

The Jesuits
of the
Middle United States

by

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CHAPTER XIV

THE MISSION OF CENTRAL MISSOURI

§ I. ST. JOSEPH'S RESIDENCE, NEW WESTPHALIA

In the autumn of 1837 Father Verhaegen, superior of the Missouri Mission, while returning to St. Louis from the Kickapoo station, visited a colony of German immigrants, most of them from Westphalia, who had settled not far from Jefferson City, Missouri, on the Maries River, about four miles above its confluence with the Osage.¹ Here he found residing with the immigrants a Catholic priest, the Reverend Henry Meinkmann, who had accompanied some of them from Germany, but without having obtained an *exeat* or written release from the bishop of his diocese. Moreover, having failed to apply to the Bishop of St. Louis, in whose territory he was now residing, for "faculties" or a license to exercise the sacred ministry, he was disqualified for ministerial functions and, as a matter of fact, made no attempt to engage in them, but confined himself to the simple duties of school-teacher to the children of the immigrants. Shortly after his return to St. Louis Verhaegen presented Father Meinkmann's case to Bishop Rosati, who in Novem-

¹ According to a manuscript note in the archdiocesan archives of St. Louis, the first priest to visit New Westphalia settlement was Father Christian Hoecken, S. J., who celebrated Mass there probably as early as 1835. However, the baptismal records for his central Missouri excursions of 1835 and 1836, though revealing his presence at Jefferson City and Cote-sans-dessein in June, 1835, show no baptisms among the German settlers on Maries Creek. *Registre des Baptêmes pour la Mission du Missouri, 1832* (A). Father Cornelius Walters, S. J., one of the "travelling missionaries" of St. Charles, Mo., is also mentioned as having followed Hoecken in ministering to the settlers named. Apart from Father Meinkmann, the first priest whose presence among them is vouched for by contemporary record is Father Verhaegen, whose visit in the autumn of 1837 is referred to in the text: "The Germans are most numerous in the neighborhood of Jefferson City. People have assured us there are almost fifty Catholic families there. They are pious and in better circumstances than those of Washington." Verhaegen à Rosati, November 17, 1837. (C)

The first recorded death in the *Liber Defunctorum* (A) of St. Joseph's parish, Westphalia, is that of Gasper Anthony Linneman, December 4, 1836. The burial was in St. Louis on December 6. Mary Josephine Linneman died February 3, 1837, and, in default of a Catholic cemetery, was buried in unconsecrated ground. The first burial-entry signed by Father Helias is for Richard O'Connor, who died in Jefferson City, September 11, 1838, and was buried there on the same day.

ber, 1837, granted the priest permission to exercise the ministry as resident pastor of New Westphalia Settlement, the latter having previously written to his former superior, Bishop Droste of Munster, for an *execut.* Father Meinkmann thereupon assumed spiritual charge of the Westphalia Catholics, who built him a small wooden chapel, named for St. John the Baptist, on the south side of the Maries River.²

In 1835, two years earlier than the incidents recorded in the preceding paragraph, a party of Catholics from Westphalia in Germany, many of them of some education, had come up the Osage River and settled on one of its tributaries, the Maries (Big Maries). Dr. Bruns, a physician, together with a brother of his, located at the bend of the Maries, where the town of Westphalia was later laid out, while the families Nacke, Hesse, Schroeder, Gramatica, Kolks and Kaiser took up land in the immediate vicinity. They were followed in a few months by the families Zellerhoff, Fennewald, Schwarze, Westermann, Bartmann and Geisberg. Some of the immigrants, it would appear, had hoped to establish or associate themselves in some way with an institution of learning in central Missouri; but the primitive conditions they encountered soon disillusioned them and some of their number returned to Germany. Among these was a Mr. Hesse, who in 1838 sketched a valuable map of the Maries River region indicating the respective places of settlement of the German immigrant families. In the course of 1836 Dr. Bruns and a Mr. Bartmann opened the first store in the locality, a picture of which appears on the Hesse map.³

² Father Henry Meinkmann of the diocese of Munster in Germany was ordained in 1829 at Lucerne in Switzerland. For three years prior to his coming to America in 1836 he exercised the ministry at Hinsbeck in Munster. On relinquishing this post he obtained commendatory letters from the curé of Hinsbeck, but on soliciting a document of like tenor from the vicar-general of the diocese of Munster, he was assured by that official, apparently in good faith, that no credentials other than those furnished him by the curé of Hinsbeck would be found necessary in America. Meinkmann applied to Bishop Rosati for faculties in April, 1837. Helias, who became acquainted with the peculiar circumstances in which Meinkmann was placed and who speaks of him as "that Israelite in whom there is no guile," induced Verhaegen in November, 1837, to lay the case before Bishop Rosati. "The Germans of Westphalia, such is the name they give to their colony, said many fine things about the good priest of whom Father Helias speaks: but those of more influence among them observed to me that he would not suit, as he could not wield over them the authority and influence which the sacred ministry requires and this for the reason that he has resided so long among them without the usual powers of a priest, merely as a school-teacher, etc." Verhaegen à Rosati, November 17, 1837 (C). Cf. also Meinkmann ad Rosati, April 13, 1837 (C), Helias à Verhaegen, November 15, 1837, *Litterae Annuae*, 1838. (A)

³ *History of Cole, Montreau, Morgan, Benton, Miller, Maries, and Osage Counties* (Chicago, 1889), p. 679. "From the mouth of the Maries up the follow-

The project of a Jesuit residence in the interior of Missouri had been under consideration for some time previous to the visit of Verhaegen to the Westphalia immigrants in the autumn of 1837. The eighteen or more Catholic stations scattered along the two sides of the Missouri River as far as Boonville above Jefferson City were, during the period 1828-1838, visited at intervals during the year by the Jesuits of St. Charles in missionary circuits averaging from four to six weeks' duration. But such arrangement was not by any means calculated to meet effectively the spiritual needs of the territory in question, it was, perforce, provisional only, pending the establishment of a centrally located headquarters for the missionaries. Already in 1836 the author of the *Annual Letters* of the Missouri Mission pointed to the Catholic settlement of eighty souls on "St. Mary's Creek," (Maries River), the Westphalia settlement above referred to, as a likely place for a Jesuit residence. Partly, therefore, to supply the spiritual wants of the growing Catholic immigrant population of Osage and Gasconade Counties, and partly to secure a missionary center for the fathers from which they could conveniently attend the various Catholic stations of central Missouri, Father Verhaegen, with the consent of Bishop Rosati, decided to open a residence on the Maries. At a meeting of the superior with his official advisers, April 23, 1838, it was determined that "Father Helias and Brother Morris be sent to the station generally known as Westphalia settlement near Jefferson City."

Ferdinand Benoit Marie Guislain Helias d'Huddeghem, scion of a noble Flemish family, was born August 3, 1796, at Ghent in Belgium in the *Primsenhof*, the same house in which the Emperor Charles the Fifth had also made his entrance into life.⁴ As a student at the Jesuit college of Roulers in Belgium, he had Father Van Quickenborne among his professors. He entered the Society of Jesus in his native

ing names appear Dohmen, Messerschmidt, Scheulen, Hoecyway, Colson, Kunermann, Zellerhoff, H. Huber, Hocker, Hesse (now Bossen), Geisberg, Gramatica, Dr. Bruns (at site of Westphalia), on the west fork, David Bruns, Herman Bruns, Fellups and Hilt, on the east fork, Ahrez, Huber, Linnemann, Cons, Hesler, and Schwartz in the west uplands, Ahrez, Clarenbach, Zurmegede, Chipley (Shipley), Carl Huber, Nacke and Fennewald on the northeast uplands, F Schwartz, Wilson, Lee (Smith's Postoffice) and the McDaniels. It will be seen that those to the northeast on the map are Americans. On the map, too, is a cut of the first loghouse at Westphalia, built by Dr. Bruns." *Idem*, p. 635. A copy of Hesse's book, *Das westliche Nordamerika in besondere Beziehung auf die deutschen emwanderer in ihren landwirthschaftlichen, Handels-und Gewerbeverhältnissen* (Paderborn, 1838), is in the library of the Jesuit residence of St. Joseph's, St. Louis.

⁴ Auguste Lebrocquy, S. J., *Vie du R. P. Hélias D'Huddeghem de la Compagnie de Jesus* (Gand, 1878), p. 1. For particulars about Helias's transfer from Maryland to Missouri, cf. *supra*, Chap. XI, § 3.

town, Ghent, finished his novitiate at Montrouge in France, and was transferred thence to the college of Brieg in Switzerland. From there he came in 1833 to the United States, where he spent the two following years in the newly erected Maryland Province, being employed in various charges, among others that of assistant-master of novices. Assigned to the Missouri Mission in 1835, he arrived at St. Louis University August 22 of that year. Here in the course of the three following years, he taught French, German, and on occasion canon law and moral theology, and was, besides given the charge of pastor of the German Catholics of North St. Louis, whom he began to organize into the future St. Joseph's parish.

Father Helias left St. Louis for his new destination May 3, 1838. A domestic diary of St. Louis University chronicles the event.

May 3 Father Helias set out from this house to take in hand a mission in a place called Liel-town, a German settlement⁵. In that man burns a truly divine zeal, for he has accepted with courage the task imposed on him, an arduous one withal, as there are heartburnings and dissensions to be healed before any good can be accomplished among the people. A church and presbytery, both of logs, have been erected in the place.

Father Helias was accompanied on his journey up the Missouri River by Fathers De Smet, Eysvogels and Verhaegen, and the lay brother, William Claessens.⁶ De Smet was on his way to Council Bluffs, Eysvogels and Claessens were to work among the Kickapoo while Verhaegen was to make an official visitation of the Kickapoo Mission. Among the fellow-passengers of the Jesuits was Captain Sutter, noted Santa Fe trader and future discoverer of the California gold-fields. The steamer coming to a dead stop at least twice owing to the complete collapse of her machinery, Father Helias at length took to land and made the last stages of his journey on horseback. He arrived on May 11 at Cote-sans-dessein, a Creole settlement on the left bank of the Missouri in Callaway County near the mouth of the Osage River, and said Mass there in a private house. The Sunday following, May 13, the fourth

⁵ "In 1831 Benjamin Lisle started a settlement named after him, Lisletown, at the head [mouth] of the Maries Creek. The first post-office in Osage County was here. Owing to the growth of the neighboring Westphalia, Lisletown proved a failure." Conard, *Encyclopedia of the History of Missouri*, 6 449. The post-office was transferred about 1838 from Lisletown to Westphalia, Dr. Bernard Bruns, the Catholic doctor of the place, being appointed post-master.

⁶ Helias, *Mémoires du Rd. P. Ferdinand Helias D'Huddeghem prêtre missionnaire de la Compagnie de Jesus en Amerique* (Ms.) (A). Contains a prefatory letter addressed to Father De Smet, 1867, from St. Francis Xavier's, Taos, Cole Co., Mo. According to a contemporary account by Verhaegen (June 20, 1838, *Ann Prop*, 11 468), the date of the departure from St. Louis of the missionary party was May 2.

after Easter and feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph, he celebrated Mass in Westphalia and was duly installed as pastor of the German Catholic congregation.⁷ To the log church which his parishioners had begun to build the year before he gave the name of St. Joseph. Several considerations determined this choice, so his memoirs declare. First, there was the circumstance that his devoted friend, Bishop Rosati of St. Louis, had Joseph for his given name. Then, Helias had always cherished a particular devotion to the foster-father of the Savior, as being the patron of his own Belgium and, so he said, of the Holy Roman Empire of the middle ages. Finally, even under the Spanish regime the district laid out as Gasconade County had been organized into an administrative unit known as the "Parish of St. Joseph," with headquarters at Cote-sans-dessein.⁸

Father Helias at once took in hand the cultivation of the extensive spiritual field entrusted to his care, Father Meinkmann at first assisting him in his labors. The latter appears to have been a man of excellent intentions, but less tactful than was necessary in dealing with the numerous parties of German immigrants that made up his rather motley congregation. Among the grievances voiced was that he confined his ministrations to the group of Rhinelanders whom he had accompanied from Germany and neglected the other portions of his flock, the Westphalians in particular taking umbrage at the line of action followed by their pastor. As there seemed little prospect of healing the differences between Father Meinkmann and the parishioners of New Westphalia, Bishop Rosati transferred him in 1839 to the newly established parish of St. Francis Borgia in Washington, Franklin County.⁹

Although the colony of Westphalian immigrants planted on the Maries went by the name of New Westphalia Settlement prior even to the advent of Father Helias, the beginning proper of the town, known first as New Westphalia and later simply as Westphalia, seems to have been made in 1838 under the immediate direction of Helias himself.¹⁰ In that year Fathers Verhaegen, De Theux and Smedts ac-

⁷ Lebrocqy, *op cit*, p. 185. "13a Maii Dominica IVa Post Pascham, Festum Patrocinii Sui Josephi titular Westphaliae instalavi me primum huius Paroeciae Pastorem primumque Sacrum dixi." Memorandum of Father Helias indorsed "Dies Memorabiles F. Mariae Helias, S. J." (A)

⁸ Lebrocqy, *op cit*, p. 206. Helias's statement that a civil district or parish named for St. Joseph was laid out in central Missouri under the Spanish régime cannot be verified.

⁹ *Residentiae Sui Francisci Xaverii Centralis Exordium et Progressus, 1838-1848*, p. 3. Ms. (A). Helias refers to Meinkmann as "our ceteroquum simplex et cordatus."

¹⁰ Meinkmann's letter of April 13, 1837, to Rosati is dated from "New Westphalia Settlement."

quired from Francis Geisberg for a nominal consideration of five dollars forty acres of land on the left bank of the Maries River. Shortly after his arrival Helias, with his superior's approval, after reserving fourteen acres to himself as a means of support, divided the remaining twenty-six into lots, which he offered to the artisans and laborers of the German colony, farmers being excluded from the offer. The recipients were to be given a ninety-nine year lease to their respective lots, which they were to hold rent free the first five years, and afterwards on an annual payment of two or five dollars, according to the value of the lot. The money derived from this source was to go to the maintenance of the church. Subsequently, to remove all ground of invidious gossip, the lots were deeded over to the tenants in fee-simple. Such was the beginning of the town of New Westphalia ¹¹

The log church which served the needs of the Catholics of New Westphalia until the construction of a solid stone church in 1848 was an architectural makeshift, including both church and presbytery under the one roof. Bishop Rosati blessed it on the occasion of his first visit to New Westphalia October 14, 1838, on which occasion he adminis-

¹¹ *Litterae Annuae*, 1838 The deed of transfer of the Westphalia property from Francis Geisberg to P J Verhaegen, Theodore De Theux and J B Smedts under date of June 25, 1838, was recorded at Mount Sterling, Gasconade County, on July 5 of the same year According to the account in Goodspeed (publisher), *History of Cole, Montreau, Benton, Miller and Osage Counties* (Chicago, 1883), Geisberg entered 200 acres of public land on the Maries, forty of which he subsequently donated for the erection of a Catholic church Cf. in this connection Helias's verse, *Atque novae fundamenta fiximus Urbs Westphaliae* ("And we laid the foundations of the town of New Westphalia").

The forty acres conveyed by Francis Geisberg is described in the deed of transfer as the ne $\frac{1}{4}$ of sw $\frac{1}{4}$ of section 26, tp. 43, range 10 w A forty-foot street (Main) cut it diagonally from southeast to northeast. The lots appear to have been originally leased to the settlers for a ninety-nine year term (1839-1938). The conditions of the lease were recorded by Helias in the baptismal register now preserved among the records of St. Francis Xavier Church, Taos, Cole Co, Mo According to this document, the town of Westphalia was laid out in two divisions, the second being the property of a Mr Gramatica Father Helias's forty acres did not therefore comprise the entire town-site of Westphalia The tenant of Father Helias's lots promised "to keep his house in good condition, to build a post-fence in a straight direction along the street and to hold in his house or on his message no people of bad morality reputed as a nuisance and a public disturber of the peace." All of the forty acres appear to have been sold by Helias with the exception of one acre, on which the old church, subsequently used as a school-house, was standing in 1861. The property on which stand the present church, convent and school was repurchased from various parties The present stone church was built on a lot acquired September 18, 1847, from Mrs. Gertrude Evens, a widow, whose skilful nursing saved Helias's life, when the doctors had given him up.

tered confirmation to thirty-eight members of the parish.¹² The prelate preached on this day in English as did also Father Verhaegen, his companion in the visitation of the diocese then in progress. A school-building, like the church, of logs, was put up within a year or two of Helias's arrival. The duties of school-teacher were discharged for a while by Father James Busschots, who arrived on the scene July 27, 1838. Busschots remained in New Westphalia until September 23 of the following year, when he was transferred to the new Jesuit residence of St. Francis Borgia in Washington, Missouri. Father Helias was then left without an assistant priest until the arrival in 1846 of Father James Cotting.¹³

Bishop Rosati's Latin diary (*Ephemerides Privatae*) affords interesting glimpses of Catholic life in Missouri in the pioneer period. The account of his visit to Father Helias's missions in October, 1838, is a typical passage:

- October 10, 1838, Wednesday. About noon we reached the banks of the Missouri river opposite Jefferson City 11 miles from Bloomfield and dined at Yount's. We crossed the Missouri not without some trouble and arrived at Jefferson City. Here by chance the first person to meet us was Mr Withnell, who built the façade and tower of our cathedral of squared, highly polished stone, as also the portico. He offered us his house and there we lodged. To Father Helias, who lives in New Westphalia fifteen miles from here, Father Verhaegen wrote at once, as he found a man who would deliver the letter the next day.
11. Thursday. Did not celebrate for there was no chalice. There are two hundred Catholics in Jefferson City, part German and part Irish. Fathers Helias and Buschotts visit them. The church is not yet built and Mass is celebrated in the dining-room of a public tavern, the proprietor of which is a Catholic. Shortly, with God's help, will be built a stone church sixty feet long and forty feet wide. I have pledged a hundred dollars towards its construction. We visited the capitol, which Mr Withnell is building of squared polished stone, the structure being 180 feet long and 80 feet wide, and from the portico to the opposite end 150 feet wide [*sic*]. We visited Mr. Hill, the English architect who is superintending the building, and he showed us most readily all the plans of the building.

¹² "From Jefferson City we went to New Westphalia, 15 [12] miles, in Gasconade Co., a German congregation. F. Helias with F. Buschotts resides there and takes care of the Congregation of Jefferson City and others. I blessed the church last Sunday, gave confirmation to 26 persons, blessed the Graveyard and gave confirmation the next day to 9 persons more." Rosati to Timon, October 20, 1838 (C). Cf. Lebrocqy, *op. cit.*, pp. 204-207, for some interesting details in connection with the blessing of the church. "*Le souvenir de cette grande journée ne s'effaçera jamais de la mémoire du P. Helias.*"

¹³ *Residentiae St. Francisci Xaverii, etc.*, p. 8. (A).

Father Helias arrived about midnight for the man sent by Father Verhaegen lost his way and was late in reaching Westphalia.

- Oct. 12 Early in the morning Father Helias notified all the persons he could that confirmation would be conferred, heard their confessions, and at 9 o'clock celebrated Mass, at which I was present, in the aforesaid dining-hall. After Mass I gave a sermon on the sacrament of confirmation and administered it to eleven faithful of both sexes, a sermon being given before confirmation, and after it, the [usual] exhortation. Many more would have come had they been given notice.

About 11 o'clock we started off in a wagon procured for us by Mr Withnell, in which were two chairs such as we use at home. Father Helias came with us. We crossed the Moreau river five miles from Jefferson, not far from it live two excellent Catholics from Germany, we got out of the wagon and paid them a visit. We continued the journey, crossed the Osage river at the confluence of Marys [Maries] river, where is situated the village called Lisletown, [and] at length arrived at New Westphalia where we were received with joy by Fathers Helias and Buschotts, who reside there.

13. Saturday Celebrated Mass in St. Joseph's church, which is built of wood. I lodged in the sacristy, Father Verhaegen, with Fathers Helias and Buschotts, in a house which has been put up for a school. Mr Bruns, a physician, who lives only a short distance from the church, paid us a visit, we dined with him. There are about three hundred Catholics living here.
14. XIX Sunday after Pentecost Said Mass at 8 in the church and gave communion to the people. At ten we assembled in the church, which I solemnly blessed according to the rite set forth in the Roman Ritual. Then Father Buss[chots] celebrated Mass solemnly. After the Gospel I preached in English, as most of the Germans understand this language and many American Protestants were present. After Mass and singing of the *Veni Creator* I administered the sacrament of confirmation to 26 faithful of both sexes, and exhorted them to perseverance. At the end, Father Verhaegen delivered a sermon in English on the Catholic religion.

At three in the afternoon we assembled in the church and went from there to the adjoining cemetery, which I blessed according to the solemn rite of the Roman Pontifical. Having returned to the church, I spoke to the people about the blessing that had taken place, about the pious thoughts which the sight of a cemetery should stir in the minds of Catholics and about the persons who are denied ecclesiastical burial; and I asked Father Helias to repeat in German what I had said in English, which he did. At the end, to return thanks to God for the blessings bestowed upon the parish, we sang the *Te Deum laudamus*.

15. Celebrated Mass in the church. Confirmed 19 of both sexes. We dined with Mr Bruns. At 4 p.m. we set out, were brought by Mr. Bruns and others to the Osage river, which we crossed, and came to the

house of Mr. Williams, whose wife, a Catholic, had come to the church. She had sent us an invitation through Mr. Bruns, for the public stage stopped at her house very early in the morning and we were to travel by it the rest of the way. We were received as guests with the utmost kindness and they asked us to stay with them whenever we chanced to pass that way¹⁴

Economic conditions among the German settlers of Osage County in its pioneer period were extremely crude.¹⁵ The journey to America had depleted the purse of most of the immigrants, as a consequence, they were often without capital in money or tools with which to begin the struggle for existence in the New World. They were thus forced to borrow, but they found the American settlers who had preceded them into the wilderness ready to lend. "I have heard," a Westphalia pastor, Father Nicholas Schlechter, S. J., wrote in 1884, "several German families saying that when they came to the county they were in great poverty and obliged to beg, and that for entire weeks and months, but they invariably added 'The Americans were good, they never grew tired of our asking, but simply said: 'take it''"¹⁶

Good strong wagons were the thing the farmers needed most of all. Though these could be obtained in St. Louis, money was scarce and the cost of shipping the wagons all the way to Westphalia and other settlements in Osage County was prohibitive. Necessity suggested therefore to the farmers the invention of a type of home-made wagon which for years answered all their needs of transportation. Not a nail or bit of iron was used in the construction, wooden bolts held together beam, cross-beam, shaft and axle-tree. But the wheels were the most characteristic feature of this singular conveyance. These were of one piece, being circular-shaped slices from the trunks of huge sycamore trees. One may well believe that these curious wagons, as they were drawn along by plodding oxen, made a hideous clatter, proverbial throughout the county long after the pioneer stage of its history had come to an end.

§ 2. MISSIONARY EXCURSIONS, 1838-1842

Father Helias had scarcely arrived at New Westphalia when he began from there, as a base of operations, the series of periodic missionary excursions which were to mean much for the upbuilding of Catholicity in central Missouri. Eleven counties, Franklin, Gasconade, Osage, Cole, Moniteau, and Cooper on the south side of the Missouri

¹⁴ Rosati's Diary, 1838. Kenrick Seminary Archives

¹⁵ Osage County was organized out of Gasconade County, January 29, 1841

¹⁶ *WL*, 13 358. Father Nicholas Schlechter, S. J., was pastor in Westphalia, 1882-1883, and in Loose Creek, 1883-1884.

and Warren, Montgomery, Callaway, Boone, and Howard on the north side were included in the area traversed.¹⁷ He said his first Mass

¹⁷ A manuscript account compiled by Helias in 1838 (*Excursionnes Missionis Centralis*) contains a census of the Catholic stations along the Missouri with the names in many cases of the persons in whose houses divine service was held. The figures indicate the number of families *South side of the Missouri*: Manchester, St. Louis Co., 10, Washington, Franklin Co. (Uhlenbrouck's house near the town), 118, Burbus, Franklin Co., 11, Henry Reed's Settlement, Franklin Co., 5, Bailey's Creek, Gasconade Co. (Jh Logsdon), 22, French Village (Louis Leblanc's house near the Osage River), 24, Loose Creek (Aug Pequignot), Cadet [Cade?] Creek (J B Bonnot), 25, (services in these two places generally held in the district-school-house), across the Osage at Herman Nieters, Liberty Township, 20, Jefferson City (Henry Haar's tavern [*publica taberna*], the missionary lodging with Mr Withnell, architect of the capitol), Barry's Settlement, Cole Co. (P. Barry), 10, Moniteau River (F. Joseph Weber), 40, Boonville (Anthony Fuch's [Fox] and Peter Joseph), 12, Pilot Grove (on the prairie at Romersbergers [Anthony Rempserger]), 15, near Georgetown, Pettis Co. (Dr Bruhl) *North side of the Missouri*: Fayette and Chariton (Mr. Post), 5, Columbia, Boone Co. (Mr. Lynch, Jr, and outside the town, Mr Lynch, Sr.), 13, Portland (Priestly Gill), 8, Hancock Prairie (John Shannon), 10, Cote-sans-desseim (Widow Roy), 20, Rocheport, 26, Lay Creek, 34, Mount Pleasant, 30, Martinsville [Marthasville] opposite Washington, 3.

In another list mention is made of a congregation of Irish, perhaps Barry Settlement, near Marion, Cole Co., not to be identified, it would seem, with St. Patrick's congregation, Hibernia Pisgah, Cooper Co. (house of John Fay), also occurs as one of the stations visited by Father Helias.

Helias's census of Catholic families in central Missouri for April 1, 1839, is a document of value. It does not, however, include all the stations in the missionary's circuit. It is reproduced in the *Missouri Historical Review*, 5 87.

Westphalia: Bernard Bruns, Doctor of Medicine, Geisberg, Brockmann, Ottens, Gramatica, Walters, Schmitz, Otto, Debeis, Eppenhof, Oldenlehre, Huber, Nacke, Bartmann, Eck, Knueve, Zellerhoff, Juchmann, Bose, Eckmeier, Kolks, Vennewald, Lueckenhoff, Meierpeter, Schuelen, Kregel, Dohmen, Stiefermann, Hagenbrock, Boessen, Linnemann, Goetzen, Artz, Brockerhoff, Kern, Wilhaupt, Schwartze, Hasslog, Holtermann, Sudhoff, Borgmann, Kuess, J Schater.

Jefferson City: Kolkmeier, Richters, Hart, Withnell, Hannan, Buz, Kramer, Tellmann, Monaghan, Ryan, Gilman, Corker, Bauerdick, Brand, Doherty.

Loose Creek: Monnier, Valentin, Cordonier, Brichaud, Besson, Saulnier, Stoffen, Farrell, Reed, Burbus.

French Village: Peter Goujon, Louis Goujon, Angelica Mercer, widow, Gleizer, Picqueur, Vincennes, Denoyer, Luison, Leblanc.

Cote-sans-desseim: Roy, Faye, Arnould, Nicholas, Renaud.

Bailey's Creek: Logsdon, Simon, Welch, Howard, Folgs, Serpentin, Miller, Heth.

Portland: Priestly Gill.

Hancock Prairie: Joseph [John?] Shannon, Thomas Flood, Anna Catharina, widow of John Preis.

Columbia: Lynch and Kitt.

Boonville: Fuchs, Weber, Fis, Pecht, Foy, Morey, Dr Heart, Rockwie, Briel.

New Franklin: Matthias Simon.

at New Westphalia May 13, 1838. On May 24, Ascension Day, he officiated at French Village and the day after at Cote-sans-dessein, where a number of adults made their first holy communion. Saturday he was at Hibernia or Hibernium, some five miles to the northeast of Jefferson City.¹⁸ The next day, Sunday, May 27, he celebrated Mass for the first time in Jefferson City, the state capital, where the first house had been built in 1819.¹⁹

Nowhere was the missionary given a heartier welcome than in Jefferson City. The Catholic population of the town consisted of about one hundred and fifty souls, chiefly German and Irish immigrants, most of whom were employed as laborers on the new capitol building

¹⁸ *Dies memorabiles*, etc. (A) Wetmore's *Gazetteer of Missouri* lists Hibernia as a post-office of Callaway County ("Holt's Settlement, Hibernia, on the C and A R R 20 miles south of Fulton" Campbell, *Gazetteer of Missouri*, p 97) The Hibernium visited by Helias, May 26, 1838, appears to have been only a few miles distant from Jefferson City According to a "*status animarum*" for the mission of Central Missouri compiled by Helias, "St. Patrick's Congregation in Hibernium" counted only ten souls in 1838-1839, a number which had dwindled to five in 1849 On August 12, 1827, Father Van Quickenborne administered four baptisms at "Hibernia near Jefferson," among the recipients being Francis Pomponius Atticus Dillon, son of Patrick M and Anne C. Nash, born June 1, 1824 *Registre des Baptêmes*, St Ferdinand's Church, Florissant, Mo

¹⁹ The first Catholic priest mentioned in contemporary records as having visited Jefferson City is Father Verhaegen, S J, who preached a mission there in 1828 *Supra*, Chap VIII, § 1 There is every reason to suppose that he said Mass there on that occasion A manuscript memorandum in the Archdiocesan Archives, St Louis, states that he said Mass in Jefferson City in 1836. According to a sketch of the Catholic Church in the *Missouri Volksfreund*, October 7, 1896, the first Mass in the place was celebrated by Father Felix Verreydt, S J, in 1831 Father Helias in his *Dies Memorabiles* seems to lay claim to the distinction of celebrating the first Mass in Jefferson City, May 27, 1838 Services on this occasion were held "in the large hall of the German Boarding House of Mr Henry Haar" (Memorandum, St Louis Archdiocesan Archives), probably the house 325 High Street, still standing in 1896 *Missouri Volksfreund*, October 7, 1896 The house of Gebhard Anthony Kramer "near the Capitol" is also mentioned by Father Helias as a place where he held services in his early visits to Jefferson City. (There is no doubt that Father Verhaegen preceded Fathers Verreydt and Helias in Jefferson City, having very probably also celebrated the first Mass there in 1828).

The earliest recorded baptisms in Jefferson City were the two performed by Father Christian Hoecken on June 18, 1835, when he baptized George, son of Patrick Ward and Mary Dillon Ward, and Charles Julius, son of Casper and Julia Haebert *Registre des Baptêmes pour la Mission du Missouri*, 1832 (A) Helias's first baptism in the town was that of Edmund Dougherty, son of Andrew and Helen Dougherty, May 26, 1838 The earliest Catholic burials in Jefferson City, as entered in the Westphalia *Liber Defunctorum* (A), were those of Richard O'Connor, September 11, 1838, and John O'Brien, September 15, same year, Helias having been the officiating priest on both occasions.

then in process of construction.²⁰ Father Helias spent a few days among these good people and afterwards revisited them regularly once a month. Before the close of 1838 sixteen hundred dollars had been collected among the Catholics for a church and school to be dedicated to St. Ignatius Loyola. Mr. John Withnell, architect of the capitol and personally known to Father Helias, offered his professional services for the new edifice at a nominal charge. The Irish and German workmen engaged in the construction of the capitol also volunteered their help. The only difficulty that beset the venture was the lack of a suitable site. Charles Dwyer of St. Louis offered Helias one of the twelve lots which he owned in Jefferson City, but the property was too remote from the heart of the town to serve the purpose intended. A happy solution of the difficulty presented itself and this from a rather unexpected quarter. The old capitol building, become unnecessary for public business by the construction of the new one, might perhaps be turned over to the Catholics for a church. The idea was taken up by some of the Catholic residents of Jefferson City, who secured a large number of signatures to a petition to this effect, even among the non-Catholic citizens. The petition was presented in due course of time to the legislature. Here a resolution in its favor was carried in the senate by a unanimous vote, but going before the lower house, was defeated by a majority of four. It was necessary to look for another site. During all this time hope was entertained by the Catholics of Jefferson City of having a Jesuit college or academy in their midst. But Father Verhaegen declined to take any step in this direction, being too much pressed by the difficulties of the existing institutions of the Missouri Mission to engage in any such perilous educational project. But a church was a distinct need of the Catholics of the town and so, ground for a site having been purchased, a frame structure under the invocation of St. Ignatius Loyola was erected in 1841 and dedicated Easter Sunday, 1843. It continued to be served by Father Helias until the arrival in July, 1846, of Father James Murphy, the first resident priest of Jefferson City.²¹

²⁰ *Annuae Litterae*, 1838 *Residentiae S. Francisci Xaverii Centralis Exordium et Progressus* (Helias Mss.) Bishop Rosati, assisted by Father Verhaegen, administered confirmation in Jefferson City in October, 1838. "I gave confirmation in the Hall of an Hotel in Jefferson City to 11 persons on a week day there are two hundred Catholics, not yet a church, but we have begun to make arrangements to have a decent one in stone. Mr. Withnell, who is building there the Capitol, very kindly received us in his house he will be of great service in the building of the church." Rosati to Timon, October 20, 1838 (C)

²¹ The *Status Animarum*, etc., 1848-49 (Helias Mss.), gives the date 1841 for the building, at least in its initial stage (*fundatio templi*), of the Jefferson City church. Father Helias's *Mémoires* (A), p. 54, fixes the date as 1842. The

Father Helias was the first Catholic priest to minister to the inmates of the state penitentiary in Jefferson City.²² An instance, occurring in 1839, of his success in dealing with the prisoners is recorded. A young Englishman, Henry Lane by name, of aristocratic connections and a one-time college student, at least so report had it, was under sentence of death. His desperate antecedents promised small hope of any spiritual impression being made upon him. Father Helias, however, undertook to prepare him for death with the result that the young man underwent a complete change of heart and went to his fate with the most edifying sentiments of faith and repentance. The crowd who gathered to witness the execution looked for a struggle on the part of the criminal when brought to the gallows. To their surprise, nothing of the sort occurred. On the contrary, he walked to the scaffold without handcuffs and with a crucifix in his hand, while the words of warning which he addressed to the spectators on the vice of drunkenness brought tears to the eyes of many. The breaking at the last moment of the hangman's rope when it was already around the neck of the condemned man failed to unnerve him. He persevered to the end in his pious sentiments, the sacred names of Jesus and Mary rising to his lips in the brief spell of agony that preceded death.²³

In the Creole settlements of Cote-sans-dessein and French Village Father Helias found the fruits of his ministry meagre enough owing to the habitual religious indifference of the people.²⁴ He notes in his record for 1838 certain sudden and unhappy deaths among the more obdurate of the Creoles. One of their number felling an oak on Christmas Day was crushed to pieces under the falling tree in the presence of his wife and mother. The Sunday following, a bitterly cold day, two men returning home from a tavern late at night in a drunken condition lost their way and were obliged to crawl along the ground on all fours in an effort to find the road. One of the men was frozen to death, the other nearly so, so that it was necessary to amputate his fingers and toes to save his life. Again, a woman of disedifying

Status Annuarum, compiled not later than 1850, is probably a safer guide on this point than the much later *Mémoires*. The church was dedicated Easter Sunday, 1843. "On Easter Sunday the neat frame church erected by Father Helias, S. J., in the city of Jefferson was dedicated to Divine worship under the invocation of St. Ignatius of Loyola." *Catholic Cabinet* (St. Louis), 1 60. Father Helias is the only authority available for the statement that the Catholics of Jefferson City petitioned the legislature for the use of the old capitol building and that the petition was rejected.

²² *Status Annuarum*, etc (Helias Mss.).

²³ *Litterae Annuae*, 1840.

²⁴ Dauphine, later Bonnot's Mill, was a sort of second growth of French Village. St. Francis Regis was patron of the Cote-sans-dessein congregation.

life who had listened to Helias preaching on the certainty of death, but without being moved to any attempt to mend her ways, was, on the very day after the sermon, suddenly stricken down. The lesson taught by these and other examples of what looked like summary divine punishment was not altogether lost on the inhabitants of French Village and Cote-sans-dessein. In pleasing contrast to the nonchalant frivolous ways of the latter was the strong faith and practical piety of a group of recently arrived French-Canadians of whom Helias makes mention, and who proposed to start a settlement of their own to be known as New Besançon. There is no record of such intention having been carried out.²⁵

A higher level of Catholic faith and practice prevailed in the other stations, near and far, which Father Helias was accustomed to attend in his missionary circuit. The stations nearest to Westphalia he visited monthly, the more remote ones, twice and three times a year. Typical of the eagerness of the pioneer Catholic settlers of central Missouri to welcome a priest in their midst was an incident that occurred at Portland, Callaway County, a town on the north bank of the Missouri some miles below Jefferson City. Here one day the Catholics of the vicinity began to assemble in a private house to listen to a sermon which Father Helias was announced to preach. So many, however, had gathered for the occasion that there was no possibility of accommodating them within the four walls of the house. The entire congregation thereupon withdrew to an adjoining field and here under a scorching August sun the missionary conducted divine service. The people of Portland were so impressed by Helias's visit on this occasion that one of their number was dispatched to St. Louis to offer Father Verhaegen, in the name of the rest, a purse of two thousand dollars together with five acres of land, as an inducement to the superior to establish a Jesuit college in their town.²⁶

Something of a clan-system developed among the German settlers as a consequence of their having arrived in Missouri in successive parties and from different districts of Germany. The immigrants from Westphalia and Hanover clustered together in and around New Westphalia in the western part of Osage County. Those from the lower Rhine settled in the northern parts of the county around Loose Creek as a center. Finally, the Bavarians took up land in the southern part of the

²⁵ *Historia Westphaliae*, p. 8 *Residentiae Sui Francisci Xaverii Centralis Exordium et Progressus, 1838-48* (Helias Mss.)

²⁶ *Litterae Annuae, 1839* Father Christian Hoecken, S J, baptized at Portland, June 30, 1835, Mary Ann, daughter of Priestly Gill and Mary Norris. *Registre des Baptêmes pour la Mission du Missouri, 1832* Portland is twenty-four miles southeast of Fulton, Callaway County.

county near the Gasconade River, their principal settlement being named Richfountain by Father Helias on account of the abundance of clear spring water found in the neighborhood. Besides the settlements named, all of which were within the limits of Osage County, there was a colony of Belgian and Hanoverian immigrants, numbering in all about two hundred souls, west of the Osage River in Cole County. It was here that Father Helias, in 1840, built his second church, St. Francis Xavier's.

The first visit of Helias to this locality, where he was destined to make his home for the greater part of his career in central Missouri, was on May 28, 1838, when he celebrated Mass in the house of one of the settlers, Herman Nieters, there being no church at the time in the place.²⁷ Having secured ten acres of land centrally situated with reference to the German farmers of the neighborhood, he began to lay plans for the erection of a wooden church. But the site did not commend itself to a certain group among the parishioners, who advocated the purchase of a tract of government land forty acres in extent. Father Helias insisted on the choice already made. The property he had secured lay within easy reach of both Westphalia and Jefferson City, was near a public highway, and had the advantage of an agreeable position on rising ground, with a fine spring of the coolest water at hand. Moreover, there was land enough for a presbytery and cemetery, both of which would have to be provided for soon. To the counter-proposition to build the church elsewhere was the further objection that the site suggested, besides being undesirable as a location for the church, would have to be bought, and that the money for this purpose would have to be borrowed, and, so Father Helias observed, "borrowed money and a foolish purchase make a sorry combination." The advocates, however, of a new site were insistent and even carried the case to St. Louis to Father Verhaegen, at that time administrator of the diocese in the absence of Bishop Rosati in Europe. Happily, the controversy was adjusted and Helias succeeded in building the church in 1840 on the site he had chosen.²⁸

The village which grew up in the course of time around the Church of St. Francis Xavier owed its origin, in a measure, to Father Helias. As the ground on which the church stood had been acquired by him

²⁷ *Dies Memorabiles* (Helias Mss.)

²⁸ *Litterae Annuae*, 1840. The church property, a tract of ten acres, was conveyed by Henry and Gertrude Haar, June 5, 1840, the consideration being five dollars, to Fathers Verhaegen, De Theux and Smedts. It was in n e $\frac{1}{4}$ of n w $\frac{1}{4}$ of section 6, range 10, township 43. The church and residence stood close to the south side of the Versailles state-road. The graveyard, one and a half acres, was purchased October 19, 1849, from John Anthony Eck.

from Henry Haar, a contractor and builder, the village went for a while by the name of Haarville.²⁹ Later, it took the name of the post-office of the district, Taos, the post-office quarters being alongside the church. Taos was three miles from Lisletown at the junction of the Osage and the Maries Rivers, six from the Missouri River and five from Jefferson City.³⁰ Father Helias thus describes the place in his *Mémoires*. "There are no bilious fevers here as elsewhere while the parish buildings are more pretentious than in the other residences established by the missionary [Helias]; in a word, the place makes a much better appearance. Moreover, the settlers succeed better here owing to the nearness of the state capital and of the railroad, by which they are enabled to ship their produce to all points in the state. The land has all been taken up and old farms sell at a high price, while the soil is less broken up and much more productive than on the other side of the Osage River."³¹

The same year, 1840, that saw the Church of St Francis Xavier built in Taos in Cole County saw also the erection of the Church of the Sacred Heart at Richfountain, the picturesque name which Father Helias gave the Bavarian settlement near the Gasconade River.³² Mass was said by him in the new church for the first time December 3, 1840.³³ In 1842 or earlier two hundred and fifty families, who had emigrated from Bavaria to escape the oppressive marriage laws there in force, settled in Richfountain.³⁴ Many couples among them were not joined in lawful wedlock at the time of their arrival in America,

²⁹ "Haarville, Cole Co, St Francis Xavier—Rev Ferdinand Helias He visits also once a month St Ignatius, Jefferson City, St Joseph's, Westphalia, Sacred Heart, Richfountain, Conception of the Blessed Virgin, Cade's Creek, and occasionally the Assumption of the B V. Manitou Creek, Booneville, Pilot-Grove, Columbia, Hybernium, Cote-sans-dessein, French Village, etc" *Metropolitan Catholic Almanac, 1843*.

³⁰ "Taos, a post-office 5 miles south east of Jefferson City" Campbell, *Gazetteer of Missouri*, p. 168. Helias, *Mémoires*, p. 53 (A)

³¹ *Mémoires*, p. 53 Family-names of children confirmed at Taos by Bishop Rosati in the early forties include those of Schneider, Thessen, Kolb, Wolken, Hoffmeyer, Laux, Schwaller, Hoecken, Schell, Roecker, Ihler, Schulte, Neumeyer, Prenger, Rakers, Kerperin, Nieters, Bekel, Motschmann, Sanning, Rohling, Hermann, Schnieders *Missouri Historical Review*, 5. 85

³² "*Un endroit qu'il baptiza a cause de ses fortes jets d'eaux, Riche Fontaine*" *Mémoires*, p. 53 The land on which the church was built, near his farm and opposite the "riche fontaine," was conveyed by John Stumpf and Elizabeth, his wife, February 2, 1843, for the consideration of five dollars to the authorities of the Missouri Vice-Province. The land was originally entered by a John Burns during the thirties Cf. *History of Cole . . . Counties*, p. 682

³³ *Dies Memorabiles Mémoires*, p. 53 Helias Mss (A).

³⁴ Thus the *Mémoires*, p. 54. Two hundred and fifty for the number of immigrant families is probably an overstatement

government restrictions at home having made it impracticable for them to conform to the marriage laws of the Church Father Helias on learning this state of affairs promptly rectified the defective unions of the immigrants. The parish of the Sacred Heart at Richfountain attained in the sequel a degree of piety and regularity of Christian practice which made it, in Helias's own words, "a model for all others"³⁵

The first years of Helias's life as a missionary priest in central Missouri were crowded with adventure and thrilling incident. The country he moved about in was just emerging from a state of primitive nature. It was thinly settled and poorly provided with roads. To reach the stations yawning ravines and swollen streams had frequently to be crossed. It was no uncommon thing for the missionary to lose his way in the woods and spend the night in the open. Once, while riding in the dark, he and his horse fell headlong into a ditch, both, however, coming out of the accident without injury of any sort. Another time, crossing a stream together with his horse in a leaking boat, he had perforce to work desperately with the boatman to bale out the water and only the heroic efforts of the two kept the wretched craft from being swamped. A kindly Providence seemed ever on the alert to save the man of God from bodily harm³⁶

A fellow-Jesuit who entered into Father Helias's labors in Osage County has sketched the tradition of the tireless missionary which he found current in the eighties:

Father Helias was a remarkable man. I have often heard old people speak of him with enthusiasm. In their feelings towards him there is the reverence of the priest blended with the warmth of the friend. He, the man of noble birth, must have been possessed of great kindness so that his aristocratic manners became winning in the eyes of the simple peasantry, and his severe virtue must have been blended with great cordiality, so that people remote from asceticism were cheered by his conversation, while they were instructed³⁷

Helias's actual residence in New Westphalia lasted only four years from his arrival there in May, 1838. In the spring of 1842 he closed the church and presbytery and returned to St. Louis. The year 1841 had been a particularly trying one. There was considerable sickness in the settlement, an epidemic of some or other contagious disease hav-

³⁵ *Mémoires*, p. 54.

³⁶ *Litterae Annuae*, 1840

³⁷ Father Nicholas Schlechter, S. J., in *WL*, 13 360. Father Murphy, vice-provincial, sketched Father Helias in this wise: "Sui generis vir homo solitarius, parvo contentus, suis venerabilis, acceptissimus. Fervidi atque inordinati ingenii, in multis puerilis."

ing lasted four months and left behind it numerous victims. Further, there occurred a severe and protracted drought, which entailed loss of crops and reduced the settlers to dire want. During these calamities Helias did his best to bring his stricken parishioners all the spiritual and temporal aid he could command, travelling sometimes one hundred and twenty miles to bring the dying the consolations of religion. Added to these trials was the opposition to his ministry which he had to endure from some of his Westphalian parishioners. In 1842 a suit to recover seventy dollars was brought against him by a physician, apparently Dr. Bruns, of Westphalia, on the ground that the priest engaged him to attend a sick man who was too poor himself to pay the bill. Father Verhaegen went twice to Westphalia, a distance, he notes, of a hundred and twenty miles, to help Helias in his difficulty. The doctor, having lost his suit and considerable money besides, made efforts to oust Father Helias from the pastorship. "The people of the congregation did not stand by their pastor as they should have done," declared Verhaegen. "Hence we resolved in consultation to transfer the Father, whom I summoned here, to the church of St. Francis Xavier, about ten miles distant, and to keep his residence as a station to be visited once a month. For these people are unworthy of special favor, seeing they have treated the Father so unworthily or permitted him to be so treated. But would that this good man would learn discretion in his words."⁸⁸ Caution in speech, it would appear, was a virtue in which Father Helias was liable at times to fail. It is likely enough that in the present instance some casual words of his were seized on by designing persons and turned against him. At all events he recorded in his *Historia Westphalicae* that some of his most devoted parishioners who had formerly stood by him in his difficulties were at length won over to the opposition, intimidated or bribed, he knew not which. He now took a distinctly pessimistic view of the future, declaring that the only hope of saving the Faith in central Missouri lay in the two parishes of the Sacred Heart at Richfountain and of St. Francis Xavier in Cole County. Summoned by Father Verhaegen to

⁸⁸ Verhaegen ad Roothaan, August 22, 1841, September 1, 1842. (AA). A sort of anti-clerical party or faction existed for a number of years among the German settlers of Missouri. They were sometimes dubbed the "Latinians" or "Latin farmers" from the circumstance that they had, so it was said, studied Latin in German gymnasia before coming to America. Probably a group of Latinians were involved in the trouble fomented against Father Helias (*WL*, 13:23). "The epithet 'Latin farmers' has commonly been applied to the scholarly German settlers who became quite numerous about the revolutionary period of 1830 and 1848, a class of cultivated men, yet frequently unpractical, for whom manual labor proved a hard school of experience." Albert B. Faust, *The German Element in the United States* (Boston, 1909), I 442.

give up his post at New Westphalia and return to St. Louis, he did so after affixing to the church door a Latin distich of his own composition:

*Ardua qui quaerit, rubros cur currit ad Indos
Westphalam veniat, ardua cuncta dabunt.*³⁹

"Meanwhile," reads Helias's vivid narrative, "the church of St. Joseph stands deserted and closed against the wolves, a reproach to those who, though of the number of the sheep, have by contentions, subtlety of speech and ambition for things beyond them forced the pastor to retire, reluctantly withal and for only a brief spell—but Westphalia has ceased forever to be a residence." And after these words follows the colophon: "Here ends the sad history of the colony of Westphalia which I founded. May 11, 1842."⁴⁰

§ 3. FATHER HELIAS AT HAARVILLE

The pessimistic forecast of the future of Catholicity in central Missouri which Helias was led to make in consequence of his difficulties in New Westphalia failed to be justified by the event. The years were to smooth away the frictions of the moment and bring to a golden maturity the harvest which he had sown in travail and bitterness of soul. When he withdrew in the spring of 1842 from Westphalia to St. Louis, he was not to abandon altogether the spiritual care of the district that had been assigned to him. From St. Louis he made occasional visits to the parishes he had started in and around Jefferson City and finally in the beginning of September, 1842, again took up his residence in central Missouri. This time, however, at the instance of his superior, he made his headquarters not in Westphalia, where the opposition to him was still active, but in Haarville, subsequently Taos, Cole County, where in 1840 he had built the church of St. Francis Xavier. Here the missionary was destined to remain until his death in 1874.⁴¹

The years immediately following Father Helias's return to his beloved mission were marked by the erection at his hands of several new churches. Though some obscurity veils the beginnings of the Church of

³⁹ "Why should the man who covets hardships hie to the dusky Indies? Let him come to Westphalia and he will find hardships aplenty."

⁴⁰ *Historia Westphalae*, p. 27.

⁴¹ The transfer in 1842 of the headquarters of the Mission of Central Missouri from Westphalia to Haarville (Taos) is emphasized by Helias in the Latin title prefixed by him to the Westphalia Burial Register: "*Liber Defunctorum Residentiae Sti Josephi Societatis Jesu in nova Westphalia Comitatus Gasconade Status Missouriani Americae Confoederatae borealis ab anno Domini 1837 Moderatorum consensu atque expressa voluntate Residentia Centralis ad Sti Francisxi Xaverii translata est in Cole County, Mo., A. D. 1842.*"

St. Ignatius Loyola in Jefferson City, 1841 appears to have been the year in which its construction was begun. Certainly the church was in use for divine service in 1843.⁴² As only the churches of St. Joseph in Westphalia, St. Francis Xavier in Cole County and the Sacred Heart at Richfountain had been built prior to Helias's retirement from Westphalia in the spring of 1842, one may designate the Jefferson City edifice as the fourth of the seven churches built by the zealous priest up to the end of 1845.⁴³ A fifth church, that of the Assumption, at the present Cedron in Moniteau County, was built in March, 1843.⁴⁴ On April 6, 1844, the corner-stone was laid of the new Church of St. Francis Xavier in Haarville. The edifice, sixty by thirty-eight feet, could claim the distinction of being the first Catholic stone church to be built in the interior of Missouri. It was occupied for the first time on May 11, 1845, Father Helias on this occasion addressing the congregation in English, German and French.⁴⁵ Towards the end of 1844, the Church of St. Thomas the Apostle was built at Indian Bottom, Cole County, near a bend in the Osage River.⁴⁶ Finally, on Ascension Day,

⁴² *Supra*, § 2

⁴³ Cf. Helias's Latin epigram (*Mémoires*, p. 58)

Flandria nos genuit docuit nos Gallia, Roma,
Teutoniae Helvetiaeque sinus peragravimus omnes,
Post varios casus, terraeque marisque labores,
Sistimus, atque novae fundamina fiximus Urbis
Westphaliae, septemque dicatas Numinis aedes

⁴⁴ *Historia Westphaliae*, p. 28. However, the *Mémoires*, p. 55 (as also a Helias ms. dated about 1870) assign the building of this church to 1845, while the *Status Animarum* places it as early as 1841. The dates given in the *Mémoires* do not always tally with those in the *Historia Westphaliae*. The writer has followed generally the latter source as being more or less contemporary with the events recorded. The church of the Assumption referred to here is in the present Cedron, Moniteau Co., Mo. A second church of the Assumption was built by Father Helias in 1857 for a German congregation in Cole County, one mile south of the present Wardsville. The property of the Assumption church (Cedron) was acquired March 1, 1843, for a consideration of four dollars from Ignace and Barbara Becker. It consisted of two acres in n e $\frac{1}{4}$ of section 4, township 46, range 15 of Cole County (Moniteau County not yet organized). The church had been built at the time the property was transferred.

⁴⁵ *Litterae Annuae*, 1845. A tract of four acres, including the site of St. Thomas's church, was conveyed, September 8, 1848, to the church authorities by Henry Strumpf and Christina, his wife. The consideration was five dollars. The tract was in s w corner of n e $\frac{1}{4}$ of section 22, township 42, range 12 w, Cole County.

⁴⁶ Memorandum by Helias *Historia Westphaliae*, p. 28. The dates 1843 and 1846 for the erection of the Indian Bottom church are also found in Helias records. (*Mémoires*, p. 55, *Historia Westphaliae*, p. 28). He was led to choose St. Thomas as the patron of this church in deference to the tradition, admittedly of slender historical value, which credits the apostle with having preached the

May 1, 1845, the Church of the Immaculate Conception at Loose Creek in Osage County, on the main public road between Jefferson City and St. Louis, was opened for divine service."⁴⁷ Thus by the middle of 1845 churches had been built at Westphalia, Haarville, Richfountain, Jefferson City, Cedron, Indian Bottom, and Loose Creek. These seven churches, attesting the progress Catholicity had made in central Missouri, were among the results of Father Helias's first seven years of labor in that part of the St. Louis diocese.⁴⁸

The range of his ministerial activities at this period is revealed in his routine itinerary for 1843. On the first Sunday of the month he officiated at St. Francis Xavier's in Haarville; on the second Sunday at St. Ignatius Loyola's in Jefferson City, on the third Sunday in Loose Creek, where, as the church building was not yet ready for use, services were held in the public school, on the fourth Sunday at the Sacred Heart Church in Richfountain, on the fifth Sunday, or, in default of that day, on some ecclesiastical feast occurring during the month, at St. Joseph's in Westphalia. Besides this monthly round of visits, services were held three or four times a year at the Assumption on Monteau Creek, at St. Thomas the Apostle, Indian Bottom, Cole County, and at Holy Cross in Pilot Grove, Cooper County. Moreover, visits were paid once or twice a year to Boonville, Columbia, Hibernia, Cote-sans-dessein and other stations.⁴⁹

As there was little money among the settlers, Father Helias had to rely largely on the charitable donations of friends in Europe for the means necessary to build and equip his numerous churches. Thus St. Francis Xavier's at Taos, where he spent the last thirty years of his life, was built and furnished largely through the munificence of his

Gospel in America Lebrocquy, *Vie du P Helias*, p 228 "The first pastor, Father Helias, came to the place when there were but three or four families" Goodspeed, *History of Cole, Monteau . . . Counties*, p 302.

⁴⁷ *Dies Memorabiles* (Helias Mss), *Mémoires*, p 54 The deed of conveyance of the Loose Creek church property, September 28, 1843, for a consideration of five dollars, from Louis Auguste Pequignot and his wife Josephine to Fathers Verhaegen, De Theux, Smedts, describes it as a "certain tract of land on which the Roman Catholic Church of the Conception and Graveyard is situated" The tract was of six acres and began "at the north of the State Road of St Louis to Jefferson City by Bolden's ferry to the North-east corner of the NE quarter of N.W. quarter, Section 5, Township 43, Range 9, West"

⁴⁸ The log church at Westphalia, though begun in 1837, was finished under Helias's direction. He always enumerated it among the seven churches built by him in central Missouri: "*Septem extantes ecclesias ipse aedificandas curavi*"

⁴⁹ *Historia Westphaliae*, p. 35. The congregation of the Holy Cross, Pilot Grove, Cooper County (12 miles southeast of Boonville) was at this period (1843) still without a church. Helias in a letter of January 6, 1845, contributed to the *Berichte der Leopoldinen Stiftung* (Vienna), 19 66-76, gives a summary of his

mother, Marie Helias d'Huddeghem, *née* the Countess of Lens. A remittance of two hundred and twenty-eight dollars made to her son in 1845 and another of one hundred and eighty-eight dollars in 1846, are recorded among the frequent contributions she was wont to make for this purpose. The countess died December 8, 1848, enjoining in her will that her heirs were to provide out of her estate whatever should be necessary for the complete furnishing of the church, of which, in the opinion of her son, she deserved to be called the foundress. As such she was entitled to the special gratitude of the parish and Father Helias accordingly announced in 1845 that the litany of Loretto would thereafter be recited every Sunday before services in her behalf and a Mass said annually for the same intention. After her death the obligation of an annual *requiem* Mass for the dead benefactress was placed upon the church.⁵⁰

From the Leopoldine Foundation of Vienna, the object of which was the support of German Catholic missions in America, the vice-province of Missouri received in 1844 the sum of eighteen hundred and seventy-five dollars. Of this sum three hundred and seventy-five dollars went to Father Helias for the churches he had built or was about to build. The father was particularly anxious to receive aid from outside sources as he was thereby relieved of the necessity of relying on his parishioners for support.

Thanks to help of this kind, we can more effectively and with greater liberty announce the Gospel freely, and, what we have freely received, freely give. Indeed, among the substantial of the [Jesuit] Institute, a gratuitous ministry is not by any means the last nor is anything more detrimental to the good of souls than Iscariot-like avarice. Moreover, having what to eat, for Christ Himself has commanded us to eat what is placed before us, to what

ministry in the various parishes and stations of central Missouri for the period 1838-1844

	1838	1839	1840	1841	1842	1843	1844
Number of souls	620	700	950	1500	2000	2000	2500
Infant Baptisms	23	36	37	125	150	149	175
Easter Communions	423	560	700	1094	1090	1100	1300
First communions	9	15	16	20	60	90	100
Conversions	3	4	5	4	4	3	4
Marriages	3	3	14	26	23	27	36
Burials	12	9	17	24	19	50	155

⁵⁰ *Historia Westphaliae*, pp 38, 45, 46. "*Maria Carolina Guslena Comes de Lens et Rom. Imperii Helias d'Huddeghem Fundatrix domus et ecclesiae jus habet quotannis ad Anniversarium*" Others who helped Helias to build and furnish the church at Taos were the Ladies of the Beguinnage of Ghent, his cousin, Mlle Rodriguez d'Evora y Vega and the Canon De La Croix of Ghent Lebrocquy, *Vie du P. Helias*, p. 256.

purpose are superfluties? Ought the Lord's work to be given over on this account? Many indeed are most ungrateful. But let us remember that chief among the concerns of Ignatius was Germany. He founded a college in Rome for German students. He was ready to recall St. Francis Xavier from distant India to send relief to the North. Of his first nine companions he gave five to Germany. Nay, he ordered his children, wheresoever scattered over the face of the earth, to say a Mass every month for the northern countries. Let us therefore not fall below the lofty sentiments of so great a father.⁵¹

An incident occurring in 1842 is recorded by Helias in terms that reveal the disappointment of which it was the occasion. Father Van de Velde on his return from Europe in that year brought with him a great quantity of altar furniture for the needy missions administered by the Jesuits. Helias was counting on his share of the treasure and already in anticipation saw his poor chapels decently provided with all the accessories of divine service. But the steamer bearing the precious cargo, when almost in sight of St. Louis, caught fire and sank, a complete wreck. Nothing of Van de Velde's shipment appears to have been saved. To Helias the mishap proved a real blow, retarding seriously as it did the progress of his parishes by depriving them of sorely needed equipment for the proper celebration of Mass and other sacred functions.⁵²

The year 1844 was a calamitous one for the Belgian missionary. The Missouri River flood of that year, the greatest, it would appear,

⁵¹ *Historia Westphaliae*, p. 37. *Berichte der Leopoldinen Stiftung*, 19 66-76, 1846. Light is thrown on Helias's early struggles by his account-books, which he kept with painstaking accuracy and neatness. For the first eight years honoraria in the shape of baptismal and marriage offerings, mass-stipends, etc., which he received from the congregations under his care, amounted to the sum of one hundred and eighty-four dollars. In 1844 he received from his parishioners ninety dollars, the first money which they contributed directly to his support. "From the beginning the Congregation promised to pay \$200 00 as annuities, but could never do it." In his first year at New Westphalia, 1838, his income amounted to \$725 12½, of which sum ten dollars came from Mother Duchesne, superior of the Religious of the Sacred Heart, and the rest from the estate of Msgr. Barret of Liège, who had remembered the Jesuit missions of Missouri in his will. "What the good Father receives from his parish would suffice for his support, if your Paternity would allot him some money every year for buying clothes." Verhaegen ad Roothaan, August 22, 1841. (AA). From 1839 on he received almost annually generous donations from his family in Belgium, while occasional appropriations from the Lyons Association of the Propagation of the Faith as also from the Austrian or Leopoldine Association, and the Ludwig Missions-Verein of Munich helped towards the financing of his numerous parishes and stations. Sometimes money was received for some specific purpose as this under date of February 16, 1841, "Thro P. J. Verhaegen for an expedition to Lexington, where I lost my horse, \$20."

⁵² *Historia Westphaliae*, p. 37.

on record, followed by a protracted drought brought widespread sickness in its wake.⁵³ There was no house without its patient and in most houses all the inmates were down with the epidemic at the same time. In one dwelling which he visited Father Helias found no fewer than twenty persons in the last stages of disease. The one compensating circumstance was that it was a season of divine grace for many of the victims, who found their way back to God as the shadows of death crept upon them. Helias himself was not to escape the consequences of the great physical strain and constant exposure to infection put upon him by the exercise of his ministry at this critical time. His health broke down and he began to waste away, his skin, as he expressed it in Scriptural phrase, cleaving to his bones. The doctors could do nothing for him and despaired of his recovery. And yet he passed through the crisis, regained his strength and was able in time to take up again his burden of missionary duties. The next year, 1845, he was repeating his experience of the past year, wearing himself out with attendance on the sick and running every risk of infection. A second collapse followed and the father lay on what seemed from every human outlook to be his death-bed. The most skilful physicians in the county pronounced him beyond reach of medical aid. For some days he lay in a coma, a cold sweat bathing his forehead and the extremities of his body stiff with the icy rigors of approaching dissolution. Funeral arrangements began to be made and the parishes were notified to send their quota of pall-bearers. But at the last moment the skill of a worthy widow, Gertrude Evens by name, saved the priest's life. She succeeded in forcing a long reed tube between his firmly clenched teeth, with the result that some needed medicine was successfully administered. He rallied, grew steadily stronger and in a short while was again performing his customary round of labors.

But the health of Helias was at best a precarious thing, liable to break at any time under the strain of his ministry. And still he kept at his post, declining the offer made by the superior to allow him to return to Belgium. The minutes of the meeting, April 16, 1846, of the consultorial board of the vice-province of Missouri, contain this item: "Father Helias declines to return to Belgium, desiring to consummate the sacrifice of his health and life. Let him remain, then, where he is." But his superiors determined now to send him an assistant-priest, a step that would have been taken earlier had the very meagre personnel of the vice-province permitted. Accordingly on December 19, 1846, he

⁵³ Barns, *Commonwealth of Missouri* (St. Louis, 1877), has an account of the Missouri River flood of 1844. Burials for the period 1838-1846 in the various parishes served by Father Helias were as follows: 1838, 12, 1839, 9, 1840, 17, 1841, 24, 1842, 19, 1843, 50, 1844, 155, 1845, 106

was joined at the little Jesuit residence in Haarville, Cole County, by Father James Cotting, a Swiss, who had been employed in the vice-province in various parochial charges since his arrival in Missouri in 1840. He was a man of robust health, with energy and zeal to match, in Helias's words, "an exceeding zealous and active young missionary." The older father found him an admirable companion and, so he recorded, was cheered up more than words could tell by his sympathetic charity and the effective service he rendered in the ministry. From June up to the arrival of Cotting in December, Helias had been subject to a chronic and troublesome fever, but on the arrival of his companion, the fever disappeared and thenceforth he enjoyed the best of health.⁵⁴

Even prior to the arrival of his colleague Helias had begun to enjoy some measure of relief, when, in 1846, the parishes of Jefferson City and Moniteau were taken over by a diocesan priest, the Reverend James Murphy, according to an agreement entered into between Bishop Kenrick of St. Louis and Father Van de Velde, the Jesuit vice-provincial. With Cotting now at hand to share his labors, the position of the pioneer missionary was vastly improved. *Semper et perpetuus in equo mobilis*, "forever moving about on horse back," is the descriptive detail with which he seeks to picture the kind of man he had for assistant. From the first Father Cotting won the favor of the Westphalia parishioners by at once pushing forward the building of the new stone church, which they had already begun at the instance of Father Helias. The corner-stone of the church was laid on March 19, 1848, with all the ceremony Westphalia could command. The weather was superb and a great throng of people, Catholic and non-Catholic, gathered for the occasion. A few pieces of cannon, trophies fresh from the Mexican war, broke the slumbers of the townsfolk at early dawn with their jubilant booming. Services were held in the old church from which there was a procession to the site of the new edifice, where Father Helias blessed the corner-stone with solemn rite.⁵⁵

One would not expect to find an anti-clerical faction in the simple immigrant population of Westphalia. And yet something of this sort were the so-called "Latinians," or "Latin farmers," who made pretensions to a larger measure of education than was usual among the immigrants and were frequently at odds with their pastors. This disaffected group became involved with Father Cotting, whose authority they sought to undermine by calumny and abuse. Unfortunately a circum-

⁵⁴ *Historia Westphaliae*, p. 52.

⁵⁵ *Idem*, p. 61. Father Cotting appears to have resided at Taos with Father Helias for the greater part of his stay in central Missouri. It was not until the pastorate of Father Ehrensberger that Westphalia again assumed the status of an independent residence.

stance occurred that put the father, who was quick-tempered and frank of speech, at a disadvantage. Some hasty words that he let fall concerning the scandalous conduct of one of his parishioners was eagerly seized on by enemies and turned against him. A riotous disturbance which occurred in Westphalia on February 2, 1848, was laid to his charge. A law-suit followed at Jefferson City in which the father appeared as defendant. The suit went against him and only the intervention of Father Helias with some of the public officials saved the priest from the payment of a heavy fine. Threatened with a second suit, Father Cotting was withdrawn by his superior, Father Elet, from Westphalia, which place he left on January 18, 1849. His connection with the Missouri Vice-province ceased a few months later and he spent the remainder of his days as a member of the Maryland province of his order.⁵⁶

Cotting's place at Westphalia was filled by Father Andrew Ehrensberger, a Bavarian, one of the exiled German Jesuits who found a home in the vice-province of Missouri in 1848. He began to reside at Westphalia on November 17 of that year. From this time forward there were two independent residences in central Missouri, namely, Westphalia and Taos. Ehrensberger gave much of his time and attention to the little Bavarian settlement at Richfountain.⁵⁷ Some little skill which he possessed as a painter he turned to good account by decorating the parish church. Helias's estimate of Ehrensberger's capabilities as a pastor of souls was high. He calls him a "capital preacher," *optimus concionator*, and sums up his record as a pastor of Westphalia in the words, "that redoubtable companion of Christ has so acquitted himself that no one can speak ill of him without untruth." Father Ehrensberger left Westphalia September 17, 1851, to take up the duties of professor in St. Xavier College, Cincinnati.⁵⁸ He was subsequently recalled to Germany where he achieved distinction as a missionary and preacher. He was succeeded as superior of the Westphalia residence by Father Francis Xavier Kalcher of the province of Austria. Helias styles him "an excellent *operarius*" or worker in the ministry. After him the line of superiors at Westphalia down to the period of the Civil War comprises the names of Father Joseph Brunner, Anthony Eysvogels and John Baptist Goeldlin. Other fathers attached to the residence as assistants during the same years were James

⁵⁶ *Idem*, p. 58. Elet ad Roothaan, March 4, 1849 (AA)

⁵⁷ He "helped greatly to render the Mission of the Sacred Heart, settled by his Bavarian countrymen, a model mission by reason of the piety and fervor which distinguished it from all others"

⁵⁸ Father Ehrensberger returned to Westphalia as superior in 1852, remaining there, however, not more than a year

Busschots, Joseph Weber, James Bruhl, John Schultz, William Niederkorn, and Henry Van Mierlo, while aiding the fathers in the domestic concerns of the house were the coadjutor-brothers Sebastian Schlienger, Gaspar Wohleb, Joseph Prassneg, Wenceslaus Kossnar, Daniel Kochendoerfer and Michael Schmidt.

§ 4. GROWTH OF THE PARISHES

During the ten or fifteen years that preceded the opening of the Civil War the mission of central Missouri prospered greatly. The course of events in the more important of the parishes during that period will be briefly sketched.

The steeple of the new stone Church of St. Joseph in Westphalia was not finished until some years later than the dedication of the edifice, a circumstance which seemed to lend point, according to the author of the *Annual Letters*, to the Latin inscription over the church door, placed there by the architect

Concordia res crescunt discordia dilabuntur.

Happily the mischief-making tendencies of a part of the congregation during the early period of its history had been corrected, so that Father Goeldlin, superior of the Westphalia residence, could write in 1862 "The spirit of the people is, in general, good. They have learned that in annoying and contradicting their priests there is neither peace nor the blessing of God."⁵⁹

At Loose Creek, six miles to the north of Westphalia, was the Church of the Immaculate Conception. The name Loose is usually explained as a corruption of the French *L'ours*, "bear."⁶⁰ The parish was composed partly of German Rhinelanders and partly of Creoles, which latter element appeared to display no very active interest in the affairs of the congregation. From 1851 on Loose Creek had its Sunday Mass by one of the fathers from Westphalia. In the cholera years 1853 and 1854 the epidemic found its way into the interior of Missouri. Among the Irish laborers employed in the neighborhood of Loose Creek on the construction of the Missouri Pacific Railroad there were

⁵⁹ *Missio Missouriensis centralis comprehendens Comitatus Osage, Cole, Miller, Maries, 1853-1862* (Ms). The author is apparently Father John Goeldlin, superior of the Westphalia residence during the period 1857-1872. The present summary of affairs in the central Missouri parishes during the decade or so of years immediately prior to the beginning of the Civil War is based largely on this source.

⁶⁰ See note 17, *supra*, for list of families in Loose Creek, April 1, 1839, showing the Creole element in the majority at this period. The German settlers came in later.

numerous cases of the dread disease. These were attended to by the Westphalia pastors, but not without difficulty, as the latter were hard pressed to care for the numerous cholera patients in Westphalia itself. In recognition of the charitable services of the fathers the Irish laborers on the railroad contributed generously in 1855 to the interior decoration of the Loose Creek church, besides donating the two side altars of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph.

At Richfountain, some eight miles southeast of Westphalia, the little frame Church of the Sacred Heart, built in 1840, was enlarged in 1854 to the dimensions seventy-five by twenty-four feet and topped off with a steeple. The village physician, a converted Lutheran, composed what the annalist calls a "*chronographus*" for the church-bell, which was consecrated to the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mother in memory of the solemn promulgation of the dogma by Pius IX in 1854.⁶¹

In 1849, when the cholera was at its height, the congregation of the Sacred Heart vowed an annual exposition and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament to last ten hours. Everyone in the parish escaped unharmed by the scourge. Accordingly, every year on the Sunday within the octave of the feast of the Sacred Heart, the people were wont to fulfill their vow with great devotion. Years after, when cholera again broke out in central Missouri, no case was reported from Richfountain, an indication, as the author of the *Annual Letters* comments, of how pleasing to the Lord was the pious faith of the congregation. Another instance of the piety of the Richfountain folk was the annual solemn high Mass for a successful harvest. The Mass stipend was made up by small contributions from the farmers. It is related that one of their number ridiculed the idea of a collection taken up for this purpose and refused to contribute, saying jocosely that he would share in the blessings showered upon his neighbors' crops. The harvest of this season surpassed expectation. The skeptic's wheat, cut and stacked to a great height in his field, made his heart rejoice. But one day, on a sudden, a storm came up and scattered his wheat far and wide, leaving nothing of the splendid crop except the straw. At the same time the wheat in the adjoining fields lay untouched. The lesson was not lost on the light-minded farmer. Thereafter, he came forward every year unsolicited with a generous contribution for the "Harvest Mass."

61

*Sacra Domini Cordis quae nomine gaudet
Ad datus statim parvula fontis aquas
Campanam hancce, Maria tibi, quo consecrat anno
Quod pia crediderat, credere iussa fuit:
Peccati exortem solam te protoparentem
Conceptam patris consilio esse Dei.*

Though poorer in economic ways than the other parishes of the mission, Richfountain surpassed them in its zeal for Catholic education. The old school becoming too small for the needs of the parish, a new one of stone, thirty-five by twenty-five feet, was built in 1858 close to the church. Shortly after the erection of the school-house, the property on which it stood was claimed by a disaffected Catholic, who proposed, however, to leave it in the hands of the parish on condition that the new building be used as a public school. Though the claimant found many to stand by him, most of the parishioners rejected the proposal and fought the case in court, with the result that both school building and property were saved to the parish. But the litigation caused a slight rift in the harmony that generally obtained among the Richfountain Catholics, while for years after the debt incurred by the erection of the new school-house lay as a heavy burden on the seventy families that made up the congregation.

Sixteen miles southwest of Westphalia, at Indian Bottom near a bend in the Osage River, was the Church of St. Thomas the Apostle ⁶² In 1844 when the first log chapel was built, the families numbered seven. This number had trebled in 1853, when a frame church, thirty by twenty-six feet, was put up, the old church being utilized as a presbytery. But the location of the church proved unsatisfactory, for the only approach to it lay through the property of an ill-humored farmer, who threatened all the rigors of the law against the church-goers. Hence both church-building and presbytery were moved in 1856 to a more accessible site, where a settlement named St. Thomas was gradually formed. In 1860 the parish counted no more than thirty-five families, many of the former parishioners having moved down to Miller County where fertile land was in abundance.

Twelve miles south of Westphalia was a settlement originally known as St. Boniface, from the name of the parish-church, and later as Koeltztown, from the name of the chief property-owner of the locality. In 1856 the sale of public lands south of Westphalia at attractively low prices induced many of the parishioners of St. Joseph to move in that direction. A Protestant lady, Mrs Koeltz, who had purchased several thousand acres of land in the locality in question, conceived the idea that the best means of attracting settlers would be the erection of a Catholic church. She accordingly offered ten acres of land for this purpose and, besides, promised to contribute generously to the building-fund. In 1857 Father Goeldlin, then superior at Westphalia, was invited to come down to the new settlement to superintend the rearing of the proposed structure. The father was at the moment under strict

⁶² *Supra*, note 46.

orders from the vice-provincial to open no more stations, besides, he wished first to see the site which had been offered, as an imprudent choice of location had quite recently made it necessary to move the Church of St Thomas to another place at considerable expense. But the promoters of the new church at Koeltztown were impatient of delay and sent a delegation to Archbishop Kenrick of St. Louis to offer him the church property, which he accepted. Foundations for an elaborate stone edifice, which was to eclipse St Joseph's in Westphalia, were immediately laid and in June, 1858, Father Goeldlin, at the Archbishop's request, laid the corner-stone. But a young carpenter, who had ventured to play the role of architect of the new church, finding himself incompetent to prosecute his task, made off with a considerable part of the building-fund. The original plan was thereupon abandoned and a modest log structure erected more in keeping with the humble circumstances of the settlers.

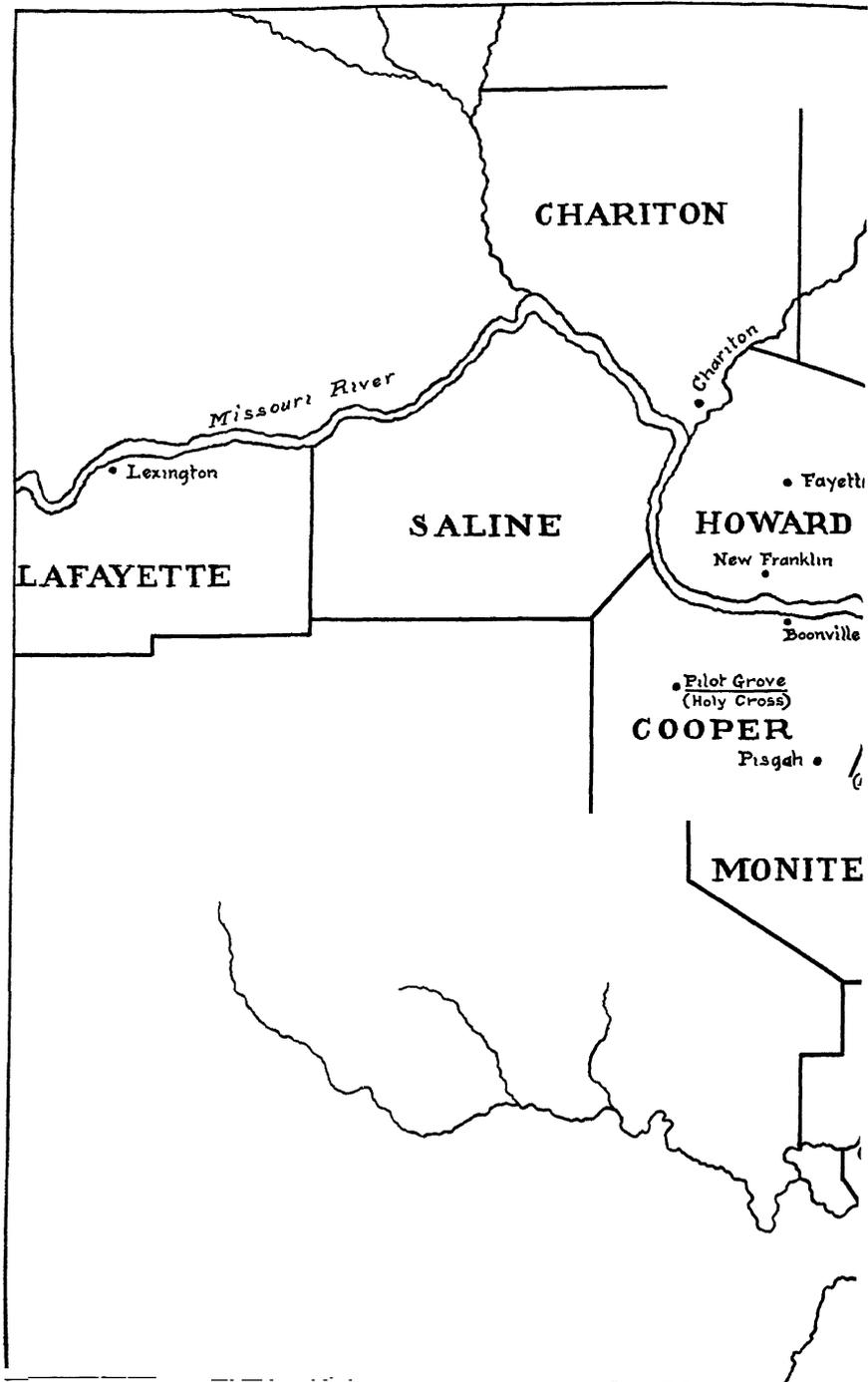
The difficulty of securing a pastor for the new church had now to be met. The Archbishop of St. Louis had no one to send. The Jesuits were again petitioned to assume charge of the station, but found it necessary to decline. Finally, an arrangement was made between Archbishop Kenrick and Father Coosemans, the Jesuit vice-provincial, by which Koeltztown was to be attended from Westphalia until a diocesan priest could be found for the post. Accordingly, in June, 1861, the place began to be visited by one of the Westphalia fathers every second Sunday of the month.⁶³

Twenty-three miles south of Westphalia in Maries County was the town of Vienna, which could boast its own Catholic church, St. Mary's. In the beginning of the fifties Vienna was a wilderness. A widely advertised sale of public lands at a low figure attracted settlers to the locality, among them a number of Irish Catholic families from the cities. These were soon planning to secure to themselves the blessing of a church and pastor. As the settlers were scattered over a considerable stretch of territory, two stations were formed for their accommodation. The settlers in the town and its immediate vicinity were the first of the two groups to build a church, which was named St. Mary's. The second station, eight miles distant from St. Mary's, was after 1862 visited every two months from Westphalia. The neat little St. Mary's Church, a frame structure forty feet long, was attended by about thirty-five families. Father Goeldlin remarks in the *Annual Letters* that when a new station is formed, all things have, so to speak, to be created anew. Not only does lack of money retard the work, but the parishioners, however devoutly they may have lived in the cities, are not

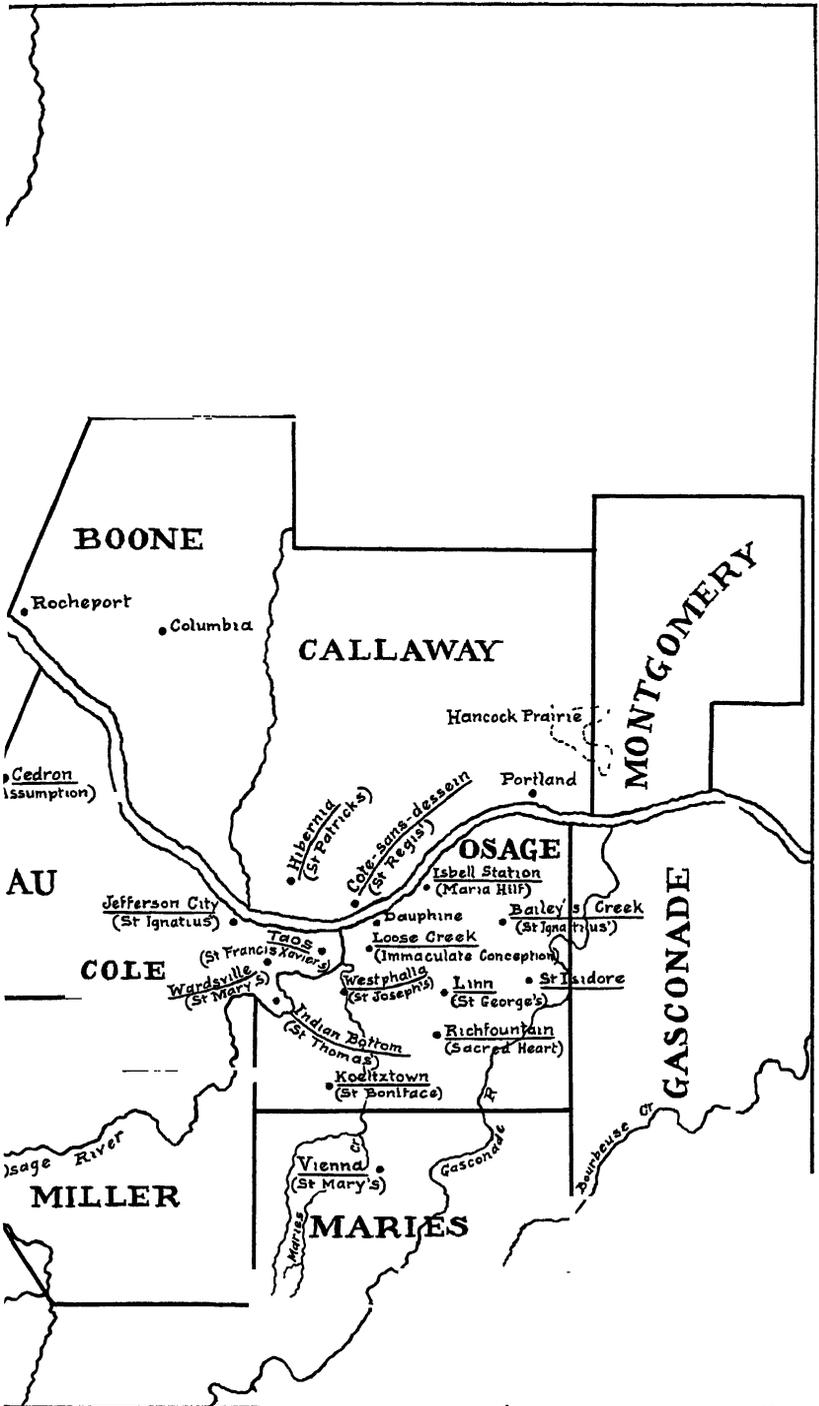
⁶³ "Koeltztown was named after the first merchant, August Koeltz." Goodspeed, *History of Cole . . . Counties.*



Ferdinand Helias, S J (1796-1874), pioneer missionary of central Missouri. From Lebrocqy, *Vie du R P Helias D'Huddeghem* (Ghent, 1878).



The Mission of Central Missouri, 1838-1867. Parishes were organized and churches Taos are also indicated. Compiled by G. J. Garraghan, drawn by J. P. Markoe.



built at the places underscored. Other stations visited from Westphalia or

easily brought to put up with the inconvenience of bad roads. The parishioners of Vienna, continues the father, are chiefly Irish, who give promise of becoming not less fervent than the rest of their countrymen, nor less generous, provided Heaven blesses their efforts and brings their good intentions to fruition.⁶⁴

Towards the close of 1861 the Jesuit pastors assumed charge of another station, about sixteen miles east of Westphalia, known as St Isidore's, where a group of French settlers had put up a little church. The site had been chosen and the building begun without consulting the fathers of Westphalia. Unfortunately the location of the church was a poor one. Moreover, the church was destitute of proper furniture and vestments, while, the *Annual Letters* note, "it will require great zeal and labor and a considerable measure of divine grace to bring forth any fruit." About the same time that St. Isidore's was taken in charge, two additional stations, one six and the other about twelve miles south of St. Isidore's, were started and thereafter attended from Loose Creek.⁶⁵

At Taos, where Father Helias resided ever since his withdrawal from Westphalia in 1842, he had the satisfaction of seeing his parish of St. Francis Xavier grow steadily in loyalty to its pastor and regard for ecclesiastical authority. The old attempts at schism on the part of a small but aggressive faction, which had provoked warning letters to the congregation from Bishop Rosati and his successor, Archbishop Kenrick, were no longer renewed. The material condition of the colonists likewise went on improving. Many of them who had enlisted in the Mexican War shared in the bounty of the government, which settled

⁶⁴ Among the first Catholic settlers of Vienna were a Mr. Felkner, Thomas and Dennis Fennessy and Michael Owen. The first church was built as early as 1859.

⁶⁵ The church property at St. Isidore, near Linn, a tract of three and a quarter acres (s w $\frac{1}{4}$ of n e $\frac{1}{4}$ of section 33, township 44, range 8, w), was conveyed February 18, 1860, by Irene Curtit to the Jesuit fathers for twenty-five dollars. The church erected by the French was of logs. The parish of Maria Hilf (Mary Help of Christians), near Isbell station on the Missouri Pacific R. R. some ten miles north of Westphalia, was organized in 1862 by Father Busschots, S. J. The church property of two acres (sections 2 and 11, township 44, range 9) was acquired May 26, 1873.

St. Ignatius's parish, Bailey's Creek, was established by Father Busschots in 1858. Father Verhaegen, visiting the place in the fall of 1837, found there some ten or twelve families, all Americans. Verhaegen à Rosati, November 17, 1837 (C). The church property, six acres (n w $\frac{1}{4}$ of s w $\frac{1}{2}$ of section 22, township 44, range 7 w.), was acquired for a consideration of five dollars, June, 1859, from Peter and Catherine Jordan. A log church was built in 1859. Bailey's Creek is twelve miles northeast of Westphalia.

St. George's parish in Linn, the county seat of Osage County, was organized by Father Goeldin in 1867.

a quarter-section of land on each of the volunteers when they were discharged from the service at the end of the war. The arrival in the fall of 1847 of a party of fifty Belgian immigrants from the neighborhood of Ghent, who came highly recommended by M. Beaulieu, Belgian minister at Washington, boded well for the future of the parish. They had probably been attracted to central Missouri by a report published at Brussels by the Baron Van der Stratén-Ponthoz, who had made a trip through Osage and Cole Counties in 1845 to ascertain by personal observation the prospects they held out to Belgian immigrants. Clad in a heavy buffalo-robe, for it was the depth of winter, and accompanied by Father Helias, who was similarly protected, he visited the various stations of the mission, entering the farm-houses and chatting pleasantly with the occupants on the success, or perhaps the lack of it, that had attended their efforts. Much useful information was in this way gleaned for the benefit of such of his countrymen as might care to try their fortune in the New World.⁶⁶ The actual arrival in Cole County in 1847 of the party of Belgian immigrants above referred to gladdened the heart of Father Helias.

The Belgian farmers make themselves favorably known in Missouri as everywhere else by their industry, methodical habits, perseverance, love of hard work and incomparable neatness. An air of prosperity hangs over their places which might serve as model farms for all the immigrants. When I ask our Flemings how they are satisfied here, they answer that "they are as happy as King Leopold on his throne."

I am delighted with the new parishioners, they are good Catholics and always ready to render me a service. Mr Pierre Dirckx, my nearest neighbor, is a constant visitor at the presbytery and shows me every attention. Together with his partner, Mr Charles Beckaert, he runs a successful farm of which he is the owner and which yields him a handsome income. Their hired men Edouard Van Voeren, François Steppens, François Goessens, *et al*, are mostly Belgians. These young fellows are all equipped with trades, not only useful but highly lucrative in a country like this which has just been thrown open to civilization. For example, François Goessens is an excellent maker of wooden shoes. People come from twenty miles around to fit themselves out at his shop. He has been known to sell as many as five hundred sabots in a single day. It's a smooth business for wood here costs nothing or almost nothing.⁶⁷

The year following the arrival of the Belgians, Taos had its first Corpus Christi procession, of which Father Helias gives an account.

I had invited for the occasion the Governor of the State and the principal officials of Jefferson City, our state capital. They all assisted at the

⁶⁶ *Historia Westphaliae*, p. 47 (A)

⁶⁷ Lebrocqy, *Vie du P Helias*, p. 254

ceremony Note that these honorable functionaries are all Protestants I had a repository fitted up in front of the presbytery The decorations of this improvised altar, the order and pomp of the procession, the beauty of the sacred chant, the piety of the Catholics, everything went to charm and edify at once our separated brethren

The Governor of Missouri is extremely well affected towards me and whatever favor I ask of him, even though it be the life of a condemned man, he is always ready to grant it But I avoid mixing up in politics in this country where they do not involve religion, and I occupy myself only with those matters that concern the kingdom of heaven ⁶⁸

The cholera of 1853 left numerous orphans in its wake. In the absence of asylums Helias exerted himself to find homes for these unfortunate children in families of his parish. To set an example, he adopted, with the permission of his superior, a young Belgian orphan, Pierre Labat. The future of the boy was a matter of grave concern to him, and he sought to interest his family in Belgium in the case

The cholera has just carried off the parents of a young Belgian lad from the neighborhood of Eecloo I am his tutor and young Pierre has become my adopted child If God should call me away, this orphan boy would be in a sad plight He has nothing here, nor anything, I believe, to look for in Belgium However, *Deus providebit*, I rely on Providence I commend this child to your care, in the event of my death . . . My young companion is only nine years old He renders me a thousand little services, and is a source of much amusement to me by his naiveté He has a quick and open mind Perhaps we shall make a disciple of Grétry out of him, as he shows remarkable talent for music ⁶⁹

Pierre Labat lived for several years in the priest's house at Taos and when old enough to earn his own living was found employment through the efforts of Father Helias. In 1858 the latter while on his way to Jefferson City to lay the corner-stone of the new Church of St. Peter met with a serious accident. His horse shied, and the priest, in his effort to quiet the animal, lost his balance and fell to the ground, sustaining serious internal injuries. He was taken to St. Louis where a double surgical operation was found necessary; but he regained his health after the operation and was able to resume his labors in Taos.

In 1858 Father Helias made an appeal, characterized by his usual warmth of feeling, to the General, Father Beckx, on behalf of the German Catholics of central Missouri. The superiors of the Missouri Mission were hard put to it trying to solve the rather insoluble problem of meeting all existing needs with the mere handful of men at their

⁶⁸ *Idem*, p. 255.

⁶⁹ *Idem*, p. 263.

disposal And yet to Helias, looking only to the particular needs of his spiritual charges, it seemed that more could and should be done for the people of his own and the neighboring parishes. He had an apprehension that the stations built up by him in central Missouri would not survive him "There is only a single step," he wrote, "between myself and death." Then followed a glowing tribute to the religious fervor of the German Catholics, whom he held up as a pattern to other nationalities. Piety, simplicity, sobriety, loyalty to their pastors, a fondness for fine churches and impressive services, these traits, among others characterized them. Moreover, they built their own hospitals, orphan-asylums and parish-schools.⁷⁰

This account of Father Helias and his ministry at Taos may be brought to a close with the words in which he pictures the condition of the parish in the decade immediately preceding the Civil War

While in so many localities both of the Old and New World, corruption, the fruit of wicked doctrines, makes incessant headway, the moral condition of our settlement recalls the beautiful days of the primitive church Here one may, without the slightest risk, go away from his house, leaving the doors right open You need have no fear of theft or trespassing of any kind. Irreligious or licentious publications fail to reach our excellent people. Libertinism is unknown God's name is not, as elsewhere, the object of profanity. My priestly heart experiences a joy ever new in seeing our churches crowded on Sundays and feast-days, with throngs of faithful souls who emulate one another in singing the praises of the Lord⁷¹

Thus did the course of things in the Jesuit parishes of central Missouri run on placidly down to the dark days of the Civil War, when they had to face the invasion of political passion and strife Helias's *Historia Westphaliae* ends about 1861 with an apostrophe:

O Ferdinand, why so dumb? Everything proceeds A M D G and with-out change, as from the beginning Why therefore should I repeat? Of one thing, however, I must make mention A M D G, to wit, the singular favor wrought by St. Francis Xavier, who cured suddenly my friend and guest, Charles Louis Bekaert, a settler of sixty years, of a cancer which had fairly

⁷⁰ Helias ad Beckx, June 29, 1858 (AA)

⁷¹ Lebrocqy, *op cit*, p 264 The Mission of Central Missouri, as described in the *Annual Letters* (1853-1862), had an area of twenty-five hundred square miles lying between the Missouri, Osage and Gasconade Rivers and a line fifty miles south. It took in all of Osage County and parts of Maries, Miller and Cole Counties. The Catholic population numbered three thousand The residence of St. Francis Xavier at Taos with its dependent stations lay outside the limits of the Mission of Central Missouri proper, the headquarters of which were at Westphalia. Here there were generally three fathers attached to the residence, a fourth being added in 1860

eaten through his hand, and besides, freed me in an instant of acutely painful rheumatism Moreover, I have experienced over and over again and hereby gratefully acknowledge A.M.D.G. the most visible assistance of my Guardian Angel O God! Thou hast given thine Angel charge over me that he may keep me in my ways ⁷²

⁷² Father Murphy, vice-provincial, communicated to the General, Father Roothaan, March 3, 1852, his opinion that "Westphalia or some other central point should become a residence like St Charles and (that) the other small isolated stations should be merged together to form a single community of missionaries" But this arrangement could not be effected until a new residence was built at Westphalia, the existing one being "a miserable affair and a menace to health" In 1855 Fathers Brunner and Eysvogels were living at Westphalia, Father Goeldlin at Richfountain and Father Busschots at Loose Creek In 1862 the new residence at Westphalia was built with four fathers stationed there, two of them serving the local parish and outlying minor stations, as St. Thomas and St Isidore, and Fathers Busschots and Van Mierlo going every Thursday or Friday to their respective missions, from which they returned on Monday At a later period Richfountain, Loose Creek and Linn had resident Jesuit pastors, who, however, remained under the jurisdiction of the Westphalia superior, whom they were required to visit personally once a week