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## Taking a one-tank trip to Glandorf

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**GLANDORF** - By any reckoning the historic St. John the Baptist Church in Glandorf is an imposing structure. It has withstood the test of time, becoming a pillar of that community. It has even withstood fire and loss. A visit to the Putnam County village of Glandorf reveals the impressive history of this church from which many other Roman Catholic parishes in that county can trace their roots.

The church began modestly, founded by Father Johann Wilhelm Horstmann who was a native of Germany. Upon arriving in Ohio, Horstmann had a log house built which became the church and the rectory in 1834. He along with other settlers from Germany named and founded Neu Glandorf, after the German town. The Catholic Church was dedicated to St. John the Baptist, which was the patron saint of Horstmann's home parish. The first Mass at the church was celebrated on Easter Sunday in 1834. This was the first Roman Catholic church in Putnam County.

In 1836 a larger, but still crude church was constructed. The new structure included a steeple and a bell. The church and the community continued to grow. By 1844, records to the Bishop showed that 731 people practiced their religion at the church.

The church continued to thrive. Construction on yet another church began in 1846 and was completed in 1848; this one made of brick. Later that year, after the death of Horstmann, the parish administration was taken over by the Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

The Missionaries and the Sisters of the Precious Blood served and continue to serve the parish. A few months after the assimilation of the groups, priests, brothers and sisters came to open the school in Glandorf. Early work of the sisters included farming, weaving and beekeeping in addition to their church-related duties. More than 100 sisters taught in the Glandorf School District over the years.

In 1874, then pastor Father Bernard Dickman

sought the approval of the Bishop to build another church as the congregation had outgrown the current structure. The congregation banded together and raised the \$25,000 needed for the new structure. In 1876, on the Feast of St. John the Baptist, the cornerstone of the current church was laid. The church was dedicated in 1878. At the time, it was the largest Roman Catholic church in northwest Ohio.

The neo-gothic structure still draws attention today. It contains art by great German-American artists. The wooden pulpit was carved by The Schroeder Brothers of Cincinnati. It subsequently won a gold medal at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition for the beautiful work. The 12 apostles were painted by Johann Schmitt on the church vault. Stained glass windows were designed by the Munich Mayer Company. In 1882 they sent a set of Stations of the Cross to Schroeder Brothers who fashioned wood-carved frames.

Unfortunately, in 1992, the church endured a fire. It was estimated that the church suffered \$1.2 million in damages to the interior of the building. The community rallied together and the church was restored after repainting, new carpeting and pews. Original artwork had to be painstakingly restored.

In 1954, Our Lady of Grace shrine was built on the Pioneer Cemetery using the old tombstones to call to mind the sacrifices the forefathers endured.

