

**St. Patrick Church  
Wheatland, Wyoming  
1942 to 1950**

[All priests are OMC or later OFMConv]

In April 1942 we find that Fr. Othmar Miller was in charge of St. Patrick as resident priest. He remained for a year and was succeeded by Fr. Brendan Weishaer, who remained but a few months. Temporarily, then, Fr. Marcellus Lell was put in charge until he was succeeded by Fr. Ferdinand Gruss on July 26, 1943.

Until the time of his appointment, the Fathers had been in residence at Wheatland only a few years. Consequently, much work was to be done. He immediately set out to improve the living quarters in the sacristy of the church and during his six-year stay, he removed the superstructure of the Altar, putting drapes back of the altar. Being very handy with tools, he, with the aid of some of the parishioners, build a choir loft in the church, painted the church and put in a celotex ceiling. After giving the church the many needed repairs, he directed his energies to the obtaining of funds for the building or purchase of a new rectory. The drive for funds covered a period of about two years and was closed on Feb. 16, 1948. Altogether, \$9,820 was realized from this drive. With this money a beautiful brick building, about a block and a half from the church, was purchased for the rectory of St. Patrick Church. It was also fully equipped and well furnished.

Fr. Ferdinand was succeeded by the Very Rev. Clement Orth, who arrived in Wheatland on Oct. 8, 1948. New kneelers were installed in the church and also a new organ obtained. A brick garage was built in back of the rectory to provide for a car and storage space. Since the parish had been growing, it was deemed advisable to increase the capacity of the church and, so in July 1950 work was begun on the addition to the rear of the church. The addition was 36 feet long and 39 feet wide and

provides for a meeting hall for the parish, a kitchen and sacristy. The church will then be enlarged inside to take care of about 75 additional people.

Contemporaneously, with this material growth there has been a continuous spiritual growth in the parish, as is evident from attendance in the church on Sundays, from the reception of the sacraments and other factors. Summer religious school is held each year and also catechetical instructions are given the children each Sunday.

Statistics from 1942 are as follows:

Infant baptisms, 187

Adult baptisms, 17

Marriages: Catholic, 27; Mixed, 12

112 received first holy communion, 51 confirmations, 42 deaths

Fr. Clement Orth, OFMConv.

**St Patrick's Church**  
**Wheatland, Wyo.**  
**1950-1960**

[1] (No parish history has been found prior to 17 August 1954)  
About 1951 or 1952 a hall was added to St Patrick's Church. This addition 60 x 40 feet was added to the rear of the church and provides a sacristy, kitchen and hall. The old quarters formerly occupied by the priest were torn out and the church extended some 22 feet. The old quarters formed the sanctuary and four pews were added on either side of the church giving the building a seating capacity of 248.

At the Provincial Chapter held in August 1954, the Reverend Clement Orth, O.F.M.Conv. was transferred to St Anthony's Parish, Lorain, Ohio, and was succeeded by the Reverend Thomas Aeschbacher, O.F.M.Conv., erstwhile pastor of St Paul's Parish, Pismo Beach, California. Father Thomas arrived in Wheatland on 17 August 1954.

On 14 November 1954 the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes, donated by Mr and Mrs Leroy Bowen, and erected on the lawn north of the church was solemnly blessed. The grotto is illuminated by night and can easily be seen from the highway.

In May 1955 the drive for the Bishop's Fund Campaign was inaugurated. A total of \$13,014.75 was pledged by the faithful of St Patrick's, Wheatland, and the amount of \$3,500.00 was pledged by the mission of St Teresa in Chugwater.

A mission was conducted by the Reverend Mark Mindrup, O.F.M.Conv., beginning 18 September and closing 25 September 1955.

[2] On 16 November 1956 negotiations were completed for the purchase of the Gardner property adjacent to the church for use as a future rectory. The property includes a vacant lot and a lot occupied by a two storied house with a garage. The price of the new property was \$12,000. The

deeds were transferred and the diocese accepted the property on 5 January 1957.

Father Thomas, who had been in ill health for some time, left Wheatland on 29 April 1957 to enter a hospital in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He returned to Wheatland on 27 July 1957. During his absence the Reverend Aidan Witte, O.F.M.Conv. looked after the spiritual needs of the people.

At the Provincial Chapter held in July 1957, the Reverend Thomas Aeschbacher, O.F.M.Conv. was transferred to St Louis Mission, Glenrock, Wyo and was succeeded in Wheatland by the Reverend Leonard Wren, O.F.M.Conv. At the time, Father Leonard was a chaplain in the U S Navy, and was unable to report in Wheatland until 25 August 1957 at which time his discharge from the naval service was completed,

The former rectory located at 901 10th St in Wheatland had been sold on 5 August 1957 for the sum of \$11,000. Since possession of the house had been promised the buyer on or before 15 September, and since the house purchased for the rectory was as yet unfit for habitation, the priest occupied a rented apartment. No plans had been made for the work of remodeling the new rectory, and on 4 November 1957 the contract was given to Harold Hoffman and work began immediately.

Other than painting the woodwork, no work was done on the exterior of the house, but the interior was completely renovated and modernized. The work was completed shortly after the new year and the house was occupied for the first time on 6 January 1958. The house was blessed by the Most Rev Hebert M. Newell, Bishop of Cheyenne, in the presence of a large number of the clergy on Sunday 2 February 1958.

[3] Since 1957 the church has undergone a gradual but rather complete improvement. The high altar was renovated and a new tabernacle installed, side altars were erected and the sanctuary was enlarged.

Synthetic stained glass windows replaced the old storm glass windows, the interior of the church was painted, a new communion rail and baptismal font were installed. The lawns about the church and rectory were put in order, and in November of 1959 the exterior of the rectory was stuccoed.

The Bishop's Fund Campaign ended in June 1958 and it was found that the payment of the pledges amounted only to slightly more than \$7,000. In April 1959 the Parish Support Appeal was introduced. At this time the amount of \$5,470.20 was pledged, of which amount \$5,119.76 was paid.

In the decade from 1950 to 1960, 184 received the Sacrament of Baptism; there were 38 marriages; 125 received First Holy Communion; 69 were confirmed, and death called 34.

Catechism classes are held weekly during the school year conducted by the priest and volunteer lay teachers. Summer school for a period of two weeks has been conducted annually by the Sisters. The Altar and Rosary Society, affiliated with the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women, functions well, and the youth club is flourishing.

**Saint Patrick's Parish  
Wheatland, Wyoming  
1960-1969**

The decade 1960-1969 began with St Patrick's, Wheatland, a mission of St James, Douglas, Rev Martin Collet, OFM Conv, was the pastor residing in Douglas, and Rev Leonard Wren, OFM Conv, the resident priest in Wheatland. The Parish Trustees were Manuel Rodriguez, Sr, and John E Shepherd. When the Franciscans returned the parish in Douglas to the Diocese of Cheyenne, a decree of the Most Rev Hubert M Newell, Bishop of Cheyenne, dated 16 September 1960, erected St Patrick's, Wheatland, to the status of a parish and appointed Rev Leonard Wren, OFM Conv, as pastor. Father Leonard has continued as pastor through the decade,

John E Shepherd remained as trustee until September 1961, when he tendered his resignation because of moving to California. William R Hayden was elected trustee in his place and acted as trustee until April 1967 when he resigned due to the pressure of his work. In his stead Bernard A Bowen was elected and continued in office until December 1959 when ill health compelled him to resign. In his place, the present incumbent, J Kenneth Kennedy, was elected as still serves. Manuel Rodriguez, Sr, has been the second trustee throughout the whole decade.

Various improvements to the buildings and property have been made during this period. The interior of the church was painted, and the walls were wainscoted with mahogany veneer. A thermostatic heat control was put on the church furnace in 1961. A flag pole was erected in the church yard in 1962. A new altar crucifix and statues for the side altars, with drapes for all altars were set up in June 1962. A new electric organ was installed in August 1963. An evaporator cooler was installed in the church in July 1964. The interior of the rectory was repainted in 1965. In December 1965 the telephones which had been manual to this time converted to the dial system. At Christmas time in 1966 the parish joined

with various other organizations in town in decorating the light poles. Our assigned pole was in front of the church end was the winner of second prize. In July 1967 the main altar in the church was permanently changed to accommodate the Mass facing the people; the following week the same was done in the mission in Chugwater. In May 1968 the side altar of the Sacred Heart was converted into the permanent altar of the Blessed Sacrament. New lights were put in the church in February 1969.

When Mr. George Grant, who resided in the house north of the rectory lost his wife in August 1969, he decided to live with a married daughter and to sell his property. He gave the first option to buy to the parish and after consultation with the Bishop and the trustees, it was decided to buy the property for \$17,000 and to convert the residence into a rectory, and to turn the present rectory into a catechetical center. The final purchase was made early in 1970. The parish now owns the entire 1000 block on the west side of Ninth Street.

The religious instruction of the children and youth of the parish has always been of prime concern. Devoted ladies of the parish have generously given of their time and effort along with the pastor in instructing the grade school pupils each Monday during the school year. In addition, the high school pupils have formed a CYO group and under the direction of the pastor and a layman, they meet once each week for religious instruction and such activities within the range of the young people. Affiliated with the Diocesan CYO they send delegates regularly to the diocesan conventions as well as to the National convention.

In Lent of 1960 the custom was begun of conducting a Day of Reflection for the members of the parish. This was so well received by the people that the one day was extended in 1963 to a Parish Retreat. Since that date it has continued and the retreat now is conducted annually during the week following Passion Sunday.

Each year during the week following the closing of school, a vacation school of religion has been conducted. During this decade the Sisters of St Francis, from St Agnes Convent in Scottsbluff, Nebraska, have conducted the sessions, and it has proved most valuable in bringing a knowledge of the faith to our children. The Sisters also prepare the little ones for First Holy Communion.

During this decade the Sacrament of Baptism was administered to 101 infants, and 15 adult converts; 113 have received First Holy Communion. The Sacrament of Confirmation was administered three times during the period with 63 persons receiving the Sacrament.

In the course of the decade death claimed 40 members of the parish. Prominent among those called were William C Howard, a first cousin of the Most Rev Edward Howard, retired archbishop of Portland, Oregon. Mr. Howard, a native of Iowa, had lived in Wheatland since 1922. He was respected by all as an outstanding member of the community and was a most exemplar Catholic layman. He passed away at the age of 85, on 14 April 1962 after having attended a mission being conducted in the parish. His wife, Margaret, a convert to the faith and in her day most active in all parish ventures, passed away at the age of 82, on May 22, 1969.

Mrs Margaret Keenan Grant, a native of Iowa, and wife of George Grant, a local rancher, from the time she first came to Wheatland she established herself as one of the most outstanding Catholic women. She was active in the Altar and Rosary Society and had held office in it many times. For the last five years she and her husband had lived next door to the rectory. Her charity knew no bounds. She gave many things to the church, had as a pet project a leprosarium in Africa for which she saved all her change; she was ever solicitous for the welfare of the poor; provided many of the children with clothing, especially for First Communion. She was active as a "gray Lady" in the local hospital where she became known to all the community for her charity. In fact she was

known as the “most charitable lady in town.” She suffered a stroke on June 8, 1969—First Communion day— and passed away on August 2, 1969, at the age of 63.

Death struck twice in a most tragic manner during the period. On May 29, 1964, Larry Mylet, son of John and Kathryn Mylet, and his two sons Hugh, age 8, and Colin, age 4, died of carbon monoxide poisoning caused by a faulty flue in their home. The triple funeral was held the church.

On October 18, 1969, the three daughters of John and Bess Vigil, Rose (20), Margaret (19), and Kathy (17) were killed in an automobile accident. The triple funeral was held in the church on October 25, 1969.

[handwritten in pencil, the names of the following Conventual Franciscans:]

Fr Leonard Wren

Fr Louis Wren

Fr Thomas Aeschbacher

**The parish history for St. Patrick's Parish in Wheatland,  
Wyoming, for the years 1970 - 1980 follows:**

Reverend Leonard Wren, OFM Conv. Was Pastor of St. Patrick's Parish in January 1970.

Monsignor John J. Corrigan is Pastor in 1980.

1970: January 19--The purchase of the George Grant property at 1009 9th Street, Wheatland, as a new rectory, and the conversion of the old rectory into a Catechetical Center was approved. The cost of the new property was \$17,000. September--Rev. Leonard Wren retired from St. Patrick's. September 6, Msgr. F. J. Kimmett was installed as the new Pastor of St. Patrick's.

1971: July 20--Manuel Rodriguez and Bertram Richard were appointed trustees of St. Patrick's.

1972: April 16--New carpet was installed in the Sanctuary and aisles of St. Patrick's Church. This expenditure was \$1,097, and was financed by the Altar and Rosary Society. October 8--The bid for a new heating furnace for the church was given to Kansas-Nebraska Company. The cost of the furnace was \$1,282. December 24--St. Patrick's won the prize for Christmas decoration, which was a check for \$50.

1974: June 12--Manuel and Sadie Rodriguez, parishioners of St. Patrick's, celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary. Manuel Rodriguez served as Trustee of the Parish for many years.

1975: Msgr. F. J. Kimmett retired as Pastor from St. Patrick's Church on June 5, 1975, and moved to St. Joseph's Children's Home in Torrington, Wyoming. Monsignor John J. Corrigan was appointed as Pastor of St. Patrick's Church on June 5, and was installed as the new Pastor on June 25, by Msgr. James O'Neill, Delegate of Bishop Newell. October 12--St. Patrick's received a bequest from the will of

**Wheatland 1990-2000**  
**St. Patrick's Parish**  
**Submitted by: Adelaide Dunham, Longtime Parishioner**  
**May 11, 2000**

Names of clergy and religious serving during the decade and dates of service.

PASTORS – Rev. Malcolm Reid  
January 1985 – June 1991

Rev. John Savio  
June 1991 – October 1992

Rev. Joseph Fraher  
October 1992 – June 1995

Rev. Charles Velasquez  
June 1995 – June 1998

ADMINISTRATORS – Rev. Kevin Koch, St. Rose Parish, Torrington,  
WY  
July 1998 – July 1999

Rev. Jan Joseph Santich (OSB)  
July 1999 – Present

NOTE: During the period July 1998 – 1999, the parish was served for various periods of time by the Reverends Joseph Fraher, Bertram Chin, A. Thomas, James Doudican, Michael Ehiemere, and Jan Joseph Santich.

Notable accomplishments by lay leaders and parishioners.

CHEYENNE DEANERY COUNCIL OF CATHOLIC WOMEN  
President – Angi Koenig 1996-1998

Secretary - Mary Ann Eisenhauer 1992-1994 and 1996-1998

Treasurer - Mary Alice Stapleton 1996-1998

## KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

State Deputy – Terry Archbold 1992-1994

Vice Supreme Master of Fourth Degree – Terry Archbold 1995-1999

## FINANCIAL RECORDS OF PARISH

Allison Weaver kept accurate financial records for the parish during the entire decade and for an undetermined period of time preceding this decade.

## ALL PARISHIONERS OF ST. PATRICK'S

The parish faced the loss of its pastor on June 5, 1998, due to emotional and psychological problems. The parish was then served by numerous priests who came for periods of time varying from a weekend, a week, a month or several months until the present Administrator was assigned in July, 1999. It was a notable accomplishment on the part of all parishioners, under the leadership of parishioner, Adelaide Dunham , to keep the parish operating efficiently. The Administrator, Rev. Kevin Koch, during this period of time was located 60 miles away in Torrington, Wyoming.

Notable accomplishments by the clergy and religious.

## LIQUIDATION OF DEBT FOR CONSTRUCTION OF NEW

CHURCH – A second building fund drive was begun in 1986 by Rev. Malcolm Reid and completed by Rev. John Savio in 1992 culminating with a parish celebration to “burn the mortgage”.

## TWENTY FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF ORDINATION TO THE

PRIESTHOOD. Rev. John Savio celebrated his 25th Anniversary of Ordination with the parishioners of St. Patrick's. Bishop Hart and most of the priests of the Diocese were in attendance for the Mass and reception following in the parish hall.

Construction – new or remodeling.

RECTORY – During the years 1985-1996 there were ongoing remodeling projects, such as updating the kitchen, new ceilings, wall texturing, painting, etc. More remodeling is planned for the year 2000.

CHURCH – Construction of the new St. Patrick’s Church began in 1983 and was ready for occupancy in April 1984. The religious education classroom area on the third floor and the parish hall area in the basement were unfinished at that time. When Rev. Malcolm Reid arrived as pastor in January 1985, the finishing projects of these areas began and continued until completion in early 1991. Central air conditioning was also installed. The paving of the parking lot was completed in 1992. An area located in the rear area of the church did not have pews installed in the original plan for the new church, however, new pews to match the original pews were installed in July 1998.

Land acquisitions.

NONE

Lay Trustees and term of service for each.

Michael Johnston 1978 – 1996

Adelaide Dunham 1980 – 1993

Allison Weaver 1993 – 1996

Jake Wilhelm 1996 – 1999

Joyce Larscheid 1996 – Present

Arnold Cancino 1999 – Present