

AN EARLY HISTORY OF ST. ANTHONY PARISH

by John Bange (2009)

In the mid-1800's, Madisonville, then known as Madison, was a village of close to 1000 inhabitants. Catholic families in the area traveled by horse and wagon to worship at St. Francis de Sales in Walnut Hills. They made the journey over dirt and gravel roads, through all kinds of weather. And so there was much interest in founding a church locally.

The first Holy Mass in Madisonville was celebrated in the then newly completed residence of Mr. Charles Naegel at 6323 Main Street (now Madison Road). This service was held on the second Sunday of May 1858 with Father Michael Sullivan officiating. Present at this first celebration was the Naegel family, Michael Buckel and family, Herman Ukotter and his wife, John Patten and his wife, Nicholas Kauffman, Mr. P. Murphy, and others. Another Mass was held in June. These services led to the organization of our parish.

During the week after that first Mass, Mr. Buckel* visited the Catholic families within a six or seven mile radius of Madison, as the village was then known. He found a total of 14 Catholic families. He urged them to attend a meeting at the home of Mr. Ukotter on the third Sunday of May 1858. The purpose of the meeting was to form a Catholic society, organize a congregation, and consider ways to erect a church. About 22 individuals were in attendance. Although they were interested, the interest gradually faded. People were not sure a church was needed. Farm families had teams of horses and could travel to Mass at St. Francis de Sales in Walnut Hills. Several members decided the only way to keep up interest was to secure a site and start construction.

A tract of land in the east end of the village was purchased from Mr. L. Cornuelle for eighty dollars. This parcel of land was located at the northeast corner of the present day Madison Road and Roanoke Street. The proposed church was to be 40 by 50 feet, along with a parish house. Mr. Ukotter agreed to furnish and haul the stone for the foundation. Mr. Patten agreed to use his team for hauling materials. Mr. Cornuelle offered to help with excavation and to lay up the foundation walls. Mr. Naegel offered to do the plastering. Mr. Murphy offered to help with general labor. All of this effort was provided free of cost.

Mr. Buckel, with pick and shovel, broke the ground in September 1858 and assisted in quarrying the stone. The foundation walls were completed in November. Work stopped through the winter months

In the early spring of 1859, no brick could be had. Arrangements were made with Mr. Cornuelle to have the brick made and fired on the adjacent land east of the church lot. The bricks were laid at a cost of one dollar and a half per thousand by Mr. Denman Ludlow. John Finneran carried the hod and was general helper. Mr. Buckel assisted in carrying the hod, but soon found the task too great for him.

The lumber for the new church was purchased at a cost of one hundred dollars. The lumber firm agreed to wait six months for payment. When the time for settlement drew near, Mr. Buckel worried, as collections and contributions were secured with great difficulty. He finally had the greater part of the amount due and called at the lumber office to pay what he had and to ask for further time on the balance due. He was told that he owed nothing to them, that a Mr. H. Flodder had settled the account in full. Mr. Buckel was greatly relieved.

The carpenter work was done by Mr. Christian Steifel, who, when the last nail was driven, demanded immediate payment from Mr. Buckel. On being asked to wait a short time, he refused and entered suit with Mr. Buckel through the Justice of the Peace. Mr. Buckel sold his horse and wagon and appeased the eccentric carpenter.

The new church was dedicated on Sunday, October 9, 1859, and named St. Michael by His Grace, Archbishop John Purcell, assisted by Fathers Ferneding, Schmidt and Borgess. In the summer of 1860, an addition, twenty by twenty-four feet, was built to the rear of the church to be used as a sacristy and schoolroom. That same year a bell was installed.

In 1864 Rev. Anthony Walburg was appointed the 8th pastor of St. Anthony. He had a keen mind for business and helped acquire a large tract of land which he developed by cutting roads through it and sub-dividing it into building lots. He induced many Catholic families to build new homes. As the area grew, Father Walburg saw the need for a larger church. He sold the old church property and donated a plot on which he erected a beautiful brick church in honor of St. Anthony. It was 90 feet long and 48 feet wide and was dedicated by Archbishop Purcell on September 26, 1874.

The new church and congregation prospered over the next 16 years under the leadership of three pastors. Rev. Charles Hahne was appointed the 12th pastor in June of 1889 and prosperity continued. But disaster befell the parish on the morning of Sunday, January 25, 1891, as smoke was spotted coming from the ventilators in the rear of church. Flames followed and quickly crept along the roof and up the tall spire. The alarm was given and several hundred residents tried in vain to save the church and its contents. The church burned very rapidly and was a mass of ruins in a half-hour. Within a few minutes the hard and persistent work of many years was gone. All that remained was an outer shell consisting of the brick walls. The pastor, Rev. Charles Hahne, consoled the parishioners and filled them with confidence and energy. After eight months of unceasing labors, a new and enlarged St. Anthony was dedicated by Archbishop Elder on October 4, 1891. The reconstruction, including new furnishings, cost \$16,000.

And this is the church building that stands today. There are tell-tale signs of the old and the new. The front and sides of the old shell were reused . . . looking at the brick on the sides just south of the side doors, you can see where old and new bricks meet to become one. The church has undergone several renovations since. The most recent was in 1988 under the leadership of pastor Rev. George Jacquemin. This included the

addition of the choir area behind the altar, the moving of the piano to the same area and adding the short walls that surround it, new carpeting and new paint throughout the church, as well as remodeling of the old choir loft into a totally new loft with stairs and pews and much more usable space.

The present rectory was built in 1882 at a cost of \$2,800. It has been enlarged and remodeled several times.

The Parish Center, originally a convent for our sisters, was built in 1907 for \$5,400. It was converted to the Parish Center in 1989.

The current school, the third in parish history and current home of the Lighthouse Community School, was built in 1924 at a cost of \$89,000.**

TIMELINE OF ST. ANTHONY PARISH

May 1858	The first Mass celebrated in the home of Mr. Naegel
September 1858	Ground broken for new church
October 1859	St. Michael Church dedicated by Archbishop Purcell
1865	St. Michael Cemetery begun
September 1874	New St. Anthony Church dedicated
1874	First schoolhouse dedicated
1882	Current rectory built
1889	Second schoolhouse dedicated
January 1891	Church destroyed by fire
May 1891	Cornerstone laid for new church
October 1891	New church dedicated (the one in which we still worship)
1902	Clock added to tower
1907	Convent built (currently our Parish Center)
1923	Addition made to rectory
1924	Current school dedicated
1939	Father Henry Westerman named pastor
1946	Ceremonial burning of church mortgage
1959	100 th Anniversary of Parish
1960	Father James Byrne named pastor
1962	Father John Campbell named pastor
1962	Hot lunch program begun
1963	Convent garage built
1974	100 th Anniversary of church building
1977	School closes
1978	Parish Council formed
1978	Father John Civile named pastor
1979	Choir formed
1980	Religious Education program re-instituted
May 1984	125 th Anniversary of Parish
July 1984	Father George Jacquemin named pastor

1990	Church roof replaced (was original from 1891 reconstruction)
July 1997	Father Len Wenke named pastor
October 1999	140 th Anniversary of Parish
2005	School sold to Lighthouse Youth Services and became Lighthouse Community School
August 2009	Parish Center garage (c. 1963) demolished and new garage built

*Mr. Buckel was the great-great-grandfather of parishioner Carol Smith. Mr. Buckel was born in Germany in 1815. In 1836 he came to America and lived in Cincinnati until 1852 when he moved to Madisonville by stagecoach. There he opened a roadhouse and later became a grocer. He died in 1911 at the age of 96, after living in Madisonville for 59 years and being a member of St. Anthony for 52 years.

**The architect for St. Anthony School was Howard McClorey, father of the late parishioner Tom McClorey. Howard practiced architecture in Cincinnati from 1913 until the time of his death in 1965. Tom, also an architect, joined his father in 1950 and worked at the firm of McClorey & Savage until his death November 10, 2007.

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