

1. DIRECTIONS TO ST. STEPHENS CHURCH From WOODBINE FARM

- Start at entrance to Woodbine Farm. Turn left onto Raphel Rd.
- Follow to Bradshaw Rd. Turn Right.
- St. Stephens Church and Cemetery will be on your left hand side.

This site is of particular interest as many relatives and residents belonging to the Fleurys of Woodbine Farm, are buried here. As well, many ancient Raphel ancestors, Emorys, Mullers, and other family members are interred here.

Paul Aime` Fleury, the Founder and his wife, Clare Young Fleury, are interred at St. Ignatius Church of Hickory. See reverse side.

HISTORY OF ST. STEPHENS CHURCH:

The earliest beginnings of Saint Stephen's Catholic Church date back to 1841. In 1836, Mr. Stephen J. Raphel purchased two hundred and fifty acres of land near McCubbinsville, now known as Upper Falls. Starting in 1841, priests from **St. Ignatius Church in Hickory** began celebrating Mass in the Raphel home three times a year. Gradually this home acquired the dignity of a mission chapel and was served by Father Birch from **St. John's, Long Green** (not on tour) in Baltimore County on the fourth Sunday of each month until 1866 when he became the first resident pastor of Saint Stephen's Parish. **Long Green Valley**, about 9 miles away, was home to many of the Jenkins family, including Cecilia Corrine Jenkins, wife of Paul Aime Fleury II, of Woodbine Farm. This area was settled by many Catholics during the colonial persecutions, among them Michael Jenkins, Corrine's great grandfather and his family, who are buried in St. Johns cemetery.

On March 17, 1863, Mr. Stephen Falls and other Trustees of the Gunpowder Division of the Sons of

Temperance deeded to Archbishop Francis Spalding for five hundred dollars a wooden building and one acre of land located on the north side of Joppa or Rolling Road (now Bradshaw Road). Father Birch and four families paid all but one hundred fifty-six dollars and ninety cents, the balance received through collections from other parishioners.

On June 28, 1864, Father W. J. Clarke, S.J. of Saint Ignatius, Baltimore dedicated the building for divine worship. The building contained two rooms, an upper and lower room. The upper room was readied for Church services and the lower room for a school where Mr. John Muller held classes.

Father Joseph Birch continued to serve Saint Stephen from Long Green until 1866 when he was made Pastor at Saint Stephen. He remained at Saint Stephen until 1870. On December 4, 1869, Mr. Hugh Simms, a Protestant friend of Father Birch, donated a second portion of land, partly wooded and lying on the west, north and northeast sides of the original property. Mr. Simms was the owner of the Jericho and Franklinville Cotton Duck Mills. Benjamin F. Taylor, Mary Jane Taylor and George Cator deeded a third parcel of land to His Eminence James Cardinal Gibbons on December 21, 1887.

From 1870 through 1879, three priests, Reverends Gerard Nyssen, Louis Morgan and Michael Stanton, served the people of Saint Stephen's Parish. In September 1879, Cardinal Gibbons appointed Reverend Don Luigi Sartori as Pastor. With wonderful support from the parishioners, Father Sartori made plans for a new Church building and on May 25, 1869, amid a great deal of pomp typical of the end of the 19th century, the cornerstone of the present Church was laid. On June 15, 1890, a solemn dedication for the completed Church was witnessed by a concourse of people who had come from both the surrounding countryside and Baltimore City. For many years the Church was referred to as "The Little Cathedral". Fleurys, Raphels and others were there.

The tenth pastor, Reverent T. Vincent Fitzgerald arrived in 1930. Father Fitzgerald arrived in 1930.

Father Fitzgerald finalized the work on the elementary school and engaged the Sisters of Saint Francis of Philadelphia to teach here. In 1931, Father Fitzgerald worked hard to establish the parish high school. He drove the school bus to bring the children to school. The school building was renovated and partitioned into an elementary grade school and a high school. On December 13, 1931, Archbishop Curley blessed the school that had a total of one hundred seventy pupils. That same day, he dedicated the convent built for the Franciscan Sisters, and he confirmed sixty-five young men and women. Undoubtedly, members of the Fleury and Raphel families were present along with others. Members of both families would attend the school in the years to come.

By 1946, St. Stephen's Parish had grown to about six hundred families and the school was overcrowded. Plans for a new elementary school were made, and it was dedicated on September 20, 1953. A few years later an addition to the school and a new convent were constructed. Eventually the parish high school was closed and the old school building was demolished when the John Carroll High School opened in Harford County.

In December of 1973, the Church was heavily damaged by fire, apparently caused by a short circuit in the electrical wiring. After two years of renovation, the Church was reopened. A short thirteen years later, in January 1986, another devastating fire struck the Church. This fire was also caused by a short circuit in the electrical wiring. With the help of a parish renovation committee, the support and generosity of the entire congregation and the community in general, the Church was again restored to its original beauty. A Mass of Dedication, celebrated by Archbishop William Borders, was held on January 18, 1987. Over the years St. Stephen's Parish has grown to nearly 2,000 households.

Information from
St. Stephens Parish Website