

# Luxemburg roots branch out in St. Henry's Parish

By EMILY SOLOFF  
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From log cabin to soaring Gothic church to combination school and sanctuary, St. Henry's Parish has been an important part of North Town for the last 137 years.

The parish has been described as the "Mother church of all churches north of Irving Park — home to Luxembourgers, center of worship to Irish, German, Scots, Oriental, Black and white."

Names like Alles and Almandarz, Clesen and Huff, Goschy, Jung, LeFebvre and Pauls reflect the early founders and their Luxembourg roots.

Catherine Lorenz was baptized 70 years ago in the brick and stone church at the corner of Devon and Ridge avenues. Now the Angel Guardian Croatian Catholic Church, it was the third building built by the congregation.

Built in 1905, when the parish boundaries went from the lake to Lincoln Avenue on the west and from Peterson Avenue on the south to the city limits on the north, the brick and stone building replaced a frame structure with a tower which had replaced a one-story frame building in 1873.

The building is one of the tallest

in North Town. Its stained glass windows reflecting light into the central nave depict scenes from the life of St. Henry, a Bavarian emperor of the middle ages canonized for his religious and social reforms.

Executed in a style popular for church windows around the turn of the century the characters are depicted in all their medieval splendor. The explanation of the scenes under each window is written in German.

Lorenz's father owned a greenhouse and she grew up in a house at 6432 N. Ridge Ave.

"I went to St. Henry's school. When I started, I didn't speak a word of English," Lorenz says. "My parents came from Luxembourg. My father had a greenhouse."

There were many Luxembourgers in the neighborhood then. So many that the Schobermesse celebration was an annual event for the neighborhood and the parish.

It was an annual harvest festival with roots in German customs. A photograph of parish members on a Schobermesse float circa 1920 was featured in the St. Henry's dedication book put together for the 125th anniversary.

Luxembourgers lived over near Rosehill Cemetery as well, Lorenz

recalls. "Most of the people around when I was a girl had greenhouses. They grew cucumbers and tomatoes, then went into chrysanthemums and other flowers."

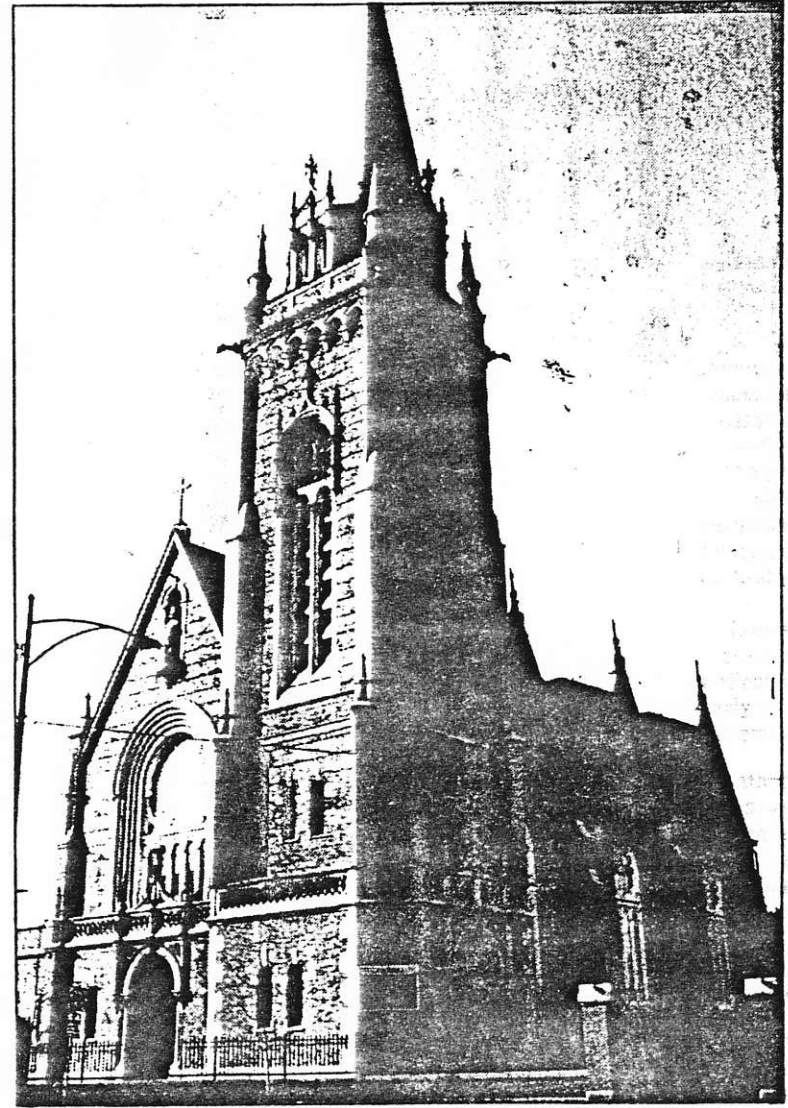
Everyone went to church and the Corpus Christi festival attracted so many participants that Devon Avenue was closed from Ridge to Western, Lorenz says.

The neighborhood was growing rapidly and with it the congregation. By 1926, it looked like the parish would outgrow the church and Cardinal Mundelein urged the building be turned over to Angel Guardian orphanage in exchange for land on Hoyne where a combination church and school could be constructed. St. Henry's second school and fourth church were built in 1928 on Hoyne.

For 40 years, the congregation and school prospered. In 1970, a new rectory, social center and convent were built next to the school. The church and school were extensively renovated in 1971.

"There are very few Luxembourgers or Germans left," Lorenz says. The ethnic makeup of the parish has changed dramatically over the years.

"I would say our parish is one of the most" diverse, Lorenz notes. "We have everything. You name it we have them."



The third building built by St. Henry's Parish, at Devon and Ridge avenues, is now the Angel Guardian Croatian Church. It was built in 1905 and is still one of the tallest buildings in North Town.