

Winter 1991

## New Jersey Catholic Records Newsletter, Vol. 10, No.2

New Jersey Catholic Historical Commission

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# New Jersey Catholic Records Newsletter

VOLUME X NO. 2

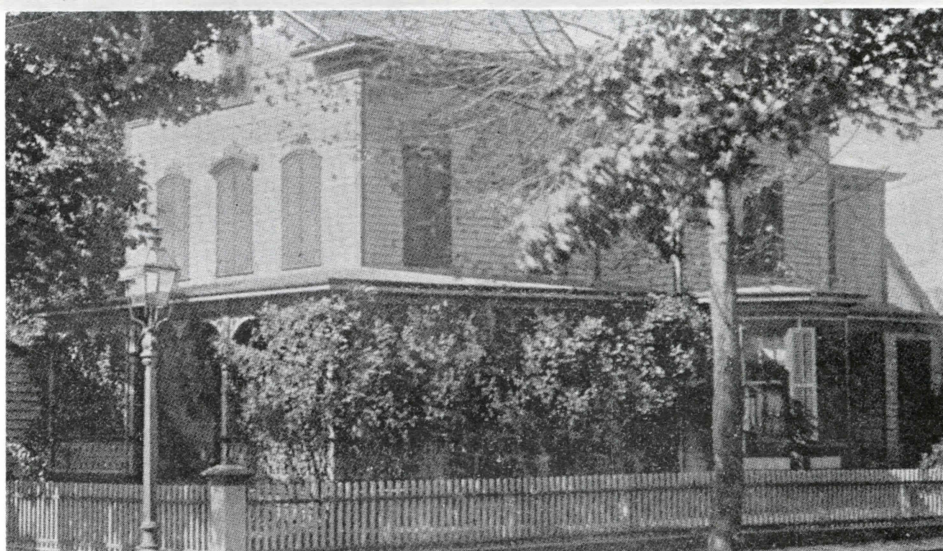
WINTER 1991

## Commission Receives "Souvenir" of the Church of the Sacred Heart

The Commission is always interested in acquiring materials which illustrate the history of Catholics and Catholicism in the state of New Jersey. Just recently it received a small souvenir booklet published on the occasion of the dedication of the new church of the Sacred Heart in Bloomfield on October 16, 1893. The new material was found among the effects of Mary Hester Flood, who died recently at the age of 93. Her parents had been married in Sacred Heart and she apparently obtained the booklet from them. Random pencil marks on some pages indicate that a child probably played with the book or possibly whiled away a rainy afternoon reading it. Through the courtesy of Mrs. Flood's son, Joseph, the souvenir is now preserved for future use in the archives at Seton Hall University.

The booklet, bound in white buckram with the single word "Souvenir" in gold lettering on the front, measures seven by five and three-quarters inches and originally had 42 pages of text and several illustrations. Unfortunately the ravages of time have broken the binding and now four pages are missing. Despite this loss, the booklet provides numerous interesting insights into the early history of one parish, and some clues as to the general character of parish development and growth in the state.

The title page identifies the booklet as a "Souvenir of the new Church of the Sacred Heart," notes that Reverend J[oseph] M. Nardiello is the pastor, adds that it contains "a history of the Catholic



*Sisters' Convent, Sacred Heart, Bloomfield, circa 1893.*

Church in Bloomfield" and that John F. Dillon published it at Bloomfield in 1893. The author remains anonymous. Perhaps the pastor himself wrote the text, but that seems unlikely.

The brief history of Catholicism in Bloomfield notes that the area for 23 years was served from Immaculate Conception parish in Montclair, and that the residents had frequently petitioned the Newark bishops, Bayley and Corrigan, for a separate parish. One parishioner commented about these years: "The well-living had miles to go to attend to their religious duties, some to Montclair, others to Belleville or Newark, and those of weak faith stayed religiously at home waiting for the Lord to come to them."

In June, 1878 Bishop Michael A. Corrigan appointed Father Joseph M.

Nardiello to establish the new parish in Bloomfield. Born and educated in Italy, Nardiello had been ordained there in 1869 and shortly thereafter came to New Jersey. He served as an assistant in Newark, Orange and Jersey City before being appointed to Sacred Heart, where he remained until his death in 1915. Until a church could be built, Father Nardiello rented a hall in the Bloomfield Hotel and said Mass there each Sunday, beginning on July 6, 1878. Contracts for a church building were let on July 7, the cornerstone was laid on July 28, the basement was first used for Mass on September 21, and on November 17 Bishop Corrigan blessed the newly-completed church. In his journal the bishop commented: "[The church] is a frame building, with basement to be used as a school, 39 x 75, and will accommo-

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*Reverend Joseph M. Nardiello*

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date 420 persons on the main floor, and 100 in the gallery. Entire cost, including steam apparatus for heating \$4,000."

The parochial school was taught during the first year by two lay teachers from Newark, and at its opening enrolled 140 students. In September, 1879 the Sisters of Charity from Convent Station assumed the teaching responsibility. By May, 1882, Nardiello was able to proceed to the building of a new school, which was dedicated on September 17 and occupied by teachers and students the following day. The new edifice contained six classrooms and a large hall with a seating capacity of 500, all for the sum of \$10,000.

Among early spiritual and social organizations of the young parish, the Rosary Society was first to be established, having been founded at the first Mass. Shortly thereafter the Children of Mary, for young women of the parish, was established, and in March, 1879 the Sacred Heart Society for men came into

existence. Probably in 1881 the Young Men's Catholic Union was organized in the parish and by 1890 had become an active force not only in the parish but also in the town.

Despite the loss of four pages of text, the simple souvenir booklet commemorating the dedication of the new church of the Sacred Heart in 1893 supplies a good deal of information about the early days of one parish, and some indication of how Catholics went about forming new parishes, what priorities they established, and how they sought to attain their various goals. Such booklets, of course, do not generally recall controversy in the parish, but perhaps there are some hints in this one of how an Italian pastor proceeded in a parish at the time largely German and Irish. Contracts for the building of both the first church and the school were divided, the carpentry work going to an Irishman and the masonry contract to a German, and the interior decoration of the church in 1881 was done by Italians. Perhaps in each case these were the lowest bidders, but if so, it was a serendipitous circumstance.

The Commission hopes that others who possess or know the location of source materials for the history of Catholics in the state—sermon notes, sermons, diaries, correspondence, pictures, anything, in fact, that tells us who we were, so that we may better understand who we are and where we may be going—will contact the archivist at 761-9476 or write to the Commission at Seton Hall University.



ABOVE:  
*Sacred Heart  
Parochial School,  
circa 1893.*



RIGHT:  
*First Communion  
group at Holy Spirit  
Church.*



# Meet the Commission

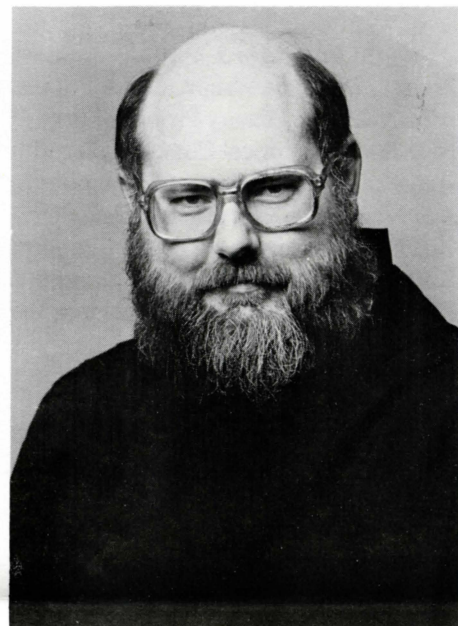
Father Augustine J. Curley, O.S.B. was born in Livingston, New Jersey to a family long established in north Jersey. His maternal ancestors lived in the Newark area before Saint John's was founded, and he grew up hearing stories of how they had to travel to Jersey City and take a ferry to New York to receive the sacraments at St. Peter's in Barclay Street. His great-grandmother's brother was Monsignor Patrick F. Connolly, who served as pastor at St. John's in Lambertville, St. Mary's in Bordentown, and SS. Philip and James in Phillipsburg. Father Augustine's great-uncle, Father Thomas McEnery, founded St. Philomena's in Livingston.

Father Augustine attended grammar school at St. Philomena's in Livingston and St. Peter's in Belleville and then went on to St. Benedict's Prep in Newark.

When this closed briefly, he finished his high school studies at St. Peter's Prep in Jersey City. After completing his baccalaureate work at Assumption College in Worcester, Massachusetts, where he majored in philosophy and politics, Father Augustine went on to graduate study of philosophy at Boston College. Here he served both as a research assistant and as a teaching fellow. He is currently a doctoral candidate there.

In 1982 Father Augustine returned to New Jersey to enter Newark Abbey and in 1984 made profession of simple vows in the Benedictine Order. He served for a year as librarian at St. Benedict's Prep, and then began theological studies at Immaculate Conception Seminary. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1988.

Father Augustine currently teaches at St. Benedict's, serves as school and abbey librarian and archivist, and is secretary to the abbot. In addition, he frequently reviews books for such publications as *The Library Journal* and *The*



*Reverend Augustine Curley, O.S.B.*

*Journal of Church and State.* He is a member of the New Jersey Historical Society, the Archivists of Religious Institutions and other professional associations. For the Commission, he is chairman of the publications committee.

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## Advisory Board Established

The Commission has recently established a Board of Counselors, consisting of outstanding individuals with a personal or professional interest in New Jersey Catholic history. The functions of the counselors will be to advise and assist the Commission in its efforts to preserve and maintain the records of New Jersey Catholics and Catholicism and to foster study and publication on all elements of the topic.

Those who have generously agreed to serve on the board are: Brendan T. Byrne, former governor of New Jersey; Charles Cummings, associate director of the Newark Public Library; Mrs. Marcus Daly; Mrs. William Y. Dear; Mrs. John Goepfert; Mrs. Shirley Horner; Richard P. Hughes, former governor and former chief

justice of New Jersey; Mrs. John Magnier; Ben Primer of the Mudd Library at Princeton University; Professor Carl E. Prince of New York University; Bernard Shanley; Kevin Shanley and Barbara Weaver, state librarian.

Professor Prince was a founding member of the Commission, but his increased commitments have made it impossible for him to remain a member. His continued interest in the Commission's work has lead him to serve as a counselor. Others of the counselors have previously assisted specific Commission projects. The Commission looks confidently to a future in which their advice and assistance notably further its goals.

## Black Catholic Symposium and Exhibit

On January 31, 1991 a symposium on gathering the history of Black Catholics in New Jersey will be sponsored at Seton Hall University by the University's Center for Special Collections, the New Jersey Catholic Historical Records Commission and the Office for Black Catholics of the Archdiocese of Newark. The program will begin at 12:30 p.m. with a welcome by Dean Robert Jones of the University Library. Most Reverend Joseph Francis, S.V.D., auxiliary bishop of Newark, will introduce the general topic, after which specific elements will be addressed by the other speakers. Mrs. Lucille Foreman, director of the Archdiocesan Office for Black Catholics, will describe the Black Catholic Heritage

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Project. Dr. Giles Wright, director of the Afro-American History Project of the New Jersey Historical Commission and author of *Afro-Americans in New Jersey: A Short History*, will discuss "Using Oral History to Illuminate the Past." Theodore Brunson, curator of the Afro-American Museum in Jersey City, will conclude the

program with a discussion on "The Importance of Collecting and Protecting Afro-American Material and Culture."

A related exhibition on the history of Black Catholics in New Jersey will open in McLaughlin Library on January 14, 1991 and run through February 10. Both the symposium and the exhibit serve to

introduce the observance of Black History Month, which is commemorated each February. Readers are invited to take advantage of both activities, most easily by attending the symposium in the Bishop Dougherty Student Center and viewing the exhibition either before or after the symposium. We look forward to seeing many of you there.



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