

## ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCHES

By Dewey Barry

Included in Early History of Amenia by N. Reed, 1985 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, pages 156-157

In 1852 there were several Catholic families in the town and a number of Catholic men were employed in the iron ore beds at Sharon Station and Amenia. Rev. Michael Riordan of St. Peter's Church, Poughkeepsie, visited this outpost of the parish, and it was in that year that he offered the first Mass in town, in the home of Thomas McEnroe, in the Ore Bed section of the village.

Rev. Patrick Tandy was assigned as the first resident pastor in 1868 when the first church was built. It was located south of the village, at the corner of Old Route 22 and Powder House Road. New parish lines were drawn up and, coming within the boundaries of the Immaculate Conception Parish of Amenia, were the mission churches of Millerton, Dover Plains, Pawling, Millbrook, Pine Plains, and Milan.

Eighteen years later, the church was struck by lightning and destroyed by fire. In the pastorate of Rev. Daniel J. Corkery the present church was built on South Street and the parochial school was housed in its basement. The cornerstone of the new church was laid by Archbishop Michael A. Corrigan on June 12, 1887.

In 1958, a new modern-type parochial school and convent were erected on the church premises. In April of the following year, Cardinal Francis Spellman, in his first official visit to the parish, blessed and dedicated the buildings in appropriate ceremonies, which were attended by a crowd that overflowed the new school auditorium. The late Right Rev. Msgr. John J. Kane was then the pastor.

Indicative of the growth of the Catholic population in this area is the fact that all except one of the original mission churches of the Immaculate Conception Parish have since attained their own parish status. St. Patrick's Church of Millerton is the lone exception; it is a reasonable conjecture that it, too, will eventually become a separate parish.

The Immaculate Conception Parish of Amenia is one of the largest in the County outside of Poughkeepsie and Beacon, and the year 1968 will mark the first centenary of its establishment. Right Rev. Msgr. Joseph A. Dunn has been the pastor for the past several years and is assisted by Rev. Peter McKeon.