
This brochure, crowded with details of Catholic missionary activities in the United States, is based on a thorough combing of the manuscript archives of the Verein at Munich, and of the Annalen, distributed among its members from 1848, in imitation of the Annales of the Lyons Société de la Propagation de la Foi. The Verein was founded in 1838 after the pattern of the Lyons society by King Ludwig I of Bavaria, whose name it bears, as a result of a plea of Friedrich Reze, Bishop of Detroit, who charged that the Lyons society, “wise in statecraft,” was using its funds to promote French interests (p. 8).

The king expresses his own hopes in a letter to Boniface Wimmer, first abbot of St. Vincent's, at Latrobe, Pennsylvania: “You remark very truly, that the education of German priests is necessary to keep the Germans in North America German” (p. 5). Numerous complaints reached Germany that the Irish bishops and priests were unwilling or unable to minister to German newcomers to these shores (p. 17 ff.).

Dr. Roemer has added little to the early history of St. Vincent's, but has quoted material already collected by P. W. Mathäser in his contribution to the Benedictine Studien und Mitteilungen (1925), a work not sufficiently well known by local students of western Pennsylvania history. But he has thrown new light on its first abbot's point of view and on his insatiable zeal for the extension of the German Benedictine movement westward. New material is also made available on the vicissitudes of King Ludwig's dream of a model German Catholic community, which bore fruit in St. Mary's, in Elk County. There are brief references, also, to Carmelite, Capuchin, and Jesuit pioneers in western Pennsylvania.

If American historians ever overcome their provincial and secularist predilections, they will find in studies of this sort (among which must be included Dr. Edward J. Hickey's The Society for the Propagation of the Faith and Dr. Roemer's The Leopoldine Foundation and the Church in the United States, 1829–1839) precious keys to unlock treasures of material bearing upon the place of this country in European and world affairs. Here is a letter of Abbot Wimmer's, unearthed by Dr. Roemer from the Annalen of 1855 (p. 140):

The Old World went to ruin under the crushing march of the Old Germans. The Anglo-Germanic race will also subjugate the whole New World,
and from its central position will then dominate Asia in the East and Europe in the West. You do not understand the power of Liberty, a liberty which gives free scope to every man and thereby calls forth the most active spirit of emulation. Although the young Eagle of the free Union has hardly begun his practice-flights, he is already soaring supremely from one ocean to the other. . . .

Is it therefore indifferent which principles become dominant here, which spirit will animate the masses and react upon Europe and Asia? Do not the American missionaries of error continually come in contact with and oppose the Catholic missionaries? What will happen if those fanatics obtain the control of the Government?

An unsigned letter to the Annalen of the same year, discussing contemporary politics at length, concludes (p. 143): "While the Germans are thus preparing for the open and secret war started against them by the Know Nothings, they are also thinking of placing new stars on the American flag. A German-American State! That now is the wonderful dream of many. They are thinking of Kansas."

On February 26, 1863, Abbot Wimmer communicated to the headquarters of the Verein his fear "that the Republican Party, under the influence of the Methodists and of many radical Forty-eighters, had brought on the Civil War, in order to ruin the Democratic Party in the North, to which many Catholics belonged, and then to attack the Church. He asserted that they were not successful in their designs solely because the general public opinion was against them" (p. 150).

Baltimore, Maryland

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This volume consists of reprints of fifteen articles on various phases of Pennsylvania history originally published in the Jeannette News-Dispatch, of which Mr. Bomberger is the editor. The author draws his material from "authoritative books whose writers gained their status by original research," from the collections of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, and from "original papers in private and public hands." Eight of the articles fall outside the field of western Pennsylvania history; these deal either with the early history of the colony before the western region was a factor, or with men and events in the eastern part of the state. The remaining seven are concerned with a variety of topics.