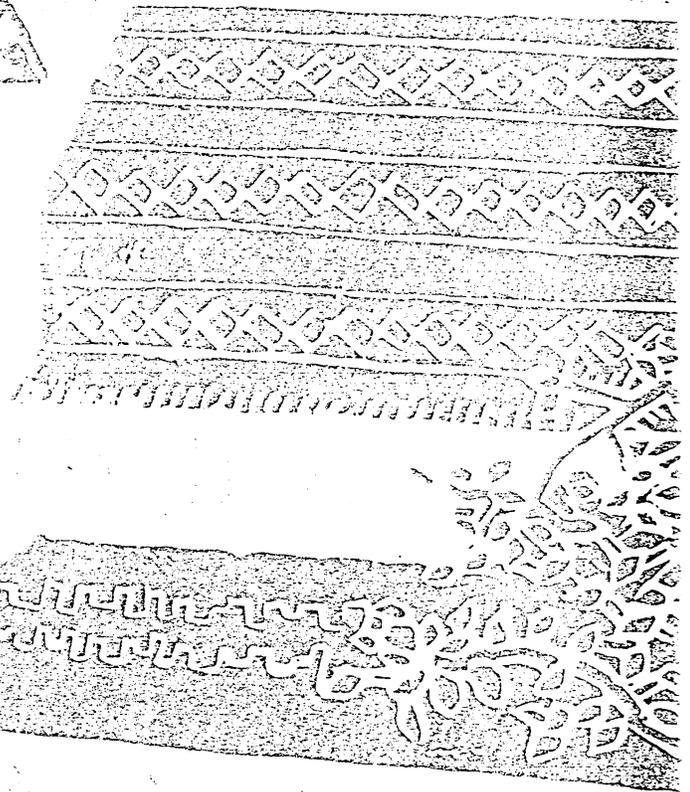
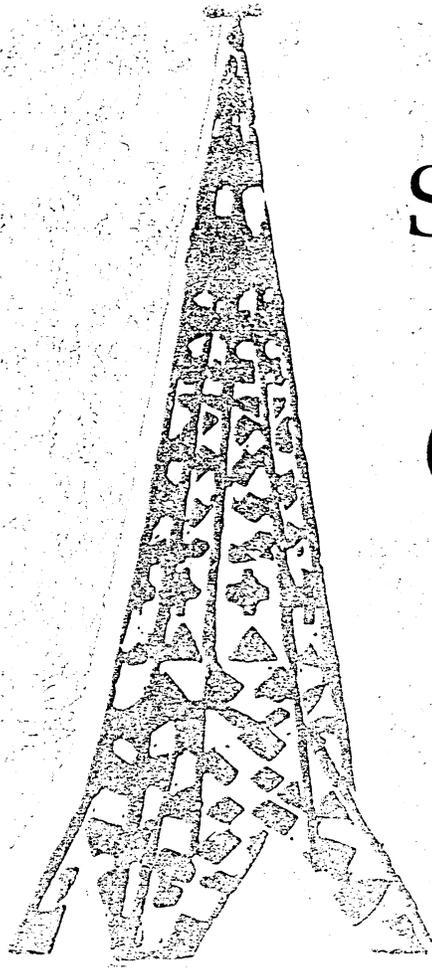


ST. PAUL'S CHURCH Centennial

1871 — 1971





“ I will give thanks to you in a great church.
I will praise you in a strong people. ”

Psalm XXXV

Saint Paul's is a great church. When it was designed and built one hundred years ago, it was hailed as “an excellent example of Gothic architecture . . . 111 feet long and 55 feet, 9 inches wide . . . with room to seat 650 people . . . and a tower 128 feet high.”

But size is not the reason Saint Paul's is a great church. There are far more impressive churches across the land. Saint Paul's is great because of its people. When you come right down to it, a church is more than a building.

IT IS PEOPLE.

As we celebrate the Centennial of Saint Paul's, we remember the people who contributed to its greatness . . . through their faith and their works. Like the light and heat of a candle, they cannot be separated.

The last one hundred years are sprinkled with the names of many people who labored, each in his own way, to build the religious heritage that is ours today. Men like Thomas Fee and John Hickey; Thomas Buttimer and Cornelius Foley; John Crowe, John Magner, Thomas Murray and other early parishioners. Priests like Father Hugh Smyth and Ambrose Roche; Hugh Mulligan, Peter McCormack, Patrick Quill, and many others. Through their faith and their works, they have given us a great church. They have made us a strong people.

So, it is fitting that we pause, as we start the next one hundred years, and recall what has gone before.

The pages that follow describe people and events of yesterday . . . and today. They are all familiar, because they are all part of our life. And that's what it's all about.



The First 100 Years . . .

When Thomas Fee arrived in Hingham with his wife and two children from Ireland in 1849, he followed a pattern typical of many other early Catholics who had gone before him. He first lived in a section of Hingham known as The Cove. And he soon learned that Mass was said occasionally at a house in the area (said to be the Hickey House on North Street.) On attending Mass, and apparently knowing the altar boy's responses, he was invited to serve. Religion was an integral part of Tom Fee's life, and in later years he would help build a new Church . . . and serve as sexton of it.

There were not many Catholics in the early days of Hingham. The first ones of record were the Acadians . . . several of whom lived in the house of Cornelius Barnes on Main Street. They were well educated and devout, "worshipping in their own way under the trees upon the grounds." Early church records also show that there were some of English, Scotch, Portuguese and French origin. The majority were Irish. But they all shared one thing in common — a strong Catholic faith. And this love of God brought them together . . . first in gatherings which revolved around the visits of priests like Father Roddan who would travel from Quincy to teach and spread the faith. Later, at various homes and the old Town Hall (then located in Hingham Center) where Mass was said occasionally. In those days, the spiritual needs of "Hingham's Catholic Society" were served by priests who would journey from Quincy or Weymouth by coach or horseback. They would arrive on Saturday to hear confessions; stay overnight at one of the houses, and celebrate Mass on Sunday.

As the Catholic population of Hingham grew, so did the need for a church. And God sent a man to help, Father Hugh P. Smyth: an amazing Irish-born priest, often called the "Apostle of the South Shore," who is part of the heritage of St. Paul's. Father Smyth was Pastor of the original St. Francis Xavier Church in Weymouth; and, in his thirteen years there, he was responsible for building eight churches . . . including St. Paul's in Hingham. Father Smyth was the driving force who marshalled the energies of the Catholic people of Hingham . . . guiding them toward their goal: their own house of prayer.

On August 10, 1866, the "Catholic Society" of the Town purchased the church site from Messrs. Burr, Brown & Co. (The first owner had been Richard Betscome who was granted the land by the town fathers on September 18, 1635.) The purchase price was \$1,700; and the deed was given to Bishop John J. Williams.

Three years passed before actual construction started on the Church itself. Money had to be raised; and this was accomplished largely through fairs, parties and other social functions. It was not until late November in 1869 that ground was broken for the foundation. And the work proceeded slowly . . . with much of the digging done by men and boys* who labored with picks and shovels as the weather and their own spare time allowed.

On Sunday, June 12, 1870, the cornerstone was blessed; and the foundation slowly took shape throughout the summer and fall. The sills of the new church were laid down on Friday, December 2, and by the last days of December, 1870, there was considerable progress on the framework. By the end of January, 1871, the structure had been boarded. The month of February saw the building of the spire. And on Wednesday, April 12, there was a moment of triumph when the golden cross was set atop the spire and the protective covering removed "at twenty-five minutes of 12."

Catholics assembled in the new building for the first time on Sunday, July 2, 1871, at 10:30 in the forenoon. They met again that afternoon for the selection of family pews. Finally, on July 23, 1871, the church was dedicated.

The church cost \$17,000 when completed. Part of the financing program included the purchase of windows bearing the names of families then in the parish. Family pews were also "bought." Seat money was paid by the quarter or by Sunday collection — a collector passing through the church until about 1926.

*Men who worked on the foundation included James Brassel, Jerry Breen, Tom Buttimer, Jonas Casey, John Corbett, Larry Crehan, Dan Daley, John Daley, Pat Delargy, Dan Donovan, Jim Dower, Jim Driscoll, Jim and Tom Fee, Cornelius Foley, Dan Hickey, Redmond Keating, John Magner, John Moore, Pat Murphy, John Tully, Barney Ward and John Welch. Stone carted from local quarries was used to build the foundation walls.

HINGHAM JOURNAL
March 17, 1871

The Catholic Church
We learn that the work as far as pro-
gressed on this structure has been
thoroughly examined by one of the best
architects in Boston, who pronounces it
superior to that of any other similar build-
ing of modern built in the State. This
speaks well for the faithful manner in
which the contract has been carried out.
-Hanson & Co.

HINGHAM JOURNAL
May 26, 1871

We learn that the new Catholic
Church St. Paul's of this town
will be dedicated on Sunday, July 23.
Great preparations for the occasion
are being made by the society and
others interested.

HINGHAM JOURNAL
September 9, 1870

The Fair
The fair held in Loring Hall, which
commenced on Monday, and termi-
nates this (Friday) evening
purpose of raising funds
building the Catholic Church
town, will, without doubt,
complete success. The hall
dressed with a profusion of
attractions are quite num-
bers, by C. M. Roeth of B.
saletables presenting a ta-
dance, and being filled with
specimens of female hand
week we shall give full
in regard to the fair.

HINGHAM JOURNAL
June 10, 1870

accommodation of the members
ious Catholic Societies of Bos-
jacent places who wish to a
of the corner stone of the
urch in Hingham, the ste-
er" will make a trip from
day 12th inst., leaving Liv-
3/4 P. M. and Hingham
rip, soon after the close

Fare: 25 cents

HINGHAM JOURNAL
December 16, 1870

The New Catholic Church
The floor timbers of this building
have been laid and boarded, and
work will progress as rapidly as pos-
sible. Messrs. Hanson and Hunnewell
of Malden, who have built several
of churches, are the contractors for this
edifice, and as their work for thrif-
tiness has heretofore given entire
satisfaction, we have no doubt that
it will prove so in the present in-
stance. Frederick V. Corsen, of Mel-
rose, is foreman of the work. Good
materials are used in its construction
and when completed, the structure
will present a fine appearance.
Mr. Smyth, the pastor of the
through whose zealous effor-
movement of building this
started, devotes all his pastoral
of the

HINGHAM JOURNAL
June 24, 1870

The following report of the
laying of the corner stone of
the new Catholic Church of this
town, came to hand too late for
last week's issue. Although late,
we think it will prove none the
less interesting to our readers.

Laying the Corner Stone

As we announced to our
readers last week, the cere-
mony of the laying of the cor-
ner stone of the new Catholic
Church to be erected on North
Street, took place on Sunday
afternoon last and was witnessed
by a large concourse of people,
amounting at least from three
thousand persons. The
ceremony was conducted with
standing

HINGHAM JOURNAL
May 12, 1871

The new Catholic Church, in
this village, is rapidly approach-
ing completion. The plastering
is completed with the exception
of a skin coat, and the car-
pentry work is nearly done.
The structure is nearly com-
pleted. It will be a
great addition to the
village.

HINGHAM JOURNAL
April 21, 1871

A horse, belonging to a lightning rod company, attached
to a buggy belonging to Mr. Geo. Cushing, 2d., the stable kept
frightened while passing the new Catholic Church, at the
by removing the staging around the tower of that struc-
ture, throwing out the occupants, two men, opposite the
South Street cemetery, who fortunately escaped the
injury. Before the horse was stopped, however, it was
essentially smashed up.

HINGHAM JOURNAL
July 28, 1871

Dedication of St. Paul's Church

The dedication of the new church,
St. Paul's, which took place on Sun-
day last, was the occasion of bring-
ing together one of the largest and
most respectable congregation of
people ever assembled in the town.

The day was one of the very best
and brightest of the season, and at-
tracted a numerous throng of people
from Hingham and the neighboring
towns. In addition to this, the steam-
er John Romer, brought down a num-
erous host of our city friends, who
embraced the splendid opportunity
afforded them of a trip down the
harbor to view the new church, about
which so much interest is centered
and to witness the ceremonies of the
dedication.

The consecration of the church
commenced a few minutes before
eleven o'clock A. M. and was con-
ducted by the Right Rev. Dr. J. J.
Williams, Bishop of Boston, assisted
by several clergymen from Boston
and vicinity.

The Asperges Me Domine, hyssopo,
etc., which translated is "Thou shalt
sprinkle me with hyssop, O Lord and
I shall be cleansed." etc. then fol-
lowed the singing of the Gloria
by the choir.

The highlights of the early days of St. Paul's. by
the Right Rev. Bishop of Boston, the litany of the saints
with the accompanying prayer were
recited within the sanctuary.

This being done, the clergy re-
turned to the vestry, and soon after-
wards the Mass was celebrated.

Among the clergymen present were
the Rev. A. Sherwood Healey, of the
Cathedral; Rev. Jas. A. Healey, of
St. James, Bosteon; Rev. Peter A. Mc-
Kenna, of Marlboro; Rev. M. Moran,
of Abington; Rev. T. B. McNulty, of
North Bridgewater; Rev. John A. Con-
lon of South Bridgewater; Rev. James
McBlue, of Chelsea; Rev. M. Supple
of Charlestown; Rev. John B. Purcell,
of the Boston Cathedral; Rev. Peter
J. Leddey, of Weymouth; and the
Rev. Pastor H. P. Smyth.

Among the laity were noticed sev-
eral prominent Catholic gentlemen
from various parts of the country,
viz: Patrick Donohoe, Esq., of the
Boston Pilot; M. J. McMasters, of the
New York Freeman's Journal; John
Mitchel, of the New York Citizen;
George Ryan, of the Southern Quar-
terly Review; T. B. McLally, of the
Metropolitan Riond; General T. M.
Donahoe, of New Hampshire; Cal. Ly-
ons, of the New York Herald; Hon.
P. A. Collins, of Boston; Thomas J.
Gargan, Esq., treasurer of the Emi-
grants Savings Bank, Boston; Patrick
S. Gilmore, of Peace Jubilee fame;
J. B. O'Reilly, of Pilot; S. T. Rankin,
of Boston Herald, together with many
other distinguished gentlemen from
Boston and vicinity. The elite of the
Boston Catholic community were
present, and taken together it was one
of the most respectable gatherings
ever seen in Hingham.

The church itself, the corner stone
of which was laid more than a year
ago, is nearly finished, and as most
of our readers are aware, is being
completed with standing

HINGHAM JOURNAL
June 17, 1870

Laying of the Corner Stone of the New Cath-
olic Church
The corner stone of the new Catholic Church
North Street, for the Catholic Society of this town, was
laid with appropriate religious services, which
between two and three thousand spectators, a large
were from Boston and not a few of the prominent
clergymen of other denominations being seated
during the services.

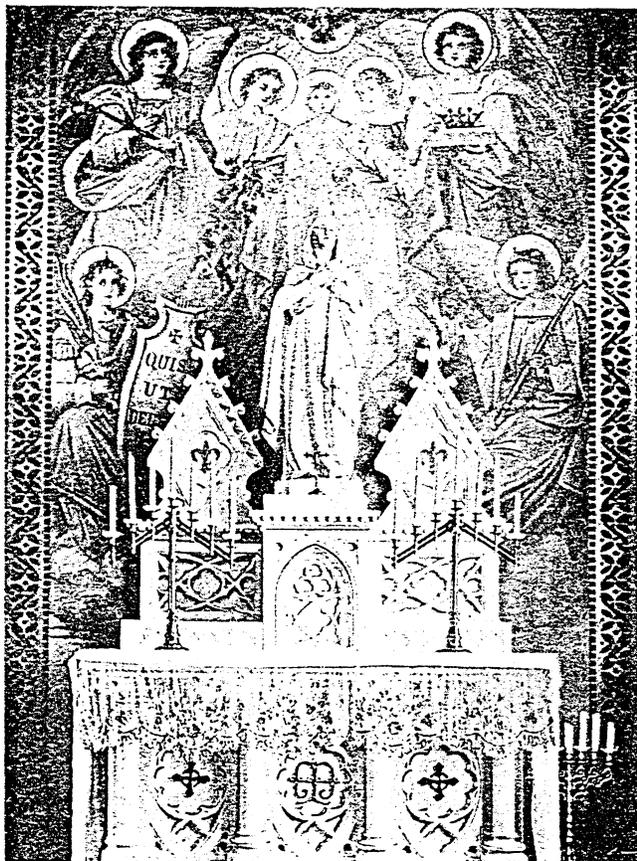
The Catholics of Hingham have worshipped
in the Town Hall and several efforts to build a
parish church failed until Rev. H. P. Smyth took the parish
pastorate he has labored indefatigably to estab-
lish a place of worship for his congregation and he receiv-
ed from several of the prominent citizens of the
town the edifice will be built of wood with
in the Gothic style of architecture from plans
prepared by the architect of the Holy Cross
Church, 55 feet 9 inches wide and the tower will be
finished in black walnut and pews will
and there will be two altars and commodi-
ous room will be used as a Sunday school room
and be so constructed as to afford seats for
ample room for the Catholic community
about 500 persons.

The services Sunday were in the ab-
sence of the Very Rev. P. F. Lydon V. G.,
Pastor of St. Peter's, and were conducted
by the Very Rev. Michael Supple,
Pastor of St. Paul's.

Hingham Journal newspaper clippings capture some of the highlights of the early days of St. Paul's.

1/22/02
Bridgewater, Rev. Adams, and the church
to Almighty God. The cor-
ner stone was laid by
of St. Paul's
Father Lydon and beneath it was placed
ancient and modern coins, copies of
bearing the usual inscrip-
tion of St. Peter at Rome, the
United States, Govern-





The years following the completion of the church record other accomplishments marking the growth of the parish. In 1873, the lower church was finished and lighted for the first time. On August 15, 1876, St. Paul's was split off from Weymouth and became an independent parish with Father Peter Leddy as the first Pastor.* The following year, on April 26, 1877, Father Leddy bought the Thaxter home (now the Hingham Community Center) for use as a rectory. And on November 13, 1877, the parish cemetery was purchased and blessed. (That same day, 50 children were confirmed in the parish church.)

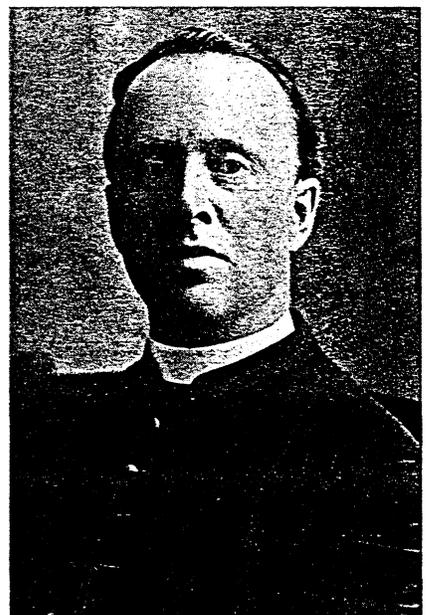
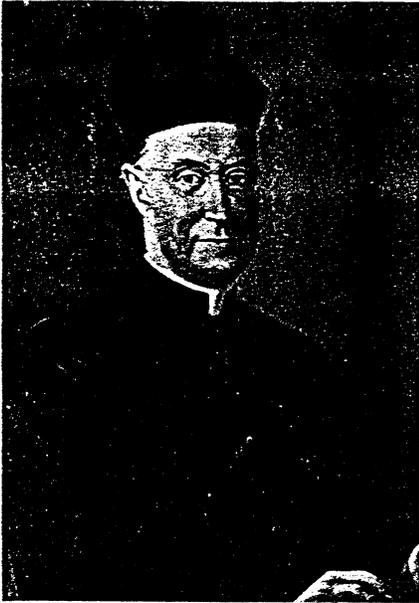
Father Gerald Fagan bought the present rectory (the old Albert Fearing homestead) on January 18, 1895. (It is interesting to note that it originally sat close to the street. In 1900, workmen excavated behind it; and the entire structure was moved back about twelve feet where it has remained through the years.)

The records of the parish, and recollections of older parishioners give us some insight to conventional as well as major events that affected the church down through the years.

Church records note a "terrible storm" and "no church" on November 27, 1898. Notations by Father Mulligan in 1900 indicate that the debt on St. Paul's Church was down to \$2,000, but the debt on the parish house and land, which had been purchased only 5 years before, was \$10,000. 1910 brought problems with the roof of the church, and Father McCall wrote that "nearly four months were consumed in repairing the roof." In 1918, on October 6 and 13, all churches were closed due to the epidemic of Spanish Influenza which was raging in Massachusetts. On November 21, 1920, at 1:15 in the morning, a fire broke out in the kitchen of the Rectory and destroyed part of the ell and the roof. As a result of the fire, two new rooms were added on the east side, and other changes were made. In 1926, Father MacCormack noticed that the church spire was swaying. Father Edmund Moran, curate, developed the engineering data and plans that were needed to fix it. In 1929, the church was completely redecorated inside. (One parishioner, Hugh Smith, recalls being married that year in a "sea of scaffolding.")

St. Paul's School had its beginning when the Terry Estate on Fearing Road came up for sale and was purchased by Father Quill in 1950. He felt it would be an ideal Convent in the event a parochial school was built. An intense effort, started by the Hingham Knights of Columbus and joined by every church organization, solicited funds for the school. By the Fall of 1951, \$50,000 had been subscribed, and amounts for twice that sum were pledged. Ground was broken on April 8, 1951 and building commenced thereafter. The school is located on the site of the old Hingham Tassel Factory. It has nine grade classrooms, an assembly hall, and is a one-story brick building of modified colonial design.

*At this time, St. Paul's parish also included Scituate and Hull. Around the turn of the century, Hull was still a mission administered from St. Paul's. St. Mary's of the Bay had been built and Mass was said there on one Sunday each month in the winter. A priest and one altar boy from St. Paul's would make the trip there by horse and buggy. St. Mary's in Nantasket was not open during the winter, so Catholics from Nantasket came to Hingham by trolley cars which then operated as far down the beach as "Whitehead."



EARLY PASTORS

Hugh P. Smyth	- to 1876
Peter J. Leddy	1876 - 1880
Gerald A. Fagan	1880 - 1896
Ambrose F. Roche	1896 - 1899
Hugh J. Mulligan	1899 - 1907
Peter F. McCall	1907 - 1926
Peter J. McCormack	1926 - 1930
James F. Haney	1930 - 1936
Daniel F. Sheerin	1936 - 1946
Patrick J. Quill	1946 - 1955
Joseph P. Burke	1955 - 1957
Alfred C. Sheehan	1957 - 1965



It's a little unfair to simply list the men who have played such an important role in the growth of St. Paul's over the last 100 years, but we really don't know that much about them. What little we do know has been gleaned from old newspaper clippings, sparse church records, and the personal recollections of parishioners. Some stand out more than others, perhaps because of their personalities, or the time in which they served. Even so, each one has, in his own way, left his mark on St. Paul's.

This is the way some people remember them --

Father Hugh Smyth -- "The tireless church builder. The apostle of the South Shore."

Father Peter Leddy -- "I was a little girl. He came to my house on sick call in a horse and buggy."

Father Fagan -- "Outgoing and very warm. A hard worker."

Father Ambrose Roche -- "Very popular . . . athletic . . . handsome. He loved to drive horses fast. He was catcher on the old Hingham semi-pro baseball team."

Father Hugh Mulligan -- "He was beautiful. He knew people. He had a wonderful brogue; loved to tell stories and was a marvelous speaker."

Father McCall -- "Most priestly man I ever knew."

Father McCormack -- "A great walker. Always had his dog with him."

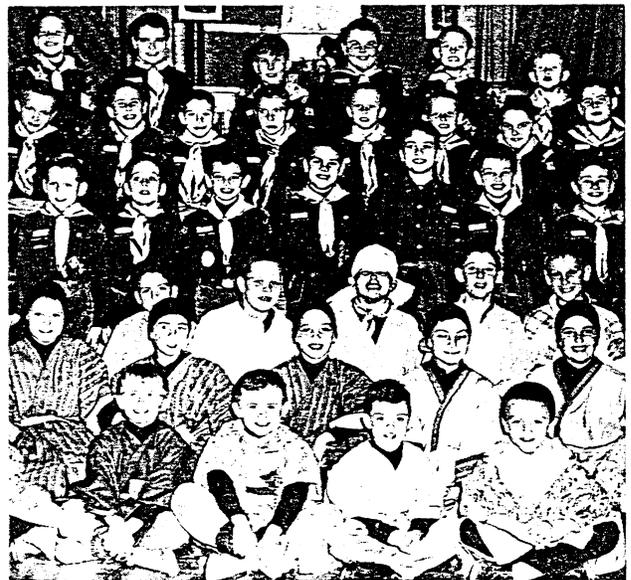
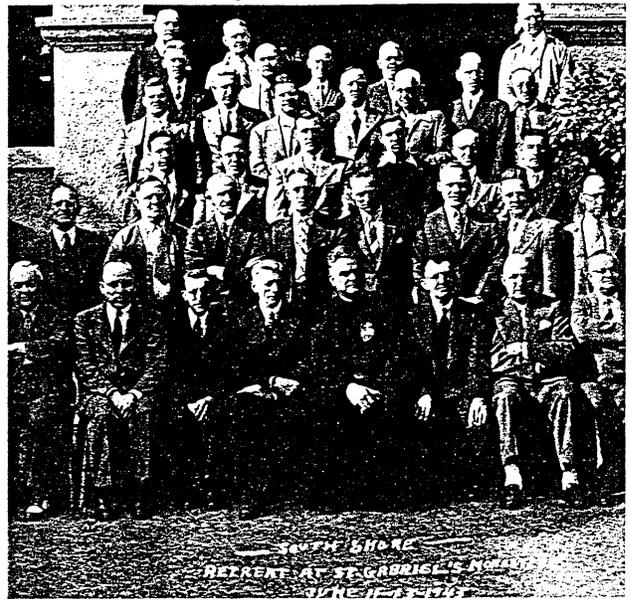
Father James Haney -- "Very strict. One of the old timers."

Father Dan Sheerin -- "Very quiet. I also remember the two curates -- Fr. Lally and Fr. Finnegan."

Father Patrick Quill -- "He was a dear man . . . good sense of humor. Kind of quiet. Used to walk up Lincoln Street every night with his German Shepherd."

Father Joseph Burke -- "A fine man. Knew everybody. Always went out of his way to greet you."

Father Alfred Sheehan -- "I remember him as a most gentlemanly priest. Very humble . . . a man of God."



SOCIAL ACTIVITIES OF THE PARISH THROUGH THE YEARS express the life style of the age in which the people lived. Before and after St. Paul's church was built, the Catholic people of Hingham held fairs and balls to raise money for the church. The Hingham Journal describes, for example, how steamers brought large groups of Catholics down from Boston to attend many of these gala occasions. Church records note that a fair held in 1890 produced \$2,900; and that income from lawn parties and fairs in 1902 amounted to \$4,022.

The success and appeal of these early functions can be traced to two factors: 1) Hingham enjoyed a large summer population, and this swelled the number of people who were drawn to attend and participate in these social events. 2) A strong, loyal, and active parish membership. The new church became an integral part of their everyday life. It was only natural that they would look to it . . . not only to fulfill their spiritual needs, but also as an instrument by which they could satisfy their emotional and social needs.

Their social life centered around association in the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Holy Name Society, the St. Vincent dePaul Society, the Dramatic Club, and women's clubs such as the Sewing Club, Ladies Sodality, St. Paul's Guild, and Catholic Women's Club. Entertainment consisted of lawn parties, card parties, dances, parish reunions, field days at Cronin Field, St. Patrick's Day celebration, and minstrel shows held in Loring Hall and Sanborn Auditorium.

Minstrel shows and musicals were especially popular in the Twenties and early Thirties; and they mirrored the times. In 1920, a "musical extravaganza," held under the auspices of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, was tied to Irish freedom. (This was at the height of "the troubles.") One typical ad in the show program was a full-page message: "In memory of Terence MacSwiney, Lord Mayor of Cork, who sacrificed his life for the ideal of Irish independence."

Many activities also embraced the Youth of the parish, particularly with the opening of a parochial school in 1952. Picnics, CYO baseball, basketball, boy scouts, beach outings, father-son Communion breakfasts, retreats, Christian doctrine sessions, and a wide range of other events were aimed at generating and sustaining a strong parish unity for young and old alike.

