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THE EARLY HISTORY OF ONE
of
OHIO'S FIRST CATHOLIC COLLEGES

(Editors' note: The following history of St. Joseph's College, Somerset, Ohio, was written in 1903 in response to an inquiry by Mr. W. O. Thompson, President of Ohio State University. Father M. J. Ripple, O.P., wrote the story at the request of his superior, the Very Rev. D. J. Kennedy, O.P., S.T.M.)

Mr. W. O. Thompson,
President Ohio State University
Dear Sir:

Your letter of the 17 inst was put into my hands by the Very Rev. D. J. Kennedy, O.P., together with instructions to furnish you with what data may be at hand relative to the foundation and history of St. Joseph's Convent.

The following, it is hoped, will convey some general idea of the history of this institution, particulars concerning which may be had in large part in the list of books and periodicals appended. It is much regretted that many valuable and original documents concerning the early history of St. Joseph's have perished in the disastrous fire which swept this institution in 1862. The principal facts, however, have been preserved in the memory of the old Fathers, or have been recorded from time to time in scattered periodicals and publications. These sources as many as are at hand, are enumerated by way of appendage to the following brief narrative, and copies of same are on file in our library.

Should you find it convenient to visit us in persuance of more thorough information than this brief correspondence can offer, I am instructed to say that you are most welcome and that the librarian will render whatever assistance is in his power to facilitate your labors.

About two and a half miles south of Somerset in Perry County is located St. Joseph's Convent and St. Joseph's Church. The early history of Catholic faith and Catholic education is so closely woven into and identified with the early history of St. Joseph's, that not to assign to it its proper place in the early Catholic annals of the state would be to rob those annals of their most romantic as well as their most important factor.

This institution is registered in Rome in the archives of the Master General of the Dominican Order under the title, "Collegium Formale Sancti Joseph, Provinciae Sancti Joseph Americae Septentrionalis." Hereby it is qualified to confer university degrees in Philosophy and Sacred Theology such as are acknowledged by the Catholic Church. This erection into a "Collegium Formale" was first effected in 1834. Subsequently its rights and privileges

were forfeited by reason of its inability to maintain the proper officials and the requisite number of professors. In 1896 these impediments being overcome the college regained its lost title and privileges by letters of reestablishment from Rome.

In 1818 Revs. D. E. Fenwick, O.P., and N. D. Young, O.P., were sent to Somerset by Dr. Wilson, O.P., their superior, to make a foundation upon a piece of land which a certain Jacob Dittoe had donated and upon which, with the aid of a few devoted neighbors, he had erected a log church, 32 by 40 feet. The Fathers after a long and weary journey, made entirely on horseback, reached their destination on Dec. 1st, and on the 6th of the same month dedicated the first Catholic Church and opened the first religious house in the state of Ohio, under the name and patronage of St. Joseph.

In 1822, Father Fenwick was called to fill the newly created bishopric of Cincinnati and Fr. Young succeeded him as superior of St. Joseph's. Three Fathers soon joined him in his labors among the missions of Ohio. They were Fathers Martin, Hill and DeRymacher. In this year a stone addition was put to the log church and later in 1829 a brick portion supplanted the old structure. A beautiful gothic interior was given to this building which is now measured 80 by 42 feet.

There is no record as yet of any change in the log house, which served as a convent for the Fathers and which was the nucleus of the future house of studies. The time had come nevertheless when the increasing needs of the growing population demanded corresponding increase in the number of the good religious who served its spiritual wants. Father Young alive to this necessity, saw the wisdom of providing larger quarters for his community, and accordingly, early in 1830, began to gather the material for a large and commodious building, which was designed to be the future scholasticate of the province. This structure was to be of brick upon a foundation of stone and it was to provide accommodations for a community of twenty or twenty-five religious. In 1834 this house was ready for occupation, and on Dec. 23rd was received from Rome the documents constituting it the "Studium Generale" or general house of studies for the Dominican Order in the U.S. Here young men previously graduated in the classics, and trained in the spiritual life and in the traditions and customs of the Order at the house of Novitiate near Springfield, Ky., were educated in philosophy, theology and all sacred sciences. At the end of this long course of study they were ordained to the priesthood and sent forth to spread the knowledge of the saving truths of religion.

The pioneer days had now past. The influence and value of the Order of St. Dominic in America had made itself felt. The harvest was being reaped in the internal expansion of the province. The little church of 1829 had become too small to accommodate the needs of the Fathers and the rapidly growing congregation. The convent though only a few years completed already proved too small for the constantly increasing community. Again the Fathers began to build and by the close of the year 1840 a handsome large church took the place of the stone and brick edifice. At the same time there arose by its side a magnificent convent building, double the proportions of the one previously in use, and intended to supply the wants of future generations. Much of this vast improvement was accomplished through the persevering energy and ability of Father Charles Montgomery, who was afterwards named first bishop of Monterey, Cal.

About this period may be recorded the beginning of the valuable theological library, which at present exists at St. Joseph's, and which in its home in the convent of which we are now speaking, attracted so much attention from all over the state.

St. Joseph's College, an institution devoted to the education of boys, was opened in 1851. The affairs of the Fathers had prospered to that point where it was deemed feasible to venture forth upon a hitherto untouched field of labor. The Rev. James Whelan, raised to the episcopacy in 1859, was appointed president of the new college, and a curriculum embracing the elementary and classical branches of knowledge was advertized to take effect upon the first Monday of September 1851. On the appointed day the institution accordingly opened its doors, and immediately received such cordial cooperation from the Catholics of Ohio, Kentucky and the South, that it was decided to erect a spacious building to properly house its large number of students. In 1853 work was begun on the college building under the direction of the Rev. C. D. Bowling, O.P., and in September 1854 it was ready for occupation. The college boys now occupied a beautiful home 120 by 50 feet. It contained provisions for 150 boarders, of which 75 registered in the opening year. The college issued a paper monthly, "The Collegian," and supported a brass band which bore a reputation of considerable note. During the five years which followed, the career of St. Joseph's College, under the able presidency of Father Whelan, was one of steady improvement and great success. It numbered among its students men who have risen to prominence in this country's esteem. Gen. Michael Sheridan, retired U.S.A., brother of the General Phil Sheridan and J. L. Sheridan another brother and prominent member of the bar, were alumni of old St. Joseph's College.

To all the promising future of St. Joseph's College, the Civil War proved the death blow. A great number of its young men were from the Southern states. These hurried to their homes before the path should be closed against them. While those from the North who remained either responded at once to the call of arms or departed for their respective homes to take part later in the more vital moments of that terrible struggle. With the breaking up of their college, the season of misfortune to the Fathers seemed only to have begun. In the following year, 1862, on the 14th of January, the convent recently completed, accidentally took fire and together with the church, of which both priests and people were so justly proud, the whole was consumed by the flames. Very little was saved and it was only by heroic efforts that a portion of the valuable library, some of the volumes of which bore date of the 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th centuries, were rescued. The buildings were almost a total wreck. Homeless and financially crippled, the Fathers and the novices were forced to occupy the deserted college building, which was made to serve both as church and convent, whence in 1866, they removed to their home in Springfield, Ky. The fruits of years of toil were thus snatched from their grasp; but their losses had not wrecked their courage. Undaunted, they returned to the charge and began anew the grand work which Providence had marked out for them. The old convent of 1834 was placed in a respectable condition of repairs and in 1873 the novices were again brought to Perry County. In 1880 the foundations were laid for a convent, modeled on a grander scale than ever, and it was completed in 1882 under the able administration of the Rev. H. F. Lilly, O.P. The church, too, was restored after a gothic design by that master of ecclesiastical architecture the late Mr. Keeley of Brooklyn, N.Y. Prosperity again began to smile upon the struggling community and the ranks of its students once more began to swell. The Province

of St. Joseph began to feel the vigor of new life, and it stretched forth its arms to the four parts of our great land. Its alumni were sent to tender their priestly ministrations as far north as Minneapolis, east to Boston and New York, south to fever-stricken Memphis, and west to the mining camps of Denver.

In 1896, May 31st, letters of reestablishment from Rome again created St. Joseph's the general house of studies for the Order in America, in response to a petition from the present prior and regent of studies, the Very Rev. D. J. Kennedy, O.P., S.T.M.

For the past few years even the present building has been taxed to its utmost capacity and it in turn has been found too small for the growing needs of the province. This time, however, the discerning eyes of the reverend superiors were directed towards that center of Catholic intellectual activity and learning, the Catholic University of Washington, D.C. There they saw the natural home for their theological seminary, for it was among the great universities of Europe that the Order had won its proudest laurels which crowned her sons the greatest theologians of the Church, and her own institute the "Order of Preachers" and the "Order of Truth."

Plans have already been accepted, and with the advent of spring, foundations will be laid of a magnificent gothic convent of Vermont granite. This, it is hoped when completed, will be a fitting member of the beautiful group of buildings which go to make up the Catholic University, and a fitting home for the sacred sciences and their ardent votaries the novices of the Order of St. Dominic.

Then with deep regret will they bid adieu to their loved spot in dear old Perry County, the scene of the glorious labors of their ancestors, and of the hardships and triumphs of their Fathers.

Very respectfully yours,

M. J. Ripple, O.P.

for

The Very Rev. D.J. Kennedy, O.P., S.T.M.

January 27, 1903.

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GRAVEYARDS
of
ST. THOMAS CATHOLIC CHURCH
ZANESVILLE, OHIO

by

R. H. H. Harkins

(Editors' note: The following account copied from the original manuscript by Mrs. Sylvia Hargrove, Zanesville, member of the Catholic Record Society, was written in 1899. Mr. Harkins, the author, was the first president of the Pioneer and Historical Society of Muskingum County.)

The first permanent graveyard as the term cemeteries was unknown, in the more early days, was that of a part of the grounds donated by the late John S. Dugan (now the site of grounds upon which St. Thomas Catholic Church occupies), being blessed and opened for burial of the dead of that Church, immediately after the opening of the Church.

Previous to the consecrating of these grounds the interments of the dead of this congregation was in the old Main Street burying ground and at Somerset, Perry County, where quite a number were buried in the grounds blessed for that purpose. The first in the Catholic burial ground was that of John S. Dugan, March , 1825, soon after the opening of the chapel for services. In the following winter and spring of 1827, there were a number of interments there. Interments continued here. The mortuary list of the town increasing, this place of burial became rather contracted and burial space about all taken.

Today there is nothing visible to denote that the grounds upon which this grand magnificent edifice occupies, were once the hallowed grounds so dear and revered by our earlier day citizens of Zanesville, as a place of burial of the dead of this Church. A large number of the remains of fathers, mothers, sisters, other kindred and others still lie in the quiet grave within these consecrated grounds awaiting the final awakening.

The population of the town and the largely increasing membership of this Church and this place of burial about filled up, and in proximity of the rapidly

increasing and densely populated part of the town, it was decided upon by the proper authorities to purchase at once a more desirable and more extensive grounds. Accordingly on the 14th of August 1835, John B. Purcell, Bishop of Cincinnati, purchased from Richard Stillwell for the sum of \$160.00 about two acres of land, east of the city and west of Greenwood cemetery. It being expressly stipulated in the purchase of these grounds that it should evermost sacredly (be)held for a place of burial and none other whatsoever.

Soon after the purchase of these grounds, interments in the old Catholic graveyard to a general extent ceased. A number of re-interments from the Chapel and Main Street graveyards was made. This burial place, like that of the Chapel grounds, by the continual increase of members of the Church and deaths increasing, (became too small, and) it was (thought) prudent and best that new grounds of such a character and location, and of such amount of territory as to safely preclude the necessity of purchasing another tract of land for a place of burial, be decided upon.

The necessary legal and Church authority was obtained. In the fall of 1881 a number of gentlemen connected with St. Thomas Catholic Church met together again, and, organized into a body of fifteen members of the Church, purchased of Charles W. Potwin a tract of land containing nearly seventy acres, located a mile and a half west of the National Road, seventh ward, under the title of Mount Calvary Cemetery. The price paid was about \$7,500.

The whole tract was immediately laid out in the most approved manner of cemetery architecture. A large receiving vault was built at considerable expense.

Father Metzger⁽¹⁾ took a warm interest in this undertaking and accomplished much in its financial success and otherwise.

The following are the names of the officers and trustees of the Association: President, Rev. Francis Dunn (2); treasurer, E. P. Bloomer; secretary, John C. Sullivan; trustees, John Hollingsworth, Thomas S. Murphy, Dennis Hays and Philip Mourin. Two trustees were elected for one year, two for two years and two for three years, thus leading to an annual election of two members to the board. The resident pastor of the Church would always be president ex-officio.

It can be truthfully stated here by the writer that but few more spacious, more beautiful or lovelier cemeteries can be found than that of Mount Calvary. Well indeed is its many advantages appreciated by those of St. Thomas Church congregation.

Mr. Walter Smith was the first regular grave digger of the Chapel graveyard assisted by his sons, Patrick, James and Thomas. They also served in that capacity for a time at the east end graveyard. For several years these gentlemen served in these two important positions or at least that of the labor performed was voluntary. For several years Mr. Smith (Watty) continued as sexton of the new graveyard and the old and the present St. Thomas Church. He was followed as grave digger by Mr. James Grace, who was followed by Mr. Eugene Smith, Mr. James Cunningham. After his decease Mr. John Gob took charge, remaining but a short time. After which Mr. Martin Quinlan took charge and still assumes the duties as sexton up to this date, 1899.

(1) Father Charles Vincent Metzger, O.P., born in Perry County, Ohio.

(2) Father Joseph Francis Dunn, O.P., at one time Provincial.

THE DOMINICAN SISTERS' FOUNDATION
IN TENNESSEE

(Editor's note: The following historical article appeared in the Tennessee Register, Catholic newspaper of Nashville, Tenn. It was written by Rev. Owen F. Campion, Editor, and is reprinted here with permission.)

Even though the War disrupted all phases of Tennessee life, some expansion was accomplished by Bishop Whelan (1) during his reign from 1860 to 1863. Bishop Whelan himself always said that the greatest event of his administration was the coming to Tennessee of the Dominican Sisters from Somerset, Ohio, and the establishment of St. Cecilia's Congregation (2).

Since the departure of the Sisters of Charity in 1858, Nashville had been without a secondary school for young women and a community of nuns. In the spring of 1860, Bishop Whelan applied to St. Mary's Convent, Somerset, Ohio, for Sisters to staff a girls' academy in Nashville. He thought that such an institution would be of value to all the people of the city. The provincial of the American Dominicans at the time, the Very Reverend J. A. Kelly, O.P., responded to the Bishop's request and sent four nuns to Nashville. They arrived in Nashville on August 17, 1860, and began to set their convent in order and plan for the academy they expected to open.

On the first Monday of October, 1860, the Sisters opened the new academy. They called it St. Cecilia Academy in recognition of the traditional love Southerners had for music. The Civil War brought financial difficulties to the new community and at one time the Sisters almost moved to Washington, D.C. Several did leave, but a few remained to form the nucleus of the Pontifical institute which later was formed.

In 1960, the Congregation of Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia observed its centenary with ceremonies presided over by the Most Reverend William L. Adrian, seventh Bishop of Nashville. Bishop Adrian acclaimed the work of the Sisters for the Church as did the Most Rev. Agidio Vagnozzi, Apostolic Delegate to the United States, who congratulated the Sisters in the name of His Holiness, Pope John XXIII. As part of the ceremonies, Bishop Adrian broke ground for Aquinas College, a two year college for women to be operated by the Sisters at their property, "Overbrook," on Harding Road. It became Nashville's first Catholic college.

At the time of the centenary, the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia not only staffed schools, on both elementary and secondary levels, throughout the Diocese of Nashville, but in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, and the Dioceses of Richmond and Birmingham as well.

In 1861 Bishop Whelan reopened the Academy for Boys in Nashville although it was forced to close soon afterwards. The German Catholics of Memphis desired a parish of their own. In 1861 Bishop Whelan established St. Mary's parish to serve them. A church was planned.

Although a large majority of Tennesseans favored withdrawal from the Union, Bishop Whelan remained steadfast in his sympathy for the Federals. His attitude caused him to be mistrusted by the people of his Cathedral city, who were seven-to-one in favor of recession.

When Forts Henry and Donelson fell, Nashville was in danger of attack, and a general panic swept the town. Bishop Whelan scheduled a novena in the Cathedral to implore Divine protection. During the course of the novena, he himself addressed the people exhorting them to place their trust in Almighty God. He said too that regardless of what the outcome of the conflict would be, it should be accepted as the Will of God. Resentment against the Bishop mounted as a result of the novena sermon. It was misunderstood to mean that he was precasting the Confereracy's ultimate collapse.

The Federal troops which occupied Nashville were led by General William Rosecrans, U.S.A., whose brother later became the Bishop of Columbus. There were many soldiers from Ohio whom Bishop Whelan had known as a Dominican missionary in Ohio. He entertained the General and these men in his residence. His close association with the Federal officers enraged his subjects and is reported to be a major cause of his departure from Tennessee. By 1863 much of Tennessee was over-run by Union soldiers. Several priests were enlisted in the armies. Catholic families were scattered. Conditions were deplorable.

These factors of the hatred in which he was held by his people, the destruction of the War, and failing health, caused Bishop Whelan to resign his See. In a lengthy communique to Pope Pius IX, Bishop Whelan cited the obstacles which faced him and asked permission to resign as Bishop of Nashville. In mid 1863 the Pope accepted the resignation and named him Bishop of Diocletianopolis in partibus infidelium.

Bishop Whelan then retired to a Dominican house. In 1872 he composed a work of apology of the doctrine of papal infallibility. Orestes Brownson hailed it as the best written in the English tongue. Bishop Whelan died on February 18, 1878, in Zanesville, Ohio. He was buried at St. Joseph's. Perry County, Ohio.

The Very Rev. J. A. Kelly, O.P., was appointed administrator sede vacante of the Diocese. Once a provincial of the Dominican Order in America. he governed the Diocese until the nomination of the next Bishop.

(1) Bishop James Whelan, O.P., (1823-1878) second Bishop of Nashville. He succeeded Bishop Richard Pius Miles, O.P.

(2) Congregation of Dominican nuns.

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MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL NOTICE

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