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New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission

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VOLUME IV NO. 1

AUTUMN 1982



An archdiocesan church group on a visit to the National Shrine of St. Joseph, Stirling, N.J. probably in the 1930's. Can readers identify either the group, the occasion, or individuals pictured? Any pertinent information will be gratefully received.



Sr. Margherita Marchione, M.P.F.

Meet the Commission

Sister Margherita Marchione, M.P.F., a member of the Religious Teachers of St. Lucy Filippini, is Professor of Italian Literature at Fairleigh Dickinson University, Madison. Born in Little Ferry, New Jersey, in 1922, she received her baccalaureate degree from Georgian Court College in 1943 and completed her doctoral work at Columbia in 1960. She has published several scholarly works, including *L'Imagine Tesa* (1960), *Philip Mazzei: Jefferson's "Zealous Whig"* (1975), and *Philip Mazzei: My Life and Wanderings* (1980). She is the founder and director of the Salvatori Center for Mazzei Studies and has just completed a microfilm edition of Mazzei's papers. Currently she is completing a multilingual six-volume letterpress edition of selected works and correspondence of Mazzei, the eighteenth-century Italian who was a friend of Jefferson and an American patriot. She has in addition published numerous essays and articles in scholarly journals and lectured widely at such universities as Michigan State, Rutgers, Seton Hall, Columbia, Harvard, and Yale.

Sister Margherita served as president of Walsh College (1966-1971), secretary-treasurer of the Religious Teachers Filippini (1966-1978), president of the American Institute of Italian Studies (1976-1982) and is currently a member of the New Jersey Historical Commission as well as of the executive council of the American Italian Historical Institute.

Survey Progress Report

The NJCHRC's survey of Catholic records in northern New Jersey, supported through a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, is nearing completion of its fourth month, and approximately 40 percent of the targeted institutions have been surveyed. Three field archivists have been hired to compile the results, which will ultimately be consolidated into a guide. Lorraine Coons comes to the Commission from New York University's graduate history program, where she is currently pursuing doctoral studies in nineteenth-century French social history. Lorraine holds a history M.A. and archival training certificate from NYU, and was recently awarded a grant from Columbia University's Council for European Studies to research her dissertation topic in France. Susan McKinney, a Kansas City native, received her history M.A. from Duquesne University earlier this year, where she served as a graduate assistant and concentrated on archival and museum studies. While at Duquesne, she interned at the Pittsburgh Public School District records survey and was hired as an archival consultant with the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh. Stephen Novak recently received a history M.A. and archival certificate from NYU, where he helped plan and prepare the 1981 sesquicentennial exhibit and served an advanced internship at the Seton Hall archives.

The Commission anticipates that the bulk of institutional surveying will be completed in February, with the remainder of the year devoted to assimilating the results and preparing a temporary guide to the material. Most pastors and recordkeepers have cheerfully accommodated the surveyors, taking time out from their busy schedules, and we sincerely appreciate their cooperation.

Oops...

The front page of the Summer 1982 *Newsletter* erroneously located St. Joseph's Home for Boys in Jersey City. Sr. Jeanne Tierney has advised us that, although the girls' home was in the Hudson County metropolis, the boys resided in Englewood Cliffs. Our thanks for the correct information, and apologies for the error.

Accessions

Rev. Edmund Q.S. Waldron, "A Short History of the Condition of the Catholic Church in the Southern Half of New Jersey in 1848," 1879, 16 pp.

"Souvenir of the Silver Jubilee of St. Leo's Church, Irvington, New Jersey," 1903.

Newark - St. Peter's Church Baptismal Registers (1855-58; 1867-1932); Marriage Registers (1854-59; 1863-1923); Communion Register (1866-1926); Confirmation Register (1888-1914); Board of Trustees Minutes (1885-1972).

Newark - St. Philip Neri's Baptismal Registers (1886-1918); Marriage Registers (1887-1918); Board of Trustees Minutes (1906-1968); Account Book (1962-1968).

Rev. P.J. Hennessey, "Report of the Condition of St. Patrick's Church, Elizabeth, N.J. from Its Foundation in 1858 to the 1st of January 1867, based on the closest investigation of Thirteen Months, and being as truthful and Reliable as it was possible to make it," 1867, 22 pp.

Newark Diocesan Council of Catholic Women (1923-1925) (two inches) minutes and reports.

Newark - Our Lady Queen of Angels (1930-1936) (six inches) includes reports, correspondence and financial data concerning missionary work amongst Newark's black population.

The Monitor (1906-1907; 1914-1916) (four inches) weekly diocesan newspaper.

Religious Communities files (1877-1932) (five inches) correspondence, dealing primarily with the Dominican Nuns of the Second Order of the Perpetual Adoration, Dominican Sisters of the Perpetual Rosary, Dominican Sisters of the Third Order of St. Dominic, Dominican Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis, between sisters and the bishops of Newark.

From the Collections

Even to the serious student of American Catholic history, Reverend Edmund Q.S. Waldron is an extremely obscure, if not totally unknown, figure. He began ministering to small, sparsely settled Catholic congregations in Gloucester, Salem, Atlantic and Cape May counties during the late 1840's, when that section of New Jersey fell under the administrative jurisdiction of the Philadelphia diocese. Archbishop Francis Patrick Kenrick did observe in his diary, while confirming twenty-seven Catholics at Pleasant Mills in November 1848, that Waldron's "zealous care" assured that "the life of religion is vigorous in this congregation." Still, concluded Philadelphia's episcopal authority, "the people live scattered here and there, far from the church"; southern New Jersey remained a fairly desolate spiritual backwater. Waldron's difficult personal sacrifices and missionary labors did not constitute the type of work which would excite the future historian. Indeed, John Gilmary Shea failed to mention the prelate in his *History of the Catholic Church within the Limits of the United States* in 1892, and even Walter T. Leahy's more limited *The Diocese of Trenton* only noted in passing that "in 1848 this parish (St. Mary's in Pleasant Mills) passed to the care of Father Waldron." Fortunately, however, a heretofore unknown manuscript uncovered during the Commission's NEH-funded Catholic Records Survey has elevated Father Waldron from historical footnotes to a more central position in New Jersey Catholic history.

In 1879, at the urging of Newark bishop Michael A. Corrigan, Waldron put pen to paper and prepared "A Short History of the Condition of the Catholic Church in the Southern Half of New Jersey in 1848." Chronicling the author's trials and tribulations as he attempted to spread Catholic teachings in a largely hostile environment, the sixteen-page manuscript offers a tantalizing glimpse into a forgotten and very foreign world.

Waldron's January, 1848 visit to Gloucester City, on the banks of the Delaware River, illustrates the work's usefulness to twentieth-century observers. Upon arriving in town, the author was pleasantly surprised. He remembered it from a previous visit as "a den of bad characters of all sorts," but now found "the place changed into a manufacturing town with stately manufacturing and other buildings." Still, "as in other places in the country, where no Catholic priest had



St. Mary's Church, Gloucester, N.J.
(from Leahy, *The Diocese of Trenton*.)

been seen and no altar erected, great prejudice and even bitterness against our religion prevailed." Waldron had received advance threats from hostile local Protestants, and was warned that "if he came to Gloucester he should be stoned."

Despite these ominous portents, Waldron secured "an old and apparently abandoned school-house in the outskirts of the town" to say Mass in and began assembling his scattered flock for occasional services. Soon, he found a hall near the town center and "five hundred people, many of whom were protestants" now practiced Catholic rituals. One evening Waldron received "a shower of chips, and an egg, which hit him between the shoulders, spreading its content all over the back of his cassock," but excepting this indignity the pastor fulfilled his responsibilities with minimal disruption.

On January 9, 1848, the lonely prelate confronted a more threatening situation. While walking toward the church hall, he noticed "the very lowest and worst characters of the whole neighborhood" congregating alongside his makeshift parish. One lone Catholic, "a strong man nearly or quite six feet high," offered to accompany Waldron into the Church and strode "like a soldier, and up the aisle of the hall...and took his seat near the platform." Shortly thereafter, the suspicious-looking locals entered in "a long single-file procession...and took their seats on the side benches along the whole of one side of the hall." Waldron preached a particularly fiery and provocative "discourse on hell...especially for their benefit" and awaited their reaction. Surprisingly, near the end of his sermon, "one after another, they walkly quietly out and nothing was afterwards heard of them and no further trouble was given the Catholics except a few harmless threats at the time the corner stone for a church was laid."

This incident and several others related in the narrative transport readers to a time when the Catholic Church was warily (and not always successfully) establishing itself in new territories. Until last month it remained lost to the ages, buried in a basement corner of Newark's Archdiocesan Chancery Office. Now, thanks to the Commission's Catholic Records Survey, it is available for historians to digest and interpret.

Grant by Knights

The New Jersey State Council of the Knights of Columbus has presented a gift of \$5,000.00 to the Commission in furtherance of its general programs. The Commission is deeply grateful for this latest donation, which continues the support the Knights have extended to the Commission since its inception.

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Newsletter Staff: Joseph F. Mahoney; Peter Wosh

Georgian Court — 75 Years

Throughout this academic year Georgian Court College will mark its seventy-fifth anniversary with a variety of observances. Established by the Sisters of Mercy of New Jersey in 1908 as Mt. St. Mary College at North Plainfield, the institution graduated its first class of four women in 1912. A growing student body over the next decade forced the Sisters to seek a new location. When, in 1924, the George Jay Gould estate in Lakewood — Georgian Court — came on the market, the Sisters of Mercy purchased it for a new campus. Gould, son of railway magnate Jay Gould, stipulated that the estate name be kept, and Mt. St. Mary became Georgian Court College. The 152-acre estate included four principal buildings, to which seven others have been added over the years. In 1976 a graduate program in education was initiated, and three years later a coeducational evening division opened. Because of the beauty of its landscape and the value of the art and architecture it preserves, Georgian Court College was registered in 1978 as a National Historic Site.

Front cover of the fiftieth anniversary booklet of St. Peter's Church, Newark. The new church, pictured here, was consecrated on Saturday, July 29, 1905, as part of the anniversary ceremonies.



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