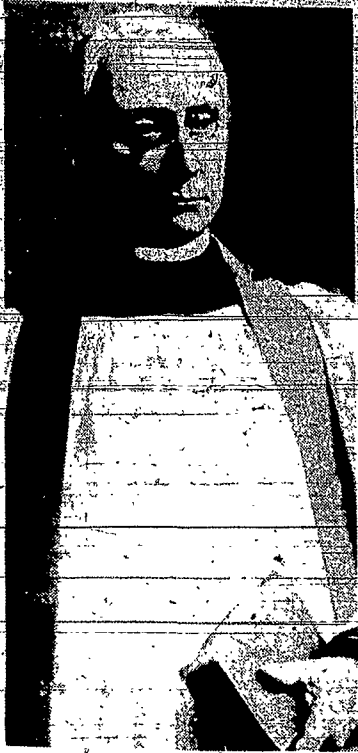


'True and Incredible Acc't' of a Dastardly Hoax

New York — If you think you've ever been bothered by too many salesmen and other callers in the midst of a very busy day, consider the plight of one Rev. Marion Dix, rector of the oldest, wealthiest and most fashionable Episcopal parish in the country.

In one brief five-day period the Rev. Dix reluctantly said "no" to various salesmen offering toupees, shoe polish, underwear, fire extinguishers, coffee, safes, a dancing course, a three-horsepower steam engine, band instruments, plumbing equipment, mausoleums and corsets.

Wait! There's more. The Rev. Dix also had to turn down a tattoo specialist who had come prepared to emblazon an eagle in three colors on the minister's chest, 28 second-hand clothing dealers who were prepared to pay top prices for Mrs. Dix's clothing, 14 pawnbrokers each under the impression that the rector needed financial help — 30 physicians who



REV. MARION DIX

were told the clergyman had suffered an epileptic fit and was near death, and 14 min-

isters who had come to the parsonage thinking they were invited to have lunch with the renowned Bishop of Exeter (the Rev. Dix decided the least he could do was invite them in for tea).

And there was the mailman, bringing correspondence from a Louisville distiller thanking the minister for his unsolicited testimonial about the medicinal properties of their bourbon and asking for his permission to be quoted in their advertising, among other interesting mail of a similar nature.

All of this occurred in 1890, but the story of the harassment of the Rev. Dix has just come to light in historian W. A. Swanberg's "The Rector and the Rogue," which is described by publisher Charles Scribner's Sons as "Being the TRUE & INCREDIBLE Acc't of a DASTARDLY HOAX against an Upright (if rather Stuff) Divine."

The Rev. Dix was rector of Trinity Church at Broadway and Wall Street, a parish whose communicants included Astors, Jays and De Lancys, and the "rogue" was a mysterious person who signed himself "Gentleman Joe" and seemed bent upon destroying the Rev. Dix's recd composure, if not his reputation.

Gentleman Joe forged the Rev. Dix's name on hundreds of postcards and letters that

brought scores of salesmen to the rectory doorstep; he placed "personal" notices in the New York newspapers that brought hordes of job-seekers calling upon the bewildered Rev. Dix, and finally, Gentleman Joe wrote a letter to Dr. Dix asking for \$1,000 to "stop the racket," although extortion proved not to be the rogue's aim.

"The press in general was of two minds about the case," reported Swanberg, who has written biographies of newspaper publishers Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst, "deploring it in pious editorials but printing many columns of zesty copy about it in the news sections, implying journalistic gratitude to Joe for brightening their pages."

It may not have been so amusing to Dr. Dix, but there was certainly mystery. Who would want to ridicule the rector? That was the question asked by Dr. Dix, post office officials, detectives and the press — the prime suspects being those churchmen who opposed liturgical change.

Dr. Dix was not only a High Episcopal churchman (High Episcopalians favored adopting as much of the Roman Catholic liturgy as possible), but, according to Swanberg, "Dr. Dix was the most prominent champion of the High Church movement in America." Indeed, when he became chaplain of the first full-fledged Episcopal reli-

gious order of nuns in this country, Dr. Dix was regarded by some Episcopalians as "the head and front of an infamous plot to betray the Episcopal Church and lead it back to Rome," according to Swanberg. The fact that Pope Leo XII had the previous year, 1879, made a cardinal of former Episcopalian John Henry Newman didn't help matters any.

There were other possible suspects: people who objected to Trinity Church's enormous land holdings — feminists (he was infuriated by the founding in recent years of Vassar, Smith and Wellesley and was at the time fighting the creation of Barnard College for Women).

But the culprit turned out to be a socially prominent, bon-vivant named Eugene Fairfax Williamson who had a long line of similar hoaxes and minor swindles to his credit, a 39-year-old friend of Andrew Carnegie who taught Sunday School classes at one time in Dr. Dix's Trinity chapel, who freely gave small gifts (which he swiped from department store counters) and was famed for a book of poetry, whose poems he stole from a Catholic nun named Sister Ambrosine.

The New York courts, refusing to believe that Williamson, alias Gentleman Joe, pulled off the Dr. Dix hoax merely for fun, sent him to Sing Sing prison for 3 1/2 years, but he died there of ulcer complications after only eight months.

Parish to the Rescue

All in the Family

Brooklyn Center, Minn. (RNS) — Members of St. Alphonsus Catholic Church here are building a new home for a family of eight children whose mother has terminal cancer.

The Richard J. Hills family has been told by the fire marshal that their present home is unsafe.

Mr. Hills, a letter carrier, has been struggling with his wife's medical bills for five years, including the costs of seven operations and hospitalization since last January.

"I wanted to build another house," he said, "but I went to the bank and with the money I already owed . . . I just couldn't swing it."

"Then I got a call and they told me I had a surprise coming. I asked what but they just said, 'You'll see.' And I came home one day and there was the Caterpillar, digging."

Idea for the project came from Eugene Sullivan, president of the parish's St. Vincent de Paul Society, and Roger H. Scherer, state legislator and partner in a lumber company.

A great deal of the material for the house has been contributed by various companies, as has excavating work.

Seven carpenters and seven blocklayers, all members of the parish, have worked on the house. Electricians and plumbers will join the project later. And an unskilled crew of "thumb-bashers" has worked loyally. And Mr. Hills has worked along with them.

He estimated that it would cost him about \$19,000 to \$22,

000 to build the two-story, four-bedroom home without help. He is paying only for materials which are not contributed.

The Hills family is now crowded into a two-bedroom house where they have lived for 17 years.

"This has been just about the best Christmas these kids ever had," Mr. Hills said. "They got just about everything they wanted. So many people brought things."

Of his wife's illness, Mr. Hills said, "She won't come home again. She knows that and she's resigned. I haven't given up hope, but how that woman has suffered . . . sometimes I wonder."

ISRAELI RECEPTION

Jerusalem — (RNS) — Israeli President Zalman Shazar held a New Year's reception here for 30 Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant church leaders in the Holy Land.

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SPECIAL JESUIT SCHOOL

St. Louis — (RNS) — St. Louis University has announced plans here for a special study program in Madrid, Spain, to provide students with an international viewpoint and intercultural understanding.

The program will be open to selected students who have completed two years of college Spanish or its equivalent. It is open to students of other schools as well as those attending the Jesuit-maintained university here.

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HORSEHEADS

Savings & Loan Association

STATEMENT OF CONDITION
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112 North Main Street
Horseheads, New York 14845
DECEMBER 31, 1968

RESOURCES

First Mortgage Loans	\$6,712,670.66
Other Loans and Contracts	380,634.55
Cash on Hand and in Banks	181,430.36
U. S. Government Securities	651,556.75
Stock in Federal Home Loan Bank	60,600.00
Office Building and Equipment	31,192.44
Deferred Charges and Other Assets	95,983.20
Total	\$8,114,067.96

LIABILITIES

Members Savings Accounts	\$7,589,678.50
Advance Payments by Borrowers	24,763.92
Loans in Process	97,754.88
Deferred Income and Other Liabilities	31,260.78
Surplus, Federal Insurance Reserve and Undivided Profits	370,609.88
Total	\$8,114,067.96

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