

HISTORY OF ST. THOMAS PARISH

Monarch, Wyoming

1940-1950

In September 1939, the Rev. Daniel B. Carroll succeeded the Rev. Thomas F. O'Reilly as pastor of St. Thomas parish.

On his arrival Fr. Carroll found the parish as well as the parishioners in sad financial straits. Added to that the church was much in need of repairs, replastering and repainting were called for on the interior walls, and the roof was desperately in need of new shingles.

On January 10th, 1940, a meeting of the trustees was called CL[^] and it was decided to apply to the Catholic Church Extension Society of America for aid. The Extension Society donated \$250.00, and the needed improvements were made. Mr. Thomas Sikora and Mr. Ted Manderfeld were hired to do the work on the interior, and the parish. The total cost of these improvements was \$322.00.

At the same time Fr. Carroll was granted a subsidy for the parish which amounted to \$25.00 monthly, which continued to come from the Extension Society till May 1946.

In April 1941 a new shingle roof was put on the Monarch rectory; and with the aid of the Sheridan-Wyoming Coal Company, the porches of the rectory were repaired and the whole house repainted.

After the first of the New Year, Fr. Carroll was appointed as pastor of the Church in Pine Bluffs, Wyoming, and was succeeded in Monarch by Father James Power.

Father Power assumed his new duties in Monarch in January 1942, and soon after his arrival plans were made for further improvements of the church. The altar and sanctuary were remodeled along liturgical lines; a new canopy was installed above the altar and plush maroon drapes were

hung. The expenses of this work were defrayed by popular donations of the parishioners. The undertaking was completed in March 1944. In the year 1943, Father Power was also able to liquidate a debt of \$300.00. This debt was contracted with the Diocese of Cheyenne by Father McDevitt for the needs of the Church of St. Louis, WYarno.

A mission was held in the parish during the first week of October, 1944, preached by the Rev. Carroll, O.P. It was during this week that Father Power was transferred to the Church of St. Matthew, Gillette, Wyoming, succeeded in Monarch by the Rev. William J. McCormick.

However, Father McCormick resigned as pastor of the parish after a few months, and the Rev. Cyril Hmelovsky was appointed by Bishop McGovern as his successor.

In April 1944, Father Hmelovsky took the helm of the parish and in October of that year installed kneeler pads in the Church. The expense of these was defrayed also by popular subscriptions of the parishioners.

With a fine sense of future possibilities, Father Hmelovsky approached the Most Rev. Bishop with a suggestion of the advisability of a mission church in Ranchester, Wyoming; it was to be a small frame mission chapel for the convenience of the Catholic people of the small communities of Ranchester, Dayton, Parkman, and Ohlman.

Receiving the encouragement of the Most Rev. Bishop, with a grant of \$4,000.00 through the Extension Society, plus a grant of land for the new building from Mr. Johnson, a non-Catholic, of the Johnson Lumber Company of Ranchester, plans for the new church were drawn in April 1948.

Ground for the new chapel was broken on June 2, 1948, and the new church of St. Edmund, Ranchester, Wyoming, was dedicated by the Most Rev. Hubert M. Newell, D. D., Coadjutor Bishop of Cheyenne, Wyoming, on December 19, 1948.

The total cost of the new frame building was \$5612.54. The added amount necessary for the building of this church was gathered by donations from interested parishioners, and from many outsiders interested in this worthy cause.

Members of the parish donated almost all of the necessary labor for the completion of the work, Mr. Karl Kukuchka being hired as the carpenter and foreman. No little part of that labor was Father Hmelovsky's share.

In June 1949, Father Hmelovsky was promoted to the newly founded parish of St. Mary Magdalen in Worland, Wyoming, where the foresight and ability of a builder and organizer find their widest scope for much productive labor for the good of the cause of the Catholic Church in Wyoming.

To succeed Father Hmelovsky the Most Rev. Bishop appointed the Rev. Herbert Kraus, who is the pastor at this writing.

In April 1950 faculty was granted. to the pastor to trinate on Sundays so that Mass could be said every Sunday in both the Monarch and Ranchester churches, and when possible, in Wyarno.

In August 1950, plans and estimates for a new furnace in the Monarch church were drawn by the Sheridan-Wyoming Coal Company, the estimated cost to be about \$1809.82. These plans were submitted to the Most Rev. Bishop McGovern who granted permission for this proposed improvement on October 10, 1950. It is hoped the installation can be made in the late summer 1951.

[The following crossed out in the original text.] The financial condition of the parish at the present writing is solvent without too much hope for improvement, at least under present working conditions of the miners, whose support is the backbone of the parish.