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O'DANIEL AND MULHANE ON THE SECOND OLDEST CHURCH IN OHIO

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The chronological dating of institutions is always a fascinating inquiry. The dating of the houses of worship in what is now the Diocese of Columbus is such an historical adventure. While there is no doubt about the first established Catholic church in Ohio -- venerable St. Joseph's in Perry County -- there has been lively discussion over what is the second church founded in this diocese. The candidates are the Church of St. Mary of the Assumption in Lancaster and St. Luke's Church in Danville, which was originally called Sapp's Settlement. Father L. W. Mulhane, the longtime pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Church in Mt. Vernon, and Bishop James J. Hartley, held that St. Luke's is entitled to the designation of the second oldest church. On the other hand, the Dominican historian, Father Victor F. O'Daniel, and the historian of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, Father John H. Lamott, claim that St. Mary's in Lancaster is the second oldest and that St. Luke's is the seventh oldest Catholic church in the state.

During the month of August 1920, St. Luke's celebrated its centennial anniversary with fitting observances. Prior to these celebrations, a spirited historical debate took place in the pages of the diocesan newspaper, the Catholic Columbian, between O'Daniel and Mulhane over the legitimacy of St. Luke's claim to be the second oldest church founded in 1820. Put succinctly, in the Columbian articles Mulhane argues that St. Luke's was founded in 1819 or 1820, within two years of the establishment and blessing of St. Joseph's near Somerset on December 6, 1818. O'Daniel, to the contrary, argues that St. Luke's was blessed in October, 1824. If O'Daniel is correct, then the centennial celebrations which took place in Danville in 1920 were four years too soon. In different writings, Mulhane lists 1819, 1820 and 1822 as dates for the blessing and dedication of St. Luke's.

In the July 16, 1920 issue of the Columbian appears a letter dated July 6, 1920 and postmarked from Washington, D.C., signed with the initials "M.P.T." This letter announces the forthcoming book by Father O'Daniel on the life and times of Edward Dominic Fenwick, the Dominican missionary who founded St. Joseph's near Somerset and who later became the first Bishop of Cincinnati. The letter writer praises O'Daniel's historical research and suggests that one of the real benefits of O'Daniel's biography of Fenwick is that it establishes with documentary proof the correct chronological listing

of the first Catholic churches founded in Ohio. The letter-writer notes that "...there has been considerable discussion and doubt about the respective dates of the foundation of some of these churches." It is unclear from his letter to whom or to what the letter-writer is referring with this claim. Nonetheless, in his essay on the Diocese of Columbus written in the Catholic Encyclopedia published in 1914, Mulhane wrote that the second oldest church in Ohio was St. Luke's:

The second chapel erected in Ohio was also in this diocese, blessed in 1822, near what is now Danville, Knox County, then known as Sapp's Settlement, a colony from near Cumberland, Maryland, many of its members direct descendants of the colonists of Lord Baltimore. This chapel was built of logs and was blessed by Dominican Fathers and the humble congregation ministered by them.
[p. 149]

In his History of St. Vincent de Paul Church published in 1895, Mulhane gives 1822 as the construction date for the log chapel of St. Luke's in Danville. Furthermore, Noah Hill in his nineteenth century account of Knox County wrote that the log chapel was built in 1809. No one accepts this early date, and Mulhane explicitly rejects it in the 1895 publication noted above.

In his History of Fifty Years, Bishop Hartley quotes and appears to accept Mulhane's position. Quite probably O'Daniel -- or "M.P.T." -- had Mulhane's thesis in mind in writing his letter to the Columbian.

In his written work, O'Daniel provides the following chronological listing and dates for Ohio's earliest Roman Catholic churches:

1. St. Joseph's near Somerset, December 6, 1818.
2. St. Mary's in Lancaster, sometime in 1819.
3. St. Patrick's near Cincinnati, April 11, 1819.
4. Holy Trinity in Zanesville, sometime in 1820.
5. St. Barnabas in Deavertown, Morgan County, 1821 or 1822.
6. St. Paul's in Columbiana County, October 3, 1824.
7. St. Luke's, Danville, October, 1824.
8. St. John's in Canton, 1825.
9. A new church begun in Zanesville, 1825.

O'Daniel bases much of his evidence on letters written by the early Dominican missionaries. Within the letters themselves and by cross-reference to other letters and reports in the cache of documents, O'Daniel determined his list as given above. What O'Daniel has not discovered in any of these documents is reference to St. Luke's Church being established in 1820. In fact, the unknown "M.P.T." indicates that "Tradition, as often happens, seems to have gotten awry in regard to St. Paul's and St. Luke's, giving them too early a date." In his biography of Fenwick, O'Daniel provides documented evidence for his claims. "M.P.T." notes O'Daniel's "painsstaking care to ferret out the chronology of the State's earliest churches." Mulhane, as we shall see, appears to depend very much on tradition.

O'Daniel suggests that the first five churches on his chronological list comprised the sum total of the houses of worship in Ohio in 1821 when Fenwick became the first Bishop of Cincinnati. St. Luke's, seventh in O'Daniel's

chronology, certainly is not on this list. Hence, O'Daniel rejects the claim that the Danville church is the second oldest in Ohio.

Reginald M. Coffey, in his The American Dominicans, (1917) provides a shorter list of churches built by 1821 when Fenwick was named Cincinnati's first bishop. The Diocese of Cincinnati was erected by Pope Pius VII on June 9, 1821 with the bull Inter multiplicies. Coffey decries the paucity of resources in Fenwick's new diocese, and he indicates the list of churches available to the new bishop about to take over the area assigned to his see.

Probably, in the long history of the Church, there have been occasions when dioceses have been erected on such slender resources, but they are few and far between. Since 1818, two priests had been working full time in the vast state of Ohio. Up until the time of the erection of the see, the two priests, Fenwick and Young, had built three small churches. The first, as we have seen, was St. Joseph's, built on the tract of land donated by Jacob Dittoe in Perry County near the town of Somerset. This was a little chapel with a one-room log cabin attached. The second establishment was St. Mary's, Lancaster, Fairfield County; a "convent" was also begun for this church but never finished. The third was St. Patrick's, on the northern outskirts of Cincinnati. These were the extent of the resources of the new diocese -- and yet not to be counted as resources at all, for they were all establishments of the order [i.e. the Dominican Order] rather than the diocese. [Coffey, p. 121]

It is unclear why the Zanesville and Deavertown churches are not listed in Coffey's account. Nonetheless, he does not mention St. Luke's in this abbreviated list. It should be noted that the reference to the "convent" for St. Mary's in Lancaster is a translation of the Latin term conventus, which refers to a Dominican Priory or house which was to be established for the priests. Possibly Fathers Fenwick and Young realized that Lancaster was a thriving city in which their conventus should be located. However, this is a moot question as the formal house as such was not erected. Possibly Coffey omits Holy Trinity in Zanesville because this was a warehouse then used for liturgical services; it was only a temporary location.

Coffey mentions St. Luke's for the first time in a discussion of the short-lived "Ohio Province" of the Dominicans, the Vicariate of St. Louis Bertrand, which functioned in some form from 1824 to 1828. In listing the assets of the new "Ohio Province" in 1824, Coffey does mention St. Luke's as an ecclesiastical resource. Coffey writes as follows:

At the time of the establishment, in Ohio, of the Dominican (General) Vicariate of St. Louis Bertrand in 1824, the whole State of Ohio was a Dominican monopoly. The only priests in the state were members of the Order of Preachers, and all the ecclesiastical property, save in the City of Cincinnati itself, was held in the name of the order. The priests in Ohio were Fathers Hill, Young, O'Leary, Martin, De Raymacker, and Stephen Montgomery. The others, Hynes and McGrady, who also served the Church in Ohio were, or were supposed to be, on a begging tour in Europe. Frederick Rese, who was the first secular priest to labor in the state, had yet to leave

Europe. The churches, all the property of the order -- both those already built and those under construction at the time -- were: St. Joseph's, the Mother Church of Ohio; St. Mary's Lancaster; Holy Trinity (later named St. John the Evangelist and still later St. Thomas Aquinas), Zanesville; St. Barnabas, Deavertown, Morgan County; St. John the Baptist, Canton; St. Paul's, Dungannon; St. Luke's, Sapp's Settlement (near Danville); St. Dominic's, Beaver Township, Guernsey County. To these were soon added St. Patrick's, Clayton Township (now Junction City), Perry County; St. Patrick's, Pigeons Roost, Jackson Township, Perry County (later replaced by St. Louis Bertrand's Rehoboth); Holy Trinity, Somerset, Perry County; St. Martin's, Brown County; and St. Pius, Steubenville. [Coffey, p., 140. He has interchanged the later identities of the two St. Patrick's churches - ed.]

A bit later in his study, Coffey recounts the lessening of Dominican influence in Ohio: "When the Chapter of 1837 convened, there were thirteen priests in the province.... In Kentucky...Dominican influence was confined to the rural parish of St. Rose with its few neighboring missions. In Ohio...all the churches under Dominican auspices outside of Perry County, except St. John's, Zanesville, and St. Mary's, Lancaster, had been surrendered to the bishop." (p.202) In a footnote to this passage, Coffey notes that "Fathers from St. Joseph's still attended the mission churches of St. Barnabas in Morgan County and St. Luke's in Knox to accommodate the bishop. These did not belong to the Order at that time." Coffey refers to the Catholic Almanac of 1839 as textual reference for his claims. In 1839, Rev. Jean-Baptiste Lamy, the future Archbishop of Santa Fe and the person after whom Willa Cather wrote Death Comes to the Archbishop, began his brief sojourn in the present Diocese of Columbus when he became St. Luke's first resident pastor.

Following M.P.T.'s letter in the July 16 issue of the Columbian, Father Mulhane responded vigorously to the rejection of what seems to have been one of his pet historical positions. Writing under the pseudonym of "R. C. Gleaner" in his weekly column in that paper, "The Catholic Viewpoint," Mulhane rejects outright O'Daniel's claims. In fact, Mulhane seems to believe that O'Daniel himself wrote the July 6 letter from Washington. The argument gets a bit mean-spirited in some places.

Mulhane begins by taking a swipe at M.P.T.'s rejection of tradition. He seems to think O'Daniel rejects his Dominican theology by the dismissal of tradition. He writes, "Let us remark that tradition is pretty well recognized by this time in Catholic Theology, even of a Dominican model, and history must recognize well established tradition." As we will see, O'Daniel does not take this charge lightly. Next, Mulhane argues that Fr. Stephen Byrne, a Dominican who wrote a history of St. Joseph's Province for his order in the latter half of the nineteenth century, "was quite emphatic in giving St. Luke's a very early date." Mulhane also suggests that Byrne was "a man of acumen and care in studying early Ohio history." Thirdly, Mulhane refers to Bishop Purcell's diary dated June 1, 1834. In referring to St. Luke's, which he had just visited, Purcell wrote that the congregation there ..."was one of the first which was formed in this Diocese." Mulhane, relying on Purcell's diary entry and taking seriously the notation "one of the first," suggests that "this hardly would agree with the statement putting St. Luke's as the seventh or eighth." Mulhane seems to accept O'Daniel's point that St. Luke's was

dedicated in 1824. But, Mulhane argues, "that does not preclude the fact that the church, a large one, was built previous to that and awaited the coming of Bishop Fenwick to bless it -- he was consecrated in 1822." Interestingly enough, Father Young seems to have blessed St. Luke's, so O'Daniel suggests, in 1824 while Fenwick was in Europe on his begging tour. Mulhane further argues that it is implausible that Sapp's Settlement existed from 1809 to 1824 "without some sort of church." Mulhane then reaches his conclusion: "We conclude therefore that because the church was not dedicated until October, 1824, this is not sufficient reason to infer that the church was not built in 1820." Mulhane goes on to say that "A congregation that assembled for Mass somewhere in and about what is now Danville, Ohio, existed in 1819, and therefore this parish can be recognized as the second of the state, no matter how, when, or where the log church was dedicated. This stands until further proof is produced."

In his written work on the dating of St. Luke's, Father Mulhane depends on three pieces of historical evidence which he thinks establish his case: a) Purcell's 1840 letter to the Catholic Telegraph; b) Purcell's 1834 letter to the same Cincinnati newspaper; c) oral tradition of the nineteenth century Danville elders. Each of these three pieces of evidence needs to be analyzed in order to see if they establish Mulhane's claims regarding the early dating of St. Luke's church.

In 1840, Bishop Purcell was in Danville to dedicate the new frame church built by Father Lamy. Writing from Mt. Vernon on November 18, 1840, Purcell informed the readers of the Telegraph about the members of the Danville congregation:

It is now nearly eighteen years since the old church of St. Luke's, a log building, was put up, on a lot given by Mr. George Sapp, a convert to our holy faith, who moved, thirty-four years ago, from Allegheny Co., Md., to this part of Ohio.

Mulhane writes that this would make the log church built about 1822. He then writes that he thinks Hill in his historical narrative of Knox County was incorrect in stating that a log church was built in 1809. Hence, the often used 1822 date for the building and blessing of St. Luke's seems to depend upon Purcell's 1840 letter. Mulhane quotes this letter in his history of St. Vincent's parish. A copy of the letter as printed in the Telegraph is found in the Catholic Record Society files. There seems to be no other reference in documents presently available to the 1822 date.

Next, Mulhane appeals to a letter by Purcell written during the Bishop's visit of his diocese after replacing the deceased Bishop Fenwick in 1833. Purcell kept the Telegraph informed of his travels. In a letter dated June 1, 1834 from Zanesville, Purcell writes about Danville.

Our last letter was dated at St. Barnabas, Morgan County, May 14th. We visited a few families on our way to Sapp's Settlement, Knox County, where our arrival was anxiously expected by a large congregation, one of the first which was formed in this diocese. It almost exclusively consists of movers from the 'Mountain Church' congregation, ten miles from Cumberland, Allegheny County, Maryland. The names of Sapp, Durbin and McKenzie, who have been faithful to

their God and their holy faith in profession and practice, notwithstanding the difficulties which they had to contend with for nearly 25 years in the wilderness, will not be forgotten in the annals of the first Catholic settlers of Ohio.

This is the reference to Mulhane's claim mentioned in the Columbian letter about the early dating of St. Luke's. And Purcell states that the Danville congregation was in the "wilderness" for nearly twenty-five years. The problem is, however, that this says nothing about the construction or dedication and blessing of a church. The Somerset congregation had been present for nearly a quarter of a century when Purcell wrote this 1834 letter. Letters in the Baltimore Archives from Jacob Dittoe indicate this. Yet a church was not built and blessed near Somerset until December 6, 1818. Furthermore, Purcell's claim of "one of the first" does not entail "second" or "third" or any particular place on the chronological scale.

Lastly, Mulhane, as we have seen already, appeals to the tradition of the Danville elders. In his 1895 narrative, he writes about such a tradition.

I have it from the lips of an old lady of very clear memory, whom I attended in her last illness, in March of this year, that the log church at St. Joseph's, Somerset, was the first church in Ohio, and the one at St. Luke's the second church. She claimed to have been present at the first Mass said in the church at St. Joseph's, Christmas morning, 1819, when she was about ten years of age, and gave a clear account of all the circumstances. She insisted that St. Joseph's, Somerset, was the first, and St. Luke's was the second, and always added, "They were both log churches, too." [This was Mrs. Mary (McFadden) Bonar Lindell. See the Bulletin, Vol. 3 (1977), pp 207-209. - ed.]

After quoting this person, Mulhane writes that "Hence, all testimony points to the fact that the first church at St. Luke's was built in 1822." ["Sketch of St. Luke's Parish," p. 82]

A person doing critical history right away notes a problem with oral traditions. The elderly woman was mistaken about the first Mass offered at St. Joseph's. There is much documented evidence in several archives indicating that St. Joseph's was blessed and dedicated on December 6, 1818, more than a year before Christmas day, 1819. Of course, it does not follow that the elderly person was incorrect about St. Luke's. But it does suggest that one must find documented evidence from the time to substantiate the various oral traditions. O'Daniel and Lamott have failed to find documented evidence for St. Luke's as early as Mulhane has suggested.

In the July 30 issue of the Columbian, O'Daniel responds to Mulhane's letter, which he appears to have taken as at least a mild personal attack. O'Daniel begins by stressing his own attention to original sources and materials. He then praises the forthcoming book on the history of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati by Father John H. Lamott. In his response to Mulhane's challenge, O'Daniel attempts to provide the "further proof" Mulhane required in order to justify the claim that St. Luke's is not the second oldest church in Ohio.

First of all, O'Daniel does not take seriously Mulhane's appeal to the history of Ohio written by O'Daniel's Dominican brother, Father Byrne. Coffey notes that Byrne wrote his history while stationed at St. Joseph's in Somerset for medical reasons. One doubts whether Byrne's privately written manuscript received the critical reading any such historical narrative needs in order to ferret out inaccuracies.

O'Daniel's chief refutation of Mulhane's thesis, however, rests on textual grounds. O'Daniel asks the serious question about why there are no references to St. Luke's in the correspondence and reports from any of the pioneer priests as early as necessary to justify Mulhane's date of 1820. O'Daniel notes that these churches were of principal concern and attention by the early missionaries. The Dominicans refer often to their churches as marks of apostolic success. To strengthen his argument, O'Daniel notes that the settlers at Sapp's Settlement were native Marylanders, which was the home of both Fathers Fenwick and Young. Marylanders seem to have stuck together. O'Daniel stresses the fact that the lack of any correspondence about a church between the Maryland Dominicans and the pioneers at Sapp's Settlement is strange; "Fenwick and N. D. Young were both native Marylanders and always stayed close to their people." The Columbian and Mulhane's Catholic Encyclopedia essay also note that the Sapp's Settlement pioneers were Maryland folk. One would think that if a church existed in Sapp's Settlement in 1820, certainly a reference to it should be found in the normally quite chatty letters from Young or Fenwick, especially since references to other churches were made frequently.

[To be concluded]

ST. JOSEPH OLD CEMETERY NEAR SOMERSET
ADDITIONAL READINGS AND CORRECTIONS

On April 4, 1986 Society members Pat Mooney, Jim Logsdon, and Don Schlegel visited the old cemetery at St. Joseph near Somerset to read several tombstones which had been placed in a pile after falling over. Many of these were broken. Some of these, it turned out, had been standing and had been read by Monsignor Mattingly in 1976; others had not. Below are presented new readings which resulted from this effort, along with a few corrected or alternate readings. The page numbers refer to the readings presented in last year's Bulletin.

---Apr. 3, 1873, aged 2 D. ...Dec. ... aged 2 Y 6 M 7 D.
Dear Maggie and John you have left us our sorrow to beguile, but to
anticipate with you the bliss of Heaven is our Eternal smile. Parents.

---n FLOWERS, died ..an 17, 1867, aged 36 yrs 9 mo. Resting in peace, Amen.

Mary, wife of William STERN[ER?]...

Arthur F. son of A. & H.C. SUTTER, died June 9, 1857 aged 1 mo. 27 ds. My
time was short but now I am free to live with God eternally. (pg. 88)

In memory of Juliana Consort of J.J. BECK who departed this life Nov. 20, 1843
aged 21 years 8 months & 25 days. May she rest in peace. Amen.

Mary Jane wife of Mathias SAMS and daughter of ...

---dau of George & Ruth REDMOND, August (?) 30, 1857 (?) aged 9 yrs.

Catherine wife of Mathew CASSELEY Born in the Parish of Ballemacknab Townland of Dindrum Ireland, Died Sept. 22, 185- (pg. 93)

John H. son of W. & F. SUTTON died Feb. 26, 1865 aged 27 y's 8 M 6 D.

Mary A. dau of Linus B. & Elizabeth DITTOE died Nov. 17, 1844.

Patrick LARGEY Native of Charlemont, Armagh, Ireland, died Aug. 21, 1859 Aged 72 years.

[Frances, daughter of] Thomas & Mary Horahan departed this life March 6, 1842 aged 21 y'rs 2 mo 26 d's. May she rest in peace. Amen. (pg. 87)

Cecily daughter of George & Helen SAUNDERS died August 9, 1838 aged 3 years 8 mo & 17 days.

Sarah wife of Owen MARTIN, died Nov. 29, 1856 aged 94 years. A native of the County Tyrone, Ireland.

In memory of Elizabeth daughter of ...les & Elenor CASSILLY died July 27, 1839 aged 11 months & 2 days. (pg. 87)

Cecily BENNETT wife of Robert Bennett, died Oct. 7, 1855 aged 67 y 1 m 4 d, Native of Nasby Lancashire england she emigrated to the united states 1819. May she rest in peace. Amen. (pg. 86)

Infant dau of A. & M.A. SUITER died Jan. 15, 1856. Sleep on sweet babe/From pain and woe/You have paid the debt/The living owe. (pg. 88)

John son of Fran.. & Rebecca CLARK, died Feb. 16, 184- aged 2 years - months & 5 --.

Anne wife of J. A. HACKETT died Oct. 3, 1847... (pg. 94)

Sarah, wife of Thomas...

Isaac J. son of Joshua & Rosana REYNOLDS died October 21, 1843 aged 21 months & 3 days.

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