

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

THE JOHN A. LYONS COLLECTION
IN THE FILSON CLUB LIBRARY

Compiled by KATHERINE L. HOUSE

Father John Aloysius Lyons was born in Dansville, New York, on 21 February 1898 and attended elementary school there. His preparatory education took place at St. Andrew's Seminary in Rochester, New York. He studied philosophy at St. Bernard's Seminary in Rochester, theology at Kenrick Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, and was ordained in 1924 at the Cathedral of the Assumption in Louisville. During the next few years he was assigned to St. Columba (1924) and St. Vincent dePaul churches (1924-1925), then Holy Trinity Church (1925) and the Church of Our Lady (1926-1927), all in Louisville. It was during those years that he began to develop what was to become a lasting and productive interest in the history of Catholicism in Kentucky. From 1927 to 1932 he served as pastor of Sacred Heart Church in Russellville which had responsibility for missions in Glasgow and Franklin. While there he wrote a history of the mission. Back in Louisville, he served as chaplain at St. Joseph Infirmary from 1932 to 1937 and afterward as pastor at St. Rita (1937-1938) and the Church of Our Lady (1938-1941). From 1941 until his retirement in 1968 he was pastor of Our Mother of Sorrows Church in Louisville.¹

Over the years, Father Lyons compiled histories of the churches of St. Bernard in Clementsville, Our Lady in Louisville, St. Clare in Colesburg, and St. Theresa in Rhodelia. His *Necrology of Diocesan Clergy of the Archdiocese of Louisville and the Diocese of Owensboro* was published in 1943 and *Bishops and*

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¹ Information from biographical records at *The Record* office in Louisville and interviews appearing in *The Record*, 20 January 1966 and 11 November 1976.

Priests of the Diocese of Bardstown was published in 1976. While gathering material on the history of the Russellville mission, he discovered the lack of references on Catholic church history in Kentucky and set for himself the task of accumulating any historical and biographical material he could collect, including letters, published materials, and records. Over the years, his material grew into a substantial library of reference books and information gleaned from newspaper clippings, archives, and church records. It is this last group, the church records, that we are concerned with here.

Beginning as early as the mid to late 1930s, as evidenced by data in some of the older volumes, Father Lyons began to translate some early church records from the Latin, carefully transcribing information from registers often torn and badly deteriorated, with handwriting marked by faded ink and nearly indecipherable. His interest focused on central Kentucky in the counties of Marion, Nelson, Washington, and Jefferson where the first churches were formed in the late 18th and early 19th centuries and where he could find the roots of many of the early native Kentucky priests, sisters, and brothers; this approach also offered a perspective on the history of the early churches and their times. After his death in 1984, the entire collection was moved to the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine College from Our Mother of Sorrows rectory where Father Lyons had continued to reside after his retirement.

The Filson Club first became interested in the collection because records from Marion County churches and cemeteries held some promise of providing a partial substitute for county records destroyed in a courthouse fire during the Civil War. Upon examination of the whole collection, it became evident that all of the transcribed records would be of value in our collection. Interested in making the records available to as many people as possible in an institution with support materials for verification and further research, Robert Daggy, Director of the Thomas Merton Center, granted The Filson Club permission to photocopy all of the church and cemetery records in the collection.

The project was begun in June 1986. Working with one volume at a time, a total of thirty-six volumes were photocopied. The project, implemented during the time the Club was involved in moving to new quarters, took two years to complete. Some of the transcripts had been prepared many years ago, had become yellowed, and were very difficult to copy with any clarity; others, prepared just a few years before Father Lyons's death, had handwritten notes in various shades and colors which complicated the copying process. It is clear from the number of changes, additions, and notations that Father Lyons considered these volumes working copies, his own notes subject to re-interpretation whenever additional data became available. Care was taken throughout to keep legible all of the handwritten notes that had been added to the transcribed records.

In conjunction with his work with church records, Father Lyons also developed genealogical files on some families and individuals (primarily among the earliest settlers), consisting of correspondence and data gathered in response to queries. In the summer of 1988, some 286 file folders with information of a genealogical nature were transferred on loan to The Filson Club library from the Merton Center. These files, with the church registers and cemetery records from the Lyons Collection and our library's extensive collection of support materials, provide a valuable resource for researchers concentrating on the specific areas covered.

AN ANNOTATED LIST OF CHURCH AND CEMETERY RECORDS FROM THE LYONS COLLECTION

Following is a list of church and cemetery records copied from the Lyons Collection by The Filson Club. Transcripts were compiled by Father Lyons unless otherwise indicated.

BULLITT COUNTY, KENTUCKY

Pitts Point, Bardstown Junction Churches and Missions, Including Colesburg (Hardin Co.) Entries.

Contains Baptisms 1888-1893. Includes some records from St. Eugene and St. Margaret of Cortona Churches in Bullitt County, and St. Clare Church in Hardin County.

CASEY COUNTY, KENTUCKY

St. Bernard Church, Clementsville Church Records 1834-1859.

Contains Baptisms 1834-1859; Marriages 1843-1856 (only a few).

HARDIN COUNTY, KENTUCKY

Corbett, Joseph L. and Lyons, John L. *St. James Church, Elizabethtown Church Registers.*

Contains Baptisms 1869-1888 (no Baptisms recorded 1881-1887); Marriages 1869-1927 (none recorded Nov. 1883-Feb. 1889); Deaths 1867-Feb. 1873.

St. John the Baptist Church, Rineyville Church Records. Alphabetized by Joseph L. Corbett.

Contains Baptisms 1829-1832, 1836-1870; Marriages 1836-1890.

JEFFERSON COUNTY, KENTUCKY

Cathedral of the Assumption, Louisville Baptismal Register. 2 vols.

Vol. 1 contains Baptisms 1835-1854; Vol. 2 has Baptisms 1855-1866.

Cathedral of the Assumption, Louisville Marriages to 1875. 2 vols.

Contains Marriages 1835-1875. Includes a separate list of brides' names in alphabetical order.

Church of the Immaculate Conception, Louisville First Baptismal Register. 2 vols.

Contains Baptisms 1846-ca. 1873; includes an alphabetical list of mothers' maiden names.

Church of Our Lady of the Port First Register.

Includes Baptisms 1839-1865; Marriages 1839-1861, with occasional records until 1863; Deaths 1839-ca. 1861.

The First Register of the Former Church of St. Michael, 220 S. Brook Street, Louisville.

Contains Baptisms 1866-1918.

MARION COUNTY, KENTUCKY

Calvary, Ky. Genealogy. 2 vols.

Genealogies of some of the very early families of Holy Mary Church and neighboring parishes and missions. Based on the first baptismal register of the church, with information gathered from several sources. Genealogies range from one to several pages.

Holy Cross Church, Holy Cross, Ky. Church Records. Alphabetized by Joseph L. Corbett.

Contains Baptisms 1832-1868; Marriages 1844-1851; Miscellaneous records (Members of Living Rosary [undated], Total Abstinence Society, 1883.)

Holy Mary Church, Calvary, Ky. Church Registers, 1807-1874. 3 vols. Alphabetized by Joseph L. Corbett.

Vol. 1 contains Baptisms 1807-1835 with an index; Marriages 1828-1829, 1831. Vol. 2 contains Baptisms 1834-1874; Marriages 1834-1874. Vol. 3 is an index to Baptisms 1836-1874.

Marion County Cemetery Records. 2 vols.

Vol. 1 contains Holy Cross Cemetery at Holy Cross, Holy Name of Mary Cemetery at Calvary, and St. Charles Cemetery at St. Mary. Vol. 2 has St. Francis of Assisi Church Cemetery at St. Francis (formerly Chicago), St. Francis Xavier Cemetery, Raywick 1867-1916, and St. Augustine Cemetery, with St. Monica Section included (Lebanon).

St. Charles Borromeo Church, St. Mary, Ky. Church Registers.

Vol. 1 contains Baptisms 1829-1858; Death Register 1899-1919. Vol. 2 has Baptisms 1858-1889; and St. Mary's College Chapel Register containing Baptisms from 1859-1927.

St. Francis Xavier Church, Raywick, Ky. Church Registers.

Contains Baptisms 1840-1872; Marriages 1845-1875.

MEADE COUNTY, KENTUCKY

Corbett, Joseph L. *St. Martin of Tours Church, Flaherty Church Records.*

Contains Baptismal Register, book one, 1848-1871; and Marriage Register 1841-1892.

St. Theresa Church Baptisms 1824-1875.

Photocopy of original register; not transcribed.

NELSON COUNTY, KENTUCKY

Corbett, Joseph L. and Lyons, John A. *Gethsemane Abbey Church Registers, 1850-1954.*

Contains records for the abbey's secular church which served laity residing in the immediate vicinity of the monastery, sometimes from neighboring parishes which are usually designated in the register. Contains Baptisms 1850-1950; only a few marriages 1856-1952; Death Register 1857-1900 for persons buried in the cemetery for the laity (only a handful are mentioned).

St. Catherine Church, New Haven Church Registers.

Part 1 (in 2 separate sections) contains Baptisms 1843-1857; Marriages 1843-1844, 1851-1857; Death records 1844, 1848-1857. Part 2 contains Baptisms 1858-1872; Marriages 1858-1880; Deaths 1896-1909 (1907-1908 incomplete).

St. Joseph Church, Bardstown Registers. 2 vols.

Book 1 includes Baptisms 1823-1842; Marriages 1823-1871; Burials 1830-1870. Book 2 includes Baptisms 1842-1861.

St. Michael Church, Fairfield Parish Registers.

Part 1 includes Baptisms 1829-1832, 1838-1860; Deaths 1840-1845. Part 2 is a copy of the original register; it has not been transcribed and parts of it are illegible. It contains Baptisms 1861-1891; Marriages 1861-1892. A surname index has been prepared for the Baptisms.

St. Thomas Church Registers 1826-1870.

Contains Baptisms 1826-1870; Marriages 1826-1848, 1851-

1870; Deaths 1851-1870; and miscellaneous records including a sacristy inventory and enrollment in the Society of the Scapular 1849-1864.

St. Vincent dePaul Church, Nazareth Church Registers.

Compiled from records in the Nazareth Motherhouse Archives, this volume contains Baptisms 1835-1936; Confirmations 1841-1955; a list of Nazareth's slaves with their birth and death dates; a list of Sisters who acted as sponsors for Baptisms.

St. Vincent dePaul Church, New Hope Registers.

Contains Baptisms 1847-1911; Marriages 1847-1848 (only five listed); Society of the Scapular 1847-1848; Confirmations 1873; History of the Parish.

WASHINGTON COUNTY, KENTUCKY

St. Dominic Church, Springfield Church Register.

Contains Baptisms 1884-1937; Marriages 1886-1968.

St. Rose Church First Register.

Contains Baptisms 1830-1839; Marriages 1830-1838; Deaths 1830-1849.

St. Rose Church Second Register.²

Contains Baptisms 1839-1849; Marriages 1838-1848.

Meany, Rev. R. J., O.P. *St. Rose Church Third Register.*

Contains Baptisms 1849-1887.

Washington County Cemeteries.

Contains St. Rose Cemetery, St. Ivo Cemetery, and St. Dominic Cemetery in Washington County; Holy Trinity Cemetery and Johnson Cemetery, Nelsonville in Nelson County.

2 Copies of the transcribed first and second registers of St. Rose Church were acquired by The Filson Club through the generosity of Brother Leo Willett of the Marianist Provincialate, St. Louis, Missouri. They have been included in this list for purposes of continuity.