



# 150 Years 1859-2009

## Historical Article

HOLY CROSS ↔ IMMACULATA  
HONOR ↔ CHERISH ↔ INSPIRE

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Edition I

## Events and Stories from Our Rich History

Today begins the first of 16 monthly bulletin inserts that will feature historical events from the 150-year journey of Holy Cross-Immaculata Parish. Some events may be familiar and others obscure, but all were milestones along the way. Our intent is to raise awareness, increase interest in parish history and reflect the quiet dedication and hard work of our predecessors. Without their commitment and dedication, our parish would not be here today.

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### August 1859: The cornerstone is laid for The Church of the Immaculate Conception

On August 21, 1859, Archbishop John Baptist Purcell, Cincinnati's first Archbishop, laid the cornerstone for the Church of the Immaculata, the building that today houses Holy Cross-Immaculata Parish. Purcell purchased the land, donated the stone and personally supervised construction from start to finish. Some accounts say he gave \$10,000 of his own money to help fund the project.

Immaculata, the name Purcell preferred, was also known as the Archbishop's Church because of Purcell's intense personal interest in it. He declared it his votive offering to honor the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Immaculate Conception. The architect Purcell chose was Picket and Sons, the architectural style simple gothic and the contractor, John Foley.

Churches in those times traditionally began as grass-roots initiatives by Catholics who desired a church in their neighborhood. They approached the Archbishop and worked out a plan. Not so with Immaculata. It was special from the beginning.

An excerpt from an article in the August 27, 1859 edition of the Catholic Telegraph and Advocate covering the laying of the cornerstone quotes Purcell:

“It is hoped that the Catholics of Cincinnati, both English and German, will contribute liberally to the building as a monument to the Divine glory, in thanksgiving for the first privilege conferred on Heaven's Queen and for the benefits conferred, through the Ever Blessed Virgin Mother on the Christian people. When this Beacon Star shines over the city, let everyone who sees it remember, with pleasure, the help he had given to place it on its watchtower.”

Thus began the physical presence of Archbishop Purcell's church on Mt Adams.

~ Jim Steiner



## Area Catholic Churches in 1859

When Immaculata was founded in 1859, East Side Cincinnati Catholics had access to St. Xavier on Sycamore Street (1819); the Cathedral on Plum Street (1841); three Over the Rhine churches, Old St. Mary's on E. 13th Street (1841), St. John the Baptist on Green Street (1845) and St. Paul at 13th and Pendleton Streets (1848); St. Philomena on the south side of 3rd Street between Pike and Butler Streets (1846), now the site of a highway overpass; St. Francis deSales in East Walnut Hills (1849); and St. Francis Seraph at Vine and Liberty Streets (1858).

Some of those churches were offspring of Holy Trinity Church in the southwest corner of the city. Founded in 1834, it was the first German Catholic Church west of the Alleghenies.

The proliferation in the 1840s of the Over the Rhine churches in particular was attributable to the huge influx of Germans into Cincinnati in the 1830s and 1840s. The congregations of those churches were largely German. By 1840 native Germans constituted 31% of the city's population.

The establishment of Immaculata, to serve the Germans of Mt. Adams, continued that trend. Not until 1872 was Holy Cross Church built to serve the Irish of Mt. Adams.

~ Ed Adams

*Lamott, History of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati 1821-1921.  
Hussey, A History of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.*

### Other significant historical events that occurred in the year 1859:

- Oregon was admitted as the 33rd state
- Ground was broken for the Suez Canal
- John Brown raids the Harpers Ferry Armory in Harpers Ferry, Virginia in an unsuccessful bid to spark a general slave rebellion
- Chimes of Big Ben in London ring for the first time
- Edwin Drake drills the first oil well in the U.S. in Titusville, Pennsylvania
- British naturalist Charles Darwin publishes the Origin of the Species