

**HISTORY OF THE PARISH OF
OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL - ST BENEDICTA
Staten Island, NY
1913-2008**

John R Hyatt, sj
2008

THE EARLY YEARS
1913-1949

YEARS OF RAPID GROWTH
1949-1970

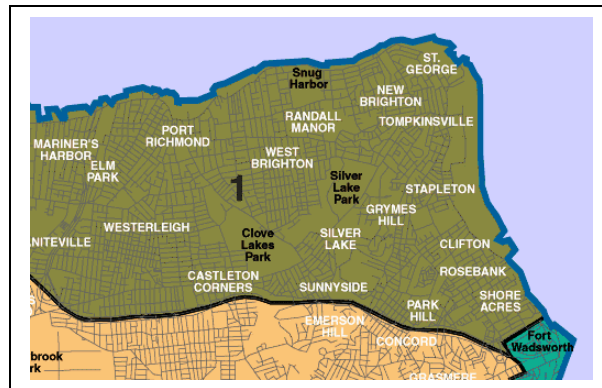
RECENT YEARS
1970-2008

THE EARLY YEARS 1913-1949 A Church of immigrants



In 1913 it was clear that something had to be done for the care of the Italian immigrants who were arriving in such large numbers on the North Shore of Staten Island. In those days Fr Anthony Catoggio was considered pastor to the Italian-speaking population, but he had just closed the mission which had been established for them at St Mary of the Assumption, Port Richmond, whose pastor was Fr Joseph Campbell. The other North Shore parish was Sacred Heart, West Brighton, whose pastor was Fr William Poole.

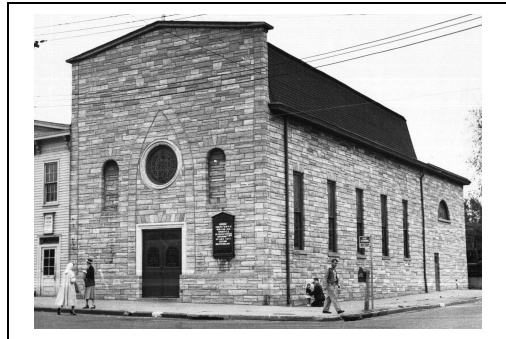
The Island Catholic clergy reached the conclusion that another Italian mission in the area was not feasible, since the poverty of the people would make expansion difficult. Nevertheless, Fr Campbell and Fr Poole succeeded in bringing the problem to the attention of the Archbishop. The situation finally resolved itself when Fr Louis Riccio, then an assistant pastor at Immaculate Conception Church in Stapleton, volunteered to assume responsibility for the immigrants on the North Shore.



He first located space in the West Brighton area, in a building owned by Dr Louis Sirkus, a Jewish dentist, on the corner of Castleton Avenue and Clove Road. It had previously been a livery stable, which also provided horse-and-buggy transportation to the Port Richmond Ferry. Dr Sirkus had offered the premises to Fr Riccio, rent-free for a period of eight months, after which the doctor was to set up his home and dental practice there. The church's benefactor asked only for prayers in return.

THE BEGINNING OF MT CARMEL PARISH

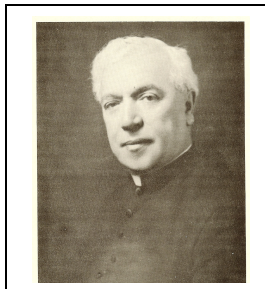
Meanwhile workmen prepared a building across the street, which had been a laundry, and which had been purchased by the Archdiocese of New York. When fully converted, the old laundry became a church which held 250 people -- and which served for fifty-three years as the parish church of [OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL](#) until the disastrous fire of 1966.



Mount Carmel was used by Fr Riccio as his base of operations. From here he gave spiritual guidance to the rapidly growing Italian community within an area encompassing all of the North Shore, and from here he planned to offset various proselytizing attempts from outside the Catholic Church. From Mount Carmel he laid, in rapid succession, the groundwork for the parishes of Assumption, Our Lady of Pity, St Michael's in Mariners Harbor, St Rita's in Meiers Corners, St Roch's in Port Richmond, Christ the King in Port Richmond, St Benedicta's in West Brighton, and finally St Nicholas, for an isolated group in Sunnyside, which in time would become the parish of St Teresa. Each mission became autonomous when the Archbishop assigned a pastor, but until these appointments were made, Fr Riccio carried on the affairs of all his missions with the resources of Mt Carmel.

THE BEGINNING OF ST BENEDICTA'S PARISH

By 1922 Italians from southern Italy, especially from the towns near Monacilioni, had migrated in such vast numbers to the North Shore that Fr Riccio established [ST BENEDICTA'S CHURCH](#) in West Brighton as a mission of Mt Carmel. The church was placed under the patronage of St Benedicta, a fourth-century martyr dear to the people of Monacilioni. Two years later, on St Patrick's Day, Cardinal Patrick Hayes separated St Benedicta from Mt Carmel, thus making St Benedicta an independent parish. In 1927 Fr Bonaventure Filitti, assistant under Fr Riccio, became the first pastor of St Benedicta.



Fr Louis Riccio

Fr Riccio died in 1929. Msgr Charles McAuliffe succeeded him as pastor of Our Lady of Mt Carmel Church, but within seven years a major change took place: Our Lady of Mt Carmel was absorbed into the parish of the Blessed Sacrament.

A MERGER OF PARISHES

Between 1936 and 1949 Our Lady of Mt Carmel was a mission of Blessed Sacrament, where Msgr McAuliffe had been sent as pastor.

Two Catholic churches in West Brighton have been combined into one parish, according to an announcement made today by Patrick Cardinal Hayes, archbishop of New York. The Rev Charles McAuliffe will serve as head of the new parish, which includes Blessed Sacrament Church on Manor Road, and Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, Castleton Ave. The merger will not affect the devotional services of the two churches. Each will continue its present schedule of weekday and Sunday Masses.

Fr McAuliffe, present pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, will take charge of the new parish Saturday. He came to Staten Island in 1929, when he succeeded the Rev Louis Riccio as pastor. He will be assisted by the Rev Vincent Julian, assistant pastor of Blessed Sacrament Church, and the Rev Harold Engel, assistant pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church.

As a result of the merger, the Blessed Sacrament School on Manor Road will serve as the parochial school for all children living in the newly-formed parish.

SI ADVANCE, 25 June 1936