

PARISH HISTORY

INTRODUCTION

The history of the Catholic Church cannot be detached from the history of the country and of the world. It is a story of kings and government, of war and famine, of struggling humanity trying to find peaceful freedom. Historical accounts of Indians, the Revolutionary War, the Holland Land Purchase, immigrants and westward migration seem far removed from church history. Yet between the shadows of these and other historical events the light of faith glimmers and glints, spreading God's love in the New World and to the settlers of Western New York.

His people . . . are sent forth into the whole world as the light of the world . . .

— Lumen Gentium, Ch. 2, 9

1803-1882

WE ARE GOD'S CO-WORKERS. . .

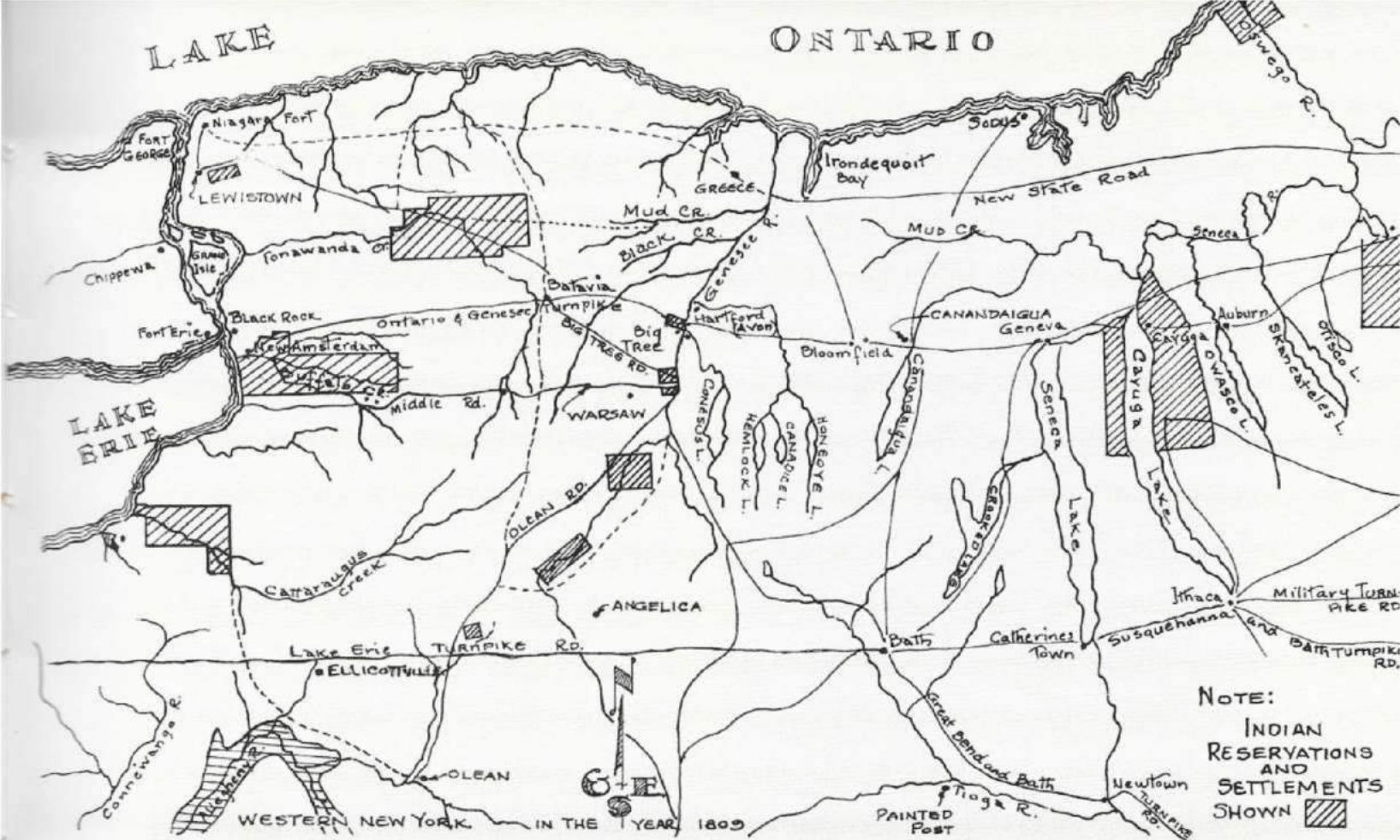
Soldiers of the Revolutionary War, descendants of the Dutch, English and French colonists, spread word of the beautiful terrain in New York State, and when the government gave bounties of land to the veterans, many of them returned to settle in Central New York.

In 1803, one of those veterans, Jabez Warren, brought his family from Vermont to settle in the Batavia area. He joined Joseph Ellicott, a surveyor for the Holland Land Company, in laying out the Middle Road — now Route 20A and Big Tree Road. It ran from the Genesee River area to Lake Erie and was the first white man's road in Western New York.

The Company had surveyed virtually all the land of Western New York and divided it into townships and lots to be sold to individuals. The area around Olean Road and Main Street was part of the town of Aurora and the circle area was part of a town called Willink. Warren himself chose several acres in the area, as did the proprietor of the Holland Land Company, Wilhelm Willink, whose name appears (spelled Wilhem) as the original owner of Immaculate Conception Church property.

By 1806, school was in session in Aurora with Jabez Warren's son, William, the teacher for the first winter. By 1811, another schoolhouse was built, which was to be the site of Mass celebrations for the Catholics later in the century.

Soon new settlers moved along the road, their fears of Indians allayed by the knowledge that they were now



Map of Western New York, 1809. (Drawn by Carol Schmitt Martin)

confined to reservations. Their fears were unfounded, however, for the Seneca Indians, who had occupied much of the territory of Western New York, were actually friendly and helpful to the newcomers, allowing them to cross the reservations without incident.

Timber of all kinds abounded, and early residents built log cabins and settled down to farming and horse-breeding. A lumber mill was one of the first businesses, followed by a feed mill and a blacksmith shop.

Warren, and other early residents of Aurora and Willink, were Baptists, whose ancestors dated from pre-Revolutionary time. The story of Catholics in the area is linked with the large immigration from Europe between the end of the War in 1776 and the year 1820.

By 1816, Central New York was booming as a result of the influx of veterans and new immigrants. The village of Auburn was the most prosperous community in the State outside of New York City, with enough Catholic families to warrant asking for a priest. The settlement of Greece, along the Genesee River, was graced with several enthusiastic Irishmen, who built the first Catholic Church outside of the large towns of New York State in hopes of finding a resident priest.

By the time the priest arrived five years later, another historical event took place.

Over 10,000 Irishmen landed in New York City between 1816 and 1819, nearly all of them Catholics of the laboring class attracted to the Erie Canal project that began in Rome, New York in 1817. The Genesee





Rt. Rev. John DuBois, S.S., Bishop of the State of New York, 1826-1842.

River canal project around the same time brought many Irish Catholics into the Southern tier, particularly in Allegheny County.

The entire state was part of one Diocese in 1820, with the Bishop's See, or headquarters, in New York City. An itinerant priest visited Auburn in 1820 but moved on to Rochester, and it was 1821 before Bishop Connolly ordained Patrick Kelly, who had just come from training in Ireland, and sent him to Auburn to minister to the Catholics of that community and all the territory to the West, including Rochester and Buffalo.

It was an impossible task. Stagecoaches traversed the archaic equivalent of modern highways only once every two or three days, providing transportation and communication between the larger settlements. Travel on lesser roads required walking, unless the fortunate person had a horse.

Only the firm faith of some of those pioneers kept the light of Christ glowing, for in many places a priest was seen only once or twice a year, the cause of great jubilation. In the interim, a family fortunate enough to have a spiritual book might read from it regularly, but, more commonly, group prayer around the fireside helped to keep the faith strong.

After the canals, the railroads came, and once again many Irish Catholics sought work. The bridge over the Genesee River at Portage was a huge project, and many workers remained in the area when it was finished, emigrating to surrounding towns. By 1850, both Warsaw

and Java were busy towns, among many of that era that have since been dwarfed by population expansion along the Niagara Frontier.

Another large group of Irishmen had begun entering the country about 1845, primarily to escape the potato famine, but also because of unfair laws and the intolerant rule of Great Britain. Undaunted by Western New York weather, many of these hardy men continued to work at outdoor occupations even after the railroads, building highways or public works. It is interesting that several construction and transportation enterprises in Western New York have Irish roots. Cottrell Bus Service is a prime example.

An Irish priest, Father Thomas McEvoy, apparently followed his countrymen and is the first recorded priest in numerous settlements. Catholics in Olean, Perry and as far away as the Dunkirk-Fredonia area credit him with the first celebrations of Mass in private homes, town halls and work shanties.

While stationed at Saint Patrick's in Java from October 1844 to September 1850, Father McEvoy came over the hills on horseback to celebrate Mass at the home of Thomas Flannigan in Spring Brook (still spelled as two words in that village). Baptisms were postponed until his arrival, about once a month, but weddings and funerals often necessitated finding someone else if he was not available.

By this time the Erie Canal had been completed in 1825, and Buffalo was the scene of incredible growth despite the interruption of progress made by the War of 1812.

The War, in fact, increased the development of Western New York and East Aurora, as land grants were again given veterans.

By 1832, Buffalo was a thriving city of 10,000 people of many nationalities. Three Catholic churches indicated the large French, German and Irish Catholic communities — St. Louis, St. Mary's and St. Patrick's.

Bishop Dubois travelled the Canal from New York City on an official visit, finding active Catholic communities along the way. His report to the Holy Father recommended new Dioceses at Albany and at Buffalo.

Very Reverend John Timon, an Irish priest of the Lazarist order, was consecrated First Bishop of the Diocese of Buffalo in the Cathedral of New York on October 17, 1847. On the feast of the Immaculate Conception, he gave a sermon in German at St. Mary's Church and two days later headed for Java in the company of Father McEvoy and two other priests. It was the beginning of a tour of the Diocese that was to take all winter.

The feast of the Immaculate Conception was not official at this time, for the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was not defined by the Pope (Pope Pius IX) until December 8, 1854, but was widely accepted and celebrated long before that time. It is often confused with the Virgin Birth, but there is no connection between the two. Simply stated, it means that the

Virgin Mary, in order to be pure enough to become the Mother of Christ, was conceived free from original sin. Her soul was created in purest holiness and innocence.

Curiosity has arisen as to why the Catholics of this area chose the name Immaculate Conception. There is no record to be found of what prompted the choice, when the decision was made, or by whom. But the declaration by the Pope of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, followed by the apparitions to Bernadette at Lourdes four years later, led many Catholics to believe that this was Our Lady's confirmation of that doctrine. Both of these events must have been world news covered by newspapers in this area and, no doubt, were the conversation topic of the day.

It was fitting that the first Bishop should be an Irishman, for most of the first immigrants were either Irish or English and almost all the early Catholics were Irish. It was also fitting that he should celebrate Mass and give a sermon in the German community, endearing him to the hearts of this large segment of the Catholic population.

The German population in Western New York had been increasing, along with the Irish, since the beginning of the Century. Early Germans had come from the region of Alsace-Lorraine, for centuries the scene of conflict between the Germans and the French. Once again the French had moved in, beginning with Robespierre and the Reign of Terror, followed by the French Revolution in 1789. Among the Alsatians were many farmers who could not tolerate the French domination that required a complete change of language and culture. Nor could they consider having their sons go to war, fighting on the side of the French. Many of these settlers formed small communities in Sheldon and Lancaster, some moving from there to what is now East Aurora.

Around 1845 and thereafter, many of the Germans came from Bavaria in southern Germany, where autocratic kings were very unpopular. A group of liberals failed in an attempt to set up a republic, and dire punishment awaited any of those involved who were caught. Again, impending war caused many to seek freedom in America. Among these people were many craftsmen, skilled in leather work, carpentry and other occupations useful in the new country. Machinists and millwrights found immediate use for their talents in Western New York as they set up such factories as Kurtzman Piano, Fleischman Yeast and Bausch and Lomb Optical Works.

The population was rapidly growing with immigrants who had come for a better life. Many had gone to bed hungry every day of their lives before coming to America. Europe simply had too many people for the amount of space. America needed workers, and there was plenty of land on which to grow food.

As the immigrants from various places struggled to make new lives in America, the only thing they seemed to have in common was their lot as newcomers. But when the Germans who moved into what is now East



Rt. Rev. John Timon, D.D.C.M., first bishop of Buffalo, 1847-1867 — a Vincentian (also called Lazarist) missionary, chosen for his zeal in the missions of the South and Southwest.

Aurora met the Irish in worship at St. Vincent's in Springbrook, they discovered the strongest link of all — their faith.

About this time Girdle Road was laid out by the Highway Commissioners of the towns of Aurora and Lancaster. Two parishioners who have studied parish history give us some background to the story.

Miss Martha Schwartz and Mrs. Estelle Nuwer Minderler, whose ancestors were of German descent, tell us that their grandparents lived on Schwartz Road near Broadway. The Schwartz family raised wheat and corn and the nearest mill was in Aurora. From Clinton Street southward Indian trails branched off and farmers frequently got lost and wound up in Ebenezer in West Seneca. The Indians were friendly and communicated with some of the settlers. Chief Red Jacket was asked to mark the trail to Aurora. The trees were girdled, a process of removing a strip of bark in a circle around the tree to kill it. The trail thus marked is now Girdle Road.

Much of the road to Buffalo from Aurora went through scrub and bog, as one historian put it. Traffic was increasing and heavy wagons often "bogged down" in the mud. A one-lane plank road was completed in 1849 from Main and Olean, down Main Street to the West End at the circle, turning up Buffalo Road (Seneca Street) to a point near city line.

The third and last toll gate was set up just past the intersection of Harlem Road and Seneca Street, near the



John J. Marshall (Marshall) family with maternal grandmother, about 1905. John had been brought to America from Bavaria around 1856, settling on Pine Street with seven brothers and sisters, mother and stepfather, Henry Rebman. Couple on left, front row, are Mr. and Mrs. Fred Marshall, parents of Jay Marshall, Sr. of Perry Street. (Photo from Verna Marshall Benzel)

railroad overpass. The wooden base allowed merchants to travel faster with farm produce and lumber to sell in the city. Wholesalers made no deliveries, so area store owners drove horse and wagon into the city to pick up merchandise. The plank road was used for heavy loads in either direction. When wagons were empty they turned out, in favor of loads, onto a dirt road that formed a second lane.

As the plank road made travel easier, Masses were more often celebrated at the home of John Devins, who lived closer to the circle, making it possible for more Aurorans to participate. There were at least ten Catholic families in Springbrook at the time, about as many in East Aurora area, and a few in Marilla and Holland.

An old parish history, compiled by a Miss Aimee Eno, records interesting details of a visit by the new Bishop.

Father McEvoy had broken his leg while on a visit to the Devins home and was obliged to remain there. Bishop Timon stopped on his way to Java for Confirmation ceremonies and delivered a lecture in the Universalist Church in East Aurora. He was entertained by the Devins family, and while Mrs. Devins was preparing his supper the Bishop walked the floor with the baby and fed her.

The next recorded priest after Father McEvoy was Father John Doran, who also apparently came over the hills from Java. In 1853, he started the first church

building in Springbrook on Seneca Street and Rice Road. The floor was crude planking, as was the altar, and there were no seats.

Father James M. Early appeared on the scene the same year, apparently the first Diocesan priest. Others were missionaries who often went on their own initiative to various communities.

Father Early supervised additions and improvements to the little church in Springbrook, while living with the Flannigans until 1857. He celebrated the first Mass in Marilla in a cooper's shop in 1853, and a church was built there in 1854 under the direction of Father Denis English, while Father Early was working on the church at Springbrook. Marilla is not mentioned again for several years, leading one to conclude that perhaps it was not a regular part of the early Springbrook mission.

In 1857, Father J. V. O'Donohue served the mission, during which time school was begun in the church building. Father O'Donohue began to build a rectory. The house was completed before he went to Java, but the first to occupy it was Rev. Dionysius (Denis) English, who arrived in 1858. He left in 1861, leaving the mission without a resident priest.

During this time, Rev. T. F. Heines celebrated Mass on

Sundays and Holydays, coming out from Limestone Hill, now Lackawanna, and in 1864 Rev. John Touhey spent the year in the Springbrook mission, his name appearing on a Baptismal record on Christmas day.

The first record of a resident priest in East Aurora is a Redemptorist from the German parish of St. Mary's in Buffalo. Father Miller, C.S.S.R., (first name unknown) stayed with the Marshall family on Pine Street from Christmas 1864 to Easter 1865. He celebrated Mass in the Regulator Building on Main Street, presently the site of The Sample Shop on the northeast corner of Main and Riley. He also celebrated Mass in Springbrook that winter.

From 1865 to about 1890, East Aurora Catholics again attended Mass at St. Vincent's in Springbrook.

In the summer of 1865, Bishop Timon's visit to minister Confirmation was the occasion of great rejoicing in the mission. The Bishop and his escort drove from Buffalo in carriages, arriving about ten o'clock in the morning. A procession of men, women, and children — the girls all dressed in white — eagerly waited at the foot of the hill. Presumably this was near the corner of Seneca and Transit. The procession headed back to the church upon the Bishop's arrival, singing "Vivat" and other Latin hymns. On reaching the church, the procession parted and the Bishop stood on the steps and imparted his blessing to the congregation. Then all entered the building for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, followed by Confirmation.

On December 23, 1867 the first train rolled into the village of Aurora. It was a welcome sight and a harbinger of future prosperity.

The records show J. V. O'Donohue returning in 1869 to attend the mission, and T. F. Heines again in 1870, followed by T. Ledwith in 1871 and Edward Quigley in 1872. The present pastor of Immaculate Conception (1978) tells us that his father served as altar boy for Fr. Quigley in a city parish.

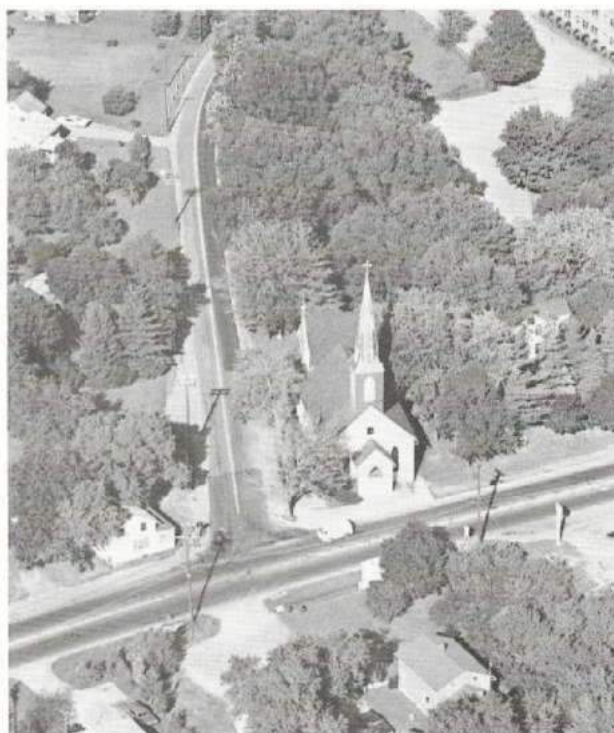
Up to this time the Village of East Aurora had consisted of two hamlets, a mile apart, often referred to as the East and West End of Main Street. West End was part of Willink, also known as the Lower Village of Aurora. The village corporation of Willink was extended in 1873 to include the Upper Village of Aurora (East End). A vote was taken to choose a name and in 1874 the entire area was incorporated under the name East Aurora.

In 1873, Rev. Martin Byrne attended the mission, and Bishop Stephen V. Ryan ministered Confirmation that year. The same year Father P. V. O'Brien is credited with building the present Saint Vincent's Church in Springbrook. He left in 1875, succeeded by Father David Lasher, who remained only a few months, as did Rev. Francis Cooke, who arrived early in 1876.

The addition of another congregation to the mission of St. Vincent's in Springbrook is accompanied by an interesting tale in Miss Eno's history.

While Buffalo was still a village, two sturdy Irish boys, John and Joseph Cottrell, purchased large pieces

1969 aerial view of St. Vincent dePaul Church, Spring Brook, New York. Built in 1873 and attended by East Aurora Catholics for many years, the church still stands on the corner of Seneca Street and Rice Road.



Engine of Buffalo, Pittsburgh and Western Railroad Company — the company merged with Western New York and Pennsylvania, which became the famous "Pennsy" whose trains came through East Aurora regularly for many years.

of land in Sardinia and Concord. They cleared the forest and built homes. John married a Methodist girl and together they raised twelve children. Several years after marriage she turned to Catholicism and the children were baptized. Joseph Cottrell remained a bachelor for years, but eventually married and raised three children. Most of John's children remained in the area as they matured, so that by 1865 there were 15 to 20 Catholic

families in West Sardinia and Concord. The nearest churches were in Java or Springville, the latter without a resident priest. A building was erected and priests came about once a month from Springville, Springbrook or Boston. Eventually Sardinians joined the Holland Mission.

From 1876 to about 1882, Sardinia was annexed to the Springbrook mission, with Father Cooke going out regularly from early in 1876 throughout the summer. He was succeeded later in the year by Rev. Bartholomew B. Grattan who drove (presumably horse and buggy) in all kinds of weather from Springbrook to Holland and from there to Sardinia. It is not known how often he made the trip, but the same year he reportedly went once a month to Marilla, also, to celebrate Mass for the Catholics there.

According to the old parish history, the priest labored under many difficulties. The house allotted him was in a most dilapidated condition, its few contents in great disorder, and so far as furniture was concerned, it was destitute of anything deserving the name. The church was in debt, but Father ordered outstanding accounts against it brought in, and succeeded in paying at least some of them and cancelling the mortgage on the church.

On July 11, 1877, Bishop Ryan confirmed eighty people and on July 29, 1880, fifty-one more. In those days Confirmation and Communion were celebrated on the one occasion, when the candidate was twelve years of age or older.

The area was growing by leaps and bounds. East Aurora was already famous for the breeding of fine horses. Many well known trainers and horsemen began their careers at Hamlin's Village Farm. By 1885, there were seven hundred horses stabled there, and it was known as the "world's greatest trotting nursery."

A census taken in 1880 showed 1500 people in the village. One source says there were about twenty-five Catholic families, but there are no exact figures.

Rev. Bartholomew B. Grattan, pastor of St. Vincent's, Spring Brook, and the missions of Marilla, East Aurora and Sardinia (Holland), 1876-1882. His attempt to build a church in East Aurora failed.



There is a mystery attached to this point in time. Many sources indicate that Father Grattan constructed the framework of a church building — some say, around 1880 — which was no sooner up than a severe wind storm blew it down. Older parishioners believe it was on the same site as the church built in 1882. However, there is no record of land owned by the East Aurora congregation until after Father Grattan left.

Early in 1882, Father Grattan went to St. Patrick's in Java as pastor and was succeeded by J. V. McInerney for a brief period, followed by Rev. Dennis Maria Reilly in late spring.

1882-1901

HIS CULTIVATION,

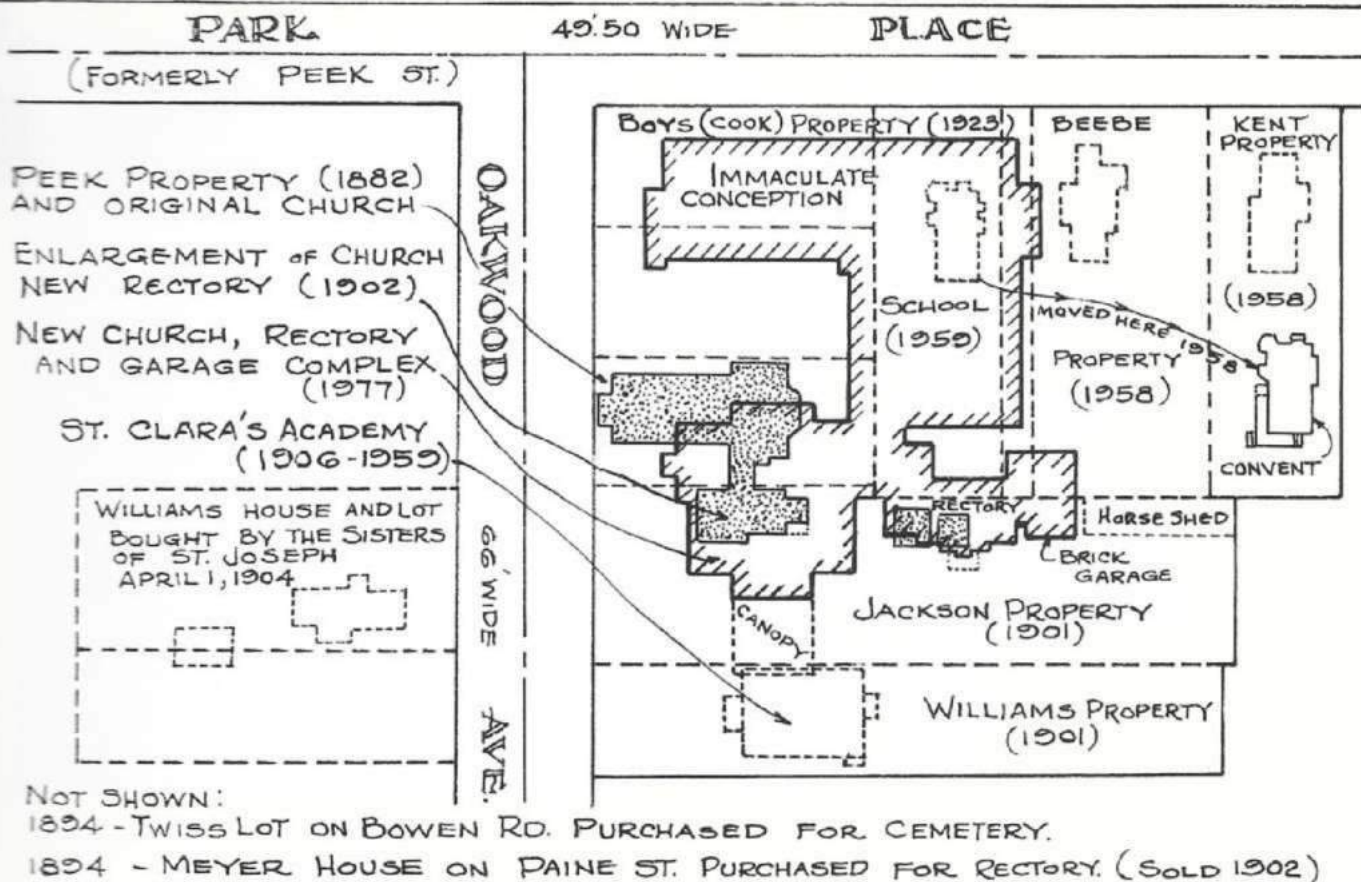
The year was 1882. Chester A. Arthur was President and Leo XIII the Pope. On November 7, Grover Cleveland was elected Governor on a reform ticket. He had entered politics as a ward worker in Buffalo and had been Sheriff of Erie County and Mayor of Buffalo. Father Reilly was the pastor of the mission with a church, rectory, and cemetery in Springbrook, serving Catholics from there and East Aurora. The priest probably celebrated Mass in the church in Marilla also, although history books are not clear.

During the eight years of Father Reilly's pastorate, many exciting things happened. Masses were again celebrated in the village, property was bought, and the church was built.

With the Bishop's permission Mass was celebrated regularly in the old District Number One schoolhouse, erected in 1810, on the west side of Olean Road, between Main Street and Oakwood Avenue. The

Rev. Dennis Maria Reilly, pastor of St. Vincent's of Spring Brook and the missions of East Aurora and Marilla, during the building of Immaculate Conception Church, 1882; celebrated Mass in District No. 1 schoolhouse.





Property map, Immaculate Conception parish. (Drawing by Carol Schmitt Martin)



District No. 1 schoolhouse, built in 1810. Used for Catholic services around 1882-83, while the church was under construction. (Photo by Richard Will)

building still stands at the rear of the Holmes garage property.

The school was still in use by pupils of the East End, as the area was called, and it is interesting that there was no complication involved in allowing the Catholic congregation to use it. Perhaps it had something to do with a notice in a school record book, dated October 11, 1811:

Notice — that this schoolhouse be appropriated to the

use of a common day school and likewise to hold meetings of Public Worship for all orders of religious worship, when it is convenient and not infringing on the day school.

On August 14, 1882 a plot of land was bought from Christopher Peek for \$300. It was the first piece of property purchased by the Catholic congregation at East Aurora. It was 61½ feet wide and 174 feet deep, on the north side of Oakwood Avenue about 150 feet east of the corner of Park Place, then called Peek Street. It was the site of the future church.

The cornerstone was laid November 19, 1882 by Rt. Rev. Stephen V. Ryan, second Bishop of Buffalo. St. Vincent's in Springbrook was still the mother parish to the missions, with the priest residing there, so for the first seven or eight years, Catholics of East Aurora continued to attend Mass at Springbrook, except for the one Sunday a month the priest came to East Aurora.

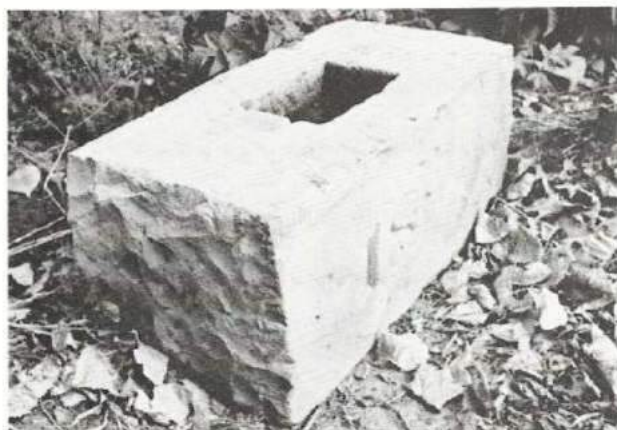
The building was oblong, with about twelve double rows of seats, enough for 180 to 190 people. Gas fixtures along the side provided light. It had three altars, two of them being almost immediately enhanced by statues of the Immaculate Conception and St. Joseph, donations of a Mrs. Becker and Mrs. Cunningham, respectively. It is believed that the statue of Mary originally stood in the center altar. It was moved to the left side some time later.



Rt. Rev. Stephen Vincent Ryan, D.D.C.M., second Bishop of Buffalo, dedicated and laid the cornerstone of Immaculate Conception Church, November 19, 1882.



Henry Dwyer, at whose home Bishop Ryan and over a dozen priests were entertained while in the area for Confirmation ceremonies at Spring Brook in 1887. Mr. Dwyer was superintendent of the W.N.Y. and Pittsburgh railroad. (Photo from Henry Dwyer Norton)



Cornerstone of the original church, laid in 1882 by Bishop Ryan. The tin box sealed inside was opened in September 1976 when the church was demolished. Only the Latin word for clergyman—ecclesiastic—was legible among the contents, but a microfilmed newspaper article revealed the contents. (Photo by Richard Will)

Among early Catholic families here were: the James Ragan family, who lived on a Maple Street farm later owned by Sandy Hubbard; the Vignerons on Jewett-Holmwood Road, the Marshalls who came from Connecticut; the Philip Logels from Sheldon; Dwyers from Oil City, Pennsylvania; Youngers from Varysburg; Conrads from Strykersville; Clearys from Cuba; Kysers, Millers and Minderlers from Buffalo; Steckmeyers,

Michael O'Shea, John Haas, John Roes, VanAntwerps, John Kingston, Christian Link, Leonard Ernst, William Kelly, Adrian Metz, John Brennan and the Tackbarys.

Churches already established here were the Baptist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist and the Universalist, and streets then laid out were Main, Oakwood, South, South Grove, Walnut, Center, Maple, Olean, Buffalo Road, Grey, Hamburg, Mill and Big Tree.

Early settlers used oil lamps, burned wood for heating and cooking, and carried water from their own wells, having no indoor plumbing. Houses were mostly frame construction and several fires resulted in the building of a West End fire hall for \$400 and the formation of a volunteer department.

Newspapers of the time frequently reported deaths from meningitis, scarlet fever, diphtheria, stroke, colic, cholera and consumption, known later as tuberculosis (TB). Louis Pasteur's experiments with bacteria in food were not common knowledge and many babies died of "colic," which was probably food poisoning. A common medical problem of the era was the broken bones caused by falls from horses, or overturned carriages when the horses ran away.

Twice during Father Reilly's pastorate, Confirmation was ministered in Springbrook by Bishop Ryan. In June, 1884, thirty-nine persons were confirmed, and in July, 1887, thirty-six.



Family of Henry Dwyer, about 1906, after his death. Seated: wife, Ellen; son-in-law, William Whitney and two Whitney children, daughter, Josephine, who later became Mrs. Charles H. Norton. Standing: son, William, and daughters, Mary (Mrs. Whitney) and Sarah (Sadie), who died three years later. (Photo from Henry Dwyer Norton)

East Aurora Chemical Company, No. 1 (Volunteer Fire Company), about 1908. The building stands on the northeast corner of Oakwood Avenue and Elm Street, presently an antique shop. John Marshall, veteran of the Connecticut Army in the Civil War, is third from the left. (Photo from his granddaughter, Verna Marshall Benzel)





Rev. James C. Cain. Soon after his arrival he issued the first financial report, for eight months of 1892.



James B. Ragan, the son of early Irish settlers, active parishioner and first recorded trustee. (Photo from his daughter, Catherine Ragan)

During the latter visit the Bishop was the honored guest of Mr. Henry Dwyer, whose home at that time was on South Grove Street. The Eno history gives colorful details:

His Lordship, accompanied by thirteen or fourteen priests, was royally entertained by this prominent Catholic family. Following the benediction of the church by the Bishop, the parishioners repaired to the old skating rink on Park Place, then called Peek Street, where a noonday repast was served.

In 1888, during Father Reilly's pastorate, the census of Marilla was taken and it was found there were twenty-five Catholic families living in that town. It is assumed that Father Reilly went there to celebrate Mass regularly. He was instrumental in forming three First Communion Classes, consisting of one person in 1886, six persons in 1889, and five in 1890. All debts on the Springbrook mission were paid before he left in 1890.

Father Reilly was succeeded by a Father Lafferty, who remained but a short time in Springbrook, attending the East Aurora and Marilla missions. Then the Rev. J. Brady came in 1891, and during his rectorship a class of eighteen persons received First Communion. Of this number, seven were from Springbrook, eight from East Aurora and three from Marilla.

The year 1892 saw the advent of Rev. James C. Cain who printed the first financial report. It covered the eight-month period of May 1, 1892, to January 1, 1893 for three congregations. Springbrook was still the mother parish to the missions of East Aurora and Marilla

but the priest resided in East Aurora now and that congregation was the largest of the three.

Several disbursements are interesting, especially "Horse support" costing \$50 and "Boy support," \$40. Horse and boy were needed to drive the priest from parish to parish. Among Springbrook expenses was \$1.50 paid to John Bove for ringing the bell, and Marilla spent \$1.15 on books for church purposes. There was already one society listed with a donation of \$76.80 — the Altar Society.

The priest's salary from the three parishes was supposed to be \$800.00, each parish paying a share. They also shared the expense of horse and boy. It was unusual for the priest to receive his entire salary; during several years there was a shortage of several hundred dollars each year. That particular year he received \$329.69 for the eight months, \$203.58 short.

That year there were 6 baptisms, 3 marriages and 3 burials. The report was signed by James B. Ragan and William J. Switzer, trustees for Immaculate Conception, Patrick Whalen and Patrick Donohue, trustees for St. Vincent de Paul in Springbrook, and Messrs. McCarthy (Michael) and O'Sullivan (Peter), trustees for the Church of Saints Philip and James in Marilla.

Churches raised money by both plate collections and pew rent. Remarks on the back of the 1893 report attest to this out-dated custom, whereby parishioners paid \$1.50 quarterly for a seat in the center aisle and \$1 for the side aisles. Trustees were the same that year for Springbrook and Marilla, but Christopher Kyser and Christian Link were trustees for East Aurora.



Mr. and Mrs. Christian Link and family. Clockwise from top, left: Caroline (Sr. Flavia), Valeria (Mrs. Denzel), Louise (Sr. Helena), Rev. Aloysius, Edward, Christian, Jr. (father of Sr. Margaret Mary who loaned us this picture), Albert and Rev. Leo.

On November 21, 1893, the Christian Men's Benevolent Association, (C.M.B.A.), Branch 169, was organized with James B. Ragan as President and thirty-nine charter members. Within two years other societies are listed in the annual report, with sometimes sizeable donations to the church income.

The year 1894 brought two important purchases. Christopher Kyser, trustee for East Aurora, bought

the cemetery property on Bowen Road just off Seneca Street from a Mr. Twiss for \$100 and a house on the East side of Paine Street, on the corner of Oakwood, was purchased for a rectory by a committee of Messrs. Steckmeyer, Kaiser and Link for \$1,200. Wood for church heating cost \$17 that year, a stark contrast to the parish fuel bill for one month in February, 1978, which was close to \$1,700.

Father Cain moved into the rectory in March, 1894. Since East Aurora was growing much faster than Springbrook, Immaculate Conception replaced St. Vincent's as the mother parish of the missions. That



Christian Men's Benevolent Association badge, for organization formed in 1893 with James Ragan, first President. (Badge from Daniel Ernst)

Home on Paine Street near Oakwood, bought for use as a rectory in 1894. (Photo by Paul Oubre)



Sarah (Sadie) Dwyer. She and Frances Vigneron formed a choir in 1893. (Photo from Henry Dwyer Norton)

same year Father Cain and the trustees from Springbrook went into Buffalo and proposed to the Bishop that East Aurora attend the Holland congregation which had been attended by priests from Boston only monthly. Father Cain went out twice a month. The Marilla church was changed to Alden that year, leaving three parishes again in the mission. Six persons received First Holy Communion in 1894, all from East Aurora.

In January, 1895, a choir was organized with Mrs. Switzer, organist, being paid \$52 for the year. The Altar Society was officially organized with Miss Louise Sutton, President, Mrs. E. Miller, Vice-President, Mrs. P. Caseman, Recording Secretary, Mrs. William Kelly, Financial Secretary, and Miss Louise Link, Treasurer. Electrical service was installed that year at a cost of \$78.65 and taxes were \$6.51. A number of bills are listed for improvements and repairs, and the church had to borrow \$600. Trustees for Immaculate Conception were William Kelly and Philip Logel.

A hand-written entry in a brief parish log states that Father Cain died very suddenly of appendicitis on June 9, 1895, the day on which the Vincentian Fathers were to open a mission. At a "mission" a missionary priest, as opposed to a diocesan priest, came to the church for eight consecutive evenings, preaching on the Gospel and repentance. This was postponed until the



Rev. Edward J. Rengel, pastor 1895-1900. Solicited funds from the community in 1898 to repair the church and the school and retire the debt on the missions of Holland and Springbrook.

following August.

The Rev. Edward J. Rengel now took up the duties of the mission. Father Rengel held special collections and subscriptions in 1898, raising enough money to put the church and house in excellent condition. St. Anthony and Sacred Heart statues were bought in 1889 and natural gas was installed. Most of the money came from non-Catholics, primarily local businessmen from whom church purchases were made.

In 1895, the Cunningham property had been bequeathed to the Catholic Church. It consisted of a house valued at \$900, cottage, \$600 and barn, \$100. This property was sold in 1900 along with the old rectory and barn in Springbrook, leaving all the church properties in East Aurora, Springbrook and Holland free of debt.

In June, 1900, Father Rengel was succeeded by Rev. James J. Gilhooly, who left in December. East Aurora was without a resident priest for four months. During this time Rev. T. Walsh came from the Cathedral in Buffalo every Saturday for the Sunday Masses and occasionally during the week when necessity required. Father Walsh eventually became Archbishop of New Jersey. On April 20th, 1901, Rev. James H. Quested came from Randolph to take charge of the mission. He made plans at once for getting a rectory nearer the



Rev. Thomas J. Walsh — Came out from the Cathedral parish on weekends, early in 1901. Later became Archbishop of New Jersey.

church. The church, too, needed enlargement, being inadequate to accommodate the Sunday congregations, especially in Summer.

Many of the Summer visitors were guests of the Roycrofters, who were famous for their work in bookbinding, quality printing and illuminating, — i.e. initials, covers and title pages done in leather, copper and brass. The Roycrofters, by this time, had expanded to various other crafts and artistic endeavors. Among these were ornamental blacksmith work, cabinet work, artistic painting, clay modeling and terra cotta, and later tapestry. It was Elbert Hubbard's belief that work done by marriage of head and hand can never go out of style. Today Roycroft pieces are collector's items.

The 1901 Annual Report stated that there were 510 parishioners, including children, in all the missions. There were 22 baptisms, 71 confirmations and 46 First Communicants. Eleven persons died, three of them children. All buildings were insured and in good condition except for Marilla where expenses for repairs were not warranted, as the congregation was attending neighboring churches. A new society was formed that year, Branch 767 of the Ladies Christian Benevolent Association (L.C.B.A.).

1901-1904

HIS BUILDING. . .

In 1901, with Bishop Quigley's approval, the trustees bought the Jackson house and lot to the east of the church for \$2,400. The house was sold for \$400 and a rectory was begun.

The 1902 report gives a striking insight into the accomplishments of a small loan at 4% interest: . . . *The only indebtedness is \$3,000.00. This sum we borrowed with the Bishop's permission for the new Rectory. Without exceeding that debt we have finished the Rectory, bought half of the Williams lot for a Convent school site, remodeled, repainted and enlarged the church so as to nearly double its seating capacity — it can now seat 400; provided a Basement Hall to seat 250 persons for societies and meetings, inserted 16 stained-glass windows, and built 1206 feet of concrete sidewalks.*

A history compiled by Miss Martha C. Schwartz, presently (1978) a member of the parish residing on Buffalo Road, explains that in this renovation the church had to be raised to accommodate the basement, the altar wall was moved back to make room for more seats, and three altars were built. Virtually all the labor was volunteered by parishioners. They installed the new bell, using horse and pulleys, says present resident historian, Mrs. Estelle Minderler. They installed the sidewalks and did all the hauling and grading. The grading took three years, according to the Annual Reports, which gave thanks to many workers. Names mentioned more than once as having done grading were: Ambrose, Barnett, Becker, Bodecker, Conley, Denzil, Head, Kingston, Leibold, Link, McHugh, Mindeler, Scheiwiller and Steckmeyer. These names are familiar to many parishioners as relatives or friends. Some of their descendants are still very active in the parish.

While the men did the heavy manual labor, the women raised money through their talents for cooking, sewing, and organizing contests and festivals. There were several of these each year, including doll contests and ring contests which brought in \$50 to \$100. Men and women combined to put on plays and a choir concert. The 1902 Report thanks the young ladies' sewing society which "paid for the new sanctuary by their quilt party."

The cooperation of the parishioners did not stop at this volunteer effort, for they gave generously of their money as well. A pipe organ was the gift of a friend, and the eight-hundred pound bell bore the names of its sponsors: Elizabeth Meuter, Sarah Dwyer, Margaret



Original statue of the Blessed Virgin, moved to side altar in the Thirties, then to St. Clara's Academy vestibule after renovation of the Forties. (Photo from Estella Minderler)

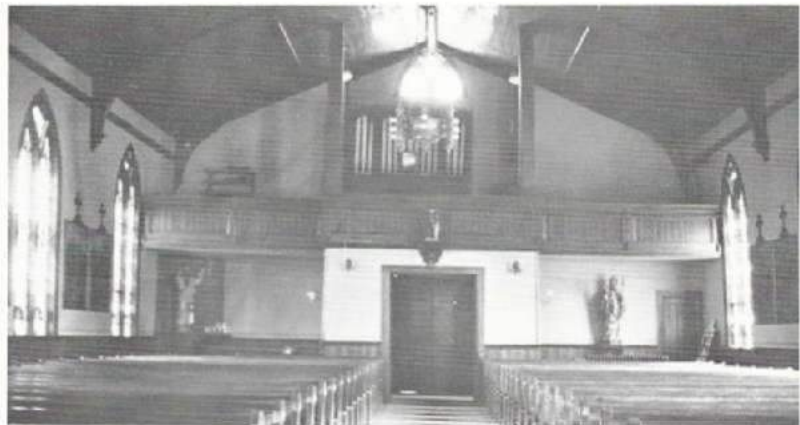


Tabernacle in center altar, flanked by Tiffany stained-glass windows installed in 1902, showing cross and veil placed by Father Cash in the Thirties. (Photo from Estella Minderler)

1902 — newly-built rectory with wrap-around porch, connected by breezeway to the enlarged church, showing bell tower and stained glass windows installed at that time. (Note Philip Logel house, far left.) (Photo from Verna Marshall Benzel)



Sanctuary and side altars before renovation in the Forties, showing wooden altars and Communion rail built by parishioners under the supervision of cabinet-maker, Philip Logel, around 1902. (Photo from Estella Minderler)



Immaculate Conception Church before remodeling in 1941. View towards rear shows pipe organ from anonymous donor, long stained-glass windows donated by parishioners and oil-painted stations donated by Very Rev. Dr. Fallon, O.M.I., all part of 1901-02 renovations. (Photo from Estella Minderler)

Hawthorne, R. Benoit, Catherine Kelly, Elizabeth Meyer, Philip Logel, M. Mindeler, B. Link, F. Boland, L. Ernst.

The stained-glass windows were donated by Mr. and Mrs. Kelly, Mr. and Mrs. Logel, C. Link, J. J. Marschall, Mary and Elizabeth Eggert, Mrs. Hawthorne, Mrs. Kinder, Mrs. VanAntwerp, George Keem, Adrian Metz family, L.C.B.A. Branch 767, Sacred Heart League, Mrs. Miller, Mrs. Meuter, Mrs. Hennessy and Miss deSomer. Charles Youngers and Merritt Kyser gave the new pulpit and a handsome triple sanctuary gong was the gift of Mr. and Mrs. E. Miller and son.

In August, 1902, Father Quested moved into the new rectory, which was connected to the church with a breezeway. The church improvements were completed that September.

On Easter Sunday, 1903, Father Quested received some help from a visiting priest, Rev. J. T. Lynch, C.M., of Niagara University. Father Quested celebrated the seven o'clock Mass at East Aurora and the nine o'clock Mass at Holland. Father Lynch celebrated Mass at nine o'clock in Springbrook, followed by an eleven o'clock Mass in East Aurora.

The emphasis shifted to the children's needs in 1903, when an arrangement was made with the Sisters of St. Joseph by which two of the nuns came to East Aurora every Sunday to take charge of the Sunday School. On March 22nd, Mother Mary Ann and Sister St. Augustine began the work, and during the remainder of the year Sister St. Augustine was assisted by Sister St. James and Sister Juliana. Beginning in May, two nine o'clock Masses were set apart each month for the children, who took part in the service by singing hymns.

The church was fitted with steam heat (Mott's Steam) in 1903 and the rectory with Mott's hot water apparatus, at a cost of \$1,125, the latter to be completed in 1904.

The population of East Aurora rapidly increased after the turn of the century. The sulky races attracted people from all over. Horse fanciers flocked to the area, buying and selling, working or simply watching. The Roycroft Shops experienced similar attention as people flocked to see the craftsmen at work and skilled artisans came to teach. They gave expert instruction in printing, binding, metal craft and the production of modeled leather articles, while sharpening their own skills.

The overwhelming popularity of Elbert Hubbard's article, "A Message to Garcia," in his monthly magazine, *The Philistine*, in March 1899, catapulted Mr. Hubbard into the world of celebrities. Thousands of orders came in for reprints, which eventually amounted to eighty million copies published in eleven languages. Within a few years he was the highest paid lecturer in the country, as well as a columnist for the Hearst papers.

In accordance with his disdain for luxuries and desire to foster the development of individual talents and skills, Mr. Hubbard bought only what he needed for himself, using the bulk of his money to enlarge the complex. Originally none of the guests at the Inn paid, as these were personal friends of Mr. Hubbard. A sort of bonanza fell on farmers in the area when Mr.



James H. Quested, pastor during the greatest growth period, invited Sisters of St. Joseph to teach Sunday school in 1903, which resulted in establishment of a convent-school and two years later St. Clara's Academy.



Martin Minderler, daughter Lena, and wife, Frances. He and many men of the parish did all the grading of the land around the rectory and the Academy. (Photo from Estella Minderler)



Mother Mary Ann, about 1900. She and Sister St. Augustine came out to teach Sunday school in March 1903, beginning an association between the Sisters of St. Joseph and Immaculate Conception parish that continues to this day (1978). (Photo from Srs. of St. Joseph Archives)

Hubbard bought many loads of field stones, which the farmers considered useless, for the wall which still stands around the complex on Main and South Grove.

It is no wonder, then, that shortly after Immaculate Conception Church was enlarged, overcrowding became a problem. A new church hall, called St. James Hall, had been completed in the basement of the church and the C.M.B.A. and L.C.B.A. had begun to hold bi-monthly meetings there in January 1903.

It was necessary on Sunday, August 2nd, to borrow seats from St. James Hall in order to accommodate the influx of visitors from Buffalo and other places, who had come to witness the children's First Communion. Nine boys and sixteen girls marched in procession from the Hall, under the direction of Sisters Sts. Augustine and Juliana, and took their places in front of the Sanctuary, while the organ sounded a solemn march. The girls and their supporters, the Children of Mary, were attired in white, with veils and wreaths of smilax and flowers. (Smilax was a garland — a thin stem encrusted with tiny white flowers that looked like rosebuds.) The boys had on dark suits and each wore a white boutonniere. After Mass, the Communicants took the total abstinence pledge, were invested in the Scapular of Mount Carmel, and received First Communion certificates. The procession then re-formed and marched to the Hall, where a generous breakfast was served. The happy day was crowned by the beautiful procession of the Blessed Sacrament, during the evening service.

By the time the enlarged and remodeled church was

rededicated, September 24, 1903, there were 403 people in Immaculate Conception parish, 81 of them children of Sunday School age.

St. Vincent's in Springbrook had also been crowded when thirteen children received First Communion there August 16th, 1903. On July 7th, 1905, Springbrook became a separate parish.

1904-1909

THANKS TO THE FAVOR GOD SHOWED ME.

On April 1, 1904 the Sisters of Saint Joseph bought the Williams house and lot for a convent-school. It stood on a small hill on the south side of Oakwood Avenue across from the rectory. The property is currently (1978) a vacant lot between the McClure's (515) and the McDonnell's (537), across from the church driveway.

The school in the convent was opened in September 1904. It was intended to be a boarding school for children of the rural district. However, the needs of the parish soon changed that aim and it served as a parochial school until one could be built.

Two rooms in the convent were set aside for teaching. Downstairs, a room was built at the rear of the house for the primary grades, and a classroom upstairs doubled as a bedroom for one of the sisters. Classes started with two grades in each room, 44 pupils in all, including 27 boys and 17 girls. It was called, appropriately, Saint Joseph's Convent School.

On Christmas Day, just four months after the Sisters opened the school, the first entertainment by children was given at 3 p.m. in the church basement. There were songs and pantomimes. Father Quested presented each child with a bag of candy, an orange and a popcorn ball.

The 1904 Annual Report quotes a newspaper article about the program.

The dance of the little ones, the choruses, recitations and tableaux were especially good. We think the children showed great talent and extraordinary results from the careful training of three short months. Indeed, the remarkable distinctness, purity and accuracy of pronunciation displayed by all the children impressed us more than anything else, except perhaps their excellent deportment. Certainly this performance fully sustains the high reputation of the Sisters of Saint Joseph as teachers and trainers.

On July 10, 1905, the first commencement exercises were held. By that Fall, the convent was obviously too small for a school. There were 103 pupils: 49 boys and 54 girls.



Immaculate Conception Church, rectory and newly-built school, St. Clara's Academy, probably 1906. (Photo from Verna Marshall Benzel)

On the lot east of the rectory, a new cement block school was started. This had been an old sand pit containing all kinds of trash. The parishioners filled the hole, leveled the slight hill along the street and dug the school basement. There were four classrooms on the first floor, a hall with stage on the second and a kitchen and dining room in the basement.

Phillip Logel, a trustee for many years, contracted the carpentry work and Jeremiah Cleary, another parishioner, supervised the masonry. The two worked together on the school and the church, as well as other buildings in town. Mr. Cleary also worked on the Roycroft wall which is a landmark in the village.

Mr. Logel also built a shed for horses and buggies at the rear of the church on the Beebe lot on Park Place. It was a long building, open to the East, with an upright supporting post at the front between the two vehicle spaces. Behind this shed was Harry Hall's Cider Mill, a place the children liked to visit. Later, parishioners laid a sidewalk from the horse shed to the church.

The school was completed and dedicated November 4, 1906 by Bishop Charles H. Colton assisted by Rt. Rev. Msgr. Nelson A. Baker, the famed Apostle of Charity in Lackawanna. Total cost was \$12,000, believed to include contents.

There was a real spirit of competition among the parishioners of Immaculate Conception as they strove to raise money for the building projects. A contest had been proposed when the hall in the church basement

was completed in 1904. Whoever could raise the most money by April 1st would have the privilege of naming the new hall. Mrs. Edith Banks organized the first Dramatic Club and won the contest by giving an entertainment which netted \$107.00. She named the hall St. James, in honor of Father Qusted.

The naming of St. Clara's Academy also involved a contest according to an article written by Father McCoy 60 years later, when the school was torn down:

When Father Qusted saw the need for the new school he formed a committee of the interested ladies of the parish and asked them to canvass the parish for funds. He told them that the lady who brought in the largest amount of donations would have the privilege of naming the school. The deadline date and time was set. The donations were to be brought to the rectory by 8 p.m. on the fateful day. The ladies showed plenty of apostolic zeal and personal dedication in their appeals.

Finally the deadline day arrived. The ladies, coming to the rectory, laid their offerings in sealed envelopes upon the desk in the pastor's office. The room was charged with nervous anticipation; each one in her own mind determining a fitting name for the school if the good fortune would fall to her. The silence was punctuated only by the loud ticking of a clock. The large hand moved with agonizing slowness. Finally it stood erect



Mary (1886-1971) and Margaret Marshall (now Sr. Silverius), about 1920. Mary crocheted lace for altar linens made by the sewing circle. Margaret worked in Father Baker's Infant Home until retirement. (Photo from niece, Verna Marshall Benzel)

at 12. It was 8 p.m., the time to open the envelopes. One after another they were opened.

As Father Quested announced the amount in each envelope, a feminine crescendo of triumphant screams pierced the hallowed room. The largest amount in these envelopes had been submitted by Miss Emily Baetzhold (Mrs. Edward Ball) . . . Someone said: "Oh, Emily, you won. What are you going to name the school?" At that moment another lady came with her donation. It was higher than the amount of Miss Emily Baetzhold. The last entry was Miss Clara Keem. So, Clara did what came naturally. She named the school "St. Clara's Academy."

In October 1907 St. Clara's School was accredited by the New York State Education Department. A letter from James D. Sullivan, Chief of the Attendance Division, attested to its quality education. It stated in part:

I have found the attendance in the grades above the primary the best of any school I have inspected. Absences are rare and then only for substantial and legal reasons. The work done in the school is of a high standard, some of it excellent. Writing and Reading in this school is far above the average in the public schools; the work in Arithmetic is very good indeed. The school



Louis Marshall, about 1905, son of John J. He took the priest to the mission churches on Sundays, by horse and buggy. (Photo from his daughter, Verna Marshall Benzel)

as a whole is highly complementary to Father Quested and his teachers.

I take pleasure in being able to say that this is one of the very best reports had from our inspector in some time and I commend you and your teachers for the interest you are taking in the advancement of education among your people.

Two pianos were given to the parish at the time of the building of the school. One was from Denton, Cottier and Daniels, the other from Mr. Kurtzman, a piano builder whose factory was a Buffalo industry.

1909-1924

I LAID A FOUNDATION. . . .

Colorful pastors are a part of every church history and Immaculate Conception is no exception.

Parishioners tell numerous stories about Rev. George Zurcher, a remarkable man who became pastor on March 1, 1909. According to Miss Schwartz, he was most generous and frugal, giving away anything he could spare. One story tells of a woman who came to the rectory on Thanksgiving morning, asking for a little money to buy food, as she had nothing at home to feed her children. Father Zurcher said he had little money but asked her to wait. He took the roast goose from the oven, put it in a basket with bread and other foods, and gave it to the woman. When his housekeeper returned, she was angry and said they would have to eat sausage for their own Thanksgiving dinner, and it served him right.

Another story relates that one morning Father Zurcher visited the school room of the sixth and seventh grades and gave each child a Latin book saying it was time they started Latin, a basic language for higher education and the language of the church. He gave them one lesson, the only one they received. In June when they all failed the Latin examination, he supposedly told them it was because they did not study enough.

Father Zurcher was a prohibitionist; he would not use wine when celebrating Mass. The Women's Christian Temperance Union (W.C.T.U.), which was locally strong at the time, invited him to lecture against liquor, which he did in various halls in town. Some of our older people remember him because, when they were confirmed, he made them take the pledge to refrain from alcoholic beverages until they were twenty-one.

On November 2, 1909, when Woodrow Wilson was elected the first time, local option for prohibition for the town was voted in, to take effect almost a year later, October 1, 1910, and to last for two years.

One Catholic family, who operated a saloon for part of their income, became angry at Father Zurcher for



Rev. George Zurcher, vegetarian, apostle of Prohibition, noted speaker and writer. During his pastorate, pew rent was paid by Elbert Hubbard for guests of the Roycroft Inn. (Photo from the Ragans)

his part in the campaign. They left the church and went to Springbrook for Mass on Sundays.

Elbert Hubbard, also a prohibitionist and a friend of Father Zurcher, asked how much the parish income would suffer because of this family's departure. When he learned that the principle loss was the pew rent, he told Father Zurcher he would take the pew, call it the Roycroft pew, and told him to send a bill. When Catholic visitors came to the Inn and inquired about Mass times, they would be told to use the Roycroft pew.

At the November 2, 1912 election, prohibition was again on the ballot, but this time the "wets" won. That week the W.C.T.U. had a notice in the Advertiser which included this notation: "The campaign was a 'wet' one indeed. Aurora has not been so wet with mothers' tears in years as it has been since October 1st."

It was during 1910, while Father Zurcher was pastor, that Pope Pius X changed the First Communion regulation. Prior to that time, children had to be twelve to receive Communion, and often were confirmed at the same ceremony. Thereafter, children six and seven years old, as soon as they reached the age of reason, made their First Communion.

Father Zurcher resigned from East Aurora parish in November, 1912, in ill health. He died September 10, 1931 and a large monument was erected in his honor



A classroom in St. Clara's Academy, March 1914. Upper left, Ruth Youngers Woodward (who loaned us this photo); second row, second seat, Jack Youngers. Sister Dolorosa is the teacher.

on a plot of ground on the southwest corner of Southwestern Boulevard (Route 20) and Shadagee Road, just south of 18 Mile Creek.

Father Andrew Porter took charge of the parish in December 1912. He was of Irish parentage and according to our sources, a very gentle and saintly man.

Times were not good, and Father Porter found it difficult to talk "money." As a result collections were meager and nothing could be paid on the debt; in fact, it increased. However, being generous, we are told, he would divide the pennies in the collection and give them to the altar boys for their services. Sometimes they would receive as much as ten or twelve cents each, sometimes only two cents.

One Sunday the collection was under \$3.00 and Father Porter spoke of it the following Sunday, suggesting that in place of the many pennies, some folk should be able to give nickles or dimes.

Merritt Kyser and the other ushers decided to substitute nickles for the pennies. When they had 150 pennies they put them in a bag and dropped it into the collection box. The following Sunday Father Porter said that, while this was evidently done in the spirit of boyish fun, it would have been even better had they used dollar bills.

Despite the shaky economy, the Fourth of July

picnic was held in Hamlin Park. A notice in the Advertiser in 1913 invited the community, mentioning plans for a spacious marquee and "delicious eats." A baseball game was held between the parish team, the Oakridges, and the Roycrofters. The Roycroft Band of 24 pieces was scheduled to entertain.

Because Father Porter loved to see the children perform, programs were held at the end of each school year. At this time the Sisters taught two years of high school in addition to the grades. Added to the graduation exercises, each grade had to perform. There were drills, songs, pantomimes and sketches. This gave the children confidence, delighted the parents and brought in a little money. Twenty-five cents was charged for general admission, fifty cents for reserved seats.

The Holland mission had been changed to Arcade July 7, 1907 and also had a resident pastor for a time, but because the Holland parish again became attached to East Aurora while Father Porter was pastor, he was given permission to celebrate three Masses on Sundays, two in East Aurora and one in Holland.

On May 7, 1915 the Lusitania was sunk by a German submarine off the Irish coast. Elbert and Alice Hubbard were among those lost — a great blow to the people of East Aurora, and to many others as well.

Many parishioners, men, women and teenage children, had worked in Mr. Hubbard's Roycroft Shop, some now able to recall personally their association with that fascinating endeavor.



Monument to Father Zurcher erected in 1935, paid for by anonymous donors believed to be supporters of his work in the cause of temperance. All four sides of the solid granite monument are inscribed, the front featuring an almost life-size relief of the priest. At the time of his death in 1931 he was pastor of St. Vincent's, North Evans, whence he travelled worldwide in the fight against alcoholism and other abuses. (Photo by Richard Will)

One in particular is Miss Martha C. Schwartz, whose manuscript, presented to the pastor in 1973, is the basis for this compilation. She recalls doing advertising for Mr. Hubbard. She left for a job in Detroit, which led to a forty-year career in Advertising Copywriting, there and in New York, Chicago and the Twin Cities in Minnesota.

She also tells us that her great grandfather (grandmother's father) Charles Beckman, was brought into town, ill and wrapped in blankets, to direct the men in cutting stones for the walls surrounding the Roycroft campus.

Middle grades, St. Clara's, 1910. Front row (l-r): Nellie Kyser, Julia Farley, Violet Marshall, Florence Ess (Dodge), Evelyn Carroll, Julia Dubois. Row 2: Lawrence Dibucci, Helen Ragan, Miriam Logel (Haselbauer, whose family loaned us this photo), Genevieve Carroll (Sippell), Marion Schneider, Myrtle Marshall, Kenneth Damon, Charles Kyser, Clarence Gross, Josephine Eley (Loersch), Richard Gregor, Patrick Ernberg, (rear) Charles Baetzhold, Eileen Reimer, Irving Kinder. Row 3: Ralph Marso, Horatio Bangs, Sylvester Snyder, Marion Deheck (Schwartz), Ruth Geyer (Hotwes), Edward Ernst, Helen Persons (Varley), Margaret Osborne (Heins). Top: (corner, unidentified), Eugene Jerge, George Russell, Henry Snyder, Ed Kingston, Al Maynard, Ralph Dibucci, Father Zurcher, Florence Reimer, Philip Persons.



Mrs. Estelle Nuwer Minderler, parish historian, worked at the Roycroft around 1930 laying gold leaf on the covers of Mr. Hubbard's famous Little Journeys volumes. She and many women worked on various stages of the bookbinding process.

Mrs. Robert C. Woodward (the former Ruth Youngers) tells us that her father, Fred, did bookbinding and hand tooling. He worked at one time for St. Bonaventure University, restoring old Bibles. One of Elbert Hubbard's original aims had been to revive the lost art of hand work in the making of books.

She adds that her mother, Josephine Youngers, was soloist in the parish for many years. She also filled in as organist for a time. Jennie Kingston became organist in 1916 and remained until 1939.

Father Daniel J. White, our next pastor, came on June 17, 1917. He was tall and thin, retiring and gentle. In spite of a slight throat impediment, his sermons could be heard throughout the church.

Father White was very much concerned with the mortgage on the church property which was taken out

in 1906 and, since World War I was in progress and everybody working, he decided to get rid of the indebtedness and thus save the parish the interest payments.

Pew rent was abolished under Father White and the Duplex Envelope System was begun. He was against the ten cent sitting charge in vogue in some of the Buffalo parishes, so parishioners were asked to increase their Sunday offerings. He encouraged the various church societies to hold money making activities. As a result the receipts for 1919 were \$5,601.08, which included returns from a lawn social, baked goods sale, church supper, hall rent and cemetery lot sales. The St. Clara's Dramatic Club was organized and their production, *Seven Keys to Baldpate*, brought in \$217.78.

Principal expenses for the year were: Pastor's salary \$1000.00, teachers' salaries \$750.00, coal \$524.77, janitor \$103.70. Payment on the mortgage was \$1500.00, which made everyone happy.

On October 24, 1918 the Holland church was destroyed by fire and for the next two years that parish was serviced from elsewhere. In November 1920 Holland again became a mission of Immaculate Conception. Father White continued to celebrate a Mass there each Sunday in addition to the two in East Aurora. Originally he was taken to Holland by one of the parishioners, Fred Nuwer, but later he had a small car of his own.

On November 11, 1918, the Armistice was signed

Upper grade pupils of St. Clara's Academy, 1910. Front row, left to right: Frank Vigneron, Edward Logel, Anthony Farley, Stanley Persons, Edward Riley, Floyd Balthazar. Row 2: Alphonse Vigneron, Vincent Ragan, Martha Persons, Anna Juenker, Ethel Osborn, Clara Ragan, Maud Ely, Annabelle Hannan. Row 3: Henrietta Gardner, Margaret Ragan, Mary Osborn, Juvenelia Ragan, Edwin Marso. Top row: Father George Zurcher, Gertrude Vigneron, Anna Conley and Sister Adelaide. (News clipping from Alice Logel)



and World War I was over. The age of airplanes and automobiles had arrived. Within a few years the old horse shed at the rear of the rectory was no longer needed. It was torn down and much of the lumber bought by a Mr. Willis. This space was added to the children's playground.

On October 21, 1923, the Catholic Daughters, Court 831, was formed with 47 members. Margaret Persons was first Grand Regent, Marion Deheck, first Financial Secretary. Meetings were held in St. Clara's Hall.

The same year the parish bought the Cook property on the northeast corner of Oakwood and Park Place where the present (1978) school stands. It consisted of a large piece of land, a good-sized house facing Park Place, and a garage.

Father White had wanted the corner site for a new church. He even had plans drawn up for an elaborate and sizeable edifice. However, he died in Sisters Hospital during an operation for appendicitis on January 18, 1924. His dream of a new church on the corner died with him.

Following the death of Father White, Rev. Roman J. Nuwer of St. Vincent's in Springbrook, filled in for

two months until Rev. Cornelius J. Cash was appointed, March 14, 1924.

Boys of the First Communion Class of 1922. Front row (l-r): Robert Ernst (who loaned us this picture), Richard Little, Leon Snyder, Michael Carini and Anthony LaMantia. Row 2: Wallace Kelly, Herbert Arndt, Robert Higgins and Fred Eberle.



Mrs. Estella Nuwer Minderler, whose knowledge of parish affairs and contacts with numerous "old-timers" led her to be named parish historian for the Dedication Committee. The pictures, mementos, clippings and stories which she has presented for use have added immeasurably to the text of this history.



Mrs. Jennie Kingston, organist for many years. (Photo from Donald Kingston)

In June, St. Joseph's in Holland became a separate parish, ending the mission work of the East Aurora pastorate.

Rev. Roman J. Nuwer, later to be the highest ranking chaplain in World War II, ran the parish after Father White's untimely death, until an appointment could be made. (Photo from Estelle Minderler)



Rev. Daniel White. During his brief pastorate more land was bought and plans drawn for a new church on the corner. (Photo from Estelle Minderler)

1924-1941

SOMEONE ELSE IS BUILDING UPON IT.

It was Father Cash's first experience as pastor and he remained seventeen years, through the Roaring Twenties, the Depression and FDR's New Deal, to the brink of American involvement in World War II.

With a dry sense of humor he stated, "My name is Cash, but you'll never hear that word unless I'm desperate." Included in one of his first sermons was the fact that he was going to cost the parishioners some money — that he was not as frugal as Father White, nor was he a saint like Father White, who slept on a very lumpy mattress in a bed that was a foot too short. Therefore, Father Cash purchased suitable bedding and other necessary rectory furnishings.

He was a tall man, and parishioners say that he could reach the sanctuary lamp, which hung from the ceiling, without either standing on a stool or using a cane, as did his predecessors.

Soon after he arrived, the recently-purchased Cook residence on Park Place was converted into a convent with a chapel. The four Sisters of St. Joseph moved with their housekeeper from the old convent-school on Oakwood Avenue into the "Cook" house, which still serves as a convent for the Sisters in its present location on Park Place.

The first Boy Scout Troop was formed during this time with William S. Lydle accepting the charter on July 4, 1925. Scouts have continued to meet in the parish up to the present time. John Sly was leader for many years and, more recently, Steve Ingraham. In the 10 years prior to 1978 many boys moved up to Eagle Scout rank.

The Great Depression began with the Stock Market crash in 1929. Life savings were lost, as companies went bankrupt and banks failed. Millions of people lost their jobs, with only charitable organizations to help them. Bread lines were common in the cities, where at least a bowl of soup and a sandwich were available.

Because of the Depression, Father Cash took no salary and used his Christmas money to pay parish bills. The Roycroft Shops closed in 1938 because of the economy, but, even before that, Father had refused to accept the usual stipends for Masses, Baptisms and the like, knowing certain people could not afford them.

During his pastorate he was threatened with a knife

by a man who apparently went beserk, claiming the priest was too holy. Father had to lock himself in his room while awaiting rescue by the police.

Some criticism arose over the Blessed Mother statue being enshrined above the tabernacle in the center altar, and Father Cash moved the statue to the side altar, putting in its place a gold cross, set off by a background of white veiling.

By 1936 the parish needed an assistant and Father James Kane was assigned. He had a fine singing voice and he instituted the Thursday night Holy Hour, followed by an interesting Question and Answer session. The organist at this time was still Mrs. Kingston, who was succeeded by Mercedes Graham around 1939.

In 1937 the men of the parish held a strawberry festival to raise money for the school. With the receipts, and some additional income amounting to about \$2000, the men purchased new school equipment and did most of the work themselves. They installed new floors, plumbing fixtures, toilets, water lines, acoustic ceilings, slate boards, wiring and lights that gave four times as much illumination as before.

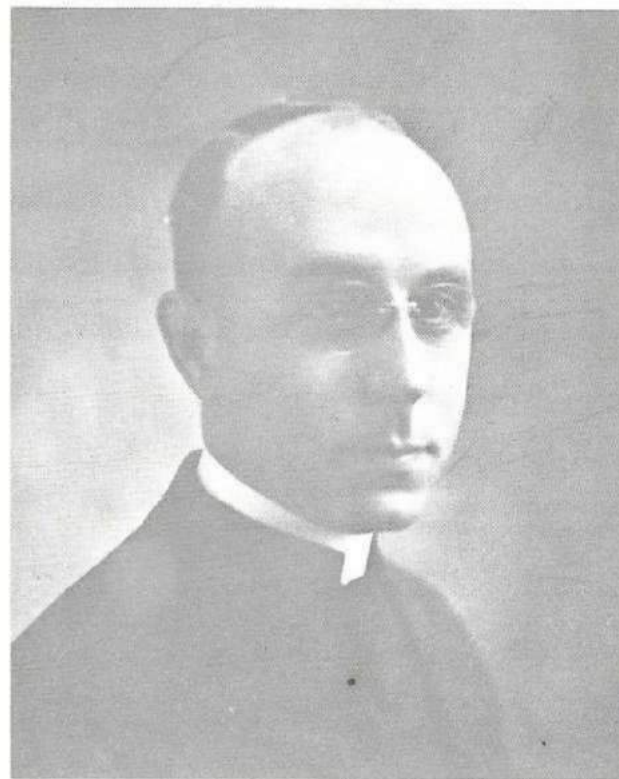
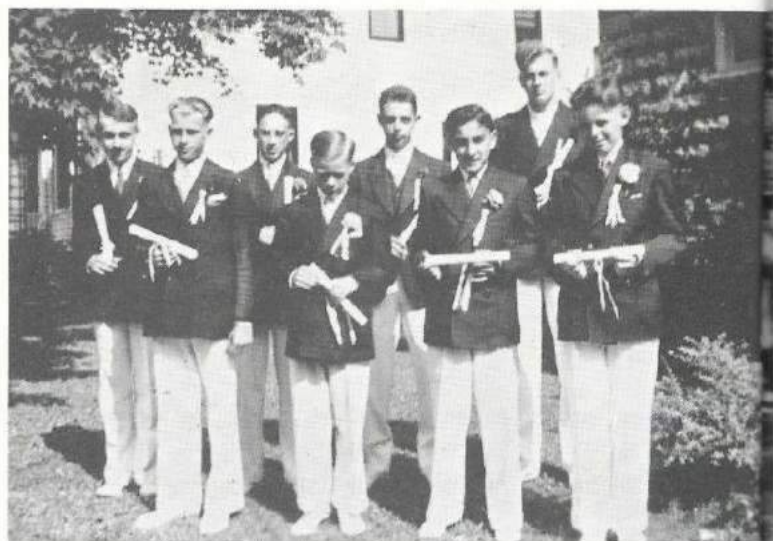
To bolster the regular church collections, the young people held dances and presented plays and the women ran baked goods sales. Many delicious dinners were served in St. Clara's basement dining room. Everyone helped with fish fries and potluck suppers which attracted so many customers that the line often went out the door and down the street.

In October 1938 a large statue of St. Clara was presented to the school by Monsignor Britt, Chancellor of the Diocese. On November 14 of that year Father Weismueller, Dean of the County outside of Buffalo, paid a canonical visit to the parish. (This involves a check of books, records and parish affairs to be sure they are in accordance with Diocesan standards.)

The inauguration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in March 1933 had been followed by numerous government programs which had alleviated some of the economic depression. Despite hard times, society as a whole continued to progress. By the end of the decade of 1930 to 1940, radio, movies, and automobiles were part of most people's lives, in one way or another. Radio brought comedy and mystery programs into people's homes, as well as fresh news from around the country. The local movie house showed three hours of black and white film, early in the Thirties, for as little as a nickel. Adventure stories, comedies, cartoons and musical extravaganzas took people's minds off their troubles and only an occasional newsreel brought them back to reality.

A 1940 grocery bill for the St. Vincent dePaul Society gives us some idea of the prices about this time. The bill was signed by Rev. Maurice Woulfe who had replaced James J. Reddington as assistant pastor. It includes groceries for four families for Christmas and totals \$20.69. Interesting items are coffee at 25¢ a pound, butter 30¢ a lb., a 13-lb. turkey for \$4.10 and 6¼ lbs. beef, \$1.78. The total for one family was

Boys of the graduating class, 1937. (Photo from Alice Logel)



Rev. Cornelius J. Cash, the longest pastorate, plagued by a \$10,000 mortgage and the Depression. (Photo from Estelle Minderler)

only \$2.75 and included a chicken, cranberries, celery, cabbage, oranges, figs, grapes and chocolate candy.

In October 1941 both the pastor and the assistant were transferred. According to one historian Father Cash had been an ideal priest and a true shepherd of the flock — he loved them and they loved him.

First Communion Class in the Thirties, in front of St. Clara's Academy. (Photo from L. Montague)



Mr. and Mrs. Philip Logel and children, Carl, Edward, Leo, Marian, Sylvester and Jim. One of the Logel boys rang the church bell every day at noon and 6 p.m. for many years. (Photo from Alice Logel, widow of Carl)



Confirmation, 1933. Bishop Turner on rectory steps, flanked by Revs. Edward Ott and George Spetz of the Orchard Park pastorate. Front of procession: Revs. John Marekovic of Strykersville and Charles Arnold, Sheldon. Row 2: Revs. Edmund Britt, Secretary to the Bishop, and Leo Link, Varysburg. Row 3: (unidentified). Row 4: Father Cash, pastor. Altar boys are Donald Kingston (who loaned us this picture) and Jack Agnew.

1941-1954

EVERYONE. . .
MUST BE CAREFUL HOW HE BUILDS. . .

On October 3, 1941, Reverend James T. Sullivan was canonically installed as pastor by the Very Rev. Dean Weismantle. He brought much of his own fine furnishings and household goods, as did his sister, Alice.

The parish was in debt and some people wanted to save money for a new church on the corner, but Father wanted to improve the existing building. He was filled with determination and ambition and was able to personally solicit much of the money to be used for renovation from parishioners and non-parishioners alike.

Architect Mortimer Murphy was employed to draw plans for remodelling the church and rectory. A \$1200 bid by DeSprit Mosaic and Marble Co., Inc. was accepted for terrazzo flooring in the church aisles and front vestibule. New pews were installed and the carpenter-built altars were replaced with plaster altars of Gothic style and new statues. A wrought-iron pulpit and Communion rail were installed and higher wainscoting on the walls covered the old light oak. It is believed that the loud-speaking system was installed at that time, also.

During this time the bell tower was repaired and given added support, the inside vestibule was remodeled and the stairway to the choir loft opened. Bob Logel, grandson of the original builder, tells us that he and classmates from the eighth grade helped Msgr. Sullivan remove the front porch from the rectory.

New, Gothic-styled stained glass windows were installed, which were of a type used in Belgium and France, designed to let in maximum light. The old ones had been opaque Tiffany leaded-glass. They had contained the names of the donors, and descendants now complained as the old windows were discarded.

World War II was in progress and the economic situation was good for many families. Parishioners made generous donations for the improvements, paying for windows, statues and the like. Their names were found in a tin box behind the tabernacle of the little white church when it was razed in 1976. The Catholic Daughters paid for the Papal and American flags for the sanctuary. A parishioner, Norman Kobel, painted the convent and the school, but the church was done by an outside contractor. There were few money-raising activities, as Father Sullivan had asked for a \$10.00 contribution from each wage-earner in lieu of holding picnics, dinners, festivals and the like. Father Sullivan himself contributed over \$2000 over a period of five years, ending in 1947, though his salary was only \$1500 a year.

The cost of improvements during the War was about \$50,000 and the total cost, which included work on the four buildings — church, school, rectory and convent —



Msgr. James Sullivan and First Communion Class, 1950, the largest class to receive as a group. Since that time the class has been divided into two and sometimes three groups on succeeding Sundays in May. (Photo by Both and Teall from the Samuels)

amounted to \$92,000, according to the 1951 Financial Report. However, because of the post-War move to the suburbs and the comparative affluence during and after the War, contributions kept pace with expenses and the parish was solvent by 1951.

Father Sullivan was raised to the level of Monsignor during his stay of thirteen years. He also was appointed the first Dean of Southern Erie County. He had helped keep countless Catholics close to the Sacraments during his pastorate, as he initiated Communion before daily Mass for those who could not stay for the entire Mass. He was also available for confessions every morning, aiding especially those who worked all hours on weekends during the War. He left in failing health in January, 1954, to become pastor of St. Mary's, Medina.

Assistant pastors through those years had been the Reverends Christopher J. Roche, Aloysius G. Kuntz, Richard Strassberger and Charles R. Amico. Trustees had been George Meyers and Earl Wittmeyer. The latter was then replaced by Robert C. Woodward, who still holds that position at this writing (1978).



Altar boys, 1943, John C. Youngers and Robert W. Woodward.
(Photo from the Robert C. Woodward's)



First Communion Class, May 20, 1945. Front row, left to right: Patrick Morgan, John Bartus, Joseph Spahn, David Schwartz, Martin O'Brien, Larry Cummings. Row 2: Joyce Dooley, June Teufel, Mary Magin, Mary Calpo, Mary Patterson, Mary Ann Sly. Row 3: Carolyn Woodward, Patricia Ernst, Mary Nichter, Janet Schnitzer, Enola Fisher, Sr. M. DePazzi, teacher. (Photo from the Woodward's)



First Grade, 1949-50: Top row: Sr. Francis Xavier, Sharon Wagner, Sandra Pensis, Carol Transki, Kathleen Kennedy, Carol Norman, Barbara Chandler, Judith Doe, Carol Eddy, Joyce Holmes. Row 2: Lyle (?), Dianne Merlau, Kathleen Spahn, Sarah Krum, Mary McDonald, Veronica Carini, Rosemary Stack, Kathleen Meckin, Ann McKenzie, William Cran. Front Row: Gerard Simon, Neil Meyer, David Findlay, Michael Barber, Kathleen Stolle, Patricia Montague, Donna Barkowitz, John Geary, Stephen Ellison, David Hubbard. (Photo from the Samuels)

Sister Augustine's second grade, 1950-51 (from right, front to back), aisle 1: Robert Aubrecht, Charlene Basil, Martha Long. Aisle 2: Kathleen Nerf, Sandra Arlotta, Marsha Benzel, Sharon Nenno, John Rademacher. Aisle 3: Kathleen Meaken, Mary O'Brien, Jean Guion, Sharon Barkowitz, Dennis McCarthy, Jerome Schmidt. Aisle 4: William O'Brien, Steven Buchanan, Dennis Transky, Paulette Drushler, Ronald Patrid. Standing (left to right): Mary Barber, Billy Ronan, Harlane Foss, Jack Kingston, Suzanne Williams, David Ernst, Marilyn Persons, John Hoeh, George Kibler, Louis LeVeque, James Nowak, Mary Finley. (Photo from Mrs. A. C. Kibler)





Class of 1948. Seated: Jane Falk, Robert Woodward, Joann Wittmeyer, George Fattey, Jean Brosnan, William Dietsche, Rita George. Standing: Sr. Rita, Sr. Catherine, Mary Ann Wittmeyer, Marilyn Reed, Rev. Christopher Roche, Dianne Foss, Sr. Francis Xavier, Sr. Julia Agnes. (Photo from the Woodward's)

Seventh grade, St. Clara's Academy, 1950-51. Sr. Margaret Joseph, teacher. (Photo from the Woodward's)





Immaculate Conception Class of 1952. Front row: Jim Leffler, Barb Geary, Trudy Casazza, Mary Ann Kibler, Carolyn Woodward, Mary Ann Kramer, Ann Stiles, Pat Dugan, Dennis Dineen. Row 2: Jean Buchanan, Joe Gillespie, Joe Spahn, Joyce Dooley, Larry Casazza, John Bartus, June Tuefel. Top row: Marty O'Brien, Joe Lucage, Msgr. J. T. Sullivan, Jim Miller, Jack Wheeler. (Photo from the Woodwards)

Class of 1953: Row 1: Patricia Kramer, Joanne Nuwer, Carolyn Jacobs, Cynthia Carini, Joyce dePerno, Marilyn Hennessey. Row 2: Msgr. James Sullivan, Joanne Simons, Carol Kingston, Yvonne Nenno, Catherine Prevot, Mary Eddy, Rev. Richard Strassberger. Row 3: Donald Grew, Bruce Holmes, David Transki, John Smith, Daniel Ernst. Row 4: Patrick O'Brien, Joseph Patti, Gerard Wittmeyer, Jack Winkler. Missing: Paul Clark. (Photo from Michael Carini)





Catholic Daughters 25th Anniversary Banquet, officers, representatives and charter members, 1948: Seated: May Jerge; May Riley, District Deputy — Buffalo Court; Mary Harrington, District Deputy, Aurora Court No. 831; Rev. Christopher Roche, assistant pastor; Mrs. Ryan; Rev. Luke Sharkey, guest speaker; Msgr. James Sullivan, pastor; Dena (Christina) Roes, Grand Regent; Eva Rieman; Mary Little. Standing: Louise Glazer, Winifred Snitzer, Josephine Youngers, Eva Ragan, Mollie Denz, Evelyn Ernst, Agnes Brass, Mary Denz, Mary Juenker, Margaret Persons, Susan Almeter, Mary Marshall, Marion Deheck, Grace Buchanan, Beatrice Logel, plus over 100 other members and guests, also at the Banquet. (Photo from the Woodwards)



Dinner with Msgr. Sullivan at Holy Family Church, about 1954. Clockwise from front left: Joseph Madigan, Robert C. Woodward, Msgr. Sullivan, Lawrence Casazza, John Dooley, unidentified. (Photo from parish files)

1954-1959

IF DIFFERENT ONES BUILD ON THIS FOUNDATION

The development of television had been interrupted by the Depression and the War, but by 1955 national and world affairs were brought into living rooms daily. The civil rights marches and the bus boycott in Alabama might have been obscure articles in the paper, noticed by a few; but television educated millions of people in realities they might never have known and presented issues they might never have faced.

The goal of the country in the late 40's and early 50's was recovery from the War and the pursuit of the "American Dream." Servicemen and women came home and settled down to family life, many of them buying cars and houses with their savings and GI loans. Many who would not have been able to afford it before were now able to attend college with assistance from the government given to veterans.

By the time Father Leo J. Glynn became pastor in February, 1954, the post-War move to the suburbs had caused a considerable increase in population in the area. It was apparent that the parish had outgrown the cement-block school which had been so proudly opened half a century before. Classrooms had been chiseled out of the basement dining rooms and the top floor auditorium had been converted into classrooms.

Father Glynn was a quiet, gentle man, who visited the parishioners' homes and was well liked for his calm, friendly manner. His assistant, Father Richard T. Nugent, began talking "new school" to various parish organizations and influential parishioners. As a result, Sunday collections increased during 1955, creating a surplus of \$30,000 that year and \$31,000 the next.

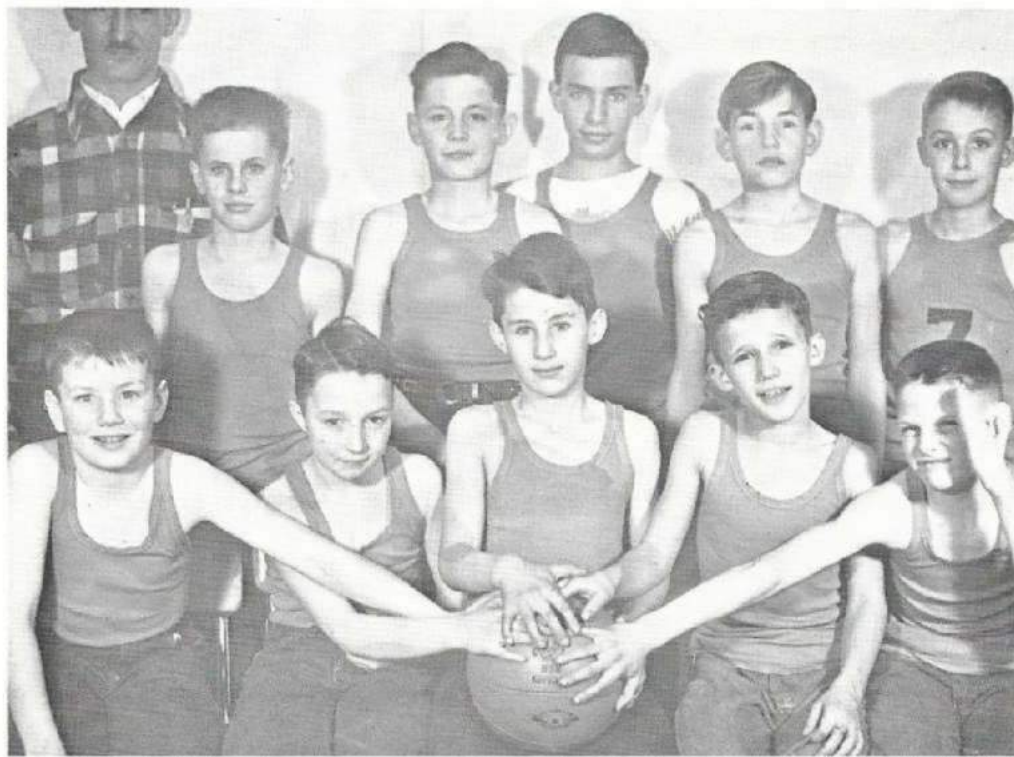


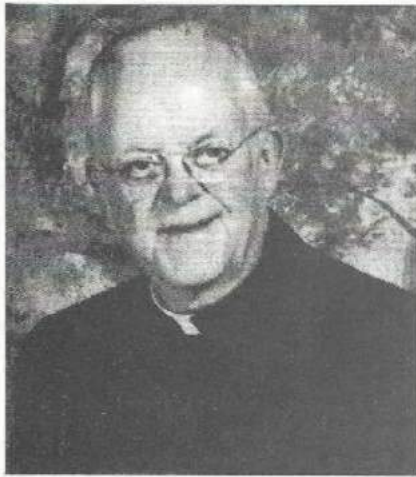
Rev. Leo J. Glynn. Under his pastorate a new school was planned.

Added to the \$12,000 surplus on hand, this made a sizeable building fund. Special summer collections those two years added over \$6000 each and contributions from the Catholic Daughters, Immaculate Conception Guild, Catholic Youth Organization and the Parish Dance Committee greatly increased the fund during that time.

The first weekly church bulletin was begun about 1954, sponsored by the Holy Name Society. John Geary typed parish news on the outside of an 8½ x 11" sheet, which was then folded in half. Inside, for the first 4 or 5 weeks, was information about the Holy Name Society and its history. Later there were explanations

Cub Scouts, organized by men of the parish in the early Fifties, formed a basketball team. Pictured are (seated): Tom McDonnell, Tom Moore, Bob Alfieri, Tim Carini, Art ("Deke") Buchanan. Standing: Dick Cottrell, James Findlay, Russell Patti, Norm Simons and Dick Mullens. Cub Master is Michael Carini, from whom we received this picture. Mrs. Buchanan was original den mother.





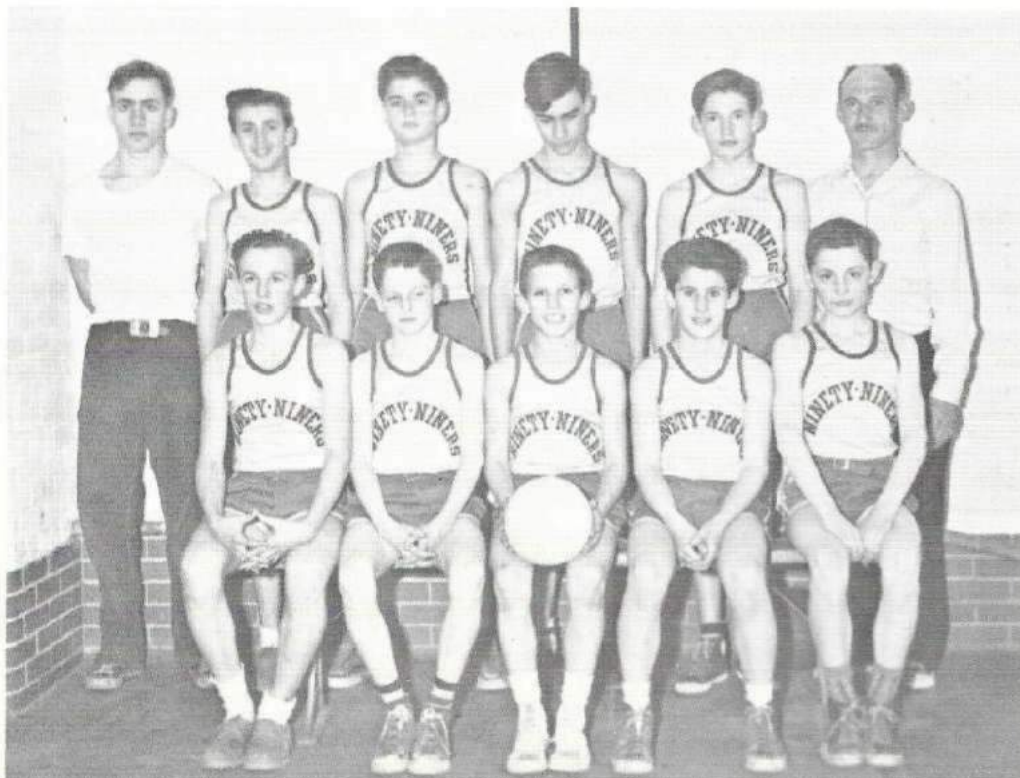
Rev. Samuel J. McCoy, popular pastor in the Fifties. (Photo from Estelle Minderler)

of feasts and Catholic doctrine on the inside. A parish couple, Tony and Marge Mandry, did the printing, free. They have moved to Texas where their son, Steve, is now a priest.

In 1956 the local Catholic Daughters unit changed its name from Court Aurora to Court Immaculate Mother. This group has contributed immensely to the parish through the years, though not actually a parish society but a branch of the Knights of Columbus.

The nine o'clock Children's Mass was eliminated about this time. Many parents, especially those living out of town, had been making two trips, one to bring the children to their special Mass and another for themselves.

The first school basketball team used the name Ninety-Niners, since they originally belonged to Pack 99 of the Cub Scouts. Seated are: Paul Spahn, Arthur Buchanan, Timothy Carini, Robert Alfieri and James Findlay. Standing: coach (unidentified), Joseph Patti, Charles Spahn, Russell Patti, Norman Simons and Michael Carini. (Photo from the Carinis)



Now they attended the same Mass. The Mass schedule had been 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 a.m. and 12 noon Sundays, and 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 on holydays. The 6 a.m. Mass on Sundays was eliminated about this time and an 11 a.m. Mass added.

In March, 1957, Father Glynn was transferred to St. Theresa's in Niagara Falls and Rev. Samuel J. McCoy became pastor, with Father Nugent remaining as assistant. George J. Meyer and Robert C. Woodward were trustees.

Twenty-six ushers were required to serve the six Masses held in the church each Sunday. The first observation of the new pastor was that a larger church was needed, as well as a larger school. The need for a school seemed greater at the time.

The corner of Oakwood and Park Place appeared to be the logical place for the new building. This meant buying more property along Park Place, so the Beebe-Meyer house and the lot next to it was purchased for \$20,000, as well as the Kent house and property.

The Cook house, still used for a convent, had to be moved out of the way and was placed at the back of the Kent lot, where it continues to serve as a convent for the Sisters of St. Joseph. The house was renovated, fences were erected and the parking lot paved.

The first estimate received for an adequate, modern school building was in excess of \$400,000, a far cry from the cost of earlier buildings. An outside organization was called in to institute a fund-raising campaign. During 1957 it netted \$200,000 in thirty-month pledges, only a few of which failed to materialize. The Immaculate Conception Guild donated \$1,100 as did the Parish Dance Committee, and the Catholic Daughters gave \$200. A special summer collection netted \$53,000 and regular Sunday collections, an equal amount. A dual envelope system was then used.

The ground breaking for the school was held Sunday, Nov. 2, 1958, with the Very Rev. Alfred A. Hagemeyer, V.F., Dean of Southern Erie County, officiating.

The Knights of the Altar, adult servers, with the travelling statue of Mary, May 1958. Left side of picture, row 1: Rev. Arthur Connors, O.M.I., who travelled with the statue, Chuck Northway, Frank Cahill, Harold Willis. Row 2: left: Edward Juengers, John Dooley Sr., George Samuels. Top row: left: John Dooley Jr., Don Kingston, Lee Pfohl. Right side, front: Jay F. Marshall Jr.,

Frank Painter, Jim Kingston, Father McCoy, Fr. Nugent, who trained the men. Row 2: Jay Marshall Sr., behind him his father, Fred Marshall, Hank Spahn. Top row: right: Mark Muther, James Tanner, John Geary and Henry Ainsworth. (Photo from parish files)

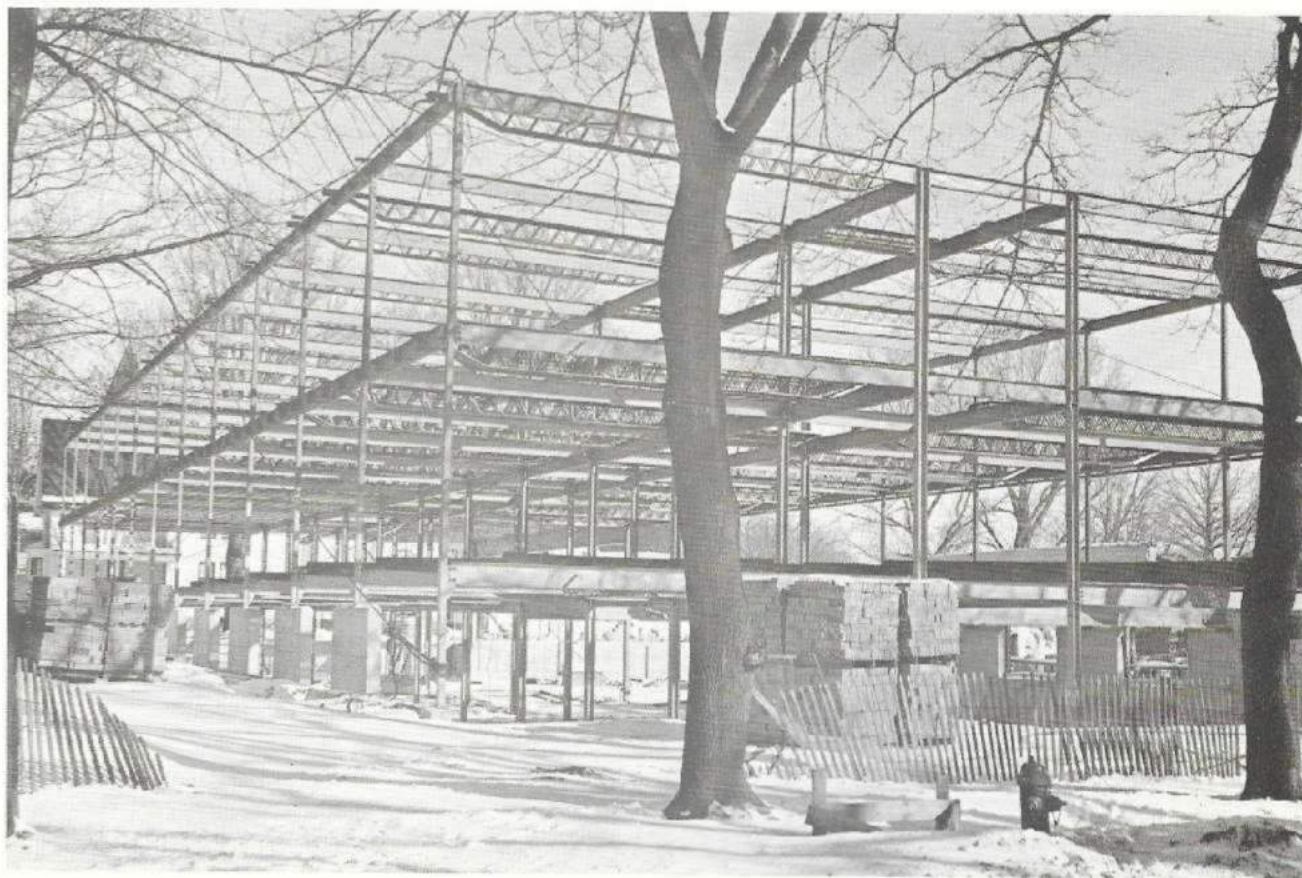


Installation of the boys' group of Knights of the Altar, April 1958. First row, left: Paul Transki, George Heffernen, Steven Dodson, Marshall Eames, Gerald Cully, Donald Aubrecht, Edward McDonald, Frank Painter, David Jerome, Donald Ketler, Peter Rosowski. Row 2: Michael Garvey, Jeffrey Kampion, John Rogers, Gregory Northway, Carlton Phillips, Raymond Moran, Kevin Grew, Donald Bach, Samuel Arcara, James Conroy, James Edwards. Row 3: Henry Spahn, vice supreme grand knight; Brian

Shaw, Charles Sheehan, Wallace Raupp, Mark Becker, Salvatore DiFilippo, supreme grand knight. Row 4: Albert Moran, James Schwartz, Francis Patti, John Cahill, Joseph Ernst, William Person. Row 5: Rev. Richard T. Nugent, assistant pastor; Richard Penfold, Thomas Ernst, Gary Almond, Joseph Schmid, John Kelver, James Juenker, secretary-treasurer; Rev. Samuel J. McCoy, pastor. (Photo from parish files)

Groundbreaking ceremonies for the new school, Sunday, November 2, 1958. From left: altar boys Samuel DiFilippo and Francis Patti; Father Nugent, Very Rev. Alfred A. Hagmaier, VF, dean of Southern Erie County, officiating; unidentified, George

Meyer, Sister Alicia, John Conroy, Gerald A. Braun, Sr. St. Mark, Kevin Kennedy and Father McCoy. Note convent in left background before it was moved to its present site. Right background shows rear of church and St. Clara's Academy behind it.



Framework of new school, Winter '58-'59. (Photo from parish files)

1959-1962

WITH GOLD AND SILVER,

BINGO games were started weekly in 1959 and brought in \$7,700 that year. A drawing for a Cadillac netted almost \$3,000 and a parish dance, \$874. Father McCoy was very supportive of these activities, often staying to help out.

There were 1,060 families in the parish at this time, 448 children in school and 339 in public school. There were several lay teachers on the staff and teacher salaries climbed to almost \$14,000. \$1,200 was paid extra clergy, needed to handle all the Masses.

During 1957 and 1958 prices had been rising on all kinds of equipment at an alarming rate. The old school desks were literally on their last legs and Father McCoy arranged for new ones to be installed in the old building, rather than wait until the new school was finished and risk prohibitive prices.

The cornerstone of the new school was laid May 31st, 1959, Most Rev. Leo R. Smith, D.D., officiating. After the school opened September 9, 1959, Sister St. Mark, the Superior, saved the cost of laborers by having the older boys move the benches (desks) into the light, modern classrooms in the new buildings. The auditorium was completed two months later.

The new school had sixteen classrooms, a large cafeteria with fully-equipped kitchen, a library, store-rooms, offices for the nurse and the principal and a combination auditorium gymnasium with stage. This room was equipped with folding chairs with rear kneelers, which were stored under the stage and used to accommodate people for Sunday Masses. An organ and sound equipment were purchased for this purpose, and the stage was set up to serve as an altar area. The 8 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. Masses were celebrated in the church, but an additional 9:30 Mass, as well as the 11 and 12:15 Masses were held in the auditorium.

When completed the total investment for building and equipment was \$642,000. Everyone was delighted with the school, but not with the resultant debt which took ten years to pay off.

The next few years everyone made an extra effort to liquidate the parish debt. The Catholic Daughters pledged \$3,000 for library furnishings and a statue of St. Clare. In 1961 the parish received \$1,000 in a bequest from Mrs. Angeline Barber. Rents from use of the property amounted to \$2,752 and individual donations amounted to \$1,080. Anyone who contributed \$100 or more was to have his name inscribed on a metal plaque in the school vestibule. Other sizeable contributions came from the Home School Association, the Holy Name Society, the Parish Dance Committee and a school Dance Recital.



St. Clara's Academy, called by the parish name in its later years, was razed in July 1960, having served the parish for 55 years. Father McCoy said at the time, "The physical building is gone but the past will spring eternal in the memories of her former students, and in their grateful tribute to those pioneer parishioners whose sacrifice made it possible." (Photo from parish files)



Bishop Burke officiates at the laying of the cornerstone for the new school, as Father McCoy and Mayor Cain look on. (Photo from parish files)



Immaculate Conception School, corner Oakwood Avenue and Park Place, cost \$500,000 for construction and \$50,000 for

equipment. It took until 1969 for the parish to pay off the debt. (Photo from parish files)



Cornerstone laying, May 1959. Left to right: Sr. St. Mark, principal; John Conroy, contractor; Dr. Lyle S. Tillou, Aurora Town Supervisor; J. Forrest Cain, Mayor of East Aurora; Rev. George Koch, pastor of St. Cecilia's, Sheldon; Kevin Kennedy, Diocesan attorney; George Meyer, parish trustee; Most Rev.

Joseph A. Burke, Bishop of Buffalo; John Beecher, benefactor; unidentified; Rev. Alfred A. Hagemajer, Dean of Southern Erie County; Rev. Richard T. Nugent, assistant pastor; Walter Baumgartner, superintendent of schools, East Aurora; Rev. Samuel J. McCoy, pastor; Elwin Pauly, architect. (Photo from parish files)

The first Easter Candy Sale was held in 1959 to purchase books for the library. Parish women did the marking, sorting and packaging, and men took care of deliveries. Orders were taken by school children and some parishioners solicited orders from their fellow workers in plants and offices. Several cooperating beauty shops and retail stores displayed samples of the candy and took orders. Mrs. George Harrington's basement was used to pack 924 orders with a profit of \$1,603.88.

Throughout the summer and fall of 1960 Mrs. Henry Dwyer Norton set up the school library with 1,500 books and several sets of encyclopedias. She and Sister St. Mark, both of whom being trained librarians, worked closely together choosing books that were added as funds were available, primarily from the Catholic Daughters and Easter candy sales. Numerous books were donated and Mrs. Jerome (Arlene) Schmid did the clerical work, typing catalogue cards, with the help of other ladies of the parish.

Catholic Daughters of America, East Aurora Chapter Sewing Circle, Fall 1961. Seated, left to right, are Mrs. Fred Youngers, Mrs. Jay Marshall, Mrs. Ted Becker. Standing, same order, Mrs. Edward Marx, Mrs. Walter Zale, Mrs. Harry Kelsey, Mrs. Edward Ernst and Miss Mary Juenker. (Clipping from The Orbit, Nov. 29, 1961)



In October, 1961, Father McCoy attempted to liquidate the debt of \$378,000, as the interest was well over \$15,000 a year. With Father Nugent's aid a fund-raising campaign was held on the parish level. There were now 1,150 families, as shown by a census taken about this time. Two hundred seventy-five men worked with a committee of seven and called on every one of the families in the parish. The results were discouraging.

Meantime school expenses almost doubled in two years. There were now 900 children in the parish, 486 of them in the parochial school. Ten lay teachers were needed to assist the six nuns assigned to the parish. Sister Macrina was the newly appointed principal.

In June, 1962, Father McCoy was assigned to St. Bartholomew's in Buffalo and Father Nugent left about the same time. Both Father McCoy and Sister Macrina passed away in Spring 1978 as this history was being compiled. Father Nugent went on to become Monsignor under Bishop McNulty while serving as Diocesan Director of Vocations.

Sister St. Mark, S.S.J., confers with Mrs. Henry Dwyer Norton, parishioner who set up the library over the Summer and Fall of 1960. Both are trained librarians. (Photo from parish files)



Meeting of the Western New York Catholic Librarians' Conference, May 7, 1960, in the new auditorium/gymnasium with a

seating capacity of 600. Later that month the first Sunday Masses were held here to alleviate overcrowding in the church.

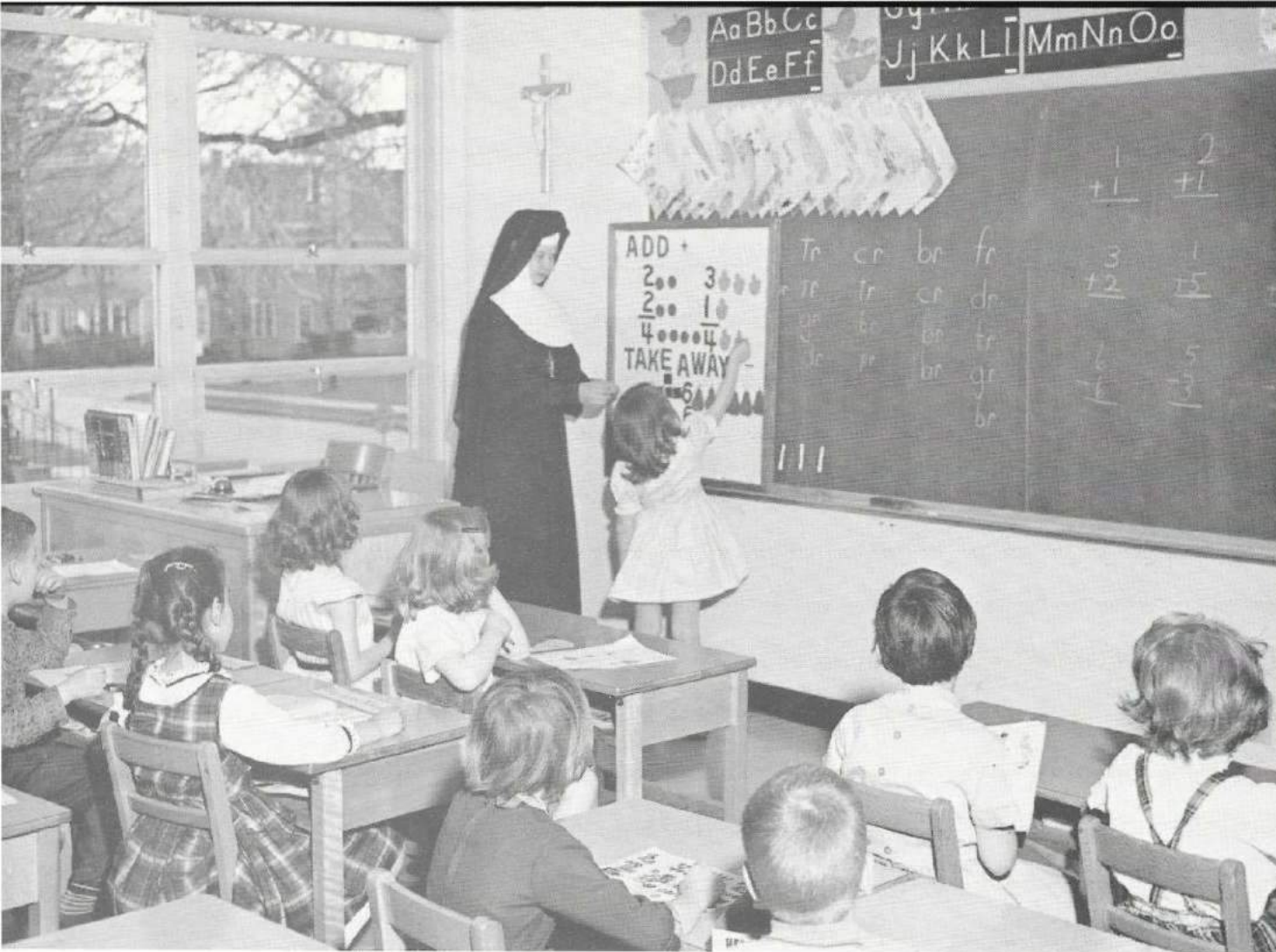
Barbara and Joan Norton and Ann and John Schmid gather at the desk in the new library with Sr. St. Mark and Mrs. Jerome

Schmid. Mrs. Schmid typed all the cards for the catalogue of about 1500 volumes. (Photo from parish files)



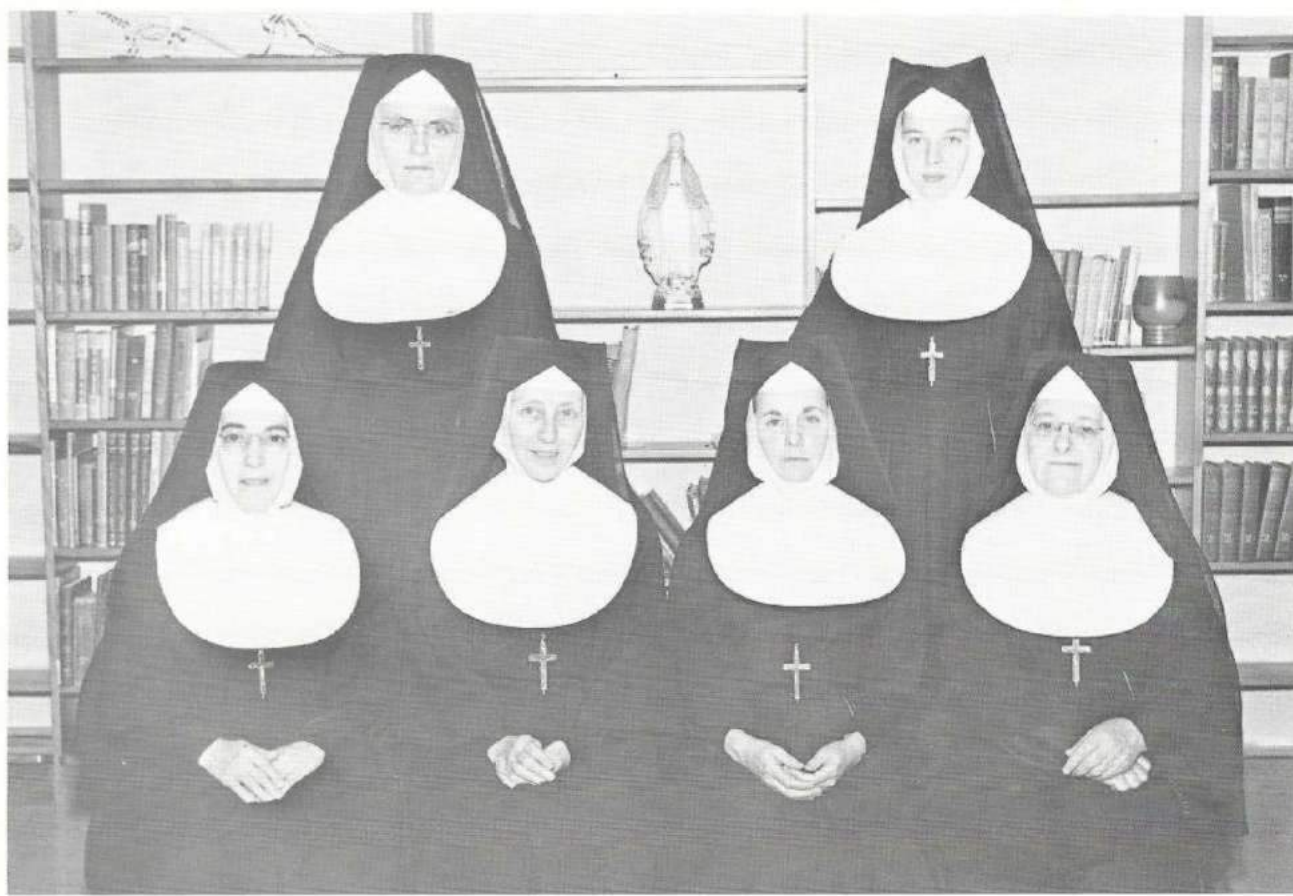
Mrs. Norton looks on as children work in the new library. The Home School Association (formerly Immaculate Conception Guild) and the Aurora unit of the Catholic Daughters of America

planned many activities to raise money for books to fill the shelves creating one of the best elementary school libraries in the Diocese. (Photo from parish files)



Sister William Anne's class, about 1960. (Photo from parish files)

School faculty, 1962. Seated: Sisters Helen Therese, Aubert, Macrina (principal) and Joseph Marie. Standing: Sisters Columba and William Anne. (Photo from parish files)



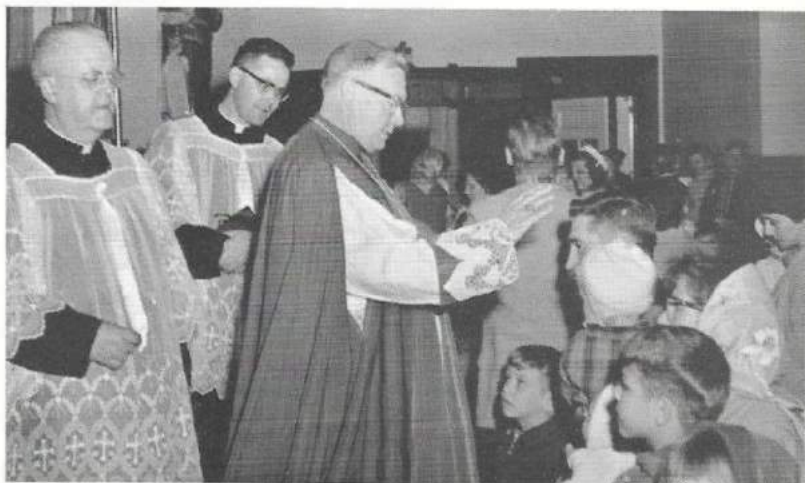


May crowning was an annual affair including a procession of First Communicants, one of whom was chosen to place the wreath of flowers on the statue of Mary. The date and the name of the girl are unknown. Do YOU know?

Nine sets of twins attended Immaculate Conception in 1962. Row 1: the Riscusso, Phelan and Stackowski twins. Row 2: the Guion, Teufel and Northways. Row 3: the Boyer, Lucca and Maurer twins.



Sister Annunciata and First Communion practice, 1960.



Most Rev. Leo R. Smith, D.D., auxiliary Bishop of Buffalo, blesses children in the church. Bishop Smith also blessed and dedicated the new school June 12, 1960.

(Photos from parish files)

Christmas crib set up in the plaza by CYC members directed by Mr. Michael Carini. It won first prize in Diocesan competition in 1960. Cribbs were set up several years in succession in front of church, at the movie theater and in the plaza. There were over 80 members in the local CYC in 1960. (Photo from Michael Carini who appears in the picture)



Catholic Youth Council (CYC, later CYO) officers, Fall 1959. Left to right: Steven Buchanan, president; Barbara Brown, secretary; Paul Grew, treasurer. Standing: John Geary, vice-president. (Photo from Michael Carini)



Proclamation of CYC Week being signed by Mayor Forrest Cain in his home, October 1961. Left to right, seated: Father McCoy, Mayor Cain and Father Nugent. Standing: Betty McTarnagajin

(later Sr. Marie, OSF), Mary Findlay, Dave Conley, Vicki Carini, Gail Muldoon, Sharon Ernst, Paul Becker, Mary Dugan, Cele Kingston and Kathy Spahn. (Photo from parish files)

