

Exploring the Cemetery: Rev. Leibensperger and his records

Reverend A. W. Leibensperger served Jerusalem Lutheran from 1896 to 1903. Born Jan. 1, 1874, in Maxatawny Township, Berks County, he graduated from Muhlenberg College and from Mt. Airy Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. His first call was to the parish serving Rothsville, Brickerville, Penryn, and Akron. In April 1903 he left for the Lutheran parish in Lebanon and Annville. But in 1921 he returned to the area and served six scattered churches in what was called the Reamstown Parish – Muddy Creek, Bergstrasse, Salem (Reamstown), St. Paul's (Bowmansville) St. Paul's (Adamstown), and St. John's (East Earl Twp.).

He was an extraordinary recordkeeper. He recorded all of his pastoral acts in a series of eleven books. He simultaneously kept a diary of his pastoral life beginning in 1909—another six books.

When pastors tended so many flocks, they usually did not separate records by congregation. Rather, all were combined into one pastoral accounting. What is extraordinary about Rev. Leibensperger is the meticulous detail of his entries, including dates of death and burial, cause of death, parentage, marital status, children, and the funeral text.

I will be pulling out some records from burials in the Rothsville cemetery in this article and the next. I hope you find them as interesting as I do.

- Mabel Koehler: born June 10, 1890; died June 28, 1896, in Rothsville; buried July 1, 1896 at 1 p.m., Rothsville. Daughter of Lemuel and Annie Koehler. Died of scarlet fever. Aged 6 yrs. & 18 days.



- Elizabeth Ravegum: born Dec. 22, 1825 in Germany; died Oct. 22, 1896 at Millport, Pa.; buried Oct. 25, 1896, Rothsville, Pa. Disease—dropsy and consumption. Was baptized in infancy & confirmed when 14 yrs. old. Member of Lutheran Church. Leaves 5 children. She was 70 years & 10 months old.

- Elmer E. Behmer: born April 12, 1867 in Warwick township; died May 3, 1897 on Owl Hill; buried May 6, 1897—Rothsville. Single. Son of Mr. & Mrs. Henry Behmer. Committed suicide by hanging in horse stable. Aged 30 yrs. & 21 days. Enough people to fill two churches.

- Amy Esther Kofroth: born Oct. 4, 1897, in Rothsville; died Oct. 17, 1897, in Rothsville, Pa.; buried Oct. 19, 1897, Rothsville, Pa. Infant daughter of Mr. & Mrs.



Preston Kofroth. Made address at the house to near relatives & neighbors. Interment on Lutheran cemetery. Aged 11 days.

- Lottie Mae Ruhl: born Oct. 11, 1895; died Mar. 28, 1898, 1 mile south of Millport; buried Mar. 31, 1898—Rothsville. Child of Mrs. Ella Ruhl (nee Stark). Child not baptized. Aged 2 yrs., 5 mos. & 17 days.

- Hannah Bender: born Nov. 8, 1813; died Oct. 21, 1898 in Rothsville; buried Oct. 24, 1898, Lutheran Ch., Rothsville. Daughter of Henry Netzly & Sarah (nee Sponhauer). Married Ephraim Bender on August 27, 1844. 5 children, 3 sons & 2 daughters. Baptized by myself on May 7, 1897. Aged 84-11-13.

- Matilda A. Weidler: born Nov. 18, 1846; died Jan. 8, 1899, near Rothsville; buried Jan. 11, 1899—Rothsville. Daughter of Peter & Susanna Kofroth. Married to Isaac M. Weidler on Sept. 6, 1870. Six children were born, one son & 5 daughters. 2 preceded her in death. Husband, 3 daughters & 1 son survive. Baptized and received as a member of Lutheran Church at Rothsville on Dec. 10, 1892. Aged 52 yrs. 1 mo. & 20 days.



- Laura D. Leeking: born Aug. 3, 1878; died Jan. 22, 1899 on Owl Hill; buried, Jan. 25, 1899—at house 1 p.m., Rothsville 2 p.m. Christian Leeking and Louisa (nee Doerr). Baptized Nov. 30, 1878. Sponsors—parents. Confirmed privately by myself on Dec. 21, 1898 (sick). 1 of twins. Sickness—typhoid fever. Aged 20 yrs. 5 mos. & 19 days.

- Lucy Bear: born June 28, 1842; died Dec. 9, 1899 in Oregon, Pa.; buried Dec. 12, 1899—at 2 p.m.— Rothsville. Nee Sauers. Wife of Elias Bear. Aged 57-5-11.



- Elva Joanna Habecker: born Feb. 10, 1900 in Rothsville, Pa.; died Mar. 1, 1900 in Rothsville; buried Mar. 3 at 2 p.m. Infant daughter of David B. Habecker & Leah Habecker (nee Lowry). Services in English in church at 2:45 p.m. Aged 22 days.

This last entry is especially interesting because it reflects how well Rev. Leibensperger navigated the thorny issue of German services vs. English services, which I have mentioned before. Leibensperger was fluent in Pennsylvania “Dutch” and English, enabling him to communicate across the language chasm that was developing.