

Fall 1980

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New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission

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VOLUME II NO 1

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Participants in the first Holy Name parade (ca. 1930) held by the Queen of Angels parish in Newark (a Black national parish). The NJCHRC recently accessioned an oral history interview with one of the parish's founding members.

Meet the Commission

Born in Boston, Sr. Mary Ellen Gleason, S.C., attended Sacred Heart grammar and high schools in Newton, Massachusetts. In 1954, shortly after graduating from high school, she entered the Sisters of Charity at Convent, and upon completion of her novitiate attended St. Elizabeth's College, from which she received the baccalaureate in 1960. In succeeding years she completed her studies for the master's degree in mathematics at Fairfield University in Connecticut, and also for the master's in religious studies.



Meanwhile, she had begun teaching in schools served by the Sisters of Charity in New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts; primary and secondary education continued to be her principal occupation until 1973. In that year she went to Rome as one of 36 religious from around the world to participate in a year-long program of study conducted by Apostolic Religious Women.

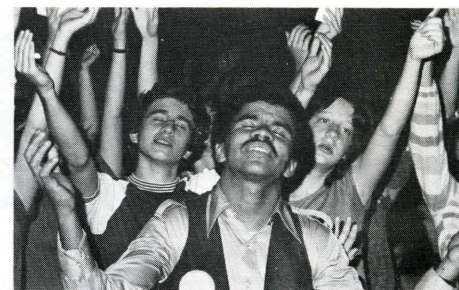
Upon her return to this country, Sr. Mary Ellen became Directress of Novices for the Sisters of Charity at

Convent, a post she held until 1976. In that year she was appointed archivist of the Sisters of Charity at Convent. Since that time she has participated in the National Archives and Records Service Institute, "Introduction to Modern Archives Management" (1977), the workshop of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious on The Religious Archives (1978), and the workshop on Preservation and Restoration of Photographic Images conducted by the College of Graphic Arts and Photography at the Rochester Institute of Technology (1979).

Sr. Mary Ellen is an active participant in numerous archival organizations. A member of the Society of American Archivists, she serves on its Religious Archives Committee, and chairs the bibliography subcommittee of the Religious Archives Committee. In addition, she is a member of MARAC, of the Metropolitan Religious Archives Group, and of Roundtable. She addressed the May 1980 meeting of MARAC at Washington, D.C. on the subject of developments in the archives of religious communities, and in September 1980 participated as a panelist at the annual convention of the Society of American Archivists in Cincinnati.

Accessions

Catholic Women's College Club (1934-1979) (2ft.) Minutes, printed histories, scrapbooks, correspondence files, financial records, and artifacts of this organization which sought "to foster friendly relationships among Catholic college-women who wish to inquire further into cultural pursuits, participate in worthy projects, and plan purposeful lines of endeavor for the furtherance of the Catholic Action Movement."



Catholic charismatics at the Eastern General Conference in Atlantic City, 1976.

Catholic Charismatic Renewal Movement (1975-1980) (10 ft.) Records of the Eastern Regional Advisory Board of the Catholic Charismatic Movement, including videocassettes, audio tapes, press releases, newsletters, office files of the director, photographs, publications, and artifacts. Audio tapes document the Eastern Region Conferences, which were held in Atlantic City and Yankee Stadium from 1976 through 1979. Videocassettes were prepared by the movement's Office of TV Evangelization.

Newark--St. James' Church (1854-1970) (2 ft.) Marriage Registers (1854-1867); Baptismal Registers (1854-1929); Parish Expenditure Book (1854-1855); Communion Lists (1920-1947). In addition, the collection includes parish bulletins, booklets, subject files, nineteenth-century grammar school workbooks, photographs, newspaper clippings, and artifacts.

Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Minutes of the Meetings of the Particular Council (1869-1892) (1 bound volume) Includes joint meetings of conferences attached to the following Newark parishes: St. James', St. John's, St. Patrick's, St. Pius', St. Joseph's, St. Columba's.

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Guest Archivist

Religious communities, parishes, and other institutions all maintain records which document Catholic activity in New Jersey. The Commission hopes that this column will serve as a vehicle for exchanging information between individuals responsible for and interested in maintaining New Jersey Catholic records. Archivists are invited to submit information and articles about their holdings.

St. Mary's Abbey formally created an archives in 1969, when Abbot Martin Byrne appointed Rev. Clement H. Bloomfield, O.S.B., to the newly established position of Abbey archivist. No one at the Morristown Abbey had previously attempted to gather, maintain, and organize the Benedictine community's records and Fr. Clement, with over thirty years of experience in working with genealogical and local history materials, appeared eminently qualified for the post.

The Benedictines possess a long and rich local history. Bishop James Roosevelt Bayley's efforts to provide for Newark's growing German Catholic population led to their establishment in New Jersey. Rev. Boniface Wimmer, founder and first abbot of St. Vincent's Abbey in Latrobe, Pa., sent monks to this demanding apostolate in 1857, and St. Mary's was established as a Conventual Priory on High Street in Newark. The community founded St. Benedict's High School shortly thereafter, in addition to continuing parochial work. In 1884 St. Mary's was raised to the status of an abbey.

Eventually, the Newark monks purchased nearly 400 acres on Mendham Road near Morristown and formed the Delbarton Preparatory School. As the Morristown facility

grew and the area became increasingly desirable, Abbot Patrick O'Brien transferred the title of St. Mary's Abbey to Morristown in July 1956. The Newark facility then became a dependent priory until, in November 1968, it became a totally separate foundation. The separation created an archival problem, for only a small portion of the abbey records were transferred to Morristown. Efforts to correct this situation and duplicate the remainder of the records are now underway.

The abbey archives contain a wide range of materials documenting Benedictine life. Obituary files contain information on every priest who served in the New Jersey community since its establishment. Series of correspondence from abbots and deceased priests have also been preserved. Complete minute books of the Monastic Chapters also repose in the abbey archives and reveal much of its history. Though these latter books are open only to professed members of the abbey, extracts can be provided by the archivist. A particularly significant segment of the collection traces the development of St. Benedict's Preparatory School in Newark and Delbarton School on the monastic acreage in Morristown.

Because of the extremely cramped storage conditions, researchers cannot be accommodated except by special permission of the abbot. Fr. Clement encourages mail and telephone requests, however, and will forward Xeroxed copies of primary materials where possible. Inquiries should be directed to:

Rev. Clement H. Bloomfield, O.S.B.
Archivist
St. Mary's Abbey
Morristown, N.J. 07960
(201) 538-3231

Diocesan Archivists Convene

Approximately forty Catholic diocesan archivists held a day-long conference in Cincinnati's Netherland Hilton Hotel on September 29 to exchange information and opinions.

The morning session focused on the relationship between canon law and diocesan archivists. Sr. Mary Ann Andrews, assistant chancellor of the Cleveland Diocese and a noted canonist, discussed the canons relating to archives and their implications. She specifically addressed the problem of access to sacramental records and the necessity of protecting individual privacy. James O'Toole, Archivist of the Boston Archdiocese, explored canon law from a professional archivist's viewpoint. Commenting on the canons' strengths and weaknesses, O'Toole examined the concept and problems of "secret archives." Both speakers agreed that diocesan archivists should play a greater role in suggesting revisions in the canons relating to archives.

An informal luncheon featured a caucus meeting for newly appointed diocesan archivists presided over by Ofelia Tennant from the Archdiocese of San Antonio. Andrew Raymond, assistant director of the New England Document Conservation Center, spoke to the afternoon gathering concerning microforms. He offered a basic and informative discussion, suggesting the problems, preparations, and costs involved for archivists considering microfilming programs.

The archivists concluded by discussing recommendations they had formulated at a previous meeting in San Antonio and plan to present to the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. These include guidelines for a uniform policy on the accessibility of parish records and encouragement for the creation of archives in dioceses that do not possess them. Encouraged by the turnout, the archivists also decided to hold annual meetings in conjunction with the yearly conventions of the Society of American Archivists. The 1981 meeting will be held at the University of California campus in Berkeley, with Rev. Leonard Blaw of the Detroit diocese handling arrangements.

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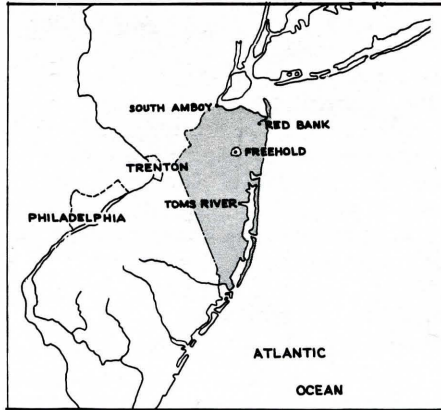
From the Collections

Shortly after the establishment of the Newark Diocese in 1853, Rev. James Callan of Ellenville, New York, offered his priestly services to Bishop James Roosevelt Bayley. While enthusiastically receiving Fr. Callan, the bishop apologetically assigned him to the South Amboy mission, promising to "do better by him as soon as I can." The young pastor quickly discovered the reasons for Bayley's apprehension.

On December 29, 1853, "after returning through drifting snow from a sick-call fifteen miles distant," the disillusioned priest penned a lengthy letter to his bishop. Fr. Callan's frustrations owed less to the winter storm than to the year-round condition of Catholicity in Middlesex and Monmouth counties. His experiences near Middletown illustrate the problems which faced New Jersey's clerical pioneers.

The pastor noted "a steady opposition on the part of our protestant neighbours in every way it can be used against us." Local hostility complicated his attempts to offer Christmas services. "At Middletown, within three miles of Red Bank, we were denied an empty School-house by one of the trustees, and also the use of a working Catholic's house rented of a man with many Catholics in his employ."

Area nativists discouraged Catholic worship in other ways as well. Irish servants experienced special obstacles. "The servant, particularly the female servant because more dependent upon them, has the choice of either joining in the family prayers or providing herself elsewhere, and is urged upon the choice in proportion as there appears little chance of the possibility of an alternative that would be gladly accepted." Two Red Bank servants faced dismissal "only



The mission field of St. Mary's parish in South Amboy, CA 1853.

because they dared to assist at Mass." Middletown's postmaster "broke a contract with his servant when she made known her final resolve not to accede to the terms upon which she was offered Service, viz., uniting with the family in prayer." Fr. Callan lamented that "family persecution is used to ensnare this unprotected class of persons for whom it is laid, and in many cases, is but too successful."

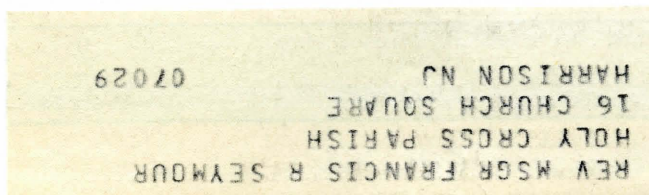
These factors, reinforced by the absence of a resident pastor, contributed to a general decline in faith among area Catholics. While visiting "Way-Cake," a sparse settlement near Holmdel, Fr. Callan received a disheartening reception from the local gathering. He wrote that "the Catholic neighbours assembled to the number of six or seven, seemed to regard me with suspicion, giving only such dry evasive answers as one might expect to see dealt out to a Maine liquor-hunter." The cleric's attempt to obtain the names of the faithful produced only silence, "much significant winking & many a lengthened face." Finally, the silence was broken by a group spokesman "of some importance, a dealer in punkins in the season." Cryptically commenting that

two previous Catholic priests had "made themselves very busy on the lame head and soon passed away," he sneered that "he was not to be duped any longer, but would look for better security than words that a priest was about to remain."

Callan received very little cooperation from these "Way-Cake" Catholics. When celebrating early Mass on Sunday at Middletown, he journeyed to the area late Saturday "to afford an opportunity to those anxious for confession." This necessitated an overnight stay, however, and though "I applied to each of these Catholics in their own houses for a place in their family when obliged to remain overnight I have as often been refused." Catholic feeling, concluded Callan, "seems lost and at 'low water' with the entire people of that end of this mission."

Within a year the troubled priest assumed charge of St. James in Newark and conducted a very successful pastorate. The South Amboy mission continued to experience difficulties. Fr. Walter T. Leahy, a Catholic historian writing in 1906, claimed that "bigoted and benighted people" frequently disrupted services there "by acts of rowdiness which at this day are hardly credible." Callan's observations lend support to his claim.

New Jersey nativism, Irish servant life, and rural Catholicism require more intensive and sophisticated study than a single document or an early twentieth-century chronicler can offer. Yet, since Callan offered his letter to Bishop Bayley, surprisingly few studies which attempt to address these issues have appeared. Fortunately, source materials which might clarify the hazy story of mid-nineteenth-century Catholicism have been preserved and are available to scholars at Seton Hall.



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