Father Peter Lemke served as a missionary pastor in west-central Pennsylvania for a little over a decade in the mid-nineteenth century. First as an assistant to Father Demetrius Gallitzin, and then in his own right, Lemke helped establish a number of Catholic communities that survive to this day, and played a critical role in bringing the presence of the Benedictine Order to western Pennsylvania. His writings give us a firsthand look at the emergence of Catholic life in western Pennsylvania during one of its most critical formative periods.

**Arrival in America**

Peter Lemke was born to a non-Catholic family in Mecklenburg, Germany, in 1796. He had an unhappy childhood in a domineering household, but he received a good education. He served for a time in the army and fought in the Napoleonic wars, but afterwards he followed a natural spiritual bent by entering Mecklenberg University to become a Lutheran minister. While studying for ordination, however, he was disappointed both theologically and personally by his experiences. He instead became Catholic only five years after completing his theological studies, and after some further study he was ordained a priest. Though his work was not uncomfortable, Lemke manifested a sort of ministerial restlessness early on that would mark the rest of his priesthood when he then sought to become a missionary in the United States of America. He answered a plea from the bishop of Philadelphia for priests to serve as missionaries in his young diocese, arriving in the United States in 1834.

Though first assigned to ministry in a German church in Philadelphia, Lemke sought to be assigned to the western half of the state, where there were even less priests available and therefore, a much greater need. The bishop acceded to his wishes, assigning him to assist Father Demetrius Gallitzin in the Allegheny Mountains, whose labors, personal sacrificial contributions, and pastoral care had already established a similar community in the area. Lemke’s work in this community was marked by dedication and diligence, as he labored tirelessly to establish a new community and to bring the presence of the Benedictine Order to the region.

His writings give us a firsthand look at the emergence of Catholic life in western Pennsylvania during one of its most critical formative periods. Lemke’s work was not without its challenges, as he faced opposition from other religious groups and from the existing established church in the area. However, his dedication and perseverance helped to establish a new community that survives to this day, and played a critical role in bringing the presence of the Benedictine Order to western Pennsylvania.

**Note**

1. Lemke’s work and contributions to the establishment of Catholic life in western Pennsylvania are documented in his writings, which give us a firsthand look at the emergence of Catholic life in the region during one of its most critical formative periods. His contributions were marked by dedication and diligence, as he labored tirelessly to establish a new community and to bring the presence of the Benedictine Order to the region. Though faced with opposition from other religious groups and from the existing established church in the area, Lemke’s work was not without its challenges. However, his dedication and perseverance helped to establish a new community that survives to this day, and played a critical role in bringing the presence of the Benedictine Order to western Pennsylvania.
fices and apologetical writings were well-known both in the America and in Europe. Gallitzin was then in his mid-sixties, and Lemke expressed surprise to find out that he was still alive, much less that he might be sent to assist him. It was as assignment that would provide the most significant portion of Lemke's priesthood and permanently shape the history of western Pennsylvania.

The Missionary Pastor in the Alleghenies
Prince Demetrius Gallitzin had been born into the noble Gallitzin family, whose roots in Russia went back for centuries. His father was an ambassador in the court of Catherine the Great, and his mother was descended from a prominent German military family. Demetrius was born in 1770 and was both well-bred and well-educated. He was baptized as a baby, mainly as a political formality; both of his parents (including his mother, a fallen-away Catholic) were students and active supporters of the Enlightenment, and felt only animosity towards Christianity. However, after a serious illness and positive encounters with educated priests, Demetrius’s mother returned to an active and fervent practice of her Catholic faith, ensuring that the then-teenage Demetrius did the same. When as a young adult Demetrius was sent to the newborn United States for a year or two on an educational tour, he surprised all who knew him by going straight into the seminary in Baltimore to become a missionary priest. He would never return to Europe.

At the time, all priests in the United States could be considered missionaries to some degree. Even when situated in churches in the better-established cities of the eastern seaboard, priests frequently had to travel long distances to minister to increasingly far-flung Catholic immigrants and settlers. A system of regular missionary routes were gradually established by these priests, with some Catholic dwellings becoming Mass houses that would occasionally serve as places for local Catholics to gather to celebrate Mass. Such Masses might be the only ones that these Catholics would be able to attend for months at a time, and the visit of any priest for Mass would usually become a “one-stop shopping” affair that included baptisms, confessions, catechism lessons, and blessing and distribution of religious articles. This was, at the time, the only means by which Catholics in western Pennsylvania could avail themselves of the sacraments.

Gallitzin spent nearly the first five years of his priesthood in itinerant priestly ministry before being assigned in 1799 to a distant Catholic settlement in the Alleghenies. First established by a Catholic veteran of the Revolutionary War, Gallitzin renamed this settlement “Loretto” a few years after his arrival. There, he served as what might be termed a missionary pastor with Loretto as his parish and primary assignment. It also served as a hub for his own mission routes to Catholics in much more isolated areas of western Pennsylvania, many dozens to sometimes more than a hundred miles distant. Prior to Gallitzin’s arrival, Catholicism in western Pennsylvania existed only in the hearts and the cabins of Catholic settlers who might hope and pray that a priest might someday visit to baptize their children, hear their confessions or celebrate Mass.

Without any structured or regular priestly presence, many Catholic settlers in the territory were so scattered and isolated that they attended whatever Christian services might be nearest (even if different from the faith with which they had been raised), or else drifted away from the practice of organized religion at all. At least one estimate considers it “probable that not more than one-sixth of the entire population of western Pennsylvania during the pioneer period were church members” of any kind.

Accordingly, Father Gallitzin’s work as the pastor of Loretto was true missionary work, with the priest administering the sacraments and celebrating the Mass in fields, under trees, in cabins or houses, and gradually but increasingly, in humble buildings erected as chapels or churches where there were enough Catholics to warrant it. What might be termed the Catholic culture in western Pennsylvania during frontier times had its own flavor, as the habits and customs of Catholic immigrants “were modified, sometimes temporarily, sometimes with permanent results, by the ever-present exigencies of frontier existence.” As such, changing needs and numbers among the Catholics gradually settling in western Pennsylvania could radically change the course of Gallitzin’s ministry year by year. Having divested himself of nearly all worldly possessions, this scion of European nobility had truly become a poor servant of poor Catholics, turning down offers to become a bishop in either Europe or America, instead expending everything in his disposal in order to fulfill his own written desire to “live and die a disciple of Jesus Christ” and even die as a martyr in the process, if God willed it.

Catholic Life on the Pennsylvania Frontier
This was never to be a permanent arrangement, of course. Gallitzin recognized that he was simply breaking the ground and sowing the seeds for what might eventually become permanent churches and parishes, even if that would be after his own death. Though he devoted himself entirely to his ministry to Catholics who needed him, his secondary goal was always to lay the foundation for a future in which there might be a flourishing Catholic presence with a church in every town and a priest in every one of those churches. Such a goal required willing and able priests, however, and this deferred the realization of such a vision for decades.
Instead, Gallitzin would serve virtually (and heroically) alone for the first three decades of his assignment as a missionary pastor in Loretto, only receiving a few priests to serve under his jurisdiction in the five years prior to Lemke’s arrival. In spite of this, by the time of his death, the handful of Catholics Gallitzin had first ministered to in Loretto in 1799 had grown to about five thousand Catholic families in Cambria County, Pennsylvania, in only forty years.8

But at the time of Loretto’s inception, for all intents and purposes, western Pennsylvania was the American frontier. Ohio was not yet a state, and the Louisiana Purchase was still several years away. “Nowadays when there is talk of the ‘far West,’ the Indian territories along the upper Missouri and Oregon and lying beyond the Rocky Mountains are meant,” Lemke wrote in 1861. “But at that time people as a rule did not venture beyond western Pennsylvania; whatever lay beyond, remained for the greater part inaccessible wilderness….9” He noted that there was no railroad access ever lay beyond, remained for the greater part inaccessible wilderness….9 He noted that there was no railroad access from Philadelphia to western Pennsylvania at the time, rendering the journey instead “a break-neck affair” of many days and nights by horse.10 Lemke told of one man whom the young Father Gallitzin (not yet thirty years old at the time) had convinced to come with him to the new settlement with his family.

In those days a journey such as theirs actually amounted to an expedition of some magnitude, considering that roads were altogether wanting. The baggage, women, and children were carried on packhorses or on carts and sledges drawn by oxen. For long distances, the men were obliged to go in advance and clear the way for the caravan to follow. Thus on some days only a few miles could be covered. At night they camped in the forests.11

Even after their arrival, such Catholic settlers were carving their lives out of the wilderness. Houses were built from cut trees, farmland had to be cleared, and supplies were not easily available. Father Gallitzin told Lemke that when Loretto was first established, the nearest available salt, coffee, or sugar was a hundred miles away.12 In the midst of these and other priorities, these first mission pastors had to plan for the gradual construction of churches that might, in future decades, become formal parishes.

Churches at that time were not much different from the cabins built by the settlers - perhaps slightly larger. The first churches were built of round logs that afforded little protection from weather, and they often had neither floors nor windows.13 Gallitzin’s first church had indeed been built from trees hewn in the few months between his arrival and the first Mass celebrated there at Christmas of 1799. Even the second church Gallitzin had built there years later to replace the log cabin had only two rows of pews.14 By the time Lemke was first assigned to the area, he compared a wooden church in which he celebrated Mass to “a large Bavarian country barn”15 - a far cry from the great cathedrals of Europe that he would have been familiar with!

The Arrival of Father Lemke

It is in this context that Father Lemke makes a great historical contribution in having set pen to paper on several occasions to provide eyewitness accounts and reminiscences of both Gallitzin’s ministry and the historical situation of Catholics in western Pennsylvania during this period. These include letters written by Lemke during his initial assignment to the Alleghenies and recollections published in a local newspaper towards the end of his life, but above all his biography of Father Gallitzin. Written nearly three decades after they originally met, his Life and Work of Prince Demetrius Augustin Gallitzin (1861) provides an especially valuable glimpse into the establishment of Catholicism among the people of western Pennsylvania, as well as into the life of the Servant of God.

In these writings, Lemke records his journey from Philadelphia to the Alleghenies, culminating in his first encounter with Prince Gallitzin. Lemke traveled from Philadelphia to Loretto successively by rail, river, and horse. The railroad took him the first seventy miles to Columbia, Pennsylvania, a town originally founded by the Quakers along the Susquehanna River. Word of a German priest passing through reached the right ears and, after disembarking from his train, Lemke was approached by a local asking if he might be willing to pause in his journey to say Mass for German-speaking Catholics living in the woods a little more than a dozen miles away. He quickly agreed, accompanying his guide into the forests on a borrowed horse. Lemke was especially struck by how dense the “American primeval forest” was, remarking that the foliage was so thick that he doubted if European horses ever could have navigated them. Lemke continued:

After several hours of riding it became, at last, light again from the forest shade and I caught sight of plowed fields and the up-climbing smoke of dwellings. Our halt was made before a large log-house, and an old man with snow-white hair and a face of integrity helped me with my things from the horse and led me to the hearth where round uncleft logs were blazing…. Here was I now really in every respect in a new world.16

This missionary visit provided Lemke with a taste of what awaited him to the west. The man with the white hair, his
host, was a Swiss-born Catholic who lived in the area for thirty-one years, during which time five of his sons had grown and established families nearby as well. German families had joined them to make a little Catholic enclave in the forest. As there was seldom a priest available, the man had become a sort of spiritual patriarch for the settlement, ensuring that their faith was well tended during those times when priestly ministry ensured that they could avail themselves of the sacraments. “During thirty years in the forest [this man] had been either father, grandfather or godfather to every baptized child in the region,” Lemke marveled. “During those same thirty years, when there was no priest – and there seldom was one – he conducted every Sunday religious service, and himself instructed the young people in their catechism.”

“I am bound to say,” Lemke later reflected, “that I was filled with wonder at the healthy and correct religious views of these people, who had grown up in the woods, as also at the simplicity and purity of their lives. Here one sees the power of the Catholic faith; here one for the first time fully realizes what is meant by tradition.” In the western half of the state, the reality was the same as in this instance: it was such families that remained faithful Catholics in spite of the lack of regular sacramental ministry, which provided such rich ground for the efforts of the missionary priests who slowly emerged to minister to them. These cabins, homes and farmhouses, where some sense of Catholic faith, prayer and pious devotion had been practiced, would provide priests such as Gallitzin, Lemke and others with the raw material with which the story of Catholicism in western PA would be permanently shaped.

This is exactly what Father Lemke had discovered in the woods near Columbia on this occasion, and the settlers there were especially excited to have a German-speaking priest available. They fed him and put him up for the night. The next morning, Lemke sat on a log next to the fireplace in his host’s cabins to hear confessions. Afterwards, a white tablecloth was spread over the table and Mass was celebrated, at the conclusion of which a horse arrive bearing a woman and her month-old child. She had learned of Lemke’s presence and had brought the baby to be baptized. Happy as he was to be of priestly service, Lemke was also thrilled on this occasion with an unexpected visitor of another sort. As he sat down to eat supper with his host’s family on the evening of his arrival, one of the sons burst in and called for the dogs and other sons to come outside. The sudden commotion made Lemke think that perhaps Indians were attacking – hardly likely at that time and place, but perhaps indicating what the priest’s perception of what ministry in America would be like. It turned out to be a black bear, which the dogs soon treed. It was too dark for shooting, so the sons chopped the tree down, whereupon one of them came forward and killed the bear with a single ax-blown so that they could skin and dress it. Lemke, who had come from Europe with a romantic vision of ministering on the American frontier, was delighted.

Meeting Father Gallitzin

From Columbia, Lemke set out on the Pennsylvania canal for another 170 miles, eventually disembarking in Hollidaysburg. From there he took the stage coach up the mountain to the hamlet of Munster, only a few miles distant from Loretto. There he stayed his first night in a tavern, where he struggled to make himself understood since they spoke no German and his English was very slight. They did understand the word “Gallitzin,” however, and a young man was set to guide him to Loretto the next morning to meet the legendary missionary.

“We had penetrated the forest for a mile or two,” Lemke later recalled, “when I saw a sled coming along drawn by two powerful horses…. In the sled I beheld a venerable-looking man, in a half-reclining posture. He was clad in an old worn-out overcoat resembling a cloak, and was wearing an old farmer’s hat which no one, it is likely, would have stooped to pick up from the street. He was holding a book in his hands. I thought that probably an accident had taken place that perhaps somewhere in the woods the old man had dislocated a limb, and he was therefore being conveyed in such outlandish fashion.” Lemke could hardly conceal his amazement when his guide pointed to the old man in the sled and told him that this was the Gallitzin he was looking for. Lemke rode up and asked if he really was the pastor of Loretto, the royal-born Prince Gallitzin. The older priest was greatly
amused at Lemke’s reaction to his ragged appearance. “‘At your service! I am that very exalted personage,’ he said with a hearty laugh.”

Lemke’s arrival came at a unique formative moment in the Catholic history of western Pennsylvania. Numbers were growing, due to both western expansion and an influx of both immigrants and rising industry. More priests were available, but there were few considering the needs, especially in more rural areas. Shortly before Gallitzin’s arrival in America, there were only five priests to minister to about ten thousand Catholics in all of Pennsylvania. By the time Lemke arrived to help Gallitzin in 1834, there were over a hundred thousand Catholics in the state. Less than ten years later, the Diocese of Pittsburgh was formed; it encompassed twenty-seven counties of western Pennsylvania and boasted forty-five thousand priests – a third of the state’s Catholic population – with fourteen total priests assigned to them.

Lemke, meanwhile, vacillates in his writings between being somewhat shocked as a native of Europe at what the people in western Pennsylvania considered civilization and embracing a more romantic spiritual view of his missionary labors. We find both perspectives reflected in an account he wrote the year after his assignment to the Alleghenies. Initially, Lemke seems almost offended by the details he describes:

Though less than ten miles from Loretto, Ebensburg had been named the county seat of Cambria County; it must have seemed an ideal place for a second mission parish. Prior to Father Lemke’s arrival, a small church had been erected where a very brief succession of priests had served, none staying long. When Lemke was assigned there in 1834, his ministry was patterned out of necessity on that of Father Gallitzin, celebrating Mass in the Ebensburg church only one or two Sundays per month and spending the other Sundays at more distant churches, mission stations or Mass houses. Due to the small number of available priests in proportion to the number of Catholics and their geographical spread, this could be the case even after large numbers (even hundreds) attended a particular church.

Lemke, meanwhile, vacillates in his writings between being somewhat shocked as a native of Europe at what the people in western Pennsylvania considered civilization and embracing a more romantic spiritual view of his missionary labors. We find both perspectives reflected in an account he wrote the year after his assignment to the Alleghenies. Initially, Lemke seems almost offended by the details he describes:

I am now since the 23rd of December here in Ebensburg, which is the principal town of Cambria County. Lest you get a wrong impression… I must tell you that there is nothing to be seen here resembling a town except one large walled-up building with a tower, the court-house of the county or circuit, and very few
houses which resemble the dwellings of Europeans; but mostly log and clapboard houses. As to paved streets and such like it is not to be thought of here but instead one is compelled evenings to feel his way with a stick – in order not to break his neck by falling over stumps. Prior to twenty years ago all this country ‘round about was woods, and if one will now go one thousand steps away he will find himself again in the primitive forest. For these reasons the place looks more like a bivouac than a town, as for example such things as kitchens, cellars and other rooms and conveniences which according to our ideas about human comforts are necessary, are not much to be thought of here and I am willing to bet that in this entire principal town there are not five doors to be found which can be locked. My host is one of the first magistrates, that is the collector and accountant of public revenues of the entire district, covering a territory of about four hundred square miles, and besides, he carries on the carpenter trade and fanning business without an apprentice; for apprentices and maid-servants are unknown here.25

Lemke goes on, however, to describe the joy that his ministry in what he seems to regard as appalling conditions provides him:

I could wish that every missionary would find himself so situated as I am here…. I have [no resources] except what the people give me, and as the people have very little I likewise have very little; and I can really say that I have never in my life been so poor and at the same time so rich; for here I feel satisfied and happy, and have everything in abundance that is necessary for the maintenance and support of life; and for what purpose should I want money [anyway]? My health becomes better with every hardship.26

According to Lemke, there were only three churches in Cambria County by 1834, with Gallitzin serving the one in Loretto, and Lemke thereafter assigned to serve those at Ebensburg and at Hart’s Sleeping Place. But there was no lack of work for them both beyond those communities. “There were Catholic settlements as much as fifty, indeed seventy miles distant” from their churches, Lemke wrote. He continued:

We were their nearest priests, and they of course needed to be visited occasionally. In the entire tract [of western Pennsylvania], there were at that time no more than four or five priests besides us. It was a frequent occurrence that I had to make a journey of two full days on horseback to conduct divine services as a congregation or to administer the last sacraments. Thus I was always on the road, but my work was easy, for wherever I came, Gallitzin had already been there in advance and had prepared the ground well.27

**Mass at St. Joseph’s**

One of the more amusing anecdotes left to us by Father Lemke reflects this tension between what he viewed to be the simple and sincere spirituality of the people established by the saintly Gallitzin and the reality of the situation in which they lived it out. Coming to St. Joseph’s church at Hart’s Sleeping Place to celebrate Mass for the Feast of the Epiphany, Lemke arrived early to attend to the other sacraments of need. Since the humble construction of the church rendered it quite cold and drafty, he sat in front of the kitchen fire in a nearby house to hear a steady stream of confessions throughout the morning, pausing occasionally to baptize children brought to him. Mass was then to be celebrated in the early afternoon. The priest was pleasantly surprised when one of the men said that while the church had no organ, the people could sing the High Mass since it was a feast day; and his wife, a “good singer,” was able to lead them. Pleased that they had been trained and willing to do so, Lemke consented – but by the time Mass was over, he regretted it.

My singers had arranged themselves on John Campbell’s work bench, the only article of furniture in the church… and commenced singing in a way that would have made me laugh if I had not been highly edified by the zeal and religious fervor of the good people. The good singer might have been a good singer half a century ago, but since she had become the mother of about a dozen children and the grandmother of several dozen and faced the storms of the Alleghenies for many a long year, her voice must have suffered considerably, for it sounded exactly like that of a young rooster making his first attempt at crowing.28

Making matters worse, Lemke found himself distracted by what sounded like another group singing outside the church. By the time the Gospel was being proclaimed, he realized that the other group of singers were the dogs who had followed their masters to church and who were howling in response to the singing inside the church. They howled so much that by the time he had begun his sermon, Lemke had to stop suddenly and ask in frustration if none of the people had common sense enough to go chase the dogs away so that he could be heard. The people were so anxious to please the priest that every single person at Mass then ran outside and chased the dogs away, leaving the priest standing alone at the pulpit until they returned. Putting his chagrin...
behind him, he continued the Mass, for which he had brought all the necessary accoutrements except the delicate bell that was to be rung near the consecration. The person serving, noticing that the bell was missing and not wanting to disappoint, procured the best substitute he could find: at the Sanctus, the loud clanking of a cow bell suddenly sounded out. Lemke does not record if he was able to keep a straight face.29

The Establishment of Carrolltown

Father Gallitzin grew ill and died in Loretto in the spring of 1840, with the bedside Lemke holding Gallitzin’s hand when his pulse stopped. Lemke preached in German at the funeral, and was deeply moved by the great number of weeping Catholics who had traveled from up to fifty miles away to bend over the open coffin and kiss the venerable missionary’s hands.30 Lemke felt a personal obligation to carry on the work with the vision that Gallitzin had for his mission field in west-central Pennsylvania. “Not only did I know [Gallitzin] personally,” Lemke proudly wrote, “but I was his bosom friend, his confessor and collaborator during the last six years of his life. Afterward I was his successor and continued his work at the identical place where he had begun forty years earlier.”31

After Father Gallitzin died, Lemke was stationed in his place at Loretto, and for the rest of that year he was the only priest in all of Cambria County. But more and more, Lemke focused his sights on another territory that he felt might be able to aspire to a greater success than Loretto with its geographical limitations. Lemke used his own private funds and the support of local Catholics to purchase land about twelve miles north of Loretto, where some Catholic settlers had already established farms.32 With a view toward eventually building both a town and a church in this territory, he bought about four hundred acres of land and then built a house for himself and a chapel there.33 He proposed to name the town of Gallitzin several months before the latter’s death, but Father Gallitzin vigorously opposed the idea, suggesting instead that it be named in honor of Bishop John Carroll, who had been the first Catholic bishop of the United States. The town was accordingly named Carrolltown,34 and its size, though never great, indeed came to surpass that of Loretto.

Bringing the Benedictines

Perhaps the most visible monument today to Father Lemke’s ministry in western Pennsylvania, however, is the presence of the Benedictines there and, more specifically, of St. Vincent College. Trappists had passed through the area in 1803 with the evident thought to establish a monastery there, but they stayed very briefly.35 But Lemke very much took the view that the combined spiritual and civilizing influence of Benedictine spirituality would be an ideal cure for what he called the “lamentable patchwork”36 of the mission field under his care, and indeed his actions would lead directly to a significant Benedictine presence in the western half of the state.

After Cambria County came under the jurisdiction of the newly-established diocese of Pittsburgh following Gallitzin’s death, Lemke’s desire to see a more fitting church built at the newly-established Carrolltown led him to ask his new bishop that he be allowed to travel to Europe to raise the necessary building funds. His resulting trip to Germany was successful in procuring the funds, but also produced a second, unexpected success. In Munich, he had dinner with some Benedictines who were greatly interested in his missionary work in America. Not wanting to miss the opportunity, Lemke told them of Carrolltown and his vision of having a Benedictine community established there to solidify the work Father Gallitzin had begun and which he was endeavoring to continue. Afterwards, one of the priests, Father Boniface Wimmer, sought him out and told him that he dreamed of coming to America as a missionary much as Lemke had only a decade before. Lemke encouraged him to do so, telling him that he could offer him significant acreage from the land he had purchased at Carrolltown to establish a monastery there. “The idea of establishing the Benedictines in America may already have existed in Father Wimmer’s mind, but out of this interview apparently grew the project which was afterwards carried
out by Father Wimmer on so marvelous a scale. To Father Lemke appears to be due the credit of first suggesting the establishment of the order in the United States.\textsuperscript{37}

But to his great consternation, the realization of that project was not to happen in either the manner, or location, that Lemke had dreamed of. When he returned, he settled in once more at Carrolltown, where he busied himself in making plans to see the new church built and the Benedictines welcomed there. Indeed, Father Wimmer and nineteen Benedictine brothers arrived in America in September of 1846, greeted personally by Father Lemke. Unfortunately, the bishop of Pittsburgh, in his first remonstrance with Father Wimmer, asked that they relocate to Westmoreland County instead,\textsuperscript{38} giving them the land of Sportsman’s Hall which had been home to a Catholic community since add date.\textsuperscript{39} Though this was a great personal blow to Lemke, his role in bringing the Benedictines to western Pennsylvania would lead to the establishment of St. Vincent College. It also resulted in the establishment of a smaller monastery in Carrolltown, where St. Benedict Church is maintained by the Benedictines down to this day.

**Lemke’s Last Years**

Because of the tensions arising over the collapse of his well-laid plans, a disheartened and discomfited Lemke eventually sold his land at Carrolltown and transferred to the diocese of Philadelphia to serve under his old bishop there.\textsuperscript{40} His restlessness continued, however, and only a short time later, he traveled back to Father Wimmer’s community in their new Westmoreland County monastery and became a Benedictine himself, taking solemn vows in 1853. The last third of his life found him involved in various projects as far away as Kansas, New Jersey, and even Austria before he eventually retired to and passed away in Carrolltown at eighty-seven years of age.\textsuperscript{41}

The work of Father Peter Lemke, intertwined with that of Father Demetrius Gallitzin, clearly made a significant impact on the unfolding of history in western Pennsylvania, together shaping two centuries of geography as well as faith with their labors. We can hardly improve on the summary view provided by Lawrence Flick in his own essay on Lemke:

> Father Lemke’s work in Cambria County, Pennsylvania, was supplementary to that of Father Gallitzin, and in its results can only be judged in conjunction with it… The fruit of these two men’s labors, as far as it can be measured, is in truly Catholic country in the greater part of the district which their labors covered. In the little towns of Loretto, Carrolltown, St. Augustine, St. Lawrence and St. Boniface, and in the country round about them, Catholic customs and practices are well fixed and the Catholic faith is as deeply planted as in any Catholic country in Europe.\textsuperscript{42}

**Endnotes:**

1. Alternately spelled “Lemcke” in some sources.
10. Ibid., 12.
11. Ibid., 116.
12. Ibid., 102.
24. Ibid., 329.
26. Ibid., 118-19.
29. Ibid., 122.
31. Ibid., 9.
33. Flick, “Biographical Sketch,” 123.
34. Ibid.
37. Ibid., 125, 127.
38. Ibid., 129.
41. Ibid., 136-140.
42. Ibid., 144.