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# The Foundation of St. Ann's Parish, 1866-1870: The African-American Experience in Cincinnati

Joseph H. Lackner, S.M.

**L**ike most people, those who first established St. Ann's Colored Church in Cincinnati in 1866 were soon forgotten once they died. Even though their stories were rich in human struggle and emotion and had made it possible for others to follow after them, their lives were not thought significant enough to be repeated in standard histories. Anonymity was their fate, except for an occasional obituary, a small notice in a local paper, a few scattered letters, or a mention in church or civil records. Yet, these meager sources can render some suggestion of their lives. The intent of this essay is to draw from these resources a tentative sketch of some of the founders of St. Ann's parish and school and thereby provide an example of how one can use such materials to catch a glimpse of the ordinary life of parishioners.

## Among the First of African American Catholic Churches

St. Ann's Colored Church, Cincinnati, which held liturgical services for the first time on July 6, 1866, was the third Catholic parish in the United States to be exclusively dedicated for service to African Americans.<sup>1</sup> It was preceded by St. Francis Xavier Church, Baltimore, established on February 21, 1864, and Blessed Martin de Porres Chapel, opened in Washington, D.C., on February 11, 1866.<sup>2</sup> Only three more black parishes were founded by 1871, the year the first

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1. "Church for Colored Persons," *Catholic Telegraph*, 18 April 1866; "Peter Claver School Society," *Catholic Telegraph*, 16 September 1866; *Diamond Jubilee of St. Edward Church* and the *Annals of St. Ann Mission* (Cincinnati: n.p., 1940), 6. For information on the creation of St. Ann's parish see: Joseph H. Lackner, S.M., "St. Ann's Colored Church and School, Cincinnati, the Indian and Negro Collection for the United States, and Reverend Francis Xavier Weninger, S.J.," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 7(1988): 145-156.

2. Peter E. Hogan, "Catholic Missionary Efforts for the Negro Before the Coming of the Josephites," (unpublished paper, 1947): 26, 37. Obviously, as Hogan chronicles, there were many adjunct chapels and the like established to serve African Americans before these permanent, separate churches were founded.

four priests of the Mill Hill Missionaries arrived from London to work among African Americans in the United States.<sup>3</sup> And by 1893, the year that the St. Joseph's Society of the Sacred Heart (Josephites) was established as an American Catholic congregation of priests and Brothers independent of the Mill Hill Missionaries and dedicated to ministry among African Americans, the number of black Catholic churches was not more than twenty.<sup>4</sup>

This simple review of history highlights St. Ann's exceptional status as a Catholic parish in the United States. But the community's existence is that much more remarkable when seen in the context of Cincinnati's population. In 1860 Cincinnati had an African-American population of 3,731, representing 2.3% of the total population of 161,044.<sup>5</sup> By 1870 the black population had grown to 5,896 or 2.7% of the city's total population of 216,239.<sup>6</sup> But of these African Americans very few were Catholic.<sup>7</sup> The situation in Cincinnati, then, was quite different from that in southern cities such as Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and New Orleans, which had significant African-American Catholic populations.<sup>8</sup>

Also, Cincinnati, like other cities in Ohio, was racist. In 1867, when the General Assembly of Ohio decided to place an amendment in favor of Negro suffrage before the electorate, Hamilton County, in which Cincinnati is located, rejected the matter by a vote of 20,796 to 16,119.<sup>9</sup> And throughout the 1860s many acts of violence and prejudice against African Americans in Cincinnati were perpetrated, often by the Irish.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, in view of the very

3. John T. Gillard, *The Catholic Church and the American Negro* (Baltimore: St. Joseph's Society Press, 1929), 39.

4. *Ibid.*, 42.

5. Lyle Koehler, "Cincinnati's Black Peoples: A Chronology and Bibliography" (Cincinnati: The Institute for Policy Research at the University of Cincinnati for the Arts Consortium, 1983), 53.

6. David Gerber, *Black Ohio and the Color Line, 1860 - 1915* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 274; Koehler, 63.

7. It is only in 1900 that data are available by race for all the denominations with which Ohio blacks were affiliated. Gerber holds that of the 27,723 blacks then affiliated with churches, 93% were registered with specifically black churches or integrated denominations (the Disciples of Christ, the Wesleyan Methodists, and the Methodist Episcopal Church, North) while "most of the remaining 7 percent of black affiliates were found among Episcopalians, with a small number scattered among Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Roman Catholics, and Unitarians." Gerber, 143. See also: Koehler, 70.

8. For example, it has been estimated that at the time of emancipation there were 16,000 black Catholics living in Maryland. Gillard, 88.

9. Frank U. Quillan, *The Color Line in Ohio* (Michigan University, 1913; reprinted., New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 98-102; see also: Leonard Harding, "The Negro in Cincinnati, 1860-1870: A Demographic Study of a Transitional Decade" (M.A. thesis, University of Cincinnati, 1967), 56.

10. Koehler, 56-63. The Cincinnati Enquirer vented this racist attitude with the comment, "Slavery is dead, the negro is not, there is the misfortune. For the sake of all parties, would that he were." Cited in Leslie H. Fishel, Jr. "The Negroes in Cincinnati: The Black Experience, 1870-1880" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1953), 70. See also: Leonard Harding, "The Cincinnati Riots of 1862," *Bulletin of The Cincinnati Historical Society* 25 (October 1967): 229-239.

small number of African American Catholics in Cincinnati and in consideration of the racist sentiment among the population, many of whom were traditionally Catholic, the existence of St. Ann's Church is not only exceptional but extraordinary.<sup>11</sup>

## Contributing Factors to the Establishment of St. Ann's

On the other hand, a number of national and local factors helped foster an environment sympathetic to the establishment of St. Ann's Church. To begin with, racial prejudice had driven African-American Protestants to found separate black congregations in the north before the Civil War, and this movement greatly influenced black religious life both in the north and the south after 1865.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the creation of St. Ann's fitted into the pattern of what was generally happening among blacks in Cincinnati and throughout the country. Though often spurred by racial prejudice, still the possession of their own institutions contributed to a sense of autonomy among African Americans.

Also, the foundation of St. Ann's was consistent with the practice of nationality parishes among Catholics. In fact, during the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore, held October 7 to 20, 1866, African-American parishes were compared to those existing among various nationalities, and they were sanctioned if the local situation warranted it.<sup>13</sup> For some bishops at the council, including Martin John Spalding, the Archbishop of Baltimore, ministry to blacks was one of the most urgent issues facing the church. In a letter to Bishop John Timon of Buffalo listing reasons for the council, the archbishop wrote: "I think that it is our most urgent duty to discuss the future status of the negro.

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11. Writing home to his confreres in England, a scholastic [university student] of the Society of Jesus reported threats made against the pastor of St. Ann's: "In Cincinnati, Ours [the Jesuits] raised a subscription, and bought a little place for a Negro church: Fr. Hoecken, an old Indian Missionary, opened it on the 1st of July, with an attendance of twelve negroes. Many are against this "nigger" church; some threatened to set fire to it, others told Fr. Hoecken that they would break the windows. The Irish hate them I hear, because they make work too cheap." "Letter from an English Scholastic," *Letters and Notices* 3(1865-1866): 347.

12. August Meier, *Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1964), 12-16.

13. *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1st ed., s.v. "Baltimore, Councils of," J. Hennesey. Some felt the establishment of separate black parishes ill advised on two scores. First, part of the evangelization program of Catholicism had been the avowal that among Catholics there was no color line. However, the very foundation of separate black parishes could easily be interpreted as a contradiction to the claim. Secondly, a growing movement for the assimilation of Catholics of various ethnic groups tended to oppose any initiative that in any way furthered the model of national parishes. On the other hand, in Cincinnati national parishes were taken for granted. In 1865 there were thirteen Catholic churches within the city limits, divided between English and German speaking. John H. Lamott, *History of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, 1821-1921* (New York: Frederick Pustet Company, Inc., 1921), 332-336.



***St. Ann's church, New Street (Courtesy: Archives of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati)***

Four millions of these unfortunate beings are thrown on our charity, and they silently but eloquently appeal to us for help. We have a golden opportunity to reap a harvest of souls, which, neglected, may not return.”<sup>14</sup>

It was also a continuing concern for Roman officials, about which they reminded the American hierarchy at the council and through the ensuing years.<sup>15</sup> The editor of the *Catholic Telegraph* made a point of this special interest when he announced the establishment of St. Ann's: the “. . . Sovereign Pontiff . . . has directed it [response to African Americans especially in light of emancipation] to be brought up in the

Second Plenary Council, to be convened in Baltimore, next October.”<sup>16</sup> However, the “opportunity” mentioned by Spalding was generally missed. Thus, in this context of official recommendations, St. Ann's can again be seen as an exception.

Finally, both John Baptist Purcell,<sup>17</sup> Archbishop of Cincinnati, and several members of the Society of Jesus, in whose care the parish was initially entrusted, realized the Catholic Church's responsibility to African Americans.<sup>18</sup> In

14. J.L. Spalding, *The Life of the Most Rev. M.J. Spalding, D.D.* (New York: Christian Press Association Publishing Co., n.d.), 299.

15. Cyprian Davis, “The Holy See and American Black Catholics. A Forgotten Chapter in the History of the American Church,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 7(1988): 157-179.

16. “A Church for Colored Persons,” *Catholic Telegraph*, 11 April 1866, p. 2.

17. Purcell, for example, in 1863 and again in 1864, even against the advice of some northern bishops and in the face of opposition from a large number of Catholics, including many in his own archdiocese, spoke out in favor of emancipation and the prosecution of the war. See: Anthony H. Deye, “Archbishop John Baptist Purcell and the Civil War” (M.A. thesis, University of Cincinnati, 1944), 55.

18. For the roles of Francis Xavier Weninger, S.J., and Walter Hill, S.J., see Lackner, “St. Ann's Colored Church and School.” For the Society of Jesus in general see: Edward D. Reynolds, *Jesuits for the Negro* (New York: The America Press, 1949).

fact, in 1834, the year following Purcell's appointment to Cincinnati, he unsuccessfully petitioned the Oblate Sisters of Providence, a black Catholic religious order headquartered in Baltimore, to establish a school for African Americans in his diocese.<sup>19</sup>

Undoubtedly, without the cooperation of these individuals St. Ann's parish would not have existed. But none of these factors explain the origin of the church. Similar conditions existed in other cities, but without similar results. It was only through the initiative of African American Catholics, who approached Walter H. Hill, S.J., rector of St. Xavier College, with a request for the establishment of a separate church and school for black Catholics,<sup>20</sup> that the church came into existence. This fact deserves special attention. St. Ann's was not an idea or plan that ecclesiastics originated and then sought to implement. It came from the people. Before examining church records and 1870 and 1880 U.S. Census data to gain some impression of the parish membership of St. Ann's during its first five years of existence,<sup>21</sup> attention will be focused on two of the parish staff, Reverend Adrian Hoecken, S.J., and Sister Francis Regis, S.N.D. To some degree, they shared the parishioners' sense of being outsiders in relationship to the dominant culture of the city since they were foreigners.

Like many Jesuits who served in Cincinnati, including the pastor of parish church attached to St. Xavier College, Hoecken, St. Ann's first pastor, had been born in Holland.<sup>22</sup> At the age of twenty-four he came to the United States with the purpose of serving in the Indian missions, entering the Jesuit novitiate in Florissant, Missouri. From his ordination in 1842 until 1865 he worked among various tribes, mainly the Flatheads. His missionary work took him through Montana, Washington, and Oregon. During six years of this time he was cut off from any contact with whites, except for his lay brother companion, Daniel Lyons.<sup>23</sup> His biographer, Walter Hill, mentioned above, claimed that the seventeen years he had spent in the missions had made him identify

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19. "A Church for Colored Persons," 2.

20. Reynolds, 130; Theodore Roemer, *The Ludwig-Missionsverein and the Church in the United States* (1838 - 1918) (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 1933; reprint ed., New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1974), 99.

21. One of the goals of this research is to gain some sense of the backgrounds of the members of St. Ann's parish and to discover how involved they were in the parish. But the use of the church records, presently preserved in the archives of St. Xavier and St. Joseph Churches, Cincinnati, requires a certain caution. It is clear that not each of the pastors was equally careful in his notations. For example, the first communion records which date from 1866 to 1882 are incomplete. In 1871 after listing the names of six persons who had received first holy communion, the recorder, presumably the pastor, Reverend Adrian Hoecken, S.J., simply wrote "etc., etc., etc." Another caution involves the use of the 1870 and 1880 census data and the listings in the William's City Directory for Cincinnati. Occasionally, slight discrepancies in spelling and age in the census data, directory, and church records make it impossible to claim absolutely that the same person is being considered in each of the documents. Usually, these discrepancies will be noted in the text.

22. Walter Hill, "Father Adrian Hoecken, A Sketch," *Woodstock Letters* 26 (1987): 364.

23. *Ibid.*, 364-365.

with Native Americans for the rest of his life:

Through his long association with the Indians, as his only companions . . . Father Hoecken became to some extent, identified with them in sympathy. . . .The Indians loved him, and to this day, I am informed, they speak of him, inquire about him, and some of them, now and then, made their children write letters to him. Father Hoecken was, to the end, an admirer of the Indians, even retaining in some degree, their manner of talking and their forms of expression.<sup>24</sup>

In the summer of 1865 he was assigned to St. Xavier College and there began a prison and hospital ministry. Writing to Pierre DeSmedt, S.J., the famous Jesuit missionary to Native Americans and member of the provincial council, Hoecken revealed his enthusiasm for his new ministry:

Good Fr. Driscoll [pastor of St. Xavier Church] brought me to jail the other day, I found a great number of poor Catholics in their iron-cells: I will visit them once a week, and hope every one will make their confession. . . . A priest can exercise here the H. ministry in one week more than a whole year at the Osage Mission. Many things truly edify me here, but I ought not perhaps to be too quick in judging.<sup>25</sup>

Hill claimed that Hoecken became a frequent figure in the prisons:

He took his satchel along with him, in making these visits to the prisoners, filled with pious objects, and also things to please their palates. At first his satchel was cautiously searched, lest it might contain contraband objects; but his disinterestedness and uprightness of character soon became well known to the officials of the prison and thereafter he was allowed to go in and out at any hour, unmolested.<sup>26</sup>

Also beginning in 1865 and continuing throughout his tenure as pastor, Hoecken visited the city hospitals, administering Baptism, Penance, and Anointing of the Sick. Two hospitals were Catholic, St. Mary's and Good Samaritan. The former had been founded in 1859 by the Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis and the latter by the Sisters of Charity in 1866. The other two public establishments were Commercial Hospital and Lunatic Asylum and Rohs Hill Hospital for contagious diseases, popularly called the "Pest House."

Except for a very few individuals, the recipients of baptism performed in these hospitals and then recorded in the church register of St. Ann's were African Americans. Perhaps the pastor of St. Ann's Church came to be known

24. *Ibid.*, 367.

25. Hoecken to DeSmedt, 25 September 1865, Jesuit Missouri Province Archives [hereafter JMPA].

26. Hill, 368.



as the priest in the city for blacks, so that whenever a hospitalized African American needed priestly service, he was called. More than likely, his ministry to one patient was often the occasion for others to ask for him.

Though the Queen City at the time was a "walking city," these visitations to hospitals and prisons required Hoecken to travel fair distances from his residence at St. Xavier College. Such was especially true for the Rohs Hills Hospital located in Clifton Heights, a newly developing section on one of Cincinnati's outlying hills. And visits to this hospital, as well as to homes of persons in danger of death, regularly exposed him to deathly illnesses as well.

Originally, Hoecken had hoped to secure some African-American sisters for the school that was to accompany the parish, but requests for their service, just like the requests made of other religious orders in the United States at the time, far outnumbered those that could be answered. In writing to Hoecken, DeSmedt indicated that though the Jesuit provincial greatly approved of the plan to have black sisters at the school, recruiting them might be difficult. "I think you will have to be in a great hurry to accomplish this end," he said, "for the good Sisters will be called upon from all quarters."<sup>27</sup>

Either Hoecken's request was denied or he never followed through on his plan, for in January of 1867 he and Francis Xavier Weninger, S.J.,<sup>28</sup> visited the major superior of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Sister Louise van der Schrieck, to request teachers for the school. In the annals of the convent, she noted the visit and her promise to send two religious to teach at the school as soon as possible.<sup>29</sup> Tradition has it that when Sister Louise presented the request to the assembly of religious who lived at the Notre Dame Convent and Academy on Sixth Street, a few city blocks from St. Xavier's Church and College, they all volunteered. Sisters Marie Monica and Francis Regis were chosen, and no financial compensation was given to the religious order for their services.<sup>30</sup>

Except for her name, no traces of Marie Monica have been found in any records. The other woman, however, was destined to be the soul of the school until her death in 1895. Like most of the others of her convent, she was from Europe. Born in Luxemburg in 1822, she professed vows as a religious in 1845 at Namur, Belgium, and then came to Cincinnati in 1847 as part of the fifth colony of Sisters of Notre Dame to serve in the Queen City. For twenty years

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27. DeSmedt to Aidan Hoecken, 30 November 1866, JMPA.

28. At Hill's request, Weninger solicited \$4,000 from King Louis I of Bavaria for the purchase of a former public school building to serve as St. Ann's church and school. From that point on, Weninger proved to be a faithful benefactor of the black church and school. Roemer, 99; "Church for Colored Persons," *Catholic Telegraph*, 18 April 1866.

29. *Annals of the Sisters of Notre Dame*, vol. 1 (1849-1886), p. 51, Archives of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Cincinnati [hereafter ASND].

30. "Peter Claver School Society," *Catholic Telegraph*, 16 September 1868, p. 2; "Diamond Jubilee," 6.



before her assignment at St. Ann's, she taught in various schools staffed by her religious order, the last of these being the Sixth Street Academy, considered the most prestigious of the congregation's establishments in the archdiocese. While at St. Ann's her name occasionally appeared in church records as a baptismal sponsor or as a witness at a wedding of parents of her students. These citations give a glimpse of her involvement in parish life beyond the school and suggest a link between conversion and the school.

Her work was consistently praised by black and white Catholics alike. For example, Daniel Rudd, the African-American editor of the first black newspaper in the United States, the *American Catholic Tribune*, called her, ". . . the very embodiment at once of humility and activity . . . one of the truest friends the Colored people ever had."<sup>31</sup> Three years later the paper claimed, "Sister Francis is doing noble work in the education of the youth of the race."<sup>32</sup> And at her death a priest testified that he had "never met her equal in zeal and fervor."<sup>33</sup>

Contrary to the custom in regard to religious sisters, the *Catholic Telegraph* published an extended obituary at her death.

Patiently, hopefully, heroically, she has striven to guide and help the poorest of God's poor, proudly opening the doors of the Queen City's first colored [Catholic] school to their little ones, and with a courage never faltering at the many, many refusals, at the innumerable discouragements that offset the advancement of such an undertaking. . . . We will miss those strong benignant features which were hers, her kindly, instructive and encouraging voice, and her presence among the poor, the ignorant and the neglected, which appealed to all that is spiritual in man.<sup>34</sup>

For the first year and a half the school children were girls since the religious rule of the Sisters of Notre Dame stipulated that they could only teach females. So in order to extend the school's benefit to boys, a lay teacher, Miss Mary Quigly, who had previously taught at St. Patrick's school in Cincinnati, was hired.<sup>35</sup> Her name, like that of Sister Francis Regis, appeared occasionally in church records, indicating her involvement with parishioners beyond the school.

Partly to fund her salary, Weninger created the St. Peter Claver School Society. Both the society's officers and board of directors were of German birth or descent, perhaps because the Austrian Weninger moved most easily

31. Daniel Rudd, *American Catholic Tribune*, 29 June 1888, 2.

32. John Rudd, *American Catholic Tribune*, 13 June 1891, 3.

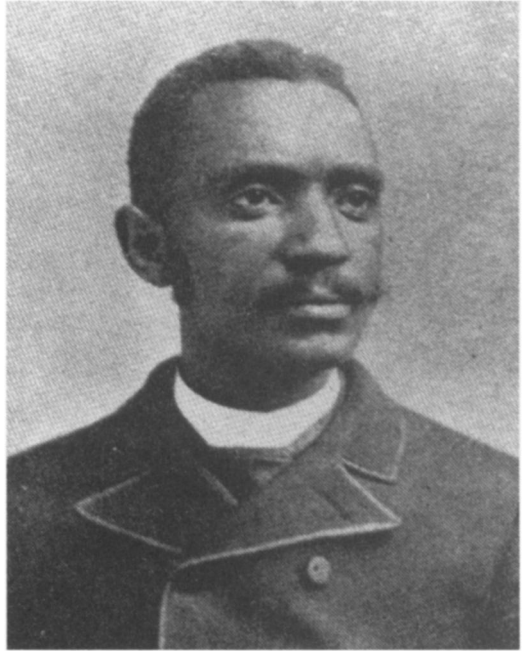
33. Mary Patricia Butler, *The American Foundations of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur* (Philadelphia: The Dolphin Press, 1928), 35.

34. "Sister Francis Regis," *Catholic Telegraph*, 3 December 1895, 4.

35. "St. Peter Claver School Society," *Catholic Telegraph*, 16 September 1868, 4.

among such circles or because Germans were more sympathetic to the situation of African Americans than the Irish. Also, generally speaking, German Catholics were more financially prosperous than were Irish Catholics.<sup>36</sup>

Occasionally, the *Catholic Telegraph* alerted its readers about activities of this new parish. For example, it recorded the members' generosity toward those sick with yellow fever in New Orleans and Galveston in 1867.<sup>37</sup> The presence of Archbishop Purcell for Confirmation was also noted on several occasions<sup>38</sup> as well as presentations of the school children for the community.<sup>39</sup>



*Daniel Rudd (Courtesy: Josephite Archives, Baltimore)*

## Parish Membership From 1866 to 1870

Though the data recorded thus far contributes to an outline of St. Ann's, what is central to the parish's portrait are the parishioners. 153 Catholics are listed in the various church records of St. Ann's during this period.<sup>40</sup> Most often names of parents of those baptized are also found in the baptismal records but there is no certain way to determine whether or not these individuals were Catholic. In some cases a Latin notation behind the name indicates

36. Among the six laymen mentioned in the *Catholic Telegraph's* account of the society, two were professionals (a physician and a lawyer), two were businessmen (a wholesale clothing merchant and the owner of a restaurant), one was a craftsman (a chair maker), and one a service employee (a bar keeper). "Peter Claver School Society," *Catholic Telegraph*, 16 September 1868, p. 2; United States Census of 1870; *William's Cincinnati Directory*, 1870.

37. *Catholic Telegraph*, 16 October 1867, 4.

38. *Catholic Telegraph*, 2 January 1867, 4; 22 January 1868, 4; 26 May 1869, 4.

39. *Catholic Telegraph*, 23 September 1868, 4.

40. This figure is based upon the number of baptisms performed (97), the number confirmed or who received first holy communion for whom no baptism at St. Ann's is listed (17), the number married for whom no other sacrament is noted (2), the number enrolled in the Scapular of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mt. Carmel for whom no other sacrament is listed (5), and the number who served as sponsors at baptism and for whom no other notation appears in the church records (32).

that the parent or parents were either baptized non-Catholics or nonbaptized individuals. Lacking such notation, it might be assumed that the parents were Catholic. In some instances such is the case, for example, in regard to Louis<sup>41</sup> and Martha O'Brien. But for the majority of individuals there is no absolute way to determine their religious affiliation. These, then, have not been counted as parish members in this study.

Compared with the membership of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Cincinnati, St. Ann's parish had about half as many Catholic individuals listed in its church records by 1870. This figure is somewhat remarkable when one remembers the general situation of the African Americans in the Catholic Church at the time and when one recalls that not all black Catholics in Cincinnati belonged to St. Ann's parish.<sup>42</sup> However, black Baptists in Cincinnati numbered more than one thousand.<sup>43</sup>

But of the 153 Catholics listed in the parish records from 1866 to 1870 only 64<sup>44</sup> were adults and three of these were white.<sup>45</sup> Probably, these whites did not regularly attend liturgical services at the church.<sup>46</sup> More women than men were active at St. Ann's parish between 1866 and 1870, but not overwhelmingly so. Of the 53 adults, 20 were male and 33 were female. A slightly higher ratio of females to males exists in regard to the overall number of those baptized at St.

41. His name also appears as Lewis in various documents.

42. According to *The Proceedings of the Semi-Centenary Celebration of the African Methodist Episcopal Church of Cincinnati* (Cincinnati, 1874), 55-62, 117, the AME had a membership of 325 in 1871. Both before and after the establishment of St. Ann's, African American Catholics attended liturgical services in Catholic churches that were predominately white. See: *Catholic Telegraph*, 19 February 1868.

43. Koehler, 70.

44. The number 52 has been calculated by adding together the number of those baptized, 20 years or older (23), with those who served as baptismal sponsors (26), with two who were married and who were not baptized at St. Ann's, and with two who were confirmed whose age was more than 20 (this fact was determined by reference to census data). Also, excluded from the number baptized were those whose records indicated that the sacrament was administered in danger of death and for whom there is no further involvement in the parish. The pastor carried out a ministry to African Americans in Cincinnati's hospitals and jails. Some of the baptisms in danger of death took place in these establishments.

45. The names of the white individuals appearing in the church register were: Hermann Gerold, godfather for Nancy Jackson; Lisa Cleure, godmother for John Henry Highwater; and the lay teacher at the parish school, Mary Quigly, godmother for Frances Ann Highwater and two of her children, Mary Ann Pollard and William Highwater. There is much discrepancy in the spelling of the "Highwater" name. In the baptismal records the name is spelled as it appears in the text. In the 1870 Census the spelling is Heighweurden and in various editions of the *William's City Directory* it appears as Highwarden or Highworden. However, the evidence indicates that all the different spellings are referring to the same family.

46. The church records assume that those listed are African Americans. For those not of this race, either the Latin word "albus" (white) or Irish follows the name. A white female, Mary Ann Sweeney, was confirmed at St. Ann's in 1869, but there is no way at present to determine her age. Another individual, Thomas Brady, who served as a godfather five times (all in 1866) might also have been white. He has not been identified in the 1870 census but the 1867 and 1870 *William's City Directory* lists a Thomas Brady who teaches at St. Xavier's parish school. Perhaps the pastor of St. Ann's parish, who lived in St. Xavier's rectory, asked him to serve in this capacity.

Ann's, 54 females to 37 males. And of the 38 persons confirmed at St. Ann's during this period, 15 were males and 23 were females. The disproportion is much higher in regard to those who received first Holy Communion, 12 males to 26 females, but it must be remembered that the Holy Communion records were incomplete.<sup>47</sup>

During the first year of the church's existence adult baptisms (ages 20-59) were almost three times those of children (ages 0-15), 11 to 4. Perhaps most of the African Americans who were Catholic at the parish's foundation and who had children of baptismal age preferred to remain in their familiar surroundings. Also, they may have been skeptical about the future success of the new parish. And though they undoubtedly experienced prejudice in the predominately white churches they attended,<sup>48</sup> they may have still held to the belief so often preached by contemporary Catholic evangelists that the Catholic Church was the only Christian denomination that knew no color line. To leave their white parishes could have been seen as a tacit repudiation of this conviction.

The following four years saw a dramatic change. During that period only 13 more individuals, ages 20 to 59, were baptized. On the other hand, the records show an increase of baptism of children: 21, ages 5 to 15, and 26, ages 0 to 4. One factor that surely accounted for the rise of baptisms of those aged 5 through 15 was the parish school. As examples of the influence of the school are the Highwater and Goins families.<sup>49</sup> In April 1869, Frances Anna Highwater and three of her children were baptized. As noted above, the god-mother for all three of them was Mary Quigly, the lay teacher at St. Ann's parish school, suggesting a link between their conversion and the school.

About a year and a half before, on November 1, 1867, Mary Elisabeth Goins and three of her children were baptized. And a little more than a year later, on March 9, 1869, her husband, Robert Goins, was also initiated into the Catholic Church. On the same day Mary Elisabeth and Robert were joined in the Catholic sacrament of marriage.<sup>50</sup> Church records indicate that present at

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47. Though communion records are incomplete, it is assumed that the baptismal records are complete because a strict obligation binds church personnel to record them.

48. In a "Circular Letter" Archbishop Purcell wrote, "As all know, the colored people are not favorably received in the midst of the congregations of the whites. The condition of their children is worse. Colored children are nowhere admitted into the schools of the whites, so that almost necessarily they are sent to some sectarian school at the risk of losing their faith, since Protestants are ever on the watch for them." Archives of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati [hereafter AAC]. The letter is undated, but from other sources and from internal evidence it is clear that it was written in 1877. There is evidence that at least some African Americans were educated at St. Xavier College, Cincinnati. See: Deye, 54.

49. This name is sometimes spelled in an official records as "Goings."

50. Though a marriage ceremony took place, there was no need for that to have occurred. Both Robert and Elizabeth were non-baptized when they first entered marriage. Such a marriage is considered valid though non-sacramental in the eyes of the Catholic Church. Once both parties of such a marriage are baptized, the marriage becomes sacramental and there is no need for convalidation. The same situation pertains to the marriage of Robert and Frances Eugenia Paine cited below.

the wedding were Mary Quigly, Sister Francis Regis, and the girls of St. Ann's school. Their presence suggests the likelihood that the school was a significant factor in the family's conversion. If such was the case, their baptisms would fit into a strategy that became typical of Catholic evangelization among African Americans, the use of education as a means to conversion.

## **The One-Parent, Female-Headed Households at St. Ann's**

The baptismal records also yield another important piece of information about the character of the community centered at St. Ann's. According to the register, 21 two-parent families, 16 one-parent families, and two adopted families presented children 15 years or younger for baptism between 1866 and 1870. Two other children were baptized during this period for whom no parents were listed. For one of these two children it was specifically indicated that she had been abandoned by her parents and for one of the adopted children a note records that his parents were unknown.

Set against Cincinnati figures for black children, the numbers at St. Ann's are striking. According to the 1870 Census, out of a total of 1,691 black children fifteen years old and younger, 70% were living in two-parent families, 25.9% were residing with one-parent families, and 4.1% were living with no parent.<sup>51</sup> In contrast, of the families listed in St. Ann's baptismal register for 1866 to 1870, 51.2% are two-parent, 39% one-parent, and 4.9% adopted. And of the one-parent families, only in one was the parent male. Thus, among those families that presented children for baptism at St. Ann's Church in these years, one sees a preview of what will eventually become a pattern among urban blacks, the one-parent, female-headed household.<sup>52</sup>

## **Signs of Parish Involvement Beyond Baptism**

To what extent those listed in St. Ann's church records were actively involved in the parish is difficult to ascertain. One indication of a degree of participation in the Catholic Church beyond baptism is confirmation. Of the 91

51. Paul Lammermeier, "The Urban Black Family of the Nineteenth Century: A Study of Black Family Structure in the Ohio Valley, 1850-1890," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 35(1973): 443-445.

52. At the same time, it should be noted that Lammermeier recognized that even in 1860 "the average proportion of female-headed families was greater in Cincinnati than in any other city considered in his research (Louisville, Pittsburgh, Steubenville, Wheeling, Marietta, and Portsmouth)." And of these cities, he claimed that in many ways Cincinnati "foreshadowed future trends for blacks in the urban context." But it is also clear that the trend stands out that much more among the population found at St. Ann's Church. Lammermeier, 444.

baptized from 1866 to 1870 only 23 were confirmed at St. Ann's. Twelve more, who had been baptized elsewhere, received the sacrament of confirmation during this time.

Another sacramental indication of participation in parish life is the celebration of marriage. Four<sup>53</sup> marriages were solemnized at St. Ann's during the period under discussion. The first of these was that of Robert and Frances Eugenia Paine on December 15, 1866. On that date both parties were first baptized and then joined in Catholic marriage. The baptismal register indicates that during the previous October they had had their seven-month-old son, Robert Edward, baptized because of the danger of illness. Three years later their two-day-old son, Robert Joseph, was baptized on March 11, 1869. According to the notations both of these children died.<sup>54</sup>

The second marriage took place between John Smith and Mary A. Cann on September 15, 1867. Because Smith was not a Catholic, a dispensation was granted, and the wedding was celebrated in a private home rather than in church. Present were a number of persons whose names appear in St. Ann's baptismal and confirmation records. Mary Cann must have been Catholic before St. Ann's was founded, for her name is not listed among those baptized at the parish. She also evidenced a greater degree of participation in the life of the community than most by serving as a baptismal sponsor on one occasion. This wedding is the only one contracted between 1866 and 1870 in which one of the parties is not Catholic. After 1870, however, such would be the norm for those marriages recorded at St. Ann's.

About a half year later, on April 19, 1868, James Claver Taylor, who had been baptized the previous year at St. Ann's [September 15, 1867], married Mary Blackston, a Catholic, not listed in the church's baptismal register.

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53. Actually, a fifth marriage was witnessed by the pastor of the parish on November 15, 1866, but since the woman who was married was in danger of death, it seems unlikely that the couple became active parishioners. The names of the parties were not given in the St. Ann's marriage register, only the notation that they lived on Baymiller Street and that after having baptized the woman and having done the same conditionally for the man, the pastor witnessed the wedding. Thomas Brady and Martha Ann O'Brien were recorded as witnesses. This incident is one example of how the pastor often found himself summoned beyond the regular round of parish duties to attend to strangers at the point of death. Perhaps Martha Ann O'Brien, who also lived on Baymiller Street, knew this couple and was so convinced of the absolute need of baptism for salvation that she had persuaded them to allow her to call her parish priest.

54. A death record has been discovered for the second child, Robert Joseph Paine. He died on June 11, 1869. The cause on the certificate indicates convulsion. Funeral arrangements were made with Soards & Bro., an undertaking establishment that served blacks, and he was buried in St. Joseph Catholic Cemetery. Unlike many denominational cemeteries in the city, Catholic ones permitted African Americans to be buried within their grounds, though not all parishioners at St. Ann's chose to be buried in Catholic graveyards. The baptismal record for a third son born in 1871 also indicates that the ritual took place in the context of danger of death, but whether the child actually died then has not been determined. *Hamilton County, Ohio Death Records, 1865 -- 1869*, Vol. I. Compiled by Lois E. Hughes (Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books, Inc., 1992).



Though not registered in the 1870 Census, the family is found in that of 1880. That data suggest that Mary had been previously married and had three sons.<sup>55</sup> The oldest, Robert, is also named as one of the witnesses to his mother's marriage to Taylor. As will be indicated below, this family was very active in the parish community. The fourth wedding, already described above, was that between Elisabeth Mary [Cael] and Robert Goins.

Record of those who served as sponsors at baptism indicates the greatest degree of involvement in the parish. Several parishioners acted in this capacity on more than one occasion. Among these were some who were Catholic when St. Ann's Church was founded.<sup>56</sup> Of these, Martha Ann O'Brien was the most active, serving fifteen times in this period and continuing on in this capacity in the 1870s. Her husband Louis also functioned as godfather twice. She was followed by Georgia Adeline Blackburn, who was a sponsor six times between 1866 and 1870 and several more times thereafter. Her husband Robert served as a godfather twice. Thomas Brady also fulfilled the role as sponsor six times, all in 1866 and never thereafter. Finally, Martha Blackston's name appears four times as sponsor, Mary [Blackston] Taylor twice, Samuel Blackston once, and Robert Blackston four times.

Of those baptized at St. Ann's during this period, two stand out in their service as godparents. Mary Elisabeth Goins served three times, and James Taylor once. Taylor continued to be very active after 1870, often serving as a baptismal and confirmation sponsor.

## Various Characteristics of the Members of St. Ann's

Not only were the members of St. Ann's parish a minority within a minority, they were practically anonymous in the civil records of the day. Of all the persons mentioned in the parish registers, including the parents of those baptized, only thirty-eight individuals [two of whom were white, Sister Francis Regis and Hermann Gerold] were recorded in the 1870 Census. Another eight

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55. The 1880 U.S. Census, Cincinnati, HM w20, 336-337, provides the following information: James Taylor, 58 years old, a tobacconist, was born in Virginia; Mrs. J. Taylor, 53 years old, keeping house, was born in Maryland; William, 18 years old, single, was born in Tennessee; Robert, 32 years old, single, a laborer, was born in West Virginia; Samuel, 29 years old, single, a coachman, was born in Maryland; Gus [August], 25 years old, single, a teamster, was born in Ohio. *William's City Directory* for 1880 lists their address as 237 Barr Street [no listing for the family is found in the 1870 directory]. St. Ann's records indicate that August received Holy Communion and Confirmation in May of 1869 and that Samuel celebrated Confirmation on December 23, 1869. A Blackston not mentioned in the census information, Charles Joseph, also celebrated Holy Communion and Confirmation in May of 1869.

56. The assumption is made that if a person is listed as a baptismal sponsor and if no indication of baptism is found for the person in the records of St. Ann's Church, the individual already was a Catholic at the time of the parish's foundation.

were located in the census of 1880, but some of those found in 1870 were no longer enrolled there.<sup>57</sup> Though it is impossible to generalize from such a small number, still the information provided about them offers a glimpse into the diverse composition of St. Ann's parish.

According to the 1870 Census, these individuals were scattered throughout Cincinnati's downtown, living in seven different wards. Though the area covered by these wards was in relatively easy walking distance of the church and school, still this dispersion of parishioners stood in contrast to the usual Catholic pattern of the neighborhood parish. This condition may have had a negative impact upon attendance at church functions and on the cohesion of the community.<sup>58</sup>

Since African Americans represented only 2.7% of Cincinnati's population, it is not surprising that none of its wards were racially segregated. However, some of them contained a higher percentage of African Americans than was found generally in the city, and it was in these that the majority of those individuals listed in the records of St. Ann's and found in the 1870 Census lived. One ward in particular, the thirteenth, commonly called "Bucktown," with an African-American population of 14.6%, especially stood in contrast to the others of the central city. It was here that ten of the individuals named in the records dwelt.<sup>59</sup>

If those persons indexed in the 1870 and 1880 censuses are representative of the general parish community, then St. Ann's was mostly comprised of migrants to Ohio. Twenty-two out of twenty-five adults and eight out of seventeen children had been born outside Ohio: nine in Virginia; six in Maryland; five in Kentucky; two each in Tennessee, Arkansas, and Canada; and one each in Louisiana, Michigan, West Virginia, and Gaudeloupe.

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57. Some of the individuals missed by the 1870 or 1880 census may have no longer been residents of Hamilton County when the poll was taken. However, such is not the case for the majority of members of St. Ann's. For example, there is clear evidence in the parish records that the Blackston family lived in Cincinnati during 1870, even though they are not recorded in that year. Another example is Lloyd Johnson, who appears in the 1870 census but not in that of 1880, despite the fact that he is listed in the *William's City Directory* for 1880 and 1881.

In order to discover St. Ann's parishioners in the census materials, various indexes for Hamilton County and for Ohio were used.

58. Weninger seems to have suggested that the Jesuit pastors of the parish had not dealt adequately with the fact that their parishioners were dispersed throughout the city rather than clustered in one neighborhood. In proposing a change of administration, he wrote Archbishop William Elder: "...what was done until now, from the Fathers of St. Xavier, was no doubt useful, but *not sufficient* to answer the wants of the *colored* race. They want their *own* Pastor, who would hunt up them over all the city." Weninger to Elder, 12 May 1886, AAC.

59. St. Xavier Church and School were also situated in this ward. In 1873 St. Ann Church and School would relocate to this area. Sixteen individuals lived in three other wards [second, fourth, and fourteenth] that had an African American population of more than 6% each. On the other hand, seven lived in ward eight, which had a black population of only 1.5%.

Another detail provided by the 1870 Census is the literacy of individuals twenty years and older. Partly as a result of the influx of southern blacks, the illiteracy rate for African Americans in Cincinnati in 1870 had fallen to 35%.<sup>60</sup> The rate is approximately the same for the twenty-one persons twenty years and older discovered both in the census and the St. Ann's records. Census data reveal that about 66.6% of them could read and write (six males and eight females), 19% only read (one male and three females), and 14.4% neither read nor write (one male and two females).<sup>61</sup>

The 1870 Census also contains information about occupation, marital status, and attendance at school. In regard to the females found in the census data and St. Ann's records, eight were married and lived with their husbands. Of these, only two worked outside the home, one as a hairdresser and the other as a washer woman.<sup>62</sup> That the husbands of all these women had occupations that made it possible for them to reside at home and that so few wives had to work outside the home suggest better living arrangements among them than found among the African-American population in general.<sup>63</sup>

Three other women were listed as widows. Two of them worked outside the home as washer women. Four single women — two twelve year-olds, one aged fourteen and another thirty three — were registered as domestic servants, living in the homes of their employers. They were a part of the about 12% to 15% of the black population that formed a cadre of live-in servants in Cincinnati.<sup>64</sup> And finally, five females were enumerated as "at school" and four "at home." Of the latter, only one was of school age.

The occupations of the parishioners, along with the possession of real estate, provide clues to the economic standing of the members of St. Ann's. In order to gain some idea of the status of the jobs reported in the census, the following classification, developed by a researcher in this period for Cincinnati, will be used. The ranking is from highest to lowest: 1) Professional; 2) Business and Commerce; 3) Skilled; 4) Transportation; 5) Factory Workers; 6) Service; 7) Unskilled; 8) Laborers.<sup>65</sup>

None of the individuals mentioned both in the 1870 census and the St. Ann's records had occupations that fell into the categories of professional,

60. Linda Krane Ellwein, "The Negroes in Cincinnati: The Black Experience, 1870-1880" (M.A. thesis, University of Cincinnati, 1970), 48.

61. Of the five persons twenty years and older listed in the 1880 Census, three (two males and one female) could read and write and two (one male and one female) could neither read nor write.

62. The two married women listed in the 1880 Census also worked within the home.

63. Figures are not available for the 1870 Census. But according to information gleaned from the 1880 Census, many black husbands worked at jobs far from home and wives were often forced to work outside the home. Koehler, 81-82.

64. Koehler, 67.

65. The classification is borrowed from Ellwein, 44.

skilled, or factory worker. Qualifying for the second highest level (business and commerce) was one male listed as "retail confectionery"; for the fourth level (transportation) were three males registered as "steamboat man," "drives express," and "drives city cart"; for the sixth level (service) were the female "servants" and "hairdresser" and one male "hotel waiter"; for the seventh level (unskilled) were the two washer women and two males enumerated as "hostler" and "white washer"; and finally for the lowest level was one male described as "laborer."

The 1870 census also reveals that two of these persons possessed real estate. Lloyd Johnson owned property valued at \$1,500 and recorded a personal estate of \$300.<sup>66</sup> Louis O'Brien was even wealthier. His property was valued at \$2,500 and he had a personal estate of \$100.<sup>67</sup> Therefore, according to the calculations of one historian of this period, who maintains that the average value for property held by middle class blacks was \$999.51 and for whites \$1,607.50,<sup>68</sup> Johnson and O'Brien belonged to a very select group of African Americans, who numbered 537 people or 9.1% of the black population.<sup>69</sup> Though not owning real estate, the census records that another man, Robert Blackburn, had a personal estate of \$700.<sup>70</sup> And a fourth individual, George Tinbrook,<sup>71</sup> a husband of a convert, possessed a personal estate of \$1,000. Thus, from this review it is clear that though the parishioners of St. Ann's Church generally belonged to the lower socio-economic class, as did 89.7% of the African American population,<sup>72</sup> still a few of its members significantly rose above that level.

## Beginning Sketches of Some Individuals of the Parish

It is not unlikely that Louis O'Brien, possessed as he was of some economic and social status, was among those who had approached Walter Hill, the Jesuit rector of St. Xavier College, to found St. Ann's Church. Both he and his wife had been born in Maryland, a state in which there was a large concentration of African-American Catholics.

The first reference to Louis O'Brien's presence in Cincinnati is found in *William's City Directory of 1866*. There, he is listed as a boarder at 321

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66. 1870 U.S. Census, Hamilton County, HM w2, 147.

67. 1870 U.S. Census, Hamilton County, HM w8, 232.

68. Harding, 62.

69. Ibid. Harding numbered the white middle class at 26,232 persons or 12.5% of the white population.

70. 1870 U.S. Census, Hamilton County, HM w6, 474.

71. This name is sometimes given as "Tinbrock" or "Tinbroeck." 1870 U.S. Census, Hamilton County, HM w2, 173.

72. Harding, 62.

Broadway. The next year he moved across town to Baymiller Street in the west end, ward eight, in which only 261 blacks or an African-American population of 1.5% resided.<sup>73</sup> He remained in this section until he died, though in 1869 his address changed from 206 to 270 Baymiller. According to the 1870 Census, his was a single dwelling. Only one third of Cincinnati blacks at that point lived in single dwellings. However, living with him was another family, James and Rachel Hagan and their two children, Elisabeth and Mary Anastasia. It seems probable that the Hagan family was Catholic at the foundation of St. Ann's since there are no notices of the baptism of any of its members even though the parish register records that the youngest daughter, Mary Anastasia, aged eleven in 1870, was confirmed and received holy communion the following year (1871). That both O'Brien and Hagan drove carts for a living may have been a factor besides religion that brought them together.

A child, Anna Maria Martha Josephine, was born to Louis and Martha O'Brien on January 6, 1869. The very next day she was solemnly baptized at their home because of sickness. Her godmother was Emilia O'Brien, presumably a relative of Louis. However, the office was carried out by proxy. Her stand in was Josephine Frazier, a forty-one-year-old widow, a washer woman, who had served as a baptismal sponsor on other occasions, one time as a proxy for Martha O'Brien. Like the O'Briens, she had also been born in Maryland.<sup>74</sup> Undoubtedly, she knew the O'Briens from church and also because she lived in their neighborhood.

The last listing of Louis O'Brien's name in the *William's City Directory* was for 1874. Sometime within the year he died, for the directory for 1875 records that Martha O'Brien, a widow, lives at 270 Baymiller.<sup>75</sup> The record is the same for the following year but then her name disappears from the directory and she is not enumerated in the 1880 Census. Most likely, she and her daughter returned to their relatives in Maryland.

Robert and Georgia Adeline Blackburn are another couple who may have approached Hill to found St. Ann's. Both were Catholic when the parish began and both, like the O'Briens, were more involved than the ordinary parishioner in sacramental life. Born in Virginia, the first mention of them in Cincinnati is in 1865. The *William's City Directory* for that year records a Mrs. Robert Blackburn, a hairdresser, living at 2 Smith Court, ward six, or the western riverfront area of the city. Records also show that through the years Robert was employed as a coachman, driver, hostler, and watchman. Some subsequent city directories have two entries, one for Robert and one Georgia, listing their different occupations but always giving the same home address for both. By 1870

73. This percentage is calculated on the basis of the 1870 Census.

74. 1870 U.S. Census, Hamilton County, HM w8, 249.

75. No record of death has been so far discovered in the Hamilton County records.

they had moved two doors down to 4 Smith Court. Theirs was a multiple dwelling, but except for them and a family living with them, the other tenants were white. This condition breaks the usual pattern of segregated tenements.<sup>76</sup> And whites also lived on either side. Ten years later they had crossed the city eastward to Pike Street to a single dwelling residence with whites on both sides.

Living with them in 1870 were Henry B. Floyd,<sup>77</sup> aged forty-four, his brother Thomas, aged thirty-four, his son, John, aged seventeen, and Elizabeth Floyd, seventy years old, presumably the mother of Henry and Thomas. Henry was a journeyman barber and perhaps this line of work, which enjoyed a certain prestige in the African-American community of the day, had brought him in contact with Georgia Blackburn. The 1870 Census also records that Henry held real estate valued at \$2,000. Since the 1880 Census indicates that he was already married in 1870,<sup>78</sup> his wife and children probably lived on that land while Henry was pursuing his career as a barber. He continued to board with the Blackburns during the 1870s, but by 1880 the *William's City Directory* gives his address as 390 George Street. According to the 1880 Census his residence was a single dwelling and whites lived on both sides.

Though there is no record of Thomas Floyd in the 1880 Census for Hamilton County, it is tempting to suppose that like his brother Henry, he had a family living somewhere other than Cincinnati. Were that the case, then he might be identified with Thomas Joseph Floyd, married to Alice Floyd, whose children, Carl Henry Bartholomew, seven years old, and Georgia Anna, six months old, were baptized at St. Ann's on July 14, 1867. One other detail urges such a supposition: Georgia Blackburn served as godmother for the infant girl.

Another person living with the Blackburns in 1870 was Zoea Beatt, who was twelve years old and at school at the time of the census enumeration. Church documents reveal that she was baptized on July 14, 1867, and adopted by Georgia Blackburn, who also acted as her baptismal sponsor. In 1880 a separate entry in the *William's City Directory* listed her as a music teacher, though her address was still that of the Blackburns on Pike Street. It was also in this year that her adopted mother died of heart disease on June 16. Georgia, who had been such a faithful support of St. Ann's, was buried in St. Joseph Cemetery.

The 1880 Census also registers another person in the Blackburn household:

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76. Three quarters of the tenements in which blacks resided were segregated. Koehler, 67.

77. 1870 U.S. Census, Hamilton County, HM w6, 474.

78. Because several of the Floyd children listed in the 1880 Census are older than ten years and none is registered as a stepchild and since his family is not listed in the 1870 Census in Cincinnati, it is obvious that his family lived somewhere other than he did in 1870. 1880 U.S. Census, Hamilton County, City of Cincinnati, HM 25, 466.



William Beatt, single, a boarder, and seventeen years old.<sup>79</sup> There is no direct evidence that he and Zoea were related. However, the fact that they both share a rather uncommon surname and register the same birth places for themselves (Kentucky), for their fathers (France), and for their mothers (New York) makes it most likely that they were brother and sister. Holy communion records indicate that William received the sacrament from a Franciscan priest in 1874. The 1870 Census enumerates a William Bett, aged six, along with an Angeline Bett, aged twenty-seven, who live with Josephine Frazier (already mentioned above). His age and place of birth (Kentucky) make it most probable that he is to be identified with the William Beatt living at the Blackburn residence.

Two other Beatts are found in records of the period. A Mary Josephine Beatt received Confirmation and Holy Communion on May 16, 1869, as well as a Mary Angeline Beatt. There is no further mention of the former in any documents but in the 1870 Census the latter is listed as a servant, aged twenty-one, in the house of the vice consul of France, Ravin D'Elpheaux.<sup>80</sup> Despite differences in the ages listed in the census, it is tempting to identify this Beatt with the Angeline residing with Josephine Frazier.<sup>81</sup> However, both give different places of birth. The one employed in the house of the vice consul was born on the island of Guadeloupe and the other was born in China.

Undoubtedly, the Beatts, a family of domestics, travelled with the French foreign service. Their various birth-places partially mark the route they travelled, from China to Guadeloupe to New York to Kentucky and finally to Ohio. Perhaps Zoea and William were the children of Mary Josephine, who had died or who had moved on. By 1880 only the two children (Zoea and William) remained in Cincinnati. Since Ravin D'Elpheaux had left the vice consulate in Cincinnati by 1875,<sup>82</sup> he may have taken one or both of the older Beatts with him.

Also serving the vice consul was Mary Frances Lewis, thirty-three years old and born in Louisiana. Like Angeline Mary Beatt she received Holy Communion and Confirmation in 1869. Also, no notice of her presence in Cincinnati is found in the 1880 Census.

Two other families in Cincinnati had live-in servants who were members of St. Ann's. Helen Fry, aged fourteen, and Julia Fry, aged twelve, both born in Kentucky, resided with Stephen Bonner, a medical doctor born in Ireland, his wife Lucy, born in Kentucky, and their nine children.<sup>83</sup> Since their baptisms are not recorded in St. Ann's register but their Confirmations are listed, it seems

79. 1880 U.S. Census, Hamilton County, HM w5, 463D.

80. 1870 U.S. Census, Hamilton County, HM w14, 270.

81. 1870 U.S. Census, Hamilton County, HM w8, 249.

82. He is listed in the *William's City Directory* for 1874 but not for 1875.

83. 1870 U.S. Census, Hamilton County, HM w14, 270.

that both were Catholic at the foundation of the parish, perhaps having been born into a slave family in the Catholic sector of Kentucky. In the following decade both Stephen Bonner and his oldest son, also a physician, died.<sup>84</sup> With these deaths the Bonner household broke up. However, Julia Fry continued to serve the family in a residence established by one of the doctor's daughters on Locust Street.<sup>85</sup>

The final servant and member of St. Ann's parish mentioned in the 1870 Census is Nancy Anna Maria Jackson, aged fourteen and born in Kentucky. She worked in the home of Hermann Gerold, a music teacher from Saxony, his wife, Mary, and their three children.<sup>86</sup> Probably under the influence of Hermann, her godfather, Nancy was baptized on Christmas of 1870. She continued to be active in religious practice for the next few years, receiving both Holy Communion and Confirmation. By 1880 she was no longer living with the Gerold family nor is there record of her in the census.

In all of the above instances, such as that of Nancy Jackson, there is some obvious connection between the celebration of the sacraments and the circumstances of the people's lives. But such is not always the case. For example, why Thomas True, aged twenty-seven and a steamboat man, and his wife Rebecca, aged twenty-two,<sup>87</sup> chose to have their son baptized Catholic, when both of them were listed as unbaptized in St. Ann's register, is not clear. Undoubtedly, one significant factor was the serious illness that infected their seven-month infant, Thomas Joseph. Because of the sickness, the baptism was performed at their house on Pearl Street, located in ward four, the central river-front area of the city. Unfortunately, on that very day (May 8, 1870) he died.<sup>88</sup> This death was the second loss of a child that they had to suffer, for they had also had an infant daughter die two years before.<sup>89</sup>

Perhaps the parents thought of baptism as a way of protecting the child from death. But why they turned to a Catholic pastor rather than to a minister of a Protestant denomination that practices infant baptism, such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church, cannot be determined with certainty. Living with them was another African-American family, Oliver and Jane Donelly and their son Issac. From their Irish surname one could infer a possible relationship with

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84. *Hamilton County, Ohio Death Records, 1874-1877*, vol. III, A-K. Compiled by Lois E. Hughes (Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books, Inc., 1993).

85. 1880 U.S. Census, Hamilton County, HM w2, 110D. No record of Helen Fry has been discovered in the 1880 Census for Hamilton County. In the 1880 Census Julia's name is given as "Frey."

86. 1870 U.S. Census, Hamilton County, HM w10, 440.

87. 1870 U.S. Census, Hamilton County, HM w4, 336.

88. *Hamilton County, Ohio, Death Records, 1870-1873*, Vol. II, L-Z. Compiled by Lois E. Hughes (Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books, Inc., 1992).

89. Hamilton County, Ohio Death Records, 1865-1870 lists a Rebecca True, four months old, who died on August 24, 1868, from diarrhea.

Catholicism. If such were so, they may have advised the Trues to call a priest. Also, the census notes that Donelly's son Isaac, fifteen years old, was at school. If he attended St. Ann's school, then another link to Catholicism would be established. On the other hand, the Donelly name is not found in any of the extant church records. And there is no indication that when Thomas' wife, Rebecca, fell ill in 1873 any recourse was had to Catholic baptism. She died on November 5, 1873, and neither Thomas True nor the Donelly family is enumerated in the 1880 Census.

Another baptism performed in danger of death was that of Mary Magdalena Tinbrook.<sup>90</sup> It took place on June 24, 1867. About three weeks later (July 17, 1867) the ceremonies of baptism, originally omitted because of the emergency situation, were supplied, indicating that she had recovered from the illness. Nothing in the church records or census data suggests reasons why she might have asked for Catholic baptism in her sickness, but having done so, she continued to be an active member of St. Ann's, receiving both Holy Communion and Confirmation. About a half year after her baptism she adopted an eight-day-old child, who was baptized on February 23, 1868. The child, whose parents were unknown, was named Peter Damian. Within less than four years he succumbed to smallpox.<sup>91</sup> And in 1877 she was widowed.<sup>92</sup> Despite the fact that the 1870 Census revealed that her husband had a personal estate of \$1,000 and that she had a son David, who also registered a personal estate of \$1,000, she was left alone in 1880 to provide for herself as a washer woman and share quarters in a segregated tenement with two other widows, a widower, and a single male boarder.<sup>93</sup>

The final St. Ann's members to be considered are the Highwaters.<sup>94</sup> Of all the families located in the 1870 Census, only this one is a one-parent, female-headed household.<sup>95</sup> She and her children lived in a segregated tenement, whites dwelling on both sides of the building, in ward four, the central river-front area of the city. Listed as a widow in the *William's City Directory* for 1871, Frances Anna Highwater was baptized at St. Ann's along with three of her children in April of 1869. These children were Ann Marie Pollard, fourteen years old, John Henry Highwater, seven years old, and William B. Highwater, six years old. That Ann Marie possessed a different surname than

90. 1870 U.S. Census, Hamilton County, HM w2, 173.

91. *Hamilton County, Ohio, Death Records 1870-1873*, Vol. II, L-Z. Compiled by Lois E. Hughes. (Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books, Inc., 1992).

92. *Hamilton County, Ohio, Death Records, 1874-1877*, vol. III L-Z, indicates that George Tinbroeck died on February 27, 1877.

93. 1880 U.S. Census, Hamilton County, HM 25, 523B.

94. 1870 U.S. Census, Hamilton County, HM w4, 330.

95. All the other one parent, female headed households noted in the baptismal records have not been located in the census data.

her brothers suggests that Frances had had the child by a man different than the father of the two boys. It is impossible to determine if he had been a previous husband.

For some reason, there is no notice of baptism in St. Ann's records for a fourth child, Matilda, thirteen years old in 1869 and enumerated in the 1870 Census, even though her illegitimate son, Joseph Pollard, was eventually baptized on February 28, 1875. At the time he was four years old. Therefore, he was born in approximately the same year as his illegitimate cousin, Magdalena Pollard, the daughter of Ann Marie Pollard.<sup>96</sup>

Frances Highwater came to Ohio by a circuitous route. Born in Virginia, her first three children, Ann Marie, Matilda, and John Henry, were born in Canada around the years 1854 to 1862. This fact raises the possibility that she had fled to Canada to escape slavery. By 1863 or 1864 she had returned to the United States, for it was in Michigan that William was born.

The Highwater name appears several times in St. Ann's records throughout the 1870s. On December 13, 1874, Joseph Highwater, the two-month-old son of Frances Anna, was baptized. There is no mention of the child's father nor of illegitimacy. Within two months, on February 18, her daughter, Ann Marie Pollard, married William Johnson. Because he was nonbaptized, the wedding took place privately, in a home. Notations indicate that they had been married civilly.

Two years later, on August 20, 1876, a four-week-old son of Frances Anna, was baptized. Though the name of the father, Joseph Sullivan, is given, he and Frances Anna were not married at the time, at least in the Catholic Church, since notice of the child's illegitimacy is included. However, it is also indicated that the parents eventually married.

The following month (September 3, 1876) Joseph Highwater, one and half years old, was baptized. The record shows that he had been abandoned by his mother Mary Ann Highwater [the married name of Johnson is not given] and adopted by one of the widows in the parish.

The last mention of Highwater in the St. Ann's records for the decade occurred the next year with the baptism of Mary Eve Sullivan, recorded as the daughter of Joseph Sullivan and Frances Highwater on December 23, 1877. The child had been born eleven days before.

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96. The St. Ann's register records the Baptism of Magdalena Pollard on January 20, 1871, and notes that she was eight days old.

## Reprise

St. Ann's Colored Church and School represented an extraordinary undertaking in 1866. Unlike other Catholic churches dedicated solely to African Americans, it was not located in a southern district inhabited by a significant number of black Catholics, but in a city periodically the scene of racial riots, often instigated by the Irish, who competed with blacks in the labor market. Initially, some Irish had threatened to harm the church and pastor if he persisted in establishing the parish, even though he had the archbishop's support. These Irish may have interpreted this interest in behalf of African Americans as a kind of betrayal by the church with which they had been traditionally identified. On the other hand, both the pastor and the teacher at St. Ann's may have had a natural empathy for their African American parishioners, since their native language (Dutch or French), their foreign birth, and their explicit Catholic roles may have moved them nearer the margins of society than even their English-speaking Catholic compatriots.

But most of all, African-Americans created St. Ann's, at its inception and through the years. Characterized by various degrees of commitment, attracted by opportunities of schooling for their children, drawn from various parts of the world, and often shadowed by death and hardship, they formed a diverse community. Just the hints at their stories contained in the census data suggest many lives rich in adventure, perseverance, initiative, and pathos. As with their white co-religionists and other urban African-Americans, they were mainly poor migrants. And in the lives of those such as the Highwaters persisting problems of family structure were foreshadowed. But present also were the humanity and compassion of widows who took in children, the enterprise of those who improved their station in life through work and education and shared it with others, and the generosity of those who served as godparents in their church. What these people did in the first five years was to build a foundation so that St. Ann's Colored Church would last until the middle of the next century.