

This month we're beginning a series of short biographies about the priests who have served our parish. One of the many tasks the first bishop of a newly created midwestern diocese had was to secure priests and sisters to serve the waves of migrants and, in our case, German-speaking immigrants coming to the Old Northwest. Bishop Henni set out to do just that. His ultimate goal was to establish a German-speaking seminary that would meet that need. We'll meet some of the first missionaries from Bavaria and Austria as well as the first ordinands of the archdiocesan seminary in our first chapter of biographies.

Homebase for our earliest missionaries was St. Peter Cathedral and St. Mary Parish, Milwaukee. Soon St. Boniface became home base for a circuit that expanded into the wilderness of Menomonee, Richfield, Polk, Jackson, Grafton and Belgium Townships.

Michael Heiss is the earliest missionary of record in Germantown. Heiss was the son of Joseph



Heiss and Getrude Frei. Born April 12, 1818 in Pfaldorf, Kipfenberg, Bavaria, he was baptized the next day in St. John the Baptist Church there. Michael was ordained on October 18, 1840 in Nymphenburg, Bavaria. He served as curate in Raitenbuch and Pleinfeld. In 1842, he immigrated to the United States arriving on December 16 in New Orleans. The young priest served at Mary, Mother of God Parish in Covington KY. He arrived in Milwaukee on May 4 or 5, 1844 along with our newly ordained first bishop Martin Henni. Their base of operation was St. Peter's Cathedral in Milwaukee. The record indicates that Germantown was among the foundations north and west of Milwaukee that Henni visited in 1844. Heiss would make trips out here until his time was so consumed with the founding of St. Mary's Parish in Milwaukee that he could no longer do so. The Germantown mission was then served by Charles Schroudenback, Francis Obermueller and Anton Maria Meyer. Heiss went home to Bavaria to convalesce in 1849, returned to Milwaukee in 1852, was ordained Bishop of

LaCrosse in 1868 and installed as the second archbishop of Milwaukee in 1881. He died on March 26, 1890 in LaCrosse WI and is entombed in St. Francis de Sales Seminary Chapel, Milwaukee.

A fuller biography is found at <https://www.archmil.org/Bishops/Former-Archbishops.htm>

*St. John the Baptist Church, Pfalldorf, its baptismal font and sanctuary*

