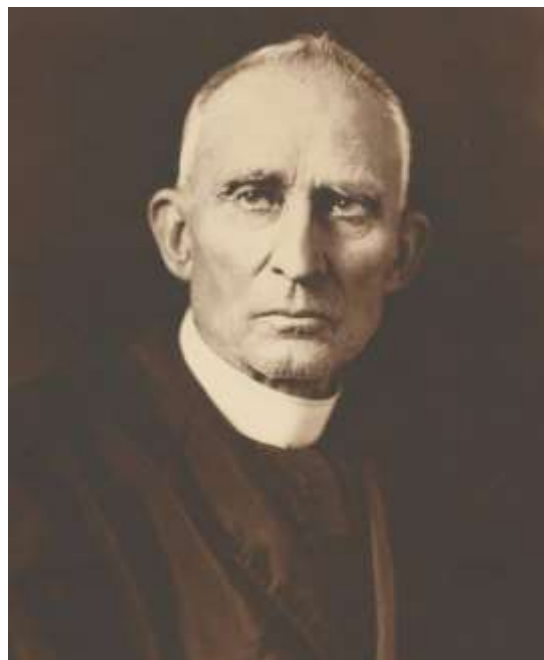


Rev. Paul Joseph Volk (1841-1919)

By Jerry Long
c.2024



Rev. Paul Joseph Volk (1841-1919)



Daviess County, Kentucky Celebrating Our Heritage, 1815-2015
(Evansville, IN, M. T. Publishing Company, Inc., 2015),
“Daviess County Bicentennial Chronology – 200 Historical Events,”
by Jerry Long in celebration of Daviess County’s Bicentennial, p.10:

1874, 8-14 Mount St. Joseph Academy is founded as a boarding school. Kentucky Historical Highway marker reads: Mount Saint Joseph Motherhouse and Academy, the first motherhouse for Sisters in western Kentucky, the oldest operating girls’ academy in Daviess County, founded August 14, 1874, by Rev. Paul Joseph Volk under auspices of Bishop George McCloskey of Louisville. Mother Aloysius Willett of Union County elected first Superior of the autonomous Ursuline house in 1912.



The Roman Catholic Diocese of Owensboro, Kentucky
Paducah, KY, Turner Publishing Company, 1995, pp.25-26:

REVEREND PAUL JOSEPH VOLK, a native of Germany, was born May 16, 1841 at Hunfield, near Frankfort, in the Province of Hesse-Nassau. He studied for the priesthood at Fulda, where he was ordained at the Cathedral of the Most Holy Redeemer, March 19, 1865. After laboring in his native diocese for three years, he entered the American College in Louvain, to prepare himself for the missions in the Diocese of Louisville. One year later, in the early summer of 1869, he came to Kentucky.

In January 1870, he became pastor of St. Alphonsus Congregation in Daviess Co., where he built a brick church, which was completed in the following year. In the meantime, the parish school was destroyed by fire, and the Sisters of Loretto, who taught there, returned to their motherhouse. He erected a new building, and upon its completion, in September 1874, Ursuline Sisters from Louisville reopened the school, which today stands as a part of the motherhouse and academy of Mount St. Joseph for in 1912, the Sisters separated from the Louisville Order and became an autonomous community.

Upon his arrival at St. Alphonsus, Fr. Volk gathered together the German families in Owensboro for services and began what later developed into St. Joseph Parish. At his mission in Calhoun, McLean Co., he erected St. Sebastian Church, which was opened in 1880. At Beech Grove, another mission in the same county, he built a church, St. Benedict's, which was dedicated Oct. 19, 1881. When he was moved to Ottenheim in Lincoln Co., in July 1885, he continued his building operations. His missions extended into the Covington Diocese. St. Boniface Church at Jellico in Whitley Co., was blessed in 1885, St. Francis of Assisi Church, New Austria, was opened on Palm Sunday, April 18, 1886 and St. Sylvester Church, Ottenheim, was dedicated September 12 in the same year. The construction of St. Sylvester Church, East Bernstadt, in Laurel Co., was begun by him in February 1888.

A couple of months later, in the spring of 1888, Fr. Volk sought a new field of labor and sailed for Ecuador in Central America. He built four mission churches for the native Indians in the Provinces of Manabi and Esmeraldas. His next assignment, in September 1891, was to Bocas del Toro in Panama. Bishop William George McCloskey recalled him to Kentucky in June 1893.

Fr. Volk was appointed pastor of Ss. Peter and Paul Church, Danville, with the missions attached. He built St. James Church, Lawrenceburg, which was dedicated July 15, 1894 and also St. Nicholas Church at Rose Hill, Mercer Co., which was blessed December 6 in that year.

A few months later Fr. Volk, having furnished the diocese with a priest, Rev. Joseph Nieborowski, who had been missioned at Ecuador, set out again for Bocas del Toro, arriving there Sept. 29, 1895. He was transferred to the District of Chiriqui, on the Pacific side of the Isthmus of Panama in August 1898, and made his headquarters in a small city called David, where he erected a stone church in 1905. It was dedicated under the patronage of the Holy Family. Then he was sent to Colon. Another stone church, dedicated under the title of the Immaculate Conception, was built by him in 1910.

Fr. Volk returned to Kentucky in May 1915, and in October, became chaplain at Sacred Heart Academy, Louisville, which office he held for several months. But the restless priest needed

more activity and although in his 76th year, sought permission to take charge of a poor county parish and was appointed to St. Anthony Church ,Peonia, in Grayson Co. in September 1917. This builder of churches began the erection of St. Joseph Church in the nearby mission of Anneta. However, the infirmities of age forced his retirement from parochial duties in July 1919.

Fr. Yolk spent the last few months of his life at Mount St. Joseph, where he died November 2,1919. After his funeral services, the mortal remains of this faithful missionary were laid at rest in the cemetery of the convent and academy he had established 45 years before. [source: Rev. John A. Lyons collection]



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 29 August 1995, Community section, p.8:

Community Histories: St. Joseph

By Glenn Hodges, Messenger-Inquirer

In 1862, the large group of Catholic families worshipping at St. Alphonsus Church in what is now St. Joseph looked forward to the construction of a new school. It was what their pastor, Father Ivo Schacht, wanted so much.

Little did they know that by the end of the decade the school would be destroyed and the community around it would literally rise up from the ashes of disaster to become home for one of Daviess County's best institutions of higher learning.

Mount St. Joseph Academy and Convent would be established there in 1874, and Daviess County's first junior college would eventually be started on the site.

The story began in 1859 when the Catholics of St. Alphonsus began holding services in their new church, a small frame house built near the present crossroads of Kentucky 56 and 500. The church had been constructed there to serve the many Catholic families who had come to the Panther Creek settlement from Nelson and Washington counties in central Kentucky.

In 1861, the Bishop of Louisville sent Father Schacht to St. Alphonsus as pastor. Schacht immediately saw the need for a school for girls and young women so in 1862 the parishioners built a 20- by 50-foot log house and employed two lay teachers.

When it was evident that the teachers would not return for their second year, Father Schacht requested four nuns from the Motherhouse in Loretto to reopen the school. After a rocky beginning, the school grew and other nuns came to help as teachers.

Then early on the morning of Dec. 30, 1870, a fire totally destroyed the school and left 13 homeless nuns and their students stranded. The Ohio River was frozen over, and the nuns stayed with members of the community for three weeks before they could return to the convent in Loretto.

Meanwhile, years passed and briars and underbrush grew up around the ill-fated school.

After Father Schacht's death in 1874, the Rev. Paul Joseph Volk became pastor of St. Alphonsus and visualized building another school from the ruins. As construction began, Father Volk asked the Bishop of Louisville for more help, and five Ursuline sisters who had come to America from Bavaria in 1858 were assigned to reopen the school.

In mid-August 1874 the Ursulines came down the Ohio River by flatboat to Owensboro from Louisville, and rode the long, dusty 15 miles to Mount St. Joseph in a spring wagon.

Mother Superior Pia, Sister Johanna, Sister Xavier, Sister Margaret and Sister Martina arrived before Father Volk received a letter telling him that they were coming. He tried to make

them feel at home, serving them their first meal – watermelon and buttermilk – on log tables and benches under the trees.

If Father Volk was unprepared for the arrival of the nuns, so was the school. The new brick structure was not complete. Between the roof and floors, there were only bare walls, no furniture and no provisions. And school was due to start in two weeks.

But the nuns got the boarding school in shape and it opened in September to only two girls. The school on the picturesque hill south of St. Alphonsus struggled, averaging nine students during the next two years. But eventually girls came from Union and McLean counties, and the enrollment grew gradually.

Shortly after the school reopened, Father Volk planted a grove of maple trees on the hill which inspired the name Maple Mount.

By 1880, the academy had 25 students, was incorporated by the state legislature and under the charter was given power to confer diplomas and degrees. Miss Annie Johnson of Calhoun received the first degree in June 1880.

At the same time, a small community was growing up around the academy. Mrs. Emma Pike, widow of Dr. Patrick Pike, opened a general store in the corner of her yard, built a blacksmith shop and had telephone lines set up. On July 6, 1886, a post office was established at St. Joseph, and Mrs. Pike was named postmaster.

In 1912, Mount St. Joseph became an autonomous community of Ursuline sisters, and a post office was established in December 1934 on the academy grounds and named Maple Mount.

A junior college curriculum was established at Mount St. Joseph Academy in September 1925. The school trained hundreds of young women for life. In 1939, there were 95 enrolled in the college division and 124 in the academy.

The college division was moved to Seventh and St. Ann streets in Owensboro in 1947 and became coeducational. In 1950, the school was renamed Brescia for the town in Italy where St. Angela Merici, the founder of the Ursulines, was born.

In 1952, the school that had begun in the 1870s as St. Joseph Academy became a four-year college.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 21 September 1969, p.1C:

Rev. Paul Volk – Legend Of Miracles, Churches

By Stan Lemaster and Frankie Hager

"Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time."

-Longfellow

The Rev. Paul Joseph Volk left footprints on two continents.

Not the least of these were the convents, churches and schools that he built in Kentucky, including St. Alphonsus Catholic Church, St. Joseph Catholic Church and Mount St. Joseph Academy in Daviess County.

Altogether he built 25 churches. Many of these were in the mountains of Eastern Kentucky and in the wilds of Ecuador and Panama, South America, where he served as a missionary.

Esteemed by some as a saint, many miracles are attributed to him by Daviess Countians. At least seven of these are recorded in the official papers at Maple Mount.

Most famous of these is the miracle of the soft brick. Legend has it that the bricks used to build Mount St. Joseph Academy were soft and unfit for use when taken from the kiln. The masons who were on hand to begin the building went home expecting not to return until another kiln was burned which sometimes took days.

About dusk Father Volk was seen passing around the kiln praying. The next morning he called the workmen back. Miraculously the bricks had hardened! Estil Harl of West Louisville says his grandfather witnessed the event in 1874.



SITE OF FIRST MIRACLE – Mt. Saint Joseph Academy, in Daviess County, is, according to legend, the site of the first miracle attributed to the Rev. Paul Joseph Volk. The legend has it that the bricks for the school came from the kiln soft and unfit for use, but that through prayer, Father Volk caused the bricks to harden.

Born in Hunfeld, Germany in 1841 of a wealthy family, Father Volk was reared by his mother. His father died while he was still a boy.

At the age of 24, he became a priest and soon afterwards decided to become a missionary to America. To prepare himself, he entered the American College at Louvain in Belgium, where according to a fellow classmate: "He was little understood, nor cared to be, intent as he was to master the rudiments of English . . ."

In the summer of 1869 he came to Louisville to serve as assistant pastor of the Immaculate Conception Church. A year later he was named pastor of St. Alphonsus in Daviess County. He served here from 1870-85 and again from 1915 until his death in 1919. Throughout his life he referred to Maple Mount and St. Joseph as his "home."

His first task was to rebuild St. Alphonsus since it had been destroyed by fire prior to his arrival. He attended to the burning of the brick under construction, he organized St. Joseph's Church at Yellowbanks (Owensboro).

With \$1,000 in donations and \$3500 from the Ursulines in Louisville, Father Volk set about laying the foundation for what now is Mt. St. Joseph Academy.

However, it was not the first school to be erected on the site. The 74' x 34' structure was built in front of the ruins of one established in 1863 and destroyed by fire on Dec. 30, 1870. St. Sebastian Church at Calhoun and St. Benedict at Beech Grove were also built by Father Volk.

Slightly taller than average, the priest was lean and large limbed and not very attractive in appearance "as he was not particular about his clothes." Always frugal, he dyed his long, clerical garbs himself. He worried his parishioners because on many occasions he would give his hat and coat to a needy wayfarer and return to the church shivering. Friends would supply "him with new articles which he would promptly bestow on someone less fortunate. Once a well meaning friend advised him to look out for himself and not give everything away. To this he replied: "God will take care of me."

A hard teacher and exact disciplinarian, he would have students write and rewrite papers until "inspiration often terminated in desperation." He felt it was important to be informed about current events and daily brought newspapers into the classroom.

In the summer of 1877, Father Volk's mother, Mrs. Elizabeth Volk, came from Germany to spend her remaining days with her son. Records at the Mount report that her footsteps – one heavy thump followed by a soft pat – were heard entering church after her death on Dec. 1, 1884. Mrs. Francis Brandt Markowitz recalls that her mother, Mrs. Mary Bell Alvey, and others not only heard the footsteps after her death, but saw her on several occasions sitting in her "usual pew during Mass. When told of this Father Volk said: "Mother is a saint and that is her spirit appearing."

Another popular story tells about the time the priest crossed the swollen Green River near the Curdsville ferry, which was not operating because of the high water. Not only did horse and rider traverse the river safely, but John Oldham, the ferryman, said that their path was straight as an arrow. Others insist that Father Volk did not get wet during the crossing.

Father Volk's faith in the ability of prayer to accomplish the supernatural was complete and unassailable. As word spread of his ability to perform miracles he was often challenged to prove this talent.

On one occasion in the late 1870s, when this area was suffering from severe drought, a local farmer, John Glenn, taunted Father Volk to make rain. Accepting the challenge, the two men got off their horses and Father Volk prayed. That afternoon the area was drenched with a cloudburst. Glenn reportedly remarked later that he hadn't wanted quite so much water.

On another occasion a cripple some say his name was Ralph Arnold asked Father Volk for spiritual assistance to cure his affliction. After saying prayers, the man dropped his crutches and walked away cured.

Father Volk is also said to have had the ability to explain the unexplainable. Residents of the Mount St. Joseph area noticed that a light came out of the ground at a certain grave each night, went through the church, and immediately proceeded toward the cemetery and into the ground at the same grave. After this happened for several successive nights, someone told Father Volk about it. He listened carefully, then explained that the light meant that the man in the grave needed prayers. After special prayers were said, the strange light was never seen again.

Shortly after his mother's death, Father Volk was asked to minister to the "poor, spiritually forsaken German people of Lincoln and Boyle Counties, Ky." He said his first Mass in the settlement on July 12, 1885 with the stump of a big tree as an altar.

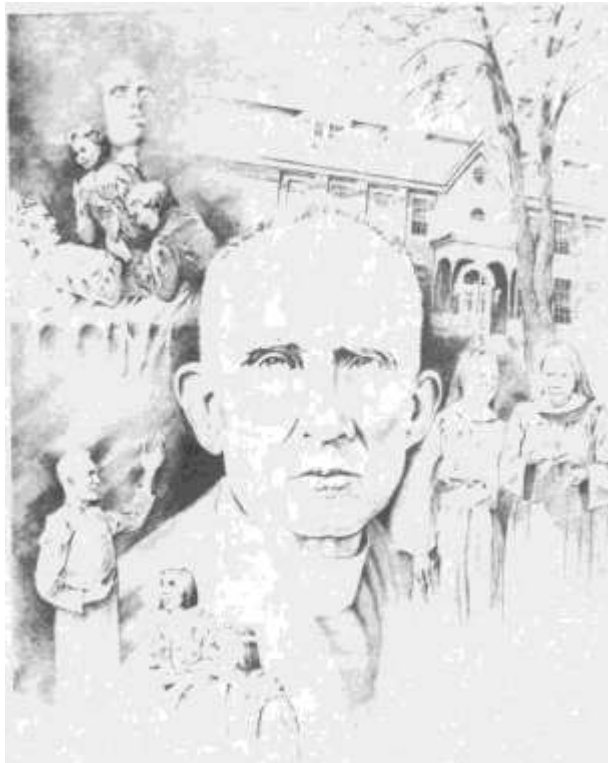
During the construction of St. Sylvester in Lincoln and St. Francis in Boyle in 1885, the missionary visited King's Mountain regularly and said Mass in the Penny Baker Hotel. In 1886 he established a mission in Sloans Valley, below Somerset, in Pulaski County, holding his first Mass in the hall of a home with the kitchen as confessional. At Somerset he said Mass in McCabe's saloon which he first cleared of its whiskey and beer. This later became St. Mildred's Mission.

He had to put up with the poorest of fare while he built mostly with his own hands – church after church.

Of his time in Eastern Kentucky he writes: "I have been at my present mission 14 months, and during this time I have not received more than three dollars salary. Sometimes I kneel before the Blessed Sacrament and say to my sweet Lord: "No one gives me anything, and I am poor; but I am glad of that, for I wish only to serve Thee, O my Lord."

He built St. Boniface in Whitely County in 1885 and St. Sylvester at East Bernstadt, Laurel County in 1888. But still he sought harder tasks.

In the spring of 1888, he wrote: "I have now after two years of waiting obtained permission . . . to go by Easter time to Bishop Schumacher of Portoviejo, Ecuador, who has scarcely any priests." His field of work comprised the provinces of Manabi with 64,000 people and the Esmeraldas with 15,000 inhabitants. Most were Indians. "Among these simple forest children" Father Volk built four mission churches.



MIRACLE WORKER – The drawing depicts the Rev. Paul Volk who built 25 churches, many in Kentucky, and, according to legend performed miracles. The upper left portion of the sketch depicts Father Volk awakening a man from a coma to repent for his sins before the man died.

In the lower left, Father Volk is shown preaching to Indians in South America, where he served as a missionary. At right is a scene at Mt. Saint Joseph where Father Volk built a school and reportedly performed "the miracle of the soft bricks."

He returned to the states in 1890 to appeal for funds. On Thursday, March 25, 1890, St. Alphonsus parish and Mt. St. Joseph Academy celebrated Father Volk's silver jubilee. He was presented with 75 silver dollars following the ceremonies. Despite the fact he was on a begging tour, he donated the money to two parochial schools then being planned .

Shortly thereafter, he returned to Ecuador, his tour successful. He stayed until 1891 when a Civil War forced his departure to Panama, where he became a missionary to Bocas del Toro. His parish embraced 3150 miles with some 22,000 inhabitants. He built churches at Split Hill, Fish Creek and Chiriqui Grande before being called to return to take charge of SS. Peter and Paul parish at Danville, Ky. Two new churches, St. James at Lawrenceburg, and St. Nicholas at Rose Hill were built in 1894 as a result of his return to Kentucky.

After their completion, he begged permission to return to South America, where he served for 20 more years.

In a letter written from South America, he predicted that oil would be found on the property at Mount St. Joseph. Approximately 10 years later a small well was pumping away on the site.

He became ill in January 1915, and following an operation, was returned to the States.

Miracles attributed to Father Volk during his last years include this account of Henry Overstreet's anointment for death.

Although Overstreet was baptized a Catholic, he never became an active churchman. Word of his suffering a stroke reached Father Volk in July, 1918 at Peonia, Ky. He quickly dispatched a letter to Father Jolly Hayden saying "Send the nearest priest to Henry Overstreet and I will do the rest."

Mrs. Overstreet's granddaughter, Mrs. Robert E. Field, remembers the story well because she was in the sickroom when Father Higgins called. When asked if he were truly sorry for his sins, the sick man came out of his coma and answered clearly, "Indeed I am." And when asked if he wished to be anointed for death he replied, "Indeed I do." Following this he fell back into a coma and died shortly thereafter.

Another story has it that in the summer of 1917 Father Volk cured Aquilla Blandford of cursing. After the Rev. Father prayed in his presence, he was never heard to swear again.

Another incident resulted in the conversion of Charles Smith's father. While taking his farm crop to market, Smith's wagon became hopelessly mired in the mud. Father Volk happened along and was asked for assistance. After prayers were said, the horses easily pulled the wagon out.

"If it be a question of cannonizing Father Volk," wrote an archbishop, "I would without hesitation give my approval . . . because he was really a saint. He had the wonderful faith, simplicity and humility of the little children whom the Lord puts before us as models . . ."

A fellow priest said: "His life is evidence of how much good one zealous man with blessings of God can accomplish when actions are prompted by divine love."

His remaining days included the chaplaincy at Sacred Heart Academy, Louisville, a temperance Crusade in Daviess and neighboring counties during the summer of 1916, and the pastorate of Peonia and surrounding missions from 1917 until 1919 when he erected his last church, St. Joseph, in Annetta, Ky.

In July, because of ill health, he returned to Mount St. Joseph, where on Sunday, Nov. 3, 1919, he died. He is buried in Mt. St. Joseph's cemetery.



**Daviess County, KY 1870 Federal Census,
Curdsville Precinct, post office – West Louisville, p.140B, household #263-257:**

Volk, Paul age - 30 Catholic priest born – Prussia
value of real estate - \$680, value of personal estate - \$150
parents of foreign birth; enumerated on 20 June 1870



**An Illustrated Historical Atlas Map of Daviess County, KY.,
Leo McDonough & Co., 1876, pp. 32 & 62:**

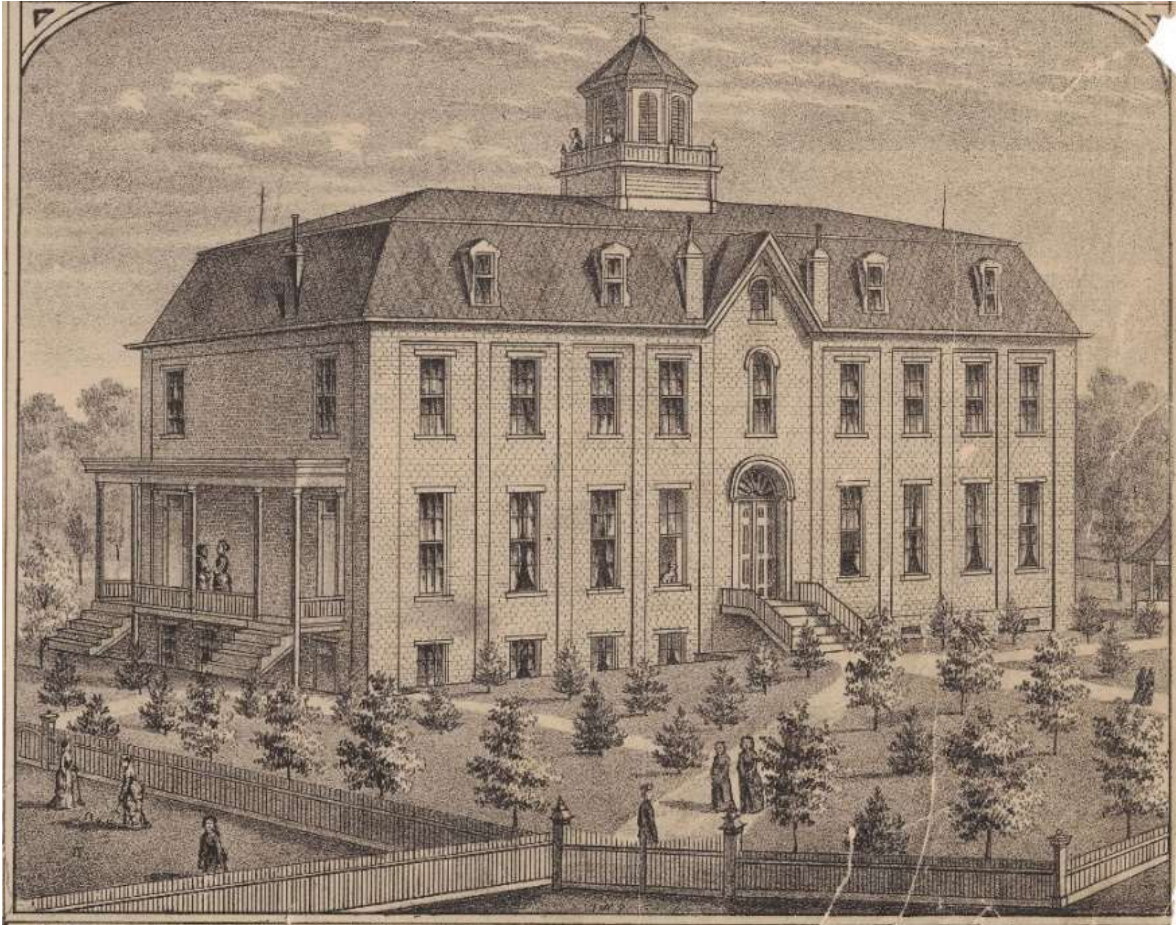
A PORTION OF OUR PATRONS

Precinct No. 7 – Curdsville

Name – Volk, Paul; post-office – West Louisville; residence – s. w. 15 miles [from Owensboro]; business – Catholic Clergyman; nativity – Germany; when came to county – 1868



[ed. note: St. Alphonse Church above was constructed in 1870 under the direction of Rev. Paul J. Volk, who served as pastor of St. Alphonse during 1870-1885]



Mount St Joseph's Academy, 15 miles south west of Owensboro, Daviess Co. Ky, conducted by the Ursuline Sisters of Louisville. Terms – Board and Tuition in the entire Engl. Course, Bed, Bedding, Washing, Stationary and Books & c. per session of Five Months, \$75.00. Instrumental Music & Languages form extra charges, For Further Information Send For Catalogues. [ed. note: Rev. Paul J. Volk in 1874 directed the construction of the above edifice]



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 21 November 1877, p.3 :

Rev. Father Volk, the earnest and able pastor in charge of the "Brick church" near West Louisville, who has been so dangerously ill, was improving at last account.



Owensboro Examiner, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 18 January 1878, p.4:

The Good Work Progresses.

Father P. Volk, residing in the vicinity of West Louisville, is about to inaugurate the Murphy or a kindred movement, in his neighborhood.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 6 April 1880, p.2:

Easter Sunday Rev. P. Volk took up a collection for the benefit of the Beech Grove chapel, it having been understood that he that donated the most liberally would be accorded the honor of naming the church. The privilege was granted to Benedict Hardesty, he having donated \$52. Total collection \$448.



**Daviess County, KY 1880 Federal Census,
Curdsville Precinct, post office – West Louisville, p.452A, household #171-172:**

St. Joseph’s Female Academy

	-	age	-	marital status	-	profession	-	person & parents’ place of birth
Saveri, Sr. Leandera	38	single	teaching	New York-Switz.-Switz.				
Kern, Sr. Alberta	32	single	teaching	Germany-Germany-Germany				
Bloemer, Sr. Augusta	31	single	teaching	Germany-Germany-Germany				
Freber, Sr. Joanna	52	single	teaching	Germany-Germany-Germany				
Tork, Colletta	25	single	teaching	Germany-Germany-Germany				
Greineder, Sr. Martina	43	single	cook	Germany-Germany-Germany				
Neihaus, Sr. Gertrude	38	single	keeping house	Germany-Germany-Germany				
Amermeir, Sr. Florence	35	single	keeping house	Germany-Germany-Germany				
Engbert, Sr. Appoloma	36	single	keeping	Germany-Germany-Germany				
Young, Regena	33	single		KY-KY-KY				
Dunn, Alice	6	single	ward	KY-KY-KY				
Volk, Paul	39	single	minister of Gospel	Germany-Germany-Germany				
Volk, Elizabeth	73	widowed	boarder	Germany-Germany-Germany				
		[ed. note: Elizabeth Volk is mother of Rev. Paul Volk]						
Keifer, Jacob	14	single	ward	Germany-Germany-Germany				



Daviess County, KY Order Book L, pp.170-171:

Court of Saturday, 18th September 1880: This day Paul Volk an alien personally appeared in Court and upon his solemn oath made the following declaration of his intention to become a citizen of the United States and says he came to the United States in the year 1869, from Hunfeld in Germany and that it is his bona fid his intentions to renounce and abjure all allegiance to any foreign prince potentate state or sovereignty, whatever, and particularly to William the king of Germany of which he was before a subject which is ordered to be certified.



Daviess County, KY Circuit Court Book 16, Tuesday, 24 October 1882, pp.238-239:

This day came Paul Volk, (who heretofore viz on September 18th 1880 in the Daviess County court declared his intention to become a citizen of the United States, and to renounce all allegiance to any foreign prince do.) whereupon the said Volk being first duly sworn declared on oath that he would support the constitution of the United States and that he absolutely and entirely renounced and abjured all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate state or sovereignty and particularly to William King of Prussia of whom he was formerly a subject. It appearing to the satisfaction of the court that said Paul Volk has resided within the United States for more than five years last past and that during that he has behaved as a man of good moral character, attached to the principles of the constitution of the United Sates and will disposed to the good order and happiness of the same, whereupon said Paul Volk is admitted to the rights and privileges of citizenship.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 27 October 1882, p.4:

Circuit Court: Paul Volk was granted naturalization papers.



**History of Daviess County, Kentucky,
Inter-State Publishing Co., Chicago, IL, 1883:**

[pages 369-370] St. Joseph's Church (Catholic (German)).--In 1870, while Rev. Callaghan was pastor of St. Stephen's Church, an English speaking congregation, the German element was separated from it and organized as St. Joseph's Church, under Rev. Paul Volk, of West Louisville, this county. The names of he first members were: Paul Tennes, Michael Crans, Victor Strehl, Henry Dillmann, Jacob Meis, George Schaffer, Joseph Rose, Henry Rose, John Gillis, Frank Cammuff, Andy Eger, etc. The first religious service was held in the school-house, corner of Third and Mulberry streets, and Father Volk was the first preacher...

[pages 558-559] St. Alphonsus' Catholic Church was built in 1854 by Rev. Walter Coombs, on land donated by John Rodman. Mr. Coombs was a very zealous clergyman, and at that time the only priest in the county. Mass was first offered up by Rev. John Boyle, who was stationed at St. Raphael's Church, and served at St. Alphonsus' Church once a month for two years. After he left Rev. Eugene O'Callaghan officiated. He was a good and zealous man, never failing to fill his appointments. He served this church once a month for four years, being at that time stationed at Owensboro. In 1861 the Rev. Ivo Schacht was sent to St. Alphonsus' by Rev. Martin Spalding as the first resident pastor. He enlarged the old church building, which had become too small, and purchased a lot from James Glenn and built St. Joseph's Female Academy, which was occupied by the Sisters of Loretto, of Marion County, Ky. It was a frame building, and was accidentally burned in 1870. Mr. Schacht was succeeded by Rev. Charles Eggermont, and during his administration the old frame church was burned. He immediately, made arrangements to build the present brick church, but before its completion he was called to fill a professorship at St. Joseph's College, at Bardstown, Kentucky. Rev. Paul Volk, the present pastor, took his place. He finished the church building, and rebuilt St. Joseph's Academy, which is now occupied by the Ursuline nuns. The church is 84x45 feet, and has a graceful spire. It is situated fifteen miles

southwest of Owensboro, and there is a membership of about 1,200. A beautiful cemetery adjoins the church. This part of Daviess County is settled almost entirely by Catholics, and it is a remarkable fact that during a period of more than twelve years not a murder has been committed by a member of this church.

The following is a list of all the priests that have served this church: Revs. E. J. Durbin, from 1825 to 1831; John Wathen, 1831 to 1837; Walter Coombs, 1837 to 1846; Athanasius And, 1846 to 1848 ; John Boyle, 1848 to 1850 ; Eugene Callaghan, 1850 to 1861; Ivo Schacht, 1861 to 1864; Charles Eggermont, 1864 to 1870; Paul Volk, 1870 to the present time; Rev. Michael Coghlan, of Ireland, 1848 to 1871. From 1846 to the present time there have been from two to seven priests within the county.

The members belonging to St. Alphonsus' Church are all Americans, coming chiefly from Marion, Nelson and Washington counties, whose ancestors came from Maryland. The baptismal registers show that from 1861 to 1881, 900 infants have been baptized in this congregation. Children all receive a good Christian education in the district school.



Owensboro Semi-Weekly Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 21 March 1884, p.4:

Rev. Father Paul Volk will leave in a few days for New York, going thence to Rome, Italy, to be absent several months.



Owensboro Semi-Weekly Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 1 July 1884, p.4:

Rev. Father Paul Volk, who has been on a three months' tour in Europe, returned home last Friday delighted with his trip. He saw the Pope at Rome, and met all of his own people and renewed many pleasant acquaintances while gone.



Messenger & Examiner, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday 10 December 1884, p.3:

Death's Doings

Mrs. Elizabeth Volk, mother of Rev. Paul Volk, died at St. Joseph's Academy, near West Louisville, in the 83d year of her age.



Owensboro Tri-Weekly Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Saturday 11, July 1885, p.4:

Rev. Father Paul Volk is to be succeeded at St. Joseph's Academy at West Louisville by a new priest. Father Volk preaches his last sermon Sunday. He goes to some point back of Louisville to take charge of a new Catholic church. Father Volk's many friends in Daviess county will regret to hear of his removal.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 8 December 1885, p.4:

The Louisville Record says : "The Rev. Father Volk has finished the little church at Mirror, Lincoln county, with the exception of the plastering. The school opened with nineteen scholars. All are enthusiastic in pushing on the good work in this new German colony."



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Saturday, 28 May 1887, p.4:

MT. ST. JOSEPH ACADEMY
A FLOURISHING INSTITUTION OF LEARNING.

An Entertaining Historical Sketch of the Oldest and Most
Prosperous Educational Institution in Daviess County.

The cut above gives a correct representation of Mt. St. Joseph Academy. It is located on a beautiful hill, and the maples in the lawn have grown very much since the picture was taken.

One of the most interesting features of the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of this flourishing institution, a few days ago, was the historical address, which was as follows:

Twenty-five years ago this section of Daviess county, known as the Panther Creek region, was almost an entire wilderness. Here and there at intervals, a rude farm house could be seen, breaking the monotony of the traveler's view, but at golden eventide, no vesper bell pealed forth; wild beasts prowled about, and not a sound was heard, save the doleful hooting of the owl, and the echo of the sturdy woodsman's axe. Places that present, to-day, the noblest monuments of man's industry – edifices where God is honored and worshiped – were at that time, either over-grown with briars or covered with forest trees.

In the beautiful spring time of young manhood, the early settlers had moved here with their families from their ancestral home in Nelson county. The ambitious tendency of youth to make a home for itself and its own, to be free and independent, but at the same time dutiful and generous, had prompted them to this action. All that is dear on earth, the scenes of childhood and the fondest associations, the old homestead flower-grown with memories treasured and fadeless, they had exchanged for a log hut in the virgin forest on the Green River hills of Daviess county, Years passed, industry and economy hail made the little cabin a comfortable, country-like home, but still their cherished hope to have a minister of their religion reside among them, was unrealized. They were nearly all Catholics, and often did the "Angel of Time" record months and months between the consecutive visits of some far-distant priest. Schools, too, were few in number, and inferior in discipline, and young and old felt the consequences thereof, but though they knew not, a new blessing was dawning for them, glimmering in the eastern horizon of the year 1861. This year the Rev. Father Schacht, of happy memory, was appointed the first pastor of St. Alphonsus' little frame church, built of the trees in which forest birds sang just two years previous, Of the same kind of material he soon constructed a pastoral residence, and ere the wild roses twined upon its walls he began to look about for material to erect a school-house. His appeal to the charity of the people met an immediate response in liberal hearts and willing hands, but the work was delayed until the following spring. Then logs were hauled from the forest and cut to the dimensions of a

building fifty feet long by twenty wide, and ere the last rays of the setting sun were cradled in the west on the feast of the Annunciation, 18612, they bathed in crimson and golden light the first rude structure of "Old St. Joseph's Academy," raised up in the name of God and His blessed mother, Mary, and giving more testimony to-day than ever before, to what christian zeal can accomplish when seconded by charity.

September bade summer farewell, and the school was completed and opened under the tutelage of two worthy lay teachers, Misses Mitie Landrum and Nora Moors, but they did not retain their positions the second year, and the Zealous Father Schact, fully realizing the necessity of securing teachers who taught not for a pecuniary gain, but in the name of Him and for the glory of Him who said: "They that instruct many to justice shall shine as stars for all eternity," applied to the mother house of the sisters of Loretto for a colony of sisters to take charge of the school.

As a response to his application, four sisters arrived in September, 1863. Accustomed to the beautiful scenery of their convent-home in Marion county, what a strange contrast the school in the wilderness presented to them. Autumn was already busy with brush in hand, painting the "saddest season of the year," wild-wood flowers had ceased to enliven the mossy carpet of the forest, whose leaves were already tinged with gold and brown, the country-road that swept in front of the building was lonely and deserted, and save the barking of the fox and the rustlings of nature, silence and solitude reigned supreme. They found the building, destined for them to be a poor place for a permanent residence, but disciplined in the school of the cross, they were not disheartened. Here was poverty in every sense of the word, how perfectly they could assimilate themselves to their divine model, Jesus, who had not whereon to lay His head; how abundantly they could store up heavenly treasures in this newly shaped urn of self-sacrifice, even if their mission extended not an iota farther. The next morning at the dawn of day, the chosen hymn of their sisterhood, the Salve Regina, was heard resounding through the woods, and a few hours later, they were seen clearing away the rubbish of rotten logs, and cutting down the briars, that grew so thick and high as to impede a free entrance into the house.

In October they began their work of labor and love with an encouraging number of pupils, all day-scholars, but when winter snow began to fall boarders arrived, and it became apparent that an addition of kitchen and dining room was necessary, which was soon built of logs and clap-boards. They titled their lowly home St. Joseph Academy, as months rolled by and linked themselves one by one into years, other sisters arrived to share the tolls of the original little band of four, for the school was increasing and with it their solicitude to provide their pupils with every possible comfort.

The cup of hardship, carved from the wood dire necessity, and filled to the brim with toil and often a bitter drink of which they had to partake. Dark clouds of impending misfortune would loom up now and then, and threaten to injure the reputation of the school, or lessen its patronage, but they tolled on, heedless of the world and its ways. They felt their labors were adequately repaid for the annual attendance, at one time, numbered thirty-seven boarders besides a large class of day-scholars.

Through perseverance and industry, the dense wood that had obstructed the view in every direction, was disappearing now, at blessed twilight hour, when! nature seemed to kneel in adoring silence before the Creator, the inmates of the academy could walk for a little relaxation of mind and heart, on a cool grassy lawn, where before the briars grew in thickest profusion, the owl hooted, and the wild beast awaited its prey.

The children of the neighborhood were better instructed, and consequently, more dutiful and obedient to parents and superiors, prosperity smiled upon another branch-house, of Loretto,

and the crown of success hung beautiful and fair above it, but on each flower-leaf a tear-drop had gathered, and the pencil of a future historian was already lifted to record a sad destruction.

Winter lay shrouded in her winding sheet of snow, and the wind played a tune as mournful as a funeral march. 'Twas the last month of the year, 1870, and twenty-nine days thereof, had launched their ships, laden with sorrows and joys, in the port of eternity; the midnight clock from the belfry of the skies had chimed the hour of twelve, and ushered in the morning of the 30th of December; darkness and silence wrapped double mantles around the Academy, while the sleeping inmates dreamed on, unconscious of molestation or peril. 'Twas three o'clock; all at once the cry of "fire! fire!" rent the cold, still air; the Academy was burning, the flames leaped high and entered the main building. Sisters and children hurried to and fro to save what could be snatched from the writhing, crackling fury of the raging element, while the work of destruction went on. The neighbors hastened to lend assistance, but 'twas of no avail; they could only contemplate the scene in mute sorrow, and not how quickly the hopes and labors of man for years can be touched by the finger of a single mistake, or a casual accident, and reduced in a few hours to a heap of ruins. At last, the aurora came from the East to dispel the weird light of the falling buildings, and morning dawned upon thirteen homeless sisters with a number of pupils, clinging about them for protection. But where were they to go, on this bleak winter day? To return immediately to their mother house was utterly impossible, for the river, the only means for travel, was frozen over.

The neighbors with genuine hospitality invited them to their homes, to which after a sojourn of three weeks, they bade farewell, visited for the last time the blackened ruins which were now the monument of their toils and privations for six years, and returned to Loretto, not depressed and disheartened, however, by their sad misfortune, but renewed in zeal, and buoyant as the eagle, for any other work in the cause of God and religion.

How different was the place, where stood "Old St. Joseph's; a mournful silence hung about it, while the snows of January, and the cold, dreary rains of chill March, made it appear more lonely than ever. Spring time blossomed again, but merry childhood came not to sport beneath those old trees, standing, to-day, just beyond our maple-grove. Again the little birds came from the South, with the return of warm, fragrant breezes, and sang their old sweet songs, but every note was the minor key of a requiem, for they built their nests mid the mouldering ruin. Rank vegetation sprang up, on all sides, and for four years the spot where the Academy stood was vacant, more desolate than in the primitive wilderness, but destined by God to become a light-house of education, and a sanctuary, where He would dwell in a special manner with His chosen people.

The same year, 1874, that recorded on the tear-stained pages of life's journal the death of the late Father Schact, his second successor in the pastorate of St. Alphonsus congregation, the Rev. Father Volk, laid the foundation of another academy, just in front of the ruins of "Old St. Joseph's." Unlike the log-bouse of '61, this building was to be an imposing, spacious edifice of brick, therefore, its construction was not to be completed in a day.

The cost of it and the grounds, consisting of five acres, figuratively speaking, was charity and sacrifice; literally, \$1,500 from the private means of the pastor, a subscription of \$1,000 from the people of the parish, and \$3,500 from the sisters by whom the contemplated school was to be conducted. On the 14th of August, five Ursuline sisters arrived from Louisville. They had expected to find the building completed and an encouraging prospect for a number of pupils, but to every eager search to discover, at least one habitable room, sad disappointment responded; the bare walls stood before them with a roof and a floor. and that was all.

If the sister of Loretto had found poverty here, in the rough logs of the wilderness eleven years before, these sisters certainly experienced it, and drained the very dregs of the poor mans' cup, within the sheltering arm of mortar and brick.

They were strangers to every one, and I may say in a strange land, for what did they know of rural life, reared from earliest infancy on the bosom of the city? To them the country in summer with her fragrant breezes, luxuriant forests, and bright skies, was the real of beauty, and the landscape they had seen in painting and read of in poetry, the copy. They knew nothing of its customs, nothing of the art of helping ones' self, according to the circumstances of the situation, and sad, indeed, were the first lessons they learned in the school of stern experience. Here they vera necessitated to take up their abode, and without an article of furniture and without provisions, they began the second establishment of Mt. St. Joseph's Academy, wearing to-day, so honorably the silver crown of jubilee.

But days of hardship and trial, and every adversity in the catalogue of human vicissitude, were lying, by the wise decree of God, on the shelf of the future, to test the endurance of these five sisters. In September the school was formally opened, and were it not to illustrate the patience by which the Ursulines can outlive the prejudice and the opposition of some people, I would think the patronage during this scholastic year too insignificant to mention. Two teachers had been sent with the supposition that both would have employment; their task was the instruction of three young girls. Not that they were incompetent to discharge their duty conscientiously, but false reports had been rumored, which have only been rectified by thirteen years of patient charity on the part of the sisters, and especially of the founder, Rev. P. Volk.

The second and third years, the average number of pupils was nine , and thus it increased slowly enough each year, till it reached twenty-five; here the sunlight of a new era seemed about to dispel the ominous clouds that had burst into so many storms of contradiction and disappointment; and how the pupils of that session rejoiced, and bound themselves in sweetest friendship and affection, and made a compact to remain at their convent-like home. The Rev. Father Volk had never spared personal labor, money nor influence, to raise his school to the rank of a first-class literary institution. This year, 1880, he secured its incorporation by an act of the State Legislature, and in June, at the annual commencement, academic degrees were conferred upon Miss Annie Johnson, of Calhoun, the first young lady of Mt. St Joseph's, Academy, to wear the snowy orange blossoms, that form the graduating wreath. Since that time the school has prospered. The number of pupils of an annual attendance has increased to fifty. Eight graduates give evidence of the thorough system of education pursued throughout each grade of three departments. The main building has been enlarged by the addition of an exhibition hall and two dormitories, to which was recently added a large building for laundry purposes. The first eight years of apparently unproductive toil have at last borne fruit, and St. Joseph's Academy is now reaping the benefit of the forbearing patience, indomitable energy, and the saintly virtues of its second founder. And now, to-day as we stand beneath the shadows of our glorious "Stars and Stripes" and the "Tiara and Keys of Rome," and watch the flag of every nation of the earth, as it floats upon the passing breeze, let us congratulate each and every one of those, whose charity, whose toll, or whose sacrifice has contributed in any way, in raising this Academy to its flourishing condition, for they have laid the axe to the wilderness, and made instead of it, a garden-spot of the soil, wherein pure young souls will grow only to be transplanted as lilies into the flower-land on the "Golden Shore" and wherein too, the penitent at the foot of the cross, will be compassionated and loved in the regenerating waters of religion, till we assemble again to lift the silver crown of jubilee, and replace it by one of gold.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Saturday, 22 March 1890, p.1:

REV. PAUL J. VOLK.

The Returned Missionary Priest Will Celebrate
His Silver Jubilee at St. Alphonsus Church.

West Louisville, March 21. – The missionary priest of South America, Rev. Paul J. Volk, has returned to his former home, St. Alphonsus, to celebrate his silver jubilee on the 25th of March. There will be a solemn high mass in the church which he built, and the clergy of the surrounding counties are invited to participate in the festival. The clergy will be entertained at St. Joseph's Academy. Immediately after the 25th Father Volk returns to his home in South America. The people he served for fifteen years realize now the loss they sustained in losing Father Volk. May every blessing attend his future career is the wish of his people.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Saturday, 17 December 1892, p.1:

FATHER VOLK DEAD.

The Beloved Priest Ends His Busy Life His Chosen Work at Panama.
A Faithful, Laborious and Conscientious Apostle
Lay Down His Earthly Arms Among Strangers.

The many friends of Rev. Paul Volk, formerly pastor of St. Alphonsus church, will be grieved to hear of his dearth, which occurred at Panama about three weeks ago. The letter bringing the news did not give the exact date nor the cause of his death. Father Volk won the hearts of all as pastor of St. Alphonsus, and there was a general regret when bishop McCloskey transferred him to Eastern Kentucky. A few years ago he asked to be assigned to a mission field, and he was sent to Bishop Shoemaker, of Portoviejo, Ecuador, where he labored for a time among the half wild negroes and thoroughly uncivilized Indians. His success was such that he was sent to a harder field at Panama, among the canal laborers and the wild natives of that region. He endured untold hardships, and day and night worked in the cause for which he was sent there. The Indiana over a wide scope of country knew him by no other name than "el padre santo," "the holy father." He lived among them and waded streams, climbed mountains and remained days and weeks in the woods without subsistence except that nature furnished in his ministrations to them, The letter referred to says the Apostles could have been no more faithful than he.

All that is mortal of the good priest lies buried on the shore of the Pacific ocean, but his love lives in the hearts of thousands in both Americas.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 16 February 1893, p.1:

FATHER VOLK ALIVE.

The Devoted Missionary Priest at Work In South America.

Some time since the Messenger printed an account of the death of Rev. Paul Volk, formerly of this county, translated from a German paper published in Boston. It was stated that he had died in Panama of a disease brought on him by hardship and exposure. After a time the paper reached him, and in the past few days he has written friends at St. Joseph that he is alive and almost well. He is now in the Bahama Islands, where he will remain until his health is fully restored, when he will resume his labors among the Indians of the continent. He is tireless in a good cause, and has taken up the life of a missionary from choice. The news of his death caused profound sorrow among his many friends in this county, and they will be doubly glad to learn of its untruth



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 22 May 1895, p.1:

West Louisville, Ky., May 20. – Rev. Paul Volk, from Danville, is spending several days at St. Joseph's.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 22 December 1901, p.9:

DETAILS

OF THE KILLING OF FATHER VOLK IN COLOMBIA.

Blacklisted, and Marked for Slaughter by Revolutionists – News of the Catholic Clergy.

A recent dispatch reporting the death of Very Rev. Paul Joseph Volk at David, a small town on the Pacific coast, in the United States of Colombia, has been confirmed and the details of his death have been received here. Father Volk was shot to death by the revolutionists and then his body was hacked to pieces with knives and machetes.

In this connection a brief extract from a letter written by Father Volk to one of his former fellow clergy in this diocese several months before his death is of interest. He wrote:

"We are decimated here since the revolution broke out. Friends have left. It is over a year and a half since we had a bishop. In this deanery are five, parishes without any administration. The Liberals held this place but a little while, when it fell again into the hands of the rightful government. But we can never give thanks enough to Divine Providence that the revolutionists did not take Panama. From the list of names that fell into the hands of the government, they had already singled out those here in David that were to be shot. I had also the honor to be on the black list."

Father Volk was the principal churchman in that locality and evidently a strong supporter of the government and his death seems to have been made proportionately horrible.

In 1871 Father Volk was appointed pastor of St. Raphael's church, near West Louisville, and he soon became generally known for his energy and devotion to the duties of his priestly office. He was chiefly instrumental in making St. Joseph's academy a permanent establishment. On this assignment he spent five years. Later, from 1881 to 1885, he was again in charge there and built a new church and school house. He was also in charge of St. Alphonsus church, near Curdsville. His namesakes in the western part of the county are quite numerous,.

He held various other assignments in the diocese. In 1888 he went to Panama to find a wider field for his mission ardor. He returned to this state in 1895, but soon went again to his Central American missions, where he has worked most ardently until his death a above described.

He was a native of Fulda, Germany, but came to Kentucky when a young man. He was especially noted for his abstemious, self-denying habits and was an ardent and successful worker in the total abstinence cause.

St. Joseph's academy, near West Louisville, which was a favorite institution with him, has a fine cabinet of specimens and curios which were sent by him from far-away Central America.

Many of all denominations will regret to hear of Father Volk's sad death and thousands of Catholics will see in his death that of the martyr and fervently pray, "Requiescat in pace."



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 16 January 1902, p.1:

FATHER VOLK ALIVE

Letters Received Written by Him After His Reported Murder in Colombia.

EXPECTS TO COME BACK TO KENTUCKY THE FIRST OF FEBRUARY.
Report of His Violent Death Was Given Wide Publicity Only a Few Weeks Ago.

LETTERS TO MOTHER AUGUSTINE

The report of the murder of the Rev. Father Paul J. Volk by revolutionists, near David, in Colombia, South America, turns out, to the delight of the friends and acquaintances here and elsewhere in this section, to have been untrue.

Mother Augustine, the mother superior at St. Joseph's academy, received two letters from Father Volk on Monday, of date December 28, and another Tuesday, dated December 29. His massacre was reported to have been before these dates. The letters are all dated and postmarked at David, Colombia, and again at Panama, January 5, Father Volk states in them that he is coming back to Kentucky and will arrive here about February 1 and that he will stay here about two years. The letters are of a business nature and relate to the academy.

The publication of the reported massacre of Father Volk was made in various papers, and was officially published in the Catholic Record, of Louisville, and these letters to Mother Augustine therefore come as an agreeable contradiction.

Father Volk has been a missionary in South America since 1895. He was for many years pastor of St. Raphael's church, near West Louisville, and was one of the chief founders of St. Joseph's academy and largely responsible for its permanent advancement.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 16 March 1902, p.11:

ANOTHER PEIEST
WAS KILLED IN COLOMBIA, WRITES FATHER VOLK.

So Many Masses Said for Him He Fears There

Will Be None When He Really Dies.

The Rev. Paul Joseph Volk, formerly pastor of churches in this county, and who was reported killed by rebels in Colombia, has written a letter to the Very Rev. Father Deppen, of Louisville.

Extracts from the letter will be of interest to Messenger readers, to many of whom Father Volk is well known. The letter is dated David, Colombia, via Panama, February 12, 1902, and contains the following explanation of how the false report probably started:

"To my great astonishment, I see that a false report about my death has been spread in several papers. . I do not know how to explain it. It is true that several months ago a priest of this diocese, and not so very far from this place, the Rev. Ruso, a Spaniard, was been shot by the Liberals. They took him with several other persons out to a house and marched them off. It seems that they did not know at first that one of the prisoners was a priest. As they halted on the roadside. Father Ruso saluted the captains, and when asked who he was, told them that he was the pastor of Tole, and lifting his hat, they, noticing the tonsure, exchanged some sinister signs, and in a few moments later he was aware of their wicked intention, and falling down on his knees. he could only say a few words when they fired four shots at him. Uttering a prayer, he reeled over dead. Some of the women prisoners, when they commenced to cry aloud, were threatened that they would be shot if they did not stop crying. As the body of the dead priest was laying in the very roadside, they dragged it off some distance to a place, where there was plenty of dry wood, and burned the body.

"It is possible that somebody, badly informed, got my name mixed up with his.

"About a week ago this place, a town of five thousand people, was threatened by a new invasion. These invasions generally come from Nicaragua, where President Zelaya and the Liberal party have the power. A panic ensued; for the people were sure that the same scenes would be repeated like two years ago; at the time there were but few soldiers in the castle to resist the attack. Some of my parishioners insisted on me to save myself by going on board of a ship that was just going to Panama. But with the grace of God I let my better thoughts prevail, and did not abandon my flock. About nighttime I went to the church, and after a due preparation, I consumed the blessed sacrament. The people passed a fearful night. The enemy had landed some troops, but they did not attack us for some days; and, in the meantime, plenty of help came from the country; the men took up arms to defend the town. So we are now comparatively safe.

"Getting out such false reports causes other inconveniences. My letters and papers stopped all at once.

"I belong to the Priests' society of five masses from each priest, at the death of a member.

Now, about eight years ago, they commenced to say these holy masses for me; for a false report had been started that I had died in Panama of yellow fever. And now the same over again. Surely I am afraid, that when in a little while death will come to me, I will not get any prayers and holy masses at all."



Owensboro Weekly Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 2 September 1902, p.1:

FROM SEAT OF WAR

Rev. Volk Returns to His Old Home from a Long Stay, in Colombia.

CLAIMS THE BACK OF THE REVOLUTION HAS BEEN FULLY BROKEN.
Now Has a Mission Chapel in the Crater of an Extinct Volcano.

BITS OF INTERESTING HISTORY.

Rev. P. J. Volk arrived in Owensboro on Monday at noon from Louisville, having recently returned to Kentucky from Colombia, South America, where he has spent thirty-three years of his ministerial life. His headquarters are at David, in Panama, and about six months ago he was reported chopped to pieces by the revolutionists at David. It was two weeks later that the Messenger published the fact that Father Volk was not dead, the news being received by New Orleans.

Father Volk founded the German Catholic congregation of this city and also the academy at St. Joseph. At the latter place he was pastor for several years and his mother is buried there. Many children in this county are named for him. He is here for a short visit to the scenes of several years of arduous labor, the grave of his mother and his many friends. He will then return to David to continue the work he has there begun. One material part of this is the building of a very large stone church. It is 160 feet long and of proportionate width. Though in an earthquake region the church has a high tower. It is, however, carefully terraced and gradually narrows to the top. Several towers are covered with mother-of-pearl shells reflect the brilliant tropical light refulgently. For this structure Father Volk made his own brick.

Stands In With Government.

Father Volk stands in with the government authorities so well that he has been given he use of convicts from the penitentiary to build his church, and he is so familiar with the leader of the revolutionists that he bought of them 2,000 bushels lime to be used in the church structure. There is no sawmill at David and the only lumber used is manufactured by the old method of whipsawing. This is the fifteenth church built by Father Volk, but the first one of stone.

When asked about the revolution he answered at once that the revolution was now crushed, that only a few armed bands were now left in the extremes of Panama, near Nicaragua.

Asked about the probable route of the isthmian canal Father Volk answered promptly: "Sure, it will be the Panama route and only that." He went on to explain that the great number of active volcanoes, if nothing else, will surely prevent the building of the canal along the Nicaraguan route. He says the Pacific coasters are now lighted on their way by the glaring flames from volcanoes.

His Mission Chapel.

Asked if he had been near any of the volcanoes Father Volk answered that he had a mission chapel in the crater of an extinct volcano, Chiriqui. He often says mass at this station and, when looking west, can see the Pacific ocean, and when he turns around can see the Atlantic. He always preaches and teaches in Spanish, which nearly all the Indians and mixed races understand.

David is a place of 3,000 inhabitants. There are no wagons in the place or country and only about three carts, which are used by Father Volk's laborers in hauling stone from the quarry to the church. All traffic is on horseback and goods shipped from here must be packed in suitable bundles for such transportation. Ordinary hand stones are used for grinding corn and it is cultivated with no tool but the machete, which is use for all purposes, fighting included.

Father Volk has many interesting reminiscences and much valuable information and relates these quite entertainingly, but he is disinclined to talk for publicity.

Father Volk will say the special mass for the school children! at St. Joseph's church at 7:30 o'clock this morning when he will preach in German. He is now the guest of Rev. E. H. Fehrenbach, of this church, and will assist him in the forty hours devotion, which will begin there next Sunday, and will preach there in German on next Monday night.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 5 October 1902, p.1:

FATHER VOLK.

The Returned South American Missionary at West Louisville.

Rev. Joseph Paul Volk, the returned South American missionary, spent me past two weeks in his old charge, St. Alphonsus church, near West Louisville, during the temporary absence of the pastor, Rev. Anthony O'Sullivan, in New York. He is now visiting in Casey county, where he built the first of the thirteen churches that point their spires to heaven. He is now awaiting the cessation of hostilities at Panama so that he may return to that country and resume his work there and complete the fine stone church which he began there some time ago.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 19 October 1902, p.3:

BACK TO PANAMA

REV. VOLK HAS RETURNED TO MISSION WORK.

Says the Revolution Is not Over, but There is a Precious Work For Priests.

Rev. P. J. Volk, who recently visited this county, the scene of former priestly labors, started from Covington, Ky on October 9, for his present mission work in Panama." The day before leaving he wrote as follows to a clerical friend:

"I shall depart again tomorrow for the Isthmus of Panama. The revolution is not yet over. But, over or not, there are now so many soldiers in and around Panama, in the midst of the rainy season, badly sheltered and nourished, that all kinds of diseases abound, and deaths are a daily occurrence – precious work for priests to attend to.

"I do not think that I will be able for the present to get to my own mission in David, for it is yet in the hands of the rebels, and for the reason the government in Panama does not let any steamer go there, and overland it would take more than a month to get there."



U.S., Panama Canal Zone, Employment Records and Sailing lists, 1884-1937:

Rev. P. Jose Volk, legal residence – Daviess County, KY; Department – Government & Sanitation; office – hospital; where located – Colon; entered on duty – 16 October 1905; date of appointment – 15 October 1905; where appointed – Isthmus; position – resident chaplain; salary

– \$1200 per annum; age – 64; place of birth – Germany; file number – 5424; home address – St. Joseph post office, Daviess County, KY



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 24 December 1907, p.8:

LETTERS FROM FATHER VOLK
LABORS OF A KENTUCKY PRIEST IN ISTHMUS OF PANAMA.

Was Formerly Pastor at St. Joseph's In This County and Writes to Old Friends.

The following letter has been received by the authorities of St. Josephs academy, this county from Rev. P. J. Volk, who was formerly chaplain of that institution. He has been in the tropics as a missionary for about, fifteen years.

Colon, Isthmus of Panama, November 24, 1907. – Dear Sisters of Mt. St. Joseph's: A Catholic directory reached me today, and looking up Mt. St. Joseph's convent and academy, I see, to my great joy, how it is growing.

Ever since the silver jubilee celebration, I have been expecting to receive a copy of "Maple Mount," but, as yet, it has not reached me.

I am still alone in Colon, but am waiting, from week to week, for the arrival of Rev. Nicholas Ward, passionist, from West Hoboken, N. J., who will establish a monastery here.

You will soon receive a photograph of the new church of Colon; on the patronal feast, December 8th, I shall ring, for the first time, the new bells in the tower, one weighing twelve, hundred and seventy-five pounds, the other eight hundred and thirty pounds.

I attend to the spiritual needs of the Christian Brothers and the Sisters and offer mass once a week in their chapels. On Sunday I give holy communion to the Brothers in their chapel at 5:00 o'clock, and go from there to the Sisters' chapel, to give them holy communion, then, return to the church to ring the Angelus.

First mass begins at 7:00 o'clock, after which I preach in Spanish; at 9:00 o'clock I offer high mass and preach in English; all the schools' children, numbering 150 boys and 100 girls, attend this mass. Gregorian music is used exclusively. Baptisms follow mass.

My breakfast, which I usually prepare in a shanty near the church, consists of roasted barley coffee and a pint of milk; however, if not too tired, I take breakfast at the Canal-Hotel. After the morning's work, I take a little rest up in the church tower.

At 3:00 o'clock, the children, assemble at the church for the services of vespers and benediction. The Rosary, salve regina and a sermon, at 7:00 o'clock, close each Sunday's devotions.

At present, I am filling up a swamp that almost surrounds the church. The railroad company dumps the dirt into the nearest street and I have sixteen wheelbarrows to convey it to the swamp; twelve laborers receive one dollar per day in gold. About, a dozen prisoners, guarded by the police force, work for me; to these, through mere charity. I give four dimes a day, and go to the prison occasionally, at night, to preach to them.

Please to salute all the inmates of the convent, academy and old members of St. Alphonsus, for me. Greetings, also, to the pastor and your chaplain.

Respectfully in Xto.
Paul Joseph Volk



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Monday, 30 May 1910, p.2:

FATHER VOLK PREACHED SUNDAY

Delivered Two Sermons to Big Audience at St Joseph's Church

Rev. Father Volk, formerly of this county; and for a number of years pastor of St. Alphonsus Catholic church, at St. Joseph, delivered two very interesting sermons at St. Joseph's Catholic church in this city Sunday morning and evening. Father Volk is here on a visit, having recently returned from Colon, Panama, and the announcement of his making an address, packed the church to overflowing.

The pastor. Rev. Eugene Speiss, conducted the services at the 7 o'clock mass, and Father Volk officiated at the 9 o'clock mass, and also at the services held at 7:30 o'clock in the evening.

Father Volk, while somewhat aged, was at his best, and his audience was highly entertained with two interesting sermons. In delivering his address, instead of speaking from the altar steps as is the custom, Father Volk walked up and down the middle aisle, which was something unusual but, which proved to be very satisfactory as the entire' congregation could hear very distinctly every word that was said. .This is the practice in Panama, speaking in the middle aisle of the church instead of from the altar.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 7 July 1910, p.3:

Rev. Father Paul Volk, of Colon, Panama, who has been in Owensboro visiting old acquaintances, left yesterday for a visit to friends in eastern Kentucky.



**New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists
(including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957:**

Rev. Paul J. Volk, age 72; born - Germany; last known - residence Colon, Panama; departure port - Cristobal, Canal Zone, Panama; arrival date - 7 June 1913; arrival port - New York, New York; final destination - St. Joseph, Kentucky; former resident of St. Joseph, KY for 25 years; going to join St. Josephs Academy, St. Joseph, KY; passage paid by self; condition of health - good; description – height 5 feet, 9 inches; hair color light; eye color light; complexion light; ship name - Panama



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Saturday, 14 June 1913, p.5:

REV. P. J. VOLK IS ON A VISIT TO OWENSBORO

The Rev. P. J. Volk, Catholic missionary to Colon, Panama, and chaplain for the United States government at that place, arrived in Owensboro Friday morning for a short visit to his many friends in Owensboro and Daviess county. Father Volk is one of the pioneer priests of the county, having erected the St. Alphonsus church near West Louisville and Mt. St. Joseph academy, which adjoins. He also had constructed the St. Joseph church in Owensboro. and was its first pastor. He is at Joseph academy.



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 18 June 1915, p.5:

GOLDEN JUBILEE
OF REV. PAUL JOSEPH YOLK FOUNDER OF ST. JOSEPH'S
Commerorated In Elaborate Manner by Alumnae Association Today

A notable occasion in the history of Mt. St. Joseph's Alumnae association was the commoration today of the golden sacredotal jubilee of the Rev. Paul Joseph Volk, founder of St. Joseph's. Father Volk, who has labored for over 30 years in South America, has returned to spend the rest of his life amid the scenes of his early labors.

Everywhere elaborate decorations told of forethought and the spirit of the day Golden festoons and maple leaf crowns were used on the lawn and white and gold formed the color scheme, in chapel, library, parlors reception hall, auditorium and dining hall.

The day's program began with high mass with by the jubilarian as celebrant, with the Rev. L. E. Clements, as deacon, Rev. J. L. Whelan, as sub-deacon, Rev. Raymond Payne, Master of ceremonies Rev. L. H. Spalding and Rev. R. J. Jenne, as acolytes.

The alumnae address, given by Mt. St. Joseph's chaplain, the Rev. L. H. Spalding, was a masterful development of the grand idea and ideals embodied in the motto given to the Alumnae Association by Father Volk. "We will extend the kingdom of God.

A musical program, specially prepared for the occasion, was rendered by the Cecilian choir, with orchestral accompaniment. At 1 o'clock a banquet was served to the clergy and alumnae in the academy dining hall, which was especially beautiful in its appointments.

A delightful toast program, interspersed with music, gave an intellectual savor to the more substantial side of the affair. Eloquent addresses were made by the Rev. J. L. Whelan and the Rev. L. E. Clements, and toasts to the jubilarian were gracefully voiced by Misses Rose Shoemaker, Margaret Miller,, Victoria Zinsz, Margaret Thomas and Mrs. Ora Pjke __Luckett. Miss Irmine Mulligan was a most gracious toast-mistress.

A touching responsive address was made by Rev. Father Volk.

Immediately after the banquet a tender tribute was paid to the memory of the jubilarian's mother when the clergy, alumnae, community and student body marched to her grave which was beautifully decorated and short exercises took place.

At 5 this evening the alumnae will give a special reception to Father Volk.

At 7:30 a piano recital was given in the auditorium by members of the Alumnae, this being the closing feature of the first of three happy and memorable days.

Tomorrow will be Students' day, and upon this occasion, the Students' tribute to the venerable jubilarian will be voiced in the commencement program.

On August 10, Community day will be. observed by the sisters of Mt. St. Joseph's.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 11 August 1915, p.3:

**Last of Observances In Honor
Of Father Volk at Mt. St. Joseph**

The last of the observances held at St. Joseph's academy, Maple Mount, in celebration of the golden sacerdotal jubilee of the Rev. Paul Joseph Volk, occurred on Tuesday morning. The convent buildings and grounds were beautifully decorated, a combination of the national and church colors being effectively used.

The religious ceremonies formed the principal feature of the day, which was known as community day. Eleven novices pronounced their vows as members of the order, and ten young women received the habit of the nuns of the Ursuline order.

The ceremonies, which were of a very impressive nature, began with a procession to the chapel, formed of religions to the number of one hundred, and a large number of priests. The young women who were to receive the habit led the procession, gowned in bridal robes, with veils and wreaths, followed by those who were to pronounce their vows.

Father Volk acted as celebrant of the solemn high mass, in the absence of the Right Reverend Bishop O'Donaghue. The Rev. Andrew Zoeller was deacon; Rev. P. M. Managhan, subdeacon; Rev. L. H. Spalding and Rev. R. Payne were masters of ceremonies; Rev. J. Fallon, thurifer; J. P. Hayden and Joseph Fitzgibbons, acolytes. Members of the clergy present in the sanctuary were Rev. Theo. Kellenaers, Rev. B. J. Wight, Rev. George M. Connor, Rev. F. O'Connor, Rev. J. Berresheim, Rev. A. M. Zoeller, Rev. J. D. Kalaher, Rev. P. J. McNeil, Rev. J. Knue, Rev. L. E. Clements, Rev. Bonaventure Oberst, C. P. Rev. R. Maloney, Rev. H. Jennie, Rev. C. Rahm, Rev. H. Jennie, Rev. C. Rahm, Rev. E. Bachman, Rev. L. Herberth, Rev. W. Pike, Rev. A. Thompson, Rev. C. Timony and Brother Alban Paul.

The sermon for the occasion, a beautiful and eloquent oration, was delivered by the Rev. E. S. Fitz- Gerald, of this city.

The young women receiving the habit were: Miss Beatrice Peterson, Miss Agnes Livers, Miss Mary Fenwick, Miss Hattie O'Brien, Miss Gertrude Benedict, Miss Alberta Robinson, Miss Malissa Mattingly, Miss Roberta Raley, Miss Pauline Mattingly and Miss Edna Cravens.

Those pronouncing vows were: Sister Cecilia Redmond, Sister Rose Marie Thompson, Sister Ursulita O'Brien, Sister Bernadine Howard, Sister Rosina Hinton, Sister Miriam Hinton, Sister Geraldine Jarboe, Sister Benedict Thomas, Sister Michelle Drury, Sister Raphael Hayden, Sister Dorothy Payne.

At the close of the chapel ceremonies a six course banquet was served to the clergy and invited guests. During the dinner a delightful musical program was rendered. During the afternoon a musicale was given in the auditorium of the academy, and this enjoyable occasion marked the close of the celebrations being held for Father Volk.



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 23 June 1918, p.1B:

PLANS ARE BEING FORMED FOR NEW CATHOLIC CHAPEL

New House of Worship to Be Erected at St. Joseph's Academy

... Mt. St. Joseph's Academy was founded in 1874 by Rev. J. P. Volk, who is now doing missionary work in Grayson county, having charge of six small churches. Father Volk, although 78 years of age, is still active and able to perform his duties. He was in attendance at the commencement of the- academy this year and was given a big ovation by the people of that section of the county who have always admired and respected him for the great work and many miracles he has performed. ...



Owensboro Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 5 August 1919, p.3:

RETURNS TO OLD HOME

Rev. Father Volk Has Returned to Mt, St. Joseph's Academy .

Rev. Father Joseph Volk, the founder of Mt. St. Joseph's Academy, who has been stationed at Peonia, in Grayson county, for some time has resigned his position, and has returned to St. Joseph's where he will spend the rest of his days in peace and quietude. Father Volk was given a farewell banquet by his congregation before he left for Daviess county. He is well known in Daviess county, where he has many friends.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 19 September 1919, p.8:

BEECH GROVE

Rev. Father Volk, who ministered to the spiritual needs of this community forty years ago, has been again returned as pastor of St. Benedict's Catholic church.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Saturday, 25 October 1919, p.3:

Rev. Paul Volk At Point of Death
At St. Josephs Academy

Rev. Paul Volk, ' aged seventy-nine years, the oldest priest in Daviess county, and one of the most venerable and best beloved men of the county, is at the point of death at Mt. St. Joseph's academy.

Father Volk, who has spent many years of a long, busy life in the ministry in Daviess county, and has been pastor of several different churches, recently retired from active work and came to Mt. St. Joseph to live. His health has been growing steadily worse recently, but he was able to go to Louisville last Friday. Since his return on Tuesday of this week he has been confined to his bed and his condition became so critical on Friday, that the last rites of the church were administered. It was stated last night that he might not live twenty-four, hours.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 4 November 1919, p.9:

Father Volk Died At Mt. St. Joseph
After Active Life

Venerable Prelate Founded Academy and Dozens of Kentucky Churches

Rev. Paul Joseph Volk, age 70, founder of Mt. St. Joseph's Academy and builder of a dozen or more churches in Daviess county, Kentucky and South America, died at Mt. St. Joseph's Academy at 11:45 Sunday morning after an illness of about two weeks.

Although he had been a sufferer from internal disorders for several months past, Father Volk lead his usual active, busy life until a little more than two weeks ago when he became confined to his bed.

The funeral will be- conducted from the chapel of St. Joseph's Academy on Thursday morning at 10 o'clock with a high requiem mass. The burial will be in the academy cemetery.

The life of Father Joseph Volk was an unusual one in many respects, and was one of continual self-sacrifice and of untold hardships, incidental to the laborious career which was his for so many years. He was born in Hunfield, in the diocese of Fulda, Germany, on May 16, 1841, and grew to manhood there. On March 19 1865, he was ordained to the priesthood, celebrating his first mass on March 25. For about two years he served as assistant pastor at different churches in the diocese of Fulda, after which he spent a year in the American College at Louvain. preparing to labor in the diocese of Louisville.

Father Volk erected chapels and churches, among them being those of St. Sebastian, St. Alphonsus, St. Benedict at Beech Grove, also churches at Calhoun, Ottenheim, Lincoln county, Jellico, Junction City, Harrodsburg, and other places.

In 1874, Father Volk founded Mt. St. Joseph's Ursuline Academy, in which place he has always manifested a deep, fatherly interest; here he always called "home," and here it was that he came to spend his last earthly days.

It was in 1885, that Father Volk began his missionary career, laboring always in the poorest and most remote sections of Kentucky. In 1888, he left the states to labor as a, missionary in South America, where, he spent several years, during which he built various churches and schools, and at the same time labored zealously among the Indians of the South American mountains. He also spent several years in Panama, where at David he built two churches, and a handsome church also at Colon, an edifice which is today the pride of the Isthmus.

On May 20, 1915, Rev. Volk returned to Mt. St. Joseph's where in August of the same 'year the institution celebrated with much splendor, the Golden Jubilee of his ordination. Even after all these years of arduous labor, Father Volk was not satisfied to remain, as he expressed, "idle," and at the age of 74, he voluntarily undertook the care of the little church at Peonia, Grayson county, Ky., from which place he attended on horseback, over the roughest roads in Kentucky, five other missions.

In July of the present year, he gave up this work and returned to Mt. St. Joseph's, this time to remain until death closed his remarkably active career, a career which, both in public and private was always characterized by a strong personality, an inherent refinement and gentleness, and a child-like simplicity.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 7 November 1919, p.7:

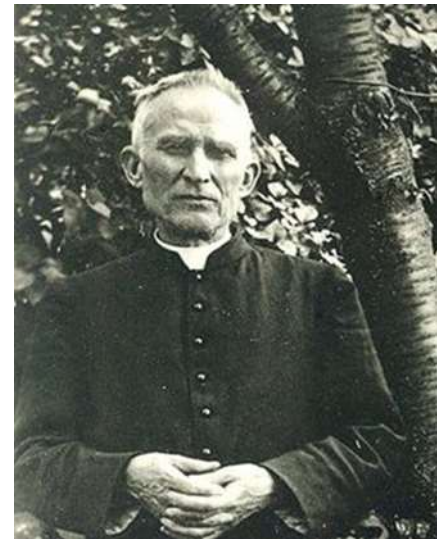
Immense Crowd Attends Funeral of Father Volk

One of the largest crowds that has ever gathered for a funeral in Daviess county was present on Thursday at the funeral services for Father Paul Joseph Volk, who died Sunday night at Mt. St. Joseph's academy. The church was filled to its capacity and the church yard was crowded with people.

The services consisted of a solemn high requiem mass sung by Father James Whelan, of St. Joseph, with Rev. Daniel McGuire, of Louisville, as deacon, and Father J. F. Maloney, subdeacon. Rev. Richard Maloney, of Owensboro, was master of ceremonies. Rev. E. S. FitzGerald, of Owensboro, delivered an inspiring eulogy on Father Volk who was one of the greatest missionaries ever associated with Daviess county, and who founded dozens of churches and missions in Kentucky and South America, besides Mt. Joseph academy, which he lived to see reach great success as an educational institution.

The clergy present at the funeral services were: Rev. James L. Whelan, St. Joseph. Ky.; Rev. Daniel McGuire, Louisville; Rev. F. J. Timony, Knottsville; Rev. R. Maloney, Owensboro; Rev. J. Bernatto, Thurifer; Rev. J. Higgins and J. Dudine, Acolytes; Rev. E. S. FitzGerald, Owensboro; R. L. Herberth, Rome; Rev. A. G. Meyering, Brown's Valley; Rev. P. J. McNeill, Waverly; Rev. J. D. Kalaher, Louisville; Rev. J. F. Kneu. McQuady; Rev. J. F. Norman, Hardinsburg; Rev. R. Jenne, Curdsville; Rev. G. Mensa, Owensboro.

[ed. note: funeral services were conducted at the St. Alphonsus Church]



Rev. Paul Joseph Volk (1841-1919)





Elizabetha Theresia Volk died 1 December 1884; St. Alphonsus Catholic Church Cemetery, Daviess County, KY. In the summer of 1877 she came from Germany to live with her son, Rev. Paul Joseph Volk, at Maple Mount, KY

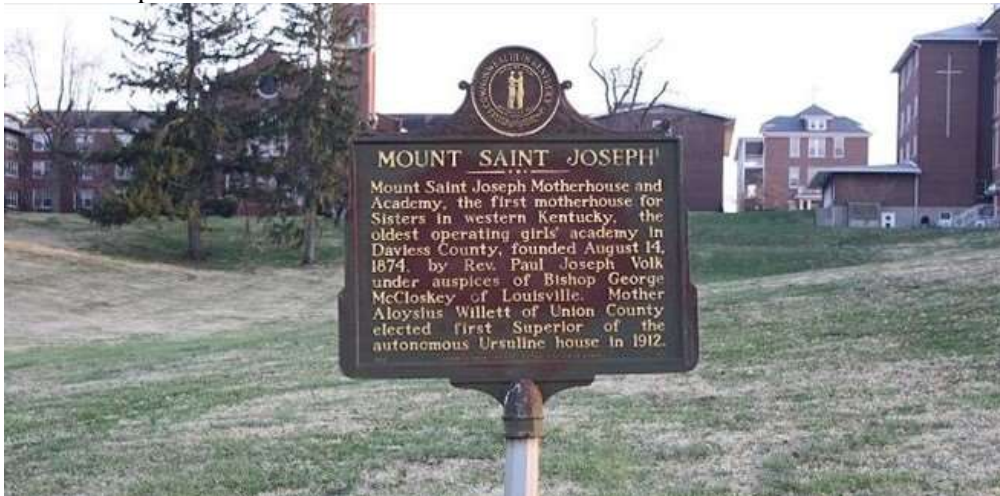


Grave of Rev. Paul Joseph Volk (1841-1919) at Mount Saint Joseph Cemetery, Maple Mount, Daviess County, KY





Mount St. Joseph Academy original building erected in 1874 under the supervision of Rev. Paul J. Volk. Due to deterioration and cost of renovation the building was razed in April 2023.



Kentucky Historical Marker: "Mount Saint Joseph Motherhouse and Academy, the first Motherhouse for Sisters in western Kentucky, the oldest operating girls' academy in Daviess County, founded August 14, 1874, by Rev. Paul Joseph Volk under auspices of Bishop George McCloskey of Louisville. Mother Aloysius Willett of Union County elected first Superior of the autonomous Ursuline house in 1912."



See also book: Rev. Paul Joseph Volk, A Pioneer Missionary in Two Continents, by Rev. Norbert Russwurm (1893-1963), OSM; St. Bernard, AL, St. Bernard Abbey Book Shop, 1937, 147 pages. A copy can be found in the Kentucky Room at the Daviess County Public Library in Owensboro, KY (call #KR B Volk).



Fr. Paul Joseph Volk / Pioneer Sisters Memory Meditation Garden.
Dedication on August 15, 1999 To Celebrate 125 Years of
Service by the Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph 1874-1999.
Monument at Mt. St. Joseph Academy

