



The History of St. Michael's Parish, Fulton, NY.

The Dedication and Blessing of the new St. Michael's Church and Rectory, Sep. 17, 1961. CAP at Orchard Lake.

Fulton, a city of 15,000 inhabitants is located on both sides of the Oswego River, 11 miles to the south of Oswego and 25 miles to the north of Syracuse. St. Michael's Parish extends from the Oswego River to Lake Neatahwanta with the church erected on the corner of Beech and West 3rd Streets.

Early History of Fulton

Fulton is a comparatively young town of a little over 100 years. For centuries this territory was inhabited by the Iroquois Indians. The first white man who reached the Oswego Falls in August 1654 was Father Simon LeMoyne, a Jesuit French missionary from Canada. Very soon Father LeMoyne was followed by the other French settlers from Canada, and later by the English from New England and the Dutch from New York; all attracted by the beauty of Oswego Falls and the fertility of the land of this territory.

The construction of the Erie Canal in 1828 provided work for many people and brought many Irish who were fleeing a persecution in England and some Swiss immigrants. All these people settled on both shores of the Oswego River by the Oswego Falls. The 'Western part of this settlement was called Oswego Falls, and the Eastern part took the name Fulton. In 1857 both settlements joined into one town under the name of Fulton.

The construction of a railroad from Syracuse through Fulton to Oswego in 1848 again brought many new people, most of whom settled on farms raising wheat and dairy farming. Industry began to establish itself due to the power supplied by the Oswego Falls Saw and grain mills provided the people of this territory with lumber and flour. Later the Woolen Mill and Chocolate Works were established followed very soon by the Sealright and Armstrong Cork. These diverse industries attracted many newcomers, mostly Italians, Poles, some Germans and Ukrainians.

Poles - a long time without a church

The first Poles came to Fulton in 1901 and since that time their number increased each year. At that time only the Immaculate Conception parish was established on the East side of Fulton. In this church Father Patrick Kearney cared for the Poles . After his death in 1906 Father John Lindsman came to Fulton. He continued the same spiritual work for the Polish people. His pastoral work was limited to Holy Mass, baptism, weddings and funerals, but for confession due to their unfamiliarity with the English language the Poles traveled to Father Eusin in Syracuse or to Oswego when he

celebrated Holy Mass there.

In 1908 Father Stephen Plaza came to Oswego as the first Polish pastor, attending to the spiritual needs of the Poles in Fulton also. He was first who thought of building a Polish church in Fulton. On February 7, 1909, he founded the St. Michael's Society, whose aim was to help start the construction of the new church. But Father Plaza left Oswego in July 1909 and was succeeded in November of 1909 by Father Simon Pniak. He also came here for Sunday Mass and Holydays.

During the time of Fathers Plaza and Pniak Holy Mass was celebrated in the hall under the Church of the Immaculate Conception. All sacraments, sermons and religious instructions for the children were provided there. This continued for over 10 years.

Father Pniak with the help of the St. Michael's Society began to collect funds for a Polish church in Fulton. He bought five lots on Park and Pine Streets as a future site. Due to the illness in 1920 from which Father Pniak did not recover until his death in 1929 all these preparations were left at a standstill.

Between 1920 and 1924 Father Valentine Chrobok from Syracuse sometimes came to Fulton with Holy Mass. On other Sundays and Holydays the Poles attended Mass in the Immaculate Conception Church in Fulton or in St. Stephen's in Oswego.

A place of worship found.

In February of 1924 Father Casimir Piejda became pastor in Oswego and on March also the administrator in Fulton. For a time he offered Mass at the former Red Men's Hall on Broadway, and later at Paul Saydera's Hall. With his extraordinary zeal Father Piejda labored for the needed funds to build a new church. Because many parishioners were not in favor of the site Father Pniak proposed, Father Piejda despite many difficulties, hardship, opposition and friction bought the present land with the house on the corner of Beech and West 3rd Streets. This house was converted on the first floor into a church; the upstairs serving as the rectory for the priest. Such were the humble beginnings of St. Michael's parish in Fulton.

In 1927 Father Piejda left Oswego and Fulton and was succeeded by Father John Sciskalski who was unable to come to Fulton to provide spiritual services for the people of St. Michael's parish. For a very short time Father Casimir Skrypko, chaplain of St. Mary's Hospital in Syracuse, occasionally traveled to Fulton to celebrate Holy Mass here.

First resident pastors.

The first Polish resident priest assigned exclusively for the Poles in Fulton was Father Joseph Janowski. He arrived here in June 1930 and left Fulton next year in July. He was the first to live in the rectory above the church.

In September 1931 Father Boleslaus Dutkiewicz was assigned to St. Michael's parish. Thanks to this Father's endeavors' three Felician Sisters came to our parish and stayed here about 3 years teaching the children religion and the Polish language.

Father Francis Przywara came to Fulton in October 1938. With the help of some parishioners Father

Przywara gained from the Bishop all the canonical privileges for St. Michael's parish and thus he became the first canonical pastor of this parish.

After Father's Przywara departure in June 1941 for an interim of four months, Fathers Piejda, Koleczek and Kowalczyk came from Syracuse to care for the parish.

On October 12, 1941, Father Edmund Stankiewicz was assigned to Fulton as the pastor. He stayed here for fifteen years until April 1956. Besides his good work in caring for the spiritual life of the parishioners Father made some improvements in the church building such as an addition of the vestibule on the front of the church, installation on new pews and the provision of a class room in the basement of the church for religious instructions.

Since April 17, 1956, Father Stanley Macewicz has been the pastor of St. Michael's parish. At the end of October 1957 Father John Sliwowski came to our parish to work temporarily, with the intention of returning to his diocese of Łomża, Poland. Eut due to the persecution of the Church in Poland he remained in Fulton as the assistant pastor of St. Michael's church.

1959-1961 period of most outstanding development.

Under the pastoral leadership of Father Macewicz the parish has grown both spiritually and materially, and thus the idea of building the new church and the rectory became very actual. The good parishioners accepted this proposition with great enthusiasm and gave very generous offerings for this purpose. As a result, on September 29, 1960, the feast day of the Patron of the parish, St. Michael the Archangel, ground was broken adjacent to the old church. Since that time the construction of the new buildings proceeded very quickly and on Pentecost in May 1961 the Priests moved into the new rectory. Two months later on July 29, the first Holy Mass was said in the new church.

The old church which served the parish for 35 years was demolished and on its site today is a beautiful square with St. Michael's statue in front of the new church and rectory.

On September 17, 1961, in the presence of many of the clergy and people of Fulton and vicinity the solemn blessing of the new church and rectory was performed by the Ordinary of the Syracuse diocese, Bishop Walter A. Foery.

This great day is one especially memorable for our pastor, Father Macewicz and his worthy parishioners. The culmination of their dream has been realized. St. Michael's church and rectory stand as monuments of their sacrifices and generosity. With this new house of prayer erected for the honor and glory of God the external appearance of the parish is completely renewed. May also all the souls of St. Michael's parishioners be reborn and rededicated for a new life for God and their everlasting happiness.