

Fox Point Oral History Narrator Biography

Interviewer: Becky Soules

Interviewee: Rev. Kevin J. Brassil

Kevin J. Brassil was born on July 18, 1943, the second of the Brassil family's three children. Both of his parents emigrated from County Cork, Ireland, during the early decades of the twentieth century, arriving in Providence in search of economic stability and political freedom. Along with his siblings, and many of the other Irish Catholics living in Fox Point, Kevin Brassil was a member of St. Joseph's parish and attended Cleary School. Over the course of the interview, Father Kevin stressed the importance of the church in everyday neighborhood life: from the social activities of the Catholic Youth Organization that involved the locals kids, to special "Minstrel" performances in the Cleary School auditorium, to the slight tensions and differences between St. Joseph's parishioners and the Portuguese parishioners of Holy Rosary Church. With the church such an important part of daily life, Father Kevin decided to become a priest at a relatively young age. The church also offered the extensive classical education that was otherwise out of reach for most of the neighborhood's immigrant families. With the exception of about twelve years, Father Kevin has resided all his life in Rhode Island, serving as the pastor of churches in Pawtucket and Portsmouth before retiring and returning to Providence. He now resides in one of the same houses in Fox Point in which he grew up, and he retains close connections to St. Joseph's Church and the older generation of Fox Pointers.