

# EARLY GROTTO NEWS ARTICLES AND THE 1852 CHURCH

Detroit Free Press, May 31, 1881 pg.1.

"Hamtramck Notes" Cornerstone Laying at Connor's Creek: "The Corner-stone of the new stone chapel of Our Lady of Lourdes, in Connor's Creek was laid at 4pm on Sunday with great festivities. The grove near the church and the front pillars there of were decorated in honor of the occasion. The ceremonies were attended by a large number of people from the vicinity and from this city, and were very impressive. Work will be rapidly pushed forward on the new structure, and when completed it will be made a pilgrimage station. Real water from Lourdes will be imported and mixed with that which will flow from a spring. An open air procession preceded the laying of the corner-stone. Grotto Archives: Ch082c-1881

Western Home Journal October 8, 1881 p.5

"Mr. A Chapoton sr. and family last Thursday paid a visit to the grotto of the Assumption, Connor's Creek. After a cordial reception, our Rev. Pastor showed his highly respected visitors our nice and costly decorated church, and then conducted them through the grand alley of evergreens to the shrine of our Blessed Lady. Having all said some prayers on the lovely spot, the experienced gentleman, whose opinion is so universally consulted on city and state buildings, inspected our grotto and declared it a solid, elegant and so far well erected monument. This most favorable opinion by one of the most competent and successful master builders of Michigan is a great credit to our architect, Mr. P. Dederich, and to Felix Meier, who has accomplished the first contract in a superior manner; and it will also be a powerful incentive to our congregation to prosecute vigorously the glorious work. Our respected friend also offered some practical suggestions for the happy and speedy termination of the grotto of which he is a great admirer and a generous contributor. Grotto Archives: Ch083d-1881

Note: The Western Home Journal became The Michigan Catholic in 1883 and has been owned by the archdiocese since 1920. Prior to that on July 23, 1842 the first Catholic paper was called the Western Catholic Register, it lasted only a year. On April 30th, 1853 a second attempt was made for a Catholic press. The paper was called the Detroit Catholic Vindicator and survived about 6 years. Then on September 12, 1868 the Western Catholic appeared and in 1872 its name was changed to The Western Home Journal. \* Information from, A Condensed History of the Catholic Church by Msgr. Francis Canfield published in the early 1980's.

1890's The Grotto Shrine Silas Farmer

"The Grotto is a large arched recess built of massive blocks of stone. Within it is an altar at which Divine Services may be held. Directly in front is a fountain surrounded by large boulders. The grounds which are naturally beautiful have been improved under Fr. Van's careful supervision. A long avenue shaded and arched by evergreen trees lead up to the grotto from different directions. The entire cost of the structure is estimated at \$6,000. though much of the work has been gratuitously performed. Within the Grotto 10 ft. tall on either side are occupied by 4 rows of massive stones all dressed to the square, the face of each stone bearing an emblem of the church or the Virgin. They are also inscribed with the names of various priests. On each of the stones in the ceiling are engraved the names of one of the popes with the date of his death and the name of the donor of the stone. At the base of the arch is a narrow projection or cornice of stone, bearing on its sides the words of the Hail Mary, separated by stars. On the rear cornice, is the word "Sanctus" thrice repeated. The floor is of marble..." This is how Silas Farmers described the shrine in the 1890's. It is still the same today except for the lack of trees and the names on the stones worn out as a result of the years. One month before the dedication Pope Leo XII had granted Fr. Van's request to authorize the shrine for devotions. Partial and plenary indulgences were extended to all those who visited the Grotto and prayed there for the propagation of the faith. Veneration of Our Lady at this grotto became widely known and attracted even pilgrimages from various parts of the country. The parish feast day August 15<sup>th</sup> still attracts large crowds to this famous landmark 2A2 Gazette #04 Grotto Archives #Ch083g-1881

The Evening News, June 16, 1890 *Describes a typical procession to the Grotto.*

Yesterday at the Grotto. "The Church of the Grotto with her thick brick walls and stone floors, is an agreeably pleasant resting place after traversing under a hot June sun long stretches of the uneven Gratiot Road, shadeless and grey with dust. There are striking and unique features about the well known suburban structure which no other rural parish in America possesses. These plain Connor's Creek folk worship five miles beyond the first toll gate in the midst of surprising wood carvings. The altar rail the confessional and the altar dedicated to the Virgin, present elaborate ornamentation in relief. On a tall altar dedicated to St. Sebastian is a carved representation of the martyrdom of that saint. Further back and on the left the baptism of the Savior by John appears in wood. As is the custom in pleasant weather in the long Sunday afternoons of the summer season, there was yesterday a procession to the grotto, from which the church takes a name known to all the suburban district to the north and east. An unusual number of conveyances, divers with the unmistakable aspect of city vehicles, stood in front of the iron palings of the church enclosure at 4 o'clock when vespers began and the notes of the organ -an unusually fine instrument though somewhat affected by age- floated out through the shade trees and over the fields which seemed never so green in previous years and never so dimpled with swaying grain and grasses. After the service the beloved pastor, Fr. Vandendriessche, who laid forty years ago the foundations of the parish in the woods and whose heart is still as young as any in this year's first communion class, presenting the worldly paradox of an enthusiast in the sixties, spoke briefly to his people. He exhorted them to make diligent use of the means to spirituality referred to the ceremony of the day and closed by offering an extempore prayer at one of the altars. Then the three bells in the steeple rang and the procession was formed. The children of the congregation marched first down the center aisle, a little girl in a white dress bearing a banner. Joseph R. Rivard, of this years graduating class at Detroit College, walked by Fr. Vandendriessche's side. Reciting the Lord's prayer, the Apostles Creed and " Ave Maria," a long line issued from the church door. \*There is a very beautiful avenue leading back from the church about a quarter mile. It is lined by pine and evergreen trees placed at intervals of less than 10 feet and grown so tall during the many years since their planting that their tops intertwine across the avenue above. Down this the procession took it's way. Interslices in the tree tops were sky-lights in the arched passageway, down which shafts of sunlight fell on the bright costumes of the children, the bared heads of men, and the crimson banner held extent to avoid the low branches. The avenue traverses the cemetery and ends at the grotto whose facade of masonry can be seen afar through the burying ground trees. Circling around the fountain the procession knelt in prayer. Father Vandendriessche then addressed those present. He said that he had four columns from old St. Anne's church, the first in the west, and asked financial aid in erecting in the church grounds to the four bishops of Detroit diocese a monument of which these columns should form a part. At the school house after the procession lots were cast for a number of articles on which tickets had been sold, the proceeds going to the parish fund. Among the things disposed of was a toy ship, with a music attachment, which pastor brought from Europe many years ago. Supervisor Trombley, of Grosse Pointe Township, superintended the drawing. Cigars were smoked and beer drank, and it was a pleasant pastoral occasion. There were many evidences to the fact that "Fr. Van" is a great favorite with his people. Grotto Archives #Ch132c-1890

Grotto 1890's

Fr. "Van"

