

FOUNDATION  
OF  
SAINT MONICA'S CHURCH  
OF ROCHESTER

By  
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## THE FOUNDATION OF ST. MONICA'S CHURCH OF ROCHESTER

In early June of 1898 when all nature was blossoming into fresh new life, the young Father John P. Brophy of Rochester, N.Y. was told "Go out beyond the hedge where the oatfield is and there you will found a parish." The tender shoots of oats in the field near the edge of Rochester--those vigorous shoots which in a few months would yield abundant harvest, could have been a happy portent to Father Brophy of his vigorous apostolate and the harvest which would be reaped from the fruit of his labors in that territory. On June 8 of that year Father Brophy (then but thirty years old) was named pastor of what was to become St. Monica's Church.

For some time prior to 1898 it had been felt by Bishop McQuaid and Father O'Hare V.G., rector of Immaculate Conception Church, that the parish of Immaculate Conception having grown to such proportions, a division of the parish was necessary for more effective pastoral work. Accordingly, the parish was divided and a portion of SS. Peter and Paul's parish was also included in the new St. Monica's parish, the boundary lines running at that time from the lower end of Magnolia St. to Jefferson Ave., down Jefferson Ave. to Columbia Ave., thence to Genesee St., down to West Ave., including all streets south and west of those lines. St. Bernard's Seminary owned a tract of land on Genesee Street about 500 feet from the city line at that time, and St. Monica's Church Corporation purchased some of this ground for building purposes. At first there were but 65

families willing to support the new church--and many unwilling.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, the first church was built in the fall of 1898 at a cost of about \$12,000, the architect being W. Foster Kelly. It was a two-story combination church and school situated on Genesee Street, built of red brick trimmed with Medina stone, the building which today forms part of the St. Monica's School structure. When it was built, the first floor contained four large school rooms, well lighted, heated, and ventilated in accordance with the most modern ideas of the day. The second floor contained the church, which was 90 by 45 feet. It was so constructed that when more room was required for school purposes it could be partitioned off into four rooms, the partition being moveable so that it could also be turned into a large assembly room with capacity for seating 500 persons. The sanctuary contained a high altar and two side altars, one dedicated to the Sacred Heart and the other to the Blessed Virgin, the latter adorned with a beautiful statue of Our Lady imported from France, of which "there is no duplicate or a statue that bears close resemblance to be found in Western New York."<sup>2</sup>

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1. (Rochester) Catholic Journal, (Feb. 5, 1915), p.1 (Later became Catholic Courier and Journal)  
(Rochester) Catholic Courier, (April 20, 1939), p. 3 (Later became Catholic Courier and Journal)  
Historical-Pictorial Edition of the Catholic Journal, (1914), pp. 105-107.  
Manuscript History in parish archives
  2. (Rochester) Catholic Journal, (Oct. 8, 1898), p. 1.  
Historical-Pictorial Edition of the Catholic Journal, (1914), pp. 105-107

On Sunday afternoon Sept. 18, 1898, the corner stone of the new building, the seventeenth Catholic church in Rochester, was laid by Bishop McQuaid. In the corner stone were placed important ecclesiastical documents, copies of the local papers, current coins, etc. After the corner stone had been laid and the building blessed, the Bishop addressed the large crowd, calling the structure "a new gem in the crown of churchdom encircling the outskirts of the city." At the close of his address the Bishop gave his episcopal blessing to the congregation and then, in keeping with his renowned love for and interest in children, he gave a special blessing to the children of the congregation.<sup>3</sup>

When the building was completed Father Brophy blessed it and celebrated the first Mass in the new church on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 1898. Father Brophy's sister, Mrs. Edward Needham was his first church organist.<sup>4</sup>

The foundation of St. Monica's was completed, we might say, when it was dedicated by Bishop McQuaid on Sunday, New Year's Day, 1899. At the dedication services the new church was packed. Afterwards solemn high Mass coram episcopo was celebrated by the rector. The altars were a brilliant spectacle, decorated with

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3. (Rochester) Catholic Journal, (Oct. 8, 1898), p. 1.  
Historical-Pictorial Edition of the Catholic Journal, (1914), pp. 105-107.
  4. Manuscript History in parish archives.  
(Rochester) Catholic Courier, (April 20, 1939), p. 3.

smilax and ferns, and resplendent with brilliant electric lights. The sanctuary was banked with palms and potted plants.

After the Mass, Bishop McQuaid addressed the congregation in the following words:

St. Monica's Church is the outcome of an idea I have had for some time past of placing in the outskirts of the city small parish churches. Yet I must say that you have erected here a larger church building than I expected. Still if you were able to put up such a splendid building, you will, I think, be able to sustain it.... 5

How well founded was the Bishop's trust, the subsequent history of the parish eloquently testifies.

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5. Historical-Pictorial Edition of the Catholic Journal, (1914), pp. 105-107.

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