



## Rev. Father John Castaldi 1834-1895

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But sometimes, through the soul of Man,  
Slow moving o'er his pain,  
The moonlight of a perfect peace  
Floods heart and brain."

John Castaldi was born on Nov. 28, 1834 in Piconza, Italy where his father was a merchant. John entered college at the age of 15 studying philosophy for three years. He then attended Alberroni College and later was at the Propogarda in Genoa.

He came to America in the 1850's where he first spent a short while as an assistant priest at the Cathedral in Buffalo. Following this he served in the absence of resident priests in both Batavia and LeRoy. From these places he came to Albion where he conducted his first Mass during January of 1862. His next 33 years would be spent at St. Joseph's Church in Albion, where he performed his priestly duties. It was during this time that the material prosperity of the church in Albion was greatly increased due to his incumbency.

The first Catholic service conducted in Albion was in a private home in 1833. During the succeeding 16 years a Misson in Albion was attended from Lockport. In 1849 the Rt. Rev. Bishop Timon paid his first visit to Albion where a site for a church was selected. The building was completed in 1852 with the first Mass being said on Palm Sunday of that same year. That edifice was located on North Main Street in Albion on the site now occupied by the residence of Dr. and Mrs. S. Sahukar.

No resident priest served the church however, until 1858 when a succession of four different men came and went, some only remaining a few months. It was indeed, Father Castaldi who, in 1862, gave St. Joseph's Church its first assured stability. In 1863 a rectory was built and the church upgraded. In 1869 St. Josphe's parochial school was opened which was in a building at the rear of the church. In 1870 this school was placed in the charge of the Sisters of Mercy. In 1876 the large mansion of Roswell Clark was purchased for a convent. The home is now the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Kevin Doherty. In 1874 a tract of land was purchased on Brown Street for a cemetery, first known as Holy Cross and now referred to as "Old St. Joseph's."

During his lifetime, Father Castaldi traveled abroad several times. In 1868 and 1881 he made visits to Rome. In 1887 he journeyed to the Holy Land where, in Jerusalem, he was made a Knight of the Holy Sepulchre. He also received the title of Monsignor from the Pope of Rome.

In March 1895 Father Castaldi died of heart disease at the recory in Albion. In April 1985 the Rev. John Biden was sent to Albion as successor to Father Castaldi. It was during his short tenure that the construction of the present St. Joseph's Church was undertaken by the parish.

Upon Father Castaldi's death an Albion newspaper made the following editorial comment: "Father Castaldi was a kindly, courteous, Christian gentleman, possessing in large measure the honor and esteem of the entire community, and by his own people was most tenderly loved."