

# Rev. William Bigot

St. Michael Pastor: 1874 - 1906

Buried in Center of Cemetery  
(Between Rows 17 & 18)

## OHIO

# Archaeological and Historical

## PUBLICATIONS

### LORAMIE AND PICKAWILLANY



REV. WILLIAM BIGOT.

[The following articles concerning the stations, forts and early settlements known respectively as Pickawillany and Loramie were obtained by the Editor of the *Quarterly* from the Rev. William Bigot, now a resident of Dayton. These articles contain much first-hand information relating to the location of the historic points in question. The sketch of Father Bigot - pronounced *Bego* - is by the Editor. For further discussion on this subject, see article on Forts Loramie and Pickawillany by Prof. R. W. McFarland, in Vol. VIII, p. 479 Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Annuals- E. O. R.]

Among the earliest white settlements in Ohio of which we have definite record are those known respectively as Pickawillany and Loramie. The origins of these places and their proper distinctive locations are much confused by tradition and the historical accounts. Mr. Henry Howe was one of the first to attempt to give accurate statement concerning these memorable stations, in his first edition of Ohio Historical Collections, published in 1846. He relied mainly upon tradition, which is more likely to be faulty than otherwise. In his second edition (1893) he somewhat revised his former recital. With the purpose of securing, as far as possible, correct data concerning the points in question the Editor of *The Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Quarterly* not only visited the respective sites of Pickawillany and Loramie station, but availed himself of interviews and correspondence with the Reverend William Bigot, a Catholic priest, who for thirty years resided at Loramie, now Berlin, and made a thorough study of the origin and history of both Pickawillany and Loramie. Father Bigot deserves more than a passing word.

His career is quite unique and worthy of record, for he is a man of remarkable experience, scholarly attainments and distinguished achievements. He was born December 4, 1838, near Alkirch, Upper Alsace, which at the time of his birth was a French possession, later and now a German province. By parental decree he was destined for the priesthood. He was fitted for his calling by a period of industrious study extending through some thirteen years, portions of which were spent respectively in a Swiss *Gymnase*; in the college of the

Congregation of the Holy Ghost in Bretagne, Western France; and the Catholic College of Paris. He became proficient not only in the classics and leading modern languages, French, German, Celtic and English, but also acquired profound scholarship in Philosophy, Theology, History, and the Liturgy of his church. He was ordained a priest in 1864 and sent to the Archdiocese of Cologne, Germany, where he was made Director of the Institute for Aged and Invalid priests at Kaiserwerth (Caesaris Insula) near

Dusseldorf. When the Franco-Prussian war arose Father Bigot was sent as Military Chaplain to Stuttgart, Ludwigsburg, and other points, having the religious care of over 15,000 French captive soldiers and nearly a thousand wounded and sick. After eight months of severe service among the French prisoners he was made Superior of the Old Monastery at Marienthal in the Archdiocese of Cologne. The Franco-Prussian war over, Father Bigot was designated by both the French Minister of War and the German Minister of War to be chief commissioner of a bureau for the collecting and tabulating officially the death records of all the French soldiers who died as prisoners of war in Germany. It was a great undertaking. Thousands of circulars of inquiry were sent to all the fortresses and localities, some 260 in number, where the 400,000 of the French soldiers had been quartered, were in action or confined in prison. More than eighteen thousand of these mortuary records were secured. This work was followed, under his direction, by the erection of monuments in all the cemeteries where the fallen French soldiers found their final resting places. For his faithful execution of this great commission the French government bestowed upon Father Bigot the Cross of Chivalry, the badge of the Legion of Honor. By the order of the Culturkamp Law, the Monastery of Marienthal, where he had taken refuge, was suppressed June, 1873. The members of the monastic community were expelled and driven homeless into the world. Father Bigot chose the United States for the home of his remaining life. Hither he came in January, 1874. He offered his services to Archbishop Purcell, then a resident in Cincinnati

The Archbishop gave him warm welcome and assigned him the parish of St. Michael in Loramie, Shelby county, Ohio. Loramie was then a small berg, the settlers of which were almost exclusively immigrants from Germany. It was indeed a typical village of the Fatherland, transplanted to the banks of the little Loramie Creek. Here for thirty years the good Father was the Parish Priest, beloved and respected not only by his own people, but by all with whom he came in contact. Under his untiring efforts, the little modest church edifice was replaced by a magnificent church costing \$60,000, with a beautiful priest residence costing \$10,000. It is a worthy and enduring monument to the zealous work of the Father. In 1890 Rev. Bigot made an extended journey to Europe, visiting his former friends and relatives in France and Germany. He was given audience by the Pope at Rome and celebrated Christmas in Bethlehem. He has written a history of the Parish of Loramie (now Berlin) which is now in process of publication. His devotion to historical research

led him to acquire all information possible concerning the old Loramie Fort and Station and its relation to Pickawillany.