

## *History of St. Patrick Parish*

It is quite difficult, almost impossible, to get accurate records of the early history of the Catholic Church in York. There is evidence, however, that Catholics were among the first to settle in our City. Thus, for instance, during the French and Indian War, the Pennsylvania authorities were suspicious that the Catholics of the Missions might be favorable to the French, and General Loudon, Commander of the British Army, ordered, April 28, 1757, an examination of the Catholics in York and Cumberland Counties. The report showed that there were 116 German and 76 Irish Catholics in York County, under the care of the Rev. Father Manners, and that these were loyal to the Colonial Government. Additional evidence is found in the following decidedly Irish names affixed to the petition from the citizens of York County appealing to the Governor for aid against the attacks of the Indians subsequent to the defeat of the provincial forces at McCord's Fort, April 2, 1756: James Murphy, William McCleary, William Carney, Andrew Shannon, James Cranahan, John Murphy. William Carroll. Among those killed in Captain Hamilton's Company of 'York County, in an attack on the Indians at Sidling's Hill, are two Irish names, John McCarty and John Kelly (Notes on the History of the Catholics in York County: Miss Gamble.)

Irish names also appear on the rosters of the York County Companies which saw service in the Revolutionary War. At the outbreak of the War of independence Patrick McSherry, a Catholic, was elected to the Committee of Safety for York; only those interested in protecting the rights of the Colonies were chosen. Another Catholic layman who settled in York before the close of the 13th century was Doctor Charles Pochon who, according to Reilly's Conewago Collections, introduced the tomato into this County.

When and where the first Mass was celebrated in York is not known. Very likely as early as 1750 in some private home, and probably by Missionaries from Emmitsburg, Baltimore and Conewago who occasionally visited the scattered Catholics. In 1776, a permanent place of worship was secured on the site of the present church. In attempting to write the history of this (Catholic) Church, it is difficult to get accurate information. As early as 1750, John Moore secured lot 395, the present site of St. Patrick's Church. On June 20th of the same year, John Moore shortly erected thereon a stone dwelling house. In 1776, it was purchased from the heirs of Casper Stillinger by Joseph Smith. who presented it to the small Catholic congregation to be used as a place of worship: (History of York County: Judge Gibson.)

This stone dwelling known as a 'Mass House' continued to be used until 1809, when the Rev Thomas Neale, of Georgetown, Maryland, now District of Colombia, visited York, and finding the accommodations inadequate, decided to erect a new church. Father Neale resolved, before building, to obtain a new deed, and succeeded in having the heirs of William Penn grant him the following: "To the Rev. Thomas Neale, in trust for his heirs and assigns, to and for the only

proper use, and in behalf of the Roman Catholic Congregation of York, their successors and assigns forever. Sealed in the presence of John Small and John Forsyth.”

The cornerstone of the new church, the first edifice to be erected exclusively for Catholic worship, was laid in 1810 by the Rev Father De Barth, a brother of Colonel John De Barth Walbach who served in the Revolutionary War. The building was dedicated the same year.

For the next few years St. Patrick's was attended by the Jesuits of Conewago in 1819 the first resident pastor made his advent in the person of the Rev. Laurence Huler who remained in York six months, and was succeeded by the Rev G B. Hogan whose stay lasted two years. Father Hogan was followed by the Rev. P J. Duen whose pastorate covered a period of sixteen years. Father Rafferty was the next pastor and had charge until his appointment to St. Francis Xavier s. Philadelphia in 1841. Father Rafferty furnished the church with new pews, organized a choir, bought an organ added the steeple to the church and later procured a bell. Within the following few years the names of Fathers Kelly, 1842, Mackin, 1844 Basil Shorb. a native of York County, 1846; and Father Martin appear.

Father Martin improved the church in many ways. In 1851, he purchased the property adjoining the church on the north side. He remodeled the old house, also the building in the rear of the lot and opened the first parochial school. Father Martin left York in 1852 to take charge of St. Mary's, Philadelphia. It was during his pastorate that the German Catholics of York received permission from Bishop Neumann of Philadelphia to found a separate parish.

Until 1870, the names of Fathers Reilly, McLaughlin, Eagle. McGuinnis and Murray are associated with the progress of St. Patrick's. Father Murray remodeled the church generally: introducing gas lighting, frescoing the interior and installing a heating system. In 1870, the Rev. Thomas McGovern, later Bishop of Harrisburg. took charge; he made diverse improvements to the church property. Father McGovern left in 1873 and was succeeded by Father McElvaine who remained but a few months and in turn was followed by Father McGonigal.

The Rev. Charles Kenney was appointed successor to Father McGonigal in 1875. In August of the same year Father Kenney introduced the Sisters of Charity of Mt. St. Vincents, as teachers in the parochial school. These Sisters remained until 1934, when they were recalled by their Superior. The Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Philadelphia are now in charge of the educational work of the parish. Father McKenna succeeded Father Kenney in 1880 and remained until 1882. The Rev. John B. Shanahan was pastor of St. Patrick's for the, next three years. Father Shanahan purchased the ground which is now used for cemetery purposes. Father O'Reilly followed Father Shanahan and was pastor for seven years. He built the present school and hall on the rear of the church

property. In 1892 Father O'Reilly WCIS appointed to Mount Carmel. Father Galligan 1892; Father Kennedy 1892; again Father Galligan 1892-1897 are the priests who successively had charge.

In 1895 Father Galligan began the erection of a new church on the site of the old edifice. The cornerstone was laid in October by Bishop McGovern. a former pastor of St. Patrick's. The next two years were consumed in the building of the church. In the meantime Father Galligan's health failing, he was obliged to leave York, and was succeeded by Father Hooman who completed the church which was dedicated in 1898 by the Rev. J. J. Koch, Administrator of the Diocese after the death of Bishop McGovern. The celebrant of the Mass was Father McCann, a native of the parish. The church is one of the largest and most beautiful in central Pennsylvania, and was erected at a costs of \$40,000—a low figure even for those days. Father Hooman remained as pastor for seven years and was followed by Father Hollern who remained until his death in 1912. During Father Hollern's pastorate the church was beautifully frescoed and the magnificent marble altars installed, during his pastorate St Rose's parish in the West End of the City was established. Father McGrath was the next pastor, he built the present Rectory and secured a Convent on Beaver Street. Father McGrath remained until 1925 and was followed by Father Brown 1925-1934; who in turn was succeeded by the present pastor, Father Shields. Father Shields is ably assisted by Father Kaminsky and Father Brady.

This brief survey would be incomplete without a mention of the young men and women of the parish who have heard the Master's call -- Come and follow Me--and who have entered the religious life. St. Patrick's boasts of three priests, Father McCann, Father Feeser and Father Allen. The former was the son of Thomas McCann and Catherine McHugh McCann. He made his studies at St. Charles College, Ellicott City, Maryland, and Sylvan Heights Seminary, Harrisburg. He was ordained by the Most Rev. Jeremiah Shanahan. Father McCann was immediately assigned to the pastorate of St. Columba's Church, Bloomsburg, later to St. Joseph's, Locust Gap. At the time of his death in 1917 he was pastor of St. Joseph's. Dannville. Father Feeser studied at St. Charles Seminary, Overbrook, Pa. He is at present pastor of St. Mary's, Harrisburg. Father Allen studied at St. Charles Seminary, Overbrook, Pa., and St. Vincent. Latrobe, Pa. He is Pastor of St. Mary's. Fairfield. Pa. William Frantz is preparing for the priesthood at St Joseph's College, Collegeville, Ind.

The following Sisters are of St Patrick's: Sister Mariannana, Sister Gilberta, Sister Coralita, Sister Regina Clare, Sister Constance, Sister Theodosia—all Sisters of Charity, Mount St Vincent's, New York. Those who have entered the Order of Mercy are Sister Mary Phyllis and Sister M. Agnes.