

Evanston, St. Mary Magdalene Bishop McGovern

[82] St. Mary Magdalen's parish, Evanston, started life in 1873, when the first priestly ministrations in that vicinity were performed by the Rev. Eugene Cusson, who was in charge of the Laramie pastorate at that time. On his first visit to Evanston Fr. Cusson found twelve Catholic families.

Mass was celebrated in the school building until 1877. In that year, Fr. Cusson purchased a house of worship from the Baptist Home Mission Society for \$1,100.00. The people of the parish paid for their new church within one month from the date on which it was bought.

The Catholics of Evanston were attended from Rawlins from 1879 to 1884 by Rev. M.F. Cassidy, who in the former year was given charge of the western part of Wyoming.

The first activity that we have note of since the purchase of the church building came during the tenure of the first resident pastor, Rev. Christopher Fitzgerald. This good priest took time from his ministrations to the living to remember the dead, and in 1885, secured a plot of ground (5.46 acres) for a Catholic cemetery.

[83] To replace Fr. Fitzgerald came the Rev. Peter Casey in 1895. In 1897, the coal fields in the northeastern part of Uinta County were opened and with their development came a number of Catholics to work in the mines. Fr. Casey attended the new coal camp, which was named Kemmerer, in 1898. He took heed of the increasing Catholic population in the Kemmerer neighborhood and in 1899, through his efforts, a neat, little church building was constructed.

In July, 1902, Fr. Casey was transferred to the charge of Rawlins, where he died in February, 1903. From his departure until the pastorate of Rev. John F. Moreton there is nothing of importance to chronicle.

In 1920, the property, house and lot, adjoining the church on the east side was acquired from a Mrs. Fiero. The cost of the property was \$4,750.00, which amount was borrowed. It is interesting to note that this house is the remodeled school building in which Mass was first celebrated in Evanston.

The existence of the parish was uneventful for the next few years, disturbed only by the rumor that Evanston was to be abandoned as a railroad terminal. The disturbing rumor materialized on March 11, 1926, and the home terminal for the freight conductors and brakemen was changed to Ogden. On August 31st of the same year the roundhouse and shops were closed and Evanston was no longer a railroad division; only [84] the locomotive engineers and firemen remained. The effect on the parish was discouraging as many of the old Catholic families were transferred elsewhere. The citizen's committee was successful in having the shops reopened November 8, 1926, but this was only temporary. January 23, 1927, the railroad Reclamation Plant replaced the shops, beginning operations with a force of one hundred men, which was later much increased.

The temporal affairs of the parish were laid aside May 1, 1927, when a class of eight was confirmed by his excellency, Bishop McGovern.

In 1928 another substantial payment was made on the debt. There were thirty-five families on the parish roster in 1928.

Thirty-six miles east of Evanston is historic Fort Bridger, which is situated in an agricultural and ranching district. In 1928, there were sixteen Catholic families scattered throughout the vicinity. Mass was celebrated twice a month in a hall whenever the roads to Fort Bridger were passable. September 1, 1928, a class of eleven children made their first communion, the first regular class in the history of the town.

May 1, 1931, the Most Rev. P. A. McGovern, D.D., bishop of Cheyenne, confirmed a class of forty-three. In this year also there was a noticeable increase in first communions in Evanston and Fort Bridger.

[85] At the end of 1931, the debt had been cut to \$1,300.00. In January, 1932, the Rev. Edward Cassidy relieved Rev. John J. O'Connor of his charge.

Seventeen candidates were confirmed June 17, 1934, by his excellency, Bishop McGovern. In the same year it seemed advisable to plan for a church at Fort Bridger. There were twenty families in that district, and the hall in use was not suitable for services. An application was made to the Catholic Church Extension Society for help and it generously responded with a gift of \$3,000.00. The church was dedicated November 11, 1935, free from debt.

In 1937, the last payment was made on the Evanston debt.

A class of twenty-four was confirmed by his excellency, Bishop McGovern, May 24, 1938. During the year a class of fourteen made their first holy communion; there were five baptisms, and two marriages. At the close of the year there was \$500.00 in the treasury. The parishioners of St. Mary Magdalen's were still attending the church that had been bought in 1877 by Fr. Cusson. It was true that a few changes and improvements had been made, but substantially it was the same. The pastor and his flock were eager to have a new church, and plans were discussed for a campaign to start a building fund.

[86] Providence intervened and in the early morning of January 4, 1939, a fire completely destroyed the church and living quarters. The total insurance came to \$4,500.00, of which amount \$4,200.00 was received by the parish. A building fund was immediately organized and \$7,500.00 was raised.

The parish built a beautiful new church of native stone, with a seating capacity of 156. It is well furnished, and presents a most attractive appearance, both interiorly and exteriorly. The first Mass was celebrated in the new St. Mary Magdalen's on Christmas day, 1939. The building and furnishings cost \$33,000.00, and the debt is \$13,000.00. It was solemnly dedicated May 22, 1940, by Most Rev. P.A. McGovern, D.D., in the presence of Bishop Hunt, of Salt Lake City,

two monsignori, and 25 priests from Wyoming, Utah, Nevada and California. Bishop McGovern preached on the Infallibility of the Roman Pontiff to a congregation that filled the auditorium and gallery and was made up of Catholics and non-Catholics.

A total of four missions were given during the years from 1925 to 1939.

The following priests have had charge of the Evanston parish: Rev. Eugene Cusson (attended from Laramie) 1873-1879; Rev. M.F. Cassidy (from Rawlins) 1879-1884; Rev. Christopher Fitzgerald, 1884-1895, first resident pastor; Rev. Peter Casey, 1895-1901; Rev. [87] Thomas Hayes, 1902-1903; Rev. Patrick Walsh, 1903-1904; Rev. Thomas Barrett, 1904-1907; Rev. D.M. Tully, 1907-1908; Rev. M.A. Kennedy, 1908-1910; Rev. P.J. Lynch, 1910-1911; Rev. R.B. Groener, 1912-1914; Rev. Michael Stagno, (November to December, 1914); Rev. John F. Moreton, 1915-1923; Rev. John J. O'Connor, 1923-1932; Rev. Edward Cassidy, 1932 to the present.

History of St. Mary Magdalen's Church
Evanston
May 1940 to Jan. 1st 1951

With the dedication of the new church seemed to come new life to the Catholics of Evanston. A new pride was born. This was especially to be noted among the children.

The Pastor now took up residence in the house originally purchased by Fr Moreton. It was old, but very well constructed. It needed many repairs however, and both the men and the ladies of the parish gave a helping hand in making it more livable.

As the debt was realized to be very great for a parish like Evanston very little new expenditures could be made, and a complete program of retrenchment was followed.

The people responded well, and very generously, and by the end of the year 1944 the complete debt was paid, and the new St. Mary Magdalen's reared its tower and spires high in its pride.

After a brief respite a new improvement program was instituted. In this the men of the parish were particularly zealous. The grounds of the property were made more in keeping with the beauty of the church and many new furnishings were added in the house so that now in 1950 it is quite an attractive house in which to live.

In May 1941 a class of 21 was confirmed by his Excellency Bishop McGovern and in 1944 a class of 18.

In May 1948 a class of 15 was confirmed by his Excellency Bishop Newell on his first visit to the parish.

During these years two missions were given and were exceptionally well attended by both Catholics and non-Catholics.

On June 1st 1950 the Pastor Father Cassidy celebrated the Silver Jubilee of the anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. The event was graced by the presence of his Excellency Bishop Newell who brought with him the cordial felicitations of His Excellency Bishop McGovern. The priests of the diocese were well represented, as well as many from the Diocese of Salt Lake.

At the beginning of the year 1951 there were some 60 families in the parish. The total number of Baptism for the year 1950 was 16 and the total number of marriages was 3.

Parish History 1950-1960
ST. MARY MAGDALEN'S CHURCH
EVANSTON, WYOMING

On October 24, 1951, Father Edward Cassidy, pastor of St. Mary Magdalen's for nineteen years, died after a short illness. Father Gerard Schellinger was appointed administrator until June 1952 when he was appointed Chaplain to De Paul Hospital in Cheyenne. During the summer of 1952 Father Bonaventure Knaebel, O.S.B., from St. Meinrad's administered St. Mary Magdalen's until the appointment of a pastor.

On September 4, 1952, Father John Marley was assigned the parish. In February 1953 a new Hammond Organ was purchased for the sum of 2,600 dollars. In June of the same year, the walls of the church were wainscoted at a cost of 2,100 dollars. On October 9, 1953, Father Marley was transferred to Green River, Wyoming, and Father John Corrigan was appointed pastor of St. Mary Magdalen's. In July 1953, siding was put on the rectory and interior and exterior painting done at a cost of \$1,000.00.

On February 18, 1955, Father Corrigan was transferred to Pine Bluffs and Father James Godley appointed pastor of St. Mary Magdalen's. In December of the same year the sum of \$1,731.14 was paid to the City for

**HISTORY OF
ST. MARY MAGDALEN CHURCH
EVANSTON, WYOMING
AND
ST. HELEN MISSION
FT. BRIDGER, WYOMING
(1960-1970)**

Father James Godley was assigned to St. Mary Magdalen, Church, Evanston, and St. Helen's Mission, Ft. Bridger, in February 1955. The usual routine continued including Altar Society meetings, religion classes, and C.Y.O. meetings. Father Godley celebrated his Silver Jubilee June 9, 1965. The ladies of the Altar Society at the parish rectory gave open house in his honor. C.Y.O. convention was held in Rock Springs in October 1966.

October 20, 1966, Father Godley was assigned to the Immaculate Conception Church, Green River. Father Philip Colibraro was assigned to St. Mary Magdalen's and St. Helen's October 21, 1966.

1967 plans were made for the construction of a parish hall and catechetical center.

The first special observance commemorating the 95th jubilee of St. Mary Magdalen's was held March 3, 1968, when members of the family donated a music and sound system in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Edward McGarry and son. September 12, 1968, was the dedication of St. Francis of Assisi Shrine in honor of the Sisters of Holy Cross Hospital, Salt Lake City, Utah. Accepted by Sister Ann Josephine, administrator. Bishop Joseph L. Federal of Salt Lake City, Bishop Hubert M. Newell of Cheyenne, and Sisters of Holy Cross Hospital in attendance.

January 21, 1969, was the completion of Catholic Center. A dedication was held. Bishop John May of Chicago and Bishop Newell present for the occasion. Boy Scout Troop #95 organized October 1968, with Mr. George Leckie as Scout Master. September of 1969 first Deanery meeting held in new center. Bishop Newell, Mrs. J.J. Hickey and Mrs. Peyton attended.

The interior of the church re-decorated. The old altar was removed. New carpets laid, new drapes hung, and new light fixtures installed. Resurrected Christ was installed over altar. Blessed Sacrament Altar was placed on the side of the sanctuary. Daughter, Alice Mahoney, gave Christ the King's Gold Crown in memory of Sadie Miller.

People of the parish in memory of deceased members donated lighting system around church and center.

C.Y.O. members gave Thanksgiving Day dances. Dinners and luncheons were served in the center. Summer breakfasts were served following the 6:30 and 8:30 Masses to tourists and public as a fund-raising project. Mass held every Saturday morning at the Wyoming State Hospital.

C.Y.O., E.C.C.W. religion classes and Boy Scout meetings are held in the center. 6-10 baptisms, 10-12 burials, and four marriages are held each year.

The 1970 projects are the building of a new parish hall and catechetical center for St. Helen's mission in Ft. Bridger, and a new rectory for the priests in Evanston between the present church and new catechetical center.

ST. HELEN'S, FT. BRIDGER
MISSION OF ST. MARY MAGDALEN, EVANSTON
1960-1966

Weekly Sunday Mass.

St. Helen's Altar and Rosary Society met regularly (monthly), C.Y.O. activities (conventions).

Church was painted inside and out. Visiting and substituting priests were enjoyed.

Annual Smorgasbord each year, March 17th.

Furnace room added to church building. Choir loft extended.

1966-69— Same

Sisters for summer school.

New lights and new furnace.

Altar and sanctuary remodeled.

Baptistery.

Blessed Sacrament reserved permanently.

Organ moved downstairs.

Plans begun for catechetical center and social hall. Land purchased from Birleffi for this.

1960— first deanery meeting by a Mission (St. Helen's).

Evanston 1970-1980
St. Mary Magdalen, Evanston
St. Helen, Fort Bridger
December 1980

PASTORS:

1970-1972 Rev. Philip Colibraro
1972-1975 Rev. Bartholomew Svete
1975-1976 Rev. Colm Woods
(interim administrator - Rev. John Hoodack, S.J.)
1976-1978 Rev. Thomas Cleary
1978-1979 Rev. Vincent Langfield
1979-1980 Rev. William Espenshade

TRUSTEES:

1970-1971 Hubert Benn & Joseph Staniforth
1971-1975 Enoch Dunning & Joseph Staniforth
1975-1979 Pat Branch & Robert Kearns
1979-1980 Pat Branch & Lee Guild

MAJOR EVENTS:

1970: In December, constructed a parish center at St. Helen's, Fort Bridger.

1973: Constructed new rectory at St. Mary Magdalen, Evanston.

1975: Finished rectory basement at St. Mary Magdalen, Evanston.
Enlarged Church and joined to Center, St. Helen's, Fort Bridger.

1978: Appointed Eucharistic Ministers.

1979: Site of Spring Deanery Meeting. Reconciliation Room installed. All debts were paid off.
Received lease money for mineral rights. New pulpit was installed. Communion under both
kinds was started.

1980: Renovated Church heating system. Church roof was coated, the center was painted, and
church trim was painted. Ceiling fans were installed. St. Helen's Church at Fort Bridger was
incorporated and trustees were appointed, and a parish council was formed. Constructed new
kitchen in parish center at St. Helen's. The exterior of the Church was painted, new front doors
were installed, and the sanctuary was renovated.

Evanston 1980-1990
Saint Mary Magdalen, Evanston
St. Helen, Fort Bridger
Rev. Sam Hayes

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

Rev. William Espenshade -- 1979 - 1983.

Rev. Patrick Trujillo -- 1983 - 1984.

Rev. James Callahan -- 1984.

Rev. Cletus Prado -- 1985 - 1986.

Rev. John Savio -- 1986 - 1991.

2. Notable accomplishments by lay leaders and parishioners (give dates)

Lisa Galioto - State President, CYO, 1984.

Lee Guild - State Deputy, Knights of Columbus, 1984.

Rocky Reed from St. Helen's - Elected to the National Youth Board, 1990.

3. Notable accomplishments by the clergy and religious during the decade: (give dates)

4. Construction - new or remodeling: (give dates)

Restrooms and classroom added in basement of the Church in 1982. Stained glass windows installed in Church in 1980.

Repair foundation of the church in 1986.

Remodel sacristy and added a cry room in 1987.

Constructed a second entrance to basement of rectory/Parish office in 1988.

5. Land acquisitions: (give dates) None.

6. Lay Trustees and term of service for each:

Lee Guild and Walter LaCrosse (LaCasse?)

Both of these trustees served in this capacity throughout the ten year period.

Trustees for St. Helen's were Floyd Fillin and Steve Rodzinak. Both served throughout the ten year period.

7. Pastor's overview of the decade:

The 1980s saw a large influx of people into the Evanston community associated with the energy boom. The parish nearly tripled in the number of families registered. It was a time of growth and transition. In the late eighties, the boom was over, and many people left the community and the parish.

The early eighties were an unsettled time in the parish due to the fact that in the space of three years, there were four different pastors here. With Fr. John Savio's coming here in 1986, a much-needed period of stability and healing was begun.

The same events apply to St. Helen's parish.

8. Significant Parish events and programs: (give dates)

In 1984, St. Mary Magdalen observed its 100th year anniversary as a parish.

The Renew Program was a tremendous success. Over 100 people were involved in small groups. This program is credited for helping to unite the parish.

In 1980, under the leadership of Fr. Espenshade, St. Helen's was recognized as an independent parish.

In 1989, a Knights of Columbus Council was formed at St. Helen's Parish.

Evanston 1990-2000
St. Mary Magdalen
Rev. Rory Schiffbauer, Pastor
May 2000

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

1987-1991 Rev. John Savio

1991-1993 Rev. Sam Hayes

1993-1998 Rev. August Koeune

1998-Present Rev. Rory Schiffbauer

2. Notable accomplishments by lay leaders and parishioners. (Give dates.)

1995-1997--Completion of Lay Ministry Program (2 yr.)--Dottie Pasenelli-Peggy DuCharme

1997-1999--Completion of Family Life Ministry Program (2 yr.)--Julia Murray

1999 MOMS-Introduced by Jan Brown

1997 CARE-Catholic Arms Reach Everyone--established with the help of several parishioners led by Ann Trosper

1990 Lord's Storehouse--moved to Church--managed by Kay Rossiter and Melba Amster.

3. Notable accomplishments by the clergy and religious. (Give dates.)

4. Construction--new or remodeling. (Give dates.)

1994--Remodeling Rectory basement into large conference/meeting area

1995--Handicapped ramp

1997--Remodeling CCD classrooms

5. Land acquisitions. (Give dates.)

6. Lay Trustees and term of service for each.

1995-present Lee Guild and Dottie Pasenelli

7. Pastor's overview of the decade.

There was a very minimal participation in the Synodal process of 1992. Ministry focuses mostly on maintaining catechetical programs for all ages, including adults. A Spanish Mass was added to the schedule to accommodate the growing Spanish speaking community. Growth has been shown in financial responsibility and stewardship.

8. Significant parish events and programs. (Give dates.)

7/22-----Annual Feast of St. Mary Magdalen Parish picnic

December----Our Lady of Guadalupe Celebration

April 1999----Spring fest

Annual Parish Missions