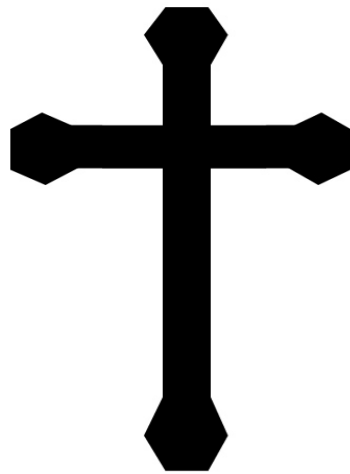


**RHINE'S
ONE HUNDRED
YEARS**



1856

1956



MOST REVEREND KARL J. ALTER D. D.
ARCHBISHOP OF CINCINNATI

The RHINE Story

Situated three miles east of Botkins, Ohio, is the little community of farming families called Rhine, pronounced Rhiney. How it came by its name none of its inhabitants are certain. First settlers have passed away in death without handing down what they knew of its beginning; so the origin of the name stands in the misty past and can only be guessed. It seems, however, that by the name, Rhine, these early settlers wished to perpetuate in memory what they loved in the land of their birth. It is a fact that many towns and places in the States recall towns and places in other lands. Most of the early settlers in Rhine were German immigrants. Perhaps they lived in regions touching the Rhine River, greatly celebrated in their home country, and so they handed down its name to the new community in their new land. This guess is strengthened by another fact that these early folks, isolated from towns and cities when much of the land was covered with forests, and travel was difficult, loved to get together in recreation to relieve their loneliness. One of their diversions was the singing of songs and one of their favorite songs was 'The Watch on the Rhine'. It is therefore again surmised that the Rhine River had a part in establishing the name of their new home.

[I beg to differ. It would be very unusual to name a town after a river and the song was popular at the time of the French-Prussian war (1870), a bit too late. My suggestion is that it was named after the town of Rheine (same pronunciation), not far - as the crow flies - from Voltlage. R. Winter, the transcriber.]

Milk-sickness, a malignant disease affecting farm stock, was prevalent these early days in Northwestern Ohio, so much so that many settlers moved quickly to other places. Diedrich Schulte, however, was one who stayed. Mr. Schulte entered the southwest portion of section 36, Dinsmore Township in the year 1838. It is not known what price acreage he paid for this first place of property, but it must have been only a nominal price in order to encourage others to come into the region. For, in 1852, Mr. Schulte acquired an additional 80 acres for which he paid the "grand" sum of one-hundred and twenty dollars. To raise this purchase price he butchered four hogs, hauled them by wagon to Port Jefferson, a distance of twelve miles, where they were sold, then journeyed on to the Government Agency at Sidney to obtain a deed for his land. This deed, carefully



Confessio
et
in
Sancti
Laurentii
Kirche
in
Shelby County, O. 1856

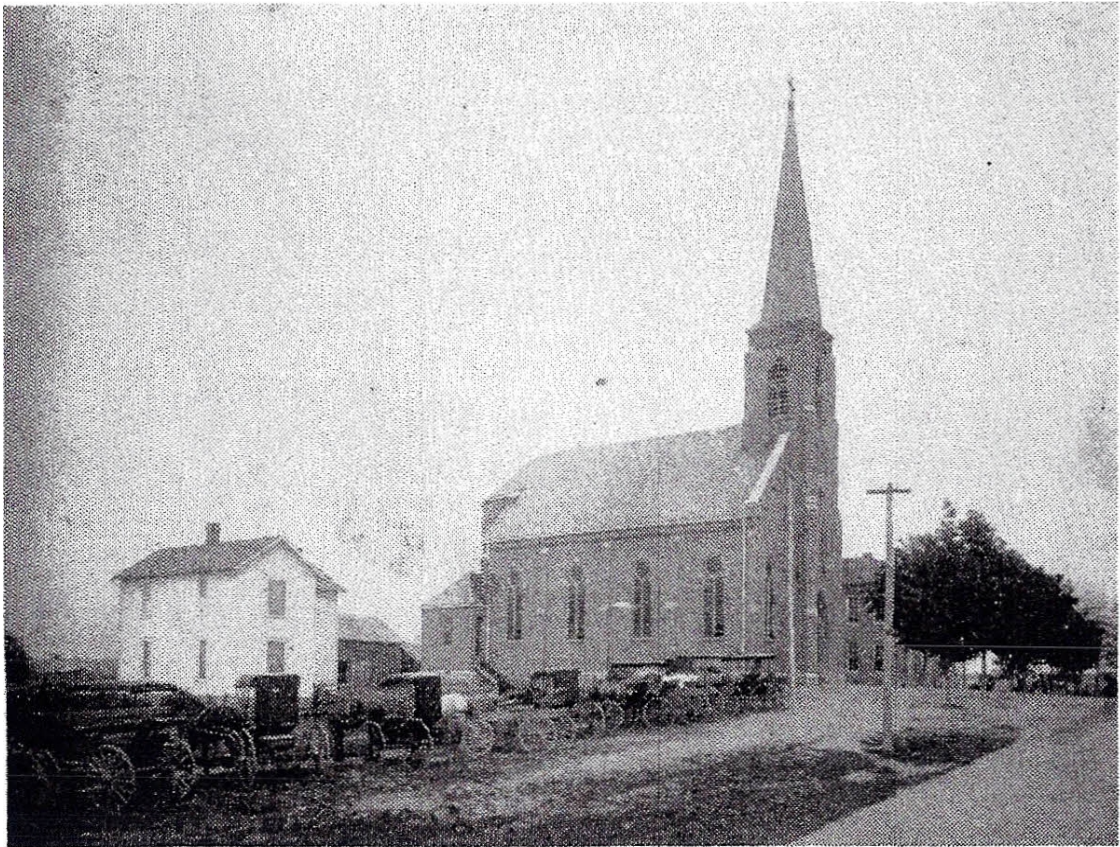
THE FIRST CHURCH 1858

preserved and treasured by the Schulte heirs, is signed by Reuben Wood then Governor of Ohio.

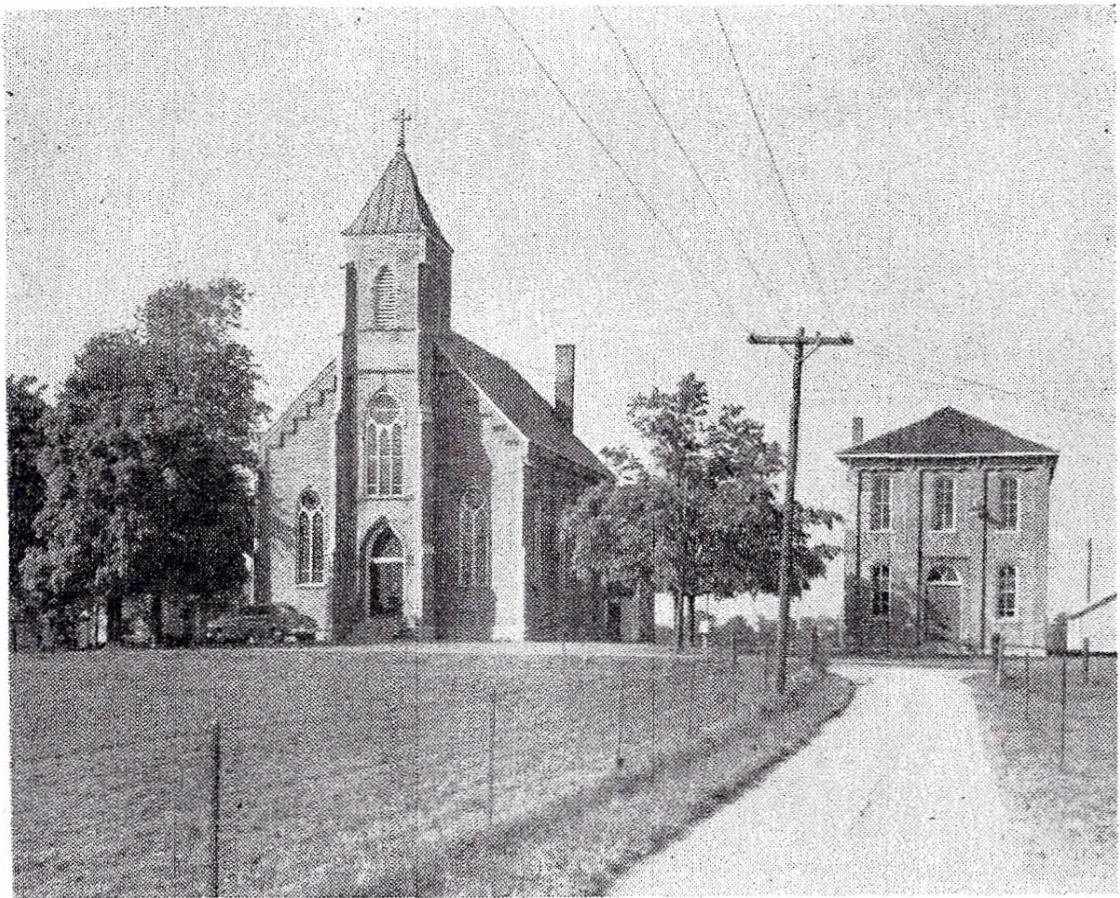
Relative to divine service the catholic people of Rhine first offered the Holy Sacrifice of Mass in Petersburg Parish, one mile south of Fryburg, organized by Reverend William Horstman. Father Horstman, a man surely dear to the heart of God because of his zeal and self-sacrifice in missionary work, was born in Glandorf, Germany, in 1778 and ordained priest in 1806. A long-time desire to found a new colony in America was fulfilled when his superiors granted leave and after eight weeks of ocean voyage he landed in the new country, the choice and scene of his future labors for Christ. Striking out at once into the wilderness he came to Putnam County, Ohio where he decided to stay. Friends followed him across the ocean and together they cleared the land, broke the soil and in memory of their old home called the new colony Glandorf.

But Father Horstman, fired with the cause of Christ, did not confine his missionary zeal to Putnam County. Hearing of catholic settlements farther south he founded a congregation in Minster, Auglaize County. His second foundation was at Petersburg mentioned above in this story. Here a little log church was built in 1836, which however, was not formally blessed until January 1840 under the invocation of the Apostles Peter and Paul. In this church the families of Rhine together with those from Wapakoneta, Fryburg and Botkins worshipped God. But distance, and mud roads which became impassable in winter, caused the Catholics of each of these places to build their own churches, the first, Wapakoneta in 1839, the second Fryburg in 1849, the third, Rhine 1856, and Botkins in 1866. Surrounded completely by her children as Father Tebbe writes in his centenary book of the Fryburg Parish, the little log church of Petersburg was needed no longer. She had served her purpose. Like the good seed, in giving life to new plants she losed her own.

At first, and until a church could be built, the Sacrifice of the mass was not offered in Rhine every Sunday but at intervals. For instance on Mondays after the great feast days such as Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, it was



BEFORE THE DAYS OF THE AUTOMOBILE



PRESENT ST. LAWRENCE CHURCH 1983
SCHOOL 1878

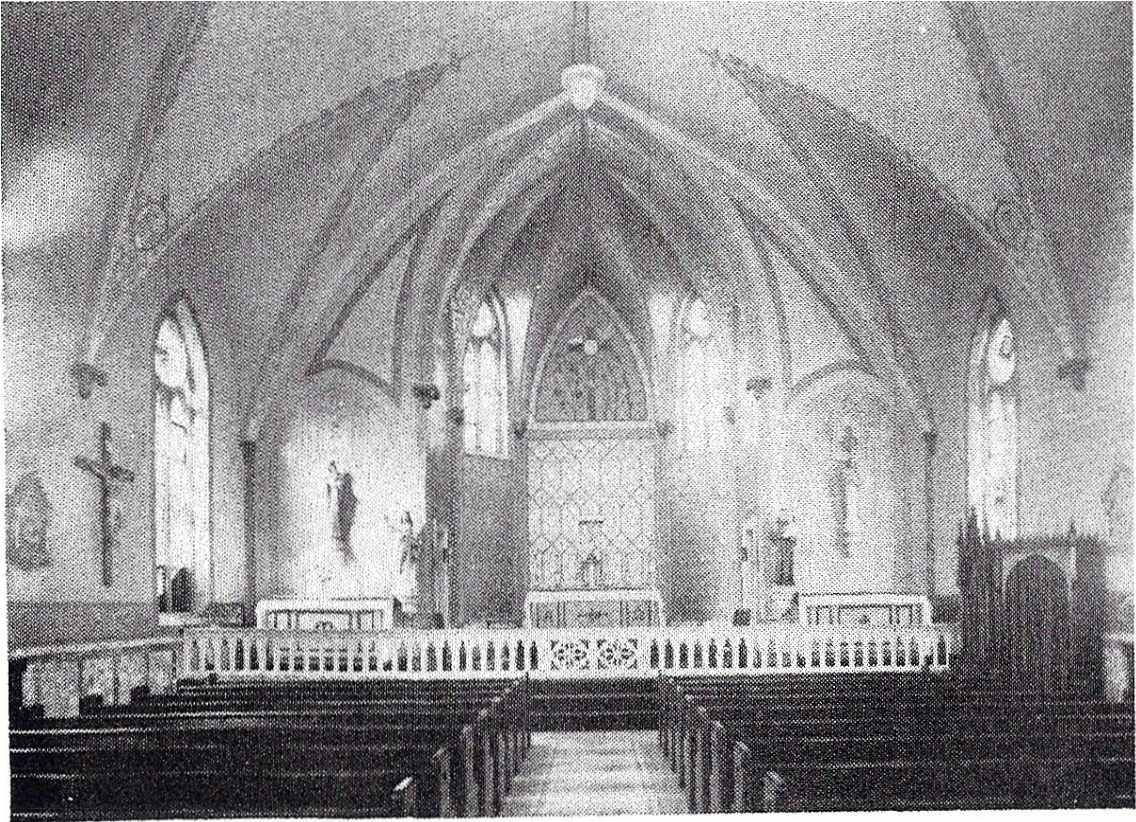
offered in the Schulte home on a dresser, and the faithful, previously confessed, received communion. Meanwhile the Rhine folks worked with enthusiasm for their new parish.

At a first meeting held in the district school-house, Mr. Schulte announced that he would donate four acres of his land for a church. To this announcement George Schnippel replied, If you can donate four acres for a church, I can and will donate one acre for a cemetery. Both offers were accepted with joy. Those on the building committee were John Greve, John Soder, Diedrich Steinke and Dietrich Schulte.

An early history of Shelby County, compiled in 1883 has the following account of the Rhine Parish:

„ St. Lawrence Catholic Church is located near the southwest corner of section 36, Dinsmore Township on the Botkins Pike. The society was organized in the schoolhouse of sub-district No. 1 by Father Henry J. Muckerheide with about twenty families. Their church was dedicated sometime during the autumn of 1858. The building is a brick structure 50 x 40 feet with a 22 foot ceiling and was erected at a cost of \$2100. John B. Shipper, D. Schulte, Joseph's Schmerge and Steinke were then appointed trustees. The present trustees are Joseph Stolle, Andrew Borges and George Martin. The priests since the organization of the society have been Father Muckerheide until 1862; Father A. Enders 1862; Father P. Engelbert 1863; Father Henry Volm 1864; Father Joseph Goebbels 1864-71; Father Henry Daniel 1871-73; Father Nicholas Eilerman 1873-93.

In his later years Father Eilerman realized the need of a new church to replace the first one which, although not so old yet had been constructed rather roughly both within and without. He set about collecting funds and in 1893 witnessed the laying of the cornerstone of the new edifice. However, he died the same year and did not see its completion. It was finished under the direction of Father Henry Daniel and dedicated in August 1894 by Most Reverend William Henry Elder, Archbishop of Cincinnati.



INTERIOR VIEW OF CHURCH TODAY



RECTORY

Rhine at this time still had no resident pastor. All priests mentioned above served the parish out of Fryburg or Botkins where they lived. Father G. Henry Mueller built the present rectory in 1896 and became the first priest to live on Rhine premises. Following him came Fathers Aloysius Kohmescher 1896-1902; Joseph Sund 1902-1906; William Miggeel 1906-07; Clemet (now Right Reverend Monsignor) Beckmeyer 1907-10; William Miggeel 1910-20; Alphonse Mueller C.P.P.S. 1920-21; Bernard Wellman 1921-22; Aloysius Cood C.P.P.S. 1922-23; Charles Knap 1923-48; Edwin Dittman 1948-50. The present pastor is Father Urban Koehl.

During the pastorate of Father Knab, high tornadic winds blew across Rhine on St. Joseph's Day, March 19, 1948, causing much material damage to church buildings and farm property in the area. The steeple of the church toppled and crashed onto the adjacent schoolhouse. Debris was seen everywhere. But the people took it in good stride knowing that all parts of the earth are subject occasionally to high wind, and Rhine not more than others. So when-



AFTER TORNADO -- FRIDAY, MARCH 19, 1948



Brother Delno Schuman S. J.
Entered Jesuit Novitiate 1936



Rev. Leander A. Schweitzer
Ordained June 7, 1941

Rev. James W. Sorderman
1945



Rev. James W. Sorderman
Ordained October 27, 1945

Rev. Leander A. Schweitzer
1941

ever it begins to blow unusually strong they calmly and piously light their blessed candles and pray with confidence in the protection of God and His angels.

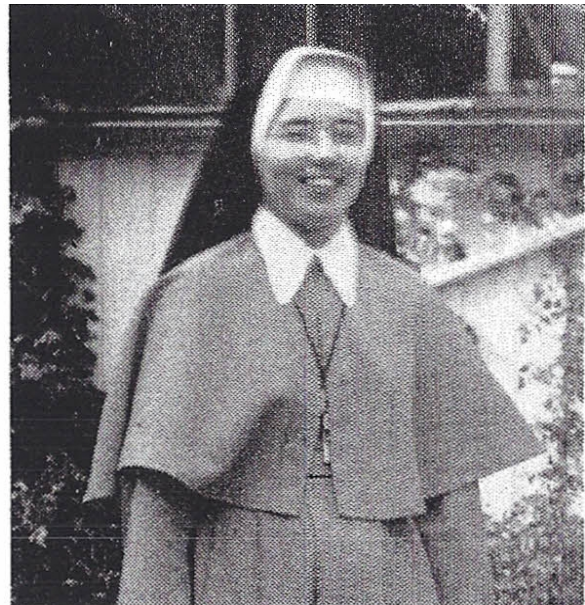
Schools were built in Dinsmore Township very early, the first one constructed entirely of logs in 1836. By 1846 there were nine schools, one in the center of every four sections and a tenth devoted to the instruction of negro children. In one of these schools an amusing incident occurred relative to the blackboard. The History of Shelby County has this to say:

"The blackboard was first introduced in this township in 1846, and consisted simply of a board about five feet long and three feet wide, smooth planed, painted black, to which slats were fastened to answer the place of legs by which the board was supported against the wall. The people considered it a nuisance because while the teacher and pupils were working on it, it drew the attention of the whole school. It was therefore secretly removed from the school by night and hid in the woods. In 1849 another teacher introduced the blackboard and this time it was retained."

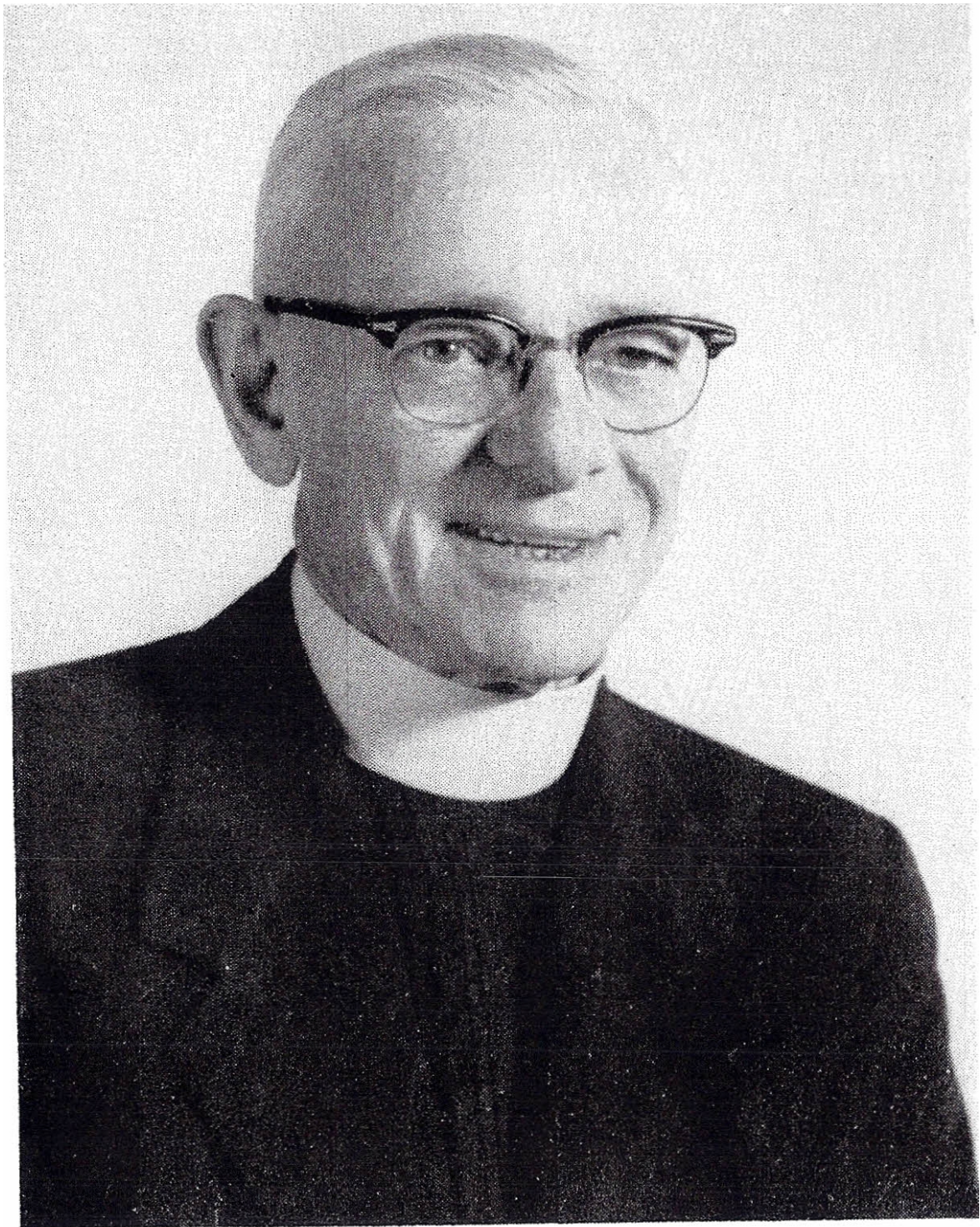
To provide religious instruction for their children the catholic people built with private funds a school near their



Sister Mary Bertholda Schweitzer
Entered Convent 1900
Died 1926



Sister Mary Janet Greve C.P.P.S.
September 1950



REV. URBAN J. KOEHL
Present Pastor

church in 1878. It was a two-story brick construction with a lean-to in the rear and cost \$1800. The teacher used the lean-to and part of the upper story for his living quarters. Besides his duty as instructor he usually acted as organist at divine service and was also janitor of the place. This school is still standing and most of the adults of the parish can remember learning in it to read and write and do their numbers. Only a few years back

Rhine was incorporated into the Botkins school district, and now the children are transported by bus to Botkins where they learn to do their numbers in up-to-date schools under state supervision. The Rhine building is used now for society meetings and an occasional old-time get-to-gether for pleasant recreation.

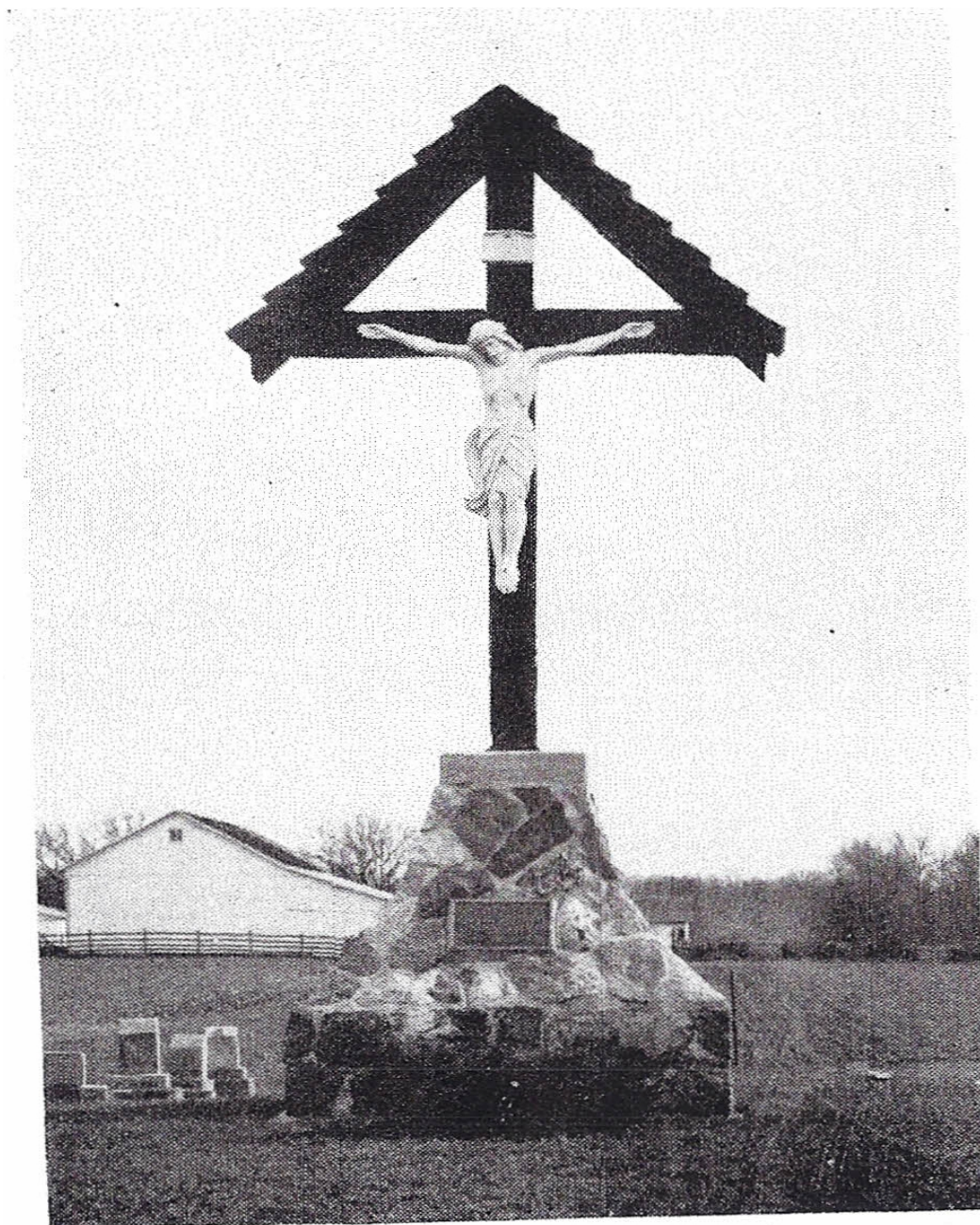
If one wishes to make a good meditation on eternal things one has only to walk leisurely through the cemetery across from the church and decipher on tombstones the names of those who witnessed the birthpains of their beloved parish many years ago. Peacefully they lie there waiting for the trumpet-call of their resurrection in Christ. To mention all these names would be impossible and perhaps not wise. For some lie there who worked equally as hard for their parish as those who are mentioned in these pages and we would not wish to hurt them or their descendants by possibly forgetting their names. Naturally we write only of facts and events which research has uncovered.

It is regretted that those whom we lovingly call the old-timers did not collect material from which one could give a more detailed and interesting account of St. Lawrence Parish. We would like to know more of their joys, heartaches and sacrifices. But such is not our satisfaction. Youngsters living at the present time can remember Joseph Dieringer, Uncle George and Aunt Elizabeth Schmerge. Many adults can recall learning the three R's under the rule of teacher, organist and janitor all rolled in one. They can remember the old-fashioned pot-bellied stove which warmed them on winter days. Those who sat near it were too warm; those who sat in the corners of the room were too cold. A few can go back further, but none, of course, can go back to the time when dear old Rhine herself was

a toddling infant. It remains for eternity to enroll that panorama before our eyes.

As for the present loving and lovable residents of Rhine we say: God bless you everyone. May your deeds for God stand out in the future as the deeds of your forebears stand out in the past.

So ends the Rhine Story.



GOD'S ACRE OF THE DEAD