



THE GROTTTO, OUR LADY OF LOURDES SHRINE

Listed in the National Registry of Historic Places

The Grotto, Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine, became the first standalone resource in the state of Pennsylvania unanimously approved for its historical significance by Bureau for Historic Preservation, Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission.

The nomination was forwarded to the National Park Service's Keeper of the National Register, Washington, DC for further review. The Keeper of the National Registry in Washington, DC, determined that the Grotto was eligible to be listed in the National Registry.

The National Registry recognizes the historical, architectural, or cultural merits of a wide variety of significant resources across Pennsylvania and the United States.

History of The Grotto, Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine

The Grotto has been an important cultural place within the Italian-American neighborhood of New Columbus, in Nesquehoning Borough, since its construction during World War II. It was built on the grounds of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church by a local coal miner, Placidio Guido LaRizzio, during a time when Italian immigrants and their descendants were struggling to define a place within the American culture.

The Grotto was dedicated on October 15, 1945 to the memory of all those service men and women who died in WWII and as a thanksgiving memento for the safe return home of members of the parish and all fellow servicemen. Numerous stones, shells, pieces of coral, and other objects that were embedded during the Grotto's construction were supplied by local servicemen and women from the existing 48 states and all seven continents. Quality workmanship was influenced by patriotic and spiritual dedication to the men and women who served on foreign soil. The Grotto's period of significance begins in 1941 with the onset of its construction. It is a constant reminder of those who fight for freedom past and present.

The Grotto became an important focus during many weekly and annual events organized by the Church. It was also the focus of many informal family and community gatherings. The Grotto is an integral part of the ethnic heritage of the Italian American Community of New Columbus and extends to the present day.

Monsignor Agnello J. Angelini

Father Agnello J. Angelini was born in Calvano, Italy, in the Diocese of Aversa on October 18, 1899, and came to America at the age of 5 years with his mother Teresa and his sisters. He arrived in Roseto, PA, on Sunday, November 6, 1904.

On September 12, 1932, Father Angelini became the pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in New Columbus.

Father Angelini was elevated to the rank of Domestic Prelate by Pope Paul VI on May 11, 1964, and now had the title conferred on him of Rev. Monsignor Agnello J. Angelini.

The love and respect that Monsignor Angelini had for military service personal was demonstrated throughout his lifetime of service to the community of Nesquehoning, PA.

Many military service men and women departing for World War II, Korea, and Vietnam have found memories of a dedicated, loving priest at the train station in Jim Thorpe blessing them and praying for their return. Monsignor Angelini saw brave men and women leaving to serve their country rather than Catholics, Protestants or any other religious denomination. He gave each one his blessings and a religious medal and scapular to carry with them overseas. To this day many of these medals are still carried by veterans or their surviving family members.

Placidio Guido LaRizzio Builder of The Grotto

Guido LaRizzio was a humble, devoted parishioner of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church. Mr. LaRizzio was very artistic and was featured in the Popular Science Magazine in 1938 for his coal carvings. He also composed music. He brought Monsignor Angelini's vision to life when he began the construction of the shrine in 1941 with guidance from the pastor. After his shift in the mines, he would spend a few hours every day working on the Grotto. The Shrine was completed and dedicated in 1945. The statues around the Grotto were purchase by Monsignor Angelini in an attempt to recreate the famous scene of the visitation of the Blessed Mother to the children at Lourdes, France.

The Preparers of the National Register Nomination
Rose Marie Arieta ~ Lucille Donahue Richmond

In Memory of Mary Kerscanin Arieta