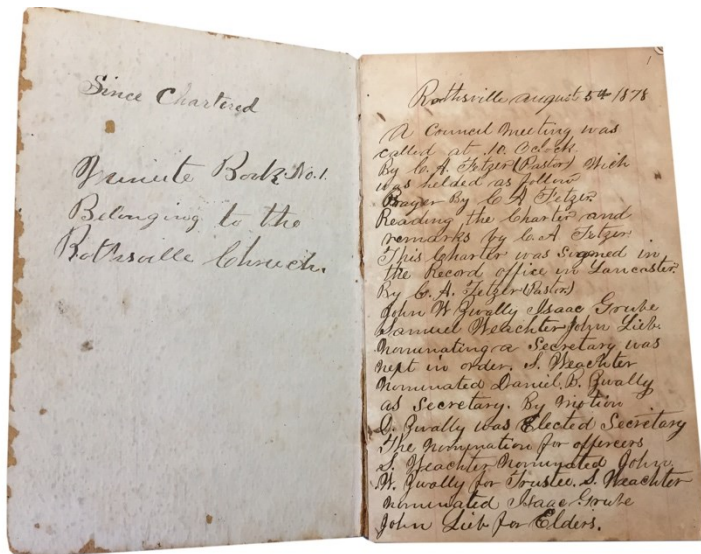Exploring the Cemetery: The Minute Book

In the congregation's fire safe there is a book just 4-3/4 inches wide by 7-3/8 inches high labeled "Church Minute Book." Inside the front cover it states: "Since Chartered" and "Minute Book No. 1 Belonging to the Rothsville Church." It has just 36 pages and is all in English.

The first entry is dated August 5th 1878 and is the record of a council meeting held to commence business in accordance with the charter which had recently been recorded in the Lancaster County Court House. The pastor was Rev. C. A. Fetzer. Daniel B. Zwally became secretary, John W. Zwally became trustee, and Isaac Grube and John Leib, elders. Deacons were Daniel B. Zwally and Samuel Weachter. The Charter itself was signed at the meeting by Peter Raezer, Daniel B. Zwally, Martha Raezer, and Eliza Leib.

The last entry in the minute book was on Aug. 1, 1892. Many of the interior entries were written in poor quality ink and are faded to near illegibility. By 1890 the primary discussion in the minutes centered around the cemetery and the responsibility for cleaning up lots. As I mentioned in an earlier article, that duty originally fell to the family of the deceased, but as the congregation neared 50 years in existence, that wasn't working anymore.

In January 1890, the church council drew up a sketch of by-laws for the cemetery and announced a collection to buy posts, railing and fences. The idea of selling lots (remember, they were originally rented!) was stalled by the realization that the charter did not give the council power to do so. Furthermore, Pennsylvania required that all corporate documents bear a corporate seal, and the church did not have a seal. By August, these matters had been taken care of.

The next order of business was to provide for "cleaning" of the cemetery. Those families with members already buried in the old cemetery and all of those buying lots were asked to pay a minimum of $2 into a fund for cleaning. At such time as the fund reached $200, the interest would be used to pay for upkeep of lots, provided the owners, their heirs and assigns did not live within 5 miles of the cemetery!

In June 1891 the council specifically stated that all persons who had contributed at least $2 should have their names recorded in a book entitled "The German and English Ev. Lutheran

Jerusalem Congregation Cemetery Fund Book." Boy, would I like to find that book with the lengthy title!

Daniel B. Zwally and his wife, Mary S. Grube Zwally, are buried in the Old Cemetery. Daniel was born in January 1858, so when elected to the office of secretary, he was just 20. His wife was the daughter of Elder Isaac Grube.

John W. Zwally was 71 at the time. He died 7 years later and was buried at Akron Lutheran.

John L. Leib was about 50 at the time of the entry and lived in Ephrata Township. Church records mention him as a communicant and contributor. He was even baptized during his time at the church. Eliza Leib, mentioned above, was his wife. They are buried at Bergstrasse.

Deacon Samuel Weachter was 39. I mentioned him in a previous article about the Civil War veterans buried in the cemetery. He was one of a cohort of Rothsville youths who joined the 5th Pa. Artillery in late winter of 1864.

Peter Raezer, 32, and his wife, Martha, were living in West Earl Township in 1870. Peter was a blacksmith.