

***THE ST. JOSEPH***

***BARNEY STEET***

***CEMETERY***

And the founding of  
The 1<sup>st</sup> Irish Catholic Parish  
In Rhode Island

Presented by the Museum of  
Newport Irish History

***INTRODUCTION***

**WITH THE CONSTRUCTION OF FT. ADAMS  
BEGINNING IN 1824, THE U.S. ARMY  
BEGAN HIRING LABORERS AND FOUND A READY  
SUPPLY OF IRISH MEN FROM AROUND THE NEW  
ENGLAND AREA, MEN WHO HAD IMMIGRATED  
FROM A VERY DIFFICULT ECONOMICALLY STRESSED  
COUNTRY, AND A COUNTRY SUFFERING FROM ONE  
OF MANY POTATOE FAMINES.**

**FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE VAST CONSTRUCTION  
PROJECT, WHICH WAS TO LAST UNTIL 1857,  
BETWEEN 200 AND 400 IRISH BRICK LAYERS, MASONS,**

**STONE WORKERS AND LABORERS WORKED AT FT.ADAMS.**

**ACCORDING TO THE "HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN NEW ENGLAND" (1899, REV. WILLIAM BYRNE, BOSTON), FATHER PATRICK BYRNE VISITED NEWPORT IN 1827, SENT BY BISHOP FENWICK, WHO HAD HEARD ABOUT THE MANY IRISH WORKING AT THE FORT. FATHER BYRNE SAID MASS AND GAVE THE SACREMENTS TO 150 LABORERS.**

**IN 1828, BISHOP FENWICK SENT FATHER WOODLEY TO NEWPORT TO BUY PROPERTY AND A BUILDING TO BEGIN A PARISH TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF THE IMMIGRATE IRISH.**

**THE FIRST PURCHASE WAS A 50FT BY 100FT LOT WITH A SMALL SCHOOL BUILDING – BUILT IN 1809. BY ELEAZER TREVETT**

**. THIS SMALL EDIFACE ON BARNEY STREET WAS TO BECOME THE FIRST PARISH CHURCH IN THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND. THE CHURCH WAS DEDICATED TO ST.JOSEPH.**

**WHEN BISHOP FENWICK ARRIVED ON THE 2<sup>ND</sup> OF NOVEMBER, 1828 TO ADMINISTER CONFIRMATION TO 11 CANDIDATES, HE REALIZED THAT THE BUILDING WAS FAR TOO SMALL, AND IMMEDIATELY BEGAN THE PROCESS OF PURCHASING THE ADJACENT LOT, WHICH WAS DONE IN 1830. A THIRD PURCHASE WAS MADE IN 1833, WITH THE INTENTION OF BUILDING A NEW, LARGER EDIFACE, WHICH WAS IN FACT BEGUN THAT YEAR, AND COMPLETED IN 1837.**

**THAT WOODEN, GOTHIC STYLE STRUCTURE, ALSO CALLED ST.JOSEPH WAS DEDICATED IN 1837 AND WAS USED UNTIL THE NEW PARISH CHURCH WAS ERRECTED ON SPRING STREET AND DEDICATED IN 1852 WITH THE PARISH NAME CHANGED TO ST.MARY. THE OLD WOODEN, GOTHIC STYLE BUILDING WAS DESCRIBED IN THE NEWPORT CITY DIRECTORY OF 1856-57 –“ THE BUILDING, WHICH IS ON MT.VERNON STREET, MEASURERS 40 BY 65 FEET, AND SEATS, BY COMPUTATION, 450, WAS ERRECTED IN 1833-36.” THE STRUCTURE WAS DISMANTLED IN 1865.**