

Past and Present

Our Lady of Lourdes



today's church with hand-carved doors

by Jim Hildreth

(Wellfleet) It's believed that the fishermen from the Azores and Nova Scotia who settled on the Outer Cape were the first people to bring the Catholic faith to Wellfleet. They were served in private homes during the 1850's by priests who traveled from Provincetown and Harwich.

Wellfleet had been a mission of the Provincetown parish until 1900 when there were enough worshippers to warrant the opening of Wellfleet's first Catholic Church. Resident Henry Delory was authorized to purchase an old schoolhouse for \$59 to serve as a chapel

for the growing number of Catholics. The small church was located where the Wellfleet Mobil Center now stands on Route 6.

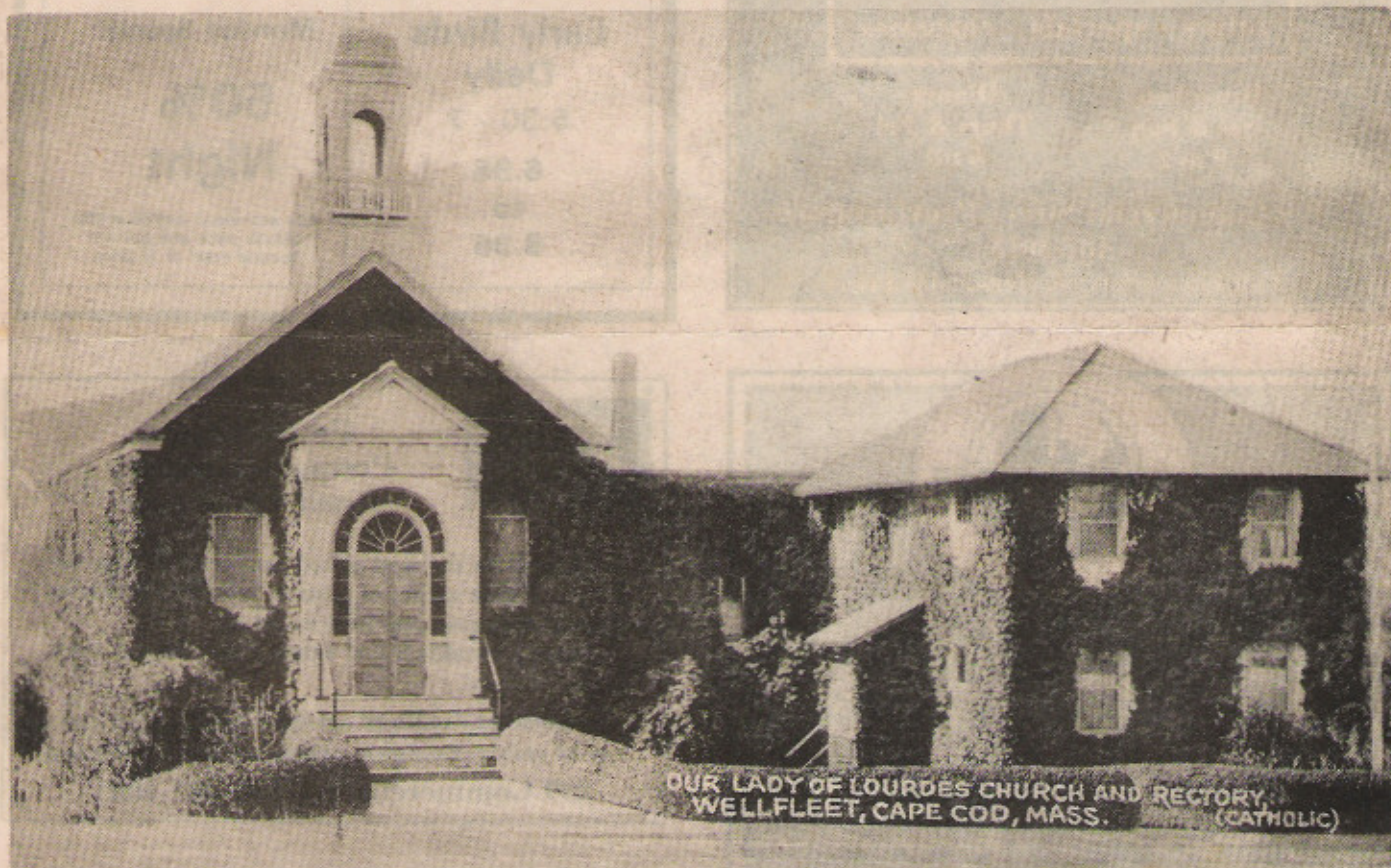
Catholicism flourished in town and 11 years after the first chapel opened its doors, a larger church was built, complete with rectory, in Wellfleet Center on Main Street. Upon completion of the new church, Our Lady of Lourdes, Wellfleet was placed under the direction of the Sacred Heart Fathers, with Truro and North Truro serving as its missions.

The church was designed by its pastor and built by

PROVINCETOWN MAGAZINE 11



Wellfleet's first Catholic Church from Judy Stetson's Wellfleet: A Pictorial History



the church with its original doors and covered with ivy

congregation members and friends. It featured a colonial fan entranceway, a small tower, and seating for 300 people.

The church remained virtually unchanged until the spring of 1976. At that time two men, Kendall and McLeod, were hired to make new hand-carved doors for the church. The beautifully detailed doors feature 8 carved panels that depict biblical stories, and they grace both sides of the doors.

Our Lady of Lourdes continues serving Wellfleet under the direction of Reverend Jeremiah Casey,

SS.CC. Pastor, and Reverend John Fee, SS.CC. Associate. Periodically, the church holds bake sales, crafts fairs, and in 1983 and 1984, its basement was the home of the Outer Cape Performance Company. The church also helps the town by leasing its parking lot for public use for the cost of the lot's upkeep and \$1 per year.

Information for this story was gathered from Judy Stetson's, *Wellfleet: A Pictorial History*, Marion Rawson Vuilleumier's, *Churches on Cape Cod*, the Wellfleet Historical Society, and Wellfleet residents.