

The Bech Estate



The Novitiate

In 1906 the first Marist Brothers postulant (an applicant to the Marist Order) was sent from Poughkeepsie to Canada for his training. He could not speak French and soon left as he found it impossible to adjust. It was obvious that an English-speaking American Novitiate would be needed. Thanks to a \$28,000 interest-free loan, the Bech estate, which was on 75 acres south of the Waterworks Road, was purchased.

Edward Bech had contracted with Detlef Lienau, a prominent architect, to construct, in stone, a series of buildings which would serve as a homestead, a stable, a gardener's house and gate house. The homestead, the main building on the Bech estate, was used as a Novitiate by the Marist Brothers. It housed the postulants and the novices. The original house had two towers as seen in the accompanying photo.



The stable (Greystone), the gardener's house (St. Peter's) and the gate house (Kieran House) were built in the style of Gothic Revival architecture. The main house was never built because Edward Bech died before it was started.

The buildings were in good condition and with an additional loan of \$4,500 some needed renovations were carried out. While the brothers occupied the main homestead, the top floor was completed by joining the two towers.

In 1908 this Novitiate was formally opened with 12 postulants. As part of this property a dormitory called St. Mary's was built separate from the main building. There was also a bee house with apparatus to extract honey from the 30 beehives which were tended by the novices. An interesting aside with respect to this bee house is that it was



constructed with lumber salvaged from the roller coaster from the Woodcliff Amusement Park which burned in the mid 1940s. This had been a popular amusement park for people coming from New York City.

The dayliner, a tour boat from New York City, used to leave, stop at West Point, Poughkeepsie at Woodcliff Park and go on to north of Kingston. Passengers were dropped at each of these stops and picked up by the boat on its return trip to NYC. The property occupied by this amusement park was later purchased by Marist College and now is the location of Gartland town houses which are occupied by resident students of Marist College.

In August 1949 the novitiate was moved to Tyngsboro, Massachusetts. In the early 1950s the building was used to house the Marist Brothers who were spending their summers building Marist College. This building, now demolished was located on land which is now to the north side of the entrance to the McCann parking lot.

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Project Directors

Dr. Brian Henry Desilets
Dr. Linus Richard Foy
John Patrick Noone

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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