

St. Mary's History

According to records, the Catholic Church was organized in the Pavilion community about a hundred years ago. The first Mass was offered in the home of Major and Mrs. Brooks, prominent Episcopalians, at Pearl Creek in the territory of St. Mary's Parish by the Reverend Father Cook of Java, for a few Irish workers, many of whom had come to America to escape the Irish famine.

The small congregation then purchased an old blacksmith shop and transformed it into a church. Some of the prominent Catholic families in this time were Foley, Armour, Murphy, Mulvey, Powers, Kenne and Quinlan.

The priests visited their congregation when weather, which caused bad road conditions, permitted. About the year 1862 Pavilion became a mission of Batavia and was attended by Father Cunningham, who built the present St. Mary's Church between 1862 and 1865. The first couple to be married in the church were Michael Powers and Bridget Foley in November 1865. They had 12 children, three of whom are still alive and members of this parish.

In 1865 Bishop Timon visited Pavilion and preached a three-day mission for the Catholics. He also spoke for two nights in the Universalist Church, answering various questions, and clearing doubts of the ministers regarding the Catholic faith. The mission of Pavilion was then transferred to Warsaw and attended by Father O'Dwyer until he was transferred to Elmira.

Father O'Shay then became the next pastor. He purchased three acres of land from Patrick Quinalan on the Warsaw Rd. and laid out a cemetery. A Mrs. J. Kenna was the first parishioner buried there.

In the year 1887, Father Thomas B. Milde was appointed by Bishop Ryan as first priest solely for Pavilion and St. Mary's was made an independent parish. Father Milde repaired the church and in 1888 purchased the house adjoining the church property, from Thomas Wilson, for the rectory. He also did great work in improving the property and in instituting societies for the benefit of religion during his 12 years as pastor. Father Milde was sent to Middleport, in 1899 and Pavilion was attended from Le Roy. In 1901, the Rev. C. F. Killeen was appointed pastor but in February, 1902 Rev. M. J. Kelly took his place and immediately started to repair the church and built a tower and sacristy.

On Dec. 10, 1906 the rectory was totally destroyed by fire and with it went all the books and records. The people who were present at this particular Mass observed that an altar boy had come in just after announcements and whispered something to Father Kelly who immediately asked everyone to leave the church.

Outside the church, the congregation saw the flames enveloping the rectory. Although an alarm was given it was evident the structure was doomed. Father Kelly estimated the loss at about \$3,000 with insurance of \$1,500. A possible cause of the fire was the Franklin stove which had been filled with coal before Mass by a young lad who helped with the rectory duties. Coal gas might have formed causing the stove to explode.

Father Kelly was transferred and Father Dobbins was appointed to succeed him on Dec. 19, 1906. On May first that year, Bishop Colton made a visitation and broke ground for a new rectory. A heating plant of two furnaces was installed in November, and Father Dobbins moved to the new rectory in December. A mission began that day and lasted one week. New statues, candlesticks, erected by a Franciscan father, new stations, candlesticks, chalices, altar furnishings, and carpeting were purchased for the church. The same year gas was piped into the church for light and heat.

In 1913 both the church and the rectory were painted. Hardwood floors and a new roof were furnished and a new organ was installed. In 1914 the cemetery was terraced and new stone gateways built. A new entrance to the church was built with cement steps approach. In 1915 the mortgage on the church was paid off completely and electricity was installed in all the church property.

In 1923 the Holy Name Society was organized for the men. In 1927, the Rev. William Donnelly was appointed rector by Bishop Turner, and remained there until 1948 when he was transferred to St. Mary's Church in Middleport where he is still pastor. The Rev. Francis P. Hendricks was sent to replace Father Donnelly on June 28, 1945 and is the present pas-tor with 135 families as parishioners.

Besides the Holy Name Society the church also has the St. Vincent de Paul Society, Rosary and Altar Society and the newest organization formed in 1961, the Ladies of Charity. The children of the parish are taught religion two days a week by the Sisters of the Divine Child. Confirmation of 100 to 150 children and adults is held every three years and the Sacrament of Holy Communion is administered every May to about 25 youngsters.

The parish is now planning a 100-year celebration. This had to be postponed this year because of the serious illness of Father Hendricks. The celebration is now scheduled for after Easter.

(Editor's Note: This is a history of St. Mary's Parish in Pavilion prepared by Miss Jean M. Bridges, a student at Notre Dame High School.)