

# “Jack” Müller (1881-1956): Catholic Church Artist in Kansas During the Twentieth-Century’s First Decade

Cindy Higgins with assistance from Gabrielle Greenwood-Hamilus and David Greenwood

July 2023

“Known as Jacques, Jack, Jaki, Jak, or J.V.,<sup>1</sup> Jakob Müller was born October 23, 1881 in Esch-Uelzecht,<sup>2</sup> a city in Luxembourg that now has about 35,000 residents. Gabrielle Greenwood-Hamilus, a Müller relative who lives next door to his family home at 7 Faubourg Esch-sur-Alzette, wrote:

He was officially named Jacob. His birth certificate is in German and depending on the administrative language used at the moment of registration, the names were either in German or French. In the margin of the certificate, the

name is clearly spelt Jakob with a k. If the certificate had been in French, he would have been Jacques. The priest would have baptised him as Jacobus. His parents called him Jaki and he signed his letters Jak. This swapping of languages is typical for Luxembourg.<sup>3</sup>

Name	Dates	Spouse	children	notes
Marie-Mathilde	1857-1857			
Marie	1857-1857			
Margaret	1859-1939	Jean-Baptiste SCHMIEDELER	11	emigrated to Kansas
Louis	1860-1864			
Marie	1862-1940	(spinster)	-	ran a corner shop
Nicolas	1864-1864			
Louis	1867-1867			
Jean-Pierre	1866-1867			
Françoise	1868-1921	Dominique MÜLLER	2	Dominique and François MÜLLER from Mondercange were 2 brothers who married 2 MÜLLER sisters, who were third cousins
Dominique	1869-1870			
Nicolas	1870-1873			
Jean	1871-1872			
Josephine	1874-1950	François MÜLLER	6	carpenter / furniture maker, later shop owner and furniture importer
Louise	1877-1951	Jean-Baptiste WEINAND	2	Weinand ran a café/bar
Marie-Anne	1877-1877			
Jacob (“Jack”)	1881-1956	Lissie DEGES	5	painter etc.

His father Franz Müller was 52 and his mother Maria Mathilde Schmit was 43 when Müller was born. Of their 16 children, six survived to adulthood.<sup>4</sup> As a teenager, he attended Athénée de Luxembourg in Luxembourg City<sup>5</sup> and later studied painting at evening classes.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>U.S. newspapers usually referred to Müller’s first name as “J. V.”

<sup>2</sup>Wikipedia. [https://lb.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack\\_M%C3%BCller](https://lb.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_M%C3%BCller)

<sup>3</sup>Gabrielle Greenwood-Hamilus (personal communication/email, June 20, 2023).

<sup>4</sup>Note: FamilySearch contains incorrect sibling listings for Müller. David Greenwood in a June 20, 2023 email sent this listing.

<sup>5</sup>Müller Jack, Esch/Alzette (industrie.lu).

Müller came to the United States at age 18 to visit his oldest sister Marguerite (“Gréitchen”), who was 20 years older than him, in Kansas City, Kansas. He came again in 1901 to work during the day in the family wheatfields by Wilson, Kansas, and painted in the evenings.<sup>7</sup> The farm belonged to Marguerite and her husband Jean-Baptiste Schmiedeler.<sup>8</sup> Both had emigrated from Luxembourg to Kansas and later moved to the Kansas City area.<sup>9</sup>

Müller went back to Europe for two and a half years before returning to Kansas.<sup>10</sup> He may have done church decor there because a 1909 news article wrote: “Mr. Mueller was educated in Antwerp, Germany. He has done well known works in Germany, but has only been in America a few years.”<sup>11</sup> The reporter incorrectly situated Antwerp, the largest city in Belgium, in Germany. Other news accounts and reports, including the U.S. Census also erroneously recorded Müller as German, so Müller probably did public artwork in Europe but which country is the question.

After his return in 1904, Müller married Elisabeth [Lizzie] Catherine Degess (1883-1943) in 1905.<sup>12</sup> Her parents had “emigrated from the Eiffel, parts of which used to belong to Luxembourg, but is now part of Germany,” Greenwood-Hamilius wrote. Elisabeth was listed at age 18 in the 1900 U.S. Census with her parents Leonard Deges (1845-1866) and Catharine Deges along with siblings Mathias (24), Philip (23), John (21), Mary (15), and Barbara (12) in Wilson Township, Ellsworth, Kansas. Her father immigrated to Calumet, Michigan, in 1866 and homesteaded in Wilson, Kansas in 1880 where the family lived till 1910 before moving to Grinnell in Gove County,<sup>13</sup> a city the Müllers visited in 1910<sup>14</sup> when they were living in Plymouth Township in Dorrance. Also in Dorrance at that time were Lizzie’s uncle and aunt Thomas Deges<sup>15</sup> and Margaret Mangen Deges<sup>16</sup> who married 1878 in Minneapolis. By the mid-1890’s

<sup>6</sup>The Atchison Globe (1907, March 29) printed he had studied art in evening classes in Antwerp. However, Gabrielle Greenwood-Hamilius in a 4 September 2023 email wrote the only reference to Antwerp that she found was in a letter sent to her by Claire Billock around 1989. Billock wrote: “He was educated at the Athenaeum in Luxembourg City, and studied art in Antwerp at the Conservatory, Jacques Muller was as a ‘reputed artist of a high type.’”

(Note: At the time, Mrs Billock was researching the Schmiedeler Family.)

<sup>7</sup>Wichita Eagle. (1901, February 27). He also appears in a Russell Informer (1901, Oct. 4) notice: “An entertainment will be given in the Russell opera house on Saturday evening, October 5, for 8 to 10 pm by Victor Apollon, alias Jacques Muller, the greatest European champion Hercules, the modern Sampson, and strongest young man in the word.” There will be a wrestling match during the entertainment. Admission 25 cents; children 10 cents. It will pay anyone to witness this exhibition.”

<sup>8</sup>Gabrielle Greenwood-Hamilius (personal communication/email, June 7, 2023). “So excited about your reply! Allow me to give you a brief family history to situate Jack Müller. Jack left his hometown Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg, when he was 19 years old (in 1900) to visit his sister Marguerite (Gréitchen) in Kansas. Gréitchen was the oldest sibling and there was about a 20 year gap between her and her brother Jack, which made him about the same age as his nephew Jean-Baptiste jr. Schmiedeler, the writer of the letter. Gréitchen was married to Jean-Baptiste Schmiedeler and they had previously emigrated from Luxembourg to Kansas where more of their numerous children were born. The family were devout Catholics and two of them taking religious vows (monsignor Edgar Schmiedeler and one of the girls joining a nunnery.)”

<sup>9</sup>The Schmiedelers lived at 4800 Mission in Kansas City, Kansas. They had 12 children; one of whom lived at 5300 Mission. Four of their daughters and three sons lived in the Kansas City area. Tipton Times (1924, June 19).

<sup>10</sup>Wichita Eagle. (1910, February 27).

<sup>11</sup>Topeka Daily Capital. (1909, November 7).

<sup>12</sup><https://www.industrie.lu/MullerJack.html> lists her birth year as 1984 but her grave reads 1983.

<sup>13</sup>The Grinnell Record (1919, November 27) obituary lists seven children: Leonard, Olathe, Colorado; Mathias, Phillip, and Mary, Grinnell; John, Grainfield, Kansas; Barbara, Seguin, Kansas; and Elizabeth of Esh, Luxembourg. It also says Leonard summered in Colorado because of his asthma.

<sup>14</sup>Gove County Advocate. (1910, April 9).

<sup>15</sup>Thomas Deges born October 25, 1842 in Salm, Landkreis Vulkaneifel, Rheinland-Pfalz, Germany, died Feb. 7, 1908 (aged 65) in Dorrance, Russell County, Kansas.

<sup>16</sup>Margaret Mangen Deges born January 22, 1854 in Lintgen, Canton de Mersch, Luxembourg, Luxembourg died March 16, 1924 (aged 70) in Dorrance, Russell County, Kansas.

they had relocated to Russell County, Kansas, and were farming in Plymouth Township. Anna Deges' brother also lived in Dorrance.<sup>17</sup>

After Grinnell, Elisabeth with her new husband resided in Denver, Colorado, when Müller painted the interior of a cathedral, which probably was the Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception being built in 1905, which Claire Billock, a relative, also presumed. However, the initial construction of St. John's Episcopal cathedral in Denver also began in 1905 but Müller specialized in Catholic church art. Next, Müller surfaced in Eudora, Kansas. Although the Eudora newspaper called him "Mr. Miller," the artist was Müller, which is known because a nephew of Muller living in Rosedale sent a letter to Luxembourg relatives telling of Müller's employment.<sup>18</sup> That 120-year letter surfaced when Greenwood-Hamilius forwarded a copy to the Eudora Area Historical Society.<sup>19</sup>

Wrote the Eudora Weekly News on November 3, 1905: "The Catholics are the latest to improve their church home. The church has just been newly painted and decorated on the inside. The work shows skill and taste of a high grade. A Mr. Miller from Kansas City has been doing the work." In an earlier post, Müller was termed a fresco artist: "A fresco artist has been at work in the Catholic church for two weeks or more. He is painting Biblical scenes on the wall, which add materially to the attractiveness of the interior."<sup>20</sup>

The term "fresco" originally meant applying dry mineral pigments mixed in a water solution directly to freshly-applied lime plaster that become a permanent part of the wall (*buon secco*). Wrote, Kathryn Campbell, Conservation Center:

The chemical reaction of the lime with carbon dioxide in the air results in a hard calcium carbonate shell forming around the pigment particles binding the pigments to the wall. Depending on the thickness of the plaster, the process of forming a hard calcium carbonate layer can take months since the outer hardened layers act as a barrier to the air needed by the inner layers for the reaction. Water is the biggest enemy and cause of deterioration to frescos in several ways. If water gets to unreacted lime, it can dissolve

---

<sup>17</sup>Grinnell Record. (1927, January 20).

<sup>18</sup>Gaby Greenwood-Hamilius (personal communication, 2023, June 7): "So, as said above, the letter that mentions Jack was sent from Rosedale by Gréitchen's son Jean-Baptiste jr. to his aunt Joséphine and uncle François in Esch. Joséphine, née Müller, was married to François Müller (yes, the name is extremely popular here :). Joséphine and François had a daughter called Françoise Müller who married a Nicolas Urbany. They in turn had a son, François Urbany, who died in 2001. He was in his 70s and a bachelor. He was my father's second cousin, and my husband and I were in charge of clearing François' house 11, rue Jean Origer here in Esch-sur-Alzette, and we brought all of the personal papers (including the above mentioned letter) back to our house before the house was sold."

<sup>19</sup>Gabrielle Greenwood-Hamilius (personal communication/email, 2022, May 11). "While clearing a house of a distant relative, I came upon a letter dated 21 September 1905 sent to Luxembourg from Rosedale, Kansas, in which Eudora, Kansas is mentioned. The letter is in German and it says that Jack Müller, a relative, was commissioned to do some painting (mural?) inside a church in Eudora and that he would be paid 300,00\$. And that there was also work to be done in a Kansas City church for between 600,00 and 800,00\$. Unfortunately, it does not say which church in Eudora. Jack must have been reasonably successful as a decorator in America as there were other churches that he had done work for, including the cathedral in Denver, Colorado. This may have been a bit later, before he came back to his native country Luxembourg. He brought his family back to Luxembourg just before WWI for a visit, the war preventing him from travelling back to the US. Anyway, I am aware of the fact that it is very unlikely that you will find a trace of Jack's work in your archives in Eudora. I just thought, I'd contact you out of curiosity. There is an article on Jack Müller's other achievements here: <https://www.industrie.lu/MullerJack.html>."

<sup>20</sup>Eudora Weekly News. (1905, September 28). Note: The newspaper had been purchased by new owners during this time. The long-time editor Will Stadler of German parentage may not have made the same spelling mistake. However, the newspaper did supply the artist's name. Often, newspapers and records don't include that information. For example, St. Benedict in Bendena, Kansas, had frescoes and gilding done in its new 1904 church and only the \$405 expenditure was recorded. See its 1998 National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.

the lime and undermine the stability of the surface. Moisture on the surface can get into any cracks allowing freeze-thaw cycles to break off layers of the plaster.<sup>21</sup>

In more recent centuries, artists have painted on dry plaster (*al secco*), which enables more detailed painting. Both are types of murals—imagery painted on walls.<sup>22</sup> Removal of paneling covering Müller’s art at Holy Family in 2022 does appear he painted on a thin layer of plaster, now cracking in many spots. It’s probable he painted on dry plaster at Holy Family because in news accounts, Müller worked exclusively with oil paints<sup>23</sup> (i.e., to Atchison clergy he “offered to fresco the entire area in oil;”<sup>24</sup> “It is said that St. Benedict’s is the only church in Kansas frescoed entirely in oil, the fine churches in Seneca and in the country near there are frescoed, but mainly in water colors.”<sup>25</sup>). “Fresco” used as a verb or noun often was used to mean painting imagery in buildings.<sup>26</sup>

Presumably, Holy Family’s wall surface was prepared similar to other churches of the time. If the plaster was damaged, it would be removed and repaired before new plaster application. After drying a few weeks, the walls would be sized, and then painted with several coats of oil paint. Although industrially manufactured paint could be bought, many artists mixed their own of linseed oil, turpentine, and dry powder pigment.<sup>27</sup>

The revealed sections show a repeated design that appears to be done with the stenciling technique where a painter places a template with a cut-out pattern on the surface. After applying paint to the template, the template is removed. Infill, a variation, uses the pattern for outline, then paints in the outlined area. Outlining also can be done by pounce where charcoal is rubbed over a pattern outlined with small holes.

For his Holy Family artwork, Müller was paid \$300. Julius Lotz, the house painter in Eudora at the time, was paid \$52.80 that same year to paint the interior and exterior of Eudora’s city hall.<sup>28</sup> That might be the equivalent of \$10,000 based on inflation.<sup>29</sup> According to MeasuringWorth, an economic historical calculator, that \$300 amount would be \$50,000 today based on nominal measure and the relative worth over time.<sup>30</sup> No matter what the today’s equivalent, the value of Müller’s art services would be considered higher than those of the town building painter because an ecclesiastic artist with a portfolio and previous experience

---

<sup>21</sup>August 1, 2010. <http://www.theconservationcenter.com/articles/676049-the-challenges-of-outdoor-frescos>

<sup>22</sup>More than a thousand murals have been estimated to presently be in Kansas. In 2022-2023, 37 murals were completed in 14 Kansas communities through the Office of Rural Prosperity Rural Mural and Public Art Grant Program, according to Kansas Country Living (September 2023). Additional murals continue to be funded through individuals, companies, and community organizations.

<sup>23</sup>News articles about oil paints.

<sup>24</sup>Atchison Globe. (1906, May 15).

<sup>25</sup>Atchison Daily Globe. (1907, March 29).

<sup>26</sup>St. Joseph Catholic Church National Register of Historic Places, 1971.

<sup>27</sup>“The practice of oil painting dramatically changed at the end of the nineteenth century when paints companies began to develop a method to maintain pigments particles suspended in linseed oil. Consequently, since then, there was no more need for painters to ground pigments in order to prepare their paints. Paint used before the 1920’s contained primarily pigment, boiled linseed oil. Lead was later extensively used until it was found to be causing serious illnesses.” Pigments Through the Ages. <https://www.webexhibits.org/pigments/intro/industrialization.html>

<sup>28</sup>Eudora Weekly News. (1905, June 29).

<sup>29</sup>This total is similar to the InflationCalculator, Inflation Calculator, Statista, and CPI Calculator.

<sup>30</sup> . . .to evaluate a past transaction or asset, one must begin with the contemporary value of the item. To make this valuation meaningful, it must be measured against the value of the appropriate economic indicator in that year. To understand the valuation from another year’s perspective, one must carry that measure forward against the changing value of the indicator.” <https://www.measuringworth.com/aboutus.php>

adorning interior walls of churches had a prized skillset. Such artist could reproduce famous paintings and create original images, restore Stations of the Cross and statues, apply stenciling and decorative borders, gild objects, “marbleize” columns with paint, and demonstrate other uncommon abilities. Wrote Stephen Enzweiler, a Catholic church historian:

Church muralists were a specialty occupation then, because they had to be part Michelangelo and part theologian with the capacity to create and deliver large scale mural projects, while at the same time translating and expressing the divine through art. Kansas presented a host of new opportunities for an ecclesiastical artist in 1910. As eastern cities grew and artists sought those jobs, the Plains states were experiencing somewhat of their own renaissance. Throughout the region, Catholic churches were springing up in cities like Omaha, Kansas City, Tonkawa, and Lincoln with few ecclesiastical artists to call upon.<sup>31</sup>

German-American Catholics built many of these churches to honor and preserve their culture. Wrote Annemarie Springer:

To reinforce their feelings of a shared past, the German Catholics set out to build their new churches in the traditional styles of their homeland. The beautiful German churches were built with German money, were founded quickly one after the other, and became the source of great pride for the settlers. The new churches needed interior decorations by experienced artists. Fortunately a number of such artists had come to the U.S. from Germany to explore opportunities that were not available in their homeland.<sup>32</sup>

The Eudora newspaper wrote Müller lived in Kansas City. The 1908 Official Catholic Directory and Clergy List containing his advertisement also stated a Kansas City residency but a Topeka newspaper wrote he had been headquartered in Atchison from 1906 to 1909.<sup>33</sup> Ecclesiastical artists also typically traveled and were constantly moving to decorate churches.

Stated the 1908 Catholic directory



<sup>31</sup>Enzweiler, S. (2023, April 3). Our rich history: The unknown muralist of St. Augustine's emerges from the shadows. *Northern Kentucky Tribune*, <https://nkytribune.com/2023/04/our-rich-history-the-unknown-muralist-of-st-augustines-emerges-from-the-shadows/>

<sup>32</sup>Springer, A. (2001). *Nineteenth-Century German-American Artists*. Dissertation.

<sup>33</sup>Topeka Daily Capital. (1909, November 7).

advertisement (see his photo in advertisement on right):

J. V. Mueller, Artist Painter, Kansas City, Mo. Original pictures and old masterpieces executed most carefully on all kinds of wall finish or on canvas. Frescoing done after celebrated schools by well trained artists under my own supervision and help. Because of my many studytrips through all parts of Europe, to the finest art galleries and to many famous churches, where I saw and copied the originals of the great old masters I'm able to fulfill any order in the line of ecclesiastical paintings. Estimates and sketches upon request.

The advertisement included a testimonial by an Atchison priest and also one by a Wilson priest, commenting about his artwork at St. Wenceslaus Catholic Church in Wilson:

Mr Jaques Mueller has applied himself to decorating our modest church with precious frescos. He has painted three pictures: Christ among the Doctors in the Temple, Jesus with the Rich Young Man, and above the main alter, Glorious Christ with two groups of Apostles. It is clear from his work that Mr Mueller has an inborn talent of the highest degree. He strives for truth in his work: a lustrous shine, a luminosity and a beauty of colour, which an ordinary artist cannot possibly achieve in a painting. This painter's artwork is evocative. The undersigned wishes the hard working young man good luck in America and can recommend him unconditionally to the reverend clergy. Signed: Rev. Dr. J. Olesch. Wilson, Kansas, January 5 1908<sup>34</sup>

After decorating Holy Family in Eudora, he had a contract for twice the amount for a Kansas City church.<sup>35</sup> In 1906, Müller was in Atchison to paint the Stations of the Cross at St. Benedict.<sup>36</sup> When complete, he bid on the replacement of the interior's watercolor and oil frescoes.<sup>37</sup> Müller received the commission. He used 320 gallons of oil paint to decorate "every inch of the interior," 21 paintings, four medallions, two angels, and the stone columns that he detailed to look like onyx. He made the ceiling look like a star-filled sky.

Of the 21 paintings, the largest and most important is the one above the high altar, and which bears the Latin inscription, 'Deliciae Benedinorum,' meaning the joy of the Benedictines. The Blessed Virgin is seen raising on a cloud in the sky, while below kneel St. Benedict and his followers, paying homage to the heavenly Mother. It is the work of Mr. Mueller himself, and contains sixteen life size figures. To the left of the main altar, on a side wall, is 'Crucifixion,' after several noted paintings. On the right side wall, directly opposite, is 'The Last Supper,' after [Melchior Paul von] Deschwanden. A painting over the left altar is 'The Crowning of the Blessed Virgin,' a copy of Feuerstein's painting. In front of this altar, and not visible from the auditorium of the church, is 'The Madonna of

---

<sup>34</sup>Translated by Gaby Greenwood-Hamilius and David Greenwood 2023, June 28 with the caveat that the original German was archaic in instances and translated with discretion.

<sup>35</sup>"And that there was also work to be done in a Kansas City church for between 600,00 and 800,00\$," wrote Gaby Greenwood-Hamilius (personal communication/email to Eudora Area Historical Society, 2022, May 11).

<sup>36</sup>Atchison Globe. (1906, March 20).

<sup>37</sup>Atchison Globe. (1906, May 15).

Sistine,' after Raphael, and one of the finest pictures in the church. Over the right altar is the painting, 'Death of Saint Joseph.' The remaining 12' x 16' paintings above the stone columns were Christ Praying (Hofmann), Descent From the Cross (Rubens), Ascension of Our Lord (Deffreger), Jesus Among the Children (Plockhorst), Resurrection (Unknown artist), Raising the Dead (Hofmann), Birth of Christ (Berthel), Christ With the Doctors (Hofmann), Wedding at Cana (Feuerstein), Storm at Sea (Berthel), and Healing the Sick (Hofmann). On either side of the main entrance were two panel pictures. One as Jesus Christ knocking at the door and the other Jesus Christ walking on the sea. Both were copies of famous pictures of the time.<sup>38</sup>

During the 1908 summer, Müller spent two months at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church in Burlington. Assisting him were Ernest Diederich and Müller's nephew Jean Baptiste (John) Schmiedeler. They painted up to seven apple green coats on the sanctuary walls. On the side walls, Müller painted medallions that displayed (1. Chalice and Sacred Host with a book inscribed "Ecce Pavis Angelorum" (Behold the bread of angels); (2. flagellation torture instruments that Jesus Christ endured on his way to the Cross on Calvary including the Crown of Thorns, Mock Scepter, and Scourging Pillar (the next four are bust picture copies of Hofmann, Guido Reni, and other masters); (3. Christ in the Temple; (4. Christ in the Garden of Gethsemene; (5. Christ Crowned With Thorns; and (6. Christ Crucified. By the choir loft, he painted St. Cecelia, patron saint of music; on the other loft side he painted "Sorrowful Mother." Over the side altar arches Gothic letters were placed to display phrases in Latin: "Hail Mary, full of grace," the first words of the Angelical Salutation, and also an invocation to St. Francis Xavier.<sup>39</sup>

Between the walls and the six coats of sky-blue paint on the ceiling, the trio painted a customized border of thistles and Gothic crosses. A curtain design in dark green and yellow along with two autumn leaf borders was applied to the wainscoting also painted to resemble marble. From photographs he made in Europe, Müller painted The Last Supper by Hofman and Descent From the Cross by Rubens. "All the metal work on the outside has been repainted also, the steeple in slate color and cornices and guttering a light stone, a combination which adds much to the exterior of the church and will prolong the life and usefulness of the metal work."<sup>40</sup> The two assistants also regilded the spire's ball 127' above the street.<sup>41</sup>

About the work, Father Domann said:

Their work needs no recommendation: it speaks for itself; it is the marvel of our entire community both Catholics and Protestants, and as artists, they are complete masters of their art. I never in my life dealt with more gentlemanly, honest, and reliable men. Most men fall short of their contract. These men go far beyond their contract. With such thorough honesty and ability combined as they have Mueller and his men must and will

---

<sup>38</sup>Atchison Globe. (1907, March 29).

<sup>39</sup>Burlington Democrat. (1908, July 10).

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Burlington Republican. (1908, July 2).

succeed. All they need is to be a little more known and then fortunate will be the man that gets them.<sup>42</sup>

Müller, Schmiedeler, and Diederich next had a contract to decorate St. Patrick Catholic Church in Emerald where they spent four months. Using oil paint again, they painted an elaborate fresco, smaller panels on the ceiling, and four medallions copied from Hofmann. “On the walls and back of the altar are The Blessed Trinity, an original by Mr. Mueller, and copies of The Elevation of the Cross by Rubens, The Descent From the Cross by Rubens, and Ecce Homo by Guido Reni.”<sup>43</sup>

On December 10, 1908, Müller began painting the interior of St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Doniphan about two miles north of Atchison. For this, he received about \$600.<sup>44</sup> Less than six months later, Müller bought a five-passenger Studebaker E.M.F. from Atchison Motor Company<sup>45</sup> in a time when only three out of a thousand people had automobiles<sup>46</sup> and received a \$3,000 contract to decorate “the finest Catholic church in the state”: St. Joseph in Topeka. To get that contract, Müller had to compete with other artists. His decorating at St. Benedict in Atchison was a deciding factor in his favor. Assisting him as an apprentice was Theodore Heinrich Adolphe Braasch, a “man with a bright future,” Müller reportedly said.<sup>47</sup>

Born in 1881 in Preetz, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, Braasch was orphaned at nine. Braasch studied at the Royal Academy of Art in Munich where German painters reinterpreted fresco painting that combined German medieval art and Italian early Renaissance painting and flourished with the support of Prince Ludwig I.

Under Ludwig’s patronage, mural and fresco painting in the Nazarene style became the dominant artistic expression of both German nationalism and of the German Catholic Church. . . . Through the efforts of the Ludwigmissionsverein the practice of mural painting as church decoration was transmitted to the German community in the United States, particularly through the conduit of Boniface Wimmer and the Benedictine order. At Wimmer’s request, German mural painters with training from the Royal Academy of Art in Munich came to the United States to decorate German Catholic churches and monastic buildings that began to spring up across the country. . . . As transmitted through Benedictine monasteries and the patronage of the Ludwigmissionsverein, mural painting in the Nazarene style became the preferred mode of church decoration in German Catholic parishes in the United States.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup>Burlington Democrat. (1908, July 10).

<sup>43</sup>Burlington Democrat. 1908, July 13); Ottawa Herald. (1908, December 10).

<sup>44</sup>Atchison County Historical Society/Sterling Falk, personal communication (2023, June 13). Theodore Braasch later painted medallions in that church. Atchison Daily Globe. (1967, July 5).

<sup>45</sup>Atchison Daily Globe. (1909, May 21).

<sup>46</sup>U.S. Department of Energy, <https://www.energy.gov/eere/vehicles/fact-841-october-6-2014-vehicles-thousand-people-us-vs-other-world-regions>

<sup>47</sup>Atchison Daily Globe. (1909, May 22).

<sup>48</sup>Dimock, Maggie. Arriving at a Notion of “True Christian Art”: Father Raphael Pfisterer, Father Bonaventure Ostendarp, and the Studio of Christian Art at Saint Anselm College. Alva de Mars Megan Chapel Art Center, Saint Anselm College.



Braasch worked in Rome and other European cities before deciding to make his living as a church artist in Newark, New Jersey. After teaming up with Müller, he painted St. Mary Catholic Church (Purcell, Kansas); St. Joseph Catholic Church (Tonkawa, Kansas); St. Benedict Catholic Church (Atchison, Kansas); St. Mary Catholic Church (Newton, Kansas); and churches throughout the country, including Church of the Assumption (Nashville, Tennessee); St. Luke Catholic Church (Plain, Wisconsin); St. Joseph Catholic Church (Memphis, Tennessee); and Church of the Immaculate Conception (St. Joseph, Missouri).<sup>49</sup> He also added to and also replaced Müller's work in at least two churches: St. Benedict in Atchison and St. John the Baptist in Doniphan.<sup>50</sup> Around 1930, he moved to California and painted numerous West Coast churches. Wrote Enzweiler: "Within a few years, Braasch's work made him known far and wide as one of the pre-eminent ecclesiastical artists of the day."<sup>51</sup>

Constructed in 1898, St. Joseph underwent its first interior decoration in 1909, featuring decorative elements by Müller and Braasch who painted angels on the dome, floral decorations throughout the interior, and 12 fresco paintings (one in each arch of the nave and transept) as well as six frescoes on the sanctuary walls and scenes of angels and cherubs above each altar. This décor remained until a complete renovation 33 years later in 1943.<sup>52</sup> The following further details the artwork.

The church has been ornamented with Roman stencil designs and the walls of the sanctuary and the upper walls of the main part of the church have been decorated with mural decorations illustrating the life of Christ. The paintings are copies of Hofmann, Raphael, Munchasci, Dore, Dietrich, Plockhorst, and others. The paintings are large and easily studied from the floor of the church. The ceiling is ornamented with mosaic designs and medallions, containing portraits of biblical characters.

The paintings illustrated The Wedding of the Blessed Virgin, copied from Raphael; The Presentation in the Temple; Christ and the Wise Men, after Hoffman; Christ and the Rich Young Ruler, from Hoffman; Christ Preaching From the Boat; Hoffman figures arranged by Mueller; Christ and the Children, after Plockhorst; The Entry Into Jerusalem, by Gustav Dore; group of four from the Last Supper, arranged by Brash; Christ Before Pilate, after Munchasci; Plockhorst's He Is Risen, and Death of the Blessed Virgin, arranged by Mueller.

---

<sup>49</sup>Catholic Advance. (1918, May 25). St. Joseph Church in Tonkawa still displays his artwork.

<sup>50</sup>The Atchison Daily Globe (1967, July 5) featured an interior view of St. John's and told of how Theodore Brash, [Braasch] who was decorating St. Benedict's at the time, painted two medallions above the altar and a scene of Jesus Christ at the nativity and another of him being taken down from the Cross.

<sup>51</sup>Enzweiler, S. (2023, April 3). Our rich history: The unknown muralist of St. Augustine's emerges from the shadows. *Northern Kentucky Tribune*, <https://nkytribune.com/2023/04/our-rich-history-the-unknown-muralist-of-st-augustines-emerges-from-the-shadows/>

<sup>52</sup>St. Joseph Church Restoration Mass 2.16.20. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R5QGMDEA\\_Ks](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R5QGMDEA_Ks)

In the sanctuary there are four smaller paintings showing Christ lifting Peter out of the water, after Plockhorst; Hoffman's Behold I Stand at the Door and Knock; The Good Shepherd, after Dietrich, and Christ Appears to Mary Magdalene, by Plockhorst.<sup>53</sup>

Also in 1909, Müller, "the noted German artist," painted stage scenery at St. Louis college, a parochial grade school maintained by St. Benedict's Parish, with more than 250 students<sup>54</sup> in Atchison. Interestingly, in news mention of this, the Atchison Daily Champion gave him the title of "Professor."<sup>55</sup> His nephew and former assistant, Schmiedeler also used that honorific in advertisements telling of his role in the touring Great Passion Play of Oberammergau, Bavaria at that time.<sup>56</sup>[Two years later, Braasch, "a noted Kansas City artist," frescoed St. Louis' chapel, corridors, and staircase.]<sup>57</sup>

At age 29 in 1910,<sup>58</sup> Müller lived in Plymouth Township where his wife's family had a farm by Dorrance, a small community in Russell County close to where he had worked in the wheatfield of his oldest sister's farm. It was by Russell that he experimented with his flying machine fascination. His initial interest in balloons evolved into motorized airplane design. In 1910, he became first manufacturer of a monoplane in the state even the country. At that time, interest was in biplanes, which have two sets of wings stacked on top of each other, while a monoplane like today's planes have one set of wings. "Jacques V Mueller, 29 years old, has gotten into the limelight via Salina on the aeroplane route. He claims to be the first genuine, dyed-in-the wool aeorplane maker in Kansas," wrote the Beloit Gazette.<sup>59</sup> From Salina went forth this article carried in newspapers across the state:

Salina, Kas., Feb. 19. 1910 - The first monoplane to be manufactured in Kansas, and perhaps in the USA, is now being put in readiness for a flight at Dorrance, Russell County, Kansas, 60 miles west of Salina. The various pieces of the monoplane have been assembled, and it has been christened Prairie Eagle. It will, according to the plans of the manufacturer, Jacques V. Mueller, make its first flight in about 2 weeks, the exact date not having been set.

The wings of the Prairie Eagle are constructed of poplar, soft pine, Oregon Spruce and bamboo and covered with silk (soisette) on both sides. The dimensions of the machine are 27 feet across the wings and 25 feet front and aft. The total area of the wings is 160 square feet. At the rear edge on the outer ends of the wings are attached 2 extension wings, which can be used to alight, to brake, to steer, to balance, to descend and to imitate the soaring of a bird. The control of the machine rests with the steering of the horizontal and vertical rudder. The rudders are intercrossed and have great stabilizing qualities. They are fastened to a universal joint at the end of the machine.

---

<sup>53</sup>Topeka Daily Capital. (1909, November 7).

<sup>54</sup>Ingalls, S. (1916). *History of Atchison County Kansas*.

<sup>55</sup>March 26, 1909, i.e., Prof. J. V. Müller

<sup>56</sup>Concordia Blade-Empire (1910, March 12) is an example.

<sup>57</sup>The Atchison Daily Globe (1911, March 29).

<sup>58</sup>U.S. Census, 1910. Jack Müller, Wikipedia Dës Säit gouf de(n) 28. März 2023 um 18:49 Auer fir d'lescht geännert.

[https://lb.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack\\_Müller](https://lb.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_Müller)

<sup>59</sup>February 24, 1910.

The main body of the machine is built of hickory, spruce and walnut. The entire frame work has been painted with shellac and aluminum. The front part of the frame is built with 4 corners, the rear part having only 3 poles, and the bracing is assisted by Damascus steel wires. The entire flying machine rests on 3 bicycle wheels. The propeller is 6.5 feet long, weighs 12 pounds and is built very strongly. The blades are made of walnut, the shaft of maple, strengthened by sheet iron. The propeller will make 3,200 revolutions/minute, driven by a 35 hp engine.

The engine, which is coming from Denver, weighs 96 pounds. It has 7 cylinders and its motion is rotary. It runs, according to Mr. Mueller, without water, without fans and without flywheel, and he declares there will be no hot running, no vibrations, no noise. The entire monoplane, ready to fly, containing fuel and pilot, will not weigh more than 500 pounds and it will rise from the ground at a speed of 30 miles/hour. It will have a carrying capacity of about 5 pounds a square foot, and it will carry 300 pounds extra passenger weight besides the pilot.

This article reported Müller would fly in mid-March but later articles don't mention the flight. In late September, Müller was reported to be working on a monoplane with seven cylinders that rotated around a shaft powering propellor blades at 3,000 revolutions. He built the plane with supplies from Kansas City.<sup>60</sup> Apparently, Müller did not have enough capital to complete his monoplane, so he had to sell his J. Muller's Aeronautic Enterprises before his airplane, the Prairie Eagle, was completed.<sup>61</sup> But he was said to have patented a propeller under the number 2048 in Washington on July 18, 1910.<sup>62</sup>

He worked on his monoplane manufacturing while in Topeka at 408 East Second Street<sup>63</sup> and during the latter part of 1910 in Tipton while decorating its St. Boniface (seen in photo below).<sup>64</sup>

The first St. Boniface Catholic Church was built in 1877, with the parish having been established in 1875, by early settlers of mainly German heritage. The first church building was also used as a school. In 1899, a larger church was built to accommodate the growing congregation. That structure saw many beautiful ornate additions through the work of Fr. Charles Menig over the near 45 years of his parish service, until his death in 1947. An early morning fire in January of 1952, totally destroyed the historic church.<sup>65</sup>

The Beloit Daily Call<sup>66</sup> described the interior in this north central Kansas church.

---

<sup>60</sup>Smith County Messenger (1910, September 29) reprinting a Cawker City Ledger article.

<sup>61</sup><https://www.industrie.lu/MullerJack.html>

<sup>62</sup>Online searches and the 1910 *Official Gazette of the United States Patent Office, United States* show no such number or Müller.

<sup>63</sup>Topeka Daily Capital. (1909, November 7).

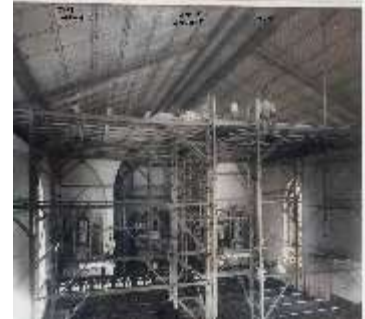
<sup>64</sup>Atchison Daily Globe. (1911, January 18).

<sup>65</sup>Mitchell County Tourism. <https://www.mitchellcountystourism.com/tipton-kansas.html>

<sup>66</sup>1910, December 19.

Mr. J. V. Mueller, the artist, who has been working in the Catholic church at Tipton for the past month has finished his work and the people of Tipton may pride themselves on having a beautifully decorated church.

The walls are painted light green, the ceiling cream yellow with a border of Gothic crosses between walls and ceiling, soft and rich colors that brighten the whole interior and are at the same time restive and harmonious. The wainscotting of the Sanctuary is a curtain design in dark green, that of the body of the church is painted to resemble Verde Antique marble. Above the wainscotting is a rich border consisting of vines, grapes and leaves in Indian summer colors. Oil colors are used throughout.



There are ten beautiful medallion pictures on the side walls. The Infant Christ, Christ in the Temple, Christ Blessing the Children, Christ the Good Shepherd, Christ at the Last Supper, Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ on the Cross, Christ Crowned With Thorns, The Sorrowful Mother. Two hovering angels, bearing the instruments of the Passion, direct the eyes of the visitor to the Sanctuary.

The most admirable part of the work are the two large paintings 97 x 13 at both sides of the high altar representing the Death on the Cross and The Burial of the Savior. They are a remarkable production of an eminently gifted artist. Lineament and shading both show that an expert hand wielded the brush. In a rich display of colors, the brush of the artist conjures up before the eyes of the beholder the Redeemer in his Suffering and Death, Mary and the Holy Women in Their Sorrow, and the Pharisees in their gratified hatred.

Both paintings are original in conception and composition, upborne and transfigured by the spirit of noble piety, uplifting the heart and prompting to devotion. The beauty of form and colors of these two paintings of Mr. Mueller call to mind the paintings of the Seitz in the German chapel at Loreto.

May the modest, highly gifted artist often have the opportunity to decorate yet many churches with such works of genuine Christian art. Tipton owes him a debt of gratitude so long as there shall remain one who will fold his hands in prayer before the paintings.

During 1912 and possibly in 1911, Müller decorated the parish church of Sanem in Luxembourg and was noted as using KEIM'schen mineral pigment paint. A church history reported "The commissioned artist, Jakob Müller from Esch, has already decorated 27 churches, which includes one cathedral and two large Benedictine Abbey churches in the state of Kansas."<sup>67</sup> In his choice of decorative elements, Müller favored the Late Gothic Revival style that predominated in Catholic churches during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

---

<sup>67</sup><https://www.industrie.lu/MullerJack.html>; 200 Joer Poar Suessem-1808-2008 200 Years of the Sanem parish-1808-2008 pp. 48-49.

Medieval design inspired this style rather than the previously popular style that reflected ancient Greece and Rome. While he reproduced works by Renaissance artists such as Raffaello Sanzio da Urbino, better known as Raphael and Peter Paul Rubens, the majority of his reproductions were of European artists' work painted in the previous century. Of those and based on existing knowledge, Müller reproduced most the work of Johann Michael Ferdinand Heinrich Hofmann (1824 – 1911), a German painter. In any of his painting, Müller used extensive shading and blacklining.<sup>68</sup> He also “marbleized” columns with paint and wainscoting and applied gold leaf, both popular artistic touches of the time.

But Müller would not have opportunity to decorate more churches in Kansas. He happened to be in Esch with his family in 1914 when the First World War broke out, forcing them to stay there because of travel restrictions.<sup>69</sup> In Luxembourg, it's known Müller painted for private houses, the Escher Synagogue, and the Suessemer Parish Church<sup>70</sup> “Unfortunately, at one point, there was no interest in preserving old buildings and their interiors and a number of churches had their fresques simply painted over. It would be ironic if you could come across a trace of Jack's work in America hidden behind some insulation,” Greenwood-Hamilius said.<sup>71</sup>



<sup>68</sup>Burlington Democrat. (1908, July 19).

<sup>69</sup>Note: The German Empire occupied Luxembourg from August 1914 until the end of World War I on November 11, 1918.

<sup>70</sup>200 Joer Poar Suessem – 1808-2008 200 Years of the Sanem parish – 1808-2008 pp. 48-49. Translation of the brochure 200 Joer Poar Suessem by Greenwood: pp. 48-49 On the 30<sup>th</sup> October 1912, the *Luxemburger Wort* announced that the parish church of Sanem had been given a beautifully executed renovation in *KEIM'schen* mineral pigment paint. The commissioned artist, Jakob Müller from Esch, has already decorated 27 churches, which includes one cathedral and two large Benedictine Abbey churches in the state of Kansas. He was warmly recommended by both Bishops and Abbots as being an artist of renown in his field. This particular building has a rather bizarre structure having undergone a series of transformations as fashions have changed over the four centuries of its existence. The artist has managed to create a unified whole, using fairly limited resources. He emphasised the beautiful aspects of the building while disguising any existing defects. The end result has been admired by connoisseurs of the trade. Müller gave preference to the architectural ornamentation over repeated stencil decoration, and achieved the best possible harmony of colour. The artist has produced a beautiful half-portrait, entitled *Der kreuz tragende Heiland* (*The Cross bearing Savior*), illustrating his mastery of figurative painting as well as decorative work. Even if it is a small building, Mr Müller can be rightfully proud of his renovation of the first church in his homeland. Jacques Muller, or the Americanised version “Jack”, which he always used, was born in Esch-sur-Alzette in 1881, where he died in 1956. An extensive biography by Joseph Flies can be found in *Das Andere Esch*, (1979, pp501-2). Müller was not just a proficient painter, but also an inventor of a mono-plane aircraft, which excited many in the New World. After his high school education at the Luxembourg *Athénée*, he emigrated to North America in 1900, where he dedicated himself to his calling. He had discovered his talent in painting, which he honed in evening classes, becoming a decorator and artist. It is reported that he painted the interiors of 10 churches in America, among them the Cathedral of Denver, Colorado. With the outbreak of war in Europe in 1914, he was unable to return to America with his American born wife, forcing him to stay in Esch, where he lived in the *Villa Blanche* (The White Villa) in a suburb of Esch called *Neidierfchen*. (c.f. *Luxemburger Wort*, December 27, 1954, and *De Biergmann*, January 26, 1957). The finished interior of the 1912 restoration of the church of Sanem appears on a postcard of that era. When nominated as parish priest of Sanem, Willy Wampach ordered a renovation of the church in which Müller's work was destroyed.

<sup>71</sup>Gabrielle Greenwood-Hamilius (personal communication/email, May 13, 2022). “According to the short biography found on the Internet on Jack Müller, he had been commissioned to decorate a couple of churches here in Luxembourg, too. Unfortunately, at one point, there was no interest in preserving old buildings and their interiors and a number of churches had their fresques simply painted over. It would be ironic if you could come across a trace of Jack's work in America hidden behind some insulation. . . .The writer of the letter that he sent in

He apparently kept painting as some of his artwork recently came to notice when auctioned.<sup>72</sup> However, he turned to other employment for a livelihood (see his home to right). For instance, he operated a mine in Buergronn and later founded Industrie Chromatogene, a company that extracted pigments for paint color production before he died November 9, 1956 in Esch-Uelzecht.<sup>73</sup>

An Escher, who looked around a lot in the big world, especially in America, did art painting himself and therefore knows about the realm of colors, their technology and their chemistry, it was left to determine a secondary use for certain and suitable minettes and in this to be pioneering in this country's new paint industry. Encouraged by this, Muller decided, parallel to exporting this colored ore as raw material, after many arduous attempts, travels and studies, to also present the finished product, the colors. From 1932, the founder of this industry, which was new in this country, succeeded in opening an ocher factory and producing paints in all possible inks, in powder form and ready to use. Sales started out on a modest scale, but slowly but surely increased despite the long-lasting crisis period.<sup>74</sup>

Greenwood-Hamilius' referred to the loss of European church murals in renovations that tended to strip symbolic ornamentation. Catholic church decrees during the 1960s accelerated this décor trend:

While the Second Vatican Council has produced great fruit for the Catholic Church, it must be admitted that there have also been some disastrous consequences. One of the most negative results has been the impact of "the Spirit of Vatican 2" on church architecture. For the last fifty years Catholics around the world have abandoned their timeless architectural and artistic traditions and opted for a utilitarian church design. With an idealistic iconoclasm, older church buildings were gutted. Much loved statues were relegated to the basement. Tile or wooden floors were smothered in carpeting, while gothic furniture and fittings were stripped out, sold or even thrown on the bonfire.<sup>75</sup>

Known artwork of Müller has not survived periodic church renovations<sup>76</sup> or the austerity and form-follows-function trends of more recent years<sup>77</sup> except in Eudora as seen in the

---

1905 from Rosdale, Kansas to his aunt and uncle in Luxembourg used German because they would not have been able to read English at the time. I'm not sure where he learnt his German and I can only assume that he was taught it at school in Rosdale, and of course his parents would have spoken Luxembourgish at home and may have taught the kids. Anyway, it would be nice if you could find any trace of Jack Müller's work and I'd be happy to share whatever I may find locally."

<sup>72</sup>Gabrielle Greenwood-Hamilius (personal communication/email, June 12, 2023). "By coincidence, we discovered that three of Jack Müller's paintings were sold at auction on 4 June 2023. The auction house is KANERZ and the lot numbers in the catalogue are: 674, 764, and 765. This link takes you straight to one of them: <https://www.encheres-luxembourg.lu/en/results/4-juin-2023-luxemburgensia-2/scene-de-bistrot-luxembourgeois-huile-sur-toile-par-j-muller-annees-20-30>."

<sup>73</sup><https://www.industrie.lu/MullerJack.html>. He also invented and patented an insect repellent.

<sup>74</sup>This is an online translation. The source is the 1941 Eisenoxydfarben-Bergbau in Esch.

<sup>75</sup>Longenecker, D. (2017, April 29). Restoring beauty in church buildings. *Crux Now*.

<sup>76</sup>Dante Cosentino, Kansas City, who decorated many Catholic churches starting in the 1930s, also had his art painted over or lost except his frescos in Our Lady of Sorrows Church, 2552 Gillham Road, according to a biography written by Dory DeAngelo, The Kansas City Public Library.

<sup>77</sup>Upon this foundation: Are new church designs taking us backward? *American: The Jesuit Review*, May 28, 2012

following listing, which does not include the two unknown Kansas City churches nor Dighton, Kansas, church<sup>78</sup> painted:

1. (1905) Holy Family, Eudora, covered the artwork with fiberboard panels installed in 1946 and might be the only known surviving work of Jack Müller.
2. (1906) St. Benedict, Atchison has painted much of the interior a flat color but has preserved some Braasch above the altar.
3. (Before 1908) St. Wenceslaus, Wilson, was destroyed by fire in 1910.
4. (1908) St. Francis Xavier, Burlington, painted over artwork in the 1970s, although currently renovating to earlier church appearance<sup>79</sup>
5. (1908) St. Patrick, Emerald, was completely renovated in the 1940s following 1939 lightning damage.
6. (1908). St. John the Baptist, Doniphan, has painted walls in the same color. Two pictures hang on the wall of unknown source.
7. (1909) St. Joseph, Topeka, removed decorative elements in 1943 and brought in new detailing, including stencils at the side shrines and sanctuary walls. In 1956, another renovation was completed, adding faux marble finishes to the columns and sanctuary walls. Due to failing plaster in 1980, repairs and renovations included removal of the clerestory murals and overpainting on most decorative stencil work.<sup>80</sup>
8. (1911) St. Boniface, burned in 1952.<sup>81</sup>

Unfortunately, artwork in Holy Family is crumbling and has had paneling attached to it, which further has damaged it. What can be done with deteriorating decorative painting covered up by something that further destroys the art when removed?<sup>82</sup> Janet Campbell, a member of the Holy Family Restoration committee, said as of June of 2023,<sup>83</sup> the current plan is to preserve and frame an artwork fragment. An alternative, Maria Ochalek, The Conservation Center, wrote could be to copy the artwork and preserve it by putting the original church decoration on fresh surfaces. She suggested reaching out to a local company that specializes in high-end painting or stencils such as <https://www.thestudiochick.com/> or <https://www.marywalkerfaux.com/>.

---

<sup>78</sup>The Topeka Daily Capital. (1909, November). Dighton's church is listed as painted by Müller but it would not have been a Catholic church as Catholics worshipped in private homes till a church was built in 1927. (The Catholic Advance. 1957, 27 September).

<sup>79</sup>Angela Myers (personal communication, June 13, 2023): "Actually, we are in the process of interior renovations and are trying to get back to as close as possible what the original Church interior looked like. If you would be so kind as to send photos we would appreciate it greatly! As for the 'paint over' date, we estimate it happened sometime in the seventies by old photos - no one seems to know the exact year. This was also the time that some of the angel statues were taken down from the altar (but were replaced in time for Corpus Christi this year), the Communion rail and confessional were also taken down, but we are working on the return of those projects as well. It is an exciting time for our parish!"

<sup>80</sup>Email inquiry sent to [office@4catholicck.org](mailto:office@4catholicck.org). Conrad Schmitt Studio webpage statement. <https://conradschmitt.com/project/st-joseph-topeka/>

<sup>81</sup>Catholic Diocese of Salina: St. Boniface Parish – Tipton

<sup>82</sup>That question was sent June 16, 2023 in an email by Cindy Higgins to Ecclesiastical Studios, 816-845-0815, 25204 Haines Rd. Greenwood, Missouri 64034 [esskcmo@gmail.com](mailto:esskcmo@gmail.com) and did not receive a reply. This company did the restoration of St. Joseph, Leavenworth; St. Boniface, Scipio; St. Mary's Immaculate Conception, Valley Falls; Our Lady of St. Rose, Kansas City, Kansas; Holy Name, Winfield; St. Joseph, Humbolt; St. John Neupomucene, Pilsen; St. Barbara, Chicopee; St. Patrick, Chanute; Mary Queen of Angels, Chanute; and Sacred Heart, Leavenworth.

<sup>83</sup>Campbell said this in June 2023 church tour.

Ochalek also suggested Conrad Schmitt Studios, Inc.<sup>84</sup> in New Berlin, Wisconsin. Schmitt Studios, for example, repaired and repainted the damaged plaster walls of St. Columban Church in Chillicothe, Missouri. It installed a Hallman Lindsey Polymer system on the church's interior that prevents spider cracks, keeps out moisture, and provides a fresh surface for paint. (Multiple layers of paint interacted negatively with each other on this church's walls that caused paint to flake.) On the fresh surface, artists repainted stencils and full-size murals. They also marbled columns to restore the church to its decorative height of 1910.<sup>85</sup> St. Mary's Catholic Church by Seneca faced a similar situation as Holy Family with crumbling art by the contractor artist G.F. Satory of Wabasha, Minnesota who, in 1901, applied calcimine paint colors to the walls and ceiling in painted patterns, bands, and friezes, and then stenciled on the cast iron columns, vault ribs, and window openings. Church members repaired interior walls, did extensive plastering, duplicated the original design, replicated all with a washable acrylic latex paint, and has since received awards and reknown for the last surviving artwork of Satory.

Beside enlivening the interior, restoring or duplicating interior decoration honors the contribution and spirit of previous generations. It further reflects the German-Catholic aesthetic of the time. As *The Painted Churches of Texas* documentary, a production of Austin PBS, KLRU, stated:

The painted churches were often the second or third church building these communities erected. The churches embody the aspirations of immigrant communities that had reached a certain maturity. The churches became a symbol of success for these new Texans who had survived the transition from the homeland, acquired the much-sought-after land, built schools for their children, and finally, established beautiful churches to nurture their spirits and sustain their faith.<sup>86</sup>

As for Müller's adornments to German-Catholic churches, all that might now be left besides Holy Family's walls is the spiritual inspiration of his art for long-ago worshippers. Wrote Joel Fernandes in *The Love of Beauty: Artistic Patronage and the Catholic Church*:

The teleological end of Catholic art and architecture is to build a place of beauty within the soul, a union between the human person and God, to inform man about his existence. ...the cultivation of beauty is paramount to aid the development of the human person and reflects the spiritual health of a culture. . . . Beauty and the love of the beautiful is at the heart of the message of the Catholic Church and the gospels, a visible manifestation of an infinite ocean of knowledge and truth that is open before man.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup>Ochalek wrote she had not worked with any of these companies, thus, these were suggestions and not recommendations.

<sup>85</sup><http://www.stcolumbanonline.org/renovation-news.htm>

<sup>86</sup><https://austinpbs.org/paintedchurches/map>

<sup>87</sup>Fernandes, J. (2019). *The love of beauty: Artistic patronage and the Catholic church*. St. Ambrose Press.