The Sisters of Charity in Cincinnati: 1829–1852

Judith Metz S.C.
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By
Judith Metz, S.C.

Standing at the window of the Cathedral residence shortly before his death, and noticing the sisters passing by, Archbishop John Baptist Purcell commented to a friend, "Ah, there go the dear Sisters of Charity, the first who gave me help in all my undertakings, the zealous pioneer religious of this city, and the first female religious of Ohio,—who were never found wanting, and who always bore the brunt of the battle."

When four Sisters of Charity arrived in Cincinnati, Ohio, in October 1829 to open an orphanage and school, they were among the trailblazers in establishing the Roman Catholic Church on a sound footing in a diocese which encompassed almost the entire Northwest Territory. These women were members of a Catholic religious community founded in 1809 by Elizabeth Bayley Seton with its motherhouse in Emmitsburg, Maryland. This was the first community of women religious native to the United States. Embracing an adapted version of Saint Vincent de Paul's Common Rules for the Daughters of Charity, its members were devoted to the special spirit expressed in the community motto, "The charity of Christ urges us." In the spirit of Saint Vincent the sisters made a priority of being available to the poor and needy in a variety of ministries. Shortly after its foundation, the leaders of the community began receiving requests from bishops for sisters to work in their dioceses. It was in response to such a request that these sisters came to Cincinnati.

The local church to which they were introduced was small and poor. Its physical properties included one house of worship, a seminary operating out of a small frame building, a brick residence for

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priests, and an unoccupied school building. Catholics were few and far between in Cincinnati and throughout Ohio in the early decades of the nineteenth century. One 1821 report estimated that of more than a half million inhabitants of Ohio, fewer than six thousand were
The area around Cincinnati was initially part of the diocese of Bardstown, Kentucky. One of the first Catholic missionaries to serve this locale was Edward Fenwick, a Dominican priest. He crossed the Appalachian Mountains in 1806 and became an itinerant missionary known for his zeal and humility, and earning the title “Apostle of Ohio.”

The small Catholic community in Cincinnati attempted to organize a church as early as 1811, but it was not until eight years later that the hundred-member congregation succeeded in erecting a frame palace.

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2Born in 1768 in Saint Mary’s County, Maryland, to a wealthy planter family, Fenwick was educated by the Dominicans in Europe, joined the order, and was ordained in 1792. His dream of establishing the Order of Preachers in the United States was realized when he returned to his homeland in 1804.

3Benedict Flaget to Ambrose Marechal, 16 March 1820, from Bardstown, quoted in Lamott, History, 41.
church on the outskirts of the city and petitioning for a resident pastor. Indeed, on 19 June 1821 the diocese of Cincinnati was created with Edward Fenwick appointed the first bishop. He and his party of four priests arrived in his episcopal city the following March and took up residence in a rented house near the river.5

By the summer of 1822 Fenwick purchased property near the heart of the city on Sycamore between Sixth and Seventh Streets. He had the small, frame church relocated there and named it Saint Peter's Cathedral. One of the greatest obstacles to growth was the poverty of the congregation: collections amounted to about $80 per year.6

Driven by financial concern and the need for personnel, Fenwick left for Europe in May 1823. After visiting Rome, he toured western Europe with a stop in Lyons, France, headquarters of the Association for the Propagation of the Faith.7 Fenwick’s appeal to the Association resulted in annual contributions to his diocese beginning that year and continuing for almost a half century.8 In addition to monetary contributions, Fenwick recruited several priests and a sister to work in Cincinnati.

Upon return to his diocese, additional property was purchased on Sycamore Street to accommodate a larger Gothic-style cathedral.9 The original church was moved to the rear of the property and converted into a seminary, but it was not until May 1829 that it opened with ten students. The optimism generated by these achievements was further buoyed when Fenwick learned that additional assistance was to become available due to the efforts of Reverend Frederick Rese.10 Traveling in Europe on behalf of the bishop, Rese was instrumental in forming the Leopoldine Mission Association in Vienna.11 The Society was particularly interested in supporting the Cincinnati diocese because of its growing German Catholic population.12 Sister Saint Paul, a French Sister of Mercy, became the first woman religious to work in

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5Ibid., 50, 51.
6Edward Fenwick to Stephen Badin, August 1823, from Bordeaux, cited ibid., 53.
7A work begun in 1816 to assist the diocese of Louisiana, it later consolidated with other mission-aid efforts to become the Association for the Propagation of the Faith, which supported missions all over the world.
8Lamott, History, 174.
9B. Drake and E. D. Mansfield, Cincinnati in 1826 (Cincinnati: 1827), 35.
10Rese was recruited by Fenwick from the Urban College in Rome to minister to the Germans in Ohio. He served this group in Cincinnati until his appointment as the first bishop of Detroit in 1833.
11Established during the winter of 1828-1829 by Emperor Franz I of Austria, the society focused on mission activity in the United States and Canada.
12Lamott, History, 183, 185.
Cincinnati. Recruited by Fenwick on his European trip, she arrived in the city in September 1824 to open a school. News of her coming preceded her and when her party arrived in Cincinnati, they were greeted by a crowd who had come out to see "what kind of creature" a nun was.13 "Zealous, active, prayerful and edifying in every respect",14 Sister Saint Paul and a Kentuckian, Miss Eliza Rose Powell, soon enrolled twenty five girls in the first Catholic school in Ohio.15

By late fall 1826 three additional European sisters16 came to the city. They too became involved in the school which, within a few

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13Frederick Rese to Students of Propaganda College, 5 May 1825, from Cincinnati, quoted in Lamott, History, 243.
14Edward Fenwick to Madame Superior, 8 July 1825, from Cincinnati, Archives of the University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana, hereafter cited as AUND.
15Edward Fenwick to Stephen Badin, 8 July 1825, from Cincinnati, cited in Lamott, History, 277.
16Two of these sisters were Poor Clare Nuns from Bruges: Sisters Françoise Vindevoghel and Victoire de Seilles. The third, Sister Adolphine Malingie, was a Beguine from Ghent.
months, boasted an enrollment of seventy students. Plans were soon begun to build a brick schoolhouse facing the new cathedral. Beside working in the school, these women conducted a class for poor children on Sundays. Unfortunately, all of this activity was short-lived. Sister Saint Paul died in September 1827, and two of the other sisters left the city for Pittsburgh the following April. The remaining woman withdrew from her order but remained at the cathedral as a singer and directress of the choir. The school closed for lack of teachers.

The loss of the sisters and the closing of the school caused Bishop Fenwick to turn to the Sisters of Charity at Emmitsburg, Maryland, for assistance. As early as 1825 the prelate had unsuccessfully tried to recruit these sisters for the diocese. Father John Dubois, their superior, informed him that before sisters could be sent, the local church must agree to assume responsibility for paying the travel expenses of the sisters and ensure the permanency of the establishment by the guarantee of ongoing financial support.

The hope of securing Sisters of Charity remained alive, however. When sisters from Emmitsburg were passing through the city in October 1828 to open a hospital in Saint Louis, they met with Mr. Patrick Reilly, one of the leading laymen of the Cincinnati church. After giving them a donation for their hospital, he expressed his desire to have sisters in Cincinnati, telling the travelers of his intention to build an orphan asylum. Within a few months, Fenwick, urged by several Catholic laymen, was ready to renew his appeal to Emmitsburg. In February one of these men traveled to the Maryland motherhouse to personally request sisters. To reinforce the need, the bishop sent a letter on 9 May:

Venerable and Dear Mother:

Confident that a great good may be done in this city by the establishment of a female orphan asylum under your

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17 Lamott, History, 63.
18 Born in France in 1764, Dubois emigrated to the United States during the French Revolution. He joined the Sulpicians in 1808 and served as superior of the Sisters of Charity from 1811 to 1826 when he became bishop of New York.
19 Since the 1809 founding of the Sisters of Charity in the United States, the Sulpician priests had served as the clerical superiors of the community.
20 John Dubois to Edward Fenwick, 30 December 1825, from Emmitsburg, AUND.
22 Mother Mary Augustine Decount was born in Philadelphia in 1786 and displayed a remarkable musical talent as a young woman. She entered the Sisters of Charity in 1817. She served as mother of the congregation from 1827-1833. She died in 1870.
zealous and charitable care, I have written to the Rev. Mr. L. Deluol of Baltimore, your Superior, to beg of him 3 or 4 of your pious Sisters who are well calculated to conduct such an establishment in this place, and now have to request that you will consent to send me not less that three of your worthy community for that purpose.  

Mr. M. P. Cassilly and others have engaged to furnish you a good and comfortable house, rent free, as long as you wish to occupy it, and $200.00 in cash annually towards your support and to refund, if required, all expenses of your journey in this place.

I am myself unable to contribute anything in a pecuniary way towards your establishing yourselves here, but will do all in my power to give your spiritual comfort and advice and endeavor to render you happy and content.

I hope you will set out in time to descend the river before it becomes too low for boating.

My compliments and blessing to all your community and beg[ging] your prayers.

I remain affectionately
Your cordial friend,
+Edward Fenwick.  

In October Fenwick visited the motherhouse while attending a bishops' meeting in Baltimore. He learned that four sisters had been appointed for Cincinnati and were ready to depart. He sent Reverend James Mullon, his traveling companion, to accompany the sisters to their new mission. From his initial role as escort to the sisters, this zealous priest remained a stalwart support to them during his remaining years in the diocese.

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23 A French Sulpician, Father Deluol came to the United States in 1817. He served as superior of the American Sulpicians as well as superior general of the Sisters of Charity.
24 Edward Fenwick to Venerable and Dear Mother, 9 May 1829, from Cincinnati, Archives Saint Joseph Provincial House, Emmitsburg, Maryland, hereafter cited as ASJPH.
25 Mother Augustine Decount and Mother Xavier Clark (Emmitsburg, Maryland: 1938), 46.
26 James Mullon was born in Ireland in 1793 and came to the United States as an infant. He served as a United States Navy officer and on the faculty of Mount Saint Mary’s Seminary at Emmitsburg. He was ordained in 1825 for the Cincinnati diocese and was known as an eloquent preacher. In 1832 he transferred to the New Orleans diocese and remained there until his death in 1866.
Leaving Emmitsburg 12 October\textsuperscript{28} the party arrived in Cincinnati after fifteen days of tedious travel by stage and riverboat. The Reilly family offered hospitality to the weary missionaries until their accommodations were ready. In later years Marianne Reilly loved to tell how her family had the pleasure of entertaining the sisters and were filled with regret when they left.\textsuperscript{29} By early November a two story frame house, owned by Mr. M. P. Cassilly and located near the cathedral, was made available to them rent free. The sisters immediately took charge of five orphan girls. In addition, they reopened the school with six additional children in the vacant school building across the street from the cathedral.\textsuperscript{30} Being part of the cathedral parish, the new establishment was named Saint Peter's.

When the bishop returned from Baltimore in early December he was delighted to find the school and orphanage in full operation and within three months he was reporting that the school had grown to 106 girls.\textsuperscript{31} Saint Peter's was the first permanently established free school in Ohio, predating the Cincinnati public schools which were started the following year.

Further growth is reported in the 14 August 1830 edition of the \textit{Cincinnati Chronicle and Literary Gazette} which describes Saint Peter's Orphan Asylum as "one of the most interesting charities in our city." The article notes that the Sisters of Charity are "supporting and educating eight destitute orphan children, besides teaching about one hundred and fifty day scholars. Most of these are charity pupils. . . . No effort, we are assured, to inculcate the doctrines of the Roman Catholic church among the Protestant children placed in the asylum."\textsuperscript{32} The conciliatory tone of this last statement was presumably meant to placate a growing antagonism against Catholics in the city, part of a national outbreak of anti-Catholicism. Membership in the Catholic Church was increasing rapidly due to both immigration and missionary work. In the year 1829 alone, the Church boasted 150 converts from Protestantism. The sisters offered instruction in the Catholic religion to interested ladies and were responsible for a considerable number of converts themselves.\textsuperscript{33} At Saint Peter's School, the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[28] Council Book 1829-52, Emmitsburg, entry for 11 October 1829, Archives, Mount Saint Joseph Provincial House (hereinafter cited as ASJPH).
\item[29] McCann, \textit{History}, 162.
\item[31] Edward Fenwick to Abbé Rigagnon, 25 February 1830, from Cincinnati, quoted ibid., 371.
\item[32] \textit{Cincinnati Chronicle and Literary Gazette} (Cincinnati), 14 August 1830.
\item[33] Frederick Rese to Leopoldine Society, 3 August 1831, Reel 10, #52, and 3 August 1832, Reel 11, #37, AUND.
\end{footnotes}
greater number of the students were Protestant,\(^3^4\) while Protestant children were also accepted into the orphan asylum.\(^3^5\) These activities were seen as threats by some Protestants and provoked a spirit of intolerance. The *Cincinnati Chronicle* reported that “the church in this city to which this asylum is attached and of which these Sisters are members, has been occasionally the subject of this spirit [of antagonism] to no inconsiderable degree.”\(^3^6\)

This spirit of intolerance became evident soon after the founding of Saint Peter’s. Protestant clergymen began to launch malicious attacks on Catholicism and the pope,\(^3^7\) and the opening of a Catholic boys’ college in the city in 1831 only intensified the fear. These attacks were published in sectarian papers such as the *Cincinnati Journal* which warned that the “increase of Papists in the United States is beyond belief to those who have not attended to this subject,” and that “immense funds have been placed at their disposal.” Under the headline “Designs of the Papists,” the paper cautions Protestant parents against placing their children in Catholic schools, claiming they are nothing but proselytizing schemes. “There is no end to the wiles of Jesuitism,” it warns.\(^3^8\)

Due in no small part to these attacks on Catholicism, Bishop Fenwick began to publish *The Catholic Telegraph* in October 1831. Before the decade was out, the first German language Catholic paper in the United States, *Wahrheitsfreund* (The Friend of Truth), was also being published in Cincinnati.

Despite the hostile climate, the sisters carried on their work. As noted above, most of their 150 day scholars were charity pupils, and, at least once, a Native American girl was sent from the missions in Michigan.\(^3^9\) Some income for the institution came from tuition payments and small private donations. But the most substantial support came from collections taken during charity sermons. One, in December 1831, was preached by Father James Mullon at the cathedral and netted $75 for the orphan asylum. “The weather was very unfavorable

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\(^{3^4}\)The *Catholic Telegraph* (Cincinnati), 28 July 1832.


\(^{3^6}\)Cincinnati Chronicle, 14 August 1830.

\(^{3^7}\)Silberstein, *Cincinnati Then and Now*, 94.

\(^{3^8}\)Cincinnati Journal, 22 July 1831, 29 July 1831, 5 August 1831.

\(^{3^9}\)Rese to Leopoldine Society, 3 August 1831, AUND.
and the audience much smaller than usual; notwithstanding, the amount contributed was greater than any before received on such an occasion."\(^{40}\)

Another means of garnering support for the asylum and school was to invite the public to visit, especially at the end-of-the-year exhibition. Compositions by the children were posted along the sides of the school room, and they demonstrated their proficiency at reading as well as answering questions in English, grammar, history, geography, and arithmetic. The young ladies also displayed their bead, rug, and fancy needlework. At the 1832 program, a nine-year old orphan, while showing her rug work depicting a little rabbit seated in a basket suspended from a branch of cherry, charmed the audience with her recitation:

To prove a real industrious habit,
Pray view this pretty little rabbit.
How snug it fills the basket there;
And sits secure mid leaves and air.
Now do not blush, if I disclose,
This is the work of little Rose.\(^{41}\)

Following this event, an enthusiastic visitor expressed his high praise in a letter to *The Catholic Telegraph*, noting:

the scene was entirely free from that ostentatious parade that so frequently accompanies exhibitions of this kind: and one can easily imagine that the retiring and amiable spirit of the Sisters who superintend the school had been transferred into the several interesting individuals who had been placed under their instruction. The neat simplicity of the place was, in itself, an eulogism on the perfect order with which everything was conducted within. Excuse me, Gentlemen, if I have dwelt somewhat at length on this subject; but I thought it a duty to notice modest merit, and to pay a just tribute of respect to the Sisters of Charity, who have done so much for the advancement of moral and religious education in our city.\(^{42}\)

\(^{40}\) *The Catholic Telegraph*, 3 December 1831.

\(^{41}\) *The Catholic Telegraph*, 28 July 1832

\(^{42}\) Ibid.
These Sisters of Charity who had "done so much for the advancement of moral and religious education" in Cincinnati were Sisters Fanny Jordan, Beatrice Tyler, Victoria Fitzgerald, and Albina Levy. Sister Fanny Jordan, sister servant of the group, was a veteran member of the community and served as assistant mother just before coming to Cincinnati. Born in 1793 to Irish parents living in the West Indies, she and her family had fled revolution there to settle in Baltimore. Conversant in several languages, as a child she taught English to refugees who were given asylum in the Jordan home. Sister Fanny joined the Sisters of Charity in 1810, and by the time she came to Cincinnati she had experience at asylums in Philadelphia, New York, and Baltimore, and had conducted a school for German speaking children in Philadelphia.

Victoria Fitzgerald and Beatrice Tyler were both young women who had joined the community in 1826. The former was born in Ireland in 1809 and immigrated to the United States with her family. The latter was a convert to Catholicism from Hartford, Connecticut. She had three sisters who were also Sisters of Charity. The fourth member of the group, Albina Levy, was a novice when she came to Cincinnati. Apparently the sisters and Father Mullon found her wanting, for upon their recommendation she was dismissed from the community on 20 December 1831.

Fortunately for the work in Cincinnati, Sister Emiliann Pigot was named as Sister Albina's replacement, and by early February Bishop Fenwick was busy making travel arrangements for her. It seems, however, that her stay in Cincinnati was no more than a layover. Another sister, Sister Assissium McEnnis, was traveling with Sister Emiliann on her way to Saint Louis. When the two sisters arrived in Cincinnati, Sister Fanny Jordan switched their assignments, directing Sister Assissium to remain in Cincinnati. The superiors at Emmitsburg were quite displeased with Sister Fanny's action and reprimanded her by refusing to allow her to renew her vows at the usual time the following year. Even Father Mullon interceded with the Mother Superior on her behalf:

43 Deceased Sisters Book 1866-68, (Emmitsburg, Maryland), 31.
44 The Treasurer's Book, ASJPH.
46 Ibid., 17 January 1832.
47 Edward Fenwick to John Purcell, 6 February 1832, from Washington, AUND.
49 Mother Mary Augustine Decount.
I am exceedingly distressed to find that our good and faithful Sr. servant has incurred the displeasure of her superiors in this well-meant transaction. My dear Mother, will you reject my earnest entreaty for her forgiveness? I am convinced that the fault was not intended, and if circumstances may at any time extenuate or even blot out the effects of a fault, there are many under which Sr. F might successfully plead for your forgiveness. . . . Divine Providence has permitted even through our fault, that we should at last have a most excellent housekeeper for our asylum. . . . Sr. Assissium is so well calculated for the children also, that the place appears entirely new since she took charge of this department.\footnote{Reverend James Mullon to Respected Dear Mother, 3 December, 1832, from Cincinnati, ASJP.}

As serious as this infraction was regarded by superiors, they did not override the switch Sister Fanny had made, and Sister Assissium remained in Cincinnati for several years as housekeeper at Saint Peter's.

Beginning in 1831 there was discussion of having Saint Peter's separately incorporated. Father Mullon wrote to the motherhouse in Emmitsburg asking for their consent to this arrangement, but the superiors there did not agree to "the people's owning the Asylum."\footnote{Council Book 1829-52, entries for 25 January 1831 and 15 February 1931.} The discussion did not end there. More than a year later Father Frederick Rese, vicar general of the diocese, wrote to Bishop Fenwick informing him that Mr. Cassilly wanted him to write to Emmitsburg on the same subject. Rese told the bishop that lay supporters of the asylum wanted to form an association of ladies who would administer the temporal affairs of the asylum, similar to the arrangement that existed in New Orleans. If this happened, he assured Fenwick, "Mr. Cassilly will easily give the property."\footnote{Frederick Rese to Edward Fenwick, 27 September 1832, from Cincinnati, AUND.} But a letter from Sister Fanny Jordan to Mr. Cassilly maintains a consistency with her superior's understanding that "the Sisters of Charity should have the management and control of the helpless little ones. We are not aware of any conditions that have been infringed in regard to the government of the house, as our immediate superiors left that to the prudence, piety and
zeal of the Rt. Rev. Bishop of the Diocese and his clergy, who have been its governors. No change in management at Saint Peter's resulted from this discussion. The institution continued to be owned by the diocese and managed by the sisters as it struggled to meet ever growing needs of a burgeoning population.

These needs became particularly acute during the summers of 1832, 1833, and 1834 when a cholera epidemic swept the country. In the summer of 1833 alone, Cincinnati averaged forty deaths per day, with the immigrant population most heavily affected. Estimates are that 4 percent of the city's population died during this epidemic. The Sisters of Charity responded heroically during the crisis. An extra sister, Angela Hughes, was sent to assist in the emergency. The number of orphans being cared for at Saint Peter's jumped to thirty-four and, in addition, the sisters nursed those afflicted. A report to the Leopoldine Society by Reverend Martin Henni noted the number of impartial newspaper articles praising them and the priests who remained in the city to minister while others fled in panic. Of particular loss to the diocese of Cincinnati was Bishop Edward Fenwick who fell victim to the disease while visiting Catholics in northern Ohio and who died on 26 September 1832.

Cincinnati was without a bishop for more than a year. By spring 1833, word was received that Reverend John B. Purcell, president of Mount Saint Mary's College in Emmitsburg, was named the second bishop of the diocese. Since the new bishop had been at Mount Saint

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53Sister Fanny to Mr. P. Cassilly, Esq., Saturday Morning, from Cincinnati, Archives Mount Saint Joseph, Mount Saint Joseph, Ohio, hereafter cited AMSJ.
54Anthony H. Deye, "Archbishop John Baptist Purcell Pre-Civil War Years" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1949), 137.
55Angela Hughes, the sister of Bishop John Hughes of New York, later became a founding member of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul of New York and was elected their third mother superior in 1855.
56John Martin Henni was born in Switzerland in 1805. He was ordained in Cincinnati in 1829 and served there until his appointment as the first bishop of Milwaukee in 1844. He died there in 1881.
57Martin Henni to Archbishop of Vienna, 1834, Archdiocese of Cincinnati reports to the Leopoldine Society, Reel 2, #85, AUND.
58John Baptist Purcell was born in County Cork, Ireland, in 1800. He emigrated to the United States at age eighteen in hopes of obtaining a seminary education and becoming a priest. Educated at Mount Saint Mary's at Emmitsburg and at the Sulpician seminary in Paris, he was ordained in 1826. On his return to the United States he joined the faculty at Mount Saint Mary's and became president in 1829. He became bishop of Cincinnati in 1833 and served there until his death in 1883.
Mary’s as a student, faculty member, and administrator, Purcell and the Sisters of Charity were well known to each other, and the sisters were delighted at his appointment.

Borrowing $200 for travel expenses, Purcell left Emmitsburg in early November 1833. He was accompanied by Sisters Cephas Cook and Alphonsa Lilly who were assigned to Saint Peter’s to replace Sisters Fanny Jordan and Angela Hughes. Purcell and his party made their way twenty miles south to Frederick, Maryland, on Thursday, 7 November, and took the stage to Wheeling. They arrived there at 5 o’clock on Sunday morning experiencing two accidents along the way. After a layover, they boarded the steamboat, *Emmigrant*, at two o’clock Monday afternoon, paying eight dollars per person for the three day journey. After more than a week in transit, the group was warmly greeted at the public landing in Cincinnati, on Thursday, 14 November at 10 a.m. 60

Purcell estimated there were 8000 Catholics in Cincinnati at the time, one half of whom were German. 61 Much to his credit, this Irish born bishop established a good rapport with the dominant immigrant group. The year after his arrival he oversaw the establishment of Holy Trinity Church, the first of many German parishes in Cincinnati. 62

Sisters Cephas and Alphonsa took their places at Saint Peter’s under the direction of the new sister servant, Sister Beatrice Tyler, under whom “all was peace and quiet.” 63 The orphanage and school continued to grow, but space and money were becoming increasing problems.

From its founding Saint Peter’s “had depended on casual charity and the unceasing exertions of the excellent Sisters,” 64 but broader support was needed. Fortunately, early in 1833, “a number of young ladies scarcely in their teens were induced by that impulse of genuine charity . . . to consecrate the little means afforded by parents and friends to a Fair for the benefit of destitute orphans who have been placed under the care of the Sisters of Charity. . . . The result of the first

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61Deye, 90. 62 Ibid., 104.
63John Hickey to John B. Purcell, 3 January 1834, from Emmitsburg, Archives Archdiocese of Cincinnati, hereafter cited AAC.
64*The Catholic Telegraph*, 20 December 1833.
effort exceeded one hundred and sixty dollars." This fair became an annual effort to support the orphan asylum.

A second venture was initiated by the new bishop shortly after his arrival when he established the Saint Peter’s Benevolent Society. The first meeting was held on Christmas evening 1833 and was “numerously attended.” A constitution and by-laws were adopted and offic-

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ers appointed. Membership required an initiation fee of fifty cents and a monthly contribution of twenty-five cents. In its first year the Society collected $282.23, the bulk of which was contributed toward paying the more than $1200 annual expenses of the asylum. Like the fair, the ongoing support of the members of the Benevolent Society proved to be an important means of income for Saint Peter’s.

Despite increasing financial support, fortunes remained uncertain for the sisters and the orphans. Since their arrival in the city the sisters had enjoyed the rent-free use of a house on Sycamore Street provided by Mr. M. P. Cassilly. He had expressed his intention to donate the house but became offended when news of his donation was published prematurely in the Catholic paper, and he withdrew the gift. In fact, he “instituted . . . a suit and menaced to dispossess the Sisters.” Purcell was dismayed at Cassilly’s behavior which he recorded in his journal. “His language has been frequently indecorous in speaking of them [the sisters]. . . . The wife of Mr. Cassilly is a bigoted and bitter Protestant and she has worried him and put him to great and unnecessary expense, reproaching him with reluctantly granting her articles of costly dress etc. when he could afford to squander 5000 Doll. on Lazy nuns.” The Bishop resolved not to quarrel with him, “but let the Sisters leave the house, not charged with rent for the last 4 years.”

Purcell immediately began searching for a new house but had difficulty locating one which met the sisters’ requirements. He eventually found property on Sixth Street and borrowed the $4000 purchase price. The sisters moved there during late winter, 1834.

That year proved to be a trying one for the sisters. Besides revilement at the hands of Mr. Cassilly and being forced to move, Sister Victoria Tyler became ill to the point where some despaired of her recovery. By March of the year she left the Cincinnati mission to recover her health.

In addition, there was an increasing wave of anti-Catholicism in the city. Doctor Lyman Beecher, one of the most virulent anti-Catholic...
lic orators in the country, had moved to Cincinnati and was making his presence felt. Purcell reported that he was "persecuting us fiercely." "I seriously believe that the hour of persecution is not far distant," he wrote to Bishop Rosati in Saint Louis. With opposing sentiment so high, there was fear among Catholics that anything could be used against them. Rumors of ghosts inhabiting the new asylum led Father Hickey, the Emmitsburg superior of the sisters, to comment to Purcell, "I trust that the Sisters ... will not disgrace us so far as to be accounted ghost believers or ghost seers. The next thing, they will be looked on as witches and fortune tellers, and the enemies of religion will triumph." With all of the above, plus the cholera again making its appearance in the summer of 1834, there was disagreement over when to hold the fair, and the results, when it was held in June, were disappointing. The house was so disrupted that the school closed early without the usual public exhibition. The Catholic Telegraph reported that private examinations were held due to the excessive heat, the indisposition of the sisters themselves, and the inability of the sisters to present suitable awards to deserving pupils due to a lack of resources. Besides the debt incurred for the new house, a larger school room was rented at the rate of eighty dollars per year which further added to financial concerns. The orphan asylum was named in occasional bequests, such as one from Mr. David Kilgour from which they received $2600 in 1835, but others were tied up in the courts for years. The institution also received allotments from civic events, such as charity balls or concerts which were gratefully accepted but were by no means sufficient to alleviate the ever present need for more resources. By the end of 1835 the house on Sixth Street was already too small. The president of Saint Peter’s Benevolent Association announced in The Catholic Telegraph that he was hopeful that during the coming

73John B. Purcell to Joseph Rosati, 10 March 1835, from Cincinnati, quoted in Deye, "Archbishop John Baptist Purcell Pre-Civil War Years," 142.
74John Hickey, a Sulpician, was ordained in 1814 and served for a time at Mount Saint Mary’s Emmitsburg. He spent some time in Baltimore but later returned to Emmitsburg and served as clerical superior of the Sisters of Charity from 1830 to 1841.
75John Hickey to John B. Purcell, 15 June, 1834, from Emmitsburg, AAC.
76Stephen Montgomery to John B. Purcell, 1 June 1834, from Cincinnati, AUND.
77The Catholic Telegraph, 18 July 1834.
78Ibid., 19 December 1834.
79McCann, History, 227.
80Deye, “Archbishop John Baptist Purcell Pre-Civil War Years,” 117.
Saint Peter's Orphanage and School, Third and Plum Streets.
In 1836 this building was purchased by Bishop Purcell to provide larger quarters for Saint Peter's Orphanage and School. It was the center of Sister of Charity activities in Cincinnati from 1836 to 1854.

Courtesy Archives, Mount Saint Joseph

spring an eligible site might be procured and a commodious building erected. Sister Beatrice Tyler, in writing to her sister, Sister Mary DeSales, commented, "Now I must tell you that I guess we are going to get a new house. Is it not time, never mind, I intend it shall be right nice when it is done. In the mean time, I shall ask a favor of you which is to send me a plan of your asylum. . . . Please send me the plan immediately if you can."

These hopes were fulfilled in April 1836 when Bishop Purcell, after repeated efforts, purchased property on the corner of Third and Plum Streets, recently occupied by Major Ruffner, for the sum of $15,905. The board of Saint Peter's made an appeal for donations to which the public responded generously. The new orphanage site was "situated in a quiet part of the city, on a swell of ground arising

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81McCann, "Archbishop Purcell," 23.
82Beatrice Tyler to Mary DeSales Tyler, 10 January, from Cincinnati, ASJPH.
83McCann, "Archbishop Purcell," 23.
from the lowest bottom and thus overlooks the river and has a full view of the opposite hills in Kentucky... having in front a large grass plat, filled with shrubbery and shade trees which are so well calculated to refresh and cheer."

With the constant growth in the number of Catholics there was a need for more sisters to carry on and to expand the work. As early as 1834 Bishop Purcell unsuccessfully petitioned the Oblate Sisters of Providence from Baltimore to establish a school for African Americans in the diocese. In that same year there was talk of the Sisters of Charity establishing a pay school, but Father Hickey wrote to Purcell explaining that there was a shortage of sisters. "We have lately broken up our pay school of Washington for the want of subjects," he told him. In fact, the community had made a priority of running free schools rather than opening additional pay schools.

Just a year later Purcell wrote to Mother Rose White at Emmitsburg giving a glowing report of the sisters' activities, but pleading for a "good school sister." By 1836 the bishop was sounding more desperate in his appeal. After again praising the sisters he noted:

Instead of one hundred pupils, they could have under their care three hundred if their Asylum were large enough to accommodate them, and the number of sisters increased. Only send us one or two more for St. Peter's Asylum. And if at all possible let me know if you can send us four or five German Sisters. We have four or five thousand German Catholics in and near this city; they would be rejoiced beyond measure, and generous to excess, if they had an Asylum for their orphans and a school for their children.

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84Margaret George to James Guthrie, Secretary of Treasury, 1 December 1855, from Cincinnati, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
86John Hickey to John B. Purcell, April 1834, from Emmitsburg, AAC.
87Rose Landry White was born in 1785 in Baltimore. As a young widow she entered the Sisters of Charity in 1809 and was placed in charge of the sisters' first mission in Philadelphia. She succeeded Elizabeth Seton as Mother of the community from 1821 to 1827 and again from 1833 to 1839.
88Purcell to Rose White, 23 April 1835, from Cincinnati, ASJPH.
On the back of the letter the superior wrote, "Of course you have to tell the Bp. that it is a thing absolutely impossible—It will be difficult to send the two [for St. Peter's] which he asks."\(^8\)

Besides the work at Saint Peter's, the sisters began supervising and participating in the newly organized Mary and Martha Society. This women's group visited the homes of the sick and indigent in order to alleviate suffering and provide both spiritual and temporal necessities.\(^9\)

By 1837 the number of sisters in Cincinnati had increased to seven. Four new sisters arrived that year, one a new sister servant who replaced Sister Beatrice Tyler. Sister Beatrice left the community to join a cloistered order, the Monastery of the Visitation in Saint Louis.\(^9\) Assuredly this caused upset on the Cincinnati mission as well as at the Emmitsburg motherhouse. Apostolic sisters sometimes felt that a conventual life was more holy, and superiors were fearful that transfers of this kind would disturb other members of the community. Reverend John Hickey, superior at Emmitsburg, commented to Purcell, "Let the dear . . . go to the wished-for home. We have nothing to say or do in it. As for penance, it is certain that she is leaving a very laborious, painful, penitential, humiliating, charitable way of living for the calm and secrets and delights of a monastery . . . . We can do nothing but let her go in peace."\(^9\)

The new arrivals in Cincinnati included Sister Seraphine McNulty, the new sister servant, and Sisters Joseph DeChantal Miles, Ann Simeon Norris,\(^9\) and Anthony O'Connell. The two latter were novices who made their vows just a few months after arriving.\(^9\) Sister Anthony was born in Ireland in 1814 and immigrated to the United States as a young teenager. After attending the Ursuline academy in Charlestown, Massachusetts, she entered the Sisters of Charity in Emmitsburg. She was destined to become a great leader in charitable works in Cincinnati, a career terminated only by her death in 1897.

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\(^8\)Same to same, 23 February 1836, from Cincinnati, ibid.
\(^9\)McCann, “Archbishop Purcell,” 27.
\(^9\)Hickey to Purcell, no date, from Emmitsburg, Maryland, quoted in McCann, *History*, 300.
\(^9\)Louisa Norris was born in 1816 in Charles County, Maryland, and entered the Sisters of Charity in 1835, becoming Sister Ann Simeon. She later served on the council at Emmitsburg and was the sister who visited Cincinnati in 1852 at the time of the decision to form a diocesan community there. She later served as visitatrix of the Emmitsburg Province of the Daughters of Charity from 1859 to 1865. She died in 1866.
\(^9\)Mother Regina Smith and Mother Ann Simeon Norris (Emmitsburg, Maryland: 1939), 78.
Things continued smoothly at Saint Peter's under Sister Seraphine. The sisters admired her and appreciated the spirit of peace and unity that prevailed. Purcell remarked that “much as we have been edified by the piety of the former Sisters in Saint Peter’s Asylum, we are still more so by everyone of the present devoted band.” Reverend Edward Collins, a Cincinnati priest, commented on how strongly the children were attached to the sisters and were improving in every respect under their care.

The harmony in the house did not remove the need for more laborers. Purcell continued to appeal to Emmitsburg for additional sisters in letters and even on personal visits when he was in the East. The Catholic Telegraph, echoing the bishop’s vision, editorialized, “Three young ladies home from Loretto and Nazareth with prizes! When shall we have our own Boarding School?”

Finally, the frustrated prelate began appealing to other congregations of sisters. During a visit to Europe in 1838-1839 he was unsuccessful in securing a commitment from the Sisters of the Sacred Heart from Paris to open a boarding school for girls. However, the Belgium Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur accepted Purcell’s invitation. Eight sisters arrived in Cincinnati in late October 1840 and stayed with the Sisters of Charity until they purchased a large home on Sixth Street where they opened an academy as well as a small free school.

Saint Peter’s, in the meantime, continued to flourish. Annual public exhibitions were held, presided over by such visiting dignitaries as Archbishop John Hughes of New York and Bishop Benedict Flaget of Bardstown. Besides awards for excellence in academic subjects, areas such as “improvement,” “neatness and diligence,” and “good behavior” were also recognized. These festivities were held outdoors, when possible, “among the shady trees in a beautiful arbour on the grounds.” The 1840 annual report stated the number of orphans as “generally, rather over than under fifty.” The following year there were fifty-eight in the asylum. “Of these, twenty-six were admitted during the past year. Three, two of whom were in very poor health

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5 Ann Simeon Norris to Rose White, 1 October 1837, from Cincinnati, quoted ibid.
6 Purcell to Rose White, 17 June 1837, from Cincinnati, ASJPH.
7 Edward Collins to Rose White, 17 June 1837, from Cincinnati, ASJPH.
8 McCann, History, 285.
9 Ibid., 290-91.
10 The Catholic Telegraph, 6 August 1842.
11 Ibid., 9 January 1841.
when received, have since died. Nineteen have been provided for, or placed again among their friends."102 With the growing numbers, the school and asylum were enlarged and more comfortable arrangements secured for the sisters and orphans.103

By the end of the 1830s expenses were nearly $2000 per year. Saint Peter’s Benevolent Society continued to be the largest benefactor, followed by smaller individual monetary gifts. In addition, the reports list many donations of goods, such as groceries, medicine, and furniture as well as services such those offered by prominent physicians such as Doctor Stephen Bonner.104

Stories of Sister Anthony O’Connell’s begging trips to the market tell of a further means of support. With her Irish wit, she delighted in entertaining the sisters with tales of her experiences and how often her homeliness of features paid dividends in the acquisition of donations. As one story goes, she was in the market bargaining for chickens to make some broth for sick orphans when a salesman told her, “If you were a pretty woman, I’d talk to you longer; but you are so damned ugly, you may go your way, and take the chickens at your own price.”105 Another story tells of her visit to the Fifth Street Market House. Setting off with two orphan girls and an empty basket, Sister Anthony ventured onto streets where sisters were at risk of insult because religious intolerance was high. While pushing through crowded passages at the market, a big, stout, young butcher taunted her by picking up a bull pup that was dozing under one of the benches and throwing it into her basket. Immediately another butcher came to her defense, leaving the instigator of the incident in a heap at her feet. Her protector gave her a new basket and filled it with 200 pounds of meat. He then proceeded to introduce her to some of his friends and recommend her to their consideration. She returned home that day with a wagon load of donations and promises of continued support.106

By 1840 Cincinnati was a rapidly growing city. Its population had risen to nearly 50,000, with German immigrants representing 28 percent of the total. Many of these Germans were Catholics with a great concern for preserving their faith and their culture. As noted above,
the first German Catholic parish of Holy Trinity was begun in 1834, and within two years Purcell was unsuccessfully seeking Sisters of Charity to manage a German orphan asylum. Nevertheless, the German Catholics organized the Saint Aloysius Orphan Society on 27
January 1837. The society placed boys with families until a home could be provided. Using funds partially raised by profits from Warheitsfreund, in May 1839 the society purchased a nine room brick house and vacant lot on West Sixth Street a few blocks from Saint Peter’s for $3,150. Miss Angela Siemers, assisted by her sister Margaret, took charge of six boys, ages three to ten. Bishop Purcell, meanwhile, did not give up his hopes of having Sisters of Charity manage Saint Aloysius. On 15 May 1842 he wrote to Mother Mary Xavier Clark at Emmitsburg, “praying for the fulfillment” of her charitable promise made some years ago, to send “three Sisters for the German Male Orphan Asylum.”107 There were, by this time, twenty-seven boys in the institution, and they had outgrown the house on Sixth Street. Plans were being made to build a more spacious home, perhaps on the same lot with Saint Peter’s. Purcell suggested that the premises could be divided with separate provisions for the boys and the girls, and the sisters from both asylums able to share the same house. He further proposed that the boys from Saint Aloysius attend Holy Trinity School which was located in the basement of the church.108

The following month Purcell reiterated his plea, asking Mother Mary Xavier to picture the little orphan boys “who, in the name of St. Vincent and of our divine Savior, extend their hands to you imploring you not to abandon them. . . . for God’s sake write soon to tell me that the Sisters are coming for St. Aloysius’ Asylum.”109

By August the sisters had been promised, but with conditions stipulated by the Emmitsburg motherhouse: the boys and girls orphanages were not to be located on the same premises; the boys would not go to Holy Trinity for school; and a larger home would be provided. Purcell and Sister Seraphine McNulty, who was changed from Saint Peter’s to be superior of Saint Aloysius, discussed how satisfactory arrangements could be made. In a letter of 25 August the bishop assured Mother Mary Xavier that all was in readiness, but before the letter could be posted he jotted a note on the outside of the envelope: “Sisters have just arrived, August 26, 1842.”110

107Mary Clark was born in the West Indies of French ancestry and moved to the United States as a girl. As a young widow, she entered the Sisters of Charity in 1818 and served as Mother from 1839 to 1845. She died in 1855.
108Purcell to Xavier Clark, 15 May 1842, from Cincinnati, ASJPH.
109Same to same, 21 June 1842, from Cincinnati, ibid.
110Same to same, 25 August 1842, from Cincinnati, ibid.
The sisters assigned to Saint Aloysius were Sisters Seraphine McNulty, Germana Moore, and Genevieve Dodthage. The latter two were newly arrived in the city as were two sisters assigned to Saint Peter's, Sisters Irene Jarbœe, the new sister servant, and Mary Lawrence.

Saint Aloysius Orphan Society lost its "founding father" when Reverend Martin Henni was named bishop of the newly created diocese of Milwaukee, but by 1844 the institution had a momentum of its own. During the summer of that year the house on Sixth Street was sold for a larger property on Fourth Street. Soon additional property was purchased extending the lot back to Third Street. This acquisition was the first effort of the Society toward establishing a division of the orphanage for the care of girls, even though "German orphan girls were always welcome at St. Peter's [English] orphanage." The new location placed the German Orphan Asylum across Western Row from Saint Peter's. The Sisters of Charity increased their number at Saint Aloysius to four including, as much as possible, German born sisters. Of these, Sister Genevieve Dodthage was joined by her sister, Sister Wilhemina. By 1846, fifty-three boys were residing at the Fourth Street Asylum.

In that year, however, the Sisters of Charity terminated their services at Saint Aloysius. For some years there had been discussion in the community over the issue of caring for boys since this practice was not permitted in many women's congregations. An 1836 policy prohibited the sisters from keeping boys over the age of nine in the asylums without special permission from the motherhouse. By 1843 the age was raised to twelve. But in late 1845 Reverend Louis Deluol, superior of the sisters, sent a letter to bishops in whose diocese Sisters of Charity were serving, informing them that the sisters were giving up charge of all boys' asylums and boys' schools. This policy was enforced despite the objections of bishops like Purcell who had worked so hard to obtain the sisters for the German asylum and was again faced with the practical problem of staffing the orphanage and school. "Purcell tried to replace the sisters at St. Aloysius with Sisters of Mercy, the Christian Brothers from Pittsburgh, or with Precious Blood

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111Catholic Churches of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, Ohio (Cincinnati: 1896).
112Purcell to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, 17 February 1844, quoted in Deye, "Archbishop John Baptist Purcell Pre-Civil War Years," 290.
113Purcell to Leopoldine Society Directors, 10 February 1843, AUND.
114Council Book 1829-1852, 21 August 1836, ASJPH.
115Ibid., 23 February 1843.
Sisters . . . but without success.”117 Once again a lay woman, Mrs. Henry Schulhof, was appointed superintendent.118

While the sisters at Saint Aloysius were reassigned to other missions, the community’s change of policy became part of a larger controversy in New York which resulted in the separation of thirty-four sisters into an independent diocesan community. Twenty-nine of these were working in New York at the time. Five others, on missions elsewhere, left the community and traveled to New York to join this new branch of Elizabeth Seton’s daughters. One of these was Sister Lucy Ann Concklin from Cincinnati. She had been at Saint Peter’s since 1844, but in February, 1847, left the community. In Father Deluol’s diary he comments that “Lucy Ann has gone to join the renegades.”119

Emotions ran high during this period in which Father Deluol told the sisters that those who remained in New York would “be forever cast off . . . as perfect strangers to us. God will never bless those who will abandon our Community.”120 From that point sisters were forbidden further contact with their former coworkers who elected to remain in New York.

Meanwhile, life at Saint Peter’s in Cincinnati continued to change and grow. In early February 1845 Sister Margaret George arrived from Boston as the new sister servant. She entered the community in 1812, was a friend of the foundress Elizabeth Seton, and served on the governing council at Emmitsburg several times through the years. In addition, she worked in schools and orphan asylums in Emmitsburg, New York, Frederick, Richmond, and Boston before coming to Cincinnati. Upon her arrival, Reverend John McElroy, with whom she had worked in Frederick, wrote to Bishop Purcell, “I congratulate you on the acquisition you have in Sr. Margaret. . . . She is gifted with many more qualities which are seldom found in the same person—most pure in her intentions and in all her acts . . . and at the same amiable and even attractive in her manner with externs. With her, you may rest perfectly easy respecting the Asylum.”121

By the summer of the year two other sisters who would be important to the future of the Cincinnati mission arrived. Sister Eleazar Harvey was a native of Brooklyn. After attending the Sisters of Char-

117Ibid., 297.
118“The Catholic Telegraph, 6 February 1987, (Special Supplement).
119“Father Deluol’s Diary,” 2 March, 1847, Sulpician Archives, Baltimore.
120Deluol to My Dear Child, 18 June 1846 quoted in Mother Etienne Hall (Emmitsburg: 1939), 31-33.
121John McElroy, S.J. to Purcell, from Boston, 28 January 1845, AUND.
ity academy in Frederick, Maryland, she entered the community in 1835. She completed her novitiate at Emmitsburg and was then missioned to teach in Pittsburgh, remaining there until her assignment to Cincinnati. The second was Sister Louis Regina Mattingly. A native of western Kentucky, she attended the Catholic academy near her home in Union County before joining the Sisters of Charity in Emmitsburg in 1844. Saint Peter’s was her first mission after her novitiate.

In the 1840s the orphanage nearly tripled in size, with its census close to 150 children by 1850. Shortly after her arrival as sister servant, Sister Margaret George wrote to Mother Mary Xavier Clark explaining how busy things were and emphasizing the urgent need for a seventh sister on the mission.122

Growth precipitated the need for larger and improved facilities; consequently three additions to the physical plant were made in the course of the decade. The first was in 1843 when the old building was improved along with a 29' x 45' expansion. At the same time twenty-eight new bedsteads and mattresses were purchased and the school department was greatly expanded.123 Major fundraising necessarily accompanied this building project. A three day fair was held in March and in June The Catholic Telegraph included notice of another benefit: “Clayton’s Aerial ship “Star of the West” will be inflated for eight days and a number of Ladies and Gentlemen will ascend to the height of two or three hundred feet. For the accommodation of spectators an amphitheater on the corner of 3rd and John Streets capable of affording room for at least three thousand persons. Admission to the amphitheater only 10 cents.”124

Within three years the orphanage had again reached capacity and notice was given that no more children were being received. The Catholic Telegraph reported that there were “ninety-six orphans in the Asylum, but only seventy cots or beds.”125 By early 1847 construction on a large wing was commenced along with the addition of another story on the center building. “Much expense was also incurred in the erection of the Baths in the dormitory” which were provided with warm water, adding to the health and comfort of the children.126

122Margaret George to Xavier Clark, 1 November 1845, ASJPH.
123The Catholic Telegraph, 28 October 1843.
124Ibid., 3 June 1843.
125Ibid., 8 January 1846.
126Ibid., 25 November 1847.
Shortly after this addition was completed the country was ravaged by a major cholera epidemic causing a sharp rise in census at the asylum. Death was no stranger to the sisters working in orphan asylums. Each year they suffered the loss of several of their charges, some of whom were brought to them in poor health. But the year 1849 was worse than most. In an August letter, Sister Margaret George noted:

5 of our little ones, all under 7 left us for our Father’s Home—happy little innocents secure of their immortal bliss. . . . the epidemic has left our city . . . and we have reason to be grateful . . . that the goodness of God has spared us the more advanced in age and took a few of His little children for such is His Kingdom. . . . He has them and can provide for them in His own Sweet Mercy and yet such is poor human nature not to give them up without a sigh, nor without a tear. 127

In just two years the number of children rose from just over 100 to nearly 150. Again space was at a premium and there was a temporary halt on admissions. In May 1850 The Catholic Telegraph reported, “We have been compelled to commence, this week, a new addition to the St. Peter’s Female Orphan Asylum. It will be as large as either of those made at different times to the original building. 128

The $3151 cost of this project included razing an older part of the building, altering the steeple, and paving work. 129 As with previous building projects, this added to the ever present pressure of meeting debt payments in addition to ordinary operating expenses. Financial reports show the frugality with which the institution was run. For instance, in the 1846 calendar year when there were an average of 100 orphans in the asylum, income was $2,024. More than three-fourths of receipts were from the Saint Peter’s Benevolent Society, proceeds from the pay school, and income from relatives of orphans and boarders. 130 Of course, without voluminous donations of goods and services from numerous individuals, this cash income would have been woefully insufficient.

127 Margaret George to Catherine Spalding, 26 August 1849, from Cincinnati, Archives Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, Nazareth, Kentucky.
128 The Catholic Telegraph, 18 May 1850.
129 Ibid., 11 January 1852.
130 Ibid., 14 January 1847.
A source of constant irritation to the Catholics of the city was the inequity with which they felt public resources were allocated to social service efforts. An 1843 petition soliciting funds from the city was rejected on the grounds of sectarianism, and yet the Cincinnati Orphan Asylum, with a much smaller population than Saint Peter's, received funding. In Catholic eyes the city asylum was a Protestant institution living on public taxes. A chorus of complaints appear in The Catholic Telegraph throughout the decade about having to pay the water tax. An editorial entitled “More City Meanness” notes a charge that the orphanage had to pay for gas lamps on Third Street, and another remarks that “the collection of the gas and water tax from the Roman Catholic Asylum has been a subject of astonishment for some years. It is an exhibition of bigotry.” But despite problems and concerns, life for the children continued as regularly as possible. In a letter written by Sister Margaret George, an idea of the orphan’s daily schedule emerges:

Our orphans rise at 5, wash and comb during the hour 5 1/2—morning prayers in common, after morning prayers the larger ones go to the dormitories, presided by one of the sisters in each dormitory, make the beds, sweep, dust, and put everything in order.
6 1/2—Mass
7—Breakfast
8 1/2—School commences. Three different classrooms. The ABC children and the little ones in one room; our rule is three years of age, not younger unless some particular circumstances require a dispensation.
11 3/4 Dinner prayers. . .
12—Dinner—Silence, of course (reading when we are altogether). . .
1 1/2—School opens—at four o’clock those that are able to study employ this hour in studying lessons for the next day—the little ones continue their lessons with one sister and one sister can keep all the studies of the others, thus three sisters are engaged during the hour the sisters keep the studies the two class sisters can make their spiritual

131Ibid., 4 February 1843.
132Ibid., 11 November 1847, 8 February 1851, 4 December 1852.
exercises. After meals, 10 or 12 of the larger children assist in washing the dishes and cleaning the refectory, etc. but must not stay longer than the commencement of school without special permission each time from myself—which I rarely grant—the only chance these poor children have for education is while they are with us, therefore we should do all we can for them....

The externs never mix with the orphans neither in or out of school—separate rooms and separate teachers sore eyes have been our torment and the only remedy I find is separate towels and basins for each one and we have to be particular to see that this is observed. Each child is numbered, clothes, box, and everything belonging to her marked in her number. No school on Saturdays. A general reviewing of the dormitories, etc.—bathing the children in summer, etc.; in the afternoon, they have sewing classes and read....

Our children—such as they are able—go to the Cathedral twice every Sunday. This keeps them before the public who love to see them and encourages them to contribute to their support.  

In addition to the orphan’s Sunday trips to the cathedral, their excursions were often given notice in the press. On one occasion a reporter from the Cincinnati Commercial noted, “It was my good fortune to be present on Monday last, when the children composing St. Peter’s school accompanied their teachers (better known and more endeared by the name of Sisters of Charity) made an excursion to a neighboring hill-side, to crown with due ceremony the Queen of their choice, and pass the day in amusements appropriate to the month and occasion.” At another time their participation in a temperance procession was reported; thousands marched to the cathedral for concluding services. “The Cathedral was so densely crowded that the orphan children had to be admitted within the railing of the sanctuary. Dressed in new and beautiful attire, they looked the picture of health, as they thronged around the Bishop’s chair.

133Margaret George to Catherine Spalding, 26 August 1849, from Cincinnati, Archives Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, Nazareth, Kentucky.
134Cincinnati Commercial, 15 May 1850.
135Margaret George 1842 Scrapbook, AMSJ.
Through the years Bishop Purcell continued to be a protector and benefactor to the orphans as well as a friend and supporter of the sisters. In a letter to a friend Sister Margaret George remarked, “In Bishop Purcell we have the kindest and best of Fathers and providers. . . . The Bishop’s brother is our confessor and he is another Father like the Bishop. We have every spiritual and corporal assistance.”

By 1851 Saint Peter’s was accommodating over 300 children, about half each in the school and the orphanage. Their annual exhibitions continued to draw notice to themselves as well as to the sisters who were given the “greatest praise for their endeavor to instruct those placed under their charge.” The number of sisters increased to accommodate the growing numbers of children. By 1848 there were ten at Saint Peter’s. Within two years that number had expanded to eleven and in 1851 reached thirteen. At the same time women from Cincinnati were contributing to the overall growth of the community. Between 1838 and 1850, nine traveled to the Maryland motherhouse to make their novitiate and become Sisters of Charity.

While the ministry of the sisters was proceeding well, decisions were being made in the community which would lead to profound changes. There had always been some priests who favored the American Sisters of Charity joining the French Daughters of Charity. In addition, the Sulpician priest-directors of the community were under pressure from their French superiors to withdraw from the work of directing women’s religious communities, as it was not in keeping with their main purpose. The sisters’ superior at this time, Sulpician Louis Deluol, looked upon the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentians) as a natural group to replace the Sulpicians in this work since part of their mission was to serve as directors for the French Daughters of Charity, a community from which the American Sisters of Charity had derived their spirit and rule.

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136 Margaret George to Cecilia O’Conway, 10 October 1848, from Cincinnati, Ursuline Archives, Quebec.
137 Charles Cist, Sketches and Statistics of Cincinnati in 1851 (Cincinnati: 1851), 58, 151.
138 Cincinnati Commercial, 29 June 1850, 2 July 1851 and The Catholic Telegraph, 6 July 1850.
139 Council Book 1829-1852, entries for 16 January 1838, 31 March 1840, 2 April 1842, 13 February 1843, 18 November 1844, 27 February 1845, 27 August 1850, 12 December 1850, 2 December 1851. These women and when they entered were: Ann McKay, 29 March 1838; Bernadine Schroeder, 11 May 1840; Mary Routanne, 2 April 1842; Ellen Gallagher 13 February 1843; Mrs. Sherrod, 19 November 1844; Rachel Hemberger, 27 October 1844; Ellen Strahen, 27 August 1850; Ann McQuaid, 25 December 1850; Ann Cassilly, 2 December 1851.
Initially the Vincentian superiors in Paris were cool to the idea of assuming this responsibility, but Father Deluol continued to pursue it. His 1845 letter instructing the sisters to withdraw from the work of caring for boys brought the American sisters’ practice essentially into conformity with the Common Rules of the French Daughters of Charity. As described above, this change led to the withdrawal of some sisters to form a diocesan community of Sisters of Charity in New York.

The New York situation hastened Deluol’s course of action. To the above motivations was now added the fear that other bishops would find the idea of a diocesan community attractive and foster a further splintering of the community.
From the moment in which the separation [in New York] had taken place, Father Deluol worked slowly but steadily for the desired Union of his Daughters with the Daughters of Saint Vincent. He prayed, and had the sisters make perpetual novenas for his intention, without however, manifesting what that intention was. His project was of a delicate nature, and had to be conducted with much circumspection; therefore, he kept the project a secret to himself for about three years, during which time he consulted God, and meditated on the means of attaining his object. . . .

The sisters thus far had not been formally acquainted of the union in contemplation; they only conjectured it. Their Very Rev. Superior in his wisdom thought it well to keep from them such information till initiatives had been taken in obtaining the opinion and approval of the bishops most interested."\(^{140}\)

In the summer of 1848 negotiations to effect the union were formally opened with the Vincentian superiors in Paris. A petition was presented and preliminary arrangements begun.\(^{141}\) Documents of the period indicate that neither the sisters nor all of the bishops involved were aware of the course of events being pursued by the signers of the petition.\(^{142}\) Nevertheless, the union was approved by the Vincentian superiors in July 1849. This news was communicated to the sisters in September with the assurance that “nothing will be changed in the usual order of things.”\(^{143}\)

Reactions to the announcement were mixed. Reverend Mariano Maller,\(^{144}\) visitor (provincial superior) of the United States province of the Vincentian priests, had cautioned Mother Etienne Hall,\(^{145}\) the

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\(^{141}\)Ibid., 5.


\(^{143}\)Deluol to My dearest children, 7 September 1849, quoted in “Our Union with France,” 9-10.

\(^{144}\)Mariano Maller was born in Spain in 1817 and joined the Congregation of the Mission in 1833. He came to the United States in 1839 and became the visitor of the American Province in 1848. It was during his term as visitor that Maller helped to finalize the negotiations for the union of the Sisters of Charity at Emmitsburg with the Daughters of Charity in Paris.

\(^{145}\)Mary Hall was born in 1806 in Queen Ann County, Maryland. She entered the Sisters of Charity in 1829 and became Sister Etienne. She served as mother of the community from 1845 to 1851. She died in 1872.
Saint Peter in Chains Cathedral. In 1843 a new Greek style cathedral was erected in downtown Cincinnati. It continues to serve as the cathedral for the archdiocese.  

*Courtesy Archives, Mount Saint Joseph*
Emmitsburg superior, that "Perhaps it would be better not to spread the news too hastily." But soon word was out and there was evidence of disquietude among some sisters and bishops.

In Cincinnati Bishop Purcell seemed satisfied to go along with the change, but there was discontent among some of the sisters. Early in 1850 they received a copy of the new vow formula which recognized the Vincentian superior in Paris as their superior. Some of the sisters responded that as they had entered the order in America, "Superiors had no right to transfer their allegiance without their full consent. We were ignorant of the French customs, had made our Novitiate in America, and knew what would be required in said community." On the basis of these reservations, about half of the sisters on the Cincinnati mission refused to renew their vows in March. Bishop Purcell took up their cause, describing their "agitation" and "anxiety" and expressing concern that "they should never have been called upon to make such vows . . . without their consent. . . . But above all they should not have been required to make them or it, under a threat of being no longer reputed members of a community in which they had faithfully fulfilled their obligations."

During the spring of 1850 some of the sisters from the New Orleans missions stopped in Cincinnati on their way back to Emmitsburg. One of these, Sister Sophia Gilmeyer, sympathized with the position of those in Cincinnati who were raising questions about the French affiliation, feeling the changes threatened the character of the community. She decided to remain with them. A native of Maryland, Sister Sophia attended Saint Joseph's Academy at Emmitsburg and was a pupil of Elizabeth Seton. She entered the community in 1825 and served in asylums in Philadelphia and Frederick as well as in hospitals in Brooklyn, Baltimore, and New Orleans. Father Maller blamed the disruption in Cincinnati on Sister Margaret George who "excites the other sisters" and swayed Bishop Purcell. In May he made a visit to Cincinnati and assured the sisters that "no change would take place in the Rules, dress, etc."

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146Maller to Mother Etienne, 17 August 1849, quoted in "Our Union with France," 8.
147See Deluol to My dearest Child, 12 August 1849 in which he asks a sister, "Why do you call sorrowful the idea which 'haunts' you, whilst it should fill your heart with joy" quoted in "Our Union with France," 9-10. See also Bishop John Chance to Bishop Anthony Blanc, 22 December 1849 and Maller to Bishop Blanc, 11 December 1849, both in AUND.
148Annals of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, Ohio 1852, AMSJ.
149Purcell to Archbishop Samuel Eccleston, 26 March 1850, Archives, Archdiocese of Baltimore.
150Maller to Etienne, 14 April 1850, Vincentian Archives, Saint John's University.
151Annals, AMSJ.
On the basis of this assurance, those who had not made vows made them privately.\textsuperscript{152} The climate became more settled, and Sister Margaret George, in a summer letter to Bishop Purcell, even advocated applying to Emmitsburg for more sisters to meet the needs of the diocese.\textsuperscript{153} But in early November the sisters received a letter from the Vincentian superior general, Jean-Baptiste Étienne, outlining the changes in dress, rule, and custom that would be required of them as a result of the union.\textsuperscript{154} Again, the sisters were thrown into turmoil, and some did not sign their vows at Christmas.\textsuperscript{155}

Sister Margaret voiced her nagging concern to Father Maller but got no satisfaction. Instead, he criticized her to his superior as one who lacked "much of the spirit of her vocation," and believed herself "too important because of her age."\textsuperscript{156}

The situation continued to be tense into 1851. Father Maller convened all the local superiors of the missions for a retreat at Emmitsburg in late September to explain how the impending changes would be implemented. Sister Margaret George stated her views opposing this direction to the council but to no avail.\textsuperscript{157} Realizing that the community’s direction was set in a way she could not embrace, this local superior returned to Cincinnati to convey this message to the others. For those who could not subscribe to the change, a decision had to be made. Two sisters applied and were accepted by other communities: Sister Eleazar Harvey into the Sisters of Mercy in Pittsburgh, and Sister Louis Regina Mattingly as a member of the Ursuline Nuns at Brown County, Ohio.\textsuperscript{158} Sister Margaret George, too struggled with her future. "One evening Sister Anthony O’Connell sought Sister Margaret whom she found disconsolate and in tears saying that she [Margaret] guessed she would be obliged to go to the poor house. Sister [Anthony] replied, ‘not while Anthony has two hands to work,’ at the same time promising to stand by her superior to the end."\textsuperscript{159}

\textsuperscript{152}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{153}Purcell to Margaret George, 25 August 1850, AMSJ.
\textsuperscript{154}Étienne to My very dear Sisters, 1 November 1850, quoted in “Our Union with France,” 23-28.
\textsuperscript{155}Annals, AMSJ.
\textsuperscript{156}Maller to Étienne, 31 December 1850, Vincentian Archives.
\textsuperscript{157}McCann, History, 2: 35.
\textsuperscript{158}Sister Cornelia McGurn, “A Little Record,” 12, 18, AMSJ.
\textsuperscript{159}Ibid., 15-16.
Sister Margaret George. Assigned as sister servant to Cincinnati in 1845, she became the first mother of the Cincinnati community when it became diocesan in 1852.

*Courtesy Archives, Mount Saint Joseph*
Aware of these happenings, Purcell consulted with several other bishops who all agreed that a separation was advisable under the circumstances. Meanwhile one of the sisters on the mission, sympathetic to the changes, acquainted the superiors at Emmitsburg with the state of affairs among the Cincinnati sisters. Within a few weeks, in late February 1852, Sister Ann Simeon Norris arrived from Emmitsburg. She met with each of the thirteen sisters privately and then with Bishop Purcell. The prelate informed her of his intention to open a motherhouse in his diocese for those sisters who could not conscientiously join the French community. He also expressed hope that “poor young girls of the diocese or in that section of the country, who had not the means of going to St. Joseph’s might wish to join the remaining sisters and thus their good works would be Perpetuated.”

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160 Annals, AMSJ.
161 Mother Regina Smith, 89.
162 Ibid., 89, 90.
Seven of the sisters chose to remain with their original community. They were reassigned to other missions and left the city with Sister Ann Simeon. The remaining six made their vows on 25 March 1852 naming Purcell as their superior. These women became the founding members of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati. They were Sisters Margaret George, Sophia Gilmeyer, Anthony O'Connell, Eleazar Harvey, Louis Regina Mattingly, and Antonia McCaffrey, a novice who had been missioned to Cincinnati the previous year.

Within a few weeks Sister Gonzalva Dougherty arrived.163 This young woman had entered the community in 1844 and served at Saint Peter's for several years in the late 1840s. She then spent several years at Saint Philomena's School in Saint Louis but returned to Cincinnati when she learned of events there. Two additional sisters, Angela McKay and Zoe Shaw, also arrived from other missions and were received.

Four additional Emmitsburg sisters applied to transfer to Cincinnati but were refused.164 At the same time three others appeared unannounced.165 One of these was Ann McQuaid, who had entered the community from Cincinnati in 1850 and served for a time at the New Orleans hospital.166 This activity evoked a protest from Father Maller who accused Sister Margaret George of offering a "standing invitation" to the Emmitsburg sisters.167 Sister Margaret responded that the accusation existed "only in his own fertile imagination" and that she had not either directly or indirectly encouraged sisters to come to Cincinnati.

The Cincinnati sisters, especially Sister Margaret George, keenly felt the separation from their community. She was sixty-five years old and had been a member of the community for forty years at the time of the separation. Now, she knew, her courageous stand had caused her to be cut off from friends and that she would never visit her beloved home at Emmitsburg again. Sister Eleazar Harvey, in writing to a friend, recounted, "We have indeed passed through a severe

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163 Annals, AMSJ.
164 These sisters as listed in the Annals of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati were: Margaret Reilly, a novice at Emmitsburg; Fanny Whelan; Sister Mary Mark; and Catherine Gibson.
165 These sisters as listed in the Annals of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati were: Sister Palladia McQuaid; Sister Albina of Emmitsburg; and Sister Melita Flood.
166 Annals, AMSJ.
167 Maller to Purcell, 2 August, 1852, AMSJ.
ordeal but thank God it is over and all our sorrows and anguish have been succeeded by a calm and holy tranquillity... It was hard indeed to give up our 'valley home.' To me it was endear'd by many ties." 168

But while correspondence with the Emmitsburg sisters was cut off, the Cincinnati sisters reestablished their ties with those in New York. In writing to one, Sister Margaret George reported on the progress of the group and then remarked, "It is certainly a great consolation to me once more to correspond with friends of our blessed times—times that are gone forever." 169 In fact, in the summer of 1852, Sister Margaret paid a visit to her friends in New York. Sister Elizabeth Boyle, another pioneer member of the Emmitsburg community, welcomed her warmly, describing her as in very good health, "looking very much broken, but full of life and spirit" 170 after the strain she had been through. The two reminisced of their early days together and visited old friends, most notably Elizabeth Seton's daughter, Catherine, who was then a Sister of Mercy in New York.

Beginning 2 April 1852, with the arrival of Joanna O'Keefe, new members were received into the novitiate established at Saint Peter's. By the end of the year thirteen additional women joined the new community, 174 bringing Bishop Purcell's expectation to fruition.

With their new, more local focus and with additional personnel, the ministry of the sisters expanded immediately. In March 1852 Saint Joseph's Benevolent Society was formed for the purpose of establishing an orphan asylum for boys. A home was purchased and on 8 May the sisters took charge of twenty-three boys. Later in the year, Bishop

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168Mary Josephine to M. Constantia, 19 June 1852, copy in AMSJ. Sister Eleazar changed her name to Sister Mary Josephine shortly after the Cincinnati community became independent.
169Margaret George to My beloved Sisters, 6 May 1852, from Cincinnati, AMSJ.
170Born and raised a Protestant in Baltimore, Elizabeth Boyle converted to Catholicism as a young woman. She entered the Sisters of Charity in 1810. She spent many years on mission at the orphan asylum in New York and was elected the first mother of the New York Sisters of Charity in 1846. She died in 1861.
171Elizabeth Boyle to Cecilia O'Conway, 5 September 1852, from New York, Ursuline Archives, Quebec.
172Sister Elizabeth Boyle to Sister Cecilia O'Conway, 9 September 1855, from New York, Ursuline Archives, Quebec.
173Catherine Seton was born in 1800, the fourth of Elizabeth Seton's five children. She lived with her mother at Emmitsburg until her mother's death in 1821. She entered the Sisters of Mercy in New York in 1846 and took the name Sister Mary Catherine.
174These women and the dates they entered as listed in the Annals of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati were: Elizabeth Ferris, April 12; Bridget Flynn, April 12; Ellen Carson, April 12; Maria Lowe, April 12; Mary Maddock, July 31; Ellen Phillips, August 7; Margaret Rachenberg, August 18; Catharine Griffin, August 30; Ann McDermot, September 4; Mary Conroy, September 4; Mary Kenny, September 25; Mary Corcoran, September 25; and Mary Lavan, October 15.
Purcell purchased the "Hotel des Invalides" and asked the sisters to take charge. Renamed Saint John’s Hotel for Invalids, this facility was the first private hospital in Cincinnati and eventually grew into Good Samaritan Hospital.

Thus the Sisters of Charity completed the beginning phase of their ministry in Cincinnati. They arrived in the city to help pioneer the growth of the Catholic Church in Ohio. Serving as the Church’s focal point in providing services for women and children, and despite a hostile environment, they did not exclude non-Catholics from their benevolent reach. Models of disinterested selflessness, they functioned as teachers, mothers to the orphans, and social service providers. In many ways they were the mustard seed of the educational and social services of the diocese. In collaborating with clergy and lay leaders, they impacted the lives of many through their presence and their works. The seed planted in 1829 yielded an abundant fruitfulness for the city and the Church which few could have predicted.
Appendix I
Sisters Who Served in Cincinnati 1829-1852

The records for the early sisters are at times incomplete or different sources contradict each other. In addition there is a lack of consistency in spelling and, in some cases, variations in names used. This list is compiled to the best of my knowledge based primarily on data from the "Council Book 1829-52" and "Catalogue of the Sisters," both located at Saint Joseph Provincial House Archives, Emmitsburg.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year missioned to Cincinnati</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Biographical dates</th>
<th>Year Entered</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1829</td>
<td>Fanny Jordan</td>
<td>1793-1867</td>
<td>1810</td>
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<tr>
<td>1829</td>
<td>Beatrice Tyler</td>
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<td>1829</td>
<td>Victoria Fitzgerald</td>
<td>1809-1885</td>
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<tr>
<td>1829</td>
<td>Albina Levy</td>
<td>(left)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1832</td>
<td>Assisium McEnnis</td>
<td>1812-1879</td>
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<td>1832</td>
<td>Angela Hughes</td>
<td>1806-1866</td>
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<td>1833</td>
<td>Cephas Cook</td>
<td>1814-1855</td>
<td>1833</td>
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<tr>
<td>1833</td>
<td>Alphonsa Lilly</td>
<td>1810-1845</td>
<td>1827</td>
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<tr>
<td>1834</td>
<td>Mary Charles</td>
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<tr>
<td>1834</td>
<td>Mathias</td>
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<tr>
<td>1835</td>
<td>Samuelanna</td>
<td>(left)</td>
<td>1828</td>
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<tr>
<td>1836</td>
<td>Alexandrine Forsyth</td>
<td>1811-1860</td>
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<td>1836</td>
<td>(Mary Alexander)</td>
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<td>1837</td>
<td>Seraphine McNulty</td>
<td>(left 1846)</td>
<td>1829</td>
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<tr>
<td>1837</td>
<td>Josephine De Chantal</td>
<td>-1848</td>
<td>1830</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Miles</td>
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<td>1837</td>
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<td></td>
<td>O'Connell</td>
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<td>1840</td>
<td>Barbara Longworth</td>
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<td>1841</td>
<td>Lumina Flynn</td>
<td>1822-(left 1864)</td>
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<td>1842</td>
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<td>1813-(left 1853)</td>
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<td>1842</td>
<td>Mary Lawrence</td>
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<td>1842</td>
<td>Germana Moore</td>
<td>-1851</td>
<td>c. 1834</td>
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<td>1842</td>
<td>Wilhelmina Dodthage</td>
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<td>1843</td>
<td>Adele Durm</td>
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<td>1843</td>
<td>Ann Austin (left)</td>
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<td>McGrann entered Sisters of Providence in 1841</td>
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<td>1844</td>
<td>Lucy Ann Concklin</td>
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<td>1842</td>
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<td>1845</td>
<td>Margaret George</td>
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<td>1845</td>
<td>Eleazar Harvey</td>
<td>1819-1895</td>
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<td>1845</td>
<td>Louis Regina</td>
<td>1826-1883</td>
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<td>1848</td>
<td>Borromeo Fecher</td>
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<td>Walburga Gehring</td>
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<td>Anesia Grieg</td>
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<td>Dougherty</td>
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