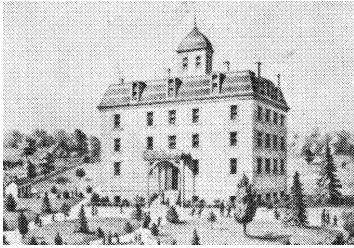


## *The German Methodist Orphanage in Berea, Ohio*

The first German Methodist Orphanage in the United States was opened in Berea on May 1, 1864. Rev. William Aherns was its first superintendent and nine-year-old Marie Betsch was admitted as the first child in the orphanage. Seven more followed the next day.

The first of the orphanage buildings was a three-story structure, which was started in 1866. Within 10 years the influence of the Orphanage had spread throughout the country and it was then the oldest of a group of five Methodist orphanages. By 1874, 100 orphans had been cared for and 45 were in the institution at that time.

Boys were taught farm and garden work and daily chores began around 5 am. Girls were taught knitting, sewing and household duties. Beside teaching industry and responsibility, the crops and cattle raised were important for food for the orphanage.



Discipline was stern – often harsh – and family worship was help daily. The Orphanage was a community unto itself and was apart from the city of Berea. Children lived their lives and

received their education from German Wallace College instructors within its walls. In later years part of their elementary education was received in the Berea Union School and more talented youth were allowed to attend and graduate from Berea High School.

In 1924, the name of the Orphanage was changed to the German Methodist Orphan Home because it was becoming more of a home than just a place of refuge for a parentless child.

Today, as Berea Children's Home & Family Services, they continue to respond to the needs of the community's most vulnerable children and their families. ☪ ☪ ☪

**Orphanage records** have been kept for at least 200 years. Orphanages were operated by civil authorities, religious groups and priority benefactors. Unfortunately, the records they kept vary in type and are often hard to locate.

In early America, local courts elected or appointed someone to deal with the orphans. If property was involved, the court would appoint guardians. The orphan might have been bound out to learn a trade. These records would be at the county court house. Some are indexed under orphans, apprentices or paupers.

Orphanages maintained by the government kept better records than church or private agencies. These records should be available if the orphanage is still operating. If the orphanage does not still exist, state archives, county court houses and historical libraries should be consulted.

If the orphanage was run by a church, you should check with that church to try and locate records. ☪

### *German Methodist Orphanage 1870*

<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Birthplace</u>
Baencely, Christian	10	Ohio
Bechh, Augusta	12	New York
Bechh, Caroline	10	New York
Bechh, Henry	9	Illinois
Bechh, Frederick	7	Illinois
Bense, Henry	15	Germany
Betsch, Mary	15	Pennsylvania
Gruner, William	10	Michigan
Herrmann, Charles	14	Kentucky
Herrmann, William	12	Kentucky
Herrmann, John	10	Kentucky
Herrmann, Lucy	8	Kentucky
Hesselbacher, Jacob	14	Maryland
Hesselbacher, William	10	Ohio
Huelseberg, William	8	New York
Maechtel, John	15	Ohio
Maechtel, William	13	Ohio
Major, Emily	17	Ohio
Merrick, Julia – Seamstress	21	Ohio
Meyer, Anna	10	Ohio
Meyer, August	8	Ohio
Moll, George	15	Ohio
Moll, Charles	13	Ohio
Orrbele, Gottlieb	16	Ohio
Orrbele, Charles	14	Ohio
Plate, Alice	10	Pennsylvania
Plate, Fredrick	8	Pennsylvania
Plate, Charles	6	Pennsylvania
Plate, Racheal	4	Pennsylvania
Roessle, Fred	15	Pennsylvania
Roessle, Jacob	13	Pennsylvania
Roessle, Philipp	11	Pennsylvania
Ruehl, John	16	Germany
Ruehl, Justine	11	Germany
Schneider, Edward	6	Michigan
Schneider, Richard	4	Michigan
Schwab, William	10	Ohio
Sczeschlegner, Agness	12	Germany
Sczeschlegner, Wilhemina	10	Pennsylvania
Sczeschlegner, John	6	Pennsylvania
Sczeschlegner, Ida	4	Pennsylvania
Sczeschlegner, Amelia	2	Pennsylvania
Siebenherr, E.G.-Superintendent	76	Switzerland
Siebenherr, Caroline-Housekeeper	32	Ohio
Siebenherr, Godfrey	7	Ohio
Stollberg, John	14	Ohio
Stollberg, Christian	12	Ohio
Stollberg, Charles	9	Ohio
Stollberg, Geske Thomas	10	Canada
Vieths, Emily	10	Ohio

*Sources: Lisa South, One Great Family.com; Cleveland Memory Project; Berea Children's Home website; "Men of Grit and Wisdom" by Walter Holzworth; 1870 Federal Census (thanks to Nancy Shaw for finding this.)*