

The Windows of St. Michael's

A brief history about those who donated the stained glass windows of St. Michael's, or in whose memory they were given.

Given In Memory of: Rev. Patrick Sherry

Just two years after the dedication of St. Michael Church a new pastor arrived. Rev. Patrick Sherry was appointed in 1863 and was to serve the parish for the next seven years.

Patrick Sherry was born about 1825 in County Monaghan, Ireland. He immigrated to America and appears to have become a priest in the Hartford diocese. After serving in the Connecticut/Rhode Island area for a number of years, he went to Bloomington, Illinois, in 1857 to become pastor of a new parish serving a community of poor Irish immigrants. While at Holy Trinity parish, Father Sherry was considered an energetic visionary. Among other things, he built a one-room schoolhouse and opened one of the first Catholic Boys' Schools in Illinois. Unfortunately, his health became an issue. In 1860 he took a leave from his pastorate and returned here to recover. He never went back to Bloomington.

It's likely he spent some time recovering with Sherry relatives in Waterford, Connecticut. They were the immigrant ancestors of the Sherry family of Stillman Avenue in Pawcatuck, a family that includes Owen Sherry, a life-long St. Michael parishioner and benefactor. In 1863 Father Sherry was appointed pastor and moved into the recently built rectory. He brought with him as his housekeeper Rosanna Taggart, who was living with the Sherry family in Waterford during the time Father was regaining his health.

Once again showing his energetic and visionary qualities, Father Sherry recognized the rapidly growing Catholic population in Pawcatuck would soon outgrow their recently opened church building. In 1867 he embarked on a major undertaking, building a large addition to the church which would more than double the capacity of the original building. To maximize seating capacity, he installed galleries in the two transepts, with seating facing the center of the church. Father Sherry was held in high regard by his parishioners throughout his pastorate.

Sadly, Father Sherry's health issues returned to plague him. On November 24, 1870, Thanksgiving Day, the beloved pastor died of tuberculosis. His grief-stricken parishioners buried him in front of the church and erected a large monument, dedicated in 1872. For 130 years he remained in a place of honor in front of our church, until the need to repair a retaining wall required that his grave and monument be relocated. Father Sherry is now interred among his parishioners in the Old Cemetery behind the church. The Latin inscription on his monument reads:

Here rest the blessed remains of a priest, Patrick Sherry, born in Ireland. In the same fashion as the Good Shepherd, he cared for this church for seven years. He died the seventh day before the kalends of December (November 24) 1870.*

Aged 45 years.

May he rest in peace.

*Kalends refers to the first of the month.

