

Start Of Catholic Faith In Village Of Addison Traced To Irish Famine, Building Of Erie Railroad

A century of Catholic Faith will be recalled this Sunday (Oct. 3) when Auxiliary Bishop Casey celebrates Mass at St. Catherine's Church in Addison to mark the establishment 100 years ago of this Southern Tier parish in Steuben County.

The beginnings of Catholicity in Addison were due to two factors one foreign, the other native. The former was the famine years of the late forties of the last century, which caused at least one and a half million of the Irish to come to the new land. The latter was the building of the Erie R.R., which required laborers and these Irish needed jobs. So famine brought these people to this country and the railroad brought some of them to Addison.

There may have been an occasional priest who passed through Addison prior to the 40's, but all that is known is that the few early Catholics of the town were occasionally visited by priests from Auburn, Geneva, Hornell and Greenwood (Rexville).

The first Mass in Addison was celebrated in one of the shanties along the railroad track. Later

for the proposed church. They succeeded in purchasing for the sum of \$250 a parcel of land with a frontage of 30 feet on Curtis Square and extending south for about 130 feet. This land had been owned by the Henry Boldwin and Rufus Weatherby families.

When one looks at the history of this particular time, 1854, it is clear that courage was required for this undertaking. Anti-Catholic feeling was running high as a result of the Know-Nothing movement which was just about at its height. And the papers of that period show that Addison was a strong center of the movement.

Despite all this, the local Catholics persevered and erected a small frame church on this piece of land which lies just west of the present parish house. The exact date of the dedication of the first church is unknown, but it took place sometime between the organization meeting in 1854 and November of the following year.

Addison in those years was part of the diocese of Buffalo and therefore under Bishop John Timon. The first recorded visit of Bishop Timon to Addison is in September of 1856, when he administered the sacrament of Confirmation in the new church. Unfortunately the names of those in this class are no longer in existence.

Continuation of Coming
The new parish of St. Catherine remained under the care of St. Mary's Convent from 1854 until 1865. During those years three priests, Father Thomas Cunningham, Father Peter Colgan and Father Charles McMillan took care of the spiritual needs of the people of Addison.

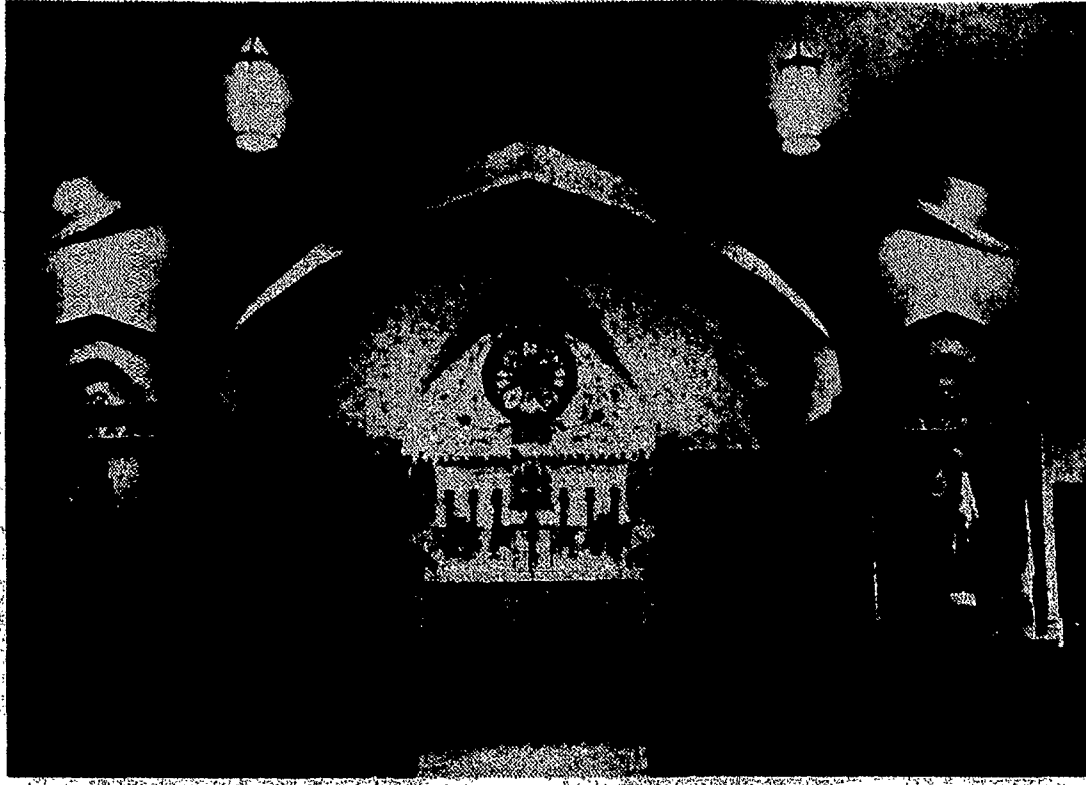
During these years the Catholic Society as the local paper spoke of the new parish increased its membership. Perhaps this increase was placing too great a burden on the priests of St. Mary's or perhaps the Bishop had other reasons. At any rate, the year 1865 saw St. Catherine's separation from Convent and its care taken over by St. Mary's in Bath. This change brought a new face to the streets of Addison, that of Father E. Mazurek. There are still a few alive who have not forgotten this name and his work in Addison.

First Church
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Enlarged Church
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Resident Pastor
Catholicism comes of age in any place when its people are united with pride to a priest of its own and a parish house. St. Catherine's got its wish in 1868. Father Bradley came to Addison early in that year and was able to move into the parsonage near



Interior of St. Catherine's Church, Addison, N. Y.

The church by May 20, of that year. The parish was but 14 years old at the time. Rapid growth during this year added an enlarged church, a rectory, and its first resident pastor.

Present Church
The parish continued to grow and in 1884, Father P. Donahue, "Big Father" Donahue, became the new pastor. He was a man of action and one who could sell his plans to the people. And his plans meant a new church for Addison and the erection of a chapel at Cameron Mills.

The first announcement of the proposed new church was in the April 16, edition of the Addison Advertiser: "St. Catherine's Society Roman Catholics are soon to commence the erection of a large and commodious new church edifice on the site of their present structure on Maple St."

This may have been the original plan or the writer may have been in error. Actually the new church was erected about 100 feet East of the old church.

The proposed building was to be 60 by 100 feet and the cost was estimated at \$15,000. People who had taken help to draw material to the site and the stone for the foundation was donated by others in the parish.

Original plans had set September of 1865 for the laying of the corner stone, but unforeseen delays forced the postponement until later in the fall. Work continued rapidly and by February of 1866 the building was enclosed and still better all the bills up to that point paid.

The generosity of the people of those days merits mention. The year 1865 was not a good year for wages were being cut and the unemployment problem was causing worry to the county officials. Yet despite these factors, the people of the parish raised a total of \$6,755.20. To us in the days of inflation the sum seems small but when we stop to consider that this is roughly equivalent to \$70,000 in today's money, we begin to appreciate what these people did.

Work on the new church continued all through 1866 and into the following year. By April, the local Advertiser could say: "The Catholic Church is nearly completed. The altar cost \$500." July 17 was set as the day of dedication and Bishop Ryan was to conduct the ceremony.

The Corning Journal carried an account of the ceremony and a description of the new building.

The music for the occasion was furnished by a choir from St. Mary's Convent under the direction of Miss Marie C. Kennedy. The cost of the structure was \$15,000 of which less than \$2,000 remained as a debt. And of this amount \$800 was paid that fall.

St. William's Chapel
One job is too much for some men. But for Father Donahue, one was not enough. At the same time that he was building the new church in Addison, he was not neglecting another section of his parish. In 1885, he was celebrating Mass at the school house at Cameron Mills.

The following year Patrick O'Connor and his wife donated land for a chapel and by Feb. 18 a "neat substantial chapel" had been erected and paid for. This chapel was dedicated to St. William and it continued to serve the people of that area until 1930, when it was sold as it was no longer needed.

Parish House
The pastorate of Father Donahue ended in 1889. It was this same year that saw the razing of the old church and the building of the new parish house. Some of the lumber from the old church is part of the present rectory.

The End of an Era
During the years from 1889 to 1897 two more pastors came to St. Catherine's: Father Carroll in 1889 and Father Noonan in 1895. The latter of these had a short pastorate, about two years. The reason for this change originated in Rome, and resulted in Addison becoming part of the Rochester Diocese.

Change of Status
The Diocese of Rochester began in 1868. At this time, there were those who felt that the diocese should extend south to the state line. But when the papers came from Rome, the counties of Steuben, Schuyler, Chemung and Tioga were not included in the new diocese. Finally after the death of Bishop Ryan, on Dec. 10, 1896, Rome ordered these four counties transferred to the Rochester Diocese. This change affected 26 churches, 18 parishes and 23 priests. One of these parishes was St. Catherine's, Addison.

The Bishop of Rochester was the Most Rev. Bernard McQuaid. After the document arrived in this country, Bishop McQuaid invited all these priests to have dinner with him in Rochester at the seminary. Father Noonan of Addison was among those present. The priests involved in the new change were given a choice: they could remain in the new diocese or return to Buffalo. Among those who chose to return was Father Noonan of Addison. This meant a new pastor for St. Catherine's.

Father Darcy
Father William Darcy arrived in Addison in 1897. He was the first priest of the Rochester Diocese to serve the parish. One of his first tasks was to prepare a Confirmation class for

his new bishop. Bishop McQuaid came to Addison and met the people of his new parish, confirming a class of 47 boys and girls. Bishop McQuaid would again visit Addison in 1901 and 1905. But the next Confirmation would bring Bishop Thomas Hickey to Addison.

Father Darcy made two changes in the parish during his pastorate. The first concerned the cemetery. When the Irish came to Addison, one of the first things they did was to purchase land as a final resting place for their dead.

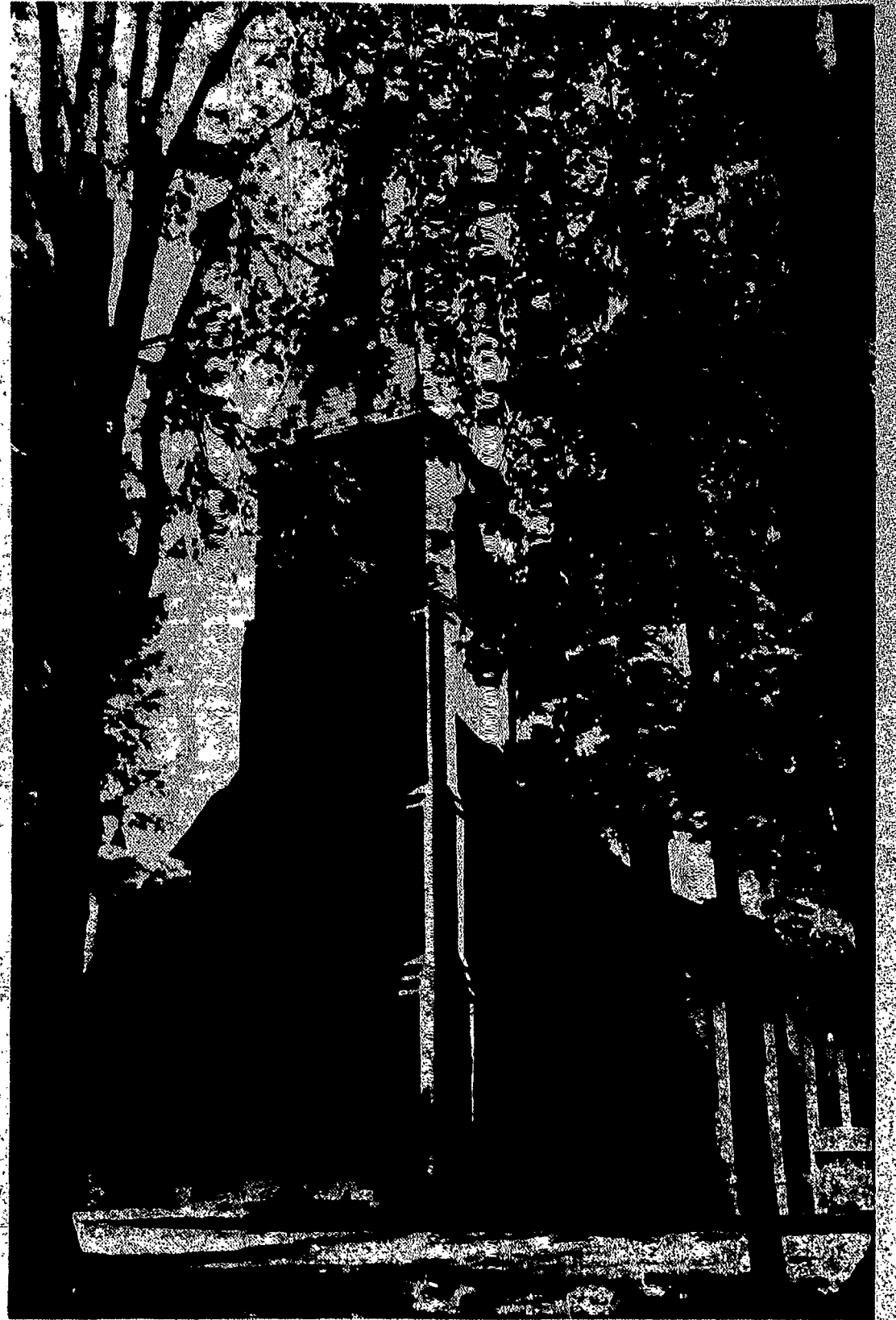
The original cemetery began several years before the parish was started. By the turn of the century more land was needed. A three man committee considered several sites for the new cemetery and finally in 1902 the parish purchased four acres of the Bliss property.

This property was located on the same street as the church but on the opposite side and about one quarter of a mile from the church. This choice was good, for it was level land not far from the church and also near the old cemetery. Work was begun immediately and on May 7 the first eight lots were sold.

During the pastorate of Father Patrick Sullivan, a fence was built at the cemetery. This was replaced only last year. Several pastors had considered completing the interior of the church, which had been dedicated in 1887, but it took Father Darcy to actually get the work done. There are many still alive who recall the unfinished church, open to the roof with its large, rough unfinished beams and truss work, supported from the floor by large pillars. As one of the parishioners described it: "It looked like a large barn." When this work on the interior of the church was completed at a cost of about \$15,000, the church was about the same as it is today.

During the century of parish life, 23 priests have served the parish. Of these, only three are still alive. Of the 20 that have passed on, only one died while pastor of St. Catherine's. This was the successor of Father Darcy, namely, Father Patrick Sullivan. He was a very young priest when he came to the parish from St. Peter and Paul's, Elmira. In fact he was only in his early forties when he was killed. On the night of Sept. 20, 1920, Father Sullivan was seriously injured by his own automobile. Taken to the hospital it looked for a while that he might live, but pneumonia set in and on the following Friday the parish was saddened by the news of his death.

Father Bloomer, later Monsignor Bloomer, of St. Catherine's Church, Elmira, celebrated the funeral



Historic St. Catherine's Church of 100-year old parish at Addison, N. Y.

Mass. The body was then taken to St. Mary's, in Elmira for the Pontifical Mass by Bishop Hickey. Father Sullivan was buried in Elmira.

Last Quarter-Century
More recent years, remembered by more of the people saw the pastorate of Father Thomas Harrington, Father William Killeckey, Father Francis Moffett, Father Patrick Kelly, Father William Cannon, Father Peter Jankowski, and the present pastor, Father Francis Turner.

This period included the great depression and the second world war. It also witnessed the building of the first parish hall by Father Killeckey in 1934. It saw the financial struggles of the days of Father Kelly, and the recovery period of Father Cannon. From that time on the parish has been able to make improvements. The interior of the church was redecorated during the pastorate of Father Jankowski. And in the last few years, a new organ was purchased, the exterior of the church repaired, a new parish office set up in the house.

This centenary year finds St. Catherine's Parish under the spiritual direction of Father Turner who came to Addison as pastor in June, 1950. Doing all the work themselves, Father Turner and the men of the parish worked for six months this year enlarging the parish hall in the church basement. They also installed a modern kitchen in the hall and a new bell system in the church tower. Area-wise, St. Catherine's is not a little parish. It covers about 225 square miles. In addition to the village of Addison, St. Catherine's Parish embraces in whole or in part the towns of Tuscarora, Woodhull, Rathbone, Cameron, Erwin, Lindley, and Thurston.

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REV. FRANCIS TURNER, Pastor

Mass was celebrated in the home of Frank Smith on East Front St. and at the home of D. D. Hickey on Goodhue St.

By the year 1854, the Catholics had rented Jones Hall at the corner of Main St. and Railroad Ave. Here Mass was celebrated and the sacraments were administered by a Father McCluskey with these early days, such as Father McConnell of Greenwood (Rexville).

In the year 1854 St. Mary's Church in Corning received Father Thomas Cunningham as its first resident pastor. To this man was also given the care of the Catholics of Addison and surrounding territory.

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Indian Mission Marks Centenary

St. Ignace, Mont. — (RNS) — Thousands of Indian and white Catholics flocked to the centennial celebration of the St. Ignace Mission here.

His Eminence Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York, presided at a Solemn Pontifical Mass that opened the three-day observance. Bishop Joseph M. Gilmore of Helena was the celebrant.

A pageant, "One Hundred Years of Achievement" was presented in the nature of outdoor theater near the mission on the opening and closing days. It depicted the arrival of the "black-robes" 100 years ago and the more dramatic highlights of the community's growth and progress since that time.

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