

## Perinton's First Catholic Church

The Church of the Assumption is an important part of our community. But there was no Catholic church in Perinton in 1849, when the first Mass was delivered by Reverend Michael Guilbride, a missionary priest. The Mass was administered to a handful of faithful, mostly Irish immigrants, in the home of Smith Brinning, a blacksmith who lived and had his shop along the towpath of the Erie Canal. A few years later, Fairport became a designated mission of St. Ann's Parish in Palmyra. By 1856, under the direction of Father William Casey of Palmyra, enough money was raised to build a 30 by 35 foot wooden church on High Street. The small building was soon doubled in size, which helped to accommodate the growing Catholic population on Sundays, and the sale of produce the rest of the week.

With a rapid increase in Perinton's Catholic population, the congregation soon required an even larger house of worship. In 1883, early in the 47 year pastorate of Reverend John L. Codyre, a new brick church of modified Gothic design was built at 20 East Avenue, formerly known as Sanford Street. Fairport's second Catholic church served its congregation for 100 years, until it was replaced in 1983 by the current Church of the Assumption.

While the 1883 church building no longer exists, the original, built in 1856, still stands. Although the early wood frame building no longer served as a house of worship after 1883, it continued to operate as a produce warehouse, for many years under the direction of Charles Lacy Fuller, who also sold seeds, fertilizer, grain, and farm implements. With close proximity to the railroad, local farmers utilized Fuller's warehouse to distribute their apples, cabbage, potatoes, and other crops to distant markets. Fuller sold the business to J. Milton McMahon in 1910. McMahon soon added on to the old church building, to accommodate the sale of Pennsylvania Portland Cement, shipped to Fairport on barges on the Erie Canal. He also sold Purina products. Longtime residents may recall the checkerboard paint scheme on the building's exterior, similar to that found on a bag of Purina feed.

At 157 years old, the building still provides a vital purpose, as a residence with two apartments.



*Perinton's first Catholic church in the 1940s, when it operated as a grain and feed store under the ownership of J. Milton McMahon.*