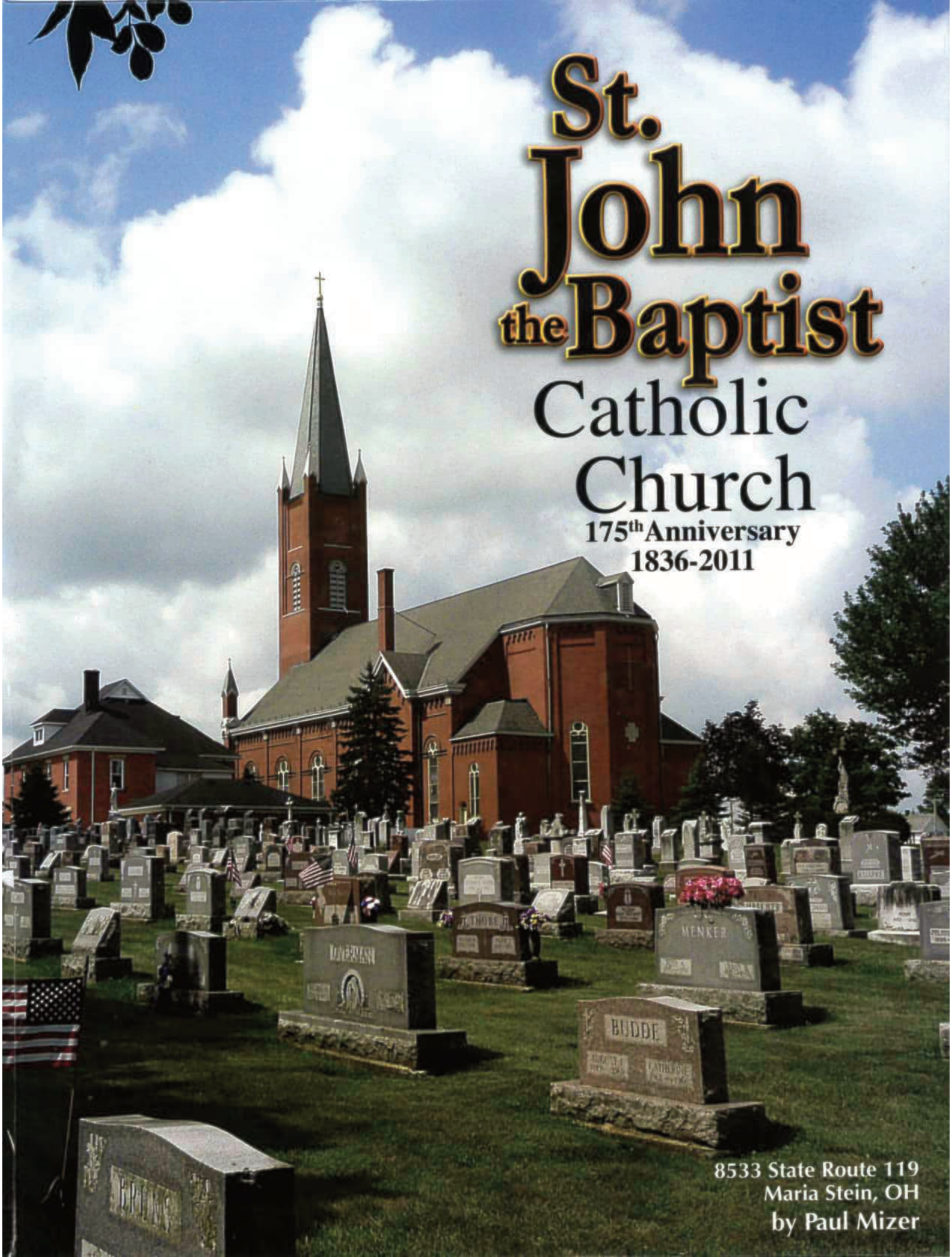
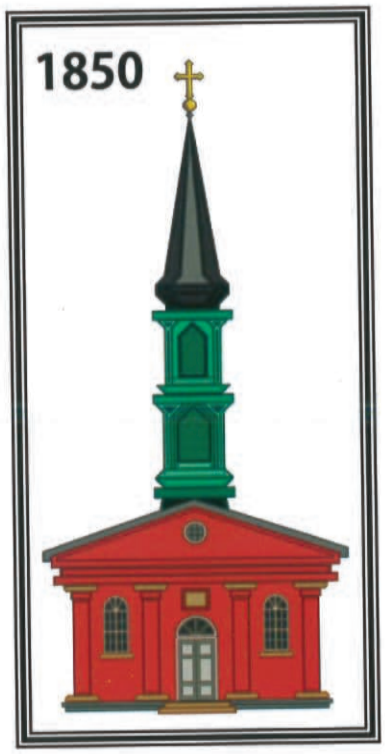
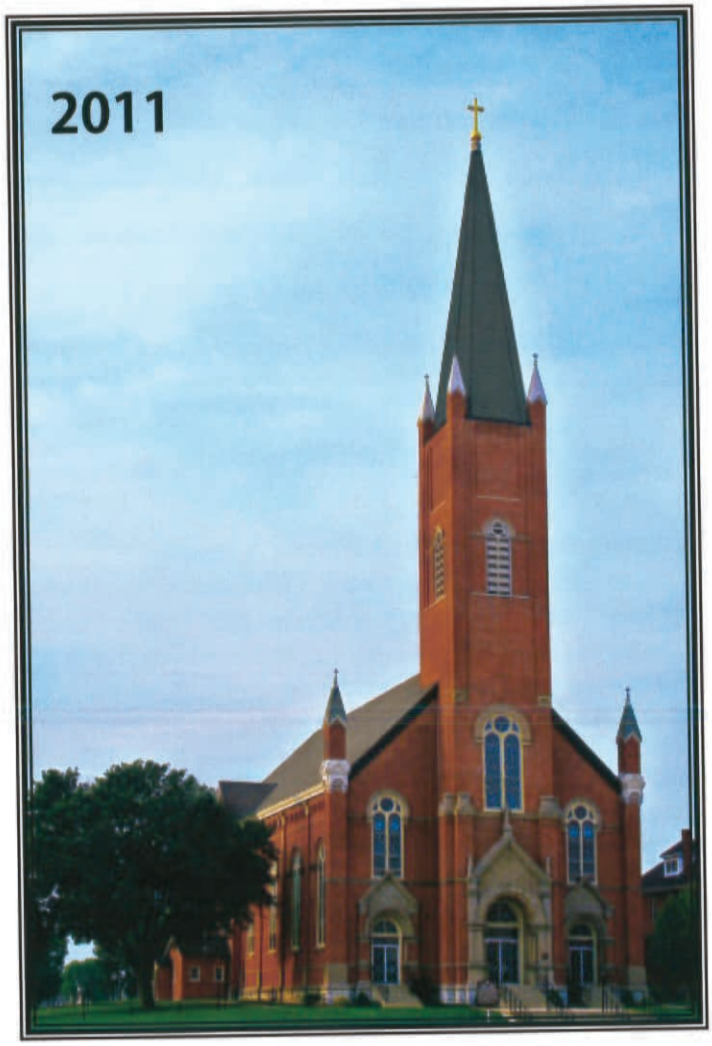

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175th Anniversary
1836-2011
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Maria Stein, OH
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St. John the Baptist
Catholic Church
Maria Stein, Ohio







The 175th Anniversary
1836 - 2011

by Paul Mizer

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Various stencil designs from 1936-37 remodeling of church by Herman Diedam, Kirkland, Indiana

RM initials: Photographs by Russ Martin, Anna, Ohio; www.crosstippedchurches.blogspot.com

Various geometric shapes and symbols: From the stained glass windows of St. John Church

Silhouette landscape design of St. John Church by Julia Bernard

Symbols of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood and Sisters of the Precious Blood

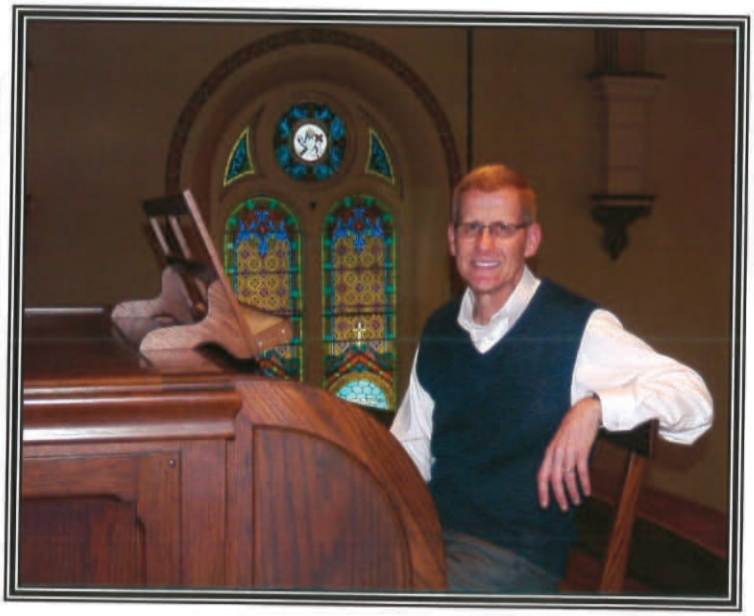
Three stems of wheat, symbols of an agrarian heritage

Free printable stencils taken from the internet

About the author – Paul Mizer

Paul Mizer grew up in Stone Creek, Ohio, and received a Bachelor of Music Education degree from the Wittenberg University School of Music (1977) and a Master of Science in Education degree from the University of Dayton (1984). He was the band director at Miami East Local (Miami County, Ohio) from 1977-1984. In 1984, he became the band director at Marion Local (1984-2000) and currently teaches third grade (2000-present). He is married to Penny (Preston) and they have two daughters, Oksana and Karina.





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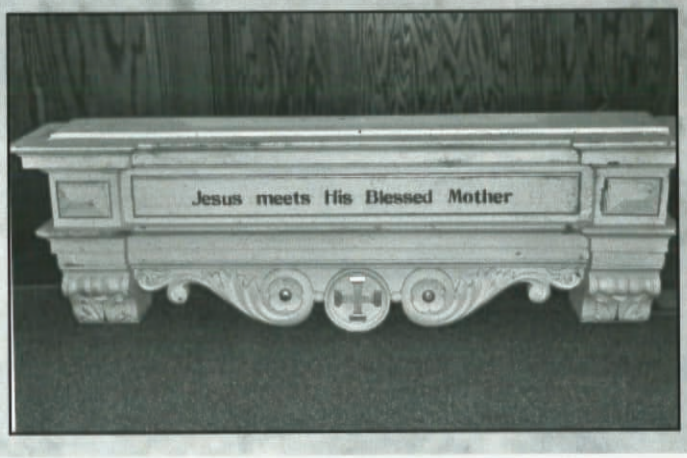
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Stations of the Cross

The newly constructed framework around our Stations will be featured on the back side on each Table of Contents page.





In 1935, the Stations of the Cross were purchased, at a cost of $160, from the Kaletta Statuary Company of St. Louis, Missouri. These wonderful stations were surrounded with wood framework, but the top and side portions were removed after Vatican II, and the bottom ledge (shown above and repainted) was removed in the 1973 renovation. As part of the 175th Anniversary Wish List, a wood frame again adorns the stations; this time with a more contemporary design - adding a dignified reverence to our already beautiful stations. Notice the elaborate stenciling around the windows and under the windows (the latter stenciling went the entire way around the interior of the church).

Top left: The only known picture of the Stations before Vatican II. The top and sides were then removed.
Top Right: The bottom ledge remained, was repainted, but it was also removed in 1973.
Below: The new framework added in 2011 (primary artisans: Paul Holdheide & Howard Bruggeman)



First Station: Jesus is condemned to death.

Second Station: Jesus carries His cross.



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Henry & Lillian Leugers

Acknowledgement to Henry Leugers

It is with great respect and admiration that I use Henry Leuger's text as the foundation to this 175th anniversary book. For the Sesquicentennial Celebration (1986), Henry wrote a history of this parish. Today, twenty-five years later, his text still rings proudly as a testament to his love for this community and the people.

The events of history don't necessarily change; however, the amount of information in archives increases, access to those files changes, and therefore, this span of time has presented the opportunity for many updates and new insights into our parish's history. I have been very cautious to preserve his well chosen text and trust that he would appreciate this Septaquintaquinquecentennial Anniversary Book.

Paul Mizer

Special Appreciation extended to:

- Bob Leugers and the Leugers family for graciously allowing me to sift through file drawers, boxes, and folders of their father's work – and for trusting me with Henry's passion of our history.
- Allen W. Bernard for his wisdom and encouragement throughout this process. Also, many thanks for his tenacious work and donation of *An Art and Architectural Tour* brochure.
- Fr. David Hoying, St. Charles archivist, for his historical perspective and expertise.
- Joyce Alig for her amazing passion and input on local history.
- The many people who shared personal memories of St. John church. What a joy! However, special mention must be made of a few who, collectively, have spent hours sharing their stories and photos with me. I am so very grateful to them: Bob and Ginny Tangeman, Art Bruggeman, Ken and Lou Ann Kremer, Joan Overman, Martha Rindler, and Alice Puthoff.
- Becky Fullenkamp and Lou Ann Kremer for researching and updating our cemetery records.
- The members of the 175th Anniversary Committee – especially David Koenig for his many hours of assistance with Photoshop and enhancing photos.
- Sharon Kremer for graciously fielding an endless barrage of questions and requests from me.
- Charlie Mescher and John T. Roth for their assistance in German and Latin translations.
- Russ Martin for his numerous photographs (these are marked R.M.).
- The anonymous donor who made a substantial financial donation to subsidize the printing costs of this book.
- And finally, my wife, Penny, and my children, Oksana and Karina, for allowing me the immense amount of time this project consumed.



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"Seeing with the eyes of Christ, I can give to others much more than their outward necessities; I can give them the look of love which they crave." Pope Benedict XVI
(Elected: April 19, 2005)



QUÆRITE FACIEM DOMINI

100 East Eighth Street
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

January 11, 2011

Dear Family and Friends of Saint John the Baptist Church,

It is with gratitude to Almighty God that I extend my congratulations on the 175th Anniversary of the founding of Saint John the Baptist Church. Throughout these years, many have been blessed by the untiring efforts of the founding fathers and mothers who dedicated themselves to building a beautiful house of God. Their sacrifice and the work of their hands are an inspiration for us today. Since 1836 many hearts and hands have come together to celebrate our Catholic faith at Saint John the Baptist.

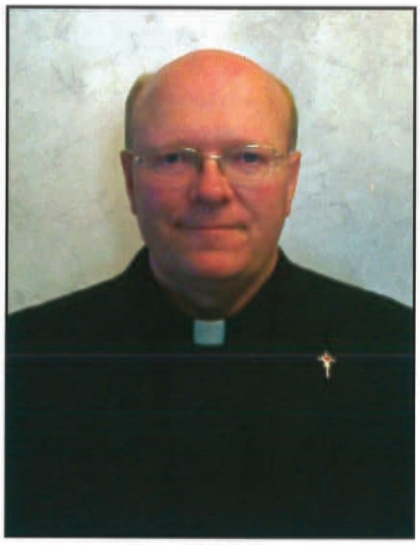
My prayers and best wishes are with you as you celebrate this joyful Septaquintaquinquecentennial Anniversary.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Dennis M. Schnurr
Archbishop of Cincinnati

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A Message from the Pastor



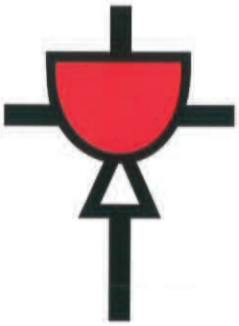
Fr. Eugene Schnipke C.P.P.S.

Congratulations and together we thank God for the many gifts and blessings given to Saint John the Baptist parish for over one hundred seventy-five years. In the Acts of the Apostles, St Luke tells us that "the first Christians devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching, communal life, to the breaking of bread, and praying together. Day by day, the Lord added to their number those who were being saved." (Acts 2: 42,47)

The first settlers to this area had many challenges. Life was far from easy, but with faith in God they found the grace and strength they needed to build homes and clear land for farming. Communal life revolved around the church and they shared not only in the breaking of the bread and other prayers, but helped each other do the work that needed to be done.

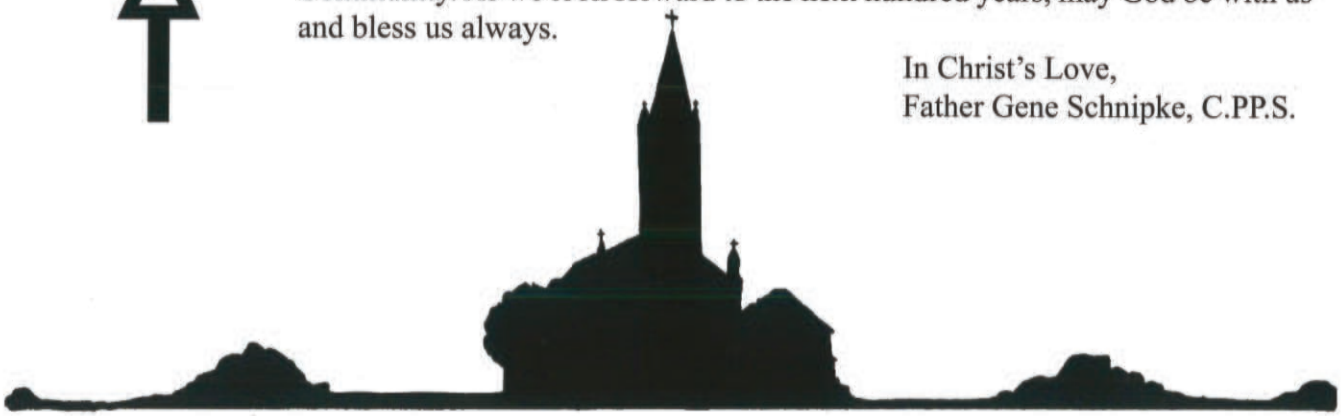
The beautiful church we have today still stands as a visible witness to their love for God, to their communal life, and their ability to work together. It's truly amazing what they were able to do without heavy equipment, computers, and the knowledge we have today. Today this magnificent structure is our spiritual home where we gather as God's family to listen to the word of God, to give thanks for the many blessings we've received and to ask God for the help we need to make it through the difficult times that are part of all our lives.

Over the years we've celebrated many Masses for both the living and the dead. Many of you were married here and then baptized your children and watched them grow in the faith. In many cases, you were also here to pray with your children as they married and are now passing on the faith to future generations. In the sadness of death, the community walks with you and as you bid farewell to those you love they hopefully help you find the grace and strength to continue the journey of life with the hope in God's promise that one day we will be reunited in heaven. Saint John parish and all of you who are part of this family of God are indeed Christ in our world today.



Congratulations to all our parishioners as we celebrate this great anniversary. I thank you so much for all you do. As Missionaries of the Precious Blood who have served this parish for all but 10 of the 175 years, Fr. Tom Brenberger and I are grateful to continue serving you, St. John parish, and the Marion Catholic Community. As we look forward to the next hundred years, may God be with us and bless us always.

In Christ's Love,
Father Gene Schnipke, C.PP.S.



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175th Anniversary Committee
St. John the Baptist Catholic Church

Back Row: Paul Mizer, Dave Koenig, Jon Bergman, Dave Osterloh, Fred Kleinhenz
Front Row: Nancy Billerman, Lou Ann Kremer, Carol Heinfeld, Dan Fullenkamp

Paul Mizer: Anniversary Book
Jon Bergman: Committee Member
Fred Kleinhenz: Parish Council Representative
Lou Ann Kremer: Cemetery Directory (with Becky Fullenkamp)
Carol Heinfeld: Anniversary Dinner and Reservations
David Koenig: Graphic Design/Photo Enhancements
Dave Osterloh: Anniversary Dinner Tickets
Nancy Billerman: Commemorative Christmas Ornament/ Anniversary Coasters
Dan Fullenkamp: Chairman



As part of the Anniversary Wish List, the Stations of the Cross received new woodwork framing. The original woodwork was removed many years ago. The photo on the left shows the new woodwork and the photo on the right is a Station without the woodwork.



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An Art and Architectural Tour*



* Adapted from the brochure:
St. John the Baptist/An Art and Architectural Tour;
Published 2011 by the Anniversary Committee;
by Allen W. Bernard

INTRODUCTION

The parish of St. John the Baptist in southern Mercer County, Ohio has been a beacon of faith since 1836 and the present church with its high steeple and stained glass has been a source of aspirations for generations since its dedication in 1891. It is the third church of the parish replacing a log one (1837) and a previous brick one (1850).

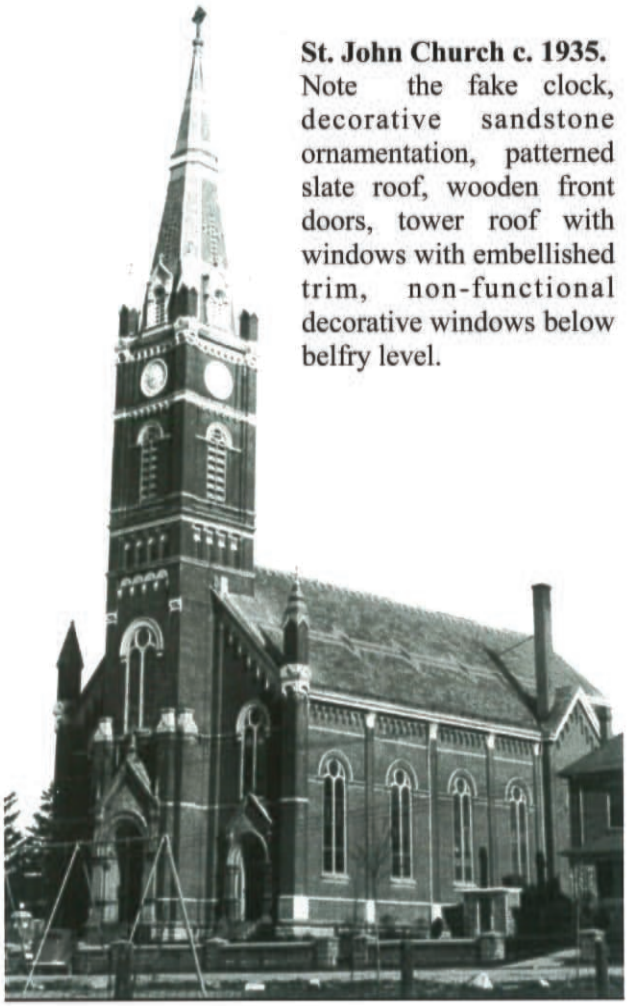
Landmarks, such as St. John, hold special meaning to us as individuals as well as to the larger community if we read them as if they were holy books, walk into them, and allow them to speak to us in their own architectural and artistic language. In their beauty, they complement the flat fertile fields and identify the core of the community they dominate; they hold treasures of ages past while telling the stories of ancestors who felled the forest and created a sustainable life for us. In the stained glass, we see the Germanic characters of a past language now infrequently spoken along with symbols of religious thought and meaning. St. John represents a legacy of architecture, history and art. These, in turn, provide clues toward the realization and fulfillment of our highest inner nature as human beings.

The architect, Adolphus Druiding, created a superb structure that combines three basic functions for the parish: a beacon for the community, a communal gathering space, and a sacred sanctuary where the glories of faith are celebrated. With the decorative and engineering skill of Anton DeCurtins, the contractor, St. John has achieved the qualities of a National Register Landmark, so designated in 1979. As such, it has accepted the ancient traditions of the Church, while adapting worship and celebrations to a contemporary community within a single sublime structure that has enriched the minds and hearts of this community. Through interior and exterior additions and renovations, St. John has adapted and refurbished itself as a living organism "in-process" through the past one hundred years. Allow its beauty to speak to you.

THE EXTERIOR

St. John the Baptist Church is an excellent example of German Romanesque Revival architecture, a style that was especially popular in the mid- to late 19th century in American churches and other ecclesiastical buildings. Druiding's design was based upon a European style of architecture from the 11th and 12th centuries of the Christian Era, characterized by round-topped arches and vaults. The Romanesque period in Germany is especially noted for its red-brick architecture, usually trimmed with both stone and brick details.

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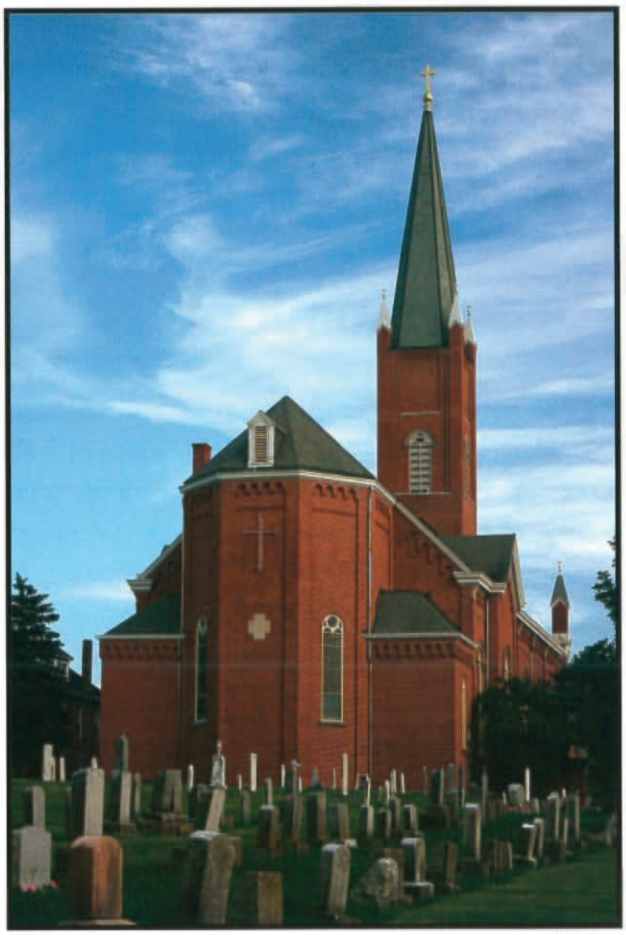
St. John Church c. 1935. Note the fake clock, decorative sandstone ornamentation, patterned slate roof, wooden front doors, tower roof with windows with embellished trim, non-functional decorative windows below belfry level.

St. John measures over 138 feet in length and 58 feet in width. The steeple, rising to a height of 180 feet, can be seen for miles around, dominating the broad fields of Mercer County. Much of the decorative sandstone ornamentation was removed in a 1960s renovation, but the stark remaining features, especially the rounded windows and arches, accent its strong Romanesque-influenced architecture. This is in contrast to the Gothic style with its tall pointed arches that characterize so many other Mercer County churches.

The main front or façade of St. John is dominated by a centered tower topped by a tall steeple or spire which effectively contrasts with three prominent entrances and windows, symbolic of the Holy Trinity - the unity of three-in-one. The pointed main entrance pediment or gable leads the eye upward to the large window and a pair of angled buttresses (projecting structures used to support walls and vaults or for ornamental purposes) to the tower and belfry. Four octagonal finials continue the eye to the spire and cross at the pinnacle.

The outside walls of the nave (the main elongated part of the church) along the sides of the church are divided into four bays or units by the buttresses; each bay contains a large stained-glass window. The cornice around the entire structure, just below the roof line, consists of small brick arches or corbels and is interrupted by the limestone caps at the tops of the brick buttresses. Large triangular dormers with windows on each side of the church give the impression of the shape of a Latin or elongated cross, as seen from the air.

At the end of the nave is the polygonal or many-sided apse (a semicircular projecting part of a building) that contains the sanctuary with the altar and tabernacle. In addition to the buttresses, shoulder stones, and windows, two rather large decorative crosses are centered on the back of the sanctuary; a brick Latin Cross and a stylized stone Greek Cross (possibly from the previous church). Together, the apse and



R.M.

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sanctuary effectively round off the entire edifice and seen from the rear, leads the eye back to the main tower.

The construction materials of the edifice are an important part of the message of stability projected by the Church. The light red brick color of the walls is welcoming from a distance and as one comes closer, the stone bands, shoulder caps, and entrance gables of stone provide a preview of the intricate details of the interior. The rough stone foundation of the building is an effective link to the bedrock of the earth. Thus the stone not only anchors the structure but keeps the eye moving over the brick to the golden cross that climaxes the tip of the steeple.

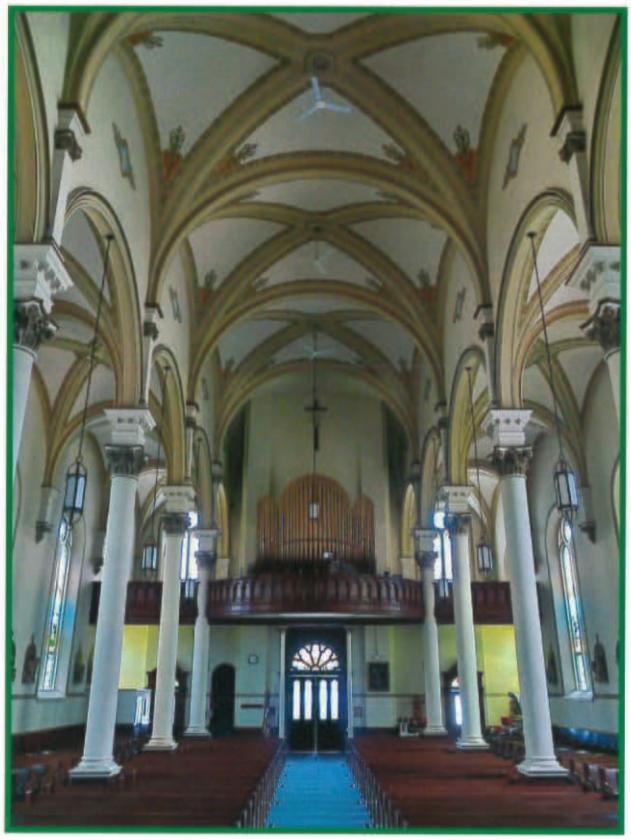
THE INTERIOR

Because the decorative and distinctive details of the interior have not been removed through changes like those on the outside, St. John Church retains a compact fusion of decorative and architectural characteristics as intended by the architect, especially noted in the multiple round arches. It is a spacious "Hall" church, a style that flourished in Germany during the late Middle Ages, and has an open quality allowing all to share in the sights and sounds of the church.



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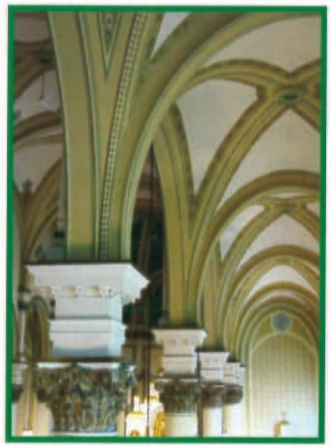
The impressive nave of the church rises to a height of fifty feet, with additional space in the side-aisles that are divided from the main space by ten Corinthian-style columns. These are topped with four-cornered capitals containing sculpted foliage, Romanesque-style acanthus leaves. Above the capitals is a square "impost block" suggestive of a cornice broken by the open arches rather than running continuously along the top of the



wall. This distinctive feature - the impost block above the columns - is unusual in Mercer County churches but was frequently used by the Florentine Renaissance architect, Filippo Brunelleschi, to help make the columns seem taller.

Atop the impost blocks are small colonnettes (little columns) that provide a transition to the rounded ceiling vault that covers the nave from one end of the church to the other. The surface of this ceiling vault is divided by ribs or raised linear strips that rise from the tops of the columns and create patterns that link the different parts of the upper interior.

Because these ribbed moldings intersect at the tops of the columns, they create an impression of springing from each column. The overall effect is an intricate forest of moldings and decorative lines that is carried out throughout the nave. The painted stenciling along the ribbing may be the only



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surviving details of the original decorator of the church, Adolph Liebig Co., of Milwaukee. This nationally recognized decorating firm was one of the first U.S. companies that used tempera in their paints.



Above the ornate ceiling, the main roof structure is invisibly supported by an elaborate system of wood beams. This type of construction, in which two vertical posts along the base of the truss are connected with a horizontal beam, is called "queen-post construction" and is attached to the rafters holding the roof. These trusses are joined together by sturdy wooden pegs. The enormous timber beams that cross the nave were felled from nearby woods that surround St. John.

Three distinctive white wooden altars, installed in 1913, dominate the sanctuary end of the church, and the largest one forms the visual focus of the whole interior. Large and small round arches are the primary motive of the altar ensemble, along with the thirteen golden domes that crown them. The entire reredos (the elevated background of altar) reflects the Romanesque architecture of the building, although the domes also evoke the earlier Byzantine or Eastern Christian periods. The central octagonal (eight-sided) dome, topped by a golden cross, is surrounded by eight additional rectangular domes of varying sizes above three large niches for statues. The largest central statue portrays St. John the Baptist, Patron of the Parish, with St. Anne (Mother of the Virgin Mary) on the left and St. Aloysius Gonzaga (Patron of Youth) on the right. The designers and artist-craftsmen of the altars are unknown but possibly they were the work of the Schroeder Brothers in Cincinnati.

The contemporary altar, which dates from 1973, contains a notable relief sculpture of the Last Supper by the Delin Brothers, Paris, France, that was removed from the original (1913) main altar. Gold



R.M.

columns taken from the previous communion railing give historical meaning to this important piece. The construction of this altar is a tribute to the craftsmanship of a local parishioner, Richard Schulze.



A unique feature of the church is the grand and richly detailed architectural frame that stands on both sides of the altar within the apse. The upper half of the frame hides a small room behind exquisitely carved wooden grillwork. Framed within four arches and two columns, the large glass window behind the grillwork could be opened when the cloistered Sisters of the Precious Blood from the nearby convent visited the

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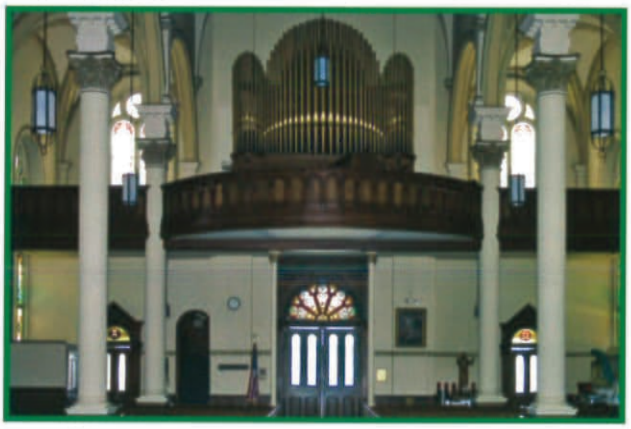
church for Mass in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This enabled them to participate in the service while remaining discreetly separate from the congregation. The lower part of the elaborate wooden framework also provides an entrance to the vesting rooms.

Nineteen stained-glass windows fill the interior of the church with a profusion of light, color, and symbolic meaning. They are the work of the important Artistic Glass Company, Cincinnati, with the exception of the two windows beside the main altar. These two windows, which complement the intense blue skies in the painted panels above them, are the creations of the renowned stained-glass artisans of the Emil Frei Company, St. Louis, and were purchased in 1936. The elongated windows throughout the church, with overall paired round-arched and circular patterns, contain multiple symbols, images, and saints as well as German Fraktur inscriptions of the donors or their dedications. Even on the greyest Mercer County days, the light streaming in through the luminous windows is reflected in soft rainbow tints on the beige walls and columns, the wooden pews, and the colorful statuary of St. John, creating a spiritual aura for prayer and worship.



R.M.

The balcony in the back of the church provides a successful conclusion to the visual impact of the interior. It contains the pipe organ and provides space for the choir as well as overflow seats for the congregation. The dark wood arcade of arched Corinthian columns harmonizes effectively with the vertical pipes of the organ, as well as the large arched tracery in the window above the central entrance. This integration of the gently arched pipes of the organ, the arched arcade of superimposed columns along the front of the balcony railing, and the bright light streaming through the arched window above the door, provide a synthesized and fulfilling experience for persons exiting the structure.



R.M.

TREASURES OF ST. JOHN

- Stained Glass Windows: Intense colors with multiple symbols and figures characterize these majestic windows made by the Artistic Glass Co., Cincinnati. The two windows behind the altar are the work of the renowned Emil Frei Glass Company, St. Louis and date from 1936. The window in the tower of the church contains the names of the choir members when the church was dedicated in 1891 or when the windows were installed.

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- High and Side Altars: Romanesque/Byzantine Style. Installed 1913. The main altar contains statues of St. Anne, St. John, and St. Aloysius. Side altars have statues of the Virgin Mary and Child and St. Joseph.

- Paintings: The seven religious panels on the walls of the sanctuary were from the original decorator of the church or that of Theodore von Freskoirt, (possibly the word "frescoist" rather than a name), though research has yielded no information on him.



R.M.

They skillfully depict religious subjects and symbols including the Virgin Mary, the Holy Spirit, and various Saints including Doctors of the Church (the early theological scholars St. Augustine, St. Gregory the Great, St. Thomas Aquinas and the mystic writer St. Teresa of Avila). The intense blue skies in the background, especially of those paintings behind the altar (St. John the Evangelist, St. Peter and St. Paul), accentuate the symmetry, color and boldness of the figures. Three framed canvas paintings of religious subjects (St. Francis of Assisi, St. Francis Xavier, and the Virgin Mary with St. Dominic) are by Rev. Paulinus Trost (1856-1939), the famed priest-artist from St. Charles Seminary, Carthagena.

- Statuary: Made of plaster and wood gracing the interior portray various saints (St. John the Baptist, St. Anne, St. Aloysius, St. Joseph, the Virgin Mary, Infant of Prague) and religious subjects (The Pieta). Some are from the previous churches and others are contemporary (Sacred Heart of Jesus) depictions. The statues in the altars were made by Mayer Art Studios, Munich, Germany while the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the work of Vincent Demetz Figlio of Ortisel, Italy.



R.M.

- The Bells of the Church: Three bells were installed by the Henry Stucksted Bell Company of St. Louis in 1892. They include one in honor of St. Rochus, patron of victims of the Plague and given by Diedrich Hinders in 1851; another in honor of Mary, Queen of the Rosary and given in 1888; and a third one, the largest, in honor of John the Baptist, patron of the parish, given in 1891.

- Stations of the Cross: Fourteen relief depictions of the Passion and Death of Christ are on the east and west walls. The intensity of expression is characteristic of art from the Baroque Period inspired by the Counter-Reformation during the 16th to 18th centuries. From the Kalettta Statuary Co., St. Louis, Missouri.



R.M

- Holy Water Fonts: Four carved octagonal white marble fonts with religious symbols and depictions are placed at various entrances and date from the dedication of the Church. The eloquently sculptural container of holy water rests upon a stone shaft with recessed arched panels and a molded base.



- The Baptistery: A stylized contemporary interpretation of the Sacrament of Initiation is on the right side of the sanctuary. A metallic band of six Greek Crosses in connected circles surround the font above a framed cross depicting the Holy Spirit, connected to the waters of Baptism.

- Sanctuary Lamp: A highly ornate hanging brass candle holder on the west side of the altar indicates the presence of the Blessed Sacrament

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in the tabernacle where it is "reserved" between services.



R.M.

- Sisters' Rooms: Elaborate wood carvings, grillwork, columns, an arcade of small arches, and stained glass surround the exterior of these unique rooms and vesting entrances. The Holy Oils are also contained in an ambry on this ensemble.

- Prie Dieu Prayer Bench, Credence Table and Chairs: Gracefully carved oak and walnut furniture are throughout the Sanctuary.

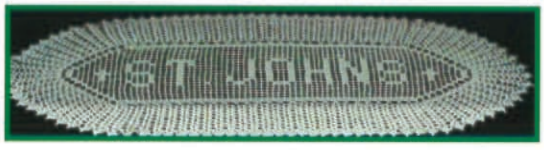
- Accessories for Worship: Highly ornate chalices, bells, patens, ciborium, monstrance, crucifixes, processional items, candelabras, satin vestments and



altar linens, some over 100 years old, are maintained and used in various worship services.

- Altar Crucifix: Above the tabernacle, this superb depiction of the Christ on the cross is a masterpiece of brass and onyx upon a stylized pedestal and dates from 1916.

- Crocheted Table Covers: Inscribed "St. John" and "IHS" were made by a devoted parishioner, Ruth Bertke c. 1993. These ornate hand-crafted doilies represent the high quality of local talent and ability



THE ORGAN

In 1935, a twelve rank pipe organ was purchased from the highly reputable organ builder, the Henry Pilcher Organ Company in Louisville, at a cost of $3900. This was a considerable sum for a small parish at a time when economic hardship challenged the whole country, particularly rural people. Its dedication, October 20, 1935, featured William E. Pilcher, Jr., the son of the owner of the company, who played at this occasion.

In 1997, the organ was completely rebuilt and enlarged by the Miller Pipe Organ Company, Louisville. It now consists of twenty ranks (1500 pipes), a set of chimes, a restored console shell and base, along with the 41 facade pipes. The visual impact of this important instrument in the balcony contributes to the balanced appearance of the entire entrance end of St. John and harmonizes with the curved lines admired throughout the church.



R.M.

THE ARCHITECT & CONTRACTOR

ADULPHUS DRUIDING (1839–1899), was one of the most prolific and important Catholic ecclesiastical church architects in the Midwest during the last third of the 19th century. He was born in Hanover, Germany, and studied architecture at the Royal Academies of both Berlin and Munich. He came to the United States in 1865 and settled in St. Louis and later also practiced in Chicago. Popular

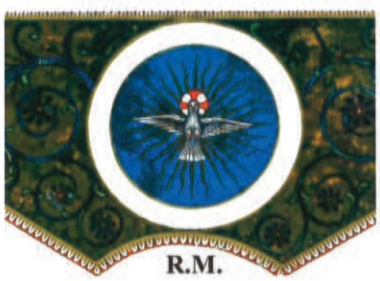
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with German Catholic parishes, he designed some 400 churches, cathedrals, and religious buildings in the Midwest. Locally, his work is seen in St. Henry Catholic Church, St. Henry, and Immaculate Conception, Ottoville, as well as numerous churches and institutions in the Cincinnati area, including impressive headquarters of the Sisters of Charity and the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor.

ANTON DeCURTINS (1829–1895) was born in Switzerland and immigrated to Cincinnati circa 1849 where he was employed as an architect and organ builder. Soon after, he, along with his family, moved to Mercer County (Carthagena) and began his prolific work as a church architect. He built St. Henry's church in 1855 along with numerous other churches throughout the area. St. John's church, built four years before his death, is one of his finest achievements. Closely following Druiding's drawings and working with the Liebig firm, he was able to master and synthesize the many managers, volunteers, decorators, and artisans who built this church. After Anton's death, his family continued to construct church buildings, homes, factories, and public institutions throughout the Midwest, moving from Carthagena to Celina and later Lima, Ohio. For over ninety years, this talented family graced the Ohio landscape with splendid testimonies of artistry, talent, and vision. St. John is a magnificent embodiment of his skills and a tribute to Anton DeCurtins and the dedicated faith and witness he shared with his entire family as well as to the citizens of Maria Stein and Mercer County.

CREDITS

- *Text: Allen W. Bernard*
- *Photographs - Paul Mizer & Russ Martin (R.M.)*
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  Joyce L. Alig - Mercer County Historical Society
  Penny Mizer - Parish Council Secretary



The Altars of St. John Church

Our three stationary altars date to 1913 and are of wood construction. Ideally, the mensa (top) of an altar is to be of stone. However, if a wooden altar is built, a small altar stone may be placed on the top. Whether a complete mensa or an altar stone, five crosses are incised upon the stone representing the five wounds of Christ, along with a small sepulcher (cavity) holding relics of various saints, one of which must be that of a martyr.

This recalls what is heard in Revelation (6:9-10): *When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne; they cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before will you judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?"*

Our altar stones were consecrated by the Archbishop of Cincinnati, who used the relics of saints which had at one time been procured from the catacombs in Rome. Relics of these same martyrs were used in most of the altar stones that were consecrated. The sepulcher, holding the relics and grains of incense, may not be opened, as this would destroy the consecration. The altar is rich in symbolism, for it represents to us the Body of Christ, so that in kissing the altar, the priest is reverencing the person of Christ. The altar recalls that Christ himself is the Priest, Lamb, and Altar of His Sacrifice; the stone tells of Christ as the cornerstone; and the relics with incense speak of the Communion of Saints and intercessory prayer.





The artisan of the altars signed his name twice in the wood. However, available research has not yielded his exact name. Maybe someone can help solve this important link to our church's history. It appears to be the initials of J. A. and a last name beginning with K. The 1913 is written below each signature.

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The High Altar
Altar and statues date to 1913. Statues from the Franz Mayer Company of Munich, Germany.

St. John the Baptist



St. Anne

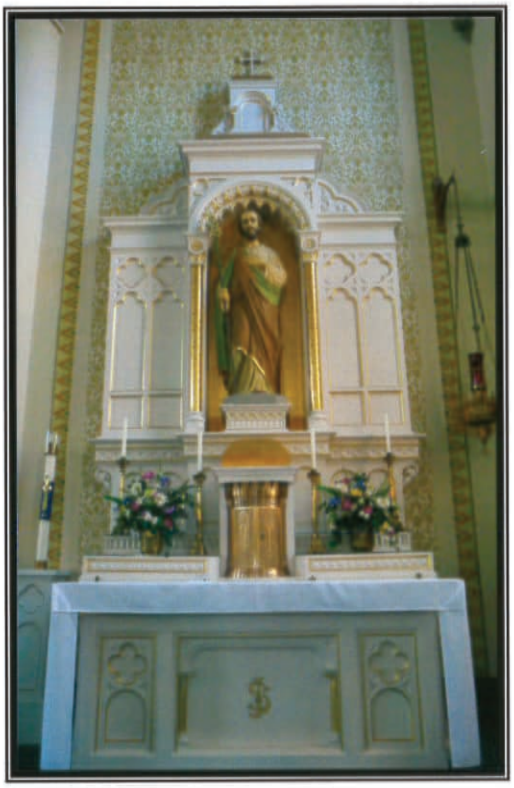


St. Aloysius



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The west altar statue is of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Two reliquaries are placed at the base of the statue. They are relics of Saint Pius the Tenth (acquired 1952) and St. Gaspar del Bufalo, founder of the Society of the Most Precious Blood (acquired 1954).

The east altar statue is of St. Joseph. The Men's Sodality honors his name. Joseph is seen holding a white lily, a symbol of purity. This represents his holiness and celibate marriage to the Blessed Virgin Mary.





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St. Gregory (Servant of the servants of God)



St. Augustine (Late have I loved thee)

The sanctuary ceiling is graced with some beautiful paintings.

Photos - Russ Martin



St. Peter

What a wonderful presence and reminder of the lives and sacrifices of various saints.



St. Paul



St. John the Evangelist

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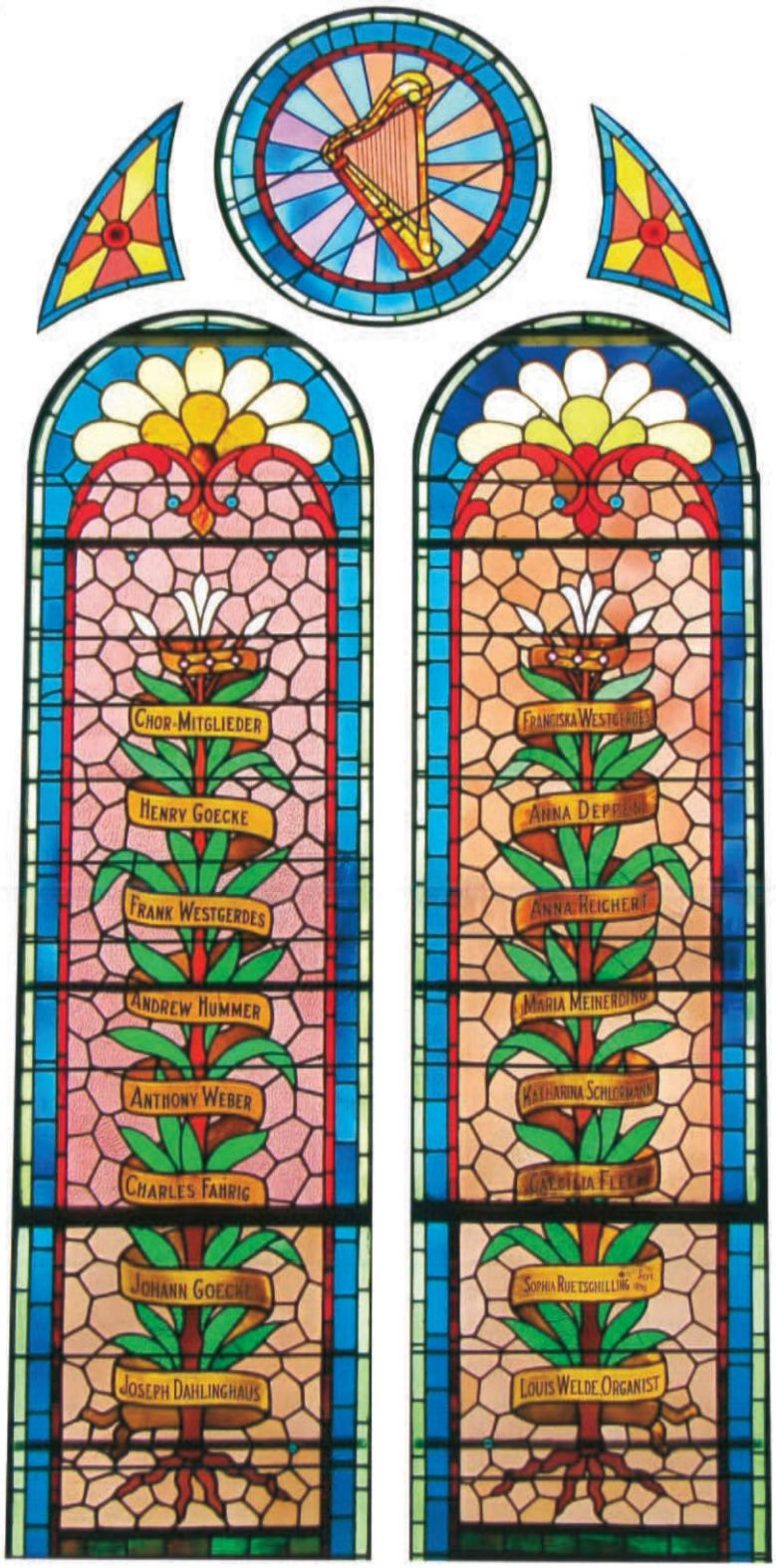


1. **Stained glass and elaborately carved main entrance with tracery reminiscent of a Rose Window.**
2. **The carved scalloped design echoes the "beads" in the center window.**
3. **Vesting cabinet in main sacristy with wooden "lace" filigree suggestive of the floral finials in the larger stained-glass transoms.**
4. **Stairway to "Sisters' Room" with curved wood hand railing, balusters, and box style newel.**



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The Stained Glass of St. John Church



Located in the tower - names of the organist and choir members 1891

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The two magnificent windows in the sanctuary come from the Emil Frei Stained Glass Company of St Louis, Missouri. They were replaced in 1936 at a cost of $700, after a severe wind storm destroyed the original windows.

The west window depicts the resurrection and the east window the crucifixion.





The windows in our church are a faithful reflection of the saints and the devotions which were popular when our church was built. While most of these saints and devotions were universally popular, many saints in our church windows are reminders of the German background of our rural parish. With the exception of the two sanctuary windows, the stained glass is from the Artistic Glass Company, Cincinnati, Ohio.

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Stained Glass Medallions



The eye represents the omnipresence and omniscience of God, who watches over all things. The triangle represents the Trinity.



Moses lifted up the brass snake, curing the Israelites of snakebites. This reminds us of the healing powers of prayer.



The hammer, three nails, and pliers represent the pain and suffering endured by Jesus for us as He was nailed to and later removed from the cross.



The Ten Commandments offer the basic rules of behavior for spiritual and moral living.



The mitre is a kind of folding-cap worn by Bishops. It consists of two like parts, each stiffened by a lining and rising to a peak.



The triple crown (the tiara) represents the pope's three roles as supreme pastor, supreme teacher, and supreme priest.



The image of sacrificing animals from the Old Testament reminds us of Jesus, the Lamb of God, who was sacrificed so as to "take away the sins of the world."



The harp or lyre represents music, music ministries, and praise of God.



The first three letters of the name Jesus in Greek



The ark represents the saving power of God to His people. Also, the place where the people worship is called a "nave" from the Latin "navis" or ship.



This medallion represents the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Cross of Redemption, and Jesus as our anchor.



The dove symbolizes innocence, purity, peace, and is used to represent the Holy Spirit.

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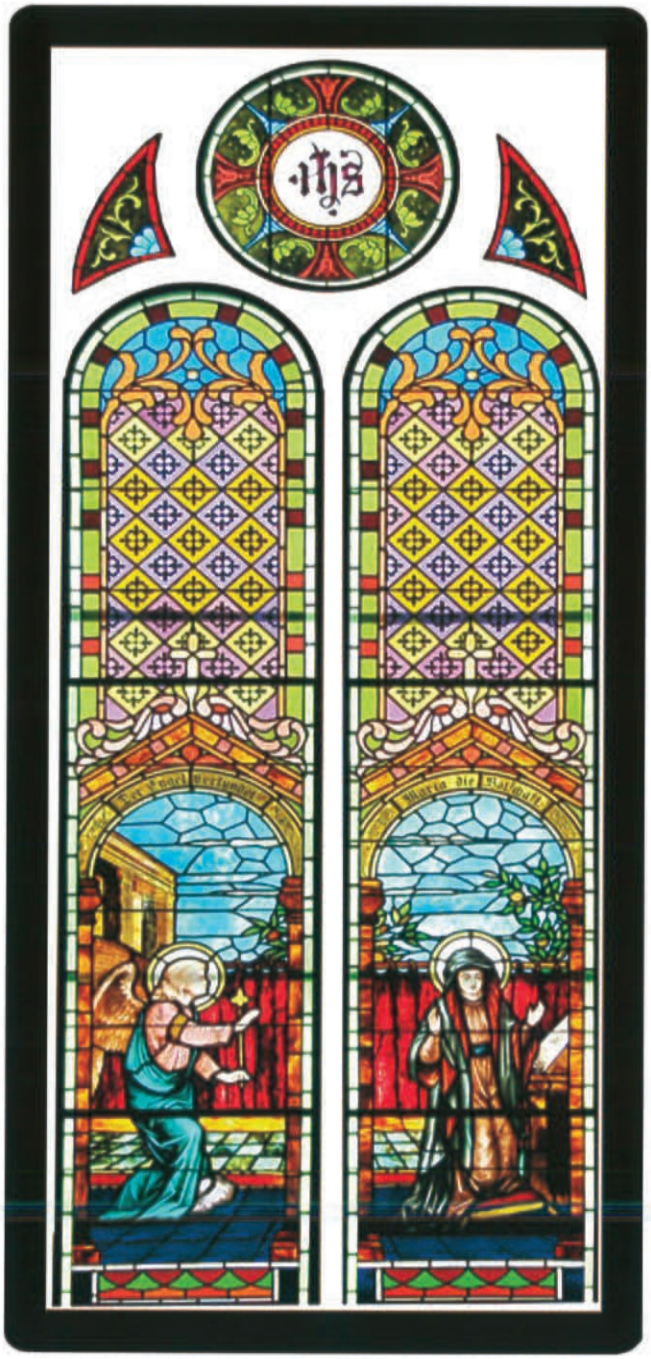


West 1: At the front of the church, near the sanctuary, the first window pictures the *Holy Family*, which was donated by the Men's Sodality of the Holy Family.

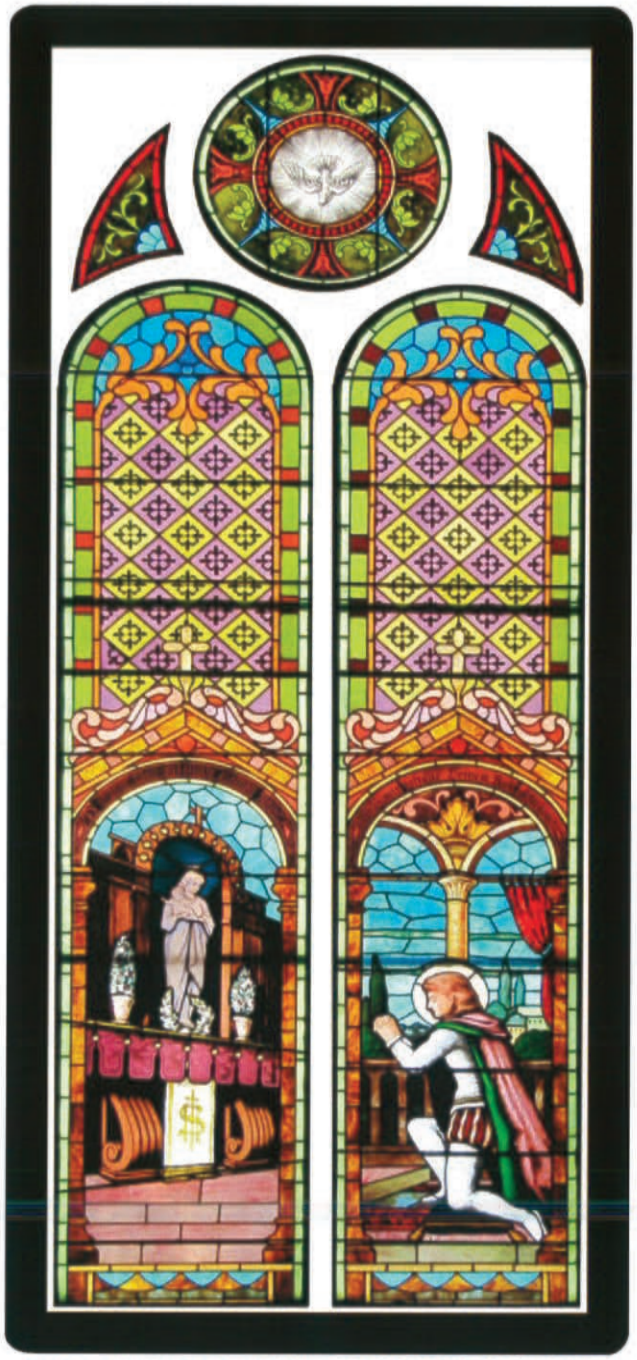


East 1: At the front of the church, near the sanctuary, the first window pictures *St. Ann and the Virgin Mary*. St. Ann, the mother of Mary, was an obvious choice for the St. Anne Ladies Sodality who donated this window.

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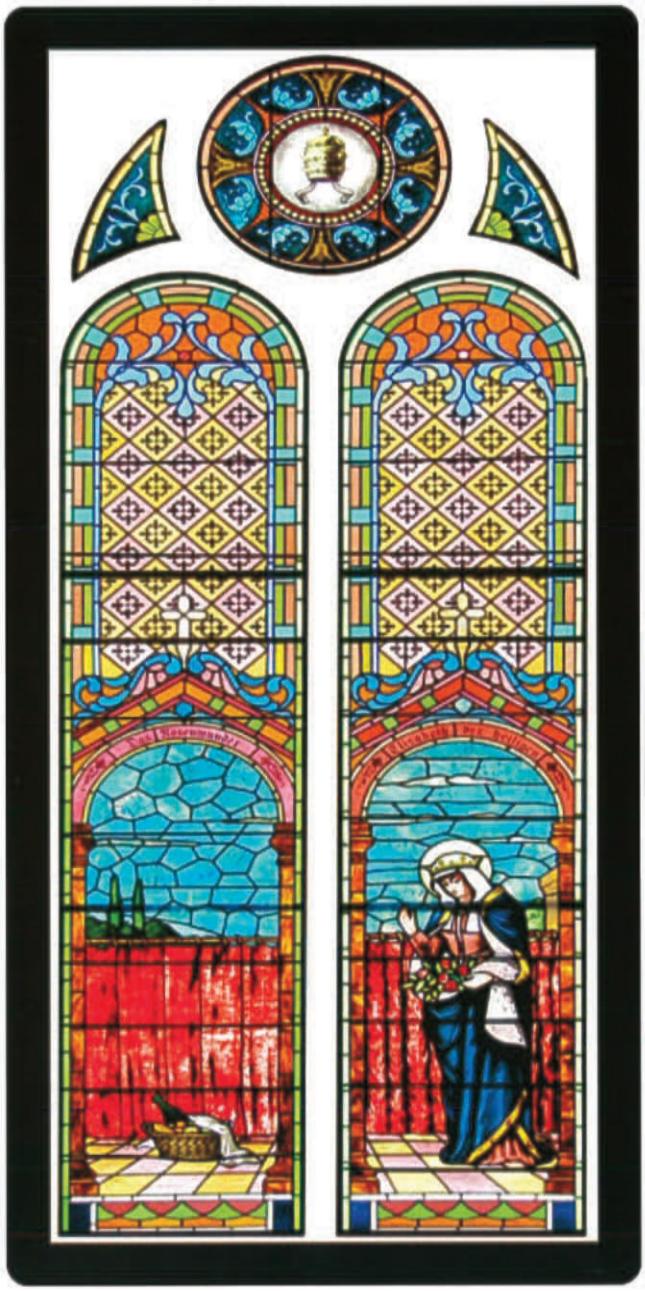


West 2: The next window depicts the *Annunciation of the Angel to the Virgin Mary* - a gift of the Young Ladies Sodality.



East 2: Next is a picture of St. Aloysius in the window donated by the St. Aloysius Young Men's Sodality, the forerunner, along with the Young Ladies Sodality, of today's CYO. St. Aloysius was a young Italian nobleman who became a Jesuit seminarian. He died at the age of 23 after a life of heroic mortification and purity. In the following centuries he was named the patron of young men.

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West 3: The third window on the west side is a scene from the life of *St. Elizabeth of Hungary*, the *Rosenwunder*, or Miracle of the Roses. Born in 1207, Elizabeth was married to a German prince who died in the Crusades. The young widow devoted her remaining years to the poor and the sick, dying at the age of 24. Our window pictures the miracle by which roses appeared in the folds of her garment as she was bringing food and drink to the poor.

The early German settlers were devoted to St. Elizabeth since her husband was the Landgrave of Thuringia in Germany.

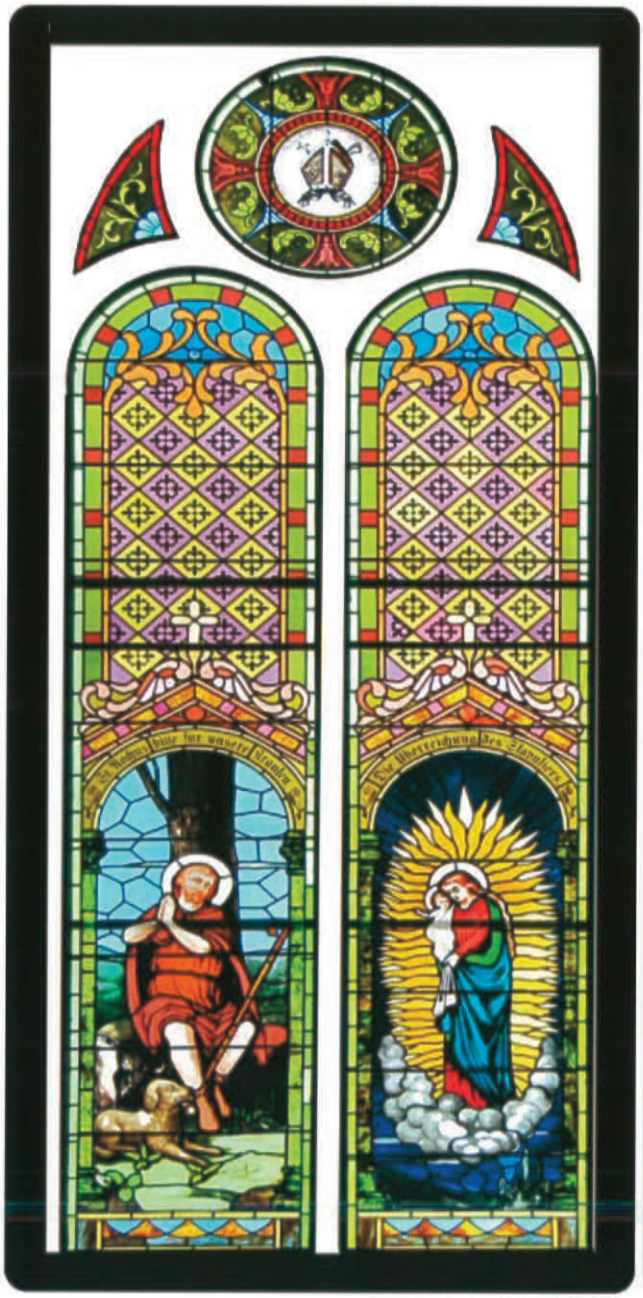
The window was donated by Elis (Elizabeth) Meinerding *for the pious remembrance in the prayer of Wenzislaus (Wessel) Meinerding.* †October 21, 1870.

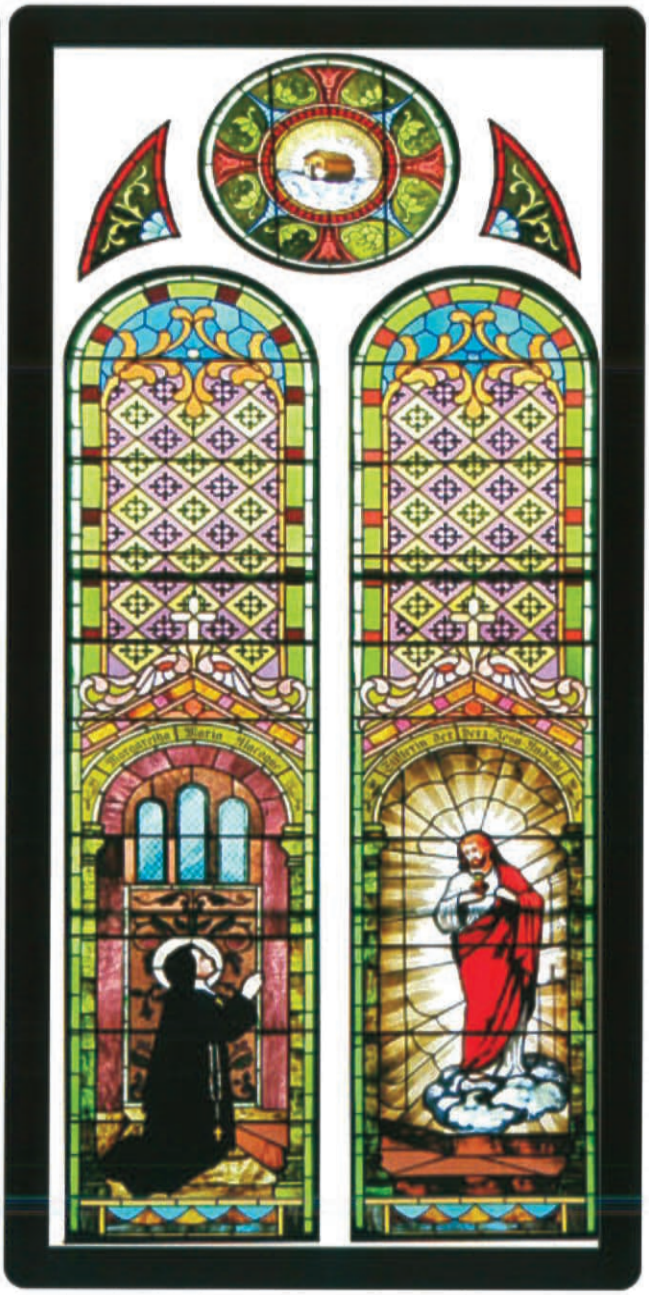
East 3: The third window on the east side pictures two saints who are the patrons of farmers; St. Wendelin, (L) with the inscription, "St. Wendelin, pray for our herds." Wendelin was a shepherd and hermit in the neighborhood of Trier in West Germany. Later he became a Benedictine monk and abbot. He died about 650. He is the patron of swineherds, shepherds, and peasants.

St. Isidore (R), known as the Laborer, was born near Madrid in Spain of poor parents, worked for a landowner and was later made manager of the estate. The angels, it is said, sometimes helped Isidore pull his plow. His goodness extended to all the poor and even to little birds, which he fed with grain during the winter. Isidore died in the year 1130. Above his picture in our church window is the invocation: "Saint Isidore, pray for our fields."

This window was *donated by Gertrud (Gertrude) Kramer and Wilhelm Walterbusch for the blessed remembrance in prayer for the deceased of the families Kramer & Walterbusch.*

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West 4: The fourth window has two distinct panels. The one on the right depicts the *Bestowal of the Scapular* by the Blessed Virgin Mary. The scapular (from the Latin word for shoulder) consists of the two pieces of cloth hung over the shoulders by strings. The panel on the left depicts St. Rochus (or Roch), who had a special meaning for Christian people of past centuries, and a particular meaning for the early Catholic settlers in western Ohio. St. Roch, who is thought to have died in 1327, was invoked in Christian Europe against contagious diseases of men and animals. He spent his life wandering through Europe, caring for the sick and the dying, especially those afflicted by the plague. He is always pictured with his faithful dog that, according to legend, brought the saint food when he was near death.

With the cholera epidemic, which took the lives of numerous parishioners of St. John and neighboring parishes in 1849, many of the early settlers turned to St. Rochus with special devotion. St. Rochus was chosen as the patron of the local Commandery 313 of the Knights of St. John. Also, the smallest of the bells in the tower is named for St. Rochus. This window was donated by Bernard & Anton Hausfeld and Bernard & Heinrich Knapke *for the pious rememberance in prayer of the deceased of the families Hausfeld & Knapke.*

East 4: The fourth window is the vision of *St. Margaret Mary Alacoque* of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Margaret Mary is considered the foundress of the modern devotion to the Sacred Heart, which was becoming widespread in the Church when our church was built in the late 1880s.

The window was *donated by the Mother of Math (Mathias) and Francisca (Frances) Gast for the pious remembrance in prayer for the deceased of the family Gast.*

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West 5: Two popular saints are the subjects of the next window on the west side of the Church.

St. Dominic, on the left, is pictured receiving the Rosary from the Blessed Virgin Mary. The founder of the Dominican Order (Order of Preachers), Dominic is the saint who popularized the use of the rosary in the Church.

St. Anthony of Padua, on the right, was revered as a great teacher and preacher. His preaching was known as the "jewel case of the Bible" while working in the Papal court under Pope Gregory IX. St. Anthony was canonized less than one year after his death in 1232.

This window was *donated in prayer for the deceased of the family Jos (Joseph) Heitkamp, Imwalde, Maria Döermann, Brüggeman, and Johan Rödner (Roedner).*



East 5: St. Francis of Assisi, one of the most beloved saints of the Church is the subject of the last window on the east side. This window emphasizes Francis' relation to the Cross of Christ. The saint stands before the cross on which the winding or burial cloth is draped. The accompanying text reads: "Be clothed with the Cross of Christ."

This window was *donated by Bernard Vehorn for the holy remembrance in prayer for the deceased of the family Bernard Vehorn.*

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Medallions placed in the Sisters' rooms

(L) The chalice represents the Holy Communion and the forgiveness of sin won by Christ's blood shed on the cross.

(R) The Crossed Keys are the symbol of the papacy. Christ said to Peter that He would give him the "keys to the kingdom."



Windows above doorways:
(L) Sacred Heart of Jesus
(R) The Body of Christ



Given by the family of Joseph Dahlinghaus



Given by the family of D. Bühler





Stained Glass in the balcony



Bottom
Ventilator Windows in the church







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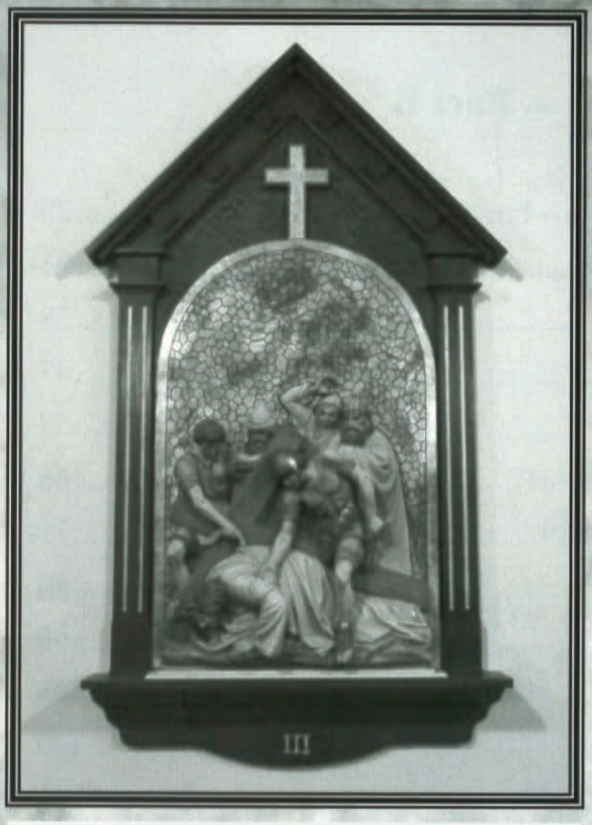
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Third Station: Jesus falls the first time.



Fourth Station: Jesus meets His Mother.



Fifth Station: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry His cross.

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CHAPTER ONE
The Early Pioneers

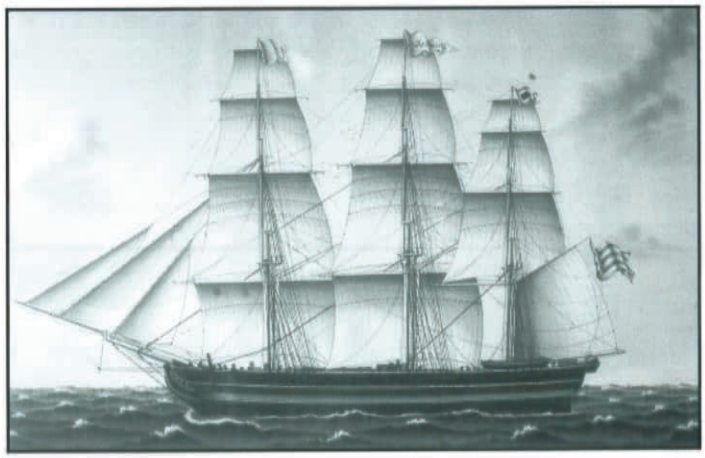
Mentem Sanctam Spontaneam
Honorem Deo et Patriæ Liberationem
ignis a læsura, Protege nos Sancta Agatha
pia Virgo et Martyr.

Remember the Holy Will
To the Honor of God and Country
Liberate us from fire and harm
Protect us Saint Agatha Holy Virgin and Martyr
This was a common prayer in many early Catholic homes.

The forefathers of St. John Parish came from Oldenburg (Münsterland), Bavaria, and other parts of Germany, although some of the earliest parishioners were from France. Their homeland had a tumultuous political history characterized by political and ecclesiastical wars. Frequently their education was limited, and there was little opportunity for economic or cultural advancement. There were also high taxes, military conscription, and a lack of opportunity to own large tracts of land.

Their situation became very serious by the late 18th and early 19th century due to political turmoil. The law of primogeniture stated that the oldest child might inherit his father's lease and could look forward to the same difficult and harsh life of his parents. Life was limited for the other children. There were very few leases available, so they had to settle for the most menial tasks as day-laborers and servants and domestics. Marriage was not permitted until they had shelter, owned livestock, and had some means of support.

There was increased fervor to emigrate, and America seemed to offer the greatest opportunity. However, it was not easy. To raise passage money, many families sold all their possessions, or the men would work in Holland for a year or two to raise money. Sometimes they would borrow from relatives and send the



The ship, *Johannes*, traveled from Bremen, Germany, to Baltimore, Maryland, and landed on July 2, 1834. Passengers aboard included Johann Wenceslaus Meinderding and Heinrich Clemens Vehorn and their families.

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Part B



GROSSHERZOGTHUM OLDENBURG.

REISE PASS

Herzogthum Oldenburg.

Alle Civil und Militair-Behörden

werden hierdurch ersucht

№ 10.

Bezeichnung
des Inhabers dieses Passes.

Alter 35 Jahre
Grösse 5 Fuss 8 Zoll
Statur gesetzt
Haare Kastanienbraun
Stirn [illegible]
Augen grau
Nase [illegible]
Mund proportionirt
Zähne gesund
Kinn [illegible]
Bart [illegible]
Gesichtsform oval
Gesichtsfarbe gesund
Besondere Kennzeichen
[illegible]

Unterschrift
Heinrich Tangemann

Bemerkung.

Der Inhaber dieses ist verbunden, in den [illegible] Orten, wo es eingerichtet ist, sich bleu, seinen Pass visiren zu lassen, auch die [illegible] ung bey den Gesandten [illegible] Consuln aller Staaten, [illegible] dem Deutschen Bunde, mit welchem derselbe zu ge[illegible] beabsichtigt, zu versehen.

Der Inhaber dieses [illegible]
Schmied Heinrich Tangemann
nebst Frau und 2 Kindern von
respve 1 und 3 Jahren

gebürtig aus } Neuenkirchen
und wohnhaft } bei Vörden

der von hier über Bremen
nach Baltimore

zu reisen gewillet ist, frey und ungehindert passiren und repassiren zu lassen, auch demselben nöthigen Falls zur Beförderung seiner Reise behülflich zu seyn. Dieser Pass ist gültig auf Ein Jahr

Oldenburg, den 16 April 1834
(Eintausend Achthundert Dreyssig und Vier)

Grossherzogl. Oldenburg. Regierung
Polizey Departement

Lange

Vorgedruckt zum Grossherzogl. Oldenburg. Amte Damme, d. d. ut supra
[illegible]

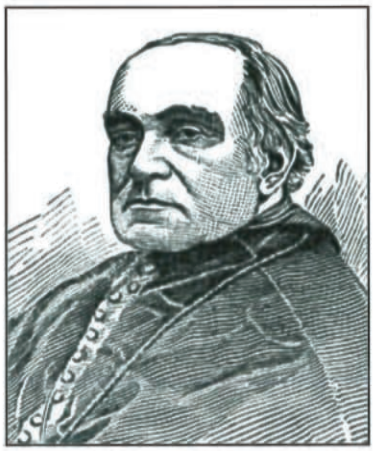
GROSSHERZOGTHUM OLDENBURG

AMT DAMME

Passport issued to J. Heinrich Tangemann (great grandfather of parishioner Robert Tangeman) on April 16, 1834. He is listed in church records as one of the first settlers who was present when the log church was built. In 1836 he started the first blacksmith shop in town. (2011: 8489 S.R. 119)

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passage money back after reaching America. Even though economically poor, the qualities they possessed motivated them to create and construct a new life for themselves and their families. (There were, however, others who had sufficient savings to support their voyage to America.)



Archbishop John Baptist Purcell

By 1830, many immigrants who planned to settle in this area first landed at Baltimore. The trip was made by sailing vessel and lasted six to thirteen weeks, depending on the winds. Three German immigrants named John Leistenschneider, John Stelzer, and John Thomas, along with their families, became friends and decided to settle in the same community. On the 13th day of October, 1833, these three families arrived in Marion Township, Mercer County. (The 1882 Mercer-Van Wert history states that John and Margaret Leistenschneider had seven children when they arrived.) They decided to call their community St. John, as the first names of the three men (being John) made selection of a name easy. Also, it was on that same day, October 13, 1833, that another man named John was consecrated Archbishop in Cincinnati; the Right Reverend John Baptist Purcell.

The land that the three original settlers decided on was dense virgin forest. Huge trees were present, creating nearly impenetrable underbrush everywhere, and the ground was littered with fallen trees and up to six, seven, and even eight inches of leaves. There were no trails or roads through the woods other than the paths made by animals, such as deer, or some made by the Native Americans. The ground was swampy as well.

It is not known how they survived the first winter. Whether they built a temporary lean-to or were able to complete a cabin is not known. It is possible that the women and children stayed with friends in Stallostown that first winter.*

The Native American presence was not a concern to these settlers. Prior to this time, in 1791, the Native Americans defeated General St. Clair at nearby Ft. Recovery. In 1794, however, General Anthony Wayne's Army defeated the Native Americans, which resulted in the signing of the Treaty of Greenville in 1795. In 1803, Ohio was admitted as the 17th State and Mercer County was formed in 1820. This was shortly after an 1819 treaty that opened up the Indian lands of northwest Ohio, including Mercer County, to settlement.



This undated photo is of J. Heinrich Tangemann (1799 -1889) and his wife Ann Maria Moeller (1810-1881) Photo courtesy of Bob Tangeman

For the early pioneers of Marion Township, the next big chore was clearing the land. It was a tremendous task. The trees were immense; six to seven feet in diameter. Sometimes there were sixty to seventy huge trees to each acre of ground. The work was

*** First settled in 1832, Stallostown was later named Minster (1836).**

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A New Home in the Wilderness.
Note the dense forest and tree stumps.
Sketches: Elizabeth Boeke
Liwwät Böke 1807-1882 Pioneer

slow and tedious. Felling the trees was tiresome and dangerous. Sometimes they would only gird the trees, cutting the bark around the tree and letting it die. This would delay cutting the tree, but at least the sunshine could get through to help the crops or garden grow. Pioneer couples, working from early morning to late at night, could spend a full year cutting and burning trees, grubbing the underbrush, and picking up stones just to clear two or three acres. However, the soil was fertile and the first spot cleared, close to the cabin, was used for a garden. As soon as the seed was planted, rail fences had to be built to keep out the animals. Dogs were indispensable. They helped to keep the raccoons, deer, wolves, bears, and other animals at bay. If they couldn't keep them away, the dogs at least alerted the settler so that with his gun he could drive them away. Each year it became a little easier as horses and spans of oxen were brought in, and with chains and pulleys small trees and roots could be pulled out. However, removing the big stumps and roots took years of drying and burning.

Families kept coming continually, and as early as 1835, St. John had some 25 families. The settlers moving into the community (Marion and Granville Twp.) came from the lowlands of northern Germany and spoke "Plattdüütsk." The majority came mostly from a rather small area in southern Oldenburg, called the Münsterland, and adjoining areas of Hannover.

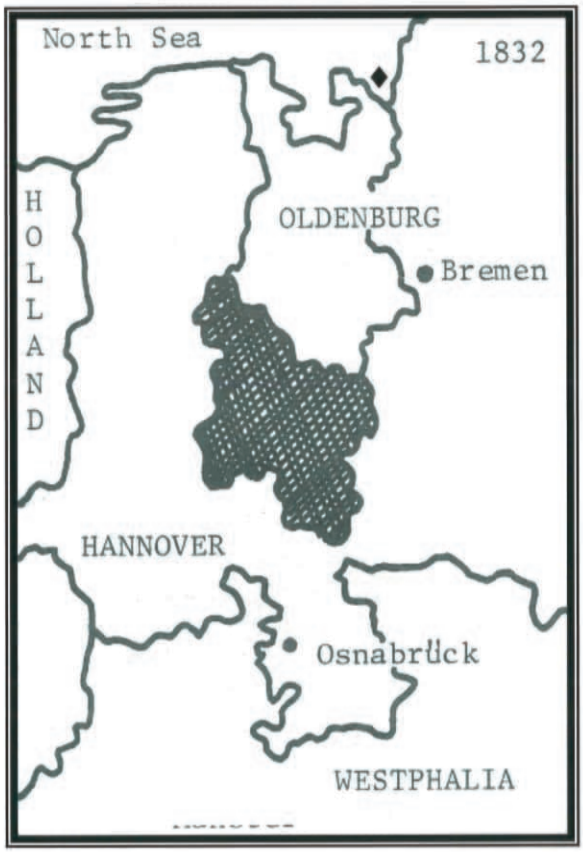
As more and more pioneers arrived from Europe, they each experienced a similar journey. The trip west from Baltimore was made with wagons pulled by oxen to the Ohio River and then by boat to Cincinnati. Sometimes they would work in Baltimore or Cincinnati for a year or two to save money to buy land or repay their passage money. Also, some worked in the construction of the Miami-Erie Canal to gain income. Coming from northern Germany, they tried to find similar land, and the flat land in Mercer County suited their needs. From Cincinnati, they would take the canal as far as Dayton and then follow the log roads and trails north through Piqua to Minster, which had been founded several years earlier in 1832.



Osnabruck: Early 20th century. Many St. John and area residents came from this area.

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Having spent much of their money on passage to the New World, the immigrants who were arriving from Germany had limited means. Their first need was to procure a tract of land from the government. Often, they did not have the means to purchase sufficient land, so it was sometimes necessary to borrow from a friend. In some cases, land was purchased sight unseen in Cincinnati or from other land offices in Ohio. But, most people chose to migrate to the location where they wanted to settle down. They would then pick out the piece of land they wanted from the township maps that were available at that time. Fortunately, land could be obtained for one dollar and twenty-five cents per acre, and new settlers could purchase land in increments of 40 acres. In obtaining land, they had to travel to Wapakoneta, Lima, or Sandusky to find the local land office. There were times when two or more people selected the same desirable tract of land, so it was necessary to make a swift journey (by foot, horse, or wagon) to purchase the land. If successful, the new landowner would proudly return to St. John, joyously waving the large document of strong parchment, complete with a big red seal of endorsement. As quoted by Fr. Henry Drees,* the new property owner would happily say to his wife and family, *"Kiekes hier, Olska! Duet is usa Died! Nu hawwet wie Land!" ("Look here, wife! Here is our deed. Now we have our land!")*



Map showing the regions of Osnabruck and Oldenburg. Many ships would have set sail from Bremerhaven (♦). (map - In Praise of our Ancestors; Fr. David Hoying, C.PP.S.)

Part B

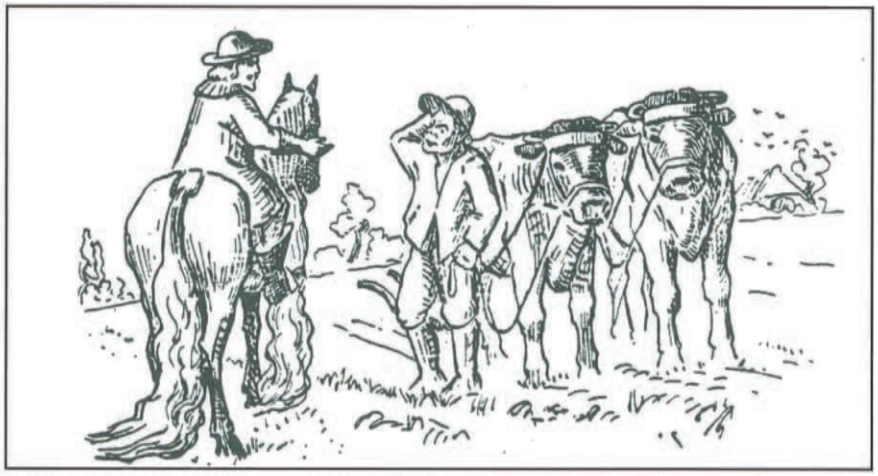
Although enthusiastic over the purchase, the condition of the land was daunting to the couple. Dense woods covered almost every acre of the new acquisition, but the first order of business was to select a site for the house. The closest neighbor was called upon to assist in the decision, usually trying to find a slightly higher spot of ground for the dwellings. All available hands were called upon to clear away the heavy timber, with much of it to be used in the construction of the buildings. Due to the density of the forest, it was even a necessity to carve a path to a neighbor's house. Without a well marked path, anyone could get lost in the almost impenetrable woods. However, the abundant supply of hickory bark made great torches to light their way in the dark. Fr. Drees stated: *"These sturdy emigrants had not come to inhabit the wilds of America like hermits, living squirrel-like on acorns and nuts. No! They meant to remove by ax and fire the dense woods from their acres, preparing same for the cultivation of crops – wheat, corn, potatoes, and all kinds of vegetables for their increasing families."*

The early settlers, after clearing the land, planted various grains, including corn, a new staple for these emigrants. Many seeds were sown in between the stumps, but acreage increased each year as land was cleared. Meat the first few years was mostly deer, turkey, bear (which was sweet to the taste) and geese and ducks while in season. Gardens furnished squash, cabbage, turnips,

*** Fr. Henry Drees was the provincial for the Society of the Precious Blood from 1880-1898. In 1902, while serving as chaplain at the Maria Stein Convent, he wrote an extensive *Chronicle of St. John's Parish.* Many references to his writings will be made in this document.**

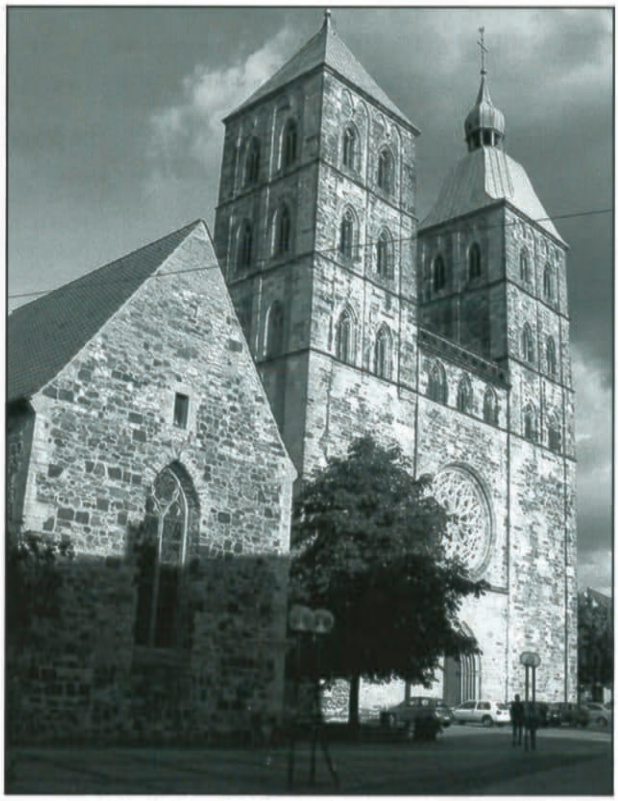
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beets, beans, carrots and onions. Hickory nuts and walnuts could be gathered as food. In time, hogs were raised and pork replaced venison and bear. Pelts were always used for warmth and clothing.



During the earliest years at St. John, oxen were used. However, they were later replaced with horses.

Getting corn and grain ground into meal was a problem. For a few years people would travel as far as Piqua where water power from dams would grind the grain. The cost was not in money but in a percentage of the meal ground. Some of the families created their own mill by burning out a big stump, and in this hollow stump corn and grain were crushed with a stone. However, this was not too practical. Water-powered mills were few in number, as most streams around St. John were inadequate to provide power to operate a mill. Gerd Westgerdes built a horse driven mill, grinding out meal between two stones. Grain would be ground for others on a percentage basis.



St. Johann Church in Osnabrückt.
In 2011, as St. John in Maria Stein celebrates its 175th Anniversary, this "St. John" in Germany celebrates one thousand years as a parish.

Oxen, generally docile by nature, were used in St. John for hauling big logs and stones, breaking the ground, and for building construction. They were slow and sometimes awkward but stronger than a horse and could pull a heavier load. These animals were used for the heavy work in building the first church completed in 1837. However, oxen were not used long and were soon replaced by horses.

Real decisions had to be made on how to divide their time for the awesome tasks that lay ahead. Most tasks could only be accomplished during daylight hours. Much had to be done and with mostly hand powered tools, everything took multiple hours for completion. Time was needed for house building, house additions, or other farm buildings; most built with logs and stones. Time was needed for clearing more land, planting grains, and building fences to protect crops and gardens from animals and birds.

In the early days of St. John, the main crops were corn, wheat, and oats. Barley and rye were also grown to use in the bauenbrot (farmer's bread). It was a continual fight to keep deer, raccoons and squirrels out of the corn fields. Crows were not afraid of scarecrows and had to be chased by noise, clubs, and guns both day and night. Wild

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pigeons were so numerous that often the sky was darkened by their passing, but the real trouble started when they descended on the grain fields.

The religious needs of the St. John Catholic settlers in the first few years were met by getting together on Sunday mornings at a local house and praying together. They would have possibly used the *Handpostille* by Father Goffine for the Sunday readings and prayers, in German, along with commentary about the texts. Also, these Sunday mornings were opportunities to discuss common problems and to exchange news; it broke the monotony of work. About once a month, Father Horstmann, located in Glandorf, Ohio, would visit Minster to say Mass. The families in St. John would travel by foot to Minster to attend services and receive the sacraments. The pathway to Minster was well-traveled and relatively safe.

Newborn infants were carried to Minster to be baptized. The first two infants of St. John, according to the Minster records, were boys, both baptized by Father Horstman. John, son of John Stelzer and his wife Frances Siegrist, was baptized on July 20, 1834, and Christian, son of Jon Leistenschneider and his wife Margaret Rhiem, was baptized on April 12, 1835.



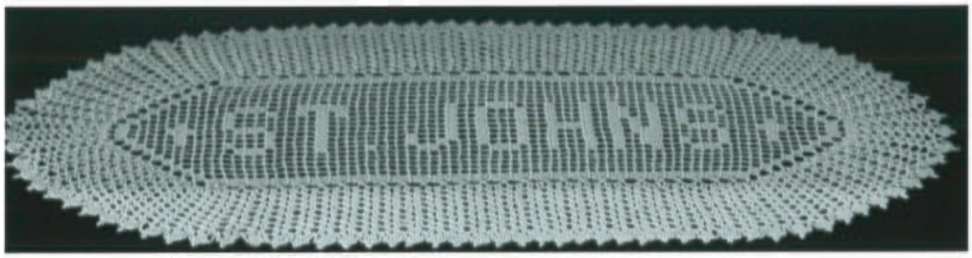
Throughout this text, numerous examples of grave markers from the St. John cemetery will be shown. The marker on the right is that of Bernard "Natz" Boeke.



Author's comments regarding references to: ***Liwwät Böke 1807-1882 Pioneer***

Elizabeth (Liwwät) Knapke and Bernard (Natz) Böke emigrated to the United States from Neuenkirchen, Oldenburg, Germany. Although they arrived at different times, they were married in Cincinnati, Ohio and came to St. John in 1835. They purchased land in the virgin wilderness just west of St. John Church and immediately began to clear it. Liwwät (referred to as Elizabeth) was said to have chronicled her life extensively in drawings and writings. She and her husband had six children; three sons lived to maturity. Natz died in 1857 as a result of an accident, and Elizabeth died in 1882. Both are buried in the St. John cemetery.

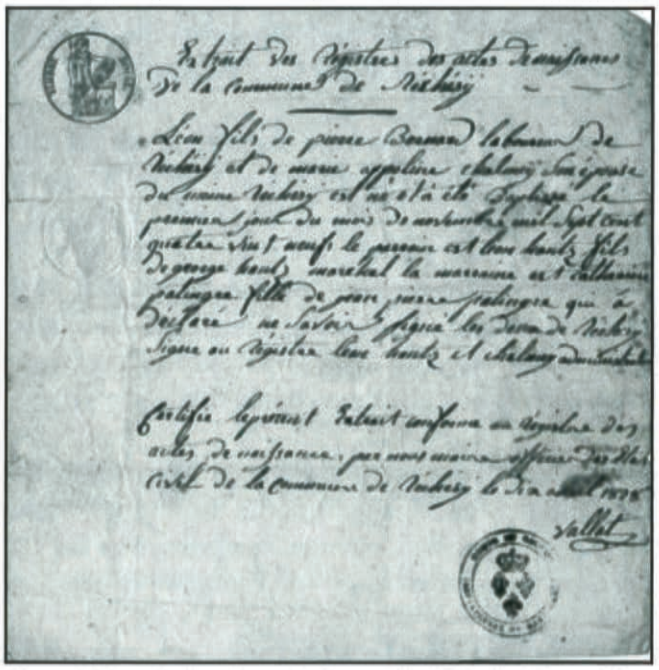
Numerous critics, especially in Germany, have questioned the authenticity of Liwwät Böke's writings and drawings, citing numerous discrepancies in their origin. A limited sampling of her material, primarily comments specific to her life in St. John and Maria Stein, is being presented in this manuscript, but with the understanding that critical analysis is ongoing.



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Leon Bernard
The French Connection

The St. John community and area was largely settled by German Catholics. However, there were immigrants from France who also settled in this area. In March of 1835, Joseph Bernard, oldest son of Leon and Catherine, preceded his family here in order to appraise the situation in the new settlement of St. John, as it was called. He was present when forty acres of land were purchased for the new St. John the Baptist Church in Maria Stein, Mercer County, Ohio. (Others present that day were Dietrick Kemper, Bernard and Henry Goecke, and Clemens Vehorn, all of whom would play prominent roles in this family's future.) Surely Joseph Bernard's thoughts must have been of his home parish, St. John the Baptist, in far away Rechesy, France.



Several French immigrants also settled Marion Township. Above is the French passport of Leon Bernard who arrived with his family in New York in 1828.

One year later, Leon Bernard, with his spouse and nine children purchased 150 acres in Marion Township. A native of Rechesy, he spoke German as well as his native tongue, French. His children married into the Rolfes, Kemper, and Goecke families, and other Bernard descendants remain in the St. John parish today. A proponent of public education, he donated a parcel of his land for the first rural school building outside the settlement of St. John.

At the age of 71 years, Leon passed away in 1861. Parish archives stated he received the Last Sacraments of the Church. Many of his possessions were sold at a general sale, with most items being purchased by family members. Three of Leon's sons, all of whom never married, eventually received ownership of the farm. The buildings stood approximately fifty feet on the south side of Huwer Road and the barn was a major structure, similar to the barn attached to the Bernard home in Rechesy. During the 1920s, the large barn was moved east on the present Othmar and Mary Fullenkamp farm. In time, the farm was purchased by Henry Fullenkamp. At present, it is owned by Dan and Becky Fullenkamp.



In 2008, this historical marker was erected on the lawn of St. John Church. The inscription at the bottom reads: Presented to the St. John Parish by descendants of the Leon and Catherin (Kilker) Bernard family, immigrant parishioners from Rechesy, France, who arrived in Maria Stein in 1836.

Information by permission of the author, Allen W. Bernard; *The French Connection.* (1994)

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CHAPTER TWO
Pioneer to Parish

In November, 1835, Father Henry Damian Junker became the resident pastor at Stallostown (now named Minster) and on June 24, 1836, came to St. John to celebrate the first Mass ever in the parish at the home of John Leistenschneider. There are no definitive records that show the exact location of other early Masses, but they most likely were held in parishioners' homes, although on occasion may have been celebrated outdoors. Three more Masses were said during that year. If there was no Mass on Sunday, the people assembled for readings, prayer, and discussions.



Elizabeth Boeke depicts an 1836 Mass in the back yard of the Gast house. *(E.B.)*

Previously, in 1835, some 25 families had organized the congregation of St. John. They elected John Leistenschneider, John Anton Moeller and Diedrich Hinders as trustees for the parish. On March 6, 1835, the trustees bought 40 acres of land from a Bernard and Catherine Liening of Shelby County for the purpose of building a church, a school, and a cemetery. The agreed price was $120 to be paid: $60 in cash, $25 in three months, and the rest in six months. This land is the same land on which our present church now stands.

Fr. Drees wrote that the building of both church and school was started about the same time. Every member of the parish who knew how to handle an axe helped in the construction. Spans of oxen were used to remove large stones and move the heavy logs into place. The church was 30 feet by 45 feet in size. The small school was completed in 1836 and the church in early 1837.

The settlers who were present when the actual building of the church started were:

John Leistenschneider	Henry Kramer	John Stelzer	Joseph Bernard
John Thomas	Gerhard Knoebber	Christian Stelzer	Diedrich Kemper
John Anton Moeller	John Rhein	Peter J. Meier	Bernard Schmit
J. Diedrich Hinders	Gerhard Westgerdes	John Reichert	J. H. Tangeman
John Stucke	Matthias Gast	Joseph Stucke	

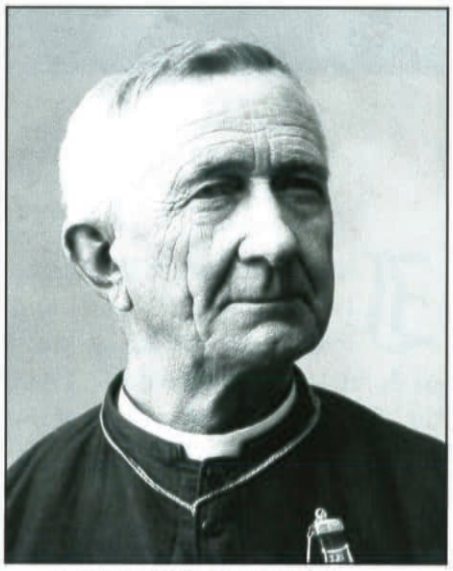
During the erection of the church the following pioneer settlers arrived and helped with the completion of the church:

John Woblers	H. Dwenger	Fred Elking	J. Gomann
Bernard Boeke	Bernard Goecke	Joseph Sieveke	J.D. Heckman
J. H. Pohlmann	Fred Heckman	Wenceslaus Meinerding	Henry Woerman
Anton Schweinefuss	J. Hoeffen	John Bruns	
Clemens Vehorn	F. John Desch	Nicholas Fullenkamp	

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In 1902, Fr. Henry Drees, C.PP.S. gave an account of the planning of the original log church.

It goes without saying, no long consultation was needed to determine the material wherewith to build the first House of God in Mercer County, in honor of St. John the Baptist. Fine, straight, heavenward-towering oak trees, surrounding by the score the site chosen, offering themselves as available material for the church in contemplation. This fine offer was not to be rejected; more so for the reason that no other material was at the disposal of the builders. Therefore, a log church was to be erected of humble dimensions, say, some 30 X 45 feet.

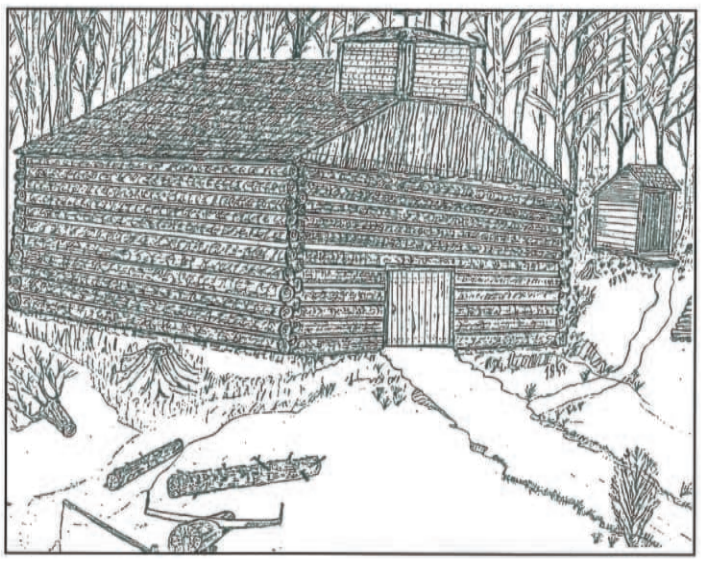


Fr. Henry Drees, C.PP.S.
Cincinnati Provincial
1880-1898

The reader asks: Who furnished the plan and specifications of said new church? Who was the builder thereof? Well!! Of course, such important factors ought to have been kept on record, but you know the Passage of Time destroys many a precious document; Hence, however humbling the confession may be, the truth is, no architect can be mentioned. As to the builders, I think we are more lucky. An old reliable tradition wills it that every burgher or member of the parish who had learned to wield an ax or broadax was contractor and builder of the new church.

No doubt all the parish of St. John felt happy, beholding the House of God in their midst. But their hearts were filled with deep emotions and grateful prayer on the second Sunday after Easter, April 9, 1837. Attending for the first time in their new church the celebration of a solemn High Mass chanted by their newly appointed Pastor, Reverend Francis Bartels, dedicating this the humble church edifice in the wilderness to the service of Almighty God and in honor of His Saint, John the Baptist.

Big cities, large parishes, boast of their cathedrals and domes! But it is safe to say: these good, simple-hearted Catholics of St. John felt more proud (and why not) of God's holy sanctuary (however humble), in their midst, than many indifferent lukewarm Catholics of majestic churches and Basilicas.



First church at St. John
Started in 1836 and completed in the spring of 1837 *(E.B.)*

In 1836, Archbishop Purcell of Cincinnati appointed Reverend Francis Bartels (1836-1839) the resident pastor of Minster, to also take charge of the growing parish of St. John and to become its pastor as well. This agreement was originally for the three month period of January, February and March of 1837 but continued until the arrival of the Precious Blood priests in 1845. The agreement, in essence, stated that in consideration of $25 payable at the end of the third month, Pastor Bartels of St. Augustine Church in Minster would say Mass at St. John at least once a month on a Sunday determined by him. The following is a copy of the original agreement between St. John parish and Father Bartels.

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AGREEMENT WITH ST. JOHN,
BEI LEISTENSCHNEIDER

We, the personally undersigned deputies of the Catholic community of St. John at Leistenschneider, Johann Leistenschneider, and Johann Anton Moeller, obligate ourselves hereby for ourselves and for our Catholic community to the Catholic parish of St. Augustine in Stallostown for the services of their Reverend Pastor for three months in January, February, and March in the year 1837 — Twenty-five/$25 payable at the close of the month of March, 1837, under the determined condition that their Reverend Pastor in the above said three months celebrates Holy Mass, with us, namely once a month, on a Sunday determined by the Reverend Pastor.

Stallostown, 26th December 1836

(Signed) Johannes Leistenschneider, Deputy of community of St. John; Johann Anton Moeller, Deputy of community of St. John; Bernd. Henrich Busse; B. Heinrich Adelmeyer, Wardens of the community of St. Augustine in Stallostown.

In faith,
Bartels

The new log church was completed in early spring of 1837. On April 9, 1837, Father Bartels blessed the church as St. John the Baptist. On this day he also celebrated the first Mass in the Church, a Solemn High Mass. This was the first Catholic Church in Marion Township and also the first in Mercer County (based on today's boundaries).

On the same Sunday, April 9, 1837, Father Bartels blessed the cemetery, which was located directly north of the church. When somebody died it was necessary to bring in a witness to certify that the person was actually dead. At death, the neighbors took charge completely. They prepared and dressed the body, notified relatives and neighbors, arranged for pallbearers, and dug the grave. Burial usually took place the morning after the day of death. The night before burial, the neighbors took part in an all night wake with prayers, rosaries, a jug of whiskey, and eating. On the morning of the funeral, the coffin or body wrapped in a sack was carried on the shoulders or on wheelbarrow or mud sled to the church. After the services, the pallbearers carried the coffin on their shoulders and the people followed at a slow pace to the cemetery. Later, those attending got together and ate their noon lunch, which they all brought themselves. The neighbors arranged for someone to stay with the deceased's family a few days to help with the work and comfort the survivors.

Boeke's book records the following about burials:

The people here, in St. John and Stallostown (Minster), promptly had to set aside a piece of ground for a cemetery in the first days, and had to set up a plan as to the how, where, when and what upon a person's death. Here, with no priest certain for singing the Requiem Mass, the lay men and lay women took charge and set up a system that we all understand and use, and every living person has his place and responsibility.

All burials follow on the next day after the death at 11 o'clock at the church building, or at Gast's house. Most times, both neighbors of the deceased come, and from the community, one from each family. When the forest is too thick, the weather too wet or snowy, or the wagon road cannot be used, we use a mud sled or wheelbarrow to get to the church and cemetery.

*As the coffin is let down into the grave, and earth is thrown in over the coffin, we in St. John are fortunate that the Bishop granted us parishioners permission to sing, in Latin, the sequence from the Mass for the Dead. While the coffin is being covered with ground, we all sing together, "Dies irae, dies illa."**

*** from the 13th century hymn, Dies Irae (Day of Wrath)**

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There are no records of the first burial, but it is said that an elderly man by the name of Lampe was the first person who died in the parish and was buried in St. John Cemetery. There is no marker for his gravesite.



The cemetery marker for Elizabeth Boeke

In April of 1837, the first wardens of St. John Parish were installed, namely: John Leistenschneider, John Meyer, Diedrich Hinders and Anthony Moeller. A well respected parishioner named John Reichert was engaged as the first teacher. A small log school had been built close to the church and became the first school in St. John parish as well as Marion Township. John Reichert was also named sexton and sacristan of the parish. On the Sundays when there was no priest present, he conducted the common prayers and religious songs.

On May 21, 1837, Fr. Bartels celebrated St. John's earliest First Holy Communion for seven children of the parish: Theodore Huelskamp, Friederich Schroeder, Theodore Schmid, Henry Thamann, Anna Leistenschneider, Catherine Herzog, and Katherine Hagedorn.

It was also in 1837 that Joseph Dwenger was born on April 7 on a farm one-half mile east of St. John. He became the first native-born St. John boy to become a priest and later Bishop of Ft. Wayne, Indiana.

The Miami & Erie Canal

Of great importance to St. John was the construction of the Miami & Erie Canal. On July 21, 1825, the groundbreaking ceremonies for the Miami & Erie Canal took place. Once the stretch from Cincinnati to Dayton was completed, the first canal boat reached Dayton on July 25, 1829. Many of our forefathers who had arrived in Baltimore traveled down the Ohio River to Cincinnati, then they came up the canal as far as Dayton before going overland to Minster and across to St. John.

Progress was long and tedious, and the first canal boat finally reached Minster in 1843. The first boat to make the entire trip from Cincinnati to Toledo was in July of 1845.

The canal was no more than finished when in 1848 the first railroad from Lake Erie to the Ohio River was opened. For a number of years the railroads served as connecting routes to the canal. However, as more and more railroads were constructed, the canal was used less and less, and by 1909 the canal system was virtually abandoned.



The canal served two very important functions for this period of time. First, building and completing the hand-dug canal provided employment for the area settlers. For digging, grubbing, clearing land, and digging and damming the reservoirs, they were paid from 30 to 50 cents a day plus board and whiskey for a month. Some of this money was used to buy land. At $1.25 an acre, ten acres could be

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bought for one month's work. Some of the men would also work a day or two a week for the township and county making roads, also providing cash money (or a trade for taxes). All during this time the housewives and children tended the garden and livestock.

Secondly, the canal was important to the settlers because it provided quick access to the markets at Cincinnati, Toledo, and in between. It stimulated and made farming more profitable. Meat and grains could be shipped seasonably and quickly. For instance, the price of wheat jumped from 10 cents a bushel to $1 a bushel. Barrel factories flourished as well as pork packing houses. The canal also provided transportation north and south for incoming settlers and provided easier transportation for business and pleasure trips to Cincinnati.





The strong and frugal pioneers of the day were very practical: nothing was left to waste and nothing was done to excess. These people had practiced economy in their native country, so this trait proved to be of great help to them as they stoically built a new life for themselves and their families. During these early days, little clothing style or fashion was to be found in St. John's parish. Most wore plain durable European garments that served them quite a while. Many times one could see married and young men wearing suits made of material called "hard-times stuff". The texture of the fabric was coarse, so the coats and pants were long lasting and inexpensive. These garments were commonly worn by the fledging, mostly poor, pioneers.



The women most likely came to church in plain calico dresses with straw or hickory bonnets. There were no expensive silk ribbons or colored feathers to adorn the hair or hats. It is safe to assume the women of St. John dressed in a modest, yet attractive fashion.

Shoes needed to be practical for this rough and often wet area. Such conditions made it impractical for the local pioneers to wear calfskin or leather shoes. As basswood and elm trees were in abundance, wooden shoes became the common footwear, at least for a time.



Fred Schroeder, a resident near St. John, started making wooden shoes for sale. Prior to this, wooden shoes had to be brought in from Stallostown. In 1838, Matthias Gast started the first boot and leather shoe store in town. In the same year, he enlarged his store to include a country general store containing dry goods and all kinds of groceries. In 1836, Mr. Heinrich Tangeman started the first blacksmith shop in town for the making and repair of hoes, pitchforks, spades, chains, etc. In 1849, John Goecke became the village carpenter. And so, early business in St. John slowly began.



Representative clothing from ancestral homelands

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The pioneer settlers of St. John, having emigrated from Catholic countries, were accustomed to and enjoyed solemn processions with the Blessed Sacrament. This had not been possible since leaving Germany. On Palm Sunday, 1839, the parishioners witnessed for the first time in their new church, the blessing of palms and solemn procession around the church. Fr. Henry Drees records: *Who would have dared to censure pious, devout fathers and mothers, if they moistened their blessed Palms with tears of gratitude, carrying them home as a pledge of still more divine favors?* Having been deprived of this ritual for the past four years, the receiving and carrying of the palms was a source of great joy and consolation.

From Fr. Drees' account: *They were also accustomed to solemn processions with the adorable Sacrament of the Altar, especially on the Feast of Corpus Christi. They remembered with sad emotions of spirit the festive days in the old country on which they accompanied their Eucharistic God carried by His Servant, the Priest, through the midst of His beloved adorers, blessing them, their homes, and families whilst passing the humble dwellings of His beloved children. During the Octave of Corpus Christi, 1839, the first Procession with the Blessed Sacrament took place in the parish of St. John, conducted by Reverend Henry Herzog, successor to Reverend Father Bartels, and at the time Pastor of Minster (formerly Stallostown) and St. John.*

The following letter appeared in the Cincinnati German newspaper "Der Wahrheits-Freund" on January 16, 1840:

St. John, January 7, 1840, Mercer Co., Ohio. Esteemed Sir:

Since the celebration of yesterday's feast, the Epiphany of the Lord, made such a deep impression on our hearts, we would like to give you a brief report of the event; and if it agrees with the policy of your worthy paper, so might you wish to record it in the WAHRHEITS-FREUND.

The Holy Church places before us every year for our consideration on the Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord the ardor, spirit, and perseverance of the three Wise Men who, as soon as they saw the star according to the prediction of the prophets, set out on their journey, came to Jerusalem, and asked about the newborn King of the Jews, saying: "We have seen his star in the East and have come to adore him." We also have seen his star, namely the Christian religion. But when we left our German fatherland and came to this land, it seemed, just as for the Wise Men, that the guiding star had set for us. How dismal the future that lay before us! Let it not be described; that could only be perceived by those brought up in the Holy Faith and able to attend daily services.

But the gracious God had mercy on us and drove away the gloomy clouds; the star which appeared to have set was again seen — yes, even in great brilliance as in Germany itself. For the impassable forest was lighted and the Lord's temple built in which now solemn services would be held. So we had the good fortune yesterday to be able to attend a musical High Mass at which our worthy Pastor Herzog delivered a moving sermon, and in which he admonished his parish children that they should follow the guiding star of the Christian religion, and that God had made, though most unworthy, tools to spread the reign of his Son, Jesus, in this wilderness.

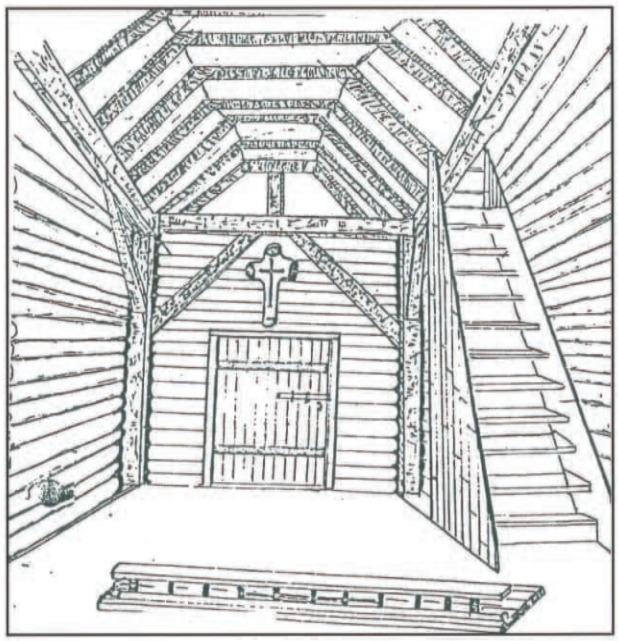
How the Catholic must rejoice when he realizes how rapidly his religion has spread, and how here, where only a short while before the red forest-dweller danced in a circle before his idols, and where one heard nothing but the sound of the turtle doves or the howling of the thieving wolves — he now adores God in such a solemn fashion and worships in spirit and in truth.

The music was provided by the choir from Minster under the direction of Mr. Gerhard Panning. For this kindness and goodwill we give our heartfelt thanks.

The Congregation of St. John

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On July 19, 1840, three years after the completion of the first log church, the parish bought a bell for $75. This was a tidy sum and the equivalent cost of 60 acres of land at that time. The belfry or tower was built in front of the church on four beams with a roof to protect the bell from the weather. Three times a day it rang the "Angelus," inviting the people to kneel and pray; on Sundays its ringing reminded the parish it was time to go to Mass; and upon the death of a parishioner, it would toll slowly to remind everyone to pray for the deceased.



Rendering of the west side of the church *(E.B.)*

From its beginning, the parish of St. John honored the newly consecrated Archbishop John Purcell of Cincinnati by selecting St. John the Baptist as the patron saint of the parish. In December of 1840, Bishop Purcell visited the parish of St. John for the first time.

A few significant events highlighted his visit. Shortly before, a new altar had been erected in the sanctuary of the new church. Fr. Drees remarks that this altar was not of fine marble stone or precious material, but of "such workmanship as mean and circumstances had suggested." Records from Carl Heinrich Dickmann's *Rechnungs Buch* (accounting book) indicate that the altar cost $27.00 and was paid for by John Goecke, John Reichert, and Theo. Hinders. "On this altar His Lordship, the Bishop, celebrated for the first time the Holy Sacrifice of Mass, which incident was greatly appreciated by His Lordship and the people."

Secondly, the very first sacrament of Confirmation was administered to forty-one candidates. The young boys and girls spent considerable time preparing for this solemn event. This was a tremendous satisfaction for the parents and relatives as they witnessed the young people of the church make their commitment to Christ and the church. The entire day would be long remembered with a sense of pride and honor for their parish, the community, and the great hopes and dreams for the future.

The first record of a baptism in St. John Church is found in 1841, when on October 26, Reverend Louis Navarron baptized a child by the name of John Cron. In 1842, Father Navarron also baptized Catherine Kramer and Frances Nieport. In 1845-46, Father John Van den Broeck baptized 17 children in the parish.

The year 1841 passed in routine fashion as the settlement steadily grew. These early pioneers were busy clearing the land, farming, and building houses and barns. By 1842, these hard-working parishioners felt the need for a new pulpit. On September 16, the Reverend Martin Henni from Cincinnati, who later became Archbishop of Milwaukee, delivered the first sermon from this new pulpit. For the record, the subject of his sermon was "The Sacrament of Penance."



Rev. Martin Henni

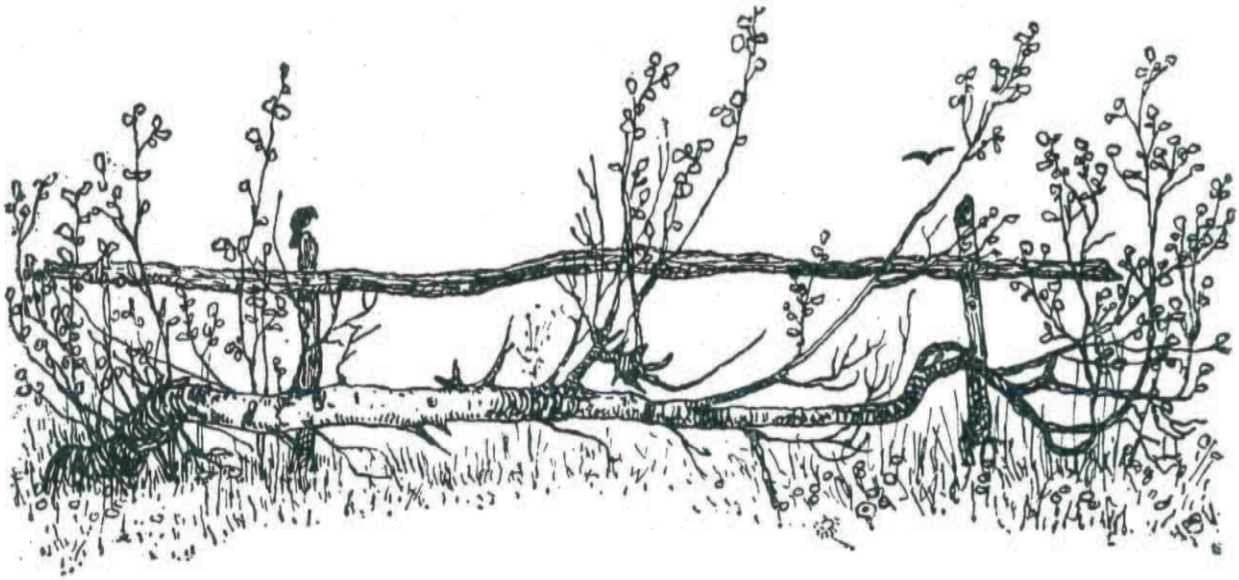
Father Herzog of Minster, because of health issues, could not take care of both Minster and St. John. Between 1841 and 1845, Father Louis Navarron helped in Minster and visited St. John when possible.

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Father Navarron was a French priest primarily looking after the French settlers of Darke and Shelby counties. He found it an impossible task to serve the needs of so many people and petitioned Bishop Purcell at various times to send German-speaking priests to take care of Minster and St. John, as well as St. Rose, St. Henry, and the other German communities in Mercer County.

Church attendance records attributed to Elizabeth Boeke indicate that four Masses were said at St. John in 1836, five Masses in 1837, twelve Masses in 1838, and those numbers gradually increased to twenty-six Masses celebrated in 1845. St. Augustine Parish of Minster had contracted for their resident pastor to say Mass in St. John at least once every month, and on numerous other Sundays the parishioners gathered for Sunday readings and prayer. Until their church was completed, they met in one of the homes. Father Henry Drees mentions the Leistenschneider home, and Elizabeth mentions the Gast home.

St. John the Baptist Catholic church was about to embark on a long relationship with the Society of the Precious Blood, now called the Missionaries of the Precious Blood. They began their ministry to this parish on November 2, 1845, and record keeping was transferred to the Precious Blood Society.



Drawings of clothing and rural life shown in this chapter are taken from *Heimatkunde des Herzogtums Oldenburg.*





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CHAPTER THREE

A Partnership Begins

St. John Parish and the Missionaries of the Precious Blood (C.PP.S.)

When Archbishop Purcell petitioned Rome for German priests, it so happened that Fr. Francis de Sales Brunner, an apostolic missionary and member of the Congregation of the Most Precious Blood, was waiting to be sent to do missionary work in the New World. Father Brunner, along with seven German-speaking priests and seven conferees, arrived in Cincinnati in January of 1844, and were assigned to work in northern Ohio, which was yet in the diocese of Cincinnati. In 1845, Archbishop Purcell asked Father Brunner and the Fathers of the Precious Blood to take charge of the Catholics living in Minster and neighboring settlements.

It was in August of 1845 that Fr. Francis de Sales Brunner, C.PP.S., now Provincial of the Congregation of the Precious Blood, and Fr. John Wittmer, C.PP.S., came to this area with the intention of selecting some suitable land to build a mission house and convent.*



Fr. Francis de Sales Brunner, C.PP.S

At St. John they came upon a peaceful and well disposed congregation with a church, a school, and a teacher, but no pastor. The surrounding countryside was attractive, and a decision was made to build a convent within St. John parish.

Years later, Sister M. Regina Reichert, who was a young girl at the time and whose father was the schoolmaster at St. John, gives an interesting account of the welcome accorded the two priests as they visited St. John on August 14, 1845:



Stained glass at St. John to honor Fr. Brunner

All the people were overjoyed when they heard that the missionaries of the Precious Blood were coming, and they hastened into the little church to await with eager expectation the arrival of these great lords. Suddenly there was a murmur. We children sat straddling the benches to get a good look at the missionaries. Then Father Brunner and Father John entered - the former wearing clumsy wooden shoes. They knelt on the altar steps; Father de Sales intoned the litany of Loreto and prayed the acts of Faith, Hope, and Charity just as they are still prayed each evening in the community. Afterwards, he stamped on the floor with his wooden shoes as a sign that we might go home. He then entered into consultation with the trustees of the parish.

*** Convents then were missionary centers housing Sisters, Priests, and Brothers.**

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The land selected by Fr. Brunner was a 60 acre tract about one-half mile north of the church. However, the land belonged to a non-Catholic who refused to sell to a religious order and a priest. A St. John parishioner, Christian Stelzer, bought the land in his name and had it transferred to the Society of the Precious Blood. The previous owner, when hearing of the assignment, tried in vain to stop the transaction. He was present, however, at the laying of the cornerstone of the new buildings on November 16, 1845, where he wept bitterly because his beautiful estate had fallen into the hands of such "infamous" people.



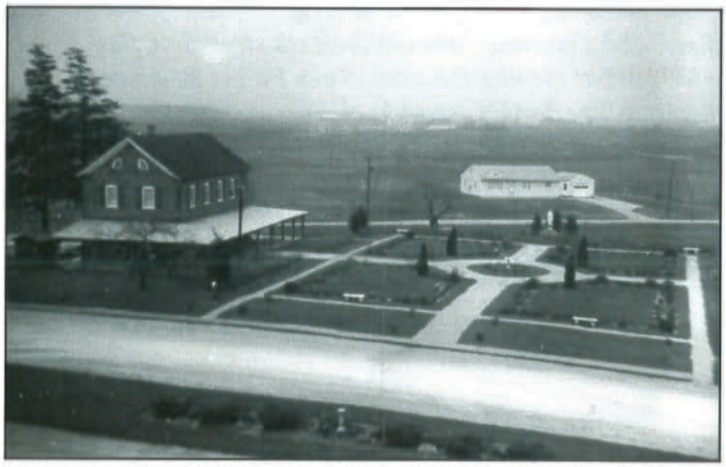
c. Early 1900s. Maria Stein Convent photographed from the southwest side. Notice the first and second floor porches, gardens, barns, dormers, and windmill.

In November, Fr. Brunner sent the young and energetic Fr. John Van den Broeck, C.PP.S., and three lay brothers to St. John with instructions to erect temporary buildings for the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood, and at the same time to take charge of the parish.

On November 16, 1845, Fr. Van den Broeck went with the people of St. John in solemn procession from the parish church to the site of the proposed new convent. There, Father John blessed the grounds on which the new buildings were to be erected. The good people of the parish, happy at the prospect of a convent in their midst, willingly and generously assisted in the construction. They provided food, helped in the hauling of materials, and performed all kinds of manual labor. Before winter set in, much progress had been made.

Work was suspended during the dead of winter. Meanwhile, Father John and the three brothers lived in the schoolhouse at St. John. In the spring, work was resumed and the convent and chapel were completed by the fall of 1846.

Fr. Brunner dedicated the Chapel under the protection of Mary, Help of Christians, and gave the Convent the name of Maria Stein, Our Lady of the Rock, in remembrance of the famous shrine at Mariastein, Switzerland. Gradually, the village of St. John became known as Maria Stein.



c. 1954. Gatehouse: For many years this was the residence of C.PP.S. priests. This photo is taken from the Shrine - looking east.

On September 24, 1846, eight Sisters entered Maria Stein to begin that very night perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and with the help of local lay people, that tradition of prayer continues to this day. Soon after this, a girls' school, located just northwest of St. John Church, was opened. Sister Albertina Schleinzer was appointed directoress and immediately won the children over with her motherly kindness and solicitude.

Close ties existed between St. John Parish and Maria Stein Convent; for

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Fr. John Van den Broeck, C.PP.S. 1845-46 and 1847-48

instance, for over 30 years the Sisters at the Convent attended Mass and were buried in the parish cemetery. In 1878, the Convent's own cemetery was started.

In 1845, Fr. John Van den Broeck became the first Precious Blood priest assigned to St. John Parish. He was one of the original fourteen men who sailed with Fr. Brunner from Europe to the New World. Since that date through today, the Precious Blood Fathers have faithfully served in St. John. Fr. John lived on the convent premises.

On October 11, 1846, Archbishop Purcell visited St. John parish for the second time and Maria Stein Convent for the first time. He confirmed 27 young people on this occasion.

In 1857, Fr. Brunner designated Maria Stein as the Motherhouse of the Sisters, becoming their most important center in the New World.

Shortly after the Convent was finished, a house for priests and brothers was erected. Close to the road, it was replaced with a larger brick building in 1858, called the Guest House or Gate House. This house was the residence of the Precious Blood priests who served the various parishes in the area. For the St. Johns priests, it was their priest house until 1906 when the first and present rectory was built.

Fr. John Van den Broeck was St. John's pastor through 1848, except for two short periods during which Fr. John Wittmer, C.PP.S., and Fr. Matthias Kreusch, C.PP.S., served the parish. Fr. John, a native of Holland and known as "the Little Hollander," was young, healthy, strong, and full of energy, but had a fiery temperament. During 1846, 1847, and 1848 he served as pastor for both Minster and St. John. On Sundays, the people walking to church, both at St. John and Minster, would keep an eye out for the Little Hollander, as he, an expert horseman, came dashing by on horseback between the two parishes. It seems that the people's sympathies were with the poor horse, rather than with Father John who was riding on an empty stomach between Masses.

Fr. Matthias Kreusch C.PP.S. was a well known and much beloved man in Mercer County and also widely known in the Cleveland and Cincinnati Dioceses. It is claimed that he possessed an unprecedented zeal for the priesthood, but he appeared quiet and self composed. He was renowned for trusting in Divine Providence - often to a fault. Fr. Drees writes that Fr. Kreusch was not an eloquent speaker, "*but he had always at hand, cut and dried, some sound and pious admonitions which he would impart to his hearers at every available occasion. When saying Mass (in Minster) on weekdays, Fr. Matthias, commonly turned after the last gospel to the people present, saying in a fatherly spirit a few kind words of exhortation which, of course, were much appreciated coming from the lips of such a venerable pious Father.*"



Fr. Matthias Kreusch, C.PP.S. 1846-47

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As mentioned previously, the people of St. John loved a procession. This European love for solemn ritual was enhanced with the arrival of the Precious Blood Fathers. It soon became a practice that on the Feast of Corpus Christi the parishioners of St. John would join in the solemn procession with the Blessed Sacrament from their church to St. Augustine church in Minster, praying and singing all the way. The people of St. Augustine returned the visit on the Octave of the Feast.

The first log church, completed in 1837, had become too small, and at a meeting held in January of 1847, it was agreed that a new brick church should be built. At this meeting, Henry Kramer and Diedrich Hinders were elected church wardens for two years. Matthias Gast and Nicholas Fullenkamp remained in office. At this same meeting, thirteen resolutions were written on how the new church was to be supported:

1. Each father of a family is to pay annually for the support of the divine service — $2.00.
2. Each widow is to pay — $1.00.
3. Each single person possessing real estate — $1.00.
4. Each son over 16, working for his parents — 50 cents.
5. Father and mother-in-law, able to work and remaining with son or daughter, pay annually each — 50 cents.
6. Poor people in parish are free. They must report to the church wardens to be free and will have a free seat in church
7. Each family who desires to acquire membership in Saint John Parish is to pay an entrance fee of $4.00.
8. For each person dying in a family, being no member, a grave has to be bought in the cemetery at $2.00; child $1.00.
9. Membership to pass over to direct heirs.
10. Wardens shall remain in office two years.
11. From each district in which the term of office had expired, three candidates shall be proposed, and then it shall be decided by lot who are to be the wardens.
12. Every three months a collection is to be taken up for the church.
13. Each young lady over 16 years old is to pay 25 cents annually.

On January 1, 1848, the St. John Young Men's Society was organized. Each member was to pay an annual fee of 50 cents and monies spent were to be for the benefit of St. John Church.

While plans and preparations were made as early as 1847, the actual building of this second church did not start until 1849. In 1848, the necessary bricks were made on the church grounds by Raymond Buehler, a member of St. John parish. In the same year, other materials such as stone, lumber, etc., were secured and hauled to the church site. While preparations for the erection of the new church were being made, Fr. John Wittmer, C.PP.S., was pastor. Fr. Wittmer was regarded as the building expert in the society because he was present during the construction of both St. Augustine Church and the planning of St. John Church.

In 1849, when the building of the church commenced, Clemens Vehorn had replaced Nicholas Fullenkamp as

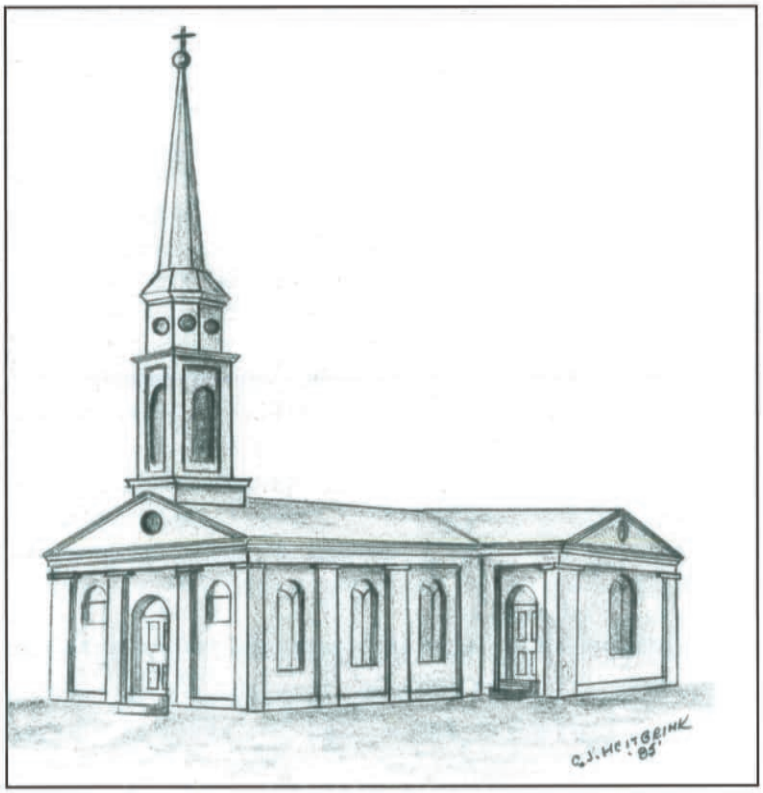


Fr. John Wittmer, C.PP.S.
1846 and 1848-49

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warden. Johann Anton Goehr of St. Augustine's parish, Minster, Ohio, was the architect and builder of the church. A master architect and builder, he constructed over twenty churches throughout the area.

The brick walls of the church were laid, and the roof work was completed before the winter of 1849. During the spring and summer of 1850, the work intensified and the church was completed by October of that year. It was 40 feet wide, 60 feet long, and stood east and west about where the present church is standing - with the main door to the west. The steeple rested on the roof and was built of wood some 55 feet above the roof line. Fr. Andrew Kunkler had been appointed pastor in May of 1849 and was in charge of the church construction.



Cletus Heitbrink, a St. John parishioner, provided this sketch of the second church. The main door faced the west, unlike the present church in which the main doors face south.

In 1848, subscriptions had been taken and pledges of $2,465 made towards the church. Also, when the church property was originally bought, it comprised 40 acres. Because not all of it was needed, portions of that acreage had already been sold off. Now, additional lots were sold, and the money from sales resulted in $1,105 being applied to the new church. The balance, some $445, was paid from the annual parish pew rent, etc.

The total cash outlay for the church was approximately $4,000, not including the labor and some of the material donated by parishioners. A breakdown of church construction costs follows:

Raymond Buehler	Bricks	$444.00
Samuel Reed	Plastering and brick laying	$731.00
Mr. Heinz	rubble stone	$291.00
Wendeln and Knoeber	Carpenter work	$866.36
Anton Goehr	Doors and windows	$150.00
W. Hermany	Steeple cross, ball, and troughs	$68.78
Rasmusen & Burgund	Frescoing	$303.20
	Material Furnished by Parish	$992.54
John Goecke	Communion Railing	$23.00
John Goecke	Altar	$37.00
Jos. Kokenge	Stairs	$28.00
Mr. Rathweg	Floor laying	$40.00
	Tabernacle	$17.00
		$4,015.88

Dedication took place on October 13, 1850, with the Most Reverend John Baptist Purcell, Archbishop of Cincinnati, presiding. The following news account appeared in the Catholic Telegraph Register on October 19, 1850, and described the event:

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On Saturday evening, October 12, 1850, just as the sun was setting in a cloudless heaven, the Bishop and Very Reverend Joseph Ferneding, accompanied by two of the priests of the Community, "Pretiosissimi Sanguinis" and preceded by a mounted escort who had gone to meet them at Minster approached the beautiful new church of St. John the Baptist. The youth and many of the older members of the congregation came in procession with their Pastor and School Teachers, singing hymns to welcome the Bishop; to whom also three young children presented, with much grace and modesty, the key of the church. After a prayer, a few words of instruction as to the manner in which the communion was to be sanctified, and the Episcopal benediction, all retired.

On the following morning the choir and a band of music from Minster, followed by one or two thousand persons, in procession, conducted the Bishop and clergy from the cloister where they had lodged, to the Church, a distance about one half mile. The Bishop briefly addressed the multitude from the door of the church which was then blessed by the Vicar General. The same Reverend Gentleman sung the High Mass, assisted by Reverend Messrs. Van den Broeck and Meyer as deacon and subdeacon. Reverend Andrew Kunkler being Master of Ceremonies. The Bishop preached in English and the celebrant in German, both morning and afternoon.

The church is one of the handsomest Sanctuaries in the Diocese. It is 60 by 40 feet, of brick, with lofty frescoed ceiling and graceful steeple all finished. The interior of the Church is decorated with edifying figures of the twelve apostles, the Holy Patron St. John the Baptist, St. Rochus, and other saints. The whole was done by the congregation without asking a cent from any but its own members, and it is almost entirely free from debt. Would that such an example were everywhere imitated.

After the dedication of the church, the parish felt the need to replace the bell from the log church. Fr. Drees, in his 1902 historical account, writes about this event: *This noble messenger from on high rendered satisfactory service for a number of years. With such a spirit among the burghers, it was not difficult to raise the amount required to purchase a bell of a sufficient size to suit the new church and the people at large. A fine bell was actually bought, weighing 935 pounds at a cost of $260.00. Said bell was blessed and located in the belfry of the new church on November the 11th, 1850, on which day the sweet, silvery peals of God's messenger to men, vibrated for the first time into all directions through the air to the great joy of all the good people of St. John parish.*

The log church was dismantled, moved, and a dwelling was built from the lumber. This house, owned by a Mr. and Mrs. Topp, was located about 500 feet east of the church on lot 22 on the southeast corner of Jackson and North Street. Fr. Henry Drees also talked about visiting this good Catholic family, the Topps, in their home: *What became of the first, humble log-church?. . . . . Whilst even the very site of said church cannot be recognized any more the humble log-church bids fair to outlive the twentieth century. A neat dwelling house has been built from the logs of church No. I erected in 1837. . . .It was a real reverential treat to behold the trim, neatly white-washed logs, which beheld in silent awe, time and again the pious pioneer adorers, kneeling within the wooden Sanctuary of the Most High.*



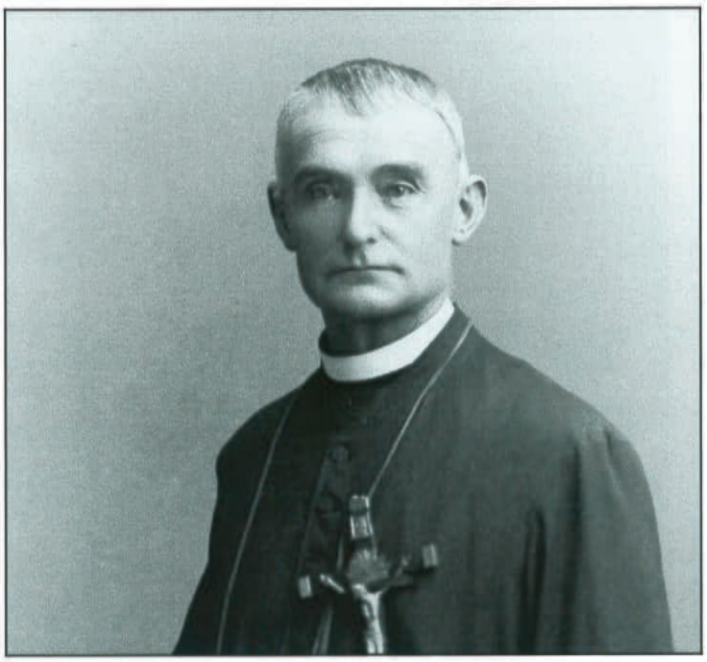
This is believed to be the house that was built from the dismantled log church. *Photo courtesy of Martha (Gast) Rindler.*

The house was demolished around 1940.

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Mercer County, which had been formed in 1820 by an act of the Ohio Legislature, included the towns of St. Marys, Minster, and New Bremen. In 1849, Auglaize County was formed from parts of Mercer County and surrounding counties. Therefore, the boundaries changed and Minster, New Bremen, St. Marys, and the canal all became part of the newly formed Auglaize County.

Fr. Andrew Kunkler, C.PP.S., was pastor from 1849-51 and then again from 1855-56. Even though this seems like a short period of time by today's standards, he made a tremendous impact on our church and the area. Fr. Kunkler, extremely well liked and respected, was also considered to be a very humble and pious priest. These qualities, along with his practical and jovial demeanor, were quite endearing to the parishioners. He reportedly possessed a gift of healing and was credited with many "miraculous" cures. Despite all this, he seemed to be a man of poor health himself.



Fr. Andrew Kunkler, C.PP.S.
1849-1851 and 1855-1856

Ironically, it was during his first tenure at St. John that the cholera outbreak descended upon the area. He worked tirelessly from morning till night. He went to sick calls, heared confessions, and prepared the sick for death. One day he was called to the bedside of a dying widow named Maria Catherina Dwenger, who begged the priest to care for her 12 year old son Joseph. Fr. Kunkler administered the last sacraments, but she was much troubled. "I am willing to die, but what will become of my boy when I am dead and gone?" Father promised to see after Joseph's welfare. "Father," murmured the poor woman between sobs, "Take him away, I give him into your hands. Should he live, take care of him. Joseph is yours." The boy grew up under the care of the priests and sisters, became a priest in the Society of the Precious Blood, and eventually became the bishop of Ft. Wayne. Further information on Fr. Dwenger's ministry can be found in Part 3, Chapter 9.

Following his time at Maria Stein, Fr. Kunkler ministered to the people of St. Augustine for almost 35 years. During that time he made many contributions to Minster and the surrounding areas.

In December of 1889, he was preaching a mission in Missouri, and at the end of the sermon he told the people that the next day he would preach about the most important truth of all. He urged everyone to come and hear this truth. He then announced the text for the upcoming sermon - taken from the book of Sirach. That very night he suffered a stroke and died a few days later. It was reported that thousands of local mourners viewed his final journey from St. Charles Seminary in Carthagena to St. Augustine in Minster.

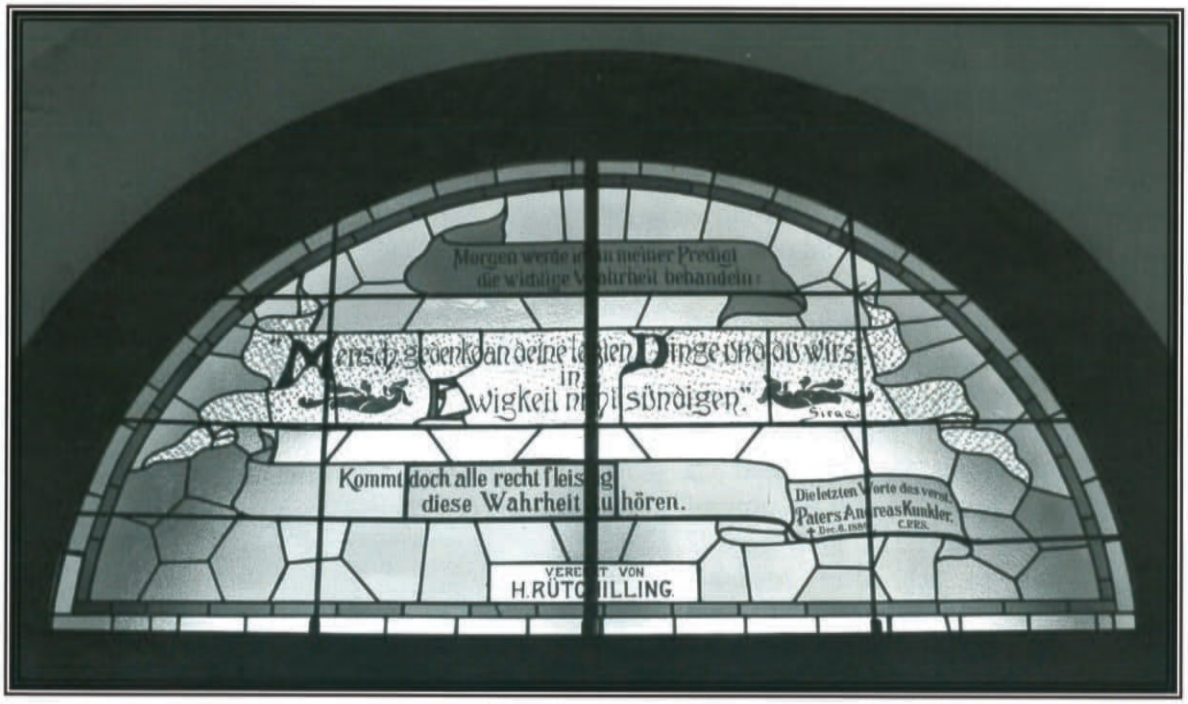
Even though he spent only a few years at St. John, his legacy remains in our church. The stained glass window over the main south entrance of the church was erected to his honor. The following inscription immortalizes his final day:

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Tomorrow I will speak in my sermon
about this important truth.

In everything you do, think about your last days,
and you will never sin. Sirach

Do come eagerly to hear this truth
These are the last words of deceased
Father Andreas Kunkler † Dec. 6, 1889



The Cholera Epidemic of 1849

The cholera epidemic of 1849 was a dreadful time for the people of St. John Parish, and even today the cemetery bears silent testimony to its ravishes. There is a large space in the cemetery just north of the church which has no crosses or stones to mark the graves. It is said that under this sod lie the victims of the cholera plague.

The epidemic seems to have come north from Cincinnati along the canal, hitting the canal towns first. Minster was struck very hard, with the first case being soon after the 4th of July that summer. Within the month, over 250 people died in Minster, with as many as 20 in one day. New Bremen recorded over 150 deaths from this painful and excruciating illness. When the epidemic started in Minster, the people in St. John tried to stay in the forest and away from each other. On the wagon road many people with wagons, carts, goods, gear and children were all trying to get away.

Later in July, it struck St. John. It brought death and horror to every household; there was no escape. When one became ill, the victim often experienced violent symptoms, and death could be

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there in 24 hours, or in some recorded instances, in a few hours. Many people did not contract the sickness, and others recovered. Some stories recall a woman who cooked dinner for the family at noon and was carried to the cemetery before night. In some households, only one person was affected, while in other families, multiple members contracted the disease. Four people in one family died in a week. In total, twenty-two people from St. John died in a short time.

Fr. Andrew Kunkler was St. John's pastor during the epidemic and was a beacon of strength for the parish. At the morning Mass, following the outbreak in the vicinity, he impressed upon the parishioners the importance of prayer and the necessity to be prepared should death come. Confessions were heard throughout the day and the number of people that received Holy Communion was extraordinary.

During the terrible time for St. John, Fr. Kunkler could be seen crossing the countryside on his horse, tending the needs of his ailing parish. On one morning, he asked everyone within the parish to mark their farmhouse with a red ensign should they need his services. Then at night, weary from the day's events, he would eventually retire long past midnight.



Pastors of St. John

1851-1861

Little information is available regarding the five priests who served this parish from 1851-1861. Fr. Robert J. Baird C.PP.S. (1911-1996/Cincinnati Province), in the 1932 Nuntius Aulaereport on the St. John Parish wrote about these years: "This period, so to speak, was one of gradual development and rest after the eventful pioneer years. The little brick church was a monument to the faith of the people and their thriving farms a monument to their industry. Little remained to be done by the priest in charge, besides the ordinary duties of a pastor."

Rev. Anthony Kramer C.PP.S.
1854-1855
Born: February 3, 1817
Ordained: November 21, 1853
Died: February 17, 1878
No photograph available

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Fr. Aloys Schelbert, C.PP.S.
1851-1853



Fr. Stephan Falk, C.PP.S.
1856-1858



Fr. Peter Wilhelmi, C.PP.S.
1853-1854 & 1860-1861



Fr. Erhard Glueck, C.PP.S.
1858-1860

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CHAPTER FOUR
Just Outside the Doors

The Earliest Schools

In 1825, the Ohio General Assembly passed a law that required county commissioners to assess a tax on property to be used for schools. Marion Township was divided into six districts. The first distribution to the districts of monies collected in 1838 took place on February 12, 1839. Such public school funds were often grossly insufficient, particularly in rural areas.

The first distribution of funds by the Marion Township Common School Fund was as follows:

District One	15 scholars	$ 5.95
District Two	25 scholars	$9.92
District Three	37 scholars	$14.68
District Four	10 scholars	$3.97
District Five	66 scholars	$26.18
District Six	62 scholars	$24.60
	TOTAL	$85.31

Mercer County records, on file at the Wright State Archives in Dayton, do not show the boundaries of the districts, but the St. John School District would probably have been number five or six.

It appears that, even as early as 1838, St. John School received money through taxes. Schools were grouped according to township, and all schools in that township received funding regardless of affiliation - public or private. (In addition, parents were assessed fees to supplement the taxable income to the school.) The monies received from the county each year were signed for by one of the township officials. In 1845, the receipt for the money was signed by John Reichert. It is not known in what capacity he signed. He signed receipts as late as 1856, signing his name for Frederick Elking, "township clerk."

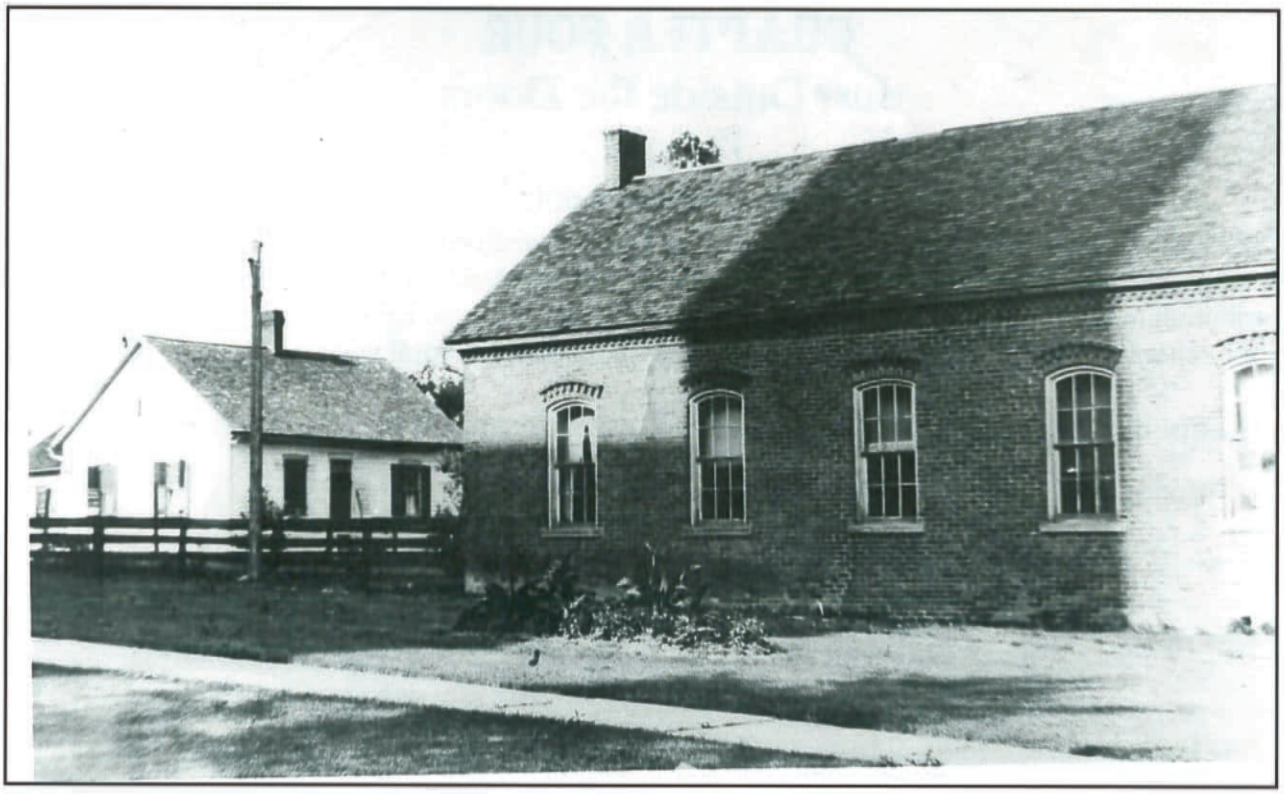
John Reichert was one of the first settlers in St. John parish. The deed to his land in the northeast corner of Section 27 was recorded on September 29, 1834. He was asked by the parish to be the first teacher, and also became the first sexton of the church. Teachers had to be accredited by the county and were examined periodically. The county records show that John Reichert was examined in April of 1857 and certified for two years. He was examined every two years, and the last time his name appeared on the records was April 25, 1863. He was 63 years old at that time.



"St. John School" 1836 (E.B.)

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John Reichert was involved in the educational system of St. John for over 30 years. It is interesting to note that his original homestead, which he bought in 1834, is now the site of the high school and elementary buildings of the Marion Local School District.



The first brick school house (1850-1925) *

About the time the new church was built in 1850, the log school was also replaced by a brick one-room school built in front of the present day rectory and east of the driveway. The school building was church owned, but tax money was used for its operation, or at least in part.

As required by Ohio's new Constitution (1852), St. John citizens had elected a board of directors or school board. In 1858, the parish sold 1/4 acre of land to the board of education for $100. On it was located the brick one-room school that the parish had recently built and owned. The board of education erected another brick school (referred to as the boys' school) on the northeast corner of the lot. John Reichert taught the boys in one and the Precious Blood Sisters from the convent taught the girls in the other.

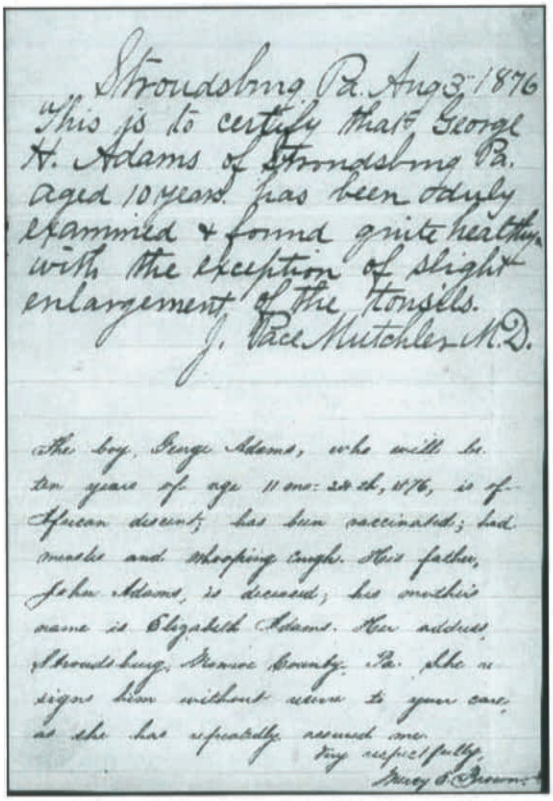
As a public school, the school system was supported with public money, but for all practical purposes it operated as a parochial school. Such an arrangement was only possible because almost all of the people in the school district were Catholic. It is not known who the male teachers were after John Reichert, but there were one or two Sisters teaching at St. John until 1883. This school arrangement set the stage for the future dissensions and feuds of the 1880s.

*** The driveway in the foreground is the location of the north/south driveway of the current rectory. In 1882, this building was deeded back to the parish and called "Vereins Hall"; it was torn down in 1925. The dwelling in the rear was the parish owned teacher/organist's house. The last occupant was the Frank Moorman family.**

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The Emlen Institute and the Civil War

Local church records of the early 1860s give minimal information regarding the Civil War and participation by the citizenry of St. John. In the Minster area, as well as areas north to include Putnam County, the local support for the Union position was generally positive. However, desertions were extremely high, particularly after the draft was instituted and a draftee was able to purchase freedom from service for the sum of $300. Some Ohio counties refused to draft their citizens and filled their quotas with volunteers or purchased volunteers from adjoining counties.



Stroudsburg Pa. Aug 3rd 1876
This is to certify that George H. Adams of Stroudsburg Pa. aged 10 years has been duly examined & found quite healthy, with the exception of slight enlargement of the tonsills.
J. Pace Mutchler M.D.

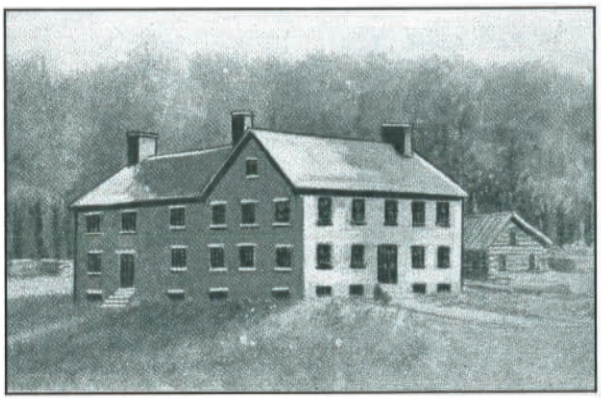
The boy, George Adams, who will be ten years of age 11 mo: 20 th, 1876, is of African descent; has been vaccinated; had measles and whooping cough. His father, John Adams, is deceased; his mother's name is Elizabeth Adams. Her address Stroudsburg, Monroe County, Pa. She assigns them without advice to your care, as she has repeatedly assured me.
Very respectfully,
Mary E. Brown

An 1876 application for George Adams, a student at the Emlen Institute (then in Stroudsburg, PA)

During the infancy of the Civil War, Mercer County already had a large African American population. In the 1830s, Mr. Augustus Wattles, a native of Connecticut, worked tirelessly to improve the conditions and future of almost 4,000 African Americans in Cincinnati. He recognized that their lack of education and repressed social life as slaves, did not, and would not, garner them the skills to become good citizens. In an attempt to break that cycle, he started a school for them, but quickly realized that a rural setting would be more practical.

He traveled through Canada, Indiana, and Michigan looking for a suitable location and finally decided on Mercer County in Ohio. In 1835, he bought 190 acres of land in Marion Township and established a manual labor school in present-day Carthagena for African American boys, financing it with his own money.

In November of 1842, Samuel Emlen of Philadelphia died and willed $20,000 to help educate these people in farming and mechanical arts. The money was used to buy the school and land from Mr. Wattles, who in turn, became the head of the school known as the Emlen Institute, located where St. Charles Seminary stands today.

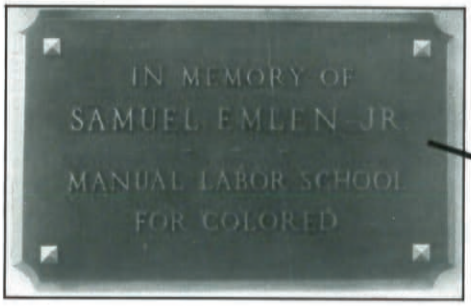


Emlen Institute, built 1836
St. Charles Seminary, 1861

In 1832, John Randolph of Roanoke, Virginia, died, and in his will freed his 383 slaves. After 13 years of debate in the Virginia courts, the terms of the will were finally executed, and the slaves were to be moved to 3200 acres of land adjacent to the Wattles colony in Ohio. They arrived by canal boat in New Bremen in 1846, but a group of local citizens from throughout Mercer County, reasoning that they had settled here first, forcibly kept them from landing and escorted them with pitchforks and bayonets back out of what was then Mercer County. The frightened African Americans were unloaded in Miami County, outside of Piqua, in the tiny village of Rossville and eventually scattered to Sidney, Troy, West Milton, and other villages in that area.

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After this incident, however, many African Americans began selling their homes and farms to local citizens and moved to urban areas. Due, in part, to this dwindling population, the Emlen Institute was closed by 1857 and moved to Pennsylvania. Four years later, on March 14, 1861, Fr. Joseph Dwenger bought the Institute for the Missionaries of the Precious Blood and located their seminary on this property; naming it St. Charles Borromeo Seminary.





Church is St. Aloysius, Carthegena, Ohio

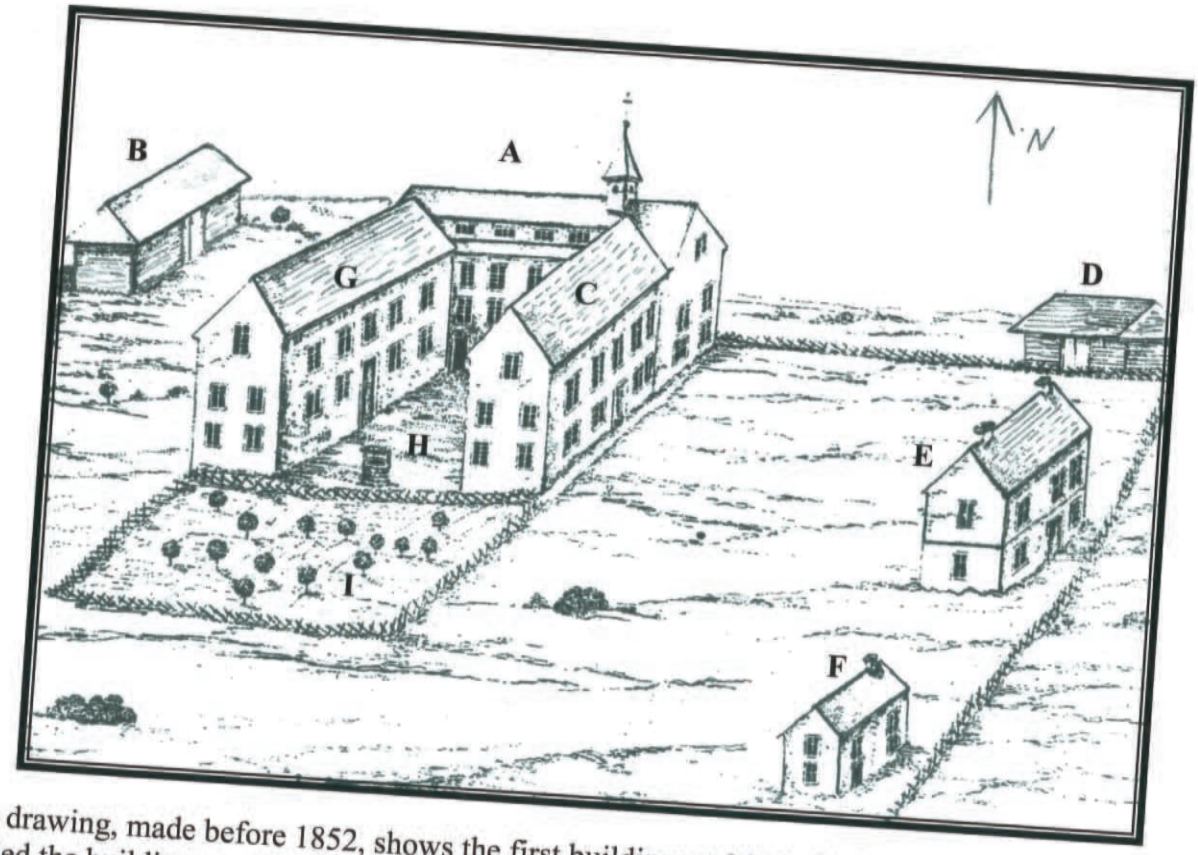
The Maria Stein Convent

Fr. Brunner and the Precious Blood fathers and sisters arrived in St. John and Mercer County in 1845. For the next fourteen years, Fr. Brunner, as Provincial of the Society of the Precious Blood, expanded upon the foundations of Catholicism which already existed in western Ohio by supplying a majority of the priests and sisters for the many parishes in this area. He was also responsible for the building of the following Convents:

Convent Name	Brunner's Place/Name	Place/Name	Founded
Mary at the Crib		New Riegel, Ohio	1844
Mary of the Angels		Thompson/Frank, Ohio	1845
Mary, Help of Christians	Maria Stein (Mary of the Rock)	Saint John, Ohio	1846
Mary at the Holy Sepulcher		Glandorf, Ohio	1849
Mary, Mother of Good Counsel	Maria Camp (Mary's Field)	Glandorf, Ohio	1850
Mary, Mother of God	Gruenenwald (Greenwood)	Cassella, Ohio	1850
Visitation of Mary	Maria Huelf (Mary's Help)	Minster, Ohio	1852
Mary, Mother of Mercy	Himmelgarten (Heaven's Gate)	St. Henry, Ohio	1852
Sorrows of Mary	Marienheim (Mary's Home)	Trinity, Indiana	1854
Mary's Flight into Egypt		Egypt, Ohio	1856

After fourteen years of inexhaustible drive and inspired work, Fr. Brunner died in Europe on December 29, 1859, at the age of 64 years and 11 months. The Sisters had lost their most ardent advocate.

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This drawing, made before 1852, shows the first buildings at Maria Stein Convent. The artist labeled the buildings and described them as:

A. The church over the residence and workrooms
B. The barn
C. The school rooms and the children's rooms
D. The old barn
E. The priests' house
F. A small house for strangers
G. The upper floor is the Sisters' bedrooms, and the lower floor is the wash house and grain storage.
H. The yard with well and bake oven
I. The garden

Many of the Sisters from the convent had connections to St. John Church or the school. In total, there were 69 Sisters of the Precious Blood, from 1863 - 1986, who shared a cumulative total of 268 years of teaching in the St. John School District and/or Marion Local Schools. Sisters were a constant presence over the years in assisting with the religious education of the young people and providing a religious presence.

The Sisters have prayed and ministered at the Maria Stein Convent without interruption since 1846. It was named the Motherhouse for the Sisters of the Precious Blood and remained in that capacity until 1923 when that distinction was transferred to Salem Heights, Dayton, Ohio.



Chapel fresco

Official symbol of the Sisters of the Precious Blood



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The Shrine of the Holy Relics

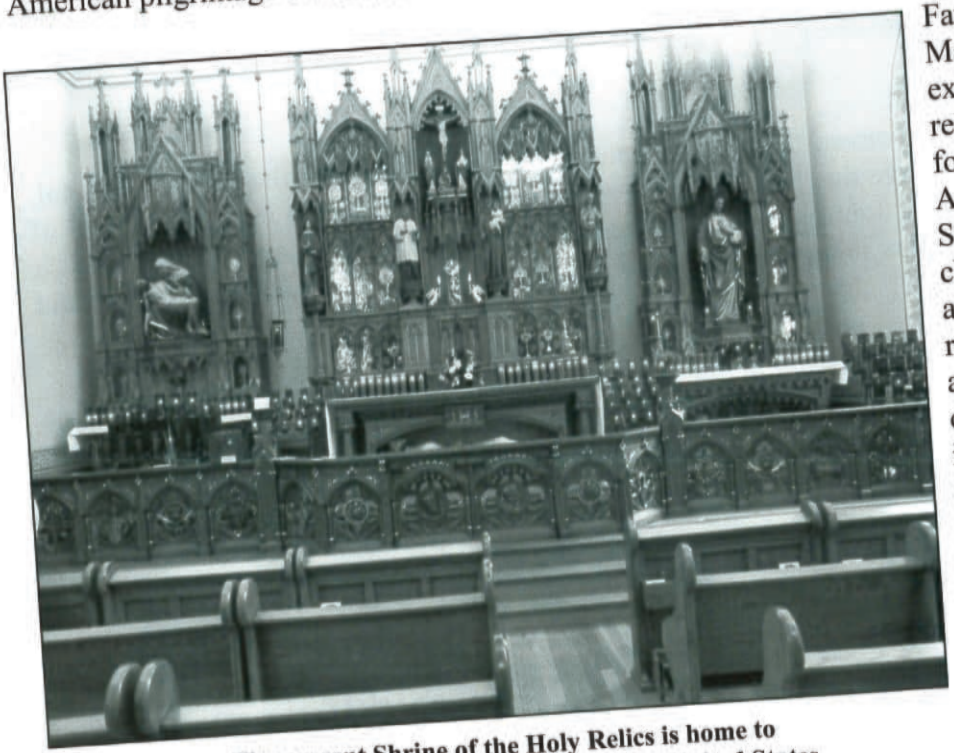
One of Father Brunner's pleasures was collecting and venerating relics of saints. Some were brought over on his first journey to America and others were collected over the years. Gradually, these relics found a home in the convent at Maria Stein. However, Fr. Brunner would have been overjoyed at the sight of the new treasury of relics that became the possession of the Community in 1875 as a gift of Fr. J. M. Gartner, a Missionary of the Sacred Heart of the Milwaukee Diocese.

In December 1872, Fr. Gartner had been sent to Rome, which was still suffering from the ravages of civil war. Every effort was being made by devout Catholics to save the holy relics which for centuries had been venerated in churches and monasteries. A large number had been placed under Apostolic custody, and Fr. Gartner was able to acquire a large collection of these sacred relics. He also obtained several valuable additions in Venice.

After returning to America, Fr. Gartner displayed the collection in New York City, as well as Baltimore, Cincinnati, and several other large cities. At first he thought they should be placed in some of the larger churches in the East, but he was advised to keep them together and have a shrine erected where pilgrimages could be made.

He finally selected the convent chapel of the Sisters of the Precious Blood at Maria Stein as best suited for enshrining the Holy Relics. It was a quiet and peaceful place where pilgrims who wished favors granted could beseech and pray undisturbed. The chapel was located in a veritable "Holy Land" where for miles around the spires of the Catholic churches gave evidence of an almost entirely Catholic neighborhood.

He informed Rome of his exploits and experiences. He asked the Holy Father for his sanction and blessing, and begged him to kindly send some missing relics of our Divine Lord's suffering, so as to have the collection complete. He received what he asked for through the help of Bishop Joseph Dwenger of Ft. Wayne, who in 1874 returned from Europe where he had escorted the first American pilgrimage to Rome and Lourdes.



The present Shrine of the Holy Relics is home to the second largest collection of relics in the United States.

Father Gartner arrived at Maria Stein in 1875, and exhibited the collection of relics in the Sisters' chapel for the first time on Friday, April 30. He asked the Sisters to assemble in the chapel and explained how and where he obtained the relics. He called their attention to this great gift of God and stated his intention to leave the relics in Maria Stein to be revered, as this place was preferred over many others by his ecclesiastical superiors.

On Sunday, May 2, 1875, the first pilgrimage of St.

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John Parish and the Sisters took place with a solemn procession. They walked with prayers and song from St. John Church to the Convent, where the relics were exhibited. After a Solemn High Mass, Fr. Gartner gave a touching address explaining the relics, and in conclusion stated that the relics were to remain in this chapel until a separate chapel could be built. The veneration of the Relic of the True Cross, expressed by kissing it, followed. The next day, children from nearby schools came to see and venerate the relics.



The adjoining chapel of the convent (2011)

In November of 1875, Fr. Gartner laid his plans before representatives of St. John parish and their pastor, Fr. Bernard Austermann, who was also the Provincial of the C.PP.S. Congregation. They could not reach agreement on the location of the proposed building. The parishioners of St. John wanted to have the relics in the parish church or in a chapel erected nearby. Finally, an agreement was reached whereby the Sisters would provide a suitable place for the relics and be charged with their safekeeping. The parishioners would defray the expense of arranging and furnishing the chapel on the condition that none of the relics be given away or taken to any other location. The parishioners of St. John were unanimous in this decision and in a few days had collected $1,300 for the furnishing of the small chapel. Fr. Gartner himself contributed an additional $1,100 of his own money.

Casper Stelzer of St. John parish, assisted by Brother Anthony and Brother Ludwig, converted an old "church room" into a beautiful shrine and made altars and cabinets for the relics. This was in the patio area of the present convent grounds. Fr. Gartner himself lined the cupboards with red silk fringed with gold and placed the ostensoriums in order, surrounded by the smaller capsules. Also, he gave the Sisters further instructions for arranging other parts of the Chapel.

Misunderstandings had arisen between Fr. Gartner and Archbishop Purcell who had desired that the treasury of relics be left in Cincinnati. The Archbishop also took exception to the large money collections and to Fr. Gartner's plan for making Maria Stein a place of pilgrimage. He openly expressed his displeasure. To avoid further complications, Fr. Gartner decided to leave. He had hoped to spend his last years close to his precious relics and would have joined the Precious Blood Fathers, but with a heavy heart, in 1876, he returned to La Crosse, Wisconsin where he died the following year.



Grotto on the site of the Maria Stein Center (2011)

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The next ten years brought more and more pilgrims to the Shrine. The Sisters started making plans to build a new convent which was to include a relic chapel. In the summer of 1887, when their decision became public, the people of St. John parish claimed the right of custody of the relics inasmuch as they had borne most of the expense of fitting out the first relic chapel. It appeared that the disagreement had been settled, as the sisters went ahead with their building plans. However, two years later when the actual building operation commenced, it flared up once more. Fr. Austermann was again called upon to settle the matter. He emphasized that in the original agreement the St. John people had voted unanimously to defray the expenses of the original chapel on the condition that the relics not be given away or taken to any other place.



c. 1940. Maria Stein Convent
Notice the dormers on the roof and the "swamp" in the foreground. The building mid-left was the garden house—used to store equipment for the fruit, vegetable, and flower gardens.

This apparently settled the controversy and work proceeded rapidly in the spring of 1890. On November 22, 1892, Rt. Rev. William Henry Elder, Archbishop of Cincinnati, dedicated the completed chapel to the Sacred Heart, possibly in honor of Fr. Gartner's devotion to the Sacred Heart. The ceremony of dedication included a procession led by 100 girls dressed in white, carrying the relics, and followed by members of the various societies and sodalities of St. John parish.

The Railroad

The impact of the railroad was significant on the community of Maria Stein. In 1881, the Toledo, Delphos, and Burlington Railroad extended its line south through Mendon, Mercer, Celina, Montezuma, Chickasaw, Maria Stein, and on to Dayton. This now made a direct line from Toledo to Dayton, and the following year it was consolidated with the St. Louis system.

In the family diary of John Kramer, he called the railroad through Maria Stein the Cincinnati, Hamilton and Dayton railroad (C.H. & D). The railroad passed one mile west of the St. John Church, and John's brother, Henry, took the job of carrying the mail from the railway station to the Maria Stein Post Office. The little community through which the railroad passed became known as St. John Station or Maria Stein Station. An influx of new businesses can be attributed to the railroad. Gradually both communities became known as Maria Stein with no distinction between St John and St. John Station. The railroad through Maria Stein, then belonging to the Toledo, Cincinnati and St. Louis Railroad, gradually went into decline and bankruptcy and was abandoned in 1923.

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C. H. & D. Railroad (1881-1923) north and south through town.
(near S.R. 716)



Ludwig Hausfeld—Last station master before the railroad was abandoned in 1923.

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CHAPTER FIVE
Growth, Transition, Turmoil
1861-1884

In November 1845, when the Precious Blood Fathers arrived in Maria Stein, Archbishop Purcell assigned them to look after the needs of St. John Parish. At that time, it was not uncommon for a priest to serve a parish for a few years, go to a neighboring parish, and then return for another year or so. Many of these names are also found on the 'former pastor lists' of St. Rose, St. Henry, Cassella, Egypt, and Minster. These priests lived in the gatehouse at the Maria Stein Convent and often said Masses at two parishes. The pastors (all C.PP.S. priests) at St. John parish, from 1845 until 1861, are as follows:

John Van den Broeck	1845-46	Peter Wilhelmi	1853-54
John Wittmer	1846	Anthony Kramer	1854-55
Matthias Kreusch	1846-47	Andrew Kunkler	1855-56
John Van den Broeck	1847-48	Stephan Falk	1856-58
John Wittmer	1848-49	Erhard Glueck	1858-60
Andrew Kunkler	1849-51	Peter Wilhelmi	1860-61
Aloys Schelbert	1851-53		

The first pastor St. John had for any extended period of time was Fr. Bernard Austermann, C.PP.S., who became pastor in 1861 and stayed until 1880. Fr. Austermann came to America in 1850 from Everswinkel, Westphalia, Germany. He was ordained into the Missionaries of the Precious Blood in 1856, and his only extended pastorate was in Mercer County. The following comments about Fr. Austermann are extracted from the writings of Fr. Vigilius H. Krull, C.PP.S..



Fr. Bernard Austermann, C.PP.S.
1861-1880

He was strong, zealous, and possessed a natural gift of eloquence and honor to God. He worked tirelessly in his mission, usually traveling by horseback in an area still covered in dense forest, on roads that were very poor, and to countryside log homes that were still few and far between. His talents and reverence were admired by many, and he was elected Provincial in 1874 [while still at St. John]. However, he always longed to be a missionary, and was granted that request at the end of his tenure at St. John. He gave missions and retreats in Tennessee and Ohio and did not find his equal. Possessed of a keen intellect and lifelong sanctity, his presence was highly appreciated even to his last breath. Shortly before his death he remarked, "These hours, which I have spent before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, are a great consolation and joy to me now in death."

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Although things had gone smoothly at St. John for many years, in 1880 significant parish problems erupted. At the center of all this trouble was the question of the local school: two school buildings adjacent to each other, one built by the parish but both owned by the school board in a solid Catholic community with its schools run by the lay Board of Education. The incident that triggered the revolt was Fr. Austermann's objection to a teacher the Board had hired. His position was that the school should be run as a parochial school with himself making the decisions. However, the School Board's stance was that they, as the elected board members of the public school, should hire the teachers and set school policy as they chose. Another argued point was the church-built school. The pastor and some of the parishioners considered that they still owned the school and should control it even if it had been sold and deeded to the school board in 1858.



First school built by the Public School Board in 1858 - located just west of Jefferson Street.*

Although the school was not a parochial school in the strict sense, in a completely Catholic community like St. John, the parish priest was, no doubt, considered by many to have the last word in school and civic affairs. In a letter of August 6, 1880, Archbishop Elder reminded Fr. Austerman of the difference between a parochial school and a public school and the implications for the local pastor.

> *A parochial school supported by the Congregation must have a teacher appointed by the Pastor without interference from laymen. But in a district school supported by taxes, the community officers or school trustees have the legal right of appointment. I can only urge them as Catholics to make an appointment agreeable to the Pastor.*
>
> The Archbishop commented further in a letter of July 23:
>
> *I will write to them about the teacher, urging that the school trustees agree with the pastor on (a) suitable person. But that will have more effect when they have a pastor who can conciliate everybody, or at least against whom there is no ill will.*

*** The school was used for 72 years; initially as the Boys School, but the last few years as a high school. It was torn down in 1930. Note the parish owned teacher's house to the north and the church and rectory to the west. The metal hitching post (foreground) ran parallel to today's Jefferson Street.**

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Obviously, the people in the parish took sides, and those opposed to the pastor were considered rebels. As a result of the controversy, the church was closed for five months in 1880 and the chapel at the convent was used by the parishioners. Baptisms took place at the convent during this time. Many people from Chickasaw had belonged to St. John parish, but because of the school problem, some joined the St. Sebastian congregation and remained there until the Chickasaw parishioners formed their own parish in 1903.

In reviewing and studying the correspondence between Archbishop Elder, Precious Blood Provincials, and Pastors of St. John, the seriousness of the division in the parish and the eventual solutions became evident. Correspondence and other records show that in the month of March, 1880, the treasurer of the parish, acting in the name of the other parish trustees, took civil action in the county court house in Celina against the former parish treasurer, ordering him to turn over the parish account books, notes, and securities worth about $2,180.

On May 4, 1880, an appeal from the trustees was sent to Archbishop Elder.

> *As we are in distress we take our refuge to you, which is on account of our Church being closed for these 5 months past. The St. John Congregation was a peaceable one ever since its existence until 1878 and 1879. Whence we became trouble with the priest, about Church Trustees. In 1879 we received rules and regulations from the Most R. Rev. John Purcell of Cincinnati to elect our trustees, but the priest only excepted them for one year. . . . . But our Provincial was not satisfied; he wanted different trustees in order to have a Sister to play the organ in church and do the church service. We never had a Sister to play the organ since the existence of our church. And, ¾ of our members are opposing the Sister to play the organ. . . . . In Mercer Co. are about 16 churches. "Catholic" and Catholic free or public schools standing close by ever (sic) church. Our school and church was always connected; the teacher who taught the school served also in church. And both together payed (sic) sufficiently to engage a good competent teacher.. . . . . During the last 3 years we had about 5 different young priests; as soon as the provincial saw that the priest was well pleased with the congregation, he was compelled to go to another place. . . . . All we demand is peace, peace, peace! Our church open and a good stationary priest. We are tired of these nunnery priests and the many changes. . . . With the greatest humility and sincerest confidence we hope you will help us out of this trouble.*
>
> *Signed by the Trustees;*
> *John H. Drees*
> *Henry Menker, Clerk*
> *Emanuel Garmann*
> *Herman Bruns*
> *Wm. Desch*

Stories handed down by word of mouth of actual violence that took place include: shots being fired in the sanctuary; a break-in of the church - with the ciborium, containing sacred hosts, being stolen and later found on a wood pile of one of the parishioners; the priest threatened and chased out of the church; and the treasurer of the parish putting a padlock on the church doors. These stories cannot be substantiated. It is true that people had strong feelings that caused deep rifts which continued for years.

The actions of the local church may have been precipitated by events that were unfolding in Cincinnati. The Archdiocese of Cincinnati was experiencing financial failure and the ownership of all properties owned by the archdiocese was being litigated in civil courts. The local people may have feared the ownership of their own parish buildings was in jeopardy.

Correspondence between Archbishop Elder and Fr. Bernard Austermann shows how the matter was settled, at least temporarily. The dissidents in the parish were required to hand over the books of the parish. The Archbishop urged Fr. Austermann to show great tact and understanding in dealing

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with the persons who had caused the trouble: . . . *speak as gently as possible to soothe their minds. Do not call them a rebel party nor use any other words that will offend them . . . Give them credit as much as possible for what good they have done - in surrendering the keys and books.*

Five months after St. John closed its doors, on July 7, 1880, the church was reopened for divine services. The Archbishop was greatly concerned about naming a suitable pastor to heal the differences in the community. He thought a priest other than Fr. Austermann should be named "to leave you more free for your higher duties," that is, his task as provincial. The priest who was named next pastor of St. John was Fr. Michael Graf, C.PP.S., who served from November 1880 until May 1884.



Fr. Michael Graf, C.PP.S.
1880-1884

But troubles continued between the school trustees and the church leaders. The next Provincial Superior, Fr. Henry Drees, complained about the division in St. John Congregation on the school issue. In spite of his efforts to keep the Sisters as teachers at the girls' school, where two Sisters had been teaching some twenty girls, he finally approved their giving up this work in 1883 because school officials had been elected who were known to be opposed to the Sisters.

In a letter dated August 20, 1884, written to a group of St. John members who were charged with spreading malicious rumors about Fr. Andrew Kunkler, pastor in Minster, and himself, Fr. Drees denounced, in rather extreme language, the appropriation of the school house which was known as the Sisters' School House: *I detest and condemn the sacrilegious act of the Marion Township School Board, taking in violation of Ecclesiastical and civil law possession of (the) schoolhouse mentioned, and I am of the opinion the respective perpetrators of act named should be punished according to the laws of Church and State.*

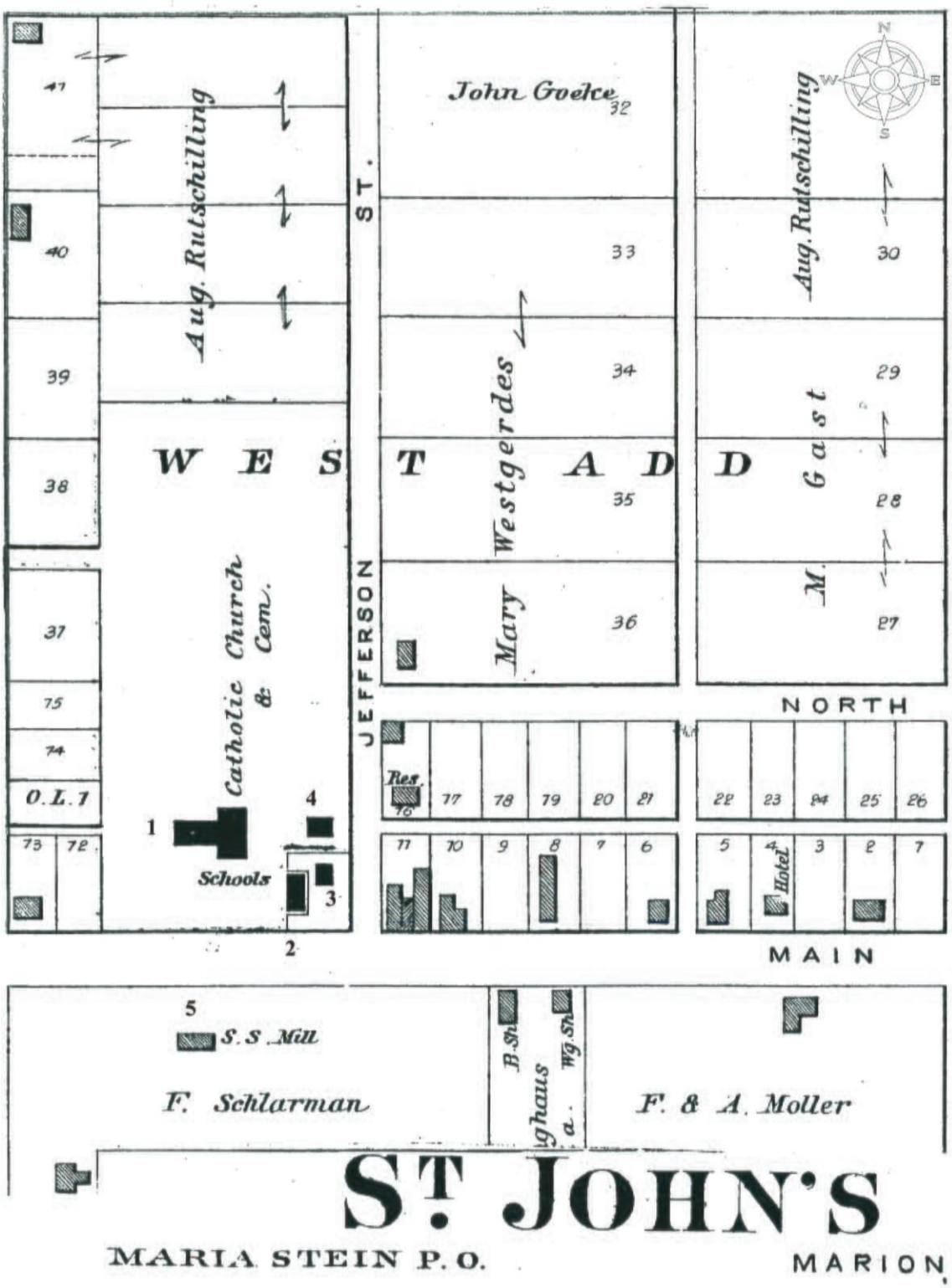
Fr. Thomas Eisenring, C.PP.S., (pastor from 1884-1889) wrote these comments in a report to the Archbishop on January 29, 1887:

> *St. John's Congregation was always a good, faithful Congregation until a kind of Josephinism crept into some members in later days, thinking themselves to be rulers of pastor and flock and therefore opposing the authority of God and church, having its origin from the deplorable trouble of school affairs from the year 1880 until the present day more or less. Documentation of this trouble would require books to be written, but better it is to let all drop in the ocean of oblivion forever.*

In spite of the charged language and accusations, the pastor and the school directors were able to discuss the problem. Part of the solution shows on the county records dated August 23, 1887, when the Board of Education deeded back to the parish a piece of ground 26 feet by 44 feet. On this piece of ground stood the church built school. Also, according to Fr. Eisenring's own words, the school directors asked him to appoint the teacher at St. John's School and assured him they would arrange to get another teacher to handle the increased number of children. The church trustees at this time were Bernard Overman, Joseph Bruggeman, Frank H. Kremer and Clement Hausfeld.

Also, reasonable counsel must have prevailed, because shortly after these episodes, Archbishop Elder visited St. John Church to administer Confirmation.

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Map of St. John dated 1888. ***(Numeric notations added for clarification)***
The parish rectory has not yet been constructed.

1. **The church (the second) faces the west. Approximate location of current church.**
2. **The church owned school (building stands north to south). Note that it has been blocked out of the school lot.**
3. **The Public School Board owned school (building stands E to W)**
4. **The teacher/organist's residence**
5. **Sawmill (currently south parking lot)**

Source: Atlas of Mercer County, Ohio - 1888

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CHAPTER SIX
A New Era - A New Church
1884-1897

Father Thomas Eisenring, C.PP.S., took pastoral charge of the parish on May 10, 1884. After emigrating from Switzerland and completing his studies at St. Charles Seminary, he was the pastor at Immaculate Conception in Celina, Ohio, St. Boniface in New Riegel, Ohio, and St. Peter in Winamac, Indiana, before coming to St. John. He realized immediately that the parish had outgrown its present quarters and needed a larger church. On August 15, 1887, the congregation voted to build a new and larger church. Elected to the building committee were Bernard Hausfeld, John Kramer, Ted Moeller and Henry Bertke, Jr. After much discussion and in the face of some opposition resulting from the recent parish feud, Fr. Eisenring and the building committee worked hard to overcome all obstacles put in their way.



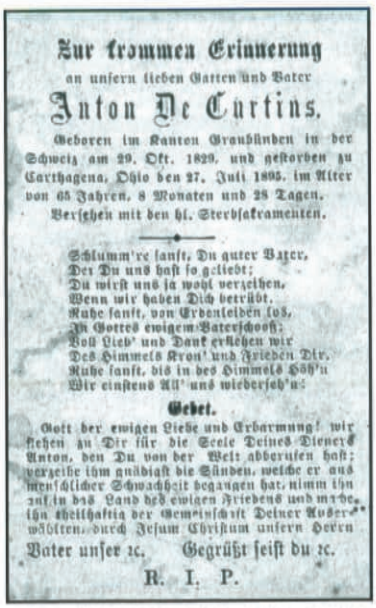
Fr. Thomas Eisenring, C.PP.S.
1884-1889

Adolphus Druiding (1839-1899), an architect from Chicago, was commissioned to make plans for the new church, which were approved by Archbishop William Henry Elder of Cincinnati. Druiding, German-born, was a nationally acclaimed architect and had an appeal to many German parishioners. Subscriptions were solicited for the construction of the new church, but with traces of disharmony still lingering, did not meet with much success. However, Fr. Eisenring and the building committee moved ahead.



Crucifix located in east sacristy

During 1888, much of the building material, including brick and stone was purchased. On February 28, 1889, the contract for the construction of the church was given to Anthony De Curtins, a Swiss immigrant who had settled in Carthagena, Ohio. Mr. De Curtins and his family built many of the Catholic churches in the area, including St. Aloysius in Carthagena, St. Henry in St. Henry, and St. Paul in Sharpsburg.



Zur frommen Erinnerung

an unsern lieben Gatten und Vater

Anton De Curtins.

Geboren im Kanton Graubünden in der Schweiz am 29. Okt. 1829, und gestorben zu Carthagena, Ohio den 27. Juli 1895, im Alter von 65 Jahren, 8 Monaten und 28 Tagen. Versehen mit den hl. Sterbsakramenten.

Schlumm're sanft, Du guter Vater,
Der Du uns hast so geliebt;
Du wirst uns ja wohl verzeihen,
Wenn wir haben Dich betrübt.
Ruhe sanft, von Erdenleiden los,
In Gottes ewigem Vaterschooß;
Voll Lieb' und Dank erflehen wir
Des Himmels Kron' und Frieden Dir.
Ruhe sanft, bis in des Himmels Höh'n
Wir einstens All' uns wiederseh'n.

Gebet.

Gott der ewigen Liebe und Erbarmung! wir flehen zu Dir für die Seele Deines Dieners Anton, den Du von der Welt abberufen hast; verzeihe ihm gnädigst die Sünden, welche er aus menschlicher Schwachheit begangen hat, nimm ihn auf in das Land des ewigen Friedens und mache ihn theilhaftig der Gemeinschaft Deiner Auserwählten, durch Jesum Christum unsern Herrn

Vater unser ꝛc. Gegrüßt seist du ꝛc.

R. I. P.

The funeral card for Anton DeCurtins

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The location of all three St. John churches has been in the same general vicinity. Several accounts have documented this understanding.

In Fr. Otto Missler's 1911 pastoral summary to the chancery, he included these observations:

> *March 6, 1835, some 25 families had organized and bought 40 acres of land for church purposes, paying $120 for the land. It was unanimously resolved to build a church on this land, on the very site on which the present church (1911) stands. . . . . Fine trees on the very church grounds and surrounding the site chosen afforded themselves as available. Hence a log church was erected some 30 by 45 feet. . . . . A location for a cemetery was readily found directly north of the church.*

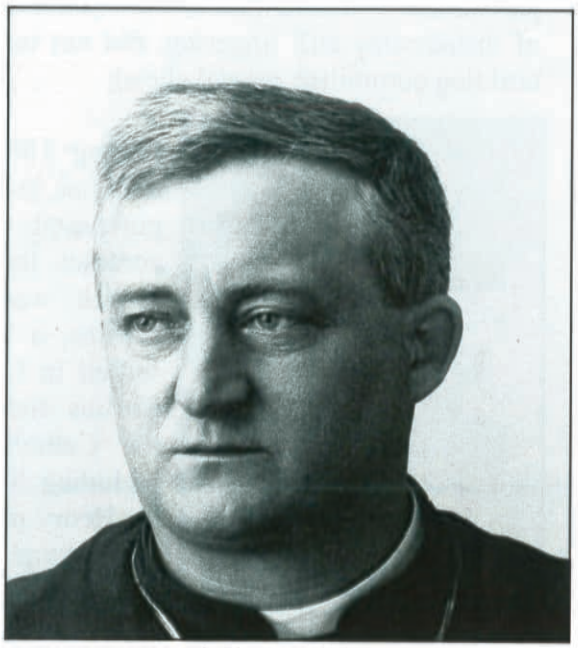
From a diary credited to John Henry Kramer:

> *At first a log church was built about at the same place that later the brick was built in 1849 and the present church was built in 1889 on the same spot only facing south, where the old one faced west. To the first brick church was added an addition on the east and making the old church a "T" building about 1855-60.. The old brick church built 1849 had altars about where the parsonage now stands and entrance from the west end is about where now the pulpit stands – a little to the east of the pulpit.*

From the historical sketch of Fr. Henry Drees, C.PP.S., dated 1902. This entry is extracted from his account of the log church:

> *. . . . . A suitable place for a graveyard was readily found, directly north of the site, on which at present (1906) the splendid new church stands.*

On May 5, 1889, the cornerstone was blessed by Right Reverend Joseph Dwenger, Bishop of Ft. Wayne, Indiana, and native son of St. John. On May 9, 1889, the following quote appeared in the Mercer County Standard: "The cornerstone of the new Catholic Church at St. John was laid Sunday and quite a number of Celina people went over to witness the occasion." During that year, the construction moved rapidly and before winter the edifice was under roof.



Father Martin Dentinger, C.PP.S.
1889-1897

In December 1889, Fr. Martin Dentinger, C.PP.S., was appointed pastor of the parish. He was a young priest, having just been ordained in 1885. In his first four years, he was the pastor at Mary Help of Christians, in Ft. Recovery, and at Cassella, where he assisted with their renovation of the church after a fire destroyed much of it. His efforts and energies at St. John were directed to the completion of the church. Much work was done during 1890, and the church neared completion by the fall of 1891.

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The following news items appeared in the German newspaper, *Der Mercer County Bote.* The first, describing the new church, was dated November 2, 1891.

The New Church

The new church of St. John's Congregation at Maria Stein, Mercer County, is unquestionably one of the loveliest in northwestern Ohio. This church, magnificent from every point of view, is built in the Romanesque style. The building is 137 ½ feet long, 58 feet wide, is in the shape of a cross with three aisles, and has a tower 180 feet high. It is made of bricks with Berea sandstone trim. The roof and tower are covered with slate with handsome decorations. Ten magnificent pillars serve both to support the building and enhance its beauty. The height of the middle aisle is 50 feet. Nineteen windows illuminate the interior and add greatly to its beauty. In addition, the lovely painting, and above all, the magnificent paintings in the sanctuary make a deep impression. They are the work of Baron Th. von Freskoirt.

The design is the work of the architect [contractor] Anthony DeCurtins of Carthagena, Ohio, and the construction was carried out under his supervision. Mr. DeCurtins has been praised on all sides for his magnificent design, but even more for the solid, well-planned construction, especially of the interior, where everything is done in oak. Mr. John Burkhart of Kenton was in charge of the masonry and deserves high praise. We must congratulate all these gentlemen for a job well done in their own particular fields. The splendid windows of the church were supplied by the Artistic Glass Painting Co., Cincinnati, Ohio. The painting was the work of the Liebig Co. of Milwaukee.

The lovely location and the wealth of artistic beauty in this building make it worth coming miles to see.

The second, inviting area residents to attend the church dedication, was dated November 5, 1891.

On Wednesday, November 11, the new church of St. John in Maria Stein, Ohio will be solemnly consecrated by the Most Reverend Archbishop Elder.

Everyone - friends, acquaintances, relatives - everyone who loves beautiful churches, but especially former members of the community, all are urged to enhance this festive day of our parish by their presence.

A hearty welcome to all!

Half-fare the evening before and the day itself on the C. H. & D. Railroad (through Maria Stein) from Dayton and Delphos and all points in between.

The Most Reverend Archbishop will arrive on the 10th and will be met at the railroad station with a grand torchlight procession.

The Solemn Mass of the consecration will begin at 9:30 a.m. At two in the afternoon will be solemn Vespers and the administration of Confirmation. The men's choir is working hard to be ready for these solemn services.

The Committee

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This financial statement, written by John M. Kramer, lists the expenses for the building of the 1891 St. John church.

Statement of Expense of
St Johns Church build
at Maria Stein in 1888 To 1894
by John M. Kramer Secty Bld Comittee

516 41/ Perch Stone	785 09	
Freight on same 57 cars	456 00	1241 09
735000 Brick		2834 51
695 yds. Sand		551 20
1200 bu Lake Sand 4½ @	54 00	
Freight on same	66 10	120 10
442 feet Watertable Sandstone		221 00
5172 bu Lime		880 22
7955 feet Ash flooring		249 65
First Contract A DeCurtins		17147 00
Extra under first Contract		27 00
Second Contract A DeCurtins		7750 00
Extra under second Contract		98 78
Miscellaneous		1614 44
Total cost of Building		$32735.04

Building	$32735.04
Painting	2000.00
Pulpit	550.00
Furnaces	409.58
Bells	1015.44
Pews	918.00
Windows	1867.00
Painting Pictures	425.00
Communion Railing	225.00
	40145.06

The items in the small box were from a separate sheet of paper and added at a later date.

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The following article appeared in *Der Mercer County Bote*, dated November 19, 1891.

The Church Dedication

Last Wednesday the magnificent new church of St. John's congregation in Maria Stein was consecrated in traditional ceremonies by the Most Reverend Archbishop Elder and officially dedicated to divine worship. Numerous visitors from far and wide took part in the celebration. Many old acquaintances greeted each other, many who hadn't seen each other for years. Despite the fact that it had been raining the previous two days and that the weather was threatening on Wednesday itself, it was good to see so many people taking part in the celebration.

The liturgical celebration was indeed impressive. At the festive high Mass, at which the Archbishop assisted on his throne in full pontificals, the following clergy were present: Eugene Grimm, celebrant; Leo Boehmer and T. Wittmer, deacons of honor; Bernard Russ, deacon, and William Russ, subdeacon; Very Reverend Henry Drees, archpriest; John Van den Broeck and C. Hummer (student), first and second masters of ceremonies; also Cosmos Seeberger, L. Hoefele, Albert Voag, Carl Meyer, John Wittmer (from Tennessee), and M. L. Dentinger, the pastor of the parish, and a missionary priest who accompanied the Archbishop, and a number of theology students from Carthagena. In addition, the Right Reverend Msgr. Windhorst from Chillicothe, Ohio, delivered the sermon for the occasion. Unfortunately we can not give you a report of the sermon since we arrived too late, but it must have been a stirring one. Unable to attend were Thomas Eisenring from Ft. Wayne and Bernard Austerman from Loretto, Tennessee, both former pastors of the parish.

In the afternoon solemn Vespers were held and the sacrament of Confirmation was given to 41 candidates, thirteen boys and twenty-eight girls. About 50 girls in white dresses carried burning candles to give a note of solemnity. August Wildenhaus, the leader of the Mass servers, carried a banner which was both lovely and cleverly designed. Mary Schlormann, leader of the girls in white dresses, carried a bouquet of white lilies, a symbol of purity and heavenly peace.

Matching the impressive ceremonies in the sanctuary was the lovely and moving singing of the men's choir and the mixed choir under the able direction of the talented organist, Mr. Louis Welde, who had been practicing for a long time for this celebration. During the dedication of the church, the men's choir sang the "Miserere." During the high mass the "Missa Sexta" of Michael Haller was sung by the mixed choir. The Introit, Gradual and Communion chants from the Roman Gradual were sung by the men. The Offertory chant, "Veritas" by Fresch, was sung by the mixed choir. The Vesper service with its antiphon taken from the feast was also sung by the mixed choir. During the Confirmation "Confirma hoc" by Fresch and during Benediction "Veni Rex Optime" by Zangl and "Tantum Ergo" by Lenk were used. It must also be mentioned that the students from Carthagena provided a four-voice "Offertorium" and "Te Deum."

The new church, the third since the establishment of the parish, is a magnificent building whose interior decoration, the painting, the elegant pillars, etc., make a profound impression on the visitor. When you think of the first log church, which was still in use in 1849, and then look at this new one, you are amazed at the growth and progress of the parish. Not without reason did the Archbishop state that this lovely church bears witness to the generosity and the Christian spirit of the good people.

The pews will be installed as soon as possible. The altars from the old church are being used until the new ones are constructed.

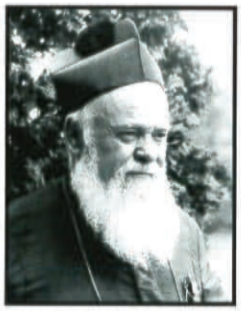
In the school building the women and girls of the parish laid a well provided table for the hungry guests. Everything from meat and potatoes to fancy baked goods were available in abundance. The girls who waited on the tables were a model of skill and courtesy. The guests had nothing but praise for the hospitality and the fine meal. Your reporter can attest to this from his own experience.

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Paintings located in the south vestibule of St. John Church.

Left: [St. Camillus]
Right: [St. Francis of Assisi]



Fr. Paulinus Trost



Several paintings in St. John church were painted (1904) by Fr. Paulinus Trost, C.PP.S.. Born in Germany in 1856, he became a Precious Blood priest and was the rector at St. Charles (1904-1917). He designed the chapel there, and the fresco work was credited to him. Many church ceilings/frescos and hundreds of canvas paintings hang in churches throughout this area. He continued to paint well into his retirement at St. Charles; he passed away in 1939.



Father Francis Nigsch, C.PP.S.
1897

Fr. Francis Nigsch replaced Fr. Dentinger as the pastor at St. John for a short period of eight months in 1897. He emigrated from Blons, Vorarlberg, Austria. An obituary notice from the St. Charles *Nuntius Aulae* indicated that his family life was filled with an atmosphere of congenial piety, as four of the five children sought entrance into religious vocations. The three boys in the family journeyed to America where they became members of the Society of the Precious Blood.

It was during his brief pastorate that the St. Rochus Commandery 313, Knights of St. John, was organized.

Prior to his time at St. John, Fr. Nigsch held pastorates in Cassella, St. Marys, St. Joseph (Wapakoneta), and then sixteen years in Glandorf. Refusing to retire, he returned to Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Cassella until poor health and a stroke forced him into retirement at St. Charles.



Father Ignatius Rauh, C.PP.S.
1897-1898

Fr. Ignatius Rauh, C.PP.S., was born in St. Anthony, Ohio. Following short appointments at St. Paul in Sharpsburg, Ohio, and St. Stephen in St. Stephens, Ohio, he was the pastor at St. John for 17 months. He was a young priest, only 34 years of age, when he ministered this parish. After his tenure here, he spent the bulk of his career as a missionary or chaplain.

Although records of that era are sparse, it was mentioned in 1898 financial accounts that the church received $111.20 in profit from a Fourth of July celebration. There was also income, perhaps from the sale of old bricks and materials from the old church, which netted $121.58.

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Earliest Known Financial Accounts

1897

Statement of St. John the Baptist Catholic Church

Names	Year	Subsc. Paid	Notes Int. Paid	Pew Rent Due	Pew Rent Paid
		$ cts	$ cts	$ cts	$ cts
Henry Tangeman	1889			$3.25	
Jacob Frey	1885			$3.57	
B. Hilgefort	1885			$1.00	
Jacob Weis	1886			$2.00	
Herman Gehle	1886			$2.50	
Jacob Fobe	1887			$2.00	
Wm. Hinders Sr.	1888			$4.06	
Charles Reichert	1888			$2.00	
John Osterfeld	1890			$2.63	
Fr. Tangeman 1890-	1892	$25.00	$10.71	$10.26	$10.26
Martin Ankenbauer	1890			$2.25	
Herman Koelker	1890			$2.00	
Jacob Desch	1892			$11.34	
B. Ungruhn	1892			$5.00	
Jacob Desch	1893			$6.50	
D. Reinders	1894			$5.00	
Hy. Poppelman	1894			$7.75	
A. Brunswick	1894			$1.38	$1.38
B. Hinders	1895			$11.63	
Hy. Mescher	1895			$10.00	$10.00
Fred. Hinders	1895			$8.25	
A. Niekamp	1895			$5.00	
Herman Schaefer	1895			$5.13	$4.50
John Schlorman	1895			$5.50	
B. Knapke Jr.	1896			$10.05	$10.05
Jos. Knapke	1896			$15.00	$15.00
G. Puthoff	1896			$10.00	$10.00
B.Overman	1896			$10.25	$10.25
John Synck	1896			$5.13	$5.13
Hy. Synck	1896			$15.00	$15.00
Jacob Schweller	1896			$10.00	$10.00
John Oliger	1896			$10.00	$10.00
Herm. Menker	1896			$5.00	$5.00
B. Bremke	1896			$5.00	$5.00
Hy. Schulte	1896			$5.00	$5.00
Anna Wildenhaus	1896			$5.17	$5.17
Frank Jopp	1896			$5.17	$5.17
E. Schlorman	1896			$7.50	$7.50
Jos. Brunswick	1896			$10.00	$10.00

Names	Year	Subsc. Paid	Notes Int. Paid	Pew Rent Due	Pew Rent Paid
		$ cts	$ cts	$ cts	$ cts
Hy. Mescher	1896			$10.00	$10.00
Aug. Stelzer	1896			$5.06	$5.06
Henry Heitkamp	1896			$10.75	$10.75
B. Heitkamp	1896			$7.00	$7.00
John Bohman	1896			$22.50	$22.50
John Brackman	1896			$21.38	$21.38
Aug. Rutschilling	1896			$7.13	$7.13
B. Schmitt	1896			$13.75	$13.75
E. Garman	1896			$6.88	$6.88
Jos. Tangeman Son of Anton				$12.75	
Jos. Meinerding	1896	$2.00	$0.66	$6.25	$6.25
B. Giere	1896			$21.00	$21.00
Hy. Grieshof	1896			$41.63	$41.63
John Huber	1896			$5.00	$5.00
B. Kalkhoff	1896			$5.00	$5.00
John Graff	1896			$5.00	$5.00
C. Meinerding	1896			$15.00	$15.00
John Tangeman	1896			$5.00	$5.00
Hy. Ahrens	1896			$5.00	$5.00
John Grieshop	1896			$5.38	$5.38
Hy. Wissman	1896			$5.00	$5.00
John Brunswick	1896			$5.00	
K. Plassental	1896	$5.00	$0.15	$5.00	$5.00
Hy. Elking	1896			$5.00	$5.00
B. Grieshop	1896			$20.00	$20.00
Hy. Tangeman	1987			$6.50	$6.50
John Borgers	1987			$6.50	$6.50
Jos. Knapke	1987			$20.00	$20.00
G. Puthoff	1987			$5.00	$5.00
Frank Mescher	1987			$5.00	$5.00
John Puthoff	1987			$10.00	$10.00
B. Overman	1987	$5.00		$10.00	$10.00
John Synck	1987			$5.00	$5.00
C. Kunk	1987		$2.19	$5.00	$5.00
Magdalena Rolfers	1987			$15.00	$15.00
Hy. Rolfers	1987			$5.00	$5.00
Fred. Mescher	1987			$5.00	$5.00
John Drees	1987			$10.00	$10.00
B. Boeke	1987	$15.00		$13.33	$13.33

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Names	Year if not 1897	Subsc. Paid	Notes Int. Paid	Pew Rent Due	Pew Rent Paid
		$ cts	$ cts	$ cts	$ cts
B. Lange 10 months				$4.17	$4.17
Dick Puthoff		$10.00		$15.00	$15.00
Hy. Synck 11 1/2 months				$13.13	$13.13
Jos. Bernard		$5.00		$5.82	$5.82
Mrs. Aug. Bruns				$15.00	$15.00
Aug. Buehler		$10.00		$5.07	$5.07
Dick Buehler				$10.13	$10.13
Anton Reichert 4 months				$1.69	$1.69
B. Bergmann				$10.00	$10.00
Annie Luttmer				$5.00	$5.00
P.H. Kleinhenz 4 months				$2.25	$2.25
K. Gast		$20.00	$1.20		
Hy. Westgerdes		$10.00	$0.55	$15.00	$15.00
B. Meier				$25.27	$25.27
E. Droesch		$3.00	$0.18	$10.00	$10.00
John Oliger				$5.00	$5.00
Jos. Tobe		$10.00	$0.55	$25.00	$25.00
Jacob Schweller			$1.35	$10.00	$10.00
John M. Kramer			$42.00	$10.00	$10.00
Hy. Kramer		$20.00		$10.00	$10.00
Jos. Oppenheim				$5.00	$5.00
Hy. Wilke		$10.00	$0.50	$10.00	$10.00
B. Mescher				$10.34	$10.34
Herm. Menker				$5.17	$5.17
Anton Weber		$10.00	$0.55	$5.00	$5.00
B. Bremke		$4.00	$0.22	$5.00	$5.00
B. Fleck			$0.40	$5.00	$5.00
Jos. Heitkamp		$50.00		$25.17	$25.17
John Homan		$25.00		$10.00	$10.00
Herm. Pohlman				$20.00	$20.00
Hy. Schulte				$5.00	$5.00
Hy. Budde		$20.00	$1.75	$5.00	$5.00
John Plaspohl				$5.00	
N. Fullenkamp				$15.00	$15.00
Frank Weber		$5.00	$0.25	$5.00	$5.00
Anna Wildenhaus				$10.00	$10.00
Clem. Hausfeld				$10.00	$10.00
Frank Topp				$5.00	$5.00
Henry Goecke		$25.00	$4.50	$15.00	$15.00
E. Schlorman				$6.25	
K. Rutschilling		$5.00	$0.20	$5.00	$5.00
Jos. Brunswick		$8.00	$1.36	$10.00	$10.00
M. Meier		$5.00	$0.83		
John Bernard				$5.00	$5.00
Ferdinand Desch				$15.30	$15.30
Jos. Desch				$5.10	$5.10
Dick Rutschilling				$5.10	$5.10
Hy. Mescher				$10.00	$10.00
Fred. Schroeder		$5.00		$7.50	$7.50
B. Westgerdes & Bro.		$15.74	$0.87	$20.25	$20.25
Herm. Kunk				$5.12	$5.12
John Overman		$5.00	$0.28	$5.12	$5.12
Jos. Brandewie		$10.00		$8.00	$8.00
Henry Heitkamp		$20.00	$0.50	$10.38	$10.38
Fred Huber		$5.00		$5.19	$5.19
D. Heitkamp				$5.19	$5.19
John Bohman		$5.00	$0.28	$10.25	$10.25
Henry Wendel				$10.25	$10.25
John Brackman		$15.00	$0.83	$15.00	$15.00
Aug. Rutschilling		$5.00		$5.00	$5.00
B. Everman				$20.96	$20.96
Fred. Heckman				$10.75	$10.75
Hy. Reichert		$20.00	$1.05	$16.70	$16.70
Frank Dabbelt		$5.00	$0.30	$5.57	$5.57
Jos. Dahlinghaus				$11.13	$11.13
Chas. Eifert				$5.57	$5.57
Dr. Wilke				$5.57	$5.57
John Imwalle		$25.00		$22.50	$22.50
Frank Kremer				$23.00	$23.00
Mary Goecke		$10.00	$0.25	$28.25	$28.25
Dick Huelskamp		$25.00		$11.63	$11.63
B. Huelskamp		$10.00	$0.55	$11.63	$11.63
Sophia Heckman				$15.60	$15.60
E. Hausfeld		$10.00	$0.55		
Anton Hausfeld		$25.00	$1.38	$23.50	$23.50
Mrs. A. Droesch				$20.00	$20.00
S. Bergman Jr.				$20.00	$20.00
Hy. Menker				$10.40	$10.40
John Kremer				$8.08	$8.08
B. Schmitt				$10.00	$10.00
E. Garman				$5.00	$5.00
B. Garman				$5.00	$5.00
M. Gast		$10.00	$0.60	$15.75	$15.75
B. Vehorn				$25.25	$25.25

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Names	Year if not 1897	Subsc. Paid $ cts	Notes Int. Paid $ cts	Pew Rent Due $ cts	Pew Rent Paid $ cts
C. Bruns		$50.00		$15.38	$15.38
B. Miller				$5.13	$5.13
C. Vehorn		$25.00		$15.85	$15.85
Aug. Stelzer				$7.07	$7.07
Hy. Fullenkamp		$50.00		$21.50	$21.50
B. Knapke Sr.		$50.00	$2.25	$26.92	$26.92
Hy. Bertke				$11.50	$11.50
Jos. Bertke				$5.75	$5.75
Wm. Roeckner		$5.00	$0.28	$11.50	$11.50
John Roeckner		$5.00	$0.28	$11.50	$11.50
B. Giere		$15.00	$0.75	$12.13	$12.13
Jac. Ranly		$45.00	$0.68	$12.13	$12.13
Anton Overman				$17.44	$17.44
Hy. Giere				$5.82	$5.82
John Fleck				$23.00	$23.00
John Goecke		$10.00	$0.50	$5.00	$5.00
J. B. Knapke		$60.00	$6.90	$10.00	$10.00
Jos. Bruggeman				$15.00	$15.00
Hy. Bruggeman		$8.00	$1.24	$5.00	$5.00
Charles Fahrig				$5.17	$5.17
Hy. Stammen 6 months				$2.59	$2.59
B. Tangeman				$5.75	$5.75
John Tangeman				$5.75	$5.75
Wm. Wallerbusch				$10.00	$10.00
Hy. Wisman				$5.00	$5.00
A. Tangeman				$20.00	
B. Borgers				$15.25	$15.25
A. L. Heitkamp				$10.34	$10.34
M. Bertke		$10.00	$0.55	$15.00	$15.00
C. Meinerding				$15.00	$15.00
K. Voshkuhl		$12.00	$0.63	$14.78	$14.78
John Bruns				$20.00	$20.00
B. Bruns				$10.00	$10.00
Wm. Niemeier				$10.00	$10.00
Anton Plassental				$5.00	
H. Gehle				$5.00	$5.00
Hy. Rutschilling				$20.00	$20.00
John Mueller				$10.00	$10.00
Henry Ahrens				$5.00	$5.00
Henry Hoehne				$15.00	$15.00
Frank Goecke				$10.00	$10.00
Hy. Dirkes				$50.00	$5.00

Names	Year if not 1897	Subsc. Paid $ cts	Notes Int. Paid $ cts	Pew Rent Due $ cts	Pew Rent Paid $ cts
Aug. Albers				$10.00	$10.00
John Huber				$5.00	$5.00
A. Bourgeos 9 1/2 months				$4.04	$4.04
John Bergman				$15.00	$15.00
Jos. Gehle 9 months				$3.75	$3.75
B. Kalkhoff			$2.48	$10.00	$10.00
H. Schaefer				$5.00	
Jos. Kern 10 months				$4.20	$4.20
Jos. Hemmert 10 months				$4.20	$4.20
Fred. Meyer				$5.00	$5.00
Andie Diegelman 10 months				$4.20	$4.20
Victor Gruss 10 months				$4.20	$4.20
Clem. Brunswick				$5.00	
Hy. Brunswick				$5.00	
Jos. Kohls				$5.00	$5.00
Katherine Benke				$5.00	
Mrs. Plaspohl					
Hy. Grieshopp				$15.00	$15.00
B. Grieshopp Jr.				$10.50	$10.50
B. Grieshopp Sr.		$25.00	$1.38	$25.00	$25.00
Hy. Elking				$10.00	$5.00
Mart. Vondenhoefel 6 months				$2.50	
Hy. Knapke				$15.25	$15.25
B. Desch		$20.00	$2.20		
E. Desch		$15.00	$1.95		
F. Meier		$2.00			
Wm. Haslinger		$10.00			
F. Bruder		$5.00			
M. A. Westgerdes		$50.00	$2.75		
M. Gagel		$5.00			

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CHAPTER SEVEN
The Expanding School System

In 1890, with the church nearing completion, and tranquility restored in the parish, the School Board turned its attention to school buildings, which had been in part the source of the parish dispute. On October 2, 1890, Elizabeth Schlarmann sold to the Board of Education lots 14, 15 and 37, (the location of the present parking lot, northwest of the church). On it, the Board erected a one room brick school for the girls. The Sisters, who had stopped teaching at St. John in 1883, returned in 1891 after the new school was completed. The previous church built school, which was now again church property, was converted into a parish hall known as "Vereins Hall" (Society or Sodality Hall). It was used for sodality meetings and parish functions, including the newly-formed Knights of St. John Commandery, No. 313.

On June 13, 1898, after voter approval, a contract was awarded to Anton DeCurtins & Sons of Celina to add a second story to the girls' brick school building. Up until this time, the Sisters had taught girls only. After the second story was completed, both boys and girls in grades one through three were taught downstairs by the Sisters, while girls of grades four through eight were taught upstairs. The boys in grades four through eight went to the boys' school east of the current priest house.



Girls' School. This was located on the site of the present St. John Church west parking lot (northeast corner).

It is known that Frederick Lorshetter taught here in 1876; Peter Jacobs in 1881; and Louis Welde in 1891. Mercer County Teachers Examinations show additional certified teachers, namely: Joseph Reichert, Frank Brackman, F. Wildenhaus, Joseph Stukenborg, Frederick Huber, Henry Droesch, Frank Garman and Julius Berhrick. The certificates were issued for one, two, or five years. The above all had Maria Stein mailing addresses, but they may have taught elsewhere; at the Bernard School, the Puthoff School, or the Heitkamp School. Numerous Sisters taught at the various schools.

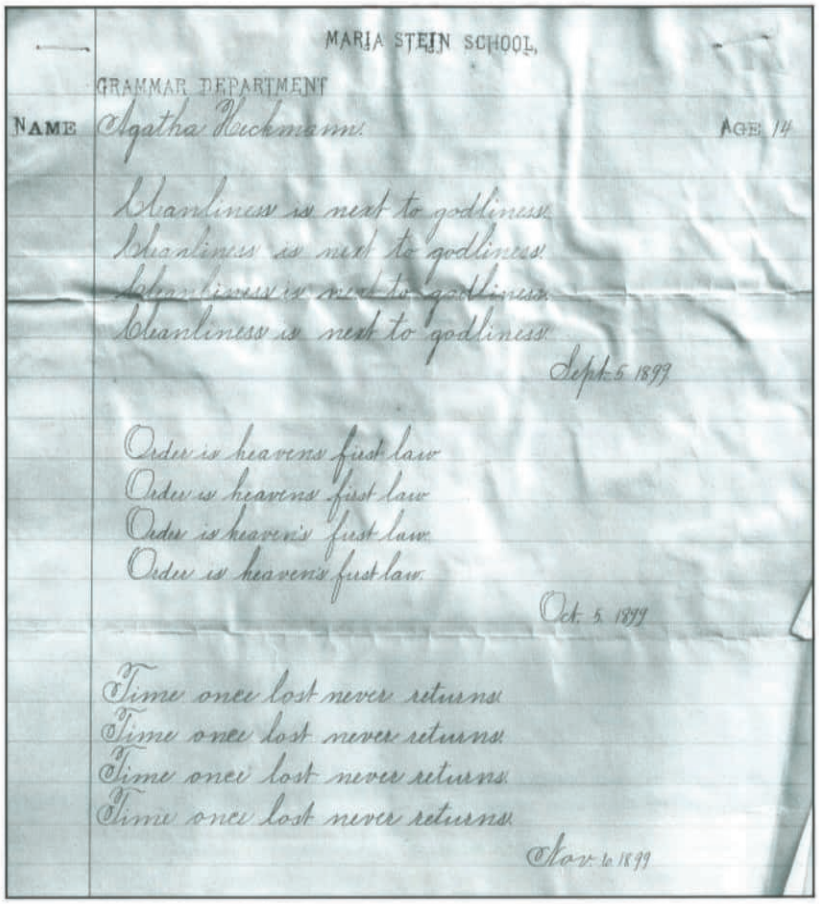
In 1897, the schools in Mercer County were redistricted and Special School District of St. John was formed. Elected to the new school board were Henry Bertke, Clerk; Joseph Bruggeman, President; and Frank Kremer. The April 27, 1897 board minutes show that Sister M. Rosalia Alt was hired as a teacher at $35 a month, and also that Joseph Oppenheim was rehired as a teacher for the upcoming year at $50 a month. Mr. Oppenheim had started teaching at St. John in 1894 after having taught previously in Putnam County. He and his family lived in the old teacher's house, which was directly east of the present

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priest house, and belonged to the parish. He originally had been earning $45 a month, and to supplement his income he converted a back woodshed into a studio for photography work such as weddings.

As a teacher, Oppenheim noticed that many of the farm boys stayed home, sometimes several days a week, to load and unload wagons of manure by hand into the fields. He worked with his friends at the local machine shop designing a wagon that would unload and spread the manure in the fields.

When Joseph Oppenheim resigned in 1900 as teacher and organist, he was replaced by Aloys C. Eifert who held both positions until 1915. Upon the completion of the two story school, two Sisters were paid at any given time, and occasionally a third was employed. Some of these teachers/Sisters included Sister M. Rosalia Alt, Sister M. Louisa Huss, and Sister M. Metrona Schmidt.


MARIA STEIN SCHOOL.

GRAMMAR DEPARTMENT

NAME Agatha Heckmann AGE 14

Cleanliness is next to godliness.
Cleanliness is next to godliness.
Cleanliness is next to godliness.
Cleanliness is next to godliness.

Sept. 5 1899

Order is heavens first law
Order is heavens first law
Order is heaven's first law
Order is heaven's first law

Oct. 5 1899

Time once lost never returns
Time once lost never returns
Time once lost never returns
Time once lost never returns

Nov. 10 1899

Cursive Writing Sample by Agatha Heckman—1899

School Board records show that receipts for the school year 1911-12 were $3,183.47. Also, in 1914 a county school system was organized with H. J. Bernard of St. Henry being hired as the first County Superintendent. St. John School's share of his annual salary was $96. In addition to those board members originally mentioned, the following men were on the St. John school board at one time or another during this period: John Pohlmann, Bernard Westgerdes, Bernard Friemering, Joseph Goecke, Henry Wendeln, Fred Schroeder, Henry Reichert, John Kramer, and John D. Kremer.



The Eifert home c. 1907. Note: Girls' School in the background and church to the right. The street was paved in 1920. This is the current west church parking lot, southwest corner.

From 1916 to 1922, Henry Forstoffel taught the boys while Sister M. Irene Brinkman and Sister M. Louisa Huss taught the lower and upper grades of girls. Also, at this time, Agnes Synck was hired as janitor of the school.

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1921. "Girls School" first floor. Both boys and girls - first through third grades
Teacher, Sister M. Irene Brinkman



1921. Boys School. Boys - fourth through eighth grades
Teacher, Henry Forstoffel

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Rural One-Room Schools of the Area

Leon Bernard donated a small section of his land to the local school board in 1852 for the erection of a school. This one-room brick school (Number 106) was known as the Bernard School, and stood well into the 20th century at the northwest corner of Huwer and Rolfes Roads. His son Joseph served as one of the three school directors for that district. Little information regarding it has been found, but many of its students moved to the Puthoff Rural School, ten years later, when it was erected.

The Puthoff school was created in 1862 when on February 1, one fourth acre of land was deeded to the Puthoff School Board of Education. In 1864, an additional one fourth acre was acquired. It was located two miles south of the St. John Church. The school operated independently, but the district was part of St. John Parish and the children received their religious training there.

On November 10, 1924, after the Puthoff School was consolidated with St. John, the one half acre was transferred to the St. John Board of Education. In 1948, the school was closed and the children came to the St. John School. The land was sold to Fred Luebke.

Some of the teachers at the Puthoff School were: Anthony Heitkamp, August J. Reichert, Seraphim Reichert, Leo Vonderhaar, Vincent Muhlenkamp, Evelyn Romer, Miss Bogt, Mrs. Raterman, Ben Moorman and Mr. Rengers.

The Puthoff School 1916



***Front Row**: Otto Mescher, Ernest Winner, Joseph Buening, Clarence Rolfes, Clarence Bergman, Ben Rutschilling, Edwin Mescher **Middle Row**: Veronica Drees, Helen Drees, Leona Rutschilling, Florence Rutschilling, Rosa Buening, Stella Rolfes, Raymond Rutschilling, Albert Rolfes, Edward Drees **Back Row**: Clara Bruns, Elizabeth Buening, Lauretta Winner, Elizabeth Bergman, August J. Reichert - Teacher, Katie Buening, Hilda Rolfes, Leo Walterbusch, Dick Mescher*

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The Puthoff School - private residence
2011: 1009 St. Johns Rd.



The Heitkamp School - private residence
2011: 04538 S.R. 364

The Heitkamp School began in 1908, when on July 7, Joseph Heitkamp sold to the Board of Education of Jackson Township one acre of land located on S.R. 364 one half mile north of Ohio 119. Church membership in this school district was split, but most of the residents belonged to St. John Parish. Gradually, over the years, the people with New Bremen and Minster church affiliations transferred to the New Bremen and Minster school systems. By 1952, the only people left in the district belonged to St. John Parish. The school then closed, and the remaining territory transferred to the St. John Rural School District. On February 27, 1952, the land and school were sold to the Jackson Township Community Club.

Heitkamp School 1927-1928



***Front Row**: First-unknown, Velma Heitkamp, Hilda Heitkamp, Rita Garmann, Norma Wente, Lorina Albers, Rita Heitkamp, Luetta Albers, Oscar Heitkamp, Louis Schwartz **Second Row**: Elise Thieman, Sylvina Heitkamp, Irene Albers, Irene Heitkamp, Bern Heitkamp, Cletus Heitkamp, Clarence Heitkamp, Lawrence Baumer, Lawrence Schwartz, Urban Zahn **Third Row**: Irene Heitkamp, Luetta Thieman, Marie Wente, Alvina Thieman, Adella Heitkamp, Elmer Heitkamp, Cecelia Dirksen, Clarence Albers, Corena Baumer, Norbert Schwartz, Paul Zahn **Back Row**: Leonard Heitkamp, Alphons Heitkamp, Thomas Burke - Teacher, Elmer Farno, Albert Schwartz, Elmer Albers, Leo Wente*

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Some of the teachers at the Heitkamp School were: Evelyn Romer, Joseph Kloecker, Rosemary Hogenkamp (Kahlig), Mrs. Westbrick, Charles Ashman, Theresa Wilkens, and Thomas Burke.

In June of 1922, Frank H. Moorman, who had taught six years in Minster and several years at St. Sebastian, was engaged as a teacher with the object of establishing a two-year high school. Mr. Moorman also became the organist and choir director of St. John Parish as well as Clerk of the School Board. In the same year, the St. John Special School District bought 2 ¼ acres of land from Frederick Wendeln for $800. This land was to be used as the future site of a new school and to provide additional playground for the present school. In 1923, the school district applied for a two-year high school charter, and the next year Mr. Moorman effected the consolidation of the Puthoff School and St. John Special School District.

The first graduates, of the class of 1925, receiving two-year diplomas were Margaret Kramer, Arnold Kleinhenz, Hugo Moorman and Alvina Heitkamp. The second class to graduate in 1926 included Dorothea Tangeman, Eleanor Droesch, Sylverius Homan, Richard Moorman, Urban Ruschau, and Victor Boeke.

St. John High School 1924



The first class graduated from the newly formed high school in 1925. Frank Moorman was school administrator.

<u>Front Row:</u> Dorothy Tangeman, Elenora Droesch, Viola Zahn, Alvira Schwieterman, Victor Boecke, Edwin Heitkamp, Urban Ruschau <u>Second Row</u>: Iola Zahn, Armela Kramer, Celia Gehle, Richard Moorman, Urban Heitkamp, Clarence Huelskamp, Arnold Kleinhenz, Water Thieman, Frank H. Moorman - Teacher <u>Back Row</u>: Juliana Hierholzer, Sophia Fortkamp, Albina Heitkamp, Hugo Moorman, Silverius Homan, Herman Fortkamp

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In November of 1929, the school district voted on a $35,000 bond issue for a new school building to be built on the 2½ acres across the street from the church. The vote was overwhelmingly favorable with 165 votes YES and only 7 voting NO. On January 25, 1930, bids were accepted, and two days later contracts totaling $35,967 were granted. Construction proceeded rapidly with F. A. DeCurtins as architect. This joyous occasion was commemorated with a dedication ceremony and picnic on Labor Day, September 1, 1930. The school board members at that time were John D. Kremer, President; August Knapke, Treasurer; Henry Wendeln, Clerk; Leo Nagel and Leo Hausfeld.

Some unwanted excitement also took place in 1930 when on March 3 the roof of the grade school caught fire. Over 100 children exited without incident. The damage was confined to about a third of the roof on the east side. A local carpenter, Ben Ruschau, was contracted to make the repairs.

In anticipation of the completion of the new school by the fall term of 1930, the boys' and girls' schools were both dismantled in May. The land in front of the parsonage and lots 14, 15, and 37 were deeded to Joseph Backs who in turn deeded them to St. John Parish. This brought back all the church land that had been sold to the school board in 1858. The boys' school had been in use for 72 years , the last eight years as a high school.

In 1930, the name of the district was changed to the St. John Rural School District. In April of that year, an application was made to the State for a three-year high school charter. In the fall of

St. John High School 1932-1933



Front Row: Ermin Bruns, Lewis Nagel, Arthur Stucke, Alvin Zumwald, Marci Hausfeld Second Row: Louis Zumwald, Herbert Heitkamp, Felix Kremer, Leo Wendeln, Robert Droesch, Frank Bruns, Herbert Bergman Third Row: Luetta Luebke, Helen Meinerding, Sylvina Heitkamp, Alvina Overman, Irene Heitkamp, Ruth Bernard, Irene Backs, Elenora Huelskamp, Joanne Albers Fourth Row: Jerry Wideman - Teacher, Albert Knapke, Mary Kleinhenz, Mary Pohlman, Elenora Hartings, Rita Lochtefeld, Agnes Homan, Margaret Rutschilling, Frank Moorman - Teacher Back Row: Norbert Winner, Otto Kremer, Andrew Goecke, Joseph Borges, Hugo Adams, Henry Leugers, Paul Kleinhenz, Vincent Gagel, Wilfred Ruschau

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1930, the new school opened with Frank H. Moorman as principal and Sister Metrona, Sister Sebastian, and Sister Lydia as teachers. The new three story building housed the high school as well as the grade school.



In 1931, Clifford Wendeln, Ivo Kremer, Wilbert Gagel, Rosella Moorman and Freda Moorman were the first three-year high school graduates. Before St. John had a high school, those wishing high school diplomas would go to Minster or St. Henry by car or bicycle.

The school continued to grow, and in 1937 graduated its first four-year high school class. Those graduating were: Joseph Leugers, Arthur Bruns, Leroy Bertke and Elsie Kremer. In 1942, Frank H. Moorman, the well respected and successful school administrator died unexpectedly, and John F. O'Grady became the new principal. In 1955, St. John Rural School District merged with Osgood and the other Marion Township Districts and became the Marion Local School District.

St. John High School - Junior Class 1947



Front Row: Joan Gast, Jeannette Budde, Irene Bruggeman, Verena Homan, Jeannette Bertke, Dorothy Clune, Irene Goettemoeller, Rita Tumbusch Second Row: Sister M. Paulissa, Andrew Kleinhenz, Donald Bruggeman, Harold Heitbrink, Lewis Bertke, Earl Moeller, Gregory Hausfeld, Ruth Ann Kremer
Third Row: Delores Mescher, Helen Dirksen, Thelma Jean Griesdorn, Sally Dahlinghaus, Rose Kremer, Velma Jean Meier, Beatrice Bruggeman Back Row: Donald Niekamp, Louis Moorman, Walter Harting, Cyril Thobe, Gustave Link, David Goettemoeller

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1901. Inside the Boys' School - grades four through eight
Aloys C. Eifert, teacher



c. 1910. Inside the Girls' School

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From 1863-1986, sixty-nine Sisters of the Precious Blood taught in the St. John and Marion Local School District for a total of 268 cumulative years of teaching. [This list was provided by Sr. Noreen Jutte from the Salem Height Archives, Sisters of the Precious Blood.]

Sister M. Adelaide Schmerge
Sister M. Nathalia Josberger
Sister M. Stylita Summer
Sister M. Alphonsa Schunk
Sister M. Rosina Huber
Sister M. Tharsilla Geissler
Sister M. Eustachia Moes
Sister M. Salesia Bowes
Sister M. Lucy Ellerbrock
Sister M. Frances Finke
Sister M. Rogata Bollinger
Sister M. Victoria Drees
Sister M. Rosalia Alt
Sister M. Lioba Rosenhahn
Sister M. Augustine Garvey
Sister M. Magna Lehman
Sister M. Viola Wagner
Sister M. Humilitas Boeckman
Sister. M. Philomena Paluszak
Sister M. Hortensia Steiert
Sister M. Palma Haefner
Sister M. Louisa Huss
Sister M. Helen Wourms

Sister M. Ruth Heueisen
Sister M. Irene Brinkman
Sister M. Lourdes Elsaesser
Sister M. Metrona Schmidt
Sister M. Sebastian Engelhart
Sister M. Othilda Fullenkamp
Sister M. Lydia Wildenhaus
Sister M. Epiphania Kramer
Sister M. Sienna Langhals
Sister M. Augusta Mikes
Sister M. Alarda Riffel
Sister M. Cordelia Gast
Sister M. Elizabeth Hafer
Sister M. Paulissa. Remaklus
Sister M. A. Smietanka
Sister M. Manetta Guillozet
Sister M. Celestine Landoll
Sister M. Linus Bax
Sister M. Alma Dorenkemper
Sister M. Juanita Hayden
Sister M. Laurita Epperson
Sister M. Solina Shaffer
Sister M. Alveria Vortkamp

Sister M. Louis Mallifske
Sister M. Lawrence Hayden
Sister M. Pacifica Weiner
Sister M. Liliosa Hemmelgarn
Sister M. Raphael Pleiman
Sister M. Dionysia Ruhe
Sister M. Consuella Salmon
Sister M. Dulcina Bonifas
Sister Bernice (M. Erwin) Krieg
Sister M. Veronita Merkel
Sister Clara (M. Adelicia) Freeman
Sister M. Iona Taylor
Sister M. Antoinella Froelich
Sister M. Cyril Langdon
Sister M. Vera Koestler
Sister M. Ceciliana Goldschmidt
Sister M. Pauline Stoermer
Sister M. Bonaventure Kleman
Sister M. Dolores Lewis
Sister M. Constantine VanDulman
Sister M. Magdalene Schuster
Sister M. Theona Smith
Sister Rita (M. Melania) Yahl

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CHAPTER EIGHT
Early Twentieth Century Businesses

The railroad through Maria Stein, which brought an influx of new business to town, was not completed until 1881. Prior to this, an 1876 Map and Atlas of St. John lists the following businesses:

Herman Pulskamp	Manufacturer of wagons
John Fleck	Dealer in horses and proprietor of hotel
Fred Fleck	Dealer in harnesses, saddles, whips, etc.
August Rutschilling	Dealer in dry goods, boots and shoes, hardware, groceries, etc.
Gast & Goecke	Manufacturers of tile of all descriptions
Fred Lorshetter	School teacher
John H. Drees	Blacksmith
Geo. Plassental	Manufacturer of boots and shoes

John M. Kramer

The grandparents of John M. Kramer homesteaded in St. John in 1835 and helped build the first log church. The original homestead was one-half mile south of St. John (2011: 1731 Rolfes Rd.). The farm stayed in the family until 1890 when the above John Kramer, aged 31, sold the farm to John Homan. John Kramer and his brother Henry formed a partnership and built a grain elevator alongside the railroad tracks in Maria Stein

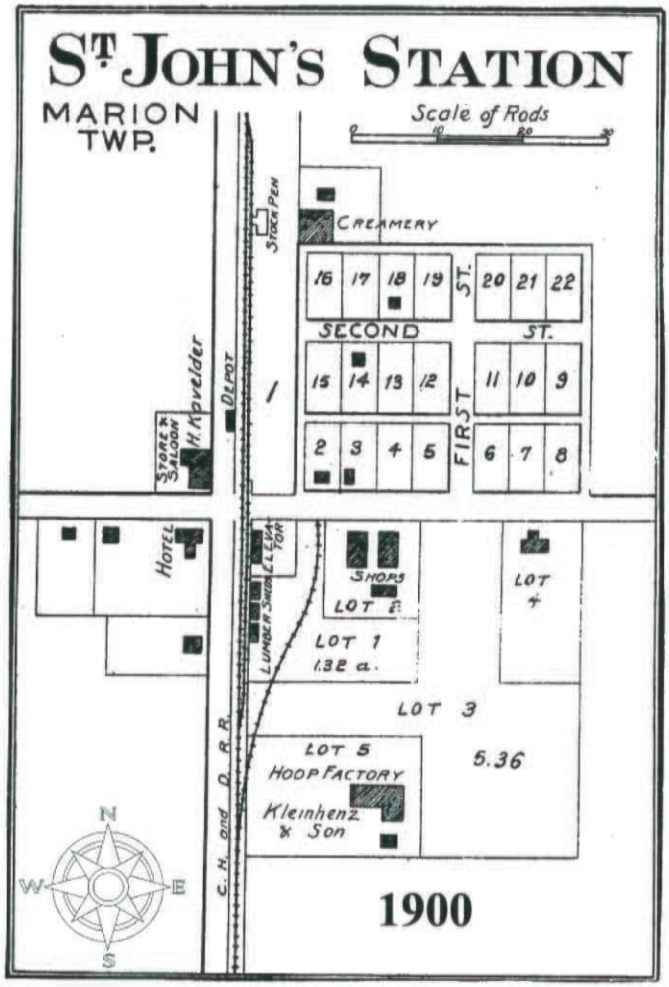


c. 1914. John M. Kramer Family (2011: Fred Buening Home - 8050 S.R. 119). Side door was entrance to Marion Telephone Co. office and switchboard. Back Row: Henrietta (Ashman), Mary, Regina (Esser), Armella (Wendel) Front Row: Sister Mary Ida, John and Caroline Kramer, Medard.

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Station, which remains today. They then built a machine shop and later a lumber yard. Henry operated the elevator, and John ran the machine shop, building new wagons and repairing machinery. In 1890, they also built a house for John and his family.

In 1896, fire destroyed the machine shop. With little or no insurance, it was a great financial blow to the Kramer brothers. At the urgings of neighbors and the community, a new machine shop was built. The financial burden was still heavy, and in 1899, everything they owned was sold to pay their bills. John stated in his diary that he was very happy and thankful that none of the public lost any money. John bought back his home and five acres of land. Henry bought back his home and a store across the street (2011: Scott's Carry Out). John Link of Cassella bought the machine shop, and John Kramer managed it until 1905. Henry Kramer managed the elevator for the new owners, Meyers and Patty Co. of Pleasant Hill. The machine shop later was sold to John Osterloh and again sold in 1921 to the Budde Brothers who operated a garage in it for many years. Today it is the Maria Stein Oil Co.



Source: Atlas of Mercer County, Ohio - 1900
The "intersection" that appears on the map would be the intersection of present day S.R. 119 and S.R. 716.

In 1898, John Kramer achieved what he considered his major accomplishment. He organized the Marion Telephone Company and was its manager until his death in 1927. The office and switchboard were in his house. The Telephone Company was sold shortly after his death and today is part of the General Telephone Company. In addition to the Telephone Company, he operated a successful heating and plumbing business that employed several men year around. At one time, John also owned and operated a well drilling outfit. He was Secretary of the Building Committee



1925. Marion Telephone Co.
Repair Crew - August Droesch, repairman



1929. Marion Telephone Co.
Repairman - south of Chickasaw on S.R. 716

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when the new St. John Church was built in 1890. He was the first Recording Secretary of the newly formed Knights of St. John in 1897. John Kramer, an energetic and innovative man who helped his church and community greatly, died in 1927, just a few days shy of his 68th birthday. A newspaper obituary stated that his widow and children were visited by people from every surrounding town while his body rested at the home.



c. 1905. Henry Kramer (John's brother), Norma Kramer, and daughter Stella. Location is where Scott's Carry Out is today. The building on the right, at one time, was used as a grocery store, hardware store, plumbing shop, and finally as the Budde Barber Shop.

Oppenheim's New Idea

Joseph Oppenheim, teacher at St. John School, was distressed that so many boys had to miss school each spring in order to help on the family farm by spreading manure manually on the fields. There were several manure spreaders being manufactured in the United States at that time, but none were very effective.

During 1897 and 1898, in John Kramer's Machine Shop, Joseph Oppenheim, John Kramer, Fred Heckman, and Henry Synck, experimented on a workable manure spreader. John Kramer had already worked out a gear arrangement that would move the manure to the back of the spreader and had this patented. However, a year earlier, John assigned all the rights to that patent over to Joseph Oppenheim, in exchange for the money Joseph had loaned him to rebuild his shop. This gracious and friendly gesture among friends would lead to great debate over the person who was truly responsible for inventing the spreader as we know it today.



c. 1900. Picture of the John Kramer home looking east. Note: St. John church in the top of the photo.
(2011: Fred Buening home - 8050 S.R. 119)

The problem on the spreader had always been the beaters. As a teacher, Mr. Oppenheim noted that in a game called "Tom Ball," the flat bat used deflected the ball in different directions depending on the angle of the bat. He experimented with this idea for a long time, but it would not fall into place. According to a 1973 interview with his daughter, Cecelia Selhorst, Joseph had a dream about this spreader. In this dream, and with the help of the Poor Souls, he envisioned how the gears could be put together to turn the beaters. After that vision, the beaters were put on a manure wagon built by John Kramer & Bro. Fred Heckman worked out a folding seat that would

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fold forward when the manure spreader was being loaded and would fold back when manure was being spread. Together, with Henry Synck, they built a successful spreader with the first one being sold on October 18, 1898.


1

In 1899, Joseph Oppenheim bought a barrel hoop factory, located north of the present Scott's Carry-Out, from Charles Eifert. This group of entrepreneurs built six spreaders for sale and called them "Oppenheim's New Idea."


2

In 1900, he resigned his teaching position and in the same year he moved his family into a new home close to the New Idea plant. Unfortunately, only one year later, Joseph Oppenheim died of typhoid fever. His widow, using life insurance money left by her husband, continued the business with her son Benjamin and son-in-law Henry Synck. The plant was enlarged to include a pattern shop, woodworking, machinery, foundry, electric light plant, etc. It employed 30 to 40 men. However, by 1910, it had outgrown the Maria Stein plant and relocated to Coldwater, Ohio, where it could take advantage of two railroads. In 1914, the Oppenheim home was sold to Anthony Kleinhenz.


3


4

5



6

1. c. 1905. New Idea Factory Located north of present day Scott's Carry Out (2011: 8015 S.R. 119)
2. c. 1900. Manure unloader (no beaters) *The lettering on the side:*
   MAN'F'D BY JOHN M. KRAMER & BRO. MACHINE WORKS - MARIA STEIN, OHIO
3. c. 1900. Oppenheim's "New Idea." (includes beaters)
4. 1916. Pictured are Anthony and Anna Kleinhenz with infant son Joseph in front of their home - the former Joseph Oppenheim home. (2011: Fred Kleinhenz Home - 8029 S.R. 119) *photo courtesy of Fred Kleinhenz*
5. Joseph Oppenheim
6. Joseph Oppenheim was a well-known and widely used photographer in the Maria Stein area in the late 1800s and until his death in 1901. Most of his photographs contained this logo.

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Sawmills and lumber yards were an important part of the landscape in the late 1800s and early into the 1900s. Almost every community had a sawmill - or sawmills.





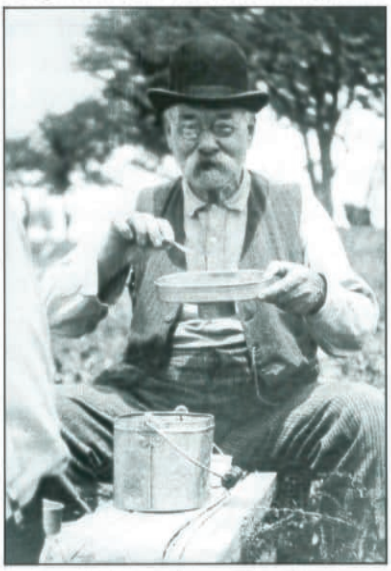


1. **1895. Sawmill employees**
2. **c. 1905. Sawmill and Hoop Factory on south edge of Maria Stein Station (2011: South of Maria Stein Grain Co.)**
3. **1924. Maria Stein Lumber Co. Closed about 1925. Located between present Elevator and Maria Stein Oil Co. L-R. Ben Ruschau, Charles Seitz, Leo Moeller (owner)**
4. **c. 1900. Sawmill owned by John Osterloh. Located just south of St. John Church in the current south parking lot. Rectory has not yet been built (1906). Purchased in 1905 by the Heitkamp family and moved to Heitkamp Road and was known as the Heitkamp Sawmill.**



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John Link now owned and operated the Maria Stein Machine Shop, repairing boilers and engines, making general repairs and making wagons. Around 1900, the hotel in town was owned by John Osterfelt. It was located where the Leugers Insurance parking lot is today. By 1910, it was serving as many as 65 meals a day. Some of the other hotel owners at various times were John Link, Theodore Schwerman, Joseph Friemering and John Fortkamp, and Anna Hilgefort. In 1920, it was bought by George Adams for a residence and tin shop. In 1954, it was bought by Herman Leugers and made into a parking lot. In the early 1900s, Henry Wissman ran the saloon in Maria Stein Station (Korner Kafe today) while his brother, Anthony Wissman, operated the saloon in St. John (just west of Gagel Hardware). John Synck, a son of Henry, who had worked with Joseph Oppenheim in the New Idea plant, had an axe handle factory.



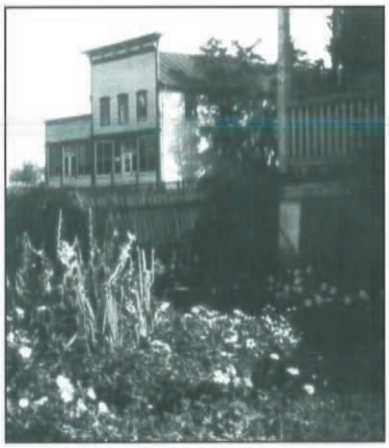
c. 1925. Henry Goecke - Undertaker and furniture store owner. Died in 1927 at the age of 75.

Health needs were taken care of by the town physician, Dr. Alois J. Willke, who had started practicing medicine in Maria Stein in 1893. His office was located where the Gagel Hardware parking lot is today.

Henry Goecke was the local undertaker. He also operated a furniture store located across the street and a little east of Arnold Goecke's Shoe Shop. The building was eventually sold to Cornelius Goecke in 1945 who converted it into a garage and service station and later into a tavern. It burned down on Christmas Day 1973 and was not rebuilt.

At the turn of the century, Frank and Bernard Westgerdes owned and operated a hardware store located where the Knights of St. John Hall stands today. In 1907, it was sold to Henry Goecke, whose son Herman operated it as the Goecke Hardware Store. Nine years later it burned down.

Ben Tangeman, Jr., operated a butcher shop next door to the hardware store, which he had bought in 1901 from John Fleck. It burned to the ground with the hardware store and was never reopened.



Henry Goecke's store. (2011: Approximate location - 8696 S.R. 119)

A Mercer County Chronicle article stated: *The hardware store and dwelling owned by Herman Goecke at Maria Stein was destroyed by fire about nine o'clock last Sunday night. The Tangeman butcher shop was burned. The loss is placed at $8,000 with but a small amount of insurance. The fire is supposed to have been caused by an overheated stove in the dwelling. This is quite a loss to Mr. Goecke, as well as to the town of Maria Stein as this was the largest business room in the place and enjoyed a good trade from the surrounding country. We have not learned whether he will rebuild but it is very doubtful, and if he should it would possibly not be on so extensive a scale.*

Joseph Goecke owned a large tile yard on the east end of town (2011: Approximate location is 8758 S.R. 119 - Bob Unrast farm.) On a windy day in 1926, a fire started in town, and burned down several homes. It jumped to the tile yard, burning it to the ground, also.

In 1887, John Goecke started the Goecke Shoe Sales and Harness Repair Shop. The business stayed in the family for generations and provided residents with shoes and related leather products.

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A hardware store on the north side of Main Street was owned by John Fleck, Matthew Fahrig, and then, in 1917, Michael Gagel purchased it and named it Gagel Hardware. This business stayed in the family and is still operated by Mike's descendents.

In the early 1900s, the Gast Dry Goods and Grocery Store was operated by Mathias Gast, Jr. Eventually, Joseph Gast took over the store. In 1941, he sold the building to the Knights of St. John and built a small store next door known as Gast's Beer Stube. This closed in 1952. The original Gast store was sold as a storage building to Gagel Hardware, but was torn down on July 4, 2003.



c. 1908. Mr. and Mrs. Herman Goecke in front of the Goecke Hardware Store - formerly the Westergedes Hardware Store. It stood where the Knight's Hall stands today and burned on January 19, 1913. The Benjamin Tangeman Butcher Shop is on the left and it also burned.





Above: Inside view of Gast Store

(L) c. 1917. The Gast Dry Goods and Grocery Store was operated from 1838-1941.

Below: Small store known as Gast's Beer Stube. Located between the Gast homestead and the Gast Store. Torn down in 1952.



c. 1925. Gagel Hardware Store
(2011: The empty lot east of Gagel Hardware)



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c. 1945. The Urban Menker Grocery Store and Post Office. Later -Vehorn's Market (2011: Thobe Radio & TV - 8559 S.R. 119) Upper floor has been removed.



c. 1915. Henry Bruggeman hauling mail from Maria Stein Station (railroad) to the Post Office. He also hauled to Cranberry, St. Rose, and Cassella.



c. 1920. The Joseph Goecke Tile Yard was located on the east edge of Maria Stein. It burned down in 1926.



c. 1916. Benjamin Tangeman, Sr. hauling tile for the Goecke Tile Yard.

In 1900, a grocery store, now owned and operated as Thobe TV, was owned by August Rutschilling and later by Frederick Mescher. The store had its beginning in 1852 and was owned at various times by Joseph Backs, Urban Menker, and Charles and Rita Heinl. It housed the Maria Stein Post Office for many years prior to the construction of the present post office in 1962.

Meanwhile, on the west end of town, known as Maria Stein Station, business boomed. The Maria Stein Lumber Company had been started in 1890 by the Kramer Brothers and was operated by Leo Moeller when it closed down in 1925. John Fortkamp built and operated a grocery store located just west of the current Korner Kafe. On the south edge of town, along the railroad tracks, a barrel factory was in operation. In 1899, Joseph Seitz sold it to John and Henry Kleinhenz. They made metal hoops and wooden staves for the manufacture of wooden barrels. Barrels were much in demand for whiskey, beer, pork and other food products. In 1904, J. & H. Kleinhenz leased the plant to the Independent Hoop Company with C. J. Davisson as plant manager. It ceased operation circa 1910.

Henry Kramer operated a hardware store across from the elevator, approximately where Scott's Carry Out stands today. There was a blacksmith shop close to the machine shop, and later, Ed Hartings started a blacksmith shop by the hotel. During this time, William Langerhone managed a plant called the Creamery Package Manufacturing Company (ownership was in Portland, Indiana). It was located north of town along the railroad tracks and manufactured small wooden buckets for

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butter. Next to the butter tub factory, Charles Eifert operated a successful creamery; in 1903 he sold it to Louis Henke of New Bremen. It operated as the White Mountain Creamery until 1912 when it moved to New Bremen and eventually became Meadow Gold and part of Beatrice Dairy Products. The land was sold in 1912 to John Kleinhenz and later was the site of a fence business operated by Anthony Kleinhenz.

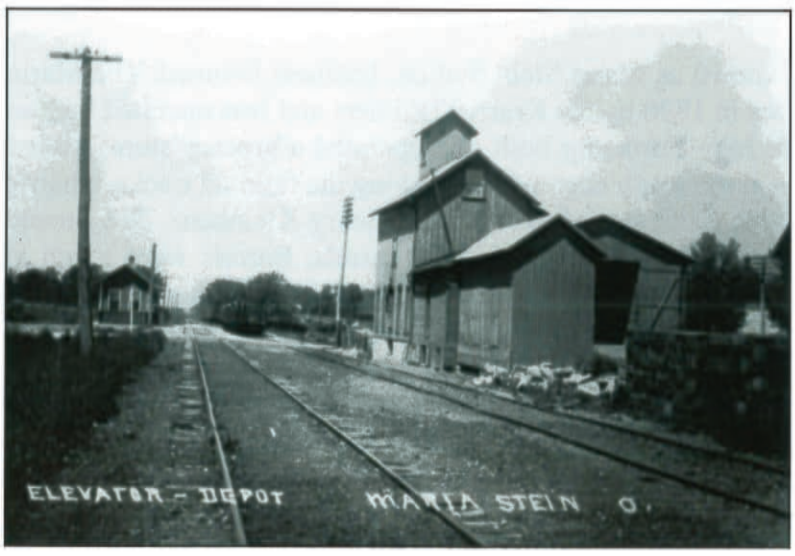
The departure of New Idea in 1910, the creamery move to New Bremen in 1912, and the railroad's demise in 1923 signaled the end of the business growth in Maria Stein. This contributed to the population drop in the early decades of the 1900s.



c. 1920. This is the west end of Maria Stein Station. Cy Hausfeld dwelling (note oak tree), Ed Harting, John Fortkamp dwelling, John Fortkamp Grocery Store (gone) and Saloon (now Korner Kafe). The above addresses in 2011: 7967 - 7995 S.R. 119. Note the road is not paved. The one mile stretch between St. Rose and Maria Stein Station was paved with cement in 1923.







Top left: c. 1915. Hogs being driven to the Maria Stein Station for shipment by train. Former Cy Hausfeld dwelling at right (2011: 7967 S.R. 119)

Above: c. 1917. The Anthony Kleinhenz Fence Co. sold and put up fences. The location was along the railroad track just north of the Train Station. Just north of the Fence Co. was the Charlie Eifert Creamery.

Left: c. 1920. The end of an era. The train system in Maria Stein comes to an end. Note: Train depot in upper left and the Maria Stein Grain Co. - some buildings still in use.

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Source: Atlas of Mercer County, Ohio - 1900

1. Current St. John Church
2. Girls' School
3. Verein's Hall (Parish Hall)
4. Boys' School (later high school)
5. Teacher/organist's house
6. Sawmill (2011: St. John south parking lot)
7. Eifert House
8. Menker Store (2011: Thobe TV)
9. Westgerdes Hardware Store (2011: location of Knights Hall)
10. Gast Dry Goods & Grocery Store
11. Dr. Alois J. Willke (2011: empty lot east of Gagel Hardware)
12. Matt Fahrig Hardware (2011: Gagel Hardware)

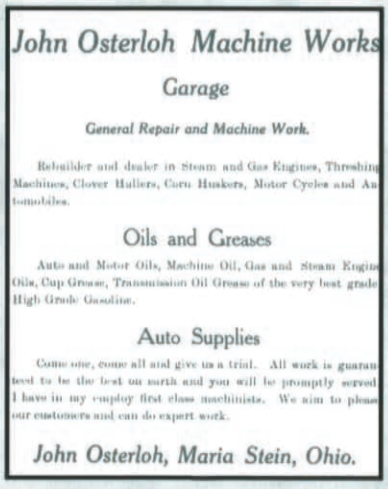


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The Natz and Elizabeth Boeke Homestead on Rolfes Road, c. 1895.
L-R: Henry Kuess, Catherine Kuess, Aloys Kuess, Bernard Brunswick, Elizabeth Brunswick, Bernard Boeke (son of Elizabeth and Natz Boeke), Mary Hausfeld, Agnes Hausfeld, Aloys Hausfeld, Clemence Hausfeld, Frances Boeke, Henry Boeke
Photo courtesy of Linie Hausfeld *(building no longer stands)*





John Osterloh Machine Works

Garage

General Repair and Machine Work.

Rebuilder and dealer in Steam and Gas Engines, Threshing Machines, Clover Hullers, Corn Huskers, Motor Cycles and Automobiles.

Oils and Greases

Auto and Motor Oils, Machine Oil, Gas and Steam Engine Oils, Cup Grease, Transmission Oil Grease of the very best grade. High Grade Gasoline.

Auto Supplies

Come one, come all and give us a trial. All work is guaranteed to be the best on earth and you will be promptly served. I have in my employ first class machinists. We aim to please our customers and can do expert work.

John Osterloh, Maria Stein, Ohio.

This Bertke Corn Unloader was built by Henry Osterloh in his sawmill. The sawmill was located by the Budde Service Station. The patent was filed in 1909 and issued the following year. The advertisement is for John Osterloh's Machine Works.

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MEMORIES FROM HENRY . . . .

Henry Leugers provided many wonderful and treasured photos in his
Pictorial History and Early Scenes of Maria Stein, Ohio (1999)
and
St. John Church - Maria Stein, Ohio (1986)

These photos, plus many other photos contributed by longtime Maria Stein residents, provide a glimpse into our community's heritage.







1. **Prior to Prohibition. Thought to be Frank Topp's house on Lot 22. (L-R) Frank Topp, Julian Schweller, Jake Schweller, Mike Gagel, and unknown person.**
2. **c 1910. In front of today's Post Office. Note flagstone sidewalk.**
3. **c. 1912. Wissman Saloon. (2011: 8575 S.R. 119) (L-R) A. Rutschilling, F. Schlarman, T. Schlarman, A. Wildenhaus, H. Rutschilling, and A. Tangeman**

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1



2



3



4

1. Maria Stein Band. (L-R) Julian Schweller, John Schulte, Fred Wendeln, August Rutschilling, John Borgert, Henry Rutschilling, August Dahlinghaus, Julian Goecke, Ed Goecke, Frank Schlarman
2. 1926. Tile factory fire. Much was destroyed at this time.
3. c. 1939. Lot between Gagel Hardware and Wissman Saloon property. (L-R) P. Borges, R. Imwalle, U. Berning, T. Gast, O. Mescher, E. Bruggeman, L. Goecke.
4. c. 1900. Henry Kramer Home (2011: Location of Scott's Carry Out)

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1



2



3



4

1. c. 1910. Maria Stein Baseball Team. Front: T. Schlarman, A. Kleinhenz, J. Lechleiter, J. Thobe Center: F. Schlarman, unknown Back: L. Wildenhaus, A. Wildenhaus, A. Dahlinghaus, unknown, F. Plaspool
2. c. 1930. Budde Brothers: August, Bill, Henry, and Lawrence
3. c. 1915. Sanitation Department - referred to as "Honey Dippers"
4. c. 1923. Heitkamp Threshing Rig in operation. Owner - John & Henry Heitkamp

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1. c. 1890. Grand Lake - note the oil derrick
2. c. 1907. Kramer Gas Drilling Rig. J. Kramer, H. Wendeln, A. Droesch
3. c. 1915. Ralph and Alex Fahrig. Their father, Matt Fahrig, owned and operated the hardware store that is currently the Gagel Hardware Store.
4. c. 1925. A day at the Reservoir. Frank Mescher, Ed Goecke, Ben Tangeman, Joseph Goecke, Henry Goecke, Tony Voskuhl, Al Goecke, and "Butch" Ben Tangeman

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The following ads are from the

Mercer County Bote - 1894



Maria Stein Anzeigen.

Fred Hinders,

— Der Leiter in —

fertige Kleider, Herren-Ausstaffirungs-Waaren, Hüten, usw. usw.

Wir sind jetzt bereit euch einen größeren Vorrath und schönere Muster zu niedrigen Preisen, als irgend ein anderes Haus in der Umgegend, anzubieten.

Vergesset nicht bei uns vorzusprechen ehe ihr kaufet. Achtungsvoll,

Fred Hinders,

Maria Stein, O.

English Translation of Advertisement

Maria Stein Register
Fred Hinders

The leader in
Finished clothes, men's outfits-articles, hats, etc., etc.

We are now prepared to offer you a larger selection and finer samples at low prices than any other house [establishment] in the area.

Don't forget to talk with us before you buy.
Respectfully,
Fred Hinders
Maria Stein, O

English Translation of Advertisement

Maria Stein Register
The large selection
of
furniture of all kinds
by Henry Göcke
is recommended as the best to everyone who needs something in this specialty.

Talk with me beforehand and see my stock and be surprised that you can buy with me as favorably as anywhere.

My undertaking business is complete.

A splendid new hearse will be available before long.

Also a person can get bricks and bee hives in any quantity.

Also a nice selection of travel trunks, travel bags, ladies' handbags and standing clocks.

Furthermore a large and elegant selection in wallpaper.
Prices very cheap.
Favorably inclined to the customer,
Respectfully,
Henry Goecke
Maria Stein, Oho 33-5t

Henry Goecke was one of the leading businessmen of the community. He was involved in undertaking, furniture, and brick making. He is credited with burning the brick for St. John church (1907 Mercer County History).

Maria Stein Anzeigen.

Das große Waarenlager

— von —

Möbeln aller Art

bei Henry Göcke empfiehlt sich bestens Allen die etwas in diesem Fach brauchen.

Sprechet vor und besehet meinen Vorrath und überzeuget euch selbst, daß ihr bei mir ebenso vortheilhaft kaufen könnt, wie irgendwo.

Mein Leichenbestattungs-Geschäft ist vollständig.

Ein prachtvoller neuer



Todtenwagen

ist vor Kurzem demselben beigefügt worden.

Auch Backsteine, und Bienenkörbe kann man in beliebigen Quantitäten bekommen.

Ebenso eine schöne Auswahl von Reisekoffern, Reisetaschen, Frauen-Handtaschen und Standuhren.

Ferner eine große und elegante Auswahl in Tapeten (*wallpaper*). Preise sehr billig.

Um geneigten Zuspruch ersucht,

Achtungsvoll

Henry Goecke.

Maria Stein, Ohio. 33-5t

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Maria Stein Anzeigen.

ANTON NIEKAMP

— Händler in —

Schuhen und Stiefeln.

Hält jetzt eine vollständige Auswahl von fertigen Schuhen und Stiefeln von aller Art auf Lager und verkaufe dieselben zu den niedrigsten Preisen.

Hier einige Preise:

Kinderschuhe für 15 Cents und aufwärts.
Damenschuhe „ 75 „ „
Feine Pantoffeln (Slippers) für Damen für 65 Cents und aufwärts.
Feine niedrige Damenschuhe (Ladies Oxfords) für 85 Cts. und aufwärts.
Schwere Werktagsschuhe für Männer 95 Cents und aufwärts.
Feine Männer Sonntagsschuhe für $1.25 und aufwärts.
Schwere Werktagsschuhe für Knaben für 75 Cents und aufwärts.
Feine Sonntagsschuhe für Knaben für $1.15 und aufwärts.
Alle Gummi-Stiefeln und Ueberschuhe zum Kostenpreise.

Den größten Werth für sein Geld zu nehmen, ist eine Pflicht die sich ein Jeder selbst schuldet.

Kommet und besehet die Waare und lernet die Preise kennen und ihr werdet euch überzeugen, daß ihr bei mir ebenso vortheilhaft einkaufen könnt wie irgendwo.

Auch werden alle Sorten Schuhe und Stiefeln auf Bestellung gemacht und Flickarbeit prompt und billig besorgt.

Achtungsvoll

Anton Niekamp.

Maria Stein, Ohio.





Frank Westgerdes



Maria Stein Register
Anton Niekamp
Dealer in
Shoes and Boots

Has now a complete selection of finished shoes and boots of all types in stock and am selling the same at the lowest prices
Here are a few prices:
Children's shoes for 15 cents and up.
Women's shoes for 75 cents and up.
Fine slippers for women for 65 cents and up.
Fine low ladies' shoes (ladies oxfords) for 85 cents and up.
Heavy workshoes for men 95 cents and up.
Fine men's Sunday shoes for $1.25 and up.
Heavy workshoes for boys for 75 cents and up.
Fine Sunday shoes for boys for $1.15 and up.
All rubber boots and overshoes at cost.
To get the greatest value for his money is a duty everyone owes himself.
Come and see the stock and get acquainted with the prices and you will be surprised, that you shop with me just as favorably as anywhere else.
Also all types of shoes and boots can be ordered and repair is done promptly and cheaply.

Respectfully,
Anton Niekamp

Maria Stein, Ohio

Für Blech-Dächer u. Dachrinnen

— gehet zu —

B. Westgerdes & Bro.,

— Händler in —

Eisenwaaren, Blechwaaren, Oefen, allen Sorten Farben, usw., usw.

Alle Arbeit wird garantirt.

Preise so billig wie irgendwo.

Maria Stein, Ohio. 33-3M

For sheet metal roofs and gutters
go to
B. Westgerdes & Bro.

dealer in

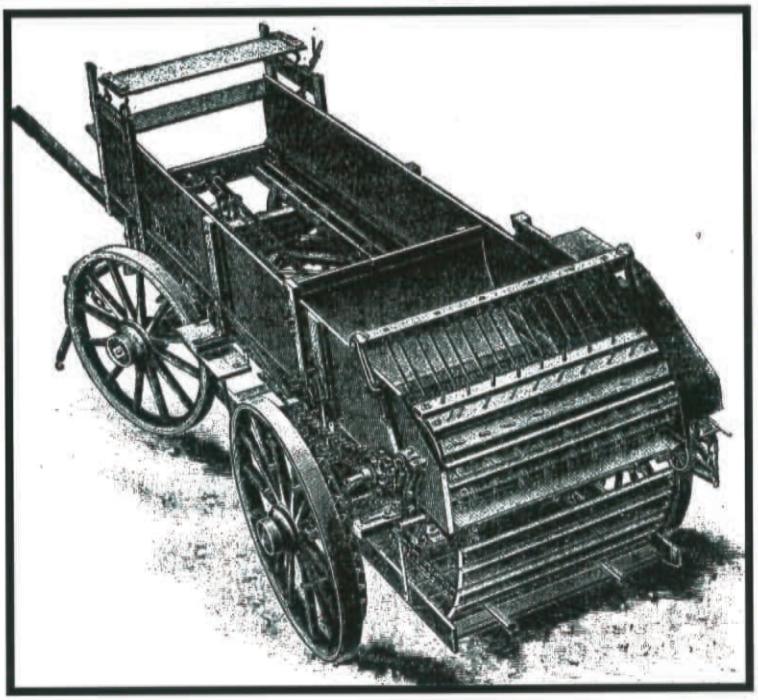
iron goods, sheet metal good, ovens, all types of colors paints, etc., etc

All work guaranteed
Prices as cheap as anywhere.

33-3M

Maria Stein, Ohio

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Eine unumstößliche Wahrheit

ist, daß nur jener Farmer, der den möglichst größten Ernteertrag zu erzielen trachtet und auch erzielt, vorwärts kommt und Geld verdient. . Dieses kann aber nur geschehen durch gehörige Bearbeitung und Düngung des Bodens. Die beste und billigste Düngung geschieht durch Stall- und Hofdünger, gleichmäßig und fein gestreut durch oben veranschaulichte Maschine. Dieselbe streut alle Sorten von Dünger und ein ordinäres Gespann kann die Arbeit thun. Sie streut eine Ladung Dünger vollständig in einigen Minuten. Cataloge frei. Alleinige Fabrikanten sind

John M. Kramer & Bro.,

MACHINE WORKS,

MARIA STEIN, OHIO.

N. B.—Wir repariren auch alle Arten von Ackerbaumaschinen.

An irrefutable truth

is that every farmer, who aspires to obtain and who obtains the largest possible yield, prospers and earns money. This can only happen through proper cultivation and fertilization of the soil. The best and cheapest fertilization happens through stall and barnyard manure, uniformly and finely spread by the above illustrated machine. The very same [machine] spreads all types of manure and an ordinary team can do the work. It spreads a load of manure completely in a few minutes.

Catalog is free. Exclusive manufacturers are

John M. Kramer and Bro.,
Machine Works
Maria Stein, Ohio

NB [note bene] We also repair all types of farm equipment.

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CHAPTER NINE
A Beloved Priest Moves into the New Century
1898-1932

Father Otto Missler, C.PP.S., arrived at Maria Stein and took charge of St. John Parish on September 14, 1898, at the age of 41. A native of Bellevue, Ohio, he had been ordained a priest at the age of 25. For 34 years, the longest tenure of any priest at St. John, he faithfully ministered to this parish. Many were baptized by him, received their First Communion from him, and were married by him. The older parishioners remember Fr. Otto as a pious priest who was quiet in manner and rarely stirred up opposition. It is easy to imagine that during Father Missler's pastorate, times were tranquil, and life continued very much as in the previous years.



Father Otto Missler, C.PP.S.
1898-1932

His first efforts were directed toward raising funds to finish paying the balance owed on the new church. Due to the parish disharmony, the debt reduction had not gone too well. Fr. Missler was a financially conservative and frugal man. Expenses were reduced to a minimum, and all available money was applied to paying the debt. In a few years, St. John parish was free of debt.

On September 22, 1904, Most Reverend Henry Moeller, Archbishop of Cincinnati, on the occasion of his Episcopal visit and confirmation at St. John, expressed his wish that a pastoral residence be built near the church. St. John did not have a pastor's house as all of the former priests had lived at the convent gatehouse.



c. 1925. St. John Rectory

In 1905, plans were adopted for the construction of a brick residence in harmony with the adjoining church. Fr. Missler took up subscriptions to pay for the rectory and was met with a generous and prompt response. In April of 1906, work was begun, and on September 14, 1906, Fr. Missler moved into the new residence. The total cost of the house, including the hot water heating, plumbing and all furnishings, was about $8,000. It was paid for when completed. The house has a basement, two residential floors, and a full attic.

It was during Fr. Missler's era that the population of St. John Parish dropped due to business closings, departures, and fires. However, the parish must have run smoothly because

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no problems erupted that were recorded. Financial statements show that in 1913, three new altars were installed at a total cost of $3,000, including the altar statues. In 1919, Delco lights were installed. The electric wires, fixtures, Delco motor, and 32 cells cost a total of $1,741. In the same year the organ bellows were electrified.



c. 1954. St. John priests stayed at the Gate House (built in 1858) on the grounds of the Maria Stein Convent until the parish rectory was built in 1906.

Fr. Missler was almost never seen without cassock and biretta. He had a passion for accurate time, and with the advent of radio, he corrected his clocks daily to Greenwich time. Although the schools had changed to English, Fr. Missler continued to use the German language in church. His sermons and confessions were in German, religion classes were in German, and German prayer books were used for the First Communicants. It was only during World War I that English made its way into St. John Church.



Typical vestments of this time period at St. John

Fr. Missler believed that going to communion once a month was sufficient. He encouraged and almost demanded that the parishioners go to communion only on their Society or Sodality Sundays. He did not distribute daily communion. It had been customary that First Communion take place when children were in the eighth grade. However, in 1910, Pope Pius X established that children would receive First Holy Communion much younger than the age of 12-14. By order of the Archbishop, Father Missler brought the age of First Communion down to eight years. He kept the practice of special instruction about the importance of Communion for eighth graders and called it Solemn Communion.

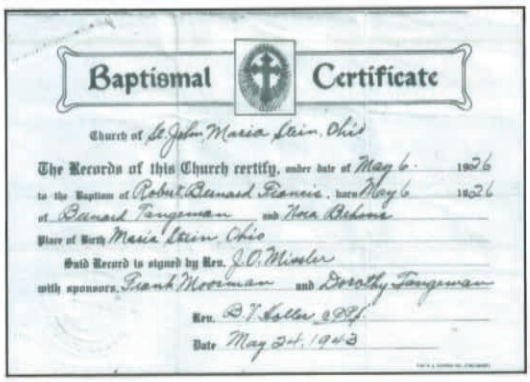




1900: (Left)
Aloys and Clara Gast - First Holy Communion

1910: (Right)
Carl and Alma Gast - First Holy Communion

This baptismal record of Robert (Bob) Tangeman, infant son of Bernard and Elenora Tangeman, is one of many baptisms presided over by Fr. Missler.
May 6, 1926.



Baptismal Certificate

Church of St. John Maria Stein, Ohio

The Records of this Church certify, under date of May 6 1926

to the Baptism of Robert Bernard Francis, born May 6 1926

of Bernard Tangeman and Nora Bekone

Place of birth Maria Stein, Ohio

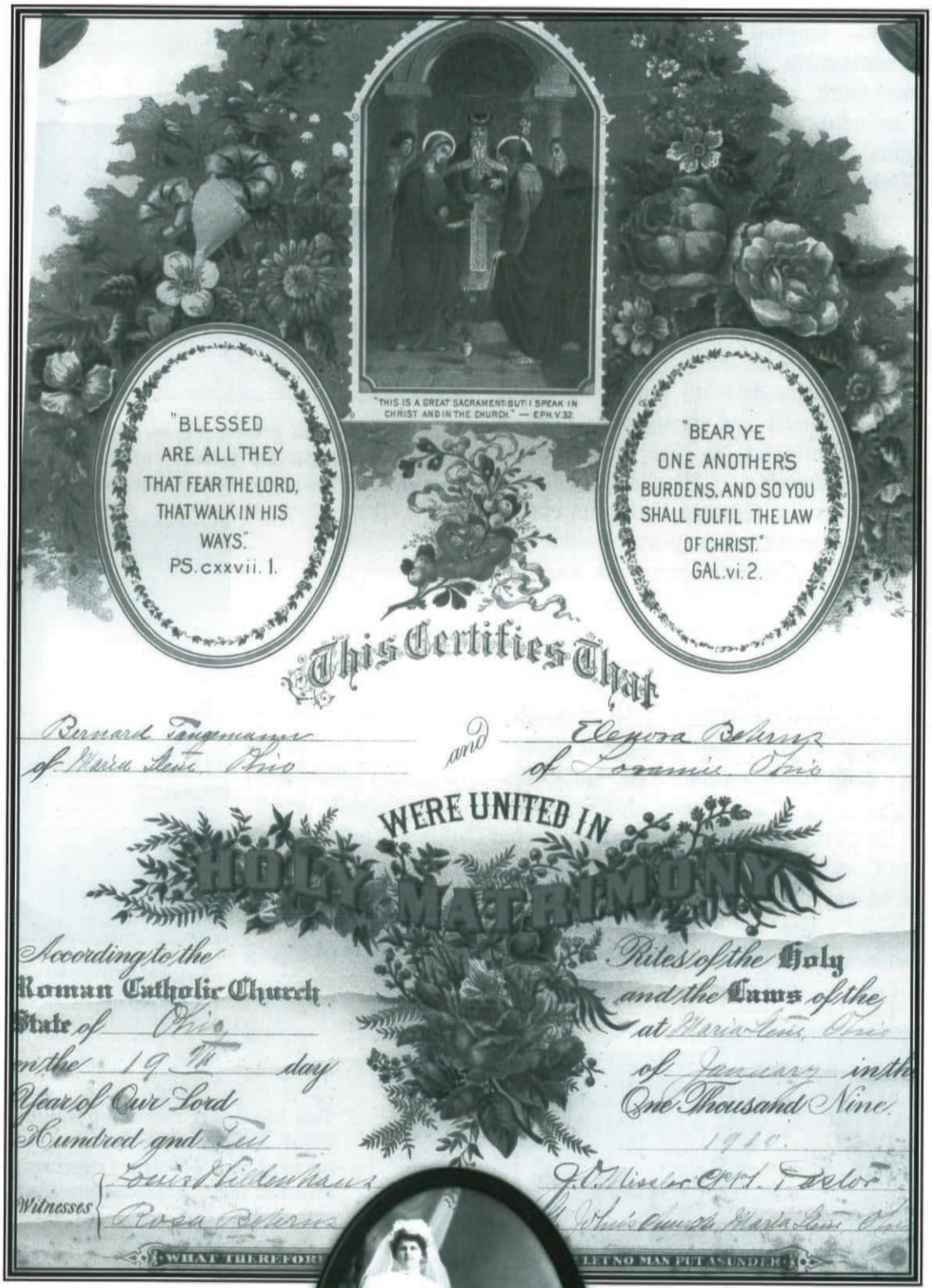
Said Record is signed by Rev. J. O. Missler

with sponsors Frank Moorman and Dorothy Tangeman

Rev. B. J. Keller, O.S.F.C.

Date May 24, 1926

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Fr. Missler celebrated countless sacraments with many families over his 34 years as pastor at St. John.



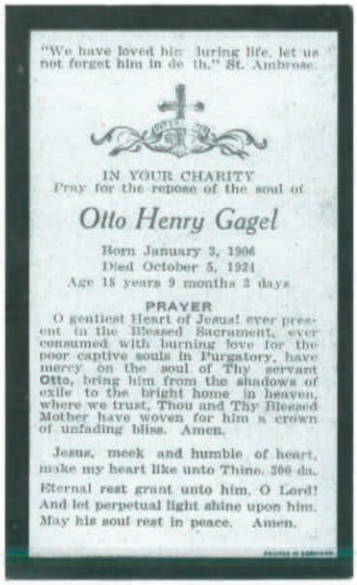
The wedding certificate of Bernard Tangeman and Elenora Behrns.

Married on January 19, 1910 by Fr. Missler

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c. 1920. To the west of the church is the Eifert property. West of that, and west of St. John Rd., was a property belonging to George Plassental. (2011: An empty lot belonging to Tom Gagel - 8473 S.R. 119)



"We have loved him during life, let us not forget him in death." St. Ambrose

IN YOUR CHARITY
Pray for the repose of the soul of

Otto Henry Gagel

Born January 3, 1906
Died October 5, 1924
Age 18 years 9 months 2 days

PRAYER

O gentlest Heart of Jesus! ever present in the Blessed Sacrament, ever consumed with burning love for the poor captive souls in Purgatory, have mercy on the soul of Thy servant **Otto**, bring him from the shadows of exile to the bright home in heaven, where we trust, Thou and Thy Blessed Mother have woven for him a crown of unfading bliss. Amen.

Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine. 300 da.

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord! And let perpetual light shine upon him. May his soul rest in peace. Amen.



Otto Gagel Funeral (1924). Otto, 18 years old, received an accidental but fatal gunshot wound. Notice the Girls' School, the cemetery monument, and the relatively few tombstones in the cemetery at that time. The shed in the foreground was north of the organist's house.

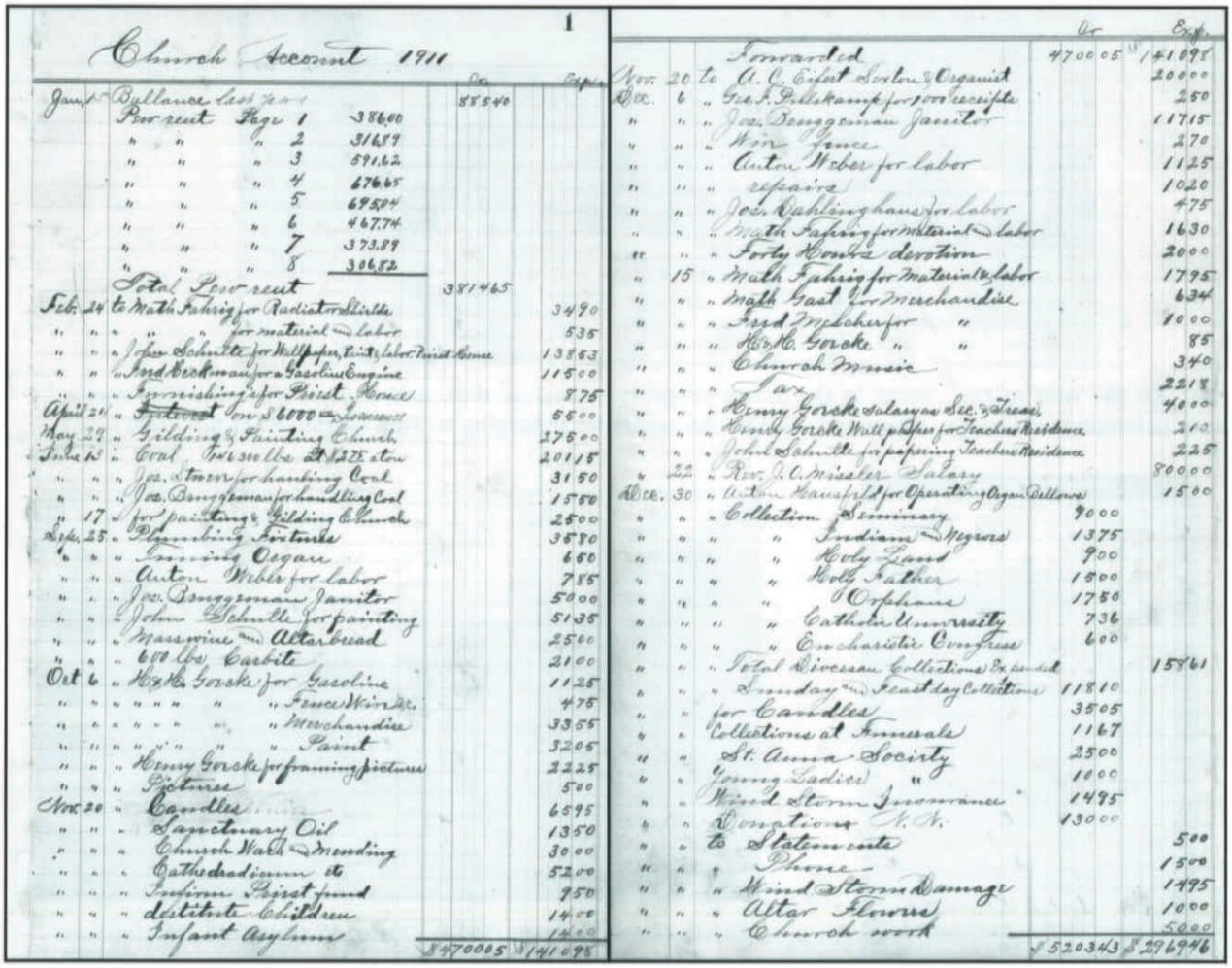


c. 1925. St. John Church.
The steeple held four non-functional clocks and windows. The south doors are wooden and there is a stone fence in front of the church. Notice the decorative masonry throughout the exterior façade. There are also faux brick windows below the belfry.



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Original handwritten copy of the Church Account 1911



Church Account 1911

1

			Cr	Exp.
Jan. 1	Ballance Last Year			88540
	Pew rent Page 1	38600		
	" " " 2	31659		
	" " " 3	59162		
	" " " 4	67665		
	" " " 5	69504		
	" " " 6	46774		
	" " " 7	37389		
	" " " 8	30682		
	Total Pew rent		381465	
Feb. 24	to Math Fahrig for Radiator Shields			3490
" "	" " " for material & labor			535
" "	" John Schmitt for Wall paper, Paint, Labor, Paint Rooms			13863
" "	" Ford Beckmann for a Gasoline Engine			11500
" "	" Furnishings for Priest Room			875
April 21	" Interest on $6000 Insurance			5600
May 29	" Gilding & Painting Church			27500
June 12	" Coal 14 at 300 lbs @ $2.75 a ton			20115
" "	" Jos. Steven for handling Coal			3150
" "	" Jos. Benggeman for handling Coal			1550
" 17	" for painting & Gilding Church			25000
Sept. 25	" Plumbing Fixtures			36780
" "	" Moving Organ			660
" "	" Anton Weber for labor			785
" "	" Jos. Benggemann Janitor			50000
" "	" John Schmitt for painting			51335
" "	" Masswine & Altarbread			25000
" "	" 650 lbs Carbite			21000
Oct 6	" Hy H. Goreke for Gasoline			1125
" "	" " " " Fence Wire &c.			475
" "	" " " " Merchandise			33555
" "	" " " " Paint			3205
" "	" Henry Goreke for framing pictures			2225
" "	" Pictures			500
Nov. 20	" Candles			65915
" "	" Sanctuary Oil			1350
" "	" Church Work & Mending			3000
" "	" Cathedraticum &c			52000
" "	" Priests Relief fund			750
" "	" destitute Children			1400
" "	" Infant Asylums			1400
			$4700 05	$1410 98

			Cr	Exp.
	Forwarded		4700 05	1410 98
Nov. 20	to A. C. Eilert Sexton & Organist			20000
Dec. 6	" Geo. F. Pollekamp for 100 receipts			250
" "	" Jos. Benggeman Janitor			11715
" "	" Wm Fence			270
" "	" Anton Weber for labor			1125
" "	" repairs			1020
" "	" Jos. Dahling hauling for labor			475
" "	" Math Fahrig for Material & labor			1630
" "	" Forty Hours devotion			2000
" 15	" Math Fahrig for Material & labor			1795
" "	" Math Gast for Merchandise			634
" "	" Fred Imbecker for "			1000
" "	" Hy H. Goreke " "			85
" "	" Church Music			340
" "	" Tax			2218
" "	" Henry Goreke Salary as Sec. & Treas.			4000
" "	" Henry Goreke Wall paper for Teachers Residence			210
" "	" John Schmitt for papering Teachers Residence			225
" 22	" Rev. J. A. Misaler Salary			80000
Dec. 30	" Anton Hausfeld for Operating Organ Bellows			1500
" "	" Collection Seminary	9000		
" "	" " Indians Negroes	1375		
" "	" " Holy Land	900		
" "	" " Holy Father	1800		
" "	" " Orphans	1750		
" "	" " Catholic University	736		
" "	" " Eucharistic Congress	600		
" "	" Total Diocesan Collections Expended			15861
" "	" Sunday & Feast day Collections	11810		
" "	for Candles	3505		
" "	Collections at Funerals	1167		
" "	St. Anna Society	2500		
" "	Young Ladies "	1000		
" "	Wind Storm Insurance	1495		
" "	Donations N. N.	13000		
" "	to Statements			500
" "	" Phone			1500
" "	" Wind Storm Damage			1495
" "	" Altar Flowers			1000
" "	" Church work			5000
			$52034 3	$29694 6

			Cr	Exp.
	Forwarded		52034 3	29694 6
Dec. 30	to A. Chalices			5000
" "	" Articles for Church by donation			13000
" "	" Surplices for Mass Servers			2500
" "	" Plumbing Fixtures			1000
" "	" Supplies for Sanctuary			1090
" "	" Freight " Express & Drayage			502
" "	" Sundries			875
	Total Receipts	$52034 3	$32091 3	
	Total Expenditures	32091 3		
	Balance on hand January 15 1913	$19943 0		

We the undersigned certify that the accounts for 1911 are correct

Henry Goreke — Treas.
J. Misereor Asst. — Pastor
Jos. Brandewie
John Strobe
August Kremer
August Knapke — Wardens

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St. John Catholic Church

Church Account - 1911

	Receipts	Expenses
Balance last year	$885.40	
Pew Rent	3814.65	
Math Fahrig/Radiator Shields		$34.90
Material & Labor for above		$5.35
John Schulte/Wallpaper, Paint, Labor for Priest House		$138.53
Fred Heckman/Gasoline Engine		$115.00
Furnishings/Priest House		$8.75
Interest on Insurance		$55.00
Guilding & Painting Church		$275.00
Coal 145,300 lbs. @ $2.75 ton		$201.15
Hauling Coal		$31.50
Joseph Bruggeman/handling coal		$15.50
Painting & Guilding Church		$25.00
Plumbing Fixtures		$35.80
Tuning Organ *		$6.50
Anton Weber/ Labor		$7.85
Joseph Bruggeman - Janitor		$50.00
John Schulte /painting		$51.35
Mass Wine & Altar Bread		$25.00
Carbide - 600 lbs.		$21.00
Goecke/Gasoline		$11.25
Goecke/Fence Wire		$4.75
Goecke/Merchandise		$33.55
Goecke/Paint		$32.05
Henry Goecke/framing pictures		$22.25
Pictures		$5.00
Candles		$65.95
Sanctuary Oil		$13.50
Church Wash and Mending		$30.00
Cathedradicum etc.		$52.00
Infirm Priest Fund		$9.50
Destitute Children		$14.00
Infant Asylum		$14.00
A.C. Eifert - Sexton & Organist		$200.00
1,000 receipts		$2.50
Joseph Bruggeman - Janitor		$117.15
Wire Fence		$2.70
Anton Weber/ Labor		$11.25
Repairs		$10.20
Joseph Dahlinghaus/Labor		$4.75
Math Fahrig/Material & Labor		$16.30
Math Gast/Merchandise		$6.34
Fred Mescher/Merchandise		$10.00
H.H. Goecke/Merchandise		$0.85
Church Music		$3.40

	Receipts	Expenses
Tax		$22.18
Henry Goecke/Salary Sec.Trea.		$40.00
Henry Goecke/Wallpaper for Teacher's Residence		$2.10
John Schulte/Papering Teacher's Residence		$20.25
Rev. J.O. Missler Salary		$800.00
Anton Hausfeld for operating Organ Bellows**		$15.00
Collection: Seminary	$90.00	
Collection: Indians & Negroes	$13.75	
Collection: Holy Land	$9.00	
Collection: Orphans	$17.50	
Collection: Catholic University	$7.36	
Collection: Eucharistic Congress	$6.00	
Total Diocesan Collections - Expended		$158.61
Sunday/Feastday Collections	$118.10	
Candles	$35.05	
Collections: Funerals	$11.67	
St. Anne Society	$25.00	
Young Ladies' Society	$10.00	
Wind Storm Insurance	$14.95	
Donations	$130.00	
to Statements		$5.00
Phone		$15.00
Wind Storm Damage		$14.95
Altar Flowers		$10.00
Church Work		$50.00
A. Chalice		$50.00
Articles for Church Donation		$130.00
Supplies/Mass Servers		$25.00
Plumbing Fixtures		$10.00
Supplies/Sanctuary		$10.90
Freight Supplies, Express & Drayage		$5.02
Sundries		$8.75
Total Receipts	$5,203.43	
Total Expenditures		$3,209.13
Balance as January 15, 1912		$1,994.30

* compare to 2010 tuning - $850.00

** prior to electricity, the organ bellows were hand pumped

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Knights of St. John Uniform Rank - 1906

The Knights of St. John were first organized in 1897.

Front: August Rutschilling, Julian Schweller, Julian Goecke, John Weber, Ludwig Hausfeld, August Droesch, Capt. Mike Gagel Middle: August Dahlinghaus, John Borgert, Joe Zumwald, unknown, ? Goecke, unknown, V. Brackman, unknown, Lawrence Droesch Back: Joe Goecke, John Kramer, Henry Goecke, Matt Gast, Frank Topp, Ferd Desch, Henry Reichert, ? Wildenhaus, Albert Schweller, Ed Hausfeld

World War I had a definite impact on St. John. While English prevailed in the schools, the German language was slower to fade in church activities. Confessions in German continued for well into the 1950s, and sermons in German continued on an alternate basis into Fr. Holler's time. Despite the German roots of the parish, patriotism ran high for World War I.



Bond Rally - World War I

Upper photo: On the left is the Maria Stein Lumber Co., and on the right the Maria Stein Elevator.

Lower photo: Far left is the Hotel (now Leugers parking lot). L. J. Mescher Café across the street.



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Maria Stein Fire Company

A Maria Stein Fire Company (St. John part of town) was formed in 1913. Subscriptions were taken up for the purpose of buying a fire engine, hose, and a building to house the equipment. Seventy-eight subscribers gave money, including Father Missler (for the church) $25, Maria Stein Convent $25, Victor Fullenkamp and Henry Wendeln each $20. The balance of the subscribers gave varying amounts down to $2.50. A total of $659 was collected. The expenses the first year included: a hand-pump fire engine and hose $430, building costs of $207, and a piece of land from Henry Goecke $5. The fire house (30 feet by 10 feet) was located across the street from the VanSkiver property today. The next assessment, levied on January 8, 1917, was 25 cents for each member of the community.



c. 1915. The photo is taken from the Gast property looking west. In 1931, the fire house (white building on the left) was moved to the Henry Wendeln farm (2011: Keith Pohlmann property - 8480 S.R. 119). The street was paved about 1920.

Regular meetings were held and assessments were made as needed. At the January 6, 1931 meeting, a discussion took place concerning the need and cost of repair and replacement of the fire fighting equipment. A committee was appointed to meet with the Chickasaw Fire Company to see what arrangements could be made with them to fight Maria Stein fires. At the February 3, 1931 meeting, it was voted to accept the proposal of the Chickasaw Fire Company, namely that for $50 the first hour and $20 each succeeding hour they would fight the fires of the subscribers to the Maria Stein Fire Company. The fees were to be paid by the Maria Stein Fire Company. At the same meeting, it was voted to sell at public auction the equipment no longer needed as well as the building.

This agreement worked well and the Maria Stein Fire Company used its assessments to build and maintain fire wells. Apparently having excess money, the Company in 1938 repaired the sidewalk from the Church east for one-half mile to the edge of town. In July of 1944, the agreement was changed with the Chickasaw Fire Company so that they would only fight the fires of members who belonged to and paid annual assessments to the Chickasaw Fire Company. At the March 20, 1950 meeting, a balance of $146 was reported, and the officers (Aloys Bruggeman, Victor Unrast, and Ed Bruggeman) asked to be replaced since they had served continuously since 1937. The new officers were: President, Lee Eifert; Secretary, Henry Leugers; and Treasurer, Arthur Everman. After 47 years of existence, the last meeting of the Maria Stein Fire Company was held on February 21, 1960. After paying all outstanding bills, it was voted to give the Chickasaw Fire Company the balance of $12.50. The minutes book was signed by W. A. (Bill) Gagel.

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The Community Club

In 1922, in Maria Stein Station, some of the community citizens organized the Community Club. The following excerpt appeared in the Minster Post in the Spring of 1922:

> *A company has organized under the title of the "Maria Stein Community Club" and their officers are: John Fortkamp, president; Fred Heckman, vice president; Anthony Kleinhenz, treasurer; H. H. Leugers, secretary. The company is not to be incorporated, but they will transact their business according to the manner of any body of associated persons.*
>
> *They have already started to erect a building on a lot opposite (across) the street from the well-known Fortkamp store. The foundation for the structure has been completed and the remaining portion of the work will be taken up immediately following Easter and hastened until final completion. The plans call for a house 30 feet wide, 70 feet long, one story in height. It will have a seating capacity for at least 350 persons and will be provided with a large stage and other such additions as will render it serviceable for the public. It will be for rent in such instances wherein the managers feel that the good of the community is to be served, but the club members have tabooed public dances, or any other demonstrations that are not approved of by the entire citizenship.*

This building was in constant use for functions such as meetings of the Farmer's Institute, minstrel shows, medicine shows, moving picture shows, and wedding anniversary celebrations. A very important use was for the wedding receptions of new brides and grooms, known as "Wedding Dances." This was during the Prohibition Days, and evidence of illegal liquor could often be found after the dances and weddings. The Community Hall was the meeting place for the young adults in the area, and many marriages had their roots at the Community Hall.

Each generation has its own fun and many will remember the kite makers conventions at the Community Club, while others may remember the surprise fifth, tenth, and twenty-fifth wedding anniversaries. Guests enjoyed the playing of the Clap Board Band rendering such pieces as *Fly on the Wall* and *Cow in the Cabbage* - all in Low German, of course. An interesting and enjoyable custom took place when a bachelor (over 30) married and was invited to the Community Hall to scratch his name out of the "Ruhen Bok" in the presence of his friends and relatives. Dance bands were always present at the parties, and every family brought sandwiches for an evening lunch.



c. 1927. Play at the Community Hall. (L-R) Joe Fortkamp, Luetta Reichert, Sophia Fortkamp, Louis Lengrich, George Reichert, Matilda Heckman, Anthony Fortkamp, Alvina Fortkamp, Pauline Heckman, Frank Huber

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This era passed, when in 1948, the Community Hall was bought by the American Legion and moved to its present home at 8140 S.R. 119. Improvements and enlargements have made this an impressive American Legion home. However, the center portion is still the old Community Hall. The land on which it had been located is now part of the Leugers Insurance Agency.



The Community Hall
The building on the left is the original Leugers Insurance



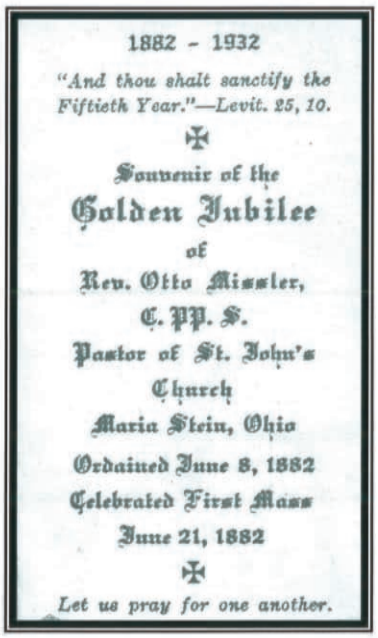


May 20, 1928. Tony Voskuhl (L) and his son, Fr. Julian Voskuhl who was ordained to the priesthood on that day. On the right is the procession leaving St. Charles Seminary for Maria Stein.



1922. Fr. Otto Missler's Ruby Anniversary (40th). Taken in front of the rectory - built 1906. Front: Fr. Francis Nigsch, Fr. Missler, Fr. Anthony Dick Center: Fr. Thomas Meyer, Fr. Benedict Boebner, unknown, Fr. Raphael Schmaus, Otto Weber Back: unknown, Fr. Sixtus Meyer, Fr. John Rahrie

On September 10, 1923, the parish celebrated Father Missler's 25th year as pastor at St. John. This was followed in 1932 by the Golden Jubilee of Father Otto Missler as a priest.



1882 - 1932

"And thou shalt sanctify the Fiftieth Year."—Levit. 25, 10.

✠

Souvenir of the

Golden Jubilee

of

Rev. Otto Missler,

C. PP. S.

Pastor of St. John's

Church

Maria Stein, Ohio

Ordained June 8, 1882

Celebrated First Mass

June 21, 1882

✠

Let us pray for one another.

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St. John Catholic Church

Church Accounts - 1927

	Receipts	Expenses
Balance last year	$4,874.78	
Coal – 50 ton		$297.72
Plumbing Repairs		$9.58
Interest on Certificate	$0.00	
Insurance		
Frank Moorman - Organist		$150.00
Joseph Bruggeman – Janitor		$100.00
General Merchandise		$12.43
General Repairs		$5.95
National Council Catholic Men*		$5.00
Coal Oil		$14.30
Interest on Certificate	$30.00	
For Tax		$34.32
Insurance		$6.40
For Repairs		$3.75
Repairs/Church & Residence		$154.74
General Merchandise		$11.56
Candles		$64.20
New furnace delivered		$392.00
Repairs, Labor, Materials		$133.00
Coal Oil		$14.30
General Merchandise		$2.06
General Repairs		$8.00
Joseph Bruggeman – Janitor		$50.00
Interest on Certificate	$13.25	
Repairs/Material/Labor		$25.07
General Merchandise		$18.86
For Taxes		$32.37
Frank Moorman – Organist		$150.00
Joseph Bruggeman – Janitor		$183.80
Diocesan Expenses		$100.00
Electric Current		$26.40
Coal Oil		$14.30
Joseph Backs, Treasurer		$40.00
Rev. J.O. Missler - Pastor Salary		$1,500.00
Insurance		$48.00
Interest on Certificate	$60.00	
Sunday & Holiday Collection	$137.59	
Candles	$69.60	
Funerals	$120.52	
St. Anne's Society	$72.50	
Seminary Collection	$350.50	
Holy Land	$14.94	
Holy Father	$103.28	
Orphans	$15.25	
Deaf Mothers	$20.86	
Catholic University	$42.81	

	Receipts	Expenses
Missions	$32.14	
Flood Sufferes	$18.40	
Diocesan Collections		$598.18
Church Work		$50.00
Church Wash **		$30.00
Telephone		$16.80
Mass Wine & Altar Bread		$35.00
Altar Flowers		$72.50
Sundries		$30.82
Interest on Certificate	$35.00	
Pew Rent	$3,726.86	
Total Assests	$9,748.31	
Total Expenditures		$4,783.41
Balance on Hand		
January 15, 1928	$4,964.90	

* National Council of Catholic Men - founded in 1920 to promote activities and lay cooperation. Also to promote Catholic principles in education, social, and civil life in general.

**The church was washed yearly - due to the black dirt and dust from the coal furnaces.

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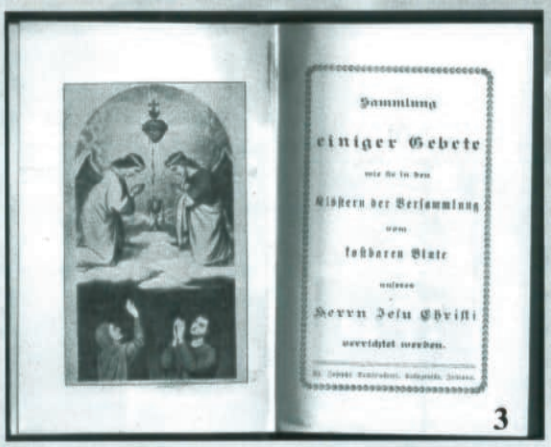
MEMORIES

Photos/events from the time of Fr. Missler

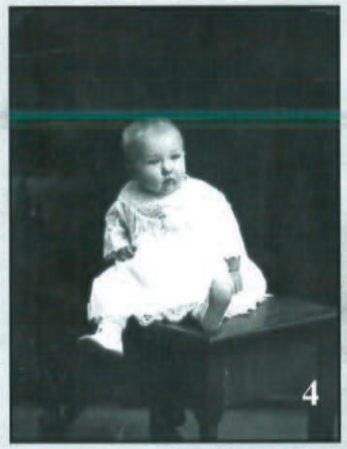

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4


5

1. 1917. Lee and Oscar Eifert. Girls' School in background
2. 1930s. Popular advertising sign located where Scott's Carry Out stands today.
3. 1906. Prayer Book from Alice Puthoff
4. 1920. Armella (Walterbusch) Pohlman
5. 1919. Dorothea and Margaret Tangeman - Robert Tangeman's sisters who went to the Girls' School.

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The advent of electricity brought many advances to the community. This picture of three girls playing on a new electric cable drum was taken just west of the church in 1927.



1918.
1440 Rolfes Rd.
Clem Brandewie, father of Alvina Riethman, on his farm one mile south of Maria Stein. On Labor Day, 1947, the top section of the barn went down in a bad windstorm. Originally built with wooden pegs, the majority of the wood was salvaged and the barn was rebuilt with the existing wood.



Clem's sisters who all became C.PP.S. Sisters.
L-R. Sister Mary John (Eleanora Brandewie), Sister Engelina (Rosalie Brandewie), Sister Dorothy (Clementine Brandewie)

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A Soggy Time



c. 1920. High water in Maria Stein Station. Both photos taken from the Kleinhenz home (8029 S.R. 119). Top Photo: Center white building was the Budde Garage (former Kramer Machine Shop) and to its right the Maria Stein Lumber Yard. Note both horses and buggies and automobiles. Bottom Photo: Building on the left is the Maria Stein Lumber and to its right is the Elevator. The building on the far right is The Hotel



These locations in 2011:

- Budde Garage later became MS Rental and currently Maria Stein Oil Company
- Maria Stein Lumber Yard was razed; tennis courts were later built on the site. Currently, the empty space in front of B&S Hauling (between Maria Stein Oil and the Elevator)
- Elevator has remained the Elevator
- The Hotel later became Adam's Tin Shop and is currently Leuger's Insurance parking lot.

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St. John's Church, Maria Stein, Ohio

Financial Statement for 1931

RECEIPTS		
Balance last year		$ 6924.36
Pew Rent		4063.75
Sunday and Holyday Collections		120.59
Candles		61.30
Funerals		33.48
St. Ann's Society		171.00
Special		234.93
Teachers' College	$ 9.00	
Catholic University	53.71	
Indians and Negroes	14.50	
Holy Land	14.97	
Seminary	268.00	
Deaf Mutes	10.45	
Missions	15.50	
Holy Father	51.22	437.35
Total		$12046.76

EXPENDITURES	
Diocesan Collections	$ 437.35
Diocesan Expenses	122.00
Pastor	1500.00
Organist	350.00
Janitor	349.00
Treasurer	40.00
Church Work	50.00
Church Wash	30.00
Fuel and Light	325.85
Taxes	75.58
Insurance	46.56
Merchandise	13.11
Repairs	111.45
Altar and Sanctuary	194.47
Sundries	49.45
Total	$ 3694.82

Total Receipts	$12046.76
Total Expenses	3694.82
Balance	$ 8351.94

1931		Dr.	Cr.
Adams, George	1	$15.00	$15.00
Albers, Bernard	1	10.00	10.00
Albers, Henry	3	45.00	45.00
Backs, Jos. H.	2	30.00	30.00
Bergman, Edward	1	15.00	15.00
Bergman, George	2	30.00	30.00
Bergman, Lawrence	1	15.00	15.00
Bergman, Jos.	3	37.50	37.50
Bergman, Stephen	2	30.00	30.00
Bernard, Jos. H.	2	30.00	30.00
Bernard, Jos., Sr.	1	15.00	15.00
Bertke, Ado	1	15.00	15.00
Bertke, Alvin	1	15.00	15.00
Bertke, Ivo	3	45.00	45.00
Bertke, Lawrence	2	17.50	17.50
Bertke, Rudolph	2	30.00	30.00
Bomholt, Leander	1	7.50	7.50
Borges, Frank	2	25.00	25.00
Brackman, Vincent	2	30.00	30.00
Brandewie, Clement	2	30.00	30.00
Bruggeman, A. H.	2	30.00	30.00
Bruggeman, Mrs. Henry	1	15.00	15.00
Bruggeman, John	1	5.00	5.00
Bruggeman, Jos. H.	1	15.00	15.00
Bruggeman, Jos., Sr.	1	15.00	15.00
Bruggeman, Lawrence	1	15.00	15.00
Bruns, Edward	4	56.25	56.25
Bruns, John, Jr.	3	45.00	45.00
Bruns, Jos.	3	45.00	45.00
Bruns, Louis	2	30.00	30.00
Budde, August	1	15.00	15.00
Budde, Mrs. Caroline	3	45.00	45.00
Budde, Henry	2	30.00	30.00
Budde, Lawrence	1	15.00	15.00
Budde, William	1	15.00	15.00
Clune, Fred	2	26.25	26.25
Droesch, August	3	45.00	45.00
Eifert, Charles	1	15.00	15.00
Eifert, Leander	1	15.00	15.00
Esser, G. J.	1	15.00	15.00
Everman, August	2	30.00	30.00
Eyink, Louis	2	17.50	17.50
Fortkamp, Jos.	1	15.00	15.00
Froning, Jacob	3	33.75	33.75
Fullenkamp, Bernard	2	30.00	30.00
Gagel, Mrs. M.	2	30.00	30.00
Garman, August	2	30.00	30.00
Garman, Emil	1	15.00	15.00
Gast, Mathias	2	30.00	30.00
Giere, Jos.	2	30.00	30.00
Goecke, Edward	1	15.00	15.00
Goecke, Fred	3	45.00	45.00
Goecke, Mrs. J. B.	1	15.00	15.00
Goecke, Jos.	2	30.00	30.00
Goecke, Leonard	1	15.00	15.00
Grieshop, Bernard	3	45.00	45.00
Grieshop, Fred	2	20.00	20.00
Hartings, Anthony	2	30.00	30.00
Hartings, Herbert	1	7.50	7.50
Hausfeld, Albert	1	15.00	15.00
Hausfeld, Clement	2	17.50	17.50
Hausfeld, Leo	2	30.00	30.00
Hausfeld, L. M.	1	15.00	15.00
Heckman, Fred	2	30.00	30.00
Heckman, Mary	1	15.00	15.00
Heitkamp, August	2	27.50	27.50
Heitkamp, Edward	2	30.00	30.00
Heitkamp, Fred	2	30.00	30.00
Heitkamp, Henry	3	45.00	45.00
Heitkamp, John	6	75.00	75.00
Heitkamp, Jos. A.	2	30.00	30.00
Heitamp, Leo	1	15.00	15.00
Homan, John	3	45.00	45.00
Homan, Lawrence	2	20.00	20.00
Huelskamp, Bernard	3	37.50	37.50
Huelskamp, John D.	1	15.00	15.00
Imwalle, Mrs. John	3	45.00	45.00
Kemper, Jos.	1	11.25	11.25
Kleinhenz, Anthony	2	30.00	30.00
Knapke, August	4	60.00	60.00
Knapke, Frank	1	15.00	15.00
Knapke, Jos.	6	90.00	90.00
Kramer, Mrs. J. M.	2	18.75	18.75
Kremer, Anna	1	6.25	6.25
Kremer, August	4	60.00	60.00
Kremer, John D.	4	60.00	60.00
Kremer, Roman	1	15.00	15.00
Luebke, Fred	2	30.00	30.00
Meier, Bernard	4	60.00	60.00
Meinerding, Henry	1	15.00	15.00
Meinerding, John	2	30.00	30.00
Menker, Henry	1	15.00	15.00
Mescher, Bernard	3	35.00	35.00
Mescher, Dick	2	30.00	30.00
Mescher, Frank	2	30.00	30.00
Mescher, Lawrence	1	15.00	15.00
Mescher, William	3	45.00	45.00
Meyer, Mrs. Fred	1	15.00	15.00
Moorman, Frank H.	3	45.00	45.00
Nagel, William	2	30.00	30.00
Nieberding, Aloys	1	15.00	15.00
Overman, Leo	3	45.00	45.00
Overman, Louis	3	45.00	45.00
Overman, William	2	30.00	30.00
Pohlman, John	3	45.00	45.00
Pohlman, Mrs. Mary	3	45.00	45.00
Pohlman, Richard	1	15.00	15.00
Prenger, Frank	2	30.00	30.00
Puthoff, Anthony	3	42.50	42.50
Puthoff, Frank	1	15.00	15.00
Puthoff, Jos.	2	27.50	27.50
Reichert, Henry	3	45.00	45.00
Rolfes, Henry	2	30.00	30.00
Rolfes, Miss Kate	1	15.00	15.00
Ruschau, Bernard	3	32.50	32.50
Rutschilling, Dick	3	45.00	45.00
Rutschilling, Fred	3	41.25	41.25
Rutschilling, Henry	2	26.25	26.25
Schlarman, John	2	5.00	5.00
Streacker, Henry	2	30.00	30.00
Synck, John	1	15.00	15.00
Tangeman, B. J.	1	15.00	15.00
Tangeman, Bernard, Jr.	2	30.00	30.00
Thobe, Frank	1	15.00	15.00
Thobe, Henry	1	15.00	15.00
Thobe, John	3	45.00	45.00
Unrast, Bernard	3	45.00	45.00
Vehorn, Bernard	2	30.00	30.00
Vehorn, Edward	2	30.00	30.00
Vehorn, Ferd	2	30.00	30.00
Voskuhl, Anthony	2	30.00	30.00
Voskuhl, Henry	4	60.00	60.00
Walterbusch, Leo	3	45.00	45.00
Wendeln, Fred	2	27.50	27.50
Wendeln, Henry	3	45.00	45.00
Westgerdes, John	2	30.00	30.00
Willke, E. J.	2	12.50	12.50
Will, Theodore H.	1	7.50	7.50
Wilker, Mrs. Henry	1	15.00	15.00
Wolters, Alphonse	2	30.00	30.00
Wissman, Mrs. Henry	1	15.00	15.00
Zumwald, Bernard	2	30.00	30.00

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CHAPTER TEN
A Parish Milestone
1932-1952

During the summer of 1932, Fr. Benno Holler came to St. John from Pulaski, Indiana. Being experienced in parochial work, he at once decided to make necessary repairs and improvements. Whether it was due to the depression years or to the reluctance of Fr. Missler to spend money, repairs were needed. Fr. Holler had the chimney in the church replaced and all the exterior woodwork on the windows and tower repainted. He then renovated part of the sanctuary by lowering the steps that led to the communion railing. These steps had been a concern to many of the older parishioners.



Father Benno Holler, C.PP.S.
1932-1943

In August of 1935, with the consent of the authorities of the Archdiocese, a new pipe organ was installed at a cost of $3,900; it was dedicated on October 25, 1935. Also in 1935, the Kaletta Statuary Company of St. Louis, Missouri, provided the Stations of the Cross at a cost of $160. These wonderful stations were surrounded with wood framework which was removed after Vatican II. Due to a severe storm, the stained glass windows in the sanctuary around the altar had been blown out. The acclaimed Emil Frei Stained Glass Company of St. Louis was selected to replace them at a cost of $700. In 1936-37, at a cost of $8,000, Fr. Holler initiated the repainting and redecorating of the inside of the church. This was done by Herman Diedam, a German immigrant who settled in Kentland, Indiana. Much of the stencil work and beautiful paintings are still there today. (The stencils marking the chapter headings in this book are an example of this fine craftsmanship that Fr. Holler insisted on.) Part of the redecorating included laying linoleum (1937 - $377) in all the aisles to cover the original wooden floors, and then three years later, carpet was laid in portions of the sanctuary. It was in 1939 that major electrical wiring and new lights were added to the entire church. Up until that point, the church used a series of Delco batteries for lights and the organ bellows. Padding was added to the kneelers in 1947 at a cost of $1,825.



The only place where the artist, Herman Diedam, signed his name. Located above the Blessed Virgin Altar. 1936.

Fr. Holler is remembered not only for the renovation and beautification of St. John Church, but also for his long sermons. He would preach one Mass in English and the next Mass in German. Some Sundays he exasperated parishioners by preaching the same sermon in both English and German at the same Mass.

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During Father Holler's stay at St. John, the parish celebrated its 100th anniversary. The celebration took place June 20, 1937 - one hundred years after the completion of the first church. Old financial accounts records show that the Centennial Celebration net income was $3,610.15 - quite an amazing testament to Fr. Holler and the parish.

The following is an excerpt from *The Minster Post* dated June 2, 1937, concerning this event:

Reverend Father Benno V. Holler, C.PP.S., who is the pastor of the St. John parish at Maria Stein, was in Minster, on Wednesday afternoon of this week with a glowing report of the centennial celebration that was held on Sunday by the people of that community. The event was attended by His Excellency, Bishop J. H. Albers, Auxiliary Bishop of Cincinnati and by Martin L. Davey, who is the governor of the state of Ohio.

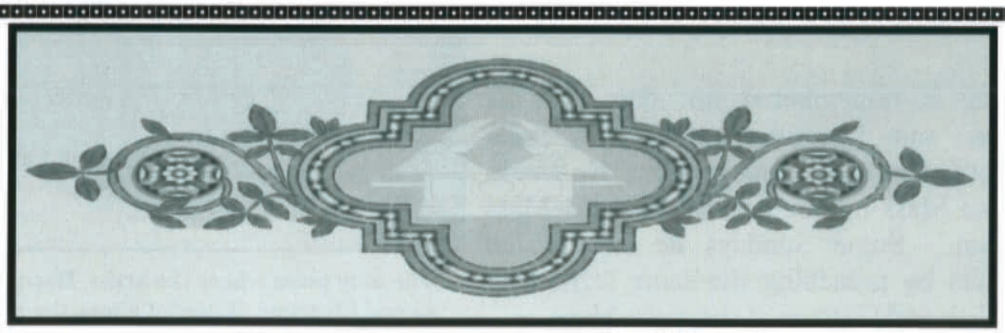
Music was furnished by the Minster City Band and a chicken dinner, that was served by the members of the parish, refreshed thousands of persons.

In the morning a procession was formed at the church rectory by persons who were charged with this duty and it embraced the following divisions: The Knights of St. John, the school children, seminarians from St. Charles Seminary, and the clergy. The marchers moved to the village church where a very large number of people had already assembled for the morning devotionals.

A Pontifical High Mass was celebrated by His Excellency, Bishop Albers, who is now the Bishop-elect for the newly created diocese of Lansing, Michigan, and he was assisted by the following priests: Very Reverend Othmar Knapke, of St. Charles Seminary as Archpriest; Reverend Simon Kuhnmuench of Chickasaw as deacon of honor; Reverend Julian Mayer of Wapakoneta, as sub-deacon of honor; Reverend Julian Voskuhl of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, and a son of the St. John parish, as deacon of the Mass; Reverend Aloys Feldhaus, of St. Charles Seminary, as subdeacon of the Mass; Reverend Roy Grotenrath and Charles Davitt, of St. Charles Seminary, as masters of ceremony.

The sermon for the occasion was delivered by Reverend Sebastian J. Kremer, who is also a son of the parish.

The following clergymen from other communities attended the event besides those who assisted in the morning services: Reverend Linus Stahl, St. Wendelin; Leander Linz, Egypt; Hubert Seiferle, St. Marys Novitiate, Burkettsville; Ernest Hefele, St. Sebastian; Mathias Schmidt, St. Joseph; Ivo Weiss, St. Peter; Othmar Missler, Francis Rehberger and James Tekath, Minster; Cletus Foltz, St. Charles Seminary; Melchior Lochtefeld, Cleveland; Rudolph Stoltz, Ft. Recovery; Otto Mueller, Sharpsburg; Pius Kanney, St. Henry; and Edwin Lohmiller, Maria Stein Convent.



Example of 1936 stenciling

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The exact date of this photo is unknown, but it was possibly taken in 1939 when Fr. Edward Moorman celebrated his First Mass at St. John. Several noteworthy items: The current lights of the church are not yet in place. There is decorative stenciling in all the niches of the altar and also around all the windows in the church. The communion rail is still a natural wood color - was later painted white. The sanctuary floor has carpet or linoleum.

photo courtesy of Paul Gagel

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During Fr. Holler's time, one of the prominent families of the parish was the Frank and Johanna Moorman family. In 1922, Frank Moorman became the church organist and an esteemed teacher. *(An extensive report on his life and contribution to this community can be found in Part C, Chapter 2.)*

On May 7, 1939, Edward Moorman, son of Frank and Johanna, was ordained. Four years later, on December 3, 1943, another son, Gregory Moorman, was ordained into the priesthood. He said his First Mass on December 8, 1943 in Minster and the following Sunday in St. John.





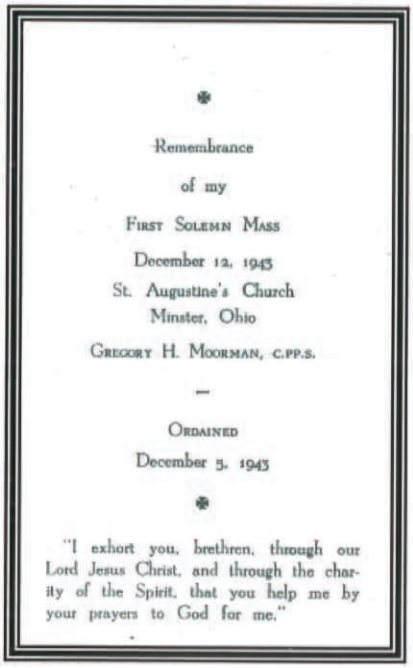
Top. Fr. Edward Moorman, C.PP.S., said his First Solemn High Mass at St. John on May 14, 1939.

(L) The Moorman family gathers to celebrate Fr. Ed's First Mass. Center, with the C.PP.S. cross, is Fr. Ed; on his right is his father, Frank, and on his left is his mother, Johanna. The tall man in the back is Gregory - who eventually became a priest at St. John.

Below. Fr. Gregory Moorman celebrated his First Solemn Mass at St. Augustine.



A day in the life of the Moormans. Notice St. John School. The "Moorman" house, rectory, and church is behind (W) of the parked car. The tall man is Fr. Greg. The children are playing at the Menker house (2011: Vaughan Ray home - 2020 Jefferson St.)
Photos provided by David Moorman



✠

Remembrance

of my

First Solemn Mass

December 12, 1943

St. Augustine's Church
Minster, Ohio

Gregory H. Moorman, C.PP.S.

—

Ordained

December 5, 1943

✠

"I exhort you, brethren, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and through the charity of the Spirit, that you help me by your prayers to God for me."

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Romie Hausfeld

Romie Hausfeld turned 90 on October 12, 2010, and is a long-time member of this community and parish. He shared some thoughts and memories of his years growing up in this church.

In the summer time, when we were on vacation from school, we used to walk barefooted all summer. We would even go to Mass barefooted, but when it was our turn to serve we had to wear shoes. It did happen, on occasion, that a server did not show up and we'd serve barefooted as substitutes.

In those days there was a communion rail the width of the church where we received Holy Communion. The priest said Mass at the altar with his back to the people. The Mass was in Latin, and when the priest gave the sermon he would deliver it in Low German from the pulpit. It was located against the pillar in front on the west side and was located probably five or six feet above the people. There were probably eight to ten steps up to the pulpit.

My grandfather, Aloys Eifert, was my baptism sponsor when I was baptized in 1920. He was a school teacher and an organist here at St. John. However, they moved to St. Joe probably in 1917 or thereabouts.

Gregory Moorman became a good Catholic priest, however, years earlier when some of my friends and I served Mass, we'd sit on the west side. During the sermon, Greg, who was a few years older, would make monkey shines in the sacristy - where he was the sacristan. He tried to make us laugh during the sermon, knowing that we would get in big trouble if we were caught laughing.

From his years in the service: *I spent most of my Navy time during WWII aboard the destroyer USS Walker. I was a radioman on our ship. Operations included New Guinea, the invasion of Leyte, Luzon, and after a return to the States for repairs, we went to the invasion of Okinawa on Easter Sunday, April 1, 1945. After the dropping of the two atomic bombs and the ending of the war, I returned to the States and got my thankful release in early 1946.*

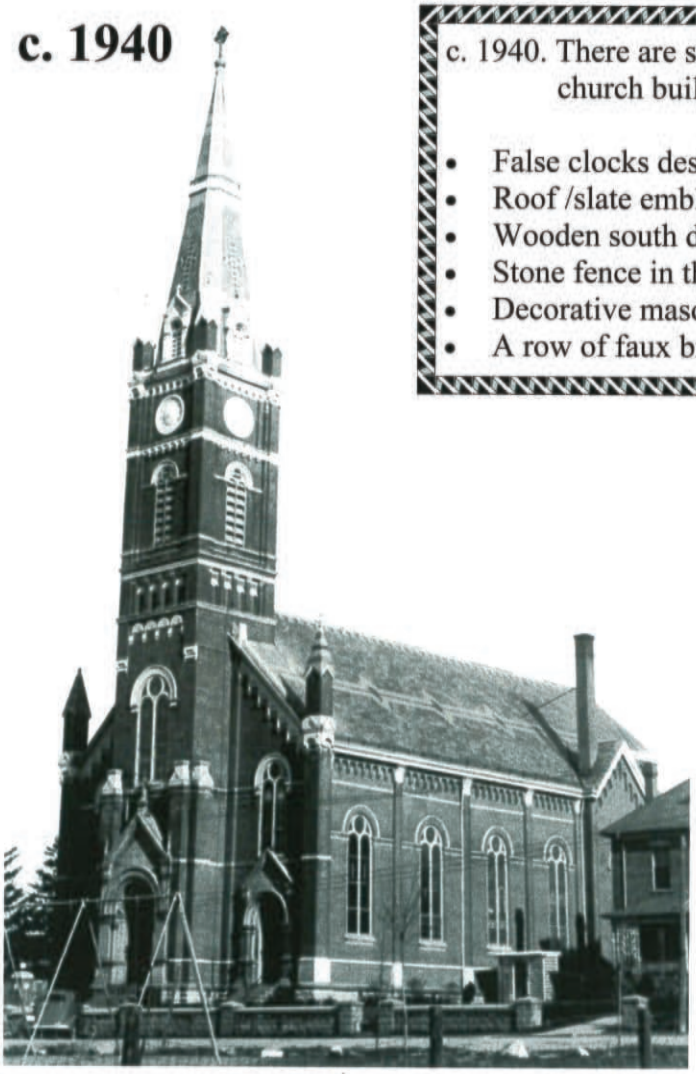




The church had an exquisite pulpit that the priest would ascend to deliver his homily.

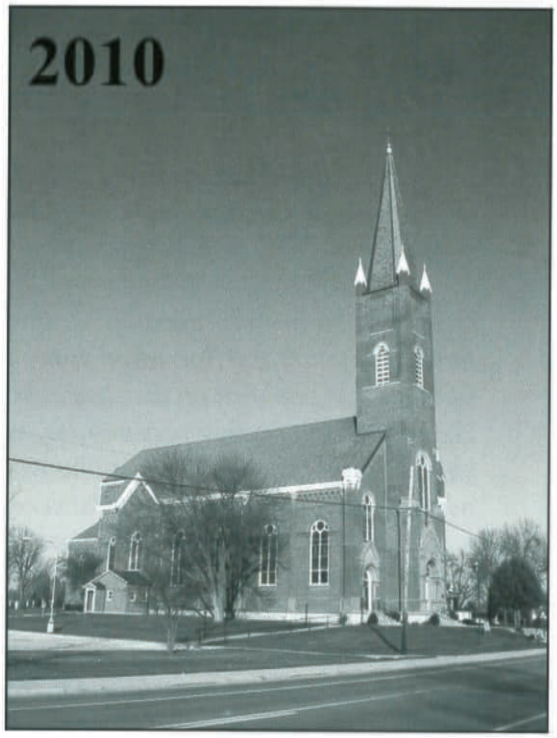
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c. 1940



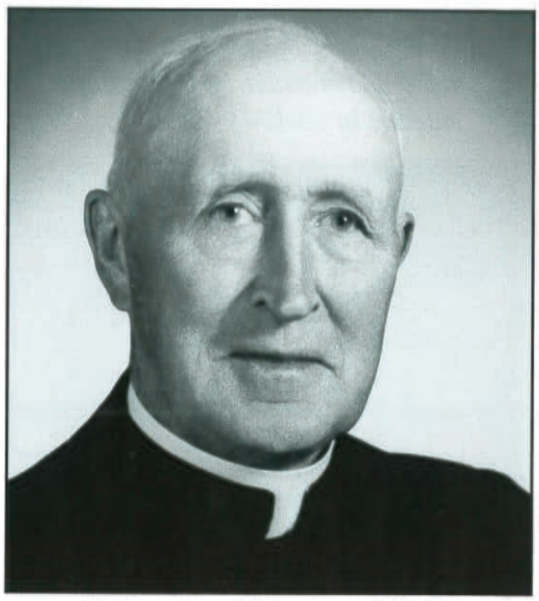
c. 1940. There are significant differences between the church building of 1940 and today.

- False clocks designs
- Roof /slate emblems
- Wooden south doors
- Stone fence in the front
- Decorative masonry on the exterior walls removed in 1961
- A row of faux brick windows below the belfry



Fr. Olberding was born in Petersburg, Iowa, in 1884. He entered the Society of the Precious Blood in 1901, professed in 1909, and was ordained in 1914. His tenure at St. John was toward the end of his pastoral career. He passed away in 1967 and is buried at St. Charles Seminary.

World War II ended in 1945, much to the joy and relief of all parishioners. In his annual reports to the diocese, Fr. Olberding made these notations: 1943 - 61 boys in the Armed Services; 1944 - 72 boys; and 1945 - 87 boys in the service. St. John was not spared in World War II. Herbert Heitkamp, age 28, was killed in Belgium in the Battle of the Bulge on December 26, 1944. Louis Imwalle, born and raised in St. John Parish, was working in Springfield, Ohio, when he left for the service. At the age of 22 he was killed in action in Burma, on January 19, 1945. Both men are buried in the St. John cemetery.



Fr. Evaristus Olberding, C.PP.S.
1943-1952

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Louis J. Imwalle
SGT. 475th Infantry WW II

Parishioner Mark "Duke" Droesch shared some memories and thoughts of his time in the army:

I reported to the Celina Court House in January 1943 for army service. I got on a bus with 50 other young men. We drove to Camp Atterbury, Indiana, where we were issued all of our army clothes. Then we were shipped out to Bangor, Maine for basic training. 30° below. Cold. Later we shipped out to sail the Atlantic Ocean, first through the Panama Canal Zone, where we passed through the locks.



Herbert C. Heitkamp
PFC 23 INF 2 INF DIV WW II

We sailed out to sea on our way to Bora Bora, Society Islands. Here we got off the ship to stretch our legs. Then on to Milne Bay, New Guinea. Here we built a hospital road and a large construction area. Then we sailed out to Maffin Bay, Dutch New Guinea on our way to the Wake Islands and built an airfield and opened up a stone quarry. Sailed out to Okinawa Shima Ryuki, again to build airfields and another quarry. Here we built the company Castle Theater and all roads that led to it.

War ended while on Okinawa, got to ship out home bound. Hurrah! Hurrah! After 19 days on the ocean, we landed at a camp in California. Saw the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. Then got on a train from California back to Camp Atterbury, Indiana. Here we were discharged on January 14, 1946. Wow. I was overseas for 23 months, but in the army a total of 35 months and 18 days. Never forget. When I got back home I started my new life.

My brother Robert Droesch also was in the army M.P. When he got home, he started to work at the St. Marys tire factory. Because of poor ventilation, he developed leukemia and died on August 5, 1946 at the age of 28.

After the death of organist and educator, Frank H. Moorman in 1942, the organist's house (commonly referred to as the Moorman House) was razed. Miss Jeanette Wagner was brought in as the new organist. She was followed by John O'Neil and Dominic Berardi; all were high school teachers. On February 1, 1951, the parish bought the Dr. Willke home and office as a parish house. This move was intended to provide a home for an organist and to make it easier to find and retain organists. In reality, it was occupied very little by the organist, but by numerous other teachers in the St. John school system. During this time, while a high school student, Ruth (Kremer) Schwieterman started playing the organ part-time. Since she had no need to live in a parish house, the property was sold to Eugene and Doris Imwalle, who live in it to this day.



Former Dr. Wilke office
(2011: Eugene Imwalle home - 8459 S.R. 119)

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According to records, the following Confessional and Communion Sacraments were celebrated.

YEAR	CONFESSIONS	COMMUNION
1946	7,578	11.002
1947	7,733	12,100
1948	7,369	11,519
1949	7,397	11,975
1950	7,236	10,820
1951	6,984	11,290



Right: Crucifix located above the pipe organ.



c. 1943. Solemn Communion (at St. John School) - Fr. Olberding, priest.

Top Row: Lorena Prenger, Mary Evelyn Bertke, Mildred Fortkamp, Mathilda Imwalle, Irene Pohlmann, Edna Heitkamp, Alfrieda Everman, Carol Vehorn, Othmar Homan, Linus Heitkamp, Stanley Kleinhenz, Greg Esser, Ralph Mescher, Wilbert Heitkamp Fourth Row: Lucille Mescher, unknown, Elsie Heitkamp, Jovita Heitkamp, Grace Mescher, Maxine Eifert, Rita Menker, Annella Prenger, Katie Goettemoeller, Dennis Bertke, Alfred Kremer, Richard Puthoff, Othmar Bergman, John Mescher, John Vehorn, Tom Overman Third Row: Esther Adams, Alvina Walterbusch, Irene Bruggeman, Beatrice Bruggeman, Jeanette Budde, Dorothy Wolters, Eileen Budde, Mary Streaker, Ruth Budde, Omer Bertke, Cyril Thobe, Andy Kleinhenz, Gene Mescher, Delbert Thobe Second Row: Irene Vehorn, Ruth Kremer, Irene Luebke, Mary Agnes Rutschilling, Dorina Heitkamp, Dorothy Clune, Delores Mescher, Jeanette Bertke, Rosie Streacker, Fr. Olberding, Leo Pohlmann, Tom Gast, Joe Wendel, Jerry Kemper, Othmar Fullenkamp, Louis Overman, Bud Bertke, Tom Budde, Tony Fortkamp Front Row: Wilma Budde, Martha Lou Bertke, Eileen Nieberding, Margie Esser, Ag Hausfeld, Joan Gast, Rose Kremer, Edgar Overman, Lewis Bertke, Greg Hausfeld, Leonard Homan, Don Bruggeman, Harold Heitbrink

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Let us pray for one another.

✠

AMBROSE A. RUSCHAU, C.PP.S.

ORDAINED PRIEST

May 18, 1950

—

FIRST SOLEMN MASS

May 21, 1950

St. John's Church

Maria Stein, Ohio

✠

O Jesus, give rest to the soul of my father, bless my mother, brothers, sisters, and all, living and dead, who have helped me to Thy Altar.



Fr. Ambrose Ruschau, C.PP.S.

During Fr. Olberding's pastorate, another son of the parish, Ambrose Ruschau, was ordained a priest into the Society of the Precious Blood. Ambrose Ruschau was the son of Bernard & Catherine (Buehler) Ruschau. He was born on October 16, 1922, ordained on May 18, 1950, and died on January 5, 1998.



May 21, 1950. The First Solemn High Mass for Fr. Ambrose Ruschau (center of the picture). The priest to his left is Fr. Evaristus Olberding (pastor at St. John), and to his right is Fr. Paul Knapke. To the right of Fr. Knapke, in cassock and surplice is Fr. Emil Schuwey. The priest to the right of Fr. Ruschau is unidentified, but the next priest is Fr. William Eilerman. All of the priests are C.PP.S. priests.

photo courtesy of Robert (Bob) Pohlman

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May Crowning 1946



Note numerous design differences: Far left, lower portion of wall - the entire church had this stenciled pattern throughout. The exquisite pulpit and angel statue. The communion rail. Linoleum in aisles. Wooden floor in sanctuary. Elaborate stenciling at the altars. Numerous statues throughout. Other items of interest: Choir at right. Ladies in their hats - there are no men present in the congregation. All five parishes in today's cluster participated.

The Girls' Choir for the 1946 May Crowning



<u>Front Row:</u> Madonna Goecke, Ruth Kremer, Jeannette Bertke, Norma Hartings, Rosemary Lochtefeld, Esther Hausfeld, Delores Mescher, Joan Gast <u>Second Row</u>: Kate Kleinhenz, Agnes Hausfeld, Lucille Menker, Rita Menker, Irene Bruggeman, Dorothy Clune, Jeanette Budde <u>Third Row</u>: Velma Meier, Katherine Goettemoeller, Irene Goettemoeller, Ethel Kremer, Roseana Hausfeld, Lilian Will <u>Top Row</u>: Irene Pohlmann, Rose Kremer, Beatrice Bruggeman, Sally Dahlinghaus, Rosemary Heitkamp, Irene Luebke, Ruth Hess, Mary Evelyn Bertke, Mary Ann Bruggeman

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May Crowning 1948

Representatives from all five local parishes participated in the May Crowning Ceremonies. Prophetically, almost sixty years later those five churches have indeed clustered into the Marion Catholic Community.



Far left /bottom to top: Dorothy Otte, Mary Katherine Thobe, Lorena Heitbrink, Alfrieda Schoenlein, Marian Schmitmeyer Second row/bottom to top: Patty Schwieterman, Anita Meier, Shirley Eyink, Ruth Menker, Patty Eifert Holding pillow-Doris Hartings Center-Alma Dirksen Third row/bottom to top: Margie Goecke, Mary Jo Stelzer, Margie Froning, Rita Zumberge, Celia Budde Far right/bottom to top: Joan Tangeman, Mary Ruth Homan, Verena Homan, Mary Ann Bruns, Ginny Borgert



Henry and Mary Elizabeth (Schulte) Wendeln - 50th Wedding Anniversary - 1936
Married on October 6, 1886
Picture taken in front of their home
(2011: Keith Pohlmann home - 8480 S.R. 119)

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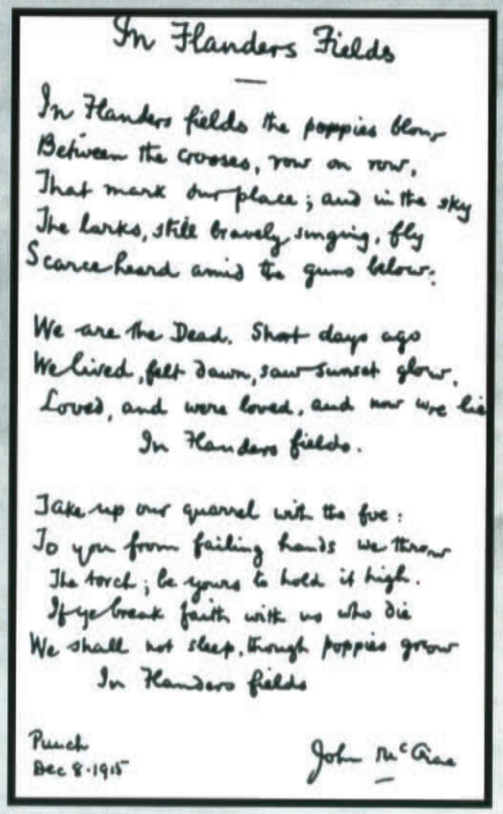
A Country's Grief
One Family's Agony

In Flanders Fields

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie,
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.


In Flanders Fields

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The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields

Punch
Dec 8·1915

John McCrae

This poem, penned by John McCrae, a WWI Canadian medical officer, commemorates the deaths of thousands of young men who died in Flanders during the brutal battles there. Grieving over the loss of a friend, McCrea wrote this poem as he gazed at the blood-red poppies that dotted the cemeteries in Belgium where foreign soldiers were buried. In twenty minutes he scribbled these fifteen lines of poetry that created a world-wide impact over the years. Almost thirty years later, one of St. John's own would be buried, temporarily, in one of these graves.



Herbert Heitkamp, son of John and Rosa (Bruns) Heitkamp died while serving in WWII in the Army Infantry.





The grave and marked cross for Herbert Heitkamp in a cemetery in Belgium.

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ARMY SERVICE FORCES
PHILADELPHIA QUARTERMASTER DEPOT
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL
PHILADELPHIA 45, PA.

Mr. John J. Heitkamp
Route #1
Minster, Ohio

THE PURPLE HEART DECORATION IN THIS PACKAGE HAS BEEN SENT TO YOU UPON AUTHORITY OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL OF THE ARMY.

Roland Walsh

ROLAND WALSH,
BRIGADIER GENERAL, USA.
COMMANDING.





Purple Heart belonging to Herbert Heitkamp.





American soldiers were buried in graves throughout Europe. Local citizens would look after the grave, and after the war the bodies would be returned to the States. This family, from Belgium, looked after the grave of Herbert Heitkamp.

What a heartbreaking time for a family; so proud of their son, but so sad to have him gone.

HEADQUARTERS TWENTY THIRD INFANTRY
Office of the Commanding Officer

958051

A.P.O. #2, c/o Postmaster,
New York City, New York,
29 December, 1944.

Mrs. Rosa Heitkamp,
Route #1,
Minster, Ohio.

Dear Mrs. Heitkamp:

Your son, Private First Class Herbert C. Heitkamp, 35281513, who had been a member of Antitank Company, 23rd Infantry since the 16th of January, 1942, was killed in action the 26th of December, 1944, while engaged in combat against the enemy in Belgium. He was buried in Belgium and the services were officiated by a Catholic Chaplain.

You have the deepest sympathy of the officers and enlisted men of this regiment in your bereavement. Private First Class Heitkamp was held in high regard by all members of this command. He was a splendid soldier and his exemplary action in combat was an inspiration to his fellow soldiers. His loss will be felt by his many friends.

Sincerely,

B Lovless

B. B. LOVLESS,
Colonel, 23rd Infantry,
Commanding.

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Richard Brackman
United States Army



1

NOTICE OF CLASSIFICATION

Registrant Richard Henry Brackman Order No. 11,626
Induction postponed

has been classified in Class I-A (Until Feb. 1, 1943)
(Insert Date for Class II-A and II-B only)

by ☒ Local Board
☐ Board of Appeal (by vote of _____ to _____)
☐ President

12-1, 1942 Mercer Co. Local Board # 1
(Date of mailing) *Member of Local Board.*

NOTICE OF RIGHT TO APPEAL

Appeal from classification by local board or board of appeal must be made by signing appeal form on back of questionnaire at office of local board, or by filing written notice of appeal, within ten days after the mailing of this notice.

Before appeal, a registrant may file a written request for appearance within the same ten-day period; and, if he does so, the local board will fix a day and notify him to appear personally before the local board; if this is done, the time to appeal is extended to ten days beyond the day set by the local board for such appearance.

There is a right in certain dependency cases, of appeal from appeal board decision to the President; see Selective Service Regulations.

The law requires you—To keep in touch with your local board. To notify it of any change of address. To notify it of any fact which might change classification.

D. S. S. Form 57 (Rev. 4-13-42) 10—19071-1 U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

3

INDIVIDUAL ENLISTED MAN'S TRAINING RECORD

Important
Retain This Card

NAME Richard H. Brackman

ASN 35546896

DATE OF BIRTH 16 JUNE 1922

SINGLE X MARRIED _____

EDUCATION Grade Sch.

CIVILIAN OCCUPATION Truck Driver

THE ARMORED SCHOOL
Fort Knox, Kentucky

This Individual Training Record is for your personal convenience. Every effort should be made on your part to qualify in all of the items indicated. This record should be in your possession at all times.

P. M. ROBINETT
Brigadier General

TAS-155-M-Knox-10-6-44-15M



2



4

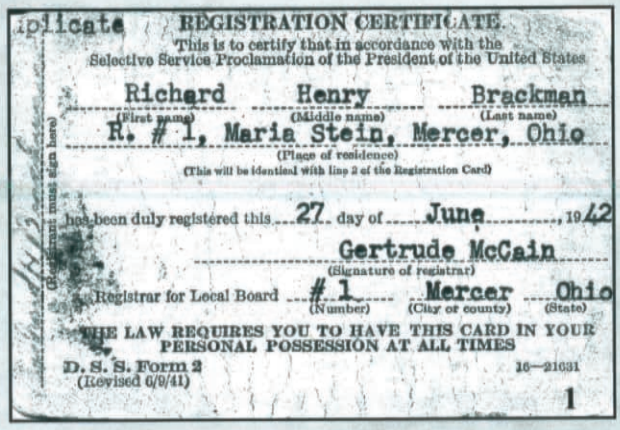
1. **Classification Notice: 1-A**
2. **Service men and women waiting for the bus to take them to Mammoth Cave.**
3. **Training Record**
4. **Richard (star) was a T-4 driver. The tank's name was "Hi Helen" - named after their commander George Guile's wife, Helen.**

Note: in 2011, Richard was the only living serviceman from this picture.

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The 717th Army Tank Battalion in Paris, France. 1945
RICHARD is the soldier on the left and PRESIDENT HARRY TRUMAN is the gentleman in the suit.



plicate **REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that in accordance with the Selective Service Proclamation of the President of the United States

Richard (First name) Henry (Middle name) Brackman (Last name)

R. # 1, Maria Stein, Mercer, Ohio (Place of residence)

(This will be identical with line 2 of the Registration Card)

has been duly registered this 27 day of June, 1942

Gertrude McCain (Signature of registrar)

Registrar for Local Board # 1 (Number) Mercer (City or county) Ohio (State)

THE LAW REQUIRES YOU TO HAVE THIS CARD IN YOUR PERSONAL POSSESSION AT ALL TIMES

D. S. S. Form 2 (Revised 6/9/41) 16—21631

(Registrant must sign here)

1

1. **Army Registration with Selective Service**
2. **Richard's Dog Tags**
3. **Permission to carry/mail enemy military equipment**

Photos and documents courtesy of Richard and Barbara Brackman



2

CERTIFICATE

T/4 Richard H. Brackman 35546896 _____ (Date)

"1. I certify that I have personally examined the items of captured enemy military equipment (mailed by*) (*in the possession of) ___; that the trophy value of such items exceeds any training, service, or salvage value; that they do not include any explosives and that the (*mailing) (*possession) thereof is in conformity with the provisions of Sec III, Cir 353, WD, 31 August 1944, and the existing regulations of the Theater Commander.

"*2. I further certify that the items mailed do not include any firearms capable of being concealed on the person, or any parts of firearms.

"3. The items referred to are:
2 German Knives
With sheath.
No ammo.

Calvin Dennis (Signature)

Sgt Inf (Rank and Branch)

_____ (Organization)

* Strike out one.
** Not required for items being carried personally to the US."

3

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MEMORIES









1. c. 1941. Danny Goecke on the bicycle - just outside the Goecke Filling Station
2. 1939. Paul Moorman. Just north of the Moorman house. Note the old rectory garage.
3. May 25, 1941. Dorothy Pohlmann - First Communion
4. 1940. Louis Tangeman outside the Fred Bruns house (2011: Tom Knapke home - 2075 Jefferson St.)

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