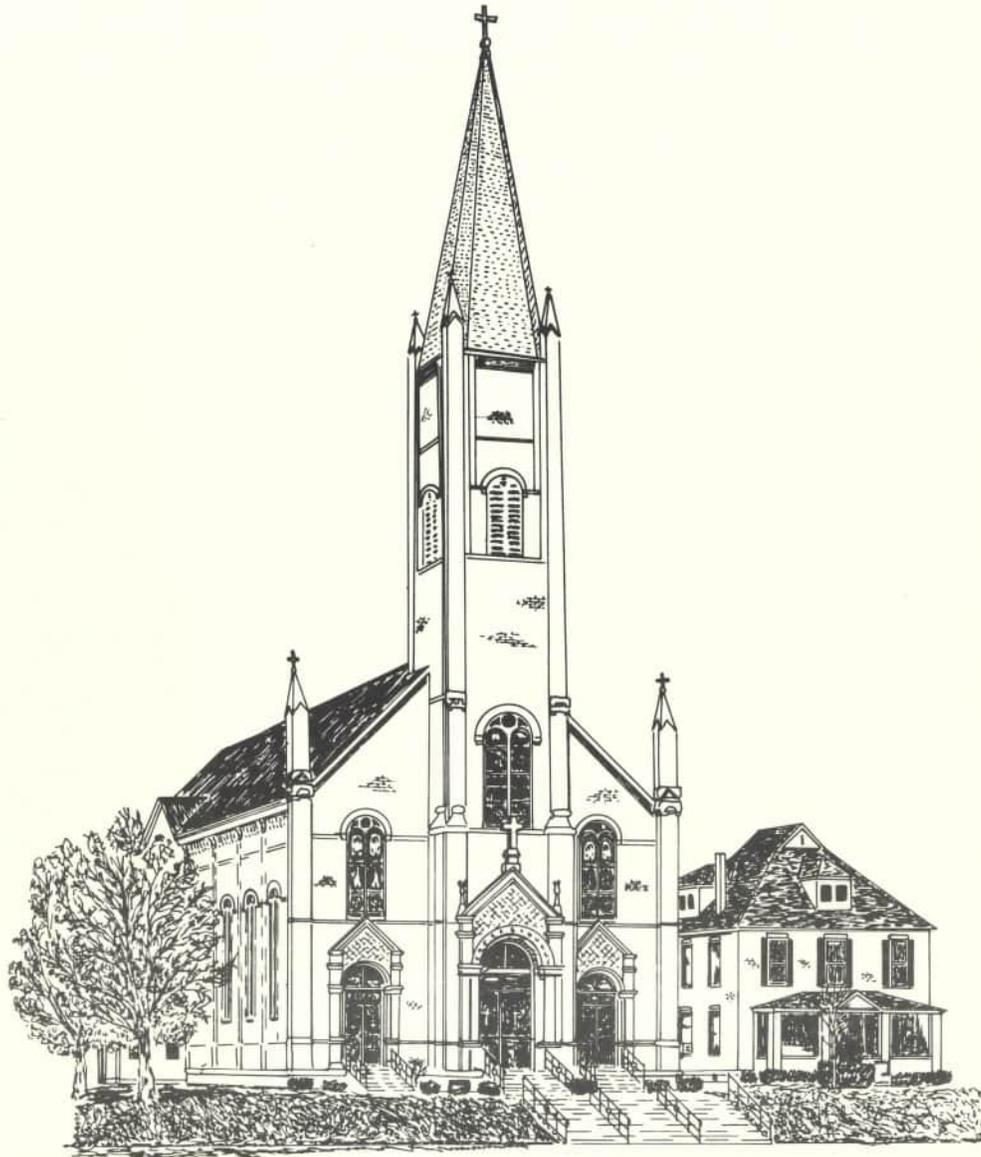


ST. JOHN CHURCH MARIA STEIN, OHIO



1836-1986

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by
Henry J. Leugers

*Henry J
Leugers*

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

PHYSICS 551
LECTURE 10
SPECIAL RELATIVITY
I. INTRODUCTION
II. THE GALILEAN TRANSFORMATION
III. THE LORENTZ TRANSFORMATION
IV. TIME DILATION
V. LENGTH CONTRACTION
VI. VELOCITY ADDITION
VII. THE RELATIVISTIC ENERGY-MOMENTUM RELATION
VIII. THE RELATIVISTIC Doppler EFFECT
IX. THE RELATIVISTIC ABERRATION OF LIGHT
X. THE RELATIVISTIC TRANSFORMATION OF ELECTRIC AND MAGNETIC FIELDS
XI. THE RELATIVISTIC THEORY OF ELECTROMAGNETISM
XII. THE RELATIVISTIC THEORY OF GRAVITATION

FOREWORD

In 1835 an interesting couple arrived in St. John from Germany, namely Bernard and Elizabeth Boeke. They were religious and active in church work. They were hard workers and leaders in the community. In this parish history we are going to talk primarily of Elizabeth because of her exceptional talent of writing and sketching.

Elizabeth (Liwwat) Knapke was born at Neuenkirchen, Oldenburg, Germany in 1807. She emigrated to the United States (Bremen to Baltimore) in 1834, and was married in Cincinnati to Bernard (Natz) Boeke (1800) who was also a native of Neuenkirchen, and who had come to the United States at an earlier date.

Together they came to Marion Township, Mercer County, in 1835 where they bought a farm in the virgin wilderness just west of St. John Church. (Today known as the Al Nieberding farm.) They immediately began the work of clearing their land.

Considering her peasant status, Elizabeth Boeke was exceptionally well educated for those times. Instruction in drawing was part of this education, and she drew and wrote throughout her life. Many of her drawings show events and scenes from her experiences as a typical immigrant and pioneer, and sometimes she used these to illustrate parts of her writing.

She was very conscious of the importance of history, and she felt records should be kept of the first days in this new country. There can be no doubt about her determination. After the exhausting labor of a pioneer's day, few persons would have had the drive and energy which her drawings and writing must have demanded.

All of her drawing and writing was done with quill pens which she made herself. She wrote extensively on a variety of topics, many of these being about the earliest days in this area.

Fortunately, much of her writing and drawing has survived and has only recently come to light. Translation of her writings which are in the old German script (usually in Low German) is now in process.

Elizabeth and her husband had six children; three sons lived to maturity. She died in 1882; her husband died in 1857 as the result of an accident. Both are buried in the parish cemetery at St. John.

It was the late Vincent Boeke of Columbus, Ohio (a great nephew) who discovered her works and realized their worth. He spent the last 10 years of his life in translating and organizing her drawings and manuscripts. Luke Knapke of Minster and his wife Mary helped Vincent in his work and are responsible for most of the translations. Since the death in 1983 of Vincent Boeke, Luke Knapke is going forward with further translations.

Elizabeth Boeke's writings are in manuscript form. Not all of her manuscripts have been translated. Not all of them have been found. The Minster Historical Society has copywrited the translations of her works and in the near future hopes to publish these.

A thanks to the Vincent Boeke family for recognizing their worth and preserving her works. Thanks to the Minster Historical Society for protecting her material.

The Boeke family and the Minster Historical Society have made some of her material available to us. All the sketches illustrated in various portions of this history are copies of her original drawings. Some have been reduced in size to fit this book. Also inserted in different sections of this history are selections of her writings in italics with a reference to Elizabeth Boeke. They tell how life and attitudes were 150 years ago through the eyes of a pioneer woman and a parishioner.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANKS

Compiling a history of St. John Parish would not have been possible without the help of so many parishioners who offered old pictures making the account much more meaningful. A thank you to the many older residents of the area who helped to identify the people in the pictures.

This history would not be complete without thanking my wife Lillian for her help in transcribing and typing my notes and putting up with my odd working hours. A special thanks to Luke Knapke for his counsel and suggestions. Diane Bertke for her help in typing and proof reading.

My gratitude to Father John Behen for his encouragement and contributions to this history. Thanks to Bob Tangeman for his help and research. To Sister Cordelia Gast for her help and suggestions. To Jerry Bruggeman for his artwork on the cover page and to Cletus Heitbrink for the drawing of our second church.

And lastly to the members of the Leugers Insurance Agency for using their facilities and equipment in my work.

Henry J. Leugers

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THE GREAT WALL

BY [Faint Name]

[Faint Text]

CHAPTER ONE

EARLY DAYS AT ST. JOHN

It was on the 13th day of October, 1833, that three German immigrants and their families arrived in Marion Township, Mercer County, from Baltimore. They met in Baltimore, became friends, and decided to settle in the same community. The names of the three settlers were John Leistenschneider, John Stelzer and John Thomas, the latter being Protestant. The 1882 Mercer-Van Wert history states that John and Margaret Leistenschneider had seven children when they arrived. The three families decided to call their community St. John. The first names of the three men being John made selection of a name easy. Possibly, the name St. John had been decided upon already when they left Baltimore. It was also on that day that a man named John was ordained Bishop in Cincinnati, Right Reverend John Purcell.

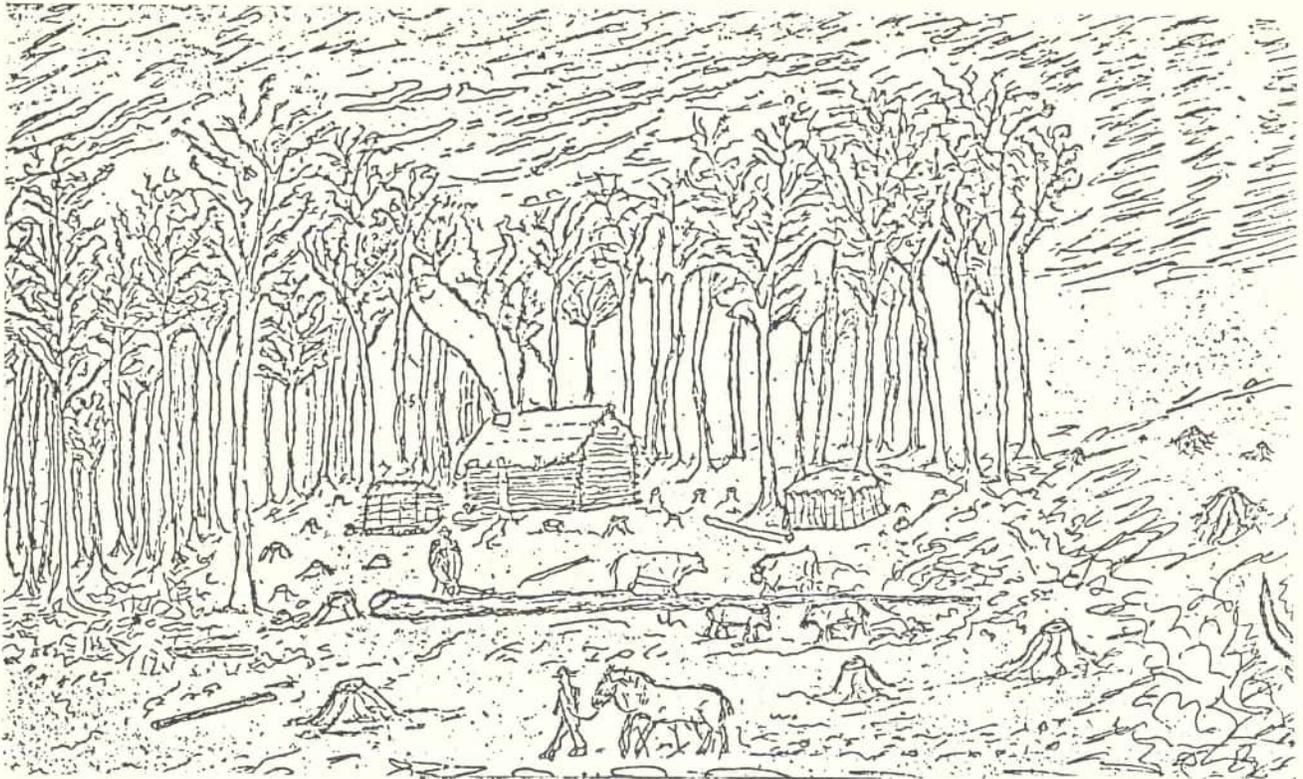
Prior to this, in 1791 the Indians routed General St. Clair at Ft. Recovery. In 1794 General Anthony Wayne's Army defeated the Indians, which resulted in the signing of the Treaty of Greenville in 1795. In 1803 Ohio was admitted as the 17th State of the Union and in 1820 Mercer County was formed. In 1832 Stallstown (Minster) was settled.

The land that the three original settlers decided on was solid virgin forest. Big trees were everywhere. The sky could not be seen. The dense underbrush was littered with fallen trees and six, seven, eight inches of leaves. There were no trails or roads through the woods other than the paths made by animals, such as deer. Some of 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 Stallstown that first winter.

After their cabins were built, the next big chore for the first three settlers, as well as those that followed, 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 slow and tedious. Cutting the trees with the saws and axes available then was tiresome. Sometimes they would only gird the trees, cutting the bark around the tree and letting it die. This would postpone cutting the tree, but at least the sunshine could get through to help the crops or garden grow. A husband and wife working from early morning to late at night cutting and burning trees, grubbing the underbrush and picking up stones could only clear two or three acres in a year's time. 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, fences (rail or tree stumps) had to be built to keep out the woods animals. Dogs were indispensable. They helped to keep the raccoons, deer, wolves and other animals away, even bears. If they couldn't keep them away, they 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, to get rid of the big stumps and roots took years of drying and burning.

Elizabeth Boeke says,

"Many strangers, men, families, on their way to establish a home come here. We help each one that passes here, now especially our own people who are coming here all the time, continually arriving from our old homes in Germany at Wellinghof, Lohne, Damme, . . . mostly young people



New home. Note the tree stumps.

by Elizabeth Boeke

who are Catholic and Low German. We are not angry with the High Germans, but they have other speech and living customs. Here in America persons must more and more live and think alike."

"Many travelers from Europe who are looking for farms stay with St. John residents for one or two days. They are weak from their journey, have colds, sore throats, scabs on their bodies, and are exhausted and filthy. They are also worried and irritated with everything. They bring to our residents diseases, fleas, lice. The children are pouting and dizzy, listless, lethargic. But all of us here were also passersby a little while back, so we must be sympathetic."

Families kept coming continuously and as early as 1835 St. John had some 25 families. The settlers moving into the community (Marion and Granville Twp.) came from the "Low Countries" of northern Germany and spoke "Plattdüütsk." They came mostly from a rather small area in southern Oldenburg and adjoining areas of Hanover.

Our forefathers worked in Europe under the feudal system. This system had been practiced for centuries. Landlords owned the land and they leased

small plots of ground, one or two acres of very marginal land with a house, to farmers. For this lease the farmers were bound to farm and work the landlord's land, working long hours under difficult conditions. Meanwhile, on his one or two acres of poor land, which he could only work late at night or early morning, he had to make a living. It was almost impossible. He was little better than a slave.

Things became very serious by the late 18th and early 19th century. The oldest child might inherit his father's lease and could look forward to the same difficult and harsh life of his parents. There was no future 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 maids. Marriage was not permitted until they had shelter, owned a cow, and had some means of support. Often, they were 35 years of age or older before they could start a family.

The only hope was getting out, and America offered the best opportunities. However, it was not easy. To raise passage money, 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 passage money back after reaching America.

The immigrants usually landed at Baltimore. The trip was made by sailboats and lasted six to thirteen weeks, depending on the winds. 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. Coming from northern Germany, they tried to find similar land. The 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.

While some of the first settlers bought land sight unseen in Cincinnati, most of them migrated 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. Land offices erected by Congress and authorized to sell government lands were at this period



*"Putting up the rafters. First house — loghouse."
 Bernard and Elizabeth (Knapke) Boeke arrived in St. John in 1835.
 Elizabeth's drawing shows the building of their first house.
 Location is the Al Nieberding farm today.
 Note their home six years later.*

located at Wapakoneta and Lima. In order to obtain land, the newcomer would go to one of these offices and for the price of \$1.25 an acre, payable to the United States Government, would buy the piece of ground that he wanted. Sometimes going to the land office, he would find out that the piece of ground that he wanted was already owned by some other person. Also, it sometimes happened that two people would desire the same piece of ground and whoever could get to the land office first would be able to buy it. Many a happy land owner coming back with the deed in his hand would proudly say to his wife, "Kiekies hier, Olska! Duet is use Died! Nu haewet wie Land!" (Look here wife, here is our deed. Now we have our land.)

Elizabeth says,

"We had to walk everywhere and use the Indian path north and south. The path to St. John village (to the east) we made with logs and branches. We used wheelbarrows — back and forth — for fetching and carrying.

We should and must help one another for the entire community's needs are our concern. The support of a neighbor would console us were we in a similar case. On to our faith we must hold fast, for we farmers here in St. John depend above anything and everything on God's blessings. We know sympathy for the little man, helping when the shoe pinches. We must be patient for as Natz says, "By 1860 this will be a paradise."

Nevertheless, self-concern is more common each succeeding summer and is now almost epidemic. The people, men and women, are locked in the solitude of their own hearts and minds. The men want to chop down the forest in a short time, and it is not possible. The men fall short in their undertakings and, in their dissatisfaction, they are silent and sulky, sullen and pouty. Such behavior smothers the women's spirits, and they feel themselves alone, apart from the community, without friends and female companions. That is not simple. Some of the people here are alone in actual isolation, or are alone among other people or in crowds, because they think that no one is concerned, or that they cannot cope anymore. The women are not often praised, so they feel themselves abandoned in the world, facing their inner troubles. Also, the loneliness brings on drinking and suicide here. More and more are indifferent in their outlook and thinking. The community is in great difficulty.

The wives worry themselves half to death with complaints. Many are without hope. Always and all the time they are in the dismal forest. Their husbands are usually outside in the woods, sawing and chopping down trees and gathering and burning the underbrush."

The early settlers, after clearing the land, would plant corn and sow wheat and oats in between the stumps. The acreage became bigger each year as land was cleared. In the early days, corn was a main staple for the people. Some variations of corn, such as corn mush, corn pancakes, corn fritters, hominy and corn bread were served every day. Meat the first few years was mostly deer, turkey, and even bear; also geese and ducks in season. Sometimes when hunting was poor, the settlers might go weeks and even months with no meat. Gardens would furnish squash, cabbage, turnips, beets, beans, carrots and onions. Hickory nuts and walnuts were gathered as food. After a while hogs were raised, and pork replaced or supplemented the venison diet.

In addition to hunting and trapping animals for food, the pelts were needed for clothing and for selling or barter. Deer skins made good outer garments. Bear skins were used as blankets and covering for door openings. (The bears were mostly gone by 1842.) In 1838 raccoon skins brought \$1.00 and deer skins \$2.50.

Elizabeth says,

"Houses lie far apart from each other here in the forest. Right up to our doorsill and to those of our neighbors reaches the huge, somber and vaulted forest. There are no openings to break up the overhang, nothing but endless miles upon miles of the shadowy wolf-haunted woodland. The great trees tower heavenwards until their individual crowns are lost among the many branches at the top, and the lower branches disappear under the wild growth that chokes the open places between the trunks."

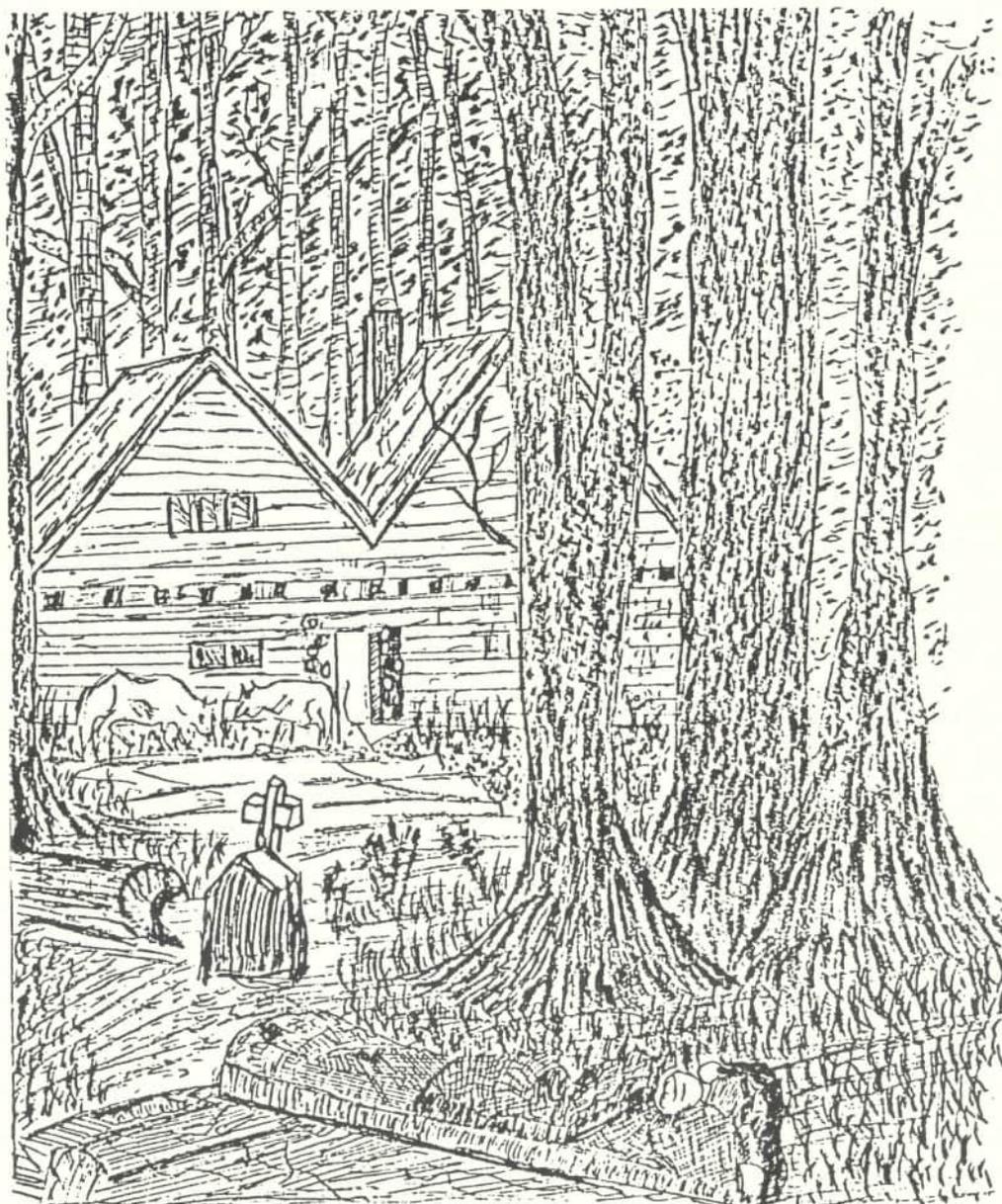
Our forefathers had to walk wherever they went. Wheelbarrows were used all the time. The paths to St. John town and church were made of logs and branches. There was an Indian path north and south through St. John. Getting corn and grain ground into meal was a problem. For a few years people would walk and carry their grain to Piqua where water power from dams would grind the grain. A few had pack horses to use. The cost was not in money but in a percent of the meal ground. For instance, 1/6 to 1/9 of the grain went to the miller. Some of the families

made their own mill by burning out a big stump and in this hollow stump corn and grain was crushed with a stone and sifted. This was not too practical. A John Steinemann operated a grist mill south of St. John with water power from a small stream. When the stream wasn't running the mill wasn't operating. (This stream was close to the Mile Creek.) A Gert Westgerdes built a horse driven mill, grinding out meal between two stones. Both ground grain for others on a percentage basis.

Elizabeth says,
"Isolated here in St. John, we had to grind our own grain using the same primi-

tive mortar and pestle which they used in ancient times, a thousand years ago."

Many of the wagons that pulled the belongings of the immigrants across the mountains and into Ohio were drawn by oxen. The ox is slow and awkward, but it is stronger than a horse and can pull a heavier load. Spans of oxen were used in St. John for hauling big logs and stones, groundbreaking and building construction. They 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.



7847 by Penn Young Jan

"1841 — at St. John" (Double log house)

Real decisions had to be made on how to divide their time. Much had to be done and everything took so much time. Time was needed for house building and house additions or other farm buildings; all was built with logs. Time was needed for clearing more land and cutting trees. Everything had to be done by hand. Time was needed for planting corn and grain, building fences, and protecting crops and gardens from animals and birds. With mostly hand power and primitive tools, everything took much time.

Elizabeth says,

"The farmers did not have the right grasp of the how, where and what for taking over this forest, for dealing with the forest or plants. All of the routine was new and went contrary to our previous ideas and skills; sympathy was not needed, that had no value for us. Countless discussions in the forest or cornfields . . . the land seemed crazy. It was a crying shame how much time and help, how many hours were wasted. In Europe we understood the weather, the land, its use; here we dared not speculate. We learned by degrees how or where and what to plant first and such things. There was always a stalling, a delay.

Now finally we must especially push aside our Saxon cautiousness, sensitiveness and mysticism, and must let ourselves go with laughter and singing and fun. Afterwards we will better be able to clean, to build, and to try to fit in a new concept, namely, that the real need here in St. John or in our houses is the building of a new mental attitude. There is more in life than gear for keeping warm, and clean, and for eating, drinking, bathing, sleeping, working and praying. There are also visiting, looking in on others with troubles. Every one can contribute something.

But we think about fatigue when we are most tired. The worst causes of fatigue are not among the things which lie before the feet, but, rather, the exasperation and bitterness that so little work was accomplished, the limitations of our work. The brutal result is the insidious corruption of all of one's feelings and attitudes during all the waking hours. And when we drag one another under. That is wrong here in St. John. Married couples cannot make over the world here in one day, there are limits: fatigue and time. And a man and woman must support one another in hot water and boiling oil. In time let us learn, O

God, to accept the limits of our little strength.

From Germany many people have brought over unreality: a belief in the underworld, in magic, witchcraft, sorcery, witch's Sabbath, and evil spirits here in every corner. Now at first they deny this imagining, this foolishness, and to a stranger they pretend that they do not understand what you are asking. But I am one of our own people and I know and am acquainted with this foolishness. I do not believe in all that one little bit. It is not true, absolutely worthless; but underneath lingers a fear that always is similar to the "mock-justice" which was with us for 500 years; there was a mock court right in Bieste for a hundred years.

At home alone every day many women drive themselves crazy with this unseen, unrecognized power of the imagination which is all only in the mind. We must more and more get the people together so that we will not find so much mental disturbance, and with laughing, visiting and good cheer, their minds will again get clear. God help us here. The pastor told me and Natz that they have these same troubles in Minster and all of the other communities."

In the early days of St. John the main crops were corn, wheat and oats — in that order. Barley and rye were grown mainly for use in breweries and distilleries. It was a continual fight to keep the 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 day and night. Wild pigeons were so numerous that often the sky was darkened by their passing, but the real problem started when they descended on the grain fields.

The religious needs of the St. John settlers in the first few years were satisfied by getting together on Sunday mornings at somebody's house and praying together. Somebody would give a talk on God and a discussion would follow. These Sunday mornings also were opportunities to discuss common problems and to exchange news. It broke the monotony of work. About once a month a Father Horstman located in Glandorf, Ohio would visit Stallstown (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 good and safe.

Newborn infants were carried to Minster to be baptized. The first two infants of St. John according to the Stallstown records were boys, both baptized by Father Horstman. The name of the first child was John, son of John Stelzer and wife Frances Siegrist,

and was baptized on July 20, 1834. The second baby was named Christian, son of John Leistschneider and wife Margaret Riem. He was baptized on April 12, 1835.

* Henry Kramer, later spelled Kremer, was my great great grandfather. He came to America with his son Dietrich and wife Elizabeth Buder Kremer ^{one daughter} in or around 1835. They came from Arckum, Hanover, Germany.

Alfred E. Wilke

CHAPTER TWO

1836

FIRST MASS IN ST. JOHN

In November, 1835, Father Henry Damian Junker became the resident Pastor at Stallstown and on June 24, 1836 came to St. John to celebrate the first mass ever in the parish at the home of John Leistenschneider (or Gast). The mass was celebrated outdoors. Three more masses were said during that year. If there was no mass on Sunday the people would assemble for readings, prayer, and discussions.

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

Elizabeth says,

"We have no pastor, but God is with us nevertheless. Once or at most twice a month there is mass on Sunday at St. John; we assemble at Gast's house, outside the building. Other Sundays we go there about 11:30 in the morning and assemble to pray. Usually someone gives a talk about God. Then we listen to one another with complaints, troubles, news and informative things like where, what and when about our work. We usually have to walk; the forest is too thick for a horse to be able to get through. We do have a pathway to Minster that is good and safe."

Previously in 1835, some 25 families had organized the congregation of Saan Jaan (St. John). They elected John Leistenschneider, John Meyer (or Moeller) and Dietrich 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.

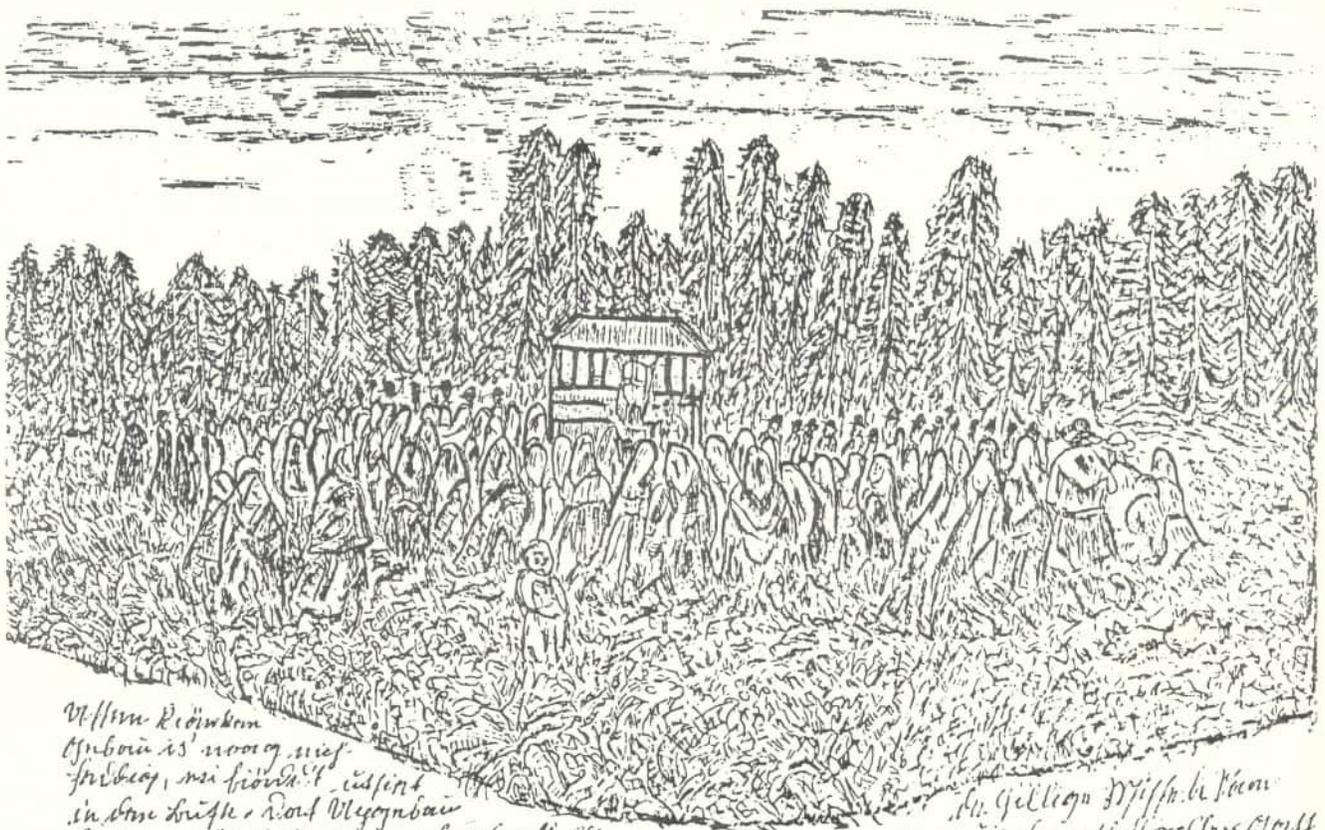
The settlers who were present when the actual building of the church started were:

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

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

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

* J. H. Pohlmann was my great grandfather. Came to America in approximately 1833 from Osnabruck, Germany. He was born in 1799.



Wenn die Kinder
 Geben ist noch nicht
 fertig, wir sind es
 in dem Buch, das Vliegobau
 gut von der Welt für den
 in Rommion. Die Welt der
 Leinwand der Welt, 1836

An. Gelligen Niffen la Koen
 von der Welt der Welt
 sein Jesus, die Welt der Welt
 von der Welt

"Our church building is not yet finished. We pray outside in the forest.
 The platform has a little altar for the chalice and communion. I made the altar cloth." 1836
 "Holy Mass at St. John in the yard back of Gast's house. The priest is here from Stallostown." 1836

In 1836, Bishop Purcell of Cincinnati appointed Reverend Francis Bartels of Stallostown (Minster), who was now the resident pastor, to also take charge of the growing parish of St. John and to become its pastor as well. Following is a copy of the original agreement between St. John Parish and Father Bartels:

**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

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, said that in consideration of \$25 payable at the end of the third month the Reverend Pastor at St. Augustine Church in Stallostown would say Mass at least once a month on a Sunday determined by the Reverend Pastor.

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 (Saan

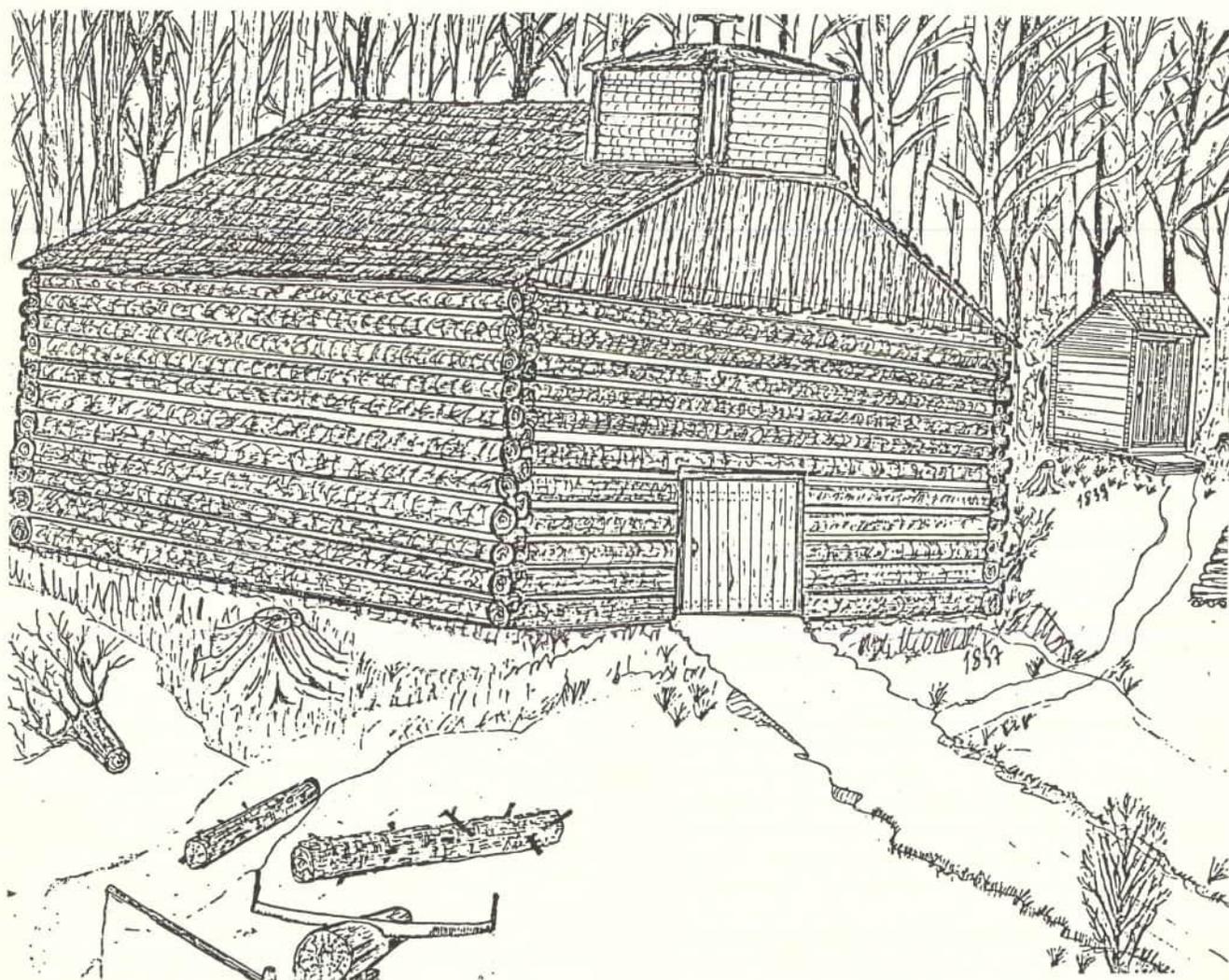
Jaen de Dopfer). On this day he also celebrated the first mass in the Church, a Solemn High Mass. This was the first Catholic Church in Marion Township and also the first in Mercer County (based on today's boundaries).

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, if any, notified 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. After the services, 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 to comfort the survivors.

Elizabeth says,

"The people here, in St. John and Stallstown (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



First church at St. John. Started 1836 and completed in the spring of 1837. By Elizabeth Boeke

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.

Before we built the church, we parish members conducted our own ritual at Gast's house and yard. Most of the time there was no priest. We assembled in a circle around the coffin for a planned reading and psalm recited together.

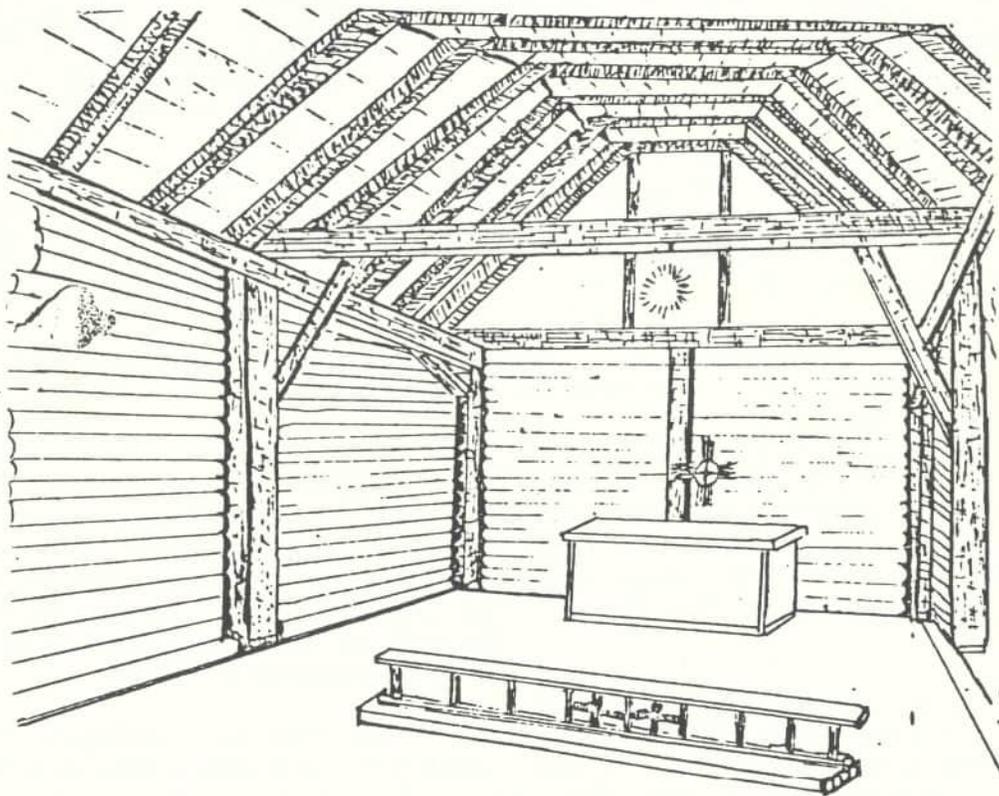
As the coffin is let down into the grave, and earth is thrown in over the coffin, we in St. John are fortunate that the Bishop granted us parishioners permission

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."

There are no records recording 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's Cemetery.

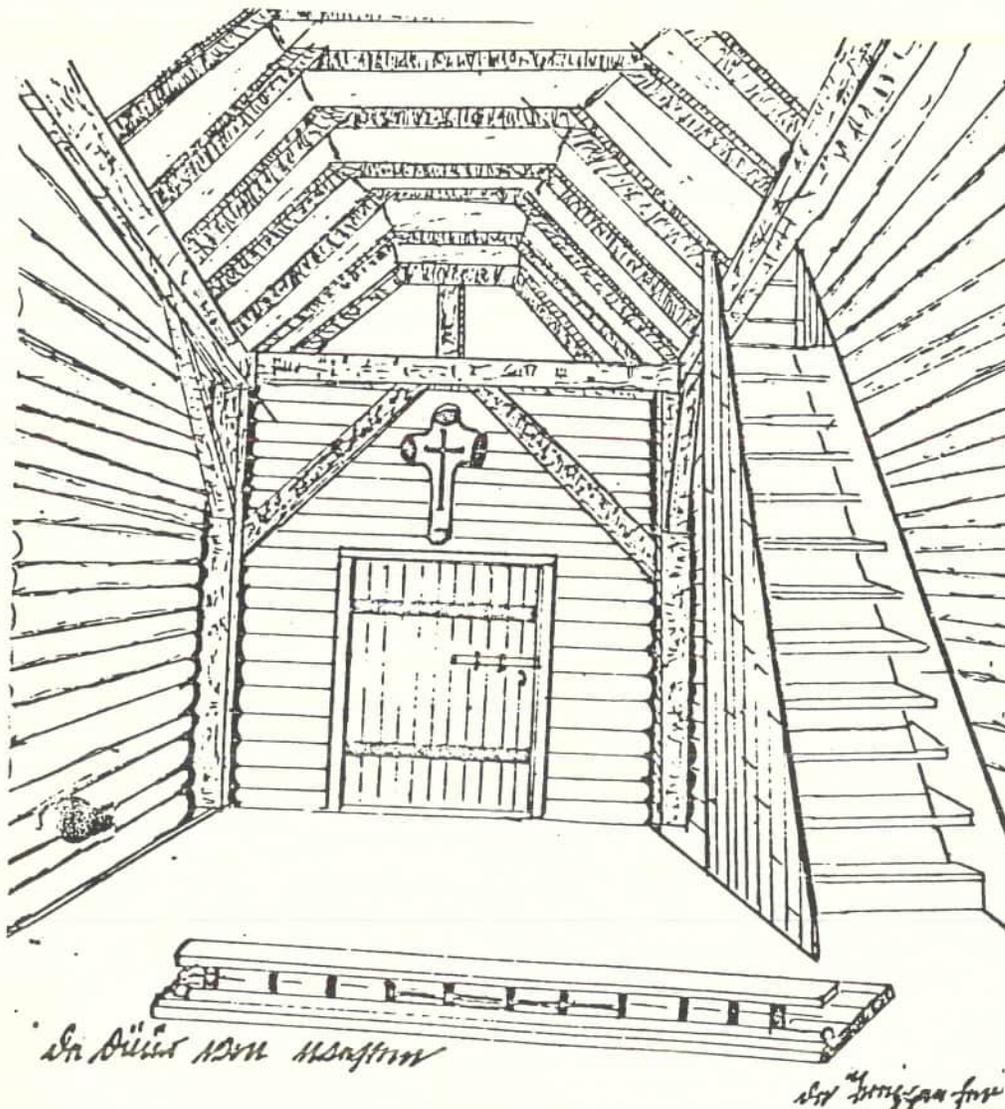
In April of 1837 the first wardens of Saan Jaan Parish were installed, namely: John Leistenschneider, John Meyer, Friedrich Hinders and Anthony Moeller.

A big year in the history of the parish was 1837. Not only was the church completed but it was the year that a well thought of 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 would conduct the common prayers and religious songs.



*inside by High Altar
is first and last fix, mounted.*

Sketched by Elizabeth Boeke.
"Inside by High Altar — I made the cross."



Sketched by Elizabeth Boeke.
 "The choir loft is not yet completed. Steps inside finished 1838.
 Natz helped. The door from west."

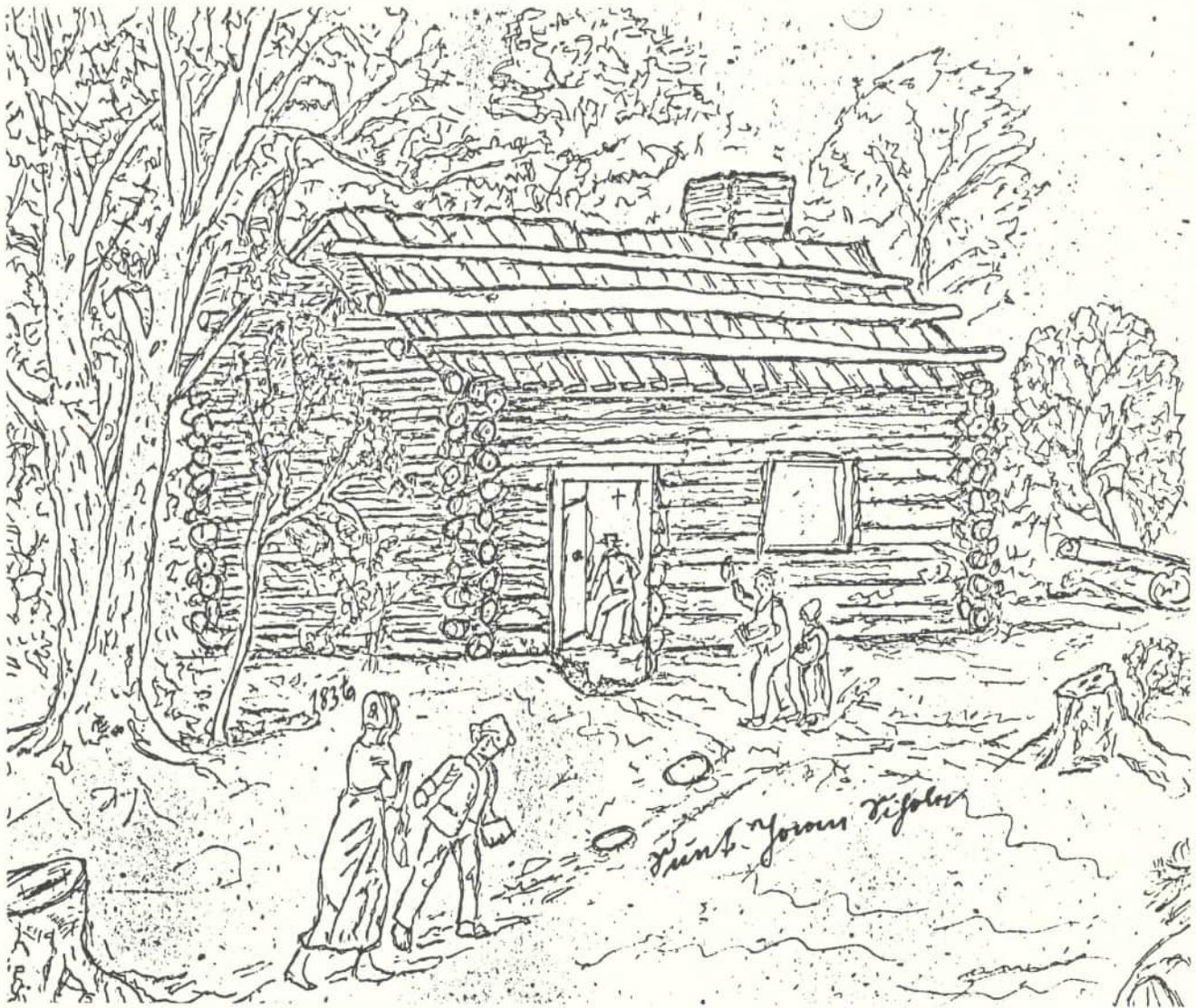
Another first that took place in 1837 was First Holy Communion for seven children of the parish. On May 21, making their First Communion were: Theodore Huelskamp, Friederich Schroeder, Theodore Schmid, Henry Thamann, Anna Leistschneider, Catherine Herzog, and Catherine Hagedorn.

It was also in 1837 that a Joseph Dwenger was born on April 7 on a farm about a half mile east of St. John. He became the first native born St. John boy to become a priest and later he became Bishop of Ft. Wayne. We will tell more about the story of Joseph Dwenger later.

Of 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. A stretch from Cincinnati to Dayton was completed first with the first canal boat reaching Dayton on July 25, 1829. Many of our forefathers who came across from Baltimore down the Ohio River to Cincinnati came up the Canal as far as Dayton before going overland to Stallstown (Minster) and across to St. John.

The real challenge to building the canal was the stretch from Lockington to New Bremen since this was at the highest level that the canal would reach. It was called the summit. Three reservoirs were built near the summit where water either flows north to Lake Erie or south to the Ohio River. The reservoirs were Indian Lake, Lake Loramie, and Grand Lake St. Marys (Celina reservoir); Lake Loramie was used



"St. John School" 1836

to provide an adequate flow of water for the twenty-six mile stretch of flat ground between New Bremen and Lockington near Piqua. These reservoirs helped drain the surrounding farmland as well as provide water so the canals could become operative. They were not finished until 1842. The first canal boat reached Minster in 1843 and the first boat made the whole trip from Cincinnati to Toledo 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 usage became less and less. By 1909 the canal system was virtually abandoned.

The canal served two very important functions for a 50 year period. First, building and completing

the hand-dug canal (and reservoirs) provided employment for the settlers (including Saan Joann people). 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 26 day month. They were paid in cash instead of trade goods as in the barter system. Some of this money was used to buy land. At \$1.25 an acre, ten acres could be 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 housewife and children would tend the garden and raise as many vegetables as possible.

Secondly, it was important to the settlers because the canal 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.

St. John was laid out in lots in 1838 by John and Christian Stelzer. The plat was recorded at the Court House on September 24, 1838.

The wood from bass and elm trees make good wooden shoes, and with both trees plentiful it only followed that a Fred Schroeder near the town started making wooden shoes for resale. Prior to this wooden shoes had to be brought in from Stallstown. In 1838 a 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. H. 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.

Elizabeth says,

"Most troubles come to us from mishaps in the forest. We don't know the weather or our unfamiliar surroundings, and we don't know exactly how to manage the forest. The sad problem is our adverse life style here, the daily new things alongside our worries and burdens with the forest. It is irritating, hateful, this disposition of us in this community towards both bodily illness and sullen attitudes. And in every family in the district, from Minster (Stallo) to here, our ordeal is frequently overladen with heartache."

The pioneer settlers of St. John, having immigrated 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 in 1839 the blessing of palms and the first procession took place in St. John conducted by Reverend Henry Herzog. Father Herzog was the successor to Father Bartels at Stallstown and St. John.

1840

The following letter appeared in the 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 perservance 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 new-born 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 Music-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

The above letter shows how strong and sincere were the religious beliefs of our forefathers. How trusting and confident they were in following their religion. While it is not known who composed and wrote the above letter it seems that it may have been written by Elizabeth Boeke. The letter is written in her strong and positive style.

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 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 tolled the "Angelus Domini," inviting the people to kneel and pray, and on Sundays its tolling reminded the parish it was time to go to mass.

The parish of St. John from its very beginning honored the newly consecrated Bishop John Purcell of Cincinnati by selecting St. John the Baptist as the patron saint of the parish. During the latter part of 1840, Bishop Purcell informed the St. John people of his intention to visit the parish in December. It is well that Bishop Purcell was a young and strong man because visiting the rural parishes was difficult and done by farm wagon, horseback, and even by foot. Shortly before his arrival a new altar had been erected in the sanctuary of the church, and Bishop Purcell celebrated the first sacrifice of the mass on it. At the same time he confirmed 41 young boys and girls of the parish.

Elizabeth says,

"When a girl marries she brings her inheritance, here in America, a cow and a calf, a brood mare or mare, a bed with blankets and straw mattress, a chest with her clothes and a hat. Each couple's instructions were the bitter necessity of self-help, and the knowledge that the St. John community can barely survive even if everyone helps everyone else as in: logrolling, house-raising, house-furnishing, corn shucking, quilting, roofing with the neighbors. Each family must do all that it can by itself.

When there was no pastor, then three witnesses testified to the promises between the bridal couple. Later on, when the cleric visited the neighborhood again, he consecrated the two with God's blessings. A wedding is a great deal of work, but does not cost much. In the first years at St. John, all in the community came to the wedding. Later, as more residents came in, only the neighborhood came. With

heightened anticipation, both young and old, in a frivolous and happy mood, each with his own expectations awaited the wedding day. A wedding here is the unanimous gathering when no work is done, such as: reaping, logrolling, loghouse building, pathmaking in the forest, or chopping down and burning brush.

All the people are immediately serious and quiet as the mother of the bride comes from her house to the fourth chair and sits with the other three parents. Then the bridesmaid, sometimes the bride's own sister or relative, comes out. In a few minutes the bride comes out of the house and walks right to her father. Everyone is deathly still. Now the father says, "I" (and he says his name and that of his wife, the mother) "today offer from my house and my family our daughter with the name of _____ to her bridegroom whose name is _____ for the two to marry. They will today, and from this day forth for all time, be known as man and wife until the time a priest is here to bless the two in the sacrament of marriage, according to the rules of this land, state and village, and the regulations of the Roman Catholic Church. Now I ask you three citizens to witness these two, without husband or wife, take one another in free will to live an honorable and virtuous life together." Now come their questions, the new pronouncement, etc. Then they sing, if someone knows the Ave Maria, and we pray a rosary."

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 a Catherine Kramer and a Frances Nieport. In 1845-46 Father John Van den Broeck baptized 17 children in the parish.

In the year 1842 a new pulpit was built and on September 16 the first sermon was delivered from it by Reverend Martin Henni from Cincinnati who later became Archbishop of Milwaukee. For the record, the subject of his sermon was "The Sacrament of Penance."

Elizabeth Boeke kept accurate attendance records at Saan Jaan parish after she and her husband arrive in 1835. St. Augustine Parish of Minster had contracted for their resident pastor to say mass in St.

John at least once every month. On the other Sundays the parishioners would gather for Sunday readings and prayer. Until their church was completed,

they would meet in one of the homes. Elizabeth mentions the Gast home. Father Henry Drees mentions the Leistenschneider home.

Year	Average Sunday Attendance	Sunday Readings (No Mass)	Sunday Mass	
1836	45	34	4	June 26 September 18 December 4 December 25
1837	63	33	5	January 22 March 12 May 21 September 3 November 5
1838	80	31	12	
1839	92	29	21	
1840	102	32	19	
1841	112	31	21	
1842	127	28	18	
1843	147	32	20	
1844	163	26	26	
1845	168	17	26	10 months

The Society of the Precious Blood took over the parish on November 2, 1845, and Mrs. Boeke kept no further attendance records.

CHAPTER THREE

1845 ARRIVAL OF THE SOCIETY OF THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

Father Herzog of Minster, because of overwork, had a health breakdown and could not take care of Minster and St. John both. During 1841 and 1845 a Father Louis Navarron helped in Minster and visited St. John when possible. 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 need of so many people and petitioned Bishop Purcell 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.

When Bishop Purcell petitioned Rome for German priests, it so happened that a Reverend 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 with seven German-speaking priests and seven conferees arrived in Cincinnati in January 1844 and were assigned to work in northern Ohio, which was still in the diocese of Cincinnati. In 1845 Archbishop Purcell asked Father Brunner and the Fathers of the Precious Blood to take charge of the scattered Catholics living in Minster and neighboring settlements.

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

At St. John's they came upon a peaceful and well-disposed congregation with a church, a school, a teacher, but no pastor. The surrounding territories

were healthful and attractive. A decision was made to build in St. John parish and close to the church.

Years later Sister M. Regina Reichert, who was a little girl at the time and whose father was the schoolmaster at St. John's gives an interesting account of the welcome accorded the two priests on this August 14, 1845, visit.

"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."

The land selected by Father Brunner was a 60 acre tract about half mile north of the church. However, the land belonged to a bigoted 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 to stop the transaction but in vain. He was present, however, at the lay-



Father Francis de Sales Brunner

ing 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.

In November the Very Reverend Brunner sent the young and energetic Father John Van den Broeck, C.P.P.S. with 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 take charge of the parish. Father John Van den Broeck was a Hollander, having come from Holland. He was young, healthy, strong, and full of energy.

On November 16, 1845, Reverend 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, and at the same time, they helped in the

hauling of material 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 fall.

Father 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 convent at Maria Stein, Switzerland. Ever since the erection of the first convent buildings, the village of St. John gradually became known as Maria Stein.

On September 24, 1846, eight Sisters entered Maria Stein to begin that very night perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Soon after this, a girls' school was opened at St. John. Sister Albertina Schleinzer was appointed directress and immediately won the children over by her motherly kindness and solicitude. Close ties existed between St. John Parish and Maria Stein Convent; for in-



Father John Van den Broeck, C.P.P.S.
1845-46
1847-48

stance, for over 30 years the Sisters at the Convent were buried in the Parish Cemetery. In 1878 the Convent's own cemetery was started.

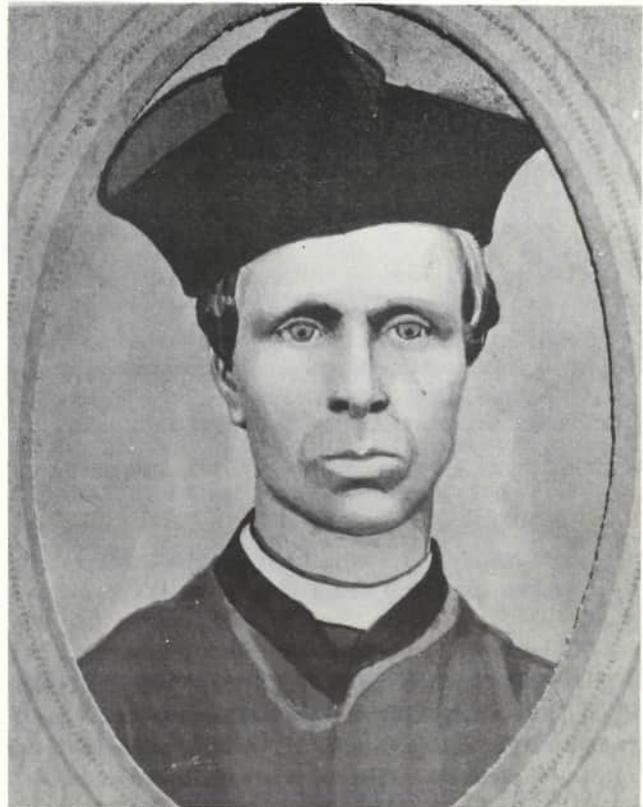
On October 11, 1846, Bishop Purcell visited St. John's for the second time and Maria Stein Convent for the first time. He confirmed 27 young people on this occasion.

Within a few years Maria Stein developed into the most important house of the Society of the Precious Blood in America, although it was not until 1857 that Father Brunner designated Maria Stein as the Motherhouse of the Sisters. Thus, it remained for the next 65 years.

In 1845 Father John Van den Broeck, C.P.P.S., became the first Precious Blood priest assigned to St. John Parish, and since that date thru today, the Precious Blood Fathers have served in St. John. Father John lived on Convent premises. Shortly after the Convent was finished, a house for priests and brothers was erected. It was built close to the road but was replaced with a bigger brick building in 1858, which is still standing and is 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 St. John it was their priest house until 1906 when the first and present house was built.

Fr. John Van den Broeck was St. John's pastor thru 1848, except for short times when Father John Wittmer, C.P.P.S., and Matthias Kreuzsch, C.P.P.S., served. Fr. John (the Little Hollander, as he was called) was small of stature. He had a fiery temperament and lots of energy. During 1846, 1847, and 1848 he served as pastor for both Minster and St. John. He was an expert horseman, and on Sundays the people walking to church, both at St. John and Minster, would keep an eye out for the Little Hollander as he would come dashing by on his horse between the two towns. 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.

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



*Father Matthias Kreuzsch, C.P.P.S.
1846-47*

on the Octave of the Feast. The order of the procession was alternated in some years.

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 Dietrich Hinders were elected church wardens for two years. Matthias Gast and Nick Fullenkamp remained in office. At this same meeting 13 resolutions were written out on how the new church was to be supported. They were:

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's 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, a society for young men was organized, selecting St. John the Baptist as Patron. Each member was to pay an annual fee of 50 cents. Monies spent were to be for the benefit of St. John's Church.

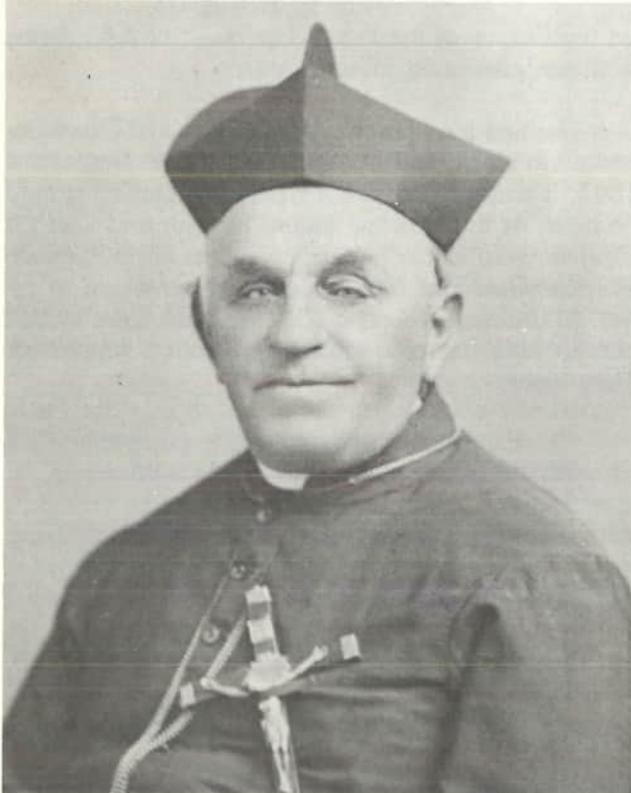
While plans and preparations were made as early as 1847, the actual building of the church did

not start until 1849. In 1848 the necessary bricks were made on the church grounds by Mr. Raymond Buehler, a member of St. John's parish. In the same year other material such as stone, lumber, etc., were secured and hauled to the church location. While preparations for the erection of the new church were being made, Reverend John Wittmer, C.P.P.S., was pastor. Father Wittmer was regarded as the building expert in the society because he was present in the construction of both St. Augustine Church and the planning of St. John Church.

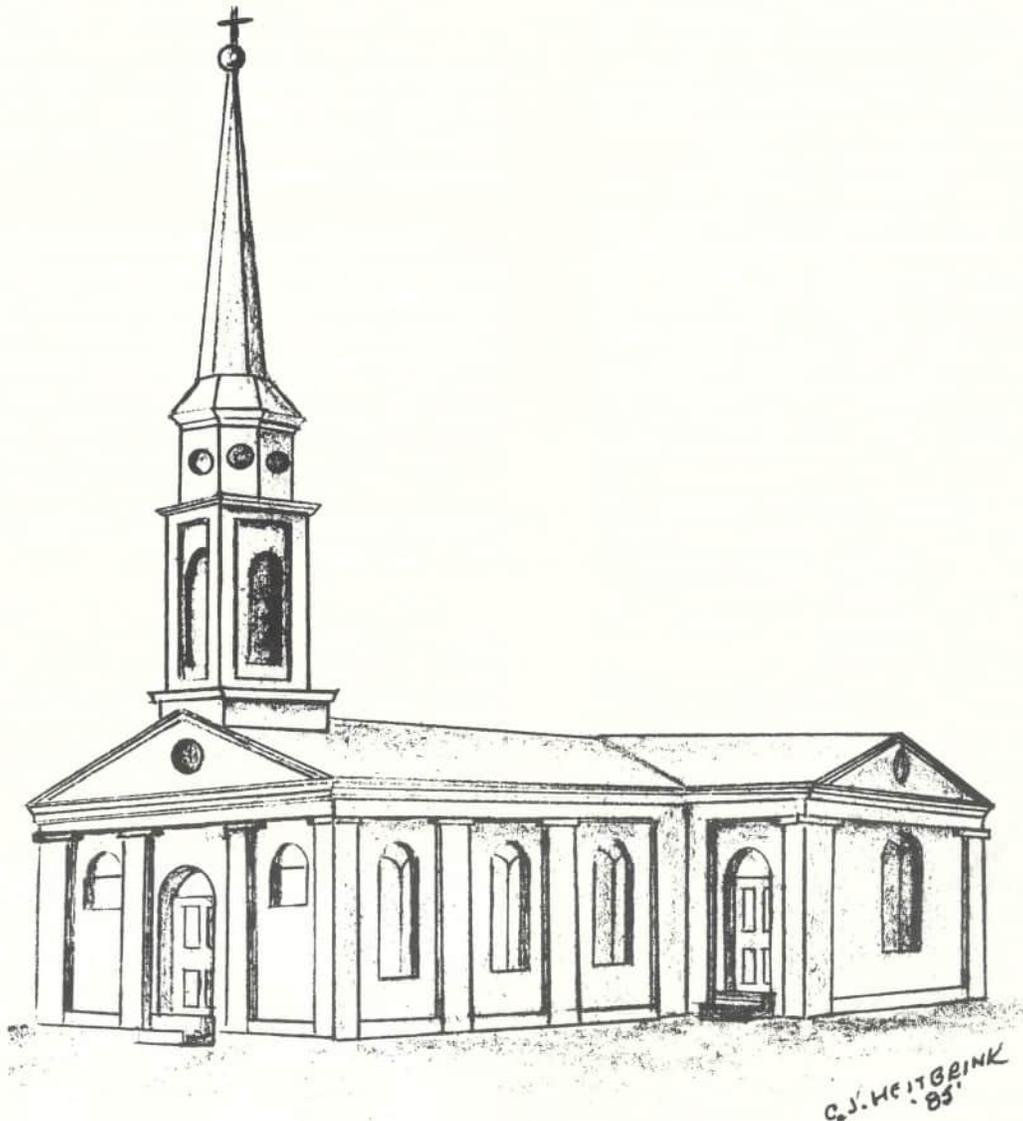
In 1849 when the actual building of the church commenced, Clemens Vehorn had replaced Nicholas Fullenkamp as warden. Johann Anton Goehr of St. Augustine's parish, Minster, Ohio, was the architect and builder of the church. He designed and built over twenty fine churches throughout the area. The brick 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. 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. Reverend Andrew Kunkler had been appointed pastor in May of 1849 and was in charge of the church construction.

The total cash outlay for the church was around \$4,015, 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 Knoeber, carpenter work	866.36
Anton Goehr, doors and windows	150.00
W. Hermany, steeple cross, ball and troughs	68.78
Rasmundus & Burgund, frescoing	303.20
Material furnished by parish for cash	992.54
John Goecke, Communion railing	23.00
John Goecke, Altar	37.00
John Goecke, gallery	24.00
Jos. KoKenge, stairs	28.00
Mr. Rolleneg, floorlaying	40.00
Tabernacle	17.00
	<hr/>
	\$4,015.88



Father John Wittmer, C.P.P.S.
1846-46
1848-49



A local artist's concept what our second church probably looked like. Completed in 1850, it was 40 by 50 ft, made of brick with a 55 ft. wood steeple. In 1857 an addition was added on the east end making it a T shaped building.

In 1848 subscriptions had been taken and pledges made of \$2,465 towards the church. Also, when the church property was originally bought, the 40 acres were not needed and land had been sold off in lots to build homes. Additional lots were sold at this time, 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.

1850

Dedication took place on October 13, 1850, with Most Reverend John Baptist Purcell, Archbishop of Cincinnati presiding. The following news account

appeared in the Catholic Telegraph Register on October 19, 1850, and describes the event:

On Saturday evening, October 18, 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 every where imitated.

After the dedication of the church a new bell was purchased, weighing 935 pounds at a cost of \$260. The bell was blessed and located in the belfry of the new church and on November 11, 1850, tolled for the first time for the people of St. John Parish.

The log church was dismantled and a dwelling was built from the lumber. It was a nice home owned by a Mr. and Mrs. Topp, a Catholic family, and was located about 500 feet east of the church on lot 22 on the southeast corner of Jackson and North Street in the west addition of St. John. The house was torn down in about 1940.

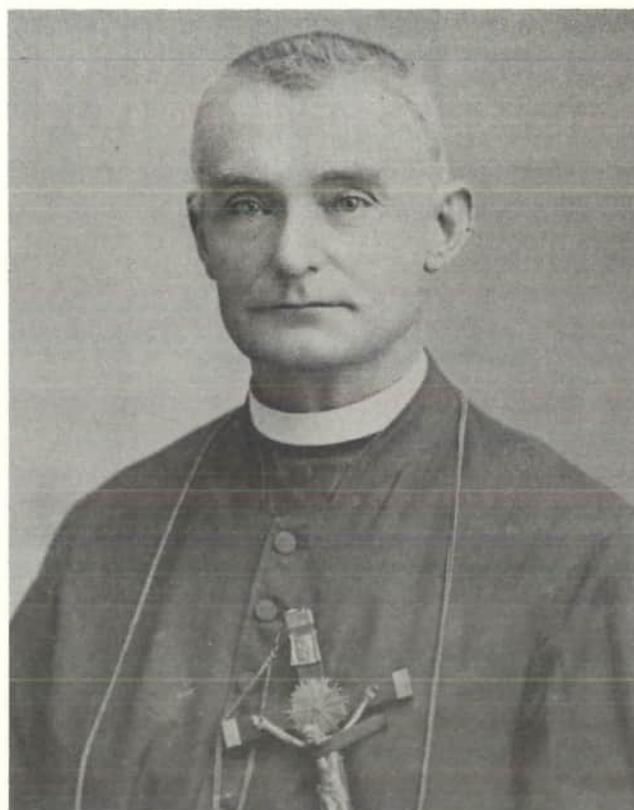
Mercer County had been formed in 1820 by an act of the Ohio Legislature. It extended and included the land to St. Marys, Minster and New Bremen which were all a part of Mercer County and Marion Township. At this time (1849) Auglaize County was formed from Mercer County and the surrounding counties. The canal, St. Marys, Minster and New Bremen all became part of Auglaize County.

CHOLERA

The cholera of 1849 played havoc with St. John Parish and even today the cemetery bears silent testimony of its ravishes. There is a large space toward the front of the cemetery which has no crosses or stones to mark the graves. Under this sod lie the victims of the cholera plague.

The cholera seems to have come up from Cincinnati along the canal, hitting the canal towns first. It struck Minster and quickly spread west to St. John. However, it did not affect St. John as seriously as it did Minster where over 250 died, as many as 20 in one day, or New Bremen where over 150 died. 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.

In July it struck St. John. It brought death and horror to every household. There was no escape. When one became ill, death could be there in 24 hours. Some did not contract the sickness and others recovered. Twenty-two people died in St. John in a short time. Four people in one family died in one



Father Andrew Kunkler, C.P.P.S.
1849-51
1855-56

week. At the cemetery there was much confusion and turmoil. The corpses came by wagon, by wheelbarrow and by stretcher. The sight was dreadful with fright and panic everywhere. The bodies went into graves with no order; sometimes one on top of another, with no names or prayers.

It came quickly and left quickly. By September the people started going to church again and in November the children were back in school.

Elizabeth says,

"The cholera was around here a long time before 1849. In towns where people lived close to one another, they became infected before we farmers were struck down. People talked most about the plague, the cholera. The newspapers of the cities printed rumors and these traveled around here also. In stealth and gradually, the plague was spread from spring until it broke loose in July. Here in St. John we lingered in the dim hope against the cholera. In Minster the plague was loose like a raging, treacherous beast!! Then started the frightful question, who, or which families will be dead next? The people could not hide their ill temper while they were shunning one another. All, in fear, fled from every person.

At St. John cemetery the routine was confused. The pastor, Kunkler, was one of the best we had had here, but it was too much with day and night confessing the sick and preparing them for death. The graves were mere holes in the ground with a lot of water in them. The corpses came by wheelbarrow, wagon and stretcher. The sight was awful, with horror in every breath. The corpses went into the grave mixed atop one another, no names, no prayers, nothing!

Neighbors found other neighbors at home, all long dead, young, old, children, women, hired hands and relatives! One woman in St. John shouted, "Oh Death! Death! Death!" . . . an inhuman voice that struck me with horror and a chilling of my very blood! Now, later, it is scarcely believable, the dreadful occurrences we experienced every day, people in the raging of the fever and affliction, or in the torment of their own agitation . . . Who could stand that? Many times people laid their own violent hands on themselves, threw themselves outside the door. Often it was insanity. Some died from mere fright, without infection; some frightened others with their despair, folly or madness.

By September it was again better. We went again to church and in November the children went to school. If one thinks back, how the people gave up and abandoned themselves: that was one strange effect for a period of about two or three weeks. They became bold and venturesome. They became not shy with one another, not restrained. They behaved as though their lives didn't matter anymore. Many remedies for a cure were tried, but there is so much to figure out about the plague. However, it pleased God, with the cold weather, to restore us to health. By February in 1850 then, it was past."

Reverend Andrew Kunkler was St. John's pastor during the cholera. He worked from early morning until late at night on sick calls, hearing confessions and preparing the sick for death.

JOSEPH DWENGER

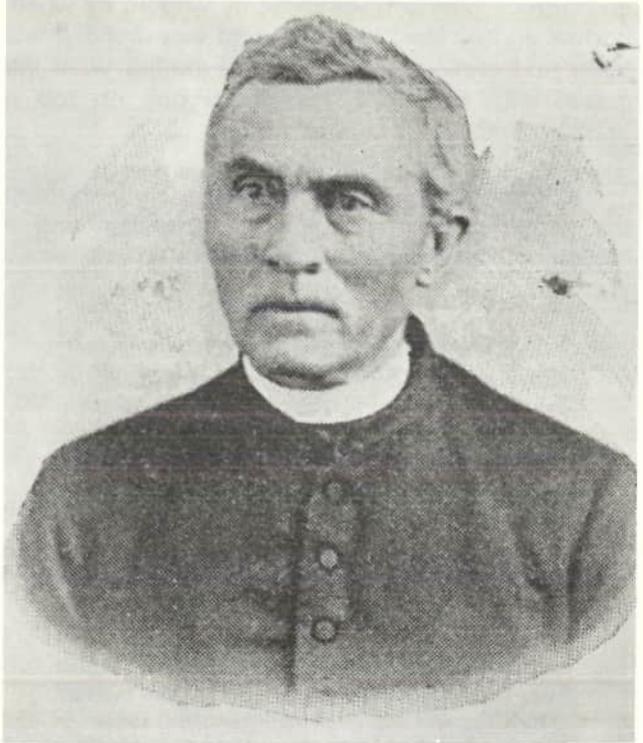
Earlier it was mentioned that in 1837 a Joseph Dwenger was born on a farm about one mile east of St. John and now owned by Henry Thobe. He quaintly spoke of his birth place as "between four big oak stumps in a dense forest in Mercer County." His parents had emigrated the previous spring from Hanover, Germany. When three years old his father died and his mother moved to Cincinnati. In the summer of 1847 she moved back to St. John Parish.

In 1849 during the cholera Father Kunkler was called to the home of Mrs. Dwenger. The mother was dying and 12 year old Joseph was on a cot by her side. Father administered the last sacraments. She was much troubled. "I am willing to die, but what will become of my boy when I am dead and gone." Father Kunkler 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."

Joseph survived and at an early age consecrated himself to God in the Community of the Most Precious Blood. He was ordained by Archbishop Purcell on September 4, 1859, saying his first mass in St. John's Church. Father Joseph was a big-hearted, generous, somewhat brusque man. He was a big, broad-shouldered man with massive features. He had an aggressive look and eyes that peered forth from beneath bushy eyebrows. He had a voice that rang like thunder. He had a spirit as gentle and generous as a child's, and children loved him. He was an impatient man, striving to get things done and thus was short tempered at times.



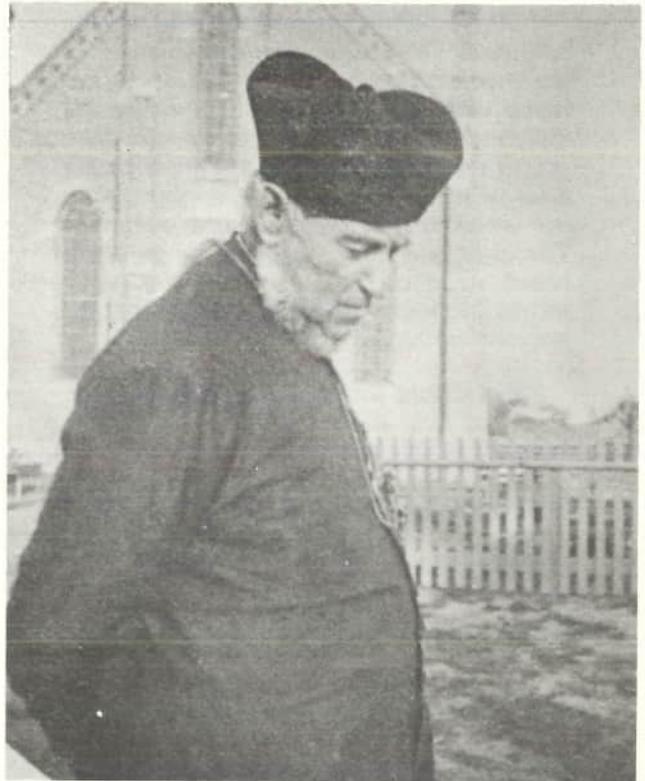
Father Aloys Schelbert, C.P.P.S.
1851-53



Father Stephan Falk, C.P.P.S.
1856-58



Father Peter Wilhelmi, C.P.P.S.
1853-54
1860-61



Father Erhard Glueck, C.P.P.S.
1858-60

After ordination he became Rector of the Congregation of the Precious Blood; then situated at Himmelgarten near St. Henry. When his superiors proposed a site change he engineered the purchase of the old Emlen Institute at Carthagena, Ohio, which became St. Charles Seminary. He was its first Rector.

After several successful church pastorates, he was consecrated Bishop of Ft. Wayne, Indiana on April 14, 1872. While there he developed a parochial school system for the diocese that was adopted by the Provincial Synod at Cincinnati in 1881 and later recommended by the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1885, earning him the title "Father of the Parochial School System in the United States."

Bishop Dwenger induced the Society of the Precious Blood to establish St. Joseph's College at Collegeville, Indiana which opened its doors in 1891.

He died January 22, 1893 after a successful career as Bishop. He is buried in a tomb beneath the

Cathedral in Ft. Wayne, Indiana where a Diocesan high school is named in his honor.

After the dedication of the new church in 1850, things went smoothly in St. John parish. However, the church soon became too small again, so in 1857 an addition was deemed necessary to accommodate the people. To the brick church was added an addition on the east end making the church a T shaped building. The altars of the church were about where the parsonage now stands, and the entrance was from the west about where the pulpit stood in our present church.

When the parish of St. Rose was formed about 1839, with regular services after 1845, the people on the west end of St. John's parish transferred to St. Rose. Likewise, in 1852 when Egypt church was formed, a few people from the southeast portion of the parish transferred to Egypt.

CHAPTER FOUR

EARLY ST. JOHN 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. Those public school funds were grossly insufficient, especially in rural areas where the evaluation was low.

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	<u>24.60</u>
TOTAL		\$85.31

It seems that the funds were distributed according to enrollment, and they figure out to be 40 cents per student. But this money was supplemented by other contributions or assessments. Elizabeth and Bernard Boeke recorded their contributions toward hiring the teacher as follows: 1836 — \$7.00; 1837 — \$8.00; 1838 — \$8.00; 1839 — \$8.00; 1840 — \$10.00; 1841 — \$10.00; 1842 — \$11.00.

Mercer County records, which are on file at the Wright State Archives in Dayton, do not show the location of the districts, but it is safe to presume that St. John School District would probably have been number five or six.

It seems that even as early as 1838 St. John School was part of the public school system. 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 Fred Elking, "township clerk."

John Reichert was one of the first settlers in St. John's 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. In those early years, 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.

John Reichert was spoken of highly through those early years, and 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.

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 parsonage and east of the driveway. A parsonage was not built until 50 years later. 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's 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 church owned school. It was a square piece of land, seven rods wide (151.5 feet square). It was the southeast corner of the church land, to the front and east of today's parsonage. Almost in the middle of the lot and on the west edge was the church built school, in later years known as "Vereins Hall." The board of education erected another brick school on the northeast corner of the lot. John Reichert taught the boys in one and sisters taught the girls in the other.

This was a public school system, and was the beginning of the public — parochial school type of education that continued for many years — a school system supported with public money but for all practical purposes operated as a parochial school. Such 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 parish dissensions and feuds of the 1880's.

In November 1845 when the Precious Blood Fathers arrived in Maria Stein the Archbishop assigned them to look after the needs of St. John Parish. From 1845 until 1861 the following priests, at one time or other, were at St. John.

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

These names are also found on the "former pastor" lists of neighboring parishes like St. Rose, St. Henry, Cassella, Egypt, and Minster. These priests lived at the gatehouse at the Maria Stein Convent and often said masses at two parishes.



Father Bernard Austermann, C.P.P.S.
1861-80

1860

The first pastor St. John had for any length of time was Father Bernard Austermann, C.P.P.S., who became pastor in 1861 and stayed until 1880. There are no church records to indicate any problems or improvements that may have taken place. Things must have been peaceful. With the canal boats coming up from Cincinnati through Minster and to Toledo, settlers continued to come into Mercer County and to St. John.

During Father Austermann's stay at St. John the Civil War broke out. In the Minster area as well as to the north, including Putnam County, the support for the Union position among the German people was generally good. However, the German element of Mercer County, including St. John, opposed fighting in the Civil War. Mercer County already had a large Negro population, and the whites feared that if the North won there would be a mass immigration of former Negro slaves to Mercer County. St. John people looked with disapproval at the number of Minster enlistments; claiming they were being tricked into signing up with the Union Army. The 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.

When decorating graves at St. John's Cemetery, the Maria Stein American Legion has been able to locate only one Civil War veteran buried there. There may be more but records do not show how many people from St. John served in the Union army.

It is interesting to learn why the people of St. John and Mercer County were so opposed to the Union stand.

In the 1830's Mr. Augustus Wattles, a native of Connecticut, worked to the best of his ability for the uplift and betterment of the Negro people. In 1833-34 he became acquainted with the Negro population of Cincinnati, which was around 4000, and found that they were totally ignorant of everything calculated to make them good citizens. Most of them had been slaves and had been shut out from every avenue of moral and mental improvement. He started a school for them but felt that they should be moved into the country if possible.

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 for Negro boys, financing it with his own money. Within three years more than 30,000 acres were bought in Marion, Granville and Franklin townships and settled by Negro people, who farmed and also did manual work in Celina and neighboring communities. For more than a decade the Negro settlement thrived.

Meanwhile Mr. Wattles maintained and supported a two story brick school building with his own money until November of 1842. At that time a certain Samuel Emlen of Philadelphia died and willed \$20,000 for the cause of Negro education in farming and mechanical arts. This money was diverted to Mercer County and used to buy the school and land from Mr. Wattles. Mr. Wattles in turn became the head of the school known as the "Emlen Institute," located where St. Charles Seminary stands today.

In 1832 a John Randolph of Roanoke, Virginia, died and in his will freed his 383 slaves, making provision that they were to be moved to 3200 acres of land adjacent to the Wattles colony in Ohio. After 13 years of debate in the Virginia courts, the terms of the will were finally executed and the slaves arrived

by canal boat in New Bremen in 1846. However, the German settlers of Mercer County, reasoning that they had settled here first, forcibly kept them from landing and escorted them, armed with pitchforks and bayonets, back out of what was then Mercer County. They ultimately 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.

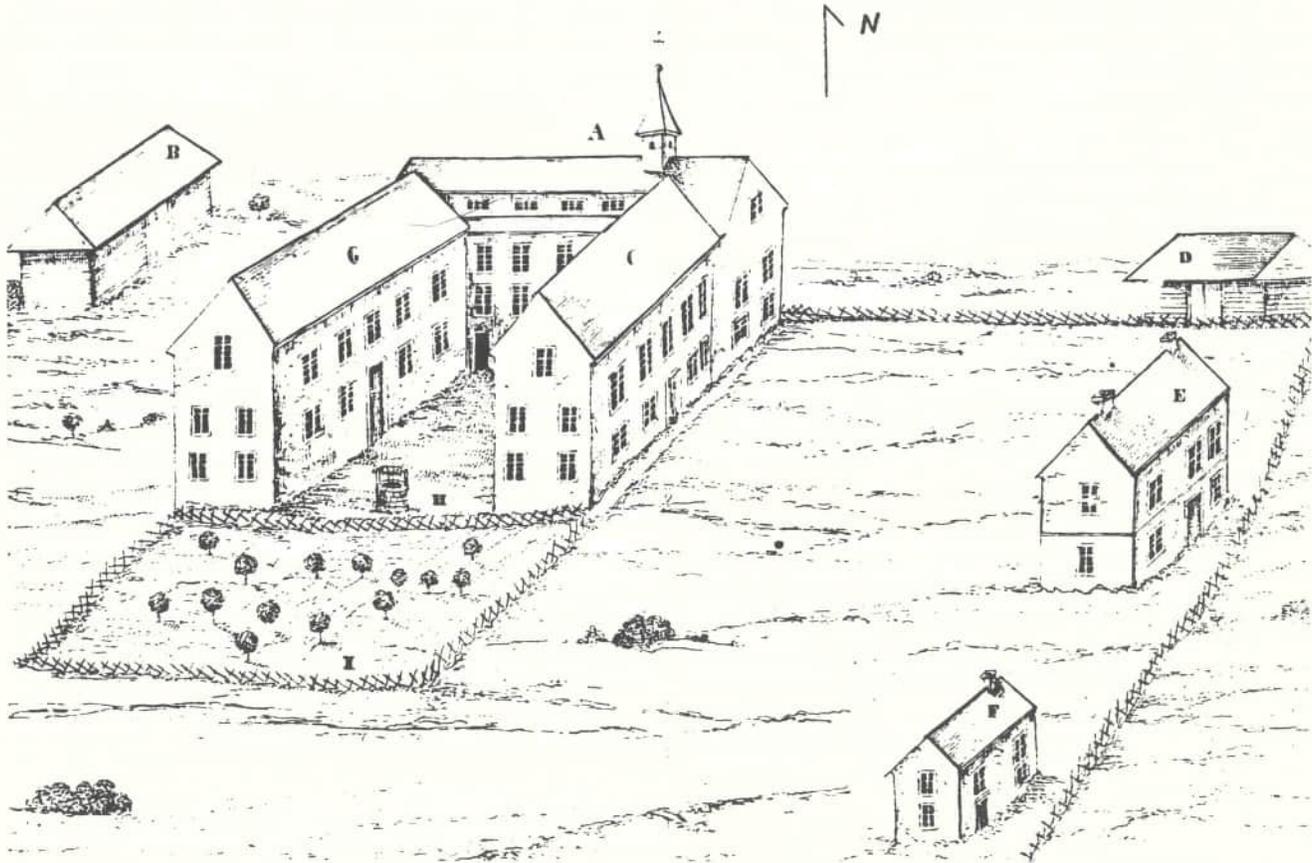
After this incident a lot of hostility was built up against the Wattles colony, and under pressure and threats the Negro people began selling their homes and farms to the white population of the area and moved away. With so many Negro families moving out, the Emlen Institute was closed by 1857. Four years later, on March 14, 1861, Reverend Joseph Dwenger bought the Institute for the Fathers of the Precious Blood, who located their seminary on it. It was named St. Charles Seminary.

At the time of the Civil War the Wattles colony still numbered about 80 families. Carthagenia was an important station on the underground railroad, and many slaves were aided on their way to freedom in Canada. The people in Mercer County were afraid that if the southern slaves were freed many would move to Mercer County because Negro roots had been established there through the Wattles Colony. Because of this fear, St. John and Mercer County had little enthusiasm for the Civil War.

MARIA STEIN CONVENT

Father Brunner and the Precious Blood fathers and sisters arrived in St. John Parish and Mercer County in 1845. Fourteen years later, after 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. During those fourteen years, Father Brunner, as Provincial of the Society of the Precious Blood, laid solid foundations for Catholicism and the Precious Blood Order in western Ohio by supplying both priests and sisters for the many parishes in this area. He was also responsible for building the following Convents:

- Mary Help of Christians, Maria Stein, Ohio, 1846
- Mary at the Holy Sepulcher, Glandorf, 1849
- Mary, Mother of God, Cassella, (Gruenenwald) 1850
- Visitation of Mary, Minster, 1852
- Mary, Mother of Mercy, (Himmelgarten) Between St. Henry and St. Joe, 1852
- Mary's Home, Jay County, Indiana, 1854
- Mary's Flight into Egypt, Egypt, Ohio 1856



This drawing, made before 1852, shows the first buildings at Maria Stein Convent. The artist numbered 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. On the upper floor the Sisters' bedrooms and on the lower floor the wash house and grain storage.*
- H. The yard with well and bake oven.*
- I. The garden.*

After the death of Fr. Brunner, Father Andrew Kunkler was elected Provincial. The headquarters, or motherhouse, for both sisters and priests was the Maria Stein Convent. It remained the motherhouse for the sisters until 1923. For the priests the authority and motherhouse was gradually transferred to Carthage after the acquisition of St. Charles Seminary. By 1887 it had been entirely transferred.

In 1870 three new altars were carved by the expert wood carver, Casper Stelzer of St. John's Parish, and were installed in the chapel of the motherhouse at the Maria Stein Convent. The original motherhouse at that time was located where the patio area is today, next to the convent building. After a new chapel for the sisters and a new chapel

for the Holy Relics had been built during the 1889-93 period, the three altars were moved to other convents. The altars may still be in use someplace today.

1875

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 at the convent at Maria Stein. Fr. Brunner would have been overjoyed at the sight of the treasury of relics that became the possession of the Community in 1875 as a gift of Father J. M. Gartner, a missionary of the Sacred Heart of the Milwaukee Diocese.

In December 1872, Father 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 Father Gartner was able to acquire a large collection of these sacred relics. He also obtained several valuable additions in Venice.

After returning to America, Father 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 of 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.

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 them. 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. 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, Father 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 for the purpose of housing the relics. Then the veneration of kissing the Relic of the True Cross followed. On the following day children from nearby schools came to see the relics and venerate the True Cross. On the next day Fr. Gartner left for Milwaukee.

In November of 1875 he returned to lay his plans before Father Bernard Austermann, the Provincial of the Congregation as well as Pastor of St. John, and before representatives of St. John Parish. 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. Father Gartner himself contributed an additional \$1,100 of his own money.

Casper Stelzer of St. John parish, assisted by Brothers Anthony and 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. Father Gartner himself lined the cupboards with red silk fringed with gold and placed the ostensoriums in regular order, surrounded by the smaller capsules. Also, he gave the Sisters further instructions for arranging other parts of the Chapel.

Misunderstandings had arisen between Father 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 Father Gartner's plan of making Maria Stein a place of pilgrimage. He openly expressed his displeasure. To avoid further complications, Father 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, he returned to La Crosse, Wisconsin on July 13, 1876, where he died the following year.

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 dispute had been settled and the sisters went ahead with their building plans, but two years later when the actual building operation commenced, it flared up once more. Father 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.

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

Records show that Father Henry Drees a good friend of St. John's and who had written an early history of the parish dating from 1833 to 1850, was pastor at St. Aloysius parish in Carthage. In 1878, Carthage was planning to build a new church. Father Drees offered to canvass the neighboring parishes soliciting funds. His efforts were successful, and he especially praised St. Henry and St. John parishes saying of St. John, "And St. John's? Well! Old St. John's Parish deserves to be called the charitable banner parish having contributed toward the erection of St. Aloysius Church over \$400. May God bless the good donors and may the Carthage

Parish be ever mindful of what it owes to so many kind benefactors."

In 1881 the Toledo, Delphos, and Burlington Railroad extended its narrow gauge line south through Mendon, Mercer, Celina, Montezuma, Chickasaw, Maria Stein, and on to Dayton thus making a direct line from Toledo to Dayton. The following year it was consolidated into the narrow gauge railroad from Toledo to St. Louis and was called the St. Louis-Narrow-Gauge System. In the railroad industry, gauge means the distance between tracks. Standard gauge in most countries is 4 feet 8½ inches while narrow gauge refers to anything smaller than standard.

In the family diary of John Kramer, he called the railroad through Maria Stein the Cincinnati, Hamilton and Dayton railroad, known as the C.H. & D. John Kramer was born in St. John parish in 1859 and died in 1927. He was very active in church and community affairs. The railroad passed one mile west of the St. John Church. John's brother, Henry Kramer, took the job of carrying the mail from the railway station to the Maria Stein Post Office as soon as the railroad was built. The little community through which the railroad passed became known as St. John Station or Maria Stein Station. Because of the railroad it attracted a lot of new business. Gradually both communities became known as Maria Stein with no distinction between St. John and St. John Station. The railroad through Maria Stein, then known as the Toledo, Cincinnati and St. Louis Railroad, went into bankruptcy and was abandoned in 1923.

CHAPTER FIVE

1880 THE PARISH REVOLT

Father Bernard Austermann, who had become pastor at St. John in 1861, was elected Provincial of the Society of the Precious Blood in 1874. He resided at the Convent Gate House. Although things had gone smoothly at St. John for many years, in 1880 real parish problems erupted because of the school. Pressures were building up for a revolt and only needed an incident to erupt. The scene: two school buildings adjacent to each other, one built by the parish but both owned by the school board; a solid Catholic community with its schools run by the lay Board of Education. The incident that triggered the revolt was Father Austermann's objection to a teacher the Board had hired. He felt that the school system should be run as a parochial school with himself making the decisions. However, the School Board felt that they as the elected board members of the public school should hire the teachers and set school policy as they chose. Another sore point was the church built school. The pastor and some of the parishioners felt they still owned the school and should control it even if it had been sold and deeded to the school board in 1858.

It further appears that 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 a while in 1880 and the Chapel at the convent was used by the parishioners. Baptisms took place at the convent during this time. Many of the people from Chickasaw had belonged to St. John parish, but because of the school problem joined the St. Sebastian Congregation until they formed their own parish in 1903.

Stories handed down by word of mouth of actual violence that took place include: shots being fired

in the sanctuary; 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 tempers ran high and deep rifts appeared in the parish. This continued for a number of years. In 1883 the Sisters left the St. John School because of the bickering among the parishioners, and they did not return again until 1891.

Father Thomas Eisenring, C.P.P.S. (pastor from 1884-89), wrote in a report to the Bishop 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 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. The issues were the local schools. So serious was the division that the parish was deprived of its priest for some time during the year 1880. 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.

The situation became so tense that the parish services were suspended. Sometime during the year an appeal was sent to the Archbishop asking him to send a priest to the parish. Signed by over 47 members of the parish, the request reads: "We, the undersigned members of the congregation of St. John's Church, humbly beg you for a Priest. We agree to pay him full salary, furnish him a good house and full apparatus, and do all we can for him in order to establish peace once more in our Community."

Correspondence between Archbishop Elder and Father Bernard Austerman show 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 Father Austerman to show great tact and understanding in dealing 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."



**Father Michael Graf, C.P.P.S.
1880-84**

By July 7 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 Father Austerman should be named "to leave you more free for your higher duties," that is, his task as provincial. When one priest was suggested by Father Austerman, the Archbishop declined to approve him because he had been too close to the scene of the trouble. The priest who was named next pastor of St. John's was Father Michael Graf, C.P.P.S., who served from November 1880 until May 1884.

At the center of all this trouble was the question of the local school. Although the school was hardly 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 affairs. In a letter of August 6, 1880, Archbishop Elder reminds Father 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 gave Father Austerman this bit of advice 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."

But troubles continued between the school trustees and the church leaders. The next Provincial Superior, Father Henry Drees, complained about the division in St. John's 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 Father Andrew Kunkler, Pastor in Minster, and himself, Father Drees denounces 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."

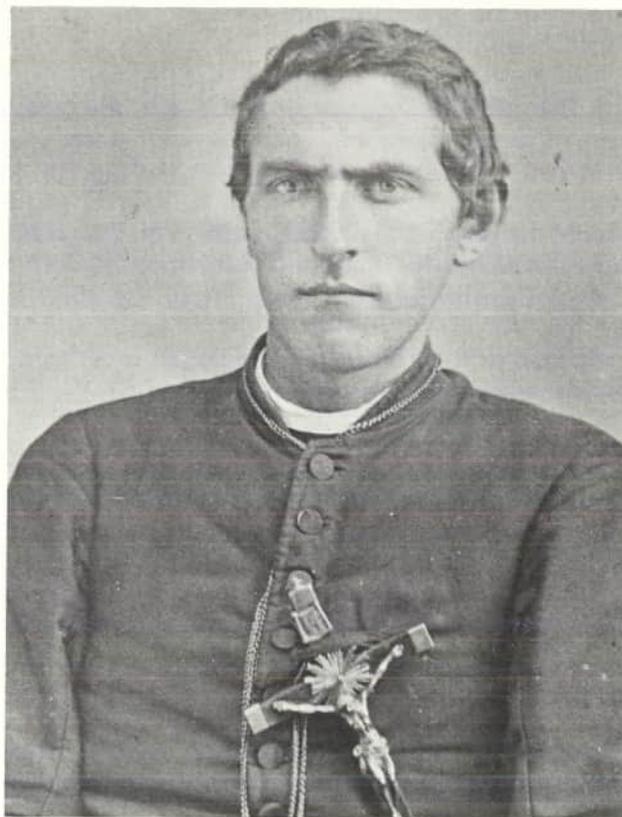
The situation got more involved when on September 1 the directors of School District 4 opened a school of their own and refused admittance to children from the New Bremen area who lived outside the district. In letters to Archbishop Elder, the pastor of St. John, Father Thomas Eisenring, C.P.P.S., asked for advice from his ecclesiastical superior. In July a delegation of parishioners, with the pastor's blessing, had visited the Archbishop to state its case. A lawsuit was being seriously considered to regain ownership of the school building.

In spite of the charged language and accusations, the pastor and the school directors were able to discuss the problems and some kind of solution was evidently worked out. 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 Father 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 Clem Hausfeld. There is no available correspondence from Archbishop Elder at this time, but it can be assumed his reasonable counsel prevailed because shortly after these episodes he visited St. John's Church to administer Confirmation.

1890

When Father Thomas Eisenring, C.P.P.S., took pastoral charge of the parish on May 10, 1884, he realized immediately that the parish had outgrown its present quarters and needed a new and bigger church. Because of the problems within the parish this need was tabled. With the controversy within the parish subsiding and the division almost healed, 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, Father Eisenring and the building committee worked hard to overcome all obstacles put in their way.

An architect, Anthony Doniding of Chicago, was commissioned to make plans for the new church,



*Father Thomas Eisenring, C.P.P.S.
1884-89*

which were approved by Most Reverend Bishop William Henry Elder of Cincinnati. Subscriptions were solicited for the construction of the new church, but with traces of disharmony still lingering, did not meet with much success. However, Father Eisenring and the building committee moved ahead.

During 1888 much of the building material, including brick and stone were purchased. On February 28, 1889, the contract for the construction of the church was given to Anthony DeCurtins of Carthage, Ohio. Mr. DeCurtins built many of the churches in the area.

On May 5, 1889, the cornerstone was blessed by Rt. Reverend Joseph Dwenger, Bishop of Ft. Wayne, Indiana, and native son of St. John. On May 9, 1889, the following article 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.P.P.S.
1889-97

In December, 1889, Reverend Martin Dentinger, C.P.P.S., was appointed pastor of the parish. His efforts and energies were directed to the completion of the church. Much work was done during 1890, and the church neared completion by the fall of 1891.

The following news items appeared in the German newspaper "Der Mercer County Bote" telling about the new church at St. John and inviting the public to attend the Dedication.

THE NEW CHURCH

(Dated November 2, 1891)

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 137½ 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 illumi-

nate 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 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.

INVITATION TO THE CHURCH DEDICATION

(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.

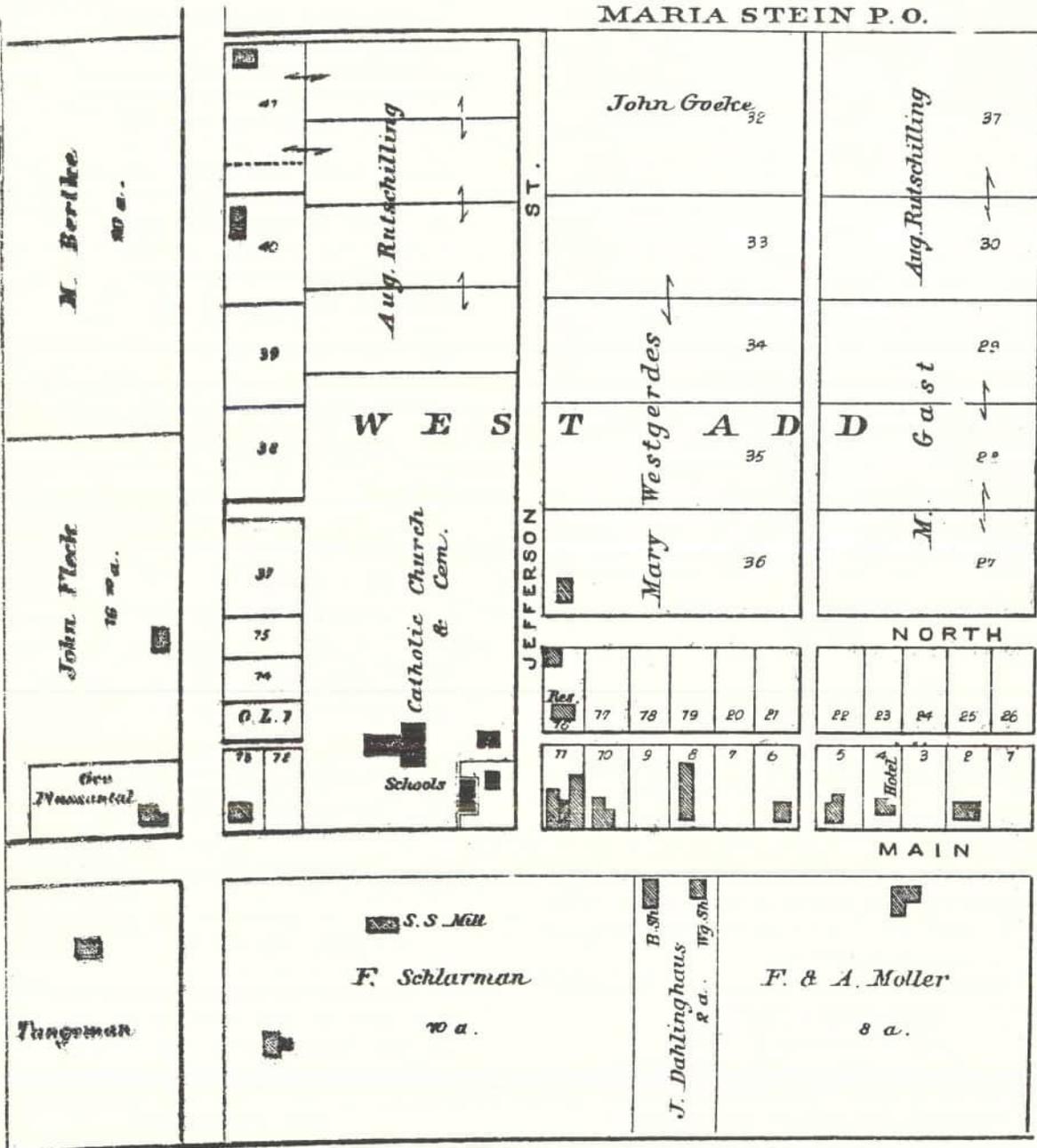
THE PROGRAM

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

ST. JOHN'S



Map of St. John dated 1888. Note the position of Church #2.
 Notice that the church owned school has been blocked out of the school lot.

An 1888 map of the town of St. John shows that the church built in 1850 with the main door facing west stood about where the new church was built. The new church has its main door facing south.

It is not known how or where church services were conducted during the building of the new church. Possibly they were conducted at the Convent.

Statement of Expense of
 St. Johns Church build
 at Maria Stein in 1888 to 1894
 by John W. Kramer Secty Bld Comtee

516 ⁴¹ Perch Stone	785 09	
Freight on same 57 cars	436 00	1241 09
13500 Brick		2851 51
695 cu. Sand		551 20
1200 cu. Lake sand 4 1/2 w	54 00	
Freight on same	66 10	120 10
442 sq. Water table Sandstone		221 00
5172 cu Lime		880 22
7955 feet Ash flooring		244 65
First Contract U & C. Burtius		17147 00
Extra under first Contract		27 00
Second Contract U & C. Burtius		7750 00
Extra under second Contract		78 78
Miscellaneous		1614 44
Total cost of Building		\$32735.04

Building	\$32735.04
Painting	2000.00
Pulpit	550.00
Furnaces	709.58
Bells	1015.44
Pews	918.00
Windows	1867.00
Painting Pictures	425.00
Communion Kelling	225.00
	<u>40145.06</u>

The present church is of the Roman style of architecture and built of brick with sandstone trim. It is almost 140 feet long and 60 feet across the transept. According to the actual figures of the Building Committee Secretary, John Kramer, the church cost \$40,135.

On November 11, 1891, the dedication took place. Archbishop Elder performed the ceremony amid happy rejoicing and in the presence of a large number of people. Monsignor Windhorst of Chillicothe delivered a festive German sermon and address.

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 Carthage. 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 Carthage 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.

Father Dentinger stayed at St. John Parish until 1897. He was replaced for short periods by Francis Nigsch, C.P.P.S., in 1897 and Ignatius Rauh, C.P.P.S., 1897-1898.



**Father Francis Nigsch, C.P.P.S.
1897-97**

KNIGHTS OF ST. JOHN — 1897

On June 24, 1897, the Uniform Rank of The Knights of St. John Commandery 303 of Celina attended church services at St. John Church. The display of the Uniform Rank and the precision marching by the members of Commandery 303 on their beautiful horses aroused among the leaders of St. John parish a great enthusiasm for organizing a commandery at Maria Stein.

In July, Father Frank Nigsch, C.P.P.S., Pastor of St. John asked Captain Lawrence Schunck of Celina to attend a meeting at St. John and explain the workings of the Knights of St. John. This led to a decision

to form a new Commandery called St. Rochus Commandery 313, with about fifty men being asked to join as charter members.

On September 5, 1897, the first election of officers took place. Father Frank Nigsch was appointed Spiritual Advisor for the new commandery. Mathias Gast was elected as President, Henry Bertke as First Vice-President, Henry Goecke as Second Vice-President, John M. Kramer as Recording Secretary, Frank Westgerdes as Financial Secretary, and John Goecke as Treasurer. Captain of the Uniform Rank was Bernard Desch; First Lieutenant was Joseph Goecke; and Second Lieutenant was Michael Gagel.

Although it originated in St. John parish, membership quickly spread to adjoining parishes. Enthusiasm has continued high and at the present time Commandery 313 is the largest Commandery in the world. A new and beautiful hall and home stands in Maria Stein as a memorial to the work and dedication of many Knights members, both past and present.



**Father Ignatius Rauh, C.P.P.S.
1897-98**

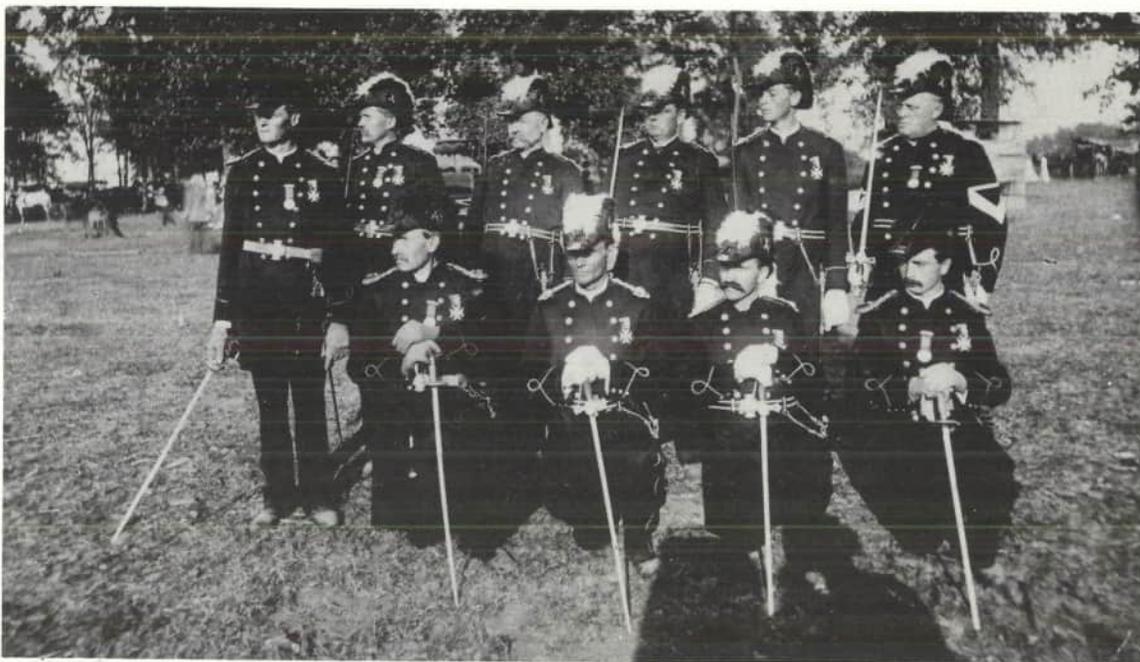


**Knights of St. John
Uniform Rank — 1906**

Bottom: 1 Aug. Rutschilling, 2 Julian Schweller, Julian Goecke, 4 John Weber, 5 Ludwig Hausfeld, 6 Aug. Droesch, 7 Capt. Mike Gagel.

Middle: 1 Aug. Dahlinghaus, 2 John Borgert, 3 Joe Zumwald, 4 _____ 5 Goecke, 6 _____ 7 V. Brackman, 8 _____ 9 Lawrence Drosch.

Back: 1, Joe Goecke, 2 John Kramer, 3 Henry Goecke, 4 Matt Gast, 5 Frank Topp, 6 Ferd Desch, 7 Henry Reichert, 8 Wildenhaus, 9 Albert Schweller, 10 Ed Hausfeld.



Knights of St. John — about 1906.

Front Row, 1 Frank Topp, 2 Henry Reichert, 5 Mike Gagel.

Back Row, 3 Henry Goecke, 4 John Kramer, 6 Matt Gast.

CHAPTER SIX

1890 — SCHOOLS



Vereins Hall

Built prior to 1858 by the parish as a school. In 1858 it was sold to the Public School Board. It was one of the main issues in the parish feud of the 1880's.

In 1887 it was deeded back to the parish and called "Vereins Hall." It was torn down about 1925.

Dwelling in the back is the parish owned teacher's (or organist's) house. It was razed in 1942. Last occupants were the Frank H. Moorman family.

In 1890 with the church nearing completion and peace 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, an Elizabeth Schlorman sold to the Board of Education lots 14, 15 and 37, (the location of the present parking lot behind 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 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. It was also used by the newly-formed Knights of St. John Commandery No. 313.

In 1897 the schools in Mercer County were re-districted 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. On April 27, 1897, Joseph Oppenheim was rehired as teacher for the coming year at \$50 a month. The same Board minutes show that Sister M. Rosalia Alt was hired as a teacher at \$35 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 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, etc.

Prior to this, it is known that Fred Lorshetter taught in 1876; Peter Jacobs in 1881; and Louis Welde in 1891, who was organist at the time of the church dedication. Mercer County Teachers Examinations show as additional certified teachers, namely: Joseph Reichert, Frank Brackman, F. Wildenhaus, Joseph Stukenborg, Fred 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, such as at the Puthoff School or the Heitkamp School. There were many sisters certified who taught at various schools.

Joseph Oppenheim taught for three more years at St. John and resigned in 1900. As a teacher he



Girl's School. Built as a one floor public school in 1890. In 1898 a second floor was added. It was known as the girls school and located on the site of the present parking lot. Torn down 1930.

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. This was the original manure spreader, and was called "Oppenheim's New Idea."

On June 13, 1898, after voter approval, a contract was let to Anton DeCurtins and 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, grades one, two and three, boys and girls were taught downstairs by the Sisters, and girls of grades four through eight were taught upstairs by the Sisters. The boys grades four through eight went to the boys' school east of the priest house.

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 con-

tinued teaching, but school records show only one sister being paid. In 1911 the board started paying two sisters. From 1898 to 1911 Sister Rosalia Alt and Sister Louisa Huss were the paid teachers, but the second sister changed almost yearly. It is possible that the second sister was considered in training, and the Sisters donated her services. In 1907 Sister Rosalia was replaced by Sister Louis Huss who was replaced by Sister Metrona Schmidt in 1928. Sister Metrona stayed until 1935. All during this time a second sister also taught. In 1930 a third sister was engaged.

School Board records show that receipts for the school year 1911-12 were \$3,183.47. Records also show that 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, Barney Westgerdes, Barney Friemering, Joseph Goecke, Henry Wendeln, Fred Schroeder, Henry Reichert, John Kramer, and John D. Kremer.



First school built by Public School Board in 1858 on land bought from the parish and located east of present parsonage. School used for 72 years, last few years as a High School. Torn down in 1930.

Picture taken from Jefferson St. Note parish owned teachers house on the right, and the church in the background.

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

In June of 1922, Frank H. Moorman, who had taught six years in Minster and several years at St. Sebastian, was engaged as 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 two and one quarter acres of land from Fred 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 1924 Mr. Moorman effected the consolidation of Puthoff's School and St. John Special School District.

In 1923 the School District applied for a two-year high school charter and graduated the first class in 1925. The graduates 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.

In November, 1929, the school district voted on a \$35,000 bond issue for a new school building to be



St. John High School in 1924. The first class graduated from the newly formed high school in 1925. Frank H. Moorman was school administrator.

Front row: Dorothy Tangeman, Elenora Droesch, Viola Zahn, Alvira Schwieterman, Victor Boecke, Edwin Heitkamp, Urban Ruschau.

Second row: Iola Zahn, Armela Kramer, Celia Gehle, Richard Moorman, Urban Heitkamp, Clarence Huelskamp, Arnold Kleinhenz, Water Thieman, Frank H. Moorman.

Third row: Juliana Hierholzer, Sophia Fortkamp, Albina Heitkamp, Hugo Moorman, Silverius Homan, Herman Fortkamp.

built on the 2¼ acres across the street from the church. The vote was overwhelmingly favorable with 165 voting YES and only 7 voting NO. On January 25, 1930 bids were accepted and two days later contracts totaling \$35,967 were let. Construction proceeded rapidly with F. A. DeCurtins as architect. Dedication took place on Labor Day, September 1, 1930, and was celebrated with a picnic. 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, 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 application was made to the State for a three year high school charter. In the fall of 1930 the new school opened with Frank H. Moorman as Principal and Sisters Metrona, Sebastian and Lydia as teachers. The new three story building housed the high school as well as the grade school.



St. John's School in 1939. School was built in 1931.

In 1931 Clifford Wendeln, Ivo Kremer, Wilbert Gagel, Rosella Moorman and Freda Moorman were the first three-year high graduates. Most the two-year and three-year high graduates continued their education and graduated from the Minster Public High School. Before St. John had a high school, those wishing high school diplomas would go to Minster 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, the well thought of and successful school administrator, Frank H. Moorman died unexpectedly. 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 — 1932-33

First 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, Albert Knapke, Mary Kleinhenz, Mary Pohlman, Elenora Hartings, Rita Lochtefeld, Agnes Homan, Margaret Rutschilling, Frank Moorman.

Fifth Row: Norbert Winner, Otto Kremer, Andrew Goecke, Joseph Borges, Hugo Adams, Henry Leugers, Paul Kleinhenz, Vincent Gagel, Wilfred Ruschau.



**PUTHOFF'S SCHOOL
1916**

Bottom Row: Otto Mescher, Ernest Winner, Joseph Buening, Clarence Rolfes, Clarence Bergman, Ben Rutschilling, Edwin Mescher.

Second Row: Veronica Drees, Helen Drees, Leona Rutschilling, Florence Rutschilling, Rosa Buening, Stella Rolfes, Raymond Rutschilling, Albert Rolfes, Edward Drees.

Third Row: Clara Bruns, Elizabeth Buening, Laurretta Winner, Elizabeth Bergman, August J. Reichert, Katie Buening, Hilda Rolfes, Leo Walterbusch, Dick Mescher.

PUTHOFF SCHOOL

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 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.



**HEITKAMP SCHOOL
1927-1928**

Front Row: First-unknown, Velma Heitkamp, Hilda Heitkamp, Rita Garman, Norma Wentte, 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 Wentte, 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 Wentte.

HEITKAMP SCHOOL

The Heitkamp School came into being in 1908 when on July 7 Joseph Heitkamp sold to the Board of Education of Jackson Township one acre of land located on Ohio 364 one half mile north of Ohio 119. Church membership in the 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 down and 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.

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.

CHAPTER SEVEN

BUSINESSES — TURN OF THE CENTURY

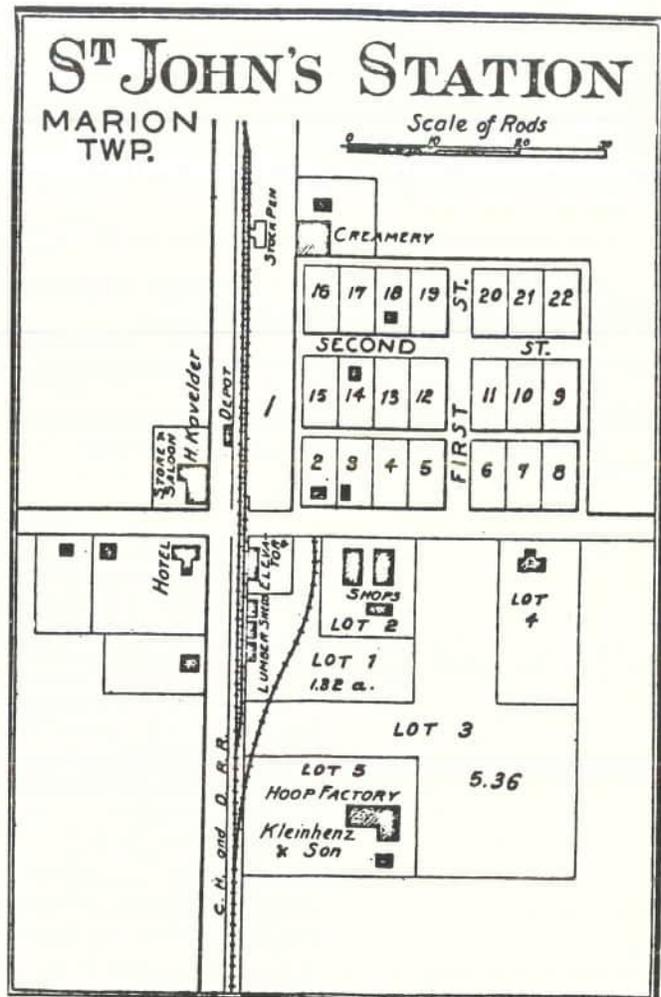
The railroad through Maria Stein was not completed until 1881, which brought an influx of new business to town. Prior to this an 1876 Map and Atlas of St. John lists the following businesses:

- Pulskamp, Herman, Manufacturer of Wagons
- Fleck, John, Dealer in Horses and Proprietor of Hotel
- Fleck, Fred, Dealer in Harness, Saddles, Whips, etc.
- Rutschilling, August, Dealer in Dry Goods, Boots and Shoes, Hardware, Groceries, etc.
- Gast and Goecke, Manufacturers of Tile of all descriptions.
- Lorshetter, Fred, School Teacher
- Drees, John H., Blacksmith
- Plassartal Geo., 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 $\frac{1}{2}$ mile south of St. John (Lawrence Homan farm). 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 in Maria Stein Station built a grain elevator alongside the railroad tracks (It is still there). 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 family to live in (the present Ed Garmann home).

In 1896 fire destroyed the machine shop. With little or no insurance it was a great financial blow to



Maria Stein Station — 1900



1895 — John M. Kramer's original machine shop. Burned 1896. Replaced by a new machine shop. Now the Mobil Service Station.

In 1898 Mr. 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 John Kramer's 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 employing several men year around. He also at one time owned and operated a well drilling outfit. He was Secretary of the Building Committee 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. He was an energetic and innovative man helping his church and community greatly. John Kramer died in 1927 at the age of 68 years.



About 1905 — Henry and Norma Kramer and daughter Stella. Location is where the Carryout and Feltz dwelling 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.

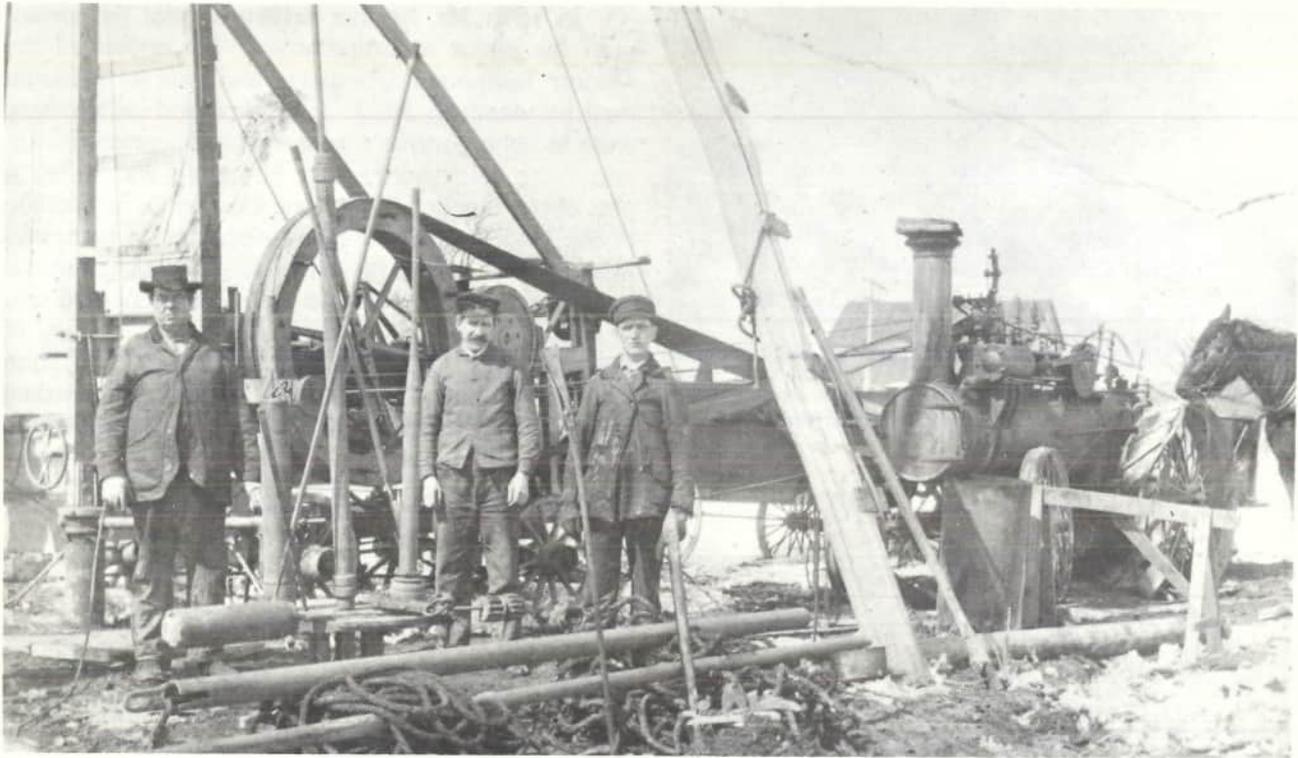


1925 — Marion Telephone Co. repair crew. August Droesch repairman. John M. Kramer started Telephone Co. in 1898.

the Kramer Brothers. At the urgings of neighbors and the community a new machine shop was built. The financial burden was too 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 (where the Carry Out is today). 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 Mobil Service Station.



1929 — Marion Telephone Co. repairman — close to Chickasaw on Ohio 716.



*About 1907
Gas Drilling Rig
John Kramer, Henry Wendeln, August Droesch*

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.

In 1897 and 1898 in John Kramer's Machine Shop, Joseph Oppenheim experimented with the help of Kramer, Fred Heckman and Henry Synck, who worked for Kramer, on a workable spreader. John Kramer had worked out a gear arrangement



*About 1900
Manure unloader "Manufactured by John M. Kramer and
Brother Machine Works Maria Stein, Ohio."
Note: No beaters.*



*About 1900
Picture taken from Kramer Machine Shop looking east.
House today belongs to Ed Garmann.
(At that time belonged to John Kramer.)*



*About 1900
Oppenheim's "New Idea." Note: Beaters.*



*New Idea Factory — about 1905
Maria Stein, Ohio*



*New Idea Factory — About 1905
Located across alley from Cletus Heitbrink.
Note: Tom Kleinhenz barn — upper right.*

that would move the manure to the back of the spreader and had this patented. Joseph Oppenheim had loaned John Kramer money at the time of the fire for the rebuilding of the machine shop. When Kramer was working out his financial obligations, he assigned all rights to this patent to Oppenheim in full payment of the note.

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 his daughter, Cecelia Selhorst interviewed in 1973, he had a dream and with the help of the Poor Souls he saw how the gears could be put together to turn the beaters. The beaters were put on a manure wagon built by John Kramer & Bros. (Note picture.) Fred Heckman worked out a folding seat that would fold forward when the manure spreader was being loaded and would fold back when it was being spread. Together with Henry Synck they built a successful spreader with the first one being sold on October 18, 1898.

In 1899 Joseph Oppenheim bought a barrel hoop factory belonging to Charles Eifert and located across the alley from the present Cletus Heitbrink home. With his son Benjamin, Henry Synck and Fred Heckman, they built six spreaders for sale and called them "Oppenheim's New Idea."

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. This is now the home of Thomas Kleinhenz. A year later, in 1901, Joseph Oppenheim died of typhoid fever.

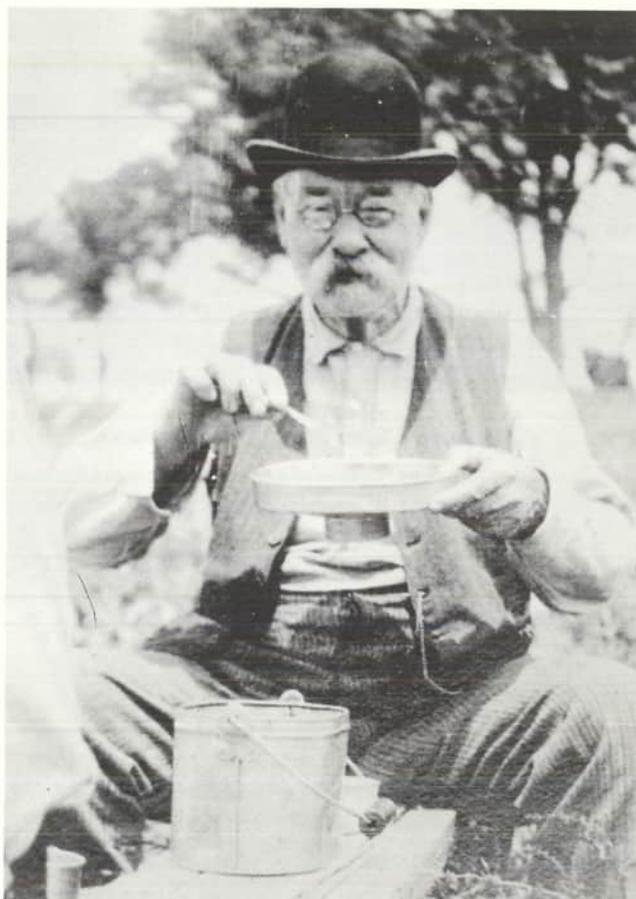
His widow, using life insurance money left by her husband, continued the business with her son Benjamin and Henry Synck. The plant was enlarged to include a pattern shop, wood-working machinery, foundry, electric light plant, etc. It employed 30 to 40 men. However by 1910, it had outgrown the Maria Stein plant and relocated in Coldwater. In 1914 the Oppenheim home was sold to Anthony Kleinhenz and is still in the Kleinhenz family today.

TURN OF THE CENTURY — BOOM TOWN

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. It was last operated as a hotel by Anna Hilgefert. 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. During the boom period, Henry Wissman ran the saloon in Maria Stein Station (Komer Kafe today) while his brother, Tony Wissman, operated the saloon in St. John (now the Van Skiver property).



About 1895 — Sawmill employees at sawmill where the St. John's building stands today, owned by John Osterloh.



Henry Goecke — about 1925. Died in 1927 at the age of 75. Before retirement had been the local undertaker and owned a furniture store.

On the east end of town John Synck had an axe handle factory where the Vincent Gagel home stands today. He was the father of Henry Synck who worked with Joseph Oppenheim in the New Idea plant. 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 in 1973 and was not rebuilt. At the turn of the century a 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 and was known as the Goecke Hardware Store. The building burned down on January 19, 1913. Ben Tangeman, Jr., operated a butcher shop



About 1908 — Mr. & Mrs. Herman Goecke in front of the Goecke Hardware Store — formerly the Westgerdes Hardware Store. It stood where the Knight's Hall stands today and burned on January 19, 1913. The Ben Tangeman Butcher Shop is on the left and also burned.



About 1920. The Joseph Goecke Tile Yard was located on the east edge of Maria Stein. Burned down on Wednesday, July 21, 1926.

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. Joseph Goecke owned a big tile yard on the east end of town and had a good business. Wednesday, July 21, 1926, was a windy day. A fire started in town, and burned down several homes. It jumped to the tile yard burning it to the ground, too.

In 1887 John Goecke started the Goecke Shoe Sales and Harness Repair Shop. This business is still in the family. John's son, Fred, continued it and today Fred's son, Arnold, is carrying on the business at the same location. Matt Fahrig owned and operated the hardware store on the north side of Main Street. He had bought it from John Fleck in 1910. In 1917 Michael Gagel bought the store and it became Gagel Hardware. This business stayed in the family and today is operated by Mike's grandchildren, Paul and Tom Gagel. In the early 1900's the Gast Dry Goods and Grocery Store was operated by Matt

Gast, Jr. Joseph Gast eventually 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 owned by the Knights was sold to Gagel Hardware in 1967 and is today used for storage. In 1900 the grocery store now owned by Ralph Vehorn was owned by August Rutschilling and later by Fred Mescher. The store had its beginning in 1852 and was owned at various times by Joseph Backs, Urban Menker and Charles and Rita Heintl. 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 Moel-



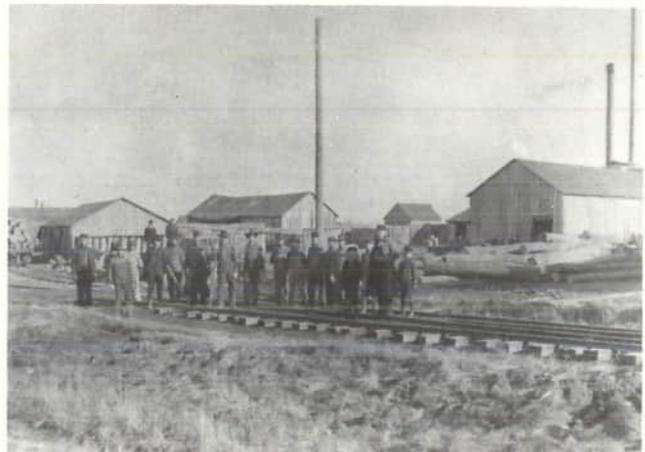
About 1925. Gagel Hardware Store. Mike Gagel bought the store from Matt Fahrig in 1917.



About 1917. Now the Gagel Hardware storage building. Site of the Gast original store in 1838 and remained in the family until 1941. Served as a clothing store, general store, a tavern, Knights of St. John Lodge Hall and now hardware storage.



The Urban Menker Grocery Store and Post Office.
About 1945. Today is Vehorn's Market.
Repairman on roof is Richard Pohlmann.



About 1905 — Sawmill and Hoop Factory on south edge of Maria Stein Station about where Walter Budde lives now. Owned at various times by Joseph Seitz — John and Henry Kleinhenz. It was operated by a C. J. Davisson for the Independent Hoop Co. when it closed down in 1910.



Wissman Saloon — About 1912
1 August Rutschilling, 2 Frank Schlarman, 3 Tony Schlarman, 4 August Wildenhaus, 5 Henry Rutschilling, 6 Anton Tangeman.



C. H. & D. Railroad
1881 to 1923



Maria Stein Lumber Co.
Closed about 1925.
Picture taken in 1924.
Located between Elevator and Mobil Service Station.
1 — Ben Ruschau, carpenter.
2 — Charles Seitz, Lumber yard employee.
3 — Leo Moëller, owner.

ler when it closed down in 1925. John Fortkamp built and operated a grocery store about where Ralph Wenning lives today. 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 about 1910.

Meanwhile Henry Kramer was operating a hardware store across from the elevator about where the 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 a 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 butter. Next to the butter tub factory, Charles Eifert operated a successful creamery which in 1903 he sold to Louis Henke of New Bremen. It operated as the White Mountain 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.

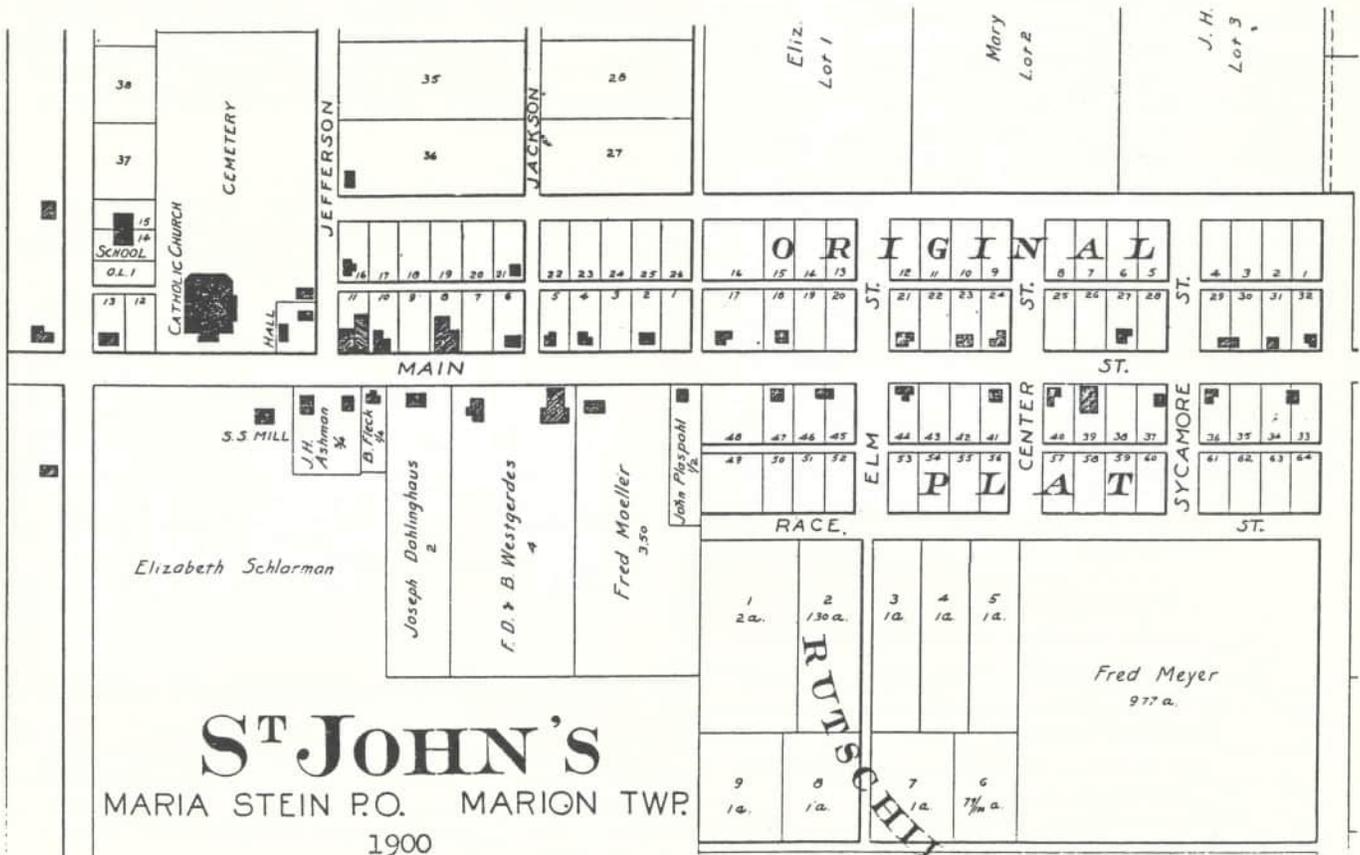
The departure of New Idea in 1910, the creamery move to New Bremen in 1912, and the railroad's demise in 1923 signaled the end of the business growth in Maria Stein and St. John parish. This was the cause of the population drop in the early decades of the 1900's.



About 1920 — Some of Maria Stein Grain Co. buildings still in use.



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



CHAPTER EIGHT

FATHER OTTO MISSLER



*Father Otto Missler, C.P.P.S.
1898-1932*

When Father Missler arrived at Maria Stein and took charge of St. John Parish on September 14, 1898, he was 41 years old. A native of Bellevue, Ohio, he had been appointed as a pastor at the age of 25. For 34 years this priest served as pastor of St. John. Many were baptized by him, received their First Communion from him, and were married by

him. The older parishioners remember Father 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.

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. Father Missler was a 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.



*MARIA STEIN BAND
1906-07*

*1 Julian Schweller, 2 John Schulte, 3 Fred Wendeln,
4 August Rutschilling, 5 John Borgert, 6 Henry Rutschilling,
7 August Dahlinghaus, 8 Julian Goecke, 9 Ed Goecke,
10 Frank Schlarman.*



Maria Stein Baseball Team — About 1910
Front Row: 1 Tony Schlarman, 2 Anthony Kleinhenz,
3 Julius Lechleiter, 4 Jim Thobe.
Center Row: 1 Frank Schlarman, 2 ?.
Back Row: 1 Louis Wildenhaus, 2 August Wildenhaus,
3 August Dahlinghaus, 4 ?, 5 Frank Plaspool.



About 1915. Sanitation Department,
then referred to as "Honey Dippers."



The Elfert home about 1907. Note: Girl's school in back-
ground. The street was paved about 1920.



About 1915. Henry Bruggeman hauling mail from Maria
Stein Station (railroad) to Post Office. Also to Cranberry, St.
Rose and Cassella.



About 1910. In front of today's Post Office.
Note flagstone sidewalk.

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 and all of the former priests had lived at the convent gatehouse.

In 1905 plans were adopted for the construction of a brick residence in harmony with the adjoining church. Father Missler took up subscriptions to pay for the parsonage and met with generous and prompt response. In April, 1906, work was begun and in September of the same year the priest's house was completed. On September 14, 1906, Father 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.

It was during Father 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 no problems erupted that were recorded. Father Missler was conservative and did not believe in incurring debt. Repairs and improvements that needed to be done had to be paid for. 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.

Father Missler was a kind and reserved man. He was almost never seen without cassock and hat (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 held on to the German language in church. His sermons 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.



**BOND RALLY — WORLD WAR I
1917**

Note: Hotel (Now Leugers Parking Lot); Jim Ruschau house in the back; Korner Kafe on right.



**BOND RALLY — WORLD WAR I
1917**

Note: Korner Kafe (then operated by August Wildenhaus). Since that time the building was shortened by removing part of the front.



About 1915 — John Kleinhenz Stockyards in St. Rose driving hogs to Maria Stein Station for shipment by train. (Cyril Hausfeld house in background.)



**BOND RALLY — WORLD WAR I
1917**

Note: Maria Stein Lumber Co., Maria Stein Elevator.

World War I had a definite impact on St. John. While the German language was pretty well out of the schools, it now began to fade in church activities. Confessions in German, however, continued for a long time and even today some people prefer this to English. Sermons in German continued on an alternate basis into Father Holler's time. Even today Low German or Platt Düütsk is spoken in some homes and surfaces regularly in discussions at local taverns and other gatherings.

There are no records to show how many young men from St. John parish served in the military service. But support was enthusiastic and patriotism high for World War I. There are graves of ten WWI veterans in our cemetery and many native sons buried elsewhere.

Father 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. 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.



About 1915. Taken across from the Gast property looking west. The fire house on the left was moved to the Henry Wendeln farm (now Richard Pohlmann) in 1931. The street was paved about 1920.



*Prior to Prohibition — about 1915
Thought to be Frank Topp's house on Lot 22.
1 Frank Topp, 2 Julian Schweller, 3 Jake Schweller,
4 Mike Gagel, 5 unknown.*



*Ben Tangeman, Sr.
Hauling tile for the Goecke Tile Yard about 1916.*



Clem Brandewie 1918



Wissman Saloon — About 1922

1 August Dahlinghaus, 2 August Rutschilling, 6 Henry (x) Tangeman, 7 Frank Borges, 8 a drummer (travelling salesman — note brief case), 9 Ben Borges.



**About 1923 — Heitkamp Threshing Rig in operation.
Owned by John and Henry Heitkamp.**

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 by 10 feet) was located almost across the street from the Van Skiver property today. The next assessment, levied on January 8, 1917, was 25 cents for each member.

Regular meetings were held and assessments were made as and when 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 of the Maria Stein Fire Company. The fees 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. The building was bought by Henry Wendeln and is still in use on the Richard Pohlmann farm today.

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 ½ 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. The last meeting was held on February 21, 1960. After paying all outstanding bills it was voted to give the



Maria Stein Station

About 1920 — Hausfeld dwelling (Note oak tree) — Ed Harting (now Jeffery Vehorn) — John Fortkamp dwelling (now Ralph Wenning) — John Fortkamp Grocery Store (gone) and Saloon (Now Korner Kafe).

Note the road is not paved. The one mile stretch between St. Rose and Maria Stein Station was cemented in 1923.

Chickasaw Fire Company the balance of \$12.50. The minutes book was signed by W. A. Gagel (Bill). The Fire Company had been in existence 47 years.

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

A company has been 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.



About 1927 — Play at the Community Hall
1 Joe Fortkamp, 2 Luetta Reichert, 3 Sophia Fortkamp,
4, Louis Lengrich, 5 George Reichert, 6 Mathilda Heckman,
7 Anthony Fortkamp, 8 Alvina Fortkamp, 9 Pauline
Heckman, 10 Frank Huber.



About 1930. Horse down in front of what now is the
Korner Kafe. (At that time owned by Lawrence Mescher.) Trying
to assist are Tony Rolfes, Ed Hartings and Henry (Upps)
Tangeman.



In the 1930's — Popular advertising sign located where
the Carry-Out stands today.

This building was in constant use for functions like: 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." Also public or admission dances were held and were very popular. This was during the Prohibition Days and evidence of these bootleg days was always present in the form of empty bottles found after the dances and weddings. The Community Hall was the meeting place for the young in the area, and many marriages had their roots at the Community Hall.

Each generation has its own fun and the old timers will remember the Kite Makers Conventions at the Community Club. The older residents of Maria Stein Station remember the surprise 5, 10, and 25th Wedding Anniversaries. The surprise was the gathering and 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.

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

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.



Father Otto Missler — Ruby Anniversary (40th) — 1922
Front Row: 1 Fr. Francis Nigsch, 2 Fr. Otto Missler, 3 Fr. Anthony Dick.
Center Row: 1 Fr. Tom Meyer, 2 Fr. Boebner, 3 ?, 4 Fr. R. Schmaus, 5 Otto Weber.
Back Row: 1 ?, 2 Fr. Sixtus Meyer, 3 Fr. John Rahrle.



May 20, 1928. Procession leaving St. Charles Seminary for Maria Stein on Father Julian Voskuhl's ordination.



May 20, 1928. Tony Voskuhl and his son, Fr. Julian Voskuhl who was ordained to the priesthood this day.



About 1925

Note fake clock in steeple and wall in front of church



ST. JOHN CHOIR 1925

10th Wedding Anniversary of Mr. & Mrs. Aloys Hausfeld

Back row: Clem Brandewie, Albert Hausfeld, Aloys Gagel, Oscar Eifert, Medard Kramer, George Reichert, Leonard Goecke, Aloys Hausfeld, Fred Wendeln.

Front row: Edward Goecke, Charles Eifert, George Adams, Frank Moorman, Ben Ruschau, Joseph Bernard.

CHAPTER NINE

1932 — 1952



*Father Benno Holler, C.P.P.S.
1932-43*

Father Benno Holler came to St. John from Pulaski, Indiana, during the summer of 1932. 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 Father Missler to spend money, repairs were needed. Immediately in 1932, Father Holler

had the chimney in the church replaced and all the wood work 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 for many years had been a worry to many of the older parishioners. In August of 1935, with the consent of the authorities of the Archdiocese, a new pipe organ was installed at a cost of \$4,000. It was dedicated on October 25, 1935. This beautiful sounding organ is still used today and will be used for many years to come. In 1936-37 at a cost of \$8,000, he initiated the repainting and redecorating of the inside of the church. The stencil work and beautiful paintings are there today.

Father Holler is remembered for the renovation and beautification of St. John church. He is also remembered for his long sermons. He would preach



About 1930. Budde brothers: August, Bill, Henry and Lawrence. Bill was the barber. At that time August, Henry and Lawrence operated the Budde Bros. Garage.



About 1936. Lawrence Mescher Tavern (Korner Kafe)
1 Ludwig Hausfeld, 2 Lawrence Mescher, 3 Henry Tange-
man, 4 Ben Ruschau, 5 ?, 6 Ed Harting, 7 Bill Henke, 8 Rich
Pohlmann.

one mass in English and the next mass in German. Some Sundays he got carried away and would preach the same sermon in both English and German at the same mass.

During Father Holler's stay at St. John, the parish celebrated its 100th anniversary. The celebration took place June 20, 1937 — 100 years after the completion of the first church. The event was attended by His Excellency, Bishop J. H. Albers, Auxiliary Bishop of Cincinnati, with a surprise visit by Martin L. Davey, who was then the governor of the State of Ohio. Music was furnished by the Minster City Band and a chicken dinner was served by the members of the parish.

Following is an excerpt from the Minster Post dated June 2, 1937, concerning this event:

Reverend Father Benno V. Holler, C.P.P.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 S. Kuhnmuensch 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 S. 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.



Maria Stein Station
1939 — Adam's Tin Shop (formerly the hotel) — Ed Hart-
ings Blacksmith Shop — Community Hall — Leugers dwell-
ing.



Picture taken about 1940 from church steeple looking east. On left side of street note: Menker's store, VanSkiver and Gagel Hardware properties (all before remodeling).

It was in 1931 that Dr. Edgar J. Willke and wife Alfrida, moved to Maria Stein to continue the medical practice originally started by his father Dr. Alois Willke in 1893. Dr. Willke fully retired in 1984 after practicing medicine for over 50 years in Maria Stein.

It was during Father Holler's term that Educator Frank Moorman died in 1942. After the family moved to Minster, the teacher's house next to the cemetery was torn down.

On December 3, 1943, Father 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.



May Crowning — 1946
Note communion rail and pulpit.

**FATHER EVARISTUS OLBERDING, C.P.P.S.
1943-1952**



**Father Evaristus Olberding, C.P.P.S.
1952-62**

Since Father Holler had made extensive repairs and improvements, and had painted the church interior, not much work was needed on the church or rectory during Father Olberding's stay.

World War II ended in 1945, much to the joy and relief of all parishioners. Over 85 sons and daughters of the parish served in the various branches of 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. He is buried in our cemetery. Louis Imwalle, born and raised in St. John Parish, was working in Springfield, Ohio, when he left for service. At the age of 22 he was killed in action in Burma on January 19, 1945, and is also buried in our cemetery.

Ludwig Hausfeld, Edward Hartings and Aloys Bruggeman, all veterans of World War I, felt an American Legion Post in Maria Stein was needed.

They organized a drive and after several meetings Post 571 came into existence. The first official meeting was held on February 4, 1946, with Aloys Bruggeman being installed as the first commander. The meetings the first few years were held at the old Knights of St. John Hall. In 1948 Post 571 purchased the Community Hall and moved it to its present location. The activities of the American Legion have become a part of Maria Stein history. Membership comes from a considerably larger area than St. John parish. Post 571 is held in high esteem in the Ohio Department of the American Legion for its many worthwhile projects and accomplishments and for the activities of the Firing Squad.

After the death of organist and educator, Frank H. Moorman in 1942, Miss Jeanette Wagner was brought in as organist. She was followed by John O'Neil and Dominic Berardi; all were high school teachers. During this time, while a high school student, Ruth (Kremer) Schwieterman started playing the organ part time. 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 hold organists.

It was during Father Olberding's pastorate that another son of the parish, Ambrose Ruschau was ordained a priest into the Society of the Precious Blood. Father Ambrose was ordained in May, 1950.



**1948 — Community Hall being moved to new location and becoming part of the Legion Hall.
John Fortkamp store on left.**



***The Thobe Orchestra in 1949
Jiggs Thobe — Buck Thobe
Norb Overman — Whitie Thobe***



***About 1950 — George Reichert Tractor Sales. Originally
built in 1929 by Fred Heckman as a John Deer Tractor
Agency. Located across the street from the Elevator. Torn
down in 1983.***

CHAPTER TEN

1952 to 1986



*Father George Kraft, C.P.P.S.
1952-62*

One of the first things Father Kraft did when he arrived in St. John was to hire Ruth Schwieterman as the permanent organist in November, 1952.

When Father Kraft came to St. John the collections averaged \$35 a Sunday. Many people in the parish still went to confession in German.

Some of the early work done under Father Kraft's pastorate was electrifying the bells and removing the pulpit which had been a part of the second pillar on the left side in the church. (See picture.) This had blocked the view of people behind it and with the coming of microphones and loudspeakers a pulpit was no longer needed.

In 1955 and 1956 the rectory was rewired and the plumbing repaired. Also a new rectory bathroom was installed at a cost of \$1,600. During this same time a vestibule and a restroom were added to the church. In the spring of 1957 work was completed on reshingling the church roof at a cost of \$9,900 and work was started on a new furnace in the church. The complete change over to a hot water system was completed in 1958 at a cost of \$8,500.

On May 5, 1957, the parish helped Father Kraft celebrate his Silver Jubilee as a priest.

In August of 1958 the parish sold the organist's house (Willke property), which it had owned for seven years, to Eugene and Doris Imwalle. The home was no longer needed and the practical thing to do was to sell it. The organist, Ruth (Kremer) Schwieterman, was living at home with her mother.

An improvement, which was evidence that the town was growing up, was the installation of street lights. These were turned on for the first time on February 9, 1960.



May 5, 1957 — Sodality officers: Louis Zumwald, Leonard Homan, Urban Berning and Johnny Heitkamp presenting the keys to a 1957 Plymouth to Father George Kraft on the occasion of his Silver Jubilee as priest.

Father Kraft continued to upgrade and make improvements in the church. In 1959 the church was insulated and the stations and altars refinished. Also, the church interior was cleaned and repainted where necessary at a total cost of \$7,711. In 1960 a new carpet was put into the sanctuary. In the same year the sidewalks and church entrance were replaced — total cost \$5,190.

In 1961 a final major repair took place with the repairing and putting new shingles on the steeple and tuck pointing and waterproofing the front of the church — total cost \$23,205.

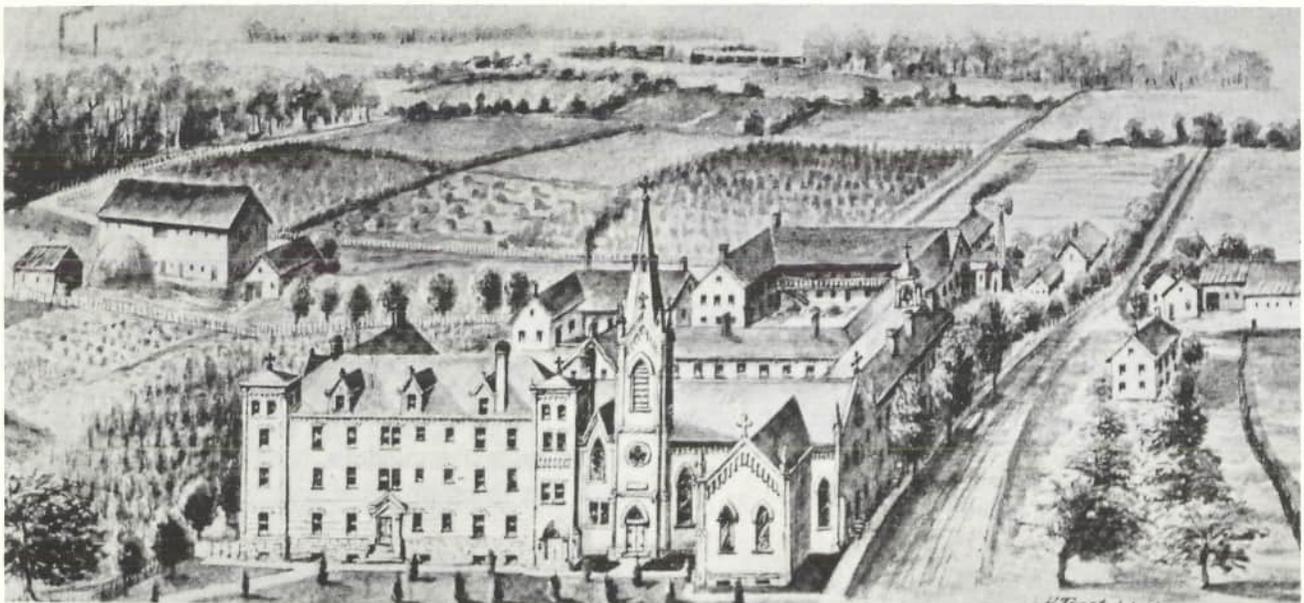
On August 29, 1962, Father George Kraft left St. John and assumed a new pastorate at Montezuma, Ohio.

MARIA STEIN CONVENT

During this time things were happening at the convent. In 1950 an infirmary, Lourdes Hall, was built at the Motherhouse in Dayton and the sick from Maria Stein Convent were moved there. The oldest of the Convent buildings was then razed and made into a lovely patio conducive to prayer and peace. This was part of a plan to use Maria Stein Convent for the giving of spiritual retreats to lay people. In 1953 the first retreats were given. The 1890 wing of the Convent as well as the Gate House were remodeled for the use of the lay retreatants. To accommodate people who came either for retreat or pilgrimage, a lunch room called "The Swiss Coffee Shop" was opened, and a gift shop was stocked.

In 1887 when the Sisters separated from the priests and brothers of the Society, Maria Stein became the Motherhouse for the Sister of the Precious Blood. Perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was begun on September 24, 1846. This constant prayer was continued at Maria Stein until 1970. Almost a century and a half of prayer have made this Convent a place of peace and grace.

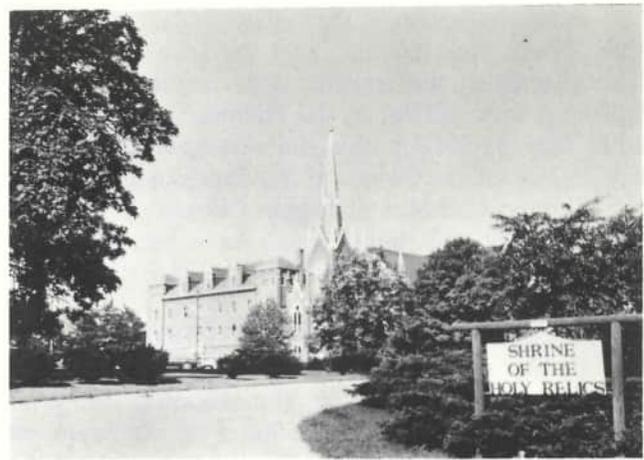
In the early 1900's the work of the Sisters began to shift from farm and manual labor to teaching in parochial and public schools. Maria Stein, as the



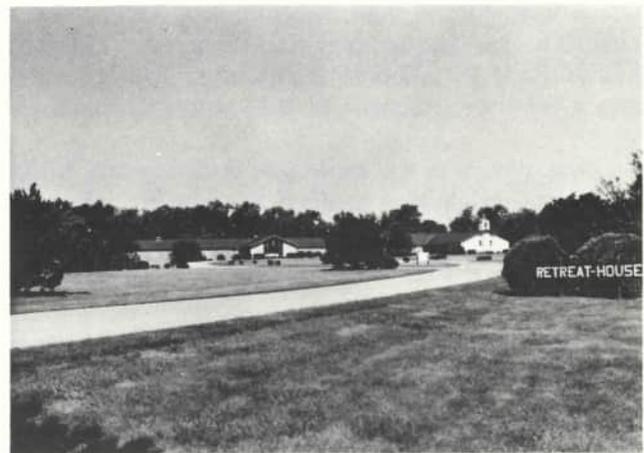
A view of Maria Stein Convent drawn by Fr. Paulinus Trost, C.P.P.S. in 1907. Note smokestack (upper left) of New Idea Factory. Also note train in center — back.

Motherhouse, became a training center for teachers who served across the United States. Mother Emma Nunlist, who served three terms of office at Maria Stein, was largely responsible for this broadened activity. Sisters who taught at neighboring schools lived at the Convent.

The weekend renewals and retreats became so popular after they started in 1953, that in a few years space had become totally inadequate. In 1959 the Sisters of the Precious Blood and the Lay Advisory Board, with the blessings of Karl J. Alter, Archbishop of Cincinnati, initiated a Building Fund Campaign to help pay the cost of a new Retreat House. The new building was to provide for 60 single rooms, modern dining rooms, a chapel and sacristy, Chaplain's quarters, Retreat Master's quarters, Sisters' rooms, library and lounges, kitchen and utility rooms, officers' and conference rooms, a large auditorium and a laundry.



Shrine of the Holy Relics in 1985



The Retreat House in 1985



Maria Stein Convent in 1985



*Guest House in 1985 — Built about 1858
The original Gate or Guest House was built in 1846.*

The campaign covered a many county area, and the people of St. John parish donated generously to this cause. Sister M. Friedburga, C.P.P.S., served as Moderator. In addition to Father George Kraft, who served as Clergy Moderator for the Campaign, other parish committeemen were Henry Leugers, who served as General Chairman, and Dr. E. J. Willke as Associate. The Campaign was successful. The beautiful Maria Stein Retreat House became a reality, and was dedicated in April of 1963.

It is impossible to recount the activities of the retreat movement at Maria Stein without remembering the enthusiastic and enduring effort of the lay people of the surrounding villages. Many gave of their time, skills and energies. Among these were the "Retreat House Helpers," a group of men and women who fried chicken at various festivals until in 1974 when the initial building debt was paid. The Retreat League, founded, in 1956, continues to assist the Center in many ways.

After renovation of the old convent in 1976, the title "Maria Stein Center" was used for all facilities. The chapels of the convent were restored, and the buildings were placed on the National Listing of Historic Sites. In 1982 a museum was opened to honor the history of the Sisters of the Precious Blood and the German Catholics of Mercer County. As a "Center," convent and retreat house have become a unified entity serving the needs of all who come.

VINCENT PARR, C.PP.S. 1962-1972

Father Parr assumed his new pastorate at St. John on August 29, 1962. The following spring on May 5 the parish helped Father Parr celebrate his Silver Jubilee as a priest. As a remembrance of the occasion the parishioners donated old jewelry and rings, some with diamond sets, some of solid gold, which were turned over, together with Father Parr's chalice to Joe Thoma, a Piqua jeweler and friend of Father Parr. Mr. Thoma transformed the collection into a handsome chalice of gold with diamonds.

On June 9 of the same year a native son, Louis L. Schmit, celebrated his First Mass at St. John. He had been ordained the previous day at St. Charles Seminary as a priest in the Society of the Precious Blood.



**Father Vincent Parr, C.P.P.S.
1962-72**

During Father Parr's stay at St. John, new glass doors were installed in the church replacing the old wooden doors, a new confessional was built and the rear porch of the rectory was enclosed. However, Father Parr's most important accomplishments were introducing and implementing the changes dictated by Vatican Council II. During this time the Catholic Church went through one of the biggest changes in its history, and we at St. John were a part of it.

Vatican Council II opened in 1963. The effects of the Council in parish life was felt throughout the 1960's and into the 1970's. The most important changes in the liturgy and in lay participation in parish life were decreed in the 1960's, although the implementation of some of these changes was slower in some dioceses and in some parishes. At St. John Father Parr implemented them as they were announced. A parish council was voted in. Lay readers were introduced and communion ministers were appointed. On Palm Sunday, March 22, 1970, Virgil Bertke, Paul Moeller, and Dr. Edgar Willke, laymen of St. John Parish received the privilege of distributing Holy Communion from Archbishop Paul F. Leibold in the Cathedral of St. Peter in Chains in Cincinnati. The ceremony was later repeated in St. John Church. In addition on February 11, 1971, Carl Franzer, Leonard Heitkamp and Robert Tangeman, laymen of the parish, were invested as Communion ministers.

On January 14, 1968, Archbishop Karl Alter visited the parish and officiated at a Solemn Pontifical High Mass in St. John Church. The occasion was the blessing and dedication of the new Knights of St. John Hall in Maria Stein.

An influence on parish activities during Father Parr's stay at St. John was Marcella Boland. Marcella, a physical therapist by trade, came to Ohio from Saginaw, Michigan to do apostolic work. She ended up here in Maria Stein as housekeeper for Father Parr; though, she continued doing physical therapy work part-time. The rectory became a favorite meeting place for many of the priests in the area to enjoy both her cooking and lively give and take conversation.

FATHER GREGORY MOORMAN, C.PP.S. 1972-1977

Father Greg grew up in Maria Stein. His father, Frank Moorman, was a teacher and organist at St. John and lived in the teacher's house between the old high school and cemetery. At the time Father Greg left for religious training, Father Missler was pastor. Father Greg was ordained in 1943. His father had died the previous year and the family was then



Father Gregory H. Moorman, C.P.P.S.
1972-77

living in Minster. He said his First Mass on December 8, 1943, in Minster and in St. John the following Sunday.

Twenty-nine years later he came back as pastor to his home parish and with great enthusiasm continued the spirit of Vatican II. As in other parishes, the 1970's was the time for developing the Vatican II changes and making them productive in the lives of the parishioners.

Shortly after Father Moorman arrived, the parish council and Father Greg agreed on an extensive interior renovation of the church. New pews were installed; new carpet was laid; the woodwork in the sacristy was renewed; the church interior was renewed and repainted where necessary; the sacristy was redecorated — all to give us the beautiful church we have today. Total costs were \$68,000. The remodeling committee was composed of Carl Pohl, president; Leo Streacker, Robert Mescher, John Vehorn, Joan Overman, Paul Kremer, Leo H. Pohlmann and Arthur Bruggeman. Dennis Mescher was president of the parish council during the renovation. Open house was held at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, June 11, 1973, and opened with the parish giving thanks to God for the success of the renovation.

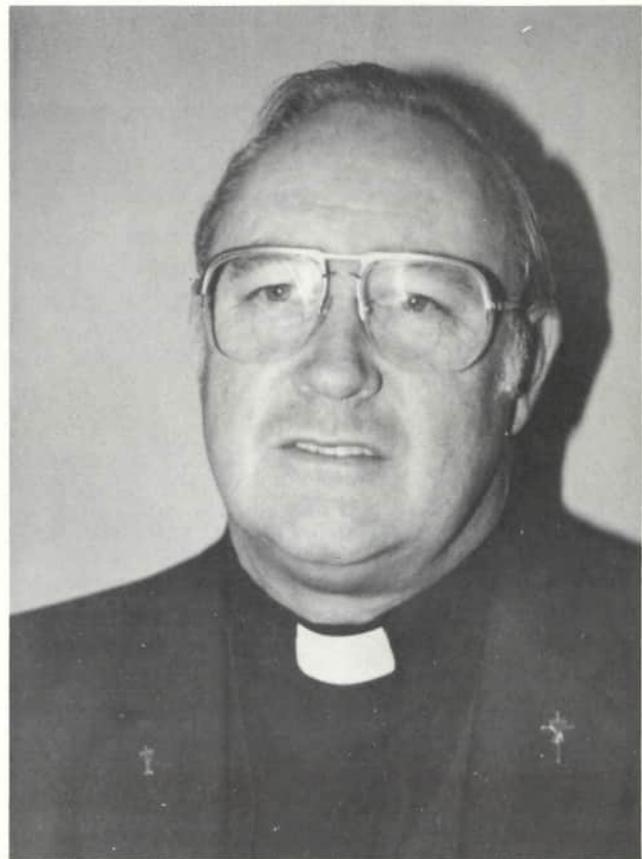
About the same time \$12,000 was spent on the outside of the church, replacing bricks and waterproofing. During the next several years a new two-car garage with a storage room was built. The rectory basement was remodeled so it could be used for meeting rooms, religion classes, and recreation. Also, the first floor of the rectory was renovated and repainted.

At a parish council meeting in April of 1975, it was noted that Olivia Reichert had worked in the church for forty-five years, cleaning and decorating the sacristy. At a retirement dinner, a corsage was given to Olivia by the Ladies' Sodality as well as a gift certificate and gasoline for the rest of her driving years.

In 1977, after five years at St. John, Father Greg was transferred to Immaculate Conception Church in Celina to accept the challenge of a bigger parish.

FATHER JOHN E. BOLAN, C.P.P.S.
1977-83

On July 19, 1977, Father Bolan assumed his duties at St. John. The first important event of his pastorate occurred in October when Ruth Schwieter-



Father John E. Bolan, C.P.P.S.
1977-83

man observed her twenty-fifth year as organist at St. John. While in high school Ruth had played on a part-time basis, but in 1952 she had become the full-time organist. To help her remember the event, the parish presented Ruth with a wall clock.

In June of 1978, the parish and Father Bolan celebrated his Silver Jubilee as a priest. The occasion was celebrated on Sunday, June 18, starting with a Mass at 2:00 p.m. followed by a dinner at the Knights of St. John Hall for parishioners and guests. Father was presented with an engraved pocket watch with two family precious stones mounted on the watch fob.

In September, 1978, the parish leased the old St. John School building from the Board of Education, included were the parking lot and lighted ball field. The building was to be used for religion classes, the parking lot for church parking and the athletic field sublet to the Maria Stein Athletic Association.

Major repairs completed in 1980 were weather-proofing the church tower and the south side of the church, rebuilding the church chimney and painting and glazing the three large windows on the south side of the church.

In July of 1981, the gym of the old St. John school building was remodeled by the Men's Society. This made it possible for parish volleyball and basketball games to be played, and it also served as a fitness center for interested parishioners. In October, 1981, ceiling fans were installed in the church by the Men's Society at a cost of \$800. The work was all volunteered by Society members. In November the Ladies' Sodality purchased new vestments and altar hangings at a cost of \$500.

In September, 1982, the parish voted to move the CCD classes to the Maria Stein Retreat House. Difficulty in keeping the classrooms warm and the heating and maintenance costs of the St. John school building prompted this move.

Effective July 16, 1983, Father John Bolan was assigned as chaplain to a hospital in Canton. The parish bid him farewell and good luck after the 10 o'clock Mass on Sunday, July 10, 1983. The farewell party was celebrated with coffee and doughnuts at the Knights of St. John Hall.

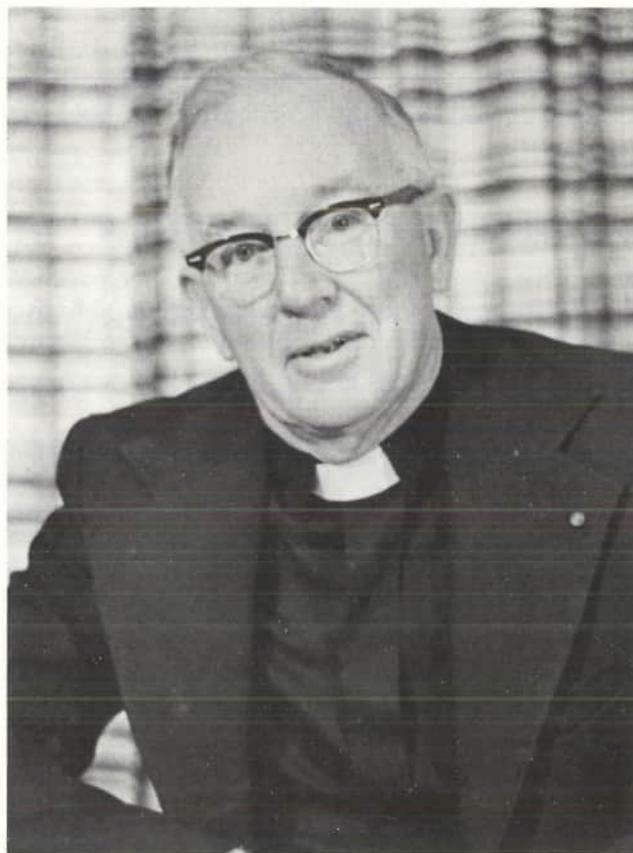
JOHN BEHEN, C.P.P.S. 1983-

In July, 1983, Father John Behen arrived from Precious Blood Parish in Dayton to assume the pas-

torate of St. John Parish. New emphasis was placed on the parish council as the parish leaders. The parish Worship Committee was re-organized in 1984 and the following year a parish Education Committee was organized. In 1985 a parish Maintenance Committee was established to free the parish council from maintenance concerns.

In 1984, the parishes of the St. Mary's Deanery grouped in "clusters" in order to work together to provide better ministry to the Catholics of this area. St. John and the other parishes of the Marion Local School District have been particularly successful in their efforts at collaboration. The pastors meet monthly and hold regular meetings with the parish directors of religious education and with the administrators of Marion Local Schools.

In the fall of 1984, two parishioners, Carl Franzer and Omer Bertke, began their three-year training period to be ordained as deacons. This training program had been established at the Maria Stein Center. Upon ordination they will assume special responsibilities as associates of the pastor in the ministry. In 1985 a training program for lay ministers was



**Father John Behen, C.P.P.S.
1983-**

also established at the Maria Stein Center, thus making it the most important center of pastoral training in the northern part of the Cincinnati Archdiocese.

Material changes during the last two years include a concrete ramp on the east side of the church to assist the elderly and disabled, a new roof on the rectory in the summer of 1983 at a cost of \$11,000, and replacement of the twenty-seven year old boiler in the church in 1985 at a cost of \$5,773. The bid of Wellman Brothers of Coldwater was accepted for extensive repair on the church steeple, cross and front of the church. The work, which will cost \$28,152, will be finished by June, 1986. Other important improvements, such as the repair of the church bells, were achieved through the parish maintenance committee and the many generous parish volunteers.

In the fall of 1984 Ruth Schwieterman announced that at the end of the year she would retire after thirty-two years as organist of St. John Church. During these years the St. John choir was among the best in the area, and it was with great regret that the



St. John Graveyard with church in background.

parish said good-bye to Ruth, who had provided the music for so many weddings, funerals, and other events in the life of the parish for almost a third of a century. In commenting on her stay at St. John, Ruth said that she really enjoyed her tenure as organist, and probably the reason for staying thirty-two years was the dedication and loyalty of the choir members. The parish was happy to welcome Marie Hemmelgarn of St. Rose as the new organist. She contributes a special kind of youthful enthusiasm to her work with the choir and the accompaniment at weekend masses.

An important development in the life of St. John Church and the other parishes in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati will be the program called "For the Harvest." Inaugurated in the fall of 1985, the program plans for the future when the declining number of priests will require some parishes to share pastors. This program envisions quite a different style of parish life in which parishioners will have to assume a much greater role in the management of the parish than in the past.

With the coming of the canal in the 1840's providing access to markets, agricultural production became important to the St. John farmer then and continues to this day. During the first half of the 20th century many businesses left St. John and Maria Stein, while farming became ever more important. The background of our ancestors was farming and their goals were to encourage their children to farm and to stay close to the homestead. This increased demand for land in this area boosted land prices to record highs in the State of Ohio.

In the last few years Mercer County has ranked number one in farm income in the state. Mercer County is number one in poultry. St. John has some chicken operations totaling as much as 90,000 to



St. John Church today.

120,000 birds. Gone are the small 200 chicken flocks tended by the wife and children mainly to provide grocery money. Mercer County ranks second in dairy production. Marion townships and particularly St. John parish ranks number one in the county. Dairy herds of 90 and more head are becoming average. Mercer County ranks second in the state in hog production, and in St. John 90 to 120 sows are the average.

St. John parish and other Catholic communities have specialized in these types of farming. Milk, hog and chicken farming require a lot of work. With their large families, plus German traits of hard work, pride and the desire to excel the farmers of St. John have excelled and become leaders in the State of Ohio.

Small family-owned farms are being put to the test today. Farms are getting bigger and with larger acreage and management skills are able to compete

in the agricultural market. Corporate farms are becoming more common and threaten the family-owned farms. Agriculture and the family farms have been and are today the mainstay of our parish and community.

As the first 150 years winds down, two interesting observations should be made. A parishioner, Elizabeth Buening, has only missed cleaning church twice in the last 66 years, or since she was fifteen years old. Another parishioner, Elizabeth Imwalle, after cleaning the altar cloths and vestments for 35 years retired from her duties in the fall of 1985.

As the celebration of our 150th year as a parish approaches, plans are under way to commemorate this milestone in our history. Before the actual anniversary on June 22, 1986, other events are scheduled to help us remember and appreciate our past.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

FIRST SETTLERS FROM COUNTY RECORDS

Following are names taken from the Book of Original Entries in Mercer County by Section. They were the first settlers who bought land and probably were parishioners in St. John Parish. The date shown is the date the land was recorded. In those days Low German names translated to English might result in different spellings as used today.

Mercer County, Marion Township

Section 2

Leon Bernard 24 May 1836

Section 3

John Doll 27 Sept. 1836

Section 14

John Desch 7 Apr. 1835
Ferdinand Desch 7 Apr. 1835

Jacob Desch 7 Apr. 1835
Margaret Desch 7 Apr. 1835

Section 22

Joseph Meiring 9 July 1835
Henry Everman 19 Aug. 1835
Hen Hagedorn 2 Nov. 1835
H. H. Wertmueler 2 Nov. 1835

Henry Sieveke 19 Aug. 1835
Fred Waterkoetter 22 Oct. 1835
John Hagedorn 2 Nov. 1835

Section 23

Dietrich Hanneman 2 Sept. 1834
John Wabler 12 June 1835
Bern Baker (Boeke) 19 Aug. 1835

Bern H. Wabler 13 Sept. 1834
Fred Elking 19 Aug. 1835
Carl Heisfield (Hausfeld) 12 Sept. 1834

Section 24

John Stelzer 7 Oct. 1833
Peter J. Meier 13 Oct. 1834
Anton Schweinefuss 25 Oct. 1834
John Thaman 1 Nov. 1834

Carl Hausfeld 12 Sept. 1834
John H. Meinerding 18 Oct. 1834
H. Clemens Vehorn 24 Oct. 1834
John Thomas 7 Oct. 1833

Section 25

John Leistenschneider 7 Oct. 1833
 Anton Moeller 2 Sept. 1834
 Gerhard H. Westgerdes 4 Nov. 1834
 Herman Hessler 20 June 1835

David H. Heckman 25 Feb. 1834
 T. Heckman 4 Nov. 1834
 Fred Heckman 4 March 1835
 Henry Wissman 20 June 1835

Section 26

Henry Tangemann 2 Sept. 1834
 Joseph Stucke 29 Sept. 1834
 Gerard H. Lemmermuhle 24 Oct. 1834
 H. Kramer 1835

Bernard Tangemann 2 Sept. 1834
 John Stucke 29 Sept. 1834
 Joseph Moller 10 Sept. 1835

Section 27

John Reichert 29 Sept. 1834
 * Henry Pohlmann 10 Sept. 1835
 Bernard Buschaman 6 Oct. 1835
 Francis Dahlinghaus 21 Nov. 1835
 John Schlarmann 21 Nov. 1835

Nicholas Rheim 3 Oct. 1834
 G.F. Rileman 10 Sept. 1835
 Bernard Holteheide 21 Nov. 1835
 Bernard Harderingshaus 21 Nov. 1835

Section 28

H.H. Steinkamp 21 Nov. 1835

Section 34**Section 35**

F. Mescher 1 July 1836

Section 36

David H. Heckman 26 Feb. 1834
 Henry Thobe 20 June 1835
 A. M. Huelskamp 4 Sept. 1835

John H. Busse 20 Jan. 1835
 Diedrich Menke 29 Aug. 1835

Section 13

* Henry Kramer 13 May 1836

A. Klune 13 May 1836

Following are names taken from the Book of Original Entries in Auglaize County, Jackson Township (At that time part of Marion Township, Mercer County) on settlers arriving in 1833-34-35-36, who probably were part of St. John Parish are shown.

Section 20

Henry Kempker 21 Sept. 1835

Gerhard H. Limmerrmihle 21 Nov. 1834

Section 29

Jno. B. Albas 9 Oct. 1833

Henry Rolfes 1 Oct. 1833

Section 30

Henry Knapke 20 Dec. 1833
 Dedrick Hinders 20 Dec. 1833
 Joseph Nieman 12 Oct. 1833

Gerhard H. Dwenger 23 Oct. 1834
 Henry Rolfes 1 Oct. 1833
 Henry Fullenkamp 24 Oct. 1836

Section 31

Herman Westjohn 2 Oct. 1833
 John A. Osterloh 14 Oct. 1833
 John H. Schulmiller 3 March 1834

John Suermann 12 Oct. 1833
 John H. Steinemann 14 Oct. 1833

CHAPTER TWELVE

VOCATIONS FROM THE PARISH

Most Rev. Joseph Dwenger, C.PP.S. .. ordained 1859	Sister Regina, C.PP.S. Barbara Reichert
Rev. A. Heckman	Sister Agloe, C.PP.S. Elizabeth Stucke
Rev. Wm. Pachlhofer	Sister Gertrud, C.PP.S. Gertrude Holdermann
Rev. Crysostom Hummer, C.PP.S. . ordained 1893	Sister M. Cornelia, C.PP.S. Elizabeth Fredericks
Rev. Frank Garmann	Sister M. Electa, C.PP.S. Mary Fleck
Rev. Joseph Schweller	Sister M. Blanka, C.PP.S. Mary Anna Meier
Rev. Sebastian J. Kremer, C.PP.S. . ordained 1907	Sister M. Maxima, C.PP.S. Elizabeth Deppen
Rev. Bernard Garmann ordained 1909	Sister M. Eusebia, C.PP.S. Margaret Fleck
Rev. Joseph Schaeper, C.PP.S. ordained 1918	Sister M. Dorothea, C.PP.S. . Clementine Brandewie
Rev. Julian Voskuhl, C.PP.S. ordained 1928	Sister M. Maxentia, C.PP.S. Catherine Bernard
Rev. Edward Moorman, C.PP.S. ordained 1939	Sister M. John, C.PP.S. Eleonora Brandewie
Rev. Gregory Moorman, C.PP.S. ordained 1943	Sister M. Angeline, C.PP.S. Rosalia Brandewie
Rev. Ambrose Ruschau, C.PP.S. ordained 1950	Sister M. Delpine, C.PP.S. Agnes Knapke
Rev. Louis Schmidt, C.PP.S. ordained 1963	Sister M. Eugenia, C.PP.S. Mary Knapke
	Sister M. Dominic, C.PP.S. Mathilda Imwalle
	Sister M. Ida, C.PP.S. Margaret Kramer
	Sister M. Benet, C.PP.S. Verlina Mescher
	Sister M. Martha Ann, C.PP.S. Lucille Bertke
	Sister Regina, O.C.D. Helen Meinerding
	Sister Mary Jude, O.S.C. Judy Mescher

VOCATIONS – DAUGHTERS OF THE PARISH

Sister Eva, C.PP.S. Eva Stucke
Sister Agnes, C.PP.S. Anna Maria Stucke
Sister Theresia, C.PP.S. Maria Nichting

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

WINDOWS OF SAINT JOHN CHURCH

by *Father John Behen*

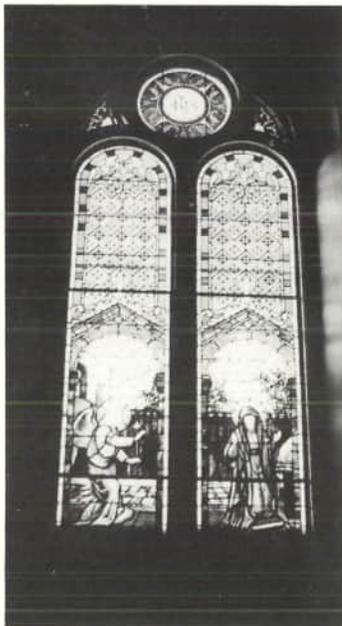
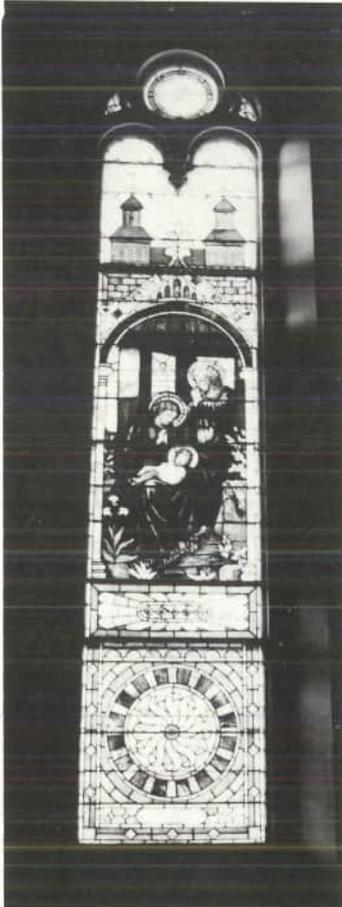
The religious art in a church is an indication of the belief and devotion of the people who built the church. For that reason it is worth taking a good look at the windows of our church to discover who were the saints and what were the practices of devotion of the members of Saint John Church about a century ago when our church was built.

The two windows in the sanctuary on the right and left, depicting the crucifixion and the resurrection, are evidently of later origin and style from those in the main body of the church. The original windows on the sides of the church were furnished by the Artistic Glass Painting Company of Cincinnati, and were the work of one Baron Th. von Freskoirt.

THE WINDOWS ON THE WEST SIDE OF THE CHURCH

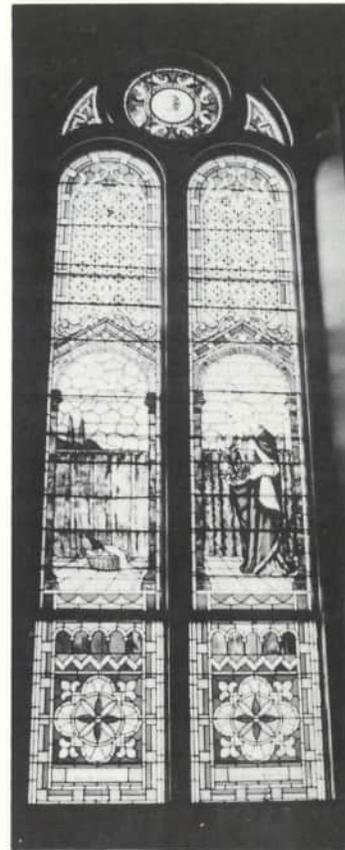
1W, At the front of the church near the sanctuary the first window pictures the *Holy Family*, which was donated by the Men's Sodality of the Holy Family.

2W, The next window depicts the *Annunciation* of the angel to the Virgin Mary, the gift of the Young Ladies' Sodality.



3W, 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.



4W, The fourth window has two distinct panels. The one on the right depicts the *Bestowal of the Scapular* by the Blessed Virgin Mary.

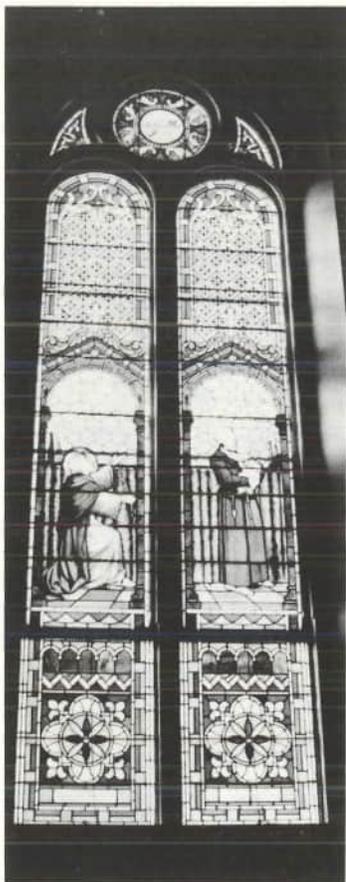
The scapular (from the Latin word for shoulder) consists of the two pieces of cloth hung over the shoulders by strings. This is an abbreviation of the long wide band of cloth with an opening for the head worn front and back over the shoulders as part of the monastic habit. The small token scapular is a sacramental by which the laity share in the blessings and religious benefits of certain religious orders, particularly the Carmelite Order.

The panel on the left has *St. Rochus* (or Roch) as its subject. Here is a saint, almost unknown today, 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 who, according to the legend, brought the saint food when he was near death.

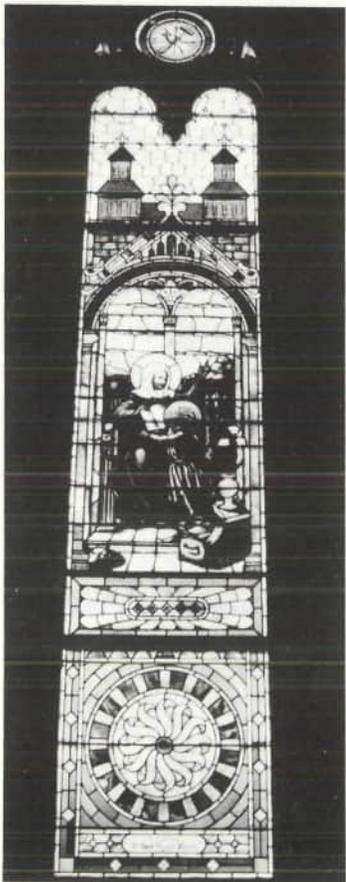
The cholera, which took the lives of numerous parishioners of St. John and neighboring parishes in the 1849 made the early settlers turn to St. Rochus with special devotion. His feast used to be celebrated on August 16. St. Rochus was chosen as the patron of the local Commandery 313 of the Knights of St. John.





5W, Two popular saints are the subjects of the next window on the west side of the Church. *St. Dominic* on the left, and *St. Anthony of Padua* on the right.

St. Dominic 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.



THE WINDOWS ON THE EAST SIDE OF THE CHURCH

1E, The first window at the front of the church is *St. Ann and the Virgin Mary*. St. Ann, the mother of Mary, was an obvious choice for the St. Ann's Ladies' Sodality who donated this window.

2E, Next is a picture of *St. Aloysius* in the window donated by St. Aloysius Young Men's Sodality, the forerunner, along with the Young Ladies' Sodality, of today's (CYO Catholic Youth Organization). 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.

The window pictures him begging God to give his father a change of heart so that Aloysius might follow his call to be a Jesuit.



3E, The third window on the east side pictures two saints who are the patrons of farmers, *St. Wendelin* and *St. Isidore*.

St. Wendelin, with the inscription, "St. Wendelin, pray for our herds," is on the left panel of the window. Wendelin ("Wendel" is German) 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.

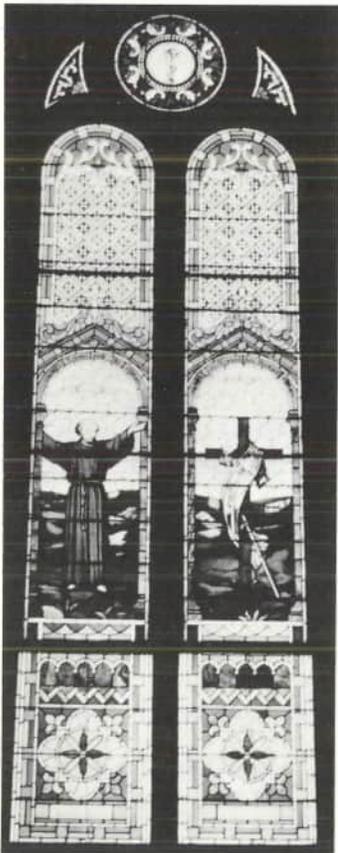
St. Isidore, known as the Laborer, was born near Madrid in Spain of poor parents, worked for a landowner and was later made manager of the estate. The angels, it is said, sometimes helped Isidore pull his plow. His goodness extended to all the poor and even to little birds, which he fed with grain during the winter. Isidore died in the year 1130.

In recent years he was declared the patron of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference by the bishops of the U.S. and his feast is celebrated on May 15. Above his picture in our church window is the invocation: "Saint Isidore, pray for our fields."





4E, 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.



5E, *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."

* * * * *

The windows in our church are a rather faithful reflection of the saints and the devotions which were popular at the end of the last century when our church was built. While most of these saints and devotions were popular throughout the Church, regardless of national or ethnic setting, other saints in our church windows are reminders of the German background of our parish and a reminder that our parish is a rural community.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

This chapter contains ads that appeared in three different publications between 1916-1921.

1. Program of two plays put on by the Maria Stein Dramatic Club on April 30 and May 7, 1916 at the Knights of St. John Hall, Maria Stein, Ohio.

"HANS VON SMASH"

Cast of Characters

Hans von Smash	Robert Reichert
Mr. Batch	Leo Hausfeld
Henry Dasher	Albert Hausfeld
John Prettyman	Alfred Eifert
Mary Batch	Bernadine Wendeln
Susie Batch	Hedwig Gagel
Katie (servant)	Armella Eifert

"CONFIDENTIAL CLERK"

Cast of Characters

Mike McGann (just from the boggs)	Gerald Willke
Robert Morgan (a retired farmer)	Roman Kremer
Frank Montgomery (an innocent abroad)	Aloys Goecke
Thomas Maxwell (a villain)	Edward Kremer
Petah Johnsing (a geman ob color)	Urban Menker
Ephreham Johnsing (chip ob de ole block)	Aloys Gagel
Esquire Snyder	George Reichert
John the boatman	Leo Hausfeld
Burk the detective	George Reichert
Mrs. Robert Morgan	Agnes Dahlinghaus
Miss Edna Morgan	Marie Willke
Bessie Morgan (the missing child)	Rita Eifert
Miggie (a nurse girl)	Leona Mescher
Police No. 37	Alfred Eifert

2. Directory, The MARION TELEPHONE CO., Maria Stein, Ohio, issued June 1, 1920.
3. Program of play "THE HOODOOED COON" given by the Dwenger Dramatic Club at the Dwenger School House on January 16 and 23, 1921, St. Rosa, Ohio.

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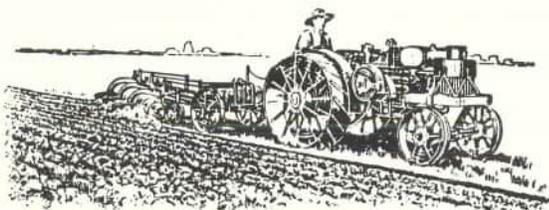
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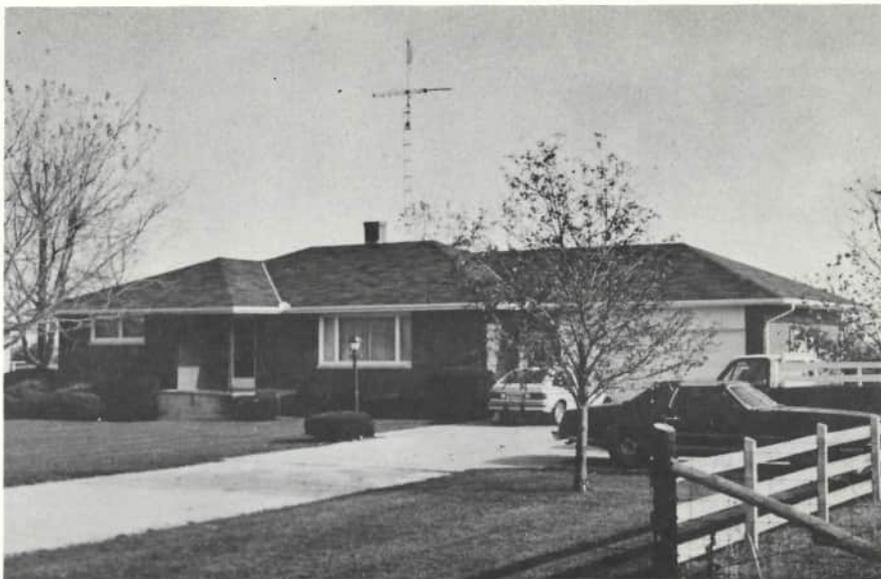


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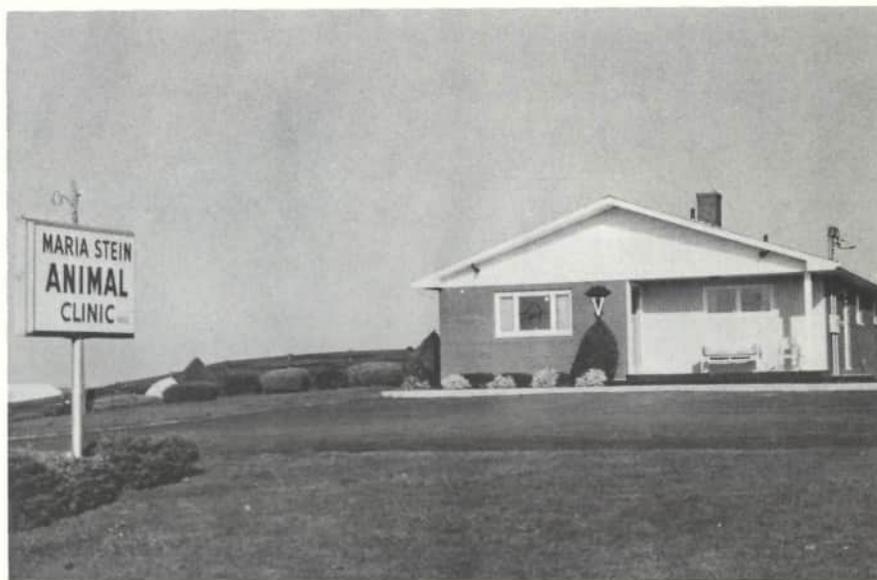


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