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**South Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, 1880-1920: Industrialization, Immigration and the
Development of a Religious Landscape**

Woodward Christian Carson

A THESIS

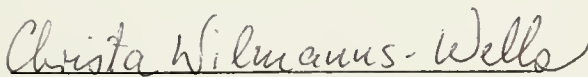
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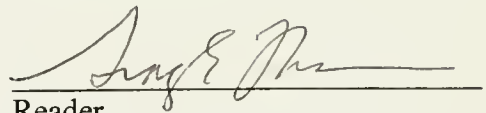
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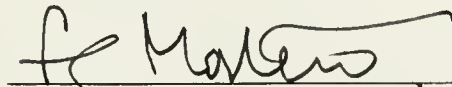
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Dedication

To my children, Faith and Summer.

Acknowledgments

Many individuals deserve thanks for their efforts in the completion of this thesis. First and foremost, I would like to thank my wife, Krista, for her remarkable devotion and sacrifice. Krista shares equally in my accomplishment here for reasons incomprehensibly larger than the hours of listening to me develop my thoughts before committing them to text, the mundane tasks proof reading and editing, and the countless weekends of flying solo with the kids. Krista's unwavering patience and quiet faith are an immeasurable source of strength and inspiration to not only myself but also all that know her.

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Introduction

Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, is located in Northampton County of southeastern Pennsylvania, 60 miles northwest of Philadelphia. The community lies along the banks of the Lehigh River, within a valley created by the Blue Mountains to the north and the Durham-Reading Hills to the south. The Lehigh Valley, as the broader region is known, extends west to east from the watershed of the Schuylkill River to the confluence of the Lehigh and Delaware Rivers at the Pennsylvania-New Jersey junction. William Penn first acquired the territory by deed in 1689 as a result of the infamous Walking Purchase. Feeling themselves deceived by Penn's tactics of land acquisition the American Indians were reluctant to cede their holdings, resulting in a lack of European settlement within the Lehigh Valley until the 1730's. The first group of settlers is well known. The Moravians, who gave the town its sacred name, were a pious and cultured community of Saxon emigrants who trace their origins to pre-Lutheran reformer John Huss. Fleeing generations of persecution in Europe, the Moravians established at Bethlehem, in 1741, a thriving, industrious, communal religious community. Bethlehem served both as a haven for the expression of Moravian beliefs, and, of equal importance, as a base of operations for spreading the Gospel to the heathen population of the Pennsylvania frontier. The conversion of the American Indian to Protestant Christianity was a central component of the Moravian presence in America.

Though of immense significance in a multitude of ways, most of which have not even been mentioned in this brief introduction, Bethlehem is today the product of far more than the Moravian story. In fact, the greater part of the community's history has been shaped by events decidedly non-Moravian.

South Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, was established in the mid-19th Century as the Moravians began to break up their land holdings under the influence of a rapidly changing American landscape. The isolated Moravian way of life drew to a close as the population pushed beyond the Philadelphia perimeter and the highly interactive quality of American society began to emerge. On a 274-acre tract of land south of the Lehigh River, that for the previous century had served the Moravians as a buffer to the outside world, an industrial town was born. South Bethlehem emerged during the late 19th Century as a shaping force of regional, national and global importance. The events born here comprise an epic in American history no less significant than that of the area's earliest settlers. In fact, the creation of the industrial hub south of Moravian Bethlehem left behind a chronicle that is, quite arguably, of superior national significance, and that embodies a more direct contact with the present. Nevertheless, to avoid misrepresentation, it should be stated that the story of the Moravian community and industrial South Bethlehem are ultimately inseparable, being closely and vitally intertwined with innumerable interconnections and bonds.¹ Though not traditionally the subject of scholarly research and to date deemed of little interest to the Historic Preservation arena, the focus of this thesis is placed here, industrial South Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries dramatic changes brought about by the global dominance of American industry transformed the American landscape in a multitude of ways. The focus of this thesis will be to illustrate one such transformation

¹ The two communities were in fact united under the overarching name Bethlehem in 1917.

within a readily definable geographic area. Specifically, the question is what were the effects of industrialization on the religious landscape of South Bethlehem, Pennsylvania?

Accompanying South Bethlehem's emergence as one of the nation's most vital iron and steel centers was a flood of foreign-born to supply an unprecedented demand for labor. South Bethlehem is by no means alone in this matter. Most, if not all, American manufacturing centers were similarly affected by the, so-called, "Age of Mass Migration."² Though not alone, South Bethlehem is of particular interest because of its ability to tell the story of this era through a study of the town's ecclesiastical architecture and church related structures, sites, religio-social institutions and associated figures. These present an excellent resource for study in many contexts: within a chronological continuum, across a clearly defined geography, and in terms of demographic and ethnic distribution. The period 1880–1920 has been chosen because of its particular relevance to the diversification of South Bethlehem, as visible in the religious landscape. The primary focus of this thesis will be the church structures themselves, but with the intent of defining them as icons of a much larger story. Specifically, the relationship of these institutions to the geographic evolution of the town's development, and, most significantly, the place of the industrial town's church as a stabilizing element in the lives of the incoming labor force.

The timing of this thesis is opportune. South Bethlehem is presently in the midst of great change. Central to this turbulent environment was the conclusion of steel production in 1995, which has been the shaping force of the community for nearly its entire history. Large portions of a vast, internationally significant, and historic industrial

complex are presently being dismantled for salvage. A proposed adaptive re-use of many of the mill buildings and general redevelopment is being formulated for the site including a Smithsonian affiliated National Museum of Industrial History including an Iron and Steel Showcase to tell the story of South Bethlehem's industry. It is the intent of the author for this study to help inform the formulation of the Iron and Steel Showcase by connecting the steel mill complex to the architecture of the surrounding urban landscape and by offering an example, perhaps, of how to take South Bethlehem's story beyond the factory gates. In addition, as congregations and parishes continue to shrink, a general cultural trend likely to accelerate in South Bethlehem with the cessation of steel production, closures and mergers of congregations appear inevitable. Here, it is hoped that this thesis may illustrate the broad social and cultural value of these under appreciated historic resources.

Following a concise yet comprehensive survey of the rise of industry and the development of the immigrant community in South Bethlehem, the thrust of this thesis is addressed by way of a general overview, and three in-depth case studies of individual churches and the history of their congregations. The overview clearly illustrates the above stated contexts of focus: chronological, geographic, demographic, and architectural. Each case study will detail the role of the church in the lives of South Bethlehem's labor force and as an architectural ingredient of South Bethlehem's cultural mosaic. The thesis will conclude with a succinct investigation of three individuals whose guiding presence, generosity, and creative vision were vital in giving shape to South Bethlehem's religious landscape and thus the cultural mosaic it informs.

² Timothy J. Hatton and Jefferey G. Williamson, *The Age of Mass Migration: Causes and Economic Impact*

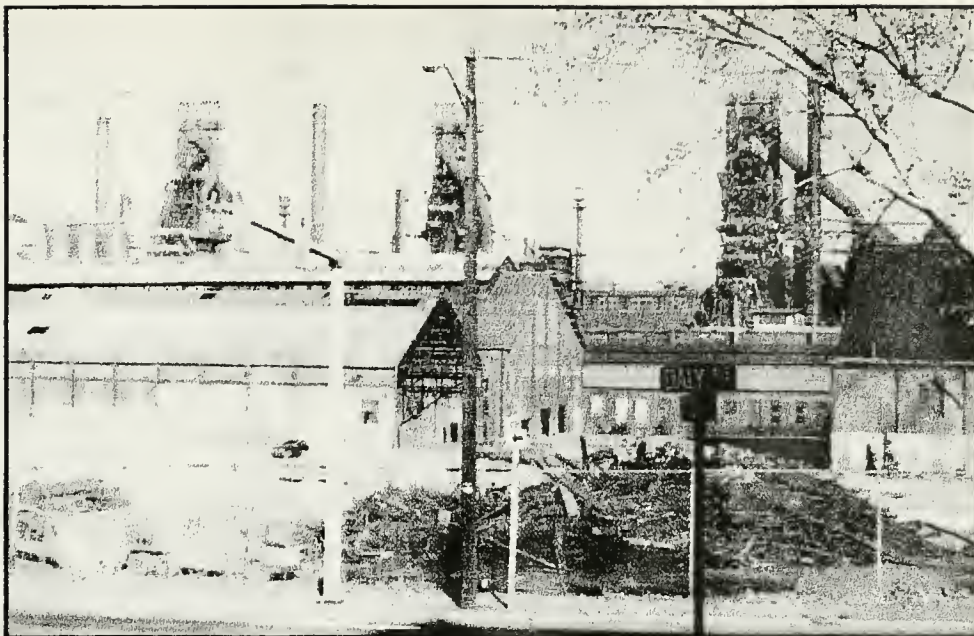


Figure 1. Demolition of the Lehigh Division of the Bethlehem Steel Corporation's Bethlehem Plant. Fall 1998. Photograph by W. C. Carson.

Chapter 1: The Rise of Industry

The borough of South Bethlehem was officially established in August of 1865. By this time, the landscape was already being shaped as an industrial center under the creative direction of a number of farsighted industrialists, capitalists, and new machine-age entrepreneurs. The Moravians sold their holdings south of the Lehigh River in 1843, and in a little more than ten years, speculation was being fostered by the swirl of smoke and hiss of steam and most importantly, exciting talk of great things to come. But here we must immediately address one of the historical bonds between the northern and southern settlements along the Lehigh which make for a comprehensive study of the area, replete with the evidence of the vital interconnectedness of the two Bethlehems. In order to do so we must back up nearly 50 years to the early years of the 19th Century and focus again upon the northern shore of the Lehigh.

Approximately 15 miles east of Bethlehem at Easton, Pennsylvania, the Lehigh River merges with the mighty Delaware. The possibility of a potentially lucrative water link to Philadelphia, one of the most heavily populated markets and industrial centers during the 18th and 19th Centuries, proved both an attractive and undeniable challenge. The Moravians reportedly took to the river for the purpose of commerce as early as 1754, using flatboats to transport linseed oil to the Philadelphia market. However, their efforts were quickly abandoned. The waters of the Lehigh proved far too treacherous for the successful transport of goods, and the aggressive current of the Delaware prohibited return travel and thus the possibility of reciprocating trade.³

³ Anthony Joseph Bryzinski, *The Lehigh and its Effect on the Economic Development of the Region through which it passed-1818-1873*. (Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 1957), 16.

The discovery of anthracite coal in 1787 at Mauch Chunk, Pennsylvania, soon forced the river into the role of a transportation corridor. The first fleet of arks loaded with coal bound for Philadelphia industry passed the Lehigh River in 1806. "...Sent down five arks today from the landing in Mauch Chunk, two of which reached Philadelphia, the others having been wrecked in their passage."⁴ As this account suggests, the rate of success mirrored that of the Moravian's earliest discouraging attempts. The demand for the revolutionary fuel being unearthed at the river's headwaters, however, demanded a solution to all possible obstacles. By 1818, things were much improved as a result of the innovative engineering of Josiah White and Erskine Hazard, proprietors of the Lehigh Navigation Company. Wing dams and sluice gates were constructed along the river making the journey to Philadelphia less treacherous and costly in terms of lost cargo. While much improved, trade was still a one-way operation and very much hostage to the whims of Mother Nature. Ice, drought or an over abundance of rainfall could halt commerce completely. Descending navigation was beset with such limitations and still far from ideal.

In 1829, The Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company opened the famous Lehigh Canal, which cut through the Moravian Community along the north bank of the Lehigh. The canal quickly became an impressive force to the industrious spirit of the Moravian community and served as a catalyst for the opening of their private domain. With the canal era came a dependable, safe, two-way route to Philadelphia and, by 1833, New York as well. The volume of anthracite the canal could provide for these markets increased dramatically, and an explosion of industrial production soon followed. The

⁴ Ibid., 27.

Lehigh Canal, ironically, sits eerily quiet today; its locks broken-down and its trench reclaimed by wilderness. Nevertheless, the transformations this monument to human ingenuity initiated are legibly etched into the surrounding landscape and provide a rich summary of the region's history since.⁵

So how did the canal, passing through Bethlehem, affect the development of South Bethlehem? Here we find the core connection between the neighboring communities. First, construction of the canal began the region's experience with the Age of Mass Migration. Foreign-born soon arrived to fill a growing demand for labor in both the construction and transportation industries. By the end of the 19th Century this supply became a flood of immigrant labor looking not only for work but also for a way of life better than offered in their countries of origin. Second, the canal illustrated the possibilities of communicating with distant markets and made available the mineral resources necessary for large-scale, fully integrated industry. Scale and integration, hallmarks of American manufacturing prowess, soon became the defining quality of the yet to be born borough of South Bethlehem. Third, and most immediately influential, the canal initiated a race to the coal regions of Pennsylvania for which the flat, undeveloped floodplain south of the Lehigh proved more geographically suitable with the advent of steam and rail locomotion.

For the purpose of clarity, the remainder of Chapter One will deal strictly with the development of industrial operations in South Bethlehem. Foreign immigration and the societal changes this growth ushered in for the new town are addressed at length in the

⁵ Lance E. Metz, "The Arsenal of America: A History of Forging Operations of Bethlehem Steel." *Canal History and Technology Proceedings*, Vol. 11 (Easton, PA: Canal History and Technology Press, 1992), 223.

following chapter. Though the two are ultimately inseparable, a clear and concise history of South Bethlehem industry will be best served here uncomplicated by social implications. Again, the interplay between the rise of industry and its social manifestations in South Bethlehem form the body of this thesis, but an understanding of the two highly complicated ingredients is better achieved if they are first looked at largely independent of one another. These elements are rewoven in Chapters 3, 4, and 5 to illustrate and expose their interactions within the context of South Bethlehem's religious landscape, for which many notable architectural achievements still proudly stand in remembrance.

The Railroad

According to the diaries of railroad pioneer, Robert Heysham Sayre, "Rumors were spreading as early as 1850 that railroads were heading their way."⁶ The renowned Asa Packer sought to directly challenge the de facto monopoly Hazard and White's Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company held on the transportation and supply of anthracite, and in 1852, Packer's Lehigh Valley Railroad Company surveyed a 45-mile path from Easton to Mauch Chunk. Construction of the proposed railway immediately followed and tracks were laid through the southern addition of Bethlehem in 1855.⁷ With the arrival of the transportation industry "South Bethlehem" became the common appellation for the budding town across the Lehigh.⁸

⁶ Frank Whelan and Lance E. Metz, *The Diaries of Robert Heysham Sayre* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 1991), 9-10.

⁷ William Cornelius Reichel, *The Crown Inn, near Bethlehem, Penna., 1745: a history* (Philadelphia: King and Baird, 1872), 144-147.

⁸ Borough of South Bethlehem. *Semi-centennial of the borough of South Bethlehem, 1865-1915* (South Bethlehem, PA: Quinlin Printing Company, 1915), 12.

The little town's character was molded by Asa Packer's capitalist belief that the railroad could do the work of the canal faster, more directly, more efficiently, and more predictably. Packer was right. In 1856 the Lehigh Valley Railroad was connected to New York City by way of the Central New Jersey Railroad and to Philadelphia in 1857,⁹ by a junction with the North Pennsylvania Railroad located in South Bethlehem. In 1858, Packer moved his company's headquarters from Philadelphia to Bethlehem, and thereby established South Bethlehem as one of the most critical transportation hubs along the East Coast.¹⁰ The demise of canal transportation closely followed; and the stage was well set for big things in South Bethlehem.

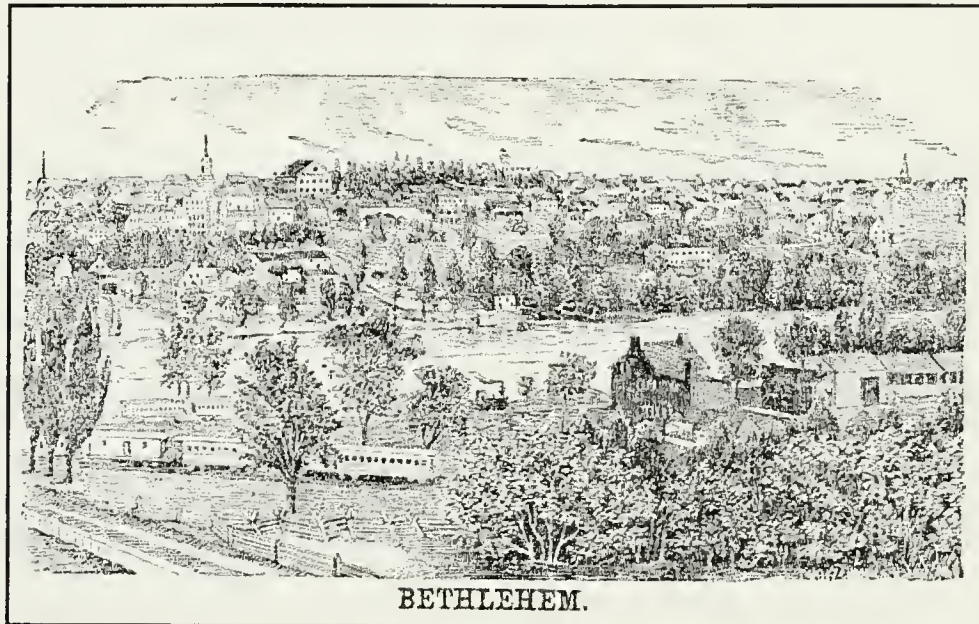


Figure 2. View of Moravian, North Bethlehem, looking north from what would become the Borough of South Bethlehem. The junction of the Lehigh Valley Railroad and the North Pennsylvania Railroad is pictured in the foreground. This lithograph, produced circa 1860, captures a critical phase in the area's transition from an isolated religious realm during the 18th and early 19th centuries to a worldly industrial power-center during the 19th and 20th centuries. Source: Martin, 81.

⁹ Robert F. Archer, *The Lehigh Valley Railroad: The Route of the Black Diamond* (Berkeley: Howell North Books, 1977), 31-32.

¹⁰ Borough of South Bethlehem, *Semi Centennial*, 13.

The Zinc Industry

A variety of manufacturing and refining operations developed concurrently with the construction of the railroad because of the unmistakable commercial promise the new railroad offered. The first manufacturing operation in South Bethlehem predates the completion of the Lehigh Valley Railroad ever so slightly. The Pennsylvania and Lehigh Zinc Company incorporated in 1853, under the direction of noted Philadelphia business leaders Joseph Wharton and Samuel Wetherill. These men were well aware of the untapped fortune the railroad now offered them and to a region rich in mineral resources.¹¹ A manufactory using patented technology developed by Wetherill was erected in South Bethlehem the same year, and zinc oxide was produced soon after from ore mined in the nearby Saucon Valley. Their operation was only the second place to produce zinc oxide in America, a highly prized ingredient for the manufacture of white paint. The Wetherill family had amassed great wealth during the previous century from the production of white paint using lead oxide, and with zinc, Wetherill positioned himself in South Bethlehem to expand his fortunes.¹² The South Bethlehem operation was the first to produce metallic zinc or spelter commercially in America in 1859, and was again the first to produce sheet zinc, doing so in 1865. The zinc works supplied a host of materials for use in construction, the production of military hardware, and the refining of gold, silver and brass. One of the industry's later products, spiegeleisen, was an essential ingredient in the manufacture of steel using the yet unrealized Bessemer

¹¹ Ross Yates, *Joseph Wharton: Quaker Industrial Pioneer* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University, 1978), 75.

¹² *Ibid.*, 77.

Process.¹³ The zinc industry was one of the region's largest employers throughout the remainder of the 19th Century and the early years of the 20th Century. For a variety of reasons, including the claim of railway freight discrimination, the zinc works ceased operation in South Bethlehem, closing its spelter works in April of 1911.¹⁴ Though the end of a significant chapter in South Bethlehem's brief history, this date is ultimately of little importance. Well before the early years of the 20th Century, the economic fortitude and regional influence of the zinc industry paled in comparison to South Bethlehem's industrial colossus of iron and steel manufacture.



Figure 3. Postcard (circa 1895) of the Lehigh Zinc Company with the Durham-Reading Hills (South Mountain) in the background. Source: South Bethlehem Historical Society.

¹³ Accounts of the history and importance of the discovery of zinc ore in the Saucon Valley and the South Bethlehem zinc operations is offered by Benjamin Leroy Miller, *Lead and Zinc Ores of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, PA: Department of Forests and Water, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1924), Richmond E. Meyer, "The Story of the Zinc Industry in The Saucon Valley" from *Rocks and Minerals*, vol. 10 no. 2, 3 and 4: 17-21, 33-36, 56-59. 1935, and The New Jersey Zinc Company's self-published work *The First One Hundred Years of The New Jersey Zinc Company: A History of the Founding and Development of a Company and an Industry, 1848-1948* (New York: New Jersey Zinc Company, 1948).

¹⁴ *The Globe*, April 15, 1911.

Iron and Steel

Fully integrated industry began its development in the South Bethlehem area in the late-1850's, and here again, we find another unmistakable connection with the young community's mother borough, Moravian Bethlehem. Augustus Wolle, a Bethlehem merchant and Moravian, owned a wealth of real estate in the region including a substantial tract in the Saucon Valley known to be rich in iron ore. Wolle organized a company in 1857 to exploit his ore beds for the production of pig iron.¹⁵ Under the financial influence of the Lehigh Valley Railroad, the iron company was reorganized in 1858 as the Bethlehem Rolling Mill and Iron Company, and the decision was made to set up shop in South Bethlehem.

The railroad's interest in Wolle's undertaking is clearly represented in the iron-company's change of name; Asa Packer's ever-expanding railroad had at its very heart an innate need for rail. The erection of an ironworks and rolling-mill in South Bethlehem along with a majority financial interest in its operations insured the Lehigh Valley Railroad of not only an abundant, direct supply of rail but also monopoly on the shipment of the company's products. In addition, by locating the iron works in South Bethlehem, the major markets and industrial centers of the eastern seaboard were directly accessible.

In terms of manufacturing basics, the choice of South Bethlehem for the ironworks positioned the rolling mill and iron works to take full advantage of the core purpose of the railroad's presence, anthracite coal, which by this date was the primary fuel for the smelting of iron ore in eastern Pennsylvania. In addition, plentiful sources of limestone, an essential ingredient in the refining process were readily available nearby.

¹⁵ Borough of South Bethlehem, *Semi Centennial*, 13.

Finally, the mighty Lehigh provided water in a plentiful quantity, upon which the iron and steel and most other heavy industries were essentially dependent.

From these beginnings grew an industry that by the dawn of the 20th Century was a global model of integration, controlling the full production of iron and steel from raw material to finished product, from the ore mine to the market.¹⁶ Numerous newspaper accounts exist as early as the mid-1870's of foreign dignitaries representing such nations as Russia and Japan touring the works in South Bethlehem.¹⁷

In order to explain fully the magnitude and importance of the iron and steel industry to South Bethlehem's history, greater detail of this story is necessary. In the end, it is the presence of the iron and steel industry that provided the impetus for the realization of the town's religious landscape. The capitalists, entrepreneurs, inventors, and laborers—skilled and unskilled, native and foreign—along with the service providers for all of the above, essentially came together for one purpose, the production of steel. It is from the independent qualities of each of these elements and the interaction between them, that the amazing cultural, spiritual, and architectural legacy this thesis will address was spawned.

The blast furnace and rolling mill began production in 1863 under the direction of pioneering iron master, John Fritz, and the works grew in size at a steady pace. Newspaper accounts of the day reveal an excited optimism and basic awe inspired by events such as the erection of “the huge stacks” for a new rolling mill complex in May of 1872.¹⁸ This new mill replaced the production of wrought-iron rail with that of Bessemer

¹⁶ Lance E. Metz. “The Arsenal of America.” 236-237.

¹⁷ *Bethlehem Daily Times*; 3 August 1876; 15 November 1884; 28 March 1889; *Daily Times*, 31 May 1893.

¹⁸ *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 9 May 1872.

Steel. South Bethlehem's industry was among the earliest operations in the United States to use the newly refined Bessemer Process and with it produced rail of a superior quality in strength and durability. In addition, the new mill was noted for the high degree of integration among stations, producing speedy output beneath a single albeit huge roof.¹⁹ The new Bessemer mill set off over a century of plant expansions and improvements as the company continually reinvented itself, replacing obsolete technologies and introducing new products. As a result of the effort to stay atop the iron and steel industry, South Bethlehem's iron and steel operation claimed over several linear miles of territory along the Lehigh River by the early 1910's.

The company moved into the production of war materials, including armor plate, gun forgings, munitions and ordnance in the late 1880's, winning lucrative federal contracts. Under the direction of Secretary of the Navy, Theodore Roosevelt, the U. S. Navy was revived from a post Civil War decline by a state of the art fleet whose demand for steel sustained South Bethlehem's industry almost single handedly through to the close of the 19th Century. With the decline of Bethlehem's interest in the rail market, Bethlehem Steel executives lobbied vigorously for the procurement of federal contracts and invested capital heavily toward this end.²⁰ Top company officials including Linderman, president, Robert Sayre, general manager and John Fritz, general superintendent, made joint appearances in Washington D.C. to reinforce the company's intentions.²¹ The announcement of the awarding of the first of these contracts to South Bethlehem's works appeared in the local press on April 15, 1887. The report gloats

¹⁹ Metz, 237-242.

²⁰ Ibid., 246-252.

²¹ *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 15 March 1887.

abundantly at beating out such notable competitors as Philadelphia's Midvale and Johnstown's Cambria operations and hails the construction and development boom this achievement insured.²² Other industries were solicited by other local business leaders with the promise of financial assistance to take their place in South Bethlehem alongside the iron and steel works. The "abundant supply of minors and females" associated with the 2,000 men employed by the steel mill ²³was soon consumed by the presence of cigar factories, silk mills and breweries in South Bethlehem.

The effect of Bethlehem's contribution of military hardware and materials has been detailed by a number of scholars in a variety of works about both Bethlehem and the iron and steel industry at large.²⁴ The company was honored in 1898 by the personal invitation of President William McKinley to general manager Sayre, requesting his presence for the celebratory review of the new naval fleet as it returned to New York harbor after the successful conclusion of the Spanish American War.²⁵ Military production reached new levels during World War I as output tonnage surpassed record upon record in every part of the South Bethlehem plant.²⁶ During World War II Bethlehem operations again proved indispensable by providing a dominant share of materials for all aspects of the U. S. armed forces.²⁷

²² Ibid., 15 April 1887.

²³ Ibid., June 2, 1886.

²⁴ Accounts of the history of Bethlehem Steel Corporation include, in addition to the previously cited work by Metz, Robert Hessen's *Steel Titan: The Life of Charles Schwabb* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), W. Bruce Drinkhouse's, *The Bethlehem Steel Corporation: A History from Origin to World War I* (Easton, PA: The Northampton County Historical and Genealogical Society, 1964), Arundel Cotter's, *The Story of Bethlehem Steel* (New York: Moody Book Co., 1916) and Thomas J. Misa's *A Nation of Steel: The Making of Modern America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

²⁵ Metz, 268.

²⁶ Numerous press accounts detail WWI production. Examples include features in *The Globe*, 6 November 1916, 7 April 1917.

²⁷ Metz, 281.

In addition to the production of war materials Bethlehem Steel moved into another market shortly after the turn of the century. Charles Schwabb, previously one of Andrew Carnegie's most forceful protégés and successor to Henry Clay Frick as the director of Carnegie Steel, took control of Bethlehem in 1901, and he immediately sought to wean the company from dependence on government contracts. Investing some \$5,000,000, Schwabb took a great financial risk on the erection of a new mill complex for the production of structural steel. Under Schwabb the company installed a revolutionary, never before utilized, technology for the production of the continuously rolled wide flange beam that has since transformed every urban skyline in the world. With production of the Bethlehem Section or H-Beam, Schwabb crushed his competition in the structural steel market. South Bethlehem's product required less manpower to turn out and, being less weighty than the built-up and riveted structural sections offered by Carnegie, was less expensive to transport. As a result of the diversity of the Bethlehem Steel's line up, including military and structural products among many others, the South Bethlehem operations thrived. Thirty-three thousand persons were employed at the South Bethlehem works by the end of World War II, a considerable increase from 1,000 in 1870 and highly suggestive of the inevitable transformation wrought upon the steel mill's surroundings.

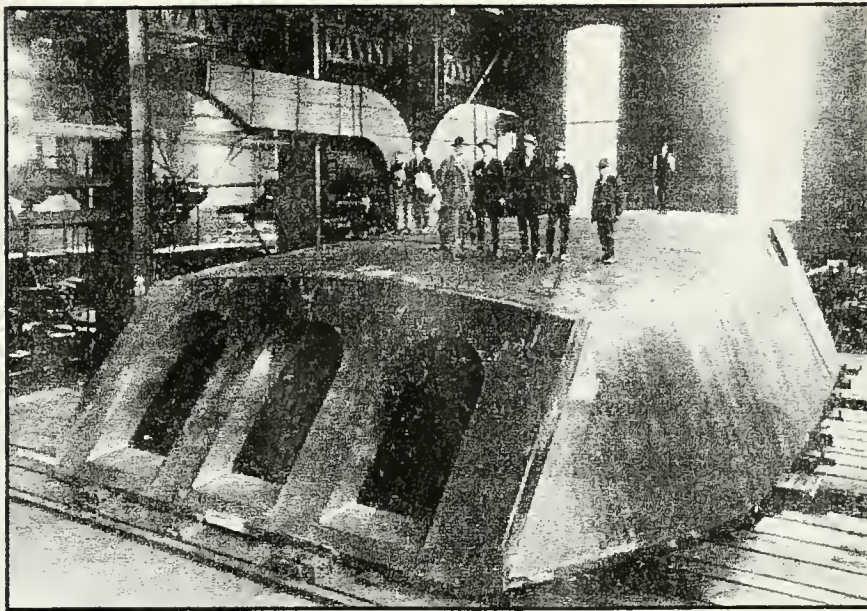


Figure 4. Battleship turret with 18-½ inch armor plate during manufacture in South Bethlehem, PA (circa 1900). Source: Metz, 273.



Figure 5. View of the Bethlehem Steel Company (circa 1900) from the north side of the Lehigh River. Source: Yates, *Bethlehem of Pennsylvania*, 181.

Chapter 2: Immigrant South Bethlehem

A hallmark of South Bethlehem's rise as an industrial center was the steady influx of foreign-born labor to fill a void of manpower the new economic reality presented. As expressed in the introduction to this thesis, South Bethlehem was not unique in this regard but firmly characteristic of most, if not all, industrial centers. Outside of key urban areas such as Philadelphia and New York, the industrial growth of America, like the Bethlehem region, plodded along at a relative slow pace to the mid-19th Century. The explosion of the transportation industry, specifically the railroad, compounded the growth of the manufacturing sector and spread the industrial economy far and wide; the number of densely settled production centers multiplied vigorously with a pronounced dispersion.²⁸ Therefore, the city was no longer the only destination for those newcomers that invested themselves, either by choice or necessity, in the toil of industry. Along with South Bethlehem, many smaller mill towns like Gary, Indiana; Youngstown, Ohio; Sparrows Point, Maryland; and Steelton, Pennsylvania; absorbed an ever-increasing tide of European immigration.²⁹ New arrivals numbered just over 400,000 at mid-century, grew to over three-quarters of a million in the early 1880's, and by 1910, accounted for a

²⁸ Sources detailing the effect of the railroad on the industrialization of the American landscape include George R. Taylor's *The Transportation Revolution* (New York: Rhinehart and Co., 1951), John F. Stover's *American Railroads* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997) and Harold U. Faulkner's *American Economic History*, sixth edition (New York: Harper and Row, 1949).

²⁹ An excellent case study that examines the role of immigration and ethnicity in affecting change in the mill town's character and social organization is John Bodnar's *Immigration and Industrialization: Ethnicity in an American Mill Town, 1870-1940* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977). Bodnar's work reflects a maturing approach to historiography. His observations on issues such as occupational mobility and property ownership among immigrant populations are based soundly upon quantitative analysis. Bodnar's work, along with several recent studies, largely discredits the conjectural theory offered by historians such as Oscar Handlin *The Uprooted* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1951) that portrays immigration as destructive to traditional culture and social organization. Bodnar illustrates immigration as a process of the transplantation of culture rather than loss in his study of Steelton, Pennsylvania.

1,250,000 person increase to the nation's population each year.³⁰ This surge was due to a number of economic and social factors involving countries of origin but it also unmistakably coincides with America's emergence as the world's dominant industrial and commercial power and nation of wealth.³¹ Unlike the railroad's dispersion of industry, the economic prosperity this emergence brought about was by no means dealt evenly to all. A substantial portion of the newly generated wealth went into the coffers of a shrinking group of the elite, a trend that went relatively undisturbed until the Depression Era of the late 1920's.³² Yet, however tenuous the possibilities industrial prosperity offered were, they were tantalizing enough for individuals and families to uproot themselves from all that was familiar and to assume an insecure presence in an unknown, and in many respects, hostile land.

As in the general history of 19th Century immigration to America, the arrival of immigrants in South Bethlehem can be roughly divided into two phases. The first of these phases generally covers the period between 1840 and 1880 and consisted almost entirely of newcomers of northwest European nativity. Old immigration, as this first phase has been labeled, included English, Irish, and Germans as a majority around mid-century and grew gradually more diverse as the century wore on. The Netherlands, Scandinavia, and a few non-European countries contributed to this growing diversity. By

³⁰ Phillip Taylor, *The Distant Magnet: European Immigration to America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 63.

³¹ Between the years 1881 and 1885 the United States surpassed the United Kingdom in percentage of world manufacturing output, a trend that continued to accelerate well in to the 20th Century. By 1910 American manufacturing output was greater than that of both the United Kingdom and Germany combined and only slightly less than 2 percent behind if France's output is factored in. See Douglas C. North, *Growth and Welfare in the American Past: a new economic history* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1966), 28. The Old World factors contributing to New Immigration are covered well in Chapter Three: "Southern Europe Drawn In" of Taylor's *The Distant Magnet*.

³² *Ibid.*, 177-178.

the late 1880's, a clear shift to southern and eastern European nations as the primary source of immigration began to emerge. The steady flow of the constituents of Old Immigration was augmented on an increasing basis with a growing tide of Austrians, Hungarians, Polish, and Italians. Between 1890 and 1914, less than a third of new arrivals were from the northern and western European nations that made up the bulk of Old Immigration. As the momentum of New Immigration increased with each passing year, the ethnic make up of newcomers took on a more eastern European complexion. In addition to the previously mentioned assortment, was a vast array of other minority ethnic groups including Russians, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Ruthenians, Greeks, Slovenians, Croatians and Turks. As the new century dawned the sum of these peoples came to American ports in a virtual deluge that continued with strength until the outbreak of the First World War. It is from the addition of this sphere of ethnic influences that the nation truly gathered its richness and body as a unique entity among nations. The newcomers of the New Immigration not only bore the burdens of American prosperity (not to mention nativist hatred), they saturated the social fabric with the many cultures, customs and traditions that constitute the florid cultural patchwork of America today.

When we take a closer look at South Bethlehem during the first phase of immigration a number of significant trends are observed. As the Irish and German populations arrived in the Bethlehem area to construct the canal and railroad systems, South Bethlehem became the location of choice for the foreign population to establish new American lives. In addition, for those employed by the railroad after its construction was complete there was, of course, a decided proximity to work in South Bethlehem. The zinc-works and the iron-works began production in 1853 and 1863 respectively, and

the lure of work continued the Irish and German settlings in South Bethlehem.³³

Newspaper accounts of the day routinely detailed the peculiar habits of the foreign population in South Bethlehem, focusing in particular on the odd characteristics of and incidents involving the Irish. Also of particular interest were the repeated accounts of events and activities organized in support of and associated with the cause of Irish nationalism.³⁴ In contrast, attention to the German contingent was minimal and hardly scathing. This disparity in treatment is likely the product of a number of key cultural factors that will be expounded upon later in this chapter that facilitated rapid assimilation of German immigrants. In addition to the Irish and Germans, one notable group of arrivals in South Bethlehem prior to 1880 was a group of highly skilled Belgians recruited by Joseph Wharton for their knowledge of zinc manufacture. They were a well-liked addition to what was apparently an already self consciously diverse community as the following account of the day suggests:

They have laid aside the blue blouse and their wives have exchanged the sabot for the America Shoe. But both, by clinging to their mother tongue, are maintaining their distinctiveness as a people in the marvelous

³³ Unfortunately figures offered by United States Census reports help substantiate the ethnic composition of the budding community with only limited force. For one, the borough of South Bethlehem was not incorporated until May of 1865 and, as such, Census Reports do not reflect separate figures for the community as a “minor civil division”. Furthermore, not until 1910 did Census Reports reflect “foreign nationalities” (i.e. Ireland, Hungary, Italy) of “minor civil divisions” with populations under 25,000. To determine the breakdown of foreign nationalities in South Bethlehem for the period of Old Immigration, a complete study of the block by block information gathering illustrated by Census Tracts would be necessary. Such an investigation is here unwarranted. Reliance has instead been placed upon the general trend of immigration within the national context as illustrated by a number of previously cited studies, in correlation with a number of locally published and manuscript histories of the region. There were certainly ethnic groups other than English, Irish and Germans within the first phase of immigration to South Bethlehem but all accounts suggest that its history during these years was quite typical in absorbing newcomers of this general composition. A quick look at a random selection of census tracts for the area between 1860 and 1880 reveals a community with a distinctly Irish and German character. Local histories include W. Ross Yates, et al. *Bethlehem of Pennsylvania, The Golden Years* (Bethlehem, PA: Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce, 1976.).

³⁴ *The Moravian*, 3 December 1863, 15 March 1866; *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 7 April 1884, 28 June 1886.

little town of many, for homes in which they have exchanged the land of their birth.³⁵

Belgian names such as Hoofstetten, Lemall, Detrixhe, and Henrard are recorded in U.S. Census data of 1870 as counted among the residents of South Bethlehem.

Although Census Reports for this time do not provide an accounting based on country of origin, they do list the proportion of the population that was either foreign-born (without a distinction of nationality or ethnicity) or native. A tabulation of the data offered by this minimal breakdown of the population firmly supports the assertion of South Bethlehem as the focal point of immigration locally. For the years of 1870 and 1880, the foreign-born category averaged nearly 30 percent of South Bethlehem's total population- a population that grew nearly 40 percent during this ten-year period. When these figures are compared with those of north Bethlehem the contrast is striking. The foreign-born population of north Bethlehem averaged only 7 percent between 1870 and 1880 and the overall population increased only 15 percent.³⁶ With an ample cross-river infrastructure by 1870, the trend these figures reveal suggests more at work here in the immigrant's choice of location than proximity to work. During this time period the face of north Bethlehem, without a doubt, also changed dramatically but it apparently remained a rather isolated, proper realm for which industrial hands were as yet ill suited.

As we move into a study of the second phase of 19th Century immigration, New Immigration, a particular event of Old Immigration specific to the landscape of South Bethlehem must first be examined. Its effect upon the development of the religious landscape that is the discourse of the remaining chapters of this thesis was unmistakable.

³⁵ Yates, *Joseph Wharton*, 34.

The establishment of the zinc, railroad and iron industries in combination with Old Immigration initiated an organizational development of the landscape that continues to be broadly characteristic of South Bethlehem.

In 1858, the year the Lehigh Valley Railroad moved its headquarters to the western limits of South Bethlehem the development of an elite community of entrepreneurs, industrialists and businessmen quickly emerged nearby. Robert H. Sayre, superintendent of the railroad, began the construction of a “gingerbread” Victorian house the same year.³⁷ The house still stands today perched high atop what became locally known during the 19th Century as Episcopal Hill for its great Episcopal Church, a term that well reflects the elite, Anglo-Saxon social arena and religious affiliation that emerged there.³⁸ The neighborhood is properly referred to as Fountain Hill. The homes the young borough’s influential families erected here were consequently grand affairs surrounded by broad, elaborate lawns. Multiple varieties of eclectic Victorian era architecture are present here, including examples of Gothic Revival, Neo-Romanesque and Second Empire Styles.

The German and Irish working classes took their place in South Bethlehem, slightly to the east of Fountain Hill, in densely populated neighborhoods composed of two-story and three-story row houses. Although a distinction between these two neighborhoods was clear, a few essential ingredients enabled a sense of commonality,

³⁶ Figures calculated using population statistics of the U.S. Department of Commerce-Bureau of Census: *Tenth Census of the United States: Population, General Report and Analysis* (Washington: GPO, 1881), 454-455.

³⁷ Whelan and Metz. 11.

³⁸ The term “Episcopal Hill” was commonly used in reference to the Fountainhill neighborhood. This area is at an elevation greater than that of the central district of South Bethlehem. When the neighborhood is viewed from the center of town the Episcopal Church of the Nativity dominates the landscape

mutual respect and unity that helped bridge potentially complicated differences in wealth, religion and ethnic tradition. Of these characteristics, the speaking of a common



Figure 6. Shingle Style Fountain Hill residence at 507 Delaware Avenue (circa 1890). Photograph by W. C. Carson.

language was highly significant. English and German were the long established modes of communication in Pennsylvania and the majority of newcomers had command of one or the other. In fact, one local history makes note of the ease in which newly arriving Germans assumed the skill of speaking a particular Pennsylvania vernacular phenomenon known as Pennsylvania Dutch: “It takes but a short time to twist their German into a

architecturally. This effect was likely far more dramatic during the early years as much of the development now in place was yet to be realized.

sense of local vernacular. The work of amalgamation between the two is rapid and very often nearly complete.”³⁹ The newly arriving Germans were also typically from

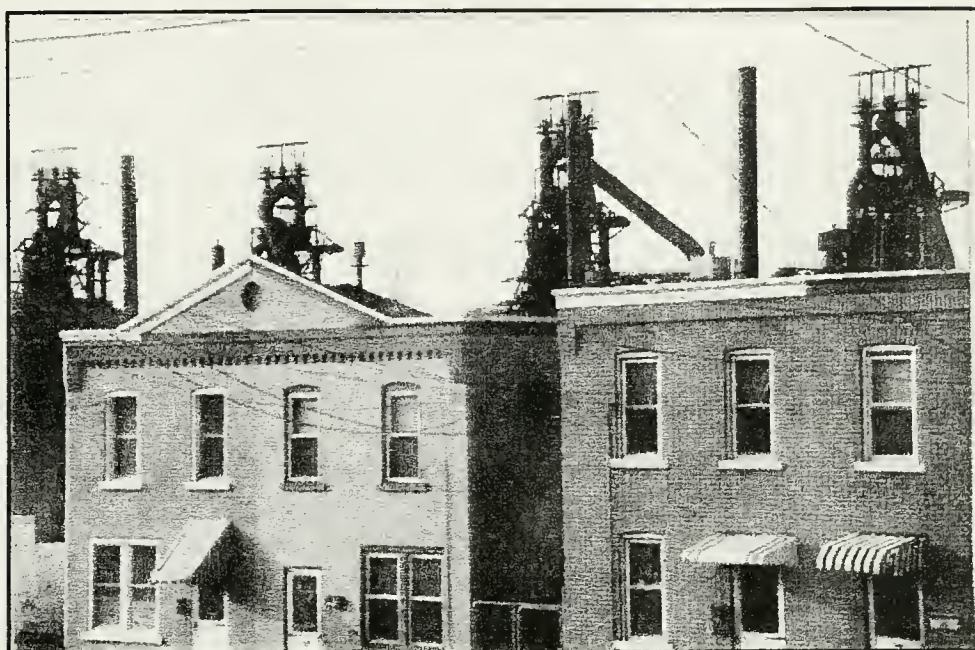


Figure 7. Typical South Bethlehem working class row houses (circa 1880) within the shadows of the steel mill. Photograph by W. C. Carson

Protestant religious traditions, either Lutheran or German Reformed, a fact that allowed for almost immediate assimilation. It is an interesting and trend establishing fact that the Irish, although intermingled with the entire population, generally settled farthest to the east. This voluntary segregation is likely the result of the disparity presented by the Roman Catholicism to which the Irish held tightly.⁴⁰ Catholic Germans, typically of

³⁹ Ross Yates, *History of the Lehigh Valley Region* (Bethlehem, PA: Joint Planning Commission, Lehigh and Northampton Counties, 1963), 102.

⁴⁰ It should be mentioned here that the Irish took a very active role in the political direction of the town from its earliest days of incorporation and that this tendency to segregate was not a social withdrawal. City council membership, appointed political positions and notably the police force maintained an Irish disposition throughout for several decades. In fact, the borough's first burgess was an Irish Immigrant named Joseph McMahon. McMahon rose from the ranks of common labor in the railroad to Superintendent of the Lehigh Zinc Company. Yates, *Bethlehem of Pennsylvania*, 114, 122-25.

Austrian ancestry, were among the group of Old Immigration. A small presence of this group was enough to establish a mission church in Bethlehem in 1855, but German Catholics did not come to the area in substantial numbers until the 1880's.⁴¹

The pattern established by the native-born Americans, the Germans and Irish, can be summarized as settlement from west to east based upon a religious, social, and occupational hierarchy. This entrenched pattern was by the 1880's irrefutable and conformity to its standards continued well into the 20th Century (and arguably still does). As immigration shifted to central, southern and eastern Europe, Hungarians, Slovaks, and Russians, to name just a few, replaced the previous group of Irish and Germans in the bottom tier of the occupational paradigm. New immigrants assumed the role of unskilled labor with strong backs, brought with them strange customs and traditions that formed the social framework of their homelands, and alien religious expressions of Roman Catholicism, Judaism and Orthodoxy largely unfamiliar to the American scene. Again, continuing the pattern of settlement established during the period of Old Immigration these groups took their place in South Bethlehem to the east. As a consequence of this settlement pattern, the borough's development naturally responded in a directional character. Restrained by the steep topography of the Durham-Reading Hill to the south, the Lehigh River and Bethlehem proper to the north, and the elite wealth to the west, working class expansion snaked along the river valley to the east abutting the steel mill and factory along its entire length.

⁴¹ Rev. Reginald S. Billinger, " *Pax Christi in Regno Christi* ": A History of Holy Ghost Parish." 1939. Parish Archives, Holy Ghost Roman Catholic Church, 4 and Yates, et al., *Bethlehem of Pennsylvania*. 123-126.

To get a handle on the American causes of the dramatic changes evident in the ethnic composition of the expanding labor force, and consequently in South Bethlehem's landscape, a quick study of labor issues of the iron and steel industry will prove valuable. The immense diversity of South Bethlehem's people and institutions and the fact that its eastern end was once known as the Ukrainian Hub is a direct result of the steel industry's draw on New Immigrants. As detailed in the preceding chapter, the 1880's witnessed an explosion in iron and steel manufacture in South Bethlehem. By the close of the decade, the industry was the core developmental force of the town's existence. As the mill expanded to meet the demands of Federal contracts for war materials, the number of workers it employed ballooned. As in South Bethlehem, the steel industry rose quickly throughout America and, by the turn of the century, was globally dominant. A fully developed transportation system and an unparalleled cache of natural resources enabled this dominance. However, equal to these conditions was the industry's preoccupation with economy and efficiency. Steel barons such as U.S. Steel's Andrew Carnegie and Bethlehem's Charles Schwabb expressed their concern for profit through their focus on costs. To secure business success in a relatively nascent industry, management was inclined to seize and utilize all means to reduce the cost of production, maneuvering legal, ethical and moral boundaries. As David Brody relates in his classic pre-union labor study *Steel Workers in America*:

[The] impulse for economy shaped American Steel manufacture. It inspired the inventiveness that mechanized the productive operations. It formed the calculating and objective mentality of the industry. It selected and hardened the managerial ranks. Its technological and psychological consequences, finally, defined the treatment of the steelworkers. Long hours, low wages, bleak conditions, and unionism, flowed alike from the economizing

drive that made the American industry the wonder of the manufacturing world.⁴²

The steel industry was intensely competitive, and its history in this respect is legendary. Steelmaking in the 19th Century is remembered by historians as a ruthless enterprise characterized by high stakes capitalism, merciless competition and a genuine struggle for survival. Companies fought bitterly over the growing but limited demand for iron and steel and, in the process, the welfare of the industry's workforce became inconsequential to the industry's leaders. Who would work the long hours required by steel operations, routinely in excess of 80 hours per week including Sundays and Holidays?⁴³ Working long hours, for exceedingly low wages, in utterly unsafe conditions, and without reservation to being at the mercy of the traditionally unpredictable nature of the steel market and the industry's management?⁴⁴ Skilled and unskilled workers alike often found themselves jobless or forced to accept up to 30 percent wage fluctuations when the economy soured, with no guarantee of rehire when

⁴² David Brody, *Steelworkers in America: The Nonunion Era* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1970), 2. Other books that detail the development of the steel industry include Christopher Hall, *Steel phoenix : the fall and rise of the U.S. steel industry* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997) and Harold C. Livesay, *Andrew Carnegie and the Rise of Big Business* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1975).

⁴³ In 1910 over 50 percent of the employees in Bethlehem's mill worked over 72 hours per week and 71 percent worked Monday through Saturday. Although many departments required a 7-day workweek, certain departments, such as the blast furnace, open hearth and Gray mill, required around the clock operation. Employees of these departments logged 84 hours per week, or 12 hour a day 7 days a week. Of the 9,184 employees in 1910, almost half worked for fewer than 16 cents per hour with common laborers earning around 12 cents. Many children were also employed in 1910. Job titles such as "core boys," "tape boys", and "oil boys" received wages of 5 cents per hour. Figures taken from *Report on the Strike at Bethlehem Steel Works*, prepared under the direction of Charles P. Neal, U.S. Commissioner of Labor (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910).

⁴⁴ Grave injuries, dismemberment, and gruesome deaths resulting from the unchecked hazards of the railroad and steel industry were chronicled almost daily in local newspapers. The descriptions of death and injury to children are particularly chilling. For instance, "John Gallagher, aged 12 years, living with his mother on Second street, had his back severely burned yesterday morning by slipping over a plate and falling on several red-hot bars, while at work in the merchant mill of the Bethlehem Iron Company." *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 1 September 1882.

things improved.⁴⁵ Who was willing to assume such uncertainty at a time when labor unions were as yet powerless and social welfare and support programs immaterial?⁴⁶



Figure 8: Testing a "heat" of steel at the open-hearth furnace. Source: Yates, *Bethlehem of Pennsylvania*, 208.

The answer to this uncertainty lies in the second major wave of mass immigration in American history and the history of South Bethlehem alike. According to recent statistics and observations offered by scholars dealing with this period of New

⁴⁵ The iron and steel industry was not alone in forcing wage reductions and unannounced job cuts with a fluctuation of the economy or company stability. The railroad among others was also known for this practice with a number of such occurrences the subject of journalism in South Bethlehem. In July of 1888 ironworkers took a 20 percent wage cut. A few days later employees of the North Pennsylvania Railroad in South Bethlehem took a similar cut but learned of it only upon receipt of their checks! *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 11 July 1888, 16 July 1888.

Immigration, late 19th and early 20th Century immigrants were drawn from far less developed industrial countries than earlier newcomers but they increasingly came from more urban centers. Most of the Slovaks, Poles, and Italians, to name a few, had fewer trade skills, were less literate, predominantly unmarried, and younger than earlier immigrants. They were thus able to adapt to the demands of the steel industry and willing to assume its risks.⁴⁷ As bleak and uncertain as conditions may have been, the financial rewards for these people were far in excess of those to be had in their native countries, characterized by explosive population increases, ethnic tensions and the lingering vestiges of feudalistic land management. Most planned or hoped to return with the financial means of insuring a better life in their homelands and were thus more than willing to assume the back-breaking role of unskilled labor in the steel industry- after all it was temporary. These newcomers from central and southern Europe were far more willing to accept the horrendous working conditions of the steel mill than those of native or western European extraction, who remembered with nostalgia the industry's recent past as an artisan endeavor. In addition, with this new foreign population, management could avoid the clamor of demands beginning to resonate from this traditional group of working class labor who were less youthful and less tolerant to the changing demands and nature of work in the steel industry.

Although many immigrants returned to their homelands, the majority remained, and the era in which representatives of new ethnic groups arrived is evidenced by their geographic location in South Bethlehem. In addition to the segregational pattern of

⁴⁶ Brody, 42.

⁴⁷ Timothy J. Hatton and Jefferey G. Williamson, *The Age of Mass Migration: Causes and Economic Impact* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 11-12.

settlement as evidenced by location, discussed earlier, an environment of blatant hostility and prejudice greeted the immigrant population during the late 19th Century. This certainly exacerbated the tendency to separate. Unlike the whimsical, fairly benign accounts of earlier years detailing the oddities of the Irish, the local newspaper was relentless in its portrayal of newcomers from central, southern and eastern Europe as an undesirable addition to the community. The violent behavior, tendency to partake of too much alcohol, socialist leanings, and poor hygiene of these people were frequent issues of attack. The Hunkies, Huns, and Dagos were typically referred to in newspaper accounts not by name but instead by the numbering system used in identifying them in

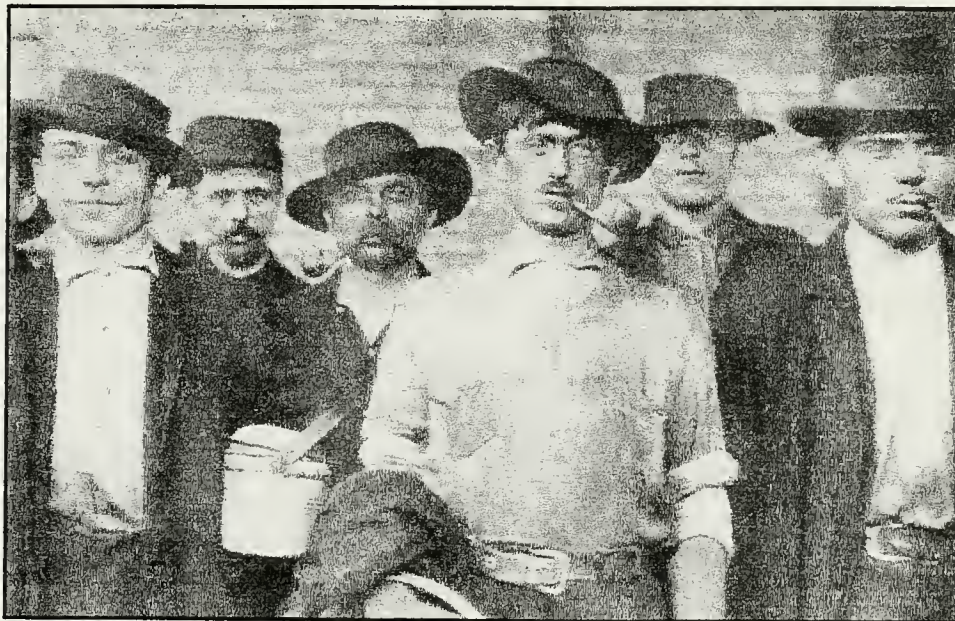


Figure 9: New Immigrant laborers on their way home from a shift in the mill (circa 1900). Source: Fitch, 142.

the steelworks. One of the more light-hearted accounts of 1883 details the arrival of a small band of Hungarians:

When the train arrived here this morning nine of the Hungarians, all able bodied men, left the train and were met by a couple of

Hungarians, employees of the Bethlehem Iron Company, who took them to their boarding house on Carpenter street. As Conductor McMullin passed through the crowd of emigrants (in the smoking car) examining their tickets, it was noticed that he frequently put his hand over his nose and mouth- because of the bad smell, perhaps. Mr. McMullin said it would take a great deal of tobacco smoke to counterbalance the strong smell of the soup eaters.⁴⁸

By the early 1880's, the influx of immigrants from southern, central and Eastern Europe created an overwhelming demand for housing. The steel company developed small areas of mill housing and the local building industry flourished in response. The *Bethlehem Daily Times*, the local news publication of the day, was literally a chronicle of the town's physical development- what was being built, who was awarded the contracts and where the material was coming from. Houses were going up in nearly every sector of the city, and the business district was transformed seasonally by new construction and improvements. The arrival of building and loan organizations, the makings of speculative development, and routine shortages in building materials were covered in detail.⁴⁹ As the 1800's ended, South Bethlehem encompassed twice its original area⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 13 August 1883.

⁴⁹ A survey of the *Bethlehem Daily Times* between 1884 and 1887 offers a colorful glimpse of both the construction boom and housing shortage. Several building and loans were established in these years and brick shortages occurred in both the summer and spring of 1886 and 1887. A building lot that sold for \$250.00 in April of 1887 was going for \$500.00 in October of the same year. In addition, a survey of maps reveals a great increase in the number of high-density tenements tight to the factory gates and a rapid increase at the town's eastern end. The pressures of overpopulation and material shortages are revealed also by fire insurance maps of the day. The use of mud-brick for house construction was apparently an acceptable low-cost alternative for the newly arriving immigrants and likely an answer to common shortages in fired brick. Maps further reveal an abundant use of wood frame construction during times of intense growth in population, and a concentration of these structures in the newly settled areas. These structures over time were replaced with buildings constructed of more permanent and durable materials such as brick and stone. Maps referenced: D.G. Beers, *Atlas of Northampton County, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: A. Pomeroy and Company, 1874), *South Bethlehem, PA: including Bethlehem, Fountainhill and Northampton Heights* (New York: Sanborn- Perris Map Company, 1892), Merriman, Mansfield, et al. of Lehigh University Department of Civil Engineering, *Map of Bethlehem South, Bethlehem, and West Bethlehem* (Bethlehem, PA: Edwin G. Klose, 1886), *South Bethlehem, PA: including Bethlehem, Fountainhill and Northampton Heights* (New York: Sanborn-Perris Map Company, 1894).

⁵⁰ Borough of South Bethlehem, *Semi Centennial*, 42.

and the town's population multiplied nearly four-fold from the first official census tally in 1870. A community of just over 3,500 in 1870 now had a population greater than 13,000.⁵¹ By 1900, the swell in population encompassed five municipal wards growing from a total of three in 1880 and was quickly spilling over into the adjacent borough of Northampton Heights to the east.

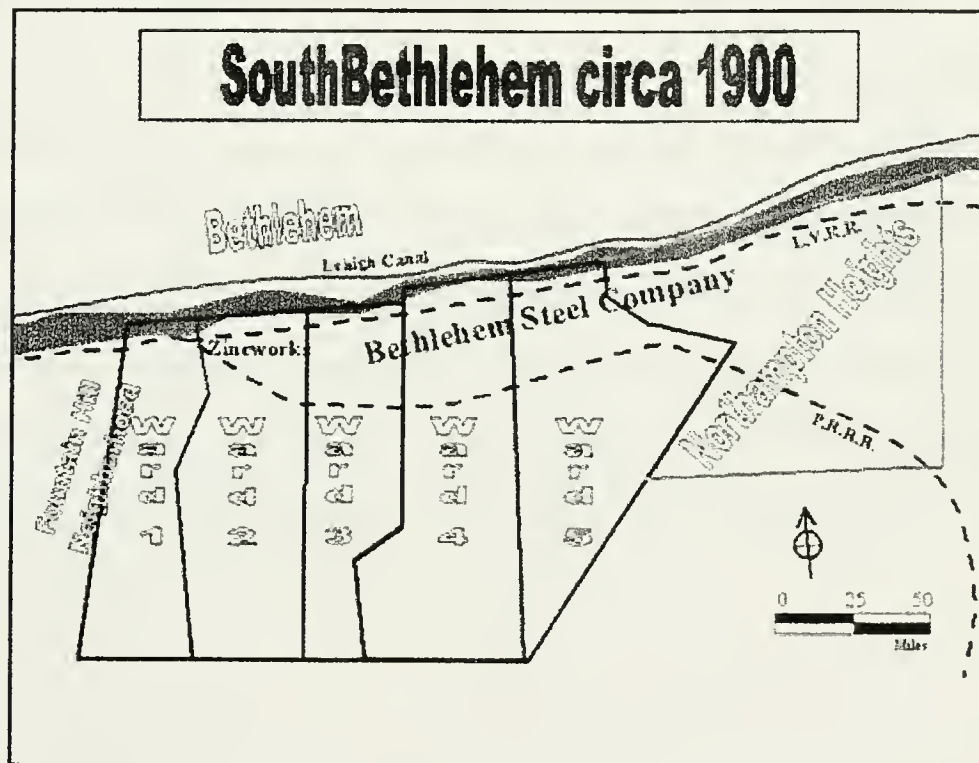
A break down of the ethnic composition of South Bethlehem's five wards and Northampton Heights well illustrates the segregational pattern of urban development in South Bethlehem that continued its development during the era of New Immigration. In fact, the new diversity of peoples represented by New Immigration frames this pattern with striking clarity. According to census research conducted by Gary Jones and put forth in his master's degree thesis of 1989, ethnic stratification in South Bethlehem was clearly apparent by the 1880's.⁵² Ward 1, basically the Fountain Hill neighborhood, was almost entirely composed of residents of American-born or British extraction. The population of Ward 2, again to the east, contained 80 percent of South Bethlehem's German Population and 50 percent of its Irish residents. The other half of the town's Irish resided in Ward 3.⁵³ A similar sampling of census data for 1910 shows a more diverse blend of ethnicity in Ward 1 than the data of 1880 but still a predominantly American born or British constituency. The presence of German and Irish in Ward 1 in 1910 is certainly the result of the social mobility achieved over the 30 year period as well

⁵¹ U.S. Department of Commerce-Bureau of Census, *Tenth Census of the United States: Population, General Report and Analysis* (Washington: GPO, 1881), 454-455; U.S. Department of Commerce-Bureau of Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States: Population, General Report and Analysis* (Washington: GPO, 1902), 640.

⁵² I have chosen to use the title of Gary Jones's work, "Immigrant South Bethlehem" (M.A. Thesis, Lehigh University, 1989) as the heading of this chapter to reflect its importance to the development of this thesis.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 38.

as an increased presence of these groups in the white-collar skilled labor world. Ward 2 in 1910 displayed an ethnic mix similar to that of Ward 1. The labor roles the Irish and Germans left behind were now performed by the newly arriving immigrants from southern, central and eastern Europe who were taking up residence in Wards 3, 4, and 5. In 1910 over a third of the population of Ward 3 was of Slavic origin. This group maintained a clear numerical advantage over American born residents. In addition, a sizable contingent of Irish remained here and Ward 3 was home to 50 percent of the town's Italian population. Wards 4 and 5 were decidedly of an eastern European character. Northampton Heights retained a predominantly American born character until



Map 1. Ward Divisions, circa 1900. Map By W. C. Carson.

the decades following 1910 at which time the area was diversified by an increase of eastern Europeans such as Russians and Ukrainians. The compelling picture of the

overall diversification of South Bethlehem's population and the segregation of newly arriving groups in the eastern wards of South Bethlehem is further supported by a look at the rapid population growth of these municipal divisions between census years. The overall populations of Wards 1 and 2 remained rather stable throughout the period of New Immigration while those to the east exploded.⁵⁴

It is clear from this overview of the immigrant presence in the Bethlehem area that South Bethlehem became a social laboratory that was exceptional. A quick tabulation of South Bethlehem's population statistics for 1910 reveals the presence of at least 52 nationalities within the geographically confined borough.⁵⁵ Not only did South Bethlehem become the focus of in-migration around mid century, it developed a very distinct pattern of settlement based upon an ethnic, social and occupational hierarchy. This pattern continued to play itself out until the close of the period of New Immigration around 1920. Newcomers assumed lower tier jobs (mostly servile, unskilled labor positions), took up residence to the east of previous arrivals, and consequently developed ethnically distinct, although not ethnically exclusive, neighborhoods. Specifically, Wards 3, 4, 5 and the adjacent borough of Northampton Heights took in a disproportionate share of those arriving in South Bethlehem during the period of New Immigration.

⁵⁴ Jones. 47-49.

⁵⁵ U.S. Department of Commerce-Bureau of Census. *Thirteenth Census of the United States: Population, General Report and Analysis* (Washington: GPO, 1913), 593.

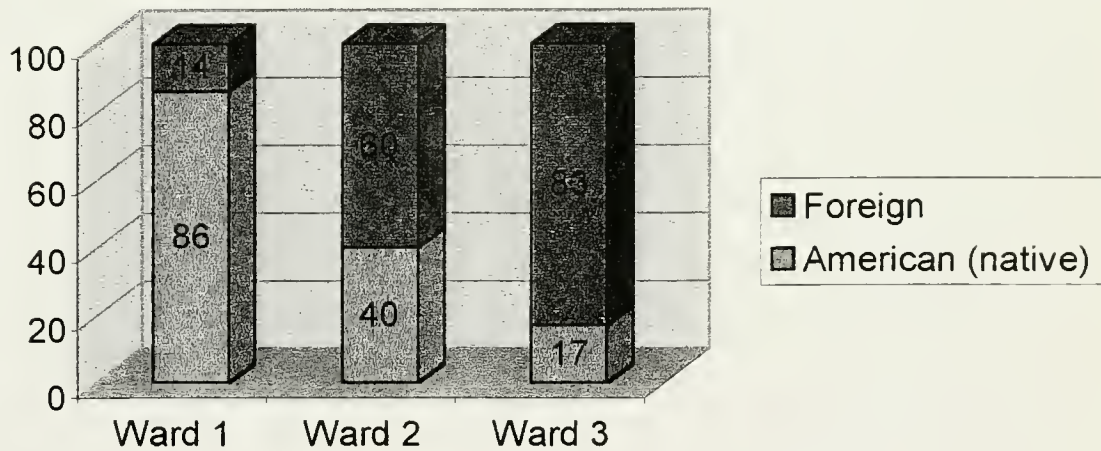
Overall Ethnic Composition 1880



Data: Jones, 37

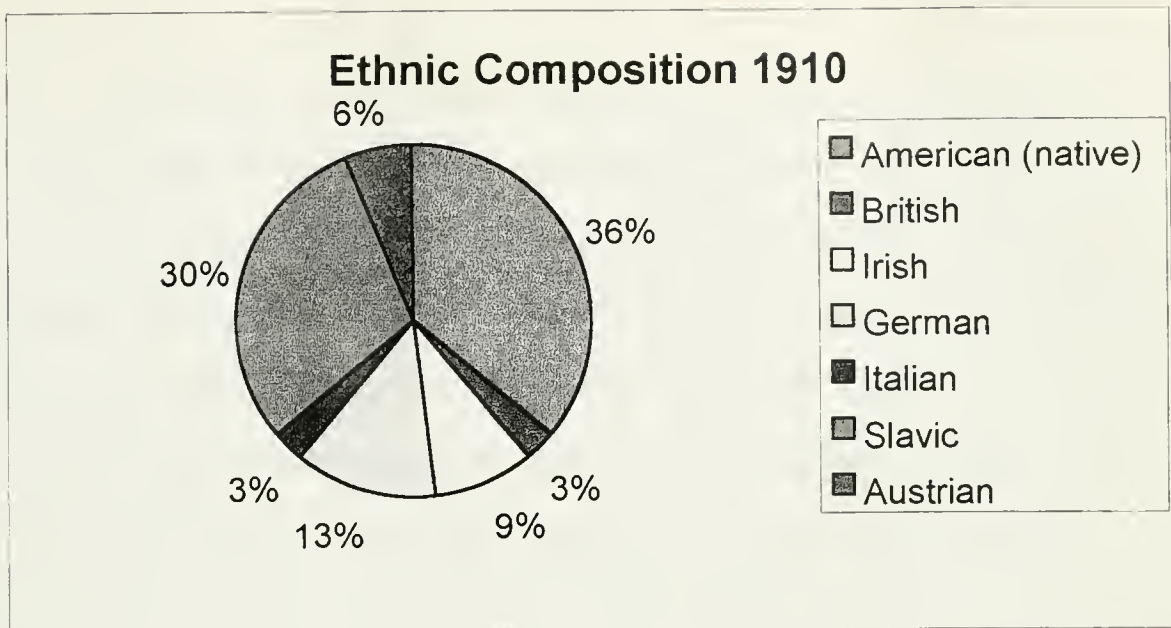
Chart 1. Overall Ethnic Composition of South Bethlehem, Pennsylvania—1880.

Ethnic Composition by Area of Residence



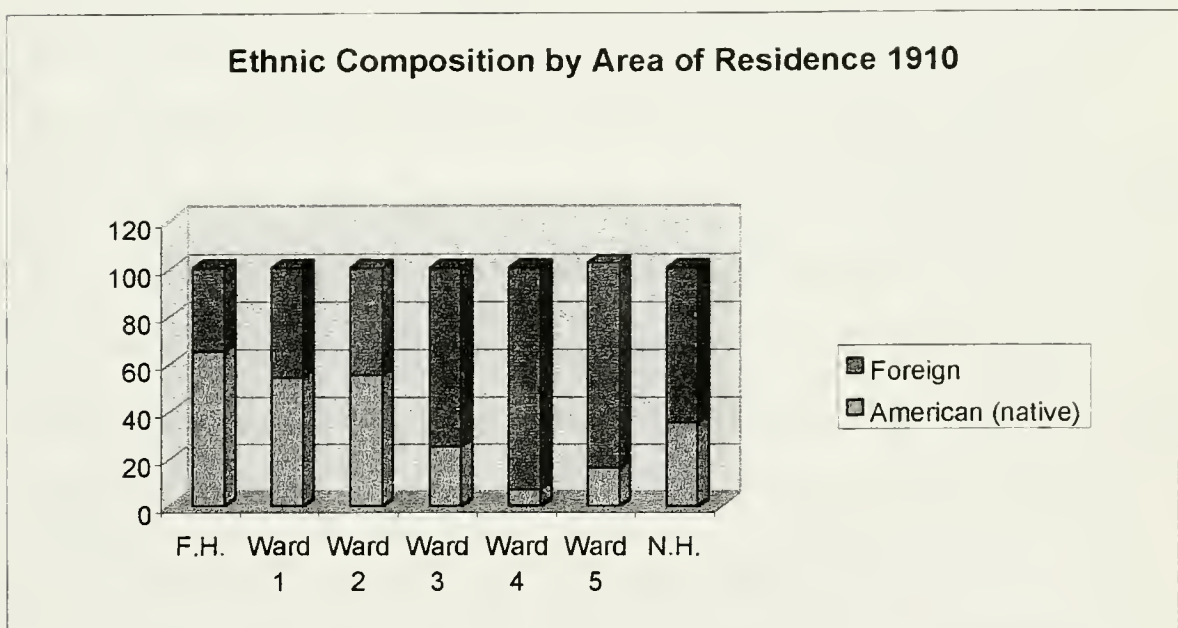
Data: Jones, 37.

Chart 2. Ethnic Composition by Area of Residence in South Bethlehem, Pennsylvania—1880.



Data: Jones, 44.

Chart 3. Overall Ethnic Composition of South Bethlehem, Pennsylvania—1910.



Data: Jones, 44.

Chart 4. Ethnic Composition by Area of Residence in South Bethlehem, Pennsylvania—1910.

This thesis will now fasten its attention upon the implications and changes the diverse medley of New Immigration wrought upon the religious landscape of South Bethlehem. The period of 1880-1920 specifically has been chosen for focus because it is within this framework that America truly defined itself as a nation of many. With each of the many came traditions, values, customs and folkways that typically found monumental form in the churches and sacred sites they built. Surely they are art, the genius of the creative human spirit, and many are fine examples of the sumptuous vocabulary of ecclesiastical design. However, these monuments were not intended merely to serve as a static objectification of tradition and belief; they were constructed to serve as dynamic dwellings. The use of the term dwelling here has a full meaning. The churches organized and erected by late 19th and early 20th Century immigrant groups, provided not only a suitable dwelling for their God, but a home for the spiritual needs of each group's members as well as shelter for the social framework that assisted in their worldly comfort and progress. These churches were typically organized under less than ideal circumstances and, at best, struggled to address the needs of their foreign people. However, they were often the sole providers of the necessities for survival in the less than supportive, sometimes hostile environment that characterized America's industrial era prior to the social reform and welfare movement. The years between 1880 and 1920 served as the crucible in which nativist America strove to understand the emerging and uniquely American multicultural concept of nationhood. The diverse social milieu we understand, accept and often celebrate today was rife with division during this time-period. The social milieu presented by the era of New Immigration and the compounding

effect of World War disaffection resulted in the isolationist backlash of the 1920's; the emergence of the pluralistic society most Americans value so deeply today did not develop without its setbacks. The many steeples, spires and bell-towers that rose above South Bethlehem, often the proudest accomplishment of the foreign population, stand today in symbolic remembrance of this critical period in American social history. They can tell us much about the struggles of New Immigrants to become American, the persistence of their spirit in maintaining the traditions to which they so closely tied their identities, and their fortitude in the practice of their most deeply held beliefs. As the towering stacks of industry come down in South Bethlehem, and with them the spoils of steelmaking, the spires remain fast and proud, unencumbered by smoke and steam and framed only by the deep blue and green of South Mountain. The churches of South Bethlehem remain; to tell the community of a remarkable, accomplished past and to guide the community in the present as it attempts to shape a future without Bethlehem Steel.

Chapter 3: Overview of the Religious Landscape, 1880-1920

Introduction

The following overview of South Bethlehem's religious landscape has several objectives. First, it is intended to evidence the transformational impact that the combined force of industry and immigration had upon the religious landscape's growth. To accomplish this, the overview will chronicle the comprehensive development of the religious landscape geographically, introduce general themes and more specific trends that emerged during this development, and touch upon certain landmark events that yielded lasting effects, or were important "firsts." Time divisions of roughly ten years in duration have been employed in this overview having proven convenient units of measure to which many of these themes and trends can be attached.

While achieving these primary goals, the overview further seeks to reveal the rich diversity of architectural, ethnic, cultural and religious heritage that survives in South Bethlehem, and that offers a means of connecting the present community with its past. Also, the following material aims to reinforce the observations made by Gary Jones in his study of South Bethlehem and build upon them to achieve a more inclusive, particular and personal report. Although Jones has provided a wonderful foundation and many valuable observations, the number crunching and sterile computation of census data, by nature, can only tell us so much. Using South Bethlehem's churches, we can fill in many of the voids that result from categorizing ethnic populations too broadly when performing such an empirical study. Such generalizations may leave out significant facets and nuances of the cultural mosaic described in the closing of chapter two. Examples here include the ambiguities innate in the meaning of such terms as German, Slav, or

Hungarian, which, due to European imperial claims, were most profound during the 19th and early 20th centuries. By filling in these blanks, a more meaningful story of South Bethlehem is revealed than is evidenced by raw data alone. An accurate report of South Bethlehem is very much a personal, human story. It is a story of industry and immigration but also a story of risk, survival, the struggle for identity, and ultimately one of success and achievement. The final purpose of the following overview is to offer an appropriate transition in further refining the focus of this thesis for an up close look at three important religious institutions that clearly evidence this human story.

Seeds are Sown: background to the 1880's

Thematically the religious landscape of South Bethlehem before 1880 is perhaps best characterized as one analogous to the sowing of seeds in freshly tilled but never before cultivated terrain. The seeds and fertile soil together held a wealth of possibilities and promise. What has transpired since and is evidenced by the community's religious institutions has at its source this critical period of germination. It was in the time-period before 1880 that the roots, which would establish themselves firmly in the 1880's first, came to life.

In keeping with the rich history of the region, the first organized church community in South Bethlehem was Moravian. The First Moravian Church of South Bethlehem was established in 1862, yet according to a number of local accounts, and supported by coverage in the local press of the day, the first completed bricks and mortar

representation of a community of believers was Saint Peter's Lutheran Church.⁵⁶ The German Lutheran people of South Bethlehem held services in the yet to be incorporated borough's first church in March of 1864.⁵⁷ The Moravians soon after had their own place of worship. While the German Lutherans celebrated the completion of their little brick edifice, three other churches were in the process of erection. It may be recalled that iron operations had commenced only in 1863, and the headquarters of the railroad would not officially relocate to South Bethlehem until 1865.

By the spring of 1865, four churches were under roof and dedicated for worship in the fledgling borough. This group of four included the Moravian and Lutheran buildings, Holy Infancy Roman Catholic at Fourth and Taylor Street, and Episcopal Church of the Nativity at Third and Wyandotte Street.⁵⁸ In the history of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, the presence of Holy Infancy in South Bethlehem by the 1860's represents a relatively early migration of Irish inland from Philadelphia. Construction of

⁵⁶ Congregational histories of both Saint Peter's Lutheran Church and First Moravian Church (see bibliography) are consistent here, as are locally published histories such as Yates, *Bethlehem of Pennsylvania*. Accounts of the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 14 March 1864 and *The Moravian*, 28 July 1864, verify the dates offered in these works. The First Moravian Church of South Bethlehem actually worshipped in a partially completed church between July of 1864 and March 1868. This building was bought from the congregation by the newly founded Lehigh University for classroom space in 1866 but the congregation continued to worship there until a new church was completed a short distance away in 1868. The 1868 church was brick of Wren-Gibbs Georgian styling. It featured a tall broached spire above the entrance. Although the church no longer stands numerous pictures of it exist including Borough of South Bethlehem, *Semi-Centennial*, n.p.; First Moravian Church, "Through 100 Years with The First Moravian Church, 1862-1962" (Souvenir Booklet), 8; Clipping Files of the Bethlehem Area Public Library.

⁵⁷ *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 14 March 1864.

⁵⁸ The construction of Holy Infancy began in October 1863 and the church was consecrated in November of 1864 according to *The Moravian*, 8 October 1863, and the Archdiocese of Philadelphia Scrapbook Collection, SB #2, 1of 5, 442. Ground was broken for Church of the Nativity on August 6, 1863 and the church was consecrated on April 19, 1865 according to Church of the Nativity, *Parish Annals*, 1862-1902 (Bethlehem: Church of the Nativity), 12-16.

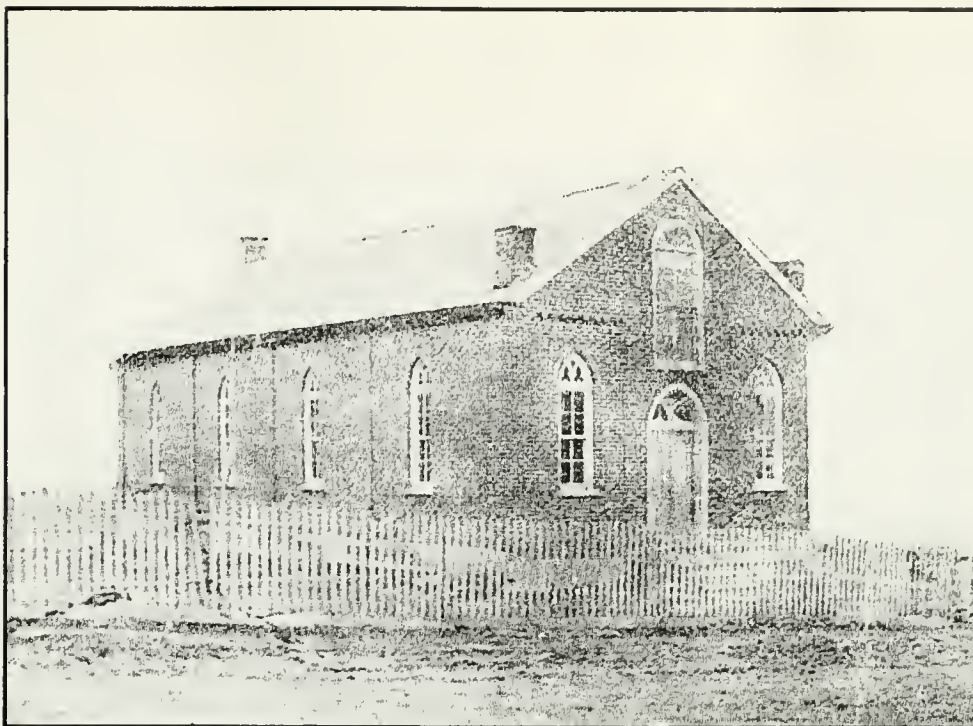


Figure 10. Saint Peter's Lutheran Church (circa 1864), South Bethlehem's first church building.
Source: "Saint Peter's First One Hundred Years," 13.

the canal and railroad brought Irish Catholics to the region as well as another English-speaking religious group of believers, the Episcopalians. However, in contrast to the labor role of Irish Catholics, the nucleus of the Episcopal Church were the entrepreneurs and businessmen whose vision and financial resources made the canal and railroads a reality in South Bethlehem. The church that these people constructed, although small, was highly indicative of their social stature. Not only was the Episcopal Church's Gothic Revival form representative of a historically critical period in American ecclesiastical design, its architect Edward Tuckerman Potter, connects the elite of South Bethlehem to

some of the most influential social circles of America at the time and the financial arena of New York City.⁵⁹



Figure 10. Episcopal Church of the Nativity (circa 1865) designed by architect E. T. Potter. Source: Church of the Nativity, *Parish Annals*, 16.

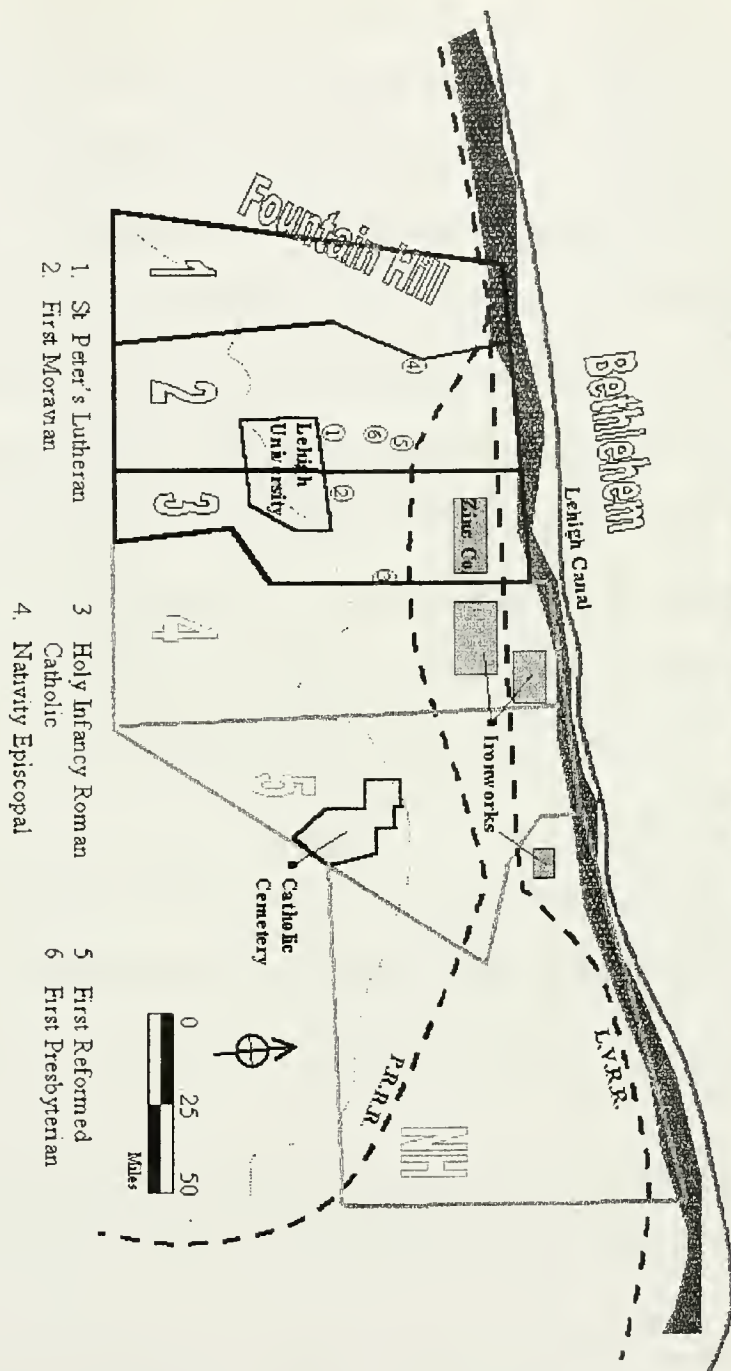
The four churches in place by 1865, two English-speaking and German-speaking illustrate, in addition to the rapid growth of South Bethlehem, the beginnings of the social stratification discussed in the preceding chapter. All were located within the broadest expanse of the flood plain at the western girth of the area the town grew to include and their spatial organization displayed a divisive quality. The upper-class American born and English Episcopalians were to the west in Ward 1, the working-class

⁵⁹ Edward Tuckerman Potter was the brother of the church's first rector E. N. Potter and son of Philadelphia Bishop Alonzo Potter. But more telling is his having been an understudy to famed architect Richard Upjohn. In addition to serving a clientele of the powerful and wealthy, Upjohn is commonly considered the father of the Gothic Revival Movement in America and is responsible for a number of very important buildings including New York's Trinity Cathedral. In 1875, Upjohn himself was commissioned by Church of the Nativity to design Saint Mary's Mission Chapel thus bringing Upjohn directly into the fold of South Bethlehem's elite. Church of the Nativity, *Parish Annals*, 61-64. Also: Sandra L. Tatman and Roger Moss, *Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects: 1700-1930* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1985), 618.

South
Bethlehem, PA

Before 1880

The Religious
Landscape



Map 2. The Religious Landscape Before 1880. Map by W. C. Carson

and German Lutherans and Moravians in the middle in Ward 2, and the Irish laboring-class Catholics to the east in Ward 3. Three city blocks separated each church, on average, at a time when the overall population had not yet reached 3,500 and urban density was not yet a reality. There were substantial tracts of undeveloped real estate between each institution, as indicated by a number of birds-eye-view lithographs done of the community about this time. The laboring-class Irish Catholics positioned their church closest to the zinc and iron mills.⁶⁰ Though the most dramatic changes were yet to occur, the organization of religious landscape by 1880 displayed the emergence of several characteristics that in time became hallmarks of the town's growth: the interdependence of industrial growth and labor; an occupational, socio-economic, and ethnic stratification of the labor force; and the tendency for the lowest tier of the labor force to take up residence at the eastern perimeter of the town's development.

Taking Root: the decade of the 1880's

By 1880, the young borough housed six religious institutions within its borders with the addition of German Reformed and Presbyterian congregations.⁶¹ Instead of a

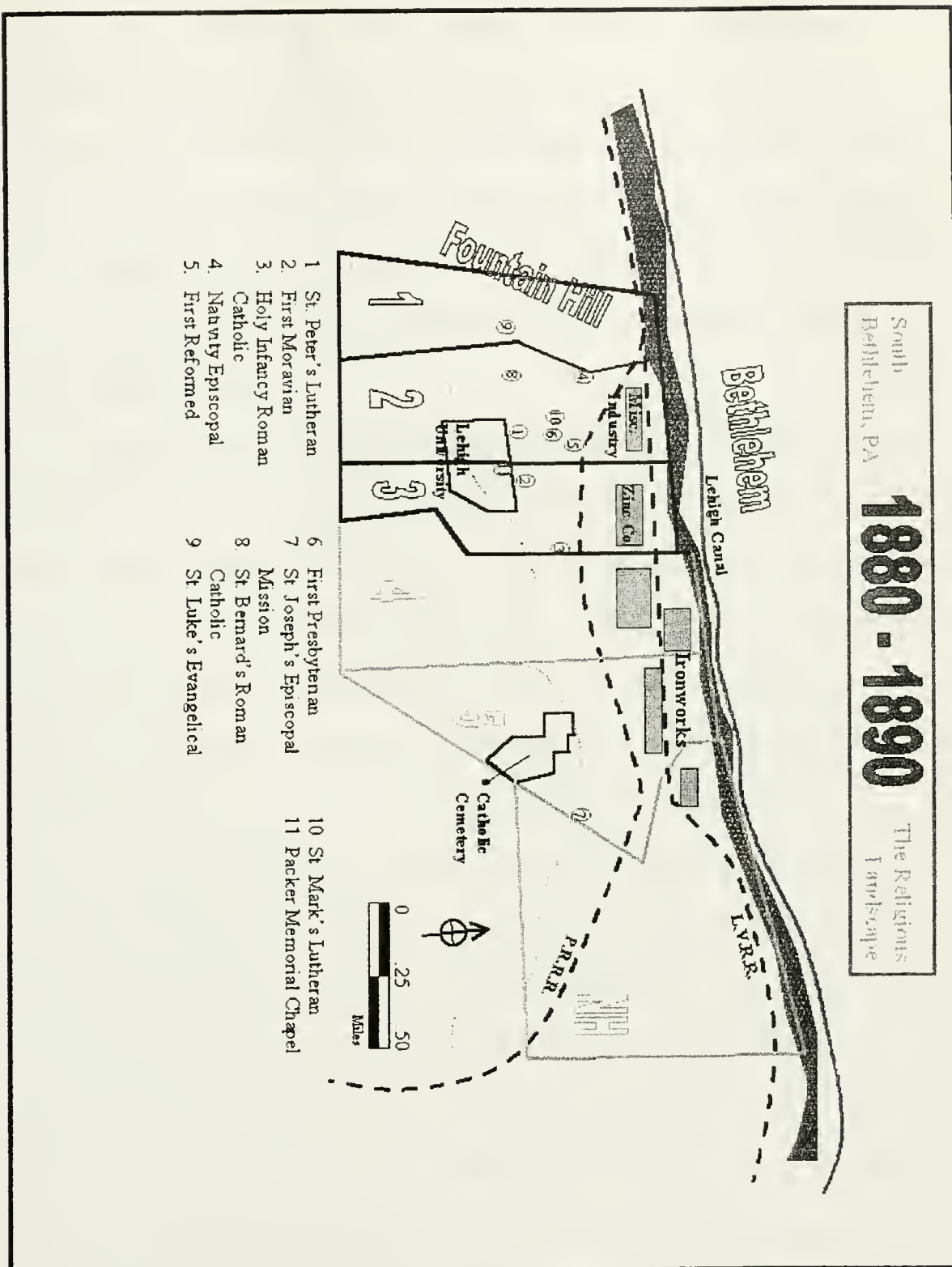
⁶⁰ The shortest separation distance was naturally between the Lutheran and Moravian congregations in the middle ground—Ward 2. According to local press accounts of the day, South Bethlehem was still a place of rural beauty by 1865, *The Moravian*, 6 November 1864. Holy Infancy was at the very perimeter of the town's development as indicated by real estate sales and advertisements in the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 1 April 1869.

⁶¹ First Reformed Church of South Bethlehem was dedicated for worship in the fall of 1871 and Presbyterian Church of South Bethlehem opened its doors the following spring. It is interesting to note both churches took their place in South Bethlehem within the confines of what can be described as the middle ground within a block of one another in Ward 2, and are very much in keeping with the ethnic mix of Old Immigration. The Reformed congregation was ethnically German and held services in the mother tongue. The Presbyterian Church of South Bethlehem was an outgrowth of the German speaking First Moravian Church. The contingent that formed the First Presbyterian Church was English speaking suggesting language as the logical issue of dispute. The formation of the Presbyterian Church was covered by the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 25 February 1869 and 1, 6, 7 and 12 April 1869. Also: see First Moravian Church, "Through 100 Years with the First Moravian Church, 1862-1962" (Souvenir Booklet.), 8.

sheer proliferation of congregations, however, the principal theme of the decade of the 1880's was the firm establishment of those already in place. As newcomers from the south and east of Europe began to arrive in South Bethlehem, the religious institutions of Old Immigration took on a stature of permanence and maturity. New Immigration was a shaping force during the 1880's, yet the event did not have a marked effect on the religious landscape until late in the decade, when the first large defense contracts sparked the rapid industrial expansion that beckoned many seeking work to South Bethlehem's mills. The impact of New Immigration was modest in these years but the dramatic changes to come have their origin in the 1880's.

A variety of trends and specific events during these years evidence the "taking root" quality that defines the 1880's. First, was the construction of more-substantial, and in some cases monumental second-generation houses of worship by the town's earliest religious bodies. Early in the decade, new, more commodious structures began to replace the no frills first generation structures that were very often little more than a one room frame or brick meeting hall. As membership grew and financial resources became less limited, more elaborate buildings, complete with tall spires and bell towers, were used by many of the earliest congregations in shoring up their presence in South Bethlehem and declaring themselves firmly settled. Stone churches replaced brick and frame versions, and architects routinely became engaged in the process. Second, most churches undertook sizable additions and alterations to their buildings to accommodate growing

Presbyterian Church of South Bethlehem was designed by Benjamin Price of Philadelphia and the first service in the new church was held May 5, 1872 as per the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 14 March 1872 and 6 May 1872. First Reformed Church was dedicated October 21-22, 1871 according to the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 23 October 1871.



Map 3. The Religious Landscape, 1880-1890. Map by W. C. Carson.

memberships. If new churches were not feasible or desirable, then additions were undertaken, facades were remodeled, and ornate stained glass installed. Third, several congregations initiated mission churches thereby broadening their influence. Not only were these groups confident of survival, but they began to look beyond their immediate circle to address the needs of others. Of course, religious conversion and the spread of a particular religious persuasion was the *modus operandi* for addressing these needs whether spiritual or worldly.

The young borough's Lutheran, Episcopal and Catholic communities undertook the construction of second-generation churches in the 1880's. The second home of Saint Peter's Lutheran was completed in the spring of 1879 and is the earliest example of this general trend of the 1880's. The Lutherans replaced a 35'x 60' brick church in May of 1879 with the dedication of a still modest but far more substantial building. The new church was constructed of a brown Hummelstown brick, and its façade was highlighted by a gabled bell-tower with a small ornamental rose window at its center.⁶²

The Episcopal congregation chose to express their permanence in South Bethlehem not with a new church but, instead, with a substantial addition to their existing Gothic Revival structure. The addition, which in fact became the dominant form of the church, was designed by a prominent Philadelphia architect of the day, Charles Marquedant Burns, whose professional production was closely associated with the elite of the region. Burns incorporated Potter's original church as the transept for the remade

⁶² A picture and description of the first church were found in Yates: The Golden Years, 348. The dedication of the second church was announced in an article in the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 1 May 1879. A photograph of the second church was found in Saint Peter's Lutheran Church, "75th Anniversary, 1863-1938" (Souvenir Booklet), 11. A comparison of this archival photograph and the current church revealed that all subsequent changes were additions and renovations to the second church. The description of

Church of the Nativity. He maintained the simple English Gothic tone of the original stone building while composing a new commanding appearance for Nativity with the addition of a large nave, clerestory and apse.⁶³

In addition to the Lutheran and Episcopal buildings, a mighty new second-generation church took shape to the east in Ward 3. The Irish Catholic community transformed the skyline of South Bethlehem with the completion of a soaring Gothic Revival church in the spring of 1886 and, in doing so, made the most important statement of the decade. The power of this statement did not escape the town's journalists. The press described the structure as "an ornament... to all the Bethlehems" and "...one of the finest and most substantially built church edifices in this part of the country." Holy Infancy is the landmark of an institution of crucial importance in the development of South Bethlehem's religious landscape and is the subject of Chapter Four's first case study.⁶⁴

Hummelstown brown brick used by the author is a result of this comparison. The installation of the ornamental window was mentioned in the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 16 January 1877.

⁶³ Alterations and additions were made to the Church of the Nativity between May 1884 and November 1888 according to the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 10 May 1885 and 1 November 1888. The congregation used space in the nearby Excelsior Knitting Mill for worship during the construction process, *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 3 June 1885. C. M. Burns of Philadelphia was first announced as the architect of the new church in the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 1 December 1883. Burns is responsible for a number of remarkable churches in the Philadelphia area including Church of the Saviour (c.1889) at 38th and Ludlow Streets and Church of the Advocate (c.1891) at Diamond and 18th Streets. Burns is discussed in articles by James D. Van Trump, "Medieval Memories in a Victorian Suburb: Two Romanesque Revival Churches in West Philadelphia" in *The Charette*, vol. 46, no. 1 (January, 1966), 9-13 and "The Gothic Fane: The Medieval Vision and Some Philadelphia Churches" in *The Charette*, vol. 43, no.12 (December, 1963), 15-21. The sandstone used in construction of Nativity was of local origin. The trimmings however were specified as Indiana Oolitic Limestone, as per the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 27 June 1885 and 22 September 1885. The contractor was J. S. Allam of South Bethlehem, *Bethlehem Daily Times* 17 April 1884, 22 September 1885 and 19 February 1887. The total cost of the church topped out at \$46,000.00 a huge sum of money in the 1880's according to John R. Chamberlain, *One Hundred Years of Nativity* (Bethlehem, PA: Church of the Nativity, 1963), 46.

⁶⁴ *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 17 July 1884; 31 July 1884. Holy Infancy was constructed between May of 1882 and May of 1886.

Mission activities of South Bethlehem congregations during the decade of the 1880's included two under the stewardship of the Episcopal Church of the Nativity and one of Saint Peter's Lutheran. The Episcopal missions were Saint Mary's Chapel and Saint Joseph's Chapel and the Lutheran Mission was known as Saint Paul's Chapel.⁶⁵ Of the three, Saint Joseph's Chapel is the only survivor of any of these mission operations that survives. When Saint Joseph's was constructed, its location was far removed from the core of South Bethlehem and well east of the borough's limits. Services were first held in Saint Joseph's Chapel in the Winter of 1884, though Sunday school meetings were held as early as November 1882 in a vacant house owned by Joseph Wharton of the Lehigh Zinc works. An account of the new church's cornerstone dedication summarized the intent of the Episcopal community in initiating mission activities and indirectly made reference to the eastward destination of the town's future growth. For the families employed by the iron company's "No. 3" furnace, Saint Joseph's was described as "an effort to improve the condition [both] moral and social...of these people of hard toil," and as only "...the second church building beyond Elm Street". The other church to break the Elm Street divide was Irish Catholic Holy Infancy.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Saint Mary's Episcopal Mission and Saint Paul's Lutheran Mission were both located to the west of South Bethlehem outside the town's limits. Saint Mary's was organized in August of 1873 according to the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 8 October 1873. A chapel designed by Richard Upjohn was constructed in 1875 for Saint Mary's. See Church of the Nativity, *Parish Annals*, 61-64 and *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 13 April 1875. Saint Paul's was organized in January of 1886 according to *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 5 January 1886. A brick, Gothic style chapel was dedicated in June of 1891 according to *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 29 June 1891.

⁶⁶First services were conducted on January 20, 1884, and the new chapel was consecrated on October 18, 1884, as per the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 21 January 1884 and 18 October 1884. A newspaper account in the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 22 November 1882, establishes the date and location of organization. Other accounts cited include the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 18 November 1883. The builder was J. S. Allam of South Bethlehem according to the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 29 January 1884.

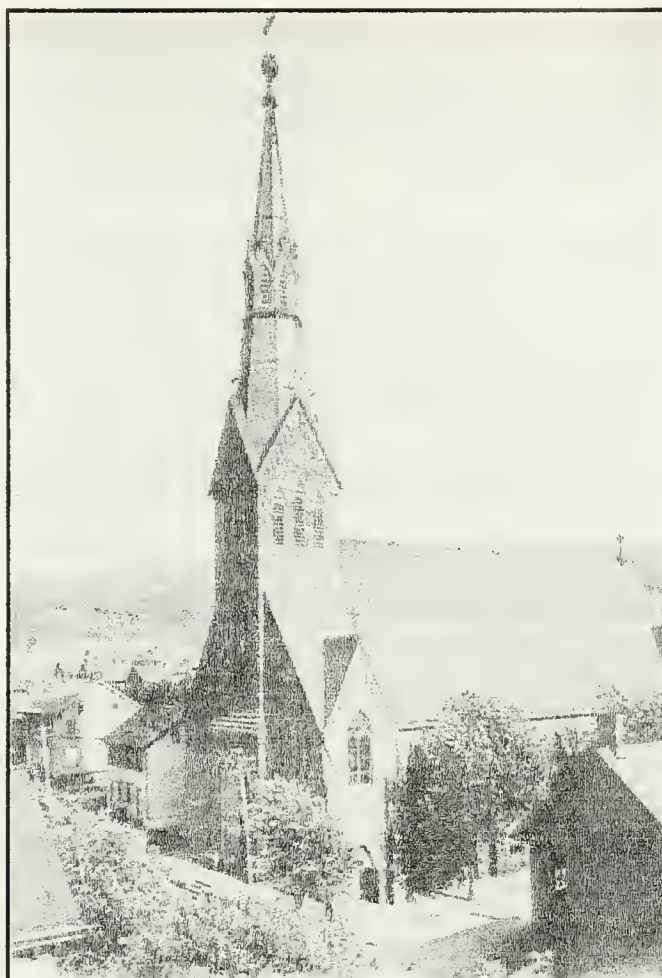


Figure 11. The second Holy Infancy Roman Catholic Church (circa 1883) in Ward 3; the religious citadel and community center of the Irish population in South Bethlehem during the 19th Century. E.F. Durang, architect. Source: Yates, *Bethlehem of Pennsylvania*, 139.

While “old” church communities expressed their maturity through grand architecture and missions, a quietly mounting influx of New Immigrants began to take up residence in South Bethlehem during the 1880’s. This influx surged by 1885 and, consequently, a few small congregations were organized that reflected the predominantly German ethnic complexion of immigration during these years.⁶⁷ Saint Bernard’s Roman

⁶⁷ The decade of the 1880’s was the zenith of German Immigration in American History. United States Department of the Treasury-Bureau of Statistics. *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1890* (New York: Johnson Company, 1891), 207; United States Department of Commerce and Labor-Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1910* (Washington: GPO, 1911), 82.

Catholic Church (1888) was established to serve a small but rapidly expanding German Catholic population in South Bethlehem and was the town's first example of a "national parish." The national parish, or ethnic parish, was a unique contrivance of the Catholic Church in America that emerged in response to the overwhelming diversity of languages and Catholic traditions brought to America by New Immigrants. Saint Luke's Evangelical Association Church (1889) reflected the missionary efforts of a German Methodist congregation from Bethlehem to attract converts from a likewise increasing number of German Protestants.⁶⁸ Another reflection of the growing impact of German immigration in the late 1880's was the emergence of Saint Mark's Lutheran Church (1889), formed by a breakaway English-speaking faction of Saint Peter's. The drive by the English-speaking minority to establish a separate congregation grew from their perceived isolation within a Lutheran community that was being steadily reinforced with new German-speaking members.⁶⁹ In contrast to the architectural grandeur expressed by

⁶⁸ The congregation of Saint Luke's represents the first new denomination introduced to the borough's religious melange in the 1880's. The Church of the Evangelical Association is described by historians as German-American Methodism or New Methodism. The small group of German Methodist that founded Saint Luke's in 1885 were first served by clergy of Saint John's Church of the Evangelical Association in north Bethlehem and utilized at least two rented facilities prior to the construction of their church in August of 1887. The location chosen by this group for their modest brick church was more telling than anything suggested by the architecture of the building. A basic understanding of Methodism, which the Evangelical Association was an interpretation of, reveals an immediate link with the Episcopal Church. Interestingly Saint Luke's was positioned in South Bethlehem close to the elite community of the Fountain Hill neighborhood so strongly associated with Nativity, yet on the downhill slope of Episcopal Hill close to heavily German Ward 2. Although possibly mere coincidence the location is curiously suggestive of the denominations theological root, being closely aligned with Episcopal Church ideology and yet firmly attached to a German identity. *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 30 June 1886; 7 August 1887; 10 May 1888. Also: see Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, Vol. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 439-441.

⁶⁹ Rumors of the disaffected English-speaking members of Saint Peter's were circulated in the local press for the first time on June 25, 1888, and the movement took shape formally with a meeting of thirty individuals on September 21. A building committee was soon at work. This group held independent worship services for the first time in a temporary wooden structure of their own in January of 1889, not too far from the German speaking mother church and well within the confines of Ward 2. The temporary clapboard and shingle chapel was a handsome structure with a simple entrance portico and trefoil window in the gable above. This church served the English speaking Lutherans for over five years. The split, which was fervently opposed by Saint Peter's, was covered in the *Bethlehem Daily Times* on 25 June 1888, 20

the town's well-healed and established congregations, all of these new church groups constructed modest, "starter" churches. Furthermore, all took residence in Ward 2, which is in accord with the overriding ethnic quality of the district reflected by census data of 1890.⁷⁰

It is interesting to note that the settlement pattern of German immigrants contradicts the eastward direction of urban growth that became synonymous with the course of New Immigration. Instead of establishing their residences at the eastern edge of town, German newcomers were absorbed by neighborhoods established by their Old Immigrant predecessors. As evidenced by the presence of Roman Catholic Saint Bernard's in predominantly Protestant Ward 2, language, more than religion, was an activating factor for the development of ethnic communities in South Bethlehem. The location of Saint Bernard's is also suggestive of the occupational and socio-economic character of the town's growing German Catholic population as more middle class.

The last church building of the 1880's to be examined does not have a strong connection with the interaction of industry and immigration, the articulation of which, is the primary focus of this overview. However, because of its architectural significance, ignoring Packer Chapel from a study of South Bethlehem's religious landscape would be a glaring omission to anyone who is familiar with the town's appearance.

A look at Packer Memorial Chapel necessitates a quick introduction to an important feature of South Bethlehem's landscape and history so far neglected by this

September 1888, 22 September 1888 and 30 November 1888. The temporary chapel was noted on an unaltered or updated Sanborn Map of 1892. One printed photograph of the church was found in the Clipping Files of the Bethlehem Public Library.

⁷⁰ The dedication ceremonies of March 18, 1888 were announced in the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 14 March 1888. Though the church was constructed on the undeveloped southern edge of Ward 2, apparently the

thesis. Lehigh University was founded by Lehigh Valley Railroad owner Asa Packer very early in the town's history, 1866, and it became the primary philanthropic thrust of his life. Packer's desire in Lehigh was to provide young men with an institution dedicated to the advancement of practical and applied sciences such as engineering and business. The university was established on a plot of ground just outside the borders of Ward 2, to the south, on the increasing slope of South Mountain. Packer endowed the school heavily and vested a personal, guiding interest in its growth. The school expanded rapidly with the construction of new academic facilities on an almost annual basis. Asa Packer's heir and daughter, Mary Packer Cummings, contributed to this expansion in 1884 by commissioning the construction of a church as a memorial to her parents.

Packer Chapel served a multitude of functions but was not strictly associated with a particular sect although its ties to the Episcopal community in South Bethlehem were solid. In many ways the entire institution of Lehigh University, including Packer Memorial Chapel, can be viewed as an extension of the Episcopal community of the Church of the Nativity because the founding and growth of both were personally guided by Episcopalians close to Packer like Robert H. Sayre.⁷¹ Packer Chapel, however,

Catholicism this group held to so tightly was not enough to divorce this group from the broader German population that largely composed Ward 2.

⁷¹ A complete history of Lehigh University is given by Ross Yates, *Lehigh University: A History of Education in Engineering, Business and the Human Condition* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 1992).

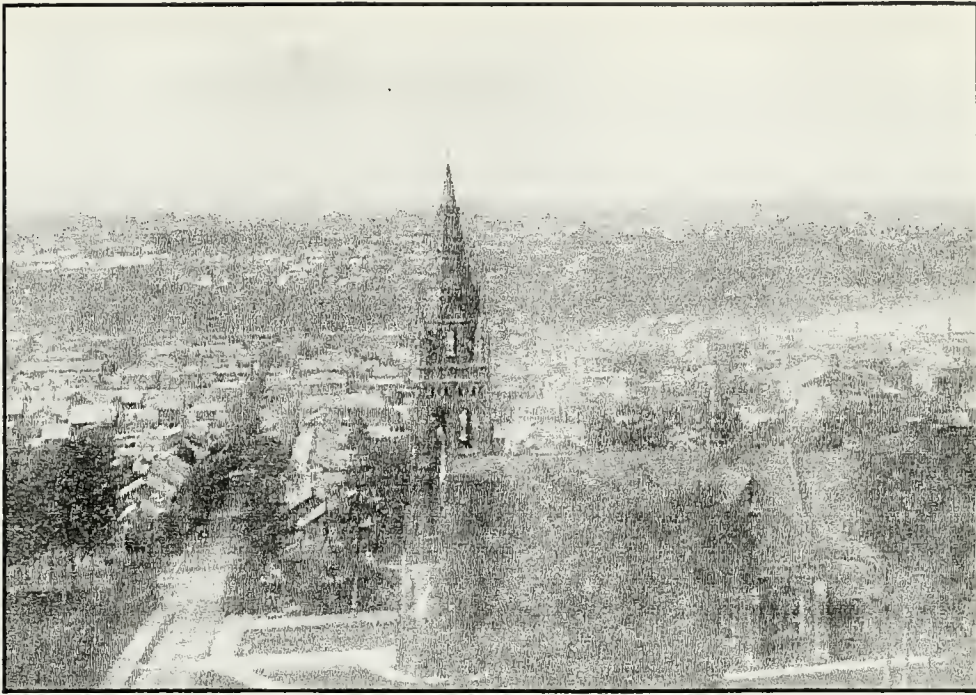


Figure 12. Packer Memorial Chapel (circa 1884), designed by architect Addison Hutton, on the campus of Lehigh University. The photograph, which dates to the early 1890's, was taken facing due east and reveals only limited development in the eastern portion of the borough. Source: Yates, *Lehigh University*, 64.

served no active congregation of believers on a daily, communal basis so its impact on the lives of South Bethlehem's residents was, at best, limited.

The church was designed by Quaker architect Addison Hutton in Victorian Gothic Style and is notable throughout for the sophistication of its design, detailing and construction. The edifice was built using a local quartzite, and it was trimmed with tan sandstone imported from Nova Scotia, described at the time as Olive Dorchesterstone. The window tracery was also executed in this stone and filled with highly ornate stained glass. The exterior was set-off by a Vermont red slate roof and a bell-tower topped with an octagonal stone spire reaching 185 feet. Gargoyles and flying buttresses accentuated Hutton's monumental intent in the tower structure.

Though Packer Chapel largely maintained an isolated presence in South Bethlehem, having no community role in the interaction of industry and immigration, an interesting connection to the emerging social condition was referenced in the first sermon offered from its pulpit. This event accompanied the baccalaureate services of Lehigh's graduating class of 1887. The young men, their families, and a number of important local industrialists in attendance were confronted with a sermon of Social Gospel orated by Central Pennsylvania Bishop Nelson S. Rulison. These leaders of industry were already being attacked with charges of wage slavery, and the welfare of a growing underclass was, by the 1880's, a sensitive issue in South Bethlehem. Of course, in addition to terrible working conditions, living conditions and pitiful wages, children clocked in and out at the town's factories every day. Rulison admonished his audience as if clearly aware of the unsettling potential of the unprecedented changes whirling about him:

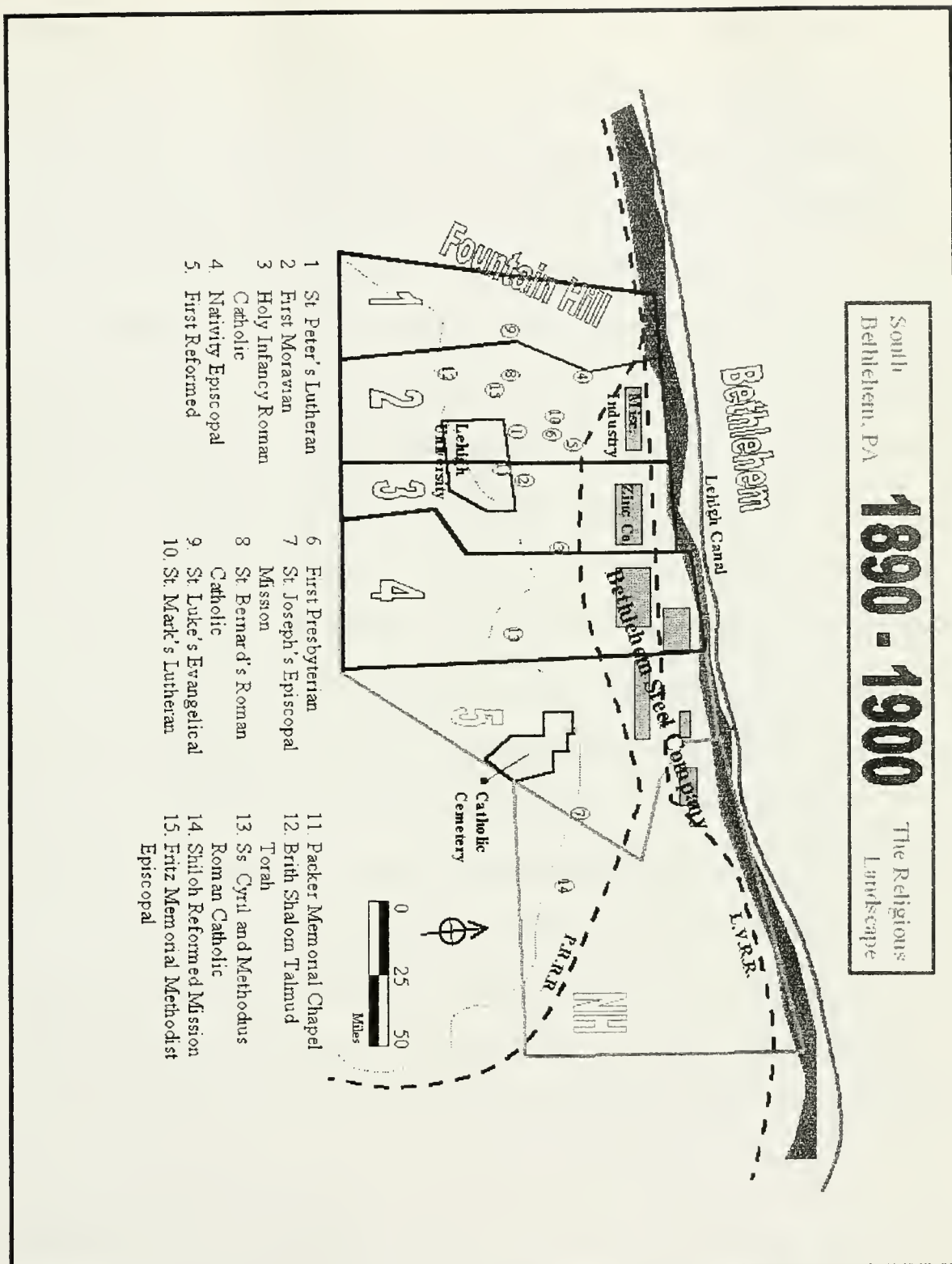
You are going forth into the world of men, many of whom are toiling, straining, suffering, to get a living for themselves and their dear ones. I bid you live as Christ lived among men. Let His love law be the law of your life. Be loveful, be helpful, be sympathetic, give your personal services to men who need your help. Remember that the most precious thing in the world is a human being, and because there is an infinite and priceless capability in him, fallen and sinful as he may be, it is your duty as educated men to draw out the good that is in him and help him to something higher and better than he knows. You are in some sense your brother's keeper, and you are set, each on his own vocation, to save men alive. A mighty responsibility rests on the educated man in this land in relation to the social political and industrial questions that are perplexing and endangering our national life.⁷²

⁷² A description of the church was detailed in the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 13 October 1887. Many details not covered in this account were gathered through a survey of the entire construction process as it was covered by the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 26 May 1885 through 18 November 1887. The full text of Bishop Rulison's sermon was run by the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 20 June 1887. The concept of Social Gospel is very simply put forth by Louis C. Wade in Chapter Four, "Religion and Social Action," of *Graham Taylor, Pioneer for Social Justice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 83-116. Taylor was a leader of the social gospel movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Another good quick summary of this movement is given by Donald C. Swift in Chapter Nine, "Socioeconomic Change and Politics" of *Religion and The American Experience* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), 211-232.

Growth and Diversification: the 1890's

The influence of New Immigration played a more central role in the evolution of the borough's religious environment in the 1890's and stands out as the decade's foremost attribute thematically. The mounting influx of New Immigration both swelled the membership of existing congregations and advanced a diversification of the religious landscape. The impact of settlers from southern and eastern Europe was evidenced: first, by the continued upgrade of existing churches to accommodate new members; next, by the construction of the area's first synagogue; and, most significantly, by the expansion of the Roman Catholic parish beyond the ethnic sphere of Old Immigration.

The forced expansion of congregations as a consequence of the New Immigrant influx resulted in a number of building campaigns by established congregations to increase the seating capacity of their churches. As displayed in the 1880's, the need for larger accommodations often gave religious bodies the license to express their "arrival" with impressive second-generation churches. Several congregations in South Bethlehem



Map 4. The Religious Landscape, 1890-1900. Map by W. C. Carson.

undertook such sizable upgrades during the 1890's including Saint Peter's Lutheran (1895)⁷³, Saint Joseph's Episcopal Chapel (1897)⁷⁴, Saint Bernard's Catholic (1895)⁷⁵, and Saint Mark's Lutheran (1895)⁷⁶. However, none of these express the identifying purpose attached to celebratory architecture more effectively than the second building campaign of the First Reformed Church of South Bethlehem.

The Reformed congregation, in response to the high point of German immigration, built a new house of worship between the spring of 1896 and 1897. Their second building campaign lavishly remodeled a simple brick chapel by the addition of a double towered, stone Romanesque Revival façade. Although altered today, the new twin-towers were truly spectacular upon the church's dedication. Both were adorned with battlements, elaborate archwork, and topped with a whimsical display of spires and finials. The facade was textured with projecting masonry and highlighted by a wheel window and opalescent stained glass. The interior remained traditional, yet with the realization of such an ornate facade this congregation clearly turned away from the humble austerity historically synonymous with Reformed church architecture.⁷⁷

The architectural posturing set forth by the First Reformed congregation was dramatic and exemplifies the importance of church architecture to a group's sense of identity. Scholars have documented the competitive spirit intrinsic to building design and in a town like South Bethlehem, with a special combination of density, diversity and

⁷³ "Saint Peter's First One Hundred Years", 36.

⁷⁴ Chamberlain, 46.

⁷⁵ *Daily Times*, 15 June 1895; Billinger, 6.

⁷⁶ *Daily Times*, 9 December 1895.

⁷⁷ Additions made to the First Reformed Church of South Bethlehem were detailed in the *Daily Times*, 8 June 1896 and 31 May 1897. The First Reformed congregation also established a small mission congregation in the east of the town in yet to be established Northampton Heights. *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 13 June 1891.

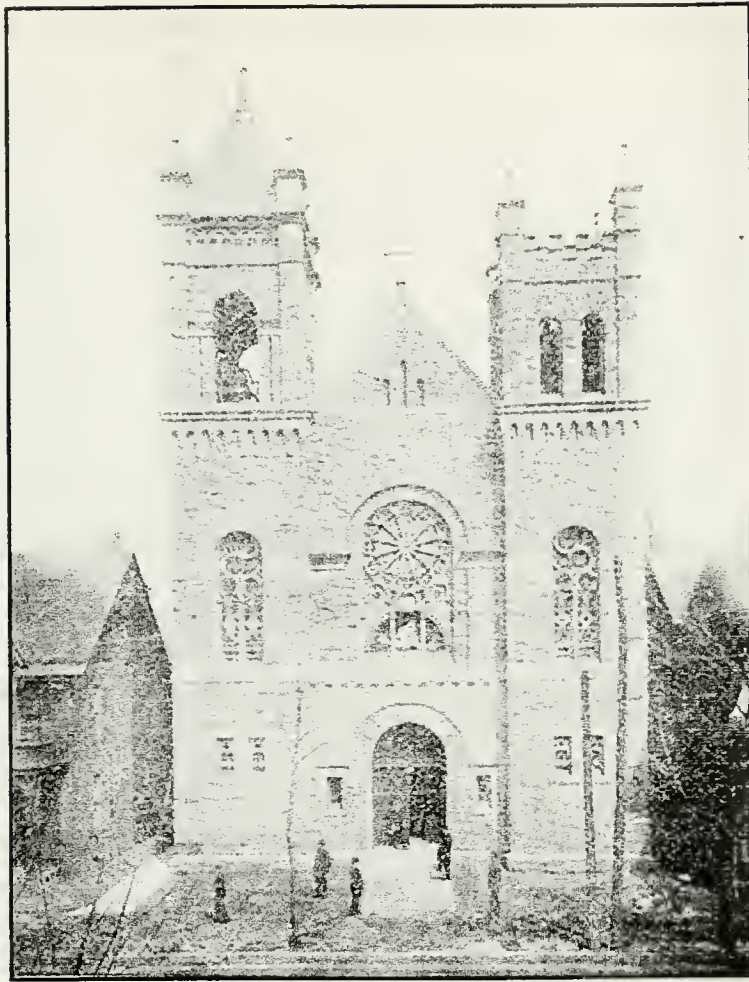


Figure 13. The second building of the First Reformed Church of South Bethlehem (circa 1896). A.W. Leh, architect. Source: Borough of South Bethlehem, *Semi Centennial*, n.p.

religious pluralism, church architecture was a logical means of expressing it. The new church provided for the German Reformed community an impressive architectural presence that insured their visibility within a religious landscape that was transforming rapidly.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ An informative study of the competition motive of church architecture is George E. Thomas, "Architectural Patronage and Social Stratification in Philadelphia between 1840 and 1920" in William Cutler and Howard Gillette, editors, *The Divided Metropolis: Social and Spatial Dimensions of Philadelphia, 1800-1975* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 85-124.

Perhaps more expressive of the interaction of Industry and Immigration in the 1890's than impressive church alterations, and definitely more revealing of an increasing cultural diversity in these years, was the emergence of the community's first non Christian faith –Judaism. The changing character of South Bethlehem's population because of New Immigration was accentuated by the construction of the area's first synagogue in 1897. In July of that year the cornerstone of Brith Shalom Talmud Torah, was set in place on the southern perimeter of Ward 2. The small Jewish community in South Bethlehem was predominantly German, and, as with the German Catholic contingent, the synagogue's location was at the very limits of the Ward 2. Again, ethnicity, language, and proximity to work appear to have been the overriding factors in the location of settlement for German immigrants, not religion. The synagogue featured a central entrance along Carlton Street flanked by towers on either side that were crowned with octagonal domes, a form reminiscent of Renaissance architecture. It is plausible that the Jewish congregation chose this enlightened style as means of distinguishing itself from the pervasive Christian culture of South Bethlehem that was, by that time, so tightly associated with the Gothic Revival architecture.⁷⁹

The movement to organize a "Hebrew congregation" was noted in the local newspaper in September 1888. As detailed by the account, a group of fifty persons had recently held their first formal celebration marking the Feast of Yom Kippur, in the home of clothing retailer Isaac Price.⁸⁰ The congregation grew rapidly. By the time a large

⁷⁹ The cornerstone ceremonies were detailed in the *Daily Times*, 17 and 19 July 1897. Other early coverage of this group includes the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 15 September 1888, 24 November 1888, and 30 July 1889. A notice of incorporation was run in the *Daily Times*, 6 May 1894.

⁸⁰ The organization of a "Hebrew congregation" was detailed in the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 14 September 1888. Isaac Price's place of business and residence was located on Third Street according to the 1888 city directory.

enough Jewish population had assembled in South Bethlehem to justify the construction of a synagogue, New Immigrants from countries such as Russia, Poland and Hungary had taken their place alongside the original group of German Jews. Coverage of the dedication services clearly mentions the presence of Russian speaking members. Further evidencing the influx of eastern European immigrants during these years was the inclusion of Harris Sofransky (Polish) and Abraham Refowich (Russian) in the governing circle of the new synagogue.⁸¹

Though a cooperative spirit prevailed among the ethnic factions of the Jewish population in these years, eventually the two parties, the Germans and Eastern Europeans, would reach a critical impasse. The Judaism practiced by Russian, Polish and other Jews from Eastern Europe was far different from that established in South Bethlehem by the German community. A formal split did not occur until the 1920's but tensions were apparent early on.⁸² The impasse reached within the Jewish population exemplifies a common cultural strain affected by New Immigrants upon the religious environment. The connection between religious tradition and ethnicity was acute in the minds of most that settled in South Bethlehem and as a consequence, the need for a house of worship that accommodated both was undeniable.

This desire of immigrant Americans to maintain the customary fusion of religious tradition and native culture, brought forward by the Jewish population, was at the heart of the emergence of the Catholic parish from the ethnic sphere of Old Immigration. After worshipping for several years at either Irish Holy Infancy or German Saint Bernard's,

⁸¹ Charter members were listed in Brith Shalom Community Center, "Thirtieth Anniversary Yearbook" (Souvenir Booklet, 1955), n.p. The charter members were mostly businesspersons and lived in the border

South Bethlehem's growing Slovak population reclaimed the ethno-religious customs of the Old World with the establishment of a church of their own early in the decade. A group of Slovak leaders, all attracted to South Bethlehem for jobs at the steel plant less than ten years before, purchased a plot of ground from Lehigh University situated well east of the town's development in newly incorporated Ward 4. This location reasserts the eastward progress of New Immigration that was contradicted by German settlement patterns in this era. Construction of a small unadorned church to be named Saints Cyril and Methodius was commenced in May of 1891. Over 2,500 Eastern European Catholics attended the dedication of the cornerstone, traveling to South Bethlehem from towns throughout the Lehigh Valley.⁸³ The attraction of the Slovak population from throughout the region evidences the deep importance these people attached to an expression of Catholicism consistent with that practiced in their native land and further highlights the significant role of the immigrant church in mediating the immigration process. It should be remembered that the Slovaks of Saints Cyril and Methodius not only confronted South Bethlehem with unfamiliar language and customs, they personified the growing force of the Catholic Church in America, a long derided subject of the Protestant pulpit in America by the 1890's. Because the Slovak Catholic community and the history of their church, Saints Cyril and Methodius, provides a wealth of color in bringing to life the

area between Ward 1 and Ward 2. Several names could not be located in South Bethlehem thus the religious body was likely drawing members from beyond the town's limits.

⁸² *The Globe*, 17 September 1917.

⁸³ *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 25 May 1891; Archdiocese of Philadelphia Scrapbook Collection, SB #3, 3 of 5, 371; Saints Cyril and Methodius was the first Slovak parish according to James F. Connelly, *The History of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: The Archdiocese of Philadelphia, 1976), 282. The first mention of the new Slovak congregation in the press makes no distinction between ethnicity and nationality. The *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 23 February 1891, tells of a new "Hungarian Catholic Church for South Bethlehem." Slovaks were at the time subjects of the Austria-Hungary alliance and typically incorrectly labeled Hungarians.

immigrant experience in South Bethlehem a closer examination of this institution will be undertaken in Chapter Four.⁸⁴



Figure 14. Eastern European immigrants from throughout the region attended services for the consecration of the Slovak Saints Cyril and Methodius Roman Catholic Church in May of 1891. The church was the first Slovak parish in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Source: Saints Cyril and Methodius Roman Catholic Church. "A Century of Faith: 1891- 1991," n.p.

⁸⁴ One other important church edifice constructed in the 1890's but not essential in evidencing the broad pattern of the religious landscape's development was Fritz Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church of 1893. The name derives from John Fritz, the former superintendent of the Ironworks who assumed the entire cost of the church's construction. Upon completion, the building was a notable addition to the body of church architecture to date: the only example of an auditorium plan church in South Bethlehem. The architectural vocabulary used in the design of the church was Gothic Revival, yet it stands in contrast to the Episcopal and Roman Catholic influence of this style present in the borough's other churches. Fritz Memorial did not respect the longitudinal emphasis of a center processional aisle considered essential by high church proponents of Gothic Revival architecture. Instead, the church's floor plan was developed around a broad auditorium space, intended to function as a lecture hall for religious education. This style of church had an established history by the early 1800's. The church's location in Ward 2, was approximate to the more affluent section of South Bethlehem but firmly positioned within a growing district's working class row houses. The socioeconomic mix was primarily white-collar, small business owners and mid level employees living in the western wards of the town. *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 23 February 1891, 29 June 1891; *Daily Times*, 27 March 1893.

Landscape Transformed: Catholicism and a new century, 1901-1910

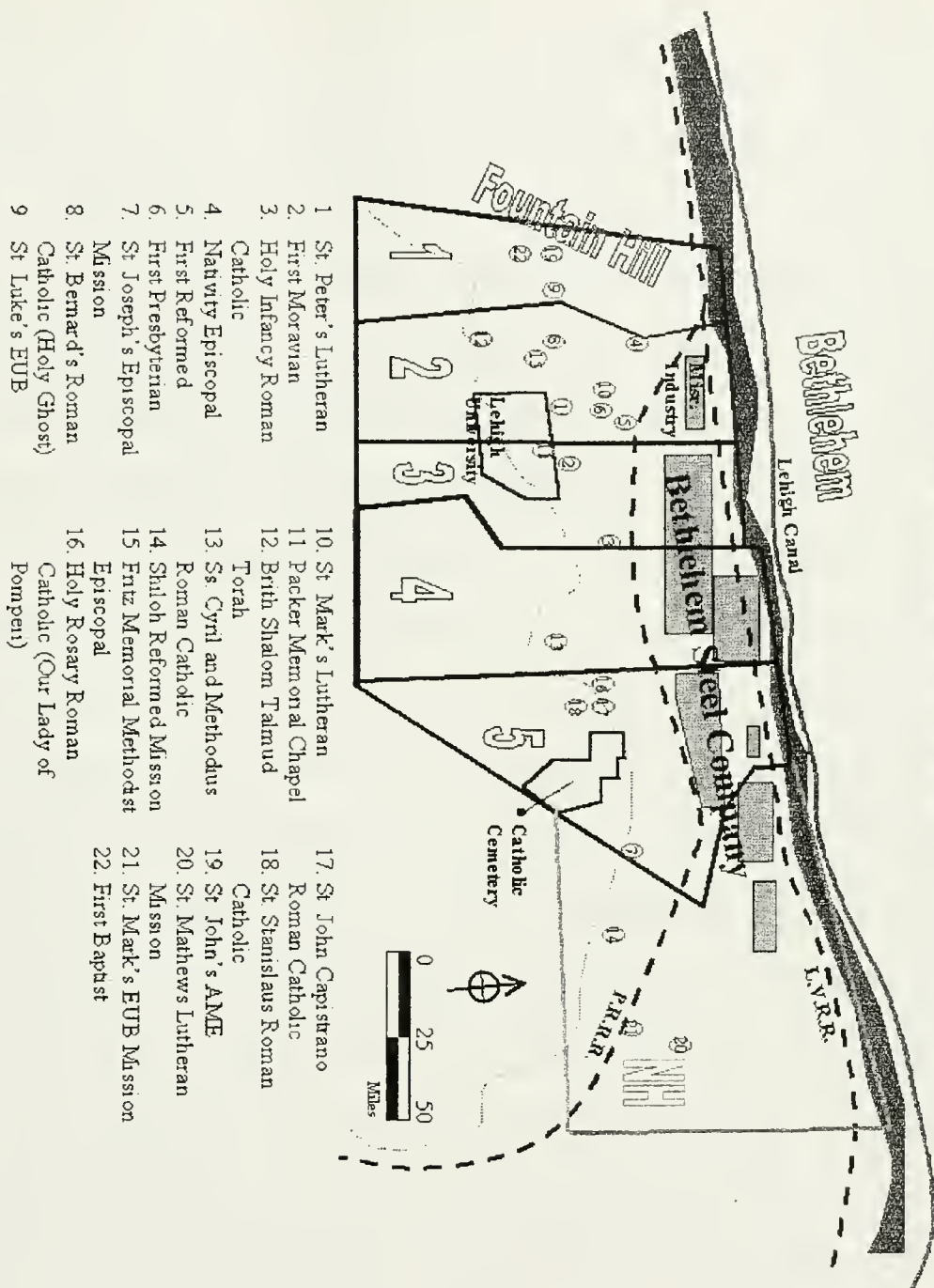
The passage of the ethnic parish from the confines of Old Immigration to a broader representation of New Immigrant diversity provided the determining course of South Bethlehem's religious milieu after 1900. The number of Roman Catholic national parishes representing cultures of southern and eastern European extraction proliferated aggressively between 1900 and 1910, and all constructed churches in Ward 5 to the east of previous settlers. Ward 5 was established at the turn of the century in response to the continued growth in the population of the borough's east-end. The explosion in the number of ethnic parishes affected a transformation in the quality of the religious landscape from one of ambiguity to decisively immigrant in character. Catholicism has in part been used here as the test for determining the prevailing character of South Bethlehem's religious landscape and justifiably so; historians have long described the Roman Catholic Church as the immigrant church in the context of American history.⁸⁵ In short, it was during the early years of the new century that the religious landscape might decisively be characterized as an "immigrant religious landscape."

⁸⁵ Kevin J. Christiano in *Religious Diversity and Social Change: American Cities 1880-1906* examines the effect of immigration on religious diversity around the turn of the century, using data provided by U. S. Census statistics on immigration, religion, industrial production, general population, and others. Special schedules for assessing the religious make-up of the nation were included in decennial censuses between 1880 and 1940. Although long ignored, these statistics have been rediscovered by historians in recent years and have provided new avenues of study (23-48). A couple of relative points for South Bethlehem taken from Christiano's work were the emergent prevalence during the 1890's of Catholicism in industrial centers, such as South Bethlehem, where a single large industrial operation drives the economy and serves as the primary base of employment (83-84, 98, 101-103). Christiano stresses that there existed at the time a variety of religious diversity across the geographic scope of the United States and due to the seemingly endless assortment of variables offered by such things as town size, location, type and variety of economy; definitive conclusions are difficult to establish. As a result, religious diversity in all its forms, including the assertion of an emerging dominance of Catholicism is highly variable and as such must be looked at on a case by case basis (89-103). America remained overwhelmingly Protestant in these years but with a shrinking numerical majority. Between 1890 and 1906 Protestant increases measured 44.8 percent while The Roman Catholic population grew by 93.5 percent (20-21). Several historians regard this trend in the context of American History as nothing less than revolutionary.

South
Bethlehem, PA

1900 - 1910

The Religious
Landscape



Map 5. The Religious Landscape, 1900-1910. Map by W. C. Carson.

One neighborhood in Ward 5, is a particularly effective tool for exposing this immigrant and Catholic transformation. Within one-half block of what was the primary intersection of Ward 5, the intersection of Fourth and Hayes Streets, three ethnic Roman Catholic parishes were constructed between 1902 and 1906, and all evidenced humble beginnings.

The first of these was South Bethlehem's first Italian church, the Church of the Holy Rosary. In addition to work in the mills, Italians were attracted to South Bethlehem for employment in masonry-related construction and building trades. Many were stonecutters, street-pavers and quarrymen. Two adjoining plots of land were donated to this group at the southeast corner of Fourth and Hayes, and in the spring of 1902, a cornerstone was placed in the foundation of a brick church that was completed by mid-summer. The church was modest in size and the pointed arch windows held clear glass. The primary ornament of the exterior was a small belfry astride the ridge, finished out with a hipped spire and cross. The consecration ceremonies in July were attended and participated in by representative members and clergy of all three of South Bethlehem's other Roman Catholic parishes, Holy Infancy, Saint Bernard's and Saints Cyril and Methodius and numerous other parishes throughout the region. The event was described in the local press as a festive celebration initiated with a lengthy parade that canvassed Wards 1 through 5. The parade featured marching bands, a crowd of Italian children, and numerous ethnic clubs, lodges and devotional societies in full regalia. A solemn High Mass concluded the day's events. At some point early in this church's history, the parish assumed a more ethnically distinguishable title—Our Lady of Pompeii.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ The cornerstone and dedication ceremonies were reported in the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 28 April 1902, and 17 July 1902. One photograph of the church was located in Borough of South Bethlehem, *Semi-Centennial*, n.p.



Figure 15. The Italian, Church of the Holy Rosary (circa 1902) in Ward 5. The parish later assumed the title Our Lady of Pompeii. Source: Borough of South Bethlehem, *Semi Centennial*, n.p.

Across the intersection on the southeast corner of Fourth and Hayes, the Hungarian Catholic community began the construction of their first house of worship within months of the consecration of the Italian chapel in July. This group named their church Saint John Capistrano in reference to the 15th Century Italian crusader known for defending the crossroads region of Europe from the influences of Islam. The church was only the second Hungarian parish in the Diocese of Philadelphia.⁸⁷ The growth of this congregation was rapid. Little more than a year after the dedication of a basement church in June of 1904, the parish served a membership of about 2000,⁸⁸ and by 1910, the need for new quarters was a pressing concern. A new and expanded combination church and

⁸⁷ Connelly, 283.

school was consecrated in 1910. Witnessing an exuberant ethno-religious celebration with sermons conducted in six languages was a delegation of the Austria-Hungary consulate.⁸⁹ In short time, this church too became inadequate and in the early 1920's, the Hungarian Catholic community completed the construction of a landmark that directly expressed their Old World heritage. The church presented an eclectic blend of Gothic Revival and Baroque styling synonymous with church architecture of the southern regions of central Europe. The facade featured a central tower, ogee shaped spire, and exterior gilt statuary while the interior expressed a crisp, airy, baroque brightness. The dedication of this edifice in 1922, the third in less than twenty years, emphasizes the Catholic influx associated with New Immigration and exposes the root of the landscape's transformation—the sheer volume of southern and eastern European newcomers seeking work at the Steel.⁹⁰

Just south of the Hungarian's basement church, but within the same block of Hayes Street, the Polish community established a parish of their own in 1906.⁹¹ This group of Poles represented a diverse mixture of national origins as was common of Polish immigration in general. The Polish region of Europe was for a large portion of its history divided among several central European powers and, therefore, the Polish were steeped in

⁸⁸ Dedication services were covered in the *Bethlehem Daily Time*, 20 June 1904. The population of the parish in 1905 was listed as between 200 and 2500 in the 1905 Annual Report of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, report #222.

⁸⁹ *Catholic Standard and Times*, 9 July 1910; *The Globe*, 5 July 1910.

⁹⁰ *Catholic Standard and Times*, 8 September 1923; *The Globe*, 3 July 1923. The drive to build an “elaborate” third church began as early as 1916 according to *The Globe*, 17 November 1916.

⁹¹ Connelly, 282

an ethnic consciousness well before they were confronted with the rancorous social climate of America at the turn of the century.⁹² The immediate importance of flocking

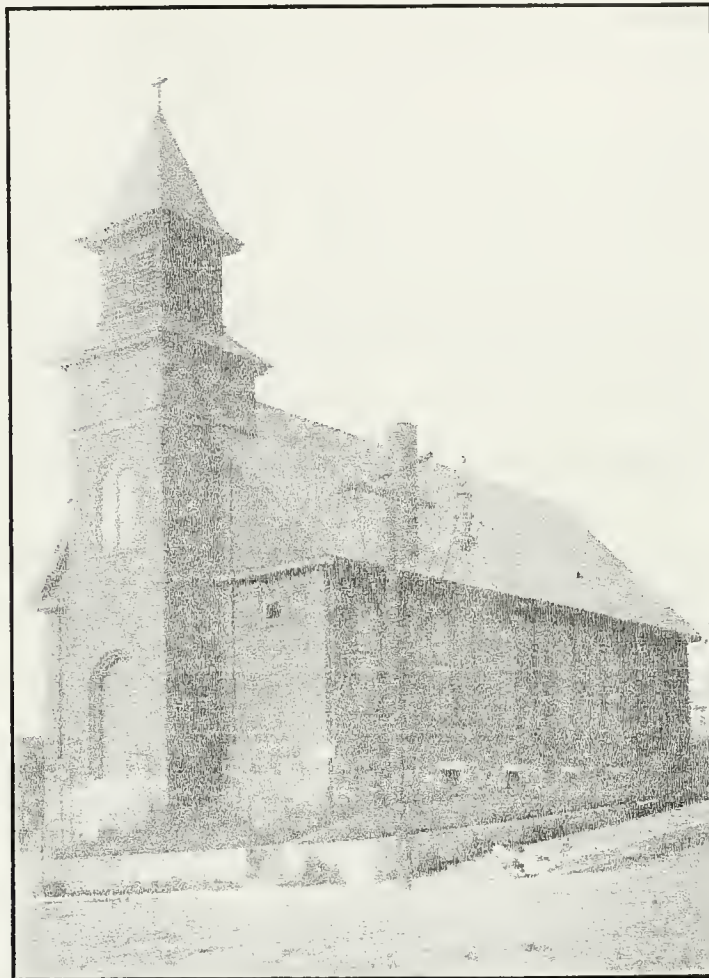


Figure 16. The Polish parish, Saint Stanislaus Roman Catholic Church (circa 1906), in Ward 5. Many of the streets in the “foreign” section of the town’s east-end were still undeveloped around 1915, the approximate date of this photograph. Source: Borough of South Bethlehem, *Semi Centennial*, n.p.

together can be seen through the sheer numbers of national parishes of Polish affiliation established around this time in Southeastern Pennsylvania.⁹³ The Polish population in

⁹² David Levinson and Melvin Ember, *American Immigrant Cultures: Builders of a Nation*, vol. 2 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997) 695-703.

⁹³ For a critique of the Polish Church see Chapter Seven, “The Polish Kind of Faith “ in Dolores Liptak’s work, *Immigrants and Their Church* (New York: Macmillan Press, 1989), 114-130.

South Bethlehem, however, was modest in size and the construction of their church, was protracted over several years. When finally consecrated in the fall of 1909, the “Polish Church” assumed the title Saint Stanislaus, in reference to the traditional patron saint of the Polish people.

The parade that marked this occasion featured an interesting display of New Immigrant solidarity as the marchers proceeded through the streets of South Bethlehem from church to church in Wards 4 and 5. Representatives of various lodges and societies associated with each ethnic parish fell into marching formation upon the corps arrival at each church, and all were outfitted in official dress. A mounted guard of seventeen lancers championed the elaborate procession.⁹⁴

Similar celebrations also marked the consecration of two second-generation churches of New Immigrant extraction during the first decade of the century. The Slovak community of Saints Cyril and Methodius dedicated an impressive new church in 1906, and the German and Austrian Catholic community of Holy Ghost closely followed this event with the completion of their third building campaign since the late 1880’s. Both edifices are architecturally significant and vital landmarks in further defining the immigrant transformation of South Bethlehem’s religious landscape. In addition, these churches and the numerous events they symbolize are essential to explaining the immigrant’s story on a personal level. Without such an examination, the interactive story of industry and immigration as revealed in the town’s religious landscape would be incomplete; therefore, Saints Cyril and Methodius and Holy Ghost will each be the subject of a case study in Chapter 4.

⁹⁴ *The Globe*, 22 July 1907; 8 November 1909.

Before concluding an overview of the 1900's, one particular native born congregation provides an interesting parallel to the transformational force of New Immigrant churches in these years. Black migrants first came to South Bethlehem in 1862 as refugees of the Civil War.⁹⁵ Upon their arrival, Black Americans encountered a social climate not unlike the Hungarians and Poles yet to arrive, and they too sought refuge collectively as a religious community.⁹⁶

The first African American congregation finally took root at the turn of the century on Pawnee Street in Ward 1 though efforts to do so started as early as 1890.⁹⁷ Its members were the domestic employees of the elite families of Fountain Hill and service providers in the local hotel industry.⁹⁸ The founding members, leaders within the black community, included individuals such as Georgia White, "servant cook," Elijah Watson, "waiter BSCO" (Bethlehem Steel dining room), and Victor Welch, "hostler" (horsekeeper) of a local inn. The member's residences were located almost entirely in rear apartments and service quarters in Wards 1 and 2, which further reflects their underclass occupational and social stature within the borough. This included the pastor's family whose residence was listed in a local directory as "r[ear] 978 Philadelphia Rd."⁹⁹ A charter was issued for this group, the first black church in the Lehigh Valley region, as Saint John's African Methodist Episcopal in 1894. After worshiping in rented quarters

⁹⁵ The first blacks to South Bethlehem in 1862, were noted as "refugees" in a special edition of *The Globe*, 3 October 1915, in celebration of the town's 50th anniversary.

⁹⁶ One hundred and fifteen "Negroes" were recorded in South Bethlehem in 1900. *Twelfth Census of the United States: Population, General Report and Analysis*, 640.

⁹⁷ The first indication of an effort to organize the black community of South Bethlehem was the "Colored ME Mission" on Philadelphia listed in the 1890 city directory. A "colored mission" associated with Asbury Methodist Episcopal Church was noted in the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 31 Aug 1892.

⁹⁸ Yates, 327.

⁹⁹ A list of founders was included in a brief article found in the Clippings Files of the Bethlehem Area Public Library about the congregation in the *Globe Times*, 24 April 1971. City directories were consulted for occupation and place of residence.

for several years a church was constructed in 1901. The result was a humble vernacular stone edifice costing only \$600.00.¹⁰⁰ This church is still used by the congregation today and is a significant, although largely unrecognized, artifact of the region's cultural history.¹⁰¹

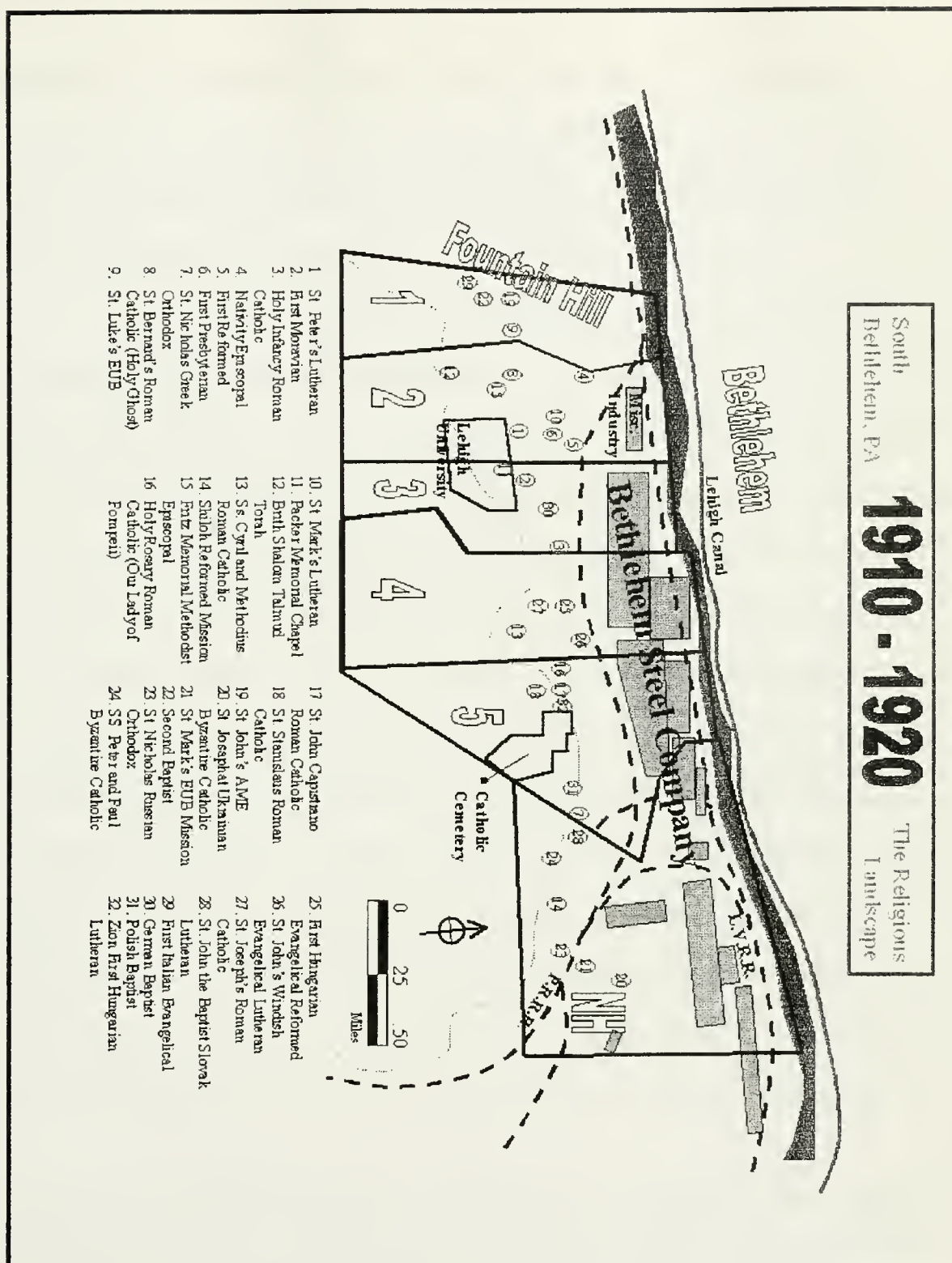
Decline and Renewal: immigration restrictions and the religious landscape after 1910

Due to the large number of new religious communities established between 1911 and 1920, the period appears to compete forcefully with the transformational character of the preceding decade. Ten new religious bodies were established in South Bethlehem during these years and, as before, most evidenced the steel industry's continuing draw on southern and eastern Europeans.¹⁰² Of particular importance to the character of the religious environment was the introduction of Orthodox Christianity and Byzantine Rite Catholicism; two faith traditions associated with the far-eastern reaches of Europe. The establishment of churches expressing these traditions during these years emphasizes two essential aspects of the religious landscape's development between 1880 and 1920. First, they communicate much about the overall course of New Immigration that affected its growth over the forty-year cycle. And second, these churches remind us of the critical

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Two mission chapels were constructed in the early 1900's. Saint Mathew's Lutheran, a mission of Saint Peter's in Ward 2 (*The Globe*, 19 October 1904; 14 January 1905), and Saint Mark's Evangelical, a mission of Saint Luke's in Ward 1 (*The Globe*, 14 December, 1904). Both were located in Northampton Heights.

¹⁰² Ten of 33 total religious bodies that established a presence in South Bethlehem before to 1920 did so between 1911 and 1920. Two of the total number had removed north of the Lehigh, and a third institution closed by 1920. New congregations quickly acquired the church buildings these groups left behind. If this fact is taken into consideration then 30 percent of the religious bodies present in South Bethlehem in 1920 were established in the preceding decade. In terms of building campaigns, including new church construction and large-scale improvements, 1901-1910 was by far the most active. Of the forty-two construction campaigns before 1920, as recorded by the author, twelve occurred in these years, 29 percent.



Map 6. The Religious Landscape, 1910-1920. Map by W. C. Carson.

importance of language and ethnic tradition to the process of immigration and the establishment of immigrant life and community in America. They remind us that language and all of its associated ethnic customs, perhaps more than a test of religious affiliation, be it Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox, or Jew, was the ultimate source of comfort and stability for newcomers in, what was to them, a strange land.

The years 1911-1920, in terms of immigration, were as dynamic as any before. Nineteen fourteen fell just short of the all time annual record of 1,285,349 set in 1907, the zenith of immigration in American history; however, the 1, 218,480 that disembarked in 1914 came in increasing numbers from southern and eastern Europe.¹⁰³ From this eastern blend of New Immigration came the core of individuals in South Bethlehem who established Saint Josaphat's Ukrainian [Byzantine] Catholic Church (Ukrainian-1916), Saint Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church (Russian-1917), Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church (Greek-1917), Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic (Ruthenian-1917)¹⁰⁴. These institutions and their faith traditions highlight the effective conclusion to the period known as New Immigration and emphasize the full course of both its development and the development of South Bethlehem's religious landscape. As evidenced by these institutions: What started as a more central European phenomenon, composed largely of Germans, Austrians and a dwindling faction of Irish, progressed during the 1890's and early 1900's to include a dominant proportion of immigrants of

¹⁰³ Department of Commerce and Labor-Bureau of Statistics. *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1918* (Washington: GPO, 1919), 95-96. Department of Commerce and Labor-Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1910* (Washington: GPO, 1911), 82, 89. Secretary of the Treasury-Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1900* (Washington: GPO, 1901), 400-402.

¹⁰⁴ Ruthenians, also called Carpatho-Rusins, are an Eastern Slavic people that originate in the upper slopes and high valleys of the Carpathian Mountains. Ruthenians are today divided by the political boundaries of several nations, including Slovakia, Poland, Romania, and the Ukraine. See StephanThernstrom, ed., *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 200-210.

southern and eastern European extraction such as Hungarians, Slovaks, and Poles. By 1910, however, the immigrant population that was settling in South Bethlehem hailed from the eastern enclaves of Europe, such as the Ukraine, Russia, Greece and the Asian crossroads nation of Turkey. Ethnic groups of a more central European extraction continued to arrive in these years and bolstered the ethnic and religious communities established by their predecessors, but the changing mixture of newcomers after 1900 indicates that the vast majority of Europe's emigrants now left the continent's eastern most regions.¹⁰⁵

Orthodox Christians and Byzantine Catholics represent two very distinct and separate traditions often confused by the use of the term Greek in describing the Rite used by each for worship. Both use an Eastern Rite, the form of ceremony based upon the traditions of Constantinople, the pre-schismatic center of Christianity and capital of the Byzantine Empire. This, however, is where a unified appearance ends. Byzantine Catholics retained an allegiance to Roman authority after the Christian church split between the 11th and 13th Centuries. A simple way to grasp the distinction may be to view Byzantine Catholics as Roman Catholics—theologically they are the same—but as Roman Catholics who celebrate mass using a different ceremonial ritual and organize the religious year upon a different liturgical calendar. Orthodox Christianity, having rejected

¹⁰⁵ *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1914*, clearly displays a steady shift in immigrant source region in the national context. Immigration levels (based upon race) remained relatively consistent with previous years for groups such as Germans, English, Bohemians, Slovenians, Italians and Slovaks, while a measure for groups such as Greeks, Southern Italians, Russians, Lithuanians, and Ruthenian rose dramatically. The beginnings of this shift in a state context are supported by *Thirteenth Census of the United States: Population, General Report and Analysis*, 836-837. Pennsylvania was a favorite destination for all of these groups. The population of Russian residents in Pennsylvania jumped from 93,271 to 240,985, the Greek influx from 465 to 4,221 and the Hungarian influx from 47,393 to 123,498 for the state of Pennsylvania.

the authority of Rome, developed theologically in a manner unique to the East and, as a result, evidences a different religious culture.¹⁰⁶

Before continuing a discussion of these new faiths and the ethnic factions they represented, two factors beyond the scope of South Bethlehem that greatly affected their lives should first be addressed. The first was the outbreak of war in 1914. The breadth of Eastern Europe, where most of these people began their journey to America, was fully engulfed early on in the conflict, and as a result, immigration from this region halted abruptly. The second event to impact the Russian, Greek, Ruthenian and Ukrainian experience was the passage of strict anti-immigrant legislation by the United States Government in 1917. Anti-immigrant sentiment throughout the country reached a political climax at that time. Literacy tests and the satisfaction passage of other immigration standards were then established as prerequisites for entering America. The nation's borders were all but closed. Arrivals in 1918 numbered less than a tenth of those in 1914 and even tighter restrictions soon followed.¹⁰⁷

The world war, literacy tests and numerical quotas that halted immigration served in defining the experience of South Bethlehem's Russians, Greeks, Ukrainians, and Ruthenians.¹⁰⁸ Church organization began among these communities as early as 1910; though, the unprecedented shift in immigration policy greatly hampered their efforts. Unlike the Irish, Germans, Poles and Hungarians, sustained by a seemingly endless supply of countrymen, these later groups were in a sense undernourished, and did not

¹⁰⁶ Adrian Fortescue, *The Uniate Eastern Churches* (New York: Frederick Unger Publishing, 1923) gives a clear account of Byzantine Catholicism. The history and traditions of the Orthodox Church are thoroughly and clearly presented in Timothy Ware's, *The Orthodox Church* (London: Penguin Books, 1963).

¹⁰⁷ *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1918*, 95-96.

¹⁰⁸ Between 1914 and 1915 the Russian influx fell from 44,957 to 4,459, the Greek from 45,881 to 15,187, and the Ruthenian from 36,727 to 2,933 according to *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1918*, 95-96.

thrive with the same vigor as earlier New Immigration populations. The ethno-religious cultures these groups introduced in South Bethlehem were cut off prematurely, and these abandoned cultures, so to speak, struggled desperately to survive. Their people struggled not only to establish themselves in the most basic sense, but also to maintain a distant heritage without reinforcement or an all-important critical mass. These groups struggled to survive year-after-year for quite some time. They did maintain themselves remarkably well however, and exclusively within Northampton Heights, the eastern most sector of South Bethlehem.

The most notable aspect of the four religious communities that represented the Orthodox and Byzantine Catholic traditions in South Bethlehem highlights the second important aspect of summarizing the development of South Bethlehem's religious environment, the importance of language and ethnic custom over denominational affiliation in organizing churches. Although in a desperate struggle for survival, the Russians, Ukrainians, Greeks and Ruthenians, deliberately rejected the stability offered by pooling resources, financial and otherwise. The possibility of a united effort in establishing a place of worship, based upon a shared theological tradition alone, was certainly apparent, but instead of two churches, one Orthodox Church and one Byzantine Catholic Church, four separate congregations developed based solely on an ethnic standard. Moreover, they did so in close proximity to one another. A redundancy of churches representing the same faith is not unusual to South Bethlehem nor is geographic proximity as evidenced by the Roman Catholic Churches of Ward 5. What is exposed here, is the fact that these small groups of New Immigration desired both the comforts of a familiar language and ethnic tradition in conjunction with a familiar faith tradition.

These groups struggled to survive based on membership and financial resources for many years. Furthermore, the Orthodox and Byzantine Catholic Churches of South Bethlehem provide the most profound summary of the inextricable interconnection of ethnicity and religious belief to Immigrant Americans. These people were willing to incur extreme hardship and risk almost certain failure in organizing churches in order to maintain their identity as a unique people and insure a direct, unadulterated connection with the culture of their native lands.¹⁰⁹

Greek immigrants began Orthodox services in South Bethlehem about 1912, soon after their arrival. By December of 1915 this group was sizable enough and able financially to secure the use of the Church of the Nativity's Saint Joseph's Mission Chapel at Fourth and Duncan Streets in Northampton Heights for \$35.00 per month. Nativity closed Episcopal services at Saint Joseph's Chapel sometime in 1916. The Greek Orthodox contingent finally purchased the vacated chapel in March of 1917 and officially organized under the name Saint Nicholas Hellenic Orthodox Community of South Bethlehem. This group did not secure a pastor until 1918, six years after the effort to organize began. Saint Joseph's Chapel, although in a much degraded state, maintains its historic function today by serving as the church home to a small Pentecostal Congregation of African Americans. The chapel is a very important and, unfortunately, undervalued resource that tells a wealth about the community's religious history.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ The hardships of basic institutional survival form the central theme to brief church histories of these groups provided by anniversary celebration souvenir booklets, press accounts, local histories and interviews.

¹¹⁰ *Bethlehem Globe Times*, 3 December 1987; Chamberlain, 82.



Figure 17. The Saint Nicholas Brotherhood, the Russian beneficial society from which the drive to organize a Russian Orthodox Church emerged, is pictured in this photograph (circa 1915) on the future site of the church in Northampton Heights. Source: Saint Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church. "50th Anniversary," n.p.

The Russian contingent of late comers to South Bethlehem established Saint Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church at the eastern extent of Sixth Street. The Saint Nicholas Brotherhood organized to provide a welfare framework for its members in 1915 and from this organization emerged the drive to build a church. Between 1916 and 1917 a church was constructed on what was far from ideal real estate for this purpose. The lot was situated adjacent to an aggressively traveled railroad corridor that was crossed on foot by many on their journey to church. It was also within earshot of a noisy, always active ore pit of the Steel where iron from distant mines was deposited by carload and scooped up as needed to feed blast furnaces that consumed around the clock. The land, though not ideal, was donated to the congregation by a local developer who, in lieu of

charging the financially strapped congregation for the real estate, charged only for the future construction of their church, that he was assured the contract for in the transfer.¹¹¹ A 74' x 42' brick edifice was completed in 1916. Though a central tower and onion dome highlighted the church, it presented a very simple appearance. The congregation struggled just to maintain a pastor and teetered on the edge of insolvency for many years. Nevertheless, the Russian community of South Bethlehem persevered and over the years the ornaments of Orthodox worship were provided for, including stained glass, and an elaborate iconostasis, the centerpiece of Orthodox architecture. Though it is no longer used for religious purposes, this church building remains today as an important informant of the east-end's past.¹¹²

Byzantine Catholics first organized themselves in 1913 and worshipped in a basement chapel of Holy Infancy, the Irish Roman Catholic Church in Ward 3. In April of 1916, funds were sufficient for this group to purchase a clapboard chapel that had served a Lutheran mission in Northampton Heights. The Ukrainians and Ruthenians organized under the title "The Ruthenian Greek Catholic Church of Saint Josaphat" suggesting that there was an initial effort to unite the Ruthenian and Ukrainian communities under one church roof. Byzantine Catholic services continued in the basement of Holy Infancy after the dedication of Saint Josaphat's new home on April 28,

¹¹¹ Deed Book H, vol. 42, 265. The title transfer lists, "William J. Heller" as the grantor and "Archbishop Evdokim of the Russian Orthodox Greek Church" as the grantee. The transaction was conditional to the completion of a stone or brick church costing at least \$25,000.00 within two years for which Mr. Heller would be contracted. It further states that the land will revert to Mr. Heller's ownership if the land is abandoned. This is probably the result of the clear possibility that the church would not be realized by the Russian Orthodox community

¹¹² Saint Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church. "50th Anniversary" (Souvenir Booklet, 1991). Few of the founding members could be located using city directories and those that were, such as Nicholas Chaikowsky and Phillip Mironick, all held the title of "laborer" for the Bethlehem Steel Company. Mr. Mironick was the only member listed that held an address not associated with temporary quarters. Hotels, boarding houses, and company housing apparently served the residential needs of the population.

1916, however, suggesting that the split was effected at that time. The ethnic Ruthenians did not join the Ukrainian element in the 1916 move and the term Ruthenian was dropped from the Byzantine church's title.¹¹³ The area surrounding the church in Northampton Heights became known as the Ukrainian Hub for the high concentration of these people who took up residence nearby. Unfortunately, this entire area of South Bethlehem, including the church and hall, was demolished for plant expansion in the late 1960's and at that time Saint Josaphat's relocated north of the Lehigh River.¹¹⁴

The Ruthenian contingent continued to worship in the basement of Holy Infancy and in time organized under the name Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Union Church in September 1917.¹¹⁵ The term "union" in the charter reflected the presence of a small Slovak element within the group that managed to bridge the ethnic divide. Having abandoned the larger Ukrainian contingent of Byzantine Catholics, the Ruthenians and the hand full of Slovaks managed only a tenuous existence for many years.¹¹⁶ In 1918 a very small, 20'x 20' temporary chapel was erected at the corner of Fifth and Edward Streets in Northampton Heights. These temporary quarters were used until the completion of a basement church that served the financially strapped congregation until the 1940's. The Church that was completed in the 1940's still stands in South Bethlehem under the care of a new steward. The hammered tin onion dome and Greek cross that

¹¹³ The joint effort of the Ukrainian and Ruthenian residents in South Bethlehem are vaguely referenced in Saint Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church, "Diamond Jubilee: 1917-1992" (Souvenir Booklet, 1992), n.p. Uniate services in the basement of Holy Infancy were announced in *The Globe* as late as 7 January 1918.

¹¹⁴ The bulk of information for Saint Josaphat's were taken from two articles detailing the churches move out of Northampton Heights and the demolition of the neighborhood in *The Globe*, 23 June 1964 and 12 October 1968.

¹¹⁵ *The Globe*, 2 January 1918; 7 January 1918.

¹¹⁶ M. Mark Stolarik, *Growing Up on the Southside* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1985), 48-50.

said much about the history of South Bethlehem's eastern end unfortunately was removed and taken north of the Lehigh River when the congregation relocated in the early 1990's. However, even lacking the dome this church remains an important piece of architectural heritage, and might still communicate much of the galvanizing bond and element of common purpose the realization of a house of worship broadly provided New Immigrant groups in general.¹¹⁷

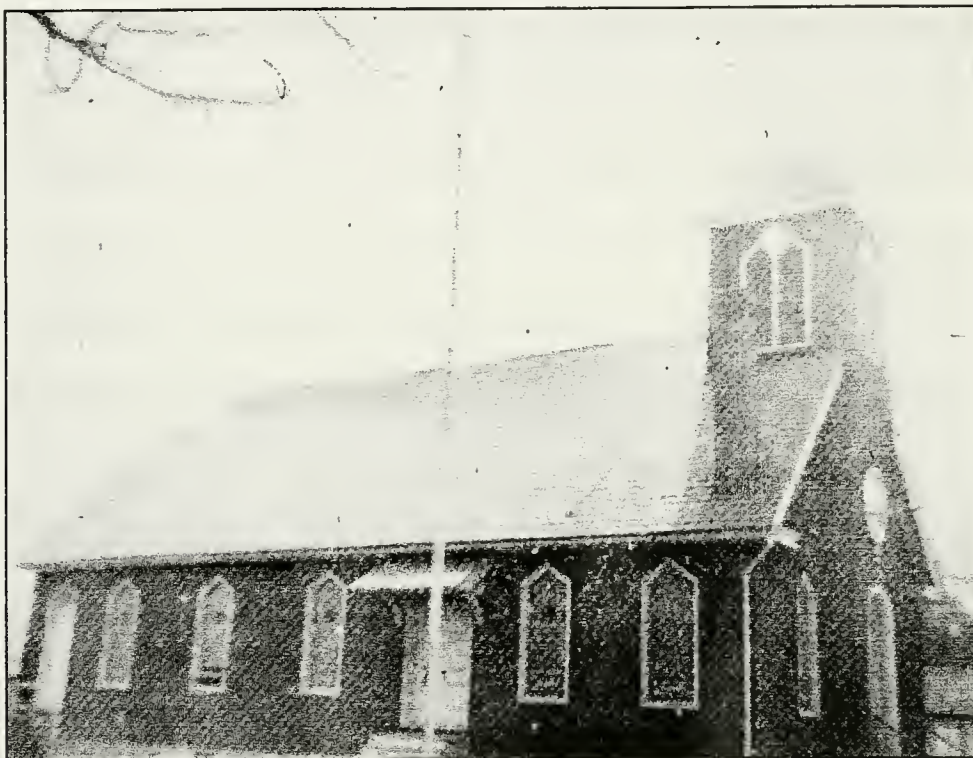


Figure 18. Saint Josaphat's Ukrainian (Byzantine) Catholic Church. The onion dome was once a common element of the town's east-end landscape. Today only one remains, it is atop Saint Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, which is no longer occupied by the congregation. The church pictured here was demolished for a plant expansion of the Bethlehem Steel Corporation in the 1960's. Source: Clippings Files of the Bethlehem Area Public Library.

¹¹⁷ Information about the 1917 charter and the description of the temporary chapel was taken from Saint Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church. "Diamond Jubilee: 1917-1992" (Souvenir Booklet, 1992), n.p. According to city directories, the leaders of this congregation, by occupation, were all blue collar workers, including Michael Yosko, John Roka and John Yasko of Bethlehem Steel and Michael Gurej, a butcher.

Two Protestant Communities of New Immigrant extraction provide an appropriate conclusion to an examination of South Bethlehem's religious landscape between 1911 and 1920. They perform this task effectively by illustrating two important qualities of the denominational composition of Southern and Eastern European settlers and the influence of these components on the development of the town's religious landscape.

First, the establishment of Protestant churches emphasizes that although Catholicism provided the overriding character of the religious environment, the people of New Immigration did not strictly represent a non-reformed stock of Christian Europeans. In fact, most ethnic groups brought to South Bethlehem both Reformed and Lutheran traditions that had weathered the Catholic Church's Counter Reformation influence of the 17th Century, and as a consequence, these Protestants held firm to them.

Second, and of equal importance, the tardiness of the arrival of Protestant churches of Southern and Eastern European extraction highlights the small proportion of this group among the general New Immigrant population. Slovak, Hungarian and Slovenian Protestants began to arrive in South Bethlehem in the late 1880's but typically did not amass sufficient enough numbers for the organization of a church until many years later. The flow of Protestants from Southern and Eastern Europe was modest; a fact that was clearly recorded in South Bethlehem's religious landscape.

A group of Hungarian immigrants of the Reformed Church were the first of the southern and eastern New Immigrant groups to organize a Protestant congregation. As early as September of 1896 the local newspaper mentions Hungarian worship in the German, First Reformed Church of South Bethlehem.¹¹⁸ Their numbers grew at a modest

¹¹⁸ *Daily Times*, 21 September 1896; 14 December 1896.

rate. In the late 1890's, the German church set service time aside strictly for Hungarian language services but the group had not yet officially organized as an independent congregation. In February of 1907, the term "Hungarian Congregation" was used in telling of the group's intention to build a church of their own. The First Hungarian Evangelical Reformed Church utilized a wood frame parish hall purchased from Holy Infancy until approximately 1911 at which time they relocated several blocks east in Ward 4.¹¹⁹ The cornerstone of their second home, which still stands, bares the inscription "MAGYAR EV. REFORMED-1906-1917." The construction process was slow and extended over several years culminating in the official dedication in 1917. The church dedicated in 1917 was simple but attractive and reflected the Old World architectural heritage the members of this church had left behind. The church was a brick veneered structure with an ashlar sandstone facade. The facade featured slender lancet windows with limestone head molding and tracery. The central door surround was also gothic in character. Above the entry door and astride the roof ridge stood a small bell turret and compact hipped spire. The spire terminated in an ogee shaped spirelet.

Like the Byzantine Catholic and Orthodox ethnic populations, Hungarian Protestants who settled in South Bethlehem were determined to realize a religious life that not only retained the faith tradition of the Old World but also its Old World associations. Though, accommodated by the German Reformed congregation in Ward 2, the desire to surround their religious life with the familiarity of Hungarian customs, traditions, comforts, and of course language, was a motivating and sustaining force for

¹¹⁹ *The Globe*, 6 December 1907; 23 December 1907. The 1911 city directory lists the congregation at the Ward 4 location.

many years. Here again is evidenced the immigrant belief that religion, language, and an ethnic culture were virtually inseparable from one another. All told, the process of establishing a permanent church home for the Hungarian Reformed population of South Bethlehem lasted more than twenty years.

Slovenian Lutherans were probably the most numerous Protestant contingent of Southern and Eastern Europeans, and the church this group founded was quickly successful. The Slovenians in South Bethlehem hailed from a very limited area of what was then under Hungarian rule known as the Prekmurje region of Upper Hungary.¹²⁰ The Slovenians applied the term Windish to the culture of this region and in South Bethlehem were generally known as “Wends.”¹²¹ Slovenian Lutherans began their religious lives in South Bethlehem around 1900, at German Lutheran Saint Peter’s in Ward 2. By 1909, a sizable quantity Slovenians Lutherans from the Prekmurje region had settled in South Bethlehem, and the drive began to organize an independent congregation. Within the congregation was a small element of Slovak Lutherans who quickly defected from the next step in the Slovenian congregation’s development—the construction of a church.

¹²⁰ As with all eastern and southern European immigrants, the Slovenian population in South Bethlehem was largely Roman Catholic. Slovenian Catholics, also from the Prekmurje region of Upper Hungary, organized a parish in conjunction with a minority faction of Croatian nationals in 1913 under the name St. Joseph’s. Saint Joseph’s Roman Catholic Church, “Golden Jubilee: 1914-1964” (Souvenir Booklet, 1964).

¹²¹ The terms Windish and Slovenian, as applied to this group of settlers, are controversial. The term “Wend” suggests the origin of these people is a nomadic tribe of Slavs that moved throughout central Europe for centuries and ultimately lack a true homeland. The Windish population of South Bethlehem, including persons who have undertaken scholarly research to resolve this dispute, firmly denounce the nomadic theory and claim Slovenia as their homeland. What is certain, however, is that the Windish that came to South Bethlehem left villages, and families in a region of what is today the modern state of Slovenia. Whether they are called Slovenian or Windish their impact upon the religious makeup of South Bethlehem is notable for they evidence the addition of yet another firmly established culture defined by a unique system of traditions and beliefs. Accounts discussing the ethnic heritage of the Windish include in support of the “nomadic theory” Rev. E. A. Stiegler, “Wends” (Typewritten Manuscript, ca. 1940) and rejecting this argument Stephen Antalich “The Origin and Use of the Term “Wend” to Describe a Hungarian Minority” in *Slovenija*, 53-55. The dispute was clarified by Frank Podleiszek, member of Saint John’s Windish Lutheran Church (Interview by author, 31 August 1999).

Ground was broken for a Slovenian Lutheran Church in Ward 4 under the title Saint John's Evangelical Lutheran Slovenian Congregation in 1910.¹²² After worshipping in the completed basement portion of the church for several years, the upper church was completed in March of 1916. The completed church was impressive for the uncanny similarity between it and the Lutheran churches the Slovenians remembered from the Prekmurje region of Upper Hungary.¹²³ Both the interior with its towering center pulpit and the exterior with its splayed spire and clock tower evidence the intimacy

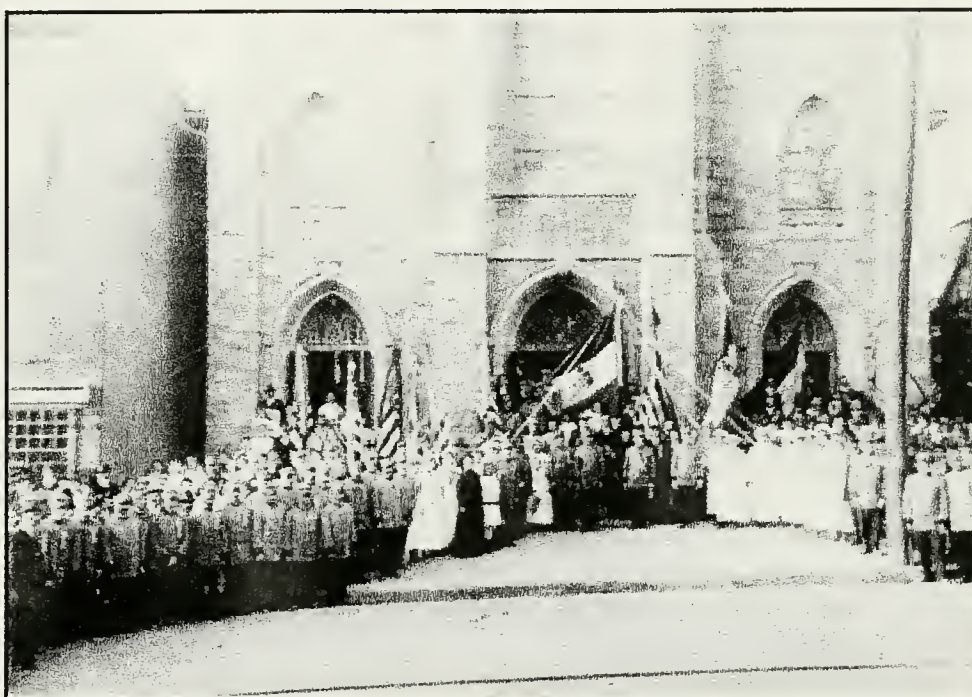


Figure 19. Dedication Day ceremonies of Saint John's Windish Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ward 4 (1916). The festive atmosphere that typically surrounded the dedication of immigrant churches is revealed in the photograph. Along with a clear ethnic emphasis, a show of patriotism to their adopted land through the prominent display of "Old Glory" was always included in such community events. Source: Church Archives.

¹²² *The Globe*, 2 December 1910; 24 February 1911; 27 February 1911. This last account incorrectly refers to the congregation as "the first foreign Protestant church in South Bethlehem.

¹²³ Antalich, 55.

of the Slovenians and their Old World heritage.¹²⁴ Protestant New Immigrants like their Roman Catholic counterparts celebrated the dedication of a new church in grand style and for the Slovenians this meant an elaborate display of marching, music and ethnic attire.¹²⁵

The day concluded on a somewhat somber note that emphasized the inner conflict that most Immigrant Americans endured—the struggle between a commitment to the Old World culture that formed the basis of their identity and a desire to fully become Americans. The men of Saint John's and their families gathered for a banquet to close the day's joyous activities and at the affair a large relief fund was collected to aid their European compatriots suffering from the ravages of World War I. As one publication aptly stated, while vaguely addressing labors unrest and expressing an isolationist sentiment:

[The] Winds...are employed at the great steel works, where much war material is being manufactured and sent abroad to kill their own countrymen. Yet no one hears that they rise in their anger, defy the laws of the land, and make havoc of this unjustifiable traffic in munitions against their Fatherland...The steel works sends munitions to kill; these humble men send their hard earnings to relieve suffering. What a contrast! And the irony of it all!¹²⁶

In the years immediately following 1920, a few events are worthy of a brief summary. Small factions within a few New Immigrant groups began to display a non-traditional combination of ethnicity and religious practice. Specifically, Baptist churches of Italian, Hungarian, and Polish extraction took a small presence within the community. The ethnic groups represented by these church bodies were almost entirely Roman

¹²⁴ Photographs of a Lutheran Church located in the town of Murska Sabota in Prekmurje was located in the archives of Saint John's.

¹²⁵ *The Globe*, 20 March 1917; *The Lutheran*, 6 April 1916.

Catholic upon their arrival in America with no measurable experience of the congregational form of church organization as the term Baptist implies. These religious institutions were likely the product of the ever present force of Americanization as they reveal both the adoption of a particularly Western form of church structure and worship, and an obvious reluctance to divorce ethnic heritage from religious identity.¹²⁷

Aside from these minor events, the overall quality of South Bethlehem's religious landscape was established by 1920 and given form by the tireless work of the preceding generation of immigrants. The children and grandchildren who assumed leadership of these immigrant communities and their immigrant churches now faced the daunting task of mediating the battle between the forces of Americanization and the ethnic separatism so valued by their forebears. But quietly the seeds of the next transformation, still occurring today in South Bethlehem, were being sown. Anti-immigrant policies created only an illusion of social stability by obstructing the flow of Europeans. As the door to newcomers from Eastern Europe slammed shut heavy industry, which by that time was dependent on a regenerative supply of cheap labor, simply refocused its draw on nations not regulated by anti-immigrant laws. It is a well documented fact that, by April of 1923 Bethlehem Steel was regularly chartering trains to bring Mexican workers to South Bethlehem from a border crossing in San Antonio, Texas, and by the year's end just shy

¹²⁶ *The Lutheran*, 6 April 1916.

¹²⁷ The First Italian Evangelical Church advertised worship services held at 205 Broadway in *The Globe* as early as, 19 August 1915. This group was listed in the city directories at the same address until 1925-1926. The Polish Baptist Church was listed in the 1923 city directory at 1125 Fourth Street. This organization may have been in actuality the beginnings of Our Lord's Ascension Polish National Catholic Church although this has not been confirmed. This church was initiated by a breakaway contingent of Saint Stanislaus. Feeling neglected by the Roman Catholic hierarchy, the Polish National Catholic Church movement developed in America in the coal regions of Pennsylvania around the city of Scranton in the early 1900's. The Baptist Hungarian Church was listed in the 1925-1926 city directory at 1157 Third Street.

of a 1,000 of these newcomers arrived in South Bethlehem.¹²⁸ Mexicans too brought with them their own cultural traditions, religious and otherwise, adding yet another layer to the town's ethnic melange.

By the early 1920's the religious landscape of South Bethlehem began to re-engineer itself to accommodate the arrival of a new, slowly swelling tide of Mexican immigrants and other Latino factions. Like those before them, these people sought refuge in the church. By 1929, services were being held for the Mexicans, known pejoratively as "greasers"¹²⁹ in the area, in the basement chapel of Holy Infancy on Fourth Street.¹³⁰ From these beginnings the Latino element has grown to dominate the cultural milieu of South Bethlehem, and in recent years it has emerged as a defining force in the town's religious landscape.

Conclusion

The preceding overview of South Bethlehem's religious landscape has presented a wealth of information that identifies it as a significant historic resource. On an individual basis the many church edifices introduced tell us much but when taken together they truly offer a tangible, artifactual outline of the community's development from the 1860's to the present. We have seen that these buildings convey more than simply the presence of particular groups of residents sharing common religious beliefs or the ethnic diversity so characteristic of South Bethlehem's history. That they evidence both of these aspects is clear but, hopefully, we are now able to look upon them as a sort of road map or time

¹²⁸ Paul S. Taylor, "Bethlehem, Pennsylvania" from *Mexican Labor in the United States*, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1932), 3.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

line, with the churches, individually or in small units, acting as markers of particular places or special moments in a remarkable history. Taking the road map analogy a little further, this assortment of markers helps inform the present by providing the contemporary observer with a means of navigating South Bethlehem's past.

This map has thus far evidenced a clear chronological pattern of the town's eastward development, and the interdependence of this development upon the rise of the iron and steel industry and a steady supply of foreign-born labor. Also, it has introduced us to a rich architectural heritage and the identifying purpose and function commonly attached to the architectural heritage by religious communities. In addition, this "map" has corroborated and enriched many of the conclusions about the social matrix of South Bethlehem offered and implied by Jones' thesis including the stratification of South Bethlehem's work force based upon socio-economic, occupational, ethnic and religious factors. Nevertheless, though a great deal has been learned, much of the profound importance of South Bethlehem's religious institutions and landscape remains to be defined in greater detail.

¹³⁰ Peter J. Antonsen, *A History of the Puerto Rican Community in Bethlehem, PA: 1944-1993* (Bethlehem, PA: Council of Spanish Speaking Organizations of the Lehigh Valley, 1994), 49-50

Chapter 4: Markers in the Religious Landscape, Three Case Studies

Introduction:

To fill out the meaning of the community's religious landscape a closer examination of a few notable institutions is necessary. Importantly, this examination must focus on the role of these institutions in the daily lives of those who provided the manpower for the industrial success of Bethlehem Steel. In order to assess the magnitude of this impact several important aspects of the immigrant church should be sketched out to provide a sort of blueprint for this examination. Though many of these aspects were introduced in the preceding overview the following presents a general outline and summary of the variety of significant roles the immigrant church performed.

The immigrant church at its core has been characterized by many historians as the central institution and bedrock of the immigrant community in American history. Religious historian J.P. Dolan has compared the institution, particularly for newcomers of Roman Catholic heritage, to "...a window in the wall through which [immigrant] life can be observed."¹³¹ The immigrant church was first and foremost a religious institution where new Americans—most of whom hailed from lands where the central place of religion and church was a matter taken for granted—practiced and expressed together their most deeply cherished beliefs. Although specific beliefs and practices often varied greatly from one institution to another, certain common characteristics can be observed that communicate a shared experience for all immigrant groups in South Bethlehem. As

¹³¹ Dolan, 159.

a consequence, we must pause here for a summary of these characteristics, before filling out the story of the immigrant church.

The personal experience of faith in bolstering the immigrant's experience in America was vital. But beyond the personal value, the practice of religion in the ethnic parish served to reinforce and sustain for the immigrant community basic values, customs and traditions of the Old World and to inculcate these in their children. Beyond the celebration of mass, the ethnic parish was witness to the most important events in the progress of an immigrant's life which were typically cloaked heavily in religious vestments; life events such as the birth and raising of children, coming of age, matrimony, and death. Sacraments and ritual religious practices typically marked these occasions including baptism, confirmation, nuptial ceremonies, and last rites. All of these events occurred in an audience of peers with a common culture, to which they clung fiercely, and substantially augmented a socialization process that ultimately served to instill a group conforming worldview. Often lavish parades followed the sacred services associated with these occasions to introduce their significance for the immigrants to the community at large, and to introduce them as a united body. One of many such events noted over the years in South Bethlehem occurred in June of 1872, preceding first communion services for the town's Catholic children. Escorted by members of several religious societies, all of whom were outfitted in their organization's particular uniforms and regalia, the children, dressed in white, poured through the streets of South Bethlehem announcing to the community a right of passage of particular importance to the Catholic faithful. Colorful banners, lighted tapers and a silver crucifix accompanied the march

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which terminated with a procession into the church for the celebration of High Mass.¹³² Spectacular events, such as the one described, that emanated from the church and were carried out with a spirit of communal devotion greatly served in holding the immigrant community to a commonly held view, replete with its particular inclinations, opinions, and attitudes of life, both earthly and spiritual.¹³³

Yet the immigrant church was not only a religious institution. With its inherent link to a common language the immigrant church was also a social, financial, cultural, educational and perhaps a political institution as well. By performing many of these secondary functions the immigrant church provided a ready connection for newcomers to the more earthly and human qualities of the Old World left behind, such as basic camaraderie and an all-important sense of belonging. In addition, and perhaps most important initially, the immigrant church provided for many of the more mundane, yet extremely critical, needs for survival in the New World. By acting as a so called “grapevine” through which one made contacts or through their association with more formal organizations such as charities or building and loan associations, churches often assisted in acquiring food, employment, basic shelter and home ownership.

It should be clearly understood that the immigrant church was not necessarily the originating source from which all things of significance to immigrant Americans emerged. Instead, the social matrix of the immigrant community typically grew from the interaction and inter-dependence of the church and other formal and informal ethnic community organizations. Before many of the religious institutions, more common

¹³² *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 17 June 1872.

¹³³ A particularly good study of the significance of the church environment for engendering common values and generating a cohesiveness within an ethnic community is Thomas C. McHugh, “A Catholic Church As

places such as local taverns, grocery stores, and boarding houses served as vehicles to share experience, exchange information, keep informed and take care of one another. Furthermore, it is highly likely that many of these informal settings served in incubating the more formal organizations. One common occurrence in immigrant populations was first the organization of a benevolent organization to provide monetary support in times of sickness or disability and from this emerged the church. The point here is that a standard formula for the development of the institutions that sustained immigrant Americans is impossible to define and that, instead of a clear formula, it was a process of exchange between the formal and informal. That this process, whether initially or ultimately, resulted in the ethnic church as the nerve center of the immigrant community is the matter of importance to this thesis. The author's intent in the following case studies is to evidence the diversity of roles performed by the immigrant churches in South Bethlehem between 1880 and 1920 and, by doing so, clearly substantiate the usefulness of these brick and mortar artifacts as appropriate "windows" through which the immigrant experience can be observed.¹³⁴

Holy Infancy Roman Catholic Church (Irish)

Based upon its date of founding, 1863, the Irish Catholic parish of Holy Infancy could be excluded from a study of South Bethlehem's religious landscape between 1880 and 1920. However, doing so would fail to recognize the crucial significance of this religious institution for a great share of what has taken shape in the community since.

An Agent of Socialization" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Rutgers University, 1987). Also see Dolan, "The Catholic Ethos," 221-240, and "Handing on the Faith," 241-261. Also: Dolan, 254.

Any credible study of the religious environment of South Bethlehem must highlight Holy Infancy's significance and if addressing the issues of industry and immigration such a study begins here for a number of reasons. First, the Irish community was the first laboring class in South Bethlehem's social and occupational hierarchy, and their church is perhaps the community's earliest example of a fully developed immigrant church with its multitude of functions. Second, in addition to addressing the needs of the town's Irish residents, which was of course the primary interest of its varied role, Holy Infancy served as the place where most Catholic immigrants began their religious life in South Bethlehem, and it further served as the breeding ground for a large number of other national parishes. Although much has been written by historians about the condescending posture the Irish dominated American clergy took towards newcomers from Southern and Eastern Europe, the nurturing influence Holy Infancy provided the peoples of New Immigration is an immeasurable aspect of the community's history.¹³⁵ Finally, Holy Infancy deserves emphasis in a study of South Bethlehem's religious landscape because the church that stands at Fourth and Taylor is an outstanding architectural icon in demonstrating the importance of the church in immigrant life.

If we follow the analogy of South Bethlehem's churches as icons then the logical place to initiate a case study is with the buildings themselves. In the case of Holy Infancy, as introduced, the building is a very substantial edifice to which much importance can be attached. The building is Gothic Revival in styling, was designed by Philadelphia architect Edwin Forrest Durang and was built between May of 1882 and

¹³⁴ Chapter Eight of Seller, "Building a Community," 147-171; and Chapter Ten of Taylor, "Immigrant Communities," 210-238, offer good discussions of the role of informal and formal institutions in the immigrant community.

May of 1886. It was constructed on the same plot of ground that the Irish congregation has maintained for its entire history in South Bethlehem. Durang's design continues to stand at the corner of Fourth and Taylor, however, it was not the Irish community's first place of worship in South Bethlehem.¹³⁶ Though the communicative value of the present edifice is the focus of this case study, an examination of the first church is necessary. By doing so, the true achievement of the Irish community represented by the present architectural marker in Ward 3 is more clearly revealed.

The first church that was removed for the realization of the present structure shows the humble beginnings of the town's Irish community, and, if observed in combination with the history of immigration to South Bethlehem, it traces clearly the immigrant experience in general. After all, the Irish that settled south of the Lehigh River largely shouldered the dreadful task of constructing the canal and railroad that made the future success of the town's industries possible; and as a consequence, provided the magnet for countless individuals looking to make a new start. The church was a modest, 40'x 80' structure that, although suggestive of the emerging influence of Victorian tastes in American architecture, lacked the grandeur that would become synonymous with the Catholic Church in America by the close of the century. The building was constructed between September of 1863 and November of 1864 and offered a plain, very utilitarian appearance.¹³⁷ It was built at the eastern limit of the town's

¹³⁵ Examples of historiography that tell of the Irish impact on the immigrant church include Chapter Five of Liptak, "The Irish Take Charge," 76-91 and Dolan, 143-144; 302-303.

¹³⁶ The first press account of construction on the present Holy Infancy was the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 22 May 1882, and chronicled on a regular basis until the consecration ceremonies in May of 1886.

¹³⁷ The only known photograph of this church presently hangs in the rectory of Holy Infancy on Fourth Street. The dimensions of the first Holy Infancy as well as the date of construction were taken from an account of the dedication of the new church in 1886 in the *Catholic Standard and Times*, 29 May 1886. Although no document of the period was found that gave the name of an architect or builder an article in a

development, and, consistent with its working class character, the neighborhood it served was closest to the rapidly growing iron works. This location, in Ward 3, evidences the social stratification, that would become a hallmark of the town's growth, at its earliest. As each new group of immigrants was drawn to South Bethlehem for employment they assumed the lowest tier jobs the mills offered, and they established their residences to the east of the preceding contingent. As Holy Infancy and its Irish neighborhood took shape in South Bethlehem the atmosphere was generally one of prevailing optimism; yet newspaper accounts do suggest an undercurrent of anxiety. The Irish were ridiculed for their odd speech, love of intoxicating drink, and superstitious religion; and the neighborhood around Holy Infancy was smugly labeled "Shanty Hill." It is also interesting to note that as the Irish church took form in the fall of 1863, prideful accounts of unbridled home construction, the new rolling mill and brass works, and talk of a new bridge were tempered by concerns of a Confederate advance into Pennsylvania.¹³⁸

With the end of the Civil War, development in South Bethlehem grew as it had never before and by the early 1870's the town's first Roman Catholic church was less than

special edition of the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 3 October 1915, in honor of the town's 50th anniversary, states the builder to have been James Wolbach of South Bethlehem. Although primarily the product of the financial resources available it has been suggested by a number of historians that such simple church construction was commonly affected in order to blend in more readily with the American environment which at the time still held strongly to Puritan notions of church design. By building with this formula Catholic American's, most of whom were of foreign extraction, hoped to avoid a backlash to their presence as anti-American and the religious bigotry revealed through hostile criticism of more ornate church design as superstitious and uncivilized. One author states that the Irish, in fact, preferred the Federal Style, which, of course, has direct patriotic overtones. See Dolan, 208-215, 229-231 and Carl Scilliano, *The Culture of Devotionalism in the Immigrant Churches of New York*, introductory essay from photographic exhibition "Ethnic Sacred Places: New York Catholic Churches in Transition" (Philadelphia, PA: Partners for Sacred Places, Information Clearinghouse, 1992, Photocopied), 3.

¹³⁸ Accounts of progression of the town's development and anxiety over Confederate troops include *The Moravian*, 13 August 1863, 10 September 1863, 17 September 1863, 1 January 1864, and 11 February 1864.

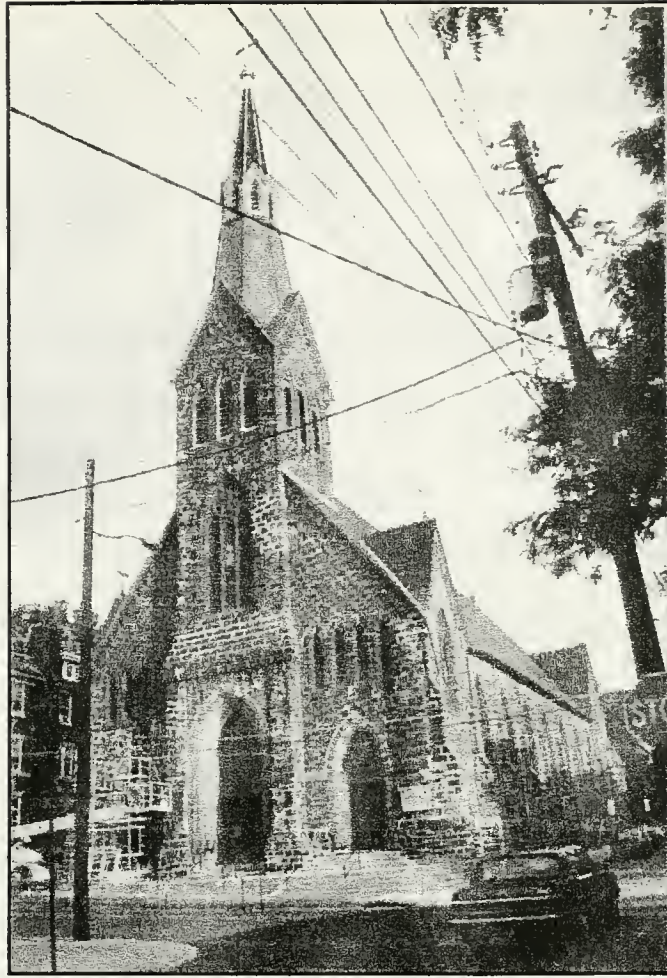


Figure 20. Holy Infancy Roman Catholic Church (circa 1883), designed by architect Edwin Forrest Durang, as it appears today, darkened by over a century of industrial pollution. Upon completion, the church displayed a bright creamy-yellow appearance, characteristic of the Stockton (NJ) Sandstone used in its construction. Newspaper accounts of the day detail the difficulty and great efforts incurred by the teams in transporting the necessary quantity of this material from the cargo terminals of the Lehigh Valley Railroad and The North Pennsylvania Railroad.

adequate. Holy Infancy's membership approached 3000 in these crucial years. The local press commented on the growth of this religious body noting on one occasion that its membership was larger than "all the other churches of the borough combined", many of whom regularly walked from distant locations such as Hellertown, and Freemansburg to

attend services.¹³⁹ Having served the congregation for less than 20 years the church was demolished in March of 1883 as work on the present edifice necessitated its removal.¹⁴⁰

Work on the present edifice began on March 22, 1882, and for a full year the construction of the foundation and wall sections of the new church rose around the first structure. After the first church was demolished the congregation held services in Saint Michael's Hall, the frame and clapboard social hall constructed in 1874 for the many organizations and activities sponsored by the church. A makeshift altar was erected, the temporary quarters were consecrated, and multiple worship services were performed weekly in order to accommodate the community's ever expanding Catholic population.¹⁴¹ The austere conditions of Saint Michael's Hall were the setting to an exciting time in South Bethlehem for the Irish Catholics of Holy Infancy and the general population as well. Never before had a building of this magnitude and elegance been undertaken in the young borough, and its progress was tracked in the local press almost daily. From the foundation to the spire, almost every phase of construction was relayed in detail; who the carpenters, masons and riggers were; where the timber was being milled and stone was being quarried; and the exact dimensions and weight of the spire and gilt cross. An account of July 8, 1884, tells of an interesting disappointment in the construction process:

¹³⁹ *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 16 April 1873, 1 November 1873, 5 November 1873. This last observation extends the potential significance of this church well beyond the confines of South Bethlehem.

¹⁴⁰ At least two local histories claim that the Moravian Church donated the property on which Holy Infancy was located. See Borough of South Bethlehem, *Semi-Centennial*, 44 and Peter Fritts, et al., *History of Northampton County, Pa.* (Joint Planning Commission of Lehigh-Northampton Counties), 215. However, this assertion is not supported by the title search performed by the author. Deed Book G 10, 451 states that the property was sold to "South Bethlehem Catholics and Rev. Wood, Bishop of Philadelphia" by "Joseph McMichael and wife" on September 29, 1863, for \$500.00.

¹⁴¹ Saint Michael's Hall was completed over the summer of 1874 according to Vol. 14, Deed Book 2, 398 and *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 11 August 1874. This article also mentioned its intended use. Services at Saint Michael's Hall were announced in the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 1 May 1883.

Shortly after 7 o'clock crowds of people gathered in the vicinity of the new building to witness the placing of the cross... when the base was to be placed in position by Fred. Alexander it was discovered that it would not go on the spike, the opening not being [of] sufficient width. It was then lowered to the ground and workmen proceeded to enlarge it. This was a great disappointment to the large crowd...as many of those present wanted to know why they did not go on with the work.

Soon after this mishap was corrected, it was noted that Lehigh engineering students were hard at work trying to discern the height of the 196 feet tall steeple with their surveying equipment. Another account expresses grief while distributing the news that a mason, Patrick Ryan, whom many in the town had grown quite fond of in the course of the church's construction, had passed away while visiting family in Ireland. These are but a few of over one-hundred updates given during the construction process of Holy Infancy and from the curious quantity of information it is apparent that great value and anticipation was being attached to the church's emerging presence.¹⁴²

The church that emerged was a towering Gothic Revival structure whose spire rose far above its surroundings, and it was the product of noted Philadelphia architect Edwin Forrest Durang. Durang's firm was the successor firm to that of John E. Carver, an early proponent of Gothic styling in America, and who is best known for Philadelphia's Church of Saint James the Less.¹⁴³ Durang, whose church designs remain numerous throughout southeastern Pennsylvania, was a visitor to South Bethlehem on

¹⁴² Accounts of the construction process cited include the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 22 May 1882, 26 Mar 1883, 1 May 1883, 8 July 1884, 24 March 1885, and 12 May 1886. The carpenter-work of Holy Infancy was J. S. Allam and Ritter and Beck Company of South Bethlehem, did the millwork. The stained glass was the product of Philadelphia studio, Alfred Godwin Company and the frescoed south wall and the two altar paintings that hang alongside Costaginni's "Crucifixion" are the work of "F. Beraldi" of Philadelphia. The fourteen small oil paintings representing the "stations of the cross" that hang on the east and west walls were imported from Munich, Germany.

¹⁴³ Sandra L. Tatman and Roger Moss, *Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects: 1700-1930* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1985), 133.

several occasions as Holy Infancy went up.¹⁴⁴ His design is very much in keeping with the common Irish preference for the “early period” styling of the Gothic Revival that was closely associated with the English speaking domain. Holy Infancy mimics what has been called the “English Perpendicular Style,” being essentially a large rectangular box with a prominent central tower and spire above the entrance. Although understated in terms of its massing and exterior ornamentation, its tall profile, steeply pitched roof, and large windows imposed a new order upon the area of Ward 3 that, less than a generation before, was called “shanty hill” in reference to the impoverished conditions of its Irish residents.¹⁴⁵

While unpretentious on the exterior, the rich ornament associated with the devotional culture and liturgy of Catholicism took full form within. The interior was tripartite in plan with vaulted plaster ceilings supported by a nave arcade of sixteen English Style compound piers. Two hundred and eight oak and walnut pews added to a rich, somber atmosphere of beige and brown tones; and throughout, the interior was decorated with running ornamental stenciling executed in warm shades of yellow, orange and gold. It was and remains a very worshipful atmosphere. An ornate Gothic style altar stood at the front of the sanctuary, and above the altar was perhaps the most inspiring feature of the entire edifice. Three magnificent altar paintings, one by an artist of some

¹⁴⁴ For a summary of Durang’s career see Tatman and Moss, 229-234. Also, a significant resource for understanding Durang’s impact upon the Philadelphia scene is the self-published prospectus of 1900 “Some Buildings From the Portfolio of Edwin F. Durang.” Also: James Van Trump, “The Column and The Cross: Three Victorian Classical Churches by E. F. Durang” in *The Charette*, vol. 48, no. 1 (January 1967), 9-12; and “The Gothic Fane: The Medieval Vision and Some Philadelphia Churches, 1860-1900” in *The Charette*, vol. 43, no. 9 (September 1968), 20-27. Durang visited South Bethlehem on at least two occasions to inspect the progress of the church’s construction as per the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 29 November 1884; 31 July 1884

¹⁴⁵ The Perpendicular Style is discussed in Phoebe B Stanton, *The Gothic Revival and American Church Architecture: An Episode in Taste, 1840 – 1860* (Baltimore: John’s Hopkins University Press, 1968), 225-235.

renown, adorned the walls of the apse. The central panel, representing the crucifixion, is the work of Phillippo Costaginni whose skill as a painter earned him the role of “hand picked” successor to the much revered Constantino Brumidi for the completion of several frescoes that ornament the United States Capitol building in Washington D.C.¹⁴⁶

So how did this beautiful edifice and the church body it represents serve the Irish community of South Bethlehem? Specifically, how did it make a difference in the life of those who came to South Bethlehem for work in the town’s steel mill?

The church building served the immigrant community in a number of ways directly related to its basic quality as a work of architecture. Holy Infancy was to the Irish faithful the place where God was most present. Inside the sanctuary, the central act of the faith, the mass, was carried out. During the mass it was believed that the bread and wine of the Eucharist, upon being consecrated by the priest, became the body and blood of Christ. As a consequence, the church was, in fact, graced by the material presence of Christ and as such it was venerated as literally “the house of God.” Beyond serving as simply a shelter, the church’s architecture served to emphasize the mystery of Christ’s presence by fixing one’s attention on the altar. Here one partook of the body of Christ and here, within a sacred repository known as the tabernacle, Christ, as actualized by the consecrated bread and wine, always remained present. Upon entering the sanctuary of Holy Infancy, the Eucharistic drama was emphasized for the faithful of Holy Infancy by

¹⁴⁶ Costaginni accompanied the altar painting to South Bethlehem when delivered in May of 1886 as detailed by the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 11 May 1886. Costaginni’s career as an artist and his role in the United States Capitol project is discussed in Barbara A. Wolananin, *Constantino Brumidi: Artist of the Capitol* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1998), 173-175.



Figure 21. The sanctuary of Holy Infancy displays a solemn richness. A marble, gothic-styled altar and a scene of the Crucifixion painted by Phillipò Costaginni (circa 1886) accentuate the architectural focus of the space—the presence of Christ as embodied in the Eucharist. Photograph by W. C. Carson.

the imposing Gothic altar and the emotional 19'x 8' image of the crucifixion, placed directly above.

In addition to the presence of Christ as the focus of Holy Infancy's design, the sanctuary served as the architectural setting where the Irish community bound themselves to one another spiritually. Again the Eucharist provided the activating medium. Partaking of the Eucharist was a means of engaging in both a mystical communion with the life and sufferings of Christ and those of the larger church body, including the saints

and martyrs of the past, and, as emphasized in this context, one's contemporary fellow parishioners. If taken literally one can easily see how this basic act of Catholic belief, the Eucharist, and the setting for this practice, Holy Infancy, served to tightly knit the Irish people of Holy Infancy. Therefore, the architectural icon at the corner of Fourth and Taylor must be viewed as far more than simply the Irish church—it was in fact the pivotal institution for mediating the immigrant experience.¹⁴⁷

In addition to its religious workings, Holy Infancy provided a number of important services that extend its significance beyond being simply the Irish church. In the social arena Holy Infancy assumed the mantle of welfare broker soon after it was established. By 1873 two beneficial societies, The Catholic Beneficial Society of the Church of the Holy Infancy and The Emerald Beneficial Society, were functioning under the church's auspices—helping ease the threat of lost pay to an already tenuous financial security. It should be recalled that industrial hands at the time were at the absolute mercy of employers and even the slightest economic fluctuation often resulted in massive layoffs. According to the 1870 by-laws of the earliest of these operations, The Catholic Beneficial Society of the Church of the Holy Infancy, elected members were entitled, after paying a minimal monthly due for a period of one year, to cash benefits of up to \$6.00 per week during times of sickness or disability. And upon death the member or his spouse received a payment of \$50.00 for the purpose of a “decent interment.”¹⁴⁸

Although they sound meager, such benefits provided a sense of economic security that was available to immigrant Americans by no other means and as historian Phillip Taylor

¹⁴⁷ Dolan, 224-229.

¹⁴⁸ “Constitution and By-Laws of the Catholic Beneficial Society of the Church of the Holy Infancy, Northampton County, PA” (South Bethlehem, PA: O. B. Sigley and Company, 1870), n.p.

adds, “a man with a particularly keen regard for his family’s security could obtain a sum equal to his normal weekly wage, by joining several clubs, and still pay less than a dollar a week while at work.”¹⁴⁹

The number of beneficial societies associated with the Irish church grew to four by the mid-1890’s, and accounted for some three hundred men of the parish and their families.¹⁵⁰ In addition to beneficial operations, Holy Infancy supported charitable organizations, such as the Holy Infancy Relief Society. Instead of functioning as an insurance provider, this organization worked “...for the alleviation of the wants and distress of the poor,” without a standard of membership.¹⁵¹ Beneficial and charitable operations such as these were but a few of the tools Holy Infancy utilized in stabilizing the process of immigration for its laboring flock. But as one can see such organizations were crucial in easing the disconcerting knowledge that one’s closest relatives, so traditionally important during times of hardship, were several thousand miles distant.

Further developing the value of church initiated activities; these organizations typically served a more pleasure oriented social function alongside their purpose of economic relief. Regular business meetings facilitated interaction and special occasions were routinely celebrated by these organizations. Events ranged from informal church fairs to more formal dances and anniversary celebrations but typically all placed a common emphasis on ethnic heritage. In June of 1898, The Emerald Beneficial Society, the second of Holy Infancy’s beneficial organizations, marked its 25th Anniversary with “a lavish and splendid affair” that featured Celtic song and dance. The merrymaking

¹⁴⁹ Taylor, 214.

¹⁵⁰ 1897 Annual Reports of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, report #181.

¹⁵¹ *The Globe*, 4 January 1898.

included a seemingly endless succession of folk dances including the traditional reel and jig.¹⁵²

In the process of performing their intended economic and social tasks, organizations such as these in their basic operation served another highly significant community building function. In the confines of such organizations, community leaders were often groomed for larger civic roles. The day to day management and political maneuvering inherent in such organizations often gave these men the only means of developing the skills needed to move up in the ranks, and, in some cases, leave the mill behind. Some molded their experience in church organizations to become gang bosses and foremen or outside the mill police officers, and businessmen. Once the transition to middle class employment was complete such individuals were then able to have a more substantial impact on the lives of their fellow immigrants. Here again Holy Infancy evidences this process. A South Bethlehem Irishman named James McMahon, who was an active participant in many of Holy Infancy's organizations rose from the rank of laborer for the Lehigh Zinc Company to one of the most respected citizens in South Bethlehem by the end of the 19th Century. McMahon was a native of Limerick, Ireland, and after a brief stop in Philadelphia he began his ascent in South Bethlehem in 1855 as a 21 year-old assistant to Samuel Wetherill while the later conducted experiments in the production of spelter. In 1881 McMahon was appointed superintendent of the zinc works and 1889 he was appointed to the federal position of postmaster of South Bethlehem. The close connection McMahon had to the inner life of his church, Holy Infancy, and the meaning the immigrant church held for him is quietly revealed in his last will and

¹⁵² *The Globe*, 16 June 1898. This article interestingly states that the organization insures "some 1800

testament. In it McMahon very clearly entrusts the wellbeing and guidance of his family in his absence to the parish rector, "Father Phil," Rev. Phillip McEnroe.¹⁵³



Figure 22. James P. McMahon was an active member of Holy Infancy. Born in Limerick, Ireland. McMahon came to America in the early 1850's and rose from an unskilled position in the zincworks to civic prominence. Source: Borough of South Bethlehem, *Semi Centennial*, n.p.

Concluding an examination of Holy Infancy, in which admittedly much has been omitted, a broader importance of this institution to religious landscape's growth provides

parishioners."

¹⁵³ McMahon's affiliation with the church of the Holy Infancy was mentioned in the special edition of *The Globe*, 3 October 1915, in honor of the town's 50th anniversary and Fritts, 215. His obituary in the *Daily Times*, 15 October 1896, gives a full accounting of his time in South Bethlehem. Also: James McMahon, "Last Will and Testament." File #13798.

a convenient building block for the development of the next case study. In addition to its significance to the Irish community, Holy Infancy played a vital role in fostering the organization of several of South Bethlehem's other immigrant churches. Holy Infancy was typically the place that new immigrants started their religious lives in South Bethlehem. The church often offered mass in languages other than English and, on several occasions, a separate space was made available to ethnic groups wishing to organize a church of their own. The basement served as the first church home for many of the non-Irish faithful associated with New Immigration. During their efforts to organize and construct a church, the basement of Holy Infancy often provided the first vessel for these groups to cultivate the particular ethno-religious customs that they brought to South Bethlehem from the Old World. At least three congregations, Saint Joseph's Roman Catholic (1914), Saint Josaphat's Ukrainian Catholic (1916), and Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic (1917), were first organized in these quarters and newspaper accounts strongly suggest that an additional three have direct connections to the Irish parish. The Pastor of Holy Infancy, Phillip McEnroe, was routinely engaged as the officiating priest for the services of consecrating the churches New Immigrant groups built. Perhaps more telling of the intimate connection between Holy Infancy and numerous other immigrant churches is that the ceremonial parades that accompanied such an occasion typically emerged from within the sanctuary of Holy Infancy. At the corner of Fourth and Taylor groups such as the Slovenians and Italian Catholics of South Bethlehem took to the city's streets and performed a well choreographed spectacle filled

with music, marching and religious pageantry; and began anew in a distant sector of town.¹⁵⁴

Holy Ghost Roman Catholic Church (German, Austrian)

The German presence in the Bethlehem area is at the core of the region's history. The Moravians were of German extraction and large additions of other German natives during the period of Old Immigration made the language and many of the customs and traditions these people brought with them a common experience in the Lehigh Valley. Although most represented a variety of Protestant affiliations it may be recalled that a small contingent of German Catholics were included in the early tide of German immigration and that they were able to establish a church of their own in north Bethlehem by the mid 1850's. The frame chapel these people constructed at the northern fringe of town provided a very limited start for all Catholics under part-time pastoral care for many years.¹⁵⁵

During the mid-1880's, as New Immigration began to stir, Germans came to America as never before and, unlike earlier years, a large measure of this influx was Roman Catholic. Contributing to the exodus of German Catholics during the 1880's and 90's was a phenomenon of German history known as the "Kulturkampf" in which Roman Catholics were openly persecuted and their faith actively suppressed and as a result many

¹⁵⁴ Services were conducted in French and Italian as early as 1886 according to the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 28 Aug 1886. German services were conducted on at least one occasion at Holy Infancy during the construction of the German Catholic Church, Saint Bernard's as per the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 28 May 1887. The Italian church, Our Lady of Pompeii, Ward 5, celebrated the dedication of its new church with such a parade in July of 1902 as did the Slovenian/Croatian parish of Saint Joseph's, Ward 4, in July of 1914 as per the *The Globe*, 17 July 1902; 5 July 1914.

started anew in South Bethlehem.¹⁵⁶ The town's rapidly expanding industrial base beckoned many who left an industrial nation with skills they could put to good use in the town's mills and factories. Their choice of residence in South Bethlehem and the fact that a large share were Catholic is evidenced by the religious landscape's first direct consequence of New Immigration, Saint Bernard's. By the mid 1880's, the frame church north of the Lehigh was not only inconvenient to those settling in South Bethlehem but also very inadequate to serve a rapidly expanding membership. As a result, permission was requested and granted by the Archbishop to rebuild in South Bethlehem.¹⁵⁷

Saint Bernard's, now known as Holy Ghost, took shape in 1887 on the southern edge of heavily German Ward 2 and the impressive complex of buildings in place today offers a full story of their history since that time. German Catholics present a unique story to evaluate. Their history in South Bethlehem transitions the "old" and "new" periods of immigration and in many ways this group maneuvered both worlds. They were German speaking, but as Roman Catholics, the people of Saint Bernard's represented only a small share of the overall German contingent in South Bethlehem; and as German Catholics, they could not pursue their particular blend of Catholic worship within the confines of Irish Holy Infancy. They were not forced to internalize their experience to the same extent as the ethnic groups yet to arrive in South Bethlehem, as evidenced by their settling in Ward 2 instead of the undeveloped eastern end of town. German Catholics did, however, make the critical "national" difference by defining the

¹⁵⁵ The name of the first church was Nativity Church, which was the same name incidentally chosen later by the Episcopal community for their church in South Bethlehem. The church was located at the corner of Union and Radley Streets, Billinger, 4.

¹⁵⁶ Dolan, 129-131.

¹⁵⁷ The relationship of Saint Bernard's to the first Catholic community in Bethlehem and Father Korves' petition to build in South Bethlehem are detailed in Billinger, 4

Catholic presence as multi-ethnic. The architectural heritage the German Catholic community left behind in South Bethlehem well evidences the emergence of the immigrant church as a more centripetal, consolidating institution and contributes much to the explanation of the ethnic parish as the immigrant community's primary source of stability. Inside and out, the buildings impart the one time presence of a people that valued the church's ability to nurture a particular set of values and interests and cultivate them in their children. The history of Holy Ghost and the integrity of its architectural presence in South Bethlehem highlight the German community's firm commitment to the parish school as the primary means of educating their children, a strong belief in the devotional aspect of Catholicism, and the role of the church in fostering the culturally valued traditions of art and music.

In March of 1886 word was spread in South Bethlehem that only after fully paying the cost of the recently purchased property in Ward 2 would construction be allowed to move forward on the new church.¹⁵⁸ This proclamation met with ample response. In May 1887 construction got underway and less than a year later, amid much talk of the recent death of King William I of Germany, the 20' x 80' brick chapel was dedicated for worship.¹⁵⁹ After having been served by the English speaking clergy of

¹⁵⁸ *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 4 March 1886.

¹⁵⁹ The dedication ceremonies of March 18, 1888 were announced in the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 14 March 1888. The details of this event were not covered in the press, apparently being overshadowed by a railroad accident involving a prominent citizen of South Bethlehem, E.P. Wilbur. Wilbur was the nephew of Asa Packer and heavily involved with almost every major entrepreneurial and philanthropic endeavor in South Bethlehem including the railroad, iron works, Lehigh University and the area's first hospital. Wilbur was also responsible for establishing the first banking venture in South Bethlehem. The tragic wreck that subverted a mention of the dedication of Saint Bernard's occurred in rural Georgia and claimed the life of Wilbur's 17-year-old son Merritt. The tragedy was first covered in the *Bethlehem Daily Times* on Monday, 19 March 1888, the day after the scheduled consecration ceremonies and the newspaper tracked its importance for many days. Sources of information on the dedication include the Archdiocese of Philadelphia Scrapbook Collection, SB #3, 1 of 5, 66; *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 10 and 12 March 1888.

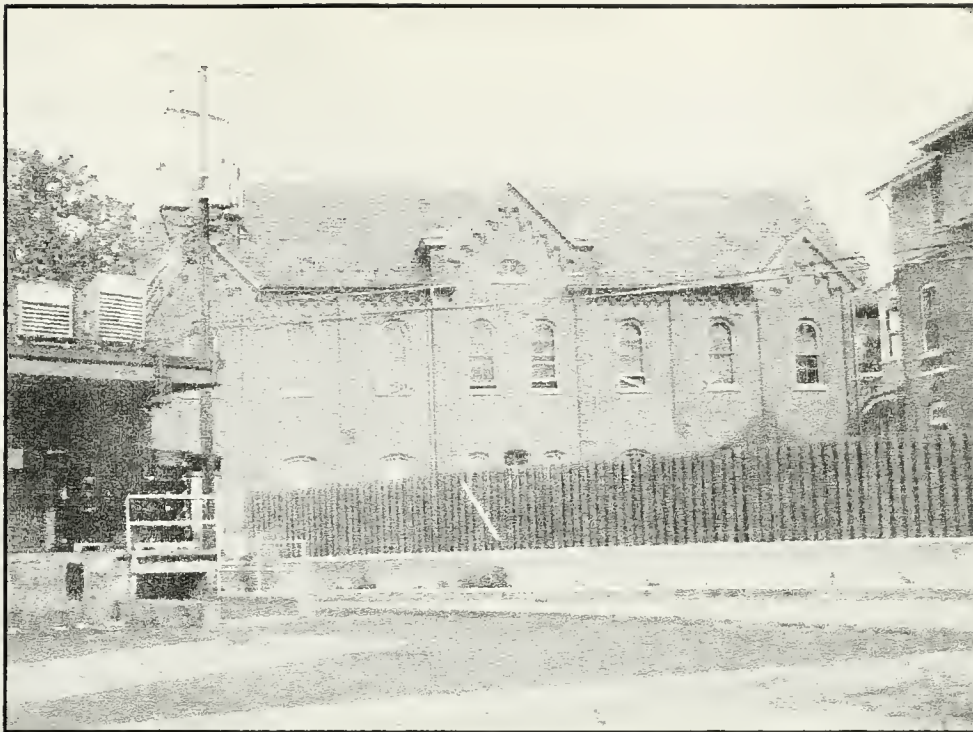


Figure 23. Saint Bernard's Roman Catholic Church (circa 1886) in Ward 2, the first church and combination school of the German Catholic population in South Bethlehem. Photograph by W. C. Carson.

Holy Infancy in South Bethlehem, or having crossed the Lehigh for irregularly scheduled services in German, the congregation now had a church of their own nearby and the growth that followed was immense. Germans continued to pour into the region and by the middle years of the 1890's this influx was augmented by a substantial share of Austrian natives who, being almost entirely Roman Catholic, began worshipping at Saint Bernard's. Hungarian immigration also began to impact South Bethlehem and many started their religious experience in South Bethlehem at Saint Bernard's.¹⁶⁰ Because of the Austria-Hungary Imperial Alliance, Hungarians were probably more familiar with

Saint Bernard's was designed by L. S. Jacoby of Allentown and built by J. S. Allam of South Bethlehem according to the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 10 May 1887; 1 July 1887.

German than English, and the flavor of the German liturgy more closely resembled their own than did that of Irish, Holy Infancy. Less than 10 years after this coterie of European natives began worshipping at Saint Bernard's the large basement portion of a second-generation church was completed in 1886 and outfitted for the celebration of mass.¹⁶¹ The basement chapel is an important ingredient of this church's story for in it is addressed an intense patience on the part of the German community that derived from a particular vision of what they wanted this second church to be—magnificent! The basement chapel was the first step in an extended process of achieving a finished upper church of exceptional distinction that fully represented the aesthetic values and religious traditions of a German Catholic parish. Nothing would be spared, except perhaps their comfort in the interim, in fully realizing their new monument, which, at some point it was decided, would be called "Church of the Holy Ghost."¹⁶²

Before proceeding with an examination of the congregation's second house of worship, the first building deserves emphasis because underneath its roof South Bethlehem's first parochial school was initiated. The school was an integral part of the German congregation's plans in South Bethlehem from its beginning, and in the first building almost half of its space was given over solely for the purposes of education. The legendary German fascination with learning is reflected in this structure. In the original design of the 20' x 80' chapel, the space was divided into two floors, the first floor with

¹⁶⁰ The Austrian presence at Holy Ghost was described Yates, *Bethlehem of Pennsylvania*, 125. Hungarians were first mentioned among those attending services at Holy Ghost in the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 21 April 1888.

¹⁶¹ Plans for the second church were announced in the *Daily Times*, 15 June 1895. A detailed financial accounting of the completed basement/sanctuary construction costs was included in the church's 1897 Annual Report. The accounting, penned by Rev. Aloysius Fretz in March of 1896, states the total cost of the basement was \$10,830.00. It also states that an additional \$4,000.00 was paid for an additional plot of land adjacent to the church; 1897 Annual Report of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, report #182.

low ceilings served as classroom space, and the upper floor functioned as a sanctuary. The sanctuary was surprisingly spacious with high ceilings and a rear gallery for a second level of seating. The summer following the completion of the combination church and school building, the congregation provided the resources necessary to construct a convent to house three “women religious” to teach their children in German.¹⁶³ As it had in the church, space quickly became restricted. When the basement portion of the new church was placed in service, the entire first building was given over for the use of the school. This too was a short lived improvement and before going ahead with the construction of the upper church a large, architecturally designed and fully equipped school building was constructed by the parish. The decision to sacrifice the completion of the upper church for the purpose of a first rate school facility was a highly democratic process, and it reveals much about the parishioner’s priorities. A congregational meeting, following mass on March 5, 1899, initiated the drive for the new school. The decision was unanimous—the church was postponed.¹⁶⁴ Unlike the English-speaking Irish who were more willing to join the mainstream world of public education, German Catholics felt that to lose the language was to lose the religion and vice versa; and to lose the two was to deny one’s identity.¹⁶⁵ The Irish of South Bethlehem, as evidenced by published comments by the clergy of Holy Infancy, felt no need to organize a parochial school for maintaining their way of life and only did so in 1892, after being directed to do so by the Archbishop in 1892.¹⁶⁶ When Holy Ghost School was completed in 1900,¹⁶⁷ the student

¹⁶² The first reference to the church as “Church of the Holy Ghost” in *The Globe* was 4 December 1908.

¹⁶³ Billinger. 19.

¹⁶⁴ *The Globe*, 6 March 1899.

¹⁶⁵ Dolan, 162-163.

¹⁶⁶ A directive was issued by Archbishop of Philadelphia...According to the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 26 June 1892, Rev. Phillip McEnroe of Holy Infancy did not think a parochial school was necessary for his

population numbered 210 and in the next 10 years, more than doubled. By 1920, it enrolled over 600 students.¹⁶⁸

The attractive Romanesque-styled school that served the German Catholic Church of South Bethlehem is today largely unchanged from the time of its dedication in 1900,



Figure 24. Holy Ghost School (circa 1900) was designed by architect and South Bethlehem resident A. W. Leh. The German Catholic population of South Bethlehem was the first to initiate a parochial school in the community and believed firmly in its ability to foster both a spiritual and worldly education while steeping the pupil in his or her Germanic heritage. Photograph by W. C. Carson.

and its presence communicates much about the history of this religious institution. The parishioners that organized after mass in March of 1899 made a pragmatic and sensible choice. By setting aside their obvious desire to raise in South Bethlehem an impressive

parish. In fact in his opinion the public school system was preferable. However, under direct orders he moved ahead with plans and according to the *Daily Times*, 29 August 1894. Holy Infancy School opened in September of 1894.

¹⁶⁷ *Catholic Standard and Times*, 1 September 1900.

¹⁶⁸ Enrollment figures taken from 1900 Annual Report of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, report #202; 1910 Annual Report of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, report #262; 1920 Annual Report of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia (report not numbered).

landmark of their presence, they clearly understood the long-term impact of a peer-oriented education. An education in the German tongue and emphasizing Germanic heritage would provide in the long-term stability, not only for the church but also the entire German Catholic community of South Bethlehem. Interestingly, once the new school was completed, a large share of the first building was maintained as a library thereby adding another layer to the story of Holy Ghost as one emphasizing the parishes commitment to the education of their children. Not until late 1905 was the campaign to complete the long desired upper church revived.¹⁶⁹

On June 3, 1906, the congregation of Holy Ghost celebrated the laying of a cornerstone for its third church construction campaign; the long awaited upper church designed by South Bethlehem resident A. W. Leh. The effects of a dark stormy sky and rain shower was not enough to dampen the spirits of a large gathering of onlookers and high ranking clergy as the occasion was marked by a festive parade put on by the church's many religious societies and beneficial organizations. Parishioner and builder, Benedict H. Birkel, laid the cornerstone of the church.¹⁷⁰ The church gradually took shape over a period of four years with a pause during the summer of 1909 to pay the debt incurred by the congregation to that point. On September 26, 1910, shortly following the end of the first of several extended and violent labor strikes to both divide and unite South Bethlehem's population in the pre-union era, the local newspaper, announcing the

¹⁶⁹ The continued use of the combination church and school as a library was detailed in Billinger, 19. Plans to complete the upper church were announced in *The Globe*, 4 December 1905. This account states that the church "will be Romanesque in design." When ground was broken on the basement church in 1895 it was intended that the upper church would be "Gothic in style" as per the *Daily Times*, 15 June 1895.

¹⁷⁰ *The Globe*, 4 June 1906.

completion of the church, appropriately read “SOLEMN DEDICATION AFTER LONG STRUGGLE.”¹⁷¹

What was accomplished over the four years of construction and nearly fifteen years of patient worship in a basement chapel must have seemed awesome to those entering the church for the first time. Watching the massive Romanesque edifice take shape from outside, however, must have given them warning of what they were to witness inside. The exterior, with its double towered facade and stout round

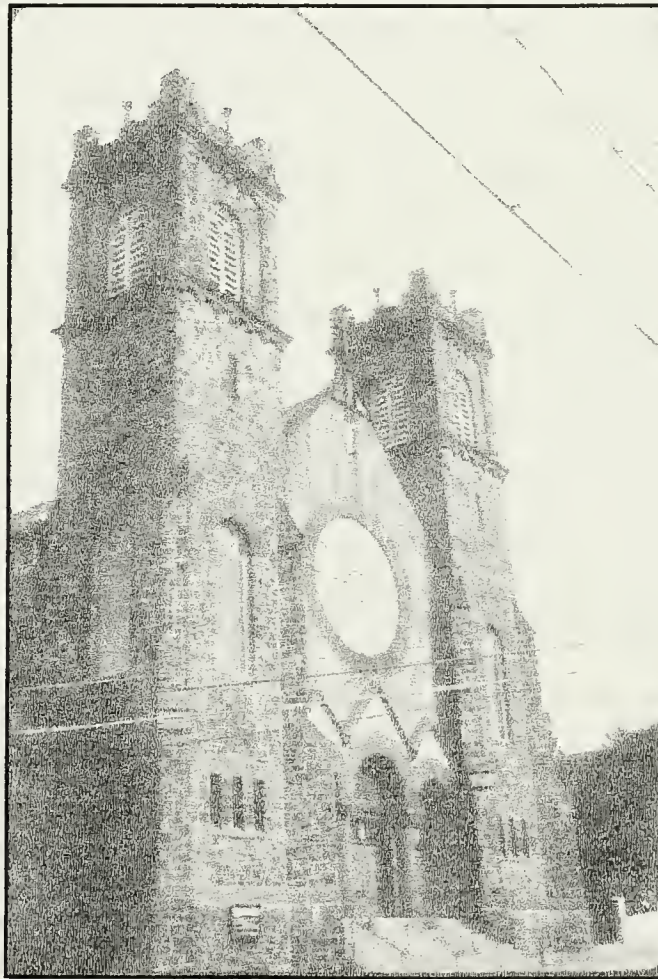


Figure 25. Holy Ghost Roman Catholic Church (circa 1910) as it appears today. The church displays the rich Germanic influence of the “Rundbogenstil” mode of 19th Century German architecture. The Church was designed by architect A. W. Leh. Photograph by W. C. Carson.

¹⁷¹ *The Globe*, 26 September 1910.

archwork, displayed the particular influence of 19th Century Romanesque Revival architecture of German origin called “Rundbogenstil”, or round-arched style of design. This style of architecture was vigorously promoted by the Benedictine Order in and around the heavily Catholic Rhineland and the cultural and religious center of Munich, Bavaria, during these years.¹⁷² It is important not to simply characterize Holy Ghost as Romanesque Revival because doing so would be to miss the conscious choice the people of this parish and the architect made in creating an immediate and tangible link to their heritage. This building cannot be mistaken for the common use of Romanesque forms by American architects during the late 19th and early 20th Centuries because it employs a strict code of symmetry and severity that does not stray from its intent by adding contradictory details of other architectural styles. One wonderful example of the deliberate nature of the church’s exterior design was the overt use of historically Germanic detailing in the columns and capitals that flank the broad west entry arcade.

The rich associations of ethnicity and culture that are so readily apparent on the church’s exterior were taken even further in the ornate interior that was realized at Holy Ghost. What was displayed inside was again a product of the architectural heritage left behind in central Europe and an attempt on the part of the German Catholics who settled in South Bethlehem to mirror that architectural heritage as best they could. The interior of Holy Ghost, crafted in a Baroque manner, was a direct reflection of church design in the southern regions of Germany and Austria. The basic plan was based upon the

¹⁷² Vern Rippley, “The View from Oben: The German Monarchy Builds in America,” Society of Architectural Historians, Philadelphia, April 1994. (Philadelphia, PA: Partners for Sacred Places, Information Clearinghouse, 1999, Photocopied), n.p.



Figure 26. The column and capital reveal the intent in the design of Holy Ghost to create a monument of German architectural tradition. The foliated motif used here is a direct interpretation of medieval German Romanesque construction. Photograph by W. C. Carson.

Catholic liturgical demands of a processional center aisle from the west entrance that culminates in a union with the high altar at its eastern extent. Surrounding this standard arrangement, however, was a display of artistic expression that was unmatched by any other church in South Bethlehem upon its dedication and an expression that continued to unfold for many years to come. The appearance presented by the vaulted interior, and its extensive assemblage of devotional statuary, much of it imported from Austrian studios, was described as “cathedral like” and “of striking artistic excellence.” Large side altars

featured hand painted statues of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint Joseph, and the sanctuary walls were hung with haute relief Stations of the Cross representing the events leading to Christ's crucifixion in Jerusalem. The architectural focus of the interior was an elaborate baldachin standing 42' tall and surmounted by a life-size representation of the crucifixion.¹⁷³ By 1920, ribbed clear glass, mentioned in the press account of the dedication, was replaced with brilliant stained glass imported from Munich and the statuary was augmented with several additions.¹⁷⁴

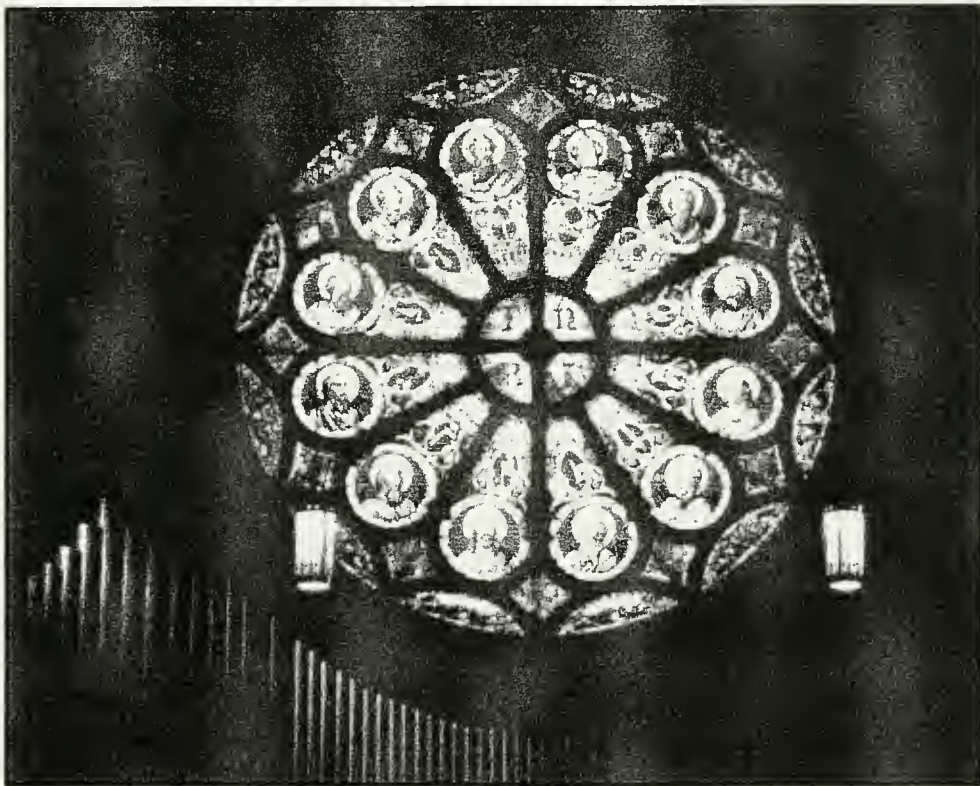


Figure 27. The large stained glass wheel window that illuminates the choir loft of Holy Ghost Church measures 14 feet in diameter and depicts in portraiture the twelve apostles of Christ. The window is an impressive example of German crafted stained glass, having been produced and imported from Munich, Bavaria, around 1920. Photograph by W. C. Carson.

¹⁷³ *The Globe*, 26 September 1910.

¹⁷⁴ Billinger, 15-18.

The extent to which the sanctuary decor of Holy Ghost was realized explains much about the artistic values of those who worshipped there but also it informs us of the manner of Catholicism the German Catholics practiced and their intense desire for maintaining this mode of worship. To the protestant community the sanctuary must have seemed strange, almost incomprehensible, and it was probably perceived as tawdry and cluttered. Conversely, to the parishioners of Holy Ghost it manifested the exuberance of Christianity and the life-like statuary and painted images were valued as objects of religious devotion through which one could communicate directly with God. The culture of Devotionalism, as Baroque styling in general, was heavily promoted by the Catholic Church in the regions of southern and central Europe during the Counter Reformation Era, growing from the desire to return the experience of religion to a personal, sensory level. People would often utter prayers, perform ritual activities before the statues, and light a small candle as they departed as a lasting symbol of their prayers and service of devotion.¹⁷⁵

The deep-seated meaning of these practices to the German-speaking faithful of Holy Ghost was revealed early on in South Bethlehem. Shortly after the first combination church and school was completed in 1887, special services were held for the consecration of the congregations first piece of devotional statuary, a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary. As a simple account of the event states “there was a large attendance, the little church being almost unable to hold all.”¹⁷⁶ It is of interest to note that the fully realized sanctuary that began to take shape in the fall of 1910 prominently

¹⁷⁵ Dolan. 229-231 and Scilliano 9-17.

¹⁷⁶ *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 7 May 1888.



Figure 28. Devotional statuary in the sanctuary of Holy Ghost, depicting the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Photograph by W. C. Carson.

displays a life size statue of Saint Stephen, a saint of particular meaning to people of Hungarian extraction, who accounted for a portion of Holy Ghost's laity. Devotionalism permeated every facet of the Catholic Church well into the 20th Century from the religious arena to the social arena, though the heart of the phenomenon was expressed through environments such as the sanctuary of Holy Ghost. Holy Ghost largely remains as the German, Austrian and Hungarian immigrants conceived it and as such is an appropriate "window" through which their presence can be observed. One can easily

imagine that here many poor, industrial workers and their families routinely sought guidance through the difficult times of their dependence on the iron and steel industry.

One such turbulent time in the history of South Bethlehem, the lengthy labor strikes of 1910, brings forward in an examination of Holy Ghost, another form of guidance that the immigrant church offered its people—the parish priest. During a time in which Bethlehem Steel virtually controlled the workings of the town, either directly or indirectly, few figures dared to speak out about the company's treatment of its employees, much less openly support the worker's efforts to organize labor unions. After thousands of workers walked off the job in February of 1910 demanding better pay and a workweek more bearable than the typical 6 day, 12 hour affair, the company ground to a virtual halt. Intolerant of labor's efforts to organize and to challenge company policy, which was perceived as a socialist threat, labor was dealt with viciously in South Bethlehem. Mounted troopers disbursed gatherings with violent, and on one occasion, deadly force and the response of the town's government and commercial sectors lent little support to a disruption at the mill that endangered their livelihoods. The pastor of Holy Ghost, Father Aloysius Fretz, and a handful of other clergy, all representing ethnic factions of New Immigration and all Roman Catholic, nevertheless did so, at a time when at best the repercussions of such action were uncertain. Through both public speeches and church sermons Fretz, a native of French occupied Alsace, emerged as a stabilizing presence in South Bethlehem at a highly volatile moment in the town's growth. Having walked off his job as a bobbin winder in a German carpet mill at age 12, Fretz apparently understood the frustrations of low wages, long hours and intolerable working conditions, but urged all to whom he spoke to gather peacefully, and avoid the understandable

tendency to act out with hostility. Father Fretz blasted the steel company for both its treatment of the workers inside the mill and its tactics in dealing with the strikers, while at the same time he admonished those among the organizers who espoused socialist or revolutionary ideologies. Addressing a crowd of strikers Fretz further cautioned the strikers to avoid the potentially divisive effects of differing occupation, social class, ethnicity, and religion and urged the men to “stick and win.” He closed his comments to a particularly boisterous gathering in a very pious manner stating, “The time may come when one or some of you may be in dire want, you know where I live, the German Priest, and as long as I have a crust of bread you shall have part of it.”

During the pre-union era of 1910, South Bethlehem, and American society in general, was still coming to grips with the impact of industrialization on the liberties and well being of the individual. The risk that Father Fretz took in firmly expressing his views was highly admirable and served to foster a spirit of conviction among his flock and the working class immigrant community at large. It should be noted that some historians consider the 1910 uprising in South Bethlehem a pivotal event in the ultimate success of unionizing the iron and steel industry.¹⁷⁷

The most appropriate means of concluding an examination of Holy Ghost is to return to an aspect of the German Catholic community’s social life that served to maintain the traditions and customs they brought to America from Europe. At the organizational level the parishioners of Holy Ghost were very active. By the early

¹⁷⁷ The 1910 strike lasted 108 days, between February and May, and its progress was covered daily by *The Globe*. Father Fretz’s remarks were taken from the *Globe*, 15 February 1910; 28 February 1910; 1 March 1910. Fretz’s place of birth was taken from Archdiocese of Philadelphia “Record of Priests” Files. Other clergy that backed the strikers included Rev. Alexander Varlaky of the Hungarian parish, Saint John Capistrano. The importance of the South Bethlehem strike 1910 is discussed by Brody, 161-162. The

1900's, four beneficial societies and a number of devotional societies reported high levels of membership and many were very active at the local, regional and national level. The membership of the men's organizations was mostly comprised of laborers in the steel mill with a "gang boss" or "machinist" being the occasional exception. In addition to providing sickness and death benefits to their members they were also providing home mortgages.¹⁷⁸ As impressive as the German community's efforts in these endeavors were, their energies never lapsed in their devotion to the arts. The Holy Ghost choir was highly regarded in the South Bethlehem community. In a region that already boasted an acclaimed tradition of its interest in fine music, the all volunteer Maennerchor (men's choir), numbering around 50 voices, was a regularly noted topic in the local press. As other immigrant groups completed a succession of ethnic parishes in the early 1900's the choir was asked regularly to participate by providing sacred music for the consecration ceremonies. Father Fretz himself was apparently musical, listing a piano as among his only possessions in his yearly reports to the diocese, and he invested a considerable sum over the years to insure that the musicians had highly skilled and professional leadership. On an occasion of hosting a state convention of German Catholic religious organizations and clergy in May 1907, the Holy Ghost choir performed a solemn requiem High Mass followed shortly after by a heart-warming round of songs for the conventions closing

strike led to the first federal investigation of the employment practices and safety conditions of United States iron and steel industry.

¹⁷⁸ The beneficial societies of Holy Ghost Church were Saint Joseph's Beneficial Society, Saint Bernard's Beneficial Society, Knights of Saint George, and Franz Joseph Beneficial Society. The last obviously references the Habsburg Monarchy of Austria-Hungary (and interestingly its name was changed upon the outbreak of World War I). The names of these organizations and membership figures were listed in the 1900 Annual Report of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, report #202; 1910 Annual Report of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, report #262; and 1920 Annual Report of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, (report not numbered). The service of providing home mortgages by one of these organizations was taken from Billinger, 50. Many of the founding members of these organizations were listed in Billinger 50-53, and their occupations were determined using various city directories.

ceremonies. Poised along side a banner that read “Deutschland Mein[e] Mutter, Amerika Mein[e] Braut!” (Germany my mother, America my bride!), the members sang German favorites such as “Nach der Melodie” and “Die Wacht am Rhein” as well as the national hymn of their adopted land “The Star Spangled Banner.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹ Details of the Holy Ghost Maennerchor were taken from *The Globe*, 17 July 1902; 5 July 1905; 27-29 May 1907; 20 December 1909; 20 January 1910; 17 March 1910; 3 June 1910. The salary expense of a professional choir director and knowledge of the piano, claimed as one of Fretz’s the few belongings, were taken from 1897 Annual Report of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, report #182; 1910 Annual Report of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, report #262. Also: Margaret Mies Harris, interview by author, 28 January 2000.

Saints Cyril and Methodius Roman Catholic Church (Slovak)

Slovak immigrants began to settle in South Bethlehem around 1880. Their presence traces its origin to a small band of immigrants from Upper Hungary; the northern most provinces of what was then the Hungarian Empire. Soon after arriving in South Bethlehem these men had the good fortune of making the acquaintance of a

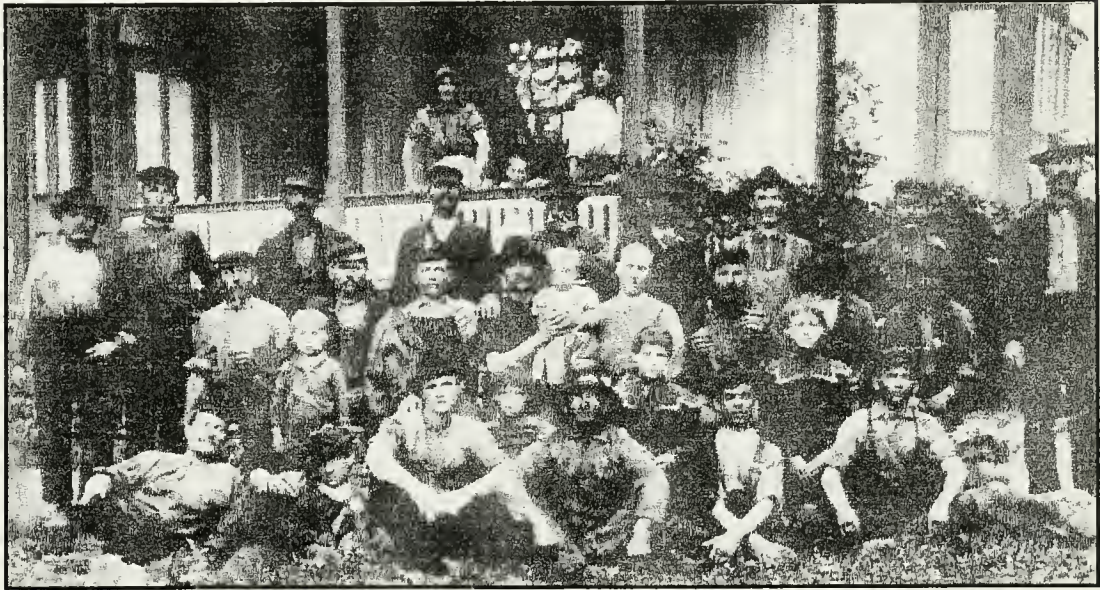


Figure 29. A boarding house of New Immigrants in South Bethlehem in town's east-end (circa 1895). Thirty men women and children are pictured here. The boarding house was often a newcomer's first place of residence and like work in the mills, sleeping quarters were often occupied in shifts. Source: Stewart, 46.

Czech-speaking Moravian physician, Dr. Brauner, who understood their native language.

Dr. Brauner secured them employment at the Bethlehem Iron Company and by 1882,¹⁸⁰ a small Slovak enclave began to emerge around several boarding houses straddling the

¹⁸⁰ Stolarik, 27. Stolarik's research was based upon a locally published, 1921, account of the Slovak community in South Bethlehem, *Dejiny Bethlehenských Slovákov v Spojených Štátoch Severnej meriky*. The account was written and compiled by the sons and daughters of the original settlers, and thus its observations are within the living memory of the authors. This source is available only in Slovak. The account of Dr. Brauner was confirmed by Rev. Monsignor Michael J. Chaback, interview by author, 16 September 1999. Chaback is a "son" of the parish and is a fourth generation South Bethlehem Slovak whose ancestors were among the first to arrive.

boundary between Ward 3 and yet undefined Ward 4.¹⁸¹ Although the eastward pattern of settlement was contradicted somewhat by the German Catholic community, it is clearly evidenced by the Slovak population. The large share of these immigrants were Roman Catholic, and they began their spiritual lives in South Bethlehem attending services at Holy Infancy in Ward 3.¹⁸² In April of 1888 special services for the Slovak community were initiated at Holy Ghost. On a monthly basis Monsignor William Heinen, a German, made his way from the coal regions to South Bethlehem to offer mass for the Slovaks in their native tongue.¹⁸³ Whether or not the Slovaks traveled the long distance to Holy Ghost in Ward 2 between Father Heinen's visits is uncertain; however, such a scenario seems likely. Having left a region of Europe dominated by Hungarian culture the form of worship at Holy Ghost, which counted a small number of ethnic Hungarians among its members, was certainly more familiar to the Slovak's than the form of worship at Holy Infancy. But even this arrangement would ultimately not have suited the Slovaks. Years of cultural oppression under Hungarian rule had generated in the Slovak mind of the late 19th Century a strident ethnocentric disposition and assuming a minority presence at German, Austrian and Hungarian Holy Ghost would certainly have been considered further subjugation.¹⁸⁴ A Slovak church was thus inevitable.

¹⁸¹ The area of Slovak settlement in South Bethlehem was noted routinely in the press for the disturbances and unusual events that occurred there. Slovak immigrants were generally labeled Hungarians based upon nation of origin. Names used to describe the area included "Hundom," "Hungarian Patch," and "the lower end." See the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 4 February 1889; 28 July 1891; *Daily Times*, 30 April 1895. Also Stolarik, 27-28.

¹⁸² No other Catholic Church existed in South Bethlehem until 1888 with the dedication of St. Bernard's. A few newspaper accounts suggest a Slovak presence at Holy Infancy including the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 20 August 1891. Stolarik, 44. Again, Stolarik's information comes from the 1921 account and its accuracy was confirmed by Monsignor Chaback, interview by author, 27 January 2000.

¹⁸³ *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 21 April 1888.

¹⁸⁴ Chaback, interview by author, 27 January 2000.

Shortly after organizing a fraternal organization, the movement to establish a church home of their own quickly took hold. By the spring of 1891 construction had begun. The church, which they chose to call Saints Cyril and Methodius in tribute to the patron saints of the Slavic Christian world, was completed by late fall of the same year.¹⁸⁵ Although this first church no longer stands today in South Bethlehem its presence, assumed by a new larger edifice in the early 1900's, became the focal point of the Catholic Slovak population of South Bethlehem. The parish of Saints Cyril and Methodius grew from the decisive interest and action of those it was to serve but, once it was given life, the church quickly became the controlling force in melding an ethnic Slovak community in Ward 4 and preserving its ethnic character.

Before an effective case study of Saints Cyril and Methodius can be presented it is critical to underscore the circumstances of the Slovak community in South Bethlehem prior to the church's founding. The Slovak community, for several years following their arrival in the town, lived what can decisively be labeled a "hand to mouth existence." It is a fact that a Slovak residential quarter had emerged by the mid 1880's and that among its residences were a few prosperous businessmen, yet the ghetto like conditions that most of these people endured was a subject of public concern as late as the 1890's. Dirty, mud-brick dwellings along the banks of the Lehigh River, just outside the ironworks, served as housing for many; and occasionally small groups of men, living entirely out of doors, took refuge in the wooded eastern edge of town.¹⁸⁶ Public concern, however, was rarely expressed as compassion but instead as extreme bigotry. Even as a stable "foreign community" began to emerge in the 1890's, it was often the focus of contemptuous

¹⁸⁵ *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 25 May 1891.

mockery and the Slovak's strange ways were actively misrepresented. During the summer and fall of 1891 a favorite topic of ridicule in the local press was the Slovak wedding celebration. Rarely were the nuptial ceremonies discussed in these accounts and when mentioned the preferable focus was the "stout" mother-in-law or the attractive bridesmaid that was "comely, coy and not at all resembling a Hungarian."¹⁸⁷

Instead, the reporter's attention typically centered on the all night "feast" that followed the wedding ceremony. This event was commonly derided for its paltry atmosphere that included folk dancing, revelerous and "discordant" Gypsy music, and the prodigious consumption of "bolinki," a traditional Slovak spirit they fermented in their cellars. The smoke-saturated air was "...unbearable to all but a Hun" and for the press, a truly savory affair always included a brawl. In addition to the intolerant reception of Slovak wedding traditions, Easter, the most important religious holiday of the year, which they celebrated heartily, was typically considered an occasion for which "...it might be well for the police to double its force in the third ward."¹⁸⁸ In contrast to the kindness of the legendary Dr. Brauner, South Bethlehem, in general, was far from hospitable to Slovaks in the late 1800's and although a job at the Steel may have held greater promise than remaining in Europe, the pressures to conform and blend in continued. The coercive force of Americanization may not have matched the oppressive tyranny of Magyarization but, once again, Slovaks found themselves in defense of their valued cultural traditions.

¹⁸⁶ *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 28 July 1884; 4 February 1889.

¹⁸⁷ *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 16 September 1891.

¹⁸⁸ *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 31 March 1891; 14, 15 and 16 July 1891; 5,7 and 11 August 1891; 16 September 1891; 20 January 1892.

The seminal event in the defensive struggle was the founding of the group's first fraternal organization, the Society of Saint John the Baptist, in March of 1888. Meeting in a hotel and saloon owned by George Zboyovsky, one of the few prosperous Slovaks in South Bethlehem, it was decided to organize a society, as the Germans and Irish had done before them, to provide sick and death benefits for its members and their families.¹⁸⁹ This group soon reorganized under the name Saints Cyril and Methodius and by the spring of 1891¹⁹⁰, with the devout assistance of the German priest from the coal regions, Monsignor Heinen, the fraternity laid the corner stone of a church bearing the same title, Saints Cyril and Methodius. This occasion was a monumental achievement for not only the Slovak community of South Bethlehem but also the Slovak presence throughout the region. Special train service for the occasion was run by the Lehigh Valley Railroad in order to accommodate the more than one thousand nationals from the coal regions that wanted to attend the event. All told, some 2,500 people gathered on the increasing slope of South Mountain in a remote section of the borough to witness the solemn beginnings of the regions first Slovak parish.¹⁹¹ A simple, brick church, measuring 41'x 86,' was completed in less than six months and for the occasion of its consecration the surrounding fields and hillside were once again filled with throngs of cheerful observers.¹⁹²

The Slovak population in South Bethlehem grew aggressively after the consecration of this modest church—its mere presence was likely responsible for a

¹⁸⁹ *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 6 March 1888. Although Stolarik claims the group did not organize until 1890 this newspaper account refutes this assertion. It gives quite a bit of detail as to members, purpose, and benefits.

¹⁹⁰ Stolarik, 34; Saints Cyril and Methodius Roman Catholic Church, "A Century of Faith: 1891- 1991" (Souvenir Booklet, 1991), n.p.

¹⁹¹ *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 25 May 1891.

¹⁹² Archdiocese of Philadelphia Scrapbook Collection, SB #3, 3 of 5, 371; *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 1 December 1891.

portion of this growth—and within a decade larger quarters were a necessity. Inspired by the need for new quarters the Slovaks of Saints Cyril and Methodius hired local resident and architect A. W. Leh to design a fully conceived house of worship and, in doing so, seized the occasion for making an architectural statement of their “arrival” in South Bethlehem.¹⁹³ The men of the parish pledged an initial \$25.00 each and an additional \$1.00 per month was withdrawn from their paychecks at the mill to support the cost of construction.¹⁹⁴ The parishioners themselves broke ground for the new church just north of the old one on May 18, 1903, and horse drawn wagon trains began hauling the necessary quantities of the local “bluestone” that, over the years, had become the hallmark of fine church construction in South Bethlehem.¹⁹⁵ In July of 1906 the new church was officially dedicated and as the three-year construction time suggests, the results were impressive.¹⁹⁶ Among many notable qualities, the edifice featured a tall Gothic Revival façade and spire, an elaborate display of figurative stained glass, and altar décor in accordance with Slovak tradition.¹⁹⁷ As had been the case for the dedication of the first church, spectators for the occasion arrived by train from several locations

¹⁹³ *The Globe*, 5 July 1903.

¹⁹⁴ Stolarik, 45. Again taken from 1921 publication and interpretation confirmed by Chaback: Saints Cyril and Methodius Roman Catholic Church, “A Century of Faith: 1891- 1991” (Souvenir Booklet, 1991), n.p.

¹⁹⁵ *The Globe*, 2 February 1902. Upon examination, the material is a local quartzite common to most of the churches in South Bethlehem. “Bluestone” typically denotes a type of marble specific to southeastern Pennsylvania. The misuse of the term here comes from the subtle bluish gray quality typical of this building stone. An interesting side note that connects this local material to the surrounding landscape and South Bethlehem’s industrial heritage is its high iron content. Time and weather, aided by harsh industrial pollutants, have caused the iron at the surface of this material to oxidize. Instead of a subtle and beautiful bluish-gray quality, most of South Bethlehem’s churches now have a smoke darkened, rusty, orange streaked appearance.

¹⁹⁶ *The Globe*, 6 July 1903.

¹⁹⁷ The stained glass was crafted by the famous D’Ascenzo studios in Philadelphia according to the “D’Ascenzo Building List” held by the Athenaeum of Philadelphia. The significance of the altar decor was described and interpreted by Monsignor Chaback, interview by the author, 16 September 1999, Bethlehem, PA.

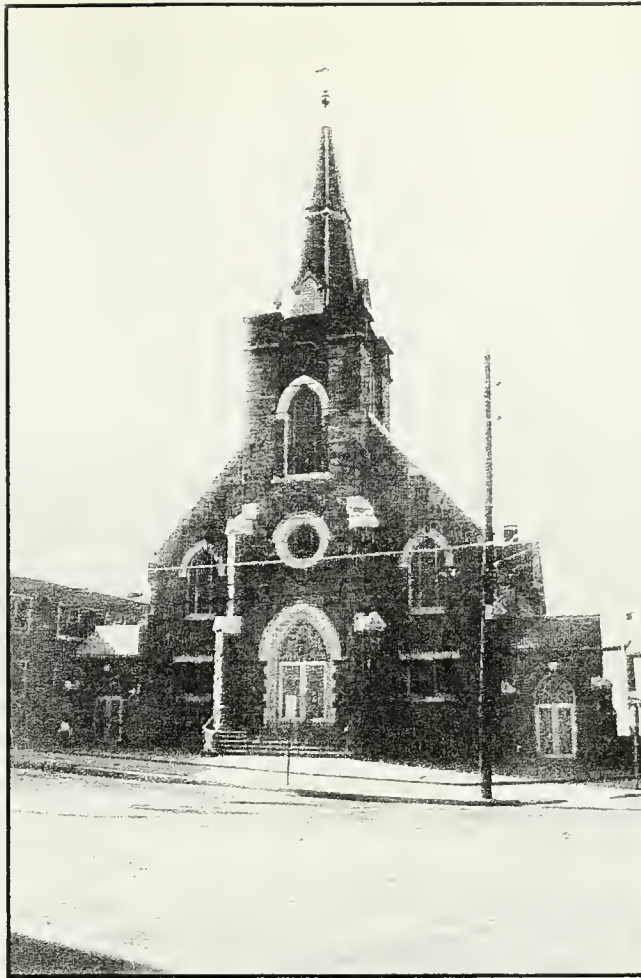


Figure 30. Slovak Saints Cyril (circa 1906) as it appears today. Architect A. W. Leh designed the church. Photograph by W. C. Carson.

throughout the region and witnessed an affair of ethnic splendor. The Archbishop's escort of over 3,000 marchers composed a "Slavic guard of honor" featuring bands, standard bearers, and men mounted on "prancing chargers."¹⁹⁸ Though the completed church was a notable feat for a population of citizens who only a generation before were barely able to provide for their immediate needs, the crowning achievement of the religious community of Saints Cyril and Methodius was yet to be fully realized.

¹⁹⁸ *The Globe*, 8 July 1906.



Figure 31. Postcard-view of the then new Saints Cyril and Methodius shortly after its dedication in 1907. The original Slovak church, later converted into a school, is pictured at left. Source: South Bethlehem Historical Society.

The church's tall steeple cast its shadow broadly and within a few short years the vision and energy of the Slovak community that had given it life was refocused on the fields and wooded hillside that surrounded the new church. In 1904 the Slovak priest, Father Frantisek Vlossak, a native of Upper Hungary, began purchasing these remote patches of real estate in hopes of uniting his flock around their religious citadel in Ward 4 and, at bargain prices, he resold subdivided portions to his parishioners. The foreign quarter along Buttonwood and Second Street in Ward 3 was gradually left behind and a Slovak "village" soon began to take shape around Saints Cyril and Methodius.¹⁹⁹ Here they could openly express themselves as Slovaks, and here they could present a unified front in the defense of their valued ethnic and religious traditions.

The “village” concept as applied to the budding Slovak community in Ward 4 should be examined a little more closely to fully comprehend the significance of Father Vlossak’s efforts in uniting his people around Saints Cyril and Methodius. An understanding of the term “village” here is critical to the Slovak story in South Bethlehem for it has a direct connection to the world these people left behind in Europe. Generations of oppressive Magyar rule generated in the Slovak culture well prior to the 19th century a way of life founded upon a closed, intimate and protected environment that revolved around the church. Under Magyar rule Slovaks were prohibited from practicing their language and customs in the public realm and as a result the insular village atmosphere was the primary means of perpetuating their identity. While no political identity or cultural legitimacy was available to European Slovaks while under Hungarian law, here in America, they could sing, speak, dance and worship as their ancestors had; and perhaps most importantly, insure that these customs were safely transmitted to future generations.

At the core of village life was the church. In addition to providing the underlying framework of most Slovak traditions, the church typically provided the only advocate that these peasants had in a civic realm that was hostile to their ways—the parish priest.²⁰⁰ Though they were never the object of governmentally sanctioned suppression in America, the parallels between the social sphere the Slovaks left behind and the environment they encountered in South Bethlehem were uncanny—as was their response.

¹⁹⁹ Stolarik, 52; 177-188.

²⁰⁰ Chaback described the significance of the “village” to Slovak culture, interview by author, 27 January 2000. For a concise explanation of Hungarian rule and “Magyarization” see Thernstrom, 236-244.

Even before the new church was completed, Father Vlossak began selling the subdivided plots, houses were constructed, and new primary and crossing streets nearby the church began to appear almost yearly. The building lots and roadways laid out within the new Slovak quarter did not fully respect the grid patterned orientation that had become the *de facto* mode of development for the borough as evidenced by Wards 2 and 3. Instead, the surrounding fields and woodlands to the south of the church were carved out in a quasi-radiating fashion, with Saints Cyril and Methodius at the center.²⁰¹ As early as 1907 the influence of Father Vlossak in shaping the landscape of Ward 4 were noted in the local press:

Father Vlossak's indomitable energy [has] extended his pastorate over a wide territory and changed the bleak fields about the church property into a large settlement, where many of his flock [have] erected durable and handsome dwellings.²⁰²

By 1915, Father Vlossak counted among his neighbors the Tackoics', Blatnek's, Morevek's, Soltis', and Slafkofsky's and other Slovak nationals. In addition to residences, a neighborhood matrix of commercial services and social establishments began to take shape including a butcher, grocer, and saloon.²⁰³ Perhaps most importantly, a parish school was up and running in the Slovak community's first house of worship by 1909, the humble brick church dedicated under the stewardship of Monsignor Heinen in the fall of 1891.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ A survey of maps revealed this occurrence. Though possibly mere coincidence, the street plan emphasizes the village quality of the new Slovak quarter in Ward 4.

²⁰² *The Globe*, 2 December 1907.

²⁰³ Bethlehem City Directories of 1904, 1906, 1911 and 1914-15.

²⁰⁴ *The Globe*, 28 February 1909; 6 November 1909; Saints Cyril and Methodius Roman Catholic Church, "A Century of Faith: 1891- 1991" (Souvenir Booklet, 1991), n.p.



Figure 32. Photograph, taken about 1920, of the Slovak quarter of South Bethlehem organized around the communities religious citadel Saints Cyril and Methodius. Source: Pauliny, 11.

The Slovak community that gathered around Saints Cyril and Methodius in the early years of the new century quickly became a festive arena in which the streets on occasion were filled with ethnic celebration and religious pageantry. In overt reference to the customs of the Old World, and by the direct influence and sanction of the church, these events typically marked the yearly milestones of the religious calendar, which by cultural standard was a critical ingredient of Slovak life. As their European ancestors for generations had done, the Slovaks of South Bethlehem celebrated the change of seasons, the cyclical progress of time, and the ebb and flow of life with numerous communal religious events associated with holy days and feast days. Although occasions such as Easter and Christmas were celebrated across ethnic boundaries in South Bethlehem, many milestones of the religious calendar had particular meaning to the Slovak

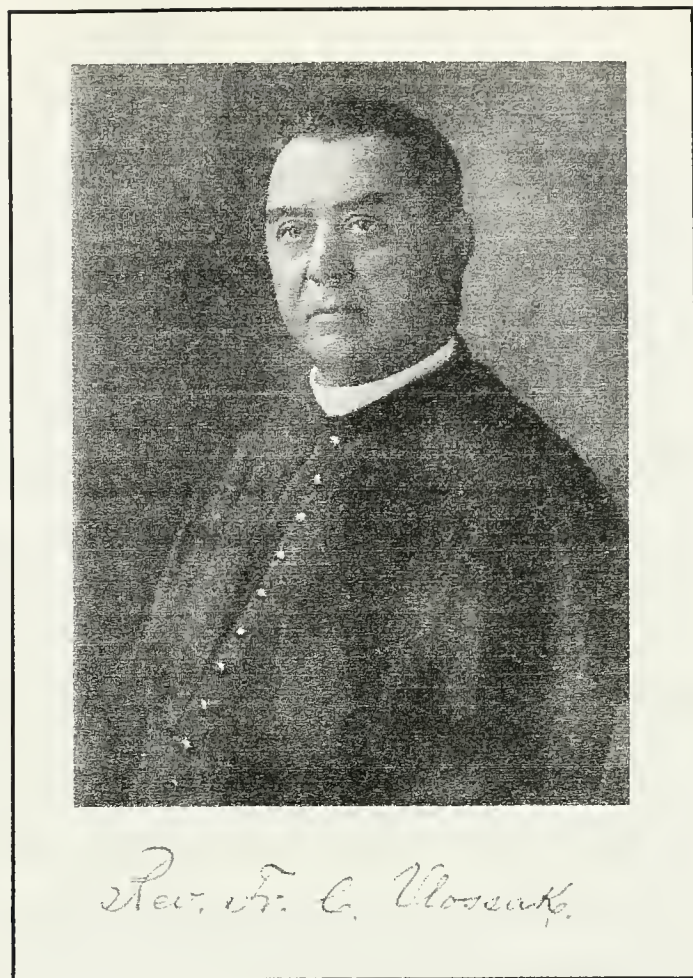


Figure 33. Rev. Frantisek Vlossack, pastor of Saints Cyril and Methodius—a vital figure in the organization of the South Bethlehem's Slovak population in Ward 4. Source: Shankweilder, 112.

community alone, such as the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, the Feast of Saint Anne, the Feast of Saint Michael, and the feast of Saint Martin. On some of these occasions colorful public processions portraying a special group devotion championed through the streets or joined together the Slovak people on the church grounds. A gathering of family afterwards for the traditional feast day meal always followed such events. As early as July of 1895, just a few years after the church was founded and well before they had

reorganized as a community in Ward 4, the newspaper noted with interest the Slavic display marking the Feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius, their patron saints.²⁰⁵

One particular event that resulted in elaborate communal exercises annually in the Slovak neighborhood of South Bethlehem was a “May Procession” that marked either Whitsunday or Corpus Christi, whichever fell in May. If celebrating Corpus Christi, a feast day commemorating the Holy Eucharist, the parish body, in their best attire, would follow the priest and several acolytes through the streets, stopping along the way to pray before several large outdoor altars that had been fashioned according to Old World Slovak tradition. Another Old World custom continued in South Bethlehem was the elaborate Slovak system that surrounds the Holy Day of Easter. Celebrating the end of the traditional fast associated with Lent, the Slovak families would gather together in Ward 4 and prepare the customary meal of ham, sausage, eggs, special breads, cheeses and butters—and always horseradish. Each dish among the list had a specific symbolic meaning to the Slovaks. Ham represented the Old World springtime custom of slaughtering the herd²⁰⁶, eggs represented rebirth and resurrection in Christ, and the horseradish was included to remind the faithful of “the bitterness of life”—and none could be eaten before being blessed by the priest. Special baskets were prepared by the families with a sampling of the day’s feast and transported to the church for the “blessing of the food.”²⁰⁷ Events such as these were fostered in South Bethlehem by the village like atmosphere that grew around the church of Saints Cyril and Methodius. The church did not merely serve as an ethnic theatre in which Old World customs could be

²⁰⁵ *Daily Times*, 5 July 1895.

²⁰⁶ Chaback, interview by author, 28 January 2000.

performed, it reunited the Slovak Diaspora in South Bethlehem, creating a critical mass for the long term defense and perpetuation of Slovak values.

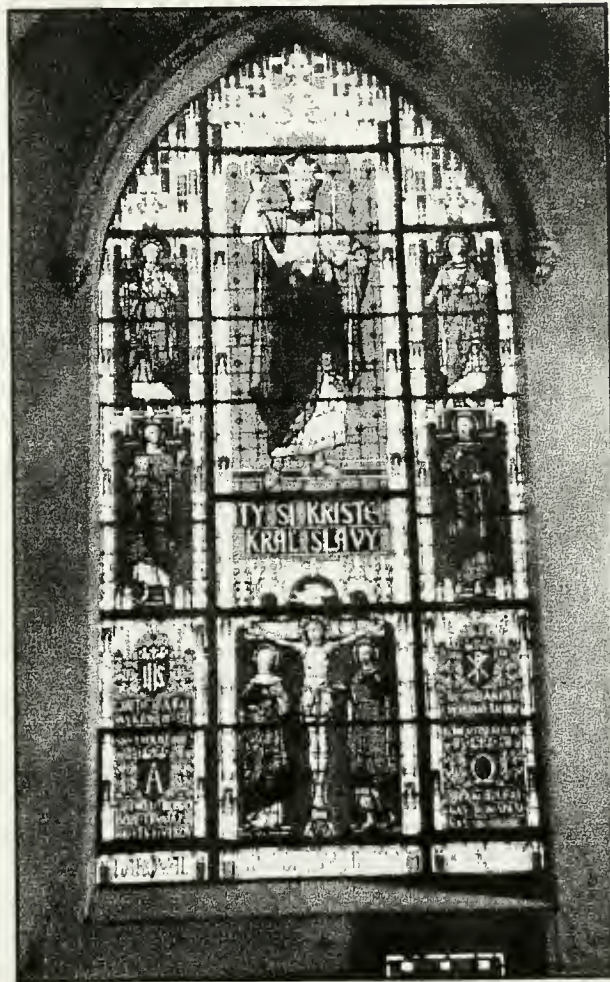


Figure 34. An example of the brilliant stained glass that illuminates the sanctuary of Saints Cyril and Methodius. Photograph by W. C. Carson.

Another aspect of Slovak life in Ward 4 that had a direct connection to both the village created by Saints Cyril and Methodius and Old World customs was the Slovak Sokol. A Sokol is roughly analogous to the lodges that were common among most ethnic groups in South Bethlehem. The difference, however, is the intensity of the connection

²⁰⁷ Stolarik, 74-84. The religious significance of feast day celebrations to the Slovak community and the

between the Slovaks and their clubs as a consequence of the generations of oppression in Europe. Whereas most clubs, beneficial societies, and lodges in South Bethlehem were devoted to the perpetuation of a particular ethnic culture, the Slovak Sokol, while performing this task, also expressed in its repertoire of services the influence of a developed sense of Slovak nationalism. In addition to sick and death benefits, home loans, and social recreational activities, the Slovak Sokol maintained an active program of athletics that was directly linked to the Old World political machinery of the independent militia. An active program of youth league gymnastics, track and field, and drill teams kept the young Slovak in South Bethlehem in fighting form and the community in Ward 4 prided itself on a competitive spirit. The first of these organizations formed in South Bethlehem in 1900 as the Saint George Society and in 1910 the Saint Anthony of Padua Society of the Slovak Catholic Sokol was formed. Both of these organizations had an intimate association with Saints Cyril and Methodius and eventually many of the other church affiliated Slovak lodges began to include an athletic aspect to their mission.²⁰⁸ The competitive spirit and sense of identity the youth of the community attached to the athletic achievement first fostered by the Sokol was commonly revealed on the sports page of the local press. One such instance detailed “Athletic Day” events of the weeklong, citywide celebration of South Bethlehem’s 50th Anniversary in 1915. The Slovak Sokols dominated the field made up of several ethnically oriented teams and associations. In the climatic event of the celebrations athletic program, “the five mile marathon,” John Sekora smashed the local record and

explanation and symbolism of the traditional foods and the blessing of the food were given by Chaback, 28 January 2000.

safely outdistanced the next two competitors to finish John Gasdacka and Micahel Schranko. The top three finishers were all members of the Slovak Catholic Sokol. In the closing ceremonies of the anniversary celebration a massive parade made its way through the streets of South Bethlehem complete with marching bands, colorful floats, and a wealth of ethnic and patriotic splendor. According to the local press several “neatly attired” and “clever” military drill corps representing South Bethlehem’s Slovak Sokols were among the Slovak portion of the parade that was commended for its high degree of Patriotic expression.²⁰⁹

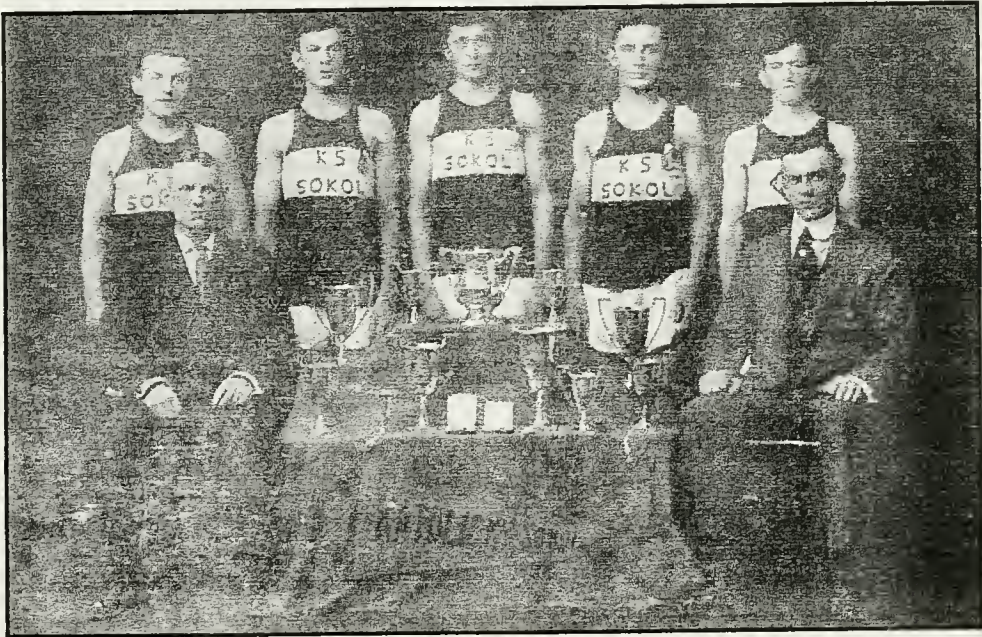


Figure 35. The Slovak Catholic Gymnastics Sokol fostered a competitive group-spirit among the Slovak youth by sponsoring a large program of athletic teams and organizations. Source: Pauliny, 106.

The last aspect of the Saints Cyril and Methodius to be examined concerns a critical part of the community’s religious landscape that has thus far been neglected by

²⁰⁸ Stolarik, 84-87. Chaback described the significance of the Sokol in relation to Slovak nationalism in detail, 28 January 2000.

²⁰⁹ *The Globe*, 9 October 1915.

this thesis. The cemetery, like the church, was for many Catholic immigrants an issue of cultural preservation and ethnic identity. The town's first Catholic burial ground, Saint Michael's Cemetery, occupies a large swath of land in the border area between Ward 5

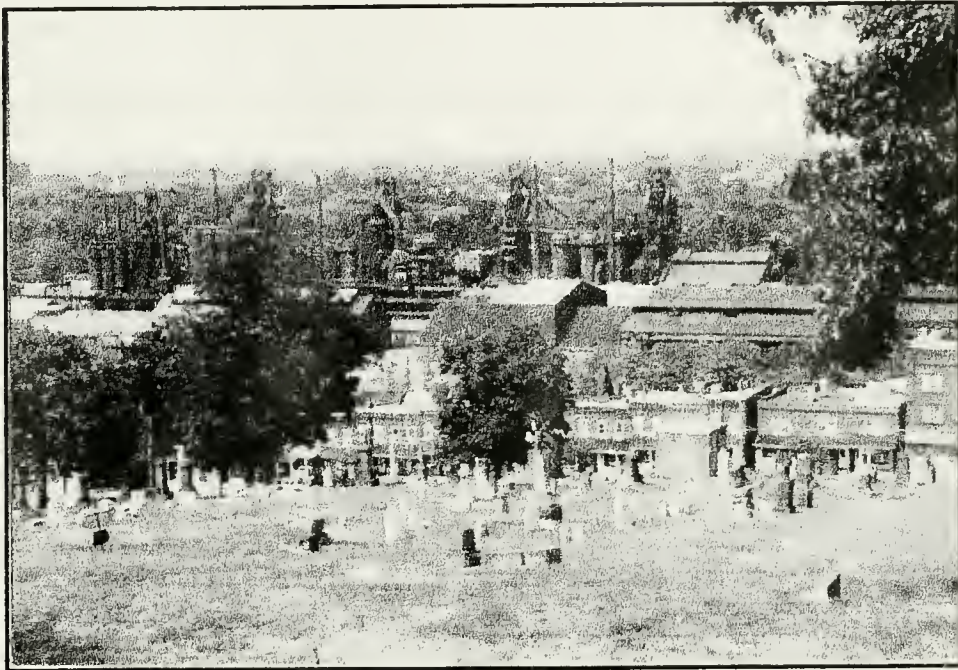


Figure 36. The now idle steelworks, and residences in Ward 5 as viewed from Saint Michael's Cemetery. Photograph by W. C. Carson.

and the Northampton Heights community and has a commanding presence in the overall scope of South Bethlehem's religious landscape. It was provided for by land donations of the United Brethren (Moravian Community north of the Lehigh River) and Asa Packer of the Lehigh Valley Railroad. The Moravian Church and Packer gave several acres of their vast holdings to the "Catholics of South Bethlehem" between September 1867 and April 1868. The acreage was situated in the extreme southeast corner of the borough on

the steep hillside of South Mountain and far to the east of South Bethlehem's town center at that time.²¹⁰

Starting with the Irish community of Holy Infancy all of the town's Catholic citizens utilized this territorial cemetery until around the turn of the century when several churches associated with New Immigration began to purchase burial grounds for their members alone.²¹¹ According to Monsignor Michael Chaback, this desire is again tied to the Old World belief, among many of the cultures emanating from southern and Eastern Europe, in which the village, centered on the church, must possess three crucial elements. In addition to a fixed baptismal font and confessional, embodied in the church building itself, a village must have a delineated area of consecrated ground for the interment of the deceased.²¹² The Slovaks used Saint Michael's in Ward 5 for many years, and accounts exist of walking Slovak processions up the mountainside composed of the congregation and Sokol Honor Guards.²¹³ However, in 1914, the longstanding desire by the congregation to have a sacred burial site for the Slovak community was achieved with the purchase of a farmstead situated high above the borough.²¹⁴ The route from the church to the cemetery progressed into the wooded hillside through Ward 5, above Northampton Heights and ended at approximately the ridge of South Mountain at its eastern most extent. Though the distance between the church of Saints Cyril and Methodius, the Slovak community, and the cemetery was great, it represented the culminating event of the cause begun by the membership of the Society of Saint John the Baptist over thirty years prior—the recreation in South Bethlehem of the Old World Slovak village.

²¹⁰ Deed Book E12, 15; Deed Book B12, 376.

²¹¹ Saint Michael's cemetery is said to include gravestones representing 28 nationalities. Yates, 347-349.

²¹² Chaback, interview by author, 28 January 2000.

Conclusion

The foregoing case studies have contributed a great deal to an assessment of South Bethlehem's religious landscape as a valuable historic resource. At the core of this resource is the landscape itself. Once tamed for transportation, the surrounding landscape provided both the raw material for industry and the terra firma on which industry's workers established lives. The industrial hands that settled in South Bethlehem arrived from the distant reaches of Europe and with them a wealth of cultural traditions that found expression in the church. As each new group arrived in South Bethlehem, they built homes and communities between the steel mill and South Mountain, and at the center of the community was the church. The town's growth progressed in an easterly direction and, therefore, the growth of the town and the chronology of immigration are revealed through the construction of its churches.

The personal story of the immigrant experience in South Bethlehem is revealed only upon a closer examination of the landscape and as the case studies have shown, the churches again tell us much. Here the newcomers sought refuge from a society struggling to hammer out a national identity, and a society that did not welcome them as ethnic Americans. Through the church, immigrant Americans practiced their religion—typically Catholicism—expressed their most deeply held convictions, and maintained the customs and traditions of Old World cultures that to many native-born Americans were unsettling. The cool reception immigrants experienced and its dehumanizing effects were also mitigated by the immigrant church through both, an informal social environment and, importantly, through an elaborate formal system of services and activities that

²¹³ *The Globe*, 26 September 1907.

provided many worldly comforts typically denied them in the larger social realm. In addition to recreation, many church organizations provided business and home loans, life and health insurance, and the operation of these organizations provided a political mechanism for leadership within the immigrant community and beyond. Clergy typically assumed the role of counsel and mediator in spiritual as well as worldly concerns, intervening at times in legal matters such as the payment of taxes, personal affairs such as the mailing of letters back home or arranging for others to make the journey to South Bethlehem; and as evidenced by Father Fretz of Holy Ghost, often they took on controversial social concerns in the interests of their people. The multitude of functions the immigrant church provided formed the primary defense of ethnic heritage and consequently forged a connection between the two parties—the immigrant and the church—that exceeded in strength that of the Old World.²¹⁵ As Jay P. Dolan describes, “families [in America] were indeed the building blocks of every immigrant community, but the church was the mortar that sought to bind them together.”²¹⁶ The chapter that follows will examine a variation of this unique bond between the individual and the immigrant church that was critical to the development of South Bethlehem’s religious landscape. It seeks to highlight a few key individuals whose guiding presence, generosity, and creative vision broadly gave it form.

²¹⁴ Chaback, interview by author, 16 September 1999; 28 January 2000.

²¹⁵ Seller, 157-161.

²¹⁶ Dolan, 204.

Chapter 5: Builders of the Religious Landscape

The forces and circumstances that transformed an isolated Moravian farmstead into an industrial citadel and social laboratory of ethnic diversity are a complex blend of issues and events, both domestic and foreign. Natural resources, tyranny, entrepreneurial vision, war, industry, freedom, poverty, and chance are just a few of the many factors. As evidenced in the foregoing text, as foreign born came to South Bethlehem for the promise of work in the town's mills and factories they brought with them their most deeply held beliefs and in time constructed churches that reflect much of the immigrant experience, both spiritual and worldly. The immigrant church was in a variety of ways the center of immigrant life in America.

As with the factors that gave birth to the town, those that gave form to religious expression and thus South Bethlehem's religious landscape were numerous. South Bethlehem's immigrant communities naturally generated leaders and typically, these leaders were directly involved, if not the central locus, in the organization of immigrant churches. Almost without exception, each religious institution today in South Bethlehem has a venerated figure they consider critical to their history. There was an army of operatives and benefactors at work within South Bethlehem's many religious institutions. Yet rarely did these figures transcend the many divides that were characteristic of American society at the time and, instead, their influence was typically limited to the church of a particular ethnic community, religious community, or economic class of citizens. There were, however, a few special individuals whose attention was broad in its application and influence and was exemplary of an inclusive, sacrificial spirit. In the growth of South Bethlehem's religious landscape, three individuals exemplified this spirit

and stood as giants among the many: Rev. Monsignor William Heinen, missionary to the Slavs; Albert Wolfinger Leh, architect; and Benedict H. Birkel, contractor and benefactor.

Rev. Monsignor William Heinen

William Heinen was born in November of 1836 in Willich, Germany, in the heart of Rhineland Europe. Little is known of his early life, but having entered the study of law in his early twenties, it can be surmised that, if not affluent, his childhood was surrounded by an environment of discipline and learning.²¹⁷ Shortly after entering his studies, Heinen placed his education on hold in order to fulfill an obligatory military service required of all German young men at the time. Early in his combat training, on a routine exercise in June of 1860, Heinen was critically wounded with a bayonet thrust to the chest that punctured a lung and caused severe internal injury. According to several accounts of his life and the work that was to come, it was at this time that Heinen developed the desire to pursue a religious life. One account suggests that his injuries were so grave that “he made a vow that if his life were spared he would devote it to the service of God in the foreign missions.” Soon after the accident Archbishop James Frederick Wood of Philadelphia began an aggressive effort to attract German speaking seminarians to serve the rapidly expanding German Catholic population in Pennsylvania. Apparently, while still in ill health Heinen made good on his vow and set sail for the port of Philadelphia in August of 1869, having likely departed Europe from Rotterdam.²¹⁸

²¹⁷ Archdiocese of Philadelphia “Record of Priests” Files.

²¹⁸ *Catholic Standard and Times*, 29 July 1905.



Figure 37. Rev. Monsignor William Heinen was critical to the organization of New Immigrant parishes in South Bethlehem and throughout southeastern Pennsylvania. Source: *Catholic Standard and Times*.

Heinen was ordained at the Archdiocesan Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul in Philadelphia in 1871²¹⁹ and soon after entered the lives of the German Catholic faithful throughout the Lehigh Valley region. During his early years of priesthood he traveled widely to serve the growing German Catholic Diaspora in the coal regions surrounding Mauch Chunk and emerging industrial centers such as South Bethlehem. Heinen performed baptisms in the Bethlehem area as early as 1872 and contracted small pox

²¹⁹ Archdiocese of Philadelphia "Record of Priests" Files.

while ministering to the sick throughout the Lehigh Valley during that time.²²⁰ The small pox outbreak, noted in South Bethlehem's press²²¹, further compromised his health, yet he recovered more fervent than ever in his desire to aid his Catholic countrymen.

Heinen was assigned in 1873 as full time pastor to a small German contingent in Mauch Chunk, and it was from there that his guiding influence was spread throughout southeastern Pennsylvania and was felt forcefully in the emerging borough of South Bethlehem. The early leaders of South Bethlehem's German Catholic Church, Saint Bernard's in Ward 2, were assistants to Heinen in Mauch Chunk prior to arriving in the steel making town. Father Bernard Korves, who led the effort to remove the Catholic church from north Bethlehem to South Bethlehem in 1887, and Father Aloysius Fretz, who assumed the pastorate at Saint Bernard's in 1891 and became one of the preeminent immigrant leaders in the community's history, began their religious lives under the supervision of Monsignor Heinen as his curates in Mauch Chunk.²²² Heinen's influence on these two men was displayed in a variety of ways and stood out particularly in the areas of debt reduction, education, and parish government. Heinen emphasized maintaining an absolute minimum of financial debt while building the church community in Mauch Chunk, before all other considerations he provided for the education of the parish children, and did not rule with an authoritative hand but instead sought consensus in parish affairs.²²³ The later actions of Father Korves and Father Fretz in South

²²⁰ Rev. Leo Gregory Fink, *Monsignor Heinen: Militant Missionary* (Philadelphia: The Dolphin Press, 1937), 22-23.

²²¹ *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 14 December 1871; 16 December 1871.

²²² Fink, 28, 35.

²²³ *Catholic Standard and Times*, 29 July 1905; 19 March 1910.

Bethlehem mirror the concerns and actions of Monsignor Heinen in Mauch Chunk.²²⁴

Monsignor Heinen's influence on the development of South Bethlehem's religious landscape, however, was not limited to the town's German community.

Though the evidence of Heinen's influence on the shape of the German community of Ward 2 is persuasive, his most profound impact took form in the town's east-end in the ethnic neighborhoods of southern and eastern European immigrants. The German pastor's first experience with the New Immigration from these regions of Europe was with the anthracite coal mining population of Mauch Chunk, and it may be recalled that his concerns for this group of people had been at work in South Bethlehem as early as April of 1888. At this juncture Heinen began monthly services for the Slovak population in South Bethlehem at Saint Bernard's. Heinen was gravely concerned with the lack of stewardship the Archdiocese was showing for the New Immigrant portion of the Roman Catholic population. In response, he established at Mauch Chunk, much as the Moravian did at Bethlehem in the 18th Century, a support center for mission activities. Heinen attracted priests from great distances to Mauch Chunk to assist him in his effort and this included Rev. Frantisek Vlossack who taught Heinen the Slovak language.²²⁵ Vlossack came to Pennsylvania from Ohio.

²²⁴ The emphasis on lowering parish debt by Korves and Fretz can be seen in local newspaper accounts and in financial reports submitted annually to the Archdiocese. These show a minimum of borrowing for construction and improvement projects, aggressive fund raising drives, and rapid debt payment when debt was necessarily incurred. When such debt was necessary loans were typically offered "by friends or societies connected with the church" and never a banking establishment. Building projects were also stalled on several occasions until funds could be appropriated from within the parish. The emphasis on education by Fretz and the democratic spirit of his pastorate were highlighted in Chapter 4. *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 4 March 1886; Billinger, 11. 1897 Annual Report of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, report #182 1900 Annual Report of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, report #202; 1910 Annual Report of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, report #262; 1920 Annual Report of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, report not numbered.

²²⁵ Fink, 34.

Heinen first organized the Slovak who assumed the push to realize the region's first Slovak parish, Saints Cyril and Methodius in South Bethlehem. Even before newspaper accounts detail Father Heinen's blessing of the church's cornerstone in the fall of 1891, they tell of his actions as an intermediary between South Bethlehem authorities and a group of Slovak residents over a legal matter.²²⁶ For exercising such an active interest in their general welfare Father Heinen quickly became a greatly admired and respected leader among New Immigrants in South Bethlehem. As one account explains, "One must live among Father Heinen's people to realize the affection they bear him in consequence of the work he is doing for them."²²⁷

After establishing Saints Cyril and Methodius, Heinen handed the direction of the fledgling congregation to Father Vlossack. Like the German clergy of Saint Bernard's, Vlossack's activities within the Slovak community mimic those of Heinen in Mauch Chunk. It may be recalled that Vlossack organized his people around Saints Cyril and Methodius in Ward 4 by encouraging home ownership and actively working as a broker of real estate to promote this interest. Father Heinen did much the same in the German community of Mauch Chunk, in the 1870's, by purchasing many businesses in the church's surrounding neighborhood, including bakeries, breweries and groceries and installing Germans "of reliable character" to insure the welfare of his people. By creating a business matrix Heinen facilitated the growth of a German enclave around his church, Saint Joseph's.

²²⁶ *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 16 September 1891; 1 December 1891; Archdiocese of Philadelphia Scrapbook Collection, SB #3, 3 of 5, 371.

²²⁷ Archdiocese of Philadelphia Scrapbook Collection, SB #2, 3 of 5, 291.

Heinen's direct efforts and influence in South Bethlehem's religious environment were not isolated to Saints Cyril and Methodius. As he had attracted Vlossack to Pennsylvania for the Slovak community, Heinen brought to South Bethlehem a Hungarian priest, Alexander Varlaky, and together they established Saint John Capistrano in Ward 5 to serve the town's Hungarian Catholics in 1903. Though he is not listed as having founded either South Bethlehem's Polish parish, Saint Stanislaus in 1906, or the Italian parish, Our Lady of Pompeii in 1902, it is likely that he played a role in the realization of both, having been appointed by the Archbishop at the turn of the century as "vicar foraneus" [caretaker] of the Eastern European and Italian population of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.²²⁸ Direct correspondence between Heinen and Archbishop Ryan occurred that focused on the welfare of the Poles, Hungarians, Lithuanians, and the yet unrecognized population of Byzantine Catholics, among others.²²⁹ In 1905, Father Heinen made a lengthy trip to central Europe to recruit new foreign clergy for his efforts in the Lehigh Valley.²³⁰ In addition to establishing national parishes for New Immigrant communities and attracting foreign speaking clergy to carry on the work he initiated, Father Heinen actively recruited foreign speaking "women religious" to fill the void of properly skilled teachers in the region's parochial schools. In the mid 1870's, Heinen brought to Mauch Chunk a group of nuns who had recently been expelled from Germany under "Kulturkampf" policies²³¹ and in 1908, another group whom he instructed in Slovak took up residence in South Bethlehem at Saints Cyril and Methodius.²³²

²²⁸ *Catholic Standard And Times*, 12 March 1910; Fink 41.

²²⁹ Archbishop Ryan Collection. General Correspondence, File 60.112. Dated, 17 April 1903.

²³⁰ *Catholic Standard and Times*, 23 September 1903.

²³¹ *Catholic Standard And Times*, 12 March 1910.

²³² Fink, 48. *The Globe*, 28 February 1908.

The critical role Monsignor Heinen played in the organization of South Bethlehem's New Immigrant citizens is undeniable. Yet, he did not act alone. In fact, Heinen's desire for those under his charge to secure the comforts of a church of their own often brought the next figure to be examined into the formula. For the purpose of giving architectural form to his idea's and to provide the fledgling congregations a place of worship that reflected their Old World heritage, Heinen frequently commissioned South Bethlehem resident and practitioner, A. W. Leh.

Albert Wolfinger Leh

A. W. Leh was born in September 1848, in Williams Township, along the Delaware River in Northampton County, Pennsylvania.²³³ Leh was one of eleven children raised on his father's farm and at the tender age of 16 enlisted for service in the Union Army then fighting the Civil War. Leh received a bullet wound to his right leg during the Battle of Hatcher's Run in Virginia, 1865, and was discharged with military honors in May of 1865.²³⁴ Soon after he returned to Pennsylvania, Samuel Steckle, a carpenter and cabinetmaker, in Durham Township Bucks County²³⁵ employed Leh as an assistant. Under Steckle's charge Leh was introduced to building construction which by 1873 had grown into a desire to practice architecture. Leh became an apprentice to George Dougherty in South Bethlehem, about whom little is known, and by 1870 was employed by Ritter and Beck, a planing mill and wood shop²³⁶. Leh likely produced

²³³ "Durham Union Church Records", 41.

²³⁴ *Portrait and Biographical Record of Lehigh, Northampton and Carbon Counties, Pennsylvania* (Chicago: Chapman Publishing Company, 1894), 646.

²³⁵ "Durham Union Church—German Reformed, Presbyterian, and Lutheran—Building Committee Records", n.p.

²³⁶ *Portrait and Biographical Record of Lehigh, Northampton and Carbon Counties, Pennsylvania*, 647.

shop drawings for the company's contracts which, according to a survey of newspaper accounts, were numerous.²³⁷



Figure 38. Albert Wolfinger Leh, architect and South Bethlehem resident, whose architectural practice was widely employed in giving shape to the community's religious landscape.

According to one source, Leh was practicing independently by 1880²³⁸ but not until the summer of 1884 was he noted in press accounts as having been commissioned for building designs. Before his architecture received notice Leh's political activities attracted interest. Leh was apparently an ardent democrat and routinely marshaled the

²³⁷ *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 13 June 1885; 20 August 1885; 12 May 1886; 17 February 1887.

²³⁸ *Portrait and Biographical Record of Lehigh, Northampton and Carbon Counties, Pennsylvania*, 647.

local party's drill corps during election year parades.²³⁹ His first several jobs included a small, but attractive, fire station that still survives in South Bethlehem, a number of modest homes designed for a speculative market, and an industrial building for the town's first silk operation.²⁴⁰ The first comment reflecting a positive reception of his work was printed in October of 1886. A simple pressed brick and terra cotta meeting hall was described as "...the handsomest building on Third Street."²⁴¹ Soon after Leh was commissioned for the first time to design a church, a small Lutheran Church in the outskirts of town, the first of many to follow that in time brought him notice as a capable and talented architect. Several press accounts in the closing years of the 1880's, evidence a rapid growth in the demand for his work and by the spring of 1891 Leh, at this time affectionately called Captain Leh in reference to the military service of his youth, was "...head over heels in work."²⁴²

It was at this juncture that Leh became acquainted with Monsignor Heinen. Included in this flood of work for Leh was a commission for the first Saint Cyril and Methodius Church in Ward 4.²⁴³ Apparently the successful completion of this modest little chapel for the Slovak community cemented a bond between Rev. Heinen and Mr. Leh that facilitated the spread of Leh's designs throughout the Lehigh Valley. As a consequence of their acquaintance, Leh not only assisted in giving form to South Bethlehem's religious landscape but to that of the entire region, from iron and steel

²³⁹ *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 6 August 1884; 6 October 1884; 24 October 1884.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 20 January 1886; 11 February 1886; 11 May 1886.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 7 October 1886.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 15 April 1891.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 23 February 1891.

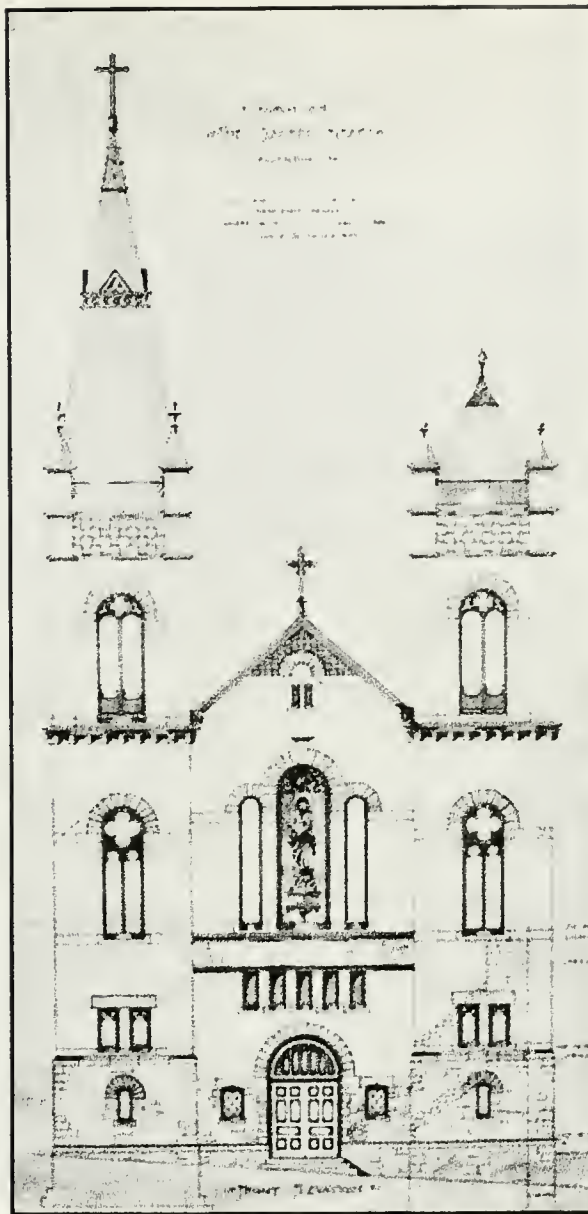


Figure 39. Church of the Sacred Heart (circa 1896) in Allentown, Pennsylvania. A. W. Leh, architect. Source: Leh Collection, Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

centers such as South Bethlehem and Catasqua to the anthracite towns of Mauch Chunk, Lansford and Shenandoah.²⁴⁴ Leh's designs for Heinen bore the emblem of a developed friendship, with Leh simply labeling his plans, "Father Heinen's Church."²⁴⁵

²⁴⁴ A combination of newspaper articles substantiates the geographic breadth of his practice as does the "Leh Collection"—architectural archives—held by the Athenaeum of Philadelphia. Leh designed a number



Figure 40. The central tower with louvered bell-house, clock, and spire of Saint Michael's Roman Catholic Church (circa 1908) in Lansford, Pennsylvania. A. W. Leh, architect.

of churches from the coal regions to Philadelphia for congregations established by both Heinen and the clergy he reared in Mauch Chunk. Examples include: Our Lady Help of Christians (Philadelphia, PA-German) founded by G. Wolf who was a curate of Heinen's between 1878-1888 (Fink, 28); Saints Cyril and Methodius (Reading, PA-Slovak) founded by Heinen in 1894(Fink, 39); and Saints Peter and Paul (Lansford, PA-Polish) founded by Heinen in 1905(Fink, 46). Leh's drawings for each of these projects are included in the "Leh Collection."

²⁴⁵ Plans for "Father Heinen's Church," St. Joseph's Church, Limeport, PA, are include in the "Leh Collection."

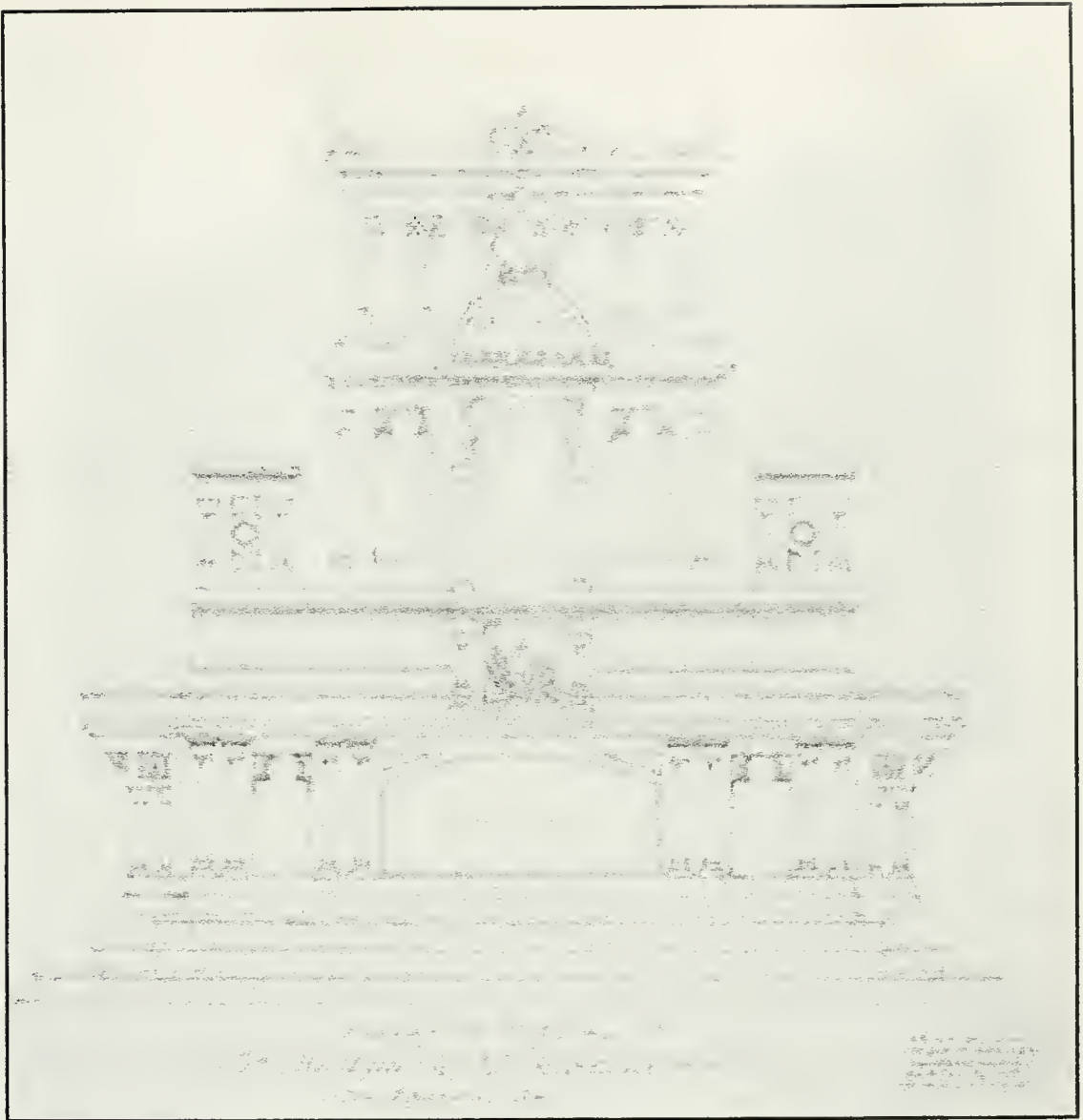


Figure 41. Elevation of the altar for Saint Joseph's Roman Catholic Church (circa 1917), South Easton, Pennsylvania. Architect, A. W. Leh. Source: Leh Collection, Athenaeum of Philadelphia.



Figure 42. Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary Roman Catholic Church (circa 1896) in Mauch Chunk, Pennsylvania. A. W. Leh, architect. Photograph by W. C. Carson.

Though he did a great deal of work for Heinen and his associates in South Bethlehem, examples of A. W. Leh's work ultimately stretched across the town's entire landscape from Ward 1 to Northampton Heights regardless of this connection. Of the more than thirty church congregations that took shape in South Bethlehem prior to 1920, at least ten employed Leh to provide designs for at least one phase or more of their churches' growth.²⁴⁶ On occasion it was a simple remodeling of the sanctuary as with Saint Peter's Lutheran in 1895²⁴⁷ or, in contrast, a complete makeover as with The First

²⁴⁶ Figures gathered by using newspaper articles, parish histories, the "Leh Collection," and Leh "A. W. Leh, Architect—South Bethlehem, PA." (Self Published Prospectus, 1899). Many other structures bear the appearance of Leh's influence, but have not been conclusively documented as his work.

²⁴⁷ "Saint Peter's First One Hundred Years," 35-36.

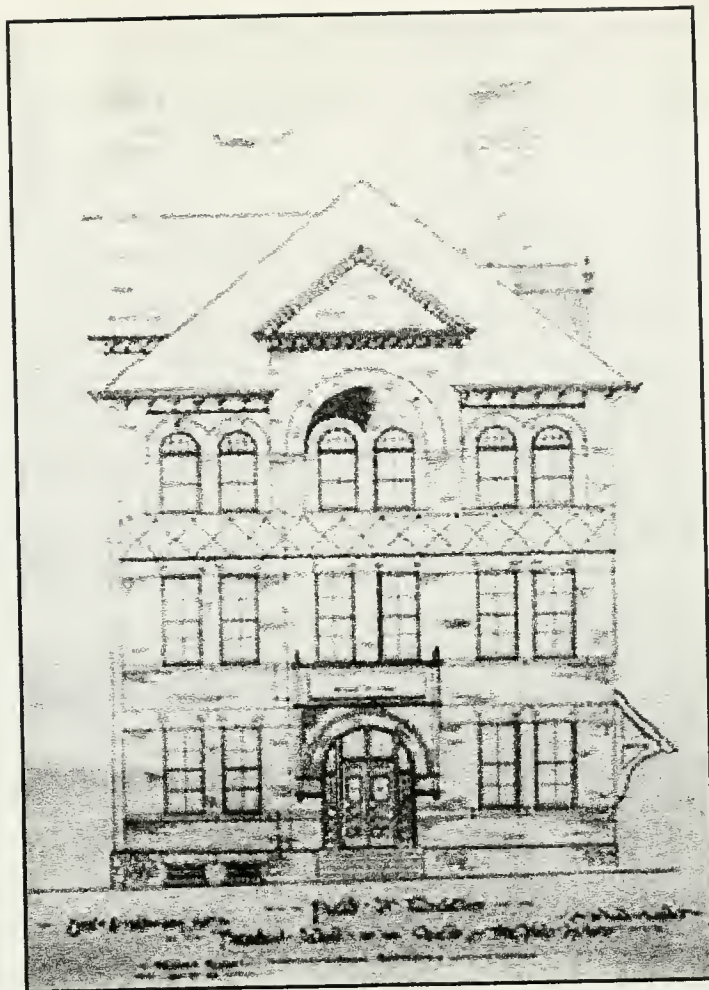


Figure 43. Elevation, Parochial School of the Church of the Holy Infancy (circa 1892). A. W. Leh, architect. Source: Leh Collection, Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

Reformed Church's eclectic Romanesque second-generation church in 1896²⁴⁸, both in Ward 2. Leh designed auxiliary halls, rectories, convents and schools from Ward 2 to Northampton Heights, all of which, as we have seen, performed an important function in church missions.²⁴⁹ Two schools of particular note were the German Catholic Holy Ghost School, built in 1900²⁵⁰, with an eclectic blend of Romanesque and Victorian

²⁴⁸ "A. W. Leh, Architect—South Bethlehem, PA." (Self Published Prospectus. 1899), n.p.

²⁴⁹ "Leh Collection."

²⁵⁰ *The Globe*, 27 August 1900.

attributes; and Irish Catholic Holy Infancy School, built in 1892, and designed with a Romanesque styling in brick, that was synonymous with a great deal of American civic architecture of the era.²⁵¹

Leh, on occasion, was afforded the opportunity to design elaborate churches and in these his talent as an architect was revealed. The German Catholic Holy Ghost Church in Ward 2, completed in 1910, and the Slovak Catholic Saints Cyril and Methodius in Ward 4, completed in 1906, are both the work of A. W. Leh. As may be recalled both of these edifices were remarkable reflections of the ethnic heritage of the populations they served. Upon his death, Leh was in the process of designing a third edifice for the Hungarians of Saint John Capistrano since the church's organization in 1903.²⁵² This building was to be the culminating building campaign for the Hungarian community in South Bethlehem and the design was grand in scale. At a proposed cost of over \$80,000.00, Leh designed a granite and limestone edifice with a façade featuring two towers of differing proportions and massing. The tallest of the spires was to reach 130' in height.²⁵³ Unfortunately, this design never materialized. Upon Leh's death, having suffered a heart attack on the train platform in nearby Allentown on his way to inspect a job underway, the plans were scrapped and a new architect, Joseph B. Jackson of New York City, was hired.

Other churches in South Bethlehem that Leh designed include two important buildings given brief mention in the overview of Chapter 3. Fritz Memorial Methodist

²⁵¹ *Daily Times*, 2 February 1893; "Leh Collection."

²⁵² Leh designed the second Saint John Capistrano Church, dedicated in 1910. "Leh Collection;" *The Globe*, 5 July 1910.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 17 November 1916.

Episcopal in Ward 2 was the creation of Leh and was constructed in 1891, South Bethlehem's first and only example of an auditorium plan church. Its L-shaped floor

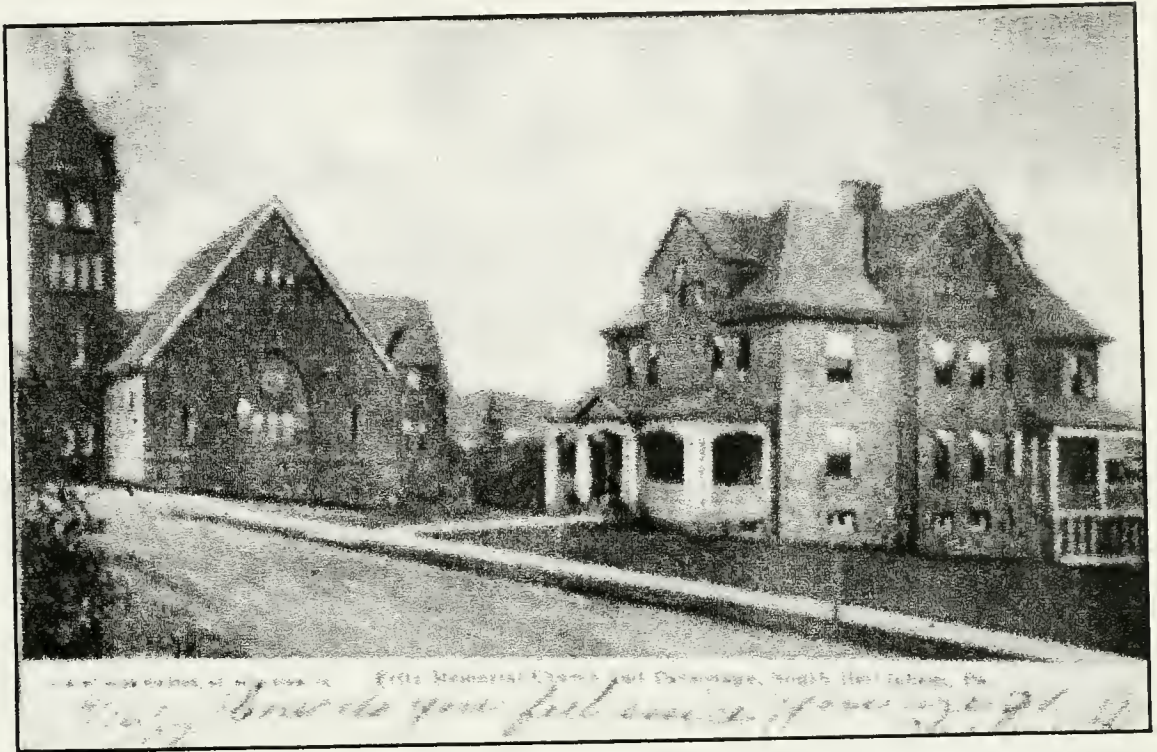


Figure 44. Postcard view of Fritz Memorial Methodist Church (circa 1893) and parsonage in South Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. A. W. Leh, architect. Source: South Bethlehem Historical Society.

plan and iron trussed auditorium space were highly innovative. The church's Gothic Revival styling and broad open bell turret constructed in 1889 are both appealing qualities of Leh's design.²⁵⁴ St. Mark's Lutheran, also in Ward 2, and constructed in 1889, evidences a style of church design Leh used throughout the region when commissioned by Protestant congregations, typically of a liturgical church tradition, and of modest financial resources.²⁵⁵ The style utilized the favored Gothic Revival Style's pointed archwork and large tracery filled widows but combined these characteristics in a manner that clearly favors the bulky qualities of Romanesque Revival architecture that

²⁵⁴ *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 27 March 1893.

emphasize the wall plane and its masonry construction. In these building Leh massed the profiles in an asymmetrical manner and typically gave them a whimsical flare with the inclusion of broad, splayed, or curvaceous spires that were ornamented at their apex with finials, crockets, and vanes. Leh's work in this formula of church design is abundant throughout the Bethlehem area and shows both a versatility and personal touch that is free of the restraint typically applied in his larger commissions.

Leh's most impressive structure discovered thus far, if not South Bethlehem's Holy Ghost Church in Ward 2, was Our Lady Help of Christians in the Port Richmond section of northeast Philadelphia, PA.²⁵⁶ Leh designed for this German-speaking parish, much as he had done at Holy Ghost, a structure that was rich in Old World influence and unmistakably identified the congregation as German. Instead of using the German inspired "Rundbogenstil" as he had at Holy Ghost, Leh employed a Gothic Revival architectural vocabulary and drew heavily upon 14th Century German architecture. The church was imposing when completed in 1905 as described in the *Catholic Standard and Times* of November 1905:

The new church is a cruciform edifice, with turrets, foliage, and fretwork conforming to the pure Gothic style, and has a length of 142 feet. A finely moulded façade, fronting on Allegheny Avenue is 65 feet wide, over which there towers a shapely spire 117 feet high. The material used is Port Deposit granite. The exterior is ornate, and the interior is most befitting the beauty of God's tabernacle amongst men. The windows thus far installed, which are from Mayer Studios of Munich, are beautiful specimens of religious art and the marble altars are of original design.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ *Daily Times*, 9 December 1895.

²⁵⁶ "Leh Collection."

²⁵⁷ *Catholic Standard and Times*, 15 November 1905; Our Lady Help of Christians, "Golden Jubilee" (Souvenir Booklet, 1935).

In addition to the detail offered by this account were four clock dials at the top of the central tower, one facing each direction; a rood spire, above the junction of the transept and nave; and above the buttresses surrounding the body of the building, several



Figure 45. Our Lady Help of Christians Roman Catholic Church (circa 1905) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This church and others like it in the coal regions of the state, including Saint Joseph's Roman Catholic Church in East Mauch Chunk and Saint Michael's in Lansford, draw heavily upon 14th Century German Gothic architecture. A. W. Leh, architect. Source: Our Lady Help of Christians, "Golden Jubilee," n.p.

tall pinnacles stretched skyward. As displayed in churches such as Holy Ghost and Saints Cyril and Methodius of South Bethlehem, and perhaps best by Our Lady Help of

Christians, in Philadelphia, Leh was an architect of distinction. He was courted for his ability to provide immigrant Americans with churches that were revered as centerpieces of their communities, were utilized as vessels for worshipping the Almighty, and quietly functioned as a direct material connection with Old World heritage. The beauty of these three buildings and many others in South Bethlehem was realized by the craftsmanship of men employed by the subject of our last “builder” of the religious landscape in South Bethlehem, Benedict H. Birkel.

Benedict H. Birkel

Benedict H. Birkel was born in 1861 in Baden-Baden, Germany and at the age of eleven accompanied his parent as they left Europe for America. Upon their arrival in Philadelphia the family made their way to South Bethlehem and established a residence in what in time became the heart of Ward 2 on Fourth Street. Birkel retained ownership of and remained within a block of this place, where his family had established themselves in America, for the rest of his life. Birkel’s father secured employment in the ironworks and upon his completion of an undetermined amount of schooling in the public schools of Bethlehem, Benedict joined his Father at the mill.²⁵⁸ Benedict was obviously still a young fellow at the time of his employ having assumed the task of a waterboy, a job typically reserved for child labor. From such simple and disadvantaged beginnings Birkel emerged, over the course of his sixty-one years in South Bethlehem, as one of the town’s prominent and beloved citizens. His prominence was driven not by political gain

²⁵⁸ *The Globe*, 28 May 1934.

or the amassing of great wealth but, instead, by a steady course of hard won business success and a generous community building spirit.

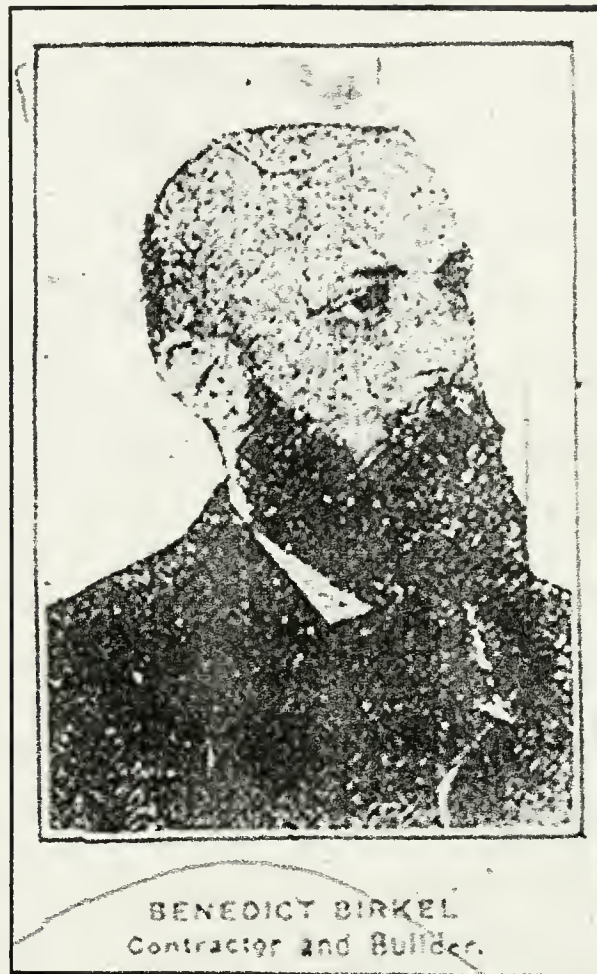


Figure 46. The only photograph of Benedict Birkel known to the author comes from a brief article in *The Globe*, 3 October 1915.

Birkel emerged from the steel mill at the age of twenty-two, and he launched a career in the construction trade, beginning this pursuit as a mason.²⁵⁹ It is possible that Birkel acquired skills as a mason while employed by Bethlehem Steel, probably working in the Company's construction corps during these years of constant factory enlargements.

Birkel was first noted by the local newspaper in the capacity as a builder in June of 1884, barely a year after setting out on his own, having acquired the contract for the construction of a foundation and cellar for a large residence in Fountain Hill.²⁶⁰ Another contract soon followed in July, and in response to the rapid growth of South Bethlehem as a consequence of the mill's success, Birkel's business venture steadily advanced.²⁶¹ Success, however, was hard won. Birkel primarily did subcontracting for other builders in the early years, and his independent jobs were limited mainly to wall construction and street paving.²⁶² One newspaper account suggests the difficulty Birkel endured while establishing himself in business, in its description of Birkel's plea before town council for the payment of completed work that he had to have in order to pay his men's wages.²⁶³

Birkel's construction venture grew alongside South Bethlehem's religious landscape and, quite naturally, Birkel became involved in giving it form. Though it cannot be stated with certainty, Birkel's first experience with church construction probably occurred as a subcontractor in the construction of his church home, German Catholic St. Bernard's in 1888. The most prominent builder in South Bethlehem at that time, J. S. Allam, was given the general contract for the completion of the church and Birkel is known to have been employed by Allam for excavations and masonry services prior to that time.²⁶⁴ If so, the small combination school and sanctuary that still survives in South Bethlehem was, as his days in the mill had been, the simple beginnings of what in time amounted to a vast resume of accomplishment.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 18 June 1884.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 1 July 1884.

²⁶² Ibid., 24 February 1887; 5 June 1888; 16 July 1888.

²⁶³ Ibid., 5 March 1886.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 1 March 1886.

In the spring of 1881 Birkel secured the general contract for the construction of two churches, both designed by A. W. Leh, one of which was Monsignor William Heinen's first building effort in South Bethlehem, the Slovak Saints Cyril and Methodius.²⁶⁵ This began a long relationship between the three that, like it had done for Mr. Leh, spread Birkel's work throughout the Lehigh Valley and beyond. A number of Leh's distant church commissions, most probably garnered by way of his intimate contact with Heinen and his subjects in Mauch Chunk, were realized by Birkel including Leh's masterpiece, Our Lady Help of Christians in the Port Richmond section of Philadelphia²⁶⁶. The Slovak Church, as noted in the preceding chapter's case study of the parish, was a modest unadorned brick structure. However, Birkel's other contract, Fritz Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church, was far from an unassuming construction task. As may be recalled from the discussion of Leh, Fritz Memorial Church displayed a high degree of architectural sophistication and the design's success was dependent upon superb masonry. The church's Gothic detailing is balanced with an interest in a bold, rustic, broken range masonry. Fritz Memorial exemplified the work of an accomplished craftsman and was the first of numerous church edifices in South Bethlehem to display Birkel's fully developed construction skills.²⁶⁷

Following the successful completion of these two contracts Birkel became the dominant church builder in South Bethlehem and over the next several decades he completed at least four other large commissions in South Bethlehem and several other substantial church related buildings including school buildings, social halls, rectories and

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 25 May 1891.

²⁶⁶ A special edition of the *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 3 October 1915, in honor of the town's 50th anniversary, ran a small article that listed several of Birkel's buildings.

administrative buildings.²⁶⁸ Among these contracts was the impressive final church of the German Catholic parish, completed in 1910 and their parish school building finished a decade before. Beyond religious buildings, Birkel's commissions were vast including numerous residences and public buildings.

Birkel's accomplishments in the construction of a large measure of South Bethlehem's religious buildings, though impressive, do not alone support Birkel's importance to giving the town's religious landscape its form. Perhaps of greater importance was the philanthropic zest Birkel displayed in aiding fledgling congregations in their desire for a place of worship. Birkel is known to have offered his services at greatly reduced rates on occasion, on others to have donated properties without remuneration, and even more remarkable, to have provided low interest mortgages to congregations and, in time, even buying out the mortgage. Among the beneficiaries of these generous actions were Saint Joseph's Windish Catholic Church²⁶⁹ and Saint John's Windish Lutheran Church²⁷⁰, both in Ward 4, Our Lady of Pompeii Roman Catholic Church²⁷¹, in Ward 5, and Saint Paul's Baptist Church, in Northampton Heights.²⁷² His generosity affected the full scope of South Bethlehem's religious landscape and as evidenced by the last two congregations cited, his generosity was oblivious to the many social divisions of the day. Both were Protestant congregations, Birkel was a devout

²⁶⁷ *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 27 March 1893.

²⁶⁸ In addition to those referenced above Birkel has been documented as the builder of: Holy Infancy School (circa 1892); Holy Ghost School (circa 1900); Holy Rosary Roman Catholic Church (circa 1902); Saints Cyril and Methodius Roman Catholic Church (circa 1906); Holy Infancy Rectory (circa 1911); Holy Ghost Sister's house (circa 1913); Saint Joseph's Windish Catholic Church (circa 1914); St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church (Mauch Chunk-circa 1917); Church of the Immaculate Conception (Mauch Chunk-circa 1896).

²⁶⁹ Saint Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, "Golden Jubilee: 1914-1964" (Souvenir Booklet, 1964), n.p.

²⁷⁰ Birkel, Benedict H. Estate Papers. File S-699.

²⁷¹ *The Globe*, 28 April 1902; 6 October 1902.

²⁷² Birkel, Benedict H. Estate Papers. File S-699.

Roman Catholic, and the last cited, Saint Paul's, was one of South Bethlehem's few African American church communities.

During the construction of numerous churches, Birkel donated many of the prized religious objects that took prominent places in both the basic function of the church and the spiritual lives of those who worshipped there. An example of this form of generosity can be seen fully in the sanctuary space of German Holy Ghost in Ward 2. Benedict Birkel donated the church bell, examples of the devotional statuary, and at least one of the massive and brilliant stained glass windows²⁷³. Shortly following the dedication of the Slovak congregation of Saints Cyril and Methodius's second church in 1906, the local press tells of Birkel being serenaded by the parish choir for his diligent fund-raising efforts during the construction process.²⁷⁴ Birkel also built many of the homes for the Slovak faithful as they clustered as a village around Saints Cyril and Methodius in Ward 4 in the early 1900's.²⁷⁵

As one can discern, Birkel's success in the South Bethlehem's construction market was vigorously reintroduced in many selfless ventures throughout the growing town. His generosity was no doubt predicated upon the fact that, having labored in the mills, Birkel too understood the immigrant struggle, and, being an active German Catholic, understood the immigrant interest in maintaining the religious customs of the Old World. One event early in Birkel's career as a builder suggests there may have been more at work in his goodwill toward and paternal presence in the immigrant population of South Bethlehem. During the summer of 1885, as the entire Lehigh Valley dealt with

²⁷³ Billinger, 10. Window bears Birkel's name in honor of the donation.

²⁷⁴ *The Globe*, 6 October 1906.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 25 March 1907.

oppressive heat and drought, Birkel was witness to a hateful act of police abuse on several Hungarian or Slovak residents. The men, likely having a cold beer after a grueling day in the sweltering mill, were attacked after leaving a tavern in Ward 3 for supposedly, being disorderly; however, Birkel's account of the incident implicated the authorities actions as excessive and unprovoked. The foreigners were badly beaten by several officers and as the newspaper readily admitted, South Bethlehem presented a less than hospitable environment for New Immigrants: "the Hungarians have very few sympathizers...and some say the Hungarians should be sent out of town." The police officers implicated by Birkel were arrested because of this courageous stand on the part of a resented minority.²⁷⁶ Possibly the events Birkel witnessed that summer night in 1885 had a lingering effect upon his desire to serve South Bethlehem's immigrant population and shaped the use of his hard won business success in their interest. As impressive as Father Heinen's missionary zeal was, and A. W. Leh's church designs were, Birkel perhaps surpassed these men as the preeminent "builder" of South Bethlehem's religious landscape, having combined the full force of his life in both its worldly pursuits and spiritual beliefs in the service of his neighbors. Birkel combined an immigrant American's life experience, a businessperson's success, and a devout believer's compassion for the injustice he witnessed around him. Birkel died at the age of 73, in the only house he ever built for himself, just around the corner from the small home his father purchased in South Bethlehem upon their arrival in South Bethlehem in 1872.²⁷⁷ Upon his death, Birkel willed over half of his cash holdings to the "German Catholic

²⁷⁶ *Bethlehem Daily Times*, 22 July 1885.

²⁷⁷ *The Globe*, 28 May 1934.

Church,” Holy Ghost in South Bethlehem, and the German Catholic “Sacred Heart Hospital” in nearby Allentown.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁸ Birkel, Benedict H. Estate Papers. File S-699.

Conclusion

With a focus on the community's religious landscape, this thesis has detailed several vital aspects of South Bethlehem, Pennsylvania's, past. In their entirety, these "vital aspects" have ultimately revealed the dramatic impact that the progress of industrialization through the 19th and early 20th centuries had upon what was once an isolated stretch of Moravian farmland along the Lehigh River. Yet the force of this study is found in the details, when the many aspects of the town's past that its sacred sites inform us of are analyzed individually.

First, South Bethlehem's religious landscape, through the ethnic diversity it embodies, communicates the power of America's industrial past as a magnet to the world's dispossessed. Countless millions, many of whom settled in South Bethlehem to work in its steel mills, came to America seeking refuge from economic distress and, on many occasions, to escape a campaign of systematic cultural oppression being waged in their native lands. Whether one considers the agricultural famine incurred by the people of Ireland, the failing grip of feudalism on the farming families of central and southern Europe, the pogroms of Czarist Russia, or the Magyarization of Imperial Hungary, all are displayed in the churches and other religious sites of South Bethlehem today. These sites are artifacts of Old World cultures, recreated and adapted in America by displaced people seeking a better way of life.

Second, South Bethlehem's sacred sites, particularly its churches, chronicle the town's evolution from an isolated past. With the arrival of the transportation and

manufacturing industries at mid-century came the entrepreneurs who settled in the highland area, known as Fountain Hill. And here they constructed their church, a Gothic



Figure 47. Tombstones of Eastern Europeans in Fountain Hill Cemetery. Photograph by W. C. Carson.

Revival monument to both Episcopal Church beliefs and to the segment of the town's population that worshiped there. Along with the entrepreneurs came the labor force to both construct and operate the canal, the railroad, the zinc and ironworks, and these people took up residence within walking proximity of their jobs, in the lowlands along the river's edge, and here they built their churches. In a variety of forms, Irish, German,

and native born citizens representing Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Presbyterian, and Moravian religious traditions erected, from mid-century through the 1880's, houses of worship that expressed a clear sense of identity and social stature within the broader community. As the years progressed and industry grew, wave upon wave of foreign-born came to South Bethlehem for work and settled the surrounding landscape, advancing in a steadily eastward direction; and here again they built their churches.

As they inform us of South Bethlehem's growth and prosperity, these churches, and the ethno-religious associations they embody, also communicate the sum of the town's experience with the Age of Mass Migration. Beginning with representatives of northern and western Europe in the mid 19th Century, progressing to include central and southern Europeans as the century closed, the "Age of Mass Migration" in the early years of the 20th Century became a phenomenon associated primarily with newcomers from the distant regions of eastern Europe that brought to South Bethlehem their particular traditions of Roman Catholicism, Byzantine Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity and Orthodox Judaism.

As important as these monuments are to informing us of how the town evolved and who affected that evolution, they further serve South Bethlehem's story by telling us about the countless men, women, and children that quietly invested their lives in that transformation. The third and final vital aspect of South Bethlehem's past communicated by the town's religious landscape, as addressed by this thesis, is this very human story. The religious institutions, as we have seen, are unmistakably as historian Jay P. Dolan professes, "window[s]...through which [immigrant] life can be observed."²⁷⁹ South

²⁷⁹ Dolan, 159.

Bethlehem's religious institutions are the material evidence of the immigrant settlers' efforts of managing the dreadful isolation, sense of dislocation and alienation, experienced upon their arrival. They were identified by a number in the mill, ridiculed for their manner of speech on the streets, and scornfully derided for their strange customs exemplified by their religion in the church. However, in the immigrant church, immigrant Americans reconnected with their pasts and surrounded themselves with others who understood and valued the same traditions and folkways and who, importantly, were tireless in their defense. In addition to providing a spiritual and cultural refuge, South Bethlehem's religious institutions aided immigrant Americans in the advance of their worldly concerns as well. Beneficial societies, ethnic lodges and other church organizations served to insure a basic standard of living and crafted leaders within immigrant communities that ultimately assisted in bridging the divide to a broader community participation. In sum, the church was the immigrant community's primary tool for mediating the immigration process; it provided many of the basic needs for survival, fostered a vital sense of group identity, and ultimately escorted its members into the broader matrix of American society.

In conclusion, South Bethlehem's religious landscape offers an excellent historic resource for both referencing the town's past and understanding its present condition. The many mill buildings that will support the proposed industrial museum complex tell us much, but a crucial part of the iron and steel story lies beyond the factory gate. Many of the town's churches are repositories of religious traditions, ethnic traditions, and sacred objects of art, and many still function as neighborhood landmarks. However, with

the end of steel production in 1995, which effectively signaled a break with the core force of the town's history, perhaps the religious landscape's greatest value today is its innate

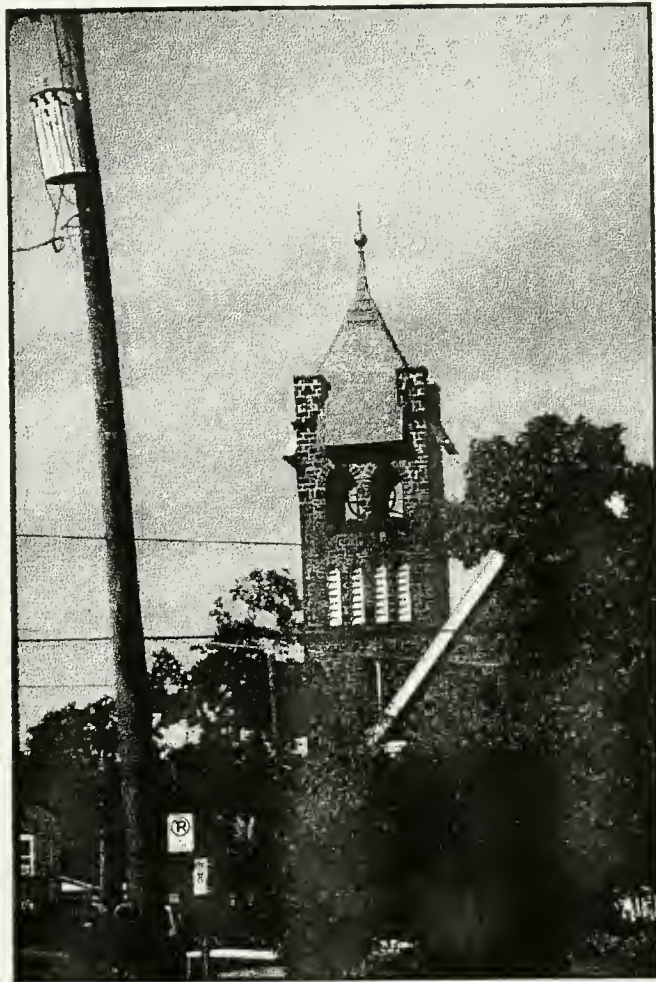


Figure 48. The bell tower of Fritz Memorial Methodist Church (circa 1893) as it appears today in South Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Photograph by W. C. Carson.

ability to tell the stories of those who left behind all that they knew abroad in pursuit of a better life and in the process built Bethlehem Steel. In the widest sense, South Bethlehem's religious landscape recalls the building of the Nation. Historic awareness is a state of mind. The human stories defined by the material objects of South Bethlehem's religious landscape have the potential of establishing for the community's future, a communion across time. "They can teach us: in fact they will teach us, willy-nilly,

because we cannot avoid the messages they send to our unconscious. They speak from the walls; the very stones have tongues. We are wise to listen.”²⁸⁰

²⁸⁰ Roger Kennedy, *American Churches* (New York: Stewart, Tabori and Chang, 1982), 215.

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☆ BAPL=Bethlehem Area Public Library

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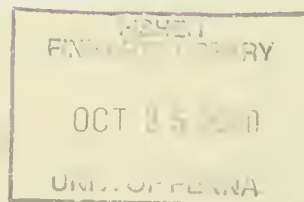
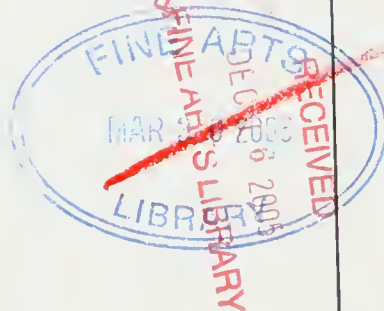
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