

CHURCH HISTORY

The first Romanian immigrants setting in the Saint Paul area around the year **1900** found themselves in a land with strange customs and new life styles, with no friends except their fellow immigrants, struggling to learn the ways of this new country.

The dynamic growth of a newly industrialized and democratic United States was a vast change from the rural village life of Banat and Transylvania dominated by the Imperial rule of the faltering Austro-Hungarian Empire.

They had left “the old country” fresh from a life behind the plow or in the field and suddenly were thrust into a new life of factories and industry. Even though this new way of living was strange to them they worked hard and long to earn their livelihood and be good members of the community.

These Romanians brought to this country very little of monetary value. However, they did bring with them a steadfast religious faith, replete with beautiful services and traditions. This faith with its beautiful services and traditions was complemented by the rich ethnic background of the immigrants. The romantic customs with their music, dancing and other homeland traditions were maintained and preserved by the formation of a benevolent society in the growing Romanian population of the Rice Street area.

It was because their firm belief that their thoughts were constantly focused on building a church of their own in St. Paul.

On **May 18, 1913** at a meeting of Society “AUGUSTINA” (which was a benefit society for Romanians started in 1910) it was voted that a parish church be instituted with the name “*Biserica Greco-Orientală Ortodoxă Română Sfânta Maria*”.

A week later, on **May 25, 1913** the church members met for the first time and elected the following officers:

President: A. Papiu

Secretary: J. Farca

Financial secretary: G. Capeti

Treasurer: P. Imbrone

1st Cantor: J. Sarafolean

2nd Cantor: M. Ionescu

Members: Cincu Crăciun, George Cristea, Ion Miculescu, Stefan Raica, Ioan Orpria, Simion Gradia, Nicolae Pescari, Vasile Gania.

The newly formed committee lost no time in identifying the site for the new church. On November 9, 1913 the transaction was completed for the purchase of the land on which the church was to be build.

June 14, 1914 the corner stone was laid and in October 15, the same year the Romanians celebrated the blessing of their new church together with Rev. Fr. JOHN PODEA from Youngstown, Ohio. With Fr. Podea’s help a petition was drawn and forwarded to the Metropolitan of Sibiu in Transylvania requesting a parish priest. Unfortunately, World War 1 intervned before a priest could be sent and the

new church depended on the cooperation of other Romanian Orthodox parishes that helped by sharing their priest for services. After the war the church was successful in securing the services of regular parish priest.

Sometime later a house was bought and moved onto the property to serve as the priest's residence. This parish house was used until 1957, when a modern, two-story, three bedroom house was build (\$17,500).

In 1930 the parishioners felt the need for an additional building; a place to serve the needs of the parish for the religious education of its young people and also a place to be able to come to socialize and enjoy the fullness of the Romanian heritage, traditions and customs. The parish members felt as if they lost a part of themselves when "The Hall" was destroyed by fire in March of 1963. After this unfortunate event they work together and pledged to build a new hall. A brand new building (1964 - \$41,500) and a quick payment of the mortgage was the result of the cooperation and good will of the church members and the Rice Street Community.

Originally, the church was blessed by Fr. Podea (Youngstown, OH). However, it was not officially consecrated until **1935** by the first Bishop from Romania, His Grace POLICARP MORUȘCA. As part of the consecration service, religious relics were set in a part of the Holy Altar table.

The turbulent war years of the **1940's** saw many of the parish members serving in the armed forces of the United States and their parents and friends prayed for their safe return. Another hallmark for St. Mary's was a visit by Princess ELENA of Romania in 1953.

In 1955 the interior of the church was remodeled and new pews were installed. The new interior was blessed on **February 13, 1955** in a service pontificated by His Grace Bishop VALERIAN TRIFA. Other improvements such as a new Iconostas and renovations as necessary have taken place through the years and have provided worthy and hospitable accommodations for national organizations of the Romanian Church such as the Ladies Auxiliary (A.R.F.O.R.A.) – founded on February 24, 1929 with Psa. Valeria Moldovan as first president – and the youth group (A.R.O.Y.) – founded on 1934 and in August 1934 Constantin Capeti and Nick Galetar participated in the National AROY Convention in Philadelphia.

During all the years the constant activity and growth of the parish can be attributed to the spirit and deep religious convictions of the people of the church. The accomplishments of a small number of members (never exceeded 150) are a constant reminder of how God works His Will through the faithful. It is our hope that the same spirit will continue to dominate the hearts of the church members in the future and perpetrate and improve their religious faith in God, with the assurance that, by doing so, they are better citizens of the community and of the country.

After 1989 St. Mary Church experienced resurgence in membership due to the addition of many new Romanian immigrants who were able to leave Romania after the overthrow of the Communist regime.

In 1996 the Ladies Auxiliary of our parish hosted the 48th ARFORA Congress under the guidance of Rev. Fr. Mihai Cerghizan. President of **Ladies Auxiliary** at the time was Mrs. Georgeta Poliac. Delegates from many Romanian Orthodox parishes in the U.S. attended this event.

The church and the parish house were renovated in 2004-2005. A major renovation and modernization of the parish hall and property occurred between 2008-2010.

In 2010 the St. Mary SPAROY chapter hosted the National AROY Convention under the guidance of Rev. Fr. George Oancă & Rev. Fr. Mircea VasIU. The president of SPAROY chapter was Anthony Hedesh.

In recent years we were overjoyed to welcome the birth of many Romanian-American babies in our Orthodox community.

Together, the old and the new families, worked hard to keep our faith strong and to keep the parish in good shape. The Parish Council and Ladies Auxiliary together with the faithful developed many fundraising activities (like: St. John Dinner (January), Anniversary Dinner (October), the annual Romanian Festival - which occur in 1st or 2nd weekend after Labor Day) and served people in need (like FOCUS MN) and other activities with children (Sunday School), with adults (Lenten Retreat), pan-orthodox services (with MEOCCA clergy and faithful) and cultural activities – Romanian dance lessons with maestro John Omorean for Izvorasul (adults), Plai de dor (women) and Dunarea (children). The idea of building a playground for children on church's property emerged in 2011.

We celebrated the **100th Anniversary in October 13, 2013** in the presence of our archbishop Nathaniel Popp and other guests and with the same occasion the new altar table was blessed.

We beautified the interior of our church with new painted icons in **2014** (you can see them on the left and right walls of the church) and installed AC in church in 2016. **In October 14, 2018 we celebrated the 105th Anniversary** in the presence of our archbishop Nathaniel, Fr. Dan Hoarste (newly elected auxiliary bishop – 2019) and other guests.

In **October 2019** we finished the project of building our parking lot on the property of 179 Atwater St.; on the land that we bought in 2016. We still need your financial help to cover the expenses of this project – please make online a donation toward it.

May God grant the parishioners and their friends the strength to be as good or even better than their ancestors.

During the 100 year history of St. Mary Romanian Orthodox Church, the following priests served the spiritual and administrative needs of the parish:

Rev. Fr. John Podea (Protopop)	- 1914
Fr. Gherasim Luca (monk)	- 1915-1916
Fr. Ilie Pop	- 1915-1916
Fr. Irimie Dalea	- 1917-1919
Fr. Pavel Negovan	- 1919-1920
Fr. Grigorie Coste	- 1921-1925
Fr. Grigorie Băloiu	- 1925-1926
Fr. Andrei Moldovan	- 1926-1930
Fr. Moise Balea	- 1930-1931
Fr. Ștefan A. Oprean	- 1931-1932
Fr. Aurel Reu	- 1932
Fr. Traian Damian	- 1933-1936
Fr. Theodore Scaletski	- 1936
Fr. Ioan Stănilă	- 1936-1937

Fr. Vasile Pașcău	- 1937-1938
Fr. Petru Moga	- 1939-1945
Fr. Eugene Lazar	- 1945-1947
Fr. Ilie Moțu	- 1948-1953
Fr. George Preda	- 1954-1955
Fr. Ljubisav Jurich	- 1956-1957
Fr. John Ivașcu	- 1958-1967
Fr. Mircea Marinescu	- 1968-1971
Fr. Isacu Coriolan	- 1971-1976
Fr. Romey Rosco	- 1976-1979
Fr. Constantin Alecse	- 1980-1982
Fr. Filimon Barbos	- 1983-1984
Fr. Cornel Todeasa	- 1985-1991
Fr. Mihai C. Cerghizan	- 1991-1997
Fr. Ovidiu Mihalache	- 1997
Fr. Ioan Poptelecan	- 1998-2003
Fr. Georgel Oanca	- 2003-2010
Fr. Mircea Vasiu	- 2010- present

(*Names with **bold** text are those departed ones)

ITEMS OF HISTORICAL INTEREST

Donations to the Church in 1914:

- Ștefan Teodorescu Church Banners - \$ 30
- Frații Vulcananti "Cerimea" - \$ 75
- Achim Pupaza..... Big Cross - \$ 40
- Frații Bebeni Big Bell - \$ 239
- Frații Simiclăușeni Small Bell - \$ 152
- Original Oil Painting - \$500
- Ion Lipovon Altar Doors -\$ 20
- George Muntean Epistle Book -\$ 10

Other small necessity items were donated by many other people.

However, in 1914 the cost of constructing the church was \$ 4,430.45

The two lots were at a cost of \$ 650 and the fence was \$ 275. The painting and the 2 (two) crosses of the church was \$ 149.50. The first vestments for the Priest were \$ 96.08.

In 1913 there were approximately 170 members and their families.

The Society "Augustina" gave \$ 100 donation in 1913 and was instrumental in the founding of our church.

FOUNDING MEMBERS OF ST. MARY ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH FOR THE YEAR 1913

1. Aurel Papiu \$ 55.00
2. George Capeti \$ 25.00

3.	Nicolae	Ispas	\$ 6.00
4.	Matei	Gligor	\$ 50.00
5.	Ioan	Farca	\$ 26.00
6.	Ioan	Opria	\$ 5.00
7.	George	Opria	\$ 6.00
8.	Ioan	Opria	\$ 5.00
9.	Nistor	Opria	\$ 5.00
10.	Ioan	Sarafolean	\$ 15.00
11.	Nicolae	Pescari	\$ 10.00
12.	Andrei	Funari	\$ 5.00
13.	Ştefan	Raica	\$ 10.00
14.	Atansie	Folea	\$ 10.00
15.	Pascu	Oncia	\$ 5.00
16.	Ioan	Sarafolean	\$ 10.00
17.	Vasalie	Cosor	\$ 5.15
18.	Mihai	Popa	\$ 6.50
19.	Toma	Dengel	\$ 5.50
20.	Anamia	Homorodian	\$ 5.00
21.	Lazăr	Paladie	\$ 6.00
22.	Nicolae	Cârţiu	\$ 5.00
23.	Macsa	Yorga	\$ 10.50
24.	Pavel	Imbroane	\$ 28.55
25.	Ştefan	Rista	\$ 2.00
26.	Pavel	Farca	\$ 12.50
27.	Iova	Foale	\$ 5.50
28.	George	Cachelo	\$ 5.00
29.	Ioan	Barzac	\$ 5.25
30.	Ion	Stamate	\$ 11.50
31.	Tudor	Giurchi	\$ 18.00
32.	Ioan	Selejan	\$ 6.50
33.	Todor	Vintan	\$ 5.00
34.	Pavel	Tomii	\$ 11.85
35.	Nic	Breţoi	\$ 6.25
36.	Ştefan	Funari	\$ 16.00
37.	Damian	Buleza	\$ 13.50
38.	Damian	Blagoie	\$ 5.00
39.	George	Pescari	\$ 2.00
40.	Ioan	Miculescu	\$ 5.00
41.	Ştefan	Opriş	\$ 5.00
42.	Valerie	Papes	\$ 10.00
43.	Dimitrie	Capati	\$ 10.00
44.	Ştefan	Grui	\$ 16.80
45.	Pavel	Zamborian	\$ 5.00
46.	George	Christea	\$ 5.00
47.	Atanasie	Ciurcie	\$ 5.50
48.	Vasalie	Moroaica	\$ 16.00
49.	George	Diroancă	\$ 10.00
50.	Nicolae	Lăzăruica	\$ 14.00
51.	Pavel	Tocăniţă	\$ 12.50
52.	Nicolae	Mario	\$ 10.00
53.	Simion	Sacria	\$ 15.60
54.	Ştefan	Farca	\$ 15.00
55.	George	Ispas	\$ 5.00

56.	Nicolae	Nedelcu	\$ 5.00
57.	Trifu	Dalia	\$ 5.00
58.	Dimitrie	Moldavan	\$ 6.00
59.	Macsa	Ionescu	\$ 6.00
60.	Traian	Ianculescu	\$ 25.00
61.	Simion	Martin	\$ 6.00
62.	Vichente	Ştefan	\$ 5.00
63.	Ginu	Capati	\$ 5.00
64.	Gavrilă	Claici	\$ 7.00
65.	Ginu	Iancu	\$ 18.00
66.	Ion	Tonia	\$ 6.00
67.	Filip	Bugariu	\$ 6.00
68.	George	Muntean	\$ 5.00
69.	Mitru	Sicloran	\$ 10.00
70.	Iova	Crăciun	\$ 20.30
71.	Moisa	Damian	\$ 5.50
72.	Simion	Damian	\$ 16.80
73.	Ioan	Sîrbescu	\$ 5.00
74.	Pascu	Gligor	\$ 5.00
75.	Traila	Lupu	\$ 5.00
76.	Ştefan	Telescan	\$ 2.00
77.	Irimie	Angelu	\$ 5.00
78.	Ilie	Nedin	\$ 5.00
79.	Sava	Socol	\$ 6.00
80.	George	Stoica	\$ 11.50
81.	Vichente	Ilcau	\$ 5.00
82.	Mitru	Ştefan	\$ 16.80
83.	Iosif	Chinda	\$ 6.00
84.	Ştefan	Doichiţa	\$ 12.55
85.	Vasalie	Palade	\$ 5.25
86.	Vasa	Stoica	\$ 5.00
87.	Simion	Cresta	\$ 5.00
88.	Arcadie	Logojan	\$ 6.50
89.	George	Galatari	\$ 5.50
90.	George	Crasiun	\$ 5.00
91.	Aurel	Gligor	\$ 8.75
92.	George	Zian	\$ 5.00
93.	Simion	Cotosman	\$ 11.25
94.	Ioan	Grui	\$ 24.45
95.	Ioan	Colari	\$ 2.00
96.	George	Cotosman	\$ 10.00
97.	Patru	Perta	\$ 5.00
98.	Ioan	Cristea	\$ 5.00
99.	Simion	Oprian	\$ 12.50
100.	Ştefan	Stanciu	\$ 5.00
101.	Patru	Ghilizan	\$ 10.00
102.	Nicolae	Bacaintan	\$ 18.00
103.	Milan	Pascu	\$ 5.50
104.	Societatea "Augustina"		\$100.00
105.	Chiriac	Radu	\$ 18.30
106.	Chiriac	Iancu	\$ 18.05
107.	Gligor	Ardelean	\$ 10.00
108.	Simion	Mesoane	\$ 5.00

109.	Terente	Toderescu	\$ 12.00
110.	George	Flori	\$ 6.50
111.	Moise	Crăciun	\$ 5.25
112.	Nicolae	Babat	\$ 6.00
113.	George D.	Capati	\$ 40.00
114.	Ioan	Pescari	\$ 2.00
115.	George	Flori	\$ 19.10
116.	Ioan	Costila	\$ 22.00
117.	Ioan	Crăuciun	\$ 9.50
118.	Pavel	Sarafolean	\$ 8.50
119.	Vasalie	Similian	\$ 2.00
120.	Lazăr	Gusta	\$ 5.00
121.	Ioan	Suciu	\$ 5.50
122.	Gligor	Halmajan	\$ 5.00
123.	Alcasan	Nica	\$ 5.00
124.	Drigoii	Procopie	\$ 6.00
125.	Ioan	Ursu	\$ 6.00
126.	George	Damian	\$ 5.00
127.	S.	Brețoi	\$ 5.00
128.	Chira	Zian	\$ 2.00
129.	Nicolae	Choban	\$ 5.00
130.	George	Pistrui	\$ 5.00
131.	Iefta	Comnoșan	\$ 5.00
132.	Crăciun	Cincu	\$ 5.00
133.	Ioan	Lazăr	\$ 5.00
134.	Todor	Stoi	\$ 5.50
135.	Vasi	Gania	\$ 10.50
136.	Patru	Costia	\$ 10.00
137.	Peta	Avram	\$ 5.00
138.	Văsălie	Cotosman	\$ 5.00
139.	George	Crișan	\$ 6.00
140.	Gavrilă	Claici	\$ 5.00
141.	Simion	Caliman	\$ 5.25
142.	Vasile	Stamate	\$ 5.00
143.	Floria	Pescari	\$ 5.00
144.	Constantin	Ardelean	\$ 5.00
145.	Lazăr	Zian	\$ 10.50
146.	George	Vingan	\$ 5.00
147.	George	Avram	\$ 5.00
148.	Ilie	Suciu	\$ 5.00
149.	Ioan	Ursu	\$ 5.00
150.	Ariton	Muntean	\$ 5.00
151.	Costea	Cadariu	\$ 5.00
152.	Văsălie	Roșu	\$ 5.00
153.	Ioan	Buta	\$ 6.00
154.	Cornel	Foltuti	\$ 5.00
155.	Traian	Flori	\$ 5.25
156.	Lazăr	Flusi	\$ 5.00
157.	Vasa	Chirbala	\$ 5.00
158.	Vasile	Farca	\$ 6.50
159.	Nicolae	Muntean	\$ 5.00
160.	Mita	Barantis	\$ 5.00
161.	George	Luchici	\$ 5.00

162.	Chiriac	Bulgar	\$ 7.25
163.	Clementina	Radu	\$ 5.00
164.	Achim	Pupaza	\$ 21.20
165.	Damian	Tărziu	\$ 5.00
166.	Pavel	Tarcoi	\$ 11.80
167.	George	Stoi	\$ 11.80
168.	George	Păunescu	\$ 15.05
169.	Andre	Grui	\$ 12.30
170.	Ioan	Bălan	\$ 11.80
171.	Traian	Muhu	\$ 11.80
172.	Ionica	Ștefan	\$ 11.80
173.	Eftemie	Ionavici	\$ 5.00
174.	Ilie	Macenic	\$ 5.00
175.	Fillip	Muntean	\$ 5.00
176.	Ioan	Stamate	\$ 5.00
177.	Ioan	Badiu	\$ 5.00
178.	Dimitrie	Oltian	\$ 5.00
179.	Dimitrie	Sarafolean	\$ 5.00
180.	Valerie	Fabilian	\$ 5.00
181.	Ioan	Cabiel	\$ 5.00
182.	Ieronim	O. Agiu	\$ 5.00
183.	Gligor	Ienovan	\$ 5.00
184.	Todor	Rejep	\$ 5.00
185.	Iefta	Drăgoi	\$ 5.00
186.	George	Ivașcu	\$ 5.00
187.	George	Christea	\$ 5.00
188.	Ioan	Miclacian	\$ 5.00
189.	Trifu	Sect	\$ 5.00
190.	Ștefan	Marian	\$ 5.00
191.	Vian	Bulgariu	\$ 5.00
192.	Dimitrie	Chevercescu	\$ 10.00
193.	Ilie	Ianovici	\$ 10.00