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Fighting Spirit: A History of St. Henry's Catholic Church New Orleans 1871-1929

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Fighting Spirit: A History of St. Henry's Catholic Church New Orleans 1871-1929

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts
in
History

By

Alvah J. Green, III

B.A. University of New Orleans, 2009

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Dedication

To the memory of my grandparents, George and Jesse Delhommer, and Alvah, Sr. and Edmae Green.

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Abstract

In 2009, the Archdiocese of New Orleans went through a reorganization that resulted in the closure of numerous parishes under its direction. This thesis will look at how one of the parishes closed during this reorganization, St. Henry's, had already faced, and survived, numerous attempts at closure. A study of these previous attempts reveals that internal church politics were often on display and the driving force behind the decisions. Using documents from the Archdiocesan Archives of New Orleans, this thesis looks at the history and leadership of St. Henry's parish, and examines how the survival of a church often has more to do with the personalities of those in leadership positions and less to do with the propagation of faith.

Keywords

St. Henry's Catholic Church, suppression, church closure, Archdiocese of New Orleans, St. Stephen's Catholic Church, Vincentian, Congregation of the Mission, Apostolic Delegate, Ludolf Richen.

St. Henry: “To defend justice he had to fight many wars. He was honest in battle and insisted that his armies be honorable too.”¹

-Holy Spirit Interactive Calendar

On the morning of January 6, 2009, New Orleans police officers, accompanied by attorneys from the city attorney’s office as well as representatives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, arrived at two Catholic churches, Our Lady of Good Council and St. Henry’s. For over two months, parishioners had occupied the churches around the clock to protest the decision of the Archdiocese of New Orleans to close their parishes. In a coordinated effort, police arrived at the churches with instructions to arrest any parishioners who resisted. At Our Lady of Good Council, police escorted three parishioners out of the building in handcuffs after sawing their way through a hundred year old door to get into the building. At St. Henry’s Church, the police entered and expelled the parishioners without incident, though their grief was evident as one elderly parishioner begged to be let back in after the police and archdiocesan officials locked her building.²

In the early years of the 21st century, similar incidents occurred in cities across the United States. Changing demographics, sex scandals, reduced church attendance, and financial hardships all contributed to the decline of many once prominent American dioceses and forced some of these dioceses to make hard decisions regarding church closures. These parish suppressions³ often met with resistance from the people who consider these parishes to be their

¹ “July 13: St. Henry II,” Holy Spirit Interactive Calendar, accessed September 27, 2015, <http://www.holyspiritinteractive.net/dailysaint/july/0713.asp>.

² Coleman Warner, “New Orleans Police Remove Parishioners Occupying Closed Uptown Churches,” *The Times-Picayune*, January 6, 2009, accessed September 14, 2015, http://www.nola.com/news/index.ssf/2009/01/new_orleans_police_swarm_uptow.html

³ *Suppress* is the formal term used by the Catholic Church to refer to the closing and dismemberment of a parish.

spiritual home. As Catholic authorities in New Orleans,⁴ Chicago,⁵ St. Louis,⁶ and elsewhere were locking the doors to sanctuaries, parishioners responded by challenging their local bishops in both Vatican courts and local secular courts, in the hopes of keeping the doors open to some of these historical parishes. Among those were the little former German language church of St. Henry's in New Orleans.

This work will investigate factors related to the closure of Catholic churches that have been heretofore ignored. Most work on church closings concentrate on the conflict between church and congregation, prioritizing the role of the parishioners. Using primary documents from the Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, including parish reports, correspondences, parish histories, diaries and other primary sources, this research argues that conflicts and power struggles within the Catholic hierarchy could play a significant but overlooked role in the decisions that determine a parish's fate and further argues that the successful fight against closure of St. Henry's Catholic Church in the 19th and 20th centuries had more to do with the intercession of the Catholic power structure than the protests of the parishioners.

The presence of the Catholic Church in New Orleans dates back to the founding of the city by the French in 1718. In 1724, the practice of Catholicism was even codified into law under Louisiana's *Code Noir*, or Black Code, which stated that all slaves were to be baptized and practice Catholicism. This law was on the books until the United States took possession of

⁴ Between 2008 and 2009, the Archdiocese of New Orleans, under the guidance of Archbishop Alfred Hughes, went through reorganization, which lead to the closure of 25 parishes.

⁵The Archdiocese of Chicago, under Archbishops Joseph Bernardin and Francis Eugene George, has gone under multiple reorganizations, which has affected both parishes and the Catholic schools run by the Archdiocese.

⁶ The Archdiocese of St. Louis, under the guidance of Archbishop Raymond Burke, went through a reorganization in 2004 that led to a prolonged legal fight with one parish in particular, St. Stanislaus Kostka Church, that was not settled until 2013.

Louisiana in 1803.⁷ The original diocese that would eventually become the Archdiocese of New Orleans encompassed the entire area of the Louisiana Purchase as well as Florida and the Gulf Coast. It was originally placed under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Quebec, before being transferred in 1763 to the Bishop of Havana when control of the Louisiana colony was transferred to Spain. In 1793, under Spanish colonial rule, Pope Pius VI elevated the parishes of New Orleans and Louisiana into the Diocese of Louisiana and the Two Floridas. In the following years, the diocese was broken up as more dioceses were formed from the large area that had made up the original diocese. In 1826, the diocese was renamed the Diocese of New Orleans, encompassing sections of the states of Louisiana and Mississippi, and in 1850 the diocese was elevated into an archdiocese.⁸ Throughout the diocese's history, a mix of secular clergy,⁹ as well as various religious orders have ministered to the Catholics in the diocese. In 2013, the archdiocese consisted of eight civil parishes including New Orleans, in which Catholics represent roughly 36% of the population.¹⁰

The Archdiocese of New Orleans, in the aftermath of the federal floods following Katrina, closed a number of churches in its jurisdiction. One of these churches was St. Henry's Catholic Church, located at 812 General Pershing Street, in uptown New Orleans. St. Henry's was a small church founded in the mid-19th century as a mission to serve German-language Catholics in the shadow of the larger St. Stephen's Church, located at 1025 Napoleon Avenue. St. Stephen's Church served the French then English-speaking parishioners of the neighborhood. The 2009 incident was not the first time St. Henry's had been threatened with closure. Over the

⁷ "Louisianan's Code Noir (1724)," *Black Past*, accessed September 19, 2015, <http://www.blackpast.org/primary/louisianas-code-noir-1724>.

⁸ Marie Louise Points, "New Orleans," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 11, (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911) accessed August 20, 2014, <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11005b.htm>>.

⁹ *Secular clergy* are clergy who do not belong to a religious institute or religious order. They are also referred to as diocesan or archdiocesan clergy.

¹⁰ Statistics, Archdiocese of New Orleans, accessed 20 August 2014, <https://www.arch-no.org/statistics>.

course of St. Henry's 160-year history, this particular church has gone through a number of changes and faced numerous suppression attempts. A close look at the history of St. Henry's can reveal a more complex set of reasons behind church closures than heretofore has been presented, while pointing out regional differences that may exist in closure debates. At the same time, the study may contribute to an understanding of how changing urban demographics may profoundly affect social and cultural institutions.

This microhistory of a single Catholic church in an urban area during times of change points out how a localized approach to the subject can offer an opportunity to incorporate multiple forms of data and to fully explore the information without trying to string together a grand narrative filled with exceptions, assumptions, and broad but nonspecific claims. In his article advocating for microhistory, István Szijártó explains, "Microhistory is necessarily built on the 'little facts' of the sources than traditional social history and it is more concrete."¹¹ As Giovanni Levi notes,

Microhistory tries not to sacrifice knowledge of individual elements to wider generalizations, and in fact it accentuates individual lives and events. But at the same time, it tries not to reject all forms of abstraction since minimal facts and individual cases can serve to reveal more general phenomena.¹²

This localized approach, in contrast to a more overarching one, also takes account of local factors often overlooked in a wider approach.

Concentrating on a local history also points out how national, and in some cases international, events and decisions can affect dioceses and churches on a local level. Sex scandals, fiscal instability, and dwindling attendance numbers may be factors in some closings, but not in others.

¹¹ Szijártó, István, "Four Arguments for Microhistory," *Rethinking History* 6, no. 2 (2002): 209-215.

¹² Giovanni Levi, "On Microhistory," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke. (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2001), 112-113.

Focusing on a single church also allows for future comparative studies by region, which may reveal distinctive factors that contributed to local decisions. As Levi wrote, “The unifying principle of all microhistorical research is the belief that microhistoric observations will reveal factors previously unobserved.”¹³ In addition, accounts that merely address the reasons behind the decisions of which churches would close, which would stay open, and where those who attended the suppressed parishes would now attend church, often overlook the initial conditions under which these churches were created, how these conditions may have changed over time, and how these changes relate to the decisions to close these churches.

A close look at one parish church, in this case St. Henry’s, also offers an opportunity to gain an understanding of how decisions are made in the Catholic Church by revealing how the church hierarchy and parishes might interact on the ground level with each other and their diocese. Although much has been written about congregational resistance to church closings, little has been reported of the sometimes-divisive opinions on the closings within the local church hierarchy. A look at the experience of St. Henry’s reveals how personalities often drove many of these interparish conflicts. For instance, dividing the time periods of the various churches by the leadership periods of their priests could reveal the impact of individuals over institutional pressures over time, an element that is often missing in accounts of church activities. This work argues that by keeping a local focus on what could easily be a national narrative a more complete story can be told.

Historiography

¹³ Levi, 101.

Gerald Gamm,¹⁴ John T. McGreevy,¹⁵ and Patrick D. Jones¹⁶ chose to focus on the Urban North in writing their local Catholic histories of Boston, Chicago, and Milwaukee respectively. Gerald Gamm's *Urban Exodus* explores the attachment and loyalty that many Catholics experience to their local parishes and how these are cultivated over time.¹⁷ Although the writings of McGreevy and Jones do not deal with church closures, they do provide a way of looking at how major events and divisions play out on the parish level, providing a case for using a microhistory to study the institution of the Catholic Church during a time of change. Both of their books look at segregation and the civil rights movement, and how these issues were handled by dioceses within the Catholic Church. Jones's *Selma of the North*, in particular, is useful in this regard as his work revolves around the work of a particular priest, Fr. James Groppi, during the civil rights movement.¹⁸ Although these works are useful, these, like many others, concentrate on the urban northern United States.

Shifting to the Archdiocese of New Orleans to study the suppression movement could give a broader look at church suppressions by increasing the focus geographically.

John C. Seitz also focused on the northern Catholic experience in his work in which he documented the most recent round of church closures in Boston¹⁹ in his book *No Closure*.²⁰ In this study, Seitz examines how the relationship changed between church leadership and its members once the decision came down to close some parishes. He also examines what closure

¹⁴ Gerald Gamm, *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews Left Boston and the Catholics Stayed* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

¹⁵ John T. McGreevy, *Parish Boundaries: The Catholic Encounter with Race in the Twentieth-Century Urban North* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

¹⁶ Patrick D. Jones, *The Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

¹⁷ Gamm.

¹⁸ Jones.

¹⁹ Beginning in 2004, the Archdiocese of Boston, under the guidance of Archbishop Sean P. O'Malley, began the process of merging or closing over 80 parishes.

²⁰ John C. Seitz, *No Closure: Catholic Practice and Boston's Parish Shutdowns* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).

might mean for an understanding of Catholic dogma and the virtue of sacrifice. In Boston, the hierarchy and the parishioners debated the meaning of sacrifice – the church argued the closures were a necessary sacrifice, related to obedience, while parishioners argued their sacrifice came from their fight to keep the church open. Seitz's focus on one city and the personal relationships is useful; however, much of his work is focused on the changing interpretation of sacrifice over time.

Seitz's emphasis on theological issues highlights the divisions that occurred not only on a parish level, but also on a personal level. Individual protesters sought to find meaning in their resistance to the Archdiocese's decision to close their individual parishes. By focusing on the individuals rather than the parish, Seitz's study becomes more focused on the individual motives and the sense of sacrifice for taking over the church rather than providing an example of the response of church leadership.

While both Steltz and Gamm explore the attachment of Catholic parishioners to their parishes, their focus on theological and religious reasoning behind parishioners' attachment to parishes ignores struggles that are often less theological and more secular and political or even personal in nature. Catholic traditions may bind parishioners to their parish and may play a role in attachment to space, but often it is the inner workings of the religious hierarchy that determine the outcome of disputes within the church. While the issues pointed to by Gamm and Steltz in their works can help explain the attachment that the laity feels for their church, their work ignores the mechanisms at work within the structure of the Catholic Church.

In *People, Priests, and Prelates: Ecclesiastical Democracy and the Tensions of Trusteeship*, Patrick Carey looks at the tensions faced by the American Catholic Church within its

own ranks.²¹ Although the bulk of his work focuses on the Antebellum church in the United States, some of the issues he addresses come into play not only in the story of the modern church closures, but are also never far from the issues raised by the numerous suppression attempts of St. Henry's. Many of the issues addressed by Carey, such as church ownership and the role of laymen in the church hierarchy, are never fully resolved by the local authority, but rather fade to the background only to resurface the next time the laity and the church hierarchies are at odds. His work points out that church ownership seems to be a constant issue brought up any time a parish suppression or merger is threatened or occurs.

While Carey's study is a valuable look at various conflicts within the Catholic hierarchy in the early United States, it focuses on the problems faced by the Catholic Church in establishing itself in the United States. One of those early conflicts was the issue of trusteeism,²² the use of civil law, and ownership of church property, by lay parishioners to exercise greater control over their parish. This tactic would most often be employed by parishioners in battles over the appointment of a parish priest. However, the ownership of church property would often be used in conflicts over church closure as well. These ways in which the church has historically solved the problem of church ownership in America would come up again in the most recent church closures, as the issue of trusteeism has been used in secular courts by many modern suppressed parishes to challenge closure decisions by local archdioceses. Trusteeism and the legal framework established by the early church in the United States becomes part of the larger story of the fight against many church closures by local parishioners in modern times. One of the most notable examples of this in recent times was the nearly decade-long struggle by the

²¹ Patrick Carey, *People, Priests, and Prelates: Ecclesiastical Democracy and the Tensions of Trusteeism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987).

²² *Trusteeism* is a practice within the Roman Catholic Church in the United States where laymen assist in the administration of ecclesiastical property.

parishioners of St. Stanislaus Kostka Church in St. Louis, where the parishioners and board of directors engaged with Archbishop Leo Burke in the secular courts over control of the parish, which was resolved in 2013. While many of the early attempts to close St. Henry's do not bear the hallmarks of a trustee conflict, arguments made by the early parishioners show that the issue of church ownership was not far from the minds of the early parishioners of St. Henry's and points out that works such as Carey's look at the history and development of churches can help shed light on today's issues.

St. Henry's Catholic Church has been mentioned occasionally in literature on New Orleans Catholicism, most notably in Roger Baudier's *The Catholic Church in Louisiana*²³ and Annemarie Kasteel's biography of Archbishop Francis Janssens, who led the Archdiocese of New Orleans from 1888 – 1897.²⁴ While neither work focuses specifically on the parish of St. Henry's, both provide background information on the church and suggest that a history of the early years of St. Henry's offers a chance to not only tell a detailed story about parish suppressions, but could contribute to scholarship on many areas of Catholic history and urban history.

Exploring the topics of immigration and language, which play a large part in the history of St. Henry's, could be useful in contributing to overall scholarship associated with urban history and the Anglicization of immigrant communities. St. Henry's was originally founded as a German mission parish. Works such as Ellen C. Merrill's *Germans of Louisiana*²⁵ and J. Hanno Deiller's profile of German churches in New Orleans²⁶ briefly mention St. Henry's and its

²³ Roger Baudier, *The Catholic Church in Louisiana* (New Orleans: Louisiana Library Association Public Library Section, 1972).

²⁴ Annemarie Kasteel, *Francis Janssens 1843-1897: A Dutch-American Prelate* (Lafayette: The Center for Louisiana Studies, 1992).

²⁵ Ellen C. Merrill, *Germans of Louisiana* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company, 2005).

²⁶ J. Hanno Deiller, *A History of the German Churches in Louisiana: 1823-1893* (Lafayette, La.: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1983).

importance to the German immigrant population in New Orleans. Its slow development into an English-speaking parish created many conflicts with its neighboring territorial parish, St. Stephen's, which was established as a parish with set territorial limits. A close look at the founding of St. Henry's and its transition from a German-speaking mission parish into an English-speaking one could add to research associated with immigration in urban areas, such as John Bodnar's *The Transplanted*.²⁷ In addition, conflict resulting from the anglicizing of the churches can be useful in illustrating the inner workings of the Church hierarchy as well as how disputes were settled between and among parishes.

In his thesis on the decline of German ethnicity in New Orleans, Raimund Berchtold focused on the reasons for the decline of German ethnic identity and its impact on the German social institutions that were created during the German immigration boom of the mid-1850s.²⁸ Berchtold cites the decline in German immigration as a major factor in the disappearance of German cultural institutions. While Berchtold's work focuses on German identity, it also provides a framework for looking at the overarching reasons a German institution in New Orleans would struggle during the late 19th and early 20th century. By looking at factors such as the decline in German immigration to New Orleans after 1854 and the rerouting of German trade routes away from New Orleans to Texas, Berchtold argues the institutions originally established to help immigrants acclimate themselves to their new country, such as churches, schools, and social clubs, suffered once German immigration to New Orleans declined.²⁹ While Berchtold's work may explain why a German public presence in New Orleans all but disappeared by the

²⁷ John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

²⁸ Raimund Berchtold, "The Decline of German Ethnicity in New Orleans, 1880-1930" (University of New Orleans, 1984).

²⁹ Even though Berchtold notes a drastic decline in German immigration after 1854, Leumas writes that German immigrants outnumbered both Irish and French immigrants until 1920 (Leumas, 2009).

1930s, it ignored how some of these institutions successfully transformed as the group they were established to serve Americanized.

In multilingual 19th century New Orleans, language played a large role in the establishment and loyalty to the local church. In early 20th century New Orleans, American attitudes about Germans and German language also may have affected the movement to suppress a German church. For instance, by the 1918-1919 school year, the singing of German songs was banned in New Orleans public Schools.³⁰ The movement toward the English language may have also been seen as an acceptable reason for closure. The fight against the closure was motivated by more than just loyalty to a community church. In addition, personal relationships, often excluded from accounts on church closures, served to cross boundaries of established authority within the Catholic Church.

In Catholic Southern New Orleans, despite changes in language, customs of the original immigrant culture often remained in church customs. Local Catholics – parishioners and priests – crossed ecclesiastical and political lines, using whatever means available to them, to protect their churches. This study of one local church and its experience will point out the sometimes-overlooked intra-church conflicts and alliances that may inform and influence church closures. It may also point to the fact that a church's fate may have had less to do with the propagation of the faith, and more to do with what amounts to little more than political and practical expediency.

St. Henry's Background

³⁰ Mary Conway, Annual Report of Division of Music, 1918-1919 Annual Reports New Orleans Public School System, University of New Orleans Library.

St. Henry's Catholic Church was originally founded in the mid 19th century³¹ by the Vincentian³² order of priests to serve the German-speaking families of Uptown New Orleans. St. Henry's began as a mission of the larger, neighboring, French-speaking St. Stephen's Catholic Church.³³ The exact date of the founding of St. Henry's is difficult to discern. Even within church records, multiple dates are given for St. Henry's founding and for its founder. Initially having two churches, only a city block apart, had been seen as a necessity in order to serve parishioners who spoke two different languages in a multi-lingual 19th century New Orleans. However, according to one church history, shortly after the construction of the original St. Henry's church, the Vincentian fathers (which included the Archbishop of New Orleans, Jean Marie Odin³⁴) realized that they could not adequately support it and sought to suppress it and merge it with St. Stephen's.³⁵

³¹ *St Henry's Centennial Celebration*, 1956, St. Henry's Parish Historical Documents, St. Henry Correspondence, 1912-1961, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, Louisiana.

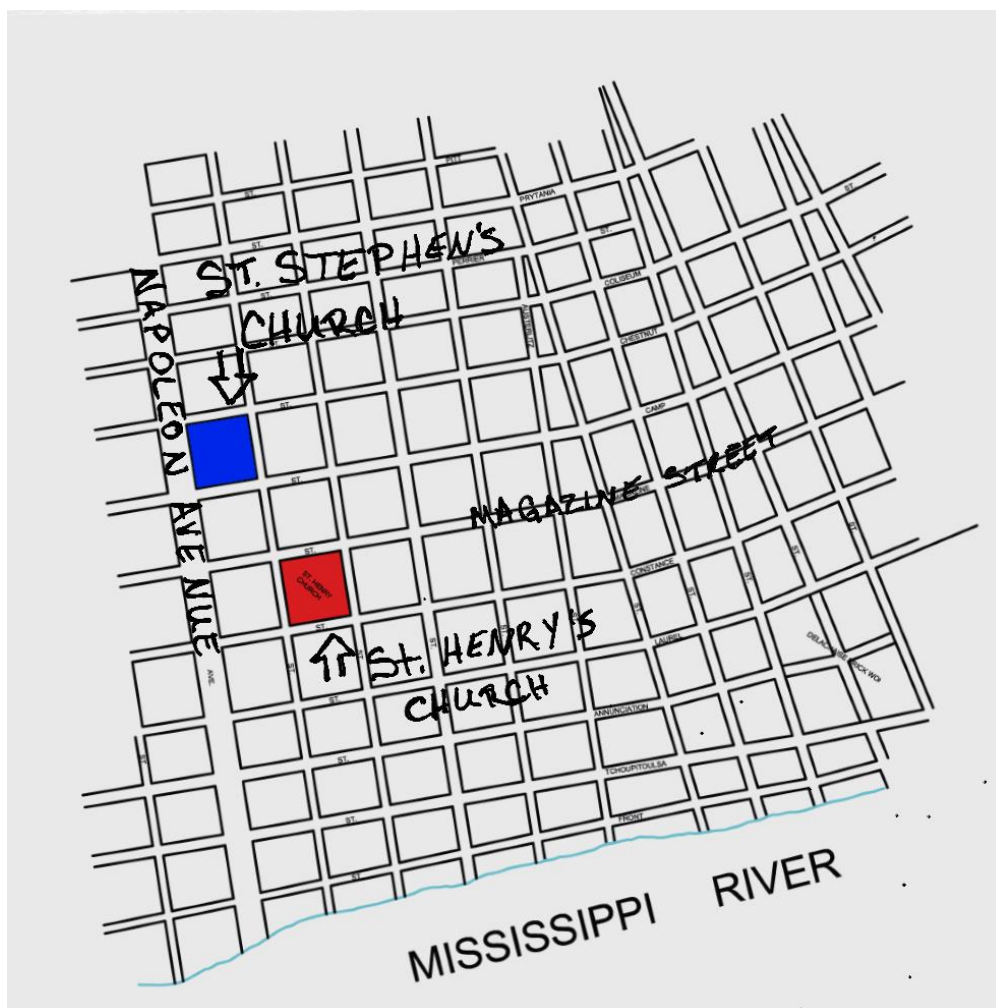
Anniversary books published by St. Henry's Parish and The Archdiocese of New Orleans state that St. Henry's was founded in 1856; however, in subsequent parish reports, the year of St. Henry's founding seems to change. The changes seem to coincide with the numerous conflicts with neighboring St. Stephen's parish as well as changing canon law.

³²The Congregation of the Mission is a Catholic religious order founded by St. Vincent de Paul in the early 17th century at the Priory of St. Lazare in Paris, France. In the source material, members of this order are referred to as both Vincentians and Lazarists. Since the majority of the source material refers to this order as the Vincentians, I will refer to them as the Vincentians, unless directly quoting a source.

³³ St. Stephen's Catholic Church was founded by the Vincentian Order of Priests in 1849.

³⁴ Archbishop of New Orleans, 1861-1870.

³⁵ The Parishioners of St. Henry's Parish to Pietro Fumasoni Biondi, May 10 1925, St. Henry's Parish Historical Documents, St. Henry Correspondence, 1878-1936, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.



For the Vincentians, the financial burden of supporting two churches so close together soon overcame the need for supporting linguistic and ethnic diversity, and the order set about to suppress their smaller neighbor church.

This early effort to obliterate St. Henry's marks the beginning of a 160-year struggle that would define the Parish of St. Henry's and its parishioners. St. Henry's survived this first effort to suppress the small German parish; however, a second attempt developed by its neighboring parish in the mid-1920s, following Archbishop James H. Blenk's³⁶ change of the language of

³⁶ Archbishop of New Orleans, 1906-1917.

worship from German to English, and Archbishop Blenk's assignment of permanent boundaries to St. Henry's.³⁷ So, almost from inception, the parish faced challenges -- at first from the national head of the Vincentian order and the Vincentian priests of St. Stephen's Parish with the Archdiocese of New Orleans as an ally, and eventually from the Archdiocese itself, culminating in the 2007 decision by Archbishop Alfred Hughes³⁸ to permanently close St. Henry's. It was only after a prolonged and acrimonious fight between parishioners and the archdiocese that included the police intervention mentioned earlier, that St. Henry's was reopened, albeit on a limited basis, in 2011, under Archbishop Gregory Aymond,³⁹ a New Orleans native.

Language in the Church

While the original parishioners at St. Henry's spoke German, it was not long after coming under Archdiocesan control that the need became apparent for a transition to English. In his study of immigrants to urban areas in the United States, Bodnar discusses the importance of ethnic churches for these new arrivals.⁴⁰ Churches provided financial assistance, education, and a community for immigrants.⁴¹ However, Bodnar argues, once the population became more assimilated into American cultural life, certain aspects of ethnic churches could hinder the new Americans from fully experiencing their worship services. For instance, once the descendants of the original immigrants began to speak English, the fact that their religious services were still conducted in the language of their ancestors might create a barrier to their faith and to their assimilation into the community. The study of St. Henry's reaffirms this argument. In his first official visit to St. Henry's in 1888, the year of his appointment, Archbishop Janssens did not mention whether or not the students at the church school understood both German and English;

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Archbishop of New Orleans, 2002-2009.

³⁹ Archbishop of New Orleans, 2009-present.

⁴⁰ Bodnar, 144-148.

⁴¹ Ibid.

he only noted that they were “well conducted.”⁴² However, in that same year, on December 14, he returned to St. Henry’s to prepare the children for the celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation. Upon examining the *Confirmandi*⁴³ he was concerned that they did not understand the meaning of the Catechism because it was taught in German and the students primarily spoke English.⁴⁴ This visit may have been what prompted Archbishop Janssens to issue an order in 1894 stating that all instruction and sermons at St. Henry’s be given in English. The Vincentians objected to the order, perhaps foreseeing the disputes that would be caused by the official change in language.⁴⁵

The issues caused by the sharp decline in German ethnicity, and the subsequent decline of the German language, on German social institutions in New Orleans were not exclusive to St. Henry’s. Raimund Berchtold writes that by the late 1880s, approximately 30 years after the height of German immigration to New Orleans, German ethnic identity in New Orleans was on the decline.⁴⁶ According to Berchtold, by the late 1880s many of the remaining German churches and schools began to transition from German to English.⁴⁷ This transition could be seen not only by the language in which the services were conducted, but also in the dropping of the “German” designation by many churches that had traditionally served the German population.⁴⁸ By 1914, of the 27 remaining churches originally established to service the

⁴² Diary of Archbishop Francis Janssens(1888-1896), October 3, 1888, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

⁴³ *Confirmandi* are students who are participating in the sacrament of Confirmation.

⁴⁴ Ibid., December 15, 1888.

⁴⁵ Archdiocese of New Orleans to Diomedea Falconio, 1911, Apostolic Delegation Folder III, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

⁴⁶ Raimund Berchtold, “The Decline of German Ethnicity in New Orleans, 1880-1930” (University of New Orleans, 1984), 2.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 14.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 16.

German community of New Orleans, half had discontinued German-language services entirely and the other half had become bilingual.⁴⁹

In her work on the language shift from French to English within the Louisiana Catholic Church, Emilie Leumas has written on the pressure on priests from the Archdiocese of New Orleans just after the turn of the century to encourage their churches to convert to English, and to change their homilies to English during that period. Although Fr. Bogaerts had written letters explaining the need for a non-French-born Archbishop and the need to move toward English as early as 1887, Leumas argues that the “linguistic tip” occurred during the administration of Archbishop Blenk in 1907, when St. Henry’s was under the direction of Fr. Ludolf Richen, when the sacramental registers were finally switched to English. In 1913, the Archiepiscopal Council minutes were also switched from French to English. Leumas points out that the priests’ motivations for language change reflected wider societal changes taking place within and outside their locality, and the source of language change was “rooted in the massive migration of [English speaking] Irish Catholics.”⁵⁰ These pressures to switch to English were probably felt even more in the German community as World War I approached and America went to war with Germany.

The language shift at St. Henry’s may have been ameliorated by the specific personalities in charge at the time. In 1871, St. Henry’s parishioners may have believed that a transition from a Vincentian-administered parish to an archdiocesan parish would keep their German language at St. Henry’s. However, the shift and the appointment of Belgian born Fr. Bogaerts as parish priest may have actually hastened the transition from German to English. It was even noted in a

⁴⁹ Ibid, 15-16.

⁵⁰ Emilie Leumas, “Mais I Sin in French, I Gotta go to Confession in French: A Study of the Language Shift From French to English Within the Louisiana Catholic Church” (PhD dissertation, Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 2009), 122.

letter from 1911 that neither Bogaerts nor Richen sought to “establish a little Germany in the United States,” as they sought to introduce English whenever possible at the church as well as the school.⁵¹ At the same time, the appointment of Fr. Bogaerts and his German-born successor Fr. Richen may have helped ease the transition. Leumas points to the sacrament of confession in particular as one area where a parishioner, though fluent in English, may feel more comfortable in his or her mother language.⁵² The appointments of Fr. Bogaerts and Fr. Richen, priests who spoke both German as well as English, may have helped the parishioners accept the transition to English.

Even though these parishioners now spoke English, a language shift did not automatically mean that they would lose their loyalty to their ethnic place of worship. For instance, despite language change, ethnic customs of the original immigrant culture – customs of marriages, funerals, holidays – might remain in church customs, distinctions important to the parishioners. These performances of what historian Joseph Roach called “otherwise forgotten substitutions,” might serve to link the parishioners in a common culture beyond language and create a loyalty to their church based on a shared ethnic past.⁵³

Contested Boundaries

As mentioned, parish boundary disputes are a recurring theme throughout the history of St. Henry’s and St. Stephen’s. In an early parish report from the parishes of Sts. Stephen and Henry, there appears to be early conflict with the pastor of a church on Carrollton Avenue in New Orleans. A letter on the back of an Annual Report for both St. Stephen’s and St. Henry’s sought clarification from the Archdiocese on the parish boundaries of St. Stephen’s and St.

⁵¹ Archdiocese of New Orleans to Diomedea Falconio, 1911, Apostolic Delegation, Apostolic Delegation III, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

⁵² Leumas, 1.

⁵³ Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

Henry's, which the author of the report saw as all of Jefferson City. The area is bounded by Joseph Street along the river to Peters, then inland to Pitt Street, and "3 squares of Rickerville," which is an area of Uptown New Orleans.⁵⁴

In an 1877 document, Fr. Bogaerts had acquired property for "purposes to the benefit of the German Catholic Congregation of the neighborhood,"⁵⁵ So at that time, two decades after its founding, St. Henry's was still designated as a German mission parish, which meant that St. Henry's sole purpose was to minister to the German population of New Orleans within its territorial boundaries and its "boundaries" were linguistic as well as geographic.

According to an 1895 list of parishes and their boundaries, St. Henry's was one of five churches in the city listed as German churches.⁵⁶ This listing set St. Henry's boundaries as the German population that lived from Audubon Park to Toledano, [Mississippi] river to swamp.⁵⁷ Two neighboring churches were also listed as serving the German population in the area: Mater Dolorosa on the Audubon Park side of St. Henry's, and St. Mary's Assumption on the Toledano Street side, bordering St. Henry's.⁵⁸ At this time, three Catholic Churches served German parishes in a relatively small area of uptown New Orleans.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Annual Report, Undated, St. Stephen's Parish Historical Documents, St. Stephen's Church Parish Reports and Correspondence 1839-1907, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

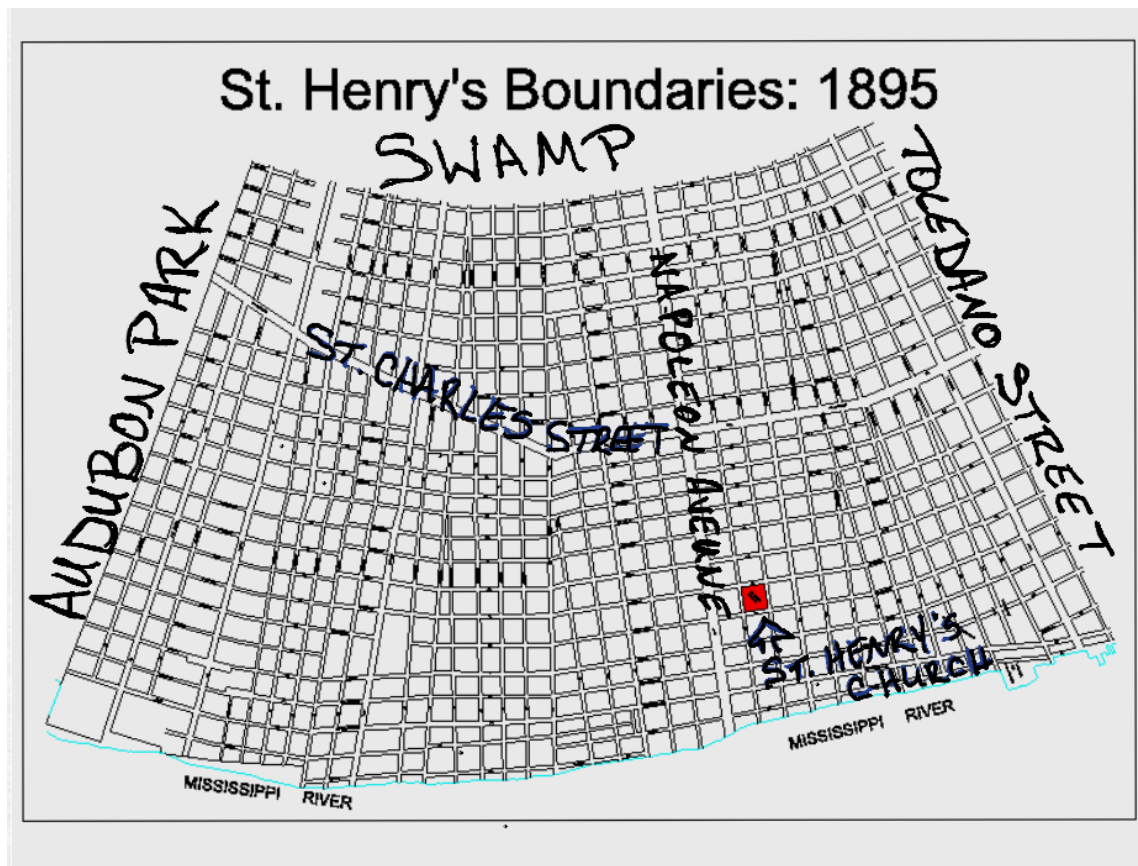
⁵⁵ Octave De Armas (notary), Sale of Property, July 21 1877, Clerk of Civil District Court, Notarial Archives Division, New Orleans, LA.

⁵⁶ New Orleans Parish Boundaries 1895, Archbishop Francis Janssens Canonical Decisions to 1897, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ In looking at pre-Civil War New York, Bodnar described two Irish churches located close to each other. He writes that while both of these churches served the Irish population, the congregations were from different class backgrounds, justifying two churches. Class distinctions could have contributed to the creation of German Catholic churches in New Orleans, as well.



In 1892, when authorizing an Italian church in New Orleans, Archbishop Janssens outlined the guidelines of an ethnic church and whom they can minister to:

The following is stipulated in granting permission to build a church for the Italians.

1. No pew nor seat can be rented to in the Italian church except to Italians by birth or to their descendants.
2. Funerals, marriages or baptisms are permitted only for those, named sub. 1.
3. Sermons and public instructions to be exclusively in the Italian language..

The fathers will have jurisdiction over all the Italians in the Diocese, as long as no other Italian church shall be founded.⁶⁰

While St. Henry's was founded much earlier and under different circumstances, as a mission church, it probably followed similar rules in order to help preserve the boundaries set by territorial parishes and other mission parishes. However, in correspondences from Fr. Bogaerts

⁶⁰ Diary of the Archbishop Francis Janssens (1888-1896), March 24, 1892.

as well as a journal entry by Archbishop Janssens in 1888, it becomes obvious that the need for a German mission parish was diminishing by the latter part of the 19th century.

During Janssen's reign, archdiocesan officials sought to officially incorporate with the State of Louisiana not only various religious orders, but the parishes as well. In 1894, St. Henry's was officially incorporated by the State of Louisiana; however, the charter of incorporation lacked any mention of parish boundaries, nor does it state that St. Henry's sole purpose was to serve a German parish.⁶¹ Failing to incorporate St. Henry's as a strictly German parish may indicate that plans were already in the works by 1894 to transition St. Henry's to a territorial parish. This transition would have been in line with what Fr. Bogaerts had noted about English becoming the dominant language and other languages fading. By not incorporating St. Henry's as a German Mission Parish, the Archbishop avoided possible legal challenges from St. Stephen's when the time would come to assign territorial rights to St. Henry's.

However, the very next year, in Archbishop Janssen's 1895 *Limits of City Parishes*, in which St. Henry's boundaries are listed as "Audubon Park to Toledano, river to swamp,"⁶² the same document continues to list St. Henry's as a German church, along with four other German churches. Other churches may have had specific ethnic affiliations, but if so these were not noted in the official *Limits of City Parishes*. So although in a secular document the Archbishop may have incorporated the parish without mentioning its role as a German parish, in church documents he continued to list St. Henry's as a German mission parish.

The attention that the Archdiocese paid to parish boundaries and defining precisely who could attend which church shows the importance of these issues to the Archdiocese. The rules regarding parish boundaries and church membership are central to a church's finances and its

⁶¹ Articles of Incorporation, April 9, 1894, St. Henry's Parish Historical Documents, Parish Reports and Correspondence Prior to 1971, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

⁶² New Orleans Parish Boundaries 1895.

overall ability to remain a healthy parish. These boundary and membership disputes, related to finances, rather than religious matters, often play into the power struggles within the Catholic Church hierarchy.

Vincentian Era

Ironically, the Vincentian priests of St. Stephen's Parish, who led both attempts to suppress St. Henry's, were the original founders of the German-language church dedicated to St. Henry, the patron saint of Germany, and some of the first mentions of St. Henry's Church appear in the correspondences of St. Stephen's church. An undated correspondence lists the number of baptisms, marriages, and Pascal communions that took place in St. Henry's in 1858 and 1859. Both of the informal parish histories of St. Henry's state that Vincentian priests staffed St. Henry's until 1871, when St. Henry's separated from the Vincentians and became part of the Archdiocese, with secular (rather than Vincentian) priests.^{63,64}

Two of the earliest priests to minister to the German Catholics of St. Henry's were Fr. P. Thoma⁶⁵ and Fr. P. A. Krämer.⁶⁶ New Orleans historian Roger Baudier lists both Fr. Krämer and Fr. Thoma as Vincentian priests at St. Stephen's in New Orleans at this time.⁶⁷ However, Thoma's signature on an early correspondence raises the question of his affiliation with the Vincentian order. Usually in letters, as well as on official documents, members of the Vincentian order sign their names with a C.M. (for Congregation of the Mission, the formal name for the Vincentian order) to indicate their religious order. However, on this document, Fr.

⁶³ *St. Henry's Centennial Celebration*, 1956.

⁶⁴ *St. Henry's 125 Anniversary Celebration*, 1981, St. Henry's Parish Historical Documents, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

⁶⁵ Some sources list his name as Cornelius Thoma and others Corneille Thomas.

⁶⁶ J. Hanno Deiler, *A History of the German Churches in Louisiana: 1823-1893* (Lafayette, LA: Center for Louisiana Studies, University of Southwestern Louisiana, 1983), 77-78.

⁶⁷ Roger Baudier, *The Catholic Church In Louisiana* (New Orleans: Association Public Library Section, 1939), 565.

Thoma did not add the traditional C.M. after his name.⁶⁸ This omission could indicate that Fr. Thoma was planning to leave the Vincentian order and take over as pastor at St. Henry's if the order was successful in abandoning St. Henry's and no longer supplying one of their priests to the small parish. However, according to John Hanno Deiler, another Vincentian priest, Fr. Valentine Rademacher, had a falling out with his superiors within the order and planned on becoming the priest of St. Henry's independent of the Congregation of the Mission.⁶⁹ While Fr. Rademacher's plan was thwarted by his recall, it was the appointment of Fr. Landy, who could not speak German, that caused the parishioners of St. Henry's to take action and demand a transfer from the Vincentian Order to the Archdiocese. St. Henry's was transferred to the Archdiocese of New Orleans in 1871, while St. Stephen's remained under the Vincentian Order.⁷⁰

Also in the early parish reports from St. Henry's, while still under the patronage of St. Stephen's, was a report of a dispute with another church with regards to parish boundaries. While the details of the dispute on the undated document are scarce (there is no mention of the church's name nor whether the dispute concerned St. Henry's or St. Stephen's), the dispute does illustrate the importance of territorial limits of parishes.⁷¹ The document also indicates that even though both churches at the time were associated with a religious order, and ministered by priests from that order, the local Archbishop held final say on aspects of their ministry, such as territorial limits. Parish boundary disputes, as will be discussed later, would become a recurring theme throughout the history of St. Henry's and St. Stephen's.

Leadership at St. Henry's While Under Father Bogaerts

⁶⁸ Undated, P. Thoma, St. Stephens Church, N.O. St. Stephen's Parish Historical Documents, St. Stephen's Correspondences (1839-1907) Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

⁶⁹ Deiler, 77-18.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Sts. Stephen and Henry Parish Report, Undated, St. Stephen Church, N.O. Correspondences 1839-1907, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

From 1871 to 1891, Fr. John Baptiste Bogaerts⁷² led St. Henry's as its pastor. According to his diocesan biography, Fr. Bogaerts, who spoke German, French, and English, was born and educated in Belgium.⁷³ In 1863, Fr. Bogaerts received his first appointment in the New Orleans Archdiocese as an associate pastor of the German-speaking parish of St. James in Gretna, then a suburb of New Orleans.⁷⁴ From there he became the head pastor of St. Henry's. Fr. Bogaerts was highly respected in the Catholic hierarchy of New Orleans, a factor that may have affected later decisions in St. Henry's favor when conflict emerged pitting the Vincentians against the Archdiocese. For instance, while at St. Henry's, Fr. Bogaerts was one of the choices of Archbishop Napoleon-Joseph Perche,⁷⁵ a French native, for the position of Vicar-General, the principal deputy of the bishop of a diocese, the highest official after the diocesan bishop or his equivalent in canon law. In fact, Archbishop Perche wrote, "Bogaerts possessed all the qualities a bishop should have."⁷⁶

In 1887, Fr. Bogaerts wrote a series of letters to Rome concerning the choice of a successor to Archbishop Perche. These letters point out two issues – the shift in language to English and the lack of solidarity in the local Catholic hierarchy. A group of Fr. Bogaerts's peers, particularly a group that Fr. Bogaerts refers to as the "clique," had argued that Archbishop Perche's successor should be French. In his letters, Fr. Bogaerts argues that English was becoming the predominant spoken and written language in New Orleans, and that French, as well as other languages, was on the decline.⁷⁷

⁷² Some sources list the spelling of his last name as Bogerts.

⁷³ The advantage of the Appointment of Belgium priests to New Orleans could have been their knowledge of both German and French, languages common in the 19th century city.

⁷⁴ Biography of Rev. John Baptiste Bogaerts, St. Henry Correspondence, 1878-1936, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

⁷⁵ Archbishop of New Orleans, 1870-1883.

⁷⁶ Kasteel, 170.

⁷⁷ Kasteel, 179-182.

Later in 1888, the Vatican appointed Francis Janssens,⁷⁸ a Dutch-born citizen who spoke several languages including English, German, and French,⁷⁹ to succeed Archbishop Perche. Under the new administration of Archbishop Janssens, Fr. Bogaerts became Vicar-General. In addition, in 1889, while the Archbishop traveled to Europe to fill a shortage of priests in New Orleans, Archbishop Janssens appointed the French- and German-speaking Fr. Bogaerts to the post of Administrator, whose duties included taking care of the diocese and making decisions in the Archbishop's absence.^{80,81} Upon his return in November of 1889, Archbishop Janssens wrote, "The V. Rev. Administrator Jn. Bogaerts, has prudently and wisely administered in my absence."⁸² In 1891, upon his appointment as Chancellor of the Archbishopric, responsible for managing the records of the Archdiocese, Fr. Bogaerts left St. Henry's.⁸³ These appointments confirm Bogaerts's status and his being held in high esteem by Archbishop Janssens, a relationship that could explain why St. Henry's was allowed to survive during this time despite strong movement for its suppression by the Vincentian priests of the nearby parish of St. Stephens.

On April 30, 1891, Archbishop Janssens appointed Fr. Ludolf Richen, a German priest, to replace Fr. Bogaerts as pastor of St. Henry's with the stipulation that if Fr. Bogaerts left his position as Chancellor in the Archbishopric, Bogaerts would be able to return to St. Henry's should he want to.⁸⁴ Illness would eventually limit Bogaerts' abilities and force him to leave the

⁷⁸ Archbishop of New Orleans, 1888-1897.

⁷⁹ Leumas, 47.

⁸⁰ Diary of Archbishop Francis Janssens (1888-1896), 1889, pp. 27.

⁸¹ During his time as administrator, Fr. Bogaerts kept two books worth mentioning, one a detailed copy of his correspondences and the other a diary of his time as administrator.

⁸² Diary of Archbishop Francis Janssens (1888-1896), November 23, 1889.

⁸³ Kasteel, 179-182.

⁸⁴ Diary of Archbishop Francis Janssens (1888-1896), April 30, 1891.

Archbishopric in October of 1896. Although he continued his priestly duties elsewhere, he did not return to St. Henry's.⁸⁵

Fire, New School, and First Rumblings of Territorial Parish

In 1891, Fr. Richen, who had been ordained only a year earlier, was appointed successor to Fr. Bogaerts as pastor at St. Henry's.⁸⁶ In an 1894 letter to Archbishop Janssens, Fr. Richen made the first case for changing St. Henry's designation from a mission parish (a parish created to serve a specific ethnic group) to a territorial parish (a more traditional parish based on geographical boundaries, open to all).⁸⁷ The transition to English as the primary language of the parishioners of St. Henry's became one of the principal arguments Fr. Richen used in 1894 to persuade the Archdiocese to turn St. Henry's into a territorial parish.⁸⁸

As early as 1891, his first year as pastor of St. Henry's, Fr. Richen had begun advocating for the church to change its designation from a German mission parish to a traditional parish. Fr. Richen seemed to gain early support from Archbishop Janssens⁸⁹ for the idea of transforming St. Henry's. In a letter to the Archbishop dated December 24, 1894, Fr. Richen noted the decline of the number of German immigrants since the founding of St. Henry's, as well as the decline of the use of the German language by the descendants of the original parishioners.

Fr. Richen reminded Archbishop Janssens that in 1891 the Archbishop had told Fr. Richen that he intended to make some changes to the mission parish. In 1894, Archbishop Janssens, while at St. Henry's for a confirmation, had reiterated the need for a change and further had suggested that perhaps St. Henry's and St. Stephen's could be given equal parochial rights to

⁸⁵ Diary of Archbishop Francis Janssens (1888-1896), November 12, 1893.

⁸⁶ *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Louisiana*, vol. 2 (Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1892), 337.

⁸⁷ Ludolf Richen to Francis Janssens, December 24, 1894, St. Henry's Parish Historical Documents, St. Henry's Correspondence, 1878-1936, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Archbishop of New Orleans 1888-1897.

the same territory, meaning that both would draw parishioners from the same territory. Fr. Richen had not supported this plan, expressing the belief that granting both parishes rights to the same territory could lead to unrest and conflict between the two. Fr. Richen believed this conflict could be avoided by assigning each parish specific and distinct territorial limits.⁹⁰ Eventually, the Archbishop agreed and the two parishes were assigned district territorial boundaries. Space – not language – would define their territories.

On December 23, 1894, Fr. Richen met with the pew holders⁹¹ of St. Henry's to discuss the possibility of changing St. Henry's from a German mission parish to a territorial parish. A committee of two was formed to discuss the issue with Archbishop Janssens and report to him the sense of the meeting as well as the feeling of the parishioners.⁹² The issue of St. Henry's gaining territorial rights, therefore, seems to have begun as early as 1891. The issue did not gain traction, however, until almost two decades later. The church continued with an uncertain future.

Despite the church's shaky ground, the years of 1907 and 1908 saw an expansion of St. Henry's Parish School. On April 11, 1907, Fr. Richen had purchased a lot of land for \$1,050 for the Congregation of St. Henry's on the same block as the church and the existing St. Henry's School. St. Henry's board unanimously approved this purchase on April 23 of that year.⁹³ While the purchase of a new lot indicates that plans were well underway for improving the school, a fire on the evening of June 9, 1908, hastened the plans for building a new school for the parishioners of St. Henry's. While the church structure received only minor damage, the old wooden frame schoolhouse was completely destroyed. The fire, which burned along Magazine

⁹⁰ Ludolf Richen to Francis Janssens, December 24, 1894.

⁹¹ *Pew holders* are parishioners who either own or rent a pew in a church.

⁹² Ludolf Richen to Francis Janssens, December 24, 1894.

⁹³ Minutes of Meeting of the Board, April 13, 1907, St. Henry's Parish Historical Documents, St. Henry's Minute Book, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

Street between Berlin⁹⁴ and Milan streets and part of the way from Constance to Camp streets along both Berlin and Milan, destroyed much of the block on which St. Henry's was located, causing an estimated one hundred thousand dollars in damage and one death.⁹⁵

The parishioners of St. Henry's did not waste time in replacing the old school building. On August 9, 1908, Archbishop James Blenk,⁹⁶ a German native, laid the cornerstone of the new school. The building, designed by the architecture firm Diboll, Owen & Goldstein, was made of brick and concrete, and stood two stories tall. A large auditorium was added, which, once completed, was used to feature entertainment to help pay off the debt incurred from the building of the new school.⁹⁷ On December 13, 1908, construction was completed and the school was dedicated and blessed by Archbishop Blenk. The total cost of the new school building was \$23,000. In his dedication speech, Archbishop Blenk credited and thanked Fr. Richen for his dedication and zeal in erecting the new school, and he thanked the Sisters of Christian Charity⁹⁸ for running the school.⁹⁹

St. Henry's Becomes a Territorial Parish

In a decree issued on January 7, 1911, and read aloud in both St. Henry's and St. Stephen's churches the following Sunday, Archbishop Blenk announced the elimination of the mission charter of St. Henry's and assigned it fixed territorial boundaries, cutting the territory out of the territorial limits previously assigned to St. Stephen's.¹⁰⁰ In his decree, Archbishop Blenk

⁹⁴ The name of Berlin Street was changed to General Pershing in 1918, following a wave of anti-German sentiment at the beginning of World War I.

⁹⁵ "Magazine Street Fire's Still Mystery," *The Daily Picayune*, June 11, 1908.

⁹⁶ Archbishop of New Orleans 1906-1917.

⁹⁷ "The New St. Henry's School," *The Daily Picayune*, August 9, 1908.

⁹⁸ The Sisters of Christian Charity are a religious order founded in modern day Germany by the German nun the Blessed Pauline von Mallinckrodt, who is being considered for sainthood.

⁹⁹ "St. Henry Catholic School Dedicated," *The Daily Picayune*, December 14, 1908.

¹⁰⁰ James H. Blenk to All Concerned, January 7, 1911, St. Henry's Parish Historical Documents, St. Henry's Correspondence, 1878-1936, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

noted, as Fr. Richen had previously pointed out, that since the German population in uptown New Orleans has stopped growing and in many cases the German families now spoke exclusively English, it would be impractical for St. Henry's to remain a mission parish.¹⁰¹ The Archbishop also noted that St. Henry's had a well-attended church and school, as well as housing for the Christian Sisters of Charity who ran the school, a situation which Archbishop Blenk called a "parochial plant, complete in every detail."¹⁰² Archbishop Blenk went on to cite the work and sacrifice of Fr. Richen, but pointed out that as long as St. Henry's had been a mission parish, "though he is most zealous in the performance of all parochial duties, he is without any parochial rights."¹⁰³ Now with St. Henry's a territorial parish, Fr. Richen would have these rights, which include the rights to carry out funerals, baptisms, and confirmations to those living in his territorial bounds. Again, the Archdiocese affirmed the status of the administration of St. Henry's and Archbishop Blenk recognized and outlined the reasons St. Henry's should be given territorial boundaries.

Vincentians Seek to Block St. Henry's as Territorial Parish

The Archbishop's decision was met with strong protest from the Vincentian fathers, who still administered St. Stephen's as well as many of St. Stephen's parishioners. This protest became a national issue and prompted the head of the Vincentian order of the western province of the United States, Rev. Thomas Finney, C.M., to file an appeal with Cardinal Diomedeo Falconio, the Apostolic Delegate, or Nuncio (the equivalent to an ambassador to the United States from the Vatican, stationed in Washington, D.C.).¹⁰⁴ The Vincentian appeal asked that Cardinal Falconio not only prevent the division of St. Stephen's, but went further to propose the

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Apostolic Delegate to the United States from 1902-1911.

suppression of St. Henry's in favor of merging it with St. Stephen's.¹⁰⁵ The battle between the order and the archdiocese had begun.

In his 1911 decree, Archbishop Blenk had outlined and explained his three main reasons for establishing St. Henry's as a territorial parish: the decline of German immigration and the accompanying decline in the German language, the existence of a full parochial plant including church and school, and the location of the existing church. These three factors, he explained, were enough to establish St. Henry's as a territorial parish at that location.

However, in the appeal letter to the Apostolic Delegate Cardinal Falconio, Rev. Finney, the head of the Vincentian Order, disputed this decision, saying that the best solution would be the suppression of St. Henry's and the merging of the parish churches. He further argued that St. Henry's had struggled with the disappearance of the German language in uptown New Orleans since Fr. Richen first arrived in 1891. At that time the school and church had given instruction and sermons in German, although the parishioners were moving to English.¹⁰⁶ By 1911 German had fully given way to English in all areas of church life.¹⁰⁷ Rev. Finney also argued that the decline of the use of German was the only valid reason that the Archbishop gave for eliminating the original charter of St. Henry's parish.

The Vincentian argument for dissolution of St. Henry's centered on the fact that since the influx of German immigrants to the area has stopped and since the German language had died out, St. Henry's church no longer served the purpose for which it was originally established and

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Finney to Diomedea Falconio, March 11, 1911, St. Henry's Parish Historical Documents, St. Henry's Correspondence, 1878-1936, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

¹⁰⁶ Ludolf Richen to Francis Janssens, December 24, 1894, St. Henry's Parish Historical Documents, St. Henry's Correspondence, 1878-1936, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

¹⁰⁷ James Hubert Blenk to All Concerned, January 7, 1911, St. Henry's Parish Historical Documents, St. Henry's Correspondence, 1878-1936, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

should therefore be suppressed, and St. Henry's former parishioners should be merged with the parishioners of St. Stephen's, the Vincentian church.¹⁰⁸

The second reason that Archbishop Blenk had given for the establishment of territorial limits for St. Henry's (rather than its suppression) centered on the stability of St. Henry's parochial plant. In his decree, Archbishop Blenk had noted that St. Henry's had a complete parochial plant, and singled out the new school paid for by the people of St. Henry's. In addition, the Archbishop had noted that while St. Henry's may have had all the features of a territorial parish, as a mission parish its priest still lacked all the parochial rights that come with having a territorial parish, again showing the Archbishop's esteem for Richen.¹⁰⁹

In his correspondence to the Apostolic Delegate, Rev. Finney, of the Vincentian order, disputed both this second reason for carving out territorial limits from St. Stephen's, and the Archbishop's description of St. Henry's. He compared St. Henry's small wooden structures and lack of seating capacity to the superior size of St. Stephen's, which consisted of large brick buildings capable of seating many times the number of parishioners as St. Henry's. Rev. Finney argued that the proposed division of St. Stephen's with its territory divided with St. Henry's would leave the larger Church, with a church building capable of seating up to 1,900 parishioners and a brick school building that accommodated 450 pupils, but with half as many parishioners. As the National Vincentian Order was in financial trouble at the time, it is not surprising that this was an issue.¹¹⁰

In his appeal letter, Rev. Finney pointed out that the only building that Archbishop Blenk specifically mentioned in his decree was the new St. Henry's school, built in 1908. Rev. Finney

¹⁰⁸ Thomas Finney to Diomedea Falconio, March 11, 1911.

¹⁰⁹ James Hubert Blenk to All Concerned, January 7, 1911.

¹¹⁰ DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives: Provincial Files, Reverend Thomas O'Neil Finney, CM, <http://library.depaul.edu/collections/DRMAPdf/RevThomasFinney.pdf>, Provincial Files, DePaul University, 2006.

stated that at the time St. Henry's new school had been built, the Rector of St. Stephen's had been planning on building a new boy's school for St. Stephen's, but when he had received word from Archbishop Blenk that St. Henry's would be given territorial rights, planning for the St. Stephen's school had been stopped. Rev Finney stated that not only should St. Henry's be suppressed, but since St. Stephen's had had to halt the building of its school to accommodate the possibility of St. Henry's acquiring territorial rights, St. Stephen's should be given the new St. Henry's school building for its parishioners instead.¹¹¹ Rev. Finney wrote:

The school we stand ready to affiliate to St. Stephen's parish, for we purposely delayed building our separate boys' school these three years by reason of this division continually threatening. We can retain the sisters in charge and use the building as a boys' school or a girls' school exclusively, the unpaid debt to be assumed by St. Stephen's parish. If it be objected that in this event all the people of St. Stephen's parish would be enjoying a school the large part of which they had not paid for, we respond: so would the old members of St. Henry's residing within the former territory of St. Stephen's be enjoying an immense church fit to be classed in New Orleans as a basilica, no part of which they had contributed to build¹¹²

Initially it seems that Cardinal Falconio sought to find a compromise between the two parties. Writing to Archbishop Blenk on September 25, 1911, Cardinal Falconio admitted that he was seeking to find a middle path without "entering into the merits of the case."¹¹³ Cardinal Falconio then goes on to ask, "whether the church of St. Henry's could be devoted to the service of some particular class of person; and for this reason, I should like to know whether Your Grace would deem it advisable to assign this church for the use of Italian, Spanish, or perhaps colored people; leaving the territorial limits as they were"¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Thomas Finney to Diomedea Falconio, March 11, 1911.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Diomedea Falconio to James Blenk, September 25, 1911, Apostolic Delegation, Apostolic Delegation III, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

On November 1, 1911, Cardinal Falconio wrote to Fr. Finney to inform him of his stance on the issue regarding the boundaries of St. Henry and St. Stephen's. While it seems that it was not a formal decision, the letter seemed to indicate that Cardinal Falconio believed the letter to be definitive. The letter seems to favor the Archbishop and to approve the concessions that the Archbishop was willing to make to the parishioners living in the disputed boundaries. Parishioners who attended St. Stephen's had been worried that they would be forced to attend St. Henry's and vice versa.

Cardinal Falconio writes,

I beg to say that the Archbishop is disposed to allow the people living in the territory that is under consideration to choose the church to which they decide to take pews. He is further disposed to erect a new church [for St. Henry's] as soon as practicable in some other more suitable location.¹¹⁵

Cardinal Falconio seemed to view the decision conveyed in his letter as definitive, writing "Considering these facts, it seems to me that the question should be regarded as settled, and that it should not, therefore, be pressed any further."¹¹⁶ However, later events proved this to not be a definitive ruling on the dispute. The Cardinal left his position as Apostolic Delegate shortly thereafter.

With Cardinal Falconio having left Washington, and his post as Apostolic Delegate, on November 12, 1911,¹¹⁷ and his replacement, Cardinal Giovanni Bonzano,¹¹⁸ not entering office until February of 1912, the final decision regarding the fate of these two churches fell to Cardinal Boneventura Cerretti, the Auditor at the Apostolic Delegate. It was during this brief three-month window, with no apostolic delegate in place, that there seemed to be the boldest moves taken by

¹¹⁵ Diomed Falconio to Thomas Finney, November 1, 1911, St. Henry's Historical Documents, St. Henry's Correspondence, 1878-1936, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Diomed Falconio to Thomas Finney, November 1, 1911.

¹¹⁸ Apostolic Delegate to the United States 1912-1922.

Archbishop Blenk, in concert with Cardinal Cerretti, to ensure the Archbishop's decision be upheld to assign St. Henry's territorial boundaries.

In January 1912, Archbishop Blenk received an extraordinary piece of correspondence from Cardinal Cerretti's office, written by a Fr. John J. Creagh, a representative of the Apostolic Delegate who seemed to have served as a secretary to Cardinal Cerretti. The letter contained advice on how the Archbishop should shape his argument to the office of the Apostolic Delegate in order to get a favorable ruling. The letter begins by Fr. Creagh passing along information from the Cardinal, including a description of Cardinal Cerretti's reaction to the Archbishop's decree. But as the letter progresses, the advice seems to come directly from Fr. Creagh himself, with much of the advice conveyed without any obvious input from Cardinal Cerretti. The secretary outlines what he sees as the necessary adjustments to the Archbishop's initial decree in order to ensure a favorable outcome for Archbishop Blenk and St. Henry's while giving the appearance of concessions to the Vincentians. In works on closures that have emphasized the church vs. parishioners, these cross-territorial alliances may be marginalized or ignored, but they can be revealing.

In his letter, Fr. Creagh reaffirms Archbishop Blenk's decision to create territorial boundaries for both St. Henry's and St. Stephen's parishes. Stating that "The real substance of the decree as originally made will stand, i.e. St. Henry's parish and St. Stephen's parish will have the territorial limits assigned in Your Grace's act of division."¹¹⁹ Creagh then goes on to address the concessions made by the Archbishop to the affected parishioners of St. Stephen's. Creagh reassures the Archbishop that "these concessions are only temporary..." and that all the

¹¹⁹ John J. Creagh to James Blenk, January 18, 1912, Apostolic Delegation, Apostolic Delegation III, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

Archbishop has to do in order to do away with these concessions is to promise to establish St. Henry's Church in a more central location in the future.¹²⁰

In order to insure a favorable ruling, Creagh went so far as to provide the Archbishop with an outline of how the decree should read, stating, "that a real victory would be secured if a decree formulated as follows."

Creagh further instructs Blenk on how to propose these changes to the incoming Apostolic Delegate. With Creagh acknowledging that many of the compromises hinge on the clause in the Archbishop's statement that "until St. Henry's Church is established in a more central location," Creagh warns the Archbishop that "The only danger is that the Lazarists [Vincentians] will be sharp enough to see this."¹²¹

Creagh also warns Archbishop Blenk that the situation should be settled quickly, advising Blenk that "It would not be disadvantageous to push the matter through as soon as possible, and have it settled by the Delegation as constituted at the present time," an obvious reference to the fact that a new Apostolic Delegate would be installed soon.¹²²

Archbishop Blenk seems to have incorporated the recommended concessions and clarifications recommended by Creagh into his decree and dealings with the Vincentian fathers of St. Stephen's, even going further than advised in order to achieve a peace with the Vincentian order of St. Stephen's. Archbishop Blenk wrote:

Understanding not that it was the intention of the Delegation that the concession regarding the pews should apply only to the territory cut off from St. Stephen's Parish, for the sake of religion I unhesitatingly agree to this. I am also willing to yield in the matter of simply renting a seat instead of a pew, and furthermore, of permitting the poor residents of St. Henry's who wish to become parishioners of St. Stephen's, to do so without renting a seat or a pew, it being understood that

¹²⁰Ibid.

¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²Ibid.

these conditions shall obtain until St. Henry's is established in a more central location.¹²³

So with compromise, and a little help from Washington, this second Vincentian appeal to stop the growth of St. Henry's was thwarted.

However, these actions only lead to further problems between the two churches and between the Vincentians and the Archbishop. These new conflicts were openly acrimonious. In his 1899 statement declaring the new territorial limits of St. Henry's, Archbishop Blenk had acknowledged that many of the parishioners of St. Stephen's would experience pain in having their ties to St. Stephen's severed, as St. Henry's would now take over a large piece of what was previously St. Stephen's parish and some parishioners would be required to begin attending St. Henry's. However, the Archbishop pointed out that it was not the Archdiocese of New Orleans, but rather the Vincentian fathers of St. Stephen's that had originally placed St. Henry's just down the street from St. Stephen's, causing the problem.¹²⁴

Despite the ruling in favor of St. Henry's, for some parishioners of St. Stephen's, particularly those with means to purchase or rent pews, loopholes existed to prevent the forced move to the other church. In a communication to the Rector of St. Stephen's, on December 30, 1911, Archbishop Blenk detailed the rights of the two parishes and described how someone living within the territorial confines of one parish may become members of another parish. This clarification was in response to a petition against being forced to attend St. Henry's presented to him by a delegation from St. Stephen's.

The Archbishop wrote that:

People living in the territory covering both parishes may choose either church provided they are, in the strict sense of the word, bona fide pew-holders in the

¹²³ James Blenk to Bonaventura Cerretti, January 24, 1912, Apostolic Delegation, Apostolic Delegation III, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

¹²⁴ James Blenk to All Concerned, January 7, 1911.

church chosen as their parish church, otherwise they belong to the parish within whose limits they are domiciled.¹²⁵

Archbishop Blenk made clear in his letter that only those who had rented a pew, not a seat, at the normal price were entitled to remain parishioners at their church.¹²⁶ A list of those parishioners using this privilege must also be furnished to the rector of the territorial parish. This list, along with the location of the pew being rented, the price of rental, and any payment made toward the rental must also be sent to the Diocesan Chancery. Archbishop Blenk ends his letter with this entreaty: “Furthermore, you should, with all priestly honor and dignity, abstain from every effort mainly tending to induce people to forsake the parish to which, according to the ordinary rulings of the laws of the Church, they rightly belong.”¹²⁷ It is assumed that those of means would be the parishioners most often allowed or induced to switch parishes.

On February 16, 1922, over the strenuous objections of St. Stephen’s Vincentian priests, Archbishop John W. Shaw,¹²⁸ who had assumed his position in 1918, established the Parish of St. Henry’s, New Orleans, as a territorial parish in accordance with the 1917 Code of Canon Law,¹²⁹ and set as its territorial boundaries the Mississippi River at Amelia Street, to Magazine

¹²⁵ James H. Blenk to Francis Nugent, December 30, 1911, St. Henry’s Historical Documents, St. Henry’s Correspondence, 1878-1936, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

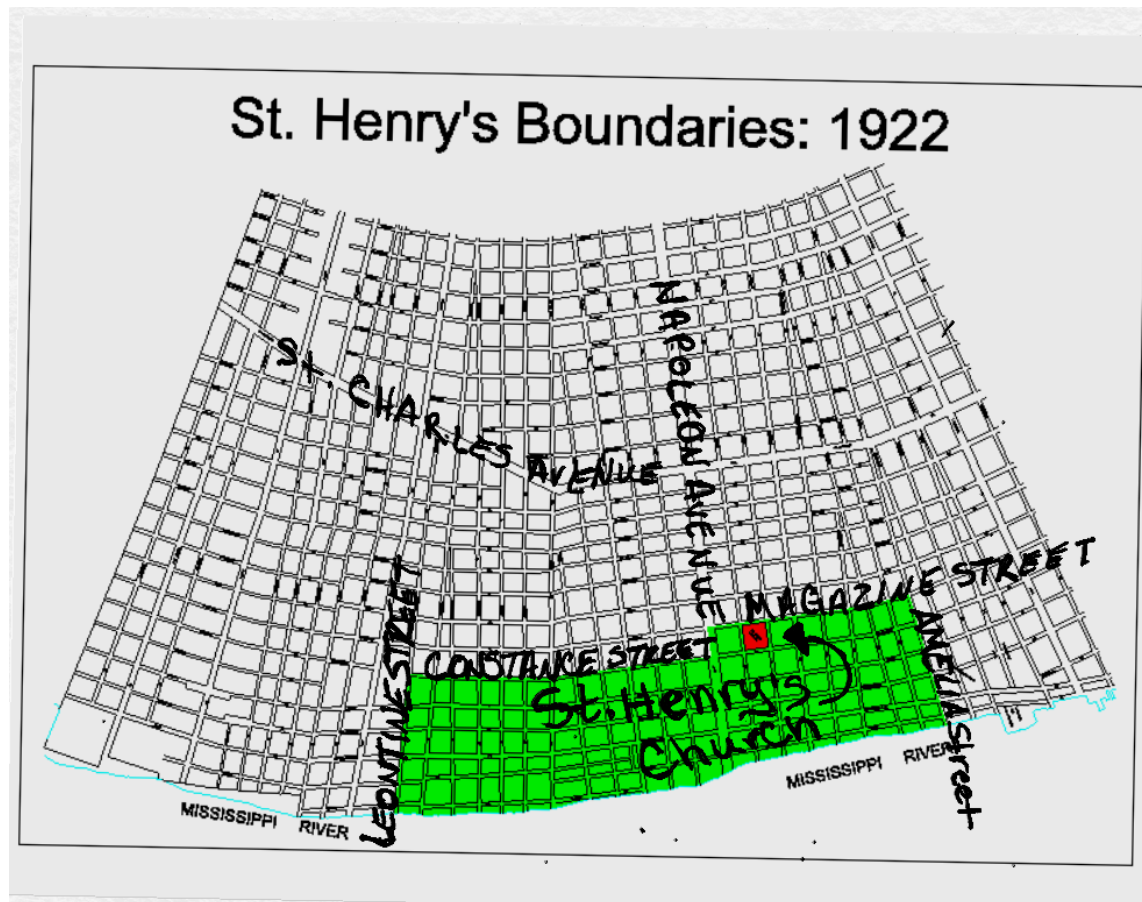
¹²⁶ The practice of buying or renting a pew in a Catholic Church in the United States was a practice approved by the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884 and endorsed by the Holy See. This practice allowed church officials to sell or rent seats and pews in a church to individuals or families. Since the Catholic Church in the United States did not have the same financial backing of its European counterparts, this practice was seen as a necessary way for churches to raise funds and allowed a person to attend one parish while living in the jurisdiction of another parish. This practice was officially abolished by the Second Vatican Council in 1965. The list of pew holders for St. Henry’s and St. Stephen’s at this time can be found in the historical documents folders at the Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records.

¹²⁷ James H. Blenk to Francis Nugent, December 30, 1911.

¹²⁸ Archbishop John Williams Shaw, Archbishop of New Orleans 1918-1934 and first American born Archbishop of New Orleans.

¹²⁹ The 1917 Code of Canon Law, or Pio-Benedictine Code, was the first integrated code of Canon Law and remained in effect until the enactment of the 1983 Code of Canon Law.

Street, to Napoleon Avenue, to Constance Street, to Leontine Street, to the Mississippi River,¹³⁰
the same boundaries set by his predecessor, Archbishop Blenk.¹³¹



Vincentians Seek to Block New Church Building

The next major conflict between St. Henry's and the Vincentians of St. Stephen's centered on the building of a new church for St. Henry's. In 1924, as the groundwork was being laid to build a new church building for the people of St. Henry's, the Vincentian fathers began yet another protest, this time to stop the construction, a protest that would lead to another case brought before the Apostolic Delegate in Washington. The main sticking point this time was the

¹³⁰ Copy of Charter, February 16, 1922, St. Henry's Historical Documents, St. Henry's Correspondence, 1878-1936, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

¹³¹ John Williams Shaw to Pietro Fumasoni Biondi, May 1, 1925, St. Henry's Historical Documents, St. Henry's Correspondences, 1878-1936, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

location of the new church. In December 1924, Rev. Finney, head of the Vincentian Order in the United States, wrote to Archbishop Shaw expressing his objections to plans for constructing a new church for St. Henry's Parish on the parish property, just one block from St. Stephen's Church. In his correspondence, Rev. Finney noted that in discussions between the Vincentians and Shaw's predecessor, Archbishop Blenk, the Archbishop had assured the Vincentians that in the event of a new church ever being constructed for St. Henry's, the building would be built at a distance from the current location.¹³² Rev. Finney wrote:

The Apostolic Delegate, at the time of the controversy which arose between Archbishop Blenk and our Community over the division of St. Stephen's Parish, included in his decision that in the event a new St. Henry's Church was to be built, it should be erected at a distance from the present location.¹³³

With no response to their protests from the Archbishop, the Vincentians again took their concerns to the Apostolic Delegate, Cardinal Pietro Fumasoni-Biondi,¹³⁴ and so yet another appeal has been sent by the Vincentians to the Apostolic Delegate in one decade concerning one small church. The main sticking point this time was the location of the new church. When setting the territorial limits of St. Henry's, Archbishop Blenk had stipulated any new church that might be built would be in "some other more suitable location"¹³⁵ than the previous church building, which was only a block away from St. Stephen's. In his response to Cardinal Fumasoni-Biondi, Archbishop Shaw did acknowledge that his predecessor had intended that the church be built a distance away from the current location, but Shaw argued that changing

¹³² Thomas Finney to Joseph W. Shaw via Pietro Fumasoni Bioni, December 17, 1924, St. Henry's Historical Documents, St. Henry's Correspondence, 1878-1936, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Cardinal Pietro Fumasoni-Biondi, Apostolic Delegate to the United States from 1922-1933.

¹³⁵ John W. Shaw to Pietro Fumasoni Biondi, May 1, 1925, St. Henry's Historical Documents, St. Henry's Correspondence, 1878-1936, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

circumstances would make such a move difficult and place a financial burden on the parishioners of St. Henry's.¹³⁶

During the second appeal to the Apostolic Delegate, the priest of St. Henry's, Father Richen wrote a letter directly to the Apostolic Delegate. In this letter, written in 1925, Fr. Richen detailed the history of St. Henry's church in an attempt to sway the Apostolic Delegate to rule in favor of the Archbishop and St. Henry's.¹³⁷ Of note in his plea is the reference to the early parishioners having to pay twice for their church: the first time, when the church building was built, while St. Henry's was still under supervision of the Vincentians, and again when St. Henry's split from the Vincentians to become part of the archdiocese in 1871.¹³⁸

This reference to financial investment by parishioners probably served two purposes. First, Fr. Richen and the parishioners more than likely sought to demonstrate their commitment to St. Henry's and highlight the financial sacrifices made by the earliest of parishioners to ensure the survival of their parish. The second purpose requires an understanding of the conflicts of the early Catholic Church with its own parishioners in the United States. In what historian Patrick W. Carey calls the "tensions of trusteeism," often the parishioners who had financially supported and whose funds had purchased a particular church or parish would attempt to use this financial investment to exercise control over local church officials. According to Carey, in the United States the argument for ownership and the management of church "temporalities" seemed to be most often used by German congregations,¹³⁹ recalling practices from their homeland.¹⁴⁰ One of these practices was lay patronage, or *jus patronatus*, which a group of trustees in Philadelphia

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ludolf Richen to Pietro Fumasoni Biondi, May 10, 1925, St. Henry's Historical Documents, St. Henry's Correspondence, 1878-1936, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Carey notes that German congregations in Buffalo, Rochester, Cincinnati, and Philadelphia all sought to use practices from Germany to justify greater control by the laity, specifically the trustees, over the church.

¹⁴⁰ Carey, 178.

used stating that “they were only following the example of The Roman Catholic congregation in Germany.”¹⁴¹ By inserting into his letter that the parishioners and their ancestors had bought and paid for the church twice, Fr. Richen may have been signaling to the Apostolic Delegate that the parish priest and his parishioners were willing to take this matter not only to higher church officials, but perhaps might seek redress in the civil courts, a strategy often used previously in instances when a congregation that had financially backed and supported the church came into conflict with local church leadership. One early example of this occurred in New Orleans in 1805, when the members of St. Louis Cathedral’s congregation challenged the appointment of the pastor of its church. This case was appealed to both Governor Claiborne of Louisiana and the Louisiana Supreme Court.¹⁴² Fr. Richen’s veiled threat – from a parish priest directed to the pope’s Apostolic Delegate to the United States – reflects the passion and determination of local Catholics – parishioners and priests -- to protect their churches, and their willingness to cross ecclesiastical and political lines to use whatever means available to them to achieve their goal. However, some saw Fr. Richen as overstepping his bounds. In a letter to Cardinal Fumasoni-Biondi, Archbishop Shaw later apologized for his local priest’s letter.¹⁴³

Decision

On May 15, 1925, Cardinal P. Fumasoni-Biondi wrote to Archbishop Shaw to inform him of his decision on the construction of a new church. He stated that he saw “no injustice in your Grace’s action,”¹⁴⁴ thus affirming Archbishop Shaw’s decision and dealing another loss to

¹⁴¹ Carey, 27.

¹⁴² Carey, 98.

¹⁴³ Joseph Shaw to Pietro Fumasoni-Bondi, May 15, 1925, St. Henry’s Historical Documents, St. Henry Correspondence, 1878-1936, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

¹⁴⁴ Pietro Fumasoni-Biondi to Joseph W. Shaw, May 15, 1925, St. Henry’s Historical Documents, St. Henry’s Correspondence, 1878-1936, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

the Vincentian fathers of St. Stephen's. In Archbishop Shaw's letter to Cardinal Fumasoni-Biondi acknowledging that Shaw had received the decision, the Archbishop stated that he viewed the decision as "a vindication of my action which was prompted by the sincerest motives for the spiritual welfare of the good people of St. Henry's Parish."¹⁴⁵ Archbishop Shaw also took this occasion to sing the praises of Fr. Richen, calling him a "zealous pastor" who has "done so much for the case of Religion and Christian Education."¹⁴⁶ In this letter Archbishop Shaw openly alluded to deeper problems between the Archbishop and the Vincentian leader Rev. Finney, stating "While I would never presume to question the justice or wisdom of an adverse decision, I must confess that I was not a little apprehensive owing to the feeling which has arisen through the action of the Very Rev. Provincial of the Vincentian Fathers."¹⁴⁷

The outcome of the suit validated again the right of St. Henry's to exist and build on its present location. In his letter thanking Cardinal Fumasoni-Biondi for his decision in his favor, Shaw states, somewhat over-optimistically, that the Cardinal's "decision now settles once and forever a misunderstanding as to the parochial rights of St. Henry's parish."¹⁴⁸ However, the verdict did not end problems between St. Henry's and the Vincentian fathers of St. Stephen's. Many of these problems stemmed from alleged violations of canonical law by the Vincentian priests of St. Stephen's and the rights of the parish priest. In a letter to Archbishop Shaw dated June 8, 1926, Fr. Richen wrote:

Since the beginning of the present year I have noticed time and again that the Lazarists [Vincentian] Fathers are always interfering in St. Henry's Parish by doing things that should come under my jurisdiction alone.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Joseph W. Shaw to Pietro Fumasoni-Biondi, May 18, 1925, St. Henry's Historical Documents, St. Henry Correspondence, 1878-1936, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Joseph W. Shaw to Ludolf Richen, June 8, 1926, St. Henry's Historical Documents, St. Henry's Correspondence, 1878-1936, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

He lists specific examples of Vincentian fathers conducting burials, last rites, and a first Holy Communion of people living in St. Henry's Parish. He even cites the example of a Mrs. Cable requesting that her daughter be married in St. Stephen's Church, and a Vincentian fathers replying that he would as long as she bought a seat in his church, and asking the mother why she didn't attend St. Stephen's.¹⁵⁰ The boundary disputes and accusations of rustling parishioners continued.

Conflicts between St. Henry's and the Vincentian Fathers began to take a toll on Fr. Richen, who worried that he might be contributing to perpetuating the conflict between the churches. In March 1929, he wrote to Archbishop Shaw and offered to resign as pastor of St. Henry's if the Archbishop believed that he was contributing to the mistreatment of St. Henry's at the hands of the Vincentians.¹⁵¹

However, Fr. Richen's resignation was not accepted. He remained pastor of St. Henry's until his death in 1936, forty-five years after he was first appointed.¹⁵² During his tenure, St. Henry's had grown from a small German language parish to a territorial parish with a new church building and school. Despite threats to its existence, and the change in language of its parishioners, reflecting the Anglicization of New Orleans, the congregation of St. Henry's chose to support their church with their attendance and resources.

Conclusion

While Fr. Richen had presided over a particularly turbulent time in the history of St. Henry's Parish, his passing did not mark the end of the many conflicts that defined the parish. In

¹⁵⁰ Joseph W. Shaw to Ludolf Richen, June 8, 1926.

¹⁵¹ Ludolf Richen to Joseph W. Shaw, March 19, 1929, St. Henry's Historical Documents, St. Henry's Correspondence, 1878-1936, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

¹⁵² "Catholic Priest Succumbs After Lengthy Illness," *The Daily Picayune*, August 25, 1936.

1936, Fr. Richen's successor, Fr. Janssen, wrote a letter to Archbishop Joseph Rummel¹⁵³ describing a parishioner who wanted to move her children out of public school but could not afford the tuition of a Catholic school. Father Janssen noted that during his tenure Fr. Richen had established a fund in order to give every student in the parish an opportunity for a Catholic education. Fr. Richen had even started a program that offered free tuition for students receiving their first Holy Communion, a program that Fr. Janssen was able to successfully continue and expand to free tuition to attend Confirmation classes as well.¹⁵⁴ Fr. Janssen told her of St. Henry's policy of accepting students even if they could not afford to pay, as this had been Fr. Richen's wish for the school. According to the letter, the woman had pondered for a moment, and then asked if Fr. Janssen thought St. Stephen's would take her children.¹⁵⁵

The conflict between St. Stephen's, with its hierarchy going through its order to its national leadership to the Apostolic Delegate, and St. Henry's, with its authority going through the local archbishop to the Apostolic Delegate, points out the complex power relationships within the Catholic church and how these conflicts may have affected local churches and Catholics in the late 19th and through the 20th century New Orleans.

Rather than ending an era of constant conflict, Fr. Richen's death only marked the beginning of a new era of conflict and struggle for the little German Parish, a conflict that continued into the 21st century and its closing in 2007 and reopening in 2012, a conflict as much about the relationship between and among the institutions of the Catholic Church as between the Church and its parishioners. This study of one local church and its experience points out those intra-church conflicts and alliances that may inform and influence church closures, cross-

¹⁵³ Archbishop Joseph Rummel, Archbishop of New Orleans 1935-1964.

¹⁵⁴ Joseph P. Janssen to Joseph Francis Rummel, December 16, 1939, St. Henry's Historical Documents, St. Henry's Correspondences, 1878-1936, Archdiocese of New Orleans Office of Archives and Records, New Orleans, LA.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

territorial alliances that often have been marginalized or ignored by most observers of church closings.

Appendix

Archbishops of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1850-1964

Antoine Blanc (1850-1860)

Jean-Marie Odin (1861-1870)

Napoléon-Joseph Perché (1870-1883)

Francis Xavier Leray (1883-1887)

Francis Janssesn (1888-1897)

Placide-Louis Chapelle (1897-1905)

James Hubert Blenk (1906-1917)

John William Shaw (1918-1934)

Joseph Francis Rummel (1935-1964)

Apostolic Delegates to the United States, 1902-1933

Diomedede Falconio (1902-1911)

Giovanni Bonzano (1912-1922)

Pietro Fumasoni Biondi (1922-1933)

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Vita

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