

Celebrating 164 Years

First of a 4 part Series

From 1850 to 1900

In 1850, the families in the Neckar area petitioned Archbishop Samuel Eccleson for their own "consolations of religion" or Catholic Parish. According to the first parish records developed in 1850 and before a church was built, families worshipped in the modest farmhouse owned by Joseph Krastel.



Fathers Joseph Muller and John Neumann (now St. John Neumann) traveled from Baltimore to celebrate Mass in the parlor of Krastel's farmhouse. In 1852, the first permanent church was built on Mr. Krastel's property on Buck's Schoolhouse Road.

Picture of the farmhouse owned by Joseph Krastel.

For nearly 20 years, a steady stream of priests visited to serve the new parish, making a difficult trip from Baltimore to Buck's Schoolhouse Road. Because of the continuing growth of new families in the area, on November 19, 1869 fourteen acres on 'the Belair Road' also known then as the Baltimore and Jerusalem Turnpike were purchased for \$200. The new St. Joseph Church, aka 'The Church on the Hill' was built and completed in late 1870.



Picture of St. Joseph Church on Belair Road.



On November 2, 1871 the rectory was completed and dedicated by Father Francis Eberhardt who stayed on and served the parish for the next five years. On the same day, Father Eberhardt solemnly blessed the cemetery.

Father Francis Eberhardt

As northeastern Baltimore County grew with hundreds of new families, St. Joseph's Church Parish grew rapidly. In 1877, the church built a convent to house the newly assigned Franciscan nuns to run a school which was housed in the convent: Only boys attended those first years!



Picture of Convent and the first school

The following letter was hand-written by Father Francis Eberhardt to his Superior at St. James in Baltimore. The letter was written on June 4, 1868 and reports the status of the St. Joseph Church.

St. James', Baltimore, June 4th 1868

Most Reverend & Dear Father,

Complying with your wishes the following is a statement of the station, called "St. Joseph's". This Church is situated nine miles from the city, near Belair-road. Around the church to a distance of five miles live about ninety German families with 450 souls. At the forty-hour adoration during last year I had 283 Communions. When school is regularly attended, there are about 70 children. But unfortunately no teacher will stay as long as there is no resident priest. The Church is in possession of every thing necessary for divine worship, e. g. chalice, ciborium, remonstrance, vestments in every color, capes, albs, surplices, one organ and one melodeon, etc. Opposite to the Church is the school-house; rooms for the teacher, one large schoolroom, 3 rooms for the pastor. There is also a garden, a stable, a well with good water.

Tenement could easily be raised to \$7.00 per annum. Around the Church are 4 ½ acres of land, partly given as donation with the obligation of singing two Requiem Masses cum Libera annually; and partly bought by our congregation. There are no debts on the Church and house, except what our congregation has paid for a piece of ground, bought some years ago. About five miles in the distance is an English, but very small congregation, called "St. Stephen's". The greater part of the congregation of St. Joseph's living between these two Churches makes it very convenient to the Germans to go to either Church.

Although St. Joseph's is able to support a pastor and the congregation has long ago desired to have this consolation, nevertheless it would be of little inconvenience for a zealous priest to attend both stations. This, Most Reverend Archbishop, is a short, but exact statement of this station.

I remain, Most Reverend Father,

Your obedient child in Christ

(Signed) Father Eberhardt

C. S. R.