

ASPIRING CHRISTIANS

HISTORIES OF YATES COUNTY CHURCHES



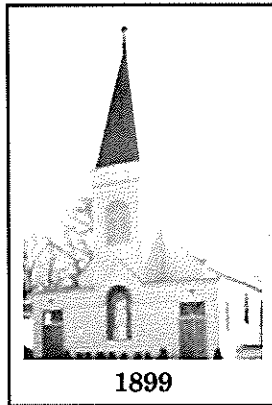
Compiled by: Linda J. Jackson

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1823-1998

ST. MARY'S CHURCH, RUSHVILLE

The first Catholics in Rushville were John Cooper and his wife who came here in 1846. A few months later Mrs. Cooper's sister a Miss Lacey, joined them and in 1852 married Daniel McGuinness in New York City, and who, at the advanced age of 77, lived with her son-in-law, Mr. J. E. Devereaux in Niagara Falls. She told of the baptism of the eight infants in the Cooper home before St. Mary's was built and said it was a notable fact that one of the boys christened that day later became a trustee of the church.



St. Mary's was the first of the two churches to be built. Rushville was but a hamlet when St. Mary's Catholic church was erected. When the first Mass was celebrated on May 5, 1853 there was no church. The Mass was celebrated in John Cooper's home which was the second house on the left side of the road after you cross the railroad tracks. The Reverend Edmund O'Connor of Canandaigua officiated with about only twenty worshippers present. The second and third services took place in the house of Daniel McGuinness on Gilbert St. Mr. McGuinness worked for Joshua Fitch, who suggested the purchase of an old wool-house to be used for Masses. This is the present site of our St. Mary's Church. Mssrs. McGuinness, Cooper and Miles went to Canandaigua to obtain consent from Father O'Connor to make the proposed purchase for \$800. On their return they started a five dollar subscription list among the Catholics.

Some time after securing the wool-house the men of the congregation moved the building back from the walk, put

in new windows, and replaced the wooden benches with the old pews from the Methodist Church which was on Chapel Street before their new brick church was built on Main Street.

St. Mary's was incorporated as a parish in 1869. The Incorporating Trustees were: R. Rev. Bernard J. McQuaid; Very Rev. James M. Early, Rev. Patrick Lee, Mr. Daniel McGuinness and Mr. John McIntosh. Father Patrick Lee is indicated as pastor according to the list of the Incorporating Trustees.

In the fall of 1897 the church at St. Mary's was totally destroyed by fire. In Nov. of 1897 an entertainment and play were held which cleared \$441.37. In February of the following year, 1898, the proceeds of another entertainment amounted to \$370. The night of this entertainment the thermometer dropped to 16 degrees below zero, but in spite of this many were in attendance. That along with the \$1,943 in insurance which was collected helped in the building of the new church of St. Mary's which was dedicated in 1899.

In its early days the church was serviced by the Rev. Father Dean of Penn Yan and the Rev. Father Gleason Purrell of Buffalo. At a later date St. Mary's was made an out-mission of Phelps for several years. Names of some of the early Catholic settlers of Rushville were the families of Thomas Conway, James Miles, Garrett Lacey, Thomas Foley, Michael Murphy, Patrick Hogan, Thomas Hogan, Michael Hogan, Frank Whalen, Thomas Rogers, John Muckle and Timothy Lynch.

This little parish at Rushville claims the honor of having been the boyhood home, if not the birth-place, of the Very Rev. James Rogers of the Immaculate Conception Church of Buffalo; of the Rev. John J. Carroll of St. Thomas Church of Chicago and the Rev. William Payne of St. Francis de Sales of Geneva.

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