

**HISTORY OF CHURCH OF ST. JOHN
THE BAPTIST, BUFFALO, WYO.**

1863 - 1928.

HISTORY OF CHURCH OF ST. JOHN, THE BAPTIST,
BUFFALO, WYOMING.
1863 - 1928.

The first Mass in the locality was probably said by Father De Smet, S.J., who traveled with the government party in 1863, and encamped for several days on the ground where Buffalo now stands. Here he was said to satisfy the demand of the Indians to prove his mission was divine, by walking out on the prairie and laying his hand on a wild buffalo.

The first priest known to any of the present inhabitants to have visited Buffalo was Father Cassidy, who was said to have come from Rawlins twice yearly and celebrated Mass at Fort McKinney.

The first resident priest was the Rev. Henry Bex, who said Mass in the log school house May, 1st 1885, with a congregation of eight or ten persons present.

In the year 1885, six lots were secured from J.W.Hart, for \$350.00, and the title conveyed by warranty deed to Bishop James O'Connor, Omaha, Nebraska. By the Fall of that year a wooded church had been erected, free from debt. The first church was known as St. Joseph's. Father Bex made his home principally with John Fischer and family. Before that time the nearest church was at Billings, Montana.

A brick church was commenced by the Rev. E. J. Englebrecht, who was pastor from July to December, 1888. The property was mortgaged for the debt of this building. The Rev. C. Scollen was pastor from 1892 to 1894. Up to this time Sheridan was attended as a Mission of Buffalo. From 1897 to 1907, Buffalo was a Mission attended from Sheridan by the following clergymen:-

Rev. G. F. Dillon, from 1897 to January, 1898.
Rev. Joseph A. Accorsini, Nov. 1898 to Mar. 1899.
Rev. P. U. Sasse, April, 1, 1900 to May, 18, 1904.
Rev. P. J. Murphy, July, 1904 to December, 1906.
Rev. Victor Fraziane, Feb. 1906 to Dec. 1906.
Rev. John Duffy, January, 1907 to Oct. 1907.

During the year, 1907, Father Duffy secured the four Lots on which the present church and rectory are built, for \$425.00, as the title to the old property had become somewhat confused. Three/

Three thousand dollars were subscribed for the new church in response to the appeal of Father Duffy, assisted by Bryon Long, the latter contributing \$250.00, the most liberal subscription. Many non-catholics contributed, and of those only four who were asked to contribute, refused.

The present church was commenced by Father Prendergrast, who resided in Buffalo, from October, to December, 1907, and completed by the Rev. Francis J. Keller, who was pastor of Buffalo from January, 1908 to January, 1910. The amount of debt remaining when the church was completed was \$600.00. Father Keller was succeeded by the Rev. T.D. Lynch and Rev. Patrick Long, who resided for short terms in Buffalo, the latter having been appointed Dean of North-eastern Wyoming. After Father Long's departure, Buffalo was attended by the Rev. Henry Schellinger, from Carneyville, and the Rev. John Duffy, from Sheridan, until the arrival of the Rev. Fredolin Huessle, August, 8, 1912. Father huessle departed February, 27, 1914.

During the following two years Father Duffy occasionally attended Buffalo from Sheridan, holding services Sunday evening, with Mass Monday morning.

In March, 1916, Buffalo, was taken over as a Mission of New Castle, and attended on the first Sunday of every month by the Rev. John T. Nicholson, or his assistants, the Rev. James A. Boland, and the Rev. John O'Laughlin. In September, 1917, Bishop McGovern authorized Father Nicholson to take up his residence in Buffalo, as pastor, with Gillette, Arvada, and Clearmont as Missions.

In the interval, since the departure of Father Huessle, the temporal affairs of the parish were chiefly attended to by St. Francis' Altar Society, made up of ladies of the congregation.

The work of raising subscriptions for a parish rectory was commenced on the first Sunday of October, 1917, and about \$1,400.00, were subscribed. The largest subscription being from John Esponda, \$500.00, and Bryan Long, \$200.00. Father Nicholson moved to Buffalo in the end of October, and work on the new Rectory was commenced early in November. The building was ready for occupancy in February, 1918. Over three thousand dollars were collected, many subscriptions being received from non-catholics, chiefly through the activity of Bryan Long. Most of the furnishing were provided by St. Francis' Altar Society. Several members of the congregation made special donations of articles necessary for house-keeping.

It is said that Bishop Lenihan administered confirmation in Buffalo, but there is no record of the event, and it is difficult to ascertain anything definite about the past history of the parish from the present residents. The Right Rev. James J. Keane, D.D., Bishop of the Diocese of Cheyenne, confirmed fourteen persons on June, 5th, 1908, and twenty persons were confirmed by the Right Rev. Patrick A. McGovern, D.D., Bishop of the Diocese of Cheyenne, on June, 13, 1917.

There are no records in Buffalo of marriages baptisms, or deaths, previous to the pastorate of Father Keller.

The League of the Sacred Heart was organized in November, 1917, and a noticeable increase in the number of monthly communions followed.

The title to the original property is now awaiting adjudication in Court.

During the year 1917, the congregation was augmented by the advent of a number of homesteaders.

Mass is now celebrated on two Sundays each month, and holy days of obligation, as well as daily Mass when the pastor is not absent.

On June 3, 1918, the old church property located six Lots west of the present church, was conveyed by Hill & Griggs by Warranty Deed to St. John the Baptist Church, on payment of all expenses, namely Taxes and Interest, amounting to \$185.00. There still remaining the removal of a cloud from a mortgage given by Mr Joseph Knight, Cheyenne, and held by Mrs Knight.

Having built the Rectory at Buffalo and organized the parish, Father Nicholson gave his attention to the Missions. In 1919, the Church of St. Mary (Assumption) was built at Clearmont. The largest and principal donor being a Miss Agnes Wynne of New York, who gave a donation of \$1,150.00, with the request that the church be erected in memory of her sister, Mary Teresa Wynne. She also donated the altar linen and a painting of the Crucifixion. A set of Station of the Cross was donated by her nephew, George Kirwin. Mammel Orneles, Joseph Borges and Martin Etchart, donated Statues; Mr and Mrs Stone a Missal, and Mrs W. Ward the organ. The erection of the church was completed in 1919, on the Lot donated by the Lincoln Land Co. The church was incorporated the same year. On August, 17, 1919, St. Mary's Church, Clearmont, was dedicated by the Right Rev. Patrick A. McGovern, D.D., Bishop of Cheyenne.

In 1919, the Church of St. Catherine was built in Arvada. The Catholic Church Extension donated the sum of \$1000.00, toward the building. The Lot was purchased from Arvada Townsite Co., for \$50.00. The church was completed in 1919, and dedicated by the Right Rev. Patrick A. McGovern, D.D., Bishop of Cheyenne, on August, 13, 1919. The total debt on completion was \$600.00.

Father Nicholson was the first priest to celebrate Mass in Kaycee, Wyo., January, 30, 1920, at the home of Mr William Loogstyn.

In January, 1921, Father Nicholson was transferred to Laramie, Wyoming, and was succeeded by the Rev. John J. O'Connor. Father O'Connor was the first priest to say Mass in the district between Kaycee and Salt Creek, at the home of Patrick O'Connor, on August, 23, 1921. Father O'Connor was pastor of Buffalo until January, 20, 1923, when he was transferred to Evanston, Wyo., and succeeded by the Rev. Edward McDonnell.

During Father McDonnell's time as pastor of Buffalo, confirmation was administered by the Right Rev. Patrick A. McGovern, D.D., Bishop of Cheyenne, October, 16, 1923, to a class of eleven.

On January, 10, 1924, the Rev. John Brady was transferred from New Castle, Wyoming to Buffalo. Father Brady had a concrete retaining wall built in the basement of the Rectory, and also in the basement of the church. The cloud on part of the church property, namely, on six Lots west of the present church, was removed on May, 27, 1925; Mrs Knight, Cheyenne, being paid \$300.00.

The debt on the Arvada Church, amounting to \$600.00, was paid on June, 4, 1926.

In October, 1926, the Buffalo parish was divided. A new parish was established at Gillette, with Arvada as a Mission; the other Mission at Roxet, being taken from the vast territory of the New Castle Parish.

In April, 1928, Mass was celebrated for the first time in Sussex, Wyoming, by Father Brady, in a hall the property of Mr & Mrs Leightner. About seventeen people were present, and four children were baptised.

On June, 12, 1928, confirmation was administered in Buffalo, by the Right Rev. Patrick A. McGovern, D.D., Bishop of Cheyenne, to a class of twelve.

In 1919, the Church of St. Catherine was built in Arvada. The lot was purchased from the Arvada Townsite Company for \$50.⁰⁰ and the Catholic Church Extension Society donated the sum of \$1000.⁰⁰ to be used for the building.

The church was completed in 1919, and dedicated by the ~~most Rev.~~ ^{most Rev.} Right Reverend Patrick A. McGovern, D.D., Bishop of ~~Cheyenne~~ ^{McGovern} ~~of Cheyenne~~, on August 13, 1919. The total debt remaining on the completion of the church was \$600.00.*

Mass was celebrated for the first time in Kaycee by Father Nicholson on January 30, 1920, at the home of Mrs. William Loogstyn.

In January, 1921, Father Nicholson was transferred to Laramie, and was succeeded in Buffalo by the ~~Reverend~~ ^{Rev.} John J. O'Connor. Father O'Connor was pastor until January 20, 1923, when he was transferred to Evanston, Wyoming. Father O'Connor was the first priest to say Mass in the district between Kaycee and Salt Creek on August 23, 1921, at the home of Patrick O'Connor.

The ~~Reverend~~ ^{Rev.} Edward McDonnell succeeded Father O'Connor and it was during his pastorate that confirmation was administered by the ~~Right Reverend~~ ^{most Rev.} Patrick A. McGovern, D.D., Bishop of Cheyenne, October 16, 1923, to a class of eleven.

On January 10, 1924, the ~~Reverend~~ ^{Rev.} John Brady was transferred from Newcastle, Wyoming, to Buffalo, Wyoming. Father Brady had a concrete retaining wall built in the basement of the rectory and in the basement of the church. Mrs. Knight, of Cheyenne, received payment of \$300.⁰⁰ May 27, 1925, and the title to the six lots west of the present

church was cleared.

The \$600.⁰⁰ debt on the Arvada church was paid on June 4, 1926. *

In October, 1926, the parish of Buffalo was divided. A new parish was established at Gillette with Arvada as a Mission. The other Mission, Rozet, was taken from the vast territory of the Newcastle parish.

Father Brady celebrated Mass for the first time in Sussex, Wyoming, in April, 1928. Approximately seventeen persons were present in the hall, and four children received the sacrament of baptism.

The ~~Right~~^{Most} Reverend Patrick A. McGovern, D.D., Bishop of Cheyenne, administered confirmation in Buffalo, ~~June 12,~~
in 1928, to a class of twelve; ~~On May 1,~~^{*in*} 1931, ~~His Excellency~~
~~confirmed~~^{*to*} a class of thirty-two; ~~in~~ 1934, ~~to~~ a class of thirty-four; ~~was confirmed by His Excellency on May 13th. May 23,~~
~~in~~^{*to a class of*} 1937, ~~thirty persons were confirmed by His Excellency.~~ There were fifteen baptisms in 1938 and four marriages.

Financial affairs of the parish were in fine shape in 1938. There is at the present time no indebtedness on the church or property and the churches of Arvada and Clearmont are also free from debt. There is a charitable bequest of \$500.⁰⁰ in the treasury.

St. Mary's church ~~at~~ Clearmont is attended twice a month from Buffalo.

Forty per cent of the people of the parish are from the Basque Pyrenees and are engaged in the sheep industry.

It is the hope of the parish to establish funds for a new church in the year 1939.