

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 to have 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, that instead of an elaborate funeral for her at death, she would prefer that a small mission chapel be built.

And so stands a small brick structure on Market street in Washington, a Mrs. Cogan's last request, and St. Agnes Catholic Church.

St. Agnes, now a church and school combined, was not the first Catholic church to be built in Washington, and records show that

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 of Washington, was built before the Civil War and destroyed in May of 1864 by Federal troops under General Harland and Captains Renshaw and Stramer when the forces twice evacuated the city. The second Catholic Church of Washington was torn down for highway improvement about 25 years ago. St. Agnes was built about three years later.

During the intervening years, when there was no church, services were held in various Catholic homes of the community.

Father Mark Moeslien, though serving only in the absence of an appointed pastor, is considered to be the first pastor of St. Agnes. He served two years when Father Edward T. Gilbert relieved him of his duties here and became the first resident pastor of the church.

Father Gilbert saw the membership of the church grow from four communicants when he came to a total membership of approximately 140 members when he was relieved.

St. Agnes Academy

In 1939, under the able guidance of Father Gilbert, St. Agnes Academy with kindergarten was open-

ed. The subsequent years saw the Academy grow with added grades until now, instead of St. Agnes Academy, it is known as and is St. Agnes Junior High school.

The first superior of St. Agnes school was Mother de Chantel, who was later transferred to St. Joseph's school in Williamsport, Pa. The teaching staff of the school is at present comprised of five Catholic Nuns of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The mother-house of this Order is in Scranton, Pa.

Like other Catholic schools and churches, St. Agnes observes Christmas, Easter and May Day as the highlights of the year.

Father Gilbert Transfers

In April of this year, after 21 years in Washington, Father Gilbert was transferred to St. Mary's church in Goldsboro, a parish which is considered to be one of the largest in the Diocese of Raleigh. He left with intentions of building a school there.

The present pastor, Father Thomas Gilbert Roche, succeeded Father Gilbert here at St. Agnes. He was previously the pastor of St. Therese's church at Wrightsville Beach, N. C.

Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Meekins and Mrs. W. H. von Eberstein, all of Washington, are said to be the oldest members of St. Agnes par-

ish. Mrs. Meekins became a Catholic in December, 1932, and her husband was converted two years later. Mrs. von Eberstein was born Catholic.

Sunday services held regularly at St. Agnes are a Mass at 9 a. m., followed by the Miraculous Medal Novena Devotion and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Week-day Masses are at 7 a. m.

POLICE WILL SEE ONE OF THREE

CLEVELAND, O. — Periodic motor vehicle inspection movement is 25 years old this year. It is estimated that 17,000,000 of the nation's 50,000,000 vehicles will be checked this year. Automobiles with defective mechanisms are a danger to highway safety and, reports The National Street and Traffic Safety Lighting Bureau, when these autos travel the many thousands of miles of inadequately lighted streets at night, their danger is enhanced, contributing in large part to the nation's high night traffic fatality totals which approach 20,000 deaths per year.

First lunch wagon in the United States was a horse-drawn affair in Worcester, Mass., operated in 1822 by Sam Jones.

Mother Of Mercy Started In 1920s

Question By Colored Man To Priest Started Catholic Church Here

By DAVID M. MILLIGAN
Daily News Staff Writer

The provocation for beginning of Mother of Mercy Mission here in Washington was a question concerning Catholicism asked by David Artis Keys, colored, to a Catholic priest, Rev. Charles Gabel.

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

In a report to the Bishop of Raleigh for 1926, Rev. Charles Hannigan, S.S.J., a pioneer, wrote: "A lot 200' by 168' at Washington, N.C. has been bought for the construction of church and school." Further on he wrote: "Work on the Washington building will begin in March of next year, 1927, and we hope to have them completed by September."

Four Nuns Arrive

Four Catholic nuns arrived in Washington, August 20, 1927, for duties with the new church, and for some months they occupied what is now the rectory.

Fifteen children registered for school on opening day, September 11, 1927. One week later the number had grown to 35, and by December of the same year, the number grew to 100.

Father Hannigan accompanied the first centre of Catholic activities in Washington section of North Carolina. As far back as March 26, 1829, the Most Rev. John England, D.D., Bishop of Charleston, S. C., dedicated the church and consecrated the cemetery of 'St. John, Apostle and Evangelist,' Washington, Beaufort county, N. C. The church and cemetery were located on a fairly large plot at Third and Van Norden streets.

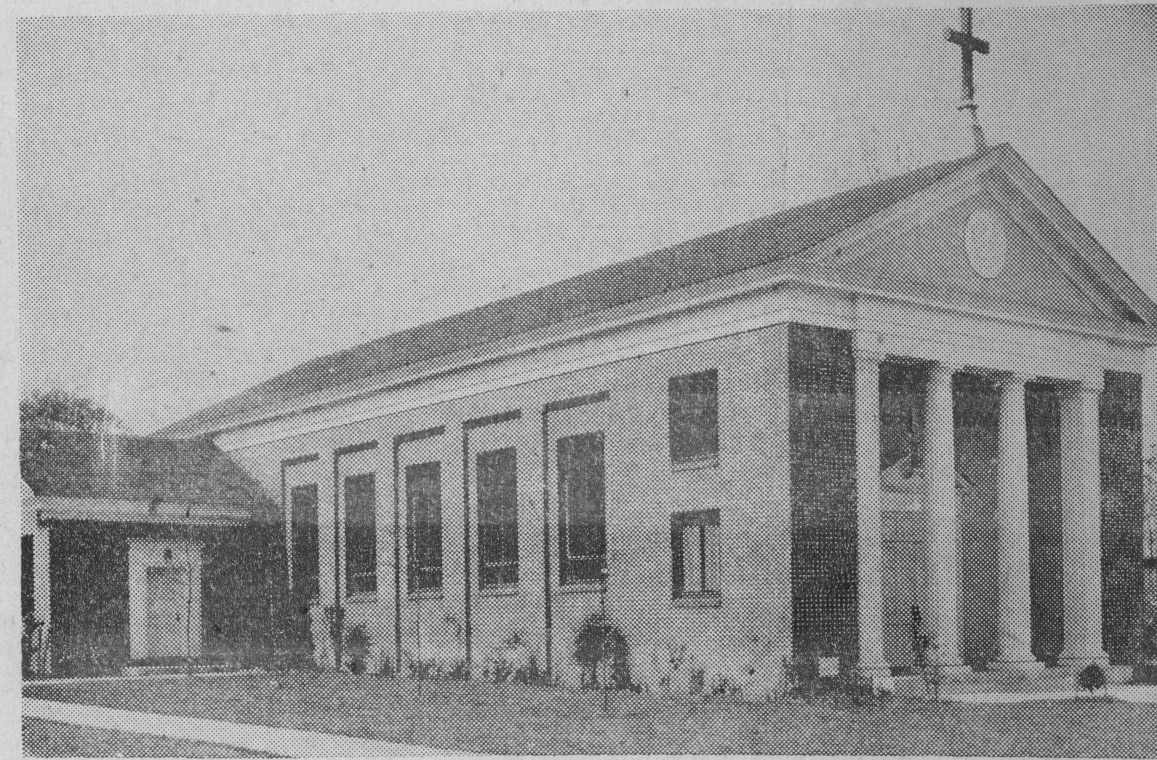
Father Hannigan accompanied Rev. Mark Moeslein to Washington on January 12, 1928, and Father Mark took over duties as the first resident-pastor of the Mission. He was in his seventy-fourth year of age at the time.

Toward the close of 1937, the pastor's old-age handicaps became evident, and the Rev. Daniel McDevitt, C.P., was sent to relieve the strain with Father Mark remaining as pastor. Neither priest drew a salary.

Gifts Bring Improvements

April 6, 1928, was the date for the Golden Jubilee of Ordination of Father Mark, and gifts to the Jubilarian made possible desired improvements to the Mission amounting to a total cost of \$14,

MOTHER OF MERCY MISSION STARTED IN 1927



MOTHER OF MERCY MISSION OF WASHINGTON

230.35. The same year a well-to-do woman and her sisters donated \$30,000 for the construction of a second-story for the school and a new roof.

The years saw this little Mother of Mercy Mission grow in the most non-Catholic state of the Union, and today it boasts a total enrollment of 225 members, all ardent churchgoers, according to Rev. J. J. Endler, C.P., present pastor, who resides at 112 W. Ninth street.

The oldest members of the parish are five who started and aged with the Mission, and are listed as Mrs. Louise Little, Mr. and Mrs. Dave Keys and Mr. and Mrs. Zeb S. Bonner.

The most outstanding highlight of the year for Mother of Mercy Mission came when Mrs. Z. S. Bonner, a member of the parish, was named Catholic mother of the year for North Carolina.

Regular services held are: Sunday Masses at 7:30 a.m., and 9:00 a.m., and Sunday evening Sermon and Benediction at 7:30 p.m.