

HUDSON
St. Victor Church
1908 1986
Donna Jean Boyle

Hudson was established on land homesteaded by George H. Rogers in 1890. Mrs. Rogers sold the land to the Popo Agie Valley Townsite Company in December, 1905. The town was platted and incorporated on May 26, 1906, and dedicated July 12, 1906. The railroad arrived in Hudson in September, 1906.

When Leslie Davidson, editor and publisher of the "Copper Mountain Miner" at Birdseye, Wyoming, moved his shop to Hudson and published the first issue of THE MINER newspaper on June 12, 1908, we find the first mention of Catholic church activity in this small coal mining town.

On October 16, 1908, Father T. D. Lynch married Mary Boyle to George Downey, at the Hotchkiss home in Hudson. On December 11, 1908, the paper reports Father T. D. Lynch will hold Catholic services at McKenna's Hall next Sunday morning at 11 o'clock. And he reported that Father Moriarity, now of Omaha, but who had been pastor of the Catholic parish at Lander in 1882-84, had stopped by the newspaper office to visit.

In the January 15 paper: Rev. T. D. Lynch of the Catholic church was in town Wednesday and gave out the information that the work on the church building here would commence about the first of the month. (Land records do not indicate the church owned any property in Hudson at that time, and no building was built). In March 1909, the paper reports the Catholic Ladies of Hudson organized a society to be known as "The Sunshine Society" and elected officers were Mrs. Frances Stebbins, President; Mrs. Bessie Boyle, vice-president, Mrs. Nellie Rowse, Secretary-treasurer. Also, a legal "Notice of Incorporation" notice appeared in the paper for St. Victor's Catholic Church in Hudson. Papers

of incorporation were filed with the Secretary of State on 29th of March, 1909. Officers were Bishop James J. Keane, Hugh Cumminsky, Vicar-General; T. D. Lynch, Pastor, and Dominic Boyle and Adam Rogers, laymen.

In the October 11, 1909 paper, Rev. Lynch was transferred to Cheyenne. The Rev. J. A. Mooney of Lander celebrated Mass for Hudson Catholics in the school house. Father Fish performed a funeral Mass in January 1912. Father William Keavey came to Lander in May, 1912. At this time, the name of the Hudson church was changed to "The Church of the Ascension."

CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION - HUDSON

(By Carol Trujillo)

1912 - 1987

In order to appreciate the early history of the Church of the Ascension, one must visualize the town of Hudson in its "heyday." With the advancement of technology, there was an increased demand for coal. Hudson grew rapidly for it was situated in an area rich in coal deposits.

With the arrival of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad in 1906, the coal business boomed and Hudson's population increased until it numbered about 900 people. Nearly all the early families traced their roots to Central European countries. The nationalities and languages were many and varied. Early Catholic pioneers included the names of Gasparetti, Rossi, Zanetti, Bonella, Kalasinsky, Galinski, Rotolo, Homec, Bertagnolli, Hotchkiss, Boyle, Cristando, Rolich, Stossel, Garrett, Petro, Gazdic, Delapicola, Rogers, Dolenc, Gaber, Pricco, Cologna, Leonardi, Starman, Ocnas, Majdic, McGinty and Torghele. If I have missed any of the early settlers, please forgive me, for I know they, too, helped build the community.

Life, while working in the mines, was difficult but weekends found the families playing as hard as they worked. Their faith was strong and because of their strong faith, families stayed, worked and prayed together.

It appears from remarks made, that in the beginning, the Jesuit priests from St. Stephens Mission often served Mass. Before the church was built, services were held in the schoolhouse which was located on land that is now the home of Mary Gaber Kaiser, McKenna Hall (called the Opera House), and the Miners Union Hall.

In 1912, Father Keavey arrived. He was a good man who was energetic and devoted to his faith and brought that faith to the people. Mrs. Catherine (Hotchkiss) Freeburgh and Mrs. Emma (Delapicola) Novak recall that Father Keavey usually rode the train to Hudson. It arrived at 6 a.m. and Emma's dad, John Delapicola, would get up early and go down to his saloon to make the fire so that Father would have a chance to warm up before Mass. Father would then return to Lander on the evening train. He often rode horseback to visit parishioners in outlying areas.

On June 8, 1913, a class of 20 youngsters made their first communion under the watchful eye of Father Keavey. These included Joseph, Frank, Alex, Helen and Veronica Rogers, Olivio and Gisella Bertagnoli, Henry Gasparetti, John Dolenc, Bert Bonella, Maymie and Raymond Boyle, Edmund Hotchkiss, John, Frank and Fannie Gaber, Fred Holton, Nellie Galenski, Agnes Kalasinski, and Kate Torta. On June 12, 1913, Bishop McGovern confirmed a class of 15. All the young boys in the parish were instructed on being altar boys. Remember--that involved learning the Latin responses!

In the spring of 1917, a contract was awarded to W. D. Hoyt of Hudson to build the first Catholic Church in Hudson. Charles Hoyt and Alex Ocnas helped on the construction. The church is still in use today.

Everyone was so proud of the new church, which was located on Lots 1, 2, 3, and 4, Block 72 of the original town of Hudson. Lot 1 was purchased from Margaret Price on July 10, 1916 and Lots 2, 3 and 4 were acquired from John Dolenc on July 11, 1916.

Father Mullins came to Holy Rosary Parish in Lander in 1924, and served the parish for 14 years. His assistant, Father Leo Morgan, cared for the Hudson mission. He was a dynamic priest. Old timers remember that even his soft voice could be quite strong! When Father Morgan came to Hudson on a fund drive, he knew no one. Mary (Pricco) Hotchkiss volunteered to escort the new "Padre" to visit and get acquainted with his parishioners. As was customary, visitors to the homes were offered a glass of home made wine--not just a wine glass but tumbler size. Mary Fern Teissere, Mary's daughter, recalls that her mother said, "We didn't collect much money, but we sure felt good and had fun!"

Catherine Freeburgh tells this story: Father Morgan was the priest and the altar boy was Jack Hotchkiss. It was during the Depression and money was hard to come by. This particular Mass, only a 50 cent piece was placed in the basket. After Mass, Father told Jack, "You might as well take it. You can use it more than I can." Home went Jack with his gift. He was excited and told his mother what had happened. She said, "You take that 50 cent piece right back. Your Dad put that in the collection."

Another time, only two men showed up for Mass. Father Morgan raised his voice and informed Paul Petro and Eddie Hotchkiss that they should go down town and drag the men from the card games, etc. to attend Mass. The two men thought it over and decided the odds of 2 against 20 were too great. They went home! Father Leo probably expounded loudly at the next Mass!

Annie Bonella and Pete Rogers were married by Father Morgan. He was a wonderful friend to all in the community.

Over the years, we have had a number of organists: Catherine Freeburgh, occasionally Margaret Hoyt, Mary Ann Svilar Long, Roberta Kier Leseberg, Bob McClurg, and Halcyon Abel. Halcyon Abel played the organ for many years. Eleanor Lutkins Petro recalls that Father Morgan once told the Altar Society, "Mrs. Abel is the best Catholic in Hudson because she never misses Mass." Mrs. Abel was NOT a Catholic, but she loved to play that old pump-style organ with its sticky key. Those of us who had the opportunity to hear her will never forget her dedication.

Father Adolph Pate came to Lander in 1942. He endeared himself to all the community. Each year he was asked by the 8th grade graduation class at Hudson Grade School to give the address. In 1949 he went to St. Margaret's in Riverton, but we were still able to enjoy his years in the area.

In February 1949, Father Thomas Cleary arrived. He was a quiet man with a saintly demeanor. His love for baseball and sports was outstanding. Under his direction, the old pews from Holy Rosary were donated to the Church of the Ascension. This happened because Holy Rosary got new ones after the collapse of one during Bishop Newell's visit to Lander. The old pews have held up well for us. A number of present day parishioners were married by Father Cleary in our little church. Father received a new assignment in September, 1958. However, before he left for Ireland and retirement, many of us visited with him.

The church's building years began under the direction of Father Michael Scullion. Due to changes caused by Vatican II, the old altars that had the priest with his back to the congregation were taken out and new altars facing the people were installed. Our beautifully quaint church took on a modern look. Gone was the white and gold ornate altar, Mary's statue,

the two large pictures on each side of the altar, the altar railing with its dark red velvet drapes behind. Even the windows changed. The old windows were plain glass but had small pieces of colored paper varnished or shellacked on. This made the appearances of stained glass. Bruno Bonella built a new altar and put panelling to match in the sanctuary. New lights were installed also.

The wooden floors were tiled and the upkeep was much easier. For many years Mrs. Mary Rolich scrubbed and waxed the old wood floors. In addition the kneelers were padded and the old Stations of the Cross from Holy Rosary were refinished and hung in the Church of the Ascension. Drapes were added to the windows and the church had a new look.

Throughout the history of the church, the ladies worked hard to help make money for the upkeep of the church. Without their diligent work, the parish may not have been able to survive.

The Altar and Rosary Society had been active but for some reason, it was disbanded. On May 8, 1962, a meeting was held at the home of Mary Ann Homec to reactivate an Altar and Rosary Society. Olga Rogers (Mrs. Tom) became the first president. The name of St. Theresa was chosen.

The women of St. Theresa's, though small in numbers, have been instrumental in "getting things done." Through their interest, a ramp was built to replace the steps in front of the church, a well was dug, new colored windows installed, the outside of the church was painted by Mary Jo and Mario Rossi, the inside of the church was painted by Percy Davis and his sons of Riverton, a lawn was planted, plans for care of the land and other items too numerous to mention. To Manuel Arguello, who cared for the lawn so diligently, our heartfelt appreciation.

Many memorials have been given that have added to the beauty of our little church. A lectern for Mrs. Rolich; a font for Frances Vijo, a plaque

for the gift of the windows, an organ, an advent wreath, a Pascal candle and Stations of the Cross for Mrs. Antonio Homec.

Although St. Theresa's Altar Society has worked hard on bake sales, prize promotions, carnivals, it was not always work. Yard cleaning parties, farewell breakfast for Father Flannigan, the John Torghele's 50th Anniversary, the Silver Jubilee for Father Pate, Thanksgiving dinners for the sisters and priests of St. Stephens, parish picnics, Tiny Tot tournament benefit for Lil VanVleet, labor day celebration, helping host a tea for Spring Deanery meeting - all were fun times for the parish and united us in a common bond of our faith.

During these years, we often had priests from the St. Stephens Mission to say Mass. Fathers Zummach, Clerkin and Flannigan came frequently. At this time, 19 of our youth attended school at the "Mission." The children enjoyed, as did the rest of the parish, the visits of these upstanding priests.

Father Zummach is in Denver and Father Clerkin was in St. Louis. Father Flannigan is still active.

Father Joseph Fraher came in 1966, followed by Father Cletus Prado in 1972. Father Prado will be remembered for his musical talents. He had the parish practice new music each Sunday. Do you suppose he thought our singing was off key?

New carpet was finally laid in 1977 and it covered the entire church. It took several years to decide to do this, but how wonderful to no longer need to haul water to scrub!

Father John Murray, a quiet man, was the pastor beginning in 1977. Father O'Shea came in January, 1982; Father Taylor in the summer of 1982; and Father Daley followed in 1986. Under each there were changes, for the Fathers bring their own ways and ideas, and the parish adapts.

While Father Taylor was pastor, the Church of the Ascension took on a “newer” look. The ceilings were beamed, the old plaster walls covered with sheetrock, insulation added, storage space above the confessionals, new electric plugs, a fan and new carpet.

Over the years, CCD classes were often taught by the priest in charge or the young people were transported to Lander. As the duties in the parish increased, it was necessary to have volunteer lay teachers conduct the classes. Many dedicated women have worked with the young people of the Church of the Ascension. September, 1986, was a “red letter” day for our parish. Father Daley was instrumental in bringing Sisters Agnes and Noreen to the parish. It has been wonderful having these dedicated Sisters of St. Francis with us.

Now, on our 75th Anniversary, we have added a parish hall to the church which has long been needed. Our parish is truly proud of the achievements that have been accomplished over the past 75 years. We pray that our faith continues to grow and be nurtured by a devotion to our Lord.