Two Catholic Churches Located Here In Washington

Catholicism Here Dates Back To 1819

Last Request By Dying Woman Made Possible St. Agnes Chapel

By DAVID M. MILLIGAN
Daily News Staff Writer

The city that claims tomatoes had the first organized Catholic parish in North Carolina, now has a Catholic church because of the last request of a dying New York woman to her husband. The request led to the establishment of an elaborate funeral for the woman, from which she concluded that she would prefer that a small mission church be built on a small block of property on Market Street. Reports indicate that the church was built, and records show that the church was dedicated in 1819.

St. Agnes, now a church and school combined, was one of the first Catholic churches in the city. The church was built in 1819, and records show that it had a small number of members. The church was later expanded and became a prominent church in the city.

SMALL BRICK STRUCTURE HOUSES ST. AGNES

ST. AGNES CATHOLIC CHURCH OF WASHINGTON

(Staff Photo)

as far back as the year 1819 a Catholic priest held regular services here.

First Church

St. John's church, the first Catholic church in Washington, was built before the Civil War and destroyed in 1864 by Federal troops under General Harlan and Captain Woodruff. When the forces twice evacuated the city, the second Catholic Church in Washington was torn down for highway improvements about 25 years ago. St. Agnes was built about three years later.

During the intervening years, when there were no church services held in various Catholic churches in the city, Father Mark Montiery, a New York priest, took up residence in the city and performed the duties here. He served two years when Father Ellis F. Gilmore, retired to the priesthood, served the church.

Father Gilbert Transfers

In April of this year, after 21 years in Washington, Father Gilbert was transferred to St. Mary's Church in Godfrey, a parish which he considered to be one of the largest in the Diocese of Raleigh. He left with instructions of building a school there for the parish. Father Thomas Gilbert, one of the parishioners, served as Father Gilbert here at St. Agnes. He was previously the pastor of St. Michael's Church in Washington.

Pence W. E. Beazley

First person of color to hold the position of priest in the city, Father Andrew D. Beazley, was ordained in 1832 by Bishop James Moore. He served as a priest for many years, and was known for his dedication to the Catholic community.

Mother Of Mercy Mission Started in 1927

By DAVID M. MILLIGAN

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The reason for beginning of Mother of Mercy Mission in Washington was a question concerning Catholicism asked by David Arts Keys, a colored, to a Catholic priest, Rev. H. A. D. Gable.

From that question, the roots of the Catholic church for people of color began to grow.

In April of this year, the Bishop of Raleigh for 1928, Rev. Charles Hanley, D.D., a pioneer, wrote a letter to the parishioners of St. Agnes Church, asking for their support and asking for a new church building to be built.

Four New Arrivals

Four Catholic men arrived in Washington, August 30, 1927, for the first time. They arrived by train and by car and by bus and by bus. The men are Prof. John B. Keyes, a colored, and Mr. and Mrs. H. A. D. Gable, a colored, and Mr. and Mrs. C. A. J. D. Gable, a colored.

The men are members of the parish and are the first colored priests to be ordained in the city.

Mother of Mercy Mission

Mother of Mercy Mission was founded in 1927 by Rev. Charles Hanley, D.D., a pioneer in the Catholic Church in Washington. The mission was founded to serve the needs of the Catholic community in the area.

The mission was housed in a small building, and provided services to the Catholic community, including education and religious services.

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