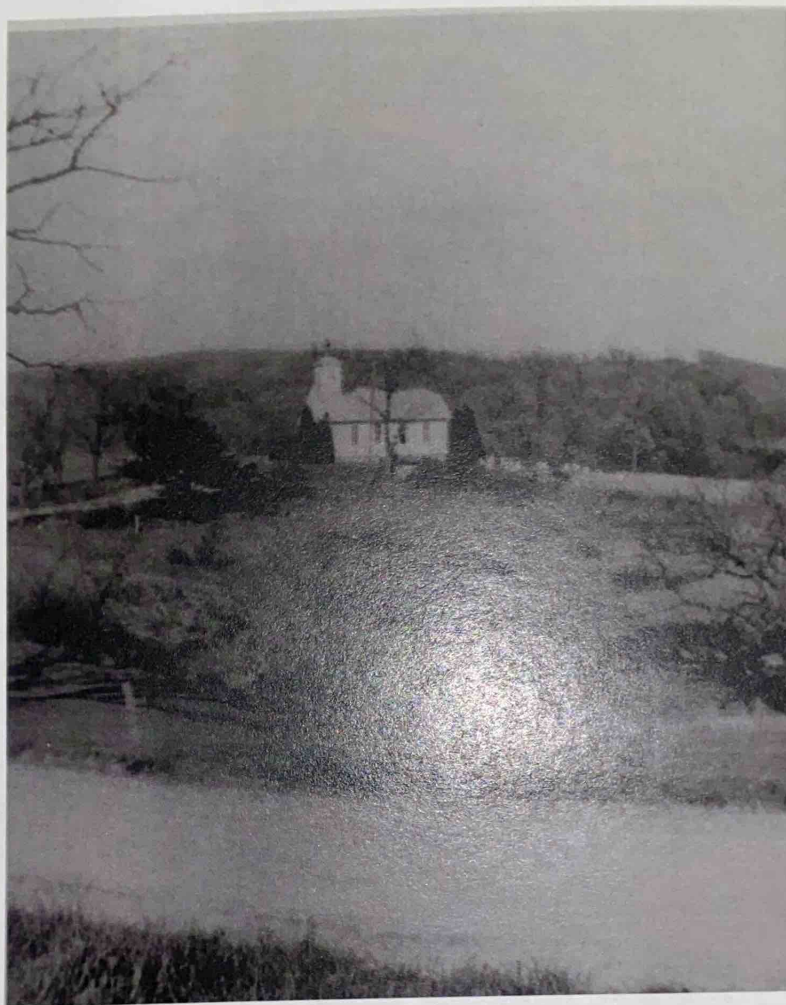


THE HISTORY OF ST. PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Early in the 1880s, a group of about thirteen German families settled just east of Parkersburg, West Virginia, in an area known as Red Hill. They were all Lutheran Christians with a strong faith who wanted to continue their worship in their new home. Beginning in 1884 they gathered together for worship in homes and were served by ministers from neighboring cities. One of the homes used for worship services was the 'Conoway House' on Dutch Ridge Road, just behind where the cemetery is still located.

St Paul Church photo taken from Henry and Katharine Brethauer's front yard on Dutch Ridge; notice the cemetery behind the church.



Their desire to build a separate building grew and under the pastoral guidance of Rev. Otto W. Meerwein, plans were made for building a church. Rev. Meerwein was the pastor at St. John's Lutheran Church in Parkersburg, presently known as First Lutheran Church. A site was established when George Beorn deeded one acre of land at Red Hill for the church and cemetery. The members built the church by their own labor, with most of the lumber and stone coming from the surrounding countryside. The church was dedicated on 25 September 1887 by Rev. Meerwein.

Its official name was "Die Evangelische Lutherische St. Paulus Gemeinde", the offering amounted to \$55.46 and a debt of \$200 was paid off in a few short years.



c.1920 Saint Paul Lutheran Church on Dutch Ridge Road

Some of the early members were Heinrich Brethauer (a farmer), his wife Catharine Fisch Brethauer, and her mother Mrs. Martha Woelling Fisch; Gottlieb Roth (a winemaker) and his wife Mary King Roth; John C. Roth from Ulm, Germany (a shoemaker) who later married Louise Brinker, also from Germany; Werner Otte (a blacksmith), and his wife Sophie Meyer Otte, and their children Freda and Sophie from Bergen, Germany; Heinrich Schueler (a carpenter), and his wife Anna Fisch Schueler; Ferdinand Meyer (a horseman) and brother of Sophie Meyer Otte, and their mother, Dorothea Steding Meyer, and his wife Mary Meyer; and John Eckhart (a stonemason). In 1899 William Gustke moved to Parkersburg to work at the Parkersburg Iron and Steel Works. His wife Anna Brinker Gustke and small son Walter joined him in 1901.

Typical of the country church architecture of that era, the building was a white frame structure on a foundation of stone, with a spire-topped belfry that housed the church bell. After the spire was struck by lightning, the base of the spire was roofed and finished with a latticework trim. Years later, when electricity came to the area, a cross of electric lights was donated and erected by the Gustke family.



St. Paul Lutheran Church

The interior of the one-room building had windows on two sides. The windows had white frosted diamond patterns with clear glass between the diamonds. The church had a center aisle that divided the plain brown pews into two sections, separating the men from the women and children, as was the custom of the day.

The altar and pulpit were beautifully hand crafted of wood by the members and adorned by maroon velvet altar and pulpit paraments. The high pulpit was reached by stairs on the right hand side of the altar, and a picture of Martin Luther was on the wall behind the pulpit.

Lighting was provided by four oil lamps with large reflectors hanging from the ceiling. Later these were replaced with gasoline lanterns hung by chains above the aisle. The lanterns worked by air pressure, and someone had to climb a stepladder and pump them up before they could be lighted.

A pot-bellied stove, fired with coal, sat in the center of one side, providing heat for the worshipers in the wintertime.

In 1890, several years after the dedication of the Church, the congregation officially organized under the guidance of the Rev. A. F. A. Sallman of Trinity Lutheran Church, Pomeroy, Ohio. In flowing German handwritten script, the (translated) title of the Constitution read: "Constitution and Regulations of the German Evangelical Lutheran St. Paul Congregation, Unaltered Augsburg Confession, of Red Hill, Wood County, West Virginia". Nineteen names were affixed to the Article of Confession, Heinrich Brethauer's among them.

The church was built and its frame structure would serve the fledgling congregation for more than fifty years. The growth of the congregation was not very rapid in the early years. Use of the German language and the lack of resident pastors were thought to be contributing factors to the slow growth. The tenure of office of the early pastors was usually brief. Many of them were not resident ministers but served the congregation from their home parishes in Pomeroy, Ohio or Ashland, Kentucky. Services at the new church were held infrequently, as the pastor usually preached to three locations, Red Hill, Pomeroy, and also at St. John's Lutheran at Sand Hill, about twelve miles east of Red Hill at the present entrance to Mountwood Park.

During the Easter week of 1914, the congregation reorganized with a new Constitution. They resolved to form a parish with St. John Lutheran Church at Sand Hill and endeavor to secure a pastor who would devote his entire time to the upbuilding of these two congregations. To this end, the twelve members signing the Constitution agreed to pay \$200 per year for the pastor's salary. The congregation also resolved to join the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and other states, and to ask the Central District of the Synod for aid in supporting the pastor they proposed to call.

The Lutheran pastors in the early days of the Red Hill St. Paul Church all needed to be able to teach, preach, administer the sacraments, and converse in the German language. Because of this, when the United States entered World War I in 1917, the Red Hill community was subjected to prejudice and hostility. This hostility culminated in a cross burning near the church. Following the armistice, life in the community returned to normal.

Volunteer work by many members helped the congregation survive. Walking or riding in horse drawn carriages were the main means of getting to church in the early years. When members started driving their new automobiles, the church parking lot was enlarged to accommodate them. This required the removal of a large Chestnut tree stump by blasting it with dynamite. The stump blew about six feet straight up, but landed back in the same hole. Later Carl Brethauer pulled it out with his horses. The stump remained beside the parking lot for years because it was too large to be moved easily.

As time passed, many of the old German-speaking members died and were laid to rest in the cemetery behind the church. Services in English for the younger members replaced the ones in German starting in the 1920s. However, once a month the English service was followed by a shorter service of hymns with a sermon in German for the remaining older German-speaking members. In 1936 the complete transition from the German language to English was accomplished.

In 1936 the congregation became self-supporting, no longer needing the financial support of the Synod, which had helped during the early years. The envelope system was introduced to meet the financial obligations and even during the Great Depression years, the drought of 1930, and World War II, the church was in a position to meet its financial obligations as they came due.

On the following page is a photo of the 1930 St. Paul congregation:



Picnic 1930

Carl & Bertha Brothman
Mrs. Mary Meyer
Mrs. John Eckhart
Lizette Eckhart
Adam & Della Eckhart
Anna Roth
Sophie Rogers
Mary & Edna Little
Dave Rogers
Eda Remond
Ment Mills

Ella Kirsch
Dora & Ray De Vries
Hester Meyer
William & Anna Gustke
Fred Eckhart
Bill Hultman
Ray & Edna Gustke

Lucy Roth
Albert & Wilh. Roth
Eneest Haas
Dorothy Kulcy
Bill DeLaine
Clarence Gustke
John & Edna Meyer
Alfred Hultman
Kerner OTC
Sam & Ruth
Glen Morrison

Clyde Morrison
Buddy Fishback
Melva & Derde
W. Marie Meyer
Harry Rogers
Mittie Reese
Clifford Quigg
Mrs. Cora
Myrtle Stella Busch
Dick & Thelma Geston
Maudie & Richard Geston



Eckhart
Pauline Eckhart
Freda, Walter, Ruth Gustke
Cora Mae, Edna (Gustke)
John & Mary Stephenson

Donald B. Taylor
Mamie Owens
Paul Gustke
Lydia Roth
Walter Eckhart
Flora Hultman
Katherine Hultman & Kelly
Doris Roth (Gustke)
Eleanor Mills
Lily OTC

Howard Roth
Arthur Gustke
Walter Meyer
Alma & Art B.
Marie Brothman (Gustke)
Florence Pohl
Paul Eckhart
Curt Eckhart
Charles Gustke

Harry Aubard
Louise Rogers
Catherine Elliott (Wass)
Anzell Brothman
Evelyn Rogers (Roth)
Fredy Brothman (M'Gee)
Bus Mills
Harold Remond

Charles Eckhart
Ada Geston
Justine Rothman





The Church picnic was one of the highlights of the year. The first one was held under the "Wall River" apple trees at my grandparents' farm when I was very young. Other locations were **Pine Grove** on Route 47, **Fries Park** in South Parkersburg, and finally at the **Lily Otte's cabin** on Dry Run Road where this picture was taken. It was held there for many years.

We seldom had visitors at the Red Hill Church, so on picnic Sunday we had the service at the picnic site, and then the meal. In the afternoon the young people had a softball game. The Sunday school classes had games with prizes and the men had a horseshoe throwing contest. Dad was often the winner. A committee made lemonade and someone went to town to get ice cream for everyone.

Only about half the people in this picture were members of the church. The others were friends and extended family, including Wig Bickle (a local celebrity and philanthropist and a Huffman relative). Wig is the man in the hat on the right side of the picture. He grew up poor, but he made a fortune in the oil business. He love to entertain the kids by standing on his head. One time some coins fell out of this picket and he scrambled to gather them up saying, "I don't want to lose my money". Everyone laughed about that.

We still have a Church picnic, but it's in the fellowship hall after church. No ball game or horseshoe pitching.

Not at all like it used to be.

Comments from Frieda ~ August 2011

"One of Wood County, West Virginia's most popular parks, **Fries Park**, was established in Marrrtown, just southwest of downtown Parkersburg, in 1892 by Gustavus Louis "Gusty" Fries (pronounced "freeze").

From a Parkersburg newspaper, May 6, 1893:^[2] *"You Are Invited. Gusty Fries has provided a place long needed. By hard work and at great expense he has fitted up grounds beautifully located below the city, that is just the thing for public or private picnic parties, dances, excursions, etc. He has the park ready, better and bigger than ever and he will be there tomorrow and will be glad to welcome and entertain any of his friends who care to visit his inviting place. There is no prettier, cooler, or better place for a private or public outing."*

The appeal was a family operation where people could relax by picnicking and enjoying square dances and round dances like the polka and schottische in the park's dance pavilion. Fries Park prospered until increasing use of the automobile made the public more mobile and long for new sights. The appeal of small local picnic parks decreased, making Fries Park a less profitable concern.

It closed in 1939, four years before the death of Gusty Fries. The main building at the park, the dance hall, was transformed into a house by Fries's grandson, Lewis V. Moyers. The house changed hands several times, and was eventually dismantled. The only remains of the park is a now dry cistern and the ruins of a bomb shelter built in 1962 in response to the Cuban Missile Crisis."

Excerpts from "History & Preservation", newsletter
of the Wood County Historical and Preservation Society

In 1937 St. Paul celebrated its Golden Jubilee at Red Hill. Harold Stephenson was a member of the Church Council, served on the Jubilee Committee and was a church Warden at the time. Ray Gustke was Superintendent of the Sunday school, his wife Edna was one of the teachers and John and Wade Stephenson were on the membership rolls

During the 1930s, there was talk of moving the church from Dutch Ridge Road to Parkersburg. As most of the original members passed away or left the Red Hill area, a vision of a church in town started to be realized. With improved transportation, most members saw the opportunity to move to a growing Parkersburg so in 1940, a building fund was started. In 1943, three lots with the parsonage were purchased in the 3500 block of Broad Street at Foley Ave. for \$7,600. During the summer months outdoor vespers were held at the new church property while morning services were still being held at the church at Red Hill. In 1947 an architect was hired to design a new church building for the property on Broad Street and on 7 November 1948 the cornerstone of the new church was laid. Total cost of the new church building was \$45,000 and after its completion the first service was held on 19 April 1949. Harold Stephenson was an Elder and Trustee at that time.

The new church, which is the present fellowship hall, was built of red brick. The interior had a ceiling of exposed wood beams, and the pulpit, baptismal font, guest register, missal stand, and the altar railing were of walnut wood, hand crafted by the members of the congregation. The organ was on the right side of the altar and the choir sat in a room to the right. The lights, which are still used today, were moved from the church at Red Hill.

The greatest concern of the older members was that the original church at Red Hill would be forgotten. Fearing that the empty church would fall victim to vandalism, the congregation eventually decided to raze the building. The steps were left standing to provide access to the cemetery, which continued to be used and maintained.

By 1962, at the 75th anniversary of the founding of St. Paul, the congregation had grown and Sunday school classes were being held in every available place, including the parsonage and outdoors in the summertime. Plans began for a new sanctuary and funds were raised for its construction. The new and present sanctuary was completed at a cost of \$200,000 and dedicated on 6 October 1968. The nave was built with a high vaulted ceiling with exposed wooden beams. The chancel has a freestanding altar with a communion rail on three sides. A large, slim silver cross hangs behind the altar, clearly seen in contrast to the wall of black volcanic rocks behind it. Above the rear of the church and narthex are the organ and choir loft. Faceted art glass windows were designed by members of the church and reflect the teachings of the Apostle Paul, for whom the congregation was named. Harold Stephenson was serving as a Trustee at the time the new sanctuary was completed and John and Eric Stephenson were attending.

The church mortgage was completely paid off by 1986, and in 1987 St. Paul Lutheran Church celebrated its centennial year and continues to serve its members and the surrounding community to this day.

John C. Stephenson's wife Mary emigrated from Germany with her family in 1882. The family departed the port of Hamburg, Germany on the ship *Vandalia* and arrived in New York on 16 May 1882, after a

1887: County's First Lutheran Church

Congregation Predominantly German

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is another in a series of articles concerning the French-German influence in the Mid-Ohio Valley. The articles are sponsored, in part, by the West Virginia Honey Festival and Artsbridge.

By **BERNARD L. ALLEN**

Located in a hamlet a few miles east of Parkersburg was a white-frame structure on a foundation of stone. A spiral Belfry housed a bell which made a clear resonant sound, at times filling the air of Red Hill. It was with 400 to 500 persons present and close by that Wood County's first German-Lutheran church was opened September 25, 1887.

The church was named Die Evangelische Lutherische St. Paulus Gemeinde, i.e., the Protestant Lutheran St. Paul Congregation or simply, the St. Paul Lutheran Church.

Razed long ago, it was built just to

the south of the present intersection of Dutch Ridge Road and U.S. Route 50 near the center of a German settlement. However, while it was still standing, it was photographed, and the result courtesy of Dr. John Beane, accompanies this article.

It was constructed 27 years after the first well in West Virginia drilled exclusively for petroleum came in nearby 35 miles to the southwest at Burning Springs, Wirt County, and 13 years before the Parkersburg-Marietta region was viewed as the center of the world's major oil and gas producing region. In other words, the picturesque church was born during the Mid-Ohio Valley's first major oil and gas boom — a major contributing factor in the accumulation of wealth which was expended to a great extent on the beautiful homes which grace the Julia-Ann Historic District today.

The church was the creation of

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approximately 13 German families. They had settled along the ridges north of the Old Parkersburg-Staunton Turnpike and south of the Old St. Marys Turnpike. A part of another county transportation link, the Old Northeastern Turnpike, was located in the center of their settlement. One of the ridges is still known today as Dutch Ridge. It received its name because the word "Dutch" is an Anglicized version of the German word for German "Deutsch."

Among the church's early members were Herr and Fraulein Gottlieb Roth, Herr and Fraulein Heinrich Brethauer, Fraulein Martha Woelling Fisch, Herr and Fraulein Heinrich Schueler, Herr and Fraulein Ferdinand Meyer, and Herr John Eckhart.

A granddaughter of the John Roths and the Werner Ottes, Doris Caltrider, who assisted in gathering material for this piece, maintains that the terrain upon which the families lived and the church was built was very similar to that upon which her grandparents lived in Germany before emigrating to the United States.

The dedication of the church took place at 10:30 in the morning. George Beorn surrendered (on behalf of the congregation) the church's keys to

the Rev. Otto Meerwein of Parkersburg, who had been conducting services since 1884 in the homes of some of the congregation's members. The church had been built by the members' labor on land deeded by Beorn, whose photograph courtesy of Annabelle Edwards, also accompanies this piece. A few minutes after the keys were handed over, the doors were opened, the church filled quickly, and those fortunate to get in participated in the services, and then listened as the Rev. P. Raether of Steubenville, Ohio, a town named for the famous Baron von Steuben — Prussian drillmaster at Valley Forge during the American Revolution — delivered a sermon in German.

At 2:30 in the afternoon ground behind the church was consecrated for a cemetery.

Shortly thereafter another sermon was delivered inside the church. Its presenter was the Rev. P. J. Doepken of Martins Ferry, Ohio. He spoke in English.

Music at both services within the church was provided by the Germania Singing Society. Their contribution to the day's events was well received. A news reporter for *The Daily State Journal* covering the



Mr. and Mrs. George Beorn

Lutheran Church

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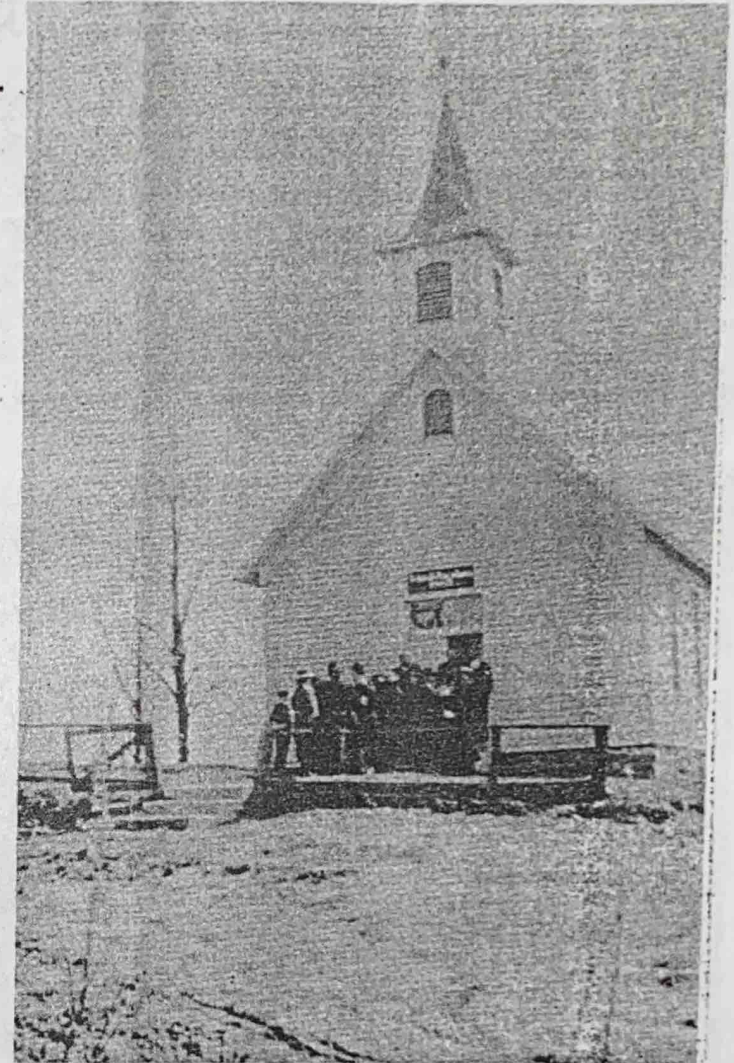
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RED HILL CHURCH — This is the St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church at Red Hill. This photograph was taken in the early 1920s.

dedication wrote:

"The Germania Singing Society rendered several sacred selections, their finely trained voices filling the little edifice to its vaulted ceiling with a volume of melody which added greatly to the impressiveness of the

occasion, and drew forth encomiums from all present. John R. Hiehle presided at the organ."

In next week's segment of this series we will take a closer look at the Hiehle family and its impact upon the culture of the Mid-Ohio Valley.

cousins it was a social event and play time. In summer we would pick blackberries to be made into jam and jelly. It was a time to roam the hills and enjoy home cooking.

THE EARLY DAYS: A ONE-ROOM CHURCH AND A ONE-ROOM SCHOOL

St Paul Lutheran Church.

St Paul is continuing today at their location in Parkersburg, West Virginia, at 3500 Broad Street. They moved to this location and held their first service on Palm Sunday, April 19, 1949. As a child I went to the old frame church until age 12, before our family moved to Florida in 1947. The old church was torn down in the early 1950's.



**Confirmation at St. Paul, Alberta Brethauer, Rev. Rosenberg, Marvin Brethauer
Back Row; Bob Gustke and Charles Roth 1945**

Brother Marvin would go early in the winter, open up and start the fire to warm up the church, the privy was on the right side of the parking lot and stayed cold.

The Earl Brethauers always sat in the same pew each Sunday, the second row from the back on the left side. Uncle Carl's family sat in the row behind us. The Roth family was across the aisle to the right, etc.

I remember St Paul's annual church picnics, and their vacation Bible school held at Kraft School. Marvin and I would ride our bikes out Dutch Ridge, down Mill Run. We would meet Leah, Robert and Lyle and ride on to Route 47, down the creek to Kraft School, maybe five miles altogether. Vacation Bible school lasted half days for a week, with a party at the end.



1946 - Brother Gary's sponsors were Art and Ruth Ann Gustke. (brother/sister)



1946 - Larry and Mel

Brother Larry was baptized by Rev. Pohl and his sponsors were Marie and Alberta Brethauer.



c. 1937 - Front Row: George Brethauer, Harold Brethauer, Margruite Berg, Carl Eckhart,
Back Row: Charles Gustke, Alfred Huffman, Howard Roth

This early picture shows the front of St. Paul's altar area with the high pulpit and steps up the right side. This was taken about 1937.

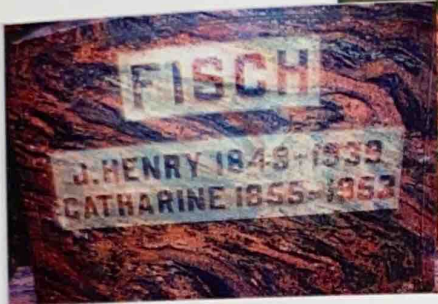


The song book/Bible shown here was printed in Cassel Germany 1796, in German. George Brethauer is written in the front.



It is 6 3/4" by 4", 2 1/2" thick, leather bound, with a brass closure.





"100 Anniversary St Paul Lutheran Church, Parkersburg, West Virginia, 1887-1987." A privately printed book by the church is great reading about the early and more current history of the church. A newspaper article by the Parkersburg Sentinel on October 10, 1987 details the first 100 years. Another article in the Parkersburg Sentinel about the cemetery and early church was printed July 8th, 1982.

The original church bell from the old St Paul church was re- installed at the new location facilities in 1977 and continues to ring the call to worship before services.

Heinrich Brethauer was one of the founders.

The internet lists the following graves in the St Paul Cemetery.

<http://files.usgwarchives.net/wv/wood/cemetery/stpaullu.txt>

St Paul Lutheran Church Cemetery, Wood Co, WV
Contributed for use in the USGenWeb Archives June 6, 2003 by Teresa LeMaster
Fordyce <s82c43@citynet.net>

<<http://www.usgwarchives.net/copyright.htm>>

Take Rt 50 east out of Parkersburg for about 2.5 miles. Turn right onto Dutch Ridge Road. Cemetery sits just to the left across the road from the very first house on Dutch Ridge Road.

This is an active cemetery, owned and maintained by the St Paul Lutheran Church. Walked and transcribed this cemetery on May 24, 2003.

Whitehead, John H.; b. Feb 25, 1908, d. Sep 23, 1981
Whitehead, Mary E.; b. Jan 4, 1908, d. Jan 9, 1970, w/o John H. Whitehead,
Married May 18, 1927
Affolter, Stephen; b. 1814, d. 1894
Affolter, Elizabeth; b. 1811, d. 1902
Eckhardt, Adam; b. Jul 11, 1883, d. May 12, 1900, s/o John and Elizabeth
Eckhardt
Eckhart, Anna Elizabeth; b. 1850, d. 1933
Eckhardt, John; b. Nov 7, 1826, d. Dec 11, 1913
Eckhardt, Edward; b. 1916, d. 1918
Eckhart, Fred; b. 1911, d. 1936
Smith, Anna Eckhart; b. 1900, d. 1956
Eckhart, Carl; b. 1873, d. 1950
Eckhart, Elizabeth; b. 1883, d. 1970, w/o Carl Eckhart
Roth, Mary M.; b. 1855, d. 1931, w/o Gottlieb Roth
Roth, Gottlieb; b. 1854, d. 1930
Stephens, J.E.; b. 1855, d. 1924
Stephens, Anna M.; b. 1850, d. 19-- , w/o J.E. Stephens
Stephens, H.F.; b. 1894, d. 1896
Meyer, H.F.; b. 1849, d. 1924
Meyer, Marie; b. 1874, d. 1955, w/o H.F. Meyer
Meyer, Carl; b. Oct 1898, d. Nov 1906
Mitchell, Homer McKinley; b. 1897, d. 1936
Stout, George J.; b. Jul 14, 1910, d. Oct 31, 1993, PFC US Army WW II
Stout, Gerald F.; b. Jan 2, 1949, d. Jan 23, 1984
Gaydac, Paul; b. Apr 14, 1915, d. Aug 31, 1984, S. SGT US Army WW II

Gaydac, Helen N.; b. 1915, d. 1997
 Gnoph, Susannah; b. Jun 27, 1827, d. Nov 19, 1893, w/o Laslo Gnoph
 Meyer, Walter O.; b. Aug 4, 1914, d. Jan 17, 1984, PVT US Army WW II
 Young, Frederick D.; b. 1873, d. 1935
 Young, Nettie Reger; b. 1871, d. 1929, w/o Frederick D. Young
 McFee, Betty Louise; b. Jun 1, 1922, d. Feb 27, 1993
 McFee, Frederick; b. 1888, d. 1956
 McFee, Elizabeth; b. 1886, d. 1971, w/o Frederick McFee
 Gustke, Ethel A; b. Aug 25, 1904, d. Oct 2, 1905, d/o William and Anna Gustke
 Gustke, Twins; no dates, daughters of William and Anna Gustke
 (note from Freda - Ethel Gustke was one of the twins - sister of
 Florence Gustke Pohl, sister of Charles)
 Gebhart, Philip; b. 1850, d. 1929
 Gebhart, Elizabeth; b. 1852, d. 1930, w/o Philip Gebhart
 Schuler, John H.; b. 1883, d. 1935
 Schueler, Eliza; b. Mar 27, 1879, d. Aug 12, 1919
 Schueler, George; b. Aug 20, 1871, d. Sep 28, 1911
 Schuler, Henry; b. 1845, d. 1931, "Father"
 Schuler, Anna E.; b. 1846, d. 1927, "Mother"
 Fische, Martha Elizabeth; b. Feb 18, 1822, d. Jan 26, 1900, w/o Geo. H Fische
 Brethauer, Henry C.; b. 1846, d. 1918
 Brethauer, Katharine E.; b. 1854, d. 1935, w/o Henry C. Brethauer
 Brethauer, Infant; b. Aug 3, 1896, d. Aug 3, 1896, s/o Henry and Catherine E
 Brethauer
 Brethauer, George H.; b. 1874, d. 1923
 Brethauer, Fannie E.; b. 1877, d. 1965, w/o George H. Brethauer
 Stephenson, Mary C.; b. 1880, d. 1964, w/o John C. Stephenson
 Stephenson, John C.; b. 1864, d. 1935

Misc:

- 2 concrete markers with no information
- 2 unmarked graves



c. 1946 - St Pauls Parsonage (Planter in front salvaged from old well)

c. 1944 - St Pauls Parsonage - Frisky the Goat in front, Marvin/Melvins Bedroom was on front upper left - Blairs Home is in the distance on the left.