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East Bend Church
Records, 1889-2018

Collection 354

Champaign County Historical Archives

Compiled by: Sherrie Bowser, February 2023

Creator/Corporate Name: East Bend Church

Inclusive Dates: 1889-2018, bulk 1949-1989

Physical Description: 2 boxes, (1.5 linear ft.)

Provenance:

The East Bend Church records were donated to the Champaign County Historical Archives in September 2022.

Access:

These records are accessible to the public within applicable copyright restrictions and limited to use at the Champaign County Historical Archives of The Urbana Free Library.

Historical Note:

The 1880s saw Mennonites moving into the northwest section of Champaign County. Most of these settlers were second or third-generation European immigrants from the north-central Illinois counties of Tazewell, McLean, and Woodford in search of cheap farmland. Early settlers included the families of Charles Stormer, August Ingold, Jacob Heiser, Andrew Birky, and Peter Zehr. Zehr, an ordained minister, soon organized a church in the Dixon schoolhouse in East Bend Township (1889). The primary language used in the Church was German, and remained so until around 1910.

In 1895, the first church building was erected at its current location, 3300N & 700E Fisher, IL. This building was destroyed by a storm in 1907 and rebuilt the same year. The present brick structure was dedicated in 1949 and has undergone several upgrades and additions.

East Bend Mennonite Church is and has been a church dedicated to outreach and mission work. The first Sunday School was organized in the spring of 1889. Interest in mission work took hold in 1905, with Andrew Birky organizing visitors from various mission stations. Other social and charitable church organizations included Sewing Circle (1917), Literary Society (1920), Mixed Chorus (1923), Christian Worker's Band (1938), Youth Fellowship (1948), and sponsorships of Vietnamese and El Salvadoran families (1980, 1987). East Bend Mennonite Church also helped establish area churches, including Dewey Community Church, Arthur Mennonite Church, and First Mennonite Church in Urbana.

In 2015, East Bend Membership voted to remove itself from the Mennonite Church USA Denomination due to conflicting stances on gay marriage and sexuality. In 2017, they partnered with the Evana (Evangelical Anabaptist) Network of Churches. The church is now known as East Bend Church.



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Scope and Content Note:

This collection contains records and ephemera relating to the history of East Bend Mennonite Church in Fisher, IL. Documents include church programs from East Bend and other regional churches, ephemera, documents, and audio related to their centennial celebrated in June 1989. The collection also contains copies of family and church histories housed in the church's library. Family histories with a call number are also housed in the Archives book stacks.

Arrangement:

The collection is arranged alphabetically by folder title.

Subject Terms:

Churches.

Churches – Illinois -- East Bend Township.

East Bend Mennonite Church (Fisher, Ill.) -- History.

Mennonites – Illinois – History.

Mennonites – Illinois – Genealogy.

Same-sex marriage.

Name Terms:

Baecher, Joseph

Birkey, Amelia

Birkey, Bertha E.

Birky, Jacob W.

Cender, Mary

East Bend Church

East Bend Mennonite Church

Good, Catherine

Good, Joseph

Heiser, Amos

Heiser, Bertha

Heiser, J.A.

Hieser, John

Hieser, Mary

Massanari, Josef

Massanari, Karl

Massanari, Lizzie

Oyer, Ruth V.

Oyer, Verle

Stalter, Catherine

Stormer, Charles

Stormer, Mary

Zehr, Amelia

Zehr, Peter

Zehr, Samuel S.

Container List

Box 1

Folder 1: Centennial Celebration Ephemera, 1989

Folder 2: Church Book (Record Book) of Peter Zehr, 1889-1919

Folder 3: Constitution, 1946-2018

Folder 4: Copy of Records Taken from the Record Book of Rev. J.A. Heiser [Call # A ILLINOIS (Champ) EAS

Folder 5: Denominational Affiliation, 2015-2017

Folder 6: Family Histories: Amos A. and Bertha E. (Birkey) Hieser by Ruth V. Oyer [Call # A 929.2 Hieser]

Folder 7: Family Histories: Charles and Mary Stormer by Verle Oyer



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Folder 8: Family Histories: Historical Records of the Joseph Baecher Family Found in his 1874 German Family Bible compiled by Theodore Wentland (1987)

Folder 9: Family Histories: John and Mary (Cender) Hieser by Ruth V. Oyer [Call # A 929.2 Hieser]

Folder 10: Family Histories: Josef and Lizzie Massanari by Karl L. Massanari [Call # A 929.2 Massanari]

Folder 11: Family Histories: Joseph and Catherine Stalter Good [Call # A 929.2 Good]

Folder 12: Family Histories: Memories of my Father [Peter Zehr] by Amelia Zehr Birkey [Call # A 929.2 Zehr]

Folder 13: Family Histories: My Autobiography by Jacob W. Birky [Call # A B Birky BIR]

Folder 14: Family Histories: Samuel S. Zehr, 1870-1943 [Call # A 929.2 Zehr]

Folder 15: Family Histories: Some Early East Bend Families by Verle Oyer [Call # A ILLINOIS (Champ) FIS]

Folder 16: Programs, 1949-1998

Folder 17: Programs, Christmas, 1963-1996

Folder 18: Programs, Regional Choirs and Choir Festivals, 1957-1988

Folder 19: Regional Churches, 1955-1971

Box 2

Cassette tapes (7), recordings of Centennial Programs, June 1-2, 1989

Centennial Commemorative Plate, 1989

Centennial Button, 1989