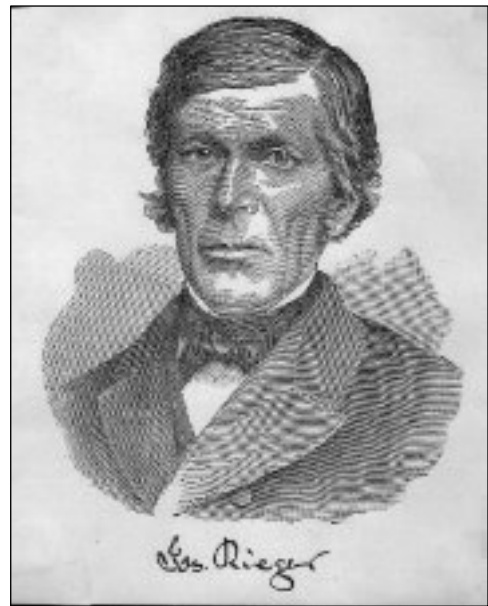


## This Week in Eden History

### April 23 | Joseph Anton Rieger

**Joseph Anton Rieger**, early pastor in the German Evangelical Church Society of the West (predecessor of the Evangelical Synod of North America) and one of the founders of Eden Theological Seminary, was born near Anspach, Germany on **April 23, 1811**. His early life as a Catholic orphan was difficult. Influenced by a group of Lutheran classmates, he converted to Protestantism and later felt called to be a missionary. After completing studies at the Basel (Switzerland) Mission Society in 1836, he was sent to the U.S. along with George W. Wall and G. Schwabe.



Rieger initially settled in the Alton, Illinois area where he boarded with the abolitionist Elijah P. Lovejoy, both of whom helped establish the Anti-Slavery Society of Illinois in October 1837. The following month, a pro-slavery mob murdered Lovejoy while attempting to destroy his printing press used to print an anti-slavery newspaper.

The fledgling seminary at Marthasville (Eden's predecessor) was one of Rieger's concerns. He arranged for gifts of furnishings and supplies when the campus opened in 1850 and travelled to the East to solicit further support. He became one of the original seminary trustees in 1851.

Rieger was at various times schoolteacher, peddler of religious books and tracts, prison chaplain, parish pastor, and itinerant minister. He served congregations at Highland, Ill.; Burlington, Ia.; and Holstein and Jefferson City, Mo.. In Jefferson City, he served as volunteer chaplain at the state penitentiary and trustee of Lincoln Institute (later University).

The Eden Archives collection includes Rieger's diary for the years 1836 to 1844. His entries illustrate a dedication to his calling, as well as his compassion for others despite the rigors of frontier life and the sorrow of losing two wives and two young children.