

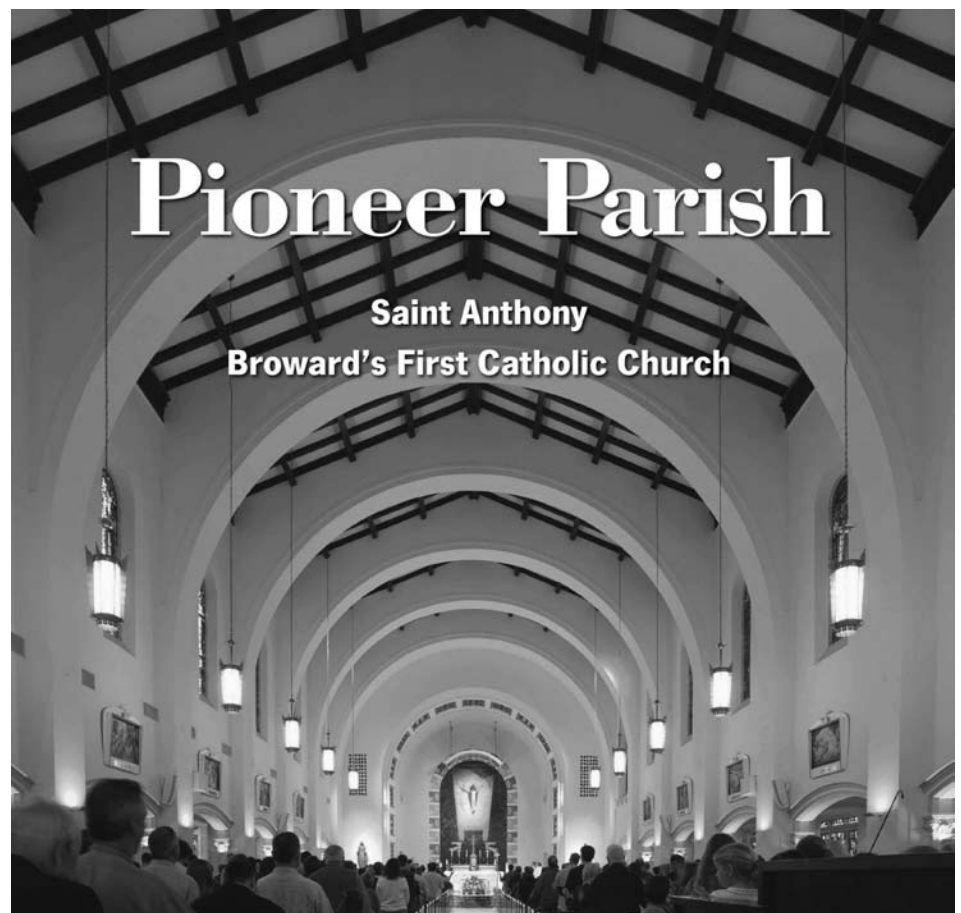
book review

By Marla Sherman Dumas

Pioneer Parish, Saint Anthony Broward's First Catholic Church

by Fr. Jerry Singleton

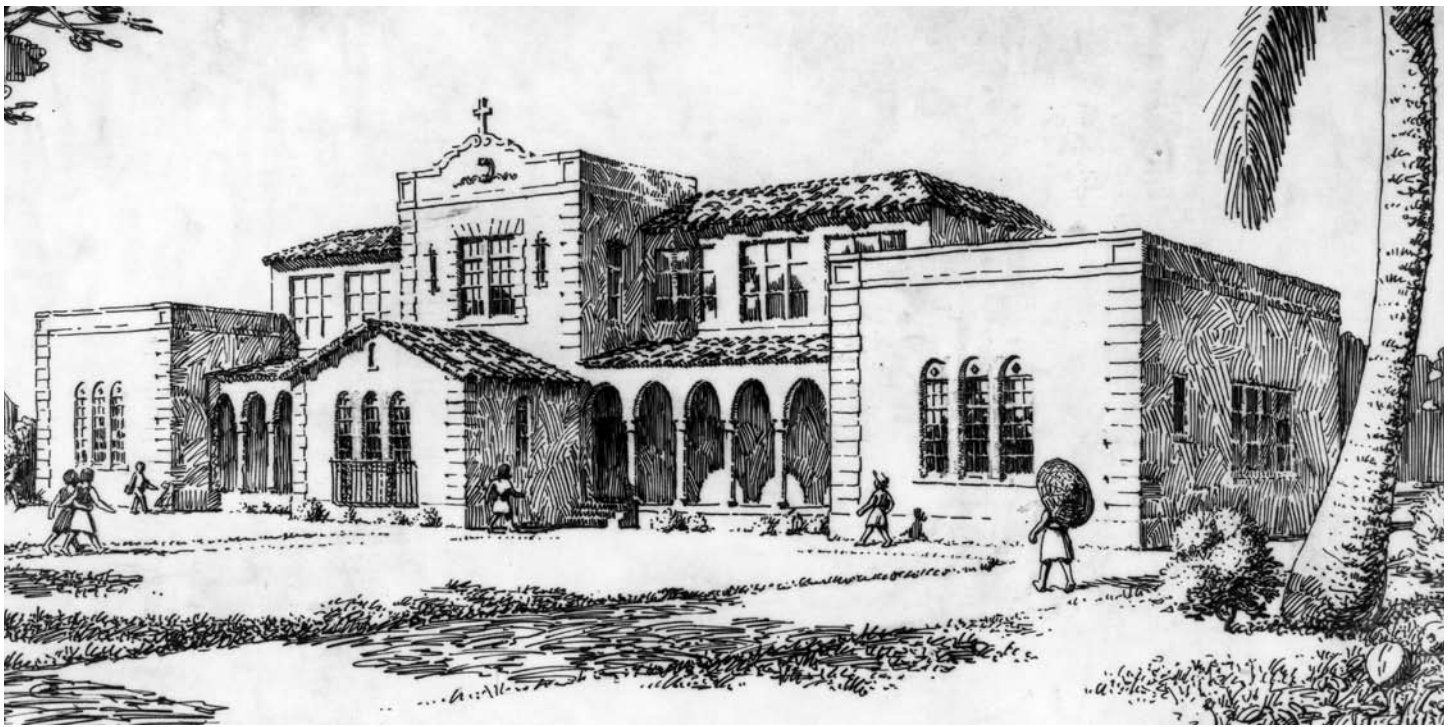
Marla Sherman Dumas, a planning consultant, has served as a Broward County Historical Commissioner since 2007. She previously contributed an article on an historic Hollywood neighborhood, Parkside, which appeared in the 2009 *Broward Legacy*. Her interest in historic preservation and the history of Broward County provides her with expertise necessary to review this book.



Pioneer Parish: Saint Anthony Broward's First Catholic Church by Fr. Jerry Singleton, Middle River Press, Oakland Park, Florida, 2011, ISBN 978-0-9838203-0-7, \$75, 174 pages.

Fr. Jerry Singleton, pastor of Saint Anthony Church and School since December 2005, with assistance from editor Chauncey Mabe, and researcher Judy Borich, developed

this publication in honor of the 90th anniversary of the church and the 85th anniversary of the school. The final product is a lovely and engaging coffee-table style book



Drawing of the Saint Anthony School, circa 1921. Courtesy of the Fort Lauderdale History Center.

containing a written history and a collection of significant photographs and illustrations that memorialize the history of Saint Anthony Church and School.

The author acknowledges that the content was compiled through archival research and recollections of parishioners. As part of the book, a list of all interviewees is included. The book tracks the history of the church and school from their inceptions in 1921 and 1926, respectively, through the Great Depression, World War II, the Civil Rights period, Fort Lauderdale's decline in the 1970s and its later resurgence. It also contains a final chapter in which Singleton discusses the potential for change faced by Saint Anthony, and the Catholic Church in general, during the 21st century.

This book includes information that clearly ties the earliest history of Saint Anthony Church and School to what was happening in secular settings in the area and the nation. For example, the author explains that in 1921 when Saint Anthony parish was established, the community still remained clearly anti-Catholic. In support of this assertion, Singleton relates the story of Julia Murphy, who in 1915 was

hired as a public school teacher in Fort Lauderdale but was fired almost immediately when members of the community found out she was Roman Catholic. One source that the author quotes regarding this incident is the same publication for which this book review has been written, the *Broward Legacy*. (The article appeared in the *Broward Legacy*, volume 18, number 3-4, summer/fall, 1995.)

Of great interest to readers is an opportunity to gain an understanding of the significance of the names given to many community institutions such as Barry University and Archbishop Curley High School (originally known as Central Catholic) and the roles their namesakes played in the history of Saint Anthony Church and School.

The founding of Holy Cross Hospital was described as a small Catholic hospital that has become a major medical facility for the entire community at large. Both of these institutions serve Catholics and non-Catholics alike and are iconic examples of excellence in educational and medical services to all South Florida residents.

Fr. John Joseph O'Looney, who

was assigned to this parish in October 1929 and served the community for over 40 years and retired in June 1971, is credited for much of the early success of Saint Anthony Church and School. Furthermore, he is acknowledged as being responsible for initiating the idea for opening Holy Cross Hospital through his fundraising efforts he started in 1950 enabling the hospital to hold an official ground-breaking ceremony in 1953. He is credited with recognizing the need for Central Catholic, the second Catholic high school in Broward County, with its first graduation class in 1953; and opening Annunciation Church in 1952, a mission that served Fort Lauderdale's African-American Catholics prior to the success of the Civil Rights movement.

Sr. Mary Paschal Sydnor, who joined St. Anthony in 1940, is credited for recognizing the need for a gymnasium-auditorium for the school. Designed by architect Robert E. Hansen, it opened in 1941 and served St. Anthony School, Central Catholic High School for a time and during World War II, the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard servicemen stationed at Port Everglades and the nearby small airfield that eventually became Hollywood-Fort



St. Anthony school bus. Broward County Historical Commission.

Lauderdale International Airport.

Also included as part of the book are lists with short biographies about students called to service in the Catholic Church and famous students, supporters and parishioners. The latter list includes politicians, sports stars, actors and business leaders that are easily recognizable to the community at large.

Throughout the book, the photographs and illustrations give an excellent pictorial overview of the church and school and include formal and more candid pictures of key stakeholders, students and parishioners responsible for the development and ultimate success of both of these facilities.

Certainly this book has great significance to anyone who ever attended the church or school as well as those persons that are currently involved with Saint Anthony. Additionally, anyone interested in the overall history of Fort Lauderdale and the greater South Florida



Aerial View of St. Anthony's Church and School. Photograph by Anthony Kozla

community will find reading the narrative and reviewing the pictures from *Pioneer Parish: Saint Anthony Broward's First Catholic Church* a valuable experience. For those interested in obtaining a copy, this book is available for sale at Well Read Book Store on 17th Street Causeway in Fort Lauderdale and on Amazon.com. It is also

available from the church.
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