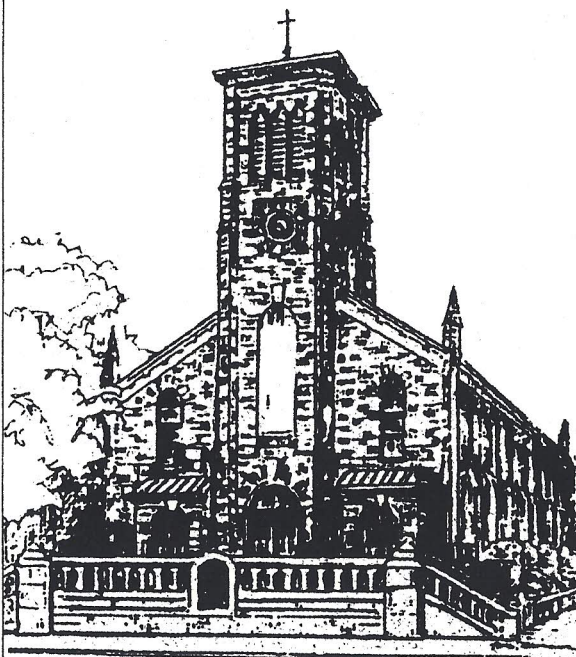




## ST. VINCENT PARISH HISTORY

# ST. VINCENT PARISH

Akron, Ohio



AKRON'S OLDEST CATHOLIC CHURCH

FOUNDED IN 1837



Every parish is a microcosm of the Universal Church – the Body of Christ. The story of St. Vincent de Paul Church, Akron's oldest Catholic parish, tells not only of our relationship to the life of the Church, but also of our ties to the local community. Water is the sign of the Holy Spirit's life-giving presence through the Sacrament of Baptism. Water is also the cause for the founding of the City of Akron, due in no small part to the efforts of Irish immigrant laborers and their families who came to this region in the late 1820's to build the Ohio & Erie Canal: the region's link with the rest of the world.

The earliest records show St. Vincent as a mission visited by Father Basil A. Shorb, pastor of St. Francis Xavier Church, Chippewa/Doylestown, in 1837. St. Vincent Parish is ten years older than the Diocese of Cleveland. Prior to 1847, the parish was in the Diocese of Cincinnati.

Early parishioners celebrated Mass in their log homes when the priest came to town. The first permanent Church was a frame structure built in 1844 with timbers cut and hauled by members of the parish on land donated by the father of a judge, Edwin O. Green, from which Green Street takes its name. The original church building was opposite Wood Street, near to the present Green Street Stadium.

Under the pastoral leadership of Father Matthew A. Scanlon, ground was broken for the present church structure on February 18, 1864. On March 17, 1864, the cornerstone was laid – thus a connection with St. Patrick, as special patron, from the beginning.

Construction was suspended during 1865, possibly due to a shortage of materials and/or manpower that may have been a result of the Civil War. Construction resumed in 1866 and was

completed in time for the first Mass to be celebrated October 20, 1867.

The architectural style of the church is Romanesque Revival, in contrast to Gothic Revival style which was dominant at that time. Reportedly, Father Scanlon chose this style to show that the Church is not limited to one style or culture. The interior view unobstructed by pillars is a noteworthy feature. The Berea sandstone for the exterior was quarried locally. Accounts vary as to the exact location of the quarry. *The Story of the First One Hundred Years*, compiled by Msgr. John J. Scullen in 1937, mentions octogenarian parishioner, Patsy Madden, who as a pupil in the school on Green Street, aided in carting the stones from Old Portage (near the North end of Portage Path) for use in construction of the present Church. The keystone above the tower window represents the head of Christ, while the keystones of each of six windows on either side of the Church may represent the twelve apostles.

The bell in the tower was cast in Baltimore, purchased by the congregation and christened "Michael" in 1886. The original clockworks, which have since been replaced, were a gift of the non-Catholic citizens of Akron. For well over a century, the tower clock has sounded the hour for neighbors and for those passing by.

A bronze plaque in the front vestibule notes the donors of the original stained glass windows, which were replaced in 1946. One of the original windows was donated by the Coal Miners. Pastor Scanlon donated another window in memory of his brother, Thomas D.A. Scanlon, killed in the Battle of Williamsburg, Virginia, May 5, 1862. In a similar manner, one of the replacement windows is dedicated to the memory of Corporal Samuel Bisesi, killed in World War II – testimony to the persistence of war, as well as to the generosity of parishioners.

Since its beginnings, St. Vincent parish has engaged in building or demolition projects of one

