

PARISH HISTORY

The Catholic community of Pompey, now under the patronage of the Blessed Mother and dedicated to her Immaculate Conception, has a history stretching back beyond the modern era to the French Jesuits who were the first white men to gaze on the beautiful lakes and hills of Central New York. Within the confines of the original boundaries of our parish Father Joseph M. Chaumonot, S.J. celebrated the first Mass in New York State in a small bark chapel at an Indian village of the Onondagas located on Indian Hill Road. The date was November 14, 1665.

In 1835 and 1836 Capt. David Dodge and his wife Ada embraced the Catholic faith due to the evangelization of an itinerant Irish peddler named Francis Murphy. The Dodge family and the Francis Murphy family now lie together in the Dodge family plot of the parish cemetery at the crest of Pompey Hill. Their strong faith and determination provided the fertile ground for what is now the Catholic parish community of the Immaculate Conception. Their efforts in encouraging Irish immigrants to settle in Pompey gave a firm and permanent foundation to the parish in its infancy.

The Catholics of Pompey were served early on by Augustinian priests who traveled from Philadelphia to offer Mass in Capt. Dodge's home east of Pompey Hill. Later priests from St. John the Baptist, Salina (now Syracuse) and St. Mary's (now the Cathedral) in Syracuse cared for the sacramental needs of the Pompey Catholics from 1836 until Father James Cahill was appointed first resident pastor of St. James, Cazenovia. Pompey then became a mission of St. James and remained such until Father John Fitzpatrick came to reside on Pompey Hill around 1871. Parish records indicate the parish was officially constituted in 1873. The parish proper included the present Township of Pompey. From

the time of Father Fitzpatrick, Fabius and Lafayette were served as missions from the Pompey parish and in 1887 Apulia Station became a "Station" for the occasional celebration of Mass. This ceased at some later unknown time. In 1888 the mission of St. Patrick's, Otisco was attached to Immaculate Conception.

Mass was offered in the home of David Dodge from 1836 until 1850 when a house east of the present church was purchased for use as a chapel. On August 18, 1852 the Catholic parish purchased for \$500 the abandoned Baptist Church on Academy Street next to the Pompey Academy. This church served the parish for many years. Father Michael O'Reilly, the second pastor, decided that with his growing congregation there was a need for a much larger and more imposing church building. On October 16, 1874 the present property including the dwelling located thereon and erected in the 1830's was purchased from Francis P. Pratt. The dwelling became, and remains to this day, the parish rectory. The additional land was envisioned as the site for a new church.

During the pastorate of Father John V. Simmons the erection of the new church was begun. The building was designed by an accomplished local architect, Archimedes Russell, who designed many public buildings and churches in the Central New York area. Russell's work is considered by experts to be among the most outstanding historical buildings in this region of the United States. Work began in 1892 and the church was dedicated in June 1893 by the Rt. Rev. Patrick A. Ludden, D.O., first Bishop of Syracuse.

The Catholic community of Fabius developed at the same time as the community at Pompey. The first Mass was offered in the Town of Fabius at the home of Edmund Shea on the Vincent Corners Road in the early 1860's. For several years Mass continued to be celebrated in this home. Fabius was considered to be a station of St. James parish, Cazenovia. Once Fabius was constituted as a mission of Immaculate Conception, Pompey, in 1871 with a

resident priest on Pompey Hill, Mass was offered in Stewart's Hall which stood on the approximate site of the present Elementary School building . In 1872 the number of Catholics had increased sufficiently to necessitate the rental of the abandoned Universalist Church on Ridge Road in the village for use as a chapel. In 1891 the church building and land were purchased from the Universalist Society for \$600. The church was enlarged, renovated and dedicated to St. Paul the Apostle that same year. Mass was celebrated thereafter every third week until 1919 when it began to be offered every Sunday.

During the pastorate of Father James Flavin several acres of property on Route 80 east of the village were purchased as a site for a more suitable church building. During this period parishioners worked very hard to layaway funds toward a new church in the distant future. Father William P. Regan was appointed to the parish in September 1970 and responded to the desire of the people of St. Paul's for a more suitable place of worship. The present brick church was erected in 1975. The dedication took place on December 7, 1975 with the Most Rev. David F. Cunningham, Sixth Bishop of Syracuse, officiating.

No history of a parish is complete without reference to its essential purpose -- to be a community of faith joined in professing Jesus as Lord and linked to the Apostolic Succession of bishops together with and under the Apostolic See of Peter presided over by the Bishop of Rome. This defines us as within the fold of that ancient church called "Catholic". This parish has been the Catholic parish family of the area for thousands of persons during its history to the present. The totality of the spiritual fruits born of this parish community through God's grace are known only to God. One visible fruit we point to with pride is the exceptional number of religious vocations nurtured within this parish family: 15 priests, 2 brothers and 12 sisters.

This is the heritage left us by our ancestors in the faith. Now it is our task to continue to carry on in our time the work so well begun by them and to pass on the legacy of their endeavors and our own efforts that the Gospel of Jesus within the Catholic tradition may be proclaimed in these hills and valleys to all the generations who will follow us. We are very happy to have you join us in this work and to offer your time and talents and treasure to that end.

WELCOME!