



**ONE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEDICATION**

**OF**

**ST. MARY'S CHURCH**

**UPPER MARLBORO, MARYLAND**

**MAY 23, 1999**



## THE BUILDING AND DEDICATION OF ST. MARY'S CHURCH

The assignment of priests of the Diocese of Baltimore to St. Mary's at Upper Marlboro marked the end of an era for the Parish. Jesuits, Dominicans, Carmelites and Josephites had, in turn, served the spiritual needs of this Parish for fifty years. The shortage of priests in the early years made staffing of St. Mary's by Diocesan priests impossible until the situation eased and in 1879 Rev. Desiderius C. DeWulf was appointed as Pastor. He was assisted by Rev. Joseph A. Cunnane who became Pastor of St. Mary's in 1883 and remained here until 1897. Not long after their arrival they found the Catholics of St. Mary's wanted to build a new church. Father Cunnane had served as Pastor for a year when he wrote to Archbishop James Gibbons (later Cardinal Gibbons) asking him to consider, "*...the desire of the community to have a memorial church erected in this town on the site where yet stands the house in which Archbishop Carroll was born.*" He lamented that, "*No monument or memorial church exists in this Country to the memory of Archbishop Carroll and it seems strange that the Catholic church in this native town should be so small and unshapely.*" Father Cunnane wrote further that he thought \$5,000 could be raised in the Parish for the church and that a legacy of \$1,500 had been left for St. Mary's by Miss Agnes Hill with the condition that it be used for the building of a new church. The following year, 1885, Mrs. Elizabeth (Eliza) Gaston Graham, owner of Nihil estate, died and left \$3,000 in her will to be used toward the building of a new church. Other legacies were provided by a Miss Gaston, Miss Annie Hill and Mrs. Elizabeth Snowden Hill, mother of Agnes and Annie. Father Cunnane evidently obtained the permission to build the new church. Parishioners "sold" bricks to raise money for its construction. Apparently Father Cunnane's health failed before the actual building could begin and he was replaced by the newly ordained Rev. Charles Trinkhaus on July 1, 1897.

Less than a year from the date of Father Trinkhaus' assignment demolition of the original St. Mary's Church at Marlboro began on May 9, 1898. The church was to be built on the site of the original St. Mary's Church and not on the site of Archbishop Carroll's birthplace. The cornerstone for the new church was laid on July 24, 1898. It was reported by the Baltimore Sun that nearly 1,000 persons from the surrounding country, Baltimore and Washington attended the ceremony. The contract for the demolition of the church was let to John Christopher Wyvill, a prominent Upper Marlboro contractor and builder. His sons, the Wyvill Brothers, were then awarded the contract for the construction of the church at a cost of \$15,000. Joseph, Michael, Anthony and William Wyvill had apprenticed with their father from their youth. They relied on his guidance and knowledge of the building trade as they undertook the project and continued into its final stage. St. Mary's was to be the grandest edifice they would ever build and established their reputation as contractors and builders. They went on to build, among others, St. Mary's at Piscataway, Bell's Church at Camp Springs and the old rectory of Ascension Church at Bowie. The Wyvill Brothers were not the only builders of St. Mary's. Many parishioners spoke with pride in later years of their participation in its construction, among them John F. Ridgely, J. Louis Garner, Messrs.

Cranford, Seltzer, Rider, and Curtin. A parishioner and carpenter, Joseph L. Martin, may have taken part in the building process in spite of an injury he received in taking down the old church from which, it was reported, he never recovered. He died of typhoid fever in October 1899 at age 66. The Wyvills were not brick layers. They called on their relatives in Frederick County, the Eckenrodes, to lay the brick for the church. Their great love of God and the Catholic Church and their sense of pride that Upper Marlboro was the birthplace of the first Roman Catholic Bishop of the United States motivated the parishioners of St. Mary's to construct the finest church in Southern Maryland at the time.

St. Mary's was the largest building in the Town of Upper Marlboro and as such it became a landmark. Its construction was watched with interest by all. On January 20, 1899 a local weekly newspaper, The Prince George's Enquirer, noted that, "*St. Mary's Church is nearing completion. New pews were put in place this week and the seating capacity is 800. The beautiful edifice is certainly a credit to the town and community and the contractors, the Wyvill Brothers, deserve much praise.*" While the new church was under construction Mass was said in the hall of St. Mary's Catholic Society (now historic St. Mary's Beneficial Hall.) Father Trinkhaus announced via a March 13, 1898 Brevity in the Prince George's Enquirer that, "*The First Mass will be at 8:30 A.M. for colored people only. Mass at 10:00 A.M. will be for the white members exclusively.*" Some would have attended Mass at St. Mary's mission church, Holy Rosary at Rosaryville, during the construction of the new church in Marlboro.

Father Trinkhaus noted in a simple composition book that Mass was celebrated in the "New Church" for the first time on Palm Sunday, March 26, 1899. The Prince George's Enquirer printed the following on March 31, 1899 in their Brevities column: "*Last Sunday, Palm Sunday, the doors of the new St. Mary's Church in this town were opened to the parishioners, and though the new building is almost double the size of the old edifice, little room was left vacant. The colored worshipers in this church number nearly eight-hundred, and generally are present at various services on Sunday. The new church is of brick, one hundred and twenty feet long and seventy-five feet wide, surmounted with a large belfry. The inside is of hard oak, and the marble altars on the sides give the building an imposing appearance. All the windows are of cathedral glass, and were given in memory of deceased members of the congregation. The building will be dedicated in May and the pastor, Rev. Charles Trinkhaus, will by that time have paid off all indebtedness on his beautiful church.*"

Jesuit diaries at White Marsh at Bowie reflect some of the eagerness and excitement surrounding the dedication of the new church at Upper Marlboro. A May 21, 1899 entry noted: "*It was announced here and at Woodmore yesterday that in consequence of the dedication of the new church at Upper Marlboro next Sunday, that the 7:30 A.M. Mass will be the only one at Bowie on that day. Father Gardiner will take the early train from there to attend the dedication. The Cardinal will pontificate and Dr.*

*Stafford will preach.*" The dedication attracted attention far and wide. The Prince George's Enquirer and The Catholic Mirror each reported at length on the occasion with its Solemn High Mass celebrated by none other than Cardinal James Gibbons, the only Catholic Cardinal in the United States.

\*\*\*\*\*

The following is from the June 3, 1899 issue of The Catholic Mirror, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Baltimore;

#### DEDICATION AT UPPER MARLBORO

Upper Marlboro, Md., on Sunday last was the scene of a celebration worthy of the birthplace of the first Catholic Bishop of the United States, Rt. Rev. John Carroll (1735-1815). On that day Cardinal Gibbons dedicated the new St. Mary's Church, which was completed early in the spring. After the dedication Solemn High Mass was celebrated by the Very Rev. Dr. Alphonse Magnien, S.S., president of St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore, with Rev. John Wade of Newport, Md., as Deacon and Rev. Thomas Mory's of St. Stanislaus, Baltimore, as Sub-deacon. Rev. Louis O'Donovan, S.T.I., of the Catholic University, acted as master of ceremonies. The sermon was preached by Rev. Dr. D.J. Stafford of St. Patrick's, Washington, D.C., who chose as his subject, "The Divine Origin of the Catholic Church." A number of distinguished clergymen were present including Rev. John A. Morgan, S.J., president of Loyola College, Baltimore; Rev. John Gloyd, rector of St. Patrick's Church, Washington, D.C.; Rev. James T. Gardiner, S.J., of White Marsh, Md.; Rev. John J. Ryan of Gonzaga College, Washington, D.C.

The church is a brick building trimmed with Hummelstown brownstone, with slate roof. Its length is 120 feet, 58 feet wide and 60 feet high, and it is surmounted with a gilt cross. On the front is a tower 76 feet high, ornamented with four brownstone turrets. It contains 24 stained glass windows. The pews, which give a seating capacity of 800, are of solid oak, antique finish.

All things considered, it is one of the finest churches in the counties and, as His Eminence remarked, compares favorably with the churches of Baltimore and Washington. The church is built on the site of the old one, which was erected about 1830. Ground has been purchased adjoining the church, and a residence for the priest will be erected thereon.

A large part of the funds requisite for building the church was legacies left by Mrs. Eliza G. Graham, Misses Annie and Agnes Hill and Mrs. Elizabeth Snowden Hill, mother of the latter two. The Cardinal spoke feelingly of the memory of these kind benefactors.

A solid oak communion rail, in conformity with the pews, was donated by Dr. Richard S. Hill. The baptismal font, also of oak, was donated Mr. and Mrs. Francis W. Hill. Two statues, one of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the other of St. Joseph, which surmount the side altars, were donated by the pastor, Rev. Charles J. Trinkhaus.

Mr. Hugh A. Campbell of Washington, D.C., was the architect, and Messrs. Wyvill Bros., of Upper Marlboro, and members of the congregation, were the builders.

The large high altar, formerly in St. Matthew's Church, Washington, D.C., was renovated by Wyvill Bros, with Mr. C. Thomas Seltzer, of Emmitsburg, as architect. The enameling and gilding was done by Messrs. H.J. Trinkhaus & Son, of Baltimore.

Stained glass windows were donated by Mrs. Richard S. Hill, Mrs. Benjamin Bowie, Mrs. Eleanor Martin, Mr. Joseph L. Martin, Wyvill Bros., Mr. and Mrs. John C. Wyvill, Mr. F. Snowden and Miss Edith Hill, Judge George W. Wilson, Dr. N. S. Hill, Rev. Thos. J. Kenny, and Henry W. Claggett and the Knights of St. Mary's and St. Mary's Beneficial Society.

Rev. Charles J. Trinkhaus, the pastor, is twenty-five years of age, and a graduate of Loyola College and St. Mary's Seminary. He was ordained two years ago by Cardinal Gibbons. St. Mary's is his first charge.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Prince George's Enquirer carried the same information as that of The Catholic Mirror with additional notations of local interest: "The music of the Mass was by Bochmann, and the soloists were Miss Edith Hill, Miss Bessie Grant, Miss Kate Martin, Miss Edith Roder, Messrs. George W. Wilson and M. Hampton Magruder. Mr. Thomas J. Grant was organist. The altar railing is of superb workmanship and was placed in position by a Western firm as ordered by Mrs. Richard S. Hill. The prevailing style of architecture is Gothic, and the ceiling of Georgia pine with open woodwork. A large belfry occupies the southern section of the church and here is found a 1,000 pound bell the work of Messrs. McShane of Baltimore."

Written By  
Gloria Wyvill Garner  
May 1999