



Barquilla de la Santa Maria

BULLETIN of the Catholic Record Society -
Diocese of Columbus

Vol. XVII, No. 4

April, 1992

THE SLAVIC CATHOLICS OF GUERNSEY AND NOBLE COUNTIES by Lorle Porter, Ph.D.

[This multi-part story was provided to us by Dr. Porter from preliminary drafts of a book she is preparing for publication this year. The work concerns a part of our history with which very few are familiar. We are extremely grateful to Dr. Porter for allowing us to publish this work and will inform our readers when the book is available. - Ed.]

Part 1

Establishment of Parishes under the Bishops of Columbus

On May 8, 1886, J. G. Montag, dressed in a black suit, white shirt and black string tie, rode the train from Barnesville to Cambridge in eastern Ohio. He might have been a drummer on his rounds, but he was a Roman Catholic priest -- on his. Father Montag stopped off at Gibson Station, at Campbell's Station, and then at Cambridge. At Cambridge Station he received a shock. He was prepared for the marriages and baptisms he normally performed, for the McCarthys, Brislens, Dolans, and O'Haras, but now he was approached by coal miner Mike Shelley and friends. Father Montag, aided by the halting Slovak of Shelley, wrote down the names of his newest parishoners "from Hungary", and -- in Latin ceremonies -- married Andrew Kochina to Anna Gweykus, John Martsinko to Mary Talovwich, John Gervenich to Anna Sabol, and John Goolige to Anna Bocher. Then Armbruster's Bakery and "The Bucket of Blood" Saloon in the Depot Hotel rang to "strange" music, accompanied by "strange" food. Times had changed in Guernsey County. (1)

The rapid industrialization of the American North in the second half of the nineteenth century coincided with peculiar events in Europe which produced a seemingly endless evacuation of able-bodied men from Italy, Austria-Hungary, and the Russian empire. The revolutions which had rocked Central Europe generationally since the French Revolution were cries for national independence and land reform. Activist plots brought harsher and harsher retaliation from ponderous police states. Through it all, peasants bore the brunt of a political milieu which they had no hope of altering. These were the people who forged new lives in the America of the Steel Age.

The American labor market in the 1870s was short-handed and violent. In 1877 the Pittsburgh railroad strike verged on a second civil war, which was quelled only by the invocation of federal troops. The "Gilded Age" produced unprecedented wealth and a "deepening economic and social injustice." American labor turned militant. Employers went abroad seeking docile labor.

With the oriental tap turned off by the Oriental Exclusion Act of 1882, labor contractors turned to the Central European market. Although paid recruitment was forbidden by Congress in 1885, the initial offers of passage money unleashed a flood. In 1880 five million "New Immigrants" arrived, 2,100 in a single day in 1882. (2)

The construction of railroads through Guernsey County, Ohio was undertaken, in part, to facilitate interest in thousands of acres of coal. The laying of track and the influx of "New Immigrant" miners went hand-in-glove, as the opening of coal mines initiated a massive migration of Slavs into the region.

Father Montag, who was pastor of St. Mary's Parish, Batesville, from 1882 to 1897, had a porcupine dropped into his lap. The New Immigrants flooded into the huge parish and he could not speak to them; he could barely minister to their needs. In September of 1886, Montag married John Lurian and Anna Stopho of Trail Run, "lately from Hungary" and John Czewhns and Clara Barko. Trail Run [now Robins] marriages continued as more women came to join men in the coal fields in a town that sprang into existence overnight. Father Montag married eight couples in 1888 and the growth of the miners' community forced the establishment of St. Benedict's Parish in Cambridge.

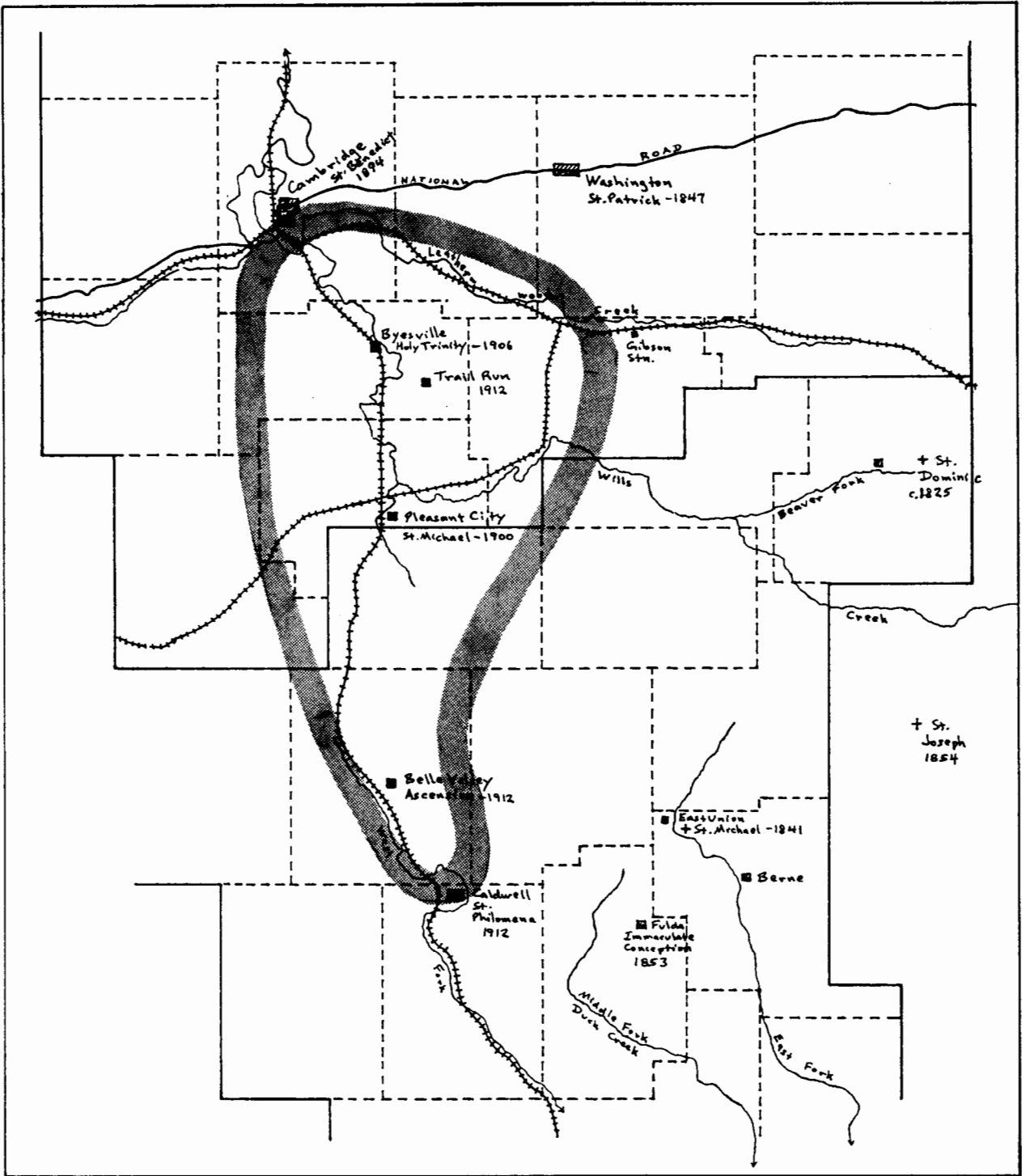
Cambridge

Until the 1880s only a dozen Catholic families had lived in or around Cambridge. The Armbrusters and Heidelbacks were part of the 1848 influx of Germans, now thoroughly Americanized and holding skilled trades: a baker and a railroad engineer. But the New Immigrants had to be served. In 1894 a room on Wheeling Avenue was rented for the offering of Mass and in 1897 Father Nathaniel McCaffrey became resident pastor, with a newly erected frame church named St. Benedict. It was just a chapel, on the corner of an alley on a side street, built to accomodate the few Catholic families living in Cambridge. (3) The priest at St. Benedict was supposed to serve the coal fields, but nobody imagined the numbers of people riding the trains destined for Trail Run and its sister villages. (4)

The sheer numbers of the Central Europeans overwhelmed the "old established Church", which still in reality was only an adolescent. The Catholicism was common to the two peoples, but the traditions, the languages, and even the rites were not. Immigrants from the oppressive empires still saw in the Church their lifeline, but there was a void, a loneliness of the soul.

The importance of the Church in the lives of the immigrants can scarcely be overestimated. In other relationships, they were forced to accomodate themselves to American life. But with their church they could retain European ceremonies, traditions and language. The Church was their place of refuge in the midst of an alien environment, an undisturbed corner of the old country in the midst of the new. (5)

Astute American bishops began to search for priests who could speak to these newcomers. In desperation, the highly controversial concept of national parishes was embraced. (6) A Polish priest from the earliest American settlement of Panna Maria in Texas ministered to Poles in Chicago in the 1860s. (7) The first Slovak Roman Catholic Church in America was consecrated



Portions of Guernsey and Noble Counties, from Cambridge south to Caldwell, showing the general locations of the churches mentioned in the text. The shading shows the approximate boundary of the Upper Freeport No. 7 coal field.

in Hazleton, Pennsylvania in 1885. (8) With the immigrant trains daily disgorging hundreds of miners into the Ohio coal fields, Rt. Rev. John A. Watterson and his successor, Irish-American Rt. Rev. James J. Hartley, Bishops of Columbus, began a search for such a priest; it would be several years before the search was over.

Pleasant City

Cisco mine began work in 1892, at Fairview, just across the creek from Pleasant City in south-central Guernsey County. Suddenly Pleasant City "was truly taken by strangers and the old settlers now form but a scant handful." (9) Among the miners was a huge chain of Byzantine people from Slovinky, Spis County, Slovakia. Sometimes a circuit-riding priest offered Mass in private homes (10), then in 1898 Latin rite Catholics and Byzantine rite Catholics organized for the purpose of building a church. On January 25, 1899, Henry and Sara Robins for \$700 sold to the Board of Trustees of the "Greek and Roman Catholic Congregation of St. Michael's Church of Pleasant City, Ohio" real estate (less coal rights) on the land "now being mined by the Walhonding Coal Company." (11) The Latin rite trustees (Mike Davola and John Litten) and the Byzantine trustees (names illegible, unfortunately) stood on a hill among the apple trees and planned their church. While the miners were working on the foundation, Byzantine and Latin priests "conducted services at regular intervals" in the town. (12) Somehow the arrangement did not hold. On December 18, 1899 the Latin rite trustees signed over the property to the Byzantines for the consideration of \$1.00. (13) Work progressed nicely on "the Greek Catholic Church;" "Hartler's of Cambridge having put on the slate roof and completed the spire last week. If there is not too much delay in receiving the building materials it will be ready for dedication by the first of January." (14) In January of 1900, Bishop Watterson of Columbus dedicated the structure. (15)

St. Michael's remained a mission of the Latin rite priests at St. Benedict in Cambridge. (16) At the end of 1904, Father J. H. Wagner, who had replaced Father McCaffrey, reported 380 souls under his care at Cambridge, Gibson Station, Pleasant City, and Trail Run. All of the marriages, half of the burials, and fifty of sixty-four baptisms performed since the first of the year were of Slavs. (17)

The Latin rite priests welcomed the assistance of any Slavic priest (of either rite), but there were few in the country. The nine Slavic priests who were in America in 1891 were joined by fifty-nine others by 1905 but they were serving eighty-nine congregations stretching from New Jersey to Minneapolis. (18) A pattern of circuit riding via railroads grew up. The baptismal pattern of St. Michael's suggests that the church was part of a circuit. In 1901 it was visited by Fathers Nicholas Stecovich and Eugene Volkay. In 1902 Desiderum Zubricky visited in February, Leon Levicky in April, Stecovich returned in August, September, and November, and Volkay also was back in September. Volkay was in the parish in 1903 and recorded his own marriage to Anna Nebreberzky in the register. Father Eugene Szatula was their sponsor. (19) In 1904 Fathers Julius Pasztelyl and Vladimir Mihalich visited. The annual Catholic Directory still listed St. Michael's as a mission of Cambridge in 1904 but in 1905 Pasztelyl was listed as pastor. During that year, however, Fathers Emil Burik, Mihalich, Zubricky, and Joseph Penyak appear in the records. Clearly these priests were on a circuit which included Pleasant

City. During the visits, they boarded with parishoners. Marie Troyan Smith recalls the special arrangements her family made for such visits. (20) But the circuit also accounts for the frequent absences during which sacraments were administered by local Latin rite priests. "The faithful had to be satisfied with a hurried visit made by a travelling priest who could spend no more than a day or two in one place. Some communities would not see a priest for a year, others for a much longer period." (21) When a priest was there for a period, he tried to make improvements. In 1910 Father Mihalich purchased land for a cemetery and Father Joseph Hanulya, consultor to the new Byzantine rite bishop for America, came to Pleasant City to bless the ground. (22)

(To be continued)

NOTES

The author wishes to express her gratitude to Father Thomas Bennett, Archivist of the Diocese of Columbus, for his diligent search for records of the Byzantine Rite Catholics.

1. Roman Catholic priests did not wear the Roman collar in Ohio until 1882, an effort of the frontier Church to "fit in." Witnesses to these first marriages were Mike Shelley, Clara Barko, John Martsinko, John Ermuch, and the bridal couples.
2. Thomas Bailey, The American Pageant (Boston, 1956), pp. 500-504, 543-545.
3. Hartley, Rt. Rev. James J., History of the Diocese of Columbus, Vol. II, p. 148.
4. Marriages of Slavs are recorded at Temperanceville up to 1894.
5. Joseph S. Roucek, The Czecks and Slovaks in America (Minneapolis, 1967); page 39.
6. This was not such a new concept. Parishes organized by language were common in American cities from the early 1800s.
7. Victor R. Greene, "For God and Country: The Origins of Slavic Catholic Self-Consciousness in America", in The Other Catholics (New York, 1978) p. 449, n.13.
8. Roucek, page 51.
9. Abe Secrest, quoted in C. P. B. Sarchet, History of Guernsey County (Indianapolis, 1911), p. 354.
10. t. Michael's Byzantine Rite Catholic Church 60th Anniversary (Pleasant City, Ohio, 1958).
11. Guernsey County Deed Book 60/299.
12. William G. Wolfe, Stories of Guernsey County, Ohio (Kingsport, Tenn., 1943), page 408.
13. Gurnsey County Deed Book 60/4.
14. Pleasant City News, December 1, 1899.
15. John MacCarthy, A History of Corpus Christi Parish, Belle Valley, Ohio (1956).
16. Hoffman's Catholic Directory for 1898-1906, courtesy of the Archives, Diocese of Columbus. There is no way to trace the finances of the church. The \$700 was a huge amount for miners; the Latins surrendered claim for \$1.00. The church was built by professionals. The financial records of St. Michael's and of the Diocese of Columbus for this period are missing. Because St. Michael's was a mission of the Latin diocese, I think it is

- quite possible that Bishop Watterson provided much of the money for the construction.
17. Census report, Archives, Diocese of Columbus.
 18. Father Nestor (Nicholas) Volensky is cited in St. Michael's souvenir book as the organizer of the parish. I do not doubt it, I simply cannot document it.
 19. Father Volkay was about to become a national figure. Many of the priests at St. Michael's were married, among them Father Joseph L. Milly (1887-1956) [who with is wife Mary (1888-1946) is buried in the cemetery], Father George Hritz and Father John Hunchak.
 20. Marie Troyan Smity, Oral History Interview, December 18, 1988.
 21. Priests who served in later years of this period were:
 - 1906: Volkay, Mihalich, Burik, Penyak
 - 1907: Burik, Volkay, Zubricky, Mihalich
 - 1908: Mihalich, Burik ("Birro" in Hoffman's Directory)
 - 1909: Mihalich, Burik, Leon Levicky, and Emile Novak
 - 1910: Novak, Arseny Gavula, Alex Novak, Mihalich, and Burik.
 22. St. Michael's Souvenir booklet.

ORIGINS OF GERMAN CATHOLICS OF COLUMBUS
FROM THE HOLY CROSS PARISH CENSUS
(Continued from Vol. XVII, Number 3)

Frank, Andreas, born 13 March, 1828 in Ochsheim, Unterfranken, Baiern, son of Adam Georg Frank and Margaretha Rieger. Wife Johanna Tauch, born 1827 in Stockheim, Baiern, daughter of Joseph Tauch. Married Jan. 21, 1855. (nine children)

Frank, John, born 4 Nov., 1821, son of Jacob Frank and Catharine; died 30 Aug., 1903. First wife: Maria Klaus, 1826-1864 (four children). Second wife: Kunigunde Wittmann, born 28 Nov., 1836, daughter of Peter Wittmann and Barbara Feder; widow of Louis Fischer. (one Fischer son and one Frank son)

Frank, John Nicolaus, born in Baiern, died 1869. Wife Eva Tauch, born 1819 in Gerolshofen, Württemberg, daughter of Joseph Tauch and Barbara Kropf; died 1887.

Frank, Peter, born 13 Mar., 1825 in Steindorf, Kurhessen. Wife Anna Maria Berens, born 13 June, 1821, daughter of Johann Heinrich Berens and Anna Maria from Neunkirchen, Hülßen, Hannover; married at Neunkirchen. (Widow of Gerhard Grethen, born 1817, died 19 July, 1854, native of Meissen, Amt Fürstenau, Hannover, son of Hermann and Marianna Grethen.) (one Grethen child and four Frank children)

Frech, Engelbert, born 11 Feb., 1844 in Weitingen, Horb, Württemberg, son of Engelbert Frech and Dominica Peccari. Wife Maria Lang, born 27 Jan., 1850 in Cincinnati, daughter of of Francis Lang and Appollonia Utz. Married at St. Mary's, Columbus. (five children)

Frech, John, born 25 Dec., 1832; died 13 Sept., 1892. Wife Anna Maria Zeller, born 4 Nov., 1843 in Hohenstadt, Ellwangen, Württemberg, daughter of Johann Zeller and Anna Maria Kreutzer; died 5 April, 1910. (five children)

Frey, Friedrich, born 18 April, 1809 in Holzerode, Göttingen, Hannover. Wife Theresia Phalbusch, born 30 Aug., 1812, Bodensee, Göttingen, daughter of John [Phalbusch] and Regina Gleitzer. (two daughters)

Frey, Henry, born 4 July, 1823, Salbach, Canton Selz, Elsass, Strassburg, son of Joseph Frey and Margaretha Schenk; died 1897. Wife Marianna Zimmer, born 13 Aug., 1827 in Vöckelberg, Rheinbaiern, daughter of Johann Jacob [Zimmer] and Marianna Kling. (six children)

Frey, Louis, born 1 Nov., 1847 in Columbus, son of Louis Frey and Marianna [Müller]. Wife Josephina Weingärtner, born 27 June, 1849 in Dayton, Ohio, daughter of Andreas Weingärtner and Marianna Müller from Elsass. Married in Dayton (three children)

Frick, Matthaeus, born 21 Aug., 1831 in Röhthis, Voralberg, Oesterreich, son of Bernhard Frick; died 18 March, 1875. Wife Mrs. Emma Kremer, born 6 Jan., 1842 in Freiburg, Baden, daughter of Michael Spitzer and Maria Anna Maurer, from Godenheim, Baden. Married 14 Oct., 1867. (Her first husband, whom she married 18 Jan., 1860, was Jacob Kremer: born 2 Aug., 1838 in Lambertheim, son of Johann Kremer from Baiern; died 21 Aug., 1863.) (two Kremer sons and one Frick son, the latter born in Chillicothe)

Friedrich, Carl A., born 2 Dec., 1814 in Unterschefflenz, Baden. Wife Rosina Kühner, born 7 June, 1821, Unterschefflenz. Married in Oberschefflenz. (one daughter)

Fritz, John, born Oct. 15, 1840 in Baltimore, Maryland. [The meaning of the next words is unclear. The name Bernard is crossed out. Then: Sophia Hugo de 2 conjug Cleveland]. Wife Walpurga Luff, born 18 May, 1838 in Bondorf, Würtenberg, daughter of John Lad. Luff and Sophia Kinle; died May 22, 1893. Her first husband had been Magnus Bender, son of Joseph Bender and Catherine Bertram of Emnan [?] Sigmaringen, whom she married at Little York, Pa.; he died in 1863. (three Bender and eight Fritz children)

Fritz, Joseph, born 27 June, 1824 in Tyrol, son of Benedict Fritz and Veronica. Wife Catherine Geisinger, born 29 April, 1834 in Leffingen, Neustadt, Baden, daughter of Joseph Geisinger and Francisca Bader. (eight children)

Futterer, John Georg, born 1825 in Beiren, Iberlingen, Baden, son of Carl Futterer; died April, 1875. Wife Victoria Weickerle, born 28 Nov., 1828, Frickingen, Heiligenberg, Baden, daughter of Philip Waekerle and Brigitta Birkhofer; died 29 Apr., 1897. Married 25 Oct., 1849. (seven children)

Gärtner, John, born 24 May, 1824 in Eiweiler, Nofelden, Birkefeld, son of Peter Gärtner and Dorothea Straub. Wife Maria Studer, born 1828 in Kesseldorf, Elsass, daughter of Bernard Studer and Maria. (four children)

Gärtner, John A., born 14 Oct., 1831 in Prinzcastel, Rheinprovince, son of Nicholas Gärtner and Margaretha Müller; died 1890. Wife Justina Bähr, born 24 Sept., 1836 in Columbus, daughter of Clemenz Bähr and Agnes Doll, from Baden. Married 15 Oct., 1854. (twelve children)

(To be continued)

DONATIONS AND ACQUISITIONS FOR THE SOCIETY'S LIBRARY

We are always grateful for gifts of books and other records relating to the Church in our field of interest, especially the present dioceses of Columbus and Steubenville. The following were donated or otherwise acquired in recent months.

Porter, Lorle, Ph.D., The Western Leatherwood Valley: Lore City, Gibson Station, New Gottengen; 1991. - gift of the author

The Catholic Encyclopedia, K. of C. edition in fifteen volumes and index; New York: The Encyclopedia Press, Inc., 1913. (lacking volumes 5 & 10)
- gift of Charles & Rita Meterer

Video tape, "Remembering St. Mary's: The Legacy of Msgr. Edmund Burkley"
- gift of Department of Communications

Grassbaugh, Martha Leah, The Arnold Families of the Danville Area In Knox County, Ohio (1991). - gift of the author

Devaney, Rev. Michael J, O.M.I., A Church in the Wilderness, the History of S.S. Simon and Jude Catholic Church, West Jefferson, Ohio (1992).
- gift of the author

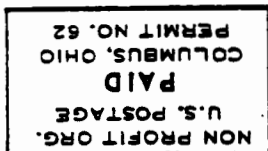
Knapke, Luke B, ed., Liwwät Bñke, 1807-1882, Pioneer; Minster: The Minster Historical Society. - purchased

Photo directory of New Lexington St. Rose Parish, 1981
- gift of Sr. Donald Thacker

Records of Beaver St. Dominic, Noble County (now Temperanceville St. Mary, Belmont County): Baptisms, 1832-1872 and 1897-1917; Marriages, Confirmations, Communion, and Burials, 1833-1860. - gift of Rev. Charles Mascolino
(via Dr. Lorle Porter)

Kennedy, Dolores Yadon, St. Clare Catholic Church, Colesburg, Hardin Co., Ky. Sesqui-Centennial St. Patrick's Church, Sugar Creek, Pa., (1956). (Includes marriage records, 1837-1955)
St. Malachi Catholic Church, Cleveland, Records of Marriages, 1865-1899 by the Greater Cleveland Genealogical Society (1978)
- gifts of D. M. Schlegel

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