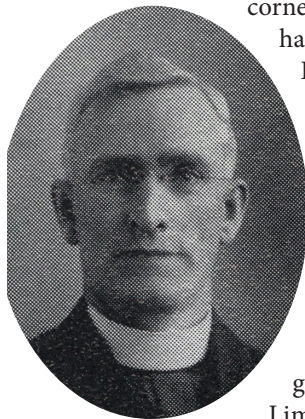




The beautiful structure that is now Our Lady Star of the Sea Roman Catholic Church had its humble beginnings in a small wooden building located directly across the street from where it currently stands. Saint Mary's Church, as it was then known, was built in 1848. In 1878, spared by the Great Fire which ravaged the city, it was moved across Washington Street, remodeled, and fitted with a steeple tower and a new bell. Masses were celebrated there until 1913.

It was in that year, two years after the cornerstone was laid and construction had begun, that His Excellency, Bishop James McFaul, celebrated the first Mass in what, since 1878, was now known as Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish. The new church was designed and built under the leadership of Father Dennis Kelly.



Specifications for the new church called for an exterior of grey granite, with Buff Indiana Limestone trimmings, and a slate roof. It would be Gothic in style with Romanesque influences.

Pictured above is Father Dennis Kelly. To the right is Our Lady Star of the Sea circa 1920. Photograph courtesy of Joe Bogle. Additional photographs provided by Jim Rambo.

One of the most attractive features of the exterior was the Bell Tower which was to soar to over 80 feet in height. The original bell (circa 1876) is still housed there and rings until this day.

There were to be three altars, all of which were intricately carved from Carrara marble; mined from the same quarry as that used by Michelangelo. And, there were to be more than 40 jewel-toned stained glass windows, imported from Munich Germany.

It took five years to complete the finishing touches on the new church. The original budget of \$44,000.00 was nearly doubled by the end of that period.



The next major renovations did not occur until the early 1970's when a new altar was constructed of the same marble formerly used, and a pulpit was added.

Since then, efforts at maintenance, upgrades, and preservation have been continuous. These efforts were rewarded when the church was listed on The National Historic Register.

Every year thousands of vacationers to Cape May visit this historically-rich landmark church. Once inside, they are able to appreciate its exquisite interior beauty, which is a combination of the architecture, its cathedral-like essence, the Carrara marble and the magnificent stained glass windows.

For over 100 years, the church has been the most imposing building on Washington Street, which was open to traffic until 1971. Due to its very ministry and location, it has always been central to the community.

Today, as it sits majestically at the entrance to The Washington Street Mall, Our Lady Star of the Sea Church draws and welcomes people of all dominations and faiths. Its century-old doors are open all day, every day, all year long, generously offering everyone who enters a place of prayer, comfort, beauty and peace— all within the presence of God.

