

**The Name "Coffee Run" has a significant place in Delaware's Catholic history.**

**Throughout most of the Eighteenth century the Jesuits from "Bohemia," the mission in Warwick, Maryland, visited northern Delaware, serving the growing Catholic population in this area. Among the ten priests tending the White Clay Creek area during the years 1730 to 1790, Father John Lewis, S.J., knew it best and served it for longer periods of time than the others. While tending the mission, he was also the incumbent at Bohemia.**

**In 1772 while he was the superior of the Maryland Province, Father Lewis directed Father Matthias Manners, S.J., to purchase 207 acres of land from Samuel Lyle, seven miles west of Wilmington, in Mill Creek Hundred. Likely influenced by Cornelius Hollohan, a well-to-do Irish immigrant, "Con" Hollohan had lived in the neighborhood for some decades. Hollohan's home had been for many years a resting place for Jesuit Missionaries in their journeys to and from Bohemia and St. Mary's County, and Philadelphia. In 1775, Father Lewis built a residence on "Laetitia Manor," the plantation named in honor of its first owner, Laetitia Penn, at which time Con Hollohan sold his own land holdings and became tenant of the Jesuit Mission. This house doubled as church for at least fifteen years until 1790, and probably longer.**

**Bishop John Carroll of Baltimore and first Bishop of the U.S. who had served the White Clay Creek plantation as priest, entrusted its care to Father John Rosseter, a Dublin Augustinian. Father Rosseter erected the first church, a log chapel, at the site of a cemetery that had existed for several years. After four years Fr. Rosseter retired to Old Bohemia, leaving his pastorate to a younger man, Father Kenny.**

**Father Patrick Kenny, intending to go on to Charleston, S.C., had arrived in Philadelphia in 1804. The discovery of trustee troubles and the intense heat in Charleston persuaded him to remain in the vicinity of Philadelphia. He was immediately assigned to the several outlying missions of the White Clay Creek plantation, West Chester, Doe Run, Concord. In January, 1805, he was assigned to the White Clay Creek plantation mission itself which he called "Coffee Run." For three years, 1805 to 1808, Father Kenny lived near West**

**Chester at Goshen with his old friend Anthony Hearne. He began at once to negotiate purchase of the plantation from the Jesuits of Old Bohemia, and his friend Anthony Hearne financed the purchase of Coffee Run Plantation as well as endowing the church in West Chester.**

**Father Kenny initiated a building program in his widespread parish which included all of New Castle County north of the present canal, West Chester, Ivy Mills and Doe Run. He constructed a large barn on his newly purchased plantation in 1807. Also in that year he began the church in New Castle. In 1812 he moved from the original Jesuit residence into a newly completed stone house, the Mundy house, located nearby. With money from the estate of Father Charles Whalen, he built the first church in Wilmington. Begun in 1816, this is the present St. Peter's Cathedral.**

**By 1823 he had sold a large piece of property south of Lancaster Turnpike and erected a new home, the Clark House, just across the road from the old one. In that year he also completely renovated St. Mary of the Assumption, the Coffee Run church, built by Father Rosseter.**

**Although St. Mary of the Assumption was moved from the Coffee Run grounds to another location in 1965, the Coffee Run grounds and cemetery are still in existence today.**