

Fall 1981

New Jersey Catholic Records Newsletter, Vol. 3, No.1

New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission

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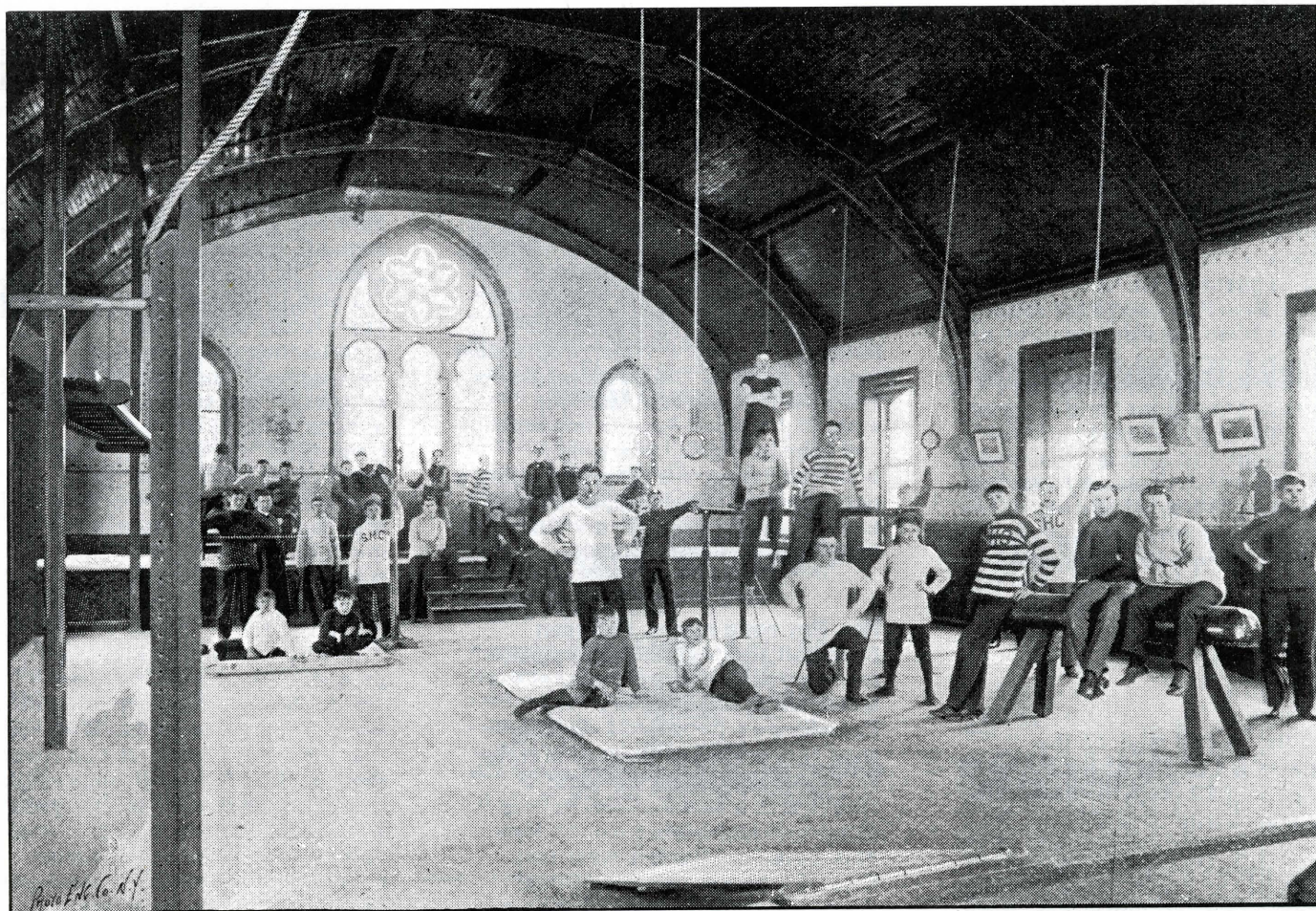
New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission, "New Jersey Catholic Records Newsletter, Vol. 3, No.1" (1981). *New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission newsletters*. 10.
<https://scholarship.shu.edu/njchc/10>



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VOLUME III NO 1

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The gymnasium at Seton Hall College in 1893 was on the second floor of Alumni Hall, now used for the Department of Psychology. In addition to gymnastic activities, the catalog of that time mentioned "lawn tennis courts, ball alleys, and baseball fields," . . . with "a safe skating pond (which) affords means of exercise in winter."

Meet the Commission

Monsignor William N. Field, a founding member of the Commission, has been associated with Seton Hall University throughout his career. He attended Seton Hall University Preparatory School, received his bachelor's degree from the University in 1936, and four years later was ordained to the priesthood upon completion of theological studies at Immaculate Conception Seminary, Darlington.

In September 1940 Father Field began teaching English and religion at Seton Hall Prep and shortly thereafter became an instructor in the University's English department. In 1951 he became chairman of the department, a position he held until 1959, when he was appointed Associate Librarian of the University, with prime responsibility for library services at the Paterson and Newark urban campuses. In the following year, Columbia University awarded him the M.L.S. Three years later Monsignor Field became University Librarian and guided McLaughlin Library through the turbulent sixties and seventies. Additionally, from 1965 until 1972 he served as pastor of St. Catherine's parish in Glen Rock and from 1972 until 1974 filled the same position at St. Luke's, Ho-Ho-Kus. In 1980, as he completed 40 years of service at Seton Hall, Monsignor Field resigned as Librarian and assumed the new post of Curator of Special Collections. In 1981 New York University awarded him the M.A. in history and its certificate in Archival Management. He is continuing doctoral studies there.

Throughout his career Monsignor Field has been active in many cultural and intellectual pursuits outside the University. He has been on the editorial board of *The Advocate* for 26 years, and for 20 years reviewed new books regularly for *Best Sellers*. He served three terms as president of the Catholic Renaissance Society, is currently in his third term as a trustee of the Newark Museum, and is an active member of other historical and cultural organizations.

He was instrumental in arranging the transfer of Newark Chancery Office records to Seton Hall University, in the acquisition of numerous collections, and in the ongoing publications projects of the Commission. In addition, he has found time to publish a volume of his poetry.



Msgr. William N. Field

Publications and Lectures

Reilly, George L.A., "Thomas J. Walsh and Seton Hall College, 1928-1952," *New Jersey History*, Summer 1980, pp. 37-48, traces the development of Seton Hall College, with special emphasis on expansion during the period of Thomas J. Walsh's episcopal reign in Newark. The article explores the growth in physical facilities, athletic programs, faculty scholarship, and academic programs which occurred during this time, and offers a perspective on the multiple reasons for the College's growth and attempts to achieve University status.

Rev. Raymond Kupke, Paterson Diocesan archivist and Commission member, served as a panelist at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference's October 24 meeting in New York's Vista International Hotel. Fr. Kupke addressed the topic of "Survival in a Non-Archival Setting," along with archivists from the New York Botanical Garden, New York Stock Exchange, and 92nd Street Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association. Relating his experiences in a religious setting, Fr. Kupke focussed on the difficulties of interpreting archival work to individuals not familiar with the archivist's tasks, and the ways in which to promote one's program within the institutions.

Welfare Records Microfilmed

Newark's Public Library, in a cooperative project with the New Jersey Catholic Historical Records Commission, recently microfilmed a significant series of parish social welfare records from an Egg Harbor City parish.

Rev. James Betz, a former Egg Harbor pastor now assigned to St. Teresa's in Runnemede, discovered the records of the "St. Nicholas German Roman Catholic Beneficial Society" while preparing for a church anniversary celebration. Several volumes were recovered in a long-forgotten section of the parish schoolhouse, and a local parishioner (Frederick Wennemer) found additional material in his basement. Fr. Betz promptly notified the Commission, which arranged the filming with Charles Cummings of the Newark Public Library.

The organization was established in 1866 and is one of the earliest local Catholic welfare societies in New Jersey. Its original purpose was to "furnish to Roman Catholic men, the opportunity to harmless entertainments and mental development, and also mutual aid in sickness." The sixteen volumes include minutes of meetings (1866-1973), membership registers (1866-1959), cash books, dues registers, etc. Egg Harbor City was founded in 1854 by German immigrants seeking a refuge from New Jersey nativist prejudice. The town grew slowly. Bishop James Roosevelt Bayley noted in 1868 that "The city? itself is making no progress. Started on too grand a scale." By 1873, however, Newark's second episcopal prelate observed that the "Chief staple of Egg Harbor is the vine. Five million pounds of grape raised this year, and 200,000 gallons wine made." These records contain particularly valuable information concerning Egg Harbor's nineteenth-century residents, including occupation, place of birth, and genealogical data. The microfilm, and the deposit of research copies at Seton Hall and the Newark Library, ensures that the records will receive much deserved scholarly attention and that they will be preserved in professional archival settings.

From The Collections

Physically remote from the episcopal see of Newark, nineteenth-century Catholics in New Jersey's southernmost counties often received minimal ecclesiastical attention. A small church in Cumberland County, however, caused considerable reflection by the state's second Catholic Bishop.

Located six miles south of Millville, Port Elizabeth enjoyed some prominence as a minor New Jersey port in the late 1700s. Though the town's small trade base eroded rapidly in the early nineteenth century, some new industry offered the promise of growth and prosperity. A glass works, established by a Catholic immigrant family, flourished briefly and attracted "a German Colony of Hungarians and Bohemians." They soon purchased a vacant academy, converted the building into a parish, and dedicated it to the memory of St. Elizabeth of Hungary. By 1854, however, the glass works proprietor had died and the town's fortunes were declining. Bishop James Roosevelt Bayley, visiting the area in May of that year, observed "but a few scattered Catholics" who attended Mass in a small church "where the Priest of this mission says Mass once a month."

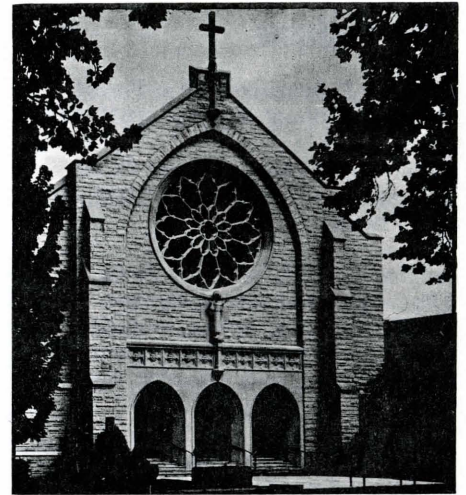
By 1875, this situation had deteriorated further. The mission's annual report complained that "the church is in a deplorable state." Fr. Martin Gessner had removed the parish's candlesticks and other furnishings to nearby Millville, and a former parishioner commented that "there's been no service in the church for a number of years." Bishop Michael A. Corrigan counted "only two Catholics in this place, which was formerly frequented by charcoal makers." He observed "an old Church, lonely & destitute."

Port Elizabeth's misfortunes intrigued Corrigan. When visiting Millville in

1879, the Bishop asked the local priest to accompany him there. They travelled through the destitute town and viewed the abandoned church. Millville's former pastor had removed the altar stone and furniture, depositing the church key with an aging Black woman, "the last surviving practical Catholic, since deceased." Bishop Corrigan contemplated the scene. "Windows smashed and destroyed, the roof partially fallen, the floor covered with debris of plaster. . . adjoining the church is the graveyard. I noticed a recent headstone with the date 1875." The town presented an equally depressing picture, with "the factories closed and grass growing in the streets of the once thriving village." Newark's episcopal shepherd was "overcome with sadness."

Bishop Corrigan and the Millville pastor soon formulated a scheme to revive the little church. Nearby Dennisville Catholics long wanted a place of worship. Corrigan proposed that the Port Elizabeth structure and furnishings be transported to that community "so that from the debris of this and the unused Masonic Lodge, bought for a church there, a little Chapel might be erected and the holy sacrifice be once more offered in reparation on that self-same altar." Within a few weeks, local Catholics had loaded the parish's remains on a raft, and "St. Elizabeth took a sail" down "the lazy stream which flows through the Port" and to its new destination. Less than four months later, on September 10, 1879, Corrigan presided at the dedication of St. Elizabeth's in Dennisville. "A great crowd. . . from Philadelphia, Camden, Vineland, Millville, and Cape May" gathered for the festivities.

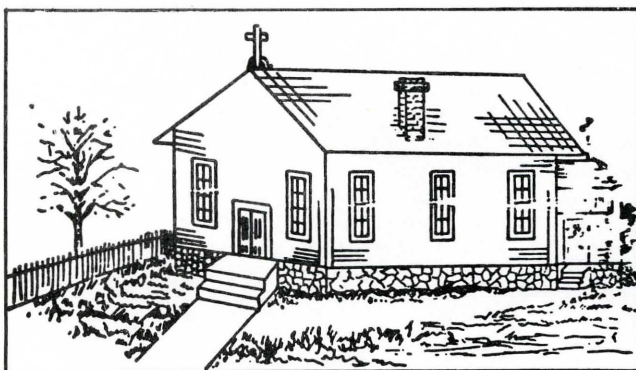
Happily, Port Elizabeth's economy revived a bit during the 1880s. Dennisville's faithful had a sturdy, new parish. And Bishop Corrigan contributed an innovative, ecclesiastical solution to the problem of underutilized diocesan property.



Church of St. Francis of Assisi, cathedral seat of the new Diocese of Metuchen, N.J., which was created in November 21, 1981, and encompasses the counties of Middlesex, Somerset, Warren, and Hunterdon. Most Rev. Theodore McCarrick, formerly auxiliary bishop to New York's Cardinal Cooke, will preside over the new jurisdiction. St. Francis parish began as a mission of St. Peter's in New Brunswick and had a frame church by 1871. The stone edifice was erected in 1961.

New Publication Available

The New Jersey Catholic Historical Records Commission is making available copies of its checklist guide to *Catholic Parish and Institutional Histories in the State of New Jersey*. Compiled by Seton Hall University archivist Peter J. Wosh, the 37-page guide is designed primarily to assist librarians, researchers, and others interested in the state's Catholic institutions. It lists histories available for research at the Commission's Seton Hall facility, with each parish entry noting author (if available), title, date published or compiled, number of pages of text, and whether illustrated. Early parish history efforts date to the late nineteenth century, and these little volumes remain a cornerstone of most church anniversary celebrations. The Commission plans supplementary volumes as the number of parish histories grow. We also wish to thank all parishes and institutions that have cooperated in sending copies of their history booklets, and hope you will continue to do so to ensure that our collection grows. Copies of the guide may be ordered for \$2.00 each from Peter J. Wosh, Archives, McLaughlin Library, Seton Hall University, South Orange NJ, 07079



St. Elizabeth's Church, Port Elizabeth.

Accessions

Newark Superintendent of Parish Schools (Annual Reports) (1910-1915)

Trenton Superintendent of Parish Schools (Annual Reports) (1912, 1914, 1916-1918)

Bishops' Association of the Laity Diocesan Seminary Campaign (1936-1937) (five inches) includes: correspondence, reports, summaries, form letters, press releases, appeals, etc.

Justin J. McCarthy Papers (1936-1960) (eight inches) includes: pulpit announcements and sermons written while McCarthy served as pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows in South Orange and Bishop of Camden, notes compiled while on retreat, and lecture notes while at the Immaculate Conception Seminary in Darlington.

Orange - Our Lady of the Valley (Scrapbook) (1904-1926) includes: programs of entertainments, dramatic productions, vaudeville shows, and other parish events.

Newark Diocesan Scrapbook (1890-1895) (one volume) includes: official circulars, lenten regulations, announcements, conference cases, etc. issued during Bishop Winand Wigger's episcopate. Also includes some information re: Archbishop Satolli's 1892 visit to the United States as an Apostolic Delegate.

Newark - St. Lucy's Church (1917-1922) (one volume) baptismal register.

CYO News (1942-1951) (1 1/2 feet) monthly publication of the Newark Archdiocese's Catholic Youth Organization.

Pleasantville - St. Peter's (three volumes) (1944, 1946, 1951) Parish monthly calendars from this South Jersey church which was attended by unsuccessful Presidential candidate Al Smith during his vacations.

Newark - Sacred Heart Cathedral (twelve feet) (1941-1978) includes: Pulpit Announcements (1958-1975); Parish Census Forms (1964); Pastors' Account Books (1941-1974); Pastors' Correspondence (1955-1961); Subject files re: tuition and schools, property demolition, employees; Bills (1955-1961, 1970-78); Annual Financial Reports (1945-1974); Payroll Books (1962-1965); Bank Statements and Deposit Slips (1951-1961, 1963, 1973).

Joseph Brady Papers (six inches) (1952-1960) primarily research notes and correspondence compiled while Brady taught at the Immaculate Conception Seminary in Darlington, and was attempting to write a comprehensive history of New Jersey Catholicism.

Stephen Moylan Papers (one item) (October 15, 1779) letter from this Catholic Revolutionary War Colonel to rebel General Nathaniel Greene.

James A. Weisbecker Papers (two feet) (1918-1945) includes a diary, sermons, scrapbooks, etc. compiled while Weisbecker served as chaplain of the Alexian Brothers Hospital in Elizabeth and preached at Holy Family Church in Union City. Also includes several newspaper clippings and articles re: Alexian Brothers Hospital, and several religious bulletins issued by Notre Dame University.

Published by the New Jersey Catholic Historical Records Commission Seton Hall University, South Orange, N.J. 07079

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