



Barquilla de la Santa Maria

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Class in sewing and basket weaving at Santa Lucia, Miss Mary Prevost, instructor. (Columbus Register photo) Standing: Rose Cragnale, Miss Prevost, Lilian (Lilly) DiPaolo, Ester DiPaolo; seated: Joann DeCesare, Connie Roberts, Grace (Gracie) Rodgers, Norma DiPaolo, Roslyn Merendo, Irene Deltedesco, unknown. (With thanks to Norma DiPaolo and Dick McCloskey for the names.)

Santa Lucia Community House, A Gift to the Italians of Milo in Columbus 1938-1951

In June, 1938, Bishop James J. Hartley of Columbus celebrated his eightieth birthday and shortly thereafter left Columbus on a journey to Rome. There he would visit the Pope and recover from a recent illness. While there, however, his mind was on a new project in Columbus and the Italian people it was intended to help. On July 16 he sent

a note home to Father Albert Culliton. "Tell all the good Italian people who come to St. Lucia Community House," he wrote, "that the Holy Father sends them his special blessing - their children and all who aid you in the work the Bishop has confided to your care - He wishes them all to come there and unite with you in trying to build up true Catholic life -



The Santa Lucia Community House (Courtesy of Rudy Notturiano)

love for home - for the Church - Holy Mass every Sunday - and Holy Communion very often. To Florence Gilmore and all those ladies who have been doing such good work for the Italian children - he sends his special blessing. He also sends his special blessing to Father Anthony who has been taking such care of the children in his parish school - tell them all to go there. Wishing you every blessing.”

Santa Lucia Community House had formally opened on July 6 when registrations were taken for the summer season. Father Culliton was Director and Miss Florence Gilmore was Executive Secretary. Plans had been announced to the community on a Saturday evening in, July, 1938, when Father Culliton spoke at the festival in honor of Saint Feliciano.

The Property

Earlier that year Bishop Hartley had purchased the former St. Clair Avenue School to serve as a center of organized recreation in St. Peter Parish, where the pastor was Father Anthony Schlernitzauer. It had been the neighborhood’s public elementary school for some 60 years until closed about 1931. It was a one-story building consisting of four rooms and a basement. From another owner the Bishop bought the ten acres behind the building, in hopes of someday building a modern athletic field there. This

was on the northeast corner of St. Clair and Starr (also known as Sheldon) avenues, at the east end of the original Milo. The former school property measured 100.14 feet on St. Clair and had a depth of about 164 feet. Tax value of the property was \$5430.

The area mostly contained small frame residences, but across the street from the old school was a barber shop, an ice cream parlor, and Ralph Santilli’s pool hall.

During the summer the Community House was renovated from cellar to roof and each room was redecorated.

Leaders of the Community House

Father Albert Edward Culliton was born in 1896 in Lynn, Mass. While attending St. John’s Seminary, Little Rock, he was adopted by this diocese. Bishop Hartley ordained him to the priesthood on May 9, 1929. He was a professor of Romance languages and English at St. Charles Seminary from 1929 until 1947 and Director of Athletics there from 1929 until 1939. From 1929 until 1934 he also assisted at Holy Rosary Parish and from 1932 until 1944 was Chaplain of the State School in Orient. He was named Director of Santa Lucia when it was organized in 1938 and began assisting at St. Peter

Parish in 1940. This assistant pastorate ended in 1945, the community house assignment in 1946, and the professorship in 1947. In the latter year he was named founding pastor of St. Christopher Parish, Grandview. He died on October 20, 1960.

Father Culliton, it is remembered, as head of the community house took a lead in all social activities in the area. He personally got many of the neighborhood children to become involved in the community house. He had a reputation for toughness that probably was necessary in dealing with the youths of the area.

Forence Gilmore, born in Columbus in 1881, was well known in the city for her social work, particularly among the Italians. She had attended Maryville College in St. Louis (where her Gilmore grandparents had moved from Columbus) and, according to her niece, she would have become a religious, like her two sisters, but the course of her



*Forence Gilmore (1882-1945)
(Courtesy of Molly Gilmore Lilly)*

life was changed when she had to remain at home to care for her ill mother. She returned to Columbus about 1913 and began instructing Italian children, those who were unable to get to a Catholic school or to church. Over the years she prepared hundreds for their First Holy Communions. In the early days of this work she went from house to house to find those in need of help. She continued this work, meanwhile writing short stories for Catholic magazines and a few books, until her death on September 13, 1945.

Another permanent feature of the community house was Pasquale or Pat Rosati of E. Third Avenue (1893-1974). He was custodian of the building. It is still well remembered that, despite having fingers twice the normal width, he would play the community house piano on any occasion. He had a knack of bringing people together and was a founder of the Societa Frantazella Introdaquesse, as will be explained in a future article.

Programs

Many of the Italians of the Milo area were from the Abruzzi region, east of Rome, but before the unification of Italy belonging not to the Papal States but to the Kingdom of Naples. Of the poor people of this former kingdom, by the early twentieth century only one in four adults could read or write. School buildings were inadequate and attendance was low. "Tradition and credulity are the masters of the population, impotence to do well and allegiance to false principles of living the result." In practice, religion was part festivity and part superstition. "This child's God is anthropomorphic, his saints are in a feudal hierarchy." Thus, though they were nominally Catholic, extra effort was needed to teach their true religion to these immigrants.

It was intended that, in addition to catechism, the community house would offer courses in carpentry, sewing, and civil government, along with a complete athletic program. Volunteer teachers and social workers in the opening days were Misses Madge McCarty, Agnes Ryan, Lenore Ryan, Alice Baker, Maude Flynn, Rafaela Jadonetti, Eleanor Zettler, Helen Oberling, Mary Blakeley, Genevieve

McGrath, Novena DePaul, Rose Panzone, and Mistresses Thomas, Dugan, Taylor, Summers, and C. F. Clark.

By the opening of the year 1940, the Santa Lucia Community House was caring for 900 enrolled children as well as helping with the social work for the older children and families. By that fall over 1,000 children were enrolled. Subjects taught included music, folk and tap dancing, drawing, knitting, and sewing. Dances were held every week in the fall and winter, with the Santa Lucia orchestra providing the music. A games party and a wrestling match also were held. Religious instruction was offered each Sunday afternoon for those not attending parochial schools, supervised by Miss Gilmore. Knitting was taught by Mrs. Joseph Tritschler and Miss Mary Jo Enderlin.

Programs in the summer of 1943 ranged from sewing and music to soccer and baseball. Retired public school teachers, students in social science from Ohio State University and St. Mary's of the

Springs College, and parochial teachers had been recruited to teach. Classes included citizenship ("Americanization"), sewing, cooking, first-aid, woodworking, knitting, art, English, American history, dancing, and singing. Mary K. Rohr, Florence Gilmore, Louise Glockner, Mary E. Warner, Genevieve Leinheuser, and Mrs. James L. Sullivan were donated time and effort to the Community House that summer.

In the fall of 1945, Ned DiPietro was volunteer athletic director. The community house still dealt almost exclusively with people of Italian descent. Miss Mary K. Rohr was secretary-treasurer and Mrs. James Sullivan, Miss Virginia Gerlach, and Miss Genevieve Leinheuser were chairman of the guilds. In 1941 there reportedly had been eight guilds, composed of Italian and "American" girls who were interested in social work.

The following January about 20 students were regularly attending catechisms classes on Sunday afternoons. Catholic Youth Organization members



Although Santa Lucia's football program was its most famous, wrestling, baseball, and limited basketball were also provided. Thomas Ricco catches and Amaday DaMato bats in this Columbus Register photo.



Cpl. Dante Toneguzzo, Rev. A. E. Culliton, and Pvt. William Lay at Santa Lucia in 1943. Toneguzzo still lives in Columbus. (Courtesy of the Archives, Diocese of Columbus)

Misses Mary Margaret Boyhan, Mary Cotter, Margie Cavanaugh, Alice Hieronymous, Mary Reynolds, Vera Troski, and Mary Zubavich were conducting the classes.

In the fall of 1946 the main activities were said to be social affairs, including wedding receptions and dances, together with the athletic program. Paolo DiPaolo was acting as the boys' worker while Father Culliton was on vacation.

Football Program

The community house provided a very small basketball court inside, but the big program was football. The Community House's bantamweight football team "the Saints" participated in the tackle football league sponsored by the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department and won the city championship in 1939. The coach was Joseph Bossetti and the practice field was the large lot behind the community house. Showers were set up in the basement of the community house for the boys to use after practise.

Joe Bossetti remained the football coach through the 1943 season. Others who led the program were Leo Williams, manager in 1943, and

coach Felix DePaolo and manager Louis Viol in 1944. As remembered by the boys in their later years, "There was no other entertainment," no transportation, no shopping, no television, so most of the neighborhood would walk to the games—except those who piled into Alex Celini's big truck. They scrounged equipment, mostly by borrowing from high school teams.

Bossetti was raised in the St. Clair Avenue vicinity and was a lineman at Central High School. The bantam-weight football team was his idea. Middle-weight and heavyweight teams developed after that. He also was a boxer. He coached not for glory but just for the boys—and at the community house he was not paid. Bossetti coached while working on the N&W railroad. He was not well known apart from his players, but was a huge factor in central Ohio football for many years, beginning at Santa Lucia. In later years he was head coach at the St. Clair Athletic Club (1947-1949), St. Peter's elementary school (1950-1953), and St. James elementary (1955-1956). He was assistant coach at various times at St. Charles, Watterson, Hartley, DeSales, Whetstone, Westerville South, and Centennial high schools, until retiring in 2000. He

was a demanding, hands-on coach, highly respected throughout his coaching career, responsible for the development of many players who became coaches themselves.

Impact

Probably because of the war, the impact of the community house was noted not in terms of the religious training provided, but in the *Columbus Register* and documents submitted for funding was noted in terms of reduced delinquency, training for citizenship, and the war effort. Delinquency cases in the Milo area were reportedly reduced from 45 in 1938 to none in 1941. "Of course, improved industrial conditions have helped. When the boys can get jobs and keep busy, they lose their tendency to gang up and get into trouble."

Even Bishop Hartley was quoted, saying, "The boys used to create a great deal of trouble. This has all been changed."

Similarly, in a 1944 request for funds from the War Chest, it was noted, "Before the war....Juvenile delinquency was prevalent.... Community house activities soon provided outlets for emotional, social and athletic activities; today as a result of a well balanced program the people of this district, trained in the ways of American life have contributed in a very efficient manner in the bitter struggle in which the nation is now engaged. Young men, who but yesterday were busily engaged in the achievement of winning five bantam weight football championships of the city of Columbus have found that the intelligent and physical training occasioned by the stren[u]ous effort have paid rich dividends, in every branch of the armed services of the United States.... Santa Lucia Community House boasts of Three Hundred and Thirty Three former members now engaged in the global war activity. Their parents and female members of their families are busily engaged in the production of essential materials for combat and even the younger members of the families not eligible for regular war activity are part time employees in necessary war activity.... Several have paid the supreme sacrifice and others are in critical condition ..."

Finances

For its first five years the Community House was supported solely by the Santa Lucia guilds. In 1940 the general chairman of the guilds was Miss Mary K. Rohr of Berkeley Road. Each guild would hold a monthly meeting in a member's home and would conduct an annual benefit party. The guilds then also were contributing their handiwork to provide layettes for the poor of the district.

Over its first three years, the community house had income of just over \$3,000 and expenses of just under \$2,500. The income was some \$2,000 from the guilds and \$1,000 from lawn fetes and card parties. Expenses were \$290 for repairs, \$67 for taxes, \$420 for interest, \$662 for utilities and building supplies, and \$646 for equipment and supplies for the athletic, sewing, musical, and handicraft programs. Other expenses included office supplies, groceries for the needy, and equipment for the fundraising activities. No salaries were paid until about 1943.

In 1943 Santa Lucia became a Community Fund project, but its affiliation with the War Chest was considered only an emergency measure for the time of the war. The War Chest contributed only about half of the expenses. The guilds continued to contribute and that July a lawn fete was held, with O. DiPietro as chairman.

In preparing for the year 1946, it was decided to continue with the War Chest affiliation. According to Father Culliton, "You cannot do everything with the good works of willing volunteers. We need their works, but we need funds to back their works and give them scope." Santa Lucia was allocated \$4,000 by the War Chest for 1946. In accepting that money, the "Santa Lucia Settlement" agreed, among other conditions, to solicit no other funds for the year without the approval of the War Chest committees and trustees; to cooperate with other agencies in preventing duplication of efforts "in the social welfare program of the city and county;" and to undertake no new line of work or expansion of present program without approval. The War Chest closed its operations effective the end of that year and reverted to the pre-war Community Fund effort.

In August of 1946 Miss Agnes Quinlan,

executive secretary of the Catholic Welfare Division of the diocese, announced that Santa Lucia had been approved for funding by the Community Chest of Columbus and Franklin County for 1947. A five-man committee composed of Chester Groce, Miss Mary Russell, Ornellia DePietro, John Fontana, and Paola DiPaolo presented the community house's case to the admission committee of the Community Chest on July 15.

Last Years of Diocesan Affiliation

Documentation for later years of Santa Lucia is lacking. Florence Gilmore had died in 1945 and Father Culliton was given other duties in 1946. City directories show Santa Lucia Community House continuing at 860 St. Clair Avenue through 1950. Kathleen O'Grady of Upper Arlington was director in 1949 and 1950.

The diocese sold the property to the SFI Lodge for \$5,200 on March 29, 1951. The community house had completed its function, assisting the immigrant families to better know their faith and at the same time to fit into the broader community. And thanks to the efforts of the Community House, the war, and new prosperity, the numbers of Italians in the neighborhood needing such assistance had greatly declined.

SOURCES

- Catholic Columbian*, July 8, 1938
Columbus Register, Jan. 26, 1940; Aug. 13, 1940; July 11, 1941; July 30, 1943; Sept. 17, 1945; Oct. 26, 1945; Aug 2, 1946; Jan. 1, 1946
Suburban News, May 13, 1998
 Undated clipping of a *Columbus Dispatch* article by Steve Blackledge on Joe Bossetti (2000 or later)
 Louis Viol, Dante Guzzo, Tony Berrilli, and Richard Teatino, in Joe Blundo column "So To Speak," *Columbus Dispatch*, May 9, 2003
 Conversation with Bennie Andreoni, Apr. 8, 2009.
 Information from clippings provided by Rudy Notturiano, March 1, 2009
 Hartley, James J., *History of The Diocese of Columbus*, Vol. II; Columbus: 1943; p 198
 July 21, 1944 statement to the Publicity Secretary of the War Chest of Franklin County - diocesan archives
 Franklin County deed records 1093/212 and 1107/350
 diocesan real estate record
 Foerster, Robert F., *The Italian Emigration of our Times*; Cambridge: Harvard U. Press, 1919; pp 96-97

Abstracts from the *Catholic Telegraph*

(Continued, from Vol. XXXIV, No. 9)

Subscribers, Second Quarter, 1857 (name, post office, date of issue)

- Rev. John C. Albrinck, Pomeroy, May 2
 John Bailesty, Kenton, May 9
 William Bennett, Oakfield, Apr. 4
 James Boulger, Chillicothe, Apr. 4
 Martha Clarke, Columbus, May 2
 P. McConomy, Lancaster, Apr. 25
 Peter P. McVeigh, Wilksville, May 16
 D. E. H. Magruder, Somerset, Apr. 4
 John Myers, Wilkesville, Apr. 4
 William Poland, Chillicothe, May 2
 Hugh Reilly, Portsmouth, May 16
 Michael Rigney, Chillicothe, May 30
 Susan Stambaugh, Lancaster, Apr. 18

- Rev. Mr. Thisse, Chillicothe, Apr. 25
 Peter Timony, Hulls, May 30
 James Tracey, Pomeroy, June 13
 Enoch Yoerger, Thornville, May 9

July 4, 1857

Episcopal Visitation Schedule:

- Nativity morning, Holy Redeemer afternoon,
 Portsmouth, 9th August
 Sacred Heart, Pomeroy, 5th September
 Holy Cross, Columbus, 13th September
 Mount Vernon, 20th September

Our friend, Jacob Costigan, Esq., after a short residence in Zanesville, has returned to Somerset, where he will again act as agent for "*Catholic*

Telegraph.”

DIED

At Woodsfield, Ohio, Mr. LEVI WILSON, aged 75 years.

August 1, 1857

Episcopal Visitation Schedule

Marges, 23d September

Canal Dover, 25th September

Steubenville, 27th September

August 8, 1857

There were one hundred and three persons confirmed in St. Mary’s Church, Chillicothe, on last Sunday, and ninety-two in St. Peter’s. Solemn Mass was sung by Rev. Father Lieb, O.S.F., at St. Mary’s, Rev. C. H. Borgess and Rev. J. N. Thisse being Deacon and Subdeacon. Vespers was sung at St. Peter’s by Rev. Mr. Borgess. The Archbishop

preached on both occasions to crowded audiences.

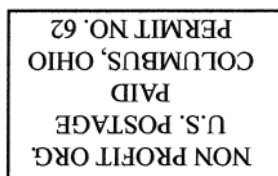
August 15, 1857

All letters, papers and communications for Rev. J. F. McSweeney should be directed to Marion, Ohio.

August 22, 1857

There were thirty-nine confirmed in St. Mary’s Church, Portsmouth, on Sunday 9th Aug., in the forenoon; and sixty in the Church of the Holy Redeemer, same place, in the afternoon—of the latter, five or six were converts. The choir[s] of the two Catholic schools sing sweetly and edifying at the Holy Mass and in the Sodality meetings. At St. Peter’s Lick Run, there were a few persons confirmed on the following Tuesday, and about Seventeen at St. Mary’s of the Furnaces on Wednesday.

(To be continued)



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