

Marist Brothers Cemetery 1909-1953 Wall along Delafield Street

MaristLand



The Marist Brothers cemetery was placed at the lowest end of the Bech property, just north of the Myers parcel. It was established in 1909 when Brother Charles Camille died at the age of 23. Creating a cemetery on the Brothers property was commonplace in Europe and even common in the United States, where many family cemeteries were located on family property. Later the practice changed to creating cemeteries adjacent to the church. When these filled, the practice evolved to central cemeteries. Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery holds the remains of many who were originally buried next to their churches.

"Once there was a distinguished looking, six foot high concrete wall along Route 9 from the South entrance to the North entrance. Brother Paul Acyndinus built this over several years with hand-cast concrete blocks. I

know because as a Novice I was assigned to work for an hour a day making them in iron molds, four each day. It is ironic that it was I who demolished this wall in 1966. It had begun to disintegrate, and some people said that it made the campus look like a prison. The wall around the old cemetery was built the same way and embellished with colored glass mosaics. Novices were sometimes assigned to go to the city dump and pick up discarded colored bottles which they brought back and broke into usable sized pieces for the mosaics." page 7 of Brother Nilus Vincent Donnelly's memoir **Memories of 75 Years.**



The cemetery had two rows of graves on each side of the center aisle. A monument was placed over each brother's grave. Later, a small concrete rectangular frame was placed over each grave, and flowers planted within each frame. Neat as it looked from above, the coffins were not always aligned. There was considerable rock and some graves had to be completed with a compressor and jackhammer. Others were placed slightly out of line to make use of available dirt and bypass rock. The graves were dug by the novices, with the novitiate building the closest building to the cemetery. I know this because I was one of those assigned to dig several graves!

"One of the greatest honors of my Novitiate days was being assigned to toll once a minute, the large bronze bell on the Novitiate veranda as the cortege passed on the way to the cemetery to bury one of the Brothers who had died. This bell is now in the tower in front of the chapel." page 8 of Brother Nilus Vincent Donnelly's memoir **Memories of 75 Years.**

By 1953 the cemetery was full, and expansion would have been difficult because of the rock formations. The Brothers established a second cemetery in Esopus New York which has been in use since 1953.

An attempt was made to relocate the graves in Poughkeepsie to Esopus, but the legal technicalities became formidable. Since the level of the original cemetery was about 15 feet below the level established for the Myers parcel site of the proposed McCann Athletic Center, just south of the cemetery, Brother Nilus carefully turned over the crosses at each grave, and broke the wall leaving the stones in place to mark the border of the site. The College

agreed not to construct any edifices over the cemetery, and established a monument to be placed over or near the cemetery site.





Visitors to the Marist Brothers cemetery in Esopus NY in October 2010. The environment is definitely rural. A Calvary group is at the far right along the grass sections where the visitors are standing. The cemetery has spaces between the small stone markers for more grave sites.

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Monument and Esopus cemetery photos by Richard Foy, September & October 2010. Earlier photos on file with the Marist Heritage Program Collection at the Marist College Library Archives.

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