

ATLAS



Parish Boundaries in Wyoming

In the beginning there was no Wyoming. Wyoming was invented because the surrounding states would be too big. Railroads fathered most towns in Wyoming. People followed the railroad. And the Church followed the tracks. The erection of the Diocese of Cheyenne (1887) predated the admission of the State of Wyoming into the Union (1890). Parish boundaries were defined after the partition of the state into twenty-three counties (1923) facilitated the ordinary method of simply following county lines. Bishop Patrick A. McGovern inaugurated the project when on January 28, 1924 he wrote to the Fathers:

As the various parishes must, according to ecclesiastical law, have definite limits, at least in name, each pastor is directed to consult with his neighbors, and, after coming to an agreement with them, mark off in black ink on the enclosed map the boundaries he would suggest for his parish, and return the same to us by Easter. If your suggestions are found satisfactory, we shall adopt them. Even after we set limits, arrangements can readily be made whereby neighboring priests may have jurisdiction in your territory.

Maps were returned by the Fathers to Bishop McGovern, who compiled them and drew parish boundaries on a "Clason's Sketch Map of Wyoming" with a handwritten title: "Parish limits in diocese of Cheyenne. 1925" and the handwritten subscription:

"First time limits definitely set: Jan. 23, 1925 + Patrick A. McGovern."

A "clean" copy drawn on a "Wyoming: State Highways, Historic Trails and Forts" map had the title: "Parish Limits, Diocese of Cheyenne. Jan. 23, 1925" [\[See following two pages.\]](#)

The entire project took twenty years to complete because of certain problematic boundaries of the parishes in Buffalo, Sheridan and Monarch, Gillette, Kemmerer, and the great Rock Springs boundary dispute, finally eliciting a letter fixing existing boundaries (1944). Bishop McGovern added four parishes. Bishop Hubert M. Newell established ten new parishes and formalized a five-part deanery system (1953). Bishop Joseph Hart's reunification of the two Rock Springs parishes (1997) marked the end of a century of expansion. Foreseeing the imminent shortage of priests in the diocese, Bishop Paul D. Etienne asked the Fathers to "evaluate pairings of parishes / missions" in 2010.

