

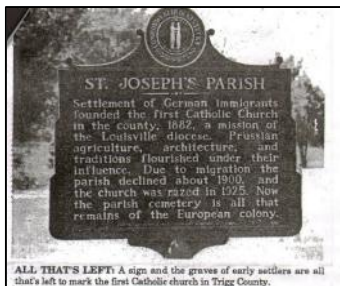
A CEMETERY SOUTH OF GOLDEN POND

John F. Hall

I wrote some of this story almost 40 years ago. My late and dear friend, Tom Vinson and eight other people, all deceased, worked on a history book called, "Trigg County Kentucky, The Past 100 Years 1885-1985, Volume One." William Potter, a graduate history student at Murray State University, helped us with a General Summary of William Henry Perrin's 1884 County of Trigg, Kentucky history book. William Turner, another friend and a historian from Christian County, worked closely with me to include his Trigg County Pioneer Histories in the book.



In a previous story, "A Harvest, A House, And A Song," I wrote about an Open House that my son and I hosted to honor my wife, the former Paula Andree Oakley of Golden Pond, on June 29, 1980. We sent out invitations and requested no gifts. We invited Rufus Dyer Jr., the grandson of John J. Dyer Jr. John Dyer was the Sheriff of Trigg County when he built my house in 1861. I hand delivered the invitation to Rufus. He was in his 803. He lived north of Cadiz off KY 129, in small house. I handed him the invitation and he walked over and opened his Bible. He took out a picture of his mom and dad and said: "We lived in that house for 18 wonderful years. I want you to have it." That was his most cherished possession, and I guess he wanted this historian to keep their memory alive. Across a field, in front of my house, is Dyers Chapel Methodist Church. It was built in the years 1872 -1875. One of the charter members was John J. Dyer Jr. In reading the history of that church, I read the following: "It was on February 16, 1877 that Cicero Dyer and Johnnie Dyer signed a deed to a small piece of land on which to build a church. Under their signatures is the name Rufus K. Dyer who signed as guardian and W. H. Thomas as witness." I guess that Cicero's and Johnnie's parents had died.



There was one church missing in the history book. No one had any information about the first Catholic church in Trigg County. The St. Joseph Parish Historical Marker in Golden Pond had little information. The church was a mission church in 1882 and it I was razed in 1925. So, as the historian for the history book, my job was to obtain a history about the church. The first clue was on the Marker: "a mission of the Louisville diocese." The following history is what was reported to me by Father John A. Lyons.

Little has been written by historians on the mission parish of Saint Joseph that thrived near Golden Pond during the period of 1878 until 1925. Gathering dust on the shelf of the Louisville Diocesan Archives were documents that told of events of the Golden Pond Mission which have not been revealed before. Thanks to the assistance of Father John A. Lyons of Louisville, this history is presented.

The small mission parish of Saint Joseph was established in 1887 by a group of German Catholic settlers who traveled from Pittsburgh, PA, to operate and work at the Laura Furnace located five miles south of Golden Pond, KY. From its establishment in 1878 and until 1882 the parish had no church building.

The missionary priest came on horseback from Hopkinsville, crossed the Cumberland River by ferry boat, and rode on to the settlement several times a month. Services were held in the homes of the settlers. The priest was a welcome guest, and it was not unusual for the priest to sit at the table with the host family, to have all join hands and pray the blessing for the meal together.

In 1882, the first church building for the mission parish of Saint Joseph was erected out of logs and built on a site several miles south of Golden Pond near the Lick Creek Road. The log church was small and had a dirt floor. It was in this crude log church that the first large confirmation of Catholics occurred in Trigg County. The Louisville Diocesan newspaper contained the following report on November 7, 1887:

“On Tuesday the 25th of October the RT. Rev. Bishop William George McCloskey of Louisville, assisted by Michael Melody of Hopkinsville, confirmed 23 persons of the German settlement situated between the Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers in Trigg County. It was a source of great pleasure to witness the piety and faith of the people as manifested in the occasion.”

The Catholic Bishop was moved by the faith of the German settlers and he prevailed upon the generosity of Sir Sylvester Johnson, a benefactor of the Catholic Church from New Haven, Nelson County, Kentucky, to donate funds for a new church at Golden Pond in 1888. Sir Johnson donated \$752 to erect a framed church building. Father Michael Melody was in charge of the project. The Louisville Diocesan newspaper contained the following report on November 17, 1883:

“Thanks to the princely generosity of Sir Sylvester Johnson, the Germans living in Trigg County hope to finish their new church by the first of December. The philanthropy of Sir Johnson helped the German settlers for a period of one year. Disaster struck the little congregation in the early spring of 1890. A strong storm totally destroyed the new church building.” The destruction was reported in the Louisville Diocesan newspaper on April 12, 1890: “At the German settlement in Trigg County, a Tornado made a clean sweep of the church and everything in it. The loss of their church was all the harder to bear as it was built last year.”

In 1891, Father Michael Melody was transferred from Hopkinsville, and the mission parish of Saint Joseph was transferred to Paducah. It came under the care of Father Henry Jansen, Pastor of Saint Francis de Sales Church of Paducah, Kentucky. Father Jansen’s extensive mission, according to the Catholic Directory of 1890, embraced Crittenden, Livingston, Lyon, McCracken, and Trigg County. A newly ordained priest, Father Charles Auer, was assigned to assist Father Jansen. In 1893, the third church building for the mission parish of Saint Joseph was erected under the direction of Father Auer.

The iron ore was playing out in the Land Between the Rivers parish.

Progress in the steel industry made the Laura Furnace obsolete. The Catholic settlers watched the fires of Laura Furnace turn cold and die for the last time. The younger generations of Catholics migrated to the larger cities to find work. The Saint Joseph Catholic Church fell into disuse and it was razed in 1925. The only remnant of the settlement is the parish cemetery, which is located several miles south of Golden Pond, approximately 800 feet up a hill near Lick Creek Road. Unfortunately, this historic cemetery is not accessible to the public by road. Forgotten and unmarked, the only Catholic cemetery in Trigg County came to the attention of the Kentucky Historical Society. The Historical Society erected a highway marker to commemorate the parish and the cemetery. The marker is located at the intersection of Lick Creek Road and Highway 68 in the former site of Golden Pond. The Tennessee Valley Authority in the Land Between the Lakes constructed a public access road to the historic cemetery in 1985. John F. Hall Trigg County Historian.

By Janet Freeman
Assistant Editor

GOLDEN POND, KY - A group of vandals have reportedly destroyed several grave markers at an historical cemetery in Land Between the Lakes.

The Saint Joseph Parish Catholic Cemetery, which dates back to the late 1800s, became the site of overturned and destroyed grave markers earlier this month. The vandalism was reported to State Trooper John Hall by the Tennessee Valley Authority.

According to Trooper Hall, a patrol officer discovered the damage while making his rounds. Even though the damage was discovered this month, Hall said that it is difficult to determine exactly when the vandalism occurred.

The cemetery, located several miles south of the former town of Golden Pond, contains the graves of many German Catholic's who moved here from Pennsylvania to work at the Laura Iron Furnace in the 1880's, according to Hall.

Trooper Hall, a local

The above information is also found on page 104 of the 1986, Volume One, Trigg County Kentucky, The Past 100 Years 1885-1985 history book. I included a newspaper article written by Janet Freeman, a former Assistant Editor of the Cadiz Record newspaper. She wanted to do a story about the damage to the Saint Joseph Parish cemetery. She met me in Golden Pond and we drove to the cemetery. She took several pictures. I found a cracked glass on the grave marker of an infant girl. It appeared to have been kicked. That infant was some mother's angel, at rest.

Katherine Kay Graven wrote a poem called, "Forgotten People Of Long Cemetery." These are her words: "I heard about a long forgotten graveyard in a rolling field next to my house. There is no sign or path to guide the way, it was said to be a lonely forgotten place. I could see the clump of maples, oaks and cedars standing tall hovering a ghostly shade. For the trees and briers where so thick, it was really no place for personal graves. I kept putting off my visit, for I just could not believe that a forgotten Long graveyard could ever be in such distress and disarray. So on a Sunday at about dusk I took some chalk with me, then took a short

walk through an open field. Into the mist of fallen trees, wondering what this graveyard entailed, and wondered if it was just an old wise tale. I walked upon the only opening I could see. And stopped at a small tombstone engraved with an Angel with wings. Trying to figure out what happened to this graveyard and why it was left to be not seen. I slowly passed through the thick briers and thicket, taking my chalk to read the names. I could see the grand headstones standing still. I could tell this family was one of prestige. Some headstones were broken and unreadable. Some looked as if they were placed just yesterday. At this point I was getting upset. As I wondered about the families and why they were forgotten in this way. With bereavement I could see in my mind the beautiful

garden this must have been; with pristine red roses and white carnations placed in this Long Cemetery of forgotten graves, which is now broken, torn and ripped. As I wonder what I can do, I read with my spirit hurting, of babies and children losing their lives.”

John F. Hall

*Read other stories by John F. Hall and others at:
<http://www.ajlambert.com>