

Beatty Church founded on anti-slavery



In this undated photo, the Beatty Church was located at the west end of Washington Square, along Jackson Street, facing Washington Street in Sandusky. The building also served as a hospital during the cholera epidemic.

Provided photo/Sandusky History Blog

Mar 27, 2021 Sandusky Register

SANDUSKY — While Sandusky aided Black Americans, creating a stop for them on the Underground Railroad, a prominent city official took a public stand against slavery.

John Beatty, the mayor of Sandusky from 1833 to 1836, founded a church in Sandusky in 1835, after the Methodist church voted against hosting an anti-slavery speaker. He withdrew his membership from the existing Methodist church and formed a new Methodist church, commonly known as the “Beatty Church.”

It was located at the west end of Washington Square, along Jackson Street facing Washington Street. After Beatty’s death, most of the membership of the Beatty Church returned to the parent church.

During the cholera epidemic of 1849, the building formerly known as the Beatty Church housed a cholera hospital. Hewson Peeke wrote in “The History of Erie County” that the city of Sandusky seized the building for use as a hospital. Charles E. Frohman devoted an entire chapter of his book, Sandusky’s Yesterdays, to the “Cholera Days” of Sandusky.

In 1855, the Baptist church purchased this building. Rev. Justin D. Fulton was the minister of the Baptist church in Sandusky from 1855 to 1859.

Former Sandusky dentist Frank Sage wrote in the Jan. 19, 1923 Sandusky Register that Rev. Fulton was “fearless in attacking with fiery zeal, public wrong, abuse of all descriptions.”

Rev. Fulton later pastored churches in Boston and New York. He wrote several books, many of them expressing his anti-Catholic sentiment. Fulton married a Sandusky girl named Sarah Norcross after he moved to Boston.

Then, in 1862, the German Lutherans of Sandusky purchased the building. (The Lutherans actually traded buildings with the Baptists, paying an additional \$2,000 in cash.) Rev. J. G. Lehrer was the Lutheran minister in 1862.

The History of Zions Lutheran Church tells of Rev. Lehrer’s direction of the congregation toward order and progress. Members who failed to live up to their calling were disciplined, and sometimes excluded, from the congregation.

The Lutheran church conducted services here until Nov. 12, 1899, moving to the building they still use today at Columbus Avenue and Jefferson Street. Eventually, the building on the courthouse square was demolished.

The old stone church in the courthouse square hosted many different groups of Sanduskians, with some very strong-willed men in leadership positions. Several church histories, historical files, and microfilmed church records are available at the Archives Research Center of the Sandusky Library for further research.