

Sheridan, Holy Name Bishop McGovern

[218] The discovery of gold in California in 1849 brought thousands of immigrants over the Oregon Trail to the new El Dorado. The Indians, from the Missouri river west, viewed with alarm this invasion of their territory, and an untold number was slain by the redskins. The United States government realized that some remedy must be found, and Colonel Mitchell, Superintendent of Indian affairs in St. Louis, conceived the idea of a peaceful settlement by holding a conference with the Indians. Rev. Peter John De Smet, procurator general of the Missouri Jesuits, an experienced Indian missionary, and a man of great influence among the various western tribes, was then residing in St. Louis. To him the colonel addressed a communication in which he wrote: "Should your present duties permit, I would like very much for you to take part in the Fort Laramie Council." The council was actually held about thirty-five miles southeast of Fort Laramie, in Nebraska, at a point where Horse Creek flows into the Platte. It lasted from Sept. 12th to the 24th, 1851, and had a most successful issue. "Your maps and drawings of the prairies and mountains, as well as any information you can furnish with regard to their habits, the history of the country, in fact, all [219] that concerns the Indians, will be of valuable assistance to us, and will be greatly appreciated by the government."

Fr. De Smet accepted the invitation, and traveled up the Missouri river by boat to Fort Union, near the mouth of the Yellowstone. Thence, with several government agents and a number of Indian chiefs, he started south on the overland trip of eight hundred miles. It is certain that the party passed close to the location of the present Sheridan, Aug. 23, 1851, but act to whether the distinguished Jesuit performed any priestly function in the vicinity, the record is silent. The next day they came upon a charming body of water which his companions named in his honor, Lake De Smet.

The first Catholic to locate in Holy Name parish was Patrick McCarthy, of Tongue river, who, in company with George B. Mandel, traveled by wagon from Fort Laramie. It was from the latter that Sheridan received its early name of Mandel. On their trip from Fort Laramie they were attacked several times by Indians, and during one of these encounters McCarthy received a bullet wound in his leg. He carried the bullet in his leg until his death.

The next member of whom we have record was John McCormick of McCormick Creek, who made the trip overland with J.D. Loucks of Miles City, Montana.

[220] Young J.D. Loucks fought in the Civil war under General Philip H. Sheridan, a faithful member of the Church, and for whom Sheridan was named.

In the year, 1885, Sheridan was organized as a mission of St. John the Baptist parish, Buffalo, whose pastor was the Rev. Henry Bex.

In 1888, a little frame church, now located at 137 Wyoming avenue, and converted into a residence, was built on east Loucks street. It was built during the pastorate of Rev. C. Scollen, of Buffalo, and completed under the Rev. Thomas P. Haley, of Alliance, Nebraska, in 1894, at an approximate cost of \$2,000.00. There was very little debt on the building at the time of its completion.

The number of families at the time of the founding of the mission was about twelve. There is no record of baptisms, marriages or converts for the early period of the mission's existence.

The priests who attended Sheridan were: Rev. Henry Bex, Buffalo, 1885-1886; Rev. E.J. Englebrecht, Buffalo, July-December, 1888; Rev. C. Scollen, Buffalo, August, 1892-June, 1894; Rev. Thomas P. Haley, Alliance, Nebraska, October, 1894-March, 1897.

Rev. C.F. Dillon was the first resident pastor of Sheridan. Of his tenure from May, 1897, to January, 1898, we have but uneventful information.

[221] We glimpse but briefly the pastors following Fr. Dillon until the advent of Fr. John Duffy in 1906. In the intervening years the pastors were: Rev. Joseph A. Accorsini, November 1, 1898-March, 1899; Rev. P.U. Sasse, April, 1900-May, 1904; Rev. Patrick J. Murphy, July, 1904-November, 1905; Rev. Victor Louis Fraziane, February, 1906-July 4, 1906.

Nineteen hundred two was a signal year for the parish members with the construction of a handsome brick church. The erection of a fine building by the Catholics proved to be an inspiration for the Protestant churches in Sheridan. The ball started rolling when the Baptists sold their little frame church to the colored Methodists. The Congregationalists followed suit and sold their frame church to the colored Baptists. The Episcopalians disposed of their church to the Christian Scientists, and the Methodists who were unable to find a buyer for their property, tore it down. The four congregations and the Presbyterian congregation built substantial new churches.

July 4, 1906, the venerable Fr. John Duffy began his long pastorate. Fr. Duffy was born April 6, 1868, in Janesville, Wis. He began his studies for the priesthood in a private school at Zanesville, Wis., where he completed the grammar grades. He pursued his classical studies in the Catholic Normal school and provincial seminary at Milwaukee, Wis. His philosophical [222] studies were made in St. Paul's seminary, St. Paul, Minn., and his studies in theology were completed at the Sulpician seminary, Baltimore, Md., where he was ordained to the priesthood by Cardinal Gibbons, June 21, 1894.

Prior to Fr. Duffy's regime, confirmation had been administered twice in Sheridan, once by the Most Rev. Thomas M. Lenihan, D.D., during his administration, and in the fall of 1902 by the Most Rev. James J. Keane,

D.D. The latter confirmed a class of forty-nine, June 8, 1908; and a class of forty-nine, March 26, 1911.

Most Rev. Patrick A. McGovern, D.D., confirmed a class of sixty-seven, August 30, 1914; one hundred and sixty, June 22, 1919; one hundred and fifteen, October 7, 1923; and one hundred and twenty-five, June 9, 1928; one hundred and nine, May 3, 1931; one hundred and eighty, May 13, 1934; one hundred and twenty, May 23, 1937.

In 1914 the Holy Name parochial school was erected on east Works street. It was formally dedicated August 30, of that year, by Bishop McGovern.

Since its opening the school has been conducted by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, Kansas. There is no tuition or cost for the children of the parish. School books are provided free. The expenses of the school and text books are paid directly out of the church treasury. The Holy Name school saves the [223] taxpayers of School District No. 7 an annual sum of \$25,000.00 in taxes.

The school excels among the grammar schools of the city and its graduates are noted for the splendid record they make in other schools.

The Protestant parochial school adjoining the Adventist church on west Whitney street has the distinction of being the first parochial school to open in Sheridan. The Adventist denomination deserves much credit for maintaining a religious school at a great financial sacrifice on the part of its members for the benefit of its small group of children.

In 1928, a new church was built at Wyarno, which was then a mission of Sheridan; it has since been attached to the Monarch parish. The church was dedicated June 11, 1928, by Bishop McGovern who confirmed a class of twenty-eight on the same day. The building cost \$2,700.00 and at the time of its completion a debt of \$500.00 was owed to the diocese of Cheyenne.

Two missions have been conducted for the spiritual welfare of the people of Holy Name parish since 1925.

There were twenty marriages in the parish during 1938 and thirty-five baptisms.

[224] In 1938 an assistant pastor, the Rev. Daniel B. Carroll was assigned to the parish, and served until Fr. Duffy's resignation.

The total valuation of the property of the Holy Name church is placed at \$100,000.00. There is no indebtedness and the properties are in good repair, a site for a new parish community center and high school is owned by the parish and there is a sum of several thousand dollars which is to be used for that purpose when the time comes. The total annual income of the parish is about \$9,000.00. Of this amount more than one thousand dollars is sent away for charitable causes outside of the parish.

The membership of the church is increasing steadily and the future is promising. Sheridan is now a city of 10,529 inhabitants.

It is of interest to note that when Fr. Duffy first arrived in Wyoming he found that he and Rev. P.J. Lynch were to have the responsibility of caring for the Catholics in the northern part of the State. They were few in number but so widely scattered that ministering to their spiritual needs was often an arduous task.

At the beginning of 1940 Fr. Duffy retired from active service, and now resides in San Diego, Calif. He was succeeded by Rev. William J. Short, both as pastor, and as dean of the district.