

## HISTORY OF THE HISTORY

In 1941 the Bishop of Cheyenne, Most Reverend Patrick A. McGovern published *History of The Diocese of Cheyenne* (Cheyenne: Wyoming Labor Journal, Feast of the Epiphany, A.D. 1941). The editor Bishop McGovern published this history in 1941, after almost three decades of preparation, perhaps as a gesture to help celebrate the event when the diocese of Cheyenne was detached from the metropolitan province of Dubuque and included in the newly created metropolitan province of Denver. This primary source has been scanned and published on our world wide website for reference.

“Histories” or “Chronicles” of the Catholic Church in Wyoming seem more proper words to use in the title of the present work because the manuscripts available have been composed by a number of writers. The title used, “History of the Catholic Church in Wyoming,” was chosen by Bishop Hubert M. Newell in 1976. The manuscript materials that have come first into my hands are the work of two Jesuits, reports from parishes to the diocese during the period 1970-1990, and a growing number of memoirs and chronicles written by local people and members of religious orders who served in Wyoming.

Two Jesuits worked to compile and write a history of the diocese of Cheyenne. The New York Jesuit Father John J. Hoodack, who had ministered to the faithful in Wyoming parishes for several years, was inspired to do this history in 1976 at the solemn Mass celebrated in Casper on August 15 and attended by five thousand people, forty-five priests, and nine bishops; Cardinal Manning of Los Angeles preached. The bicentennial of the United States occasioned this grand affair; in normal years an annual Mass at a butte by the Green River near Daniel commemorates the first Mass celebrated in Wyoming by Jesuit Father Peter Jan DeSmet on July 5, 1840. Father Hoodack asked Bishop Hubert M. Newell for authorization and support to write a history of the Church in Wyoming, to which Bishop Newell gave his approval. Father Hoodack, with Dr. Gordon O. Hendrickson, then assistant professor of

History at the University of Wyoming, formulated a methodology for the work of collecting materials. Father Hoodack's last work on the project dated from the summer of 1981. Before he died Father Hoodack had compiled histories in manuscript, and tapes, of most of the seventy-seven parish and mission churches in the diocese, and of a few more "ghost town" churches. The work was taken up by another Jesuit Father, Harold L. Stansell of Regis College, who completed drafts of histories of the bishops of Cheyenne up to 1978 when Bishop Newell retired. Then Father Stansell died in 1992. In editing these manuscripts I looked to keep the good that has been done, to finish what has been left unfinished, and to fill in the rest as need be.

The book at present is divided into two parts. The first part presents a history of the diocese from the point of view of the bishop, to give a coherent chronological account of the affairs of the whole diocese. The second part of the book presents histories of parishes, which are grouped in the deaneries established in 1953 and ordered roughly chronologically following the foundations of the oldest churches. Thus, starting with Cheyenne we follow the Union Pacific railroad west to Rock Springs, then swing around the north of the state clock-wise, to Thermopolis, Sheridan, and Casper. For greater ease to locate within each deanery, parishes with their dependent missions are listed alphabetically.

A certain obvious methodological problem must be addressed at once. I believe that to write recent history of a local community, one ought to have some experience of living in it; I could, perhaps, write a history of the Catholic community of Rock Springs because I grew up there insensibly absorbing the deep history of the place. Moreover, because Wyoming is so big – slightly larger than Great Britain – and so sparsely populated, the communities are isolated from one another often have completely different histories with no relation to each other.

The problem of writing histories of communities is further complicated because the radical evolutionary changes effected by the Second Vatican

Council vastly expanded the scope for active involvement of the community in the day to day life of the Church. Similarly, the development of diocesan-wide organizations play a role that formerly was not so prominent. With these kinds of problems in view, the tendency is to write a history of clerical appointments, numbers of sacraments celebrated or conferred, lands, buildings, maintenance, and money matters. These have their part in history, of course. But for the sake of the future let it be a challenge to the readers of these manuscripts to look to preparing their own histories in preparation for the publication of this history. Accounts written by members of parishes about their own parish are invaluable and often unique primary sources that give an authentic flavor to the histories of parishes.

Another problem that must be dispensed with concerns the history of the Indians in Wyoming. The difficulty here lies in the paucity or complete lack of sources. In Wyoming, one might say, prehistory only ended as late as the middle of the nineteenth century. Even the petroglyphs we find, though some may have been etched originally more than a thousand years ago, some were clearly new in the last century. Stories point to the existence of “ancient ones,” sometimes called “Sheep People” because they lived off the bighorn mountain sheep. But these people apparently disappeared; who knows whether they were absorbed by others, died from disease, or killed by aggressive newcomers? After the mid-seventeenth century, when the French began to supply their Indian allies with guns, many Indian nations found themselves pushed out of ancestral places in the east and forced to migrate west into the great plains. And after the mid-eighteenth century when wild Spanish horses became common and were caught and tamed, Indian nations became increasingly mobile but their movements elude us. In the end, Wyoming became the home of two Indian nations, the Shoshone, who had been allies of the United States, and the Northern Arapahos, who decidedly had not. We choose, therefore, to put aside the early history of the Indians as outside the scope of this work and deal with those who

live on the Wind River Indian Reservation when we come to the history of St. Stephen's Mission there.

Ecumenism thrives quietly in Wyoming not only because of the out-thrust of churches to each other inspired and sanctioned by the Second Vatican Council, but more fundamentally because tolerance is a necessity in small communities with a great diversity of nationalities and religions. For example, in 1960 in Rock Springs, then having a population of 10,000, there were 62 churches. Tolerance, if not taught, was learned as a matter of survival, especially in the mines, is that community.

Appendices that seem useful and an index of proper names is to be included.

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First written, 13 December 1997.

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## **Foreword**

Bishop McGovern

[1] When the editor of these historical sketches came to the diocese of Cheyenne in 1912, one of his first thoughts was to secure what facts he could of early ecclesiastical events in Wyoming while a goodly number of the pioneers was still living. Consequently as early as 1915 he sent a request to the pastors to gather pertinent data. Since that time twice have similar letters been sent to those in charge of parishes and religious institutes in order to bring the information up to date. In the meantime so many erroneous statements concerning the history of the Church in

Wyoming have appeared in books and newspapers that he determined to furnish an authentic record by committing the story to print.

It was his privilege to know all his predecessors in the see of Cheyenne, as well as the earliest pioneer priests. Moreover, most of the events herein recorded have occurred during his regime, which, in the dispensation of divine Providence, already covers a period more than half that of the existence of the diocese. The facts related are taken from the official records, and in many instances are related by the actors thereof; for the account of each parish has come from the individual pastors. It was the editor's pleasant task to check over these accounts and put them in order; where a religious [2] community of women was concerned, he consulted the archives of the motherhouse. There are three chapters, however, which he wrote in full, namely, the general history of the diocese, and the history of the Cheyenne and Laramie parishes. It is hoped that the present volume may prove a valuable source of information concerning the Catholic Church in Wyoming for the period of which it treats.

All that need be added is to express the deepest gratitude to The Catholic Church Extension Society for its generous help in building chapels, subsidizing priests in poor missions, and assisting the diocese in the education of students for the priesthood. Likewise the liberal contributions of The American Mission Board to new religious undertakings is acknowledged with heartfelt appreciation.

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Harold Stansell, S.J.

History of the Catholic Church in Wyoming

## **FOREWORD**

It would be rash to deny that the present state of Wyoming is big and wonderful. However, it was not considered to be very wonderful by those who traveled over the various trails during the years 1840 to 1867. The thousands who moved across Wyoming territory in search of new homes and opportunities in Oregon, California, and Utah were not tempted to establish permanent homes there. The knowledgeable historian of Wyoming, T.A. Larson wrote:

The travelers spent less than thirty days in Wyoming and left little besides ruts, names, and dates on trailside cliffs, a few place names and some graves. . . . Scarcely anyone had shown any interest in making Wyoming his home—except the Indians.<sup>1</sup>

One traveler is of special interest to the historian investigating the presence of the Catholic Church in that territory. The first known example of a Catholic priest in Wyoming is Pierre Jean DeSmet of the Society of Jesus. With the notable exception of explorers, fur trappers, traders and Native Americans very few pioneers saw as much of Wyoming as did Father DeSmet during the years 1840 to 1868. He made his first trip across Wyoming in 1840 in response to the persistent efforts of members of the Flathead Indian tribe to persuade the “Black Robes” to send missionaries to evangelize them. DeSmet’s objective was to investigate the possibility of establishing a mission in the land of the Flathead Indian tribe in present day Montana.

In 1840 DeSmet departed from St. Louis and journeyed to Westport (the future Kansas City) where he joined the party of the members of the American Company who were preparing to go to the annual expedition to the Green River Rendezvous in western Wyoming to trade with the Indians. The caravan began the journey over the Oregon Trail on April 30, 1840. In due time the party reached Fort Laramie at the junction of the Laramie and North Platte Rivers. The travelers rested at the fort and replenished their supplies. It was fortunate that they enjoyed the respite because the journey further west became very arduous as the trail led

through the mountains. In due time the group arrived at Independence Rock. Of this landmark DeSmet wrote:

It is the great register of the desert; the names of all the travelers who have passed by are there to be read, written in coarse characters; mine figures among them, as that of the first priest to reach this remote spot.<sup>2</sup>

One hundred and nine miles beyond the site of the Rock the travelers enjoyed the exhilarating experience of crossing the continental divide “through a broad valley of gentle slopes, at an elevation of 7,500 feet, known to travelers as South Pass.”<sup>3</sup>

Eventually they reached Green River valley, the site of the Rendezvous, late in June. A delegation of the Flathead tribe was present at the site to welcome Father DeSmet. The Jesuit took advantage of the festive occasion to offer a public \*\*\*Mass. Later he wrote an account of the memorable event:

On Sunday, the 5th of July, I had the consolation of celebrating the holy sacrifice of the Mass *sub dio*. The altar was placed on an elevation, and surrounded with boughs and garlands of flowers; I addressed the congregation in French and in English, and spoke also by an interpreter to the Flathead and Snake [Shoshone] 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. The Canadians sang hymns in French and Latin, and the Indians in their native tongue. It was truly a Catholic worship. . . . This place has been called since that time, by the French Canadians, *la prairie de la Messe*.<sup>4</sup>

After the stimulating experience of Mass on the Prairie, DeSmet in the company of his guides continued his journey to the land of the Flathead Indians. After eight days of travel the group arrived safely at the tribal headquarters situated in modern day Montana. The missionary ministered to the spiritual needs of his hosts and was impressed by the sincerity of the Indians in their desire to have “Black Robes” reside in their midst. He remained with the Indians until August, 1840 and in that month he departed for St. Louis proceeding through Yellowstone Country to the Missouri River. He embarked on that river and continued by boat down the river to St. Louis where he rejoined his Jesuit brothers on New Year’s Eve.

During the ensuing months DeSmet worked tirelessly to recruit priests and lay brothers who would be willing to go among the Flathead Indians and bring them the “Good News.” He succeeded in enlisting two priests and three lay brothers for the proposed mission. With the five missionaries he set out for Flathead country on May 10, 1841. The small contingent of dedicated men arrived at their destination after a fairly routine journey over the trail that DeSmet had followed in the previous year. The arrival of this group on September 24, 1841 among the Flatheads marked the foundation of the Rocky Mountain Mission. As superior of the mission from 1841 to 1845 DeSmet expended his energies in efforts to place the mission on a sound basis. He traveled widely in the United States and Europe to recruit priests and lay brothers and to collect funds for buildings and supplies.

However, since the history of the Rocky Mountain Mission which existed outside the territorial boundaries of Wyoming it will not serve the purpose of this undertaking to record the progress of that mission except to note that DeSmet’s association with the mission was terminated in 1845 when he was recalled to St. Louis. During the period of his extensive travels and his activities on behalf of the Indians, during the decade of 1840s, DeSmet gained a reputation of having an extraordinary rapport with the Indians; they trusted him implicitly. In spite of the fact that he never lived with the Native Americans for any

length of time nor ever spoke their language, he was always welcome in their midst. One author made the following assessment of the relationship between the missionary and the Indians:

They were bound to him, and he to them by bonds that could never be explained. One might say that DeSmet coming and going from far exotic places, presented the image of some mysterious guru who had dropped from heaven. Deeper than this love and loyalty that showed through his aging, peasant-like face.<sup>5</sup>

It is not surprising, then, that the officials of the Bureau of Indian Affairs requested DeSmet to support the government in initiating a peace policy in 1851. Specifically, D.D. Mitchell, Superintendent of Indian Affairs with headquarters in St. Louis, asked the Jesuit to use his good offices in negotiating with the Indians in a general council of representatives of the western tribes east of the Rocky Mountains - the council to be assembled at Fort Laramie. In accepting this invitation DeSmet was to have an opportunity to see more of Wyoming than most people in those days were accustomed to seeing. After accepting that invitation to attend the council DeSmet left St. Louis by boat on June 7, 1851, moved up the Missouri River on his way to Fort Union, near the confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri Rivers in Dakota Territory.<sup>6</sup>

DeSmet arrived at the fort on July 14, 1851, met with the representatives of a number of tribes and proceeded overland to Fort Laramie. The missionary wrote an account of the journey in one of his letters:

We numbered thirty-two persons; the greater part were Assiniboins, Minnestares and Crows, who were repairing to the great Indian Council to be held in the vicinity of Fort Laramie, and by the same route that we had chosen, which was scarcely less than 800 miles in length. . . . The four vehicles were in all probability the first that had ever crossed this

unoccupied waste. There is not the slightest perceptible vestige of beaten track between Fort Union and the Red Buttes, which are on the route to Oregon and 161 miles west of Fort Laramie.<sup>7</sup>

In the course of the journey the party came upon a lake, situated about ten miles north and a little west of the town of Buffalo. DeSmet, with due modesty, later recorded, “We arrived quite unexpectedly on the borders of a lovely little lake about six miles long, and my traveling companions gave it my name.”<sup>8</sup>

The party reached Fort Laramie in September, 1851, only to learn that the meeting of the Great Council had to be assembled at Horse Creek near the Nebraska border because there was not enough grass around the fort for the horses of the 10,000 Indians who came to take part in the Council. When DeSmet was not needed in the meetings he used every available occasion to evangelize the Indians. He also ministered to the “half-bloods” who were present. He baptized a considerable number of the “little ones” among the Cheyennes, the Brulés and Osage Sioux in the plain of the Great Council and on the river Platte.<sup>9</sup>

The Council ended on an optimistic note and an elated DeSmet wrote:

It will be the commencement of a new era for the Indians—an era of peace. In future, peaceable citizens may cross the desert unmolested and the Indian will have little to dread from the bad white man, for justice will be rendered to him.<sup>10</sup>

The dedicated friend of the Indians would live to regret that the hope generated by the agreement of 1851 would be shattered in a series of broken treaties.

In the course of the next twenty years Father DeSmet was available to assist the commissioners of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the officers of the United States Army in their peace negotiations with the Native

Americans in spite of the frustrations that attended such efforts. From time to time during those twenty years DeSmet entered Wyoming territory but left no further permanent trace of his presence there. It is fitting that this Catholic priest is memorialized in Wyoming with the enduring presence of the lake that bears his name and with the annual Mass at Daniel. The site of this celebration was near Daniel not far from Pinedale. The Knights of Columbus have erected a monument to commemorate the event.

## NOTES Stansell Forward

1. T.A. Larson, *History of Wyoming* (Lincoln: University Press, 1965), 10-11.
2. Hiram Martin Chittenden and Alfred Talbot Richardson, *Life, Letters and Travels of Father Pierre-Jean DeSmet, S.J., 1801-1873* (New York: Francis P. Harper, 1905), I, 214.
3. Ray Allen Billington, *Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier*, 4th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1974), 446.
4. Chittenden and Richardson, I, 262.
5. Wilfred P. Schoenberg, S.J., *Paths to the Northwest: A Jesuit History of the Oregon Province* (Chicago: Loyola, 1982), 71.
6. Robert G. Athearn in *Forts of the Upper Missouri* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 17, describes a successful navigation up the Missouri River on a paddle-wheel keelboat.
7. Chittenden and Richardson, II, 653-654.
8. Chittenden and Richardson, II, 668.
9. Chittenden and Richardson, II, 679.
10. Chittenden and Richardson, II, 684.

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## Chronological Notes Rev. Michael Shine (1915)

## Bishop McGovern

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Historical Notes On Wyoming [McGovern, *History*, 240-247]

Sent to Bishop McGovern in 1915 by the late Rev. Michael Shine of Plattsmouth, Nebr.

1742-1743, the first known white men to enter the present State of Wyoming were the sons of Pierre Gauthier Varennes, (commonly known as "Sieur de la Verendrye"). On their expedition to the Rocky Mountains in 1742-3, from Fort La Reine, (Portage la Prairie, Manitoba), they were at the foot of the Big Horn mountains and near the Tongue River in January, 1743.

Route Map of the U. S.-1908.

Proceedings of Mis. Val. Hist. Assn., Vol. 1, 53.

The original journal of this expedition can be found in Margry's Discoveries, etc., of the French in the West, etc., 6 Vols. in French from the Archives of The French Government, Vol. VI, 598. A Map of the journey can be found in Parkman's Half Century of Conflict, Vol. II, 29-58. Also notes on the journey.

1807, John Colter, a former member of Lewis & Clark's Expedition, discovered "Colter's Hell" in the Yellowstone Park district. It was a kind of a tar spring near the mouth of the Stinking Water River ([Shoshoni River now?]).

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Bonneville's Adventures.

DeSmet, Western Missions and Missionaries, 86.

1811-1812, Hunt's "Astoria Party" of 60 men, of whom 40 were French Canadians, passed through Wyoming.

Washington Irving, "Astoria" p. 221.

Cath. Hist. Magazine (N.Y.) II, 61.

1823, Thos. Fitzpatrick (from 1823 to 1852) and Stephen Provost, a Frenchman, were noted trappers and traders in Wyoming along with

Glen Ashley, Jim Bridger, the Sublette brothers, Andrew Drips, Henry Vanderburgh, Lucien Fontanelle and Robert Campbell and a host of other noted characters. Fitzpatrick was a Canadian Irishman and a relative of the present Rt. Hon. Sir Charles Fitzpatrick, KC.M.G., chief justice of Canada.

Chittenden's History of the American Fur Trade.

Irving's "Bonneville and Astoria."

Life and Letters of DeSmet.

History of the Catholic Church in Utah, by Dean Harris.

1832-1883, Captain Bonneville spent considerable time wandering over Wyoming. He was the leader of an exploring and fur trading expedition on his own account.

Irving's "Bonneville Adventures."

Also see History of Am. Fur Trade, Chittenden.

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1842-1844, Fremont's Expedition gives a detailed report of his journeys in Wyoming.

Fremont's "Reports and Explorations."

1833, Captain Sir William Drummond Stewart, a baronet from Perthshire, Scotland, accompanied by Dr. Benjamin Harrison, son of General William Henry Harrison, were on a hunting trip in Wyoming. Hist. of Am. Fur Trade, 300-304.

The Missouri Fur Company, the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, and the American Fur Company sent innumerable expeditions and trading caravans to the Green River Rendezvous and to Fort Laramie.

The fur bearing animals were unfit to trap from the middle of June to the middle of September and hence the trappers went to the Rendezvous for trade and supplies.

1821, Laramie Peak was named after a trader, Jacques LaRamie, who died at its base this year.

Mokler, Transition of the West, Vol. I, 40.

1831, a delegation of four Nez Perce Indians passed through on their way to St Louis from the Flatheads to ask for a “blackrobe” to come and instruct them. Narcissus and Paul of this delegation died in St Louis and were buried there by Frs. Saulnier and Roux, the other two, “Rabbit Skin Leggins” and “No Horns On His Head” embarked in May, 1832, [ 243 ] on the steamboat “Yellowstone” but died after reaching the mouth of the Yellowstone River.

Smithsonian Report 1885, 94-95.

Am. Cath. Hist. Records (Phila.) Vol. I, 190.

U.S.H. Magazine (N. Y.), II, 69.

1834-1835, Fort Laramie was built as a trading post, and later became a military post, and was an important station on the Oregon Trail.

See Hist. of Am. Fur Trade.

1837, Ignace La Mouse, Sr., an Iroquois, 3 Flatheads and 1 Nez Perce arrived at Fort Laramie on their way to St Louis for a “blackrobe.” All were shortly afterwards killed by the Sioux at Ash Hollow, Nebraska. Amer. Cath. Hist. Records, I, 190.

1839, November, Peter Gaucher, Iroquois, returned through Wyoming from St Louis, with the good news that a “blackrobe” would come the following spring.

A.C.H. Recs., I, 190.

1840, July, Father Peter John DeSmet, S.J., arrived at the Green River Rendezvous, with the American Fur Company caravan, under the leadership of Captain Andrew Drips of St Louis, Mo. On Sunday, July 5th, 1840, Fr DeSmet celebrated the first Mass on the prairie (at the Rendezvous) for the traders, trappers, hunters and Indians, and preached in French and in English, and to the Flathead and Snake [Shoshone] Indians [ 244 ]\*\*\* through interpreters. The Canadians sang a portion of the Mass in Latin, and canticles in French, whilst the Indians chanted hymns in their native tongue. This spot was known for years afterwards

as “La prairie de la Messe.” The next day a dozen Canadian hunters followed Fr DeSmet, and went to confession and communion. Catholic Hist. Magazine (NY, 1888), Vol. II, 79-80.

1841, Fathers DeSmet, Point and Mengarini with 3 lay brothers passed through Wyoming on their way to the Flathead Indians.

1843, Fr P. Devos, and Adrien Hoecken, S.J., passed through to the Flatheads.

1844, Fathers Zerbinati and Joset, with Brother Magri passed through to the Flatheads.

1846, Parkman mentions that a priest heard confessions at Fort Laramie (“Oregon Trail,” 196).

1847, Fr DeSmet at Fort Laramie on his way to St Louis from Oregon.

1849, Fr DeSmet was among the Sioux Indians in eastern Wyoming near the northern boundary of Nebraska. During this trip he baptized many Indian children.

1851, Fr DeSmet traversed Wyoming on his way from Fort Benton to Fort Laramie and thence to the mouth of Horse Creek in Nebraska to attend the Great Indian Council [Council Bluffs?]. On this occasion he drew a map of Indian country of the upper Missouri and of the upper Platte [ 245 ] rivers, which was used in the Council and later sent to Washington, D.C.

Life and Letters of DeSmet, 1498 et passim by Chittenden.

1832-1833, see Captain Bonneville’s remarks on the religious observances of the Nez Perce Indians who had been made acquainted with Catholic practices by the French traders and the Catholic Iroquois Indians who had drifted west from Canada and New York.

Irving’s “Bonneville’s Adventures,” Chapt IX.

1846, the Mormons passed through Wyoming.

1849, the California gold hunters or “Forty-niners” also passed through Wyoming along the Oregon Trail.

Wyoming formed a part of the “Louisiana Purchase” and was at least theoretically under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the church

authorities at New Orleans. Later it fell under the bishop of St Louis, MO (1827) and in 1851 it was included in the vicariate of the Indian Territory east of the Rocky Mountains which had Most Rev. John B. Miede, D.D., as vicar apostolic. In 1857 it comprised a part of the vicariate of Nebraska, until 1885, when it formed a part of the diocese of Omaha. It was erected into the diocese of Cheyenne on Aug. 9 [or 11?], 1887, and the first bishop Most Rev. Maurice F. Burke, D.D., was consecrated on Oct. 28, 1887, and was transferred to St [ 246 ] Joseph, Mo., June 19, 1893. Second bishop, Most Rev. Thomas M. Lenihan, D.D., consecrated Feb. 24, 1897, and died Dec. 15, 1901. Third bishop, Most Rev. James J. Keane, D. D., consecrated Oct. 28, 1902, transferred to Dubuque as archbishop, Aug. 11, 1911. Fourth bishop, Most Rev. Patrick A. McGovern, D.D., consecrated April 11, 1912, still in charge.

1868, Wyoming was organized as a Territory. Ency. Brit. XIV-713.

1867, Fall of, \*\*\*William Kelly went to Cheyenne as the first resident priest. The following extract is from a letter written by him on July 18, 1883:

“In the fall of 1867, the Union Pacific railroad having been extended to within a short distance from Cheyenne I was sent by Bishop O’Gorman to that town to take charge of the spiritual interests of the Catholics resident there and in the vicinity. For 6 months besides holding services at Cheyenne I visited the railroad camps lying westward from the town. {In the spring of 1868 General Stephenson, commandant at Fort D. A. Russell, kindly and generously donated 4 lots of ground whereon to erect a Catholic church [Mistake, see McGovern, 28, n.1]}. The first churches were under the patronage of St John Baptist. The church and parochial residence were built and completed in the summer of the same year, 1868, at an expense of about \$4,000.00.

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“At this time my missionary field extended from Sidney, Nebraska, westward to Wasatch Canyon in Utah, running northwards as far as Fort Laramie. With the exception of an occasional Sunday’s Mass at Laramie City and Fort Sanders, Mass was celebrated regularly every Sunday at

Cheyenne, after the erection of the church, the other days of the week being devoted to missionary work along the railroad.

“On these trips the section houses were converted into temporary churches. In the summer of 1869, Bishop O’Gorman accompanied by Fr Ryan and another priest visited Cheyenne and Laramie City and administered the sacrament of confirmation at both places. Towards the end of October, 1869, I left Cheyenne and was succeeded there by Rev. Fr Erlach. The late Very Rev. William Byrne succeeded Fr Erlach in the spring of 1871. After him came Rev. Fr McGoldrick. To him succeeded Rev. Fr Jennette. Then followed the late Fr Hayes.

“The first resident priest at Laramie City was Rev. Fr Cusson, who remained there until 1879 when he was succeeded by the present pastor, Fr Cumiskey.” (Original letter in my possession [One does not know if “my” means Shine or McGovern].)

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## **The Diocese in General**

Bishop McGovern

[3] The diocese of Cheyenne comprises within its boundaries 101,352 / 97548 square miles, thus ranking third in area among the sees of the United States. This year’s federal census (1940) credits Wyoming with 250,742 inhabitants; and, taking deaths as the basis of computation, the Catholic population numbers a minimum of 31,343. In other words, Catholic births and deaths are respectively about one-sixth and one-eighth of the total for the State. Besides Wyoming, the diocese includes Yellowstone National Park, which for the beauty and variety of its scenery, and its extraordinary natural phenomena, ranks among the marvels of the world. It is worthy of note that the first Territorial legislature of Wyoming in 1869 conferred the suffrage on women, and

on its admission as a State a provision to this effect was embodied in the constitution (1890).

Ecclesiastically, the territory within the present limits of Wyoming has been subject to sees as remote from each other as the civil authority to which its component parts owed allegiance. For within its boundaries is part of the Louisiana Purchase which was made from France in 1803, part of the Oregon Country which was acquired by the Florida treaty with Spain in 1819, part of the Texas annexation of 1845, and finally part of the [4] Mexican cession of 1848. However, any jurisdiction that the French, Spanish, or Mexican bishops may have had over these districts was rather de jure than de facto, since prior to the building of Fort Laramie as a trading post in 1834 and 1835, there were no white settlers in the territory, nor had any missionary work been done among the Indians.

With the creation of the diocese of St. Louis in 1827, Wyoming came under the authority of that see. In 1851, it was included in the vicariate of the Indian Territory, over which the Most Rev. John B. Miège, S.J., D.D., was called to preside as vicar apostolic. His see embraced all the region from the southern boundary of Kansas to the British possessions, and all west of the Missouri river to the crest of the Rocky mountains. The vicariate of Nebraska, which included Wyoming, was carved out of this vast region Jan. 6, 1857, and received as its ruler Most Rev. James O’Gorman, D.D., (consecrated May 8, 1859) who took up his residence in Omaha. When that city was named an episcopal see in 1885, its ordinary, Most Rev. James O’Gorman, D.D., continued to guide the destinies of Wyoming up to the erection of the diocese of Cheyenne, Aug. 9, 1887.

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## **Early Explorers and Trappers**

Bishop McGovern

Outstanding among the early explorers and trappers of this section of the United States were French-Canadian [5] Catholics. The first known white men to enter what is now Wyoming were two sons of Pierre Gauthier Varennes (commonly known as Sieur de la Varendrye) on their exploring expedition to the Rocky mountains in 1742-43. They came from Fort La Reine (Portage la Prairie, Manitoba), entered the State from Montana, and reached a spur of the Big Horn mountains Jan. 12, 1743. In 1807, John Colter, a former member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and the first American to enter Wyoming, discovered Yellowstone Park. Four years later a party of sixty men, forty of whom were French-Canadians, under the leadership of Wilson P. Hunt, crossed from east to west in the central part of Wyoming. They were in the employ of the Pacific Fur Company which had just been organized by John Jacob Astor. Other distinguished names within the next few decades may be mentioned in this connection: Jacques La Ramie, after whom is named a city, county, river, and mountain peak; the Sublette brothers, Lucien Fontenelle, Etienne Provost, and Thos. Fitzpatrick. All of these were Canadians, the last mentioned being a relative of the Rt. Hon. Sir Charles Fitzpatrick, chief justice of Canada.

Explorers and Trappers 1941 (McGovern) 1

## **Spiritual Pioneers**

Bishop McGovern

Turning to the pioneers in the spiritual order, the place of honor is assigned to Rev. Peter J. De Smet, S.J., whose name will ever be one of the brightest ornaments [6] in the field of American missionary endeavor. To him belongs the distinction of having celebrated the first Mass within the limits of Wyoming.

A delegation of Nez Percé (or Flathead) Indians from beyond the Rocky mountains had come to St. Louis to interview the ecclesiastical

authorities, and beg that priests be sent to instruct their people in the Catholic faith. Finding their way to the Jesuit college, they explained their mission to the superior; Father De Smet was appointed to visit their habitat in order to prepare the way for the missionaries whom it was proposed to send. He 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, where Fr. De Smet celebrated Mass and preached in English and French to the traders, trappers and hunters, and through interpreters to the Snake and Flathead Indians.>No doubt he had already celebrated Mass at Fort Laramie, although this is not expressly mentioned in his writings. He does state, however, that he was accustomed to say Mass on Sundays and feast days during his missionary trips.> The Canadians sang a portion of the Mass in Latin and 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 [7] followed Fr. De Smet and went to confession and communion.

The first permanent settlement in Wyoming was Fort Laramie, built by one of the fur trading companies in 1834-35 and sold several years later to the United States government. Parkman records that in 1846 a priest heard confessions at this post: it is morally certain that missionaries passing through on their way to the Oregon country likewise celebrated Mass. However, it was only with the building of the Union Pacific railroad in 1867 that the real pioneers came to cast their lot for weal or woe in the new territory. That very year Bishop O'Gorman of Omaha sent Rev. William Kelly to assume the spiritual care of all the Catholics from Sidney, Nebr. to Wasatch canyon, Utah. An account of his pastorate will be found in the history of the Cheyenne parish. While the parochial register shows Fr. Kelly to have visited every point along the Union Pacific, it is not believed that he ever went to Fort Laramie; however, it is recorded that his successor, Fr. Erlach (1869-71), visited Forts Laramie and Fetterman as well as Atlantic City and South Pass.

Religious women, those powerful and almost necessary auxiliaries of the clergy in the spread and development of the Catholic faith in modern times, were found in Wyoming even before its formation as a separate diocese. As early as February, 1876, the Sisters [8] of Charity of Leavenworth had opened a hospital at Laramie, but it was abandoned in 1896. The religious of the Holy Child Jesus (of Sharon Hill, Pa.) established themselves in Cheyenne in 1884, opening a school temporarily in the old frame church that had been built by Fr. Kelly and later, on its completion, moving into the beautiful academy opposite the State capitol. At St. Stephen's mission, likewise, the Franciscan sisters from Glen Riddle, Pa. early came to the assistance of the Jesuits by taking charge of a school for Indian girls. In the intervening years the Leavenworth Sisters of Charity have come to teach in Sheridan, the Dubuque Sisters of Charity (B.V.M.) in Casper, and the Franciscans (St. Francis, Wis.) are caring for the orphans at Torrington.

1840 Spiritual Pioneers (McGovern) 2

Harold Stansell, S.J.

## **VICARS APOSTOLIC 1850-1885**

John Baptist Miège, S.J.  
Vicar Apostolic of The Indian Territory  
(1850-1859)

James O'Gorman, O.C.S.O. (Trappist)  
First Vicar Apostolic of Nebraska  
(1859-1874)

James O'Connor  
Second Vicar Apostolic of Nebraska  
(1875-1885);

## First Bishop of Omaha (1885-1890)

### Prologue

During the decade of the 1840s very significant developments took place in the unoccupied lands west of the Missouri river which multiplied the problems of government. Vast expanses of land, some already claimed by the United States government, such as the Oregon Territory, and others gained as a result of the war with Mexico, proved to be very attractive to land hungry Americans who began to migrate to the northwest and the west in increasing numbers. After a slow beginning in 1840, the migrations began in earnest in 1842. A year later about 1,000 people traveled over the trails that led to Oregon and intermediate places. In 1845, 3,000 men, women and children set out on the long and arduous journey over the Oregon and other trails. By the end of 1845 about 6,000 people had relocated themselves in the northwest and the west.<sup>>1850>1</sup> These developments posed problems for the government of the United States and the leaders of the various churches.

The response of the government of the United States has been more than adequately recorded in general histories and specialized studies. The concern of this undertaking is the response of the authorities of the Roman Catholic Church to the new challenge. It had long been the policy of the Holy See to establish a vicariate apostolic in regions that were being occupied and developed for the first time. A vicariate apostolic is defined in canon law as “a certain portion of the people of God which is not yet erected into a diocese, due to particular circumstances and whose pastoral care is entrusted to a vicar apostolic . . . who governs it in the name of the Supreme Pontiff.”<sup>>1850>2</sup>

As early as 1843 the Holy See, in response to a request by the American Bishops, with the endorsement of Joseph Signay, Bishop of Quebec, established the Vicariate Apostolic of Oregon which included the lands

west of the Rocky Mountains. Six years later, the bishops again petitioned the Holy See to establish another vicariate for the territory between the Missouri River and the Rocky Mountains. This petition reflected the growing concern of the bishops for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the Indians who were being relocated in the area of the Great Plains. On July 19, 1850, the Holy See established the Vicariate Apostolic of The Indian Territory. It is doubtful that the bishops, much less the officials of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, had the slightest realization of the vastness of the vicariate which they established. That area has aptly been described as measuring, “almost seven hundred miles from north to south and approximately six hundred miles from east to west and included in addition to the future state of Nebraska those of Kansas, Oklahoma, the Dakotas south and west of the Missouri River, and Montana, Wyoming and Colorado at least as far west to the crest of the Rocky Mountains.”>1850>3

### **John Baptist Miège, S.J., Vicar Apostolic of The Indian Territory, 1850-1859**

The Roman authorities designated John Baptist Miège, S.J., a native of Savoy only recently arrived in the United States, to be Vicar Apostolic. This appointment made Miège the first official prelate with jurisdiction over the future state of Wyoming. However, since the territory was so vast it is reasonably certain that the bishop never set foot in that part of the vicariate. After his episcopal consecration by Peter Richard Kenrick, Archbishop of St. Louis, Miège established his residence in the St. Mary's Potawatomi Mission where Jesuits of the vice-province of Missouri were evangelizing the members of the Potawatomi tribe. This decision gave the bishop a base for his operations in his efforts to become acquainted with the vicariate. Soon after he was settled the bishop had an opportunity to extend hospitality to Father DeSmet who was on his way back to St. Louis after his memorable experience at the Great Council in Wyoming in 1851. DeSmet noted with disarming simplicity that “we reached St. Mary's, among the Potawatomes on the 11th of October. Bishop Miège and the other fathers of this Mission

received us with great cordiality and kindness.”>1850>4 No doubt, DeSmet held the attention of his hosts as he gave an account of his experiences in Wyoming and his assessment of the meeting of the Great Council at Horse Creek.

A year and a half later, April, 1853, DeSmet spent a considerable amount of time with Bishop Miège when the two traveled to Europe. DeSmet later wrote: “In the month of April of this year 1853, with the approval of the consultors of the Vice-Province, the Reverend Father Provincial sent me to Europe in company with the Right Reverend then Vicar Apostolic of Western Indian Territory, east of the Rocky Mountains. His Lordship was to proceed to Rome, myself to France, Belgium and Holland, both on business of the Society [of Jesus].”>1850>5

The bishop was not a good sailor; nevertheless, there must have been plenty of opportunity for the two to compare their experiences. It is possible that Miège experienced a growing realization of the extent of the vicariate as well as the weight of the responsibility for the pastoral care of the people who were moving into the territory.

After his return to the vicariate Miège moved his residence from the St. Mary’s Mission to the recently established town of Leavenworth, Kansas so that he could provide for the growing numbers of people who were making their homes in that area. Shortly after he had established himself in Leavenworth the bishop found time to visit Nebraska. He made two trips into that region; one in 1854, and a second excursion in the following year. The bishop was somewhat overwhelmed by the vastness of the territory entrusted to his care. He decided that something must be done about the matter and when the bishops of the area met in the First Provincial Council of St. Louis in 1855 Miège persuaded them to petition the Holy See to divide the vicariate of Indian Territory. The Roman authorities moved with proverbial slowness while making a decision. Finally, in 1857, the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith approved the division and established the vicariate of Nebraska. At the same time Rome requested Miège to continue as administrator until a vicar apostolic could be appointed. The new vicariate included “the

present state of Nebraska all of the two Dakotas lying west of the Missouri River, all of Montana and Wyoming as far as the crest of the mountains, and the northeastern corner of Colorado which lay north of the fortieth parallel and east of the crest of the mountains.”>1850>6

For more than two years Miège continued to administer both vicariates. Finally, in 1859, the Holy See designated James Miles O’Gorman, O.C.S.O., prior of the Trappist monastery of New Melleray, near Dubuque, Iowa, as Vicar Apostolic of Nebraska.

### **James O’Gorman, O.C.S.O. (Trappist), first Vicar Apostolic of Nebraska, 1859-1874**

James O’Gorman, a native of county Tipperary, Ireland, had emigrated to the United states in July, 1849. He was a member of the first contingent of’ Irish Trappists from Mount Melleray. He and his companions came to Iowa in response to an invitation by Mathias Loras, bishop of Dubuque. Eight years after the monastery was established the abbot of Mount Melleray in Ireland, Bruno Fitzpatrick, appointed O’Gorman prior of the American foundation. After his appointment as Vicar Apostolic O’Gorman traveled to St. Louis where episcopal orders were conferred on him by Peter Richard Kenrick, Archbishop of St. Louis, on May 8, 1859. The two co-consecrators were John Baptist Miège, O’Gorman’s predecessor, and Henry D. Juncker, bishop of Alton, Illinois.

The new vicar was anxious to find out the extent of his jurisdiction. The first major stop on his way to Nebraska from St. Louis was Leavenworth, Kansas where he spent a week with Bishop Miège and, no doubt, learned what his predecessor knew about the vicariate. He then preceded to St. Joseph, Missouri. He had considered making that city the site of his cathedral in accordance with the recommendation of Archbishop Kenrick. However, his reception by the local priest, Thomas E. Scanlon, was less than enthusiastic so he decided to go further north.>1850>7 After a brief visit in Nebraska City he moved on to

Omaha. Members of the Omaha City Council had made a generous offer to donate property for a church if the bishop would choose that city for his headquarters. O’Gorman turned the offer down but, nevertheless, decided to establish his residence in Omaha.

Bishop O’Gorman’s experiences during the first years of his administration were much the same as those that tested the patience and endurance of all frontier bishops during the years of westward expansion. His energies were expended in the Territory of Nebraska which at the time was his primary and pressing responsibility. His activities have been meticulously recorded by Rev. Henry W. Casper, S.J., in the first volume of his history of the Catholic Church in Nebraska and there is no need to review them in this history.

However, the vicariate was on the threshold of a momentous development which, despite of the preoccupation with the Civil War, remained high on the agenda of the United States Government: namely, the need for the development of railroad systems. After the war phenomenal progress was made in the expansion of railroads. One advance that would widen the horizon of Bishop O’Gorman and add to his responsibilities was the culmination of long and arduous planning for a transcontinental railroad to be constructed by the builders of the Union Pacific moving west from Omaha-to meet with the builders of the Central Pacific moving east from Sacramento, California. The directors of the Union Pacific were fortunate in obtaining the services of Glenville Mellen Dodge as chief engineer. Dodge had resigned from the army after a very successful tour of duty during which he had been promoted to the rank of Major General of the United States Volunteers. Dodge assumed his duties as Chief Engineer of the Union Pacific Railroad (May 6, 1866). One historian of the Union Pacific wrote that those responsible for the appointment of General Dodge did not fully realize how fortunate they were in obtaining the services of that outstanding engineer. Charles E. Ames wrote: “The directors, officers, and employees of the company, delighted as they were, hardly could appreciate at the time how lucky they were to win the services of this

renowned soldier-engineer. In retrospect, this was one of the brilliant events in the history of the U.P.>1850>8

It is tempting to relate once again the fascinating story of the building-of the Union Pacific railroad but that would not serve the purpose of this history. However, it is important to record the fact that the directors of the Union Pacific and those who worked with and for them were responsible for preparing the way for the future incorporation of Wyoming as a state into the United States. The land that had been by-passed for almost three decades was finally occupied and permanent settlements were established, and this was due to the progress of the railroad. General Dodge in his account of the building of the railroad noted that as the builders progressed they established bases for the delivery of the necessary materials at locations usually from 100 to 200 miles apart. Of the bases that survived and became towns or cities in Wyoming the following are noteworthy: Cheyenne, Laramie, Rawlins, Green River, and Evanston.>1850>9

The first of the towns mentioned, Cheyenne, came into existence when, on July 2, 1867, General Dodge staked out land for a town and reserved 320 acres for a railroad terminal. He named the town Cheyenne to commemorate “one of the most important tribes of Indians on the plains.”>1850>10

Among those who were interested in the progress of the railroad, not the least was the vicar apostolic of Nebraska who was particularly concerned about the spiritual welfare of the railroad workers, many of whom were from his native Ireland. In the fall of 1867, before the railroad reached Cheyenne, Bishop O’Gorman dispatched the Reverend William Kelly to minister to the Catholics who worked for the Union Pacific.

William Kelly, a native of Ireland, was the first Catholic priest to be canonically assigned to the territory which eventually would become the Diocese of Cheyenne.>1850>11 Kelly had visited the United States in 1853 as an Irish Christian Brother on a fund-raising tour seeking

financial support for All Hallows College, Dublin, which had been established as a training school for Irish missionaries destined to work in English speaking countries. Kelly traveled extensively while working on that project. He was favorably impressed with the work of the church in the United States, so much so that shortly after his return to Ireland he decided to leave the Christian Brothers, return to America, and study for the priesthood. He attended the Vincentian seminary in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, from 1856 to 1857. During the year 1858 he sought a bishop who would adopt him. During this year he met Bishop O’Gorman who accepted him for the vicariate of Nebraska and ordained him in June, 1859. For some eight years Father Kelly exercised his ministry in various places in the vicariate. When he was sent to Cheyenne in 1867 he was a seasoned priest who was very familiar with life on the frontier. His assignment to Wyoming was reminiscent of the scriptural commission to the disciples when they were given a mandate to proceed to preach the “Good News” with only the bare essentials and to be sustained by the peoples’ hospitality. Kelly traveled to the railroad camps of the Union Pacific where he made contact with the people who were anxious to have a priest to minister to their spiritual needs.

It would be interesting to know more about the daily activities of Father Kelly. However, there is not a exact record of the day to day progress of his ministry, but as time went on, it was obvious that Father Kelly was making an impression and that his presence on the scene on the railroad and in that railroad town was appreciated by those who were interested in some kind of orderly development of the booming town. The priest exercised his ministry for some six months before he was able to establish a permanent base for his operations. The base was provided by the authorities of the Union Pacific who donated four lots on the northeast corner of 21st and O’Neil streets to the Catholic Church.>1850>12 Father Kelly with some of the members of his flock lost little time in undertaking the task of building a church and a parochial residence. The project was completed by the end of the summer of 1868 and the Catholics of Cheyenne had a proper, if not majestic, place for worship and the pastor had his own residence, all at the cost of some \$4,000.>1850>13

Father Kelly made good use of the church in Cheyenne. In addition to providing an opportunity for members of his flock to attend Mass on Sunday, the pastor made generous provision of time for those who might wish to go to confession on Saturday by making himself available from two to six in the afternoon and seven to nine in the evening. He took a dim view of the practice of the saloon keepers of opening their places of business at 9:30 in the morning, even on Sundays. Father Kelly had more than sufficient experience with his Irish compatriots to understand that some of them had a proclivity for drinking alcoholic beverages. Consequently, he let it be known that he strongly objected to the custom of early openings of the bars every morning. It is interesting to record that the owners of the bars agreed to keep the saloons closed from 9:30 A.M. until 12 noon on Sundays. Sunday was a busy day for the pastor because he knew that he could not neglect the children and consequently he taught catechism at two o'clock in the afternoon.>1850>14

Gradually, Father Kelly became more familiar with the extent of the territory that was entrusted to his pastoral care and did his best to minister to those who needed his services. When possible, he offered Mass in Laramie City and Fort Sanders. On the other days of the week he exercised his pastoral ministry along the railroad where the section houses were converted into temporary churches.>1850>15

Father Kelly was anxious to have Bishop O'Gorman visit Cheyenne to witness the progress of the church there and to administer the sacrament of confirmation. The Cheyenne pastor had more than sufficient time to prepare the candidates for the sacrament because the bishop had many pressing problems in the vicariate and his efforts to solve those problems kept him occupied for a period of ten months after he had received Father Kelly's invitation. Finally, in July, 1869, Bishop O'Gorman, accompanied by the Reverend James M. Ryan and Reverend Millany arrived in Cheyenne and on the eleventh day of that month confirmed twenty children and adults. Father Millany preached the sermon.>1850>16

The next day the bishop and his companions, including Father Kelly, traveled to Laramie City, a mission of Cheyenne. Some Catholics gave the bishop a document in which were recorded the names of persons who pledged money needed to build a church. A total of thirteen hundred and twenty-seven dollars was pledged for the project. J.W. Donnellan was chosen to be treasurer of the congregation.>1850>17 Bishop O’Gorman presided at the laying of the cornerstone of the proposed church. No further progress was made in building the church until the first local pastor arrived in Laramie early in 1872.>1850>18

Shortly after Bishop O’Gorman returned to Omaha following his confirmation tour in Wyoming he recalled Father Kelly from Cheyenne. Father Kelly had labored in Wyoming for some two years. During that period he had established a sound foundation for the Catholic Church in that territory. He had supervised the building of the first parish church and parochial residence in Cheyenne and had traveled far and wide to bring the sacraments to those who desired the ministrations of a priest. During the brief period of his tenure as pastor he assisted at thirteen marriages, baptized forty-eight persons and prepared twenty for the sacrament of Confirmation.>1850>19

On October 9, 1869, Philip Erlach became the second pastor of the church in Cheyenne. In the year and six months of his pastorate he baptized forty-three persons. Father Erlach extended the area of his responsibility when he responded to the needs of the people who were interested in the reports that gold was being mined in South Pass City and Atlantic City. He also visited Fort Laramie and Fort Fetterman. In April, 1871, Father Erlach was transferred to a parish in Nebraska.>1850>20

The next pastor, William Byrne, was destined to remain in Cheyenne for two years and five months. He was the first pastor to have a priest to assist him, namely, Eugene Cusson, a French-Canadian, who had been ordained for service in the vicariate. He arrived in Cheyenne in May, 1871. It is clear that Father Cusson took some of the pressure off of the pastor; the baptismal register indicates that he baptized twenty-two

persons. No doubt, Father Cusson found other ways to assist the pastor. During Father Byrne's incumbency, Bishop O'Gorman visited Cheyenne and on September 15, 1872, confirmed thirteen persons.>1850>21

Father Byrne did not enjoy the luxury of having a priest to assist him for more than seven months. Early in 1872, Bishop O'Gorman requested Father Cusson to move to Laramie City to minister to the Catholics in a town that was growing rapidly as an important center for the activities of those who were working for the Union Pacific Railroad. Father Cusson's experience in Cheyenne prepared him for the task of establishing a Catholic community in Laramie. He realized that it was necessary for him to acquire a secure title to property on which he could build a church. once again the officials of the Union Pacific Railroad Company came to the aid of Father Cusson when they issued "quit-claim deed to lots I and 2, block 190, generously donating this land to the Catholic Church (June 19, 1872).">1850>22 After acquiring the property, Father Cusson moved with dispatch and made the necessary preparations for acquiring those things needed for building a church. In due time a stone church was ready and was placed under the patronage of St. Laurence O'Toole, a twelfth century bishop in Ireland who became the first Irish Archbishop of Dublin.

While these developments were under way, it was becoming quite evident that Bishop O'Gorman's health was deteriorating. He suffered a mild stroke early in 1874. His health had not been robust and the problems of administering such a vast territory with but few priests and very limited financial resources drained his strength. Bishop O'Gorman succumbed rather suddenly on 4th July, 1874. He had served his church well and bequeathed to his successor a legacy that presaged a brighter future for the Catholic Church in Nebraska. It is understandable that Bishop O'Gorman did not have the resources which would make it possible for him to hand on a mature church in the territory of Wyoming to the man who would follow him, but certainly he left a church that had a good beginning in that region.

## **James O'Connor, second Vicar Apostolic of Nebraska, first Bishop of Omaha, 1875-1890**

When Archbishop Peter Richard Kenrick, of the metropolitan See of St. Louis, learned of the death of Bishop O'Gorman, he appointed Reverend William Byrne, who had been a pastor in Cheyenne from April, 1871 to September, 1873, administrator of the vicariate until a successor to Bishop O'Gorman could be selected. Those responsible for the selection of bishops moved with unaccustomed alacrity and appointed Reverend John Ireland Vicar Apostolic of Nebraska on February 12, 1875. Father Ireland's bishop, Most Reverend Thomas L. Grace, O.P., had other plans for the pastor of the cathedral of St. Paul, Minnesota. Specifically, he hoped to have Father Ireland as his coadjutor and eventually, his successor. Bishop Grace went to Rome and made his plans known to the officials of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. After some consideration the officials of the congregation acceded to the bishop's request and revoked the appointment of Father Ireland as Vicar Apostolic of Nebraska.<sup>>1850>23</sup> In due time, John Ireland was designated coadjutor-bishop of St. Paul with the right of succession. It is interesting to speculate, in view of the subsequent career and the influence of John Ireland in the hierarchy of the church in America, on the effect he might have had in the progress of the vicariate of Nebraska.

While the process of selection of a vicar was resumed, important events took place in Laramie and Cheyenne. Father Cusson had gained stature as a churchman who was interested in the welfare of the people of Laramie; one who was willing to help as much as he could to serve the needs of the people. A pressing problem confronted the officials of the Union Pacific Railroad Company who had established a rolling mill, that is, an establishment where metal, especially iron and steel, was rolled into plates and bars. In such a factory the incidence of serious accidents was rather high. The officials of the railroad had undertaken to open a small hospital but soon realized that it was too much for them to maintain. In their dilemma they, along with the county commissioners, asked Father Cusson if he could persuade some Catholic Sisters to open a hospital where they could nurse those injured in the mill. Not long

after this request was made, Father Cusson traveled to Cheyenne on business. By a strange coincidence he met Mother Xavier Ross, foundress of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, on the platform of the railway station. After the exchange of introductions, Father Cusson asked Mother Xavier if she could send some Sisters to meet with the interested officials of the railroad and the county to discuss the feasibility of establishing a hospital in Laramie. After some discussion, the Sisters agreed to undertake the task of opening a hospital. In January, 1876, Sisters Joanna Bruner and Martha Meed arrived in Laramie where they were given “space in an old frame house belonging to the railroad and located near the tracks.”>1850>24 On February 1, 1876, a twenty-four bed hospital was formally opened under the patronage of St. Joseph. In due time, Sisters Mary Agnes Toole and Mary dei Pazzi Lane joined the pioneering staff.>1850>25

Progress was also made during the interregnum in Cheyenne where Reverend John McGoldrick, who had succeeded Father Byrne, was pastor; he held office from September, 1873 to October, 1877. Father McGoldrick realized that the church, which had been built in 1868, was no longer adequate for his parishioners. consequently, “he secured two lots at the northeast corner of 19th and Carey Avenue as the site for a new church.”>1850>26 The pastor was also concerned about obtaining land for a Catholic cemetery. With the generous assistance of the mayor of Cheyenne, Lawrence Bresnahan, arrangements were undertaken for the transfer of ten acres of land as soon As the legal technicalities could be resolved. The negotiations had been initiated in April, 1876; it took some time before a final settlement was reached.>1850>27

In the meantime, the process of selecting a successor to Bishop O’Gorman was resumed after the appointment of John Ireland had been withdrawn. In time the name of James O’Connor, a priest of the diocese of Philadelphia attracted the attention of the authorities in Rome, who, after they had reviewed his credentials, appointed him Vicar Apostolic of Nebraska.

James O'Connor, a native of Ireland, came to the United States with his older brother, Michael, in 1839. The latter had been invited to come to Philadelphia by Coadjutor Bishop Francis Patrick Kenrick who appointed him rector of St. Charles Borromeo Seminary. The younger O'Connor had decided to follow in his brother's footsteps and entered the seminary. Some two years later he transferred to the Urban College of the Propaganda in Rome. When he had completed his courses in philosophy and theology he was ordained a priest on March 25, 1848. In early April the young priest returned to the United States where he joined the recently established diocese of Pittsburg which had been entrusted to the jurisdiction of Michael O'Connor as its first bishop. It will not serve the purpose of this history to record the facts of the career of James O'Connor as a priest in the Diocese of Pittsburg. However, it should be noted that after Michael O'Connor resigned as bishop of that diocese on May 30, 1860, his younger brother found it difficult to work with the new ordinary, Michael Domenec, C.M. Serious differences developed between the two churchmen, so much so, that James O'Connor transferred to the Diocese of Philadelphia. The bishop of that diocese, James F. Wood, appointed him rector of the seminary, a post which he held for some nine years (1863-1872).

Father O'Connor resigned from that position and was assigned as pastor of St. Dominic's parish in Holmesburg. For four years Father O'Connor gained the experience of actually presiding over a parish. In June, 1876 he received news of his appointment to succeed Bishop O'Gorman as Vicar Apostolic of Nebraska. The vicar-to-be lost little time in making plans for his episcopal ordination. On August 19, 1876 Bishop Patrick J. Ryan, coadjutor bishop of St. Louis conferred episcopal ordination on James O'Connor; he was assisted by Bishops William O'Hara of Scranton, and Jeremiah F. Shanahan of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Bishop O'Connor was installed in his cathedral in Omaha on September 24, 1876 by Bishop Patrick J. Ryan acting in the name of Archbishop Kenrick of the metropolitan See of St. Louis.>1850>28

Bishop O'Connor spent his first eight months as vicar becoming acquainted with his jurisdiction. He introduced some standard

procedures which seem to have been somewhat neglected by his predecessor, such as the establishment of a diocesan council, that is, a number of priests with whom he could consult and who would offer advice when it was sought. A second matter that required attention was the need to regularize the procedures related to the acquiring and ownership of property.>1850>29

High on the vicar's list of agenda was his need to find out as much as possible about his vast jurisdiction. To satisfy this need he began a visitation of the vicariate on May 1, 1877. He traveled by rail through Nebraska and southern Wyoming and visited the Catholic communities along the way. At each visit, the bishop carefully recorded the pertinent information regarding the status of each church. If the Catholic community had a church, the bishop recorded its size and condition. he was interested in the number of practicing Catholics in each locality. He uniformly noted: "whether or not the Church had a burial ground, whether the Church property had been deeded to the bishop, and in addition he wrote down his observations on the accouterment of the sacristy and sanctuary, the personnel of the Church committee, the ability of the congregation to support a pastor, its indebtedness, the number of times attached missions were visited by the priest, the existence of church societies, and the number of baptisms and marriages performed since January 1, 1876.">1850>30

Travel across southern Wyoming was facilitated by the Union Pacific Railroad. Obviously, Cheyenne was the first city in Wyoming to be visited. After he gathered the information that he was looking for, Bishop O'Connor conferred the sacrament of Confirmation on fourteen persons on May 10th. He proceeded to Laramie where he found considerable development of the Church under the guidance of Father Cusson who had been pastor since 1872. No doubt, the bishop was impressed by the existence of a hospital in that town as well as with the work of the Sisters of Charity. Father Cusson was in a position to brief the bishop on conditions in Rawlins, Green River and Evanston since he visited these communities on a more or less regular schedule. The bishop received a warm welcome in Rawlins. Later he confirmed eight

persons in Green River; the service was held in the school since there was no Catholic church in that town. His final visit in Wyoming was to the town of Evanston where he appointed a committee to see what could be done about building a church. Fortunately, at the time there was a Baptist Church for sale. Father Cusson purchased the church from the Baptist Home Mission Society for \$1,100. It is worthy of note that the Catholics of Evanston paid for the church within one month.>1850>31

After the visit to Evanston Bishop O'Connor made short stops in Utah and Idaho and spent some time in Montana. Eventually he returned to Omaha traveling by boat down the Mississippi River. It is reasonably certain that on the completion of his visitation of the vicariate, a trip which had taken some three months, the vicar apostolic had a much improved comprehension of the vastness of the territory that was entrusted to his pastoral care.

While the bishop reviewed the status of the vicariate and made plans for the future, further progress was made in Laramie. Father Cusson persuaded the Sisters of Charity to open a school. The Sisters were well disposed to accept the challenge because teaching young people was one of the goals of their congregation. Fortunately, they were able to rent a building near the parish church and in September, 1878 they were ready to accept students. Sisters Loretta Foley and Francis de Sales Cannan taught some eighty pupils distributed over the eight grades.>1850>32 Encouraged by the initial success of the venture, the Sisters purchased a frame building on A Street in 1879, recruited more teachers, named the school St. Mary's Academy, and continued to teach an increasing number of students. By the year 1891, the academy accommodated one hundred and twenty pupils.>1850>33

There seemed to be no limit to the involvement of the Sisters of Charity in the development of Laramie. In 1878, the Sisters decided that the facilities of St. Joseph's Hospital were no longer adequate for the number of patients that needed medical attention. The sisters purchased land east of town and undertook the project of building a new hospital. They initiated a fund-raising campaign. Unfortunately, the campaign did

not receive the support it deserved, in spite of the fact that the Territorial Legislature appropriated \$3,000 for the proposed hospital. Since the necessary funds were not forth-coming, the project was suspended until a more propitious time.

Early in 1879, Bishop O'Connor transferred Father Cusson to Nebraska City. The French-Canadian priest had merited well of the Church in Wyoming. He bequeathed a church, a school, and a hospital to his successor. Besides taking care of his flock in Laramie, he traveled widely in order to minister to the Catholics in an area that included South Pass City, Atlantic City, the site of the future town of Lander, Rawlins and Evanston. He had accomplished much during his seven years as pastor of St. Laurence O'Toole in Laramie.>1850>34

In Cheyenne, the fourth pastor, John McGoldrick, succeeded Father William Byrne in September, 1873. He realized that the Church which had been built in the time of Father Kelly was no longer adequate to accommodate the growing number of Catholics in Cheyenne, consequently, he purchased two lots at the northeast corner of 19th and Carey Avenue as the site for a new church. The pastor was also anxious to acquire property for a cemetery and this project was successful because Lawrence Bresnahan, as mayor of the city, used his influence to arrange for the transfer of ten acres to the church authorities.>1850>35  
Father McGoldrick was not able to capitalize on these opportunities because he had contracted tuberculosis and did not have sufficient energy to carry out his plans for a new church. He steadily lost ground from August, 1877 on and finally succumbed on October 18, 1877. He was the first pastor in Cheyenne to die while in office. His body was taken to Omaha for interment. Bishop O'Connor who was aware of the situation, dispatched John T. Lee to Cheyenne to assist the ailing pastor. Father Lee remained in the city until July 1878 as assistant to McGoldrick's successor, John J. Jennette, who needed all the help he could get because he was also responsible to the parish in Sidney, Nebraska. Father Jennette supervised the construction of a church in Sidney as well as the laying of the foundation for a brick church in Cheyenne on the property that had been acquired by Father McGoldrick.

Jennette's Sunday schedule was published in the Cheyenne Daily Sun for March 17, 1878 under the heading "Church Services: Mass at 9:00 A.M. followed by a High Mass and sermon at 10:30 A.M. Sabbath {sic} School at 3:00 P.M. Rev. J. Jennette, pastor.">1850>36 He accomplished much in less than a year as pastor (December, 1877 to August 4, 1878).

Father Jennette was transferred to Omaha in August, 1878. His successor, John A. Hayes, concentrated on the project of bringing to completion- the building of a church and a parochial residence and both were finished in due time. Father Hayes planned a public celebration to commemorate the event. On May 25, 1879 the church was dedicated and placed under the patronage of St. John the Baptist. Since Bishop O'Connor was in New York where he attended the dedication of St. Patrick's Cathedral, the vicar general, Daniel I. McDermott, presided at the ceremony assisted by Hugh Cummiskey of Laramie, Michael F. Cassidy of Rawlins and the pastor. Rev. Daniel Hayes was also present; he seems to have disappeared from public scrutiny soon after the dedication. A number of lay persons were recognized and identified by a reporter from the newspaper, *The Cheyenne Daily Sun*, namely, "Luke Morris, Mayor Lawrence Bresnehan, John Crowley, John Phillips, Daniel Fitzgerald, Timothy Dyer, Mrs. McKnight, Misses Mollie Moran, Annie McKay and Toulson.">1850>37

During Father Hayes' tenure, the parish became firmly established but growth required more financial support than was provided by the Offertory collections. The pastor and leaders in the parish decided to organize a fair. The venture was a social and financial success, so much so, that the promoters kept the fair operating for a couple of sessions beyond the advertised evenings of January 17-20.>1850>38 The promise of continuing growth under the guidance of Father Hayes faded when he was struck down by typhoid fever. He survived a first attack and was on his way to recovery when a recurrence of the fever proved fatal. An obituary note in a daily newspaper recorded that "he quietly passed away like a child sinking to peaceful slumber.">1850>39 Father Hayes was the first priest to be buried in the cemetery which the Church had acquired some years earlier.

A little more than two months after the death of Father Hayes a memorable event took place in Laramie. It has been noted above that the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth had to suspend plans for building a new hospital in Laramie because they were unable, at that time, to liquidate some outstanding debts. They did not however, entirely abandon the project. In due time building was resumed. Early in 1883 the new hospital was ready to receive patients. It was a three-story brick building which could accommodate some fifty patients. The pastor of St. Laurence O'Toole, Hugh Cumiskey, dedicated the new facility on January 25, 1883. Father M. F. Cassidy of Rawlins assisted at the dedication.>1850>40

In 1884, two notable events took place; events which demonstrated that the Church in Wyoming was becoming firmly established and was developing north of the southern belt. In that year Bishop O'Connor, who was aware of his responsibility to provide spiritual and educational facilities for the Indians who lived on the Wind River Reservations, sent Daniel W. Moriarity, recently ordained for service in the vicariate, to minister to the Catholics in Lander and to contact the proper authorities of the Indian Bureau to ascertain what could be done to help the Indians on the reservation. Father Moriarity succeeded in building a stone church in Lander and initiated conversations with the authorities responsible for the conduct of affairs pertaining to the reservation. The bishop needed financial help and he turned to Catholics in eastern dioceses and appealed for funds to make it possible to build a school on the reservation. An early response was made by Edward McGlynn, pastor of St. Stephen's parish in New York City. Father McGlynn promised an annual gift of at least \$200.00 plus sufficient Mass intentions for one and possibly two priests for each day of the year. Bishop O'Connor showed his appreciation for this contribution by designating St. Stephen patron of the proposed mission.>1850>41

The Church's ministry among the Indians was limited by the policy of the United States officials in charge of Indian affairs. The government officials allowed one church organization to a tribe. Since the

Episcopalians had established a school at Fort Washakie for the Shoshone Indians the Catholic Church had to limit its missionary activity to evangelizing the Northern Arapaho tribe.>1850>42 While Father Moriarity worked in the Lander area the bishop, who was aware of the activity of Jesuit priests and lay brothers in the Rocky Mountain Mission in the Northwest, endeavored to obtain men from the Society of Jesus who would establish a mission for the Northern Arapaho. He wrote to the vicar general of the Society and asked for men to come and work among the Indians on the Wind River Reservation. It seemed providential that at the time of the bishop's request there were German Jesuits who had recently established a mission in Buffalo, New York. These men had left their native land because the anti-Catholic policy of the government of the recently unified German Empire made it very difficult for them to carry on their ministry in that country. The vicar general of the Society urged the superior of the Buffalo Mission, John B. Lessman, to send some men to the Wind River Reservation. The superior responded by sending, in the spring of 1884, Reverend John Jutz, S.J., and a lay Brother, Ursus Nunlist, S.J., to Wyoming. A little later Father John Aschenbrenner, S.J., took over in Lander, relieving Father Moriarity for another assignment.>1850>43 This promising beginning proved to be a disappointment and after a year and a half the Jesuits were recalled to Buffalo. The mission was eventually established at the time when the vicariate apostolic became part of the diocese of Omaha.

The second notable event that took place in 1884 was the arrival in Cheyenne of the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus. The acquisition of these teachers was due to the errors of Bishop O'Connor and Reverend Francis J. Nugent, the pastor who succeeded Father Hayes in Cheyenne. High on Father Nugent's list of priorities was his determination to establish a parochial school. He was fortunate in being able to obtain the services of the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus whose American headquarters were near Philadelphia. The Sisters opened a school in Cheyenne in September, 1884. The first group of Sisters included Mother St. Michael, Sister Ambrose and Sister Genevieve. Later Sister Imelda and Mother M. Philomena joined the staff. The student body soon numbered one hundred and thirty pupils. Father Nugent, anxious to

foster his education endeavor, supervised the building of an addition to the school known as St. John's Hall; this made it possible for the Sisters to add the fifth, sixth and seventh grades.>1850>44

By the time of Father Nugent's incumbency the parish had gained recognition as a notable institution in the city of Cheyenne. A daily newspaper noted that, "St. Mary's (sic) Catholic Church membership is probably the largest in the city, and is in a very prosperous condition. Rev. Father Nugent was unable to furnish the necessary information relating to the Church, being engaged with his ecclesiastical duties. It is unnecessary to state that he meets the approbation of his congregation.">1850>45

The pastor's preoccupation included the negotiations that culminated in the purchase of the square block bounded by 24th and 25th Streets, and by Central and Warren Avenues. This property was deeded to the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus with the stipulation that they build and staff an academy. If they failed to do so the property would revert to the diocese.>1850>46 This and other projects of the busy pastor involved a considerable expenditure of money which depleted the financial resources of the parish and established an indebtedness which proved to be an embarrassment to the bishop who had returned to Omaha in 1886 after an extended visit in Rome. Bishop O'Connor borrowed money to pay off the debts that Father Nugent had incurred. It is not surprising that Father Nugent was removed as pastor in Cheyenne and sent to Rawlins.

At the time of his return from Rome in 1886, Bishop O'Connor was the bishop of the diocese of Omaha, which had been established on October 2, 1885. The new diocese included the Territory of Wyoming and Yellowstone National Park. Ever since 1877 when the diocese of Leavenworth, Kansas was established, the former vicariate apostolic of The Indian Territory was being divided by the authorities of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith into a number of ecclesiastical jurisdictions. They were the vicariate apostolic of the Dakotas in 1879, the diocese of Helena, Montana, in 1884, the diocese

of Omaha in 1885, and the dioceses of Lincoln and of Cheyenne in 1887.>1850>47

In the period of thirty-five years, the vicariate of Nebraska was governed by three vicars. The first, John Baptist Miège, was appointed in 1850. When he became acquainted with the magnitude of the area entrusted to him, he requested the Holy See to modify the extent of his jurisdiction. It is extremely doubtful that Bishop Miège ever set foot in the region that was to become the Territory of Wyoming. In 1857, the Holy See established the vicariate of Nebraska and appointed James O’Gorman, O.C.S.O. (Trappist), Vicar Apostolic. Bishop O’Gorman was the first Catholic Bishop to visit Wyoming and to administer the sacrament of Confirmation there. In spite of the fact that he was almost overwhelmed by the magnitude of his responsibilities, he did manage to lay a solid foundation for the Catholic Church in Nebraska and Wyoming.

The second vicar apostolic of Nebraska, James O’Connor, administered a continually developing vicariate. On the eve of the establishment of the diocese of Omaha in 1885, there were eight parishes in that city and thirty-seven throughout the state of Nebraska as well as numerous missions. In the Territory of Wyoming there were seven churches and seven presbyteral residences, one hospital, one Catholic academy and two parochial schools. There were an estimated 470 Catholic families in Wyoming.>1850>48 Wyoming Territory remained part of the Diocese of Omaha for nearly three years.

### **Establishment of the Diocese of Cheyenne, August 2, 1887**

Soon after the Diocese of Omaha was a reality, the bishops of the province of St. Louis, after meeting with Archbishop Peter Kenrick on June 18, 1886, requested the Holy See to establish two new dioceses: one for the territory south of the Platte River in Nebraska, the other to include the entire territory of Wyoming.>1850>49 Roman authorities acted on the recommendation of the bishops of the province and established the dioceses of Lincoln and Cheyenne.

The official document was dated August 2, 1887. The limits of the diocese of Cheyenne were set “ad orientem Status Dakota et Nebraska, ad occidentem Status Utah et Idaho, ad meridiem Status Colorado et Utah, ad septentrionalem Status Montana.” The person responsible for sending pertinent information about the diocese to the editors of Hoffman’s *Catholic Directory, Almanac and Clergy List* noted the date of establishment of the Diocese of Cheyenne as August 9, 1887. This error was repeated in the annual editions of the directory until the 1940s when the error was corrected, though Bishop Patrick A. McGovern published a history of his diocese in 1941 in which he stated that the diocese was established on August 9th. Some reviewer must have raised a question about the validity of this statement because shortly thereafter a request was sent to the chancellor of the diocese of Omaha asking for clarification of the matter. In due time a copy of the official document establishing the diocese of Lincoln and that of Cheyenne was sent to Bishop McGovern dated October 12, 1944. The concluding sentence of the papal document reads: “Datum Romae apud S. Petrum sub annulo Piscatoris die II Augusti MDCCCLXXXVII Pontificatus Nostri Anno Decimo [Given at Rome at St. Peter’s under the seal of the Fisherman the second day of August 1887, the tenth year of our Pontificate.]”>1850>50 The correct date was given in subsequent editions of the Catholic Directory. Finally, in 1887, after thirty-five years, the Territory of Wyoming had its own diocese and its own bishop, before Wyoming became a state in 1890.

## **NOTES** **1850-1887**

>1850>1 Billington, 448.

>1850>2 *Code of Canon Law*, Latin-English ed., (Canon Law Society of America).

>1850>3 The Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith had what kind of supervisory jurisdiction in the United States, 1789-1908.

>1850>4 Chittenden, II, 689.

- >1850>5 Chittenden, II, 693.
- >1850>6 Casper, I, 63. Was he in Wyoming on that DeSmet trip to Oregon?
- >1850>7 Casper, I, 102. O’Gorman’s activities have been meticulously recorded by Rev. Henry W. Casper, S.J., in the first volume of his history of the Catholic Church in Nebraska and there is no need to review them in this history.
- >1850>8 Charles Edgar Ames, *Pioneering the Union Pacific: A Reappraisal of the Building of the Railroad* (NY: Appleton Century Crofts, 1969), 129. One historian of the Union Pacific, Charles E. Ames wrote: “The directors, officers, and employees of the company, delighted as they were, hardly could appreciate at the time how lucky they were to win the services of this renowned soldier-engineer. In retrospect, this was one of the brilliant events in the history of the Union Pacific.”
- >1850>9 Grenville M. Dodge, *How We Built the Union Pacific Railway and Other Railway Papers and Addresses* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910), 31. Microfilm edition.
- >1850>10 Ames, 234.
- >1850>11 Casper, I, 207.
- >1850>12 McGovern, 27.
- >1850>13 McGovern, 246.
- >1850>14 Casper, I, 208. Father Casper noted that this account must be read with caution because it is dated 1886, seventeen years after Kelly left Wyoming.
- >1850>15 McGovern, 247.
- >1850>16 Father Millany soon disappeared from the scene. Father Casper, who has researched the archives of the archdiocese of Omaha thoroughly, could not so much as find a first name for the priest. See Casper, I, 209.
- >1850>17 Casper, I, 209. Father Casper discovered this information in an Account Book, Laramie, 1869, in the archives of the archdiocese of Omaha, O’Gorman Collection.
- >1850>18 McGovern, 119.
- >1850>19 Casper, I, 208.
- >1850>20 McGovern, 31.

- >1850>21 Baptismal Register, St. Mary's Cathedral, Book I, April 12, 1868 to Nov. 21, 1886.
- >1850>22 McGovern, 119-120.
- >1850>23 Casper, II, 1. Later, John Ireland was designated coadjutor-bishop of St. Paul with the right of succession. It is interesting to speculate, in view of the subsequent career and the influence of John Ireland in the hierarchy of the church in America, especially during the Americanism debate, what the effect he might have had in the development of the vicariate apostolic of Nebraska.
- >1850>24 Sister Julia Gilmore, S.C.L., *We Came North: Centennial Story of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth* (St. Meinrad, Indiana: Abbey Press, 1961), 49.
- >1850>25 McGovern, 120.
- >1850>26 McGovern, 31.
- >1850>27 McGovern, 31-32. When? And why mention the protracted negos?
- >1850>28 Casper, II, 14-15.
- >1850>29 Casper, II, 14-15.
- >1850>30 Information obtained from the bishop's Diocesan Record Book, 1876-1917; Casper, II, 43.
- >1850>31 Casper, II, 45.
- >1850>32 McGovern, 121.
- >1850>33 *Hoffmann's Catholic Directory, Almanac and Clergy List, Quarterly*, vol. 6, no. 1 (Milwaukee: Hoffmann Brothers, 1891), 394.
- >1850>34 McGovern, 122.
- >1850>35 McGovern, 31.
- >1850>36 *The Cheyenne Daily Sun*, March 17, 1878.
- >1850>37 *The Cheyenne Daily Sun*, May 25, 1879.
- >1850>38 *The Cheyenne Daily Sun*, January 24, 1882.
- >1850>39 *The Cheyenne Daily Sun*, November 19, 1882.
- >1850>40 McGovern, 123. Bishop McGovern wrote that John A. Hayes also assisted at the dedication. But Father Hayes died on November 18, 1882. Did Homer nod?
- >1850>41 Casper, II, 286.
- >1850>42 In 1868 the United States government established the Wind River Reservation when it concluded a treaty with the Shoshone Indians.

Ten years later the government officials violated the terms of the treaty when they forced the Shoshone to share the reservation with the Northern Arapaho tribe. Mae Urbanek, *Wyoming Place Names* (Boulder, Colorado: Johnson Publishing, 1974), 228.

>1850>43 Gilbert J. Garraghan, S.J., *The Jesuits of the Middle United States* (NY: America Press, 1938), vol. 3, 513.

>1850>44 Casper, II, 176.

>1850>45 *The Cheyenne Daily Sun*, July 13, 1884.

>1850>46 McGovern, 43-44. Document for foundation of the diocese of Omaha, October 2, 1885. Whither the information on Nebraska parishes, Casper?

>1850>47 Even before 1877 when the diocese of Leavenworth, Kansas, was established, the former vicariate apostolic of The Indian Territory was being divided by the authorities of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith into a number of ecclesiastical jurisdictions. The vicariate apostolic of Nebraska was detached in 1857, the vicariate apostolic of The Dakotas in 1879, the diocese of Helena, Montana, in 1884, the diocese of Omaha in 1885, and the dioceses of Lincoln and of Cheyenne in 1887. Colorado had been attached to the diocese of Santa Fe somewhat earlier. In 1868 the vicariate apostolic of Colorado and Utah was established and Denver became a diocese in 1887.

>1850>48 Casper, II, 353-355.

>1850>49 Casper, II, 351.

>1850>50 A copy of the papal document was preserved at the bishop's house in Cheyenne.

\*\*\*Below, Stansell Notes to original bull Out of place. Ed.

Leo XIII. Omaha archives; bishop's house, Cheyenne. Translation of the definition given in the text: "to the east the States of Dakota [sic] and Nebraska, to the west the States of Utah and Idaho, to the south the States of Colorado and Utah, to the north the State of Montana."

101,352 was given by Bishop McGovern, but in the chancery copy that figure is corrected in pen and ink to 97,548. Or, 97,914 given by the *Official Wyoming State Highway Map, 1996*. *OCD* has a different number.

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**PIONEER BISHOPS  
1887-1911**

Maurice Francis Burke  
(1887-1897)

Hugh Cumiskey, Apostolic Administrator  
(1893-1897; 1901-1902)

Thomas Mathias Lenihan  
(1897-1902)

James John Keane  
(1902-1911)

**Maurice Francis Burke, 1887-1897**

Maurice Francis Burke, a priest of the Archdiocese of Chicago, was chosen to be the first bishop of the Diocese of Cheyenne. Father Burke was a native of Ireland where he was born in 1845. His parents immigrated to the United States and settled in Chicago. The young man, emulating so many of his co-religionists, decided to become a priest. He studied at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake. After his initial studies he was sent to Rome to finish his preparation for ordination to the priesthood. He was ordained in Rome on May 22, 1874 by Constantino Cardinal Patrizi, Bishop of Ostia e Velletri, Vicar General of His Holiness Pope Pius IX.>1887>1

After a brief apprenticeship as an assistant in Chicago, Father Burke was appointed pastor of St. Mary's parish in Joliet, Illinois. His accomplishments attracted the attention of those responsible for

submitting to the Holy See the names of priests who gave promise of being capable of carrying greater responsibilities, an indication that they were qualified to fulfill the requirements of the episcopal office. On August 9, 1887, Father Burke was appointed the first Bishop of Cheyenne. He lost little time before he wrote to Bishop O'Connor of Omaha requesting information about the new diocese. It is doubtful that he received much encouragement from the bishop of Omaha who was not enthusiastic about the prospects of the Church in Wyoming at that time. Actually Bishop O'Connor had proposed that the Holy See should establish a vicariate apostolic for Wyoming and Utah because he was convinced that there were not enough Catholics in Wyoming to support a diocese.>1887>2

Nevertheless, the bishop-designate proceeded with plans for his episcopal ordination and in due time he was ordained a bishop by Archbishop Augustin Geehan in Holy Name Cathedral, Chicago, on October 2, 1887. The co-consecrators were Bishops William George McCloskey of Louisville and Henry Cosgrove of Davenport. On November 24, 1887, Bishop Burke, accompanied by Bishop O'Connor, arrived in Cheyenne where he was well received by civic leaders of the city and those of the Territory. The Governor of the Territory of Wyoming, Thomas Moonlight, welcomed the new bishop and wished him well. The editors of *The Cheyenne Daily Sun* gave ample coverage of the ceremony of the installation and quoted extensively the speeches of the two bishops.>1887>3

After the installation as the first Ordinary of the Diocese of Cheyenne, Bishop Burke undertook the task of acquainting himself with the condition of the diocese, its size and its resources. He soon realized that the extent of the area entrusted to him was considerable and the available resources were somewhat meager.

The young prelate learned that the diocese had four diocesan priests and one Jesuit. These men exercised their ministry in eight churches. There were twenty-one religious women; some members of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, Kansas others, Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus.

The Sisters of Charity staffed St. Joseph's Hospital in Laramie and St. Mary's parochial school in that city. The Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus conducted an academy and parochial school in Cheyenne. The report sent to the editors of Hoffmann's *Catholic Directory 1887*, recorded 181 baptisms, and twenty marriages. The same report estimated that there were 448 families with a total of about 4,500 Catholics in the Territory and 3,000 Indians at St. Stephen's on the Wind River Reservation where one priest and one lay brother ministered to about 110 Indians.>1887>4

Although the situation in Wyoming did not seem very promising the bishop endeavored to solve his problems. But in 1889 after two years of effort his frustration was such that he submitted his resignation to the Holy See and recommended that the diocese be suppressed. Bishop Burke traveled to Rome and presented his reasons to the officials of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith who in turn referred the matter to the bishops of the Province of St. Louis, Missouri. After preliminary consideration these officials requested the Ordinary of Lincoln, Nebraska, who had been appointed to his See at the same time as Bishop Burke, to look into the situation and recommend a solution. Bishop Thomas Bonacum concluded that the diocese of Cheyenne had a future and Bishop Burke was asked to return to his See.>1887>5

The discouraged bishop returned to make the best of a difficult assignment. By 1891 things looked better. There were nine priests, two of whom were veterans in Wyoming, Hugh Cummiskey and F.J. Nugent. Cummiskey had been pastor in Laramie since 1879 and Nugent had served in Cheyenne from 1882 to 1886 and for a short time in Rawlins. Bishop Burke appointed Father Cummiskey Vicar General of the Diocese. He recalled Father Nugent to Cheyenne and assigned him to serve as the rector of the cathedral and to take over the duties of the bishop's secretary.

The parishes established during the period when the Union Pacific Railroad was being built were served by resident priests: Hugh Cummiskey in Laramie, C.J. Quinn in Rawlins, and Christopher Fitzgerald in Evanston. Rock Springs received its first pastor in 1888,

John Delahunty. Two parishes, St. John the Baptist in Buffalo and Immaculate Conception in Lander, were without pastors in 1891. St. Stephen's Indian Mission was served by two Jesuits, Ignatius Panken and Paul M. Ponziglione, and one diocesan priest, C. Scollen. Father Ponziglione appreciated the work of Father Scollen; he wrote that he "has been for many years a missionary among the Indians of Canada as well as the Rocky Mountains. He is a great success with Indian children, and consequently a great help to us." >1887>6

The report on the pertinent facts about the diocese submitted to the editors of Hoffmann's *Catholic Directory 1891*, reveals the magnitude of the difficulty of governing a diocese with only nine priests. Presumably all the places listed in *Directory* had been visited by a priest at one time or another. Besides the parishes referred to above, there were forty-three missions. Twenty-two of these were attended from Cheyenne—to mention a few: Casper, Douglas, Fort Laramie, Lusk and Newcastle. The pastor in Rawlins ministered to six missions; the pastors of Evanston, Lander, Buffalo, and Rock Springs and Laramie took care of three missions each. Considering the distances involved and the means of transportation available at the time, it is little wonder that Bishop Burke was discouraged.

There was little change in the involvement of religious women in the diocese since the beginning of their activity in the time of Bishop O'Connor. The academy of the Holy Child Jesus in Cheyenne enrolled twenty-five boarders and 130 day-scholars. The Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth taught 120 students in St. Mary's parochial school in Laramie and cared for a daily average of fifteen patients in St. Joseph's Hospital in that city.

Bishop Burke was concerned about the development of St. Stephen's Indian Mission. In June 1888 he presided over the laying of the cornerstone of a convent which was being built for religious women when they could be enlisted to teach Indian boys and girls. He succeeded in obtaining a few Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, who came to the Mission in September 1888. Unfortunately, tensions developed between

Rev. George L. Willard, Vice-Director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions, and Francis X. Kuppens, S.J., the superior of the Mission. Father Willard was under pressure to open a school by a designated time if he were to receive government support for it, whereas Father Kuppens did not want to open the school until it was completely finished. The vice-director insisted that the school be opened at a specified time and when Father Kuppens refused he took the matter up with the Jesuit's superior. The result of this controversy was that Father Kuppens was recalled to his provincial home and the Sisters returned to Kansas in 1890. A year and a half later five Sisters of St. Francis from Philadelphia came to Wyoming; members of this order were destined to stay at the Mission until the hectic times following the Second Vatican Council. Bishop Burke did all that was in his power to help the Mission develop and it was evident that a solid foundation was laid for the future. The bishop's report commented: "The Mission is in the best and most beautiful part of the territory with every prospect of a great future.">1887>7

Not the least of the bishop's major concerns was the lack of sufficient funds to finance a proper diocesan administration. He made a desperate appeal to Catholics in the more successfully established dioceses in the eastern United States for financial support. He mailed a circular letter to eastern Catholics explaining his plight. He wrote that there were now prospects for the future, but there was little hope for an increase in the Catholic population to support the Church in Wyoming sufficiently. He declared that there was no support for a bishop who labored under a heavy debt. He concluded pessimistically that "without any possibility of doing anything whatever in the interest of religion, I find the situation insupportable. I earnestly appeal for financial aid.">1887>8

The bishop's problems were compounded by the virulent attacks against the Catholic Church made by members of the American Protective Association formed in Clinton, Iowa, in 1887. T.F. Lyons, a member of the association, lectured on such topics as "the Attitude of Rome Towards Our Public Schools," "Rome the Murderers," and "The Abomination of the Romish Confessional." Understandably some

Catholics took exception to these proceedings with the result that a riot occurred. A man was shot and Bishop Burke visited him. He asked the doctor about the wounded man's condition. The account in the newspaper stated that the bishop "was indignant, but self-possessed" and he condemned the member of the A.P.A. "in unmeasured terms.">1887>9

Presumably, Bishop Burke had some inkling of the correspondence that was carried on regarding the problems with episcopal appointments. There is evidence indicating that he was being considered for the office of coadjutor to Bishop O'Connor of Omaha. The Cardinal Prefect for the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, Giovanni Simeoni, recommended that Bishop Burke be appointed coadjutor to Bishop O'Connor and at the same time keep the responsibility for the administration of the diocese of Cheyenne. This move did not take place because it was opposed by Peter Kendrick, Archbishop of St. Louis.>1887>10 Further recommendations were made by the responsible bishops resulting in the transfer of Bishop Burke to the diocese of St. Joseph in Missouri on June 19, 1893. Four days before the transfer of Bishop Burke to St. Joseph, Wyoming was detached from the Province of St. Louis and assigned to the newly established ecclesiastical province of Dubuque, Iowa. According to Canon Law: "Neighboring particular Churches are to be grouped into ecclesiastical provinces, then a certain defined territory. The purpose of this grouping is to promote, according to the circumstances of persons and place, a common pastoral action of various neighboring dioceses and the more closely to foster relations between diocesan bishops.">1887>11 As the Church grew in the United States, adjustments were made according to that growth in certain regions and dioceses were regrouped into new provinces.

In the interest of continuity the Canon Law made provision for an administrator of a diocese while a See was vacant. The administrator "is bound by the obligations and enjoys the power of the diocesan bishop, excluding those things which are excepted by their very nature or by the law itself.">1887>12 Given the conditions in the diocese of Cheyenne it

is not surprising that Hugh Cummiskey, pastor of St. Laurence O'Toole in Laramie who had held the office of vicar general for Bishop Burke, was appointed administrator of the diocese during an interregnum which was to last three years and nine months (1893-1897). Certainly Father Cummiskey knew Wyoming, at least the southern part, better than the other diocesan priests. The administrator served the Catholic people of Wyoming well, but the canonical requirements of his office prevented him from making any innovative plans while he and his fellow priests waited for a successor to Bishop Burke. Little evidence is available about developments in Wyoming during the interregnum and it must be supposed that the priests did their best to minister to the Catholic people as they had done during the incumbency of Bishop Burke.

Father Hugh Cummiskey was born in Tonawanda, Pennsylvania on August 15, 1854. Very little is known about his early life, but clearly he decided to become a priest. Shortly after his ordination on November 2, 1877, he appeared in Omaha ready to serve in the Vicariate Apostolic of Nebraska in February, 1879. The Vicar Apostolic James O'Connor sent Father Cummiskey to replace Father Eugene Cusson as pastor of the St. Laurence O'Toole parish in Laramie and he served in that capacity for almost forty-one years (1879-1920).

Somewhat surprising that the diocese lost a competent priest during the interregnum, F.J. Nugent, who had served well as pastor of the cathedral in Cheyenne, and, for a brief period in Rawlins. Father Nugent was listed in the *Directory of 1891* as pastor of St. Patrick's parish in Louisville, Nebraska, diocese of Lincoln. In 1899 he was listed as pastor of St. Teresa's Pro-Cathedral in Lincoln.

### **Thomas Mathias Lenihan, 1897-1902**

After nearly four years the diocese of Cheyenne obtained a new bishop, Thomas Mathias Lenihan. The bishop designate was born in Ireland (August 2, 1844). His parents brought him to the United States where he pursued his studies in preparation for the priesthood. His seminary

training was somewhat peripatetic—St. Thomas College, Bardstown, Kentucky, St. Vincent's Seminary, Cape Girardeau, Missouri, and St. Francis Seminary, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Lenihan was ordained for the diocese of Dubuque, Iowa, by Bishop John Hennessy (November 19, 1868). He began his priestly career as pastor of St. Benedict's parish in Decorah, Iowa. After two years he was moved to Fort Dodge where he was pastor of Corpus Christi parish. His accomplishments brought him to the attention of the bishop and his name was sent to Rome on a *terna*; that is, a list of three names for consideration for the episcopal office. Father Lenihan was appointed bishop of Cheyenne (November 30, 1896) and consecrated (February 24, 1897) by Archbishop John Hennessy of Dubuque; the co-consecrators were Henry Cosgrove, Bishop of Davenport, and Thomas Bonacum, Bishop of Lincoln.>1887>13

Bishop Lenihan, preferring a simple entrance, came unannounced to Cheyenne during Holy Week 1897, proceeded to the convent of the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus and asked if he could offer Mass. By happy coincidence the rector of the cathedral, Father T.M. Conway, was scheduled to celebrate Mass for the Sisters and so he met the bishop. After Bishop Lenihan was settled he proceeded to find out the extent of the jurisdiction entrusted to him and to become familiar with the resources at his disposal.

One of the first things Bishop Lenihan did was to establish a more formal organization of the diocesan administration. He kept Father Cummiskey as vicar general and appointed Rev. Peter U. Sasse chancellor and secretary. He selected Rev. John Delahunty of Rock Springs for the office of treasurer and designated Rev. Mathias Ternes defender of the matrimonial bond. He established a bishop's council made up of Fathers Hugh Cummiskey of Laramie, John Delahunty of Rock Springs, Mathias Ternes of Rawlins and Peter Casey of Evanston.

Between 1895 and 1899 three new parishes had been established: St. Anthony of Padua in Casper with James A. Keating as pastor, Corpus Christi in Newcastle with Jules Bigaouette as pastor, and Holy Name in Sheridan with Joseph A. Accorsini as pastor. Two new priests came to

the diocese, Peter Casey, pastor of St. Mary Magdalen in Evanston and William O'Dwyer, pastor of Immaculate Conception in Lander. A beginning was made in building a convent and a school in Rawlins and in Rock Springs. The entry in *The Official Catholic Directory* reporting on the situation the Wind River Reservation presents some specific items regarding the progress of St. Stephen's Mission. The report states that there were 1,900 Indians on the reservation belonging to the Shoshone and Arapaho tribes, many of whom had been baptized and were practicing Catholics. The school at the mission was subsidized by the U.S. Government, which paid for fifty pupils. Mother Katharine Drexel, foundress of the Blessed Sacrament Sisters for Indian and Colored People, supported thirty students and the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions maintained the remainder. It is also noted the Mother Drexel paid for the building of a convent and school building at a cost of about \$50,000.>1887>14

Bishop Lenihan administered the sacrament of Confirmation at St. Stephen's Mission (June 13, 1896). In spite of ill health Bishop Lenihan traveled far and wide in the diocese. He baptized in Buffalo and Newcastle. Twenty-one baptisms were recorded in the register of the cathedral (the last on April 8, 1901). During his regime the established schools more than held their own. Fifteen Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus taught 200 day-scholars and 25 boarders in Cheyenne. Five Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth in Laramie taught 100 pupils. The hospital in Laramie did not fare so well because the Union Pacific authorities shifted their rolling mill operations from Laramie to Rawlins and began to send their hospital patients to Denver, and opposition from members of the American Protective Association forced the county to withdraw county patients. The loss of support made it impossible for the Sisters to continue their work in the hospital and in their academy. All the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth in Laramie returned to Kansas by 1900, to return only in 1952.>1887>15

Bishop Lenihan's effectiveness was curtailed by chronic health problems. He suffered from a kidney disorder and his heart did not tolerate the high altitude of Wyoming which compounded his difficulties

and so it became necessary for him to return to Iowa where he shortly died (December 15, 1901). The combination of bad health coupled with the altitude and size of the diocese made it difficult for him to accomplish as much as he might have wished.

### **James John Keane, 1902-1911**

The interim between the death of Bishop Lenihan and the appointment of his successor, the third bishop of Cheyenne, was short (June 10, 1902). James John Keane (not to be confused with John Joseph Keane, Archbishop of Dubuque, who was not a relative), was born in Joliet, Illinois (August 26, 1856) and attended St. John's, Collegeville, Minnesota, the College of St. Francis Xavier in New York, and finished his seminary training in the Grand Seminary, Montreal, Canada and was ordained (December 23, 1882). He joined the diocese of St. Paul, Minnesota, where he engaged in pastoral work when he was not working at the College of St. Thomas on the faculty and as its president (1888-1892). James John Keane received episcopal ordination (October 28, 1902) at the hands of Archbishop John Ireland (the diocese of St. Paul had been raised to an archdiocese in 1888). The co-consecrators were Joseph Bernard Cotter of Winona and James McGolrick of Duluth.

Bishop Keane came to Wyoming at a time when the economic condition of the state was improving after nearly a decade of depression. Professor Larson quotes the Governor of the State as announcing, in 1901, "The young State of Wyoming enters the twentieth century under the most flattering conditions. Our people are blessed with an abundance, and contentment and hopefulness pervades every community." After the new bishop had studied the status of the diocese he concluded that Wyoming was still a missionary field and that his work was cut out for him. He undertook the task of setting up a more orderly procedure in the organization of the diocesan administration.>1887>16

Judging from the information sent to the editors of Hoffmann's *Catholic Directory*, some supervision was very necessary. Whoever prepared the

report for the diocese for the *Directory* of the year 1904 listed Father John Delahunty as pastor in Rock Springs as well as in Rawlins. In the summary it is recorded that there were fifteen priests in the diocese; one can count only eight who held pastorates (the report records that there were twelve churches with resident pastors). One can only hope that the information regarding the number of religious women in the diocese is more accurate. The Academy of the Holy Child Jesus in Cheyenne was staffed by sixteen Sisters who taught 150 day-scholars and 30 boarders. The entry for the Franciscan Sisters at St. Stephen's Mission is most confusing. The same line imparts the following information "8 Sisters of St. Frances. Sister M. supr. Sisters 12; Pupils 150." It is also noted that there were 5 Sisters of St. Francis in Rawlins who taught 80 day pupils and 2 boarders. Finally, the report estimates the number of Catholics in Wyoming to be about 7,000.

The following year, 1905, the entry in the *Directory* shows some improvement. The bishop is listed as pastor of the Cathedral with two assistants, namely, Fathers John Delahunty and Joseph Conrath. The entry recording the situation at St. Stephen's Mission was not corrected. Surprisingly, the Catholic population is estimated at about 4,000, 3,000 less than it had been the previous year. Admittedly, it was difficult to report an accurate number of practical Catholics but a loss of some 3,000 in one year is difficult to explain, unless the 3,000 added earlier represented Indian conversions which did not occur because the Shoshone went to the Episcopalian Church.

Bishop Keane was very much aware of the necessity of bringing the diocese up to date in conformity with the requirements of the law of the State of Wyoming. He incorporated the diocese and required the pastors to incorporate their parishes according to that law. Each parish was to have a board of trustees made up of the bishop, the pastor and two lay trustees.

Recruiting priests who would be willing to work in the difficult environment of Wyoming was a major task confronting a frontier

bishop. Bishop Keane was successful in securing the services of a number of priests who served the diocese well during their long tenures.

The bishop invited James Albert Duffy, who had served with him in St. Paul, to come to Wyoming and assigned him to assist at the cathedral where he took over the day to day administration of the parish and thus relieved the bishop to work more generally for the Church in Wyoming. Father Duffy did well in ministering to the people of the parish until he was selected to be the first bishop of Kearney, later Grand Island, Nebraska.

Another valuable recruit was James A. Hartmann, interviewed by Bishop Keane as a seminarian at the Josephinum in Columbus, Ohio. The bishop said that he could use a man trained for service in a German speaking parish. Evidently, the bishop was so anxious to recruit men for the diocese that he stretched the truth a little, since, at the time, there were not many Germans in Cheyenne or anywhere else in the diocese.>1887>17

Other priests were attracted to Wyoming: John Duffy, who may be considered the architect of the Church in the Sheridan area; Henry Schellinger, who was destined to work long and successfully in Green River; and Nicholas Endres, a very visible presence in Thermopolis and the Bighorn Basin.>1887>18

A very important acquisition for the diocese was the services of the Conventual Franciscans to minister to the people of Douglas and four eastern Wyoming counties. Rev. Ignatius Berna, O.M.C., arrived in Douglas in 1909, the first of many of the Order to labor in Wyoming. The earlier editions of *The Official Catholic Directory* use the initials which designated the Order of Minor Conventuals. Between 1938 and 1948 the title of the Order was changed to O.F.M.Conv., that is, Order of Friars Minor Conventual.>1887>19

Besides recruiting, Bishop Keane was in great demand as a preacher and a retreat director for both priests and nuns. He was invited to the

dioceses of Philadelphia, Providence, Springfield and Hartford, Massachusetts. He was quite successful in the performance of his office in these dioceses and was rewarded with a generous remunerative response. Bishop McGovern recorded that, "Whatever he could secure by this means was put into a fund which has been of inestimable benefit in furthering the cause of religion in Wyoming.">1887>20

To build a suitable cathedral and an episcopal residence was a goal high on Bishop Keane's list of priorities. He challenged the parishioners to raise the necessary funds to build the cathedral and committed himself to solicit the money from the diocese at large needed to build an episcopal residence.

The bishop decided to sell the property on which the cathedral was situated and to relocate on a more suitable site. He was able to purchase property on Capitol Avenue three city blocks from the State Capitol. The response of the people of the parish and of the diocese was enthusiastic and the project was soon under way.

An architect was engaged as well as a contractor. Later research failed to identify the architect of the building, but succeeded in identifying the contractor, Moses Patrick Keefe, a prominent Cheyenne builder. Mr. Keefe obtained blocks of sandstone from quarries at Iron Mountain north of Cheyenne. The blocks were hauled to the cathedral construction site where they were cut by stone masons.>1887>21

Work progressed well that it was possible to celebrate the laying of the cornerstone in the presence of an enthusiastic gathering (July 7, 1907). The Police Band of Cheyenne led the procession. Speeches were delivered by Mayor Cook, Attorney General W.E. Mullen, and Governor Bryant B. Brooks. The hierarchy of the Church was represented by Bishops B. Cotter of Winona, Lawrence Scanlan of Salt Lake City, and Richard Scannell of Omaha. *The Cheyenne Daily Leader* reported the festivities in some detail.>1887>22

The dedication of the completed cathedral and episcopal residence were ready for dedication a year and seven months later. The Pontifical High Mass was celebrated by Bishop Maurice Burke of St. Joseph, first Bishop of Cheyenne. Bishop John P. Carroll of Helena preached the sermon. Other prelates in attendance were Bishops Nicholas C. Matz of Denver, Philip J. Carrigan of Sioux City, and Mathias C. Lenihan of Great Falls, brother of the deceased second bishop of Cheyenne. It is difficult to improve on the description of the cathedral given by Bishop McGovern's *History*. However, mention should be made of the various accouterments that enhanced the beauty of the building. The main altar was the gift of the ladies of the Altar and Rosary Society. The members of the Young Ladies' Sodality donated the altar of the Blessed Virgin. The window above the main entrance was the gift of the local Knights of Columbus. And the pipe organ was made possible by the contributions of the members of the congregation and, surprisingly, Andrew Carnegie, who donated \$2,000 each. The total cost of this monument to the determination of Bishop Keane, the clergy, and the faithful was \$80,000; the episcopal residence finished about the same time was built at a cost of \$23,000.>1887>23

Two final notes give some idea about the character of Bishop Keane. First, he showed his appreciation and that of the Church for the accomplishments and services of Father Hugh Cummiskey to the diocese. The pastor of St. Laurence O'Toole in Laramie had served as apostolic administrator of the diocese (1893-1897 and 1901-1902). He was a perennial vicar general while quite successful in fulfilling his pastoral responsibilities in the parish. Bishop Keane petitioned the Holy See successfully to make Father Cummiskey a domestic prelate with the title of Right Rev. Monsignor.

A second note about Bishop Keane might be demonstrated in the Baptismal Register of St. Mary's Cathedral (February 7, 1904). The bishop conferred Baptism, but only one sponsor was available; so the bishop wrote after the word, *Paterni*, the name of one sponsor, a Mrs. Laddy, and added the words, *Ego Ipse*, ("I myself").>1887>24

After nine years in Cheyenne Bishop Keane was Archbishop of Dubuque (August 11, 1911).>1887>25

## NOTES 1887-1911

- >1887>1 Joseph Bernard Code, *Dictionary of the American Hierarchy 1789-1964* (New York: Joseph F. Wagner, 1964), 29.
- >1887>2 Casper, II, 356.
- >1887>3 *The Cheyenne Daily Sun*, exact references unknown, Ed.
- >1887>4 Hoffman, *Catholic Directory*, 1888, *et al passim*.
- >1887>5 Gilbert J. Garragan, S.J., *The Jesuits of the Middle United States* (New York: America Press, 1938), vol. III, 515.
- >1887>6 Quote reference unknown, Ed.
- >1887>7>Daniel P. Gaffey, *Citizen of No Mean City: Archbishop Patrick Riordan of San Francisco* (Wilmington, N.C.: Consortium, 1976), 124.
- >1887>8 *Leader* (June 6, 1891) quoted in Larson, 223-224.
- >1887>9 McGovern, 127-128, about A.P.A. outraging the church in Laramie in 1895.
- >1887>10 Gaffey, 124.
- >1887>11 Canon Law, Canon 431.
- >1887>12 Canon Law, Canon 427.1.
- >1887>13 McGovern, 11, 127-128.
- >1887>14 Baptismal Register, St. Mary's Cathedral, Cheyenne, Book II, *passim*.
- >1887>15 McGovern, 125. Sister Catherine Louise Lebhart, S.C.L., "Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth in Laramie, 1875-1900."
- >1887>16 Larson.
- >1887>17 This information was given to Father Stansell by Msgr. John Meyer.
- >1887>18 See Endres Extension article.

- >1887>19 O.M.C. changes to O.F.M.Conv. in the late 1940s.
- >1887>20 McGovern, 15.
- >1887>21 National Register of Historic Places Inventory.  
Nomination Form. Statement of Significance.  
Cheyenne, p. 3.
- >1887>22 McGovern, 9; *The Cheyenne Daily Leader* (July 9, 1907).
- >1887>23 McGovern, 37, 39.
- >1887>24 Baptismal Register, St. Mary's Cathedral,  
Cheyenne, Book III, p. 4.
- >1887>25 Hyperlink to Archbishops of Dubuque.

1887-1911 Pioneer Bishops (Stansell) 17

## **First Bishop, Burke**

By Bishop McGovern

When on Aug. 9, 1887, the Territory of Wyoming was erected into a separate diocese, the choice for bishop fell upon Rev. Maurice F. Burke, a priest of the archdiocese of Chicago. Born in Ireland, May 5, 1845, at an early age he came to America with his parents, who settled in what has since become the great metropolis on Lake Michigan. His education was begun in Chicago; and when he had finished the grammar-school, he entered the university of St. Mary of the Lake. Feeling himself called to the sanctuary, he applied to Bishop [9] Duggan of Chicago and was sent to the American College, Rome, where he was ordained May 22, 1875.

His first appointment was as assistant at St. Mary's church, Chicago, and so zealous was he in the performance of his duties that within three years he was given charge of an important parish at Joliet. Here his ability manifested itself in the building of a church and parochial school. Accomplishments so conducive to the advancement of religion naturally

attracted the attention of his superiors, and he was named bishop of the newly created see of Cheyenne.

The conditions which the young prelate found on reaching Wyoming, may be gleaned from the following statistics: Diocesan priests 5, religious 1, churches 8, hospital 1, academy 1 (with 130 pupils) parochial schools 2 (with 175 pupils), baptisms 181, marriages 20, families 448, Catholic population about 7,500, Indian Mission 110. There was a neat brick church in Cheyenne with a seating capacity of 300; this became the pro-cathedral, the titular being changed from St. John the Baptist to St. Mary. Beside the church was a brick rectory to which a substantial addition was now added to make it suitable for an episcopal residence. After taking stock of his vast territory, the bishop concluded that the establishment of the see had been premature, and set out for Rome to have it suppressed.>Letter of Bishop Burke to the writer, Mar. 24, 1916.> [10] Owing to the opposition of the bishops of the province (then St. Louis) this proposal was rejected. Bishop Bonacum, of Lincoln, was delegated by Rome to investigate conditions, and reported against the suppression of the see. Several years later (June 19, 1893) Bishop Burke was transferred to St. Joseph.

Burke 1941 (McGovern) 2

## **Second Bishop, Lenihan**

By Bishop McGovern

Owing to the representations that had been made by Bishop Burke, the diocese was allowed to remain vacant for several years during which its affairs were managed by the administrator, V. Rev. Hugh Cumiskey. However, the prayers of the faithful were at length heard in the appointment of Rev. Thos. M. Lenihan of Fort Dodge, Iowa. Though born in Mallow, Ireland, May 21, 1843, he came with his parents as a mere child to Dubuque, where his early training was received, and where he was led to aspire to the sublime dignity of the priesthood by the

saintly Bishop Loras. Having made his classical studies at St. Thomas college, Bardstown, Ky., he entered St. Vincent's seminary, Cape Girardeau, Mo., where he received his philosophical training. His theological course was made at the Salesianum, Milwaukee, and he was ordained a priest by Bishop Hennessy at St. Raphael's cathedral, Dubuque, Nov. 23, 1867.

[11] Fr. Lenihan was immediately appointed pastor of Decorah, Iowa, where he remained until 1870 when he was promoted to the growing parish of Corpus Christi, Fort Dodge. His executive ability found expression in the erection of a \$30,000.00 church with a seating capacity of 500. He had just laid the foundation of a new parochial school when he was nominated bishop of Cheyenne. The fine church property which he had so greatly improved during his long pastorate was left free from debt.

Consecrated in Dubuque Feb. 24, 1897, the bishop reached his episcopal see in Passion Week, but as he came unannounced, there was no public reception. The sisters at the local academy were surprised when he appeared at their door with his cassock under his arm and asked if he might celebrate Mass. He had just come from the train; so the rector of the cathedral only learned of his advent when he himself arrived at the convent to offer up the Holy Sacrifice. For the first time since Cheyenne became a diocese, the solemn consecration of the holy oils was performed in the cathedral, the service being largely attended by Catholics and non-Catholics. Bishop Lenihan was fond of ceremonies but owing to a lack of priests, it was seldom possible for him to have the pontifical functions prescribed by the liturgy.

[12] Though apparently in perfect health at the time of his elevation to the episcopate, Bishop Lenihan was afflicted with some disease of the kidneys, and to this was now added heart trouble, induced by the great altitude. He struggled on for a couple of years, but, as there was no improvement, he was compelled to seek a lower altitude, and returned to his beloved Iowa. The bishops of the province had agreed to petition the Holy See to transfer him to Sioux City which was created a diocese a

month after his death. His demise took place at Dubuque, Dec. 15, 1901, and his remains lie buried in a granite mausoleum erected by his brother, the bishop of Great Falls, at Calvary cemetery, Key West, Iowa.

Lenihan 1941 (McGovern) 2

### **Third Bishop, Keane**

By Bishop McGovern

Several months elapsed after the death of Bishop Lenihan before Cheyenne received a new chief pastor in the person of Most Rev. James J. Keane, D.D. This energetic prelate, who was to accomplish so much for the good of religion in the West, was born in northern Illinois, Aug. 26, 1857, but as a child moved with his parents to Minnesota, in the archdiocese of St. Paul. He received a liberal education at the Benedictine school, Collegetown, Minn., and at the Jesuit college of St. Francis Xavier, New York City. Impelled by a strong desire to labor for the salvation of [13] souls, he entered the Grand Seminary, Montreal, that he might receive a thorough preparation for the work of the ministry.

After his ordination, Dec. 23, 1882, he was assigned as curate at St. Mary's church, St. Paul, where his untiring devotion to duty soon merited promotion to the pastoral charge of St. Joseph's church in the same city. Recognizing his scholastic attainments and his ability as a manager of temporalities, Archbishop Ireland called him from parish work to preside over St. Thomas college and seminary. After several years of successful effort in this responsible position, he was again appointed to the care of souls as pastor of the large and important parish of the Immaculate Conception, Minneapolis. It was while discharging the duties of this office that he was named bishop of Cheyenne, June 10, 1902.

His consecration did not take place until fall. After his enthronement his first care was to ascertain the needs of his flock. He began by having the diocese as a whole as well as the individual parishes incorporated according to the provisions of the State law governing such proceedings. After a careful survey of the situation, he felt satisfied that Wyoming was still a missionary held and that the recognition of this fact was a necessary premise for the accomplishment of any effective results. At once he became all [14] things to all men that he might save all. There was no work of the ministry that he considered foreign to his office as a bishop. He passed from town to town over his extensive though sparsely settled diocese, making known the truth and beauty of our holy faith. Missions were given to Catholics, expositions of Catholic teaching to those not of the fold. Nor were his activities confined to his own jurisdiction. Wherever invited, he gave retreats to the clergy and to nuns, preached in season and out of season at sacred functions of various kinds, and in general spent himself for the upbuilding of the kingdom of God.

Knowing that one of the greatest obstacles to the spiritual progress of his diocese was the lack of churches or chapels in places where the number of the faithful was very small, he determined if possible to remedy this defect. Not only was building expensive, but loans were difficult to secure, and interest rates exceedingly high. With characteristic energy he proceeded to eliminate this obstacle by appealing to the charity of the Catholics in the more favored localities of the East. His plea for help to establish mission churches in the vast area entrusted to his care met with a generous response in the dioceses of Philadelphia, Providence, Springfield (Mass.) and Hartford. Whatever he could secure by this means was put into [15] a fund which has been of inestimable benefit in furthering the cause of religion in Wyoming.

A full account of Bishop Keane's work in building the beautiful cathedral and bishop's residence will be found in the history of the cathedral parish. His eminently successful work in the diocese was rewarded by his promotion to the archdiocese of Dubuque, Aug. 11, 1911.

## **Fourth Bishop, McGovern**

By Bishop McGovern

The Most Rev. Patrick A. McGovern, DD., present bishop of Cheyenne, was born in Omaha, in what was formerly the cathedral parish of St. Philomena, Oct. 14, 1872. His education began with the Sisters of Mercy, but his college course was received at Creighton University in his native city, where he finished with the first class graduating from that institution, in 1891. His theological course was made at Mt. St. Mary's seminary, Cincinnati, Ohio, and he was ordained by Bishop Scannell, of Omaha, Aug. 18, 1895, in the same church in which he had been baptized. The first sixteen months of his priesthood were spent as assistant at Jackson, Nebr., from which place he attended South Sioux City as a mission. Thence he was sent as pastor to Kearney, a very poor parish, having attached to it several widely scattered outlying towns and rural communities. After two years of [16] earnest endeavor to build up religion in that district, he was placed in charge of the cathedral in Omaha. During the nine years spent in this parish he succeeded in paying off the debt that had pressed upon the people for many years and abolished tuition fees in the parochial school. In the meantime business kept encroaching on the neighborhood until the section of the city about the cathedral was so given up to wholesale warehouses that a change of location became imperative. The site of the church and school was sold for one hundred thousand dollars and the buildings were demolished. It is worthy of note that the venerable Father Kelly, the first resident pastor of Cheyenne, lived with Father McGovern throughout his pastorate at St. Philomena's.

Before the erection of a new house of worship, the future bishop was transferred (Nov., 1907) to the adjoining parish of St. Peter which was

heavily encumbered with debt. This was paid off in three years, and as the congregation was increasing so rapidly that the people could no longer be accommodated even with five Sunday Masses, a fund was started for the purpose of providing a larger and better church. It was while occupied with these plans that the call came summoning him to a broader held of labor, and by papal bull dated Jan. 19, 1912, he was named bishop of Cheyenne. His consecration took place Apr. 11<sup>th</sup>, [17] in the Jesuit church adjoining his alma mater, the officiating prelate being Archbishop Keane, his predecessor in the see of Cheyenne, assisted by Bishops Scannell of Omaha and Garrigan of Sioux City. Before the new bishop departed for the West, a public reception, attended by several thousand of his fellow citizens, was held in the city auditorium; and the Catholics of Omaha, in token of their esteem, presented him with a purse of \$8,000.00

Apart from four months spent in a hospital, due to a stomach ailment that necessitated an operation, Bishop McGovern's first year in his new office was occupied with routine episcopal work and in taking stock of the diocese. He found the latter to be still definitely in the pioneer stage; the churches and parochial residences (where the latter existed) were very poor, but fortunately the debts were few and not heavy. Besides the Indian mission in charge of the Jesuits, there was a total of fourteen parishes, manned by two religious and fourteen diocesan priests. Seven of the latter were externs who did not belong to the diocese, and who consequently could leave at any time. The bishop resolved to secure a body of clergy ordained for Wyoming, and to this end proceeded to adopt a sufficient number of ecclesiastical students to supply his growing flock with priests. A synod, the first in the history of the diocese, was held Apr. 17, [18] 1913, to provide for the orderly government of clergy and people; diocesan officials were named, and salutary decrees, conducive to the upbuilding of religion, were promulgated.

One question that perturbed the mind of the bishop during the early years of his regime was the care of dependent children. Frequently when a father or mother or both parents passed away, he was asked to provide

institutional care for the offspring. Finally he made a survey of the situation and found that in the neighboring city of Denver three Catholic orphanages were sheltering seventy-seven Wyoming children, of whom twenty-six were non-Catholics. It was clear that the total number of Wyoming children in institutions in Colorado and adjoining States was not less than one hundred. He determined to establish a home for dependent children, and with this end in view formed a legal corporation consisting of himself, his vicar general, V. Rev. John T. Nicholson, his chancellor, Rev. James A. Hartmann, Mr. John T. McDonald, of Torrington, and Mr. Joseph R. Sullivan, of Laramie. This was at the close of 1923.

An irrigated farm of ninety-three acres, adjacent to Torrington, was purchased from the Lincoln Land Company for \$3,500.00, a price so small that it was practically a donation. A campaign for funds, to which the clergy, laity and many non-Catholics contributed [19] liberally, was launched and netted \$131,673.00.> The campaign was held in all the parishes except Casper and SS. Cyril and Methodius, Rock Springs.> As the payment of pledges had been extended over several years, it was not until 1929 that the members of the corporation deemed it opportune to commence building operations. The drawing of plans was committed to Mr. William Dubois, a well known Cheyenne architect, the contract was let, and by the close of summer, 1930, the work was completed. The main building, comprising three stories and a high basement, has accommodations for the personnel and for eighty-five children; it is modern, practical, and fireproof. Some distance away is the laundry and heating plant. These two buildings cost \$138,532.00, and the furnishings an additional \$18,791.00. Under the patronage of St. Joseph, Bishop J. Henry Tihen, of Denver, dedicated the orphanage on Labor Day (Sept. 1, 1930), the principal address being given by Bishop McGovern. An audience of several hundred was present from various parts of Wyoming, and Bishops Cantwell, of Los Angeles, Mitty, of Salt Lake, and Finnegan, of Helena, came to lend added distinction to the ceremony. Bishop McGovern expressed his gratitude to almighty God and to those who had made possible the establishment of the orphanage, and declared that it had been founded on the broad principle of Christian

[20] charity to care for homeless children without regard to creed or color. On the day of its dedication St. Joseph's orphanage was out of debt.

Rev. John Henry, still happily in charge, was appointed superintendent of the new institution, and it became his duty to purchase laundry machinery, provide a good barn and equipment for the farm, erect a substantial iron fence in front of the property, and have a landscape gardener lay out the grounds and plant trees and shrubbery. The administration of the orphanage and the management of the farm required all of Fr. Henry's time; so it was soon necessary to give him an assistant who would collect donations throughout the diocese for the support of the institution. Assigned to this position in 1931 was the Rev. Albert Knier. From the beginning the Franciscan Sisters were placed in charge of the domestic arrangements.

The improvements mentioned in the preceding paragraph involved a considerable expenditure; however, divine Providence favored the work and it prospered. Various legacies were bequeathed to the institution, with the result that 1935 found it out of debt and a respectable reserve fund in the treasury. It was decided that the time had come to supply two crying needs – a chapel and an auditorium. Thus far, in lieu of the former, Mass and other religious functions [21] were celebrated in a room intended as a dormitory. Accordingly, the members of the St. Joseph Orphanage corporation authorized Maginnis and Walsh, nationally known ecclesiastical architects of Boston, to prepare plans for a Romanesque chapel with a capacity of 320. They produced a beautiful design which made provision for a canopied liturgical altar at the east end of the building. A high basement was to provide an auditorium, with stage and dressing rooms. Work began in midsummer, and the handsome brick structure was completed the following year at a cost of \$87,880.00. The dedication took place with much *éclat*, as befitted the occasion. Present at the ceremony were Catholics from far and near, the townspeople of Torrington, State officials, and the following members of the hierarchy: Most Revs. Edmond Heelan of Sioux City, Henry P. Rohlman of Davenport, James H. Ryan of Omaha, Stanislaus Bona of

Grand Island, Urban J. Vehr of Denver, and Gerald T. Bergan of Des Moines. Practically all the clergy of the diocese participated in the function and Bishop McGovern delivered the sermon.

To date, \$273,000.00 has been spent at St. Joseph's orphanage for land, buildings and equipment, and this has been done without incurring too much debt. It may be asked: How was it possible to accomplish so much within so brief a period? As mentioned [22] above, this was due to the Providence of God, and to the legacies of charitable benefactors, whose names are here gratefully recorded: Mary Walters, Saratoga, John Koshir, Rock Springs, Charles Olbrich, Powell, Louis F. Oedekoven and his mother Agnes, Gillette, John Murray, Green River, Sarah Aman, Cheyenne, Elizabeth Seaman, Basin, and Joseph Fisher, Elk Mountain.

The efficient work of Father Henry as superintendent of the orphanage was recognized by his superior who, in February, 1935, appointed him vicar general of the diocese.

Every new office and dignity while it brings added honor to the recipient, likewise creates new obligations; and especially is this true of ecclesiastical dignities. When Bishop McGovern was appointed to rule the diocese of Cheyenne, he was not unmindful that it entailed duties not only to those of the household of the faith but also to all his fellow citizens of varied and diverse opinions. As he had done in Omaha, so in his new held he took his place in civic life and became active in the social and charitable work of the community. Repeatedly called upon to serve on committees and to address clubs of men and women, he never excused himself on the plea of business or inconvenience. Although he sought only the common weal in whatever he did along these lines, nevertheless he deeply appreciated receiving from the [23] Kiwanis Club of Casper the 1940 medal "for outstanding service to the community." In conferring the medal the speaker made special reference to the establishment of St. Joseph's orphanage and reminded the bishop that the award was made by the vote of all Kiwanians throughout Wyoming.

Never robust in health Bishop McGovern suffered a nervous breakdown following the dedication of the orphanage chapel, and was compelled to seek hospitalization for ten weeks. On returning home he found life at the cathedral rectory very trying on his nerves, and longed for a quiet life in a house by himself. Accordingly the diocesan corporation, out of funds in the treasury, built the beautiful episcopal residence at the corner of Pershing boulevard and Carey avenue, where the bishop took up his abode in April, 1940.

To mention two other outstanding events in the bishop's career: on the occasion of the golden jubilee of Creighton University (1928), at which he gave the principal address, Bishop McGovern received from his alma mater the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws. When he had rounded out twenty-five years in the episcopate, although he would permit no formal celebration, this important milestone was marked by congratulatory messages from the Holy Father, Cardinal Hayes, the Apostolic Delegate, and other members of the hierarchy; and Pope Plus XI named him Assistant [24] at the Pontifical Throne, with the title of Count of the Apostolic Palace.

Here it will be in order to refer briefly to the Knights of Columbus, who have always proven themselves a strong arm of the bishop, and have considered it a privilege to carry out his wishes. Both in the parishes in which there are councils and throughout the diocese, they have rendered helpful service in many ways. Thus in 1925 they secured a plot of ground on the site of the first Mass celebrated in Wyoming, and erected thereon a monument in the form of an altar, in honor of the Rev. Peter John De Smet, S.J. Mass is celebrated there every year on the fourth of July. Again in 1940 (on July 4th because it was a legal holiday and people could attend) the program to commemorate the centenary of the first Mass was arranged and carried out under their auspices. To guard against inclement weather they had previously built a stone canopy above the altar. Bishop McGovern officiated at Pontifical Mass, and an appropriate discourse was delivered by the Most Rev. Duane G. Hunt, D.D., bishop of Salt Lake City. The solemn ceremony was attended by

the governor of Wyoming, several State officials, United States Senator O'Mahoney, twenty priests, and about 1200 of the laity.

This brief general history of the diocese now draws to a close. A comparison of statistics when [25] Bishop McGovern came to Wyoming and the present time will show the growth that has taken place.

[1912 / 1940]

Parishes 14 / 24

Diocesan priests 14 / 34

Priests of religious orders 4 / 9

Infant baptisms 490 / 838

Deaths 139 / 291

Churches 32 / 61

Schools 2 / 4

Bearing in mind the lower birth rate of today, and remembering that the parishes have grown not only in number but in membership, it will be readily seen that there has been an increase of 100% in the period mentioned. The latest available figures for Wyoming (1939) give a total of 5082 births and 2280 deaths. A comparison of the births and deaths listed above for the same year will give the Catholic population for Wyoming according to births as 41,790, and according to deaths as 31,343.

Within this same period parochial schools have been opened in Sheridan and Casper; rectories have been built or acquired in Cheyenne (two), Pine Bluffs, Rawlins, Rock Springs, Green River, Evanston, Torrington, Riverton, Lander, Greybull, Powell, Gillette, and Buffalo; substantial brick churches have been [26] erected in Cheyenne, Casper, Rawlins, Powell, Evanston, Laramie, Greybull, and two at Rock Springs. Besides this, in many of the smaller towns and hamlets, through the generous and never failing aid of the Catholic Church Extension Society, chapels have been provided for scattered groups of the faithful who would have lacked priestly ministrations but for this providential help.

Strange to relate, no parochial boundaries had ever been defined until 1925 when the ordinary, after consulting the pastors, established precise lines.

If Bishop McGovern were asked to state what was the best work accomplished during his episcopate, he would answer that it was the building up of a zealous and exemplary corps of diocesan clergy; for this was what he had proposed to himself at the beginning of his regime as the most effective means of strengthening and extending God's kingdom within his jurisdiction – *qualis rex, talis grex*. When the primitive conditions confronting the clergy in those earlier days are taken into account – scant population, long trips over bad roads, lack of a place they could call home, the infrequent meeting with a brother priest, lack of sympathy on the part of their flock – it will be readily understood that it was no easy task to recruit a body of men fashioned in the heroic mold that was necessary.

McGovern 1941 (McGovern) 8

Harold Stansell, S.J.

**A Durable Bishop**  
**PATRICK ALOYSIUS McGOVERN**  
**(1912-1947)**

The fourth Bishop of Cheyenne, Patrick Aloysius McGovern, was born October 14, 1872, in Omaha, Nebraska. His parents died when he was very young, and consequently, one may surmise, he did not experience the security that is usually associated with a closely-knit family circle. One report indicated that two aunts assisted him through his formative years and according to his own testimony, given in later years, he received his early education from the Sisters of Mercy. (McGovern, 15)

Young McGovern enrolled at the recently established Creighton College in Omaha; he was a member of the first graduating class of that institution, graduating in 1891. McGovern decided to study for the priesthood, so he applied to and was accepted by Bishop Richard Scannell for service in the diocese of Omaha. After completing his theological studies at Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Cincinnati, Ohio, Patrick McGovern was ordained in Omaha by Bishop Scannell on August 18, 1895.

Father McGovern was first assigned as assistant to the pastor of St. Patrick's parish, in Jackson, Nebraska. Sixteen months later he was transferred to Kearney, Nebraska and appointed pastor of St. James parish. Two years later Father McGovern was recalled to Omaha and appointed rector of the cathedral. He later recorded that during his nine years as rector of the cathedral he managed to liquidate the debt "that had pressed upon the people for many years" and he also abolished tuition fees in the parochial school. (McGovern, 16) By an interesting coincidence, Rev. William Kelly, later first resident pastor in Cheyenne, was then living at the cathedral in Omaha. No doubt the veteran priest had much to tell the younger man about his missionary experiences in Wyoming.

The decision of Bishop Scannell in 1902 to relocate the cathedral in another part of the city resulted in another change for Father McGovern. He was appointed pastor of St. Peter's parish in Omaha. Again, he inherited a substantial debt. The parishioners were not only able to pay off the debt, but since the congregation had outgrown the church they built a larger church. Such notable success must have impressed the bishop to submit Father McGovern's name to Rome with the recommendation that he be considered a qualified to govern a diocese.

## **Bishop McGovern**

In January, 1912, Patrick Aloysius McGovern was appointed Bishop of Cheyenne; the official document was dated January 19, 1912. In

conformity with the requirements of canon law stipulating that a bishop-elect must receive episcopal ordination within in three months from the reception of the Apostolic letter and before he took possession of his office, Father McGovern made the necessary arrangements for the ceremony. He selected Archbishop James John Keane of Dubuque, his predecessor as bishop of Cheyenne to be the consecrating prelate. The co-consecrators were Richard Scannell of Omaha and Philip Joseph Garrigan of Sioux City, Iowa. (Code, 191-192) Since the cathedral had been razed and a new one was under construction at the time, the episcopal ordination took place in St. John's Church on the campus of Creighton College.

The new bishop was prevented from immediately taking over the reins of government in Cheyenne because he was suffering from a stomach ailment severe enough for surgery to take out a considerable part of his stomach and thereafter forced him to be abstemious in his eating habits for the rest of his life. During his four-month convalescence he resolved to hold a diocesan synod at the earliest possible date and acquainted himself with the facts of the diocese. He learned that there was a total of fourteen parishes and sixteen priests, fourteen diocesan and two religious. Members of two religious orders for women conducted schools in the diocese: Sisters of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, of Sharon Hill, Pennsylvania, staffed the Academy of the Holy Child Jesus in Cheyenne, and the Sisters of St. Francis of Glen Riddle, Pennsylvania, taught the girls at St. Stephen's Mission. The new bishop also ascertained that the churches and parochial residences were very poor, but "fortunately the debts were few and not heavy" (McGovern, 17). Most likely the bishop was probably concerned with the reasons for the considerable turn-over in the number of priest administering to the faithful in Wyoming. He went on record as favoring the stabilization of the number of priests in the diocese and stated that he intended to secure a body of clergy ordained for the diocese. One project high on his list of priorities was to initiate of a policy of adopting a sufficient number of seminarians who would commit themselves to work in the diocese of Cheyenne after their ordination.

In due time the bishop was able to assume the task of governing the diocese. At the beginning of Bishop McGovern's administration two outstanding events took place in Cheyenne in April, 1913. The first was an episcopal ordination of a priest serving in Wyoming, immediately followed by the bishop's planned synod. Father James Albert Duffy, who had served the diocese since he came to Wyoming at the invitation of Bishop Keane in 1904, was named bishop of the newly established diocese of Kearney (later transferred to Grand Island), Nebraska. The episcopal ordination took place in the beautiful cathedral in Cheyenne on April 16, 1913, presided over by the metropolitan, Archbishop James John Keane of Dubuque, assisted by Richard Scannell of Omaha and the new bishop of Cheyenne, Patrick A. McGovern. (Code, 76)

### **First Synod of the Diocese of Cheyenne, 1913**

The second event was the result of much planning on the part of Bishop McGovern, namely, the convening of a diocesan synod. During the period of his recuperation from the operation which had cost him a considerable part of his stomach, synod. A synod is a meeting of the bishop with the priests of the diocese during which statutes would be formulated to provide for the orderly government of clergy and people and would identify diocesan officials and, finally draft "salutary decrees conducive to the up building of religion" (McGovern, 18).

The day following the episcopal ordination of James A. Duffy, Bishop McGovern officiated at the Mass of the Holy Spirit which preceded the first session of the synod. The synod was convened, officials named, then all made the profession of faith, and the secretary, William Keavey, called the roll of the fifteen priests present, twelve diocesan and three religious. Six priests had been legitimately excused, namely, Nicholas Endres, Henry Schellinger, John Duffy, Fridolin Huessle, Thomas Hayes and the Conventual Franciscan, Ignatius Berna. Four diocesan consultors were selected: the Right Rev. Hugh Cummiskey and Fathers Joseph Conrath, Nicholas Endres and William Keavey. Next, the

diocesan officials were named: Right Rev. Hugh Cumiskey, vicar general; James Hartmann, chancellor; Anton Shiffner, Rudolph Groener, Joseph DeNichola, and Ignatius Berna, O.F.M.Conv., parish consultants; Nicholas Endres, treasurer (*procurator fiscalis*); Gerard Schellinger, defender of the matrimonial bond; and John Duffy, censor of books.>1912>1

Three men who might have benefited from an opportunity to become well acquainted with their bishop were deprived of that chance because they were excused from attending the synod. The three in question would prove to be very important in their parishes for many years. The three priests were Nicholas Endres who was firmly established in Thermopolis and the surrounding area, Henry Schellinger who was pastor in Green River for many years, and John Duffy the pastor of Holy Name parish in Sheridan. It is possible that the three men were less than enthusiastic about their new bishop. (Newell, "Reminiscences")  
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Under the heading *Statuta* (Statutes) Bishop McGovern promulgated the Decrees of the Plenary Councils of Baltimore and the statutes of the first synod of the diocese of Omaha, ordering that they be strictly observed by all who exercised the sacred ministry in the diocese of Cheyenne. The statutes are enumerated under the following headings: Concerning Persons (#1 to #38); Divine Worship (#39 to #70); Sacraments (#71 to #143); Sacramentals (#144); Funerals and Burials (#145 to #155); Confraternities and Pious Societies (#158 to #159); Church Singing (#160 to #162); Orphans (#163). A separate section contained the statutes that pertain to the management of the Temporalities. And, perhaps surprisingly, these were printed in English.

It would not serve the purpose of this history to write a commentary on the statutes of the diocese. However, there are three statutes that are of special interest to the student of the history of the Catholic Church in Wyoming. The first concerns the matter of incorporation of the parishes.

It has already been noted that Bishop Keane requested the pastors to incorporate their parishes according to the provisions set forth in the law of the State of Wyoming. Consequently, each parish was to have a board of trustees with the bishop as chairman along with the pastor and two Lay Trustees.>1912>2

The 172nd statute of the synod provides; “The temporal affairs of each church are managed under the direction of the Bishop, by the pastor and two laymen. These laymen who are called the Church committee, are named by the pastor, with the approval of the Bishop, each year, in the month of January. No one who is not a yearly communicant can be a member of this committee. Should any difference of opinion arise between the pastor and his committee it will be settled by the Bishop, whose decision will be final. Whilst it is the duty of the pastor to consult his committee in regard to the temporal affairs of his congregation they can undertake nothing with out his knowledge and consent.”

The 169th statute which legislates that “no priest is allowed to keep a conveyance of his own without the Bishop’s permission.” The student of history is reminded that the means of travel was of special concern to all citizens of the State of Wyoming as well as other western states where there were great distances between cities and towns. It is true that the railroads had been very important as a means of travel, but there was a necessary reliance on the horse as a means of conveyance to out of the way places. By the time the priests met with their bishop in the diocesan synod a great change in the means of travel had taken place. The automobile was revolutionizing travel. Professor Larson wrote: “By 1913, however, the automobile age had advanced to the point at which the legislature thought it appropriate to provide for the registration, identification and regulation of automobiles” (Larson, 344-345).

For some reason Bishop McGovern took a dim view of this development. As late as the Synod of 1948 it is recorded that Assistants may not own a car without the express permission of the Bishop.

Thirdly those attending the synod realized a raise. Statute 55 stipulated that “the salary of a pastor is six hundred dollars a year, that of an assistant three hundred, to be drawn every month, or every three months. When the congregation cannot afford to give this much, the clergy will be content with what they can obtain without distressing their people.” This, by any standard, is meager recompense for their priestly services. There was a supplemental provision made in the following statute which decreed that “offerings of the faithful at baptisms and marriages, and at Christmas and Easter, go to the pastor, who for the present will apply them to the support of the house expenses do not exceed what is necessary to secure a modest board for the clergy.

During the months following the synod one finds an interesting insight into the character of Bishop McGovern regarding remuneration for services rendered is found in the reminiscences of the bishop of as recorded by his successor Bishop Hubert M. Newell, who noted that his predecessor had resided the cathedral rectory until such time when he was able to build a bishop’s house. While he lived in the rectory he took his turn hearing confessions, offering the parish Mass and preaching and baptizing. He collected an assistant’s salary of \$25.00 a month for his contribution to parish life and services.

The synod of 1913 was a milestone in the development of the diocese of Cheyenne. Not the least important result of the meeting was the fact that Bishop McGovern met with most of the priests of the diocese and had an opportunity to gain first-hand knowledge of the men he would have to count on to administer the parishes and provide for the spiritual needs for parishioners and the Catholics in the Mission churches. At the same time the priests were able to become acquainted with their bishop. It would be helpful, if it were known what conclusions each arrived at during the course of the synod about the diocese from his Vicar General, Right Reverend Hugh Cumiskey, who had served as administrator of the diocese three times when the See was vacant. At the time of the synod the monsignor had been pastor of St. Laurence O’Toole Parish in Laramie for some thirty-four years. He was in an excellent position to be quite knowledgeable about the status of the diocese. Three men who

might have benefited from an opportunity to become well acquainted with the bishop were deprived of that chance because they were excused from attending the synod. The three in question would prove to be very important in their parishes for many years. The three priests were Nicholas Endres who was firmly established in Thermopolis and the surrounding area; Henry Schellinger who was pastor in Green River for many years; and John Duffy the pastor of Holy Name parish in Sheridan. It is possible that the three men were less than enthusiastic about their new bishop.

### **Governing the diocese**

It may be beneficial to give a survey of the diocese as it appeared in the National Catholic Directory of the year following the synod. There is some evidence that the Catholic Church was keeping pace with the developing State of Wyoming. The state was not being overwhelmed by people wanting to take up residence there. The census of 1910 gave the total of 145,967 people in Wyoming. The Catholic Directory notes that there were an estimated 13,000 Catholics in the Diocese. These Catholics were ministered to by fifteen diocesan and five order priests. There were ten churches with resident pastors and eighteen missions that had churches. Three Conventual Franciscans resided in Douglas and ministered to the Catholics in the missions of Glendo, Lusk, Torrington and Wheatland. Two Jesuit priests were in charge of St. Stephen's Mission on the Wind River Reservation. The contribution of dedicated nuns in the field of education was limited to Cheyenne and St. Stephen's Indian Mission at the time of the Synod. Eighteen Sisters of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus taught at the Academy in Cheyenne and eight Sisters of St. Francis taught in the Indian girls in the St. Stephen's Indian Mission. The year following the Synod, 1914, Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth returned to Wyoming after an absence of nearly fourteen years; three Sisters opened Holy Name School in Sheridan. A final note in the 1915 edition of the Catholic Directory recorded that there were ten "ecclesiastical students" preparing for service in the Diocese.

Bishop McGovern lived in the cathedral rectory which had been built during the regime of Bishop Keane. This fact must have been quite convenient because the chancellor of the Diocese, James A. Hartmann also lived there. For the first few years the bishop listed himself as pastor, but in 1916 Father Hartmann was identified as rector of the cathedral. When the bishop was in residence he took a regular turn in hearing confession, offering one of the parish Masses, preaching and baptizing.

Bishop McGovern had his own particular style of governing his Diocese. It seems that he took as his model Bishop Richard Scannell under whom he had served in the diocese of Omaha. Bishop Scannell had the reputation of being stern and aloof and he was more feared than loved by his priests. Most Reverend Hubert M. Newell who succeeded Bishop McGovern noted in his reminiscences that his predecessor "was often stern with priests and less frequently so with his people," however he added he was always fair. Perhaps the bishop's health made him less accessible than he might otherwise have been. It seems quite clear that the bishop expected his priests to do the best they could in ministering to the people who had been entrusted to their pastoral care. He also trusted them to manage their parishes in a way that would keep them free from debt insofar as that was possible. It is a known fact that the bishop kept his correspondence to a minimum. He made some appointments to parishes on what was at that time a penny post card. This did not please the priests because, given the size of most towns, in Wyoming, the postmaster and others would see the appointment before it was delivered to the priests. Furthermore, requests for dispensations or decisions on canonical matters might be answered in Latin on just such a card. In the interest of economy the Advent and Lenten letters were sent year after year with only the date changed to make them current.

Bishop McGovern did not adjust to the great changes that were taking place in the development of transportation. Seemingly he did not trust the use of the automobile even though the machine would have facilitated his necessary trips around the diocese to administer the sacrament of Confirmation. One of the priests would meet him and take

him to church for the ceremony. After the sacrament had been conferred another priest would take him to the nearest city or town until the tour in that part of the state had been completed. Some of the trips called for the taking of a train to Denver, Colorado, where the bishop would board another train which would take him to certain towns of the diocese such as Gillette, Sheridan and the Big Horn Basin. (Newell, "Reminiscences")

One of the most important projects on Bishop McGovern's agenda was to build up "a zealous and exemplary corps of diocesan clergy." As he became acquainted with the extent of his diocese and the problems connected with the administration of widely scattered parishes the bishop realized that he needed "to recruit a body of men fashioned in the heroic mold that was necessary" if these men were to be successful in meeting the challenges of traveling on long trips over bad roads, having no place they could call home and very few opportunities of obtaining fraternal encouragement from other priests. (McGovern, 40)

During his long tenure of almost forty years, Bishop McGovern succeeded in obtaining a corps of dedicated priests who brought the consolation of the sacraments and the inspiration of the Word of God to the Catholics of Wyoming. Bishop McGovern was also successful in recruiting outstanding priests from many places, especially Ireland, a country which sent so many sons to various dioceses in the United States.

Besides those priests who came to the diocese during the bishop's regime there were some whom he inherited from Bishop Keane who proved to be invaluable in carrying on the work of the church. Msgr. Hugh Cumiskey, vicar general for so many years, suddenly died of a ruptured appendix in October, 1920. Not the least of these Keane appointments was James A. Hartmann whom the bishop had appointed chancellor of the diocese and later rector of the cathedral, offices Father Hartmann held for many years. Father Hartmann enjoyed firsthand proximity and continued contact with Bishop McGovern since both

resided in the cathedral rectory which was naturally the convenient center of administration of the diocese. McGovern wrote in his *History* that Father Hartmann liquidated the debt on the cathedral and supervised the redecoration of that church. (McGovern, 40)

Furthermore, the rector acquired property across the street from the cathedral and arranged for the building of a hall which would be used primarily as a recreation center for the parish. The hall included a dining room and kitchen, stage and motion picture booth, reading and billiard rooms, and contained ample space for playing basketball, a handball court, a bowling alley, and showers. Archbishop Edward J. Hanna of San Francisco presided and preached at the laying of the cornerstone (local newspaper, July 29, 1922). Later the building was razed and the property sold to the United States Government for the impressive Post Office which was built on that space.

Furthermore, the rector acquired property across the street from the cathedral and arranged for the building of a hall which would be used primarily as a recreation center for the parish. The building was designed to contain ample facilities for basketball and other athletic sports. Moreover, the plans included a stage, dining room, and kitchen, billiard and reading rooms, motion picture booth, a bowling alley shower baths and a handball court. Archbishop Edward J Hanna of San Francisco presided at the laying of the cornerstone and preached July 29, 1922.

Another early concern of Bishop McGovern was the condition of the cemetery which had been obtained in the time of Father John McGoldrick, pastor in Cheyenne until October 18, 1877. The bishop had the lots cleaned up, an iron fence installed, and provided for perpetual care of the graves. In 1923 the bishop donated a Celtic cross made of Barre granite at the cost of \$3,000, and paid for its installation in the center of the cemetery. It was a fitting monument to the bishop's memory. (McGovern, 40, *passim*)

## **Founding of St. Joseph's Children's Home**

Bishop McGovern, himself an orphan, was naturally very much concerned about the plight of orphans in Wyoming. The 163rd statute of the Synod of 1913 stipulated that pastors had an obligation to provide for the well being of the orphans in their parishes. The bishop gathered information about the number of orphans in Wyoming and was surprised to learn that there were seventy-seven orphans being cared for in three orphanages in Denver, Colorado; of that number twenty-six were non-Catholic. Wyoming had the Episcopal Cathedral Home for dependent children in Laramie and there was a state home for orphans in Cheyenne.>1912>3

Bishop McGovern decided that the Catholic Church in Wyoming should have an orphanage. In 1923 he established a legal corporation with the following members: the bishop, Very Reverend John T. Nicholson, Vicar General of the diocese, Reverend James A Hartmann, Chancellor of the diocese, Mr. John T. McDonald of Torrington and Mr. Joseph R. Sullivan of Laramie. The diocese obtained a ninety- three acre irrigated farm near Torrington through the good offices of Mr. McDonald. The property was purchased from F .M. Pearson of the Lincoln Land Company for \$3,500.00, “a price so low it represented a \$15,000 gift to the future institution” (McGovern, 18). The diocese obtained a ninety-three acre irrigated farm near Torrington through the good offices of Mr. McDonald for \$3,500.00, “a price so low it represented a \$15,000 gift to the future institution” (Lefevre, 32).

After the property was acquired, the members of the corporation decided to make an appeal to the people of Wyoming, Catholic and non-Catholic, requesting them to give financial support to the project of building an orphanage. The campaign had a good start. John Koshir of Rock Spring deeded \$20,000 worth of property to the bishop of Cheyenne, Mary Walters of Saratoga also made a bequest, and Monsignor Hugh Cummiskey had designated funds in his will for the project. The bishop appealed to the clergy to give a good example by pledging money to the fund-raising campaign. He challenged each pastor to pledge \$1,000.00 and each assistant pastor to pledge \$500.00 “to be paid in annual

installments of \$200.00 and \$100.00 perceptively over the following 5 years.” The bishop is said to have informed one pastor that he was donating several thousand dollars which he had received from the people of Omaha when he was appointed bishop of Cheyenne. (Lefevre, 31-33)

When sufficient funds were collected, plans for the orphanage were drawn up. William Dubois, an architect from Cheyenne, envisioned a three-story building with accommodations for eighty-five children and the personnel who would supervise them. The contract for construction was awarded to Harvey Stenmark of Denver and work on the building began in the spring of 1929; a local Torrington man, J.F. Rankin installed the plumbing and heating systems, while the electrical work was under the supervision of John Newby of Wheatland. Work on the building progressed at a good pace and the building was completed in the summer of 1930 and the facility was dedicated on Labor Day, September 1, 1930. The Bishop of Denver, J. Henry Tihen, presided; other bishops attending were John Mittly of Salt Lake City, George J. Finnegan, C.S.C., of Helena, and John J. Cantwell of Los Angeles. Bishop McGovern preached, noting that the orphanage had been founded on the principle of Christian charity to care for homeless children without regard to creed or color. St. Joseph was designated as patron of the orphanage, perhaps because the motto on Bishop McGovern’s episcopal coat of arms was *Ite ad Joseph* (“Go to Joseph”). (Lefevre, 33)

The next task was to organize staff to administer the affairs of St. Joseph’s Children’s’ Home. Bishop McGovern appointed Rev. John Henry, a native of Ireland recruited for service in the diocese, as superintendent of the institution. Furthermore, the bishop was successful in obtaining Sisters who were members of a branch of the Franciscans from New York to look after the children. Happily the institution was debt free when the staff took over. The finished building had a somewhat forbidding appearance in its stark setting, so Father Henry worked to plant trees and shrubs to improve the site. And since the board of trustees recommended that the institution be made to be self-supporting, insofar as possible. Accordingly, Father Henry sought to develop farming and gardening techniques in an effort to achieve self-

sufficiency. Father Henry and his helpers built livestock pens and a barn for their dairy cattle, sheep, swine, and poultry. Gardening became very important and many vegetables were furnished for the tables. These accomplishments made it possible for the institution to survive the Great Depression. Father Henry and the Sisters, with the cooperation of the children, made St. Joseph's a much-needed refuge and school for orphans and homeless children.

By 1932, thirty-two orphans were being cared for. Since most of these children were unable to contribute anything toward their support the bishop soon recognized that supplemental financial help would be necessary. Consequently he appointed Rev. Albert Knier to be assistant superintendent with the particular responsibility of finding continuing sources of financial aid to make it possible for the institution to meet its obligations. Father Knier and his successors were expected to travel around the diocese to visit the parishes and tell the people about the need the orphanage had for financial assistance; these priests would tell stories about the children to enliven their appeal. In truth they were to become beggars. (Lefevre, 42)

### **Other Works in the 1930s**

A second development in the decade was the establishment of a parish in the southern part of the city of Cheyenne. The Cheyenne clergy recognized the need to establish a second parish to provide services for the Catholics who lived south of the Union Pacific railroad tracks. The bishop directed Father James Hartmann to build a church to accommodate the Catholics who lived in that part of the city. The diocese acquired two lots and another two were donated by Mrs. Mary Schmidt. Under Father Hartmann's competent direction the new place of worship was completed and dedicated as St. Joseph's church on January 28, 1929, by Father Hartmann, assisted by Fathers John Henry and Leo Morgan. Bishop McGovern preached the sermon. For nearly a decade the church was a satellite of St. Mary's Cathedral, but in November, 1938, the bishop established St. Joseph's as a separate parish and

appointed Rev. Jerome Denk pastor. At that time four Masses were offered every Sunday in the cathedral and two in St. Joseph's. (McGovern, 42)

A third important event in the decade of the thirties that caused considerable sadness in Cheyenne was the termination of the services of the Sisters of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus in the diocese; the Sisters had taught in Cheyenne for almost fifty years, having arrived in Cheyenne in 1884 to open academy on property that had been acquired by Father Francis J. Nugent and which was deeded to the Sisters on condition that they build and staff a school. Apparently the academy was practically autonomous. Changing times and constant financial struggles troubled the Sisters who had to increase the charge for board and room. The bishop suggested that a campaign be launched to raise money which would help the Sisters to meet their financial obligations. The campaign was moderately successful, but not enough to persuade the Sisters to remain in Cheyenne. Finally the superior of the congregation decided to withdraw the Sisters from the diocese and they departed in 1933. Bishop McGovern recorded in his *History*: "There was a great deal of regret at their departure; for they had a splendid record of forty-nine years of achievement to leave behind them. Let it be said to their credit that these women were ideal religious, possessing a very high degree of refinement, and well trained in the teaching profession. The impress of their culture will be reflected in this community for years to come." (McGovern, 46)

The withdrawal of the Sisters of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus marked an end to an era and the beginning of a new chapter in the history of Catholic education in Cheyenne. Before the Sisters left the city they deeded their property to the local parish and received an equity of \$20,000. The academy became parochial and the name was changed to St. Mary's. In the meantime Bishop McGovern had succeeded in obtaining some Sinsinawa Dominican Sisters the academy. The bishop evidently intended that the rector of the cathedral, Father Hartmann, was to be in charge of the academy working along with the Sisters. The bishop noted that Father Hartmann not only eliminated tuition fees, but

undertook the responsibility of paying salaries to Sisters from money taken out of the parochial receipts. (McGovern, 47) As a result of these new arrangements there was such an increase in enrollment that it became necessary to build a new high school and to renovate the old building so that it could accommodate the grade school children. The high school building was completed by the fall of 1938 at a cost of \$100,000, of which the parish assumed a debt of \$50,000.

The crowning achievement of the decade of the thirties was the successful realization of the dream of Bishop McGovern for the completion of St. Joseph's Children's Home. The bishop wanted to build a chapel, essential for a Catholic institution, and to provide an auditorium with a stage and an area suitable for indoor recreation. (Lefevre, 43) Encouraged by a bequest of \$13,000 from Louis Oedekoven of Gillette, the bishop made an appeal for a special collection to pay for the two additions. Sufficient funds were collected by 1935 to allow the board of trustees to proceed in the selection of an architect. A measure of Bishop McGovern's interest in St. Joseph's Children's Home was that he approved the selection of the well-known Boston architects, Charles D. Maginnis and Timothy Walsh, to submit a plan. The firm of Maginnis and Walsh was in great demand in the United States and Europe; Charles Maginnis was responsible for the original plans for the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., and for the Carmelite Convent in Santa Clara, California, both of which were awarded the American Institute of Architects' Gold Medal for ecclesiastical architecture. >1912>4

The contracts for construction were awarded to the same firms who constructed the original building: Harvey Stenmark of Denver, J.F. Frankin of Torrington, and John Newby of Wheatland. The chapel was rapidly completed and dedicated on June 17, 1936, at a celebration attended by many Catholics, townspeople of Torrington, and state officials. A number of bishops from neighboring dioceses also assisted at the dedication: James H. Ryan of Omaha, Gerald T. Bergan of Des Moines, Henry P. Rohlman of Davenport, Edmond Heelan of Sioux City, Stanislaus Bona of Grand Island, and Urban J. Vehr of Denver. Bishop

McGovern delivered the sermon, most likely with a certain amount of pride since at the time the chapel “was considered by many to be the most beautiful church in the diocese.” (Lefevre, 44)

A note of sadness clouded the happy occasion of the dedication of the chapel of St. Joseph’s Children’s Home. The Franciscan Sisters who had taken care of the children faithfully for the first five years had been recalled to New York. To replace them the bishop was successful in obtaining some Sisters of Humility of Mary of Great Falls, Montana, to take charge on a temporary basis. After four years of searching the bishop enlisted the Franciscan Sisters from Wisconsin who were specially dedicated to the care of children. In 1940 they assumed the responsibility of maintaining a staff at St. Joseph’s Children’s Home and continued to do so from that time to the present [1988]. (Lefevre, 45)

Not so long after the dedication of the chapel at St. Joseph’s Children’s Home Bishop McGovern suffered a nervous breakdown and was hospitalized for ten weeks. After he returned to the cathedral rectory he soon realized that his nerves were somewhat frayed and decided that it would be better for him to have his own residence. He bought some property on the corner of Pershing Boulevard and Carey Avenue. Bill Dubois, an architect with a good reputation and friend of the bishop, was commissioned to design a residence, which was subsequently constructed by George Hancock. In April, 1940, the bishop moved into his beautiful episcopal residence, which he had made livable by carefully selecting its furnishings at the Merchandise Mart in Chicago and placing them according to the suggestion of interior decorators. Ever conscious of financial arrangements, the bishop recorded in the history of the diocese, “Accordingly the diocesan corporation, out of the funds in the treasury, built the beautiful Episcopal residence at the corner of Pershing Boulevard and Carey Avenue, where the bishop took up his abode in April 1940” (McGovern, 23).

Not long after Bishop McGovern moved to the new residence he sent notice to all concerned that there would be a special celebration of the centenary of the first public Mass offered in Wyoming by Father Peter

Jan DeSmet, S.J, on July 5, 1840. Catholics of the state were aware of the beginnings of the Church's presence in Wyoming and, ever since 1925 perhaps even earlier, efforts had been made to locate the site of the event. Members of the Knights of Columbus kept interest alive and eventually settled on a site near Daniel as the place where that Mass had been celebrated. The Knights financed the construction of an altar and dedicated it to honor the memory of Father DeSmet who had offered the Mass and later wrote a vivid description of the celebration. The Knights sponsored an annual Mass to be celebrated at the altar. When the hundredth anniversary approached interest increased and preparations were made to commemorate the event with a special public celebration. Bishop McGovern cooperated in a befitting manner and announced that there would be Pontifical Mass to highlight the memorable occasion. The letter is a good example of the terse style of the bishop and deserves to be quoted in full:

3106 Carey Ave.  
Cheyenne, Wyoming  
May 6, 1940

Officers for the Pontifical Mass to be celebrated July 4, 1940, at DeSmet monument, near Daniel, Wyo., on the centenary of the first Mass said in the state by Very Reverend Peter John DeSmet, S.J. Celebrant, Most Reverend P.A. McGovern, D.D.

Archpriest, Very Reverend John Henry, V.G.

Deacon, Rev. Gerard Schellinger

Subdeacon, Rev. John J. O'Connor

Deacons of Honor, Revs. Henry Schellinger and William J. Short

Assistant master of ceremonies, Rev. E. Cassidy

Sacristan, Rev. Albin Gnidovec

The sermon will be preached by Most Reverend Duane G. Hunt, D.D.,  
Bishop of Salt Lake.

Chaplains to Bishop Hunt, two Jesuit Fathers from St. Stephen's Indian Mission, near Riverton, Wyo.

The Mass will begin at 10:00 sharp.

P.A. McGovern

## Bishop of Cheyenne

The celebration of the centenary was a notable success with a goodly number of dignitaries present, including the governor of the state, several state officials, and United States Senator O'Mahoney. Twenty priests attended and twelve hundred of the faithful paid tribute to the memory of the notable event.

The decade of the forties was notable for developments that matched or surpassed in importance those that had taken place in the thirties. Not the least of the achievements during the decade was publication of the history of the diocese. It is difficult to determine how long the bishop worked on the project, but it is known that as early as 1915 he requested each pastor to send him a history of his parish. Later he asked that the histories he brought up to date and submitted to his office every ten years. The bishop was concerned about the misinformation about the Catholic Church in Wyoming that prevailed in some quarters and he was determined to present the truth to any interested person who should be enlightened. In the forward to the history the editor noted that there were many erroneous statements concerning the history of the church in Wyoming published in books and newspapers and it was his purpose to present an authentic record. Bishop McGovern undertook the task of editing the histories that pastors had submitted; however, he reserved to himself the task of writing a general history of the diocese, and the history of the Cheyenne and Laramie parishes. When the book went to press it contained 249 pages. The publication date was January 6, 1941.>1912>5

After a comparatively long chapter on the diocese in general the editor related the history of each of the parishes which were in existence at the time of publication. The book also contained a short history of St. Stephen's Indian Mission. The history of the diocese is an invaluable source of information for anyone who is interested in the history of the first fifty-four years of the existence of the diocese. The bishop compared the situation that the diocese was in by the year 1940 with the state in which it was in 1912 when he came to Wyoming. He pointed out

that there was an increase of ten parishes served by twenty more priests than there were in the diocese in 1912. Religious priests increased from four to nine. There were twenty-nine more churches and two more schools. The bishop summarized the state of the diocese in these words:

Within this same period parochial schools have been opened in Sheridan and Casper; rectories have been built or acquired in Cheyenne (two), Pine Bluffs, Rawlins, Rock Springs, Green River, Evanston, Torrington, Riverton, Lander, Greybull, Powell, Gillette, and Buffalo; substantial brick churches have been erected in Cheyenne, Casper, Rawlins, Powell, Evanston, Laramie, Greybull, and two at Rock Springs. Besides this, in many of the smaller towns and hamlets, through the generous and never failing aid of the Catholic Church Extension Society, chapels have been provided for scattered groups of the faithful who would have lacked priestly ministrations but for this providential help.” (McGovern, 26)

The bishop realized that his diocese was a missionary one and he was able to convince the authorities of the Catholic Church Extension Society of this need for support. The Extension Society had been established on October 18, 1905, “to serve the needs of the home missions – those areas of the U.S. where the work of the Church is seriously handicapped by the lack of personnel, organization, finances, etc.”>1912>6

Moreover, the Society provided regular support to needy clergy and seminarians. Parishioners in some towns could not support their priests so financial aid was appreciated. The bishop was also grateful for the help that he and his priests received from the American Mission Board.

During the year 1941 an event took place indicating a definite shift in orientation of the Church in Wyoming. On November 15, 1941,

Cheyenne's southern neighbor, the diocese of Denver, was made an archdiocese and a new province came into existence. The diocese of Cheyenne was detached from the province of Dubuque, to which it had been attached since 1893, and became part of the ecclesiastical province of Denver. The two suffragan bishops in the new province of Denver were the bishop of the newly established diocese of Pueblo and the bishop of Cheyenne. A major benefit of this development was that it brought the bishop of Cheyenne closer to the metropolitan, Urban J. Vehr, Archbishop of Denver, who proved to be a very hospitable neighbor.

Another event that took place in the year 1941 was the accreditation by the North Central Association of St. Mary's High School. One of the members of the accrediting team was Rev. Hubert M. Newell, Diocesan Superintendent of Catholic Schools in Colorado. Father Newell was invited to reside in the rectory of the Cathedral. In the course of the week he so impressed the pastor, Father Hartmann, and his assistant, Reverend John Meyer, with his knowledge that he asked his pastor (after Father Newell had returned to Denver), "Do you think Father Newell will be a bishop?" He received the laconic reply, "Possibly." (Meyer, 55)

Soon after Denver was made an archdiocese, the United States became involved in the Second World War. For the most part the war had a rather limited consequences for the diocese of Cheyenne. Only two priests from the diocese were released to join the army to serve as chaplains, Fathers Frederick J. Kimmet and Jerome Denk.

In September, 1942, a long-standing problem was resolved concerning the canonical status of the Jesuits who were in charge of St. Stephen's Indian Mission. The Jesuits ministered to the Arapaho and Shoshone Indians located on the Wind River Indian Reservation and, since the early days of this mission, the Jesuits had cooperated with the pastors in Lander and Riverton. In the course of time a number of non-Indians settled within the boundaries of the reservation and many Catholics made it a practice to attend Mass in the Jesuit chapels. The canonical problem arose in matters concerning jurisdiction pertaining to marriages

which prompted the pastors at Lander and Riverton to request Bishop McGovern to establish St. Stephen's Mission as a canonical parish. Bishop McGovern wrote a succinct letter to Peter A. Brooks, Provincial of the Missouri Province of the Society of Jesus, informing him of the suggestion of the two pastors, pointing out that "this will give the pastor and his assistants the right to assist at all marriages within their jurisdiction; for this is the rule within my diocese.">1912>7

The bishop requested that the provincial submit the name of the superior of the mission so that he could appoint him pastor and the names of the other priests of the mission staff so they could be designated assistant pastors. Father Brooks asked for advice from his canonist, Adam D. Ellis, S.J., who recommended that Father Brooks comply with the bishop's request. Father Brooks also asked the advice of Albert C. Zuercher, S.J., a former superior of the mission. Father Zuercher also advised compliance in the matter and, incidentally, wrote that Bishop McGovern "is one of the best friends the mission has.">1912>8 In a letter dated September 11, 1942, Father Brooks presented the name of Father George P. Prendergast, S.J., and the other priests at the mission with the request that they be named pastor and assistants respectively.

The response of Bishop McGovern is another example of his characteristic terseness and is quoted in full. "Rev. George P. Prendergast, S.J., is hereby appointed pastor of the newly created parish of St. Stephen, Fremont County. The following priests are appointed assistants in the same parish: Rev. Albert C. Riester, S.J., Rev. Leo Doyle, S.J., Rev. Leonard Fencl, S.J., Rev. William F. Ferrell, S.J.">1912>9

It is interesting to note that the letter of the appointments was dated August 30, 1942, but the letter requesting the Provincial Father Brooks to present the names for the respective offices was dated September 1, 1942.

Two years after the conclusion of World War II it became increasingly evident that Bishop McGovern was losing ground as far as his health

was concerned. His health had never been robust and the years were taking their toll. The bishop petitioned the Holy See to appoint a coadjutor-bishop who would lighten the burden of administration.

Hubert Michael Newell, a priest of the archdiocese of Denver was appointed coadjutor-bishop with the right of succession (August 2, 1947). Bishop-elect Newell was consecrated in the cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Denver on September 24, 1947 by Archbishop Urban J. Vehr, assisted by Bishops Joseph M. Gilmore of Helena and Joseph C. Willging of Pueblo. The sermon for the occasion was preached by Most Reverend. Duane G. Hunt of Salt Lake, Utah. About a month later Bishop Newell arrived in Cheyenne where he received a warm welcome.

The story of the two bishops (1947-1951) is in the next chapter, an account taken primarily from Bishop Newell's unpublished "Reminiscences."

## NOTES 1912-1947

- >1912>1 *Statuta Dioecesis* (Omaha: Swartz, 1913). Internal references to decrees of the Councils of Baltimore. Ed.
- >1912>2 Example of Articles of Incorporation needed to show the form of the document. Ed.
- >1912>3 Julianne Lefevre, *For Wyoming's Children: A Half-Century History of St. Joseph's Children's Home* (Cheyenne: D.O.M., designed and printed by Unicover, 1980), 31.
- >1912>4 E. Kennedy, Jr., "Maginnis, Charles Donagh," (NCE).  
Maginnis also designed some of the buildings at the University of Notre Dame.
- >1912>5 Bishop Patrick A. McGovern, ed., *History of The Diocese of Cheyenne* (Cheyenne: Wyoming Labor Journal, 1941).
- >1912>6 John L. May, "Catholic Church Extension Society," NCE.

- >1912>7 Letter\*\*\* in the archives of the Missouri Province of the Society of Jesus.
- >1912>8 Letter\*\*\* in the archives of the Missouri Province of the Society of Jesus.
- >1912>9 Letter\*\*\* in the archives of the Missouri Province of the Society of Jesus. Date Sept 1 or 11? Ed.

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Harold Stansell, S.J.

**TWO BISHOPS in CHEYENNE  
McGOVERN the ORDINARY  
And  
NEWELL the COADJUTOR  
1947-1951**

**Source: Bishop Newell's "Reminiscences"**

Most of the material in this chapter was graciously provided by Bishop Newell's "Reminiscences" or notes (herein, Newell, "Reminiscences"), a primary source recounting the unique experience of living under the same roof as Bishop McGovern for four years. During that period he learned much about the man whom he was to succeed as the Ordinary of the diocese. It was fortunate for posterity that he jotted down his impressions. The notes are an invaluable source of information about the character of Bishop McGovern and deserve to be incorporated by paraphrasing in this history. One learns about the adjustment that the two bishops had to make when the younger settled down in the residence. One also gets

insights into Bishop McGovern's experience with other bishops, his dealing with the clergy of the diocese, his visits with religious women and his involvement with the laity.

Bishop McGovern celebrated his 73<sup>rd</sup> birthday October 14, 1945. Understandably, he was weary at that point in his life. He had spent thirty-three years fulfilling the requirements of his office such as the daily administration of the business of the diocese, supervising his priests and traveling throughout the state to administer the sacrament of Confirmation in the widely scattered parishes. These activities further undermined his fragile health. It is not surprising, therefore, that he decided to invoke the centuries old tradition in the Catholic Church which authorized a bishop to petition the Holy See to appoint a coadjutor with the right of succession who could relieve him of some of the burden of governing the diocese and free him from the necessity of traveling from parish to parish to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation. The Roman authorities approved Bishop McGovern's request for a coadjutor with right of succession and set in motion the procedures that would identify a priest who could assume the responsibilities of such an office. Eventually, August 2, 1947, the Holy See appointed Rev. Hubert Michael Newell, Superintendent of Parochial Schools in the Archdiocese of Denver, Coadjutor Bishop of Cheyenne with the right of succession.>1947>1

## **HUBERT NEWELL**

### **Father Newell, Personal History**

Father Newell was the first native of the city of Denver to be chosen to be a Roman Catholic bishop. At the time of his appointment he was forty-three years old; a priest since 1930, he had served the Church in Colorado for seventeen years. Father Newell belonged to those first generation Americans who conscientiously and deliberately contributed to the development and maintenance of the Catholic Church in their adopted country. Hubert Newell's parents, Thomas Newell and Ellen (Nellie) Taney, emigrated to the United States during the 1880s from County Galway, Ireland. Ellen Taney went to Denver, Colorado, where she worked as a maid in the Taney House, a small hotel operated by her uncle Patrick Taney which catered to Irishmen working on the railroad or in the mines; Thomas Newell came to Denver and joined the police force. On January 5, 1895, Thomas and Ellen were married in the Church of the Annunciation, the Very Reverend Henry Robinson, Vicar General of the Diocese of Denver, presiding. The marriage was blessed with six children: two daughters, Nora (October 18, 1895) and Margaret (June 3, 1898), a first set of twins, John and Thomas (December 19, 1902), and a second set of twins, Hubert and Raymond (February 16, 1904).

During the years of family growth, Mr. Newell found different employment, first with Globe Smelter, later, with Denver Gas and Electric Company. While working at the former, he had an accident and suffered an injury which impaired his health for the rest of his life; he continued to work every day, with but minor exceptions, to provide the necessities for the well being of the members of the family. Mr. and Mrs. Newell provided a truly Catholic atmosphere for their children and instilled in them an appreciation of their Catholic faith and a lasting devotion to Mary, Mother of God. The family recited the Rosary after the evening meal during the month of October and often in the month

of May. If friends dropped in for a visit they were invited to join the family in prayer.

Education was high on the list of priorities in the Newell family. The children attended the Annunciation parish school where they received a solid basic education under the tutelage of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. Later the family moved to Sacred Heart parish. The boys continued their schooling under the supervision of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati. Less than two years after the family relocated in Sacred Heart parish, Mr. Newell died January 22, 1917. At that time the boys were in grade school, Margaret was in high school and Nora worked as a clerk in a Denver store. Somehow Mrs. Newell was equal to the task of keeping the family together. She was determined that the children should continue their education. Thomas did not share his mother's enthusiasm for the more traditional type of education that distinguished parochial schools; he opted for training as an electrician and went to work for the Union Pacific Railroad. John transferred to Regis High School and Hubert and Raymond went to the Sacred Heart High School. During these years the boys supplemented the family finances by working in the local drug store. After finishing high school, John entered St. Stanislaus novitiate of the Society of Jesus in Florissant, Missouri; Raymond enrolled in the School of Pharmacy of the University of Colorado and Hubert registered at Regis College in north Denver. Nora and Margaret were employed by the United States National Bank; in 1919 Nora married William E. Jones and somewhat later Margaret married Jack Walsh, an insurance agent.

During his student years Hubert thought, from time to time, that he had a vocation to the priesthood. However, by the time of graduation he had not made a firm decision. In

time, he finally decided to request Bishop J. Henry Tihen to accept him as a candidate for the priesthood to serve in the diocese of Denver. The bishop directed him to enter St. Thomas Seminary. The usual seminary course took eight years of study and preparation for the priesthood including basic college courses with emphasis on philosophy followed by four years of courses in theology. The academic officials of the seminary, members of the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentians), recognized the college credits, especially those in philosophy, that Hubert Newell had earned at Regis College, and admitted him to the theology division. After four years of study he was ready for ordination which was conferred on him by Bishop Tihen on June 15, 1930. The bishop assigned Father Newell to assist Rev. John B. Liciotto, pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows (later, St. Mary's) parish, Walsenburg, Colorado, a town that was thriving due to a flourishing coal mining industry. The prosperity of the town was reflected in the growth of the parish which had a well-equipped grade and high school with a combined enrollment of nearly a thousand students. Father Newell gained addition to his responsibilities as an assistant pastor he was assigned to work with the principal of the high school, a forecast of his future activity in the field of education.

On January 6, 1931, Bishop J. Henry Tihen submitted his resignation to the Holy See as Ordinary of the Diocese of Denver. He remained as Apostolic Administrator until July 16, 1931. On that day Urban J. Vehr was installed as the fourth bishop of the Diocese of Denver. The new bishop, A native of Cincinnati, Ohio, was an experienced churchman. He had served in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati as parish priest, superintendent of parochial school, Rector of St. Gregory's Minor Seminary and, finally, Rector of the Seminary of Mount St. Mary-of-the-West. He left a well-established archdiocese (1850) with some assistance from

priests of religious orders. He inherited a relatively young diocese (established 1887) with a Catholic population of 115, 829 administered to by 138 diocesan priests in parishes scattered through a state measuring 104,247 square miles (land area 103,967 sq. miles). It took some time for the bishop to become acquainted with the priests of the diocese as well as all the other matters pertaining to the good governance of a diocese. In the due course of time the bishop was ready to make some changes in the assignments of the priests.

One such change was destined to influence the career of Father Hubert Newell. Bishop Vehr recalled him from Walsenburg and assigned him to assist Rev. Hugh L. McMenamain, the very capable and perennial rector of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Denver. The assignment placed Father Newell very close to the nerve center of the administration of the diocese, namely, the chancery office which was adjacent to the cathedral with ready access from one building to the other. The assistant seemed to be destined to be involved with education; he was directed assist the principal of the flourishing Cathedral High School. This phase of the young priest's career began in August, 1933.

Four years later Bishop Vehr relieved Father Newell of this parochial and educational duties and directed him to enroll in the Catholic University in Washington, D.C. and instructed him to complete the necessary work leading to a Master of Arts Degree in educational administration. The previous experience in the high schools in Walsenburg and Denver proved to be beneficial. He fulfilled the necessary requirements and received the Master's Degree within the year. When he returned to Denver he was appointed Superintendent of parochial schools as successor in that office to Rev. William D. McCarthy. During the next ten

years Father Newell made outstanding contributions to the vitality of parochial schools in Colorado. He gained the respect of educators throughout the state who selected him to serve on a team which visited schools and evaluated them to determine whether or not they qualified for accreditation by the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges.

### **Episcopal Ordination and Reception in Cheyenne of Coadjutor Bishop Newell**

When his Church called Hubert Newell to a higher office he responded with alacrity. His seven years of service as an assistant pastor and ten as superintendent of parochial schools had given him valuable experience in the pastoral ministry and training in the art of administration. He was well prepared to meet the challenges that he would encounter in the Diocese of Cheyenne. The Church of Denver rejoiced when it was time for Hubert Newell's episcopal ordination. For the second time in a decade Denver would host a number of bishops who would arrive in the city to participate in the ceremony and give encouragement to brother bishop was about to join this select body of men who carried on the work of the Apostles. Bishop designate Newell made the necessary preparation for the momentous occasion which was to take place in the cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Denver on September 24, 1947. Most Reverend Urban J. Vehr, Archbishop of Denver was the ordaining prelate assisted by Bishops Joseph M. Gilmore of Helena, Montana and Joseph C. Willging of Pueblo, Colorado. The sermon for the occasion was preached by Most Reverend. Duane G. Hunt of Salt Lake, Utah.

Three weeks after his episcopal ordination Bishop Newell arrived in Cheyenne for the second time in his life. He had previously visited the city in 1941 as a member of the team that evaluated St. Mary's High School for accreditation by North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

The second visit was more public. The leading citizens of the city had planned a proper celebration for Coadjutor Bishop. Not many Catholics in the city or state could remember any other shepherd than Bishop McGovern who had tended the flock in Wyoming for thirty-five years. Bishop Newell was warmly received and honored at a reception held in the auditorium of St. Mary's High School in late October, 1947. The leading dignitaries present were John McInerney, Mayor of Cheyenne, Joseph O'Mahoney, United States Senator, Urban J. Vehr, Archbishop of Denver, and the host, Most Reverend Patrick A. McGovern, who had recently celebrated his 75th birthday (October 14, 1947). The chairman for the occasion was William A. Norris who introduced the speakers. It was a memorable reception, and there can be little doubt that Bishop Newell realized that he was most welcome in Wyoming.

### **Bishop McGovern's 1947 Agenda**

While Bishop Newell adjusted to his new situation and environment, Bishop McGovern briefed him on three major projects which were started or in the planning stage – first, a Catholic hospital for Cheyenne; secondly, the launching of campaigns to provide the necessary funds to finance an ambitious plan to provide new buildings and physical improvements in a number of parishes in the diocese; and thirdly, his intention to convene a diocesan synod.

## **De Paul Hospital and the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth**

Founding a Catholic hospital in Cheyenne, hereafter De Paul Hospital, was a primary desire of Bishop McGovern. Not long after the welcoming ceremony Bishop McGovern requested the Coadjutor to drive him out Pershing Boulevard to a spot near the entrance of the Veterans Hospital. When they reached the site the bishop mentioned that the diocese would purchase land on which a hospital would be constructed. Bishop Newell had learned that the diocese owned property north of the city for the project but it had become clear that the cost of building on that site would be prohibitive. Bishop McGovern changed his plan and decided to purchase ten and one half acres east of the city and was able to do so because of the kindness of Mr. Hoyt Leech, “a fine Episcopalian gentlemen,” who sold the land for \$10,000, a price considered to be a bargain because at the time there were no roads in the area and only one or two houses.>1947>2

The Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth were invited to staff the hospital by Bishop McGovern. As early as September 28, 1946 Bishop McGovern wrote a letter to Mother Francesca and responded to her request for information regarding architectural plans for the proposed hospital by suggesting that she contact Mr. John Monroe who had completed plans for four churches and a large Sister’s Convent in this diocese. Some members of the Sisters’ Community Council opposed assuming such a burden. Eventually the community decided to open a hospital in Cheyenne. Actually, construction commenced in 1950.>1947>3

## **Building Churches**

A third parish in Cheyenne, Holy Trinity, as a priority. The second major project, the building of churches, schools and other needed structures was well under way at that time. This unusual activity had been set in motion shortly after the end of World War II. Bishop McGovern requested the pastors to use the amounts of money on hand to supplement those sums by conducting fund raising campaigns to provide new buildings and physical improvements in parishes in many parts of the diocese. This request unleashed dormant enthusiasm the part of the pastors, assistant and laity and a considerable amount of money was raised to finance construction of needed buildings. The progress of these endeavors was gratifying.

By the time Bishop Newell had arrived on the scene in late October, 1947, the building programs were well under way and he was pleased with the progress that was being made because it assured him that he would inherit a revitalized diocese. Obviously, the goals of such a major program would not be achieved in a short period of time. The coadjutor was able to keep abreast of developments as they unfolded because he was called upon, rather frequently, to dedicate the new buildings when they were completed. A summary of the accomplishments of these undertakings demonstrate their importance in the history of the diocese. Within a few years new churches became a reality in Buffalo, Gillette, Thermopolis and Riverton. Construction of new churches got under way in Torrington, Newcastle and Superior. Rectories were built in Casper, Powell and Worland; parish halls in Cheyenne, Wheatland and Douglas. The basement of the church in Greybull was converted into a parish hall. New schools were completed in Cheyenne, Laramie, Rawlins and Rock Springs. A new convent capable of accommodating thirty-two Sisters was

finished in Cheyenne under the watchful eye of Father James A. Hartmann, rector of the Cathedral. A new grade school building was under way in Cheyenne to replace old St. Mary's Academy. Sheridan gained a new school while Rock Springs was blessed with two new schools. Father Albin Gnidovec, Pastor of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Rock Springs, purchased a building and had it remodeled for a use as an elementary school. He bought a second structure and had it converted into a convent. Mission chapels were established in Sundance, Ranchester, Hanna and Medicine Bow. Superior received its first resident pastor, Father William Delaney and, of course, a church. Newcastle gained a new church and plans were drawn for one in Cody. Powell and Worland were graced with rectories. Father Jerome Denk was grateful for the completion of a parish hall for St. Joseph's in Cheyenne. The Conventual Franciscans made their contribution to the movement; Father Bernadine Singleton, O.F.M.Conv., arranged for the renovation of the parish church in Douglas and added a parish hall. Father Clement Orth, O.F.M.Conv., had the church in Wheatland enlarged and a parish hall constructed.

The building program of this magnitude was not possible without the cooperation of the parishioners under the leadership of their pastors and the parish trustees with the blessing and encouragement of their bishop. Architects and construction workers deserve special consideration, especially, John K. Monroe, the favorite architect of the Most Reverend Urban J. Vehr, Archbishop of Denver. Local firms made a significant contribution, notable, Kellogg and Kellogg of Cheyenne and Rock Springs which was responsible for schools in Rock Springs, Laramie and Rawlins, and churches in Superior and Saratoga. Construction of DePaul Hospital, the architectural gem created by Mr. Monroe was begun in 1950. It is interesting

to speculate on the impact of these building programs on the economy of a number of cities and towns in Wyoming. Although there is no available evidence to prove that the synod prompted the bishop's decision to initiate fund raising programs in the diocese to collect money to finance much needed improvements in a number of parishes, it is reasonable to conclude that such an influence was possible. As a matter of fact, the bishop did initiate such a program in 1949. The objectives were: parochial schools in Laramie, Rawlins, Rock Springs and Casper; a new gym in Sheridan; new churches in Riverton, Thermopolis, Gillette and Buffalo. The faithful responded with enthusiasm and a number of the programs were soon under way. The bishop chose John Monroe to be the architect for the proposed buildings. Mr. Monroe was the favorite architect of Archbishop Urban J. Vehr of Denver.>1947>4

## **SYNOD OF 1948**

The third major project about which Bishop Newell was briefed was a proposed diocesan synod. Thirty-five years had passed since the first synod was held, the one that had been convened in April, 1913. It is conceivable that Bishop McGovern had decided that holding a synod would give his designated successor a first hand opportunity to become acquainted with the priests of the diocese and furnish an occasion for them to familiarize themselves with the statutes of the Church in Wyoming. The bishop sent a letter to the priests of the diocese informing each that he was convoking a diocesan synod to be held at St. Stephen's Indian Mission starting on June 11, 1948. The purpose of the synod was "to promote ecclesiastical discipline and to strengthen the practice of religion within the limits of our jurisdiction.">1947>5

Each priest was invited and directed to be present, unless personally excused by the bishop. Those present at the synod were to participate in the deliberations. Each diocesan priest was granted a consultative vote, a right that was extended to the two religious superiors who were invited to attend. The two religious superiors were Very Reverend Albert Zuercher, S.J., superior of St. Stephen's Mission, and the Conventual Franciscan, Very Reverend Andrew Maas, pastor of St. James' Parish in Douglas. The following were appointed synodal officials: Promoter, Very Reverend Thomas F. O'Reilly, V.G.; Secretary, Very Reverend James Hartmann; Notary, Rev. John McDevitt; Master of Ceremonies, Rev. Jerome Denk.

Following centuries-old tradition, the synod opened with the celebration of votive Mass of the Holy Spirit offered by Coadjutor Bishop Hubert M. Newell assisted by Bishop McGovern (*cuique assistabat*). Thirty-seven priests were present. Two priests were excused, namely, William Delaney and Charles Bartek. Three Jesuits stationed at St. Stephen's Mission and four Conventual Franciscans, three in Douglas and one in Lusk, were not invited to attend the meetings.

Two bishops and thirty- seven priest were present.>1947>6 Coadjutor Bishop Hubert M. Newell celebrated the Votive Mass of the Holy Spirit in the presence of Bishop Patrick A. McGovern (*pluviali indutus*).

After Mass the Litany was recited and the hymn "Come Holy Spirit" was sung. Then the secretary read the decree opening the synod.

Following these actions, the examiners, judges and parochial consultors were approved, namely, Examiners:

Sylvester Welsh, James O'Connor, Philip Krass and Leo Morgan; Judges: Philip Krass, Edward Cassidy, Adolph Pate and James Power; parochial consultants: William Short, James McBride, Frederick Kimmett, and Albin Gnidovec.

## **1948 Synod Statutes**

The published booklet containing the acts of the Synod, entitled *Statutes of the Diocese of Cheyenne: Second Synod*, included a Latin summary of the acts of the meeting, a brief statement promulgating the statutes, and a decree terminating the assembly. The actual statutes and appendices were printed in English.

The number of statutes enacted was one hundred and thirty-four including legislation regarding the Sacraments and sacramentals; regulations governing the building and furnishing of churches; recommendations concerning cemeteries; prescription of the Code of Canon Law with regard to the liturgy; advice about preaching and giving instructions, schools and temporalities.

Twenty-nine statutes outlined rules of conduct for priests, enumerating their duties and cautioning them regarding things to be avoided. There is little that is surprising in the regulations pertaining to priests in the active ministry and so no need to write a detailed review of the statutes.

Three statutes of special interest to the diocesan clergy were those which increased their salaries, allowed pastors to own an automobile, and forbade gambling and the sale of liquor in church halls.

Statute 112 granted diocesan priests an increase in salary. The Synod of 1913 had allotted \$600 a year to a pastor and

\$300 to an assistant. The new statute provided that diocesan priests were granted an increase in salary “besides board and lodging, pastors shall receive seventy five dollars per month (\$900 a year), and assistants fifty” (\$600 a year). It was evidently the increase was the first increase granted in thirty-five years.

Statute 115 stipulated that parishes were no longer to purchase automobiles for the pastor. He was thenceforth obliged to pay for his own car and keep the title in his own name. However if the car was used for parish business, reasonable expenses for operation and depreciation could be taken from parish funds. Assistants were forbidden to own a car without the express permission of the bishop. When one reflects on distance between parishes in Wyoming he is inclined to conclude that the legislation regarding cars was unduly rigorous.

Finally, Statute 118 forbade “unbecoming means of church revenue, such as balls raffling, bingo, games of chance, gambling and the sale of liquor.” In light of the perennial problems regarding Church personnel and games of chance, we are reminded that some things do not change very much over the years.

## **1948 Statistics**

The facts in the entry for the diocese of Cheyenne in *The Official Catholic Directory 1948* shows how much substantial progress had been made during the thirty-six years of Bishop McGovern’s regime. The number of priests had almost tripled from 18 to 51. There were twenty-six parishes with resident pastors. Six seminarians were studying of the priesthood to serve in Wyoming. Parochial schools showed increases. There were 170 students in St.

Mary's High School in Cheyenne and 1,306 children in the elementary schools. 3,718 youth were receiving Catholic instruction. Fifty-five religious women worked in the diocese representing six communities, namely, Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth in Sheridan, Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Casper, Dominican Sisters of the Third Order of St. Dominic in Cheyenne, Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis of Assisi (Sister of Penance and Charity) in Torrington, and Ursuline Sisters in the Bishop's House. The contributions of the Sisters to the well being of the Catholic Church in Wyoming during the regime of Bishop McGovern were inestimable.

A final human interest note about the synod. Evidently, the bishop and his advisors assigned the priests to designated places in the chapel pews. Three priests, who presumably did not enjoy the bishop's best wishes, were assigned places in the front pew, namely Henry Schellinger, his brother Gerard and John Spillane. Father Henry interpreted this assignment as a deliberate slight on the part of the bishop. He referred to pew as the "Sinners Bench." >1947>7

The meeting at St. Stephen's Mission provided Coadjutor Bishop Newell with an excellent opportunity of getting better acquainted with the priests of the diocese and it made it possible for Bishop McGovern to reflect on the progress of the Catholic Church in Wyoming during the thirty six years of his regime as bishop. He must have derived considerable satisfaction in the realization that his recruiting efforts in Ireland had resulted in bringing very stalwart priests to the diocese. The presence of names of four sons of Wyoming on the roster, namely, Fathers Leo Morgan, Fredrick Kimmet, William McCormick and William Delaney, must have been especially comforting.

Father Kimmett was born in Colorado but moved to Powell, Wyoming, at an early age.

## **Priest Recruitment**

An unexpected bonus brought four young priests to the diocese in 1939 and 1940. In 1934 Bishop Josh E. Ritter (later Archbishop of St. Louis and Cardinal) was elected to the See of Indianapolis. He inherited serious financial problems, not the least of which was the fact that the diocese owed a considerable amount of money to St. Meinrad's Seminary where a number of young men were studying for the priesthood to serve in the diocese of Indianapolis. Bishop Ritter decided that the diocese could no longer support these seminarians and he released a number of students from any commitment to serve in his diocese. He recommended that they volunteer to serve in a diocese which was in desperate need of priests. A number of such dioceses were mentioned, one of which was Cheyenne. Happily four young men, namely, Paul Foster, Adolph Pate, John Meyer and Alphonsus Grannan opted for service in Wyoming. The names of the four were on the roster of those attending the Synod of 1948.>1947>8

One of the major responsibilities of a bishop as shepherd is to recruit priests to minister to the members of his flock. In well-established dioceses this need is fulfilled by the number of young men who choose to apply for acceptance as seminarian to prepare themselves to serve in their diocese. However in those states where areas have to recruit young men who would be willing to serve as priests in their diocese. When Bishop McGovern came to Wyoming he had few, if any, native sons of that state exercising the ministry in the parishes. He found about fifteen priests. Later he told Bishop Newell that some were

good, some bad and a few indifferent. After his first year the number was reduced to eight; he had invited some to leave the State because he made the decision to have none but good priests working in his diocese. (Newell, "Reminiscences").

## THE OLD GUARD

Four priests recruited by Bishop Keane were not on the best of terms with the bishop and had less than friendly dealings with him.

Father Duffy, a native of Janesville, Wisconsin came to Wyoming in 1906 and was assigned to Holy Name parish in Sheridan; he was destined to remain pastor there for thirty-three years. It seems that he resented the fact that the church authorities had chosen a priest from another diocese to succeed Bishop Keane. The available evidence indicated that he operated in Sheridan and its environs independently of Bishop McGovern and his chancellor. In fact, he had little to do with the ordinary channels of operation in a diocese and avoided Cheyenne to the extent that it was reported that his first visit to the city was made on the occasion of taking leave of the diocese in 1939. One is tempted to speculate about the unavoidable confrontation that took place when the bishop went to Sheridan to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation. Whatever the bishop's attitude toward the Sheridan pastor was, it is interesting to note that as late as the *1938 Official Catholic Directory* Father Duffy was listed as a consultant of the diocese. He left Wyoming in 1939 and resumed parochial work in San Diego, California and remained there until his death, November 11, 1943.

Of the three Europeans who had been recruited by Bishop Keane, one was a Walloon, that is a native of the south of Belgium, the other two, blood brothers, were natives of Holland. All three had studied at the University of Louvain. Nicholas Endres and Henry Schellinger came to Wyoming in 1906; Henry's brother, Gerard, followed in 1912.

Father Nicholas Endres, the Belgian, exercised his ministry in Cody and its environs from 1906 to 1909. In the latter year he moved to Thermopolis and made that town the basis for his activity in what natives call "the Basin." He supervised the building of a modest frame church which was placed under the patronage of St. Francis. He then extended his field of activity and established a mission in Basin and another one in Powell. He visited Cody, Crosby, Hot Springs, Gebo, Meeteetse and Worland, all of which were considered Stations. In the course of time Father Endres became interested in purchasing properties with an eye to his future financial security. He contracted for a church for the people in Powell and one in Greybull. He did the same for Lovell in 1920. After that venture he decided not to pursue his interest in construction any further. In 1933 the bishop decided that Father Endres was too deeply involved with his real estate holdings in the Basin and appointed him pastor of Corpus Christi parish in Newcastle. Father Endres was not pleased with the assignment and after a year he decided, presumably, on his own, to leave Newcastle. He went to Casper where he assisted Father John Mullen, pastor of St. Anthony's parish until that priest retired from active ministry. Father Endres then returned to Thermopolis where he could keep an eye on his rental properties. His status in the diocese was uncertain but one can be reasonable sure that the bishop was not pleased with him. The *Directory* for the year 1938 noted that Father Endres was on a leave of absence. Ten years later his name was not included in the alphabetical

list of secular and regular priests in the United States. It is known that Father Endres lived in retirement in Thermopolis until his death in 1962; after his death his properties were given to the parishes of Lovell, Worland, and Thermopolis. Monsignor Meyer wrote that he remained “the spiritual mentor for the whole Big Horn Basin.”>1947>9

The priest who came to Wyoming with Father Endres in 1906 was a rather rugged Hollander, Henry Schellinger. He tested the patience of his bishop almost to the breaking point. His first assignment, made by Bishop Keane, was to the cathedral parish in Cheyenne. He remained there for a short time when he was moved to Dietz near Sheridan. When Bishop McGovern came to Cheyenne he assigned Father Schellinger to the parish of Immaculate Conception in Green River; a post he honored for forty years. Whereas a number of his fellow priests were somewhat in awe of their bishop, Father Henry Schellinger was not overly impressed. He was a source of annoyance to the bishop on a number of occasions by some of his practices. One was the practice of using discarded pieces of paper such as the blank side of a used calendar instead of stationery for his correspondence with the bishop. This practice irritated the bishop as much as if not more than the fact his handwriting was almost an unreadable scrawl. Another source of irritation for the bishop was the fact that the pastor did not hesitate to evade the bishop’s established policy forbidding church basements which the bishop abhorred. Father Schellinger proceeded to finish and furnish a basement hall for the church. Bishop McGovern was upset to say the least and ordered the seasoned pastor to go to St. Stephen’s Indian Mission and make a special retreat as a penance for failing to follow the bishop’s policy regarding church basements. When the Episcopal Bishop of Wyoming passed away Father Schellinger attended his funeral. At that time

when the Church was not quite so involved in the ecumenical movement such an action on the part of a Catholic priest was frowned upon. Bishop McGovern asked for an explanation from Father Schellinger only to receive the response that the Green River pastor liked to attend the funerals of bishops.

The younger brother Schellinger, Gerard, came to Wyoming in 1912. His career in the diocese was in sharp contrast to that of Henry. Whereas the older brother enjoyed a stable career in one town Gerard moved about quite frequently and served in many parishes and missions. Monsignor Meyer wrote the following summary of his movements:

. . . he was a superb priest, who would serve in the Cheyenne parish and Pine Bluffs area, in the army during World War I, at Kemmerer and the mission field of Cokeville, LaBarge, Big Piney, Jackson and Moran in the early twenties and late thirties, at Rawlins and in the Missions of Hanna, Saratoga, the Prison, and stations at Lamont, Wamsutter, Snake River and Encampment in the middle 20s and 40s . . . (Meyer, 29-30)

Moreover, he studied at Catholic University for a year, spent three years, as the Vice-Rector at Louvain Seminary, Belgium, and taught at the Diocesan Seminary at El Cajon, San Diego, California. He returned to Wyoming in 1951 and served as administrator first at Evanston then at Newcastle. When DePaul Hospital was ready to receive patients, he became the first chaplain of DePaul. Eventually, health forced him into retirement. He went to Florida where he accepted the post of chaplain a convent. He died December 18, 1954.

## **Conversatio et Horarium**

### **Living Situation of the two bishops**

One of the first episcopal duties that Bishop McGovern transferred to his coadjutor was that of conferring the Sacrament of Confirmation throughout the diocese. However, the bishop kept his interest in what was going on and when Bishop Newell would return from a Confirmation tour he would have to answer many questions about the people in the towns that he visited. The coadjutor also officiated at all other ceremonies which required a bishop and the Ordinary would attend and preside in the sanctuary. In the course of months a mutual respect developed between the two men. The older bishop would talk about his way of governing the diocese and from time to time would say that he realized that Bishop Newell would do things differently. It is clear from what has been written about the final days of the bishop that Bishop Newell was very considerate of his predecessor and had developed a deep respect and even an affection for the man.

Bishop McGovern had graciously invited Coadjutor Bishop Newell to make his home in the episcopal residence, of which he was justly proud, thus they became more or less constant companions. Living in the same house with the man he was destined to succeed as Bishop of Cheyenne, Bishop Newell was able to familiarize himself with the requirement of this office as well as the fundamentals connected with the administration of the far-flung diocese.

When Bishop McGovern invited his associate to make his home in the episcopal residence in October, 1947, he made a momentous decision which, in time became an invaluable

source of information contributing to a better understanding of the character of the man who served as shepherd of Catholics in Wyoming for thirty-nine years. Bishop Newell served posterity well when he jotted down his impressions of the man he was to succeed as Bishop of Cheyenne. His notes reveal a man who was an extremely methodical person whose daily schedule varied little. Bishop McGovern rose before 6:00 A.M., he was in the chapel at 6:20, at which time he made his meditation; he offered Mass at 7:00 and attended Bishop Newell's Mass. Breakfast was at 8:00. After a frugal repast he read the paper, said what was at that time called the Little Hours of the Divine Office (now called Day Time prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours), and then waited impatiently for the mail. When it arrived and was read, all letters and requests had to be answered immediately. He would discuss the contents with Bishop Newell and then dictate his responses to his associate. He did not have a secretary and did his own typing a task which was henceforth performed by Bishop Newell. Bishop McGovern's policy regarding correspondence was distinctive and was summed up as follows:

The bishop always flattered himself on the brevity of his letters and tried to make his answers to questions posed by the priests concise, to the point and telegraphic in style. He always, or almost always used a half of an 8 1/2 x11 inch sheet for his correspondence and it was usually ample for his messages. Occasionally, he would send notes to the clergy via postcards, sometimes using a Latin word or expression to achieve privacy. Occasionally the bishop would write a simple 'no' or 'yes' on the bottom of a letter with as few words of explanation as

possible and return it to the sender as his response. (Newell, “Reminiscences”)

It would not serve any useful purpose to outline the schedule for the rest of the day. However, it should be recorded that his daily walk was an important event in his schedule. He walked for about two hours from two o’clock to four. The walks included brief visits at two or three homes. “He was a welcome visitor at homes of the rich and poor, Catholic and non-Catholic, in every section of town. Over the years he visited literally hundreds of families, discussing the various members and recalling incidents of earlier days.” (Newell, “Reminiscences”) Bishop Newell appreciated the fact that he was invited to go along on the walks and visits finding them informative and interesting. He gained much information and was introduced to many Catholics and non-Catholic people.”

In due time Bishop McGovern adjusted to the fact that another person was living in the residence. It took time for a man who had lived in his own quarters in the rectory of the cathedral for twenty-nine years and also in his own house, except for the discreet presence of the Sisters, for six years to grow accustomed to having a brother bishop in residence. It is to his credit that he did adjust, in fact, began to enjoy having someone to visit with, to discuss problems and policies with, one who, moreover, was a pleasant companion on his daily walks and visits in the city.

In conversations with the bishop his coadjutor learned about the problems connected with the governing of a diocese, especially one that covered such a large area, as well as his opinions about and relations with other bishops, his dealing with his priests his visits with religious women, and finally, his contact with the laity.

As Bishop McGovern mellowed he became more open and freely reminisced about his early years as bishop and explained why he had found it necessary to do things the way he did. He outlined the policies that he had formulated and followed. He was realistic enough to tell his coadjutor that he realized he would probably do things differently.

Every bishop recognizes the necessity of knowing the priests because he is the one who ultimately places them in parishes where, hopefully they can do the most good. A bishop is fortunate if he finds a number of stalwart priests already in place when he assumes the governance of the diocese. When Bishop McGovern took over the administration of the diocese after his recuperation from surgery, he found a few sturdy priests already established in their parishes, namely, Right Rev. Monsignor Hugh Cumiskey, V.G. in Laramie, Henry Schellinger in Green River, his brother Gerard in Pine Bluffs, John Duffy in Sheridan, Nicholas Endres in Thermopolis and the recently recruited James A. Hartmann, who was destined to become the rector of the Cathedral. Monsignor Cumiskey came to Laramie in 1879 when Wyoming was part of the Vicariate Apostolic of Nebraska, the other priests had been recruited by Bishop James J. Keane. The veteran pastor of the parish in Laramie could pass as an elder statesman and, probably, was regarded as such by the bishop. Father Hartmann rector of the cathedral and chancellor of the diocese accepted the fact that he was to live in the same residence as the bishop and managed his office of chancellor and his pastor duties so well that he continued to hold the office of chancellor until shortly before his death in 1973.

No doubt bishops desire to know as much as possible about their predecessors as well as their fellow bishops especially their neighbors. As author, in part, and editor of the history of the Diocese of Cheyenne (1941), Bishop McGovern

searched the records to gain knowledge of those who preceded him in the diocese. When he learned that Bishop Maurice Burke, the first bishop of the diocese, traveled to Rome in an effort to persuade the Roman authorities to suppress the diocese because, in his opinion, it could not survive, he was less than pleased, in fact, he resented and deplored the fact that the bishop had made the attempt. He had a more favorable opinion of the second bishop, Thomas M. Lenihan; he deeply regretted the fact that the bishop's health had not been equal to the requirements of his office. He admired the accomplishment of his immediate predecessor James J. Keane, and appreciated the fact that he bequeathed to the diocese a cathedral and an episcopal residence, which was also a rectory. He had also been successful in recruiting priests for the diocese who were destined to give the Catholics in Wyoming many years of spiritual encouragement and consolation. It is not possible to discover evidence that might shed some light on the activity of Bishop McGovern in his role as a suffragan bishop in the ecclesiastical province of Dubuque. It seems that he was not a close friend of Archbishop Keane.

## **Friendships**

Bishop McGovern did not develop many friendships. He did, however, have friends in the hierarchy. He was on good terms with Bernard J. Mahoney, Bishop of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and Joseph H. Schlarman, Bishop of Peoria, and John J. Mitty, Archbishop of San Francisco. After 1941 when the Bishop of Cheyenne became a suffragan of the newly established Archdiocese of Denver and its Archbishop, Urban J. Vehr, a close bond developed between the two men, so much so that Bishop Newell wrote that Archbishop Vehr was probably Bishop McGovern's closest and most esteemed friend. It was

reported that Bishop McGovern could relax with his fellow bishops and show a more human side of his personality than the one the priests of the diocese was acquainted with. It was rumored that he was quite a story teller; a gift that his Episcopal confreres appreciated. The bishop had a special predilection for California. When his schedule permitted, he went to that State in mid-January and remained there until mid-March. He volunteered to help bishops of the California dioceses by administering the Sacrament of Confirmation. His willingness to relieve hard pressed brother bishops was most welcome and, incidentally, supplemented the slender financial resources of his diocese.

When there was a need Bishop McGovern made himself available to help different bishops, lightening their burden by taking Confirmation assignments for them. After 1941 when the Diocese of Cheyenne became a suffragan of the Archdiocese of Denver, Bishop McGovern became better acquainted with Archbishop Urban J. Vehr, with a result that a close bond developed between the two, so much so, that Bishop Newell could record that Archbishop Vehr was probably Bishop McGovern's closest and most esteemed friend.

Bishop McGovern was not on close terms with any of the priest of the diocese. A few of the priests whose position kept them in proximity to the bishop could hardly be said to have been friends. For example, Father James Hartmann, rector of the cathedral and chancellor of the diocese, lived in the same residence as the bishop for nearly three decades and who of necessity had to see the bishop for diocesan business from time to time, never became a close confidant of the bishop.

However, it seems that Bishop McGovern had a feeling approaching affection for the Irish priest Father John Henry whom he had appointed vicar general. He was no doubt very pleased with Father Henry's success in administering the office of superintendent of St. Joseph's Children's Home and establishing a sound foundation for the development of that institution.

Two priests enjoyed a special place in their association with the bishop, Fathers Jerome Denk and John McDevitt; the former because he had a sense of humor that the bishop found enjoyable and the latter because of his knowledge and experience in canonical matters. The bishop had sent Father McDevitt to study in Rome and regularly consulted him about problems that required knowledge of Canon Law. One other priest who merited much from the bishop was Father Thomas O'Reilly. He was named Vicar General succeeding Father Henry and although he did not enjoy any special place in the affections of the bishop Father O'Reilly proved to be very valuable in guiding the destinies of the Church in Casper.

He reported that his predecessor had few close friends. However, he did feel comfortable with a few individuals who had more or less ready access to the bishop's residence. For example John McDonald, a diocesan trustee for many years, was a weekly visitor, one of the very few who enjoyed that opportunity. William Mullen, former Assistant Attorney General of Wyoming and diocesan lawyer until his death, was always welcome. The bishop remained a friend of the widow, and her daughters. The architect, William Dubois, was also welcome from time to time. Joseph R. Sullivan of Laramie served on the board of trustees of St. Joseph's Children's Home from the very beginning and enjoyed a special place in the affections of the bishop. Another man who was very active in his support

of St. Joseph's was T. Joe Cahill of Cheyenne. His accomplishments on behalf of the home were appreciated by the bishop. Mr. Cahill had a high profile in Cheyenne and many parts of Wyoming because of his connection with the famous rodeo, Frontier Days. His activity over a period of thirty years made him a public figure. He capitalized on his position and carried on a personal campaign to solicit funds for St. Joseph's from his many friends. He even went to work on a personal campaign to solicit funds for St. Joseph's from his many friends. He even went to work on corporations and won many sizable donations. Rather frequently he sent a sizable check to the superintendents. The bishop showed his appreciation for Mr. Cahill's dedication by obtaining a papal brief appointing Mr. Cahill a Knight of St. Gregory, a pontifical order of knighthood bestowed in recognition of distinguished services to the Church. (Lefevre, 57).

One evening a week the bishop would call on old friends. If they were at home he would visit with them, spending an evening in pleasant discussion. However, he never remained at a home beyond 9:30 P.M. After Bishop Newell arrived in Cheyenne he went on the walks and visits with the bishop. It was an excellent introduction to the status of matters in the city and the new bishop learned much about the people and the diocese which he would one day govern.

Bishop Newell recorded an event which demonstrated that his predecessor was not overly impressed by people who held a high office. On one occasion, when he was offered a ride back to his residence by the governor of Wyoming, Frank A. Barrett, Bishop McGovern had a few words to say to the governor indicating his extreme displeasure because he thought that the official might have had a say in a decision that had been made regarding the church in Lusk, namely, to have the parish church stuccoed. It happened

that the governor was a member of the board of trustees of the parish, St. Leo's. It also was a fact that the bishop had very strong dislike of stuccoed buildings. When he learned the identity of the driver who was offering the ride the bishop told the governor that what had happened to the church in Lusk was in abominable taste and was against his wishes. When Bishop Newell related this incident in his reminiscences he concluded, "The governor, sterling gentlemen that he was, took the rebuke quietly, but later recalled the incident and had a good laugh and said that all he wanted was to do the bishop a favor and ended up being lectured like a school boy. (Newell, "Reminiscences")

## **Character of Bishop McGovern**

In many dioceses of the United States priest could aspire to become Monsignors, an honor that was conferred on some priests in recognition of their contributions in the service of the Church. Before more recent times this honor was considered to be of more importance than it has been since the changes in many aspects of the Church. Bishops could present names of outstanding priests in a given diocese, to the Holy See and recommend that the men be named Domestic Prelates, that is, "an honorary distinction conferred by the Holy See on clergy in any in any part of the world; the recipient is thereby constituted a member of the Pontifical Family with certain ornamental privileges; e.g. his dress approximates to that of a bishop outside his diocese...His style in English is Right Rev.

Monsignor.">1947>10 Bishop McGovern was not impressed and he did not ask the Holy See to confer the honor on any of his priests throughout the years during which he governed the diocese. He had inherited a Monsignor, one who had been honored by Bishop Keane,

namely Monsignor Hugh Cumiskey, the pastor of St. Lawrence O'Toole in Laramie, otherwise he would have nothing to do with the honor. (Newell, "Reminiscences")

Occasionally a situation developed which gave the bishop an opportunity to exercise his pastoral ministry. One evening Father Hartmann was away from the rectory on some mission. His young assistant, Father John Meyer, was left on duty answering calls. Two couples from Loveland, Colorado arrived at the rectory and asked to see a priest. Father Meyer admitted them and learned that one of the couples wanted to get married. The Assistant asked the standard questions, but unsure of himself, he went to the bishop's quarters and sought some guidance. The bishop informed him that he should call the priest in Loveland and learn what he could about the couple. After the conversation with the Loveland priest Father Meyer asked more questions but still unsure of himself approached the bishop again. The response was memorable; he was asked why he didn't ask more questions and then the laconic remark, "The good Lord knows you ask enough normally." Finally the bishop approached the couple asked some more pertinent question, then granted a dispensation for a mixed marriage, told Father Meyer to fill out the necessary papers and marry the couple. (Meyer, 13)

As the diocese matured the bishop with the cooperation of the pastors of the larger parishes, especially those with schools, requested religious superiors of congregations of women to send Sisters to teach in the parochial schools in Wyoming. He recruited a few Ursuline Sisters to take charge of the Bishop's residence. In 1948 there were eight Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Casper; four Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth in Sheridan; nine Sisters of St. Francis teaching the Indians girls at St. Stephen's Mission; nine Sisters of another branch of

Franciscans who staffed St. Joseph's Children's Home in Torrington; and after 1933, twenty-two Dominican Sisters from Sinsinawa, Wisconsin in Cheyenne. There can be little doubt to Bishop McGovern the services of these dedicated religious women for their contributions to the spiritual welfare of the Catholics of Wyoming. There are no available records that would shed light on the meetings of the bishop with the Sisters on the occasions when he visited them on Confirmation tours. One report has survived that would indicate that his visits with the Sisters at St. Mary's in Cheyenne were happy occasions when the bishop would delight the nuns with his loud laugh and the stories that he would tell. The remark indicates that there was another side to the stern and aloof bishop, one that was rarely seen. (Newell, "Reminiscences")

Taciturn, quiet and reserved with his priests, he was the soul of informality with the laity, entertaining them with stories of his experiences and travels. He had an unusual memory for names and would always inquire about absent members of the family. There were a number of Italian families in Cheyenne in his time and he had a special concern for them and interest in visiting them. He also visited and was welcome in many non-Catholic homes. (Newell, "Reminiscences")

Bishop McGovern appreciated the help given the Church by the fraternal order of the Knights of Columbus. He noted in his history of the diocese that they had always proved themselves to be a strong arm of the bishop and considered it a privilege to carry out his orders. Members of the Order in the parishes in which there were councils

and throughout the diocese, they have rendered helpful service in many ways. (McGovern, 24)

The bishop realized that as a public figure he was expected to be active in community affairs. He took his place in civic life and was involved social and charitable works. He was often called upon to serve on committees and was invited to deliver an address to the members of clubs. In 1940 members of Kiwanis Club of Casper awarded him a medal for outstanding service to the community. The speaker on the occasion made special reference to the establishment of St. Joseph's Children's Home. The award was made by the vote of all Kiwanians throughout Wyoming. The recognition was a source of satisfaction to the bishop.

Another award which pleased him very much was the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws conferred by his alma mater, Creighton University on the occasion of the golden jubilee of that University. He delivered the principal address on the occasion. Recognition by the Church was especially pleasing. When he celebrated the Silver Jubilee of his episcopal ordination he received congratulatory messages from the Holy Father, Pope Pius XI, the Apostolic Delegate, the Archbishop of New York, Patrick Cardinal Hayes, and other members of the hierarchy. He was named Assistant at the Pontifical Throne, with the title of Count of the Apostolic Palace.

### **McGovern's Last Trip**

After the final session of the synod the bishops and priests returned to their residences and resumed the ordinary activities of their ministries. The two bishops were adjusting to their situation and, it seems that Bishop Newell was gaining the confidence of his colleague. Bishop

McGovern's health had not been robust throughout the thirty-six years of his episcopate, consequently, he depended more and more on his coadjutor. As he reviewed the progress of the building programs in the diocese he must have been pleased. He was especially relieved when ground was broken for DePaul in 1950.

In the summer of that year he told Bishop Newell that he would like to preside at the laying of the cornerstone of the new church in Gillette and that he would appreciate it if the coadjutor would drive him to that city. Because he had taken a special interest in the proposed church in Buffalo, he would like to visit that city so that he could see how the project of building a church there was progressing. Satisfied that all concerned were moving along with the project he continued on her journey to Gillette. This excursion to Buffalo and Gillette was the last of any consequence in the diocese.

Of all the programs initiated by Bishop McGovern one was of special interest to the bishop, namely the plans for a new church in Buffalo. The reason for this fact that a prominent resident of that city had made a promise of a substantial contribution to the building program. Count and Countess Frederick Thorne-Rider came from Marseilles in 1936 and settled in Buffalo. They had been ennobled by Victor Emmanuel III, King of Italy, in 1922 as a reward in grateful recognition for their accomplishments on behalf of the University of Perugia and in 1931 Pope Pius XI appointed him a member of the "Cape and Sword." The Count was moved to make another benefaction, this time in favor of the parish in Buffalo. When the fundraising campaign was announced the Count promised to contribute \$25,000 provided that the new church should adjoin his residence which he intended to donate to the parish of St. John the Baptist. The pastor of St. John's, Rev. Alphonse Grannan

and members of the parish preferred to build the church on a different site. The Count was upset by this decision. He canceled his pledge and moved to Sheridan, Wyoming. He let it be known that he thought that the pastor Reverend Alphonsus Grannan and the parishioners did not appreciate his generosity.

The bishop was understandably disappointed in this turn of events. In 1948 he requested Bishop Newell to visit the Count in Sheridan, and inquire about the promised contribution. Bishop Newell called upon the Count and his wife in Sheridan and asked if they intended to make the promised donation of \$25,000 for the church. The Count informed the bishop that he had become disenchanted with Father Grannan and members of St. John's parish because of their ingratitude and, consequently, had voided his pledge. Nothing more could be accomplished under the circumstances. Henceforth, the bishop gave his unstinted moral support to Father Grannan and his parishioners and their endeavor to build a new church in Buffalo. In the event, the pastor and trustees selected a more desirable location for a new church.>1947>11

### **Death of Bishop McGovern, November 8, 1951**

For some time Bishop McGovern's health had been deteriorating. The trip to Buffalo and Gillette must have been exhausting for him. During the rest of the year 1950 he curtailed his activities more and more. He cut down his daily walks and began to spend more time in bed. His burden was lightened by the comforting companionship of the coadjutor bishop and the Franciscan Sisters (The Ursulines had withdrawn in 1949). Bishop Newell spent a great deal of time conversing with him or reading to him and the Sisters attended to his needs.

In early November Bishop Newell was scheduled to go to Chicago to attend a meeting of the National Confraternity of Christian Doctrine and to chair one of the group sessions. Considering the growing weakness of Bishop McGovern, the coadjutor thought that he should cancel the trip and remain in Cheyenne. However, the ailing bishop insisted that he fulfill his commitment. When he took his leave he must have thought that it was the last time he would see the bishop alive and he was right.

On November 8, 1951, the fourth Bishop of Cheyenne died quietly about mid-morning while sitting in his chair with no one in attendance. When he did not come down at lunch time the Sisters checked his room and found him dead in his chair. No doubt they had been briefed about the procedure to be followed in the event of the Bishop's death. The Sisters informed the diocesan authorities. They in turn endeavored to contact Bishop Newell in Chicago. This was no easy task because it was difficult to locate the bishop since so much was going on in that city. Eventually Bishop Newell was informed and he passed the news on to Archbishop Vehr who was in Chicago at the time. Together they made plans for the funeral. When it was time to select a bishop to preach the eulogy at the funeral Mass, Bishop Newell thought that the man to be invited was Most Reverend Joseph H. Schlarman, Bishop of Peoria, only to learn that he was unable to accept because he was not far from death himself. (He died on November 10.) They decided that the archbishop would celebrate the Pontifical Mass and that Bishop Newell would deliver the sermon.

Ten bishops traveled to Cheyenne to attend the funeral and hear the sermon preached by the man who knew very much about his predecessor, namely Hubert M. Newell. There would have been more bishops in attendance if it were not

for the fact that most of the bishops had made arrangements to proceed from Chicago to Washington, D.C. to attend the annual bishop's meeting. The preparations for the obsequies were minimal because Bishop McGovern had made all the necessary arrangements for his burial including the choice of his headstone. After his body had been laid to rest Bishop Newell met with the diocesan consultors and renewed the appointment of diocesan officials.

The man who was shepherd of the Catholic flock in Wyoming for thirty-nine years was somewhat of an enigma, that is a person not readily understood, one who exhibits an incomprehensible mixture of opposed qualities. However, there is no denying that as Bishop of Cheyenne he guided the diocese toward maturity in a vast State that did not easily lend itself to cohesiveness. He carefully recruited priests to guide the destinies of the parishes and administer the sacraments to the faithful and give them the guidance in spiritual matters they needed. The bishop made sure that there was a sound financial structure in the diocese. He nurtured his own spiritual life by a daily regimen of prayer and selective reading. He was not overly concerned about the comforts of his life; his eating habits were governed by a stomach ailment. He was deeply grateful for the financial assistance given by the authorities of the Catholic Extension Society. He compensated their generosity by sending all of his episcopal robes, except the cassock in which he was to be buried, to missionary bishops. He never amassed a fortune and bequeathed the money he had, less than \$500, to the diocese. One of his decisive contributions to the diocese was his invitation to his coadjutor to take up his residence in the Bishop's House thus providing his successor with the inestimable opportunity of gaining a very practical knowledge of the diocese that he was destined to govern. A final note that

many help to understand the man was that made by his successor when he wrote, “He was not given to idle words of praise but he did express himself many times in the final year or two as thankful for the kindness shown him.” It was fitting that the bishop was buried in the cemetery, the proper care of which he had provided, to that his remains could rest under the shadow of the Gaelic Cross that he had donated. (Newell, “Reminiscences”)

## NOTES 1947-1951

- >1947>1 Bishop Newell’s “Reminiscences.”
- >1947>2 Bishop Newell’s “Reminiscences,” 12. See Gilmore, 434.  
There is an extended draft about this hospital negotiation in the Archives of the Sisters of Charity, Leavenworth, Kansas. Ed.
- >1947>3 Archives of the Sisters of Charity, Leavenworth, Kansas.
- >1947>4 The information about the building programs was gleaned from a summary that was published in the first issue of *The Wyoming Catholic Register*, April 11, 1952, p. 12. Msgr. John Meyer also contributed information.
- >1947>5 *Statutes of the Diocese of Cheyenne: Second Synod* (Cheyenne: Wyoming Labor Journal Publishing, 1948). *Passim*.
- >1947>6 Rev. William Delaney and Rev. Charles Bartek were excused. Three Jesuits stationed at St. Stephen’s Mission and four Conventual Franciscans, three in Douglas and one in Lusk, were not invited.
- >1947>7 This information was contributed by Msgr. John Meyer, who, as a young priest, attended the synod.
- >1947>8 See Meyer, 4, 50; and *The Official Catholic Directory, 1948*, 400.
- >1947>9 Msgr. John Meyer was the source for this information. See also *The Official Catholic Directory 1915*, 325.
- >1947>10 Donald Attwater, ed., *A Catholic Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1956), 155.

>1947>11 See Barbara Butkay Ketcham, *Holy Name Centennial, 1885-1985* (Sheridan, Wyoming: Quick Printing, 1985), 31.

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Harold Stansell, S.J.

**HUBERT MICHAEL NEWELL**  
**A BISHOP ON THE MOVE**  
**1951-1978**

According to a provision in Canon Law a coadjutor bishop becomes the bishop of the diocese for which he had been appointed immediately upon the vacancy of the episcopal see. Consequently, Hubert M. Newell formally took over the administration of the diocese of Cheyenne when he learned about the death of his predecessor on November 8, 1951. After the final obsequies for Bishop McGovern, the fifth bishop of Cheyenne met with the diocesan consultors, namely, Very Reverend Thomas F. O'Reilly, Vicar General, Reverends James A. Hartmann, Chancellor, Sylvester A. Welsh, John J. O'Connor and Jerome Denk. After consultation, the bishop renewed the appointment of diocesan officials.>1951>1

The bishop was in a position to implement plans that he had formulated during his four years as coadjutor. Not the least of those plans was the determination to provide a diocesan newspaper for Catholics in Wyoming. His Confirmation tours during those years made him fully aware of the need of an instrument to create some kind of unity among widely scattered cities and towns in the State. His acquaintance with the members of the staff of the *Denver Catholic Register*, especially, Monsignor Matthew J. Smith, Editor and Manager, facilitated his efforts to make a diocesan newspaper a reality in Wyoming. He appointed Reverend James Ruddy, a priest who had recently come to the diocese after serving two years in the ministry in Cardiff, Wales, editor. Father Ruddy and his associates with, no doubt, the generous assistance of

members of the staff of the Denver paper, prepared the first edition of *The Wyoming Catholic Register*, for publication April 11, 1952, just over five months after the death of Bishop McGovern.

The Wyoming newspaper was modeled after its Denver counterpart. The first issue consisted of two sections; one of eighteen pages dealing with developments in Wyoming; a second part of four pages, reported on national and international news, with special emphasis on the Vatican of interest to Catholics. Bishop Newell reminded his readers that April 11<sup>th</sup> was a special day because it was the fortieth anniversary of the episcopal ordination of Bishop McGovern. He invited members of his flock to join him in dedicating the initial issue of the *Register* to his predecessor's blessed memory.

The paper published a copy of Bishop Newell's official letter explaining the reason for the publication. It stated that the *Register* was destined to become a powerful means for the advancement of God's kingdom in the diocese. He added, "One of the greatest effects of the *Register*, however, will be the forging of stronger ties among the people of our own diocese. In Wyoming, with its great distances and its sparse population, a diocesan newspaper can be the means of uniting the faithful and bringing them into closer contact with the activities of other parishes and with the programs of the diocese." >1951>2

In retrospect, it is clear that the objectives were achieved. Before the publication of the paper it was difficult for the average Catholic to know about the events taking place in the diocese. Certainly, parishioners in Gillette would know little or nothing about activities in Evanston; nor would Catholics in Laramie be knowledgeable about the state of the Church in Sheridan. The diocesan newspaper made possible a cohesion that had been sadly lacking among Catholics in Wyoming prior to April 11, 1952. Thereafter, there would be an exchange of news which made it possible for those interested to keep informed about developments in the parishes throughout the diocese. A very important aspect of the weekly newspaper was the fact that people were informed about the activities of their bishop. Routine reports about his travels in the diocese to

administer the Sacrament of Confirmation and/or dedicate a new church, school, or parish hall were regularly reported.

A second project high on the list of Bishop Newell's priorities was his intention to persuade Catholic women to take part in parish and diocesan activities. This matter was a concern of the bishops of the United States who, in September, 1919, had voted to establish a national council staffed with officers who would coordinate the efforts of Catholic men and women who wished to promote Christian life and further the cause of Christ and His church. The bishops chose to name the organization of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. The officers established a number of departments to facilitate their administration one of which was that of Lay Organizations. After a few months the founders decided to divide that department into two councils, one for men the other for women. The latter proved to be more prominent, probably due to the fact that Catholic men could be members of the Knights of Columbus and/or Serra International. The bishops envisioned a Council of Catholic Women in each diocese which would, eventually, affiliate with the National Council which was created to unite Catholic organizations and channel to diocesan information and material in the fields of religion, education, family life, social action and international relations.>1951>3

After the first of the year (1952) Bishop Newell invited a number of ladies living in Cheyenne and neighboring towns to attend a meeting on February 13, 1962 to consider the feasibility of establishing a Council of Catholic Women in Wyoming. At the meeting he outlined the background of and the need for such an organization in the diocese. He told the ladies that the purpose of such a council was to bring unity and harmony into the lives and works of Catholic women. Moreover, he indicated that such an organization would make it possible for the ladies to be active in their parishes and thus be of great assistance to the pastors. The ladies reacted enthusiastically and proceeded to organize a council in the Cheyenne Deanery, that is, a district of the diocese presided over by a dean appointed by the bishop after consultation with the priests who exercised their ministry in that part of the diocese. The Cheyenne Council served as a model for the other deaneries, namely,

Casper, Rock Springs, Sheridan, and Thermopolis. In a short time councils were formed in those districts. On October 17, 1952, Bishop Newell announced that he would apply for affiliation with the National Council of Catholic Women. It must have been a source of great satisfaction for him to be able to announce on January 16, 1953, that there would be a State Convention of the Diocesan Council to be held in Casper on May 12<sup>th</sup>. A necessary preliminary to the event would be a meeting of the members of each Deanery Council to make suggestions for a program for the convention and select delegates to attend that assembly. The ladies responded with enthusiasm; some seven hundred women attended the deanery meetings which were convened prior to May 1, 1953. Finally, on the twelfth day of May three hundred delegates attended the first State convention of the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women. The bishop and twenty-five parish priests attended the meetings, contributing their moral support and encouragement.

Following guide lines provided by the officers of the National Council of Catholic Women, the ladies elected members to serve on committees (later designated commissions) recommended by the national office, namely, Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Apostolic, Spiritual Development of Home and Family, Legislative, Libraries and Literature Organization and Development, Community Activities, Youth, Home, and School, Civil Defense. In time, the members of the Wyoming contingent found it difficult to staff each of the ten committees, probably because the number of available women was quite limited in comparison with dioceses with a greater number of Catholics. Consequently, the officers requested the national office to sanction a reduction of the number of committees from ten to five.>1951>4

The highlight of the convention was the election of officers for the year 1953-1954. The delegates chose the following:

President.....Mrs. Julian Carpender,  
Cheyenne  
1<sup>st</sup> Vice President.....Mrs. L.F. Holscher, Casper

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President.....Mrs. J.H. Trusheim,  
Thermopolis  
3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President.....Mrs. Don Beaton, Sheridan  
4<sup>th</sup> Vice President.....Mrs. Glenn Staunton, Rock  
Springs  
5<sup>th</sup> Vice President.....Mrs. Earl Shawver, Laramie  
Secretary.....Mrs. Bard Ferrall, Cheyenne  
Treasurer.....Mrs. John Tripeny, Casper  
Historian.....Mrs. J.J. Hickey,  
Cheyenne>1951>5

These ladies provided a solid foundation for the growth of an organization which was destined to prove of inestimable value for Catholicism in Wyoming. The delegates of the deaneries who attended the State conventions had an opportunity to make new friends and become aware of the activities of Catholic women throughout the diocese.

An interesting innovation in the activity of the council was the deanery tour, that is, a week during which the bishop and the president of the council, usually with a guest speaker, visited each deanery in the diocese. A random example of the tour indicates how exacting the trip could be. One such journey started with a meeting with the ladies in Cheyenne on a Monday followed by a drive to Saratoga and attendance at a gathering there on Tuesday. That afternoon the Bishop and his associates traveled to Douglas to attend an assembly there on Wednesday thence to Sheridan to attend a meeting on Thursday, finally, completing the tour at Greybull on Friday. Any person who is knowledgeable about the distances between towns in Wyoming can appreciate the Bishop's dedication and his willingness to support the members of the council by the encouragement he gave the ladies to their endeavors. The presidents of the council expressed their appreciation of the Bishop's support when they wrote the following in the dedication of the "mini-history" presented in the centennial year of the diocese, 1987,

To our beloved founder, Bishop Hubert M. Newell, who set us on this journey of faith in 1953, and who was our guiding light until your retirement. ... Your faith in the Catholic Women of Wyoming helped us to make the Council a force to be reckoned with. ...you will always have a special place in our hearts, and our undying gratitude for being our friend, as well as our spiritual leader...

>1951>6

While the organization of the Council of Catholic Women was being developed, Bishop Newell petitioned the Holy See to honor three priests of the diocese by naming them Domestic Prelates, that is, honorary members of the papal household with the title Right Reverend Monsignor. It has been noted that Bishop McGovern thought that the honor was meaningless and did not ask the Holy See to bestow the honor on any of the priests of the diocese during his thirty-nine years as Ordinary. Bishop Newell's request was handled expeditiously by the Roman officials. The announcement was made in March, 1952 that the three priests were so honored; they were Thomas F. Reilly, Vicar General and pastor of St. Anthony's parish, Casper, John McDevitt, J.C.D., and pastor of St. Laurence O'Toole, Laramie, and James A. Hartmann, Chancellor and rector of St. Mary's Cathedral, Cheyenne. After the necessary robes, the bishop presided at the investiture of Monsignor O'Reilly on April 13<sup>th</sup>, Monsignor McDevitt, April 20<sup>th</sup>, and Monsignor Hartmann, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 1952. Henceforth, the presence of the Domestic Prelates at Liturgical and other functions enhanced the ceremonies and the occasions. It is quite certain that parishioners of the three parishes deeply appreciated the honor bestowed on their pastors.

The month following the investiture of the Monsignori was notable for the dedication of DePaul Hospital which took place on June 20, 1952. Bishop Newell was aware of the difficulties that had been encountered by his predecessor in his efforts to provide such a facility for the people of Cheyenne. He knew about the Bishop's correspondence with Mother Francesca, the superior of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, which

began in June, 1945. He was also acquainted with the transactions that had taken place regarding the acquisition of the necessary property. He shared Bishop McGovern's concern about the delays made necessary by the shortage of Sisters in the community and the lack of funds in the treasury of the Sisters of Charity. The two bishops breathed a sigh of relief when workers started construction in 1950. The Sisters had finally decided that the hospital had to be built and staffed to fulfill the commitment they had made to Bishop McGovern. They provided the major portion of the finances. However, they were mindful and grateful for the financial assistance and support given by the people of Cheyenne. Their gratitude was duly recorded in the centennial history of the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth in the words, "Never have residents been more generous in offering personal services in the erection of a building." Construction progressed satisfactorily and was finished by June 20, 1952 when Bishop Newell presided at the dedication of the new hospital. The first patients were admitted on July 2<sup>nd</sup>.

One of the more notable units in the hospital was the well designed and artistic chapel made possible by the generous contribution of Mrs. Nellie Derr whose son, Cloise, had been fascinated by the Sisters so much so that he wished to do all in his power to assist the sisters in making the hospital in Cheyenne a reality. However, the young man died in 1945. The mother wished the chapel to be a memorial in honor of her son, and his name is memorialized on a plaque in the vestibule.

When Bishop Newell succeeded as the Ordinary of the Diocese of Cheyenne he automatically became the chairman of the Board of Directors of St. Joseph's Children's Home, a position that had been cherished by Bishop McGovern for twenty-seven years. By 1951 the Home had become an important establishment in Wyoming supported by the generosity of Catholic and non-Catholic citizens of the State. However, there was constant need for financial assistance. To meet this need the Bishop appointed a priest of the diocese and designated him Assistant Superintendent. The major task of this priest was to solicit funds by preaching in the parish churches throughout the State. During

Bishop McGovern's regime the sisters who staffed the Home prepared material describing the needs of the institution to help the fund raising efforts. Bishop Newell relieved the Sisters of this responsibility. He hired a professional advertising agency and commissioned it to prepare a printed brochure publicizing the activities of the Home and the dedicated work of the Sisters who cared for the children.

In the meantime, a number of Bishop McGovern's friends contributed to a fund which made possible the purchase of an eight foot statue of St Joseph embracing two children to be placed on the front lawn of the Home as a tribute to the memory of the bishop whose vision and determination had made the institution a reality. The statue was ordered from a firm in Italy. Bishop Newell planned a fitting celebration for the dedication of the statue. He invited Archbishop Urban J. Ver to honor the occasion by presiding at the dedication. The ceremony took place on August 3, 1952. Seven hundred people from Wyoming, Colorado, and Nebraska attended the event. Later that evening a dinner was served to the guests; the Governor of Wyoming, The Honorable Frank Barrett, delivered an address.>1951>8

Four months later, November, 1952, Bishop Newell announced plans for the remodeling and modernizing of the kitchen facilities and providing new food preparation equipment as well as new dining rooms and storage space. Moreover, it was imperative that showers, wash rooms, and new laundry machinery be furnished. Those responsible for providing these important needs planned an addition which would be connected to the main building by an enclosed passageway. The architectural details were entrusted to the planning of John K. Monroe, the Denver architect who had designed a number of new buildings in the diocese. The contract for construction was awarded to the Fullen Company. The necessary funds were solicited throughout Wyoming. It is pleasant to note that a substantial bequest came from Harriet Thorne-Rider to the amount of \$100,000.>1951>9 It would seem that Bishop Newell made a favorable impression on that lady when he visited the Thorne-Riders on a less auspicious occasion. The new facilities were ready for use by July 4, 1954 and were properly dedicated on that day

which also commemorated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St. Joseph's Children's Home.

*The Wyoming Catholic Register* fulfilled the purpose of making its readers aware of the activities of their co-religionists throughout the state as well as the contemporary status of their Church. For example, readers learned that their Church was alive and well; the total number of Catholics was almost 50,000, a gain of approximately 50% in a decade.

The building programs that had been launched after the Second World War included plans to provide for the educational needs of a growing population. New schools were constructed in a number of cities. Old St. Mary's in Cheyenne was replaced and a new structure built providing sixteen classrooms. This school was dedicated by Bishop Newell, August 31, 1952. A catechetical center was constructed for St. Joseph's parish in Cheyenne for the Sisters of Victory Noll. >1951>10 The parish of St. Laurence O'Toole in Laramie was graced with a school staffed by seven Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth. St. Joseph's parish in Rawlins was fortunate to have six Sisters of Loretta at the Foot of the Cross to staff the new parochial school. The Church in Rock Springs seemed to be thriving; the two parishes in that city opened schools; Our Lady of Sorrows with three Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth and Sts. Cyril and Methodius with four Sisters from the same congregation. The significant increase of the number of religious teachers augmented by the twelve hospital Sisters, Daughters of the Divine Redeemer who staffed the Weston County Memorial Hospital in Newcastle, enhanced the Catholic presence in the State. Catholic children in smaller communities were not neglected. Pastors invited Sisters to come to their parishes during the summer vacation to teach children for a few weeks. *The Register*, September 19, 1952, reported that 1,500 children had been instructed during the summer.

A number of other interesting items that were newsworthy were recorded in the paper during the first year, namely, the fact that the collection for The Catholic University in Washington D.C., an annual event throughout the United States in Catholic parishes, was taken up for

the first time in Wyoming during the month of July, 1952. The officers of the fraternal order of the Knights of Columbus announced that the Knights had initiated some two hundred candidates. Bishop Newell published a letter declaring a crusade for converts to make readers aware of the opportunity they had to invite prospective converts to learn more about the Catholic Church. There were signs for a brighter future for the diocese in the announcement that there were sixteen seminarians studying for the priesthood.

It is evident that the diocese was not stagnant. Many of the accomplishments during the first year of Bishop Newell's episcopate had their beginning during the last years of his predecessor's regime. The fifth bishop of Cheyenne added his remarkable ability to capitalize on those beginnings and see them through to the desired end, while at the same time giving new impetus to projects that appealed to his pastoral sense and which had been developing for some time. One such project was the Newman Club at the University of Wyoming. The Club, an organization serving the religious needs of the Catholic students attending the University, had been established by the Very Reverend John T. Nicholson, V.G., pastor of St. Laurence O'Toole parish in Laramie, 1921-1935. His successor as pastor and chaplain of the Newman Club was Reverend John McDevitt, J.C.D., later Monsignor. He was a vivacious and dedicated priest who enhanced the status of the club by establishing, with the approval of Bishop McGovern, a Catholic School of Religion which with the approbation of the officials of the university granted nine hours of transfer credits to students who satisfactorily completed the course taught by Father McDevitt.>1951>11 The school began to operate in January, 1938. It furnished a good foundation for the further development of the Newman Club of the university. It was an interesting fact that about that time the Newman apostolate was entering a new phase of its development, gaining recognition and support that had been lacking due to a controversy challenging the movement as a threat to Catholic colleges and universities. In 1952 the Newman Club Federation was given a full-time executive secretary who was appointed to direct the activities of the Newman Clubs from a troubled past was made clear when national

officers and regional chaplains held a three day meeting in Boulder, Colorado late December, 1952. One of the prominent speakers at the assembly was Monsignor John McDevitt of Laramie, Wyoming. A measure of the success of the Newman apostolate was indicated in the fact that thirty-four members were initiated into the club in February, 1953. In due time Bishop Newell would give eminent proof of his full support of the Newman apostolate.

A number of communities besides Laramie laid claim on the Bishop's attention. Over the years cities and towns in Wyoming with a significant number of Catholics could expect to have a resident pastor. Other places had to depend on occasional visits from the nearest priest. In fact, a number of pastors in Wyoming were responsible for a Mission or Missions in less populated towns in their vicinity. In time, when an increase in the Catholic population warranted it, a resident pastor would be assigned to minister to the faithful in a given community.

A town that merited the attention of Bishop McGovern in 1949 was Superior, a coal mining town east of Rock Springs and a mission of Our Lady of Sorrows parish. The Bishop announced that Superior would thenceforth have a parish with Reverend William E. Delaney as pastor. This decision was made public in November, 1949 at a time when the building boom was well under way in the diocese. Sufficient funds to finance construction, however, were not immediately available. Father Delaney had the task of acquiring the necessary resources. The undertaking received support in the form of a donation from what would appear to have been an unlikely source, namely a check for \$5,000 donated by Mr. Frank DeMarco of Little Neck, New York. The check was given through the good offices of the Extension Society as a memorial for Mr. DeMarco's wife. Construction on the church in Superior was completed by the middle of December, 1952 when it was dedicated by Bishop Newell and placed under the patronage of St. Vivian. Eventually it became evident that due to the fact that coal mining was somewhat unpredictable, the Catholics of Superior were not able to support a resident pastor. By 1968 St. Vivian's parish once again became a Mission of Our Lady of Sorrows, Rock Springs.

Catholics in Lovell fared better than their coreligionists in Superior; their church, under the patronage of St. Joseph, was raised to the status of a parish, in February, 1953, Reverend John Brady, pastor. Eight months later, in October, Our Lady of Peace in Pinedale was designated a parish with Reverend Charles Bartek, resident pastor. About the same time Bishop Newell and his advisers responded to requests of Catholics living in the vicinity of Clark, a town northwest of Powell near the Montana border, and designated Clark a Mission of St. Barbara's parish in Powell. The petitioners reacted with enthusiasm and within a year a very practical chapel was built. Bishop Newell blessed the chapel on October 6, 1954 placing it under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin with the title of Our Lady of the Valley.

The final decision to establish a new parish or mission was the prerogative of the Bishop of the diocese. However, bishops of necessity, relied on reports and suggestions made by local pastors. An example of the initiative of a pastor in this matter was the action taken by the pastor of St. Anthony's parish in Casper, Very Reverend Thomas O'Reilly, Vicar General of the diocese, and, later a Monsignor, who realized that there was a significant increase in the number of Catholics making their home in Casper. The need for a second parish became evident. To prepare for that eventuality he obtained ten acres of land on the south side of CY on 20<sup>th</sup> street. He paid the reasonable price of \$1,000 an acre. The transaction took place in July, 1949. No further action was possible at the time because the necessary funds were not available. Father O'Reilly was no stranger to Casper; he had been pastor of St. Anthony's for fourteen years. It is not surprising that he was aware of the fact that the United States Government had adopted a policy of making war surplus obtainable by interested parties at a reasonable expenditure. It happened that a military chapel which had been located on the property of a base in Casper which had been used by servicemen stationed there during the second world war was being offered to whomever cared to purchase it. St. Anthony's parish offered the government \$17,050 for the chapel which was named Little Chapel of the Sagebrush. It then became necessary to move the building to the site that had been acquired earlier.

The task of moving the chapel was a challenging one. However, Mr. Fred Trost, owner of Midwest Movers, Inc. was equal to the task. When the chapel was in place on its new location its name was changed to Our Lady of Fatima and was, temporarily, a mission of St. Anthony's parish. In 1954 it became a parish with Reverend Alphonsus H. Grannan as the first pastor.>1951>12

It is clear that the Catholic Church became more visible in a number of cities and towns in Wyoming during the first two years of Bishop Newell's episcopate. Many of the achievements of that period were the culmination of building projects that had been undertaken while Bishop Newell was coadjutor. It was gratifying that the momentum had accelerated and a number of goals had been attained, thanks to the cooperation of the laity and the leadership of the parish priests. It must have been noticeable that there was better rapport between the bishop and the priests of the diocese.

An event that enhanced the visibility of Catholicism in Wyoming was the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the fraternal order of the Knights of Columbus. It may be recalled that the order was not a favorite of Monsignor Hugh Cumiskey, early and long time pastor of St. Laurence O'Toole parish in Laramie, who requested the national officials of the Knights to revoke the charter of the Laramie Council. Sometime later the charter was restored and the order prospered. In fact one of the order's more enthusiastic supporters was another Monsignor of Laramie, John McDevitt, J.C.D. The first Council of the Knights of Columbus in Wyoming was organized in Cheyenne and received its charter July 12, 1903. Subsequently, twelve more councils were chartered in Wyoming. With understandable pride the members and their wives and supporters celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the introduction of the order in Wyoming for three days, September 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup>, 1953 in Casper. The Order was honored by and grateful for the Bishop's recognition of their existence and the services they rendered in support of Catholicism in the Diocese of Cheyenne.

Five months before the celebration of the jubilee of the Knights of Columbus Catholics in Wyoming were given a striking reminder of the debt they owed to the priests, European and American, who laid a solid foundation for Catholicism in their State. From the time of the establishment of the diocese the bishops necessarily recruited priests to minister to the faithful. Some priests came to Wyoming for reasons of health; others because they desired to serve the Church in what could be considered missionary territory. An example of the universality of the Catholic Church is found in the contributions of European priests who volunteered to come to the United States to exercise their ministry in newly established dioceses. The generosity of priests who came from Ireland to serve in many dioceses in the United States is legendary. The number of priests from other countries could not match the total from Ireland but many of those who did come served with distinction. One in particular became a legend in southern Wyoming in his time, namely, Reverend Henry Schellinger who came to Cheyenne in 1906 with a classmate, Reverend Nicholas Endres. The former was a native of Holland, the latter of Belgium. Both men studied for the priesthood in the American College at Louvain, Belgium, a seminary established and financed by some American bishops to train European seminarians for parochial service in what were considered the American Missions. Presumably, Bishop James J. Keane of Cheyenne recruited Fathers Schellinger and Endres to exercise their sacerdotal ministry in his diocese. A younger brother of Henry, Gerard, came to the diocese somewhat later.

Henry Schellinger's first assignment was to the Cathedral in Cheyenne. Shortly thereafter, the Bishop sent him to minister to the Catholics in Carneyville and Dietz in the Sheridan area, towns which were sites of coal mining. Bishop Keane's successor, Patrick A. McGovern, recalled Father Schellinger and appointed him pastor of Immaculate Conception parish in Green River, June, 1913. The faithful in that parish were used to seeing priests come and go over the years. In fact, there had been twenty-eight priests exercising the ministry in Green River in forty-five years, from 1868-1913. >1951>13 No one would have predicted that the newly appointed pastor would keep his position for forty years before

announcing his retirement for reasons of health in April, 1953. During his tenure he remodeled and enlarged the church building, purchased property for future development, built a substantial parish rectory, and with an eye to a more comfortable existence, planned it so that he could offer the upstairs rooms to renters who were permitted to use the kitchen and dining room facilities, an arrangement that provided the pastor with his meals.>1951>14

In time, Father Schellinger made friends among those who were associated with the Union Pacific Railroad. The friends facilitated his travels in southern Wyoming. He used the railroad to go to Rock Springs to visit his close friend, Reverend Sylvester A. Welsh, pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows parish in Rock Springs. He also used the railroad to carry him to the Missions in Carbon County where he exercised his ministry taking the place of the priest whose duty it was to visit the places, namely, Reverend Joseph Conrath, pastor of St. Joseph's parish in Rawlins. At times Father Conrath was too ill to travel to his Missions. Later, Father Henry Schellinger would visit Rawlins regularly to spend some time with his younger brother who was assigned to St. Joseph's parish for a time. A Wyoming priest who knew Father Henry Schellinger quite well, Monsignor John Meyer, paid tribute to the Dutch priest when he wrote:

Father came to know the Union Pacific parishes and missions very well. He helped to all the way from Hanna to Evanston. He knew of side trips to Saratoga and Encampment, and he used to talk about a stage trip from Wamsutter to Bags on a July 3<sup>rd</sup>; when the coach was caught in an out of season snow storm, that made for very hard going. Every place he was known, he was respected and loved. Plain he was, but ever the model kind parish priest.>1951>15

The priests of the Rock Springs Deanery hosted a testimonial dinner to honor Father Schellinger at the time of his retirement. No doubt, there were many words of praise and appreciation for his forty years of

priestly service to the Catholics of Green River and the town along the tracks of the Union Pacific Railroad across southern Wyoming. In an emotional response the veteran priest assured all present that he had been happy in their State serving his Church and the people of God for a total of forty-seven years. Father Schellinger retired to Florida where he spent the final months of his life serving as a chaplain to a group of religious women.

The announcement of Father Schellinger's retirement was duly noted in the *Register* which served its purpose as a medium reporting newsworthy developments of interest to Catholics in Wyoming. Bishop Newell used the approaching first anniversary of the appearance of the diocesan newspaper to designate March 22, 1953 "*Register* Sunday." All pastors were urged to encourage the members of their congregations to support the publication.

Readers of the diocesan newspaper were gratified to learn that their bishop was taking an active part in the annual meetings of the Bishops of the United States, later known as the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Bishop Newell's experience as superintendent of parochial schools in Colorado and consultant to the education department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference qualified him to serve on the Episcopal Committee in charge of promoting the work of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. His qualifications were recognized by Most Reverend Edwin V. O'Hara, Bishop of Kansas City, Missouri, Chairman of the Committee who invited the Bishop of Cheyenne to become a member of that body joining Matthew F. Brady, Bishop of Manchester, New Hampshire, William P. O'Connor of Madison, Wisconsin and Joseph M. Gilmore of Helena, Montana. The members of the committee were responsible for promoting the work of the confraternity in a region covering the states of Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma.

The bishop's involvement on the national level did not hinder his efforts to keep pace with developments in his diocese. High on the list of his

priorities for the diocese was his determination to recruit seminarians. The number of those preparing to serve in Wyoming had been increasing since 1948. In that year the Official Catholic Directory recorded that there were six seminarians studying for Cheyenne. Three years later fifteen were enrolled. The number increased to twenty-six in 1954. Of the latter number, four were in a seminary in Ireland. They were Sean A. Farren, Patrick J. McGovern, Cornelius O'Connor, and James O'Neill. Father Farren was destined to serve in the diocese from 1954 to 1978 and continued his ministry in the Archdiocese of San Francisco. Father Patrick McGovern met with an untimely death in an automobile accident in February, 1962. Father O'Connor served the diocese well from 1954 until his death in August, 1977. Father O'Neill, later Monsignor, started his ministry in the Cathedral as an assistant, and eventually, rector. He also served as Vicar General of the diocese succeeding his compatriot in that office, Monsignor Thomas F. O'Reilly who died in March, 1974. Almost ten years later Monsignor O'Neill was transferred from the Cathedral to Casper where he became pastor of St. Anthony's parish. A fifth seminarian, Joseph E. Moroney, finished his studies and preparation in St. Thomas Seminary in Denver.

In 1955, Bishop Newell reviewed the accomplishments of seven and a half years of service in Wyoming with a certain amount of satisfaction. Much had been achieved. However, he realized that much more had to be done. In April, 1955, he announced that he planned to establish a third parish in Cheyenne under the patronage of The Holy Trinity; a parish that had been proposed for East Cheyenne by his predecessor who had purchased property for a church in that part of the city. Later, during the month of May, he announced that he was establishing a parish in Jackson to be placed under the patronage of Our Lady of the Tetons (later the title was changed to Our Lady of the Mountains). The first pastor, Reverend James Doudican, a native of Ireland, would have the responsibility of making the parish a reality.

The review of the status of the diocese made its financial limitations abundantly clear. Bishop Newell decided to establish a solid fiscal foundation by means of a fund-raising campaign. Late in April, 1955, he

requested that pastors read a letter in all parishes and missions on Sunday, May 1<sup>st</sup>, announcing that there would be a major campaign to provide the necessary revenue to finance needed building projects. The minimum goal of the drive was set at one million dollars.

Using techniques developed by fund-raising professionals, the Bishop established a committee and invited T. Joe Cahill of Cheyenne and Timothy J. Mahoney of Casper to serve as co-chairmen. Under their leadership 2,500 volunteer workers would be recruited and commissioned to visit the homes of Catholics and request parishioners to make pledges to contribute whatever they could afford to help meet the quota set for each parish and mission. This information was duly noted in the *Register* in the issues of May 6<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>.

An interesting aspect of the preliminaries of the campaign was the publication of an article in the May 20<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Register* listing the needs of the parishes and missions. Readers were given a comprehensive view of the status of the diocese as well as knowledge of the more important needs of the churches. Catholics learned that thirteen pastors hoped to benefit from the campaign by receiving financial assistance to make it possible for them to reduce their indebtedness. The pastors were Monsignor James A. Hartmann, St. Mary's Cathedral, Reverend James Ruddy, St. Joseph's Cheyenne, Monsignor John McDevitt, St. Laurence O'Toole's Laramie, Reverend Paul Hellrung, St. Rose's, Torrington, Reverend Terence McGovern, Corpus Christi, Newcastle, Reverend Francis T. Penny, St. Anthony's, Cody, Reverend Thomas Cleary, St. Helen (Mission), Clark, Reverend Adolph Pate, St. Margaret's, Riverton, Reverend Cyril Hmelovsky, St. Mary Magdalen's, Worland, Reverend John M. Meyer, St. Joseph's, Rawlins, Very Reverend S. A. Welsh, Our Lady of Sorrows, Rock Springs, Reverend Aloys Diekemper, M.S.C., St. Vivian's Superior.

Living quarters in a number of the parishes were somewhat less than adequate. Ten pastors hoped to be able to build suitable rectories. The article in the *Register* named the following: Monsignor John McDevitt, Laramie, Fathers, Paul Hellrung, Torrington, A.H. Grannan, Our Lady of

Fatima, Casper, Bartholomew Svete, Hartville, James Powers, Buffalo, Terence McGovern, Newcastle, Frederick Kimmett, Sheridan, Philip Krass, Thermopolis, S.A. Welsh, Rock Springs, Francis T. Penny, Cody. Leonard Wren O.F.M.Conv. was a resident priest in Wheatland, a mission of Douglas; he hoped to be able to obtain a building near the church to be used as a rectory.

The revitalization of parish life in the diocese prompted twelve pastors to plan to build parish halls. These priests counted on the success of the fund-raising campaign to assist them to finalize plans for the halls. The parishes were: Douglas, Glenrock ( a mission of Douglas), Hartville, Buffalo, Gillette, Lander, Lovell, Powell, Thermopolis, Evanston, and Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Rock Springs. The recently established parish in Cheyenne, Holy Trinity, with Reverend William E.Delaney as pastor, hoped for a combination church and parish hall with classrooms if possible.

Seventeen pastors wished to obtain financial assistance to help them make necessary repairs in buildings that had deteriorated through the years. Five were resident pastors, namely, Frederick Kimmett, Sheridan, James Godley, Evanston, John Marley, Green River, Charles Bartek, Pinedale, and Bartholomew Svete, Hartville. The other churches were in towns designated as missions which were attended by the pastor of a parish in a neighboring city. The buildings were more likely to fall into a state of disrepair due to infrequent use. The *Register* noted that twelve mission churches needed renovation. They were: St. Raphael, Carpenter (Pine Bluffs), St. Joseph, Albin (Pine Bluffs), Our Lady of Lourdes, Glendo (Hartville), St. Louis, Wyarno (Ranchester), St. Albert, Four Corners (Newcastle), St. Paul, Sundance (Newcastle), St. Helen, Fort Bridger (Evanston), St. Dominic, Cokeville (Kemmerer), St. Anne, Big Piney (Pinedale), St. Joseph, Hanna (Rawlins), St. Philip, Basin (Greybull), Ascension, Hudson, (Lander).

Pastors with parishes with schools hoped to gain assistance to help them to improve facilities. For example, Monsignor Hartmann, rector of the Cathedral, indicated that he needed help to make possible the expansion

of high school facilities to accommodate additional pupils. Monsignor O'Reilly, pastor of St. Anthony's in Casper, hoped to be able to acquire land for school expansion and facilities for additional pupils. Monsignor McDevitt, pastor of St. Laurence O'Toole in Laramie, planned to build an addition to the parish school. Father Paul Hellrung, pastor of St. Rose in Torrington, envisioned a new parish school as did Father Adolph Pate, pastor of St. Margaret in Riverton. Father John Meyer, pastor of St. Joseph in Rawlins, planned to increase the school facilities.

Many teachers were members of religious congregations of women. Because of the increase of activity in Catholic education, the number of nuns in the diocese had increased from 55 in 1948 to 118 in 1955. It was understood that the pastor was expected to provide suitable living quarters for the religious women who taught in the parish school. The Dominican Sisters who taught in St. Mary's in Cheyenne had recently been provided with a convent as had the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary who taught at St. Anthony's parish in Casper. The pastors of Holy Name in Sheridan, St. Joseph's in Rawlins and St. Laurence O'Toole in Laramie hoped that the fund-raising campaign would make it possible for them to build convents to house the Sisters who taught in their parish schools. Father John Marley, pastor of Immaculate Conception parish in Green River, hoped that he would be able to renovate a parish owned house so that it could be used as a convent.

Seven pastors realized that they could not support a parochial school. However, they wished to provide religious instruction for the children by establishing a catechetical center in which Sisters would teach religion on the elementary and secondary levels for Catholic children who attended public schools. Such a center had been established at St. Joseph's parish in Cheyenne and had been blessed by Bishop Newell in September, 1953. Members of Our Lady of Victory Sisters, (commonly known as Victory Noll) staffed the center. It seems that the project prospered because Father James Ruddy, pastor of St. Joseph's, hoped to obtain financial aid from the campaign to provide an additional classroom in the center. Pastors of Douglas, Gillette, Greybull, Powell,

Worland, and Green River planned to establish catechetical centers in their parishes.

The people of St. Leo's, Lusk, St. Ann's, Saratoga, St. Anthony's, Upton, and the station of Wamsutter (Rawlins), wished for nothing less than new churches. Reverend Leonard Wren, O.F.M.Conv. who attended the mission of Chugwater wished to enlarge the church and install a new heating system. Father James Doudican, pastor of recently established parish of Our Lady of the Tetons in Jackson, wished to acquire property for future use. A second new parish, not yet established in 1955, was planned by Monsignor O'Reilly who had purchased 3.2 acres on the eastern edge of the city of Casper on the corner of 4<sup>th</sup> and Country Club Road. The Monsignor hoped that the campaign would make available resources to assist him in making a third parish in Casper a reality.

Over and above the needs of the parishes and missions the Bishop had two projects in mind that he hoped to be able to finance with money contributed during the campaign. The first was his plan to establish a fund to make it possible to provide financial support for seminarians preparing for service in the diocese. Secondly, he wished to prosper the work of the Newman apostolate by building a student center for members of the Newman Club near the University of Wyoming in Laramie.

The informative article in the *Register* publicized the goals of the drive to raise funds. After careful preparation the first phase of the campaign was set in motion when the 2,500 volunteers attended dinners on June 2<sup>nd</sup> at which they made their pledges. On June 5<sup>th</sup> workers visited parishioners and recorded the sum that each family pledged to contribute to the campaign fund. The success of the venture exceeded the expectations of those who organized the drive. The *Register* reported that the amount pledged on June 5<sup>th</sup> totaled \$1,314,662. A week later the total reached \$1,728,444. The final published amount, June 24<sup>th</sup>, was \$1,840,392. Parishioners were given a period of thirty months during which they could contribute the amount they had pledged. The success

of the campaign exceeded the expectations of all concerned. Catholics in Wyoming were just proud of their accomplishment.

In the meantime church related activities demonstrated that there was a healthy vitality in the diocese. For example, Sisters of various religious congregations conducted vacation schools in which they gave religious instruction to children who did not have an opportunity to attend parochial schools. A total of 2,789 boys and girls attended classes in their home parishes during the month of June, 1955. Two anniversaries gave evidence of stability in the diocese, namely the diamond jubilee, 75<sup>th</sup>, of St. John the Baptist parish in Buffalo and the silver, 25<sup>th</sup>, of St. Joseph's Children's Home in Torrington. The notable anniversaries were properly celebrated according to plans formulated under the leadership of Father James Power, pastor in Buffalo, and Father Leo Morgan, superintendent of St. Joseph's Home. Another sign of vitality was the installation of Father James Doudican as pastor of the recently established parish of Our Lady of the Mountains in Jackson. A further significant evidence of vitality was the increase in the number of women who joined the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women. The enthusiasm and dedication of the first members of that organization generated a lively response from women throughout the State. In the rather brief period of three years the officers of the Council counted 5,000 women who were active in their parishes working to achieve their goals.

For thirty months, June, 1955 to January, 1958, Bishop Newell kept a watchful eye on the progress of the efforts to collect the funds that had been pledged during the campaign. When that period expired, January, 1958, a total of \$1,500,000 had been collected. That sum was over \$300,000 short of the amount pledged. Hoping to collect some, if not all, the outstanding pledges the Bishop announced that he would extend the period six more months during which parishioners could contribute what they had promised.

Somewhat later, March, 1959, the Bishop announced that there would be another drive aimed at encouraging parishioners to assist the pastors in placing parish finances on a more solid basis. The goal of this drive was

to instruct the faithful that they had an obligation to contribute to the support of their parish. The slogan for this drive was “Put the Church in Your Budget.” The Bishop made it clear that this campaign was not just another drive rather it was a prayerful approach on a spiritual plane to help every Catholic understand and live up to his/her obligation to contribute to the support of the Church. He emphasized the fact that there would be no quota or money goal set. April 26<sup>th</sup> was designated “Parish Appeal Sunday.” As early as May 1<sup>st</sup> the project was considered to be a major success.

Bishop Newell had reason to feel satisfied with developments in the diocese. The fund raising campaign was moderately successful. It made possible the achievement of important objectives. One of these, high on the Bishop’s list of priorities, was the building of a multi-purpose hall to be used by members of the Newman Club of the University of Wyoming in Laramie. The Bishop had also directed that a chapel be built, placed under the patronage of St. Paul the Apostle, to serve as a parish church for students, faculty members, and employees of the university and their families. The Newman apostolate had prospered under the direction of Monsignor John McDevitt, pastor of St. Laurence O’Toole parish in Laramie and his assistants, the latest being Father Joseph Moroney. The Bishop appreciated the endeavors of these dedicated priests. However, when the building of the hall and chapel was completed he decided that the Newman Club should have a full time chaplain. He appointed Father Charles F. Taylor, a native of Kemmerer, who had been ordained in 1953 for service in the diocese, chaplain of the Newman Club and pastor of St. Paul’s parish. Father Taylor had recently returned to Wyoming from Rome where he had studied at the North American College and earned his doctor’s degree in Canon Law.

The year 1960 was noteworthy for a number of events that indicated the growing maturity of the diocese. For example, the Catholic students attending the university were given an opportunity to broaden their knowledge of the world when Father Taylor invited the rector of Westminster Cathedral in London, England, Canon Francis J. Bartlett, to spend some time with the students. The year was also memorable for

the ordination of two Wyomingites to the priesthood, Rev. John Murray and Rev. Gerald Chleborad. In September of that year the full time chaplain of the Newman Club in Laramie made his presence felt by adding seven new courses to the curriculum of the Catholic School of Religion. In October, the rector of St. Mary's Cathedral, Rev. Frederick J. Kimmett who succeeded Monsignor James A. Hartmann, the perennial (1915-1958) rector of the Church, announced plans for complete renovation of the building which had fallen into a state of disrepair. The cost of the project was \$250,000. A sad note was added to the events of the decade when the Conventual Franciscans informed Bishop Newell that they would withdraw from St. James parish in Douglas. The Franciscans had been active in Wyoming since 1910. The friars had made Douglas their headquarters from which they gradually branched out as they ministered to the faithful in four counties, namely, Niobrara, Platte, Goshen, and Converse. After 49 years of dedicated ministry to Catholics in those counties, the superiors of the order needed men in other parts of the country where their members were committed to staff schools and preach missions. By September 15, 1960 the Conventual Franciscans had relinquished all their parishes in Wyoming except St. Patrick's in Wheatland where Father Leonard Wren, O.F.M. Conv. continued as pastor for ten years. The diocese had been fortunate to have had these dedicated men who gave the Catholics of significant part of Wyoming an ever memorable example of Christian devotion and service.

The year 1961 marked the tenth anniversary of Bishop Newell's episcopate. In late April he had a heart attack and was taken to DePaul Hospital. The preliminary prognosis indicated that the attack was not as serious as it might have been. However, the Bishop would have to undergo a period of enforced rest during which he would have to lose weight and, incidentally, give up smoking his favorite cigars.>1951>16

Undoubtedly, during the period of his recuperation, he kept informed about diocesan developments. He had a special interest in the progress that Father Taylor was making as chaplain of the Newman Club in Laramie, a progress that was notable for innovation. For example, on

April 21, 1961, Father Taylor announced that he was planning to provide an opportunity for Catholic students to learn more about their faith and their church by establishing a Newman School of Catholic Thought. He was in the process of inviting qualified educators to be members of the faculty of the school which would be in session June 5<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup>, 1961. The participating instructors were Rev. Bruce Vawter, C.M., renowned scripture scholar, St. Thomas Seminary, Denver, Rev. Edward L. Maginnis, S.J., Theology, Regis College, Denver, Rev. Bede Butler, O.S.B., Liturgy, Holy Cross Abbey, Canon City, Colorado, Rev. Harold L. Stansell, S.J. Church History, Regis College, Denver and Professor John Senior, Literature, University of Wyoming.

On June 4, 1961 some forty students assembled in Laramie ready to make the best of an opportunity to be enlightened about their faith. They were presented with an exciting schedule which assured them that they would be kept busy for five days. The schedule proposed an early start with morning prayer followed by a lecture at nine and one at ten, Mass at eleven, then lunch. Afternoon classes at one and two then free time until dinner at six. After the evening meal there was a plenary session of students and faculty from 7:30 to 9:30. The evening session offered participants an opportunity for lively discussion about perplexing problems. A high light of the week was an outing in a park in the mountains east of Laramie. This event provided students with an excellent chance to let off steam and revive their flagging spirits. The schedule was a product of a vivacious and very practical man who understood college students. No one could doubt that the week was an interesting one and the success that was achieved prompted Father Taylor to plan a program for the following year.

A cursory summary of the entry for the diocese of Cheyenne in the Official Catholic Directory for the year 1961 reveals the state of the diocese on the tenth anniversary of Bishop Newell's incumbency. It is noteworthy that DePaul Hospital was measuring up to expectations. Ten Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth with the help of other nurses cared for over four thousand inpatients and two thousand outpatients. St. Joseph's Children's Home was efficiently administered by Father Leo Morgan,

assisted by Father Michael Butler, who, with the assistance of eight Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, cared for over sixty dependent children. Three catechetical centers, St. Joseph's, Cheyenne, Immaculate Conception, Green River, and St. Barbara, Powell, staffed by Our Lady of Victory Missionary Sisters assured young people opportunities for religious instruction. Thirty-seven parishes had resident pastors. Three, St. Mary's Cathedral, St. Anthony's in Casper and St. Joseph's in Rawlins were served by two assistant pastors. Nine parishes had one assistant pastor. Twenty-two pastors exercised their ministry in a neighboring mission or, in some cases missions, of which there was a total of thirty-seven.

Catholic education was high on Bishop Newell's list of priorities. During the first ten years of his episcopate the number of parochial schools in Wyoming doubled from four to eight. Over, three thousand boys and girls attended these schools. Provision was made for students in public schools to attend special religious instruction classes. The entry in the directory for 1961 recorded that 930 high school students and 2,329 children in elementary schools attended such classes. A total of 7,114 young people availed themselves of Catholic instruction. The total Catholic population at that time was 48,500 in a state which claimed 330,066 people.>1951>17

During the period of the Bishop's convalescence the governance of the diocese was in the capable hands of the Vicar General, Monsignor Thomas F. O'Reilly. Late in August, 1961, a trim and rested Bishop Newell resumed his responsibility as shepherd of the Catholic flock in Wyoming. While he recuperated he had an excellent opportunity to review his accomplishments during the first ten years as bishop. Moreover, he found time to make plans for the future.

A major impending event that required considerable amount of planning was the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the existence of the diocese. The period of preparation provided the bishop and the faithful, clerical and lay, an opportunity to rejoice and give thanks to God for the many blessings bestowed on the diocese. A highlight of the celebration was a Solemn

Pontifical Mass of Thanksgiving on February 21, 1962 with 8 bishops in attendance. They were, Archbishop Urban J. Vehr of Denver, his auxiliary Bishop David M. Maloney, Bernard J. Sullivan, S.J., retired bishop of Patna, India, Joseph M. Gilmore of Helena, Montana, William T. McCarty, C.S.S.R., Rapid City, South Dakota, Joseph L. Federal, Salt Lake City, Utah, John L. Paschang, Grand Island, Nebraska, and Charles A. Busell, Pueblo, Colorado. The gracious and grateful Bishop of Cheyenne delivered the sermon.

The year 1962 was memorable for a number of other noteworthy events. One was tragic, namely, the untimely death of Father Patrick J. McGovern who had come from Ireland in 1954 to serve in the diocese. After the conclusion of the activities of the jubilee Father McGovern drove to Colorado Springs to visit a parishioner who was ill. On the return trip he encountered a ground blizzard in the vicinity of Loveland, Colorado during which his car collided with a heavy Cadillac. The Wyoming priest was rushed to the hospital in Loveland. Efforts to save his life were futile; he died on the operating table.>1951>18

The Newman School of Catholic Thought was set for the week of June 4<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup>. This was the second venture for which Father Taylor had enlisted Reverend Eugene H. Maly, faculty member of St. Mary's Seminary of the West, Norwood, Ohio to lecture on Sacred Scripture. Three veterans of the first endeavor repeated in the second, namely, Fathers Butler, O.S.B. and Stansell, S.J. and Professor John Senior.

Other happenings worthy of note included the establishment of a council of the Knights of Columbus. Officials of the Order granted a charter to Council 5291 of Holy Trinity parish in Cheyenne; the fifteenth council in the State.

Another highlight of the year 1962 was the celebration of the Golden Sacerdotal Jubilee of Monsignor James H. Hartman who had been recruited for service in the diocese by Bishop James J. Keane when he visited the Josephinum Seminary in Columbus, Ohio where James Hartmann was preparing for ordination to the priesthood. The young

seminarian accepted the Bishop's invitation. Shortly after his ordination he came to Cheyenne. In 1915 Bishop McGovern appointed him chancellor of the diocese and rector of the Cathedral. He was destined to serve 57 years as Chancellor, 1915 to 1972, and as rector of the Cathedral for 44 years, 1915 to 1959. In the course of time he acquired other responsibilities such as paying regular visits to the County Memorial Hospital and Veteran's. Furthermore, he was treasurer of St. Joseph's Children's Home, superintendent of St. Mary's grade and high school, teacher of religion and German in the high school, moderator of the Legion of Mary and Vicar General in the Matrimonial Court. Whenever there was a special pontifical celebration in the Cathedral Monsignor Hartman acted as master of ceremonies. Somehow he managed to conduct regular instruction classes for prospective converts and gained an enviable reputation for bringing them into the Church. On a more mundane level he was a successful gardener who provided vegetables in season and in abundance for the priests living in the Cathedral rectory.>1951>19 His accomplishments were duly recognized when his brother priests honored him at a luncheon held in the Plains Hotel in Cheyenne.

It has been noted that the diocese was indebted to the Catholic Extension Society for financial assistance which made possible the construction of churches in sparsely populated towns. The Society moreover sponsored a program of recruiting, training and assigning lay mission workers to lend assistance to hard pressed pastors in struggling dioceses. At the end of August, 1962, 20 volunteers came to Wyoming and were assigned to assist pastors in nine parishes.

While these developments were taking place in Wyoming greater ones were taking place throughout the Catholic world. This was the time that a major event was being planned, one that would affect the Church throughout the world. On January 25, 1959, Pope John XXIII announced his intention to summon an ecumenical council. A year and a half later, June 5, 1960 the Pope established preparatory commissions and secretariats. Pope John convoked the council on December 25, 1961 and designated October 11, 1962 as the day of the solemn opening. Bishop

Newell left Wyoming for Rome, September, 1962. The Council opened on October 11<sup>th</sup>. It took time to decide on procedures, in fact, eight weeks transpired without much progress being made. At the time the health of the Pope was deteriorating and on December 8<sup>th</sup> he closed the first period. Little of a positive nature was accomplished during the first period of the council. When Pope John died on June 3, 1963 the Council and all its activities were suspended. However, Pope John's successor, Paul VI, announced his intention to continue the Council and fixed the opening date for the second period for September 29, 1963.

Some ten weeks after his return to the diocese Bishop Newell and three laymen, Professor John Senior, Basil Imburgia and Fred Dreves, were honored for their contributions to the Newman apostolate at a banquet served in the Newman Center in Laramie. This public recognition was given on February 17, 1963. Seven Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, teachers at St. Laurence O'Toole school in Laramie were also honored. Father Taylor had succeeded in establishing a vibrant Newman Club and was not hesitant about informing people about the accomplishment and activities of the Club.

The next major event on the Bishop's agenda was the dedication of the buildings of a new parish in Casper. The new church under the patronage of St. Patrick, was a tribute to the foresight and generosity of Monsignor Thomas F. O'Reilly, V.G., pastor of St. Anthony's parish in that city. The Monsignor had purchased the property and initiated the building of the plant and it was fitting that he should be the celebrant at the dedication at which the Bishop preached. The Monsignor delivered the new parish complex to the first pastor, Father James J. Power, debt free.>1951>20

The first week in June, 1963, twenty-nine Newmanites came to Laramie to participate in the third annual Newman School of Catholic Thought. Father Taylor had publicized the event by disseminating brochures with photos of the faculty. The heading on the brochure read, "A week of stimulating classroom lectures and evening seminars, sponsored by the Newman Club at the University of Wyoming and underwritten by the Wyoming Knights of Columbus 'Monsignor McDevitt Memorial

Fund’”. Three members of the faculty of the first two “schools” returned. The new participants were: Reverend Berard L. Marthaler, O.F.M., Conv., Assistant Professor of Theology at Bellarmine College, Louisville, Kentucky, John H. Ford, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Philosophy at Bellarmine College, and Reverend John Dreese, S.T.D., lecturer in Sacred Scripture, St. Charles Borromeo, Columbus, Ohio. The students appreciated the opportunity made available to help them increase their knowledge of the fundamentals of their faith even though the schedule of classes was exacting. Father Taylor had the facility of making possible the achievement of just the right balance in the scheduling of events that resulted in making the week rewarding and memorable.

The decade of the sixties was especially notable for a number of dedications in the far flung diocese. In any given period of time Bishop Newell set a travel record that was impressive. Given a number of Confirmation tours and a series of dedications, he covered many miles in Wyoming. After dedicating St. Patrick’s Church in Casper, March 17, 1963, the Bishop blessed the Church of Our Lady of the Mountains in Jackson on May 1<sup>st</sup>. On a more mundane occasion he dedicated the new St. Mary’s Gymnasium in Cheyenne on January 5, 1964. Five months later he had the satisfaction of blessing St. Brendan’s in Jeffrey City and Our Lady of the Woods in Dubois.

On February 21, 1964, prompted by the spirit of the ecumenical movement fostered by the bishops assembled in the Second Vatican Council, the Bishop entertained a group of Ministers, members of the Ministerial Association of Cheyenne and other non-Catholic clergy of Laramie County. The gathering took place in the parish hall of St. Joseph’s Church where a luncheon was served. This event prepared the way for a developing dialogue with clergymen of the various denominations in Wyoming.

It had been some time since Bishop Newell requested the Holy See to honor a number of his priests making them members of the papal household with the title of Right Reverend Monsignor. The Bishop

decided to have this honor conferred on the following: Frederick J. Kimmett, Corpus Christi, Newcastle, James McBride, Sacred Heart, Greybull, John J. O'Connor, St. Patrick's, Kemmerer, Philip Krass, St. Francis, Thermopolis, Alvin Gnidovec, Sts. Cyril and Methodius, Rock Springs, and John Marley, Our Lady of Sorrows, in the same city. Since Thomas F. O'Reilly, Vicar General of the diocese, had previously been honored with this title the Bishop requested the authorities in Rome to bestow the title of Proto-notary Apostolic on Monsignor O'Reilly, a dignity which entitled him to celebrate the liturgy endowed with certain ceremonial privileges.

A recurring news item during the decade of the sixties informed those interested about the activities of Father Taylor and the members of the Newman Club in Laramie. Father had joined the National Newman Chaplains' Association. He attended meetings of the Newman Club Federation. In time he invited members of the federation to meet in Laramie. The officers agreed. They met in the Newman Center, December 27<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup>. Bishop Newell attended as did Bishop James Malone, Auxiliary of Youngstown, Ohio, the Episcopal Moderator of the Newman Apostolate. That apostolate was thriving in Wyoming under the leadership of Father Taylor who promoted a number of interesting projects which appealed to Catholic students attending the University of Wyoming. One program in particular was a source of great satisfaction to all concerned, namely, The Newman School of Catholic Thought which had become an annual event meeting during the first week in June. The chaplain was adept in recruiting professors well qualified in their academic disciplines. Of those who participated two outstanding lay professors, John Senior of the University of Wyoming enhanced the faculty for twelve years, and Ronald McArthur, Professor of Philosophy at St. Mary's College, Orinda, California, added quality to the program for six years. Those in attendance were able to benefit from the learning of these two scholarly and dedicated Catholic gentlemen. Professor Senior transferred to the University of Kansas in Lawrence but returned to Laramie for the Newman School 1969 to 1972. Scripture scholars were in such demand that it was not possible to recruit the same authority more than once. There was one exception, however, Reverend

Thomas W. Leahy, S.J., member of the faculty of the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California, participated in the school and lectured on the New Testament in 1966 and 1967.

Father Taylor, aware of the progress of the liturgical movement in the Church enlisted Reverend Bede Butler, O.S.B. of Holy Cross Abbey, Canon City, Colorado, and put him in charge of the liturgies during the week. Father Butler returned to Laramie in 1962 and 1963. In 1965 Reverend Kevin Seasoltz, O.S.B. of St. Anselm's Abbey, Washington, D.C., joined the faculty as liturgist. No such authority in that field was available in 1966 and 1967. In the following year Reverend Robert J. Greenslade, Archdiocesan Director of Music for the Archdiocese of Denver joined the faculty and returned the following three years. Father Greenslade committed himself to present "The history of Church music, classical and modern, interpretation, and its use in the liturgical Mass settings will be highlighted throughout the entire week." >1951>21 The Denver priest was the right man at the right time to present these matters to Catholics who most likely were bewildered by the changes in the liturgy initiated by the Second Vatican Council.

A notable member of the faculty, Reverend Claude Mussell, O.F.M., Conv., enlightened those attending his lectures. He was qualified by training and experience to impress those who came into contact with him. He had earned a doctor's degree in Philosophy and one in Theology; one from the Gregorian University in Rome; the other from the University of Fribourg in Switzerland. He also served in the army as a chaplain, achieving a rank of colonel. As an experienced seminary professor he was a stabilizing influence in the challenging times after the Second Vatican Council. As an eminent defender of orthodoxy he was an outstanding member of the faculty.

The Newman School of Catholic Thought was a bold venture and under the dedicated leadership of Father Taylor it prospered. The increasing number of Newmanites who attended demonstrated the reputation that the school had attained among those in the Newman apostolate. It is worthy of passing note that the total cost for the school, room and board,

was \$30.00 for the week. This charge did not change for eleven years. Finally in 1972, due no doubt to inflation, there was an increase of \$15.00. This endeavor as an activity of the Newman apostolate had the full and enthusiastic support of Bishop Newell who came to Laramie during the sessions whenever his busy schedule permitted.

Bishop Newell's itinerary kept him on the road a considerable amount of time. In 1965 he had the satisfaction of dedicating three new churches, one in Lovell, St. Joseph's, another in Powell, St. Barbara's, and a third in Lander, Holy Rosary. Later in September he traveled to Rome to attend the fourth and final session of the Second Vatican Council. Participation in the Council was the highlight of his episcopate. The experience was exhilarating, if demanding. It is tempting to outline the momentous changes initiated by the Council Fathers which required certain adjustments in the way Catholics lived as members of the Church, but this is not the place for such a summary. However, a few innovations introduced by the bishops should be mentioned because they effected the way they governed. The Council Fathers decided to temper the existing monolithic structure of governance by proposing that these should be shared responsibility between the bishops and their priests. This could be achieved by establishing a senate made up of priests representing their colleagues and which, by its counsel, would be able to give effective assistance to the Bishop in his government of the diocese.

Understandably, it would take some time before the provision of shared responsibility could be implemented. Gradually the priests formulated procedures for the selection of members of the senate. After due consideration they decided that the senate should consist of six men representing their confreres according to the number of years of ordination. The following men were elected: Very Reverend John Meyer, Laramie and Reverend Adolph Pate, Riverton representing those ordained twenty years or longer; Reverend Joseph Fraher, Lander, and Reverend James O'Neill, Cheyenne, for men ordained between ten and twenty years; Reverend John Murray, Cheyenne, and Reverend Angel Ornelas, Casper, representing priests ordained less than ten years.

A second momentous innovation was the decision of the Council Fathers to call upon the Catholic laity to participate in the Church's mission. In an eloquent exhortation concluding the decree on the apostolate of the laity the bishops reminded lay persons that they are the Lord's "coworkers in the various forms and methods of the Church's one apostolate, which must be constantly adapted to the new needs of the times.">1951>22

Involvement of the laity in diocesan administration was not new for the Church in Wyoming. Since the time of Bishop James J. Keane two laymen in each parish served as officers of the parish corporation. However, the bishops encouraged even wider participation of lay persons in diocesan activities. For example, they charted a new course in the field of ecumenism and called on Catholics to become involved. In 1967 Bishop Newell established a Commission on Ecumenism and appointed the following members: Right Reverend Monsignor Thomas F. O'Reilly, V.G., Very Reverend George Stoll, Reverends James Power, Thomas Cleary, Adolph Pate, John Corrigan, Charles Brady, James Godly, Sister Anthony Marie, S.A. (i.e., Franciscan Sister of the Atonement), Sister Placida, O.S.B., Mr. Houston Williams, and Mrs. Jan Wilkin.>1951>23

Moreover, the Bishop commissioned eight priests to supervise the implementation of the Council's directives for the renewal and fostering of the liturgy, namely, Right Reverend Monsignor T.F. O'Reilly, V.G., Chairman, Reverends W. J. McCormick, James Ruddy, Very Reverend John Meyer, Cyril Hmelovsky, Michael Butler, John Corrigan, and Joseph Fraher. Four years later the Bishop made some changes in the membership of the Commission; he increased the number of priests and added a nun and two lay persons. Those who served were: Reverends Michael Butler, Chairman, W.J. McCormick, Secretary, Gerald Chleborad, Thomas Cleary, John Corrigan, William Delaney, William Gianola, Cyril Hmelovsky, Joseph Moroney, Thomas Ogg, Sister Dolora, O.S.B., Mr. Robert Tripeny, and Mrs. Royal Bock.>1951>24 Eventually Bishop Newell set up a Pastoral Council and appointed

himself as chairman with a layman, Mr. James Applegate, Vice-Chairman and a priest, Reverend Charles Hardy, Secretary.

About this time the Bishop realized that the diocese should have a chancery, that is, an office for the Chancellor who, by definition, is a public notary and the authorized official whose chief function is to preserve in the archives the acts of the curia. It is somewhat surprising that the diocese did not have a chancery as such for seventy-nine years. Perhaps, the bishops were content to allow matters pertaining to that office to remain in the competent hands of Monsignor James A. Hartmann chancellor and rector of the Cathedral from 1916 to 1959. In the latter year the Bishop relieved the monsignor of his responsibilities as rector and appointed a Vice Chancellor to assist him. To accommodate the two officials the diocese made available the residence on 200 East 24<sup>th</sup> street which had served as a base of operations for the volunteers sent by the Catholic Church Extension Society to assist those pastors who were in need of assistance. When the Chancellor and the Vice Chancellor moved into this building it became the temporary chancery for the diocese. The residence was not a professional office building but, finally, the monsignor did have an office far from the one he had used at the cathedral rectory for so many years as well as the one he occupied during the intervening period after his replacement on the staff of the cathedral. The Vice Chancellor, William J. McCormick, had the advantage of serving as an assistant under an experienced chancellor who had held that office for fifty-five years, 1916 to 1971. Age took its toll and the Bishop in recognition of the many years of dedicated service appointed Monsignor Hartmann Chancellor Emeritus in 1972. Father McCormick became his successor and Father John Corrigan was designated as Vice Chancellor.

Earlier, Bishop Newell decided that it was time to give public recognition to the contributions that had been made over the years by the Extension Society to assist needy pastors to establish fitting places of worship. In an effort to show his and the diocese's appreciation for the sums of money disbursed to the diocese the Bishop designated September 25, 1966 as Extension Sunday, a day on which pastors were

requested to urge their parishioners to subscribe to the Extension Magazine. Somewhat later, January 21, 1969, Bishop Newell joined Bishop John L. May, President of the Extension Society in the dedication of the New St. Mary Magdalen Catholic Center in Evanston.

The decade of the seventies proved to be memorable in the history of the diocese especially regarding the manner in which pastoral assignments were made. Mention has been made of the Priests' Senate which provided a forum for priests to make their concerns known to the proper authorities. The clergy in Wyoming were aware of the movement in many dioceses in the United States favoring important changes in policies governing the tenure of pastors and assistants as well as determining the age of mandatory retirement from the active ministry. These matters were on the minds of the priests of the diocese when they assembled in Saratoga to make their annual retreat, June 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>, 1972. They were eager to hear a report from Father John Corrigan, chairman of the Clergy Personnel Committee, about the study that had been authorized the previous January by the Priests' Senate and the diocesan consultants regarding pastoral appointments and the age of retirement. After hearing the report the priests, by a vote of forty to fifteen, approved sweeping guide lines regulating the terms of pastoral appointments and the age of mandatory retirement.

Henceforth, pastors would be assigned to a parish for a term of five years with the possibility of a second tour of duty in the same parish. Priests would not be subject to a change after they reached the age of sixty unless the Bishop decided to use their talents and experience where needed. Assistants would serve in a parish for four years after which they would be given a different assignment. The age of mandatory retirement of all priests was set at seventy-five. However, a priest could opt for voluntary retirement at the age of seventy. Certain assignments were exempted from the general policy, namely, the rector of St. Mary's Cathedral, priests, assigned to St. Joseph's Children's Home, and the directors of education and charities. Shortly after the acceptance of these guidelines Bishop Newell implemented the new policy and announced, in mid-August, 1972, that twenty-four were reassigned.

At this point it was quite obvious that a new era in the history of the Catholic Church in Wyoming was dawning while at the same time other happenings marked the end of an older era. For example, Monsignor Hartmann who had served the diocese as Chancellor for more than five decades and rector of St. Mary's Cathedral for 44 years died at DePaul Hospital. Another stalwart veteran of the diocese, Monsignor O'Reilly, Vicar General for 39 years and pastor of St. Anthony's parish in Casper for 37 years, tendered his resignation from both offices. He had been a very stabilizing influence as Vicar General and a person to be reckoned with in the environs of the city of Casper. Bishop Newell chose Father James O'Neill to succeed him as Vicar General and assigned Father Charles Brady pastor of St. Anthony's parish.

An example of the new era unfolding in the Church at this time was the change that took place regarding the title of "Monsignor." The designation Right Reverend Monsignor was changed to a simpler form namely, Reverend Monsignor, and there were significant changes in the garb that those so honored wore. To the surprise of some, Bishop Newell announced in January, 1974, that the Holy See identified eight priests of the diocese as honorary prelates of Pope Paul VI. Those so honored were: Monsignors Daniel Carroll, John Corrigan, W.J. McCormick, Chancellor, John Meyer, James O'Neill, Vicar General, Francis Penny, James Ruddy, and George Stoll.

## **NOTES**

### **1951-1978**

- >1951>1 Newell, "Reminiscences".
- >1951>2 *Wyoming Catholic Register*, vol. 1, #1, p.1.
- >1951>3 Mealey, Margaret J., "National Council of Catholic Women", *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, (McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1967), vol. 10, p. 233.
- >1951>4 *Anchors, Past Presidents of WCCW Present a Mini-History of WCCW, 1953-1987*. Note: The name was changed, with the

approval of the officers of the national office, to the Wyoming Council of Catholic Women in 1976.

>1951>5 *Ibid.*

>1951>6 *Ibid.*

>1951>7 Gilmore, *op. cit.*, p. 434

>1951>8 Lefevre, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

>1951>9 *Ibid.*, p. 69.

>1951>10 The formal name is Missionary Sister of Our Lady of Victory, popularly known as Victory Noll. Bishop John F. Noll of Fort Wayne, Indiana, built Victory Noll, the Congregation's Motherhouse and novitiate at Huntington, Indiana.

>1951>11 McGovern, *op.cit.*, p.135.

>1951>12 Doherty, Linda L., *An Irish Legacy*, (Mountain States Lithograph Col, Casper, 1987), p. 91.

>1951>13 June, James William, *History of The Green River Immaculate Conception Catholic Church*. Typescript copy, 1981, p.1.

>1951>14 *ibid.* p.8.

>1951>15 Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

>1951>16 Information offered by the Bishop's nephew, Msgr. William Jones.

>1951>17 *Official Catholic Directory*, 1961.

>1951>18 Meyer. *op.cit.*, p.22.

>1951>19 Meyer, *op.cit.*, p.34.

>1951>20 Doherty, *op.cit.*, p.99.

>1951>21 Brochure, 1968.

>1951>22 Abbott, Walter M., S.J., General Editor, *The Documents of Vatican II*, (The America Press, N.Y.), p.521.

>1951>23 *The Official Catholic Directory*, 1968, p.145.

>1951>24 *Ibid.*, 1972, p.160.