

Book pays tribute to historian's dad

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

BRIGHTON — As an author and longtime archivist and historian for the Diocese of Rochester, Father Robert F. McNamara had written about many a Father — but never his father.

That has changed with the publication of *Good Old Doctor Mac*, Father McNamara's tribute to his own dad, a highly regarded doctor and community leader in Corning in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

The 132-page book, published by Devon Press of Utica, is due to be released early this winter. Copies, at \$12.50 each, will be available at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Irondequoit. Father McNamara said numerous copies are also being sent to St. Mary's Church in Corning, but that a Southern Tier distributor had not yet been confirmed.

The book depicts the life of Dr. Thomas A. McNamara (1856-1927), who wore several hats of distinction during a medical career that spanned more than 40 years. After settling in Corning in 1882, Dr. McNamara performed the first known



Mike Crup/Catholic Courier

Father Robert F. McNamara holds a prototype of the cover to his new book, *Good Old Doctor Mac*, which details his father's life as a doctor in Corning in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

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appendectomy and Caesarean-section birth in the area. He headed the first medical and surgical staff at Corning Hospital, and served as the local coroner as well.

"He developed a large following — interracial, international, ecumenical," Father McNamara wrote. "It was also a devoted following. His patients had deep confidence in him for three reasons in particular: medical skill, dependability, and winning professional manner."

Dr. McNamara also became a businessman and politician. He served as mayor of Corning from 1908-10 and chaired a World War I draft board; in addition, he was a frequent public lecturer. He was devoted to his family, as well as his Catholic faith — for instance, he would pray the rosary while tending to a woman in labor.

Good Old Doctor Mac marks the first book released by Father McNamara since 1998's *The Diocese of Rochester in America: 1868-1993*.

The priest, who lives at McAuley Residence at the Sisters of Mercy Motherhouse, said finalizing the book has kept him busy in recent years and that he's pleased with the result.

"It doesn't burden me too much, and yet at the same time I like to stay active," said Father McNamara, who celebrated his 94th birthday Nov. 3. "I feel that it's worked out pretty well."

It also marks a departure for this renowned history author. While several elements of the era are interwoven into *Good Old Doctor Mac* — such as Dr. McNamara making house calls by horse and buggy early in his career, and tending to frequent injuries from railroad accidents — the book has deep personal meaning as well.

"I started this back in the 1980s as some recollections for my nieces and nephews who didn't know my father. This is much expanded," Father McNamara said. "It's a sort of in-house family memoir, but the story has more than a family appeal. It's a good story, I think — it's an edifying story in a day when there's not so much edifying done."

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