

**CASPER 1887-1987 An Irish Legacy, Casper' Catholic Community, 100
Years of Faith, Linda L. Doherty**

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AN IRISH LEGACY
Casper's Catholic Community
100 Years of Faith

Linda L. Doherty

Cover Design: "Jesus as Shepherd" by Sister Janice Hasselo, O. P., Pastoral Associate
The Church of St. Anthony, Casper, Wyoming.

This book was written, published, printed and bound in the State of Wyoming. Printer:
Mountain States Lithographing Co. Layout by Linda L. Doherty

This book is a Diocesan Centennial Project sponsored and published by St. Anthony's
Parish Council Casper, Wyoming August, 1987.

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For my husband, Tom, whose love and understanding make all things possible.

Letter of Monsignor James O'Neill

Dear Friends:

Four years ago I came among you. I was somewhat a stranger to you, and you were
"the people of St. Anthony's" to me.

Today I feel that I can call you friends. I have grown in my love and affection for you. I
have been inspired and touched by your faith and goodness.

These have been difficult years, a difficult time in Casper. I have shared with you the
disappointment of joblessness. I have been saddened when so many families I was
privileged to call friends had to move away. I prayed with you. I tried to inspire you

with hope and confidence. I asked that we, as a people, never give up hope, never give up trying

As we make plans for the celebration of our Centennial as a Diocese, as "CHURCH" in Wyoming, I reflected on how important it is to strive to preserve the faith-stories of the people who have gone before us. They were people who came to Wyoming, who came to Casper as a pilgrim people, bringing the faith with them. It was the faith that sustained them during the loneliness and hardships of the earliest years here. It was the faith that sustained them during the cycles of prosperity and depression that had been so much a part of Casper's history.

This is a legacy we should not forget. We will not forget. This beautiful parish history, the history of a people, AN IRISH LEGACY, hopefully will preserve our heritage for posterity.

It's author, Linda Doherty, has, I believe, captured the soul of a people, the soul of a faith community. We are all indebted to her for her labor of love.

Just one regret. Would that it could include a little vignette of the life story of each person that has made St. Anthony's and Casper great. May we all meet in heaven for a grand and glorious reunion where we will never tire of telling and retelling our stories! !

Lovingly and gratefully yours,
Monsignor James O'Neill
Pastor
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Preface

[Casper 1987, 1] There's a little spot of Ireland that is locked in by mountains and the sea. For centuries the people there were isolated. Few surnames come out of this place as the people there were all related one way or another. They made their living out of the land, and when the great Potato Famine came, full half of them died. Those who stayed faced death. Those who could, came up with a few pounds, went down to the bay, handed them to the captain of a boat and, with just the clothes on their backs, sailed away.

The place is County Cork, Ireland. The Irish also came from other parts, most notably County Kerry and County Cavan. The boats generally landed in New York or Boston, and many immigrants stayed there. Others stayed just long enough to make the money to go west.

At first, one might think it odd that they would come to a barren place like Casper, but she offered open skies, acres and acres of free and open land, a bit of money in their pockets-enough to buy food to eat. "This was heaven to them," a descendant explained. So, they stayed and they built a life here.

Being a religious people and depending heavily on their faith, they also built the Church, the Catholic Church, and it grew.

Today, Casper's Catholic Community still boasts some of the "Old Irish" and is guided by at least two native Irish priests. But this community also boasts the descendants of Italians, Scots, English, a very active Hispanic contingent, and nearly every other group you can think of.

And all of us together, as God would have it, share the legacy left by a few hungry Irish shepherders who came to Casper nearly a century ago.

This is a people history. By that I mean it is a history seen through the eyes of people. Parts of it are downright personal: the facts as seen by those presenting them, or by me. And should you talk to other people, you might get a completely different view.

I talked to people who were accessible to me, and might have gone on forever but for the time constraints. I found the work fascinating and fun, and a top-notch experience.

At times, it may seem that this is not a church history because it deals with the lives of the people around the church. To me, the two are inseparable. To understand them, and the doings within the church, you must find out what they did after Mass on Sunday.

I do not pretend to have here evolved the complete objective history of the Catholic Community of Casper. Rather, this is a subjective piece, spotlighting certain people here and there, and the times and events which affected their lives. I chose this approach with the hope of capturing the character of the church and the flavor of the times through which it has grown. I know I have overlooked a lot, and that uncharted territory I leave for others who follow.

In writing this book, I have learned so much about Casper, about people, about my faith and about myself.

First, I would like to thank Monsignor O'Neill for his grand idea, and for his absolute faith in my abilities. "Yes, you can," is a favorite phrase of his, and, as he is a priest-an Irish one at that-I didn't dare not believe him.

Next came all the wonderful people who invited me into their homes, treated me like one of the family and shared their lives and memories so freely. If you ever think there's no hope for mankind, write a book like this one (and, trust me, there are many more wonderful people out there). You will find that people are charming and loving and so willing to help if only you ask. Thank you all.

And, perhaps most importantly, I would thank the people who came before us. Not being a particularly strong person myself, I so greatly admire them. They came to a barren, empty land. They called it "God's Country"-I think because He was the only one here! Nonetheless, they built a city out of it. They came with nothing, most of them, no money, no material wealth, and only their faith to guide them. They beat the odds, these hard-working folks, and they remembered to say thank you to God.

They built a church and increased their numbers. They have served Casper in almost every way possible as good citizens and good Catholics. Though some among them have tripped or fallen along the way, they've always been willing to lend the humblest of hands to help each other.

Casper's Catholics are an industrious lot, even today. If something needs doing, they roll up their sleeves and do it. If money is scarce, they do the work themselves. If times are hard, they band together and pull each other through.

All I can say, after a prayer of thanks to God for His part in all of this, is a joyful thanks to you, for reading this book, for learning what it has to teach, and for living the great faith in which we Catholics believe.

Before There Was A Casper

[Casper 1987, 3] In the year 1887, where Casper stands today, there was nothing, save sagebrush scraping the dusty plains and the howl of prairie wolves to pierce the cold Wyoming wind. Then, the land lay quiet, as if in wait for the effects of the past and present in other parts of the world.

Years before, central Wyoming had hosted various tribes of Plains Indians as they passed through this land in Massive bison hunts. Later came the white men, fur trappers who followed the North Platte River in search of beaver pelts. The river was once again a source of activity as the Mormons followed its course, attempting to escape religious persecution. In fact, a ferry was built right near Casper in 1847. It was to lead them to their "promised land" in Utah.

In the 1840s, Fr. Jean Pierre DeSmet brought Catholicism to the Indians of Central Wyoming. He won them over with gentle missionary manners and sincerity. In Alfred J. Mokler's History of Natrona County, Mokler cites DeSmet's true affection for the Indians and his respect for their way of life. Apparently, when the Indians brought him gold, he explained to them the White man's obsession with it. He told them their

precious land would be desecrated should the Whites learn of this gold. He promised, too, never to reveal the secret of its location. He never did. Unfortunately for the Indians, White men found the gold themselves and DeSmet's predictions became a harsh reality.

The first recorded Catholic service in Wyoming was celebrated by this same tender missionary. Fr. DeSmet wrote thus of the service, which took place on Horse Creek near the site of Old Fort Bonneville in 1840:

"On Sunday, the 5th of July, I had the consolation of celebrating the holy sacrifice of Mass. The altar was placed on an elevation, and surrounded with boughs and garlands of flowers; I addressed the congregation in French and English, and spoke also by an interpreter to the Flatheads and Snake Indians. It was a spectacle truly moving for the heart of a missionary, to behold an assembly composed of so many different nations, who all assisted at our holy mysteries with great satisfaction. This place has been called since that time, by the French Canadians, La Prairie de la Messe (Prairie of the Mass)."

By 1850, the Oregon Trail was at its peak and they say that the tracks of wagon wheels can still be seen along the Platte River banks near Casper.

1859 saw the first permanent structures being built near here, a trading post and bridge. The little area also served as a Pony Express stop and telegraph office for those going west.

The bridge across the Platte became important as a military outpost when the Indians finally decided that these White men were coming too far, too fast and in too great numbers. It was just as DeSmet had warned.

The Platte Bridge Station opened in 1862. A man named Caspar Collins was assigned there a year later. When he and his troops took off to escort a wagon train into the station, they came under Indian attack. Collins was killed as he attempted to help a wounded comrade, and the station came to be named Fort Caspar in his honor.

Not surprisingly, none of these people coming through this barren land ever considered actually living here. No, that eventuality was the result of other factors, some seeming so unrelated as to be of no consequence.

The potato famine in Ireland, for example. This famine had a devastating effect on the Irish economy, and for many, the only choice was to leave the homeland to start fresh

somewhere else. Oftentimes, the “somewhere else” was America, a land of promises and dreams. Unfortunately, once these optimistic Irish arrived, they found slums, discrimination and help wanted signs declaring, “No Irish need apply.” So much for dreams.

But the West was different. It was exciting, it was open, and it was free. Truly, a man could make his own way there. So, that’s the direction they took. Some joined the Army and fought in the Indian Wars. Others joined the railroad to follow the tracks as far as they would go.

One man, John Mahoney, is credited with populating much of Wyoming, not with progeny, but with his Irish kin.

John was an Irish Catholic who had first come to Wyoming in 1877 with the military. He had been involved in what was called the Meeker Massacre in Colorado. In that skirmish, 13 men including Federal Agent Nathan Meeker, had been killed in a brutal ambush staged by Ute Indians. Mahoney was one of the survivors. Deciding at that point that he had seen enough of war, particularly Indian war, John returned to Rawlins to begin a modest sheep business. And he wrote some letters home.

The late 1880s brought several difficult winters to Wyoming. Losses in the cattle business have been estimated at anywhere from 30 to 90 percent of the total. This, they say, brought the “Irish Revolution.” Irishmen started infiltrating the area, coming straight from the Old Country. They spoke in brogues so thick, many native Americans could barely understand them. But, they knew the sheep business and this put them in great demand. With cattle down, sheep and Irishmen to run them became a valuable resource.

John Mahoney was becoming a busy man-popular, too. His flock was steadily increasing. He needed help and his letters had piqued the curiosity of more than one relative at home.

John sent for a man named Pat Sullivan, a hard worker with a good business sense. Pat was a native of County Cork and, on arrival, found America to his liking. He started herding sheep near Casper.

Richard Tobin was a cousin of Pat’s. (Their mothers were sisters.) He came, too. Richard went by the nickname of “Red” because of his bright red hair.

Starving in Ireland was not much to Red's liking [Casper 1987, 4] either, so he hopped a boat one day and came to America. He landed in Boston, worked his way down to Rhode Island and took a job milking cows to earn his way west.

By 1886, he was checking out a homestead near Midwest and working with his cousin, Pat Sullivan and Tobin were just two of many Irish who would come to Wyoming and decide to stay.

In fact, at that time nearly one-third of Wyoming's foreign-born population was Irish. Thus, it is small wonder that Catholics began to play an active part in the development of the Territory.

From 1857 to 1887, Roman Catholic activity in Wyoming was guided from a diocese in Omaha, Nebraska. But, on August 9 of that year, the diocese of Cheyenne was formed to oversee the Territory. An Irishman by the name of the Most Reverend Maurice Burke was brought to Cheyenne to serve as first Bishop of the diocese.

Bishop Burke was not completely taken with his new assignment. According to *A History of the Diocese*, by Bishop Patrick McGovern, published in 1941, the Most Reverend Burke inherited six priests, eight churches, one hospital, one academy, two parochial schools, one Indian Mission and 7500 Catholics. Among his earliest requests was to have the See suppressed as, he noted, this was no fit place for a diocese. In fact, he made a trip all the way to Rome to state his case, but they sent him back anyway.

Someone must have listened, however, as Bishop Burke finally was granted a transfer just six years later and was not replaced for four years after that.

In the meantime, Casper began to take shape. The year that Bishop Burke arrived in Wyoming was the same year that the Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad Company announced that it would extend its line to a point near the old Fort Caspar, and that plans were being made to build a town somewhere near there.

This announcement, combined with the influx of Irish interested in sheepherding, and the Homestead Act passed by Congress, set the stage for Casper.

The Homestead Act offered 160 acres of land to any man who could prove he had never fought against the United States, was the head of a family, or was 21 and a citizen or had tiled papers to become a citizen.

Meanwhile, in the Missouri Valley of Iowa, a young woman by the name of Mary Ann Coyle had fallen in love with a dashing Irishman by the name of Dunn, William F. Dunn. On April 24, 1888, they were married, and soon they, too, departed for Wyoming. Dunn worked as an agent for the railroad and, on June 15, 1888, when the Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad made good on its promise to push on from Glenrock to Casper, Dunn was on it.

As he stepped off the train, Dunn probably was not terribly impressed. What were his thoughts? Could he envision the city that would be? He must have seen such towns rising out of the wilderness at the end of the railroad line. But predicting Casper's rise would have taken some imagination.

The town had not yet been surveyed and most of those who came ahead did so with the intent of moving on as soon as the railroad did.

Such temporary towns were not uncommon as the Wyoming frontier moved to the west. These little communities were anything but genteel. One wonders how the priests and preachers of various faiths ever got the nerve to approach. But they did.

In Lusk, for example, the first recorded sermon came from a Reverend Bross of Nebraska. He stood in a wagon, its seat turned round to serve as a pulpit. As word passed that a man was preaching in town, stores and saloons closed down. Cowboys, gamblers and saloon keepers, 120 in all, gathered to hear the Reverend speak.

In Big Horn, a curtain was drawn across the bar of the saloon to create a more reverent atmosphere for the first sermon there. Later, the saloon was closed for business once again to convince its clients to help build a Sunday School. The first church in this colorful little town was built with money acquired in a Poker jackpot. Not much of one, but it was indeed a start.

Big Horn is where many of the Irish sheepmen who wintered near Casper would spend their summers. Trailing sheep to the lush summer range, they nicknamed the area "Little Ireland" and called the route there "the Irish highway."

The Big Horn became a summer rendezvous spot for the Irish and remained so for many, many years. Here they celebrated many festivals and feasts, often with a priest in tow. Names common around the campfires were Sullivan, Daly, Mahoney, Burke, Tobin, McCarty, Swanton and Murphy. Many we'll meet again in Casper, Wyoming, the town they built out of the prairie's edge

Believing In The Wilderness (1888-1890)

[Casper 1987, 5] Back in Casper, William F. Dunn and his young wife enjoyed the grandest home in town. It was in the train depot! But, hey, this was the first home in Casper to have plaster on its walls!

Other folks lived in tents, slept in sleeping bags and ate by campfires. It must have made an interesting sight: a railroad track going nowhere surrounded by a few wandering souls huddled around campfires in the black of a prairie night. with only the stars and the fires to light their private thoughts. How surprised the wolves must have been to suddenly have such strange company!

As time went on, a few buildings were “roughed in.” They were built of green lumber from the mountain, topped with corrugated iron. Surely these people prayed at night that God would guide and protect them as is His way. Or maybe they were just so exhausted that He took care of them anyway.

It soon became apparent that the economic slump in the cattle industry was affecting plans for railroad expansion too. And, for awhile at least, Casper would be the end of the line.

A few who were there, many of them Catholic, rolled up their sleeves, accepted their fate and the fact that they would not be moving from this barren wasteland for some time to come. They began to build a town.

Some sent for families, some came by covered wagon and always, they helped each other. Strangers weren't strange, as everyone was new here, and everyone pitched in to help build homes and to give the town a name. Merchandise and supplies arrived not only by train, but also by bull teams called “freighters,” and later by “string teams” of up to twenty horses at a time.

Imagine the excitement as one of these freighters clomped into town with fresh supplies and goods everyone had waited weeks to get - not exactly Eastridge Mall style!

Travel in those days was generally facilitated by covered wagon, horseback, stagecoach or, for the highest in fashion, horse and buggy. Of course, there were no streets or sidewalks in Casper in the early days.

In fact, an article in the Denver Post in 1951 noted, "Cowpunchers, soldiers, sheep, cattle and gunplay characterized the early ramshackle siding on the route west. And it was allowed by them who knowed that Casper was no fittin' place for those what liked things genteel."

In the Fall of 1888, the railroad finally surveyed a permanent townsite, just west of where the people were living - oops! That area became known then as "old town."

The railroad and J. M. Carey and Brother offered lots for sale at low, low prices. But purchasers were scarce as many still had their doubts about Casper and its prospects for the future. Oscar Hiestand, who had ridden with the Carey outfit in 1885 appeared on the scene to lend a hand. One wonders if sales would have gone better had the small populace known the railroad would not move another inch for yet some 17 years!

1889 bade well for the area. In January an editorial in the newly-founded Casper Weekly Mail proclaimed, "There are springs in various localities that flow all the way from one gallon to ten gallons per day. It is by these springs that the oil belt of Wyoming is traced for more than 200 miles."

At about this time, a man named Phillip Shannon filed claims north of Salt Creek. He drilled a 1,000 foot well in what soon was named Shannon Field. He found himself with five to ten barrels of oil a day. Eureka! Shannon and his associates formed a corporation and called it the Pennsylvania Oil Company.

Back in Casper more good fortune was soon apparent. A little girl was born to the Dunns. Her name was Theresa - nickname of Tessa - and she was the first white woman born in what would soon be Natrona County.

The Dunns in this instance, quickly realized the problems of isolation. In a place like this, life brought no guarantees. Thus, Theresa's baptism took on great importance to them. To do right by the little girl, her parents bundled her up and traveled 175 miles from Casper to Chadron, Nebraska, where Tessa was properly baptized. Dunn was suddenly keenly aware of the need to introduce a bit more religion into the ramshackle town of Casper.

In Chadron, he must have talked it up a bit as, on March 3rd, Reverend Bross made the trek to Casper. Though not a Catholic, he did deliver the first religious service in the town, this in a private home.

The Casper Weekly Mail noted on this occasion that, "while there are but a few of our male adult population that are ordinarily supposed to have souls (worth speaking of) to save, there are women and children." At this, Mr. Dunn must have nodded knowingly, thinking some such as, "Point made."

On March 22, President Benjamin Harrison appointed Francis E. Warren official Governor of the Territory, and on May 6, Casper was incorporated as a town.

Somehow, the name "Caspar" was misspelled and thus, the name became "Casper," leading one astute reporter some years hence to note that "Casper was, in a sense, founded by fur traders and a typographical error."

Another noted that "Casper has been spelled wrong ever since with nobody but the historians objecting." They do object vociferously, however, and even today, there are occasional uprisings of petitioners to get the darn thing spelled right! No matter, Casper overcame such fantastic odds in ever coming into being, a mere misspelling couldn't stop her now.

In 1889 there were about 100 buildings in the town, flocks of sheep were streaming into the county, immigrants, regardless of origin, were welcomed and readily accepted. [Casper 1987, 6] Bodies were the scarcest resource. And thus, the 1890 Census reported Casper's population at 544, up from 0 a mere three years before.

As people began to settle, religion became again an important consideration especially for the immigrant Catholics. Their religion provided them with stability, guidance and support in a disorganized, wild and often uncontrollable environment. While there were, as yet, no assigned priests, there certainly was a great deal of faith, Christianity and good Catholic teaching, at least within the family.

William Dunn, for example, brought his religion with him, reading to his children by the light of the fire from *The Manual of the Holy Catholic Church - The Beautiful Teachings - Light from the Altar*.

However adventurous, Dunn was still a quiet, reserved man who would teach his children well. The manual is today a family heirloom, handed from one generation to the next, a symbol and a sign that even the "Wild West" had, beneath its rough exterior, a respect for the grace of God.

1890 brought more organization to the town of Casper and its environs. A petition was circulated to split the northern part of then Carbon County to form Natrona County.

On March 3, the County was formed with Casper as its seat. The following month, the Town Hall was built. It was a single story structure which would serve as a general meeting place for all. In fact, it would soon serve as the setting for the first Catholic Mass ever celebrated in Casper, Wyoming.

Oddly enough, this great event came about as an indirect result of Wyoming's receiving the honor of statehood on July 10, 1890. One William F. Dunn was elected as representative to the first State Legislature. The job required a trip to Cheyenne, whereupon our Mr. Dunn met and became friends with Father Francis Nugent.

Thus, when Mrs. Dunn gave birth to a tiny son, Eugene, it was Father Nugent who came to Casper to perform the baptism. While here, he also agreed to sing the first Catholic Mass.

Excitement ran high on this occasion, as the ladies hurried about the Town Hall preparing for themselves and their families a makeshift church with an improvised altar and all manner of imaginative furnishings. But to those in attendance, this Mass was one they would always remember. After that, Fr. Nugent came to Casper on occasion for the purpose of baptizing the children of the town.

[Casper 1987, 7] Still, Casper had no Catholic church. Even by 1895, the town was but a dot on a missionary priest's map. But the interest and faith of the community had been shown. Casper became a stop, albeit an irregular one, on the route of Reverend P. Brophy (as spelled in church records, Mokler spells it Brofie) of Chadron.

When Mass was offered, it was in the Town Hall in the Episcopal Church (as there was no room for inter-religious rivalries in this tiny community) and in private homes. One of the most popular of these was the home of the Trevett family. The Trevetts had one long room and a sideboard which, overturned, made an acceptable altar. The Dunns also offered their home for services on occasion. Attending Mass thus became a social event and a wondrous treat. No one in this isolated community considered it anything but a celebration.

The town, meanwhile, was not as saintly as it might have been. In 1890, Casper recorded its first murder—that of a drunken cowpuncher. According to one report, he was shot off of his horse by a man who, simply “didn't like cowpunchers.”

Then came the prospectors, the oil speculators, the railroad men. Those who came to Casper were mostly men, thereby creating a market for a certain kind of woman. These began to arrive, and soon parts of the town were barred to respectable women and children, "for their own protection," of course.

Thus, religion was a fact of life only to those who truly sought to find it and, but for those few, the town of Casper might never have become anything more than a stop at the end of the line.

And So They Built A Church (1891-1899)

[Casper 1987, 8] In 1891, a branch of the American Protective Association became active in Cheyenne. Members attempted to use the Republican Party to promote anti-Catholic goals. It has been speculated that the rise of this sentiment may have resulted from the influx of Catholic workers holding jobs with the railroad during the economic depression of the time. This group was most secretive, but as nearly as can be told, its aims included ousting Catholics from public office, maintaining the nonsectarian public school and ending the use of public funds to support religious education.

Perhaps the person in Casper most affected by this group was Pat Sullivan himself. Sullivan had become one of the most successful sheepmen in the Natrona County area and had gone into partnership with John Mahoney of Rawlins. He was a Republican and had political aspirations.

Consequently, he kept a low profile of his Catholicism, and when one does research, one finds at first that he was not particularly active in the church. But a little digging reveals his contributions were, in fact, exceedingly generous. In his own way, Pat Sullivan did more for the Catholics and his countrymen in Casper than anyone ever realized.

In Father John Mullin's history of the parish, he explains Sullivan's contributions to Casper thus: In order to protect his flocks and provide shepherds, and at the same time, alleviate the conditions of his relatives and his fellow countrymen in Ireland, Mr. Sullivan began the importation of his kin.

"Steadily, therefore, the number of Irish and, accordingly, Catholics, increased in Casper and its vicinity, and thereby a new era in Catholic welfare dawned. The generosity, liberality and loyalty of the Irish race so inherent in her people were brought to Casper, and from their influx, the comfort of the clergy and the prosperity of the church have been marked."

In 1894, Sullivan became a naturalized citizen. He ran for public office and served two terms in the State House, followed by four more in the State Senate.

Also in 1894, there was a marriage by one Margaret McDonald to Oscar Hiestand. Though he was not a Catholic, she was, and the two had an influence on the church in Casper throughout their lives.

Mrs. Hiestand remembered the first years of her marriage and the isolation that was characteristic of Casper at the time. She had no neighbors for some years and remembered only the Indians stopping by for water. The ways of the Whites were quite strange to them and they found White women, in particular, most fascinating.

Mrs. Hiestand once said she would turn to see the Indians peering through the windows at her as they headed to town to receive their government allotment of supplies. A commissary for this purpose was set up at the C. H. Mercantile Company near the railroad depot.

Tessa Dunn remembered the Indians, also, as shy but curious. As a child, she would run to their campsite when they came to town. The children would talk to the men, but the squaws would pay them little mind.

Just about this time, too, the Pennsylvania Oil and Gas Company built a refinery in Casper. The refinery was capable of producing 100 barrels of oil per day. This brought people and, with them, great hope for the future prosperity of the town. It also brought Casper's first severe housing shortage.

With the people came a greater demand for religious growth. Soon, a Father Ahern took over for Father Brophy, and by 1897, Casper was receiving regular visits and people were offering Masses with some regularity.

In Cheyenne that same year, Wyoming finally received its second Bishop, the Most Reverend Thomas M. Lenihan, another Irishman. The way was open for greater development of Catholicism within the state.

After this, in Casper, a group of determined Irish women gathered with the specific intent of starting the long-awaited Catholic church. They included Mrs. John Trevett, Mrs. J. P. Smith, Mrs. Wm. F. Dunn, Miss Juli Mahoney and Mrs. Oscar Hiestand. Only one report, it is interesting to note, included the name of Mrs. Pat Sullivan.

The women formed a Society to raise money for the Catholic church. They went house to house seeking subscriptions. Non-Catholics, as well as Catholic contributed. When met with some success, the ladies were joined in their efforts by the new Bishop who then formed Building Committee.

A few years ago, a Father Hoodack likened this history to a cartoon he pictured in his mind. These six women having waited so long for an opportunity to formalize their beliefs, charged on ahead with poor Bishop Lenihan running frantically after them calling, "Wait for me! Wait for me!"

Despite the lack of any sort of women's liberation these Irish ladies were not to be stopped. They raised good sum of money on subscriptions. And, in the Fall, they held the first of Casper's Catholic church bazaars, a tradition that would become the source of wonderful memories for many of Casper's citizens for many years come.

By the end of 1897, the funds had been raised, and it was clear that very soon there would be a Catholic church in Casper.

The year 1898 was a landmark one for Catholics. They were blessed with the arrival of a resident priest. They were able to build the church so long awaited. And yet, so soon the very fiber of their faith would be tested sorely.

By now the population of Casper had risen to 800 people and Bishop Lenihan's Building Committee had reached nearly all of them. Donations came not only from Catholics or even those who might use the church, but from all the townsfolk. Frontier spirit, they called it. Even the [Casper 1987, 9] bazaar involved the help of others, including the well-known Mrs. Nicolaysen.

The first priest, the Reverend James A. Keating, arrived in town at the order of Bishop Lenihan. Fr. Keating was a very young man and approached his new assignment with zeal. Calling almost immediately for bids for construction of the new church building, he settled on a contract with Mr. John Trevett. According to the abstract, the property was secured from Townsite Corporation, but whether it was received by gift, purchase or donation is not known.

Nonetheless, a church was built in short order on the southeast corner of First and Center Streets, opposite what would someday be the Henning Hotel. The cost was \$1650. According to notes in church records, the new church was named after St. Anthony because the "A" in Fr. Keating's name stood for none other than "Anthony."

This record states that this information was gleaned from a Father Duffy who served in Cheyenne and Sheridan at the time that Fr. Keating served Casper.

Groundbreaking took place on March 15 and the local paper reported it thus:

“ On Tuesday, March 15, Father Keating raised the first spade of dirt for the foundation of the new St. Anthony’s Catholic Church. The site is one of the best in the city, and now, since the church is to be there, this part of Casper will certainly build up, for when finished, St. Anthony’s Church will be the finest in Central Wyoming. It will be a frame building, 30x46 feet in the body of the church, with a sanctuary 10x12 feet, a sacristy or vestry room adjacent. A tower will be added later on, elegant windows will be put in, beautiful altars erected and equipped with handsome pews. The plans for the edifice are rich in design, artistic and substantial. It has been the dream of Father Keating since he came among us to see a handsome church in Casper. Now that his wishes are being realized, he is certainly happy. He entered upon his duties with enthusiasm and deserves great credit for the efforts manifested. The new church becomes a subject of interest for all the citizens of Casper, both Protestants as well as Catholics, and, when completed, will reflect praise for the push, energy, and progressive spirit shown by the citizens of the town.”

Upon its completion, the little church “was a pride and a blessing to the Catholic people, and at the same time a house of God and a place of prayer,” according to Fr. Mullin’s history. Certainly, it was a great work to the small parish body and the young priest who led them. The first child baptized in the new church was Kathleen Sullivan, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Sullivan.

Meanwhile, Casper was trying to become a bit more respectable in other spheres, and entered what came to be known as its “Sunday School Town” phase. Lewd women were ordered off the streets and out of the saloons, though interestingly not out of town. And Casper, unlike some other Wyoming towns, allowed its saloons to stay open even on Sundays for many years to come.

In fact, Casper never became quite as “respectable” as other places. Even church-goers enjoyed their dances, and the Irishmen were well known for their ability to imbibe great quantities of alcohol.

Dances in the old town hall were fun social affairs, attended by nearly all the townsfolk. For years Tessa Dunn recounted how her Mom and Dad had fixed up the hand express cart from the depot with warm blankets and pillows, then put young Tessa and her

brother, Eugene, to sleep in it, and wheeled them down to the Town Hall. There they slept while their parents danced the night away.

But May of 1898 took all the joy from Casper as the faith of this tiny frontier community was tested to its limit. An epidemic of spinal meningitis broke out and spread quickly among the children of Casper, killing many and leaving others very ill. In a panic, parents tried to flee with their babies. Some got out, but as soon as word traveled that this deadly disease originated in Casper, anyone from there was evicted, even from the homes of friends and [Casper 1987, 10] relatives. Casperites were put off trains and refused passage.

Attempts to escape having failed, the families of Casper were forced to return and pray that God would spare their children. Some He did not. And it was only in faith that they continued, disheartened and in sorrow for their great losses.

By summer, however, the greatest danger had passed. Those who had fled returned, and those who had lost, adjusted, day by day. The newspaper blamed the outbreak on unsanitary conditions, and the town council began actions compelling people to clear their residences of garbage and to remove the cow corrals and hog pens from the middle of town.

In July, 1898, William Dunn received a commission as Captain in the Wyoming National Guard, and was ordered to report for duty at Tampa, Florida. The Spanish/ American War was on. Dunn served for two years, the first in camps in the south and the last aboard the transport Ingalls in Santiago and Havana. He would not be discharged until the summer of 1901.

During this time, in Casper, the Dingley Tariff of 1897 was having its effect on the area. This legislation provided protection against raw wool imports and made the sheep business more attractive than it had ever been before.

For one thing, it took less capital to enter the sheep business than it did to get started with cattle. With sheep running a mere \$2 to \$3 a head, it wasn't that difficult to herd 1000 to 2000 head or more on public lands. Then, too, many of the herders were willing to take their pay in ewes, saving even the cost of labor.

The Irish system seemed to be working perfectly. A successful Irishman sent back for friends and relatives he knew he could trust. The new arrival would provide a source of labor, would ease things up at home, and would help Wyoming grow too.

Many of the immigrants preferred to take their pay in ewes, remaining with their employers until they had enough to start their own flocks. When they left their sponsor, they would send home yet again for a replacement, often providing free passage as well. Thus, the numbers of Irish increased, as did the number of sheep.

At the turn of the century, the number of sheep rose rapidly from 297,000 to 538,000, and, by 1907, Casper one of the largest wool-shipping centers in the world. Her shearing pens saw more than a million sheep a year trailed [Casper 1987, 11] in from all parts of the state.

With prosperity came organization. The town had its own herd of cows, which, by order of the Town Council, was now required to be herded away from the community for grazing, being brought back for milking. Prior to the epidemic of 1898, the cows were maintained at night in corrals in the middle of town. Herding and milking chores went to the young boys of Casper. Life was not easy and everyone was expected to help out.

There was occasionally a bout of drama like we see in the western movies, but the reality comes out a little differently. Oscar Hiestand served as County Sheriff for a time, and, during his term, a gang of thieves attacked a train in what was known as the Wilcox Train Robbery.

Mr. Hiestand joined Sheriff Joe Hazen of Converse County and Detective Vizzard of the Union Pacific Railroad, and the three signed on a posse of men. They rode out of town just like John Wayne might have done, but there the similarity ended. A series of mishaps left Sheriff Hiestand on foot, having lost his horse. The tracking proved hazardous as the bad guys seemed to have the lead, and would shoot up a storm to keep it. Christianity escaped them.

The posse lost them, and soon "tips" started coming in from good citizens everywhere. The gang appeared in half a dozen places at the same time, and numbered anywhere from four to ten men.

Meanwhile, as Sheriff Hiestand tried to find himself another mount, the townsfolk stood on their front porches watching the robbers gallop past, cross the Platte, and make good their escape to the famous Hole-In-The-Wall! So much for the "Wild West."

In other ways, however, Casperites were doing well. They were making a life for themselves. Mrs. Trevett opened a millinery shop and notion store. Her husband, John, ran the confectionary store. Mr. Trevett, you remember, built the first church after his

wife helped raise the money. He was a native of Cork, Ireland, like Pat Sullivan, and a jack-of-all-trades, it would seem. He also played in the first Casper band.

A. A. Schulte was the town blacksmith, with a shop at David and Second. Oscar Hiestand, after his stint as Sheriff, turned to the less frustrating task of harness making. Mr. J. P. Smith, a one-time freighter and rancher, eventually bought the Hotel deWentworth, which was erected on the southeast corner of Center Street. He renamed it the Natrona Hotel. His wife also helped raise funds for the first church. J. P. had homesteaded in the Bessemer Bend country, but moved to Casper to raise his family.

Dick and Steve Tobin, a couple of Irishmen, though not directly related to "Red" Tobin, were especially busy these days building a sheep buyers' market and were quite successful at it. They, too, had entered the Irish Catholic "welfare" business, so aptly described by Fr. Mullin. They were instrumental in bringing even more Irish to the town.

Among the colorful Catholic types must be listed one Eugene McCarty who came from Ireland to work with Sullivan's herd. He moved from herder to camp mover and, by 1900, was Sullivan's partner. By that time, he was earning a reputation as a shrewd businessman, or a crook, depending on which side of the money you were standing. If the year was bad and he had overbought on the sheep, he might show up late for pick-up and, finding, as he had planned, that his seller had given up and gone home in disgust, McCarty was seen to tear up the contract in a great public display of Irish temper. Following such hi-jinx, he came to be required by many herders to put deposits up front. But, a true Irishman, and a potential actor to boot, Eugene McCarty would always get the best price in town!

W. F. Dunn was not one to stand still, either. He saw the potential of the wool market and opened himself a warehouse. From there, he went into real estate, making a good deal of money at it. "He liked nice things," grandson Frank Schulte told me. And he worked long and hard to get them.

While opportunities seemed to be endless in this little town, all were required to work and work hard: from the little boys, who at age seven were expected to milk cows and herd them to the hills and back, to the women who carried water, kept homes, raised children, fed chickens, and did everything by hand (no sewing machines, or dishwashers or clothes washers at this time), to the shepherders who were out of town and away from their families for months at a time, to the entrepreneurs, who worked long, hard hours to serve the needs of the town, and often lived in the back of their

stores. Industriousness, back-breaking labor and, of course, faith were the only tools for survival.

And even that was never assured. There was always the fear of illness and not much of anything to be done about it, should it occur. Winter each year could bring disaster. A bad one could wipe out half the town and those affected would have to start all over again. Even fire was a grave concern. The volunteer fire department was organized early. With buildings of tinder-dry wood, most everyone expected the whole town would go up in smoke one windy night.

A single fire could mean the end of Casper. The sound of the fire bell clanging in the night from the tower of the Town Hall building sent shivers down the spine. But there was no time for panic. The men would run to help the fire department. The women would dress their children and prepare to leave quickly should the need arise.

No, it was not a life of ease—even for those who were quite successful. It took great strength and faith to persevere in the Wyoming wilderness. But, they stayed, they worked, and they prayed. Because of that, we are here today.

To Give Up Or Go On (1900-1915)

[Casper 1987, 12] The turn of the century brought change to Casper, as the lives of its people were affected on personal and private levels. In 1900, Miss Julia Mahoney, sister to Mrs. Pat Sullivan, was married to Dick Tobin. They would have two children, Brian and Mary, before Dick's death just a few years hence. William and Mary Ann Dunn stood as godparents at Brian's christening.

In town, there was great excitement over the election of the first County Commissioners. J. P. Smith was among them, having received 218 votes. A few in the Bessemer Bend Voting Place may have beat him but, as more votes appeared to have been cast than there were people, that precinct had to be discarded in the official count of the day. These people still believed in "rugged individualism," occasionally to a fault.

On June 12 of that year, Casper saw light, electric ones that is. Mrs. Kimball, the mayor's wife, turned on the first electric lights for the first time. Two days later. The Wyoming Derrick, now the town newspaper, devoted the entire front page to this great and lasting event.

That same year, Casperites said goodbye to their first pastor. Fr. Keating was transferred. The church stood, but St. Anthony's flock was without a leader for yet another lonely year. During that time, a Reverend George Bryant was called to answer a sick call. Coming up from Cheyenne, Fr. Bryant realized the need and great desire for a priest in Casper. Shortly thereafter, Administrator of the Diocese, the Reverend Hugh Cumiskey, assigned I Bryant to serve as the second pastor of the Church of i Anthony in Casper. His missions outside of Gasp included Douglas, Wheatland, Glendo, Glenrock and Sunrise. The young priest, thus, was kept quite busy.

But he was young, energetic and full of ideas. He set about building a rectory right next to the church, and worked on it with his own hands, as well as supervising the work of others. When it was finished, the rectory was considered one of the finest homes in Casper. It was a two story building with a cuppola, and it stood just south of the church. The rooms were spacious with lovely high ceilings and nice furnishings. Rambling porches decked the front. In fact, the house was so beautiful, it was much later purchased by Dave True and his family. At this writing, it stands on the corner of Ash and 16th Streets in Casper

Alice Bradshaw, a present member of St. Anthony's remembers visiting the house as a child. Fr. Bryant housekeeper invited the children into the kitchen at times to visit and have cookies.

"We thought it was all very exciting," Alice said, "though we were never allowed in the parlor." The chime of the cuckoo clock was always a high point of those visits. She remembers Fr. Bryant only a bit, as being reserved around the children.

However, one who always remembered Fr. Bryant fondly was Mickey Burke. Mickey Burke was a hot-[Casper 1987, 13]-blooded Irishman with a penchant for hard work. Never at a loss for words to express his varied opinions, Mickey came to Casper in 1901 at the age of 22. He was one of Pat Sullivan's herders. Following the scheme of the day, he became a sheepman in his own right in just a short time.

Fr. Bryant reached out to Mickey and to many others, bringing them back into the fold of the church.

He came just in time, too, to see the first oil boom in this once desolate frontier. In 1902 and 1903, oil was found near Casper, and it was established that the town would grow and grow and grow.

1902 was also the year that Wyoming received a new bishop. The Most Reverend James J. Keane, D.D. was perhaps the first to recognize the true missionary aspect of Wyoming, and under his leadership, many of the small town churches were to benefit. He worked like a missionary, traveling from place to place, offering missions and retreats to the people, some of whom had probably never experienced them before, and certainly had not since their arrival in the great American West.

Bishop Keane also saw to the incorporation of Wyoming's Catholic Churches, meeting their business needs far more effectively than ever before. The Articles of Incorporation in Casper were signed on May 1, 1903, by bishop Keane, Vicar General of the Diocese, Hugh Cumiskey, Fr. G. Bryant, pastor, and two lay members, J. E. Schulte, and John Trevett, Sr. The official name of the corporation was The Church of St. Anthony.

By 1904, the sheep business was booming. Pat Sullivan had started the VI Sheep Company near Midwest, with his cousin "Red" to ably run it. A good and trustworthy sheepman, "Red" Tobin would run that ranch some 65 years.

Meanwhile, Sullivan and McCarty could focus their attention on the 25 to 30 railroad cars they were forwarding a week to the Fremont Yards to fill, feed or prepare for the packer or feeder buyer. And "Gene" was wheeling and dealing his way to a fortune. In 1905, the Wyoming Wool Growers Association formed to protect the interests of the sheepmen at the State Legislative Meeting. Needless to say people in Casper were optimistic.

Marking the period were, among other things, friendly rivalries, these settled by football games and fire hose fights. Rivalry between Casper and Douglas was particularly strong, probably because there wasn't anyplace else to be rival to.

The first football game in Casper predictably carried Irish team members. Steve Tobin and a Murdock McPhearson were among the players and chief organizers.

The first high school football game took place a little later on and featured the names of second-generation Irish, names which we have seen before: Eugene Dunn, Pierce Smith, Ralph Schulte and even John Trevett. It was still a pretty small town.

Though cars were starting to appear in other parts of the country, they weren't common in Casper. In fact, many people believed the lack of water and the great distances to be traveled in Wyoming would preclude the use of these new machines. Something far more rugged and trustworthy, like a horse, would surely have to prevail.

In 1906, Casperites began to push their town with a new effort - the Casper Booster's Club Committee formed with Pat Sullivan and Oscar Hiestand serving as Committee members.

Meanwhile, Mickey Burke was starting his own sheep [Casper 1987, 14] ranch 25 miles north of Casper. He filed on a homestead and bought up the land around it gradually. He brought his family into town during the winter, and spent many weeks away from them running the ranch. The focus of life was very different then. Building a future for ones children and grandchildren took priority over present situations and temporal pleasures. The Irish Catholics of Casper, as well as others, made sacrifices, sometimes harsh ones, for future rewards.

Alice Dodds (to-be Bradshaw) and her parents were among them. Their ranch, the Effell, was originally a cattle ranch, but turned to sheep with the rise in wool. Alice remembers coming to church on Sundays. It took five or six hours to get into town by horse and buggy. It was a long, rough ride, and sometimes the Dodds would miss Mass because of it.

But they weren't the only ones. Joe Burke (son to Mickey) recalls that priests would sometimes come out to ranches to say Mass or administer baptism. In fact, the Burke Ranch became a station, for a while, where the people of the area could go to Mass on occasion. It was probably during these visits that Joe's father became good friends with Fr. Bryant as they would talk for hours about "the old country" which they missed a great deal at times.

Facing these realities, these people had choices to make: to give up or go on. They called upon their faith, rolled up their sleeves and went on, just as they had in the face of all the other trials they had so far encountered.

These folks were indeed of sturdy stock, and looking back, we wonder how many of us could have done what they did. Some did not survive, but those who did, stayed and helped one another, and they brought each other back. The history, thus, is one of more than faith. It is also one o:

love. Christ told us, "Love thy neighbor as thy self." The Catholic community of Casper lived His words.

They continued always to look to the future for hope And they built up the town as well as they could. Through the cycles of Casper's economy, there is yet a steady optimism and always some sign of growth.

On June 22, 1908, the pioneers gathered to lay the cornerstone of the first Natrona County Courthouse. It was located in the center of the street in front of the present-day courthouse. Our friend, Pat Sullivan, was in attendance. The pictures of this event strike one as absurd. This little gathering of men has seated itself in the middle of absolutely nothing to celebrate the construction of a courthouse. They had visions we cannot imagine, their dreams and their faith leading them

Meanwhile, the old town hall was being made into a movie theater run by Gay and Faye Trevett. He ran the movie machine and she sold the tickets. Lo, Casper finally had some wholesome entertainment. It was called the Bell Theatre, named for the bell (the old fire bell) that hung in its tower and now looked ridiculously out of place. Tickets for the theatre were a mere 15 cents. Years later, the theatre burned down, but early Casperites have many fond memories of the few years it existed.

Despite dire predictions, 1908 was the year Casper saw its first automobile, and wool became the states leading industry.

1909 brought progress in the church. New people were [Casper 1987, 15] coming and the church makeup was less Irish than it once had been. Italians, Scottish and Germans were being assimilated more and more easily, with some of the Irish even toning down the brogues a bit. Some were as pleased to be Americans as they were to be Irish.

By 1910, Casper's population was 2,639. Burlington had purchased 80 acres of land in the extreme northern part of town from W. F. Dunn, Eugene McCarty and Pat Sullivan for \$150 an acre. The Dunns had another child, Catherine. She was born in Iowa where Mrs. Dunn was visiting. Later, two more children were born to the Dunns, Leo and Francis, in their home at 148 North Durbin in Casper.

At about the same time, John Trevett encouraged his widowed sister, Angelica Tripeny, to come to Wyoming. She was accompanied by her teenage son, John Tripeny, and they decided to stay. Angelica's granddaughter, Lois, reflects on her grandmother as quite a courageous woman. Having come from St. Regis Falls, N. Y., she surely was shocked by the frontier life in Casper. Nonetheless, she worked as a cook in the Jail House and her son, John, was part of the first graduating class of Natrona County High School.

John was to become one of Casper's outstanding citizens and a great supporter of St. Anthony's Church and School. After high school, he opened a drugstore, and the rest, they say, is history!

On May 3, 1910, the Casper City Fathers purchased the city's first fire truck at a cost of \$4500. Fred Villnave drove it, Oscar Hiestand was his assistant driver (co-pilot I guess we'd call him today) and W. F. Dunn was part of the crew. Things were progressing yet.

Not to lose sight of the full flavor of the community, there on the Sand Bar, backed away from all signs of human habitation, were two small tarpaper shacks. They called them "pest houses" and they were used for those who had communicable diseases. Not a particularly Christian concept, these houses were a means of survival for the general populace.

Being sent to them must have brought the greatest heartache. One wonders how many mothers shielded their children from doctors who might pronounce them a sentence to the "pest house," for fear they would never return. No one took care of those sent there, save during a weekly visit from the doctor. One merely got better or died, in the meantime being exposed to others who had something possibly worse.

Not far from the Sand Bar, the houses of prostitution had multiplied and "sin" proliferated. Due to the Irish clientele, one of the Houses was even named the Irish World, and was run by a madam by the name of Irish Nell. While one could suppose it just a gimmick, attracting all the non-Catholic Irish in the area, we might also want to realize that we are "sinners" all and that, perhaps, all of this served some purpose. At the least, it provided an impetus for the mothers of Casper's children to teach them right from wrong.

In legitimate business, oil was picking up again. The [Casper 1987, 16] Wyoming Syndicate, which took over Pennsylvania Oil and Gas in 1903, was acquired by the Franco-American Wyoming Oil Company, which laid a six inch pipeline from Salt Creek to Casper and built a refinery at the west end of town. That same year, 1910, Midwest Oil Company was organized in Salt Creek. This company laid another six-inch pipeline to another refinery in Casper. Demand for oil increased year by year after that and, quietly, Casper was transformed from a wool town to an oil city.

Oscar Hiestand, being one willing to try anything new, signed on at one of the refineries. The Irish, being more traditional in their approach, were still importing relatives. Casper soon greeted yet another jolly Irishman when a Catholic by the name

of Jeremiah Mahoney stepped off the train. He is described by those who knew him as a jaunty, happy-go-lucky sort. Soon, he had stolen the heart of the widowed Julia Tobin. As they were cousins, they had to apply for a special dispensation from the Church for approval to marry. But marry they did, and Jeremiah thereby inherited the Prairie Sheep Company, the business Dick Tobin built and left to his wife upon his death. Julia and Jeremiah had three children of their own, Dorothy, Barry and Martha.

Shortly thereafter, an Irishman named William Swanton was having some problems finding work in New York City. In frustration, he figured the best way to go was West. So, he took all his money and went to the train station. He told the man he wanted to go as far west as the money would take him. The ticket he got back said Rawlins, Wyoming. Swanton got as far as the depot in Casper. There, he bumped into a cheerful Jeremiah Mahoney leaning casually against a post out front. They got to talking 'bout the "old country," no doubt, and Swanton had himself a job. He stayed and became another of Casper's leading citizens, and a strong supporter of St. Anthony's Church.

The church, meanwhile, was taking a part in educating its children and in trying to make them good citizens of the Church as well as of the general community.

Fr. Bryant began instructions for altar boys. Brian Tobin and Francis Dunn were among his first victims, er [sic], students. Brian remembers him as being very tough on the boys so that they learned to be most reverent most quickly and soon were helping Fr. Bryant in his celebration of the Mass.

In 1911, the Hospital officially opened and Casper could finally offer some help and hope to the ill. The priests of St. Anthony's have ever since been a welcome presence there, offering prayers for the sick and injured of the city and giving them guidance in the hours of illness or death.

Also that year, the Knights of Columbus came into being in Casper. Mr. Fred Villnave, of the Fire Department, was among the original founders.

In 1912, the Most Reverend Patrick McGovern became the fourth Bishop of the diocese. Bishop McGovern would lead the diocese in years to come, and would recruit many an Irish priest to guide the parishes of Wyoming. Casper especially benefited from his paternalism in this area as Irish priests were what they knew best.

Back in town, Fr. Bryant was making plans. The little church on Center Street seemed to be shrinking as his parishioners filled it to overflowing. With Casper's growth came a

growth in St. Anthony's, a growth that could hardly be contained in a church built for a temporary town at the end of the railroad line. These were citizens of a town fast becoming a city, citizens who wanted to practice and live their faith.

So, Fr. Bryant bought two lots on the corner of Sussex (Seventh) and Wolcott for \$1600 with the hopes of building a bigger and better church for the good people of St. Anthony's parish. But Fr. Bryant was never to see the church for which he paved the way. He resigned as pastor of St. Anthony's in August 1915, and was succeeded by the Reverend James McGee.

Fr. McGee was a young priest and not much is known of him. Alice Dodds met him a few times and recalled that he seemed much less reserved than Fr. Bryant had been. He was friendly, she said, and he was easy for a child to talk to. "But, he was here just a short time."

On November 27, Fr. McGee died at the tender age of 27.

At this, a Father Isidore, O. M. C. of Douglas was named to act in "locum tenens," serving Casper until December 18, 1915, when Father John Mullin arrived in Casper.

World War I (1916-1918)

[Casper 1987, 18] Those who can, recall the first Church of St. Anthony in Casper as a lovely little place teeming with Catholics (it was built to hold maybe 100 people). The services, they say, were generally not too long, and everyone looked forward to socializing afterwards. At Christmas, little Alice Dodds would arrive with all the other children, her arms loaded with gifts and her eyes lit up by the Christmas season. Everyone would exchange gifts after Mass and it was a very happy time; a warm and fulfilling time, when everyone knew everyone else.

But, Fr. Mullin was a man of the future, and he could see, as Fr. Bryant before him had, that this parish had outgrown its church.

Fr. John H. Mullin is remembered as being a heavy-set, plump little man, a jolly sort too. He was born in Pittston, Pennsylvania on October 22, 1888, the third child of ten. He matriculated at the University of Notre Dame,

receiving his A. B. degree in 1911. That same year, in October, he set sail from New York to Naples to pursue studies at the American College in Rome, and on February 27, 1915,

Fr. Mullin was ordained at the Cathedral of St. John Lateran in Rome, by the patriarch of Constantinople.

He was incardinated in the Diocese of Cheyenne. In April, he received his first assignment, this from Bishop McGovern to the parish of Newcastle. On December 18, 1915, he came to Casper to take charge as pastor of St. Anthony's.

What Fr. Mullin faced was a town that had gone too far, too fast, and people who had fought through so many hard times that they seized on the opportunities of good times with a vengeance. Casper's red light district must have appalled the good Father, and he was much saddened at the gambling and oil speculation that went on. It is said that, when a gusher came in, people would gather on Second Street to buy and sell stocks, cash in hand, leaving their businesses, professions and everything else just to "get in on the deal."

In fact, things were so bad, Berne Hopkins of Reed Investment Company finally established headquarters in the Midwest Hotel during this period in an attempt to quell the brewing hostilities in the streets. Claims makers were solving their differences there by means of fist-fights and weapons.

Fr. Mullin thought a sizeable Catholic church to accommodate the needs of the community and offer some spiritual guidance would considerably help the situation. So, he set about it in earnest. He sold the first church lot to Mickey Burke and Jeremiah Mahoney as they had planned to use it for a Knights of Columbus building. Somehow, that deal fell through, however, and they returned the money raised for the purchase.

Mickey and Jeremiah did buy the building, though, for the sum of \$11,000, and moved it to the corner of Wolcott and Sussex Streets (where St. Anthony's school sits). It was planned that the church building would be used for services while the new church was being built, but where a series of emergencies precluded that, and Mass would not be heard again in a church for some months to come. The rectory and the homes of parishioners served in the interim as interim.

Fr. Mullin proceeded, then, to make plans for the new St. Anthony's. He purchased the present church site from Mr. Charles Warner for the sum of \$4750. His Building Committee consisted of Patrick O'Connor, A. A. Schulte, radiate Angus McPherson, M. J. Burke, John Daly, J. L. Bigenheimer and A. E. Biglin. The Committee accepted the plans of Garbutt and Wiedner.

But a World War, and a number of other obstacles were to keep St. Anthony's parishioners out of their new church for years to come.

Casper was now facing serious problems. This once tiny, ramshackle frontier town was becoming a mecca, another promised land of wealth, opportunity and adventure. The second Oil Boom hit in 1917. And oil quickly rose to become second only to agriculture on the Wyoming economic scene. Casper was literally right in the middle of it. She hosted two of the five refineries in the state.

On January 9, 1917, Casper became a city, and more people moved to the bursting community. Among them was Pat Sweeney, a worker for Burlington Railroad. In 1916, he had been transferred from Nebraska, and would now make Casper his home. Soon he encouraged his brothers and his brothers and family to join him as well.

In 1917, however, Casper was not exactly a "family" place. Housing was scarce, conditions were crowded, and morals were hitting new lows as the young Fr. Mullin tried to keep his flock in some sort of order.

For those who remember him, recall that he was quite a wonderful speaker, though his homilies, not surprisingly were of the "fire and brimstone" variety. The children were frightened by him, though not so much so that they wouldn't hide in the bushes and call out "father watermullin" as he passed. And, on occasion he was heard to chuckle loudly at their little pranks. He had a great Irish laugh, they say.

Fr. Mullin made his rounds and was known to visit and have dinner with parishioners, and he was known as quite a story-teller, too. Many, many people came to like Fr. Mullin, and he did many good things for the people of Casper.

When he saw a problem, Fr. Mullin tried to address it as well as he could. Citing the situation with the children the city, Fr. Mullin decided they needed some guidance. Here their parents were out buying and selling stocks, and fighting in the streets over the same, and if youngsters wandered too far, they might well find themselves as prostitutes and pimps.

Fr. Mullin formed and organized the Young Men's Social Club to provide alternatives for the young men of the community. The Club's stated purpose was to provide [Casper 1987, 19] "supervised recreational activities in a growing community where many youth had no family restraint."

The Clubhouse was built on one of the parish lots and was named "The Mullin Club" after its founder and donor. As time went on, The Mullin Club became an institution in Casper, serving as host to social activities of the Altar and Rosary Society, and acting as clubhouse for the Catholic Girl's Club. The Altar and Rosary Society eventually radiated its welfare activities from The Mullin Club as well.

Also to note here, the situation with the children put a germ of an idea into Fr. Mullin's head - that someday this town would need a school to teach its children proper moral values - it would be a Catholic School.

By this time, the great Irish Republican leader, Fat Sullivan, had been defeated in the Wyoming Legislature by another Irishman, Patrick O'Connor, a Democrat.

On the national level, Congress was considering entering "the War to end all Wars."

On April 6, 1917, war was declared against Germany. In Casper, ex-Governor Brooks read the message of war that very evening to a crowd of some 2,000 people at the Henning Hotel. Grippled with the uncertainty and fear that a declaration of war brings upon a people, Casperites joined in faith to sing "America" and the National Anthem, and surely offered a prayer for the hard times ahead.

The war touched Casper in many ways. Alice Dodds accompanied her cousins as they saw boyfriends off at the train depot. There were many tearful goodbyes and, for some, they were final goodbyes, as war always takes lives. Enlistments were proportionately high in Casper.

For those who remained at home, the war was yet realized. A. J. Mokler considered the conviction of many Casperites that there were spies in the city:

"The Standard and Midwest Refineries had many extra guards at their plants. Guards were stationed at Pathfinder dam, railroad bridges were guarded and every precaution was taken against German spies, there being every reason to believe that quite a number were located in and around Casper."

German citizens of the city were suspect, and those of German background, like Oscar Hiestand, kept low-profiles and withdrew from many of the activities they had heretofore enjoyed and been welcomed into. Surely, it was a most difficult time for them as well.

Even The Mullin Club was affected by the war as Fr. Mullin offered its use to the Presbyterian minister who headed up the local Red Cross organization.

Trainloads of gasoline were shipped every hour from the Midwest and Standard Refineries in Casper for the war effort. The people accepted rationing as a way of life. Sugar, flour, and gasoline were rationed commodities, and food stamps were put into use. Casperites learned to use honey as a sweetener because bees were easy to come by, and ranchers did their haying with horses. Many planted victory gardens to supply their own vegetables. It was a busy time, and a sad and frightening time, too.

As if things were not bad enough, the winter of 1917 made them worse. The war news was bad and young boys were being shipped across the ocean by the thousands. A major epidemic, apparently caused by crowded conditions in the Army, broke out. Doctors did not know how to cope with it. It hit the lungs quickly and many people died suddenly from it. Fear was everywhere, so much so that people were afraid to leave their homes. Ethel Sanford in her book, *As I Remember*, noted,

“We lost so many of our neighbors and friends, and we wondered who would be next. It quieted down in Spring, but came back again worse than ever the next winter.”

Statistics showed that influenza was taking more lives than the war. In Casper, Fr. Mullin cancelled all church services because of it, and funerals were held only at the graveside. When it became necessary to purchase supplies, only limited numbers of people were let into the stores and all wore masks.

Alice Dodds contracted the flu at St. Agnes Boarding School in Alliance, Nebraska. Her parents came to take her home, as the nuns, too, had the flu, and could not care for [Casper 1987, 20] her or the other girls. She remembered sitting in the train depot, everyone in masks, and being very frightened by it all.

Alice was not unlike many of the other children who lived on the ranches around Casper. Sometimes, their parents would bring tutors out to teach the children, but eventually, it was realized that a proper education could only be obtained by sending the children off to boarding schools or to board them with one of the families in town. Separation was very hard on the children and, no doubt, on their parents. But immigrants put a premium on education as one of the great things America had to offer and, if required, sacrifices were made to obtain it.

The winter of 1917 was recounted in a story published in The Casper Star-Tribune on Christmas Eve, 1967. The story was written by Tim Mahoney, a beloved member of the Knights of Columbus for many, many years, and a storyteller in the Irish tradition.

Mahoney apparently came in from the sheep range that Christmas Eve, his first in Casper, to celebrate in the bars, and find a bit of Christmas cheer. He witnessed a bar fight, and much merriment, and spied an old adversary from his Colorado days. But his tale was woven with a sadness and isolation so many must have felt that year. For even with Casper's growth, so many of her citizens had left their homelands, their families and all that they had known, to come to this new land which, in 1917, offered them doubt and fear, as well as hope and prosperity. It was a very trying time, a time when the presence of God was perhaps the only comfort around.

When 1918 came, sheep were still among Wyoming's most valued commodities, though oil was gaining a quick lead. Nonetheless, that year's tax roles show 343,233 sheep valued at \$3,291,925 in Natrona County alone. Sheep were still important to Casper's economy. Casper, meantime, though a city, was hardly a modern one.

Her walkways were mere boardwalks, and there were no streets. She was still a "wild and swinging" town, and when Ethel Sanford came [Casper 1987, 20] through here with her husband, she was told by the hotel clerk not to venture out of the room without him (Mr. Sanford).

This was the year that one Mac Redington arrived in Casper from Galesburg, Illinois. And, about this time, Ann Dilso (to be Blower) was born to her Italian immigrant parents, Joe Dilso and the former Anna Reto. Mr. Dilso worked at the Standard Oil Refinery.

On June 25, 1918, "Red" Tobin and his young wife Nora (she was 14 years his junior) celebrated their first wedding anniversary. They had been married, of course, by Father Mullin at St. Anthony's. Their children would be five, John (Jack), Bill, Jim, Theresa and Mary.

Nora was of the Donegan family, and her two sisters were Mrs. Con Shea and Mrs. (Mary) Rochelle. The Donegan girls came from County Cork, Ireland.

A man named George Sullivan brought his family to Casper in 1918 from Massachusetts. Their son had taken ill and doctors advised a drier climate for him. As Mrs. Elizabeth Sullivan had a sister already in Wyoming (Mrs. Charles Wheeler), it was

decided the family would move as soon as the child was well enough to travel. George opened a blacksmith's shop, and two of his daughters, Margaret and Elizabeth, still live in Casper.

George gave heavily to the church, but even his family was not aware of that fact until after his death. The sisters have fond memories of St. Anthony's Church, recalling the dinners and bazaars as high points of a young girl's social life.

1918 saw the Armistice declared with great celebration in Casper. "The town went wild," according to one report, "with dancing in the streets and all the stores closed down."

Ethel Sanford recalled Armistice Day as she was in town enroute to another place, and she was in dire need of supplies. At that time, the Dodds owned the Pines Hotel, where Sanford was staying. Mrs. Dodds noted Mrs. Sanford's predicament, and called the manager of the Golden Rule Store (that was the actual name). He came down and opened up the store so that Mrs. Sanford could get what she needed. A small Christian kindness in the midst of great confusion, but one that Mrs. Sanford remembered all her life.

With the war over and the flu quieted down, things could return to some sort of normalcy, and people again began to think of the future.

In the interim, Casper had acquired a few more Mahoney s. It seems back some years, John Mahoney's brother, James, had gotten himself into a scrape in Ireland, and had come to America to let things cool down back home. He eventually returned and told such stories of the West that all four of his daughters dreamed of it.

One after another, they came. Mary arrived in 1908. Met by her sister in New York, young Mary Mahoney traveled to Chicago where she entered nurse's training, a skill she would need in the "wild west."

Soon after, she married one Maurice Kelliher and the two came to Casper to make their life together. Mary was niece to John Mahoney of Rawlins.

Mr. Kelliher was yet another colorful Irishman who had served in World War I. He started out as a sheepherder, but, according to his daughter, that didn't work out. His fondest memory of that period was of an old sheepdog named Boots.

Maurice eventually joined the Fire Department, serving with Fred Villnave. He worked his way up and for many years was the fire Chief in Casper.

His predecessor in that post was, of course, Villnave himself. He lived above the fire station for years, and Mary Louise Reed (to be Baker) always loved to visit the Villnave home. It provided the rare opportunity to slide down the fire pole! Mary Louise grew up with the Villnave children and counted Dorothy Mahoney as one of her best friends, as well.

[Casper 1987, 21] Mary Louise was not Catholic as a child. Because her Mom owned a florist shop in town, she was on her own during the busy holiday season. Julia Mahoney took this situation in hand, however, always opening her home to the Reed children for holiday meals.

“Mrs. Mahoney had a quick Irish wit and Jeremiah was always happy,” she remembers, and it was “great fun” to go to Dorothy’s house at Christmas and Easter. “It was always a happy, lively, family sort of place.”¹

A Dream Realized (1919-1920)

[Casper 1987, 22] On May 2, 1919, the St. Anthony’s Building Committee let a contract to Donahoe Construction of St. Paul, Minnesota, to build the church. The \$58,657 contract called for completion on December 20, 1919. According to Fr. Mullin’s history, on September 7, 1919, the Right Reverend Patrick A. McGovern came to Casper to perform the Cornerstone Ceremony, and the Reverend William O’Ryan of Denver preached the sermon.

It was a joyous time for the church, but the cycle came round again and the summer and winter of 1919-1920 spelled disaster for many of its parishioners.

A severe drought hit central Wyoming that summer and was followed by an early October snow. Then, in April, 1920, a single bad storm resulted in the loss of about one-third of all the stock in the state of Wyoming.

On top of all this, sheep prices fell. In a week, wool dropped from 80 cents to 25 cents and sheep from \$18 to \$10 and later down to \$6. Lambs that once sold from \$8 to \$12 were now worth only \$3.

Casper's citizens saw their dreams and their futures dissipate before their very eyes. Fr. Mullin must have been busy consoling his congregation and somehow pointing out to them light in the ever-increasing darkness. Many found their future in oil, having lost their sheep. Casper's complexion was changing.

Her population in 1920 was 11,447. And, among the new arrivals was Rita Kelliher, born at home as was customary, to the Kelliher family. Rita, of course, was duly baptized a short time later at St. Anthony's.

As more and more people came to Casper, the housing became critical. Many citizens opened their homes to boarders and renters. Among them was a Catholic named Kate Mechaley, who came to be known for her kindnesses to the newcomers of the town and for the great meals she fed them. The housing shortage was so acute, in fact, that Ohio Oil, for one, fixed up the basement of their building for renters.

Meanwhile, the Catholic population was growing accordingly, so that it was with the greatest relief and excitement that the beautiful new Church of St. Anthony, dream of Fr. Mullin for so many years, was finally dedicated.

The day came on August 15, 1920, and everyone I interviewed remembers it as being beastly hot. But that was not a detriment to the long-awaited glory of this day. One thousand people turned out for the service.

There the building stood, having cost some \$150,000, towering above the people and the city which had so lovingly spawned her.

The church itself was built of brick and limestone topped with a mottled tile roof. A graceful campanile became her structure. Altars of Carrara marble had not yet arrived but were on order from Italy. The interior woodwork was all of oak and the windows are Italian stained glass.

The windows in the main part of the church depict The Annunciation, the Visitation, The Nativity, The Presentation, The Finding in the Temple, The Agony in the Garden, The Crucifixion, The Resurrection, The Ascension and The Descent of the Holy Spirit.

Bishop McGovern, in his History of the Diocese recorded the gifts which added the special touches to make this church a true statement of love and religious faith. So many of the names are familiar, they are here, too, recorded for posterity.

The main altar was the gift of the Altar and Rosary Society; The Blessed Virgin's Altar is the gift of John and Peter Tobin; The Altar of St. Joseph is the gift of Patrick Sullivan; the Shrines of St. Anthony and St. Patrick are the gifts of M. W. Purcell and Wm. Swanton; the Altar rail is the gift of the Schulte family. The children of the parish donated the magnificent sanctuary lamp; Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Adams gave the onyx candlesticks; Mr. and Mrs. Con Shea gave the brass candle set; The sanctuary windows were the gifts of Mr. and Mrs. Jeremiah Mahoney; Mrs. M. Slizeski, P. E. de Caplane, William Kyne and A. E. Biglin gave the windows of the transept, the four Evangelists; the rose window of the church is the gift of the choir; The windows on the main part of the church were the gifts of Mr. and Mrs. J. Foley, Mr. and Mrs. Angus McPherson, Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Burke, Mr. and Mrs. M. J. Burke, Miss Elizabeth McDonald, Mrs. John Daly, Mr. and Mrs. M. W. Purcell and Fred and Thomas Villnave; The sacristy windows were donated by J. W. Bingenheimer, John J. Tobin, Jean Salabert, Miss Margaret Barrett, Miss Ella McGuire, Mrs. C. A. Holloran and Eugene McCarty. The five windows in the chapel were the gifts of E. A. Slater and Fr. Mullin's family. The Church Bell was donated by the Knights of Columbus; The Stations of the Cross by Mrs. Patrick Sullivan; the Pulpit by Mr. and Mrs. Patrick J. O'Connor; Confessionals by the Ancient Order of Hibernians and Richard "Red" Tobin; the Baptismal Font by Joseph Wimsatt, the Vestment Case from W. F. Henning, the Monstrance by John Heery of Chicago, and the Chalice by Mrs. A. F. Edmonds.

The day began with the Blessing of the Walls and Chanting of the Litany of the Saints. The clergy wore vestments made in Paris, these of white satin with hand embroidery. Of course, Bishop McGovern celebrated the Mass with Fr. Mullin assisting. The choir sang Leonard's Mass in F, directed by Mrs. George Smith, and accompanied by Mrs. Edna Smith on the organ, and Miss Verna Burnett and Lynn Hewlett on violins. Soloists were Mrs. J. H. Roush, Miss Eileen Sullivan, Mrs. DOB Lobdell, Theodore Day and Mr. Conly.

The children remember the ceremonies as being long but surely those adults in attendance, especially those who had worked so hard to have their church, considered it time well spent. For now, Casper's Catholic Community could [Casper 1987, 23] visit the House of the Lord. They could spend time with Him in comfort and in surroundings dedicated to His glory. And they could increase their numbers.

The following Saturday, a picnic and dance were scheduled by way of celebration, as Casper Catholics have

always enjoyed their celebrations. But, as is Wyoming's way, the weather did not cooperate and many were transported back to The Mullin Club by horse and buggy, through the mud and rain. Undaunted, they danced and celebrated this joyous time.

Times Of Trial (1921-1926)

[Casper 1987, 29] The Roaring Twenties dawned in Casper, as the rest of the country, with flappers and the Charleston and general high living, which was no stranger to this town anyway. Speculation here had been going for quite some time. But, this was not to be a decade of ease for Casperites, as a number of things went against them, foreshadowing what would become of the rest of the nation.

First, an attitude problem emerged. Apparently, as more people came, and came to feel more secure, the Christian ideal of working together, helping each other and loving your neighbors began to seem less imperative. The Ku Klux Klan emerged.

In Wyoming, this group directed itself, not so much against racial or ethnic groups, as against Roman Catholics. With Catholic churches springing up in many frontier towns, and Catholics assuming positions of leadership, KKK members saw a threat that, somehow, these Catholics would take over, undermining their businesses and livelihoods and spreading their influence into education and other areas.

So, even in Casper, they started to organize against what they saw as a Catholic menace. They donned their white hoods and began demonstrations. A young Joe Burke witnessed burning crosses up on C-Hill (where Casper College stands now), and there was at least one confrontation, this recalled by church member Beatrice Bennett. Apparently, the KKK was parading outside St. Anthony's Church one day and Fr. Mullin got angry.

The man was not very big, and he was alone, or as alone as a priest standing up for his faith ever can be alone, and he confronted the group, telling them to leave.

The leader spoke in a threatening tone from beneath the safety of his disguise, "If you weren't wearing that collar," he shouted, proceeding to tell Fr. Mullin what he might do.

Fr. Mullin pointed to his collar and said, "Don't let this stop you!" Then he reached up and pulled off the hood of his challenger. Thus exposed, the local businessman that he was, was duly boycotted by all Catholics in the city, and Fr. Mullin was quite the hero of the day.

It was not the end, however, and the KKK continued their cross burnings and parades, though not quite so close to the church. The Knights of Columbus became true knights

(in the figurative shining armor) as they gathered together to stop this ugly action before it turned to violence.

Perhaps taking their cue from Fr. Mullin, Mickey Burke, Jerry Mahoney, Mike Purcell, Charlie Cullen and Pete Tobin got together as Joe Burke remembers it. They hired a man named O'Donnell from Chicago. They met with him and they paid him some money.

Mr. O'Donnell proceeded to join the KKK in Casper, thereby obtaining members' names and the names of their businesses. Then he quietly went back to Chicago, and printed up a little newspaper publicizing these names and businesses for all to see. The newspaper was distributed throughout Casper and the KKK never gained strength in the city again.

A trying, tense time for Catholics, but handled in a Christian way, without violence. Meanwhile, life went on apace, the Lord working sometimes in ways which seem quite strange to us.

In 1921, for example, young John Tripeny must have been devastated when his store burned down. Sifting through the debris, he must have felt he had lost everything which he had worked so hard to achieve. But, he decided the thing to do would be to have a Fire Sale, and maybe start again.

And start again, he did, as Mae Redington walked into the Fire Sale in search of a bargain-she found one-John! They were married at St. Anthony's Church on June 10, 1925, and in years to come would bless Casper with three more citizens, two boys and a girl. They lived at 1125 S. Wolcott, several blocks from St. Anthony's School, where their children were educated.

In another part of town, Anne Dilso (to be Blower) was also growing up. Anne remembers there were only a few Italian families in Casper in those days. "Most were Irish," she said. But among the Italians, were Carlo and Felice Colibraro who had three children. Eventually, all three entered religious life. Today, Fr. Daniel Colibraro is pastor of Our Lady of Fatima Church in Casper, Fr. Philip Colibraro is pastor of St. James Catholic Church in Douglas, and Sr. Mary Carlo Colibraro works at St. Joseph's Hospital in Denver.

Anne also remembers the Irish focus of the church in its early years. As the Italian contingent was so small, she said those families were merely assimilated into the group. She did liken to add, however, that Italian heritage was certainly present at many of the

dinners at the Old Mullin Club. "I, personally, must have cooked tons of spaghetti," she laughed. And Anne certainly never let the "Irish" bent keep her away from the Church of God. A very devout Catholic, she has always given much of her time and energy to the work of the Lord.

But, this aside, back in the 1920s, Anne was just a young girl growing up in Casper. Children were becoming more plentiful as the population grew. The Trevetts had a daughter, Ruth, who was a friend of the young Mary Lou Reed and of Dorothy Mahoney. Mary Lou recalls the Trevett home as a joyful one and always fun to visit, as was the Mahoney household where, you will recall, she partook of many a holiday meal.

A Catholic sheepman named Jack Sullivan and his wife were also adding to the Census rolls, producing nine little Sullivans, among them a set of twin boys. The little red-haired Sullivan twins would one day grow to become the pride of Casper's Catholic community, entering the priesthood on the same day, pledging both to serve the Lord and, as happened, Wyoming's people, for many, many years

[Casper 1987, 30] People, each with a story to tell, were still moving to Casper as well. The tale of Elizabeth Harte Doherty is quite similar to that of Mary Mahoney Kelliher who arrived in Casper but a few years before her. As a child in County Longford, Ireland, "Lizzie" was mesmerized by letters from her cousins who had come to America. At sixteen, she crossed the ocean alone to see for herself. She took up nurses' training at Bellevue Hospital, then served as a governess for a wealthy family in the east for seven years.

During the first World War, she met a young Irishman, James Doherty, who was serving in the Army. He had come to America from County Donegal, had worked in the mines in Montana, and was now enroute to France. The romance blossomed nonetheless, and after completing his tour of duty, and accepting a job with Standard Oil in the "boomtown" of Casper, Doherty felt secure enough to wed the lovely Longford lassie.

Following a Greenwich Village wedding, the couple came to Casper in 1922 where Lizzie experienced culture shock. This was not the America of her dreams and this was not the America she had seen through the eyes of her rich New York employers. This was a dirty, rough, unkempt America. But, calling upon her faith and pure Irish stubbornness, she stuck with it and, in time, she learned to love the west. She bore five children, four girls and one boy, Mary Elizabeth, Brigid, Patricia, Cecilia, and Dan.

Meanwhile, Casper faced its own kind of culture shock: Prohibition. In 1919, Alice Dodds had sat near the kitchen one evening, listening as her father and the others who worked the Effell, discussed in earnest how to vote on Prohibition.

Voting was an important concern to the ranchers and the Effell was a voting precinct, a fact of which Mr. Dodds was quite proud. Relief shifts were always arranged so that each worker could ride in to the precinct to vote.

Prohibition, of course, passed, and its enforcement, in 1924, sparked Congressional Debate on the National Origins Act calling for restrictions on immigration. The argument ran that Prohibition, the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, was difficult for many immigrants to understand, as many drank wine with meals and alcohol was part of nearly every celebration. It was, therefore, allowed that in certain instances, persons could make and store their own wine for private use. Surprisingly, given the populace of the state, Wyoming delegates stayed out of this potentially vociferous debate. Perhaps it was because the immigration to Wyoming was slowing and many of those coming in now were already Americans. An era had gradually passed and the Irish were becoming a part of the community, rather than a guiding force.

During Prohibition, those who wanted to drink increasingly made their own, and, once made, it was quite tempting to sell it. Officials often looked the other way, and, if caught, westerners were quite creative with their excuses. Mash, for example, was cited in the courtroom as a wonderful feed for chickens and alcohol was also suddenly the best "medicine" for every kind of illness. Another claimed he used it for snake bites, at which the Sheriff pointed out there simply were not enough snakes in the whole country to use up the booze this gentleman had produced.

Natrona County proved no exception to the rule. The Annals of Wyoming record one of our own was arrested for bootlegging, all the while proclaiming he was merely making "sacrificial wine." Whereupon, the judge looked down and asked, "600 gallons of sacrificial wine?"

The bootlegger replied, "Well, I ship it to Rock Springs, Cheyenne and Sheridan." The judge with a wry humor, fined the wine-maker \$100 and confiscated the sacrificial wine-making still.

In Casper, Alice Dodds recalled many prominent families made and sold alcohol. The product was much more dangerous than commercially prepared alcohol and people occasionally died from drinking it. Thus, it was generally from this angle that the

subject was broached from the pulpit. Nevertheless, bootlegging went on in this town and county long after Prohibition was repealed.

On September 27, 1923, Casper suffered one of the worst disasters in its history. A flood at Cole Creek 14 miles east of town damaged the bridge there. As Train #30 of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy line, left Casper on its way to Denver, its passengers and crew were unaware of the problem.

At Cole Creek that night, the train and the 70 people aboard it plunged into the cold waters. Thirty died, and Casper was yet again reminded harshly of the temporal nature of this life.

The population was rapidly rising by 1923, but tough times lay ahead, and within the next few years, more than half of Casper's population could move away for want of livelihood.

Nevertheless, Casper would forge ahead in other ways. The church was still a focal point of social activity. Those who remember these days, remember most fondly the grand bazaars and dinners most often held at the Old Mullin Club.

Catherine Dean (to be Barrett) recalled, "The bazaars were something to see. There were many, many tables, all sorts of things going on. My mother (Anna Burke Dean, sister to Mickey Burke) used to get up at dawn to finish her baking on bazaar day, and she wouldn't get home until late, late that night."

Catherine, it is interesting to note, grew up in the vacated Trevett home, which is now the America Theatre. She remembers being told how the sideboard where her mother dried the dishes, had once been used as an altar.

As she grew older, she helped her mom with Altar and Rosary Society projects. At dinners, each lady was responsible for her own table, providing the linens, the table service and waiting on it.

Anne Dilso was enamored of the early processions. Before the school opened, all the Catholic children [Casper 1987, 31] participated on Holy Thursday. The girls in pretty white dresses; four boys carried a canopy as the priests walked beneath it to the church. "It was all very thrilling for the children," she said.

During these years a new family had come to town as well. James and Catherine Sweeney arrived in Casper in 1923 with their two daughters, Mary and Frances. They came from Fort Worth, Texas, where James had worked with his brother, Myles, since 1919. Irish immigrants from County Donegal, only young Frances could claim to be native American. Two other Sweeney brothers, Patrick and Con, were already in Casper to greet them.

Eventually, the brothers opened a family grocery store on Midwest Avenue, and Catherine became an active member of St. Anthony's Altar and Rosary Society.

When James Sweeney died some years later, Catherine married Patrick. Catherine and Patrick died on the same month and day, September 3rd, she in 1974, he in 1983.

In the Fall of 1925, a mission was given in Casper by two priests of the Congregation of the Holy Cross, Frs. Boyle and Molloy. One result was an active Holy Name Society, formally organized in January 1926 by Rev. Durkin, O. P., of Denver. Officers included M. J. Burke, president; J. P. Golden, vice-president; J. A. Gaisler, secretary; W. A. Reipel, treasurer and D. P. Cullen, Wm. Cronin, A. L. LaClair and H. J. Clare, consultors.

Meanwhile, Bishop McGovern and Fr. Mullin were making plans. The Bishop, seeing that Wyoming was wide open and would eventually attract many settlers, began a campaign to bring priests into the area, many of them straight from Ireland.

Thus, in the Fall of 1926, arrived two young priests to serve as assistants to Fr. Mullin. Fr. Moreton was designated to look after the growing oilfield mission, saying weekly Mass, every Sunday in Midwest. Up to this time, Catholics in the oilfields were ministered by the Franciscan Fathers of Douglas, who were able to say Mass there but once a month. In April of 1927, however, Fr. Moreton was transferred to Rawlins and Fr. Walter Nicholson came to take his place.

Fr. Mullin's other assistant was to become one of the most important men in Casper's Catholic history. He was [Casper 1987, 32] the newly-ordained Father Thomas O'Reilly. He was just 26 at the time. Folks remember him and Fr. Nicholson as being "so green (Irish green) that you couldn't understand a word they said." But, they were welcomed with open arms by the Irish community.

The young Fr. O'Reilly is remembered as being a big man, though pictures show him not much taller than Fr. Mullin, who is remembered as being short. Fr. O'Reilly was strong physically, however, and those who, as children, remember his early days in

Casper, best recall how they would cajole him into playing a game of kickball, and would stand in awe, as the ball soared high in the air out of the playground and clear across the street.

Fr. O'Reilly's athletic prowess, however, never surpassed his piety, and for this he came to be perhaps the most loved and respected man in the Casper community.

To Teach The Children (1927-1936)

[Casper 1987, 34] With a little help those days, Fr. Mullin was finally able to start pushing the plans he had been making for Casper. Development of a school became a top priority.

We have seen Fr. Mullin's concern for the youth of the city and his feeling that they were not being blessed with the benefits of a truly Christian upbringing. Thus, he dove into this particular project with great zeal. And the parishioners, concerned about the influences surrounding their children, joined him. Teams and Captains were formed in a formal fund-raising campaign. Leon C. Goodrich was chosen as the architect. Lot 5 Block 38 was purchased from Julia Mueller for \$5500 and the home thereon became the temporary residence of the parish clergy.

On May 7, 1927, construction bids were opened and awarded to Carson & Schultz for building at \$35,580; J. Donohoe Plumbing for plumbing for \$7,384; E. G. Erickson and Son for painting and decorating for \$1,289.95; with the additions and plan changes coming to \$1,670.50. Thus, the building when finished and completely furnished, came to approximately \$45,000.

Wasting not a moment, groundbreaking came on May 11, 1927. In a very uncharacteristic move, perhaps indicating their desire to get the building built, the Catholics of Casper held no ceremony or celebration to mark the groundbreaking or laying of the cornerstone.

Meanwhile, Fr. Mullin was busy rounding up nuns to teach in the school. He had purchased a residence at 634 S. Durbin, a six-room, two-story house which sat on the corner of what is now 7th and Durbin. It cost \$12,000 and served as a modest convent for the sisters. Each felt most fortunate to have a room with hot and cold running water. The quarters were certainly cramped, but the nuns never complained or sought to better their conditions. They ran the school, with God's guidance, and had faith always that He would provide for their needs.

These exceptional women were the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, come from Iowa to minister the third parochial school in Wyoming. The first year's faculty included six sisters, with two others to arrive in October.²

According to the Annals of St. Anthony's School, the nuns looked upon their new assignment with great [Casper 1987, 35] anticipation, "for there was a verve, a charm to that beginning year that was peculiarly its own - a spirit of adventure pervaded even the most ordinary happenings, and cast upon them almost the warm glow of romance."

Fittingly enough, the Superior, Sister Mary Leandre, was the first to arrive and blaze the trail. Sister Mary Camille was her companion. They reached Casper August 22, 1927, followed the next day by Sisters Mary Timothy, Aglae, Demetria and Roberto.

As the house was not quite ready for occupancy, the sisters stayed in The Mullin Club until August 26, when the convent was completed. It was blessed by Father Mullin on the following day.

The financial problems of the foundations were nicely solved on the day after our arrival, by the payment of our salaries up to January 1. This, with a loan from Sister Mary Mona, tided us over the first months, when naturally, there were extraordinary expenses. Not the least of these was the purchase of two pianos, a baby grand and an apartment square. Three others were loaned by people leaving Casper, which proved a saving little short of miraculous, as the music class has, from the very beginning, been one of the most prominent features of the missions.

After moving into the convent, all our efforts were bent towards improvising an altar from packing boxes, so that we were able to have Mass in the house a few days after our arrival. This proved only a very temporary measure, as an altar was presented to the sisters by Mr. Henning, almost immediately."

With the good sisters settled in, it was time to open the school. On Sunday, September 10, 1927, St. Anthony's Catholic School was dedicated. Ceremonies included inspection and blessing of the school, after which the assembled throng repaired to the church in a line of march headed by the Casper Band.

The Most Reverend Patrick McGovern, D.D., bishop of Cheyenne, was present on his throne in the sanctuary, flanked by Father A. Breen, S. J., President of Regis College in Denver, and Father J. Lannon, S. J. of the Indian Mission in Riverton. High Mass was sung at 10:30 a.m. by Fr. Mullin. Fr. Nicholson was master of ceremonies

The Bishop preached what was termed “an eloquent sermon on the subject of Catholic education, and the duty devolving on parents to see that their children attend Catholic institutions of learning.” He also complimented Fr. Mullin on the great work he had achieved in Casper.

In discourse with the nuns, Fr. Mullin made it plain that his educational vision was to be, “to make better citizens not only of this world, but of the next.” A monumental task, indeed. The school motto is “for God and Country.”

That evening, the celebration continued as parishioners and others gathered at the Henning Hotel for a banquet.

On Monday, classes began. There were 201 students that first year in grades one through six. Among them were Joseph Burke and Rita Kelliher. Both remember those days with fondness. Joseph Burke was in the second graduating class. Rita, being a bit younger, entered the first grade, the first year.

Through the years, Rita gained great respect and love for the BVM sisters. She recalls the uniforms the girls wore: navy wool blouses with skirts and collars and cuffs. The linen collars and cuffs had to be cleaned and sewn back on every week. She remembers, too, memorizing a great many songs, poems and recitations, especially for the St. Patrick’s Day celebration, which with all the Irish of Casper, was among the most popular of holidays.

But, most of all, Rita looks back on her days at St. Anthony’s School as among the most important of her life. [Casper 1987, 37] It was there and at home that she learned of Christian values and the Catholic way of life.

According to Bishop McGovern’s History of the Diocese, the opening of St. Anthony’s School had an edifying effect on all the people of the parish (just as Fr. Mullin had predicted) and there was a gradual increase in the number of persons receiving the sacraments and in those attending daily Mass.

It was not all roses, however, at least for the nuns who had to settle this rag-tag bunch of children into a strict routine. An incident at the very beginning illustrates what they were up against.

Within weeks after school opened, the sisters were upset by the oil of cinnamon which the children were using and which created quite a strong scent throughout the building.

Their concern led the pastor to write to the Bureau of Public Health Service for more information as to why the children might require such treatment. A reply was received on October 29, 1927 from R. C. Williams by direction of the Surgeon General. He stated that the Journal of the National Association of Retail Druggists of 1914 reported in a similar case that the children of Lima, Ohio used cinnamon oil as an intoxicant! The sisters immediately began a campaign to remedy the situation.

1 There were other pranks visited upon the sisters as well. There's a tale told of a budding young Catholic scientist who blew out three windows of the school with his chemistry set, and of cats placed in pianos for music-time chaos, and of a rebellion by little boys required to dress up like girls for a rendition of "The Good Ship Lollipop!" It seems there was quite a display of bloomers on that one, and such display was not met with the slightest amusement by the sisters.

Investigating these incidents, I developed some sympathy for the sisters. In many cases, the culprits are, even yet, unidentified. They will be known only to God for all eternity. Needless to say, these errant angels were eventually brought to order and are today some of our city's leading citizens. (You can guess all you want, but you'll not get confirmation from a single one. A conspiracy of silence, this.)

Nonetheless, the school survived. In 1928, a seventh grade was added and in 1929, an eighth grade, too. Whereupon, one Jack Sullivan took it upon himself to teach each eighth grade class the proper way to execute an Irish jig, thus assuring an important aspect of the students' education. Fr. O'Reilly taught religion classes, and you can be sure, there was no tomfoolery there. He also assisted in the training of altar boys and with athletic activities of the parish youth.

Fr. Nicholson spent a great deal of time with the children, too, and was especially appreciated by the altar boys who served at 7 a.m. Mass, for it seems Fr. Nicholson could say the entire Latin Mass in a mere 12 minutes!

On Sunday, the children were required to attend a special Children's Mass, at which the nuns would take attendance. Should a child miss, he or she would be expected to explain to sister at school the next day.

First Communion required all the children to dress in white but, as they were relegated to the unfinished basement of the church to wait for their cue, many did not emerge that way for the final procession. No matter, the ceremony was always noted with great pride by pastor, sisters, students and their parents and friends, as it is even today.

In May of 1929, the school held its first May Procession with one Betty Goodman crowned as Queen. The yearly processions were always met with much fuss. Great import was placed on being named its Queen.

In June of 1930, St. Anthony's graduated thirty-three students. Among the graduates were Jack Schulte, Frank Burke, Neil Sullivan, Robert Tobin, Martha Mahoney, Clifford Tobin and Bernard Sullivan.

The ladies of the church soon decided they needed to organize their efforts. The first recorded president of St. Anthony's Altar and Rosary Society was Mrs. James Daly in 1929. Meetings were held on the second Thursday of each month in various places, such as The Mullin Club, the Knights of Columbus Hall, and the school auditorium. Coffees or teas with programs were the order of the day, and apostolic and civic functions took up the serious work. Altar care, funeral dinners, hospital visitations and charity work have always taken top priority with St. Anthony's parishioners, particularly with the women.

Meanwhile, Casper and Wyoming were changing as well. In 1929, Sen. Frances Warren died. He had been serving in the U. S. Senate. Warren was credited with having been the author or principal instigator of legislation protective of the sheep industry for more than a quarter of a century. He was therefore highly regarded by the people of Casper. "He was the greatest shepherd since Abraham," said co-worker Sen. J. P. Dolliver.

Republican Governor Frank Emerson then appointed Casper's own Patrick Sullivan to fill Warren's post until the next regular election. Sullivan was pleased with the appointment, but nonetheless, chose not to run for reelection the following year.

Back in town, Alice Dodds married Lewis Bradshaw who worked at Mountain States Power Company. Lewis [Casper 1987, 40] was not a Catholic, so the ceremony was held in The Mullin Club rather than the church. They had two children, Lewis and Robert.

In another ceremony, Brian Tobin (son of Dick and Julia Tobin) married Vira Barker. Vira also at that time was not Catholic, but Fr. Mullin married them anyway, and in a most unusual move, agreed to do so at her family's ranch. For this, Fr. Mullin got in trouble with the Bishop it is said. Vira later converted to Catholicism by her own choice.

With the school getting on so well, and Casper citizens planning for the future, one would think the city was growing but such was not the case. In fact, parts of the city resembled a "ghost town." Blocks of pavement, sidewalks and preliminary work on

buildings seemed to have been abandoned mid-stream as homes lay vacant and in silence-remnants of a future that never came to be.

The population dwindled and real estate values dropped. For example, a 12-unit apartment house in the early 1930s sold for a mere \$1200.

Things were not any better anyplace else, however, and some say Casper seemed to suffer less because her people had been through all this before. The cycle had merely come round again.

Roosevelt's New Deal brought some relief to Casper, most notably with The Casper-Alcova Project which put many to work building Seminoe and Alcova Dams, the Casper Canal, tunnels and excavations. It was a \$20 million project. In October 1933, federal aid for transients was instituted with the Salvation Army doing the work and in August 1935, indigent transients were required to work for room and board at five camps in the state, one of which was located at Casper.

It was during this time that Mary Reed remembers being thrilled to have been offered a job paying \$65 a month. John Tripeny established the American Finance Company in 1932, to help support his growing family. Lois had recently been born and was baptized by Fr. Mullin. Anne Dilso was growing up where Bennett's Restaurant came to be, and her father was now running Joe's Auto Court (a motel) and Joe's Service Station.

Maurice Kelliher was working for the Fire Department and so, his daughter remembers, he at least had job security. But she also recalls others less fortunate. People would come to the back door. "If you had food, you gave them some," she said, "and they would eat out by the gate and leave." People called them hobos, and they came and went with the railroad, each with a story that never got told.

Alice Bradshaw remembers the Depression as well. "Many people just left." She recalls one day a 14-year-old boy showed up at the Effell looking for work. He had left home as there were younger brothers and sisters there who needed what little food the family had. He felt he was a burden to his family. The Dodds gave him room and board and he lived in a sheepwagon out back. When there was money, he got a bit of a salary. He turned out to be a very good worker, and he stayed at the Ranch until World War II.

Families became very important when times were so tough, and falling back on the old Irish custom, people helped their own if they could, and then they helped others, too.

Many of Casper's shepherders lost their businesses during the Depression. Sheep simply weren't selling. Alice Bradshaw remembers how hard it was on the Effell. The government instituted a "recovery" program whereby they would buy the sheep at \$1 a head, then slaughter them. "It was a very painful time."

The year of 1934 was a particularly bad one. There was a drought and then came sand storms. It was a disaster for the farmers, sheepmen and cattlemen who were already struggling to survive. Their stock came in off the ranges too thin to ship or sell. Prices hit rock bottom and there was no market at all. The Government Buying Project extended to farmers and ranchers who had few choices. They sold the best of their cattle for \$20 a head. Those able to travel were given to the Indian Reservations and those too thin to move were shot and disposed of.

Meanwhile, in the city proper, St. Anthony's was becoming a clearinghouse for the destitute. Parishioners and clergy helped set up soup kitchens to feed the hungry and arrange for shelter for the homeless. Those houses left empty became a resource. The church was instrumental in arranging for homeless families to occupy vacant homes around town. The rationale being that a home was better off lived in as it would deteriorate less quickly.

Parishioners gave through their businesses, too. Butcher shops gave away soup bones, oxtails, livers and hearts. Day-old bread was sold for pennies. Grocers provided stewing hens and eggs for the poor.

Fr. Mullin offered The Mullin Club as a general meeting place, and many organizations, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, organized and managed community welfare programs from its rooms.

The BVM nuns were suffering, too. Donations were, of course, meager in tough times, and these good ladies were not apt to complain. Meanwhile, they got thinner beneath their habits and ate little and prayed much.

It finally became apparent, these women needed help. The parish ladies came to their aid. The Silver Tea tradition was instituted. The idea was to have a tea for the nuns. Those attending would donate silver dollars on silver trays which the nuns could then use as they wished. In later years, the annual Tea proceeds were used to send the sisters to teachers' schools in summer, but in those early years, it was much more a necessity for their survival.

It became a social event, too, as the children helped serve and provided background music on the piano. The nuns were not allowed out after dark, so the Teas were an afternoon affair.

Merchants helped the sisters in their predicament, as well. Lois Tripeny recalled when her father would receive an order in the store from the sisters, he would often throw [Casper 1987, 41] in some ice cream or candy as a treat, and he never charged them for medicine. In return, he would receive a thank you note and the promise of a rosary said in honor of the Tripeny family.

The BVMs were semi-cloistered then and had little to do with the outside world except in their work at the school. Thus, their lives were kind of a mystery and fascination to the children.

Once a week, it was said, they allowed themselves a recreation night when some fun activity might be enjoyed. Lois remembers one day the children were asked to bring their rollerskates and leave them in the hallway overnight. It was all very hush, hush. Ostensibly, the sisters would be rollerskating down the halls that night. It conjures quite a picture of the nuns, their habits billowing as they sailed down the hallways of St. Anthony's at breakneck speeds. No one knows if it ever really happened but, like the student pranksters, one doubts if anyone ever will know. But, surely, these dear ladies had their own releases for what would today be known as stress.

The thirties brought some new faces to the church as Frs. O'Reilly and Nicholson were both transferred and, for the first time in history, the assistants were replaced with native Wyoming priests. The Reverend Leo Morgan of Laramie and the Reverend Fred Kimmett of Powell became assistants to Fr. Mullin.

In 1935, Leo Boehler came to town to go to St. Anthony's School. He came from Verse, Wyoming in northern Converse County. His parents boarded him with relatives of Kate Mechaley for \$20 a month. John and Grace Mechaley lived at 449 CY Avenue. Leo entered the sixth grade at St. Anthony's School that year.

Leo's impressions of Casper come from a child's eye view, giving a fresh perspective which differs from that of natives of the city. Perhaps because Leo was just a little boy when he arrived, homesick but trying to act tough, as little boys were fully expected to do in those days, he observed many things and remembers them vividly. Leo is today a member of St. Anthony's Parish Council, and shares his memories herewith:

“John Mechaley, it seems, was a policeman for the city of Casper. His brother-in-law was also a policeman. But as they were on opposite sides of the political fence, with no Civil Service to protect them, it depended on who was mayor as to who had a job. For example, if Rolfes was mayor, John was out of a job and his brother-in-law was [Casper 1987, 43] working; if Cowan was mayor, John had a job but his brother-in-law was unemployed.”

Leo recalls, as this situation also existed with the fire department, it often created serious rifts among families, friends and parishioners. He remembers too, that Fr. Mullin, and O’Reilly after, spent many an hour trying to make peace out of the chaos herein created.

When Mr. Mechaley was out of a job, he usually found other employment as he could, working perhaps as a bartender or janitor until the next election.

Grace Mechaley was like a mother to Leo while he stayed in her home (which seems to have been quite definitely a job for a Christian sort of woman!). “She would give me 15 cents per weekend to go to the show. Usually, I would stop at the Royal Bar and Cafe. They had the best ice cream soda in town for a nickel,” Leo chuckles. “But they also had some slot machines by the door on the way out as gambling was wide open in those days.” Leo would change his remaining dime for two nickels, climb up on the machine and “ride the handle down.”

“I always hoped to win,” he explains, “but usually lost and had to forget about the show until the next week.”

He remembers that the Sand Bar was going strong in those days, too, and all the children were strictly forbidden to go there. EVER! Of course, this gave the whole area an almost magical fascination, speculated upon frequently by young Leo and his classmates.

Given all of this, one can see why Leo’s parents considered it imperative to give this child a good, Christian education. Going to St. Anthony’s was indeed a challenge for the young Mr. Boehler. First, he had to get there.

“One had to walk by Park School every day.” Though real religious prejudice like that experienced in the 1920s was no longer prevalent in Casper, certain terms like “Fish Eater” and “Red Neck” were not foreign to students of St. Anthony’s. And, Leo and his friends, being of the proper age and temperament, were involved in “more than a few

fist fights, not so much for standing up for my faith as it was for pure survival," Leo explains.

Once at school, there was a single classroom for each grade. The nuns were very strict, and in those bulky habits, made austere and frightening silhouettes as they towered sternly above little boys. "There wasn't a doubt in anyone's mind that they had eyes in the backs of their heads," Leo recalls, "and one couldn't find a single desk in the entire school of St. Anthony with even the tiniest carve mark in it."

Leo remembers the Sunday Masses were scheduled at 8 a.m. for the children and 10 a.m. for adults. "We always had to go to the 8 o'clock, as it was for the children and I usually sang in the choir." The songs, of course, were in Latin and Leo claims he had no idea what he was singing. "But I always found them most profound and impressive, anyway," he says.

"The choir was also my first experience with the fact that if you finished your song before the rest of the group, you were far from the best in the class!"

The early Mass for working people had not yet been instituted, Leo notes, as Catholics were expected to keep holy the Sabbath. Sunday was a day of rest.

The only store in town that was open on Sunday, according to Leo, was the "Bluebird," which stood where the Cheese Barrel stands today. There were more than a few jaundiced casts of the eye and knowing nods in that direction as parishioners left the church each week!

Leo recalls his Confirmation at St. Anthony's in the mid-1930s, the Most Reverend Patrick McGovern officiating.

"We had been threatened with our lives to bone up on the Baltimore Catechism. If we would have failed to answer one of the questions at the Confirmation, we would probably have been turned to stone, or at least that's what we thought.

I was small for my age and had to lead the line for the boys at the ceremony, adding to my distress." Fittingly, Leo took the name of Anthony at his Confirmation.

Another student of St. Anthony's, Mary Theresa Kelliher, also shared some memories of these years. Mary remembers the excitement of the bazaars and running around the church buildings, "like I give the kids dirty looks for doing now. We used to race to see

who would get to play jacks at the top of the steps of The Mullin Club because that was the coolest place," she said.

While she attended the school, Mary took part in at least one drama program, as a first grader. A man named Cornelius Turner made the props. "He made my spider; I was Miss Muffet," she said proudly. Elsie Neithamer had the starring role that year, and the play was put on in the high school auditorium.

Mary notes also that, in 1936, all the Irish Catholic Democrats formed Conga lines to go through the school hallways singing, "Vote for Landon and Knox, you'll lose your shoes and socks!" Roosevelt, of course, was the winner that year.

This was an important period for other church members, as well. In 1935, Mary Louise Reed had married Dr. George Baker and soon after, began classes to convert to Catholicism. The classes were instructed by Fr. Mullin, a good friend of her husband's. She remembers Fr. Mullin fondly and enjoyed learning about the Catholic faith from him.

There was trouble brewing, however, and one day Mary Louise went to her class to find that Fr. Mullin had left the diocese and would be replaced as Pastor by Fr. O'Reilly. Fr. Mullin's departure from the parish he built was based on several factors, one was his health which seemed to be deteriorating, the other on a financial disagreement with the church.

Fr. Mullin, as it turns out, was human like the rest of us. That he should have fallen to temptation does not deter from the great things he accomplished. He affected many lives and his many good works in this city are still evident in the memories he left behind. He had faithfully fulfilled, at least in part, God's mission for him in Casper.

Casper's Irish Priest (1936)

[Casper 1987, 44] Enter Father Thomas F. O'Reilly. He came to St. Anthony's facing a \$100,000 debt and a bewildered flock of parishioners who felt betrayed and confused by the troubles of the times compounded with troubles within their beloved church.

Fr. O'Reilly charged in, in typical no-nonsense fashion, to the great relief of parishioners who needed a strong leader just now. Father was, of course, no stranger to Casper and was welcomed with open arms. The year was 1936. Fortunately for all, he was quite a financial whiz, and church records from this point on, read like some highbrow Wall

Street firm - buying and selling of property, building contracts, renovations and various and sundry other financial data, all so locked-up and legal as to be hardly discernable to a commoner like myself.

Fr. O'Reilly was also an Irishman, which endeared him to the still mostly Irish congregation on a personal level as well. As one interviewee aptly noted, "He was one of their own."

But, make no mistake, this Fr. O'Reilly was an Irish priest of the first order, very pious and strict. Many things came only in black and white to him. Sometimes, this was difficult for the easy-going Casperites, especially after some of Fr. Mullin's fairly liberal policies. Yet, his Irish ways earned Fr. O'Reilly the respect of the people he served, for tho' you may not always agree with such a man, you must admire him greatly. And so they did.

In fact, they got used to his formal sermons and listened in earnest to his words, learning a great many things from this Irishman. And outside of the church, they knew he would also be there for them. Parishioners marvel at their memories. "It seemed he was always there, at every meeting or function. I don't ever remember him being sick or missing anything." Fr. O'Reilly was a very visible priest. His coming back to St. Anthony's was truly a blessing for all.

Fr. O'Reilly must have been a fascinating man, multi-faceted and very human. People remember him as being very big, though he does not appear so in pictures. His presence, however was certainly imposing. Dorothy Mahoney related to her non-Catholic friends how the children would bow their heads and try desperately to hide behind their books when he entered the classroom. Yet, as years went by, the greatest honor afforded a child of St. Anthony's School would be to have his or her picture taken with the Monsignor (as Fr. O'Reilly would some day be).

Though his outward ways seemed stern, he also had what has been described as a "cream-puff" side. And it was this side which showed itself in kick-ball games in the schoolyard, paternal pride in the children of St. Anthony's and their accomplishments, and the inside story of St. Patrick's Day celebrations among the Irish (and not-so-Irish) priests wherein the voice of Monsignor leads all others in a medley of Irish songs. Also, his tenderness and many kindnesses towards the people of his parish in times of crisis cannot be overlooked in any description of this many-sided man.

All this notwithstanding, the pastor of St. Anthony's, in accepting the position, also took on the role of instructor to many new priests in Wyoming, particularly those from Ireland. To them, Fr. O'Reilly was one to be reckoned with.

At any rate, Fr. O'Reilly was back, and on May 14, 1936, he took over leadership of the Church of St. Anthony. A mere two weeks later, he was faced with the sadness of having to announce to the students of the school that their Mother Superior, Sister Mary Kyran, BVM, had died of pneumonia.

Many Casper residents remember this as a very emotional time. For so many of the children, it was their first experience with death. A wake was held and they made visitation to the body, as was customary at the time. Lois remembers it as a frightening experience for she was quite young. Frank Schulte acted as a pall-bearer and recalls this as one of the first times he considered the nuns and their way of life. He saw the inside of the convent and was struck by the austerity of it, and came to respect these women a great deal more for the sacrifices they made to God.

The passing of Sr. Mary Kyran affected many people but perhaps none so much as the young Margaret Shea. Margaret was the daughter of Con and Mary Agnes Shea, both of whom had come to Casper from County Cork, Ireland. He was a shepherd. Both Con and Mary died in 1928, leaving their four children orphans. They were placed in foster homes, and raised, lovingly, by the people of Casper. Margaret's brother Con, was recognized early on as one of St. Anthony's brightest children. Eventually, he moved to Colorado and served in state government there for more than thirty years until his death in 1986.

Margaret's other brother, Patrick, was but an infant when his parents died. He went to live with Hugh and Margaret Meenan, and was legally adopted by them at the age of six. Today, Pat Meenan serves as Speaker of the House in the Wyoming State Legislature.

After her parents died, Margaret lived for many years with the Mulvaney family of Casper. Vincent Mulvaney was an attorney for the Northwest Railroad and was very active in the church. Margaret also has memories of "Aunt Delia" Burke, who was Patsy Burke's widow, and who eventually married Mickey Burke. Delia was mother to James, who joined the Jesuit priesthood. At any rate, Margaret remembers her as a very good woman with a soft spot for anyone needing help. She befriended young Margaret, took in the children of the Burke combined marriage, and even helped the sisters as best she could. She was, in fact, one of the organizers of the first Silver Tea. Margaret remembers,

too, a man named Ralph Conroy, who for years, gave up Sunday afternoons to take the sisters for rides up Casper Mountain or out to the lake, to help [Casper 1987, 45] brighten their lives a bit.

Margaret was awed by the church and the Christianity that surrounded her. As a very small girl, she was convinced that it was Jesus, and not a mere altar boy, who rang the bells at Benediction. When she grew older, the Church took on even more meaning as the BVM nuns impressed her as devoted and caring women, living in service to God. Thus, when Sister Mary Kyran died, Margaret Shea said, "I received the grace of my vocation. I felt that I should take her place." That year, she joined the order of the BVM nuns and took the name of Sister Mary Kyran Shea. Sister celebrated her fiftieth anniversary with the BVMs in 1987.

The War Years In Casper (1936-1945)

[Casper 1987, 47] After the stress and initial shock of losing Sister Mary K, Fr. O'Reilly turned his attentions to financial matters and a gradual recovery of the deeply indebted Church.

On September 23, 1937, however, an event occurred which brought even Fr. O'Reilly out of the office and into the streets. Mr. and Mrs. Franklin Delano Roosevelt came through Casper on a campaign tour. The procession was scheduled to go down Wolcott St., so St. Anthony's School students prepared an honor guard. Funny thing, though, it wasn't Roosevelt who got the most attention that day. It was a Catholic named Ed "600" Hadley. He was an uncle to Lots Tripeny.

Ed, it seems, was quite a character, always looking to advertise his business which happened to be a florist shop on East Second Street. The "600" in his nickname was his telephone number and he drove around town in a car covered with postage stamps. Not exactly a subtle kind of guy.

On the day of Roosevelt's visit, Mr. Hadley saw an opportunity to make a promotional coup and honor the President too. He prepared a huge bouquet of flowers with pencils and various other articles in it. And, as the President passed, he ran out to the car with his gift.

"Darn near got himself shot," is the way Frank Schulte put it. Needless to say, the Secret Service rushed in to intercept Mr. Hadley posthaste, and whisked him and his flowers away. Questioning followed and Mr. Hadley was kept under close surveillance until the

Roosevelts were well out of town. The incident was met with much amusement by the townspeople who knew Ed, but the Secret Service uttered nary a chuckle over it, nor did Ed himself.

Not all the stories of St. Anthony's and its parishioners are amicable. There are some which leave one feeling a little off balance. Through the years, there have been those who have fallen away from the church, or who have been pushed.

As we have seen, Fr. O'Reilly had a way of looking at things according to strict Catholic doctrine, and was not one to look the other way.

A man named Vic Marker lived in Casper in the 1930s and, though he considered himself a good Catholic and always attended church, Father denied him the sacraments after he was divorced from his wife.

Vic, according to those who knew him, was a softhearted, generous man and was hurt by this, but Fr. O'Reilly was adamant.

At any rate, Vie was one of the best, if not the best, boxer in this part of the country and, when he teamed with Terry (Terrible Terry) Carpenter as his manager, he fought many successful bouts. He made the Boxing Hall of Fame and, according to Leo Boehler, his greatest accomplishment was beating out Archie Moore (who later fought Floyd Patterson for the heavyweight championship of the world) in the Golden Glove Finals. But, as near as can be told, he NEVER won his bout or reconciled his differences with Father Thomas F. O'Reilly.

Other Casper Catholics were lost along the way. The Trevett family, for example, had a falling out with the Church way back when Fr. Bryant left, and their surname does not appear on church function lists again, though Casperites were always grateful for their help in the early days. Some members of the Trevett family pushed on to California, and a daughter lived most of her life in Casper.

Thus, Fr. O'Reilly was not the first Casper priest to take a stand on the worthiness of a person to receive the sacraments. Even Fr. Mullin, who was liberal in some matters, was known to have withheld his blessings in some cases. In the early days, for instance, it was Fr. Mullin who passed up country school teacher Gladys Ford as she knelt at the railing for communion. After Mass, Father explained, "She was wearing lipstick!" Of all things! Priests are people, too, and like any of the rest of us, they need to do what seems right to them at the time. The Christian concept of forgiveness runs in all directions.

Life continued apace. The Dunns had grandchildren by now and Mr. Dunn, still enjoying the nice things life had to offer, drove first a Packard and then a Nash with a rumble seat.

The Tripenys, John and Mae, were doing quite well due to John's active entrepreneurial spirit, and Lois remembers her family as warm and close-knit. Her mother was active in the Altar and Rosary Society and other women's groups. In fact, she served as the first treasurer of the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women (CCW).

In 1939, Oscar Hiestand died after serving as Casper's Fire Chief for more than 40 years, the place, it seems, where he finally found his niche.

As the decade ended, happenings in Europe seemed to be closing in on people and could no longer be ignored. The church held special collections to aid the German refugees, and people turned to prayer in their anxiety.

By mid-October of 1940, Natrona County had registered 2500 young men for the draft, and on January 1, 1941, Bishop McGovern sent this notice to his priests:

"We urge you to show the greatest solicitude for all our American boys in the C. G. C. Camps or military cantonments; and when the government makes decisions in these critical times, let us give it loyal support."

America would enter the war soon, and everyone knew it. It was now just a matter of time. Everyone waited. December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor was attacked, and the United States officially entered World War II.

The war brought changes to Casper and none can deny that it brought people and prosperity, as well as heartbreak. Early on, the Department of Defense discovered that the air currents above the city presented unusual flying conditions which could greatly advance the training of bomber pilots. Consequently, construction was begun on an Army Air Base eight miles west of Casper, its major mission being to give the final phase of four-engine [Casper 1987, 51] bomber training. Thus, in the spring of 1942, government construction contracts put more than 4,000 people to work and the city finally emerged from its Depression doldrums.

Replacing the 220 young men and women who left Casper to serve in the various branches of military service, were hundreds of servicemen who were stationed at the Air Base.

Leo Boehler was among those who left to serve in the Navy. Enlisting in December 1942, Leo would spend the next three years in basic training, radio school and aboard ship in the Pacific Theater. No doubt, he was given a send-off by Casper's Aloha Committee which permitted no recruit to leave town without special honors. All were treated as heroes.

And, although war is perhaps the greatest sin of man, this particular war seemed to have greater justification than many of those since.

In the Fall of 1942, men and planes began to arrive, among them Dick Blower, Anne's husband, who served as an instructor. From October on, squadrons of huge war planes filled the skies over Casper making the people constantly aware of the frightening presence of war.

At first, there was no Catholic chaplain on the base and the priests of St. Anthony's graciously assumed the duties of auxiliary chaplains to meet the spiritual needs of the men. Masses were held every Sunday and confessions were heard regularly in the field chapel, which would one day take on even greater meaning for Casper's Catholic Community.

Dr. Fred Haigler, who was base surgeon at the time, remembered the devotion of then Fr. O'Reilly, in particular, to these young men.

"The constant self-giving and perseverance of Father O'Reilly was a real faith builder for those of us who first came to St. Anthony's. Father accompanied me to every crash, to every widow's door, to every dying animal's bedside - and he never complained or let up on his pastoral duties - he just did it."

Some of the servicemen came into town for services in what must have been spiritually troubled times for them. Some brought their families, creating yet another housing shortage in Casper. But the citizens were very kind to these people, many opening their homes for room and board just to help out.

Our Lady showed her influence every Friday night as people, Catholic and non-Catholics alike, packed St. Anthony's Church to pray for peace, an end to the war and a safe return of American boys. The Novenas brought hope, and a parish history of the time reflects:

“During these years, devotion to Our Blessed Mother received a marvelous impetus as anxious parents participated in Friday evening Novena devotion to Our Sorrowful Mother. Indeed, to her powerful intercession is attributed the fact that out of the many who saw military service, a comparatively small number failed to return (to Casper).”

In fact, many of those who had served at the Air Base returned with their families after the war, contributing greatly to Casper’s growth and prosperity. And with the increased population, came a proportionate increase in the [Casper 1987, 52] number of St. Anthony’s parishioners.

It is fascinating to note here that the chapel on the Air Base which served the soldiers of World War II eventually became Our Lady of Fatima Church, named for the very Lady who at Fatima in 1917 predicted that war. And many of the Casperites who served in the war sit in that parish today, nourished again by (and perhaps only here because of) devotion to this Sacred Lady who promised to hear the prayers and requests of her faithful people. There are many who say that the Novenas made a difference in the outcome of the war and, even in Casper, there is evidence of this.

Those who could not serve in the military, nonetheless contributed to the war effort. Mr. Ray Studer, who had moved to Casper in 1941, was one who worked tirelessly.

Ray moved here from Minnesota with his wife Louise and seven children. Two more would be born in Casper. His son Mike was killed in the war, and another son, Gordon, served as a Lieutenant in the Marines. Ray brought a heavy duty equipment business to Casper which eventually served the whole state.

A good Catholic and a good citizen, Ray Studer offered much to Casper. During the war, he was the local campaign manager of a major home-front operation whereby thousands of tons of scrap metals, rubber, clothing, kitchen fats, silk and nylon were collected. The state’s largest single contribution to this effort came in the form of 30,000 tons of rails from the Northwestern line just west of Casper.

Ray spent many hours coordinating collection and removal of scrap iron which was duly loaded and sent to the foundry to help in the war effort.

Ray Studer is also the man credited with helping to break the barriers between the Masons and the Catholics in Casper. A most likable businessman and a good human being, Ray was eventually awarded the Honorary Green Fez by the Masons.

With all those children. Ray also took an interest in scouting. For many years, he led Casper boys in the adventures of the Boy Scouts, winning two Silver Antelope awards and eventually, the Boy Scouts' highest honor, the Silver Beaver award.

The Church took an active interest in scouting in those days, too. In fact, Bishop McGovern in a letter to his priests, stated, "We should like to emphasize the value of the Scouting program for the Church. It cannot be gainsaid that our youth need constantly to be kept in contact with the church. The years from twelve to sixteen, are spiritual dangerous, too, if our boys are not watched over with the [Casper 1987, 53] utmost care. Scouting certainly offers us a means whereby we can supervise our youth in an efficient and complete manner. And we may add that when we say 'scouting' we mean of course Catholic scouting which combines a purely natural program with the great gifts of our faith, the Mass and the sacraments."

"The program has been given to us quite humbly. We can make it our own; we can do with it as we wish."

And this they did, making scouting an important component of Catholic education for many, many years.

During World War II, the church, school and city grew. The church acquired the Hiestand property and the two-story frame building upon it. Today, the building has been replaced by St. Anthony's Rectory.

The children at St. Anthony's School were given a patriotic point of reference and St. Anthony's was thus the first school in the city to receive the coveted School-at-War Minute Man Flag.

Mary Kelliher, having graduated from St. Anthony's in 1941, was still active in the church throughout high school. She remembers a young Father Grannan who took over the "Catholic Club." "He was fun," she recalls. And there was a Father Godley from County Kerry, Ireland, who was only at St. Anthony's one year, but who taught Mary and her friends to do the Irish Reel. Then they all went out to the Air Base and performed their dance for the servicemen at the USO Club. Lois Tripeny, John Trout and Jack Tripeny were also part of the group.

Apparently, Fr. Godley was a good step dancer and also played the horn-pipe. "Monsignor wasn't crazy about the idea, but Father went ahead anyway," Mary reports.

Father McCormick was an assistant at that time too. Mary remembers a picnic on Hat Six Road that the Father took them on. As he sat down to enjoy some fishing, a local came after him with a gun: "No Fishin' Allowed." Father got the message.

Needing an extra driver, Father asked if any of the kids could drive. Ann Sullivan raised her hand. "Of course, she couldn't drive," Mary said. "Anyway, it was quite a ride she took us on! She kept driving off the road onto the gravel, and Mrs. Tripeny in the car behind us having a fit!"

Three years after graduating from high school, this happy-go-lucky St. Anthony's girl, Mary Theresa joined the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. She took the name Sr. Mary Maurita, Maurita being a combination of her father's name, Maurice, and her sister's name, Rita. When the Sisterhood allowed it, Sister took back her given name, and today is known as Sr. Mary Kelliher, BVM. Today, Sister is still offering her special brand of joy to the people of Wyoming, serving in Green River in the pastorate of another native Casperite, Father Gene Sullivan.

Another St. Anthony's girl is mentioned quite often. Casper knew her as Julia Bowman. Julia grew up with the Kelliher girls. When she graduated from high school, she went to Clark College in Dubuque. The College was the first one opened by the BVM nuns. She was a very intelligent young woman. She graduated and entered the BVM Order, taking the name of Sister Mary Antonio.

From there, she went to Chicago to teach English and Literature, eventually earning her Ph. D. "We were all very proud of her," Rita Kelliher (Rochelle) remembered.

But in her early 1940s, Sr. Mary Antonio developed a brain tumor. Sr. Mary Kelliher recalls visiting her at the convent at Mundelein College in Chicago. By then the BVMs had opened their second college.

"She was wearing a nightcap, as they had just operated on her," Sister said, "and I remember we sang 'Hail to Casper's High School' all up and down the hall just to cheer her up." A few weeks later she died, a great loss to all of us, but an inspiration even today.

Back in Casper during the War, time moved on. Eugene Dunn was by now following in his father's footsteps, serving as agent for the railroad express. Ray Studer remembers him as a very congenial man, willing to come down to the station at all hours to open up for heavy equipment deliveries and such.

In 1944, Casper suffered the loss of one of its first citizens when Eugene's father, William F. Dunn died. His memory and his vision for Casper lived on in the people he left behind.

Meanwhile, Pat Meenan had graduated from St. Anthony's and Mary Mahoney Kelliher, mother to the Kelliher girls, was busy nursing as well as raising children. She also found time to serve with St. Anthony's Altar and Rosary Society.

The Tripenys were still active, as well, and Lois was busy working in her father's store. There, she would one day meet Joe Schickich, who would become her husband.

1944 was also the year Father O'Reilly was named consultor of the diocese and Vicar General.

Monsignor John Meyer in his book, *Look Backs*, notes the surprise with which this announcement was met [Casper 1987, 54] by other priests in the diocese. Apparently, there were some who doubted Fr. O'Reilly's abilities in business management.

However, they would soon be proven quite wrong, as Msgr. Meyer states, "He seemed to be everywhere and his parishioners were out in front for overall supervision, special gifts committee work and individual giving."

By the end of 1944, church records indicate sufficient funds were on hand to relieve the parish of all financial encumbrances. So that, on January 15, 1945, final payment was made and Fr. O'Reilly was finally free of the great debt of St. Anthony's.

Fr. O'Reilly, Msgr. Meyer adds, "was precise, knowledgeable and strict, but with a complete sense of balanced justice, a dignified figure." Surely, it would seem, Fr. O'Reilly had proven himself.

Ray Studer recalls the Father from a businessman's perspective, "a real executive and a real human being."

The Reverend O'Reilly more than lived up to the tasks presented him, as we shall soon see.

On September 8, 1944, came a letter from the Bishop, stating: "Thanks be to God, it appears that victory for the allied military forces in the European theatre of war is near at hand. When the surrender is announced, let bells be rung, and let services be held in

all the churches to express our gratitude to divine Providence without whose help all our efforts must needs be vain. Nor should the joy of triumph lead us to forget the souls of those who have fallen in battle.”

The good Bishop need not have worried, however, for when I interviewed Ray Studer more than 40 years after the fact, there still came a great sadness in his eyes and a crack in his voice, as he told me of the young boy he sent off to war, the child never to return, and the heaviness in the heart of a man who has lost a son.

The Vincent Mulvaney family also suffered the loss of their eldest son, Vincent in the war. The tragedy and pain of war can never be forgotten.

Bishop went on in his letter to encourage the collection of clothing for those in the liberated countries of Europe. “We consider this a privilege, rather than a burden,” he wrote.

And finally, it came to pass that the war was over. Casper’s Air Base was officially deactivated on March 7, 1945, certainly with a great sigh of relief from the citizens of the city.

Progressing Yet (1946-1949)

[Casper 1987, 57] After World War II, Casper never did return to the kind of town it was before the war. She had grown- exploded might be a better word- and was on her way into the modern world.

The days when shepherders ran the town, and the price of sheep controlled the economy were over. Competition from foreign wool-growers (despite a 34 cent per pound tariff) plus price ceilings on lamb, mutton and wool, plus wartime costs of labor and feed had caused many, many shepherders and related businesses to switch to cattle, or to simply quit, and take up other things.

In 1947, a man named Con Dalgarno joined the police force. He was the son of Arthur E. and Nellie Dalgarno. Arthur was, predictably, a sheep herder. He came from Aberdeen, Scotland. Nellie (formerly Eleanor Mary Josephine McGeehan) was from Londonderry, Ireland. She had come to Laramie, Wyoming in 1912 to visit her brother. On October 9, 1913, she married Arthur at St. Laurence O’Toole Church in Laramie, Fr. Hugh Cummiskey performing the ceremony. Together they came to Casper in 1919. Their sons were four: Joseph, Cornelius, Arthur and John.

Nellie, being from the same part of Ireland as Father O'Reilly, was quite fond and, apparently, defensive of him. In fact, on leaving church one day, she overheard a parishioner complaining about all the Irish priests with their Irish brogues.

"I wish we could get one you could understand," the parishioner said.

To which Nellie piped in, "What d'ye mean? Th' Irish priests 'r th' only uns ye kin understand!" Nellie was active in Altar and Rosary Society for many years and also served a term as its president.

At any rate, her son Con made Nellie very proud when he joined the police force in 1947, then moved up through the ranks from sergeant, to captain, to police chief. He retired in 1972 after giving 25 years of service to the Casper community. Con and his wife, Marie, had two daughters, Connie and Colleen.

The late 1940s found Casper concerning itself more and more with oil and building a certain quality of life for its citizens. Casper College came into being with the help of an enabling act authorizing any school district with an accredited four-year high school program to vote a special levy up to two mills for junior college work.

Thus, education became a top priority as people looked' to college for their children. Seeing this, Fr. O'Reilly called a special meeting on October 16, 1947 of all the mothers of children in St. Anthony's School. His idea was to establish a Mother's Club which would not only assist the good sisters in their work at the school, but would also help parents extend Catholic education into the homes of Casper.

On October 29, the group met again to elect its first officers and formally organize St. Anthony's School Mother's Club, which was to serve the school faithfully for the next twenty-one years through the dedicated efforts of caring mothers. Those first officers were: President: Mrs. C. P. Kobel; Vice-President: Mrs. E. M. Stadfeldt; Secretary: Mrs. H. Try on; and Treasurer: Mrs. O. M. Johnson.

Among other things, the Mother's Club sponsored educational programs for parents, throat swabbing clinics and cub scout and girl scout programs for the children.

While the Mother's Club had wonderful impact, the children still acted like children most of the time. It is from these years that Father Gene Sullivan, present pastor of the Immaculate Conception Church of Green River, pulls his memories of St. Anthony's.

Fr. Gene, you will note, is one of the Sullivan twins. One of his most vivid recollections of the sisters came as a result of a fight he had with his brother, Gerald, one afternoon in the schoolyard. It seems the sisters were praying in the Chapel of the convent, and the window was open. Just in the middle of their prayers, the voice of young Gene was heard as he let loose with a string of cuss words - about every one he knew at the time. These were directed, of course, at his errant twin. Gene was about in the fourth grade at the time.

The next day at school, Gene was told to report to the eighth grade classroom where he was greeted by a "wall of black." All nine nuns were lined up and he was required to apologize to each. "It was the longest apology I ever gave," he said.

Fr. Gene also remembers the first Mass he and his brother ever served as altar boys. Fr. McCormick "drafted" them. They were only in the third grade and you were supposed to be in fourth, "so this was big stuff," Father notes.

Years later, Gene, still an altar boy, attended the altar boy picnic up at Garden Creek. Coming down the mountain, his horse bolted, leaving Gene with a broken leg and in the hospital for his graduation from St. Anthony's School. That was the end of the altar boy picnics.

For the gentlemen of the parish, the Knights of Columbus provided social activities. In the mid-1940s, the Knights met on a regular basis and in 1947, a few of the members decided they should form a bowling team as well. The team consisted of Father Kraus, Jim Dover, Frank Bucina, Don Moore, Marvin Wilson and Leo Boehler as their captain. It is said that Fr. O'Reilly, as pastor, was not too thrilled about Fr. Kraus being on a bowling team, and perhaps he'd have been even more offended had he heard the rest of the story. Nonetheless, he did not forbid it, and Fr. Kraus played.

To add to the indignity of it all, the good Father had incredibly big feet, size 15 to be exact! He had to bowl in his stocking feet until bowling shoes that large could be acquired. Finally, a firm in New Jersey came through, but half the parish knew about the size of Father's feet by this [Casper 1987, 59] time.

Other amusing stories come from the Knights and their clubhouse. Apparently, there was a running battle going on between Mickey Burke and Maurice Kelliher.

Mickey, it was said, was a strong-minded Irish rancher with a heart of gold but a short temper.

Maurice, on the other hand, was a talker. He loved to get up in front of an audience and talk and talk and talk, and would do this repeatedly during meetings at the Knights. Mickey would take it all for just so long. Then, they say, his face would flush red and finally, he would explode, "Maurice, shut the hill up!"

Maurice would stop in the middle of his sentence and quietly sit down as if nothing had transpired! Then, it would all begin again.

Perhaps one of the most famous, or infamous, members of the Knights was Bill Carlisle. Bill was an ex-train robber who always swore he never killed anyone. The media called him the "gentleman train robber" because he refused to steal from the women on the trains, taking cash and valuables only from the men. He claimed he had spent his time in the penitentiary and thereby figured he had satisfied his duty to society.

Fellow Knights claim he was quite a good member of St. Anthony's and of the Knights, tho' he could spin some rather exciting yarns about his younger days. Bill always held that his national notoriety was greatly exaggerated by the yellow journalism of the time, but this he said with a bit of a twinkle in his eye, so no one knew for sure.

The Knights were always available for any laity church assistance, and there were many picnics at Garden Creek and other social functions associated with this stalwart men's group.

1947 brought a new Bishop to the diocese. Bishop Hubert Newell was consecrated that year to act as coadjutor to Bishop McGovern. He made his first visit to Casper in the Spring of 1948 to attend a simple function held in his honor in the auditorium of the Elks Building.

Also, in March of that year, the new carillon, a memorial to the war dead, was played for the first time at St. Anthony's Church in Casper. A carillon is a set of bells tuned to the chromatic scale and sounded by hammers controlled by a keyboard.

The event was duly noted by the Sisters of St. Anthony's who had always placed a premium on the musical instruction and knowledge of their students. Recitals and piano rehearsals were almost constant at the school and many look back on this time as a great gift, rendering them enjoyment for the rest of their lives.

Parishioners took pride in the music of the Mass, too, and the choir of these years is remembered as among the best many have ever heard. The voice of Madeline Trever is

particularly noted. It had an operatic quality which filled the church with the emotional beauty of the Roman Catholic Mass. In later years, the efforts of Wilbur and Janeth Steams, Wilbur being the choir director and Janeth the organist, were greatly appreciated by the people of St. Anthony's.

The Summer of 1948 brought a restoration of the church interior. The contract for \$8,600 went to Carl Matthias Wise, an architectural and decorative designer of St. Louis, Missouri. Meanwhile, the Hiestand House was sold to a Mr. Harold Strader for \$5,000 with the understanding that it would be moved from the site next to the church. In October of that same year, the house was hauled to 17th and Elm, as promised.

And, with Father O'Reilly's considerable vision, in January 1949, the Church of St. Anthony undertook what would become one of its greatest fund-raising challenges, that being for an addition to the school.

According to a plan devised by the American Bureau of Chicago, Illinois, a campaign was organized under the general chairmanship of William A. Schulte.

"Fired by the ardent enthusiasm of the general chairman, committee personnel worked arduously through the parish, receiving contributions and assurances in the form of signed pledges toward the quota assigned to them," according to the parish history for those years.

The parishioners didn't have a chance. It was hard sell all the way. A brochure requesting funds showed children crowded incredulously into hallways and classrooms, not unlike sardines in a can.

"New construction, together with the remodeling referred to, will cost some \$165,000. Approximately \$25,000 will be required for up-to-date equipment, while the convent addition cost is estimated at \$40,000. On this basis, the overall project involves \$230,000 which is the objective of the current campaign.

"Here is an investment in the future of our Church and Community!" the brochure proclaims, explaining in earnest, "Today the original plant (school) has eight grades and an enrollment of 375. Despite this expansion, 130 of our boys and girls eligible for admission cannot be accommodated.

“Last year there were 125 baptisms in this parish. A few years hence, we face a demand for Catholic educational facilities far greater than could have been anticipated by the founders of the school.

“Until we provide additional facilities, we are faced with school doors locked against our own children.

“The Key to those locked doors is in your hands!”

Try saying no to that sales pitch! Apparently, few dared even to try. By Easter Monday evening of 1949, the final in a series of many meetings was held, highlighted by the announcement that the goal of \$230,000 had not only been met, but was exceeded by \$12,000. The spontaneous outburst and jubilation at this remarkable feat gave ample evidence of the earnest enthusiasm and cordial cooperation that marked every phase of this campaign.

At this same meeting, plans for the school building were given final approval.

Next came a call for bids. These were opened on June 13, the feast of St. Anthony, and the building contract was let to the Casper firm of L. D. Liesinger Company for [Casper 1987, 60] \$154,750.

Bids were also taken that summer for construction of a new rectory. The low bid of \$74,802 was accepted and building began in earnest.

The few blocks around the church and school must have looked like child’s play full-scale as buildings were moved and rearranged and new ones went up.

The Old Mullin Club building which had served so well as a parish hall for some 30 years, was sold to the Knights of Columbus for \$3,000. It was then moved half a block to the corner of Wolcott and Seventh where it was dedicated, and stands today.

Building at the school included a fireproof addition with eight new classrooms, a library, a principal’s office and a combination hall and auditorium. Adjoining this was to be a kitchen and serving facilities. Prior to this time, the children had gone to The Mullin Club for lunch. A special feature was the inclusion of a kindergarten.

The following year, in anticipation of an increased enrollment (which turned out to be almost 25 percent), the church bought the property adjoining the convent to provide even more playground space.

On July 25, 1950, the priests took up residence in their new rectory at 624 S. Center, where it still stands today.

The following September came opening day at St. Anthony's School. The children must have felt so special walking into their school the 5th day of that month. The smell of that new building, the sudden space after all those cramped classrooms. The nuns must have felt they'd been given new life. Surely, all felt the blessing of this extraordinary accomplishment in a town the size of Casper.

On September 24, 1950, Bishop Newell came to Casper to preside over the blessing and dedication of the school addition. Following ceremonies, everyone retired to the church for a special Mass and the Bishop's sermon.

That night, a banquet was held in the school's most touted new feature, the Gymnatorium, as it was so cleverly called. Some 300 people were there congratulating themselves, no doubt, on the wonderful job they had done.

The congratulations were quite in order, however, because growth had come to Casper. Within a very short time, the little Catholic School would see top enrollments of more than 800 children.

The reason? Casper's third oil boom. (Here we go again!) And once again, Casper became THE PLACE TO BE. An article which appeared in the Casper-Tribune-Herald talked of the growth in terms of religion:

"As Casper grows, its church membership grows. New churches are being built or planned; more modern facilities welcome the worshipper. But the philosophy remains the same-the same belief and goodness of purpose which has guided mankind for almost two thousand years."

Another article, this appearing in the Denver Post took a less aesthetic view of the situation.

"Casper is a Cadillac, Chrysler, Buick sort of town. There's no end in sight. Everything in sight is money in the bank (referring to oil, oil, oil!)."

But still there were some who considered Casper less than ideal for living purposes. Ernest Hemingway noted at about this time that, "I love the West and know it well, and of all the towns in the West to be stuck in would pick Casper last." Of course, his trip through was marred by the fact that his wife suffered illness here. One would have to assume that this may have clouded his judgment. Not to worry, Paul Harvey was yet to sing his praises of this city over the nation's airwaves.

Tending The Flock (1950-1959)

[Casper 1987, 63] The 1950s dawned with more people and consequently, more Catholics in Casper. The Irish contingency was less and less noticeable as people of all nationalities flocked to St. Anthony's for Sunday Mass.

In the interim, Casper had even produced some religious of its own. In the decade from 1940 to 1950, five young ladies of the parish had entered the sisterhood and one young man, the Reverend Clement Lafferty, O. S. B. was ordained a priest.

Fr. O'Reilly had married many couples in the church, among them Mary Ellen Moore to Marvin Wilson. The Wilsons are a generous family who, we will see, give freely of their time and talents to the church. Leo Boehler was also married by the 1950s, to the former Margaret E. Rooney. They would have three children, and Leo signed on at the Amoco Refinery in 1946, where he stayed until his retirement in 1984.

A colorful character of this time period was Mr. Tim Mahoney, of the Mahoney clan. He ran a western store and was a faithful member of the Knights of Columbus (this being the same Tim Mahoney who recalled his first Christmas in Casper in 1917). He liked to tell stories and people liked to listen to him.

But all was not light and joy. In the early 1950s, Casper suffered one of its most noted crimes. In a single night, seven fires were started by an unknown arsonist. Businesses destroyed included the Head Warehouse, the Chili King Cafe, Nolan Feed, and the Chemical and Geophysical Laboratories. The old depot building where Tessa and Eugene Dunn were born was also destroyed that night.

But what few people recall is that a man dressed in black and carrying a flashlight, was standing in the middle of the intersection of Railroad Avenue (now known as Collins, 5th St. and Center). While firemen frantically tried to keep up with all the fires, and policemen desperately sought to catch the arsonist before more fires were set, this

solitary man was regulating the flow of traffic and people at 2 a.m. with the expertise of a professional Traffic Director. The man was none other than Father Thomas O'Reilly.

By 1951, Father Charles Brady had arrived in Casper. Father Brady would be a significant leader of St. Anthony's flock, but that was not for some years to come. For now, he was one of Fr. O'Reilly's trainees, just a young, innocent Irishman, newly ordained.

Fr. Brady had graduated from St. Peter's College in Wexford, Ireland and was ordained June 5, 1949. He came to Casper as a result of one of Bishop McGovern's recruiting drives.

Lois Tripeny was one of the first people to meet him. "I was working in my father's store and this young Irish priest came dashing in, in search of an alarm clock, of all things!" It seems he'd slept a bit late that morning, his first in Casper, and he was already in a great deal of trouble over it. Fr. O'Reilly expected a lot from his assistants and, in so doing, gave Wyoming many exceptional priests. Fortunately, for everyone concerned, Fr. Brady was quick to shape up!

Father Brady enjoyed young people. He became friends with many of the young adults of the city and was the impetus for the Anthonian Club. The Club was designed for post-College age adults and sponsored social activities, like dances and picnics and such for young, unmarried people, kind of like a wholesome "swinging singles" club. The group was quite popular and served its 300-400 members well. It was a way for Catholics to meet Catholics in a fun social setting. Those who were part of it, remember the Anthonian Club as a really enjoyable part of their lives. It went on for about ten years.

On February 16, 1952, Fr. O'Reilly became the pride of Casper when Pope Pius XII announced his elevation to a Domestic Prelate with the title of Right Reverend Monsignor.

The Domestic Prelate, according to the Investiture Program, is "an honorary distinction conferred by the Pope on priests in any part of the world as a recognition of merit. His title in English was Right Reverend Monsignor.

"Domestic Prelates are an ancient institution in the Church which probably had its rise in the notaries appointed by Pope St. Clement (1523-1534 [dates are incorrect for a St. Clement—Ed.]) to collect the acts of the Martyrs."

At any rate, the investiture, the first ever in Casper, occurred on Easter Sunday, April 13, 1952 at 4 p.m., having been duly announced in the first issue of the Wyoming Catholic Register, which began publication on Friday, April 11, 1952.

The following week, the Register (which started as a weekly) reported on the ceremony itself:

“Bishop Newell mentioned, in glowing terms, the achievements of Msgr. O’Reilly both in spiritual and temporal spheres. He paid tribute to his work as an administrator of ecclesiastical property and in the field of education.

“But Monsignor O’Reilly would be best remembered because of his diligence and zeal in the cause of the sick, the poor and those in need of the comforts which only a good priest could give.”

And so he is. In the mid-1950s Mary Louise Baker suffered the loss of her husband, Dr. George Baker, to sudden heart failure. The doctor told Mary to stay at home with the children—they had six—while he went on to the hospital. It is her greatest regret that she agreed.

She has clear memories of the events of that night and of Monsignor O’Reilly, a man she had always thought of as stern and unapproachable.” He was so kind and so consoling.” And even after, Mary, struggling to raise her children alone, found the Monsignor was always there for her, ready to help out in any way he could. This was the kind of man Monsignor O’Reilly was.

[Casper 1987, 64] The polio epidemic seized the country in the 1950s and Monsignor O’Reilly was there for the people then, too. He spent many hours consoling those afflicted and their families. The people of the parish helped one another as well.

Alice Bradshaw remembers volunteering at the hospital in those trying times before the Salk vaccine. Though Casper was not particularly hard-hit, there were cases.” We used to hot-pack the patients, then cover them with wool blankets,” she said. “It really seemed to help, but took time and many hands.”

The school also took up the cause and managed to raise \$800 for the national polio fund drive, through the hard work of its students.

It is interesting to note here, also, that one of the Mulvaney children, Dick, was by now a doctor, and he was working with Dr. Salk at the time he discovered the life-saving polio vaccine.

As always, things kept moving forward. On August 30, 1952, Lois Tripeny was married to Joe Shickich at St. Anthony's Church. The wedding was quite an affair as John Tripeny was proud of his daughter. And had one attended, one might have noticed two little red-haired altar boys named Gene and Gerald Sullivan.

On May 12, 1953, St. Anthony's Altar and Rosary Society gathered together with other groups to host the first convention of the Cheyenne Diocesan Council of Catholic Women. Among the first officers were Mrs. L. F. Holscher as first vice-president and Mrs. John Tripeny, Sr. as first treasurer. A year later, Mrs. A. A. Schulte (formerly Tessa Dunn) was named most typical mother by St. Anthony's Altar and Rosary Society because of her outstanding contributions to church and community.

In 1954, Fr. Brady, having relished the success of his Anthonian Club, took on an even bigger project. He established the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) for teenagers of the entire diocese. Luckily, he was good at this sort of thing, for if you have ever tried to organize teenagers, you surely can appreciate the magnitude of the task and the saintly qualities required of anyone who might undertake it!

March of that year also marked another great day for the young Catholics of Wyoming, for it was then that the first State Catholic Basketball Tournament was held with none other than Bishop Hubert Newell providing all the trophies!

Then, having been shunned by Hemingway, Casper received a four-star rating from Mr. Paul Harvey. Harvey came through Casper in April 1954 and stayed long enough to broadcast from the KVOC radio station.

[Casper 1987, 65] "Casper is a cowboy town," he said, "squeezed into shiny Sunday dude shoes. The heirs of Caspar Collins aren't yet quite comfortable in low heels. You'll understand the wordlessness Paul Harvey felt when he'd been cleansed by the rare mountain air and had sensed something of the serenity that God gave to this big, up-and-down land. And you'll understand better why these sons of the pioneers resist change . . . because they had so much to start with."

Resist, they did. Casperites had been burned before and many of those who had been through the oil booms and busts of the past tried to tell the newcomers that it would not last. They were scoffed at and disregarded, and divisions occurred in the community.

The church tried hard to prevent this, offering activities and organizations to keep people meeting people, and talking and working together. As the Register at that time reported, "Members of St. Anthony's parish, regardless of age or capabilities, can find an organization in which to better serve their Church and community." The article then went on to list the many organizations of the church.

The school was growing, too, and in 1954 it was determined that the sisters had outgrown their convent. Keeping in mind that Casper might someday support a Catholic High School, the Monsignor decided to build for the nuns a home which would accommodate present and predicted future needs.

He purchased a lot 60x140 feet for \$23,500 and hired the architectural firm of John K. Monroe of Denver and on March 25, 1955, the sisters moved into their beautiful new convent at 623 S. Wolcott (the Catholic Conference Center today). The old convent building was removed to give the children still more playground space.

That same year, the Monsignor, having been recognized as a particularly good fund raiser, was put in charge as general chairman of the Bishop's Fund Campaign for the whole Diocese of Cheyenne. Among others named to his financial committee were Ray Studer and Tim Mahoney. The two became fast friends.

Other friends were being made through the lively meetings of the Mother's Club, these being often attended by Msgr. O'Reilly. In the 1950s, the mothers, according to Monsignor at least, were occasionally misguided in their efforts. Characteristically, he wasted no time in gently straightening them out. Take the time they voted to sponsor a play at Casper College. Apparently, some tickets had been donated to be sold by the group for revenue.

The following month, Monsignor showed up to present a talk on the plays, pointing out most clearly that "most of them are unchristian and immoral, and that we as taxpayers and parents of young people not only have a right, but it is our duty to object to that type of dramatics being taught to our children."

There is no mention of the ticket sales in the minutes of that meeting, or of any other, but one can imagine how many red faces there were in the audience that night!

The mothers also got up in arms about their children on occasion. Monsignor stood up one evening to explain to them that the proprietor of the Bluebird (you know, the one that stayed open on Sundays?) had requested that St. Anthony's School children refrain from entering the store. Following the announcement, Monsignor fielded questions and the mothers, in the end, chose to boycott the store. So there!

Other meetings featured talks by Casper people who had traveled to Europe or other parts unknown, as well as focusing on specific projects. The Mother's Club provided valuable services to the school, its occasional faux pas notwithstanding. It sponsored Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Brownies and Girl Scouts, assisted with immunization and TB X-ray programs, ran an active traffic safety campaign, provided transportation and other necessities for the sisters, raised funds for school purchases, and sponsored breakfasts (cocoa and rolls) for students who received Communion at First Friday Masses. (You had to fast all night in those days).

The Mother's Club also continued the Silver Teas for the nuns, provided for the needy (food and clothing), made hospital calls, and sponsored prayer study groups and living rosaries. The meetings were generally well-attended, upwards of TO people, and served educational as well as social purposes.

Monsignor was recognized by all as a great leader. Frank Schulte, now a father of six, tells a story of the baptism of his last child, this, of course, performed by the Monsignor. Following the ceremony, all repaired to the Schulte home a few blocks away for refreshments.

Monsignor O'Reilly arrived a few minutes late and one of the Schulte toddlers spied him coming up the walk. "Watch out, here comes the guy that owns the church!" he called out. Monsignor's reputation preceded him, and thus was widely acknowledged.

School children stood in awe of him, as well. Perhaps the most trying time for any of them was when they had to face him one on one in the sanctity of private confession.

Colleen Dalgarno (to be Engleman), daughter of Con and Marie, remembered this experience quite vividly. In [Casper 1987, 66] the late 1950s she was in the second grade and, as a student at St. Anthony's, she had spent months in preparation for her first confession.

The children, she recalls, were drilled by the nuns, each child standing at his/her desk and reciting a mock confession:

“Bless me Father, for I have sinned,” they began, “I disobeyed my parents, I fought with my brother and sister and I stole a dime, but I gave it back.”

The real “sins” of each child, of course, would be revealed only to the priest. This was just a rehearsal.

Colleen’s first Confession went off without any problem at all. But, the second time she went, she was not feeling particularly creative, or perhaps, could think of no sins of her own. She decided to use those designated in class-that way she wouldn’t make any mistakes (or so she thought).

Her turn came and she reverently entered the confessional, knelt down, and as she heard Monsignor slide back the door, she began:

“Bless me Father, for I have sinned, I disobeyed my parents, I fought with my brother and sister and I stole a dime, but I gave it back.”

From the other side of the door, she heard Monsignor’s familiar Irish brogue in a voice that, to her, seemed to fill the church as if it were God’s own: “But, Culleen, ye dun’t even have a bruth’r!”

Picture if you will, this little bit of a girl emerging from confession, all in attendance aware that she had lied to a priest! Talk about sin. The nuns were aghast! Her fellow students were terrified to follow, each quickly rearranging their confessions into a more believable text!

But, being a good little Catholic, Colleen mustered her faith and continued to believe in the absolute anonymity of confession, as only a Catholic could do, convincing herself that Monsignor’s loud “slip of the tongue” was God’s way of teaching her how to confess!

Colleen laughs about it now, but I bet she had some good advice when her son received the Sacrament of Penance and his First Communion just this Spring!

Mothers and children were not the only ones among Monsignor’s flock who got out of line at times. For though Monsignor inspired reverence, this was still Casper, Wyoming and there was yet that “other” side to the community. It all became quite clear in the late 1950s at the Knights of Columbus Hall.

It was St. Patrick's Day, still a treasured holiday in Casper and a time for celebration by all. The Knights were sponsoring a dance with all the trappings, and attendance was great!

While many claim to be quite sure of the instigators of this prank, the Code of Silence prevails yet again, and no [Casper 1987, 67] one has ever positively proven who the culprits were.

Anyway, the evening was progressing in fine Irish fashion with all the proper music and fanfare, when, at its pinnacle, some devious person or group projected an orange-dyed pig into the center of the celebration. The pig, as if on cue, went squealing and running back and forth across the floor as Irish tempers (greatly inflamed by Irish whiskey) flared out of control.

A full-fledged riot ensued that turned into what the old boys would call a "donney brook"; Americans use the term, "free-for-all."

Before it was over, ambulances of brawling "wearers of the green" were taken to the hospital with assorted cuts and bruises.

And noone knows whatever became of the pig! Not being one to assign blame, I must impart that this story came to me from one Leo Boehler who seems to know a great deal about it, except of course the names of the perpetrators. 'Nuf said.

While their parents partook of all this tomfoolery, children by the hundreds, were attending St. Anthony's Catholic School. By the 1957 school year, enrollment reached an all-time high of 815 students. And by 1959, 25 students had to be turned away for lack of space and teachers. The ratio that year was but one teacher for each 49 students.

With the school growing at such a rate, and without notice of the world to come, it was logical to assume that a high school for Casper would soon be required. Twenty-two acres of land were purchased for \$22,000 for the high school that, as yet, has never been built.

On May 23, 1959, however, Casper offered another kind of gift to the Catholics of the state. On this day, Fathers Gerald and Gene Sullivan were ordained at St. Anthony's, and both embarked on lives of service to God and to the people of Wyoming. It was a fitting way to end a decade of growth and success for the parish.

And The Changes Came (1960-1969)

[Casper 1987, 69] As if in reverse of the legendary month of March, the sixties came in like a lamb and went out like a lion. The winds of change would come like a hurricane, lifting all that once seemed so settled and stable, and making a jumble of it. There was confusion, fear and anger everywhere.

A parish history of the decade begins, "Throughout the sixties, the parishioners of St. Anthony's witnessed with the rest of the world one of the most challenging decades in the history of mankind."

Vatican II brought tumultuous changes to the church at a time when other forces seemed intent on breaking down every other institution as well. "Establishment" was out and it seemed that anything one had grown up with, trusted, or cared about, was now irrelevant.

The young watched their heroes die, one by one, and many times over, as television brought the tragedies of the nation into their very living rooms. They watched a war progress that no one seemed able to justify, and listened to the death counts rise. They felt betrayed and lost. Many turned away from the institutions they had once held dear: their families, their country, their church.

And even to Casper, the changes came. In 1960, all seemed well. The population was a strong 38,930. Wyoming still ranked second in the nation in wool production, with Casper the second most important wool shipping center in the state. Wool value, however, had dropped from over \$4 million in 1958, to less than \$1 million just three years later. Clearly, changes were in the wind.

The number of students at St. Anthony's School was well over 700. The school had just instituted new programs for remedial reading, speech therapy and the new math, with a physical education program but two years down the road. It should be noted here that the physical education program was started by Mrs. Emerick Huber who devoted four years of her life as a volunteer p.e. instructor just to keep it going.

Another person devoting himself to the children was Ray Studer who, during this period, received the highest honor for his work with the Boy Scouts: the Silver Beaver Award. And in May of 1961, the school graduated the largest class in its history, 78 students. That same month, Monsignor celebrated his Silver Jubilee as pastor of St. Anthony's.

The celebration was held at the Elks Club as the church had no proper function room at the time. The basement, in fact, was still unfinished, and though parishioners had often pushed Monsignor as hard as they dared on the issue of restrooms in the church, this old country priest would not relent. St. Anthony's would have no restrooms until after Monsignor retired.

At any rate, his Silver Jubilee as pastor of St. Anthony's was something to be remembered. A lot of the "Old Irish" got together and raised funds to present Monsignor O'Reilly with a new car and a trip to Ireland! Many donations, by the way, came from non-Catholics. Monsignor's example had made him friends throughout the city.

Ray and Mary Kay O'Brien remember the affair quite well. Altar and Rosary and Mother's Club organized the potluck dinner. The Knights of Columbus did the decorating. It was a fancy dinner, with the good sterling silver service used.

As part of the program, Ray O'Brien sang "Danny Boy" (What else?) at Monsignor's request and the School Children's Choir, directed by Sister Reparata, also sang.

It was a nostalgic time for remembering the past, the good times and the many things this Irish priest had brought to this parish and this city. It was a time to say thank you to a very special man.

On November 29, 1964, St. Anthony's celebrated the Mass in English for the first time ever. And, for Monsignor O'Reilly, it was a difficult transition. This priest from the "old country" seemed a great deal saddened by the loss of his beloved Latin and the traditions of faith on which he had based his entire life. As Msgr. Meyer noted, the changes in the church just weren't his "cup of tea."

There were many of the "Old Irish" and others of Casper who agreed with him, and found new ways in the church very hard to take. Suddenly, what heretofore was sacred was now "irrelevant" in 1960's talk, and that which seemed foreign and irreverent was disturbing to many of the devout. But, though change is seldom easy for everyone, it comes anyway, and people adjust and hopefully, accept. Anyone who lives in Casper will find that out soon enough.

Some faced changes in the church enthusiastically, seeing them as truly liberating, and bringing them to a new understanding and closeness with the Lord. To them, these changes were a blessing unequalled in their lives.

On the 25th Anniversary of the ordinations of the Sullivan brothers (1984) they returned to their hometown for a celebration. Reflecting then on changes in the church, they noted that they don't miss the Latin, "which," they said, "we didn't always understand."

"How thankful to God and the Holy Spirit I am that the Mass is what it is today," Rev. Gene said. "The people are as important to the Mass as the priest is, and that is how it should be."

It has been hard to let go of the old ways, but change has brought a fresh approach to Catholicism, and an open-door, fresh air feeling that God welcomes with open arms any who wish to enter His House.

The nuns greeted the changes with the same kind of mixed reactions as the priests. Suddenly, women who had led semi-cloistered lives were given all sorts of freedoms. To some it was welcome, to others it was frightening.

Up until these chaotic times, the nuns suffered many restrictions. For example, the Silver Teas were always [Casper 1987, 70] afternoon affairs because the sisters never left the convent after dusk. If they had to go across town, they depended on others to take them there. Parishioners were always very generous in this regard, but, with the changes coming, the sisters were treading new ground.

Frank Schulte remembers when the sisters got their first vehicle. It was a white Chevy van which he donated to them. (he owned a car dealership at the time). The van was big and bulky and many of the sisters had yet to learn to drive. Worse, he claims, were the few who thought they already knew how. At any rate, Frank still shakes his head and chuckles as he thinks about the "driving lessons" he gave them, and, he notes, a few good scrapes resulted. Fortunately, though, the white van, offset by the sisters in black, created a kind of "heavenly alarm" and motorists quickly learned to stay out of their way. The Good Lord obviously was with them as well, and soon the sisters could maneuver that van anywhere they wanted it to go!

On Christmas Day, 1966, the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary were able to don the new optional black habits, these consisting of long A-line skirts, blouses and jackets.

But perhaps more important than clothes or cars, the sisters were beginning to have choices. The Order was offering new opportunities and many were pulling out of the

schools to go into other kinds of social work. This, eventually, would mean changes for Casper's only Catholic School.

On February 14, 1965, the Right Reverend Monsignor O'Reilly had been elevated to the dignity of the Protonotary Apostolic by Pope Paul VI. This is one of the highest honors given to priests and ranks immediately below the episcopate in importance. With this appointment, Monsignor received the right to offer Pontifical Mass on certain occasions. Monsignor O'Reilly was the only Wyoming priest ever to have received this high honor.

Three years later, in August, the Monsignor decided to retire, having served the parish of St. Anthony as its pastor for thirty-two years. His retirement was met with great sadness in Casper. Born in Ireland on November 16, 1900, the Monsignor had been ordained there, appropriately, on the feast of St. Anthony in 1926. He came to the United States that very Fall and began his love affair with Wyoming. In 1936, of course, he became pastor of St. Anthony's and pulled the church out of a \$100,000 debt, built two new parishes in Casper, presenting each, debt-free, to their first pastors. He improved the school, built a rectory and a convent, and he directed the building of the chapel of St. Francis at Midwest. In addition to his appointments as Vicar General, Domestic Prelate and Protonotary Apostolic, Monsignor O'Reilly had served as chairman of the Liturgical Commission, a member of the Ecumenical Commission, and was one of the founders and the first president of St. Joseph's Society for sick and retired priests.

To the relief of many of those who loved him, Monsignor announced that, although he would retire as pastor, he would continue to serve as Vicar General and as a member of the consular-senate of the diocese. He also noted that he would retain his residence in Casper and [Casper 1987, 71] would live in the residence at 614 S. Durbin Street.

On Thursday, August 15, Bishop Newell announced that the Reverend Charles Brady, who had been serving as pastor of St. Matthew's Church in Gillette, would return to replace the Monsignor as pastor of St. Anthony's.

Considering the shoes to be filled, Fr. Brady was a wise choice. He was Irish, had studied as an assistant under the Monsignor for three years, was well-liked in Casper, and was a deeply religious man with an easy-going sort of personality.

Still, his nerves must have been shot when, on August 27, he faced the parishioners of the Church of St. Anthony and introduced himself as their new pastor at all of the Masses that day.

Fr. Brady recalls his first task as new pastor was quite an inglorious one. Apparently, the cleaning of the school had been neglected all summer long, and he had to go out and quickly hire Pete's Janitorial Service to come in and clean up the place. Often, when one takes on a new leadership role, there is some "housecleaning" to be done, but Father chuckles as he relates this most literal sense of the word!

That taken care of, Father began to assess the needs of his new parish. He soon earned a reputation as a great fixer-upper, and was, as such, a blessing to St. Anthony's. Before very long, he had worked his way into the hearts of the people. The children remember his referring to them collectively in a charming Irish lilt, as "Boys and Girls." Adults recall often, after making his point, Father would seek their approval with an "OK?"

He's been described as hard-working, outgoing and "an awfully nice fellow."

And the good Father remembers St. Anthony's fondly as well. He found the parish to be "very beautiful, very active and energetic."

Settling in, Fr. Brady noted with regret that there was still poverty on the North Side of Casper, as he had observed years ago when he was still an assistant.

On this subject, he gathered together the sisters, and they began planning the North Side Center.

Fully funded by donations to Saint Anthony's and the Catholic Extension Service, the Center became a community project. Donations came in from Catholics and non-Catholics alike, and bequests came from the estates of James (Mac) McVaney, Larry Burke and Margaret Brattis-Catholics who expressed an interest in the project prior to their deaths.

The building purchased was located on North Durbin and H Streets, and parishioners banded together to fix it up. Marvin Wilson and others donated their carpentry skills, their time and some back-breaking labor. In the end, the North Side Center offered offices, three classrooms and a well-child clinic. Cost of the renovation was \$15,608.19.

The official opening came on August 10th of 1969 with Bishop Newell blessing the Center. It was operated from then on in close conjunction with all welfare agencies and the unemployment commission, to make many services available to needy Casper families. These included the well-child care program, nutrition and budget planning for low-income families, adult education, instruction in the use and care of household

appliances, consulting and guidance for all ages, cooking, sewing and religious instruction for children in the area, and Masses.

Staffing the clinic were seven volunteer doctors, among them Dr. Ellbogen. Sister Catherine Milder, B. V. M., volunteered to serve as its first director, spending [Casper 1987, 72] much time there, organizing and running the Center so that it properly served the needs of many of Casper's less fortunate citizens.

At about the same time, the church basement and interior was finally renovated. The total cost came to \$27,859.54 and included the long-awaited bathroom facilities (endearing Fr. Brady to many parishioners). Renovations also included a redecorated choir loft. Architect for the project was Jan Wilking of Casper.

Meanwhile, the school was feeling the effects of the sixties. Enrollment had dropped by almost 50 percent in an eight-year period, and Monsignor Wm. H. Jones, a widely known Denver educator, was called in to perform a complete review of religious education in Casper.

In May of 1969, findings of this study were made public. Its recommendations included a city-wide CCD Center, headed by Reverend Angel Ornelas on the secondary level, and by the Benedictine Sisters on the elementary level, which would utilize the school built at St. Patrick's. CYO activities for all three parishes were to be combined as well, and it was recommended to continue St. Anthony's elementary school grades 1 through 8.

The Center at St. Patrick's was put into operation for one year at which time its activities were terminated on the recommendation of its board.

Physical changes to St. Anthony's School included a new library opened in 1968 with an additional 700 books catalogued through the use of Government Title II funds. That summer, a lighting system, cable TV outlets for each classroom, audio-visual equipment, listening centers and a science room and laboratory were added.

The following year, the school was redecorated at a cost of \$26,916.46.

It was kind of sad to see the school enrollment dwindling, and an announcement in 1969 by the Sisters of the BVM seemed as if it would make matters worse. The Regional Director of the BVMs explained that, effective that year, the ratio for all schools conducted by that Order would be 35 percent religious faculty to 65 percent lay faculty.

(Since that time, a policy of open applications has been instituted which requires maintenance of no definite ratios.) The school thus was entering a period of drastic adjustment.

The enthusiasm of the parents seemed to be waning in all the confusion and the Mother's Club, disbanded in 1968, was replaced by the Parent Teacher Organization. A sign of the times, this Organization encouraged the participation of both fathers and teachers, as well as mothers, in the support of the school.

The first officers were: President Warren "Cy" Wallace; Vice-President Mrs. George Johnson; Secretary Mrs. John Ellbogen; and Treasurer Charles Curtis.

Committee Chairmen that first year included: Mrs. M. Joseph Burke, Spiritual Development Committee; Bill Butler, Finance Committee; Leo Miller, Athletic Committee; Mr. Dennis Knopik, School Plant Committee;

Dr. William Harris, Health and Safety Committee; Mrs. Donald Ackerman, Home and School Committee; and [Casper 1987, 74] Miss Mary Lovrien, Publicity Committee.

This group was committed to bringing the school through its difficult times and "Cy" Wallace, as President, wrote,

"Let us all join together with our Pastor, sisters and teachers to help our school meet the needs and improvements our ever-changing world demands."

It is important to note here that these people and their unfailing faith in Catholic education are largely responsible for bringing St. Anthony's School through these difficult years.

They met monthly with Board meetings in between and that first year, they offered programs, committee reports and entertainment.

The parish of St. Anthony's in 1969 included about 5,000 parishioners representing some 1500 families. This was not too surprising, given the thriving economy in Casper. But, as noted, the school was suffering. Perhaps it was because of the improved public schools, or the nuns pulling out, or the confusion of the period. Whatever, in the Fall of 1969, a series of meetings was held to discuss and evaluate the advisability of continuing the 7th and 8th grade programs at St. Anthony's.

At the final meeting, Bishop Newell was concerned enough to be in attendance and, at its conclusion, those present voted almost unanimously to continue those grades, at least for the time being.

It was a trying time, a time of personal and national trial which was felt by Catholics, as well as others all across the country.

But this, after all, was Casper, Wyoming, a place that had seen trials before. A whole new decade awaited. And, it would begin with a 50th anniversary celebration of Casper's Church of St. Anthony.

Farewell To A Friend (1979-1976)

[Casper 1987, 75] Mary Haigler was chairman of the 50th Anniversary Celebration and Margaret Sullivan was among those who helped raise funds.

Along with special church services, there was a banquet to which many wore the old-time costumes like those once donned by the parishioners who attended the dedication in 1920.

Also that year, Ellen (Mahoney) Johnson sold her house to St. Anthony's. The church had always had a bid on it as it was connected to other church property.

Father Brady recalls, "All I said from the very beginning was it would not be a parking lot."

The building was razed, and Father worked closely with Mr. Tony Prante to design the lovely grotto which now adorns the spot.

"Tony went all the way to Colorado to get the flowers planted there," Father said, "and the granite came from a red granite quarry just outside of Douglas. The Statue is made of Carrara Marble from Italy, and practically everything there was made possible by the generous donations of the people of St. Anthony's Parish."

The spot is serene and soothing. People go there to pray and contemplate. It has become a source of pride and strength to Catholics, and others, living in Casper. The grotto is also frequently the scene of First Communion and Wedding pictures, May crownings, and summer prayer services in memory of the tragedy at Hiroshima at the conclusion of World War II. It is a place of peace.

1971 saw an actual increase in sisters at St. Anthony's, and brought a feeling that perhaps the toughest times were past. Now there were viable solutions being considered and it seemed that St. Anthony's School would come through the crisis, somehow. Lower enrollments had one advantage for the children. The ratio of teachers to children had dropped from earlier years and was now one teacher to every 18 students.

In 1971, it was also decided that perhaps parents would be able to pay at least part of the costs of the school. That first year, tuition was \$95 plus basic fees, for the first pupil in a family.

The good works of Casper's Catholics continued when, in October, the Meals on Wheels program, providing nutritious meals for the elderly and handicapped people of the city, was begun.

A newspaper article published at the time, notes, "Father Gerald Sullivan is one of our Board members and very good support to the program, as is Sister Catherine of the North Side Center, and Father Grannan (pastor of Our Lady of Fatima). In fact, about half the personnel of our Board of Directors and Advisory Board are Catholics."

1972 marked the opening of a Bargain Shop on North McKinley Street, another of Fr. Brady's projects to help the poor. It was operational until 1976.

The Regal Club came into being in 1972 as well, REGAL standing for Retired Elderly Golden Age League. Still active today, this group is non-denominational and sponsored by St. Anthony's Church. Its stated objectives are to assist the elderly to greater participation in the social, civic, intellectual and spiritual activities of the community; and to encourage the elderly to have daily communication by telephone or by visits with one or more shut-ins or others in need. Sr. Mary Prudentius Fuller was first coordinator.

Tim Mahoney was honored at the Central Wyoming Fair and Rodeo in 1972. Lauded as "Casper's Irish Bard," Tim was Honorary Marshall of that year's Fair Parade. One wonders if, as he traveled the parade route through this modern city, his thoughts might not have wandered to that cold, empty Christmas Eve so many years ago when, as a lonely shepherd, he sought some bit of cheer in the tiny frontier town that was Casper then.

This day, Tim Mahoney could not have felt alone if he wanted to, as Casper waved and cheered and heartily honored one of the men who shaped their city, and did so, admirably, with his Irish heritage and Catholic faith.

By the 1970s, most Catholics were reconciled to the [Casper 1987, 76] new ways of the church, and were able to look back on the past as “Bits of Nostalgia” these particular ones contributed to an Altar and Rosary Society Scrapbook by one Patsy Brattis:

“Remember?” it began, “Singing Tantum Ergo . . . hard wooden kneelers . . . Women searching through their purses for a handkerchief to pin on their heads before entering church . . . Trying to get through Good Friday afternoons without saying a word . . . *Ite Missa est* . . . fasting all night before going to Communion . . . Offering it up . . . Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus . . . Basketball players blessing themselves before a foul shot . . . entering church for a visit . . . the Baltimore Catechism . . . Waiting in line for Confession . . . St. Christopher Medals . . . Car Blessings . . . Saying the Rosary during Mass . . . Writing ‘JMJ’ at the top of all your homework . . . Giving up movies, cigarettes, anything for Lent . . . Kneeling through most of the Mass . . . Getting holy cards for giving the right answers in class?” Nostalgia here greeted with relief, sadness, a smile, a tear.

In June of 1973, the Monsignor decided he could no longer serve as Vicar General of the diocese. He lived in the little house on Durbin Street with his sister, Kathleen, for yet another year.

On Thursday, March 21, 1974, the Monsignor received word that his good friend, Father John Brady, had died in Ireland. Father Stolcis, who had been to see the Monsignor that day, said he was visibly shaken and deeply disturbed by the news. “He was almost afraid to go to sleep Thursday night,” Father said. At 2 a.m. Friday, Monsignor Thomas F. O’Reilly returned to the God he had served so well. Medical reason given was a heart attack.

His death was met with great sadness in Casper. St. Anthony’s Parish Bulletin the following Sunday carried the following special memorandum:

“We, priests, sisters and parishioners of St. Anthony’s Parish and his many friends in the Catholic community, were much saddened at the sudden and somewhat unexpected death of our beloved Msgr. O’Reilly, who served and tended to our spiritual needs for so many years. Rt. Rev. Msgr. Thomas F. O’Reilly was indeed a man and a priest for his times; he knew Casper and its people as well as anyone might wish and, as a priest, he

had the keen ability to be ever abreast of community happenings; ever ready to offer advice and counsel where needed and even to lead whenever he found it prudent and priestly. Words at this time prove inadequate to describe his contribution to the Catholic Church in Casper and indeed to the work of Christ in the diocese of Cheyenne. Among the clergy, he was both respected and revered; while the laity found him very understanding and most considerate of their temporal and spiritual welfare willing to give of his time and then, they went on their way strengthened by the honesty and assuredness of his opinion. He was indeed a strong and faithful friend to old and young; these sentiments were echoed Friday morning by many when they said, "The 'Big Man' has left us" On Friday morning at 2, the gates of heaven opened and a man entered to be welcomed with the salutation from his heavenly Master, 'Well done, good and faithful friend . . . enter into the joy of the Lord.' Our continued prayer will be, 'May the Lord have mercy upon his soul.'"

The newspaper called him, "one of the most influential and respected churchmen in Wyoming."

Funeral arrangements included reception of the body at St. Anthony's on Monday, followed by a concelebrated Mass for children and adults. The Rosary was recited every hour thereafter by Frs. Brady, Grannan, Stolcis, Bauer and Bishop Newell until 8 p. m. that night. The Funeral Mass came Tuesday and was concelebrated by the Most Reverend Hubert M. Newell and more than 50 priests of the diocese. The Mass of the Resurrection was broadcast on KATI Radio at 9 a. m.

The church was filled to overflowing, lector for the Mass was Mrs. William Shutts, gift bearers were Mr. and Mrs. Jan Wilking, pallbearers were Jan V. T. Wilking, Walter Burke, Jack Daly, James L. Wilson, Ray Studer, John P. Burke, M. Joseph Burke, Harold Schmidt, Paul Naughton, Art Salazar, Leo Mullin, Roger Thomas, Robert Crews, Linus R. Lau and Maynard J. Richmeier. Honorary Bearers were Allan Chorney, Richard A. Tobin, Dan Sullivan and Frank L. Bowron. Burial took place at Mount Olivet Cemetery in Cheyenne.

Father Hoodack perhaps said it best when he noted of Monsignor O'Reilly, "He was a giant among men, but a priest above all." Truly, this man will never be forgotten.

The church in Casper was bereft without its beloved Monsignor O'Reilly, but the new Parish Center purchased by Fr. Brady offered a place for people to meet and talk, and share their grief.

The building was located at 606 S. David, one block west of the church, and was used as a Parish Center, for meetings and social events.

On May 17, 1974, the Parish Center was used for one B of two celebrations in honor of the 25th Anniversary of the ordination of Father Charles Brady.

The evening began at 6:30 p.m. with a concelebrated F Mass with Bishop Newell as principal celebrant. A reflection of Fr. Brady's standing among his peers, there were 29 priests in attendance.

The Bishop took this opportunity to praise the works of the good Father Brady, calling him "a good and zealous priest." He also made a plea for vocations to the religious life commenting that a priest had not been ordained in Wyoming in six years. "The call continues to be given but it seems to go unheard. This is difficult to understand," he said.

Following, a Mexican mariachi folk Mass was sung by the choir. That afternoon, the Altar and Rosary Society held a reception at the Parish Center and, after the Mass, a no-host reception was offered at the Holiday Inn in Casper. Bill Shutts was the master of ceremonies and Irish songs were sung by Eileen Burke accompanied by brothers Kevin and James on guitars. During the evening, parishioners [Casper 1987, 78] presented Fr. Brady with a trip home to Ireland.

The program for the day included a special tribute written for a much-loved priest:

"Long ago from the hills of Cavan,
From his home in the dear Old Sod,
Came a kindly priest to bless our lives,
A steadfast man of God!

&&&

With the grace of Ordination

Still fresh on each holy hand,

Father Brady came to us

In this, our treasured Land.

&&&

We learned to love him, day by day,

As young, devout, sincere,

He served a fruitful ministry

In the first years he was here.

&&&

Then, several years he was away;

Our loss was other's gain.

Then back in 1968

He came to us again.

&&&

Now the Silver Anniversary

Of his ordination is here;

Let's bless him for great things he has done

And, forever, hold him dear!"

1975 was designated "Holy Year" and Catholics everywhere began to gather and plan for the special year to come. The Casper Deanery of the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women chose "A Time for Healing . . . Holy Year '75'" as the theme for its Fall meeting.

On September 25th, the meeting began with Msgr. James O'Neill, Vicar General of the Cheyenne Diocese, making his presentation. He pointed out that the Holy Year is a time to heal and a time to build. Reconciliation, he noted, must first take place within ourselves if we are to be ambassadors to others; then reconciliation within our family, the environment, the church and the community must follow.

Monsignor O'Neill spoke at all five deanery meetings that year. He was serving in Cheyenne then, and no one suspected that one day, he would come to Casper to bless the people of St. Anthony's as their pastor.

At any rate, Monsignor guided the people of the state through the Holy Year, its history traced to the thirteenth century when Pope Boniface VIII declared that every 100 years would be a Jubilee Year, a time to set things right when debts and sins are to be forgiven." Man and the world were intended to share and work together in unity and it must begin with deeds and not just words," presenters proposed.

In Casper, Our Lady of Fatima parish hosted the meeting with the Reverend Lawrence Etchingam offering the homily.

Fr. Etchingam would also soon serve a term as pastor of St. Anthony's Church in Casper.

The year was well-planned and Catholics of the city, as always, responded, offering, and receiving, the blessings of the Holy Year.

As the city became an ever-more modern and thriving place, she became important as the center of the state. In 1976, the nation celebrated its Bicentennial Year. "The Spirit of '76'" caught fire and spread from coast to coast,

Wyoming Catholics, never being a group to pass up a reason to celebrate, undertook one of their grandest productions ever. A Bicentennial Mass for Catholics from all over the state was to be celebrated at the Fairgrounds in Casper in August. It took many months of planning and many people participated.

Among them were Father Etchingam, at the time Pastor of St. Patrick's, who headed the planning committee, Msgr. James O'Neill, V. G., Msgr. W. J. McCormick, the Reverends Charles Brady, A. H. Grannan, Gerald Chleborad, and Philip Colibraro, and Mrs. Karen Amen, Mrs. Aime Blower, Mrs. Finn McCarthy, Harold Schmidt, Wilbur Steams and Dr. D. F. Michie.

For the first time in Wyoming history, a Cardinal was scheduled to take part in the Church Service. Archbishop Timothy Cardinal Manning of Los Angeles, was the principal celebrant. Nine bishops and 45 priests also took part. The choir, led by Wilbur Steams, was to include 120 voices and 200 altar boys were set to serve.

But first the altar had to be built. Marvin Wilson remembers it all too clearly. As one of the carpenters chosen for the task, Marvin duly built the altar, then went home to change for the Mass. Then, true to form, that old Wyoming wind kicked up its heels!

An urgent call went out to Marvin's place, and he hustled down to the Fairgrounds to build a second altar, this one far sturdier than the first, and once again, everything was set.

The date chosen was August 15, the Feast of Mary's Assumption, and 5,000 people came.

The event began with an hour-long concert by the Casper Municipal Band. Cardinal Manning arrived on schedule. The Cardinal, interestingly enough, was a native Irishman, born in 1909 at Sallingearry, County Cork, Ireland, though he came to Casper from the Diocese of Los Angeles.

Also in attendance and serving as co-celebrant was a man new to Wyoming, the Most Reverend Joseph Hart, D.D. Bishop Hart remembers it almost as fondly as Marvin Wilson does. It was his first public visit to Wyoming, since having been named Auxiliary Bishop to Bishop Newell. Finn McCarthy picked him up at the airport and offered to help with anything he needed. "Finn had no idea what he was getting into," the Bishop remembers. He was to be later named pastor of St. [Casper 1987, 79] Patrick's Parish in Casper.

First thing- the Auxiliary Bishop needed, as it turned out, was a good seamstress. One thing I have learned in writing all of this is that priests are definitely people, too. Even Bishops can get into embarrassing situations. An errant seam might well have undermined the dignified impression the Bishop planned to make. Fortunately, the hotel was able to help. All sewed up and ready to go, the Auxiliary Bishop was whisked off to the Fairgrounds, with no one the wiser, until he shared this most human story with me, of course.

The Program for the Bicentennial Mass reads like a Coronation-with Color Guards, the National Guard, Crossbearer and Acolytes, Banners, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Altar Boys,

Lectors, Knights of Columbus Guard of Honor, and concelebrating Priests, Bishops and the t Cardinal.

“It was a very beautiful Mass,” Bishop Hart recalls, noting, “I was awed by the whole thing.”

Many others were, too, as Anne Blower commented. “I had planned on serving punch and cookies, but there were so many people there, they had to cordon off a special area so the Cardinal would not be crushed.”

Quickly drafted as an honor guard, Anne found herself just outside the velvet ropes with orders not to let anyone touch the Cardinal. And with him stood Bishop Newell, Auxiliary Bishop Hart, and Governor Ed Herschler. Anne would have preferred serving punch and cookies!

An open letter from Bishop Newell appeared in The Wyoming Catholic Register on August 27, 1976, expressing the feelings of so many at this spectacular event:

“Everything about the day went well. There were occasional moments of uncertainty because of weather, but the glorious Mass and procession, the inspirational music, the magnificent souvenir program, the beautiful reception, and, above all, the large crowd, made it a day that will long be remembered in our diocese. It was truly an appropriate tribute to our nation on the feast of Our Lady, our diocesan and national patroness.”

And yes, folks, this great event took place in Casper, Wyoming, a town that grew up at the end of the railroad line! William F. Dunn, Pat Sullivan, Mickey Burke, Fr. Mullin, Msgr. O’Reilly and all the others whose faith had formed the seeds, could now look down from Heaven at the mighty tree which they had planted.

Less than one month later, Casper was blessed with the assignment of Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Hart to the Parish of St. Patrick’s.

The Most Reverend Hubert M. Newell publicly expressed his pleasure at the appointment, “We are deeply grateful to our Holy Father, Pope Paul VI for his gracious response to our request for an auxiliary bishop to serve the needs of our growing diocese. We rejoice that in Bishop Hart he has given us a man acknowledged as an exemplary priest, an experienced administrator and a successful pastor.”

Bishop Newell, 72 at the time, was clearly pleased to have an Assistant. A Denver native, Bishop Newell had come to Wyoming in 1947 under similar circumstances, serving as Assistant to Bishop Patrick A. McGovern, who had been instructed by his doctor to live in a more quiet and secluded way. He died November 8, 1951 and Bishop Newell automatically succeeded him.

Having won the hearts of Wyoming Catholics, Bishop Newell is himself an interesting subject. A feature article in the Cheyenne Tribune-Eagle on March 7, 1976 describes him as an optimist with "a warm and ready smile."

Journalist Ralph Partridge captured the essence of the Bishop's work when he quoted, "We can't forget that people are the key not only to the problems but to the solutions, and if we can make religion vital and meaningful to them, it's bound to affect their environment.

"And if enough people can be concerned, it can affect the whole world."

This was the man from whom Bishop Hart would eventually take the reins. Bishop Hart's time in Casper was learning and traveling time, but he came to know and love the people of the city which first welcomed him to Wyoming.

Bishop Hart came to us from Kansas City where he was born on September 26, 1931, the son of Hubert H. Hart and Kathryn Rose Muser Hart. He has a sister, Rosemary, who lives in Portland, Oregon and a brother, Father James Hart, who is pastor of Coronation Parish in Granview, Missouri. Bishop Hart attended St. John's Seminary and St. Meinrad Seminary, and was ordained a priest on May 1, 1956 by Archbishop Edwin V. O'Hara in the Chapel of St. John's Seminary in Kansas City.

He held various posts and pastorships before coming to Wyoming, including teaching assignments and the Chairmanship of Diocesan Radio and TV Apostolate.

One of the first acts of the new Auxiliary Bishop in Casper, as noted by the press, was the institution of the Mariachi Mass in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The first was held at St. Anthony's December 12, 1976, at 5 p. m. It was standing room only with mariachi music of trumpets, guitars and drums. The Reverend Patrick Trujillo of Guernsey delivered the homily, telling the simple story of the appearance of the Virgin Mary to a commoner in Mexico in the 16th century. His vision did not convince the Bishop until the Lady visited again, and provided a sign; a picture of herself, imprinted

on the peasant's cloak. This picture was reproduced on the bulletin provided each worshipper and also was standing, enlarged, before the serving table.

Greetings (1977-1979)

[Casper 1987, 81] 1977 brought a new pastor to St. Anthony's as well. Fr. Brady was transferred to Cody, and Fr. Lawrence Etchingham came over from St. Patrick's to take his place.

Fr. Etchingham is described as being rather brusque at times, but with "a cute sense of humor." And, of the many priests who have come through Casper, he's one of the very few who had a pet, a dog, which people remember, got to travel with him in the car.

Anne Blower recalls Fr. Etchingham was a wonderful help and very supportive during her years as president of the Council of Catholic Women.

She recalled when the ladies could not pay their bills up front for that year's spectacular Celebrity Series, it was Fr. Etchingham who lent them the money, until a mammoth garage sale could be planned.

That series, by the way, brought celebrities Art Linkletter, actor; Lawrence Gichner, the "Ambassador of Antiques"; Jon Lindbergh, on "Resources from the Sea"; and Irene Kampen, author and television writer, to Casper. Proceeds went to benefit the projects of St. Anthony's Altar and Rosary Society, including the North Side Center, the Regal Club and Meals on Wheels. The price for the entire series was a mere \$15!

Fr. Etchingham also was responsible for a remodeling of the church interior, which included the public address system and a complete basement renovation, (It was named O'Reilly Hall in honor of the man who so stubbornly refused to build it!), and for the installation of new insulation and windows at the school.

Being a particularly good businessman, Fr. Etchingham was able to lay the groundwork for St. Anthony's Manor, put the school on strong financial ground with set fund-raising projects and negotiated tuition, as well as converting the little-used convent into the Catholic Conference Center.

Meanwhile, in Casper, there was a boom going on like never before. The city just seemed to grow and grow and grow. People were buying and selling homes, spending and thriving financially with no apparent end in sight.

1978 was indeed a year of celebration, of change, of farewells and welcomes in Casper and the world. On January 11, 1987, The Wyoming Catholic Register announced the retirement of Bishop Hubert Newell. Having served for more than thirty years in the diocese, Bishop Newell said he had "submitted the resignation some time ago, feeling the time had come for a younger man to take over the administration of the growing diocese."

Governor Ed Herschler took the opportunity to note, "Bishop Newell's ministry has reached beyond his own parishioners and touched the lives of countless Wyoming people. He is an articulate friend of man, never afraid to raise his voice for honesty, truth, and compassion. . . . I know he will continue to share his learning, his faith and wise counsel."

Fortunately, for Wyoming, Bishop Newell has done just that, providing a driving force of wisdom and piety throughout his retirement years. The Bishop once told a reporter enthusiastic about his priestly ways, "Don't make a hero out of me." It is hard not to when you review a life so full of selfless devotion and love.

Among his final duties as Bishop of the Diocese of Cheyenne, the Most Reverend Hubert M. Newell, D.D., bade farewell to the women of the diocese on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Wyoming Council of Catholic Women. The anniversary booklet is dedicated to him.

The WCCW Convention was held at the Ramada Inn in Casper that year. The program included updates on the Church Communities Commission, the Family Affairs Commission, the Community Affairs Commission, the International Affairs Commission, the Organization Services Commission and the Public Relations Commission. Mrs. Anne Blower and Mrs. Mary Kay O'Brien served as co-chairpersons.

Someone wrote a song for the special occasion which I could not resist including here. It is supposed to be sung to the tune of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" and includes a special apology to Julia Ward Howe.

Here goes: "For the WCCW

In 1953, they came to Casper by the dozens,

Women of every shape and size, in cars and planes and buses,

To start the greatest council that Wyoming's ever known,

The Cheyenne Diocesan Council of Catholic Women.

Mrs. Carpenter presided. Bishop Newell blessed one and all.

Everyone discussed and pondered things both great and small.

And when the ladies went back home they said it was a ball

With the Cheyenne Diocesan Council of Catholic Women

STAND AND CHEER IN CELEBRATION.

CLAP YOUR HANDS IN JUBILATION.

RAISE YOUR VOICE IN ACCLAMATION

FOR THE WCCW. (refrain)

For 25 years we've met in cities all across the state.

We've prayed a lot, and played a lot, and here let me relate

That each meeting has been different and yet each one has been great

The Cheyenne Diocesan Council of Catholic Women.

In '76 we changed our name with due deliberation.

Naming the WCCW took some concentration.

Today we're glad to have you here to share this grand occasion

With the Wyoming Council of Catholic Women.

(refrain)."

[Casper 1987, 82] Now we're looking forward to another 25. Growing even better is the goal for which we strive. Knowing what can happen makes us glad to be alive and part of the Wyoming Council of Catholic Women. (refrain)

On the last day of the Convention, April 25, 1978, Bishop Newell's successor was announced officially. The Most Reverend Joseph H. Hart, Auxiliary Bishop of Cheyenne, was named by the Apostolic Delegate in the United States, Archbishop Jean Jardot, of Washington, D.C., to head the Catholic Church in Wyoming.

Back in Casper, it was also time for another celebration. This year marked the 50th Anniversary of St. Anthony's School. For this occasion, Sr. Mary Ancile Carton, BVM, compiled and wrote a booklet entitled *The History of St. Anthony's School*. Sr. Mary Ancile did a fantastic job with this, and much of her work is included in these pages. Her book was dedicated to Our Lady, "the only teacher who ever had a perfect student." Copies of the work are becoming quite scarce and should be carefully preserved.

The weekend of May 20 was set for the celebration with registration for all graduates, friends and past and present students of the school invited. That evening, a dinner-dance at the Ramada Inn offered entertainment. On Sunday, a concelebrated Mass was followed by an old-fashioned barbecue at City Park. Atypically for Wyoming, the weather cooperated.

A report of the day begins, "The rains stopped, the sun shone and the 50th Anniversary of St. Anthony's School last week was a big success." Nine hundred people attended the Mass and barbecue, with 450 at the dance the night before.

It was truly a time for celebration and, as we have seen, Casper's Catholics are very good at this. The report went on, "They paraded, danced, sang and visited and everyone agreed, they had a great time at the Golden Jubilee Celebration."

June 12, 1978, was yet another time to celebrate. Bishop Hart was installed as the Sixth Bishop of the Diocese. The following year, the Bishop's Guild of Casper came into being, sponsored by the Most Reverend Bishop Joseph Hart. Membership is open to women in Casper, Midwest, Glenrock and Douglas. The purpose of the organization being to serve as a medium to further understanding of the Catholic faith, Bishop Hart calls it, "the ladies' night out."

Meanwhile, the church had gained a new Pope, Pope John Paul I, and optimism was high. On September 29, 1978, however, the Pope's private secretary found him dead from acute myocardial infarction, and a kind of shock set in.

In one of the shortest Conclaves of Cardinals (two days) in modern church history, a new Pope was named. The College of Cardinals elected the Most Reverend Karol Cardinal Wojtyla, Archbishop of Krakow, Poland as Supreme Pontiff. His Holiness Pope John Paul II is the first non-Italian Pope in more than four centuries. He is a charismatic figure who has brought new life and inspiration to Catholics throughout the world.

But, charismatic or not, he is still the Pope, and at least one Wyoming man has clear recollections of meeting him.

Our own Bishop Hart attended a meeting in Rome a few years ago to deliver the report U. S. Bishops make to the Pope every five years. It seems each of the Bishops was given a private 15-minute conversation with His Holiness.

Bishop Hart received notice of his appointment less than 24 hours before it occurred. "I couldn't sleep that night," he confessed, "I just kept pacing back and forth."

During that time he had prepared a proper greeting but "everything started to happen too fast," he said. "A fellow dressed all in white grabbed my arm. It took me a second to realize it was the Pope, and I lost what I was going to say."

But the Bishop did find his voice, and the Pope was interested in Wyoming and how he covered all that territory. He was surprised to hear that our Bishop drove himself from place to place.

When asked if he had any problems, the humble Bishop, reflecting on those problems the Pope must face, replied, "Not really."

At lunch, Bishop Hart heard His Holiness asking some of the other Bishops the same questions. When they answered affirmatively, Bishop Hart was surprised at the Pope's reply, "You should be more like Wyoming," he said. "They don't have any problems!"

But the Pope did promise to pray for our state and her people, and what more could we ask from this remarkable man?

In the wake of Vatican II, the changes just kept coming. In the United States, one major example came following a meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. The Bishops determined that Communion-in-hand might now be offered as an option to Communion-by-mouth, practiced by Catholics for more than twelve centuries.

The Wyoming Catholic Register duly reported on the change, citing its justification in three parts: "1) Communion in the hand is a recognition that the total person is holy, soul and body. 2) Communion in the hand can be a striking symbolic gesture, generating feelings of humble dependence, wanting and seeking, and of patient expectancy, and 3) Communion in the hand is a more active participation in the liturgy."

Today, in the Catholic churches of Casper, most parishioners receive Communion in the hand as a special gesture of reverence to Our Lord and as an acceptance of changes in our world. Communion in the hand, by the way, is not a new idea, but is a reverted custom practiced during the first eight centuries of Catholicism. Communion by mouth is still offered as an alternative to those who are more comfortable with it.

To The Present (1980-1986)

[Casper 1987, 84] A new decade arrived. As we have seen, it came in with great prosperity and high hopes for the future. In 1980, St. Anthony's Altar and Rosary Society voted to change its name to St. Anthony's Council of Catholic Women. Fr. Etchingham had instituted the first Parish Council, which could assist him in his duties as pastor, and the school was doing better and better financially, thanks to the new concept of negotiated tuition.

But, the school was facing the loss of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In May of 1980, the BVM motherhouse announced that it would be necessary for many of their Order to accept teaching positions or graduate school training closer to the motherhouse in Dubuque, Iowa.

As a result, the following year, St. Anthony's School took on a complete lay faculty and its first lay principal, Dan Quill. The convent, once built to house some 30 nuns was closed, to eventually become the Catholic Conference Center, while the house at 604 S. Durbin was put into service to house the five sisters remaining in Casper.

Nonetheless, the school year had its high point. A ninth grade was added. This came to be a boon to school enrollments as it allowed students to go directly from St. Anthony's to the city's high school without the lag year at one of the junior highs.

Also in 1980, the North Side Center was converted into the headquarters for the Vincent de Paul Salvage Center. The Center is a lay-administered society run by volunteers who serve a need for the entire community of Casper.

1982 brought yet another blessing to the Catholic community. Five Holy Cross Brothers arrived on August 10.³ Their mission was to serve the poor and needy of the city through St. Anthony's parish. At a time when the Casper economy has caused such pain for so many (for now we were learning the "cycle" still applied), the brothers have been "a true godsend," as they are so often described. The church also has been working closely with the Salvation Army and the Red Cross in these trying times.

1983 brought big changes, especially to St. Anthony's. In Casper, stores closed, banks failed and many people had no choice but to leave town. Abandoned houses lined the streets to be sold at auctions and many who stayed suffered poverty for the first time in their lives. Thus, the entire complexion of the community had changed, and St. Anthony's was forced to face yet another loss, that of its leader, Monsignor Etchingham. He was named Chancellor for the Diocese and was transferred to Cheyenne.

Enter Monsignor James O'Neill. Monsignor came to Casper from Cheyenne, where he had served as pastor of St. Mary's Cathedral for nearly 20 years.

A native of Ireland, he was ordained in 1954 and spent most of his priesthood in Wyoming. A lovable, gentle and pious man, Monsignor O'Neill was given a send-off of the first order as parishioners of St. Mary's said farewell to their "beloved Irishman."

He was presented a special proclamation from Governor Ed Herschler proclaiming a Monsignor James O'Neill Day for his many contributions to the people of Wyoming. He was presented the key to the city by Cheyenne Mayor Erickson. And he received a special resolution from the Parish Advisory Council as well as a spiritual bouquet from St. Mary's parishioners.

Among the many tributes came Bishop Hart's reflection. ". . . I find Monsignor O'Neill the closest to what I think God wants a priest to be. As Vicar General he is the 'priest of priests', the first priest of Wyoming."

And the parish newsletter reflected, "Through the years, his immeasurable kindness, his strength, his holiness, his gentle, humble smile kept our lives together, moving in a positive direction. Just seeing Monsignor celebrating Mass reassured me that in the end all will be well.

“As I reflect, I find it heartwarming to recall so many good memories of this gentle, strong, humble man of God. Even when he appeared to be hurt or troubled, that mischievous twinkle in his beautiful Irish eyes did not disappear for a moment.”

Always ready, his hands outstretched, Monsignor has brought his love to Casper. In writing this book, I have gone to him, and taking my hand, he always will say, “I know you can do it,” and seeing the doubt in my eyes, gently, “Yes, you can.” His kind of faith is absolute. And contagious. I pushed on.

Other parishioners have been struck by the bounce in his step, the Irish grin, and the compassion in his eyes. And a Mass said by Monsignor O’Neill is an experience in the reverence and tradition of the Irish Catholic faith.

Among Monsignor’s first projects was the completion of St. Anthony’s Manor. It was dedicated December 18, 1983. St. Anthony’s Manor is the state’s first federally-funded, church-sponsored housing complex for the elderly.

The eight-story structure contains sixty-four subsidized one-bedroom apartments for the elderly and handicapped. Bishop Hart officiated at the opening ceremony.

1983 also meant a celebration for the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It was the 150th anniversary of their Order, and though only three of the nuns were in Casper, they had so shaped its Catholic life, that a concelebrated Mass was offered, attended also by other BVMs serving the diocese.

The sisters in unison recited, “As Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we are women who have been touched by God’s steadfast love.

“In response to that love, we are moved to commit ourselves to a vowed life of faithfulness to the Lord, faithfulness to one another in community, faithfulness to God’s people, especially the poor.

[Casper 1987, 85] “This covenant relationship is a freeing one enabling us to risk responding to the pressing needs of our times according to our gifts and in keeping with our BVM mission.

“We pray that God will continue to give us the faith and courage to engage wholeheartedly in the ministries to which we are called and to accept with joy,

flexibility, understanding, and a spirit of sacrifice, the diverse lifestyles to fulfill our BVM mission of being freed and helping others enjoy freedom in God's steadfast love."

A fitting testimony to a group of dedicated women to whom the city of Casper owes a great debt. "Watch these Sisters to see God's hand working," Bishop Hart said.

1983 was also the year Mary Kozola was chosen to replace Dan Quill as principal at St. Anthony's School. A St. Anthony's teacher for 16 years, Mrs. Kozola has proven an exemplary principal earning the love and respect of parents and students alike.

She's good in emergencies, too. One day when I went to pick up my son, I found a kindergartener terrified, his arm wedged in the tree just outside the school. The students ran for Mrs. Kozola. She came on the run, sent for the school nurse, and they proceeded to keep young Matthew Mix calm enough to get himself free unharmed. Afterward, she came over to me and, with a wink, said, "He really had me scared; I could just see the Fire Department cutting down our tree!" I was amazed, she even had a back-up plan!

Another time, I happened to be in the office when a young man was brought in with a huge bump on his head.

[Casper 1987, 86] He appeared to be a little dizzy, had fallen off the slide in the playground. The school nurse was not in that day. After consultation with the boy and several unsuccessful attempts to reach his parents, Mrs. Kozola swept through the room, car keys in hand, "I'm not going to wait on this; I'm taking him to the doctor right now. If you reach his mother, have her meet me there." That was when I decided I wanted my children at St. Anthony's as long as Mrs. Kozola was in charge.

The children of St. Anthony's impressed me, too. I stand outside each day at 2:30 watching them come out. They are just like other children, of course, sometimes running, sometimes shouting, the little boys sometimes fighting, and nearly all heading directly for that wonderful puddle that forms around the tree as winter snows melt down!

But they are a polite lot; if they bump or splash, they generally take a moment to say they're sorry and they seem to display a basic respect for other people.

St. Anthony's School offers an alternative to public schools in Casper. And, as they freely admit, they teach Christian values and morality, while the public schools claim they cannot. Given this, it is a very important alternative. I am proud of St. Anthony's

School, and pleased that it is a Catholic School as well. Perhaps as an example, and certainly through her graduates, this school will make a difference in our world.

We recently celebrated Casper Balloon Day, and we gathered in the school yard, all of the students, teachers and many parents, listening to the radio as schools throughout the city prepared to release balloons inviting people to visit our city. Some 13,000 balloons were released that day, but the 300 from St. Anthony's were sent off with something special. Just after the balloon launch, the radio cut off and Mrs. Kozola's voice came over the loud speaker: "Let us all join hands and offer an Our Father," she said, and everyone did.

RENEW came to Casper in the early 1980s and so many Catholics took that opportunity to spread and share their faith. They met together in small and large groups, praying, discussing and learning ever more about themselves and Catholicism.

As the city seemed to crumble around us, for by now the boom had turned to an incredible bust as the price of oil dropped, and dropped and dropped, these RENEW groups offered support and faith to bring us through. Even after the groups stopped meeting formally, many had formed fast friendships, others chose to become prayer groups, and, despite the drop in population, the city seems to be growing in faith each day. RENEW, the program, has ended, but the bumper stickers, Mass attendance and the eyes of a faithful people are a proud testimony to its success. In Casper, RENEW had a profound and lasting effect on the lives of many Catholics.

In 1984, our beloved Sister Mary Reparata Hartnagle, BVM, celebrated her golden jubilee with the BVM Order. On October 5, she was honored with a Mass and reception at the church.

Sr. Reparata is a dear lady who gave 25 years teaching girls and boys of Casper to sing, leading their choirs, and offering them private music instruction. Since 1982, she has served as an office assistant.

On the occasion of her Jubilee, Bishop Hart commended her commitment of the past 50 years, adding appropriately, that Sr. Reparata "makes music wherever she goes."

The Reparata Conference Room at St. Anthony's School serves as tribute to the extraordinary life of service this woman has dedicated to our most fortunate community.

The same year, another long-time Casper sister, Sr. Mary Prudentius Fuller, BVM, bade farewell to the city she had served for 12 years. As minister of pastoral care to Casper's sick and elderly, Sr. Prudentius touched many lives.

Retiring to California, Sister was thrilled to receive a special gift from St. Anthony's Parish Council: a trip to Lourdes for herself and a companion. A lifelong dream fulfilled by the grateful people whom she had served so well.

1985 and 1986 were tough years for Casper. Newspapers were filled with news of businesses closing [Casper 1987, 87] down, devoting whole pages to foreclosures and HUD auctions, and people were losing their jobs.

St. Anthony's School, however, received a gift of faith from parishioner Mary C. Hagood. Having seen three children through St. Anthony's, Mrs. Hagood is a firm believer in Catholic education. At a time when other parochial schools suffered financial hardship and Casper itself was in need, Mary's generosity enabled St. Anthony's to add a library, a science room, a classroom and new offices.

Not long after, this dear lady, donated a huge sum to pay off the outstanding mortgage on the Shepherd's Staff building. A plaque therein honors Mary Hagood and her exceptional devotion to the church. A special friend to St. Anthony's, she offered sparkle and hope in troubled times.

Also responding to the economic situation in Casper and to similar happenings throughout Wyoming, Bishop Hart offered free space in The Wyoming Catholic Register to people needing work. Editor Sally Ann Michelov published the ads again and again to help the people of the community help one another.

Trying to live on a single income, my family of four found to be a little difficult, and as there were no jobs in Casper, I started to look for freelance writing jobs. I wrote an ad, at the Bishop's generous invitation, and Sally ran it.

The next thing I knew a call came from Monsignor O'Neill, followed by a meeting, and, before I knew it, I was writing this book.

The week after I met with Monsignor, in November 1986, someone broke into the Shepherd's Staff building where St. Anthony's staff had their offices, piled many church records and files and old pictures in the hallway, and set them afire.

Damage was assessed at \$150,000. Much of what might have been included here was destroyed. However, the fire firmed our conviction to see this book in print and to distribute it throughout the community so that at least a part of these good people and their Catholic way of life might be preserved. And that a single fire might never nearly obliterate all that had been.

The fire also forced me to go out and interview as many people as I could, to focus on their personal memories, and to enjoy and share those memories with you. This may not be the most objective history you have ever read, but it certainly is a reflection of Casper's Catholic Community, its makeup, its history, and its caring concern for this city and her people.

[Casper 1987, 89] As you drive down Center Street past St. Anthony's Church, one thing grabs your attention, holds it, and draws you nearer-the striking Pieta on the lawn.

The Pieta was donated to the church by Mr. Frederico (Rico) Trujillo and he tells this story of it with emotion and a sense of awe.

In 1976, Rico's niece Kathy Santistevan was just 17 years old. She lived in a suburb of Colorado Springs with her mother and father, Tina and Louis Santistevan, and her five brothers and sisters.

Rico, of course, had seen Kathy many times and, though they were not especially close, she meant a great deal to him.

Kathy, it seems, loved to rollerskate and would often go to the rink with friends. One evening she met a boy there who was quite taken with her. He asked her to skate with him and he asked her out, but she said no. There was something about this boy that frightened her.

He followed her home one night. Somehow, he was able to get her phone number and he began harassing her. Eventually, the family consulted with police, but nothing could be done to stop him.

One day, as Kathy and her sister waited for the bus, a car pulled up, some boys got out, pulled Kathy inside and drove away. Her sister ran for help.

The family contacted police and began searching for her themselves. Louis consoled a frantic Tina, saying, "We'll find her."

They did find her, in a vacant house in South Colorado Springs. She had been shot to death, and the boy who had been pursuing her lay next to her, also dead. He had shot her, then himself. It was declared a murder-suicide; Rico notes, the boy was an experimental patient.

The family was crushed in their grief, and being a Catholic family, they said many prayers for Kathy's soul.

About a year later, Rico couldn't sleep one evening. He lived across from the grotto next to St. Anthony's at the time, so he went out to the living room, knelt before the window facing the grotto and began to say a Rosary.

Just about half-way through the Sorrowful Mysteries, Rico claims he felt a gust of wind, "on my right ear. I turned my head, and there was a glow all about the room. The only way I can describe it is as if a bright candle lit up the whole room."

Then, he saw the Pieta. Next, Rico says he heard the rustling of dresses, "like the women wore years and years ago." And he saw a figure floating across the room to stand between him and the statue. "When she turned, it was Kathy," he said. "She said, 'Thank you.'"

Rico says he was not frightened, just shocked and, for some reason, he had a great desire to see the Pieta again. "I said, 'Kathy, you're standing in my way, blocking my view of the statue.' And she disappeared."

Rico says he was confused by the whole experience. He assumed Kathy was thanking him for the Rosary he was saying for her. But the statue as yet had no significance for him. He spoke to a priest who questioned if perhaps this was a "bad vision," to which Rico replied, "If I hadn't been saying the Rosary at the time, I would have wondered."

The priest then prayed upon the matter and came back to tell Rico that he was, "for some reason in the Lord's favor." Rico shakes his head, "I'm just an old man."

At any rate, Rico continued his involvement with the North Side Center and, one day, called his brother Bill, as he wished to donate an oak altar for the building. (Bill lived near a large religious supplies store in Denver.)

When Bill Trujillo went in to make the deposit, as Rico had requested, he ran into Father Etchingham, quite a coincidence in itself. And when Bill told Father why he was there,

Fr. Etchingham explained that soon Masses would be discontinued at the Center. "But," Father offered, "You might take a look at this statue I've had my eye on." It was the Pieta.

When Bill told Rico about the incident, the vision came back, and became clearer to him. Rico never saw the Pieta until they set it on the lawn in front of the Church of St. Anthony. Then, he felt it was all so clear. The statue bears a plaque which reads "To The Glory of God / In Memory Of / Kathy Santistevan / January 6, 1958-October 20, 1976."

Whether or not you believe in the vision, Mr. Trujillo did, and he acted on it. Today, the Pieta stands as solemn, striking testimony . . . to the pain that Mary suffered at the brutal murder of her beloved son . . . to the suffering of any who have lost a loved one through murder, be it at the hands of an organized Army or those of a madman . . . and to the pain that we have caused others through our sins. It is for me the ultimate admission of the sins and pain people visit thusly one upon the other, and I cannot pass it by without feeling that pain and great sadness.

The statue and its story call to mind the words of Our Lady of Fatima concerning gains to be made towards peace in the world . . . through the Rosary . . . through worship . . . and through our love for one another.

Our Lady Of Fatima

[Casper 1987, 91] Monsignor O'Reilly was a crafty sort. He saw things happening in Casper before they happened, and he acted on them. He took a few gambles, betting with the odds, and the Casper community of Catholics won.

In the 1940s, Monsignor took note of the city's growth and the direction of that growth. Consequently, in a very shrewd move, he purchased ten acres of land from Mr. Harry Yesness at \$1000 per acre. The land was on the South side of CY on 20th Street. This was in July of 1949.

Mr. Yesness soon realized his mistake in selling the property at such a price and tried to buy it back. But Monsignor, being no fool, was not about to sell it. Parishioners, meanwhile, having balked initially at the size of the investment, were now quite proud of their coup.

In 1953, Monsignor purchased the Little Chapel of the Sagebrush from the War Department for \$17,050. The Chapel was the same one used for servicemen stationed at Casper Air Base during the war.

Ironically, Father Grannan, then an assistant at St. Anthony's, had performed the first military wedding at the Chapel, unaware of the many hours he would spend within its walls.

The Chapel was set on wheels and moved to its new site. The building itself was 80 feet long, 40 feet wide with a 27-foot steeple and cross. It was the largest structure ever moved without a floor in the Casper area.

Church records report that the move was not without incident. "Midwest Movers Inc., Fred Trost, owner, realizing the added risk of coming directly to the site and because of the difficulties anticipated from overhead power and telephone lines upon reaching the city detoured by way of Raderville Route, onto highway 220 and approached the new location from the direction of what is now the Fairgrounds."

A temporary impasse was met when, "upon reaching the Platte River Bridge just north of 13th Street and advancing half-way across the river bridge, the contractor, to his dismay, discovered that the parapet of the bridge was inches higher than anticipated. Resourceful as he was, he backed off sufficiently to release the building and with huge planks hastily brought from the lumberyards, placed across the floor of the bridge, he soon had sufficient clearance to proceed on his way."

But, at last, the Chapel was set upon its foundation, moving and completion costs coming to roughly \$65,000.

The thing to remember about Our Lady of Fatima Church is that it was a community project from the start. This is one of those times that Casper's Catholics wanted something done. So they did it themselves. Our Lady of Fatima would not be the lovely church it is today but for the caring and devotion of the people of Casper. They literally built this church.

People like Marvin Wilson, John Haass, Ken LeClere, Leo Mullin and Frank Wood were on the scene day after day, making repairs, finishing the basement, and later adding to the grounds. Through the years of improvements, Fr. Grannan himself was often seen wielding a shovel right along with the others to help with the work.

On the Feast of the Purification of Mary, February 2, 1953, the spire was replaced atop the church and, on the Feast of the Anunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, March 25, 1953, the first Mass was offered from Our Lady of Fatima Church in Casper.

His Excellency Hubert M. Newell, D.D., bishop of the diocese, delivered the sermon. Monsignor Thomas F. O'Reilly, V. G., who, incidentally, was celebrant of the first holy Mass offered in this same building at the Air Base in October, 1942, was celebrant of the dedication Mass also.⁴

The building was originally dedicated as Our Lady of Fatima Chapel, a mission of the Church of St. Anthony, to be served by its priests.

It was not until 1954 that the Reverend Alphonsus H. Grannan assumed pastoral charge of the parish of Our Lady of Fatima. Fr. Grannan came to Wyoming from his home in Indiana. Ordained in 1940, he served as assistant pastor of St. Mary's Cathedral in Cheyenne before coming to Casper where he became assistant to Msgr. O'Reilly in August of that year.

In 1943, he moved to Buffalo to serve as pastor of St. John the Baptist Church there. And on October 1, 1954 he was named pastor of Our Lady of Fatima. At that time, ninety-eight families were enrolled. The first to receive Holy Communion there was a young girl named Donna Jean Stag, on November 7, 1954.

On December 6, the parish was incorporated for the convenience of conducting business. Officers of the corporation were Bishop Newell, president; Msgr. O'Reilly, vice-president; L. E. Hussion, treasurer; and Fr. Grannan, manager.

The following week, Donna Kay Balben, infant daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ed Balben, was the first to be baptized in the new church.

Christmas Eve that year saw the first choir performance, orchestrated by Mrs. Shirley Kirscher and Mrs. Shirley Kovel, at midnight Mass.

By February 1955, the Parish boasted 175 families.

[Casper 1987, 92] The following month, Fr. Grannan was formally installed and an Altar and Rosary Society formed to help with church needs.

On June 25, 1955, the first wedding was held at Our Lady of Fatima joining Helen Ortiz and John L. Sedar in the sacrament of holy matrimony.

In the Fall, Fr. Grannan instituted catechism classes for high school students and lay teachers shared the duties of elementary school classes.

The city had grown as predicted and Our Lady now had 217 families to her credit. Parishioners saw to the beautification of what would become known as Fatima Village.

May 5, 1956 saw the first ordination of a parishioner, Fr. Daniel Colibraro, at St. Anthony's Church. His first Mass was said at Our Lady, the church which would someday take on even greater meaning for the native Casperite. The following year, Fr. Daniel's brother Philip was also ordained. He, too, celebrated his first Mass at the church on CY Avenue.

By now, the grounds included a "Garden for God" tended by the Altar and Rosary ladies with a lovely statue of Our Lady of Fatima and likenesses of the three children who saw her, Lucia, Jacinta, and Francesco, providing a peaceful retreat for rest and reflection. The statues were dedicated on May 31, 1957 with Bishop Newell leading the procession to the garden area.

The early 1960s brought enlargement of the church itself, under the supervision of Joe Stasiak. In 1962, the building was lengthened with transepts added to each side, doubling seating, adding confessionals and enlarging the sacristies.

[Casper 1987, 94] Building continued apace as well, with a convent and a school soon erected. The original plan for the school was rather interesting. That which stands now and is used for catechism classes, was meant to be the first of four similar buildings to house different grades at the elementary level. Plans at one time included even a high school which would have been situated where Fatima Cottage (the Parish Drop-in Center) now stands.

In the case of every building or improvement at Our Lady of Fatima Church, donated labor saved thousands of dollars that might otherwise have been spent.

In the Fall of 1963, Our Lady of Fatima was able to obtain the services of three sisters from the Order of Saint Benedict near Rapid City, S.D.

Receiving a yearly salary of \$900, the sisters opened a middle school for children in the 6th through 8th grades. An outdoor basketball court and skating rink, still in use today, provided recreational facilities.

Financial problems and a lack of facilities closed in, however, and on April 16, 1968, Father Grannan sadly sent the following letter to the people of the parish:

“Dear Loyal and Beloved Parishioners,

During the brief four years that Our Lady of Fatima School has been in existence, much blood, sweat and tears and sacrifices have gone into this effort on the part of priests, sisters and people.

You especially have been tried and not found wanting. We are unable to thank you suitably for your steadfastness in behalf of Our Lady of Fatima and its endeavors. I am sure because of your faithfulness, God will always bless you and yours.

After prayerful consideration and consulting our ecclesiastical superior we are instructed to close our parochial school effort.

Man proposes and God disposes. I do not feel our efforts are lost in this attempt to establish a Catholic school. It has been a test of your caliber as well as that of people concerned, brief actors on this stage of life.

Without saying more, it is my wish that you keep this letter for your children as an indication that when tried in this run of life, you and yours were found true and not wanting. Always keep up the good work!”

-Your Spiritual Father, Father A. H. Grannan

The school at Our Lady of Fatima was the first Wyoming Catholic School to close in more than sixty years.

The school building then came into use for CCD classes while the convent and cottage came to house, in the 1970s the Little Sisters of the Poor and the Villa Maria Home for the Elderly, which they staffed.

On April 30, 1971, the Bishop allowed that a deacon could administer Holy Communion when a priest is unavailable. Among those commissioned as Extraordinary Ministers at

Our Lady of Fatima were parishioners Harold Amburn, Ray Bader, Robert Bush, Roland Carter, Raymond Charles, James Farmer, Patrick Freiberg, John Griswold, Joseph Hankins, James Herold, Loren Leferve, Dan Norcross, Clarence Nollette, Leonard Suther and Patrick Swanton.

Foreign mission commitments and shortage of personnel required the recall of the Little Sisters of the Poor. The sisters wrote a lovely letter of farewell and noted, "the first concern will be to place the present nine residents in suitable quarters in Wyoming or in homes maintained by the sisters in other states."

In April of the following year, Our Lady of Fatima underwent a complete refurbishing including cry rooms, carpeting, kneelers and microphones.

Fatima Cottage, now deserted, was redone to include rental units, while the convent became the "Fatima Parish Center."

1974 marked the 20th Anniversary of Our Lady of Fatima parish. The event was celebrated with Forty Hours Devotion on October 4, 5, and 6 with an Apostolic Benediction obtained from Rome by Fr. Grannan for the parishioners of Our Lady of Fatima Church. An ice cream social and a slide presentation of the history of the Parish [Casper 1987, 95] ended the anniversary.

Also in honor of the event, the Altar and Rosary Society gathered, wrote and reproduced a 24-page history entitled Our Lady of Fatima - 20 Years. Most complete and factual, this history provided much of the information here stated, and in a particularly meaningful gesture, parishioners dedicated it to their pastor, Fr. Alphonsus H. Grannan.

In 1977, Fr. Grannan suffered a heart ailment which required his retirement. At that time, he moved west of town to spend his retirement years enjoying fishing and tending to his "critters," an assortment of animals which included raccoons and skunks.

Although officially retired, he continued to celebrate Mass and assist at the parish. And parishioners were pleased to see that he still took an active interest in Our Lady of Fatima.

Meanwhile, an old friend, Fr. Daniel Colibraro had come to take his place as pastor. According to a 1986 report that celebrated Father's 30th anniversary in the priesthood, Fr. Colibraro graduated from Natrona County High School in 1940. He is a graduate of

the University of Wyoming, where he received B.A. and M.A. degrees in mechanical engineering. Father served two years in the military in the Philippines and was employed by the University of California prior to his entering Conception seminary in 1949. He was ordained by Bishop Hubert Newell on May 25, 1956. For nine years, he was editor of the Wyoming Catholic Register, also serving at St. Joseph's in Cheyenne. From there Fr. Colibraro went to Rome where he received a Licentiate in philosophy from the Angelicum and studied at Cambridge University in England before teaching at St. Thomas Seminary for four years.

He served at the Newman Center in Laramie, then returned to St. Joseph's as pastor before coming home to Casper in 1977 to take over pastorship of Our Lady of Fatima.

On May 11, 1986, Fr. Grannan, who was the first and only pastor of Our Lady of Fatima Church for more than twenty years, died. At that time, Fr. Colibraro wrote, in memorium,

"To all of our parishioners and friends of Fatima Parish. Once again you have demonstrated your dedication and sincerity by the wonderful donation of your time and skills and compassion in preparing the services for Father Grannan. He gave so much to this parish and everyone responds as he did, with generosity and an open heart. Let us all remember him in our prayers because I do believe he will remember us. Pray much. Father Colibraro."

Today, the Parish represents an active congregation. Just this year Father Terry Hruska has been assigned as assistant. He is an enthusiastic priest, dedicated and most sincere.

Fr. Terry is a native of Rock Springs. He was [Casper 1987, 96] educated at Our Lady of Sorrows School in Rock Springs, then St. Joseph's Military Academy in Hays, Kansas. After high school, he served in the U. S. Navy and attended Western Wyoming Community College. Then, he went to work for Pamida-Gibsons in Rock Springs and Green River for nine years.

Turning at last to the priesthood, Fr. Terry trained at Conception Seminary in Missouri for two years and transferred to St. Thomas Seminary in Denver, where he earned a degree in theology. Fr. Terry was ordained a deacon on May 18, 1983 at St. Mary's Cathedral in Cheyenne, and was ordained a priest November 29, 1984 in the Rock Springs High School gymnasium. He offered his first Mass December 1 in his home parish of Our Lady of Sorrows Church.

Fr. Terry, I have found, is a very open, caring person. He is always ready with a smile, a hug and a word of encouragement. He is a thoughtful, cheerful man who will give his best to this very special parish.

Our Lady of Fatima is, of course, a “fix-em up” kind of parish and no matter how lovely the church and grounds are, her parishioners are ever improving.

The basement of the church for example, was recently renovated and surely will be the scene of many joyous and educational occasions for the congregation.

The church also this year began a program called, “The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.” Parishioners Donna and Kent Macklin are the coordinators for this fascinating project designed to bring very young children into an understanding of the church and its ceremonies.

The children are allowed to explore the symbols and rituals of their faith in scaled-down versions and quiet surroundings. Here they learn the Bible stories, acting

them out with models and related activities. Macklin has high hopes for the program and the children for whom it is designed.

For everyone, Our Lady of Fatima Church and grounds offers one of the most lovely spots in Casper. The day I went there to take pictures, the smell of lilacs filled the air, and as I sat in the garden facing the statue of Our Lady, I felt a great sense of peace. For young children, there’s a small playground in sight of the spot. What a delightful way for a young mother or father to find a moment for prayer, reflection and peace.

Fatima Village in Casper is a special place which honors Our Lady in a very special and devout way.

[Casper 1987, 99] In 1955, Monsignor O’Reilly was, as always, looking ahead to the future. He saw Casper expanding to the east, so in October, he purchased 3.2 acres of land that seemed way out of town at the time. The land cost him \$3,750. It was on the corner of 4th and Country Club Road. Parishioners might have balked, but having seen what Monsignor had done with the church on CY, they were by now, true believers in his grandiose schemes.

Soon, the plans were in the works, under the guidance of the Goodrich and Wilking Architectural Firm.

Monsignor was getting on in years and some say he knew this would be the last church he ever built. He wanted it to be special, a tribute to his faith, and a gift to the community he had grown to love.

Of course, it would be named in honor of his faithful friend, St. Patrick. In October 1961, construction began. The Contractor was Sam Moore, of Northern Construction Company. Cost of construction was \$336,353.

The church is modern Romanesque by design and is built in Cruciform structure. A side altar is dedicated to the Blessed Mother, patron saint of the diocese, another pays tribute to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Beautiful stained glass windows fashioned in Cologne, Germany honor the life of Christ. And if you are interested in the history of St. Patrick's Church, you need to note the windows in the transepts, for there recorded are the likenesses of the Bishops of the Diocese, Monsignor O'Reilly himself, and even Jan Wilking and Sam Moore shaking hands as architect and contractor.

The tabernacle, sanctuary and baptistry gates are made of wrought iron worked by the skilled craftsmen of Holland. Marble altars also came from Europe.

The Mother's Chapel, often used for daily Mass, is located in the northwest corner of the church. It is soundproof, is equipped with a public address system and offers an unobstructed view of the altar.

Clearly, the Monsignor outdid himself on this one. There were problems, however. For example, the iron work, stained glass and marble are probably more widely traveled than most of us.

Sent by ship, the cargo arrived in New York Harbor where it was greeted by a strike. Re-routed to Los Angeles, it met another strike there, this one apparently begun between the time the cargo left New York and reached L. A. At this point, the frustrated crew headed back to Europe, and then started out yet again for New York. The records don't explain it, but somehow the whole shipment ended up in Houston, Texas!

Surely, this little escapade turned more than a few Casper heads of hair pure white. Nonetheless, Casper die-hards continued the work here, trusting Providence to help them meet their deadline, set, of course, for St. Patrick's Day. The year was 1963.

On March 16, the day before the dedication, Wyoming could not resist inflicting its own brand of trouble: snow. A blizzard blew into town and many people were convinced that the opening day would have to be postponed. Prayers were answered, however, and the 17th of March dawned sunny, mild and beautiful, as if St. Patrick himself had planned it.

By now, installation of carpeting, landscaping, altars, pews, the baptismal font, the windows and all other incidentals had brought the overall cost of St. Patrick's Church to approximately half a million dollars.

Also included in that figure was construction of the school consisting of six classrooms, office space, an auditorium and kitchen. All monies expended reflected the generosity of the Mother Church and Parish of St. Anthony's.

The completed church could hold 1100 parishioners and the parking lot could accommodate 200 cars. Truly, it was a day to be proud.

At 4 p. m. that afternoon, the procession formed. The Most Reverend Hubert M. Newell, D.D., blessed the buildings. The Mass, Coram Pontifice, in honor of St. Patrick, was celebrated, fittingly, by Casper's own Msgr. O'Reilly. Bishop Newell delivered the sermon. Deacon and sub-deacon of this very Casper ceremony were the Reverends Eugene and Gerald Sullivan, and Master of Ceremonies was the Reverend James J. Power, pastor of the new parish of St. Patrick.

The Mass was attended by 1000 people. Bishop Newell, in his remarks, cited it as one of the most important days in the history of the entire diocese, and paid tribute to the man most responsible.

This is a day, he said, "of special jubilation for Monsignor O'Reilly, because it was he who planned every phase of this splendid development. He acquired the land and worked hand in hand with the builders and the architects to bring this work to completion. In a spirit of charity that has no parallel in the history of the diocese, he not only directed the building, but arranged for the payment of half a million in construction costs."

Monsignor, it seems, had not forgotten the debt he faced when he first came to St. Anthony's and therefore, presented Father Power, as he had Fr. Grannan before him, with the gift of a debt-free parish.

Following the church service, some 600 people attended a banquet in the new school auditorium.

When Monsignor handed over the reins of St. Patrick's, it was an Irishman who was there to receive them. Ordained in 1939 at St. John's College in Waterford, Ireland, Fr. Power came to Wyoming that very year. He had served as an assistant in Sheridan and Rock Springs and as pastor in Monarch, Gillette and Buffalo. His influence in the years he was at St. Patrick's was profound.

On March 22, 1966, Fr. Power and St. Patrick's Church hosted the first official Interfaith Prayer Service in Wyoming, according to a report in the Casper Star-Tribune.

"May the Holy Spirit open our eyes and our hearts and our minds so that we will see each other as brothers and sisters, who are one in creation, one in redemption and one in our supernatural destiny," Bishop Newell remarked.

[Casper 1987, 100] Dedicated to World Peace and Christian Unity, the service was attended by 500 people of all faiths. Bishop Newell also took the opportunity to pray for the "cessation" to the hostilities in Vietnam and for a "just and enduring peace."

In 1973, after having served the parish for ten years, Fr. Power bade farewell to St. Patrick's and Fr. Thomas Cleary took his place. By the mid-1970s, St. Patrick's was assessed at \$1 million, having doubled its value in just over a decade.

In 1974 St. Patrick's saw another first. On Monday, October 14, Bishop Newell there ordained Wyoming's first Permanent Deacon. Mr. Lou Carubie became the first married Permanent Deacon of the Catholic Church in Wyoming. The Mass was celebrated in the theme of St. Stephen, the church's first deacon.

Deacon Lou was born in Brooklyn but married in Casper to Shirley M. Pursel at St. Anthony's Church in 1946. The deacon's ordination Mass was concelebrated by more than 40 of the Wyoming clergy and was attended by a large congregation of visiting sisters and laity, and non-Catholic clergymen.

Bishop Newell explained the diaconate in his homily, "the Second Vatican Council, conscious of the shortage of priests in many sections of the world, and aware of the great potential in the spiritual witness of men, who while not priests, would generously give of their time and talents to the service of their brethren, called for a renewal of the permanent diaconate in the Church of our time."

The deacon is responsible for his own support and serves a part-time ministry with the church. "He is authorized to administer baptism, to bless marriages, to bring viaticum to the dying, to read the Sacred Scripture to the faithful, to instruct and exhort the people, to preside at the worship and prayer of the faithful, to administer sacramentals and to officiate at funeral and burial services."

I was impressed by Deacon Lou at the birth of my second child. I shared a room with another young mother. Her baby was having problems feeding and the doctors told her he would have to be placed on an IV. The situation was not that critical, but all parents will understand the feelings she was having. Very frightened and in tears, she called the church wanting baptism for her child.

Deacon Lou was there, in minutes it seemed. His very presence calmed her and his words gave her hope. They went to the nursery and baptized her baby right then. She was consoled.

For those who would worry, this story has a happy ending. When I took my son in for his two-week check-up, this woman and her husband were also there with their baby. He was thriving by this time and doing wonderfully. I said a little prayer of thanks to God just for letting me know.

At St. Patrick's, the term of Fr. Cleary was followed by those of Frs. Etchingham and Moroney and even by a two-year stint by then-Auxiliary Bishop Hart, who came to know and love Casper as one of the strongest Catholic communities in Wyoming. "Catholics are notable in Casper," he said.

[Casper 1987, 101] Then, in 1980, came Father Thomas Sheridan, who still serves St. Patrick's today. As a member of St. Patrick's parish, I can offer here one parishioner's view of him:

To put it simply, Father Tom Sheridan is an Irishman. A native of County Cavan, Ireland, he has brought a lot of that country to Casper.

From the lovely bit of a brogue, to his St. Patrick's Day beret, to his sometimes biting sarcasm, to his love of a good story, to his special reverence for the Blessed Mother, Father Sheridan is Irish all the way.

In his priestly vocation, he has a penchant for cutting through all the excuses and all the excess baggage, right to the core of the matter. Often his homilies make you

uncomfortable, but they also make you think and examine your motives in light of what really matters.

Father Sheridan, in fact, is who brought me back to the church after quite a long absence. And, should he read this book, it is the first that he will know of it. I happened to attend a Mass of his some six years ago, and his words were so relevant, I attended another, and another, and yet another still. I admire the way he crystallizes every point and I have learned a great deal from his words.

You can tell that Fr. Sheridan has spent his whole life studying his faith, and searching, too, along with the rest of us. He readily admits his failings, a quality I've not found in a great many priests I've known. He shares the journey with us.

On June 7, 1964, the 20th anniversary of his ordination in Ireland, an interviewer noted, "Priests used to be God-like figures in people's eyes. Fr. Tom says he is just human and interacts with people as a human."

He is tall, 6'3", easy to look up to. And he is a symbol of the good Irish blend with which so many Casperites identify. It is a blend of strong faith, meshed with the reality of the world, the world we face right here, right now. It is a blend the Casper pioneers dealt with from day one, and the one with which we cope today.

Fr. Sheridan will sit and talk about Catholics and what they believe and how they should act and will follow with a "But," a shake of the head, and a great shrug of acceptance.

Fr. Sheridan is very wise, the kind of priest you could sit and listen to for hours. He holds education classes every now and then and the draw is never the same, people of all ages like to listen to him. You may not always agree, and he doesn't even expect you to but you love to listen.

He doesn't talk in platitudes. He deals openly with the toughest issues of our day. For example, Fr. Sheridan says abortion just doesn't make any sense. He says the whole abortion issue is a backlash, a kind of punishment we face for the unChristian attitudes we have taken in the past towards pregnant women. If they weren't married, they were outcast; if they had too many children, they were gossiped about. No wonder, says he, abortion became a consideration for them.

Condoms, Frs. Sheridan says, will not solve the AIDS epidemic, not as long as we focus our whole society on sex as casual recreation. Much that is on American television night after night does just that. The attitude must change; the self must change, and we cannot depend on artificial means to do it for us. It might be easier, "But" . . . and the great shoulders shrug.

He says that most Americans are not ready to marry until age 25 because it is not until then that most face life in the greater society. For this reason, he has been reluctant to marry people without a lot of pre-marital counseling and structured classes. It is his contention that these help avoid divorces later on.

Through his honesty and boldness, Fr. Sheridan has brought a good deal of strength and wisdom to St. Patrick's. You may not always agree with him but you know where he stands on almost any issue. He will even be able to tell you why. For that and many other qualities, the parishioners of St. Patrick's myself among them, admire and respect this extraordinary Irish priest and count themselves blessed to have him as their pastor.

If Fr. Sheridan is the strength and wisdom of the parish, then Father Charlie is the joy. The Reverend Charles Velasquez is a native of Cheyenne, Wyoming. He was ordained in 1985 at St. Joseph's Church. He is presently serving as Associate Pastor of St. Patrick's Church.

Sometimes when Fr. Charlie enters the church, you hear a groan or two or see eyes roll. It means the Mass will be a long one. Fr. Charlie doesn't believe in the little parentheses in the Missalette to shorten passages. But, Fr. Charlie grows on you.

You get the feeling that his Masses are long because he genuinely enjoys being there with you. He brings true meaning to the words, "celebration of the Mass." You feel like you are celebrating.

And, though they may be long, Masses with Fr. Charlie are guaranteed not to be boring. On various [Casper 1987, 102] occasions, he has entered the church with fishing poles, socks, even ice cubes in cups, to make the point of his homily. I've not a shred of doubt that Fr. Charlie would tap dance to the altar if he thought it would relate. He's the only priest I've ever known to address the Congregation as "You guys."

He expects participation, asking obvious questions like, "Are you a sinner?" And, if you're too embarrassed to raise your hand to that, he embarrasses you more by inviting everyone to your house after Mass to rejoice in the purity of your sinless soul!

One of the most beautiful Masses I ever attended, however, was this past Easter eve. It was one of Fr. Charlie's and it took two hours. But, it was two hours of feeling involved in my church, of welcoming others to it (for Fr. Charlie has already brought more than a handful of converts to share in the joy of our faith) and of a closeness to the Word of God. It was a beautiful experience in the church that night. And Fr. Charlie was the candle which lit our way.

I used to be one of the ones who groaned, but now I smile, and after Mass, as he verily skips down the aisle, greeting everyone, I say a prayer of thanks for this young priest who has breathed new life into St. Patrick's Parish.

When the Casper economy went bust in the early 1980s, St. Patrick's was perhaps the hardest hit of the city's parishes. But somehow she survives, with budget cuts here and there. And she is still packed to overflowing on Easter and Christmas, and weekly Sunday Mass at 10:30 is nothing to be ashamed of, either.

The school is used for CCD classes. It is also the scene of many celebrations and parties, bazaars and garage sales. It is a comfortable place which welcomes parishioners and others with the open arms of faith. Most Casper people who are part of St. Patrick's are very proud of the fact and will gladly tell you so.

Soon, even more details on the history of this lovely parish will be compiled in a book by parishioner Charlotte Babcock. *The Story of St. Patrick's Church* should be available by the time of the Centennial Celebration in Casper.⁵

Casper's Catholic Community Today {1987}

THE PARISHIONERS

[Casper 1987, 104] In writing this book, I've found myself inspired by people and caught up in the joys and sorrows of their lives.

When I first talked with Ray Studer, it was just after he and his wife, Louise, had celebrated their 66th wedding anniversary. He's a spry man with a charm all his own. He plied me with Irish Creme Liqueur - an anniversary gift he'd received - and shared his life with me. He served Communion at his own anniversary celebration and told me how much he loved his wife. I met Louise, too, she an invalid. But, she lived, as if to share that memorable day with him.

Just a few weeks later, on February 13, 1987, Louise Mercedes Studer passed away. Her obituary noted that she had been born in 1899, married in 1920 and came to Casper in 1940. She was a member of St. Anthony's Church, St. Anthony's Mother's Club and the Council of Catholic Women. For many years, she was a Girl Scout Leader and a Cub Scout Den Mother. Truly, the Church was an integral part of her life.

Another friend of the Church who died just prior to the publication of this book is Jerry Swanton.

Jerry was always an active member of St. Anthony's Parish. He was born in Casper in 1920 to William and Nora Swanton and went to St. Anthony's School. After high school, Jerry served in the Army in World War II and the Korean War and then came home, eventually, to the sheep ranch his father owned. Later, he went into insurance adjusting, owned Mountain States Adjusting and then retired in 1971 as an agent for the Bon Agency. Though not a native Irishman, Jerry seemed to inherit the Irish gifts and people smiled when they saw him coming. His death on February 5, 1987, was marked by sadness in all the parishes of Casper and his Mass of the Resurrection was well-attended.

One other we would like to here mention is Dick Tobin who died September 19, 1986. Dick was a prominent Casper attorney. Born in Casper on June 6, 1918, he was the son of Peter and Margaret Tobin. He went through St. Anthony's School and was noted for his abilities in football. At the University of Wyoming, his studies were interrupted by a disease which left him immobile for some 13 years. But Tobin moved in other ways, serving people. He did volunteer work, and during the war, published a paper, *The Altruist*, which he sent to Casper servicemen wherever they were sent. He served as administrative assistant to six mayors of Casper before returning to school to earn his law degree. At the State Legislature, Dick Tobin served as an attorney, as a representative and for twelve years as a state senator, where he was majority floor leader, vice president and president. He was just as active in the Church, serving as director of Wyoming Catholic Charities and trustee, not only to St. Anthony's, but also to the Diocese of Cheyenne. His memberships were wide and varied, including the Knights of Columbus, Red Cross and Boy Scouts as well as professional associations. Until his death, Dick Tobin shared a private law practice with his wife, Marialyce (Barrett). An incredibly energetic and inspiring man, Dick Tobin is a name St. Anthony's parishioners will not forget.

When I went to interview Mary Lou Baker, she, too, was grieving. This, over the tragic and recent death of her daughter and son-in-law who had died in a fire in Casper.

“At least they died together,” she said, “and that is how they would have wanted it. A mother always worries about her children and car accidents or illness, but I never dreamed of this. But, life goes on,” she said sadly, adding, “It has to.” She has been there before.

But, this year has had its celebrations as well. In March 1987, Father Patrick Shea became the first grandpa ever ordained at St. Anthony’s. A widower, Fr. Shea chose to devote his remaining years to God. Today, he serves faithfully in St. Margaret’s parish in Riverton, Wyoming.

A tri-parish Confirmation ceremony brought light to St. Patrick’s Church one Thursday in May. And also at St. Patrick’s, Youth Ministers Mary Shutts and John O’Connor married each other with great fanfare in the parish. A giant pig roast, with Steve Martin doing the roasting, provided food enough for all.

St. Anthony’s School graduated 21 students on May 22, and a series of Healing Masses at St. Anthony’s Church packed the house as everyday people experienced the powerful and inexplicable mysteries of our faith.

Along with the many other groups, a little band began to meet at the Conference Center to study Pax Christi, the peace of Christ. Among them, Padeen Holland brought joy to all with the birth of a beautiful baby daughter. On October 19, 1986, her daughter, Mari Claire, was baptized in the same ceremony in which her husband, Richard, was confirmed, accepting the Catholic faith as his own. In an inspiring ceremony, Msgr. O’Neill administered the sacraments to this young family of the Church of St. Anthony and the cycle continues.

Another member of the Pax Christi group, Pat (Kelliher) Tripeny provides inspiration to all who know her. Pat was widowed in 1971 when her husband, John Tripeny, Jr., died of complications of rheumatic fever. She has since spent much time and money helping with the strep throat swabbing programs in Casper.

A mother of four, Pat is also very involved in the church choir. At the 1983 WCCW Convention, she spoke.

“We are co-celebrants in every Liturgy and we are the Body of Christ. The entrance song isn’t intended to be travel music to get the priest down the aisle,” she said, noting that we must, “reflect His light from within. It is vital that we come alive and minister to one

another in the Liturgy." She lives these words, offering her own brand of light and radiating peaceful joy wherever she goes.

[Casper 1987, 105] As families go, "Red" Tobin's descendants carry on in his stead. I was impressed by the drive of these people. The whole family, not a one, ever seems to give up! "Red", himself, lived into his late 1980s working the VI Sheep Company through thick and thin.

Today, his son Jim runs the ranch and Bill serves as its president. Bill's sons help out as well. They are athletic types and the family strengths surely come out there as they win a lot! Enough, in fact, to earn Dick (named for grandpa) this letter from an admirer:

"You are really famous in Wyoming. Congratulations. I hope that I can get to see a game sometime when I am in Casper." The letter is signed, "Sincerely Yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend Joseph Hart, D.D., Bishop of Cheyenne."

Peg Tobin, in typical "proud mother" fashion, framed it.

Red's other son, Jack, has continually "bucked" the Republican tide in Casper, serving as an Irish Democrat in the Natrona County Court House since 1958. Twenty-nine years, total time, as County Commissioner and now, County Clerk.

"I'll stay as long as they let me," he says. And in his office, pictures of three little red-haired grandchildren prove that this tough Irish blood courses yet through tiny veins.

THE PRIESTS

Today, the priests of St. Anthony's follow the able leadership of Monsignor James O'Neill. Monsignor, Br. Raymond Phillips and a special committee of parishioners have dedicated much of their time this past year to the renovation of the burned-out Shepherd's Staff building. As this goes to press, their efforts have been rewarded, as the staff moves from their temporary headquarters in the Conference Center to the beautiful new Shepherd's Staff building, its very doors a symbol of the faith of the people within. The building has been redesigned and includes even a conference room for adult education classes.

In addition to serving as pastor of St. Anthony's, Monsignor is also Vicar General of the diocese and Dean of the Casper deanery.

At St. Anthony's he is assisted by the Reverend Thomas E. Cronkleton, Jr., associate pastor, and the Reverend Michael Hellman, priest- in-residence who also serves as Vocations Director.

Fr. Tom chatted with me one evening about his life and his priesthood. He was born in Iowa but grew up in Laramie, Wyoming. His father is a doctor there. There were eight children in his family, a set of triplets among them.

Father graduated from Laramie High School and went on to Conception Seminary College, earning a BA in philosophy, then to St. Thomas Theological Seminary, graduating in May, 1986 with a degree of Master of Divinity.

Fr. Tom was ordained a priest on December 29, 1986. This is his first assignment. "I'm still facing many of my 'firsts' as a priest," he confided, noting that the most difficult so far was the first time he heard Confession.

"I thought, Gosh, what will these people say to me? And worse, what will I say to them?" Open and relaxed about his feelings, Fr. Tom adds that the people of St. Anthony's have inspired him. In particular, he mentioned Sister Janice Hasselo, a Dominican sister whose wisdom in theological matters seems unbounded; Msgr. O'Neill whose incredible reverence and devotion to prayer affects everyone around him; Pat and Ed McCarthy who are to him a shining example of love within marriage, family and the church; and Joe and Mary Burke, whose prayerfulness and approach to difficult situations humble even one who devotes his entire life to God.

Fr. Tom is young and enthusiastic about his priesthood and is an asset to St. Anthony's Parish.

Fr. Hellman is so devoted to his work, it was difficult to track him down. A native of Rawlins, Wyoming, Father was ordained at 26 in the gymnasium at Rawlins High School because they didn't think the church would hold the crowd. The date was May 27, 1983 and Bishop Hart officiated.

Fr. Hellman said his first Mass on Saturday, May 28, at 5:15 p.m. at St. Joseph's in Rawlins. No stranger to Casper, he served at St. Patrick's Parish in 1982.

Mary Lou Baker is one who thinks highly of Fr. Hellman. He said the funeral Mass for her daughter. "It was a beautiful Mass, very comforting, very personal," she said.

[Casper 1987, 106] Our Lady of Fatima parish is guided by Father Daniel Colibraro and his associate, Fr. Terry Hruska.

St. Patrick's, of course, is today guided by the Reverend Thomas Sheridan, pastor, with the Reverend Charles Velasquez as associate pastor, and Deacon Lou Carubie to assist.

These eight men serve the Casper community of Catholics, meeting their spiritual needs and helping them grow in their faith.

THE BROTHERS⁸ & THE SISTERS⁶ and 7 and 8

In addition to her priests, Casper is served by three brothers. Two are of the Holy Cross Order. They live in the home that was set up for them at 645 S. David in July of 1982.

Although purchased at an inflated price, church records show, "It was felt that we had no choice but to buy this property for the protection of other adjoining church property." The Holy Cross Center is located at 841 North Durbin.

Brother Francis Kjeldgaard is the Director of the local residence of the Brothers of the Holy Cross, Brother John Baptist Community. He is also administrator of the Holy Cross Center, providing food and services for the needy. Brother Francis also ministers to the elderly.

Brother Raymond Phillips serves as Parish Administrator to the Church of St. Anthony. He also serves as secretary to the Brothers Community here in Casper. Well-liked by parishioners, Br. Raymond takes an active and energetic interest in almost every phase of life at St. Anthony's.

The third brother, Brother Martin Kietz, is a member of the Christian Brothers Community. In Casper, Brother Martin has his headquarters at the Catholic Conference Center where he lives and works. He serves as Education Coordinator for the diocese and spends many hours on the road reaching out to Catholics throughout the state. Br. Martin is a straight-forward, forward-thinking kind of person, who has brought his own brand of enthusiasm to Catholics in all corners of Wyoming.

A total of eight sisters also bless the city of Casper, as they offer their devoted services to the people of our community.

In Casper, Sister Mary Reparata Hartnagle, BVM, devoted a good part of her life to the teaching of music to many, many of the city's children. Today, she works in the school office. Sister Helen Louise Young, BVM, ministers to the ill and infirm, while Sister Mary St. Luke Belus, BVM, is in charge of the Media Center at the Catholic Conference Center.

Sisters Ramona Negrette, OSF, and Pat Sablatura, OSF, are members of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi Order. In Casper, Sister Ramona is well-loved by the Hispanics of the Church, and her ministry is much devoted to their needs, while Sr. Pat is especially drawn to her work as a counselor. These women dedicate themselves day in and day out to helping others.

Sister Janice Hasselo, OP, is Casper's only representative of the Dominican Order. Sister Janice serves as pastoral associate in the parish of St. Anthony's Church.

Casper's two other sisters, Mary Judith Brown and Mary Genevieve Cavanaugh, are of the Sisters of Loretto Order. They have chosen to serve the senior citizens of Casper at St. Anthony's Manor. They welcome all with a smile and the joy of their ministry.

These eight women, the sisters now serving Casper, do l so quietly. Finding out about them takes a bit of work, as this is their way. But the inspiration they provide and the importance of the work they do, is worth seeking them out, as they are the support, along with the brothers, upon which our community can rely.

THE CATHOLIC CONFERENCE CENTER

[Casper 1987, 107] There is a building right next to St. Anthony's School on Wolcott. The sign out front says it is the "Catholic Conference Center" and lists a number of its functions, but few people in Casper have any idea what the Catholic Conference Center actually is.

The building, of course, was built as a convent to house the sisters at St. Anthony's and eventually those who would come to teach at the Catholic High School one day to be built. Then came the changes, and there went most of our sisters. The few remaining felt lost in the huge building and eventually requested to move into the smaller house the church owned on Durbin Street.

Their move left a beautiful building with lots of potential just sitting there. Soon, the church with its resourceful, bounce-back optimism converted the house into a

Conference Center, which today serves many of the ministries of Casper and the diocese.

Within, you will find offices bustling with activity as dedicated people conduct the work of God. If you entered this past year, you would have first found the temporary offices of Msgr. O'Neill during the restoration of the Shepherd's Staff Building. More often than not, you would have been greeted by the winning smile of his secretary, Mary Heim, whose efficiency has been a great help to me. Otherwise, this area is a lovely sitting room.

On the opposite side of the hall is the secretary for Catholic Social Services, Mary Sue Jacques, who is a wonderful secretary (as long as you don't breeze in asking too many questions at once at 8:30 on a Monday morning. Then she gets a little confused). You may also run into Lou Huber, receptionist, who will help you get to where you want to go.

Through the foyer and to the left is Sr. Ramona, Hispanic Minister. Usually, there are people waiting in the hall to see her. In a recent article in *The Wyoming Catholic Register*, Sr. Ramona explained,

"The thrust and goal for the Spanish-speaking Apostolate is to respond to the Hispanic presence in our diocese: to serve as a vehicle; to provide spiritual, cultural and social nourishment for Hispanic Catholics; to provide an equal voice and representation at the decision-making level; to surface the needs of the Hispanic community and to communicate these needs to the designated agencies; and to surface Hispanic Catholic leadership within the diocese."

I talked with Sister Ramona about the Hispanic contributions to Casper's Catholic Community, which I know to be great. In 1986, a Census revealed that there are some 375 Spanish-speaking families in the church in Casper, representing 886 individuals. Thus, this group makes up a proportionately large sector of the community.

Their devotion is great, their contributions many. Representatives from each of the parishes meet regularly to plan the Hispanic tri-parish events. This year they are Pat Aragon of St. Patrick's, Cleo Martinez of St. Anthony's, and Rita Belus of Our Lady of Fatima.

These are joyous occasions, perhaps the most eagerly anticipated being the Fiesta. Set for September of each year, it coincides with the Day of Mexican Independence. To earn

the title of Queen of the Fiesta, high school girls coordinate and sponsor fund-raising projects under the guidance of Cleo Martinez. The Queen reigns for one year. This year, Centennial Year of the Diocese, Melissa Alcala reigns.

On a regular basis since 1981, Spanish Masses have been offered once a month, and in December of each year, the community offers a special Mass also in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The shining star in all of this is a lady named Cleo Martinez. She became very active in the Hispanic ministry when Father Richard McClellan (Father Mac) encouraged [Casper 1987, 108] her years ago.

“Ever since then, she has been a truly committed person,” Sr. Ramona notes, “She is always there to help, and she never gives up. If a Mass or event that she has worked hard on is poorly attended, she doesn’t lose heart; she just keeps going, on to the next thing.”

Sister also noted the support of Cleo’s family. Fred Martinez is always there too. Cleo doesn’t drive. And their two daughters, Louisa and Veronica, work as well. “It is a wonderful, devoted family,” Sister says.

The RENEW process, too, was very much supported by this community within a community. Benny and JoAn Isais, as well as Cleo, were very active in training interested Hispanics to be trainers and facilitators for the groups. “And many of those continue to meet, even now,” Sister Ramona adds.

Recently, Frances Eccles was voted to St. Anthony’s Parish Council where she will represent the Hispanic point of view.

Following our interview, Sr. Ramona took me into the hallway where she showed me a poster by which she guides her ministry. There I could see the many works the Hispanics contribute to our community through their love and devotion to God. From Spiritual Renewal, to Works of Mercy (including visits to the sick, the needy, the elderly, and food and clothes for the poor), to the Spanish Masses which bring joy and grace to the parish, to the yearly Fiesta which makes money for the Church, to the beautiful Mass in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and finally to their everyday community work serving as interpreters and referral agents bringing people to a greater understanding of the faith and making their lives more joyful. This is the Hispanic

Ministry in Casper and by it, all of Casper's Catholics gain a greater meaning from the beliefs and sacraments we share.

Back down the hall and just a tad to the left, we find the Media Center. From this room, Sr. Mary St. Luke, BVM, orders, compiles and catalogues TV cassettes, filmstrips, records, tapes, books, reference materials, pamphlets, articles, educational kits and magazines which are available, upon request, to all Catholics around Wyoming.

Sr. St. Luke is a media consultant serving the diocese and often, if she doesn't have what you're looking for, she can order it for you.

Down the hall you will find Kileen Smythe who is Youth Minister. She works with the young people, keeping them involved in their Church and doing so many things that sound like fun, we wish you didn't have to classify as a "youth" to participate.

Then there is Brother Martin who runs the Diocesan Education Office. His desk is frequently unattended as he is off around the state at least as often as he is in Casper. His work as Director of Total Education reaches out to the churches, missions, Catholic schools and general populace of Wyoming to offer encouragement, support and programs to further educate the people of the diocese in the Catholic faith.

On the other side of the hall is Tom Cotterill, Executive Director of Catholic Social Services. As such, it is his job to run the Catholic Social Services in an efficient manner, these include counseling, family planning, adoption services and immigration work.

The Conference Center also serves as a meeting place for many groups and organizations. An open building teeming with dedicated people whose main goal is to help other people, that's the Catholic Conference Center today.

[Casper 1987, 109] St. Anthony's Manor

Just around the corner from the Conference Center is St. Anthony's Manor, a modern retirement residence. A booklet introducing the Manor on the day of its dedication, welcomes residents and gives a flavor of the place,

"Saint Anthony is an integral part of a larger community. Many will contribute to the quality of life here. Many will desire to be enriched with your presence, wisdom, skills, and talents. Therefore, we encourage you to continue your valuable interest,

participation, and service - to continue all the good you are already doing! We see your experience here as expanding to wider circles of influence and inspiration.”

St. Anthony’s Manor is federally-funded and church-sponsored, which means that Monsignor Etchingham devoted many hours to hearings and meetings to secure needed zoning and building changes, and he worked actively with lenders and regulatory officials to insure the success of St. Anthony’s Manor.

Today, the Manor provides a safe, tranquil and happy atmosphere for its residents and is guided lovingly by Sisters Mary Judith Brown and Mary Genevieve Cavanaugh, Sisters of Loretto.

St. Anthony’s Preschool

Just next door to the Manor is St. Anthony’s Pre-School. This delightful little place opened in the fall of 1982 to meet the growing needs of Casper’s younger citizens. Today, Director Tulip Titus and Pre-school Teacher Maria Norelius offer classes and interesting activities for some 59 three and four-year-old children each year. The windows are adorned with the creations of happy little preschoolers living and learning in Casper, Wyoming.

VINCENT DE PAUL

On the North side of town, the Vincent de Paul Store offers second-hand clothing, appliances and other goods at bargain prices. The store is staffed by Phyllis Coleman who is always organizing, rearranging and repairing merchandise for sale.

Behind the counter is one of the volunteers who devote many hours to running the store and serving its customers in friendly fashion.

The Future

[Casper 1987, 114] Thus, the little Church of St. Anthony has grown and expanded to cover the city of Casper with active parishes and fruitful evidence of the love and caring of Casper’s Catholic community.

The immediate future of the Church in Casper includes participation in the Celebration of the Centennial of the Diocese of Cheyenne. Plans promise an inspiring Historic

Pageant the evening of August seventh and a moving Centennial Mass on August eighth.

As the Host City, Catholics of the Casper Community enthusiastic about extending hospitality to the are thousands expected for the celebration.

As a people they are aware of the nearness of God in times of sorrow as well as of joy.

May the next one hundred years continue to be filled with the transmission of our faith-filled legacy.

In Closing

[Casper 1987, 115] As I was writing this book, I took a class on the History of the Catholic Church with Father Tom Sheridan. One of the first things he said was that Catholic History is cyclical as opposed to linear.

That thought is nowhere perhaps so evident as in Casper, Wyoming. The notorious boom-bust cycle throws us into a fuller range of human experience. But these things are relative. For, in the bust cycles I have seen progress and many gains. People become concerned about their friends and neighbors, and they extend themselves. There is a closeness in Casper today that simply wasn't there seven years ago when everyone was riding high. And yet, we call these "bad times." I wonder if the Lord was not sending us a message this spring when all the trees and flowers in Casper bloomed as I have not seen them do in all the time I've lived here. Perhaps it was His way of saying He is pleased.

The "good times" bring us hidden difficulties as we focus on bettering ourselves and our situations. Greed sometimes becomes a substitute for human kindness. Casper is a kind of microcosm of this because of its economic trials.

Thus, you can pick a criteria and label our times "good" or "bad," but within the good, there will always be "bad" as within the "bad" there is also "good." It depends on where you want to focus your attention. Casper's Catholics have, for the most part, and admirably through the years, dealt with the situation at hand and accepted the cycle in stride. Their attention has been most often on dealing with the present while looking to the future.

Some have fallen, it is true. But I think the cycle applies to them, too. In “good” people there will always be “bad” as in “bad” people, there will always be “good.”

I have found it fascinating, reviewing lives in retrospect, people who dedicated themselves for many years to the people of the community. And yet, they made mistakes, sometimes big ones.

This book has been for me a study in gray. Nothing can be so clearly defined in black or white as to have a linear end. As Father Sheridan so beautifully explained, it will all come back around again.

Thus, one hundred years have passed. Casper has changed, her people have changed, the Church has changed. But one thing has not changed and never will, that being the grace and goodness of God, Our Father. To Him we look for guidance in the centuries to come.

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Contributor's List

[Casper 1987, 141] A special thank you goes out to all those who helped support and preserve this precious bit of history. Through their donations of money and services, this book was made possible. Thank you to:

The Dominican Sisters, Sister Janice Hasselo, Davidson Plumbing & Heating, Inc., Lloyd & Anne Blower, Bill & Peggy Tobin, VI Sheep Company, Parker's Appliance, Bill Lummis, Bush-Wells Sporting Goods, Sherwin Williams, Apple's Corner, Jourgensen Paint, Mary Heim, Warren Perkins, Lee Ann Brechtel, E. F. Hutton, Vance N. Oracion, Jeanette's Workout Studio, Leo V. Boehler, Catholic Conference Center, Elizabeth Harte Doherty, Charles R. Gray, Cecilia Doherty Gray, Verna M. Heisey, Ray A. Studer, Bishop Hubert Newell, Padeen Holland, Charlotte Babcock, J.J. Graybill

The Members of St. Anthony's Parish Council in 1987

Mary Diesburg, Ed McCarthy, Pat Keating, Bob Brechtel, Jean Bartholomew, Janet Steensland, Connie Gates, Leo Boehler, Frances Eccles, M. Joseph Burke. Don Swanton, Mary Kozola, Brother Raymond Phillips, Brother Francis Kjeldgaard, Sister Ramona

Negrette, Sister Helen Louise Young, Monsignor James O'Neill, Sister Janice Hasselo, Bill Houston, Father Thomas Cronkleton

About the Author

[Casper 1987, 143] Linda Doherty is originally from Boston, Massachusetts. She came to Wyoming in 1975, has lived in Casper since 1980. She and her husband, Tom, have two sons, Nathan and Philip.

Linda holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Southern California and a master's degree from the University of Wyoming. She has worked in media and public relations for some 13 years, has won awards in journalism, poetry and photography.

Today, she runs her own home business, Linda's Ink, doing freelance writing, editing, typesetting and layout for various publications.

Casper 1987 Boxed Notes

[These notes were scattered passim throughout the text.]

1. St. Anthony. Feast Day: June 13

[Casper 1987, 21] The Church of St. Anthony is named for St. Anthony of Padua known as the "Wonder-Worker" for the many favors he has granted devotees since his death.

St. Anthony was born near Lisbon, Portugal in the year 1195. He was baptized Ferdinand by his father, who was a knight of King Alphonso II. The family was quite well-to-do.

Ferdinand, however, chose a more reclusive, pious sort of life, spending many years with the Canons Regular of St. Augustine. While there, he had occasion to meet five members of the Friars Minor (the Franciscans), a new and untried order founded by St. Francis of Assisi. They were on their way to Morocco to work among the Mohammedans. A few weeks later, the remains of all five were brought back to Portugal; they were the first Franciscan martyrs. Ferdinand was so overwhelmed by this

act of faith, he joined the Franciscan Order in 1221, and took the name of Anthony (after St. Anthony of the Desert).

He spent much of this time in prayer and penance, and went to Africa to preach to the Moors. Anthony became ill, however, and on the trip home, was blown off course to Sicily. There, he attended a great gathering of Franciscan brothers, and met St. Francis himself. Shortly after, Anthony was asked to preach, and it became clear that this man was sent from God.

Wherever he went, Anthony held his listeners spellbound. He became known as the "Hammer of the Heretics" because of his ability to teach the Bible in scholarly, as well as common, terms. His last Lent was spent preaching in Padua, after which he became ill, and died at the age of 36.

Many miracles occurred at the tomb of St. Anthony, forty-six of which were accepted at his canonization. He is also known as the "Finder of Lost Objects." No one knows how this came about but many who have called upon him in this vein will agree that St. Anthony is indeed very good at it!

2. Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

[Casper 1987, 35] The Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, perhaps have had the greatest influence on Casper as it was they who educated many of her citizens. Up until 1980, the BVM's for the most part, comprised the staff of St. Anthony's School.

The Order was founded by a young Irish woman, Mary Frances Clark. In 1831, she opened a small school in Dublin and was soon joined by four others. They committed themselves wholly to teaching, visiting the sick and assisting the poor and friendless. They became the BVM community.

In 1833, the sisters came to Philadelphia to minister to the needs of Irish immigrants there, and they began to teach in parish schools. Soon, they moved west to Dubuque, Iowa, where the motherhouse is located today.

In September 1927, the BVM's began their work in Wyoming when they opened St. Anthony's School in Casper. Today, they serve in various ministries in Cody and Green River as well. Several Casper women have joined this Order and spent their lives dedicated to its principles.

3. Holy Cross Brothers

[Casper 1987, 85] The Holy Cross Brothers were founded in 1820 in France. They came to the United States in 1841. Their ministries include building community, providing services to all humankind and spreading the Good news revealed by God which the Church proclaims.

The Brothers, here and overseas, bring a variety of services and gifts, as educators, social and health care workers and technicians.

4. Our Lady of Fatima.

[Casper 1987, 92] Our Lady of Fatima Church in Casper is named for a series of events which occurred at Fatima, Portugal in 1917. The year before, three children were visited by an angel as they watched over their sheep. The children were of peasant families and up to this time, seemed perfectly normal. They kept their visits with the angel a secret, but on May 13, 1917, they were witness to a vision of Our Lady, one they could not keep to themselves. Over the next five months their lives changed as the vision returned each month to speak to them. She told them many things, some frightening, some hopeful. She spoke of the war that was then being waged, and of the one to come. She warned them about things of the future, predicting sadly the rise of Hitler and of Communism. She offered hope to those who would say the Rosary and pleaded with the people of the world to repent and offend their God no more. Each month, more and more pilgrims came to be present at the appearances, though only the children could see her, and at her final visit, in October, Our Lady of Fatima is said to have performed a miracle, the sun appearing to spin as a disc toward the earth. The sight converted many disbelievers, and, they say, the occurrences at Fatima brought Portugal back to its strong ties to Christianity. In years to follow, the Catholic Church closely scrutinized the events at Fatima and discerned them to be true and real. Today, we pray to Our Lady of Fatima for the wisdom and guidance she imparted to these brave children more than half a century ago and while many turn to her Novenas and Rosaries in times of war, we should not underestimate our need for her protection and our own repentance even in times of peace.

5. St. Patrick, Feast Day: March 17

[Casper 1987, 102] Though not an Irishman, St. Patrick will always belong to the Irish people because he devoted his life to them.

Born in Great Britain in the year 385, St. Patrick was captured by pirates at the age of 16, and was taken to Ireland as a slave. He worked as a shepherd. Eventually, he escaped and returned home. But he could not forget the paganism practiced in the land of his enslavement.

One would think he would have felt bitterness against them and anger for what they had done to him. Instead, St. Patrick felt pity and sorrow for these people. He saw the tragedy of their lives, lives in which they enslaved themselves as well as others.

St. Patrick became a priest and resolved to return to Ireland and preach the Gospel of the Lord to all the people there. He went to a place called Tara where all the Irish kings and pagan Druid priests celebrated the vernal equinox. As part of the ritual, all of the fires in Ireland were supposed to be extinguished until the pagan priests lit new ones. On a hill overlooking Tara, St. Patrick built a huge bonfire, then announced the Resurrection to these people who knew nothing of it. He overcame the arguments of the Druids, using a shamrock to explain the Trinity to the Irish kings and to the people they ruled.

St. Patrick continued in his mission, converting thousands of Irish to Catholicism. The Church expanded throughout the country and Ireland became one of the most devoutly Catholic countries in the world.

Though he died in 461, St. Patrick's influence was carried by the Irish to many countries of Europe and eventually to the United States. Today, the Apostle of Ireland belongs to the world, and his feast day, March 17, is among the most famous and most celebrated of all the saints.

6. Dominicans

[Casper 1987, 106] The Dominican Order has its motherhouse located in Sinsinawa, Wisconsin. This particular sisterhood began in 1844 when Father Samuel Mazzuchelli, an Italian Dominican and a missionary to settlers on the frontier, purchased the Sinsinawa Mound from a local politician. In 1848, he gathered together four young women to form the Sinsinawa Dominican Congregation. They were simple women, the daughters of farmers, miners and immigrants, but they wanted to give their lives to Our

Lord and His work. Today the Congregation numbers some 1250 sisters in all parts of the United States,

7. Sisters of St. Francis

[Casper 1987, 108] The Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi celebrated their 135th Anniversary as a congregation in 1984. On March 13, 1849, a small group of men and women, Franciscan Tertiaries, left their village of Ettenbeuren, Bavaria, under the leadership of their two parish priests and began their journey to North America.

Arriving in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, they presented themselves to Bishop John Martin Henni on Pentecost Monday, May 28, 1849, and offered their services as missionaries for his diocese, erected in 1843.

The Bishop of Milwaukee requested that they settle in Nojoshing, on a strip of land south of Milwaukee, on the shores of Lake Michigan. Their motherhouse is still located there today.

Initially, the sisters helped in beginning and maintaining St. Francis Seminary in Milwaukee. Besides domestic work, gradually the needs of people also called the sisters to care for orphans, to teach in parish and diocesan schools, to work with developmentally disabled persons and to respond to other pastoral and social needs. Today, the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi serve in a variety of ways in thirty-eight dioceses from Massachusetts to California, from Wisconsin to Texas, in Taiwan, Tokyo and Mexico. Wherever they serve, they bring a special care for poor and oppressed persons, especially the elderly, women and handicapped persons.

8. Christian Brothers

[Casper 1987, 109] Formally known as the Brothers of the Christian Schools, this group of religious men work in the field of education. The Order goes back three centuries to the poor in the streets of Rheims, France and to a man named John Baptist de la Salle.

He devoted himself to the poor, opening schools in the poorest sections of Rheims. Soon others came to work with him. At de la Salle's suggestion, they began to live and pray together, sharing simple lives in the service of others.

He also offered innovations in teaching. His community flourished and by the time of his death the Christian Brothers numbered 100 and taught in 26 schools. De la Salle was canonized in 1900 and proclaimed "patron of all teachers," in 1950.

The Brothers came to the United States in 1845. Today, they here number about 1000 and cover 26 states. By living a simple, single lifestyle, the LaSallian Brothers try to embrace the Gospel value of loving and serving many people. They believe in people. They believe in each other.

9. Sisters of Loretto

[Casper 1987, 110] The Sisters of Loretto celebrated their 175th Anniversary on April 25, 1987. This Order began in a dilapidated cabin with a dirt floor and with no visible means of support. Three young pioneer women, Mary Rhodes, Christina Stuart and Ann Havern, on the Kentucky frontier had already formed a school and, in 1812, decided to form a religious order.

When Father Charles Nerinckx suggested that they might consider joining a European Order, they refused, and the Loretto simplicity even today is said to have a "healthy, early American quality about it."

With three more girls added, the Order began. They rebuilt their cabin, they cut their own wood, they farmed, they taught and they ate almost nothing.

Their school flourished but, with boarding pupils charged only \$5 a year and orphans nothing, life was very hard. Nonetheless, new members kept coming. One woman walked more than 300 miles just to join.

The Lorettoes were able to open a few more schools and soon academies for the higher education of women. They also lined the American frontier, daring to go to its limits wherever they saw a need, and often suffering near-starvation and death to do it. They are said to have been the first white women to set foot in the Kansas Territory.

The Lorettoes went all the way to Santa Fe and then some, eventually serving as missionaries to China and Latin America.

In 1968, they were allowed to choose their own ministry. Today, the Loretto Directory includes, as well as teachers, doctors, nurses, an attorney, social workers, artists, writers,

business executives and even union representatives. They are concerned with peace, social justice and alleviating poverty in our world.

10. In Memorium: Father Patrick McGovern (+1962)

[Casper 1987, 118] Father Patrick McGovern was an assistant at Our Lady of Fatima parish. In 1962 he was killed in an automobile accident. Father McGovern was 31 years old. Monsignor James O'Neill delivered this sermon.

FUNERAL SERMON
FOR
REV. PATRICK J. McGOVERN

Wednesday, February 28, 1962

“Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time. For his soul pleased God; therefore He hastened to bring Him out of the midst of iniquities.” Wisdom, IV, 13, 14.

On the feast of Corpus Christi, June 17, 1954, a young Deacon, robed in a white alb of purity and innocence, stood confident and zealous, yet humble in the Sanctuary of the Most Holy Trinity, Waterford, Ireland, and with a resonant ADSUM joyfully accepted the power and privileges, together with the challenging duties and responsibilities of the Priesthood. That glorious moment climaxed six arduous years of conscientious and specialized study and countless hours of soul-searching prayer and meditation. Standing at the altar of his native parish church in Limerick, the following morning, the scene no doubt of boyhood and youthful hopes and dreams - hopes and dreams that were now a reality, surrounded by grateful and justifiably proud parents, immediate family and friends, the young priest whispered the miraculous and awe-inspiring words of Consecration, for the first time the God he loved and served was in his consecrated hands, obedient to his command.

Unselfish - as was the dominant characteristic of his short lived life - he was desirous to devote his priestly powers and talents in an area of greatest need; freely choosing it from among the more glamorous, he was adopted some years prior by the Diocese of Cheyenne, a Diocese that was to him, then, but a name; its people, their culture, their way of life comparatively unknown - yet its people were to him, then and always, immortal souls, for whom Christ died, whom God loved and whom he was zealous to save.

Arriving in Wyoming in September of 1954, he entered whole-heartedly the field of his priestly ministry - teaching, guiding, comforting, baptizing, absolving, sanctifying; praying with and for the souls entrusted to his care; paternally and patiently conducting them in the footsteps of Christ and in the pathway of the Commandments, from cradle to grave; from birth to death; from God to God. No churches, schools or parish halls, no monuments of brick and stone were erected under his supervision, to help keep alive the memory of his apostolic labors; yet numberless are the souls that were and are the grateful recipients of his counsel and encouragement and for whom he has been God's instrument in sanctifying and saving. His zealous priestly work for souls will long be remembered by the people of St. John's church in Buffalo, St. Patrick's in Kemmerer and St. Barbara's in Powell; as well as by the parishioners and his many friends in St. Anthony's and Our Lady of Fatima here in Casper.

And now, suddenly, tragically and heart-rendingly, the life of this young priest, for whom the future held so much, is snuffed out. "Father Pat is dead," such was the terse message passed from one priest to the next last Friday. Yes, Father Pat is dead. Speaking as a classmate of Father McGovern and after almost 14 years of close association, I can say without hesitation that the Diocese of Cheyenne, its priests and people are poorer today, for a good priest for whom the future held the brightest promise has passed to his reward; for us priests his untimely death means the loss of a dear and trusted friend, and you, the laity, are bereft of a pious and zealous spiritual father, a truly priestly priest.

God has taken Father Pat to Himself after but a few short years in His service; no more will his lips pronounce the sacred words of Consecration; no more will he place the Bread of Life on the tongues of the faithful; no more will hand be raised in Absolution and Priestly Benediction; no more will he pour the saving waters of Baptism; no more will he whisper words of peace, encouragement and resignation, to the troubled, sick and dying; no more will he teach and preach; and no more will his living presence and conduct serve as a source of emulation. All this is now a closed book and we are tempted to ask WHY? Why in a Diocese so critically short of priests was one of its most promising called in the prime of his Priestly life? While not attempting to fathom the inscrutable mind and wisdom of a loving God, we derive consolation from knowing what, the ways of God are not always the ways of men; that Father Pat's death, to us an apparent unspeakable tragedy, may in God's plan and providence be for many a compelling source of inspiration, and a fruitful source of sanctification and salvation. For in a very real sense he gave his life and death for souls; always sympathetic of the needs of others, he died in line of duty, his last mission was to bring aid and comfort to the sick.

As the blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians, our fervent prayer and hope this morning is, that, his brief priestly life and his tragic untimely death will serve as a holy beacon, and as a compelling incentive to many a young man in Casper and throughout the state, now wavering in undecision [sic], to accept Christ's call to "Come follow Him"; to dedicate their lives to the greatest cause of all; to follow in the footsteps of Father McGovern; to fill the spot left vacant by his passing; to help continue and bring to fruition the work he so nobly begun. And for you his parishioners and friends, may his life and death make ever more vivid the importance of salvation; make you determined so to live as you desire to die; make you determined to save your immortal souls at all costs.

We are very much in spirit with Father Pat's good mother this morning, for to her this must be a shattering blow, yet we confidently pray that God will bring to her the comfort, consolation and resignation that her Priest-son so often brought to others, that she will and say sincerely what comes readily to the lips of every Irish mother "God's holy will be done." To Father Pat's mother and family, to your Excellency, to you his brother priests, and to you his good friends, we offer our prayerful sympathy. And while tempted to request that you pray not for him but to him, yet conscious of the onerous duties and responsibilities of the Priesthood, let us one and all join in beseeching God to grant to His Priest the reward he so richly deserves. Prayer for a deceased Priest:

"O God, who didst raise Thy servant PATRICK to the dignity of Priest in the Apostolic Priesthood, grant, we beseech Thee, that he be forever united to the company of the same, through Christ our Lord, Amen."