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The Landmarks of Federal Hill: Developmental History of Our Lady of Mount Caramel Church

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The Landmarks of Federal Hill

By Comm. Joseph R. Muratore (C) 1979

At the corner of Brayton Avenue and Spruce Street, today is the beautifully renovated Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, with its recently dedicated Plaza.

In 1920, the Holy Ghost parish was divided by the Rt. Rev. Bishop Hickey, and a new parish was created, the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church.

Its first pastor, Rev. Nicola Armento, was named in 1920, and he continued as pastor until 1960. This church had decreased to such few numbers that it almost was closed.

However, through the hard work and foresight of Fr. Cavallaro, in 1967, there was complete renovation and modernized the interior of the church.

In October, 1960, Rev. Galliano J. Cavallaro was named Pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church.

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However, through the hard work and foresight of Fr. Cavallaro, in 1967, there was complete renovation and modernized the interior of the church.

As was the tradition in the past, the so-called nationality churches was the focal point of the community. It took care of the many new immigrants arriving, who could not speak English, had little money, had few friends and did not know the customs or the ways of the new country.

The Church was the only place they could turn to for help. It was the pastor who filled many of the parishioners needs. He was their interpreter. He was their counselor. He was their benefactor. He provided them with temporary funds.

He helped them with immigration problems and he helped them to adjust to the New World.

The pastor of a church was everything to everyone. He was what the word “Pastore” means: the guide and caretaker of his flock.

In some instances, very elaborate processions would be organized and the statue of the feast saint was carried by the privileged, selected members of this society, as the carrying of the saint was considered an honor.

And along the route of the route, within the parish (as was the tradition in the hometowns in Italy), anywhere that a temporary altar was arranged by someone, the statue would be stopped, carried to the altar, a brief prayer would be offered and a donation (usually of $1.00) was pinned to streamers on which were attached to the saint.

In this way, funds were raised to carry on the mutual assistant functions of that society.

Elsewhere on this page, a photo of a High Mass, celebrating a feast day at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, is shown.

These feast day celebrations were cornerstone supporters and the beginning of our American insurance system.

Consequently, these saint societies of the church were a strong force and influence for the members to participate in the Feast Day of the saint.

Whenever a feast day for a particular saint was observed, elaborate plans were made for special High Masses, that all members attended.

A pastor was a friend, a confessor and an inspiration to his parishioners and to his fellowman and a leader of the community.

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Interior of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church as it appeared before it was completely renovated. You will note the great attendance at this Mass, which apparently was a Feast Day, as a High Mass is being offered, many of those attending Mass are wearing their scapulars.

This photo shows the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church as it appeared before the front steps were removed, the street closed, and the center of the Piazza was built, Romanesque in design and appearance, radiating from it, were installed benches, trees, shrubbery, a drinking fountain, and all that exists today.

Monsignor Cavallaro Plaza, as it appeared before the buildings within the Plaza were demolished. The three story flatiron building, in the center, was the Sarubi Building, which, during the period of its full use, was occupied at the extreme left corner, by a one-pump gas station. On the first floor, Mr. Sarubi conducted the Sarubi Barber School. On the second and third floor, was occupied by Dr. Hughes, a Hawaiian dentist, one of the first dentists to locate on Federal Hill. However, his stay was a short one, and he moved to Elmwood Avenue. This was a well built building, with much terrazzo and cement figurines used for ornamentation. On holidays, an American flag was always raised, and whenever church band concerts or activities were being carried on, the entire perimeter of the roof was illuminated with bulbs. Next to the Sarubi Building, was a three and one-half story commercial and residential building that was used by M. Joseph Marcello as a photographic studio. The Sarubi Building gave lateral support to this home. As the Sarubi Building was demolished, it became necessary simultaneously, to take down this cottage, as it did not have lateral support. To the right of this three and one-half story building, was the DiBenetto Market. This building still exists today.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, as it appears today with the new Monsignor Cavallaro Plaza completed.