

Pilgrimage Churches

Ss. Peter and Paul In Elmira

By Father Robert F. McNamara

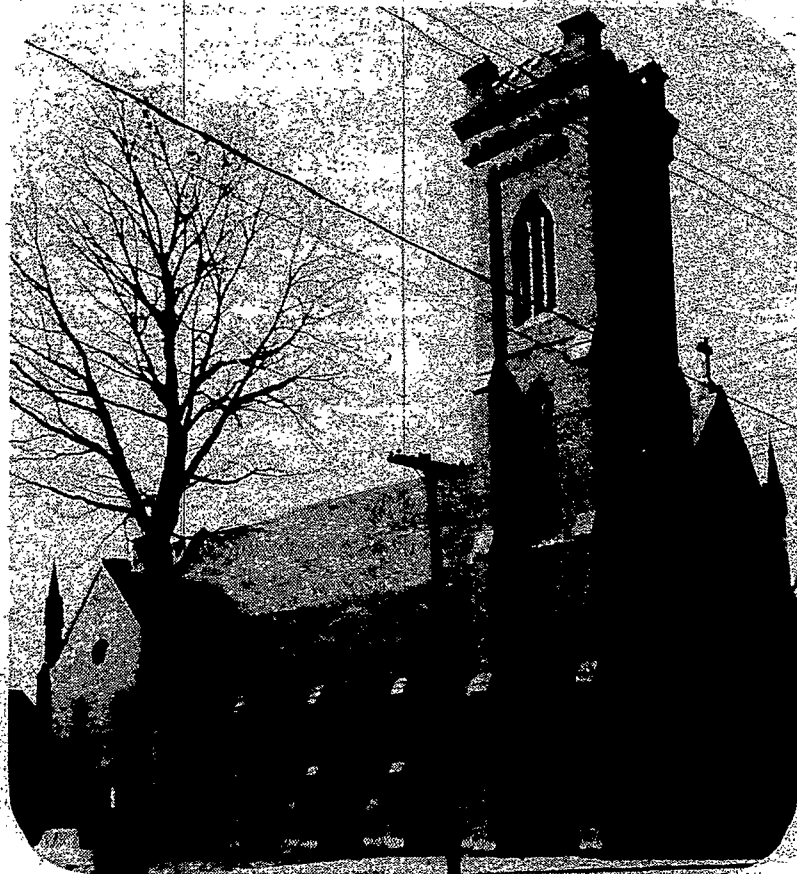
The only Chemung-Schuylar Region parish church chosen by Bishop Hogan as a "substitute" for the diocesan cathedral in connection with the current Holy Year pilgrimages is Ss. Peter and Paul, Elmira.

This is surely a most appropriate choice. Ss. Peter and Paul is the mother church of Chemung County Catholic parishes.

Catholics in Chemung County began to increase, particularly in Elmira proper, after 1830. From 1834 to 1840, they were attended occasionally as a mission station out of Auburn; from 1840 to 1842, out of Geneva; and after that, from Binghamton.

In 1849, Father John Sheridan was named resident pastor of Elmira, by Bishop Timon, who in 1847 had become first bishop of Buffalo. Father Sheridan put up a small brick church on the site of the present St. Joseph's Hospital. His successor, Father John O'Boyle — who came in 1850 — found this church building inadequate, so he built a wooden church across the street, on the site of the present rectory. Then, in 1854, he began the present church. Unfortunately, he did not live to see its completion. Early in December, 1856, he fell from the scaffolding, incurring injuries which resulted in his death on Dec. 8, 1856.

Father Thomas O'Flaherty, named to succeed O'Boyle, carried on the work appropriately. Father O'Boyle was buried under the original altar of the new church, according to parish tradition. Bishop Timon came down from Buffalo and dedicated the finished church on Aug. 19, 1857. He also consecrated the altar. Parish tradition records that when it came to the Bishop's attention that there were no relics at hand to seal into the



altar-stone, he took some out of his pectoral cross.

The present marble high-altar was installed and consecrated in 1924. Apart from that, the church remains substantially unchanged — a nostalgic memorial to the Catholic faith of an immigrant generation.

Ss. Peter and Paul's history has nevertheless been eventful. The Chemung River has had a long history of floods, and the church, on the valley floor just a few blocks from the river, has suffered some degree of flooding on a half dozen occasions. On May 28, 1946, the flood waters rose high enough to cover the pews. In the great flood of June 23, 1972, the water level inside the church was 11 feet. (In 1946 the water had

risen only to the first floor of the frame rectory; in 1972, the rectory was destroyed.)

Even though the old mother church had lately lost most of its parishioners in the face of commercial growth, the pastor, Father Edward Foy, manfully restored the waterlogged structure. Reopened for use in September, 1973, it was formally rededicated on the feast of Christ the King that same fall.

Ss. Peter and Paul's twice threatened with destruction, thus has been twice renewed. It symbolizes the Church itself — often supposed dead, but always rising to new life. May pilgrims who visit the Elmira pilgrimage church this Year Jubilee, become themselves renewed, in their own hearts!

OFFICIAL WELCOME

Apalachin — The St. Margaret Mary annual picnic will serve as the parish's official welcome to its new pastor, Father Elmer Schmidt. The picnic will be held on

parish grounds on Sunday, July 14. The affair is being planned by the parish social committee, with Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Robinson in charge.

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Some interesting words run into while looking up some other words. If you can get five of the meanings you're a word buff. If you get all 10 you're a whiz:

1. Turtlet.
2. Didlove.
3. Macrurous — (as opposed to brachyurous).
4. Huckaback.
5. Cleantha.
6. Bardy.
7. Anelace.
8. Carking.
9. Flitch.
10. Smaragd.

ANSWERS

1. A young or small turtle.
2. A boy's given name.
3. long tailed (zoological) as a lobster.
4. toweling or linen or cotton.
5. A girl's given name probably from Greek Stoic philosopher Cleanthes.
6. audacious (Scot.)
7. A short sword.
8. anxious.
9. A side of hog salted or cured as a flitch of bacon.
10. emerald.

RURAL AMERICA



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The U.S. Postal Service will release this stamp in honor of the centennial of the Chautauqua Movement in the U.S. The stamp is scheduled for issue August 6 at Chautauqua.

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