

A History Closes, but a Family Grows Larger

By Father Robert McNamara

The little community of Catholics in Rochester and its environs organized on July 12, 1820. Its board of managers bought a lot on the corner of Platt Street and Frank Street (Plymouth Avenue, N.) in the following year "for the purpose of erecting and building thereon a Church, or house of Public Worship and for a Cemetery or burial ground." The church rose, under the watchful eye of the pastor, Father Patrick O'Kelly, and was in use by the end of 1823. Dedicated to St. Patrick, it was constructed of stone, measured 38 by 42 feet, and had "large Gothic windows." Unfortunately, no picture of this small structure, the first Catholic church west of Syracuse, has come down to us.

The original St. Patrick's soon became too small to accommodate the growing Catholic population. In 1831 the trustees rented a school room on Buffalo Street (Main Street West) to serve as a temporary chapel while a larger church was built on the site of the first St. Patrick's. St. Patrick's No. 2 was inaugurated on Christmas Day, 1831.

The second St. Patrick's served its congregation for the next 30 years. In 1863 it was more than evident that it should be replaced by a larger building.

A prominent Brooklyn architect was chosen to draw up the plans: Patrick C. Keely. The corner stone was set in place on Oct. 9, 1864. It seems likely that when Bishop John Timon of Buffalo gave his approval for the construction of such a large St. Patrick's No. 3, he was anticipating its use as the cathedral church of a new diocese to be established with its center at Rochester.

Pope Pius IX established the Diocese of Rochester on Mar. 3, 1868, and named Father Bernard J. McQuaid of Newark, N. J., as its first bishop. Bishop McQuaid, consecrated to the episcopate in New York, was installed in Rochester on July 16, 1868. St. Patrick's No. 3 had already been chosen as the diocesan cathedral, but it was still far from being finished. It was only on St. Patrick's Day,

1869, that the new cathedral was finished enough to be used for the celebration of the feast day of its patron saint. The formal dedication took place on Nov. 6, 1870, in the presence of Archbishop John McCloskey of New York and 15 other bishops. The preacher was Father Isaac Hecker, the well-known founder of the Paulist Fathers.

As it stood in 1870, the church had a tower but no spire, and the sanctuary was too shallow for solemn church functions. In 1896, Bishop McQuaid arranged to have the tower completed, the sanctuary enlarged, and a weekday "Lady Chapel" added to the rear. Rochester Architect Andrew Jackson Warner, who had been clerk-of-the-works for Patrick Keeley in building St. Patrick's No. 3, was entrusted with the remodeling project, which was probably partly his own design. The work was done in 1898, in time to honor the diamond jubilee of St. Patrick's No. 1 and the Bishop's own 50th anniversary as a priest and 30th as a bishop. On Oct. 5, 1898, Archbishop Michael A. Corrigan of New York solemnly consecrated the remodeled structure.

The Cathedral parish was for years Rochester's most prestigious Catholic parish. Although its wide boundaries embraced people of many economic levels, it included Lake Avenue which was lined with imposing residences, many of them occupied by prosperous Catholics. As early as 1887, the Cathedral parish had embraced 1,121 families and some 5400 souls, adults and children.

St. Patrick's School went through considerable evolution after its foundation in 1832. In 1842, the Sisters of Charity took charge of St. Patrick's Orphanage and the instruction of girls in the parish school. They succeeded lay teachers. In 1857 the Christian Brothers arrived to instruct the parish boys. In 1871 the Sisters of St. Joseph succeeded the Sisters of Charity in the girls' classes. When the Christian Brothers also left in 1872, laymen and laywomen were brought in to teach the boys. The Sisters of St. Joseph assumed the direction of both the boys and girls in 1882.

In 1906, the cathedral hall attached to the parish school was converted into a high school, called Cathedral High School. Because it was eventually open to students from other than the cathedral parish, it was renamed Rochester Catholic High School in 1913. In 1922 it moved to a new site and acquired a new name by which it is still known: Aquinas Institute (a boys' school). Before it moved, however, this high school had gradually crowded out the recreational space from the cathedral hall. A new hall was built on Plymouth Avenue just north of Brown Street in 1906-1908.

St. Patrick's Cathedral in its day was the center of the diocese. Here the bishops conducted the major ceremonies of the church year, preaching often. Bishop McQuaid made sure that the choir was good and the rites were well performed. Successive bishops were also consecrated at its altar. Archbishop John M. Farley of New York, on May 24, 1905, raised to the episcopate Thomas F. Hickey, newly appointed coadjutor bishop of Rochester and later (1909-1928) its second bishop. On Dec. 4, 1912, the papal delegate, Archbishop Giovanni Bonzano ordained as bishop another native Rochesterian, Edward J. Hanna, who had been designated by Pope St. Pius X as auxiliary bishop of San Francisco, and was later to be the second archbishop of that diocese, 1915-1935. Cardinal Patrick Hayes of New York was the consecrator of John Francis O'Hern on March 19, 1929. Bishop O'Hern was the third bishop of Rochester (1929-1933). The last man to receive episcopal orders in St. Patrick's was Walter A. Foery, Bishop of Syracuse (1937-1970). A Rochester priest, Bishop Foery was ordained by the former fourth bishop of Rochester, Edward Mooney, by then first Archbishop of Detroit, and later a cardinal.

After World War I, however, the face of Rochester changed. The area that radiated from the "Four Corners" — the original Rochester — became more commercial, and the city center moved east, while East Avenue tended to become the



Photo by Terrance J. Brennan

Parishioners of St. Francis of Assisi greet new members of their community, those who, for the last time worshipped at St. Patrick's earlier last Sunday morning. The Mass at St. Patrick's was the final religious rite in a building whose parish was the oldest in the diocese. St. Patrick's was formally dissolved as a parish in 1976; but religious ceremonies continued to be held in its building until last Sunday.

more exclusive residential district. St. Patrick's thus became the victim of the encroachment of business construction, particularly the Eastman Kodak offices; and the lower Lake Avenue neighborhood also gradually lost its prestige as a residential street.

Furthermore, segments of the territory of the Cathedral parish had been cut off from time to time, reducing the Cathedral population: Holy Apostles (1884), Holy Rosary (1896), St. Augustine (1906), and St. Anthony (Italian) (also in 1906).

What was to become of the now isolated St. Patrick's was a question that plagued the Rochester bishops of the depression years. In August, 1937 a solution finally presented itself. The adjacent Eastman Kodak Company offered to buy the whole Cathedral property on Platt and Plymouth for \$300,000 in cash. The last obstacles were cleared away on Sept. 8, 1937. On Sept. 12, the last Masses were offered in the historic building, and the doors were locked. A Kodak building now stands on the site of Rochester's first Catholic church, with a bronze tablet

to mark and note the location.

Meantime, the parish continued in existence, and the Cathedral hall was remodeled into a church, largely attended by Italian parishioners of the neighborhood. In the 1960's when a shifting population took away many Italians and brought in a number of Spanish-speaking, St. Patrick's No. 4 served as a

west-side center of the Spanish apostolate.

In 1978 even this apostolate was transferred, and St. Patrick's was closed. Its sacramental registers were taken to St. Anthony Church on Lorimer Street. Now not only a church of St. Patrick but the very name has vanished from the map of Catholic Rochester.

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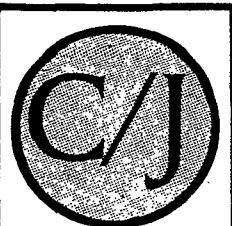


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Calendar

midnight; Sunday, July 1, noon-midnight; golabki and chicken barbecue served Sunday, from noon; rides, live music, etc.

MENDON PLAYHOUSE — Good Evening, by Peter Cook and Dudley Moore of Beyond the Fringe, this weekend and next; 8 p.m. curtain Thursday-Saturday, 3 p.m. Sunday; \$5. Information: 624-2480.

BRISTOL VALLEY PLAYHOUSE — R.D. 3. Naples, opens with Gigi, Anita Loos play based on Colette novel, July 6-8, 13-15; 8:15 p.m. curtain except Sundays, 3:15. Art shows in lobby gallery, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. daily through season and on performance nights — stained glass by Valerie O'Hara, Rochester, July 6-15. (Reservations necessary for all performances, through 716-374-6318.)

KEUKA COLLEGE — In library gallery, paintings and pottery by Peter Knickerbocker, Monday-F-

riday, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m., through June 30.

MEMORIAL ART GALLERY — Art works by Cornell faculty members, in lending and sales gallery. Uncommon Visions, major exhibition of contemporary painting and sculpture, closes June 24; Arshile Gorky's aviation murals, Arena Group, Print Club shows open June 30.

SENIOR CITIZEN MATINEES — Gigi, 1958 film starring Leslie Caron, Maurice Chevalier, June 21, 1:30 p.m., Dryden Theatre, Eastman House.

CETA FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS — Saturday, June 23, in Xerox Square auditorium, noon-10 p.m., continuous performances, demonstrations, exhibitions by 15 art groups in projects funded by CETA and administered by Arts Council. Free tickets.

COUNTY PARKS BAND — Concert Saturday night, 7-9, sponsored by city at Festival Site, Main and

Water; Sunday night, 7-9, sponsored by and at Sea Breeze Park.

CORNERSTONE PARK CONCERTS — Noon-1 p.m. June 22, Dick Sampson & Co.; June 29, Stonehenge; no concert July 6.

MARRIAGE EN-COUNTER — Convention at Kent State, Kent, O., June 29-July 1. Reservations: 716-865-4721.

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