

## Brief History of St. Joseph Parish, Randolph

St. Joseph Village, a nonincorporated community on the western edge of the township of Randolph, took its name from the Church of St. Joseph. St. Joseph Church was first a mission of St. John the Baptist Church of Canton, OH under the pastorate of Fr. John Martin Henni. Fr. Henni organized St. Joseph as a parish in 1831. The immigrant population had come from Alsace Lorraine and Hessen, Germany. A parochial school began in a log house in 1832. The Liturgy was celebrated in homes until 1835 when the pioneers built a log chapel and school house.

Reverend John Neumann came to the parish in 1841 for a week of reconciliations and administered baptism to two children. Fr. John Neumann would later become the Bishop of Philadelphia and the first American citizen to be canonized as a saint. St. Joseph Church has had days of glory and days of distress. Growth has caused the glory and two burned churches caused distress. The current church dedicated in 1905 is the fifth church on site and an excellent example of Romanesque and Gothic Architecture. The stateliness of the church amidst the cornfields and dairy farming forms a remarkable contrast.

St. Joseph School is the oldest continuous running English speaking private school west of the Alleghany and east of the Mississippi. The school is again growing with an agenda and a mantra: a Rural Oasis of Superior Education Blended with Faith. In its 186 year history the school has gone from a one room log schoolhouse, to a two-story building with four classrooms, to the current building constructed in 1922 and added to in 1960. The principal teachers were Sisters of Notre Dame and now lay teachers and faculty.

The rectory and office building was constructed in 1887 and stands between the current church and the school. This three story building has offices on the first floor, residence on the second floor, and an attic.

Almost one hundred years after the founding of the parish, Fr. Ed Spitzig envisioned and built the Grotto of Mary, a replica of Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto in France. Bishop Joseph Schrembs solemnly dedicated the shrine August 14, 1927. People from great distances come to invoke Mary's help, and Masses and Baptisms are performed in the Grotto during the summer.

The cemetery is almost as old as the parish. The oldest cemetery section is adjacent to the church on the east side and began in the mid 1830's with an unmarked burial site of an infant. Today the cemetery extends to the hill on the north side of the church and holds over 2,500 sacred remains. The burial grounds are peacefully bucolic.

St. Joseph Church and School, the Grotto of Mary, and Cemetery form the heart of St. Joseph Village, a community of God's continued favor.

Thomas S. Acker, S.J.  
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