Barquilla de la Santa Maria
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The McCunes and Staffords,
the Proposed Catholic Church in Beverly, Ohio,
and the Catholic Church in Keokuk, Iowa
by Donald M. Schlegel

Several years ago, in researching the property deeds of the Bishops of Columbus in the Washington County Courthouse in Marietta, a deed was found whereby Bishop Purcell of Cincinnati in 1850 sold to John Dodge lots 15 through 18 in Beverly, for a nominal one dollar and for the further consideration of relieving John McCune and Martin Stafford from the requirement to build a Catholic church there. This obligation apparently originated in 1838, when Dodge sold the lots to Purcell for one dollar, “in trust for the Roman Catholic Congregation of St. Michael Beverly Washington County, Ohio.” It was known that Martin Stafford had been a member of the building committee for St. Remigius Church in Columbus in the earlier 1830s and McCune had been found in records along the National Road. What more could be learned of these two, their history, and their involvement in other church projects? These questions led to the present article, in which the two men and their families are traced from Ireland through Ohio to Iowa; and their impact ripples on to Butte, Montana.

Peter McCune

Peter McCune was born in County Armagh, Ireland, and came to Ohio about 1822.1 The McCunes were numerous in and near the parish of Loughgilly, County Armagh, where the name was spelled McKeon. (Peter’s name is spelled McKeown and McKown in early deeds in Guernsey County, O.2) They appear to have been an ancient military family, perhaps originally from Scotland, who fought as heavily armored gallóglach for the ruling O’Neill family under MacDonnell captains in the 15th and 16th centuries.

Peter’s family consisted of two sons born in Ireland, John on Feb. 4, 1808 and Charles T. (c.1813 or 1817), and three children born in Ohio: Bridget (c. 1822), Margaret (1823), and Peter Joseph (c. 1830). His wife Catherine was a convert to the Catholic faith3 and, given the wide span of birth years from Charles to Bridget, one might assume that John’s mother had died and Catherine was a wife whom Peter had married in this country.

Peter and his family settled first in Belmont County, Ohio, where his daughter Margaret was born on Aug. 25, 1823.4 Margaret was baptized on August 1, 1825 on one of Father Thomas Martin’s missionary journeys, probably at the log Church of St. Dominic, called Beaver, west of the present Temperanceville,5 and the act was recorded at St. Joseph’s near Somerset. Margaret’s mother Catherine’s maiden name is difficult to read, but appears to be Tomkild. Others baptized that day included a son of Peter Curnyn, whose sponsor was Peter Cusick, and a son of James Creighton. These heads of families were workers on the roads and moved west as construction progressed. Curnyn settled in Zanesville; Creighton wet on to Licking County before stopping; the McCunes moved west...
of Old Washington but eventually moved south, down the Muskingum Valley. A deed of October, 1826, recorded in Guernsey County, shows that Peter and Catherine were still residents of Belmont County at that time. (Peter signed his name but Catherine signed with her mark.6

In August, 1827 Peter bought four acres in Center Township, Guernsey County, in the northwest corner of lot 11 (Quarter 3, Section 2, Range 2, US Military lands). This was on or near the National Road, about half way between Old Washington and Cambridge, near where today’s Pine Lane meets US Route 40. The next year Peter bought an adjacent 177 acres, being most of the rest of lots 11 and 12.7

In Archbishop Purcell’s account of his episcopal visitation in June, 1834, he noted this McCune residence as a center of Catholicity: “At Cambridge and near to the residence of Mr. McCune, on the same [National] road, there are several Catholic families anxious for an opportunity of practising their holy religion. A numerous congregation assembles occasionally at [Old] Washington.”8,9

Peter’s son John McCune married Roseanna Rogers. We know nothing about Roseanna’s family except that she had a brother named Patrick.10 Their son James P. was baptized on October 21, 1834 by Father Thomas Martin. Father Martin recorded this at St. Mary’s, Lancaster, but it is not possible to say where it took place. Another son, Peter Charles, was baptized by Father James Reid, pastor at St. Dominic, Beaver, in eastern Guernsey County, on January 9, 1836; sponsors were Charles and Bridget McCune. That March John bought in lots 10 and 11 of Robb’s addition to Old Washington.11 These lots were on the National Road on the eastern edge of the town. The young family did not live there long, if at all, for soon they moved south to Beverly on the Muskingum River. John owned the lots in Old Washington until 1845, when he sold them to Father Charles McCallion, the pastor of St. Dominic’s.12,13

**John McCune and the Muskingum River Improvement Project**

In the years 1836 to 1841 the State of Ohio made navigational improvements along the Muskingum River from the Ohio River at Marietta up to Zanesville. Ohio’s Board of Public Works selected Colonel Samuel R. Curtis as chief engineer. After the necessary surveys were completed, Curtis set up his headquarters at McConnellsville and members of the surveying corps were located at different places along the river to supervise construction. John Scott was assigned to Beverly, where a lock, dam, and short canal were to be built. When the contracts were let in 1836, John McCune won the bid to build the canal and dam and Arthur Taggart the lock (No. 4) at Beverly. Taggart was of the same mold as McCune, an immigrant from County Tyrone, whose wife was Margaret, daughter of Peter Cornyn.

In the fall of 1837 Mr. Scott was dismissed from his supervisory position at Beverly and teenaged John Sherman of Lancaster, the later U.S. Senator, was assigned not to take his place but to look after details at Beverly and to keep the headquarters advised of progress. It soon was found that Sherman was able to measure embankments, excavations, stone, and other materials. He continued practically in charge of the work. All plans came from headquarters and he was carefully instructed from there what to do and how to do it. This situation continued until the summer of 1839 and, though Sherman did not say as much, it speaks highly of the contractors, McCune and Taggart.

While Sherman was in this odd position, diversion was occasionally provided in the form of debates. One of these was on the subject of temperance.

...drinking of something stronger than water was almost as universal as eating, and considered equally necessary. However, there
sprang up about that time a movement in favor of temperance. It was thought best to discuss the subject at a public meeting, a school-teacher and I taking the side of temperance, and two other young men opposing us. The meeting was well attended, largely by the men employed on the public work who habitually received a certain number of “jiggers” of whisky a day, at regular hours. Whisky, not being taxed, was worth from fifteen to twenty-five cents a gallon. It was not an expensive luxury, and was regarded by all the workingmen on the improvement as a necessity. At the end of the debate, which I do not remember to have been a very notable one, the audience decided we had the best of the argument. The discussion created a great excitement. The workingmen took up the cry that the Cumberland Presbyterians, the prevailing sect there, and other Christians, were interfering with their habits and comfort, and when the young schoolmaster appeared the next day, they raised a shout and pursued him with sticks and stones. He escaped with difficulty across the river, thus getting out of the way. I heard of the trouble, but went up to the canal and made my usual measurements. Not a word was said to me and no unkindness shown. I understood afterwards that this was caused by a warning given them by the contractor [McCune], who, hearing of the assault upon the schoolmaster, told them that I was a part of the government and it would not do to attack me; that to disturb me would have a very bad effect upon them all. So, I was forgiven, and, indeed, I never had any controversy during my time there with anyone connected with the work, from John McCune, the contractor, to the humblest water carrier about the works.

In 1839 the state government changed hands and Col. Curtis and other state employees, including Sherman, were removed from the works. John McCune was a resident of Beverly at least from 1837 to 1846. John Dodge, proprietor of Beverly, platted the town in 1837 and named for his birthplace in Massachusetts. McCune was there by that July 17, when he made a loan to another resident. The Catholic Telegraph listed him as a subscriber from 1838 through 1846. Peter Cusick, formerly associated with McCune along the National Road, also was in the vicinity, his mail being addressed to Lowell post office in 1838.

On May 8, 1838, Bishop Purcell of Cincinnati visited Marietta, accompanied by newly ordained Father James McCaffrey, who was to be the first resident pastor. The Bishop was to visit the Catholics of Waterford, an older town across the Muskingum from Beverly, a few days later. On May 9, John Dodge for $1.00 sold to Purcell city lots 15, 16, 17, and 18 in square 29 in Beverly, “in trust for the Roman Catholic Congregation of St. Michael Beverly Washington County, Ohio.” This being while Bishop Purcell was in the area, he probably saw the lots in person and chose the name of the prospective congregation. The lots are on the east side of Ferry Street between Sixth and Seventh. The
price was low because the town’s proprietor, as was a common practice, wanted to encourage development by making the town attractive to newcomers, and so wanted to have churches and other institutions built. John McCune and Martin Stafford were bound by an agreement with Dodge to build the church. The next day, May 10, John McCune and John Dodge jointly advertised in the Marietta Gazette seeking 500,000 bricks. The 1839 and 1840 Catholic Directories noted a church was “building” at Waterford; and in 1841 and 1842 listed Waterford as a station of Father McCaffrey of Marietta. No doubt the intended church at Beverly was indicated by these listings, but it never was built.

**Martin Stafford**

Martin Stafford had landed in New York City in 1822, having been born in County Wexford in 1801. He went from New York to Baltimore, where he obtained a contract with the B&O Railroad.21 He lived in Columbus, Ohio, from 1835 to 1838. There in 1836 he was a member of the building committee for St. Remigius Church, the first Catholic edifice in the city.22 He was the first Irish Catholic to own a lot on North Public Lane, which long after he was gone became known as “Irish Broadway” and now is Naghten Street.23

By January 24, 1839 he had moved to Marietta, or at least was having his mail directed to that post office, when he was a subscriber to the Catholic Telegraph. On Feb. 12, 1839, “Martin Stafford, of Beverly, safely translated from the gloomy confines of Bachelorism and a life of celibacy, to join Miss Bridget McCune in the glorious land of matrimonial bliss and connubial felicity.” The bride was John McCune’s sister and that same year Stafford, McCune, and Thomas Slevin were partners as wholesale and retail grocers with a shop on Ohio Street in Marietta. (McCune, no doubt, was only a “silent partner.”) The partnership still existed in 1843.25 In partnership with John McCune, Stafford had a leasehold interest of a building in Marietta, held by “permanent lease” from the trustees of property set aside for religious purposes, described as a brick storehouse, being the southwest half of a three-story brick store (on fractional lot B in square 69) fronting on Ohio Street and extending back to Green Street. (They sold this interest on Sept. 10, 1855.26)

The Staffords had definitely taken up residence in Marietta by the end of 1840, where Martin was a grocer and dealer.27 In the following decade Martin no doubt was a mainstay of the Catholic community there. (The histories of St. Mary’s parish are of the type according to which the pastor did everything and the laity might not have existed, so we cannot be sure.) He was the city’s most consistent subscriber to the Catholic Telegraph and was its agent in 1849 and 1850.28 After Peter McCune’s death, Martin and Bridget’s home became the family center, her mother Catherine and brother Peter living there along with their own young children. Mrs. McCune died at their residence on April 10, 1845 of a lung condition. She had been a convert to the Catholic faith, “in the practice of which she fulfilled in an exemplary manner the duties of a virtuous wife and an affectionate mother...”29

(To be continued)

**NOTES**

1) Catholic Telegraph, Dec. 10, 1842
2) Guernsey County deed records E/212, J/415, and O/541
3) Catholic Telegraph, April 24, 1845
4) her tombstone in the Old Catholic Cemetery, Keokuk, Iowa
5) see the Bulletin, XIII/8, Aug. 1988
6) Guernsey County deed record E/212
7) Guernsey County deed records E/322 and E/425
8) Catholic Telegraph, June 27, 1834
9) There was another Peter McCune in eastern Ohio.
This man owned real estate in Zanesville beginning in 1828 and died about January, 1833. His heirs were his widow Bridget and children Patrick, Ann, Bridget, and Hugh. (Muskingum County deed records I/740, M/377, M/589, O/356, Y/464, Z/155; probate case 1211)

10) Catholic Telegraph, March 5, 1842. The brother could have been the Patrick Rogers who was in Franklinton in the early 1830s. See the Bulletin, Vol. XIX, No. 2, Feb., 1994.

11) Guersey County deed record J/613
12) Guernsey County deed record U/294
13) The were more than one other contemporary John McCunes in Ohio. Men of this name were residing in Warren Township, Belmont County and Jefferson Township, Guernsey Co., in 1830. Per Guernsey County deed records: J/300 and M/216, John and Sarah McCune of Belmont County had owned parts of S 11 T 3 R 3 of unappropriated US Military lands, 40 acres. In 1840 a John McCune was in Madison Twp., Guernsey County. On June 28, 1842, James, son of John and Polly McCune, was baptized by Father Charles McCallion of Beaver St. Dominic; sponsor was Philip Harkins. John McCune and wife Hannah and family were in Barnesville in 1850.

15) Jerry B. Devol, “Postal History of Waterford Township” Tallow Light, Vol. 3, p. 139
16) Washington County deed record 30/160
17) Catholic Telegraph, Jan. 18, 1838
18) Catholic Telegraph, April 19 and May 17, 1838
19) Washington County deed record 28/365
20) Marietta Gazette, May 12, 1838. It is possible that McCune did build what became the first Catholic church in Beverly. In November of 1842 John Dodge donated a building and land to the new Beverly College, up Seventh Street from the proposed St. Michael’s site. We do not know who contracted to build this large brick structure—perhaps the half-million bricks sought by McCune and Dodge were used there. This building was purchased by Father Crock of Churchtown in 1919 to be used as St. Bernard’s Church and it served as such until 1952, when it was replaced by the present church.

21) obituary, Oct. 20, 1886, courtesy of the Keokuk Public Library
22) Studer, Jacob H. Columbus, Ohio, Its History, Resources, and Progress; Columbus, 1873, p 165
23) Franklin County deed records 14/344, 18/364, 19/13, 30/366 and 30/372; one of these says his residence was in Washington County; see the Bulletin, XIX no. 2, Feb., 1994, p. 11
24) Marietta Gazette, quoted in the Tallow Light, Vol. 19, p. 231 (could not be found in the Washington County probate court records)

25) newspaper ad quoted in Andrews, History of Marietta & Washington Co., p. 268; also Washington County deed records 30/443 and 34/329
26) Washington County deed record 46/425
27) Catholic Telegraph, Dec. 30, 1840; 1840 census; 1850 census
28) Catholic Telegraph, Jan. 30, 1841, Sept. 7, 1848, Aug. 9, 1849, March 30 and June 1, 1850
29) Catholic Telegraph, April 24, 1845

Abstracts from the Catholic Telegraph

(Continued, from Vol. XXXV, No. 12)

October 23, 1858
Episcopal Visitation Schedule:
Sunday, 5th December, St. Francis de Sales, Newark
7th, St. Mary’s, Mattingly’s Settlement
8th, Dresden, St. Matthew’s
9th, St. Nicholas, Coshocton county
10th, St. Ann’s, morning; Coshocton, evening
Sunday, 12th, St. Mary’s near Temperanceville
13th, St. John’s, Miltonsburgh, Monroe co.
14th, St. Joseph’s, Monroe co.
15th, St. Mary’s, Antioch tp. [Immaculate Conception, Fulda]
16th, St. Michael’s, Archer Settlement

November 6, 1858
St. Patrick’s Church, Columbus.

Rev. Mr. Fitzgerald, from whose piety, zeal, and good sense we expected these results, writes: “I hope we have well nigh forgotten our party feelings and little dissentions. Indeed every one appears to try to forget them. I have got a very excellent teacher, who had been for some years director of St. John’s Schools, Cincinnati. We have 132 boys, an increase of 50 over last year; and 175 girls—the latter taught by the devoted Sisters of Notre Dame. We are getting a new organ for $1200—the old one being taken in part pay—and over $200 being subscribed towards the balance. All are anxious to profit by the
Jubilee in Columbus.

REV. EDITORS: ...The Jubilee and mission of nine days' duration, conducted by the illustrious missionary, Rev. Mr. Weninger, at Holy Cross Church in Columbus, was productive of a vast amount of good. ...These powers [of eloquence and persuasion] are possessed to a large degree by the Rev. Mr. Weninger. His delivery is not altogether faultless; his voice, when raised to its highest pitch, is rather unpleasant; but in his conceptions he possesses great advantages over other speakers—inasmuch as his discourses are more practical, more in detail, better adapted to the individual wants of the faithful, and more within the comprehension of the many....

Possessed of such powers, it is no wonder that the Rev. Mr. Weninger, in his first sermon, on Sunday, Oct. 17th, made a deep and lasting impression upon his hearers. Being the commencement of the Jubilee, the Church was crowded to the utmost, the renown of the missionary having attracted, not only a host of the faithful, but also a large number of Protestants. Rev. Mr. Weninger labored during these nine days' mission with unrelenting zeal and ardor. He preached from three to four times every day, heard confessions, and attended to many other imperative duties, accruing from the nature of the solemnity of such holy times. He was assisted by the Rev. Mr. Weis of Delaware, Rev. Mr. Hahn of Dayton, Rev. Mr. Lange of Lancaster, Rev. Mr. Hemsteger of Piqua, and Rev. Mr. C. H. Borgess, our beloved pastor. About 1500 Catholics approached the Holy Sacrament during the week, and seven Protestants were converted and received into the Holy Catholic Church.

On Sunday, Oct. 24th, Solemn High Mass was celebrated and sung by the Rev. Mr. Weis, assisted by Rev. Mr. Hahn, Rev. Mr. Hemsteger, and Rev. Mr. Borgess. The choir performed Mozart's 12th Mass, accompanied by an efficient orchestra of 17 members, the whole under the lead of Mr. Kronenbitter. The performance, in its ensemble of voices and instruments, gave general satisfaction—it must be charitably judged—since so sublime a work suggests a style of performance as great as itself; besides, it requires a great deal of individual study and many careful rehearsals in order to render it perfect, neither of which, under existing circumstances, could be had. Miss Donovan, the leading soprano, although not yet entirely recovered from severe lung-fever, acquitted herself in her usual happy manner. In Miss Donovan's voice and musical accomplishments, the congregation of Holy Cross Church possesses a treasure which they can never prize too highly. Considering this, her affliction and her great attachment to the Holy Catholic religion, the congregation has sufficient reasons why never to forget her as a worthy object of their care and protection.

The Holy Mission was closed on Monday evening, Oct. 25th, in a most happy and satisfactory manner. The interior of the Church presented a spectacle never before witnessed in Columbus. The Church was magnificently decorated, and a beautiful Cross, as a lasting memorial of this Holy Mission, was erected in front of the High Altar; the splendor of the whole being enhanced by the brilliant light emanating from the many hundred candles. The crowd assembled to witness the closing ceremonies was a compact mass of human beings utterly absorbed with the solemnity of the surrounding scenery. The most affecting part of the ceremony however, was the chanting of the Te Deum (in German), the ready and loud response of the entire congregation to the request of Father Weninger to forget past difficulties and promise perpetual love and friendship to one another. ...
St. Mary Parish in Lancaster had the second Catholic church built in the state of Ohio. However, it had no resident pastor for many years and its sacramental acts were recorded elsewhere, primarily at St. Joseph’s and Holy Trinity, Somerset. Its own records begin in 1834. This register and the second register of St. Joseph’s near Somerset are the only registers in the diocese from before 1840 that we have not published.

Baptismal Register

October the 19th 1834
Thomas son of James Lannen and Mary Hill, spouses; spons. Henry Hughes and Joanna Riordan. F. Th. Martin
Oct. 19th, Martin son of John Powers & Catherine Sherlock, spouses; spons. Andrew Maher & Mary Hill. F. Tho. Martin
Oct. 21, James P. McCune, son of John and Rosanna Rogers, spouses; spons. Michael McCune & Eleanor O’Reilly. F. Tho. Martin

November
2nd, Rosanna daughter of Daniel Elms? & Hanna Clark, spouses; godmother was Winefrid Lilly. F. T. Martin

December 18th, George Nicholas lawful son of George Shaefler & Mary Ann McAlear, spouses; godmother was Isabella McAlear. T. Martin

January 1835
4th day, Mary Ann lawful daughter of Robert Cling and Rosanna Hanselman, spouses; godmother Agnes Dault. F. Tho. Martin
Same day, Catherine lawful daughter of Martin Coon and Catherine Litzing; spons. Martin Dault. F. T. Martin
Same day, Mary, daughter of Clement Bear & Agnes Dault, spouses; spons. Theresa StJohn? F. Tho. Martin
Same day, Weldelina daughter of Felix Kinsens & Richna [Regina?] Hugner [or Stugner?], spouses; spons. Helen Hanse. F. Tho. Martin

February 1, Louisa daughter of Alexander Sardo & Sophia Ringwalt, spouses; spons. Charles Boverketts & Caroline Smith. F. Tho Martin
Same day, John son of George Levether & Rosanna Everhaus; [page 5] spons. Mathias Hemerlin & Harieta Ulse. F. Tho Martin
Same day, James, son of Joseph Hartman & Catherine Martafer; spons. Francis Simerman & Susanna Lindley. F. Tho. Martin
Same day, Ferdinand, son of Ferdinand Riley & Frances Trellinger; spons. Jerome Brown and Clare Hause. F. Tho. Martin
February 19th, Baptized by Rev. Father Brother Vincent De Raymacker, Michael son of Michael Meyers & Margaret Frecker, spouses; spons. Joseph Meyers & Frances Frecker. Same day & by the same priest, Charles, son of Xavier Heverler? and Maria Wald, spouses; spons. Andrew Spooner & Maria Wald.

March 14th, Charles, lawful son of Thomas Ewing & Maria Boyle; godmother was Abigail Clarke. F. Tho. Martin


April 13th, Joseph, son of Frederick Beifer & Mary Walt, spouses, one month old; spons. Telfer Hefler & Josephine Lifford. Th. Martin.

April 11th, George W. Rifler, son of George & Ann Leighnegar, spouses; godmother was Eliza McAleer. Tho Martin OP


May 24th, George Ex son of George & Margaret Econroth, spouses; spons. Joseph [blank] & Maria Smith. Tho Martin

May 18, Baptized by Reverend Mr. Nicholas D. Young, Michael son of Michael Myers & Margaret Frecker, spouses; spons. Joseph Winter & Frances Frecker. Tho Martin.

12 June, Bridget daughter of Joseph Walt & Mary Walt. sponsors Joseph Beiden? & Mary Walt. N. D. Young, O.P.

1 July, 1836, Mary Elizabeth daughter of Richard J. Lilly & Margaret Lilly or Hughes; sponsors were Daniel Riffle and Theresia LittleJohn. Alleman

6 July, 1836, John son of Francis Anthony Schloper & Rosina Schloper formerly Bayes. Sponsors F. Jon. Fixle & Mary Anna Uz. Alleman

Same day, Mary Catherine daughter of Anthony Kessler and Helen Kessler formerly Spring. Sponsors J. Sindelbach and M. C. Sindelbach. Alleman

July 31st, Drusilla Elizabeth lawful daughter of William Forsythe & Elenor (formerly Kenedy?) sponsors were Drusilla Kenudy? F.Tho. Martin

1st, Emily Cecilia lawful daughter of William Bodenheimer & Mary Fought; spons. Rachel Bury. F. Tho. Martin

4 Sept., Catherine Welker daughter of Mathias Welker & Magdaline Welker; sponsors George Riling & Magdalene Grosgood. N. D. Young

4 Sept., James Stanislaus? Blair, son of Louis & Julia Blair; spons. Mrs. M. McManimy. N. D. Young

4 Sept., Catherine Louisa Blair daughter of Henry & Hariot Blair; spons. Catherine McManimy. N. D. Young O.P.

25 September, Valentine Charles Roth son of Adam & Christiana Roth; spons. Christian? Winegardner & Anna Spire. N. D. Young (To be continued)