

Northern Kentucky Views Presents:

A History of
St. Mary of the Assumption

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ST. MARY OF THE ASSUMPTION CHURCH

St. Mary of the Assumption Church sits high on a hill overlooking the Morning View river valley. It all began in 1869. The church was originally known as St.

Benedict and was visited monthly by the Benedictine fathers of St. Joseph Priory of Covington until the spring of 1873. The first recorded baptism was December 25, 1869 administered by Reverend Aemilian Wendel, O.S.B. The church was also built under the direction of Father Wendel. The last of the Benedictine fathers to come to the mission was Reverend Gabriel Guerster, O.S.B.

In 1873, the first diocesan priest to be sent to the church was Reverend Charles Excel. He arrived June 15, 1873. By August, Father Excel had built a parish house and was making plans for a school. Father Excel stayed until 1874. The church continued to be known as St. Benedict until 1886.

A new church was built in 1887 and dedicated under the name of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. At this time the Assumption Parish School was established and it continued to exist until 1901.

St. Matthew was a mission church to St. Mary of the Assumption parish. The cornerstone of St. Matthew church was laid by Bishop Maes in 1908. The church was dedicated on June 9, 1909, by Bishop Maes.

The establishing of the church at White Villa was brought about through the efforts of William T. Hohnhorst, Ben Eilerman, and F.D. Anthe. These men conceived the idea of having the church built, and made the necessary contacts with the various donors, who contributed the necessary money, materials and labor for its erection. It was the original plan that this church could be erected on the grounds of the White Villa Club. However,

J. M. Armstrong, at that time the owner and operator of Kenton Lakes, requested that it be built between White Villa and Kenton Lakes, so that it would also benefit the Catholics who spent weekends at this fishing grounds.

In 1914, it was decided that a new church would be built on land which was donated by the Steinhauser and Jennings families. Father Joseph Hausterman moved to the house on the land that was donated. The church was originally heated by pot bellied stoves. You can still see where the stove pipe went through the ceiling.

In December of 1917, when Father Gellenbeck was pastor, the priest's house was destroyed by fire and with it all the parish records. This is why the early history of the church has been pieced together. A new house was built next to the church. While it was being built, Father Gellenbeck took up residence at St.

Elizabeth Hospital. One can only imagine how long or the trouble they ran into due to the harsh winter of 1918 and the flu epidemic of 1918-19 in rebuilding the new parsonage.

Winter proposed a whole new set of problems for the people of the parish. Since most people walked, rode horses or sled they had trouble travelling up the hill to the church. My mother, Marie Lemming Roth, often told me stories of coming to church from DeMossville in the 1920's on horse and sled wrapped in blankets on cold wintry Sunday mornings. During the summer months they walked. In 1945, Father Aloysius L. Griesinger became pastor of St. Mary's. A school was built next to St. Matthew on land donated by the family of Robert Jackson during the 1950's. This school was open until 1969. The students of St. Matthew's have very fond memories of Father Griesinger. He always had a nickel or dime in his pocket for the

children. His generosity and kindness extended throughout the community, not only in our parish. Father Griesinger was sent to St. Charles Nursing Home after his physical collapse on July 14, 1973.

Reverend Henry Hacke became administrator on July 17, 1973. Father Haacke moved his residence to the apartment vacated by the Divine Providence sisters who taught school at St. Matthew from the old parsonage on the hill. Under the direction of Father Haacke the St. Matthew Mission church was moved into the brick school building. Since this new church was more economical to heat, it was decided that the mass would be held at St. Mary's during the months of June through October.

St. Mary's seems to draw people together. In 1991, a lot of work was done to St. Mary's. Some of the improvements

were new sidewalks, outdoor bathrooms, a new steeple, siding, and new church step handrails. The labor was donated by members of the church and there was also help from others who were not of the parish.

On June 4, 1993, a severe storm swept through the tri-state area. This storm tore away a section of the roof and it blew several trees over in the graveyard. Rain came through the roof of the church covering the altar and pews with black, dirty water. Many people did not have electric or phone service; but in a short time, there were many people there to help clean the church and the cemetery. Kenton Community Fire Department put plastic on the roof. Roof repairs were made shortly afterwards.

During my research, I have found a few interesting points. These include that electric was probably installed in 1932 and

the organ was wrenched into the balcony with mules. And who could forget the Dutch Hill Picnics with their fried chicken, dancing and music that went well into the night. A walk through the cemetery shows that the church was attended by German and Irish alike. The oldest grave we found was that of Katharin Alkreidlen Mayer, wife of John Mayer. She was born in 1828 and died in 1861. This was eight years before the first church was built and leads us to wonder if her grave had something to do with the new location of St. Mary's. It is also thought that a Civil War captain may be buried in the cemetery.

I don't think that anyone can attend Mass, take a walk through the cemetery, or look at the fabulous view and not feel the quiet reverence that is St. Mary's. It is this special love and respect held in the hearts of her parishioners that has kept St. Mary's going for 125 years and hopefully another 125. 7

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Bach

With Special Help from:
Sister Mary Philip Trauth, S.N.D.

PASTORS WHO HAVE SERVED OUR PARISH:

Rev. Charles Excell
Rev. Joseph Jaspers
Rev. Frederic Heising
Rev. Bernard P. Tuetenberg
Rev. Joseph Meiwes
Rev. Thomas Ott
Rev. Wendelin Goehrig
Rev. Frederick Bocklage
Rev. George Kaufman
Rev. William Wenzel
Rev. Joseph Haustermann
Rev. Henry Gellenbeck
Rev. William Gockel
Rev. Francis B. Donnelly
Rev. Aloysius Griesinger
Rev. Henry Haacke
Rev. Richard McGrath
Rev. Paul Wolfzorn
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