

KLEINDEUTSCHLAND

By Robert Wideen : 2020

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Marriage records of immigrants from Soufflenheim at three German Catholic churches in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, an area known in the 19th century as Kleindeutschland (Little Germany): St. Nicholas (1833) the oldest, Most Holy Redeemer (1844), and Our Lady of Sorrows (1868). From Findmypast.com.



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.

CONTENTS

| | |
|----------------------------------|----|
| Kleindeutschland | 1 |
| The German Districts | 2 |
| St. Nicholas Church | 4 |
| Most Holy Redeemer Church | 8 |
| Our Lady of Sorrows Church | 10 |

| | |
|--|----|
| References | 11 |
| Appendices | 12 |
| Church of the Most Holy Redeemer | 12 |
| Church of Our Lady of Sorrows | 16 |

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, who had arrived two years earlier, teaching philosophy at Georgetown College. He became rector of St. Peter's on Barclay Street, founded in 1785, mostly Irish and the only Catholic church in the city, holding services in English, German and French, and was instrumental in building the second Catholic church in 1815, the original St. Patrick's on Mulberry Street, seat of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York until 1879. ⁽¹⁾

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.

A large number of immigrants began settling in Manhattan in the 1840s. Many 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. 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. ⁽²⁾

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. ⁽³⁾

The majority of immigrants on the east side during the mid-19th 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." 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 had the third largest number of German speakers in the world, surpassed only by Berlin and Vienna. ⁽⁴⁾

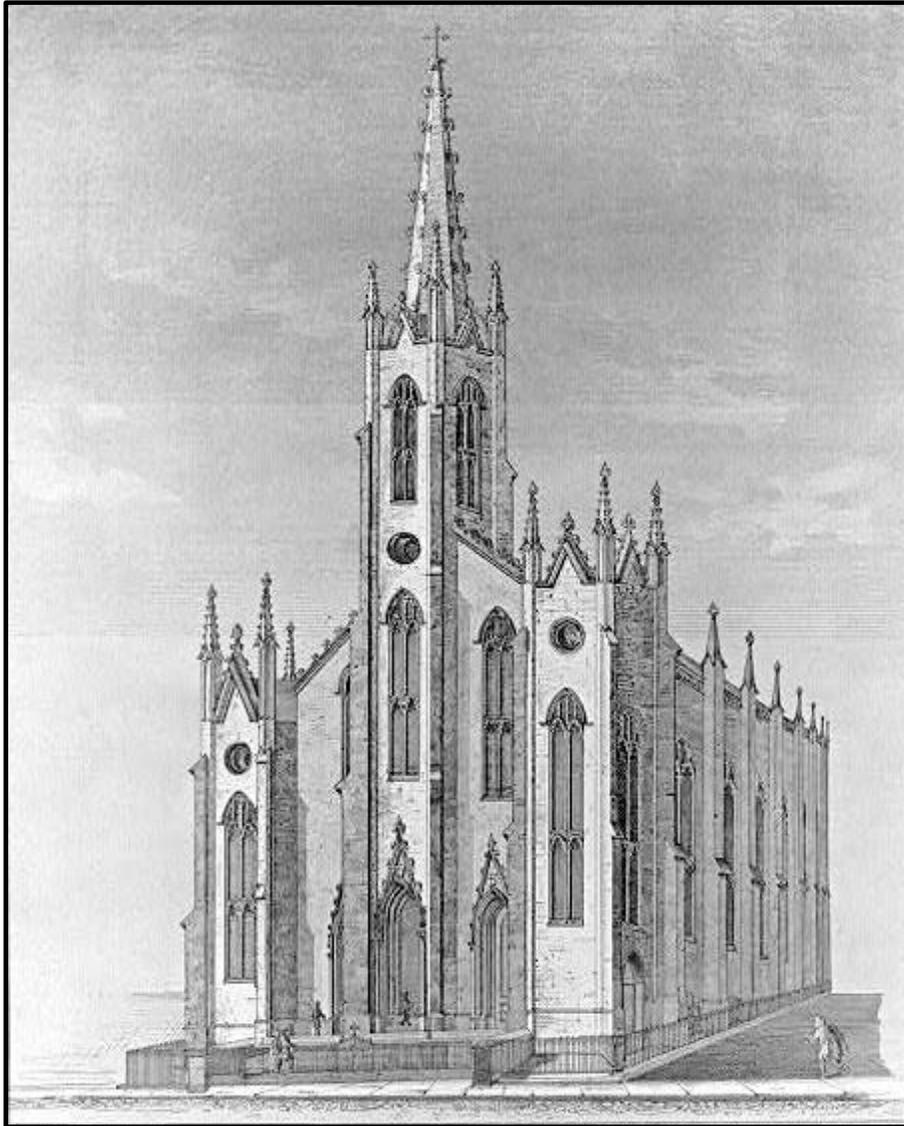
The heart of the community was initially located to the south in the blocks along the Bowery between Canal and Rivington Streets. By the 1860s, the focus of Kleindutschland was moving northward past Houston Street into the streets of the seventeenth ward, which contained the most substantial buildings 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. ⁽⁵⁾



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

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 Raffeiner. Raffeiner initially rented a carpenter shop on Delancey Street for services and later a former Anabaptists meeting house at Delancey and Pitt Streets.⁽⁶⁾



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

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. ⁽⁷⁾ 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. ⁽⁸⁾

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. ⁽⁹⁾ 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.

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?

PETER THOMA & PELAGIA MAÏET

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 MaÏet, bride, age 31, of Laon, France, daughter of Georgii MaÏet 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 Vanhattan, groom, age 26, of Sufflenheim, Alsatia, son of Josephi Vanhattan and Theresiae Habercorn, and Odilia Lengert, bride, age 19, of Sufflenheim, Alsatia, daughter of Josephi Lengert and Margarethae Mesmer. Witnesses: Joseph Gress, Balthasar Daun.

ANTON KORBERSTEIN & MARIA ANNA LENGERT

09 September 1844 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.

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. [Rauch of Soufflenheim, 1842 marriage of Cyprianis Rauch]

MATHIAS FUCHS & THERESIA NUMONT

13 August 1848 Nicholas Parish, Manhattan, Marriage

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

JOSEPHUS JUNG & MARIA ANNA BILDSTEIN

01 August 1852, Nicholas Parish, Manhattan, Marriage

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

FRANCISCI MACK & MAGDALENA KEHRES

28 August 1853 Nicholas Parish, Manhattan, Marriage

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

JOSEPHUS GALLAND & SOPHIA THOMA

25 October 1853 Nicholas Parish, Manhattan, Marriage

Sophia Thoma, bride, age 20, of Sufflenheim, Elsassia, daughter of Petri Thoma and Pelagiae Majet. Josephus Galland, groom, age 26, of Sulz, Elsassia, 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 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 Sufflumheim, Alsassia, daughter of Ignatius Kehres and Magdalena Siegfried. Witnesses. Joseph Scharen, Jacob Gienze?

JOSEPHUS DAUL & BARBARA RAUFER

03 July 1866 Nicholas Parish, Manhattan, Marriage

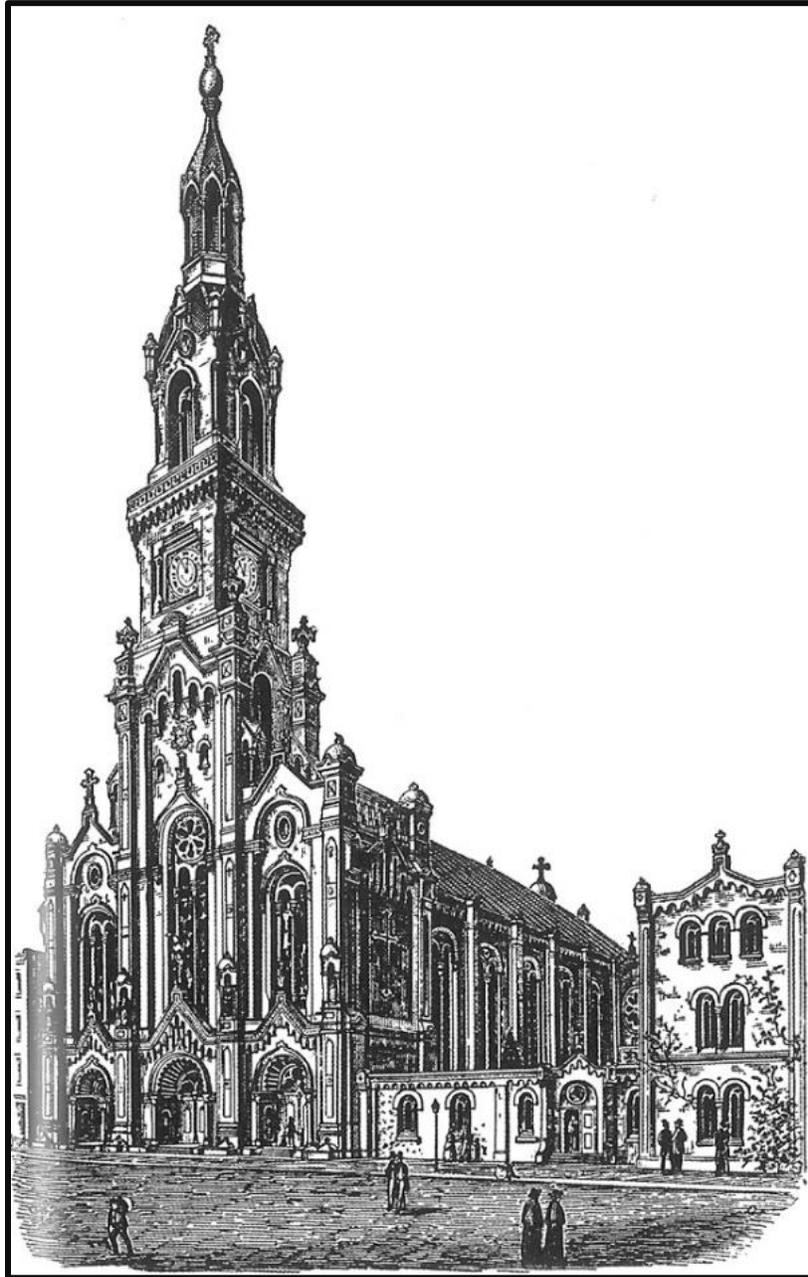
Josephus Daul, groom, age 28, of Sufenheim, Alsatia, son of Balthasaris Daul and Franciscæ Jaeck, and Barbara Raufer, bride, age 25, of Neo-Eboraco, New York daughter of Francisci Raufer and Elisabethæ Koch. Witnesses: Joannes Raufer, Balthasaris Daul.



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

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. ⁽¹⁰⁾



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

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. ⁽¹⁾

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," ⁽²⁾ becoming the most important church in Manhattan's Little Germany. ⁽³⁾



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

EDUARDUS MESSNER & MAGDALENA GENTAN

05 April 1846 Most Holy Redeemer Parish, Manhattan, Marriage

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

NICOL. SCHNEIDER & MAGDALENA HELMER

30 March 1871 Most Holy Redeemer Parish, Manhattan, Marriage

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

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.

JOSEPH LITZLER & TERESIA KIRCHDORF

16 April 1882 Most Holy Redeemer Parish, Manhattan, Marriage

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

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. ⁽¹⁴⁾ 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. ⁽¹⁵⁾

CAROLUM KIRCHDORFER & JOSEPHINAE VON HATTAN

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

Carolus Kirchorfer, groom, age 28, of Sufflenheim, Elsass, son of Francisci Xavier Kirchorfer 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.

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 Kirchorfer, Georg Ruppert.

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APPENDICES

- Church of the Most Holy Redeemer
- Church of Our Lady of Sorrows

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.”

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.

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 19 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."

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 worshippers. 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 shopper 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.