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### **Interview Transcript**

*Sacred Spaces of Greater Cincinnati*

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at various locations 2007

### **Mother of God Church**

This church is significant for a number of reasons: historic reasons, cultural reasons, and artistic reasons. In 1841, Mother of God Church was founded as the first German Catholic church in Northern Kentucky. Right about that time, we know that about 200 German Catholics were arriving per day in the Cincinnati area. So already by the time the original church was built here in 1842, at least one quarter of the population of Covington was considered to be German Catholics. Many of the priests who served this early parish of Mother of God, or as it was called in German - Mutter Gottes Gemeinde, Mother of God congregation - went on to become nationally known figures, like Reverend Michael Heiss, who went on to become Archbishop of Milwaukee. Milwaukee was one of the other points of what's called by American historians the German triangle in the United States. The German triangle's three points were Milwaukee, St. Louis and Cincinnati. And within that triangle, most of the German immigrants to the United States settled. So Cincinnati, Northern Kentucky - Covington and Newport in particular—were really a locus of immigration for German immigrants.

The Germans, like the Irish, really arrived in kind of a chain migration. And that means that someone would come, early on, in a family and they would write back to family members, relatives, and friends, say for instance in Germany, and say come to Covington, come to Newport, come to Cincinnati. During the 19th Century, all three of those cities were very prosperous cities; they were sort of the happening places of their day. And there were a lot of economic opportunities for immigrants. So that happened, but also with the case of the Irish, there were great obstacles to overcome. Very often times, because of the famine, the potato famine which occurred in Ireland, families would send off the oldest daughter first because the oldest daughter could usually get work here as a domestic in the United States. And then because she was a domestic and had free room and board, she could save up a little money, send it back and then they would send for the next eldest daughter, etc. And the mother, and then finally, usually at the last tail end, the father and the brothers. So it's a different kind of migration than the German migration. Germans came mainly as families. The Germans also came from particular areas. Many of the Germans to this area came from the Northwest which was heavily Catholic or the Southwest, Bavaria, and places, Alsace, Lorraine, which were also heavily Catholic. So we don't see as many German Lutherans or German Methodists, which are more northeastern Germany, in the Cincinnati / Northern Kentucky area as we do in other areas, like for instance Dayton, Ohio.

The architects of the present church, which was dedicated in 1871, were William Walter and William Stewart. They had designed major churches in Covington - which included First Presbyterian Church, First Baptist Church, First Methodist Church - and the Catholics couldn't be outdone; they needed an equally fine architect so they chose the same firm of Walter and Stewart. They chose the Italian Renaissance style, at least on the exterior. Now, if you look at it on the interior, it almost looks very baroque in style because it's replete with all kinds of frescoes and artwork and murals taking up almost literally every inch of the floor and the ceiling and the walls. All of that, though, is very symmetrical. If you looked at the paintings themselves they contain very classical poses, if you look at the church from the outside, also very symmetrical. If you cut it in half, you have one bell tower on one side, and one bell tower on the other side. And the dome, half a dome on one side and half a dome on the other so, all very symmetrical and all pointing out the kind of the dignity and also the flare, the ritualism of the church of the 19th century.

Right about 1890-91, twenty years after this church was built, the congregation had gathered up enough money to celebrate what was the 50th anniversary of the founding of the church itself. And so they hired a plethora of well-known artists. These were regionally known artists, some nationally known, some became internationally known.

One of those, considered the finest fresco artist in the Midwest, his name was Wenceslaus Thien. And he was a German-American, of course. His brother was a priest of the Diocese of Covington. But he not only did frescoing and a secco work in Catholic churches but also in churches and temples of many different denominations. So for instance, it was Wenceslaus Thien who was the artist who executed all of the beautiful frescoes that you see in Plum Street Temple in Cincinnati. And he also did the fresco work here. We don't know a lot about his life. He died later on in this area in Cincinnati but we do know he went on to places like Canada and worked on a church in Quebec and worked on churches all throughout the Midwest and the East Coast.

The 14 Stations of the Cross were executed by an internationally known ecclesiastical artist and his name was Melchior Paul von Deschwanden, and he was a Swiss artist. He lived and died in Switzerland, so, he never immigrated to the United States. He worked for a religious house, which would provide imports of religious articles to the United States called Benziger Brothers and they were located in Einsiedeln, Switzerland. And in about 1853, they opened up a store, a location in New York City, that was followed in the 1860s by a location in Cincinnati itself. Cincinnati was so German Catholic and so German American that it was literally importing from Germany wonderful works of art. And these included Paul von Deschwanden's wonderful Stations of the Cross. Now a lot of times, those artists would become very enamored of their own particular style and artwork. So, actually we know that there is almost an exact replica of the Stations of the Cross at another church that is not too far from here and that's St. Ferdinand in Ferdinand, Indiana. We're very fortunate to have this internationally known artist. Another internationally known ecclesiastical artist would have been Wilhelm Lamprecht or as we would say William Lamprecht, and he worked on churches throughout the Midwest, also in a church in Quebec, worked here for what was called the Covington Altar Stock Building Company which was founded in 1862 by Benedictine monks out of Latrobe, Pennsylvania. He executed for the church in 1872, just one year after the church was completed, the murals of the four evangelists that are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. I think one of the interesting things is the kind of cross references that you see. We know that the King of Bavaria was very much involved in much of the ecclesiastical art that came to be in the United States. He supported the Benedictine monks who came from Bavaria to Latrobe, Pennsylvania. They, in turn, sent monks to Covington to form a winery that produced altar wines. They also sent monks to establish what was called the Covington Altar Stock Building Company. And the idea of this was to employ young German-American men and to teach them the trade of, almost make them apprentices of, ecclesiastical art. So, this company produced altars, altar pieces, paintings, all kinds of ecclesiastical art all over the United States. And we find it from the East Coast all the way throughout the Midwest, up through places like Chicago and Milwaukee. And they employed at that time Johann Schmitt who had come to the United States from Germany in 1848. Johann Schmitt literally translates to John Smith, and he worked for awhile executing church murals in New York and then he was hired by the Covington Altar Stock Building Company in 1862. He was really the first teacher of Covington artist Frank Duveneck who himself became internationally renowned. So, Duveneck got his start in Covington at the Covington Altar Stock Company doing ecclesiastical art. We know that Johann Schmitt's murals are everywhere in the United States and you see behind me five of the beautiful murals that he executed in 1890-91 for this particular church.

The Catholic rosary is composed of 15 decades; if you say an entire rosary. There are 10 Hail Marys, and in between each of the set of the 10 Hail Marys, there is an Our Father. At the Our Father, you're supposed to meditate on certain aspects of Mary's and Jesus' life. Now, since this church is named Mother of God, if you look behind me, you'll see in the very center, "Ecce Mater Tua," which is from the Gospel of John, Chapter 19, Verse 27, and it means "behold your mother." In the 19th century when everyone knew Latin because the mass, the Catholic mass was in Latin, everyone would have known what that meant. They're literally inviting you to behold the patron saint of the church, Mary, and her life. You see on the left of the altar the Annunciation, which is the first Joyful Mystery of the Rosary, in which the Angel Gabriel visits Mary, and asks her to become the mother of Jesus, the mother of God, literally, the patron saint of the church. Then you see to the right of the altar the Visitation where Mary goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth to tell her the good news that she is now pregnant with a child. And if you look very carefully at the painting, you'll see doves standing underneath each one of them, Elizabeth is pregnant and also Mary, so that symbolizes their pregnancies. If you looked up above the altar, you'll see the Nativity, the birth of Christ, which is the Third Joyful Mystery. And then if you looked to the right, the far right, you'll see the Presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple for the Jewish rite of circumcision. And if you looked to the far left, you will see the Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple at age 12 teaching the Pharisees, et cetera. This whole theme of the Mysteries of the Rosary, the five Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary, the five Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary, the five Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary, things like the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles, and the Pentecost, et cetera, are all represented in the artwork, the first five in Johann Schmitt murals and the other 10 in the beautiful and very delicate frescos of Wenceslaus Thien.

Another connection to the king of Bavaria is the Munich Royal Academy of Art, where Wilhelm Lamprecht, who painted the Four Evangelists here in Mother of God Church, studied, and in 1869, when he was working for the Covington Altar Stock Building Company, he was the one who was responsible for sending Frank Duveneck to the Munich Royal Academy of Art. That was really Duveneck's start. We also know that the king of Bavaria financially supported many of these early churches and he had a mission society called the Ludwig-Missionsverein and it sent money. There was also the Austrian emperor, who had a Leopoldine Mission Society, and so Mother of God Church was the recipient of mission funds from Austria and from other places in the country.

Most of the stained glass windows here at Mother of God were installed beginning in 1890-91 and then throughout the first part of the 1910's and the 1920's. They were done by Mayer & Company Studios in Munich Germany. Mayer & Company was founded in the 1840's by a man called Joseph Gabriel Mayer. We were very excited in 1987 when the great grandson Gabriel Mayer of the firm came here to Mother of God and to the Cathedral Basilica to see his great grandfather's windows and he still runs the firm, Mayer & Company; it still exists, and it does stained glass, mainly mosaic work in the United States. But it has a very interesting story, because right about 1840, the very liberal ruler, King Ludwig I of Bavaria, decided that it was time to resurrect the ecclesiastical arts. The old art of stained glass had pretty well been lost from the time of the late Middle Ages, and he wanted to resurrect that. So he founded a studio--Ludwig I founded a studio devoted to Ecclesiastical Art and an Academy. Meanwhile Joseph Gabriel Mayer founded his own school - in conjunction with King Ludwig I - that was to teach handicapped children. You have to remember, in the 19th century, handicapped children were not at all appreciated and they were usually kind of shoved aside, kept in the house, not at all regarded as having talents. So King Ludwig's ideas were essentially very modern. Let's teach these students and employ them in enterprises. When Ludwig I resigned, because of a revolution in 1848, Gabriel Mayer, Joseph Gabriel Mayer took this school; he took many of the students from this school and employed them in a stained glass studio. So when you look at these beautiful windows, here at Mother of God and the Cathedral and many other places in the United States, you see the handiwork of people who would have been considered throwaways in society before the 19th century and now, their beautiful talents are displayed for posterity for all of us to enjoy. It's their legacy to us.

Mayer & Company had an agent in Cincinnati, called Frederick Pustet and Company which was a printer, and it also sold religious goods and so many of the windows of both Mayer & Company and of Mayer's son-in-law, F. X. Zettler ended up in this particular area, but they all are represented in other countries as well, and places as far away even as Australia.

The carvings here at Mother of God are absolutely exquisite and they're all hand-carved oak. The communion rail itself, the communion table, the altars, are by about three or four different firms. One of the firms was called the Schroeder Brothers and they had a huge facility at Betts and Linn Streets in Cincinnati. Another part of the carvings were by Carl Dannenfelser who was very well known as well, and Mr. Brockmann, of whom we know nothing, other than his last name. The crucifix, above the altar, which is really the oldest artistic piece in the church, was by Ferdinand Muer, who later on seemed to have moved to New York City and he specialized in carving statues out of wood. In fact, the other statues around that crucified Jesus show Mary, the disciple John and Mary Magdalene and those are actually by Mayer & Company in Munich. They are wood carved and then they're covered with a thin layer of plaster, called gesso.

The church also contains English mosaic tile floors, and German Mettlach tile floors. Some of these were restored in the 1990's by the firm of Mayer & Company. So they brought German craftsman over here to restore those.

The organ here at Mother of God, is by an old German-American Firm called Koehnken and Grimm and there is a sister organ to it, originally it was a tracker at the Plum Street Temple in Cincinnati.

There is an altar here, called Our Lady of Perpetual Help and the painting there was given by Pope Leo XIII in the late 19th century to one of the two brother pastors, Father William Tappert. For 50 years, father William Tappert, followed in 1907 by his brother Henry Tappert served as pastors of this parish. They were very close to Leo XIII. Father William Tappert was the first president and really founder of the German-American Priests' Society in the United States. He was very instrumental in founding what is called Leo House, in New York City. When German Immigrants would leave ports, there was a concern in Germany, by some German Catholics, that they were being swindled, that they were being taken advantage of by unscrupulous people who would say, "You wanna buy a steamship ticket?" and it won't really be a steamship ticket. So they formed a society called the St. Raphaelsverein, named after the patron, both for German Lutherans and German Catholics, of migration: that's Saint Raphael, the

archangel Raphael. Members of the St. Raphael society would meet German Catholics at the ports, they would help them buy their steamship tickets, and then in New York, there were representatives of the Raphaelsverein, who would meet German Catholics, help them buy railroad tickets to the interior, and take them to a place Father Tappert of Mother of God helped found, called the Leo House, where they could stay for a night or two. They could receive the sacraments, and go to mass, things of that sort. And we're convinced, although there is really no archive remaining for Leo House, that probably there were brochures saying "Come to Covington Kentucky, come to Cincinnati, come to Mother of God church," and people assisting them in New York City to make the trek here to the Cincinnati area.

The tombs of the Tappert brothers are actually in the church, as well as of a later pastor, Fr. Klosterman, who was very instrumental during the Great Depression and the flood of 1937 on the Ohio River and also during World War II and providing for the needs of the poor. He was really the founder of Catholic Social Services here in this area. So this parish has always had a great respect for the poor and needy in its area, and, and then the further wider community in general. In fact, in the 1970's, it founded what's called the Parish Kitchen, which still exists to feed the needy of the area a lunch time meal. It also founded or helped to found a home for abused women and children called Welcome House and it works on behalf of peace and justice for the community in general.

In 1906 Mother of God Parish built a brand new school designed by Samuel Hannaford & Sons and it sat across the street from the church. It was demolished in 1974. It was an impressive building and like many buildings designed by Samuel Hannaford & Sons in the area, its acoustics were perfect. It had an auditorium that sat 900 people, had a gallery, had four boxes, had a beautiful stage and proscenium. And the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, when it visited Covington, would play at the acoustically perfect Mother of God School auditorium. Almost immediately after that new school was built, Mother of God was slowly suffering a decline in numbers because it was located in the downtown area very near a railroad. They're always referred to the wrong side of the tracks, literally. By 1915, right about the time of World War I, the church really hit its height of about 4000 members and it was a steady decline after that. So, by the 1910s, 1920s there are letters that exist in the archives complaining about how many of the members are moving to the newer suburbs of Covington to the south and to the west of the city. And this continues to the 1920s and 1930s until the school actually becomes very small, so small that in 1962 it's forced to close. And at that point in time, it really becomes an incubator for all kinds of other schools. One of the classrooms was used for classes for the blind and visually impaired. A school for mentally impaired children began called Good Counsel School, Thomas More College then called Villa Madonna College, had classrooms in the building. And when all of those moved out to new locations in the early 1970s, the church really, by the late 1960s and early 1970s, was in rough condition both in terms of what needed to be done to the church building and school but also financially. And a pastor came along, Fr. Mertes who resurrected the area and with 12 other people, formed Covington Avenue Property Partnership and began to buy up properties in the area and to restore those properties. And the church membership decided that they were going to restore this beautiful church and tear down the school for a parking lot. Now it seems to have been a bad decision, but in those days it was the only thing that they were faced with, they did not have money to restore both properties at that time. But to think that at one time, in the late 1960's, the demolition of this church was rolled around as an idea--as a possibility for urban renewal, almost seems to us today to be preposterous, but you know, today we live in a world that, I think, respects historic preservation more now. The parish also determined that it needed to go back to its roots and serve the community with peace and justice and that's when it began to found things like the Parish Kitchen and the Welcome House to reach out to the people in the neighborhood, and the city, and into the further region.

The church was added on to the National Register of Historic Places as well as a larger district called the Mutter Gottes, literally Mother of God, National Historic District because of all the restoration activities that were going on in the neighborhood and a lot of that began with pastor Fr. Mertes of this church.

The church is really fairly intact from 1890-91 when the major kind of decoration was done for the 50th year jubilee but on September 25th of 1986, about six months or so after a small tornado hit Covington and repairs were being made to the dome of this church, workmen accidentally caught the dome on fire; a million-and-a-half dollar fire, which raged into the night resulted, with extensive smoke and water damage to this church. There was talk early on that the church possibly had to be demolished. We brought in experts from all over the United States, civil engineers, artists, restorers of all kinds, preservationist and fought a valiant and a successful effort to have the church totally restored to its original condition. That was a million-and-a-half dollar restoration in 1986 that was award winning, and within a couple of years, the National Trust for Historic Preservation was in town and visited the church. This was one of the highlights of their visit.

Mother of God was one of the first German-American Catholic churches to form a fraternal organization that was a benevolent organization which meant that, literally, you pay dues into it. Before the days of workman's comp or any other kind of social security, it would be very essential if a partner, in particular, if the man of the household and the breadwinner at that time in the 19th century died. There were social implications of all of these as well. They were not only houses of religious worship, they were places where people would congregate and be among their own. And for a few hours, maybe at a meeting, maybe at a church service, they could enjoy speaking in German with one another or maybe speaking in Gaelic with one another, but these churches, German in the sense of Mother of God, Irish in the sense of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, served as bridges to American democracy. This is where their members literally learned about American institutions, clubs and associations and made that cultural bridge, that leap so to speak, into American society. And for that, we don't speak German here anymore at Mother of God, they don't speak Gaelic at any society meetings at the cathedral, so it shows you that these institutions had a lasting impact. And they also had a lasting impact architecturally and artistically.

There are so many other things to talk about at Mother of God, the beautiful Carrara marble angels that you see behind me, the holy water fonts were put in, in the 1920's. And just recently, in 2006, we discovered as we were preparing to have the vestibule painted, as it was being scraped, some very old frescoes of Wenceslas Thien that had been covered over for years and years. Now those are being restored back to their original splendor.

So many items in the church have a story and that story deals with people, people who cared a lot about their own congregation and about other people, sometimes even more than they cared about themselves. In today's world, we sometimes see very huge homes in the suburbs and right in the midst of all of those is a rather plain and generic-looking church. It was the complete opposite in the time of the 19th century and early 20th century in these cities -- the jewels, the gems, considered civic architecture -- were the churches and the temples. The houses sometimes were less ostentatious. They were more plain and more general. So it tells you a little bit about where people put their priorities.

They liked, both at Mother of God Church and the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, to include modern technology in the building of their buildings because they couldn't take dozens of years to build these buildings generally. And so in Mother of God, they were very proud of the fact that these very slender columns supporting the ceiling, supporting the roof quite literally, were made of iron and were manufactured here in Covington. Now, they look very beautiful because they've been covered with plaster and then they've been covered with a sizing, and actual gold leaf on the columns themselves. And so in the restoration in 1986, gold leaf was again used to restore the columns. Gold leaf will always have that beautiful shine and gleam to it, and it will never become darkened.

The congregation here at Mother of God's is very active and it's a very prosperous congregation that draws people from all over the Cincinnati region from as far away as Clermont County and Boone County. The problem with older churches like this is they are very expensive to maintain. So if you have a church like this, you usually need to have a preservation endowment. They are not only expensive to maintain, they are expensive to heat and to air condition as well. But they're one of a kind and we've lost and we are still losing so many of them. The legacy of their art and architecture is something that really we can't afford to lose. They say so much about our past and about our aspirations and our priorities that it's very important to maintain them, not only as living organisms, as churches, if we can, but if we can't, as buildings which tell us something about our legacy.

Mother of God Church is a living, breathing museum of artistic and architectural and cultural accomplishments, a legacy for generations to come, one of the true gems or jewels of historic preservation.

### **Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption**

A basilica is a term that is used for churches that are historically, artistically, or culturally significant. There are currently 56 minor basilicas in the United States. There are minor basilicas all throughout the world and the only really major basilicas are in the city of Rome itself. The Vatican actually designates a cathedral or an historic church as a Basilica, a place worthy of preserving, a place worthy of visiting.

Now are there any other Basilicas in the greater Cincinnati area? No there are not. In Ohio? I think one or two others.

In 1953 in recognition of the 100th anniversary of the Diocese of Covington, the Vatican named the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption in Covington a minor Basilica. It is the only Basilica in the Greater Cincinnati area.

In 1885 when Camillus Paul Maes, who was Chancellor of the Diocese of Detroit, was named Bishop of Covington he came to Covington and saw that the old cathedral on East 8th Street was just in a sorry and dilapidated condition and unworthy of really being called a cathedral. So he had plans to build a new, more worthy cathedral. And the reason for that is he was from Belgium and he worked in a Civil Engineer's office and he also studied under an architect in Courtrai in Belgium. So he had, before he ever became a priest, a love of great architecture. When he was at the Diocese of Detroit and acting as Chancellor, he came to know an architect by the name of Leon Coquard who designed a beautiful French Gothic church by the name of St. Anne's in Detroit, which still exists. And so, Bishop Maes, or "Maze" it's sometimes pronounced, called upon Leon Coquard to design, in 1894, a cathedral in the French Gothic style. Letters went back and forth between Coquard and Bishop Maes and they decided that the interior would look like that of the Abbey Church of Saint-Denis, just right outside of Paris, which was one of the first great Gothic cathedrals designed by Abbott Suger. So they went with that design and the exterior was going to look like Reims Cathedral in France, and they ran out of money at one point in time. So they finished the basic construction of this church and opened it for services in 1901, but it took another nine years to continue on with fund raising and the plans to build the west beautiful façade of the cathedral. By that time Leon Coquard had gone on to design a cathedral in Denver, Colorado--Immaculate Conception Cathedral--which still exists today as well. He had had a falling out with Bishop Maes and he wasn't being paid, etcetera, so they hired on a new architect by the name of David Davis. Davis had studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston. He had worked for the great American architect, Henry Hobson Richardson. And when he came back to Cincinnati and worked as a partner in an architectural firm here, he decided along with Bishop Maes, and the decision really had been made a little earlier, to go ahead with the façade that looked like the great Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. And that was the western façade, which was completed in 1910.

One of the interesting things about this cathedral is because they had a limited amount of funds and because they were kind of celebrating modern technology, the walls are made of brick and they're just faced with limestone on both the inside and the outside. And a lot of the Gothic vaulting and ribbing that you are seeing is actually made of terra cotta. It was made by Corning Terra Cotta. There's still a Corning plant in New York State currently. That I think is very interesting. But the windows are absolutely fabulous in this cathedral. There are over 79 windows. They range in size from very small to the rose windows, which are 26 feet in diameter and the great window behind me, which is 67 feet tall and 24 feet wide, one of the world's largest stained glass windows.

The Gothic design is noted for its pointed arches, so everywhere you look you see pointed arches. And because the technology of the Gothic allowed the buildings to absolutely soar, they could be penetrated with a lot of stained glass bringing light into the interior and so, from the Middle Ages on, the Gothic architecture in days before electricity were the places that were just filled with light.

There are a series of four paintings by Frank Duveneck in the Blessed Sacrament chapel here. They were installed in 1910 in memory of Frank Duveneck's mother. Frank Duveneck, of course, was a renowned American artist who taught for many years at the Cincinnati Art Academy. Alongside was his friend, Clement Barnhorn, who was trained at the Cincinnati Art Academy, studied under the great sculptor in Cincinnati, Henry Fry, and taught for many years at the Cincinnati Art Academy. He executed in stone a beautiful statue of the Virgin and Child as well as a carving of the Assumption of the Virgin into heaven on the tympanum right above the main entrance on the west side of the Cathedral.

The Covington Stone and Marble Company worked on the original nave which was completed in 1901. And working for them were two gentlemen by the name of Joseph and John Carl. Later on they created their own firm, the Carl Brothers Firm, and they worked as stone masons on the beautiful western façade patterned after Notre Dame. And then in 1934 they came back and they worked on the baptistry in stone for this building. They also donated all of the gargoyles on top of the building when it was completed. Before they invented down spouts, if it rained the rain had to go some place and the rain had to be kept away from the building because it could do damage to the building. So gargoyles literally were designed to spew water away from the building. And what better way as to make them look grotesque as they're spewing forth water in a rainstorm. So if you were walking in a rainstorm underneath a building like this, you would have gotten wet originally. The gargoyles are sometimes very grotesque and they represent the evils of the world. And those evils are outside of the building, so once you enter into the building you're entering into a holy place, a divine place.

There have been so many changes in '46 and then again in 2001. The original marble altar is gone, some of the floors are original but some of it has been really changed in 2001.

The Cathedral contains beautiful woodwork and that was installed mainly in the 1946 renovation and it's made out of Appalachian oak and it includes a beautiful reredos altar, a baldachino actually, surmounted by a lovely hand-carved statue of the Virgin Mary. There are also three separate shrine altars--one of them is to Saint Mary, one to Saint Joseph, one to the Sacred Heart. They were done in 1957, '59, and '74 by German and, later on, Italian craftsmen. And there are also beautiful Stations of the Cross here, which were installed in 1915. Each of those stations is composed of about 70,000 plus pieces of glass tile, and they were made in the world's capital of mosaic making--Venice, Italy.

There are three organs in the church and a total of over 4,500 pipes. The oldest organ was moved here in about 1970 when a church, which was a German-American church, a block away, was demolished. And it is a Matthias Schwab organ, who was a great German-American organ builder from Cincinnati, Ohio.

When this parish was founded in 1833/1834 it was for the English speaking Catholics of Covington--mainly Irish. Although they may have spoke Gaelic here and there, and their sermons would have been in English, the services themselves were in Latin. Some of them were common everyday laborers and some of them worked their way up the ranks. For instance, a few of the major donors of the Cathedral that we're standing in, Peter O'Shaughnessy, James Walsh and his son Nicholas Walsh, operated one of the largest distilleries in the area called The Walsh Distillery. And they gave well over a couple hundred thousand, I suppose, of donations to the Cathedral to build this marvelous building.

All good cathedrals were supposed to face east, and the reason for that is as the congregation faced the altar they were to face the Holy Land. That is Jerusalem itself. And this cathedral follows in that tradition. It's certainly common in Christianity, especially early Christianity and Catholicism.

The main body of the church here is called the nave and the area where the altar is called usually the apse. The altar in this church has actually been moved as of 2001 to be in what is called the crossing between the nave and the transept. The transept functions as the arms, the side arms of the church. So if you look at the church from the sky--if you were looking down from a plane--you would see that's it's in a cruciform or a cross shape, and that was very significant in early Christianity.

Major renovation occurred in 1946 and they put in all the Appalachian oak, the baldachino, and most of the choir stalls at that time, which have since been sort of changed in the 2001 redecoration.

The cathedral was originally supposed to have two towers to it. Those bell towers were never built. Had they been built, the cathedral would be about 120 feet tall: at least those towers would be.

Like the windows at Mother of God and many other churches in the Cincinnati area, the stained glass windows here were executed by the studio of Mayer & Company in Munich, Germany. And the local distributor of Mayer & Company windows in the 19th century, early 20th century was the firm of Frederick Pustet & Company in Cincinnati.

Frederick Pustet & Company was, I believe, a publisher of religious tracts and books as well as a distributor of art work from around the world--religious art work.

There were several Irish-American Catholic congregations in the city of Covington. The Cathedral Basilica was one of those. Interestingly, only one block away was a German-American Catholic church by the name of St. Joseph's which has since been demolished. And in those days when mass was in Latin, one could really attend anywhere in the world and understand the mass. But the sermon and other activities--club associations, etc.--all of those would have been in the native language. Sometimes there was a bit of a tense relationship between the Irish-Americans and the German-Americans. But like anything else, those tensions broke down over time as the Irish intermarried with the Germans.

Part of the significance of the cathedral is that it is the home church of the Bishop, in this case of the Diocese of Covington. So all major ceremonies, ordinations of priests, etc. are held here at the cathedral. So the cathedral needs to be an appropriate place where that worship can take place. It needs to have the beauty and the pageantry that might be absent in some of the other churches in suburban areas.

All of the parishes and the diocese support the upkeep of the cathedral and the Bishop and the Bishop's office. So the movement of members of the congregation out to the suburbs was not as large of an issue. But the cathedral has always had wonderful music programs and with the current director, Robert Schaeffer who is a well-published musician, certainly is a drawing card for many people to this cathedral; the beautiful worship ceremonies.

## Northern Kentucky

There was a priest of the early St. Mary's parish which became St. Mary's Cathedral, who was called Jean Baptiste Lamy and he went on to become Archbishop of Santa Fe, New Mexico. Willa Cather wrote a wonderful book about him; a novel entitled "Death Comes for the Archbishop" and it was made into a movie; Time Magazine called it one of the top 100 American novels of all time. So he has ties, historic ties here to the Cathedral.

Bishop Maes, because he loved architecture so much, was micromanaging pastors and priests and the Diocese making certain that if there were any new building projects when he was bishop from 1885 to 1915, for 30 years, that they chose well-known and respected architects. So there are many beautiful churches and schools that still remain in this area. One is the old Academy Notre Dame of Providence, which has been made into a beautiful condominium project in Newport which was designed by Samuel Hannaford & Sons. Another beautiful church designed by Samuel Hannaford is St. Bernard in Dayton, and St. Benedict also here in Covington. David Davis who designed the front facade of the Cathedral designed the beautiful St. Augustine Church in Covington. And an architect by the name of Louis Piket designed Sacred Heart Church in Bellevue as well as a number of Cincinnati churches, including Sacred Heart in Cincinnati on Massachusetts Ave. and St. Francis Xavier in downtown Cincinnati. The wonderful firm of Ludwig & Dreisoerner out of St. Louis designed the mammoth St. John Church, which has this towering bell tower steeple.

During the 1960's and 1970's when the suburban movement, the suburban migration increased, there were a number of losses of Catholic churches in Covington. Very important artistic and architecturally beautiful churches, like Immaculate Conception church in Newport; St. Patrick church in Covington; St. Joseph church in Covington; St. Aloysius church in Covington. We've lost so many of our treasures, not only in Covington, in Newport, northern Kentucky but also in Cincinnati that I think it becomes really imperative that we preserve and restore those few remaining churches which still have active congregations and are part of their community.

During the 1960's, 1970's and '80's both in Cincinnati and in northern Kentucky there was a new movement for liturgical art and design and that was to simplify things. So many of these beautiful artful churches, if not actually demolished, were almost whitewashed. And many of the beautiful reredos altars and statues, some of them even hand-carved, were removed. Sometimes when people removed these beautiful artifacts they did not even realize that they were hand-carved and they literally took them off to the dumps. So we've lost a great amount of history, not only through demolition, but through alteration of the churches themselves.

These historic churches like the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption are one-of-a-kind churches, they're not cookie cutter churches and it's important for us to preserve them. Not only for their architecture, not only for their art; but they say a lot about the history of our ancestors, where we came from and I think they can point the direction to where we are going and what our priorities in life are.

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