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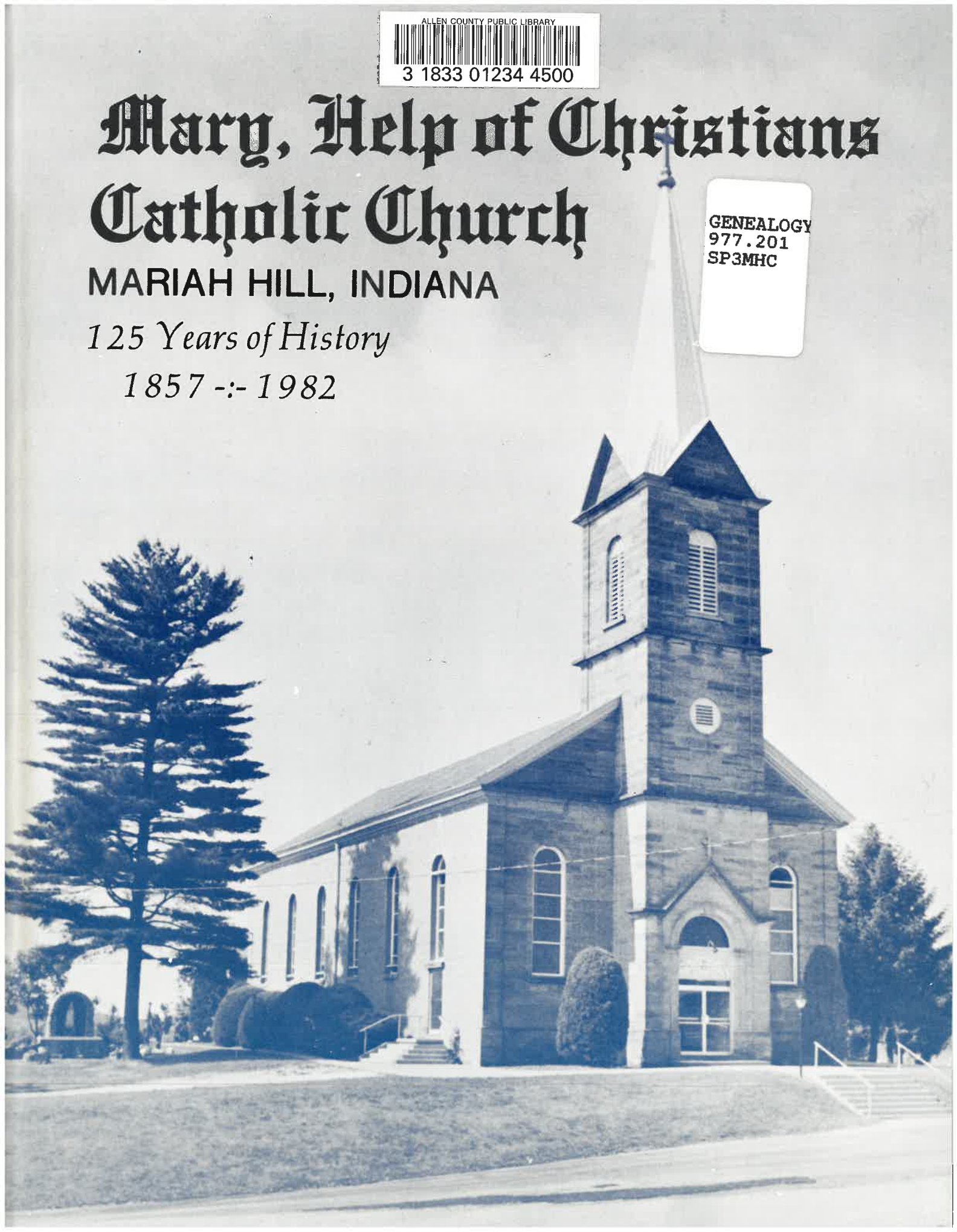
# Mary, Help of Christians Catholic Church

MARIAH HILL, INDIANA

*125 Years of History*

*1857 -:- 1982*

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# Remembering 125 years of Christian Community

## Town and Parish



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In its early days Mariah Hill was an overnight resting place for teamsters and other travellers as the population began to spread from the river ports. As the population of the state and area grew so did the needs of the people, especially the religious needs. Mariah Hill grew to be a self-sufficient community and soon the people wanted and needed their own place of worship.

On December 28, 1850, Jacob Spaeth I and his wife, Mariann, sold the rights to property in Carter Township of Spencer County to Rev. Maurice de St. Palais, then bishop of the Vincennes District. The land he transferred to the bishop of Vincennes became the parish property of Mary, Help of Christians Church. In the Ferdinand Church is a subscription list dated February



25, 1852. This list asked the parishioners to donate toward the church which was to be built in Mariah Hill.

The faithful of the community continued to attend church at Ferdinand until 1857. In the early 1850's a small frame church was built in which Mass was first said by Rev. Ulrich Christen on a day within the Octave of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1857. Father Ulrich, O.S.B. then attended the parish as a mission of Ferdinand from May until September of 1858.

From October of 1858 to October of 1860, Fr. Isador Hobi, O.S.B. attended this mission of Mariah Hilf.

On May 24, 1858 the first Patron Feast Day was celebrated; and Fathers Ulrich and Isador were present for the occasion. On the feast day of the Annunciation in 1859, Ferdinand, the parent-parish of Mariah Hilf, organized a grand procession. A beautiful statue of the Blessed Virgin was mounted on an appropriately decorated wagon drawn by carefully groomed and bedecked oxen to escort the statue to the daughter-church. Father Isador, with about all the Ferdinanders, their church societies, banners, the choir and the band journeyed to their neighbors to joyously enthrone the statue in the church at Mariah Hill. The friendly feeling between these two parishes

still exists today.

In 1859 the site for the cemetery was selected. And in 1860 the 64 lots of the town were laid out.

Rev. Fintan Mundwiler, O.S.B. was in charge of the parish from 1860 until 1862. There were about forty families in the congregation at this time. The next priest attending the parish was the Rev. Martin Marty, O.S.B. On May 24, 1862 all the students of St. Meinrad College visited Mariah Hill and their choir sang at the High Mass. Some parishioners remarked afterwards that the students can sing like an organ can play. There were various such occasions those days. Fr. Marty was succeeded by Father Wolfgang Schlumpf, O.S.B. in 1863. Then Father Fedelis Maute, O.S.B. came in 1864. He began the stone church; but left for Jasper in July. However, it is also recorded that on May 24, 1865 the cornerstone of the present church was laid by Fr. Isador. Father Albert's historical reference (History of St. Meinrad Archabbey) reads: "The stone church was built in 1865, around and over the old frame church. The old church remained in use for divine services during the construction of the new church. It was dismantled only after the new (stone) church was ready for use. There was no interruption of service." The stone was quarried





**MARIAH HILL SCHOOL PHOTO — 1890:** Mathias Heichelbech, teacher. First row, from left: Mathilde Grundhoefer, Ida Handschiegi, Dolly Bell, Cecelia Maffenbeier, Mary Horlander, Leander Spayd, Peter Schafer, Paul Lehr and Mary Handschiegi. Second row: Elizabeth Jochim, Theresa Maffenbeier and Justine Maffenbeier (twins), Elizabeth Heichelbech, Mary Schue, Emma Arnold, Kate Lehr, Victoria Horlander and Frances Harz. Third row: Frank Arnold, Adam Horlander, John Handschiegi, Simon Maffenbeier, Adam Schafer, George Ofer, Frank Horlander, Frank Arnold and Joseph Spayd.

on the Seb. Bettag and Frank Jochim lands. Lime burned on the F. Lindauer farm.

Mariah Hill parish was attended by Benedictine Fathers until 1873. They were: Reverends Henry Hug, 1865-1868; Benno Gerber, Placidus Zarn and Isador Hobi.

The contract to build the house for the pastors was signed in July of 1873 by Paul Dilger, Michael Staab and M. Spaeth under Fr. Hobi. The Reverend Conrad Ackerman, O.S.B. was the first resident pastor of Mary, Help of Christians Parish. He took charge in December of 1873 and remained until 1875. He was followed by the Rev. Alphonse Leute, 1875-1876; Rev. Wolfgang Schlumpf, 1876-1877; Rev. Ildephonse Zarn, 1880; Rev. Silvan Buchor, 1880; Rev. Alexander Burkard, 1881-1883; and the Rev. Maurice Wagner, 1883-1916; all were Benedictine Fathers from St. Meinrad Archabbey.

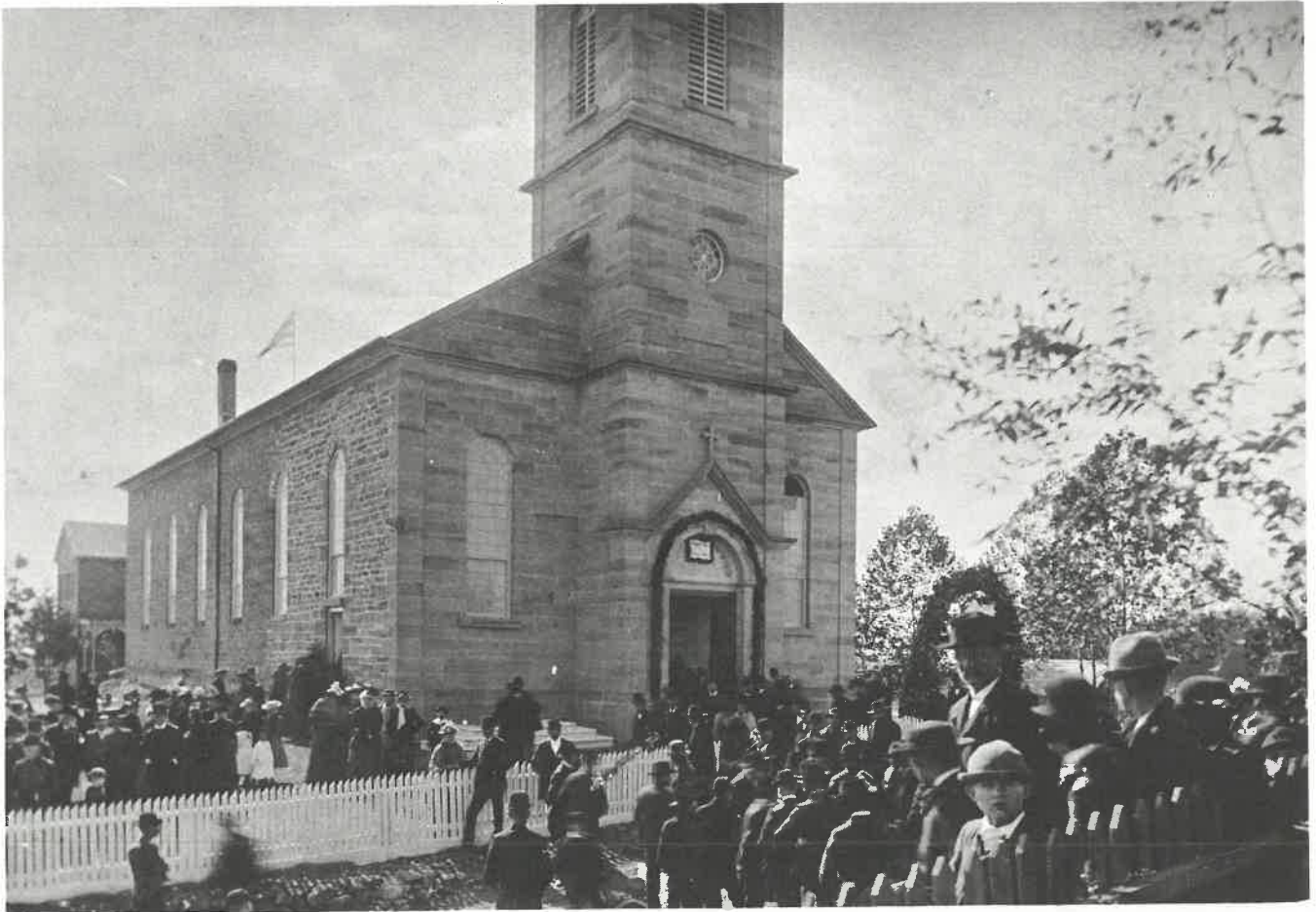
It is recorded that in 1869 a Mission was given by the Franciscan Fathers. Also in 1885 there were about 125 families in the parish and about 100 children in school.

The Reverend Maurice Wagner, O.S.B., son of Henry and Rosina (Weber) Wagner of Ferdinand, born May 16, 1853, became pastor of Mary, Help of Christians parish at Mariah Hill on September 22, 1883. He remained there until his death on Saturday, January 29, 1916. He made his vows as a Benedictine, June 29, 1871; and was ordained a priest May 28, 1877. He celebrated his First Mass at St. Meinrad on June 8, 1877. He was professor of Latin and Greek and also of vocal and instrumental music and pastor of the parish at St. Meinrad.

Pater Moritz, as he was commonly called, built an addition to the stone church in July of 1888. The cornerstone was laid on August 19 by



Silver Jubilee of Rev. Maurice Wagner, O.S.B.



Dedication of new tower — 1892.

the Rt. Rev. Fintan Mundwiler. The spire of 135 feet in height was erected in 1890. The ceiling of the church was changed and raised seven feet; the entire inside was plastered; and a new roof put on the old part of the church and the sanctuary by 1892 at a cost of \$5,000. Then on October 29, 1893 the church was consecrated by the Rt. Rev. Francis Silas Chatard, Bishop of Indianapolis. Father also purchased two bells at a cost of \$600.

During Father Maurice's time many improvements were made to the church. The tin roof was removed and replaced with a slate roof. The outside walls finished to appear as the stone of the





front, the interior of the church was frescoed, the old windows were enlarged and very beautiful stained glass windows, imported from Munich, were installed for the golden jubilee in 1908. New pews were also installed at this time. And in 1910 tile was placed on the floor on the aisles and the sanctuary.

In 1898 there were 165 families, 887 persons, in the parish. In 1902, Father Maurice celebrated his silver jubilee. In 1907 (or 1908) the Golden Jubilee of the parish was celebrated at which the Rt. Rev. Athanasius Schmitt, O.S.B., Abbot of St. Meinrad, was the celebrant of the Pontifical Mass.

During this time the people of the parish residing in and near Dale asked to have a church of their own. Father Maurice gave his consent and a new parish was formed with Father Francis Wolf, a diocesan priest, as pastor, in 1909.

The Reverend Andrew Bauer, born in Germany, became pastor of Mariah Hill parish in 1916. He was pastor of the parish in Dale. He was also professor of pastoral theology at St. Meinrad, a position which he held while pastor of Mariah Hill. In 1920 he built the present parish hall and added seven rooms to the rectory. The trees for the parish hall were donated by the parishioners



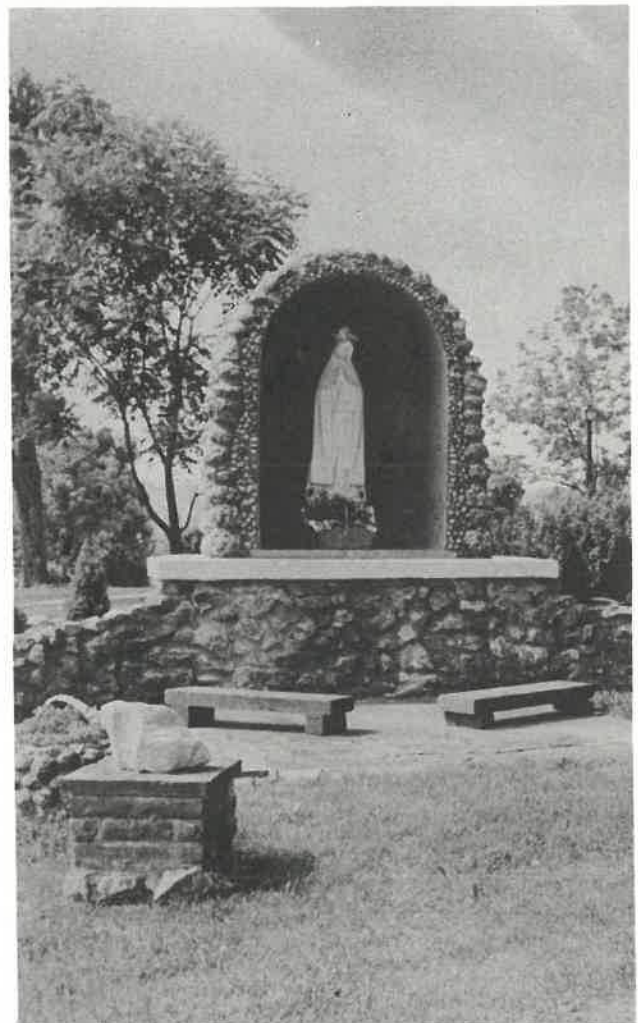
Silver Jubilee of Fr. Andrew Bauer — 1922.

and the wood was cut on the church grounds. In 1922, Father celebrated his Silver Jubilee as a priest. During 1933 the new organ was installed. Some statues, vestments, wood carvings, a monstrance, new stations and a new confessional were procured.

On August 12, 1934 the parish celebrated its Diamond Jubilee. In 1941 another jubilee was celebrated in honor of Father Andrew's twenty-five years as pastor. Unfortunately, a cancer developed and Father Bauer was recalled to St. Meinrad Abbey. After 29 years of devoted work in the parish he died on April 18, 1949 at St. Mary's Hospital in Evansville. Many parishioners today remember Father Andrew with great fondness.

Father Matthew Preske became Pastor of Mary, Help of Christians Parish in September of 1945. Father Matthew had previously taught in the Jasper Academy, and was in charge of the oblate school at St. Meinrad. He also did much work in organizing the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine in the area. On May 17, 1946 his Silver Jubilee as a priest was celebrated at Mariah Hill. In 1950, Father assumed care of his elderly parents. They are both buried in the cemetery at Mariah Hill. Father left Mariah Hill in 1951 and later became an assistant at St. Joseph parish in Evansville and later became the pastor of St. Boniface parish in Fulda.

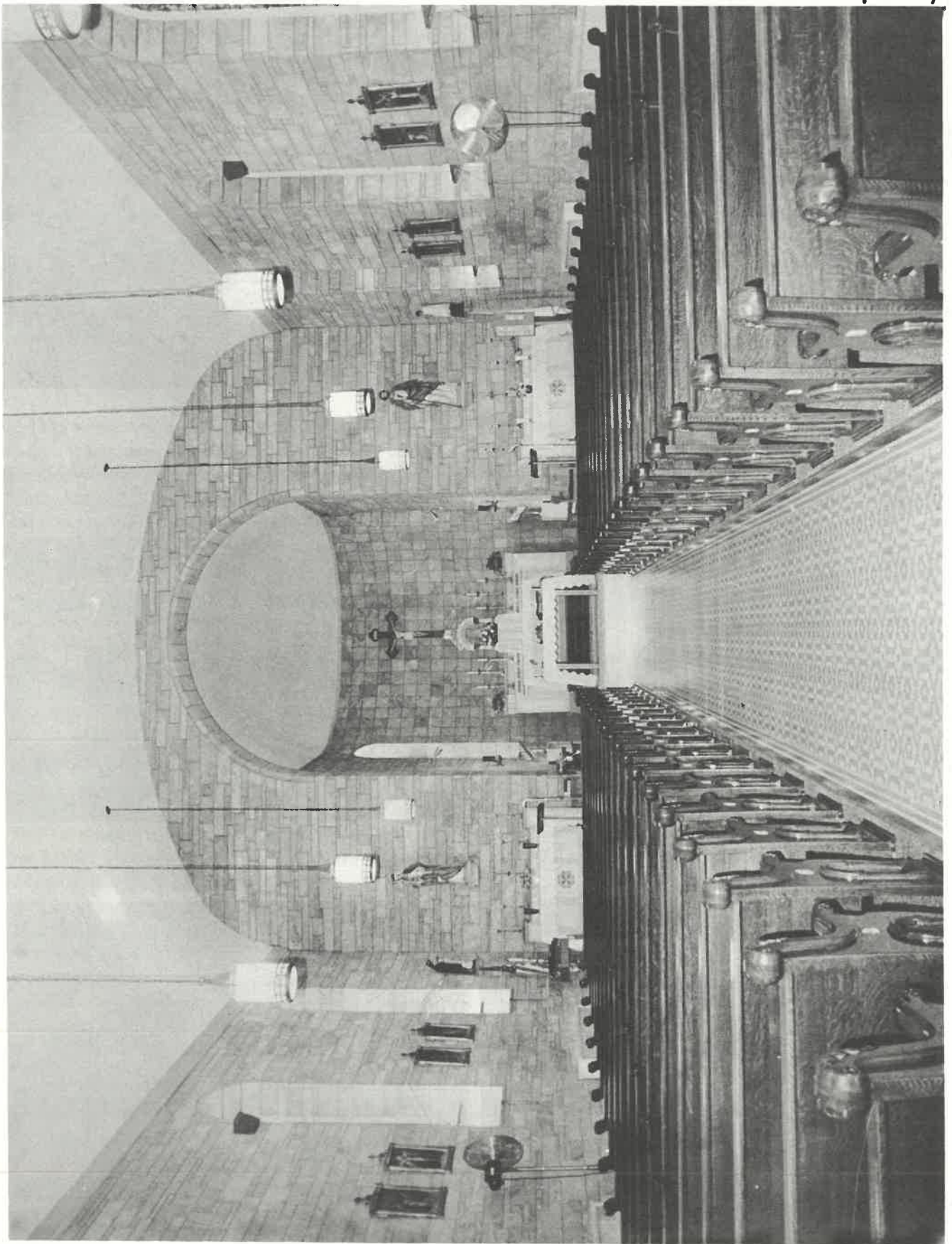
In 1951, the Rev. Edmund Morthorst, O.S.B. became pastor of Mary, Help of Christians. Through the volunteer work of the parishioners, in 1952, the beautiful shrine to Our Lady of Fatima was built. In 1953 the cafeteria and school lunch program were initiated. Father also modernized



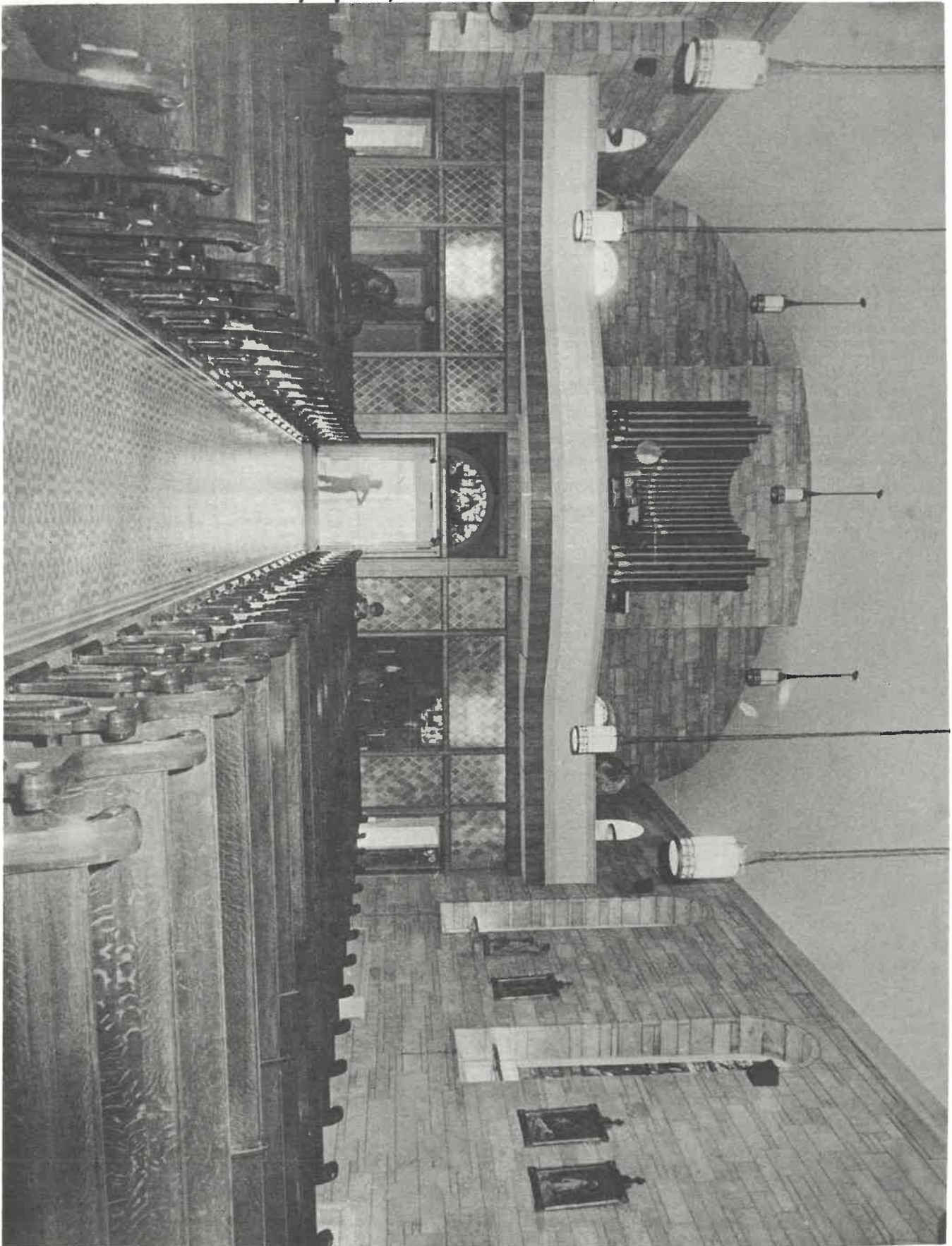
Grotto was first built by Chester Gogel (1951?). It was damaged and rebuilt by Paul Bettag and Maurice Meyer during the pastorate of Rev. Matthew Preske, O.S.B. River rock was found in a creek near Bedford in Jackson County and hauled to Mariah Hill by Linus Kerstiens.

The grotto was the brainchild of Paul Bettag who was sick with the mumps and to pass the time away made a model of the grotto out of clay and presented it to Fr. Matthew.

Interior of Church in 1982: Mariah Hill Church interior was completely



remodeled and finished by April 7, 1957 in time for the centennial





**1941 FIRST COMMUNION, MARIAH HILL:** Frank Lehr, James Luebbhusen, Ed Hurst and Orville Dilger (Fr. Basil). In front: Leroy Dilger and Charlotte Dilger.

the sister's home. In 1956 the interior walls of the church were practically rebuilt. Beautiful multi-colored stone from St. Meinrad enhances the interior beauty of the church. Modern lighting fixtures and other beautifying improvements were also made at this time. This work was completed in April of 1957.

**WORTHY OF NOTE:** Miss Catherine Bosler (1866-1948) served as housekeeper for priests for 64 years. She was also the organist and choir director for 62 years.

The Centennial of Mariah Hill Parish was celebrated in 1957. A Pontifical High Mass was offered by the Most Rev. Henry J. Grimmelman, Bishop of Evansville, on Sunday, December 1. Rev. David Duesing, O.S.B., pastor of the mother parish of Mariah Hill, served as Arch-



**CORPUS CHRISTI PROCESSION:** Fr. Maurice, Carl Bockting, altar boy, Richard Nord.



**ALL SAINTS DAY AROUND THE MIDDLE 1940's**— Servers identified are from left to right: Dennis Kordes, Russell Arnold, Orville Dilger, Leroy Dilger, ? (Hurst), Bert Lehr, Frank Lehr and Ralph Bettag.

## A History Of The Town Of Mariah Hill

In 1850, America's population reached 23,000,000 and a decade later it was 31,000,000. Because of the difficulty to earn a livelihood in field and factory in Europe, immigrants were swelling the population of America. German farmers were discouraged by crop failure and their inability to compete with large landowners. Handicrafts men found their pay diminishing while their work day lengthened. Disillusionment finally caused many to abandon the Old World and seek a new life in America.

Emigrants from Germany found their way out by freight wagon or by boat down the Rhine to north seaports. Wagons that trucked American cotton southward from LaHavre returned to the coast with emigrants for vessels bound for New Orleans. From that gulf port they spread up the Mississippi Valley. The majority, however, entered the United States by way of New York arriving from Bremen and Hamburg.

1800 to 1850 has been termed "Indiana's Pioneer Era — A period of beginnings." It was the beginning of schools, roads, churches, mills, shops and settlements around farm areas. It was also during this Era in 1816 that Indiana became the 19th state of the union.

During the Civil War era (1850-77) important changes took place. Roads were built, railroads developed and the population was expanding away from river ports.

Jacob Spaeth I and his wife, Maria Anna Erhold, were born and married in France, and their family moved to the United States in 1827 and settled in Pennsylvania. In April, 1846 the family moved to Spencer County, where he acquired considerable land. This became known as Spaethville. On December 28, 1850, Jacob Spaeth I and his wife, Maria Anna, sold the rights to property in Carter Township of Spencer County to Rev. Maurice de St. Palais, bishop then of the Vincennes District.

Records show that "Maria Hilf," the German name for Mary, Help of Christians, was laid out in 1860 in Section 14 and was so known instead of Spaethville, until 1862 when the post office was established in Mariah Hill.

By the early 1860's, the community of Maria Hilf had grown and made application to officials in Washington, D. C. for a post office. Post office

officials in Washington couldn't decipher the German script and so named the village Mariah Hill. From the Indiana Historical Bulletin we learn that this took place in 1862.

The Lake Historical Atlas of 1879 shows William Wagner and his widow, Barbara, as post-masters. Others included William Schwarte, Sr. and his son, William A.; Fred W. Wagner (1885); Dr. Felix Maslowsky; John C. Fischer (1906-1912); Mrs. Margaret Maslowsky (1912-1940); and was succeeded by her daughter, Cecilia, (in 1940-1959); Severin Birchler (1959-1961); and the present postmistress Anna LaGrange was installed as acting Postmistress in March, 1961 and commissioned as Postmistress in December, 1961.

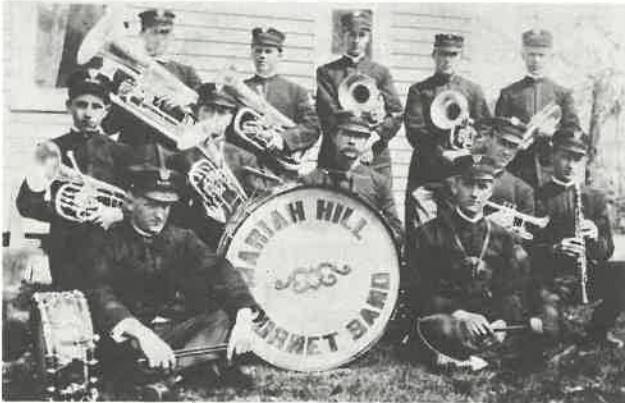
The Mariah Hill Post Office today is located in the home of Mrs. LaGrange and her husband, Eugene. It faces what used to be Mariah Hill's main street. Time has shifted the bulk of the traffic over to the highway. Around 85 families continue to receive and send mail directly at the office.



At one time during the early years the self-contained, prosperous town boasted a flour mill, saw mill, brickyard, two wagon making shops, a creamery, harness shop, two general stores, two hotels, three saloons, four livery stables, a furniture store, a wooden shoe factory conducted by Ferdinand Bockting, a medicine store and brooms were made by George Horlander. There was a coal mine south of the town. Mariah Hill even had

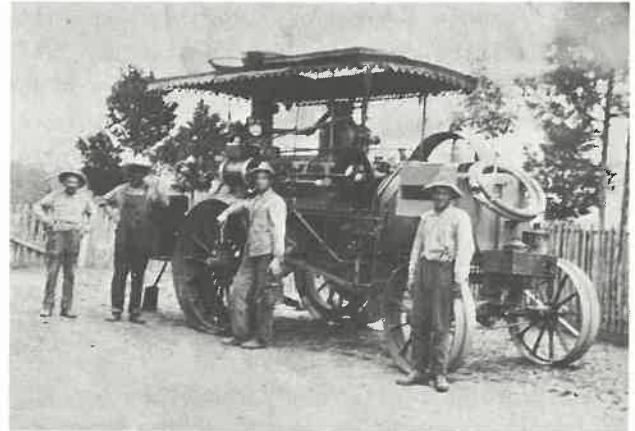
its own doctor and John Dilger was a coffin maker.

In its early days the streets of Mariah Hill were brought to life by the music of a Cornet Band, which would play and march for any and every occasion.

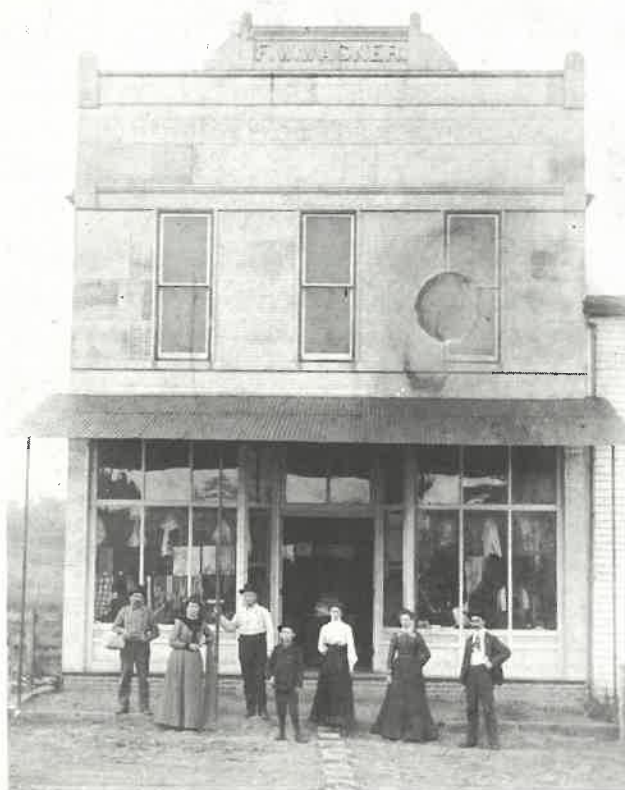


**MARIAH HILL CORNET BAND (1916)** — First row, from left: Paul Brenner and Frank Brenner. Second row: Mike O'Hallen, Olis Dilger, Paul Scherzinger, Frank Nord and Richard Wagner. Third row: Peter Hollander, Frank Hollander (instructor), Frank Dilger (father of Olis), ??? and Ben Bockting.

blacksmith and gunsmith; Jacob Mittelbuehler, hotel and feed stable; Jacob Weller, notary and all manner of conveyance work. These people settled here between 1847 and 1870.



**THRESHING CREW** — From left: Ferdinand Demuth, John Daunhauer, Thomas Daunhauer and Simon Demuth.



**WAGNER GENERAL STORE** — Pictured are John Hartz, Mr. and Mrs. F. Wagner, Richard Wagner, Josephine Tretter, Mattie and Isadore Egloff.

In Lake's Atlas of 1879 of Spencer County (page 43) reference is made to these businesses: Barbara Wagner, General Merchandise and Postmistress; William Schwarte, Sr., Brickyard; Felix Maslowsky, physician and surgeon; Joseph M. Sturm, manufacturer and dealer in wagons, buggies and farm implements; Joseph Yellig,



**COAL MINERS** — Peter Jochim, Louis Gogel, Maurice Hollander, coal hauler and miner.



**DIAMOND TAVERN** — Taken in the early 1930's — now the Chateau, owned by Mike and Ann Jochim.