

# ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC GERMANS IN MARYLAND

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There is a rather sharply defined beginning to the development of Catholic German church life in Maryland. Before 1840 not much of importance was accomplished by the Catholics of German extraction but in that year they were committed to the charge of the Redemptorists who initiated almost all the constructive measures undertaken. Finally, since the Germans were entrusted to the Redemptorists, the growth of the German parishes is intimately associated with the history of that order in Maryland, and more especially in Baltimore. By the time the parishes nurtured by the Redemptorists passed into the hands of diocesan or other clergy the Americanization of the Germans had far progressed and, when that occurs, we may, for the purposes of this study, sharply curtail the treatment of their recent history.

The beginnings of the Maryland German Catholics were in general insignificant and inauspicious. About a decade after the founding of the episcopal see of Baltimore in 1789 a small band of Catholic Germans appeared in Baltimore and was ministered to by Father F. Caesar Reuter of St. Peter's; which was then the residence of Bishop John Carroll and the headquarters of the diocese. Soon Father Reuter, against Bishop Carroll's wishes, urged his compatriots to erect a separate German church. The bishop protested that there were too few Germans to support a pastor and that it might interfere with his plans to erect a cathedral. Disgruntled, Reuter carried the matter to Rome, accusing Carroll of trying to Americanize the Germans and

requesting a German church, German catechism and even a German bishop. An unfavorable reply was given him on each count. Rome obviously preferred to leave the solution of the difficulty in Bishop Carroll's hands. Meanwhile, Reuter returned to Baltimore and with his fellow-Germans established, October 11, 1799, the first Catholic German church in Baltimore, at Park Avenue and Saratoga Street, dedicated to St. John the Evangelist.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the whole movement was schismatic.<sup>2</sup> The breach was healed, however, by 1805 when the parish returned to the jurisdiction of the bishop and Father Reuter was replaced by the Reverend F. X. Brosius.<sup>3</sup>

The entire episode did not augur well for the felicitous blending of German and American life. If the intentions of Father Reuter and others of his ilk had prevailed, the Catholic Germans would have remained for a long time a sort of self-contained ship in an alien sea and the amalgamation of German and American culture would have been indefinitely delayed. Happily, the upshot was quite to the contrary.

The parish of St. John's under diocesan priests—except for a short period under a Jesuit—pursued an even tenor for the next forty years, gradually growing in size. By 1840 the pastor, Reverend Benedict Bayer, recognized that he was incapable of reaching all his parishioners (about 4,000) scattered over the city. As a student in Switzerland he had learned to admire the members of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer<sup>4</sup> and he magnanimously de-

<sup>1</sup> Peter Guilday, *The Life and Times of John Carroll*, II, 723-728 (New York, 1922).

<sup>2</sup> Archdiocesan Archives, Baltimore, Reuter to Carroll, September 4, 1801; November 25, 1801; October 18, 1802. Documents 7A8, 7A9, 7A10. Profession of submission drawn up by Carroll to be signed by Reuter. Document 9G2.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. St. Alphonsus' Church, *Zur Erinnerung an die Centenar-Feier der St. Alphonsus Gemeinde* (Baltimore, 1900).

<sup>4</sup> *Congregatio Sanctissimi Redemptoris*. A society of missionary priests and lay brothers, founded by St. Alphonsus Liguori at Scala, Italy, 1732. The only permanent settlement the Redemptorists could make among Germans was in Austria, whither applicants came from all over Germany for admission. The first German Redemptorists in America landed in 1832 and were stationed in the diocese of Cincinnati. Cf. Editors of the "Katholische Volks-Zeitung," *Zum Andenken an die Goldene Jubelfeier der Hochw. Herren Redemptoristen-Vater in Nord-Amerika* (Baltimore, 1882).

terminated to tender his resignation to the Most Reverend Samuel Eccleston, the Archbishop of Baltimore, with the understanding that the Redemptorists should succeed him. The prelate agreed on these terms:

"1. That they (the Redemptorists) assume charge of the German Catholics of our archiepiscopal city and of the whole diocese, employing for this purpose a sufficient number of German priests who are qualified and competent missionaries.

"2. That on the same site on which St. John's Church now stands, they build a larger church and a house large enough for the training of students or novices of the same society.

"3. That in the same place they build a school for the Germans."<sup>5</sup>

Thus at one stroke all the German Catholics had been commended to the superintendence of one religious order. Almost immediately the Redemptorists plunged into the task of rearing their church, novitiate and school. While St. John's was being razed, the congregation had to find shelter elsewhere for its liturgical functions. The Irish church of Old St. James' on Aisquith and Eager Streets in Old Town (East Baltimore) was being vacated at this time for new quarters on Front Street (St. Vincent's) and Archbishop Eccleston kindly extended the use of its facilities to the Redemptorists and the flock of St. John's for the "perpetual use of the Germans."<sup>6</sup> Thus was started what was later to prove the most flourishing and intensely German parish in the entire archdiocese. A home was arranged at St. James' for the community and in October of 1841 they began their ministry.<sup>7</sup>

Meantime, action was seen across the city on Park Avenue and Saratoga Street. Rev. Joseph Salzbacher, canon of the cathedral of Vienna, laid the cornerstone of the new church to replace St. John's in 1842, and three years later

it was dedicated to the Immaculate Conception in honor of St. Alphonsus, the founder of the Redemptorists, by Archbishop Eccleston. The pure gothic structure, a landmark familiar to all Baltimoreans, was a center of fervent German activity for many years until the encroaching business section drove the parishioners to other residential districts. In 1917 St. Alphonsus' was turned over to the Lithuanians who still have it.<sup>8</sup>

Concerning St. Alphonsus' parish, the *United States Catholic Magazine* of October, 1847, reported: "But what we principally designed in this notice, was to call the attention of the public to the new schoolhouse now in process of completion, under the direction of the Redemptorists, in Saratoga Street, directly opposite their beautiful church. . . . The school is so arranged as to accommodate male and female scholars with separate rooms, and already counts large classes of German children of both sexes."

In other words, the first real advance of the Catholic Germans in Baltimore was made with a strong stride, although the road stretched far beyond the horizon and they had just begun to travel. Over in Old Town the Redemptorists stimulated the feeble life of St. James' parish, established a novitiate for newly arriving Redemptorist candidates from Germany who were to finish their scholastic work in this country, and welcomed Father Joseph Helmpraecht from Altoetting, Bavaria, who later became the Baltimore provincial of the Redemptorists, and also Father John Nepomucene Neumann, from Pittsburgh, who pronounced his final vows at St. James', stayed there a while, and later rose to be the fourth bishop of Philadelphia. Father Neumann is beyond question the most distinguished Redemptorist ever to have offered Mass in Baltimore, where he did noble work throughout the city. His sanctity of life

<sup>5</sup>Document in the Redemptorist archives, Esopus, New York. Quoted by John F. Byrne, *The Redemptorist Centenaries*, 93-94 (Philadelphia, 1932).

<sup>6</sup>*Relations of Father Bayer*. Quoted by Byrne, 95.

<sup>7</sup>St. James' Church, *Centenary, 1834-1934*, 9-11 (Baltimore, 1934).

<sup>8</sup>St. Alphonsus' Church, *Zur Erinnerung an die Centenar-Feier der St. Alphonsus Gemeinde* (Baltimore, 1900).

became legendary among the Germans and at present his cause for beatification is in process at Rome.<sup>8</sup>

The St. James' priests' house was, in 1847, handed over to the school sisters of Notre Dame for a convent. Thereafter, St. James' was administered from St. Alphonsus' until 1860. "The German Catholics on the west side of Jones' Falls, which was the line of demarcation, went to worship at St. Alphonsus' Church and those on the east or in 'Old Town' remained at St. James'."<sup>10</sup> The administrator of St. James', Father Thaddeus Anwander, a Bavarian, in addition to his parochial duties, extended some German kindness to the colored Oblate Sisters of Providence by taking them under his supervision. Due to his solicitude the scholars patronizing the sisters in a short time grew from 18 to over 200." Possibly the crowning achievement of his ministry was the founding at St. James' of a branch of that widespread Catholic German institution, the Archconfraternity of the Holy Family, which has produced such beneficent spiritual results in all German parishes in Baltimore.

By virtue of voluntary contributions, fairs and other activities the parish had collected enough funds to begin contracting for a new church. The former church was torn down and by October, 1865, the cornerstone of the rising structure was blessed before 25,000 people in an elaborate ceremony that included both English and German sermons. "The style of the architecture of the church is Lombardic, or early Roman, the design being highly ornamental."<sup>12</sup> With the erection of the much larger edifice the church activities went forward at an ever-increasing pace. During the New Year's celebration of 1868 the pastor proposed that volunteer musicians congregate as a parish orchestra to play at various func-

tions and at the same time suggested the training of a juvenile choir.

Through the last testament of Mrs. Catherine Eberhart, a prominent member of St. James' parish, three two-story houses on North Caroline Street near Madison Street were donated in 1864 to the Redemptorists for the care of the sick and infirm. The nuns of the third order of St. Francis, from Philadelphia, took up the work. By 1867 the institution had expanded so much the sisters were forced to purchase four acres of land at Caroline and Hoffman Streets, the price of which, \$24,000, was furnished by the various congregations in charge of the Redemptorists. The joint effort of the three Redemptorist parishes—namely, St. James', St. Alphonsus', and another of which we have not yet spoken, St. Michael's—in guiding the hospital's destiny may be seen in that the pastors and two laymen from each parish were constituted the board of trustees.<sup>13</sup> In the following year the property of "Brown Lane Woods" was added to the hospital site. In 1872 St. Joseph's German Catholic hospital officially opened its doors. In gratitude to the Redemptorists for their part in the hospital's foundation the sisters dedicated the four principal wards to the patron saints of their churches. The chaplains of the institution have always been the clergy of St. James'.<sup>14</sup>

It may be interesting to note that at one time there was a *bona fide* college maintained by the Germans of East Baltimore. The Redemptorist preparatory college, established to give advanced liberal and theological training for aspirants to the Redemptorist order, was first attached to St. Alphonsus', but in 1869, because of the growing number of students and the need for larger quarters, it was transferred to St. James' hall, where it opened under the title,

<sup>9</sup> Cf. John N. Berger, *Life of the Right Rev. John N. Neumann, Fourth Bishop of Philadelphia* (New York, 1884).

<sup>10</sup> St. James' Church, *op. cit.*, 19.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Grace H. Sherwood, *The Oblates' Hundred and One Years* (New York, 1931).

<sup>12</sup> St. James' Church, *op. cit.*, 29.

<sup>13</sup> J. F. Byrne, *op. cit.*, 103.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Sister Mary Barnaba, *A Diamond Crown for Christ the King, a story of the first Franciscan foundation in our country, 1855-1930*, 104 ff. (Glen Riddle, Pa., 1930).

"St. James' College." Later the school moved to North East, Pennsylvania.<sup>15</sup>

Plans were cast by the parish for the establishment of a cemetery on Belair Road which was solemnly blessed by Father Dauenhauer in 1880 "amid a vast concourse of people and priests." On the feast of the Most Holy Redeemer, 1883, a new statue of the Most Holy Redeemer was placed in a niche over the entrance and to this day the burial ground has been known as the Most Holy Redeemer Cemetery.<sup>16</sup>

As with most Germans those of St. James' were much addicted to joining and maintaining societies of every sort, devotional, social, sick-benefit, and so on. Possibly the most colorful of those at St. James' was the Knights of St. James', organized with the approval of the pastor, Father Dauenhauer, in 1883. Trim in their military uniforms, the knights were intended to enhance special gala occasions whether within the church or in public parades. Frequently a prize drill was performed in conjunction with the parish picnic and Muth's park on North Gay Street often re-echoed with applause and marching feet. Of recent years the smartly clad knights have gradually died off, but St. James' parishioners will always pause and remember their gay buttons and their service to the parish. Most prominent among the benefit societies was a branch of the Catholic Benevolent Legion which was organized on a state-wide scale, mostly in German parishes.<sup>17</sup>

Of equal if not of more importance than any other work of the Catholic Germans in Baltimore has been their contribution to education. Everywhere the Germans went they established as an integral part of their parochial system a school to instill principles of right living as well as to supply useful secular or vocational information. St. James' was no exception. As early as 1843, according to tradition, the nucleus of the parochial school was formed in the basement of Old St. James' Church in charge of several lay teachers. We

have already mentioned that the novitiate and studentate of the Redemptorists was for a while stationed at St. James' under the title "St. James' College." In 1847 the Redemptorists of St. James' sold their house to the Notre Dame sisters who had just come to the United States from Germany under the leadership of Mother Teresa. From this convent the Notre Dame nuns branched out in all directions, taking charge of schools one after another. The first of these was St. James'. The sisters in the basement school had the care of the girls, while the boys were still entrusted to lay professors. A new convent for the sisters on Aisquith Street was finished in 1863 and they moved into it, using the old convent house to shelter the 562 students.

The cornerstone of a new academy on Somerset Street was laid in May, 1864. About a year later the Brothers of Mary were invited to St. James' to take over the boys' section of the school and a lot was purchased for them on Somerset Street whereon they might erect a residence. The German language was, of course, a prominent part of the curriculum for many years. A highlight of 1879 was a public examination of all the pupils in the parish hall, an examination marked by the extraordinary enthusiasm and interest on the part of the children's parents and friends who attended.

Since the completion of the new school on Somerset Street the number of pupils grew rapidly. By the end of 1878, the list contained the names of 500 boys and 400 girls—900 in all. To relieve the pressure on the small school a new hall was built, completed by 1879 and the old hall furnished additional classrooms for the expanding school population. By 1885, 1,020 students were attending St. James' school. As proof that the quantity of pupils had not impaired the quality of their instruction an examination conducted by the diocesan school commission in 1891

<sup>15</sup> St. James' Church, *St. James' School, Souvenir Album* (Baltimore, 1925), 12.

<sup>16</sup> St. James' Church, *op. tit.*, 37.

<sup>17</sup> St. James' Church, *75th Anniversary and History of St. James' Church and Silver Jubilee of the Knights of St. James* (Baltimore, 1908).

won for them all much praise for their intelligence and progress.<sup>18</sup>

Needless to say, at the time of the World War the young men of St. James' were not shirkers. Only a century and a quarter before, the Reverend Caesar Reuter had resisted all attempts to weaken the heritage of the Baltimore German Catholics. Now in 1917 the Germans of America were at war with the Germans of Europe. It is illustrative of the degree to which the pristine German culture had blended into the new American culture. On April 4, 1918, a service flag was presented by the Catholic Benevolent Legion to the school on which were 130 stars, representing the number of those who were serving their country. After the armistice a solemn military Mass was celebrated in thanksgiving for peace. The church had never been filled with so much khaki before. In 1919 a memorial tablet was unveiled in the vestibule of the church which tells of the 274 young men from St. James' who served their country and of the seven who died across the sea.<sup>19</sup>

By 1845 the priests of St. James' realized that it was a too great hardship for the German children living in the vicinity of Fell's Point to come all the way to St. James' to attend school. Consequently, through the efforts of Father Albert Schaeffler, the cornerstone of a school was laid at Pratt and Register Streets in that same year. The bricks for the school had traveled all the way from Bremen, Germany, as ballast in the hold of a ship.

The two-story, four-room structure, which had been named in honor of St. Michael, was attended after 1847 by the Notre Dame sisters who for seventeen years traveled daily from the convent on Aisquith Street and generally made the way on foot. The school was the focal point of an ever-increasing number of German immigrants who made

their homes near the school rather than some place else because of the educational advantages it afforded their children.<sup>20</sup>

In answer to the petition of 172 German Catholics, Father Gabriel Rumpfer, then pastor of St. Alphonsus, undertook to build a church in connection with the school and by 1852 the new church was blessed by the Rev. Bernard Hafkenschaid, provincial of Baltimore. The growth of the new-born parish of St. Michael's school rose from about 300 in 1852 to a little less than 500 at the beginning of the Civil War.<sup>21</sup>

The following description of a certain piece of land appears under the date, April 10, 1796, in an inventory of Catholic property in Baltimore: "That square of ground bounded on the north by Dulany (Baltimore Street), on the south by Smith (Lombard Street), on the west by Wolfe Street, was given by Mr. William Fell to the Catholics of Baltimore City for a burying ground."<sup>22</sup> That "burying ground" was old St. Patrick's cemetery. Only five years after the dedication of St. Michael's church, room for the parishioners was so scant that old St. Patrick's was purchased, the bodies were removed, and a new St. Michael's church was erected. Previous to this, St. Michael's had been ministered to by the priests dwelling at St. Alphonsus' or St. James', but hereafter the parish was to have its own pastor. A new school was built at the same time.<sup>23</sup>

The turn of the century saw such a crying need for a hall to accommodate the bustling parish societies that work was started and Cardinal Gibbons blessed the new hall in 1901. The school was quite fortunate in 1870 to gain the talents of the Marist brothers, who took over various boys' classes. The heights of attendance was attained in 1897 when the rolls included over 1,600 pupils. St. Michael's, at one time, was the largest

<sup>18</sup> Cf. St. James' Church, *St. James' School* (Baltimore, 1925).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> St. Michael's Church, *Diamond Jubilee, 1852-1927* (Baltimore, 1927), 13, ff.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Byrne, *op. cit.*, 100-101.

<sup>22</sup> *The Catholic Church in the United States*, III, 49. St. Michael's Church, *op. cit.*, 23.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 24, ff

Redemptorist parish in the United States.<sup>24</sup>

During the years from 1835 to 1840 when the tide of German immigration was at its flood, the Redemptorists and other priests returning to Germany from America besought German nuns to come to the new nation to instruct the young German children in American schools. One of these groups of sisters, the Notre Dame nuns of Bavaria, at the behest of King Louis I of Bavaria, determined to make the long journey. The king contributed to their expenses and told them, "I shall not forget you in America. I shall not forsake you."<sup>25</sup>

On July 31, 1847, one novice and five sisters, including Mother Teresa (Caroline Gerhardinger), the superioress, and Sister Mary Caroline (Josephine Friess), who later was to do such herculean work in the United States, arrived in America and proceeded to St. Mary's, Pennsylvania, whither they had been invited by certain Redemptorists of that locality. But conditions there did not prove promising,<sup>26</sup> and Mother Teresa with two other sisters came to Baltimore where she found a mother-house very near to St. James' Church.<sup>27</sup> In a short time the three sisters had assumed charge of St. James', St. Alphonus' and St. Michael's schools.

This is not the place to trace the spread of the Notre Dame sisters all over the continent but we may say something of both the Institute of Notre Dame and Notre Dame College of Maryland, the two outstanding schools this German community established in Baltimore.

The exact beginning of the Institute of Notre Dame on Aisquith Street cannot be ascertained. However, it is usually placed in 1849. By 1857 there

were about 70 students.<sup>28</sup> The original convent-school soon became too small for the demands made upon it and, since the sisters had to vacate the premises anyway to make way for the new St. James' church, they decided to build close by and on September 8, 1862, the foundation was laid.<sup>29</sup> Criticisms came fast and furious for their rashness in building during the war period, but in several months the school was ready for occupancy. Only 26 girls appeared for classes in September, 1863, but they must have been well trained, for, when the chapel was dedicated in December of the same year, Mozart's Twelfth Mass, with piano and harp accompaniment, was sung by the students.<sup>30</sup> The first public commencement was held on July 24, 1864. From this period dates the signal interest shown by Archbishop Spalding as a friend of the institute.

The arrival of Sister Clarissa in 1864 and her subsequent appointment as superioress in 1873 marked the beginning of a rapid expansion of the academy. "Sister Clarissa was the soul, the dynamic power of the establishment from this day to that of her death. . . . Ever alert to progressive movements, in educational matters, she was well able to judge between worth while advances and mere fads; appreciative of classical excellence, she did not fail to minister to practical trends."<sup>31</sup> Consequently, the institute, long before many other schools, introduced a very practical commercial course; music and art were always exceptionally well cultivated. Extensions in 1894 included a chapel, an auditorium, more class rooms, music and art studios. At the time of Sister Clarissa's death in 1924 there were about 250 pupils. In 1926 a final build-

<sup>24</sup> Byrne, *op. cit.*, 101.

<sup>25</sup> A School Sister of Notre Dame (Sister Dympna), *Mother Caroline and the School Sisters of Notre Dame in North America*, I, 26 (St. Louis, 1928).

<sup>26</sup> Frederick Friess, *Life of Reverend Mother Mary Teresa of Jesus Gerhardinger*, 169-170 (Baltimore, 1942).

<sup>27</sup> Father John Nepomucene Neumann was responsible for Archbishop Eccleston's invitation to the Notre Dame nuns to reside in the archdiocese of Baltimore. See Archdiocesan Archives, Baltimore, 27 A U3.

<sup>28</sup> House Chronicle of the Institute of Notre Dame.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Sister Dolorette of the Institute of Notre Dame to the author.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

ing was erected that brought the entire group to Ashland Avenue.<sup>32</sup>

On North Charles Street at Homeland Avenue a lot was purchased in 1871 by the Notre Dame sisters to which were added contiguous tracts, Villa Montrose and Sheridan's Discovery, in 1873. From the surrounding countryside the mansard roof of the new building could be seen "resting as it were, on the tree tops." And "above this was a graceful tower—"the highest building within many miles of Baltimore, a pre-eminence it still holds." The school opened in 1873 and President U. S. Grant benignly crowned with laurel the first graduates in June, 1876. Notre Dame of Maryland was the first Catholic women's college in the United States.<sup>33</sup>

Another venture successfully attempted by the Notre Dame nuns was St. Anthony's orphanage. It is recorded that in 1847 the Notre Dame sisters of St. James' parish had taken in two orphans of German parentage. By 1854 the Redemptorists had purchased a plot of ground on Central Avenue and Eden Street and had erected thereon an orphan asylum for German children. A corporation, composed of the two German pastors in Baltimore at that date and two laymen from each parish, was invested with the property, but the actual charge of the homeless children was committed to the Notre Dame order.<sup>34</sup>

In the early fifties a certain Society of St. Paul, the members of which lived in the vicinity of Federal Hill, sent a delegation to the Reverend Francis Seelos of St. Alphonsus', beseeching him to establish a church in their neighborhood.<sup>35</sup> Rev. Seelos first suggested that they seek a site for a school, a task which presented them little trouble, for Mr. Joseph Kaufman, at his own expense, remodeled numbers 51 and 53 Brown Street (now 7 and 9 Cross

Street) and donated the buildings as the first Catholic school on Federal Hill. It opened in September, 1855, to over 60 children under the tutelage of two unmarried ladies. The children and parishioners still attended St. Alphonsus' for church services. In March, 1857, ground was broken for the erection of a larger school building, although local Know-Nothing opposition at the time rendered the whole undertaking risky.<sup>36</sup>

The *Katholische Volks-Zeitung* (January 31, 1865) says: "This congregation, in spite of war and depression, makes constant progress and that silently and without pomp. The school that at its founding numbered scarcely 70 children now numbers 300, so that it was necessary to enlarge the building, a gallery was erected in the church and a new organ installed."

Although founded and organized by the Redemptorists, the parish on December 19, 1869, was turned over to Father Ludwig Vogtman, a secular priest who was brought directly from Westphalia. It was he who engaged the Sisters of Christian Charity to conduct the school. These sisters, founded by Pauline von Mallinckrodt at Paderborn, in 1849, took charge of about 350 children at Holy Cross in 1886. When Father Charles Damer was installed as pastor in 1890, he put into execution a plan for a cemetery on Annapolis Road. He also erected a new school, modern in every respect, complete from kindergarten to high school, a social center-hall, bowling alleys, conference and club rooms.

Of unusual interest is the existence of a society at Holy Cross which is a branch of the famous "Gesellenvereine" founded by Adolf Kolping in 1849 at the Cathedral of Cologne in Germany. It spread over Germany, Austria-Hungary, Holland, Belgium and France, having for its purpose the religious and

<sup>32</sup> House Chronicle of the Institute of Notre Dame.

<sup>33</sup> A School Sister of Notre Dame, *op. cit.*, I, 229, ff.

<sup>34</sup> St. James' Church, *op. cit.*, 21-23.

<sup>35</sup> Next to Father Neumann, Rev. Francis Seelos possessed the greatest reputation for sanctity among the Redemptorists. Coming from his home in Bavaria, he was ordained in Baltimore and then sent to Pittsburgh. Later pastor at St. Alphonsus in Baltimore and then stationed in Annapolis, he died of yellow fever in New Orleans in 1867.

<sup>36</sup> Holy Cross Church, *Diamond Jubilee, 1860-1935*, 13-14 (Baltimore, 1935).

vocational improvement of traveling journeymen. Although it met with rapid success among German Catholic youth in the "old country," owing to different social conditions, it has not developed so well in the United States. Nevertheless, in 1873 various members of Holy Cross parish, including John Snyder and Werner Rieve, formed a branch of the movement and entitled it "Father Kolping Casino of South Baltimore." Active ever since, the Casino possesses a spacious clubhouse on William Street.

For many years the nearest place of worship for the German Catholics of Canton (as Highlandtown was then called) was at St. Michael's Church. As their number expanded, the Rev. Joseph Müller of St. Michael's was commissioned in 1870 to begin collecting funds for the foundation of a new parish. Two years later the Redemptorists were able to purchase a lot on Snake Hill, former site of Fort Marshall of the Civil War days and present location of Sacred Heart Church near the corner of Eastern Avenue and Conkling Street. By 1873 both school and church services were started in the basement of what was to be the first church.

Replacing those lay people who had taught in the school from the beginning, the Sisters of Notre Dame took over the classes in April, 1876, moving into a new convent erected for their convenience. Even though the Sacred Heart parishioners had their own church, convent and school, they still had to rely on St. Michael's for their priests, because they were unable to support a pastor of their own.<sup>37</sup> The coming of the first permanent pastor in 1878 marked a determined rise in the fortunes of the parish. Under the second pastor, Father Francis Eberhardt, a new priests' house and school additions were built. Father Henry Urben, a new pastor who arrived in 1887, was appointed especially because of his interest in a new duty entrusted to the Redemptorists of Sacred Heart by Archbishop Gibbons of Baltimore, the

spiritual care of the inmates of Bay View Asylum. This guardianship the Redemptorists exercised with extraordinary zeal for many years. Father Urben also completed a parish hall in 1888 and founded a parish cemetery, plots for which were purchased between the years 1888-1892. The cemetery is situated on German Hill Road.

At the urgent request of Cardinal Gibbons a new church and rectory were, begun in 1908. The church was completed in 1921.<sup>38</sup>

Seeing the necessity of a church and school for the German Catholics of West Baltimore, Father Joseph Wissel, pastor of St. Alphonsus', in 1869 invited all German-speaking Catholic men living west of Pearl Street to a meeting to discuss the possibilities. Results were quickly apparent. By May, 1870, excavation was begun on a lot on Mount Street between Lombard and Pratt Streets for a church and school. Archbishop Martin Spalding of Baltimore dedicated the church in January, 1871, in honor of the Fourteen Holy Martyrs. The Benedictines replaced the Redemptorists as ministers of the parish in 1874. In 1880 the Benedictine nuns from Chicago took charge of the school but were later replaced by the Notre Dame nuns. The cornerstone of a new church was laid in 1902 by Cardinal Gibbons.<sup>39</sup>

Closely connected by origin with Baltimore is the "Central Verein of North America," a union of all kinds of German societies. Spreading from Rochester and Buffalo, where various German Catholic beneficial societies had united into one master organization called the "Central Verein," the movement was formally organized in Baltimore during the year 1855 in St. Alphonsus' Hall. The organization which was intended to be nation-wide has been described as "the oldest Catholic organization in the United States devoted primarily, if not exclusively, to the study and solution of moral and social problems. Its official organ, *Cen-*

<sup>37</sup> Archdiocesan Archives, Baltimore, Helmptraecht to Bayley, November 9, 1875. Document 40 H1.

<sup>38</sup> Sacred Heart Church, *Golden Jubilee, 1873-1923*, 16 ff. (Baltimore, 1923). Also see Byrne, *op. cit.*, 104-106.

<sup>39</sup> Wilfrid Frins, *History of Fourteen Holy Martyrs' Church, passim*, 39 (Baltimore, 1903).



tral Blatt and Social Justice, was the first Catholic journal in this country to undertake the cause of Catholic reconstruction...."<sup>40</sup>

For a time the "Central Verein" gave aid to German immigrants and appointed special agents to look after their interests in Baltimore and other cities.<sup>41</sup>

Although founded in Baltimore, the Maryland branch of the "Central Verein" seems, for some reason or other, to have lapsed for a while. Then, through the efforts of Reverend William Kessel, a Redemptorist, at a certain meeting in Holy Cross parish, "the date of which cannot be ascertained,"<sup>42</sup> the societies of St. James', St. Michael's, Holy Cross and Sacred Heart banded together to form the *Deutscher Roemisch-Katholischer Verband von Baltimore und Umgegend*, which in 1910 affiliated with the "Central Verein of North America."

A question that is of utmost importance in connection with the Catholic Germans of Maryland is that of their Americanization. Possibly the most reliable index of this process of Americanization is the use of the German language. It is safe to say that down to the end of the nineteenth century German was in general use in all the German parishes. It was taught in the grammar schools together with English and was widely used in the churches for sermons and so on. It was always customary to memorize the catechism in German. At least two publications in the German language were started by the Catholics of Baltimore in the nineteenth century that were eminently successful, *Die Katholische Volks-Zeitung* and *Die Katholische Kirchenzeitung*. *Die Katholische Volks-Zeitung* was described in 1874 as "the most successful Roman Catholic paper published in the United States," having a weekly circulation of over 24,000 numbers "in all parts of the United States and Canada."

The editor was John Schmidt; it was published by Kreuzer Brothers, who also published many other Catholic Books, pamphlets, catechisms, etc. The first number was issued on Saturday, May 8, 1860.<sup>48</sup>

*Die Katholische Kirchenzeitung* was edited by a convert Lutheran minister, John James Max Oertel, who started it in Baltimore, in 1846 but moved it to New York in 1851. "It was long the leading Catholic weekly of the United States."<sup>44</sup>

The period of decline in the use of German was from about 1900 to 1914, when the advent of the world war administered the *coup de grace*, so to speak. For example, *Die Katholische Volks-Zeitung* was discontinued in 1914.<sup>45</sup> The German language has so much fallen out of use today in the Catholic German parishes that in general it is used in only one church service a week and occasionally in the confessional for the few who desire it.

Outside of Baltimore the only other important settlement of Catholic Germans was in Cumberland. Annapolis, as we shall see, although there was posted in that city a very important community of German Redemptorists, contained few German Catholics. Various small towns and villages in Western Maryland contained small groups of Catholic Germans which were considered as missions by the German priests, but none were of great significance.

The Catholics of Cumberland first came under the care of the Redemptorists in 1841 when the latter began the routine of traveling every three months by wagon from Baltimore to Cumberland in order to furnish the large colony of German, as well as other, Catholics with religious service in a church on the site of the present St. Patrick's. At last the Cumberland Germans dispatched Mr. Michael Wiesel to Archbishop Eccleston to beseech him for a

<sup>40</sup> *Catholic Historical Review*, VI (1926), 557.

<sup>41</sup> See "Central Verein," *Catholic Encyclopedia*.

<sup>42</sup> Holy Cross Church, *op. cit.*, 59.

<sup>43</sup> J. Thomas Scharf, *Chronicles of Baltimore*, 107 (Baltimore, 1874).

<sup>44</sup> *Historical Records and Studies*, U. S. Catholic Historical Society, XXVIII, 239.

<sup>45</sup> Apollinaris W. Baumgartner, *Catholic Journalism: A Study of its Development in the United States, 1789-1930*, 17 (New York, 1931).

German priest and a separate German parish. Archbishop Eccleston wrote to Father Obermayer, then pastor of the English-speaking Catholics of Cumberland, June 18, 1847, "It is my wish to place all the German Congregation of my Diocese under the charge of the Redemptorists. There may be some little inconvenience in the employment of Regulars, but situated as the Germans are, a Religious Order offers to them and to me advantages that cannot be expected from other sources..." Mr. Wiesel also received a copy of the same document.

Zealously in the spring of 1848 the German people began work on a church on lots at the corner of Plumb Alley and Fayette Street, thoroughfares on Academy Hill (formerly Fort Hill). When the church was dedicated to Sts. Peter and Paul by the Rev. Bernard J. Hafkenscheid, Provincial of the Redemptorists, on September 23, 1849, two priests and two brothers were already stationed in the parish.

By 1850 the Germans had purchased a large tract for a cemetery on Fayette Street next to the Episcopal Rose Hill Cemetery. Michael Wiesel was undoubtedly the most distinguished member of the parish. As organist, he served the church for many years; he was quite accomplished also on the piano, violin and flute. After emigrating from his native Bavaria to Baltimore he organized and directed an orchestra and brass band there. He had the honor of composing the funeral march at the death of President Harrison. His son, Henry, conducted the choir from 1860 to 1864 in which latter year "he entered the college at Baltimore."

At the close of 1849 the brother in charge of the school had fifty-six pupils. Three years later an old public school house nearby was purchased and turned into a parochial school. In 1855 the Redemptorists at Sts. Peter and Paul's opened a college for the young members of the order. Theology and philosophy were the principal courses of study. Although most of the students had been

born in Germany, agitation was begun in 1857 by Isaac Hecker and some others for an English-speaking convent. Father Hecker's parents had come from Prussia but he himself was American-born and it seemed to him that American priests should forsake the foreign training that so many were receiving even after they had landed on American soil. The dispute was carried to his Redemptorist superiors in Rome who expelled him from the order. Pope Pius IX dispensed him from his Redemptorist vows and he returned to New York where he organized the Paulist Fathers.<sup>46</sup>

The Redemptorists, desiring a college and novitiate much nearer to Baltimore, abandoned Cumberland in 1866. The Carmelite Fathers from Straubing, Bavaria, led by Father Cyril Knoll, succeeded them. During the next several years bricklayers went to work on a new school and sisters' house for the convenience of the Ursuline Nuns who arrived in 1870. An academic exhibition of the following year "met such a hearty approval that upon request its performance was repeated. Three days were devoted to the examination of children."

Another shift in pastors occurred in 1875 when the Capuchin Fathers replaced the Carmelites. Driven from Westphalia by the oppressive May Laws of 1875, they sought refuge in Cumberland where they wanted to use as a novitiate the college abandoned by the Redemptorists. The first mention of a dramatic entertainment occurs in 1876. Annually thereafter there are repeated notices of parish plays, most of which were performed at four favorite times— at Christmastide, on Shrove Tuesday, at Easter time and in June.

On three noteworthy occasions the Catholic Germans of Cumberland allowed their charity to be extended outside of the parish. A sum of money was sent to yellow fever sufferers in New Orleans in 1878. Five years later financial aid was extended to flood victims in Germany, and in 1886 "a consider-

<sup>46</sup>For complete information on Isaac Hecker see *The Catholic World*, vols. LI-LIV (1890-1891); Walter Elliott, *Life of Isaac Thomas Hecker* (New York, 1894); Katherine Burton, *Celestial Home-spun, The Life of Isaac Th. Hecker* (London-New York, 1943).

able sum was contributed for the relief" of the citizens of Charleston, S. C., at the time of the earthquake there.

The year 1889 marked the celebration of the centennial of Washington's election as first President which was commemorated with a Solemn Mass and other elaborate ceremonies. The fact that only a year later Solemn Mass was also sung for Ludwig Windthorst, the Catholic champion in Germany, reveals how closely the Germans kept in touch with both their native and adopted lands. More and more, however, the links with the old country were given up. Although German had been used in both the school and church, by the time of the World War its use had been abandoned.<sup>47</sup>

The city of Annapolis is not by any means conspicuous for the number of its German residents, Catholic or otherwise. But the German order of the Redemptorists did establish a community and parish there that was of some importance in the history of the Maryland Germans. Through the kindness of the Marchioness of Wellesley, daughter of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, a small chapel on Gloucester Street had been put at the disposal of the handful of Catholics before the Redemptorists appeared.

Not long after the Redemptorists had been well established in Baltimore the Rev. Bernard Hafkensheid, Provincial of the Redemptorists, perceived the necessity of a new novitiate for the increasing number of applicants for admission into the order. Meantime, the old Carroll Mansion in Annapolis on the banks of the Spa River, fallen into decay and smothered with weeds, had come into the hands of a Miss Emily McTavish who offered it to the Redemptorists of Baltimore.

By the middle of 1853 a community of over twenty Redemptorists—fathers, brothers, students and novices—had refurnished the old mansion, cleared away the weeds on the lawns, and had taken full possession. For a very short

time the Rev. Roger Dietz, S.J., continued his pastorate of the small church on Gloucester Street, but soon turned it over to the newcomers.

The citizenry of Annapolis, Protestant almost to a man, in general looked with interest and, indeed, respect upon the Catholic "Monks" in spite of the Know-Nothingism firing America at the time. But there is one incident that points to the presence of at least one bigot.<sup>48</sup> In June or July of 1853, Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War, received a note from Annapolis written with a burnt match. The note claimed to have been written by a man imprisoned in the cellar of the Redemptorist convent, where he was going to be murdered as others already had been. The writer implored the Secretary to examine into the iniquitous proceedings of the Redemptorists, who kept him confined with the design to murder him. It was pretended the letter had been thrown out of the cellar window with instructions that the finder forward it to Washington. The Secretary, though skeptical, instructed the Commandant of the Naval Academy to make a routine investigation. He and Mr. Humphrey, the President of St. John's College, called on Father Gabriel Rumpler, protesting their doubts of the whole story and their mere blind obedience to orders. Father Rumpler took them all over the house except through the cellar. He did not show them that because there was none. Thereafter friendly relations between the Redemptorists and the people of Annapolis were more strongly cemented than ever.

The superiorate of Father Michael Mueller, 1857-1862, was one of the most important eras of the Annapolis house. It was he who erected the principal buildings of the Redemptorist settlement in the Maryland capital. The Provincial had reluctantly given Father Mueller permission to build a church if he could raise an initial sum of \$2,000. His appeal from the pulpit was the object of much skepticism because

<sup>47</sup> Details from *Fifty Years of S.S. Peter and Paul's Church* (Cumberland, 1898).

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Henry Borgmann, *History of the Redemptorists at Annapolis, Md.*, 22 ff. (Ilchester, Md., 1904).

of the paucity of Catholics. But soon after he set forth on a begging expedition among the citizens of Annapolis. "And behold! In an hour he had collected one thousand dollars!"

It was not long before sufficient funds were on hand, mostly through the generosity of Protestants, to start work. Stone was transported from Port Deposit and the brothers and novices helped dig the foundation and lay the bricks themselves. By October, 1859, the work was complete and the *Annapolis Gazette* could write:

"A grand concert will be given in the new St. Mary's Church. . . . The best talents of Baltimore, including some of the members of the Baltimore Cathedral Choir, have kindly volunteered their services for the occasion. Mr. Courlaender, pianist to the King of Denmark, will preside at the piano."

Even before the church was dedicated, it was decided to construct a convent much larger than the crowded Carroll Mansion. Since excavation was to begin in July, Father Mueller was unable to find laborers willing to work in the sun. Consequently the brothers and novices themselves went to it with pick and shovel, digging up and hauling away 40,000 cubic feet of earth. They also unloaded and counted 500,000 bricks. This example of self-sacrifice was extremely edifying to the Annapolitans.

With the Civil War came the transformation of the Naval Academy into a military hospital, while an army parole camp was set up nearby. The ministry of the German Fathers among the soldiers may be instanced from the following in the chronicle of the institution for 1864:

"Burnside's corps was here for some time and, after they left, the hospital began to be filled with sick and wounded soldiers, and later with paroled pris-

oners. Sometimes the Fathers were called to their assistance several times a day. Mass was often said in camp, and also in the Naval School Hospital. Hundreds of the dying received the Last Sacraments, and hundreds of others had recourse to the sacred tribunal of penance. Many of the Fathers often spent whole days ministering to the soldiers." The popularity of one Father Jacobs at this time led the most prominent citizens of Annapolis to invite him to make the customary Fourth of July speech in the State House in 1861. His clever and tasteful acquittal of his task at so delicate a time won him universal applause.

In 1862 it was decided to move the novices to Cumberland and to convert the Annapolis convent strictly into a house of studies. After the necessary changes had been made, the community numbered 93, the majority of whom were devoted solely to study, "from the lower grades of humanities up to the highest of philosophy and theology." In 1863 twenty Redemptorists were ordained to the priesthood. At the time it was the largest group of Redemptorist *ordinandi* in America, the first ordination in the capital of Maryland and the last ordination by Archbishop Kenrick of Baltimore.

Such a brief account as this, it goes without saying, cannot give an adequate picture of what the Catholic Germans have accomplished in Maryland. Perhaps the physical monuments of their endeavors — churches, schools, halls, etc. — although superficially the most impressive, have been the least of their contribution. Far greater are the "imponderables," as another famous German would call them, namely, their religiousness, their passion for organization, their zeal for education, and their facility in adapting their German qualities to "the American way of life."