

St. Mary Of The Assumption Church

Historic Scottsville Church Recalls Laying Of Cornerstone 100 Years Ago

This is a year of anniversaries for St. Mary's of the Assumption Church in Scottsville. Last June the parish celebrated the 25th anniversary in the priesthood of its pastor, the Rev. Edward H. Hartmann. Next Sunday the parish will mark the 100th anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone of St. Mary's Church, historic landmark in the beautiful village of Scottsville.

Next Sunday's program includes the celebration of Pontifical Mass in the centennial church at 10:30 a.m. by His Excellency, Auxiliary Bishop Lawrence B. Casey and a Centennial Dinner for parishioners and friends at 1:00 p.m. in the Auditorium of the Scottsville High School.

According to the faded, handwritten parish records there must have been a sizeable colony of Catholics in the Scottsville area as early as 1840. The village of Scottsville derives its name from Isaac Scott, a New Hampshire native, who in 1790 took up his residence in what is today the village proper. Two decades later Catholics appeared in this fertile Genesee Valley and Oatka Creek area and their arrival reflected, no doubt, the strong tide of immigration which set in during the first decade of the nineteenth century.

THESE PIONEER Scottsville Catholics, mostly Irish and German judging from their names, were folk strong in the Faith. They had no Church, no priest, no Mass; and they felt their deprivation very keenly.

Now the Mass was first brought to the pioneer Catholics of Scottsville in a dramatic story. In the early winter of 1841, Father Bernard O'Reilly, pastor of the St. Patrick's Church in Rochester and later of St. Joseph's in Caledonia, neighboring village of Scottsville. As he returned, Father O'Reilly became ill and when he reached Scottsville he stopped for a rest at the home of Mr. Patrick Rafferty, who has been called the "founder of the Church in Scottsville." After 1841, Father Bernard O'Reilly, fell better and inquired from Mr. Rafferty about the number of Catholics in the area. Commissioned of the spiritual needs of Scottsville Catholics, Father O'Reilly promised to provide Mass for them every third Sunday of the month if a room could be obtained.

Mr. Rafferty rented a room for \$12.00 a quarter where Father O'Reilly offered the first Mass in January 1841.

Father O'Reilly made arrangements for Father Murphy, his assistant, to offer the sacrifice of the Mass every third Sunday. In the fall of 1842, Father Charles French, then attached to the church in Greece, came to minister to the spiritual needs of Scottsville.

In the meantime plans for the erection of a church in Scottsville were progressing. Patrick Rafferty, Michael Sheridan and James Early purchased from Shepard Garbutt the lot on Main Street where the church now stands, together with a building which was later to serve as rectory. This building, originally intended as a hotel but never used as such, had a spacious room which was used for services until the present church was built.

HERE ON Sundays and holy days came men, women and children from Mt. Morris, Lima, Avon, Brockport, Bergen, LeRoy, Churchville and Spencerport. This is surely a testimonial to the Faith of these people who struggled so valiantly to keep it alive in their own souls and to transmit it in its beauty and integrity to their children.

In 1844, Rev. Lawrence Carroll, then pastor of St. Mary's in Rochester, came to Scottsville to offer Mass. The record seems to indicate that after the departure of Father Carroll in 1846 the visits of priests to Scottsville were infrequent.

In these days, it should be noted, there were only four Catholic Churches in the city of Rochester. The priests attached to these churches were called upon to serve in Greece, Scottsville, Canandaigua and Mt. Morris. The State of New York was a single diocese under the jurisdiction of Bishop John Hughes of New York.

On April 23, 1847, Pope Pius IX established the diocese of Buffalo including all the territory which comprises the two dioceses of Buffalo and Rochester today. When Bishop John Timon took possession of the new diocese, there were but sixteen priests.

In 1848, Rev. Edward O'Connor, the first priest ordained by Bishop Timon, was appointed to Scottsville as the first resident pastor. In the same year Bishop Timon, traveling by stage coach to Avon and continuing by way of the Genesee Valley Canal, came to Scottsville to administer Confirmation.

When Father James McGlew was appointed in 1852 to succeed Father Michael Walsh, he set himself immediately to the task of building the new church. The records disclose that Louis Charbonneau was both architect and builder. The mason work was done by Cleveland and Company of Rochester. Work progressed rapidly and on the Feast of the Assumption, August 15, 1853, Bishop Timon laid the cornerstone. It was indeed a happy day! The hopes and dreams of men and women who loved God were about to be realized.

Work was discontinued during the winter. In the spring of 1854 foundations were laid for the tower which was to be 107 feet high, surmounted by a cross, a symbol of faith and salvation.

In the month of our Lady, in 1853, the first Mass was offered in the church dedicated to her honor.

WHEN BISHOP TIMON came to Scottsville in February, 1856 to confirm thirty-seven persons, the pastor and parishioners proudly showed him their new church.

Father McGlew succeeded as pastor by Father Richard Story who often recalled that, as a boy, he had accompanied the priests who had come from Rochester to say Mass here.

The church had been built but much work remained. During the pastorates of Father Story and that of his successor, Father O'Donoghue, many improvements were made. The main altar and balcony were built, a sacristy was added and a pipe organ was installed. The copy of Titian's painting, "The Assumption of the Blessed Mother" was purchased and hung over the main altar.

The Diocese of Rochester, including Scottsville, in 1868, was created and the Most Rev. Bernard J. McQuaid was appointed the first Bishop. In the same year he appointed Rev. M. J. Laughlin to succeed Father O'Donoghue. In his term as pastor Father Laughlin remodeled the rectory, installed a furnace in the Church, built a new barn and graded and seeded the grounds about the church and rectory. When Bishop McQuaid made an episcopal visitation of the parish on July 23, 1869, he administered Confirmation to 187 persons.

IN THE AUTUMN of 1869, the Bishop changed Father Laughlin to another parish and in his place sent Rev. T. A. Mahar who served until October 1870 when he was succeeded by Rev. E. J. McDonald. Because of ill health Father McDonald was compelled to give up his duties as pastor in March 1871. He had only recently been ordained and died shortly after leaving Scottsville. Then the Rev. Louis Miller came and was pastor until July 1872. In that short time he was able to

make considerable progress in reducing the church debt.

In July 1872 the Rev. J. J. Buckley was appointed and stayed only until January 1873. The records indicate that there was no resident pastor until June and the spiritual needs of the people were cared for by priests from Rochester. In June, following his ordination the Rev. M. M. Meagher was appointed and remained until the following year June 20, 1873. During his term as pastor, land for the new cemetery was purchased from T. R. Sibley, the price of the land being \$970.00.

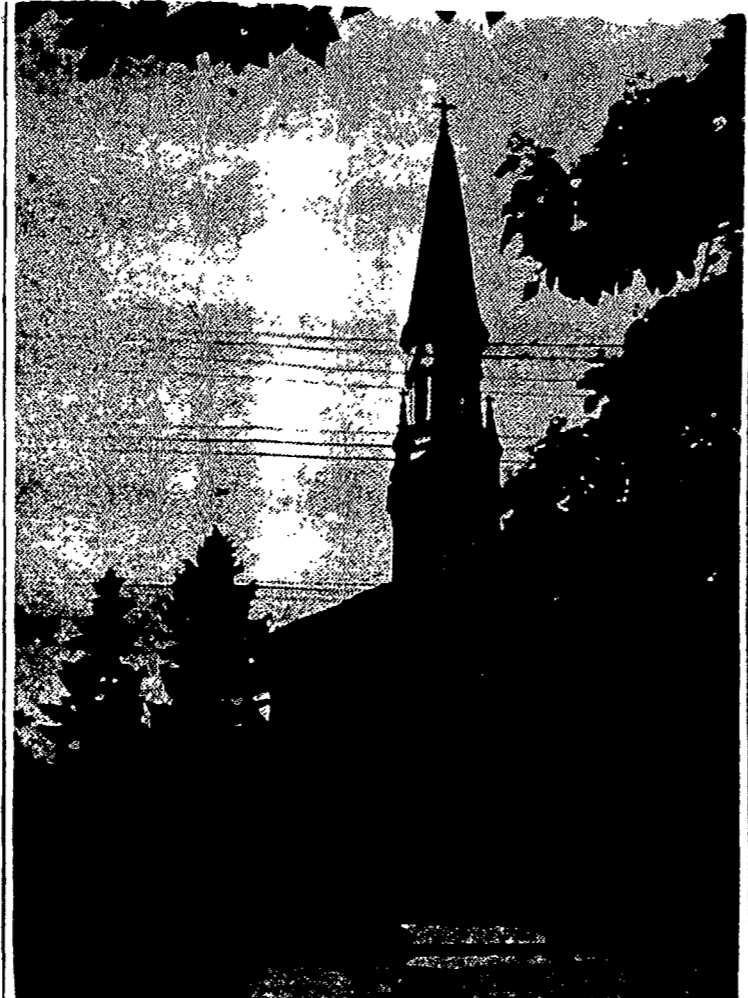
To succeed Father Meagher, the Bishop appointed in 1874 the Rev. M. T. Madson and after three years as pastor, he was succeeded by the Rev. Thomas L. Rossiter who remained until November 1881. Father Rossiter proved to be an able administrator and the church debt was further reduced and the cemetery property improved. Having shown his administrative ability, he was transferred to a larger parish and Rev. George J. Eisler was appointed in his place. Previous to his coming to Scottsville in 1881, Father Eisler, ordained only a few months, had been assistant at St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Soon after his arrival the members of the congregation were called together to devise a means to reduce the church debt. It was decided to have a fair and this was held in February, 1882. As a result of the combined efforts of pastor and people, over \$1340.00 was realized.

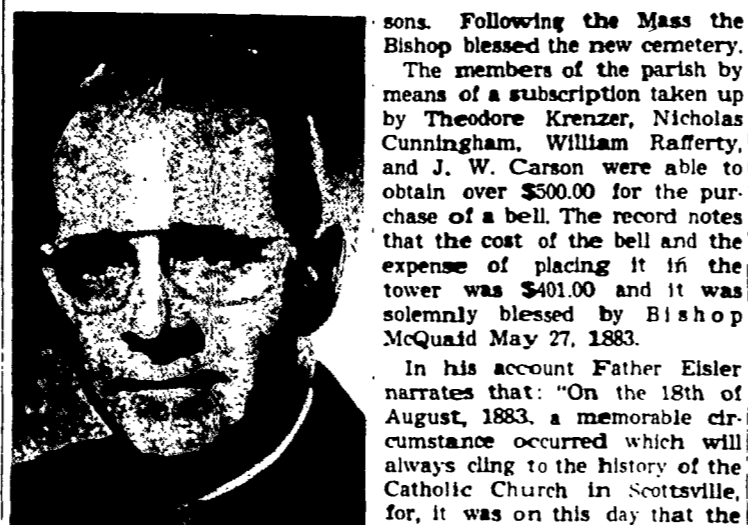
ON THE FEAST of the Assumption, August 15, 1882, Bishop McQuaid made an episcopal visitation of the parish and at the same time confirmed 59 persons. Following the Mass the Bishop blessed the new cemetery. The members of the parish by means of a subscription taken up by Theodore Krenzer, Nicholas Cunningham, William Rafferty, and J. W. Carson were able to obtain over \$500.00 for the purchase of a bell. The record notes that the cost of the bell and the expense of placing it in the tower was \$401.00 and it was solemnly blessed by Bishop McQuaid May 27, 1883.

In his account Father Eisler narrates that: "On the 18th of August, 1883, a memorable circumstance occurred which will always cling to the history of the Catholic Church in Scottsville, for, it was on this day that the church steeple was struck by lightning, and the large cross surmounting it was thrown to the roof below and the steeple itself was quite severely damaged." Fortunately, however, no further damage was done to the church building itself. A new and somewhat remodeled steeple replaced the old one and the repairs were completed in November at a cost of \$516.00.

It would seem that lightning also damaged the bell because a new one was secured and blessed November 12, 1884 by Monsignor DeRegge, assisted by several priests.



St. Mary of the Assumption Church is an historic landmark on Scottsville's Main Street.



REV. EDWARD HARTMANN, Pastor

With characteristic zeal Father Eisler continued to make improvements and needed in having six stained glass windows placed in the church and at the same time reduced the debt on the church and cemetery.

AFTER SEVEN years Father Eisler was changed to Caledonia, becoming the first resident pastor of the neighboring church of St. Columba. He is remembered as a gentle, kindly priest, zealous in all things, and devoted to his parish and its people. Bishop McQuaid then appointed the Rev. Augustine M. O'Neil and he came to Scottsville in October 1888 and remained until April 1890 when he was made pastor of the Immaculate Conception Church in Rochester. Gifted with a pleasing personality and the ability to make friends, he is remembered to this day.

As the successor of Father O'Neil Bishop McQuaid appointed Rev. Louis L. Lambert, D.D., LL.D. Father Lambert came to Scottsville with a national reputation as a scholar, teacher, editor and chaplain. While carrying on his duties as pastor, Father Lambert continued as editor of the New York Freeman's Journal, which at the time was regarded as an outstanding Catholic newspaper. He was also the author of "Notes on Ingersoll", "Tactics of Infidels" and the translator of a German work "Thesaurus Biblicus" or "Handbook of Scripture Reference."

FATHER LAMBERT continued the work of his predecessors and made many improvements, seeking to enhance the beauty of the church. During his long pastorate he came to be known, admired and loved by all.

His philosophy of life may be summed up in this quotation taken from the "Notes on Ingersoll" which his friends had engraved on the striking granite shaft which today marks his grave in Holy Angels Cemetery in Scottsville:

"To the Christian who looks upon this life and its vicissitudes as a mere phase of man's immortal career, who considers

this world of time as the womb of the eternal years, the sufferings of this life are but the temporary inconveniences of the weary traveler on his homeward voyage. Their weight is lightened and their sharpness blunted by the thought of home with its comforts and rest. He suffers with patience and resignation to the will of his Eternal Father, with the consoling hope that, when he is freed from the body of this death, he will pass into the eternal day where death and pain are known no more forever. Buoyed up by faith and hope he says in his inmost soul: 'Lord, tarry not, but come.'"

The death of Father Lambert September 25, 1910 came as a great shock to the members of his parish and to the village in general. The funeral Mass was offered by Bishop Thomas F. Hickey on September 29, with Rev. George J. Eisler as deacon and Rev. Michael J. Krieg as subdeacon.

To succeed Father Lambert, Bishop Hickey appointed the Rev. Patrick J. McArdle. He was born in Rochester June 2, 1879 and ordained June 6, 1903. Following his ordination he was appointed assistant pastor of Holy Family Church, Auburn, N. Y., but in seven years, he came to St. Mary's, Scottsville, and immediately set himself to the task of continuing the improvements initiated by the pastors who had preceded him. The old rectory which had served since 1843 was torn down and plans were drawn and work started on the present rectory which was completed in 1911.

IN 1912, FATHER McArdle entered upon a long range program to improve the cemetery. It was not until 1921 that this work was completed. The grounds were improved and beautified, additional land was bought to provide another entrance and an iron fence erected. It was a gigantic undertaking but Father McArdle, with characteristic zeal encouraged the people to help finish the job and the results of his planning are evident today. The beautiful sloping terraces with numerous shrubs and trees combine to make it a truly beautiful place.

When this was finished, Father McArdle began to make plans for the 75th Anniversary of the laying of the church cornerstone accordingly. Thus, in 1925, the shingle roof on the church and rectory was replaced with slate. This was an expensive repair even in those times and the cost of it today would be almost prohibitive. All this was done in preparation for the Diamond Jubilee to be held in 1928.

To commemorate this occasion, Father McArdle with the help and cooperation of the people had the interior of the church completely repaired and redecorated. This was to be a twofold celebration, the 75th Anniversary of the Church and the 25th Anniversary of Father McArdle's ordination. Friends came from far and near and both pastor and people were honored by the presence of the Archbishop of San Francisco, the Most Rev. Edward Hanna.

The pastorate of Father McArdle was to be an exceptionally long one; it is, in fact, remarkable that the combined years of Father Lambert and Father McArdle as pastors of St. Mary's were to exceed fifty years.

During the greater part of his years as pastor Father McArdle was in poor health, but, in spite of this handicap, he cared for the needs of his people in a most faithful and zealous manner, and served them with unwavering loyalty. As a citizen of the community he was always interested in everything for the betterment of the community.

After 31 years of service to the parish of St. Mary of the Assumption Father McArdle passed to his eternal reward October 16, 1941. The funeral Mass was offered by the Most Rev. James E. Keamey, Bishop of Rochester; Rev. John M. Sellinger, a life-long friend preached his eulogy. He is buried in the family lot in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery, Rochester, New York.

On November 4, 1941 Bishop Kearney appointed the present pastor, the Rev. Edward H. Hartmann to succeed Father McArdle. Ordained in 1928, Father Hartmann had served as assistant at Sacred Heart Church, Rochester, now the Cathedral Church of the diocese; at St. Patrick's Church, Elmira, New York; St. Patrick's Church, Owego, New York; and St. Monica's, Rochester.

When the depression of the 1930's ended with the outbreak of World War II, the financial condition of the people improved everywhere, and in this, as in other parishes, it became possible once more to make repairs and improvements. With the whole-hearted support of the congregation and with their generous cooperation, the debt of \$3000.00 was paid off. The exterior of the church and the rectory was repainted, the sheds removed to provide parking facilities, new walks were laid and new entrances for the church provided. In 1947 and 1948 new heating systems for the church and rectory were installed. In 1951 it was possible to replace the lighting system with more modern hanging lanterns. In 1952 the church was redecorated and carpeted in anticipation of the Centenary this year. 1963 repairs and improvements have likewise been made in the rectory.

In a special booklet prepared for the centennial celebration on Sunday, Father Hartmann reminds his parishioners:

"As we of the present survey the past, we are grateful for the gifts of one hundred years of labor and sacrifice. We can take but little credit to ourselves for what we have been able to accomplish. We have never been called upon to make the sacrifices made by the valiant priests and people who built this Church and passed on to their descendants the wonderful gift of Faith. To them belongs the glory and our praise. We but reap the harvest which they sowed."



Newly decorated interior of St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Scottsville. Cornerstone was laid on the Feast of the Assumption, August 15, 1853.

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