

## **Johann Gehrlein and the Line School in Erie, PA**

Johann Gehrlein was seriously involved in various activities in Erie, PA soon after he arrived there, as noted in the attached pages from *St. Joseph's Congregation, Erie, PA, Its Origin and Growth* (pages 13-14), that was published in 1917. A copy of this document was in the possession of Vincent F. Gehrlein, who died in 2001. He apparently obtained this copy from the original document that was in the possession of Ed Hoffman of Erie, PA. The document describes the reinstatement of The Line School on Buffalo Road, in Erie, PA at a meeting on 10 October 1859 that established the "Roman Catholic Line School Society". "John Gehrlein" is listed as a founding member of this society.

William V. Gehrlein  
23 January 2019  
Lewes, Delaware

MAY 17 1883

ST. JOSEPH'S  
CONGREGATION

ERIE, PA.

ITS ORIGIN AND GROWTH

Together with

Biographical Sketches of its Pastors  
and Assistants

AND AN OUTLINE OF

ERIE'S PRIMITIVE HISTORY

*Richly Illustrated*

A SOUVENIR OF ITS

GOLDEN JUBILEE

1867—1917

1983

Original owned by Ed Hoffman Erie Pa Marie St, Erie Pa

## The Line School on the Buffalo Road

AS early as 1853 several German Catholics bought a lot for \$300, on the North Side of the Buffalo Road, now Eighteenth Street, a little west of Peach Street, from Mr. Alfred King. On this lot they erected a schoolhouse, in which a teacher engaged by them taught the children of the German Catholics living in the neighborhood and "on the hill". Though encouraged and superintended by Rev. F. J. Hartmann, then in charge of St. Mary's Church, on East Ninth Street, the enterprise was far from being a financial success and was about to be abandoned, when on Monday, October 10, 1859, the following men met in said schoolhouse and put new life into the project: Peter Henrichs, Peter Wuenschel, Michael Wuenschel, Valentine Schultz, Henry Kalvelage, John Adam Daub, John Gehrlein, Simon Christoph, Peter Loesch, Ferdinand Eichenlaub, Peter Hoffmann, Joseph Hermann, Michael Berchtold, Ignaz Ehret, Abdon Wuenschel, George F. Eichenlaub, Frank Burger, Joseph Seelinger, Ferdinand Schultz, Winand Pesch and Martin Esser.

They adopted as name: Roman Catholic Line School Society—and stated as object of their society:—to enable German Catholic parents of that vicinity to secure suitable education for their children, without having to send them to the quite distant St. Mary's parochial school on East Ninth Street.

This new Society re-opened the school, but encountered unexpected difficulties and opposition, which led to its absorption by a larger, more fully organized society early in 1865, which had the same objects in view. At the regular meeting on July 9, 1865, the new society was fully organized by eighty-one charter members, who elected the following first officers: President, Ignatz Ehret; Vice-President, Joseph Zefferer; Secretary, Valentine Heidt; Second Secretary, Joseph Seelinger; Treasurer, Henry Kalvelage. The school then made fair progress and became a social nucleus for all the Catholics living in that district. For support it depended mainly upon the school money paid monthly by the pupils, though it also received 25 cents of every entrance fee, also 5 cents of all monthly dues. To relieve the overcrowded condition of the school a resolution was adopted in the meeting of July, 1866, to put an addition of 20 by 40 feet to the schoolhouse.

Until this time the Bishop of the diocese, Rt. Rev. Josua Maria Young, had kept a watchful eye on this nucleus of a future congregation, without the least interference on his part. But now he became convinced that this organization might be developed into a new congregation for the Catholics of South Erie. Consequently the Bishop accepted the offer of

the school society: to let any priest have the free use of the school building for church purposes on condition that the school sessions remained undisturbed. On his part he promised them for the near future a priest to act as their pastor. This latter promise was fulfilled when the newly ordained priest, Rev. Joseph Stumpe said the first Mass in that school-house on the first Sunday in September, 1866, in the above mentioned 20 by 40 addition, which served as chapel and sacristy, generally partitioned off from the schoolroom and open only during the divine service.

#### FATHER STUMPE AT SAINT JOSEPH'S

There was great rejoicing in South Erie, when the fondest hopes of a separate congregation were happily and speedily fulfilled. This all the more so because Father Stumpe was an affable young priest of winning manners, who made himself at home among his people and knew how to enthuse them for the new church.

Soon there was an almost constant succession of festivals, parties, suppers and even dances in the various neighborhoods of the congregation which at the time claimed for its own territory all of Erie south of the railroad (Fifteenth Street) and even the west side as far as the present St. Michael's and the Germans of New Elend, the present St. Andrew's. These socials brought and held the members of the congregation together, trained them in the spirit and works of charity, and made possible the great success at their fairs, generally held in the South Erie Market Hall, still standing as the rear part of the E. C. M. A. stable, east of Peach Street, between Twentieth and Twenty-first Streets, and their picnics at Cochran's Grove, situate south of the present Erie reservoir.

Everybody tried to do his best. Practically all the supplies were furnished by the members of the congregation and sold at good prices—supper or dinner tickets, then costing \$1.00 each, selling readily. If, as often happened, on the regular supper evening, not all things were disposed of, there was an extra supper announced for the next evening, when the leavings would be served at 50 cents a ticket. Such a thing as the congregation buying from the butcher or baker was then unheard of. The thrifty young housekeepers vied with each other, as to who would give and provide the most and best eatables, while the various breweries threw in at least one barrel as their share. In those days nobody took any exception to the sale of beer on occasions of that kind, or at best did so only mentally.

As a proof and illustration of the foregoing statements may serve the fact that the church committee in its account book charged itself, April 25, 1867, as having received \$1176.00 from a supper, without any charges for that supper in its expense account.