

CENTENNIAL HISTORY  
OF  
TRINITY  
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Missouri Synod  
Ebenezer, New York

1849 - 1949

*"Jesus Christ, the same Yesterday, and Today, and Forever."*

HEBREWS 13; VERSE 8

## *Dedication:—*

*We humbly and gratefully dedicate this Centennial Book: To the founders of our congregation, who labored so faithfully and at such great sacrifice, in order to establish a Lutheran Zion ever true to God's inspired Word;*

*To the pastors who labored with such zeal and loyalty to the Holy Scriptures, who ever invited those that labor and were heavy laden, to comfort their souls with the Word of Life;*

*To the teachers of our school, ever loyal to their profession, ever leading lambs to the Shepherd of children;*

*To the many, many consecrated men and women, who brought such great sacrifices of time, of effort and of money, that they might leave to us, their children, a priceless heritage;*

*To the goodness, the mercy and compassion of the only true God, the Triune God; Father, Son and Holy Ghost.*



## Foreword

*It is so easy to forget! Our founding fathers have long since left this world of strife and the Church Militant to enter the Church Triumphant, through faith in the blessed Redeemer, Jesus Christ. They can no longer recount to us, their children, the primitive conditions which they found in our locality; the tremendous sacrifices they were compelled to make; the blood and the sweat demanded to build the Church in which we worship to this day; nor the countless blessings of an ever-merciful God. And we are so apt to forget!*

*So the purpose of this Centennial Book is to be a two-fold one. First of all, it is to be a testimony to the grace and love of the eternal God, through whom alone this work, now known as Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church came into being, prospered and lived even to this present hour. And then, the story of Trinity Lutheran Church is told as an encouragement to the present generation and as an inspiration to future generations. As they behold the mighty works of God here at Trinity, may they be inspired to follow the glorious example of those who have gone before!*

*Looking to the past we exclaim: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory." And looking to the future, we go forward in the blessed name of Him of whom the Word of God tells us: "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and forever."*

In the early part of the 19th Century, rationalism had gained a firm foothold in Germany and religious decadence was evident everywhere. Not even such Lutheran centers as Saxony, Bavaria and Silecia escaped this blight of rationalism. There were faithful ones who used their best efforts to stem the tide of liberalism and unbelief, but they stood powerless over against the enemies of true confession.

To escape such conditions, large numbers of true believers left Germany and emigrated to America where they could worship God according to the dictates of their consciences. About 1839 a company under the leadership of a certain Pastor Krause, was formed in Silecia, Prussia with Buffalo, New York as their objective. It was in September 1839 when this company reached Buffalo. The greater number of these people removed to the State of Wisconsin; however the family of Godfried Grotke was one of several which remained. Mr. Grotke became one of the founders of First Trinity Congregation in Buffalo which was incorporated in 1844.

In 1846, an act of Congress lifted certain restrictions on an Indian Reservation known as "Indian Bush" located south of the City of Buffalo. Portions of this reservation were offered for sale to the white settlers.

With this act, the chain of events leading to the Centennial Celebration of our beloved congregation was started.

During the period from 1847 to 1849 the families of Godfried Grotke, Ferdinand Langner and Carl E. Kromphardt moved from Buffalo to newly acquired tracts of lands purchased in the "Indian Bush" country. The eight mile trip through heavily wooded country, over rough trails to First Trinity Church in Buffalo was a definite hardship, but it did not prevent these men and their families from attending public worship regularly.

However, the want and need for a church of their own became more and more apparent as time progressed. As early as 1847, Pastor Ernest Buerger of First Trinity began conducting divine services in the homes of these settlers. In 1848, a public school house on Orchard Park Road was rented to serve as a place of worship. Quite regularly, Sunday afternoon services were conducted to which all woodsmen, laborers and settlers were invited. But not all of these people could be gained for the Lutheran Church. Many of them were of the Reformed belief and were not willing to subscribe to the doctrinal teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and the other Lutheran Confessions. The settlers were thus divided into two groups, the Reformed group organizing and locating on Orchard Park

Road at the head of what is now known as Reserve Road.

In the Fall of 1849 more than a dozen Lutheran families decided to organize a congregation. As near as is known, this organization meeting took place in the latter part of October. Taking the name "German Evangelical Lutheran Trinity Congregation, Unaltered Augsburg Confession of West Seneca, Erie County, N. Y.," they adopted a constitution patterned after that of the mother church, First Trinity of Buffalo. Paragraph 2 of this constitution, pertaining to the verbal inspiration of the Bible and the complete accordance of the Symbols of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, still remains the doctrinal basis of our congregation.

The eight original signers of the constitution were:

Michael Lebert  
Ferdinand Langner  
Jacob Hahn  
George Roth  
Godfried Grotke  
Carl Kromphardt  
Adam Koch  
Luke Escherich

At this meeting, Michael Lebert and Carl Kromphardt were elected to serve as the first deacons of our congregation.

A second meeting was held January 29, 1850 to apply for incorporation papers. Three trustees, Godfried Grotke, Adam Koch, and Michael Escherich, were elected in whose names the application was to be made. The incorporation papers were recorded and filed in the town clerk's office on February 12, 1850.

In November 1851, the year following incorporation, Trinity Congregation called its first pastor. The call was extended to Pastor Ernest Buerger, then pastor of First Trinity. Accepting the call, Pastor Buerger moved to the country and purchased a small plot of ground on the east side of Orchard Park Road about one-quarter mile south of the present intersection of Southwestern Boulevard and Orchard Park Road. Here he erected a log building which served as home, school-house and place of worship. During the first few years, until 1855, Pastor Buerger did not draw any regular salary, but was remunerated in food and small sums of money from the Sunday plate collections. In 1853 he was instrumental in our joining the Synod of Missouri, Ohio and other States, now known as the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod. Pastor Buerger, himself was one of the charter members.

During the first decade, which can properly be called the greatest decade of her life, Trinity Congregation grew from twelve to approximately thirty-five families. The pastor performed 223 baptisms, confirmed 75 children and married 47 couples. The children baptized would alone make a fair sized congregation, however some of these were from families who were non-members. There were 49 burials, 35 of which were children below the age of 13, giving a hint of the high mortality rate among children at that time.

For a little over three years, services were held in a public school building on Orchard Park Road. Less than two years after Trinity dropped her status as a mission station she had her own church building located on the site of the present building. The two-acre lot was purchased from Mr. Michael Eschrich in 1851 at a price of \$70. The building was completed in less than four months at a cost of \$232.85. The small cost resulted from a combination of low prices and donations by members of materials and labor given liberally by those who had ability with hammer and saw. Only one carpenter was hired to supervise the actual construction.

In October of 1858 Pastor Buerger was called to Washington, D.C. Trinity was without a regular pastor until 1860. During this time Rev. L. Dulütz, then pastor of First Trinity Church of Buffalo, took care of our congregation.

Rev. L. Muckel was installed in May 1860. During the summer and fall semester of 1861 the pastor substituted in the school, our teacher having left in the spring. He was also serving the congregation at Elma during this time and under the strain his health broke. With the calling of a teacher in the fall his work was somewhat lightened and he was able to continue, but on November 24, 1864, on the advice of his physician, he resigned his pastorate to seek a warmer climate.

During Pastor Muckel's time the first parsonage was built and he was the first one to occupy it. It was completed early in the fall of 1862 and consisted of a story and a half building located on a half acre of ground which was purchased from Mr. John G. Langner. In 1863 a cellar was added. Also in this year a board fence was erected around the church premises.

Our third pastor was Rev. C. A. Weisel, who served us from April 2, 1865 until September 20, 1868. On November 20, 1868 Pastor Frantz Schmitt was installed. Besides serving our congregation, Pastor Schmitt received permission to serve also Eden, Farnham and Marilla congregations as often as he could on week days. Marilla, however, was allowed four

communion services a year because they had issued a regular call to be served in conjunction with Trinity.

The building which we are now using for worship was built by Mr. George Reichert in 1869 at a cost of \$3700.00. The edifice was so well constructed that today, after 80 glorious years of service to God, no major repairs were needed other than redecorating and normal maintenance. The contract for the building was awarded on October 17, 1869 and dedication services were held one year later, on October 16, 1870. At that time our congregation numbered 88 voting members, 320 communicants and approximately 600 souls.

The dedication was a gala and joyous affair with visiting pastors, choirs and trumpeters. Two services were held on that day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The morning service began in the old church with confessional services and prayers followed by a march from the old to the new building where the key was presented to the pastor. After more prayers and short speeches the door was unlocked and the congregation marched in singing, "Now thank we all our God." After this service the congregation served dinner to all in attendance. Pastor Grossberger of Buffalo, delivered the sermon in the afternoon service and Pastor Schmitt solemnized a marriage.

The calibre of christian life and brotherhood of our members is reflected all through our glorious 100 years. Trinity's generosity and willingness to offer a helping hand to others has been known to Synod for many many years. Our records show that in 1872 a collection of \$103.16 was taken to relieve the suffering of our brothers in Faith who had lost all their earthly goods in the great Chicago fire. That amount does not seem very impressive now, but in 1872 it meant much sacrificing for many of our members. The very lean depression years of the late 1860's and early 1870's put great burdens on our congregation. Many families were so poor that the congregation had to grant them aid from the "Poor Treasury," yet in spite of this their hearts were touched by the sufferings and loss of their fellow men in Chicago.

In 1875 we formed a voting circuit with the congregations of Boston, Eden, Cattaraugus and North East. This circuit was to send one Layman and one Pastor to General Synodical Conference every three years.

The congregation at Marilla came in for service again in 1878. Town Line and Marilla congregations had formed one parish in 1875. But now that Town Line has severed its connection with Synod, Marilla, not able to keep their own pastor,

begged to be served eight times a year. Their request was granted.

In June 1878, the Rev. William Dahlke was installed as our pastor. During his pastorate, in 1881, Trinity purchased its first pipe organ. This was a small, single-manual instrument operated by a hand pump. The 'organ-pumper' received a yearly salary of \$35.00 with an extra remuneration of 50 cents for each wedding or funeral. In 1927 an electric blower was installed to eliminate the tedious job of hand pumping. This organ served the church until 1941 at which time our present organ, a larger, two-manual instrument was installed.

On March 5, 1911 Pastor Dahlke tendered his resignation due to old age. This decision terminated a faithful stewardship of 33 years. Trinity now had to think in terms of calling another pastor. In June 1911, a call was extended to the Rev. Adolph Saar of Germanica, Canada and a few weeks later his letter of acceptance was received. The installation service took place in August 1911.

After the parsonage had been vacated by Pastor Dahlke, the congregation resolved to undertake rather extensive alterations. When Pastor Saar arrived, the alterations had not been completed, so the congregation was compelled to rent a house on Berg Road which served as a temporary parsonage. During the pastorate of Rev. Saar, English services were introduced in our church and English was also made the official language for instruction in our school and Catechetical classes. Pastor Saar remained with us until October 1919, when he accepted a call extended to him by the congregation in Otto and Little Valley, New York.

Once again our congregation was without a shepherd, but the vacancy was not a long one. A call was extended to the Rev. William Albrecht of St. Johnsburg, N. Y. The call was accepted and Pastor Albrecht was installed on December 14, 1919. During his pastorate the congregation celebrated the 50th anniversary of the dedication of our Church on October 3, 1920. Our present school building was erected and dedicated to the glory of God in connection with the 75th Anniversary of our congregation on November 2, 1924. In January 1926 Pastor Albrecht accepted a call to Pittston, Pennsylvania.

That same month the Lord of the Church guided us in our deliberations and prompted us to call the Rev. Walter E. Schuldt of Freedom, Penna. Pastor Schuldt accepted our call and was installed on April 18, 1926. He proved to be the man we needed at Trinity at that time, for with infinite patience, tact



and wisdom he guided us safely through trying times for our congregation. The things he has done for Trinity Congregation are recorded on no Church records, but God's record of eternity will reveal their blessings. In addition to building us up spiritually, Pastor Schuldt was instrumental in adding an 8th grade to our school; the introduction of more English services; the replacing of our plain windows with stained-glass memorial windows for our Church; the introduction of the envelope system of contributions, etc. But this happy relationship came to an end when he accepted a call to Marwood, Penn. on February 22, 1937.

On March 8, 1937 a call was extended to the Rev. Paul Trumpoldt, pastor of St. Philip's Lutheran Church (Colored) of Philadelphia, Penna. This call was accepted and Pastor Trumpoldt was installed on May 9, 1937 by the sainted Rev. F. Ruhland. Pastor Trumpoldt serves us at the present time, his pastorate having become the second longest in the history of Trinity Congregation.

In 1939 our congregation observed its 90th anniversary with 3 of her former pastors preaching at specially-arranged services. Pastors W. E. Schuldt and W. Albrecht conducted English services while Pastor A. Saar preached in a German service. For this occasion the church building was completely renovated. Our modernization program continued apace also in our school with the installation of sanitary facilities, a central heating plant and modern school seats.

And now, a major item in the celebration of our Centennial, is the beautiful and practical new parsonage built on two lots adjacent to the church. Our new parsonage was dedicated June 27, 1948. This well-built home for the ambassadors of Christ to Trinity Congregation should serve well and with a minimum of expense for many years to come. This new parsonage replaces the old land-mark at 296 Reserve Road which served so faithfully for 86 years and which was located about 4/10 of a mile east of the rest of our congregational properties.

**"Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's."** Trinity has ever been mindful of this admonition of her Lord. Though our records, in general, are quite complete and well preserved, yet no mention is made of the number of sons of our congregation who served in the First World War. A diligent inquiry reveals that perhaps 5 sons of our church were called to the colors and one of them, Fred Moll, made the supreme sacrifice on Flander's Field. In World War II, 26 sons and 1 daughter of the congregation served

in the armed forces of our country on far-flung battlefields. The God of all grace and mercy heard our prayers in their behalf and brought all of them home safely again. During their absence, we, here on the home-front, upheld them with our prayers, our gifts, our service letter entitled the "Y.P.S. Gazette" and by liberal and regular contributions to the Army and Navy Commission. Services of praise and thanksgiving to our God were conducted on V-E Day and again on V-J Day; while a service of recognition and gratitude was conducted in May 1946, after most of the veterans had completed their tour of duty to their country. One of our Chaplains, the Rev. E. E. Heuer, preached in this service.

Stewardship has always occupied a most prominent place in our congregational life. Since the work of the District is our work, and since "We" are Synod, both our District and our Synodical obligations have been met year after year. When the Synod-wide "Peace Thankoffering" was gathered in 1945, our congregation raised \$4500 for that purpose; and when, in 1947, the "Centennial Thankoffering" was gathered, our congregation also supported that by raising \$1500. In June 1949, Trinity again contributed to the work of Synod with a collection of \$800 for the Building for Tomorrow Program.

The small acorn that had been planted in the Indian Bush Territory of West Seneca 100 years ago has grown to be a strong oak. With her sturdy roots firmly planted in the Lord, Trinity has weathered many a storm from within and without. But neither storms nor her age have diminished her strength, slowed her pace or dulled her vision. Yes, we are convinced that a new era of service and of growth lies ahead. Located just 4 miles south of Buffalo, N. Y., in a community which is experiencing an unprecedented growth in population, in business establishments and in new homes, we see further souls, redeemed by Christ, to be gained for His Kingdom of Grace. Ever mindful of our Savior's command: **"Ye shall be witnesses unto Me,"** Trinity is alert to her mission opportunities. This is evident in the fact that she has sponsored and paid in full the entire cost of a foreign station of the Lutheran Hour net work for several years. Her mission-mindedness is bearing fruit and is enjoying the Savior's blessings, for our present house of worship is becoming too small to accommodate the ever-increasing numbers of worshippers who crowd her portals Sunday after Sunday.

Trinity Lutheran Church of Ebenezer starts her second Century of Grace with 434 members 311 of whom are communicant members.

## *Pastors of Trinity*



ADOLPH SAAR  
1911 - 1919



WILLIAM ALBRECHT  
1919 - 1926



WILLIAM DAHLKE  
1878 - 1911



WALTER E. SCHOLDT  
1926 - 1937



PAUL TRUMPOLDT  
1937

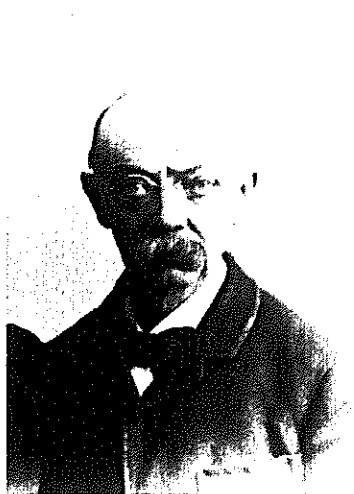
## *Teachers of Trinity*



AUGUST F. LOGE  
1867 - 1875



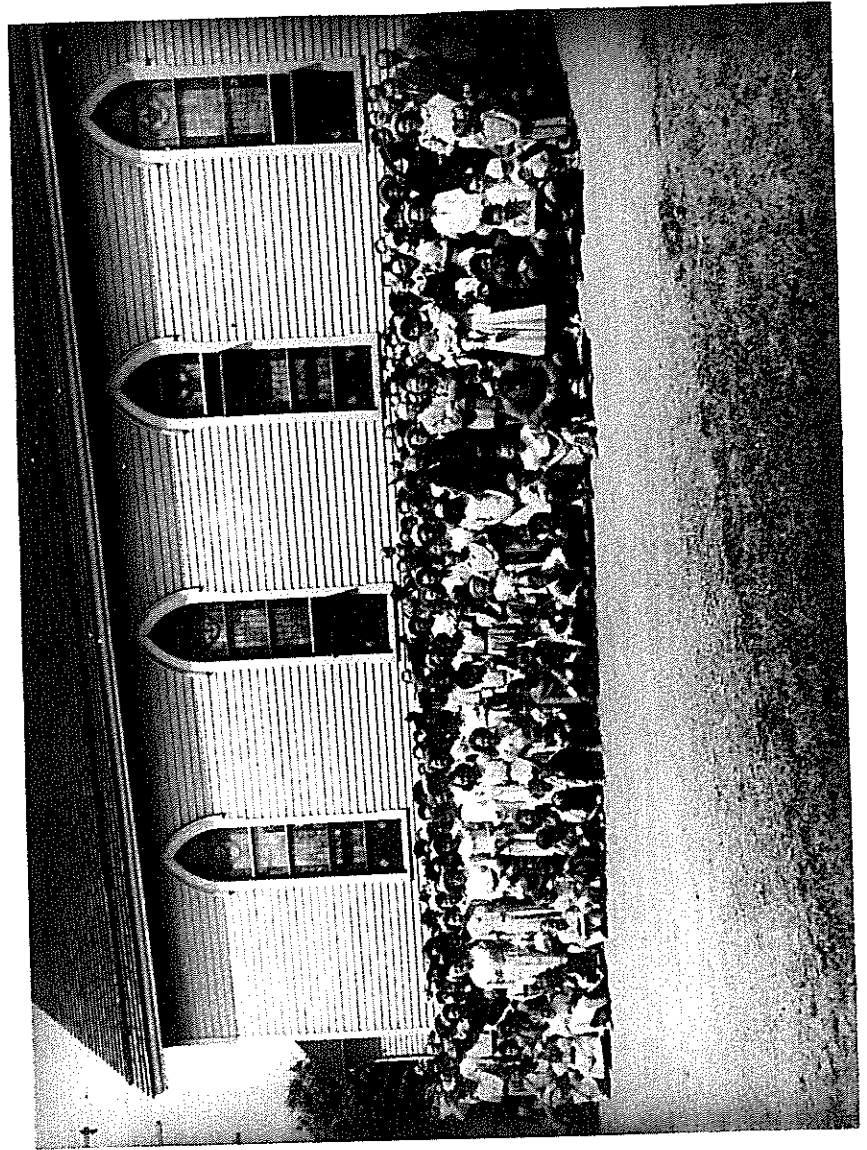
F. C. ROSSEAU  
1875 - 1883



HUGO MEISSNER  
1888 - 1909



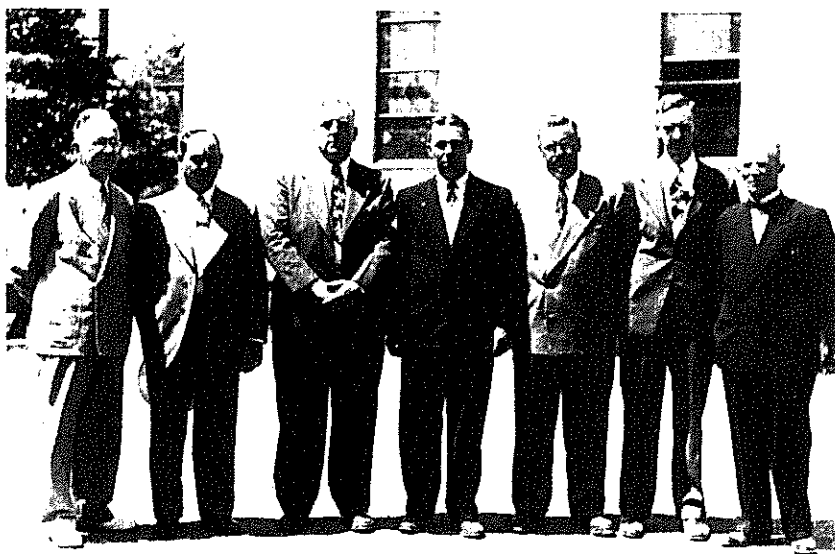
PAUL HILLGER  
1909



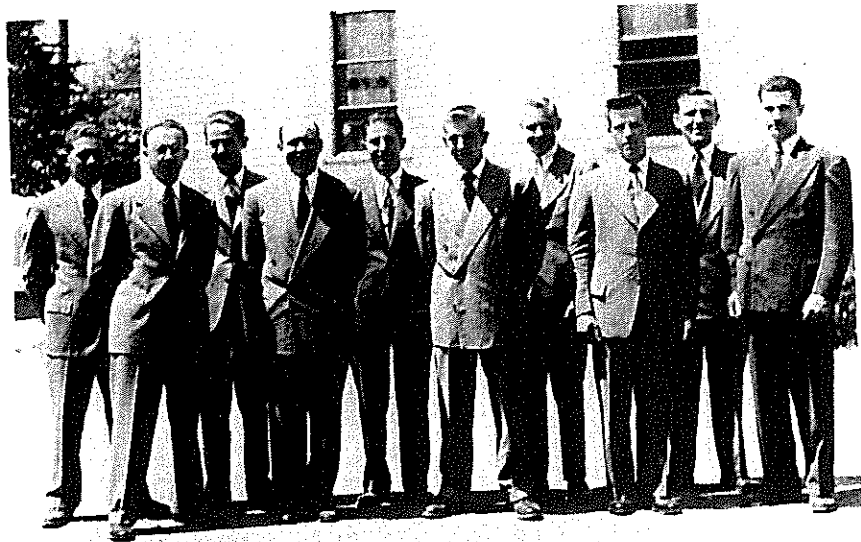
SUNDAY JUNE 19, 1949



*The Vestry*



*Board of Education*



*The Usher Staff*



*Centennial Committee*

*To live up to one's moral convictions and remain a true Christian at all times and under severe handicaps is not an easy task. God-given courage and a firm faith in our Savior's promise, "I will never leave thee or forsake thee," are prerequisites of such a life. Without this Divine power and faith our founding fathers would not have succeeded in starting the small mission station which has developed into our present beloved Trinity Congregation.*

*The following brief biographies furnish a few facts concerning our first pastor and three of the laymen who were instrumental in the organization of Trinity.*





### *The Reverend Ernest Moritz Buerger*

Ernest Moritz Buerger was born in 1806 in Saxony, Germany. He prepared for the ministry and was ordained and held a pastorate in Lunzenau, Saxony, Germany. As the Saxon emigrants left Germany for America in quest of religious freedom, Pastor Buerger, his wife and three children were in the company of 700 that left in one group. Arriving in New Orleans December 31, 1838, they proceeded up the Mississippi River to Perry County where homes were built. After a series of epidemics, during which Mrs. Buerger died, and after events brought shame and disgrace upon the entire company, Pastor Buerger with others decided to return to Germany.

While in Buffalo, enroute to New York, he was contacted by a group of Lutherans and accepted their call to serve them in the fall of 1841. This was the beginning of First Trinity Church of Buffalo. Here he labored for a period of ten years during which decade the Missouri Synod was organized with Pastor Buerger as one of the charter members. In November of 1851, he accepted a call to Trinity Church in West Seneca to become its first regular pastor, two years after its organization. The term of this pastorate lasted until October 1858 when he accepted a call to Washington, D. C. A few years later he followed a call to Winona, Minnesota. His last Sermon was preached September 8, 1889, at the age of 83 years, on the occasion of the golden jubilee of First Trinity of Buffalo. He died March 22, 1890, at the age of 84 years.

### *Godfried Grotke*

Godfried Grotke was born in 1797 at Luzine, Silesia, Kingdom of Prussia, Germany. In 1839, feeling the need for greater religious freedom, he, with his wife and five children emigrated to the United States, settling in Buffalo. Together with Ferdinand Langner, Carl Ephrahim Kromphardt and others he was instrumental in organizing First Trinity Church of Buffalo in 1841. In 1847 or 1848 he moved to West Seneca and settled on Church Road. Here he lived as a farmer and woodsman. In 1849 he became one of the original founders of Trinity Church of West Seneca. Mr. Grotke died on June 26, 1887 at the age of 90 years. He is buried in our cemetery with his wife who died five years later in 1892.

### *Ferdinand Langner*

Ferdinand Langner was born at Circuit Wohlan, Province Silesia, Germany in 1796. In 1839 he emigrated to Buffalo with his wife and two children. After purchasing land in West Seneca he moved to Church Road in 1849 where he became a farmer. He died March 20, 1860 at the age of 64 years and is buried in our cemetery together with his wife and daughter who died several years before.

### *Carl Ephrahim Kromphardt*

Carl Kromphardt was born Nov. 25, 1802 at Denstadt, circuit of Langensalze, Province Thuringen, Germany. Leaving his occupation as a thriving shoemaker, he emigrated to Buffalo in 1847 with his wife and six children. He moved to West Seneca in the Spring of 1849 where he was known throughout the neighborhood as the country shoemaker. He died on Sept. 19, 1876 at the age of 74 years, his wife following him to the grave three years later in 1879.

