

ROCHESTER HISTORY

Edited by Joseph W. Barnes, *City Historian*

Vol. XLIV

October, 1982

No. 4

St. Mary's Church

By Gerard Muhl and Rev. Charles Bennett

A traveler to Rochester in 1834 would have seen a bustling city but one with the look and feel of a country town. Finally incorporated a city that year, after a long series of applications to the state legislature, the new municipality boasted a population of about sixteen thousand persons.

Upon leaving the Erie Canal packet boat, the traveler would have to pick his way through horses and wagons that visiting farmers had left at central intersections. Just north of the famed canal aqueduct across the Genesee River he would see and hear people hawking produce from stalls on the Main Street Bridge, while nearby the world-famous Rochester mills ground mountains of local wheat into flour. A block to the west, farmers auctioned wagons and livestock from the steps of the courthouse. Sidewalks were clogged with one-time farmers turned city dwellers, with displays of shoes and clothing, nails, butter churns, farm tools, hats, and other simple manufactured goods. Upstairs or in the back rooms of some of the stores, Rochester's urban workingmen were busy making most of the products sold below.

Among these workmen was an ever growing number of transplanted Irishmen; transplanted in geography only, as they feverishly retained old world customs, brogues, and a strict adherence to their Roman Catholic faith. At this time, all of western New York was part of the

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Diocese of New York City. The only Catholic church in Rochester was St. Patrick's on Frank Street (now the site of the Kodak main offices on North Plymouth Avenue) on the west side of the river. Many of the new members of St. Patrick's rapidly growing congregation lived east of the Genesee which made for a rather long and tedious walk—especially on one of the city's unfavorable winter days. Cramped quarters in the old St. Patrick's were also far from conducive to worship as more and more Catholics arrived in Rochester every day.

Furthermore, things were far from serene in the predominantly Irish-American parish. In 1832, Bishop DuBois of New York appointed the Rev. John McGerry to succeed the Rev. Michael McNamara, who had died in August of that year, as pastor of St. Patrick's. In the throes of a battle over who had final ecclesiastical authority of appointment, the trustees of St. Patrick's refused the new pastor the right to officiate. Finally, after much bitterness and the development of factions within the parish, the Bishop in 1833 appointed the Rev. Bernard O'Reilly to succeed Father McGerry.

On January 23, 1833, Patrick Kearney, John Sheridan, Patrick O'Maley, and William O'Neil, all of the Village of Rochester, together with Nicholas Reid of Greece (famed for giving his name to Mt. Reid or "Paddy Hill"), and William Tone of the Town of Chili, purchased a church edifice and the site on which it stood from one Richard VanCleck and Mary, his wife, for the sum of \$3,000.¹ The price was substantial when it is considered that a skilled craftsman of the time might earn \$2.50 for a sixty-hour week of toil. But financial optimism was running high in the new boom town and few would have prophesied the financial depression soon to hit the city.

The building these men purchased had been erected by a Methodist congregation in 1825. It was built of brick and surmounted by an octagonal cupola. Originally, the structure measured 42 feet by 55 feet. In 1827, an addition extended the dimensions five feet. The Methodists ceased using the church in 1831, and it remained vacant until deeded to the Catholics. This original building housing the congregation of St. Mary's stood on a raised plot of land on what was then known as River Street between Ely Street and Main Street. In 1834, River Street became South St. Paul and is now South Avenue. The church was at the present site of the new Rochester Convention Center.

Much of the work of organizing the new parish was assigned to the Rev. Patrick Foley, Father O'Reilly's assistant. The work of repainting,

plastering, and furnishing the new church building and making it suitable for celebrating Mass took many months, partly because much of the labor was supplied on a voluntary basis by workmen who may have already worked a twelve-hour day. The work also was not without interruptions. Eight days before Christmas in 1833, fire destroyed the priests' residence at St. Patrick's. The rectory was uninsured.

The Christmas Eve edition of the *Daily Advertiser* carried a letter praising Father O'Reilly "for his work and sacrifice." It spoke of the poverty of the parish, and the debt of gratitude owed to Father O'Reilly by his congregation.² The pioneers of St. Mary's, even in the midst of preparing their new place of worship, did not forget their mother church and took time out to rebuild the rectory of St. Patrick's.

Father O'Reilly became pastor of St. Mary's in 1834. Father McGerry succeeded him at St. Patrick's; this time he was not refused permission to officiate. The *Daily Democrat* announced the opening of the new church with a brief notice on Tuesday, July 8, 1837:

The brick church on St. Paul Street recently purchased by the Catholics of this city will be opened for divine service on Sunday, the 13th, when the sermon will be preached by the Rev. Mr. O'Reilly, after which a collection will be taken up for the benefit of said church. Service at half past 10 o'clock A.M.³

The opening of St. Mary's Church of the Assumption commenced on Sunday, July 13, 1834, with a procession of parishioners of both St. Patrick's and St. Mary's marching from the church on North Plymouth through the early streets of Rochester to South Avenue. Every parish organization and club lined up behind its own distinctive, heavily embroidered banner. The children led the march carrying flowers gathered from their yards. Sometime later during the year, Bishop DuBois made the long canal trip to Rochester to dedicate the new church. Steam rail service would not begin in Rochester until April of 1837.

The first St. Mary's Church remained open for only seven months as the optimism and hard work of 1833 and 1834 faded in the financial realities of 1835. Taxed by the burden of rebuilding the burned-out priests' residence and existing under an economy rapidly slipping into the Depression of 1837, the men who had purchased St. Mary's were forced to sell the property back to the Methodists on February 22, 1835. They were paid \$3,600. The original St. Mary's again became a place of Protestant worship when the East Society of the Methodist Church (incorporated September 26, 1836) used it as a meeting place.

Bernard O'Reilly once again became pastor of St. Patrick's when St. Mary's was sold—Father McGerry left to take up duties elsewhere. The

first election for trustees of the Cathedral took place soon after he resumed his duties at St. Patrick's. Among those elected were William Tone, Patrick Kearney, and Patrick O'Maley, all of whom had been involved in the attempt to establish the new church.

St. Patrick's remained the only Catholic church in the city for one more year until 1836, when St. Joseph's was founded on Ely Street by a group of German Catholics.

Although Bernard O'Reilly was a saintly man and an untiring worker, he could not prevent the internal strife that resurfaced between the people of St. Patrick's and the ex-parishioners of St. Mary's. It is probable that the Genesee River in those days, when bridges were much fewer than now, caused many Irish Catholics living on the east side an annoying inconvenience. It might be noted that German Catholics on the west side established St. Peter and Paul's in 1843 to make it easier for them to worship.

Father O'Reilly's personal life was marred by an incident that took place in December, 1839. He was bludgeoned on the forehead while sleeping, by an intruder who had entered under cover of darkness. Father O'Reilly was incapacitated for some time, but he recovered enough by St. Patrick's Day to give a speech. One week later, his accused assailant, a suspended cleric, was acquitted of the assault charges.

In November of 1841, four Catholic laymen, George A. Wilkin (who had been elected a trustee of the Cathedral in 1834 and who resigned from the board in 1836 in a dispute over "discharge of duties"), John Hayes, Michael Kinsella, and John Rigney, were able to repurchase the site of the original St. Mary's for the sum of \$4,400 including a mortgage for \$3,200. Bishop John Hughes, the successor to Bishop DuBois, had earlier in the year written of the need for an additional church in Rochester and recognized the reorganization of St. Mary's. He appointed the generous and kindly Lawrence Carroll to the pastorate.

As an interesting aside, it will be noted that Bernard O'Reilly continued as pastor of St. Patrick's. In 1847, he made an excursion to Mexico to settle the estate of his brother who had recently died and left O'Reilly a fortune of \$100,000. While in that country, he ministered to U.S. troops stationed there during the Mexican War. Rochester became part of the new Diocese of Buffalo in 1847, and Father O'Reilly became Vicar General of the diocese in 1849. He stayed in residence with John Timon, Bishop of Buffalo, for only a year. In 1850, he was consecrated Bishop of Hartford, Connecticut. In June of 1856, Bishop O'Reilly was

in Europe. He sailed from Liverpool for the United States aboard the S.S. Pacific; the vessel was lost at sea with all on board.

Father Carroll saw the newly reorganized parish of St. Mary's prosper and grow. Infant baptisms went from ten in 1843 to 222 in 1848. Marriages in the same period went from five to eight-six! Thoughts turned to expansion of the physical plant. The September 2, 1847 issues of the *Rochester Daily Advertiser* noted, "The congregation of St. Mary's Church are about to erect a new more commodious edifice on the vacant corner of St. Paul and Andrew's Street."⁴ To help pay for this project and particularly to support its work with the poor of the city, a Mr. Rounds had introduced in the State Senate a bill for the relief of St. Mary's. No positive action being reported on that bill, the parishioners turned to other fund raising ventures to pay for a new church building.

In 1848, the citizens of Rochester celebrated Christmas as a religious holiday but were just beginning to explore its mercantile possibilities. Shopping was not yet a month-long ritual. To encourage shoppers, the *Rochester Daily Democrat* announced in 1848 that, "The good ladies of St. Mary's have made arrangements for holding a bazaar or Fair, for the sale of useful and fancy articles on Christmas eve night. The proceeds of the sale are to be applied toward the erection of a new church edifice."⁵ Lawrence Carroll was a tireless worker toward the goal of a new church. He put the parish on a firm financial basis and raised sufficient reserve to begin the new construction. However, before he could hire architects to begin the project, he was transferred in 1852 to become pastor of a church in East Cambridge, Massachusetts.

During Father Carroll's tenure, religious education in Rochester made some notable forward steps. To help instruct the adults in the parish, Carroll invited Bishop Timon to preach at a twelve day retreat at St. Mary's. Each day, the Bishop preached four sermons and gave two meditations and also heard confessions six or seven hours a day.

Although it was not directly attached to St. Mary's, the parish supported the effort between 1848 and 1851 to establish a College of the Sacred Heart at the corner of South Avenue and Court Street, just one block away. The school was designed as a boarding school for boys and had a peak enrollment of seventy. In 1851, the school was forced to close due to the inability to find enough qualified teachers in Rochester.

Father Michael Creedon now became pastor but would stay for little more than a year. During that time, however, he set in motion the series of events that established the present St. Mary's Church on South

Street (St. Mary's Place). He purchased two adjacent tracts of land 132 feet by 165 feet for \$2,200 in 1852. Today, St. Mary's Church stands on this land.

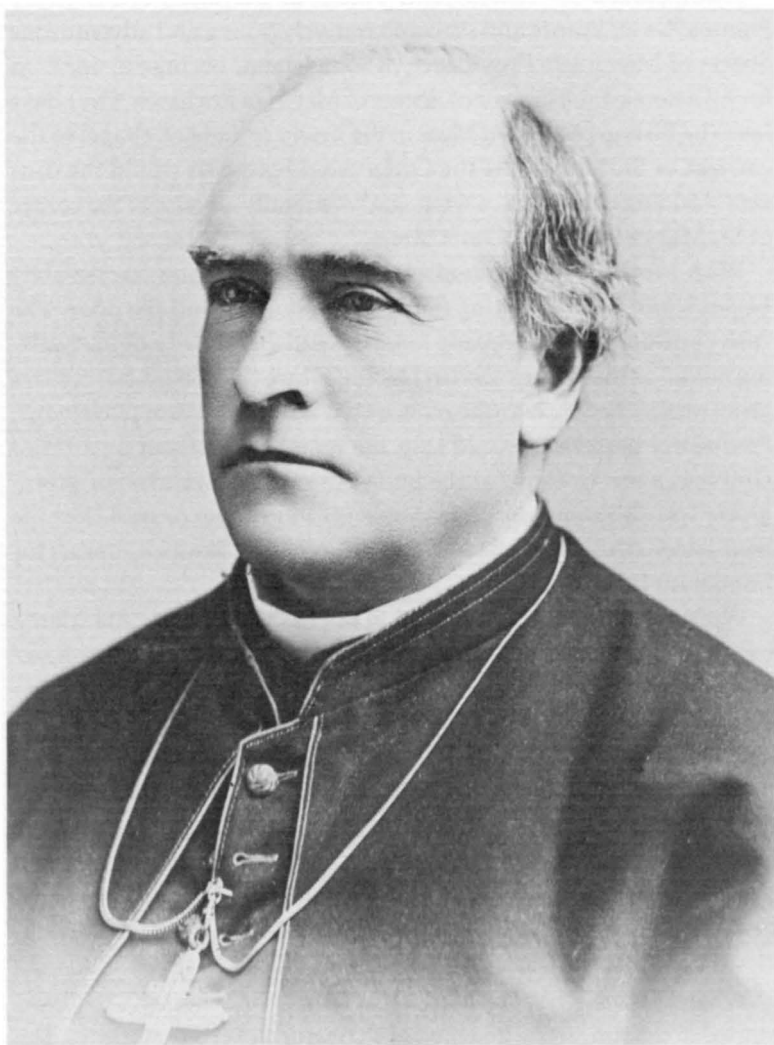
Thomas McEvoy would next become pastor and have the actual honor of starting construction of the present Romanesque church building. The *Daily Union* reported on September 19, 1853, "The corner stone of the new church about to be erected by St. Mary's Society on Washington Square was laid yesterday P.M. in the presence of an immense congregation of people. The ceremonies were performed by Bishop Timon. . . ."6 Five more years and an expenditure of forty thousand dollars were needed to complete the structure.

What did the interior of an early Catholic church in Rochester look like? First, walls, ceiling, and pillars were all frescoed with various biblical devices and scenes from lives of the saints. The windows were simple with angels adorning those most prominent. Galleries extended the full length of both sides of the church. They were intended for the children and those who were unable to rent seats in the body of the church.

The pulpit was highly wrought, and according to the *Union & Advertiser* of October 18, 1858, "is moveable, when required it will be run on a rail outside the chancel to the middle directly in front of the congregation."⁷ The entire building was illuminated by 133 gas burning lamps.

During the five years of construction the parishioners were able to raise \$25,000 of its costs through teas, fairs, and the sale of the old South St. Paul Street church. Still, the people of St. Mary's were faced with paying off a mortgage of over \$15,000 in 1858. The recession of 1858 scuttled the plan to complete the church bell tower. That project would wait another eighty years.

While the church building was under construction the life of the parish was far from inactive. By 1856 the Sisters of the Order of St. Bridget were working in St. Mary's teaching religious instructions in various homes and working with the poor. This group, though dedicated, lacked adequate canonical standing, and had not secured permission from their bishop in Ireland to migrate to the United States. For this reason their numbers remained small. They did enroll two women of St. Mary's, including Catherine McEvoy, the pastor's sister, who received the veil in 1856 from Bishop Timon. Within a year, the Brigidines left the parish for Buffalo, but Miss McEvoy stayed on to join the Sisters of Mercy, who came to the parish in June, 1857 at the invitation of Father McEvoy.



Bishop Bernard McQuaid, first bishop of Rochester Diocese, 1868.

Accompanied by Bishop John Timon of Buffalo, Mother Mary Frances Xavier Warde and six comparatively young and adventurous Sisters of Mercy left Providence, Rhode Island, on June 5, 1857, to found a new establishment of Sisters of Mercy in Rochester. Four days later the Bishop celebrated Mass in the newly completed chapel of the convent of St. Mary's. As the Order would grow so would the convent—adding new floors, a wing, and eventually a house at the corner of St. Mary's Place and Court Street.

With Mother Frances's assistance, the congregation immediately began a program of visiting the sick, the shut-in, and the poor. The Irish parishioners were already familiar with this activity of the "walking nuns," as they were called in Dublin, where they began twenty-five years earlier. Two by two, the nuns set out walking in silent prayer vigil. Frequently passersby would stop the nuns to give them a parcel of clothing, a toy, or food for the poor. A stop at the butcher or greengrocer was also common. Nuns would get soup bones or semi-overripe fruit which could be made into nourishing if not luxurious meals for immigrant families.

Within a month of their arrival in Rochester, the Sisters of Mercy began preparations for a "free school" for poor children in the basement of St. Mary's Church. No tuition was charged and parents avoided worry about the secularizing influences of the public schools. Furthermore, an Irish school was one link in the chain preserving Irish nationalism and customs from the Old World. More than once St. Mary's reported taking up collections for the "landlord ridden" citizens of Ireland. In an effort to strengthen the Catholic School movement in Rochester, Bishop Timon wrote a pastoral letter authorizing pastors to deny the Sacraments to those Catholics not sending their children to church schools.

When the free school opened, an academy, or "select school," was started in the convent. It accepted both boarders and day students. The courses included all branches of a thorough English education. French, music, drawing, useful and ornamental needlework, and wax flowers (a popular craft) were also taught. Tuition for the academy was \$200 a year and any extra money collected was earmarked to help pay the costs of the free school. Curiously, recurring annual costs in the parish budget were \$200 for coal, \$200 for upkeep of the horse, and \$200 for the salaries of all the nuns! When years were lean, the nuns' salaries

were cut altogether. In 1857, the total enrollment in the parish schools of St. Mary's was 200 students.

Once the school was launched, the religious women established a House of Mercy, to shelter distressed women of good character who were out of work in the Depression of 1857. The women were provided with sustenance and asked to help with domestic chores in return. They were never considered servants of the sisters. They were treated as individuals training for better jobs when times improved. The establishment was enlarged in later years and an employment office was added. The elite of Rochester came here to find a maid, housekeeper, or shop clerk.

The winter of 1858–59 was a hard one. Sister Mary Di Pazzi opened a soup kitchen at St. Mary's Convent to aid the poor. For two dollars, a person could purchase a meal ticket good for the whole year. The St. Vincent's Men's Society of the parish raised money to pay for the meals of over forty families, many of whom had no other parish affiliation. It is recorded that members of the community didn't believe there was a hungry man in Rochester in 1858 because of this charitable work.

In 1858 the fiery Daniel Moore became the new pastor of St. Mary's. A year earlier he wrote a letter to the Rochester *Democrat* responding to an earlier article implying that Catholics would not be willing to fight if a war broke out between slave states and free states. His letter stated that Catholics were opposed to slavery but advocated ending it by peaceful means.⁸ However, he also said that Catholics would be ready to defend national unity with their lives if necessary. Events following the firing on Fort Sumter soon extinguished most doubts about Catholic loyalty.

The summer of 1861 was one of great excitement at St. Mary's. In a spirit of patriotic fervor, Father Moore and several other gentlemen of the area went to Albany and there obtained full authority from the governor and Major-General Morgan to raise an Irish Brigade in western New York. By November, front page advertisements appeared in Rochester newspapers calling for:

Able bodied men between the ages of 18 and 45 Pay from \$13.00 to \$23.00 per month from date of enlistment. A \$100.00 bounty at the end of the war. The Brigade is to rendezvous at Camp Hillhouse, Rochester, where the best of food, clothing, etc. will be furnished.⁹

Initially, recruiting went well, and by November three companies of men had enlisted. Father Moore resigned his pastorate with the intention of becoming chaplain of the Irish troops. It was not to be.

In dire need of additional troops to defend Washington, D.C., the federal government decided to merge the forming Brigade with troops already training at Le Roy. Reluctantly, the three Irish companies, led by their chaplain, said good-bye to Rochester and headed by train to Le Roy.

From the beginning, no love was lost between the city Irish enlistees and the country Protestant troops already drilling. One account has it that within ten minutes of arrival, a general free-for-all broke out between the two groups which didn't end until each side learned to respect the fighting ability of the other. Soon, however, the recruits settled down to winning the war. Father Moore served only the first few months of the war. He was reassigned by his Bishop to be the first resident pastor of St. Joseph's Church in Weedsport, Cayuga County, in April, 1862.

In September of 1860, while Daniel Moore was still at St. Mary's, two additional rooms in the basement of the church were refurbished at a cost of nearly \$500. These were to be used for instructing the boys of the parish. The Religious Order of the Christian Brothers was assigned the task of working with the boys. The Brothers continued working in this role until a new school opened in the 1870s.

The Rev. Thomas O'Flaherty came from Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Elmira to succeed Father Moore on December 5, 1861. During his brief (a little more than four months) pastorate, St. Mary's intensified its efforts to aid the poor. Sacred concerts were given to raise funds. The St. Mary's Benevolent Society and the St. Francis Young Men's Mutual Aid Society were organized partly to provide against want from sickness, and to aid widows and orphans. The St. Vincent de Paul Society brought the Rt. Rev. Dr. Spalding, Bishop of Louisville, Kentucky, to Rochester to lecture on "How the Nations Became Christian" as part of its fund-raising efforts.

In April, 1862, Father O'Flaherty exchanged pastorates with James McManus of St. Francis de Sales in Geneva. By the time of his departure, Father O'Flaherty had won the esteem and affection of his congregation. He only stayed in Geneva for seven months, at which time he resumed the pastorate of Holy Family in Auburn, where he had been rector for 1845 to 1856. An intelligent but headstrong man, Father O'Flaherty challenged the authority of Bishop McQuaid to reassign him in 1869. The Bishop prevailed and Father O'Flaherty left the diocese.

By 1864, the Civil War had substantially increased the number of orphaned children. Local charities and the homes of orphans' relatives

were badly taxed, and the church felt an obligation to help. With the backing of the Bishop, St. Mary's Pastor James M. Early invited the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, Missouri, to come to Rochester and establish a home for boys. Mother Mary Stanislaus and nine sisters founded St. Mary's Orphanage in the building just north of the church. Numerous sacred and secular orchestral concerts were staged to support their work.

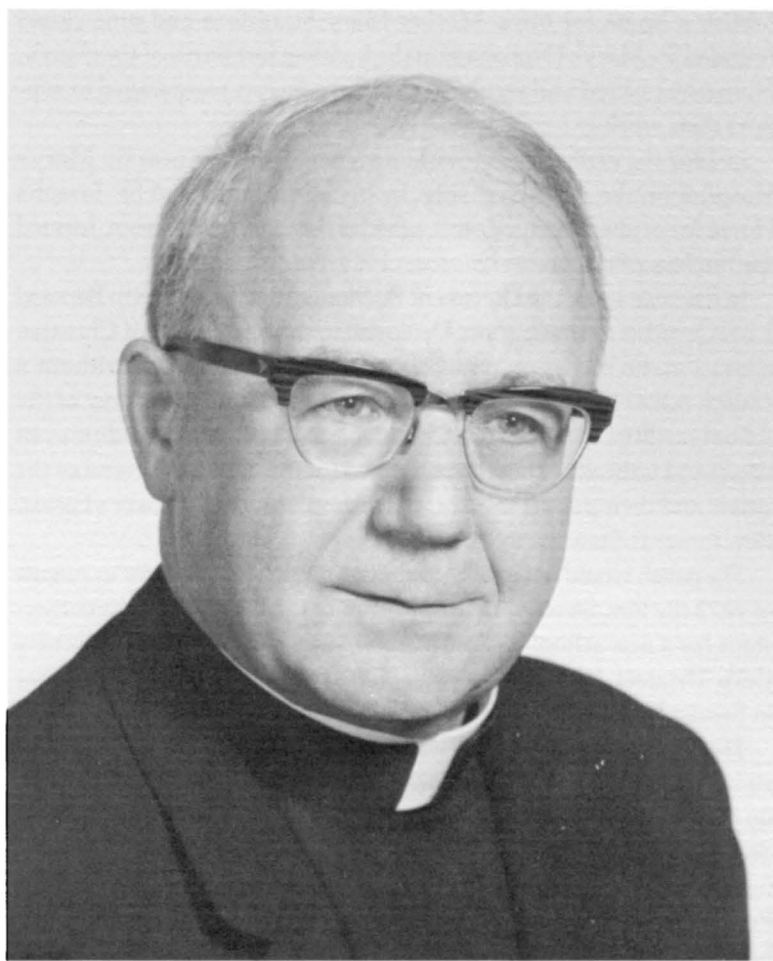
In 1867 the orphanage moved into a new structure near St. Mary's Hospital on the city's west side. In 1942 St. Mary's and St. Joseph's Home for orphans merged, and, after buying a farm in Greece, formed the nucleus of the present St. Joseph's Villa.

In the year 1868, the Diocese of Rochester was formed with Bernard J. McQuaid as its first bishop. Dedicated to the furtherance of Christian education, he had as an unofficial motto: "a schoolhouse without a church rather than a church without a schoolhouse." A survey of the school facilities in St. Mary's Church basement showed conditions so damp and unhealthy that it was blamed for the deaths of several of the sisters and their pupils. In 1872, the Bishop ordered St. Mary's Pastor, Rev. James P. Stewart, to close the school.

The parish would not long be without a school, however, for in August of 1872 the Rev. Stewart, in the presence of the Bishop, laid the cornerstone for a new school on South Street, opposite the Arsenal (the new GeVa Theatre). Work on the project was rushed to completion so that in September of 1873 over 500 students entered the new facility.

The new parochial school was a two-story building consisting of eight classrooms. The four rooms on the second floor could be opened up into one large room forming a spacious hall complete with stage and dressing rooms. The school rooms were described as lofty and well lighted. Seven Sisters of Mercy taught the girls and younger boys. Professor William E. Ryan served as principal and taught the older boys. In 1874, the children of St. Mary's took their first New York State Regents examinations. The project was off to a resounding start.

Thomas Hickey, who became second Bishop of Rochester in 1909, was a member of the first graduating class of St. Mary's new school building in 1874. Archbishop Hickey later recalled the first closing exercises in the new school, held in June of that year. Oral and written examinations were administered. He remembered being sent to the board to demonstrate one of the numerous examples in Robinson's Practical Arithmetic.



Monsignor James C. McAniff, pastor of St. Mary's from 1949-1980

When St. Mary's new parochial school opened its doors for the first time on September 22, 1873, Sister Mary Catherine Daly served as first principal of the girls' department and later of the combined departments. She had entered the Order of Mercy on May 3, 1868, and received the habit on January 4, 1869. She pronounced her vows in the Motherhouse Chapel on January 5, 1871. Sister Catherine was an unusual teacher who possessed a gentle persuasive way with her students, especially the boys. She was also a gifted musician. Besides being principal of St. Mary's, she also later served in the same capacity at Holy Family School in Auburn.

In 1872, the parish purchased the house of Mrs. Julia Blenop at 7 South Street for \$4,000. The house became the new location of St. Mary's Industrial School, which had opened in 1859. The new location allowed the school to expand its enrollment and curriculum. Orphaned and semi-orphaned girls between the ages of 10 and 15 were provided care and taught useful skills in preparation for future careers in one of Rochester's industries. Sixteen sewing machines were purchased for the nuns to teach plain and fancy sewing. A few heavier sewing machines were used to sew and repair shoes and the sisters soon opened their own small shoe store in the school.

The salaries of the teaching nuns were paid by the Rochester Board of Education, but were usually so small that other funding was also sought. Looking for a product to sell, some of the nuns remembered their youthful days in old Ireland where some of the world's finest lace was produced. With that in mind, they imported lace looms and with the help of their students began turning out material eagerly sought by the city's leading department stores. The Bert Fitsimons Department Store and Gordon and Company sold the Industrial School lace as an exclusive product. Decorative wax flowers were another commodity which the school later supplied to local stores. The girls had to stay for four years in the Industrial School. In their last year, however, they were transferred to the exclusive Academy conducted in the convent for training in the higher branches of learning. The sisters operated an employment bureau to help find each girl a good, steady job upon graduation.

To help finance church expenses, St. Mary's held a series of festivals and fairs each year. A winter festival and an Easter festival each filled the nearby Arsenal to capacity. In summertime the public was invited to the annual picnic sponsored by the church at Falls Field, a short walk

or buggy ride away. The year 1879 proved to be the biggest picnic for St. Mary's, or, for that matter, the entire city.

Plans for the events were laid months in advance. Five locomotive engines were chartered to haul train loads of picnickers from the center of the city to Charlotte. Hundreds of buggies clattered up State Street. Provisions for nearly 10,000 people were prepared. No one was disappointed. Whole oxen were roasted and served. Speeches were made and a wagon load of Bartholomay beer helped check the heat of summer. At dusk the parish sponsored a barge of fireworks launched from the mouth of the Genesee River. Newspapers declared it the biggest picnic in Rochester's history, with crowds exceeding the expected 10,000.

Spiritual occasions kept pace with social events during Father Stewart's pastorate. In 1880, on the ninth anniversary of his coming to St. Mary's, Father Stewart called attention to the material progress that the parish had made, and then presided as seventy boys and girls received their First Holy Communion. In July of that year, Bishop McQuaid received four novices of the Sisters of Charity into that Order in the Chapel of the Sisters of Mercy at St. Mary's. In the afternoon of that same day, the Bishop confirmed a class of 135 boys and girls.

In April of 1881, Father Stewart purchased the property at 5 South Street to convert it into a home for working women and a nursery where they could place their small children during the day. Thus St. Mary's was operating a day care center eighty years before they became commonplace.

The Nursery School aided families in which both parents had to work, and also assisted poor widows with small children. The parents were thus enabled to keep their families together and to know that their children were safe while they worked in shops and domestic services.

The children who came to the "Creche," as the day-care center was called, received food and both secular and religious instruction. As many as thirty to fifty children were sheltered and fed each day. In addition, poorer children often received clothing. A fee of five cents per day was charged those who could afford it. The Creche was maintained largely by the volunteer contributions of a guild of patrons known as the Willing Helpers.

In 1892 the Creche moved to the Sibley block due to overcrowding in the old convent building. Prominent patrons who volunteered their time in the project included Mrs. P. Cox, Mrs. Charles Cunningham,

Mrs. John Fahey, Mrs. R. Sibley, and St. Mary's Pastor, Rev. J. R. Stewart. The Creche operated through the turn of the century, closing in 1906.

Until 1888, almost all English-speaking Catholics who lived in the city and east of the Genesee River attended St. Mary's. The parish had no other well defined limits. In that year, however, Bishop McQuaid authorized the construction of Corpus Christi Church on Main Street East. The area east of the downtown business district was growing; many of the parishioners of St. Mary's found Corpus Christi a more convenient place to worship.

The year 1891 marked Father Stewart's twentieth anniversary as pastor of St. Mary's. At a Mass celebrating the event, Bishop McQuaid preached. He praised Father Stewart in his sermon, stressing the improvements Stewart had made in the church, convent, and school buildings. In October, Father Stewart gave a sermon on the laying of the cornerstone of a building that would be of immense importance to Catholics of the Rochester Diocese and elsewhere: St. Bernard's Seminary.

There were 470 children in the free school, 50 in the academy, and 40 in the industrial school in 1891, the year in which a literary and musical club was formed. In December the parish choir and school children arranged a surprise entertainment in honor of Father Stewart's silver anniversary of his ordination.

In the following year, musical and dramatic entertainment was given in the church hall in April, and the Stations of the Cross in the church were blessed in July. During 1892, the mortgage on the church, the only debt the parish owed, was reduced to \$9,860. The church property was worth about \$140,000. The schools cost \$2,400 per year to run. The budget included coal, salaries for the janitor and the teachers, and repairs.

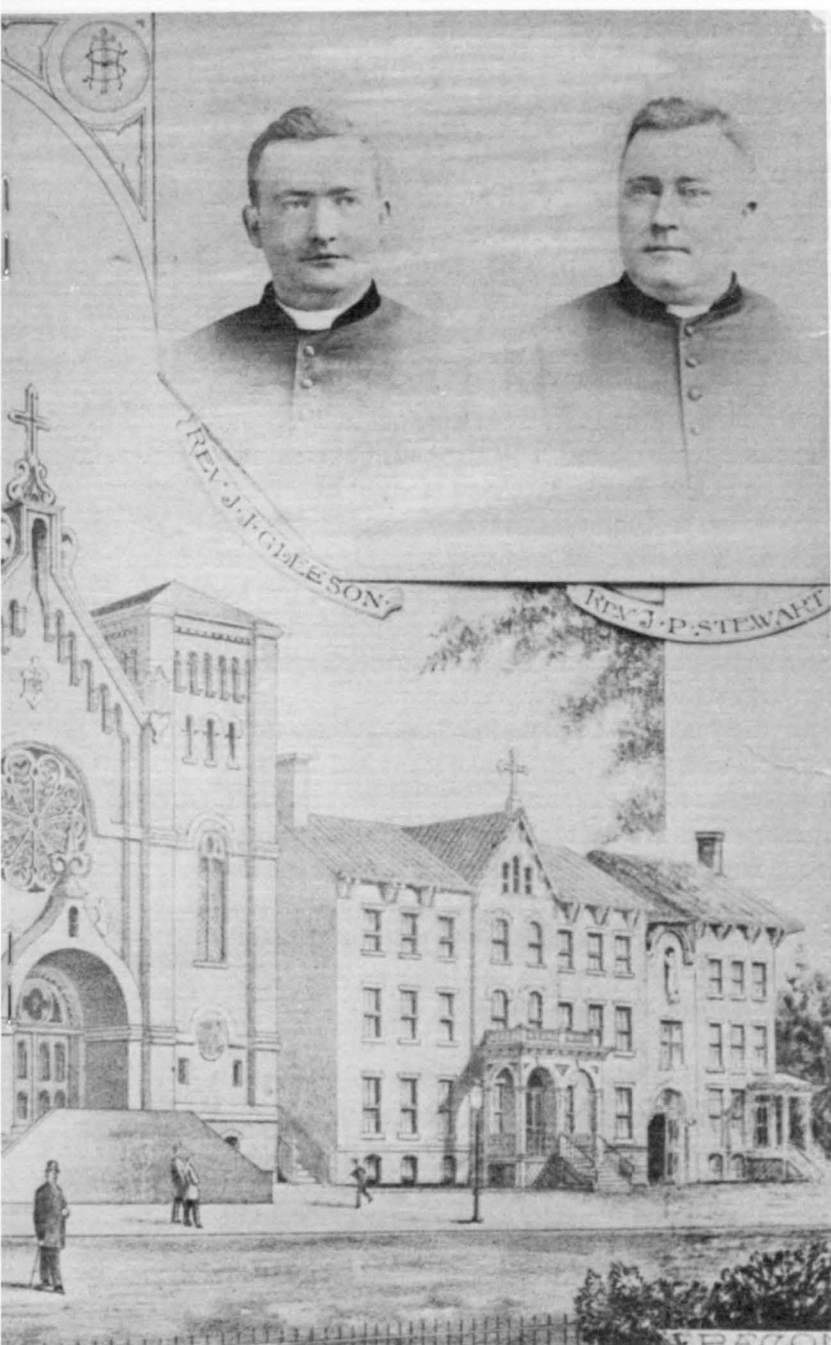
At St. Mary's in 1895 Father Stewart said a Solemn High Mass to dedicate the new altar in the Chapel of the Convent of the Sisters of Mercy. In addition to the new altar, a sanctuary lamp and four Munich windows were donated. New hangings and rugs were installed in the sanctuary. The total cost of these improvements was \$2,000.

Father Stewart passed the quarter-century mark as pastor, and the thirtieth anniversary of his ordination, in 1896.

Shortly after the parish carnival in June, 1897, Father Stewart went to the White Mountains near the coast of Maine for his health. He had been ill with heart disease, but it was cancer of the tongue that sent him



St. Mary's Church as it appeared in 1885



to Carney Hospital in Boston in late August. He died there after ten days, on September 3, 1897.

His funeral was one of the largest ever seen in Rochester. It was held at 10:00 A.M. on September 6, at St. Mary's. It attracted high church dignitaries, his brother priests, and laymen from many distant places. At the time of his death, Father Stewart was probably the most widely known priest in the diocese.

In his eulogy on that Monday morning, Bishop McQuaid said:

You know how he gave your children a school house fitting their needs. You know how he gave a home to the Sisters of Mercy. His good work will go from generation to generation because the foundation he laid was broad and for the future. No matter what, he thought it was well nigh heresy to insinuate that St. Mary's was not the best parish in the diocese.¹⁰

A short time prior to his death, Father Stewart had transferred all of his real property to others. Bishop McQuaid received two lots on Michigan Street, two lots on Thorne Street, two lots on Lexington Avenue, and one lot on North Street. The Rochester Benevolent, Industrial, and Scientific School of the Sisters of Mercy received the two lots on Thompson Street that Father Stewart had conveyed to them in 1886. Most of his remaining worldly goods were donated to the parish he had labored in for twenty-six years.

In 1898, Bishop McQuaid appointed the Rev. James P. Kiernan Pastor of St. Mary's. The new pastor was a man of many and diverse interests and came from a local background.

Father Kiernan was born in Spencerport on December 30, 1855, the youngest of four children of John Kiernan and Loretta Brennan Kiernan. He was ordained on July 9, 1882, and served under Father James F. O'Hare as assistant at the Cathedral. In 1886, he became the Cathedral rector. He held this post until he became pastor of St. Mary's. Later, in 1898, he was made Vicar General of the diocese.

Father Kiernan had genuine administrative ability. In 1882 he had become secretary-treasurer of Holy Sepulchre Cemetery. His greatest diocesan interest, however, was education. He was a member of the Diocesan School Board (Synod of 1885). In 1896, while serving as general director of Nazareth Academy, a post he held in addition to being rector of the Cathedral, he organized a Diocesan Institute for Religious Teachers, with the blessing of Bishop McQuaid. This was a first, not only for the Rochester Diocese, but also for the American Catholic Church. It led to the establishment of diocesan teachers' institutes elsewhere in the following century.

Father Kiernan has been described as devout, unassuming, zealous, and progressive. He was not essentially a man of learning, but he lent his administrative skills to the development of diocesan schools, particularly Nazareth Academy. His interest in adult education led him to sponsor the Rochester Literary Coterie, a club of young men bent on self-education. He was also vice president of the Catholic Summer School at Cliff Haven, New York.

Given his interest in education, it hardly seems likely that among his first acts as pastor of St. Mary's would be the closing of both the Industrial School and the Academy, yet this was done in 1898. Bishop McQuaid preferred that parish efforts be concentrated in the parochial schools, and Father Kiernan adhered to this wish. He set about improving the parish school. W. Foster Kelly was the architect for the 64 feet by 30 feet addition which doubled the size of the existing building. Ventilation and heating were improved throughout the entire structure. Rooms were provided for the Rosary and Scapular Societies, the then Catholic Men's and Catholic Women's Benevolent Associations, the Children of Mary, and other societies. In September, the enlarged school opened its doors to 600 pupils.

Major new construction of facilities at St. Mary's seems to be almost a barometer mirroring the economic condition of Rochester and the nation. Always fiscally conservative, the clergy would save for building projects in good times and begin spending money when a recession was on the horizon. Thus, construction was apt to provide employment when parish members most needed it.

In 1905 the Rev. William Gleason replaced the old Italianate style rectory with a modern brick building nearly twice the size of the original. With a growing number of parishioners, additional priests were assigned to the congregation to say nine Sunday Masses; more living and office space in the rectory had become a necessity.

Just before the United States' entry into World War I in 1917, the new pastor, Rev. Simon FitzSimons, expanded the seating capacity of St. Mary's by adding transepts. The building took on the cuneiform shape which it retains to this day.

On January 2, 1916, a fire broke out in the convent. The Young Men's Association members were in their clubroom when the fire began, and they placed a ladder against the rear porch of the convent, enabling several sisters to descend to safety. One nun was injured in jumping



Construction of St. Mary's Church Belfry, 1940

from a window, and another was carried from the floor of her room by firefighters after being overcome by smoke, but there were no serious injuries. The prompt response of the YMA members and the firefighters prevented any loss of life.

The estimated property loss from the fire was \$6,000, including tapestries and other works of art. The cause of the blaze was determined to be a tiny lamp which was kept burning before the Christmas Crib in the Music Choir. The lamp ignited the straw in the crib. The nuns had scheduled a ceremony to renew their vows or to take first vows of service to the community the next day,¹¹ and all the floors and the spiral staircase were waxed in preparation. This enabled the fire to spread rapidly up the stairs and throughout the building. It was fortunate that the YMA members observed the smoke and flames, for the convent's telephone wires were burned through, and the sisters could not call the fire department. In the wake of the fire, the various convents in the city opened their doors to the sisters. Those who taught at St. Mary's, however, remained in the charred convent until the close of the school year.

In July, 1916, Father FitzSimons purchased the convent property, including a house on Court Street, on behalf of St. Mary's. He then remodeled the main building as a residence for the sisters who taught at the parish school. The purchase price was \$32,000. An additional \$18,000 was spent on remodeling.

The sisters discontinued the high school courses offered at St. Mary's in 1916, but restored the two-year commercial program the following year for those students able to pay a small tuition. This program later merged with Our Lady of Mercy High School in 1928.

The year 1918 brought peace to the nations engaged in the World War, but it also brought an influenza epidemic which claimed more Rochester lives in a few short months than did the long years of conflict. Although Monroe County suffered less than many communities, nearly 1,100 persons died. The epidemic raged in late October and early November throughout the city. For three weeks all public functions, including church services, were suspended. The Sisters of St. Mary's worked among the black people of Rochester. They aroused much interest among their patients and the sufferers' families, and received every courtesy that the latter could bestow upon them.

Another fire damaged St. Mary's in May, 1919. This blaze was due

to spontaneous combustion and caused \$2,000 worth of damage to the entrance of the church. The flames also burned through the floor near the altar.

In 1920, Father FitzSimons sent a letter to his parishioners that testifies to the esthetic and financial state of the parish at the time. He reviewed the large expenditures, beginning with the purchase of two houses on Court Street soon after he became pastor "to safeguard our church neighborhood and exclude an undesirable vicinage." Father FitzSimons stated that the church treasury contained \$11,000 when he became pastor and that property transactions, construction, and maintenance costs amounted to \$80,000 in the 1912-20 period. He also claimed that through judicious purchase and improvements, the assets of St. Mary's "based on actual cash offers" exceeded the parish's liabilities by from thirty to fifty thousand dollars.

The pastor reminded his parishioners that all of the financial transactions were managed without resort to special collections or subscription funds of any kind. Using only the "ordinary sources of church revenue," St. Mary's had practically a new church edifice—in the interior, one of the most beautiful in western New York; a convenient, comfortable, commodious, and well-appointed convent for its teachers; and finally, some of the most valuable real estate in the City of Rochester.

During his pastorate, Father FitzSimons continued his scholarly pursuits and was the author of three books: *Revised Darwinism*, *Reflections on Agnosticism*, and *How George Edwards Scrapped Religion*. William Jennings Bryan, the famed orator and foe of evolution and atheism, sent Father FitzSimons a letter commending him and endorsing his stand in the printed word.

Archbishop Edward Mooney of Rochester named the Rev. George F. Kettell to be the new pastor of St. Mary's in 1935. The parish enthusiastically welcomed a man of scholarly attainment and varied experience. Father Kettell attended St. Bernard's Seminary and was ordained in 1914. After a brief initiation as assistant pastor in Dansville, he was appointed to teach Fundamental Moral Theology at St. Bernard's. During the First World War he left the Seminary to become Chaplain of the 72nd Artillery. He was later transferred to the 307th Artillery where he served until April, 1919. At the end of his war service, Father Kettell returned to St. Bernard's. In September, 1921, he was sent to the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, where he studied for two years and received the degree of Doctor of Sacred Theology (S.T.D.).

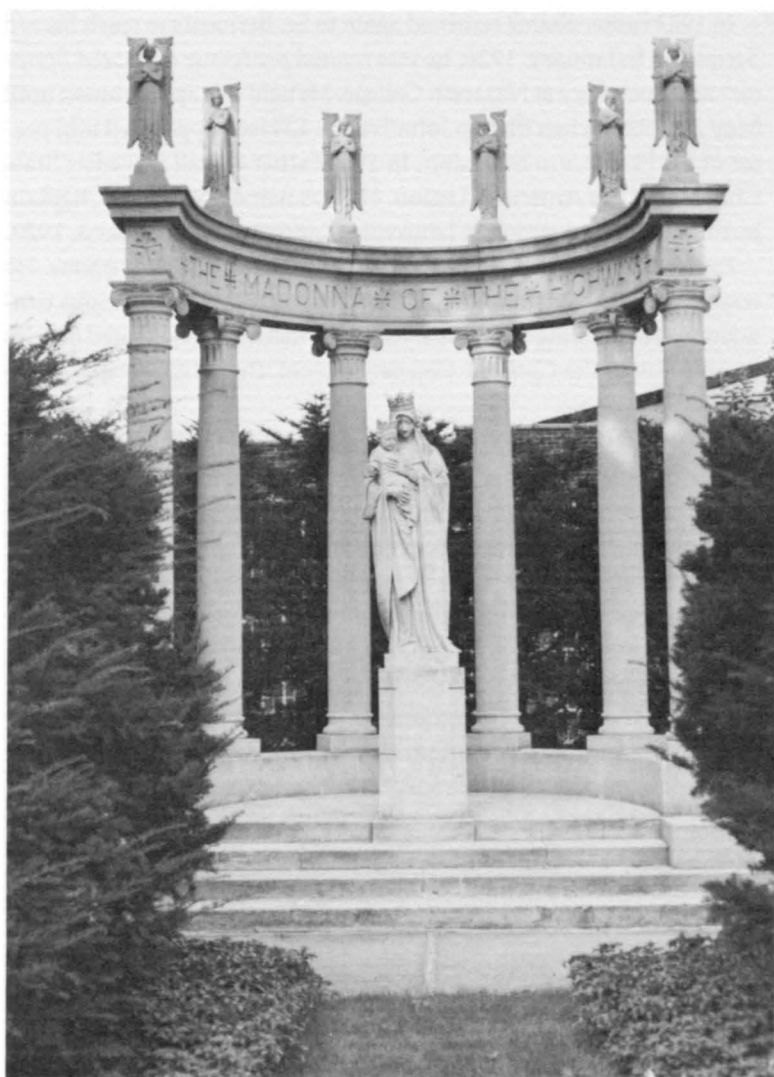
In 1923 Father Kettell returned again to St. Bernard's to teach Sacred Scripture. In January, 1926, he was named professor of Sacred Scripture and Sociology at Nazareth College. He held this appointment until May 28, 1929, when Bishop John Francis O'Hern appointed him pastor of St. Patrick's in Macedon. In 1928 Father Kettell served as State Chaplain of the American Legion. He was named National Chaplain by the Legion convention in Louisville, Kentucky, on October 3, 1929.

Father Kettell was both an able scholar and an excellent orator. He was a very dynamic man, who in his younger days gave serious consideration to entering the Jesuits. Father Kettell also contributed articles to, and edited, the *Catholic Courier-Journal*, the official organ of the Rochester Diocese.

Rochester's downtown was changing rapidly when Father Kettell assumed the pastorate of St. Mary's in 1935. He raised money for the parish, setting up a program designed to restore St. Mary's to its former prominence. His American Legion connections were helpful in this endeavor. Father Kettell eventually succeeded in rehabilitating the entire complex of parish buildings. In keeping with the changing neighborhood, he also emphasized the concept of St. Mary's as a service church, a place of worship ministering to the needs of people who did not live within the geographical boundaries of the parish. That so many people would choose to travel an extra distance to worship at St. Mary's, even today, is a tribute to the success of this concept.

In 1937, the old St. Mary's Convent, which was no longer being used by the Sisters of Mercy, was turned over to the Basilian Fathers who taught at Aquinas Institute.

The 80th anniversary of the dedication of St. Mary's was celebrated as Old Home Week with a series of Solemn High Masses during mid-September, 1938. Monsignor Fulton Sheen of Catholic University gave the sermon on the Sunday evening that began the festivities. During the week, the congregation remembered, at various Masses, the deceased members of the parish, the deceased sisters and priests, the children and teachers of St. Mary's School, the current parishioners, and the graduates of the school. There was a parish banquet on Thursday night at the Hotel Sagamore, at which the speakers were Judge Harold P. Burke and the Rt. Rev. Joseph Cameron, who served as assistant at St. Mary's from 1907 to 1914. Dancing and card playing rounded out the evening.¹²



The Shrine of the Madonna of the Highways

In June, 1939, Father Kettell celebrated the 25th anniversary of his ordination. Judge Burke, a graduate of St. Mary's, paid tribute to the pastor at another dinner in his honor at the Sagamore. The judge told his audience that through Father Kettell's "ceaseless efforts he performed a miracle at St. Mary's, until today it is one of the most successful parishes from every standpoint in the City of Rochester."

During the winter of 1939-40, the 45-foot tower built in the 1850s was completed to a height of 55 feet. A ten-note chime was hurriedly installed so that the bells could be rung during the Christmas holiday. The chimes are connected to the organ console, and permit playing a chromatic scale.

James B. Arnold was the architect who designed this addition. He said that he had never passed by St. Mary's without wishing it had a steeple. The addition is Romanesque in style; the belfry windows were partially fitted with stone tracery, and the spire itself was finished with lead-coated copper of a ribbed pattern. The left walls of the tower had to be raised slightly to conform with the new spire. Mr. Arnold made the discovery that the right tower walls were stronger than the left, probably to permit construction above. This is believed to be part of the plan of 1853.

Father Kettell was alarmed by what he saw as a developing tendency toward atheism in the world and in particular in the Soviet Union. He chose Armistice Day, 1940, to take issue with an incident in a campaign parade before the election which had just been held. Clothing workers had organized a mockery in which a man dressed as a cleric sprinkled "holy water" on a corpse representing Wendell Wilkie. In his sermon, Father Kettell admonished listeners: "Communism got its start in Russia with just such mimicking of the Church. It is up to you people to ferret out and suppress such communistic tendencies."¹³

In May, 1942, the Basilian Fathers moved to Augustine Street, the site of Aquinas Institute. The old convent building at 9 South Street that they vacated was razed. During the summer Father Kettell beautified the lawn and began the erection of an outdoor shrine.

On December 6, 1942, the Madonna of the Highway Shrine was illuminated for the first time. The Shrine was not formally dedicated until Sunday, September 12, 1943, along with a plaque containing the names of 145 parishioners of St. Mary's then in military service. In an article in the *Democrat & Chronicle* in August, 1943, Father Kettell in-

terpreted the title of the Shrine to mean "Mary protect us on our way." With this intention the Shrine was dedicated to the servicemen of World War II. Delivering the sermon on the day of dedication was Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen. Nearly 1,000 parishioners gathered for the ceremony while others listened to its broadcast over WHAM.¹⁴

In 1943, Old St. Mary's, as it was now being called, also joined in a hemisphere crusade of prayer to end the war or at least depose Hitler. This movement began in Chicago shortly before the Roosevelt-Churchill meetings in Casablanca and was a united response of the American Catholic Churches to Pope Pius XII's appeal to add prayer to the weapons attempting to win the peace. Participants in the crusade pledged special prayers for the entire year.

In 1943 Old St. Mary's reached out further to eager audiences. Encouraged by numerous positive comments on the earlier Fulton J. Sheen broadcast from the church, Father Kettell began a weekly program every Sunday on WHEC. The program always began with the ringing of the bells of St. Mary's, followed by organ music and hymns sung by the Children's Choir, and then with instruction by one of the staff. The program continued until 1949.

After World War II, Father Kettell remained adamant in his opposition to communism. Speaking to the Commerce Club on November 23, 1945, he declared, "Russia must not be given the secret of the atomic bomb until she shows more international cooperation. Otherwise, the bomb will become not a weapon of peace, but of enslavement."

Father Kettell ordered extensive renovations at St. Mary's in 1947. About \$70,000 was spent on church improvements. New stained glass windows were installed, and the front entrance was completely altered. In 1947, St. Mary's became the first Catholic church in the nation equipped with air conditioning. At the same time, in keeping with the concept of a service church, the lower church was fitted out so that more Masses could be said each Sunday and on holy days.

On October 19, 1949, the 62-year-old Father Kettell was returning from a Forty Hours Devotion. He tried to swerve his car to avoid crashing into an auto making a left-hand turn from St. Paul Street onto the Bausch-Smith Street Bridge. As a result, he crashed into the Labor Lyceum building and was killed instantaneously. So great was the assembly for the funeral that hundreds had to stand outside the church and in Washington Square, silently and reverently mourning their pastor.

On October 26th, Bishop James E. Kearney named the Rt. Rev. Msgr. James C. McAniff, the chancellor of the diocese, to the pastorate of St. Mary's, effective November 4th. Msgr. McAniff was born in Canandaigua on August 16, 1909. He attended St. Augustine's School, and St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's Seminaries. After the completion of his philosophical studies, he continued his courses at the North American College in Rome, where he was ordained on December 5, 1933. He earned the degree of Doctor of Sacred Theology from the Gregorian Institute in 1936, and a License from the Pontifical Institute of Civil and Canon Law in 1937. After studying in Rome for eight years, Father McAniff returned to the United States and became chaplain of St. Ann's Home. On May 1, 1939, he was appointed vice-chancellor of the diocese. On February 15, 1945, he was named Pro-Synodal Judge of the Diocesan Tribunal. He became a Papal Chamberlain in 1947. In December, 1947, Father McAniff was appointed to succeed the late Msgr. William F. Bergen as Chancellor of the Diocese of Rochester. He was the fifth, and youngest (38 years old at the time of his appointment) Chancellor in the history of the diocese.

On December 11, 1949, throngs of St. Mary's parishioners visited the rectory in the afternoon to greet their new pastor at a reception. On that morning he celebrated a special Communion Mass marking the silver anniversary of the founding of the Notre Dame Club of Rochester.

One of the new pastor's tasks was to reevaluate the role to be played by St. Mary's parish in the light of the rapid changes in the neighborhood adjoining the church and rectory. Over 160 homes were evacuated because they were in the path of the projected inner loop expressway. Young families were no longer drawn to the area. It looked as if the City of Rochester was ready to turn its back on the neighborhood and allow it to devolve until ready for the wrecking ball. Hotels became flophouses; remaining houses were divided and re-divided into sub-standard apartments. The decade-old tower of St. Mary's faced a neighborhood that was dying.

Faced with a dwindling population, Father McAniff was compelled to close the parish elementary school. In 1950, a near century-old tradition of education ended when one hundred remaining St. Mary's students transferred to Blessed Sacrament School on Monroe Avenue. St. Mary's School was razed in November, 1950, and the site leased for commercial purposes.

The question now asked was how to maintain and reestablish pride in the parish facility and in the greater neighborhood surrounding the church. To this end Father McAniff decided on a renewal project to help stabilize South Street with the hope that pride would spread to neighboring businesses and homes.

During 1951 Monsignor McAniff set about refurbishing the church. At a ceremony in October of that year, Bishop Kearney dedicated a new, nine-ton, Italian marble main altar and two side altars as a memorial to Father Kettell. In March, 1953, Bishop Kearney blessed a new Austin organ for the church. After the ceremony, Jeanne Deme-sieux, the noted French organist then touring the United States, gave a dedication recital. The organ cost the church \$50,000 and is one of the finest in the city.

In 1955 Monsignor McAniff began the extensive job of redecorating the rectory and enlarging its inadequate quarters and cramped office space. The cloister walkway between the church and the rectory was also built at this time. In addition, the wooden structure of the Madonna of the Highways shrine was replaced with a permanent one of stone. In 1958, the lower church was panelled and its ceiling was replaced. The restoration begun in 1950 was now completed.

In 1958, the St. Thomas More Lawyers Servers began activities. Members of this group took charge of serving the evening Mass at St. Mary's all year round. Within a decade and a half this group evolved into the Lawyers Guild with its object being to foster, stimulate, and maintain high standards of religious, social, legal, and ethical ideals and practices. Over one hundred lawyers and judges were members of the Guild, which from time to time brought in speakers, held forums on legal and moral issues, and took the role of advocate on legal questions.

On the afternoon of Easter Sunday, 1971, a two-alarm fire broke out in the downstairs church at St. Mary's. Actual fire damage was confined to a corner of the basement church, but smoke damaged part of the main sanctuary, and heat from the blaze broke some of the stained glass windows. City firefighters rescued the Holy Eucharist from the main altar. The organ, altar, pews, carpeting, wall paneling, statues, ceiling timbers, and church vestments were all damaged or destroyed in the blaze. Billowing smoke hid St. Mary's bell tower from view, but the chimes could be heard every fifteen minutes. Monsignor McAniff praised the extraordinary effort and skill of the firemen who succeeded

in confining serious damage to the basement of the then 118-year-old structure.

The fire did not seriously affect the routine at St. Mary's. On the day following the fire there were three Masses, as usual. The worshippers had to clean soot from the pews before they sat down, and the Masses were held by candlelight, for there was no electricity. The walls bore scorch marks, and the smell of smoke filled the air; yet St. Mary's was still a place of worship. Fortunately, the main church escaped heavy damage. In addition, St. Mary's was fully insured at the time of the fire. Monsignor McAniff expressed it best when he told a reporter on Easter Monday: "The Lord may have singed me, but he didn't burn me up."¹⁵

In the autumn of 1974, a unique ecumenical venture known as the Midtown Ministry Employee Counseling Service was started. St. Mary's joined with Our Lady of Victory, Christ Episcopal, Reformation Lutheran, and Salem United Church of Christ in this project. The service was intended to satisfy the need for pastoral counseling felt by some employers and employees in downtown Rochester. The approach was unusual in that business people provided space in a downtown building for the clergy to meet with those interested in the service. The counselors acted as independent third parties paid by the employers.

In the 1970s, through Assistant Pastor Father Charles Bennett, St. Mary's joined in the formation of the Rochester Downtown Development Corporation. The Corporation works to promote improvement of the city's central business district and to increase employment opportunities for area residents. Thus, the staff sought methods to extend St. Mary's traditional role as a service church to the thousands of county residents who work in downtown by day but who return each evening to their homes in the outlying city and the suburbs.

The year 1980 marked the beginning of major changes in the operational philosophy of Old St. Mary's. In that year Father James Lawlor accepted Bishop Matthew Clark's appointment to be the new pastor. This was a period when, throughout the Rochester Diocese, admissions to the priesthood were declining. Soon Father Lawlor would be the only staff member of the parish, as Bishop Clark had no assistants available.

Encouraged both by necessity and the suggestions of the Second Vatican Council, the laity and the religious orders of women assumed a much greater role in the day to day ministry of the parish. Within a

year and a half Father Lawlor's staff included Sister Sheila Walsh and Sister Joan Sobala as pastoral assistants, and Mrs. Joan Young as pastoral minister. When Bishop Joseph L. Hogan retired from diocesan administration, he too joined the staff part time as minister to the aged of the parish.

Change is not always well received. Not long after Father Lawlor became pastor a number of parishioners became distraught and left. Attendance at Mass dropped sharply and measures that were considered "innovations" in worship brought harsh criticism. The shock wave of Vatican II may have come late to Old St. Mary's but yet it was felt.

By 1983 the silent protest subsided and as Mrs. Joan Young commented, "those parishioners who stayed have taken delight in the church." Sunday attendance leveled off at about 600 with each congregant being welcomed or recognized by members of the parish staff.

When Father Lawlor arrived the basement chapel of St. Mary's had been unused for over a decade. After being approached by Margot VanEtten and Father Thomas Erdle, the parish agreed that the downstairs facility could be used as a permanent home for the newly formed parish of the Rochester deaf community. Nearly twenty percent of the graduates of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf remain in Rochester; the ever expanding need for a church facility was recognized. The new parish is supported in part by an annual collection raised in all the churches of the Rochester Catholic Diocese.

Old St. Mary's has reached out beyond its old boundaries. A number of parishioners helped to establish and operate the Clothes Closet at St. Peter and Paul's Church on West Main Street. Here the poor are invited to get good used winter clothes at no charge. The parish also sponsors a pastoral assistant at the Eastman School of Music. The position includes counseling and spiritual ministrations, as well as encouragement of social activities. A noontime lecture series was offered, from time to time, by the parish.

Looking back, the downtown parish of St. Mary's has mirrored in microcosm some aspects of the growth and development of the City of Rochester. Born in optimism, it has reacted to the myriad forces outside itself. Its progress has not always been smooth and often it has had to pause and reevaluate its goals and direction. But, as with the city, it looks to the future with an assurance that whatever new tools it must forge in times to come, its material at hand is derived from a solid historical foundation.



Interior of St. Mary's Church.

Notes

1. Monroe County **Book of Deeds** (Liber 240, p. 357).
2. Rochester **Daily Advertiser**, December 24, 1833.
3. Rochester **Daily Democrat**, July 8, 1837.
4. **Daily Advertiser**, September 2, 1847.
5. **Daily Democrat**, December 20, 1848.
6. Rochester **Daily Union**, September 19, 1853.
7. Rochester **Union & Advertiser**, October 18, 1858.
8. Robert F. McNamara, **History of the Diocese of Rochester** (Rochester, 1968), p. 93.
9. **Union & Advertiser**, November 12, 1861.
10. **Union & Advertiser**, September 6, 1897.
11. Throughout the history of St. Mary's just over 225 women from the parish entered religious orders of sisters.
12. Rochester **Democrat & Chronicle**, September 16, 1938.
13. Rochester **Times-Union**, November 11, 1940.
14. **Democrat & Chronicle**, August 23, 1943.
15. **Times-Union**, April 14, 1971.