

A Guide to the St. Mary's Catholic Church Records, 1842-1921

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A Collection in Special Collections, Kegley Library 1998.5
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History

Processed by: Cathy Carlson Reynolds

Title Statement

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Revision Description

2013-11-21 Converted to schema conforming EAD by dtd2schema.vh.xsl.

Descriptive Summary

Collection Number

1998.5

Language

English

Physical Characteristics

3 folders.

Repository

Special Collections, Kegley Library

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Collection is open to research.

Use Restrictions

There are no restrictions.

Acquisition Information

Kegley Library staff photocopied the registers in the 1980s with the permission of St. Mary's Catholic Church. The materials were processed in 1998.

Preferred Citation

St. Mary's Catholic Church Records, Mss. Collection 1998.5, Kegley Library, Wytheville Community College, Wytheville, VA.

Historical Information

Founded on 8 August 1845, St. Mary's is the oldest Catholic church between Lynchburg, Virginia and Knoxville, Tennessee. Bishop of Richmond Richard V. Whelan visited Wythe County in 1842, attracting both Catholics and non-Catholics to his services. John P. Mathews, a convert, donated one and one-half acres of land for the first church building and cemetery. The first church was a white frame building with stained glass windows imported from Italy and a steeple topped with a crucifix. Its classical style earned it the nickname, "Cathedral in the Wilderness."

Rev. Edward Fox served as St. Mary's first pastor; he had answered Bishop Whelan's call for a "self-sacrificing, zealous laborer for the arduous Virginia missions." Even after he was transferred to Lynchburg in 1846, Fox continued to visit Wytheville every month until his death four years later.

St. Mary's enjoyed a diverse membership with German and Irish families along with native Virginians such as Senator John Warfield Johnston, Colonel Ben Rush Floyd, and others. Members built a new church in 1936 on the north side of East Main Street; it was consecrated in 1937. The original church was dismantled in 1961 but many of its artifacts are displayed at the present church.

Scope and Content

Photocopies of the original baptismal, marriage, death and internment, and confirmation registers for St. Mary's Church in Wytheville, Virginia comprise this collection. Records include a baptismal register (1843-1900). Also included is a register listing baptisms (1842-1875), marriages (1844-1921), confirmations (1853-1883), and members of the Society of the Sacred Heart of Mary. The third register contains baptisms (1869-1900), confirmations (1888-1919), and death (1886-1905) records. Records cover several counties around Wythe County including Montgomery County, Pulaski County, Smyth County, Tazewell County, and Giles County.

Contents List

Folder 1. Baptismal Register. 1842-1900.

Extent

[187] p.; 94 numbered pages; index in front.

Scope and Content

Photocopy of original baptismal register in St. Mary's Catholic Church, Wytheville, Virginia.

Folder 2. Records. 1842-1921.

Extent

[141] p.; index at end.

Scope and Content

On front page: "Mission Commenced 1842, by Rt. Rev. R. V. Whelan, Bishop of the Diocese of Richmond, Edward Fox, Pastor, of St. Mary's, Wytheville, which was solemnly blessed the above prelate . Edward Fox assisted on the 10th August 1845." Baptismal (1842-1875), marriage (1844-1921), confirmation (1853-1883) records, and list of members of the Society of the Sacred Heart of Mary. Photocopy of original baptismal register in St. Mary's Catholic Church. Records cover a ten county region.

Folder 3. Records. 1869-1919.

Extent

[143] p; numbered pagination varies.

Scope and Content

Baptismal (1869-1900), confirmation (1888-1919), death (1886-1905) records included. Photocopy of original baptismal register in St. Mary's Catholic Church, Wytheville, Virginia. Records cover a ten county area. On front page: "Liber Baptizatorium."

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