

## Pilgrimage Churches; St. Pius X, Chili

By Father Robert F. McNamara

St. Pius X Church, in the Town of Chili, suburban Rochester, is a relatively new parish and possesses a brand-new church building. But the origins of the parish congregation go back over 120 years.

Irish immigrants began settling in this part of Chili in the period 1830-1840. In the early 1850's, priests would come out from St. Patrick's Church, Rochester, to offer Mass once or twice a month. When St. Mary of the Assumption Church was established at Scottsville in 1846, the Chili mission was assigned to its pastor.

Encouraged by their Scottsville pastor, the men of Chili undertook in 1854 to build their own church. It was a strictly do-it-yourself job, begun, it is said, without benefit of architect or contractor. The end product was quite commendable: a pretty little white frame building with six Gothic windows. (The tower was added three decades later.) The Irish parishioners chose a very Irish saint as patron of the Church: St. Fechin (or Fechan) of Fore, a Seventh Century monk.

Although the official title of the mission church was St. Fechan (pronounced "Feehan"), it was more commonly called the "Swamp Church," because the lot was low, and the spring thaw regularly produced a lake around it. In 1882, Father Dennis J. Curran, the pastor of Churchville (to which Chili was by now assigned) bought new parish

property on Chestnut Ridge Road, about one-third mile from the original lot. Around the end of the year, the church was moved to the new site on rollers. The removal took ten days. Sunday Mass was celebrated, and catechism classes were held in the church on rollers. Since it came to rest on the new property, however, St. Fechan's church has ceased its wandering. It still belongs to the parish.

Not until almost one hundred years after St. Fechan's Church was built was the congregation given a resident pastor — the present pastor, Father Donald J. Murphy. He made a completely new beginning. On a newly purchased tract at 3000 Chili Avenue, (about a mile away from the original church), a combination school and church building was constructed, and the name of the congregation was changed to St. Pius X, lately canonized. But the generous spirit of the Chili parishioners had not altered over the hundred years. Again, they did all the construction work themselves. Finally, in the period 1971-1973, a permanent church was built: the present pilgrimage church. Once more, it was the parishioners who did all the work of construction. Bishop Joseph L. Hogan dedicated the new St. Pius X on May 20, 1973.

Pilgrims will find several furnishings of the church of special interest. The main marble altar used to be in Our Lady of the Genesee Trappist Monastery at Piffard, N.Y. The large ceramic altarpiece, represents St. Pius X,

"Pope of the Eucharist," distributing Holy Communion to two children. It was executed by Felix Oudin of France. Most striking of all the appointments are the windows of faceted glass in abstract patterns. They are the work of Muriel Pulitzer, an American artist resident in Paris.

Erected by American brawn and embellished by European art, St. Pius X Church epitomizes the "success story" of many a Catholic rural parish.

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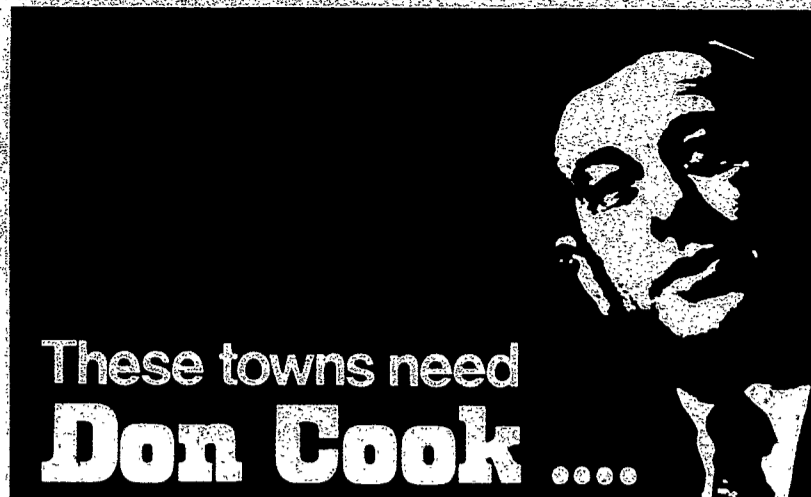
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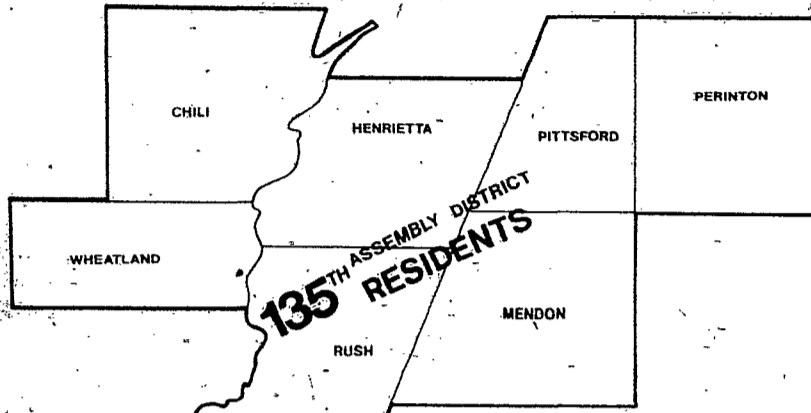


Seniors' Social Hour

Senior Citizens of St. Mary's parish in Dansville were invited for coffee on a recent Sunday morning by the Senior Sounding Board, a sub-committee of the parish council's Human Development group. Helen Wolff, third from left, was hostess. Social services available to older people were outlined by representatives of various agencies.



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