

**LOCAL CATHOLIC
CONGREGATION
FORMED IN 1838**

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parish had been shifted, first to the Rev. Alphonse Moncina, then to the Rev. E. M. Failer. The latter bought the first church bell for \$60.00. It had to be shipped by canal from Cincinnati into Fort Wayne, and to be hauled from there to Decatur. At this time the church grounds consisted of six lots.

The Succeeding Pastors.

The sixth priest, the Rev. B. H. Schulties, was the first one permanently stationed at Decatur. He built the first rectory in 1852 and remained until 1856. For almost a year, Decatur was left without a resident pastor during which time it was visited by Father Failer and Father Rudolph. From June, 1856, to May, 1857, Father Sebastian Gentez C.P.P.S. ministered to the wants of the congregation. After him came Father L. Schneider who remained but a few months. Father Jacob Geyer took charge of the parish in 1858, and remained until 1862. Again the parish was left without a resident pastor, and Father Meyers and Father Heitmann from St. Mary's church, Fort Wayne, visited Decatur from time to time.

Church Built in 1872.

The Rev. Julius Becks came in January, 1865, and remained one year. The pastorate of the Rev. Jno. Wemhoff extended from 1866 to September, 1872. The congregation had, by this time outgrown its primitive place of worship, and Father Wemhoff set to work to plan for a suitable church. He remained long enough to see the foundation laid for the present St. Mary's church, which faces Fourth

street.

Father Von Schwedler was appointed pastor in 1872, and he finished the church begun by his predecessor. He was succeeded by Father Jos. Ussbaum, who remained until 1880. In the same year on July 23, Father H. Theodore Wilken took charge of the parish and labored with unremitting zeal until death called him to his reward, October 29, 1913.

Rev. Wilken's Noble Work.

When Father Wilken took charge of the congregation, it was burdened with a debt of \$5,000. His first care was to provide a school for the children of the parish. In 1881, the building, facing Madison street was completed, and three Sisters of St. Agnes came to take charge of the school of ninety pupils. The Sisters lived on Fourth street until 1883 when a Sisters' home was erected together with two new class rooms to accommodate the increased number of pupils. These latter buildings cost \$7,500, and were paid out of the bequest of Henry Derkes.

After this, Father Wilken turned his attention to a home for himself and his successors, which was completed in 1885.

In 1888, Rev. Wilken was made removable pastor, as a token of appreciation of his unremitting zeal in the care of his parish.

In 1894, the congregation, in accordance with the advice of Father Wilken, purchased a new cemetery west of the city which is today one of the finest burial grounds in the state.

First Assistant Appointed.

By this time, St. Mary's parish had grown to such an extent that it became necessary to provide an assistant for the pastor. The Rev. Jno. Blum was the first priest to act in that capacity and he remained in this office from Nov. 1, 1896 to Nov. 1, 1900.

Assistant Pastor



FATHER OTTO PETERS

Father Otto Peters is assistant pastor of the St. Mary's Catholic church. He, also, serves as director of athletics in the Catholic school. He has done much to promote athletics and physical training in the schools.

1900. He was succeeded by the Rev. Jno. B. Steger who labored here from August 24, 1905, to September 15, 1906. He in turn was succeeded by the Rev. George Angermaier, who served as assistant from the last mentioned date to April, 1910. From the time of his removal to July, 1912, the Rev. Wm. Flaherty filled that position.

The Rev. Hermann Theodore Wilken labored here with unremitting zeal until his death. The parish in which he spent his best years sincerely mourned his unexpected and untimely death.

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OF

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dedication of the new

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