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ST. PATRICK'S CHURCH YORK

~~Dedicated 1776, the year of Our Independence~~

The original plot in the town of York was land owned by the proprietories John, Thomas and Richard Penn, Son's of Wm. Penn. In 1741 they directed Thomas Cookson, the deputy Surveyor for Lancaster Co. of which York County was there a part to lay out in Lots, after the Manner of Philadelphia the town of York, on both sides of the Codorus, the Square in the center of the town to be 480 ft. by 520.

St. Patrick's Church was built on a lot next to the Potter's field, adjoining the Cargo stretch of Public land called "The Commons". Says Mr. Prowell and his History of York Co. p. 641; "The lands thus described as "Commons" (in the charter of borough) included much more territory than was afterward included in the Public Common which is now transported into Penn Park". This property was not transferred to the borough York until 1886. There were difficulties between the Penn heirs and the free holders of York about the titles to the land in this vicinity, dating from the time the State of Pennsylvania in 1776 took over the rights of the proprietories. The deed from the Penns was dated June 11, 1816, which finally conveyed a tract of land containing about 20 acres and used as a Public Common. This was in accordance with an act of the Legislature in 1805 providing that "all right, interest and claim of the Commonwealth to all lands in the borough held or occupied under title from the late proprietories should be released to the person or persons building the same". (St. Patrick's)

In attempting to write the history of this church it is difficult to get accurate information. As early as April, 1750, John Moore secured lot No. 395. (The present site of St. Patrick's Church.) On the 20th of June, of the same year, John Moore shortly after erected there on a stone dwelling house. In 1776 it was purchased from the heirs of Casper Stillinger by Joseph Smith, who presented it to the then small Catholic Congregation to be used as a place of public worship..... York Congregation was presented with a place for the freedom of worship in the same year that our forefathers were presented with the inestimable boon for which they labored so long, viz: Liberty and Independence. After considerable remodeling, this old stone dwelling was converted into a place of worship, and dedicated and consecrated.

Quoted from Judge Gibson History of York County

p. 542.

(in York)

.....When and where the first Mass was said cannot be determined, as there are no records of the parish until 1776, but the congregation was formed about 1750, and was attended by missionaries from Baltimore, Conewago and Emmitsburg.

After considerable remodeling and repairing, the old stone dwelling had converted into quiet a respectable place of worship. After its dedication to the service of God, there being no resident priest, the parish was attended by priest from Conewago, Adams County, Pa., who attended to the wants of the congregation by celebrating Holy Mass and administering the Sacraments. This church continued to be used

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continued to be used until 1809 when Rev. Thomas Neal, of Georgetown, Maryland, now District of Columbia, visited York and finding the church too small, determined to build a new one. (See Picture) As there was some doubt about the legality of the deed, Father Neal resolved before building, to obtain a new deed and succeeded in having the heirs of William Penngrant him the following deed:

"To the Rev. Thomas Neal, in trust for his heirs and assigns, to and for the only proper use, and in behalf of the Roman Catholic Congregation of York, their successors and assigns forever. Sealed and delivered in the presence of John Small and John Forsyth."

This deed remained in the custody of some unknown person for a number of years unrecorded. At the present writing we find it was recorded in the York County Courts in the year of 1875, Book F. F. F. Page 347.

Quoted from Prowell's History of York County,
Vol.1 p. 707

* John T. Riley says his name was Francis and that he was "Superior of the Jesuits at that time."