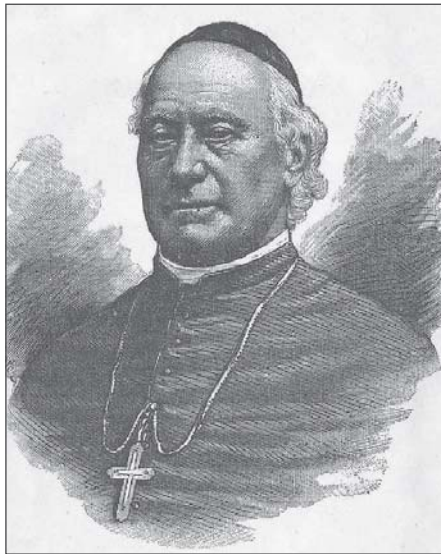


Notable German-Americans
Johann Martin Henni (1805-81) -- A German-American Pioneer Priest
By Don Heinrich Tolzmann



Rev. Dr. Johann Martin Henni
From Martin Marty's biography of Henni

Born in Obersaxen, Switzerland, Henni came to America in 1829, and was ordained to the priesthood in Cincinnati. In 1834, he became pastor of Holy Trinity Church (*Heilige Dreifaltigkeits-Kirche*). It was the first German Catholic church in Cincinnati, and is considered the mother church of German Catholic churches in Cincinnati. Other German Catholic churches in Cincinnati followed its founding, including: Old St. Mary's Church, St. John the Baptist Church, St. Philomena, St. Paul Church, St. Michael the Archangel, St. Augustine Church, Immaculata Church, St. Anthony Church, and St. Stephen's Church (later renamed: Our Lady of Victory).

Henni published a fascinating book on the German Catholics of the region: *Ein Blick in's Thal des Ohio: oder, Briefe über den Kampf und das Wiederaufleben der katholischen Kirche im fernen Westen der Vereinigten Staaten Nordamerika's* (A Look into the Ohio Valley: or, Letters about the Struggle and Reawakening of the Catholic Church in the far West of the United States of America), published in München by Franz Seraph Hübschmann in 1836. It would be a great contribution to German-American history to have this work translated into English, and explore the image it portrays of German Catholic life in what was then called the West.

Another major accomplishment of Henni's was the founding of the *Wahrheits-Freund* (Friend of Truth), the first German Catholic paper in the U.S. It was published in Cincinnati from 1837 to 1908. It is a veritable goldmine of information on German Catholics not only in Cincinnati, but regionally and nationally as well. In 1843, Henni was appointed Bishop of the newly established Diocese of Milwaukee, and not surprisingly played an important role in German Catholic life there.

For further information on the life and work of Henni, see: Martin Marty, *Dr. Johann Martin Henni, erster Bischof von Milwaukee. Ein Lebensbild aus der Pionier-Zeit von Ohio und Wisconsin...* (Dr. Johann Martin Henni, First Bishop of Milwaukee. A Biography from the Pioneer Time of Ohio and Wisconsin...), published in New York by the Benziger Brothers in 1888. Like Henni's book, this work is deserving of translation into English. There are many works that have not been translated from German, and these two works are good examples of the translation work that needs to be done to fully illuminate German-American history.