

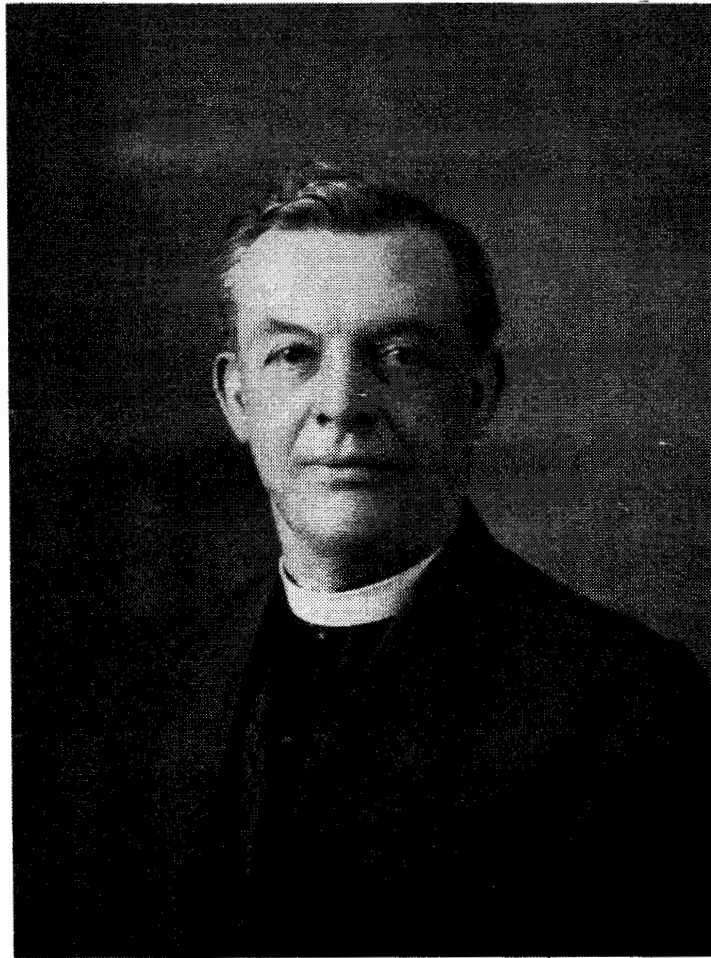


Barquilla de la Santa Maria

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Rev. John B. Eis (1845-1922)

The Diocesan Archives contain files concerning almost all of the deceased priests of the Diocese, but, strangely, contain not a scrap of paper in a file for Rev. John B. Eis, who was pastor of Sacred Heart parish in Columbus for nearly fifty years. Rev. Michael Donovan recently came upon a packet of papers concerning this interesting man, which he sent over to the Society. Working from the base provided by these papers, an extensive and interesting biographical sketch of Father Eis has been developed, which begins in this issue of the Bulletin. The papers will be placed in the Diocesan Archives. The photograph of Father Eis was provided by Sacred Heart parish.

REV. JOHN B. EIS
INTRACTABLE RECTOR OF COLUMBUS SACRED HEART

by Donald M. Schlegel

The headline in the Ohio State Journal boldly proclaimed the news: "REV. EIS BUILDING MISSION PARISH. Ground is Broken for St. Anthony's to Be Branch of Sacred Heart Parish." The article continued in the same confident tone:

Father John B. Eis of Sacred Heart church is planning to establish a mission of his parish in North Columbus.

He has purchased thirteen lots in Patterson Avenue abutting on Adams avenue, between High and Summit streets, and has ordered building material from St. Louis.

Father Eis says that nearly 500 of the 2000 members of Sacred Heart parish live between North Columbus and Clintonville, and the new location will be very convenient for them. He will ask the bishop to christen the mission "St. Anthony's."

Ground Already Broken

The Sunday school room will be finished this fall, and the auditorium proper will be added next spring. The school part will be 60 by 30 feet. The buildings will be modeled after Sacred Heart church. A force of men is already breaking ground.

Twenty-five years ago Father Eis established Sacred Heart church in what was then a wilderness, and at present he has one of the most flourishing parishes in the diocese.

On June 13, 1903 Father Eis had successfully bid \$1,068.00 for the site of new parish facilities at a sheriff's sale. The thirteen lots (nos. 136-148) had been the property of Charles R. Cornell. The site measured some 403 feet east along Patterson avenue and 153 feet south along Adams. (1)

When the above article was published, Bishop Henry Moeller of Columbus had been named Coadjuter of Archbishop Elder of Cincinnati and the Diocese of Columbus was for the second time under the administration of Rev. Msgr. Francis X. Specht, who was pastor of St. Mary's parish in Columbus and Vicar General of the diocese. (Monsignor Specht had served in the same capacity after the death of Bishop Watterson, before the installation of Bishop Moeller.) Upon seeing the notice in the Journal, Monsignor Specht immediately sent a registered letter from the Cathedral to Father Eis, stating that he had "learned, that you have started a new parish. Please let me know by next Friday whether or not there is truth in the statement, so that I will be enabled to report to my superiors."

Father Eis responded on the same day, September 14, 1903 in the following words:

You may report to your superiors that I have not started a new parish. Before I do such a thing, I will wait till we have another Bishop.

The fact is that I own personally some land in the Northern part of Columbus on which I dug a well and a hole for a water closet.

Whether or not a new parish will be started there in the future will entirely depend on the next Bishop and my own good will.

If Father Eis had actually ordered building material and had planned to build immediately, the query from Monsignor Specht put a halt to the process. There the matter rested, as far as the Diocese was concerned, but on September 26 Father Eis in his personal capacity purchased four additional lots at another sheriff's sale for \$535.00. This site, on the northeast corner of Adams and Patterson, measured 123 by 133 feet. (2)

The "next Bishop," on whom the new parish in northern Columbus would depend, was Most Rev. James J. Hartley, D.D. Since 1885 Father Hartley had served as the first pastor of Holy Name parish in Steubenville, in a situation apparently filled with mutual affection, respect, and cooperation between pastor and flock. Father Hartley was appointed to the See of Columbus on December 10, 1903; he was consecrated in his own Holy Name church in Steubenville on February 25, 1904, and was installed in St. Joseph Cathedral on March 1.

For a year Bishop Hartley made no major changes in the Diocese, but in 1905 he began making new appointments and forming new parishes. As the very first of these, he apparently reviewed Father Eis' actions regarding the northern part of Sacred Heart parish and found his judgement to have been sound. On May 3, 1905 he appointed Rev. William McDermot as pastor of the new parish. On May 10 the Bishop purchased all of the lots at Adams and Patterson from Father Eis for \$3,000.00. On the following day Father McDermot signed a note acknowledging the \$3,000 debt of the new parish to the Bishop for the property. (3) This note is the earliest original document found showing Bishop Hartley's one disagreement with Father Eis' earlier thoughts on the new parish: it was not to be named for St. Anthony but in honor of the Holy Name of Jesus, no doubt in memory of the Bishop's former parish in Steubenville. On the lots originally purchased by Father Eis, a combination church and school building and a rectory were erected.

How seriously had Father Eis considered starting a "new parish" without the approval of the ecclesiastical authorities? In all probability the newspaper report was exaggerated, but Monsignor Specht's hurried inquiry indicates that he may have mistrusted Father Eis enough to have taken the report seriously. In fact, as will be shown below, Father Eis had been at odds with the diocesan administration for some years; the incident of the "new parish" was just the latest and perhaps most public symptom of the mistrust which had built up over a period of twenty-five years.

The Early Years of Father Eis

Three sources of information on the early days of Father Eis, before he came to Columbus, have been found: an account in the Centennial Biographical History of Columbus, published in 1901 (4); the notice in the Catholic Columbian at the time of his death (5); and Bishop Hartley's sermon at Father Eis' funeral, which was based on the information "he himself gave to be recorded in the official annals of the Diocese." (6) Unfortunately, the latter seems to have been lost many years ago. These sources of course do not answer every question, but they give a good idea of the priest's education and early experiences.

John Baptist Eis was born on October 10, 1845 near the city of Trier in the German state of Rheinprovinz or Rhineland. He was educated in the local parish school and at an early age, apparently about thirteen years, he left his home to further his education at the seminary in Blois, France. He remained there for seven years and then spent a year at the University of Münster, Westphalia.

About the year 1865 or 1866 he joined the household of the Duke of Asuna, "the first grandee of Spain." The Duke was Spanish ambassador to Russia and with him the later Father Eis travelled to St. Petersburg and widely throughout that country. At the age of about 21, while in this service, he was given the responsibility of teaching eleven-year-old Prince Alexander of Solms-Braunfels, which task he carried out for four years. This prince was closely related to William Hohenzollern, the first Emperor of Germany, his grandmother having been a sister of the Emperor's mother. (7)

In 1870 he returned to the city of Blois, where he was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Charbonal of that Diocese on June 29. Just twenty days later the Franco-Prussian War broke out and the new priest was commissioned a chaplain, apparently in the German army. (His native city of Trier by this time had been absorbed by Prussia.) He had spiritual charge of some sixty-eight hundred men and took some part in the battle of Sedan. He was released from the military after six months' service.

After the war, Father Eis expected to find a position at one of the German universities, "but he found the doors of all the universities closed to him because he had been ordained by a French bishop." He was welcomed back by Bishop Charbonal, however, who found a place for him as teacher of history at the seminary in Blois. His position there he soon found to be an embarrassment to the seminary, for the local populace knew he was a German citizen and, perhaps, knew that he had served against them in the late war. To avoid causing trouble for the seminary and for his patron, he determined upon emigrating to the United States, in the year 1872.

Father Eis already had friends in this country and he had a cousin living in Michigan. (This was Rev. Frederick Eis, who was born in 1843 in Arbach, Diocese of Trier; was ordained to the priesthood in 1870 in Marquette, Michigan; and was consecrated Bishop of Sault Ste. Marie and Marquette in 1899.) Father Eis served for a short time under Bishop Conroy in the Diocese of Albany and then came to Ohio, arriving in Columbus on April 9, 1873.

His education and experience made Father Eis a valuable addition to the priestly ranks of the Diocese of Columbus. His scholarly knowledge of Hebrew, Latin, and Greek allowed him to read the wisdom of the ages, while his proficiency in speaking French, Spanish, English, and German, together with a passing familiarity with other languages, allowed him to use this wisdom in dealing with the immigrant Catholic population of Columbus. His military experience seems to have enhanced a methodical frame of mind, which will be seen in the financial dealings to be examined below.

Father Eis got along quite well with Bishop Rosecrans, who appointed him to assist Father Hemsteger at Holy Cross parish in Columbus, and he entered wholeheartedly into the efforts of the Bishop in developing the still-new diocese. He took part in the second Synod of the diocese in 1873 and he

assisted in the consecration of Mt. Calvary Cemetery in 1874. It was about this time, and certainly before the year 1877, that Bishop Rosecrans appointed Father Eis to be his secretary. The notice in the Centennial Biographical History places this appointment even before his commission to build Sacred Heart.

In the fall of 1875 a group of four Franciscan Sisters arrived in the Diocese to take charge of St. Vincent Orphanage in Columbus. When they arrived, Bishop Rosecrans asked them to consider taking over St. Eugene's, a school near New Lexington on which construction had been started some time before, but which had never been completed. Upon visiting the site, they were greatly discouraged by the location and the condition of the building. Father Schmidt at Lancaster agreed that there was no use whatever in opening a school there and the sisters voted to give up the project. At this point, Father Eis, apparently as Secretary to the Bishop, stepped into the discussion. He felt positive that a success could be made of the school and was determined to see the school completed; he offered to go to New Lexington periodically to supervise matters. Bishop Rosecrans agreed with Father Eis' judgement and the project continued. After many struggles, the building was occupied in June of 1876 and shortly thereafter, to ease the sisters' burdens, Father Eis went to New Lexington and announced that he would be responsible for the debts owed by the sisters for the school. He then asked for and received all the claims, which were repaid to him by the sisters many years later. The school was re-named and became famous as St. Aloysius Academy. (8)

On May 27, 1875 Bishop Rosecrans commissioned Father Eis to build the new Sacred Heart parish in Columbus and within a year he had the task well in hand. A school was built on the property donated by William Phelan, facing Hamlet Street, under the supervision of John Harding, with a hall large enough to be used as a church. Father Eis later characterized this brick building as having "whole lumberyards in it." The first Mass was sung there on Easter Sunday, April 16, 1876 and it was dedicated by Father Hemsteger in the absence of the Bishop. The school was opened on April 19, under the care of the same Franciscan Sisters who had charge of St. Vincent's Orphanage and St. Aloysius Academy. A rectory was added on the south end of the building in 1877 and a convent on the north end in 1886. (9)

The majority of the members of the new parish spoke English, and Father Eis can correctly be called the first German pastor of an English-speaking parish in the city, but other members spoke French or German and he could instruct them all, each in his own language. It was no small task to unite the many elements which formed the parish. The boundaries of the parish stretched from the railroad tracks passing through the old Union Station north to the county line.

[To be continued]

NOTES

- (1) Franklin County Deed Record 374/152.
- (2) ibid, 376/268.
- (3) Bishop Hartley, letter book I/233. Diocesan Archives.
- (4) Centennial Biographical History of the City of Columbus and Franklin County, Ohio; Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1901; pp 449-450.
- (5) Catholic Columbian, December 15, 1922, p. 1.

- (6) Diocesan Archives.
 (7) The Columbian article cited above calls the prince a nephew of the Emperor. The exact relationship and the Prince's identity were determined with the help of Betty Thurn and a copy of the 1914 edition of Almanach de Gotha, courtesy of the State Library of Ohio.
 (8) Bulletin, Vol. 9, pp. 267-272.
 (9) Columbus Citizen, June 28, 1957; Catholic Columbian, Nov. 23, 1923; etc.

ST. JOSEPH CHURCH
 NEAR SOMERSET, PERRY COUNTY
 BURIAL REGISTER, 1815-1873

(Continued from Vol. XI, Number 10)

[1857, continued]

- Apr. 21 Elizabeth Zahm died in her house. Albert Bokel
 Apr. 25 Marianna Zahm, age 25. Albert Bokel
 May 21 Henry Sanderson, age 54. Albert Bokel
 June 9 Infant of Anthony Suiter, age 5 months. Albert Bokel
 June 14 [blank] Riffel died in his (her?) house, age 67. Albert Bokel
 Aug. 26 Daniel McChristle died in his house, age 33. Albert Bokel
 Dec. 12 John Gallaher died, age 29, buried at St. Joseph on Dec. 14. P.V. Keogh
 Dec. 25 Thomas Crossin died in his house, age 17, buried at St. Joseph on Dec. 27. P.V. Keogh

1858

- Feb. 4 I buried at St. Joseph Simeon Concannon, died Feb. 3 in his father's house, age 28 years, after receiving conditional baptism [etc.] Fr. S. Ludovicus de Stchoulepnikoff
 Feb. 10 Maregaret McFaden died in her house, age about one hundred years, buried at St. Joseph on the 11th. Stchoulepnikoff
 Aug. 11 Anna McNulty died at her father's house, age 20 years, 6 months, 11 days. Fr. F. J. Dunn

[next page blank]

1863

- Jan. 4 Catherine Crossin was buried, who died in her house Jan. 2, age 83. Fr. M. D. Lilly
 Jan. 16 ---- Croghan died in his house, buried at St. Joseph on the 18th. M. D. Lilly
 Jan. 11 Martina Wellon died, age 4 years. M. D. Lilly
 Jan. 23 Margaret (?) Wellon died, buried on the 25th in Somerset. M. D. Lilly
 Feb. 4 John Crossin died, age 9, buried at St. Joseph on the 6th. M. D. Lilly
 Feb. 8 Maria Crossin died, age 7, buried at St. Joseph on the 10th. M. D. Lilly
 Feb. -- [no date] Thomas Crosson, age 5.
 Feb. -- [no date] Clara Crosson, age 3.
 Mar. -- [no date] Susan Crosson, age 1, buried at St. Joseph.

[The following three records apparently are from the winter of 1865 and spring of 1866. Father Sheehy signed the baptismal register at St. Joseph's from September 1865 until September 1868.]

Dec. 28 Mrs. Sterner, age seventy. J. D. Sheehy
Nov. 3 Mrs. Gallagher, age fifty. J. D. Sheehy
Apr. 6 Maria Brady, age 43. J. D. Sheehy

1866

Feb. 3 Maria Kintz was buried, age 9 months. J. D. Sheehy
Apr. 11 Michael McKenna [McKinney or McKenney] was buried, age 81. J. D. Sheehy
May 1 Thomas M'Kuen was buried, age 22 years 30 days. J. D. Sheehy
May 21 Michael Brady died, age 83. J. D. Sheehy
May 30 Ellen Brien died. J. D. Sheehy
June 21 Miles Cluney died, age 87. J. D. Sheehy
June 29 Dennis McGonigle died, age 85. J. D. Sheehy
Aug. 23 Emanuel Crosson died, age 85. J. D. Sheehy
--- 26 Mrs. J, Dittoe died, age 26. Sheehy [no month given]

1867

Jan. 19 Jacob [James?] Flowers died, age 100. J. D. Sheehy
Mar. 8 Mrs. S. C. Miller died, age 67. J. D. Sheehy
Apr? 26 Ed Crosson died, age 23. J. D. Sheehy
Aug. 13 James William Eckenrode died, age one month. J. D. Sheehy
Sept. 29 Jacob Wonnemacker died, age 12. J. D. Sheehy
Nov. 1 Mrs. Blotsuccer died, age 66. J. D. Sheehy
Nov. 24 Rosalia Slevin died, age 4 months. J. D. Sheehy

1868

Jan. 12 Infant of A. Decot and Cat. Stalter died. J. D. Sheehy
Feb. 14 James Stalter died, age 22. J. D. Sheehy
Feb. 20 James Brown died, age 89. J. D. Sheehy
Feb. 20 Mrs. Michael M'Kenna [McKinney or McKenney] died, age about 80. J. D. Sheehy
Mar. 9 William M'Fadden died, age 78. J. D. Sheehy
Mar. 22 Margaret M'Ardle died, age about 26. J. D. Sheehy
Apr. 19 Mrs. Mary Eckenrode died, age 30. J. D. Sheehy
Apr. 24 Mrs. M'Barn died, age 91. J. D. Sheehy
Aug. 17 Pius Edward Stalter died, age 3 years, 7 months, 10 days. J. D. Sheehy
Sept. 3 Emily Jane Scallon died, age 10 years 3 months. J. D. Sheehy
Oct. 8 Mrs. Jon. Bringardner died, age about 90. J. D. Sheehy
Oct. 28 John Ward died, age 65. F. J. Dunn, O.P.
Dec. 4 Patrick Lynch died, age 75. F. J. Dunn

[1869]

Mar. 10 Mrs. Lynus Dittoe died, age 45. [In Fr. Sheehy's hand]
Apr. 24 Agnes Dittoe died, age 22. "
Sept. 22 Catherine Flowers died, age 21 [?].
Oct. 24 Patia Dolan died, age 22.
Nov. 10 Pat Donnelly died, age 59.

1870

Jan. 17 Mrs. O'Brien died, age 70.

Mar. 13 Elenor [?] Donnelly died, age 13.
 Mar. 15 Edward Slevin died, age 84.
 June 19 Philip Gainer died, age 87. J. D. Sheehy
 July 12 James Sweeney died, age 67. J. M. Heaney
 July 18 Pat Farley died, age 27.
 Sept. 27 Margaret San--- died, age 1 day.
 Nov. 1 Mrs. J. Dittoe died, age 22 years.
 Nov. 11 Joseph Fink died, age 80.
 Nov. 17 Michael Crosson died, age 51.
 Nov. 28 Philip M'Ardel died, age 11 months.
 Dec. 5 Thomas Horahan died, age 83.
 Dec. 9 Infant of David Fink died.

July 31 [1871?] Ellen Cecilia Muter died, age 8 years.

1872

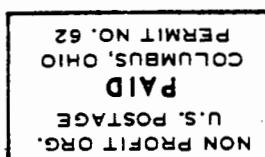
Feb. 11 Michael McTirenan died, age 71 years. Fr. J. H. Lynch, O.P.
 Sept. 15, 1871 Joshua Green died, age 76 years. J. H. Lynch
 June 11 [1872?] George M. Wellan died, age 19 years. J. A. Bokel
 Oct. 26 [1872] George H. V. Bratz died, age 2 years. J. A. Bokel
 Oct. 30 Emily Eckenrod died, age 22 years. J. A. Bokel
 Dec. -- [blank] Infant of N. Cody died (New Lexington), age 2 years. J. A. Bokel
 Dec. 26 Maria Eckenrod died, after a pious and exemplary life, aged 60 years. J. A. Bokel

1873

Jan. 7 Margaret Robinson died, age 30 years (from New Lexington). J. A. Bokel
 Mar. 3 Bridget M'Ginly died, age 80 years. J. A. Bokel
 Apr. -- [blank] Charles Michael Metzger died, age 1 month. J. A. Bokel
 Sept. 1 Catherine Crossin died in her house, age 25 years. J. A. Bokel
 Sept. 2 Winfrida Fink died in her house, age 16 years. She was a pious and good girl. J. A. Bokel
 Sept. 6 Magdalen Kelly (formerly Carr) died in her house, age 71 years. J. A. Bokel
 Sept. 18 Francis Gallagher (Tertiary) died in the convent of St. Joseph, age 63 years. J. A. Bokel
 Oct. 3 Maria Scherschel (formerly Hever) died in her house (Logan), age 25 years. J. A. Bokel
 Oct. 14 James J. Green died in his house, age 1 year 5 months. Fr. S. Collins, O.P.

[This completes the record of the old cemetery.]

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