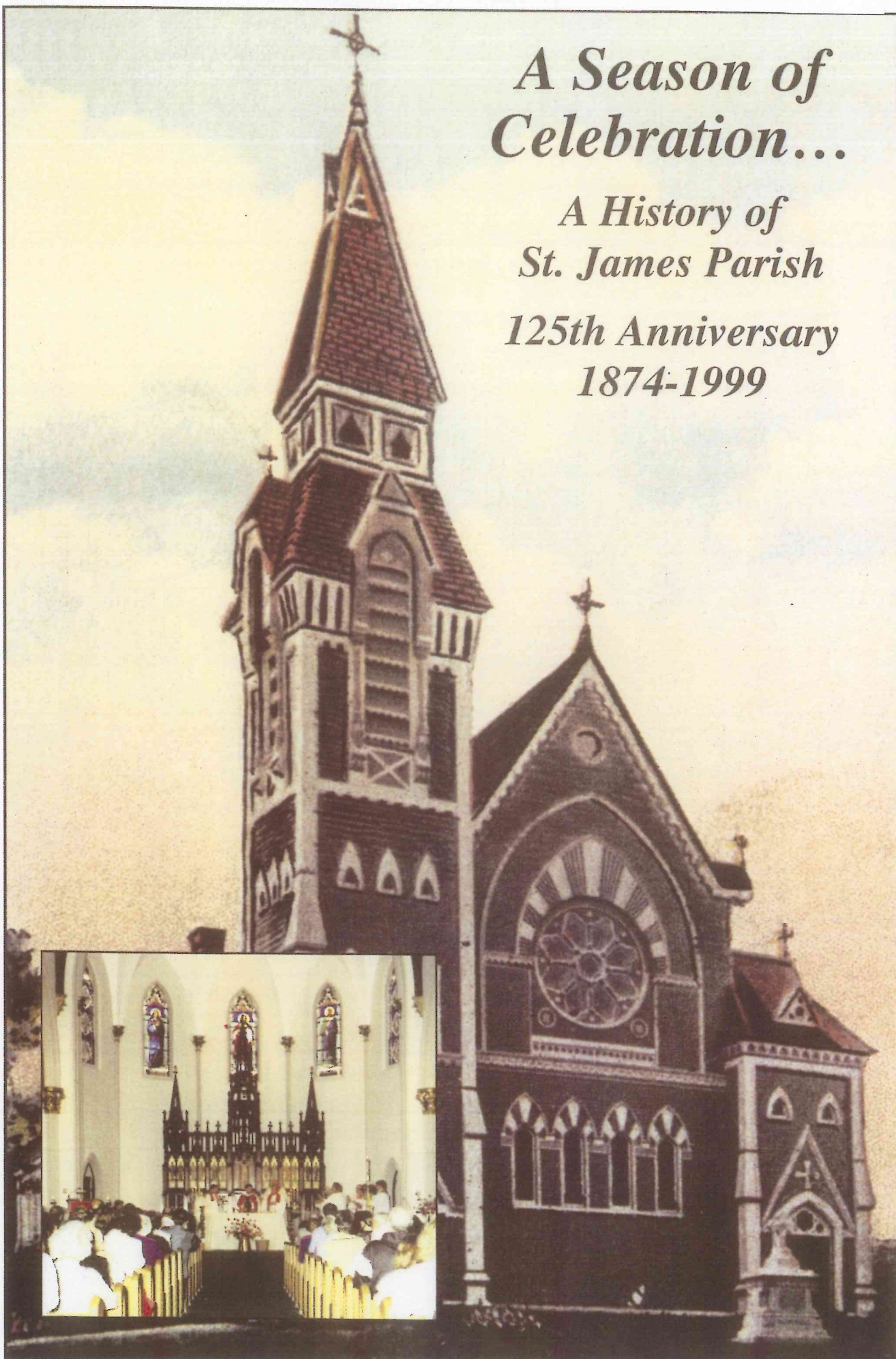


A Season of Celebration...

*A History of
St. James Parish
125th Anniversary
1874-1999*





*For everything there is a Season,
And a time for every matter under Heaven*

A time to celebrate

A SEASON OF CELEBRATION
SAINT JAMES PARISH
MANCHESTER, CONNECTICUT
1874-1999

Carole Enderlin Holmes

With the Assistance of

Rev. Douglas P. Clancy
Susan Stepanski

To Commemorate The 125TH Anniversary
Of Its Founding

1999 Saint James Church
125TH Anniversary Committee
Manchester, Connecticut

DEDICATION

This narrative is dedicated to the Parishioners
& Pastoral Staff of St. James Parish -
1874 to the Present

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Gratitude is extended to the following individuals who provided historical material and shared special memories of times past for this narrative: James Farrell, Robert Gorman, Teresa Moriarty, Terry Parla, Mary Leone, Judy Kargl, William Tanski, Marilyn Meyers, Anne Gryk, James and Frances Gregory, and Michael and Tina Ryba.

A special thank you to the members of the 125th Anniversary Committee members Karen Abraitis, Anne Helin, Dana McCarthy, Don and Anne Rowe, and Don Tencellent for their hard work the past six months putting this celebration together. Joseph Duffy, History teacher at East Catholic, previously researched and wrote a concise history of St. James that I relied on extensively, and I wish to thank him for providing the source material.

Appreciation and thanks are also extended to Philip and Peg LaFond for searching and organizing the photographs in the possession of the rectory as well as to Susan Stepanski and Joan Osella for their thoughts and assistance.

Geno Pietrantonio of Prestige Printing deserves a special commendation for helping a novice put together a project on this scale.

And of course, no acknowledgement would be complete without a special thank you to Carole Scialla, our parish secretary, for her patience and assistance with my continued questions and requests for information; Father Louis Cremonie for his photographic assistance; as well as to Father William Lynch and Father Douglas Clancy for their continued support of this project.

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

When I first started researching this project, I must admit I was a little frustrated by the lack of primary source material there was to work with and I found myself having to dig a little further than anticipated to get the material I needed. Upon reflection, however, I came to the conclusion that this was not necessarily a bad thing. In their ordinary lives, the past parishioners of St. James were probably too busy working jobs, raising children and building lives to take time out to meticulously record parish events which I am sure they felt were so common place that there was no need to chronicle them for posterity. In their ordinariness, however, these people were really quite extraordinary. They form a common link to a very personal part of our past and it is from these people that we develop a sense of belonging to a long tradition of faith and, ultimately, to each other.

It was my attempt to not just record these events, but to also develop a context for the past that allows us to recognize how our common history fits into our present lives, and, consequently, to challenge people to address the question of how this knowledge might help us address the question of how we can build on what went before us.

I also hope you enjoy just reading the narrative as much as I enjoyed writing it, and that it, along with the photographs, sparks some memories of your own personal history with St. James Church.

At a meeting of the People
of South Manchester held in
Cheney's Lower Hall on Jan 26.
1874, this Mission was regularly
organized and prompt means
adopted for the immediate
erection of a suitable Church.

James T. Campbell - Pastor

South Manchester 27 Jan 1874.

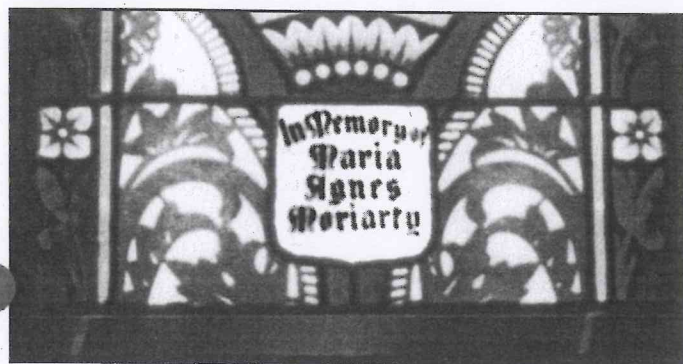
A SEASON OF CELEBRATION

SAINT JAMES PARISH

1874-1999

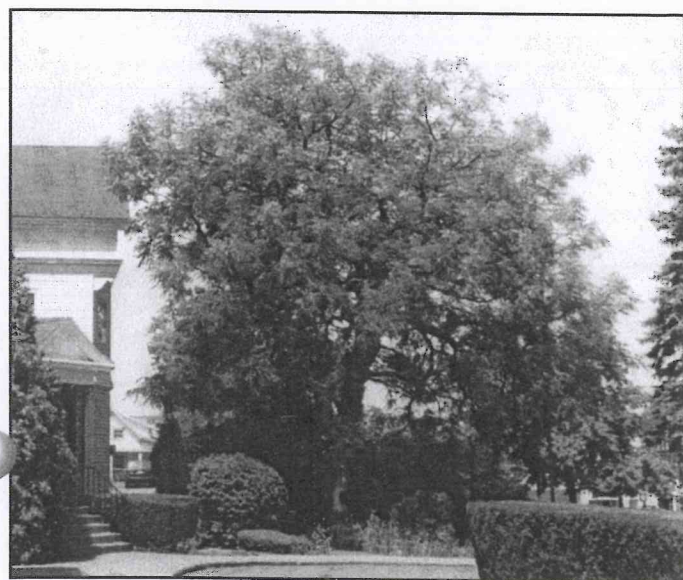
15,388 Baptisms, 4,995 Marriages, 8,305 Funerals and over 80,000 Masses have been celebrated at St. James Parish since its founding in 1874.¹ Now, you may look at these numbers and yawn. How boring, historical facts with little meaning. But look again. These numbers represent the spiritual journeys of thousands of people who built and continue to build their religious lives as part of the St. James parish family. People who choose to celebrate the greatest joys of life in this church: uniting with a life companion in the Sacrament of Marriage and later celebrating the birth of a child in the Sacrament of Baptism. Then, we gather again, at our saddest moments, to mourn the death of a loved one within the sanctified walls of our church, all the while being sustained by the promise that our life's journey will end when we are called by God to the perfect home. While these important events in our lives are celebrated, Mass is said here everyday, for 125 years, binding these events as well as our lives and souls.

Sometime when you get a chance, stop by the church when it is empty. Sit quietly, maybe pray, and try to imagine the people of 125 years ago who set out to



Stained glass window depicting one of the many Irish names representing the heritage of most of the founding members of St. James - St. James Church collection

Within a generation, they not only built lives and made homes for their families, but also built this church. During this period, from 1850's to the 1870's, most of these immigrants worked within a few blocks of here at the Cheney Silk Mills on Forest Street. Every Sunday, year round, the families would make the long 2-mile trek (most of the time walking) to St. Bridget's Church in the north end of town for weekly Mass. When the community

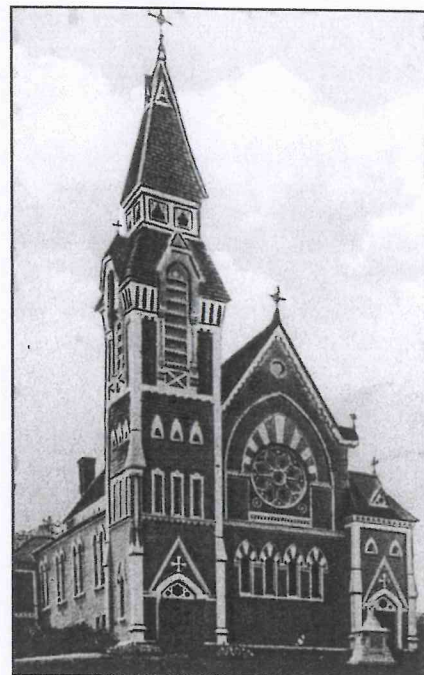


Kentucky Coffee Tree planted by the Cheney family sometime in the mid 1800s - St. James Church collection

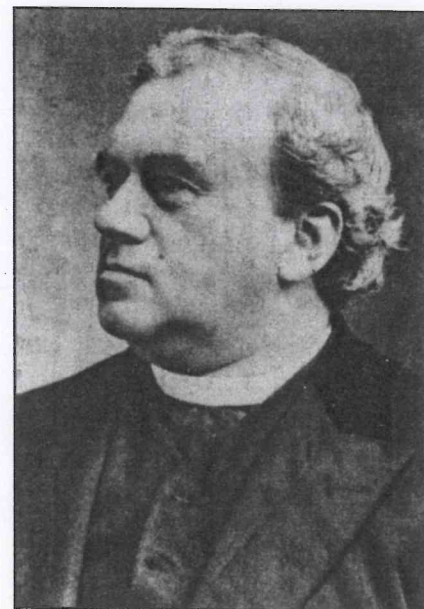
build this church and establish the Parish. Who were they? Where did they come from? Why was this church so important to them that they would sacrifice so much to construct a building that they felt was worthy of their faith and spirit.

This church, like most American Catholic parishes in the later part of the 19th century, was founded by Irish immigrants. Names like Moriarty, Fitzgerald, Sullivan and McCann left the southern part of Ireland in the 1850's arriving here with nothing more than the bags in their hands and the promise of a job.

around the mills grew large enough, the idea of a "missionary" church occurred to Rev. James Campbell, the pastor at St. Bridget's. Bucking the trend of the virulent anti-Catholicism at the time, the Cheney family generously gifted the land the church was built on. Still standing and blooming each year on the lawn in front of the rectory is a Kentucky Coffee Tree planted by the Cheney family in the mid 1800's.



Postcard photograph of St. James prior to 1938 and loss of the Bell Tower - Tanski collection



Father James Campbell

With a handful of families making up the parish, a \$30,000 loan to build the church and volunteers galore WE WERE ON OUR WAY!

Unfortunately, the first of two serious setbacks to befall the physical complex of the church took place just two years later, on May 5, 1876. According to newspaper accounts, the church building was ransacked by a group of Scotch-Irish immigrants from Northern Ireland. Thirty-five stain glass windows were shattered, the altar was desecrated and vestments were smeared with blood and dumped on the street. A pile of branches was



Father Daniel Hagarty
- Moriarty collection

found near the altar in what appeared to be an attempt to set the church on fire. Although shaken by the event, the founding parishioners were not to be deterred, and the necessary funds were raised to replace damaged or stolen items as well as repair the physical structure.

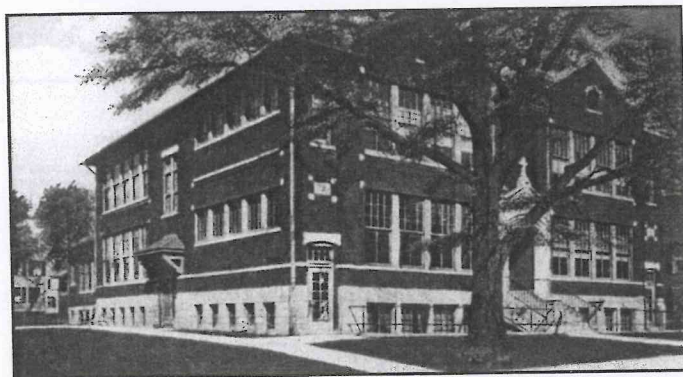
In 1990, Father John Gwordz, a priest assigned to our parish, responded to a questionnaire sent to him by Professor Virginia Raguin of the Visual Arts Department of the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, MA. Upon receiving Fr. Gwordz' response, she wrote back to him and stated that, upon review of the photos he sent to her, she is certain that the chancel stained glass

windows behind our altar are rare examples of American-made stained glass windows from the 1870's. They are the only ones she has seen from that era in a Catholic Church.²

The rectory next to the church was built by Fr. Campbell's successor and St. James' first full time pastor, Father Daniel Hagarty, who served from 1890 until his death in 1898.

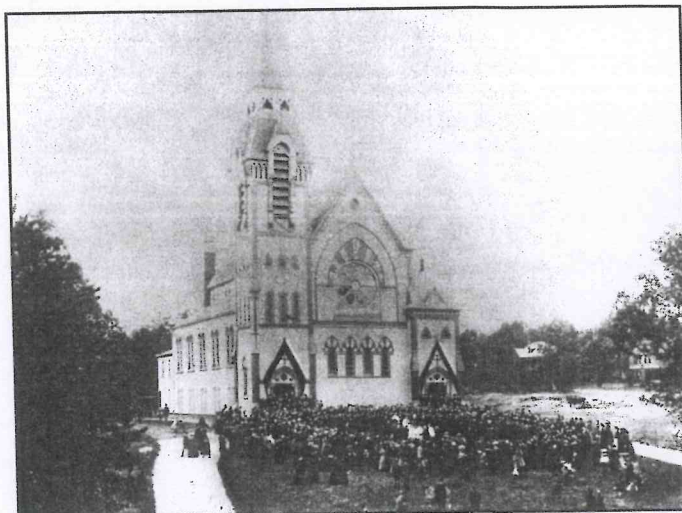
During the early part of the century, the next wave of immigrants arrived in Manchester and names like Pagani, Agostinelli, and Diana as well as Kravontka and Pietrowski were added to our rolls. Now the parish was not just Irish but "catholic" in the true meaning of the word.

Right after Word War I and within 50 years of building the church, the next



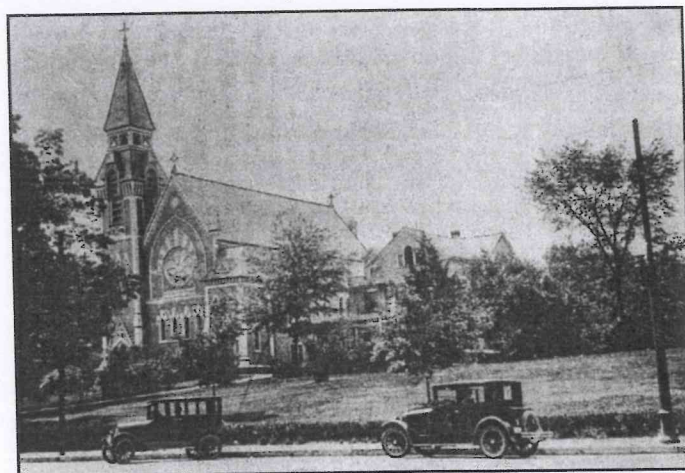
An early photograph of St. James School prior to the additions in the 1960's - St. James Church collection

large-scale project began under the auspices of Father William McGurk, who arrived at the parish in 1898 as its third pastor. Father McGurk should hold a special place in our remembrances for two reasons. He was the pastor who



Funeral ceremony of Father Campbell — Although there is no official identification of this photograph, upon careful review, a reasonable supposition is that it is the scene of Fr. Campbell's funeral in 1890. Note the black draping over the front doors as well as the group of people standing in the middle of the encircled mass. Father Campbell was interred at this exact spot from 1890 until his remains were moved to St. James cemetery sometime in the mid 1900s.

our parish, responded to a questionnaire sent to him of the Visual Arts Department of the College of the



St. James Church sometime in the late 1920's or early 1930s
- Tanski collection



First graduating Class of St. James School in 1927. The photograph was taken on the front steps of the church - Moriarty collection

commissioned the reredos that stands in the back of the altar and, more important, it was Fr. McGurk's vision that led to the establishment of St. James School. Through the continued benevolence of the Cheney family, who again donated land, as well as the generosity of the parishioners, construction of the school began around 1920. In his later years, parishioner Anthony Gryk would reminisce about the hours he spent as a young boy sitting in the lot across the street from the school mesmerized by the sight of hand operated machinery being pulled by teams of sturdy horses as they dug the foundation of the school.

Fr. McGurk remained with us long enough to witness the dedication of the cornerstone of the school in 1922. The following year he was transferred to a Waterbury parish. His vision has withstood the test of time as thousands of children have had the opportunity to attend a school with a reputation for continued excellence. Through prosperous times and lean years, the school has thrived mainly because of the devotion of hundreds of nuns from the Sisters of Mercy, who took the responsibility of running the school. The vital religious instruction for the parish children who attend local schools was also run by the sisters for many years. In recent times these tasks have been taken on more and more by lay teachers and volunteers. In 1998, the last of the residing nuns of the convent moved on to different residences. For many years it was a common sight on Park Street to observe the sisters pacing the schoolyard, usually deep in prayer. Times change, people move on. We will miss our neighbors.

The most serious challenge to the survival of the church structure was the devastating damage to the south side of the building as the result of the Hurricane of 1938. Almost everyone knows that the church lost the bell tower located in the upper left portion of the building, but not many people know that the damage was so severe that it was questionable whether the church itself could be saved. Not only was the front left portion of the church completely demolished, but also every side window was shattered and the foundation was affected. Because of these problems, it was suggested that the entire structure be demolished and rebuilt. The parishioners, however, would not hear of it. With the help of an ingenious engineer, Jack Hayes, as well as the sheer force of willpower of our then pastor, Father William Reidy, the church was restored. Of course, not to be lost in this story is that this disaster took place at the height of the depression when almost everyone was suffering economically. Once again, an unending trail of volunteers logged long hours to bring the church back to full use, which was completed in 1939.



Father William Reidy
- Tanski collection

Unfortunately, the large bell tower was lost forever. The bell itself sat for many years on a stone pedestal on the left side of the church. In 1976, the present tower was built on the north lawn and the original church bell placed in the tower belfry.

Father Reidy lived for only a short time after the restoration of the church was completed. After his death, the Manchester Herald reported that the stress of restoring the church affected his health and contributed to his demise.

One of Robert Gorman's fondest memories of his childhood in the 1930's were the parish picnics that took place on weekdays in the summer. He remembers the events as quite a treat as groups of children with their mothers caught rides on the open air trolley in front of St. James and traveled "all the way" to Elizabeth Park in Hartford for an afternoon of picnicking and playing.

From the time the Sisters of Mercy were with us in the 1920's until sometime in the 1950's, it was a tradition on Sunday for the nuns to take charge of gaggles of children and watch them downstairs during their own Children's Mass while parents quietly worshiped in the sanctuary upstairs. Teresa McConville Moriarty remembers these Masses as a child and the fact that the liturgy was always adapted to the children. She also remembers that every Sunday a Mr. Murphy, also known by the children as "The



Scenes of the destruction after the hurricane of 1938 that destroyed the south side of the building - St. James Church collection



Scenes from the musical "Golden Days". The production was directed by Father James O'Connor in the early 1960's. The event, along with other fund raisers, raised over \$20,000.00. The funds were used to offset the addition to the school. These events typify the spirit and vitality of our church.

"Penny Man" would make an appearance during the offertory each week to collect the children's contribution of pennies that were later added to the general coffers of the church.

As with the country at large, the late 40's, 50's and most of the 60's were years of tranquility and growth for the parish. Church organizations, the largest of which were the Ladies of St. James and the Holy Name Society, as well as the St. Vincent DePaul Society, thrived.



Father William Dunn
- Moriarty collection

From 1939 until his death in 1947, Father William Dunn served as pastor. As funds would permit, improvements to the church grounds and school were attended to. It was also during this time that land was obtained on Broad Street for a parish cemetery.

Mona Toomey Wilke, who lived near the church during this time, fondly remembers visits from Father Hughes, who was assigned to our parish in the 1940s. He would knock on their door whenever there was a sick call at night to borrow their Irish Setter so he could bring "Sam" with him on his call. The Toomey family never asked whether Fr. Hughes took their family pet with him for protection or companionship or both, but they were more than happy to lend their family pet out for a few hours "of service" to the parish. The family could always get a chuckle out of Fr. Hughes when they teased him about his twilight pal.

From 1947-1949, the parish was run by Father John Loughran. His stewardship was tragically cut short when he died suddenly while on retreat on June 13, 1949. One of the highlights of his short pastorate had to have been the dedication ceremony

of the statue of Our Lady of Fatima on the front lawn of the Church on May 9, 1948. The Manchester Herald reported that over 2,000 people attended the event. The ceremony, which

included the participation of such parish groups as the altar boy assembly, the boys choir, members of the living rosary and, in a display that could not be duplicated today, young women dressed in matching outfits to symbolize the five mysteries of the rosary, certainly exemplified the elaborate rituals that took place during this time.

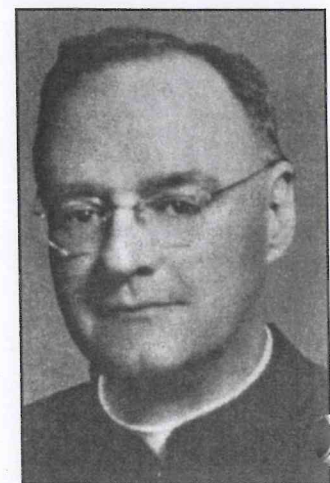
During the tenure of the our next pastor, Monsignor John Hannon, the population of the parish grew at such a fast rate that the school could no longer accommodate the number of children that wished to attend. The call went out



Father John Loughran
- St. James Church collection



Dedication Ceremony of the Statue of Our Lady of Fatima on May 9, 1948 - St. James Church collection



Monsignor John Hannon
- St. James Church collection

and, within a short period of time, funds were raised that allowed for two classrooms for each grade, as well as a gymnasium and a cafeteria. Monsignor Hannon was with us until his death in 1963.

In 1963, the winds of Vatican II blew open the doors of the church in a way that none of us anticipated. Our parish, along with the rest of the church, was hit with the full force of these changes during the late 60's and early 70's.

It is one of those great ironies of life that Monsignor Reardon arrived at our parish the same year Vatican II commenced. Msgr. Reardon was a physical force to be reckoned with. An imposing figure in any light, his fondness for wearing long clerical robes only added to his stature. If there was ever a priest that represented the old guard and traditions of the church, it was Msgr. Reardon. And yet, when the changes came, he not only embraced them, but also prodded, consoled and soothed the apprehension of many parishioners by explaining that they would only make the church better and stronger. It has taken many years to get used to the "new" way, and now they seem like they have been around forever, but it was priests like Msgr. Reardon that made them possible and successful in so many parishes throughout the Church.



*Monsignor Edward Reardon
- Tanski collection*

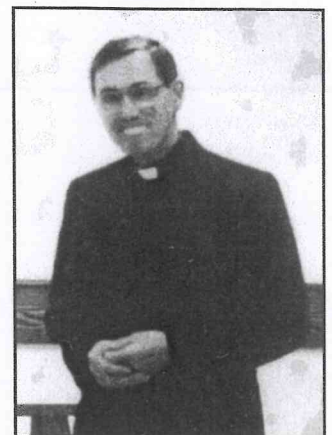
The St. James School Foundation, which was the idea of some very forward thinking parishioners, was established during Msgr. Reardon's tenure. The foundation, which has turned out to be a very successful fund raising tool, has kept the school on strong financial footing for more than a generation.

In 1971 and 1984, two very extensive restorations to the church took place to modernize the building and bring it into liturgical compliance with the directives of Vatican II.

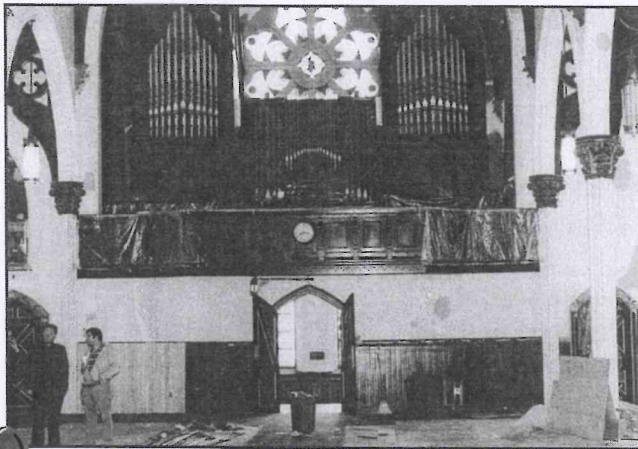
With the excitement as well as the apprehension of change, the first renovation in 1971 resulted in the permanent removal of the front railing and the removal of statues that once stood surrounding the altar to other parts of the church. In the biggest change of all, the grand paintings of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John as well as the angels in the cove behind the altar. were painted over to represent a simpler worship style. The parish went along with each change, until the suggestion was made to remove the wood reredos in the back of the altar. With the stern clarion call of "Don't touch our Altar Piece!" it was decided to keep this beautiful and unique piece of art. So there it still stands, a testament to a parish that, although willing to accommodate and accept change that would reflect a modern world, felt that certain pieces of our past should remain and be appreciated for generations to come.

In 1984 the old pews in the sanctuary were removed and new pews placed in a different configuration. The lower church was also completely renovated to allow for maximum flexibility of use as a reception area and as a place of worship.

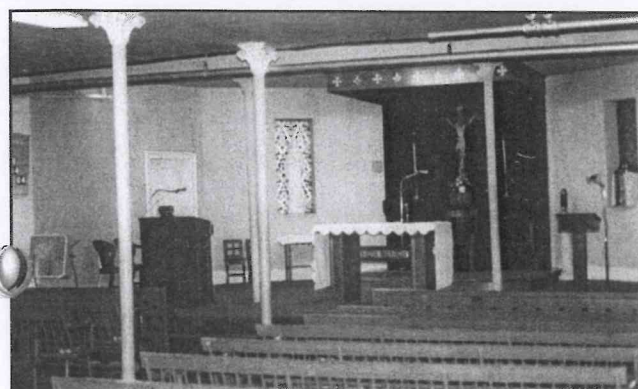
Five years later the last stage of the 1984 restoration was completed when the church organ was fully restored to its original resonance. The early sound was lost in the 1920's



Fr. John J. ...



*Interior of the Church during the renovations of 1984
- St. James Church collection*



Lower Church Altar as it appeared prior to the renovations of 1984 - St. James Church collection

with the purchase of rather substandard organ after some of the original pipes began to show signs of wear. The restoration was done under the auspices of then Choir Director and Organist, Ralph Maccarone and Jane Maccarone respectively. The restoration was almost completely financed by the generous contribution of an anonymous donor.

Monsignor Reardon retired as pastor in 1976. That year two priests became co-pastors at St. James, Father Francis Krukowski and Father James Archibault. After Fr. Archibault was transferred, Fr. Frank became our sole pastor.

Fr. Frank came to St. James at a time when his financial resourcefulness and expertise were needed most. He, along with a large group of dedicated parishioners, started the St. James Fall Festival with rides, games, and family activities as a source of income to bring the parish out of debt. As it turned out, the festival served its purpose and then some. For many years it turned over profits to the parish that were used to retire the financial liabilities of the church. The festival also gave Fr. Frank a chance to spearhead the "garbage detail" after the tents were taken down; a job that attested to his unpretentious and humble personality. The fall festival continued for 17 years and now St. James parish moves on in other directions to welcome the new millennium.

After 18 years of successfully running what had become a very large (and now debt free) parish with administrative duties to match, Father Frank took his leave of us in 1994 to take up duties at a church in South Windsor. Fr. Frank was only the second pastor in our entire history, and the first since 1922, to actually be reassigned to another parish. Anyone taking on the assignment of replacing such a popular and still energetic priest after so many years was certainly accepting quite a challenge.

The man who took on the venture is our 11th and present pastor, Father Douglas Clancy. At first glance, it would appear that we were returning to our long tradition of Irish priests as pastors, but, in reality, Father Clancy's veins flow with equal parts Polish and Irish blood. Father Clancy has been with us for five years. During his pastorate, the elevator was installed in the north side vestibule to provide handicapped access to the upper church. Father Clancy, in sharing his thoughts for this history observed:

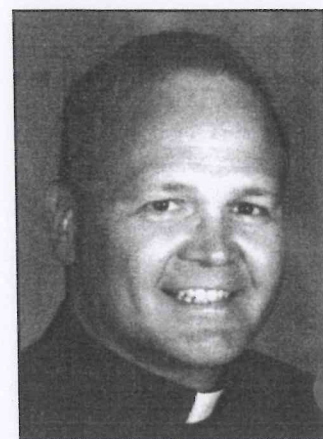
"Although St. James Church is an old building reflecting the architecture of a bygone era, when it is full of people, it becomes new again and makes you feel as if it was dedicated just yesterday. There is a spirit here. The spirit of Christ Who said, "Behold I make all things new."



One of the many groups of parishioners gathering to serve the parish community

perfect, merely human like ourselves, but they were men who, in many small, incremental ways, made this a better place to worship by helping us to become better people. What can we say to a group of men who dedicated, and continue to dedicate, their lives to serving us? How do we thank them? If asked, we all know what the answer would be. So, go ahead, say a prayer for the lot of them.

St. James has had a respectable number of its members who have become priests and nuns through the years. Among them are Rev. Monsignors Daniel Foley and Charles Johnson as well as Frs. Philip Blaney, John Rohan, James McDonnell, Francis McDonnell, Martin Scholsky, Maynard Kearns, Edward Moran, John Connors, Robert O'Grady, William Riser, William Chabonneau, Richard Foley and John Tierney. On May 23, 1999, Father James Gregory celebrated his first Mass as a priest at St. James.



Father Douglas Clancy

Committees, clubs and organized groups have come and gone over time to suit the needs of the parish. They are too numerous to mention here except to thank all those who volunteered their time and expertise through the years. We can well imagine how spirited some of the debates were (and surely still are) over budgets, renovations and liturgical expression, not to mention who would be the star bearer at the Christmas Eve service! The one constant, however, is a people united in worship and faith doing their best to keep the parish thriving and serving the needs of its family as well as the community at large.

And the priests, the many, many priests who have come our way and served us at St. James. We all know they weren't



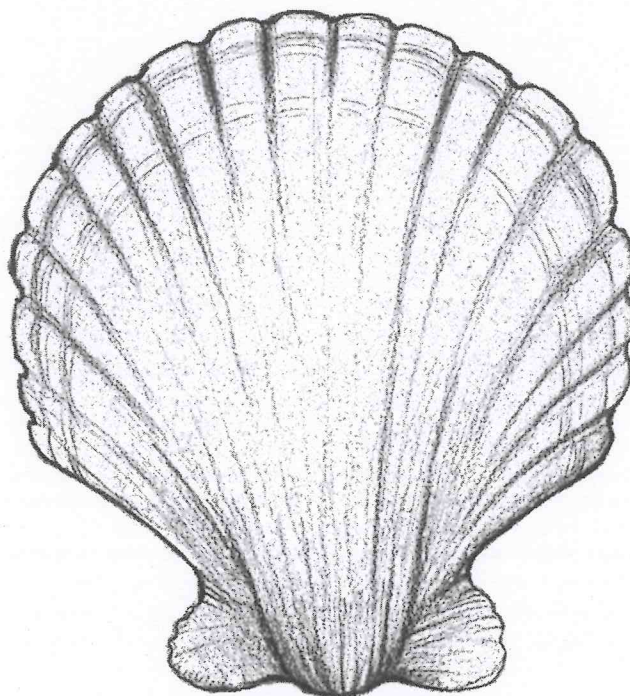
Father James Gregory performing his first Mass as a priest at his home parish on May 23, 1999 - Gregory collection

Sisters who professed from the parish include Sr. Clare, Sr. Rita Clare, Sr. Elaine Sweeney, Sr. Eucharia, Sr. Jean Mooney, Sr. Carol Mooney and Sr. Mary Moran.

On St. Patrick's Day in 1990, William Tanksi of our parish had the foresight to conduct a video interview of the then 85 year old Monsignor Reardon. Mr. Tanksi asked Monsignor what made St. James special. His response sums up the running narrative of the story of our church. Monsignor stated we were special because of the willingness of the lay people to volunteer and get involved in church activities. This involvement not only helps the church, but, more often than not, enriches the parishioner as much as the parish. As Monsignor put it, "There isn't a night that goes by here when you don't see groups of people in the church and that's good; small groups of people who get to know another and help each other... ." Could it be said any better?

The history of St. James Church is the history of so many Catholic parishes in the United States. It is a history of great generosity on the part of the people who make up this church, both monetarily and in personal service. And, most important, it is a history of faith.

Again, come to the church someday, sit quietly, hear the echoes and listen to the spirit of the people, who, through the grace and forbearance of God, built and sustained this parish. Now, as we enter the next millennium, the challenge is passed to us and our children to carry forward their spiritual vision.



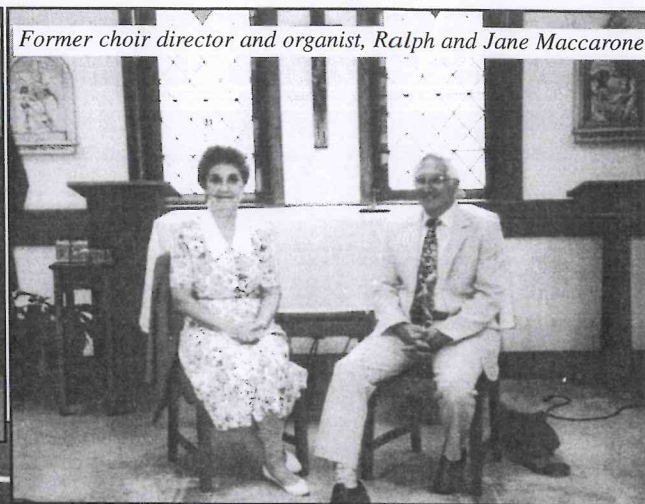
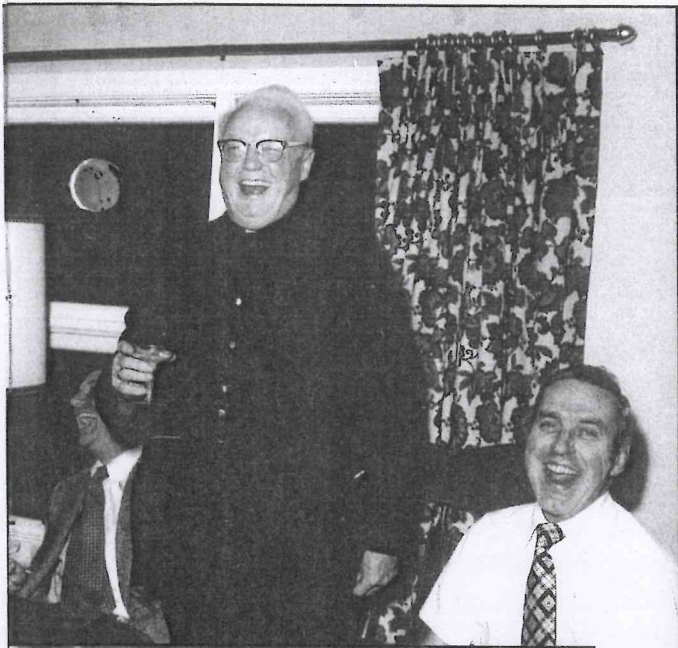
Footnotes:

¹ Statistics from Parish records

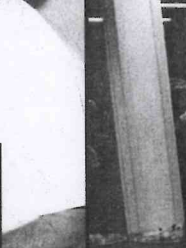
² For a more detailed description of the stained glass art in our church, please refer to the Appendix at the end of this narrative.



Carnival Days...



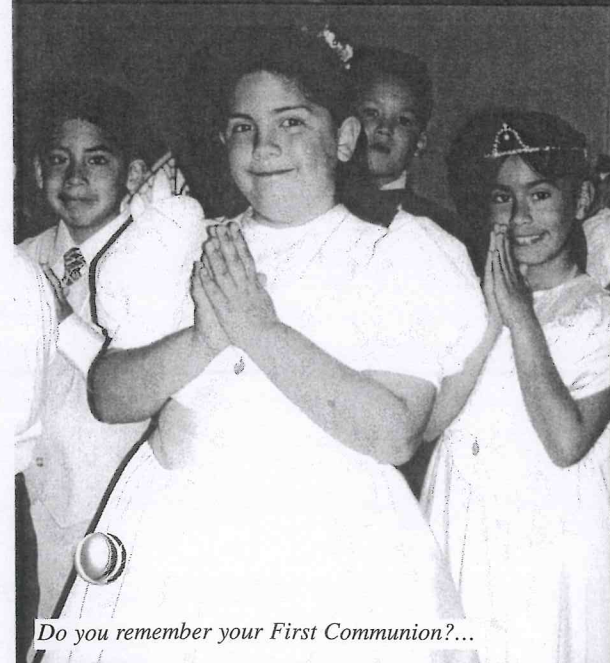
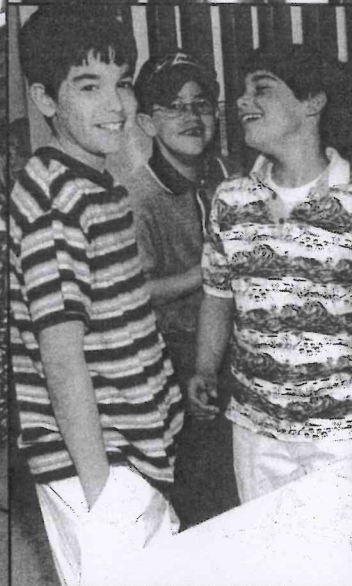
Former choir director and organist, Ralph and Jane Maccarone



We gather together...



Kathy at work...



Do you remember your First Communion?...



APPENDIX

Reprinted from an article entitled "Mystical Rhythms in Light," published in the parish newsletter, Networks in 1992, by Susan Stepanski

When walking back to your pew, after receiving Christ, lift up your eyes. Alone, on the eastern wall, between the floor and vault, flanked by the earth-bound spires of the organ, is the St. James rose window. This continuous ring of radiating light represents the star of rebirth, emblazoned with Christ's name, IHS. This is the star of old which directs our course to the Last Judgment exemplified by our Holy Family, found on the opposite wall. But how do we know this?

Saint James was designed by admirers of Gothic Architecture who viewed the church structure as an Ark of Humanity sailing through time. Gothic churches were typically built in the shape of a Latin Cross and always heading east, the direction of rebirth. The north, south, and west walls represented the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the future, respectively. The ceilings were reserved for the heavenly angels. The tradition of these artistic depictions, especially the stained glass windows, goes back to a time when the written word was scarce and the idea that the vast majority of the parish members could read was even more remote, and yet the story needed to be told.

The rose window isn't the only window holding sacred hidden meanings. A window on the north wall, which holds a twelve pointed star, can be interpreted several ways as representing the twelve tribes of Israel, the Apostles, or a symbol for universal time. Stained glass windows, in general, were thought to symbolize the precious stones from the foundation of St. John's New Jerusalem.

The Four Evangelist windows, near the sanctuary, also echo symbolism first found in the early mosaics. The oldest window, dated 1876, is St. Luke, who is represented by the sacrificial ox, signifying the "horn of salvation" (Luke 1:68-69). St. Matthew, who brings the human aspect of Jesus through his narrative of Christ's genealogy, is portrayed as a winged man. St. Mark, exemplified as winged lion, authored a Gospel describing the royal dignity and power of Christ while St. John's words soar to a higher plane, symbolized by the eagle. In the lower church, the pelican of piety is commemorated in glass. The pelican, with its reddish beak and breast feathers, gives the illusion of feeding its young with its own blood. The folklore gave rise to the Church declaring the pelican of piety as symbol of redemption through self-sacrifice.

Unfortunately, most of the artist's who created these visual delights, are unknown. F.X. Zettler, who signed the north side vestibule window in 1908 was a Munich native with a large studio. The window illustrates Jesus coming to the children and the artists use of glass combines the heavenly gift of light with our own earthly wood and stone. As the light expands the space within, it creates mystical rhythms between the stone and glass that continue throughout eternity.

As the light of our Church touches you today, remember the light of Christ can overcome your darkness forever.



Northern Vestibule Stained glass window