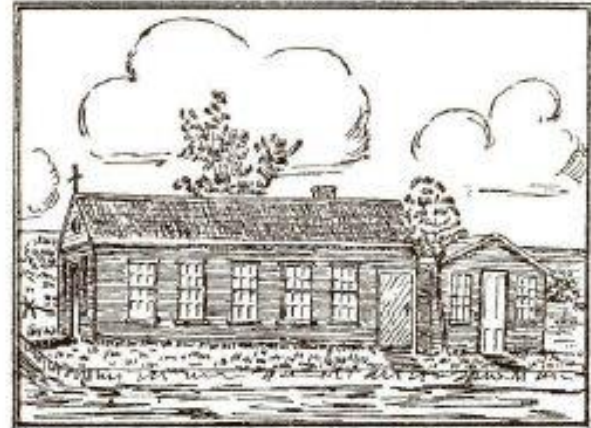


St. Mary's History

1850 – 1860

St. Mary's Church is the mother church of Dunkirk, for many years it was the only Catholic Church in the city. In 1848 Bishop Timon visited Dunkirk and finding no place to say Mass he probably went on to Pomfret, near Dunkirk, where Mass was said in the homes of Catholic farmers. In 1850 Father Lemmon came and purchased two old frame structures located on Lots 15 & 16 in Block 83 of the village map. The site, a 30



First Catholic Church in Dunkirk

by 100 foot lot on the north side of W. Second Street ran from Plover to Robin Street. The larger building was converted into a temporary mission. This was the first seat of Catholicism in Chautauqua County. Fr.

Lemmon was in charge of the mission until April of 1851 when Rev. Peter Colgan was appointed pastor. He at once enlarged the mission and bought the present day cemetery which was consecrated the following year by Bishop Timon. In 1852, he purchased the present day site of St. Mary's Church and began its construction. The cornerstone was laid on July 24, 1853 and the church was dedicated on November 12, 1854, by Bishop Young, of Erie and cost about \$9000. A parochial school was started in 1854 and held at the old church on Second Street. Later it was held in the basement of the new church and finally at the site of the school building on Washington and Fourth Street.

