

HISTORY OF ST. MARY'S PARISH FAMILY 1837- 2005

In 1796 Nathaniel Massie, a surveyor, founded Chillicothe in the midst of a perfect wilderness. The town grew in importance after Ebenezer Zane's mail road passed through in 1797. In 1800 Chillicothe became the seat of the territorial government. It was then an important frontier town with a post office and one hundred fifty houses. When Chillicothe became the capital of the new State of Ohio in 1803 it brought an influx of legislators and settlers.

Little is known about those of the Catholic faith in the early days of Chillicothe. The first notice of Catholics in Chillicothe is in a letter dated February 1, 1807, State of Ohio, Ross County, Chillicothe, from Whaland Goodee and Major Philips. This letter was sent to Bishop John Carroll, Baltimore, Md., asking that he send a priest to Chillicothe to minister to the Catholics estimated at "betwixt 30 and 40 which come from the Eastern Shore." It is not known what action Bishop Carroll took about this request.

Benedict Joseph Flaget And Stephen Badin

In 1808 Fr. Benedict Joseph Flaget was appointed by Pope Pius VII as Bishop of Bardstown, Ky. (Travel in those days was arduous and events moved slowly. It was not until Nov. 4, 1810 that Flaget was consecrated Bishop of Bardstown by Bishop John Carroll, Baltimore.) Bishop Flaget visited Chillicothe on the first Episcopal Visitation of his diocese with Father Stephen Badin in the autumn of 1812. They reported that the faith of the few Catholics present was nearly extinct. In John Poland's sketch of the Catholic Church in Chillicothe, which he wrote in 1896, he noted: "The name of Father Badin, the first priest ordained in the United States, should not be omitted in these recollections of the early days. There are those living who met and knew this wonderful man. There was hardly a bridle path in Ohio during the first half-century of its statehood over which Father Badin had not passed. The pioneers of Chillicothe, irrespective of creed, learned to revere this Apostle of the Middle States. Fearless, rugged, and of a strong personality, he went from cabin to village, fanning the embers of Christianity into an inextinguishable flame, and planting the seed of his faith in the hearts of the remaining aborigines."

It was not until the year 1815 that a sufficient number of conscientious Catholics had arrived and Father Fenwick made his first recorded visit to Chillicothe. In September 1816 four Dominican students were ordained by Bishop Flaget. It was the first ordination of Friar Preachers in the United States and these four priests relieved Father Fenwick's duties in Kentucky. He devoted himself entirely to the Ohio missions shortly after this time.

In 1816 Father Robert Angier, Father Fenwick's assistant at Lexington, Ky. passed through Ohio on his way to Maryland. He cared for the Catholics along the way, taking the place of Father Fenwick on one of his semi-annual trips. Bishop Flaget made his second visitation to Ohio in 1816 traveling to Cincinnati and Chillicothe.

The Diocese of Cincinnati was created in 1821 and Father Fenwick was appointed by Pope Pius VII as the first Bishop. The diocese comprised the State of Ohio. Bishop Fenwick was also charged with the spiritual administration of the territories of Michigan, Indiana and Wisconsin. Bishop Fenwick made his first Episcopal visit to Chillicothe in 1822. He again visited in 1825 and 1832.

Martin Bauman

There being no established place of worship, the Bishop and visiting priests celebrated mass and administered the sacraments in the homes of the faithful. One such place was the home and tavern of Martin Bauman. He came to Chillicothe with his family in 1817. In 1822 Martin Bauman and Mary, his wife

purchased lot #12 in Tiffin's addition on Deer Creek Street where they erected a two-story frame tavern. It was in a large room in Bauman's tavern that the Dominican Friars celebrated mass for area Catholics on the occasion of their infrequent visits to Chillicothe. Bauman's tavern was destroyed by fire in 1866. It stood on the present-day site of 148-152 Park Street.

Canal Brings Immigrants To Chillicothe

The building of the Ohio & Erie Canal, which started in 1825, brought many Irish and German immigrants to work as stone cutters and laborers. Chillicothe's first canal boat was built by Martin Bauman and John Renshaw on the ground in front of Bauman's hotel which faced the canal just to the east.

In a letter written by Bishop Purcell in March 1835, he informed the Chillicothe faithful that he was sending the Reverend Mr. Henni of Cincinnati to administer the "blessings of our holy religion." Rev. Henni, who spoke English, German and French, was to visit here on the fourth Sunday of Lent. Father Henni was to call on all the Catholics in settlements along the way. Bishop Purcell advised all that they "will have an opportunity of attending to the urgent precept of the Paschal Communion, which it is hoped they will not fail to observe religiously." Rev. John Martin Henni went on to become the first Bishop of Milwaukee in 1844.

In the summer of 1835 Bishop Purcell made his first Episcopal Visitation of his diocese. In Chillicothe the Catholics crowded the parlors of Bauman's hotel, where the Bishop offered the sacrifice of the Mass and 25 or 30 communicants received the Blessed Eucharist. The Bishop in commenting on his visit to Chillicothe stated: ". . . The want of a church is likewise sensibly felt in this place -- and it needs but the presence of a clergyman to have a neat and commodious building speedily erected . . . The number of Catholics is supposed to be considerable, but at present they are as scattered sheep without a shepherd . . ."

First Parish In Ross County

Rev. Father Henry Damien Juncker was the first priest ordained by Bishop Purcell. On June 7, 1837, he appointed him as Chillicothe's first resident pastor. Chillicothe then ceased to be a mere mission point and became instead a center of missionary life and activity. Father Juncker at once set out on horseback through the hills and valleys of Ross and surrounding counties "bringing back to the fold the fallen-aways and converting the liberal minded." Traveling with a few belongings and sacred vessels in his saddlebags, Father Juncker visited missions in Circleville, Columbus, Waverly, Piketon, Portsmouth, Frankfort, Delaware, Marion and a few smaller stations.

It was on July 7, 1837, that Archbishop John Baptist Purcell purchased the south half of In-Lot #122 on South Walnut Street from the "Wardens and Vestrymen" of St. Paul's Episcopal Church for the sum of \$1,300. These two events - the appointment of Fr. Juncker and the property purchase - were the beginnings of St. Mary's Parish.

St. Mary's Church Dedicated

When the little church on South Walnut Street was dedicated to the honor of St. Mary on August 15, 1837, it was said "tears fell from many aged eye." The *Catholic Telegraph*, Cincinnati, September 21, 1837, reported: "It gives us great pleasure to state that the populous and beautifully situated town of Chillicothe in this State has been at length blessed with a Roman Catholic Church and a resident pastor . . ."

Immediately after the Walnut Street property was acquired Father Juncker set about fitting the little church with all the furnishings necessary for Catholic worship. He then purchased an old frame house and had it moved on the church lot where it served in the dual capacity as a parsonage and school.

Bishop Purcell Makes Episcopal Visit

This item appeared in the *Scioto Gazette*, Thursday, October 24, 1839: "Bishop Purcell, of the Roman Catholic Church, made a visit to the section of his diocese which embraces this city and vicinity, within the past week. On Saturday evening, upon special invitation by a number of gentlemen, his Reverence addressed a large audience in the Court House, where those who might not have been convinced by his efforts to prove that his is the only Christian Church, were highly delighted by his elevated and thrilling eloquence."

The *Catholic Telegraph*, Cincinnati, October 24, 1839, gave this account of Bishop Purcell's Chillicothe visitation: ". . . On the Sunday he preached in the morning and evening to an overflowing church [St. Mary's], and gave the Pontifical Benediction. Forty-four persons received confirmation, and from 90 to 100 were admitted to Holy Communion. We are happy to hear that the prospects of the Church in Chillicothe are most flattering, and that much good has been accomplished by the zealous pastor."

First Catholic Graveyard

In 1839 Father Juncker purchased a one-half acre plot on the Milford Pike for the use as a burial ground for the increasing Catholic population. The sum of \$430 was paid for this ground at the northwest corner of the present-day Western and Delano Avenues. In 1858 land was purchased on Limestone Road and the burials moved there. This long-forgotten cemetery was once located along the north side of the present-day Allen Avenue about a half block west of Vine Street. This cemetery was used until 1892 when St. Margaret's Cemetery was opened on 22 acres of the old Governor Worthington estate. This land was the very generous gift of Mrs. Sarah Worthington King Peter, a daughter of Governor Worthington.

Father Juncker Travels To Europe

Sometime during the early 1840's Father Juncker went on a trip to Europe in the interest of his parish and the missions. During his absence a number of priests including Bishop Purcell rendered temporary service at St. Mary's. On his return from Europe Father Juncker found that his congregation had grown to such large proportions that he immediately set about to secure a church large enough for its accommodation. Actually a committee for this purpose had been formed in 1841. Courthouse records show that on May 18, 1842, Bishop Purcell purchased Lot Nos. 1 and 2, of Atwood and Schutte's addition to Chillicothe for the sum of \$800.00 from Parker J. Gardner and wife and Daniel A. Schutte. These lots were on the northwest corner of Church and Water Streets.

After about a year and a half for some unknown reason - perhaps because of the lack of funds to construct a new church - these two lots were sold October 2, 1843, to Fidel Buehler for \$860.00. In the summer of 1844 Bishop Purcell came to Chillicothe and found a thriving parish. It was evident something had to be done to get a larger church. The same property was bought back from Mr. Buehler for the increased price of \$1,052.36. The deed is dated March 27, 1845.

Father Juncker's pastorate in Chillicothe ended in July 1845 when he transferred to Dayton. Some years later he became the Bishop of Alton, Illinois. At the time of Father Juncker's departure from Chillicothe the Catholics in town then numbered about fifteen hundred, the larger part German. The congregation was much too large for a small brick church and much difficulty existed.

St. Peter's Church Begun

Work on a new church begun immediately and the cornerstone of the new St. Peter's Church was laid June 29, 1845. The church, costing about \$10,000, was dedicated August 30, 1846. All services were then held in St. Peter's. In 1847 the missions in Ross, Pike, Pickaway and Fayette Counties were turned over to the Jesuit Fathers. At St. Peter's Rev. Father Kalcher, S.J. was assigned to the German-speaking members of the congregation and Rev. Father D'Hoop, S.J. to the English-speaking members. These two priests were soon joined by Rev. Carroll, S.J., and Rev. Tscheider, S.J. Father Tscheider was placed in charge of neighboring missions. All resided in Mr. Kauffman's house on Church Street. This information is taken from *Historical Sketch of the Catholic Church in Chillicothe* by Msgr. Ernest Windhorst in 1896.

The church experienced remarkable growth from the year 1837, when Father Juncker began his unremitting labors of his flock, up through 1848. During that period there were a total of 823 infant baptisms, 127 Catholic marriages and one mixed marriage. After the Jesuits came this increase of the faith continued.

Congregation Increases

In Chillicothe, the Catholic population was increased after the 1846 potato famine in Ireland drove hundreds of thousands of Irish to America in one of history's greatest migrations. The famine lasted until 1855. After the 1848 Revolution in Germany many Germans came to Chillicothe as wine gardeners, carpenters, masons, blacksmiths and saddlers. Again our Catholic flock increased. All this made for very crowded conditions at St. Peter's Church. Historic records contain no further mention of Father D'Hoop who had ministered to the English-speaking members of the congregation. Perhaps he had left Chillicothe. In any case friction developed when both the Irish and German parishioners stubbornly held to the use of their native tongues in the effort to retain their autonomy and distinctiveness.

In 1849 about a dozen of the English-speaking families returned to the original St. Mary's on Walnut Street. The Rev. Fr. George Aloysius Carroll, S.J. was then appointed pastor of St. Mary's. About Father Carroll we find these comments: "Father Carroll was a man of sterling qualities and force of character and, although not a great orator, his words carried with them the power of conviction. He was a type of the clerical gentleman of the old school and, by his life and example, planted deeply the seeds of the Catholic faith in the hearts of many which ripened into beautiful Catholic lives." Father Carroll left his charge at St. Mary's in 1851 when the Jesuits withdrew from Chillicothe. The two parishes, St. Mary's and St. Peter's, were then reassigned to the jurisdiction of Bishop Purcell.

In 1853 Chillicothe was one of only four cities in the Archdiocese, other than Cincinnati, which had more than one congregation; the others being Hamilton, Dayton and Columbus. Each of these four had a German and Irish congregation, each with its own church.

In September 1851, Rev. Thomas Joseph Boulger succeeded Father Carroll. The "genial" Father Boulger was welcomed as a true son of Erin. He was ordained by Archbishop Purcell on June 3, 1847. Upon his arrival in Chillicothe Father Boulger found the unpretentious little church on Walnut Street much too small for the growing numbers of St. Mary's congregation.

On March 3, 1852, Archbishop Purcell purchased the former Methodist Church building on West Second Street from Michael Davis and wife for \$2,800. This building, on the west half of In-Lot #61 (just west of Cardo's Restaurant), had been vacated by the Methodist congregation in 1849 when they moved over to their newly constructed church on North Walnut Street.

Second Street Church

The Second Street Church then became the meeting house of the predominantly Irish congregation.

This building had earlier been described as being set back quite away from the street with a front lawn enclosed with a high board fence. A walk led up the center of the front yard where entrance was made through large double doors. As one entered he found a large auditorium squarely built with a pulpit and altar at the north end. A balcony or gallery ran around the south, east and west sides of the interior, affording extra seating space. When the "Great Fire" devastated a large portion of the business section of the town in 1852 the church escaped, although buildings on either side of it were destroyed. St. Mary's congregation worshiped here until the present church was built in 1867.

Father Boulger was a scholarly priest, revered by his parishioners and esteemed by all who knew him. In 1854 he was called to Cincinnati to take charge of St. Augustine's Church. Succeeding Father Boulger at St. Mary's was Father Michael Forde who soon became interested in higher education. He founded St. Peter's College which was located on the north side of the Cincinnati Pike, "One mile west of the old and beautiful city of Chillicothe." (Governor's Place on Western Ave.) St. Peter's College was opened for public inspection on the Fourth of July 1855 and 1,500 people assembled on the grounds to listen to Thomas D'Arcy McGee, a well-known Irish orator. The college opened for students in September of that year with the original purpose of procuring students for the seminary. The college failed after a short season. Father Forde was a priest of great ambition but his noble efforts to make the college a success were premature for the existing conditions at that time.

To Father Forde the parish owes an everlasting debt of gratitude for his insight in the purchase of In-Lot #36 which later became the site of beautiful St. Mary's Church. On September 1, 1854, he acquired this lot from Owen T. Reeves for the sum of \$3,250. Perhaps Father Forde had entertained the idea of building a church on this lot for his ever-increasing flock, but found he could not afford to. One month later the title was transferred to Clement Huart, Sister Superior of the Notre Dame Female Educational Institute for the sum of \$4,000. Lot #36 bordered on the south of the Female Institute which the Sisters had operated very successfully for several years. They also may have had dreams of expansion.

Father Forde put his pastoral residence on South Walnut Street up for sale or rent in April, 1855. He then moved into the mansion house of William Marshall Anderson on the grounds of St. Peter's College. This house with pillars still stands at Governor's Place on Western Avenue. Reverend Forde left Chillicothe in September 1855. At his departure from St. Mary's, Father J. N. Thisse took charge of the parish.

Past histories of the Church state that Father Thisse "endeared himself to the faithful with a vivacity of spirit so peculiar to his race, that charmed and attracted all who came in contact with him." On June 5, 1860, he left to take charge of St. Raphael's Church in Springfield, Ohio, and Rev. Michael Kennedy became pastor of St. Mary's.

One priest who served the Second Street Parish appears to have been missed by former writers of parish history. He was Rev. Serge de Stchoulepnikoff. He is listed in the 1858 Chillicothe Directory as pastor of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church on Second Street with residence on the east side of Walnut Street between Main and Fourth Streets. The earliest parish records of St. Mary's are in a tattered volume begun in September 1855, by Rev. J. N. Thisse. Recorded in Latin in this book are found the names of those baptized and their sponsors, signed by the parish priest officiating. From April 30, 1858 to September 13, 1858 all rites of baptism were administered and signed by Rev. Serguis de Stchoulepnikoff. Father Thisse's name again appears in this record on September 30, 1858 and lists all baptisms performed by him to March 28, 1860. From this it appears Rev. Thisse was temporarily away from the parish.

Civil War Era

Fort Sumter fell on April 12, 1861 and the long Civil War began. The parish, then under the charge of

Father Michael Kennedy, was quick to react to the spirit of the time. We find this in the *Scioto Gazette*, April 30, 1861: "Pole Raising - On Thursday evening last, a very tall and beautiful pole was raised in front of St. Mary's Church on Second Street. After it was raised a large banner of the true Union stripes waved at its top, evidencing the feelings of patriotism which prompted its erection. Long may it wave." Many men of the parish joined regiments formed in the area and went off to war.

Father Kennedy remained as pastor until 1863 when failing health compelled him to relinquish his charge. Rev. Michael Ahern then took over the parish until some time in 1864 when he was succeeded by Rev. T. J. Tierney. It was during Father Tierney's pastorate that the property on the southeast corner of Paint and Fourth Streets was purchased from the Sisters of Notre Dame who had conducted on this site an Academy for young ladies since 1848.

The ladies of St. Mary's were quick to offer their talents to aid the parish, as indeed they did many times later. In the *Scioto Gazette*, December 27, 1864, this notice: "The ladies of St. Mary's congregation will hold a fair and supper at Masonic Hall on Wednesday and Thursday evenings, Dec. 28th and 29th, for the purpose of aiding to pay a debt incurred in the purchase of pastoral residence and schoolhouse. The patronage of a generous public is earnestly requested."

In May 1865, the pastoral residence on Walnut Street was offered for sale by Martin Schilder, R. Gorham and William Poland, committeemen of St. Mary's. It was later sold for \$1,854.

Father Tierney died on September 6, 1865. He was the first priest to die in Chillicothe and was buried in St. Mary's Cemetery on Allen Ave. Later his remains were removed to St. Margaret's Cemetery.

On September 17, 1865 in obedience to the orders of the Most Rev. Archbishop Purcell, Rev. John B. Murray took charge at St. Mary's. When he arrived he found that Father Tierney had purchased from the Sisters of Notre Dame their property on Paint Street, which consisted of Lot Nos. 17 and 36 which ran from Fourth Street south to the alley. The price was \$9,000 and of that sum Father Tierney had already paid \$6,506, leaving a balance of \$2,494 due the Sisters.

Again the ladies of the parish came to the front. On January 9, 1866, they announced that they would hold the "Greatest Fair of the Season" at Masonic Hall on the 17th and 18th. Among the several valuable articles which were raffled off were a sewing machine, silver tea set, a new style of silver castor and ladies' furs. Receipts from this fair brought the church debt down to \$600.

Progress of the parish moved at a fast pace under the guidance of Father Murray. In July, 1866, St. Mary's Church building on Second Street was sold to Abram Fiddler for the sum of \$4,150.37. Mr. Fiddler soon set about tearing out the altar and remodeling the historic old church into a livery and feed stable for horses.

On July 31, 1866, workmen began clearing away for the foundation of the new St. Mary's Church on the grounds of the former Notre Dame Academy. The *Scioto Gazette*, August 7, 1866, reported: "We understand the church is to be an edifice of magnificent proportions, and one which will be an ornament to our already beautiful city."

On November 27, 1866, Father Murray advertised that he would receive until January 1, 1867, "sealed proposals for the lumber to be used in the construction of St. Mary's new church." These were years of depression following the Civil War.

April 7, 1867 was a banner day for St. Mary's congregation as well as for St. Peter's and indeed much of the town, for on that day the cornerstone of the new St. Mary's Church was laid by Archbishop John B. Purcell. The ceremony started out with a procession from St. Peter's Church to St. Mary's. Preceded by the bands of

Von Weller and Kutschbach, over two thousand persons marched to the cornerstone laying. It was the largest assemblage seen in the streets since the Morgan Raid scare during the Civil War. Deposited in the stone were copies of the *Chillicothe Advertiser* and *Gazette*, the leading Cincinnati newspapers, *Waverly Democrat*, coins and currency, each of the tickets voted for at the last election in the city, and a parchment written in Latin giving the date and other historic facts.

The months following found the building site a beehive of activity. Horses strained at pulling huge wagon loads of brick, lime, sand and stone to supply the many masons putting up the walls of the church. On October 29, 1867 the *Scioto Gazette* reported: "The brick work of St. Mary's Church is completed, and the sheathing of the roof has been put on, which will be covered with slate, and it is intended to have services held there by Christmas. It will probably be as fine a church building as there is in Ohio."

In 1869 the church was finished inside and finely frescoed and ready for permanent use. On August 15, 1869, the church was dedicated to the worship of the Most High under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary by the Most Rev. Archbishop John Baptist Purcell.

Ten days following the dedication the *Scioto Gazette* reported:

Chillicothe today can truly boast of having one of the finest, if not the finest, Catholic church in the State. Archbishop Purcell in his remarks at the last dedicatory service said that it was the finest church in the diocese . . .

The work has been done under the supervision of the following gentlemen, as contractors:

Architect: Mr. Harding of Columbus
Superintendent: John Cook of Chillicothe
Foreman of Carpenter Work: William Cook of Chillicothe
Stone Masonry: Franks & Co. of Chillicothe
Slate and Galvanized Iron Works: St. Clair & Co. of Columbus
Plastering: McIntire and Beall of Chillicothe
Free-Stone Dressing: Mr. Ritchie of Waverly
Oil Painting: McDowell Bros. Of Chillicothe
Frescoing: Messrs. Tandrop of Cincinnati
The stained glass windows were furnished from the establishment of Messrs. Booth & Riester of Buffalo, N.Y.
Messrs. Walter & Co. of Cincinnati furnished and put up the heating.

The inside work and arrangement is a marvel of beauty and should be seen to be appreciated. There are to be three altars, one main and two side altars. The main altar is to be an elaborate structure of the finest Italian marble . . . The altars and sides of the room are ornamented with full-length fresco paintings of the twelve apostles. The stained glass windows are of different designs and patterns as regards the arrangement of the variegated many-colored glass, and are the gifts of various societies and members of the congregation . . .

The baptismal font was presented by Mr. James Poland, deceased, a gentleman who devoted much time, energy and personal labor to the work of building this church. The carpets adorning the floor are of a very handsome pattern and were selected with special reference to the color prescribed by the forms of the church to be used on occasions of consecration. The pews are of black walnut, with beaded and paneled ends, and are to have scrolled backs and

arms. The communion railing is, we believe, already finished and is surmounted by a slab of superb Italian marble. The church has a congregation of one thousand persons [seating capacity], in the chancel and choir gallery . . . The tower and spire of the building are yet to be finished and will, when completed, reach an altitude of 180 feet from the ground . . .

A later description of the church stated the building as being 66 x 150 feet with a 136-foot tower. It has been admired by experts as an excellent example of early Italian Gothic architecture, and stands today as a monument of the sacrificial spirit of the early Catholic pioneers of the parish.

Another story states: “The tower, in which there is an important bell weighing 2,500 pounds, is about 120 feet in height. The bell was donated by Mr. William Poland.”

Archbishop Purcell Gives Oil Painting, “The Assumption”

This account was published in the *Scioto Gazette*, Wednesday, December 7, 1870: “Archbishop Purcell on Sunday last [Dec. 4] presented Father Murray, of St. Mary’s Church, with a beautiful picture entitled, ‘The Assumption.’ The picture is about 12 x 14 feet and was imported directly from Rome. It was painted by one of the old masters.”

This much-admired oil painting has hung on the wall of the church ever since, and was completely renovated by Old World Restorations of Cincinnati, Ohio in 2001.

It has been said that there were probably none of the pastors of St. Mary’s who did so much to build up the parish as Father John B. Murray. In 1880 Father Murray published a detailed account of the building of the church. In it he gives much credit to the many who made great sacrifices in accomplishing this great project. Excerpts from this account follow:

. . . It is an account of over seventy-five thousands dollars, which were collected and spent in purchasing the lot on the corner of Paint and Fourth Streets, of the Sisters of Notre Dame, and the building of the new church.

During the progress of the work, statements were published at the end of each year. In that way the congregation was kept informed of its financial condition. These report were, perhaps, in many cases misunderstood, and now forgotten. For the satisfaction of all concerned, I present this full report in a permanent form, so that all who contributed to the building of St. Mary’s Church, can see that their money was applied to the purpose for which it was given. I make the report as a matter of duty on my part. In receiving the money of the congregation I always consider myself as a trusted agent, who was bound to give an account to his principal. In order to be able to render an account at any time, I kept the books of the congregation as precisely as possible, considering my many other duties. I managed the whole transaction in the form of a cash account, in which I charged myself with all the money received and credited myself with the money paid out for material, labor, etc . . .

The list of individual donations nearly six-hundred names, and includes moneys received at various times; (1) to purchase the property, (2) to enclose the

church, (3) to plaster the church, (4) to make necessary repairs, (5) to build pastoral residence . . .

The amount credited on the subscription list does not do full justice to a great many individuals of the congregation. Had they contented themselves with merely contributing their money the beautiful church would not now be nearly completed and paid for.

To the ladies and gentlemen who gave their time and labor in making our many fairs successful, the congregation owes very much. The fairs, it is true, were liberally patronized by many who do not belong to our congregation, and for that generous assistance we will be ever thankful. But to the untiring energy of those who, year after year, undertook the management of the fairs, the large amounts realized by that means is mainly due.

Too much praise cannot be accorded to Messrs. Poland, Schilder, Cahill, Savage, Scully, Alberti, Thos. Murphy, and P. J. Seward who acted as the church committee. They willingly gave every assistance and encouragement to the work. The financial credit of the congregation was sustained all along by Messrs. Poland, Schilder, Cahill and Savage, who endorsed the notes on which the money was borrowed to meet the liabilities incurred in building the church . . .

The collection of so large an amount of money and the building of so costly a church were not accomplished without much labor and anxiety. But I look back upon those years with unmixed pleasure, for in all my undertakings I was encouraged by the cheerful assistance and sympathy of the whole congregation. In all those years there was not heard a single word of adverse criticism or one that showed a lack of confidence. For that confidence and assistance I feel unspeakably grateful. By the success of the past I am encouraged to hope that the congregation will finish the good work by paying off the small remaining debt of \$2,945 before the close of the present year.

John B. Murray, Rector

Pastoral Residence

The first pastoral residence or rectory was in the frame house which Father Juncker had moved next to the church on South Walnut Street in 1837. For a time in 1855, Father Forde maintained his residence in the former home of William Marshall Anderson on Western Avenue. The old rectory on South Walnut Street was sold about the time the construction of the new church began in 1866.

Father John B. Murray changed his residence several times. In the 1869 City Directory he is listed as living at 117 Paint Street. Kate Murray, his sister, is also listed at the same address. She was his housekeeper. As this was before our present house numbering system, the number 117 would indicate they then lived in the old academy. In 1873 Father Murray's residence is given as Second Street between Hickory and Bridge Streets. In 1876 his residence is given as "in church east side of Paint between Fourth and Fifth Streets." This was probably when the new rectory was being built next to the church (67 South Paint St.) and Father Murray wanted to be close to observe the progress of its construction. The financial report which Father Murray compiled in 1880 states the (new) pastoral residence and furniture cost \$3,200.

The building at 30 East Fourth Street, which has been renovated and will serve again as the rectory, was acquired in 1958 from the Presbyterian Church. It had been used for a long time as their manse. It is over 150 years old having at one time been owned by James T. Worthington. This building served as the rectory for the pastors of St. Mary's until Father Mario Serraglio returned to the Paint St. address in 1987.

Father Murray Bids Farewell

After the celebration of Mass on Sunday, March 11, 1883, Father John B. Murray addressed a few appropriate remarks to the large congregation and bade farewell. He expressed gratitude for the cordial support given him during the seventeen years of his administration here and asked that the same support be extended to his successor, Rev. Father Patrick Cussack. Father Murray was beloved by his flock and universally respected by the citizens of all denominations. Later that week he left to take up his new charge at Urbana, Ohio.

The old brick wall which had darkened a part of the front of the church yard and rectory was torn down in June, 1883, and replaced by a "light and graceful iron fence."

In late July 1883, the congregation was surprised and grieved to learn of the plan to remove Fr. Patrick Cussack from the parish and transfer him to Dayton. Fr. Cussack had achieved great popularity since he had come here. A committee composed of Messrs. M. Cahill, Ferd Marzluff, Martin Schilder and Major William Poland earnestly asked Archbishop Elder to leave Father Cussack at St. Mary's, but to no avail. A few days later a telegram was received by Father Cussack ordering him to proceed to Dayton. Rev. Fr. James J. O'Donohue of Dayton then became pastor of St. Mary's.

Father James O'Donohue served the parish for four years as a zealous, devoted priest. He was ever ready to lend himself for the good of others. He was succeeded in September 1887 by Rev. Patrick A. Quinn who remained as pastor until September 23, 1889, when ill health compelled him to give up the parish.

During Father Quinn's pastorate he was assisted by Rev. John F. Hickey and they installed "impressive altars" in St. Mary's Church. Father Hickey was transferred to take charge at Marysville, Ohio. Father Hickey, who had been the temporary pastor during Father Quinn's illness, had made a very favorable impression on the congregation during his brief stay.

Rev. Alfred D. Dexter Becomes Pastor

On September 23, 1889, Rev. Alfred D. Dexter was appointed pastor of St. Mary's. Father Dexter, who was well known in the community, was born near Frankfort, Ohio. His parents were George M. Dexter and Mary (McNally) Dexter. Father Dexter was educated in a one-room school house near his native village. He celebrated his first Mass on the following Sunday and delivered his first sermon in St. Mary's Church, Chillicothe. Taking up residence in 1889 he spared no efforts for the advancement of his parish, and St. Mary's prospered.

During Father Dexter's tenure at St. Mary's (1889-1907), he and Father Feeney, assistant pastor, took care of the Mission Church at Waverly. During this period the interior of St. Mary's Church was redecorated and our present stained glass windows installed. The windows

in the church, with the exception of the A.O.H. (Ancient Order of Hibernians) window, an Irish Society, were given "In Memory Of" of individuals or families. The windows in the front of the church was unmarked and the donors unknown. The arched window above the door opening into the church from the vestibule was given by Albert Schilder.

Father John O. Cotter succeeded Father Dexter in 1907. Every change in pastors brought new ideas and improvements to the church and parish. Father John O. Cotter was no exception. He introduced the *Parish Monthly* in August 1908 which was a booklet containing parish news and stories of interest to both adults and children alike.

In July 1908, Father Francis X. Cotter, who had recently been ordained, read his first Mass at St. Mary's and acted as pastor during the absence of his brother, Father John O. Cotter, on his vacation. Father F. X. Cotter was described as "a most eloquent young priest with a brilliant mind and a very bright future in store for him." Soon after this he was appointed assistant pastor at St. Peter's, Cincinnati. Twenty-five years later he returned to St. Mary's as its pastor.

On July 27, 1910, Father John O. Cotter passed away peacefully at the rectory. During his twelve-year pastorate his sister, Miss Ella Cotter, kept house for him. After the death of Father John Cotter his brother, Father Francis X. Cotter, became the pastor until October 16, 1910, when he left for St. Mary's Seminary at Cedar Point, Ohio. Just before he left, the congregation held a farewell meeting in his honor and a reception for Father Dennis M. Halpin, the new pastor. On the following Sunday Rev. Msgr. John B. Murray, Pastor Emeritus of St. Mary's, officiated at Mass. He was very pleased to see the many improvements which had been made to the interior of the church, which he had worked so diligently to build forty-three years previously.

The Academy Of The Sisters Of Notre Dame de Namur

Two Sisters of Notre Dame purchased In-Lot #17 on the southeast corner of Fourth and Paint Streets on September 14, 1848 for the sum of \$8,500. It was the late residence of Gen. John L. Green. The names of the two Sisters on the deed of purchase were Hortense Monsen and Constance Remy. Both were from the Notre Dame Convent on Sixth Street in Cincinnati. Hortense Monsen was Sister Louis de Gonzague, the first major superior of the Sisters of Notre Dame in the United States. She headed the pioneer group of eight nuns who came from Namur, Belgium, in 1840 at the request of Archbishop Purcell.

It was in this house on Lot #17 that the Sisters opened their "Female Institute", a boarding and day school in 1848. The Ohio Legislature, March 1850, passed a joint resolution to incorporate the "Souers de Notre Dame Female Institute of Chillicothe." The school "prospered from the start and was patronized by Protestants and Catholic."

The sisters continued their laborious duties with efficiency and success until 1862 or 1863 when, to the regret of all, they returned to Cincinnati. Besides conducting the Academy, the Sisters had taught daily in the two parish schools, St. Mary's for the English and St. Peter's for the Germans.

St. Mary's Parochial School

Catholic education began in Chillicothe in 1837. In that year Father Damien Juncker purchased the church building formerly used by the congregation of St. Paul's Episcopal Church. After he had fitted the little building on South Walnut Street as a Catholic Church, dedicated to St. Mary, he then purchased an old frame house and had it moved on to the church lot. This frame house served in the dual capacity as a parsonage and school for about ten years.

This early account about St. Mary's School children appeared in the *Scioto Gazette* May 30, 1844: "Juvenile Celebration -- The children attached to the Roman Catholic Sunday School of this city, with their preceptors, turned out on Thursday last made a fine display. The little girls were ornamented with garlands and bouquets, and the whole cortege was led off by fine music. They made an excursion to the residence of William Marshall Anderson, Esq., near the city, ("Governor's Place on Western Ave.) where we understand they were regaled with a beautiful collation." This was on the occasion of Bishop Purcell's visit when he confirmed 67 persons at St. Mary's.

Little was recorded about the history of St. Mary's School in its early years. How long the school remained in the frame rectory on Walnut Street is unknown. Larger quarters were no doubt needed with the increase in children in the parish and the school may have been moved over to the church on Second Street. In any case the old rectory and school house was sold in May, 1865. Since the Sisters of Notre Dame had vacated the Academy at Fourth and Paint Streets in 1862 or 1863, the opening of St. Mary's School in that building probably began at that time under the tutelage of lay teachers.

Mention of the school is found in this notice in the *Scioto Gazette*, December 31, 1861: "St. Sylvester's Festival -- The young folks of St. Mary's congregation have made arrangements for a Fair connected with a "Promenade Concert," to come off this evening in the Masonic Hall, for the benefit of their schools. The entertainment will be a delightful one, and will give great pleasure to all who may attend. Admission only 25 cents - Doors open at 6½ o'clock, Come one, come all."

When Rev. Fr. John Murray became pastor in 1865 his sister, Miss Kate Murray, also came. It is known that she taught school at St. Mary's. The Sisters of Notre Dame returned to Chillicothe about 1867 to teach at St. Mary's School. They stayed until 1872 when they once again departed for their mother-house in Cincinnati. This was the end of their "second sojourn" in Chillicothe. The Sisters of Mercy from Cincinnati served next at St. Mary's School until 1885.

With nearly 200 attending, the school was getting crowded. The *Ross County Register*, March 30, 1878, reported that a new school building 50x70 feet and two stories high was to be constructed on the Fourth Street front of the grounds of St. Mary's Church. "It's an improvement long needed, and will not only add to the beauty and ornamentation of the buildings in that locality." It is not known what happened to those plans - the building was never constructed.

Next to teach at St. Mary's School were the Sisters of Notre Dame. They returned again to Chillicothe at the plea of Father James O'Donohue. This was their "third sojourn" and the last in Chillicothe. They were followed in 1891 by the Sisters of St. Joseph from Buffalo, N. Y. who taught in the school until 1899.

In 1899 the Sisters of Charity responded to the call of Father Dexter to teach at the parish school. The Sisters Of Charity are owed an unpayable debt of gratitude for having served

Chillicothe parochial schools for over 80 years. Sister Thomas Miriam Kane and Sister Dorthea Schwarz were the last Sisters of Charity to serve our community.

Old Academy Building Serves As St. Mary's School

The following information came from the Sister Mary Norma Poucher's story, "Lot 17 and Everything On It," which she compiled in 1949. "During the 19th Century the older boys were taught by lay teachers in three smaller buildings at the rear of the school lot. Mr. Walter Barman said the boys called these buildings 'first, second and third base.' William Rigney and John Breen described these buildings as: (1) a lead-colored brick building facing Fourth Street, just back of the old Academy, (2) a frame building about 50 feet long on the eastern edge of the lot, and (3) a smaller brick building back of it. [They were probably the original out-buildings of this old property -- summer kitchen, icehouse and stable.] These buildings were probably removed at the turn of the century.

In 1908 Rev. John O. Cotter established the high school and, since the whole building was soon needed for grade and high schools, the Sisters moved, first to a house at the northwest corner of Fourth and Hickory, and later [before the flood of 1913] to the McConnell house on Fourth Street [#53 East].

Sometime after 1913 the old schoolhouse became a convent. The Sister's Chapel in the large north front room of the Office Building should be noted. Mass was celebrated there on various occasions, especially morning Mass on week days in later years in the winter months. In 1981 the remaining Sisters moved next door to the renovated "old rectory." On the Feast of the Assumption in 1982, the former convent was named "Marian House" and dedicated as a "Center For Parish Renewal". And today it serves as our Parish Office after renovation and dedication in 1989.

Father John Cotter Begins Plans for New School

During Father John Cotter's pastorate, the need for a larger school became more evident when the school population reached nearly three hundred. It had been known for some time that our school did not afford our children the opportunities that the Parish should give them. When the Rev. Superintendent of Catholic Schools of our Diocese paid a visit in March 1909, new impetus was given for the purpose of building a "grand new school" for St. Mary's Parish. Miss Margaret Watts had bequeathed a piece of ground to be sold in lots. The *Parish Monthly* of April, 1909, published a long list of parishioners who had purchased certificates on the Watts Addition lots. Money from the sale of these lots was a tremendous help in paying for the new school.

St. Mary's School Construction And Dedication

Father Dennis M. Halpin became the pastor of St. Mary's in October 1910, and immediately followed up on the groundwork begun by Father Cotter for getting a new school.

On November 5, 1911, Archbishop Henry Moeller of Cincinnati visited St. Mary's. While here he particularly stressed the needs of Catholic education and he complimented the

congregation upon their progressive spirit in asking for a new school. He gave his consent to the building of the school.

Announcement was made on March 22, 1912, that the Parker-Wood Manufacturing Co. of Washington C. H. had been awarded the contract for the erection of the new school. The contract price as reported in the *Scioto Gazette*, that same day, was \$39,000.00. Work began three days later and the school children were given a holiday for the ground-breaking. The Parker-Wood Co. had just completed two eight-room school houses at Middletown and had the best of references.

Sunday August 31, 1913, was a great day of rejoicing at St. Mary's, for on that day the new Parochial School was dedicated. The full day's program began with a 6 a.m. Mass by Father Halpin. At eight o'clock Rt. Rev. Msgr. Murray, the builder of St. Mary's Church, celebrated Mass. The ten o'clock Mass was said by Rev. Fr. Dexter. At one o'clock all societies of St. Mary's formed a line to march along Fourth Street under the direction of M. J. Grohe. The Twentieth Century Band led off the parade to St. Peter's Church. At St. Peter's all the societies of that church took their places in the parade. The Hibernian Rifles from Columbus fell in behind the Twentieth Century Band and they marched back to St. Mary's. The clergy from both parishes, together with the visiting priests and Archbishop Moeller, took their places at the end of the parade in automobiles.

At three o'clock all the school children from St. Mary's proceeded up the center aisle of the church, followed by the clergy and Archbishop, and the services began. The Young Men's Choir sang the *Ecce Sacerdos* with Miss Catherine Herlihy presiding at the organ.

After the Archbishop preached on the "Sacrament of Confirmation," the sacrament was given to about 50 children and several adults. Then followed Benediction. After this everyone marched over to the new school, where at the entrance the Archbishop blessed the entrance with holy water. The new school resounded with the sweet voices of 170 school children, who sang the hymn "Asperges Me," while the Archbishop went through the building and blessed every room.

The celebration festivities resumed on the evening of November 24, 1913 with the formal opening of the school. Rev. John Hickey of Cincinnati, a former pastor of St. Mary's Parish, delivered an address, "Reminiscences of St. Mary's Parish." A musicale and bazaar for the benefit of the school followed.

Father Halpin managed the parish well during the busy WWI days of Camp Sherman in 1917-18. In 1922 he was transferred to Holy Angels Parish, Dayton, Ohio. Rev. E. G. Depenbrock had charge of the parish for two years. During his time he signed an agreement with Father F. J. Krueskamp of St. Peter's Church, whereby the city was divided by boundary lines defining the territory of each parish. The war was over and with the economic conditions improved, the city was growing. Besides, the ethnic distinctions of "Irish" and "German" had been softened by the offspring of the original immigrant parishioners of each parish. This agreement defined St. Mary's boundary pretty much to the territory south of Main Street, including the south side of Main Street. It never worked, as parishioners of both parishes continued to jump boundary lines. During Father Depenbrock's pastorate the school debt was reduced to \$11,000.

In 1924 Father William A. Conroy arrived to take charge of the parish. By 1931, under his administration the parish paid off the debt incurred by the building of the new school in 1913. This was a remarkable accomplishment as the great depression had begun.

Next in succession as Pastor of St. Mary's was Rev. Francis X. Cotter who came in 1933. He was the brother of Father John O. Cotter, a previous pastor. During his six-year pastorate the church was redecorated and new altars installed. Father Cotter was transferred to Holy Name Parish, Cincinnati, in December of 1939. He was succeeded by Rev. Edward A. McGinty, a native son of Ross County.

Events Of The 1940's

The average attendance at Sunday Masses in 1940 was 654. A third Mass on Sunday was added when Father John Byrne, Chaplain at the Federal Reformatory took up residence at the Rectory. The financial statement for 1940 reported receipts of \$13,362.93 and expenditures of \$11,496.15; Salary of Pastor, \$1,500, and salary of the Sisters, \$2,210. There were eight Sisters of Charity living in the convent at that time. Fifty-two students attended Catholic Central High School.

The 75th Anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone of St. Mary's Church was celebrated on April 17, 1942. Why this date was chosen is not known as the actual laying of the cornerstone took place April 7, 1867. In any case the occasion took on a double meaning when it was revealed that April 17 was the birthday of Father Edward A. McGinty. The celebration opened at 10 a.m. with solemn High Mass said by the five native son priests of the parish: Rev. Daniel B. Cronin, Rev. Robert Cronin, Rev. Clarence McGinty, Rev. Leo T. Herlihy and Rev. Paul Woodyard. At the reception that followed, Father Edward McGinty served as Master of Ceremonies. Father Daniel B. Cronin, S.J., Father Robert Cronin, S.J., and Father Clarence McGinty, brother of the pastor told of their days as students at St. Mary's High School. They paid tribute to Rev. Dennis Halpin who was pastor of St. Mary's when they were in school. He had a great influence upon their election to enter the clergy.

Father Edward McGinty administered the parish well during the years of WWII. St. Mary's Parish in 1942 was comprised of 235 families, many of whom were descendants of the pioneers of 1837. In 1945 Father McGinty was transferred to St. Francis de Sales Parish in Newark, Ohio. His successor was Father Raphael D. Rodgers, who was named pastor on November 15, 1945.

Father Rodgers Long Record Of Service Begins

Father Rodgers came to Chillicothe about the time St. Mary's became a part of the Columbus Diocese. During his long pastorate he was assisted by Fr. Maser, Fr. Lawrence O'Connor, Fr. Charles Jones, Fr. John Kempf, Fr. Edward Fairchild, Fr. Patrick Dolan, Fr. Thomas McLaughlin, Fr. Frank Lane and Fr. Jerome Raiser.

In these years the church property grew. The McKell-Kilvert-Sweeney house at 41 East Fourth Street was acquired and dedicated as "Marian Hall." It was first used to alleviate the crowded conditions at St. Mary's School later served as a recreational center for the youth of St. Mary's and St. Peter's. This property was sold to the Barrington family in July 1978. The former Presbyterian Manse at 30 East Fourth Street was purchased in 1958. This historic brick house was once owned by James T. Worthington, a son of Governor Thomas Worthington. Mrs. Eleanor Worthington Watts, a daughter of the Governor, gave the house to the First

Presbyterian Society in 1849 before her conversion to Catholicism. This building was renovated with a new kitchen, updated electrical and bathroom facilities and again occupied as the rectory in the spring of 2005.

Bishop Flaget High School Built

The building of Bishop Flaget High School took place during Father Rodgers' pastorate. It was named for Benedict Joseph Flaget, the first Catholic Bishop of Kentucky, who in 1812 visited Chillicothe on his pioneer trek through Ohio. This school was a joint undertaking of St. Mary's and St. Peter's parishes. Ground breaking ceremonies were held on September 1, 1961. The school opened September 6, 1962 under the principalship of Father John P. Tague and with a teaching staff of the Sisters of Charity, Cincinnati, and the Sisters of St. Francis, Oldenburg, Indiana. The opening of Bishop Flaget High School coincided with the 150th anniversary of Bishop Flaget's first visit to Chillicothe. In 1986 due to declining enrollment Bishop James Griffin closed the high school. Today this building houses a thriving Preschool through Eighth Grade program shared by both parishes.

Highlights of the 1960's

Early in 1963 Father Rodgers was conferred the rank of Right Reverend by Pope John XXIII. Monsignor Rodgers retired on October 7, 1968 and returned to his native city of Springfield, Ohio. His twenty-three year pastorate left a legacy of caring and conscientious tending of his flock at St. Mary's.

Father Paul W. Meyer, who came from Our Lady of Sorrows, West Portsmouth succeeded Monsignor Rodgers. During his short stay Father Meyer accomplished the repair of the church steeple, outside painting of the church and new landscaping. He was transferred to Millersburg St. Peter Parish in June 1969.

Father John Kempf became our next pastor and soon set out to rehabilitate St. Mary's Elementary School building. The work of cleaning, repair and painting was done by the men of the parish assisted by Father Kempf and Assistant Pastor Jerome K. Raiser.

An eight-day celebration to commemorate the Centennial of the dedication of St. Mary's Church was held November 29 through December 7, 1969. The Centennial Committee, chaired by Frank Hirsch chose "rededication to St. Mary" as the theme. Bishop Clarence Elwell celebrated Mass at 4:00 pm Sunday December 7 to close the celebration. A banquet followed at the Elks Hall.

Father Kempf well known for his love of country served the parish well until November, 1973. He was succeeded by Father Clarence J. Durbin, who encouraged parents who had small children to bring them to church.

Highlights From The 1970's

Father Durbin served St. Mary's for only a few years and left effective June 15, 1976. Father Robert F. Reilly, a native of Lancaster, Ohio was named new pastor and he set about seeking more parishioner involvement with the establishment of new committees.

In August 1976 Bishop Herrmann authorized the following parishioners as St. Mary's first Lay Ministers: Sr. Mary William Pendergest, Sr. Ruth Marian Hanekamp, Kathy Fry, Joe

Anderson, Agnes Hirsch, Phil Hartzog, Hal Krauser and Bill Reeves.

St. Mary's and St. Peter's Elementary Schools consolidated with the first classes beginning August 30, 1976. The name St. Mary's changed to Bishop Flaget Middle School for grades 6-8. St. Peter's School for grades 1-5 was named Bishop Flaget Elementary School.

In October 1976 several changes were made in the church. The main altar was moved toward the congregation; sanctuary lighting was updated; the baptismal font moved to the sanctuary area, the communion rail was removed and a Reconciliation Room constructed.

On June 12, 1977 Father Dean Mathewson became Associate Pastor of St. Mary's. The first assistant at St. Mary's in seven years. On October 15, 1977 receiving Communion in the hand, as recently approved by Pope Paul VI, became an option at Mass. By March, 1979 permission is given to share the cup at Communion for the first time during Lent.

Highlights of the 1980's

On April 19, 1980 David D. Cox who entered the Catholic Church in the early 1970's, was ordained a Deacon by Bishop Michael McAuliffe of the Diocese of Jefferson City, Mo. He was ordained a priest in April, 1981 becoming the first priest from St. Mary's since Carl Drake, twenty-five years earlier.

By December 1980 the parish growth was noted. There were 635 registered family units. This was an increase of 125 in four years.

On June 14, 1981 Father Dean Mathewson left St. Mary's to become the pastor of St. Joseph's in Larue, Ohio.

The Lazarus Committee was formed on January 17, 1982 to minister to bereaved families. This Committee continues this valuable minister today under the loving guidance of Della & Marvin Riley.

On June 12, 1982 Pat Rogers was ordained a priest and offered a Mass of Thanksgiving on Sunday, June 13 at St. Mary's. On November 6, 1982 Bill Whalen was ordained as St. Mary's first Deacon. In May of 1983, Deacon Whalen trained several girls of the parish as servers, a first!

In December 1985 Father Reilly formed a committee to plan the celebration of St. Mary's Sesquicentennial in 1987. To plan and facilitate this event he appointed John Grabb, historian, and the following volunteers: Chairman Bill Reeves, Co-Chairman Frank Hirsch, Music Director Delma Rouleau, Secretary Katie Rourke, Treasurer Mildred Creager, Tom Shea, Susie Shaffer, Susan Schneider, Della Riley, Marvin Riley, Agnes Hirsch, Joe Anderson, Betty Grabb and Edna Brust.

On Saturday, February 1, 1986 at the five o'clock Mass Father Bob Reilly announced that he had acceded Bishop Griffin's wishes and would leave St. Mary's in July for his new assignment at St. Joseph's in Circleville. Father Mario Serraglio pastor of St. Mark's Parish in Lancaster since 1977 succeeded Father Reilly.

The community received shocking news on March 26, 1986 when the decision by Bishop

James A. Griffin to close Bishop Flaget High School at the end of the school year was announced. The decline in the enrollment and financial concerns were given as the reason for this decision. It was a sad time for not only St. Mary's and St. Peter's parishes but for the community as well. Bishop Flaget High School was known for its academic excellence. Some attempts were made to have this decision reversed. This included community meetings and a "town meeting" with Bishop Griffin held in St. Mary's Church. The parish dealt with the loss as best it could and looked to the leadership of our new pastor Father Mario Serraglio to heal the hurt feelings.

On Sunday, June 29, 1986 a farewell party for Father Reilly was held in the school basement. Earlier in the month on June 7, George Lovensheimer was ordained a Deacon by Bishop James A. Griffin. On July 8, 1986 Father Reilly left St. Mary's for his new pastorate in Circleville.

Father Mario's Tenure Begins Era Of Parish Improvements

Father Mario was an Italian native who attended seminaries in Padua and Milan, Italy and the Pontifical College Josephinum in Worthington. Parishioners were immediately taken with his Italian accent, humor and memorable short sermons. His tenure began at a time when the parish was dealing with the emotions of the closure of Bishop Flaget High School and parish budget deficits. Shortly after his arrival, Father Mario set about exploring ways to improve the parish finances and physical plant.

With the Bishop Flaget High School building closed, St. Mary's and St. Peter's decided with Diocesan approval, to move the middle school grades (4th - 8th grade) from the St. Mary's School building to the Parsons Ave. building. The preschool through 3rd grade students were housed in St. Peter's School building on Water St. The only remaining use for the St. Mary's School building was for the bingo sessions held in the school basement, some Parish social events and limited office use. The Administration Committee and Parish Council soon realized the financial impact to the parish was nearly \$25,000 to maintain the building in this limited capacity. Bingo which was used to raise funds to offset the cost of parish subsidy, netted less than the cost just to maintain the building.

A special Parish Council meeting was convened on December 19, 1986 concerning bingo. Father Mario commented that as St. Mary's enters its 150th anniversary year, he would like to see parishioners support the parish without having to rely on bingo. After some discussion, a motion was approved that by June 30, 1987, St. Mary's would have in effect, fundraising activities, and an increase in offertory collection in order that the parish be self-sufficient without bingo income. Another motion was approved that bingo operations cease to be sponsored by the parish.

The parish set about strengthening the financial concerns of the parish. With the help of the Diocesan Finance Office, a Stewardship program, chaired by Chuck Halm began. Stewardship was a success from the very beginning and started the turn around in the financial status of the parish.

With the financial picture of the parish looking brighter, it was time to look at the parish physical plant. To go about this task, Father Mario formed the Building Utilization Committee (BUC) which originally consisted of the following members: Steve Madru, Chuck Halm, Richard Ward, Jim Barrington, Bob Althoff, Frank Hirsch, Bill Nolan, with assistance from Lou

Calderone, Diocesan Building Superintendent and Michael Liscano, architect. The committee gathered information on the parish finances and needs for the present and future of the parish. During a series of meetings, this committee discussed the history, architecture, costs, uses, states of condition, income and expense histories of all parish buildings.

In a report of December 16, 1986, the BUC listed a summary of their preliminary findings. The committee concurred with Father Mario's decision to move the rectory back to the Paint Street location. The rectory (30 East Fourth St.) also served as the parish office at that time. It was recommended that the historical and architectural importance of Marian House (61 South Paint St.) become an integral part of parish life by housing offices, meetings, etc. The committee further recommended that the Fourth St. property be rented until a permanent determination of its future could be made. Finally, the BUC recommended the St. Mary's School building, 30 East Fourth St., "Woodhouse" rental property, those being all parish properties fronting on Fourth Street, be offered as a single package for lease by a single major tenant but only if such an arrangement would not lessen or impede parking availability for parish use. The committee felt the implementation of the recommendations would likely result in the immediate balance of the parish budget, a condition emphatically recommended by the Diocesan Finance Office.

At the January 7, 1987 Parish Council meeting a motion was approved to "submit the recommendations of the BUC to the parish, with time for them to think about the evaluation of the report, and then have one parish meeting for parishioners to give input on the report, so Parish Council can make a final decision".

An open Parish meeting concerning the Building Utilization Committee Report was held in St. Mary's Church on February 1, 1987. Parishioners were encouraged to ask questions and provide input. It was discussed that the estimated costs for renovating Marian House for the office and parish activities was \$175,000. This amount was based on the architectural planning provided by Michael Liscano.

Parish Council met on Wednesday February 4, 1987 and set about exploring the BUC's first recommendation of renovating the historic 1816 Marian House. A Memorial Fund Drive was established to generate income for the Parish Center modifications. The generosity of parishioners and the newly established Stewardship program enabled the parish to make the completion of the renovations possible.

The 150th anniversary year of 1987 was highlighted by the Sesquicentennial Mass held June 7, 1987 with Bishop James A. Griffin as celebrant. Delma Rouleau, music director coordinated the ecumenical choir with native son Thomas Cahill as soloist. He performed "*Messe De Grace*", an original composition by Delma Rouleau. All during this special year, St. Mary's celebrated by giving thanks for the many sacrifices made by the past and present parishioners and priests who had given so much to maintain our beautiful Italian Gothic church and our living faith.

At the October 7, 1987 Parish Council meeting, architect Michael Liscano presented a tentative sketch of the proposed Marian House renovations. The time had come to re-form the Building Utilization Committee with the goal of looking into the immediate needs of the Marian House renovations, the school building and Woodhouse property (which at that time was rented as apartments). The committee members were: Chuck Halm, Steve Madru, Michael Liscano, Jerry Cushing, Jim Boyce, Cathy Evanoff, Bob Althoff, Mary Kay Clipner, Bill Reeves, Bill Nolan, Mike Rourke, Richard Ward, Susan Schneider, Carl Smith, Frank Hirsch, Joyce

Kochendorfer and Stella Streitenberger.

On November 4, 1987, parishioners volunteered to strip carpeting, paneling and acoustic ceiling panels in Marian House. Their efforts in the initial renovations kept some of the costs down. Gay & Chaffin, Inc. was the general contractor for the Marian House renovations. A Memorial Fund was established giving parishioners the opportunity to donate funds in memory of loved ones. Each room was given a name based on the history of the building.

By the spring of 1989 the renovations of “St. Mary’s Parish Center” were complete. The dedication celebration was held on May 20, 1989. The Most Reverend James A. Griffin, Bishop of Columbus was celebrant and Father Mario Serraglio concelebrant as well as William T. Whalen, Deacon. During the Mass Bishop Griffin blessed the Altar, Pulpit and Tabernacle stand which had been made from the original Altar and Altar Railings. The Altar top and base were constructed by Gay & Caffin with refinishing and staining completed by Mary Boyce and Don Dixon. The Tabernacle Stand was completed by Jim Boyce and Jerry Cushing. The Pulpit was completed by Mark Unger. Following Mass, a procession formed to St. Mary’s Parish Center for the official ribbon cutting and dedication. A community Open House of the Parish Center was held June 16, 1989. The parish settled into our newly renovated parish center where the parish offices and gatherings now occurred.

At the June 7, 1989 Parish Council meeting, the position of Pastoral Assistant was approved. Agnes Hirsch was named St. Mary’s first Pastoral Assistant and expanded her duties beyond just the financial bookkeeping of the parish.

Other improvements to the church property continued. A restroom and crying room area were added. The church pews were stained a light oak in March 1990 which made for a vastly improved appearance.

St. Mary’s Parish was certainly experiencing a renaissance of sorts with the changes in the physical plant and noted vitality of the parish spirit. The parish wondered if this momentum would end when Father Mario announced to the parish in June 1991 that he would be leaving St. Mary’s for the Columbus Italian parish of St. John the Baptist. On June 28, 1991, the parish bid farewell to Father Mario, who many parishioners credited with revitalizing St. Mary’s. A reception was held in his honor that evening.

Father Don’s Leadership Allows For Continued Parish Enhancements

In July 1991, St. Mary’s welcomed Father Donald E. Franks. Father Don looked forward to the opportunity to take his first pastorate at St. Mary’s following his service to the Diocese of Columbus as Vicar of Catholic Charities. He came with an energy and eagerness to get to know the needs of the parish and the community. Father Don quickly became known for his seemingly tireless energy and devotion to all parishioners.

On May 6, 1992, St. Mary’s Parish Council approved a motion making St. Mary’s Parish a covenant church for the local Habitat for Humanity organization. We continue today as an active member with many of our parishioners devoting hours to Habitat for Humanity projects.

On September 2, 1992 Father Leo Connolly and Father Tony Frecker came to parish council to explain the Future Staffing Project as requested by Bishop James Griffin. This was the beginning of a process to encourage dialogue among the vicariate parishes on how to deal

with the loss of two priests by the year 2000. The time had come for some serious discussion on the shortage of priests. Each parish was to begin discussing how to share resources.

By the fall of 1992, discussions began again about what the parish should do with St. Mary's School. The building had remained "mothballed" since the beginning of 1987. Parishioners were invited to an "open house" to inspect the school and ask for their suggestions on what to do with the school. A new Building Utilization Committee was formed to consider the future of the building and other parish building concerns. Ever since the school closed there were occasional inquiries from outside sources looking at possibly buying or leasing the building. With the school in such close proximity to the church, Parish Council was very careful when considering any proposal. Parish Council agreed by consensus at the December 2, 1992 meeting not to pursue the use of St. Mary's School building as an apartment complex. It was becoming more apparent that the school building had no practical use for any parish function. Large social gatherings had to be held off site at either the Knights of Columbus Hall or Bishop Flaget School.

At the April 7, 1993 Parish Council meeting another proposal was presented to Council by the Ross County Community Action Committee and CONSOC to turn the school into apartments for the disabled. A motion was unanimously approved by Council to no longer entertain offers to use the school building as residential housing due to the close proximity of the church and surrounding buildings.

By June 1993, BUC Chairman Chuck Halm discussed with Parish Council the condition of "Woodhouse". The Building Utilization Committee made the recommendation to Council to raze this building and convert the property to additional parking. At the August Parish Council meeting a motion was approved to raze the "Woodhouse" by November 1, 1993.

Efforts To Raze St. Mary's School Building Begins

By late 1993, the Administration Committee began to seriously discuss the issue of razing the St. Mary's school building. In a letter dated December 15, 1993 Bishop James Griffin gave his approval to raze the school building and proceed with initial plans to build a parish hall. In January, 1994 a letter was sent to all parishioners concerning razing the school building and constructing a parish activities center in its place. The feedback from parishioners was very positive to this idea. Knowing how most parishioners felt about this issue, a motion was approved at the February 2, 1994 Parish Council meeting to "raze the St. Mary's School Building to the top of the basement walls. The cost shall not exceed \$38,000 for demolition, plus \$1,000 for the removal of the "St. Mary's School" carving and cornerstone. The Administration Committee shall apply for the proper permits, contract with the lowest bidder for asbestos survey, approve contract with the contractor and oversee the demolition of the building." The Administration Committee was appointed to represent the parish at the Design and Review Board for their permission. Approval by this Board was necessary because the school faced Fourth Street in Chillicothe's historic preservation district. The Administration Committee knew getting the approval from the Chillicothe Design and Review Board would not be an easy task.

On February 17, 1994, St. Mary's presented this request to the Design and Review Committee at their 4:30 p.m. meeting held in the Chillicothe Administration building. Earlier in the day, the *Chillicothe Gazette* had published an article concerning the razing of the school building. This article, along with the Board's decision at that meeting to table discussion on razing the school building began the series of *Gazette* news items and editorials. St. Mary's continued in the news for the next several months. The Design and Review Committee felt

uneasy about making any decision at that first meeting. Board Chairman Cam Shipley commented he didn't think the Board should make a decision without public input. A public hearing on this issue was recommended. This delay gave those in the community who take an active interest in the preservation of downtown Chillicothe a chance to voice their disapproval. St. Mary's Administration Committee viewed this as a temporary set-back and remained determined to see our request be approved. The parish was ready to proceed with the initial stages of planning for a new parish activities center and knew that in order to do this, the school must come down.

Prior to the March 17 Design & Review Board meeting information was gathered and personally delivered to each member of the board. Included in this notebook was testimonial of several long-time parishioners stating the deteriorating condition of the school building and lack of historical significance to it. There were hundreds petitions signed by parishioners in favor of razing the school. And an overwhelming amount of information was the documentation of 28 proposals for use of the school building and the projected costs of renovations. This documentation proved the parish had explored for eight years ways to use the building and the parish decision was not a rushed one. It all boiled down to the fact that prohibited costs of renovating still would not provide the parish with what was wanted in a parish activities building. The 1912 three-story school building could not realistically be renovated to meet the needs of a 1990's parish.

Before the March Design and Review Committee meeting, St. Mary's graciously agreed to open the school for a tour with Bob Loversidge, an architect from the Ohio Preservation Alliance and members of the Design and Review Committee. Mr. Loversidge felt the school was structurally sound, but agreed that finding a practical use for it would be difficult. Public comment was welcomed at the meeting held March 17, 1994. The seven member Board voted 3-0 to allow St. Mary's to raze the school building. By the next week the validity of the vote was questioned. Since three members had abstained and one member was absent, David Carroll, a Columbus lawyer hired by two members of the board and four citizens claimed the approval motion was invalid. They stated four votes were necessary to approve the motion to raze the building because a majority of a quorum was necessary to approve any motion.

At the April 21, 1994 Design and Review Committee meeting as their first order of business another motion was made to raze St. Mary's School Building. The motion carried 4-0 with one member abstaining and two members absent. St. Mary's could now proceed with plans to build a parish activities center.

On Saturday, July 16, 1994 St. Mary's School demolition began. Many people came by to watch and reminisce about their school days. Some carried away souvenir bricks and other items. As the demolition was winding down, many parishioners commented on the beautiful view from the Fourth Street of the side of the church hidden for 82 years by the school. While viewing the church property after the razing of the school building, it became an overwhelming consensus of members of the Administration Committee to preserve the visible beauty of our historic Gothic church by extending the existing courtyard area and providing additional parking on the old school site. Building Utilization Committee Chairman Chuck Halm and the committee members began the initial plans for the new building on the vacant lot where the "Woodhouse" once stood.

The year 1994 was indeed a very busy one at St. Mary's. In the midst of all the controversy in tearing down the school, enough special funds had been received that by summer an air conditioning system was installed in the church.

The August 3, 1994 Parish Council meeting began in the Parish Center Courtyard as the cornerstone from St. Mary's School building was opened by Father Don Franks, Steve Madru, Chuck Halm, Joan D'Antoni and Dave Richter. Parts of a local German newspaper and the *Scioto Gazette* featuring articles on the St. Mary's School Building, some unidentified papers and coins were retrieved. Parish Council approved UMA Architecture of Columbus for preliminary work on the parish activities center, and would explore the feasibility of building it beside and possibly adjoining it to the Worthington Manse building. The Building Utilization Committee was also recommending replacing the carpet in the church and making minor modifications in the sanctuary area.

The BUC presented the floor plans for the new building to the parish after all Masses the weekend of October 15 and 16, 1994. By December, 1994 the Design and Review Committee and the Diocesan Building Commission had approved the initial architectural plans. The BUC and Finance Committees were given the authority to take all the necessary steps to complete the project and their discretion to make minor modifications as necessary. At the February 8, 1995 Parish Council meeting, Dan March of UMA presented the revised plans. Approval of the design of the new parish activities center were approved by the Design and Review Committee.

St. Mary's Choir Performs Handel's Messiah

For some time Delma Rouleau and St. Mary's choir had dreamed of performing Handel's "*Messiah*" in its entirety. Beginning in 1989, they began learning the music and the story behind this composition. Rosemary Zedalis contributed much time and effort in this project serving as "*Messiah*" librarian and secretary. Brain Moore gave insightful instructions as assistant choral director. In March 1994 Delma reported to Parish Council the choir's plans to perform "*Messiah*" in April 1995. The chorale numbering 41 voices was composed of members of St. Mary's choir and other area churches and members of the Cecilian Singers of Columbus. Guest artists were Soprano Deborah Humphrey, Mezzo-Soprano Nancy Roberts, Baritone Terry Davis and Tenor Tom Cahill. An orchestra of community members accompanied the choir at the performances held on Saturday, April 22 at 7:30 p.m., Sunday, April 23 at 2:00 p.m. (Highlights of "*Messiah*") and again that evening at 7:00 p.m. in St. Mary's Church. It was believed that a production of this magnitude had never before been performed in Chillicothe.

Family Life Center Construction And Dedication

UMA completed the final architectural drawings near the end of May 1995 so the project was ready to out for bids on June 15 with the bids due back to the Diocesan office by July 15, 1995. Finance Chairman Steve Madru, BUC Chairman Chuck Halm and Father Don opened the bids on July 20, 1995 but to their dismay the bids were unacceptable due to budget constraints. The Building Utilization Committee set about working with the contractors to bring the cost more in line with the budget and with the architect on modifications to the original specifications. By the September 6, 1995 Parish Council meeting, Chuck Halm reported modifications to the design were made to make the project cost effective. Council approved these new plans so the parish was able to proceed.

A ground breaking ceremony was held on September 17, 1995 immediately following the 10:45 Mass. Construction began by the end of the month. Meetings were held every two weeks with representatives of Ingle-Barr, the contractor, UMA and the Diocesan Building Superintendent. The successful completion of our beautiful Family Life Center would not have

become a reality without the dedication of our Pastor Father Don Franks, Building Chairman Chuck Halm and Finance Chairman Steve Madru. These individuals were constantly checking on how this project was progressing and heading off construction issues as they came up. We should also note the overwhelming support from parishioners for the Family Life Center. A Memorial Fund Drive was established and again as was the case with the renovation of the 1816 Parish Center building, parishioners generosity helped offset the parish debt.

By July 21, 1996 the Family Life Center was complete except some areas in the kitchen. The first event held in the new hall was a reception following the Vince Ambrosetti Concert that Sunday evening.

At the August 7, 1996 Parish Council meeting it was reported that plans for the Family Life Center dedication were scheduled for the Vigil of the Feast of the Assumption August 14. Father Don commented that the parish had spent the last ten years of our parish life and energy getting things in good shape, of which we should be very proud. He felt St. Mary's was entering a new period where we would have the opportunity to share our faith and make the people of the community feel at home. It was fitting that in the Bicentennial year of the city of Chillicothe, that St. Mary's would be celebrating such an event in the history of the parish. The Eucharistic Celebration with Bishop James Griffin celebrant and Father Don Franks concelebrant as well as George Lovensheimer, Deacon began at 7:00 p.m. Following the Recessional Hymn "Glory to God" from Handel's "Messiah" the ceremony to bless the new Family Life Center began. Well over 400 parishioners participated in the dedication festivities. The parish was able to retire the debt for construction of the building by July 1, 1999, four years ahead of schedule. A plaque listing all who contributed \$1,000 or more to the Memorial Fund for the Family Life Center was dedicated on Sunday, August 15, 1999.

St. Mary's Parish saw a tremendous amount of improvements to the physical plant in the ten years following the Sesquicentennial anniversary of the parish. With all the changes in appearance it should be noted that the spiritual aspects of St. Mary's continued in many positive respects also. Many parish retreats, missions and small prayers groups developed.

On March 1, 1999 St. Mary's lost a beloved staff member with the passing of Agnes Hirsch. Agnes devoted much of her life to the church. She left a legacy of service and commitment to the church as well as constant dedication to evangelizing and encouraging many people to join the faith.

Stewardship allowed the parish to have another look at a project explored prior to the departure of Father Marion in 1991. The possibility of replacing the sanctuary backdrop was in some early planning stages at that time but not acted upon. With the financial aspects of the parish in good order and the approaching millennium, Parish Council felt it was time to have another look at this project. Following several months of planning and discussions and with Diocesan approval, The Studios of Potente, Inc. of Kenosha, Wisconsin design, was accepted. The new Gothic backdrop was installed by the weekend Masses August 21- 22, 1999.

One of the long range goals of the parish had been to provide additional parking in close proximity of the church. In August 1999, the parish was given the opportunity to purchase the adjoining Carl's Town House property for \$170,000.00. On May 11, 2000, a special on-site Chillicothe Design & Review Board meeting concerning the church's request for a demolition permit to remove the Carl's Town House Restaurant and the surrounding buildings was held in the Family Life Center. Permission was given to have the restaurant building, purchased by John Molnar, moved to the corner of Second and Walnut. The other buildings were permitted to

be razed.

In January 2000, the Diocese of Columbus began a campaign to raise \$30 million dollars of which \$24 million was to be used to fund six new endowments and \$6 million was to be returned to the parishes who met or exceeded their target goal. St. Mary's goal was to raise \$171,408.00. Despite concerns about attaining this goal, the parish far exceeded expectations by receiving \$322,688.00 in pledges. Any rebates the parish received were divided 90% to the Bishop Flaget School Endowment and 10% to St. Mary's Parish Endowment.

At the Holy Thursday Mass on April 20, 2000, Father Don announced that after serving St. Mary's for nine years he would be leaving St. Mary's and taking up residence at St. Mary's in Lancaster. Father Lawrence Hummer became pastor in July, 2000.

Father Hummer served as a Navy Chaplain for nine years and was assisting with duties at St. Colman parish in Washington, OH, Ohio due to the ill health of Fr. Raiser when Bishop James Griffin called upon him to take the pastorate at St. Mary's. Father Hummer quickly immersed himself in new goals for St. Mary's. He stated at his first Parish Council meeting on August 2, 2000 that education was a top priority and the goal of a Catholic education was to establish a Catholic identity. He set in motion the establishment of a St. Vincent de Paul Society noting the need for more outreach to the poor of the community. The Parish Council Constitution was revamped and a formal education program for the youth was established. More joint programs with St. Peter's were explored and well as making PreCana more readily available. Katie Boesch was hired by both parishes to oversee Sacramental preparation, Youth activities and the RCIA programs. Father Hummer also presented Advent and Lenten adult education series.

By the summer of 2001, the Grotto area was complete. Four more handicap parking spaces along with 40 additional spaces enhanced the south side of the church. The Assumption painting was taken to Cincinnati to be renovated by Old World Restorations as well as the statue of Mary for display in the Grotto brick alcove and returned by Easter 2002.

The church exterior was painted and sealed the summer of 2002. New used organ purchased and modifications were made in the choir loft area to accommodate present and future needs.

The William H. Nolan estate was completed the end of February 2003 and St. Mary's was the beneficiary of the endowment at over \$2 million dollars. Through the generosity of Mr. Nolan, St. Mary's will reap many benefits for years to come. The parish is forever grateful.