

Today in Columbus History:

On January 6, 1880, a story appeared in the *Columbus Enquirer-Sun* entitled "New Catholic Church" that provides a segue to several bits of Catholic trivia from early Columbus. The article tells how Fr. Kirsch appointed W.S. Needham, John Colvin, Richard Deignan and George J. Burrus as trustees for the disposition of property for the new church. Coincidentally, before the holiday break, I planned to use the article "First Stone Laid" from the December 16, 1879 *Columbus Enquirer-Sun* that tells the story of the laying of the first stone of the new Catholic church and another story from the same page reporting on the "Sisters Fair," put on by the Sisters of Mercy, from the local convent. The articles are all related. The Sisters' Fair was to raise money for a new church on Randolph (now 12th Street) on land they donated, leaving the old church on Jackson near Few Street (now 2nd Avenue near 7th Street).

The Catholics of Columbus included some prominent members of the community. The fair took place at the Springer Opera House with Francis J. Springer being one of the most prominent Catholics in town. One interesting member of the church was the sister of Henry L. Benning. Augusta Palmyra Benning was married to M. L. Patterson by Methodist preacher S. D. Laney in 1852. However, when the couple died, the Catholic Church held both of their funerals. In fact, at M. L. Patterson's funeral in 1901, the pallbearers included R. Deignan, George Burrus and R. W. Needham, a relative of W.S. Needham, mentioned above. I am not sure of the reason for the switch from Methodist to Catholic. Maybe Patterson was Catholic and converted her. Who knows?

Details on the early history of the Catholic Church in Columbus are hard to come by. The construction and dedication of the original parish church of Saints Philip and James in 1835 goes unmentioned in the newspapers available in the Digital Library of Georgia or Martin's 1874 history of Columbus.

However, Fr. Michael Cullinan, a priest at Saints Philip and James, holds a distinction in Columbus today. He is the only person buried on the grounds of any of the city's downtown churches. He died in February 1877 several years before the construction of the new Church of the Holy Family. After construction, the parish moved the body of Father Cullinan from the old church to the new one, just to the left of the front door on 12th Street.

A photo of Father Cullinan appeared in a story in the October 25, 1947 issue of *The Bulletin of the Catholic Laymen's Association of Georgia* in Augusta (and available from the Digital Library of Georgia). Cullinan was the first priest ordained in and for the Diocese of Savannah in 1854. According to the story, the photo of Cullinan belonged to Mrs. William Deignan. William Deignan was the brother of Richard Deignan mentioned in today's article as one of the church trustees.

Another trustee, John Colvin appears in my Wednesday post for the third time, without actually being the subject of a post. He first appeared on October 14 as the husband of Mrs. Colvin of Mrs. Colvin and Miss Donnelly, milliners. He appeared again on December 2 as the man who caused the mistaken arrest of Frank Haynes for the murder of the Walker brothers. I had never heard of him prior to doing these posts but now I cannot seem to stop reading about him.

Incidentally, neither one of the stone-laying events mentioned earlier were the official laying of the cornerstone. That ceremony would not take place until May of 1880.

Compiled by Daniel A. Bellware, Muscogee Genealogical Society

Clipping from Georgia Historic Newspapers (GALILEO).

Our weekly snippets of Columbus history are usually based on a few days-worth of searching through the most popular sources for Muscogee County history. Meant to inspire readers to explore more about Columbus history, they are not exhaustive dissertations on the topic and may contain mistakes. If you have corrections or additional information, feel free to share them with the group.

New Catholic Church.
On Sunday Rev Father Kirsch, pastor of the Catholic church, appointed Messrs W S Needham, John Colvin, Richard Deignan and **George J Burrus trustees for the disposition of the property of the new church.**
Yesterday the brick masons began work on the new edifice.
It is thought the corner stone will be laid some time in February.

Story from the Columbus Enquirer-Sun, January 6, 1880, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.

First Stone Laid.
The first stone of the new Catholic church, to be erected on Randolph street, was laid yesterday by Rev Father Kirsch, the pastor. By this we suppose the plan of Messrs Champayne & England has been accepted, and the work will begin immediately.

Story of the first stone laid for the new Catholic Church, Daily Columbus Enquirer-Sun, December 16, 1879, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.



Location of the new Catholic church on Randolph (now 12th Street) and the old Catholic church on Jackson near Few Street (now 2nd Avenue near 7th Street) from the 1885 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps.

SISTERS' FAIR.

**What is to be Seen at the Opera House
---Opening Night.**

The fair of the Sisters of Mercy, to be given at Springer opera house, begins this morning and continues ten days. The ladies have labored in a manner highly creditable, and too much praise cannot be given them. The success of any affair of the kind is assured when such energetic people lend a helping hand. The gentlemen are not all idle, but came to the front and gave their time and money that the fair might succeed. Mr James R England, of the firm of Herring & England, has rendered valuable aid, inasmuch as he built the majority of the tables and otherwise assisted the ladies. We also noticed Messrs Matt O'Brien and Louis Wells actively engaged in the hall yesterday. They will have charge of the "pool game," which will be located in the lower dressing room to the left of the stage.

Story of the Sisters Fair put on by the Sisters of Mercy for the new Catholic Church, Daily Columbus Enquirer-Sun, December 16, 1879, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.



Photo of Fr. William Cullinan from the Bulletin of the Catholic Laymen's Association, October 125, 1947, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.



Grave of Fr. Cullinan to the left of the front door of the church on 12th Street, from FindAGrave.com.