Barquilla de la Santa Maria
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Diocese of Columbus

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Our Lady of Perpetual Help Mission, Modoc, Trimble Township, Athens County
1921-1956



Our Lady of Perpetual Help does not quite fit the definition of Bishop Hartley's "Coal Churches," a series of histories that appeared in last year's *Bulletins*. Unlike those churches, Our Lady at Modoc was more of a success, surviving until 1956, well into the time of Steubenville's Bishop Mussio.

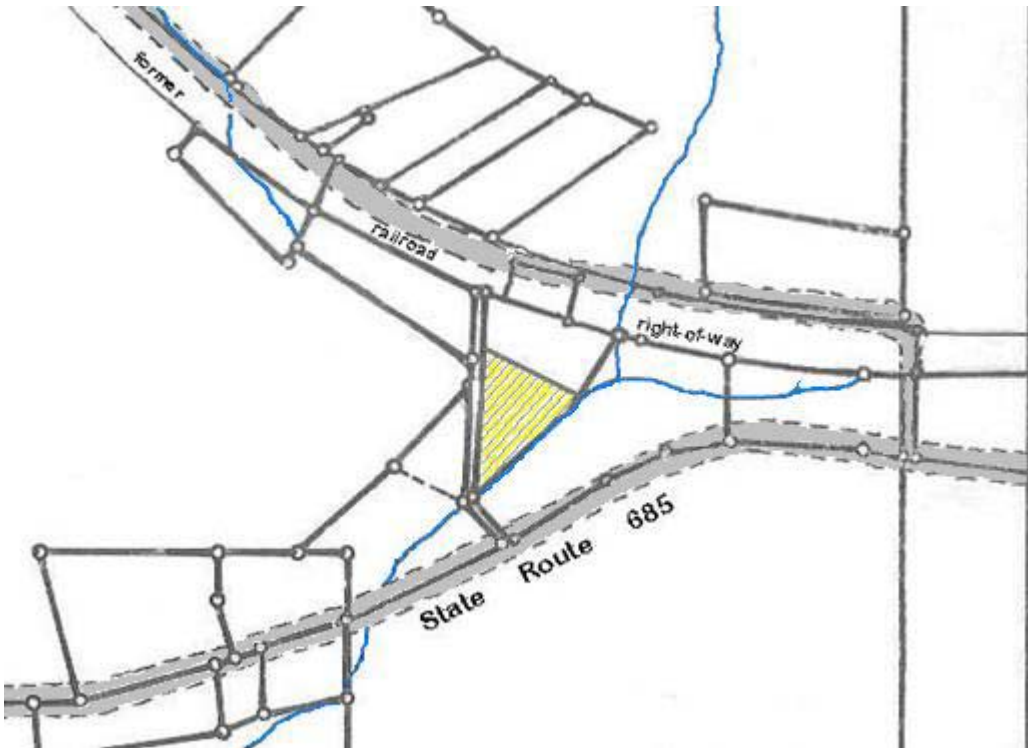
Modoc is in Section 25, Trimble Township, Athens County, two miles east of Buchtel on State Route 685. It now is a straggling village of houses, but in the first half of the twentieth century it was a thriving coal mining town. The Modoc Mine was opened in 1902 by the Congo Coal and Mining Company of Columbus. It was about a half mile northwest of the village, up Modoc Road, and was served by a railroad spur that ran along that same right-of-way. Superintendent was P. J. Harrington of Congo, O.[1] About a half-mile in the opposite direction, at what is now the southeastern crook of Township Road 301 in Section 24, Dover Township, was the Drydock mine. This mine was opened in 1903 by the Continental Coal Company. It was operated by the Sunday Creek Coal Company from about 1907 to 1918; the Drydock Coal Company from 1918 to 1955; and then the Gem Coal Company from 1955 until it was closed in 1963.[2]

As in the majority of Ohio coal mines in that period, the miners were mostly immigrants from Eastern Europe and many of them were Catholic Poles, Hungarians, and Slovacs. The 1921 mission census listed 155 Poles, 81 Hungarians, 47 Slavocs,

and 21 Greeks, for a total of 304 souls. Among them were 72 children in the public school.[3] The dirt roads made it difficult for them and their families to attend services at St. Patrick Church in Buchtel, but despite the difficulties they would walk to Buchtel every Sunday and Holy day. "It resembled a pilgrimage, for the parents and children of the various families would walk together. ...Throughout those years, the children of Modoc would walk to Buchtel, weekly at least, for religious instructions."[4]

As early as 1918 Modoc was one of four Catholic stations attended from Buchtel, with Mass offered in the public school. By 1919 Father Eugene Owens and the people were considering some land to be used for church purposes in Modoc. A triangular, 1/3-acre property was purchased for $500 and placed in Bishop Hartley's name on May 14, 1920.[5] The address is 7878 State Route 685. The site, lying between the State Road and Modoc Road, but not touching either of them, was reached by a twenty-foot wide lane running north from S. R. 685, some 550 feet west of the Modoc Road intersectiion. About a hundred feet north the lane crosses Modoc Run. The property was northeast of that point, about 250 feet along the east side of the lane and about 200 feet along the northwest side of the creek; the border on the northeast, from the lane to the creek, measures 143 feet.[6]

That fall a frame building that had been used as a men's club room was given to the Church by Stanley Sikorski. (Who, with his wife Pauline, had previously owned the church lot.[7]) In November it was enlarged and converted into a church, with much of the labor involved credited to Mr. Sikorski. The people called it St. Mary's, but already by July of 1921 its official name was Our Lady of Perpetual Help. The financial report for the Buchtel parish shows a total of $1,552.80 spent for the church and lot in Modoc in 1921. A large part of this was paid through a house-to-house collection and a subscription taken up among the members in 1921. Furniture was purchased for the church in 1921 ($99.50), the roof was repaired and a vestibule was built in 1923 ($177.74), and in 1924 a new altar and pews were installed ($425), a coal house was built, and the church was painted ($47). The mission's committee, tasked with assisting the pastor in financial matters, in these early years consisted of

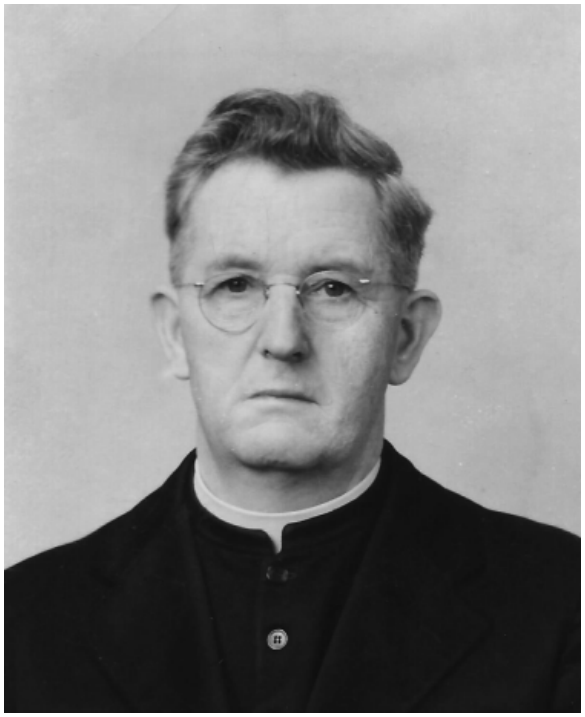


The cross-hatched triangle indicates the church property in this plat map of Modoc.

Louis Levandofsky and Jacob Wagner. Levandofky continued to serve as the only committee member in the later 1920s.

Conditions changed only slightly as the early years passed. In 1925 Father Touey reported a shifted nationality split: 60 Slovacs, 60 Poles, 50 Hungarians, and 19 Greeks. Catechism was taught to the 74 children in public schools twice a week by the pastor and another teacher. Mass was offered at Modoc every Sunday and Holy Day in the summer, but only on the first and third Sundays of each monh from October through May. Modoc was not an insignificant part of the pastor's charge: in 1930 Father Carney reported 76 souls at Modoc and 98 at Buchtel.

The mines must have been somewhat busy during the Great Depression—either that or adult children were remaining at home—for the population of the mission increased. The nationality figures also indicate that the population was somewhat unstable. In 1933 Father Carney reported 92 Hungarians, 76 English-speaking, and 9 Poles, a total of 177 souls. In 1935 Father Stecker reported 145 souls in 63 families: 21 Polish, 20 English, 18 Slovac, and 4 Italian. For this population Mass was again offered



Rev. Eugene Owens (1878-1949)



Our Lady of Perpetual Help

on all Sundays and Holy days. They supported a Holy Name Society, an Altar Society, and a Blessed Virgin Sodality. By 1940 a Sacred Heart League and the Children of Mary had also been organized.

In his 1943 history Bishop Hartley praised the people of Modoc. "They are splendid Catholic people, probably about 25 families, good hearted and kind and have the greatest reverence for the priest. All the priests who have cared for the little Mission liked the people and the children and expressed great regret upon leaving them."[8] There were only 18 school-aged children in the mission by that time. This being a war year, with men away in the service and women working, only two societies were operating, the Holy Name Society and the Altar Society. The little mission had eighteen men in the armed services at the time: Frank, James, Michael, and Tony Erdy, John Horvath, Steve Kochis, Vincent Kovath, Edward Miller, Bert and Lewis Pallo, Joseph Toth, Thomas Truszka, Lewis Yonkoski, and Henry, Leopold, and Walter Zukowski.[9] In January, 1945, the mission became part of the new Diocese of Steubenville.[10]



Interior of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church.

The booklet issued for the diamond jubilee of St. Patrick Parish, Buchtel, in 1955, listed some special members of the Modoc mission:

- Helen Horvath, born in 1912 in Murray City, moved with her family to Oregon Ridge, above Modoc. She attended the Oregon Ridge elementary school. She entered the Hartwell convent of the Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis and became Sister Mary Angelo.

Pastors of St. Patrick Parish, Buchtel, and Our Lady of Perpetual Help:

1919-1923 Rev. Eugene Owens
1923-1925 Rev. Peter B. Crelly
1925-1926 Rev. Francis B. Touey
1926-1929 Rev. Julian Schaefer
1929-1934 Rev. Joseph Leo Carney
1934-1942 Rev. William Stecker
1942-1945 Rev. Cornelius F. Gallagher
1945-1947 Rev. Joseph Paul Johnson
1947-1950 Rev. Carl Leo Heilman
1950-1952 Rev. John B. Nadzam
1952-1954 Rev. Mieceslaus Dzikowski
1954-1956 Rev. George J. Adams, admr.

- Mary Horvath was born near Glouster in 1917 and also attended the Oregon Ridge school. She became Sr. Mary Elvira of the Stella Niagara Franciscans.

- On October 26, 1951, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Miller celebrated their golden wedding anniversary. Their twelve children were present for the festivities. They had been married in Hungary and had come to America shortly afterwards and lived on Oregon Ridge for fifty years. Among other blessings, God gave them 58 grandchildren and 23 great-grandchildren (as of 1955). Mr. and Mrs. Miller led exemplary Catholic lives.

In the summer of 1955 a census found 27 Catholic households in the Modoc area, totaling 78 souls. That September Father Adams, administrator of the Buchtel parish, suggested to Bishop Mussio that Our Lady of Perpetual Hope might be closed soon. The church was uncomfortable in bad weather, the roof was leaking, and other repairs were needed. With modern roads and automobiles, many of the people attended Mass at St. Patrick's rather than St. Mary's, when the late Sunday Mass was there. Many also did not like to be responsible for the upkeep of two church buildings. The people

who wanted the mission to remain were those who would need transportation to Buchtel. On February 26, 1956 Father Adams formally requested the bishop to consider closing the mission.[11]

Bishop Mussio decided that a trial closing period of three months would begin on March 1, 1956. But his letter gave no conditions under which the trial would be a failure. After three months the mission was to be merged into the parish and Our Lady of Perpetual Help was to be razed.[12] It is not known how closely this schedule was followed. Bishop Mussio sold the Modoc property to Victor Oakley on October 28, 1957.[13]

NOTES

Special thanks are due to Msgr. George Schlegel for assistance on several trips to Athens to search the property records; and to Pat Coyle, volunteer, Diocese of Steubenville, for information from the diocesan archives.

1) *Annual Reports for 1902...State of Ohio*, Part III, pages 217 and 344 (Report of the Chief Inspector of Mines).
2) *History of the Coal-Mning Industry in Ohio* by Douglas L. Crowell, published by the Ohio Division of Geological Survey, Columbus, 1995: pp 8 and 55.
3) Census and financial reports, not individually cited, are filed in the Archives, Diocese of Columbus.
4) *Diamond Jubilee Booklet of St. Patrick Parish, Buchtel, Ohio* [1955] pp 33-34.
5) Athens County Deed Record 131/346.
6) The property descriptions in the deeds from 1910 to 1920 are deficient as to precise location, inconsistent within themselves, and/or inconsistent with each other, due to insufficient surveying or recording. All deeds for the property from 1920 until 2006 used an identical, insufficient description. The first good survey of the property was made in 2006 and is recorded in Athens County Recorder's Official Record 396 page 1587.
7) Athens County Deed Records 112/399 and 128/505.
8) Hartley, Rt. Rev. James J., *Diocese of Columbus: A History of Fifty Years, 1868-1918*, Columbus, 1943, p. 126.
9) 1943 special edition of the *Columbus Register*, p 51.
10) The documents changing the diocesan boundaries were issued in 1944, but became effective



The Miller Family.

only with the installation of Bishop Ready on January 4, 1945.

11) Rev. Geo. Adams to V. Rev. Henry O'Donnell, Chancellor, Feb. 26, 1956, Archives, Diocese of Steubenville.

12) V. Rev. Henry O'Donnell, Chancellor, to Rev. Geo. Adams, Feb. 26, 1956, Archives, Diocese of Steubenville.

13) Athens County Deed Record 231/221.

Abstracts from the *Catholic Telegraph*

(Continued from Vol. XLII No. 5)

January 14, 1863

Receipts of Mount St. Mary's Seminary for the year 1862

CHURCH COLLECTIONS.

Holy Trinity, Somerset	$30.00
Church of the Most HolyRedeemer, Portsmouth	24.45
Church of the Most SacredHeart, Pomeroy	35.00
Church of the Most Sacred Heart, Bremen	4.00
Holy Cross, Columbus	155.22
Church of the Immaculata,Enoch, Noble co.	40.41
Church of the Immaculata,Marges, Carroll co.	13.53
Our Lady of Good Hope, Hocking co.	6.75
St. Mary's, Lancaster	65.19
St. Mary's, Chillcothe	56.00
St. Mary's, Marietta	35.00
St. Mary's, Wilkesville and missions	32.00
St. Mary's, Etna Furnace	26.15
St. Mary's, Delaware	25.00
St. Mary's, Mattingly Settlement	18.80
St. Mary's, Noble co.	11.25
St. Ann's, Taylorsville	4.05
St. Joseph's, Circleville	35.00
St. Joseph's, Wills Creek Coshocton co.	17.37
St. Joseph's, Fairfield co.	3.24
St. Michael's, Noble co.	8.79
St. Michael's, Knox co.	8.00
St. Peter's, Chillicothe	96.00
St. Peter's, Steubenville	54.75
St. Peter's, Canal Dover	10.57
St. Peter's, Cambridge	6.00
St. John Baptist's, Logan	20.65
St. John's, Miltonsburg	16.65
St. John's, Belair	11.05
St. John's, London	8.50
St. Thomas', Zanesville	32.00
St. Luke's, Danville	32.00
St. Dominic's, McCluney, Perry co.	6.42
St. Francis de Sales, Newark	20.00
St. Francis', Chapel Hill, Perry co.	13.00
St. Francis Xavier's, Lodi	11.44
St. George's, Coshocton	23.45
St. Lawrence O'Toole's, Ironton	35.00
St. Louis, Gallipolis	4.90
St. Nicholas', Zanesville	26.00
St. Patrick's, Columbus	120.00
St. Pius, South Fork, Perry co.	3.75
St. Vincent of Paul's, Mt. Vernon	44.09
Athens mission	2.09
Belmont Station	6.75
Leatherwood	9.25
Marion	11.02
Sunday Creek	25.00
Through Rev. S. Byrne, O.S.D.	32.00
[Future Diocesan total:	$1,337.53]
[Archdiocesan total from churches:]	$4,277.83

January 28, 1863

In this issue is printed No. 2 of the series of lectures delivered by Bishop Rosecrans, "the credulity of the members of the Catholic Church."

February 4, 1863

Bishop Rosecrans' lecture No. 3 is printed, "Natural and Revealed Religion."

A Strange Funeral.

Rev. M. Forde, for many years a Catholic priest in this city, died at Freeport on Thursday of last week, leaving a request that his remains be carried to Dixon and placed by the side of those of Father Tierney in the cemetery. At the funeral at the Catholic church in this city on Saturday, Father Herbert, in behalf of himself and his people at Sterling, demanded the body for burial there. The numerical strength and determination of Father Forde's flock was too evident to the Sterling priest and people present, and the remains were properly buried. During the night following, about sixty men, armed with shot guns, pistols, knives and bludgeons, came from Sterling, exhumed the body and removed it by rail before the faithful of the city were aware of the movement.

Father Forde was greatly beloved by his people here, who propose to petition Bishop Duggan for an order for the return of the body, and that it be interred at the place and according to the request of Father Forde while living. — *Dixon (Ill.) Republican*

[*No doubt this refers to Father Michael Forde who had founded St. Peters' College in Chillicothe in 1855.*]

Church of the Nativity, Portsmouth, and Missions
Baptisms, 1841-1853

(Continued, from Vol. XLII, No. 5)

1843, continued

Ripley

July 18 Frances, daughter of Richard Tabbs and Eleanor Waters, spouses; sponsors Michael Waters and Rebecca Dugan. J. O'Mealy

same day Honora, daughter of Richard Tabbs and Eleanor Waters, spouses; spons. Michael Waters and Elizabeth Berbine. JO

same day John, son of John Weber and Catherine Pental, spouses; spons. James Hooke and Magdalene Weber. JO

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Pine Grove

Aug. 15 Catherine, daughter of Henry Wesel and Catherine Smith; spons. George Crampus[?] and Catherine Beiler. JO

same day James, son of James Sweeny and Louise McFallon; spons. Timothy Courtney and Helen Sweeny. JO

same day William Augustine, son of John Sweeny and Mary Ann Gelson; spons. Henry Barte and Mary Walker. JO

same day William Henry, son of Henry Camperman[?] and Mary Rosevard; spons. Henry Berte and Mary Mickebar JO

Aug. 19 at Aberdeen, James McLaughlin, son of James Gekin and Rebecca Janet Teeters; sponsor Joseph O'Mealy. JO

Ripley

Aug. 20 Frederick, son of John Shaeffer and Elizabeth Ergod; spons. Frederick Hartman and Catherine Miller. JO

same day Michael, son of James Kane and Mary Catherine Burger; spons. Thomas Smith and Barbara Bruger. JO

same day Roseann, daughter of Martin Lint and Ann Marie Burger; spons. Francis Burger and Rosann Burger. JO

same day George, son of Jacob Ernest and Ann Gobedin; spons. George Klason[?] and Margaret White. JO

same day Joseph, son of Henry and Margaret Anderson; spons. Thomas Mullen and Mary McDonough. JO

same day Elizabeth Ann, daughter of Andrew Mahoney and Margaret Connor; spons. Michael Waters and Elizabeth Berbine. JO

Aug. 27 at Portsmouth, Mary Ann, daughter of Patrick Fitzpatrick and Mary Bouger; spons. Thomas Kline and Mary Nugent. JO

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Aug. 8 Francis, son of Hugh Gilroy and Catherine Gilroy, spouses; spons. Owen Sweeney and Margaret Nugent. JO

Aug. 14 at Lick Run, Catherine Elizabeth, daughter of Henry Lipker and Catherine Endoff, spouses; sponsors Herad Rolf and Elizabeth Dieker. JO

Aug. 20 at Pine Grove, Charles, son of David Putoff and Mary Jane Gramps, spouses; sponsors Charles Huber and Mary E. Myers. JO

Aug. 20 at Scioto, John, son of Matthew Hassenbend and Elizabeth Hubert, spouses; spons. Joseph Embick and Jane Emrick. JO

Oct. 13 Mary, daughter of James Hobart and Ann Davis, spouses; spons. John Hobart and Mary Sharer. JO

Nov. 2 Andrew, son of George Nuss and Regina Allehand, spouses; spons. Michael Baum and Ann M. Bish. JO

Nov. 8 at Pine Grove, Francis, son of Frederick Cline and Mary Fink, spouses; spons. Francis Fink and Catherine Fink. JO

Nov. 12 at Portsmouth, Vincent, son of Peter Brodback and Eleanor Legler; sponsor Michael Baum. JO

Dec. 4 Louise, daughter of James Grimes and Mary Tobin, spouses; spons. Joseph O'Mealy and Elizabeth O'Mealy. JO

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1844

Jan. 6 at Pine Grove, Frederick, son of Bernard Camperman and Catherine Berthe, spouses; spons. Henry Venil and Mary Dieker JO

Jan. 8 at Greenupsburg, Kentucky, James, son of Conrad Brown and Dorothy Brown, spouses. (rites supplied). JO

Jan. 12 at Portsmouth, Mary Ann, daughter of Patrick Merriell and Ann Pine, spouses; spons. Andrew Sullivan and Margaret Sullivan. JO

Jan. 22 James, son of James Will and Mary Hobart, spouses; sponsors James Glass and Mary Niedermyer. JO

Feb. 15 Catherine, daughter of Benedict Derfas [?] and Eva Christensen, spouses; spons. Bernard Ott and Catherine Ott. JO

Feb. 17 George, son of Joseph Carl and Mary A. Reis, spouses; spons. Laurence Carl and Eva Hobart. JO

Feb. 21 Helen, daughter of Thomas Kline and Bridget Higgins, spouses; spons. John McGill and Helen McGill. JO

Mar. 3 Mary, daughter of Joseph Steigervalt and Ann Kunkel, spouses; spons. George Miller and Mary Myer. JO

Mar. 24 at Pine Grove, Elizabeth, daughter of Frederick Monick and Elizabeth Cruger, spouses; sponsors Ferdinand Goldcamp and Elizabeth Monick. JO

Mar. 24 at Pine Grove, Mary Catherine, daughter of J. Baker and Mary Wolcam, spouses; spons. Herman Haspin and Catherine Smidt. JO

Apr. 1 at Portsmouth, Rosann, daughter of Thomas Rafferty and Catherine McGuire, spouses; spons. John Crouger and Mary Myer. JO

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Apr. 7 at Portsmouth, George Leopold Jacob, son of Carl Fred. Reiniger and Barbara Sutor; spons. Mathew Threcker and Margaret Myers. JO

Apr. 7 Francis, son of Francis Adam and Mary Ann Wolford, spouses; spons. Francis Adam and Victoria Neidermyer. JO

Apr. 8 George, son of George Hammerstein and Clementa McFadden; spons. George Shafer and Barbara Uri. JO

Apr. 21 Susan Louise, daughter of Daniel Johnson and Ann Franer; spons. Patrick and Hellen O'Mealy. JO

(To be continued)

St. Pius

With respect to the story of St. Pius Mission in our April issue, Msgr. Schlegel points out that by the early 1900s there already were two saints of the name. Our author was unaware of St. Pius I, the tenth pope.

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