

# HISTORIC OTTERBEIN

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## Neighborhood Churches in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

by David Safier

Today the east side of Hanover between Lee and Barre is all new construction. The photo at right shows what it looked like in 1864. The houses are similar to the historic homes across the street, but the church just north of Welcome Alley is a surprise. It is St. Stephen's Protestant Episcopal Church.

St. Stephen's was one of the many churches and synagogues which have come and gone in the Otterbein neighborhood and surrounding areas. At the end of this piece is a list of neighborhood churches from the late 1700s to 1900. It's a long list.

You can learn about a neighborhood by looking at the churches its residents attend. Many of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century churches include either a German or African designation, indicating the two prominent nationalities and ethnicities in the area.

Methodist churches predominated. A

Lutheran church opened in the 1850s, and a

Roman Catholic church, a Baptist church and Jewish synagogue opened around 1860, indicating the arrival of people of those faiths to the area.

Below is a description of six churches at four locations in the general area followed by a more complete list of churches.

### 117-123 West Lee

The south side of West Lee between Hanover and Sharp was home to three churches from 1843 until the 1960s.

The first was St. Stephen's Protestant Episcopal Church whose cornerstone was laid in 1843. It moved around the corner to Hanover north of Welcome Alley in 1854.

In 1855, the Lee Street Baptist Church, which had been meeting in a converted stable on Hill Street, moved in, then built a new church on the spot in 1863. In 1913, the Baptist Church moved to 113 Warren Ave., east of Light.

St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, which had to leave its previous location on Barre Street to make way for Camden Yards, built a church on the spot in 1915. The house to its left,



St. Stephen's Protestant Episcopal Church, 1864

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115 W. Lee, was used as a rectory, and the house to its right, 125 W. Lee housed the nuns who taught at the school behind the church, which was on the land that is now Concert Park. In 1962, St. Joseph's combined with the Church of the Holy Cross on East West Street. The building was demolished and replaced by townhouses in the 1970s.



St. Joseph's Church, 1915

## 513-519 South Hanover

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church was located at 117-123 West Lee Street until 1863 when it decided it wanted a fancier building, so it built a Gothic style church with a 150 foot bell tower around the corner on the east side of Hanover just north of Welcome Alley.

In 1893 the church disbanded and sold the property to an orthodox Jewish congregation, Anshe Emunah, which had been meeting over a Chinese laundry on Hanover north of Conway. The church building was destroyed in a fire and was rebuilt using a more typical synagogue-style architecture.

In 1955 the Anshe Emunah congregation moved to the suburbs. They sold the building to the Baltimore school system



Anshe Emunah, around 1960



St. Stephen's Protestant Episcopal Church, 1864

which used it as a cafeteria, gymnasium and extra classrooms for the junior high school down the street at the corner of Hanover and Lee.

## Sailors Union Church

The Sailors Union Church at 454 East Cross Street really was a church for sailors in its early days. It began in an old ship at the Light Street Pier. The description below is from the historical marker for the church. The photos are from the church's website.

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“In July 1846, a battered and storm-tossed hulk, the *William Penn*, was moored at the pier at Light Street wharf across from the McCormick building [at Light and Conway]. A ship chandler, a rigger and other local merchants with interest in the shipping industry bought the ship and converted it into a place of worship for sailors visiting the port of Baltimore.

“The ‘Ship-Church’ was ready for service after being fitted with a pulpit and benches holding 600 people. A large roof was built over the decks with 24 windows to let in sea breezes and sunlight. Samuel Kramer, a former skipper of the ship, was appointed minister.

“The floating church was condemned in 1852. The congregation built a new church on Lee Street and called it Sailors City Bethel. After several years at that location and a brief stay at a church on Hill Street near Charles, the congregation built the present structure in 1873. In 1881, the name was changed to Sailors Union Bethel Methodist Church.

“A model of the *William Penn* hangs in the sanctuary commemorating the church’s origins as a ‘Floating Bethel’ serving the travelers of the sea.”



## St. Stephen's Lutheran Church

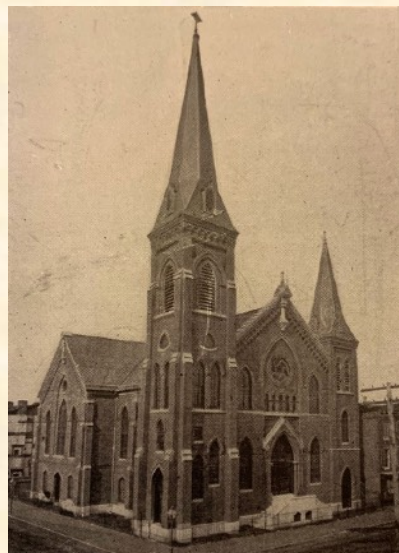
St. Stephen's Lutheran Church at 938 S. Hanover St., the corner of Hanover and Hamburg (shown here in a photo taken before 1920), has a complex history, with numerous locations and a series of church rifts and healings.

The first Lutheran church in this part of the city was on the 1200 block of Light Street in 1849. It merged with the group which owned the 938 S. Hanover property in 1852.

A portion of the congregation split off in the 1860s due to a dispute and formed St. Luke's German Evangelical Church at 401-417 W. Henrietta St.

In 1893, a new pastor suggested that some of the worship services should be conducted in English instead of German.

When the church elders disagreed, some members of the congregation left and created St. James Lutheran church directly across the street from St.



St. Stephens Lutheran Church

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Stephen's at 937-939 S. Hanover St. in a former Methodist meeting house, where services were held in English.

In the 1950s the two churches reunited, using the St. James church building for their combined congregation, but in 1962, they moved back to the old St. Stephen's building at 938 S. Hanover. They sold St. James church to Shofer's Furniture Company which used the space for a parking lot.

The church closed in 2018. The building is currently occupied by the St. Barnabas & St. Susanna Coptic Orthodox Church.

## A List of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Churches

Baltimore city directories have a separate listing for the city's churches, which I used to create the list below. It includes, I believe, most of the churches in the area from 1800 to 1900. Some of the churches may have opened a few years before the date listed.

- 1785: **Otterbein Church** (United Methodist), Conway, NE side of Sharp
- 1802: **Sharp Street Church** (African Methodist), Sharp south of Lombard
- 1822: **First Baptist Church** (Baptist). NE Corner, Sharp and Lombard
- 1822: **Methodist Meeting** (Methodist Episcopal), Light Street
- 1822: **Methodist Meeting, or Wesley Chapel** (Methodist Episcopal), Corner, Sharp and Barre
- 1835: **Grace Church** (Protestant Episcopal), Williams Street, Federal Hill
- 1835: **Wesleyan Chapel** (Methodist), Sharp near Lee
- 1842: **Light Street Church** (Methodist Episcopal), Light Street Extended
- 1842: **Old Wesley, or John Wesley** (African Episcopal Methodist), Corner, Sharp and Hughes
- 1842: **Zion** (African Episcopal Methodist), Montgomery east of Hanover
- 1842: **Seaman's Bethel** (Methodist Episcopal), Lee near Light Street Wharf
- 1845: **St. Stephen's** (Protestant Episcopal). Lee east of Sharp
- 1845: **Light Street Chapel** (Methodist Episcopal), Light and Cross
- 1848: **Ebenezer AME Church** (African Methodist Episcopal) Montgomery east of Hanover
- 1849: **5th Presbyterian** (Presbyterian), Hanover south of Lombard
- 1849: **Wells Chapel** (Methodist Episcopal), Light south of West
- 1851: **Zion (Independent) German** (Lutheran), Corner Hanover and Hamburg
- 1852: **St. Stephen's** (Lutheran), Corner Hanover and Hamburg
- 1860: **St. Stephen's** (Protestant Episcopal), Hanover and Welcome Alley, NE corner
- 1860: **South Presbyterian** (Presbyterian), Light near Montgomery
- 1860: **Church of the Holy Cross** (Roman Catholic) West between William and Light
- 1860: **John Wesley** (Methodist Episcopal, Black), Sharp near Montgomery
- 1860: **German Church** (Baptist), Hill Street
- 1860: **Lee Street Baptist** (Baptist), Lee between Hanover and Sharp
- 1860: **Fourth Synagogue** (Jewish) Hanover between Lombard and Pratt
- 1868: **Hersey Chapel** (Methodist Episcopal) Light Street extended
- 1868: **South Baltimore** (Methodist Protestant), Light Street south of West
- 1868: **Ingham Chapel** (Methodist Episcopal) Hill near Hanover
- 1868: **Eighth Synagogue** (Jewish), Hanover between Barre and Conway
- 1868: **St. Martin** (United Brethren), Corner Sharp and Barre
- 1872: **Leadenhall Baptist Church** (Baptist, Black) Leadenhall near West
- 1879: **St. Martin's (German)** (Evangelical Lutheran), Corner Sharp and Henrietta
- 1879: **Eighth Synagogue (Jewish)**, Hill near Hanover
- 1879: **Hanover St. Church** (Methodist Episcopal), Corner Hanover and Hamburg
- 1879: **Sailor's City Bethel** (Methodist Episcopal), Hill near Charles
- 1879: **John Wesley Church** (Methodist Episcopal, Black), Sharp near Montgomery
- 1879: **Henry Chapel** (Methodist Protestant, Black) West near Hanover

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- 1879: Epiphany Mission** (Protestant Episcopal, Black) Leadenhall near Sharp  
**1879: Fourth Church** (Protestant Episcopal Reformed) Hill between Hanover and Sharp  
**1879: Church of the Holy Cross** (Roman Catholic) West near Light  
**1889: St. Stephen (German)** (Evangelical Lutheran), Hanover and Hamburg  
**1889: Oheb Shalom** (Jewish), Hill and Charles  
**1889: Light Street Church (German)** (Methodist Episcopal) Light near Ostend  
**1889: St. Monica** (Roman Catholic), Hill near Sharp  
**1892: Christ Church (English)** (Evangelical Lutheran), Hill near Charles  
**1892: Gospel Mission** (Friends) Light near Hamburg  
**1894: Anshe Emunah** (Jewish) Hanover and Welcome Alley, NE corner