Gathered Fragments

Vol. XXI, Fall 2011
The Publication of the Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania
Submission Guidelines

The Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania solicits and welcomes items for Gathered Fragments addressing the culture and history of Catholicism in Western Pennsylvania.

Gathered Fragments publishes articles and primary sources relating to the parochial, religious, diocesan, and laical history of the Catholic Church in Western Pennsylvania. We also solicit book and exhibit reviews, news, and other items relating to Catholic history in Western Pennsylvania. Genealogical items are accepted providing they relate to the broader scope of the Society’s mission. Articles previously published elsewhere will be considered with appropriate permission from the original publication.

Research articles of 1000 words or more will be considered. Notation of sources must accompany each article. Submitters are urged to consult the Chicago Manual of Style or the most current edition of Kate Turabian’s A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, for guidelines on proper formatting.

Submissions should be sent to: info@catholichistorywpa.org. To submit by mail, please send to Blanche McGuire, Catholic Historical Society of Western PA, Diocese of Pittsburgh, 2900 Noblestown Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15205-4227. News items or other relevant articles of note of any size pertaining to Catholicism in Western Pennsylvania will also be considered.

Submissions are requested to pertain in some way to the broader theme of Catholicism in Western Pennsylvania. These items may also be sent to the above address.

Membership Information

Gathered Fragments is published once a year by the Catholic Historical Society of Western PA, Diocese of Pittsburgh, 2900 Noblestown Road, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15205-4227. Rates for subscriptions are currently: $25 for sustaining members, $15 for institutional members, $10 for individual members, and $5 for individual vowed religious.

The Society welcomes donations to complete research, as well as to support publishing and preservation projects in local Church history. For further information, contact the Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania at the above address.

cover page images: communio.stblogs.org, mountangelabbey.org
Gathered Fragments

Contents
Vol. XXI, Fall 2011

Articles

The Write Stuff: The Influence on Western Pennsylvania on Writing and Faith
Regis Flaherty ......................................................... 3

Celebration of Catholic Pittsburgh
Robert P. Lockwood .............................................. 5

Pittsburgh’s Catholic Writers: A Legacy of Faith
Mike Aquilina .......................................................... 7

Historical Society Established at St. Paul Seminary
Jack Demnyan ......................................................... 9

Catholic Pioneer to be Honored with Memorial Park
Blanche McGuire ..................................................... 10

Book Reviews
John C. Bates .......................................................... 12

Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania
Board of Directors

Blanche G. McGuire, Acting President
Mike Aquilina
John C. Bates
Patrick Boyle
Kerry A. Crawford
Msgr. Russell A. Duker
Rev. James W. Garvey (Emeritus)
Anthony P. Joseph, Jr.
Rev. Joseph Mele
Rev. Peter Murphy
Kathleen M. Washy
Thomas E. White

Jenna Lo Castro, Editorial Consultant
Western Pennsylvania has been blessed with many Catholic writers whose words and works have inspired generations to grow in their faith and love of God.

In 1880, Monsignor Andrew A. Lambing laid the foundation for what would become the Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania. Monsignor Lambing was not only an exceptional priest and historian, he was a writer. Monsignor Lambing translated and wrote the introduction to and notes for one of the most precious accounts of our faith here in Western Pennsylvania: The Register of Fort Duquesne.

The founding of Fort Duquesne marked the establishment of Catholic worship in present-day Pittsburgh. The Register of Fort Duquesne, published in 1885, sheds light on the pastoral concern of the early French missionaries for the spiritual welfare of the soldiers, Catholic settlers, and Native Americans of this land at the confluence of the three rivers. In Monsignor Lambing, we find a quality important to all Catholic writers: remembrance. In remembering and honoring the past in the many books he wrote, Monsignor Lambing testified to the faith and those forbearers who shared it.

Ethel Danforth graduated from Seton Hill High School and the University of Pittsburgh. It was not enough to write flawless copy, she would later say, “if you do not have the gumption to see an editor and get him to print it.” Ethel Danforth had gumption - another quality for which Catholic writers are known. Graduating during the Great Depression, she was hired on as a reporter for the Pittsburgh Press. In 1933, she left her beat and Western Pennsylvania to enter the Maryknoll Sisters. As Sister Maria Del Rey, she served as a missionary in the Philippines for 11 years including three years in a concentration camp. Sister Maria Del Rey made the ultimate sacrifice as a writer – she destroyed her prison journal lest it incriminate her and the other sisters.

During the 1950s, she wrote several books about her ongoing missionary adventures as well as a vocation book well-known to a generation of Catholic girls, “Bernie Becomes a Nun.” And, then, there was Father Lawrence G. Lovasik. Father Lovasik was the oldest of eight children born in 1913 to Slovak immigrants in Tarentum. A Society of the Divine Word priest, Father Lovasik labored as a home missionary in the coal and steel regions of the eastern United States and later preached missions and gave retreats.

Frustrated that he could not reach more souls, Father Lovasik took up writing. “At least ninety percent of any writer’s accomplishments,” Father later said, “are due to plain and ordinary hard work.” By the time Father Lovasik died in 1986, his “plain and ordinary hard work” had yielded more than 30 books and 75 pamphlets on the spiritual life. Children might know him best for the many books he wrote about saints and sacraments.

The book “The Hidden Power of Kindness: A
Practical Handbook for Souls Who Dare to Transform the World, One Deed at a Time” still inspires adults. We recall Father Lovasik as a writer known for his virtue of perseverance.

Remembrance of, and respect for the past, gumption, and perseverance tell only part of the story of our Western Pennsylvania Catholic writers. It is their end goal that we must never forget. Sister Maria Del Ray perhaps said it best. “No doubt about it,” the nun and author wrote, “writing is a little bit of Purgatory. The only thing that drives me to it – besides my superiors – is the thought that it might lead souls to God.” And—she added, “I hate to see a good story go by the board.”

Remembrance of and respect for the past, gumption, perseverance, and the desire to lead all to Christ are the marks of yesteryear’s and today’s Catholic writers. On April 25, 2009, the Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania celebrated the area’s writing heritage by hosting the Catholic Writers Dinner. Sponsored in part by Our Sunday Visitor and the Gumberg Library of Duquesne University, the dinner drew more than 125 guests to hear four local Catholic writers speak of the influence of western Pennsylvania on their faith and writing.

The dinner was held at the Power Center of Duquesne University. Father Joseph Mele, Ph.D., a board member of the Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania and currently Rector of Saint Paul Seminary, gave the Benediction.

In this and future issues of Gathered Fragments, the Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania will share the remarks of our writer honorees.
Celebration of Catholic Pittsburgh

Robert P. Lockwood

Robert P. Lockwood, author, Director for Communications of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, General Manager of the Pittsburgh Catholic and former board member of the Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania was a honoree speaker at the Catholic Writers Dinner. His most recent books include A Guy’s Guide to the Good Life (St. Anthony Messenger Press) and A Faith For Grownups: A Midlife Conversation About What Really Matters (Loyola Press).

I think what we really have here tonight is a reflection – a celebration – not of individual authors, but of Catholic Pittsburgh. I have often said that it is impossible to understand Southwestern Pennsylvania – its history, culture, politics, academics, even its sports, without understanding the essential Catholic nature of its culture. It is there underlying every story and every part of who we are as a people. Maybe what I can do here in a few minutes is to relate just a couple of stories that reflect that truth.

Many of you are no doubt familiar with the Register of Fort Duquesne. Much of it was written by Father Denis Baron, chaplain at the French fort who celebrated what was traditionally seen as the first mass in Pittsburgh on April 17, 1754. The Register is just that – a canonical record of the Sacraments, not unlike the sacramental records every parish is required to keep today.

But in those pages, there are a hundred stories of faith. Take just one: “In the year one thousand seven hundred and fifty-five, on the 18th of September, was baptized with the customary ceremonies of our Holy Mother the Catholic Church, John Daniel Norment, born the same day, the son of John Gasper Norment and Mary Joseph Chainier, his father and mother being united in lawful wedlock.”

And then, just a week later, Father Baron recorded that, “In the year one thousand seven hundred and fifty-five, on the 24th of September, died at Fort Duquesne, under the title of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin at the beautiful river, John Daniel Norment, the son of John Gasper Norment and Mary Joseph Chainier. His remains were interred in the cemetery of the same fort, and with the customary ceremonies, by us, recollect priest, the undersigned chaplain of the King at the said fort.”

We then have Joe Barker. Anyone with an interest in Pittsburgh history can’t help but know about old Joe. From 1845 until his death, Joe Barker was an anti-Catholic polemicist in Pittsburgh. A minor political office holder, Barker gained fame as a street preacher targeting Catholics. Barker’s grist was the gamier stuff of Catholic urban legends that had been permeating American culture since the Pilgrims: convent horror tales, the brutality of the Inquisition, and power-mongering clerics. Such anti-Catholic harangues were commonplace in his day.

Bishop Michael O’Connor, Pittsburgh’s first bishop, was a favorite target of Barker’s rhetoric. Barker called him “Mickey” or “Irish Mickey” and he and his supporters would gather in Market Square. Often, the police were called in to handle the inevitable troubles that would arise from his oratory.

In September of 1849, the mayor had Barker arrested, charging him and his fellow travelers for obstructing traffic and using lewd language. His supporters convinced the majority of the Pittsburgh that citizens that Barker’s freedom had been taken away from him by a conniving and corrupt Catholic Church and, most assuredly, a new Inquisition in Pittsburgh was just around the corner.

Convinced that Barker’s arrest proved that the Church was dominating politicians, the citizenry of Pittsburgh in 1850 elected Joe Barker mayor while he was still in jail.

In one of his first acts as mayor, Barker ordered the arrest of Bishop O’Connor over faulty plumbing at Mercy Hospital. Barker served as judge of the case
and found the bishop guilty. Refusing the bishop’s appeal, he gave him the choice between jail time and a $20 fine.

Guards were often kept overnight in churches to deter attacks and priests began to avoid wearing their clerical garb in public. Anti-Catholic rallies were often held with the mayor delivering his usual fare. A plot was revealed to the bishop claiming that arson was planned for Catholic churches and Mercy Hospital. On May 6, 1851, Saint Paul Cathedral burned to the ground. Bishop O’Connor believed that nativist arsonists had torched the church, but didn’t press the issue out of fear of the riots that could result. The electorate tossed Barker out of office quickly and he died in 1862 when he was decapitated by a train.

A couple of years back, I wrote a column in the Pittsburgh Catholic about a local shop selling nuns’ habits for Halloween costumes. I wrote that perhaps it is time to give a little award for mindless acts of anti-Catholicism. “We’d call it the ‘Joe Barker Memorial Award,’” I wrote. A few days later, I got a letter in the mail. It was from a professor of law at Duquesne University. He mentioned that he got a chuckle out of my column. The letter was signed by Professor Robert S. Barker, great-great grandson of Joe Barker. Professor Barker is also a prominent member of the Latin Catholic community at Holy Wisdom Parish, and a first cousin to the head of the Department for Canon and Civil Law in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, Father Larry DiNardo. Joe Barker’s great-great grandson was a devout Catholic.

A final story: I had been asked to give a talk, and I was taking a quick breather outside the church hall before things got under way. The talk was for a Holy Name celebration in Beaver County, and the parking lot was already packed. A car pulled up while I was getting my thoughts in order, and a lady rolled down the driver’s side window. “Is this where they are having bingo?” she asked. “Nope,” I said, and worried about a perspective where a crowded church parking lot could only mean bingo.

After my talk, the awards program began. The fellow next to me whispered that it was the key to getting a good crowd—give out a lot of awards because the whole family has to come. Even the kids and grandkids come back in town to see the Old Man get his recognition. It was fun. The guys would get their picture taken with their award, then pull some notes from their jacket pocket to make sure they thanked everybody who had to be thanked. One fellow had his two typewritten pages, a torn-off note from a newspaper, the program of the event and a napkin with some last minute scribbling. The stuff kept falling off the dais. When he finally started, he forgot about all that and just spoke from the heart about family, faith, and service to the Church.

The guys weren’t getting awards for what someone might call the big stuff. No one was recognized for saving lives or running into burning buildings. What most of these guys accomplished were the small things done in love. And that day, they were in uncomfortable suits and ties, sweating bullets as they tried to say a few words of thanks to an audience that knew everything about them anyway.

They were all about love as Saint Paul described it. A love that “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” As I watched the parade of guys yanking nervously at their ties as they struggled through their embarrassed thanks, I realized how blessed I was to be in the company of men like that. Nurtured on a lifetime of the sacraments, they find that grace has become an old friend.

I think about John Daniel Norment, baptized, then dying at the age of six days, and his grieving parents over 250 years ago, part of the roots of our Catholic Church of Pittsburgh. I think of old Joe Barker and what he would think of a great-great grandson who had been raised to be a staunch and devout Catholic, serving a great university. I think of those guys at the Holy Name Society in Beaver County, the ones so nervous that they could barely eat the fancy meal in front of them as they waited to be honored for their faith in action.

I realize that together, all their stories are the mosaic of the Church of Pittsburgh. It is a dream come true for a Catholic writer to find a home here in Pittsburgh. Thank you for honoring me. Thank you for welcoming seven years ago a guy from a different place. But thank you so much more for the inspiration that is the Catholic community of Pittsburgh.
Three weeks ago, when I saw the advertisement for [The Catholic Writers Dinner] in Pittsburgh Catholic, with my photograph placed alongside those of Bishop Zubik, Dr. Muto, Father Gruber, Mr. Lockwood, and Mr. [Regis] Flaherty, I remembered a story about the poet Howard Nemerov. In one remarkable week in 1977, Mr. Nemerov received word that he had won the Pulitzer Prize and then the National Book Award. His reaction was exuberant. He cried out, “Overrated! At last!”

I took those very words as my own. Overrated! At last! A writer knows when he’s outclassed by present company. But he lives for such moments. So I thank God and the Historical Society for inviting me to share such an Olympian table. I am happy to be overrated if it means I am allowed to praise this city’s Catholic culture — if I am allowed to praise our communion of saints [and] the Church of Pittsburgh.

I didn’t have the privilege of growing up here. But that hardly matters. To grow up when I did was to live off the largesse of Pittsburgh’s Catholic literary scene. My friends and I, like millions in our generation, learned our early lessons in the faith from the picture books produced by that prolific priest of Western Pennsylvania’s coal fields, Father Lawrence Lovasik.

Father Lovasik had an almost-papally infallible instinct for identifying the facts that resonated with kids. We consumed his “Picture Book of Saints,” his catechisms and prayerbooks, and his primers on angelology and sacraments. As we grew older, Father Lovasik offered us spiritual direction in the finer points of kindness and Eucharistic devotion. He guided us along simple paths to the divine life, to the familiar places in our neighborhoods where heaven meets earth.

When we went off to school — if we went to Catholic schools, as my mother insisted we must — we took our lessons from Pittsburgh authors. If our school was struggling, we were still using textbooks produced in the early twentieth century by Pittsburgh’s Father Jerome Hannan — his “Bible History: A Textbook of the Old and New Testaments”; and his excellent “The Story Of The Church, Her Founding, Mission And Progress.” In my hometown, these books retained canonical status, more than half a century after their first publication because Father Hannan had eventually become bishop of our diocese.

If a school of my generation was more well off and up to date, then it could afford the state-of-the-art textbooks, like the Cathedral Basic Readers produced by Monsignor John B. McDowell. They were no less Catholic than their predecessors, though they bore more modern-sounding titles like “Cavalcades,” “All Around America,” “Fun with Our Family,” and “Fun Wherever We Are.”

Monsignor McDowell, too, would go on to become a bishop — an auxiliary here in Pittsburgh. And I know him well enough to know that he would pass along any credit for Pittsburgh’s Catholic literary culture to the generations before him. In fact, over the last decade, he has devoted his own literary labors to that end: writing histories that give cultural credit, across the centuries, wherever it’s due.

He would have us hear the voice of Pittsburgh’s church in those who lived here, and wrote here, and have been raised to the altars: John Neumann, Francis Seelos, Maria Theresa Gerhardinger, Katharine Drexel — but also in those whose fame was more local, though no less fascinating, and maybe no less important to history — and whose lives, in some cases, were perhaps no less holy than those who have been canonized: Michael O’Connor, Suitbert Mollinger, James Cox, and Adrian van Kaam.
If we draw the genealogical lines, we would all, I think, find our way back to a remarkable man of the nineteenth century, Monsignor Andrew Lambing (1842-1918), a prodigious and prolific man of letters. Not least among his accomplishments was the founding of the Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, which still sponsors an annual lecture in his honor. Monsignor Lambing wrote the foundational histories of Allegheny County and of Pittsburgh — and he wrote histories of the Dioceses of Pittsburgh and of Allegheny. He wrote serious theological studies in pneumatology (the science of the Holy Spirit) and mariology (the study of the Blessed Virgin), as well as a handbook of comfort for children who had lost their parents.

Academic history was his avocation, which he pursued in addition to the running of parishes and an orphanage. A giant of a man, grown fit through his early work on farms, in brickyards, and in an oil refinery, he served as a priest for 30 years before he missed a single day on account of illness. He is reputed never to have taken a vacation.

In the multivolume “History of Pittsburgh and Environs” published by the American Historical Society in 1922, Monsignor Lambing is listed prominently among the region’s “Men Widely Famed.” How prominently? Well, he appears just after Charles Schwab and George Westinghouse, but before Andrew Carnegie and Henry Clay Frick. He’s number three out of forty men identified as builders of this region.

I get exhausted just thinking about Monsignor Lambing’s literary accomplishments, which seem to have been an afterthought to his pastoral work and brick-and-mortar administration. But I can’t help but be grateful to him for setting the high standard for the next generations — for Father Hannan, Father Lovasik, and then Monsignor McDowell and so many others.

Twenty-three years ago this month I dropped, as if by a providential parachute, into this wonderful culture when I took a writing job at a high-tech company in the suburbs of Pittsburgh. My wife and I fell in love with this place and this church. Here we’ve raised our six children in the faith on a hearty diet of Lovasik, Hannan and McDowell as well as Muto, Gruber, Lockwood, Lawler, Wuerl and Hugo. We cannot quite imagine leaving. It’s good to be here, as everyone in this room well knows.

It’s a privilege for me to speak here tonight and get all these mushy affections out of my system. If I have to be overrated for a moment to seize the opportunity, so be it!

As for my own accomplishments, I’ll prefer to recall an experience I had speaking to a group of Catholic high school students here in the city. It was a career-day sort of thing, and I was supposed to talk about my important work as a writer. I rattled off the titles of my books as if they were a long litany, figuring the kids would be impressed.

Then I invited questions about the writing life. I was ready to play the seasoned sage and after an awkward pause a hand went up in the back.

“Yes?” I said as I pointed to the young man.

And he asked me a question that is good to remember as I stand here among my heroes, past and present. He said, “Um, have you ever written anything that anyone would actually read?”

Perhaps for the first time in my life I was left speechless. And I’ll take this moment now to begin the second time. Thank you for being here, and for listening.

“I am happy to be overrated if it means I am allowed to praise this city’s Catholic culture — if I am allowed to praise our communion of saints [and] the Church of Pittsburgh.”

-Mike Aquilina
History Society Established at St. Paul Seminary

Jack Demnyan

As founding president, I am pleased to announce that historical interest among the seminarians studying at St. Paul Seminary (located in Crafton) is alive and well with the establishment of the St. Paul Seminary History Society in October 2010.

The idea to create a history society occurred to me as I noticed that several members of the seminary community frequently enjoyed having historical conversations at the dinner table and during the commute to and from Duquesne University.

After consultation and approval from the then Rector, Father Dennis Yurochko, I sent out an email to the seminary community ascertaining their level of interest in a group. –The results were overwhelmingly positive! Out of a total of 20 seminarians, eight wanted to join the society! Fellow history society member and brother seminarian, Christopher Mannerino, jokingly remarked that “it only takes a third of the population to start a revolution!”

As a further pleasant surprise, there is diversity among the members in their area of historical interest and expertise ranging from ancient civilizations to Russian culture!

Of course, the underlying interest for all of us is Church history which provides for us a great framework for historical inquiry. (For example, I am currently researching the role Catholics had in the antebellum South and in the Confederacy, but more on that later!)

So far, the History Society has gone on two field trips. The first one was to the completely original and recently restored Grand Army of the Republic, Capt. Thomas Espy Post located inside the Carnegie Free Library in Carnegie. The second one was to Old Economy Village where two of our members have volunteered. Currently, we are exploring the possibility of visiting the Prince Gallitzin shrine and the Columbus Chapel both located in Central Pennsylvania.

Jack Demnyan is a seminarian for the Diocese of Pittsburgh. He is now in his first year of Theological Studies at St. Mary’s Seminary in Baltimore, Md. Saint Mary’s is the first Catholic seminary established in the U.S. (1791).

CHSWP News

The Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania welcomes two new Board members: Pat Boyle is President of the Pastoral Council at St. Anne’s Parish in Castle Shannon. He has served on the Boards of the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank and Catholic Charities. The Rev. Peter P. Murphy is pastor of Saint Alphonsus parish in Wexford.

CHSWP Fall Lecture Scheduled

Rabbi Alvin Berkun, Chairman of the National Council of Synagogues, will speak to the Catholic Historical Society on Nov. 6 at 2 p.m. at the Seminary. His topic will be “Interfaith Relations: We’ve Come a Long Way!” Mark your calendars.

Congratulations to Board member, the Rev. Joseph Mele who is the newly appointed Rector of St. Paul’s Seminary.
Pennsylvania Catholic Pioneer To Be Honored with Memorial Park

Blanche McGuire

Capt. Michael McGuire, a Revolutionary War veteran and the first settler in Northern Cambria County near Loretto, PA, donated a sizable tract of land to the Catholic Church in the early 1790s. Today, St. Francis University in Loretto, is returning the favor by creating a community memorial park on university land in honor of McGuire.

Father Gabriel Zeis, T.O.R., president of Saint Francis University, put the park into perspective when he said, “The park is named in honor of the founding father of Loretto, Capt. Michael McGuire. Our park will be dedicated to his memory and to the challenge for all of us to be leaders: spiritually, civically, environmentally and physically.”

McGuire’s connection to the Church was long established. His father settled on the Maryland/Pennsylvania border before 1740, an area popular with Catholics who fled to the frontier to escape anti-Catholic laws in Maryland. Jesuit missionaries from Conewago, Pa. administered the sacraments to these settlers and kept the faith alive in the wilderness. During these troubled times, McGuire’s family publicly avowed their Catholic faith. Legal documents in 1758 refer to his father as a “Papist” liable for higher taxes.

For colonial Catholics like the McGuires, the Revolution promised freedom from British anti-Catholic laws. During the Revolution, McGuire captained a company of Frederick County, Md. militia that served under Gen. George Washington in New Jersey and Pennsylvania and was reportedly present at Yorktown.

After the war, Captain McGuire fulfilled a long time goal and moved his family, relatives and friends to the vicinity of Loretto, Pa. in 1788.

A noted hunter who loved the wilderness, Capt. McGuire had hunted in the area since the 1760s. En route to the Alleghenies, the McGuires stopped to worship at the recently built Basilica of the Sacred...
"The Captain Michael McGuire Park is a tribute to McGuire and all the early Catholics who held true to their faith [...]"

Heart in Conewago. The Catholic residents of the newly formed McGuire’s Settlement yearned for the services of the Church.

To that end, McGuire set aside land for a graveyard, church and support of a resident priest. Bishop John Carroll, the first U.S. Catholic bishop, described the gift as follows, “Capn Michael Maguire, living on the deck (slope) of Alligany, [...] where there are a good many Catholicks, offers 200 acres of very good land and a good horse to a priest, & will himself, subscribe (funds per year).” *

Father Felix Brosius, a visiting priest, later consecrated the donated land. When Captain McGuire died in 1793, he was the first person interred in the cemetery. McGuire’s gift to the Church was one of a series of events that established Loretto as an early center of Catholicity in Western Pennsylvania. In 1795, Prince Demetrius Gallitzin, a Russian prince and newly ordained priest, came to McGuire’s Settlement on a sick call and was shown the donated land. By 1799, Bishop John Carroll approved Prince Demetrius Gallitzin’s request to take possession of McGuire’s gift and reside as pastor.

Gallitzin renamed McGuire’s Settlement ‘Loretto,’ supervised the construction of St. Michael’s Church (reportedly named in honor of Captain McGuire) and spent his life ministering to his beloved flock of pioneer Catholics. Captain McGuire’s sons, Luke and Richard, served as Church wardens and his widow Rachel’s will called Gallitzin her ‘dearly beloved friend.’ Known as the ‘Apostle of the Alleghenies,’ Gallitzin is now a candidate for beatification.

The Captain Michael McGuire Memorial Park is a tribute to McGuire and all the early Catholics who held true to their faith in times of difficulty and is a reminder that Catholics today must meet similar challenges.

McGuire Park will provide recreation and education for area residents, visitors, and students. It will include a playground, an amphitheater, picnic facilities, a low-ropes course, several workout stations, a bird blind, and boardwalks that lead into the natural wetlands located on the grounds. Saint Francis University is presently raising funds for the Park’s construction. Members interested in supporting this initiative can send a donation to the Capt. Michael McGuire Memorial Park Fund at St. Francis University.


Special Note: Blanche McGuire is a descendant of Capt. Michael McGuire.
By John C. Bates
Board Member, The Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania


Paul F. Kennedy, “Billy Conn: The Pittsburgh Kid” (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2007), table of contents, prologue, appendices, bibliography, illus., 224 pp.


These three works, all published within a two-year period, may be taken together. They represent the rich sports history of the Pittsburgh area and reflect for Catholics the fact that a number of our sports figures got their start either at Catholic schools or in institutions operated by the Catholic Church. Such is the case with boxers Billy Conn and Harry Greb, who trained at the famed Pittsburgh Lyceum -- a gym and club organized and built by Fr. Laurence O’Connell, the founding pastor of the Church of the Epiphany in Pittsburgh’s Lower Hill District in the early 1900s. Designed to keep young men off the streets of the congested neighborhood, the Lyceum succeeded famously in providing training opportunities that were not available at all or within a reasonable distance. Conn, the “Pittsburgh kid”, was to win the world light-heavyweight title by age 21; he sought greater challenge in the heavyweight division, challenging champion Joe Louis in one of boxing’s all-time classics. Greb held the middleweight and light heavyweight titles and beat every Hall of Fame boxer he ever fought. Dubbed the “Pittsburgh Windmill”, because of his freewheeling style in the ring, he fought despite blindness in one eye and died by age 32.


Pittsburgh’s principal daily newspaper has mined its considerable newspaper obituary archives to produce a story of the “giants” who have made the city what it is. Admittedly selective, the stories ranging from a half-page to several pages resurrect many historical figures now lost to many except the elderly.

Of particular interest to Catholic readers is the work’s inclusion of John Cardinal Wright, Archbishop John F. Regis Canevin, Father James Cox of St. Patrick Church in the city’s Strip District, labor priest Msgr. Charles Owen Rice, and (and one of the few women included) Sister Michelle O’Leary of the Sisters of Mercy. The selected obituaries bear the date of publication; some are accompanied by a photograph. The work also includes the obituaries of a number of once-prominent Catholic laymen.

This prolific author and former president of The Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania has again enriched the parish histories of the Diocese of Pittsburgh by this work. This history tracks the foundation, by then-Pittsburgh bishop John F. Dearden, of the parish in the western hills of Allegheny County. Development of the Greater Pittsburgh Airport and construction of the Parkway West between downtown Pittsburgh and the airport resulted in the growth of Moon Township and necessitated creation of the parish. A history of the parish choir is also included in this publication.


This publication follows the standard format of the many church directories issued in the United States for Catholic churches: a pictorial presentation of the parish’s administrative team, the members of the many parish organizations, and the parish members (typically in family groupings, occasionally individual) – followed by the inevitable address listing of the members.

What is unique about this volume is its effort to tie together four formerly independent parishes in the Lawrenceville section of the City of Pittsburgh that were consolidated in the great diocesan reorganization of the late 1980s/early 1990s – St. Augustine (German) on 37th Street, Holy Family (Polish) on 44th Street, St. Mary (Irish) on 46th Street, and St. John the Baptist (Irish, with a significant African-American school population) on Liberty Avenue -- into Our Lady of the Angels parish.


This profusely-illustrated volume traces the history of the diocese that was the second to be carved out of the existing Diocese of Pittsburgh in 1901. The work opens with a reprise of the early history of the area, including the foundational work of Father Demetrius Gallitzin. It includes a chapter on the work of Pittsburgh native (of Holy Rosary Parish in the Homewood section of the City of Pittsburgh) Howard J. Carroll --- one of three priest-brothers, two of whom were elevated to episcopal rank --- who served as bishop from 1957 to 1960. He died prematurely while rushing completion of the magnificent diocesan cathedral. This beautiful history is a welcome addition to the many existing works, primarily focused on Fr. Gallitzin, which treat of the early years of the Diocese of Pittsburgh and its then-eastern-most counties.

The letters of Benedictine Archabbot Boniface Wimmer (1809-1875), founder of St. Vincent Archabbey in Latrobe (Westmoreland County), Pennsylvania, provide important details about the early history of this immigrant German order in the United States, but also shed light on nineteenth century Catholic immigrants and Benedictine missionary activity among them. This volume commemorates the 200th anniversary of Wimmer’s birth. It consists of translations and English-language originals of 200 of the most important letters that Wimmer wrote between 1832 (the year he entered the Benedictine monastery at Metten in Bavaria) and 1887 (when he died at the archabbeay in Latrobe). Some of Wimmer’s letters have been previously translated, and some (both untranslated and translated) have been published before. Those in this volume were selected from over 1500 extant letters in the archabbeay archives.


Holy Rosary Parish in the Homewood section of the City of Pittsburgh has the unique distinction of producing a number of priests from its family membership – including one set of three brothers, one of whom became an archbishop and another a bishop. In the absence of a true published history of the Diocese of Pittsburgh subsequent to the 1943 publication of Catholic Pittsburgh’s One Hundred Years, many Pittsburghers are unaware of the three Carroll brothers: Msgr. Walter Carroll who served in the Vatican during and after World War II, Bishop Howard Carroll of Altoona-Johnstown, and Archbishop Coleman Carroll, who served as Pittsburgh’s first auxiliary bishop (1953-1958) and was appointed as the founding bishop of the Diocese of Miami in 1958 — subsequently becoming its first Archbishop when Miami was elevated to the rank of an archdiocese in 1969. Archbishop Coleman Carroll died in July 1977. This volume – the usual lavish du Signe production replete with sleek text and color photographs – was issued to commemorate the Archdiocese’s 50th anniversary of its foundation.


This volume is an updated version of the University of Pittsburgh art and architecture professor Franklin Toker’s original 1986 work, Pittsburgh: An Urban Portrait. It is a neighborhood-by-neighborhood, sometimes building-by-building story of the city. Receiving note are the decaying condition of the former Our Lady Help of Christian (Italian) Church in the city’s Larimer section. Comments are made about the former St. Joseph (German) Church in the city’s Manchester section, the former St. Walburga (German) Church in the East End, Holy Rosary Church in Homewood, Sacred Heart Church in Shadyside, the Sisters of Mercy Motherhouse in Oakland and the former Mercy Hospital in Uptown, St. Benedict the Moor (formerly Holy Trinity and later St. Brigid) Church in the Upper Hill District, and Holy Spirit Byzantine Catholic Church in Oakland.

This coffee-table book recounts the history of the Archdiocese of Detroit in color photographs and well-written text, provided by the archdiocesan archivist. The value of this volume to Pittsburghers is that it covers the history of two cardinal-archbishops tied to our diocese: (1) John Cardinal Dearden, coadjutor bishop of Pittsburgh 1948-1950 and bishop of Pittsburgh 1950-1959, who left Pittsburgh to become Detroit’s second archbishop. He served there until his retirement in 1981 (d. 1988), and (2) Adam Cardinal Maida, a native of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, who became Detroit’s fourth archbishop in 1990, serving until his retirement in 2010. This volume ably captures the development of parishes, and to some extent institutions, in the archdiocese during the period of those two prelates’ administrations.


The autobiography of this Brooklyn-born Jewish conductor of major orchestras both in the United States and abroad has a particular interest for Catholics in southwestern Pennsylvania. The book has a dual dedication – to both the late Pope John Paul II and to a survivor of the Holocaust. The book begins with the prescient observation that religion cannot be envisioned without great music – be that Jewish liturgical songs or Gregorian chant. Against that conceptual background, the volume lays out the relationship of Sir Gilbert Levine and Pope John Paul II. Levine became the first Western conductor of an orchestra behind the Iron Curtain, when he was selected to head the Krakow Philharmonic in 1987.

Collaboration on papal-sponsored concerts of reconciliation was intended to ease the pained history between Christians and Jews. The great Papal Concert of Reconciliation in January 2004 included the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, celebrating the 25th anniversary of John Paul’s papacy – the first time that a U.S. orchestra performed at the Vatican.

Just days before that concert, Levine had led the Pittsburgh orchestra in a Reconciliation concert at Heinz Hall. Levine later conducted the Pittsburgh Symphony in concert at St. Paul Cathedral in Haydn’s “Creation” as part of the cathedral’s 100th anniversary. The role of then-Pittsburgh bishop Donald Wuerl in the preparation and execution of this musical cooperation is noted; the names of other Pittsburghers also appear in the work. This volume testifies to the religious faith of Pittsburghers and the musical talent of its orchestra.

Mercy Sister Julia Upton traces the life and work of a priest whom many consider to be one of the most influential liturgists before, during, and after Vatican Council II. Born in Germany in 1897, the young Hans Ansgar Reinhold entered the famed Benedictine abbey of Maria Laach, but was ordained for the German diocese of Osnabrück. Initially involved in the seamans’ apostolate, the young priest left Germany after Hitler’s rise to power and Reinhold’s encounters with the Gestapo. In 1938, Reinhold settled in Seattle, Washington. The first National Catholic Liturgical Week conference in 1940 marked his entrance onto the American liturgical stage. The year 1956 witnessed his departure from his adopted diocese after years of conflict with successive bishops, his diagnosis with Parkinson’s Disease, and his encounter with Bishop John Wright (then bishop of Worcester, Mass.) who took him under his providential care and later arranged the priest’s incardination into the diocese of Pittsburgh in 1961, of which diocese Wright had become ordinary in 1959. The author fairly portrays the priest’s conflicts with the Washington state prelates as well as the brotherly support provided by Bishop Wright and Cardinal Spellman. This volume reflects Father Reinhold’s themes of active participation, social justice, and liturgical development – and establishes how this prolific author and teacher established the blueprint for liturgical reforms implemented by Vatican II. This is a volume well worth reading for its insights into Vatican II, Catholic liturgical development, and the import role of Catholic Pittsburgh with respect to both the Council and the liturgy.


A member of the Benedictine Sisters of Erie, Pennsylvania, traces the enormous changes that her religious community underwent over three decades – beginning several years prior to Vatican II and continuing through the 25-year period that followed the Council’s conclusion. Her straight-forward description of the dramatic changes that this originally German immigrant group of Sisters (established in Erie in 1856, just four years after their arrival from Bavaria and original settlement in St. Marys, Pennsylvania) experienced reflects the struggles the Sisters experienced, as well as their strengths and skills in meeting them. While the author provides a wealth of detail about the many initiatives undertaken as the Sisters moved into new ministries, the reader is uplifted by the strong religious spirit conveyed in the Sisters’ individual and collective decisions and actions – particularly their openness and risk-taking. As this very readable volume makes clear, while the Erie Benedictines are a relatively small congregation, the Sisters have broadened their initial traditional work into a variety of independent ministries, with a central commitment to peace and its necessary corollary, justice.
"Welcome to Our Table: A Collection of Recipes by Saints John & Paul Parish, Sewickley, Pennsylvania" (Kearney, NE: Morris Press Cookbooks, 2010), table of contents, illus., index, appendices, 607 pp.

This attractive leather-bound cookbook is the latest in the long tradition of western Pennsylvania cookbooks. With this publication, Catholics take no place other than first when it comes to cookbooks! The work opens with a history of the parish — formed in 1994 to address the exploding Catholic population in the North Hills. Founding pastor was then-Msgr. (later Cardinal) Daniel DiNardo.

Leaving history aside, the easy-to-use 3-ring binder contains hundreds of recipes contributed by parishioners. Organized by chapters (appetizers, soups and salads, vegetables and sides, main dishes, etc.), an easy-to-use index is complemented by Helpful Hints for each chapter. This reviewer suggests that the cooks among you start with the last chapter, "Recipes from Heaven". With an array of choices, bring on the holidays and entertaining with great food! This reviewer would be remiss in not mentioning the consummate professionalism with which the chairpersons and members of the Cookbook Committee communicated with interested buyers of the cookbook. Madison Avenue has nothing on this group when it comes to first-rate customer service and communication. Bon appétit!


This massive coffee-table-style book was issued to mark the bicentennial of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Western Pennsylvania was originally part of the then-diocese of Philadelphia until the formation of the Diocese of Pittsburgh in 1843. This work, lavishly illustrated with photographs and maps, is of interest to Catholics in western Pennsylvania because its historical account covers the early history of Catholicism in our area. In 1843, the former rector of Philadelphia’s seminary (Rev. Michael O’Connor) was named as the first bishop of Pittsburgh. This work is an impressive history, reflecting the long-standing commitment of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia to the telling of its Catholic story at both the diocesan and parish levels.

“100th Anniversary: The Church of the Resurrection” (Pittsburgh: Church of the Resurrection, 2009), illus.

This book commemorates the 100th anniversary of the principal Catholic church in the city’s Brookline section. Established in 1909, the parish enjoyed a phenomenal growth for much of its history. Its original pastor, Fr. James Quinn served for 46 years. Father Quinn selected the parish’s name to reflect his own birthday, which occurred on Easter Sunday, hence the name “Resurrection.” The history recounts the sale of the convent and the conversion of the old school building into a 26-unit apartment building for seniors, known as Creedmoor Court. Historical and current photographs enhance the narrative. All parishioners who contributed to this publication may be justly proud of the result, as they already are of the rich history of this prominent city church.

The editors of this lavishly illustrated volume, issued to commemorate the city of Pittsburgh’s 250th anniversary, candidly admit in the book’s preface that given the thousands of prominent persons who originated in or were part of the city’s rich history -- born here or bred here --- their selection of just 500 was as “arbitrary.” Illustrated biographical entries are provided. The only Catholic clerical profiles are those of Fr. James Cox (legendary pastor of St. Patrick’s Church in the Strip District) and Msgr. Charles Owen Rice (nationally famous “labor priest”). Catholic laity, although not identified by religion, include such prominent figures in a broad range of categories: newscasters (Bill and Patti Burns), actors (Gene Kelly), artists (Virgil Cantini), singers (Perry Como), politicians (David L. Lawrence), sports (St. Justin High School’ graduate Johnny Unitas, Central Catholic High School graduate Dan Marino, and the Steelers’ Rooney’s), and judges (Michael Musmanno). Among the self-promoting sponsor profiles is that of the only Catholic institution included, Carlow University.

Sister Mary Angelita Molina, “My 15 Year Journey in Africa: A Memoir of Sister Mary Angelita Molina, OSF” (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2010), introduction, table of contents, illus., 114 pp.

This is the autobiographical account of a Puerto Rican native who entered the then-Sisters of St. Francis of Millvale (now the Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities), who finally realized her calling to the missions among the people of Africa. In the late 1980s, she was invited by the bishop of the Diocese of Benin City in Nigeria to work among in one of Africa’s poorest countries. For 15 years, Sister Angelita taught English to the people and developed the catechetical structure in 52 centers in the diocese. Builder of a school and a skating rink for children, she taught widows the art of batik/clothe tye-dying so that they could develop small businesses. Despite bouts with malaria and typhoid fever, she continued her ministry – but breast cancer led to her return to the Motherhouse in Millvale in 2004. Sister Mary Angelita fulfilled her childhood dream of missionary work in Africa; her story continues the Franciscan mission to world into the 21st century. Readers will find her story to be an inspiring account of the challenges she encountered with significant accomplishments in the face of those challenges.