

**HISTORY OF ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, PINE BLUFFS
AND MISSIONS, 1907 - 1928.**

HISTORY OF ST. PAUL'S CHURCH.

PINE BLUFFS, WYO.

1907 - 1928

The Rev. James Duffy, who was Rector of the Cathedral, Cheyenne, was, in all probability, the first priest to celebrate Mass in Pine Bluffs in the year 1907. Services were held in Blair Hall, North Main Street.

The Rev. Gerard Schellinger was the first resident pastor, and took up duty in the Fall of 1912. Soon after his appointment he began preparations for the new St. Paul's Church. Two Lots were donated for that purpose by Mr J.B.Gillion, a non-catholic. The building was completed and dedicated in the year, 1913, having cost about \$4000.00. At the time of the dedication another Lot was added to the church property, being the gratuitous gift of Mr C.L.Beatty, a non-catholic.

The sum of \$4000.00, for the new church seemed too strenuous a task for the small number of families to meet the entire demand the first year, and consequently there was a debt of about \$1000.00 contracted. This amount was paid off during the succeeding years, and St. Paul's Church, with a seating capacity of about one hundred people, is now free of debt.

During the year 1914, which was the first year when parish records were kept, catholic families numbered eighteen. Baptisms eighteen, marriages three and one convert. There were ten pioneer laymen. On August, 8, 1915, the Rt. Rev. Patrick A. McGovern, D.D., Bishop of Cheyenne, conferred the sacrament of confirmation on thirty-seven candidates. The Altar and Rosary Society, which is the only society in the parish, consists of twenty-three members.

ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH, ALBIN.

St. Joseph's Church, Albin, was built in the year, 1915. It has a seating capacity of about forty. The cost of the church was approximately \$1000.00. The church Lot was donated by Mr John Nelson, a non-catholic, with the condition that it be used for church purposes only. In 1919, a long standing Note for \$170.00, against the building was paid off. Father James Duffy, Cheyenne, was the first priest to attend Albin Mission in 1908.

ST. MARY'S CHURCH, BURNS.

The Rev. James Duffy, Cheyenne, was the first priest to celebrate Mass at Burns, in all probability, in the year 1908.

The Rev. Gerard Schellinger built St. Mary's Church, in 1914, and it was dedicated by the Rt. Rev. Patrick A. McGovern, D.D., in August, 1915. The building cost in the neighbourhood of \$1000.00, and at the time of dedication was free of debt. It has a seating capacity of about forty.

ST. RAPHAEL'S CHURCH, CARPENTER.

St. Raphael's Church, Carpenter, was built in 1917. It has a seating capacity of from sixty to seventy. The building cost \$1500.00 unfurnished. The Church Extension Society gave a donation of \$500.00. It was dedicated in August of the same year. At the time of dedication there was a debt of \$250.00, but this was cleared off in 1919. Father James Duffy, Cheyenne, was the first priest to attend the Carpenter Mission, in 1907. A hall and Lot were purchased for church purposes, and were in use until the new church was about to be built, when the hall which was known as St. Peter's Church, was sold, and the Lot was traded for two other Lots owned by the Federal Land Company.

During Father Schellinger's pastorate, the parish church at Pine Bluffs was built and three mission churches.

In October, 1917, the Rev. Gerard Schellinger, was appointed an Army Chaplain, and he was succeeded in the pastorate of Pine Bluffs by the Rev. Michael Healy, who was appointed temporary pastor, and continued in this office until compelled by illness in June, 1925, to enter St. Joseph's Hospital, Denver, where he died in May, 1926. During the temporary pastorate of Father Healy he built substantial parochial residence at a cost of \$10,000.00, of this amount he collected \$4600.00 among the people of the parish, leaving a debt of \$5400.00 against the building. During the years 1926, 1927, and 1928, this debt was reduced to \$2400.00.

On the departure of Father Healy for St. Joseph's Hospital, Denver, in June, 1925, the Rev. James McBride, was appointed temporary pastor. On the death of Father Healy in May, 1926, Father McBride was appointed pastor of Pine Bluffs and Missions.

ST. PAUL'S PARISH, PINE BLUFFS, WYO.

Resume' of the history of this parish and its out-missions from the year 1925 to 1938.

In June 1925 the Rev. Michael Healy, who had been pastor of the parish over a period of eight years, was forced by a lingering illness to retire from the active ministry. From this date until Father Healy's death on May 23, 1926, the affairs of the parish were administered by the Rev. James McBride, who now assumed the office of pastor until July 1933.

In the minutes of the corporation of St. Paul's church under the date of June 26, 1925, Father McBride is referred ^{to} as temporary pastor, and there is a casual reference to a fire, which apparently originated in the sacristy of the church but did little damage. Father McBride worked earnestly and zealously to reduce the indebtedness of the parish and incidentally endeared himself to all whom he contacted by the attractiveness of his personality. In 1926 the parish borrowed the sum of \$2,000.00 from diocesan funds to pay off loans of \$1,500.00 and \$500.00 contracted respectively from the church of Sts Cyril and Methodius and Matt Ferlic, both of Rock Springs, Wyoming. As part of the reduction of indebtedness program in January of 1926 \$300.00 was paid to a Mrs. Carolina Egg. ^{All the debt} ~~There is no~~ *was contracted when the parochial residence was built.* ~~record available to show when or how this loan was contracted.~~ In April, 1926, on the advice of His Excellency, the bishop, the parish rectory was insured for \$5000.00 with the Catholic Mutual Fire Insurance Company of Omaha, Nebraska. In the following June a further \$300.00 was paid to Carolina Egg.

In 1926 part of the rectory was rented to Dr. M.L. Morris, Pine Bluffs physician, and he and his family lived in complete harmony with the pastor for several years, while the additional revenue so obtained was of considerable help toward swelling the funds of a poor parish. In December, 1926, the debt to Mrs. C. Egg was liquidated by the payment of \$1,200.00 and the parish indebtedness at that time, exclusive of that amount, is revealed as \$3,200.00. Most of this amount was owing directly to the diocese and between June 1927 and May 1928 \$1,200.00 was raised towards the reduction of this debt, and there is also mentioned the payment of \$200.00 "which will pay off the obligation to Olivet Cemetery" (quotation from corporation minutes of May 9, 1938). ~~As to the nature of this obligation there is no indication.~~

* Cheyenne Catholic cemetery.

In November, 1930, \$500.00 was paid off the debt. For the raising of this money it seems the Altar and Rosary Society was largely responsible. In 1931 an attempt was made to procure money to secure a new roof for the church, some repairs to the furnace and to the basement of the rectory. However owing to lack of funds it was found that only the basement of the rectory could be repaired. In December, 1931, it was decided to introduce the envelope system of offerings in an effort to increase the amounts donated towards church support. Some little time later, the lay directors of the corporation, shocked by the records made available by this system, strongly recommended that parishioners be sharply reminded of their obligation to pay dues. In 1932 the effects of the economic depression began to be felt more keenly and the straitened circumstances of this farming community were reflected in a marked decrease in parish revenues.

When in June, 1933, Father McBride announced his impending departure from the parish, upon motion the following tribute was inserted in the minutes of the corporation: "A vote of thanks was extended to Father McBride for his excellent service while (pastor) of St. Paul's church not only for his efforts in reducing the debts and keeping expenses at a minimum but also in his friendly relationships with the townspeople and the public of other faiths."

Between the years 1926 and 1933 yearly revenues fluctuate considerably but drop consistently from a high of \$3,700.00 in 1927 to in and around the \$1,500.00 for the remaining years with the exception of receipts amounting to \$2,700.00 in 1929.

During the period between 1925 and 1932 the census records available provide the following averages, in which the figures given represent (a) the number of Catholic families in the place named; (b) the number of practical Catholics in that place: Pine Bluffs, St. Paul's: 20, 36; Carpenter, St. Peter's: 7, 12; Burns, St. Mary's: 3, 5 Albin, St. Joseph's; 7, 10; Hillsdale, station: 4, 6; Little Horse Creek, stat.: 3, 3. The number of conversions registered during the same period is six. On October 20, 1929, the Most Rev. P.A. McGovern administered the sacrament of Confirmation to 24 candidates.

Father McBride was succeeded by the Rev. Walter Nicholson, who remained as pastor until July, 1935. During his administration church receipts fell away considerably mainly because of the increasingly felt effects of the economic depression, poor markets and consistent crop failures due to drought and the destructive activities of unprecedented numbers of insect pests. In these two years there was little

or no fluctuation of Catholic population and the number of converts is listed as three.

In 1935 the parish passed into the hands of the Rev. Jerome K. Denk who at once went to work energetically to strengthen the parish both in the number of faithful members and in its drained treasury department. He succeeded in having curbing laid in front of the church at low cost and with the assistance of W.P.A. labor. Mostly by his own labor he effected various necessary repairs and redecoration in both the church and the rectory. Interested in horticulture, he did much to improve the appearance of the lawn and garden surrounding the house. In 1936 the possibility of providing the stoker type of furnace for the church was discussed and a bazaar was held to raise funds but owing to the poor response the discussed project was dropped. Although what precisely transpired is not clear from the sources of information available, in 1937 it would appear that an extension of credit on the expired period of the diocesan loan was graciously granted by the Most Rev. Patrick A. McGovern, bishop of Cheyenne. In June 1938 a second-hand car for parish purposes was secured at a cost of \$350.00. \$150.00 of this amount was paid from the pastor's personal account.

In 1935 Burns, formerly a mission complete with a substantial mission church, but now having but two practical Catholics, was reduced to the status of a station, while the stations of Hillsdale and Little Horse Creek are disregarded in parochial census returns as from 1934. During Father Denk's regime and through his efforts the score of families attending St. Paul's church in 1934 increased to thirty-two by 1938. Four or five of these families come from the neighboring states of Nebraska and Colorado. In the meantime the congregations at the missions of Carpenter remained more or less stable. In 1938 the indebtedness of the parish to the diocese was reduced to \$1,100.00 while there still remained an additional \$150.00 to be paid on the automobile. From 1935 to 1938 church receipts continued to hover between the \$1,500.00 and \$2,000.00 marks.

In May, 1937, the Most Rev. P.A. McGovern administered the sacrament of Confirmation to forty seven candidates.

In December, 1938, Father Denk was chosen to become the first pastor of the newly established parish situated on the south side of the city of Cheyenne. He was succeeded by the Rev. Charles J. Gormly, lately assistant in the parish of Our Lady of Sorrows at Rock Springs, Wyoming.

At the present time, March 1939, while the parish is still limping financially owing to the impoverished condition of the community, there is a steady attendance of from seventy to eighty persons each Sunday at Pine Bluffs; Carpenter has a congregation varying in numbers from twenty to twenty-five, while Albin has a fairly steady attendance of some four adults and eight children. As has been already stated the mission church at Burns has been abandoned, but the other church buildings are in a state of good repair with the exception of the mission church at Carpenter, the roof of which needs shingling. The necessary repairs will shortly be under way and will be executed almost entirely by voluntary labor.

Branches of the Altar and Rosary Society function faithfully in Carpenter and Albin as well as in Pine Bluffs and all branches are to be recommended for the much-needed financial assistance, which their self-sacrificing efforts provide in these difficult times. Nevertheless, even the heroic efforts of the Albin Altar and Rosary Society have failed to save that mission from being a constant expense to the parish as a whole.

During the last calendar year, 1938, the number of marriages was one and that at Pine Bluffs. Baptisms number sixteen and are distributed as follows:- At Pine Bluffs, ten; at Carpenter, five; from Burns, one.

In 1937 from January 25th to 31st a mission was conducted by the Rev. Raymond Hillinger of the Diocesan Missioners of the Holy Name Cathedral, Chicago, Illinois. Despite the inclemency of the weather this mission was faithfully attended not alone by the residents of Pine Bluffs and the immediate vicinity, but also by people from the outmissions and with obviously good results.