

Saint Thomas the Apostle - History of the Church

Written in 1940

The Parish of St. Thomas the Apostle in the Brookdale Section of the Town of Bloomfield was canonically erected on the 26th day of January, 1939.

The name was especially selected by the Most Rev. Thomas Joseph Walsh, S.T.D., J.C.D., Archbishop of Newark, who also selected a plot of ground consisting of five and a half acres on Bryd Avenue and Day Street. The Most Rev. Archbishop also approved a sketch of the a combination Church and School building submitted by Anthony J. De Pace, Architect of New York City. On June 17th, 1939, the Rev. Thomas J. Herron was appointed the first Pastor of the newly created Parish.

On Sunday, June 25th, 1939 the first Mass in the Parish was celebrated by Father Herron. A tent of sixty by one hundred feet and seating 900 people had been erected and was to be used as a temporary structure until the basement of the contemplated building was ready.

On August 1st, 1939 the contracts for the new Church and School building were awarded the following:

Vroman & Mahieu, the General Contractor; Sellback & Meyer, Structural Steel and Ornamental Iron; A.J. Gasewind, Plumbing; Adolph Grant & Co., Tile; Shaw Electric Co., Electrical Work; B. J. Steinke, Heating.

On Sunday, August 6th, the ground was blessed and the first spadeful of earth was taken out by the Rt. Rev. Msgr. T.M. Donovan, the Revs. James J. Ownens, Thomas J. Herron, James F. Flanagan, Charles Murphy, Edward Stanley, Eugene McGuire, B. Socha, Donatus Walsh, O.F.M. and Firman, O.F.M. The blessing was followed by Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament. At the blessing Msgr. Donovan promised \$30,000 to the new Church, which promise later fulfilled.

On August 17th, 1939, Mr. Joseph D. Lintott and Mr. John Whelan met in the Rectory of the St. Thomas the Apostle and formed the corporation of the Church of St. Thomas the Apostle. The papers of the incorporation were signed by the Most Rev. Thomas Joseph Walsh, S.T.D., J.C.D., Archbishop of Newark, and President of the Board the Rt. Rev. Msgr. J.C. McClary, Vice-President, Rev. Thomas J. Herron, Secretary and Treasurer, Mr. Joseph Lintott and Mr. John Whelan.

Plans for a new Rectory designed also by Mr. Anthony J. DePace were submitted to the Chancery, and approved by his Excellency and the Archdiocesan Building and Sites Committee. The contracts for his additional unit were signed on September 15, 1939, said work to be completed in four months. The following firms were awarded the contracts for the building: Vroman & Mahieu, the General Contractor; Sellback & Meyer, Iron and Steel; Shaw Electrical Co., Electrical Work; G.M. Crocetti, Tile; James F. Cassidy, Plumbing; Bernard Steinke, Heating.

Work on the Church and School building was pushed rapidly and on Oct. 15th, 1939, the cornerstone of the building was placed in position by His Excellency the Most Rev. Thomas Joseph Walsh, S.T.D., J.C.D., assisted by the Rt. Rev. Msgrs. Paul T. Carew and T.M. Donovan. The Rev. Fathers Thomas J. Herron, James J. Owens, Thomas A. Boland, James F. Flanagan, James A. Hughes, N.A. Marnell, Thomas K. Burke, Thomas Kenny, William J. Landers, Charles Murphy. Rev. Matthew J. Toohey delivered the principal address, followed by the Most Rev. Thomas Joseph Walsh, S.T.D., J.C.D., and the Rev. Thomas J. Herron.

This date, Oct. 15th, also marked the first service in the new building and the abandoning of the tent, which was then taken down. Mass was celebrated for the first time that morning in the basement of the new structure. Although this was only partly finished, it served as a church until December 24th when Mass was celebrated in the Church Auditorium. After four weeks, services were again resumed in the basement, now practically completed, and continued until the Church was dedicated March 31st, 1940.