

## OUR LADY OF ANGELS CHURCH

### History of Our Lady of Angels Church

The history of Our Lady of Angels Church at Osceola, now Armstrong, though not made memorable by the blood of martyrs, began as all Christian organizations, that is there was present those never-failing attendants, Privation, Difficulty, Self-Denial, and Patient Working and Waiting.

Three fourths of a century ago a little group of pioneer families took preliminary steps for the organization of what is now Our Lady of Angels Church.

The parish at Armstrong, P. P. Wisconsin situated approximately 9 miles east of Eden station on the Northwestern railroad under the guidance of Providence and leadership of pastors and their flock flourished extensively so that from a mere log structure stands to the credit of those zealous souls the present church edifice.

In those early days when settlers were scarce and money scarcer, it was useless to look for greater achievements in the way of large and expensive structures, although an almost untold amount of good was done and zealous labor achieved in behalf of the church, by those having but little in the way of worldly goods, or time for that matter to spare for any cause, no matter how laudable it might be.

At that time the country for many miles around was but sparsely settled, and the opportunities to attend divine services were therefore limited to a marked degree.

There is but little data from which history of the earlier times of the church at Armstrong can be obtained. The information is all of a verbal character and very meager at that, however it is positively known, that prior to this time holy Mass was offered in the houses of some zealous and generous laymen.

In this way the spiritual interests of catholics residing in the vicinity of Osceola were looked after, until the year when the site of the present church was presented to the congregation by the devoted friends of the catholics, the John Graham family, Catholics and of English descent.

It was given to them by him with the simple provision that it should be used for church purposes only. On this property a small log structure was at once built which served as a Church for some considerable time following.

It was a kindly and generous act on his part and of especial value to the catholics, who at that time were few in number and naturally had but limited means at their command. Mr. John Graham and family deserves special recognition, as it was he who donated the land upon which the church now stands. This being decided upon, work was at once begun, the farmers cutting suitable logs for the structure and hauling them to the site with ox teams.

The good people who first settled in and around Osceola were no exception to the rule, and hence the small log building was in itself an example of zealous devotion to and love for the faith of their fathers.

With the assistance and cooperation of the Irish catholics of the town, and vicinity, who took an active and earnest interest in the advancement of catholic affairs prominent among whom were Messrs. Daniel Cavanaugh, the son of James and Ellen Cavanaugh who later married Margaret Hardgrove, the daughter of Henry Hardgrove, one of the Irish pioneers of Forest. John Hardgrove, son of Henry and Mary Hardgrove who with his parents came and settled in Fond du Lac county, in the town of Forest, after several years moving to Eden.

David Twohig, son of Bartholomew and Hanorah Twohig, who in the course of time married Miss Bridge Hardgrove after the death of his father and settled in 1852 in Forest. Michael and Ellen Scannell, who in February of the year 1849 lost their daughter, which was considered as the first death in the town of Osceola.

The raising of the church was one of the most notable and long remembered events in that section of the country, the entire population around turning out almost to a man to render whatever assistance might be demanded of them.

Many of the early settlers who helped to promote matters more or less towards the establishment of the parish with due credibility among whom were Messrs. James and Michael Lyons, Thomas and Michael Moriarity, John and Thomas O'Brien, Michael and Anthony Kelly, John Rach, both Patricks Hugh and Foy, the early settlers of the Roltgen family, Patrick Fitzgerald, John Baker, and Michael Stack, John O'Connor, Cornelius Seamel, John and William Shea, John and Nick Lesleyoung, Michael and Thomas McGraw.

Of the earlier visitations to these people but little, if anything in the way of history has gone on record.

The entire list of pastors attending this congregation from the beginning is not forthcoming at the present time, the names of quite a number failing to appear on any of the parish records now extant.

As a result of this, we are almost entirely dependent upon hearsay, certainly not the most acceptable authority for an occasion such as the present.

Prior to this time the people of that vicinity were occasionally visited by traveling priests and more immediately to its organization, at stated intervals by resident pastors from adjacent parishes. Necessarily these visits were few and far between for the way was long and dangerous, and the times treacherous at best, so that those godly self-sacrificing men who ventured to make the journey veritably took their lives into their own hands.

The first that we have in the way of recorded facts regarding the pastors associated with this

congregation were given prior to the year 1856 when the Rev. Father Louis Dale attended this congregation from Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. It was under the supervision of Rev. Father Dale that the first unpretentious log structure was built and dedicated in honor of St. Mathew. Small however in dimensions, but which admirably filled the demands of the rather limited number belonging to the congregation at that time.

However we find that prior to the year 1870 the Catholics in this vicinity were attended by the following Rev. Fathers Dale, Davitt, Mathews and the Rev. Hannon of Darlington, Wisconsin.

Subsequent to that date the following Rev. gentlemen succeeded one another in charge of St. Mathews congregation: the Rev. Father W. A. Croak from December 1869 to April 1870, the Rev. Francis Spath from May 1871 to August 1871; the Rev. G. J. Quinn from December 1871 to August 1872; the Rev. L. H. Jacobs from October 1872 to July 1873; the Rev. Francis Baroffi from July 1873 to October 1877; the Rev. E. J. Goss from October 1877 to June 1881; the Rev. C. H. Horan from June 1881 to May 1883.

During the pastorate of Father Horan a church, a neat brick structure costing about seven thousand dollars was built, its dimensions being 90 by 40 ft. retaining for the time being the name of St. Mathews. Later this was changed to the Church of Our Lady of Angels.

Father Horan was succeeded by the Rev. Thos. F. O'Neil, who remained at Armstrong from May 1883 to December 1885.

Father O'Neil while a resident there underwent a serious sickness from which he finally died, and his remains lie buried in the little cemetery near to the church. Over his grave was erected a neat marble cross with the inscription, "Here lies 'till the Resurrection Morn, Thos. F. O'Neil, a priest of the Most High God. May he rest in peace, Amen."

The cross was erected at the expense of his brother priests, under the direction of Rev. Thos. J. O'Leary, these priests previously having attended this parish until August 1889.

To fill the vacancy caused by the death of Father O'Neil, the Rev. P. Bonifaisies, O. M. Cap. was appointed, assuming the duties March 1885 and remaining until August 1885.

Thereupon Father M.B. Norton was assigned to the pastoral duties on the 23rd of August 1885, zealously laboring to the time of his departure August 1889. While at Armstrong, Father Norton made several improvements to the church among which are included a new high altar, which cost five hundred dollars, he also purchased new pews for the church.

Father Norton was succeeded by the Rev. J. F. O'Leary who undertook the charge August 23rd, 1889. During his administration also the parish increased in numbers and prospered more than in any previous period of its existence. He left again in June 1893, prior to which time he made valuable improvements on church, parsonage, and premises.

Having served the parish at Armstrong for some time, Father O'Leary was incardinated into

the Green Bay diocese where he labored as a zealous priest for many years and died in the year 1931.

Father O'Leary's successor was the Rev. Charles Dries, who came to Armstrong in 1893 and left in the June following. The parish then being served as a mission by the Rev. Edward L. Meyer from March 1894 to July 1894. He was followed by the Rev. D. O'Donnovan from July 1894 to March 1896 at the conclusion of whose pastorate Our Lady of Angels was again attended as a mission until August of that year by the Rev. Edward L. Meyer. As a matter of fact it was during Father O'Donnovan's administrations that the parsonage was destroyed by fire of unknown origin.

On the 23rd of that month, 1896, the Rev. M. E. Downs arrived to Armstrong, Wis. The Rev. M. E. Downs as pastor of Our Lady of Angels was born in the town of Delavan, Wis. in July 1869 and attended the high school of that town. He then entered St. Francis Seminary, near Milwaukee where he spent nine years in preparation for the priesthood, to which he was ordained on the 17th of June 1894, by the Most Rev. F. X. Katzer. Father Downs said his first Mass in the town of Delavan at St. Andrews Church, soon after which he was appointed to act as assistant pastor of St. Patrick's Church at Whitewater, Wis.

After remaining at that place for two years, he was transferred to the pastorate of Our Lady of Angels Church. When Father Downs arrived at Armstrong, he found that parish without a parsonage, the one there having been burned down during the previous March. The people however, were willing and anxious to furnish their pastor with a suitable dwelling, so in the course of the year following a new residence was erected and furnished with all necessary appliances, including furnace.

This, though a somewhat costly undertaking at the time, eighteen hundred dollars was promptly paid for, so that at the time the pastoral residence stood as an achievement to the parish and without a cent of debt upon it. In the meantime the church interior was neatly frescoed at an additional expense of two hundred dollars. The congregation of Our Lady of Angels at that time numbered three hundred and fifty souls.

Then followed in succession the Reverends F. J. Webber from Feb. 1903 to July 1903, Rev. George Haeusler, July 1903 to November 1912, Rev. Alois Kraus, November 1913 to March 1915. As pastors the latter two of the above mentioned centered their efforts in advancing the spiritual and temporal interests of the parish and have met with gratifying success. Upon a new appointment in his field of labor, the Rev. J. A. Creary succeeded April 1915 towards September 1915, and the Rev. Alois Kastiger coming to Armstrong, September 1915 and remaining until October 1915. Upon the Rev. leaving, the Rev. John Gruenewald was appointed who undertook duties October 1915 close to the time of May 1917.

The Rev. Leo J. Scheurell was assigned next in the order given, assuming charge May 1917 until the month of May 1921. Many valuable additions and improvements have been made to the church property during the time of Rev. Scheurell's pastorate.

Next in the order noted the Rev. John S. Haeusler, when in the best vigor of his priestly life,

was given the duty towards the cares and betterments of the parish who followed about May 1921 and labored until April 1923. During the pastorate of the Rev. John Haeusler the church was partially rebuilt, owing to its dilapidated appearance, he in the course of his administration set forth to make the necessary repairs.

The church edifice as it now stands was a marked undertaking and of considerable recognition in behalf of the generous people who cooperated so splendidly in conjunction with their pastor. The Rev. pastor has been an active and zealous worker, making many material and beneficial improvements to the church property. The beautiful stained glass windows and the Stations of the Cross which add so greatly to the beauty of the interior were donated by the members of the congregation.

The members of Our Lady of Angels parish are not, however, unmindful of the kind and generous assistance, which they have in all their important undertakings received from the numerous visitors who come annually to spend the hot summer months on the beautiful shores of Long Lake and Round Lake.

As successor to him came the Rev. James J. Conway, who served the people of the parish from April 1923 to March 1925. The church at the departure of the Rev. John Haeusler being unfinished was completed during the stay of Rev. Conway.

Then the Rev. Charles Strahberger, O. M. Cap. and the Rev. Robert Overmohle, O. M. Cap. assumed charges, the former from March 1927 to July 1927, the latter July 1927 until February 1928, attending to the spiritual needs of the people of the parish, both affiliated and as resident priests at the Monastery at Mt. Calvary, Wis.

Under the pastorate of Rev. Francis Finnegan, which began towards February 1928 and continued until March 1931 particular attention was attributed towards several improvements about the church edifice and the present parsonage, noticeable among them being the electrification of both structures. During the three years of his residence at this place he made additional improvements about the cemetery, which for many years remained untouched. Realizing further necessity towards the care of God's Acre the establishment of the Cemetery Association was undertaken, towards which officers were respectively chosen, Messrs. Hugh Foy, President; George Scannell, Secretary, and George Stack as Treasurer. In addition the tract of land, once owned by the O'Connor family, south of the Church was purchased by the members of the Holy Name Society to be used for burial purposes.

The Rev. Michael Joseph Fetko, the present pastor of Our Lady of Angels, assuming duties March 15, 1931. In the prosecution of all this work, and in the necessary outlay of money, the greatest harmony and good will have continued to prevail among the members of the parish. This is perhaps the great secret of the success that has attended all their undertakings.

Many kinfolks of this now prosperous parish still live to enjoy with pardonable pride and unwanted leisure the work, which the pioneers so well and faithfully aided in years gone by.

The present parish of Our Lady of Angels dedicated Thursday, October 25th in the year 1923

by His Grace Sebastian G. Messmer numbers approximately in the neighborhood of four hundred souls.

The organizations connected with this parish worthy of mention are the Holy Name Society whose officers are respectively, Messrs. Henry Cavanaugh as Vice-President, Emmet Blackmore and Geo. Carolan as Secretary and Treasurer. With some certainty it is known that the Rev. Leo Scheuerell had been active in the establishment of the Holy Name Society, which at the present time numbers in the neighborhood of 75 members.

The Altar Society which for many years has been so solicitous for the care and betterment of the parish, flourished extensively in the course of its existence. The present enrollment amounts to 48 members, whose officers are for the year extant, Mrs. William Burns as President, Mrs. Ben. Ditter as Vice-President and also Mrs. John Schwind and Miss Martha Carolan, the former as Secretary, the latter as Treasurer.

The present Board of Trustees of Our Lady of Angels Church is composed of Messrs. George Twohig and William O'Brien, as Secretary and Treasurer.

It was the willingness exhibited on the part of the pioneers that did so much in forwarding the interests of the church throughout the township of Osceola, and which also in a manner, if not wholly, rewarded the devout and self-sacrificing spirits whose love of God and their fellow-men led them unhesitatingly to dare these dangerous and untrodden wastes of unknown country, that the cross might be borne, as it were to the utmost ends of their confines.

#### The Mission at Dundee

The Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus at Dundee, Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin, situated about five miles from Armstrong, in the same township was a mission at the time until the year of March 1925 it was discontinued under the pastorate of Rev. James Conway.

It was organized and founded by the Rev. Francis Baroffi about the year 1877, and has been attended by the same pastors as those in charge of the mother parish. There were at the time about one hundred members belonging to this congregation. Services were held at the Sacred Heart every other Sunday, or every two weeks.

Worthy of note that during the final years of its existence the mission was progressing splendidly, at which time Messrs. Matt Schuh and Joseph Brown acted as Secretary and Treasurer whose efforts were faithfully centered towards the spiritual and material progress of the congregation.

Among the priests attending St. Matthews Catholic Church of Osceola (now Our Lady of Angels) prior to the year 1867 were the following:

Rev. Matthews, Byron

Rev. Smith, Byron

Rev. Colton, Fond du Lac

Rev. Dale, Fond du Lac  
Rev. Willard, Fond du Lac  
Rev. Hannan, 1867, Forest

List of Resident Pastors of Our Lady of Angels

Rev. Walter A. Croak (December 1869 to April 24, 1870) (First resident priest)  
Rev. Frank Spath (May 1871 to August 1871)  
Rev. G. J. Quinn (December 1871 to August 1872)  
Rev. H. Jacobs (October 1872 to July 1873)  
Rev. Francis Baroffi (July 1873 to October 1877)  
Rev. Edward J. Goss (September 1877 to June 1881)  
Rev. Charles H. Horan (June 1881 to May 1883) (Built Church)  
Rev. Thomas F. O'Neill (May 1883 to December 1885)  
Rev. P. Bonifaisies Goebel, O. M. Cap. (March 1885 to April 1885)  
Rev. Michael Bernard Norton (August 1885 to August 1889)  
Rev. John T. O'Leary (August 1889 to June 1893)  
Rev. Charles Dreis (November 1893 to March 1894)  
Rev. Edward J. Meyer (March 1894 to July 1894)  
Rev. D. O'Donovan (July 1894 to March 1896) (House Burned)  
Rev. Edward J. Meyer (March 1896 to August 1896)  
Rev. Matthew E. Downs (August 1896 to February 1903)  
Rev. F. J. Webber (February 1903 to July 1903)  
Rev. George Haeusler (July 1903 to November 1912)  
Rev. Alois Kraus (November 1912 to March 1915)  
Rev. J. A. Creary (April 1915 to September 1915)  
Rev. Alois Kastiger (September 1915 to October 1915)  
Rev. John Greunewald (October 1915 to May 1917)  
Rev. Leo J. Scheuerell (May 1917 to May 1921)  
Rev. John S. Haeusler (May 1921 to April 1923)  
Rev. James J. Conway (April 1923 to March 1925)  
Rev. Charles H. Schmitz (March 1925 to March 1927)  
Rev. Charles Strahberger, O.M. Cap. (March 1927 to July 1927)  
Rev. Robert Overmohle, O.M. Cap. (July 1927 to February 1928)  
Rev. Francis A. Finnegan (February 1928 to March 1931)  
Rev. Michael Joseph Fetko (March 1931 to date)

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