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THE HISTORY OF ST. MARY'S PARISH MINERTON, VINTON COUNTY, OHIO

By Herman E. Mattingly



Sketched above is the church of St. Mary's, Minerton, Vinton County, Ohio, which was built in 1921, and destroyed by fire in October, 1978. Long neglected, the front doors, the windows, and the interior furnishings were gone. The church stood on an elevation in a woody area with no home near. It burned at night. The fire may have been started by hunters who used the church to keep warm. It was the third church of the little parish to be destroyed by fire: the first in 1873; the second in 1921. (Sketch by Wally Toscano, Karlsberger and Associates, Architects, Columbus.)

THE HISTORY OF ST. MARY'S, MINERTON

Another example of lost records, neglected cemetery (the hallowed repository of the relics of saints), and abandoned church, is that of the now long defunct parish of St. Mary's, Minerton.

Rising out of a group of pioneer Irish Catholics who came to the area of Wilkesville, Vinton County, in the 1830's, St. Mary's for many years enjoyed the privilege of a resident pastor.

It should be noted preliminary to any history of the little urban parish that it was listed with some confusion in the editions of the early Catholic Almanac/Directory. First notice of it was given in the Catholic Directory of 1841, when it was listed merely as Wilkesville, Gallia County. (Vinton County was erected in 1850. Previously the area of Wilkesville was in Gallia County.)

The Directory gave this description of the mission: Two thousand acres of land, part of a large tract owned by Mr. P[atrick] Quinn, abounding with iron, salt, etc., and one of the finest wheat regions in the west, only eighteen miles from the Ohio River, and having adequate water power, have been very liberally granted for the support of a pastor, an asylum for orphans, and schools. Industrious Catholics would find it to their advantage to settle in this vicinity." The same notice appeared for the next three years. Wilkesville was not listed at all in 1845-1847.

The notice about Mr. Quinn's property was first accompanied with the publication in the 1841 Directory of a longer notice which appeared in the Telegraph of Cincinnati, Sept. 12, 1840. The first record of any transfer of property is found in Gallia County Deed Books, Vol. 19, p. 346, when Alice Quinn transferred 440 acres to Rev. Joseph O'Mealy on January 19, 1846.

The little mission was first listed in the Catholic Directory in 1848. It was then given as attended from Portsmouth by Father Emmanuel Thienpont, and notice was given that a church was being built. In 1849 there is some confusion in the Directory listing which states that Father Thienpont attended at number of missions including "Laurence Co., Raccoon Creek, four miles from Wilkesville, St. Matthew's." It continued under Portsmouth until 1854 when it was given its own status as merely "Wilkesville, Vinton Co. Rev. D. Kelly, who also attends St. Michael's (sic!) on Raccoon Creek, four miles distant." Father David Kelly was the first resident pastor.

In 1858 the listing was changed to read: "Wilkesville, Vinton Co., St. Michael's, Rev. Ph. McMahon, who also attends Raccoon Creek." In 1859 it was given as St. Malachy's., but changed back to St. Michael's in 1860. It first appeared as St. Mary's in 1864, and continued so thereafter.

A rather colorful history of St. Mary's, Minerton (Wilkesville), was written in 1903 by Philip Keck. He died a few months later. His narrative must be given great authenticit because of his part in much of it. The story as given here is based on his account.

The early Irish settlers of Wilkesville Township, Vinton County, included Patrick Quinn and his wife; his son, Daniel with his wife and small family; Simon Dolan with his wife, Bridget Quinn, daughter of Patrick; P.K. Dolan, and daughter, Katherine; James Karr (known as Uncle Jimmie) and son, John. According to Mr. Keck the group left New York City where they owned valuable property, and made an inspection tour of the country. In 1837 they settled in Wilkesville Township.

It must be noted here that Mr. Quinn's glowing description of the locality as given in the Telegraph of 1840, hardly coincides with the facts. Although there was iron and coal in the area, it can scarcely be considered as prime farming land. It did have valuable timber, however.

Mr. Keck writes that Mr. Quinn "built a small frame church, 24x30 ft., and named it St. Mary's." He also is said to have donated "part of a section of land for the exclusive benefit of St. Mary's Church."

Father Joseph O'Mealy, who was stationed in Portsmouth, seems to have been the first priest to visit the Irish settlers in Wilkesville Township. His visits were of an occasional nature and continued until 1844. (1) In 1846 there were only six Catholic families making up the Wilkesville mission.

Father Emmanuel Thienpont (2) replaced Father O'Mealy in Portsmouth and visited Wilkesville quarterly from 1844 to 1851. Mr. Keck writes of him: "He was a most earnest, interesting true missionary priest, making his quarterly visits on horseback, and the old citizens who lived at Pine Grove Furnace and Gallipolis always gave him a hearty welcome as he rode past in the fulfillment of his mission. In those early days we had no telephone or anything of the sort to tell the glad news that the priest had come; but there were many little boys and girls to run over the settlement to notify everybody that the priest was here. On these occasions every member rushed to the confessional and Communion for fear it might be the last chance."

It seems that about this time there was an influx of Catholic families from the Pittsburgh area. This probably brought about the decision of Bishop Purcell of Cincinnati to send a resident pastor. He came in 1851 in the person of Father David Kelly (3).

Mr. Keck gives a colorful account of Father Kelly's first days. "We had no accommodations for him, not even a respectable house in which to live. He was content, however, to move into a miserable round log hut where there was but one large room, which served as parlor, sitting room, study, dining room, kitchen and bed room. The chimney connected with the hearth was an old-fashioned stick chimney, made of split sticks and dried clay.

"Something came to mind I heard that happened about that time which will show the young generation how the people lived in early days. Some one gave the alarm that the stick chimney was on fire, and about to set fire to the old hut. All in the house rushed for buckets and water to put out the fire. Father Kelly rushed out with a bucket of water to help extinguish the fire. The aged housekeeper who assisted the priest's sister in doing the work, rushed after him, demanding the bucket of water, asking that it not be wasted since she wanted it to prepare supper."

Although the Catholic Directory noted in 1848 that a church was being built, it was probably a year or so before that the church was erected (4). Father Kelly's stay as pastor lasted from 1851 to 1857, during which time he built a rectory and enlarged the church. He had more than the usual hardships of the missionary times. He had many missions to visit and had no horse for transportation. The congregation took up a collection and bought one for him (5).

Mr. Keck gives Father Kelly's schedule of missions: About once a month to Gallipolis, 24 miles; Jackson, 16 miles; Latrobe Furnace, 9 miles; Iron Valley Furnace, 8 miles; Zaleski, 18 miles; Vinton Furnace, 12 miles, and Eagle Furnace, 8 miles." Some of these were in nearby counties, especially Laurence County. At Eagle Furnace Father Kelly stayed in the home of a well-to-do farmer, a non-Catholic, who gave him permission to celebrate Mass in his parlor for the nearby Catholics. Mr. Keck gives as authority of this hospitality the testimony of the farmer's son, a Homer C. Jones, Vinton County attorney. Mr. Jones said "we always welcomed the day when Father Kelly came to visit us; we all thought so well of him." When Attorney Jones was a candidate for auditor of Vinton County his Catholic friends did not forget him. He was elected.

Father Kelly's transfer to Dayton was keenly felt by the little Wilkesville congregation. He was succeeded in 1857 by Father Philip (Peter) McMahon (6), who remained until 1861.

Father Timothy J. Tierney (7) became pastor in 1861 and remained through 1864. For two years after his departure in 1864, the little congregation was taken care of by Father John C. Albrinck (8) of Pomeroy, and Father James Donahoe (Donohoe or Donahue) (9), who came from Chillicothe. There were also occasional visits made by the pastor of St. Paul's, Athens.

Father Michael Ahern (10) became resident pastor of St. Mary's, Minerton, in 1865. It is peculiar to note that the sacramental records of all the years previous to Father Ahern's time, are lost. And Father Ahern's records of Baptisms start with March 8, 1868. He was succeeded by Father Daniel B. Cull (11) who first made entry in the register of Baptisms October 29, 1871. He was replaced by Father Thomas D'Arcy (12) whose name appears in the baptismal register for the first time on Feb. 9, 1873.

Unfortunately, he was pastor but a short time when the church burned to the ground. The tragedy was caused by a defective flue, and occurred at 9 a.m. on a Sunday morning. The parishioners stood watching their house of worship burn, a total loss, with no insurance. Mr. Keck describes the event: "Father D'Arcy felt their loss keenly. He called his flock about him and over the ashes of the burned structure they all agreed that Mass should be held in the open air. It was a beautiful sight to behold the entire congregation kneeling upon the frosty ground attending Mass."

After the fire Mass was celebrated in the little parsonage until a new church could be provided. In the winter of 1874 money was raised by subscription to build the new church. The contract was awarded to Nicolaus Fagen. Work

on the new church was started in the spring of 1874. The people attended Mass in the new church as soon as it was enclosed, before the plastering was done and without pews.

In a letter to Bishop Rosecrans (13) of July 31, 1875, Father D'Arcy wrote that "I lived here in poverty and misery..... In my simplicity I lent what money I had to different poor families here...." He left the parish shortly afterwards, Father Michael Ahern returned to take charge in September, 1875 and remained until March, 1878. Father Ahern now had great difficulties in raising money to pay the church debt. There were differences among the parishioners which added to the problems of Father Ahern. In a letter to Bishop Rosecrans (14) he concludes by stating that it might be better for the bishop to replace him, "A new broom according to the saying, sweeps clean," he wrote, thinking a new priest might do better.

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- (1) Father Joseph O'Mealy (1814-1856) was born in Ireland, ordained in 1838, and died in Springfield in 1856. He was a brother of Father Patrick O'Mealy who died in Dayton in 1849. (Cf. Lamott, History of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, p. 364).
 - (2) Father Thienpont (c.1803-1873) was a famous missionary throughout Ohio. He is said to have established the first parish in Dayton, Emmanuel Church, which apparently took its name from him. He is buried in Calvary Cemetery, Columbus.
 - (3) Father David J. Kelly was born in Ireland in 1820, and was ordained in 1853. He died in Dayton, Ohio, in 1867.
 - (4) The date of the building of the church is not certain, but Louise Ogan Biggs indicates in her "A Brief History of Vinton County," that it was erected about 1845-1846.
 - (5) Although Mr. Keck does not mention him, Father Richard Gilmour, afterwards Bishop of Cleveland, visited Wilkesville during these years. He was stationed in Portsmouth from 1853 to 1855, and in Ironton, 1856-1857. While Bishop of Cleveland he visited Europe in 1875. He wrote from Cannes, France, in 1876 to Father Daniel B. Cull, then pastor at Wilkesville: "I am glad to see the old place has at last begun to show signs of life again. How faithfully you follow me"(Cf. Letter in Columbus Diocesan Archives).
 - (6) Father McMahon was later at the Cathedral in Cincinnati (Cf. Catholic Directory, 1868). He was born in Ireland in 1826 and ordained in 1855. He came to the Diocese of Cincinnati in 1857 (Cf. Lamott, op. cit., p. 362).
 - (7) Father Tierney was ordained in Cincinnati in 1859. He died in Chillicothe, Ohio, in 1865.
 - (8) Father John C. Albrinck (1830-1902) was a highly respected priest. He was born in Germany in 1830; ordained in 1853, and died in Cincinnati in 1902.
 - (9) Not much is known about Father Donohoe. Bishop Hartley states (p. 312, History of the Diocese of Columbus) that he succeeded Father Gilmour as pastor of Holy Redeemer in Portsmouth.
 - (10) Father Michael Ahern was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1840, and ordained in 1863. He died Sept. 9, 1910.
 - (11) Father Cull served Circleville and Portsmouth as well as Wilkesville. He was sent to Bellaire in 1879 as pastor and served many missions in that area. He died at Bellaire in 1888.
 - (12) Not much is known about Father D'Arcy. He had been at Sidney in 1866 (Cf. Catholic Directory for 1866). He was at Wilkesville from 1873 to 1875.
 - (13) Columbus Diocesan Archives.
 - (14) Columbus Diocesan Archives.

(To be continued)

MT. CALVARY CEMETERY, COLUMBUS, OHIO

BURIAL RECORDS
(Continued)

Some additional historical notes to the history of Mt. Calvary Cemetery published in the June issue of the BULLETIN, may be found in the History of Franklin and Pickaway Counties of Ohio, 1796-1880, page 533, published by Williams Brothers. The purchase price of the cemetery tract was \$3,000.00. A year after the purchase it was decided by a joint meeting of the representatives of the German Catholics of Holy Cross Church and the English Catholics of the city, that upon payment of three hundred dollars, Germans could choose the north half of the cemetery tract. Previous to the consecration of the cemetery by Bishop Rosecrans on Nov. 2, 1874, portions of the ground had been blessed for burials. Father John W. Brummer, who died June 19, 1872, was the first priest to be buried at Mt. Calvary Cemetery.

Burial Records (Continued)1870 (Cont.)

Freiter, Joseph, Sept. 12
Noltmeir, Julius, Sept. 13
Ury, Johan, Sept. 15
Merk, Edward, Sept. 26
Luckhaupt, Valentin, Sept. 27
Lind, Edward Anton, Sept. 29
Hoellenthal, Margareth, Sept. 25
Ehrler, Maria Anna, Oct. 3
Reeb, Charles, Oct. 4
Plaettner, Margaretha, Oct. 7
Bockmeir, Franz, Oct. 18
Engler, Georg, Oct. 21
Hirsch, Maria, Oct. 20
Betz, Wilhelm, Nov. 9
Reeb, Maria, Nov. 9
Redel, Johannes, Nov. 14
Koenig, Katharina, Dec. 5
Koenig, Joseph, Dec. 13
Bauer, Andreas, Dec. 14
Kissenweter, Anna, Dec. 15
Koenig, Anton, Dec. 25
Saurer, Maria & Katharina, Dec. 30

1871

Demmerling, Wilhelm, Jan. 4
Boehm, Christina, Jan. 14
Griebel, Johannes, Jan. 17
Falkenbach, Otto, Jan. 30
Maerz, Maria, Feb. 19

1871 (Cont.)

Balzle, Johann, Feb. 27
Docho(?), Mary, March 1
Weber, Theresia, March 6
Daum, Margaretha, March 17
Weiss, Martin, March 31
Hokenmiller, Wilhelm, March 31
Geschwendner, Maria, May 6
Keller, Franz, May 24
Bartling, Christ, June 17
Oestreicher, Maria, June 25
Hofer, Joseph, July 3
Lind, Carl, July 5
Handler, Katharina, July 8
Schumacher, Karl, July 13
Koch, Josephina, July 16
Deinhart, Johan, July 24
Deust, Elizabeth, July 29
Dobmeir, Jakob, July 31
Paul, Otto, July 31
Eiset, Christian, July 31
Schwarz, Anna Rosina, Aug. 1
Eissel, Georg, Aug. 8
Breit, Johan, Aug. 7
Ehrett, Theresia, Aug. 11
Metzner, Maria, Aug. 15
Reinhart, Katharina, Aug. 24
Palmer, Eugen, Sept. 2
Fink, Michael, Sept. 3
Keller, Joseph, Sept. 5
Studer, Carolina, Sept. 6

1871 (Cont.)

Gottlieb, Maria, Sept. 23
 Fischer, Peter, Sept. 27
 Gunzmann, Johan, Sept. 30
 Arceglin, W., Sept. 30
 Froelich, F. Xaver, Sept. 25
 Mann, Joseph, Oct. 5
 Backmayr, Franziska, Oct. 7
 Benzheimer, Heinrich, Oct. 12
 Braunhold, Elizabeth, Oct. 19
 Krum, Christoph, Nov. 2
 Baumgart, Peter, Nov. 6
 Lukhaupt, Peter, Nov. 7
 Pirrung, Bernhart, Nov. 17
 Held, Katharina, Nov. 19
 Schaefer, Ferdinand, Nov. 20
 Waengert, Katharina, Nov. 30
 Stutz, Heinrich, Dec. 9
 Hiel, Joseph, Dec. 10
 Keller, Andreas, Dec. 19
 Franzoss, Rohr, Dec. 24
 Fladung, Amalia, Dec. 28

1872

Miller, N.N., Girl of, Jan. 6
 Redel, child of, Jan. 10
 Geschwendter, Georg, Jan. 12
 Baumann, Maria, Jan. 21
 Redelbach, Anna Maria, Jan. 28
 Kelle, Agatha, Feb. 2
 Hirl, Sophia, Feb. 8
 Gaterdam, Friedrich, Feb. 13
 Schreck, Eva, Feb. 13
 Herner, Edward, Feb. 13
 Muth, Margaretha, Feb. 11
 Carpenter, Johan, Feb. 14
 Veith, Anna Maria, Feb. 28
 Berel, Maria Barb., March 4
 Deinhart, Ludwig, March 14
 Lavell, Mrs., March 16
 Killian, Johan, March 19
 Hauck, Bertha, March 21
 Frank, Johanna, March 29
 Nippel, Louise Regina, April 6
 Miller, Elizabeth, April 12
 Unversagt, Joseph, April 12
 Teufel, Cyrenus, April 17
 Starck, Joseph Wilhelm, April 17
 Siefert, Elizabeth, April 21
 Gehl, Theresa, April 23
 Weller, Wilhelm, April 25

1872 (Cont.)

Eigensee, Georg Jakob, April 19
 Gehl, Georg, May 9
 Leopold, Joseph, May 9
 Trautmann, Elizabeth, May 21
 Frank, Johan, June 10
 Hermann, Michael, June 17
 Brandecker, Johan, June 17
 Hermann, Karl, June 22
 Fuchs, Wilhelm, June 28
 Gschwil, Josepha, July 4
 Schwarz, Maria, July 4
 Marzetta, Johan, July 5
 Koehler, Friedrich, July 17
 Heilmann, Katharine, July 22
 Miller, Johan, July 23
 Ruhl, Carolina, July 30
 Frischke, Johan Georg, Aug. 4
 Bersel, Barbara, Aug. 7
 Schneider, Clara, Aug. 12
 Schmied, Child of, Aug. 13
 Leuchtenberg, Lena, Aug. 15
 Saile, Paul, a Child of, Aug. 15
 Lang, Maria Sophia, Aug. 18
 Hamilton, Maria, Aug. 22
 Ewight, Helena, Aug. 23
 Vornehm, Heinrich, Aug. 26
 Goldschmied, Andreas, Aug. 26
 Lunz, Michael, Sept. 1
 Osterreicher, Martha, Sept. 7
 Osterreicher, Emma, Sept. 8
 Hoellenthal, Karolina, Sept. 9
 Ostreicher, Joseph, Sept. 15
 Rein, Adelheid, Sept. 17
 Merz, Nicklaus, Sept. 23
 Klaus, Theresia, Sept. 25
 Ziegelmliller, Wilhelm, Sept. 19
 Ruhl, Johan, Oct. 5
 Oerthoefer, Heinrich, Oct. 17
 Albert, Johan, Oct. 26
 Gehl, Louise, Nov. 5
 Lind, Carolina, Nov. 13
 Maehler, Joseph, Dec. 4
 Fuchs, F., Dec. 6
 Schneider, Martin, Dec. 8
 Gramlich, Franz, Dec. 15
 Leipold, Margarethe, Dec. 29
 Luft, Pfilimina, Dec. 30

1873

Weissbecker, Katharina, Jan. 4

1873 (Cont.)

Fischer, Anton, Jan. 8
 Maeder, Mathilda, Jan. 12
 Schmid, Elizabeth, Jan. 14
 Birrung(Pirrung?), Barbara, Jan. 15
 Richter, Georg, Jan. 20
 Schraudt, Maria, Jan. 18
 Roth, Georg, Jan. 24
 Wiliam, Remiy, Jan. 26
 Weirich, Josephine, Jan. 27
 Niebling, Anna Maria, Jan. 31
 Wagner, Ignatz, Feb. 3
 Stein, Maria, Feb. 7
 Krausmann, Elizabeth, Feb. 21
 Thomas, Johan, Feb. 22
 Stecher, Maria, March 2
 Wolls, Karl, Son of, March 2
 Wolls, Maria, March 10
 Morschaeuser, Wilhelm, March 11
 Fraas, Regina, March 12
 Frischke, Maria, March 16
 Zieger, Otto Albert, March 19
 Saile, Barbara, April 1
 Weber, Johan, April 2
 Dourson, Jakob, April 3
 Jakobs, Katharina, April 6
 Grener, Kunigunda, April 12
 Woefle, Christine, April 23
 Merk, Elizabeth, May 6
 Walter, Johan, April --
 Fischer, Kunigunda, May 7
 Knott, Amalia, May 14
 Rapp, Elizabeth, May 16
 Frank, Adolf, May 18
 Dehner, Anna Barbara, May 21
 Kelle, Benedickt, May 23
 Hermann, Edward, May 23
 Birkenbach, Maria Elizabeth, June 13
 Lang, Karl Herman, June 22
 Sauer, Maria, June 24
 Weisbecker, Mrs. Adam and Children
 [Transferred from old cemetery]
 Schaeffer, Katharina, July 2
 Williams, Katharina, July 3
 Hellenthal, Katharina, July 6
 Gantner, Ambrose, July 6
 Eichenlaub, Ludwig, July 8
 Luckhaupt, Matholde, July 11
 Deckling, Friedrich, July 20
 Wagner, Maria, July 20
 Schneider, Katharina, July 24

1873 (Cont.)

Niederlaender, Julia, Aug. 6
 Saile, Joseph Heinrich, Aug. 11
 Frank, Anna, Aug. 11
 Trautman, Karoline, Aug. 14
 Jakobs, Mrs. Fr., Aug. 16
 Merz, Maria, Aug. 24
 Hartung, Joseph, Aug. 19
 Fischer, Emma Josephina, Aug. 26
 Hock, Crescentia, Sept. 1
 Voll, Johan, Sept. 21
 Seifert, Katharina, Sept. 16
 Winkels, Magdalena, Sept. 22
 Aschwendner, Maria, Sept. 23
 Holzbacher, Crescentia, Oct. 3
 Klaus, Georg, Oct. 16
 Schwarz, Christina, Oct. 19
 Schneider, Georg, Oct. 19
 Leitsch, Edward, Oct. 21
 Rohrenbeck, Johan, Oct. 22
 Stork, Johan, Oct. 19
 Leitsch, Johan, Nov. 5
 Kuhn, Martin, Nov. 6
 Moriz, Anna Maria, Nov. 24
 Gerling, Katharina, Dec. 2
 Bichner, Karl, Dec. 3
 Veit, Sebastian, Dec. 8
 Betzhold, Dorothea, Dec. 21
 Schraudt, Kasper, Dec. 22
 Frech, Cirinius, Dec. 26

1874

Juli, Stephan, Jan. 6
 Trott, Johan Joseph, Jan. 6
 Stalder, Katharina, Jan. 19
 Trap, Joseph, Jan. 19
 Mehling, Franz, Feb. 1
 Frank, Karolina, Feb. 3
 Hoy, Dr. Franz, Feb. 9
 Reinhart, Katharina, Feb. 19
 Muth, A Child of Johan, Feb. 20
 Roling, Anton, March 14
 McGuire, Theresia, March 17
 Deibel, A. Maria, March 25
 Rohletter, Elizabeth, March 31
 Hoy, Margaretha, April 2
 Meder, Maria, April 9
 Loechler, Maria, April 12
 Sauer, Franziska, April 20
 Mr. Brillenmayr, April 20

(To be continued)