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THE SECTARIAN CLIMATE IN 1840s SOMERSET, OHIO by Patrick J. Mooney

Occasionally the linking of bits of information from different historical sources illuminates persons and events in a way that throws into quickened relief, however briefly, the personalities, emotions, and social flavor of a by-gone time. Such a linkage brings together two nineteenth century clerical gentlemen and their contemporary townsfolk in Somerset, Perry County, Ohio in the 1840s.

Andrew Carroll arrived in Quebec from Ireland with his parents and several siblings in 1829. By 1832 the family had moved to near Plainfield, Coshocton County, Ohio, where Andrew taught school for a short time. He was then in his twenty-first year. In 1833 he felt called to ministry in the Methodist Church, preached his first sermon in Coshocton County in 1834, and was licensed to preach by the Ohio Conference of the Methodist Church on September 19, 1835.

During the early decades of the nineteenth century, the Ohio Conference met annually and assigned ministers to each of the numerous and growing circuits in its jurisdiction. Few Ohio towns in these early years had Methodist congregations large enough to support full-time pastors, so nearly all Methodist ministers of the time were itinerants, traveling their circuits continuously to provide religious services to scattered, small groups of their faithful.

When the Ohio Conference clergy met in Chillicothe for their annual conference in late September, 1843, the Reverend Andrew Carroll was appointed to the Somerset station for the ninth year of his itinerancy. With residence in Somerset, Reverend Carroll was responsible for at least three other congregations in the northern tier of Perry County townships in addition to Somerset itself. In 1843 Somerset was a thriving county town, situated on Zane's Trace, still a major route across southeastern Ohio from Wheeling, (West) Virginia to Maysville, Kentucky, and had been the county seat since the formation of Perry County in 1818. Northern Perry County was settled earlier than the less agriculturally productive southern areas, having had a large immigration of Pennsylvania German Lutherans, Reformed Church families, and Catholics. Somerset itself was mostly English-speaking Protestant in population. The Methodist congregation of Somerset had been established as early as 1810, and by 1843 was occupying its second church building, on East Main Street.

Reverend Andrew Carroll arrived in Somerset on Saturday, October 14, 1843 and preached his first sermon in the Methodist church on Sunday, October 15. It was in the following several months that the incidents occurred which make our story.

In 1843 the Reverend George Augustine (Joseph) Wilson, O.P. began his term as Provincial of the American Dominicans at St. Joseph's Priory, just outside the town of Somerset. Father Wilson, ordained in 1837 at St. Rose Convent in Kentucky at the age of thirty years, was a native of Morgantown, (West) Virginia, and a convert from Methodism to the Catholic Faith. (For a full treatment of Father Wilson's life story, see Anthony J. Lisska's article in the Bulle XIII, No. 4, April, 1988). Throughout his long career, Father Wilson was a builder of churches, a proponent of strict observance of the details of religious life, and a noted and fiery preacher. This last characteristic is documented early in Father Wilson's career in the journal of the Methodist itinerant, Reverend Andrew Carroll.

In 1857, Andrew Carroll's Moral and Religious Sketches and Collections with Incidents of Ten years' Itinerancy in the West was published by the Methodist Book Concern in Cincinnati. Chapter XI, "Our Ninth Year in the Itinerancy", begins:

Sabbath, the 15th of October, 1843, we tried to preach our first sermon in Somerset. The condition of the society here is not good...

...The outwards haters, or, say, non-lovers, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Universalists, and Romanists, etc., all trying to pile up the agony, all pleased at the dissensions among the Methodists. What a world this is!

The Romanists, or some of them, and their priest, the Rev. George Wilson, in particular, who on the 1st of January, as we attended a funeral in the Romish chapel, where Mr. W. officiated, among other things, said, in referring to Protestants, "They are all heathens, out of the Catholic Church." Touching heretical doctrines, he said, "My Protestant friends, make your noisy preachers give you a reason of the faith they preach to you; they do not believe what they preach themselves," etc. We announced a series of lectures on the contrast between Protestantism and Romanism, to be delivered on Sabbath evenings. The Catholics came out, the church was filled, yea, crowded. As poor as these lectures were, we did not hear that the priest attempted an answer to them.

Shortly after this, a Mr. Eaton, a Universalist preacher, who had flourished for a season in Newark and Hebron, etc., came to Somerset, and occupied the court-house in his fulminations against all orthodoxy, and especially against the Methodists, etc.

A letter of April 5, 1845 from Reverend Father Francis Sadoc Vilarrasa, recently arrived in Somerset from the Dominican convent in Barcelona, to his parents in Spain, sheds more light on the sectarian climate in Somerset at this time.

Ohio, April 5, 1845

My very dear parents:

No doubt you have received my last letter of January 12th, in which I gave a detailed account of our arrival in America and of our Convent situated two miles from a small village called Somerset. The convent is in a thickly wooded country with a few houses scattered here and there. The residents are for the most part

Irish and German, and nearly all are Catholics; since the Protestants do not wish to live out here for fear of becoming what they call "perverts".

In Somerset the greater part of the people are Protestants....

A short time ago the Protestants loaned us their church for services, but after or Father Provincial [Fr. George Wilson] preached there, they were not so wiling to let us have it a second time....

The Protestants who come to our churches raise no disturbance nor do they give any cause for scandal. If excesses have been committed, chiefly at the instigation of the ministers, the majority of the people have ever regarded them as contrary to liberty which reigns here, and as out of accord with the principles of civilization.

One might comment that if the "fiery" preacher, Father Wilson, when using the Protestant church for services, expressed sentiments resembling those quoted by Rev. Andrew Carroll at the funeral in the Catholic Church in 1844, it is perhaps little wonder that the Dominicans were not invited to preach a second time in the Protestant church.

In addition to his conflict with the "Romanists", earlier in 1844 Rev. Andrew Carroll had been drawn unwilling into public debate with the Universalist preacher, Rev. Mr. Eaton, who was preaching one Friday evening in the Somerset court house. By his own account, as Rev. Carroll began his discourse from a position several steps up from the floor in one of the jury boxes, several supporters of the Rev. Mr. Eaton began the cry, "Take him down!" At this a Somerset citizen, neighbor of Rev. Carroll, and a cooper by trade, moved in front of Rev. Carroll and stated, "If you take another step, I will send you to the place you affect not to believe in," which gave pause to the attempt to "bring down" the Methodist preacher. Carroll says,

One stentorian countryman, a blacksmith, and a Romanist, cried out---"Faith, that's true; give it to them, my countryman," We had Protestants and Romanists out. Quite a number on their way from the Methodist church came into the court-house, particularly as it was late, and on hearing our voice and supposing something more than common was up. Hence, we had, at the least calculation, ten friends for one the Universalist had.

And Methodist doctrine had its hearing. Rev. Carroll concludes his account of the episode:

We challenged him, over and over again, to answer us, but he ran out of the house. Poor soul! However, one of his friends followed him, and he returned and dismissed the congregation with prayer, as undevout as his preaching.

Mr. Eaton complained of his discomfiture afterward, but during our time in Somerset, he only visited the place, once or twice, and all was over.

By countrymen, Rev. Carroll presumably meant a native of Ireland, like himself. Would that we could identify by name that "stentorian" Irish Catholic blacksmith, and the cooper, too! Alas, by the 1840s Somerset had a population of more than one thousand persons, including ten blacksmiths and nearly as many coopers.

After a rather unsettling year in Somerset, in the fall of 1844 Rev. Andrew Carroll was assigned to the Piketon circuit of the Methodist's Ohio Conference.

SOURCES

Carroll, Andrew, Moral and Religious Sketches and Recollections with Incidents of Ten Years' Itinerancy in the West; Cincinnati, 1837.

Colburn, E. H., History of Perry County, in Graham's 1883 History of Fairfield and Perry Counties; Chicago, 1883.

Lisska, Anthony J., "Father George Augustine Joseph Wilson (1807-1884): Temperance Preacher, Parish Missionary, and Church Builder", Bulletin of the Catholic Record Society - Diocese of Columbus, Vol. XIII, No. 4, April, 1988.

Vilarrassa letter, translation as published in The Centenary of Saint Joseph's Parish, Somerset, Ohio by The Novices of St. Joseph's Novitiate; Somerset, 1918.

The Somerset Press. A series of twenty-four articles published April through September, 1876, in Somerset's weekly newspaper under the nom de plume Senex, detailing memories of life in Somerset and environs during the 1820s through 1840s. (Ohio Historical Society microfilm)

----- THE DIOCESAN DEBT IN 1899

The Bulletin of July, 1977 carried a small article titled "The Proposed 1899 Suppression of the Diocese of Columbus." There the situation of the Diocese after the death of Bishop Watterson was presented: a diocese deeply in debt and few in numbers, so that Archbishop Elder of Cincinnati proposed to the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith that the diocese either be increased in territory or be suppressed. Documents in the Archives of the Diocese have preserved the extent of the indebtedness and the names of the creditors of the Diocese. As can be seen below, the debt amounted to over \$180,000. The Catholic population of the diocese at that time was about 60,000, so that the per-capita debt was only \$3, or perhaps \$15 to \$20 per household. That this debt was in fact relatively small was demonstrated by the next ordinary, Bishop Moeller, who apportioned the debt among the parishes and soon had it down to a manageable amount.

The bulk of the debt, \$133,000, was owed to two insurance companies and on these portions the interest was up to date. Most of the the remainder was in the hands of individual persons in small amounts. Some of these smaller accounts were far in arrears even as to payment of interest. The debt of \$454 due to Mrs. Mary Ann Gallagher carried an interest amount of \$463.08. Assuming that no payments had been made on the principal, then this amounts to about twelve years of interest. Other loans appear to have been outstanding, with no interest paid, for about seven or eight years.

Columbus, Ohio
June 16, 1899

To the
Very Rev. F. X. Specht, Administrator of
the Diocese of Columbus

Very Rev. and Dear Sir,

We the undersigned hereby certify that the following is a correct and full statement of the debt of the Diocese of Columbus, as found in the Diocesan Ledger, April 17, 1899.

To	
Loan, The Penn Mutual Life Ins. Co. of Philadelphia	\$115,000.00
Rt. Rev. J.A. Watterson, D.D.	580.00
Peter M. Kreuzberg, M.D.	3,600.00
Interest on same to April 17, '99	510.99
Miss Bridget Scanlon (int. 648.65)	1,200.00
Mr. Anthony Clarke	550.00
Int. on same to April 17, '99	7.75
Miss E. T. Devling	300.00
Int. on same to April 17, '99	4.57
Mrs. Susanna Hoffman	4,000.00
Int. on same to April 17, '99	19.99
Infirm Priests' Fund	5,000.00
Int. on same to April 17, '99	540.00
Miss Ellen M'Garr	1,455.00
Int. on same to April 17, '99	77.60
Miss Catharine M'Garr	1,375.00
Int. on same to April 17, '99	73.33
Rt. Rev. J. A. Watterson, D.D.	4,357.50
C. Winter	850.00
Int. on same to April 17, '99	182.01
Catherine Barker	700.00
Int. on same to April 17, '99	3.49
Adam Breahl	1,200.00
Int. on same to April 17, '99f	10.00
Miss Mary Busc	540.00
Int. on same to April 17, '99	103.68
Miss Mary Doyle	120.00
Int. on same to April 17, '99	62.00
Bridget Finnegan	45.00
Mrs. Mary Ann Gallagher	454.00
Int. on same to April 17, '99	463.08
Miss Mary Gillivan	1,200.00
Int. on same to April 17, '99	536.00
Miss Annie Hayes	194.41
Int. on same to April 17, '99	50.49
Miss Mary J. Hinterschied	200.00
Immaculate Conception Church, Marges, O.	200.00
Rev. D. J. Kluber donated	378.00
Mrs. Petronilla Lang	700.00
Lena Lindel	200.00
Int. on same to April 17, '99	12.50
Mary A. Lipps	425.00
Int. on same to April 17, '99	34.00
Mary Mannix	100.00
Joseph Marx	21.00
Miss Nora McNally	225.00
Miss Margaret Nolan	270.00
Int. on same to April 17, '99	99.70

Joseph Nurre	1,500.00
Int. on same to April 17, '99	75.00
Miss Nora O'Connor	340.00
Int. on same to April 17, '99	103.75
Mrs. Bridget O'Farrell	56.00
Very Rev. N. E. Pilger	500.00
Provident Life & Trust Co.	18,000.00
Mary J. Reilly	60.00
Int. on same to April 17, '99	33.35
Antonia Schafhausen	200.00
Int. on same to April 17, '99	16.00
St. Mary's of the Springs	1,000.00
St. Patrick Church \$600.00 paid	1,900.00
Miss Kate Sullivan	70.50
Int. on same to April 17, '99	23.00
Miss Mary Sullivan	1,700.00
Int. on same to April 17, '99	1,132.90
Sacred Heart Church, Bremen, O.	400.00
Charles Wolfel	300.00
Miss Benedicta Breahl	1,000.00
Int. on same to April 17, '99	10.00
First National Bank	500.00
Rt. Rev. Joseph Jessing	2,828.33
St. Mary's of the Springs	2,570.80
	<hr/>
	\$182,550.72
Less Cash in Bank April 17, '99	2,703.90
	<hr/>
	\$179,846.82

/s/ M. M. Meara Committee
/s/ S. Weisinger on
/s/ T. J. O'Reilly Auditing

The auditing committee's report of December 1, 1899 has the following note appended: "The Committee also hereby reports the discovery of \$6680.58 of the original diocesan Indebtedness which makes the total Indebtedness of the Diocese April 17, 1899: \$186,527.20." That report for the period April 17 to December 1, 1899 is as follows:

Receipts:		
Cash on hand, April 17, 1899	\$2,759.90	
Loans	11,964.30	
Seminary Collections	2,284.83	
Dispensation Alms	371.50	
Life Insurance	5,073.80	
Bequest of Miss Frances Brent	300.00	
Rent	85.00	
Peter's Pence	847.13	
Diocesan Assessments	60.55	
Sundry Receipts	18.24	
Total Receipts		25,173.40

Expenditures:	
Loans, Paid	10,879.40
Interest	8,375.84
Lawyers' Fees for negotiating Loan of \$115,000	1,015.38
Streets Assessments	1,300.00
Bishop's Household Expenses	247.78
Sundries Stamps etc.	86.60
Seminarians	2,740.38
Total Expenditures	<u>24,645.38</u>
Balance on hand	528.02

Payment during this period of the "Lawyers' Fees" for negotiating the loan from the Penn Mutual Life Insurance Company seems to indicate that Bishop Watterson had obtained this loan shortly before his death, possibly to replace earlier debt.

The little sheet reproduced to the right contains the next, and probably last, report of the auditing committee. It appears to have been printed up for distribution, either to the diocese in general or at least to the priests.

It is not easy to reconcile these figures. On the July 1, 1900 report, the debt as of the previous December 1, is given as \$179,527.20. Whence came the \$7,000 reduction from the December 1, report? Beginning with the April 17, 1899 debt of \$182,550.72 and adding the \$6,680.58 later found by the committee, plus new loans of \$11,964.30, less loans paid (\$10,879.40) and less cash on hand (\$528.02) would leave a debt of almost \$190,000 at December 1, 1899. Part of the difference must lie in the \$8,375.84 interest paid per the December 1 report, perhaps half of which was reported in the debt amount as of April 17, 1899.

Whatever the accountants' answers to the above question may have been, it must have been heartening to the administrator of the diocese and to Bishop Moeller that progress had been made on reducing the debt even before the new bishop was appointed or installed.

DEBT OF THE DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS.

The following is the statement of the Very Rev. Administrator, of diocesan receipts and expenditures from Dec. 1, 1899, to July 1, 1900, and the sum total of the debt on the latter date:

RECEIPTS.	DR.	CR.
Cash on hand		
Dec. 1, 1899	\$ 528.02	
Loans	5,660.00	
Seminary Collect- ion	1,793.96	
Cathedraticum...	1,767.17	
Dispensation		
Alms	300.00	
Bequest of Miss Frances Brent..	875.00	
Rent	250.00	
Peter's Pence....	24.83	
Diocesan Assess- ment	4,074.32	
Holy Land Col- lection	360.41	
Holy Oil Offerings	257.00	
EXPENDITURES.		
Loans.....		\$7,470.00
Interest.....		4,442.99
Bp's Household..		76.00
Sundries, station- ary, etc.....		66.48
Seminary account		1,199.39
Peter's Pence transferred....		866.13
Cash on hand		
July 1, 1900....		1,769.72
	\$15,890.71	\$15,890.71

The undersigned having this day examined the above financial statement of Very Rev. F. X. Specht, Adm., of the diocese of Columbus, do certify that it is correct in every detail.

Auditing Committee { M. M. Meara,
S. Weisinger,
T. J. O'Reilly.

Columbus, O., July 1, 1900.	
Diocesan Indebtedness Dec.	
1, 1899	\$179,527.20
Paid from Dec. 1, 1899, to July 1, 1900	1,810.00
	<u>\$177,717.20</u>
Cash on hand July 1, 1900 ..	1,769.72
Diocesan Debt, July 1, 1900.	\$175,947.48
Signed { M. M. Meara. S. Weisinger. T. J. O'Reilly.	

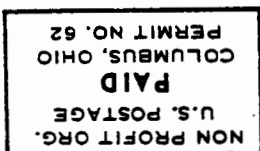
CHILLICOTHE ST. MARY'S CHURCH
BAPTISMAL REGISTER, 1835-1846
(Continued from Vol. XVII, No. 5)

1838, continued

- 2 Dec. Mary Ann, born 9 October, daughter of John Dougherty and Mary Ann Passmore; spon. John Gallery and Margaret Coll. H. D. Juncker
same day Catherine, born 11 Nov., daughter of Anthony Fiegel and Johanna Juncker; spon. Jacob Schlick and Magdalena Schlick.
same day Catherine, born 20 October, daughter of Martin Brendall and Agatha Hiel(?); spon. Anthony Fiegel and Jahanna Fiegel.
same day Paulina, born 21 November, daughter of Keller and Constantia Funtkeitz; spon. John Baptist Diederich and Paulina Diëderich. [The given name of the father seems to be missing in the above record.]
same day Catherine, born 20 November, daughter of Francis Munich and Elizabeth Albrech; spon. John Keller and Catherine Schnell. HDJ
- page 8
- 9 Dec. Leopold, born 21 November, son of Leopold Wagner and Francisca wagner; spon. Aman Bintz and Elizabeth Lind. HDJ
25 Dec. Mary Ann, born 8 Dec., daughter of Michael Kaley and Catherine McDonald; spon. William Ward and Anna Handley. HDJ
- finis anni 1838
- 1 Jan. Carl, born 15 December, 1838, son of Rosalia Kramer; sponsors Martin [1839] Bauman and Caroline Jennings. HDJ
same day Martin, born 23 December, 1838, son of George Berman and Josephina Gerdeisser; spon. Martin Bauman and his wife Mary. HDJ
27 Jan. Andrew, son of Andrew Herman and Elizabeth Meyer; spon. Jerome Brown and Francisca Richly. HDJ
same day Mary Ann, born 10 January, daughter of Roman Gerber and Rosanna Gerber; spon. Anthony Kreutz and Sophia Santo. HDJ
29 Jan. James, born 18 January, son of James McNally and Bridget McGrary; spon. Timothy McGravy and Mary McGravy. HDJ
- page 9
- 2 Feb. Bridget, daughter of Charles McDonach and Catherine McGrady; spon. James McNally and Bridget McNally. HDJ
3 Feb. Franz Anton, born 15 Jan., son of Michael Schmitt and Anna Maria Lutz; spon. Franz Eid and Frances Bintz. HDJ
7 Feb. Mary, born 17 months ago, daughter of Patrick McDeeman and Fanny McSchee; spon. Edward McVoy and Anna Gobbeling. HDJ
17 Feb. Franz Anton, born 14 Feb., son of Kosman Bohn and Elizabeth Leime(?); spon. Franz Anton Eid and Bernardine Buckler. HDJ
17 March John Baptist, born 6 Feb., son of Ferdinand Rihli and Frances Frillinger; spon. Jerome Brown and Elizabeth Hermann. HDJ

(To be continued)

Catholic Record Society - Diocese of Columbus
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