



Brother Paul Ambrose finagled to have Brother Nilus Donnelly appointed to the college in 1952 to teach physics. Brother Nilus had been charged with construction of a gym for Central Catholic High School in Lawrence, Mass. To get this done on a very small budget, he hit on the idea of using as much war surplus material as he could lay his hands on. He rented a warehouse in Lawrence, hired a secretary, and traveled around the USA to government auctions. Using a ham radio, he communicated with his secretary and had the purchased items shipped to

the warehouse. Here he hit on the idea of using poured concrete because it was something unskilled labor could do with a minimum of skilled supervision. For several summers he used vacationing Marist Brothers.

Coming to Poughkeepsie, Brother Nilus expected a rest from his five year stressful construction activity, but Brother Paul Ambrose had other ideas. He inveigled Nilus to construct a free standing chapel for which Paul would raise \$100,000 plus an additional amount for the furnishings. After agreeing, Nilus engaged the architect he had used in Lawrence. Together, they designed a circular chapel with the altar in the middle - the first such Roman Catholic chapel in the United States. The construction would use poured concrete and wooden trusses, materials requiring less expertise than bricks or steel. When completed, the chapel won several awards for outstanding architecture. But Brother Paul wasn't finished. During the dedication of the chapel, Cardinal Spellman, who was deathly afraid of fire, insisted that the student brothers be moved to a place which would not be the firetrap the Cardinal saw in the McPherson house. Until such housing was complete, his Eminence insisted that some student brothers stay awake all night to warn the others in case of fire.



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# Project Directors

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**From the beginning, Marist Heritage has been a collaborative effort.**

We appreciate the contributions of the Marist Brothers and the Marists All community, who by supplying information and personal memories, have given vitality, scope and depth to this project

Under the guidance and direction of Dr. Brian Henry Desilets, the initial web pages were designed and created by the following Marist College students: Michele van Brero (Hermitage, St. Peter's, Kieran Gate House, Greystone, Marist Brothers Builders, Our Lady Seat of Wisdom Chapel).....Tage Haun (Bech Homestead, Marian, Donnelly).....Fang Fang Xu (Boat House, Byrne House, Kirk House).....Courtney Gutt (Bech Family History).....Vij lyer (Cemetery).....Rahkee Chopra (Fontaine Hall).

All the final Marist Heritage web pages were either created, revised, rewritten and/or reshaped by John Patrick Noone, who is solely responsible for any errors contained therein.

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***John Patrick Noone, editor***  
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**\*this page is printer ready**

