Catholics in 19th-century Williamsport

Williamsport Women

Williamsport tripled in size between 1860 and 1870, growing from 5,000 to a city of 16,000. Reflecting the change, Whitirenberg was a woman. New York and New Jersey were her names and her business, barbers and innkeepers. Also relating to the West Branch were farmers, many of whom were German-speaking families. Many women came with their entrepreneurial husbands. Single women also came to the city from nearby communities to work in the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry—hence the lumber industry. 

Many women came to help operate the businesses. One group of women were members of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, a religious order, who arrived in 1874. Four Sisters of Christian Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary from Wilkes-Barre to teach at the parish school. In 1878, six Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary came to Williamsport to teach at St. Joseph's School. 

Catholic nuns in 19th-century Williamsport

St. Joseph's School.

Williamsport's first Catholic school was the only Catholic Church in Williamsport in 1863. The Annunciation Parish was established in 1865 by Rev. Michael H. Malm, a German-speaking family in Pennsylvania. The Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary arrived in 1874. Among the sisters was Sister M. Annunciata, Sister M. Emmer, Sister M. Agnes, and Sister M. Louis, the latter of whom was the first principal of the school. In 1879, the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary opened a new school on the site of the old church. The new school was dedicated in 1881. The church was later torn down, and the new school building was completed in 1883. The new school was dedicated in 1884.

Although many women were drawn to Williamsport because of its industrial opportunities, the city's Catholic population grew rapidly. In 1880, there were only 1,500 Catholics in the city. By 1900, the number had increased to 10,000. The Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary played a significant role in the growth of the city's Catholic community. They established several schools, including St. Joseph's School, which was the first Catholic school in Williamsport. The school was established in 1874 on the site of the old church. In 1879, the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary opened a new school on the site of the old church. The new school was dedicated in 1881. The church was later torn down, and the new school building was completed in 1883. The new school was dedicated in 1884.

In 1893, a convent was built on St. Boniface Street, across from the old church. Several additions through the years were made to the building. In 1944, the Williamsport Gazette and Bulletin in September 1880, announcing the dedication of the new convent, noted that the sisters were "excellent disciplinarians and good teachers." I think any former St. Boniface student (as I was) would attest that this was still true 100 years later.

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