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ST. GENEVIEVE'S PARISH, CALMOUTIER
HOLMES COUNTY, OHIO, 1836 - 1981

St. Genevieve parish, Calmoutier, in northeastern Holmes county, Ohio, founded in 1836, was closed last October. It had served the pioneer French settlers and their descendants through all the intervening 145 years.

Calmoutier was just one of many such "settlements" of Catholic pioneers who brought their Faith to Ohio. There were German settlements; English/Irish settlements. And then there were French settlements. What of their origin? Whence did they come? How did they get started?

The answer might be given that a single pioneer - or two - may have come to the recently opened Ohio area, and was later followed by relatives or neighbors of the country from which they came. The English/Irish settlers, for the most part, came from the east, from Maryland, Pennsylvania, or some other of the colonial states. The German arrivals, quite often, were made up of immigrants, following where relatives or friends had already gone. It was the same with the French immigrants.

But why was any particular spot chosen? Thus, why did Carl Druhot, a French immigrant, who came in 1832, decide to settle in northeastern Holmes county? Why not where French had gone earlier in Illinois? Or to any other state? Was it merely that he had learned of the good farming land in Holmes county? Or was there some particular French interest?

It has been suggested that some early graves found at Calmoutier were those of Frenchmen from Canada, killed in early days by the Indians. If so, how did Druhot know of them? This seems to be mere speculation, and can be left as that. Perhaps the answer may be found in their acquaintance with the Swiss Mennonites who came to Sonnenberg, a few miles away. They had lived near each other on the Swiss-Alsace border. Each had a slight knowledge of the other's language, so that they could communicate.

At any rate, it was Carl Druhot who was the first French immigrant to come to Salt Creek township in northeastern Holmes county. His arrival is given as 1832. He was from a small village named Calmoutier, near Vesoul in the Haute-Saone, France. And with the coming of many more families from that area of France, the settlement in Holmes county became known as Calmoutier. Not that there is a town or village, but it is the title given to the settlement of French people whose first immigrant was from Calmoutier. But, as one writer has put it, "With typical disregard for native pronunciations or Gallic pride, the lilting sound of the classic

French 'Calmoutier', was replaced long ago with a sadly guttural 'Calmootch'." (1)

Jean Claude Mougin with his wife, Anne Pagin, probably came in 1832, since all of his children were born here and the oldest was born ca. 1833 (2). Several more families came in 1833. Francois Boigegrain and his wife, Marie, came that year, as did Peter Marthey, his wife, Jeanne Claudine Migeon, and six children, who arrived in August. [Peter Marthey was one of the organizers of the parish.] The number increased still more in 1834 when Francois Martin and his wife, Marguerite Corboran(?), arrived with six children. Also that year another pioneer and his family were welcomed. He was Jean Francois Cholley and wife, Francoise Jeanvoine, and their ten children. Other early immigrants included the Cheneveys, the Loniers and Jeanvoines. These and many others made the area a true French settlement. They could not as yet speak English.

The little community grew steadily. It was not long until word of French Catholics being in the area got to missionary priests. A penciled note written in 1891 in the front of the little parish's first register of sacraments may give an idea of the first priests to visit there. The note reads: "The first priest to visit Calmoutier is said to have been Rev. Residen, who was followed by Rev. Guitar and finally Rev. Badin made frequent visits....."(3) Except for Father Badin, no such names of early missionary priests in the United States are known. Perhaps research may reveal them to have been from Canada.

Whether preceded by others or not, it is without doubt that the Dominican Fathers of St. Joseph's, Somerset, Perry county, Ohio, were the early traveling missionaries of all eastern Ohio. In their constant efforts to search out and find any Catholic settlers, they would certainly have come to know of the French people of Calmoutier. It seems likely that no later than 1835 they came to know of their presence. By the next year Father John George Alleman, O.P., (4) opened a sacramental register for the mission. It continued to be used until 1876.

Father Alleman may not have been the first Dominican in the area. A late entry in his book states that Father D. Martin, O.P. (5) baptised four infants at Fulton (6) in May, 1836. Father Alleman's first entry is under date of August 15, 1836. He baptised two on that day, but their names are not French. They seem to be of people who settled where the mission of St. Joseph's, Mohican, was late to be located in west central Holmes county (7). The next entries, August 23 and 24, were designated by Father Alleman as at "Patton Settlement." This is thought to have been some miles northeast in Stark county.

The first baptism of a Calmoutier infant was recorded as happening on August 28, 1836. Baptised that day was Mary Louise, daughter of Peter Jeanvoine and Johanna Antonia Jeanvoine, once Joli. Sponsors were John Baptist Sainty and Mary Louise DelaPlace.

The first history of St. Genevieve's is that written as told by John B. Bardin who died in 1904 at the age of 81. The history was written in the 1890's. A number of short accounts of the parish have been written since, but all seem to follow that of Bardin. The latest tribute to the now closed parish is that of Rev. Timothy A. Chenevey, S.S.P., a son of the parish. Father Chenevey is the son of Cyril F. Chenevey and Helen Becker Chenevey. He made his studies for the priesthood at Duquesne university, Pittsburgh; St. Paul seminary, Canfield, Ohio, and St. Paul International seminary, Rome. He was ordained July 6, 1958. He is a member of the religious Society of St. Paul.

Shortly after his coming to the Holmes county French settlement, Father Alleman suggested to the people there that they erect a chapel for themselves. This is said to have been a log structure. Where was it placed? There seems to be some reason to doubt the tradition now given which states that the church has always been at its present location.

In September, 1836, Bishop Purcell of Cincinnati bought two acres of land for ten dollars from Hubert Pierson and his wife, Francoise Piney (8). As the deed states, the parcel was bought "for the purpose of erecting a chappel thereon." The location was the west half of the northwest quarter of section 35, township 15 and range 12. This was clearly some distance from the present location of St. Genevieve's.

A few months later, Dec. 24, 1836, Bishop Purcell obtained two more acres from John B. Roussel and his wife, Marie Bollet (9). The deed designated it to be "for the purpose of erecting a chappel thereon." This property was located in section 26 - on the west line of the east half of the southeast quarter. If there was a mistake in the section numbers, which seems unlikely, the two parcels would not have been adjoining in the same section. Ten dollars was paid for each parcel.

If the first chapel was erected on one of the two properties bought by Bishop Purcell in 1836, it is not now known which one was chosen.

The parcel of land where the present church stands was bought by Bishop Amadeus Rappe of Cleveland in 1849.(10). (The diocese of Cleveland was established in 1847 and Bishop Rappe was its first bishop.) It was made up of two parcels, each containing two acres. One was bought from Mr. and Mrs. Hubert Pierson and the other from Mr. and Mrs. John Roussel (11). They were adjoining pieces, both in section 25. Pierson's piece was in the northwest quarter and Roussel's in the northeast quarter of the section. The deed descriptions show them to be next to each other. Both were donated for a minimal sum. It should be noted that both parties owned land in section 25 prior to 1836, but no property was donated for the church until 1849 (12).

Later, in 1868, Bishop Rosecrans bought 48 perches (about $\frac{1}{4}$ acre) from Mr. Roussel, expanding his previous donation of two acres (13).

Parish Life to 1848

Little is known of the Calmoutier family during the 1830's and early 1840's. Not yet able to speak English fluently, their social life as well as their workaday world was confined to themselves. Their religion and their nationality made them a united group, able and ready to help one another. Their life naturally centered around their church. Proud they were, no doubt, to have it dedicated to God under the patronage of St. Genevieve, at that time patron saint of their fatherland.

No doubt the log chapel was built in late 1836 or early 1837. It may have been ready for the first wedding recorded by Father Alleman on March 28, 1837. On that day Vincent Manney(?) and Eugenie Wiss were married before their parents as witnesses.

Father Alleman continued to visit the mission through 1836 and most of 1837. The register shows that he also visited Massilon, Randolph, Fulton and Bethlehem (14). His last entry was in August of 1837. There were no more entires until April, 1839, when Father Francis M. Masquelet (15) officiated at a baptism. He was there

for two days. In August of that year Father Lamy (16) began coming from his post at Danville, Knox county. He continued to look after the flock until September of the next year, but was back again in May, 1841. Meanwhile Father Louis DeGoesbriand (17) came from Louisville in Stark county in February, 1841. He took care of the Calmoutier parishioners for over four years. His last visit was in September, 1845.

On October 13, 1844, Father DeGoesbriand established the Society of the Immaculate Heart of Mary for the conversion of sinners. Thirty-seven were enrolled. It continued to flourish for some years.

During these years more families were arriving from France. Francois Cholley and his family came in 1842. With them was Pierre Drouhard. In 1844 and 1845 the Bressons, the Rouhiers and the JeanMougins arrived. Bernard Merollat came in 1846.

Father Peter Peudeprat (18) who had succeeded Father DeGoesbriand at Louisville, came to Calmoutier from August, 1845, to August, 1846. Father Sebastian Sanner (19), who was helping Father Peudeprat, came to Calmoutier for several months. Father Peudeprat was back in August, 1847, and remained in charge until the following spring.

A New Church Is Built

The next priest to care for the French settlement was Rev. Casimir Mouret (20). He visited Calmoutier from April 27 to September 22, 1848, when he was succeeded by Father Augustine Campion (21), who came through most of 1849.

It was during this time that parish activities increased. The election of trustees was recorded for the first time on November 14, 1847. Two days later the election was recorded at the court house in Millersburg. Chosen were Pierre Marthey, Jean Baptiste Cardot and Jean Baptiste Bardin. John B. Roussel was secretary.

The election of trustees was probably thought necessary because a new church was being erected. Bishop Amadeus Rappe of Cleveland came to the parish for the first time in December 1848. He baptised two infants while there. Perhaps it was at this time that arrangements were made to buy two parcels of land in Section 25, where the present church is located. Bishop Rappe was back again March 22, 1849. Could it have been for the dedication of the church? On that date he officiated at the marriage of John Boigegrain and Augustina Milliot. The Catholic Directory of 1849, giving statistics for the previous year, noted that at Mt. Eaton, Wayne county, the "church was built but not dedicated." (Mt. Eaton in Wayne county was used as the designated address for the Calmoutier parish for some time.)

Father Augustine Rollinet (22), who was the first resident pastor, came to Calmoutier for the first time in December, 1848, when he officiated at two baptisms. He was back to remain in October, 1849.

Blessing of the New Church Bell

Shortly after Father Rollinet's arrival the following entry was made in the sacramental register:

"In 1849, November 1, on the feast of All Saints, there was baptised the first bell for the new church of St. Genevieve's under the name of

Jeanne Claude Hubertine. The bell had for godfather Hubert Pierson, and for godmother, Jeanne Claude Migeon, wife of Peter Marthey, both already old benefactors of the said church. Together they paid the price of the bell.

"The blessing of the bell was done by Msgr. Rollinet, missionary of the congregation of St. Genevieve, and first resident pastor of this parish, one of the oldest congregations of the missions of Ohio, almost entirely composed at this time of Catholics coming from the Diocese of Besancon, Haute-Saone, France. This missionary, a priest of the same country, had been delegated by Bishop Amadeus Rappe, first Bishop of Cleveland; and there were present some witnesses, trustees, who have signed with us below.

Aug. Rollinet, Claude Etienne Marthey, Hubert Pierson, N. Girard, Charles Bresson."

It was at this time that attention was given to the building of a home for the priest. The parish account book lists the donations made for this purpose. The subscription was begun in August, 1849.

The first record of a First Communion class was made in 1850. On the feast of Corpus Christi, May 30, the following received Holy Communion for the first time: Pierre Girard, Francois Xavier Echeman, Gabriel Dreme, George Bouhier, Joseph Lonier, Emile Stut [Stutz], Antoine Mougin, Mary Olympe Gauthier, Adelaide Martin, Mary Mougin, Othilie Bresson, Annette Tisserand, Albertine Dreme, Eugenie Roussel, Anne Henri, Francoise Henri and Mary Saintvoirin.

That same year, with the authority of Bishop Rappe, the Confraternity of the Scapular was established. Seventeen were enrolled.

Father Rollinet, like other missionaries of the time, did not hesitate to hunt up other Catholic settlers, especially those who were immigrants from France. He noted in a letter to Bishop Purcell (23) on October 28, 1850, that he had visited the French mission near Coshocton. This was evidently at Plainfield in Coshocton county. "Last week," he wrote, "I was called to baptize and make sick calls among some French people near Coshocton. In making these visits I learned that several French families have not frequented the sacraments since their coming to America, because no priest knowing their language came around. I also discovered that some young men and girls age 15-18, had not received their First Communion. I also had to rehabilitate several marriages contracted before civil authorities."

Father Rollinet also visited Assumption church at the French settlement near Bolivar in Tuscarawas county, during the years 1850-1852 (14).

Probably the first time for Confirmation at the little Calmoutier parish was on Dec. 19, 1850. On that date Bishop Rappe confirmed ten of St. Genevieve's children, and 13 from Bolivar. The list: Pierre Girard, Joseph Lonier, Francis Xavier Echeman, Emile Joseph Stut, Eugene Etienne Rigney, Nicholas Rigney, Mary Olympe Gaughier, Anne Adelaide Martin, Francoise Othilie Bresson and Eugenie Roussel, all of Calmoutier. From Assumption, Bolivar: Jean Baptiste Lab, Jean Reynel, Jacob Reynel, Francois Saintvoirin, Mary Henry, Anne Henry, Francoise Henry, Mary Lab, Mary Saintvoirin, Mary Adelaide Saintvoirin, Francoise Emilie Saintvoirin, Mary Geoffrey and Rose Geoffrey.

During 1852 Father Rollinet left Calmoutier. During the next three years the mission was cared for by Father Campion, Father Peter Weber (25) and by Father Ch. Thomas (26).

Father Rollinet was back again in 1856 to remain until his death in 1859. Bishop Rappe was back again at St. Genevieve's on April 1, 1856, when he baptised two infants.

Great sorrow came to the little parish January 1, 1859. The zealous Father Rollinet died as the result of his labors. He walked 12 miles on Christmas Eve, 1858, carrying things needed for midnight Mass. He contracted pneumonia, and died suddenly while on the road to a mission on New Year's. He lies buried in the hallowed St. Genevieve cemetery.

- (1) Dianna Rossetti (related to the Martheys of Calmoutier) in "The Repository", Canton, Ohio, Sept. 16, 1979.
- (2) These family items are from genealogical research made by Rev. James B. Semonin, Parma, Ohio.
- (3) Very Rev. Stephen T. Badin, early missionary of Ohio, Kentucky and Michigan. He was at Canton, Ohio, about 1836. See Diocese of Cleveland, Prehistory to Founding in 1847 by Rev. William A. Jurgens, Cleveland, 1980, p. 239-240.
- (4) Rev. John George (Albert) Alleman, O.P., born in Alsace-Lorraine. Ordained in Zanesville, Ohio, in 1834. Served the Ohio missions until 1840. Died in St. Louis in 1865.
- (5) Rev. Thomas Martin, O.P., born in Ireland in 1794, ordained in Cincinnati in 1822, one of Ohio's great missionaries. Died in New York in 1859.
- (6) This may have been Canal Fulton, or what Father Alleman later called the "Patton Settlement," in Stark county.
- (7) For a history of St. Joseph's, Mohican, see "Bulletin", Catholic Record Society, Diocese of Columbus, July, 1978.
- (8) Holmes County Deed Books, Vol. 3, p. 687.
- (9) Holmes County Deed Books, Vol. 4, p. 105.
- (10) See "Bulletin", Catholic Record Society, Diocese of Columbus, March, 1982, for history of the episcopal jurisdiction of Holmes county.
- (11) Holmes County Deed Books, Vol. 15, p. 204; Vol. 15, p. 205.
- (12) Holmes County Deed Books, Vol. 23, p. 308; Vol. 4, p. 627.
- (13) Bishop Rosecrans became bishop of Columbus when it was established in 1868.
- (14) Massillon, Fulton and Bethlehem (Presently Navarre) were in Stark county. Randolph was in Portage county.
- (15) Little is known of Father Masquelet. He was a native of France and entered the diocese of Cincinnati in 1837. See Lamott, p. 362.
- (16) Father John Baptist Lamy (1814-1888) became archbishop of Santa Fe.
- (17) Father Louis M.J. DeGoesbriand (1816-1899) became bishop of Burlington, Vermont. See Diocese of Cleveland, by Rev. W. A. Jurgens, 1980, p. 284.
- (18) Father Peter Peudeprat (1809-1852) was a native of France. See Jurgens, p. 510.
- (19) Father Sebastian Sanner, see Jurgens, p. 513.
- (20) Little is known of Father Casimir Mouret, except that he signed the register of baptisms at Calmoutier on four different visits in 1848.
- (21) Father Augustine S. Campion (1811-1886) was a native of France. He came to the diocese of Cleveland. He attended Calmoutier from Wooster.
- (22) For biography of Father Rollinet see "Bulletin", Catholic Record Society, Diocese of Columbus, February, 1980.
- (23) Letter of Rollinet to Bishop Purcell, Oct. 28, 1850, Archives of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.
- (24) See History of Diocese of Columbus by Bishop Hartley, p. 453.
- (25) Father Peter Weber was a native of Germany. He probably attended Calmoutier from Randolph. He also visited St. Joseph's, Mohican (Greer).
- (26) Nothing is known of Father Thomas. He is thought to have been working as a missionary in Michigan after a short time in Ohio.

(To be continued)

The Parishioners of St. Genevieve

Their Origin and Their Coming

By Rev. James R. Semonin

We write about a French-speaking people who shared a common origin, livelihood, destination and religion. They were the pioneers of St. Genevieve parish, Calmoutier, Salt Creek township, Holmes county, Ohio.

Calmoutier, France, is a little village in the north of the old province of Franche-Comté, whose capital was Besançon. The province was surrounded by Champagne on the northwest, Lorraine on the north, Alsace on the northeast, Switzerland on the east and Burgundy on the south and west.

At the Revolution, the province lost all political entity, and was replaced by the department as the largest political unit in France. Old Franche-Comté now consisted of three departments: Jura to the south; Doubs (with its capital, Besançon) in the center; and Haute Saône (with its capital, Vesoul) in the north. Though separate politically, these departments, along with Belfort, still comprise the ancient Diocese of Besançon.

The Department of Haute-Saône was, in turn, divided into three arrondissements, named after their principal towns: Gray to the west; Vesoul in the center; and Lure to the east. Calmoutier lies just inside the arrondissement of Vesoul, six miles east-northeast of the town, and on the road to the town of Lure, twelve miles further on.

"Calmoutier" is derived from Colomonastere, a combination of two words. The village is situated by a monastery on the little Colombine, a stream that eventually flows into the upper Saône River (hence, the name of the department Haute-Saône).

Thirty miles east of the village is the city of Belfort, which commands the Belfort Gap, a wide pass between the Jura mountains bordering Switzerland and the Vosges mountains along the western side of the Rhine valley. Therefore, the area is important strategically, and has been a highway for many a conquering army.

The years following the Revolution were certainly ones of political, religious and social upheaval for the "eldest daughter of the Church", but in Haute-Saône, particularly, hostilities with Prussia always threatened the livelihood of the people - the fields, farms and homes - to a much greater degree than the rest of France. The discontent that these conditions bred simply led some families to seek peace and quiet elsewhere - the newly opened-up Ohio interior.

Calmoutier, Ohio, is located in northeastern Holmes and southwestern Wayne counties, between the villages of Mt. Hope and Maysville. Unlike its namesake, it was never a village itself, but just a farming community of French Catholics, centered around their parish church of St. Genevieve.

Claude Druhot (ca.1803-), who bought land there in July, 1833, is said to have founded the settlement in 1832. And according to tradition, he was soon joined by at least a dozen more families over the next two years, some of whom were probably natives of old Calmoutier. But, while almost all of the settlers of new Calmoutier came from Haute-Saône, it appears most came from the arrondissement of Lure rather than that of Vesoul.

What attracted Claude Druhot to the vicinity was undoubtedly the completion in 1832 of the Ohio-Erie canal connecting Lake Erie and the Ohio river. This meant that Ohio farmers could now get their goods to market quickly and cheaply. It also became much easier for new settlers to transport themselves and their goods to their new homes.

These pioneering French, after embarking at Le Havre and crossing the Atlantic, would enter New York harbor and proceed north up the Hudson river, west over the Erie canal to Buffalo, then over Lake Erie to Cleveland, and finally south over the Ohio-Erie canal to Massillon, where the last 20 miles of travel, heading southwest, would be the only overland route after leaving their native land!

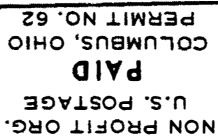
In addition, the land which had to be cleared, was about the most fertile in all the state. This is due to the fact that it lies just inside the terminal moraine, the southernmost extension of the ice age glacier in Ohio, which cut right through the middle of Holmes county, depositing there precious topsoil which it had scraped up and carried along in its creeping, southward movement, ending on an east-west line through Millersburg. This also explains why the land south of this line is very noticeably rugged and steep, while north of it gently rolling hills are the rule.

Sainte Genevieve church was the hub of this French farming community. It is practically synonymous with Calmoutier and almost as old. Until its closing in 1981 it was the northernmost parish in the Columbus diocese, with its property actually bordering Wayne county and the Cleveland diocese.

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Announcement

The Catholic Record Society is happy to announce the publication by one of its members of the first definitive history of the Columbus German brewing industry of the nineteenth century. The book is entitled, Lager and Liberty, German Brewers of the Nineteenth Century. It gives the story of each Braumeister/ proprietor of the city. Concluding chapters trace the development of the industry through the strike of 1903, the formation and troubles of the Hoster-Columbus Associated Breweries Company, and the coming of prohibition. The author is Donald M. Schlegel, of Columbus, a charter member of the Catholic Record Society and associate editor of its "Bulletin". Orders may be placed with the Catholic Record Society. Price: \$7.95 plus \$1.00 for postage and handling; Ohio residents add 44 cents sales tax.



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