

HISTORY OF THE SACRED HEART PARISH, CROYBULL, WYO.

History of the parish from 1916 to October 1, 1928.

HISTORY OF THE SACRED HEART PARISH, GREYBULL, WYO.

History of the parish from 1916 to October 1, 1928.

In 1915 when this part of the history of the Catholic church in Big Horn county begins there was but little known of the church here in this territory. There was then but one Catholic church in Big Horn county, which was located at Basin, and built in 1910, through the efforts of Fr. N. J. Endres who was in charge of this territory at the time. The Catholic congregation at Basin was if anything, larger in 1915 than it is now, but it has remained practically the same during all the intervening years. Though the church was built in 1910, it still carried a small amount of debt up till 1924, when it was finally paid off and it has been clear of debt since that time.

Greybull was the next community in Big Horn county to make a move towards the erection of a church. In 1915 Greybull was but a very small town which grew as the result of this place being made a railroad division point. Up till 1918, there were but a few Catholic families here, and Fr. Andres who was in charge used to stop at Greybull about once a month on week days and have Mass at some private home. But, when in 1918, oil was discovered around Greybull and a refinery built there, the little town blossomed forth assuming quite a metropolitan appearance. Naturally a number of Catholic families came with the increased population and about the middle of the year 1919, plans were drawn up for the erection of a church. One lot of ground was purchased from the Lincoln Land Co. which company also donated another lot, and in October of that year the contract for building the church was let at a cost of \$1600.00. The Extension Society donated the sum of \$800.00, and the remainder was raised among the parishioners and their friends. The Extension Society

being granted the privilege of naming the church, named it "Church of the Sacred Heart." The building was finished and the first Mass offered in it on Dec. 26, 1919. Like many of the buildings in Greybull that were constructed in a hurry to keep up with the boom, the church was far from being desirable, as is also its location. However, it must be remembered that at the time the church was built, the value of property was so inflated that it was impossible to secure a suitable location at anything like a reasonable price, and the church was erected mostly as a temporary building with the hopes of building something better in a few years, if the prospects of the growth of the town should justify it. Unfortunately the production of oil ceased in a couple of years and in 1921 and 1922 Greybull saw its population dwindle almost as fast as it came; consequently the same church exists and serves the needs of the people to the present day, and from all appearances will have to do for quite some time to come. Like Basin, Greybull had Mass once a month from the time the church was erected, until 1926 and Father Endres had charge until that date.

There was no need of a Catholic church in Lovell prior to the year 1919, as up to that time Lovell and the surrounding country was a solid Mormon community. In 1918 a sugar-beet

factory was built at Lovell and this brought some more people to town, among them a few Catholics, and for the following two years, Fr. Enares visited there several times through the year and said Mass wherever he could find a suitable place. In 1919 the number of Catholics increased, and in the end of that year work was begun on a substantial brick building toward the erection of which Extension Society donated the sum of \$1000.00 and was granted the privilege of naming the church "St. Joseph's Church." The building of the church was begun during the time that Fr. Enares had charge of Lovell, in fact up till the end of the year 1919 Fr. Enares had charge of all the territory lying within the Big Horn Basin. In the beginning of 1920, however, this vast territory was divided and a new parish was formed at Powell to which Lovell was added as a mission, Basin and Greybull still remaining under Fr. Enares' administration. Fr. Bernard Schneiders was the new pastor appointed to Powell, and he had the church at Lovell completed. The Lovell congregation had Mass once a month from the time the church was finished till early in 1922 when Fr. Schneiders was transferred from Powell and Fr. Spillane took charge continuing the same schedule of services at Lovell. There still remained some debt on the church when Fr. Spillane came but within a couple of years this debt was paid off.

Thus things went on with Fr. Spillane attending Lovell once a month and Fr. Soares coming to Greybull and Basin once a month until Oct. 1, 1926, when another parish was formed in the Big Horn basin with headquarters at Greybull, and Fr. John Marley who is at present in charge was appointed pastor thereof. The new parish consists of all of Big Horn county with the pastor residing in Greybull and having Lovell and Basin as missions. Since Oct. 1, 1926 services have been held at Basin and Greybull on three Sundays of the month and at Lovell on the fourth Sunday as previously. On the establishment of this new parish there was not, of course, any rectory for the pastor to live in, so he rented a small three room apartment where he lived for about a year and a half. In March, 1928, arrangements were completed for the purchase of a pastor's residence in Greybull at the cost of \$3750.00, and since all furniture for the new residence had to be purchased at the same time as the house, the approximate cost of the residence as it now stands is around \$5000.00. Towards the purchase of this house the Home Mission Society donated the sum of \$1000.00 and a loan of \$2500.00 was obtained from the Diocese of Cheyenne, which covers the total amount of debt on the parish at this time, and which it is hoped will be reduced to about half this sum at least within the next year's time. Since the establishment of this parish in 1926, the Extension Society has very generously given a subsidy of \$30.00 a month up to the present date (Oct. 1928).

The prospects of growth for the parish at the present time are not very glowing indeed. There has been little or no increase in the number of parishioners for the past two years, in fact there has been little change in the Catholic population of Big Horn county for the past ten years with the exception of the

2.

two or three years when Greybull had the oil boom. There are at most about 100 practical catholics within the limits of the parish now, with about half of these located at Greybull, and the other half about equally divided between Basin and Lovell.