In the 1830's the number of people moving from the eastern states into the
midwest, and even to the far west, was steadily increasing. The comparatively new
state of Ohio was by no means neglected in this migration. Joining the stream of
people from the colonial states were some from European countries, especially from
Germany and France. Naturally, among all of Ohio's arrivals there was a good
portion of Catholics. They were taking up residence in the growing cities, but also
in rural areas, since many of them were agricultural people. It was only to be
expected, then, that there should be found "settlements", each with its own people
of the same national origin. The result was settlements of English-Irish settlers
in places like Sapp's settlement (Knox county) and Wilkesville (Vinton county);
French settlers at places like Versailles (Darke county) and Calmoutier (Holmes
county), and German nationals at New Riegel (Seneca county) and St. Joseph's,
Mohican (Holmes county).

The Catholic Church of Ohio in the 1830's was still a missionary church. The
diocese of Cincinnati which included all of Ohio at that time, had only 15 priests
in 1833. (1) Throughout the vast area of the state there were settlements of Germans
crying for a priest who could preach to them in their own tongue and hear their
confessions. It was the same with French settlers. The priests, travelling on horse-
back, were zealous in responding to these pleas. They sought any Catholic settler
of whom they heard; and where there were settlements they made it a point to spend
some time. By this time also, Irish Catholics were in the state helping to build
Ohio's system of canals, the national highway, and later the railroads. To all of
these scattered Catholics the missionaries hurried with spiritual aid.

Upon the scene in 1834, not two years after his ordination, Father Emmanuel Thienpont appeared. He was to spend a life of tremendous missionary activity throughout the state earning the respect and admiration of all his fellow-priests.

Emmanuel Thienpont was born in Belgium about 1803. The place of his birth has not yet been determined. He must have had most of his education in his native land. He is reported to have come to America in 1830 or before. At any rate, he was enrolled as a student at Mt. St. Mary-of-the-West Seminary in Cincinnati, where he received minor orders from Bishop Fenwick on October 16, 1831 (2). Two days later he received the order of subdeacon. The following Holy Week, on Holy Saturday, April 21, he was made subdeacon (3). On January 20, 1833, Emmanuel Thienpont was among those ordained to the Priesthood at Mt. St. Mary's (4). Bishop Rosati (5) of St. Louis had come to officiate at the ordinations in Cincinnati, the See being vacant due to the death of Bishop Fenwick (6). It was not until October of that year that John Baptist Purcell became bishop of Cincinnati.

The first we hear of the young Father Thienpont after his ordination is his appointment in 1834 to assist Father Edmund Quinn at Tiffin, Ohio (7). What he was doing between his ordination in January, 1833, and 1834, seems not to be recorded. Obituaries at the time of his death state that "he was a man of eminent learning and was chosen first President of the ecclesiastical Seminary of the Diocese" (8). It seems rather peculiar, being just ordained, that he would have been given such a responsibility. He was probably already visiting the scattered Catholics along the canal from Cincinnati to Toledo. It was only natural, then, that he would be assigned to help Father Quinn at Tiffin. He signed a record of baptism there on August 24, 1834.

At Tiffin Father Thienpont was "to assist Father Quinn in the care of the communities and settlers along the Maumee River and the canal as far north as Toledo. When Quinn died in September of 1835 Thienpont remained on at Tiffin for only a very short time and was then appointed to care for Dayton in Montgomery county and for Troy and Piqua in Miami county. All three places were on the Miami and Erie Canal, and he probably still made occasional visits north to his former stations along 'the line,' that is, along the canal and down the Maumee River. The Miami and Erie Canal had been opened from Cincinnati to Middletown in 1827, and would be opened its entire length, from Cincinnati to Toledo on Lake Erie, in 1845." (9) Father Thienpont is also known to have visited Lower Sandusky, Urbana and Springfield at this time.

Although Father Jurgens states that Thienpont was at Tiffin as late as September, 1835, Bishop Purcell wrote in July of that year (10): "We are happy to observe that the Rev. E.M. Thienpont is at present in this city, soliciting aid for the erection of a Catholic Church in Dayton." The bishop describes Dayton at some length and tells of the donation by Mrs. Prudence Pierson of property on which to build a church. The Dayton congregation was mostly German and Father Thienpont would be able to care for their wants.

The Catholic Directory of 1836 places Father Thienpont at Dayton where the "church is not yet built." The need for a church must have been great and the means with which to finance it very meager. Accordingly, Father Thienpont went on a begging trip to the east. "We have not heard from Rev. Mr. Thienpont for some time," wrote Mr. F. L'Homme of Baltimore to Bishop Purcell on June 25, 1836 (11). "After a successful begging trip in Philadelphia he was to go to New York and Boston for the same purpose."
The following year the Catholic Directory reported that Father Thienpont had charge of Troy and Piqua as well as Dayton where the "church was recently built." In 1838 the Directory adds Urbana and Springfield to his list of missions.

Father Lamott in his history of the archdiocese of Cincinnati (12) states that "The real founder of the first church in Dayton was Father Emmanuel Thienpont, who in 1835 was collecting money in Dayton to erect a church on a lot 96 by 166 feet that had been given to the bishop by Mrs. Prudence Pierson.... It required two years, however, before the church could be dedicated to God under the title of Emmanuel."

Father Thienpont was at Dayton until 1844. The Catholic Directory of 1843 and 1844 reported him as also attending missions at Troy, Piqua, Urbana, Bellefontaine, West Liberty, Springfield, Xenia and Lebanon. Next we find him at Chillicothe in charge of St. Mary's parish. From there he attended Circleville and Waverly, and other places. He was not in Chillicothe very long until he was sent to take charge of the Church of the Nativity in Portsmouth. This was in 1845. He was to remain there until 1850.

Father Thienpont was just as active and missionary in Portsmouth as he had been in Dayton. In the History of the Lower Scioto Valley (13) he is described as a "man of great ability and energy.... He had charge of churches of the surrounding country.....and at the furnace towns in the eastern part of the county. A new church was established by him at Pond Creek, a French settlement of this county." The Catholic Directory of 1846 reported him as attending St. Michael's, Ripley, Aberdeen and New Richmond from his post in Portsmouth. In 1848 he was also visiting Wilkesville (Vinton county), Gallia county and Gallipolis "where churches are building." The next two years the Directory adds a number of other missions, the total being somewhat amazing. He was attending the furnaces of his own county and those of Lawrence county. He went to a new church near the Etna Furnace, to Racoon Creek, and St. Matthew's, four miles from Racoon Creek.

One of his missions while in Portsmouth was St. Mary's, Minerton, in Vinton county. "From 1844 to 1851 the small Catholic membership of the first St. Mary's Church was visited by Rev. Emmanuel Thienpont of Portsmouth," wrote Bishop Hartley (14) "He was a most earnest, untiring, true missionary priest, making his quarterly visits on horseback. The old citizens who lived at Pine Grove, Furnace and Gallipolis, always gave him a hearty welcome as he rode past in the fulfillment of his Mission."

"By 1850 eleven Catholic families had gathered at Lick Run (Scioto county)... With the aid of the men of the parish, the Rev. Emmanuel Thienpont built a log church on Lick Run." (15)

During his time in Portsmouth Father Thienpont also took care of the beginning of St. Mary's, Pine Grove, Lawrence county. Bishop Hartley tells the story of this beginning (16): "In January of 1849, Rev. Emile Thienpont came and celebrated the Holy Sacristy of the Mass in the log cabin allotted for the purpose to his small flock. He went along in this true missionary spirit preaching and teaching the Word of his Master until he saw that his little log chapel would be insufficient for his then growing parish of Saint Mary's. So he appointed a committee of men to solicit funds for the purchase of a new site of land and the erection of a new and more commodious building." A parcel of land was donated by one John Dempsey, just a half mile east of the log chapel, the location of the present St. Mary's, Pine Grove. "While the plans of the future house of worship were receiving favorable comments," wrote Bishop Hartley, "as well as generous donations from people as far distant as Cincinnati, Ohio, this young congregation received a setback in the
transfer of their spiritual leader, Father Thienpont, on April 1, 1850." He was sent to Steubenville.

Father Thienpont's stay in Steubenville lasted until 1865. His work there earned for him the same praise as elsewhere. Bishop Hartley gives us something of his pastorate in the Ohio River city (17): "Father Kearney and Father O'Farrell preceded Father Emmanuel Thienpont, who took charge of the Steubenville parish in December, 1850. During his pastorate the congregation grew rapidly. The coming of the Pennsylvania railroad brought a large number of Catholics to this section. The little St. Pius edifice (18) was soon found to be inadequate to their growing needs, and in 1853 it was replaced by a larger building which supplied the double purpose of church and school for fifty years. The new church was called St. Peter's, the name of St. Pius disappearing with the first structure which bore this name."

The new St. Peter's stood on the corner of Fourth and Logan streets in Steubenville. It was two stories high and had two impressive towers. The story of its dedication by Archbishop Purcell of Cincinnati is contained in the April 15 issue of the "Catholic Telegraph" of 1853.

"It would not be fair," Bishop Hartley wrote further, "to the truth even in the most condensed history to permit the name of this sturdy pioneer of Catholicity, Father Thienpont, to pass without complimentary notice. He was a Belgian by birth, a man of powerful physique, scholarly, industrious and indefatigable. He covered more territory in his parochial visitsations, and baptized more children during some years of his pastorate than do all the priests of Steubenville today."

Bishop Hartley also relates a story about Father Thienpont (19): "In the early days while the Pan Handle R.R. was being built, Father Thienpont used to travel on horseback and say Mass at the various camps along the road. An old Irishman told the writer that one day while he was hearing confessions and saying Mass at an old farm house not far from Scio, a non-Catholic woman who was present made mockery and sport of the good old priest. He said nothing -- but as the woman was crossing the field to her home -- an angry bull gored her with his horns and pitched her to death."

After the completion of the church Father Thienpont remained in Steubenville for twelve more years. In June, 1863, he reported to the archbishop, "We are well here and peaceful." (20)

At the end of June, 1865, Archbishop Purcell transferred Father Thienpont. He was apparently to do more missionary work. He came to Columbus, and had some thought of living at the Sisters' hospital. That did not prove satisfactory. It is not clear where he stayed though the Catholic Directory listed him as being at St. Mary's, Chillicothe. At any rate, he had baptisms there on Nov. 5, 1865, and again on February 4, 1866. Shortly thereafter, on March 25, he was at St. John's, Logan, in Hocking county, beginning his pastorate there which was to last until his death in 1873.

The history of the Logan parish states that Father Thienpont came there from Our Lady of Good Hope (21) a mission parish in northwestern Hocking county. There was no rectory at this mission and its records at St. Joseph's, Sugar Grove, have no mention of Thienpont. There is little else of him in the Logan parish history. Early during his pastorate the site of the present school was purchased. On October 25, 1866, a lot was purchased from John Webster for $175.
In 1868 the diocese of Columbus was established and it included Hocking county. The Columbus diocesan archives holds Father Thienpont's first report of his Logan charge. He gave the value of the church property as $4,000, and the parish debt as $200. The "school house was built." Parish statistics showed 400 communicants, with 31 births, nine marriages, twelve deaths. He gave the "stone church in Perry county, as a mission.

In 1871 the first bishop of Columbus, Rt. Rev. Sylvester H. Rosecrans, asked Father Thienpont to organize a parish at New Straitsville in Perry county. He was already attending St. Peter's, the "Old Stone Church," about three miles north of New Straitsville. It had become feasible to have the church in the town itself. Property was bought and ground broken for a new church in 1871. It was named St. Augustine. Thienpont served it as a mission until September, 1873, when a resident pastor was named.

It was during his stay at Logan that Father Thienpont marked the 40th anniversary of his ordination. It is significant that the esteem of his fellow-priests was such that they presented him with a silver loving cup commemorating the occasion.

His health by this time was not good. On the Sunday before his death he preached to his congregation a sermon full of earnest zeal and good counsel. He told them that he had leave of rest from his superior, and that he intended making a journey. He thought in this he would be better able to serve them. He asked them to remember his teachings and to pray for him (22). The venerable old priest died October 19, 1873. The "Hocking Sentinel" of Logan gives the account of his death and burial. We quote it in part.

"Living a life of austerity, homeless and without kindred, quiet, gentle, charitable, loving as a father in his ministry, the old and venerable man lies down to his final slumbers in the cheerful hope that the lowly flowers of humility gathered in the hidden and unseen paths of duty will blossom brightest in the crown of Resurrection.

"Father Thienpont's life in Logan has been one of quiet gentle unostentatious discharge of duty, endearing himself not only to the members of his own church, but to the people generally by his kind, generous qualities as a man and his modest virtue as a Christian."

"During much of the forty years of his missionary duty, visiting the remote members of his Church, often a day's journey apart, and taking two years to complete a round of his circuit. His life has been one of toil and danger and hardship, and even to the last his zeal and fervor in the discharge of duty sustained his tottering steps, under the infirmities of four score years and ten. He died last Sunday, the 20th, in the 70th year of his age.

"He was buried in Columbus. His funeral was attended by a number of citizens of this place and of Columbus, and by more than one half of the priests of the diocese."

In his will (23) Father Thienpont left all his property, real and personal, to Bishop Rosecrans, subject to several bequests including one thousand dollars to each of the following: the Jesuit Fathers, the Good Shepherd Sisters of Columbus and to the Sisters of the hospital in Columbus. He also designated a sum in annuity to his housekeeper, Mary Naghton. When his estate was finally settled it totalled more than $20,000 to the Diocese of Columbus, and included quite a
number of promissory notes. He had loaned money to persons in Dayton, Portsmouth, Steubenville and Columbus. Francois Blasius was the administrator of the Will. His wife, Mary, and Father Louis DeCaillay had been witnesses to the signing of it.

It is appropriate to conclude this biography with the words of Bishop Hartley (24): "Father Thienpont was an old time missionary priest. He was pastor of many missions in the state that today are important parishes. A distinguished citizen of Steubenville once told the writer that he always had the greatest respect for a Catholic priest -- and that respect grew from his boyhood days owing to the kindness and friendly feeling shown him by good old Father Thienpont. Father Thienpont is buried in Mt. Calvary Cemetery, Columbus, Ohio. There is a beautiful gold cup at the Bishop's House in Columbus with an engraved inscription stating that it was presented to him by the clergy of the Diocese July 2, 1873, on the 45th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood."

In another place (25) Bishop Hartley wrote that Father Thienpont bequeathed to the diocese "an estate that puts it under everlasting obligations to his memory."

11. L'Homme to Purcell, June 25, 1836, Archives of Archdiocese of Cincinnati.
14. Diocese of Columbus, the History of Fifty Years, 1868-1918, by Bishop James J. Hartley, Columbus, 1918, p. 538.
18. St. Pius church was built in 1832 by Father McGrady, O.P.
19. Hartley, op. cit., p. 259
20. Letter of Thienpont to Purcell, June 18, 1863, Archives of Archdiocese of Cincinnati, Ohio.
23. Hocking County Wills, No. 980.
ST. GENEVIEVE'S, CALMOUTIER
HOLMES COUNTY, OHIO
1836 - 1981

Register of Baptism 1836-1872 (Continued)

1863 (continued)
April 9: Adelaide Louise J., b. 8 March. P: Joseph Redoutey and Margaret Pierson.
May 5: Louis Joseph C., b. 22 April. P: Peter Bresson and Melanie Mary Meunier.
May 17: Mary Joseph C., b. 8 May. P: Hubert Cheveway and Appolonia Jeannoine.
June 28: Mary Cecilia, b. 22 June. P: John Baptist Bardin and J. Mary Marthey.
July 3: Elizabeth Euphrasia, b. 10 June. P: August Blanc and Elizabeth Marthey.
July 12: Mary Cecilia, b. 11 July. P: Edward Rouhier and Mary Magdalene Roussel.
Aug. 15: Marie Hubert Benjamin Stafford, b. 10 Jan. 1812, Ireland.

1864
July 17: Mary Eugenie, b. 19 June. P: Joseph Walter and Mary Appolonia Stouff.
July 31: Edward, b. 3 March. P: John Buttiger and Mary Anna Studer.
Sept. 27: Mary Frances Josephine, P: Joseph Malcuit and Augustina Potot.

1865
Aug. 19: Mary Eugenie, b. 2 July. P: John Baptist Cabut and Mary Pierson.
Oct. 26: Helen, b. 28 Aug. P: John Jones and Bridget Nonnen.

1866
Feb. 7: Gregory, b. 22 Sept. 1865. P: George Rauzer and Elizabeth Ulrich.
1866 (continued)
Feb. 11: Mary Josepha C., b. 7 Feb. P: Joseph Walter and Mary Appolonia Stouff.
April 17: Melania Sophia, b. 2 April. P: Victor Stutz and Sophia Cholley.
June 12: Paul, b. 16 May. P: Paul Girard and Hyacinth Rebut.
June 12: Mary Catharine, b. 23 April. P: Stephan Paquelet and Eugenie Dete.
June 17: Joseph August, b. 20 April. P: James Studer and Melitina Piguard.
June 17: Mary Augusta B., b. 10 May. P: John Claude Bardin and Mary Figard.
June 17: Mary Julia, b. 22 March. P: Louis Foucault and Eugenie, his wife.
June 17: Mary Frances J., b. 28 May. P: Peter Petit and Felicitas Rouhier.
July 24: Joseph Hubert, b. 19 July. P: Theodore Jeanmougin and Sophia Girard.
Nov. 6: Peter Joseph, b. 27 July. P: August Merillat and Mary Marthey.
Nov. 28: Mary Ottilia, b. 5 June. P: Theodore Girard and Felicitas Genet.

1867
Jan. 3: Augustus Hubert, b. 9 Dec. 1866. P: Joseph Redoute and Margaret Pierson.
March 10: Charles Eugene, b. 17 Feb. P: John Baptist Cabut and Mary Pierson.
March 10: Louis Francis, b. 16 Feb. P: Louis Valot and Mary Cholley.
April 21: Joseph Charles, b. 21 Feb. P: Charles Cagnet and Basilia Girard.
May 13: Peter Paul, b. 11 May. P: Joseph Malcuit and Augustine Potot.
May 20: Henry John C.J., b. 9 May. P: Joseph Pailliotet and Mary Bardin.
July 19: Hilbertus Hubert J., b. 21 June. P: Paul Girard and Hyacinth Rebut.
Dec. 27: Mary Teresa J.S., b. 20 Dec. P: John Baptist Cabut and Mary Pierson.

1868 (No recordings)

1869
March 7: Joseph Placidus, b. 21 Nov. 1868. P: Joseph Marthey and Clara Jeanmougin.
May 2: Melanias Victoria, b. 23 March. P: Louis Valot and Mary Cholley.
May 11: Mary Helen, b. 7 April. P: William Geohegan and Helen McGovern.
June 20: Mary Catharine, b. 12 May. P: Paul Socie and Catharine Cuenot.
June 20: Emmanuel, b. 29 May. P: Louis Gaume and Johanna Cholley.
June 20: Joseph Louis, b. 8 June. P: Francis Bardin and Noema Girard.
June 27: Mary Josephine, b. 8 June. P: Joseph Pailliotet and Margaret Bardin.
June 27: Joseph Albert, b. 1 June. P: Francis Girard and Adelaide Martin.
July 18: Mary Eugenie, b. 11 July. P: Emil Stutz and Amelia Henry.
Aug. 1: Mary Augusta, b. 22 July. P: Francis Olivier and Mary Blanchard.
Aug. 1: Peter Francis, b. 1 Aug. P: John Baptist Dete and Josephine Bresson.
Aug. 1: Mary Ottilia, b. 1 Aug. P: John Baptist Dete and Josephine Bresson.

(To be continued)