

2014 -- H 8309

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2014

HOUSE RESOLUTION

CELEBRATING THE 170TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF ST. MARY'S
CHURCH IN WEST WARWICK, RHODE ISLAND

Introduced By: Representatives Serpa, Ackerman, Nunes, Morgan, and McLaughlin

Date Introduced: June 11, 2014

Referred To: House read and passed

1 WHEREAS, It has been known by several names in its long history, but St. Mary's
2 Church has been a mainstay in the tiny village of Crompton, in the Town of West Warwick for
3 the past 170 years; and

4 WHEREAS, By 1844, the Irish settlers of Crompton had grown tired of the ten mile trek
5 to Providence for Catholic Mass. Mary Doran, the wife of a printer in the Crompton Print Works
6 purchased an acre of land and donated it to Father Fitton for the purposes of building a church.
7 The cornerstone for the church was laid on October 15, 1844 and a small church was built upon
8 it. The Irish of the Pawtuxet Valley finally had a church of their own; and

9 WHEREAS, The church started out as a mission church served by priests from the
10 Cathedral in Providence. The church became a separate parish and was renamed St. Mary's under
11 its first Pastor the Rev. Daniel Kelly in 1850. Less than a year later, the Reverend James P.
12 Gibson came to St. Mary's. Under Father Gibson, the transepts and sanctuary were added in
13 1856; giving the church its distinctive cross shape. The church's bell tower was added in
14 1859. Reverend Gibson served until his death in 1892, and is buried adjacent to the church; and

15 WHEREAS, After Father Gibson's death, the church was once again a mission church for
16 traveling Catholic priests from Providence. On August 6, 1926, the church was devastated by
17 fire. The church was re-opened on Easter Sunday, 1927. In 1946, the church was returned to
18 parish status and Rev. Barton Daggett was appointed pastor; and

19 WHEREAS, The church continued to grow spiritually, although the building itself had

1 suffered the ravages of time. In 1978, the church's 133rd year, the parish undertook the task of
2 planning and funding an extensive renovation. Work on the project began in April of 1980. The
3 structure was lifted and moved while a new foundation was built. After returning the building to
4 its original location, interior renovations revealed evidence of previous fires. After the
5 renovation, the building was rededicated on January 25, 1981, by Bishop Louis Gelineau. In
6 1994, St. Mary's held its 150th Anniversary Celebration; and

7 WHEREAS, Today's parishioners are acutely aware of the history of their church. St.
8 Mary's and the adjacent St. Mary's Cemetery are now entered on the National Register of Historic
9 Places. From high atop the hill, the church looks over the village of Crompton and the other
10 villages that would eventually become the Town of West Warwick; and

11 WHEREAS, Most of the original parishioners of Our Lady of Mount Carmel are buried
12 behind the church. Many of their gravestones indicate their Irish birth places. Among their
13 graves are the graves of Mary Doran and Father Gibson. There are also the graves of those who
14 have served our country, and the graves of thousands of other parishioners that have found their
15 way to this little building on Church Street; now, therefore be it

16 RESOLVED, That this House of Representatives of the State of Rhode Island and
17 Providence Plantations hereby joins the parishioners of St. Mary's in celebrating the 170th
18 Anniversary of their church. May she continue to serve as the Mother Church of the Pawtuxet
19 Valley and may she continue to grow with her 18th generation of parishioners from this day forth;
20 and be it further

21 RESOLVED, That the Secretary of State be and hereby is authorized and directed to
22 transmit a duly certified copy of this resolution to Bishop Thomas J. Tobin, Rev. Paul Reynolds,
23 and Rev. Douglas Spina, and Richard S. Hughes.

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