

Lander, Holy Rosary Bishop McGovern

[109] In the baptismal register of Cheyenne there is an entry recording the christening of a child, James Joseph, son of John L. Walsh and Margaret E. McGovern. The place is given as Hamilton City, Wyoming Territory; the date, Nov. 3, 1869; the officiating clergyman, Rev. J.J. McGovern. A week later he baptized a baby girl at South Pass City. It is likely Fr. McGovern was the brother of Mrs. Walsh, and that she invited him to visit her and baptize her son, because there was no priest within reach. Beyond doubt he also celebrated Mass while there. The reason these baptisms were sent to Cheyenne to be recorded was that this was the only parish in the Territory. In passing, it may be mentioned that the name Hamilton City was later changed to Miners Delight; and its location was about ten miles northeast of Atlantic City. Thus Hamilton City was the cradle of Catholicism in Fremont county!

The following year Rev. Philip Erlach, pastor of Cheyenne, made a missionary trip to South Pass and Atlantic City, and besides celebrating the Sacred Mysteries, administered baptism to an Indian girl and a white baby.

[110] There is no further record of official Catholic functioning until 1877 and 1878, when Rev. Eugene Cusson, of Laramie, visited all these places. Even in those early days there was a number of Catholics in this district, but they were widely scattered. Some were engaged in stock-raising others were prospecting for gold, and a goodly share were government soldiers and scouts.

In July, 1882, Rev. D.W. Moriarty, a native of Massachusetts, just ordained for the diocese of Omaha, was sent by Bishop O'Connor to be the first resident pastor of Lander. Fr. Moriarty immediately began plans for a church. Eugene Amoretti, Sr., donated a piece of property for the building site. The stone church was completed in the spring of 1883. The

total cost was \$3,000.00, and the building was completed free from debt. It was named the church of the Immaculate Conception, changed in February, 1911, to the church of the Holy Rosary.

It is interesting to note the generosity of the pioneer settlers. In December, 1882, a three-day fair was held for the benefit of the church and the sum of \$1,812.00 was raised. The amount was used to furnish the church, to provide a bell for the tower and to add two small rooms to the rear of the building. There were approximately one hundred people in the village at that period.

[111] During Fr. Moriarty's tenure there were twenty-four baptisms and three marriages recorded.

Active laymen at the time of the organization of the parish were: Eugene Amoretti, Sr., William O'Brian, Jules Lamoreaux, Melville N. Baldwin, Jacob Price, Edward Lanagan, John Werlen and Mrs. Anna Kiernan.

Fr. Moriarty departed from his Lander charge in June, 1884.

From July, 1884, to December, 1885, Lander was attended about once each month by the Rev. John Jutz, S.J., of St. Stephen's Mission.

Little is known of the events which took place in Holy Rosary parish from the time of Fr. Jutz until the advent of Rev. M.A. Kennedy in 1904. During most of this period the parish was attended by priests from the neighboring Indian mission. They were as follows: Rev. Paul M. Ponziglione, S.J., December, 1885-April, 1887; Rev. F.X. Kuppens, S.J., 1888; Rev. J.G. Venneman, S.J., December, 1888-August, 1889; Rev. Paul M. Ponziglione, S.J., December, 1889-August, 1892; Rev. P. Turnell, S.J., August, 1892-June, 1893; Rev. S.P. Sansone, S.J., January, 1894-December, 1897; Rev. William O'Dwyer, resident pastor, January, 1898-January, 1899; Rev. S.P. Sansone, S.J., January, 1899-January, 1900; Rev. J. Nolan, resident pastor, January, 1900-December, 1901;

Rev. S.P. Sansone, [112] S.J., January, 1902-August, 1902; Rev. A. Couffrant, S.J., August, 1902-December, 1903.

In April, 1904, the Rev. M.A. Kennedy took over the charge. It was during Fr. Kennedy's regime that the mission at Hudson was established in 1906. It was attended by Fr. Kennedy once each month and the congregation gathered in the schoolhouse or hall.

To replace Fr. Kennedy came the Rev. T.D. Lynch in September, 1908. During his charge two lots were secured as site for a residence, at a cost of \$3,800.00. A debt of \$2,500.00 was incurred.

Rev. James A. Mooney succeeded Fr. Lynch, who departed from the parish in October, 1909. During Fr. Mooney's tenure (November, 1909-May, 1910) the parish debt was reduced to \$1,036.00, and improvements were made on the property, including the laying of a cement sidewalk.

Rev. Francis J. Keller, resident pastor, September, 1910, to December, 1911, reduced the debt to \$700.00. The diocese of Cheyenne took over the mortgage in January, 1911.

February 5, 1911, articles of incorporation under the name of "Church of the Holy Rosary" were filed. Further improvements were added to the church and property.

May 11, 1912, Rev. William Keavey was appointed pastor. The next few years saw increasing activity [113] in the parish. In 1912, the church was partly refurnished. In 1913, the grounds were graded and planted. In 1915, the sacristy was remodeled for a class room and winter chapel, and the sanctuary was repaired and decorated. An old building on the grounds was remodeled for use as a parish hall in 1916. In 1917, a parochial residence was erected at a cost of \$5,500.00. The parish borrowed \$1,500.00 from the diocese of Cheyenne, increasing the indebtedness to \$2,200.00. Bills due to the amount of \$1,000.00 made a total indebtedness of \$3,200.00 on May 1, 1918.

The year 1917 saw the materialization of another parish hope, the erection of a church at Hudson. Mass was celebrated for the first time in the church of the Ascension, at Hudson, on July 8. The building cost \$3,000.00 and lacked \$400.00 from being clear of debt. The \$400.00 was in outstanding bills.

Notable contributions to the building fund were: \$500.00 from the Catholic Church Extension Society, Chicago; \$100.00 from Most Rev. P.A. McGovern, D.D., bishop of Cheyenne; \$100.00 from Hon. P.J. O'Conner, Casper, Wyoming; \$100.00 from Mr. Michael Henry, Douglas, Wyoming. The latter two men were stockholders in a coal mine near Hudson.

In 1918 the church furnishings included an altar, altar railing, pews and organ at a cost of \$630.00. The [114] seating capacity was 200. A hot air heating plant was installed at a cost of \$200.00.

Prominent members of the Lander parish at this time were Mrs. Ellen Sheean, Mrs. Stasia Allen, Mrs. E.J. Farlow, Mrs. Jane Savage, Mrs. Ann S. Hudson, Mrs. Ann Ivens, Mrs. W.H. Sherlock, Eugene Amoretti, Jr., G.A. Stack, C.H. Sheean, F.S. Brower, John Dillon, J.P. McKenna, M.N. Baldwin, William O'Brian, and J.P. Buckley.

In 1920, the condition of the church building made it necessary to condemn it for further use. The furniture was transferred to the parish hall and services were held there. At this time a building fund for a new church was started. The amount grew slowly and in January, 1924, the total sum was \$2,400.00. In January, Fr. Keavey was obliged to resign his charge due to ill health.

Fr. Keavey was born April 12, 1879, near Nenagh, county Tipperary, Ireland. He attended the Christian Brothers school, Nenagh, and Rockwell College, Cashel. He left Ireland and came to the United States in September, 1898, to enter St. Paul Seminary, St. Paul, Minn. He was

ordained June 11, 1904, and was appointed assistant pastor at St. Mary's church, St. Paul. He also served as assistant pastor at Graceville, Minn., and at the pro-cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Minneapolis. He came to Colorado in [115] April, 1910, to try to regain his failing health. He was appointed pastor at Lander by the Most Rev. P.A. McGovern, D.D., bishop of Cheyenne, in May, 1912.

With the departure of Father Keavey from the Holy Rosary parish the spiritual needs of the parishioners were cared for by the Rev. M.J. Hofferer, S.J., until the arrival of Rev. J.J. Mullins in July, 1924.

A debt of \$2,200.00 still remained on the parochial residence. It was decided to pay off this debt from the building fund. After the debt was paid the \$600.00 left in the building fund did not brighten the prospect for a new church.

Prior to this date the parish of Riverton had had the services of a resident pastor. However, with the decrease in the Catholic population of Riverton it was thought advisable to have another priest reside at Lander and attend Riverton and its missions. Rev. Edward Cassidy was the first priest to act in this capacity.

In the spring of 1925, a church was erected at Pavillion at a cost of about \$1,800.00. The erection of the church was made possible through the aid of the Catholic Church Extension Society.

In November, 1925, Fr. Cassidy was transferred to Torrington and Rev. Martin Kennedy was sent to Lander to take care of Riverton and the other missions.

[116] With the need of a new church at Lander becoming more apparent every day another attempt to start a subscription fund was made in March, 1927. The result was very satisfactory and in the summer of 1928 work was completed on a fine new brick church in Spanish Mission style.

At an impressive ceremony on November 4, 1928, the church was dedicated by the Most Rev. Patrick A. McGovern, D.D., bishop of Cheyenne. He was assisted by the pastor and numerous clergy of the diocese. An interesting phase of the dedication was the presence and assistance of the Rev. D.W. Moriarty, the first pastor of the parish, who took up residence in Lander on the 23rd day of July, 1882.

There was a debt of \$6,000.00 on the \$15,000.00 building on the day of its dedication. At this writing the debt has been reduced to \$1,400.00.

From September 1, 1934, until August 1, 1938, Fr. Mullins was assisted in the care of the parish and its out-missions by the following assistant pastors: Rev. Edward Cassidy, September 1, 1924-October 4, 1925; Rev. Martin Kennedy, November 1, 1925-September 30, 1930; Rev. Daniel O'Doherty, October 1, 1930-April 1, 1933; Rev. Arthur Crann, May 1, 1933-December 1, 1933; Rev. Leo B. Morgan, December 1, 1933-April 30, 1936; Rev. Francis Penny, July 1, 1937-[117] November 1, 1937; Rev. Theo. J. Rath, November 1, 1937-August 1, 1938.

Three missions have been given in the parish since 1925. They were as follows: by Rev. J.T. Lannon, S.J., in June, 1929; by Rev. M.A. Connell, S.J., in June, 1932; by Rev. Leo B. Morgan in September, 1934.

Until August 1, 1938, the Lander parish with its missions of Riverton, Hudson, Pavillion and its stations, Shoshoni and Dubois included the whole of Fremont county, which is 9,000 square miles in area. On August 1, 1938, the parochial status of Riverton was resumed with Pavillion and Shoshoni attached. The out-mission of Hudson and the station, Dubois, were retained by the Lander parish.

Father Mullins relinquished his charge October 23, 1938, and was succeeded by Rev. John Marley, the present pastor, October 30, 1938.

The growth of the parish has been slow since 1925. In fourteen years an addition of ten families to the parish, registry has brought the actual membership up to forty-five families.

The mission of Hudson has a membership of twenty families. Mass is celebrated every Sunday with an average attendance of about sixty persons. The church is in good condition and is free from debt. There were three baptisms in 1938.

[118] There are ten families located in the vicinity of Dubois. With the exception of three of these families all are mixed marriages, which reduces the actual Catholic membership. Services are held once a month in Catholic homes and the people have been most faithful in attending; these services.

A plot of ground has been donated as a site for a house of worship and preparations are being made for the erection of a mission chapel in 1941.

The records show the following confirmation classes for Lander and missions:

[simplified] Date, No. Confirmed, Officiating Prelate's last name:

July 7, 1889, 7, Burke

June 16, 1897, 6, Lenihan

June 12, 1898, 5, Lenihan

Oct. 8, 1899, 8, Lenihan

July 9, 1909, 8, Keane

June 11, 1913, 31, McGovern

Oct. 19, 1919, 35, McGovern

June 2, 1923, 34, McGovern

Nov. 4, 1928, 56, McGovern

May 16, 1934, 35, McGovern

May 3, 1938, 32, McGovern