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THE EARLY GERMAN CATHOLICS OF COLUMBUS

By Donald M. Schlegel

(Talk given at the winter quarterly meeting of the Catholic Record Society, February 15, 1981. The talk was illustrated with maps.)

The early German Catholics of Columbus can be defined as those who arrived here in the fifteen year period from 1830 to 1845. The earlier limit of 1830 is chosen because at that time there were no German Catholics in the city, though they began arriving a year or so later. The later limit, 1845, was chosen for two reasons: first, using that cut-off date gives us about 240 persons about whom enough is known to say that they have been "identified"; going beyond that year would produce so much data that it could not be handled easily. Secondly, 1845 was the last full year of the sacramental registers of St. Remigius church, the first Catholic parish in the city.

Before describing the immigrants of this period, mention must be made of one Catholic who resided in the area before Columbus even existed. In the early 1800's, between about 1804 and 1808, Joseph Grate came west from Emmitsburg, Maryland, and settled in Franklinton. Franklinton was the small village founded in 1797, centered where the Sandusky expressway now passes under West Broad Street, now two blocks west of Holy Family church. Grate apparently was a German-American, possibly descended from the German-Catholic settlers of Berks county, Pennsylvania, of the 1740's. He was a silversmith. He was appointed postmaster in 1812 and was elected Justice of the Peace in 1812 and 1815. Unfortunately, he died shortly thereafter, as did also his wife. His daughter moved to Somerset, where the first permanent Catholic parish of the state was being established.

There have been other Catholics in Franklinton, but, if so, we do not know who they were. As far as is known, there were no other Catholics in the area until about 1830.

The federal census of 1830 gives the name of each head of a household, along with the numbers of persons in each of several age categories. The 1830 census for Franklinton township and Franklinton, Montgomery township and Columbus, and Truro township shows a total of 725 households and 4,659 persons. This is an area of about 75 square miles, now bounded roughly by Georgesville road on the west, the county line on the east, Fifth avenue on the north, and Refugee road on the south. In this entire area there was one Catholic - a man

with an English name - Ignatius Wheeler, who lived near Franklinton. His wife was German, but her family apparently were not Catholics. She was Johanna Naidenbusch, whose father, Henry, is usually mentioned twice in connection with the early history of the Church in Columbus. Mass was celebrated in his house for the Irish laborers on the National Road, about 1832, and he operated the quarry from which the limestone for the walls of St. Remigius' was taken. The stone was purchased, not donated, and there is no indication that Henry was a member of the congregation which soon grew up.

This situation, with only one known Catholic in the area, soon was changed by a combination of two factors: there was a surge of immigration to America from Germany just at the same time that transportation facilities were put into place to bring the immigrants to Columbus. In September of 1831 the Columbus feeder to the Ohio and Erie Canal was opened. The canal tied Columbus to the ports of the world, via Cleveland and Lake Erie on the north, and Portsmouth, the Mississippi river system and New Orleans on the south. In 1832 and 1833 the National Road was built through Central Ohio, providing a good overland route to the Mid-Atlantic seaboard. Of the two, the canal was the more popular; soon whole boat-loads of German immigrants were disembarking at the wharves between South and Rich streets and on up the east bank of the Scioto river.

Total Immigration to the United States was about ten thousand per year in 1820; this grew to about twenty thousand in 1830. By 1833, this had sputtered up to almost one hundred thousand per year, about 30 per cent of whom were Germans. By 1840 sixty thousand Germans per year were arriving in this country. Most of them were from Bavaria and the upper Rhein valley, and a good percentage of them were Catholics. The population of Columbus in 1830 was 2,437; by 1840 it had more than doubled to 6,048; by 1850 it almost tripled, to 17,882.

To get an idea of the kind of people who were immigrating we can turn to the great French author, Victor Hugo. In the summers of 1838, 1839 and 1840, Hugo journeyed through Switzerland, Germany and the Rhein valley. On returning home, he wrote a two-volume work entitled, The Rhine, Letters to a Friend. In it he wrote the following:

"A few moments before crossing the far-famed battle field of Montmirail, I met a cart rather strangely laden; it was drawn by a horse and an ass, and contained pans, kettles, old trunks, straw-bottomed chairs, with a heap of old furniture. In front, in a sort of basket, were three children, almost in a state of nudity; behind, in another, were several hens. The driver wore a blouse, was walking, and carried a child on his back. A few steps from him was a woman. They were all hastening toward Montmirail, as if the great battle of 1814 were on the eve of being fought.

"I was informed, however, that this was not a removal; it was an expatriation. It was not to Montmirail they were going - it was to America. They were not flying to the sound of the trumpet of war - they were hurrying from misery and starvation. In a word, it was a family of poor Alsatian peasants who were emigrating. They could not obtain a living in their native land, but had been promised one in Ohio." (1)

The immigrants, though not all as poor as these, were fleeing poverty. Their poverty was not of their own making, but was the result of the oppressive political and economic systems under which they lived. Of the immigrants themselves and their habits, the following was written by Henry Duhring in London in 1833:

"The German carries with him for the most part, into the interior settlements of the country, the same patient and laborious habits which had dis-

tinguished him in his native land. A peacable citizen and a judicious husbandman, the colonies which he founds, though strikingly characterized by national peculiarities, are yet, almost without exception, models of well ordered and productive industry." (2)

The early German Catholics of Columbus fit the above qualities pretty well. Of the 240 or so persons who have been identified, the German states of origin of 117 are known. Of these, 111 were from the south and only six from the north of Germany, as follows:

South: 43 from Baiern	North: 3 from Hannover
22 from Hessen	2 from Rheinprovinz
17 from Baden	1 from Prussia
8 from Rheinpfalz	
8 from Württemberg	

A list of some of the first arrivals in the area shows typical variety which can be found among the immigrants of the period.

- Michael A. Reinhard, a farmer, brought his family to this area from Bavaria in 1832 or 1833.
- Bernhard Buerck, a single man, born in Baden, arrived around 1833; he was the first German brewer in the city.
- Jacob and Georg Heinrich Fischer and their families settled in Franklinton and Columbus in 1832 or 1833; Georg was a drayman.
- Urs Frund and his wife Anna Maria and their family immigrated about 1831; he was a farmer in Truro township.
- Cornelius and Johann Jacobs, from Hesse-Darmstadt, arrived about 1834. Both were single; Cornelius was a gunsmith and Johann was a saddler.
- Jacob Scharinger from Rheinpfalz arrived about 1834; he was a carpenter and was unmarried when he arrived.

The numerical standing of the Catholics in the community can be learned through the 1840 federal census and the first city directory of 1843 (3). In 1840 there were 990 households in the city, of which 38 or 3.8 per cent have been identified as German Catholics and five as English-speaking Catholics. About 90 per cent of the Catholic households were German. In Montgomery township, which surrounded the city, there were 202 households, of which 12, or 5.9 per cent, were German Catholics. (There were no identifiable English-speaking Catholics in the township.) By 1843, there were 1018 households in the city, of which 52, or 5.1 per cent, were German Catholics, and seven were English-speaking Catholics. Still, about 90 per cent of the Catholic households were German. If the numbers can be trusted, the city grew by 28 households in the period, of which half were German Catholic households.

Incidentally, the census of 1840 indicates that the average Catholic household had fewer persons than the average household of the whole population of the city.

The 1843 and 1845 directories also tell us where the German Catholic households were located. The approximate locations have been plotted on the map. Generally, they were located from the canal east to Sixth street, and from Friend (Main) street south to South Public Lane (Livingston avenue). A few were scattered along Fourth and Fifth streets as far north as State street, and also south on High and New streets (City Park avenue) in what is now a part of "German Village."

The directories also give us some of the group's economic standing in the community. The 1843 directory indicates occupations for 889 persons, of which 47

were German Catholics (5.3 per cent of the sample, compared with 5.1 per cent of the total households.) In the top level of government officials, owners/managers of partnerships and large establishments, and professionals - anyone in a position of leadership - German Catholics made up only two out of 158 listed, about one per cent, much less than the 5.3 per cent of total occupations. Of these, one was the pastor; the other was a physician, born in Pennsylvania but of German descent (his wife and children were members of St. Remigius, but it is not certain that he was). In the middle level of skilled laborers, craftsmen, shopkeepers, etc., German Catholics made up 27 out of 582 listed, about 4.6 per cent, a little below the overall 5.3 per cent. In the lower level of laborers, teamsters, etc., German Catholics were 18 out of 149, or 12.1 per cent, much higher than the overall 5.3 per cent. So, while the majority (27) were in the middle level, still a higher than average number depended on physical labor for their livelihood. This is to be expected in an immigrant group. Examples of their later movement upward to leadership positions will be given below.

The Germans brought with them to this country a sophisticated tradition of food, drink, recreation and entertainment. This led to the organization of beer gardens, vineyards, athletic games, dances, theaters and feasts. The pattern of the social organizations also carried over into their religious lives. In this early period there were seven Catholic societies in Columbus and an eighth which seems to have been made up primarily of German Catholic men.

The first of these in time and importance was St. Remigius parish, which was formally organized in 1836. Its history has been written elsewhere and will not be repeated here. The church property was donated provisionally in 1833 to the Dominicans; a stone church was erected on the property north of the present Holy Cross rectory, within five years, thereby meeting the provision of the deed. Building committee members were Cornelius Jacobs, George Studer, Jacob Schoeringer, and two English-speaking men. Jacobs had been treasurer of the congregation from its earliest days. Incidentally, this ratio of three German to two English-speaking members may have been typical of the congregation in those early days. By the 1840's, as we have seen, the Germans made up about 90 per cent of the congregation. By 1857, after the Irish immigration caused by the famine, the Germans still held a two to one advantage, numbering about three thousand to the English-speaking Catholics' fifteen hundred. The subscription list for St. Remigius, taken in 1836 and 1837, is the first record of the presence of some of the German Catholics.

The second organization formed was the St. Katharine's Ladies' society, formed in 1843 to ornament and beautify the altars of the church. Unfortunately, no early records of this society exist; the earliest book now remaining dated 1860, is a list of members. No officers are listed; it appears that the pastor was chairman and one of the ladies was secretary.

Also formed in 1843 was the German Catholic School society. Histories differ as to whether formation of this society was urged by the pastor or by the parishioners themselves. Members paid $12\frac{1}{2}$ cents per month to support the teacher and the building. From the fall of 1843 to around January of 1845, classes were held in a frame building owned by Georg Baumann, at the northwest corner of Friend and Third streets. The first teacher was a German gentleman who came up from Covington, Kentucky, just for this job, but soon returned to Kentucky. The teacher in the second year was Dominic Weiler, a member of the congregation, who was a "philosophical instrument maker." That year there were fifty students. About January of

1845, the school was moved into a frame building on the church property, roughly north of where Holy Cross church now stands. By 1849, the school held about a hundred German children in addition to an unspecified number of English-speaking children. Officers of the school society in July, 1850, were Georg Endert, president; Ferdinand Lichtenegger, vice president; Jacob Kronenbitter, secretary, and Cyril (Tillman) Frech, treasurer. Members of the committee were John Getreu, Barnhard Baumgard, Johann Ender and Martin Hinterschitt.

In January, 1845, Holy Cross officially replaced St. Remigius parish, though the new church was not yet under roof. German members of the building committee, in 1844 and 1845, were Jacob Schoeringer, Fridolin Mutter, Anton Rolling, Cornelius Jacobs (architect of the new church), Joseph Sattler, Peter Ury, John F. Zimmer and Georg Endert.

The Columbus Catholic cemetery was founded in 1845 at the corner of Washington and Mt. Vernon avenues (4). Before 1846, burials were made in Franklinton, City and East graveyards. The only name of a member of the original cemetery committee to come down to us is that of the chairman, Peter Ury. Officers of the German half of the cemetery, or "Gottes Acker", in 1862 were Georg Baumann, treasurer; Christian Wittmann, secretary; Georg Schmitt, sexton; trustees were Henry Theado, Charles Baer, Georg Eiermann and Martin Hinterschitt. In its thirty active years about seventeen hundred interments were made there. St. Jacob's cemetery was also founded in 1846, as an individual effort on the part of Henry and John Frey. It was a small plot on their farm where their father Joseph had been buried; the location is now between South Stanwood and Roosevelt avenues in Bexley. They donated the land, "in consideration of our high regard for the Catholic Church and the members thereof.....as a burial place for Catholics who shall reside nearer to it than any other Grave Yard at the time of their decease, and who shall have died in the pace and Communion of the Catholic Church" (5).

The St. Aloysius' Young Men's society was formed in 1847 for the mutual improvement and social acquaintance of its members and for the ornamentation of Holy Cross church. The society also had a library. At its organizational meeting the chairman was A. Buerkle, and the secretary pro-tem was J. Kronenbitter. The first elected officers were Jacob Kronenbitter, president; Ludwig Zettler, secretary, and Franz Weingard, treasurer (6).

The last organized of these early Catholic societies was St. Joseph's Catholic Widows and Orphans' association, founded in 1848. Though mainly intended to aid the German Catholic poor, the society helped the poor of the whole city, extending charity to all. Its first committee was Barnhard Baumgard (president), John Getreu, Jacob Kronenbitter, Johann Pirrung, A. Woelfel, Johann Ender and Ferdinand Lichtenegger.

One other early organization in the city was not a Catholic society but seems to have had a heavily German Catholic membership. This was the Deutsche Washington Artillerie Company, organized as a military group in October, 1841. Many of its members appear to have been Catholic, and this is more apparent when contrasted with the Erste Deutsche Artillerie company. In 1841 the Washington company's officers were Captain Cornelius Jacobs and First Lieutenant Bernhard Buerck; Feldmarshall or Field Marshall in 1843 was Johan Ender. The Erste company had German Protestant officers, such as Louis Hoster and Peter Ambres. The Washington company was reorganized in 1846 as the First German Beneficial society. It paid its members weekly installments in case of sickness, buried its dead, and provided for widows and orphans of deceased members.

What became of these early German Catholics? Those who survived a critical period in 1849 and the early 1850's prospered and their descendants are still with us today.

They first had to survive the cholera epidemics which struck Columbus in 1849, 1850, 1842 and 1854. In the period from June 21 to mid-September, 1849, the city Board of Health reported 162 deaths due directly to the cholera. At Holy Cross, 62 burials were recorded in the period, of which almost 50 were probably due directly or indirectly to the epidemic. Some families were devastated; some were completely wiped out, such as that of Christian Zähringer, a High street hatter and skin dresser. Some families temporarily left the city to escape the disease. From July 8 to September 4, 1850, the Board of Health reported 209 deaths due to the cholera. At Holy Cross, 62 deaths were recorded, of which fifty or so were probably cholera related. The 1852 epidemic was slightly less severe; in 1854, the last epidemic, perhaps 20 German Catholics died.

The other factor affecting the German Catholics in the 1850's was a general "emigration fever" of the times. Beginning with the 1849 gold rush and extending into the late 1850's, many long-time residents of the eastern states moved west to California and Oregon, Kansas and Nebraska. Many of those who left Columbus, however, would have returned had they been able to do so.

Among those who remained in Columbus and survived the epidemics, the following are some examples of prosperity later in the century.

- Michael A. Reinhard was among the first German farmers of Ohio to cultivate the grape. He was not a seeker of distinction or fame.
- Jacob Reinhard, his son, in 1843 became co-founder and manager of Der Westbote, the most influential German-language newspaper in the state. He was a principal of Reinhard & Co., bankers. He was elected to City Council in 1853 and for the next twenty years, serving as president of the Council in 1863 and 1867. He was a member of the Democratic State Executive Committee (7).
- Bernhard Buerck, the first German brewer in Columbus, died in the cholera epidemic of 1849, His son,
- George Burck, was a shoemaker, but also was the city's Police Commissioner in the 1880's (8).
- Cornelius Jacobs has already been mentioned as a gunsmith, first treasurer of the congregation, and architect of Holy Cross. He was the first German Catholic on City Council, elected in 1844 and 1845.
- Felix Jacobs, his son, was a prominent businessman in the city, a partner in Kilbourne and Jacobs, makers of wheelbarrows, road scrapers and other equipment (9).
- Charles Woelfel designed the Holy Cross school building.
- Jacob Studer, baptized at St. Remigius, was a publisher and was author of the 1873 Columbus history, which contained the first extensive history of the Catholic Church in the city.
- Francis Engler was president of the Eagle Foundry in Columbus.
- Louis Zettler was a prominent grocer for many years, was a member of City Council and was Police Commissioner in the 1870's. St. Vincent orphanage was founded in his homestead and he was one of its first major benefactors.

Some of the early German Catholic names can still be found prominently displayed in the city - such as Rodenfels Chevrolet, Roehrenbeck Electric, Zettler Hardware, and the Trautman building. On a more personal level, we have as members of the Catholic Record society a descendant of Joseph Grate, the Franklinton

silversmith, and another who is a great-granddaughter of Michael A. Reinhard.

Paraphrasing Henry Duhring's comments of a century and a half ago, the German Catholics brought with them to Columbus their patient and laborious habits and became peaceable and prosperous citizens. They led, and their descendants here still lead, well-ordered and productive lives.

- (1) Dedication in Clement L. Martzolff's History of Perry County, Ohio. Ward and Weiland, New Lexington, Ohio, 1902.
- (2) North American Review, XL (April, 1835), p. 467.
- (3) The Columbus Business Directory for 1843-1844, Columbus. J. R. Armstrong, 1843.
- (4) "Bulletin," Catholic Record Society, Diocese of Columbus, Vol. IV, pp. 275-282.
- (5) Ibid., Vol. IV, 339-341.
- (6) Ibid., Vol. V, 443, ff.
- (7) For a short biography, see Williams Brothers' History of Franklin and Pickaway Counties, 1880, between pages 544 and 545.
- (8) "Bulletin", Catholic Record Society, Diocese of Columbus, Vol. VI, 555 ff.
- (9) Additional data can be found in Bill Arter's Columbus Vignettes, Vol. II, p. 56.

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ST. REMIGIUS CHURCH, COLUMBUS
SACRAMENTAL REGISTER, 1837 - 1846
(Continued)

By Donald M. Schlegel

Year 1843, continued

242. 27 August: Catherine, born 30 June, daughter of James McGuire and Mary born Kiernen. Sponsors Timothy Rorke and Mary Fitzsimons. W. Schonat
[James McGuire was born in Ireland around 1860. He lived in New York between 1832 and 1838 and moved to Ohio before 1841. In 1850 he and his family, including Margaret McGuire, age 86, were living in Ward 1 in Columbus. (p. 769)]
243. 29 August: Mary Anne, born 11 June, daughter of Patrick Kentuel and his wife Margaret. Sponsors Henry Terner and Mary Anne Terner.
244. 30 August: At Marion (in Bethlehem) Katharina, daughter of Ludwig Henselmann and his wife Katharina born Reder. Sponsors Johann Getreu and Barbara Volpert. W. Schonat
245. 3 September: Margaret, born 25 August 1843, daughter of Barbara Ackerman. Sponsors Elizabeth Herner and Margaretha Kellner. W. Schonat
246. 5 September: Wilhelm Eugene, born 1 Sept. 1843, son of Cornelius Jacobs and his wife Christina. Sponsors Eugene Koos and Cornelia Koos. W. Schonat
247. 18 September: Jane, born 10 August, daughter of Michael [?] Riaen and his wife Bridget. Sponsors Franz Xavier Dengler and Margaretha Zimmer. W. Schonat
248. 24 September: Nicolaus, born 15 August, son of Adam Wagner and his wife Margaretha. Sponsor Maria Heinz.
249. 24 September: Caroline, born 21 July, daughter of Adam Zahn and his wife Veronica born Zopf. Sponsors Johann Röhrenback and Caroline Robard. W. Schonat
250. 10 October: Georg, born 9 October, son of Bernhard Baumgarten and his wife Veronica born Knoth. Sponsors Johann Georg Entert and Sophia Entert. W. Schonat
[Bernhard Baumgart was a tailor, born in Germany around 1815. He

Year 1843, continued

- immigrated with his wife and children around 1840 and was living in the Third Ward in Columbus that year (p. 229). (1850 Wd. 3, p. 590)]
251. 22 October: Jacob, son of Urs Freund and his wife, born 14 September. Sponsors Jacob and Barbara Rinehard. J.M. Young
252. 29 October: Joseph, born 16 October, son of Anton K nig and his wife Maria Anna Born Dichtmiller. Sponsors Joseph Trautman and Dorothea Trautman. W. Schonat
253. 5 November: Mary, born 1 November, daughter of John Burns and his wife Mary. Sponsors Margaretha Balzel and Catherine Ellis. W. Schonat
[John Burns was a cook at the Neil House in 1843, with residence on Broad street near Front.]
254. 8 November: Johann Georg, born 11 September, son of Jacob Reinhardt and his wife Katharina born Hamman. Sponsors Georg Studder and Margaretha Reinhardt. W. Schonat
255. 21 November: Barbara Elisabetha, born 19 November, daughter of Georg Baumann and his wife Sibilla born Ehrenhardt. Sponsors Cornelius Jacobs and Christina Jacobs. W. Schonat
256. 25 November: Johann Klemens, born 23 November, son of Klemens Beer and his wife Agnes born Doll. Sponsors Jacob Schaeringer and Eva Ender. W. Schonat
257. 26 November: Heinrich Edward, born 26 October, son of Johann Jacobs and Magdalena born Kraus. Sponsors Franz Xavier Dengler and Apoll. Gangloff. W. Schonat
258. 1 December: Frederick Fridolin, son of Frederick Fishinger and his wife Blandina born Roth. Sponsors Fridolin Schumacher and Maria Schumacher. W. Schonat
259. 3 December: Friederich Franz Xavier, born 26 September, son of Bernhard B rck and Maria born Ritter. Sponsors Isidor Frey and Margaretha Breit. W. Schonat
260. 9 December: Peter, born the same day, son of Benedict Rott and his wife Laura born Gutballt. Sponsors Peter Brands and Maria Brands. W. Schonat
261. 10 December: Fridolin Johann, born 19 November, son of Ferdinand Lichtenegger and his wife Maria born Rameil. Sponsors Fridolin Schumacker and Maria Schumacker. W. Schonat
[Ferdinand Lichtenegger was a "clock and watchmaker," living on the north side of Friend street near High street in 1843. He was born in Germany around 1810; in 1850 he and his family were living in a double with the John Ender family. (Wd., p. 406) He died in May of 1889.]
- 262- 14 December: "In Northern," Catherine, aged about four years and Henry
263. Samuel, aged about fourteen months, children of Henry Patten and his wife Bridget. Sponsors John Smith and Mary Smith. W. Schonat
[Henry Patton was born in Ireland around 1811. In 1840 he was living in Troy township, Delaware county (p. 242) and in 1850 in Marlborough township, same county. (p. 353)]
264. 17 December: Joseph, born 9 November, son of Joseph Studder and his wife Magdalena born Fischer. Sponsors Urs Freund and Mar. Barbara Freund. W. Schonat
265. 23 December: Peter, born 22 December, son of Matthias Trott and his wife Laura born Ludwig. Sponsors Peter and Katharina Eisel. W. Schonat
266. 24 December: Joseph John, born 9 December, son of Laurence Murat and his wife Eva born Franz. Sponsors Gallus W lfel and Maria W lfel. W. Schonat

(To be continued)

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