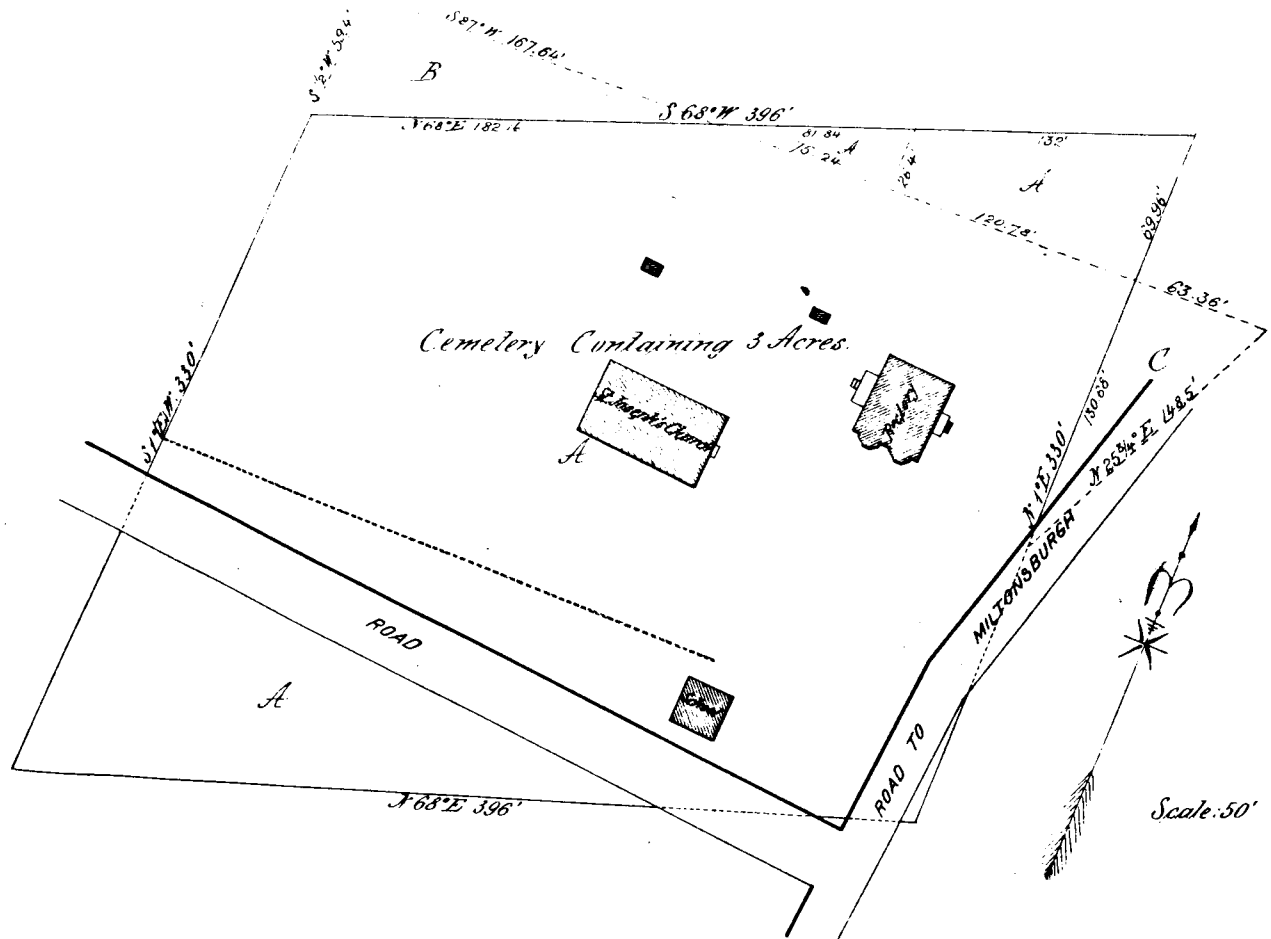


# Barquilla de la Santa Maria

## BULLETIN of the Catholic Record Society - Diocese of Columbus

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WILLS CREEK OR CHAPEL HILL ST. JOSEPH  
 SENECA TOWNSHIP, MONROE COUNTY, OHIO  
 1854 - 1894

High on the ridge between the valleys of the South Fork and the Skin Creek branch of Wills Creek in Seneca and Summit townships in northwestern Monroe County, Ohio there settled a group of German Catholic farmers. The names of families known to have been living there by 1850 include Burkhart, Weisent, Spangler, December, and Nauer. Some of these were branches of the Catholic families of St. John the Baptist Parish some six miles east at Miltonsburg, and until the dedication of their own church they all were an

integral part of that parish. Through the years, they not only have shared with the Catholics of Miltonsburg their heritage and their blood lines but also have shared many of the same pastors, whether these resided at Miltonsburg, at Wills Creek or Burkhart, at Woodsfield, or at Fulda.

Rev. John C. Kroemer was sent by Bishop Purcell to Miltonsburg in 1847 as its first resident pastor, replacing the Irish pastors who had resided at the older Beaver St. Dominic Parish. In 1848 he is said to have offered Mass at the home of Michael Spangler in the Biz Hollow area of Seneca Township. Three acres of land in Seneca Township were transferred by George W. Weisend to Archbishop Purcell on December 31, 1852. The site is in the southeast quarter of Section 9, at the intersection of township roads 63 and 61. Under the care of the saintly Father Kroemer the frame Church of St. Joseph, measuring about 35 by 55 feet, was erected in the center of that site. In ecclesiastical circles the church was designated Wills Creek but locally the site was called Chapel Hill. The church was nearly completed, or at least well under way, by the winter of 1853/54. (1) It was probably dedicated by Archbishop Purcell when he visited the area in August of 1854. (2)

In April of 1856 Father Kroemer was replaced as pastor of Miltonsburg by a Father Lorg, of whom the people spoke "with raptures." It seems that Father Lorg was a physician not only of souls but also of bodies. He made few demands on the people for contributions to his support, for he supported himself by charging for medical services. He had departed the area by February of 1857. (3)

In the spring of 1857 Rev. J. W. Brummer, who had been pastor at Beaver in 1854 and 1855 but had then been transferred to Zanesville St. Nicholas, visited Fulda, Archer's Settlement, Wills Creek St. Joseph, and Miltonsburg so that the people could make their Easter duties. He announced to them that they should get a priest of their own again, and that if the Archbishop could not find another he would send Father Brummer himself. This plan was soon put into action. Father Brummer took up residence at Fulda as soon as a tiny house could be built there for him; his missions were Archer's, Wills Creek and Miltonsburg.

Father Brummer and the people of Wills Creek St. Joseph did not always see eye-to-eye, especially concerning finances and the parish school. At one point he called them "good but close-fisted people," but another time he admitted that he had not insisted on receiving money from them and that the people of Wills Creek and Miltonsburg together had pledged \$400, enough to support their own pastor. Another part of the problem was the physical strength of the German people in comparison with the priest: "they with their iron constitution cannot understand that a priest coming exhausted from the mission need anything else but a piece of dried pork & coffee & to ask it would scandalize them." (4)

The school at St. Joseph's was in operation with its own teacher by the autumn of 1857 with over forty children in attendance. (The school building was not yet completed, so the classes may have met in the church.) The people, however, were somewhat indifferent to the school and Father Brummer had to convince them "by exhortation & through the confessional" to send their children. During the next school year the teacher was shared with the smaller school at Miltonsburg. This teacher was not well liked (Father Brummer

even scolded him for "want of life & energy") and one of the trustees of Wills Creek got him to quit in February, 1859. This upset the pastor, for the children's preparations for First Communion were not yet completed. By August of 1859 these troubles had subsided, the people themselves had engaged a teacher for the new season, and they were finishing the log schoolhouse. The new teacher, who remained but one school year, was Martin Draiss, formerly a seminarian in Germany and at Latrobe, Pa., who was in minor orders. He was very conscientious and hard-working with the children and they responded well to him. Twenty-seven of his pupils received their First Communions at St. Joseph's on May 6, 1860. (5)

Nor did the people always see eye-to-eye with each other. Once a man died who had paid nothing toward construction of the church, the school, or anything else, nor had he rented a pew; neither had his sons done so, and so the people refused to allow him to be buried on Chapel Hill. He had formerly paid a few cents a Miltonsburg, and so was interred there, but not without hot protests from his son. Such were the troubles the priest had to face on his missions, but Father Brummer blamed himself as much as anyone, writing, "If I had the prudence meekness & Sanctity of St. Fr. of Sales I know these things could be prevented."

Father Brummer was replaced as pastor of Fulda by Rev. Damian J. Klueber in the summer of 1860. However, since the people of Wills Creek and Miltonsburg had pledged enough to support their own pastor, Rev. W. Wilkins was sent to them. He took up residence at Miltonsburg but remained less than one year and in April of 1861 these two churches became once again missions of Fulda. In July, 1865 Rev. Nicholas Pilger became pastor at Miltonsburg, with Wills Creek as his mission. His successors in that post were Rev. Edward Fladung (1872-1874), Rev. Joseph Buss (1874-1877), Rev. J. Ritter (1877-1878), and Rev. P. J. Weisenberger (1878-1880). During Father Pilger's tenure Woodsfield St. Sylvester was added as a mission of Miltonsburg. Rev. J. B. Weisinger, who replaced Father Weisenberger in 1881, took up residence in Woodsfield.

During these years we are given only scattered glimpses of Wills Creek. Father Pilger's report to Bishop Rosecrans in 1868 shows that the school was still in operation and had 35 pupils; St. Joseph's then had 170 members. Father Fladung's report for 1872 still exists but from it we learn only that St. Joseph's was over \$700 in debt. The Catholic Telegraph of Sept. 15, 1869 gives us one final view of St. Joseph's in this era:

Sept. 7, Tuesday morning, Solemn High Mass was celebrated in St. Joseph's, Wills Creek, by Rev. N. A. Gallagher, Rev. Messrs. Hahne [Charles Hahne of Dayton St. Emmanuel] and O'Brien [William O'Brien, newly appointed to Beaver], being deacon and subdeacon. After Mass the Rt. Rev. Bishop [Rosecrans] briefly addressed the confirmands who were drenched with rain, and confirmed them, 30 in number.

St. Joseph's church has been greatly improved and is now really a credit to the excellent congregation which always maintains a school although it has no resident priest.

It is said that a little village consisting of a store, a saloon, and a few houses stood near the church. The store, owned and operated by John Haren, was later moved to Woodsfield.(6)

The only priest who ever resided on Chapel Hill was Rev. Ignatius Sagerer (7), who was sent to Monroe County by Bishop Watterson in November of 1883. He was a native of Gottmannsdorf, Diocese of Passau, Germany, where he was born on July 1, 1846. He was ordained at Regensburg on June 11, 1871 and, after serving the Church for only a few years in Germany, he arrived in the United States on July 4, 1876. (8) He was, at this time, a member of the Order of St. John of God. He settled in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in the Diocese of Harrisburg, where his work is described as follows in the centennial history of that diocese:

On October 14, 1877, construction began in Lancaster of the first building of a very ambitious plan for the care of the sick which had been envisioned by Father P. Ignatius Sagerer, a priest of the Order of St. John of God. He planned a building complex with a chapel and two wings, one for the care of men and the other for the care of women. He proposed to bring Brothers of his order to America to care for the men and he hoped to obtain Sisters to care for the women.

The completed building, the hospital for men, was dedicated in honor of St. Joseph and the Brothers of Saint John of God began their work. The project did not prosper and Father Sagerer soon became so heavily burdened with debt that he had to withdraw his Brothers.

The hospital was purchased by a group of Franciscan Sisters in 1883 and it grew into today's St. Joseph Hospital. (9) Father Sagerer, meanwhile, apparently sought and received permission to withdraw from his order and offered his services to Bishop Watterson.

The people of St. Joseph found Father Ignatius, as they came to call him, to be a man of great humility, unassuming piety, and fidelity to his duties as pastor. (10) St. Joseph Parish flourished under his leadership. He appears to have lived at Miltonsburg for a short time until a rectory was built for him at Chapel Hill, just northeast of the church. In 1887 he obtained from Adam Weisend and Casper Biedenbach two small parcels of land to square off the back of the cemetery and to align the property with the road in front of the rectory. (11) By 1891 the parish had a Sodality of the Blessed Virgin (31 members), a Confraternity of the Most Holy Rosary (73 members), and a St. Anna Society (39 members). Father Sagerer also took care of Miltonsburg St. John the Baptist as a mission. In the parish and mission together there were 506 souls in ninety families, slightly more than half of them members of St. Joseph Parish. (12)

Father Sagerer also saw to the development of the parish school, although one does not quite know what to make of the succession of religious orders who worked there. About 1885 he obtained the services of two Sisters of St. Francis for the school. In 1887 these were replaced by two Sisters of Divine Providence from Pittsburgh, Pa. That fall there were 89 children enrolled in the school, the highest number reported in the 19th century. (The parish had only four boys and one girl attending the public school.) In 1889 the old log schoolhouse was replaced by a small frame building which contained both school and convent. In 1891 three Sisters of St. Francis from St. Francis, Milwaukee, Wisconsin came to teach at the school while four other sisters of their order were assigned to replace lay teachers at Miltonsburg and Woodsfield. They stayed at Wills Creek only one year and were in turn replaced by three Sisters of the Precious Blood from Maria Stein, Ohio. In the fall of 1894 these sisters withdrew from Wills Creek (although some remained at Miltonsburg) and

their place was taken again by two or three Sisters of St. Francis from Milwaukee, whose superior in the tiny convent was Sr. M. Ottilie. These were the last sisters to teach in the school on Chapel Hill. (13)

In 1893 it was decided to move the parish facilities south just over a mile into the valley of the South Fork of Wills Creek, in Summit Township. There were about as many Catholic farm families in the valley as there were on the hills near the Chapel Hill site. A narrow gauge railroad had been built along the valley by the Ohio River and Western Railroad which connected with Caldwell and Zanesville to the west and with Woodsfield and the Ohio River to the east. The new site was a stop on this railroad known as Burkhart Station, where there were a general store, a post office, and an express office. Interestingly, Rev. Louis Grimmer of Harrietsville, some fifteen miles away in Noble County, had reported in 1872 that he visited four families at Burghart Station, Monroe County once each six weeks, while at the same time Chapel Hill was a mission of Father Fladung of Miltonsburg. Such was the relative ease of railroad travel in those days of horses and carriages that Father Grimmer was able to serve this nucleus a the new parish site more easily than Father Fladung was.

Property was obtained from the Burkharts in 1893 and that year the cornerstone of the new brick Church of St. Joseph was laid. The church was completed in 1894 and the old frame church on the hill was razed. In 1895, the rectory and the convent were both carefully dismantled, moved to the new site, and re-erected, the rectory to the north and the convent to the south of the new church.

Meanwhile, Miltonsburg remained a mission under Father Sagerer's care. Construction of the present stone church of St. John the Baptist to replace the original brick structure was begun during Father Sagerer's pastorate. He was relieved of this mission early in 1902, however, and the church was completed under the new pastor, Rev. Tibertius Goebel.

Father Sagerer remained as pastor of St. Joseph Parish until the end of 1904, completing twenty-one years of service there. In 1904 he became painfully ill and went to Mt. Carmel Hospital in Columbus. His illness was diagnosed as cancer of the stomach. He was moved to St. Anthony's Hospital, where he spent his remaining months. He resigned his pastorate and his replacement, Rev. Joseph Schmidt, arrived at Burkhart on Christmas Day, 1904. After bearing his intense suffering "with the fortitude and patience of a martyr," Father Sagerer passed away on Holy Saturday, April 22, 1905, "perfectly resigned to the will of God." (14) It had been his wish to die during Holy Week, and as, on Good Friday, he realized the end was near, he rejoiced that his wish would be granted.

Bishop Hartley, Father Leyden, and a Mr. Meyers of Monroe County, a close friend of Father Sagerer, accompanied the remains to Burkhart on the railroads. The Ohio and Western allowed the train to stop at the rear of the church, where the casket was met by Father Schmidt and a delegation of parishioners. The church was thronged for the funeral by both Catholics and non-Catholics; over one hundred had to stand outside. At Father Sagerer's request, his grave was dug between the church and the convent, close to the entrance, where the people could see it and offer up prayers for him as they passed.

Father Sagerer had no close relatives living and so he left all that he owned to the Church and to charitable organizations. He left some money to the parish to pay for the altars of the new church and some to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. He also had a number of handsome paintings, of which he left some to St. Anthony's Hospital and some to the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. A collection of choice relics, all authenticated, together with a piece of the True Cross in a beautiful reliquary, he presented to Bishop Hartley. (15)

In 1906 a new cemetery for St. Joseph Parish was laid out south of the old convent, the first interment there being that of Josephine Nauer who died that November 22. Father Sagerer's grave was moved to the center of this new cemetery and is marked by a large crucifix. The old parish cemetery, which is still carefully maintained by the faithful people of St. Joseph's, is all that now remains at Chapel Hill.

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#### NOTES

1. Brummer to Purcell, Jan. 21, 1854.
2. Brummer to Purcell, Aug. 1, 1854.
3. same to same, Feb., 2, 1857.
4. same to same, Apr. 2, 1859; Oct. 4, 1859; and Nov. 3, 1858.
5. same to same, Nov. 15, 1859 and May 8, 1860.  
(The above letters courtesy of the Notre Dame University Archives.)
6. Mrs. Helen Ludwig to H. E. Mattingly, Mar. 21, 1983.
7. The spelling of Sagerer would indicate that the first vowel should be a long German "a", rhyming with "Pa" or "Ma". However, many of the people of Burkhart pronounce it "say" with a long English "a." This pronunciation is supported by the listings in the annual Catholic Directory while Father Sagerer was in Pennsylvania, where his name is given as "Saegerer."
8. A Directory of German Roman Catholic Clergy in the United States; Cincinnati: 1892. The Ohio portion was translated and published in The Palatine Immigrant, Vol. XII No. 2 (1987), pp. 72-86.
9. Diocese of Harrisburg: 1868-1968 (the official diocesan centennial history), page 187. Monsignor Mattingly in his article "Priests in Southeastern Ohio in the 19th Century" (see the Bulletin, Vol. IV, page 314), listed Father Sagerer at St. Nicholas, Coshocton Co., in 1879. This listing is not in the directory as printed. A few years after 1879, probably about 1883 or 1884, Bishop Watterson or some other official of the diocese marked up the then out-of-date 1879 directory and pencilled in Father Sagerer's name above the Wills Creek St. Joseph's line, on the line with Wills Creek St. Nicholas. Monsignor Mattingly apparently thought that this was current for 1879 when compiling his list.
10. Catholic Columbian, Apr. 29, 1905.
11. Plat book, Archives, Diocese of Columbus.
12. Report to Bishop Watterson, year ended July 1, 1891; Archives, Diocese of Columbus.
13. Based largely on the annual Catholic Directory. Also, Father Sagerer's report to Bishop Watterson for the year ending Aug. 1, 1887; and Hartley's history, page 558. The first sisters may have been from the Franciscan community at Rochester, Minn., as were those at Woodsfield a few years later.
14. Hartley's history has Nov. 22, 1905; the parish record says April 2, 1905; the correct date is supplied by the Catholic Columbian.
15. Catholic Columbian, April 29, 1905.

Chapel Hill Cemetery, Seneca Township, Monroe County

These are the oldest tombstones that are still legible in the Chapel Hill Cemetery. Generally, those dated earlier than about 1880 were copied.

Karl H., son of -----

Dominic Becker, died Apr. 4, 1895, aged 81 years, 7 months, and 25 days.

Anna M., wife of D. Becker, died Mar. 20, 1871, aged 62 years, 8 months, and 20 days.

Antoneus son of C. & T. Biedenbach, died Mar. 19, 1879, aged 7 months and 27 days.

Katharina, Tochter von Franz und Anna Biedenbach, gestorben den 6 Nov. 1880, Alter 1 Jahre 3 Monaten 27 Tage.

Hier ruht Caspar Biedenbach, geboren 20 Mai 1820 zu Kirchhassel Kreis Lunefelt, Provenz Hessen Nassau, Pruessen, gestorben am 2 März, 1897.

Franz, son of ----- Biedenbach, .... 1880

Sacred to the memory of Anna, daughter of John H. and Mary Jefferis, wife of Francis Biedenbach, died Nov. 6, 1880, aged 22 years and 10 days.

Elisabeth, Tochter von ---- Birkenbach [Biedenbach?], born Sept. 13, 1866, died Feb. 9, 1867, age 4 months 26 days (in German)

Barbara Keller, Ehefrau von Joseph Birkenbach, geb. 13 Feb., 1828, gest. 21 Sept. 1862, Alter 34 Jahren, 7 Monaten, und 6 [or 16] Tage.

Margaret Brister, died Feb. 26, 1881, aged 76 years, 1 month, and 18 days.

Joseph, son of John and Barbara Burkhart, born June 3, 1861, died March --, 1862.

George Burkhart, died Mar. --, 1857 (?)

Thomas Burkhart, born 8 June, 1813, died 12 Aug. 1879, aged 66 years, 2 months, and 4 days.

Marie Magdalena Burkhart, 1815 - 1876

Philip Burkhart, 11 May, 1813 - 25 Aug., 1879, age 66 years, 3 months, 3 days.

Elisabetha Burkhart, geb. 10 Dec. 1791, gest. 10 Nov. 1875, age 80 years 11 mos.

Katharine, daughter of F.J. & M. Burkhart, born and died 6 July, 1869, age two hours (minutes?)

Anna M., daughter of J. & K. Burkhart, died Jan. 21, 1871, age 4 years, 4 months, and 12 days.

Thos. Philip Sohn von S. und C. Burkhart, geb. Aug. 21, 1873, gest. Sept. 7, 1873.

Elizabeth, wife of Martin Burkhart, died Mar. 12, 1862, in the 71st (?) year of her age.

Martha M., Tochter von J. Joseph und M. Burkhart, died Aug. 28, 1865, alter 1 year, 19 months [!] and 2 days.

Barbara Birckhard, Ehefrau von Johann Nieobido (??) ---- [broken]

Anna Mary, wife of Valentine Burkhart, [The remainder is now illegible but an old reading says: died Mar. 17, 1855, age 58 years].

[Wendelinus Burkhart, died Jan. 4, ] 1879, aged 79 years.

Martin Burkhart, died June 18, 1873, aged 86 years, 6 mos., and 13 days.

Katharine, daughter of Joseph and ----- Burkhart, born March 7, 1877 (?), died May --, 1884 (?)

Anna December, died March 27, 1885, aged 85 years.

John December, died March 25, 1895, aged 85 years.

Balthaser, son of Peter and Catherine December, born in Baiern, gest. Mar. 24, 1857.

Peter Fournier, born Feb. 20, 1822, died Feb. 1, 1863 (?)

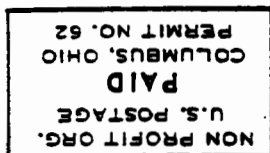
John Jantz, July 1, 1796 - May 7, 1876  
 Christina Jantz, Sept. 30, 1813 - Mar. 24, 1869  
 George Nauer, died Apr. 10, 1890, aged 73 years 1 month.  
 Joseph, son of G. & J. Nauer, died Oct. 27, 1886, aged 23 years, 5 months, and 15 days.  
 Anna Maria Nauer, [illegible, but an earlier reading has: died 1877, age 57 years 2 days].  
 Philip, son of P. and A. M. Schenk, born Dec. 6, 1863, died Feb. 19, 1865, age 1 year, 2 months, 13 days.  
 Johann Scherman, geboren 22 April 1822, gest. den 1 March 1885, Alter 60 Jahren, 10 Monaten, und 15 Tage.  
 Simon E. Spangler, born June 11, 1843, died Apr. 6, 1864, rest in peace.  
 John A. Ulrich, died Aug. 23, 1856, in the 79th year of his age.  
 Franz Ulrich, geb. in Weingarten, Land ----, Koenigreich Baiern, 15 July, 1809 (?), died 9 March 1875, age 66 Jahren, 7 Monaten, und 24 Tage.  
 In memory of John L. Weisent, who was born May 7, 1784, died Mar. 17, 1849.  
 Michael Weisent, died Apr. 11, 1890, aged 70 years.  
 Barbara Weisent, died Sept. 20, 1909, aged 90 years.  
 John, son of M. & B. Weisent, died Apr. 4, 1855, aged 5 years, 5 months, and 4 days.  
 Katharina, Ehefrau von ----- Weisent, geb. in Bhemhangen (?) --- ---- am 6 Feb. 1813 (?), gest. am 23 Jan. (?), 1858, Alter 74 Jahre, 11 Monate, und 24 Tage.  
 Georg M. Weisent, gestorben Feb. 25, 1884, alter 60 Jahren, 3 Monaten, 13 Tage.  
 Catherine Zwick, daughter of Mick Zwick and Catherine Burkhart, born Sept. 15, 1853, died Nov. 1, 1857.  
 Michael, son of Michael and Katharina Zwick, died Sept. 12, 1860, age 2 hours [in German]

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 ACQUISITIONS FOR THE SOCIETY'S LIBRARY

We have purchased a series of books recently published by Barbara Brady O'Keefe which reprint from the Records of the American Catholic Historical Society and other sources the following sacramental and death registers from Pennsylvania:

- Greensburg, Pa. baptisms 1799-1818; marriages 1800-1818; burials 1804-1819.
- Lancaster, Pa. St. Mary registers, 1787-1804.
- Philadelphia St. Joseph: baptisms 1758-1781 and 1791-1810; marriages 1758-1786 and 1799-1808 and 1826-1836.
- Philadelphia St. Augustine baptisms 1801-1839 and marriages 1801-1838.
- Philadelphia St. Mary cemetery tombstone inscriptions.
- Philadelphia Holy Trinity baptisms 1803-1806 and marriages 1796-1803.
- Donegal or Buffalo Creek baptisms 1803, 1805, and 1812 and burials.
- Loretto, Pa. various records.

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