

# History

compiled by Linda Palm, 2016

In the late 1860's, Catholic families began coming to the Stamford area in northern Delaware County, New York. Some came because of the arrival of the railroad and others because of the advent of the summer boarding business in the region. The need for a Catholic Church soon became apparent, and in 1869 the site for a church was purchased by Rev. Thomas Riley from Cobleskill.

The church was built in 1870 in the southwest section of the village known as "Brooklyn" at the time, under the direction of Rt. Rev. J.J. Conroy, Bishop of Albany. Ground was broken in May and the church was dedicated on October 25 by Bishop Conroy, who was assisted by Rev. T.W. Riley.

The church was 34' wide x 70' long and cost \$4000 to build. It was a mission of St. Mary's Parish in Hunter, New York for 20 years, and Mass was celebrated once a month. Visiting priests during those years included Rev. Thomas Riley, Rev. Aloysius Murphy, Rev. Simon J. Canane, Rev. P.H. Delehanty and Rev. Hugh O'Neill.

The first trustees of the church were Bishop Conroy, Fr. Reilly, Chas. T. Smith, Matthew B. Govern, John Delaney, James Kaley and J. M. Delaney. The first windows placed in the church were donated by Margaret Martin Govern, John Delaney, James Kaley, J. and M. Delaney, in memory of their father and brother, and Chas. Smith, in memory of his parents.

In 1891 a Rectory was built adjacent to the church and the first resident pastor, Rev. Patrick Livingston, was appointed. In 1892, the church purchased a new organ and electric lights were installed, making it the first church in the area to have electric lights.

Sacred Heart was redecorated in July 1907 as reported by "The Stamford Mirror Recorder":

*"The Catholic citizens of Stamford can feel proud of their Sacred Heart Church in Stamford and the improvements which have lately been made to the interior of the church are certainly fine. New windows are now being made in the old country in Austria and it will be sometime yet before they will reach here and be placed in position. Mr. E.D. Champlin and son took the contract to paint and decorate the interior of Sacred Heart Church and they were able to finish the work Friday, promptly on time. The Champlins were assisted in the decorative work by Mr. W.F. Thompson of Kingston. On Friday morning, fourteen pieces of fine statuary, depicting the chief events in the entombment of Christ arrived and these were prepared and placed in the church in their proper places in the church by the Messrs. Champlins on*

*Saturday. The interior decorations of the church are very chaste and beautiful. Rev. Slattery, pastor of Sacred Heart, is well pleased with the decorative work. Visitors to the church will find a great improvement to the interior of the edifice and a change that is decidedly pleasing.” (July 10, 1907)*

Later that year, “The Stamford Mirror Recorder” reported on the recognition given to all who donated items for the beautification of the church:

*At the Church of the Sacred Heart last Sunday, a bronze tablet was unveiled with appropriate ceremonies. The inscription on the tablet is as follows: D.O.M. This tablet is erected to record the following:*

*Statues: The Blessed Virgin, E.L.Kelly in memory of his parents; St. Joseph, E.F. Govern; St. Patrick, T.J. O’Brien in memory of his parents; St. Anthony, G.J. Molloy in memory of his Father.*

*Stations of the Cross: 1. M.H. Donovan, in memory of his parents; 2. Clara Baab, in memory of her husband George W.; 3. Mary Lee, in memory of her parents and Mary McNamee Lee; 4. Emma Dux, in memory of her daughter, Magdalen; 5. Thomas Murphy in memory of his wife, Agnes; 6, 8 and 10, donated by Elizabeth Callahan Young; 7. In memory of Hugh O’Neill, sometime pastor of this church; 9. Peter Meeghan Sr. and wife; 11. Louis S. McMahan, in memory of his mother; 12. Anna Stark Langler; 13. Jane Gray and Dorothy Bergh, in memory of their parents; 14. Elizabeth Callahan Young, in memory of her Father.*

*Other windows, in memory of Thomas Murphy Sr., James Nolan, Phillip and Ann Dooley A.D. 1907. (Dec. 11, 1907)*

In 1910 Sacred Heart purchased 5 acres of land from the Johnson Hamilton estate for a cemetery at the southern end of town. Also in 1910, a beautiful marble baptismal font was presented to Father Walsh, the present pastor at the time, by Mrs. Andrew Kuhn of Brooklyn. A sanctuary lamp was gifted to the church by Adelaide M. Thomas, B. and John M. Jones of NYC, in memory of Morgan and Annie Jones. As was reported in “The Stamford Mirror Recorder”, Father Walsh said:

*These gifts speak volumes for the generosity and piety of the donors, while they aid greatly to the adornment of the sanctuary. During the long watches of the day and night, the lamp will burn brightly and faithfully before the Blessed Sacrament. Its gleaming will tell of the presence of the Redeemer of souls made white by the regenerating waters poured over them in the baptismal font. Their gifts are worthy of a place in the Holy of Holies. (August 17, 1910)*

In 1913 a concrete retaining wall, steps and entrance were added to the front of the church. During 1916, two electric crosses were added to the spires. Additions were added to the church in 1917 and 1919 and a number of priests came and went.

In 1945, the rectory burned and was razed. The house across the street was acquired from the Govern family and became the new rectory. It remains as such today. In 1965 a garage was built and a side porch was enclosed. The present parish hall was also built by the Govern family and named The Josephine Govern Hall.

Little was recorded over the next 20 years. 1958 saw the formation of a branch of the Holy Name Society and in 1960, an Altar Rosary Society was formed. A severe windstorm in February of 1965 damaged the failing church structure in February 1965, and the building was declared unsafe because of cracked timbers in the ceiling. Up to that day, Sacred Heart Church had flourished and filled the spiritual needs of the Catholic faithful for 95 years.

Under the direction of Bishop William A. Scully, the ordinary in the Diocese, plans for a new church were formulated. Construction began in April 1966. While it was located on the same site as the old structure, the new Sacred Heart Church was built facing the west... with parking facilities in the rear.

The new church was dedicated on October 29, 1966, by His Excellency Most Reverend Edward J. Maginn, D.D., Apostolic Administrator, from the Albany Diocese. The new church was described in the Dedication Program as follows:

*The new Church of the Sacred Heart is semi-modern in style and will seat 390 in the nave, 15 in each side chapel and 15 in the Cry Room. The exterior is face brick with laminated wood arch construction, along with a cedar wood shingle on a four-inch wood deck roof. The roof design is striking with its lower curve and with a perpendicular pitch to the top. There are sky domes in the upper portion of the nave to provide soft natural lighting in addition to the beautiful electrical fixtures descending from the ceiling.*

*An all-aluminum entrance and oak side doors give ample entrance and exits to the new building.*

*The interior was planned to provide a somewhat subdued atmosphere of elegance and devotion. To bring about this effect, the finished wood and laminated arches have been so*

*designed that the eye is focused on its soft exterior. There is a concrete floor construction, with vinyl asbestos floor covering in the nave, vinyl corlon in the sanctuary, with carpeting on the predella. The Gothic lighting fixtures illuminate the nave and enhance the decorative effect of the timber ceiling. Heating is by forced hot water with panels and convectors in the exterior zones of the building. Mechanical ventilation is provided in the nave of the church by exhaust fans in the ceiling.*

*For centuries, ecclesiastical art has portrayed the great truth of religion in the beauty and color of stained glass. By means of these windows, our mind and hearts are raised to the contemplation of the spiritual. In the new Church of the Sacred Heart, we have used to advantage the beautiful stained glass windows that were taken from the old church. Refurbished, they are a fitting memorial to our love of the old church and the parishioners whose sacrifices made it possible. The stained glass windows of Christ knocking at the door, of Christ with the chalice and the host, of Christ in Gethsemane, of the Ascension, of the Good Shepherd, of the Sacred Heart, of the Christ Child in the carpenter shop, and of the Madonna and Child, will further aid in the beautification of the House of God.*

*The Sanctuary is the heart of the church, and here every effort has been made to bring the attention of the worshipper on the sacrifice of the Mass and Divine Presence. The main altar is simple in design and faces the people. Behind the main altar is the altar reservation and over the altar of reservation is a crucifix with a corpus of Our Lord in carved wood. On the Gospel side of the altar reservation is a wood carved statue of Our Lady. On the Epistle side is a wood carved statue of the Sacred Heart. Moreover, on each side of the Sanctuary there is an open chapel in which the faithful may hear Mass and be part of the congregation.*

*As a trend of the times and following the admonition of Christ, "Suffer the little children to come to me," there is a "Cry Room" on the Gospel side of the front vestibule with its own loud speaker system and enclosed in glass for privacy. Here our beloved children and devoted mothers may bring their little offspring to the holy sacrifice of the mass.*

*The baptistry is on the Epistle side of the vestibule, opposite the Cry Room, and has in it the baptismal font from the old church.*

A dedication plaque was placed in the church in June of 1966 naming all the parishioners who had contributed to the many parts of the new church.

Over the years, many changes took place. The open chapel on the right side of the altar (the Choir Chapel) was closed in to make a room for confessions. Outside of that room is the area for the choir. The altar reservation was moved to the open chapel to the left of the altar (the Lady Chapel) and the communion railing was removed.

In the vestibule, the baptistry area was made into a bathroom and a small kitchenette. The Cry Room was opened up and that gates from the baptistry area were placed by the Cry Room, setting it off from the vestibule. Between 1988 and 1991 a new roof and new front door were added. Other improvements included a new sound system, closure of the side exits, and new carpeting. In 1992, handicapped access was built at the entrance to the church. The entrance

steps have been carpeted, and pavers laid in front of the steps. The stained glass windows were refurbished and rededicated in 2015, at which time the roof was again replaced. In 2016, the parking lot at the rear of the church was paved.