

## KLEINDEUTSCHLAND

By Robert Wideen : 2020

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Many Alsatians began emigrating to New York City in the 1830s. In Manhattan, Alsatian and other German Catholics, including from Soufflenheim, primarily worshiped at three German Catholic churches in the Lower East Side, a German area known in the 19th century as Kleindeutschland (Little Germany):

- St. Nicholas, built in 1833 on East Second Street between Avenue A and First Avenue
- Most Holy Redeemer, built in 1844 on East Third Street between Avenues A and B
- Our Lady of Sorrows, built in 1868 on Pitt Street between Rivington and Stanton



Manhattan, 1865, by John Bachmann. The tip of the land protruding to the right is the southeastern boundary of Kleindeutschland. The prominent dark steeple northwest of the tip is Most Holy Redeemer Church, with St. Nicholas slightly to the left.

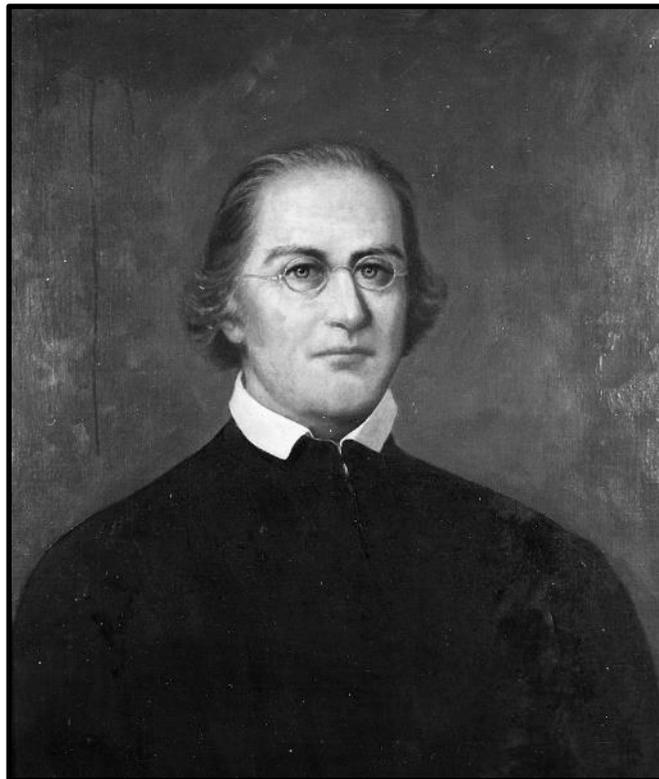
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## THE GERMAN DISTRICTS

The diocese of New York was created in 1808, organized and administered during its first seven years by an Alsatian from Kaysersberg, Jesuit Father and Vicar General Anthony Kohlmann.



Rev. Anthony Kohlmann of Kaysersberg, Alsace.

Father Kohlmann had arrived in the United States two years earlier, teaching philosophy at Georgetown College (later its President). He became rector of St. Peter's on Barclay Street, founded in 1785, the only Catholic church in Manhattan at that time, holding services in English, German and French, and was instrumental in the construction of the second Catholic church in the city in 1815, the original St. Patrick's on Mulberry Street, seat of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York until the current Saint Patrick's Cathedral opened in 1879. <sup>(1)</sup>

The number of German Catholics gradually increased and they eventually organized their own small congregation in 1833, led by Reverend John Raffener from Mals, Austria, leading to the creation of St. Nicholas in 1836, the first German Catholic church in the city.



Little Germany grew to encompass the 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> wards, shown on this 1842 map of lower Manhattan. Developed areas in dark gray.

A large number of immigrants began settling in Manhattan in the 1840s. Christopher D. Brazee described the development of lower Manhattan at this time. Many of the immigrants were poor Irish fleeing the agricultural collapse of 1845 or people from German States escaping the failed revolutions of 1848. The city grew from a half-million citizens in 1850 to more than 800,000 in 1860, to almost one million in 1870. Most of the new immigrants lived in the older, crowded downtown wards. As their population grew, they began moving north to recently settled areas on the east side of Manhattan. The seventeenth ward, the largest of the four German wards and the location of the earliest German Catholic churches, increased from about 18,000 in 1840 to more than 43,000 in 1850. By 1860 its population grew to 73,000. <sup>(2)</sup>

The depression following the Panic of 1837 reduced construction, creating a shortage of space for new immigrants. Row houses were divided into smaller apartments. A two-and-a-half or three story residence could be made to house at least eight separate families, with two households on every floor including the basement and attic. Common in the 1850s and especially by the 1860s were buildings constructed for a large number of households. These “tenant houses” (tenements) were typically five stories, 20 to 25 feet wide, and about 50 feet deep, about the same footprint as a row house. Tenements at this time typically housed 10-20 families, with four apartments on each of the upper floors and two in the rear of the ground floor. Each apartment had two to three rooms, only one with natural light and ventilation. Sanitary facilities were in the rear yard, sharing space with the building’s water source. A few tenements had a common water source on each floor. Some had an additional building constructed in the rear yard and tenants would share facilities in an even smaller space. <sup>(3)</sup>

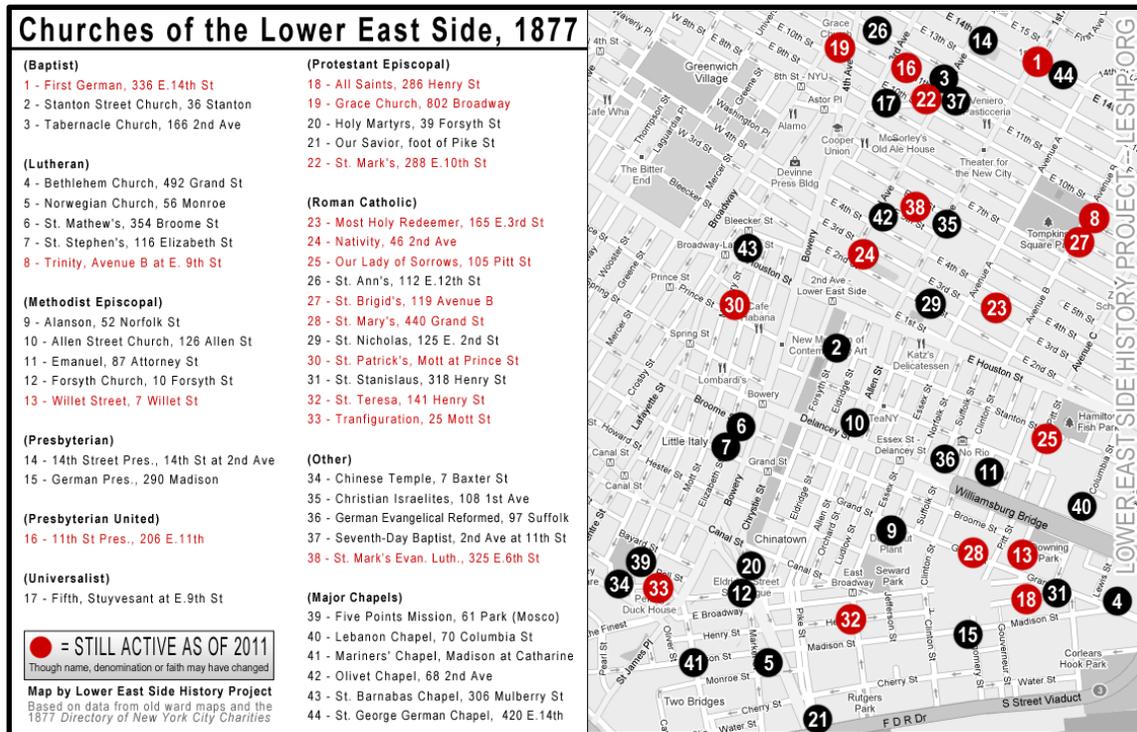
The majority of immigrants on the east side during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century were German. As immigration increased during the late 1840s and 1850s, the eastern wards of Manhattan developed into a cohesive, large-scale ethnic community, the first non-English speaking immigrant population in the country to retain the language and customs of its homeland. The neighborhood came to be known by the names Kleindeutschland, “Little Germany,” Deutschlandle, “Dutchtown,” or simply “Germany.” <sup>(4)</sup>

The heart of the community was initially located to the south in the blocks along the Bowery between Canal and Rivington Streets. By the 1860s, the focus of Kleindeutschland was moving northward past Houston Street into the streets of the seventeenth ward, which contained the most substantial buildings and the most comfortable residences. Nearly all of the buildings in the area, both tenements and private houses, were solid brick structures, a contrast to neighboring wards that had substantially higher concentrations of aging frame dwellings and deteriorating housing stock. <sup>(5)</sup>

With nearly half the city’s German population, Kleindeutschland was the largest German community in the Greater New York area, larger than in Brooklyn, Morrisania in what is now the Bronx, Hoboken, and elsewhere in the country. New York City had the third largest number of German speakers in the world, surpassed only by Berlin and Vienna. <sup>(6)</sup>

## THE GERMAN CATHOLIC CHURCHES

Records of people from Soufflenheim are found in the Lower East Side churches of: St. Nicholas, Most Holy Redeemer, Our Lady of Sorrows, and Transfiguration.



Churches in the Lower East Side of Manhattan in 1877.

The German catholic churches in Kleindeutschland were: #23 Most Holy Redeemer, #25 Our Lady of Sorrows, and #29 St. Nicholas,

## St. Nicholas Church

St. Nicholas Roman Catholic German Church, on East Second Street between Avenue A and First Avenue, was the first German Catholic parish in New York City, founded in 1833 by Reverend John Stephen Raffener. Raffener initially rented a carpenter shop on Delancey Street for services and later a former Anabaptists meeting house at Delancey and Pitt Streets.<sup>(7)</sup>

Land was purchased for a church from John Jacob Astor in 1834. Before it was finished the lease of the Baptist meeting house in Delancey Street expired, and the congregation used the basement of St. Mary's on Grand Street. The dedication ceremony took place on Easter Sunday, 1836.<sup>(8)</sup> The growing number of German speaking immigrants required a larger church, and the second Church of St. Nicholas was built in 1848 in the Gothic Revival style.<sup>(9)</sup>

Father Raffener served as pastor of St. Nicholas until 1840, assisted by Benedictine Father Nicholas Balleis, who continued until 1841, succeeded by a Franciscan, Reverend John Lewis. Reverend Gabriel Rumpel, a Redemptorist, was rector of St. Nicholas' until 1844, when he left to form Most Holy Redeemer Church on East Third Street, the city's second German speaking church. He was replaced by Capuchin Ambrose Buchmeyer, who remained until 1861.<sup>(10)</sup> St. Nicholas was a spiritual home of an American saint, John Nepomucene Neumann, who celebrated his first Mass in the church on June 26, 1836.

## Most Holy Redeemer Church

Most Holy Redeemer Church, on East Third Street in Manhattan between Avenues A and B, was the second German Catholic church in the city, founded in 1844 by German speaking Redemptorists to serve the city's German immigrants. The society erected a wood frame building, rectory, convent and school. The present cathedral-like church building was built in 1851-52, and dedicated on November 28, 1852. <sup>(11)</sup>

In the mid-nineteenth century, this block of East Third Street was in the heart of a large German community that began forming in the Lower East Side in the 1830s. The initial settlers of the block came largely from southern Germany; many were Catholic and attended service at the first German language parish in New York City, St. Nicholas, one block away on Second Street. <sup>(12)</sup> A Catholic publication at the time called Most Holy Redeemer "the most beautiful and largest (church) in New York," and it earned popular acclaim as "The German Cathedral of the Lower East Side," <sup>(13)</sup> becoming the most important church in Manhattan's Little Germany. <sup>(14)</sup>

### **Our Lady of Sorrows Church**

In 1857, Reverend Bonaventure Frey, a Capuchin priest, founded Our Lady of Sorrows for German Catholics. The new congregation was originally an offshoot of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church. <sup>(15)</sup> Our Lady of Sorrows Church, on Pitt Street between Rivington and Stanton, was established in 1867 as Our Lady of the Seven Dolours Church and staffed by Capuchin Friars. It served the German Catholics who immigrated to New York in the late nineteenth century. The church was built in the Victorian, Byzantine Revival, and Romanesque Revival style by Henry Engelbert, and dedicated in September of 1868. <sup>(16)</sup>

### **Church of the Transfiguration**

Transfiguration, located on Mott Street in the "five points" slum in lower Manhattan, served all Catholics, particularly poor Irish. It was not a German catholic church.

"The Roman Catholic Church of the Transfiguration can trace its roots to 1827. At that time, Father Félix Varela, a Cuban-born priest, bought Christ Protestant Episcopal Church on Ann Street and converted it into a Catholic church of the same name. The new parish remained at this location until 1833 when the building was declared unsafe. For the next few years, services were held in temporary quarters on William Street and, later, on Ann Street.

In 1835, Father Varela purchased property for a new church on James Street, and the name was changed to St. James Church. Built from 1835-37 and dedicated by Bishop Dubois in 1836, St. James Church is the second oldest Roman Catholic church building extant in Manhattan. However, as many parishioners objected that St. James Church was too far away, Father Varela purchased the old Scottish Reformed Presbyterian Church on Chambers Street and converted it for use as a Catholic church. The new church was named Church of the Transfiguration, and it was dedicated by Bishop Dubois in 1836. Father Varela remained as pastor until 1850

The small church on Chambers Street was sold in 1853, and the larger Zion Episcopal Church was purchased by Bishop John Hughes on January 28, 1853. Located at the corner of Mott and Cross (now Park) Streets, the stone church had been built in 1801 at a cost of \$15,000; it measured 55 feet in width by 76 feet in length, and had walls that were 30 inches thick. The church had burned in 1815, but it was rebuilt by the Zion congregation. The parish of the Transfiguration moved into their church building on Mott Street and, in the spirit of its Cuban Pastor Father Felix Varela, continued to serve the Irish and

Italian immigrant populations in New York. In 1868, Henry Engelbert designed additions to the church, including the tower.”<sup>(17)</sup>

## RECORD INDEX

People from Soufflenheim are mentioned in the following 28 marriage and ten baptism records from 1836-1884.

### Records of People from Soufflenheim

Date	Groom & Bride	Church	Record Type	Location
15 Jun 1836	Pius Strack & Anne Marie Masseram	Transfiguration	Marriage	Manhattan
24 Aug 1841	Mathias Rebholz & Magdalena Mori	St. Nicholas	Marriage	Manhattan
22 Nov 1842	Cyprianis Rauch & Ursula Wenzel	St. Nicholas	Marriage	Manhattan
04 Sep 1843	Peter Thoma & Pelagia Maÿet	St. Nicholas	Marriage	Manhattan
13 Feb 1844	Fabianus Vanhattan & Odilia Lengert	St. Nicholas	Marriage	Manhattan
09 Sep 1844	Anton Korberstein & Maria Anna Lengert	St. Nicholas	Marriage	Manhattan
15 Apr 1845	Johannes Pletsch & Josephina Lengert	Most Holy Redeemer	Marriage	Manhattan
15 Apr 1845	Xaverius Lengert & Catharina Bergner	Most Holy Redeemer	Marriage	Manhattan
15 Apr 1845	Vincentius Lengert & Catharina Weid	Most Holy Redeemer	Marriage	Manhattan
05 Apr 1846	Eduardus Messner & Magdalena Gentan	Most Holy Redeemer	Marriage	Manhattan
13 May 1846	Josephus Seider & Catharina Rauch	St. Nicholas	Marriage	Manhattan
09 Jul 1846	Joseph Matthieu & Margaretha Lengert	Most Holy Redeemer	Marriage	Manhattan
13 Aug 1848	Mathias Fuchs & Theresia Numont	St. Nicholas	Marriage	Manhattan
19 Jun 1849	Joseph Lengert & Bernardina Haass	Most Holy Redeemer	Marriage	Manhattan
01 Aug 1852	Josephus Jung & Maria Anna Bildstein	St. Nicholas	Marriage	Manhattan
28 Aug 1853	Francisci Mack & Magdalena Kehres	St. Nicholas	Marriage	Manhattan
25 Oct 1853	Josephus Galland & Sophia Thoma	St. Nicholas	Marriage	Manhattan
19 Jun 1859	Georgius Friedrich & Catharina Kehres	St. Nicholas	Marriage	Manhattan
03 Feb 1863	Peter Strack & Eva Ziegler	Most Holy Redeemer	Marriage	Manhattan
03 Jul 1866	Josephus Daul & Barbara Raufer	St. Nicholas	Marriage	Manhattan
30 Mar 1871	Nicolas Schneider & Magdalena Helmer	Most Holy Redeemer	Marriage	Manhattan
07 Apr 1872	Philippus Krömer & Catharina Gangloff	Most Holy Redeemer	Marriage	Manhattan
06 Nov 1873	Xavier Kramer & Caroline Worster	New York City Municipal	Marriage	Manhattan
12 Jul 1874	Carolus Kirchdorfer & Josephinae Von Hattan	Our Lady of Sorrows	Marriage	Manhattan
09 Oct 1877	John Kraut & Magdalena Strack	Most Holy Redeemer	Marriage	Manhattan
03 Jul 1881	Philip Fuchs & Emma Strack	Most Holy Redeemer	Marriage	Manhattan
16 Apr 1882	Joseph Litzler & Teresia Kirchdorf	Most Holy Redeemer	Marriage	Manhattan
23 Nov 1884	Chrysostimum Halter & Maria Michel	Our Lady of Sorrows	Marriage	Manhattan

Date	Baptism	Church	Record Type	Location
07 Mar 1841	Michael Strack	St. Nicholas	Baptism	Manhattan
20 Feb 1842	Maria Strack	St. Nicholas	Baptism	Manhattan
14 May 1843	Mary Rauch	St. Nicholas	Baptism	Manhattan
16 Jun 1844	Johannes Jacob Strack	Most Holy Redeemer	Baptism	Manhattan
14 Feb 1847	Josephine Strack	Most Holy Redeemer	Baptism	Manhattan
1847	Margaretha Lengert	Most Holy Redeemer	Baptism	Manhattan
1853	Magdalena Strack	Most Holy Redeemer	Baptism	Manhattan
1856	Amelia Strack	Most Holy Redeemer	Baptism	Manhattan
17 Dec 1871	Maria Victoria Galland	St. Nicholas	Baptism	Manhattan
16 July 1874	Robert Joseph Galland	Our Lady of Perpetual Help	Baptism	Manhattan

## MARRIAGE RECORDS

### PIUS STRACK & ANNE MARIE MASSERAM

#### 15 June 1836 Transfiguration Parish, Manhattan, Marriage

Pius Strack, 30 years of age, to Mary Ann Masserram, 22 years old. Witnesses: Stephen Tuchmen and Elizabeth Roach. Entry 15.

[Anne Marie Masserram (Masserand) was born in Sarburg, Lothringen (Sarrebouurg, Lorraine). Source: Michael Heschung]

Strack Children Baptism and Marriages:

- Peter Strack: Born about 1837, birth and baptism location unknown
- Michael Strack Baptism, 07 Mar 1841, St. Nicholas, born Manhattan, 26 Feb 1841
- Maria Strack Baptism, 1842, St. Nicholas, born Manhattan, 10 Feb 1842
- John Jacob Strack Baptism, 16 Jun 1844, Most Holy Redeemer, born Manhattan, 12 Apr 1844
- Josephine Strack Baptism, 14 Feb 1847, Most Holy Redeemer, born Manhattan, 01 Sep 1846
- Magdalena Strack Baptism, 1853, Most Holy Redeemer, born Manhattan, 14 Oct 1853
- Amelia Strack Baptism, 1856, Most Holy Redeemer, born Manhattan, 03 Aug 1856
- Peter Strack & Eva Ziegler Marriage, 03 Feb 1863, Most Holy Redeemer, Manhattan
- John Krauth & Magdalena Strack Marriage, 09 Oct 1877, Most Holy Redeemer, Manhattan
- Philip Fuchs & Amelia Strack Marriage, 03 Jul 1881, Most Holy Redeemer, Manhattan

### MATHIAS REBHOLZ & MAGDALENA MORI

#### 24 August 1841 St. Nicholas Parish, Manhattan, Marriage

Mathias Rebholz, groom, of Albersweil, Rhein Baiern, son of Laurentii Rebholz and Catharinae Weber, and Magdalena Mori, bride, of Süfflenheim, Elsass, daughter of Josephi Mari and Catharinae Siefried. [Magdalena Mary, born 6 July 1820, daughter of Joseph Mary & Catherine Siegfried]

### **CYPRIANIS RAUCH & URSULA WENZEL**

#### **22 November 1842 St. Nicholas Parish, Manhattan, Marriage**

Cyprianus Rauch, groom, age 30, of Soufflenheim, Alsatia, son of Felicis Rauch and Catharinae Wagner, and Ursula Wensel, bride, age 21, of Soufflenheim, Alsatia, daughter of Georgii Wenzel and Mariae Annae Heitz. Witnesses: Joh. Adam Saul, Antonius Barber?

[Cyprianis Rauch born 14 September 1811 in Soufflenheim. Marie Ursula Wenzel born 27 October 1821 in Soufflenheim. Cyprianis Rauch and Marie Ursula Wentzel emigrated together, arriving on 31 October 1842 on the ship Ville De Lyon, Ciberien Rauch Age: 31, Ursula Wentzel Age: 21, Country: France, Port of Arrival: New York, Microfilm Serial Number: M237, Microfilm Roll Number: 51, Source: New York, Passenger and Immigration Lists, 1820-1850. Cyprianis Rauch and Ursula Wentzel emigrated with Joseph Halm, age 22, also from Soufflenheim.

1855 Brooklyn Census, 16<sup>th</sup> Ward, June 28, 1855: Ciprian Ruch [Rauch], age 47, laborer, born Germany, Maria Ruch [Wenzel], age 34, Wife born Germany, three children: Maria, 12, born New York [Manhattan] Jacob, 4, born Kings County [Brooklyn] Michael, 2, born Kings County.

1860 Brooklyn Census, 16<sup>th</sup> Ward, Williamsburg, June 12, 1860, Page 14, Entry 29: Zibrian [Ciprian] Rauch, porter, 49, born France, Mary, 39, tailor, born France, Mary, 17, dressmaker, born New York, Jacob, 9, born New York, attended school within the past year, Michael, 6, born New York, attended school within the past year, Barbara, 3 months, born New York.

1861 Cyprien Rauch Naturalization Application: Cyprien Rauch, Common Pleas Court, New York County, R200, Naturalized September 27, 1861, Bundle Number 272, Record Number 326, Address of Naturalized Person: Brooklyn E.D., New York, Nationality: French, Witness to Naturalization: John G. Bauman, Brooklyn, New York. Source: Kelly Cooper]

### **PETER THOMA & PELAGIA MAÏËT**

#### **04 September 1843 St. Nicholas Parish, Manhattan, Marriage**

Peter Thoma, groom, age 33, of Sufflenheim, Alsatiae, son of Johannis Thoma and Maria Anna Daul, and Pelagia MaÏËt, bride, age 31, of Laon, France, daughter of Georgii MaÏËt and Justinae Pavani. [Record incomplete, but appears to support their having a daughter Sophia Thoma, age 20 in her 1853 marriage]

### **FABIANUS VANHATTAN & ODILIA LENGERT**

#### **13 February 1844 St. Nicholas Parish, Manhattan, Marriage**

Fabianus Vanhatten, groom, age 26, of Sufflenheim, Alsatia, son of Josephi Vanhatten and Theresiae Haberkorn, and Odilia Lengert, bride, age 19, of Sufflenheim, Alsatia, daughter of Josephi Lengert and Margarethae Mesmer. Witnesses: Joseph Gress, Balthasar Daun.

[Fabian Vanhatten, born in Soufflenheim on 29 January 1818, son of Joseph Vonhatten and Therese Haberkorn. Emigrated on the ship Havre, Port of Departure: Le Havre, France, Port of Arrival: New York City, Date of Arrival: 8 July 1839, National Archives Series Number: M237, Microfilm Number: 39, List Number: 460. Manifest page 3, entry 23. Fabian lived in several places but mostly on East 4th Street in Manhattan near Holy Redeemer Church, and was a sawyer. Fabian and his wife were living at 275 4<sup>th</sup> Street when they died in the 1880's. Addresses from city directories (all near Holy Redeemer Church): 1844: 28 Avenue B. 1853: 175 Third Street (Adjacent to Holy Redeemer). 1859: 601 Fourth Street. 1863: 603 Fourth Street. 1864-1880's: 275 Fourth Street.

There is a Joseph Von Hatten who lived in Manhattan, eventually moving to Brooklyn. There is a Joseph Vonhatten born in Soufflenheim 14 May 1829, son of Joseph Vonhatten and Therese Haberkorn, the parents of Fabian Vonhatten. Source: Kathleen O'Farrell]

#### **ANTON KORBERSTEIN & MARIA ANNA LENGERT**

##### **09 September 1844 St. Nicholas Parish, Manhattan, Marriage**

Anton Korberstein, groom, age 24, son of Caspari Korberstein and Catharinae Warmuth, and Maria Anna Lengert, bride, age: 21, daughter of Josephi Lengert and Margarithae Messmar. Witnesses: Fabian Von Hatten, Heinrich Koberstein.

#### **JOHANNES PLETSCH & JOSEPHINA LENGERT**

##### **15 April 1845 Most Holy Redeemer Parish, Manhattan, Marriage**

Johannes Pletsch, groom, age 26, legitimate son of Joh. Pletsch and Anna Maria Muller of Mizbach, Bav. [Bavaria], and Josephina Lengert, bride, age 18, legitimate daughter of Josephi Lengert and Margaretha Mesmer of Soufflenheim, Alsatia. Witnesses: Peter Pletsch and Henericus Schreiber.

#### **XAVERIUS LENGERT & CATHARINA BERGNER**

##### **15 April 1845 Most Holy Redeemer Parish, Manhattan, Marriage**

Xaverius Lengert, groom, age 26, of Soufflenheim, Alsatia, legitimate son of Josephi Lengert and Margaretha Mesmer of Soufflenheim, Alsatia, and Catharina Bergner, bride, age 18, legitimate daughter of Andrea Bergner and Eva Russ of Karlburg, Bav. [Bavaria]. Witnesses: Antonius Koverstein and Nicholas Bergner.

#### **EDUARDUS MESSNER & MAGDALENA GENTAN**

##### **05 April 1846 Most Holy Redeemer Parish, Manhattan, Marriage**

Eduardus Messner, groom, age 29, of Sufflenheim, Alsatiae, son of Francisci Josephi Messner and Magdalena Jäg, and Magdalena Gentner, bride, age 29, of Schirrhein, Alsatia, daughter of Johannes Gentner and Catharine Geb. Witnesses: Josephus Moser and Christian Wagner.

#### **VINCENTIUS LENGERT & CATHARINA WEID**

##### **15 April 1845 Most Holy Redeemer Parish, Manhattan, Marriage**

Vincentius Lengert, groom, age 24, legitimate son of Josephi Lengert and Margaretha Mesmer of Soufflenheim, Alsatia, and Catharina Weid, bride, age 34, legitimate daughter of Laurentii Weid and Anna München of Deinschwanz, Bav. [Bavaria]. Witnesses: Michael Weid and Fabian Vonhatten.

#### **JOSEPHUS SEIDER & CATHARINA RAUCH**

##### **13 May 1846 St. Nicholas Parish, Manhattan, Marriage**

Josephus Seider, age 31, legitimate son of Josephi Seider and Theresae Schreiner, and Catharina Rauch, age 24, legitimate daughter of Felicien Rauch and Catharina Wagner. Witnesses: Peter Thoma and Xaverius Maurphing. [Catharina Rauch born 14 February 1821 in Soufflenheim, sister of Cyprianis Rauch of Soufflenheim]

#### **JOSEPH MATTHIEU & MARGARETHA LENGERT**

##### **09 July 1846 Most Holy Redeemer Parish, Manhattan, Marriage**

Joseph Matthieu, groom, age 27, legitimate son of Thoma Matthieu and Catharinae Riegler of Germersheim, Alsatia, and Margaretha Lengert, bride, age 17, legitimate daughter of Josephi Lengert and Margaretha Mesmer of Soufflenheim, Alsatia. Witnesses: Henricus Pfaff and Vincentius Lengert.

#### **MATHIAS FUCHS & THERESIA NUMONT**

##### **13 August 1848 St. Nicholas Parish, Manhattan, Marriage**

Mathias Fuchs, groom, age 23, of Sufflingheim, Elsassia, son of Martini Fuchs and Magdalena Beck, and Theresia Numont, bride, age 28, daughter of Francisci Numont and Elisabethae Schmidt. Witnesses: Vincentius Lengert, Aloysius Armbruster.

#### **JOSEPH LENGERT & BERNARDINA HAASS**

##### **19 June 1849 Most Holy Redeemer Parish, Manhattan, Marriage**

Joseph Lengert, groom, of Sofenheim [Soufflenheim], Alsace, and Bernardina Haass, bride, of Sofenheim [Soufflenheim], Witnesses: Vinzent Lengert and Xavier Lengert.

## **JOSEPHUS JUNG & MARIA ANNA BILDSTEIN**

### **01 August 1852, St. Nicholas Parish, Manhattan, Marriage**

Josephus Jung, groom, age 29, of Forstfeld, Alsassia, son of Joannis Jung and Magdalenae Leymann, and Maria Anna Bildstein, bride, age 26, of Sufflenheim, Alsassia, daughter of Michaelis Bildstein and Mariae Annae Halder. Witnesses: Georgius Mayer, Daniel Boast.

## **FRANCISCI MACK & MAGDALENA KEHRES**

### **28 August 1853 St. Nicholas Parish, Manhattan, Marriage**

Francisci Mack, groom, age 33, of Colmar, Alsassia, son of Francisci Mack and Catharinae Reinbald, and Magdalena Kehres, bride, age 27, of Sufflenheim, Alsassia, daughter of Ignatii Kehres and Margarethae Siegfried. Witnesses: Martin Wohlhüter, Carolus Mack.

[Magdalena Kehres arrived in New York 9 February 1853, age 26, PAX Irene. Other possible Soufflenheim names on the ship Irene are: Entry 395, Ignatz Goetz, age 20, France, Entry 396, Jean Goetz, age 12, France. Entry 397, Anton Schmuck, 22, France. Entry 398, Madelaine Kehres, age 26, France.

1900 Census Bloomington Township, McClean County, Illinois: Francis J. Mack, Head, Male, 86, born France, Magdaline Mack, Wife, Female, 75, born France, Francis J. Mack, Son, Male, 42, born New York, Mary E. Mack, Daughter-in-law Female, 28, born Ireland, Mellie Mack, Granddaughter, Female, 8, born Illinois, Catharine Mack, Granddaughter, Female, 7, born Illinois, Francis J Mack, Grandson, Male, 5, born Illinois.

Francis and Madeleine Kehres had another son, John T Mack born 2 January 1861 in New York, died 14 April 1926 in Bloomington, Illinois and buried on 17 April 1926. Francis J. Mack married Mary Elisabeth McMullin. Source: Kelly Cooper]

## **JOSEPHUS GALLAND & SOPHIA THOMA**

### **25 October 1853 St. Nicholas Parish, Manhattan, Marriage**

Sophia Thoma, bride, age 20, of Sufflenheim, Alsassia, daughter of Petri Thoma and Pelagiae Majet. Josephus Galland, groom, age 26, of Sulz, Alsassia, son of Ignatii Galland and Victoriae Fontain. Witnesses: Ignatius Galland, Balthasar Daul. [See 1843 marriage of Peter Thoma and Pelagia Mayet. Sophie 'Mayet'; mother Pelagie Mayet, father unknown; born in Soufflenheim on 30 September 1832.]

## **GEORGIUS FRIEDRICH & CATHARINA KEHRES**

### **19 June 1859 St. Nicholas Parish, Manhattan, Marriage**

Georgius Friedrich, groom, age 45, of Abelheim, Hessendarmstadt, son of Francisci Friedrich and Catharina Heimer, and Catharina Kehres, bride, age 27, of Sufflenheim, Alsassia, daughter of Ignatius Kehres and Magdalena Siegfried. Witnesses. Joseph Scharen, Jacob Gienze?

### **PETER STRACK & EVA ZIEGLER**

#### **03 February 1863 Most Holy Redeemer, Manhattan, Marriage**

Groom Peter Strack, residing in New York City, son of Pius Strack and Maria Anne Massaram, and bride Eva Ziegler, of Liegenburg, Bavaria, daughter of Joseph Ziegler and Catherine Rausch. Witnesses \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_ Strack, both residing in New York.

[Joseph Peter Strack, born about November 1837 in Manhattan, married Eva Ziegler. He was not baptized in St. Nicholas, perhaps Most Holy Redeemer. His mother, Anna Marie Masserand, is a widower by the 1870 census and the last census she is on is 1900. Joseph Peter has at least 2 children and Eva has passed as she is not on the 1870 census. Source: Kelly Cooper]

### **JOSEPHUS DAUL & BARBARA RAUFER**

#### **03 July 1866 St. Nicholas Parish, Manhattan, Marriage**

Josephus Daul, groom, age 28, of Sufflenheim, Alsatia, son of Balthazaris Daul and Franciscasae Jaeck, and Barbara Raufer, bride, age 25, of Neo-Eboraco, New York daughter of Francisci Raufer and Elisabethae Koch. Witnesses: Joannes Raufer, Balthazaris Daul.

### **NICOLAS SCHNEIDER & MAGDALENA HELMER**

#### **30 March 1871 Most Holy Redeemer Parish, Manhattan, Marriage**

Nicolas Schneider, groom, of Fegersheim, Alsatia, son of Josephi Schneider and Magdalena Mütschler, and Magdalena Helmer, bride, of Sufflenheim, Alsatia, daughter of Isidore Helmer and Maria Daul. Witnesses: Henrici Kaper, New York, Broth. Lambert, New York.

[Madeleine Helmer, baptized 30 March 1847 in Soufflenheim, Nicolas Schneider baptized 12 November 1845 in Fegersheim, Alsace. They had eight children, whose birth certificates are from Manhattan. Source: Kelly Cooper].

### **PHILIPPUS KRÖMER & CATHARINA GANGLOFF**

#### **07 April 1872 Most Holy Redeemer Parish, Manhattan, Marriage**

Philippus Krömer, groom, of Sufflenheim, Elsass, son of Fr. Joseph Krömer and Salome Langert, and Catharina Gangloff, bride, of Welfling, Lothringia, daughter of Jos. Ant. Gangloff and Magdalena Hubert. Witnesses: Vincentius Lengert, New York, Luis Dres, New York.

### **XAVIER KRAMER & CAROLINE WORSTER**

**06 November 1873 Manhattan, New York City Municipal Archives, Marriage**

New York, New York City Marriage Records, 1829-1940, FamilySearch, FHL Microfilm 1,561,972

Xavier Kramer, age 29, born in Soufflenheim in Elsass, son of Franz Kramer and Salome Lengert, and Caroline Worster, age 23, born in Freuelenstatt in Wurlbrg., daughter of Gustav Worster and Margarete Weber.

[Xavier Kramer Optant Declaration (French Citizenship Declaration) on 21 August 1872 in Nancy, France. Source: Kelly Cooper]

**CAROLUM KIRCHDORFER & JOSEPHINAE VON HATTAN**

**12 July 1874 Our Lady of Sorrows Parish, Manhattan, Marriage**

Carolum Kirchdorfer, groom, age 28, of Sufflenheim, Elsass, son of Francisci Xavier Kirchdorfer and Josephinae von Hatten, and Crescentia Halter, bride, age 21, of Schirein, Elsass, daughter of Michaelis Halter and Reginae Buck. Witnesses: Joseph von Hatten, Nic. Schneider.

**JOHN KRAUT (KRAUTH) & MAGDALENA STRACK**

**09 October 1877 Most Holy Redeemer, Manhattan, Marriage**

Groom, Johanes Kraut [Krauth], residing in Neo Eboraci [New York], son of Joseph Kraut and Magdalena Bon \_\_\_\_, and bride Magdalena Strack, residing in Neo Eboraci [New York], daughter of Pius Strack and Anna M. Masseran. Witnesses Joseph \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_ both residing in New York . Entry 36.

**PHILIP FUCHS & EMMA [AMELIA] STRACK**

**03 July 1881 Most Holy Redeemer, Manhattan, Marriage**

Groom Philipp Fuchs, son of Philipp Fuchs and Margareta Seib of Dürkheim, Bayern, and bride Emma [Amelia] Strack of New York, daughter of Pius Strack and Mary Ann Masseran. Witnesses: Michael Fuchs and John Krauth, both living in New York. Entry 42.

[Amelie (Emma) Strack married Philip G. Fuchs 03 July 1881 at Most Holy Redeemer in Manhattan. The Fuchs, from Dürkheim, Rheinland Pfalz, were Lutherans, they had converted their daughter, Margaretha, who was born about 1852 there, in Most Holy Redeemer on 03 Jan 1872. See "Ledogar Tree" posted by Kelly Cooper. It is public, search under Pierre Ledogar born 30 May 1817, Pfaffenhoffen. Source: Kelly Cooper]

**JOSEPH LITZLER & TERESIA KIRCHDORF**

**16 April 1882 Most Holy Redeemer Parish, Manhattan, Marriage**

Joseph Litzler, groom, of Grenzingen, Alsatia, son of Franciscus Litzler and Catharina Biland, and Teresia Kirchdorf, bride, of Sufflenheim, Alsatia, daughter of Francis Xavier Kirchdorf and Josephina Van Hatten. Witnesses: Carolus Kirchdorf, New York, Daniel Litzler, New York.

### **CHRYSOSTIMUM HALTER & MARIA MICHEL**

**23 November 1884 Our Lady of Sorrows Parish, Manhattan, Marriage [SCHIRREIN]**

Chrysostimum Halter, groom, age 28, of Scheiran, Elsass, son of Michaelis Halter and Reginae Bux [Buchs], and Maria Michel, bride, age: 21, of Haspelscheidt, Lothringen, daughter of Joh. Michel and Maria Ruppert. Witnesses: Karl Kirchdorfer, Georg Ruppert.

## **BAPTISM RECORDS**

### **MICHAEL STRACK**

**07 Mar 1841 St. Nicholas, Manhattan, Baptism**

Michael born 26 February 1841 legitimate son of Pii Strack and Marie Anne Maseran. Godparents Frans Lengert and Justine M\_\_\_\_. [Born in Manhattan]

### **MARIA STRACK**

**20 February 1842 St. Nicholas, Manhattan, Baptism**

Maria born on the 10<sup>th</sup> February 1842, daughter of Pii Strack and Mariane Masseran. Godparents Carolo ?lekit and Belagia Maget. [Born in Manhattan]

### **MARY RAUCH**

**14 May 1843 St. Nicholas Parish, Manhattan, Baptism**

Mary Rauch, born 2 April 1843, baptized 14 May 1843 at St. Nicholas in Manhattan, illegitimate daughter of Cyprianis Rauch and Marie Ursula Wenzel of Soufflenheim. Godparents Balthasar Daul and Maria Lengert.

### **JOHANNES JACOB STRACK**

**16 June 1844, Most Holy Redeemer, Manhattan, Baptism**

Baptized is Johannes Jacobus, legitimate son of Pii Strack of Sufflenheim, Alsatia and Maria Anna Wasseran, born 12<sup>th</sup> of April. Witnesses: Anton Kunz and Barbara Guttere. [Born in Manhattan]

## **JOSEPHINE STRACK**

**14 February 1847, Most Holy Redeemer, Manhattan, Baptism**

Josephina, born 01 September 1846, legitimate daughter of Pie Strack of Sulflenheim in Alsatia and Marie Anne Moser. Godparents Magdalena Gentner and Mathias Martin. [Born in Manhattan]

## **MARGARETHA LENGERT**

**1847, Most Holy Redeemer, Manhattan, Baptism**

Baptized Margaretha Lengert, legitimate daughter of Francois Xavier Lengert of Soufflenheim and Catharina Theresa Bergner, born 15<sup>th</sup> of February. Godparents Andreas Bergner and Margareta Maessner [Messner] Entry #59.

## **MAGDALENA STRACK**

**1853, Most Holy Redeemer, Manhattan, Baptism**

Entry 595. Born 14 October 1853, daughter of Pius Strack and Marie Anne Masseran. Godparents Fabian VonHatten and Margaret Matthey. [Born in Manhattan]

## **AMELIA STRACK**

**1856, Most Holy Redeemer, Manhattan, Baptism**

Baptized Amelia, born 03 Aug 1856, daughter of Pii Strack of Sufflenheim, Elsass and Marie Anne Masseran. Godparents illegible. [Born in Manhattan]

## **MARIA VICTORIA GALLAND**

**17 December 1871 St. Nicholas Parish, Manhattan, Baptism**

Baptized Maria Victoria, daughter of Joseph Galland of Alsatia and Sophia Mayet Thoma. Born 16<sup>th</sup> of November. Godparents Julius Galland and Maria Galland

## **ROBERT JOSEPH GALLAND**

**16 July 1874 Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Manhattan, Baptism**

Baptized Robert Joseph Galland, son of Joseph Galland of France and Sophia Thoma. Born 20<sup>th</sup> of June and baptized on the 16th July 1874. Godparents Peter and Josepha Galland. Entry 54.

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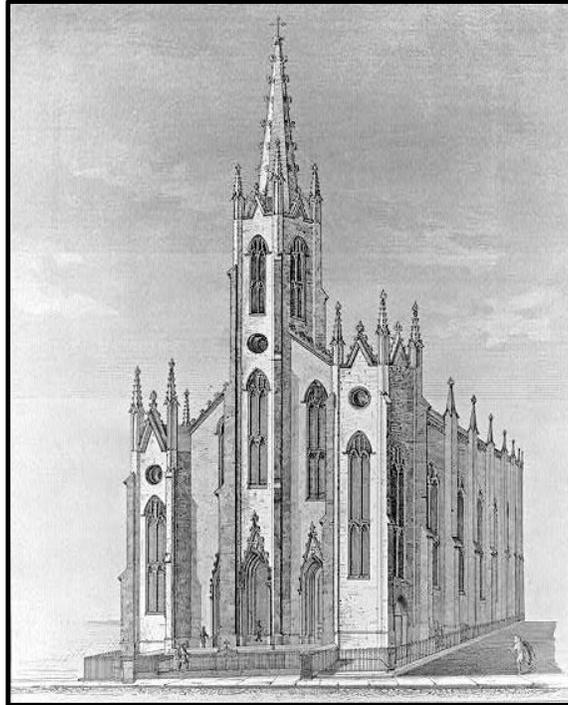
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- (11) *Church of the Most Holy Redeemer*, The NYC Chapter of the American Guild of Organists <http://www.nycago.org/Organs/NYC/html/MostHolyRedeemer.html>
- (12) *Walking East 3rd Street: Church of the Most Holy Redeemer*, 2012, Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation, <https://gvshp.org/blog/2012/12/27/walking-east-3rd-street-church-of-the-most-holy-redeemer/>
- (13) *Brief History of Most Holy Redeemer Church*, Most Holy Redeemer Church, <https://www.mhr173.org/>
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## APPENDICES

- St. Nicolas Church
- Church of the Most Holy Redeemer
- Church of Our Lady of Sorrows
- Church of the Transfiguration

## ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH

The first German catholic church in Manhattan.



St. Nicholas Catholic Church, Manhattan, 1848, Library of Congress



St. Nicholas Church, Built 1848  
*A History of German Catholics in New York, St. Nicholas Center*

## CHURCH OF THE MOST HOLY REDEEMER

Church of the Most Holy Redeemer - 173 East 3rd Street

By Tom Miller, Daytonian in Manhattan, 2016, <http://daytoninmanhattan.blogspot.com/>

On February 16, 1888 The Evening World remembered “When the Redemptorist Fathers first came to this country, in 1842, they were not very cordially received.” Indeed they were not. Anti-Catholic sentiments in New York City were deeply rooted. In 1788 John Jay had urged the New York Legislature to prohibit Catholics from holding public office. Now, in 1844, Bishop John Hughes stationed armed guards at Catholic churches to prevent mobs from burning them. The feisty Irish-born priest famously warned the mayor “If a single Catholic Church were burned in New York, the city would become a second Moscow.”



Church of the Holy Redeemer, New York, Built 1852  
Original source unknown, sketch via Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation.

The parish of the Most Holy Redeemer was founded and in 1844 the Fathers erected a school, rectory and temporary church “all in one plain frame building” on East 3rd Street near First Avenue. Dedicated by Coadjutor Bishop John McCloskey on April 8, 1844, the entire complex had taken just seven weeks to build.

John Hughes became New York’s first archbishop on July 19, 1850. That same year plans were laid for a “more substantial building” for Most Holy Redeemer, as described by *The Evening World*. Hughes’s determination to make New Yorkers realize that Catholics were here to stay would soon be reflected in his plans for the magnificent St. Patrick’s Cathedral north of the established city—intended to outshine any Protestant church in New York. It may have been that same fervor which resulted in the impressive new Church of The Most Holy Redeemer.



The original interior featured colorful stenciling. Lithograph by Packard and Butler, from the collection of the Favey Library, Villanova University

On October 29, 1850 the New-York Daily Tribune published a seemingly disinterested report saying “We notice the parish attached to the Church of the Most Holy Redeemer (Roman Catholic) in Third-street, are breaking ground for the erection of their new church, on the lots immediately adjoining the temporary edifice in which they have hitherto worshipped, and which has long been insufficient in size for the people who worship there. The new church is to be on a grand scale, and is to be completed in proportion as there are funds to advance it with.”

Construction was completed within two years and the church was dedicated on November 28, 1852. The architect, vaguely listed as “Mr. Walsh” or simply “Walsh,” created a limestone-faced Baroque Romanesque structure of cathedral-like proportions. The highly-ornate façade featured a soaring 250-foot high multi-level clock-and-bell tower which culminated in a hexagonal lantern supporting a globe and cross.

The Evening World described the church as “the most imposing edifice of its kind in this country” and “a magnificent monument of ecclesiastical architecture. Its style of architecture is the Graeco-Roman or Byzantine...The interior decorations are elaborate and artistic.” The New York Herald announced the cost of the structure at \$65,600—over \$2 million in 2016 dollars.

The parish was almost entirely composed of German immigrants. By now the Lower East Side boasted the highest population of German-speaking residents in the world, other than Berlin and Vienna. In reporting on the first Christmas service here, the New York Herald said “a large and most respectable congregation assembled...There was a sermon, in the German language, which seemed to produce a deep effect upon the congregation.”

An impressive church building could not dispel anti-Catholic feelings, however. The same newspaper reported on June 5, 1856 “the Catholics in this city, of the Church of the Most Holy Redeemer, had a procession on the occasion of the feast of Corpus Christi, in which young girls and maidens, all in white, were followed by ‘Captain Smith’s company of Independent Rifles,’ bearing the stars and stripes.” The paper was offended by the inclusion of the American flag. The article announced that the rifle company “had the audacity to carry the American flag as part of the Popish paraphernalia of the celebration. The flag is pronounced sheer hypocrisy—a sort of thing that would be torn to pieces if unfurled while the Host were passing in Rome.”

Discrimination did not come only from the English-speaking population. Catholics were a minority among the German community—only about one in four was Catholic. In January 1873 a new German play was staged in the Stadt Theatre on the Bowery. Called Secrets of New-York, or the Jesuits in America, The New York Times reported it “was written in opposition to the Jesuits and their influence in this country, and is said to abound in attacks upon the order and its principles.”

The three main characters were Father Josephus, Father Hyacinthe, and Father Ignatus. The Times noted “the object of the play was to hold these characters up to the ridicule and reprobation of the audience as representative of the Jesuits in America.”

The Catholic fathers were, understandably, upset at what they termed “the obnoxious play.” The priests of the Church of the Most Holy Redeemer were especially offended, since among its staff were Fathers Josephus, Hyacynth and Ignatius. The Redemptorist Fathers went to Captain Ward of the 10th Precinct and “protested most emphatically” against the play. Not only was it “intended to cast ridicule upon them and their faith,” said The Times, but it was being staged on Sunday.

At 8:00 on the night of January 19th 3,000 people filed into the Stadt Theatre. The Times said it was “a very respectable audience” with a great number of the patrons being ladies. After an opening concert,

the audience was informed that the police had “interfered” with the performance and there would be no play.

The magnificent interiors of the Church of the Most Holy Redeemer stood in distinct contrast to the miserable surrounding tenements. The riches inside—gold chalices, jewel-encrusted statues and such—were a great temptation to indigent neighbors. One German, Peter Scholl, pleaded guilty to burglarizing the church on June 21, 1882. He was sentenced to two and a half years in prison. But Scholl was only one of the first such criminals.

Of the many funerals held in the church, the most heart-wrenching was the group funeral for 14 little girls on February 22, 1883. On February 14 a small fire had broken out in a closet in the school of the Most Holy Redeemer. Although it was small and did little damage, panic among the children resulted in a stampede and the collapse of a stairway banister. The 14 school girls were crushed to death.

The church was filled to capacity and “outside thousands of people clamored for admittance,” according to The New York Times. Not only was 3rd Street thronged, but so were Avenue A and First Avenue. The newspaper detailed the grief each of the 14 families saying, for instance, “Mrs. Uster, the poor widow whose pretty little daughter Mamie was one of the victims, was so overcome as the body of her child was carried into the church that her outbursts of grief became violent and she bewailed her loss in pitiful sobs and cries.”

The interior of the church was draped in mourning. “The heavy pillars under the dome of the vaulted roof were twined with white and black crepe, and long festoons of the same mourning emblem were looped from the dome to the pillars of the sanctuary. Upon the altar...20 tall candles burned dimly in high, brazen candlesticks.”

The destitute conditions of some congregants were evidenced in the burials of some of the girls. One impoverished widow, the mother of 10-year old Barbara Bechel, realized when the hearse reached the “poor ground” that her daughter was to be buried in an unmarked grave. The potters’ field did not allow tombstones.

“She then made a most piteous and tearful protest, and begged the man in charge of the grave-diggers to make them take up the coffin and let her take it home until she could find some other place to bury her child.” Mrs. Bechel was told she would have to pay \$5 to bring the coffin up and store it in a cemetery vault for two days.

The burial continued, but just before the common grave was fully covered with soil, “the little brother of the dead child brought from the carriage a tiny marble slab, which he begged the grave-digger, with tears streaming down his face, to bury next to his sister’s coffin.” The girl would not have a headstone, but she would not be totally forgotten. The little stone read “Barbara Bechel, aged 10. Died Feb. 20.” The Times said it “had been purchased by the poor mother, at the cost of what privation none can tell, as a headstone for her little daughter, whose grave after all remains unmarked.”

In 1884 the Rev. Father Andrew Ziegler was appointed pastor. Among his first priorities was the redecorating of the 32-year old sanctuary. The Evening World reported in 1888 “the interior of the fine building has been entirely refitted and redecorated at an expense of \$10,000. This included the paving of the sanctuary and the aisles with white marble and a new communion table, also of marble, handsomely carved.”



The church received an interesting gift in 1892 when the bones of Saint Datian were donated from a private chapel in Italy. A wax effigy of the saint is still visible in a side chapel.

On October 27, 1897 Fritz Meyer, who was known on the street as Dutch Pete, sneaked into the church and hid until everyone had left and the doors were locked. He had brought with him a 32-calibre revolver and a 15-inch long steel drill. What he did not suspect was that the church had installed a modern electric burglar alarm. When he started breaking into the poor boxes, the alarm rang in the rectory.

Policemen Frederick Smith and Conkling responded. They searched the dark church with Rev. Aloysius Englehardt from the rectory. When Officer Smith trapped Meyer in a hallway, the crook fired twice. "One bullet struck Smith in the mouth, passing directly through its roof to the base of the brain. He fell with a crash," reported The Times.

Meyer escaped by smashing through a window, but he was captured by civilians in the street. When the crowd outside heard that the popular "Schmitt de cop" was dead, the call of "Hang him!" spread. "There was an angry, inarticulate howl and a surge in the crowd, and in another moment the four officers were fighting for their prisoner's life."

Although Frederick Smith was Lutheran, Rev. Englehardt had administered the sacrament of extreme unction on the dying policeman. In a rare exception to religious protocol, his funeral was held in the Church of the Most Holy Redeemer on October 30. Nathan Franko's orchestra played throughout the service.

On November 18, 1897 Fritz Meyer was sentenced to death for the murder.

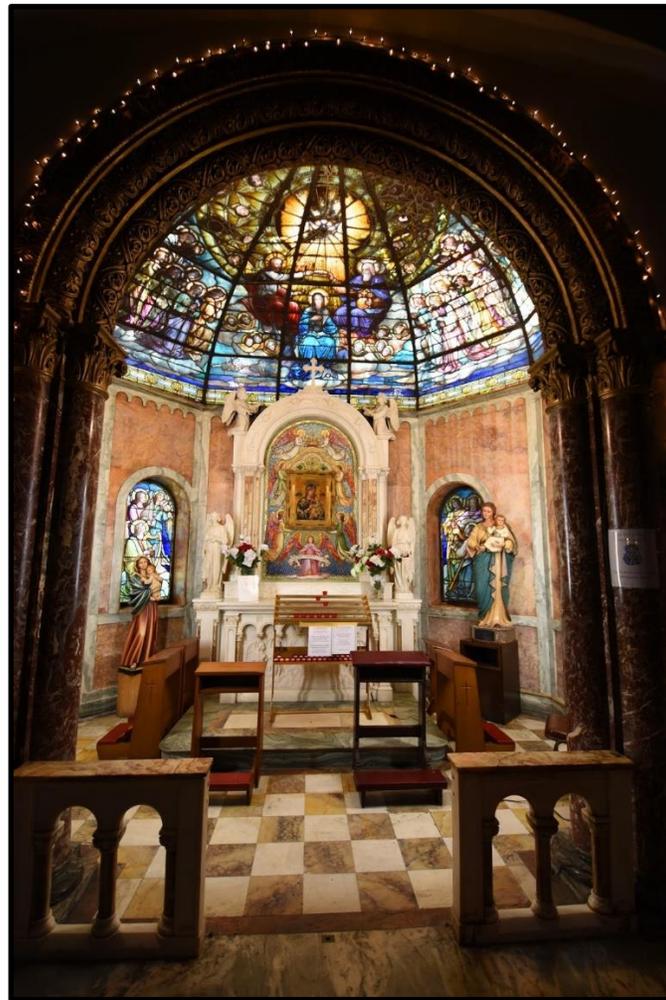
Within months of his coronation, Pope Pius X ordered that Gregorian chant would replace the classical and baroque music long favored in Catholic churches. When the Church of the Most Holy Redeemer celebrated its 60th anniversary mass on April 24, 1904, The Sun reported that it was "the first complete

Gregorian programme to be used in this country since the Pope issued his encyclical on the reform of music.”

On June 4, 1908 an unemployed and homeless French ironworker, Rene Baci, hid in the church, just as Fritz Meyer had done 11 years earlier. And like Meyer, he was unaware of the burglar alarms. But this crook was not interested in the change in the poor boxes. He was focused on what The Evening World described as “a crown, encrusted with diamonds, and the bejeweled clothes on a statue of the Saviour, valued in all at \$31,000.”

Police Captain Shaw and two detectives Gilligan and Tucker, had a hard time subduing Baci. The newspaper said they “had to battle for their lives before they overcame a giant robber.” When he was questioned at the police station, Baci had a simple explanation for the attempted crime.

“I am out of work and have no money. That church has more money than I have, and I need it.”



A side chapel sits below an exquisite stained glass dome.

Baci's predicament was common in the neighborhood. Just three months later, on the afternoon of September 5, 1908, another homeless man, Richard O'Brien, entered the church before 1:00. He entered a pew near the rear where he knelt in prayer. When he seated himself again, he took a small bottle from his pocket and drank from it. Minutes later he collapsed.

The worshipers nearby assumed he had committed suicide. Father Piedad carried the unconscious man to an anteroom and police were summoned. A doctor from Bellevue Hospital arrived as well. The bottle was found to contain harmless vanilla extract and O'Brien was diagnosed as suffering from starvation.

In 1913 architect Paul Schultz was commissioned to modernize the church. Much of the ornamentation was stripped from the façade and the tower was drastically reduced in size. Completed in September that year, the renovations cost \$50,000. The Catholic Church in the United States of America noted that the congregation was estimated at about 2,000, "and shows a decrease."



Throughout the 20th century the demographics of the neighborhood changed drastically. The German population moved north to Yorkville in the first decades and by the second half of the century Spanish-speaking Catholics formed the majority of the congregation. Today the church is popularly known as Iglesia Santisimo Redentor-Natividad.

## CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF SORROWS

Church of Our Lady of Sorrows - 105 Pitt Street

By Tom Miller, Daytonian in Manhattan, 2016, <http://daytoninmanhattan.blogspot.com/>



Political and social unrest in the German states prompted thousands of immigrants to settle in New York City beginning in the late 1840s. By 1855 only Berlin and Vienna had larger German-speaking populations. The new citizens clustered on the Lower East Side, creating what would become known as Kleindeutschland, or Little Germany.

In 1857 Rev. Bonaventure Frey, a Capuchin priest, founded the Church of Our Lady of Sorrows for the German Catholics. Thirty years later The Evening World would comment "In those years immigration had begun to increase to such an extent that its effect was very appreciable, especially in the east side district." Rev. Frey's new congregation was originally an offshoot of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church. The New York Times later remembered "the first parish mass was said in a billiard room at 121 Pitt Street." But within a decade its separation from St. Mary's was authorized by Archbishop McCloskey "who saw and appreciated the needs of the German Catholics in that part of the city," as explained by The World.

Three lots were purchased on Pitt Street, just off the corner of Stanton Street, in 1867 and German-born architect Henry Engelbert was hired to design a permanent church building. The cornerstone was laid on

August 15, 1867. Completed in 1868, the structure exhibited a jumble of styles, the effectiveness of which can easily be argued.

A split staircase led to the paired entrance doors nearly a story above street level. Romanesque arches, Gothic corbels and a square, somewhat stumpy bell tower joined with various niches and openings to create a dizzying visual display. The Evening World called it “a handsome structure of the Byzantine style.”

On Sunday, September 6, 1868 Archbishop John McCloskey dedicated the new church, which was capable of seating 1,200 worshipers. Apparently not overly-impressed, the New York Herald gave the event a single sentence.

The newspaper was more moved six months later when the organ was dedicated on April 30, 1869. It was built by Felix Barckhoff, who had arrived in America from Westphalia, Germany just four years earlier. The Herald remarked “This pretty little church, in Pitt Street, was crowded to its utmost capacity last night.” The evening featured several choral groups “with several well known artists,” and solo performances on the instrument.

The New York Herald deemed the organ “a genuine novelty and success, the solo stops being true to their orchestral original and the mixture being of an entirely different quality from what we have heard on other more pretentious organs.” The article summed up the evening saying “Few churches in this city presented such a brilliant appearance last night as that of Our Lady of Sorrows.”

While the church was widely known for its German congregation; the funerals of Irish immigrants were frequently held here; possibly because the deceased had no church of their own. In October 1873, for instance, the funeral of Mary Ronan, “wife of Michael” was held at Our Lady of Sorrows. She was a native of Limerick, Ireland. And two months later Patrick McGill’s funeral was held in the church. He had come from County Donegal.

Connected to the church was the Capuchin Convent, also founded by Rev. Frey. And in 1874 a new school building was completed on the corner of Pitt and Stanton Streets, next door. On December 14 that year the church ladies staged a “grand fair” in the hall of the school to offset the construction costs. Church fairs were a common means of fund-raising in the 19th century; and The New York Herald promised “a number of tables well covered with objects of art and virtu will surround the spacious hall, and tasteful draping depend from the walls and ceiling.”

The newspaper reported that shoppers could find articles “some of great value and rare curiosity, and there is little doubt that with the efficient corps of lady attendants the fair will be an entire success.”

By the 1890s another immigrant group, the Italians, was edging into Little Germany. Although services in Our Lady of Sorrows were still celebrated in German, the new arrivals often dropped into the open church to pray. One of these was Michael Marricini, who stopped in on the afternoon of November 23, 1893.

Many residents of the surrounding tenements struggled to survive; and unexpected babies could be a significant financial hardship. There was no better place than a church to leave an infant which its parents could not afford to care for. As Marricini knelt in the silence of the church, he heard “a feeble wail.” The New York Times reported the following day “In a seat near his he found a girl baby, about a month old, which had been abandoned.”

A slip of paper was on the pew near the infant, on which was written “Anna Skimbaer, Katolik.” The little girl was wearing a polka dot dress. Little Anna was taken to Police Headquarters.

In the summer of 1899 the 30-year old building received a make-over. A sculpture by Joseph Sibbel, representing the Blessed Virgin holding the dead Christ was installed over the doorway. Eleven feet long and six feet high, the beautiful work of art filled the lunette above the entrance. Inside the church the lantern received eight mural paintings by William Lamprecht. The New York Times reported in August that "The entire church is being modernized and decorated."



By 1913 the number of Italian congregants prompted Rome to send two Italian priests to Our Lady of Sorrows. In a rather bigoted remark The Fortnightly Review reported in 1917 that they "now conduct regular services for the Italians on Sundays and holydays in a church which was built by and for Germans, and once entirely devoted to their needs...This fact shows once again that many of our Italian immigrants can be saved or regained for the faith if earnest and intelligent efforts are made in this direction."

The Fortnightly Review was congratulating Our Lady of Sorrows on its 50th Anniversary. In doing so it went on to insult another group—the Jews. Pointing out that a change in the complexion of the neighborhood "is owing to the Jewish invasion of the lower East Side, which set in about 1879 and has not yet reached its climax," the article worried for the fate of the Pitt Street church. "It is to be hoped that this 'invasion' will not ultimately convert Our Lady of Sorrows Church, once German, now practically Italian, into a Jewish synagogue."

Twenty-five years later, when Our Lady of Sorrows celebrated its 75th Anniversary, The Fortnightly Review would have been pleased to see that the services were still Roman Catholic, and still being conducted in German and Italian. The church built to accommodate 1,200 people, however, had less than half that many. The New York Times was diplomatic in reporting "Many descendants of the original German families and the early Italians were present yesterday among the 500 persons who thronged the little church."

The neighborhood continued to change and Our Lady of Sorrows adapted to meet the needs of its new congregants. By March 10, 1966 when the basement of the church was used for a meeting of the Committee of Welfare Families of the Lower East Side, English and Spanish had replaced German and Italian.



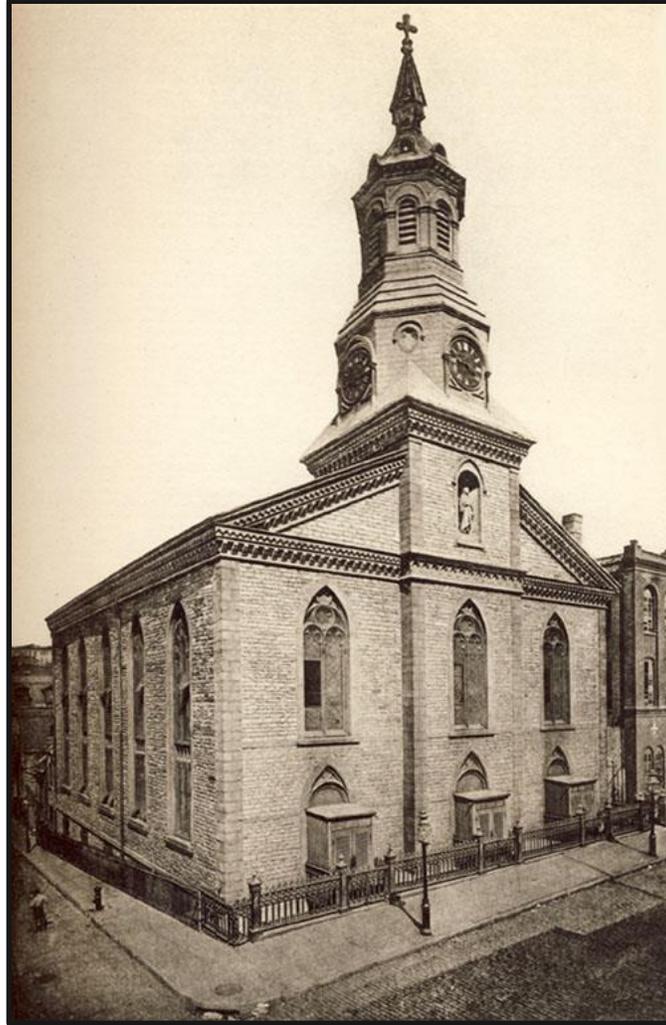
Today, other than an ill-advised coat of paint over the brick, Henry Englebert's church is little changed since it opened in 1868. Now known also as Nuestra Senora de los Dolores, it offers masses in Spanish as well as English. And it continues to serve the newcomers to America as it did nearly 160 years ago.

## CHURCH OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

Church of the Transfiguration - 25 Mott Street,

Tom Miller, Daytonian in Manhattan, 2011, <http://daytoninmanhattan.blogspot.com/>

The neighborhood around Mott Street in 1800 was had little to offer. The 48-acre Collect Pond, once a bucolic picnic spot was now a dumping ground for the waste from nearby tanneries, breweries and slaughterhouses; creating in effect an open, rancid sewer.



Transfiguration Church, after 1868.  
*History of the Church of Zion and St. Timothy of New York*

Yet it was here that a group of English Lutherans opted to build their new church. The group had broken away from its downtown congregation which conducted services only in German. Costing \$15,000 and completed in 1801, the English Lutheran Church Zion was a Georgian-Gothic field stone structure with handsome stone framing around the window and door openings. Within six years the congregation had broken away from the Lutheran church entirely, converting to Episcopalian.

On August 31, 1815 a catastrophic fire swept through the area, destroying 35 homes and essentially gutting the church. The attempts to rebuild made by the rector, Rev. Ralph Willston, were so financially crippling that he was forced to resign in 1817 and the property was sold under foreclosure at public auction at the Tontine Coffee House on Wall Street.

Peter Lorillard purchased the building and reassured the concerned parishioners that he “would retain the property until some friends of the church would stipulate to finish rebuilding, and then restore it to its former ecclesiastical organization.” Six congregants stepped up with sizable donations, aided by a

\$10,000 loan from Trinity Church.

The renovated structure was completed in 1818, dedicated by Bishop Hobart on November 16.



Church of the Transfiguration, [transfigurationnyc.org](http://transfigurationnyc.org)

The neighborhood, however, remained rough. By the 1840s the Five Points section was one of poverty and crime. Finally, in 1853, the Zion Protestant Episcopal Church gave up and relocated further uptown, having decided that “the permanent resuscitation of the parish in that locality was a hopeless undertaking.”

The Roman Catholic Diocese of New York purchased the building for the Parish of the Transfiguration. The Cuban-born founder of the parish, Father Felix Varela, died that same year, after which the church was led by a succession of Irish, then Italian, pastors throughout the 19th Century who worked with the poor Irish residents of the area.

The parish commissioned Henry Engelbert , who had just rebuilt the old St. Patrick’s Cathedral after a devastating fire, to design a bell tower in 1868. On February 13, 1871 the blessing of the 1,500-pound bell for the new tower was conducted by Archbishop McClosky. The bell was swung on a derrick in front of the altar and “notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather,” according to *The Times*, “the edifice was filled to repletion, although admission was only to be secured by tickets at fifty cents each.”

The imposing ceremony was “quite lengthy.”

In 1882 another consecration was held, this time for the new altar. “The general appearance of the altar is

similar to the one in St. Ann's Church, in East Twelfth-street," reported *The Times*. "It is of Carrara marble, on a base which is reached by three clouded marble steps. On the front and center of the altar is a niche in which is a marble recumbent figure of the Savior of the tomb. It is flanked on either side by scenes in the life of the Savior elaborately wrought in the marble. The canopy over the tabernacle is supported by four columns of mottled red Vermont marble. Its roof terminates in a foliated pinnacle, at the summit of which is a crucifix, the figure of the Savior being wrought in gold on a marble cross."

By the 1890s more and more Italian immigrants were settling in the Five Points area. The Irish leaders of the parish refused to allow them to worship in the main sanctuary; forcing them to hold services in the basement. Finally in 1902 when Rev. Ernest Coppo became pastor, the Italians were allowed upstairs.

In the meantime, however, the Chinese were now infiltrating the neighborhood in large numbers. In response, the Rev. Dr. McLoughlin of Transfiguration spoke before the Board of Local Improvements of the Tenth District in March 1899. Explaining that he was the guardian of over 5,000 souls, "mainly English-speaking and Italians," he rallied for the removal of "the Orientals" to another quarter.

"I am kept awake night after night in the summertime by the noise of these Mongolians, by their vile music, by the clatter of their tongues, by their dominoes, their unauthorized midnight processions, and by the shrill laughter of their white women. Hence I know fully whereof I speak when I pronounce Pell and Doyers Streets cesspools of immorality vile enough to bring a curse upon the entire community."

McLoughlin's intolerant rants did not produce his desired outcome and not only did the Chinese stay in the neighbor, within a few years the Salesian Society took over the staffing of Transfiguration. An Italian missionary society, the Salesians immediately sought ways to include the Chinese into the parish. Before long a Chinese-speaking pastor who had done missionary work in China was brought in to help.

By the 1940s the Maryknoll Fathers, respected for their missionary work in China, managed the church and a Chinese school was established.

Today the neighborhood around the Church of the Transfiguration is greatly changed. It is a multi-cultural district with a rich blend of ethnic and racial heritage and tradition. In designating the building a landmark, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission called it not only "a fine example of Georgian-Gothic architecture" but "one of the finest ecclesiastical buildings of its time."