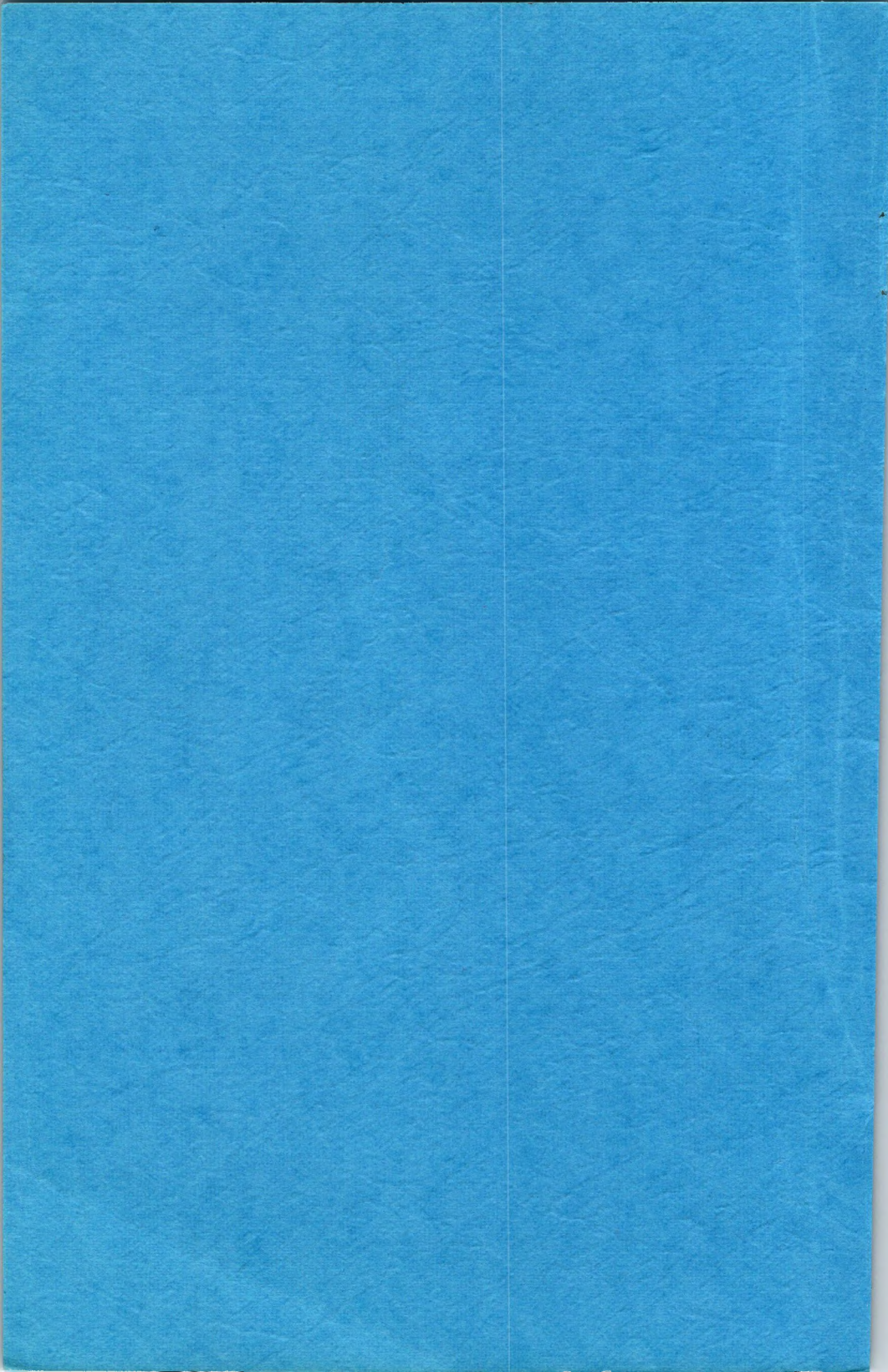


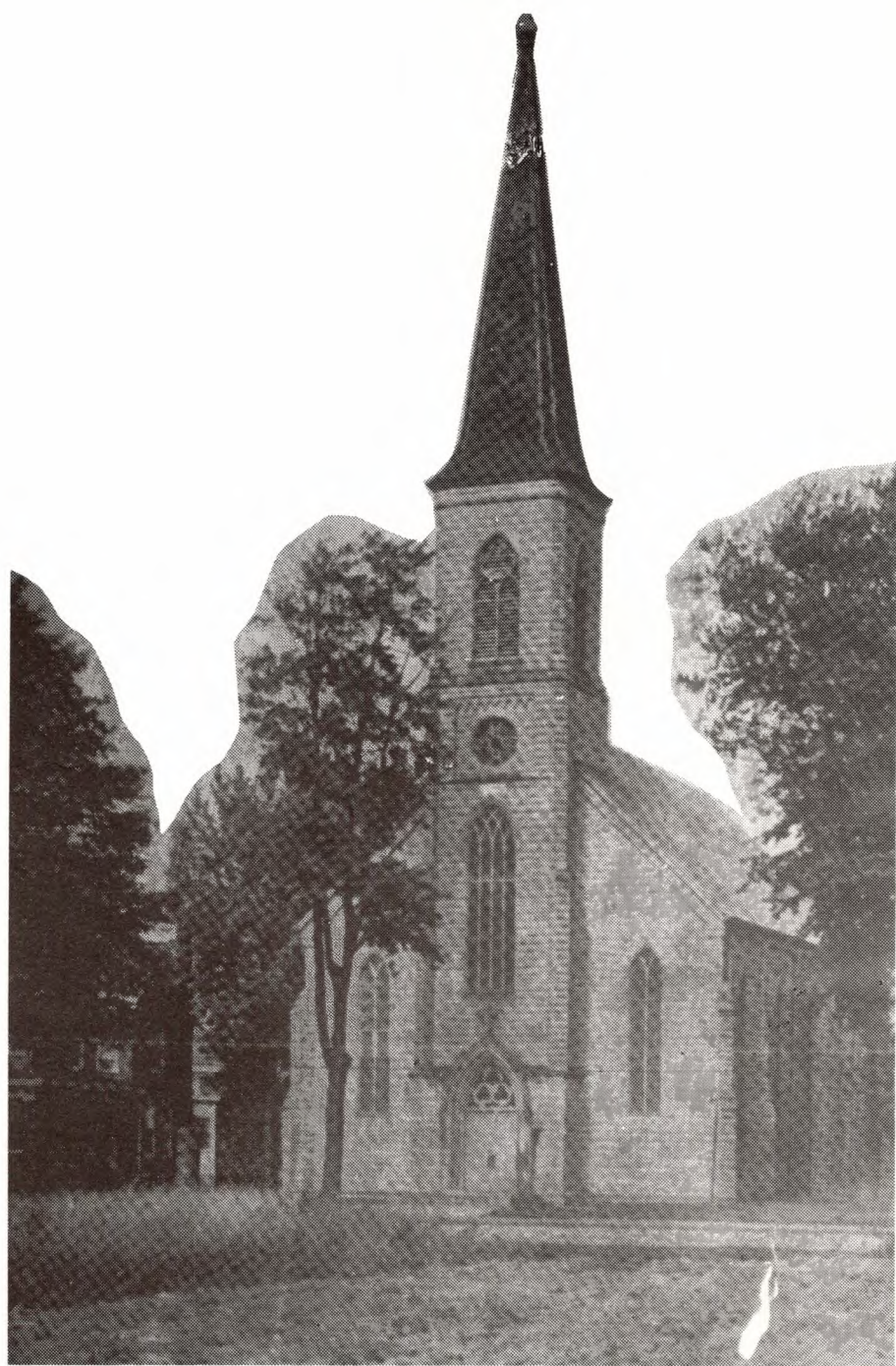
# SAINT LOUIS PARISH, BESANCON















## BEGINNINGS

A "Biographical Sketch of Rt. Rev. Julian Benoit," published in 1885, contains several references to Besancon. It gives the date of Father Benoit's arrival in Fort Wayne as April 16, 1840, and says: "At this time his missionary work extended in and beyond Fort Wayne to the present Academy, **Besancon**, Hesse Cassel, New Haven, Decatur, LaGro, Huntington, Columbia City, and Lima (LaGrange County), Girardot Settlement, and Avilla, going on sickcalls as far as Muncie." This biographical sketch contains a few paragraphs written by Father Benoit himself, with the notation that these few paragraphs are the only thing historical ever written by Monsignor Benoit. We found the same paragraphs in the "History of Allen County, Indiana," published by Kingman Brothers of Chicago in 1880, in an article signed by Rev. Julian Benoit. To the paragraphs quoted in the biographical sketch, the article in the "History of Allen County, Indiana," adds short sketches of a few parishes in Fort Wayne and nearby communities. In this brief history Father Benoit writes: In 1835 Fort Wayne was visited by Rt. Rev. Sainly Simon Gabriel Brute, first Bishop of Vincennes. In the beginning of 1840, Bishop Guynemere de la Hilandiere, second Bishop of Vincennes, appointed Rev. Julian Benoit pastor of St. Augustine's Church, Fort Wayne having to attend LaGro, Huntington, Columbia City, Warsaw, Goshen, Avilla, **New France**, New Haven, **Besancon**, Hesse Cassel and Decatur." In the "History of Allen County, Indiana," page 95, Father Benoit writes: "St. Louis Church, Jefferson Township, Allen County, was built in 1847 and rebuilt in 1874." He is evidently incorrect about both of these dates, however, as will be seen from facts which follow.

Jefferson Township, Allen County Indiana was settled about 1840 by French immigrants and the settlement thus formed was known as New France and Besancon. Father Benoit, pastor of St. Augustine's Fort Wayne (now the Cathedral) and possibly his assistants, attended to the spiritual needs of these Catholic immigrants and said Mass in private homes but there are no records to fix the time when the first gathering of Catholics to assist at Mass occurred. Previous histories of St. Louis Parish cover the period of time between 1840 and 1851 with the following rather vague statement: "Coming from a country which had been Catholic for over a thousand years the new settlers were not slow about looking for a priest to minister to them. They found one in the person of Rev. A. Bessonies, who came regularly from Fort Wayne, saying Mass in the log house of Joseph Dodane." For how long before 1851 Father Bessonies came to Besancon regularly and said Mass in the log house of Joseph Dodane there is no record, but statements of old residents from pioneer families make 1845 or 1846 seem most likely. A congregation of Catholics with a priest administering to them seems to have existed here, therefore, for at least one hundred years.

## THE FIRST CHURCH

According to an article, written by Father John Francis Noll for the Fort Wayne newspapers May 31, 1906, Gideon Dickerson donated four acres of land to Bishop Maurice de St. Palais of Vincennes January 14, 1851. The deed for the transaction is recorded in the Recorder's Office at Fort Wayne (Book 147-422) bearing the date of recording, November 1, 1851. This fact makes the date 1847, given by Father Benoit, most unlikely. After telling of the donation of the land, Father Noll's history says: "Father Bessonies immediately began the erection of a frame church under the patronage of St. Louis. Messrs. C.F. Lomont and Joseph Dodane bore the bulk of the expense of building, and Frank Sallier did the work. Until this time the entire State of Indiana belonged to the diocese of Vincennes and was under the jurisdiction of Bishop de St. Palais. When the Diocese of Fort Wayne was founded in 1857, Father Bessonies was recalled to Vincennes. Father Bessonies later became Vicar General of the Diocese of Vincennes and Prelate to His Holiness, with residence at St. John's Cathedral, Indianapolis.

## **FATHER BENOIT AGAIN**

When Father Bessonies left Fort Wayne in 1857, his place was filled by Father Julian Benoit, who attended St. Louis regularly until 1864. Old Allen County residents held Father Benoit in high esteem long after his death but he especially endeared himself to the people of St. Louis Parish. His portrait might be found in the parlors of old homes, and one such picture, donated by Mrs. Frank Henry, now hangs in the auditorium of St. Louis School. When it was a question of painting above the sanctuary of the present church, the parishioners of that time insisted on his likeness being painted among the figures of the angels, which was done. The image was reluctantly destroyed when the church was later refrescoed.

## **FIRST RESIDENT PASTOR**

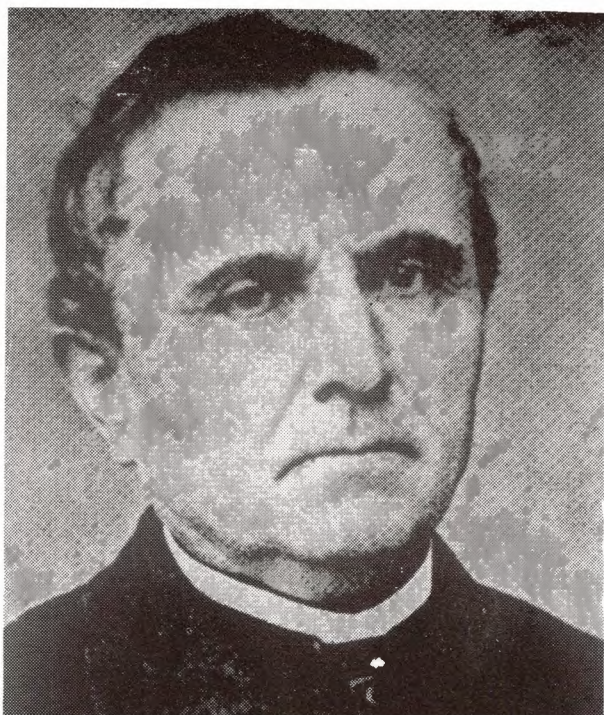
In 1864 Father Grevin succeeded Father Benoit and became the first resident pastor of St. Louis Parish. He built the first pastoral residence, a modest cottage costing only a few hundred dollars. Father Grevin was pastor from 1864 to 1865. He was followed by Rev. J.C. Carrier, C.S.C. from January 1865 to November 1866; Rev. A. de Montaubricq from April to December 1867; Father Vandevannet from December 1867 to October 1868 and Father A. Mignault from October 1868 to January 1870. Father A. Mignault began gathering funds for the erection of a new church.

## **THE PRESENT CHURCH**

On January 1, 1870, Rev. A. Adam whom the renowned Father Sorrin of Notre Dame brought with him from France became the resident pastor of St. Louis Church. He had previously built the Academy of the Sacred Heart and the church and rectory of St. Vincent's on the Auburn Road. Father A. Adam's name appears on the parish records even before 1870. On August 22, 1865, he baptized Catherine Miller and again on September 27, 1865 and April 22, 1866 we find his name signed to baptismal records of St. Louis Church. He assisted at the marriage of Joseph Rock and Augustina Brasser on March 1, 1868 and he signed a receipt for a donation for the new church October 31, 1869. Previous histories, however, date his pastorate from January 1, 1870.

About this time the settlement dropped the name New France and became known by only its present name Besancon because many of its people came from Besancon, France. The congregation numbered 600 souls. Father Adam immediately began the erection of a new, larger and more substantial church. The financial records of the parish at that time give us some interesting sidelights on the efforts to raise funds for the building of a new church. We find that subscriptions for the building of a new church were taken up as early as 1868. The July report of 1869 records donations for the building of a new church. This report is signed by F. Lomont, More Pepe, Louis Berthaud, Lester Gladio, Theodore Navert, Nicholas Lorraene and Secretary F.A. Roy as Trustees and Father A. Mignault as pastor. The yearly report, signed November 2, 1869, showed receipts of \$281.25 and expenditures of \$154.89 and a balance of \$126.36 to which was added a \$10.00 subscription for the new church making a complete balance of \$136.36. This annual report was signed by F. Lomont, Joseph Dodane, Louis Berthaud, Francis Gladio, J.B. Dupreynon, More Pepe, N. Lorraine, Secretary F.A. Roy and pastor A. Mignault.





**Father A. Bessonies**  
(builder of first church)

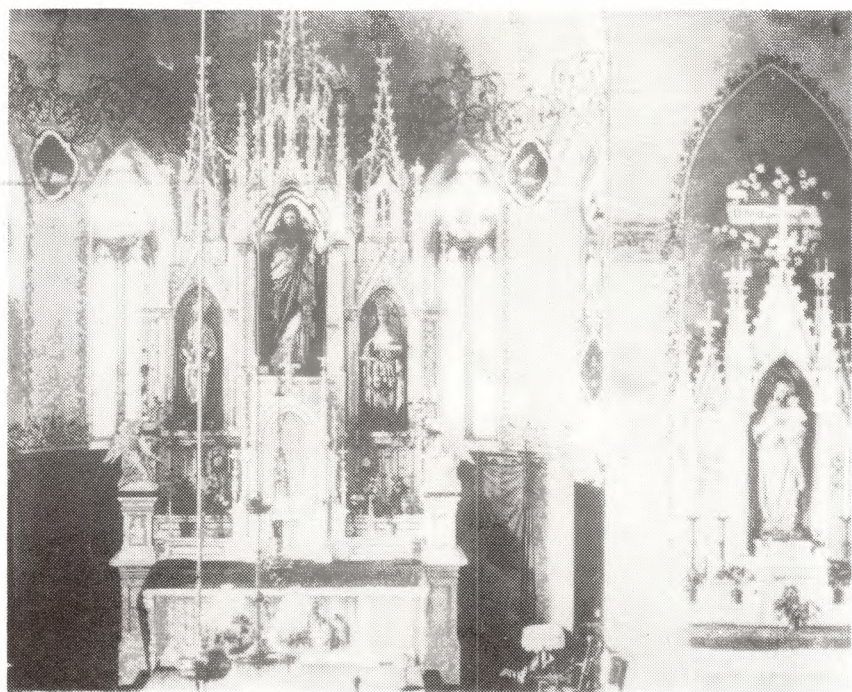


**Father Julian Benoit**  
(first missionary of Besancon)



**Father A. Adam**  
(builder of second church)





**Original Altars**



**Rectory**



We find that H.C. Bowers was paid \$22.86 for lumber October 1, 1869 and the following gifts were received for the new church in 1869: November 21, A. Mignault (the pastor) \$92.85; December 3, Alphone Lomont \$10.00; December 12, J.B. Douparon \$10.00; December 19, John Didnam \$12.50; November 1, Lester Gladio \$6.19. Father Adam signed the following entry, July 27, 1869, "Received from Alexis Monnier six dollars and 25/100, being the first installment of his subscription for the new church." The parish books give a complete list of pew renters for 1870-1871, listing pew rent paid quarterly for pews in the new church in four columns headed by the following dates: Dec. 1870, March 1871, June 1871 and September 1871. The list checks perfectly with the pews as they are now numbered and arranged in the present church. We list the names of those who then held the pews omitting the amounts they paid although they were all well paid up. The spelling as well as the names is interesting so we retain the original spelling as we have done throughout this history.

### Collacation des Banes de 1 Eglise St. Louis de Besancon 1870-1871

#### Nos des Noms des Locataires

carico	Cote 1 Evangile
1	Joseph Cochoit
2	Ferdinand Periguy
3	Alexandre Roy
4	Jacques Sordelet
5	Francois Gladieux
6	Joseph Reuille
7	Celestin Gladieux
8	Pierre Maire
9	John Dignan
10	Jean Tl. Reuille
11	Etienne Colardot
12	Severin Fevrier
13	Tl. Francois Lomont
14	J. Bte. Jacquet
15	Theodore F. Cavert
16	Jean Pierre Huguenard
17	Jean Tl. Girard
18	Justin Paillot
19	A. Adam

(The pastor was given a pew, but  
neither charge or payment is made.)

20	Charles Joly
21	Jules Girardot
22	J. Bte. Roy
23	Jules Simonin
24	Bertrand Dupeyron
25	Patrick Ryan
26	Louis Monnot
27	Eugene Lamboley
28	Constant Pernot
29	Francois Rousset
30	Charles Girardot
31	Henry Brown
32	Xavier Rousset

#### Nos des Nom des Locataires

carico	Cote de 1 Epitre
33	Nicolas Loraine
34	Jacques Petrtjean
35	Cass Bower
36	Joseph Violon
37	Francois Dodane
38	Michel Saviot
39	Frederic Kline
40	Francois Boiteux
41	Casimir Urbain
42	Jean Lorain
43	Alexis Didier
44	Georges Vanderly
45	Francois Boitet
46	Morice Rosis
47	Louis Bertaud
48	Alexis Girardot
49	Francois Lomont
50	Pierre Coaillot
51	Francois Urbain

52	Pierre Stalder
53	Auguste Pepe
54	Francois Ternet
55	Florent Voirol
56	Eugene Monnot
57	Henri Reuille
58	Edward Miller
59	James Ryan
60	Charles Dard
61	Edward Girardot
62	Samuel Bacon
63	Joseph Dodane
64	Jules Voirol

It is evident from this list of pew renters that the present church was in use in December 1870. The cornerstone of the present church, which sets high over the front door of the church, is cut with the date 1871. Thus the 1871 date given by Father Noll's history of the parish is substantiated and the 1874 date given by Father Benoit is plainly shown to be incorrect. The present church is 75 years old in this year 1946. It cost \$10,000.00 at a day when both labor and material were cheap. The method used to raise the funds for the building of the present church and the manner of its erection are both interesting. To raise funds Father Adam asked the head of each family to raise a calf until it would be three years old and his request was complied with. When the birth of each calf was announced, Father Adam went to see it and branded it. On a given date, a public sale was advertised to which came prospective buyers from far and wide. The sale netted \$3000.00. The parishioners furnished timber for most of the lumber, much of which is white ash. The bricks were burnt a few rods from where the church now stands. Old-timers tell us that the new church was built around the old church. The old church was left standing within the enclosure of the new and used for services until the new church was far enough along to be used. The first foundation laid was both longer and wider than the present church but it was abandoned and a second foundation laid—that of the present church. In 1875 Father Adam received permission from Bishop Dwenger to return to France where after serving two years as chaplain in the navy, he was appointed to a model parish by the Bishop of Tours. His church building was over 1000 years old. In 1905 as an old man of 73 years, after 50 years of hard priestly labors, he begged his Bishop to allow him to spend the rest of his days in a Trappist Monastery. He returned to the United States for that purpose owing to the persecution of religious orders in France at that time. However, being too aged for the rigorous Trappist rule, he was readmitted to the Diocese of Fort Wayne and ended his days as chaplain to the Sisters of St. Joseph at Tipton. At the time of the dedication of the new altar at Besancon, May 30, 1906, he was the guest of the parish and Rev. John Francis Noll, then pastor.

The Reverend W. Demers, C.S.C. of Notre Dame succeeded Father Adam in 1875. A year later Father Constance Maujay was made pastor and served for two years. From March 30, 1878 to April 28, 1880, there are no entries on the Baptismal, Marriage or Burial records of the parish. The financial report did show payments to Father Maujay for 1877 and 1878 salary indicating that the parish was without a priest for those two years. In 1880 Rev. Felix Veniard C.S.C., took charge and served until his death in 1893. He is the only priest to die as pastor of the parish and is buried at Notre Dame. He liquidated the last remaining debt of \$3000.00. Of this amount, Father Benoit contributed \$500.00. There was at this time 100 families in the parish.

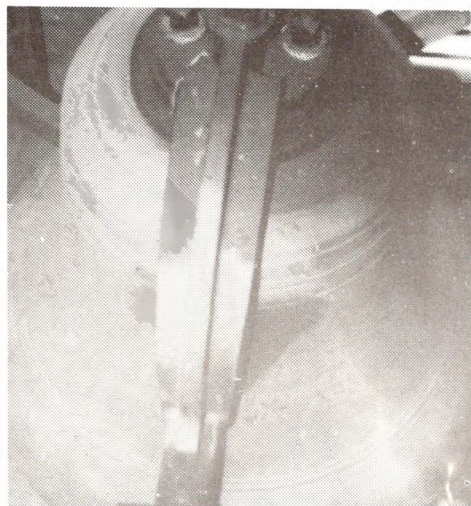
### PRESENT RECTORY BUILT

For a period of one year—June 1893 to June 1894—Father Charles Guendling and Father William Quinlan attended St. Louis Parish from the Cathedral at Fort Wayne. They came on Sundays to say Mass at Besancon. Father Quinlan built the present priest's house and collected over \$4000.00 for the purpose before the house was completed.





**Father Felix Veniard C.S.C. 1880-1893**





**Rev. F.X. Labonte 1894-1902**



**Bishop John F. Noll 1902-1906**



**1904**



## **PRESENT BISHOP ONCE PASTOR**

Rev. John F. Noll, now Bishop of the diocese, was transferred from Kendallville to St. Louis, Besancon as pastor in June 1902. Father Noll was the first pastor not of French birth but the people were thoroughly Americanized and worked in perfect harmony with him. There was a \$6000.00 debt on the parish when Father Noll took charge. He liquidated this debt and engineered improvements costing over \$3000.00. The church was beautifully frescoed in 1904, the house was renovated and the church property generally improved. Three new altars costing \$1300.00 were erected and dedicated solemnly May 30, 1906. St. Louis congregation then numbered 125 families and the value of the parish property was about \$21,000.00. A fine choir, composed exclusively of men, furnished the music for all church services. Father Noll was transferred to Hartford City and was succeeded as pastor by Father Charles Dhe in 1906. Father Dhe is remembered for his humor and easy fellowship with his parishioners.

## **THE FIRST SCHOOL**

In June 1894, the Reverend F.X. Labonte was appointed pastor. During his administration of eight years (1894-1902), Father Labonte made extensive improvements and repairs. He installed the heating plant which served the church until the installation of the present plant in September 1936. He purchased from Francis Boitet September 1, 1897 six additional acres of land on which was a house at a cost of \$1050.00. On part of this property he built a school and sister's house, costing approximately \$4000.00. The work was begun in 1898 and the school was opened in the fall of 1900 under the patronage of St. Joseph with the Sisters of St. Agnes in charge. Sister Amelia was the first directress and principal teacher. From February to June 1902, the Rev. F.J. Dandurand attended Besancon from Monroeville.

## **THE PRESENT SCHOOL**

In 1908 Father Michael Louen succeeded Father Dhe. He reopened the school, which had been closed for some time, bringing to the parish three Sisters of Notre Dame, September 3, 1910. The school opened September 9, 1910 with an attendance of 66 pupils. A fire of unknown origin destroyed the school January 29, 1915 but Father Louen immediately began the work of erecting a new one and it was dedicated on Thanksgiving day 1915. It houses four classrooms, basement, auditorium and is well arranged and solidly constructed. A new home for the Sisters was built at the same time, their old one having burned. In 1916 Father Louen was transferred to Sts. Peter and Paul Church, Huntington.

Father George J. Moorman succeeded Father Louen. He liquidated the debt of \$10,000.00 in five years as pastor, made extensive improvements on the church property, adding to its beauty, installed the pipe organ now in use in the church and purchased land for the present new St. Louis Cemetery. Father Moorman served as chaplain overseas during the First World War. During his absence Fathers William Gelsdorf O.M.I. and E.A. Davies C.S.C. administered the parish. Father Moorman left the parish free of debt and won the respect of all parishioners as much by his candor and firmness as by his sympathetic understanding. No other pastor is spoken of by them more frequently.

## **LONGEST PASTORATE**

On June 15, 1921, Father Nicholas Allgeier became pastor of St. Louis Parish. He served until July 25, 1935 the longest term of any pastor to date. In 1923 he shamrocked and refinished the church exterior at a cost of \$6000.00 and the job stands as one of the best of its kind. He also built the front porch on the rectory. In 1926 the parish numbered 775 souls. It was Father Allgeier's lot to pilot the parish through the days of the depression. He left the parish free of debt and with the imprint of his painstaking instruction and solid spiritual guidance.

## **THE PRESENT PASTOR**

Father Allgeier was succeeded on July 25, 1935 by the present pastor, Rev. Joseph A. Hession. As a result of the depression the parish property and buildings stood badly in need of repairs and modernization. Money was scarce but the people were willing so the work was immediately begun. The people turned their farm produce into cash for the parish by means of a parish picnic which netted \$2399.50 in September. A modern new water system, sewers, plumbing and lavatories were installed in the school before the end of 1935. The stoves were removed from the classrooms and the steam heating system overhauled and put into operation. The average Sunday collection for two Masses was at that time \$39.80.

In 1936 a new furnace and heating system with stoker and automatic controls was installed in the church, new cement walks laid throughout the grounds and new cement floors laid in the basement of the school and sister's house. The total cost of the improvements of these two years was \$3641.04. In 1937 the church was refrescoed using the old design. New electric wiring and a new lighting system were installed in the church. The total cost of the year's improvements was \$3737.37. This included tiling the cemetery, a new roof and cross on the church spire, painting the school interiorly, reconditioning the school floors and installing stokers in the school and Sisters' house. The average weekly collections were \$61.30 and the annual picnic netted over \$2500.00.

In 1938 the floors in the Sisters' house were reconditioned and a stoker was installed in the rectory in 1939. In 1940 the rectory was completely remodeled, redecorated and refurnished at a total cost of \$3371.20. By 1941 the weekly collections had increased to an average of \$84.83 and jumped to \$118.40 in 1942 and \$132.93 in 1943. In 1944 the church was reroofed with asbestos shingles, the organ overhauled and a new water tank installed at a cost of \$1332.00. Parish picnics were discontinued and the weekly collections averaged \$156.09. In 1945 the rectory was rewired. In 1946 a new heating system and a new furnace was installed in the rectory and storm windows placed on the rectory and school at a cost of \$2061.32. Since July 1935 over sixteen thousand dollars worth of improvements, exclusive of repairs, have been made and there is no debt.



St. Joseph School, Beaverton 1900-1915



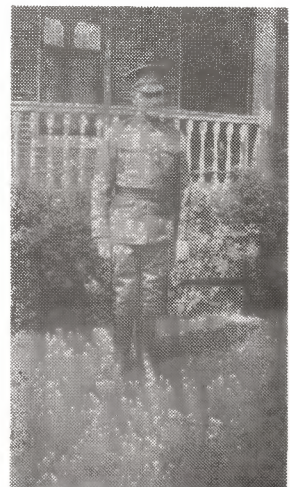
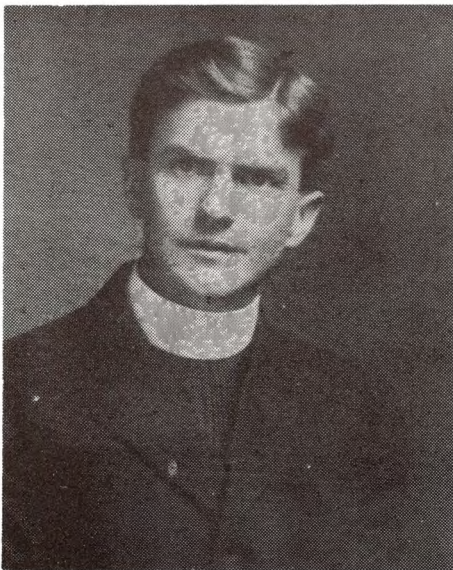
**First School     1900-1915**



**Present School     1915**



**Father Michael Louen 1908-1916**



**Father George Moorman 1916-1921**



The parish properties consist of church, school, rectory, Sisters house, two cemeteries, athletic field and playground covering in all about 13 acres. The present valuation is \$101,200.00. The parish numbers at present 216 families totalling 916 souls. The School Sisters of Notre Dame is in charge of the school and teach the eight grades in four classrooms. It enrolled 137 pupils this year, 1946. Jefferson Township school busses transport all pupils to and from school in accordance with the laws of the State of Indiana. The public school is only a few rods away and its officials cooperate well with the pastor and Sisters at St. Louis School. Unfortunately a few children living outside Jefferson Township are at too great a distance to attend Catholic School but these attend instructions in religion and it is hoped to provide them with transportation to Catholic school soon. No Catholic child in Jefferson Township has attended public school in the past ten years, a unique proof of the cooperation and Catholicity of the parishioners of St. Louis Parish, Besancon.

### THE SISTERS

The School Sisters of Notre Dame took charge of St. Louis School on September 3, 1910. The following Sisters served here:

Sister M. Sabina, Superior .....	1910-1918
Conradine .....	1910-1917
Remigius .....	1910-1934
Walburga .....	1915-1928
Gustava .....	1917-1918
Basilia, Superior .....	1918-1924
Severine .....	1918-1919
Melitine .....	1919-1922
Hyacinth, Superior .....	1922-1932; 1934-1937
Johanette, Superior .....	1924-1925
Gemella .....	1925-1926
Amantia .....	1926-1927
Clemens .....	1927-1940
Nonna .....	1928-1933; 1937-Present
Hildegard, Superior .....	1932-1933
Nivarda .....	1933-1934
Reginata, Superior .....	1933-1934
Harold .....	1934-1935
Englemara .....	1934-1935
Chionia .....	1935-1936
Simplicia .....	1935-1936
Milburgis .....	1936-1937
Hedwig .....	1936-1937
Caroline, Superior .....	1937-1943
Sigilinda .....	1937-1938
Gerosine .....	1938-1940
Alise .....	1940-1941
Livonia .....	1940-1941
Leoba .....	1940-Present
Gaudentia .....	1941-1944
Perpetuella .....	1941-1945
Frances de Paul, Superior .....	1943-Present
Hildegard .....	1944-Present
Isaia .....	1945-Present

## BOYS AND GIRLS OF THE PARISH WHO SERVED IN THE ARMY OR NAVY

**World War I** Rev. George Moorman, Joseph Girard (died in service), William Ternet, Frank Rorick, Celestine Venderley, Herman Voirol, Felecian Henry, Frank Kennerk, Albert Mumper, Charles Huguenard (died in service), Louis Sordelet, Norbert Ryan (died in service), Eugene Voirol, Elmer Oberley, Arthur Venderley, John Mumper, Charles Mumper, Frank Rose, Jesse Rose, Benny Bacon, Louis Schearshele, Frank Nalpret, Lansing Giant, William Roussey, Jesse Gladieux, Julian Chevolet, Chester Comment, Oscar Lothamer, Clarence Lesh, Francis Roy, Raymond Marthey, Louis Reuille, Clarence Reuille, Ceril Reuille, Eugene Boitet, Clem Gremaux, Clarence Ternet, Henry Reuille, Samuel McCormick, Raymond Pepe, Carl Lothamer, Harvey Bacon, Simeon Girardot and Ernest Roussey.

**World War II** Edward Lomont, Bernard Lomont, Wilbur Roussel, Virgil Frane, Walter Dodane, Gerald Oberley, Clifford Murfield, Joseph Mourey, Walter C. Dager, Cletus C. Voirol, Julian W. Converset, Harold Oberley, Clifford Coulardot, Walter Gremaux, Charles E. Lopshire, Merlin Roussey, Ross Coonrod, David P. Dehnert, Leonard Gerardot, Ralph Gerardot, Manfred Bowers, Donald Oberley, Robert Roy, Frederick Martin, Leonard Martin, Joseph Lothamer, Virgil Huguenard, Virgil Louraine, Wilmer C. Gerardot, Norbert Martin, John O'Shaughnessey Edward Dager, Bernard Beckstedt, Arthur Dodane, Laurent Voirol, Glenn Clevenger, Archie W. Ristau, Dominic Lortie, Jesse Gomez, Albert S. Banet, Donald Huguenard, Gilbert Coonrad, Eugene Lowden, Clarence Voirol, George Vachon, George Ray Girardot, Marion Dodane, Robert H. Lomont, Walter Bowers, Manfred Gremaux, Edna Rorick, Monica Lomont, Doris Roy, Joseph Jacob Giant, Edwin Mourey, Richard Oberley, Robert S. Hake, Dorothy Gremaux, Dalles Lortie, Robert Jacquay, Paul Kline, Richard Rorick, Herman J. Bowers and August Edward Welling (The only boy of the parish killed in World War II, was not a member of the parish when he enlisted.)

## DAUGHTERS OF THE PARISH WHO HAVE ENTERED RELIGIOUS ORDERS

**Stella Banet** who entered the Poor Handmaids in 1913 received the name Sister Mary Williamina. She is the daughter of Justin and Clara C. Banet. She was born February 14, 1892 and was baptized February 18, 1892 in St. Louis Church. Sister Mary Williamina is at present stationed at St. Catherine's Hospital, East Chicago, Indiana.

**Edith Ryan** entered the Poor Handmaids and received the name Sister Wilfreda. She celebrated her silver jubilee in the order February 26, 1943. She is the daughter of John and Julia Ryan and was born September 2, 1894. She was baptized in St. Louis Church on September 9, 1894. She is now stationed at St. Joseph Hospital, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

**Lucille Agnes Converset** entered the School Sisters of Notre Dame in August 1935 and received the name Sister Mary Jeanne D'Arc. She is the daughter of Joseph and Agnes Converset. She was born June 20, 1916 and baptized in St. Louis Church June 25, 1916. She is now teaching at St. Elizabeth's, Wisconsin.

**Evelyn Mourey** entered the Society of Missionary Catechists on October 28, 1939 and received the name Catechist Mary Evelyn Mourey. She is the daughter of Leonard and Eva Mourey. She was born November 30, 1918 and baptized in St. Louis Church December 8, 1918. Catechist Mary Evelyn Mourey is stationed at the Good Shepherd Mission, Box 336, Coachella, California.





**Father Nicholas Allgeier 1921-1935**



**Father Joseph A. Hession 1935-1948**





REV. C. MONJAY



RT. REV. BISHOP LUERS



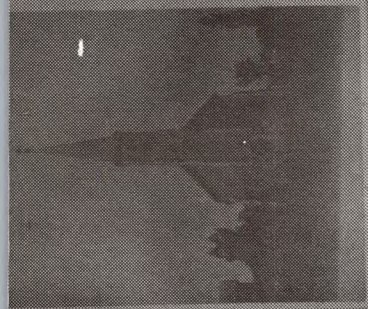
REV. FR. DEMERS







REV. JOS. RADEMACHER



REV. FR. ADAMS



REV. BISHOP DWENGER



REV. FR. VENIARD

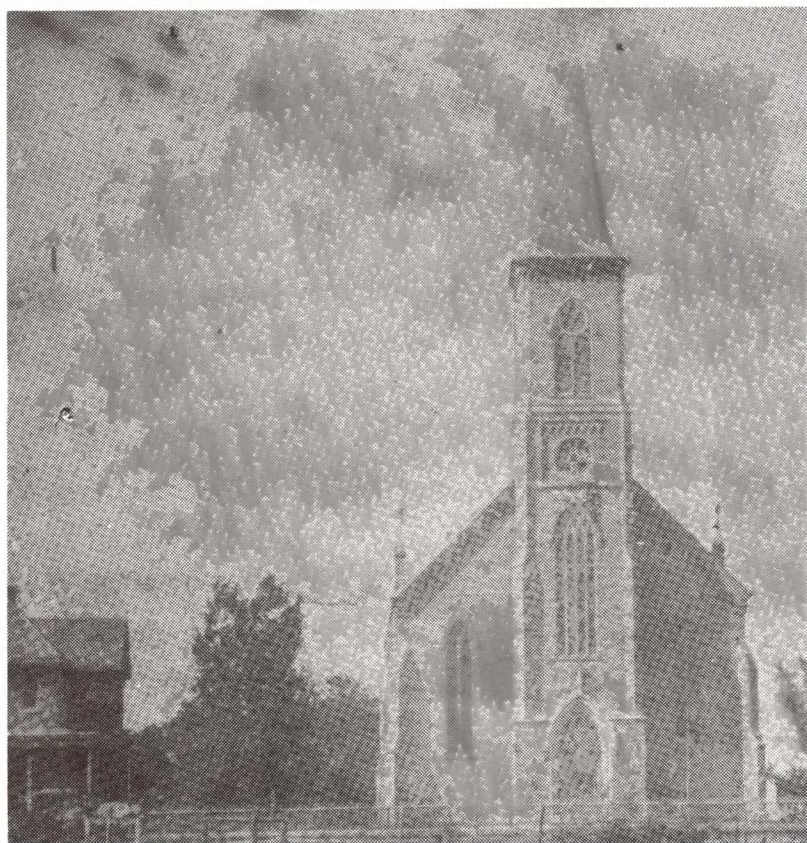


REV. F. K. LABONTE

ST. LOUIS CHURCH

PASTORS FROM 1860 TO 1898





**Original Brick Church 1900**



**Rita Gerardot** entered the Sisters of Providence on July 2, 1944 and received the name Sister Rita Clare. She is the daughter of Henry and Lillian Gerardot. She was born September 19, 1926 and baptized in St. Louis Church September 22, 1926. She is stationed at St. Mary of the Woods, Terre Haute, Indiana. Her mother, Lillian Gerardot, has been organist for St. Louis Church since 1906.

It is interesting that of the five young ladies who entered the convent, two--Edith Ryan and Evelyn Mourey--are great-granddaughters of Joseph Dodane in whose log house Mass was first regularly celebrated in Besancon.

Only one son of the parish has entered the priesthood, **Reverend Jesse Lothamer**, now pastor at St. Aloysius Church, Yoder, Indiana. Father Jesse Lothamer was ordained by Bishop Herman Joseph Alerding, June 15, 1917 and said his first Mass in St. Louis Church on June 17, 1917. Father Lothamer was born January 8, 1885 and was baptized by Father Veniard June 21, 1885. He is the son of Joseph and Elisa Lothamer. At the time Father Allgeier was moved from Besancon to St. Mary Church, Fort Wayne, Father Lothamer received the appointment to be pastor of St. Louis Parish. He declined it because he preferred not to serve as pastor of his home parish.

### PARISH SOCIETIES

**The Rosary Society** (97 members) President--Dolores Lomont, Vice President Gertrude Reuille, Secretary--Ella Henry and Treasurer--Gladys Lomont.

**N.C.C.W. Joint Chairman** Blanche Westrick and Lillian Gerardot

**Holy Name Society** (130 members) President--Clarence Roy, Vice President--Stephen Bowers, Secretary--Alban Jacquay and Treasurer--Carlton Giant.

**Blessed Virgin Mary Sodality** (34 members) President--Rita Jean Henry, Vice President--Blanche Mourey, Secretary--Juanita Gerardot and Treasurer--Maybelle Giant.

**St. Vincent de Paul Society** Active Members--Allen Lomont, Clarence Roy, Clifford Coulardot, Henry E. Gerardot, Henry J. Girardot, Alban Jacquay, Harvey Bacon, Henry Kline, Joseph Voirol and Joseph Giant.

**C.Y.O.** (Members--All unmarried young men and women of parish) President Joseph Gremaux, Secretary--Blanche Mourey and Treasurer--Teresa Burns.

**Children of Mary** (137 members) Division I...President--Carol Lomont, Vice President--Phyllis Galligher, Secretary--Barbara Lomont and Treasurer--Eugene Sheehan. Division II...President--Patricia Reuille, Vice President--Jean Reuille, Secretary--Velma Voirol and Treasurer--James Lomont.

**Parish Trustees**--Leonard Mourey, Joseph Giant, Allen Lomont, Henry J. Girardot, Henry Kline and William Ort.

**Block Captains**--Justin Rorick, Bernard Ehinger, Stephen Bowers, Joseph Dodane, Henry E. Gerardot, Norman Sarrazine, Alban Jacquay, Henry Kline, Roy Hege, Harvey Bacon, Henry J. Girardot, Joseph A. Giant, Elmer Minick, Leonard Mourey, Clarence Roy, Carlton Giant, Nolan Gerardot, Bernard Ort and Marion Moore.

A historical sketch of a parish quite naturally concerns itself mostly with the material progress of a parish, since it is impossible to set down on paper or even to estimate the spiritual good accomplished through the ministrations of the parish church. The following figures compiled from available parish records may give a partial insight into what your parish church means in your lives. The figures date from the time when the parish first had a resident pastor.

	Baptisms				First	
	Children	Adults	Marriages	Burials	Communions	Confirmations
1864-1883	378	3	62	120	No Records	No Records
1883-1905	632	22	141	243	No Records	No Records
1905-1922	441	36	134	145	408	471
1922-1941	420	38	502	165	686	421
1941-1946	136	23	43	28	141	128
TOTALS	2007	122	882	701	1235	1020

Communions total about 17,600 yearly and Confessions about 7,200 yearly. The contact between pastor and people is much closer in a country parish like St. Louis Parish than in large city parishes. The people consult their priest more frequently and upon a much wider variety of subjects. An assistant in large city parishes, as I was, coming to a country parish as pastor, soon realizes this fact. Too, the great increase in divorces noted in the city is not present in the country. Since 1935 there have been only two cases of divorces in this parish and very few among non-Catholics of this section. Before the war, of the 200 families then in the parish, 63 made their living in whole or part from industrial labor and 137 families from farming. During the war, conditions had changed to a point where only 33 families made their living entirely from farming but that condition is at present being gradually changed back to normal. The parish is at the moment, however, still more suburban than rural.

The historical sketch of St. Louis Parish, Besancon (1846-1946) was compiled from previous historical sketches of the parish, augmented by information from the records of the parish, the History of Allen County and the biography of Father Julian Benoit. The dates contained in this sketch have been carefully checked by comparison and existing documents, thus correcting some dates found to be incorrect in previous sketches. Where exact dates could not be obtained and where there were conflicting dates, all available data has been given.

Reverend Joseph A. Hession wrote this sketch and had a booklet printed in 1946 commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the present church (1871-1946) and the one hundredth anniversary of St. Louis Parish (1846-1946).

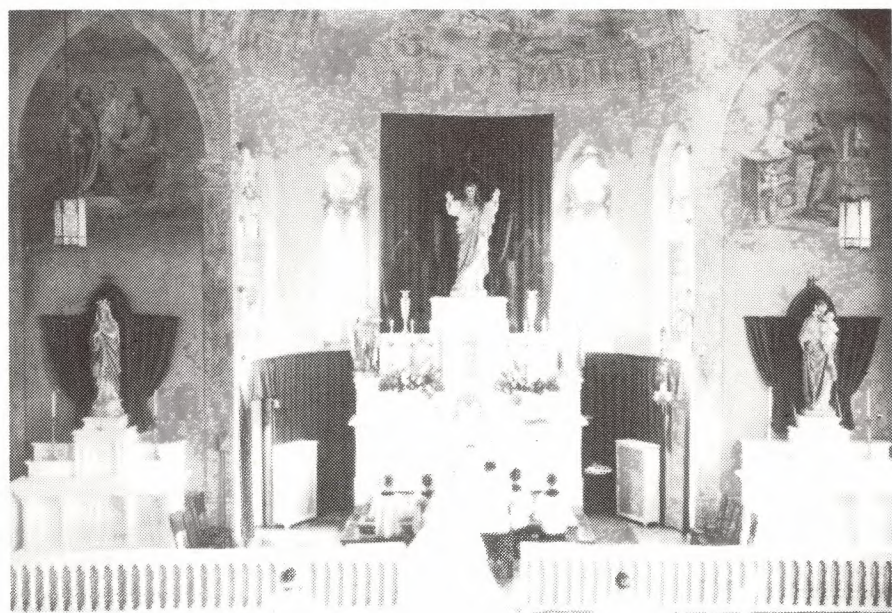
#### **FATHER JOSEPH A. HESSION 1935-1948**

Father Hession wrote the history of our parish and had a booklet printed in 1946. This history is included in this booklet. When Father Hession was pastor, he had our communion rail removed. He had the communion rail from St. Mary Church, Lafayette, IN brought here because it was the one he used while a young boy. Men started ushering during the time Father Hession was our pastor. Previously, the altar boys would take up the collection. In the school auditorium, many activities were held. School children participated in plays and skits for their families and bingo gatherings were held where often there was a full house with people having to sit on the stair steps. The auditorium was also used as a gymnasium where boxing tournaments and basketball games were held. The CYO held many dances in the auditorium and would invite CYO members from other parishes in the area.



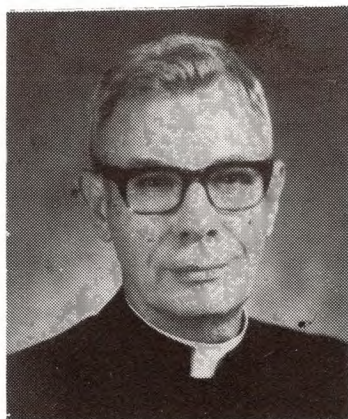


1949

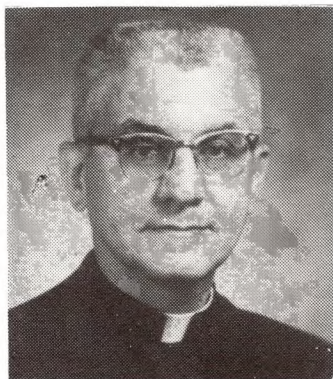


1953

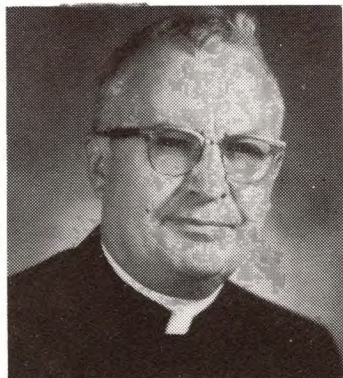




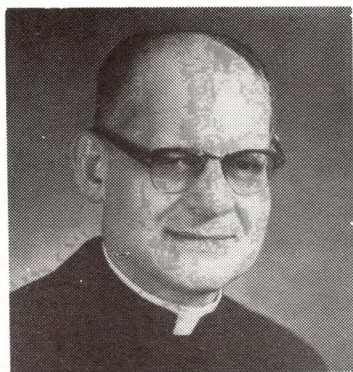
**Fr. Andrew C. Mathieu 1956-1962**



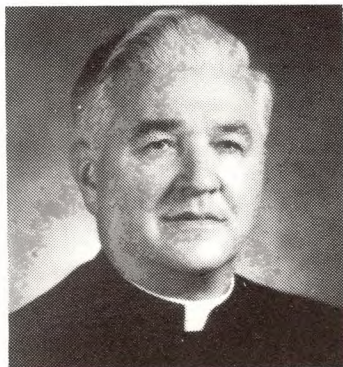
**Fr. Fred J. Cardinali 1962-1968**



**Fr. Robert L. Traub 1968-1970**



**Fr. Louis Zenz 1970-1971**



**Fr. Edward T. Keever 1971-1978**



### **FATHER CARL HOLSINGER 1948-1956**

The Besancon Hall was built with the idea that in time, when the church was too old to hold church services, the parish would have the services in the hall. The cost of the hall was approximately \$32,000. It was not used by anyone for a long time and there were no public functions held in it. In 1950 the interior of the church was washed. In 1954 scaffolding was purchased and a few men and boys of the parish painted the interior of the church using one hundred eight gallons of paint. This is when the altars were cut down for the first time and the main altar was placed closer to the backwall. The upstairs in the school was remodeled during this time. The large auditorium was made into a library and two classrooms. In 1956 Leo Pursley was named the sixth bishop of the Fort Wayne Diocese.

### **FATHER ANDREW C. MATHIEU 1956-1962**

During Father Mathieu's pastorate, new pews were installed in the church. The wrought iron communion rail was built and installed by Roy Hege and Bernard Monnier. Each parish was being assessed five hundred dollars per sister for their motherhouse, so it was at this time Besancon began having annual ham dinners to help pay this assessment. Father Mathieu had the garage built near the rectory during the time he was our pastor. There were no Sunday bulletins issued during these times. Mass was continued all in Latin even tho the Ecumenical Council had suggested parts of the Mass be said in English.

### **FATHER FRED J. CARDINALI 1962-1968**

Father was pastor during the time the people began responding in English to the prayers during Mass. He had the interior of the church redecorated in 1963 by a company in Milwaukee, Wisconsin at a cost of \$17,500. It was during this time the original altars built in 1871 were cut off for the second time. An oak wood backdrop was put on the main altar, pedestals for the statues were put above the side altars and new stations on the side walls were added. Also during Father Cardinali's time, the St. Joseph altar was placed in the center of the sanctuary where Father said Mass facing the people instead of saying Mass having his back toward the people.

### **FATHER ROBERT L. TRAUB 1968-1970**

During Father Traub's stay, he had the garage made larger and bricked the exterior walls. He communicated well with the young boys of the parish and they remember him for this.

### **FATHER LOUIS ZENZ July 1970-January 1971**

Father enjoyed editing the Sunday bulletins. They were always full of comments he felt the parishioners would enjoy. There were 235 registered families and 1,018 souls in the parish. The school had three teaching sisters and three lay teachers. There were 54 boys and 94 girls attending school. There were 23 attending Catholic high school and 57 attending public high school.

### **FATHER EDWARD T. KEEVER February 1971-1978**

Father Kever spent alot of his time visiting the sick and the elderly. In 1976, William McManus was named the seventh bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend Diocese.

## FATHER ANDREW J. KOPCSA 1978-

In 1978, Father Kopcsa was assigned to Besancon and it was his first parish as pastor. Many changes took place during his time with us. Some of the changes first made were the carpeting of the sanctuary and the removal of the wrought iron communion rail. A new main altar, two podiums, baptism font and four sanctuary chairs were purchased from donations given to the parish for this purpose. With conservation of energy being very important, Father initiated having a chapel made in the school. One third of the cafeteria was developed into a chapel with Mass being said there Monday through Thursday during the winter months. Bishop William McManus requested each parish have a council, so under the leadership of Father, a council was elected and held its first meeting in April 1979. It had been 14 years since the interior of the church had been painted so the council began a renovation fund drive with parishioners pledging their support. A total of \$55,011 was donated and the work began in November 1980. Two companies were hired to do some of the inside decorating and outside repair work but the generous help of many St. Louis parishioners was the real work force in giving our church a new look. The interior of the church was painted, new flooring in choir loft and vestibule and new carpeting in sacristy and cry room. The steeple was repaired and painted, the church roof was repaired and sealed and the bell tower was repaired and windows sealed. The bell stand was repaired and the bell is now rung by the ushers before Mass. (The bell is cast iron and was molded at the Buckeye Bell Foundry, R. W. Vanduzen Company, Cincinnati, Ohio in 1897. It is two and a half to three inches thick, three feet in height and the circumference of the base is 11 feet 6 inches. The clapper has a circumference of 17 inches. It is estimated the bell weighs one and a half ton.) The stained glass windows were repaired, book holders were put on the back of the pews, cabinets in the sacristy refinished and the sacristy was paneled. A restroom was added, an outside cement ramp, a new sound system installed and the church rewired. A total of \$31,600 was spent on the church repair and furnishings and many additional items were donated. Ladies of the parish cleaned, painted and wallpapered the rectory and Father purchased new furniture. Father keeps his home extra nice and he is the perfect host whenever meetings or gatherings are held in the rectory. Also on a continuing basis, the school is being cleaned, painted and improved by volunteer parents and parishioners. The large windows in school were removed and thermo paned windows installed. The front doors in school were replaced and the trim and overhang on the outside painted. The parish hall also was improved. Along with insulating, new wiring, new lights, painting and paneling, an addition was built in 1982. Most of this work was done by volunteers. The annual parish ham and beef dinner was started again in 1978. In 1980, the annual parish polka picnic began. In 1983, several parishioners decided to refinish the front doors of the church. After removing 11 layers of paint, the oak wood was seen. The original doors, built in 1871, are solid oak with a softer wood such as pine or poplar on the exterior. Father Kopcsa leads St. Louis Parish spiritually and encourages the parishioners to be active. There are many organizations in the parish and activities throughout the year the parishioners can choose in which to participate.

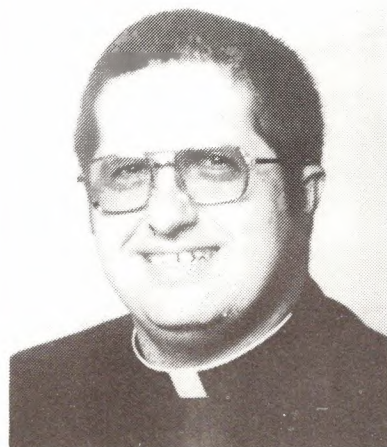




**Father Andrew J. Kopcsa 1978-**



**Father Jesse Lothamer**



**Father Kenneth Sarrazine**



**Sr. Theresa Ann Brames**



**Sister Lucille Converset**



**Sister Evelyn Mourey**



**Sister Rita Gerardot**



**Elizabeth Marie Reuille**



# DAUGHTERS OF THE PARISH WHO HAVE ENTERED RELIGIOUS ORDERS

## SONS OF THE PARISH WHO HAVE ENTERED THE PRIESTHOOD

**Stella Banet** 2/14/1892-8/1/1981 Poor Handmaids

**Elizabeth Marie Reuille** Elizabeth was born March 8, 1962 and is the daughter of Norman and Mary Alice Reuille. She was baptized by Father Andrew Mathieu in St. Louis Church. Beth entered the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration September 18, 1983. The motherhouse is in Mishawaka, IN. Beth's goal is to teach in a Catholic School.

**Theresa Ann Brames** Theresa was born April 29, 1933 and is the daughter of Clement and Mary J. Brames. She was baptized in St. Louis Church by Father Nicholas Allgeier. Theresa entered the Order of St. Francis on August 28, 1947 and was professed Sister Irita on June 13, 1949. The motherhouse is in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She is now Sister Theresa Ann OSF and for the past five years has been working with the retired sisters of her order at St. Joseph Convent, Campbellsport, WIS.

**Lucille Agnes Converset** 6/20/1916 Sister Lucille is a School Sister of Notre Dame and presently is the spiritual leader for retired sisters in Hartford, Wisconsin.

**Rita Gerardot** 9/19/1926 Sister Rita is a Sister of Providence and is presently working with the poor and elderly at Cathedral Parish, Indianapolis, Indiana.

**Jesse Lothamer** 1/8/1885-6/16/1968 diocesan priest

**Evelyn Mourey** 11/30/1918 Sister Evelyn is a Our Lady of Victory Missionary and is presently and for the past five years teaching nutrition and health care in Santa Cruz, Bolivia.

**Edith Ryan** 9/2/1894-12/9/1982 Poor Handmaids

**Kenneth Sarrazine** Father Sarrazine was born July 10, 1937 and is the son of Norman and Florence Sarrazine. He was baptized in St. Louis Church by Father Joseph Hession. He was ordained December 22, 1962 and is a diocesan priest. He served as assistant pastor in parishes in Elkhart, Fort Wayne, South Bend and New Haven. He has been pastor of St. Martin de Porres, Syracuse and St. Francis, Pierceton. He presently is pastor of St. Joseph's in Mishawaka.

For additional information on these sisters or priests, look in the section of this booklet that was written in 1946.

## THE SISTERS

The School Sisters of Notre Dame continued to serve St. Louis School until June 1977. They had taught our children for 67 years. The following Sisters served 1964-1977. 1964-1971 Sister M. Nonna, 1964-1965 Sister M. Marcian, 1964-1967 Sister M. Thomas, 1964-1967 Sister Longina, 1965-1972 Sister Lawrence, 1966-1968 Sister M. Osmond, 1967-1968 Sister M. Bernelle, 1968-1970 Sister M. Rosalinda, 1970-1975 Sister Eileen, 1973-1977 Sister Annora, 1974-1976 Sister Ann, 1975-1976 Sister Jane, 1975-1976 Sister Stanilia and 1976-1977 Sister Evelyn.

The following have served as principal of St. Louis School: Paul Johnston 1977-1978, Mary Brandle 1978-1979, Sister Virginia Murphy, Sister of St. Agnes 1979-October 1981, Bonnie Schnelker October 1981-1982 Mary Czech 1982-.

The following have served as coordinator for the religious education program of grade school children not attending St. Louis School: Dorothy Alles, Joyce Smith, Kathy Coonrod and Mike & Dianna Voors.

## PARISH ORGANIZATIONS 1983-1984

**Rosary Sodality** President--Virginia Brames, Vice President--Sandy Frecker, Secretary--Gerry Huguenard and Treasurer--LuAnn Kennerk.

**Holy Name** Treasurer--Al Ort.

**St. Vincent de Paul Society** President--Robert Kennerk, Vice President--Mel Vachon, Secretary--Virgil Huguenard and Treasurer--Marshall Lomont.

**Home & School Association** President--Ken Frecker, Vice President--Carl Frecker, Secretary--Agnes Purk and Treasurer--Monica Cagnet.

**SLYC (ST. LOUIS YOUTH COMMUNITY)** Adult Advisers--Greg & Sandy Emenhiser and Jeff & Jan Krusen. Committee spiritual--John Fry and David Fry activities--Kenny Reuille and Carol Ort and service--Jeanette Lomont and Diana Martin.

**Cemetery** Treasurer--Jim Lomont.

**Hall Committee** Vera Frecker, Rita Fry, Charlotte Giant, Pauline Giant, Joe Knecht, Jim Lomont, Ed Mourey and Carl Ottenweller.

**Dance Committee** Paul & Beth Kline, Keith & Becky Mott and Ray & Agnes Purk.

**Commentators** Chairman--Paul Kline.

**Eucharistic Ministers** Chairman--Rita Girardot

**Ushers** Chairman--Bernard Monnier.

**Harvest House** Vice President--Helen Jacquay and Secretary--Florence & Norman Sarrazine.

**St. Louis Parish Council** President--Marshall Lomont, Vice President--Greg Emenhiser, Secretary--Juanita Rorick, Spiritual Leader--Father Andrew Kopcsa, Youth Representatives--Ken Reuille and David Fry, Finance--John Giant and Doug Ort, Education--Carlton Giant and Linda Messman, Communication--Joyce Smith and Donna York, Maintenance and Grounds--Bernard Monnier and Max Rorick, Christian Service--Paul Brueggeman and Gary Lothamer, Worship--JoAnne Rorick and Monica Cagnet, Area 1--Gloria Lomont and Delbert Frecker, Area 2--Anita Bowers and Ray Purk, Area 3--Helene Spieth and Ken Ort and Area 4--Jerry Gerardot and Ron Girardot.



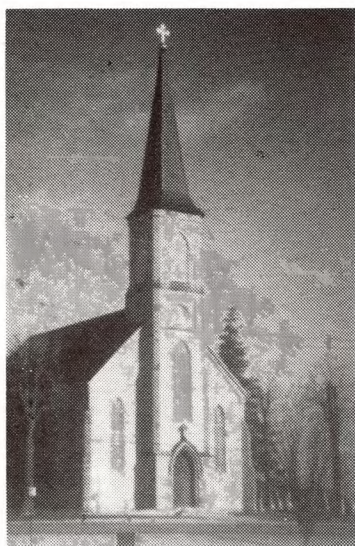


1978



1983







## ST. LOUIS PARISH TODAY December 1983

The parish properties consist of church, school, rectory, rental house, recreation hall, two cemeteries, athletic field and playground. The parish numbers at present 230 families totalling 859 souls. The school has 69 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. The religious education program has 75 students in preschool through eighth grade. There are 25 high school students active in the youth organization called SLYC, St. Louis Youth Community. For the fiscal year July 1982 through June 1983, \$102,832 was received for the parish through the weekly collections. At the present time, the weekly collections are averaging \$1700-\$1900. The 1983 polka picnic netted \$3150 and the ham and turkey dinner netted \$5938.

The Sunday Masses are 6:30 on Saturday and 8:00 and 10:00 on Sunday. The choir is an asset to our church services and usually sings at the 10:00 Mass and at special services throughout the year. The organist is Jane Lomont and her assistant in directing is Rita Brueggeman. The choir has 15-20 members. Assistant organists are Monica Cagnet and Becky Mott.

There were 14 second grade students who received their first communion in May this year. They had made their first reconciliation previous to their first communion. In November, Bishop Joseph R. Crowley confirmed 11 eighth grade students. During the past year, we had 36 baptisms, 12 marriages and 7 deaths.

There are several Eucharistic Ministers who help Father Kopcsa with the distribution of wine and the host. The sixteen commentators of St. Louis share in the duties of being lector at each Mass. The boys, from the fifth through the eighth grade, serve as servers for Father. There are 18 ushers and those doing the Sunday 10:00 Mass along with their wives are also the money counters for the weekly envelopes. Bernadine May takes care of the flowers and altar linens for the sanctuary.

The purposes of the St. Louis Parish Council are to increase communication between the laity of the parish and our pastor, to coordinate all parish activities, to study the spiritual and temporal needs of the individual and families in the parish and to encourage individual responsibility in carrying out God's work.

The Rosary Sodality meets each month and is the center of many activities using the talents of all ladies wishing to participate. Some of the activities the sodality participates in are pro life, DCCW, annual style show, church cleaning and St. Mary's soup kitchen.

The SLYC meets periodically through the year. The teens enjoy the social gathering of friends. They have speakers who enrich them spiritually and the teens work together on projects for the betterment of their church, their community and themselves.

The Home & School Association has as its purpose the education of parents in the art of educating their children. Parents are the primary educators of their children and welcome the contact with teachers in sharing the responsibility of education. The organization sponsors several activities throughout the year to help support the school financially.

The St. Vincent de Paul Society has ten members and they meet monthly. Their purpose is to help the poor and needy of the community. They visit the sick of the parish and community also.

The Harvest House is made up of senior citizens from St. Louis, Besancon and St. John's, New Haven. There are generally 18 from St. Louis who attend the monthly meetings. They enjoy the group meetings for the social and spiritual enrichment they receive.

Bishop Luers Parents are those active in promoting Catholic high school for the young people. They schedule one dance each year and the profit assists them in paying for the transportation of St. Louis students attending Bishop Luers High School.

The Hall Committee works together in maintaining the recreation hall. They help to keep it financially in the black. The hall is rented for many outside activities but also is available free of charge for our own St. Louis activities.

The three couples of the dance committee plan the monthly dances St. Louis sponsors. The dances are open to the public and the cost is ten dollars per couple which includes refreshments. Parishioners volunteer their help at each dance.

Jim Lomont is chairman of the cemetery committee overseeing everything pertaining to both cemeteries.

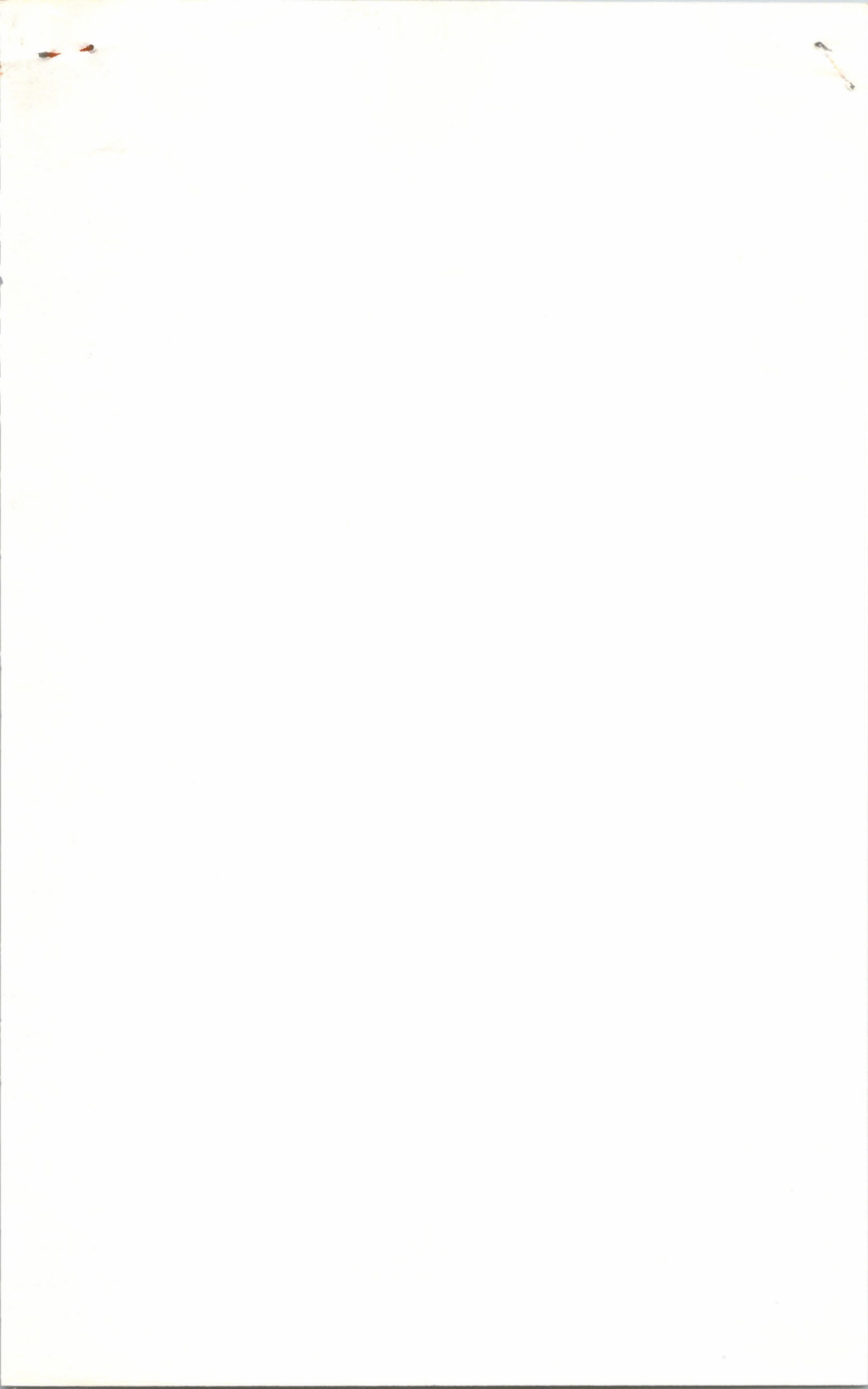
Father Kopcsa has a secretary, Eileen Morton, who works two days each week at the rectory.

For the general maintenance and repair of anything and everything on the property, Bernard Monnier is always the man we rely on.

The historical sketch of St. Louis Parish, Besancon (1946-1983) was compiled from information given to us by many parishioners. If a mistake has been made, we apologize and ask that you correct your booklet. Since few records have been kept at the rectory since 1946, we are grateful to all who have shared their remembrance of the past with us. It was with their help this booklet was written. While reading it, we hope it brings about an interest in the past and encourages you to reminisce with those in the present.

Mrs. Allen (Gladys) Lomont and Mrs. Carl (Sandy) Frecker









supplement for booklet

ST. LOUIS PARISH, BESANCON

MEN AND WOMEN OF THE PARISH WHO HAVE SERVED  
IN THE ARMED FORCES SINCE 1946

Bowers, Cynthia	1982 -
Bowers, Jerome Earl	killed 8/31/69
Bowers, John	1966 - 1968
Bowers, Merlin N.	1951 - 1953
Bowers, William	1965 - 1967
Brames, Charles H.	1951 - 1953
Brames, Virgil C.	1951 - 1955
Coonrod, Eugene R.	
Coonrod, Lawrence W.	
Dodane, Darryl	1966 - 1968
Frecker, Carl W. Jr.	1980 - 1982
Frecker, Delbert	1951 - 1953
Frecker, Donald	1951 - 1953
Frecker, Harold	1958 - 1961
Frecker, Kenneth	1972 - 1978
Frecker, Larry	1953 - 1955
Frecker, Stanley	1963 - 1965
Giant, James	1952 - 1953
Girardot, Ronald J.	1962 - 1964
Gremaux, Arnold	1951 - 1953
Gremaux, Joseph	1950 - 1952
Gremaux, Lloyd	1958 - 1959
Hakes, James	



Jacquay, Paul	1967 - 1970
Jacquay, Phyllis	1967 - 1970
Jacquay, Thomas	1956 - 1962
Kennerk, Robert D.	1951 - 1955
Kline, Orville	1942 - 1942
Kline, Maurice	1950 - 1954
Kline, Paul	45-46 48-53
Kline, Noel	1948 - 1952
Knowles, Steven	1968 - 1972
Lomont, Cletus E.	WW II
Lortie, Paul E.	1955 - 1957
Mourey, James W.	
Muldoon, David J.	1953 - 1955
Rorick, Anthony J.	1966 - 1969
Rorick, Edna E.	1943 - 1944
Rorick, Herman	1959 - 1961
Rorick, Howard L.	1951 - 1953
Rorick, Lynn E.	1969 - 1971
Rorick, Nathan C.	1979 -
Rorick, Paul W.	1954 - 1956
Rorick, Walter W.	1972 - 1977
Spieth, Jeff	1983 -
Voirol, Richard L.	1951 - 1954

### miscellaneous information

Sometime after 1900 St. Louis Church's roof had a weather vane with a rooster on it.

Shortly after Father Holsinger came, he had the fence in front of the rectory moved to the east side of the cemetery.

The spire of the main altar at one time came within 12-18" of the dome ceiling.

Father Hession had a German Shepherd and an Irish Setter. On Sunday bulletins, he would have pictures of hunters and dogs. Father also had a small fish pond filled with goldfish behind the rectory. During the winter months, he would put the goldfish in a bathtub in the school basement.

The picture in the booklet dated 1953 shows draperies in the sanctuary. They were maroon velvet and were designed by Cliff Coulardot, a member of the parish. Since the material was not acceptable according to the fire code regulations, they had to be removed. They were up less than two years.

In September 1979, our first parish picnic had Blue Grass music.

The baptism font was given to St. Louis Parish, during Father Keever's pastorate, in memory of Jerome Bowers.



