

**HISTORY OF THE GREEN RIVER
IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CHURCH
1868-1980**

James William June

The Reverend Peter J. De Smet, S.J., has the honored distinction of having celebrated the first Catholic Mass in this area and on the Green River. A delegation of Nez Perce Indians went to St. Louis to interview the ecclesiastical authorities at the Jesuit College. They begged that priests be sent to instruct their people in the Catholic faith. Father De Smet was appointed to visit their habitat in order to prepare the way for the missionaries who were to be sent. Father De Smet set out for the scene of his labors at the end of April, 1840, with the annual caravan of the American Fur Company, under the leadership of Captain Andrew Drips, On Sunday, July 5, 1840, they reached the Green River Rendezvous at the confluence of Horse Creek and the Green River. There Father De Smet celebrated Mass and preached in English and French to the traders, trappers, and hunters; and through interpreters to the Snake and Nez Perce Indians. The Canadians sang a portion of the Mass in Latin, and the canticles in French; the Indians chanted hymns in their native tongues. The spot was known for years as “la Prairie de la Messe”. The next day a dozen Canadian hunters followed Father De Smet and went to Confession and Communion.

The Union Pacific Railroad Company reached the Green River by October 1, 1868, they were greeted by a town of Green River plotted out with permanent adobe buildings and 2,000 people. Green River City was never an “end-of-track” town. The Union Pacific Railroad Company, rushing to beat the “Central” and the winter to the mountains, went through Green River City to Bryan on the Black’s Fork twelve miles west of Green River. Yet in its own right Green River City lived on, as a terminal for the Sweetwater Stage Coach Line. The Union Pacific Railroad built its division point in Bryan, with a twelve stall roundhouse, large freight house, depot, an eating house, and machine shops. In the

fall of 1868, it was said that as many as 5,000 gathered in Bryan. By the end of December, 1868, only a few months after its birth, Bryan faded quickly as its transient population moved further west towards Evanston.

Green River City was attended as a mission of the Cheyenne St. John the Baptist parish, later changed to St. Mary's Cathedral, by the Reverend William Kelly until October 9, 1868. His territory extended from Sidney, Nebraska to the Wasatch Canyon, Utah. The parochial register of the Cheyenne parish shows Father Kelly to have visited every point along the Union Pacific Railroad from Sidney to Wasatch, including the town of Carbon. Father Kelly was the apostle of the Catholic Church in Wyoming. He was also the first priest to be ordained by Bishop O'Gorman on June 26, 1859 in Omaha. Father Kelly was sent to Cheyenne in the fall of 1867, by Bishop O'Gorman, to organize the Catholics and build up a parish. In the spring of 1868, the Union Pacific Company generously donated four lots of ground at the northeast corner of 21st and O'Neil streets, whereon to erect a Catholic Church. St. John the Baptist parish was formed, a frame church with a few rooms attached to serve as the parochial residence were built, completed, and dedicated in the summer of 1868 at a cost of \$4,000.00. With the exception of an occasional Sunday Mass at Laramie City and Fort Sanders, Mass was celebrated regularly every Sunday at Cheyenne by Father Kelly after the erection of the Catholic Church. The other days of the week, Father Kelly devoted to missionary work along the railroad. On these trips the section houses or homes were converted into temporary churches. Father Kelly remained in charge at Cheyenne until October 9, 1868. He did general missionary work in Nebraska for another decade, and then lived in retirement at St. Philomena's Cathedral, Omaha, until his death October 23, 1907. He was a belated vocation: for he had been a Christian Brother in Ireland, and was about 40 years of age when he received holy orders. He was every inch a priest, although he never wore the Roman collar (during his early years in the priesthood it was not prescribed and was frowned upon by people not of the Faith), but wore instead a white neckerchief under a clerical vest. His reputation was that

of a “saintly priest”; he had an even disposition and was never angry or impatient. At the end of every interview his parting salute was always: “God Bless You”. Up to his last brief illness he enjoyed excellent health, which enabled him to take a daily walk of several miles. He died without a dollar, having devoted whatever he received to works of religion.

The first Wyoming Territory census in 1868 showed Green River City with a population of 101 people and Sweetwater (then known as Carter) County with 2,862 people. Also in 1868, Green River City had a post office with J. F. Reynolds as postmaster.

The Reverend Philip Erlach attended Green River City as a mission of the Cheyenne St. John the Baptist parish from October 9, 1868 to April 16, 1871. His territory also extended from Sidney, Nebraska to Wasatch Canyon, Utah and all the country to the north in Wyoming. The parochial register of the Cheyenne parish shows Father Erlach besides visiting all points along the Union Pacific Railroad, also made visits in the northern country at Fort Laramie, Fort Fettermen, South Pass, and Atlantic City. These long trips in the north had to be made by stage, and naturally involved a great deal of hardship. When Father Erlach was moved from Cheyenne in 1871, he was placed in charge of the oldest parish in Nebraska, St. John’s (now Jackson), near Sioux City. Father Erlach was born in Austria, April 2?, 1839, and was raised to the priesthood by Bishop O’Gorman on June 27, 1865.

The 1870 Wyoming Territory census showed that Green River City with a population of 106 people and Sweetwater County with 1,916 people. Around 1870, the first school in Green River was located at 189 North 1st West Street where the present location of the Wyoming Land Title Company building is.

Green River City was attended as a mission of the Cheyenne St. John the Baptist parish by the Reverend William Byrne from April 16, 1871 until early 1872. Father Byrne remained as the incumbent of the Cheyenne

pastorate until September, 1873. After Bishop O’Gorman’s death, Father-, -Byrne acted as administrator of the vicariate. He died of tuberculosis while serving as pastor of North Platte. It was during Father Byrne’s charge at the Cheyenne parish that Laramie was created as a parish, thereby cutting off all the territory north and west of that city.

In 1872, the Union Pacific Railroad Company was forced to move its division point to Green River City from Bryan, which involved a roundhouse, a depot, and machine shops, when the water in the Black’s Fork ran low.

Green River City was then served as a mission of St- Lawrence O’Toole parish of Laramie by the Reverend Eugene Cusson from early 1872 until early 1879. Father Cusson was of French-Canadian stock, and took charge of Laramie shortly after his ordination. His first care was to secure title to the church property. The Union Pacific Railroad Company issued a quick-claim deed to Lots I and 2, Block 190, donating this land to the Catholic Church in June 19, 1872. He then proceeded to build the stone church, and pushed it to completion; it was dedicated under the patronage of St. Lawrence O’Toole. Father Cusson officiated regularly at all points along the Union Pacific Railroad. In Evanston he held services in the local school building up to the year 1877, when a church was purchased from the Baptist Home Mission Society for \$1,100.00. The people of St. Mary Magdalene parish paid for their new church within one month from the date on which it was bought. Early in 1879, Father Cusson was transferred to Nebraska City, where for many years he shepherded the flock committed to his care.

In 1873, a new school building was built in Green River City at a cost of \$1,200.00. It was located on the corner of North 1st East and Flaming Gorge Way, where the present location of the Senior Citizens’ center is. There were 50 pupils at this time.

In 1875, a coal strike occurred which seriously interrupted the coal mining and production in Wyoming and the region.

Green River was attended as a mission of St. Joseph parish of Rawlins by the Reverend Michael F. Cassidy from early 1879 to 1886. Until the erection of the of the Immaculate Conception Church in Green River, when the priest arrived in the community, word was quickly passed that Mass would be offered in a home. This was usually done by word of mouth by the Catholic women of the community. Father Cassidy helped in the building of Immaculate Conception Church and parish in 1884. The Church was a frame building constructed on the southeast corner of North Center and East 2nd North streets, At that time the few families of the parish, perhaps eight in all, were able somehow to raise \$1,800.00 for their church. With the establishment of the Immaculate Conception parish, It is believed that the Altar and Rosary Society was organized by the ladies of the parish and began working within the Church and community.

In 1880, the census showed- Green River with a population of 327 people, and Sweetwater County with 2,561 people.

In 1885, there occurred a coal strike and Chinese riots which was wide spread and seriously interrupted coal mining and production in the region.

Bishop O'Connor of Omaha was the first bishop to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation in the Immaculate Conception parish during the period of 1884 to 1887.

The Immaculate Conception parish of Green River was attended as a mission of the Rawlins St. Joseph parish by the Reverend Francis J. Nugent from 1886 to December, 1887. Father Nugent was born in County Tyrone, Ireland, in 1859, and was ordained at Baltimore, Maryland in 1882. He died in London, England on March 15, 1920.

The Reverend John T. Smith of the Rawlins St. Joseph parish attended the Green River Immaculate Conception parish as a mission from December, 1887 to April, 1888. Father Smith died in Omaha, Nebraska on February, 1915.

The Immaculate Conception parish was attended as a mission by the Reverend James Ryan of the Rawlins St. Joseph parish from April, 1888 to November, 1888.

The Green River Immaculate Conception parish was attended as a mission by the Reverend John Delahunty of Our Lady of sorrows parish in Rock Springs from November, 1888 until January, 1902. Father Delahunty was the first pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows parish which was established in Rock Springs in the winter of 1888. He left the parish in January, 1902.

According to the 1890 census, Green River had a population of 723 people and Sweetwater County showed 4,941 people.

In 1891, a new school building was built in Green River, which was the first four year High School in Green River. This building is now owned and occupied by the Masonic Lodge of Green River, located at 129 Fast Flaming Gorge Way.

On May 18, 1898, the Wyoming Battalion of the National Guard left Cheyenne for San Francisco and the Spanish American War.

On October. 1899, the Wyoming Battalion of the National Guard was mustered out of the service and returned to their homes. Wyoming had sent 1,054 volunteers when only several hundred were needed. Sixteen of those volunteers died as war casualties In the Spanish American War.

The 1900 census shows Green River with a population of 1,500 people and Sweetwater County with 8,455 people.

The Green River Immaculate Conception parish was served as a mission by the Reverend John Nolan of the Rock Springs Our Lady of Sorrows parish from January, 1902 to August, 1902. Father Nolan succeeded Father Delahunty January, 1902 and resigned August, 1902, because of ill health.

In 1902 the Wyoming Chemical Company built a sal-soda plant in Green River near the present County Shops Uinta Drive, just north of the river. Due to increased operation expenses, the soda plant was discontinued sometime after 1909.

The Immaculate Conception parish of Green River was served as a mission by the Reverend John Delahunty of the Rock Springs Our Lady of Sorrows parish, who again became its pastor, from August, 1902 until April 26, 1903.

The Green River Immaculate Conception parish was attended as a mission by the Reverend Anton Blahnik, O.S.B., of the Rock Springs Our Lady of Sorrows parish from April 26, 1903 to June-, 1903. Father Blahnik, who succeeded Father Delahunty, was acting pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows parish until June, 1903 when Father Nolan returned. On May 1, 1903, the Articles of Incorporation of the Church of Immaculate Conception were signed.

The Immaculate Conception parish was again attended as a mission by the Reverend John Nolan of Our Lady of Sorrows parish in Rock Springs from June, 1903 until January, 1904.

The Green River Immaculate Conception parish was attended as a mission by the Reverend J. F. Guinan and Joseph Dryer of Salt Lake City, Utah, who made regular visits to hold services and minister to the flock from March, 1904 to October, 1904.

The Reverend Charles O'Connor attended the Green River parish as a mission of the Rock Springs Our Lady of Sorrows parish from October,

1904 to May, 1905, when he was succeeded by the Reverend August Conti.

The Immaculate Conception parish was attended as a mission by Father Conti of the Rock Springs Our Lady of Sorrows parish from May, 1905 to May, 1907. Father Conti resigned as pastor in May, 1907 and the Reverend T.J. Barrett succeeded him.

The Right Reverend James J. Keane, D.D., Bishop of Cheyenne, also administered Confirmation In the Immaculate Conception parish during the period of 1902 to 1912. Bishop Keane was born in northern Illinois, August 26, 1857. He was ordained December 23, 1882 and named Bishop of Cheyenne on June 10, 1902.

The Green River Immaculate Conception parish was again attended as a mission by the Reverend T.J. Barrett of the Rock Springs Our Lady of Sorrows parish from May, 1907 to December, 1908. Father Barrett left Our Lady of Sorrows parish in-February, 1910.

The spiritual needs of the Immaculate Conception parish was attended as a mission by the Reverend D.M. Tully and M. A. Kennedy of the Evanston St. Mary Magdalene parish from January, 1909 to December, 1909. Father Kennedy died in Rock Springs in 1911.

The first resident priest of the Immaculate Conception parish was the Reverend P.J. Lynch from January, 1910 to June, 1910. Father Lynch resided in Green River for six months and was succeeded by the Reverend Neil Brennan.

The 1910 census showed Green River with a population of 1,313 people and Sweetwater County with 11,575 people.

The Reverend Neil Brennan was the next resident priest of the Immaculate Conception parish from July, 1910 until September, 1910. Father Brennan remained in Green River for only three months.

The Green River Immaculate Conception parish again became a mission attended by the Reverends James, Duffy and Joseph W. Sueppel of Kemmerer, St. Patrick parish from October, 1910 to December, 1911.

The spiritual needs of the Immaculate Conception parish was attended as a mission by the Reverends Michael J. Kelly and Anton Schiffrer of the Rock Springs Our Lady of Sorrows parish from January, 1912 to June, 1912.

The Reverend Patrick Long was appointed as resident priest of the Green River Immaculate Conception parish in July, 1912. Father Long departed after a period of six months, from July, 1912 to December, 1912.

The spiritual needs of the Immaculate Conception parish was again attended as a mission by the Reverend John A. Mattes of the Rock Springs Our Lady of Sorrows parish from January, 1913 to May, 1913.

The Reverend Henry Schellinger was appointed as resident priest at the Immaculate Conception parish of Green River in June 1, 1913. Father Schellinger was born in Alkmaar, Holland on February 10, 1883. He was ordained on July 15, 1906, at the American College, Louvain, Belgium. Father Schellinger arrived in Cheyenne on October 10, 1906. He assisted at the St. Mary's Cathedral until September, 1907. Father Schellinger was pastor at Carneyville and renovated the Church at Dietz, Wyoming. He was short, alert, heavy and spoke with a decided Dutch accent. He was plain and simple in his tastes, careless in dress, but very clean about himself. He symbolized an economy of life in a panama straw hat which he had worn for years and he kept fresh with an annual coat of clear varnish. He had rare pastoral common sense and his shrewd judgment of individual dependability enable him, over the years, to loan money to needy families at a fair rate of interest and no one ever failed on their mortgage note. After a long and fruitful pastorate of forty years, Father Schellinger resigned because of ill health on May 5, 1953 while pastor at

Green River. Of all the baptisms recorded during his long administration of the Immaculate Conception parish, all but one were administered by him. Father Schellinger retired to Florida where he acted as Chaplain to the Sisters of St. Joseph at Jensen Beach. A little over a year later he passed away there on December 19, 1954. The remains were returned to Cheyenne for funeral services which were held in the St. Mary's Cathedral on December 27, 1954 with burial afterwards in the plot reserved for the clergy in Olivet Cemetery, Cheyenne.

Upon his arrival in 1913 at Green River, Father Schellinger took for himself a suite in the Church cellar. The coal bin and furnace room served as chamber and study, an arrangement that did not interfere with the heating plant, an iron stove in the body of the church. Father Schellinger described himself as a "Coal Bin or Cellar Priest."

The Right Reverend P. A. McGovern, D.D., Bishop of 'Cheyenne, confirmed a class in 1913 in the Immaculate Conception parish. Bishop McGovern was born in Omaha, Nebraska on October 14, 1872. He was ordained by Bishop Scannell of Omaha on August 18, 1895, in the same Church in which he had been baptized. He was named Bishop of Cheyenne on January 19, 1912.

In 1915, Father Schellinger remodeled and enlarged the Immaculate Conception Church at a cost of \$3,500-00. The vestibule of the old church building was sold to John Hutton, moved to 251 West Flaming Gorge Way on the alley and made into a residence. A new church steeple and vestibule was added to the southwest corner of the church building. The Reverend Conrath of Rawlins St. Joseph parish being sick, Father Schellinger took care of the missions in Carbon County during 1915. A trip to Baggs, where he had scheduled Holy Mass, made in the last of June, 1915,-they were caught in a snow storm. With Baggs being some 50 miles south and east of Wamsutter, the trip had to be made via stage coach. Also during this period, Father Schellinger directed the

construction of the St. Joseph's Mission Church in Hanna, some 40 miles east of Rawlins.

On April 6, 1917, war was officially declared and Wyoming was involved in World War I. Approximately 12,000 Wyoming men entered the military service, about 6 percent of the population and was above the national average. In 1917, the Liberty Potash Company built a potash plant in Green River at the present site of the Monroe School in the southside of the town. The competition from foreign potash, imported following World War I, caused the plant to shut down.

On December, 1917, Father Schellinger prepared for future expansion of the Immaculate Conception parish in Green River by purchasing Lot 3, Block 9 for \$400.00.

On November 11, 1918, the armistice was signed and the World War I was over, with 468 servicemen killed from Wyoming and twice that number were wounded.

In 1919, the region was affected by the National coal strike. The aliens in the coal areas were under suspicion during the national postwar "Red Scare."

The 1920 census showed Green River with a population of 2,140 people and Sweetwater County with 13,640 people.

A substantial parish house of brick was built in 1920 by Father Schellinger at a cost of \$10,600.00 Father Schellinger salvaged useable bricks from the Morris Mercantile Company building when it burned. He cleaned off the old mortar and used them for the "backing" in the rectory house. The rectory was built so that a couple could live upstairs and use the downstairs kitchen and dining room facilities. With this arrangement, Father Schellinger got his meals and cleaning done. A successful mission was given in June, 1920 by the Reverend M.A. Leary, S.J., in the Immaculate Conception parish. Bishop P.A.

McGovern, D.D., of Cheyenne administered the Sacrament of Confirmation in the parish to a class of twenty on October 10, 1920. In November, 1920, the ladies of the Immaculate Conception parish started serving a turkey dinner on Election Day, which became an annual event for more than 50 years.

In 1921 the Lincoln High School was built of brick at a cost of \$95,000.00 in Green River, located at 600 West 3rd North Street, In 1921, the Union Pacific Railroad laid off one-third of its men.

Reverend Schellinger administered First Communion to a class of ten on June 26, 1921 in the Immaculate Conception parish. The Right Reverend P. A. McGovern, D.D., Bishop of Cheyenne, confirmed a class of ten on June 26, 1921.

In 1922, the region was again affected by the National Coal Strike. Aliens in the coal areas again were under suspicion. No one in Wyoming was arrested as a dangerous alien. In a strike situation, the Union Pacific Railroad stored six months supply of coal along the tracks.

In 1923, the Wyoming Railroad shopmen participated in a widespread Shopcrafts' Strike against reduction in wages. During this strike, the Union Pacific Railroad built a high wooden board fence which enclosed the Green River railroad yards.

February 4, 1923, the Supreme Council, Knights of Columbus authorized and directed the assemble and work as a regularly constituted Council of the Knights of Columbus to be designated by the name, Rock Springs Council No. 2441 in the Town of Rock Springs, Sweetwater County, State of Wyoming. Some of the men of the Immaculate Conception parish joined the council.

Bishop P.A. McGovern of Cheyenne administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to a class of twenty-one at the Immaculate Conception parish on October 12, 1924.

In 1925, the Washington Elementary School was built in Green River at 400 North 1st East Street.

Father Schellinger continued his expansion program of the Immaculate Conception parish by buying Lot 4, Block 9 for \$1-500-00 in March, 1926, from the City of Green River. The Immaculate Conception parish residence was completely free of debt in 1926. A very successful mission was conducted by the Reverend B. J. Mully, C.S.C., in June, 1926.

In 1928, the Wyoming miners accepted a \$1.20 cut in their daily wage (cut to \$6.72 per day) without a strike.

The Right Reverend P.A. McGovern, D.D., Bishop of Cheyenne, confirmed a class of sixteen on October 10, 1928.

The 1930 census showed Green River with a population of 2,589 people and Sweetwater County with 18,165 people.

In 1931, the gym was added to the Lincoln High School in Green River which had a balcony and stage and could be used as an auditorium.

On October 11, 1931, Confirmation was administered by the Most Reverend P.A. McGovern, D.D., Bishop of Cheyenne to a class of seventeen in the Immaculate Conception parish.

On December, 1932, the Immaculate Conception parish was completely free of debt, and had a balance of \$i6,000-00, which was invested in Real Estate and Building and Loan Securities.

In the spring of 1933, a mission was given by the Reverend Angelus, a Paulist from Los Angeles, California, in the Immaculate Conception parish.

Bishop P.A. McGovern, D.D., of Cheyenne confirmed a class of twenty-five on May 10, 1934, in the Immaculate Conception parish.

Improvements on the Immaculate Conception Church building amounting to \$14,000.00 was made in 1937, A basement auditorium was provided, the construction of the basement was hand-dug job, and mostly by Father Schellinger. The parishioners would haul away the dirt and gravel and used the material for building up the streets and filling mud holes. The sacristy was enlarged to serve as a winter chapel, and a modern heating-plant was provided. The expenditure was met from funds on hand.

Bishop P. A. McGovern, D.D., of Cheyenne, confirmed a class of twenty-seven on May 22, 1938 in the Immaculate Conception parish. During the year of 1938, Father Schellinger performed eight marriages and thirteen baptisms.

As of April 1, 1939, the Immaculate Conception parish was completely free of debt and had a balance of \$17,000.00.

In 1940 census showed Green River with a population of 2,640 people and Sweetwater County with 19,407 people.

In 1940, the Jefferson Elementary School was built in Green River at 640 West 3rd North Street and opened its doors in September, 1940. On October 16, 1940 the Green River Lincoln High School was burned with the exception of the gym.

Bishop P. A. McGovern, D.D. of Cheyenne, confirmed a class of twenty-six, on May 14, 1941 in the Immaculate Conception parish.

On December 7, 1941, the attack on Pearl Harbor and World War II started. Wyoming listed 35,000 men and women in uniform during the war. The Immaculate Conception parish listed 35 of its members serving in the war.

The Reverend Schellinger administered First Communion to a class of eleven on June 28, 1942 in the Immaculate Conception parish. a successful mission was given in 1942 by the Reverend Angelus, C.P., of Sierra Madre Monastery of the Passionist Fathers of Los Angeles, California.

In 1943, the new Lincoln High School in Green River was rebuilt and completed at a cost of \$300,000.00 at 600 West 3rd North Street.

On May 16, 1944, Bishop P. A. McGovern, D.D. of Cheyenne, confirmed a class of twenty-nine in the Immaculate Conception parish. Father Schellinger administered First Communion to a class of eleven in June 27, 1944 in the Immaculate Conception parish.

The Reverend John Murphy of the Paulist Order conducted a mission in the Immaculate Conception parish in 1945. Father Schellinger administered First Communion to a class of eleven on April 14, and also to a class of sixteen on June 3, 1945 in the Immaculate Conception parish.

September 2, 1945 saw the end of World War II, with Wyoming having 1,095 persons killed or who died during the war.

Father Schellinger administered First Communion to a class of eighteen on June 7, 1946 in the Immaculate Conception parish.

In November and December, 1946, a coal strike occurred which seriously interrupted coal mining and production in the region.

Father Schellinger administered First Communion to a class of seventeen on June 1, 1947 in the Immaculate Conception parish.

The West Vaco Chemical Corporation merger into the FMC Corporation in the fall of 1948 gave the Green River project the greater financial resources required for full development.

On May 28, 1948, Coadjutor Bishop Hubert Newell, D.D., paid his first official visit to the Immaculate Conception parish and confirmed a class of thirty-six. After Confirmation, a public reception was held in the Church hall in his honor.

Father Schellinger administered First Communion to a class of twenty-three on May 29, 1949 in the Immaculate Conception parish.

The 1950 census showed Green River with a population of 3,187 people and Sweetwater County with 22,017 people.

On June 27, 1950, began the U. S. involvement in the Vietnam War (***)then French Indo-China) by sending 35 military advisors to South Vietnam. On June 30, 1950, the Korean War called many World War II veterans back into service. A total of 10,975 men from Wyoming served their country in the Korean War.

Father Schellinger administered First Communion to a class of sixteen on May 6, 1950 in the Immaculate Conception parish. In December, 1950, Father Schellinger had the interior of the Immaculate Conception Church redecorated and gas furnaces were installed in the church and rectory to replace the old coal furnaces at a cost of \$924.20.

Father Schellinger administered First - Communion to a class of twenty on May 10, 1951 in the Immaculate Conception parish.

In 1952, FMC Corporation built a \$15 million plant at West Vaco, 16 miles west of Green River.

Father Schellinger administered First Communion to a class of twenty on April 15, 1952 in the Immaculate Conception parish. The Sacrament of Confirmation was administered to a class of thirty-five on May 25, 1952 by the Most Reverend Hubert M. Newell, D.D., Bishop of Cheyenne, in the Immaculate Conception parish.

Father Schellinger administered First Communion to a class of thirty-three on April 20, 1953 in the Immaculate Conception parish. On April 30, 1953, Father Schellinger purchased the Carl Eklund home to extend the Church property for a cost of \$15,000.00. This property was obtained with the view that it might serve as a Sister's Convent at some future date. This leaves the Immaculate Conception Church with all of the north half of the block with the exception of a lot on the southeast corner.

On May 5, 1953, Father Schellinger left the parish and retired because of ill health.

The Immaculate Conception parish was attended as a mission by the Reverend S.A. Welsh, pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows parish and Dean of the Rock Springs Deanery from May, 1953 to June, 1953. Father S.A. Welsh was ordained to the priesthood for the Diocese of Cheyenne at St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York, on September 1, 1918. Father Welsh died February 12, 1959 in Rock Springs.

The Reverend Charles Taylor was appointed as resident priest of the Immaculate Conception parish in July, 1953. Father Taylor remained until his departure for Rome to take up post-graduate studies in September, 1953.

On July 27, 1953, the armistice was signed and the end of the Korean War, which had cost the Wyoming lives of fifty-five persons.

The Reverend John Marley was appointed as pastor of the Immaculate Conception parish on October 9, 1953. Father Marley came to Wyoming from County Donegal, Ireland in 1924. He was a tall, slim man. He presented an ever proper picture of the priest, erect, correct, immaculate in dress and kind in speech. He died August 23, 1966 in Rock Springs. In the Fall of 1953, Father Marley had a Baldwin electric organ installed

and had extensive repairs made to the Church, rectory and basement hall at a cost of \$8,088.28.

In 1954, the Roosevelt Elementary School in Green River was constructed and opened at 550 Uinta Drive on the southside of the town.

Father Marley administered First Communion to a class of thirty-six on May 10, 1954 in the Immaculate Conception parish. In April, 1954 a very successful mission was given by the Paulist Father in the Immaculate Conception parish. Because of the short distance to Rock Springs, a forty-two passenger school bus was purchased at a cost of \$4,720.00 in August, 1954, and upwards to 60 children were transported back and forth every day to Our Lady of Sorrows School in Rock Springs. This arrangement was satisfactory for the children who could attend, but there were many who could not avail themselves of this opportunity. The arrival of the Sisters of Our Lady of Victory to take up residence in the parish was an event of tremendous importance. In the fall of 1954, a new marble alter and communion rail with appropriate wrought iron grill work were installed in the Immaculate Conception Church at a cost of \$12,891.00.

Father Marley administered First Communion to a class of fourteen on May 4, 1955 the Immaculate Conception parish. The Sacrament of Confirmation was administered by Bishop Newell, D.D., of Cheyenne to a class of thirty-nine on July 17, 1955. In June, 1956, the old Eklund residence was enlarged and remodeled as a convent for the Sisters with their own Chapel and reservation of the Blessed Sacrament at a cost of \$15,026.63. The Sisters of Our Lady of Victory Missionary arrived and took up residence on September 1, 1956. There were 240 grade and high school pupils under instruction the year. The numbers have fluctuated up and down since then due to lay off on the railroad and construction work of different kinds. Father Marley administered First Communion to a class of forty-eight on April 6, 1956.

Father Marley administered First Communion to a class of twenty-six on May 5, 1957 in the Immaculate Conception parish. A suitable place for the instruction of the children was necessary and plans for a Catechetical Center were submitted and accepted by architect Armand Kellogg of Rock Springs. Construction on the Center began on March 11, 1957 and was completed in September, 1957, at a cost of \$36,275.00, The Catechetical Center was blessed by Bishop Newell, D.D. of Cheyenne, on September 8, 1957 with thirteen priests of the Deanery were present. Classes began on the following week.

A successful mission was conducted by the Paulist Father in February, 1958. The Sacrament of Confirmation was administered by Bishop Newell, D.D. of Cheyenne to a class of fifty-seven on March 6, 1958 in the Immaculate Conception parish. Father Marley administered First Communion to a class of twenty-five on April 27, 1958 in the parish.

In January, 1959, arrangements were made with Father John O'Connor, pastor of St. Patrick's parish of Kemmerer, to have the Sisters go to Kemmerer on Sunday of each week for catechetical work and return to Green River on Wednesday in time for classes. The Sisters made their first trip to Kemmerer on February 15, 1959. On February 29, 1959, Father Marley was appointed pastor of Our lady of Sorrows parish, Rock Springs and Dean of the Rock Springs Deanery.

The Reverend Laurence Etchingham was appointed administrator of the Immaculate Conception parish on February 28, 1959, and served in that capacity until September 11, 1959. Father Etchingham administered First Communion to a class of twenty-six on April 19, 1959 in the Immaculate Conception parish.

The Reverend Thomas Cleary was appointed pastor of the Immaculate Conception parish effective September 11, 1959. He had been pastor of the Holy Rosary parish, Lander for ten years prior to this appointment. Father Cleary was born on March 13, 1915 in County Wexford, Ireland.

He was ordained a priest on June 9, 1940 in St. Patrick's Seminary, Carlow, Ireland. He came to St. Mary's Cathedral in Cheyenne, Wyoming in March, 1944. He was transferred to St. Joseph's Rawlins parish in August, 1944. He was transferred to the Holy Name parish of Sheridan in October, 1946. He was then transferred to St. Anthony's parish of Casper in February, 1948, while Father Spillane was in the hospital and then after his death until changes were made. Father Cleary was appointed as resident pastor of Holy Rosary, Lander in February, 1949. In September, 1959, extensive damage by hail necessitated repairs to the roof of the Convent, to the steeple and roof of the Church and a complete roof for the Rectory of the Immaculate Conception parish at a cost of \$896.00.

The 1960 census showed Green River with a population of 3,497 people and Sweetwater County with 17,920.

In the summer of 1960, started the construction of the Flaming Gorge Dam, some 60 miles south of Green River at Dutch John, Utah. The cement and gravel were hauled by trucks to the dam site from Green River. In 1960, the FMC Corporation employed 430 men producing a half million tons of soda ash. In 1960, the Stauffer Chemical Corporation began construction of their Big Island facility, 17 miles northwest of Green River. In 1960, the Allied Chemical Corporation began further exploration for trona.

In 1960, the Immaculate Conception parish's indebtedness to the Diocese of Cheyenne incurred through the construction of the Catechetical Center was \$25,000.00. Father Cleary administered First Communion to a class of sixteen on May 1, 1960 in the Immaculate Conception parish.

Father Cleary administered First Communion to a class of twenty-five on April 2, 1961 in the Immaculate Conception parish. The Sacrament of

Confirmation was administered by Bishop Newell of Cheyenne to a class of fifty-one on April 17, 1961 in the parish.

In 1962, the Stauffer Chemical Corporation opened its Big Island facility with 60 employees.

Father Cleary administered First Communion to a class of twenty-nine on May 6, 1962 in the Immaculate Conception parish.

In 1963, the Monroe Junior High School was built on the former site of the Potash plant in Green River on 250 Monroe Avenue on the southside of the town.

Father Cleary administered First Communion to a class of twenty-seven on May 10, 1963 in the Immaculate Conception parish.

In 1964, Texas Gulf Sulphur began successful exploratory drilling for trona about twenty miles west of Green River.

The Sacrament of Confirmation was administered by Bishop Newell, D.D. of Cheyenne to a class of sixty-three on April 20, 1964 In the Immaculate Conception parish. Father Cleary administered First Communion to a class of thirty-one on May 8, 1964 in the parish.

Father Cleary administered First Communion to a class of thirty-four on May 6, 1965 in the Immaculate Conception parish. In June, 1965, Father Cleary celebrated his 25th Silver Anniversary, by the Immaculate Conception parish. The Immaculate Conception parish indebtedness to the Diocese of Cheyenne incurred through the construction of the Catechetical Center was finally liquidated in 1965.

A new County Courthouse was completed in 1966 at Green River for a cost of one million and a half dollars. Late in 1966, after sinking a 4-5 million dollar shaft, the Allied Chemical Corporation announced the construction of-a \$25 million trona mining and processing plant, which

began operation at full capacity with over 280 employees. The annual payroll of this new plant is in excess of \$2 million spent annually with Wyoming business for supplies and equipment.

Father Cleary administered First Communion to a class of thirty-five on April 17, 1966 in the Immaculate Conception parish. In August, 1966, a new Ford Fairlane car was purchased by the Immaculate Conception parish at a cost of \$2,500-00 for the Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters, who operate the Catechetical Center in the parish. On October 21, 1966, Father Cleary was transferred to St. Rose of Lima parish, Torrington and was succeeded by the Reverend James P. Godley.

On October 21, 1966, Father Godley was appointed as pastor of the Immaculate Conception parish. Father Godley was transferred from the St. Mary Magdalene, Evanston parish. He was born in February, 1915, in County Kerry, Ireland. Father Godley was ordained a priest on June 9, 1940 in St. Patrick's Seminary, Carlow, Ireland. He left Ireland on November 30, 1943 and came directly to St. Mary's Cathedral in Cheyenne, Wyoming. He was transferred to St. Joseph's parish in Torrington on May 12, 1944, on the occasion of the death of Father John Henry, the first Superintendent of the Orphanage. He transferred to St. Anthony's parish in Casper on October 10, 1944. In September, 1945 to June, 1948, Father Godley attended the Catholic University, Washington, D. C. Father Godley was assigned to St. Lawrence O'Toole parish in Laramie from June, 1948 to October, 1948. He was transferred to St. Patrick's parish of Kemmerer until October, 1949. He then transferred to Pine Bluffs and remained there until January 18, 1955. Father Godley was transferred to St. Mary Magdalene parish in Evanston on January 18, 1955.

In 1967, Church and Dwight Company manufacturer of Arm and Hammer Bicarbonate of Soda and kindred products, constructed a \$5 million dollar plant adjacent to the Allied Chemical Plant, from which it purchases all its soda ash. In 1967, exploration of the coal resource was

made in the Black Butte area, approximately 47 miles east of Green River, involving approximately 140,000,000 tons of economically recoverable coal lying under a surface of about 38,000 acres.

The Sacrament of Confirmation was administered by Bishop Newell, D.D., of Cheyenne to a class of seventy-one on April 16, 1967 in the Immaculate Conception parish. Father Godley administered First Communion to a class of thirty on May 5, 1967, in the parish.

Texas Gulf Sulphur Company began sinking a mine shaft in January, 1968, with 35 to 40 men employed. In 1968, a modern plant of Church and Dwight Company in Green River went into production, capable of producing about 17,000 tons per year of baking soda. Allied Chemical Corporation brought its Green River trona mine and soda ash processing plant into operation in 1968. The Allied plant's capacity for production is 2,200,000 tons of soda ash per year.

Father Godley administered First Communion to a class of thirty-one on May 10, 1968 in the Immaculate Conception parish.

In July of 1969, the Union Pacific Railroad at an expenditure of \$1,600,000.00 completed a 162-room Club House to accommodate commuting trainmen in Green River. In the fall of 1969, the Hutton Heights Shopping Center went into operation on the southside of Green River with a large grocery store operated by Mr. Dee's.

Father Godley administered First Communion to a class of twenty-five on May 11, 1969 in the Immaculate Conception parish. In September, 1969, the Immaculate Conception parish started the outfitters Trading Post in the basement of the Church where clothing and shoes could be purchased at minimum costs. This project developed into a very worthwhile benefit to the people of the community.

The 1970 census showed Green River with a population of 4,196 people and Sweetwater County with 18,391 people.

Late in the summer of 1970, the Pacific Power and Light Company and Idaho Power Company, started construction of the Jim Bridger Power Plant, a coal-fired steam-driven plant, located 50 miles northeast of Green River. In 1970, there were in excess of 600 employees producing 1.2 million tons of soda ash at the FMC Corporation.

The Sacrament of Confirmation was administered by Bishop Newell, D.D. of Cheyenne to a class of seventy-nine on April 12, 1970 in the Immaculate Conception parish. Father Godley administered First Communion to a class of twenty-five on May 10, 1970 in the parish.

In the spring of 1971, the Jim Bridger Power Plant started the construction of its first unit.

Father Godley administered First Communion to a class of twenty-six on May 8, 1971 in the Immaculate Conception parish.

In 1972, Church and Dwight Company expanded its operation about five times its original size or 85,000 tons per year of baking soda. In May, 1972, Texas Gulf Sulphur Company mine shut down, after having produced 220,000 tons of soda ash, with a working force of approximately 250, for expansion.

The Sacrament of Confirmation was administered by Bishop Newell, D.D. of Cheyenne to a class of twenty-seven on April 11, 1972 in the Immaculate Conception parish.

On January 28, 1973, the Vietnam conflict came to an end. Wyoming lists 5,700 men who served during the Vietnam War and this conflict cost Wyoming 127 casualties. In August, 1973, Texas Gulf Sulphur Company started sinking a 22-foot production shaft. In 1973, the Wilson Elementary School was built and opened in Green River on 351 Monroe Avenue on the southside of town.

On January 19, 1973, the Supreme Board of Directors of the Supreme Council, Knights of Columbus approved from a request by the Rock Springs Council, to change it's name from Rock Springs Council No. 244i to Frank Plemel Council No. 2441. The men of the Immaculate Conception parish were members of this council. Father Godley administered First Communion to a class of thirty-four on May 6, 1973 in the Immaculate Conception parish. Father Godley formed a building committee of the new Immaculate Conception Church in the fall of 1973.

In March, 1974, Texas Gulf Sulphur Company resumed mine development, with the construction of surface facilities began in June of 1974. Late in 1974, the Jim Bridger Power Plant completed its Unit No. 1. The Bridger Coal Mine started producing 750,000 tons of coal annually for the Jim Bridger Plant's Unit No. 1 in 1974. The Black Butte Coal Company was formed in 1974, with a coal contract signed with the Idaho Power Company of Boise, Idaho.

On April 3, 1974, assisted by Havey and Company Associates of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the Immaculate Conception parish Fund Drive Committee prepared for a fund drive with a goal set a \$225,000-00, for the new Church. The Sacrament of Confirmation was administered by Bishop Newell, D.D. of Cheyenne to a class of twenty-six on April 10, 1974 in the Immaculate Conception parish. Father Godley administered First Communion to a class of thirty-six on May 4, 1974 in the parish. On July 14, 1974, the Fund Drive began. Within a week the \$225,000-00 goal had been received in pledges to be paid over a three-year period. In November, 1974, Will Louis of Scott, Louis and Browning, Architects from Salt Lake City, Utah were hired to draw the plans for the new Immaculate Conception Church and Rectory. In November, 1974, the Immaculate Conception parish Fund Drive Committee was replaced by the parish Building Committee.

In 1975, the Harrison Elementary School was built and opened in Green River on 1825 Alabama Drive on the southside of the town. In the fall of 1975, the Jim Bridger Power Plant completed its Unit No. 2 late in 1975, Church and Dwight Company expanded its operation to 95,000 tons of baking soda per year. In January, 1975, the Black Butte Coal Company established an office on the project site near Point of Rocks.

On February 10, 1975, the site of the new Immaculate Conception Church was selected on the southside of the town of Green River on Hitching Post Drive. Father Godley purchased 4.143 acres of land from the City of Green River at a cost of \$18,000.00. In April, 1975, a sign was proudly erected "Future Site of Immaculate Conception Church" on the site. Father Godley administered First Communion to a class of twenty-six on May 10, 1975 in the Immaculate Conception parish. The Immaculate Conception parish sold the old Church property on East 2nd North to the City of Green River on May 20, 1975 at a cost of \$218,000.00. In June, 1975, the bid for construction of the new Immaculate Conception Church was let, with Flaugh Construction Company of Cortez, Colorado, submitting the low bid of \$390,995-00. In 1975, the ladies of the Immaculate Conception parish Altar and Rosary Society organization changed its name to the Green River Council of Catholic Women. In November, 1975, the annual Election Day Turkey Dinner sponsored by the ladies of the Immaculate Conception parish was discontinued.

In 1976, the Green River High School was opened in Green River on East Monroe Avenue on the south side of the town. In the fall of 1976, the Jim Bridger Power Plant completed its third Unit, In October, 1976, Texas Gulf Sulphur Company started soda ash production which can produce one million tons of soda ash per year. The plant is designed to be doubled in size. Texas Gulf's soda ash operation employs 457 people, of whom 206 work underground. In 1976, the Black Butte Coal Company signed a coal contract with Commonwealth Edison of Chicago, Illinois. On June 22, 1976, the Black Butte Coal Company filed

its application for a mining permit with the State of Wyoming and the Federal Government.

The Sacrament of Confirmation was administered by Bishop Newell, D.D. of Cheyenne to a class of twenty-four on March 19, 1976 in the Immaculate Conception parish. Father Godley administered First Communion to a class of twenty-eight on May 13, 1976 in the parish. The last services in the old Immaculate Conception Church were held on October 24, 1976. On Tuesday, October 26, 1976, the new Immaculate Conception Church was dedicated with ceremonies and Mass.

Dedication ceremonies and Mass was by the Most Reverend Hubert M. Newell, D.D., Bishop of Cheyenne, the Most Reverend Joseph H. Hart, Auxiliary Bishop of Cheyenne, Reverend James Godley and all visiting priests. Predominantly placed in the new Church are the two stained glass windows moved from the old church. They were donated during Father Schellinger's pastorate and were placed high above the altar. The new windows of faceted glass in the rear of the new Church were chosen to compliment the old stained glass windows in color and design. The white marble used throughout the sanctuary and shrine area were cut from the original marble on the Alter and Communion rail of the old Church. Green marble was added . to give color and contrast to the white.

In 1977, Church and Dwight Company made major expansion of the Green River facility increasing the production capability to approximately 165,000 tons or about nine times that of the original plant. Church and Dwight employs approximate 135 local residents and provides two-thirds of all the baking soda marketed by Church and Dwight. On December 27, 1977, the State off Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality issued a permit and license to mine to the Black Butte Coal Company.

Father Godley administered First Communion to a class of thirty on May 10, 1977 in the Immaculate Conception parish.

In 1978, the new Washington Elementary School was opened in Green River on 750 West 5th North Street on the northside of the town. In May, 1978, the Black Butte Coal Company began construction operations. On December 8, 1978, the Black Butte Coal Company received the Federal Mine Plan approval.

In January, 1978, Father Godley gave an appreciation dinner for the parish member, -, and the mortgage on the new church building was burned. The Sacrament of Confirmation was administered by Bishop Hart, D.D. of Cheyenne to a class of twenty-seven on March 14, 1978 in the Immaculate Conception parish. Father Godley administered First Communion to a class of fifty-two on May 10, 1978 in the parish.

In 1979, Stauffer Chemical Company expanded its operation, employing almost 600 employees and a production of about 1.52 million tons of soda ash per year. In the fall of 1979, Tenneco began mine construction of its trona mine south east of Little America. In 1979, the Jim Bridger Power Plant completed its Fourth Unit. The Jim Bridger facility is capable of producing two million kilowatts of electric energy. The operating work force at Jim Bridger will stand at 260 employees for the entire plant. In 1979, with the completion of the Jim Bridger Power Plant Unit No. 4, the Bridger Coal Mine increased its coal production to around 6 million tons per year. The usable reserve at the Bridger Mine are about 200 million tons of coal. The Black Butte Coal Company started coal shipping in August of 1979. The Black Butte Coal Company dedicated its facilities on October 4, 1979. The Black Butte Coal mine is capable of producing over six million tons of coal annually, the equivalent of 2,000 megawatts of electrical energy per year. Each shipment of Black Butte coal is carried to the market place by the Union Pacific Railroad Company's 115-car unit trains averaging 100 tons to the car.

Father Godley administered First Communion to a class of thirty-three on May 4, 1979 in the Immaculate Conception parish. On October 28,

1979, the Supreme Council, Knights of Columbus authorized and directed the assemble and work as a regularly constituted Council of the Knights of Columbus to be designated by the name, Green River Council No. 7453 in the town of Green River, Sweetwater County, State of Wyoming.

The 1980 census showed Green River with a population of 12,785 people, three times that of the 1970 census, and Sweetwater County with 41,662 people, a little over twice that of 1970.

In the spring of 1980, Tenneco started construction of the surface facility. Tenneco's soda ash mine and production complex has a designed capacity of one million tons of soda ash per year, and will employ approximately 390 persons as its permanent work force. In 1980, the Lincoln Junior High School was opened in the remodeled Lincoln High School building in Green River on 600 West 3rd North Street on the northside of the town. In 1980, the Monroe Upper Elementary School was opened in the Monroe Junior High School building in Green River on 250 Monroe Avenue on the southside of the town. In 1980, also the construction of a new Jackson Elementary School was started in Green River on Fast Teton Boulevard on the southside of the town.

In February, 1980, the Immaculate Conception Religious Article Case (better known as the "Push Cart") was organized and opened so as to meet the needs of parish members with religious items, such as rosaries, crucifixes, holy cards, medals, and missals, etc. Father Godley administered First Communion to a class of forty-five on April 16, 1980 in the Immaculate Conception parish. On June 9, 1980, the Immaculate Conception parish celebrated the 40th Anniversary of the ordination of the Reverend James P. Godley. In October, 1980, the Old Immaculate Conception Church and Rectory buildings on North Center and Fast 2nd North streets were demolished for the construction of the new Green River City buildings.

CATHOLIC PRIESTS SERVING GREEN RIVER FOR 114 YEARS,
1868 to 1981

(35 priests - an average of 3.3 years per priest)

Father William Kelly - Cheyenne - June to October, 1868.

Father Philip Erlach - Cheyenne - October, 1868 to April, 1871.

Father William Byrne - Cheyenne - April, 1871 to early 1872.

Father Eugene Cusson - Laramie - early 1872 to early 1879.

Father Michael F. Cassidy Rawlins - early 1879 to 1886.

Father Francis J. Nugent Rawlins - 1886 to December, 1887.

Father John T. Smith - Rawlins - December, 1887 to April, 1888.

Father James Ryan - Rawlins - April, 1888 to November, 1888.

Father John Delahunty - Rock Springs - November, 1888 to January,
1902.

Father John Nolan - Rock Springs - January, 1902 to August, 1902.

Father John Delahunty - Rock Springs - August, 1902 to April, 1903.

Father Anton Blahnik - Rock Springs - April, 1903 to June, 1903.

Father John Nolan - Rock Springs - June, 1903 to January, 1904.

Fathers J. F. Guinan and Joseph Dryer Salt Lake City, Utah - March,
1904 to October, 1904.

Father Charles O'Connor - Rock Springs October, 1904 to May, 1905.

Father August Conti - Rock Springs May, 1905 to May, 1907.

Father T. J. Barrett - Rock Springs May, 1907 to December, 1908.

Fathers D.M. Tully and M.A. Kennedy - Evanston - January, 1909 to
December, 1909.

Father P. J. Lynch - Green River January, 1910 to June, 1910.

Father Neil Brennan - Green River July, 1910 to September, 1910.

Fathers James Duffy and Joseph W. Sueppel - Kemmerer - October,
1910 to December, 1911.

Fathers Michael J. Kelly and Anton Schiffrer - Rock Springs - January,
1912 to June, 1912.

Father Patrick Long - Green River - July, 1912 to December, 1912.

Father John A. Mattes - Rock Springs - January, 1913 to May, 1913.

Father Henry Schellinger - Green River - June, 1913 to May, 1953.

Father S.A. Welsh - Rock Springs - May, 1953 to June, 1953.

Father Charles Taylor - Green River - July, 1953 to September, 1953.

Father John Marley - Green River -- October, 1953 to February, 1959.

Father Lawrence Etchingham - Green River - March, 1959 to
September, 1959-

Father Thomas Cleary - Green River September, 1959 to October, 1966.

Father James P. Godley - Green River - October, 1966 to