

PICTORIAL HISTORY  
AND EARLY SCENES OF  
MARIA STEIN, OHIO



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MARIA STEIN, OHIO**

**FROM PHOTO COLLECTION OF  
HENRY J. LEUGERS**



# **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND THANKS**

To the many families who have shared old town and family pictures with me during the last thirty years.

To the Minster Historical Society for letting me use some of the Liwatt Boecke drawings.

Distributed by and for the benefit of The Marion Township Park Board and the Tourism Sub. Committee of MCDO (Marion Community Development Organization).

**Printed By  
The Messenger Press  
Carthagen, Ohio 45822**

**June 1999**



## EARLY DAYS AT ST. JOHN

It was on the 13<sup>th</sup> 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 History of Van Wert and Mercer Counties, Ohio, states that John and Margaret Leistenschneider had seven children when they arrived. The three families decided to call their community St. John. The names of the three men being John made the selection of a name easy. Possibly, the name of St. John had been decided upon already when they left Baltimore. It was also that day that a man named John was ordained Bishop of Cincinnati; Right Reverend John Purcell.

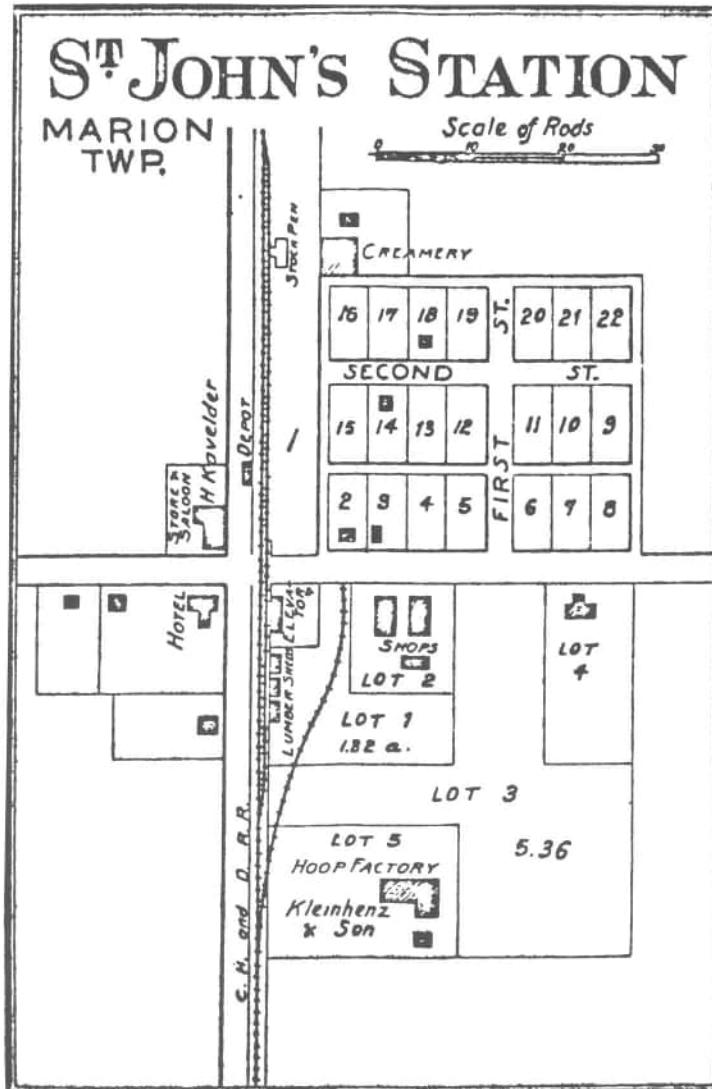
Families kept coming continuously and as early as 1835 St. John had some 25 families. The settlers moving into the community (Marion and Granville Townships) came from the "Low Countries," of northern German and spoke "Plattdeutsch." They came mostly from a rather small area in Southern Oldenburg, and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

In 1845 and 1846 Father Brunner arrived in St. John and built a Convent north of St. John, and called it Maria Stein. Eventually, the town of St. John was called Maria Stein, and when the Cincinnati, Hamilton and Dayton Railroad arrived in 1881, the western half of the town was called Maria Stein Station. In 1923, the Railroad left and the whole town was known as Maria Stein.\*

\*See "History of St. John Parish," by Henry Leugers, written in 1986, for a more detailed account.







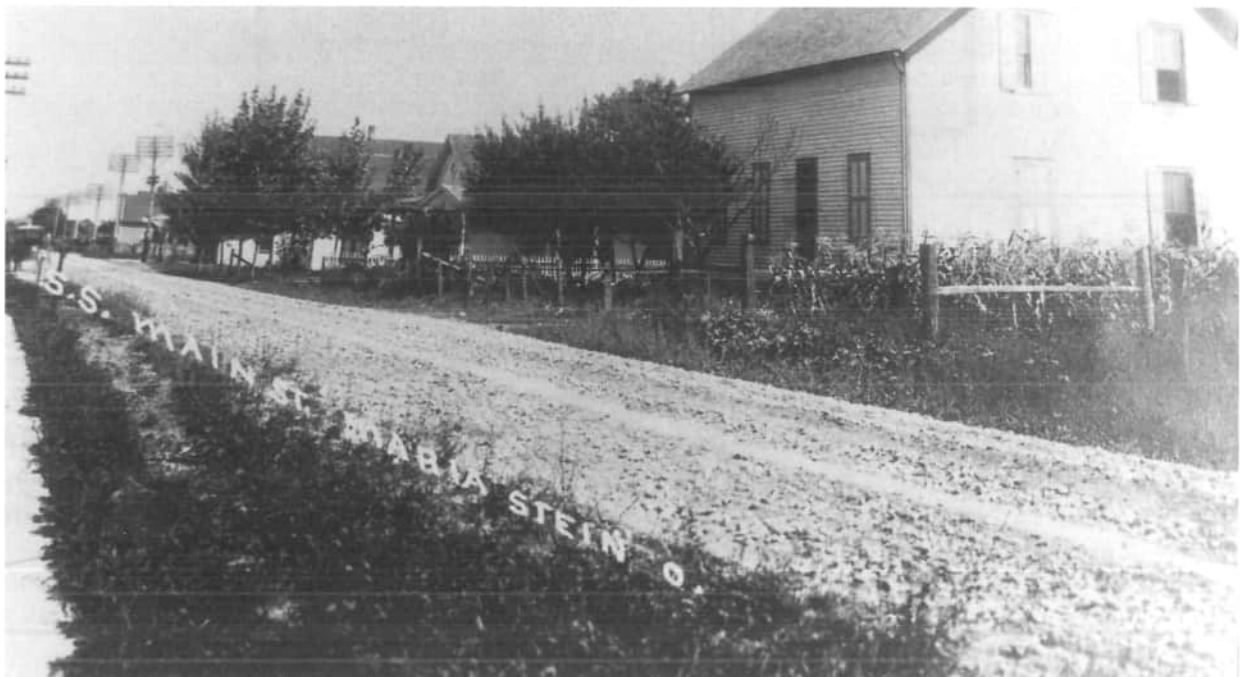
St. John Station - 1900  
(Maria Stein Station)

Note the railroad track running north and south through town. Take note of the creamery on the north edge of town, about where Richard Schulze lives today (1999-2066 St. Rt. 716). This belonged to Charlie Eifert who in 1903 sold it to Louis Henke of New Bremen who operated it as the White Mountain Creamery until 1912. It was then moved to New Bremen and eventually became Meadow Gold and part of Beatrice Dairy Products.



About 1920 West end of Maria Stein Station. Cy Hausfeld Dwelling (1999 - 7967 St. Rt. 119), Ed Harting [Marge Vehorn, (1999 - 7975 St. Rt. 119) ], John Fortkamp dwelling [Mary Ann Wenning - (1999 - 7981 St. Rt. 119)], John Fortkamp Grocery Store (gone) and Saloon [Korner Kafe - replaced with a new structure in 1998 (7995 St. Rt. 119)]. Note the road is not paved.

The one mile stretch between St. Rose and Maria Stein Station was cemented in 1923. Picture below shows the other side of the street. The house in the foreground belongs to Jim Ruschau (1999 - 7970 St. Rt. 119).





1939 - The house belonged to Herman Leugers [Art Leugers, (1999 - 7980 St. Rt. 119)]. Next is Community Hall, (Leugers Insurance, 1999). The next building is the Ed Harting Blacksmith shop.

The last building on the corner is the Adam's Tin Shop which was formerly the Hotel. [parking lot, (1999-7990 St. Rt. 119) ].



Ed Harting was the blacksmith in town. (picture about 1935) The next building is the Adam's Tin Shop.



1935 - Adam's Tin Shop. It was the former Hotel. Between 1905 and 1910, it served as many as 65 lunches daily.

It is now (1999) the Leugers Insurance parking lot.



The Community Hall was built in 1922 and used for many community affairs. It was also used for public and wedding dances. It gave the young people in the area a chance to meet and many marriages had their roots at the Community Hall.



1949 - The building on the left is the original Leugers Insurance Office built in 1948.



1927 - Play at the Community Hall

Joe Fortkamp, Luetta Reichert, Sophia Fortkamp, Louis Lengrich, George Reichert, Mathilda Heckman, Anthony Fortkamp, Alvina Fortkamp, Pauline Heckman, Frank Huber.



In 1948 the Hall was sold to the Maria Stein American Legion Post 571. It was moved to its present location and is now part of the Legion hall. Building on the left is the John Fortkamp Store.



**1949 - The Community Hall being moved down the highway a fourth of a mile to its new location on the Legion grounds (8140 St. Rt. 119).**



**1978 - The American Legion Hall in 1978. Wings were put on both sides of the old Community Hall to give it its present design.**



**Maria Stein American Legion Post 571 was formed in 1946.**

**In 1952 the Firing Squad marched in a parade in North Star, Ohio.**

**After the parade, they engaged in some Hi-Jinks by holding a mock funeral and firing a volley over Digger-O-Dell.**

**In the picture is Cy Overman, Duke Drosch, Brown Bomholt and Henry Leugers.**



1948 - The original Leugers Insurance office was built in 1948. The site was the Ed Harting Blacksmith Shop. The Bill Budde Barbershop and Leugers Insurance shared the lot (7990 St. Rt. 119).



1978 - In 1970 the insurance office was doubled in size. In 1977 it was enlarged again. In 1995 it was remodeled again.





About 1915 - John Kleinhenz Stockyard in St. Rose driving hogs one mile down 119 to Maria Stein Station for shipment by train. The Knapke farm and Cyril Hausfeld home is in the background. (1999)



This shows the need, in those days, for a fence in front of each home, such as the fence in front of the Arthur Leugers home for many years. John Fortkamp Store is in the background.



1917 - Bond Rally, World War I. Military equipment was brought in by train. Note the Hotel across the street. Jim Ruschau house is in the background.



1917 - Henry Wiseman Saloon is in the background. This is the site of the Korner Kafe parking lot now (1999).



1917 - Back left, the Maria Stein Lumber Co.; back right, Maria Stein Grain Co. (8010 St. Rt. 119).



1978 - Korner Kafe. Owners since the turn of the century:

H. Kavelder	L.J. Mescher	Clete Heitbrink & Roger Schwieterman
Henry Wissman	Ed Shenking	Roger Schwieterman
John Fortkmap	Bill King	Bob & Jeff Schwieterman
Eyink & Feldhake	Ted Girton & Randall VanSkiver	

The above building was replaced by the present Korner Kafe in 1997.



About 1930. Horse down in front of what now (1999) is the Korner Kafe. (at that time it was owned by Lawrence Mescher). Trying to assist are Tony Rolfes, Ed Harting and Henry Tangeman.



About 1936. 1. Ludwig Hausfeld      4. Ben Ruschau      7. Bill Henke  
 2. Lawrence Mescher      5. Unknown      8. Richard Pohlmann  
 3. Henry Tangeman      6. Ed Harting



**C.H. & D. Railroad (1881 to 1923) north and south thru town.**



**Ludwig Hausfeld - Last Station Master before Railroad was abandoned in 1923.**



About 1920 - Some of Maria Stein Grain Co. buildings still in use in 1999.



1978 - Maria Stein Grain Co. from about the same position as the above photograph.



About 1950 - George Reichert Tractor Sales. Originally built in 1929 by Fred Heckman and Joseph Fortkamp as a John Deere Tractor Agency. Located on the site of the Railroad Station. Now the site of the new Maria Stein Grain Co. Sales office. (1999)

In the 1930's - Popular advertising sign located where the Carry-out Stands today. (1999)





1917 - The Anthony Kleinhenz Fence Co. sold and put up fences. Picture shows Tony Kleinhenz, Henry Budde, Sr., and young Joseph Kleinhenz. The location was along the Railroad track just north of the Train Station. Just north of the Fence Co. was the Charlie Eifert Creamery.



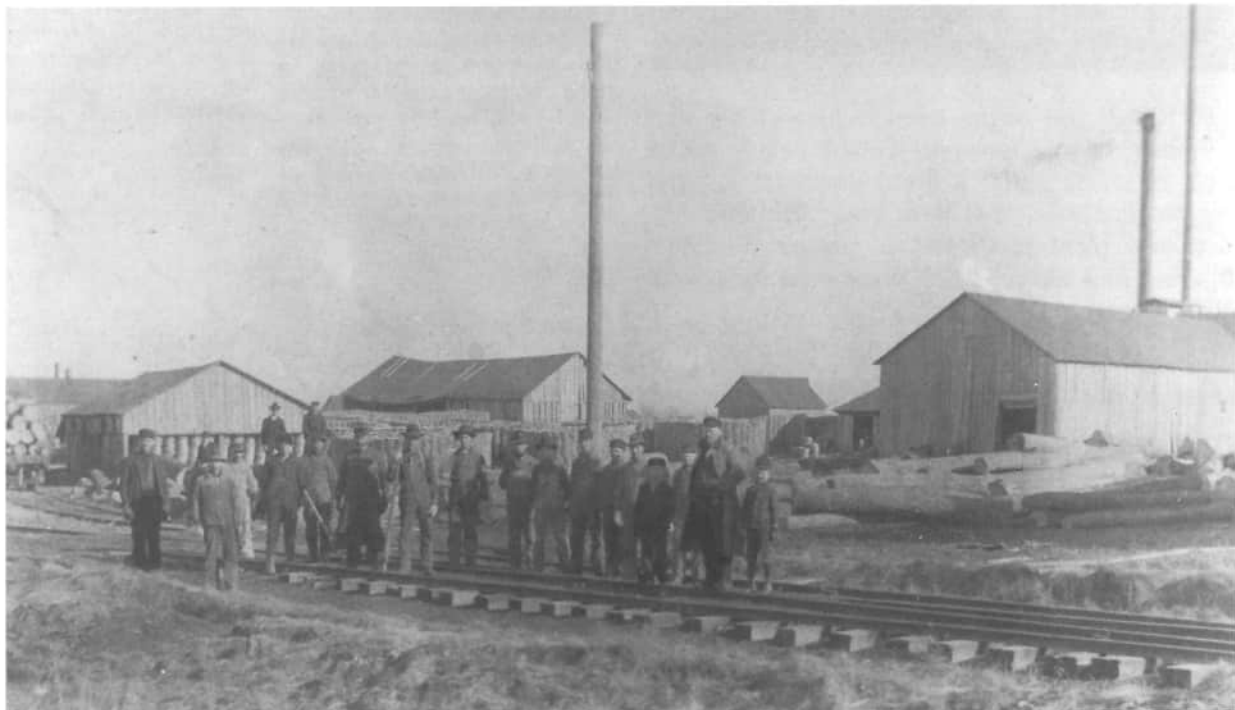
1917 - Fence being unloaded.





1924 - Maria Stein Lumber Co. Closed in 1925. Located between today's Elevator and Maria Stein Oil Co. (1999)

1. Ben Ruschau, Carpenter
2. Charles Seitz, Lumber yard employee
3. Leo Moeller, Owner



About 1905 - Sawmill and Hoop Factory on south edge of Maria Stein Station (south of present Maria Stein Grain Co., 1999). 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 in 1910.



**JOSEPH OPPENHEIM** began manufacture of his first manure spreader in the factory pictured below, which was located at Maria Stein. Several years later, after outgrowing its facilities, the New Idea Spreader Co. moved to a new plant in Coldwater. Today the plant covers 33 acres and almost 2,000 people are employed in production alone.

It is ironic that the man instrumental in the success of Avco New Idea never saw his brainstorm advance past the fledgling stage, and Joseph Oppenheim probably would be surprised that his creation, the first successful manure spreader, could turn the original New Idea Spreader Works into a corporate giant.

Tomorrow as part of a year-long celebration of "75 years service to agriculture," the Coldwater-based company will hold a day-long open house with plant tours and exhibits. And undoubtedly the Oppenheim success story will be retold many times during the observation.

Oppenheim, a schoolmaster at Maria Stein, apparently first contemplated a better way of moving manure because of the intermittent absenteeism of the farm boys in his classes. They had to stay home several days each week to unload manure from wagons. Some crude wagon unloaders were in use at the time, but were impractical as they did not spread the material any wider than the width of the wagon bed.

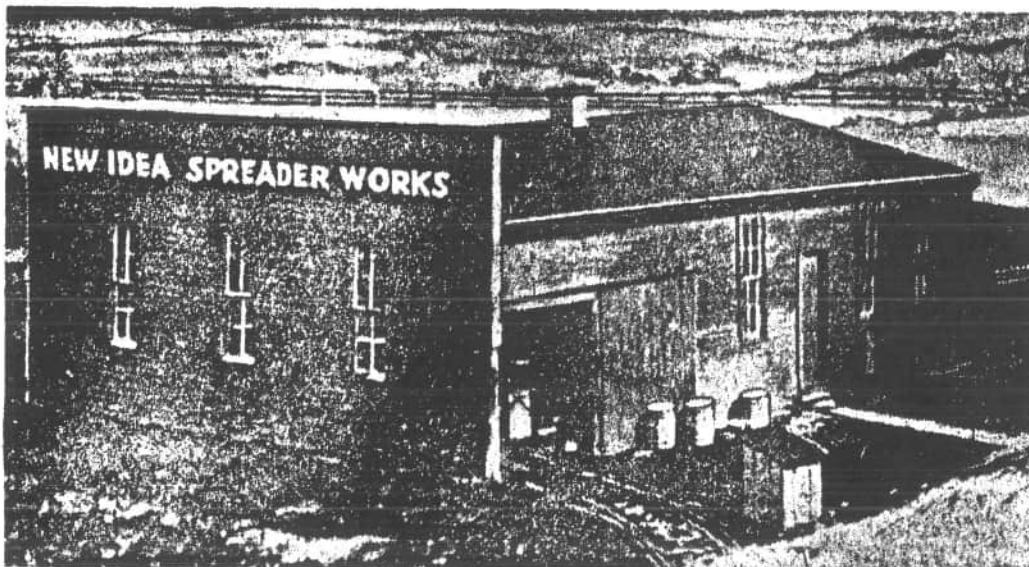
Oppenheim apparently got his inspiration while watching a game of "tom ball" in the school yard, noticing that when the ball was struck with the bat — a flat board — held at different angles it was deflected to one side or the other.

With the help of his son, B.C., he made a small-scale model out of a cigar box and built into it a rotary paddle distributor, with the blades set at an angle. Filling the box with chaff, he operated the distributor with power from the drivewheel of a sewing machine.

After further experimentation, Oppenheim was convinced his idea had promise, and in October, 1899, he broke ground for the first factory building at Maria Stein. He resigned his teaching job and together with his son, a neighbor boy, Henry Synck, and another neighbor, Fred Heckman, began work on what people called "Oppenheim's New Idea."

After months of building and testing, six spreaders were completed and sold. Manure was spread widely and the mechanism quickly was nicknamed "the widespread." Oppenheim died of typhoid in 1901, but his widow, using the insurance money left by her husband, continued the operation with the help of Synck and her oldest son.

The business grew rapidly and by 1910 it had outgrown the Maria Stein factory and relocated in Coldwater. A second line of farm implements, the transplanter, was added in 1912.



*by Scott Garwick*

Wednesday Evening, July 31, 1974

**STANDARD**



New Idea Factory - about 1905. Located across the alley from Velma Heitbrink home (1999 - 8025 St. Rt. 119).

Note: Tom Kleinhenz barn, upper right.

First New Idea manure spreader sold in 1898. Above plant used from 1900 to 1910 when it was relocated in Coldwater, Ohio. Employed 30 to 40 people.



New Idea Factory - about 1905. Another view.



About 1898 - Manure unloader "Manufactured by John M. Kramer and Bro. Machine Works - Maria Stein, Ohio" Note - no beaters.

Joseph Oppenheim experimented with the help of Kramer, Fred Heckman and Henry Synck on a workable spreader. John Kramer had worked out a gear arrangement that would move the manure to the back of the spreader. Fred Heckman worked out the folding seat and Joseph Oppenheim worked out the beaters and gears to spread the manure.

And thus, was born the "New Idea" manure spreader.



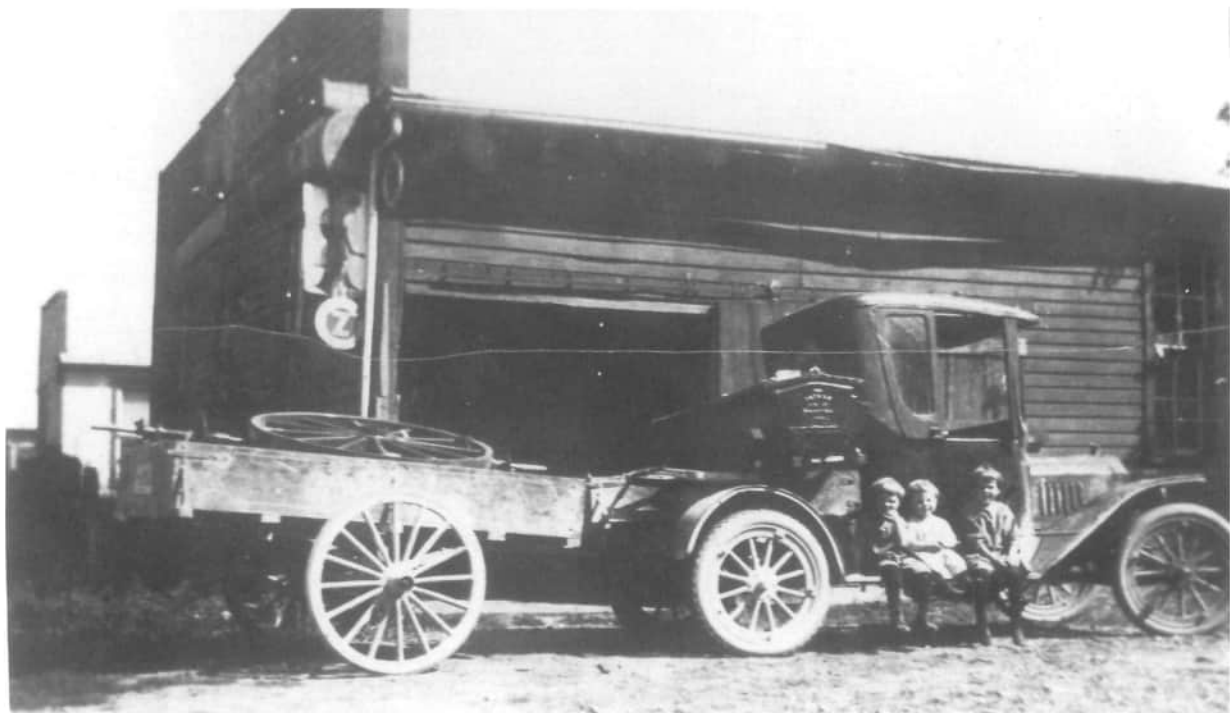
About 1900 - Oppenheim's "New Idea" Spreader. Note: Beaters.

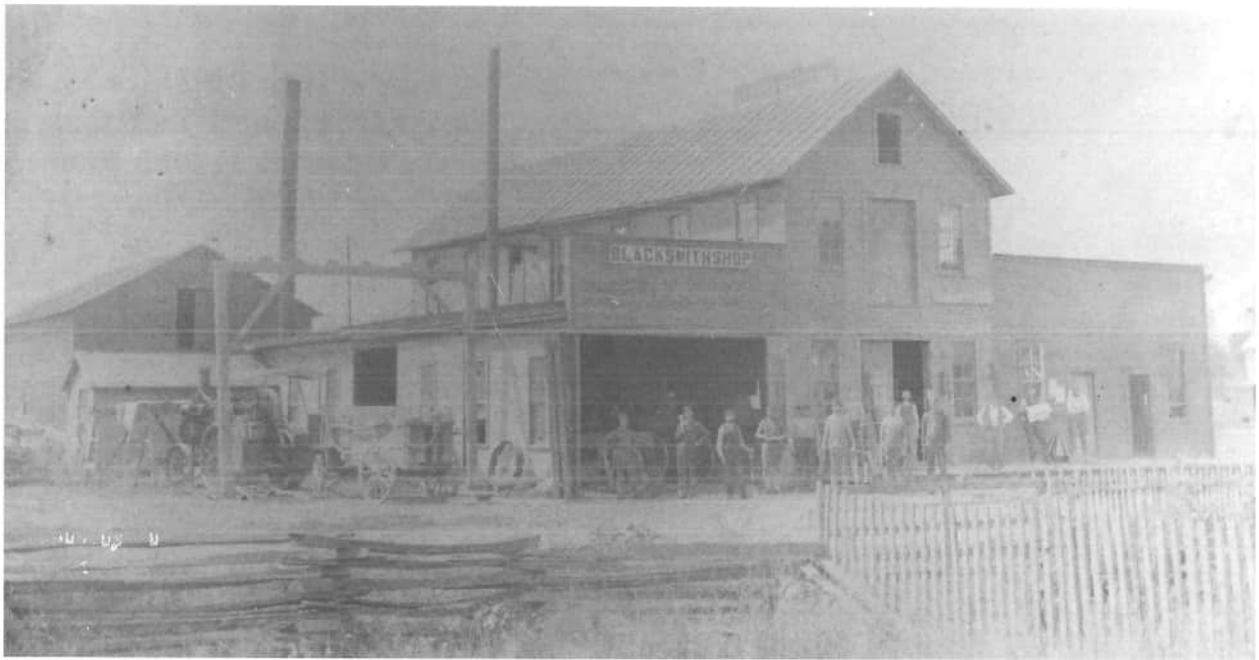


About 1900 - Picture taken from Kramer Machine Works looking east. House belonged to John Kramer. Now it belongs to Fred Buening (1999 - 8050 St. Rt. 119).

Note St. John Church in the background.

Below - 1922 - The last day the train ran thru Maria Stein. The Children seated in front of the New Idea building, are: Paul Kleinhenz, Mary Kleinhenz and Joe Kleinhenz.

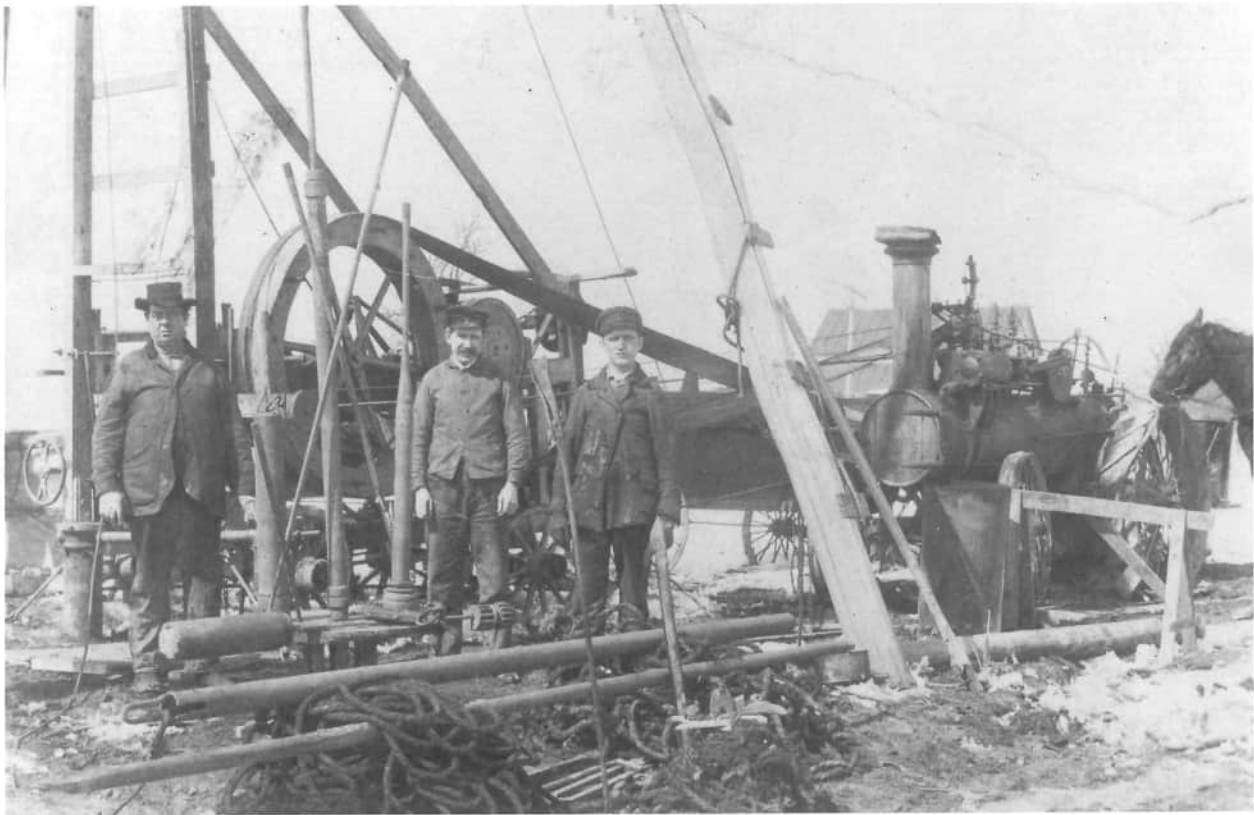




1895 - John M. Kramer's original Machine Shop, Foundry and Blacksmith Shop. It burned down in 1896. Replaced by a new Machine Shop. When sold it became the Budde Bros. Garage. It was located on what now is the Maria Stein Oil Co. (1999 - 8010 St. Rt. 119). The above building and the new machine shop is where much of the planning for the New Idea Manure Spreader took place.



About 1900 - Kramer's new Machine Shop and employees. #2. Joe Koester; #4. John Kramer; #5. Bernard Knapke; #6. August Droesch; #9. Mike Gagel; #10. John Synck.



About 1907 - Kramer Gas Drilling Rig. John Kramer, Henry Wendeln, August Drosch. Many homes in Maria Stein were heated with natural gas, supplied by John Kramer.



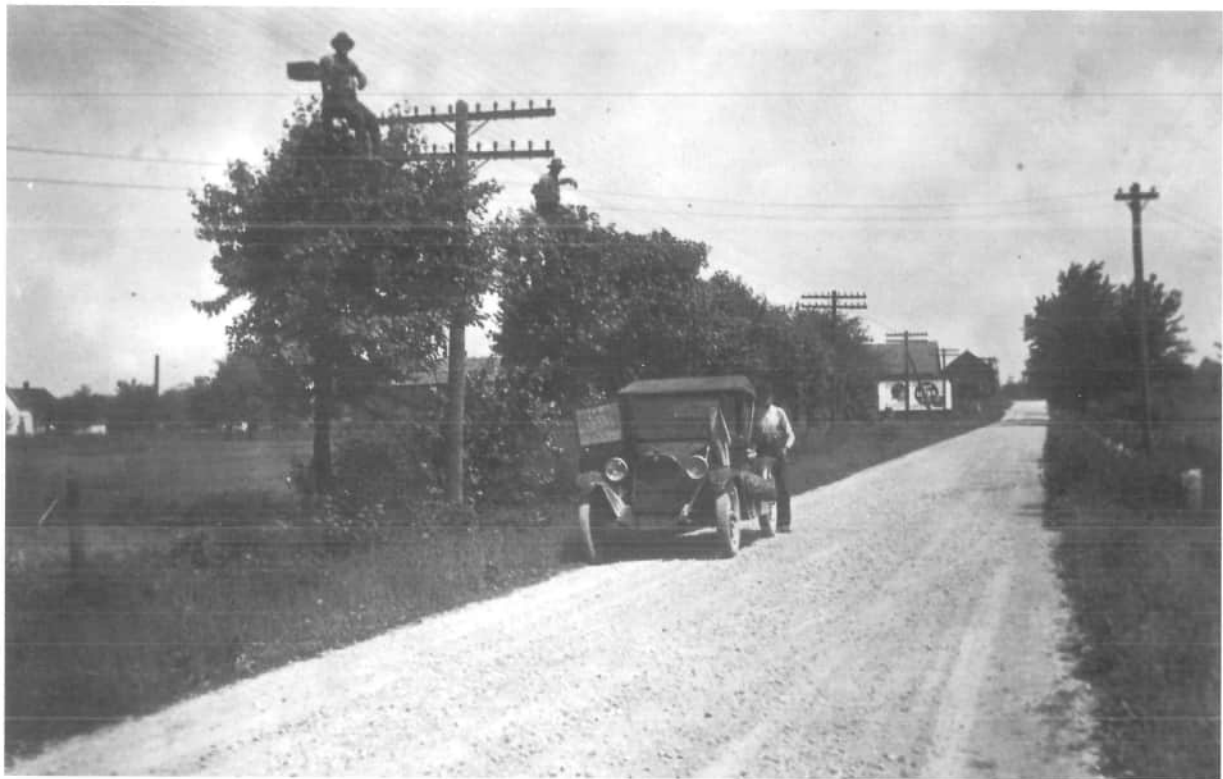
About 1914 - John Kramer family [Fred Buening Home, (1999 - 8050 St. Rt. 119). Side door was entrance to The Marion Telephone Co. Office and switchboard.

**Standing:** Henrietta (Ashman), Mary, Regina (Esser), Armella (Wendel)

**Front:** Sister Mary Ida, John and Caroline Kramer, Medard



1925 - Marion Telephone Co. repair truck. August Droesch repairman. John M. Kramer started Telephone Co. in 1898. Son, Robert Droesch is the boy in the truck.



1929 - Marion Telephone Co. repairmen - South edge of Chickasaw on Ohio 716.





About 1918 - August and Cathryn Droesch and three oldest children in front of their house. House today belongs to Mark Droesch (1999 - 8051 St. Rt. 119).



About 1938 - Aloys Knapke, John Homan, August Knapke and Frank Mescher putting in tile.



About 1910. Henry and Nora Kramer and daughter Stella. (Located where the Carryout and Feltz dwelling are today (1999 - 8023 St. Rt. 119).

The building on the right at one time was used as a grocery store, post office, hardware store, plumbing shop, and finally as the Budde Barber Shop.



About 1935 - In 1924 Bill Budde started a Barber Shop in front of the old Kramer building. Tony Harting had an electrical and plumbing shop in the rear.

Across the street in the open lot, (now the Maria Stein Oil Co. 1999), was located the first tennis court in the area, a clay court.

In 1958, Mark Droesch bought and dismantled the building using the salvageable lumber to construct the Carryout and adjoining house, (now Feltz dwelling 1999).



About 1915 - Maria Stein Station looking west from about where Fred Buening resides today. (1999 - 8050 St. Rt. 119)



About 1930 - Budde Brothers: August, Bill, Henry and Lawrence. Bill was the barber. August, Henry and Lawrence in 1917 bought the Kramer Machine Shop and operated it as an automobile garage for many years.



About 1920 - High water in Maria Stein Station. Picture taken from Kleinhenz front yard showing Budde Garage (former Kramer Machine Shop), and the Maria Stein Lumber Yard on the right.



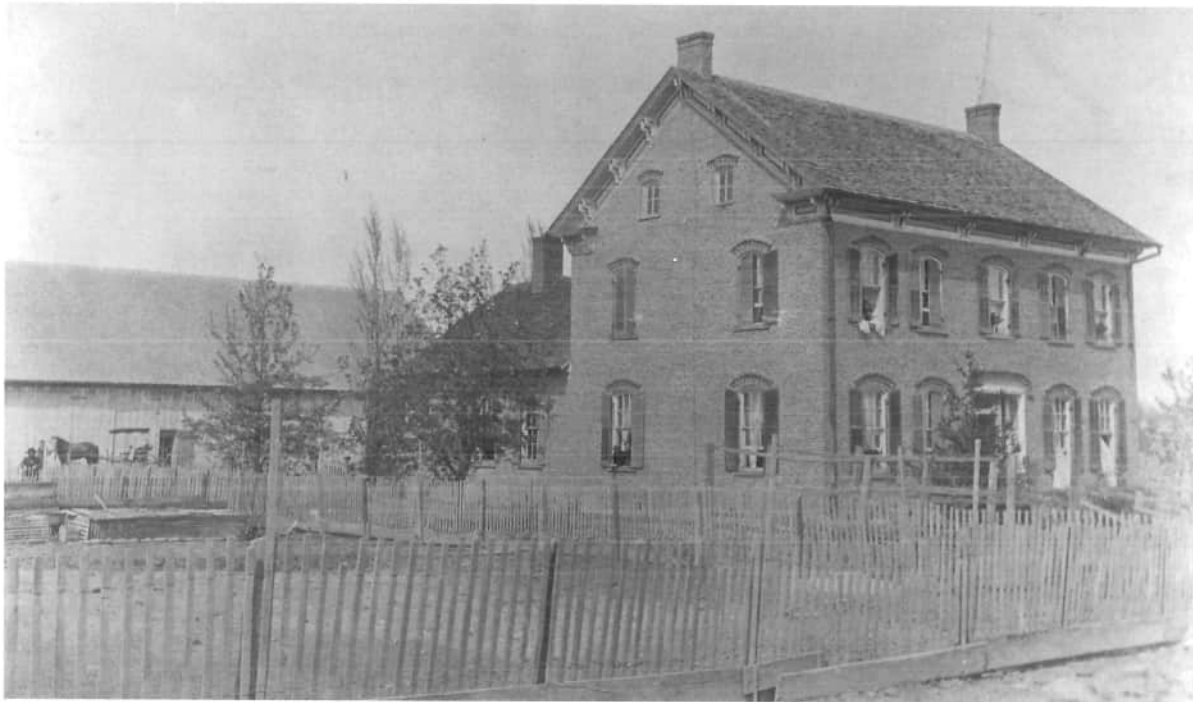
About 1920 - Same high water. Close-up view of the Lumber Yard and the Elevator. When the Lumber Yard was removed, the site became the Tennis Court for many years.



1978 - Maria Stein Branch of The Saint Henry Bank, 8111 St. Rt. 119. (Opened 1975)



1978 - Maria Stein Animal Clinic, 8155 St. Rt. 119. (Opened by Dr. George Wenning in 1968)



About 1910 - House is the location of Bernard and Liwatt Boecke farm. Brick house was built about 1880. (now the Nieberding farm, 1999, - 1/2 mile north of Maria Station, 2497 Rolfes Road.)



Liwat Boeke died in 1882. Her papers and drawings lay in the attic of this house for forty years and another 50 years later surfaced in Dayton, Ohio.

The papers were compiled and put into a book by Luke Knapke, Minster, Ohio, published in 1987.



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



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



1918 - Clem Brandewie on his farm one mile south of Maria Stein, Ohio, 1440 Rolfes Road.



Sister Mary John  
Eleanora Brandewie

Sister Engelina  
Rosalie Brandewie

Sister Dorothy  
Clementine Brandewie

About 1934 - Clem's sisters





About 1925 - In 1893, Dr. Alois J. Willke started practicing medicine in Maria Stein. His office was located on what is now the Gagel Hardware Parking lot (1999). Dr. Alois Willke's son George was practicing medicine and lived in the above property when the picture was taken. In 1931, his brother Dr. Edgar Willke took over the office, practice and dwelling. (Now occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Gene Imwalle, 1999 - 8459 St. Rt. 119).

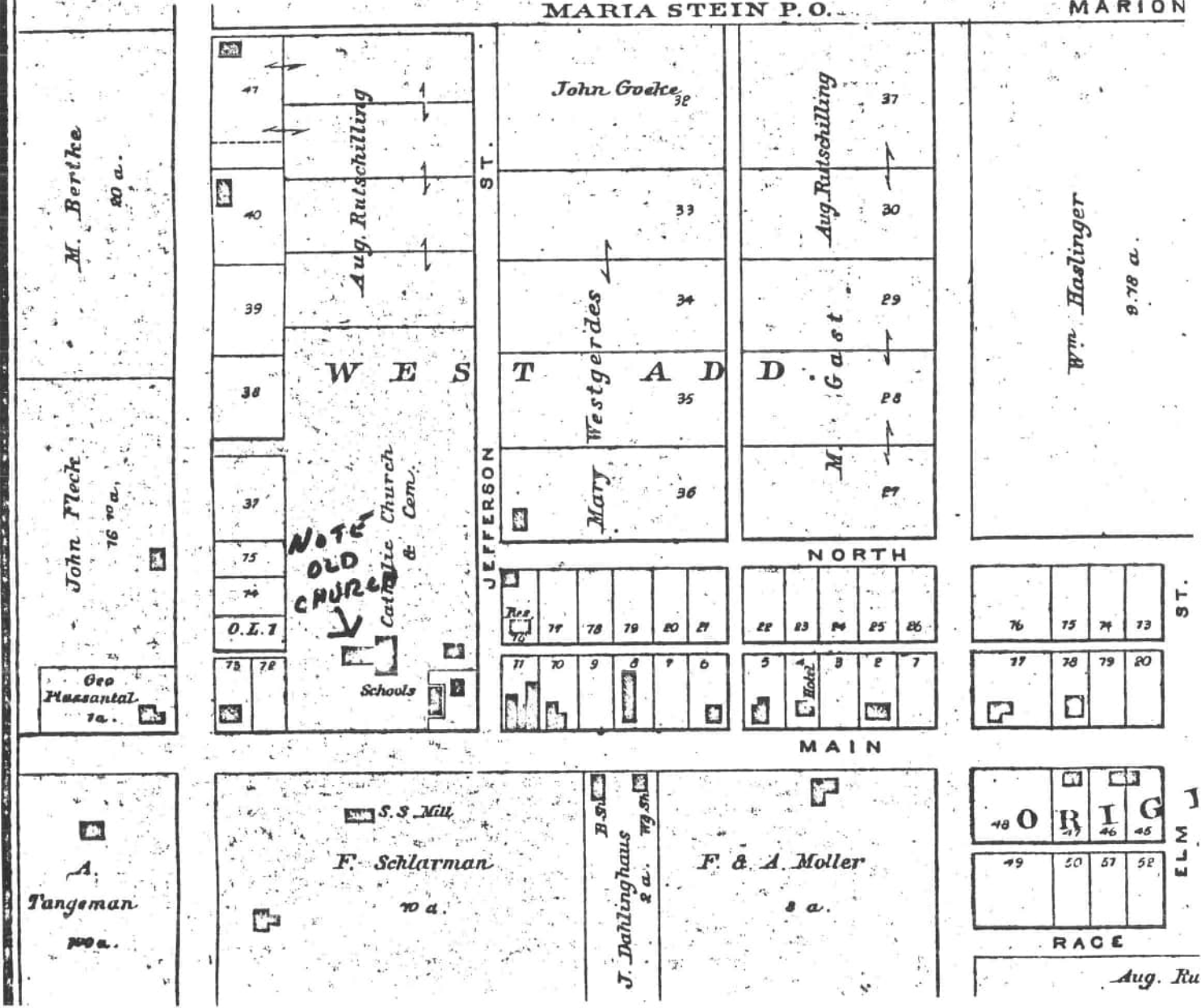


About 1955 - The doctor's office was moved to the present location, 8381 St. Rt. 119, and the practice continued under Dr. Don Schwieterman (Son-in-law of Dr. Edgar Willke.) Dr. Don retired in July 1997. But before retiring his son, Dr. Jim Schwieterman joined the practice in 1991 and Don's son Tom joined in 1996. Dr. Jim and Dr. Tom are continuing the practice.

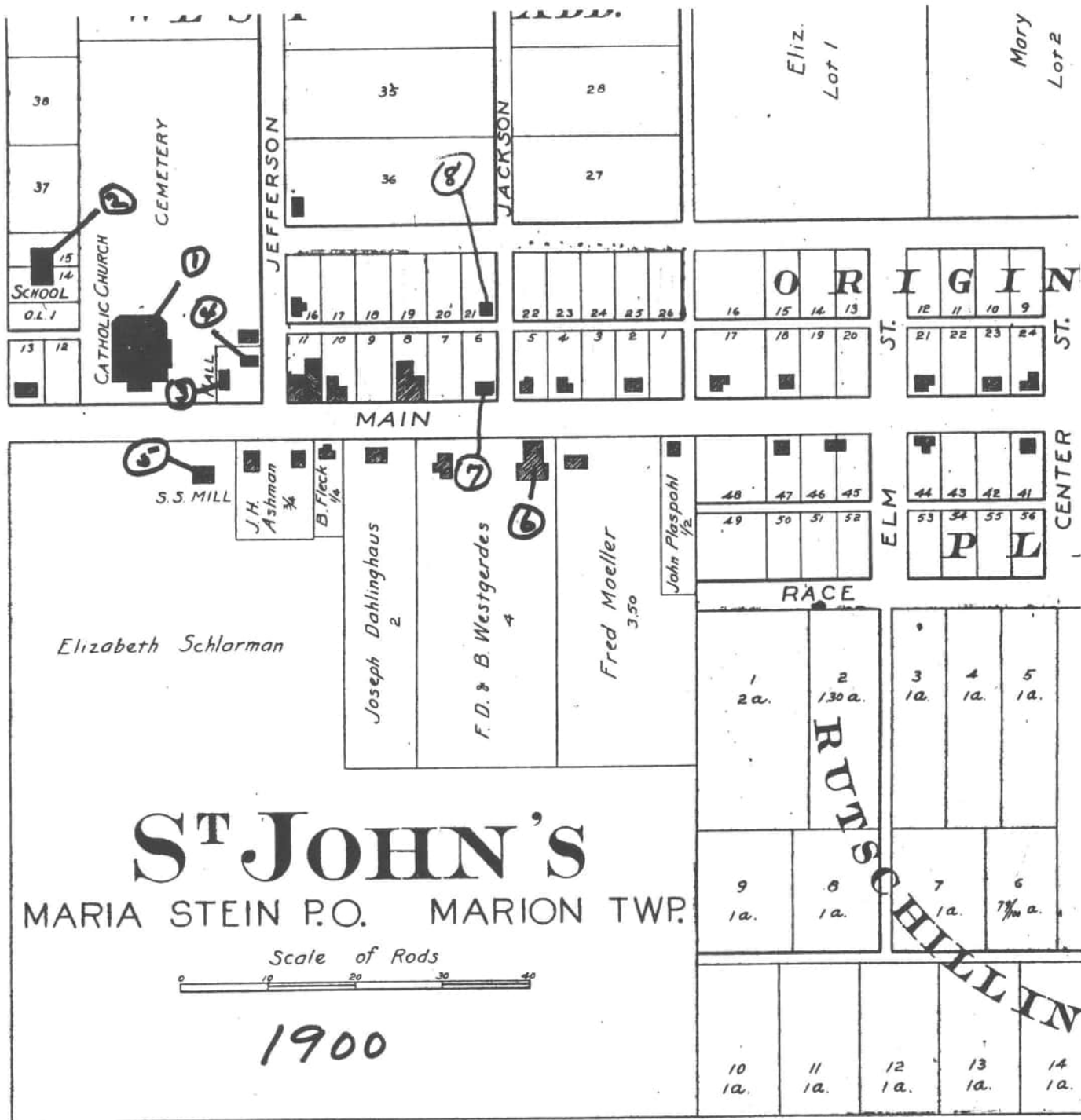
# 1888 ST. JOHN'S

MARIA STEIN P. O.

MARION

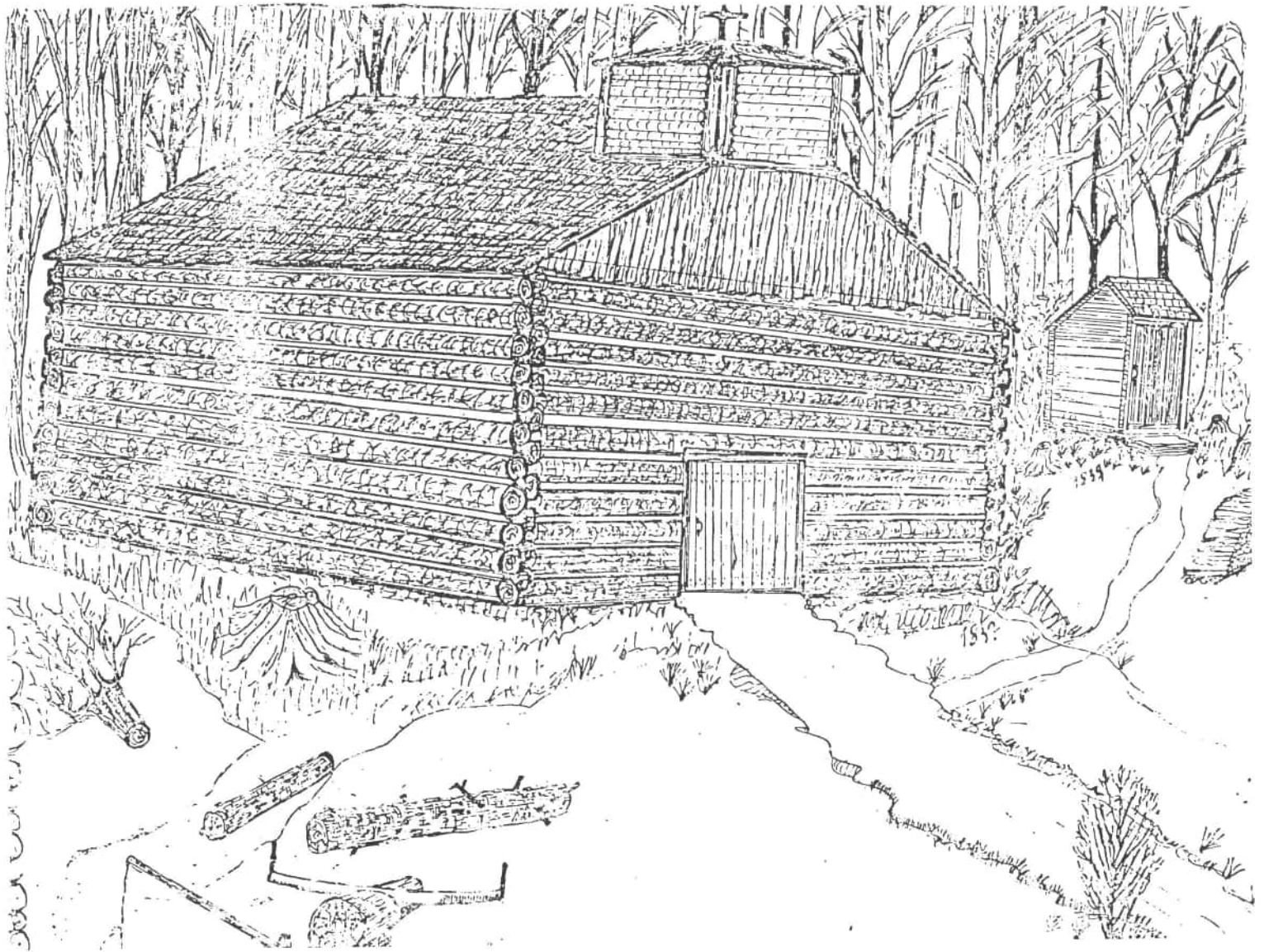


1888 Plat Map of St. John's, Mercer County, Ohio Atlas.  
 Note that our church, at that time, faced west.



1900 Plat Map St. John's. Mercer County, Ohio Atlas, 1900.

1. Our present church
2. The girl's school
3. The parish hall
4. The boy's school (later the High school)
5. The Saw Mill (site of old St. Johns Building)
6. Westgerdes Hardware Store (burned 1913)
7. Dr. Alois Willke's office and home. (now Gagel Hardware Store parking lot, 1998)
8. Dwelling occupied by a Mr. Sweller. Could have been the dwelling built in 1850 by a man named Topp from the lumber of the first church.



1837 - First church at St. John. Started in 1836 and completed in the spring of 1837. Sketched by Liwwat Boeke, parishioner, in 1837.



A local artist's concept of what our second church probably looked like, drawn by C.J. Heitbrink, 1985. The church was completed in 1850; it was 40 by 50 feet, made of brick with a 55 foot wood steeple. In 1857, an addition was added on the east end, making it a T- shaped building. It faced west and was located about where our present church is today.



**Picture about 1925. St. John's third church was dedicated on November 11, 1891. Built of brick and sandstone trim, it was built at a cost of \$40,135.**

**In 1906, the priest's house was completed at a cost of \$8,000.**

**Note the teacher and organist's house on the right.**



**1986 - Note that one tier of windows in the tower and the fake clock are gone; this was done in 1957. The wall in front of the church is also gone.**



1946 - May Crowning. Note the communion rail and pulpit.





LIWWAT BOKE (NEE: KNAPKE) 1807-1882  
 BORN IN NELLINGHOFF/NEIENKIRCHEN - OBERBURE  
 DIED IN SAINT JOHN, MARION TOWNSHIP MERCER COUNTY-DITHO  
 STUDIED AT LAPE/BIESTE-ALGERIA-HISTORY-LATIN-MUSIC-HUMANITIES  
 BECAME MIDWIFE AT DEER-CATHEDRAL SCHOOL IN OSWATUCK  
 IMMIGRATED 1835 to AMERICA - WIFE OF BELWARD BOEKE - MOTHER.  
 POET, HISTORICAL WRITER, AUTHOR, ACCOMPLISHED FOLK ARTIST  
 COMMUNITY LEADER, INNOVATOR, PICTURE 1878 CIRCA. V.H.B.

A self-portrait by Liwwat Boeke.



Burial - St. John Cemetery.

**LIWWAT BOKE (Elizabeth Boeke)** A remarkable woman who lived in St. John Parish, from 1835 to the date of her death in 1882.

See Forward in "History of St. John Church" by Henry J. Leugers, 1986.

See "Liwwat Boke (1807-1882) Pioneer." Compiled and edited by Luke B. Knapke in 1987.



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.



1985 - St. John Graveyard with the church in the background.



1925 - St. John Choir

WEDDING DAY - 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



1922 - Father Otto Missler - Ruby Anniversary (40th)

**Front Row**

1. Fr. Francis Nigsch
2. Fr. Otto Missler
3. Fr. Anthony Dick

**Center Row**

1. Fr. Tom Meyer
2. Fr. Boebner
3. Unknown
4. Fr. R. Schmaus
5. Fr. Otto Weber

**Back Row**

1. Unknown
2. Fr. Sixtus Meyer
3. Fr. John Rahrle



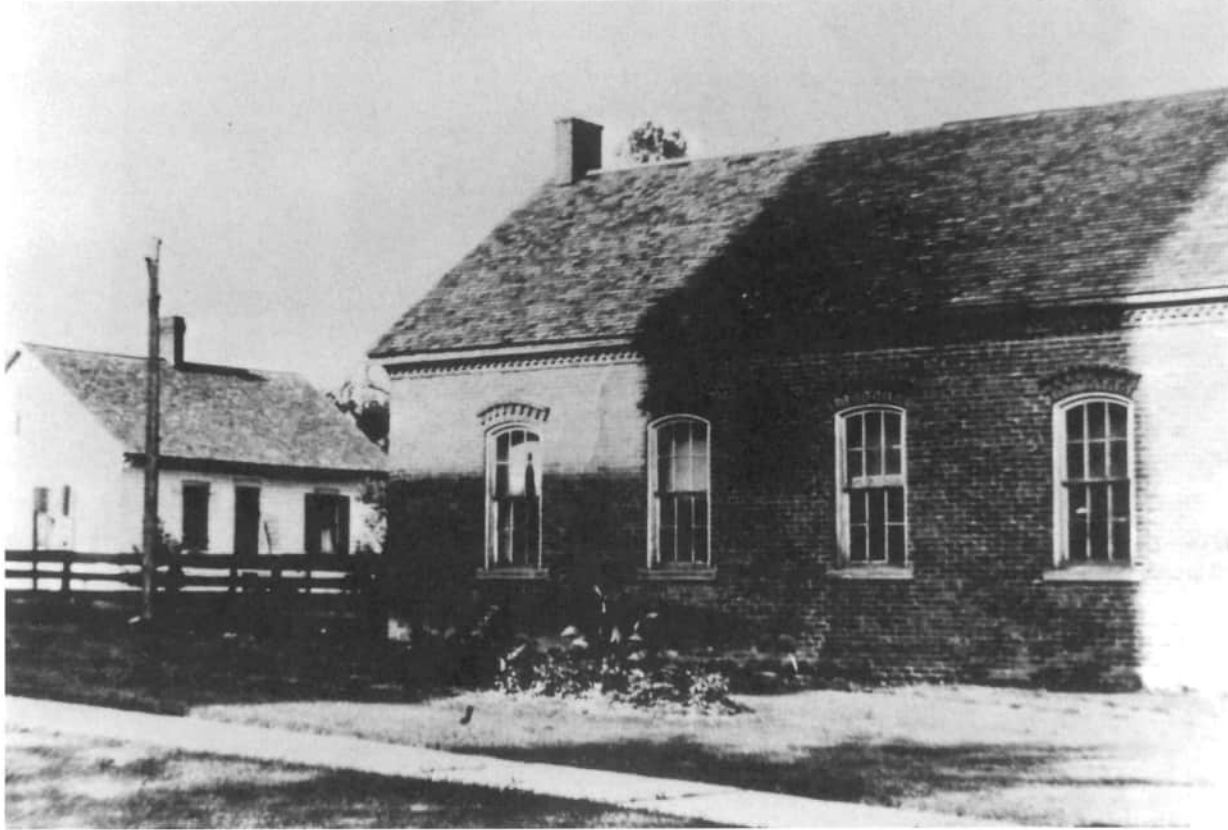
About 1907 - The Eifert home. Note: Girls' School in background. The street was paved about 1920. Now, the church parking lot (1999).



About 1917 - Lee and Oscar Eifert in their yard.



1836 - First St. John School, completed in 1836. Sketched by Liwwat Boeke. John Reichert was the first teacher.



About 1915 - Second School. About the time the second church was built in 1850, the log school was replaced by the above brick one-room school built in front of the present day parsonage and east of the driveway. In 1858, it was sold to the Public School board. It became one of the main issues in the parish feud of the 1880's.

In 1887, it was deeded back to the parish and became the parish hall and was called "Vereins Hall." It was torn down about 1935.

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.



About 1915 - The School was bought by the public school board from the parish in 1858. School was used for 72 years, last few years as a High school. Torn down in 1930.

Picture taken from Jefferson Street. Note parish owned teacher's house on the right, and the church in the background. Known as the Boys' School.



1939 - St. John's School was built in 1931 at a cost of \$35,967. The School Board sold it to the St. John Church, late in 1990, and it was torn down. That site became the Church Parking Lot.





About 1905 - Built in 1890 as a one floor public school for girls, and known as the girls' school. In 1898, a second floor was added. 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 also by the Sisters. The boys grades four through eight went to the boys' school east of the priest house.

Location of the above school was at the rear of the present day east parking lot. It was torn down in 1930. All children, boys, girls and High School, then went to the St. John's building.



1921 - First floor, Girls' School. Boys and girls, first thru third grade. Teacher, Sister Irene Brinkman



1921 - Boys' School - boys, fourth thru eighth grade. Henry Forstoffel, teacher



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

**Third Row: Juliana Hierholzer, Sophia Fortkmap, Albina Heitkamp, Hugo Moorman, Silverius Homan, Herman Fortkamp.**



**PUTHOFF 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, Elitzabeth Buening, Lauretta Winner, Elizabeth  
Bergman, August J. Reichert, Katie Buening, Hilda Rolfes, Leo  
Walterbusch, Dick Mescher**

The Puthoff School District was created in 1862 and located two miles south of St. John Church. In November of 1924, the District consolidated with the St. John School District. In 1948, the school was closed and the children came to the St. John School. The school building is now the dwelling of Paul Luebke. (1999 - 1000 St. John Road)



**HEITKAMP SCHOOL 1927 - 28**

**Front Row:** 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

The Heitkamp School came into being in 1908 with the formation of the Board of Education of Jackson Township. It was located on Ohio 364 one half mile north of Ohio 119. In 1952, the School District consolidated with the St. John Rural School District. In 1948, the school was closed and the children came to the St. John Building.



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

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



About 1933 - The Frank H. Moorman family.

Mr. Moorman had a real impact on the Maria Stein area. He was hired in 1922 as a teacher with the purpose of establishing a two-year high school. He was also organist, choir director and Clerk of the School Board. The first two year High School Class graduated in 1925. In 1929, he became Principal of the newly formed St. John Rural School District. The first three year High School students graduated in 1931 and four year High graduated in 1936. In 1942, the well-thought-of and successful school administrator, Frank H. Moorman died unexpectedly.

Back Row: Harold, Rosella, Gregory, Freida, Hugo, Francis, Richard, Edward

Front Row: Paul, Jane, Johanna, Virgil (baby), Frank, Eugene , Dorothy



About 1895 - Sawmill employees. Sawmill was owned by John Osterloh, and stood where the St. John church, south parking lot and ball diamond are today, (1999).





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



About 1915. Taken across from the Gast property looking west. The fire house on the left was moved in 1931 to the Henry Wendeln farm (Buck Pohlmann 1999). The street was paved about 1920.



About 1912 - Wissman Saloon (VanSkiver property, 1999 - 8575 St. Rt. 119)  
 1. August Rutschilling, 2. Frank Schlarman, 3. Tony Schlarman, 4. August Wildenhaus, 5. Henry Rutschilling, 6. Anton Tangeman



About 1922 - Wissman Saloon. 1. August Dahlinghaus, 2. August Rutschilling, 6. Henry Tangeman, 7. Frank Borges, 8. A drummer (traveling salesman - note brief case), 9. Ben Borges



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



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



About 1915 - Prior to Prohibition

Thought to be Frank Topp's house on Lot 22

1. Frank Topp, 2. Julian Schweller, 3. Jake Schweller, 4. Mike Gagel, and 5. Unknown



About 1925. Gagel Hardware Store, 8581 St. Rt. 119. Mike Gagel bought the store from Matt Fahrig in 1917.



Gagel Hardware Store in 1978.



About 1939 - Vacant lot between Gagel Hardware and Wissman Saloon (Berning & VanSkiver) property. Note Bruggeman Blacksmith Shop across the street. Paul Borges, Richard Imwalle, Urban Berning, Tom Gast, Otto Mescher, Ed Bruggeman, Louis Goecke.



1949 - The Thobe Orchestra. Jiggs Thobe, Buck Thobe, Norb Overman, Whitey Thobe



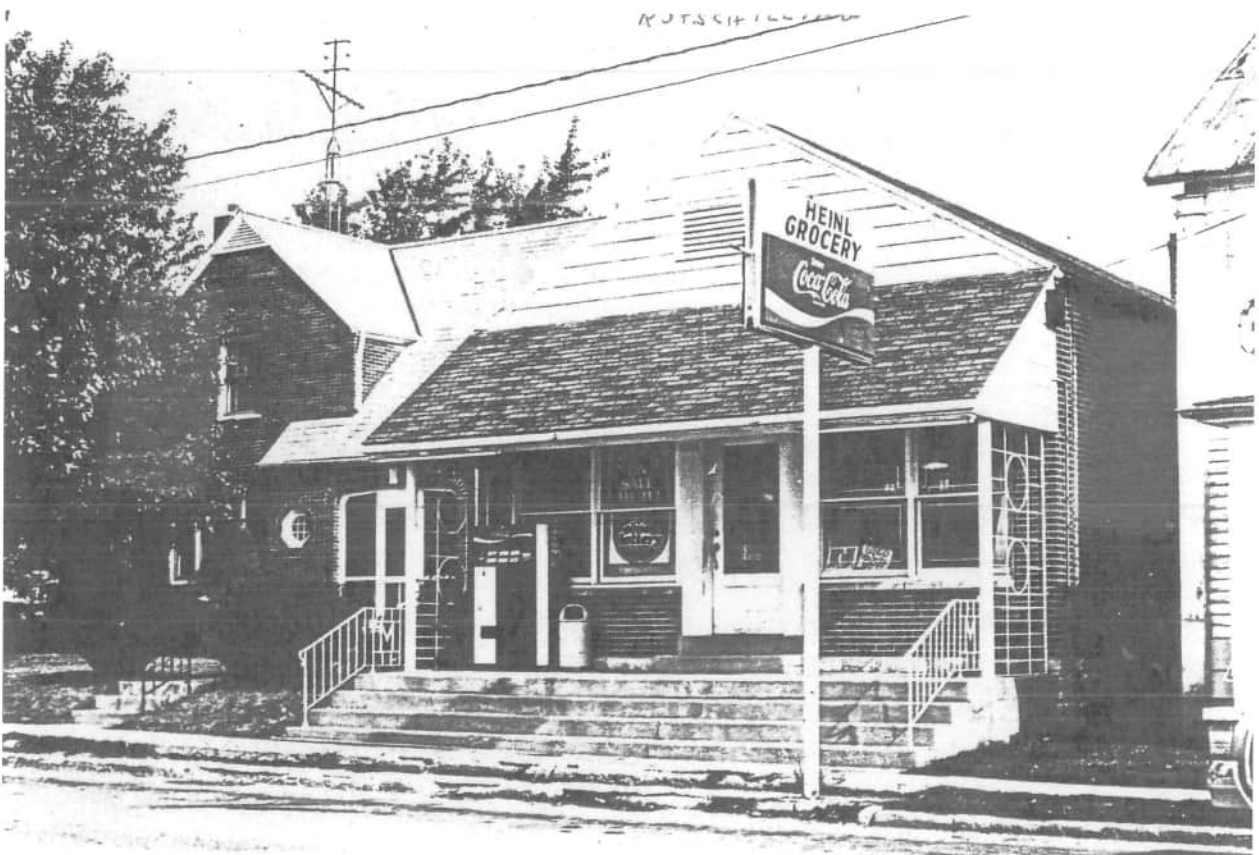
About 1917 - Site of the Gast original store since 1838. The site remained in the family until 1941. Served as a clothing store, general store, a tavern, Knights of St. John Lodge Hall and now the Gagel Hardware storage building (1999).



About 1945 - When Joseph Gast sold the beer stube to the Knights of St. John in 1941, he built a new beer stube between the house and the Knights building. When this building was dismantled, it became part of the Louis Overman dwelling.



About 1945 - The Urban Menker Grocery Store and Post Office. Repairman on roof is Richard Pohlmann. Today is Rutschilling warehouse (1999 - 8565 St. Rt. 119).



About 1978 - Same store - Heinel, Vehorn and now Rutschilling warehouse. (1999)





About 1915 - Ralph and Alex Fahrig. Matt Fahrig and family lived about where Cyril Bernard lives now. (1999 - 8619 St. Rt. 119) Matt Fahrig owned and operated the Hardware Store that he sold to Mike Gagel in 1917.



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



1978. United States Post Office, 8629 St. Rt. 119.



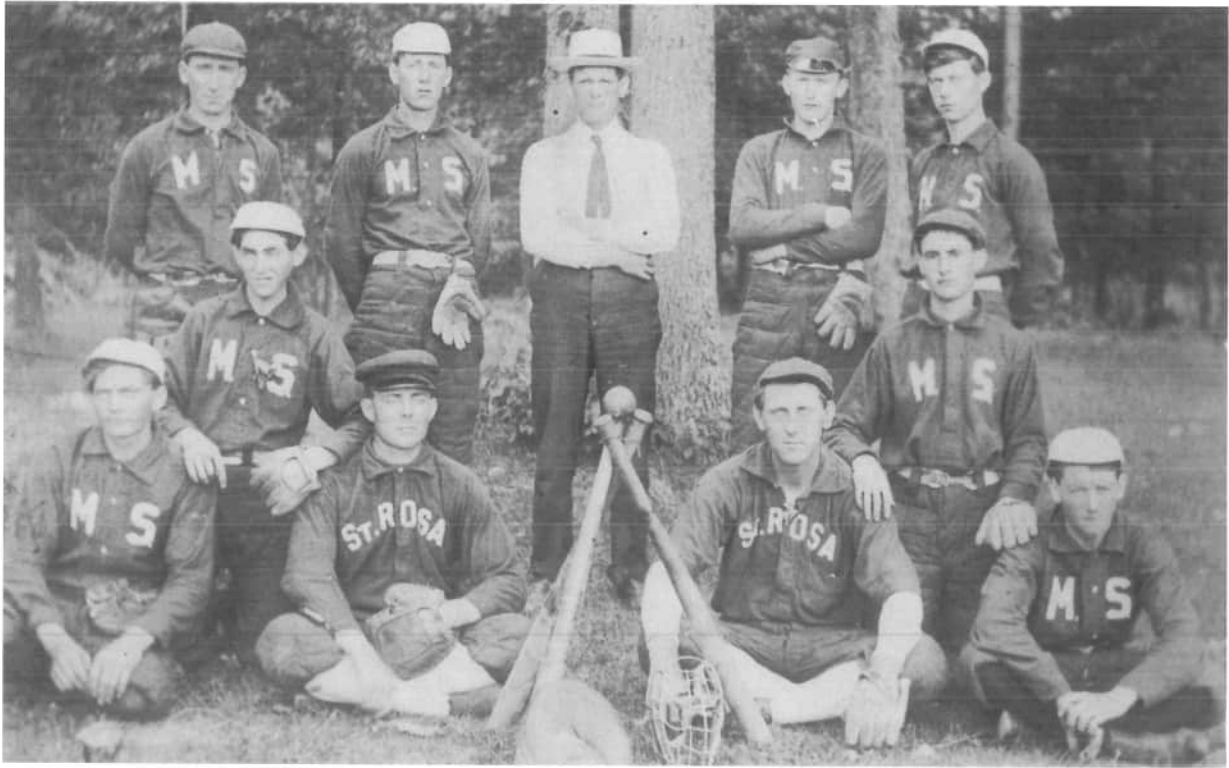
**MARIA STEIN BAND 1906-07**

- |                        |                  |                       |
|------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| 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 BAND 1906-07**

- Front Row:** Julian Goecke, Henry Rutschilling, Louis Wildenhaus
- Center Row:** August Dahlinghaus, August Rutschilling, Ed Goecke
- Back Row:** John Schulte, Julian Schweller, Frank Rentz, John Borgert, Fred Wendeln, Frank Schlarman



**About 1910 - Maria Stein Baseball Team**

**First Row:** 1. Tony Schlarman, 2. Anthony Kleinhenz, 3. Julius Lechleiter,  
4. Jim Thobe

**Second Row:** 1. Frank Schlarman, 2. Unknown

**Third Row:** 1. Louis Wildenhaus, 2. August Wildenhaus, 3. August Dahlinghaus,  
4. Unknown, 5. Frank Plaspool



**Maria Stein Pals - 1947 Mercer County Amateur Champs**

**Back Row:** John Mescher, Louis Overman, Red Mescher, Clete Heitbrink, Uppie Berning, Leander Puthoff, Cattle Mescher, Walt Imwalle, Roman Hausfeld

**Front Row:** Tom Gast, Buck Thobe, Jiggs Thobe, Bud Mescher, Bing Goecke, Herman Luthman



**Back Row:** Stan Kleinhenz, Roman Hausfeld, Bob Erning, Lee Fortkamp, Herb Imwalle, Cy Everman

**Front Row:** Herman Luthman, Urban Berning, Red Mescher, Louis Goecke, Clete Griesdorn, Elton Thobe



About 1908 - Mr. and 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 on the left also burned.



1978 - Knight's of St. John Hall today. (1999 - 8608 St. Rt. 119)



About 1906 - Knights of St. John Uniform Rank. Commandery 313 was formed in St. John Parish in 1897.

Bottom Row: 1. August Rutuschilling, 2. Julian Schweller, 3. Julian Goecke, 4. John Weber, 5. Ludwig Hausfeld, 6. August Droesch, 7. Captain Mike Gagel

Center Row: 1. August Dahlinghaus, 2. John Borgert, 3. Joe Zumwald, 4. Unknown, 5. Unknown, Goecke, 6. Unknown, 7. V. Brackman, 8. Unknown, 9. Lawrence Droesch.

Back Row: 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



About 1906 - Knights of St. John - Uniform Rank

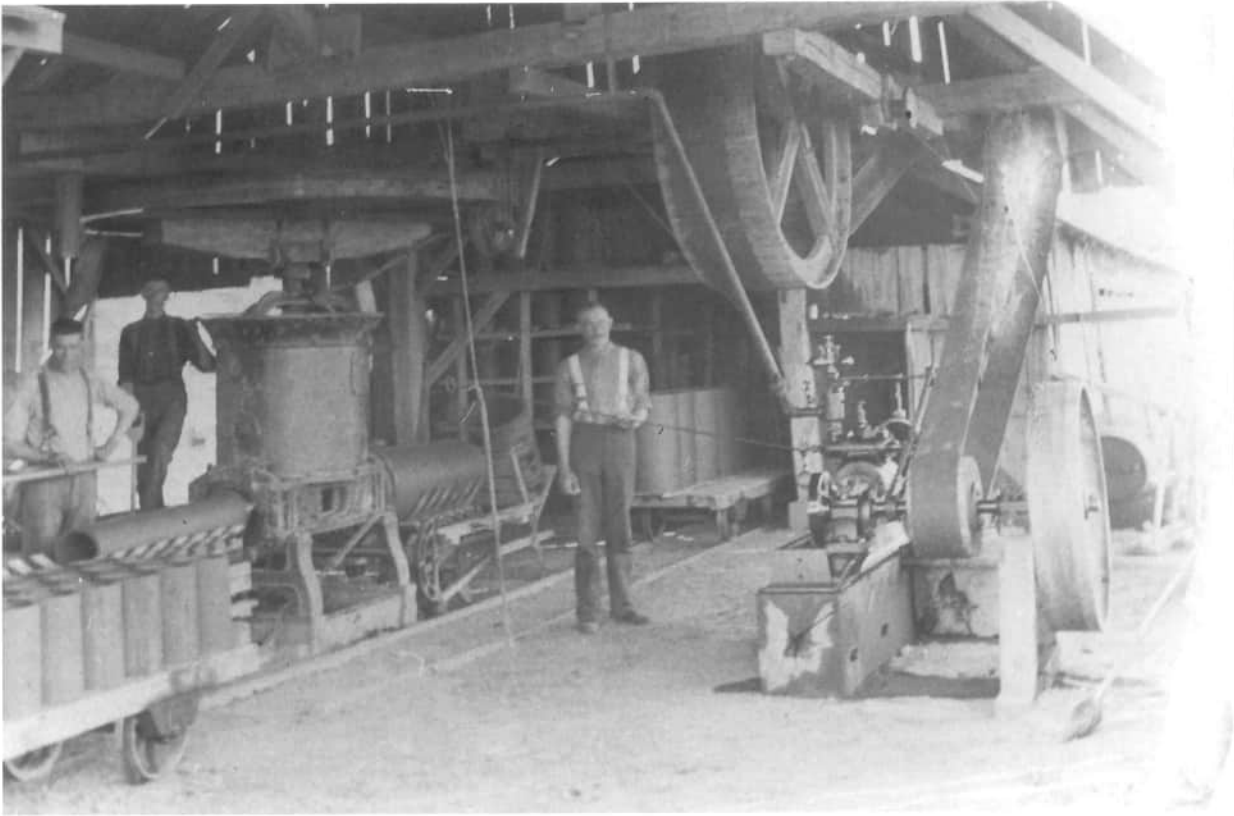
Front Row: 1. Frank Topp, 2. Henry Reichert, 3. Unknown, 4. Mike Gagel

Back Row: 1. Unknown, 2. Unknown, 3. Henry Goecke, 4. John Kramer, 5. Unknown, 6. Matt Gast



About 1920 - The Joseph Goecke Tile Yard was located on the east edge of Maria Stein. It burned down on Wednesday, July 21, 1926. It was located on the southeast corner of St. Rt. 119 and Kremer Road.





About 1916 - Ben Tangeman, Sr., hauling tile for the Goecke Tile Yard.

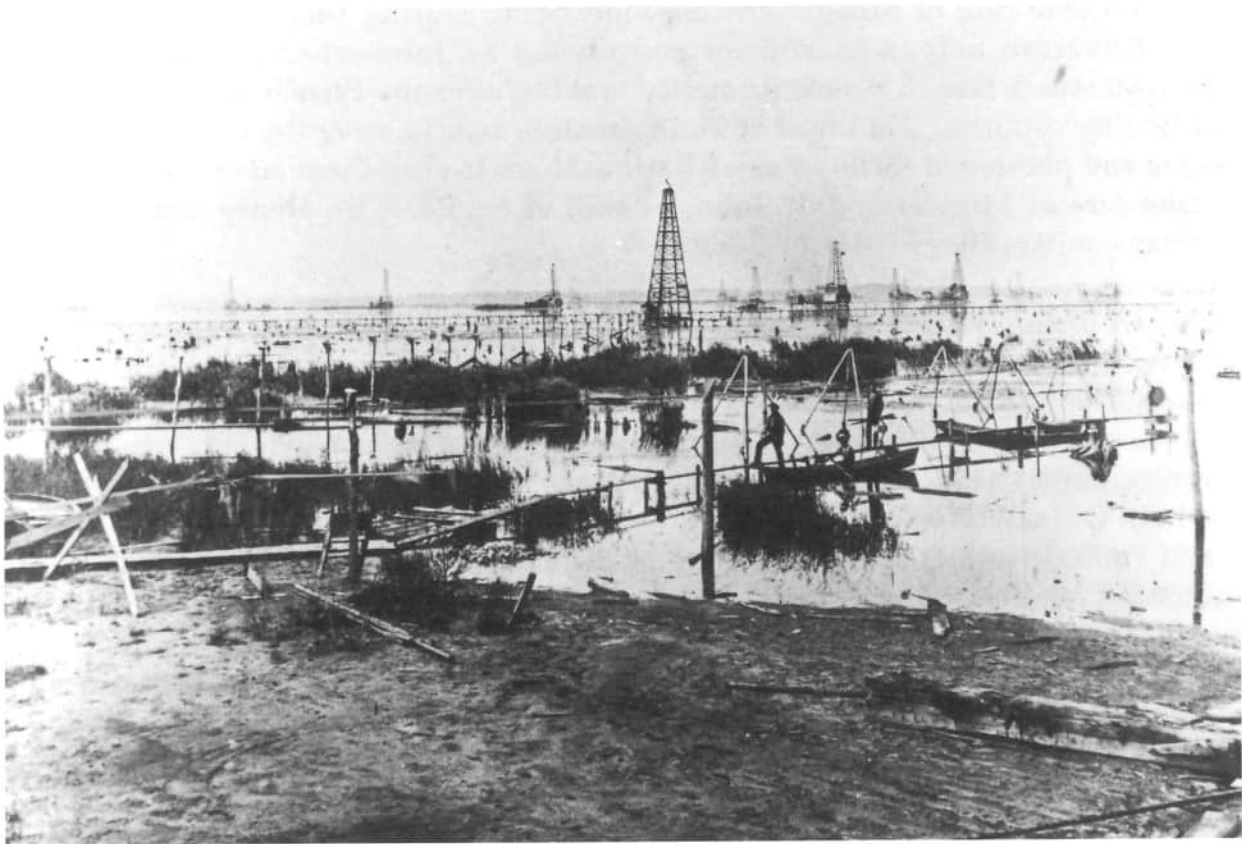


**A Day at the Celina Reservoir  
about 1925**

**Frank Mescher  
Ed Goecke  
Ben Tangeman  
Joseph Goecke  
Henry Goecke  
Tony Voskuhl  
Al Goecke  
"Butch" Ben Tangeman**



**About 1925 - Henry Goecke  
operated a furniture store and was  
the local undertaker.**



**GRAND LAKE - SAINT MARYS**  
1890 - 1900

Excerpts from "History of St. John Parish," by Henry Leugers, 1986

## MARIA STEIN CONVENT

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 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 Lorreto 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 laying of the cornerstone of the new buildings on November 16, 1845, where he wept bitterly because his beautiful estate had fallen into the hands of such "infamous" people.

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 instance, 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 was 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. The Guest House was razed on the orders of the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood in April 1999.

## RELIC CHAPEL

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 to 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.

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.

## RETREAT HOUSE

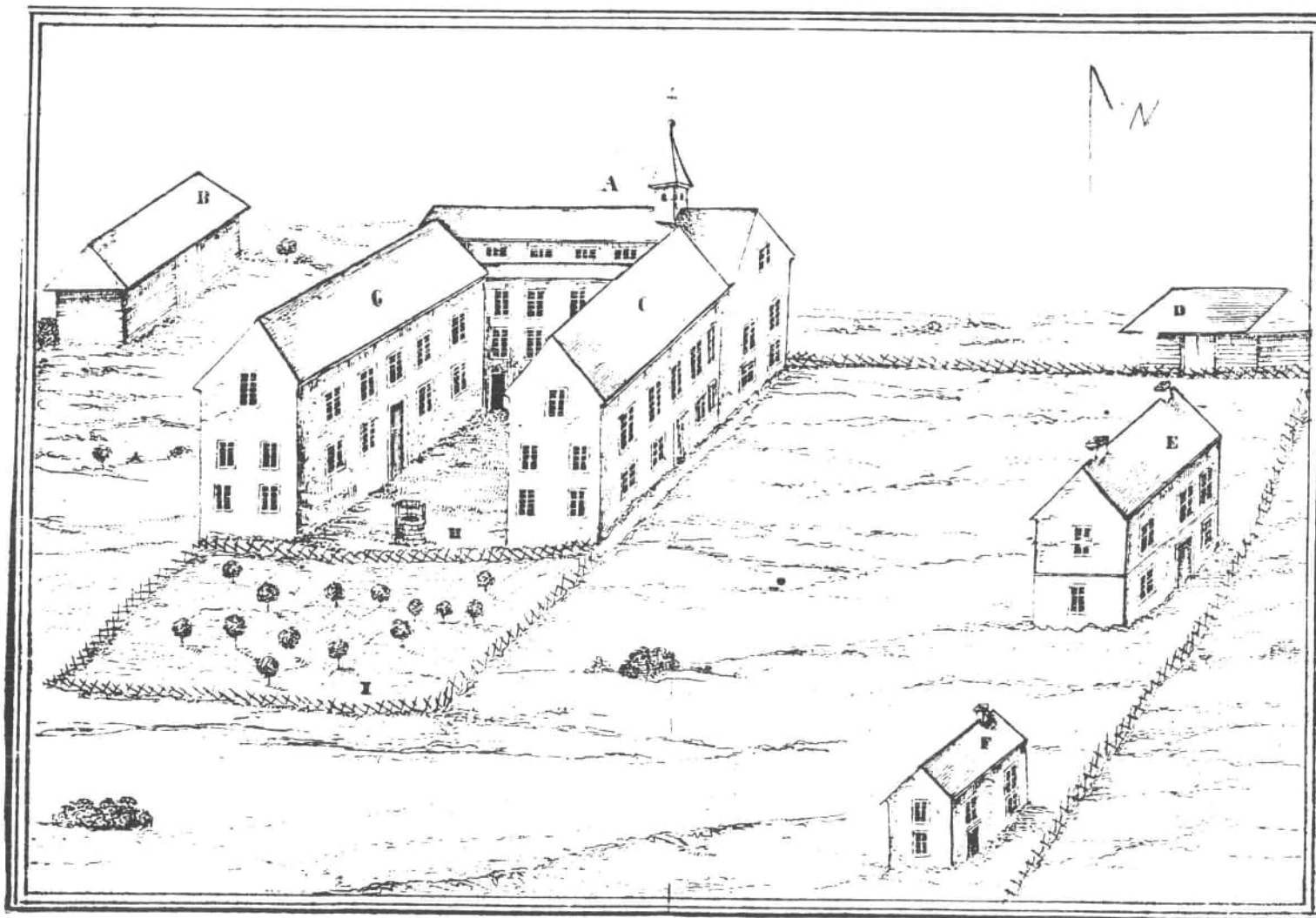
During this time things were happening at the convent. In 1950 an infirmary, Lourdes Hall, was built at the Motherhouse in Dayton and the sick from Maria Stein Convent were moved there. The oldest of the Convent buildings was then razed and made into a lovely patio conducive to prayer and peace. This 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 Sisters 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 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.

After the 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 Register 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," the convent and retreat house have become a unified entity serving the needs of all who come.



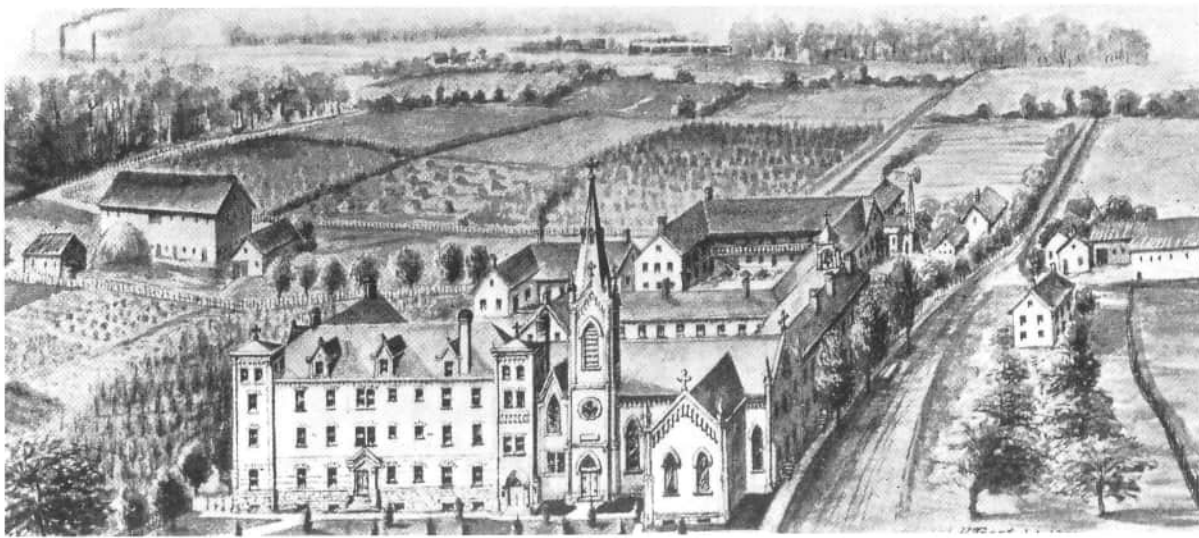
### 3<sup>tes</sup> Missionshaus vom kostbaren Blute

*Neu Mariastein, Maria Helferin der Christen Bisum Cincinnati.*

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 childrens' 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

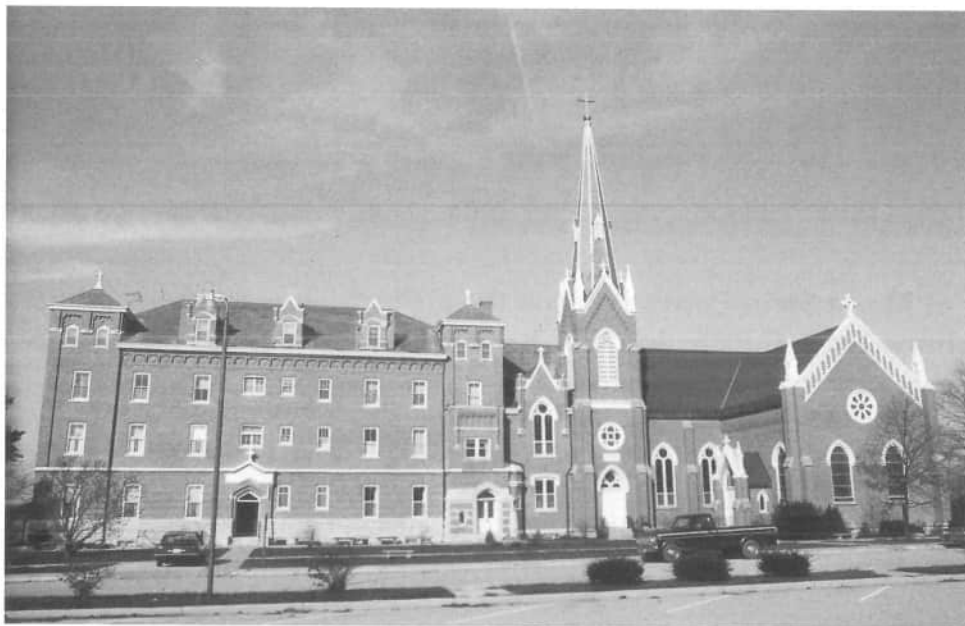




A view of Maria Stein Convent "from the air," which was drawn by Father Paulinus Trost, C.P.P.S., in 1907. Recently a copper cut of this picture was found and this picture was made from it by the Messenger Press.

The view is facing west.

Note the smokestack (upper left) of the New Idea Factory. Also, note the train in the center - back, (the Cincinnati-Hamilton-Dayton Railroad, C H & D R.R.).



## MARIA STEIN SHRINE AND CONVENT

Picture taken in 1985



**MARIA STEIN GUEST HOUSE, BUILT IN 1858**

**This building was razed in April 1999, by orders  
of the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood**

**Original Guest House was built in 1846**

**Picture taken in 1985**



## MARIA STEIN RETREAT HOUSE

Dedicated April of 1963

Picture taken in 1985

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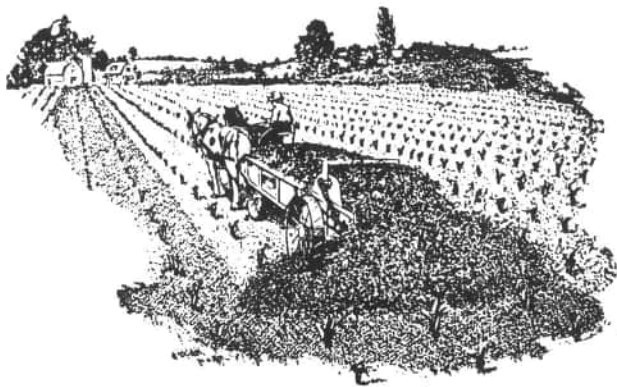
MARIA STEIN, OHIO.

.....  
**Dr. A J. Wilke**

Phone No. 9

**Maria Stein, - Ohio.**  
.....

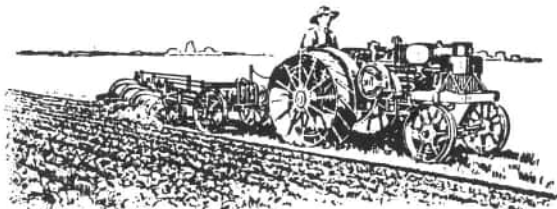
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