

SACRED HEART CHURCH, OAKWOOD, NORTH DAKOTA
Parish Centennial History - 1981

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Grandson of Josephine Collette (p. 27) and Henry Bernard

Great Grandson of Octave Collette and Clotilde Blondeau (p. 27)



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Sacred Heart Church

Oakwood, North Dakota



Centennial Anniversary

1881 - 1981

A Historical Album
marking the
Centennial Anniversary
of
Sacred Heart Church
Oakwood, North Dakota
1881 - 1981

Compiled by
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Pope John Paul II



**Bishop Martin Marty,
Bishop of Dakota Territory**



**Bishop John Shanley,
First Bishop of Fargo Diocese**



Bishop James O'Reilly



**Bishop Aloysius J. Muench,
later became Cardinal Muench**



Bishop Leo F. Dworschak



608 BROADWAY
BOX 1750
FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA 58102

March 6, 1981



Bishop Justin A. Driscoll
Present Bishop of Fargo Diocese

TO: Reverend Patrick O'Connell and
Members of Sacred Heart Parish, Oakwood

My dear Friends in Christ,

The celebration of the centennial of Sacred Heart Parish, Oakwood, is an important event in this community and throughout the entire Diocese of Fargo.

Sacred Heart Parish, Oakwood, was founded almost a decade before North Dakota became a State or the Diocese of Fargo was begun at Jamestown. The names of Fathers L'Hiver, Bonin, Malo, Robillard, Fortier, and many others tell a proud story of intrepid missionaries, together with the staunch and saintly pioneer men and women of this Plain and Valley, whose lives melted away, often painfully, under the labors and tasks of their day.

Early French-Canadian settlers came to Oakwood and they stayed. They worked hard for God and Country, never counting the cost, especially the almost heroic effort to provide their children with Catholic education.

St. Aloysius Academy had an important role in the life of Sacred Heart Parish as it provided a sound Christian education for more than a half century. It was recognized as an outstanding institution of learning and culture of the time.

The history of Sacred Heart Parish, likewise, was greatly enriched with the coming of the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation from Broons, France. They conducted St. Aloysius Academy as long as personal and human resources made it possible. Its influence in the community is easily observed from the numerous young men and women who entered the Priesthood and Religious Life from the families of Oakwood. Over fifty Sisters and ten Priests and Brothers have come from Sacred Heart Parish, including one Bishop to the American Church, Most Reverend Raymond W. Lessard, Bishop of Savannah, Georgia.

I pray that God will continue to bless you, Father Patrick O'Connell, and all the parishioners of Sacred Heart Parish as you conclude this century and look forward to the future.

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus shower His graces and blessings upon you today and always.

With every best wish, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Justin A. Driscoll
Most Reverend Justin A. Driscoll
Bishop of Fargo



Father Pat O'Connell

Rev. Patrick O'Connell, second eldest son of the late James P. O'Connell and Marie Plunkett, was born in Virginia, Cavan County, Ireland, June 21, 1906. Having completed his grade school education at the National School, he made his high school studies at the Christian Brothers' high school in Kells, Meath County. From there he went to St. Patrick's College, Cavan, for four years. After graduating from St. Patrick's College, he entered St. Peter's Seminary, Wexford County, where he took two years philosophy and one year theology. He was then summoned by the late Bishop O'Reilly of Fargo to complete the other three years of theology at St. John's Seminary, Collegeville, Minn., where he was ordained to the priesthood by the late Most Rev. Joseph Busch, D.D., Bishop of St. Cloud, on June 5, 1933.

His first appointment was as an assistant to the late Father Long at Edgeley, where after only three weeks he was appointed as an assistant at St. Mary's Cathedral, Fargo. After five years there he was appointed as pastor at St. Vincent's Church in Stirum and St. Arnold's mission at Milnor. With the removal of the Rev. Lucian J. Arrell from St. Boniface parish in Lidgerwood in August, 1943, Father O'Connell was appointed to replace him. After twenty years in Lidgerwood, Father O'Connell held pastorates in Pembina, Bottineau, Jamestown and Grafton before coming to Oakwood as pastor on August 15, 1972.

Dedication

To the Pioneers of This Community

... the men and women who came here in the "early days" before the advent of the railroad and the automobile ... to them, and to their children, and also to the people of the present generation who have labored so zealously in the interest of Church and State ... this booklet is humbly and respectfully dedicated.

PATRICK O'CONNELL

Forward

Because a Parish is a small part of a larger living organism, namely, The Mystical Body of Christ, the history of a Parish is more meaningful than a report of the dimensions of a church building, the dates of several pastorates, or the amount of money contributed during a given period of time. Rather it is the story of the people comprising the parish . . . the story of their spiritual and temporal progress.

This history is concerned for the most part with the temporal progress of Sacred Heart Parish of Oakwood. A sincere attempt has been made toward accuracy, a prime consideration of any historian.

The spiritual progress of a parish is immeasurable in terms of human symbols. This history, therefore, does not attempt to measure that spiritual progress, but it does mention the spiritual opportunities made available to the parish. The number of Religious Vocations from the parish is an indication of its spiritual health.

The event we are celebrating is the One Hundredth Anniversary of the founding of Sacred Heart Parish of Oakwood.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to the members of the Book Committee for the many long hours spent in helping to prepare this booklet, to all who have supplied pictures and information, and to all who have helped in any way to make this souvenir booklet possible.

REV. PATRICK O'CONNELL, Pastor

“The Founding of a Parish”

History of Sacred Heart Church

The settlement of Oakwood, founded in 1878 by a Mr. Joseph Charpentier, was part of a region which covered all of Dakota Territory and most of lower Canada which had been explored in 1734 by a French-Canadian by the name of Pierre Gauthier de Varennes, Sieur de Laveranderye. Although missionaries crossed the territories following the explorers wherever they went during those first years of exploration, it was not until 1818, where under the directive of Rt. Rev. Bishop J. Octave Plessis of Quebec, that two missionaries arrived at a place called Fort Douglas, where today now stands the city of St. Boniface, Manitoba. Their destination was to establish a mission to attend to the needs of that community. The two missionaries were Father Norbert Provencher, later to become the first Vicar Apostolic of Western Canada, and Father S. Joseph Nicholas Dumoulin. In that same year, Father Provencher sent his companion, Father Dumoulin, to minister to the needs of the souls in Pembina. Father Dumoulin arrived in his mission at Pembina in September of 1818, and thus became the first missionary of what is now North Dakota. Father Dumoulin remained for five years, and for a time his parish was larger than St. Boniface where Father Provencher had established his headquarters.



Mr. Joseph Charpentier
Founder (1878) of the Oakwood Settlement
and Donor (1881) of
Sacred Heart Church Property.



Father Louis Bonin
Founder of Sacred Heart Church
of Oakwood

As the number of settlers increased in the Dakota Territories, another missionary, by the name of Father Georges Antoine Belcourt, established another mission center in the year 1848, known as St. Joe's Mission, near the present town of Walhalla. Later, in 1873, the chapel of St. Joe's mission was transferred from its original site to its present location at Leroy.

It was from this mission center that Rev. Father Louis Bonin, pastor at Leroy, came to the settlement of Oakwood, then known as the "Park River Settlement" to attend to the needs of the Oakwood community.

Father Bonin paid his first visit to the Park River settlement on July 11, 1880 and celebrated the first high mass in Oakwood, where on this same occasion he also baptized ten children. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was celebrated in a log cabin, located on the south side of the Park River, about one and one-half mile west of the present church site. That building still stands today serving as a granary, and is now owned by Mrs. Jeanette Gourde.

Among the first settlers, from 1878 to 1880, at the time of Father Bonin's visit, are such names as follows: In 1878 were Joseph Charpentier, John Brunelle, William Brunelle, Joseph Brunelle, Thomas Barnabe, George Barnabe, Albert Barnabe, Octave Collette, Philippe Collette, Ovide Collette, Jean Baptiste Trudeau, Pierre Lachapelle, Theodore Huard, Benoni Brunelle, Ferdinand LaRoche, Antoine Girard, Honore Savard, Theodules Collette and Joseph Deschenes.

Settlers in 1879 were: Edouard LaBerge, Dosithée LaBerge, Arthur LaBerge, Joseph LaBerge, Jean Baptiste LaBerge, Etienne Lessard, Philias Lessard, Louis Lessard, Joseph Lessard, John Sullivan, Sr., John Sullivan, Jr., Mark Sullivan, Urbain Boutin, Alfred Boutin, John Boutin, Francis Boutin, Arcadius Collette, Stanislas Lachapelle, Domina Vary, Moise Vary, Philias Vary, Moise Labonte, Joseph Collette, Alfred Collette, Cyrille Patenaude, Emile French, Leon Suprenant, Joseph Parent, Joseth Pellant, Raymond Pellant, Thomas Poole, Joseph Poole, Francois Desautels, D. DeSautels, Guillaume Boivin, Marjorie Goulet, John Donnelly, Bernard Donnelly, Jean Baptiste Bourcier, Henry McLernan and Michel Charbonneau.

In 1880, such names to be found were: Stanislas LaRoche, Pierre Lacoste, Achille Garant, Emile Garant, Benoni Boulduc, Joseph Campbell, Arsene Campbell, Oswald Campbell, Leonce Couture, Alphonse Sabourin, Alfred Parent, Ernest Soucy, Pierre Fortier, Alexis LaMarre, Alfred Sevigny, Bernard Faille, Pierre Faille, Francois Xavier Demers, Dieudonne Demers, Cornelius Daley, James Bradford, Louis Bradford, John Boulduc, Basie Bellegrade, James Daley.

Although some of the names of these early settlers are no longer present in Oakwood, these pioneer names can be claimed as forebearers by the present generation. The name Charpentier, for example, is no longer listed in our annals, but his generation lives on today. The pioneer of 1878 remains in his descendants: a grandchild, Mrs. Adeline Dipple, deceased; a great grandchild, Mr. Halward Dipple, and three great-great grandchildren, Helen, Dennis and Carol Dipple. Even though the name of Charpentier and the names of other pioneers have vanished, their progeny remains to form the parish of today, with other sons and daughters of pioneers, whose names have remained, like Collette, Campbell, Demers, French, Gourde, Lessard, Pilon and Sevigny. There is no doubt, in the listing of the first pioneers, Charpentier heads the list and not without reason, for to him belongs the title of first settler. Not so much as that he was the first to arrive in this region and establish himself in the locality, but because it was he who donated the tract of land on which the church now stands today. This gift consisted of a plot of land



Mrs. Adeline (Addie) Carpenter Dipple

Adeline Carpenter Dipple was the daughter of Dennis Carpenter and Philomene (Bolduc) Carpenter. She married Henry Dipple in 1920, he was the son of Nick Dipple and Amelia (Schrack) Dipple. She was the granddaughter of Joseph Charpentier who donated the land for the Oakwood church, cemetery and St. Aloysius Academy. Adeline and Henry Dipple had one son, Halward, who is still a member of Sacred Heart Church. All of the others are deceased. Addie died Aug. 31, 1980.

located in the SE corner of the SW¹/₄ of SW¹/₄ of section 12, township 157, range 52, running twenty chains in length, five chains in width, situated on the bank of the Park River. In behalf of the Church in March of 1881 a warranty deed was executed for the consideration of \$1.00.

As Mr. Joseph Charpentier is revered as the founder of the Oakwood community because of his early arrival and the grant of land for the present church site, then also Father Louis Bonin must be called its first pastor, for it was he who attended to the first needs of the community and said the first mass in 1880.

On the 5th of September of the same year, 1880, Father Bonin returned to the Park River Mission. He said mass at the William Brunelle home, about one and one-half miles northeast of the actual church site, on the farm owned today by Mike French. The settlement had progressed to such an extent, that in order to accommodate the ever increasing number of church going people, it was found necessary to provide a place of worship for them.



Rt. Rev. Martin Marty, Vicar Apostolic of Northern Minnesota and of the Dakota Territory.



**Mr. J. Bte. LaBerge
Singer of first mass at
Oakwood.**



**Mr. and Mrs. Stanislas LaRoche (Evelina LaBerge).
Mr. LaRoche was one of the
two singers of first mass at
Oakwood.**

It was no doubt with the wholehearted approval of the Vicar Apostolic of the Dakota Territory, Right Rev. Martin Marty, O.S.B., that Father Bonin in the spring of 1881 acquired the property donated by Mr. Joseph Charpentier and presided over the erection of the first church in the community. Father Bastien, in his 50th Anniversary booklet, relates the memorable event in these words: "The snow was still on the ground; ice still on the Red River and the building material had to be secured from Stephen, Minnesota, then called Tamarac Station, on account of its proximity to the Tamarac River. The work was begun at once; every willing settler full of courage and contentment, put his shoulder to the wheel and helped in the good work until it was completed. Some shoveled the snow off the ground where the building was to be erected; others, who owned oxen teams or horses, hauled the material from the Tamarac Station. The work proceeded without interference whatsoever until one day the ice on the Red River, over which the caravan of timber loads had to cross, gave way to the warm rays of the bright spring sun and went suddenly. When this happened, there were still three loads of building materials to be hauled from the station to Oakwood and an unexpected though unavoidable delay followed. Nevertheless, determined to have the church completed, the volunteer workers succeeded with great effort in getting the needed lumber across the river at Parr's, the only ferry available to them, and brought it to its destination. Among the carpenters who worked on the church building were Stanislas LaRoche, Honore Savard, Mr. Charbonneau and Ovide Collette deserve special mention; but many others too, helped to the full measure of their ability. The new church building was completed in June following, and Mass was celebrated in it for the first time June 5th, 1881, by Rev. Father Bonin.

Naturally, the building of the new church brought the problem of paying for the expenditure caused by its construction. For this reason a meeting was held on June 5, 1881, whereat Father Bonin was authorized, by a unanimous vote of the congregation assembled, to borrow from \$400 to \$500 at the high interest rate of 10 percent per annum; half of this amount to be payable in November, 1882, the other half in November, 1883. The assembly also chose advisers for the priest. They were Stanislas

LaRoche, Edouard LaBerge and Joseph Brunelle, Jr., and constituted the first committee of the newly organized mission. The Park River Settlement was now known as the Sacred Heart Mission because its new chapel had received from the church authorities the most blessed name of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

There was still the matter of the pastor's salary to be settled, and it was on the 15th of August, 1881, on the feast day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that Father Bonin returned to Sacred Heart Mission to say mass. After the celebration of the mass, a meeting was held and it was unanimously agreed by all the members present, that the sum of \$400 be paid to the missionary, for the first year, as an initial salary for his services.

Father Bonin's most deserving work was now completed. The Sacred Heart Mission near the Park River, was now known as the Sacred Heart Church of Oakwood. Father Bonin returned to his parish of St. Joseph and was succeeded by Rev. Father J. F. Malo who became the first resident pastor of the parish of Oakwood. It was on October 4, 1881, that Father Malo arrived to take charge of the young parish after he had received the letter of appointment reproduced below:

September 1st, 1881

Dear Rev. Father Malo:

Go to Park River, to the Sacred Heart Mission, organized by the Reverend Louis Bonin, missionary of St. Joseph, Hyde Park, Pembina County. This mission comprises fifty-five families and several young men, owners of homesteads. The population is French-Canadian, except ten Irish families, and a German one.

The most important families are precisely those who insist in asking for a resident priest.

As customary in those regions, the crops are plentiful and the means are not lacking to complete the building and to pay the priest's salary which for the first year is to be \$400.00. But you will have to take along with you chalice, missal, vestments, wine and everything necessary to the Holy Sacrifice and to the administration of the sacraments.

Farewell,
Yours,

M. Marty, Vicar Apostolic of D.T.

On Oct. 9, 1881, Father Malo called a meeting of the congregation to resolve the problem of a dwelling place for the pastor, and an enclosure for the graveyard. The assembly decided to use the upper part of the chapel for the pastor's living area, and a wire fence to enclose the cemetery. By the end of the same month, a second meeting was called to solve the problem of furnishing the chapel with pews. The people were favorable toward the realization of this need, and also established a pew rental system to service the financing of this project.

During the following months, other general improvements were made. A chimney was built, storm windows and double doors installed, the sanctuary and the whole interior of the chapel were finished and painted, and furniture was offered to the priest for his apartment.

Though much of Father Malo's time and attention was absorbed in the material improvement of his mission, his zeal for the spiritual and intellectual welfare of youth was too great to allow him to overlook the question of their education. The worthy priest taught, not only religion, but also the common branches of study to the children of the settlement. The chapel served the purpose of a school building until a public school was erected a few hundred feet from the chapel, and Father Malo, together with his pupils, made good use of it. The school house now serves as the Oakwood Township Hall.

The devoted missionary was not the first school teacher in the locality, however, for this honor belongs to Mrs. Fred Worthing, born Cooper, who taught in the Oakwood settlement during the months of June, July and August of the year 1880. As a school room, she used part of Mr. John Brunelle's log house, located half a mile northeast of the present Oakwood village, a short distance from the place where now stands the home of Mr. Roland Collette, which was newly built by his father Mr. Arthur Collette.

Father Malo left the Oakwood mission in April, 1882, and for many years had charge of different missions in the region of the Turtle Mountains. He now rests in the cemetery of St. Ann's Church at Belcourt, North Dakota, where the population, who had the privilege to know him well and to appreciate his virtue, honors his remains as those of a saint.

From April of 1882 to March of 1884, the young mission was served by three pastors at subsequent periods, during which none of whom remained for any great length of time. The first of these, to be appointed pastor of the young mission, was Father J. S. Robillard, who arrived in May of 1882, and left in July of the same year, much to the regret of the majority of the congregation, who felt at his departure the loss of a dignified priest and of a real gentleman in the true sense of the word. He was succeeded by Father J. J. Fortier who took charge of the parish in August of 1882. His administration is credited for the erection of a cemetery cross during the summer of 1883, shortly before the pastor's departure in the month of October of the same year.

In November of 1883, Rev. Father Cyrille St. Pierre, visited the young parish after having been requested and empowered to do so by the Rt. Rev. M. Marty, Vicar Apostolic of the Dakotas, and to report as to the conditions of the parish. While on his visit, he presided over the ceremony of the dedication of the Sacred Heart Cemetery Cross, erected by Father Fortier, which he



Rev. Fr. J. F. Malo
First resident pastor of
Sacred Heart Church of
Oakwood.

blessed according to the rites of the church.

On Christmas Eve, December 24, 1883, His Lordship, the Rt. Rev. M. Marty, Vicar Apostolic, also visited the Sacred Heart Mission, and on this visit he blessed two graves and baptized one child. From the time of this visit, in December of 1883, the Oakwood parish was without a priest and no services were held in the Sacred Heart Chapel until Rev. Father F. Hamet was appointed pastor and took charge of the parish at the beginning of March of 1884.



Father Cyril, St. Pierre



Father J. J. Fortler



Father F. Hamet

At this point, we would do well to review the history of the episcopacy that governed this territory in its spiritual beginnings. What is now North Dakota was first spiritually governed by the Rt. Rev. N. Provencher, the first Bishop of St. Boniface, Canada, then by his successor Archbishop Tache, who was Vicar General of the American Bishops. From 1837 to 1850 it was under the care of the Rt. Rev. Mathias Loras, first bishop of Dubuque; from 1850 to 1875 it was within the jurisdiction of both the Rt. Rev. Joseph Cretin, first bishop of St. Paul, and his successor the Rt. Rev. Thomas Grace; from 1875 to 1879 it was governed by the Rt. Rev. Rupert Seidenbush, O.S.B. mitered abbot of St. John's monastery at St. Cloud, Vicar Apostolic of Northern Minnesota and of the Dakota Territory; from 1879 to 1889 it was committed to the care of the Rt. Rev. Martin Marty, O.S.B. Vicar Apostolic of the Dakotas. On December 27, 1889, the Rt. Rev. John Shanley was consecrated bishop in St. Paul and became the first bishop of what is now known as the Diocese of Fargo. However, at the establishment of this new Diocese, Jamestown was the see city of all North Dakota from 1889, to August, 1891, when John Shanley moved his see to Fargo, and resided there until he died on July 16, 1909. He was succeeded by the Rt. Rev. James O'Reilly. When James O'Reilly (1910-1934) was consecrated as second Bishop of Fargo, the western part of North Dakota had just been established as the Diocese of Bismarck. Most Rev. Aloisius J. Muench (1935-1960) was nominated third Bishop of Fargo at the height of the Depression. He established the Catholic Church Expansion Fund to save mortgaged parishes and provide credit for future parish development. He founded a monthly diocesan newspaper, convened the first synod in the diocese, published a synodical book of diocesan legislation, established diocesan scholarships for needy seminarians and organized a mutual aid fund for disabled and retired priests. In 1946 Bishop Muench was appointed Apostolic Visitor to Germany. In 1950 he was granted the personal title of archbishop and the following year was appointed Papal Nuncio to Germany. In December, 1959, he was created a cardinal priest and elevated to the Roman Curia. Most Rev. Leo F. Dworshak, as auxiliary bishop (1947-1959) administered the affairs of the diocese during the absence of Archbishop Muench whom he succeeded as fourth Bishop of Fargo in 1960. Bishop Dworshak was followed by Most Rev. Justin A. Driscoll — the present Bishop of Fargo.

As we resume our presentation of historical events in the early years of our parish, let us go back to the beginning of March of 1884 shortly after the arrival of Father F. Hamet as pastor of Oakwood. Under his administration the Sacrament of Confirmation was given for the first time in Sacred Heart Parish on July 2, 1884, by the Rt. Rev. M. Marty. Following is the list of the 57 candidates who were confirmed that day: Eleonore Brunelle, Odile Lessard, Christiane Sabourin, Flora Sabourin, Bridget Sabourin, Mathilda Charpentier; Josephine Keegan, Marcelline Demers, Philomene Bolduc, Josephine Bouvet, Marie Bouvet, Rosalie Pape, Elizabeth Marchand, Adeline Charpentier, Hermine Charpentier, Salome Goulet, Rosalie Petit, Josephine Vary, Agnes Duffy, Josiphine Duffy, Bridget Duffy, Josephine O'Connor, Agnes O'Connor, Julia Poole, Kate Poole, Augustine Faille,



Old Sacred Heart Rectory, erected 1886.



The Old Rectory - presently owned by Dayton Kornkven

Sara Desrosiers, Louise LeBlanc, Ellen Kyes, Josephine Donahue, Kate Murphy, Thomas Kelly, Patrick Murphy, Alfred Filteau, Thomas Murphy, Philias Lessard, Joseph Poole, Jules LeBlanc, Joseph French, Octave Collette, Oliver Charpentier, Joseph M. Bolduc, Louis Grandbois, Adelard Corriveau, David LeBlanc, Dieudonne Demers, Louis Gagner, Charles Brunet, Adelard Charpentier, Victor French, Alfred Sevigny, Henry Sevigny, Elzear Faille, Joseph Lessard, Henri Verreau and Narcisse Goulet. Many of these have descendants in Walsh County and Sacred Heart Parish. Father Hamet remained in Oakwood until January, 1886. He was succeeded by Rev. Father J. C. Barrette who arrived on the 25th of March, 1886. Father Barrette is accredited for the addition of a small structure, added to the chapel, which served as a sacristy. In the spring of the year 1887 he built the first rectory, which was sold in 1912 and moved on a village lot. It has since gone through many hands and is now the property of Dayton and Michelle Kornkven, son-in-law and daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Renee French. At the occasion of Christmas, 1887, a statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and others were installed in the primitive chapel. These statues were later placed in the Oakwood Convent, St. Aloysius Academy, for its duration until its closing in 1967. During the following spring, in March of 1888, the interior of the chapel was again enhanced when Father Barrette installed the first set of Stations of the Cross. These were made possible through the generosity of Mr. Joseph Deschenes, then a storekeeper at Grafton, North Dakota.

On August 20, 1888, Rev. Father J. L. Hella, having been appointed successor to Father Barrette, arrived in Oakwood on the 23rd day of the same month and administered the parish until November of 1893, when he was called to Fargo by his Bishop the Rt. Rev. J. Shanley, and appointed Vicar General. He in turn was succeeded by Rev. Father Joseph Leonard who remained in the Oakwood parish from November of 1893, until November of 1894. He is credited for dividing the cemetery into family lots,



Father J. O. Barrette



Father Jean L. Hella



Father Joseph Leonard

though, unfortunately, no plat of this work can be found today. He also equipped the parish with its first bell which weighed 130 pounds. After blessing it, the bell was installed in a structure erected in front of the chapel. This structure roughly resembled a church steeple, but was never completed due to Father Leonard leaving the parish before the plan could be carried out. According to a photo of the first chapel, the prospective steeple stood for a long while, a few feet from the front of the chapel.

Succeeding Father Leonard, came Rev. Father Michel Barras, who arrived in Oakwood in November of 1894, and remained until June of 1898. His administration was one that ventured into a tremendous enterprise toward the establishment of an educational structure. However, since this subject and other circumstances surrounding it will be addressed in greater detail in the following chapter, on "The School Era," our reference to it at this time, is for the sake of our being consistent in presenting these historical events in their order of sequence. Rev. Father Barras was succeeded by Rev. Father J. D. Dionne who remained in charge of the parish until November, 1899.



Father J. D. Dionne



Father J. A. Lalande

After the turn of the century, in the spring of 1900, Rev. Father J. A. Lalande, succeeding Rev. Father J. D. Dionne, was appointed pastor of Sacred Heart parish and arrived in Oakwood on April 24, 1900, just a few months after having been ordained to the priesthood by the Rt. Rev. Bishop Shanley on Jan. 27, 1900. Father Lalande was a most devoted pastor to the Oakwood community. However, after only three short years, his devoted career came to an unexpected and tragic end, when on May 19, 1903, he met with a terrible accident which crippled him for the rest of his life. It was the morning of a beautiful spring day that the young pastor was summoned to pay a sick call and administer the last sacraments to two of his parishioners. Anxious to bring the comfort of our holy religion to his dying parishioners, Father Lalande had imposed a rather strenuous effort on his horse in rushing to their home. However, after having completed his sacred duties, he allowed his horse to return at its slow leisurely pace. Taking advantage of this time and the beautiful day, he passed the lines around his shoulders and began reading his breviary. Shortly after crossing the Park River bridge, he was suddenly distracted from his reading by a strange horse running across his path. This sudden encounter so startled his horse, that it became frightened, started on a runaway, and its wild spirited dash could not be checked. As the frenzied steed in fast gallop wheeled the imperilled carriage closer and closer to a sharp turn of the road, the helpless driver quickly sensed the imminent danger and jumped clear of his crazily zigzagging buggy. Though his good judgment and quick action may have saved his life, the impact of his fall against the ground broke both of his legs. After spending the next eighteen months in St. John's Hospital in Fargo, and receiving the best of medical care, he unfortunately remained miserably and painfully crippled for the rest of his priestly life. His indefinite absence from his beloved parish of Oakwood caused the bishop to have him replaced. His faithful parishioners, though saddened by his loss, remained forever thankful for having been blessed with such a devoted shepherd and also cherished his talents as a singer, musician and a highly artistic woodcarver.



**Rev. Fr. J. E. Lee, founder of
St. Aloysius Academy in 1906.**



Father Joseph H. Forbes

During the absence of Father Lalande, the Rev. Father J. E. Louis Lee, just newly ordained to the Holy Priesthood in Fargo on June 2, 1903, was appointed administrator to Sacred Heart Parish and arrived in Oakwood on June 3, 1903. Later, when it became evident that Father Lalande could not return to Oakwood, he was appointed pastor of the parish. He was a strong and energetic young man, and held an optimistic attitude in whatever duty or venture he undertook. After being in the parish for two years, he quickly realized that the primitive structure, the first Sacred Heart Church, had long been inadequate and that it was not worthy of his congregation, then numbering over one hundred families. In 1905 he set the plans in motion for a new church building. An architectural masterpiece, it was a cruciform structure with an overall length of 156 feet, a width of 47 feet with a transept of 60 feet. In his 50th Anniversary Album, Father Bastien describes it in these words: "The building was of Roman style, plastered in artistic manner and equipped with three beautiful altars, fine communion rail and comfortable pews. Its high grade stained glass windows produced upon every one that entered its doors a deep religious impression, an impression of respect and veneration for the Master of this beautiful temple, really present in the Blessed Eucharist preserved in the holy tabernacle." This magnificent edifice was dedicated by Bishop Shanley on May 30, 1906. With the building of a new church, the parish was launched into a new era of progression. Father Lee's next plans were to provide a school for the Catholic education of the children of the parish. Again, as mentioned before, only reference to it is made at this point since all matters pertaining to school and education will be written in greater detail in the following chapter. Even though he is mostly credited for his successful ventures in material improvements of the parish, he must certainly also be remembered for the spiritual growth he brought to the parish. He introduced in the parish the Corpus Christi procession, the First Friday devotions and the holy hour on Thursdays. Each year the patron feasts of the parish and of the school were celebrated in a special manner. He did everything he could to create a love for piety and devotion in the hearts of his people.

Father Lee left Oakwood in 1911 to return to his native Canada where he spent the last years of his sacerdotal life in eastern Canada, from whence he had come to the west. He was an elderly priest when he died, after having left a very happy memory everywhere he labored.

Father Joseph H. Forbes succeeded Father Lee as pastor of Sacred Heart Parish and arrived in Oakwood on August 27, 1911. As its new pastor, he took possession of a well established parish, proud of its fine church and school. Though we may assume that the new pastor may have rejoiced over his inheritance, historical events reveal to us that he, and the entire parish with him, would soon receive a severe shock. On a Monday evening, November 5, 1911, the beautiful and magnificent church edifice, erected by his predecessor, was tragically destroyed by fire. Although there is little information as to how it happened, the hardship caused by a mishap of this magnitude, affects the congregation for several generations, and its occurrence is not easily forgotten.

No matter how discouraging the setback may have seemed, the new pastor would not allow it as an obstacle to prevent him or his people to rise above their loss and began immediately to organize plans to face this situation. They used the public school building for Sunday services, and all through the winter months they held numerous meetings and formed a building committee. After studying many proposed plans and specifications, a final decision was reached from which evolved a plan for the construction of both a new church and rectory. On April 24, 1912, a contract for \$14,425.00 was made for the construction of the church and rectory, with Nollman, Lewis and Brye as contractors. The new church was built on the same site where the former one stood, though much smaller than the destroyed one it replaced; it was designed with much quality. It is to the credit of Father Forbes that this statement can be made. He built well, and with materials of quality; very few frame structures of the same age are today so well preserved. With the church building completed, and all things needed for the divine sacrifice having been secured, services were held for the first time in the new House of God on November 1, 1912, and it was solemnly dedicated on the 28th of the same month, by the Rt. Rev. Msgr. J. A. Lemieux, pastor of St. Michael's Church in Grand Forks, delegated by the Most Rev. James O'Reilly, Bishop of Fargo. During the summer of 1912 the construction of the present rectory was also accomplished. However, since the insurance money received from the church fire was insufficient to cover the cost of the double building project, it became necessary for the parish corporation to obtain a loan of \$6,000.00 from the First National Bank of Grafton, at an interest rate of 7 per cent per annum, to meet the financial needs of the project. This mortgage was liquidated and satisfied several years later on July 26, 1927. During his administration, Father Forbes also improved the church grounds by proper landscaping, planting trees and laying sidewalks leading from the church and rectory and as far as the academy; all of which greatly improved the good appearance of this serene little village.



The present Rectory. 1981, built in 1912.

On the occasion of his silver jubilee, in 1915, Father Forbes blessed the bell which was hoisted to the high tower of his new church. On this large bell may be read the following inscription:



JAMES JOSEPH
BAPTIZED 1915
XXV ANNIVERSARY OF PRIESTHOOD
OF
FATHER JOSEPH H. FORBES,
THE PASTOR,
BENEDICTUS XV POPE,
RIGHT REVEREND JAMES O'REILLY, D.D.,
BISHOP OF FARGO, N.D.
OVIDE COLLET, PATRICK GALLAGHER, TRUSTEES
WOODROW WILSON, PRESIDENT OF U.S.A.
REPERCUTING THE ECHOES WITH MY MOST MELODIUS NOTES
I SHALL REPEAT:
TO ALMIGHTY GOD, CREATOR!
WE BELIEVE IN THEE!



Right Rev. James O'Reilly, D.D.
Bishop of Fargo, N.D.



His Holiness
Pope Benedict XV



Rev. Joseph H. Forbes
Rector



Ovide Collet, Trustee



Patrick Gallagher, Trustee



Sacred Heart Church,
Oakwood, N.D.

This same bell of marvelous tone can still be heard ringing over the countryside calling the faithful to divine services.

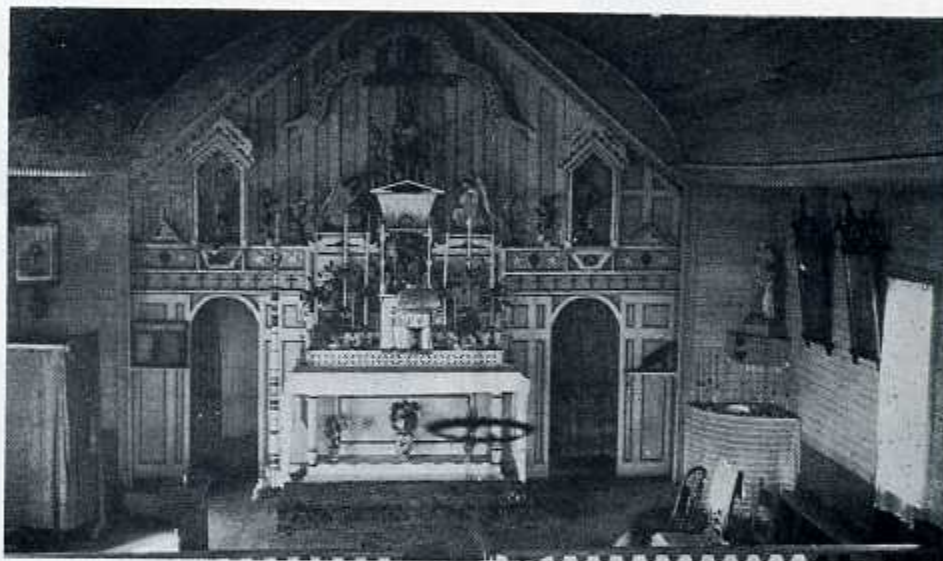
Father Forbes left the Oakwood parish, in August, 1924, to return to his former parish in Neche, N. Dak. Like his predecessor, he had tended well to the spiritual and temporal needs of his people, and with his leaving, we now bring this chapter, "The Founding of a Parish", to a close. From its humble beginnings, with the arrival of Father Bonin, and up to the departure of Father Forbes, the strides made in spiritual and temporal advancements elevated it to the status of a parish of distinction.



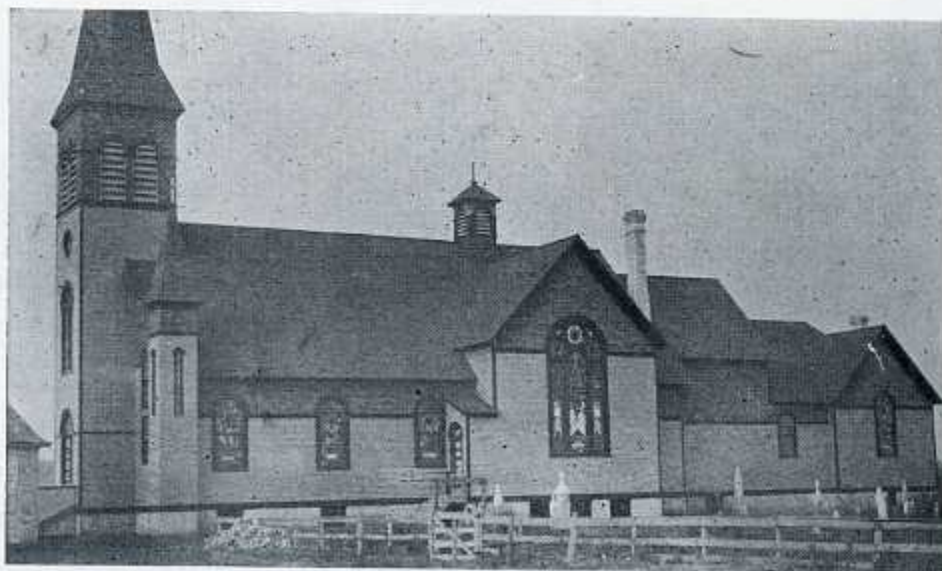
Former dwelling of Mr. Urbain Boutin, in which the First Mass was celebrated in Oakwood, by Father Louis Bonin, on July 11, 1880. It is now used as a granary on the farm of Mrs. Jeanette Gourde.



The first Sacred Heart Church (1881) and Rectory (1886).



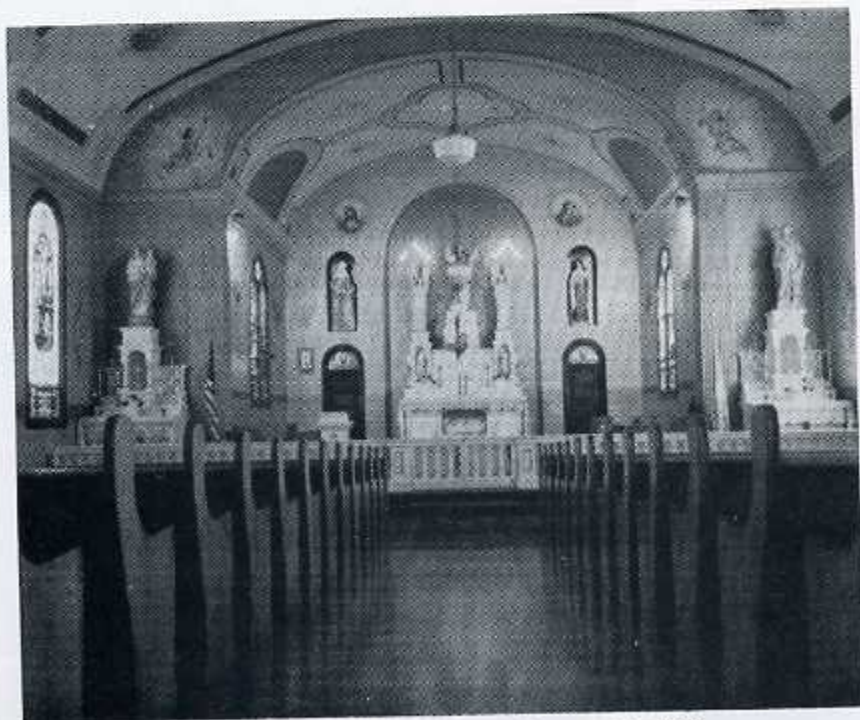
Interior of the first Sacred Heart Chapel erected in 1881.



Second Sacred Heart Church building erected in 1906.
This church burned in November, 1911.



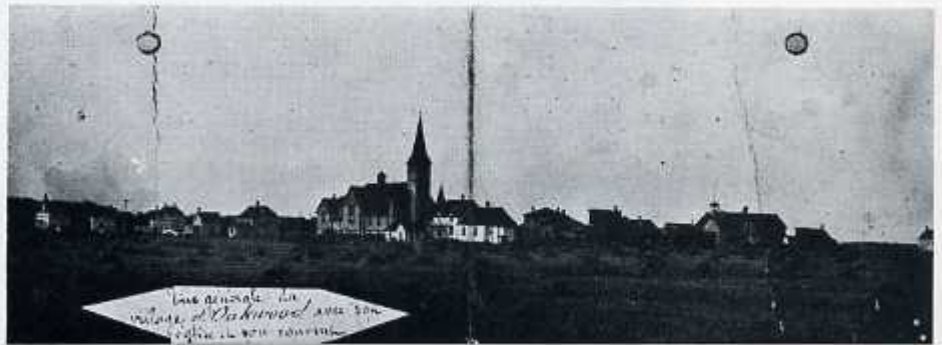
Interior of the second Sacred Heart Church building.
Picture taken April 17, 1906.



Interior of Sacred Heart Church, decorated in 1938.



The present Interior of Sacred Heart Church of Oakwood.



General view of the Oakwood village in 1907.



The present Sacred Heart Church,
taken Aug. 3, 1980.



Aerial photo of Oakwood, 1981.

Church Trustees

Sacred Heart Church of Oakwood was founded in 1881 by Father Louis Bonin and was incorporated under the laws of the state of North Dakota, October 31, 1895.

According to the articles of incorporation the Board of Directors consists of five members, three of them enter into office ex-officio viz; the Most Rev. Bishop of Fargo, as president; the Vicar-General and the Rev. Pastor of Sacred Heart Church of Oakwood as vice president. The other two are laymen, members in good standing of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart parish. They are either appointed by the Pastor on or before the first of the New Year or elected after such a time. They must be duly approved by the Most Rev. Bishop of Fargo before they can assume the duties of their office. From 1881 to 1883 there were four advisors to the Pastor.

LAY DIRECTORS

Stanislas LaRoche, Joseph Brunelle, and Edouard LaBerge, 1881.

Edouard LaBerge, Stanislas LaRoche, Francois Desautels, and Henry McClernon, 1881-1882.

John Lacey, Charles French, Jean Baptiste Trudeau, and Alphonse Sabourin, 1882-1883.

Joseph Brunelle, Jr., and Patrick Conlon, 1883-1884.

Patrick Conlon and Moise Vary, 1884-1886.

John Lacey and Eugene Baillargeon, 1886-1888.

Edouard LaBerge and Jean Baptiste LaBerge, 1888-1894.

Eugene Baillargeon and Charles French, 1894-1895.

Alphonse Sabourin and Leonce Couture, 1895-1900.

Charles Baillargeon and John Lacey, 1900-1902.

Charles Baillargeon and Joseph Campbell, 1902-1903.

Hermas Chales and Joseph Campbell, 1903-1904.

Pierre LaCoste and H. Sevigny, 1904-1905.

John Sullivan and Alfred Sevigny, 1905-1907.

Joseph French and Octave Collette, 1907-1908.

Joseph C. Deschenes and Joseph French, 1908-1909.

Lawrence Altendorf and J. C. Deschenes, 1909-1910.

Eugene Rheaume and Joseph Pageotte, 1910-1911.

Farigal Gallagher and Joseph LaBerge, 1911-1913.

Joseph LaBerge and Patrick Gallagher, 1913-1915.

Ovide Collette and Patrick Gallagher, 1915-1916.

Alfred Sevigny and Patrick Gallagher, 1916-1917.

Alfred Sevigny and Oliver Pilon, 1917-1918.

D. Demers and Patrick Gallagher, 1918-1921.

Alfred Sevigny and Patrick Gallagher, 1921-1923.

James Sabourin and William Collette, 1923-1924.

Eugene Rheaume and Alcide French, 1924-1926.

Eugene Rheaume and James Sabourin, 1926-1928.

James Sabourin and Arthur Collette, 1928-1929.

Arthur Collette and Oscar Pilon, 1929-1930.

Oscar Pilon and John Schumann, 1930-1931.

John Schumann and A. A. Normand, 1931-1933.

A. A. Normand and Albert Durand, 1933-1934.

Albert Durand and William Campbell, 1934-1935.

William Campbell and Andrew French, 1935-1936.

Andrew French and Edward Sevigny, 1936-1938.

Edward Sevigny and Thomas Samson, 1938-1939.

Thomas Samson and Elzear Garant, 1939-1941.

John P. Gallagher and Victor Lessard, 1941-1946.

Joseph A. French and Alcide Collette, 1946-1951.

Edmund J. Doland and Edmond E. Demers, 1951-1957.

Farigal J. Gallagher and Edward E. Demers 1957-1963.

Raymond Dolan and Edward A. Leclerc, 1963-1970.

Raymond Rocksvold and Edmond Campbell, 1970-197

Hiladore Osowski and Edmond Campbell, 1973-1974.

Donald Demers and Hiladore Osowski, 1974-1977.

Alan Collette and Donald Demers, 1977-1979.

John B. Sevigny and Alan Collette, 1979-1981.

John B. Sevigny and Donald Dolan, 1981-