

# FORTHCOMING BOOK ON THE HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

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**Painting of the 1754 first Mass at the Point – donated in 1954 by the  
Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania to the Diocese of Pittsburgh**

Source: Diocese of Pittsburgh

On a Monday evening in June 1940, over 500 people came together at Mount Mercy College to join in the establishment of the Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania. At this gathering, the Society's founders laid out the purposes of this new organization as the study of American Catholic history in Western Pennsylvania and "publish the result thereof from time to time."

The concept of a Catholic historical society was not a new idea. In 1885, Pittsburgh priest-historian Father Andrew A. Lambing (1842-1918) launched the Ohio Valley Catholic Historical Society of Pittsburgh in order to advance research and discussion of the history of Catholicism in Western Pennsylvania. While this early organization survived just over a year, the seed was planted and Lambing's vision was finally realized in that June 1940 meeting of the new Society.

From those early days in 1940 through the 1960s, the Society promoted history through lectures, publications, microfilming the

*Pittsburgh Catholic*, tours, radio interviews, exhibits, and other activities. The 1960s saw the Society enter a period of dormancy, from which it emerged in 1984 and lives on today.

Having recently marked its 75th anniversary, the Society continues to advance research and interest in Catholic history, including the history of the Society itself. In a forthcoming book, *The Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania: Its Origins, Establishment, Decline, and Resurrection*, author John C. Bates, the Society's former president, details the organization's history from its roots in Lambing's vision through to the status of the Society in 2018. A comprehensive biography of Lambing is also included. Throughout the pages of this work, Bates demonstrates that the history of the Society is not just that of the organization but is also a direct reflection of the evolution of the Catholic Church in Western Pennsylvania. This book is to be published in 2019.