St. Boniface Parish 1860-2005
Saint Boniface Parish

A Pictorial Record of

The Faith and History of a People

by

Patricia Richardson

Published on the occasion of the Suppression of the Parish of St. Boniface

July 1, 2005

By order of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, Missouri
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Reverend James C. Gray
Pastor, January 15, 2001 to July 1, 2005
Dear Parishioners and Friends of St Boniface: Peace

How does one sum up 145 years of accomplishment, dedication and service to God and the Church? From Fr. Gamber to myself, from the original German core to the admixture of Irish, Italians, Spanish and others, ours has been a story of families and their belonging to this greater family of St. Boniface.

In such a short space as this, the task is impossible. So I will speak here not of the history or the story of this faith filled and faithful community, but of its tradition.

From the beginning, St. Boniface Parish was and has remained a symbol of its people and priests; a symbol of the values and aspirations of the courageous Germans who came to this wilderness from the civilized climes of their homeland to create a better life for themselves and their posterity in this land of opportunity and freedom. They came to build primarily not wealth but a community to worship and give witness to the truth of their faith and their God. What those first fathers and mothers of this parish built they passed on to all the following generations to this day and hour. What were the characteristics of this community? Discipline. Order. Industry. Loyalty. Stability. Honesty. Frugality. Duty. Service. Neighbor. And above all God and the Catholic Church. This was and is the tradition of the people of St. Boniface. It will remain our tradition always; a treasure, more than a memory, to be shared with the believing communities to which we go. An inspiration ever fresh ever vital ever new as long as our faith and trust in a saving God endures.

Pax Christi,

Fr. Jim Gray

Anno Domini 2005, June
Deacon Dick Stevens came to St. Boniface in 2000. His ministry, in addition to assisting the Pastor, has been visiting the homebound and taking communion to them.

Deacon Dick Stevens
2000-2005

Sister Carolyn Brambilla began her ministry at St. Boniface with the sick and the elderly. She also became involved with the St. Vincent de Paul Society. In the early 80’s, she coordinated the Food Pantry and became the treasurer in 1995.

Sister Carolyn Brambilla
1978-2005
Doris Schmidt
1963 to 2005

Doris Schmidt has been the organist at St. Boniface for more than 42 years. She began teaching school, music, in 1963-64. Even before that, she was assisting the choir director, Mr. Ries.

In those early years Doris organized a girls choir. On June 4th and 5th 2005 the choir gave their last performance under her most able guidance.
Pastors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Years</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reverend John Baptist Gamber</td>
<td>1860-1861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reverend Ernst A. Schindel</td>
<td>1861-1895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reverend Herman J. Nieters</td>
<td>1895-1936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reverend Francis X. Reker</td>
<td>1936-1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reverend William L. Ebert</td>
<td>1942-1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reverend Gerald Sommer</td>
<td>1963-1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reverend Charles G. Clavena</td>
<td>1976-1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reverend Adolph Schilly</td>
<td>1984-1985</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reverend Henry J. (Rico) Garavaglia</td>
<td>1985-1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reverend Charles Deister</td>
<td>1989-1994</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reverend Thomas Begley</td>
<td>1997-2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reverend James C. Gray</td>
<td>2001-2005</td>
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Assistant Pastors

The Reverend John G. Nordmeyer  1870-1874
The Reverend John H. Juetting   1874-1882
The Right Reverend F. X. Willmes 1877-1878
The Reverend Herman J. Nieters 1885-1892
The Reverend Clemens Moenig    1892
The Reverend Michael Helmbacher 1893-1894
The Reverend Peter Kurtenbach   1895-1906
The Reverend Edward H. Amsinger, S.T.L. 1906-1908
The Reverend William H. Huelsmann, S.T.L. 1908-1915
The Right Reverend George A. Dreher 1915-1930
The Reverend Aloysius A. Ripper  1922
The Reverend Leo P. Holdener    1927-1936
The Reverend William J. Scheffer 1930-1931
The Reverend Bernard A. Timpe    1931-1942
The Reverend Hubert Tenholder   1936-1941
The Reverend Walter M. Boul      1941-1944
The Reverend Bernard H. Mers     1942-1943
The Reverend Ralph A. Zimmer     1943-1945
The Reverend Aloysius G. Hilke   1944-1951
The Reverend John C. Condit      1945-1946
The Reverend Omer H. Brauner     1946-1948
The Reverend Richard L. Kaiser   1948-1950
The Reverend Elmer G. Stolle     1950-1954
The Reverend William H. Thurmer  1951
The Reverend Albert F. Danter    1954
The Reverend Marvin Kopff
The Reverend William Leach
The Reverend Dennis Port          1974-1976
The Reverend Aloysius Rocklage   1976-1982
The Reverend David Means         1982-1986
The Reverend Gerald J. Parres    1986-1989
History of St. Boniface

Germans came to the United States in great numbers in the 1840’s and 1850’s, many to St. Louis. By 1870 there were over 50,000 people of German birth in the city. The history of St. Boniface as a German parish begins in 1860.

In the fall of 1859, a recently ordained priest, Father John Baptist Gamber, a native of Germany, began to organize the German Catholics of Carondelet. He was an Alsatian and was especially adept in performing the marriage ceremony and could do so in three languages at the same time, it was said. The 8:00 a.m. mass at Sts. Mary and Joseph’s Church was said by Fr. Gamber in German, but it was time for the German community to have a church of their own.

Early (January 23) in 1860, John C. Ivory conveyed to Archbishop Kenrick four lots on the northeast corner of Michigan Avenue and Schirmer Street as a site for the new church. May 6, 1860, the cornerstone for the new church was laid by the Bishop of St. Paul, Thomas J. Grace, of Minnesota. At that time the school was located in a rented building of John P. Louis at 7816 Ivory. The church was dedicated to St. Boniface. The building was actually dedicated on December 26, 1860.

Fr. Gamber returned to Germany, and Fr. Ernst Andrew Schindel was appointed as pastor of St. Boniface June 22, 1861. At that time, the church was unfinished, the walls not plastered and the beams uncovered, with a temporary altar. There were no side altars. The parish was in debt for $13,000. The rectory was incomplete and the priest boarded with a shoemaker. Fr. Schindel was with St. Boniface until his death thirty years later.

The church building was designed by Thomas W. Brady in Romanesque style, 126’x56’. The contractors were Messrs. Rogers and Gamache. The estimated cost was $16,000. The towers (each 100’ high) were completed in 1868 and 1890 respectively. The two bells were placed in the southern tower in 1868. The north tower was finished and the large bell placed in it in 1890.

The paintings and decorations on the walls and ceiling were executed by Charles F. Krueger in 1881. The original windows were ordinary glass set in large wooden frames. The first lights were coal oil lamps in wall brackets. The gas lights were installed in 1874 and remained until 1892 when electric lights were installed.

You will find much more information in the Time Line section.

But after a long history, one hundred and forty-five years, a history of joy and sorrow, triumph and loss, a history of countless footsteps of Germans, Irish, Spanish and many others walking down the aisle of St. Boniface, kneeling on the pews to offer their praise to their God, the doors will be shuttered. On July 1, 2005, by order of the Archdiocese of St. Louis St. Boniface is officially suppressed of St. Boniface, kneeling on the pews to offer their praise to their God, the doors will be shuttered. On July 1, 2005, by order of the Archdiocese of St. Louis St. Boniface is officially suppressed.
St. Boniface Neighborhood Historic District, roughly bounded by Koeln and Tesson Streets, Broadway and Alabama Avenue, (St. Louis Independent City), was officially entered in the National Register of Historic Places on May 9, 2002. In recognition of this honor, the Carondelet Historical Society placed the plaque pictured above on the church building. The historical identification includes not only the church but the rectory, school and convent.
**Time Line**

1859  
**August 24**  
Father John Gamber ordained in St. Louis. Appointed to serve the Germans of Carondelet

1860  
**January 20**  
St. Boniface School opens in a rented room at 7816 Ivory  
**January 23**  
Four lots on the corner of Michigan and Schirmer conveyed to Archbishop of St. Louis for a church  
**April 9**  
Fund raising supper for the new church is held and $340.00 raised  
**May 6**  
Cornerstone laid by Bishop Grace of Minnesota  
**December 26**  
Archbishop Kenrick dedicates the roughly completed church to St. Boniface

1861  
**June 22**  
School moved to first floor of rectory  
Father Ernst Andrew Schindel appointed as pastor of St. Boniface

1863  
Walls in the church were plastered up to 23 feet, columns were covered and decorated. Ornamental woodwork added to main trusses of the roof

1864  
**January 18**  
At. Anne’s Sodality founded. Originally called Frauen Verein

1865  
First school building erected at Minnesota and Schirmer  
**December 21**  
Three Sisters of Notre Dame arrive to teach at St. Boniface

1868  
Southern tower of church completed and two bells placed in it  
**August 16**  
Archbishop Kenrick present to administer Confirmation and also solemnly blesses new bells

1870  
**April 5**  
First convent built next to school on Minnesota  
Carondelet joins city of St. Louis

1874  
Gas lights installed in church replacing coal oil lamps

1877  
**April 15**  
High altar solemnly blessed by Fr. Hy. Muehlsiepen, V.G.

1879  
Sisters of Notre Dame withdraw. Sisters of St. Joseph teach one year

1880  
Mother Pauline von Mallinckrodt grants request for Sisters of Christian Charity to staff school

1882  
Entire church dedicated for the first time including the ceiling which had been added sometime after 1868

1883  
Furnace installed in church

1884  
**October 16**  
Hall on the west side of Michigan and Schirmer dedicated. It contained an auditorium, bowling alleys, and rooms for the Dramatic Club
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>November 22 First performance by the Dramatic Club – “Durchgefallen”</td>
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<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>North tower completed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>September 7 A third bell is blessed by Bishop Janssen of Belleville</td>
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<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>School built at 7625 Minnesota next to old convent. Pews installed in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>church</td>
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<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Electric lights installed in church, house and hall</td>
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<tr>
<td>1893-94</td>
<td>Stained glass windows imported from Europe and installed</td>
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</table>
| 1895  | November 1 Father Schindel dies of cancer. Served St. Boniface for 34 years
|       | Archbishop Kain appoints Father Herman Nieters as Pastor              |
| 1898  | Church roof replaced with slate shingles                               |
| 1900  | Bell cracks and three new bells are cast                              |
|       | April 29 New bells are dedicated by Abbot Ignatius Conrad O.S.B. of Subiaco, Ark.
|       | Installation begun                                                    |
| 1901  | First tower clock installed                                           |
| 1905  | Tall smokestack behind sacristy dismantled when central steam heating
|       | plant is installed in the stables to heat the church, rectory and school|
| 1908  | Michigan and Ivory Avenues paved with brick. School yard also          |
| 1909  | Church renovated in preparation for 50th Anniversary, including
|       | repainting, new side altars, statues, communion rails and pulpit       |
| 1910  | May 1-4 Fiftieth Anniversary celebration of St. Boniface              |
| 1912  | New school hall built facing the school yard                           |
| 1913  | January 13 Sewing Circle organized                                     |
| 1916  | November 20 St. Vincent de Paul Society organized                     |
| 1921  | March 21 Installation of new organ completed                           |
|       | Mar-Dec Old parish house torn down and present rectory built          |
| 1925  | Present convent built for Sisters, southeast corner Minnesota and Schirmer|
| 1927  | New furnace installed in plant. Burned fuel oil                        |
| 1930  | Interior of church restored and repaired. New electric light fixtures  |
1932         New tower clock installed

1935         Old steps in front of church replaced with stone steps.

May 19      Solemn Pontifical High Mass to celebrate Diamond Jubilee sung by
            Bishop Winkelman

1936         Father Nieters resigns as Pastor due to health. Archbishop Glennon
            appoints Father Reker Pastor

1939         March 23         Father Nieters dies

1942         Father Reker resigns pastorate. Father William Ebert appointed

1948         Ground broken for new school at 7604 Michigan Avenue

1949         September      First classes in new school

1952         St. Columbkille closed; becomes part of St. Boniface

1956         Church remodeled including new vestibule, decorating and concrete floor

1960         May 22         Solemn Pontifical Mass celebrated by Archbishop Ritter for Parish
            Centennial

          October 27      Father Ebert named Monsignor

1962         May         Father Sommers appointed administer

1963         March 5      Father Ebert dies. Father Sommers becomes Pastor

1964         Old hall across from church sold and wrecked

1974         June         Associate Father Leach is reassigned. Father Port arrives.

1976         June         Father Sommers retires to Florissant. Father Charles Clavenna assigned as
            Pastor. Father Al Rocklage is made associate

1979         Bowling Alley is dismantled. Hall B is born in basement of school. Sts.
            Mary and Joseph sends their children to school here. St. Boniface becomes a district school

1980         Michigan closed in front of church and school. Green park is begun

1981         May 23         Father David Means ordained and appointed assistant pastor. Fr. Al
            Rocklage resigned.

1984         October      Father Clavenna reassigned to St. Patrick in Wentzville. Father Adolph
            M. Schilly appointed Pastor.
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<td>June 1</td>
<td>Archbishop May celebrates 125&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Anniversary Mass with Parish</td>
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<td>1985</td>
<td>Rev. Henry Garavaglia (Fr. Rico) appointed pastor. Transferred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989 June</td>
<td>Rev. Charles Deister assigned as pastor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993 July-Aug</td>
<td>Great flood; River Des Peres and Mississippi River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Fr. Robert Sampson pastor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>St. Boniface school closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Fr. Thomas Begley, pastor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Fr. James C. Gray, pastor</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Bells restored and ringing</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>Close of Fish Fry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Close of Bingo</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005 July 1</td>
<td>St. Boniface Parish is suppressed</td>
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St. Boniface was not German, but English. He was born in Wessex, England between 672 and 680 and his name was Winfrid (Wynfrid). He died at Dikkum, Frisia June 4-5, 754. Winfrid entered the Benedictine monastery in Southhampshire, Exeter and became a priest at the age of 30.

Pope Gregory II changed his name to Boniface and sent him to preach to the heathen peoples in Germany. He founded monasteries and became the Archbishop of Mainz, Germany. He labored 40 years in Germany and suffered martyrdom.
Above is the rectory at 7622 Michigan which was built from March to December 1921 when the old parish house was torn down. Below is the grotto that is south of the rectory.
Above, the third St. Boniface school building, 7604 Michigan, built in 1948. Below, the convent at Michigan and Schirmer built in 1925.
The Bells of St. Boniface

The first bell of St. Boniface was a cow bell. Though the parish was deep in debit, the second pastor, Father Schindel was willing to go even deeper to the tune of fifty-seven dollars to purchase a used ship’s bell.

In the spring of 1868, the first church tower was completed and two authentic church bells were installed. The smallest of the two bells weighed 1,016 pounds and the larger weighed 2,333 pounds. The bells were solemnly blessed on Sunday, August 16, 1868 when Archbishop Kenrick came to administer confirmation.

March 1890, after the smaller bell had cracked, it was recast without change in weight. When the second tower was completed in 1890, a third bell weighing 5600 pounds was installed in the new north tower and solemnly blessed on September 7, 1890 by Bishop Janssen of Belleville.

St. Boniface now had a set of bells worthy of a cathedral, but there was a practical difficulty. The largest bell was too heavy for the tower, and it was too heavy for one man to ring. So when the second bell cracked in 1900 and had to be recast, the weight of the largest bell was reduced. This reduction involved a change in the weights and the tones of all the bells resulting in three entirely new bells being cast. The new bells were solemnly blessed April 19, 1900 by Abbot Ignatius Conrad, O.S.B., of Subiaco, Ark. The work of taking down the old bells and hoisting the new bells began the following day. Those bells survive in the towers today.

St. Boniface, the largest bell, is in the north tower and weighs 3,919 pounds. Its musical note is “C”. The middle bell is in the south tower. It is called St. Joseph, weighing 1,948 pounds, and its musical note is “E flat.” St. Mary is the smallest bell and is also in the south tower. It weighs 1,016 pounds, and its musical note is “A flat.”

For all ordinary occasions, such as daily Mass, low Masses on Sunday, the two smaller bells are rung. For High Mass on Sunday, for the Angelus on Saturday evening, and for all solemn occasions, all three bells are rung. The Angelus is rung as follows: the second bell, “St. Joseph” is tapped nine times. These nine taps are divided into groups of three each, by the time of a “Hail Mary.” After these taps are finished, the smallest bell, “St. Mary” is rung for a short time.

Tolling is done as follows. If the person for whom the funeral is being conducted is a child, the smallest and the second bell are tapped in regular succession. If the deceased is an adult, the three bells are tapped in regular order, beginning with the smallest.

To “ring” a bell generally means to ring the bell so that the pendulous clapper inside strikes the rim on one side and then on the other. To “toll” or tap a bell means to strike the bell with a hammer or clapper which is stationary just clear of the rim of the bell.

The tower clock strikes on “St. Boniface,” the largest bell. For this purpose this bell is equipped with a second stationary clapper which is tripped by the striking mechanism of the clock.
The Tower Clock

The clock dwells in the tower with the bells, and has its own history.

When the north tower was built in 1890, space was provided for four clock faces. Father Schindel announced from the pulpit he hoped some day a godfather could be found for a tower clock. Whereupon, a gentleman of the parish volunteered to pay for the clock. However, the donor wished to remain anonymous. By some mistake, a tradition grew that the clock was given by a well known St. Louis business firm.

The first tower clock was installed early in 1891. The bill for hauling is dated March 1, 1891. The clock was built by an old German mechanic, Fred Philippi, and had been displayed in the show window of Mermod and Jaccard Jewelry Company during 1890. The faces, however, were made by A. E. Pollhans. The clock marked the passing of every half hour until the spring of 1932. Then a new clock was built and installed by George J. Hoffmann, successor to the A. E. Pollhans Clock Company. At that time, the clock faces were refinished.

When the old clock was installed, the weights that actuated it demanded a long chute that extended to the floor of the church. When this chute was built, it made it impossible to open the south half of the north door. Since weights of the new clock traveled a shorter distance, it became possible to open both halves of the door.

The present clock is not driven by electricity. It is driven by weights, but the weights are wound by an electric motor. The clock will run about eight days on one winding. It marks the half hour by one stroke of the bell, and the full hour by the proper number of strokes.
Archbishop Peter Kenrick established St. Columbkille’s in 1872 to serve the Irish Catholics, most of them iron workers of the nearby Vulcan Iron Works. The building was dedicated March 1873. The first pastor was Rev. Michael O’Reilly. School was held in the church until a building was erected in the 90’s. Church was held on the second floor of the building. Funerals were difficult as the casket had to be stood on end to carry it up the stairs.

When the iron works closed, plans for a larger church were halted, and the parish population diminished

The church was razed in 1952, and many members found their way to St. Boniface, blending their faith and history with ours.
Covadonga – The Spanish Mission of South St. Louis

Jesuit priests established a mission to serve the Spanish Catholics who had settled in the Carondelet area since the turn of the century. Beginning in 1912, they operated out of St. Columbkille’s Parish, and then out of St. Boniface Parish, until the Archbishop acquired the church building at Virginia and Blow from the Methodists. Thus, the Parish of Our Lady of Covadonga was established, led by Fr. Joseph Picojuvar, a priest from Mexico. After Fr. Picojuvar returned to Mexico, the Knights of Columbus, Rosati Council 795, sponsored a mission to the Spanish of Our Lady of Covadonga Parish Church. When the Spanish assimilated into the community, the parish closed and the church building was sold.

The name Covadonga comes from a village at the head of the Deva River in the northern Spanish province of Asturias. Legend has it that in the year 718, Pelayo, the first Christian King of Asturias, led a small band of rebels against the Muslims. Pelayo and his followers stopped the Moors from advancing and inspired others to join the fight to reclaim Spain. The small chapel of Our Lady of Covadonga is in the cave where the rebels took refuge from battle and is also the burial place of Pelayo, his wife and sister. It has become a national shrine and place of pilgrimage.

Today the building that housed our Lady of Covadonga is the Church of the Nazarene.

The history of Our Lady of Covadonga is of special interest to St. Boniface because the people of that parish came back to be a part of our history.
St. Boniface Stained Glass Windows

The windows were ordered in 1891 and installed in 1893 and 1894. They were made in Ausburg, Austria. German language is used in some of the titles and descriptions of the windows. Heilige is German for Saint. Germeinde or Gemedit is German for donated or given by. Herz means heart and Zweig is German for branch.

Some of the dedication plaques under the windows have been installed incorrectly, but on October 17, 1997, Hildegarde Dierker Eiler, a long time parishioner of St. Boniface, researched this issue and the following information regarding the dedication of each window is believed to be the correct information.

There are three windows which are different from the others. Saint Eulalia does not have an angel in the lower section, but has a coat of arms. The coat of arms is that of Rev. Fr. Reinh. Boehm, pastor of Dutzow, Missouri. Two other windows do not have an angel in the lower section. They are St. Simon and St. Aloysius. These are the two windows that continue up to the choir loft. If you go up to the choir loft, you will find that the angel is in the top section on those two windows. An additional interesting fact is that the windows have a protective clear coating on the outside to prevent all but the most extreme forms of vandalism.
Joseph Foster Father of Jesus

Tyrolean Glass Works, Innsbruch, Austria
Donated by the John Krauss family (Founder Southern Commercial and Savings Bank) and the Fred Christian and Julia Rathgeber family. Julia was the daughter of John Krauss.

Sacred Heart of Jesus

Installed Friday After Second Sunday Of Pentecost, year unknown
Donated by brothers Edward, William, John, and Frank Ruprecht. They operated the Ruprecht Ferry at Davis Street and the Ruprecht Quarry.
Saint Eulalia of Menda

Virgin and Martyr
Died 304 December 10

Mystery window-- no angel. The coat of arms is that of Rev. Fr. Reinh. Boehm, pastor of Dutzow, Missouri. Donated by school children and parents.

Heilige (Saint) Fidelis

Donated by Venustus Spindler Family. Spindler was born about 1842 and was a farmer and harnessmaker.
Michael The Archangel

Donated by the Michael Zeller family. Zeller was born in 1840 in Switzerland. He came to the United States and married an Indian girl. Their son, Michael Joseph operated a bakery at 7501 Koeln.

Saint Simon The Zealot

Donated by John and Mary Dierker Zieglmier. Zieglmier was born in 1859 and was a builder/contractor. Their son, Edmund a Jesuit priest, said his first mass June 1931 at St. Boniface.
Saint (Heilige) Anna

*Gemedit vom Frauen Verin*, which means donated by a group of mature women. They were organized in 1863, and today they are known as the St. Anne Sodality.

Herz Marie (Heart of Mary)

Donated by the Joseph Hunleth family. Hunleth operated a piano and music store in downtown St. Louis.
Saint Christina

Donated by Christina Bostert, a seamstress and dressmaker.

Heilige Heinrich (Saint Henry)

Heilige Georg
(Saint George)
Saint George The Martyr
Donated by the Catholic Knights of America, Branch 556.

Heilige Aloysius (Saint Aloysius)
Patron Saint Of Young Men
Donated by the Young Men’s Sodality.
Credits

Souvenir of Golden Jubilee Booklet 1885-1935

Golden Jubilaum – St. Bonifatus Gemeinde in St. Louis, Missouri
  1860-1910 Booklet

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