

HISTORY OF ST. PAUL'S CHURCH

Bullville, New York

Bullville is recorded as "A hamlet in Crawford Township, Orange County, New York, twenty miles west of Newburg." The place was named Crawford because many Crawfords lived within the triangular shaped town. Bullville itself was named for Thomas Bull who was a son of the early settler, Daniel Bull, and was one of thirteen children. Thomas Bull was a distiller of apple whiskey and built the hamlet of Bullville near the scene of his activities. Listed among the early settlers was a Robert Jordon who came from Ireland in 1771 and settled in Bullville in 1784 or 1785.

Exactly when the first Catholic Church of Saint Paul was built is subject to some controversy as may be gleaned from two different accounts. The first account was to be found in the third volume of "The Catholic Church in the United States of America," and reads as follows:

"Bullville is another Irish colony, in fact the majority of the congregation is still Irish, there being only three German families (i.e. 1914). Mass was first said in James Nolan's house by Reverend Andrew O'Reilly, pastor of Saint Joseph's Church, Middletown. Since there was no church, the early settlers walked on Sundays to Wurtsboro or Middletown, a distance of 16 or 18 miles to hear Mass. Later Mass was said in a room rented from Peter Gill on the road towards Circleville until the Church was built in 1862. It was erected in a woods, on property covered with shrubs and boulders, some distance away from the village. The old Irish settlers brought the wood and helped to build it. Davey Burlingham is (1914) the only survivor of those who helped to build it."

Another account was written by the late Father Thomas J. Donovan; who was at the time (1952) Catholic Chaplain at Sing Sing Prison at Ossining, New York:

"In 1848, my grandfather, James Donovan, came to this country. He had heard in Ireland that Orange County was a good place for a farmer. He was forced to leave his wife and first child in Ireland for lack of money. Upon landing in New York, he walked up the Hudson as far as Newburgh, attended Mass for the first time at Saint Patrick's Church in Newburgh, and then struck inland. In this way he came to Bullville. He was employed as a farm hand by a family named Bull. I have no information of his doings between 1848 and the Civil War, except that by saving his money he was able to bring his wife and child over to this country after about a year and a half."

"After the Civil War was over, Jimmy bought what was then known as the Long Lane Farm. By this time he had a large family, four sons and two daughters. There was no Catholic Chapel in the neighborhood, and a priest used to visit Catholic farm houses, a different one on each Sunday, to say Mass. These houses in which Mass was said were known as stations. One Sunday the group attending Mass at the Long Lane Farm was quite large.

My grandmother counted noses and said to the priest, 'I think we have enough people here to build a Chapel.' The priest announced a meeting of the men after Mass. They talked the matter over, and decided that they could do it. Jimmy was appointed to buy the land. He visited a storekeeper in Bullville who owned the lot on which the Bullville Chapel presently stands. They reached an agreement as to price, and Jimmy made a down payment."

The second of the two accounts would place the erection of the Church closer to 1865, which is believed to be more correct. Upon completion of the Church, it was assigned to Saint Joseph's Church of Middletown as a mission and was served by Father O'Reilly until Saint Mary's Church in Montgomery was detached from Saint John's Church in Goshen in 1872. At that time, the Reverend John J. McCauley was assigned to Saint Mary's and Saint Paul's Church in Bullville became an out-mission. Two years later in 1874, Father Patrick Brady of Rosendale assumed the pastorate of Saint Mary's in Montgomery and as a consequence, the mission at Bullville. Thus it remained for nineteen years when in 1893 the Reverend Charles A. Meredith arrived from Holy Rosary Parish in New York City to take charge of the new parish of the Precious Blood in Walden with the Missions of Pine Bush and Bullville annexed to his charge. Early in August of the following year Father Brady of Saint Mary's in Montgomery fell ill and was taken to Saint Joseph's Hospital in Patterson, New Jersey, where he died on August 13th, 1894. Father Brady was buried in Saint Mary's Cemetery in Montgomery which he had started in 1881. During the illness of Father Brady, Father Meredith assisted in Montgomery and upon the death of Father Brady, was appointed pastor of Saint Mary's with Walden again reverting to the status of mission and Bullville again reverting to an association with Montgomery. This association with Montgomery lasted until 1901 or 1902 when Saint Paul's in Bullville was annexed to Saint Joseph's Church in Wurtsboro during the pastorate of Father M. V. Aylward. Bullville remained a mission of Wurtsboro until 1912 when responsibility was transferred to the Carmelite Fathers who had just recently arrived in Middletown. The Reverend Simon Stock Farrington, O. Carm., first of the Carmelite priests assigned to Saint Paul's, 1912, remained in that capacity until 1940 when Father Berthold R. Forrester succeeded him.

After the arrival of the Carmelites, many improvements were made. A concrete driveway was poured, an organ was installed and new sheds were built at the back of the Church to accommodate the horses in winter while the people were at Mass.

For years the parishioners held annual picnics as a source of raising revenue. These affairs became more elaborate as the years went by and, on one occasion, there were reportedly one thousand persons in attendance. A dancing platform was erected, a band was employed and after darkness a fireworks display was held. The annual picnics were well planned and eagerly looked forward to by the people for miles around. The first newspaper article concerning the annual picnic was in the Orange County Press, dated August 7, 1968, stating that it would be held on August 20. In the newspaper article the ensuing year the following account was given: "At the third annual picnic which came off at Bullville on Tuesday last, there was a large attendance, and everything passed off

pleasantly until the appearance on the grounds of a large number of ‘tunnelers’ who, it is reported, kicked up a big row, ending in a general encounter and the spilling of some blood. We do not hear that any lives were lost.”

Bullville advanced and in 1892 it was reported that the railroad station delivered \$1,048.62 of freight which represented quite a sum, considering the predictions made by the opponents twenty years earlier. The opponents had predicted that the line would not earn enough to pay for the oil used in the engine.

The years following the arrival of the Carmelites found an increase of population and the need to increase the size of the Church was realized in 1952 when a new foyer, baptistery and choir area were completed. A beautiful shrine of stone and marble was dedicated in front of Saint Paul’s Church by Fathers Aloysius Nagle and Emmanuel Hourihan, O. Carm., on November 21, 1954, the year dedicated to our Blessed Lady by the late Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, as “Marian Year”. The Church had never had a bell until a railroad bell was donated by Alfred and George Schubert of Circleville. It was rung for the first time during Easter week in 1958. Father Regis Broniszewski blessed the bell after it had been raised onto the tower atop the new extension. A well was drilled on the property about 1960 in the interest of bringing water into the Church.

A frequent sight in the last years of the old structure was the processions emerging from the edifice on Sunday mornings. The newspaper recorded one such event as follows: “Parishioners at Saint Paul’s Catholic Church, Bullville, braced 19-degree temperature and a chilling wind to participate in the Palm Sunday procession. Reverend Regis Broniszewski, the parish priest was celebrant at Mass.”

On Saturday, October 6, many of the congregation gathered at the Church for what would prove to be the last wedding in the old structure. On Sunday morning, October 28, the Church was filled, for the Circleville fireman had elected to attend Saint Paul’s Church for their annual attendance as a group to one of the local churches. A sung Mass was celebrated honoring the Feast of Christ the King. The following morning, Monday, October 29, 1962, a child entered the church to search for his books left behind at Sunday School the preceding day. The early morning being dark, the boy lighted a candle to find his way. The candle fell in a waste paper basket and in moments the Church was ablaze. Quickly the news spread and people gathered near the site. One of the firemen being a Holy Name man removed the Blessed Sacrament from the tabernacle and carried the ciborium to Father Emmanuel standing outside.

Upon the ashes of one hundred years, a team of volunteers quickly rallied to the cause of a new Church. While the work went on, Masses were held at Townley Hall in Circleville, for one year and then the parishioners joined those at Our Lady of the Assumption, Bloomingburg. In January, 1964, it was announced that the goal of \$60,000 had been exceeded by \$10,000.

Each brick of the new structure was avidly watched as it was put in place. On Easter Sunday, April 18, 1965, a joyful but tired congregation attended a high Mass celebrated by Father James Reilly, O.Carm., for the first time in the new Church.

Thanks be to God!