

# Pieces of the Past

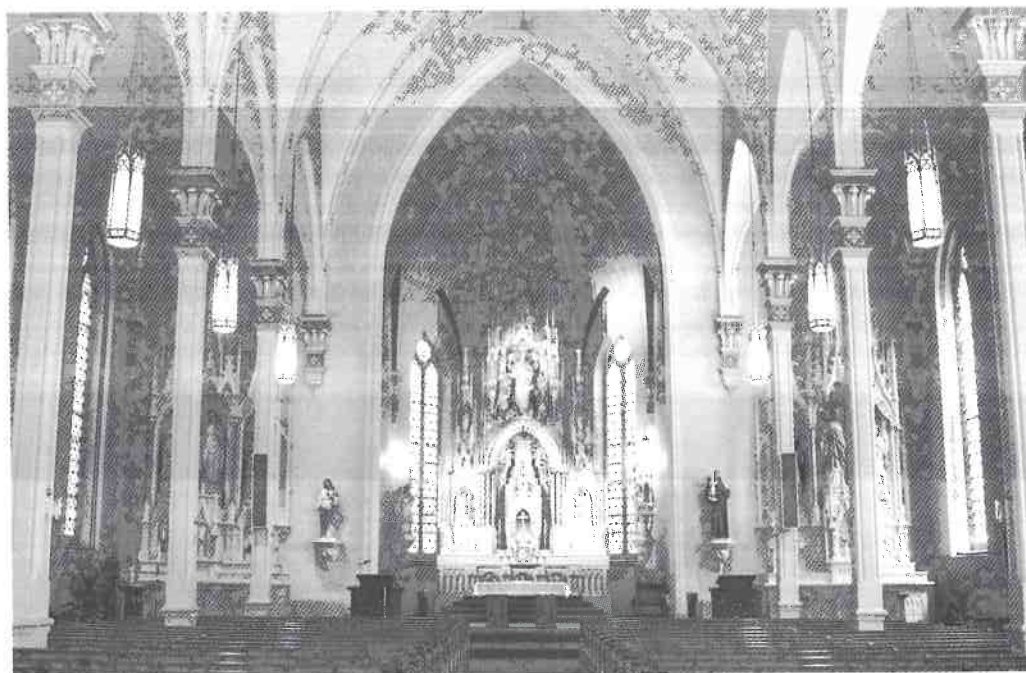
*A Sesquicentennial History of St. Mary's Parish  
Port Washington, Wisconsin*

*1853 - 2003*

# *St. Mary's Parish*

*– Beacon of Faith, Hope and Love –  
Celebrating 150 Years*

*August 17, 2003*



*Interior of St. Mary's Church – 2003  
Photo courtesy of William J. Schanen IV*

# Pieces of the Past

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## SPECIAL THANKS TO...

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Eugene Meyer	

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Father Kevin Wester







**T**his is an exciting moment in the history of St. Mary's Parish: the celebration of our congregation's 150th birthday! It is a time to look back as we cherish the past. It is also a time to look forward and to be renewed in faith for a strong future.

The spiritual legacy we have received, as members of this parish, is unquestionably rich. This legacy comes to us from God working through His faithful people – Father F. X. Sailer, Bishop John Martin Henni, John Gengler, Anna Maria Gengler, Adolph Heidkamp, David and Elisabeth Saar, Father Francis Fussedler, Father Henry Willmes, Father Charles Grobschmit, Msgr. Peter Holfeltz, Msgr. Peter Hildebrand, Father Edgar Braun, Father Rolland Glass, Sister Mary Faith, Anna & Viola Ubbink, Ann Celeen Dohms, Father Steve Amann, Father Al Sommer, and hundreds of School Sisters of Notre Dame, to name only a few!

In this 150th anniversary year, may we remember that God continues to call us to carry on the legacy of faith through worship, Christian formation, outreach, and parish community.

In writing this sesquicentennial history, we purposely chose not to use a narrative, chronological format. Narrative histories were well-documented for both the 100th and 125th anniversaries. Rather, our goal was to expand on details from previous commemorative books and to add some “newly discovered” anecdotes never published before. We hope that our presentation has captured the essence of St. Mary's past 150 years and that you will thoroughly enjoy reading *Pieces of the Past*.

Father Kevin Wester  
Suzanne Bruner

Researchers/Co-authors



**St. Mary Parish**  
**Port Washington, WI 53074**  
**August 15, 2003**

Dear Fellow Parishioners,

We are celebrating the long and beautiful history of a little part of the Kingdom of God - St. Mary's Parish. Even after 150 years, today is the first day of our new creation. It is the holy moment when God creates us again. It is a new beginning of a new day filled with hope and expectation. I am delighted to be your pastor as we remember the 150 years of this parish, to join with you humbly in thanking God for his wonderful blessings. Truly St. Mary's, in Port Washington, is one of the great parishes of our Archdiocese and our very beautiful church is an eloquent testimony to the faith and devotion of our parishioners over such a long time.

Many people work to make St. Mary's parish a true Catholic community and a model to the community in general. They build upon the legacy of all those people, and those priests, who have gone before us. Together with our predecessors we form one community - indeed, a "communion" of past and present, working together for God's glory. I am in great admiration of people who have lived in Port Washington. Your constancy in faith, your regular contributions to the worship and love of God and service of the community are the gifts which God offers to so many people.

I appreciate the great sense of history which is enshrined in this sacred place. It is a place where the sacrifice of the Mass has been offered for 150 years. It is a place where people have meditated upon the mysteries of Jesus Christ - events by which we are saved and which show the link between everyday life and the prayer and offering of Mass, Eucharistic adoration and Marian devotion. These events are at the center of the worship of our parish.

As we look at the young people of our parish and at Port Catholic School we are reminded that history always has a continuity. We must look at the past with reverent eyes, grow from the past into the present and make provision for the future. The words of Saint Augustine, "Late have I loved your beauty so ancient, beauty so new, you were within and I outside," are a reminder that there is a call to conversion and renewal which is offered to each and every one of us. As the prophet Ezekiel says, if we do not help others when they fail, then we share in their failure. So real love for neighbor means more than just having friendly feelings toward them. Saint Paul reminds us that truly loving others is supporting them in their struggle to obey God's Commandments: do not steal, do not envy, do not be unfaithful, honor your parents, observe all of the other Commandments. This is what makes our Catholic community in Port Washington strong: love of the Lord, and belief in his teachings. We do not interfere with others self-righteously, but nor do we ignore them when they are in doubt or difficulty.

Our Christian community has, for 150 years, taught the truth about love and moral values and then has given support to each other throughout life as we attempt to put these truths into practice. So I thank you all for the model of Christian charity and holiness that you offer. And I thank you once again for your hospitality. I am delighted to play a small part in the celebrations this year and I am particularly pleased to see our parish continue to grow in numbers, faith and outreach. These are the real signs of hope for the Church.

Under the protection of Our Lady of the Assumption, I am confident that St. Mary's Parish will continue to flourish. I join my prayers with yours in gratitude for all that has been achieved in Port Washington because everything that has been done here for 150 years has been done through Jesus Christ, and for Jesus Christ. We pray to Our Lord, and to Our Lady of the Assumption, that the blessings they have bestowed on this beautiful part of our Archdiocese will continue into the future - for at least another 150 years, and hopefully for much longer!



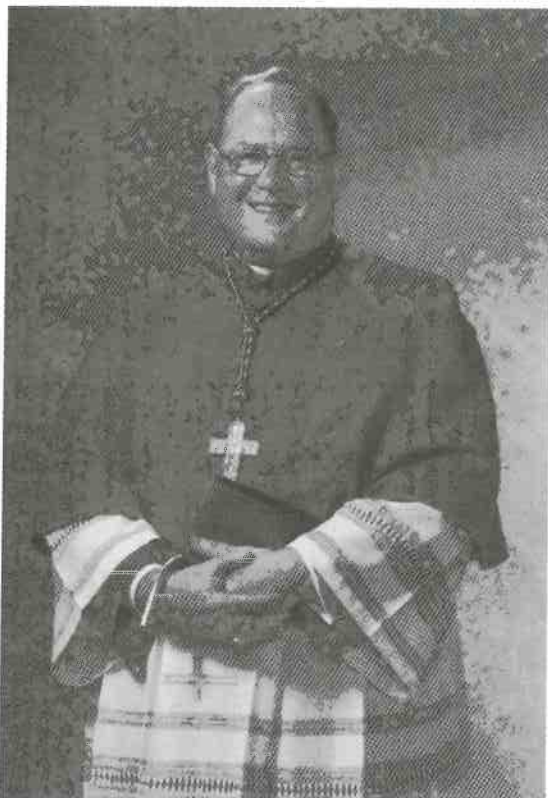
Rev. Allan Sommer,  
Pastor



# Shepherds of the Flock – 2003



Pope John Paul II

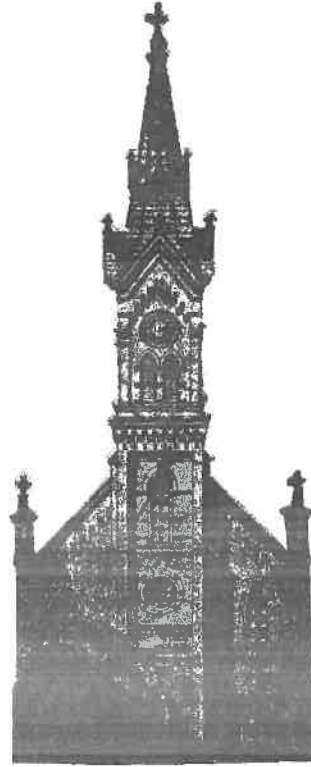


Archbishop Timothy Dolan



Father Allan Sommer





## **St. Mary's Parish Statistics**

BAPTISMS 1853-2002

11,021

MARRIAGES 1853-2002

2,977

BURIALS 1853-2002

4,596

## **Parish Census**

1853

25 FAMILIES

2003

1200 FAMILIES



# The Early Years

## *This Is Holy Ground*

Though not officially organized until 1853, St. Mary's Parish had its humble beginnings in 1847. In that year, three Catholic families who had emigrated one year earlier from Luxembourg on the ship *Talleyrand* celebrated Holy Mass at the home of the Gengler family on Pier Street. This first group of Luxembourger Catholics included the families of John and Franz Gengler, Adam Even, and John Warling.

Two years later in 1849, there were 20 Catholic families in Port Washington. In hope of building a more permanent house of worship, the men of these families met with a real estate agent named Hiram Johnson. Hiram and his father, Solon Johnson, were well-known land speculators in Ozaukee County. Johnson took these twenty men and showed them various plots of land in the village but land on the north bluff seemed most appealing.

Though often in previous histories of the parish it is claimed that Hiram Johnson donated two lots in the northeast addition of the village to these first parishioners, the truth is that a deed proves that Bishop John Martin Henni, the first Bishop of the Diocese of Milwaukee, actually purchased the two lots from Hiram's father, Solon Johnson, on July 6, 1849 for \$50 [Deeds, Vol. E, pgs. 517-18, Ozaukee County, WI]. This is not surprising as it seems most likely that the Johnsons were not Catholic and they were known to be some of the shrewdest land speculators in northern Ozaukee County.

It has also been inferred in previous histories that because Hiram Johnson "donated" the land to the parish, the street on which the parish is located was named "Johnson Street" in his honor. The fact is that Johnson Street was named after Hiram's father, Solon Johnson, who personally platted the entire Northeast addition of the village of Port Washington in 1849 [Plat Cabinet A, #5 B-C, Ozaukee County, WI].

According to the deed provided by Solon Johnson, Bishop Henni and these early Catholic families in Port Washington received:

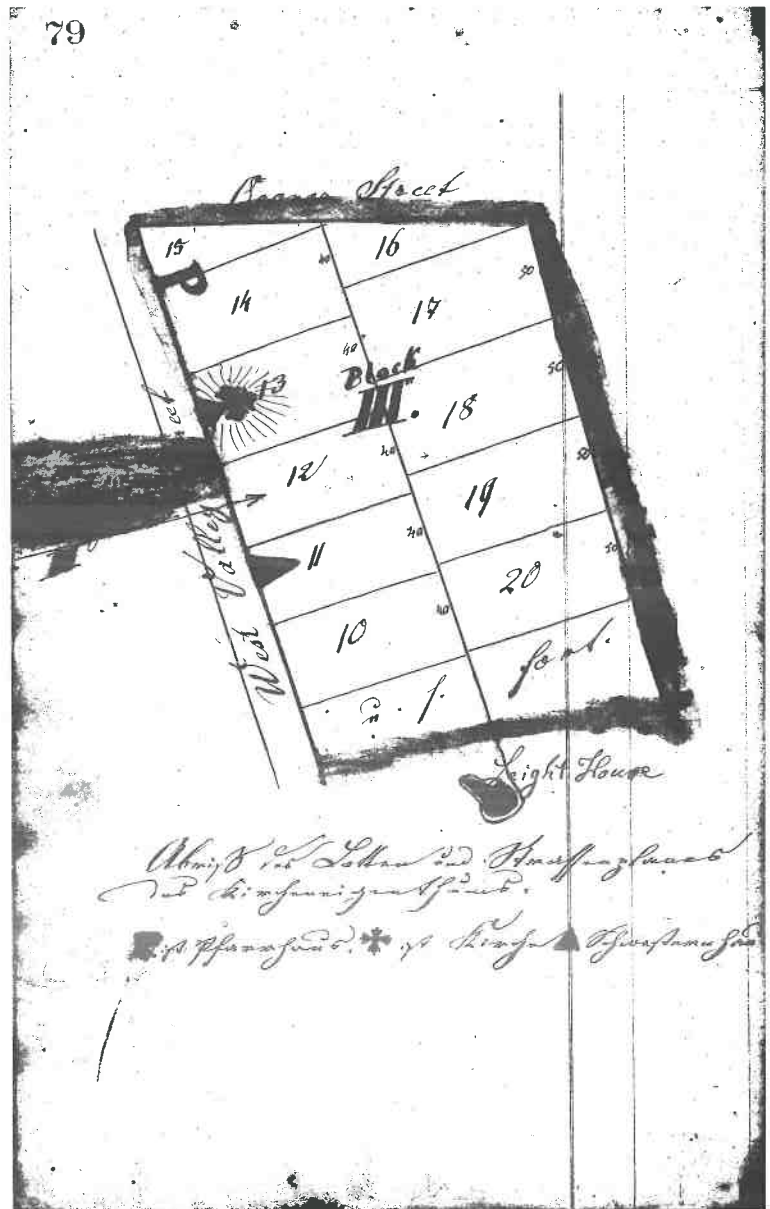
*.....Lots No. Fourteen, No. Fifteen in Block No. Three as laid out on Johnson's Plat to the Village of Port Washington with the express condition that the use, all the benefits and profits and all the rents of the said Lots and of the Buildings upon the same shall be and belong to the German Roman Catholic Congregation at Port Washington.....*





A map drawn by Father Sailer of St. Mary's property in Block III. The first lots purchased were Numbers 14 and 15. The map was drawn in 1863-66 and is found in Record Book, Volume 1, for St. Mary's Parish, p. 79.

The cross on Lot 13 represents the location of the 1860 church. The "P" on Lots 14 and 15 represents the location of the parsonage. Note the mention of the "Leight House" on the lower right representing the 1860 Port Washington Light Station.

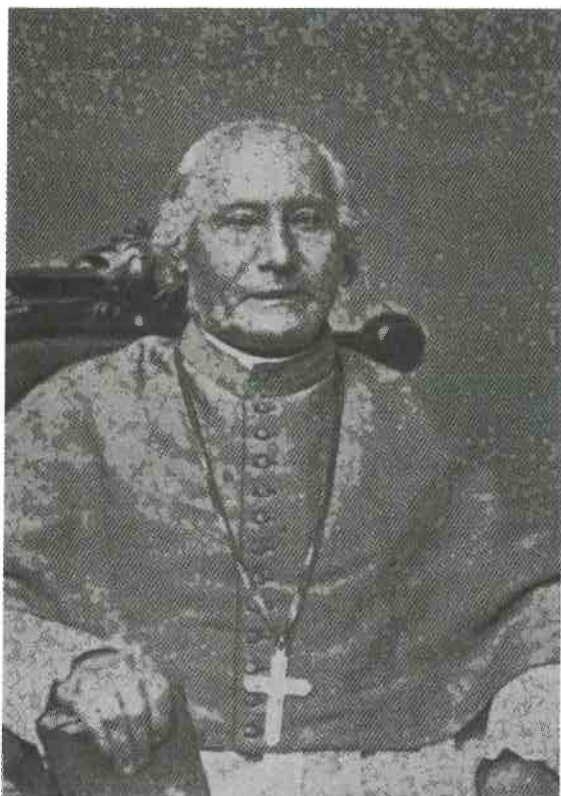


Lots 14 and 15 actually comprise what is today the northwest portion of the current school parking lot. This was the site of the first 1849 church. The description on the deed seems to infer that there were some buildings already on one or both of the lots at the time the lots were purchased. Perhaps the first church was a remodeling of one of those existing buildings, or a new structure was built on this land and served as the first church. It is impossible to know the correct answer and one can only conjecture at this point of history. This question aside, the fact is that since 1849, land in the "North-east Addition" to Port Washington has been "holy ground" to the parishioners of St. Mary's.

The next reference to this first church comes from the Bishop Henni's *Confirmation Book* (1844 – 1879). Excerpts of this book were published in *Centennial Essays For The Milwaukee Archdiocese – 1843 – 1943*, by Rev. Peter Leo Johnson, p. 60, which states:

.....Beginning August 5, 1850, the bishop spent a week in the north half of Ozaukee County (then Washington County). In 1847 when he last visited this area, the only place with a house of God was Holy Cross, which he found after a long search. Like most pioneer





*Bishop John Martin Henni of Milwaukee purchased the first land in Port Washington for St. Mary's Parish in 1849.*

*Photo courtesy of Archdiocese of Milwaukee*

*churches it was a wee log chapel and at the time it was not completed. By 1850, after a few years, 600 Catholic families had poured into the region.*

*First on the itinerary was Port Washington, which in 1844 had less than ten houses, but which in 1850 boasted about its 150 houses and two busy docks. Here there were fifty Catholic families, of whom one-third were German. Besides confirming twenty-two, the bishop blessed the local frame church.....*

Some documentation suggests that this first church was occasionally visited from 1849 to 1853 by early Ozaukee County pioneer priests Father Fabian Bermadinger and Father Mathias Gernbauer as well as Father P. Bradley, the resident pastor of the Irish parish in Port Washington, St. Stephen's.

When Father F. X. Sailer arrived as the resident pastor of St. Mary's on October 9, 1853, the parish was officially organized. During his pastorate, Father Sailer continued to add more "holy ground" to the parish holdings as he acquired more lots in Block Number Three on the east side of Johnson Street.

On April 24, 1854, parishioners David and Elisabeth Saar donated the adjoining Lots 13, 16, 17 in Block No. Three to the parish [Deeds, Vol. 4, p. 117,

Ozaukee County, WI]. David Saar was a local hotel owner and an active, lay leader in early St. Mary's Parish. Lot 13 eventually became the location of the second church built in 1860. This is verified by a map of Block Three drawn by Father Sailer circa 1863-66 [Record Book, Volume 1, for St. Mary's Parish, Port Washington, p. 79]. The first rectory, according to the map, was located on both Lots 14 and 15.

Additional lots were purchased over the years to secure what is today Lots 7 – 24 in Block Three, the parish property located on the east side of Johnson Street. Lots 11 and 18 were purchased on February 23, 1863 from Michael Schloeder for \$350 [Deeds, Vol. 12, p. 515, Ozaukee County, WI]. Lot 11 became the site of the first St. Mary's School built by Father Sailer in 1867.

On February 13, 1871 Lot 12 was purchased from John and Sarah Hough of Allen County, Indiana for \$180 [Deeds, Vol. 23, pgs. 439-40, Ozaukee County, WI]. This became the site of a bell tower that housed three bells purchased by the parish in 1875. The bell tower was located between the 1860 church and the 1867 school.

Sometime before 1886, Lots 9, 10, 19 and 20 were also purchased by the parish. Though extensive research has been done at the Register of Deeds Office in Ozaukee County, the record of this purchase cannot be found. Lot 10 became the location of the first St. Mary's convent built as an addition to the 1867 school.

When the parish decided to build another new convent in 1911, additional land was needed. On April 20, 1911, Lot 8 and 21 were purchased from John and Maria Walsh for "\$1.00 and other valuable consideration." This became the site of the 1911 convent which today serves as the Parish Center.



The final lot acquired by the parish was Lot 7 purchased from Neil and Ruth Noesen on October 25, 1949 [Deeds, Vol. 408, p. 607, Ozaukee County, WI]. The deed lists the price of the transaction as “\$1.00 and other valuable consideration.” This lot was used for the addition to St. Mary’s School in 1950.

St. Mary’s also owns what is referred to as “St. Mary’s Hill” on the west side of Johnson Street. That land was acquired in 1882 shortly before building our present church. This purchase is described in another section of this book.

Although acquisition of all the land that comprises St. Mary’s property was a 100 year process (1849 – 1949), this “holy ground” has served the parish well and has been home to an incredible tradition of faith over the past 150 years.



*The original two lots purchased by Bishop Henni for the “German Roman Catholics” of Port Washington in 1849 is the northwest, pie-shaped corner of our school parking lot. The 1849 church stood on this parcel as did the first rectory.*

*Photo courtesy of Terry Wester*





# The Pioneer Flock

In today's parish office, the parish secretary is able to print an accurate list of parish members from the computer in a matter of minutes. However, in the "olden days" books containing lists of parish members were not always so readily available. While we do have copies of Annual Parish Reports from the past century, recording parishioners' names and their church contributions, similar records from the 19th century are very sparse. The oldest, complete listing of parishioners of St. Mary's Parish that we have is hand-written by Father Sailer, the first pastor, and dated 1866. The *Record Book, Vol. 2, For St. Mary's Parish, Port Washington, Ozaukee County, Wisconsin*, pages 106 – 115 includes a list of adult, male members of St. Mary's and their occupations [note: names are spelled here as in the original]:

Adam, Math.	<i>innkeeper</i>	Bisch, Carl	<i>director</i>
Adam, J. B.	<i>(none listed)</i>	Burg, Frank	<i>farmer</i>
Altendorf, Hil.	<i>farmer</i>	Brady, John N.	<i>saloon</i>
Altendorf, Joseph	<i>farmer</i>	Baustern, Math.	<i>tailor</i>
		Bierle, Aug.	<i>woodcutter</i>
Binefeld, John	<i>retired</i>		
Bauschel, Nic	<i>(none listed)</i>	Cooney, John	<i>farmer</i>
Baer, J. N.	<i>carpenter</i>	Cooney, Hugh	<i>lawyer</i>
Bohan, J. R.	<i>editor</i>	Cody, John	<i>farmer</i>
Blue, Mrs.	<i>farmer</i>		
Becker, Peter	<i>farmer</i>	Desmond, John	<i>foreman</i>
Bacheritz, Jn.	<i>shoemaker</i>	Delfeld, M.	<i>hunter</i>
Borst, Thomas	<i>lumber worker</i>	Drucker, John Sen. (senior)	<i>foreman</i>
Bode, Math Sen. (senior)	<i>farmer</i>	Demuth, Math	<i>farmer</i>
Bode, Math Jun. (junior)	<i>farmer</i>	Dreis, Mich	<i>innkeeper</i>
Blau, Math	<i>laborer</i>	Didrich, John	<i>agent</i>
Buri, Peter Sen. (senior)	<i>grinder</i>	Daub, Jos.	<i>farmer</i>
Buri, Peter Jun. (junior)	<i>laborer</i>	Daniels, Jac.	<i>foreman</i>
Buri, Franz	<i>bridge builder</i>	Dahlhoff, Bernard	<i>farmer</i>
Besch, John	<i>farmer</i>	Dahlhoff, Henry	<i>farmer</i>
Bourr, Nic.	<i>foreman</i>	Defferang, John	<i>farmer</i>
Biever, John	<i>farmer</i>	Dix, Apolonia	<i>millar</i>
Barnich, Math	<i>farmer</i>	Doffey, Marg.	<i>(none listed)</i>
Buchholz, Peter	<i>innkeeper</i>	Dreis, John	<i>farmer</i>
Burger, Jos.	<i>brewmaster</i>	Delles, John	<i>saloon</i>
Burger, John	<i>laborer</i>	Dondlinger, Peter	<i>farmer</i>
Beer, John	<i>laborer</i>		
Buhrle, Aug.	<i>laborer</i>	Even, Adam	<i>laborer</i>





*Margaret (Wester) Martin*  
*Born in 1828 in Bartringen, Luxembourg, died in 1910*  
*in Port Washington.*

*Photo courtesy of Father Kevin Wester*

Even, Henry	<i>laborer</i>
Erd, F. X.	<i>woodworker</i>
Egle, Norbert	<i>(none listed)</i>
Egerer, Maria	<i>milliner</i>
Flamming, Nic.	<i>farmer</i>
Furst, Math.	<i>tailor</i>
Feider, Carl	<i>farmer</i>
Feider, Nic	<i>shoemaker</i>
Federspiel, Bernard	<i>laborer</i>
Gietzen, Anton	<i>farmer</i>
Gilson, Theodore	<i>foundryman</i>
Greiveldinger, Christopher	<i>farmer</i>
Gilson, Heinrich	<i>farmer</i>
Glesner, Mathias	<i>innkeeper</i>
Geimer, Domnick	<i>innkeeper</i>
Geisz, George	<i>farmer</i>
Gorman, James	<i>farmer</i>
Geimer, Theodore	<i>cooper</i>
Greiveldinger, John	<i>farmer</i>
Gedert, Nic	<i>tailor</i>

Grotz, Nic	<i>farmer</i>
Gerard, Domnick	<i>farmer</i>
Hauswirth, Anton	<i>laborer</i>
Heidkamp, Adolph	<i>lawyer</i>
Hoefer, William	<i>innkeeper</i>
Hengel, Peter	<i>clerk</i>
Hein, Andrew	<i>foreman</i>
Hein, Jos.	<i>foreman</i>
Hansen, J. P.	<i>private</i>
Hansen, John	<i>laborer</i>
Haupt, Simon	<i>farmer</i>
Hoffschild, Her.	<i>farmer</i>
Haack, Michel	<i>farmer</i>
Hein, Peter	<i>cooper</i>
Hamm, John	<i>farmer</i>
Harrington, Batholome	<i>officer</i>
Hennesy, Edward	<i>farmer</i>
Huttman, John	<i>day laborer</i>
Jung, Math	<i>innkeeper</i>
Jung, Nic	<i>pharmacist</i>



*Nicholas Martin*  
*Born in 1817 in Eischen, Luxembourg, died in 1897*  
*in Port Washington.*

*Photo courtesy of Father Kevin Wester*



*Pierre "Peter" Mahlerbe*

*Born in Ussy, France in 1806, died in 1870 in Port Washington.*

*Photo courtesy of Jim Beck.*

Jaquinet, J. B.	<i>store clerk</i>
Jaquinet, Dom	<i>laborer</i>
Johannes, Hubert	<i>farmer</i>
Jaquis, Christof	<i>farmer</i>
Jaquinet, Math.	<i>laborer</i>
Kemp, Nic.	<i>miller</i>
Kemp, Dom	<i>laborer</i>
Klein, Carl	<i>laborer</i>
Kolling, Nic	<i>laborer</i>
Kittinger, John	<i>store clerk</i>
Kessler, Mich	<i>private</i>
Knell, Math	<i>innkeeper</i>
Klopp, J. P.	<i>store clerk</i>
Klopp, Math	<i>innkeeper</i>
Kuhl, Peter	<i>innkeeper</i>
Kloos, Gregor	<i>blacksmith</i>
Kloos, J. B.	<i>farmer</i>
Kloos, Nic.	<i>wagon driver</i>
Kenna, Nic.	<i>reaper</i>
Kuhn, Jos. Phill	<i>butcher</i>
Kuhn, Peter	<i>butcher</i>

Kiefer, Nic.	<i>butcher</i>
Kestner, John	<i>laborer</i>
Kaiser, Franz	<i>farmer</i>
Klopp, Paul	<i>farmer</i>
Kirsch, Math	<i>farmer</i>
Kunz, Karl	<i>farmer</i>
Kultgen, John	<i>farmer</i>
Kuhn, G. A.	<i>farmer</i>
Kloos, Michel	<i>farmer</i>
Knor, John	<i>farmer</i>
Kleckinger, Peter	<i>farmer</i>
Knell, Nic.	<i>farmer</i>
Kulenske, Frank	<i>cooper/barrel maker</i>
Knipper, J. B.	<i>farmer/saloon</i>

Lang, Joseph	<i>wagon maker</i>
Ludwig, John	<i>shoemaker</i>
Lutfring, J. W.	<i>officer/innkeeper</i>
Lambris, Dom.	<i>laborer</i>
Lemmer, Peter	<i>laborer</i>
Lederer, Josepha	<i>farmer</i>
Leider, William	<i>farmer</i>
Ledenbach, Paul	<i>farmer</i>
Latch, Mrs.	<i>farmer</i>



*Nicholas Wiltzius*

*Born in 1825 in Merl, Luxembourg, died in Port Washington in 1908.*

*Photo courtesy of Barbara Salisbury*





*Mary (Thomas) Wiltzius*

*Born in 1839 in Luxembourg, died in Milwaukee in 1923.*

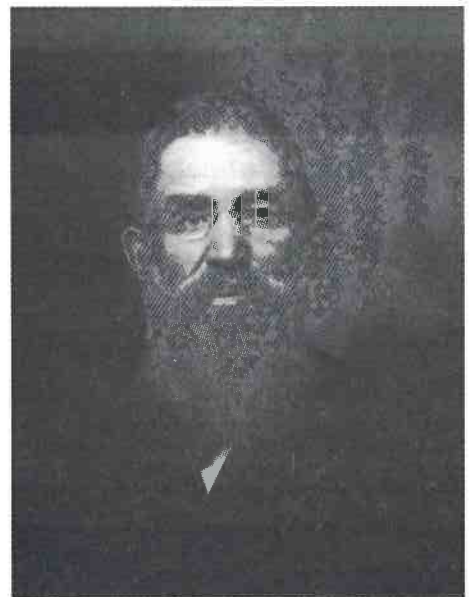
*Photo courtesy of Barbara Salisbury*

Leidinger, Hubert	<i>farmer</i>
Lutz, Martin	<i>retired</i>
Mammer, Nic	<i>laborer</i>
Merens, Geo	<i>carpenter/cabinet maker</i>
Martin, Nic.	<i>foundryman</i>
Mertes, Jac.	<i>bridge maker</i>
Meyer, Dominick	<i>widower</i>
Meyer, August	<i>tinsmith</i>
McCarthy, James	<i>officer</i>
Molitor, Peter	<i>farmer</i>
Muller, Henry	<i>machinist</i>
Meyeres, Domnick	<i>farmer</i>
Merzig, Gerhard	<i>carpenter</i>
Merkle, Anton Mrs.	<i>widow</i>
Molinger, John	<i>farmer</i>
Muller, Kathrina	<i>farmer</i>
Malherbe, Pierre	<i>innkeeper</i>
Millage, Marg.	<i>sailor's wife</i>
Mangin, Nic	<i>farmer</i>
Millward, Mrs.	<i>gunsmith</i>
Mehan, Patrick	<i>farmer</i>
Matherus, James	<i>farmer</i>
May, John	<i>farmer</i>

Mondloch, Nic	<i>farmer</i>
Molitor, John	<i>farmer</i>
Maurer, Peter	<i>farmer</i>
Meyer, Leopold	<i>tinsmith</i>
Mehan, John	<i>(none listed)</i>

Noesen, Peter	<i>farmer</i>
Noesen, Theodore	<i>innkeeper</i>
Neuens, John	<i>innkeeper</i>
Notting, Mich	<i>painter</i>
Niederkorn, Hein.	<i>farmer</i>
Niederkorn, Nic.	<i>farmer</i>
Niederkorn, John	<i>farmer</i>
Niederkorn, Math.	<i>farmer</i>
Niesen, Frank E.	<i>laborer</i>
Notttem, Heinrich	<i>farmer</i>
Noesen, Geo.	<i>storeman</i>
Neuhengen, Hubert	<i>farmer</i>

Oswald (no first name listed)	<i>widowed</i>
Obladen, F. X. J.	<i>teacher</i>
O'Mare, Miss Mary	<i>teacher</i>
Olinger, John	<i>storeman</i>



*Andreas "Andrew" Hein*

*Born in 1819 in Weiss, Germany, died in 1907 in Port Washington.*

*Photo courtesy of Gretchen Stangl*





*Margaret (Weyker) Hein*

*Born in 1839 in Sterpenich, Province of Luxembourg, Belgium,  
died in 1909 in Port Washington.*

*Photo courtesy of Gretchen Stangl*

Paulin, John	<i>farmer</i>
Poulis, John	<i>farmer</i>
Pelt, Peter	<i>tailor</i>
Peter, Nic.	<i>carpenter</i>
Paul, Nic.	<i>storeman</i>
Piring, George	<i>machinist</i>
Prom, Heinrich	<i>farmer</i>
Prom, Nic.	<i>brewmaster</i>
Pastoret, Phill Mrs.	<i>widow</i>
Pastorate, Hein.	<i>cigarmaker</i>
Parzem, Peter	<i>laborer</i>
Petemann, Mrs.	<i>miller</i>
Powers, Mich.	<i>farmer</i>
Powers, Rob. Mrs.	<i>widow</i>
Powers, Marg.	<i>widow</i>
Paulin, Henry	<i>farmer</i>
Plier, Henry	<i>farmer Green Bay Road</i>
Pierling, Anton	<i>saddler</i>
Quin, Elisebeth	<i>farmer</i>
Ries, Henry	<i>innkeeper</i>
Ries, Peter	<i>wagonmaker</i>
Rubbli, Theobald	<i>innkeeper</i>
Rock, Paul	<i>farmer</i>
Reiter, John	<i>cooper/barrel maker</i>
Resch, Karl	<i>tailor</i>

Reiter, Heinrich	<i>store clerk</i>
Replinger, John	<i>farmer</i>
Reckinger, Mich	<i>cooper/barrel maker</i>
Reiter, Nic	<i>farmer</i>
Remlinger, John	<i>teamster</i>
Reinhart, Wm.	<i>laborer</i>

Schmits, John J.	<i>cooper</i>
Schmitt, Valarius	<i>shoemaker</i>
Scheribel, Sebastian	<i>farmer</i>
Schmitt, John	<i>farmer</i>
Schwarz, Schwestern	<i>milliner</i>
Schumacher, Dom.	<i>mason</i>
Schmitt, Math	<i>farmer</i>
Stoller, Math	<i>farmer</i>
Schmitt, Mich Sen. (senior)	<i>innkeeper</i>
Schmitt, J. Mich Jun. (junior)	<i>cooper/barrel maker</i>
Scholl, Jos. W.	<i>tailor</i>
Scholl, J. L. MD	<i>doctor</i>
Straff, Mathias	<i>carpenter</i>
Schaumberger, Andreas	<i>farmer</i>
Schmidler, Jac.	<i>mason</i>
Schneidisch, J. R.	<i>farmer</i>
Stemper, Math	<i>blacksmith</i>
Schoemer, Math.	<i>farmer</i>
Straus, Stephan	<i>laborer</i>
Steinbach, Nic.	<i>innkeeper</i>
Scherard, Dom.	<i>farmer</i>
Schreiner, John	<i>cooper/barrel maker</i>
Simon, Peter	<i>tailor</i>
Schmidt, Christ	<i>farmer</i>
Georg, John	<i>wagoner</i>
<i>[editor's note: the above name is out of alphabetical order in original]</i>	
Simon, John	<i>tanner</i>
Schaak, Christof	<i>farmer</i>
Schumacher, Genoveva	<i>widow</i>
State, Mrs. and Mr.	<i>laborer</i>

Steinmetz, Nic	<i>farmer</i>	Warling, John	<i>carpenter</i>
Thull, Peter	<i>retired</i>	Wagner, John	<i>wagonmaker</i>
Theno, Math	<i>laborer</i>	Weller, Mathias	<i>shoemaker</i>
Trauscht, J. B.	<i>laborer</i>	Weller, Luis	<i>shoemaker</i>
Thill, Jac.	<i>farmer</i>	Wellenstein, Math	<i>farmer</i>
Thausaint, John	<i>foundry</i>	Walsh, Edward	<i>farmer</i>
Thoma, Phillip	<i>farmer</i>	Winkel,	<i>widow</i>
Thoma, John	<i>brick yard</i>	Wilzius, Nicolas	<i>laborer</i>
Thomas, Nic.	<i>liquor handler</i>	Westhoff, Albert	<i>farmer</i>
		Wunderli, Leo	<i>laborer</i>
		Weiker, J. P.	<i>constable</i>
Ubbing, Bernerd	<i>mason</i>	Wiltges, John	<i>farmer</i>
		Wolfinger, Elisa	<i>young woman</i>
Venderborch, Herman	<i>tinsmith</i>	Watri, Peter	<i>farmer</i>
Vinandi, Daniel Domnick	<i>farmer</i>	Weiker, Peter	<i>farmer</i>
Velan Thomas,	<i>farmer</i>	Weiland, John	<i>farmer</i>
		Wolf, Peter	<i>(none listed)</i>
Wictor, Theodore	<i>cooper/barrel maker</i>		
Wentink, Gerhard	<i>mason</i>	Zimmerman, Frank	<i>innkeeper</i>
Wentink, Albert	<i>mason</i>	Zanbon, Jac.	<i>farmer</i>
Wentink, William	<i>mason</i>	Zambon, Peter	<i>farmer</i>



*Theodore and Catherina (Ludwig) Gilson*

*Theodore was born in 1820 in Berg, Luxembourg and died in Port Washington in 1891.  
Catherina was born in 1824 in Consdorf, Luxembourg and died in Port Washington in 1887.*

*Photo courtesy of Sally Ziegler and Susan Westerbeke*



# Parish Growing Pains

It is human nature to look back and to romanticize about “the good ole days” as if life “back then” was picture perfect. This is also true in our experience as members of the Church. Particularly today, considering the many challenges the Church is currently facing, people tend to look back and view the Church of the past as flawless. However, the Church, in every era, has faced many challenges and trials along the way as well as moments of grace and success. This is also true in the history of St. Mary’s.

A narrative recently discovered in a journal written in 1867 by Father F. X. Sailer has provided us with new insight into the “growing pains” of St. Mary’s and the resulting emotional strain on our first resident pastor. Eight pages, hand-written in German, found in the *Record Book, Vol. I, For St. Mary’s Parish, Port Washington, Ozaukee County, Wisconsin*, pgs. 12 – 19 have added a new dimension to our understanding of what was involved in the formation of the parish. It translates as follows:

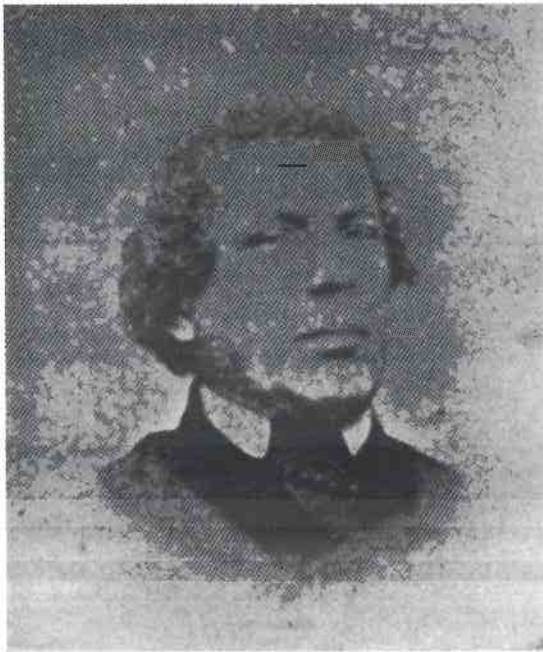
## *Short History of the Origins and Growth of St. Mary Parish Community*

*At the end of the 40’s [1840s], a number of Catholics arrived to settle in Port Washington, most of them from Luxembourg. From time to time a priest visiting from Milwaukee gave the Last Rites to twelve from this community in the house of John Gengler where Masses were held. By 1849, twenty families arrived at the decision to build a small church on two lots, which Hiram Johnson, the oldest settler in Ozaukee, gifted to them.*

*Reverend P. Weninger held a mission in 1851 in the open, out in front of the newly built church. Assisting him were Reverend P. Fabian [Bermadinger], Reverend Gernbauer, and Reverend Bradley. Reverend Bradley resided in Port and took care of the Irish as well as the German Catholics.*

*On October 9, 1853, I, F. X. Sailer, was sent to Port as minister for the Germans and at the same time I was to handle the mission at St. Mary’s in Lake Church. The entire region was still wild with brush. In Port there were just a few houses and twenty-five Catholic families. I had to endure a poor life, full of need. In order to start a necessary school for half-wild, growing and numerous children, I brought along my countryman and travel companion, F. X. Weinhard. He taught school for nine months. Together we shared an income of merely \$8 per month for the school and my own meager table of food and meager apartment. My personal total annual income was \$100 per year which I did not even once receive in full. F. X. Weinhard was accepted into the seminary. Adolf Heidkamp came from New York, where I originally met him, for my use as school director for the Catholic school. He also received lodging and breakfast from me, gratis. He was elected to public office in 1856 and I arranged for the Sisters of Notre Dame of Milwaukee to teach. Such was the wish of the parishioners. I paid for their transportation and*





Father F. X. Sailer  
Photo courtesy of PWHSRC

expenses. The parish contributed with some furnishings for the Sisters who lived in a rented house above the school where they taught lessons.

On July 24, 1857, the Most Reverend Bishop [Henni] came for confirmation for the second time (the first time was July 11, 1854) and because I came down with tuberculosis as a result of my excursions to the Mission [Lake Church], as I always made the long way there by foot, and due to my meager existence, the Most Reverend transferred me to the good parish in Racine [St. Mary's Parish, Racine]. I worked successfully there for five years.

My successor, Reverend John Weikmann, let the Sisters go and replaced them with his own countryman as teacher. He endured it for only four months. By and by, Reverend Weikmann himself had trouble with several parishioners. Finally, a formal process resulted that grew into a great spectacle. The search for the truth cost the honest priest his rights and he lost to the unjust. Following this,

three main activists were excommunicated with celebration. But now there was the vile subject matter and the persecution of it, so that remaining here was no longer possible. Reverend Weikmann was transferred and Reverend F. Fusseder arrived in his place here in Port Washington as pastor. Reverend F. Fusseder took pains to appease the agitators so that peace could be established. He disengaged the mood of the three persons who had been excommunicated and then made preparations for a new church building. The cornerstone was ceremoniously laid in July, 1860.

One year later, construction was completed under the Luxembourgers' indispensable arguing, fighting, racketeering, and ill treatment of the well intended efforts of the pastor. The edifice began to collapse because of the aimless, ill-planned, heavy beamed roof. The parish community had to insert steel rods in order to prevent total collapse in September 1864. The Catholic school had ceased to exist after I moved to Racine. Several parishioners had even sold the furnishings from the Sisters' quarters and most likely drank away the profit sum. Finally, I took pity on the children.

Reverend Fusseder received the position of assistant chaplain in the 24th Wisconsin Regiment as he wanted to serve in the Civil War. As a result of several written and vocal requests from begging parents, through personal encouragement, and with the Bishop's approval, I was thus again induced and came for the second time to Port Washington on September 6, 1862. I saw quickly that the community was not the same as the old one had been but had changed to a worse one, one full of pride, envy and gossip. Full of such burdens that it put a look of misery on the face of Jesus.

The best account of the brutality and depravity of the time is the riot [draft riot] by this community during the draft of November 10, 1862. During the riot I housed many refugees who fled the rioters in my parish house. Hate with added reinforcements from the neighboring community [Belgium], did then oppose the reigning government and the senior officials in the most gross manner and the rioters demolished their homes. However, on November 13, 1862, a 600-men militia arrived, captured 120 rioting men,



arrested them, and transported them to Madison. Following this there were tears and desperate cries and folks who previously mocked my well-meant warnings now begged me to look after the fate of the prisoners.

As a good shepherd, I spared neither effort nor expense to visit these prisoners in the camp at Madison where they were imprisoned in a horse barn under heavy guard. In addition, I brought them words of comfort, letters, and food. I recommended them to the care of Most Reverend H. Hackhofer, who visited them often and supplied them with much alleviation for which both he and I received ingratitude in return.

Once back at home, December 5, 1862, I contracted a severe eye infection and became blind for three weeks, so horrible was the illness. After several months of having withstood enormous pain and painful operations, I was finally better. So I undertook the task of establishing a new Catholic school in a rented location that began on May 25, 1863 with four Sisters of the Dominican Order. Because of several deaths, the Dominican Order called back the Sisters. I received after a long back and forth with the Order of St. Agnes of Barton, three teaching Sisters. In April 1864, H. Evans rented three schoolrooms wherein the Sisters continued education as the Dominican Sisters had done before them until June 30, 1867. The salary was \$45 per month for three teachers and one housekeeping Sister.

Meanwhile, I bought from the gracious M. Schloeder, two lots and a house to which I annexed a new wing and then added two more lots later. The house with the new wing was moved several yards to the northeast surrounded by a newly cemented basement and plastered on the outside.

And for all of my difficulties and expenses, for which I personally accumulated a \$350 debt from years 1863 – 1867, the parish community of Port Washington gave me nothing but their darkest, thankless ingratitude. A just God will reprise them all.

F. X. Sailer, Pastor



Father Sailer's two leather-bound Record Books, circa 1863-66.  
These books contain valuable historic data from the early years of St. Mary's.

Photo courtesy of Terry Wester



### *Addendum*

*According to the statement in the school building book and as a result of a million soliciting and begging steps, as well as my personal contribution and that of P. Weninger's, I was able to bring it far enough so that the building of the Catholic schoolhouse could be undertaken. We brought it to a close following a sensible plan for brickwork of 33 x 60 and built it two stories high. That God should grant a good Catholic school for this new school building is a wish passed on to my successor from this old Pastor, F. X. Sailer, Feb. 1, 1867*

*It should be a small comfort to the Reverend Mr. replacement, that great patience can accomplish much here. In particular "vestra" possibilities – animas vestras! And this principle I practiced here as much as possible. Therefore, much luck and much patience to my dear reverend replacement, Rev. A. Durst. Wishing you for the ten year long stay in Port Washington*

*Signed,*

*Pastor, F. X. Sailer*

*Port Washington, October 30, 1867*

It is obvious from Father Sailer's account, that both he and the parish endured substantial hardship in the early years. Nonetheless, the parish weathered these storms with the grace of the Holy Spirit.



# St. Mary's Cemetery

One of the corporal works of mercy in the Catholic faith is that we bury the dead. Father Sailer and the parishioners, from early on, realized the need for a parish cemetery. The necessity was accelerated by a cholera epidemic that swept through the area shortly after the parish was organized in 1853.

According to the *Book of Religious Societies, Vol. 1, Ozaukee County, Wisconsin, Register of Deeds, p. 2-3*, St. Mary's Parish organized an unincorporated cemetery association on January 25, 1854. Thirty men attended the first meeting of the St. Mary's Cemetery Association held at the home of David Saar in Port Washington. Gerard Mockley was elected chairman and John R. Bohan secretary. Six additional trustees were elected, three Irish and three Luxembourger. Those elected were David Saar and Nicholas Kenna for three years, Thomas Powers and Joseph Long for two years, and Francis Seiler (actually Father F. X. Sailer) and R. N. Byrns for one year.

On February 15, 1854, Father Sailer and the trustees purchased four and four-ninths acres of land for the cemetery at what is now the west end of Dodge Street bordering on Webster Street. The land was purchased from R.G. and Margaret Owens of Milwaukee for \$180 [Deeds, Vol. 1, p. 558, Ozaukee County, WI]. At that time, the cemetery land was part of the Town of Port Washington just outside of the village limits.

Bodies of early parishioners buried near the first church were exhumed and laid to rest in the new cemetery. It is of interest to note that in the early days, the Irish were buried on the right side of the cemetery entrance and the Luxembourgers and Germans were buried on the left side.

According to the *Book of Religious Societies, Vol. 1, Ozaukee County, Wisconsin, Register of Deeds, pp. 37-8*, the cemetery association officially incorporated on October 8, 1861 during the pastorate of Father Fusseder. The official title for the new corporation was the "Port Washington Catholic Cemetery Association."

The incorporation document states that members of both St. Stephen's and St. Mary's Roman Catholic Congregations came together to form the association. Father Fusseder was elected president and Hugh Cumming was secretary. The elected trustees were John Cooney, Peter Thull, Edmund Walsh, Nicholas Kloos, Nicholas Kenna, and Nicholas Martin.

For an unknown reason, the Cemetery Association sold the west one-half of



*The entrance gates of old St. Mary's Cemetery*

*Photo courtesy of Terry Wester*







*The keystone of the 1876 chapel in old St. Mary's Cemetery. The inscription translates "In Memory of the Poor Souls."*

*Photo courtesy of Terry Wester*

the cemetery land, two and two-ninths acres, to Herman J. Schulteis for \$75 [Deeds, Vol. 12, p. 258, Ozaukee County, WI]. Cemetery association trustees, John Cooney, Peter Thull, Edward Walsh, Nicolas Kloos, Nicholas Kenna and Nicholas Martin were listed on the deed.

This action is difficult to understand considering the rapid growth the parish was experiencing at the time. We can only theorize that a substantial financial crisis probably existed at that time. The sale of the land reduced the size of the cemetery to 2.2 acres. This led to a shortage of cemetery space forty years later, creating the need for an additional cemetery by the turn of the century.

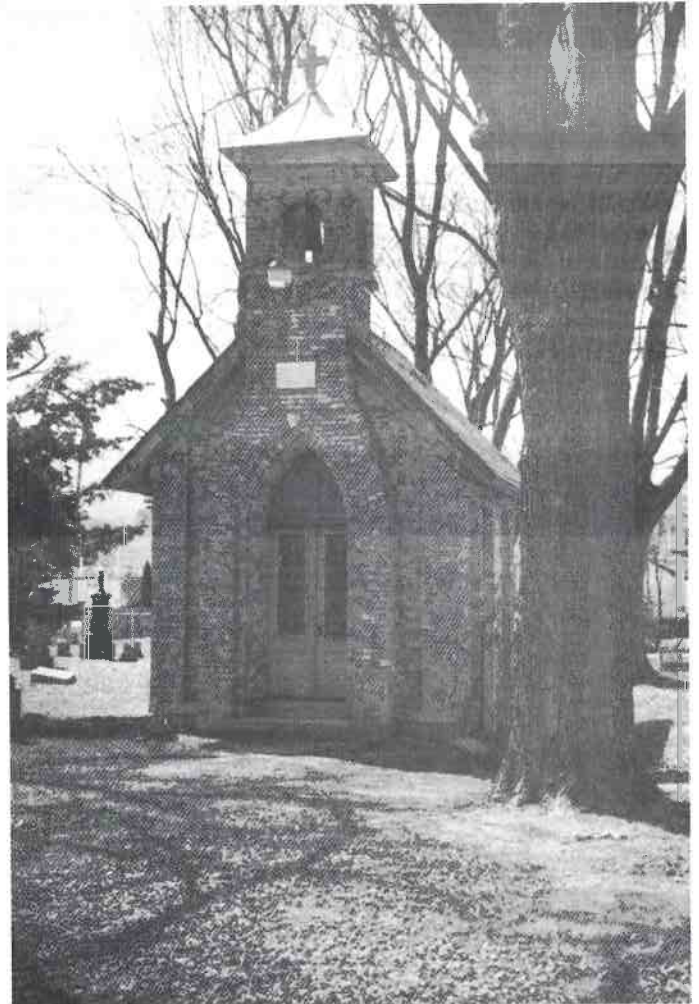
In 1876, a small, brick chapel was erected in the cemetery. The keystone, located above the door of the chapel, commemorates the year of dedication and is inscribed with the German phrase *Gedenke der Armen Seelen*, meaning "In Memory of the Poor Souls." St. Mary's first pastor, Father F. X. Sailer and his good friend and fellow pioneer priest, Father Fabian Bermadinger are buried beneath the chapel. Photographs of the two dedicated priests can be seen in a frame in the chapel, a testimony to their friendship and their ministry in Ozaukee County. If you peer through the glass on the doors of the chapel, you can see these photographs, additional religious pictures and statues, the stenciled walls and a marble altar piece depicting the crucifixion.

On January 29, 1901 the parish purchased approximately 13.5 acres of land located in the Beutel Subdivision in the Town of Port Washington to develop the "new" St. Mary's Cemetery. Three separate parcels in the Beutel Subdivision, each measuring four and four-ninths acres, were purchased: Lot #10 from Bernard Federspiel for \$444.44, Lot #11 from Peter and Martha Stemper for \$555.55 and Lot #12 from Maria Noesen for \$583.33.

The original survey of new St. Mary's Cemetery executed by H. L. Coe and dated July 10, 1901, provides not only a description of the land but also includes a deed restriction as follows [Plat Cabinet A, #8, Ozaukee County, WI]:

*The chapel in old St. Mary's Cemetery built in 1876. It serves as the final resting place for Father Sailer and Father Bermadinger.*

*Photo courtesy of Terry Wester*





*St. Mary's "new" cemetery. The pillars commemorate the opening of the cemetery in 1901 and the major improvement of the cemetery in 1929.*

*Photo courtesy of Terry Wester*

*.....Burials on said cemetery are restricted to members of the Roman Catholic Church and no body of any deceased person shall be buried on any lot, except the owner of said lot or a member of his or her family, nor unless such deceased person, at the time of his or her death, was a member of some Roman Catholic Congregation.....In case any such member shall move away, so as to be no longer a member of said St. Mary's Congregation, he may still retain his lot and burial place for himself and family, provided that before making application he shall present a certificate from the parish priest of the congregation to which he belongs showing that the deceased person at the time of his death was a member of that congregation in good standing, and pay into the Treasury of said St. Mary's Congregation, all debts due from him to St. Mary's Congregation, together with an additional Five Dollars for each burial as part of the expenses to said cemetery, borne by the said Congregation. Any controversy arising as to the right of burial, or otherwise, and the decision thereon is always appealable to the Most Rev. Archbishop of Milwaukee, and his Ecclesiastical Superiors, whose decision shall be final.*

Burials began taking place in the new St. Mary's Cemetery shortly after the land was purchased even though the grounds were not greatly improved until 1929. At that time, the cemetery was formally platted and roads were built to accommodate automobiles. On July 13, 1960, the cemetery was again expanded when 11.63 acres of adjacent land was purchased from Frank X. Didier for \$20,500 [Deeds, Vol. 149, p. 421, Ozaukee County, WI]. This additional land brought the cemetery to a total of approximately 25 acres.



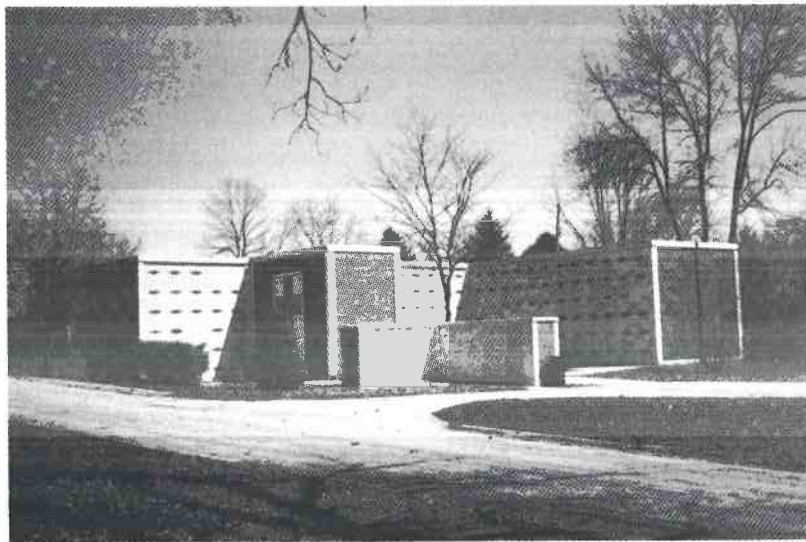
*The chapel in new St. Mary's Cemetery built in 1966.*

*Photo courtesy of Terry Wester*

This cemetery continues to be referred to as the “new St. Mary’s Cemetery” even though it is 102 years old. Two stone pillars at the entrance bear the dates 1901 and 1929, commemorating the land purchase in 1901 and the improvements made in 1929.

A chapel for burial services held during inclement weather was approved in 1966. Ground was broken on October 24, 1966 for a 26 x 68 chapel costing \$40,000, which accommodates up to 100 persons. The building includes a holding vault for caskets when the ground is frozen. Archbishop Cousins officiated at the dedication on May 5, 1968.

An outdoor mausoleum was added to the cemetery in 1983. The two-structure mausoleum was built at a cost of \$217,260 and contains 420 crypt spaces and 96 niches for cremains. In 2002, a columbarium was built for \$45,000. It has 21 single niches and 54 double niches for cremains.



*The mausoleum and columbarium in new St. Mary’s Cemetery.*

*Photo courtesy of Terry Wester*





# Money! Money! Money!

Often times, parishioners complain that all they hear about in church is “money, money, money.” While this is often used as an excuse for people not to participate in the life of their church or to stop practicing their faith, the fact is, donations made by parishioners provide the necessary means to maintain the ministry of a parish. Unlike some modern day European countries, including Luxembourg, who use civil taxation to support their churches, those in the United States are dependent on the generosity of parish members for financial strength.

Various practices encouraging parishioners’ financial support have been used at St. Mary’s over the years. During a great part of St. Mary’s history, the ancient European practice of “pew rent” was in use. A “rent” was assessed for a specific church pew. This pew was reserved for a specific parish family’s use each time they attended Mass. The family name appeared on the pew that they “rented.” Two old record books entitled *Record Book For St. Mary’s Parish, Port Washington, Ozaukee County, Wisconsin, Vol. 1 & 2, 1863 – 1866*, meticulously maintained by our first resident pastor, Father Sailer, recorded each parishioner’s “stuhltrete” as it was called in German. His records show that parishioners paid various pew rents of \$1.00, 75¢, or 50¢ each fiscal quarter. The amount of pew rent depended on the size of one’s family and where one was seated in church. Pews near the front of church were more expensive than those in the back.

Pew rent continued at St. Mary’s well into the 1930s. It was figured mathematically not only by family size but also by the pew size, long pews versus the shorter, side pews. According to minutes of a meeting of St. Mary’s trustees held on January 5, 1923:

*The following rules were adopted:*

- 1. All pew rent must be paid in advance, i.e. every three months. If nothing is paid for six months the pews will be rented again [to someone else].*
- 2. In the long pews the rent is sixteen (\$16.00) dollars for one seat, the second seat for the same family will be eleven (\$11.00) dollars, the third Eight and the fourth Six and the fifth four (\$4.00) dollars. The side pews at the wall, the first seat Thirteen Dollars, the second Nine and the third Six (\$6.00).*
- 3. Single persons pay in the long pews \$13.00 in the side pews Eleven dollars, in the balcony \$7.00*

*Those that strictly pay in advance i.e. pay in December for Jan. Feb. and March. In March for April, May and June. In June for July, Aug. and September. In September for Oct. Nov. and December, will get a \$1.00 discount.*

In the early 1900s, St. Mary’s began publishing Annual Reports at the end of each calendar year containing the names of all parishioners and the amount of pew rent they paid that year. If someone was in arrears in their pew rent, this was also included on the annual report. Annual Reports were scrupulously reviewed by all parishioners. In a small town such



# ANNUAL REPORT

St. Mary's Congregation  
Port Washington, Wisconsin



FOR THE YEAR ENDING  
**DECEMBER 31, 1951**

REV. PETER J. HILDEBRAND, Pastor  
REV. ANTHONY GUNDRUM, Assistant  
REV. JOHN B. BASTEYNS, Assistant  
JOHN P. PAULUS, Secretary  
WM. N. ROCK, Treasurer

*Courtesy of PWHSRC*

as Port Washington everyone was interested in seeing who paid their pew rent, who was in arrears or who might have made a special donation.

The oldest Annual Report found in the parish archives is dated 1913. It was published as a small booklet, a handy size to take home for review. During the 1920s, booklet publishing was discontinued and the Annual Report was published as a poster that was hung in the vestibule of church for all to review.

In 1930, the Annual Reports returned to booklet form with copies provided to all families. This practice of publishing an Annual Report of parishioners' contributions continued at St. Mary's until 1972 when the last report was printed. The Archdiocese began discouraging publication of parishioners' individual contributions for public review.

Over the years "pew rent" gave way to "church dues," a specific assessment paid by all families as well as single parishioners. This seemed a more equitable practice, ending the alignment of individuals with a specific church pew. In post-Vatican II years, the practice of "church dues" evolved into the concept of "financial stewardship" and "tithing," both current practices at St. Mary's.

Parishioners are challenged to prayerfully reflect on the many material and spiritual blessings they have received from God. In return, each is encouraged to share their time, talent, and financial treasure in a generous and sacrificial way to strengthen the work of St. Mary's community. The biblical practice of tithing a percentage of one's income to the parish is also encouraged.

Reviewing the various methods of financial support utilized by the parish over the years...pew rent, church dues, financial stewardship, the people of St. Mary's have successfully managed to provide the support required for the ministry of the parish for the past 150 years.





# A House For God

## *The 1860 Church*

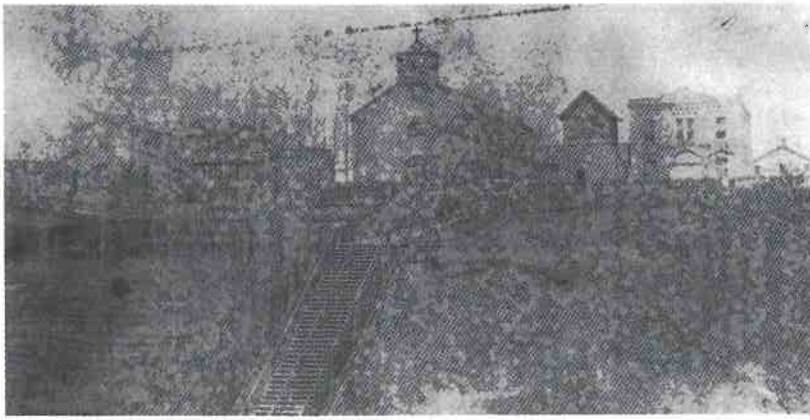
People tend to measure history within the confines of their own life span. Because of this, it may have been forgotten that St. Mary's parish has been served by three different houses of worship over the past 150 years. The first church building that served the parish was a small frame structure built in 1849 on what is now our school parking lot. This church was built four years before the parish was officially organized in 1853.

By the late 1850s, St. Mary's congregation had grown sizably. Under the guidance of Father Francis Fussedder, the parishioners of St. Mary's made the spiritual and financial sacrifices necessary to erect a larger church. The cornerstone of the church was laid in July 1, 1860 and the building was completed in 1861. The new church was built of stone and masonry in the style of the churches back in Luxembourg. The building measured 40 x 80 and cost \$7,000. The church was built on the site of our present school. The simple stone structure had a small bell tower crowned with a wooden cross. The interior of the building was adorned with altars, stained glass, and a choir loft over the entry. It seated 340 people with pew rent of \$3 a year on the main floor and \$2 a year in the choir loft. A sacristy was added later to connect the church with the first St. Mary's School.

One heirloom of the 1860 church is a beautiful, carved wooden statue of Mary, the Immaculate Conception. This statue was brought from Luxembourg by John Ternes in 1860 and placed in the new church. For many years this statue graced the stairwell of the 1950 addition to St. Mary's School. Today it may be seen in the first floor corridor of the school near the entrance to the gymnasium.

The 1860 church served the parish for 24 years until the current church building was dedicated in 1884. In 1887 the old church was remodeled into the first hall for the parish. The raised sanctuary became a stage for plays. The pews were removed so that chairs and tables could be set up for special events. Parish dinners were served in the hall and the long standing tradition of outstanding dramatics had its inception in this hall. The *Port Washington Star*, October 15, 1887 described the transformation:





*The 1860 church located on Johnson Street looking east.  
L-R: First rectory in distance, 1860 church, bell tower, school, convent.  
Photo courtesy of PWHSRC*

*The old St. Mary's church has been undergoing a transformation during the past few weeks in the hands of carpenters, painters, and decorators, and the result will be one of the finest Assembly and Concert Halls in the county. It has been christened St. Mary's Hall, and will be used for church entertainments, concerts, meetings of church societies, etc. Carpenter Nic. Blong and Fritz Mueller, the painter of Milwaukee, with an able corps of assistants, have been busy at work for some time, and will finish their labors the coming week.*

*The new hall will be dedicated on the 24th of this month by the production of the 4-act comedy "Das Trotzkoepfchen," and the operetta "The Miracle of the Roses." The latter will be given by the members of the church choir; the comedy being under the charge of the entertainment committee of the Young Ladies' Society. There is no doubt that the evening will be thoroughly enjoyed by those who are fortunate enough to attend these opening exercises.*

The 1860 church continued to serve as a parish hall until it was demolished in 1915 to make way for the current school. While memories of this 1860 church building/hall have faded into history, this second church building was a visible mainstay in Port Washington for 55 years.

*Interior of 1860 church looking toward the choir loft after the church was remodeled into St. Mary's Hall. This was Father William Kuebelbeck's First Mass Reception in 1910.*

*Photo courtesy of PWHSRC*



# The Bells of St. Mary's

While Port Washington is a city of unique sights, it is also a city filled with many unique sounds. There is the sound of Lake Michigan slapping against the breakwater and harbor walls; the sound of the fog horn on the pierhead beckoning ships to a safe harbor; the piercing cry of seagulls circling our shoreline and marina.

One sound rising above all the rest is the majestic tintinnabulation of the bells of St. Mary's Church. These three bells serve as an audible time keeper for the people of Port Washington, but more importantly, they ring out a message of faith reminding us of the presence of God in our community.

The bells have graced the belfry of St. Mary's for 119 years. They were purchased on May 3, 1875 from the Buckeye Bell Foundry of Cincinnati, Ohio for a total cost of \$1,821.96 including installation. The bells were purchased by Father Willmes in anticipation of building a new church. Each bell cost 38¢ per pound. The largest bell, named "Holy Trinity," weighs 2,829 lbs. The second bell, named "Hail Mary," weighs 1,494. The third bell, named "St. Joseph," weighs 855 lbs.

The bells were too large for the small steeple atop the 1860 church, so a larger, two-story bell tower with louvered windows was built next to the 1860 church. When the 1882 church was built, the bells were transferred to the new belfry and have been rung from there ever since. They were electrified in 1955 through a donation by William J. Niederkorn.

It is hard to imagine the thousands of Masses and weddings that these bells have announced, or the thousands of funerals they have tolled.

BUCKEYE BELL FOUNDRY.		C. T. TIFT	
Church, Chimes, School House, Court House, Fire Alarm, Tower Clock, Fugue and Steamboat Bells.			
Cincinnati, May 3, 1875			
St. Mary's Catholic Church in Port Washington			
Brought by <b>VANUZEN &amp; TIFT,</b>			
Nos. 102 & 104 East Second Street.			
1 Bell 2829 <sup>th</sup>	c 32 <sup>¢</sup>	905.288	
Hangers for same Complete		80.00	985.28
1 Bell 1494 <sup>th</sup>	c 32 <sup>¢</sup>	478.08	
Hangers for same Complete		50.00	528.08
1 Bell 855 <sup>th</sup>	c 32 <sup>¢</sup>	273.60	
Hangers for same Complete		50.00	303.60
			\$1821.96



Large bell in St. Mary's Church, 1978  
Photo courtesy of PWHSRC





# A Last Minute Decision

Many people would agree that the crowning jewel of Port Washington is the 1882 neo-gothic St. Mary's Church looming over Franklin Street. It is one of the city's most familiar landmarks. The position of the new church at the head of Franklin Street, it is surprising to learn, was a decision made at the last minute. The first two churches that served the parish were located on the east side of Johnson Street where our school and school parking lot are now located. The original plan for the much larger 1882 church called for the structure to be built approximately on the same spot. The *Port Washington Star*, January 14, 1882 stated:

*The building of a new church by the Catholics in this place is a certainty. Father Willmes, the pastor of the congregation, informs us that the plans have been adopted and are now in the hands of competent architects for the completion of details and specifications. Work on the edifice will begin early in the spring. The new building will occupy the grounds now used, and will be a large, imposing, slightly structure, and an ornament to the town.....*



Father Henry Willmes,  
Pastor of St. Mary's,  
1870 - 1891.  
Photo courtesy of PWHSRC.

While the original plan called for the church to be built on the same site, Father Willmes, it is told, had a vision just months before construction began of a church built on the crest of the hill above Franklin Street. Father Willmes moved quickly to purchase the lots and buildings on the west side of Johnson Street now considered "St. Mary's Hill."

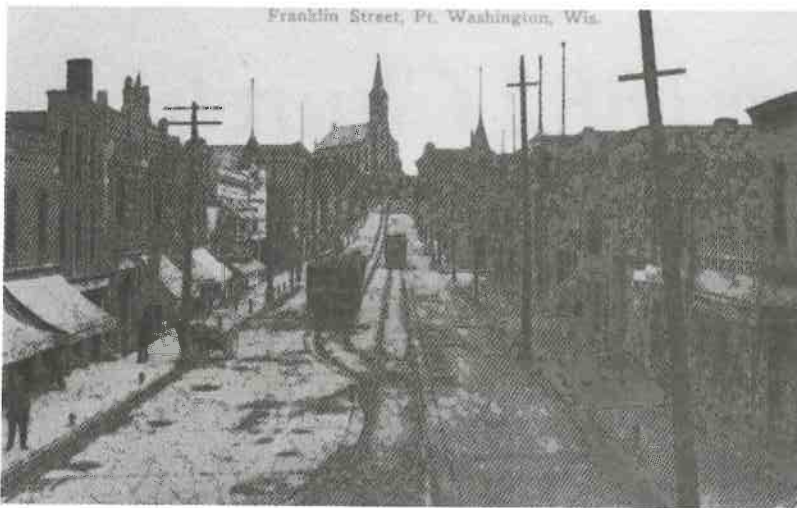
On March 1, 1882, the west half of Lot 8, and Lots 9, 10, 11 in Block Number Two of the Northeast Addition of the village of Port Washington were purchased from John and Catherine Delles for \$350 [Deeds, Vol. 32, p. 411, Ozaukee County, WI]. On the same day, Lots 14 and 15 in Block Number Two were purchased from Victoria Schaumburg for \$650 [Deeds, Vol. 32, p. 412, Ozaukee County, WI].

On March 8, 1882 the undivided half of Lots 16, 21, 22, 23, and 24 in Block Number Two were purchased from Louisa Burg, a minor, for \$200 [Deeds, Vol. 33, p. 16, Ozaukee County, WI]. The other half of these same lots were purchased from Louisa's mother, Catharine Burg on April 12, 1882 for an additional \$200 [Deeds, Vol. 33, p. 15, Ozaukee County, WI].

The final purchase which completed "St. Mary's Hill" took place on April 17, 1882 when the parish purchased Lots 12 and 13 in Block Number Two from Mathias and Margaretha Blau for \$700 [Deeds, Vol. 32, p. 467, Ozaukee County, WI].

The *Port Washington Star* reported the change of location for the new church in their March 4, 1882 edition:





*St. Mary's Church overlooking Franklin Street, 1920*

*Photo courtesy of Father Kevin Wester*

*The Catholic Church project is moving along. Recently new lots have been purchased upon which to locate the new edifice. These are situated just west of the present buildings, across the street, and if the new church is to be built on them, it will front to the south and the head of Franklin Street which is claimed to be a more sightly and pleasant situation than the present one.....*

The May 27, 1882 edition of the *Port Washington Star* reported:

*The buildings on the property recently purchased by the site of the new Catholic Church were torn down Wednesday to make room for the new structure.*

Construction of the church began shortly thereafter in early July of 1882. One can only imagine the difference in the Port Washington landscape had that last minute decision not been made.

The lots that comprise "St. Mary's Hill" were originally purchased for the parish by Bishop Michael Heiss, the second bishop of Milwaukee. On February 5, 1885, Bishop Heiss conveyed ownership of St. Mary's Hill and the lots on the east side of Johnston Street to St. Mary's Congregation for \$6,000 [Deeds, Vol. 35, p. 42, Ozaukee County, WI].



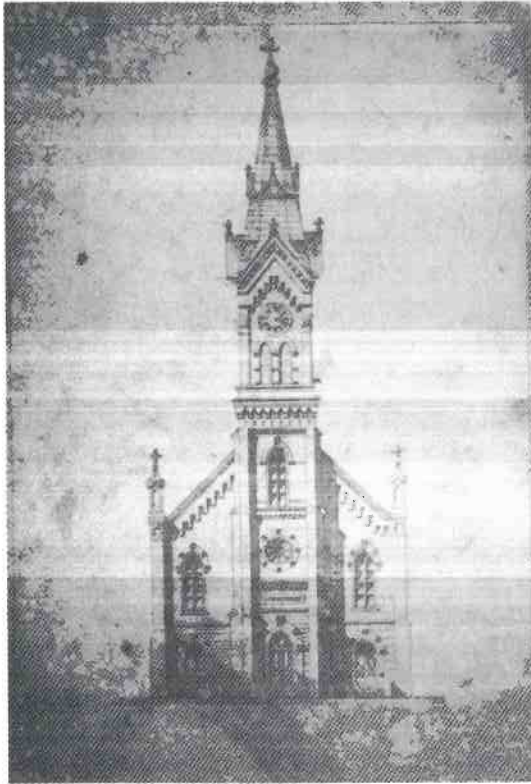
*View from St. Mary's Hill looking south across Franklin Street, 1930*

*Photo courtesy of Father Kevin Wester*



# Building the 1882 Church

While those of us living in today's world have grown accustomed to seeing the erection of high-rise condominiums and towering skyscrapers, image the incredible feat of building the glorious, 168-foot tall church in 1882. Tidbits of this fascinating history lie hidden in one of the local newspapers of that era, the *Port Washington Star*:



*Sketch of proposed St. Mary's Church  
—1882—*

*Photo courtesy of PWHSRC*

**February 11, 1882**

*Next Wednesday bids for building the new Catholic Church will be opened. Stone for the foundation walls of the new Catholic Church are being delivered on the grounds.*

**April 1, 1882**

*Architect Messmer, of Milwaukee, has completed the plans for the new Catholic Church in this city, the estimated cost being \$34,000.*

**July 29, 1882**

*Work on the new Catholic Church is progressing rapidly. Last Sunday evening the fire engine was obtained and water pumped up to the church for the mason's use.*

**August 19, 1882**

*The men at work on the foundation of the Catholic Church struck for higher wages.*

**September 9, 1882**

*The cornerstone of the new Catholic Church has arrived and will be laid with appropriate ceremonies in about a month.*

**December 2, 1882**

*We are requested by Father Willmes to state that work on the new church is closed for the winter and will be resumed in the spring.*

**April 21, 1883**

*Workmen are busy hauling stone and other material to be used for the new Catholic Church.*



**May 19, 1883**

*The substantial walls of the Catholic Church are going up apace. The stone used is first class and so is the mason work.*

**June 23, 1883**

*Thursday quite a quantity of dressed Joliet stone for the new Catholic Church was received by rail and hauled to the grounds.*

**October 13, 1883**

*The walls of the new Catholic Church are nearly completed.*

**December 8, 1883**

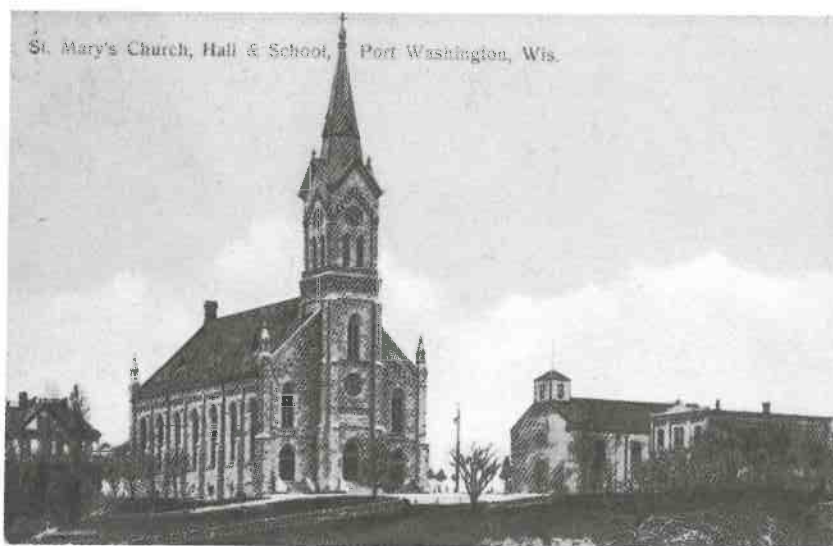
*Three masons, employed on the new Catholic Church, while engaged in placing a cope-stone on the wall of the structure, were severely shaken and one of them slightly injured by the giving way of the scaffolding on which they were standing precipitating them to a lower scaffolding some ten feet below. If the way had been clear we would be called upon to chronicle an accident terrible in its results as every one would have been killed outright. The one injured will be confined to the house for a short time.*

**July 19, 1884**

*Carpenters will again begin work next week on the tower of the new Catholic Church. They will also finish the interior of the building.*

**September 20, 1884**

*The new Catholic Church in this city will be dedicated on the ninth of October. A mason employed about the Catholic Church sustained a compound fracture of his left arm last week by the breaking of a scaffold. He fell 14 feet. A painter engaged in the interior decorations of the new Catholic Church was severely bruised about the head and shoulders, Monday, by falling from a 16 foot scaffold upon which he was working. The timber falling upon him did most of the injury. He has been unable to work this week.*



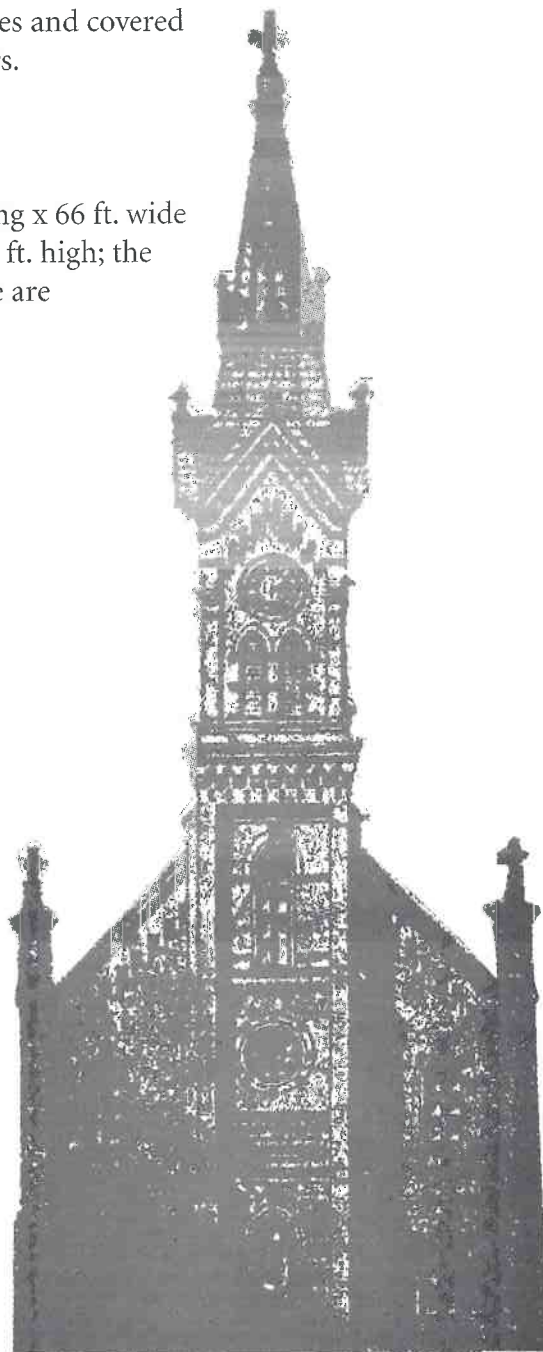
*The 1882 St. Mary's Church - circa 1908  
L-R: Second rectory, church, 1860 church converted to hall, first school.  
Photo courtesy of Father Kevin Wester*





Other interesting facts about our 1882 church:

- All the limestone used in the construction was quarried from Druecker's Stone Quarry, located 3.2 miles north of Port Washington.
- Stone was hauled to the construction site by mules, horses, and oxen on carts, farm wagons and planks. Father Willmes was even known to man a mule team.
- The church pews, made of solid oak, were built by Barth Bros Manufacturing of Port Washington.
- The church pillars were hewn from native pine trees and covered with four, bevel-edged boards with molded corners.
- Total cost of the 1882 church - \$70,000.
- The dimensions of the 1882 church are: 160 ft. long x 66 ft. wide equaling 10,560 square ft.; the church proper is 48 ft. high; the sanctuary 40 ft. high and the sacristy and vestibule are 12 ft. in height.





# *How Lovely is Your Dwelling Place*

St. Mary's Congregation can take great pride in its 1882 church building as it is one of the most beautiful houses of worship in the state of Wisconsin. Visitors to our community are drawn to its gothic splendor as it crowns Port Washington atop St. Mary's Hill. The outside splendor of our church is perfectly matched by the splendor found within.

The earliest description of the 1882 church comes from the *Port Washington Star*, October 11, 1884 in an article describing the dedication of the building:

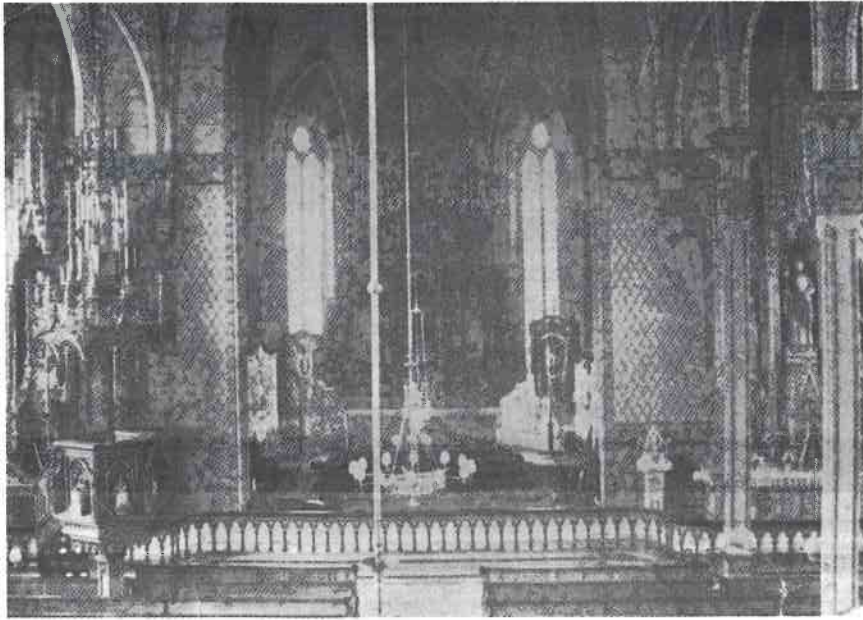
*The dedication of the new magnificent Catholic Church in this place occurred Thursday as previously announced. At 10 o'clock a.m. the Most Reverend Archbishop Michael Heiss, dressed in pontificals, assisted by deacon and subdeacon, headed by the clergy in cassock and surplices, proceeded from the parsonage, the St. Francis Benovolent Society filing on either side and accompanying them to the main door of the new building. The ceremonies commenced by the chanting of a prayer by the Most Rev. Archbishop, the Fiftieth Psalm being intoned by the clergy. They moved in procession around the church, the Archbishop blessing the exterior walls. Entering the main entrance they chanted the Litany of the Saints, which being completed, the interior of the church was also blessed while psalms were sung.*

*Anxiously the faithful and numerous friends were awaiting the moment to enter, as during the blessing entrance was not granted. Permission given the spacious interior was soon filled. Impressions made on all are, of course, beyond description for the individual, but we might venture to say in general it was that of an agreeable and grand surprise. Be it that the eye rested upon the lofty gothic arches ornamented in the most attractive colors and frescoping, or on the fields enclosed, where the pictures of the twelve apostles resting upon the clouds seem to speak to the beholder. Be it that the eyes traveled the entire length of the edifice to the well proportioned sanctuary, beautifully frescoed, with an azure (regal blue) ceiling sparkling with golden stars, until at last rested on the new high and grand altar. This artistic work, with the sacred hearts of Jesus and Mary on either side of the tabernacle, surely enraptured the attention of many.....*

Today, as we open the doors of St. Mary's and enter God's house, our eyes and hearts continue to be enraptured by the gothic arches, the majestic altars, the symmetrical pillars, the brilliant stained glass and the dramatic stations of the cross.

The church interior was redecorated in 1908 and again in the late 1920s. It was thoroughly cleaned in 1934 for the 50th anniversary of the dedication. Subsequent redecorations





*Original interior of St. Mary's Church. Note the first high altar in sanctuary. The current altar was installed in 1912. Photo taken in 1890s.*

*Photo courtesy of PWHSRC*

took place in 1956 and 1978. Today, despite the multiple redecorations, much of what is seen in the church interior is unchanged.

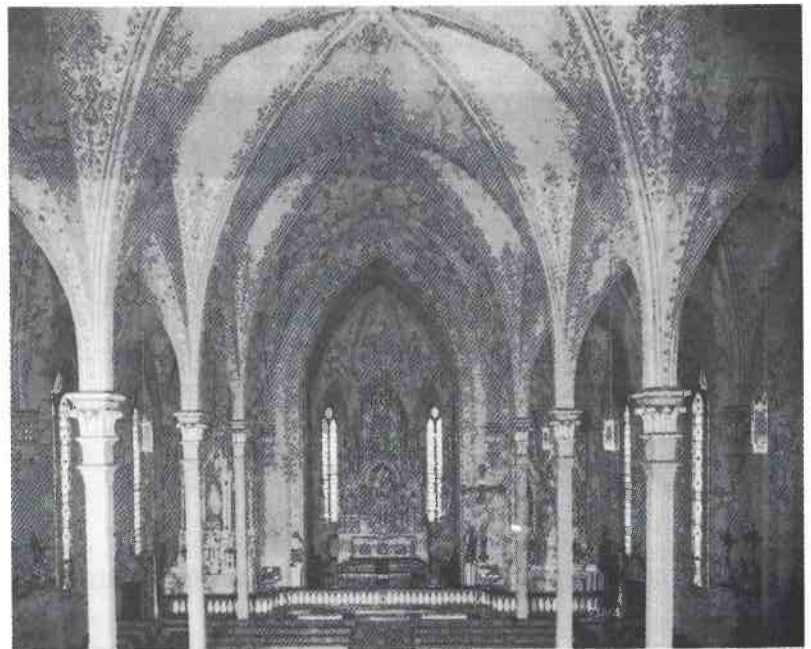
The church masterpiece, the high altar depicting Murillo's Assumption of Mary

with 25 angels in statuary, however, is not the original high altar of the church. Old photographs show an original high altar that was shorter in height, simpler in ornamentation, and more square in design. Statues of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary were enshrined in niches in the first altar.

The current high altar was added to the church in 1912, further enhancing the beauty of the interior. Three beautiful wood carvings are located at the base of the altar. These carvings have Eucharistic overtones and depict the bread and wine offered by the Old Testament priest Melchizedek, the Last Supper, and the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham. The altar was built by the E. Hackner and Son Co. of LaCrosse. The first couple married in front of the new high altar was Edward Schuknecht and Kate Blong on June 23, 1912.

Old photographs reveal that the side altars are in fact original to the 1882 church. Yet worthy of note is the fact that these massive side altars were switched from either side at one point of history. This major undertaking was done to appease benefactors because the altars were mistakenly placed on the wrong sides of the church when they were installed.

The beautiful brass sanctuary lamp was procured by Father Willmes and is an original artifact from the church. The lamp features the figures of the 12 apostles in silver and has burned to signify our Lord's Eucharistic presence in our church for 119 years. It is a treasured parish heirloom.



*Interior of the 1882 church in 1953, the year of St. Mary's Centennial.*

*Photo courtesy of PWHSRC*





*Mary's Assumption into Heaven in the 1912 high altar.  
Based on Murillo's painting of the Assumption.*

*Photo courtesy of Terry Wester*



On the upper walls of the sanctuary are four paintings on canvas depicting the Marian scenes of the Annunciation, the Nativity, the Presentation in the Temple, and the Flight into Egypt. While the origin of these paintings is unknown, they used to hang in large wooden frames on the walls of the sanctuary. During a repainting of the church they were removed from the frames and mounted on the wall of the sanctuary. Though simple in style they beautifully portray some of the joyful mysteries in the life of Jesus and Mary.

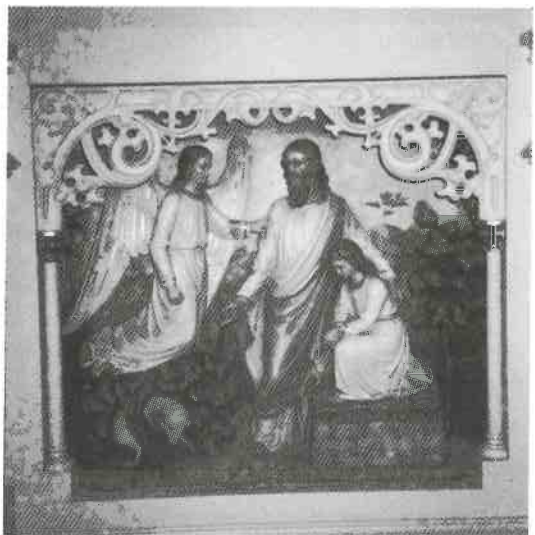
A walk-up pulpit flanked the front west pillar of the church interior for many years. It was removed in late 1930s. Pieces of this walk-up pulpit were stored in the earthen basement of church for many years. In the 1978 redecorating, parts of this pulpit were used to create the baptismal font and pulpits that are currently in use.

Old photographs show massive chandeliers suspended from the ceiling illuminating the church. These chandeliers were removed in September 1945. At that time, period-style lanterns were installed in the arches between the side pillars by Frank Prochaska.

The windows of the church were donated by various parish members and church societies in 1882. Originally, the names of these benefactors appeared on the bottom of each window as a remembrance of their generosity. Unfortunately, these names were removed during a renovation of the windows in the 1980s and replaced with the names of the renovation benefactors. As part of the 150th anniversary celebration this year, small brass plaques bearing the name of the original donor will be placed near each window. While the windows of St. Mary's have simple patterns, their brilliant

colors and symbolic medallions at the top of each window are an added elegance to the church interior.

The stations of the cross have assisted many a soul in reflecting on the life-giving passion and death of Jesus. The stations now present in the church were added in 1926 to replace framed oil paintings that perhaps dated back to the 1860 church. The fate of the oil-painted stations is unknown. The new stations of the cross were blessed with



*Relief of the Sacrifice of Isaac in the lower part of the high altar.*

*Photo courtesy of Terry Wester*



*Statue of St. Henry on the St. Joseph side altar. This statue was donated by Father Henry Willmes.*

*Photo courtesy of Terry Wester*



much pomp by Msgr. Bernard Traudt, the Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, on Sunday, November 27, 1926.

A large crucifix mounted in the church's center vestibule has a special place in St. Mary's heritage. The parish has had a long history of missions conducted during the Lenten season as a spiritual renewal. This crucifix is considered a mission cross. For many years it was located in the front of the church on the wall between the sanctuary and the St. Joseph side altar. The dates of parish missions preached over the years were inscribed on the bottom portion of the cross. Sadly, this portion of the cross was removed when the cross was moved to the church vestibule. Despite this change, the cross still speaks of the spiritual renewal achieved throughout many years of parish missions.

The church doors at St. Mary's have suffered the ravages of weather and wear and tear over the years. The original doors were replaced in 1931 and again in 1990 under the pastorate of Father Steve Amann. The new doors, made of glass and bronze, were designed by artist Roger Hornsby and cast in Pennsylvania. They depict a number of images relevant to St. Mary's. From west to east the images on the doors depict: Wisconsin (map with miner, lumberjack, religious, and a family), Our Lady of the Seas, Mary Consoler of the Afflicted – Patroness of Luxembourg, Our Lady of the Assumption – Patroness of the parish, Our Lady of Guadalupe – Patroness of the Americas, and the Landing of Christopher Columbus.

For 121 years both the exterior and interior of the 1882 church have been admired as outstanding examples of neo-gothic architecture. St. Mary's Church was added to the National Register of Historic Places by the United States Department of the Interior on December 12, 1977. It is an architectural treasure not only for St. Mary's parish but for the city, the state, and the entire nation.



*The main doors of St. Mary's Church installed in 1990. Left- Our Lady of Luxembourg, right- Our Lady of the Assumption.*

*Photo courtesy of Terry Wester*



# *When In Our Music God Is Glorified*

St. Mary's Parish has a rich tradition of music beginning with its first organist, Adolph Heidkamp, and extending to more contemporary music directors, Barney Inkman, Charles Morauski, Harold Ewig, Ann Celeen Dohms and current music director Drew Rutz. The parish has a reputation for strong congregational singing, competent cantors, refined choirs and virtuoso organists. Today choral music is provided by the Adult Choir, the Boys' Choir and the Girls' Choir.

The inspiring sound of a pipe organ has enhanced liturgical celebrations at St. Mary's for over 125 years. The parish purchased its first pipe organ in 1876 during the pastorate of Father Willmes. According to an article from the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, May 1, 1876:

*Odenbrett & Brooks have built an organ for St. Mary's Church,  
Port Washington.*

Shortly thereafter, this first pipe organ was installed in the 1860 St. Mary's Church. A dedication concert was held on July 22, 1876 with Professor William A. Ehlman of Milwaukee as recitalist. Ehlman was director of the Milwaukee College of Music and the superintendent of music for Milwaukee Public Schools. The *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 1, 1876 reports:

*The concert given here [Port Washington] on the 22nd of last month by Prof. W. A. Ehlman, of your city [Milwaukee], was a grand success socially and financially. The thanks of the whole county are due to Professor and his assistants for their efforts for so worthy a cause.*

The organ was moved from the 1860 church into the present St. Mary's Church and was rededicated with the church in October 1884. This organ served the parish for 48 years until another pipe organ was purchased by the parish in 1924. A newspaper article from the *Port Washington Herald*, November 19, 1924 stated:

## *St. Mary's Buys Organ*

*A new organ is now in the course of construction and installation in St. Mary's church in this city. The cost of the new instrument complete is \$8,200. It is expected that the new organ will have been installed by the end of this month, according to Rev. Father Peter Holfeltz.*

*The organ is a two-manual and pedal instrument with electro-pneumatic action with a separate console. It is the product of the Weickhardt & Schaefer Organ Company of Milwaukee.*





An advertisement for the Schaefer Organ Company featuring St. Mary's 1924 pipe organ.

Photo courtesy of Father Kevin Wester

*The old instrument which had already been dismantled had been in constant use since its dedication in October, 1884. At that time it had already been in use in the older church edifice according to Rev. Father Holfeltz, so that it had given probably half a century of service. The new instrument which is very considerably larger entirely meets the demands placed upon it and in addition will also eliminate the incessant repairs made necessary during the past few years on the old instrument.*

*The congregation of St. Mary's and Rev. Father Holfeltz are to be congratulated upon the purchase of so fine an instrument at this time.*

Newspaper reports also chronicle the dedication concert for the organ held on Sunday, December 21, 1924. The concert featured St. Mary's choir and Professor John Leicht, organist at Gesu Church in Milwaukee. According to the *Port Washington Herald*, December 24, 1924:

#### *Concert Draws Large Crowd*

*The sacred concert given by the choir of St. Mary's church in connection with the dedication of the new organ recently installed by that congregation drew a capacity crowd on last Sunday afternoon. The program was the subject of much favorable comment by those who attended. The offering taken in lieu of an admission charge netted a sum of nearly \$400, according to report.*

*One of the features of the concert was the fact that all those who participated were or had at one time been residents of Port Washington, ample proof that this city is not lacking in musical talent when occasion for its utilization arises.*

*The dedication address was given by Monsignor Thill, of Sheboygan. Special organ numbers were given by Prof. Leicht, of Milwaukee, Miss Henrietta Niesen, church organist, played the accompaniments for the vocal numbers.*

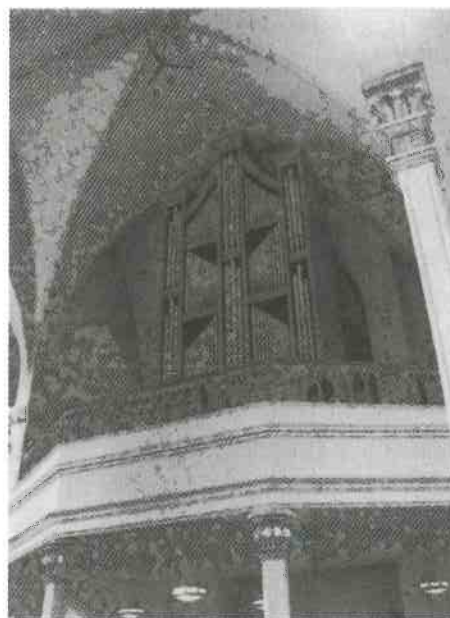
*.....Vocal Selections: Miss Lauters, soprano; Mr. Sturm, tenor, and Mr. Olinger, baritone.....*

Over the years, the second pipe organ provided beautiful music for the liturgy at St. Mary's. The instrument was tuned and maintained by Bernard Schaefer of Slinger, a son of the original builder of the organ. In recent years, the repairs to the 1924 organ became challenging due to its advancing age, deteriorated condition, and outdated electronics. In addition, the organ was designed for an earlier liturgy and rebuilding the instrument was impractical in light of the many changes in



*The new Berghaus pipe organ in the balcony of St. Mary's.*

*Photo courtesy of Patrick Jentges*



music ministry since Vatican II.

Replacement of the seriously failing organ became the focus of parishioner Ann Celeen Dohms who had served the parish for 27 years as organist, choir director and music educator, and Drew Rutz, the current music director. An Organ Committee was formed in 1999 to begin a search for the best instrument. In light of the outstanding musical tradition of the parish and the prominence of St. Mary's church as the "crowning jewel" of Port Washington, an organ would be sought which would not only serve parish needs, but would also be a true asset to the entire community as a concert-quality instrument.

The Organ Committee organized short "listening" expeditions to hear music produced by other pipe organs in our area. After thoughtful analysis and consideration, the Berghaus Organ Company of Bellwood, Illinois was selected to build the new pipe organ for St. Mary's church. The master plan called for a 30-stop, 39-rank, concert-level pipe organ which would cost \$560,000 including \$50,000 needed for modification and reinforcement of the church balcony.

A capital campaign to raise funds for the new pipe organ began in earnest in 2000. Phase I would include installation of a 17-stop, 20-rank Berghaus pipe organ in time to commemorate the 150th anniversary celebration of the parish in 2003. Completion of Phase I would adequately serve the musical needs of the parish and provide the added space needed for Phase II additions.

To date [April 2003], a total of \$357,860 has been pledged to Phase I thanks to the generosity of 431 parishioners and friends of the parish. An amazing 89.4% of the pledged amount or \$316,318 has already been received in cash. An additional \$30,387 is still needed to complete Phase I with its goal of approximately \$400,000. Fundraising efforts for Phase II will commence as the 150th anniversary year unfolds. Upon the completion of Phase II, the organ will be an instrument of exceptional concert quality to be enjoyed by the entire community.

In September 2002, the 1924 pipe organ was dismantled and removed and the carpentry work began to reconstruct and reinforce the church balcony. With the old organ removed there was no organ music for Christmas Masses in 2002.

On February 27, 2003 the mechanics, casing and some of the largest pipes for the new Berghaus organ arrived in Port Washington. Installation of the organ in the reinforced balcony began immediately. Additional pipes arrived in early March and by late March the organ received an initial voicing.

The first public introduction of the new organ took place on April 17 with the celebration of the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday. Following Holy Week and Easter, the additional ranks of mixture pipes were added and a second phase of voicing and adjustment of the action took place.

A year-long series of dedication concerts will begin during the 150th anniversary year. A dedicatory recital has been scheduled on Sunday, August 10, 2003 at 3:00 p.m. The featured recitalist will be Alan Hommerding, a Port Washington native and a son of St. Mary's Parish. Alan is a nation-





ally renowned organist and composer and currently serves as the senior editor of World Library Publications in Schiller Park (Chicago), Illinois. Alan's training in classical organ started here at St. Mary's Church on the 1924 organ.

The new pipe organ is a "dream come true" for parish music director, Drew Rutz. Drew came to St. Mary's in 1995 after serving parishes in Illinois, Oklahoma, and Washington. His extensive formal education in music includes a Masters of music and liturgy from the University of Notre Dame in 1979. He achieved the status of an American Guild of Organists' Associate in 1990, received a Choir Master Certificate in 1992, and a Fellowship in 2000.

Drew plays for all weekday, Sunday, and holyday Masses. He plans the music for all of St. Mary's liturgical celebrations and rehearses extensively with volunteer musicians. Drew serves as director of the various choirs at St. Mary's including the Adult Choir, Boys' Choir, Girls' Choir, the Training Choir and the campus Liturgical Choir for Port Catholic School. He has expanded the variety of music, both instrumental and vocal, offered at St. Mary's. He works with a brass ensemble, a fledgling string ensemble, and leads a madrigal group known as "Her Lady's Singers."



*Ann Celeen Dohms at the 1924 pipe organ with St. Mary's Adult Choir.  
Circa 1980s.*

*Photo courtesy of Terry Wester*



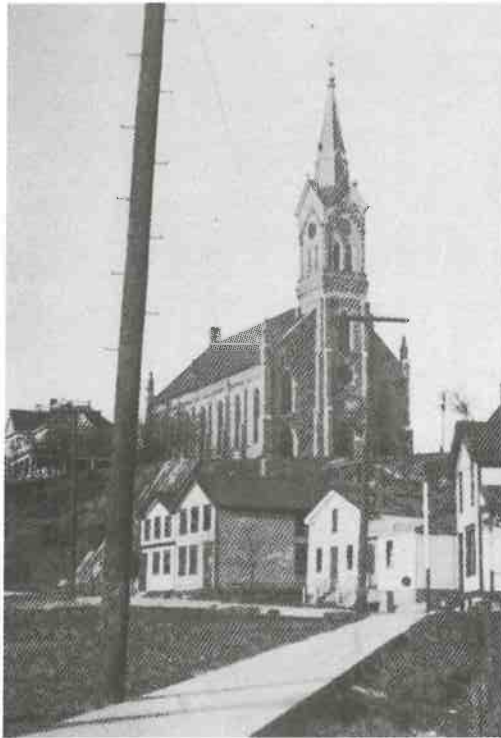


# *Piercing the Heavens*

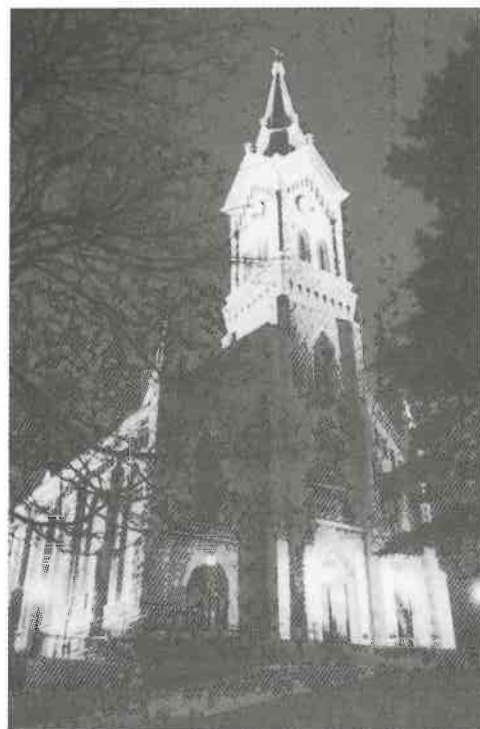
The stately steeple of St. Mary's Church can be seen from miles away. Until the Wisconsin Electric Power Company built the power plant smoke stacks, the steeple was known to be the highest point in Ozaukee County. By land or by sea the steeple of St. Mary's beckons people on their way to Port Washington.

The steeple houses the four-sided clock, the three bells and the mechanics which operate both. It is crowned with a large, round stainless steel ornament and cross. The ornament and stainless steel cross were placed atop the steeple in November, 1964. The round ornament weighs 250 pounds and the cross measures seven feet, eight inches tall.

The translucent clock face has been visible at night since 1958 yet the steeple itself was hidden in darkness until the night of July 25, 1989. On that date, the massive steeple of St. Mary's was lit for the first time, a beacon piercing through the night. Over 100 parishioners and parish priests, Father Steve Amann and Father Tom Biersack, gathered that night with Gerhard and Marcella Husting who donated \$3,700 to make the lighting project possible. The Hustings, who threw the first switch on the lights, were presented with a large pillar candle from which smaller candles were lit by all those present. The evening of prayer and song truly brought to life the scripture (Matthew 4:13-16): "A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.....let your light shine before all."



*St. Mary's steeple piercing the heavens, circa 1910.  
Photo courtesy of PWHSRC*



*The steeple and facade of St. Mary's lighted on July 25, 1989.  
Photo courtesy of PWHSRC*



# *Stairway to St. Mary's*

Images of our current landmark church seem incomplete if they are missing the famous stairway that leads residents and tourists to St. Mary's Church. Often newcomers to Port Washington make the trek up the 85 steps only to discover that there is in fact public access and a parking lot atop St. Mary's hill.

The first stairway leading to St. Mary's Heights originally rose to the top of the hill at a different angle. An early photograph of the 1860 church depicts a crude wooden stairway ascending the church hill straight east toward the church and first school/convent building.

With the relocation of the 1882 church across the street and above Franklin Street, the old stairway eventually became less practical. When the 1911 convent was built, the congregation had a cement stairway built leading directly to the church. This stairway was constructed by Joe Ubbink, a general contractor from Port Washington and a member of the parish. A close look at the 6th and 44th steps reveals two copper plaques which read "Joe Ubbink, General Contractor, Port Washington."

While the stairway leading to St. Mary's has been repaired and renovated over the past 92 years, it continues to be a point of intrigue for tourists and a reminder for everyone of the stairway of faith that leads to heaven.



*The newly completed cement stairway to St. Mary's - 1911*

*Photo courtesy of Father Kevin Wester*



# Shepherding The Flock

## *Pastors of St. Mary's Parish*

Father Franz Xavier "F. X." Sailer	1853 – 1856
Father John Weikmann	1856 – 1859
Father Francis Fussedler	1859 – 1862
Father F. X. Sailer	1862 – 1867
Father August Durst	1867 – 1870
Father F. X. Etschmann	1870
Father Henry Willmes	1870 – 1891
Father Bernard Elskamp	1891 – 1898
Father Charles Grobschmit	1898 – 1910
Father John Kessler	1910 – 1913
Msgr. Peter Holfeltz	1913 – 1938
Father Joseph Dreis	1938 – 1939
Msgr. Peter Hildebrand	1939 – 1962
Father Edgar Braun	1962 – 1967
Father Frederick Schmidt	1967 – 1968
Father Rolland Glass	1968 – 1987
Father Steve Amann	1987 – 1995
Father Allan Sommer	1995 – present



# *Assistant/Associate Pastors of St. Mary's*

Father Alois Kraus	1912 –
Father Michael Stier	1912 – 1914
Father John Rechl	1914 – 1918
Father Peter Hildebrand	1918 – 1924
Father Oswald Ullrich	1924 – 1925
Father Joseph Michels	1925 – 1928
Father Raynor Hausmann	1928 – 1936
Father Joseph Dreis	1936 – 1939
Father Joseph Beres	1937 – 1939
Father Joseph Schliesmann	1940 –
Father Cyril Livingston	1941 – 1948
Father Francis Bier	1941 – 1945
Father Anthony Gundrum	1945 – 1957
Father John Basteyns	1948 – 1954
Father Frederick Schramm	1954 – 1961
Father Charles Scheuerell	1957 – 1962
Father Charles Loehr	1961 – 1963
Father Ralph Robers	1962 – 1967
Father Jerome Repenshek	1963 – 1965
Father John Lutz	1964 – 1965
Father Stanley Klauck	1965 – 1966
Father Norman Frederick	1965 – 1967
Father Roger A. Boesch	1967 – 1971
Father Richard L. Grebasch	1971 – 1972
Father Siegfried T. Widera	1972 – 1973
Father Robert J. Lotz	1973 – 1977
Father Dennis Van Beek	1977 – 1982
Father Dan Lasecki	1982 – 1983
Father Anthony McCarthy	1983 – 1987
Father John Wagner	1987
Father Tom Biersack	1987 – 1993
Father Thomas Mlodzik	1993





# *Priest Sons of St. Mary's*

	ORDAINED
Father T. M. Hogan	1879
Father Henry T. Stemper	1884
Father John Kessler	1886
Father Peter Reiman, O.F.M.	1887
Msgr. George Meyer	1898
Father James Sampon	1910
Msgr. William Kubelbeck	1910
Father Francis Sampon	1912
Msgr. Henry Riordan	1918
Father George Jentges	1927
Father Bernard Burke, O.F.M. Cap.	1927
Father Casper Yost, O.S.M.	1927
Father Lyle Davis, S.J.	1930
Father Alois Klas	1933
Father Robert Hoeller	1933
Father Elmer Bares	1943
Father Harry Lauters	1945
Father Jerome Watry	1946
Father Alfred Schmit, S.D.S.	1946
Father Wilbert Lanser, O.F.M. Cap.	1959
Father William Pauly, S.J.	1979
Father Kevin Wester	1990

Brother Conrad (Wilfred) Federspiel, C. P. (Passionist) professed 1952

Thomas Neitzke, S. J. Professed 2001, currently studying at Loyola University in Chicago. In formation for priesthood as a Jesuit.



# Daughters of St. Mary's Parish

NAME	YEAR OF ENTRANCE	RELIGIOUS NAME
SCHOOL SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME		
Mary Reiman	1872	Sister M. Paredis
Mary Arendt	1873	Sister M. Ferreola
Barbara Replinger	1873	Sister M. Christa
Mary Niederkorn	1876	Sister M. Julitta
Mary Stemper	1876	Sister Henrica
Catherine Fuerst	1876	Sister Amica
Anna Replinger	1877	Sister Lucilda
Catherine Cloos	1877	Sister Rosamunda
Susan Koedinger	1879	Sister Vitalis
Elise Replinger	1881	Sister Cosma
Mary Puetz	1882	Sister Petra
Theresa Kuebelbeck	1890	Sister Nathaline
Kathryn Martin	1911	Sister Nicoline
Christine Mondloch	1919	Sister Aegidia
Clara Hoffmann	1930	Sister Christine
Elvira Greiveldinger	1931	Sister Vera
Mary Jane Begusch	1942	Sister Benet
Diane Dickmann	1962	Sister Jean Andrew
Martha Jean Solms	1974	Sister Martha Jean
ORDER OF ST. FRANCIS		
Dorothy Roob	1941	Sister Francis de Sales



# *Priest of Many Talents*

Father F. X. Sailer, founding pastor of St. Mary's, was a priest of many talents. He was a faithful pastor, a zealous missionary, an eloquent poet, and a lover of history and music. Yet another one of his many talents lies hidden in the original sacramental registers of St. Mary's, now locked away in the parish vault.

These treasured books contain not only the names and the dates of sacraments celebrated by pioneer families of our parish, but they also are adorned with beautiful artwork which flowed from the hand of Father Sailer. Each of the title pages from the baptism, marriage and death registers are decorated with watercolor pictures created by Father Sailer.

While none of these watercolors could be classified as a Michelangelo or a Raphael, the simplicity and symbolism reflected in these images speak of a holy priest profoundly in touch with his God.

Similar watercolor images can be found in the sacramental registers of St. Mary's Parish in nearby Lake Church, Wisconsin which also benefited from Father Sailer's pastoral care for many years. These works of art, now 150 years old, remain a visible reminder of the talented priest who founded St. Mary's.

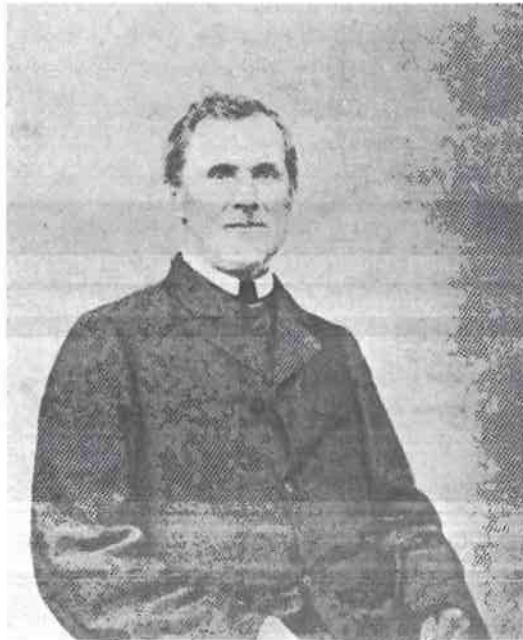


*Sketches by Father Sailer in St. Mary's sacramental registers. Top left to bottom right: Title Page, Marriage Register, Baptismal Register, Death Register.*

*Photos courtesy of Terry Wester*



# Miracle At St. Mary's



Father Fabian Bermadinger  
Photo courtesy of PWHSRC

A story once treasured by St. Mary's parishioners, but now lost by the passage of time, is the story of a miracle involving Father Sailer and his good friend Father Fabian Bermadinger.

Father Bermadinger was a Caphucin priest who had emigrated to the United States in 1847. He came to the diocese of Milwaukee and was appointed assistant to the famous missionary priest Father Caspar Rehr. During this time, Father Bermadinger became involved with a number of newly organized parishes in Ozaukee County, especially St. Mary's Church, Lake Church. He and Father Sailer became very close personal friends as they worked to build up the presence of the Catholic Church in Ozaukee County. Father Bermadinger served in Ozaukee County until 1866 when he was appointed as chaplain for the Dominican Sisters in Racine.

The miracle surrounding the death of Father Bermadinger is best described in a book about the history of the Racine Dominicans entitled *Life and*

*Work of Mother Benedicta Bauer* by Sr. Mary Hortense Kohler, Bruce Publishing Co., Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1937, pp. 281-4:

.....Although in 1866 he [Father Bermadinger] was broken down in health and a victim of tuberculosis, he won the love and grateful remembrance of the Sisters. His mere presence was a benediction, so filled was he with the charity of God and kindness of a man of God. Dignified in appearance, meticulous in dress, and precise in action, he won the admiration of all by his charming personality.....

Death, though not altogether unexpected, came suddenly to this great man. During the month of July [1867] the Reverend F. X. Sailer, an intimate friend of Father Fabian's, visited the convent. Alarmed at his failing health, Father Sailer insisted that Father Fabian come to Port Washington for a vacation. The two familiar friends departed anticipating a pleasant renewal of friendship. The rest of the story is best told by Father Sailer who in a letter written to the Sisters shortly after Father Fabian's death describes the circumstances in a most touching manner.

*The dear spiritual Father of your house and of the Sisters is no more. On the twenty-second at 11:15 the holy man of God completed his earthly career by a gentle and saintly death.*

*Dear Sisters: Today, finally, I find leisure to inform you of the death of*



*Father Fabian, and I believe that the mournful message will sadden your hearts as much as it has saddened mine—I who have lost in Father Fabian, my only and truest friend.*

*With my assistance and with much weariness and effort on his part, the dear Father arrived in Port Washington on the evening of the nineteenth. He said Mass on Saturday and on Sunday. He felt fairly well till Monday when a terrible coughing and expectoration began to torment him. I sent for Dr. Scholl. Dr. Hartwig also came from a distance of fifteen miles. Both consoled him and said they thought he would improve, while they informed me that his end was near.*

*Monday afternoon he threw his arms around me and said, “Father Sailer, I have come here to you to die.” I tried to console him, but he knew only too well how close death was. At seven in the evening I conducted devotions to the Blessed Virgin for him. The devotions were attended by many people who wept and prayed.*

*After devotions the coughing stopped; the pain in his chest also subsided. He even received a few callers, which I as a rule refused. Several times that evening he drank milk of almonds, and it refreshed him. And so we spent the evening. Part of the time he was in bed, and part of the time we walked up and down the room, praying all the time. At ten-thirty I gave him general absolution and administered Extreme Unction. Then we sat side by side, his arm about my shoulder, while I supported him with my right arm. Mariana (the parish housekeeper) wiped the perspiration from his brow. Two theologians prayed with us. At eleven-fifteen the dear Father asked me to lower him. After five minutes a beam of light passed over his face, and the good Father was in heaven.*

*For the next half hour his eyes beamed, his face was transfigured so that I thought that by breathing into his face, kissing him, and calling to him I could bring him back to life. I sent for the doctor immediately: the dear Father had passed away.*

*Excuse me for not describing my grief. But the joy that the saintly priest would die in my home gave me so much strength that from the nineteenth to the twenty-fifth; namely six days and six nights, I remained at his side without any rest. On Tuesday morning at seven o’clock, Dr. Scholl at my request opened the body and “Great God, it is a miracle,” exclaimed the doctor.*

Sadly, the rest of the letter was lost and the Dominican Sisters can only speculate about the “miracle.” In sharing this story with the late Anna and Viola Ubbink of Port Washington in the 1980s, they remembered hearing stories as youngsters about the “miracle at St. Mary’s” involving Father Bermadinger. They were told that when an autopsy was performed on Father Bermadinger, his inner body glowed with a blinding light and that his organs appeared perfect, even though he had been seriously ill with tuberculosis. This seems to be the story behind the “miracle.”

There is a reference in a poem written by Father Sailer regarding a six day vigil at the side of Father Bermadinger’s body while it lay in state in St. Mary’s 1860 church. The extended period of time would have allowed the numerous people of the diocese whom had benefited from Father Bermadinger’s ministry, to travel to Port Washington to pay their last respects.

The poem written by Father Sailer is entitled *A Memorial Poem Written by F. X. Sailer In Honor Of His Long-Time Friend, Father Fabian Bermadinger, O.M.C.* The poem, translated from German, reads as follows:





Alb

*I close the loving eyes of my friend that he may rest in sweet and gentle sleep. I place my Master's image [a crucifix] in his folded hands; because it was his treasure, it must rest near his heart. In death he is still an inspiration as he lies four days before the altar.*

*I robe his body in an alb of white which has meaning in the heavenly land. Since his heart was pure and clean, like new-fallen snow and the rays of the evening star, this garment becomes him.*

*I fasten the cincture around his waist to prepare him for his heavenly journey. His body has been anointed to strengthen him on his way to his Maker.*

*Upon his arm is the maniple, but he no longer needs a square of linen to wipe his face or to dry his tears. It is only a symbol that in sweat and tears he has done his duty which the Lord has set before him.*

*I clothe him with the priest's stole and chasuble of white, and in this honor dress he lies in God's house. With true devotion he offered the Holy Sacrifice at the altar of God, and with deepest reverence sent the smoke of incense upward to his God.*

*Candles on either side illuminate his bier because this holy one always placed his faith in the Light of the World. For him the dark cell is illuminated by the light of heaven, and now he drinks deeply of its glory.*

*See before the bier the chalice which he lifted with prayerful hands as though he stood beside the cross. Struggling in his Garden of Olives, burdened by heavy sorrow, he also emptied the chalice in Ozaukee's Gethsemane.*

*I weep much over his body in the coffin, but I find consolation despite his death, because in his holy grave he will have no more worries or suffering.*

*Therefore there is joy in the tolling bells, the incense and the atmosphere of death. The bells ring joyously as at Easter time at the burial of this pious priest.*

*And so rests the dear Father in God's Ozaukee view, so that he may see and count his assembled sheep. May he on the day when all awaken see them surrounding him, the shepherd and his flock before God's throne.*



Cincture



Maniple



Chasuble



Stole

Father Bermadinger was buried in old St. Mary's Cemetery in Port Washington.

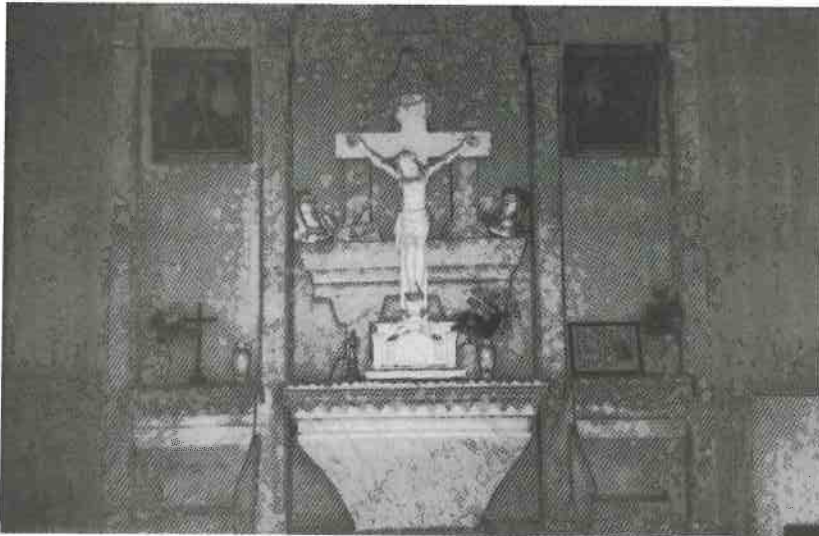
Shortly thereafter, on October 30, 1867, Father Sailer was appointed pastor of St. Aloysius Parish in Sauk City, where he remained until 1872. From 1872 to 1877, he was pastor of St. John's Parish in Highland. On August 24, 1877, Father Sailer returned to Ozaukee County and the Port Washington area, as the pastor of St. Mary's Parish in Lake Church. This pastorate lasted only a few short weeks, as he died on October 11, 1877. An obituary for Father Sailer from the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, October 13, 1877, p. 4, stated:

## Obituary

Port Washington, October 12 – Rev. Father Sailer, an old resident of this place, but at the time of his death in charge of the Catholic church in the town of Belgium, died this morning. He was much respected by all who were acquainted with him.

The funeral of Father Sailer will take place here at 10 o' clock this forenoon. The obsequies will be attended by delegates from Racine, Milwaukee, Highland, Sauk City and Belgium. The deceased had been stationed in this state for 25 years and was highly esteemed by the communities in which he had labored.

Most fittingly, Father Sailer was buried in old St. Mary's Cemetery in Port Washington. Here is where the story of the two pioneer priest came to a close. Father Sailer and Father Bermadinger are buried side by side in the vault under the little brick chapel in old St. Mary's Cemetery. The chapel can be considered a monument to their lives as devoted ministers to the people of the Port Washington area. Their individual photos share one frame on the chapel altar, where it remains 126 years later, in memory of their friendship as fellow missionaries in the early days of Ozaukee County.



*The interior and altar of the 1876 chapel in old St. Mary's Cemetery. Note the photos of Father Sailer and Father Bermadinger on the right side of the altar.*

*Photo courtesy of Terry Wester*

*The photographs of Father Sailer and Father Bermadinger found in the chapel in old St. Mary's Cemetery.*

*Photo courtesy of Terry Wester*





# Shepherd of Wisdom and Vision



*Father Henry Willmes, Pastor of  
St. Mary's, 1870-1891  
Photo courtesy of PWHSRC*

Father Henry Willmes was another of St. Mary's pastors who played a key role in the history of the parish. Though his pastorate ended over 100 years ago, the parish continues to enjoy the impact of his ministry. His legacy was the construction of the 1882 church built during his tenure.

Father Willmes was born on Christmas Day in 1844 in Reichlingen, Luxembourg. His parents were Dominic and Elizabeth (Birens) Willmes. His father was a shoemaker and farmer. Young Henry attended parochial school in his hometown until the family emigrated to the United States in 1857 at the time he was 12 years old. The Willmes family made their way to Wisconsin and settled near Theresa in Dodge County where they took up farming.

In 1860, fifteen year old Henry entered St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee to study for the priesthood. He was ordained by Bishop John Martin Henni on December 19, 1868 at the young age of 23. Six days later, on his 24th birthday, Father Willmes

celebrated his First Mass at his home parish in Theresa.

Father Willmes' first assignment as a priest was to organize a Catholic parish in Sun Prairie. Though very young, he successfully led the faithful Catholics of Sun Prairie in establishing Sacred Heart Parish. Recognizing his outstanding pastoral and spiritual abilities, Bishop Henni sent Father Willmes to become the pastor of St. Mary's in Port Washington just two years later. He arrived on May 12, 1870 when he was 26 years old.

At the time of his arrival, he determined that the primary need of the parish was the re-establishment of St. Mary's School. Aware that the School Sisters of Notre Dame had served the school at an earlier time, Father Willmes felt that this was a place to start. He contacted Mother Caroline who arranged a trip to Port Washington to look over the situation before agreeing to send her sisters.

Finding the parish acceptable, Mother Caroline sent the School Sisters to St. Mary's once again on September 2, 1870. When the Sisters had left St. Mary's in 1857 there had been 80 children in the school. When they returned in 1870, they found 200 students awaiting their arrival. Thanks to Father Willmes' efforts, the School Sisters of Notre Dame have remained, faithfully serving the children of St. Mary's for well over one hundred years.

Father Willmes' next undertaking was the purchase of three church bells from the



Buckeye Bell Foundry, Vanduzen and Tift, of Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1875 at a cost of \$1,821.96. They were initially installed in a two-story bell tower erected next to the 1860 church and eventually transferred to the 1882 church when it was completed.

In 1876 Father Willmes oversaw the purchase of the parish's first pipe organ. It was installed in the 1860 church but was later transferred to the 1882 church and served the parish for about 50 years.

Father Willmes had the privilege of celebrating the Requiem High Mass for St. Mary's founding pastor, Father F. X. Sailer, on October 13, 1877. Father Willmes said the final commendation as Father Sailer's body was laid in its resting place in old St. Mary's Cemetery.

By 1880, Father Willmes, well aware of the rapid growth of the congregation, realized that the need for a larger church would soon be inevitable. He received the necessary permission for the project from Bishop Heiss of Milwaukee and fundraising efforts were begun. A plan for a neo-gothic edifice with seating for 1200 people was drafted by noted Milwaukee architect, Henry Messmer, a building designed to be the "ornament of the city and the pride of the county."

Construction began in July 1882 following Father Willmes' eleventh-hour decision to change the location of the new church to a site on the west side of Johnson Street on the crest of St. Mary's Hill. This remarkable choice placed the church in a position to oversee the entire downtown area of Port Washington.

At the time of construction, Father Willmes was only 37 years old. The statue of St. Henry located on the St. Joseph side-altar as well as the gold sanctuary lamp in the church were gifts from Father Willmes to the new church.

Father Willmes remained as pastor for only seven years after the new St. Mary's Church was completed. On November 12, 1891 he was transferred to Old St. Mary's Parish in downtown Milwaukee. He had faithfully served St. Mary's, Port Washington for 21 years and maintained many ties with the community after his departure.

During his pastorate at Old St. Mary's in Milwaukee, Father Willmes continued to be an effective pastoral leader. Shortly after his arrival, he purchased several lots on Milwaukee Street for \$37,000. On these lots he built a large, eight-room school building for \$35,000 in 1893-94. This building was demolished in October, 1978. He made many improvements to the parish including remodeling of the church after it was damaged by arson on April 17, 1893. Father Willmes celebrated his 25th Jubilee of Ordination at Old St. Mary's on December 25, 1893.

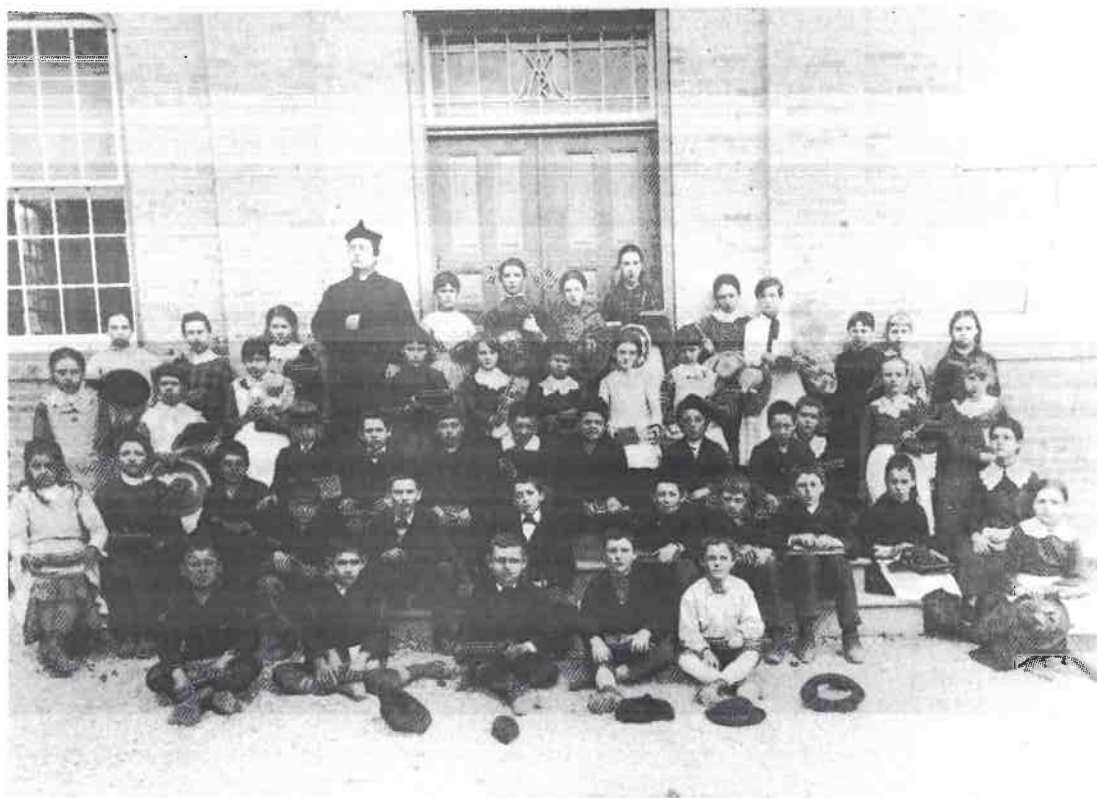
Father Willmes continued to pastor Old St. Mary's until his death on September 25, 1903 at the age of 59. A Requiem High Mass was celebrated for Father Willmes at Old St. Mary's and his body was interred at Calvary Cemetery in Milwaukee on what is known as "Jesuit Hill," the resting ground of many early Jesuit and diocesan priests. A large marble monument marks his grave. His priesthood will be remembered as full of faith, energy and vision. He was well eulogized in the following obituary from an unidentified source:



*.....Always quiet and reserved, Father Willmes shunned the glare of publicity, and was not widely known outside of his immediate parish. He was beloved by all his parishioners, especially the children, with whom he was always a strict disciplinarian, but whose love and reverence he won by the unfailing kindness of his heart.....*

The *Port Washington Star*, October 3, 1903 reported:

*Nearly one hundred Port Washington people attended the funeral of Rev. Henry Willmes in Milwaukee last Tuesday.*



*Father Henry Willmes with school children at St. Mary's School, 1884.*

*Photo courtesy of Marge Hoffman*



# St. Mary's Monsignors

A title unfamiliar to most of today's young Catholics is "Monsignor." However, two of St. Mary's pastors were elevated to the rank of monsignor during their pastorates at our parish: Msgr. Peter Holfeltz and Msgr. Peter Hildebrand.



Msgr. Peter Holfeltz was born in Remerschen, Luxembourg on September 8, 1856. He emigrated to the United States in 1875 at the age of 19 settling near Osman, Wisconsin. He attended St. Lawrence Seminary in Mount Calvary and later studied at St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee. He was ordained as an archdiocesan priest on June 24, 1887.

When Father Holfeltz became St. Mary's pastor on November 3, 1913, he inherited a debt of \$17,900 which was a residual of the construction of the 1882 church. As a first order of business, he worked tirelessly to retire it from the books. A few years later, in 1916, he took on the construction of a new school building at a cost of \$69,000. Father Holfeltz had a strong, Luxembourger personality. While his sermons could be fiery and bold, he was also known to be tender-hearted toward children, the elderly, and the sick of the parish.

In 1934, Pope Pius XI elevated Father Holfeltz to the rank of Domestic Prelate (Monsignor) because of his outstanding priestly service. Archbishop Stritch surprised Father Holfeltz by making a trip to Port Washington on Christmas Eve, 1934 to personally deliver the document when it arrived from Rome.

Msgr. Holfeltz continued to serve St. Mary's for a total of 25 years. He retired in 1938 due to ill health, the longest serving pastor in the history of St. Mary's. Msgr. Holfeltz died on November 19, 1939 at the age of 82 while hospitalized at St. Nicholas Hospital in Sheboygan. He was buried in the new St. Mary's Cemetery in Port Washington.



*Msgr. Peter Holfeltz  
with 8th grade  
graduating class of  
St. Mary's School, 1927.  
Photo courtesy of Jim Fowler*





Father Peter Hildebrand, assistant to Msgr. Holfeltz from 1918 to 1924, became Monsignor's successor as pastor of St. Mary's. Born in Sheboygan on December 1, 1890, he later studied at St. Francis Seminary and was ordained on June 13, 1915. Already well-known at St. Mary's as Msgr. Holfeltz's assistant, Father Hildebrand easily assumed the full pastoral role when he was assigned to take over the parish.

Father Hildebrand was respected for his holiness and his kind disposition. Although he was a rather reserved person, he was blessed with a wonderful sense of humor. Life-long parishioner, Joan (Sturm) Rooney, recalls how as a child in St. Mary's School she and her classmates would often serve as an audience for Father Hildebrand's jokes. As the years passed, Father Hildebrand would often repeat the same jokes over and over. One classic joke of Father Hildebrand's went like this: A lady went to the dime store and asked the clerk: "Do you carry hair nets?" The clerk responded: "Invisible ones." And the woman replied: "May I please see one."

During Father Hildebrand's pastorate many improvements were made to the parish buildings. A large addition was added to the old (second) rectory and additions and renovations took place in the convent. The largest project undertaken by Father Hildebrand was building a large addition to the 1916 school in response to steadily increasing enrollment. Work on the addition commenced in 1950 and was completed in 1952 at a cost of \$200,000.

Father Hildebrand was elevated to the rank of Domestic Prelate (Monsignor) by Pope John XXIII on June 1, 1959 due to his deep personal piety and his dedicated priestly ministry. He became the Rt. Rev. Msgr. Peter J. Hildebrand.

He died just three years later on June 28, 1962 while hospitalized at St. Alphonsus Hospital in Port Washington. At the time that he died, he was 71 years old and had been pastor of St. Mary's for 23 years, the second longest pastorate in St. Mary's history. Because of his six additional years as an assistant pastor, he rightfully deserves the honor of being St. Mary's longest serving priest.

*Msgr. Peter Hildebrand  
(center), Father  
Livingston (left) and  
Father Gundrum  
(right) with 10th grade  
class of St. Mary's  
School in 1947.*

*Photo courtesy of PWHSRC*





# *Father Rolland Glass*

A recent pastor of St. Mary's, Father Rolland T. Glass, served our congregation from 1968 to 1987. He was born on July 29, 1916 in Campbellsport, Wisconsin the son of Walter and Agatha (Haessly) Glass. After graduating from St. Matthew's School and Campbellsport High School, he attended St. Lawrence Seminary in Mt. Calvary beginning in 1933. Father Glass entered St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee to study for the priesthood in 1937.

Father Glass was ordained to the holy priesthood on March 20, 1943 at St. John's Cathedral in Milwaukee by Archbishop Moses E. Kiley. He celebrated his first Mass at his home parish in Campbellsport. Father Glass' first assignment was as assistant pastor at St. Joseph's Parish in Milwaukee. He served there until 1955 when he was assigned as assistant pastor at St. Thomas Parish in Kenosha.

Father Glass' first pastorate was that of St. Matthew Parish in Neosho and its mission of St. Mary's in Woodland in 1959. In 1961 he became pastor of St. Catherine's Parish in Granville (now Milwaukee), Wisconsin. Father Glass guided this parish through the changes advanced by the Second Vatican Council.

On June 18, 1968, Father Glass was appointed pastor of St. Mary's in Port Washington, a position he held until his retirement on June 16, 1987. At an interview on February 27, 2003, Father Glass shared many of his memories of his years at St. Mary's.

When Father Glass arrived at St. Mary's in 1968 he faced a number of serious challenges including a \$750,000 debt incurred by the recent construction of St. Peter's Church and School and the replacement of St. Mary's Rectory. It is told that a neighboring pastor had stated that "they'll run him [Father Glass] out of town in two weeks" yet Father Glass remained at St. Mary's for 19 years!

Father Glass' goals during his early years at St. Mary's were retirement of the heavy parish debt through encouraging parishioners to exhibit greater generosity in their stewardship and to strengthen the parish for the future. Under his leadership, the parish debt was paid and the parish as a whole was strengthened.

Father Glass is remembered for his warm smile, kind personality, and a genuine pastoral sense, all of which endeared him to parishioners. He was extremely faithful in caring for the sick, homebound, and hospitalized of the parish. He was dedicated to Catholic education and wholeheartedly supported St. Mary's School. He enjoyed a wonderful working relationship with school principal, Sr. Mary Faith, and the school flourished under their leadership.

Father Glass also was a great supporter of the music ministry at St. Mary's. He greatly admired the work of music director, Ann Celeen Dohms, the quality music of the adult choir and boy's choir, and the fact that St. Mary's was known as a "singing" parish. In general, Father Glass stated that he was incredibly proud of the entire parish and the beauty of our church building.

Some of the more important events which took place during his pastorate, he recalls, were the major renovation of the church in 1977, the parish's 125th anniversary in 1978, and the 100th anniversary of the laying of the church's cornerstone in 1982. All of these events remain as special memories for Father Glass.

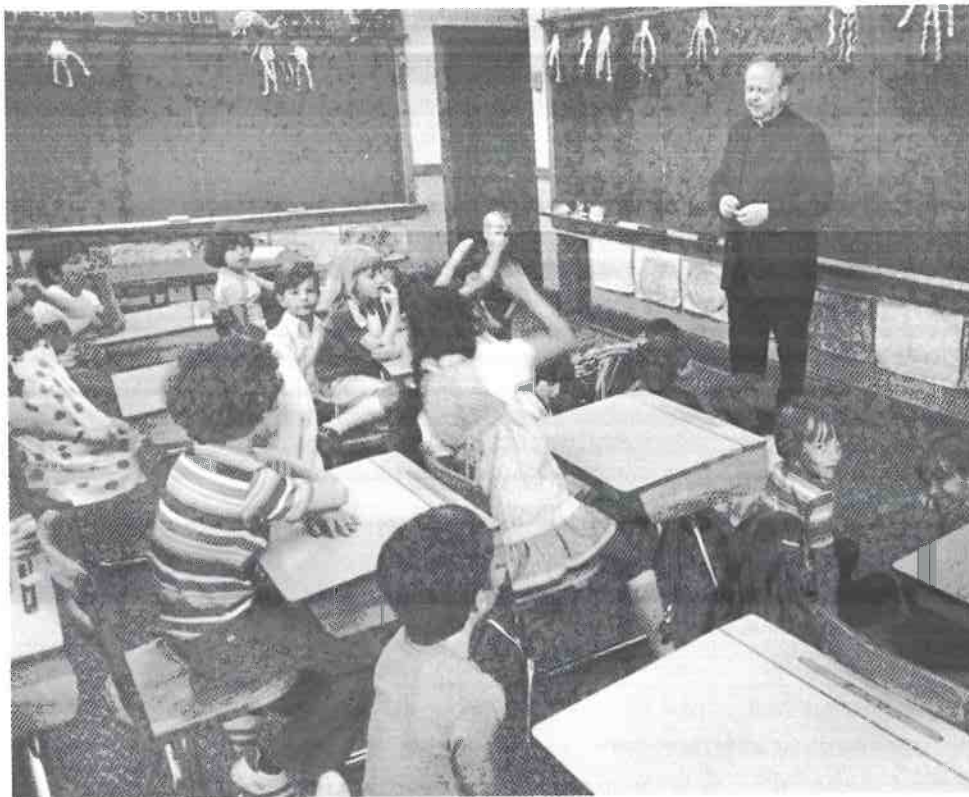


Following his retirement in 1987, Father Glass moved to an apartment in Fond du Lac to be near his bother Kelly and his family. Though leaving Port Washington was a big transition, Fond du Lac has truly become his home. Immediately after arriving in Fond du Lac, Father Glass became the regular weekend help-out priest at Presentation Parish in North Fond du Lac. The pastor at Presentation was Father Dennis Van Beek, a former associate pastor at St. Mary's, who had remained a good friend.

Father has celebrated the 10:00 a.m. Sunday Mass at Presentation for the past 15 years. He helps out at other parishes in Fond du Lac and celebrates Mass for the Sisters of St. Agnes during the week.

On June 27, 1993, Father Glass celebrated his 50th Jubilee with a Mass and dinner at St. Mary's in Port. It was a wonderful day to celebrate his priestly service to the church and his many contributions to St. Mary's.

In 1999, Father Glass relocated to St. Francis Terrace, an assisted-living center sponsored by the Sisters of St. Agnes. He concelebrates daily Mass for the residents of the Terrace. At the age of 87, Father Glass continues to inspire people with his warm personality and deep spirituality. As he celebrates his 60th Jubilee this year, may the Lord continue to bless him with good health and happiness.



*Father Rolland Glass teaching at St. Mary's School, 1978*

*Photo courtesy of PWHSRC*

# Amen or Amann?

Father Steve Amann arrived at St. Mary's in June 1987 at age 39, one of the youngest priests to serve as pastor of St. Mary's. Father Steve had ancestral roots in Port Washington as a descendent of the Stemper family. His grandmother was born in Knellsville and attended St. Mary's. His great-great uncle, Father Henry Stemper, was the second priest son of St. Mary's. His relatives continue to operate the T.H. Stemper Religious Goods Co. in Milwaukee.



*Father Steve Amann with Pope John Paul II*

*Photo courtesy of St. Mary's Parish*

Father Steve brought an enthusiastic spirit to his first pastorate and enlivened the atmosphere at St. Mary's during his eight and a half year tenure. His youthfulness and sense of humor won him a special place in the hearts of parishioners.

He led the parish in adapting to the changes in the church which were beginning to affect parish life, including the impending shortage of priests. Father Steve was a strong advocate for the consolidation of the parish schools, completed a number of building and remodeling projects, strengthened the management role of the Parish Council and helped the parish achieve a greater degree of financial stability.

In September 1995, Father Steve left St. Mary's to become pastor of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in New Berlin, where he has overseen the construction of a new church.

In honor of our sesquicentennial anniversary, he has shared some of his reflections on St. Mary's with us:

*I spent eight and a half years at St. Mary's in Port Washington. It was my first pastorate, and I have to admit that I began with a bit of nervousness. But they were very happy years. I think I accomplished a lot and left very respected. I loved the people in Port Washington. The small town atmosphere and friendliness of the people made it a wonderful place to serve.*

*Two things come to my mind when I think of accomplishments during my pastorate. The first is the consolidation of St. Mary's and St. Peter's Schools into Port Washington Catholic School. Not only was it a good educational move, but it brought the community together. We priests would celebrate Mass at both campuses, teach in both schools, etc. I believe the consolidation was good for both parishes and both schools.*

*The other accomplishment was much more mundane, but just as necessary. I was the one who put the first toilet in the church. It cost a lot of money because we had to dig 22 feet down to hit the sewer line and had to go many feet up to the bell tower for ventilation. After it was built, people would joke about needing to go to the "Steve" during Mass.*

*Congratulations on your 150th anniversary. I pray that St. Mary's can serve the people of Port Washington for another 150 years.*





# Father Allan Sommer

Father Allan J. Sommer left St. Patrick's Parish in Racine in November 1995 to become pastor of St. Mary's. "Father Al" as St. Mary's parishioners know him, states that he was pleased to discover well-developed leadership skills and a sense of self-direction in his Port Washington congregation. He notes that St. Mary's parishioners are always prepared to "take the ball and run with it."

An example he mentioned is the success of the recent organ campaign. Installation of the new pipe organ, constructed by the Berghaus Organ Company of Belleview, Illinois was made possible through the fund-raising efforts of the Organ Committee. The organ was purchased through donations and pledges made by St. Mary's parishioners and others in the community.

Additional changes which have occurred during Father Al's pastorate include improvements in the parish's "computer literacy" and an increasing awareness of the call to serve the needs of those who live beyond our parish boundaries. Father began working with computers in 1982 and he appreciates the many advantages of computer science. He has supported upgrades in St. Mary's computer systems and recognizes computers as an asset in parish management. Father Al favors parish outreach activities, especially those of St. Mary's Human Concerns Committee. The Parish Council has agreed to use 1.5% of the parish annual income for outreach purposes.

Father Al celebrated the 35th anniversary of his ordination with the parish at a well-attended dinner in 2001. Father maintains close ties with his family and spends whatever time he can with them. He is a Lieutenant Colonel in the Civil Air Patrol but is inactive at this time due to a conflict in meeting schedules.

His strong personal interest in the martial arts became apparent soon after his arrival in Port Washington with his introduction of MIZU to the parish. He holds class every Sunday evening in the school gym. Class enrollment includes boys and girls as well as men and women. The first "black belt" was achieved by parishioner Peter Dougherty this year.

Father Al emphasizes that "St. Mary's belongs to the people." He envisions his role to be that of a guide for parishioners in areas of the Catholic faith and spiritual growth and as a facilitator in matters of parish management.



*Father Allan Sommer*  
Photo courtesy of St. Mary's Parish



# *A Home For Our Priests*

One of the most pressing issues for the Church today is the shortage of priests. St. Mary's has been blessed in having a resident pastor since its organization into a parish in 1853. For many years St. Mary's was served by a number of dedicated assistant and associate pastors as well. Three rectories have housed parish priests over the years and have provided space for the priests to meet with parishioners.

The first rectory was built during the pastorate of Father Sailer shortly after the parish was organized. The two-story home was located on the site now occupied by the school parking lot. The only photo found of this early rectory shows it as an attractive structure having many shuttered windows. This rectory housed the early St. Mary's pastors, Father Sailer, Father Weikmann, Father Fusseder, Father Durst, Father Willmes, and Father Elskamp.

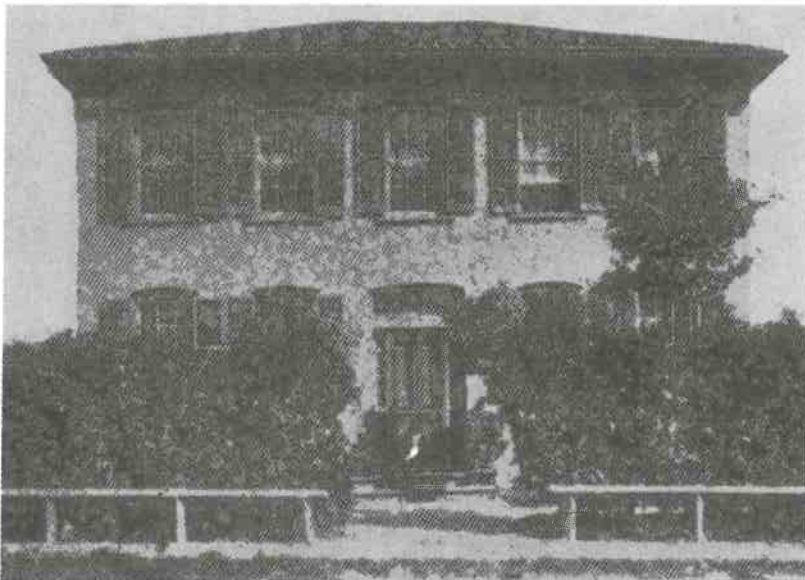
Shortly after Father Charles Grobschmit took over as pastor of St. Mary's in 1898, he decided that a larger, more modern rectory was necessary. The new rectory was built on the west side of the 1882 church having the front entrance facing south, in the same direction as the church entrance.

The *Port Washington Star*, September 10, 1898 reported:

*St. Mary's Congregation will build a \$4,000 residence for their rector.*

The *Port Washington Star*, September 24, 1898 further stated:

*The contracts for building the rector's home for Father Grobschmit were let Tuesday. Peter Eva secured the mason work and Louis Mehrens the carpenter work.*



*First rectory at St. Mary's built by Father Sailer. Located on Johnson Street on what is today the school parking lot.*

*Photo courtesy of PWHSRC*



Construction of the large, two-story brick rectory began in October, 1898 and was completed early in 1899. Father Grobschmit was able to move in just a few days before the famous Wisconsin Chair Company fire in downtown Port Washington which occurred on February 19, 1899. The beautiful structure became one of the most prominent homes in Port Washington.

The *Port Washington Star*, February 16, 1899 provided a thorough description of the new rectory:

*Palatial Home.*

*St. Mary's Congregation Provides One For Their Resident Priest*

*The editor of THE STAR returns thanks to the Rev. C. Grobschmit for the kindly courtesy shown him by that gentleman last Tuesday, when the writer inspected the palatial home built by the people of St. Mary's congregation for their resident priest. With his guidance we were shown through the building from basement to attic.*

*It is handsome, commodious, conveniently arranged, and well built. It has no peer among the many fine homes provided for the Catholic clergy in this section, and perhaps in the state. It commands a grand view of Lake Michigan and surrounding beautiful hills and vales. When the lawns shall have been graded and beautified as planned, and the surroundings made to harmonize with the elegance of the building, the property will be one in which every citizen, Catholic or otherwise, will take a just pride.*

*The plans and specifications were drawn by H. C. Koch & Co., Milwaukee, which provided for a two story and basement brick veneer structure, 38 x 66 feet, with interior hard-wood finish in polished birch, oak, and maple. The ground floor comprises a vestibule, hall, office, sitting, dining and music rooms and kitchen. The upper floor has double parlors, an alcove, guest chamber, two bedrooms, and bath. In the basement is a large kitchen and laundry room, with a splendid new steel range and every appliance and convenience. Hot and cold water are supplied to all parts of the house. Then there are vegetable and fruit cellars, coal bin, hot water heater, and Climax gas apparatus. The large attic has been finished off for use as a drying room. In the upstairs kitchen is a gas range, while off the dining room is a large china closet. Communication is had between kitchen and dining room through a short hall and double swinging doors. In the front hallway is a lavatory built in an alcove. In the sitting room is a handsome fireplace made of beaten copper and Mexican onyx, with beautifully carved oak mantel. Every room and hallway in the house is heated by radiators connected with the hot water heater in the basement, and lighted with gas furnished by the Climax machine. The gas fixtures are light and elegant in appearance and are furnished with new style globes and Welsbach mantles. Patented inside sliding blinds are on every window, and the front hallway has a stained glass window. All the other windows are of plate glass, the one in the front door being ornamented.*

*There are three entrances to the building. The main entrance at the front door leads directly into the vestibule connecting with the priest's office and also to his bedroom. The side entrance leads through the sitting room directly to the music room, and is designed especially for the use of the singers in the various societies of the congregation.*

*All the material that our local institutions could supply was used in the construction of the building. The interior wood work was furnished by the Interior Wood Work Co., Milwaukee, while other outside concerns furnished the plumbing, gas fitting and hot water heating. Stollberg & Co., Milwaukee, put in the Climax gas machine.*



*The contract for the construction of the building was awarded to Mr. Louis Mehrens and it is with pleasure we can state that everywhere is seen evidences of his painstaking care and superior workmanship. The brick-laying was sub-let to Peter Eva which is a sufficient warrant that his share of the work was properly done. And no one can view the glossy finish on the interior without knowing that the master hand of John Dornbach had been at work there.*

*We offer no apology to our readers for the somewhat elaborate write-up, believing that the generous and self-sacrificing spirit of this people that prompted them to such a noble undertaking ought to be fittingly chronicled.*

*Father Grobschmit began moving into his new home this week.*

An additional noteworthy feature, not described in the newspaper article, was the “widow’s walk” which crowned the roof above the third-story attic.

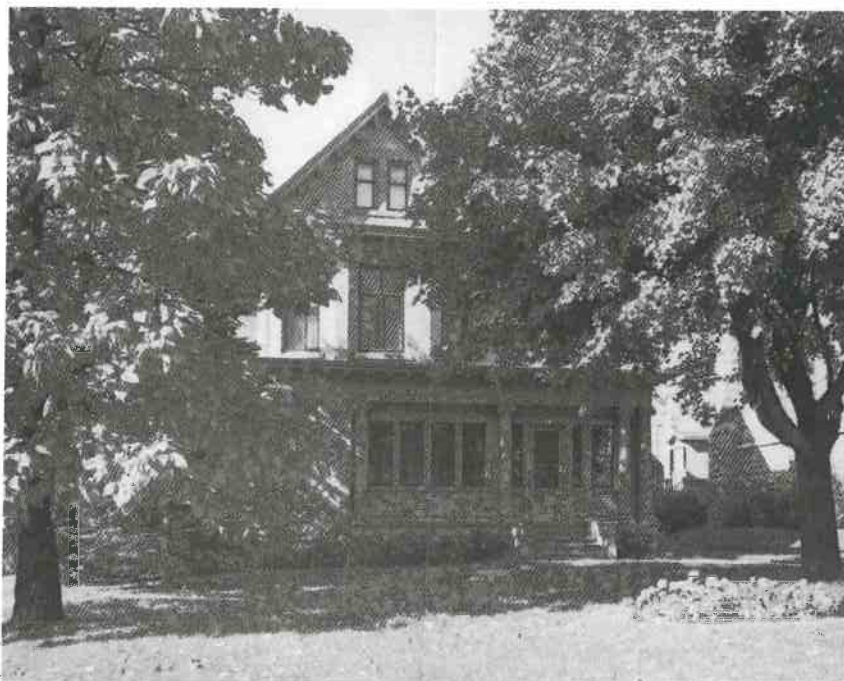
The second rectory was home to a number of Father Grobschmit’s successors including Father Kessler, Msgr. Holfeltz, Father Dreis, Msgr. Peter Hildebrand, and Father Braun. In 1912, St. Mary’s started receiving the first of a stream of assistant pastors. By the early 1960s, the parish had three assistants as well as the pastor in residence.

A major renovation of the rectory took place in 1939-1940 under the pastorate of Father Hildebrand. This included updating the wiring, new light fixtures and plumbing, additional insulation, repainting, a new boiler, and new windows. A portion of the front porch was converted into instruction rooms and an addition of a three-car garage and living quarters for the housekeeper was added onto the north side of the building.

When Father Edgar Braun became pastor of St. Mary’s in 1962, he too envisioned a more modern rectory. The decision to build “rectory number three” created substantial controversy in the parish. Nevertheless, a local architectural firm, Blong, Kempf, Schmid and Ehrlich, Inc., was promptly hired to design the structure.

The location chosen for the new building, directly behind the existing rectory, but facing north on Van Buren Street, required the parish to purchase the Keller home and property located directly behind the sanctuary of the church. On April 22, 1963, Lots 17, 18, 19, and 20 in Block Two of the Northeast Addition to Port Washington were purchased from Bernice Keller for \$14,000 [Deeds, Vol. 158, p. 204, Ozaukee County, WI].

The Keller home was torn down in March, 1964 and by July, 1964 construction was underway. The cost of the project was \$128,000 which added to the controversy surrounding the decision.



*The second St. Mary’s Rectory completed in 1899.*

*Photo courtesy of PWHSRC*





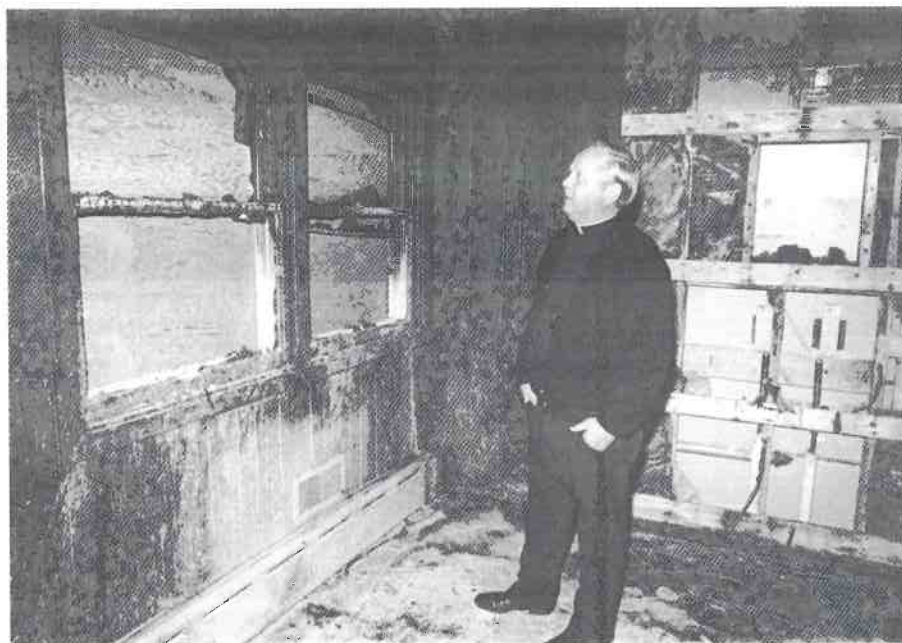
Father Braun and his assistants, Fathers Robers, Repenshek, and Lutz moved into the new, state-of-the-art rectory in March 1965. The old rectory was immediately demolished to allow completion of a final portion of the new rectory.

The new rectory, located at 117 E. Van Buren, was constructed of brick and redwood. The basement contained a large recreation room and the utility areas. The first floor housed the parish administrative office, three offices for priests, a living room, den, kitchen and dining area as well as a three car garage. The second floor comprised apartments for three priests, two guest rooms, a housekeeper's apartment above the garage, and storage area. Furnishings for the rectory were donated by William J. Niederkorn.

This new rectory provided a home for a number of our pastors and associate pastors for the next thirty years. One notable event during that time was a rather serious fire which occurred in the rectory on October 6, 1978 during Father Glass' pastorate. On that Saturday evening a television set located in the living room of the rectory exploded and ignited a fire. None of the priests nor the housekeeper were home at the time. Jimmy Lanser, a nine year old parish member who lived near St. Mary's, was walking past the rectory when he heard breaking glass and saw fire coming out of a window. Jimmy ran to a neighbor's house and the Port Washington Fire Department was notified. The fire department arrived quickly and within five minutes the fire was extinguished.

Though short in duration, the fire caused over \$20,000 damage to the rectory. The living room and kitchen were severely scorched and there was smoke damage and soot throughout the house. During the repair of the damage and cleaning of the rectory, Father Glass, the other resident priests, and the housekeeper continued to reside in the rectory. The damage could have been much worse.

A parish dialogue began in the early 1990s regarding the future of the rectory. In light of the growing shortage of priests, a new Archdiocesan policy allowing priests to live in the community away from the parish premises, and with consideration of the enormous size of the rectory, Father Steve Amann and the parish council decided that responsible stewardship called for utilizing the building in a different way.



*Father Rolland Glass inspecting the fire damage of St. Mary's Rectory, 1978*

*Photo courtesy of PWHSRC*





In the summer of 1993, American Senior Living, Inc. of Oconomowoc began to lease the rectory. An auction of surplus contents from the rectory was held on June 26. As soon as the rectory was vacated, American Senior Living began a major renovation of the rectory to transform the building into an assisted living residence for seventeen people.

Some of the rooms of the rectory were reconfigured, the three-car garage became living space, and an elevator was added, all at the expense of the corporation. The residence is fittingly named “Marian Heights” and Catholic residents find it most convenient to attend Mass at St. Mary’s. The Parish receives a monthly lease payment, but continues to be responsible for outdoor maintenance including yard work and 25% of the cost of repair work on heavy equipment inside the building.

The first floor of St. Mary’s Convent became St. Mary’s Parish Center. Parish offices were located there following a hurried preparation of the building which included painting, carpeting, new windows and other necessities. A new ramp was added to the front entrance of the building to make it handicapped accessible.

Many meetings of parish committees and ministries are held at the parish center and it serves the parish well. The second story continues to be utilized as a residence for one School Sister of Notre Dame. The third story is empty and used primarily for storage.

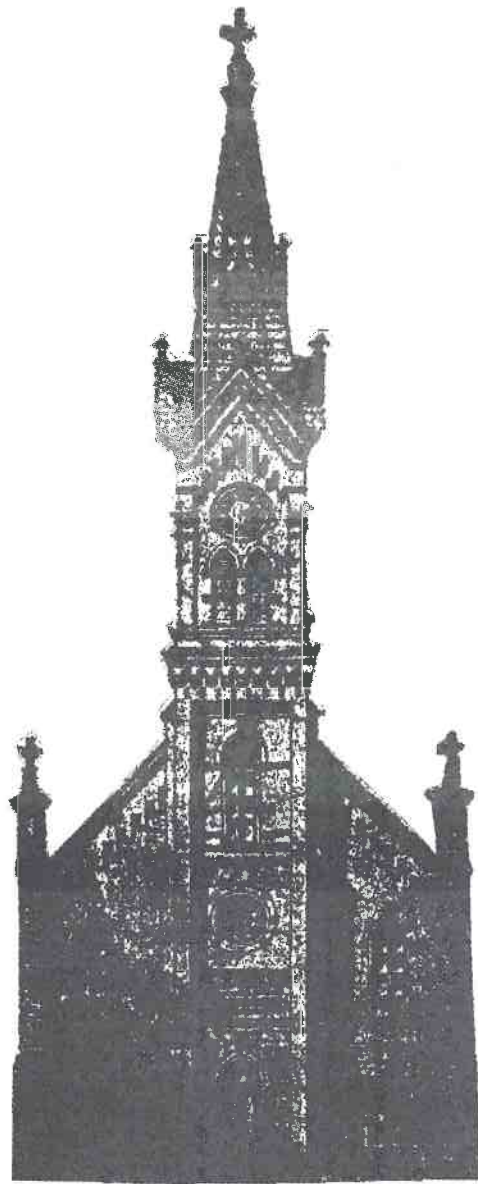
While no longer serving the parish priests as a home, the transformed rectory now fulfills a vital need for assisted living in Port Washington.



*The third St. Mary’s Rectory on Van Buren Street after completion in 1965.*

*Photo courtesy of Archdiocese of Milwaukee*





*– Beacon of Faith, Hope and Love –*

# Part of the Community

## *The Irish and Lithuanian Churches*

The ethnic makeup of St. Mary's parishioners has traditionally been people of Luxembourg and Germanic heritage. However, we should also remember two additional Catholic ethnic groups, the Irish and the Lithuanians, who have made Port Washington their home.

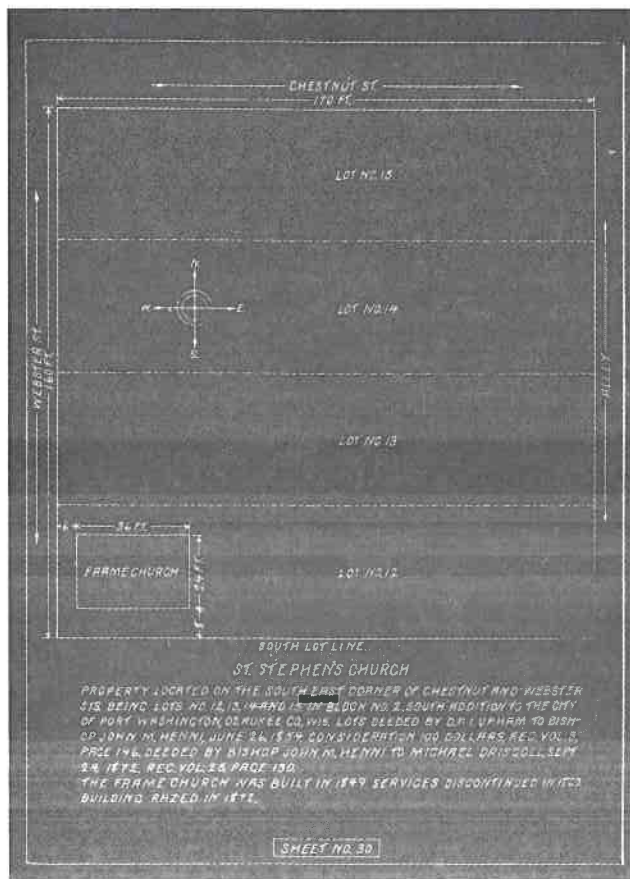
Predating the organization of St. Mary's in 1853, a small band of Irish immigrants founded St. Stephen's Catholic Parish on Port Washington's near west side. This area was known as the "Canada Side" at that time due to the recent immigration of a large number of Irish Catholics from Canada who settled there. These early Irish Catholics were shepherded by Fathers Prendergast, Colton and others. Father P. Bradley became the first resident pastor. In addition, he ministered to the needs of the faithful Luxembourg Catholic of Port Washington until St. Mary's was organized in 1853.

In 1849 the St. Stephen's congregation built a small, frame church measuring 36' x 24' on Lot #15 in Block #2 of the South Addition to Port Washington. On June 26, 1854, Bishop John Martin Henni of the Milwaukee Diocese purchased this lot along with Lots #12-15 from D.A.J. Upham for \$100 on behalf of the congregation [Deeds, Vol. 3, p. 146, Ozaukee County, WI]. The former site of the church can be seen near the southeast corner of Chestnut and South Webster Streets where a free standing garage, belonging to a home at 222 South Webster Street, is located.

Tradition holds that the struggling congregation was disbanded after a severe wind storm blew down their little church. Documentation from the Archdiocese of Milwaukee tells us that services at the church ended in 1860, and that the building was eventually razed in 1872. On September 24, 1872, Bishop Henni sold the land to Michael Driscoll for \$255 [Deeds, Vol. 25, p. 130, Ozaukee County, WI].

While St. Mary's parishioners welcomed their Irish brothers and sisters into the St. Mary's fold, the ethnic barriers were obvious. In the early years, the Irish were buried on one





*Plat of St. Stephen's Church from "Early Catholic Church Property in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, WI," 1941.*

*Photo courtesy of Archdiocese of Milwaukee*

side of old St. Mary's Cemetery and the Luxembourgers and Germans on the other side. In addition, the word *Irish* appears in parenthesis following each Irish parishioner's name in the church financial registers of that era.

The rise of the Wisconsin Chair Company as the premiere employer of Port Washington and Ozaukee County brought many Lithuanian immigrants to our city around the turn of the last century. At that time, a group of Lithuanian men formed a religious society under the patronage of St. Lawrence.

Archbishop Messmer was aware of the Lithuanian presence in Port Washington and supported their efforts to form their own parish. On March 9, 1905, he purchased a parcel of land in what was known as the Federspiel and Ternes

Subdivision located on the northwest edge of Port Washington.

The price of the land was \$1,350. The sellers were John and Catherine Bichler, Carl and Regina Bichler, William and Lillie Hemes, and Minna Hemes. The parcel included Lots 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 11 and 12 in Block One of the subdivision and measured 167 feet by 360 feet [Deeds, Vol. 51, p. 160, Ozaukee County, WI].

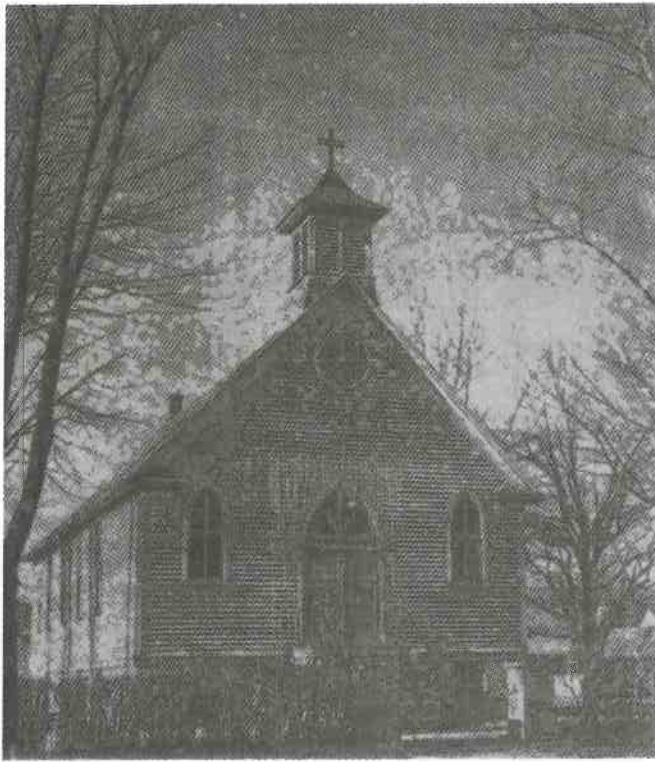
As the Lithuanian congregation stabilized, the Archbishop gave them permission to organize their own parish in 1907. St. Ambrose was chosen as their patron saint. The Lithuanians maintained their own language and customs in their parish. The congregation numbered about 175 members in 50 families, and initially met in a rented hall above a downtown store. A Lithuanian priest, either from Kenosha or Waukegan, came twice a year to hear confessions.

After a few years, John Schranke was hired to build a small frame parish church facing Milwaukee Street on what is now the southwest corner of N. Milwaukee Street and W. Pierre Lane. The church was dedicated to St. Ambrose and the cornerstone was blessed on July 11, 1909.

Father Anthony Balinski, of Immaculate Conception Church in Sheboygan, and Father Charles Grobschmidt of St. Mary's officiated at the dedication ceremony. Members of the St. Lawrence Society and some of St. Mary's societies also participated in the festivities. A collection of \$88 was received from the 2,000 people in attendance. Through industrious fundraising, the congregation had raised \$1,824 in one year to build their church.

Some of St. Ambrose's excess land was sold over the years to generate revenue for the parish. On August 5, 1941, Lots 6 and 7 were sold to Mathias and Ida Sturm for \$1,500 [Deeds, Vol. 82, p. 180, Ozaukee County, WI] and Lot 5 was sold to George and Cecelia Bares on August 24, 1945 for \$1,000 [Deeds, Vol. 94, p. 418, Ozaukee County, WI]. Lot 1 was sold to Vitold and Stella Nagrocki for \$1,500 on November 6, 1946 [Deeds, Vol. 99, p. 321, Ozaukee County, WI].





*St. Ambrose Church*

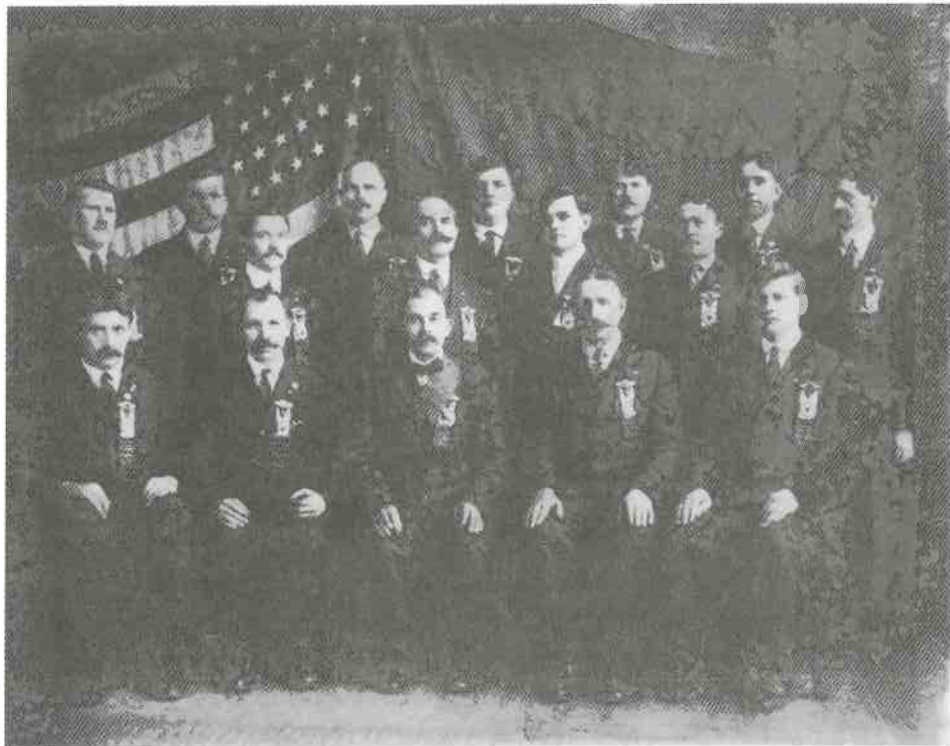
*Photo courtesy of Pat Jushka*

St. Ambrose was served by various priests from the Lithuanian-based Immaculate Conception Parish in Sheboygan. It remained a mission church with services scheduled on the first and third Sundays of the month. Msgr. James J. Shlikas of Sheboygan attended the congregation for more than 30 years.

Sunday Mass, weddings, funerals and baptisms were celebrated in this little church until the congregation disbanded on Christmas Day, 1964. For about a year prior to the disbanding, the church was operated by St. Mary's to ease the overcrowding at St. Mary's.

A decreasing emphasis on ethnicity led to the demise of St. Ambrose as well as the fact that St. Mary's had the parochial school. The members of St. Ambrose who had children in school at St. Mary's understandably did not wish to pay for two church memberships. When St. Peter's was opened on the north side of Port Washington the church was abandoned.

The church property was sold on July 21, 1965 to Lucille F. Bittner for \$7,000 [Deeds, Vol. 168, p. 219, Ozaukee County, WI] who sold it six months later on December 14, 1965, to Marvin and Mary Nash for \$8,000 [Deeds, Vol. 170, p. 159, Ozaukee County, WI]. In the spring of 1966 the church was demolished to make way for a four-family apartment. Nearly 40 years later, St. Ambrose is still fondly remembered by Port Washington's older Lithuanian Catholics.



*St. Lawrence Society of  
St. Ambrose Church*

*Photo courtesy of Pat Jushka*

# What A Riot!!!

One of the most widely renowned events in Port Washington's history is the famous Civil War Draft Riot which occurred on November 11, 1862. For two consecutive days, hundreds of angry protestors from the Port Washington area, including a significant number of St. Mary's parishioners, wreaked havoc on the city.

The rioters threw the draft commissioner, Attorney William Pors, down the steps of the Ozaukee County courthouse, pelted him with stones and forced him to flee to Milwaukee in fear for his life. They demolished the draft box with clubs and destroyed all of the draft cards. They seriously damaged and looted the homes of a number of elite Port Washington residents, who they believed to be part of a draft conspiracy. They took control of Port Washington for two days until federal troops, dispatched by Governor Salomon, marched into Port Washington and arrested 120 rioting men to quell the upheaval.

Who were these rioting draft protestors? What were their reasons for initiating this riot? And what position did Fathers Fusseder and Sailer of St. Mary's take during this disturbing period?

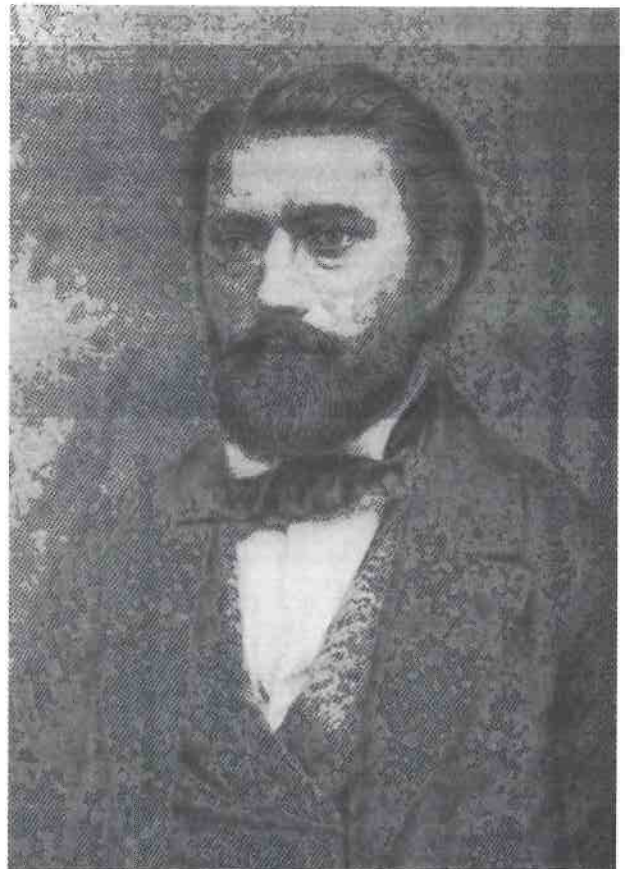
First, it was no secret that the instigators and participants in the draft riot were predominantly Catholic Luxembourgers who belonged to St. Mary's in Port Washington, St. Mary's in Lake Church and Holy Cross Parish in the Town of Belgium. According to an unidentified newspaper article from the Wisconsin State Historical Society dated November 12, 1862:

*.....The crowd [rioters] were not Germans, but Catholic Luxembourgers, a people coming from a province of Belgium. Neither were any Irishmen seen in the mob. The rioters had a white banner, with the letters upon it in black – "WE STAND BY THE FLAG – BUT NO DRAFT.".....*

The same newspaper article described the scene of the draft riot and indicts three St. Mary's parishioners, Michael Dreis, Nicholas Kemp, and John Diederich, as major participants:

*William A. Pors, Draft Commissioner,  
attacked by the rioters.*

*Photo courtesy of Ruth Pors*







*Michael Dreis, born in 1829 in Syren, Luxembourg, died in 1875 in Port Washington. Parishioner of St. Mary's and owner of the saloon where rioters gathered during the Draft Riot.*

*Photo courtesy Father Kevin Wester*

*There were, about 10 a.m. on Monday (at which there was the largest gathering) a crowd of nearly 1,000 men in the streets. The first of the outbreaks began about 7 a.m. There must have been 200 or 300 men actually engaged in the riot, along through the day, and in addition to these there must have been 100 or 200 more men who mingled more or less with the rioters along through the day. Several in the crowd carried fire-arms with them. The principal rendezvous through the day was at a tavern kept by the town treasurer, whose name is [Michael] Dreis; and also at the store of [Nicholas] Kemp and [John] Diederich, who are said to be instigators of the mob, and who furnished the crowd with whiskey, without charge. They conducted themselves all through the riot in a manner which would justify the authorities in arresting them and putting them in the army, according to the provisions of the draft law. In the early part of the day Kemp even led the mob, and made himself generally conspicuous with them.....*

An article in the same unidentified newspaper dated November 13, 1862 graphically described the arrest of those involved in the riot:

*.....The insurgents showed no fight whatever, as soon as they saw the situation of things, and their unfortunate predicament. The troops at once advanced into the village.....Arrests were at once ordered to be made, and many of the citizens assisted the troops in pointing out those who had been engaged in the riot. The ring-leaders were taken first, among whom are a man named Kemp, of the mercantile firm of Kemp & Diederich, and a butcher named Wagner, besides many others.*

*The Luxembourgers all cowed down like curs as soon as they found themselves met with anything like an equal force. They would run hither and thither through the village, some hiding in barns and sheds, and some attempting to take to the woods, but before they had gone far some of the soldiers would overtake them. Not a shot was fired, and there was no necessity for anything of the kind.....*

Why did the Catholic Luxembourgers of the Port Washington area initiate the draft riot? There were a number of reasons. First, a major reason that the Luxembourgers left their homeland was to avoid the frequent military drafts which occurred due the aggressive actions of their European neighbors. They, therefore, had an aversion to being drafted into military service. Second, the influence of the German-language Catholic newspaper *der Seebote*, published in Milwaukee, to which the Luxembourgers subscribed in great numbers, misled them by insinuating that draft avoidance was occurring state-wide and that others were planning to rebel. *der Seebote* was staunchly Democratic,



pro-immigrant, anti-abolitionist and anti-draft. Third, the Luxembourgers felt there was a conspiracy in selecting their sons for the draft. The Protestant Masons, who coordinated the draft were viewed as the conspirators. Fourth, there was another concern publicly expressed by Father Francis Fusseder of St. Mary's regarding an insufficient number of Catholic chaplains available in the military to minister to the needs of Catholic soldiers. How would they receive the Last Rites with so few Catholic chaplains? Finally, the significant language and cultural barriers existing between the Catholic Luxembourgers and the Protestant Masonic "elite" of Port Washington, as well as gossip and rumors, did a great deal to ignite the feelings which led to the draft riot.

So what position did the priests of St. Mary's, Father Fusseder and Father Sailer, take regarding the draft and the riot? Father Fusseder had publicly voiced his concern about the lack of Catholic chaplains serving the military, most likely feeding the "pre-draft riot" sentiments. Father Fusseder, to his credit, acted on his concern for the Catholic soldiers. On September 3, 1862, just two months before the draft riot, he left St. Mary's to accept a commission as chaplain in the 24th U.S. Infantry, a heavily German-speaking unit. Father Fusseder was the first priest of the Milwaukee Diocese to serve in this capacity. He served the military with distinction, but damaged his eyesight irreparably during his tour of duty.

Father Sailer began his second pastorate at St. Mary's immediately after Father Fusseder entered the military. Emotion must have been running high in Port Washington in the months and weeks prior to the draft riot. We can ascertain from Father Sailer's journal, that he advised his parishioners not to oppose the draft. He knew that the ramifications of rebellion against the draft could be serious. Unfortunately, many of the parishioners did not accept his pastoral guidance.

Father Sailer wrote that during the draft riot, he gave refuge in St. Mary's rectory to some who were fleeing the rioters. He also stated that after the riot, many of those who ignored his warnings came to him looking for consolation.

Though disturbed by the behavior of the parishioners who were involved in the riot, Father Sailer went to Madison to visit those who had been captured and imprisoned. A frustrated Father Sailer wrote that he received nothing but ingratitude for all of his efforts to minister to those involved.

Eventually the charges were dropped against the imprisoned rioters, their cases were dismissed, and they came back home to Port Washington. Ultimately, a good number of the young men from the Port Washington area went on to achieve worthy military records for their participation in the Civil War.

There is evidence that reconciliation took place quickly between those involved on both sides. Mr. Pors did return to his Port Washington home after his initial threats of never setting foot in Port Washington again. Nicholas Kemp soon entered into a business venture with a former rival from the city's Protestant Masonic circle. The people involved, both Protestant and Catholic, quickly allowed "by-gones to be by-gones".



*Father Francis Fusseder, Pastor of St. Mary's 1859 – 1862.*

*Photo courtesy of Archdiocese of Milwaukee*





# The “War” Over A Cane

St. Mary’s has sponsored numerous fundraising activities over the years. Dinners, auctions, festivals, and raffles have generated third-source income to offset the operating expenses of the parish. One of the most elaborate and fascinating fundraisers attempted by the parish was a three-day “Catholic Fair” held in 1883 to raise funds for building our present church.

The Catholic Fair was held on April 2 – 4, 1883 at the “Opera House”, formerly located on the northwest corner of Grand Avenue and Wisconsin Street. The Opera House was the center of social activity in Port Washington for nearly 100 years. It was home to plays, graduations, athletic events, organization meetings, as well as the location of the Port Washington City Hall. The stately Victorian building built in 1875, was torn down in 1957 to make way for the current City Hall building.

The *Port Washington Star*, March 31, 1883, reported:

*The Catholic Fair. The grand opening of the fair for the benefit of the new Catholic Church in Port Washington will occur on Monday, the second of April, 1883, at 10 o’clock a.m. The fair will be held in Singing Hall and will be open from Monday until Wednesday, inclusive, from 10 o’clock a.m. Every evening at*



*The Opera House on Grand Avenue in Port Washington circa 1908.*

*The Catholic Fair took place here in 1883.*

*Photo courtesy of Father Kevin Wester*



*7 o'clock Professor Zimmermann's orchestra will entertain the audience, assisted by the Singing Society [Gesang Verein] and the Quartette club. All are cordially invited. Admittance free.*

The fair included food, games and raffles of donated items. The profits from the three-day fair amounted to \$4,600.41, far exceeding expectations. The proceeds were added to the building fund for the new church. The greatest amount of money was generated by an unusual raffle which involved a gold-headed cane.

The bidding war which took place in the raffle was best described by the April 7, 1883, *Port Washington Star*:

*The event of the fair, however, was the contest for a gold-headed cane, of considerable value. The contest was between H. W. Lyman, of the Malleable and Grey Iron Works, and William Croat, a wealthy farmer [and parishioner of St. Mary's] residing a short distance from the parish. The friends of both gentlemen were firmly resolved to win the prize, and some spirited voting was indulged in.*

*The price of a vote was 10 cents. First one gentleman would be ahead and then the other, and it was nip and tuck between them. The foundry boys stood by their employer nobly and whenever Mr. Croat's side would get ahead, one of the boys would take off his hat, and throwing in a half dollar, or a dollar, would pass around the hat and the way the boys would chip in was astonishing. The close of the first evening the vote stood: Lyman 801; Croat 757. The second evening the score stood: Lyman 1517, Croat 1479.*

*The third evening voting was permitted up to 15 minutes of 10 o'clock, when a blind ballot was taken. The score stood at the close of the open vote: Lyman 3533, Croat 3470. At 15 minutes of 10 o'clock, Father Willmes stepped to the front and declared the open vote closed, and directed the cashiers to empty the boxes and prepare them for a blind vote. The boxes were soon emptied and Father Willmes, watch in hand, declared that the voting could proceed.*

*The excitement at this time was intense, and as one after another the people stepped up to the boxes and passed in their money the audience watched with eager interest. Mr. Lyman stood upon the stage and told the boys to "step right up and help Father Willmes build the church," while Mr. Croat stood down near the boxes and directed his friends to vote, and passed out large sums of money. As these 15 minutes told the story, the money flowed into the boxes. The foundry boys had each chipped in one day's wages, and many of them threw in a five or ten dollar bill besides. Most of our business men and the residents of the city were on Mr. Lyman's side, while the farmers stood by Mr. Croat.*

*As the 15 minutes drew to a close, and the two candidates stepped upon the stage and shook hands, the audience became more demonstrative and cheer after cheer was given. As may be supposed the bulk of the audience was on Mr. Lyman's side and the applause was almost deafening when Father Willmes arose, saying that Mr. Lyman was the first man he went to when he decided to have a cane contest and that they had determined to have him as one of the contestants and he, (Mr. L.), had told him that he was willing to do anything to build up our city and would be proud to be the means of helping build a church which would be an ornament to the place and the pride of our citizens.*



*William Croat with his wife Catherine Mallinger and daughter Ida (Croat) Gonnering. William is holding the St. Mary's cane in his left hand.*

*Photo courtesy of Lloyd Croat*



*At the conclusion of Father Willmes' remarks Mr. Lyman spoke a few words and then Mr. Wm. H. Landolt and Mr. Charles Bisch were appointed to a committee to count the money. As the counting proceeded the interest increased. When it was whispered about that the money in the Lyman box figured up to \$745.40, the Lyman party began to lose heart, as it was known that over \$800.00 would be in the Croat box and were therefore prepared for defeat when the latter box was counted. When the other box was counted the figures were marked down on the blackboard as follows: Croat \$1,225.93 Lyman \$745.40.*

*After the cheers following the announcement had subsided Father Willmes stepped to the front and moved that Mr. Lyman present the cane to his opponent. Mr. Lyman took the cane and presenting it to Mr. Croat made some very appropriate remarks, and was lustily cheered by the crowd. Mr. Croat, being a Luxembourger, could not make a speech, but Mr. Michael G. Ruppert stepped forward and said for him that he was thankful for the support he had received, and that he did not believe there was a more popular man in the county than Mr. Lyman, or one who could draw such an immense number of votes. Father Willmes, looking at the figures on the blackboard, said "I am astonished", and he certainly had reason to be, as the sum realized from the contest amounted to \$1,971.33.*

*Throughout the entire contest the utmost good feeling prevailed on both sides and both gentlemen shook hands over the result. At the conclusion of the contest Mr. Croat gave the band \$5 to play a tune for Mr. Lyman, and the audience left for their homes.....*

A newspaper article one week later reported that Father Willmes presented Mr. Lyman with a gold watch and 14 carat gold chain a few days after the fair. The gift was bestowed in gratitude for the support that Lyman had showed for the fair and the building of the church.

Recent efforts have been made to locate the famous "gold-headed cane" through the Croat family, but sadly, its fate is unknown.



# St. Mary's Timekeeper

In downtown Port Washington neither resident nor visitor is ever in need of a wrist watch. The clock in St. Mary's church steeple has been one of our city's most familiar and visible timekeepers since 1885.

While the early parishioners of St. Mary's can be credited with building a landmark church, it has long been forgotten that our Protestant brothers and sisters of Port Washington provided the clock for St. Mary's church tower.

At the time St. Mary's church was under construction in 1883, H. W. Lyman, who was the owner of the Western Malleable and Grey Iron Works Company, and a Protestant, organized a committee to raise funds for the clock. The group raised \$600 from non-Catholic residents of Port Washington.

Lyman and the other donors saw that the church building would be an architectural and spiritual focal point of the city and they looked for a way to actively participate in the incredible project. His committee ordered the clock from the Ansonia Clock Company of Brooklyn, New York in October of 1884. It arrived in Port Washington just before Christmas, but due to inclement winter weather, it was not installed until the second week in January in 1885.

The *Port Washington Star*, January 17, 1885 reported:

*The new tower clock on the Catholic Church is in running order and meets the approval of everybody. It strikes every hour and can be heard and seen a considerable distance.*

The four sided face of the clock measures seven feet in diameter. Old photographs of St. Mary's church reveal that the clock face was originally made of black-painted boards. In 1958, the black face was replaced with a white translucent face made by the Jerdin Company at a cost of \$4,865. The translucent face was illuminated from within, allowing the clock to be visible both day and night.

Needless to say, any time piece can struggle with accuracy, even one located in the House of God. An article from the *Port Washington Star*, August 6, 1898 addressed this reality:

*It's too bad that the big clock in the Catholic church tower is not regulated with railroad time. All this week it has been gaining and yesterday it was twelve minutes ahead.*



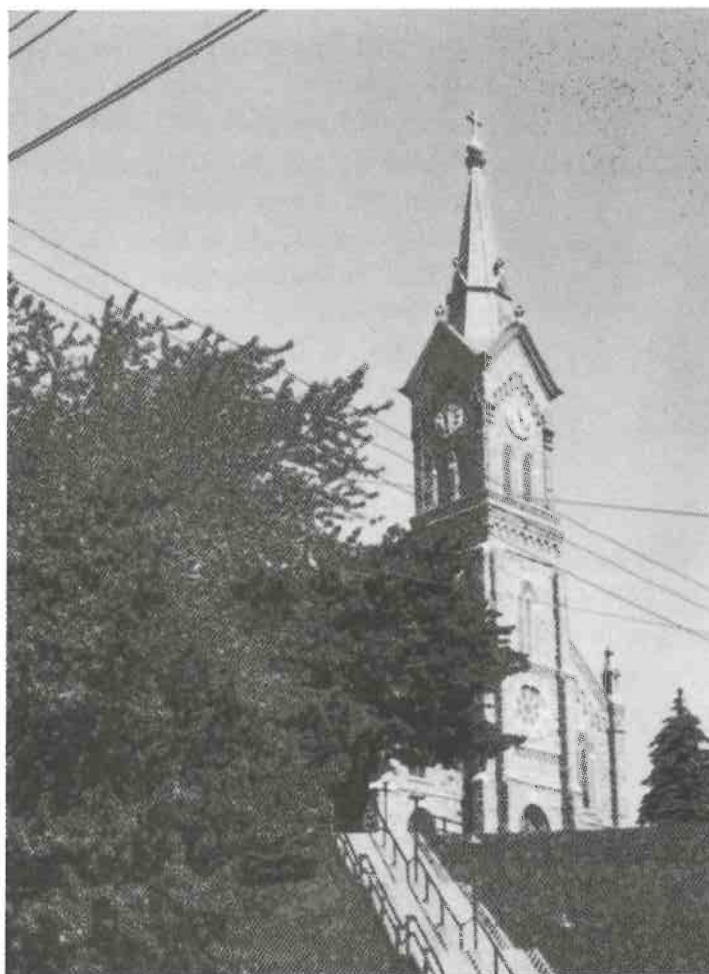
*St. Mary's Church with original black-faced clock.*

*Photo courtesy of Father Kevin Wester*





Despite some moments of “technical difficulty,” St. Mary’s clock has helped Port Washington mark time for 118 years. While ecumenism is a newer trend established by Vatican II, the St. Mary’s clock reflects the long-standing unity among Port Washington Christians.



*St. Mary’s Church with white translucent-faced clock.*

*Photo courtesy of Father Kevin Wester*



# The Thill Family Mausoleum



*Peter and Susanna (Watry) Thill on their 60th wedding anniversary in 1896. Note that Peter is wearing wooden shoes. Photo courtesy of Gordon and Mary Thill*

If you would like to become immersed in the history of St. Mary's Parish, simply open the heavy iron gate at the entrance of old St. Mary's Cemetery on N. Webster Street and W. Dodge Street. Weathered grave stones display many of the names of the pioneer parishioners who founded St. Mary's Parish.

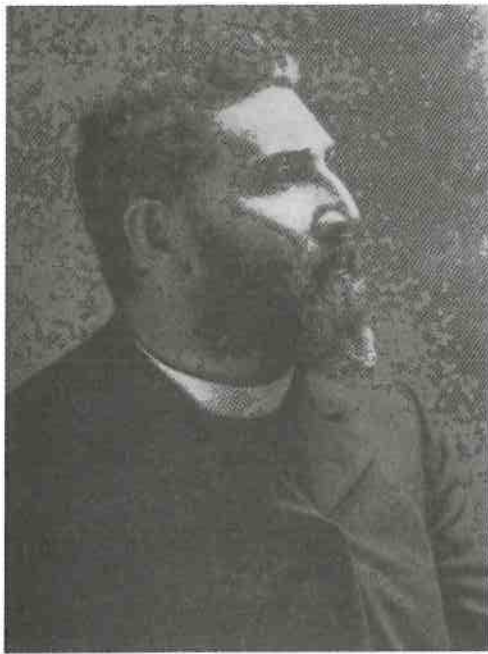
In addition to the old cemetery chapel, two interesting mausoleums grace this holy place. The larger one, a gray stone building, bears the Thill family name above its door. Its cornerstone is dated 1898. The Thills had been a prominent family, both in the Port Washington area and the Milwaukee Archdiocese, in an earlier era.

Members of the Peter and Susanna (Watry) Thill family, including two of their sons, Father Nicholas, and John G. are buried there. The Thill family, emigrating from Weiler-la-Tour, Luxembourg in 1847 to the Town of Belgium, near Holy Cross, became successful area farmers. In 1871 Peter and Susanna Thill retired and moved to Port Washington, where they lived for the remainder of their lives.

Peter and Susanna Thill had two sons who became priests, both prominent in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee: Father Dominic and Father Nicholas Thill. Father Dominic Thill was born on August 25, 1844 in Weiler-la-Tour, Luxembourg. He was three years old when the family emigrated to Wisconsin. He entered St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee and was ordained as a diocesan priest on January 29, 1868. He served at Holy Redeemer, Madison; St. Matthew's, Neosho; St. Bruno, Dousman; St. Mary's, Golden Lake; St. John, Waukesha; St. Mary's, Pewaukee; St. Mary's, Milwaukee; and St. John the Baptist, Jefferson. During these pastorates, he built a number of churches that are still in use today.

On September 1, 1892, Father Dominic switched parishes with his younger brother, Father Nicholas, due to his brother's ill health. He became the pastor at Holy Name in Sheboygan, and Father Nicholas took his place at St. John the Baptist in Jefferson.

During his 35-year pastorate in Sheboygan, Father Dominic made many improvements to the Holy Name Church, including a spectacular high altar and pipe organ, gifts from the Thill family. Father Dominic was recognized for his outstanding service by being elevated to the rank of Monsignor on October 8, 1922. He died in Sheboygan on January 11,



*Father Nicholas Thill, 1849 – 1898. Buried in old St. Mary's Cemetery, Port Washington.*

*Photo courtesy of Holy Name Parish, Sheboygan*

1927 and was buried there in Calvary Cemetery.

Father Dominic preached at St. Mary's Church dedication Mass in 1884. The statue of St. Dominic on the St. Joseph's side altar in our church was his gift to the parish.

Father Nicholas, the younger of the two brothers, was born on February 15, 1849 in Holy Cross. He also entered St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee and was ordained on December 22, 1872. He served at St. Lawrence Parish at St. Lawrence, and then became pastor of Holy Name Church in Sheboygan, where he built a large school at a cost of \$16,500.

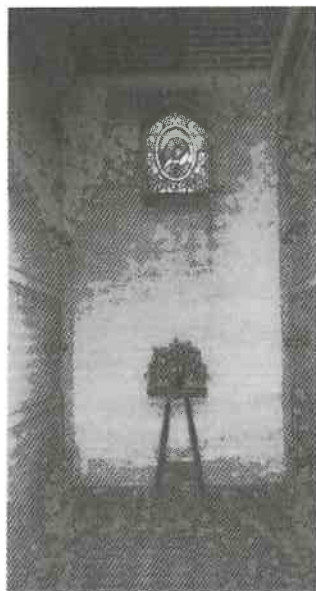
Perhaps his greatest contribution to the Sheboygan community was the organization of the city's first Catholic hospital. The hospital was named St. Nicholas Hospital in his honor and continues to serve the Sheboygan area to this day.

Father Nicholas suffered from poor health and in 1892, he exchanged parishes with his older brother, thus becoming the pastor of a smaller parish, St. John the Baptist in Jefferson. He served the Jefferson parish until his death on June 16, 1898. His body was brought back to Port Washington to the old St. Mary's Cemetery. The Thill family mausoleum was built at the time of his death.

The statue of St. Nicholas, located on the St. Mary side-altar in the church, was a gift from Father Nicholas to the parish when the building was completed in 1884.

The Thill's son, John is also buried in the Thill mausoleum with his wife Anna Gessner and their son Theodore. John and Anna, well-known residents of Port Washington, operated the Thill Hotel, which was located on the southeast corner of Main and Wisconsin Streets. It was one of the best known hotels in the county. The Thills had purchased the former American House Hotel in 1891. In 1902 the Thill's son, Oscar, built a large, three-story brick hotel building on that location. Today this building is the well-known "Port Hotel" restaurant.

The other members of the Thill family buried in the mausoleum include Peter and Susanna's daughter, Mary Thill, and her husband Theodore Jung. The Thill mausoleum now almost forgotten remains a perpetual monument to the faith and prominence of the Thill family.



*The interior and exterior of the Thill Mausoleum.*

*Photos courtesy of Terry Wester*



# *The Religious Goods Stores' Connection*

One long-standing aspect of Catholic tradition is the use of sacramentals. Rosaries, statues and holy medals are all examples of tangible articles we use to remind us of God's presence in our lives and our membership in the communion of saints. Within the liturgy, vestments and sacred images remind us of our most ancient rituals and traditions.

Over the years, the city of Milwaukee has been the home of a number of successful religious goods stores which supplied the area laity and churches with sacramentals. Three of Milwaukee's best known religious goods stores, the M. H. Wiltzius Co., the Diederich - Schaefer Co., and T. H. Stemper Co., have roots in St. Mary's Parish. The founders of these three companies were originally residents of Port Washington, members of St. Mary's Parish, and graduates of St. Mary's School.

Michael Wiltzius, owner of the M. H. Wiltzius Co., was born in Muskegon, Michigan on November 28, 1863. He came to Port Washington with his father and step-mother in 1865 at the age of two. His father, Nicholas Wiltzius, was born in Merl, Luxembourg in 1825, and his mother Anna Maria Hemmen was born in Kleinmacher, Luxembourg in 1841. Nicholas emigrated to the United States in 1849 settling in Muskegon, Michigan. He moved the family to Port Washington, founding the North Side Brickyard, later operated as the Guenther Brickyard.

Young Michael attended St. Mary's School and the 1860 and 1882 churches. While living in Port Washington he met William Diederich who later became his business associate. Michael attended St. Lawrence Seminary at Mount Calvary. In November 1883 he entered St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee to study for the priesthood. He left the seminary in 1885 and became a traveling salesman, for the *William Paschen Co.*, a wholesale and retail crockery business located at 317 - 319 Chestnut Street in Milwaukee. In 1887 he was employed by *Mahler & Abeles Co.*, a men's furnishings and wholesale notions company located at 342 E. Water Street in Milwaukee. That same year, Michael married Theresia Heintz of Appleton.

Michael purchased a small Milwaukee religious goods store in April 1889 known as M. Schuerbrock and Co. The store had been founded by Matthias Schuerbrock in 1872, and was located at 461 E. Water Street opposite the old St. Charles Hotel. In the first year of business, Michael



*Michael H. Wiltzius*

*Photo courtesy of Father Kevin Wester*



*Advertisement for  
M.H. Wiltzius Co. Religious Goods, 1896.  
Courtesy of Father Kevin Wester*

partnered with Charles H. Koenig. The store was known as Wiltzius & Koenig Co.

Michael's brother, Matthias, worked as a clerk in the store. Michael hired his Port Washington friend, William J. Diederich, as bookkeeper. In 1891 Michael ended his brief partnership with Charles Koenig and the business was renamed M. H. Wiltzius & Co. Diederich became a corporate officer, eventually purchasing the business from Wiltzius in 1911.

Michael's hard work and his keen business sense transformed the company over night. John F. La Boule, a Milwaukee attorney became a silent partner in the firm in 1893. The business moved to a five-story building located at 429-431 E. Water Street in 1896. Within a few years, Michael's corporation became the largest independent religious goods store in the entire United States.

The store sold a complete array of religious articles from holy medals and rosaries to vestments, candelabras and statuary. Michael made a minimum of one trip a year to Europe to purchase religious articles of all kinds. His store specialized in carved wooden statues from Oberammergau, Germany.

The M. H. Wiltzius Company also carried one of the largest inventories of Catholic books and literature in the country including prayer books and sermon books, as well as the works of the most noted Catholic authors. The M. H. Wiltzius Company published numerous prayer books under the company name.

In 1896 Michael purchased the rights to the official directory of Catholic institutions in the United States called "Hoffmann's Catholic Directory." This move made Michael's name known in every Catholic parish and institution in the United States. Michael published the directory until 1911 at which time he sold the rights to P. J. Kenedy & Sons. The directory is still in publication and remains the official Catholic directory for all Catholic institutions in the United States.

The company was incorporated in 1902. Michael H. Wiltzius served as president, John F. La Boule as Vice-President, and William J. Diederich as Secretary. In 1907, Michael opened a second branch of his store at North 7 Barclay Street in New York City. It too, became a success.

Michael organized the Michael Henry Statuary Company on April 4, 1911 with initial stock worth \$150,000. The business was located at 313-317 Milwaukee Street in Milwaukee. He set up an additional office at 856 W. 79th Street in Chicago, where he began producing a wide assortment of Catholic greeting cards. This store was known as the Wiltzius Catholic Gift Shop.

During the same year, Michael sold the religious goods portion of the Milwaukee store to his long-time friend and business associate, William J. Diederich, and to John P. Schaefer. In 1913 he left Milwaukee for Chicago. There, Michael concentrated solely on production and distribution of Catholic greeting cards.


Michael died at Mercy Hospital in Chicago on January 28, 1950. Services were held at Holy Name Cathedral in Chicago and he was buried there in All Saints Cemetery.

William Diederich was born in Kenosha on March 18, 1858 and moved to Port Washington with his parents as a young child. His father, John Diederich, born in Brucherhof, Canton Diekirch,

**The Catholic Church Goods House**  
(NEW QUARTERS)

—♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦—

**M. H. WILTZIUS & CO.,**  
Importers and Manufacturers.



Have opened up in new quarters, the nicest of its kind in the country. The line of goods presented is entirely new.

The finest line of  
**Religious Goods**  
ever shown in the city.

Importing Banners for Societies, Statues & VESTMENTS FOR CHURCHES is our specialty. Write to us for prices when anything in this line is required.

For the Religious, we carry the finest stock of the following at all times:

*Prayer Books, Wax Candles,  
Rosaries, Crucifixes,  
Holy Water Vessels, Religious Pictures, etc.*

Give us a call. We warrant satisfaction. Gentlemanly Clerks always in attendance.

**M. H. WILTZIUS & CO.,**  
429--431 EAST WATER STREET,  
OPP. KIRBY HOUSE.





*Advertisement for Diederich-Schaefer Co. Religious Goods, 1910. Courtesy of Father Kevin Wester*

Luxembourg in 1832, emigrated to the United States in 1851. William's mother, Mary Keenan, born in 1837 was an Irish immigrant. His father was a traveling salesman. As a boy, William attended St. Mary's School with Michael Wiltzius who later became his business partner.

When William purchased the M. H. Wiltzius Company, the name was changed to the Diederich & Schaefer Co. William served as president of the corporation along with officers Richard L. Gregory, vice president, John P. Schaefer, second vice president/manager, Oscar J. Holke, treasurer, and George F. Zander as secretary. The business continued to flourish, specializing in a vast array of religious goods.

William operated the business until his death in Milwaukee on September 16, 1923. Services were held at Sts. Peter and Paul Church and burial took place in Calvary Cemetery, Milwaukee. Following William's death, the store continued to be operated as Diederich & Schaefer Co. until

it went bankrupt in the 1930s. At that time, the statuary and metal goods portion were sold.

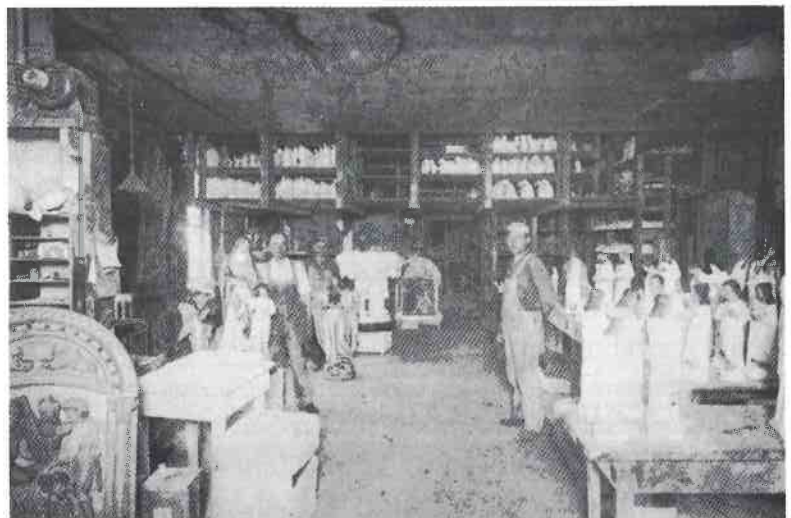
George Zander incorporated the vestment portion of the business and formed the Zander Company. The small retail portion of the business was reorganized as the Broadway Church Goods Company. The business location remained in the Diederich – Schaefer building on Broadway for some years, eventually relocating at 626 W. Wisconsin Avenue. Later, the company went out of business, marking the end of the Wiltzius – Diederich tradition in church goods.

A third premiere religious goods store, the T. H. Stemper Co., which also had ties to Port Washington and St. Mary's parish, is currently the largest in Milwaukee. The store is located at 1125 E. Potter Avenue on Milwaukee's near southeast side.

The founder, Thomas Henry "T. H." Stemper, was born in Knellsville on December 6, 1883. His father Mathias, was born in Wasserbillig, Luxembourg in 1834, emigrating to the United States in 1854. He spent a year in Chicago before settling in Knellsville. T.H.'s mother was Magdalena Ries, born in 1838 in Simmern, Luxembourg. Mathias and Magdalena were married in 1858 at St. Mary's in Port Washington.

The Stempers resided in Knellsville where Mathias was a well-

*Plaster Finishing Room of the European Statuary & Art Company owned by T.H. Stemper. Photo courtesy of T.H. Stemper Co.*



known blacksmith. They were members of St. Mary's and T.H. attended St. Mary's School. T. H.'s older brother, Henry Stemper, became the second priest son of St. Mary's Parish.

After graduating from St. Mary's School, T. H. Stemper attended St. Francis Normal School in St. Francis and became a teacher, graduating in 1901. In September, 1906 he was hired to teach sixth, seventh, and eighth grade boys at St. Boniface School in Milwaukee where his older brother, Father Henry Stemper, was the pastor. T.H. taught general subjects and music to the boys as well as forming the well-known St. Boniface Boys' Choir. He remained at the school for five years.

In 1911 T. H. became affiliated with the Herbert E. Schwartz Statuary & Marble Company located at 405 Potter Avenue [now 1125 E. Potter]. The business, founded in 1894 by Simon Rosenblatt, was having serious financial problems, including the potential for bankruptcy. T. H. initially served as secretary-treasurer, but soon purchased the failing company and brought it back to life. By 1914, the company was known as the European Statuary & Art Company and the company's primary business was the manufacture of plaster statuary. Even without a background in the church goods business, T. H. quickly turned the business around. He relied upon the design skills of European craftsmen supplemented by the production skills of domestic workers.

In 1912 T. H. became a traveling salesman for the H. E. Schwartz Company, a church goods store located at 345 Reed Street in Milwaukee, another unsuccessful venture of Herbert Schwartz. T. H. purchased this firm as well, relocating it in 1915 to a building adjacent to his statuary company. He quickly turned the business around, operating it as the Milwaukee Church Supply Company.

In 1946 T. H. incorporated both businesses under the current name, the T. H. Stemper Company, Inc. As the business evolved and customer expectations changed, so did the focus of the organization. Religious goods became the company's dominant activity. T. H.'s two sons, Eugene and Daniel, eventually joined their father in the business. Daniel assumed ownership in 1968. T. H. remained active in the business until his death in Milwaukee on October 23, 1978 at the age of 94.

The T. H. Stemper Co. continues to be operated by the Stemper family. Though Daniel J. passed away in 1980, his wife Jean and six of his sons, Daniel G., Peter, John, Joseph, Michael and James continue in the family tradition. The T. H. Stemper Co. ranks as one of the largest and most respected religious goods stores in the Midwest.



*Jeanne Stemper and sons of T.H. Stemper Co., 2003*

*Back L-R: Mike, John, Jim, Dan*

*Front L-R: Joe, Jeanne, Peter*

*Photo courtesy of T.H. Stemper Co.*





# *St. Alphonsus Hospital*

When St. Alphonsus Hospital opened its doors on May 1, 1941, it was welcomed as an invaluable addition to Ozaukee County, and was a matter of pride for the Port Washington Catholic community. "St. Al's," as it was fondly called, was the first major hospital built in Ozaukee County. In 1939 the Milwaukee-based Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother began planning construction of a 50-bed hospital to be located on a 9-acre site on the north side of Port Washington. Land was purchased for this purpose by the City of Port Washington. The entire cost of the hospital building, over \$500,000, was born by the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother.

The first sisters, Sister Mary Anita, Sister Mary Gottfrieda, Sister Mary Bartholomae, Sister Mary Melitina and Sister Mary Mildred, arrived at the hospital in 1941 while the building was still under construction. Sister Anita later became the supervisor of surgery and anesthetist, and Sister Gottfrieda, the medical records director. They remained with the hospital for many years and were well-known in Port Washington. Sister Bartholomae, who served as supervisor of the building project, visited the hospital periodically over the years.

St. Mary's pastor, Msgr. Peter Hildebrand, officiated at the hospital's cornerstone laying ceremony on November 3, 1940 - the climax of a three-day celebration. The event was attended by an illustrious group of participants. The master of ceremonies was John H. Kaiser, the mayor of Port Washington. Speakers included U. S. Senator Robert LaFollete, Milwaukee Mayor Carl Zeidler, Reverend H. A. Fleer of Chicago, State Senator Harry W. Bolens of Port Washington, State Assemblyman Nic Bichler of Belgium, Dr. Richard Kalb of Grafton, and George Hutter, general contractor for the hospital construction.

During the first year of hospital operation, 1,565 patients were admitted, including 695 surgical cases. Two hundred twenty-two newborn babies also made their debut.

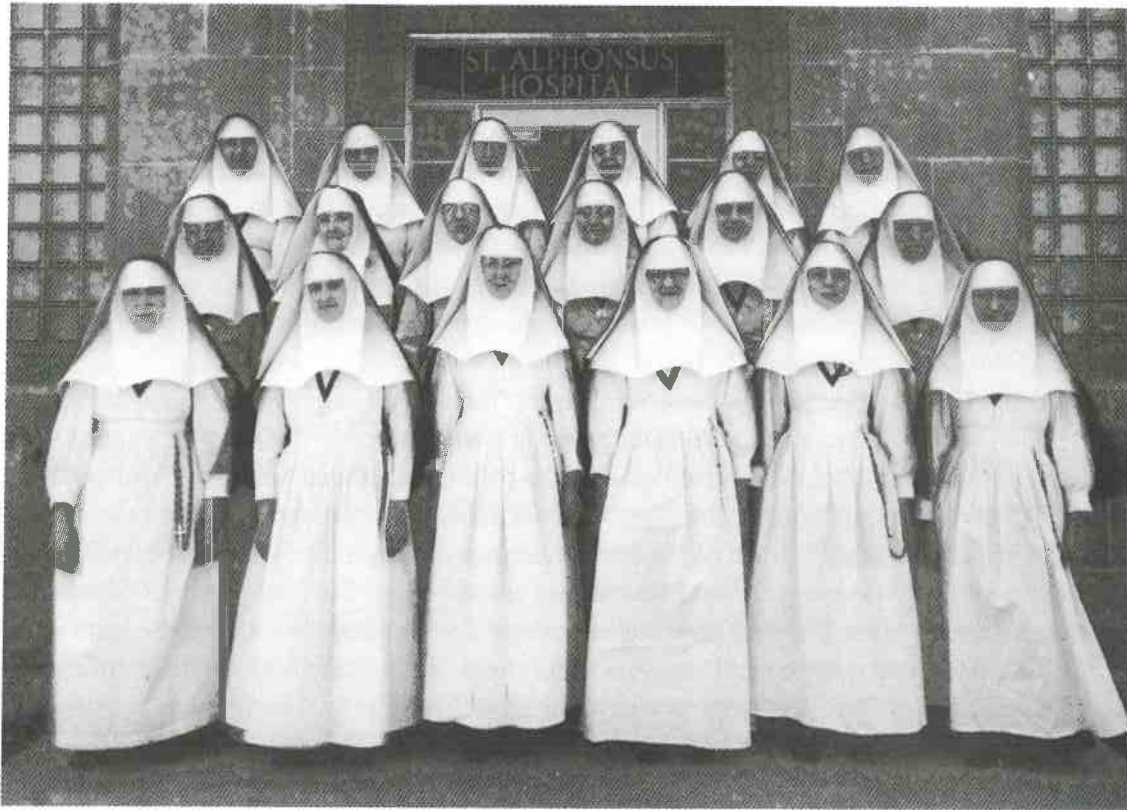


*St. Alphonsus Hospital, 1941, before addition.*

*Photo courtesy of Father Kevin Wester*







*Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother staffing St. Alphonsus Hospital at its opening in 1941.*

*Front Row: Sr. M. Siegfrieda Regnet, Sr. M. Athanasia Doellinger, Sr. M. Anita Mayer, Sr. M. Melitina Soergel, Sr. M. Ritanella Schmidt, Sr. M. Gottfrieda Neubig*

*Middle Row: Sr. M. Hiltrudis Neumann, Sr. M. Antonia Gosar, Sr. M. Quirina Siewert, Sr. M. Bartholomea Betzen, Sr. M. Martina Fehringer, Sr. M. Eucheria Riepl*

*Top Row: Sr. M. Amantia Meier, Sr. M. Mildred Harrer, Sr. M. Rudolphina Bierschneider, Sr. M. Bernice Hilger, Sr. M. Kathryn Wohn, Sr. M. Notburga Gehring.*

*Photo courtesy of the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother*

Over the years, St. Mary's Parish maintained a close connection with the hospital by providing chaplain services for patients. This chaplaincy relationship lasted from 1941 to February 1949, when a resident chaplain was appointed by the Archdiocese.

The patient numbers calculated at the end of each successive year showed a pattern of regular growth. The hospital sought and received Joint Commissions (JCAHO) accreditation, an elective program requiring adherence to superior standards of patient care.

In 1955 the Sisters increased their holdings by purchasing additional property adjacent to the hospital in anticipation of expansion. Much of this land was used by the Sisters for gardening. Many Port Washington residents will remember the enormous, well-tended gardens that were part of St. Al's landscape. For years the Sisters grew and preserved many of the fruits, grains, and vegetables served to the patients and the staff.

By the late 1950s, a growing Ozaukee County population and changes in modern medicine, called for an increase in hospital beds and space for additional services and equipment. The Sisters responded with a building program that included the addition of two wings and a fifth floor.

The expansion increased the hospital's capacity to 120 beds. The overall investment, approxi-



mately 3 million dollars, was partially funded by the federal government. All diagnostic and treatment areas, as well as the main entrance and the ambulance sections, were enlarged and revised to meet current medical standards. The second cornerstone ceremony was held on April 18, 1960. Msgr. Peter Hildebrand, still St. Mary's pastor, officiated once again.

The hospital prospered. The medical staff grew, due to a successful recruiting program, from seventeen general practitioners in the early 1960s to over 60 physicians, most of them specialists. The Sisters faithfully ministered to the needs of the patients 24 hours a day. As the number of religious dwindled, an increasing number of positions were filled by lay staff members from the Port Washington area and neighboring communities. A group of young physicians brought 24-hour emergency room service to the hospital in the early 1980s.

In 1985 the Daughters of Charity of Milwaukee purchased St. Alphonsus Hospital from the Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother, and the hospital's name was changed to St. Mary's Hospital – Ozaukee. The Daughters of Charity began a concerted effort to encourage southern Ozaukee County physicians to practice at St. Mary's in Port Washington, instead of sending their patients to Milwaukee hospitals. Their efforts to improve the utilization of the Port Washington hospital proved unsuccessful.

Residents of Port Washington were very disappointed when the Daughters of Charity announced their plan to replace the Port Washington hospital with a new hospital to be built in Mequon. St. Al's had been a large local employer and most of the staff lived in the immediate area. The hospital's presence in Port Washington was a matter of comfort and security to community residents, as well as an element of local pride.

A new St. Mary's Hospital – Ozaukee was built over a period of several years in Mequon, on Port Washington Road. The new hospital opened in 1994 and the Port Washington hospital closed its doors as a hospital for the final time.

The building was sold to a firm whose intent was to provide housing for senior citizens. The old hospital building was completely renovated and converted into tastefully designed retirement apartments. The facility is now operated as "Harbor Campus" offering various levels of assisted and independent living. Currently there are 115 residents at Harbor Campus with a maximum capacity of 130.

Though losing the hospital was a blow to the Port Washington community, time has healed most of the early disappointment and frustration felt by Port Washington residents. While stories reminiscent of old "St. Al's" continue to circulate in the community, most residents have successfully adjusted to using and supporting the new St. Mary's Hospital – Ozaukee in Mequon.

The two St. Mary's hospitals, both Milwaukee and Ozaukee, merged with Milwaukee's Columbia Hospital a number of years ago. Recently, the Ozaukee hospital's name was changed to Columbia-St. Mary's, reflecting this union.



# Parish Community

## *Christian Women's Society*

The Christian Women's Society of St. Mary's Parish is committed to promoting Christian values through personal example and to offering social opportunities for women of the parish. The society provides financial support and volunteer hours to assist with the needs of St. Mary's church and Port Catholic School. Proceeds from twice-annual bake sales sponsored by the society are used to purchase altar linens, candles, flowers and hosts for the parish.

A cloth ribbon, dated the 12th day of December, 1853, which commemorates the "St. Mary's Society of Catholic Women in Port Washington", is one of the oldest artifacts in parish possession. The printing is in German and the ribbon belonged to Margaret (Wester) Martin. It can safely be assumed that this was St. Mary's oldest women's organization. The society can be traced through the Archdiocese's records back to 1859 when it was registered as St. Mary's Ladies Society.

Archdiocesan records indicate that a few years later, the Ladies Society was renamed the Married Ladies Society. The organization affiliated with the Confraternity of Christian Mothers in 1925 and from that time on it was known as the Christian Mothers Society.

Early society enrollment records show membership at three to four hundred women. In the late 1960s, the number of members dwindled as mothers entered the workforce, reducing their availability and their need for additional socialization. Subsequently, the group's name was changed to St. Mary's Christian Women's Society with membership open to all women of the parish, both married and single.

The organization's present officers are Nina Ryer, president; Ann Orvis, recording secretary; Carol Renzel, financial secretary; and Ione Schowalter, treasurer. The current roster of 157 names includes a number of two-generation mother/daughter memberships.

*The cloth ribbon of the St. Mary's Society of Catholic Women in Port Washington. The ribbon belonged to Margaret (Wester) Martin and is dated December 12, 1853.*

*Photo courtesy of Terry Wester*





# Those Famous Church Dinners

St. Mary's Congregation has had a long-standing tradition of serving good food and hosting great social events. The parish has been the home of innumerable banquets, receptions, dances, fish fries and famous church dinners over past the 150 years. These church dinners have not only been a source of additional income for the parish, but they have also fostered a spirit of community in the Port Washington area as well as providing an opportunity for a show of hospitality to a great number of visitors.

It is hard to imagine how many pounds of Swiss steak have been prepared by caring hands, October after October, or to count how many salads and desserts the women of our parish have produced in their home kitchens. Each dinner has proved to be a masterpiece of efficiency and hard work. Gene and Mary Meyer have been in charge of this awesome event for the past 12 years.

After the last of hundreds of satisfied patrons leave St. Mary's cafeteria and when the final dish has been washed and put away, the last of the exhausted volunteers faithfully turn off the cafeteria lights over freshly mopped floors and an immaculately clean kitchen.

Courtesy of St. Mary's Parish

ST. MARY'S • ST. PETER'S  
**Oktoberfest**  
1800 NORTH WISCONSIN STREET • PORT WASHINGTON  
Fri.-Sat.-Sun.  
**Sept. 21-22-23**  
Come enjoy the splendor of Autumn  
during Oktoberfest in  
Port Washington!  
THERE IS SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE... RAIN OR SHINE!  
Friday, September 21 **ALL YOU CAN EAT**  
**FRIDAY FISH FRY**  
4:30 to 8:00 pm  
7 to 11 pm  
"BARRY'S TRUCKERS"  
NO COVER



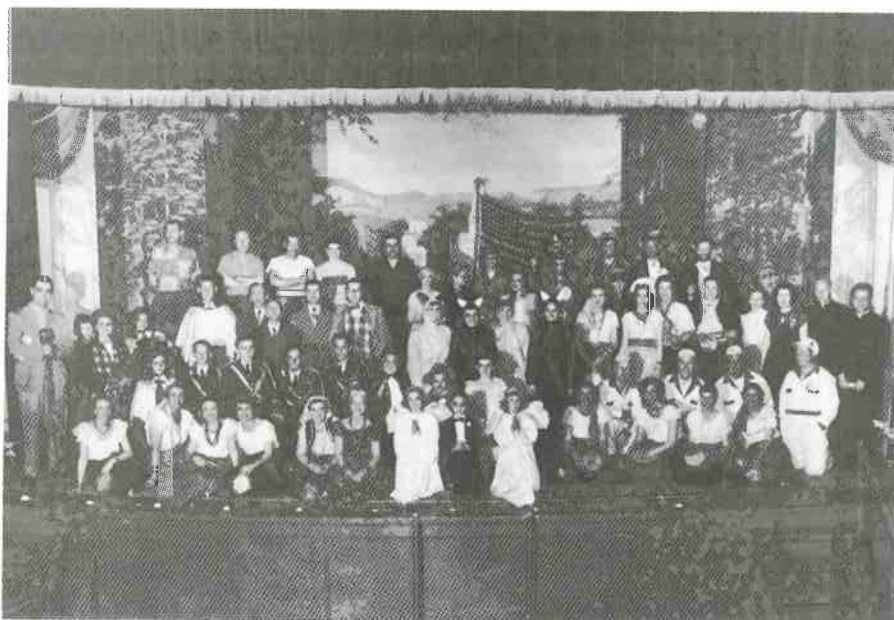
# Father Gundrum's Variety Shows

A little bit of Broadway was brought to Port Washington by Father Anthony Gundrum in the late 1940s and early 1950s while he served as an assistant pastor at St. Mary's. His dynamic annual variety shows captured the hearts and talents of a great number of St. Mary's parishioners, as well as the attention of the Port Washington community.

Each year an extravaganza of musical entertainment and comic skits was prepared. Parishioners responded to Father Gundrum's high energy and enthusiasm and worked feverishly to produce outstanding performances. Try-outs were held. Sets were built. Costumes were designed and rehearsals were constant until each production was perfected.

Set preparation and movement went like clockwork under the capable direction of Lawrence Verhayen, who called on his past experience in stage management. Able assistance with sets was provided by parish custodian, Peter Puerling. These two men upgraded the school's stage by changing all the stage ropes and revamping the lighting. Old scenery and sets were carefully stored in the school attic. Stage crew members of repute included: George "Babe" Steenis, Joe Schmidt, "Chibby" Lecher, Ed Molling, Frank Metz and John Bendt.

Many of the parish organizations contributed their latent musical, acting, and "acting out" talents, making each show a resounding and memorable event. The Daughters of Isabella Chorus, the St. Mary's School Band, the Holy Name Society, St. Mary's Chorus, Scout troops and parish sodalities all took part in the extravaganzas. Positive reviews of all the shows appeared in the *Ozaukee Press*.



*Variety Show cast  
and musicians on the  
stage in St. Mary's  
Auditorium. Father  
Gundrum standing  
on far right.*

*Photo courtesy of PWHSRC*





*A Variety Show performance  
Photo courtesy of PWHSRC*

Comic skits employed the thespian abilities of members of the Knights of Columbus including Donald Rilling, Alfred Freese, George Flierl and Willard Ewig, who performed in such notable dramas as “Operation Tape Worm.” A mellow quartet, “The Chordblenders,” composed of John Deppisch, Richard Lorge, Florian Bink and John Bink, could be counted on to belt out catchy tunes such as “Grandma’s Lye Soap” and “The Same Old Shillelagh.” They were the talk of Port Washington.

The Dixieland Band rocked with “Squeak” Hensel on trumpet, Gordie Sharbuno on clarinet, Billie Schiller on bass, “Perch” Rilling on drums, Willard Ewig on banjo, “Ziggy” Meyer on trombone and Harold Ewig on piano. The audience responded with much foot-tapping and swaying to the musical sounds of the South.


To quote Father Gundrum: “Our productions have always been based on the principle that a happy cast means a happy audience and a successful show.” Many parishioners’ names appear repeatedly on cast lists, year after year, as an indication of the enjoyment they found in being a part of these productions. A consistently packed school auditorium also gave testimony to the degree of entertainment provided by Father Gundrum’s Musical Revues.

*Courtesy of PWHSRC*

WELCOME ADDRESS .....	DICK LORGE Master of Ceremonies
ST. MARY’S SCHOOL BAND ....	HAROLD EWIG, Director
1. March “Progress” .....	Harold Bennett
2. Prince and Jester Overture .....	Otis Taylor
As the title implies, this overture describes the court life in the Middle Ages. In the opening we hear the dramatic entry of the Prince and the ensuing cheers of his retinue. He calls for his Jester to sing and amuse him. A solo cornet plays the song of the Jester. The Prince then orders the horses for a hunt of the wild boar, which is described in the fast movement which follows. After the boar hunt, the nobles participate in the revelry of the feast and dance. With the coming of nightfall, they remount and gallop back to the castle where the Prince again calls for the song of the Jester in which the entire company joins.	
OUR NATIONAL ANTHEM .....	JOHNNY DEPPISCH
Color Guard: Representatives of the Port Washington Junior Drum and Bugle Corps. — Harold Niesen Directing	

**Fifth Annual Variety Show**  
sponsored by  
ST. MARY’S PARISH

**Thousand Dollar Show**



ST. MARY’S AUDITORIUM  
PORT WASHINGTON, WISCONSIN

TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY EVENINGS  
MAY 4th AND 5th, 1954



# *St. Vincent de Paul Society*

The Port Washington Conference of the St. Vincent de Paul Society was formed at St. Mary's in May 1959 through the efforts of Msgr. Peter Hildebrand and six parishioners, Sam Bay, Clyde Weiland, Howard Schuknecht, James Lorge, Ben Bares and Joe Schowalter. The mission of the St. Vincent de Paul Society is to provide assistance to people in difficult financial circumstances and visitation of the hospitalized and the homebound in the community.

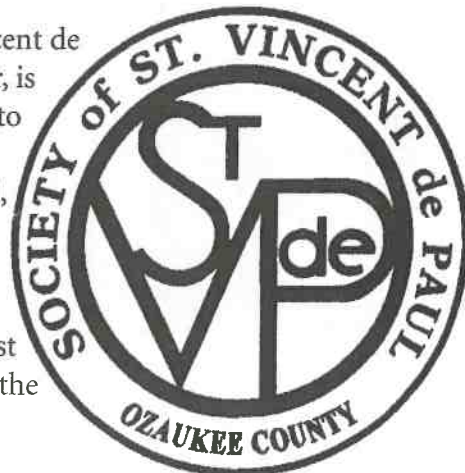
In the early years, contributions to the St. Vincent de Paul Society were left in a "poor box" located in the back of St. Mary's church. A second poor box was placed in St. Peter's church at the time that St. Peter's joined the conference. The meager proceeds from the poor boxes were supplemented by collections taken at each St. Vincent de Paul meeting. Large metal receptacles for donated clothing were also placed at both parishes. Sylvester Prom managed the collection and distribution of clothing until the first St. Vincent de Paul Store was opened in 1973.

This first store, sponsored by the Port Washington and Saukville conferences, was located in the Schnitzer Meat Market building on Franklin Street. Mike Tackes headed an appointed Board of Directors and the Archdiocese provided funds for store fixtures and a pick-up truck. The grand opening of the store occurred on July 5, 1973 with three paid employees, store manager, Erv Peiffer, and two truck drivers. A number of dedicated volunteers put in countless hours before becoming salaried at \$1.85 per hour.

Within a short time the store became too small and the Marchese Building on Lakeshore Road in the Town of Port Washington was purchased and substantially remodeled. The second St. Vincent de Paul Store opened to the public in July, 1977. An addition was added in 1978, and a truck garage was built in 1979. After the store became financially stable, each of the six Ozaukee County conferences began receiving \$500 per month to assist them in their ministry.

The Port Washington Conference of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, a member of the Ozaukee County Chapter, is well established in its outreach program and continues to fulfill the mission defined by its founder, Frederick Ozanam, a French statesman - to seek out those in need, and to provide them with both physical and spiritual assistance.

Parishioner Mike Tackes has been a member of the Port Washington Conference since 1963, and is a past recipient of the St. Vincent de Paul Ozanam Medallion, the Society's highest award for distinguished and continued service to the organization.





# Men's Clubs

Documents recently recovered from the 1901 cornerstone of the old Ozaukee County Court House, testify to a long history of organizations for the men of our parish. The St. Francis Xavier Benevolent Society and the St. Aloysius Young Men's Benevolent Society were among St. Mary's earliest men's groups.

Copies of the societies' turn-of-the-century membership rosters, listing the names of close to 100 parish men, can be found at the Port Washington Historical Society's Research Center. These two societies gave way to the organization of the St. Mary's Holy Name Society which disbanded in 1960.

In 1972 a group of interested men from the parish organized St. Mary's Men's Club. The organization lends assistance to the parish in a variety of ways, holding periodic bake sales to raise money for their projects.



*The St. Francis Xavier Benevolent Society on the front steps of St. Mary's Church with Pastor Father John Kessler and his assistant Father Michael Stier. Circa 1912 - 1913*

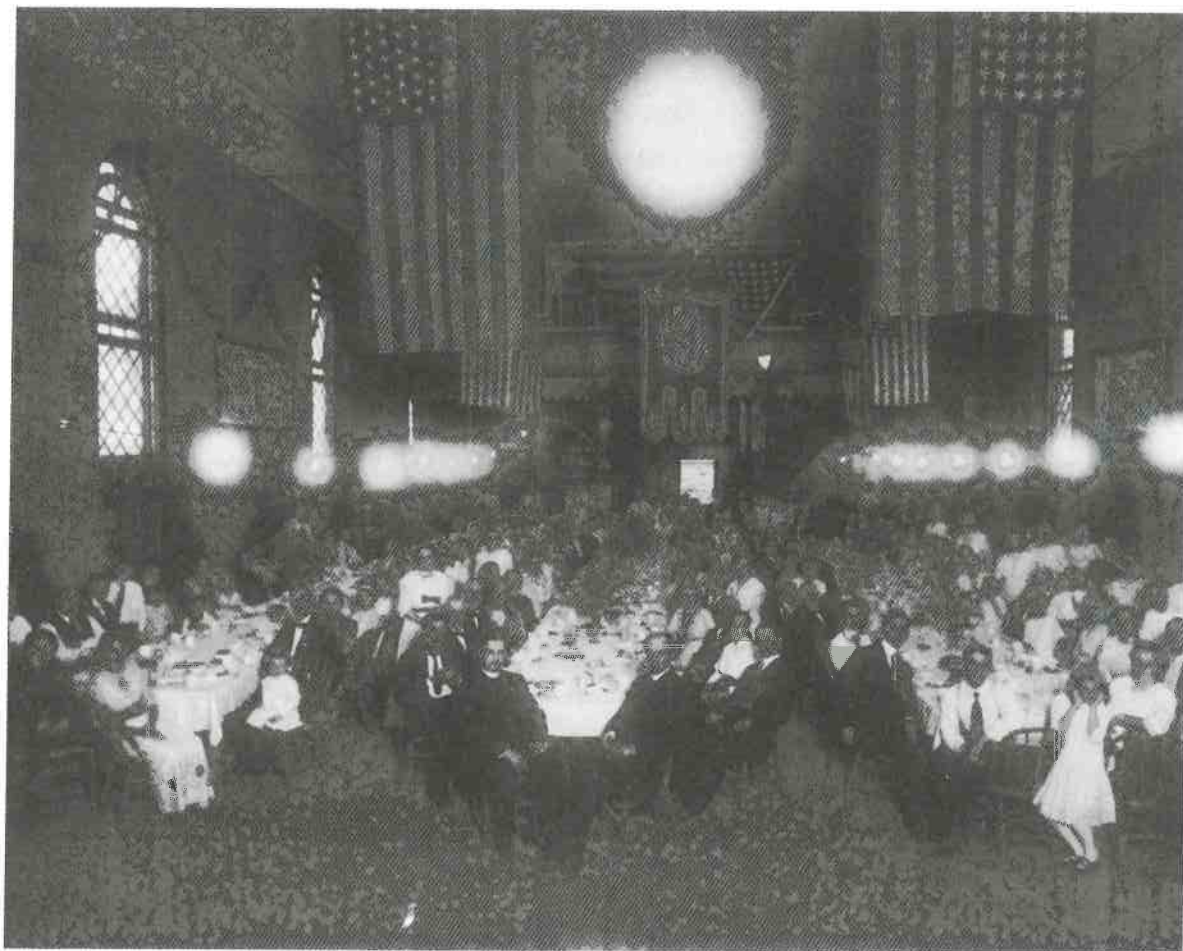
*Photo courtesy of PWHSRC*





The Men's Club considers itself to be a service organization, providing tuition assistance for Port Catholic students, and serving as a benefactor to scouting and the MIZU program. They place special emphasis on serving the elderly. The men also organize travel tours for parishioners throughout the United States. In addition, the membership is available to serve any parish need which requires "manpower."

Current officers are Gene Meyer, president and Vernon Schmit, secretary/treasurer. According to one of the officers, the Men's Club membership is small, but they make up for what they lack in size with a willing spirit and enthusiasm for meeting any special needs of the parish.



*St. Francis Xavier Benevolent Society banquet in old St. Mary's Hall (formerly the 1860 church).*

*Circa 1912 - 1913*

*Photo courtesy of PWHSRC*



# The Inception of St. Peter's Parish

Port Washington experienced a rapid growth in population, both to the north and the west, during the 1950s. Toward the end of the decade discussion started regarding a possible need for a second parish. In a letter dated May 18, 1959, Msgr. Leo Brust, chancellor of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, requested that Msgr. Hildebrand of St. Mary's begin a search for ten to fifteen acres of land for a new parish.

Over the next three years, the debate took on increasing significance. St. Mary's School was feeling the effects of the "baby-boom" and was seriously overcrowded. In 1962, the first grade was suspended due to the lack of classroom space, and it was predicted that second grade would have to be abandoned by 1964.

Msgr. Brust was present for a parish corporate meeting held on November 18, 1962. The minutes stated:

*General discussion was on the question whether to organize a new parish in Port Washington or to start with a school program. Opinions expressed were that a school program could be in operation much sooner than organizing a new parish. The school to be built, operated, and financed by St. Mary's Congregation until such a time when the new, second parish is organized and ready to take over. Msgr. Brust to discuss the proposed school program with Archbishop Cousins, Msgr. Goebel and Father Braun at a future date at the Chancery Office and Father Braun to report on their decision.*

A recommendation was made and accepted to purchase 21 acres of land on the north side of the city. The land was purchased on January 10, 1963 from Nick and Anna Jacques for \$42,000.

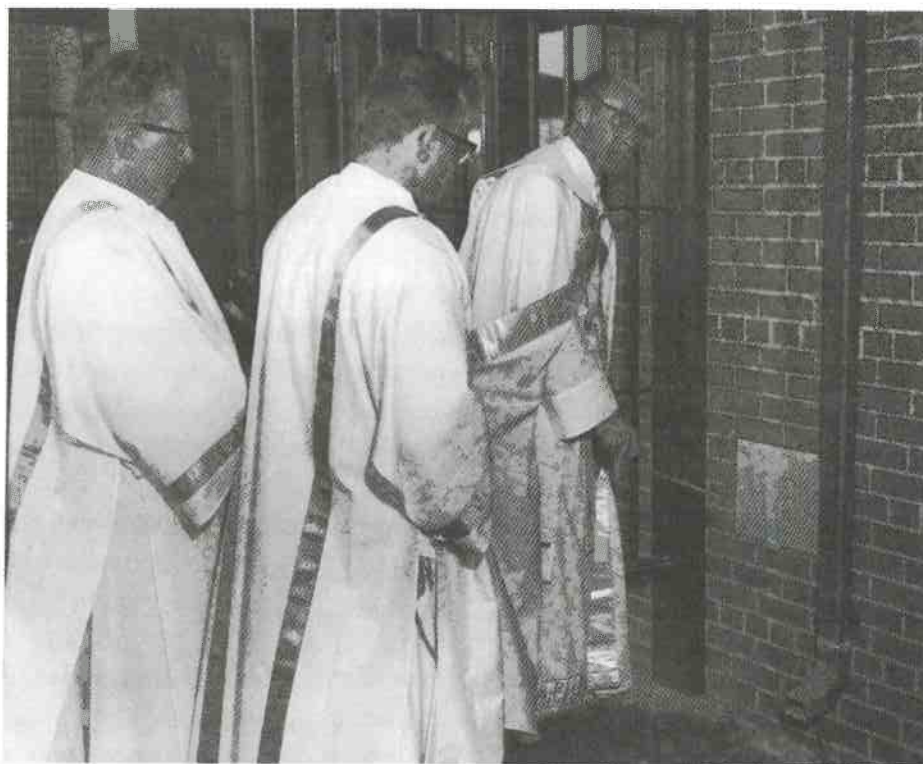
The trustees met again on December 19, 1962 and Father Braun reported on a meeting with Archbishop Cousins. The minutes of that meeting stated:

*The decision made by the Archbishop to proceed with the building of a 10-room school with an auditorium to be used for weekday and Sunday Masses, to be financed, operated and maintained by St. Mary's Congregation until the organization of a new parish is decided upon. Thereupon the newly organized parish to take over the financial, operating, and maintenance. Also a third assistant [priest] to be assigned to St. Mary's when the above program goes into effect.*

Shortly thereafter, planning began for a new school facility. An early estimate of the cost was \$500,000 and Blong, Kempf, Schmid, and Erlich Architects, Inc. was chosen to design



*Father Edgar Braun  
blessing the cornerstone of  
the St. Peter's facility,  
October 25, 1964.  
Photo courtesy of PWHSRC*



the facility. At the same time, plans were being formulated for a larger, new rectory for St. Mary's to accommodate the current priests plus an additional priest who would be assigned to serve the expanded parish. It was Archbishop Cousin's hope that a new parish could be formed two years after the school facility was completed.

The two-year goal seemed unrealistic to those involved with the building project and those working out the financial details. Consensus was that more time would be needed.

Ground breaking took place on September 1, 1963. The new facility was to be named St. Peter's School in memory of two former St. Mary's pastors, Msgr. Peter Holfeltz (1913-1938), and Msgr. Peter Hildebrand (1939-1962). At the time, it was believed that the St. Peter's facility would be a "mission" of St. Mary's parish, alleviating the school's critical classroom shortage.

As the project unfolded questions continually arose about the relationship between the St. Mary's and the St. Peter's facilities. Finances were at the heart of the discussion.

At a parish meeting on October 6, 1963, with 200 parishioners present, Father Braun announced that the total cost projection had increased to \$962,000 for the land purchase, the new school and the new rectory. The project had already been approved at a previous parish meeting and \$700,000 in financing was subsequently arranged with the B. C. Ziegler Company of West Bend in November.

St. Peter's School opened on September 9, 1964. The final phases of construction were completed a short time later. Sister Mary Marlena served as the first principal with a staff of two other sisters and three lay teachers. Two hundred forty-three students were enrolled in grades 1 – 6. The uncertainty of the relationship between new the facility and St. Mary's Parish was described in an *Ozaukee Press* article dated September 17, 1964:

*Technically the new school is known as St. Mary's second school, as the sign before the new structure proclaims. It will become St. Peter's officially only after the new parish is established legally.*





Father Braun, accompanied by St. Mary's assistant priests, blessed the cornerstone of St. Peter's School on Sunday, October 25, 1964. Though it was anticipated that the St. Peter's facility would remain part of St. Mary's Parish corporation for a number of years, this was not to be the case. On March 31, 1965, Msgr. Brust wrote to Father Braun, giving him the authority to incorporate St. Peter of Alcantara as a separate parish. Father Braun was assured that he would be pastor of both parishes. Articles of incorporation for St. Peter's Parish were signed December 15, 1965 in Port Washington, and on February 2, 1966 at the Archdiocese.

In July 1966, the severance process began, and by-laws for the St. Peter's corporation were adopted on August 15, 1966. A geographical division at Jefferson Street and Douglas Street was created. Twelve hundred-fifty families remained with St. Mary's, and 470 families were assigned to St. Peter's. A decree of canonical erection of St. Peter's Parish, dated October 19, 1966, was issued. On the same day, Father Stanley Klauck, an assistant at St. Mary's, was appointed as the first pastor of St. Peter's Parish.

There was heated debate over the division of the \$560,000 debt incurred by St. Mary's for the construction of St. Peter's. St. Mary's was already heavily in debt due to building a new rectory concomitant with the St. Peter's project. As an independent parish, St. Peter's was considered to be over-mortgaged.

Many proposals regarding division of the debt between the two parishes were considered and rejected. The final decision was made by the Archdiocese. St. Mary's was directed to assume two-thirds of the debt and St. Peter's one-third. This decision was not easily accepted by many of St. Mary's parishioners and a spirit of animosity prevailed.

Over the ensuing years, recollection of the early strained relationship between the parishes has dimmed. The passage of time has mellowed memories of the drama and trauma of the separation. The formation of Port Washington Catholic School and other collaborative programs have created a sense of unity between the two parishes and Port Washington Catholics.



*The original interior of St. Peter's Church, 1964.*

*Photo courtesy of Archdiocese of Milwaukee*





# *Liturgical Ministries*

Prior to the Second Vatican Council, laypersons had few opportunities for active participation in the celebration of the liturgy. Changes began as the Vatican II documents, encouraging roles for the laity, were interpreted and subsequently implemented at the local parish level. "Altar boys" and ushers had been time-honored traditions, but with the introduction of laypersons as lectors, cantors, and Eucharistic ministers, a new era of lay involvement began.

## **Lectors**

The first Vatican II liturgical ministry introduced at St. Mary's was that of lay reader or lector. In the early 1960s, Father Ralph Robers, associate pastor of St. Mary's, trained parishioners of both St. Mary's and St. Peter's to serve as lectors. The role of the lector was to proclaim the First and Second Reading at the Mass. The proclamation of the Gospel was reserved for the priest or deacon.

Initially, only men filled the lector positions. Parishioners Joseph F. Schmidt, Orville Froh, and Gus Gnorski were among the first lay lectors. Charles Ross, also a charter member of the program, continues to serve as a lector and is also a mentor for new participants in the ministry. Today, there are 24 lectors at St. Mary's, both men and women, assisting Father Sommer in disseminating the Word of God.

## **Cantors**

Singing the Responsorial Psalm as part of the liturgy was encouraged by the Archdiocese as a liturgical norm in the early 1970s. With that interest in mind, the Christian Women's Society sponsored music director, Ann Celeen Dohm's attendance at the National Pastoral Musician's Conference in Indiana.

The cantor program began timorously with three persons serving as cantors at each service. The cantor program took off with so much enthusiasm and such confidence that within a month it was found that one person could handle the entire ministry at each Mass. The cantor roster grew quickly. Some of the original cantors were Bob Goebel, Paul Buser, and Bill Henkle who today, continue to lead the congregation in singing the Responsorial Psalm, the Gospel Acclamation and the Lamb of God.



## Eucharistic Ministers

Another important liturgical role created after Vatican II was the Eucharistic Minister. A group of St. Mary's parishioners were sent to a "Lay Distributor" training course in Fond du Lac which was sponsored by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. They learned how to assist the priest in distributing Holy Communion to the faithful, both at Mass and to the homebound. Only husband and wife teams served as Eucharistic Ministers when the program was initiated. Now single men and women are also welcome to participate.

The Eucharistic ministry attracted a reliable group of parishioners who have continued to serve the parish through the years. Julie Ross, daughter of Charles and Ann Ross, has joined her parents as a second-generation Eucharistic Minister. Madeline Prom, currently in charge of scheduling Eucharistic Ministers, is the matriarch of a three-generation team. Her daughters, Linda Mitchell and Barbara Nitzke, as well as her grandson, Brian Nitzke followed her lead in participating in the ministry.

## Servers

Perpetuating an ancient tradition, young men of St. Mary's Parish continue to fulfill the important role of assisting the presiding priest in liturgical services. Historically they were known as "altar boys" as the old rule dictated that assisting at Mass was a privilege reserved only for the male members of the parish.

In the past years of more elaborate ceremony, four servers were assigned to assist at High Mass and two servers were present at Low Mass. Especially talented and dedicated servers were designated to assist at Benediction, Stations of the Cross and during visits by the Bishop.



*Msgr. Peter Hildebrand and Father Charles Schuerell with servers at St. Mary's Church, circa 1950s.*

*Photo courtesy of PWSHRC*

In the mid-1990s, girls were offered the opportunity to serve Mass at St. Mary's for the first time. According to scheduler Drew Rutz, there are currently 48 active servers, male and female, on the server roster.

Arthur "Mike" Gerold, at the age of 87, is among the most active members of the group. Mike started to serve six years ago. He serves twice a month at the 11:00 a.m. Sunday Mass, participates in Monday Adoration of the Eucharist, assists at all funeral Masses and is on "emergency call." Mike had no previous experience as a server before joining Father Al at the altar. He was a convert to the Catholic faith in adulthood. Mike states that he was "scared stiff" at the start but now "just can't explain in words" the special feeling he experiences when assisting at the altar.

### Ushers

St. Mary's Ushers Society is among the oldest of the parish organizations. Current membership is 35. The number of years of service provided by individual ushers on the schedule ranges from one to fifty-five years.

Norbert Augustin holds an amazing fifty-five year record, matched only by the late Ambrose Wester, who retired in 1996 after ushering from 1940 through 1995. St. Mary's Ushers handle a variety of responsibilities including seating parishioners as they arrive for Mass, collecting the offering and assuring an orderly procession during the reception of Communion. In addition, the ushers are on hand to efficiently manage any emergencies that may affect members of the congregation during Mass. There is one chief usher and one head usher at each service.

The Ushers Society meets five times per year for procedural review, problem solving and assignment of extra duty for other church activities in addition to the regularly scheduled weekend Masses. Emergency management education is provided periodically by paramedics, nurses and representatives of the Port Washington Fire Department.

### Greeters

Early in the 1990s, a plan to initiate the ministry of greeter was proposed to the Liturgy Committee by Judy Novak, a parishioner who was studying to become a Pastoral Associate. With the committee's backing, Judy enrolled a group of willing parishioners and a new liturgical ministry at St. Mary's was born.

The greeters serve by welcoming fellow parishioners and visitors as they gather for Mass and by securing volunteers to bring forward the gifts of bread and wine during the Mass. Delores Sauer coordinates the greeter program, managing the schedule for 36 greeters.

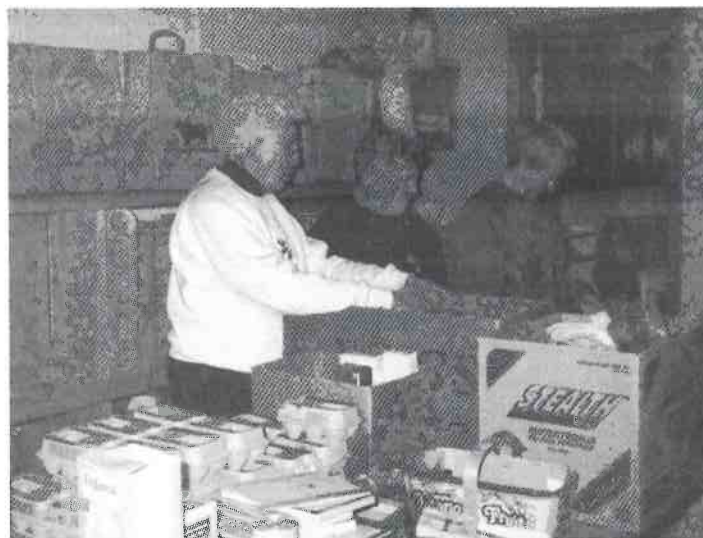


# Human Concerns Committee

The Human Concerns Committee believes in “putting faith into action.” The committee is a standing committee of the parish councils of both St. Mary’s and St. Peter’s Parishes. Committee goals include reflecting on and responding to social issues affecting the family and community life, helping parishioners understand their personal Christian responsibility for other human beings and the well-being of the environment and serving as a supporting group for direct-care service organizations.

Members of both parishes exercise stewardship through active participation in the St. Benedict the Moor (St. Ben’s) Meal Program in Milwaukee, the Interfaith Caregivers of Ozaukee County, the St. Vincent de Paul Society and the Ozaukee County Food Pantry. St. Mary’s Human Concerns Committee is a member of the Archdiocese’s *Voices For Justice* network which addresses social issues and encourages positive action. The committee oversees parish participation in the partnership established with St. Joseph Parish in Clintwood, Virginia, an Appalachian community.

In addition, the committee sponsors the Share Grief Group, visitation to the homebound, pro-life activities and other activities which provide service for the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Currently, the Human Concerns Committee is encouraging support of the Habitat For Humanity project in our community. The needs of our community and beyond are many. Human Concerns welcomes anyone willing to participate in the activities it sponsors. The Human Concerns Committee was formed nearly ten years ago with Marliss Rogers serving as the Committee’s chairperson for all of those years.



*Dedicated parishioners ready to serve clients at the Ozaukee County Food Pantry.*

*L-R: Rita Ryer, Donna Reimer, Marliss Rogers.*

*Photo courtesy of Marliss Rogers*





# Teaching the Faith

## *St. Mary's School: A Legacy of Catholic Education*



*Mother Caroline Friess,  
foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame  
Photo courtesy of School Sisters of Notre Dame Archives*

Starting in 1853, the first year of organization of St. Mary's as a parish, Catholic education has been an important focus of the parish mission. In the early years, St. Mary's School existed under a variety of names and was served by a variety of teaching orders of sisters.

When the first school was organized by Father Sailer in 1853, it bore the name "St. Mary's School." We do not know exactly where classes were held at that time. The first teacher was F. X. Weinhard, a layman and friend of Father Sailer, who came to Port Washington at Father Sailer's request. Mr. Weinhard taught school for only nine months, then left to study for the priesthood at St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee.

Father Sailer secured Adolph Heidkamp of New York City in 1854 to assume directorship of the school. After two years, Heidkamp was elected to public office, and once again, St. Mary's was in need of a teacher for the school children. Father Sailer arranged for the Milwaukee based School Sisters of Notre Dame to take over St. Mary's School as one of their missions in 1856.

When the Sisters arrived in Port Washington, the parish rented a small frame house,



located approximately where the Parish Center stands today. This house served both as the school and the convent. It is told that the first floor of the building was devoted to classrooms and that the second floor loft, reached only by a ladder, became the Sisters' residence. Parishioners contributed furnishings for the Sisters' comfort.

This original school/convent building still remains with us, on St. Mary's Hill. To the east, across the school parking lot, the house is now located at 470 N. Powers Street. If you strip away the building's ornamental shutters, the wrought-iron front porch, the building additions, and the brick exterior, which was added by a later owner, you will see the building which served the very young St. Mary's Parish as its first school and convent.

While the structure originally stood on Johnson Street, it was moved to its present location on July 8, 1895 to make room for a new convent building. When the second convent was ready for occupancy, the original school/convent was sold to Sam Guenther, owner of the Guenther Brickyard which was then located on the lake front at the bottom of the north bluff. Guenther purchased the building as a home for his family and he, naturally, refaced the frame exterior with brick.

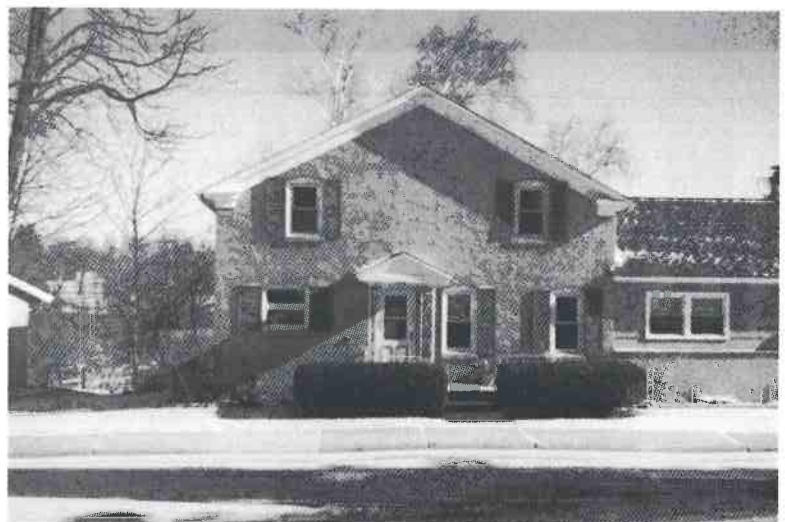
Edna Guenther, his daughter, recalls that her mother watched from the kitchen window at the end of each workday for her father's return home by a climb up the bluff. The home was owned for many years by William and Dorothy Koenig and is now occupied by their daughter Julie and her husband Charles Pfrang and their children.

St. Mary's School flourished under the tutelage of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Eighty students were enrolled by 1857, the year Father Sailer was transferred from Port Washington to St. Mary's Parish in Racine.

His successor, Father John Weikman, promptly dismissed the School Sisters of Notre Dame, and installed one of his own countrymen as director of the school. This arrangement lasted only for a period of four months after which the school was disbanded, the convent was emptied and the furnishings were sold. No classes were held until Father Sailer again returned to St. Mary's in 1863.

Father Sailer, at the urging of the parents, was able to re-establish the school by April, 1863. Father had met the Dominicans Sisters of Racine during his pastorate in that city and convinced the Order to send their Sisters to Port Washington to staff the school. The school was renamed the "St. Rose School" of St. Mary's and classes were held in rooms rented from Henry Evans on Pier Street.

The happiness resulting from the re-establishment of the school was detailed in the April 22,



*The first St. Mary's school and convent rented by the parish, now located at 470 N. Powers.*

*Photo courtesy of Suzanne Bruner*



1863 edition of the regional Catholic newspaper, the *Warheits Freund*, published in Cincinnati, Ohio:

*Port Washington, Wisconsin*

*Since last year's festive opening ceremony of our new church, the numerous Catholics here were never more moved as happily as they were since the arrival of four Sisters of the order of the Holy Dominicans, who, at the suggestion of our pastor, arrived here at the end of March from the motherhouse in Racine and on Easter Monday took over the newly established parochial school. Divided into three classes, they teach more than 200 children. "Thank God that we now have a Catholic school," thus sounds the call from all the worried parents.*

This era of Catholic education in Port Washington is also described in *Rooted in Hope: The Story of the Dominican Sisters of Racine, Wisconsin*, Sister Mary Hortense Kohler, 1962, p. 65:

*Even earlier than the opening of St. Mary School in Racine, Mother Benedicta [Bauer], while still living on the north side [of Racine], had accepted her first outlying mission, St. Rose School of St. Mary's parish, Port Washington.*

*Mother Benedicta spent a few weeks in Port Washington in March and April [1863]. Mother Hyacintha as superior, with two other Sisters whose names are not listed, opened the school in April. For three years the school prospered. Then Sisters Rose Loesch and Johanna Roller returned to Racine in the summer of 1866 leaving at the mission the novice, Sister Petrina Hock, ill with typhoid fever. Father Sailer had promised that his housekeeper would nurse the patient back to health. Mother Thomasina, however, had the novice brought to the Motherhouse. To prevent the spread of the contagion, she constituted herself as sole nurse and ministered to the sick Sister until her death on August 15 [1866].*

*That fall the Sisters did not return to Port Washington, for since the opening of that school three other missions had been accepted....Evidently there was not a sufficient number of Sisters to staff all the schools.*



Immediately after the Dominicans Sisters left Port Washington, Father Sailer convinced a fledgling order, the Sisters of St. Agnes of Barton, Wisconsin, to staff St. Mary's School. Three sisters were sent to serve the parish including Sister Clara Rehberg and Sister Agatha Bath. The Agnesian sisters, who were ill-prepared for school administration, left St. Mary's in June 1867.

Following that disappointing experience, the parishioners persuaded Father Sailer to erect a proper school building with the hope that it would attract a permanent relationship with a teaching order of sisters, providing greater stability for St. Mary's School.

Father Sailer purchased two additional lots and construction of the first parish-owned school building began. The two-story building, constructed of brick and measuring 33 x 60 feet, was erected between the 1860 church and the frame house that served as the first school/convent.

*Sister Hyacintha Oberbrunner, Dominican Sister from Racine, served St. Mary's School from 1863 – 1865.*

*Photo courtesy of Racine Dominican Archives*







*Sister Clara Rehberg, a Sister of St. Agnes from Barton, who taught at St. Mary's School from 1866-1867.*

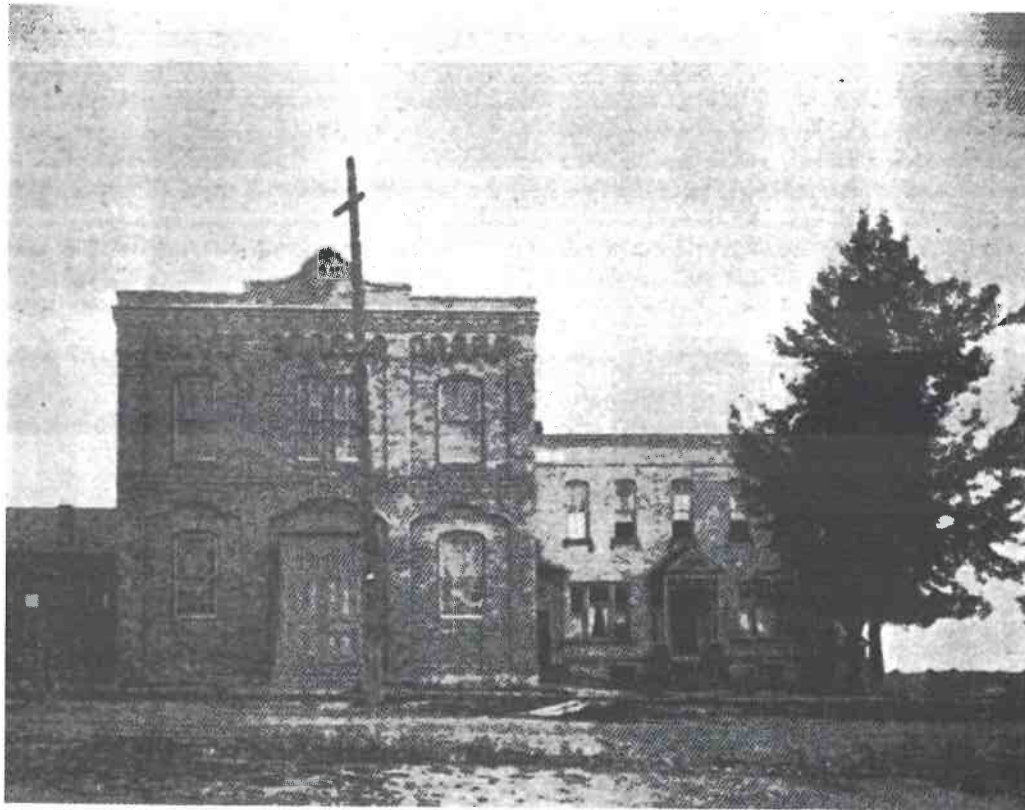
*Photo courtesy of Sisters of St. Agnes Archives*

Father Sailer was reassigned in November 1867 and left the parish before the building project was completed. His successor, Father August Durst, completed the school which cost \$7,000 but he was unable to secure an order of sisters to teach. Father Durst left St. Mary's in April 1870 and was replaced by Father F. X. Etschmann who remained at the parish only a few weeks.

On May 10, 1870 Father Henry Willmes took over as pastor and a new era began for St. Mary's School. His first major undertaking was to re-establish the school. Father Willmes was able to convince the School Sisters of Notre Dame to return to Port Washington once again.

After a 13-year absence, the sisters returned to the little convent and a new school building. The book *Mother Caroline and The School Sisters of Notre Dame In North America*, 1928, Vol. 1, p. 208, chronicles the return of the sisters to Port Washington:

*In 1870 the zealous Father Willmes became pastor, and immediately petitioned for the return of the sisters to his parish. It was a day of rejoicing for the parents and their children, when on September second, the School Sisters of Notre Dame arrived to resume charge of the classes. They*



*St. Mary's 1867 school and 1895 convent addition, circa 1908*

*Photo courtesy of PWHSRC*



*had left about eighty pupils in 1857, and after a lapse of thirteen years two hundred awaited them. This number has more than doubled in the course of the past fifty-six years. Well and aptly have the church and school been named in honor of Our Lady of Victory, for the parishioners have encountered obstacles but have also won victories.*

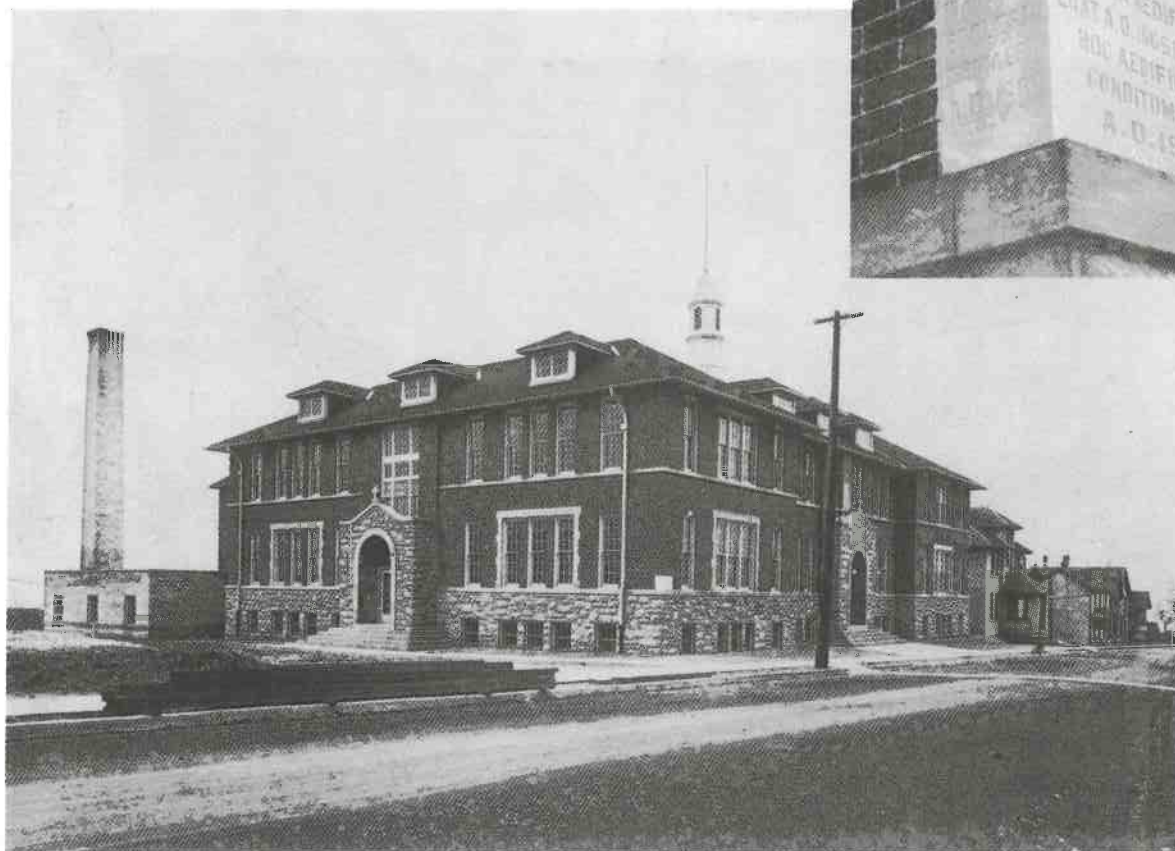
According to the records of the School Sisters, the first sisters to serve St. Mary's School in 1870 were Sisters Gualberta Obertin, Daniela Evers, Vitalis Meyers and a candidate, Josephine Schrupp.

Under the care of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, St. Mary's School flourished. By 1878, six sisters were serving the parish. In 1895, a two-story addition, attached to the south wall of the school, was built during the pastorate of Father Bernard Elskamp, providing more classrooms and a separate convent for the sisters. What a joyful day it must have been for the Sisters when they moved into a new home designed and built expressly for them! The addition was blessed on January 6, 1896.

As the school enrollment continued to grow, more sisters were needed to teach. By 1898, seven sisters were serving St. Mary's School, and by 1904, nine sisters. In 1910 eleven sisters were living in the convent, and the enrollment continued to increase.

In response to a pressing need for additional space, Father John Kessler, pastor and priest son of St. Mary's, called a parish meeting in March 1911 to discuss plans for a new convent to alleviate overcrowding. Mr. Hilger, an architect from Cedarburg, was hired to draw up plans for the approval

*Cornerstone of the 1916  
St. Mary's School  
Photo courtesy of Terry Wester*



*Second St. Mary's School - newly completed in 1917  
Photo courtesy of Archdiocese of Milwaukee*

of the parish building committee. Property adjacent to the south of the school was purchased from John and Maria Walsh as the site for the new building. The new convent, according to a June 6, 1911 article in the *Port Washington Star*, was to be a two-story structure, measuring 38 x 80 feet, with an anticipated cost of \$10,000. The work was completed and the sisters were able to move into their newly-constructed home on June 14, 1912.

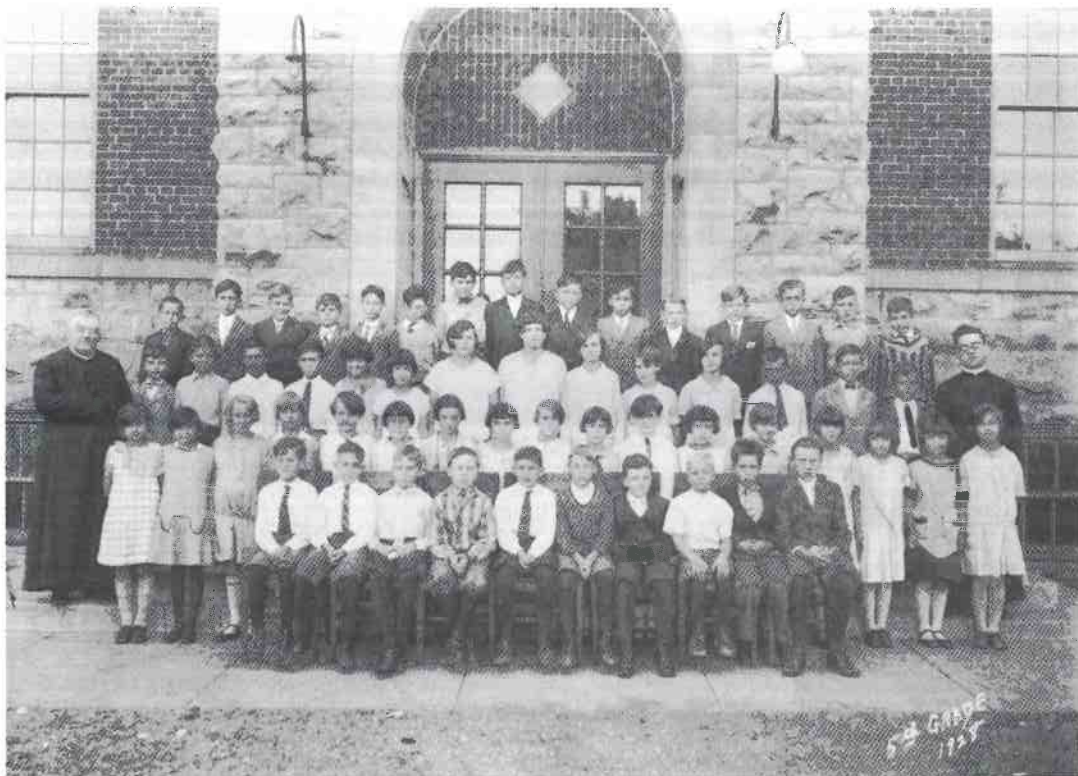
In October 1913, when Father Peter Holfeltz was appointed pastor of St. Mary's, his first priority was to address a second problem, the overcrowded condition at the school. Father Holfeltz believed that adding onto the 1867 school would only alleviate congestion for a short time and so the decision was made to build a new, larger school.

The old 1860 church (then St. Mary's Hall), the 1867 school, and the 1895 convent were demolished to make room for the new school which would be built to the north of the new convent.

The cornerstone for the new school, set in 1916, commemorated the new school, and in addition, memorialized the 1860 church, the 1867 school, and the 1895 convent which were previously located on the site. Classes were suspended during the 1916-1917 school year and St. Mary's students attended public school while the building was under construction.

On September 4, 1917, classes for 340 students resumed despite the presence of workmen still in the building. Archbishop Messmer blessed the finely equipped school on Thanksgiving Day. He addressed the benefits of Christian education and Catholic training, congratulating the parishioners on their fine new school. He also praised their generous contributions which had produced such a satisfactory result. The new school, which included eight classrooms, an auditorium, a library, food service facilities and a large attic for storage, cost \$65,000 to build.

In the 1920s St. Mary's instituted a two-year commercial high school program in association with the grade school. The first high school graduates received their diplomas in 1928. This commercial high school was discontinued after 25 years.

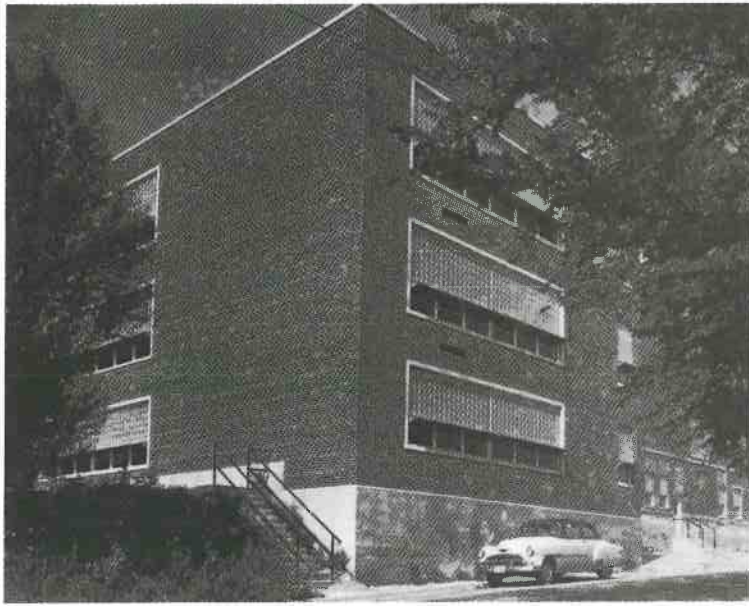


*St. Mary's School, 5th Grade, 1928*

*Priest on left - Msgr. Peter Holfeltz; priest on right - Father Raynor Hausmann.*

*Photo courtesy of PWHSRC*





*The 1950 addition to St. Mary's School shortly after completion.*

*Photo courtesy of PWHSRC*

In 1949, during the pastorate of Father Peter Hildebrand, the parish renovated and modernized the 1911 Sister's convent. A third floor was added to create additional sleeping quarters, bringing the total number of bedrooms to 17. Bathrooms were also installed on each floor. The total cost of the renovation was \$40,000.

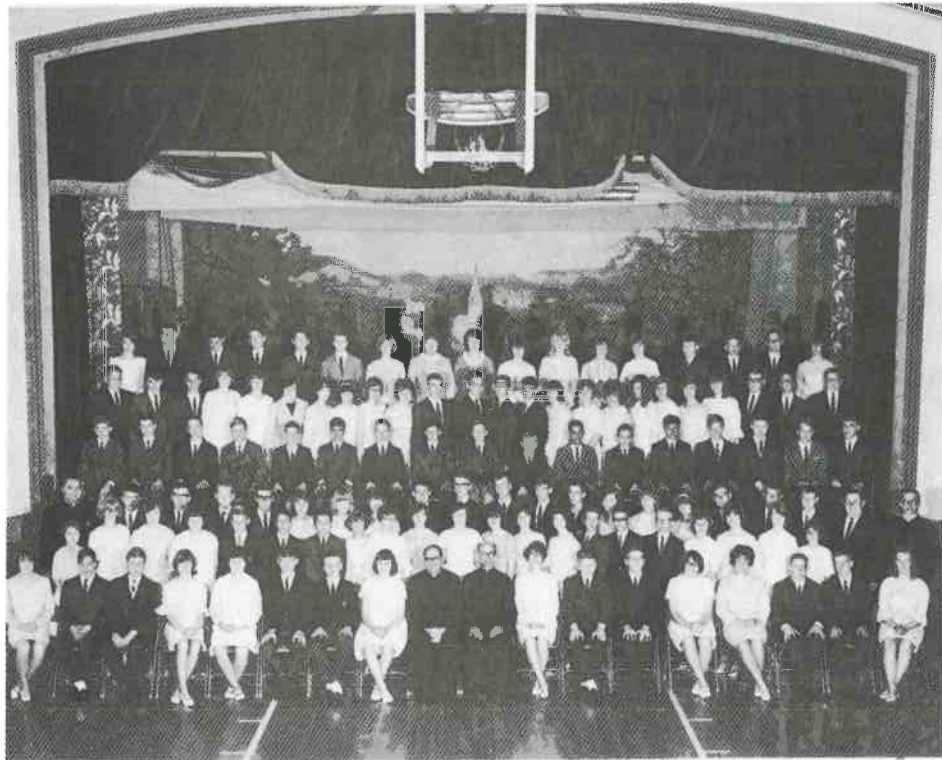
Once again, it became necessary to address overcrowding in the school. Work began in late 1950, on a large, six-classroom addition on the southeast end of the school. The addition was completed on August 24, 1952, the cost of the project was \$200,000.

Parishioner William J. Niederkorn, president of Simplicity Mfg. Company, donated \$8,000 for desks for the students and teachers, which were purchased from the National School Equipment Company, a subsidiary of the Wisconsin Chair Company.

In 1953, the year of the parish's centennial, St. Mary's School had a total enrollment of 572 pupils. A shortage of school space became an issue in the 1960s. The parish was instructed by the Archdiocese to develop another school campus on the north side of the city to alleviate the overcrowding.

In 1962, the parish purchased 21 acres of land and began a major building project which would become St. Peter's School. Groundbreaking for this second campus occurred in 1963 and the school opened on September 9, 1964.

St. Mary's pastor, Father Edgar Braun was authorized by the Archdiocese in March 1965 to



*St. Mary's School,  
8th Grade Graduation,  
1965*

*Photo courtesy of PWHSRC*





*St. Mary's 1911 Convent now St. Mary's Parish Center.*

*Photo courtesy of Terry Wester*

incorporate St. Peter of Alcantara as an independent parish. The parish boundaries divided the Catholic school student population, thus ending the overcrowding at St. Mary's. St. Mary's and St. Peter's Schools each maintained classes for grades 1-8 schools and both schools eventually added a Kindergarten.

In September 1987, the parish councils and school boards of both parishes began to discuss combining the two schools. A task force was formed to explore the various options. The task force included representatives from St. Mary's, Father Steve Amann, James Pauly, Joe Schmidt, Marie Zirbes and Sister Maxine Bauer, and representatives of St. Peter's, Father Paul Lippert, Fran Koch, Frank Metz, Jean Morrell and Sister Gemma Therese, as well as an Archdiocesan representative, Scott Weyda.

After extensive study, the task force recommended the consolidation of both parish schools into one body – Port Washington Catholic School. The recommendation was accepted by a vote taken in November 1988 at both parish councils meetings. In August 1989, Port Washington Catholic School opened its doors for the first time. Classes for grades 4-K through 4th were held at the St. Mary's campus, and grades 5 through 8, at St. Peter's. The first Port Catholic principal was Mr. James Rice.

Today, school enrollment includes children from other area parishes as well as those who live within St. Mary's and St. Peter's parish boundaries. The children of members of Immaculate Conception, Saukville, St. Mary's, Lake Church and Fredonia's Holy Rosary also attend Port Catholic. Current enrollment is 278 students.

St. Mary's Parish and Port Catholic School treasure the presence of one School Sister of Notre Dame. Sister Margie Ann Thole teaches second grade at Port Catholic and makes her home on the second floor of the St. Mary's convent, now known as the Parish Center. Reflecting on the long tradition of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in Port Washington, Sister Margie Ann states:

*Over the past years, 259 Notre Dame Sisters and Candidates have contributed over 1000 years of service at St. Mary's School and Parish. Three religious women began this Notre Dame journey. Later as many as fifteen Sisters lived in St. Mary's convent.*

*Times have changed but the journey continues. Presently, I, Sister Margie Ann, live on the second floor of the previous convent which is now the Parish Center. If walls could speak, I'm sure I would be constantly entertained.*

*I appreciate being able to see the beauty of Port Washington from every window. What a view! What a blessing!*





# Adolph Heidkamp

While the most noted clergyman in St. Mary's early history would be our founding pastor, Father F. X. Sailer, certainly Adolph Heidkamp was the most outstanding figure among the laity. He was the second teacher at St. Mary's school, the first parish organist and he served as Father Sailer's companion during his missionary days in northern Ozaukee County. Heidkamp went on to become a newspaper publisher, an elected county official and a prominent Port Washington citizen.

He was born in Bergisch Gladbach, Cologne, Germany on August 19, 1821 to Mathias Heidkamp and Anna Katherine Steinbach. Adolph attended school in Prussia and was an exceptional student, as well as an accomplished musician. He was selected by the Prussian government for a prominent teaching position.

A few years later, he decided to emigrate to the United States, arriving in New York City on May 3, 1852. While in New York, he taught school and served as a church organist in a large Catholic church in the city.

In 1854, Adolph traveled to Port Washington and St. Mary's at the invitation of Father F. X. Sailer. Father Sailer had organized the parish school a year earlier with his friend, F. X. Weinhard, who served as the first teacher. When Weinhard left after nine months to enter the seminary, the school was left without a qualified teacher.

Father Sailer had met Adolph Heidkamp in New York and had been impressed by his abilities. So he wrote to Heidkamp inviting him to teach the students at St. Mary's and to serve as the parish organist.

This is verified by the historian Bernard J. Cigrand in an excerpt from his series *Parental Stories of Pioneer Days* from the *Port Washington Star*, February 10, 1917:

*.....When in 1853, Father F. X. Sailer came to Port Washington and established himself as the first resident priest, he hoped to found a Catholic school at Port. He was in need of some experienced educator to take charge of the undertaking. He had learned of Mr. Heidkamp. So he wrote to him and induced him to come to Port Washington. At Port, he engaged, with enthusiasm, in both music at the new Catholic school and privately instructing pupils in music.....*

Adolph Heidkamp served as school teacher at St. Mary's for only two years, resigning from the position in 1856. His vast array of talents and sharp intellect had caught the attention of many in Ozaukee County. He stepped down from his teaching position to become the Ozaukee County Clerk of Courts. Nonetheless, Heidkamp continued to teach music to St. Mary's students and he served as parish organist for many years. He also continued to assist Father Sailer in his missionary efforts.



*Adolph Heidkamp*  
Photo courtesy of PWHSRC



*Parental Stories*, February 10, 1917 continues:

.....It is a family tradition in the family how Mr. Heidkamp, in company with Father Sailer, labored in the missionary service of the outlying parishes still hidden in the dense forests of Fredonia, Belgium and Saukville. He often told his children how when he first tramped through the forest, they could find their path by following the blazed trees. These prevented them from being lost in the wilderness.

Later, when the roads were crudely made, the great event took place of carting a melodia or organ through the timbers. He gave a classical religious service. The joy of the congregation of Holy Cross or [Little] Kohler cannot be imagined. The people had not heard for years the "Credo" or the "Te Deum." When the organist Heidkamp touched the keys with poetic rhythm, these floors rang with the soothing melodies, like yonder on the Rhine.....

Among Heidkamp's other accomplishments are the founding of the *Ozaukee County Democrat* in 1854, the year he arrived in Port Washington. He hired fellow-parishioner J. R. Bohan to serve as editor. Heidkamp and Bohan eventually went into partnership and in 1859, the name of the newspaper was changed to the *Ozaukee County Advertister*, a paper which served Ozaukee County for many years.

He also founded the *Ozaukee County Democrat*, an English-language newspaper and the *Port Washington Zeitung*, a German-language paper. He started the *Zeitung* in 1855 and served as publisher and editor until his untimely death in 1881. The *Zeitung* was the largest, longest running, and most respected German language newspaper in Ozaukee County, covering the news of the Luxembourg/German Catholics of northern Ozaukee County more thoroughly than any other newspaper.

Heidkamp not only served the county as Clerk of Courts, but also as Superintendent of Ozaukee County Schools for two terms and as a two-term County Judge from 1870-77.

He married Anna Maria (Hansen) Gengler on December 1, 1855 at St. Mary's Church. Father Sailer officiated and the witnesses were Victor Deuster and David Saar. Anna Maria was the young widow of Franz Gengler, both immigrants from Luxembourg. St. Mary's first Mass was celebrated in the Gengler home on Pier Street in 1847.

Adolph and Anna Maria Heidkamp raised four children of their own, in addition to the children from Anna Maria's first marriage. Anna Maria died in 1872 leaving Adolph a widower with four minor children.

He continued both his political and newspaper careers until his death at his Port Washington home on June 27, 1881. Father Willmes celebrated his Requiem High Mass in the 1860 church.

Adolph was buried next to his wife in old St. Mary's Cemetery. Their grave stone is the first marker

you see as you enter the left, front gate of the cemetery. His obituary from the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, June 27, 1881 stated:

*.....He was the most popular politician in Ozaukee County. He had a wonderful faculty for making friends, was generous and sympathizing to a fault; would share the last dollar with a friend and even with an enemy, which system of generosity involved him sometimes in financial difficulties. He was a most agreeable traveling companion, and no one could ever be trouped with the blues while in his company. We know this from long experience.....*

Shortly after Heidkamp's death, his children left Port Washington and sought their fortunes in Chicago, Milwaukee and Upper Michigan. However, when the 1882 St. Mary's Church was built, the Heidkamp family donated a large statue of "The Pieta" in memory of their parents. The statue is no longer in our church, but it was located for many years in the right vestibule, enclosed in a black iron fence.



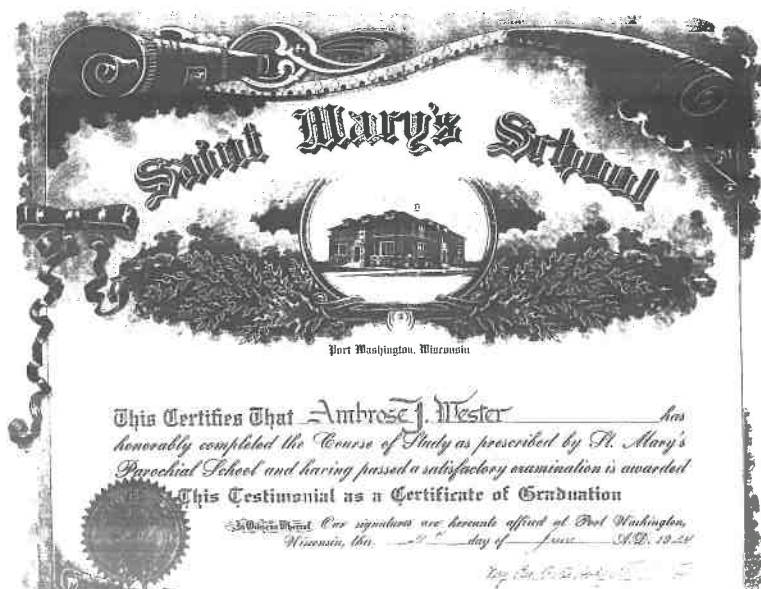
*The grave of Adolph and Anna Maria (Hansen/ Gengler) Heidkamp in old St. Mary's Cemetery.*

*Photo courtesy of Terry Wester*





# School Days, School Days



8th Grade Diploma of  
Ambrose J. Wester,  
1924  
Courtesy of Terry Wester

The following story is a recollection written by William J. Diederich, published in the *Port Washington Star* on June 12, 1920. William grew up in Port Washington on “Sweetcake Hill” and later became a prominent religious goods store owner in Milwaukee. He attended the St. Rose School of St. Mary’s Parish during the years that the Dominican Sisters of Racine served the parish (1863 – 1866).

William started his narrative by describing his “at home” education provided by Miss Mary O’Meara, a public school teacher who boarded in his family’s home for two years. In 1863, he began attending the re-established St. Mary’s parochial school. Diederich writes:

*Soon thereafter, there was a successful effort made to get some Catholic instructors for the numerous body of Catholic children in our village. Father Sailer, who was the priest in charge at the time obtained some Dominican Sisters from the Racine convent. They comprised the first Sisters to come to Port to instruct the children. There was no school house so rooms were rented in the building owned by Henry Evans which is still standing. I remember we used to enter those rooms from the rear of the alley behind Martin & Wester’s foundry.*

*I attended the parochial school long enough to learn a little German but it seemed a long time to learn even the ABCs of that language because my father used to*

say it kept him poor buying German primers for me. I wore them out more by hard usage than by study, as he declared, but finally I got acquainted with the rudiments of the alphabet and made progress.

I recall one winter when I was supposed to be in school, I hid my books and ran away to skate. I pulled that stunt regularly each day for a week, returning about the same time school was dismissed and starting for home. I clearly remember today the exact spot where I hid those books. Between the post office and Matt Weller's there was a house with a low stone wall about three feet high and behind that wall I placed my books. As I said, that lasted about a week and then, alas, nevermore!

One day when I came bravely marching home from school there sat my aunt who had come for a visit. Apparently I was overjoyed and did a lot of talking but that was to divert attention from my having played "hooky."

After supper, shortly after the folks had gone into the sitting room, father sent word that he wanted to see me at the barn where he was feeding the horses. I knew what that meant! But I went there nevertheless, and he talked to me in a nice quiet manner and I got to bawling like a kid will, you know, and he got a whole lot out of me!

During the afternoon that day, my mother wanted to show her sister what her small boy could do at school and so she and my aunt and father hurried themselves to the school. But young hopeful was not in evidence! From the teacher father got all the facts and learned that I had played "hooky" for a whole week.

It didn't take long at that interview at the stable to convince me of my wrong-doing! And then I unburdened myself of all of my escapades, told him even where I had hid my books. Father said kindly, "That is all right; I know," and didn't whip me or anything, but laid an awful penance upon me in his good natured way, and that is why I remember this so vividly.



*St. Mary's School class in the first St. Mary's School building, circa 1900*

*Photo courtesy of PWHSRC*



# *The First “School Choice”*

When the School Sisters of Notre Dame returned to St. Mary’s in 1870 after a 13 year absence, they were eagerly awaited by the pastor, Father Henry Willmes and 200 students. St. Mary’s School became affiliated with the Public School District and was considered the “German department” of the public school.

School was taught in German by the School Sisters of Notre Dame and the children of German-speaking parents, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, all attended the school. Due to the large enrollment of non-Catholic children, St. Mary’s School received tax support.

The sisters were obliged to take the usual state qualifying examinations for certification and to accept direction from the public school supervisor. All classes ran smoothly for over a decade into the 1880s. The Port Washington public school board was pleased and the sisters’ salary of \$800 per year was paid from public school funds. However, trouble lay ahead.

About 1884, the Wisconsin School Superintendent in Madison was contacted by a few local citizens who complained that the local school board was permitting religious teaching in the school and that local tax dollars were being drawn illegally to pay the sisters’ salaries.

The superintendent contacted Port Washington native Edward R. Blake, a former member of the local school board and currently a state senator, for additional information. Apparently satisfied with Mr. Blake’s explanation, the superintendent issued a letter to the sisters in Port Washington advising them to continue to teach but to save religious instruction for a time outside of regular school hours. After that, religious classes were held early in the morning for the Catholic students, before the regular school day began.

A local newspaper, the *Ozaukee County Advertiser*, commented on an annual report made by school district clerk, H. B. Schwin:

*There is one beautiful feature in the report which has agitated the whole country from Atlantic to Pacific time and again. It cannot be discovered by the naked eye in the report but it is there nevertheless, and a happy solution of the whole vexed questions, which remains unsettled in all other places in the United States but Port Washington.*

*No other town as yet has ever been known to consent to the paying out of public school monies for the support of a Catholic school. The whole affair is contrary to law; but, as it seems to be a sort of agreement all around, no one feels disposed to make objections.*

It seemed however, that not everyone in Port Washington was satisfied with the arrangement. The next step was an attempt by some residents to take the matter to court. However, no local attorney could be found who was willing to take up the cause. The entire matter was dropped after the instigators were threatened with a boycott of their businesses and after the lead complainant had spent a great deal of his time and \$200 of his own money. In order to discourage any further potential legal difficulties, Father Willmes and the congregation decided to continue St. Mary’s School only as a parochial school.





# Memories of Sister Mary Faith

One well-remembered School Sister of Notre Dame who served at St. Mary's in recent years is Sister Mary Faith Parkinson. Sister was the principal of St. Mary's School from 1973 – 1983. During that time, she gained the love and respect of her students and the parishioners as well. Sister Mary Faith is now semi-retired and is living at St. Aloysius Convent in West Allis.

In honor of our 150th anniversary, she agreed to share some of her Port Washington memories with us:

*After being a classroom teacher in three different schools in Wisconsin and Indiana, I was asked to go to Prairie du Chien where I held the double position of principal and Junior High teacher. This arrangement was followed by two years in Menasha when again, my higher superiors asked me to go to St. Mary's in Port Washington as a full-time principal. I hated to leave the classroom but as always, "Yahweh was waiting to be gracious to me."*

*Though I missed the classroom, it didn't take long to love the students at St. Mary's. My goal was to provide them with a quality education and to provide a warm loving environment in which they could enjoy learning. God blessed me in all ways by providing beautiful people with whom to work. Father Glass was the pastor the ten years that I was there. He believed in Catholic education and was most supportive along with the associates that served the parish during those years.*

*Father Glass had a terrific sense of humor which stood us in good stead during the rough periods, which were few and far between. The staff was united by sharing the same values. They not only enjoyed working together, but were good friends and socialized together. Along with the priests and staff, the School Board, and Home and School, our many volunteers, and our parents who added their support truly made St. Mary's my Camelot.*

*Our Christmas programs and Spring concerts under the direction of Ann Celeen Dohms were always first class productions. Talking of programs, Trish Schimke directed the staff in putting on "CinderReilly" a take-off of the Cinderella story. We put on the program for Father Glass' anniversary. We covered the gym windows after school and locked the doors, so the students couldn't see us practicing. We had fun putting it on and it was a huge success. Trish died suddenly this past year.....Are you smiling up there Trish?*

*We spent many months preparing for our evaluation by the Archdiocesan Board of Education since this was the first time they sent teams of educators to evaluate our*



*schools. The team spent three days at our school going into all the classrooms and also interviewing teachers, students, and parents. We couldn't help but be proud of their report. The chairman of the team said: "I hope that our school comes out 'smelling like a rose' like your school did."*

*I look back on many happy memories. I hope the students who attended St. Mary's during those years can do the same. If they can, we are grateful to God for blessing our endeavors.*



*Father Rolland Glass presenting flowers to Sister Mary Faith,  
principal of St. Mary's School.*

*Photo courtesy of PWHSRC*

# *Religious Education and Youth Ministry Programs*

The CRE program provides formal religious instruction and sacramental preparation for the Catholic youth attending public schools. The program spans 4-K through grade 11. Elementary level students attend class at St. Mary's campus and the older students are enrolled in Youth Ministry home-based at St. Peter's campus.

St. Mary's and St. Peter's were among the first parishes in the Archdiocese to develop a joint religious education program. It was started in 1985 with Sister Alice Nytes serving as the first director.

Pat Gibes, Director of Religious Education from 1988 to 1999, was joined by a full-time Director of Youth Ministry in 1994, due to the increasing enrollment. At that time, she was able to focus on refining the curriculum for the early grades, as the seventh and eighth grade students were transferred to the Youth Ministry Program.

CRE students, as a part of their religious education experience, lend their efforts to parish service projects and community programs. The younger students have participated in collections for the Food Pantry, contributed to the Rice Bowl Project benefiting the missions and have provided dessert cupcakes for the meals served by parishioners at the St. Benedict the Moor Meal Program in Milwaukee.

Current Director of Religious Education, Sr. Mary Hornung, claims that a major element of the program's continued success is the dedicated ministry of the 24 experienced catechists who have committed themselves to teaching the Catholic faith. Catechists Bernadine Bretl and Donna Stepaniak each have served the CRE program for over 20 years and Lynn Didier has served for 17 years. Currently the CRE program has a combined enrollment of 240 students.

St. Mary's Youth Ministry, consolidated with St. Peter's program in 1987, serves our young people in grades 7 – 12. General religious education is provided for the students in grades 7 – 10, while 11th graders focus on sacramental preparation for Confirmation. High school seniors assist with the overnight retreat for Confirmation candidates and are honored each year at a Mass celebrated for graduates on graduation weekend.

In addition to classroom instruction, the program offers a variety of social and service opportunities. Many of these activities are accomplished as a cooperative undertaking with other Catholic parishes in our district or as an ecumenical collaboration with other local churches. For the past several years, the Youth Ministry program has reached out to college students in an effort to introduce them to Adult and Family Ministry Programs.





Our present Youth Minister is Jeff Montoya, a graduate of St. Norbert College in DePere. He holds a degree in Religious Studies and has attended St. Francis Seminary as a lay student .

The program goal for Youth Ministry is formation of a strong faith in young Catholics, preparing them to actively and effectively serve the future needs of the Catholic community.



*2003 Confirmation Candidates from St. Mary's / St. Peter's  
with Youth Minister, Jeff Montoya, at Holy Hill.*

*Photo courtesy of Vicki Knaub*



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Sister Batina  
-who taught my mother, Margaret Fellenz, in  
1892,  
as she did me in 1918. She used a ruler for  
more than just measuring. *I know, I was there!*  
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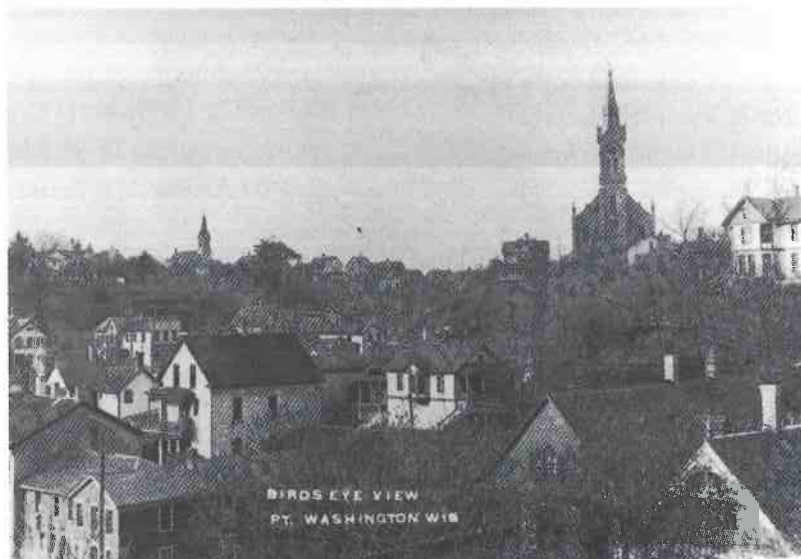
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by Ann Flierl

**Math & Martha Hansen Family**  
by Paul Hansen



*Bird's eye view of Port Washington crowned by St. Mary's Church, circa 1910s*  
*Photo courtesy of Margaret and Rita Federspiel*





*L-R: Second St. Mary's Rectory, 1882 Church, 1860 church converted to a hall,  
first St. Mary's School, 1911.*

*Photo courtesy of PWHSRC*

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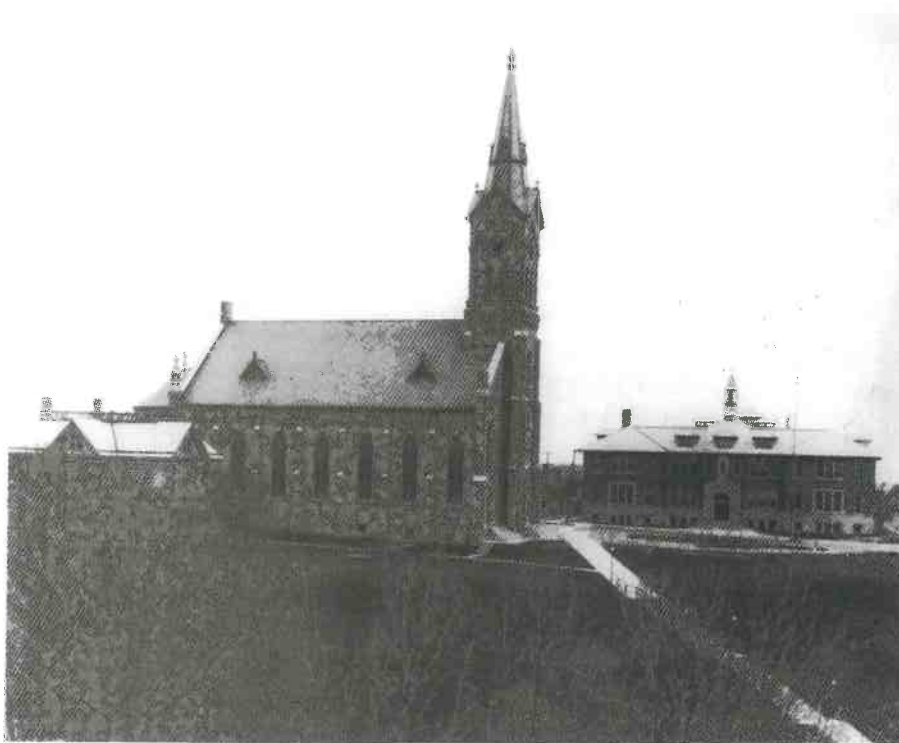
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*St. Mary's Heights  
L-R: Second Rectory, 1882 Church, second School, circa 1930s  
Photo courtesy of PWHSRC*



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