

## **Newcastle, Corpus Christi Bishop McGovern**

[142] The town of Newcastle came into existence in 1888 and like many of its neighbors was fathered by the Burlington railroad.

When the Rev. Patrick Brophy, of Chadron, Nebraska, visited Newcastle in 1889, he found a shabby little pioneer village consisting principally of tents and dugouts in addition to a couple of store buildings. On his first visit Fr. Brophy said Mass in a boarding house next to the section house and baptized several children.

Fr. Brophy made several other visits to Newcastle and about the same time a German priest, whose name is not known, made occasional trips from Ardmore, S.D.

In 1891, Rev. P. Cassidy of Hot Springs, S. D., began his visits to Newcastle and Cambria, the latter a newly opened mining camp. Fr. Cassidy came periodically from 1891 to 1896. During this period the Catholics of Newcastle began the construction of a house of worship. The Lincoln Land Company donated one lot and the other was bought by the parish.

During the last year that Fr. Cassidy attended the parish he held Mass in the church of Corpus [143] Christi, though it was far from completion. Work on the building was progressing slowly as financial depression made it impossible to do otherwise.

Part of the work was done during the two years that Rev. John C. Ahern visited Newcastle from South Dakota. (October 4, 1896-April 24, 1898), Fr. Ahern had no special days for Mass, but, as Fr. Cassidy had done, he sent word and arranged for a date whenever he could come.

The year 1898 marks the advent of the first resident pastor, Rev. Julius Bigouette, who took up his residence in the sacristy and boarded

wherever he could. He remained in Newcastle the greater part of the year and after his departure was replaced by Rev. Thomas P. Hayes, who made Newcastle his headquarters for general missionary activities in northeastern Wyoming. For three or four years Fr. Hayes led a strenuous life carrying the gospel on foot over the barren prairie to his scattered flock.

Other priests visited the parish during Fr. Hayes' ministrations, but only when they were needed because of the pastor's absence. Rev. P.U. Sasse of Sheridan was one of these.

At the time of the completion of Corpus Christi church there was no debt on it. The sum of more than \$3,500.00 had been raised by the twelve practical Catholic families, who comprised the parish.

[144] In January, 1902, Rev. Patrick J. Walsh took over the charge. He was succeeded in June of the same year by Rev. P.J. Lynch, who was pastor until January, 1910. Achievements of note during Fr. Lynch's tenure were: the erection of the \$3,500.00 commodious parochial house; payment of an old debt of \$780.00; and the erection of a church at Cambria.

During the pastorate of Rev. John Mullin in 1915, a few improvements were added to the church. A high altar was donated by Michael J. Coyle. Mrs. Dixon donated a bell, and the belfry was built by the parish.

A class of forty was confirmed by Most Rev. Patrick A. McGovern, D.D., in June, 1917. Nine of the forty were recent converts to the church.

In 1918, there were approximately thirty Catholic families in the Corpus Christi parish. A number of these lived so far from the church that they could attend Mass only occasionally during the summer months. The parish had Mass every Sunday with the exception of the third Sunday of each month, when the pastor visited Moorcroft.

The following were resident pastors of Newcastle and missions: Rev. J. Bigouette, 1898; Rev. Thomas Hayes, 1898-1902; Rev. P.J. Walsh, January, 1902-June, 1902; Rev. Patrick J. Lynch, June, 1902-January, 1910; Rev. Alphonsus B. Parker, January, 1910-April, 1910; Rev. John O'Brien, April, 1910-November, 1910; [145] Rev. Joseph DeRop, S.J., November, 1910-May, 1911; Rev. Joseph H. DeNicola, May, 1911-April, 1914; Rev. Casimir Tomiak, April, 1914-April, 1915; Rev. John H. Mullin, April, 1915-December, 1915; Rev. James A. Boland, December, 1915-January, 1916; Rev. John T. Nicholson, January, 1916-October, 1917; Rev. John O'Laughlin, October, 1917-November, 1918; Rev. John Brady, March, 1919-January, 1924; January, 1924-July, 1933, Rev. B. Schneiders.

Rev. P. Cassidy visited Cambria in 1891, when he made his first visit to Newcastle. Mass was said in the hall, which served as a pool-room, dance and concert hall and general meeting place. Likewise, Mass was sometimes said in private homes.

This condition existed until 1903, when the miners decided that the need for a church must be satisfied. St. James' church was erected at a cost of \$2,000.00 on a lot leased from the coal company for ninety-nine years. The church was free from debt.

In 1918, the congregation of Cambria was made up of about five Irish-American families, four practical Italian families, three Austrians, three Poles and a few Macedonians. The coal mine was closed March 15, 1928, and Cambria was no more.

St. Patrick's church at Moorcroft was built by Rev. John T. Nicholson at a cost of \$800.00, on a lot donated by the Lincoln Land Company. The \$500.00 [146] donation from the Church Extension Society made the building of the church possible. It was dedicated on the third Sunday of April, 1917, by Fr. Nicholson, and at this time it carried a \$250.00 debt.

The mission then consisted of fifteen families of whom the Noonans were the first to settle in Moorcroft.

The Church Extension Society again made possible, by a \$500.00 donation, the building of a church at Upton. The parish bought the lot and the \$900.00 church was erected free from debt. St. Anthony's was dedicated by Fr. Nicholson, Saturday, December 22, 1917. The village of Upton had one Catholic family at the time. The other members of the mission, about twelve families, were scattered over the territory.

Shortly after, a similar church was built at Rozet. There were approximately ten Catholic families in the mission. The Shaughnessy family were the pioneers in the locality. The mission of Rozet was taken over in September, 1926, by the newly established parish of Gillette.

In October, 1917, Rev. John O'Laughlin was appointed pastor to succeed Rev. John Nicholson. Fr. O'Laughlin remained in charge of the parish until his death, Nov. 30, 1918, at the Antlers hotel in Newcastle, where he was staying while the rectory was being repaired. He was buried in the Newcastle cemetery. [147] The parish was without a pastor until March, 1919.

In June, 1925, the church at Four Corners was opened and established as a corporation under the name of Church of St. Albert.

The regime of Rev. Bernard Schneiders was the longest of all, and to his credit be it said the parish was well cared for, both in regard to spiritualities and temporalities. He returned to Holland in July, 1933, and was succeeded by Rev. Nicholas Endres, who served from July, 1933, to September, 1933, when he resigned. Rev. James McBride served from September, 1933, to October, 1938, when Rev. J.J. Mullins, the present pastor, assumed charge.

Since 1925, the following improvements were made in the parish: the foundation of the church of Corpus Christi was repaired and rebuilt in

places; furnaces were installed in the church and rectory; a cement floor was placed in the cellar of the house.

Confirmations were as follows: May 6, 1931, 22; May 15, 1934, 20; May 20, 1937, 12; June 17, 1938, 25.

There were nineteen baptisms and eight marriages in the year, 1938.

The church of Corpus Christi and its missions are free from debt and there is one thousand dollars in the treasury.