

# FROM MANY... ONE



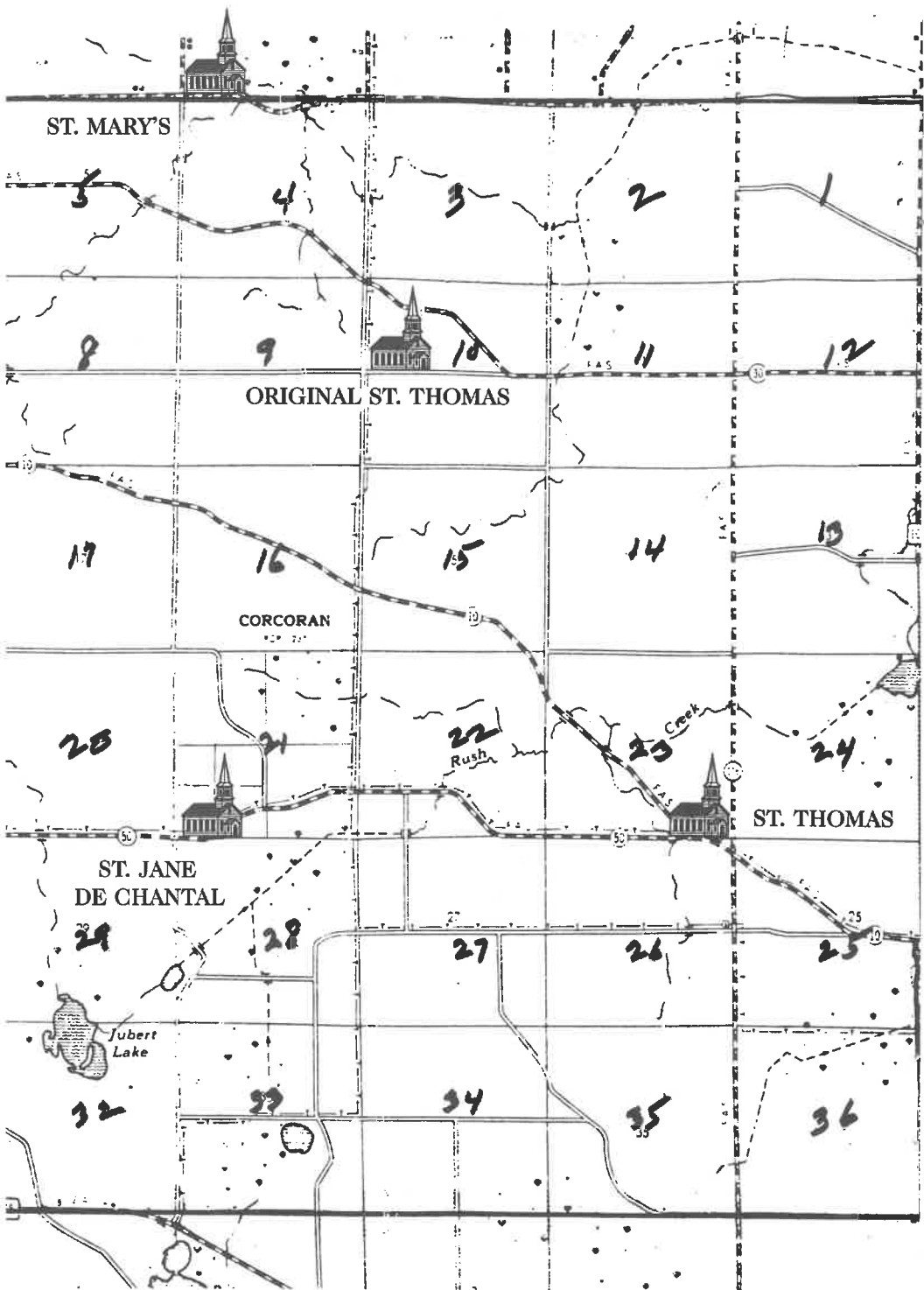
A History of  
St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church  
Corcoran, Minnesota  
1896-1996

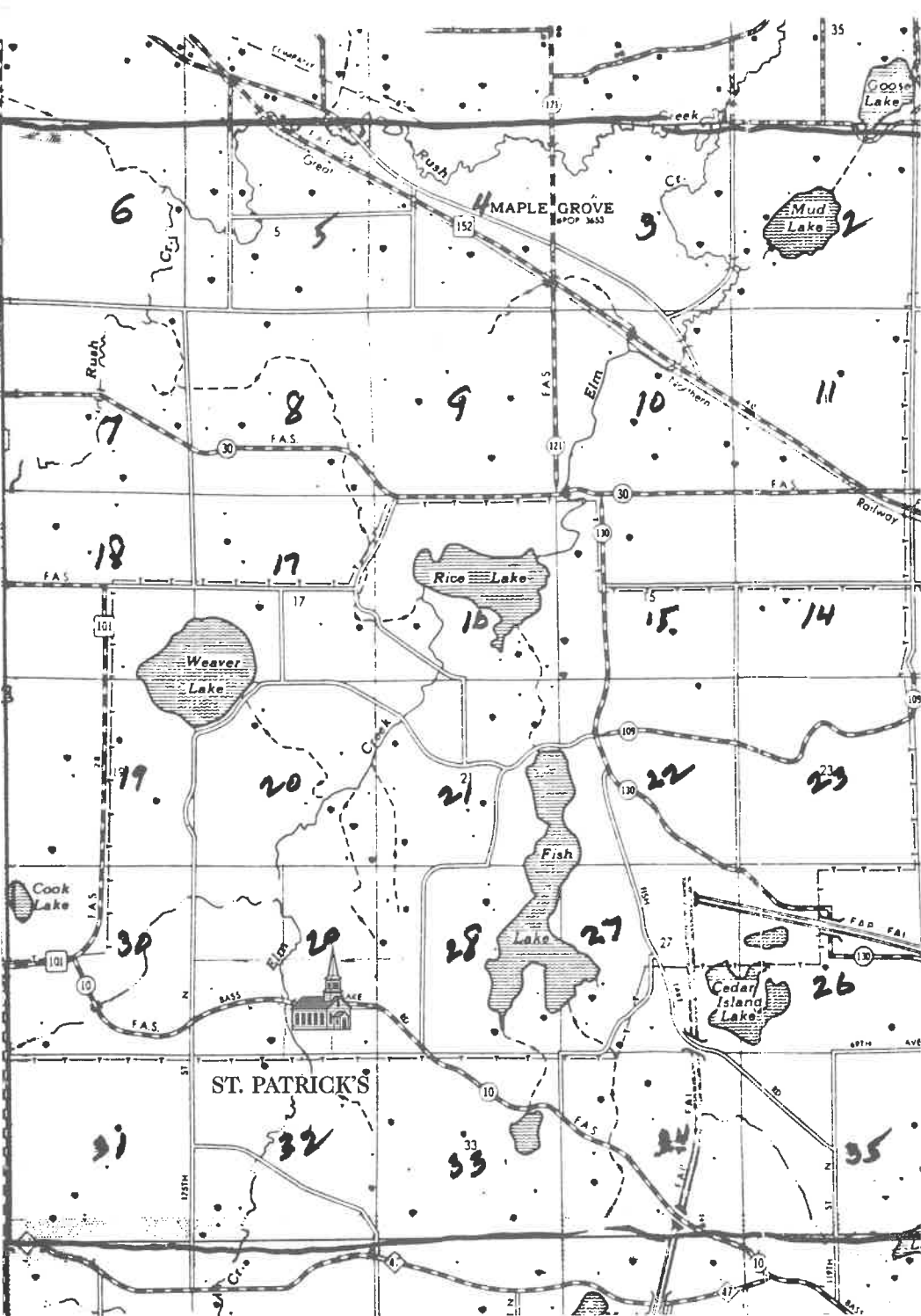


# **FROM MANY . . . ONE**

Published to commemorate  
the building of  
St. Thomas the Apostle Church  
of Corcoran, Minnesota  
on the One Hundreth Anniversary  
of its dedication

**1896 — 1996**



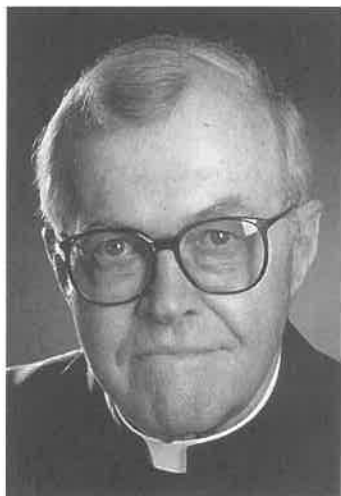


### First Abstract of Lands

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**Pope John Paul II**



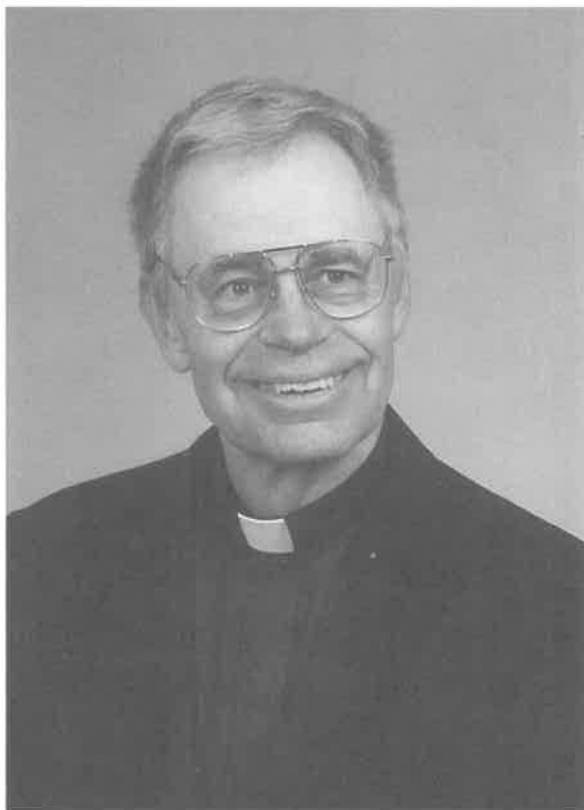
**Archbishop John R. Roach**



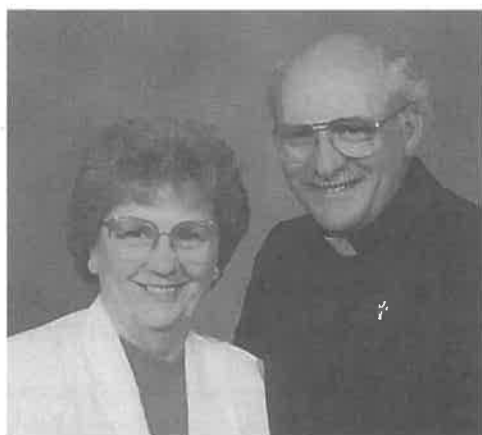
**Archbishop Harry Flynn**

*"Please accept my sincere congratulations and prayerful best wishes on the occasion of your centennial. May God bless you and may your future be even brighter than your past."*

Most Reverend John R. Roach, D.D.



**Father George Kinney, Pastor  
St. Thomas the Apostle Church  
1994 -**



**Deacon Bob Bramwell  
and Darlene Bramwell**



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## Maple Grove - 1850's First Abstract of Lands

[illegible]

## PROLOGUE

Cicero was the famous Roman statesman, author and orator who died 43 years before the birth of Christ. He says, “History is the witness that testifies to the passing of time, it illumines reality, vitalizes memory, provides guidance in daily life, and brings us tidings of antiquity.”

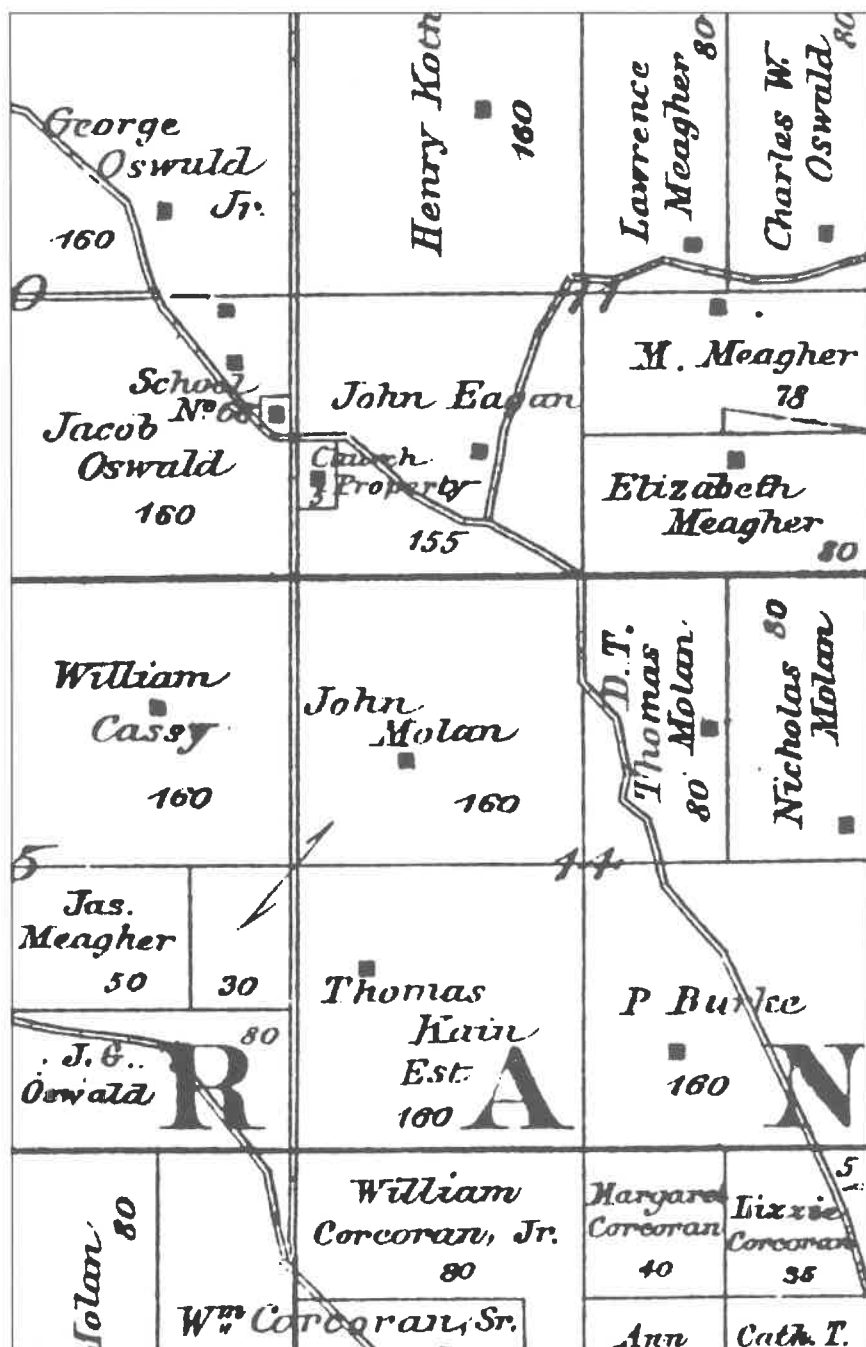
As the one hundred year history of St. Thomas the Apostle Church is compiled, one word could be used to describe the theme of that era. That word is adversity.

There were the natural adversities. There were the challenges involved in homesteading in this part of the country. There was the challenge of trying to eke out a livelihood in the 1850’s, 1860’s, 1870’s, and 1880’s and the natural challenges involved in trying to establish any institution or church.

But it was more than these natural challenges that the founders of St. Thomas had to overcome. There were the many small settlements, each of which wanted to establish and maintain their own church which would be close to their homes. There were many nationalities and backgrounds involved. Many of the people spoke only their native tongue. Also, on top of everything else, there was the challenge of obtaining clergy to take care of these churches. Some of the many missionaries who served the area came from St. Michael, Dayton, Osseo, Hamel, Robbinsdale, and Anoka.

In spite of all of these challenges, the founders of the Catholic Communities in the Corcoran area had strong faith, a love of God, and a desire to serve him and to worship him as a community.

And so the story of St. Thomas the Apostle (as we know it today) unfolds.



Prospective Site of  
 "The Church that was never built"

## THE BIG WOODS

**W**hen the first explorers entered this area, it was home to the Indian tribes. The first white people to enter the territory were French Missionaries. Eventually this territory was claimed a property of France and then sold to the United States with the Louisiana Purchase in 1801.

Soon word went back to civilization that there was water for transportation, water for power (the falls) lots of good wood, and good hunting and lots of animals for furs. And so it was that men came to establish trading posts and to begin logging.

The midsection of what is now the State of Minnesota was a transition zone between the forests of the northwest and the prairies of the southern and western parts of the state. This midsection was known as the BIG WOODS. It was a 100 mile wide zone of hardwoods such as sugar maple, soft maple, oak, white elm, and basswood. It stretched from Mankato to 110 miles north of Minneapolis and St. Paul. The soil was a heavy black loam with a clay subsoil throughout--good for producing wheat, barley, oats, and corn abundantly. Some Amber cane was also grown.

The first land survey of the territory was made in 1841 and land sold for \$1.25 an acre. Proof of occupancy and cultivation of the land were other requirements. Most of the settlements in the territory were along the mighty Mississippi or the Minnesota Rivers. Eventually there was need for more organization of government and Hennepin County was formed in 1852. Education was also beginning to become more important. The University of Minnesota was chartered in 1851.

The first settlers known to have come to this area were Benjamin Pounder and his brother Henry, in 1855. They set their claim on what is now the Clemens' Vegetable Farm and built a dwelling. Two of Benjamin's descendants are members of St. Thomas--Vernice

Pounder, who now resides in a nursing home in St. Louis Park, and Marilyn (Mrs. Ted) Kluck, who is an active member of the parish.

They were quickly followed by Patrick Corcoran, William Corcoran, Patrick Burke, John McDonnell, Francis Morin, Joseph Dupont, Hugh Keran, Joseph Morin, Joseph May, Michael Weir, Michael Patnode, Joseph Dejardins, Isaac Bartlett, Frederick Reinking, Fred Schutte, Peter Weinand, John Kleresy, Matthew Weinand, Martin Dellis, Stephen & George Archambeau, Michael & Peter Raymond, Joseph Scott, and many, many others. Patrick Corcoran, for whom the Village of Corcoran was named, came from upper New York state. He had been working in a lumber mill and had lost part of his arm in a mill accident. He came west to find other employment, and became one of the founders of Corcoran and also the first school teacher and the first postmaster.

In 1858 Minnesota was ratified as a state. James Buchanan was President of the United States. The Homestead Act was passed in 1862 making it much easier to obtain land. The map of 1873 shows some of the lands were owned by individuals. Many tracts of land had been purchased by railroad interests. Minnesota was recognizing its statehood. In 1859, the first Minnesota State Fair was held and has continued to be a leading feature of the state ever since.

Entering into the territory, along with the explorers and the early settlers, were the Missionaries. Initially, they came to minister to the Indians. As the settlements appeared, so did the churches. Organized by Rev. Father Lucian Galtier, the first church building for white settlers in Minnesota was built in 1841. Galtier had come to the area of Mendota the previous year to serve as a missionary to the Dakota tribe. It was around the church in Mendota (which was dedicated to St. Paul) that the future capital city grew up and took its name. The Diocese of St. Paul was erected in 1850 and Bishop Cretin was consecrated as the first Bishop of St. Paul. Thomas L. Grace was consecrated as the second Bishop of St. Paul in 1859.

The early settlers were hard working people. The French settlers came

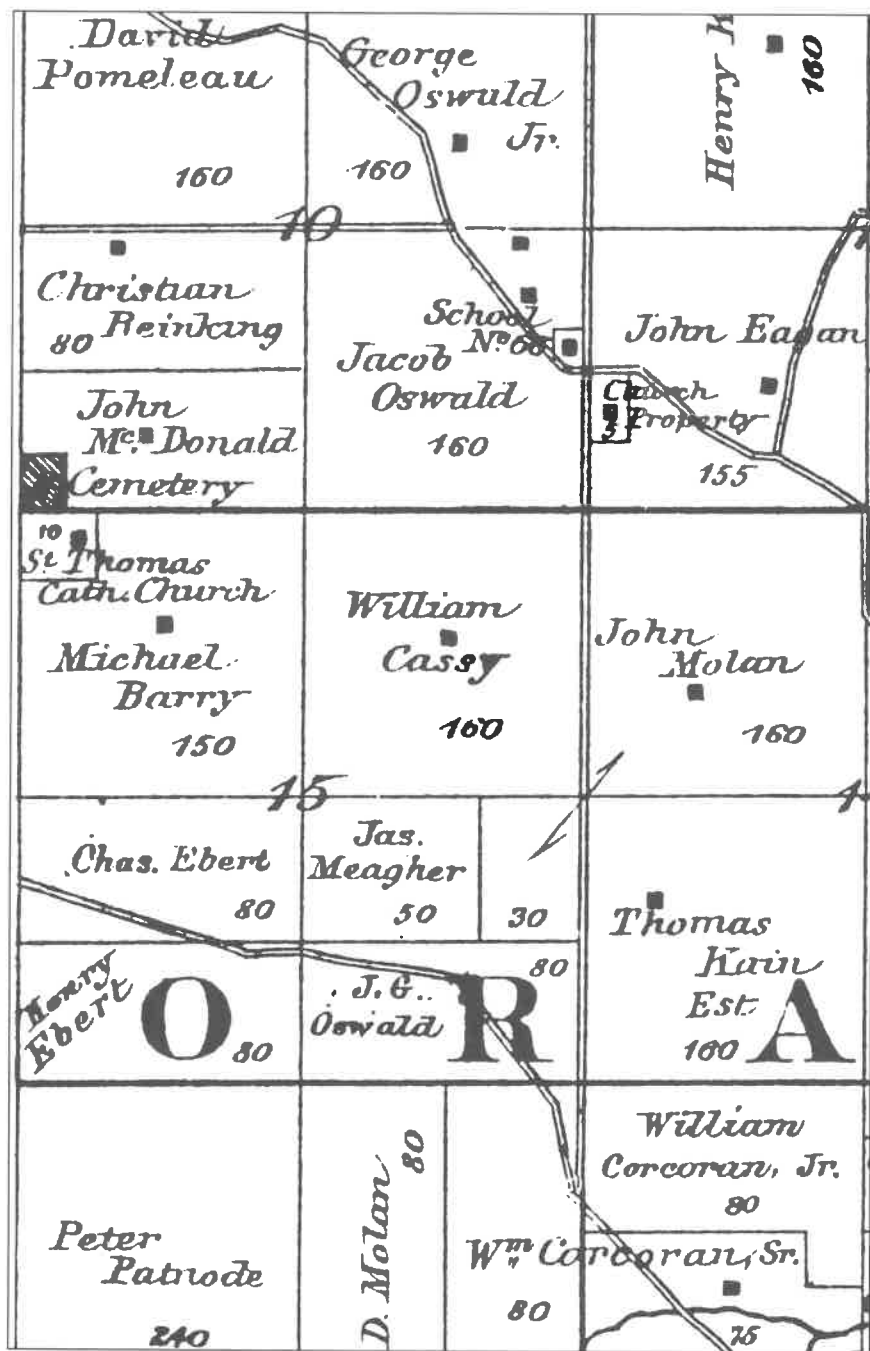
from Canada. They were men used to clearing timber stands. From the Eastern States came the Irish and the Germans. They were also lumber people—many of them had worked in the lumber mills. Their main tools were the axe for felling the trees and a grub hoe for clearing the land. Footpaths through the dense forests were the main highways. Sometimes these paths were wide enough for a horse and rider, but more often the people walked.

These early settlers made a living by selling wood to the people in the “city”, and selling a variety of things which they made including: hats made from straw, corn husk mattresses, sheep’s wool, and maple syrup. They managed to provide food for their families by hunting and fishing and the few vegetables they were able to raise on their small garden plots. When they could save enough money, they would manage to buy some cattle.

And so gradually, the land was converted to farming and the BIG WOODS was no more.



**Original Log Cabin built in the 1800's**  
Now at the Burschville School



Map showing the site of  
Old St. Thomas Church



## ST. THOMAS EMERGES

Times were hard in the United States during this period, the mid 1840's and 50's. Abraham Lincoln had been elected president and the Civil War had been declared. Many of the "local boys" had answered the call to duty and some were not to return. The Minnesota regiment was particularly involved in the Battle of Gettysburg. The Catholic Church in the area, however, was growing both in the number of churches and the number of Catholics. Pope Pius IX was elected in 1846.

The Catholic Directory, which was published in 1885, shows that there were 11 parishes in St. Paul and 3 in the St. Paul suburbs. Minneapolis had 8 parishes and there were parishes in the suburbs of Dayton, Osseo, Medina, Medicine Lake, Corcoran, Maple Plain, St. Boniface, Cahiltown, and Maple Grove to name a few.



**P. Magnus Mayr, O.S.B.  
1888**

Father Magnus Mayr was born in Bavaria in 1820. He was ordained in this country in 1857 as a member of the Order of St. Benedict. He came to St. Paul in 1860 and went to St. Cloud where he presided over the Seminary that is now St. John's. He served as both president and professor. He had one other professor on the staff. He also served as pastor of St. Augustine. He stayed at St. John's only two years and then left the Benedictine Order and joined the St. Paul Diocese.

According to the records at St. John's, he was not an easy person to get along with and cloistered life was not for him!

It can be assumed, however, that Father Mayr was instrumental in establishing the parish of St. Thomas in Corcoran.

In 1863, Father Magnus M. Mayr was serving as pastor of the Crow River Catholic Church (now known as St. Michael). He had 14 missions to serve including: St. Isadore in Dayton (now known as St. John the Baptist), Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Osseo (now known as St. Vincent's), St. Walburga in Corcoran (which was later moved to Fletcher), and St. Thomas in Corcoran. Others included the following: French Lake; Greenwood; Rockford; Maple Lake; Waverly; Marysville; and Pelican Lake in Wright County; Forest City, in Meeker County; and Bear Island, in Monticello. In Hennepin County there were parishes in Beck Settlement (now known as Loretto), and Lenz (now known as Hamel). It is no wonder church services were only held about twice a month. The last parish that Father Mayr served was St. Walburga's in Fletcher. He died there in 1888, and is buried in the church cemetery.



**Father Claude Genis**

Another early priest who served the area was Father Claude Genis. He was born and ordained in France in 1838 and came to St. Paul in 1863. He was immediately named pastor of Dayton and its missions and served there until 1866. He was known for his zeal and is credited for organizing many Catholic parishes throughout this part of the country. At his funeral, the bishop called him "the beloved".

On March 23, 1862, Michael Barry deeded land to Bishop Thomas L. Grace who was then Bishop of St. Paul. He deeded a parcel of 10 acres to the church for which he was paid \$10.00. On March 24, 1862, John McDonnell and his wife Sarah McDonnell deeded land to Bishop

Thomas L. Grace. The deed was for 6 acres and the price paid for the piece was \$5.00.

The piece of land purchased from Michael Barry was south of the road and on it was constructed the Church of St. Thomas. We assume the name, St. Thomas the Apostle, was chosen because it was the patron saint of the bishop of the diocese. (There were a number of churches dedicated to St. Thomas that were built in the Twin City area around the same time).



**Father Joseph Cain**

Father Cain supplies us with some of the information regarding the first St. Thomas. Father Joseph Cain is a Crosier Father who was born and raised in Corcoran. He now resides in Denver, but he came to Minnesota in 1994 and celebrated the Golden Jubilee of his ordination at St. Peter and Paul in Loretto. He tells us that because there was a low spot between the Old St. Thomas Church and the road, there was a bridge over that area. Remember, the bridge only had to support the weight of foot traffic and maybe a

few horses and buggies. The land that was obtained from the McDonnell's was north of the road and is the site of the present cemetery.

In 1884 however, when the parish St. Thomas the Apostle of Corcoran was incorporated under the laws of the State of Minnesota, it was Father John Hand who signed the official papers as pastor. The papers were also signed by the parish trustees, John Molan and John Kennedy. Father John Hand was born in Ireland in 1853. He entered the diocese of St. Paul in 1881 and was appointed pastor of St. Thomas of Corcoran in July of 1883. This was at the same time that John Ireland was named the third Bishop of St. Paul. Father Hand served

at St. Thomas until October of 1884. It was also in 1884 that the Baltimore Catechism, the basis for the teachings of the Catholic Church for three generations, was adopted.

In the meantime, much was going on that effected even this remote place in Minnesota. In the 1880's a diphtheria epidemic swept the countryside. It was another adversity that the early members of St. Thomas had to deal with. Many of the early tombstones in the Old St. Thomas Cemetery are from this time. The five little Audus children who died within six days from the epidemic are commemorated with five little white markers.



**Father William McGolrick**

The next pastor appointed to St. Thomas the Apostle was Father William McGolrick. He was born in Ireland in 1850. He studied and was ordained in Ireland. He came to St. Paul in 1874. He was appointed pastor to Anoka and missions in 1878 and stayed there until 1883. He was appointed pastor of Corcoran and missions in 1885 and served here until 1890. During this time, the Diocese of St. Paul was elevated to an Archdiocese and John Ireland became the first Archbishop.

According to Father Joseph Cain, his grandmother, Margaret Nealis, was the housekeeper for Father McGolrick. Pieces of rock foundation that have been found in the area seem to indicate that the parish house was east of the church and on the south side of the road. According to Father Cain, Father McGolrick was pastor when the church burned in 1886. Fire was a dreaded thing in those days because there were no adequate water supplies and often much of the land was overgrown with tall grass that fed the flames. Also, there were no fire

departments—just the neighbors and the bucket brigade. A fire could destroy everything in its path very quickly.

Father Cain also gives us this interesting piece of history. “After the church burned down, everyone agreed that it should not be rebuilt on the old site. They had proposed building the new church on ‘Corcoran’s Corner’ which is the triangular piece of land where Cain Road and the Minneapolis to Monticello Road intersected. This had been agreed on, but others who had a vested interest in this managed to switch things around so that the Bishop approved building the church on its present site. This, of course, caused some discontent which escalated into what might be called a feud. Factions formed and one of these factions built a church, without any authorization, on the North side of the “Town-Line Road” (now known as County Road 117) and Bechtold Road, in a place called “The Devil’s Elbow”. The people who built the church applied to the Bishop for a priest and the people on the other side of the dispute were afraid that they might get a priest, which would mean that “their” church would not be able to have a resident pastor. So some of them went over there and set the new church afire.”

Where Mass was held between 1886 and 1896 is not a matter of record. It is possible that Mass was held in the hall or store in Corcoran. We do know that many of the people involved in the dispute did start attending Mass at French Corcoran and at St. Patrick’s in Maple Grove.



**ST. JANE, CORCORAN**

## THE FRENCH CONNECTION

**B**y 1875, the French speaking people, who had come mostly from Canada, had settled in or near Section 21 in Corcoran township. They also felt the need for a church. They desired a French-speaking priest because many of the people were more comfortable conversing in their native language. Many of these people never did learn to speak anything but French in their lifetimes.

This group of French settlers that made up the community included such familiar names as Bolduc, Bukosky, Case, Dupont, Jubert, Kluck, Moses, Pouliot, Scott, and Westphal. In fact, the little community was known as Dupont and had its own post office. Mail delivery was every Saturday. There were also two businesses—Talbots' Store and DeMars' Tavern.



**Father Augustine Ladriere**

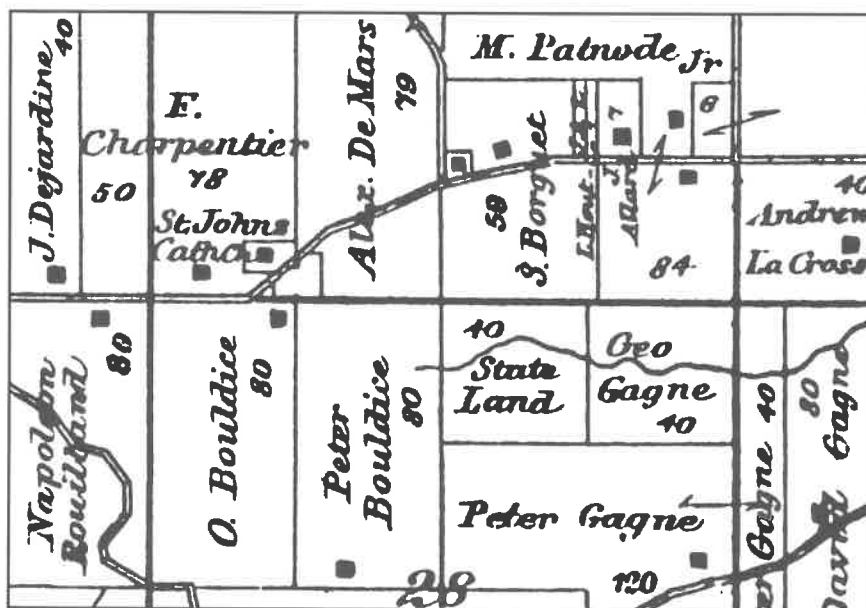
History books say that Rev. Augustine Ladriere was the first priest to come to what was known as "French Corcoran". Father Ladriere was born in Canada and was ordained in 1849. He came to the St. Paul Diocese in 1875. He worked in the Corcoran area and also the Osseo area until he died on January 4, 1884.

But the people who wanted a priest of their own traveled to Lenz seeking a French-speaking priest. Lenz is the area that later became known as Hamel. Father Peter Baucher was the pastor. Father Baucher was born in Canada and was ordained in 1847. He arrived in Lenz in 1880. He came to St. Jeanne's as a mission church from Lenz. Early Masses were said in a Patnode residence located on what is now County Road 50.

On June 2, 1875, Frank Charpentier and his wife Emilie signed the legal papers selling two acres of their land to the then Bishop of St. Paul, Thomas L. Grace. The price paid for the two acres was \$5.00. It was to be used as a cemetery. On May 19, 1876, Peter Odette and his wife Marceline sold one acre of their land to Bishop Thomas L. Grace for \$5.00. This last piece of property was the location of the Church of St. Jeanne de Chantel.

On December 3, 1881, the parish was incorporated under the statutes of the State of Minnesota. The incorporation papers were signed by the pastor, Reverend Peter Baucher and two lay members of the parish, Trustee Louis Lapre and Trustee Denis Daniel. The official papers of incorporation use the American name for St. Jeanne de Chantel which is St. Jane. St. Jane is the name that was on the official stamp used by the church. However, most of the parishioners of the church used the French version, St. Jeanne de Chantel.

There was soon built a beautiful church, and the cemetery was established.



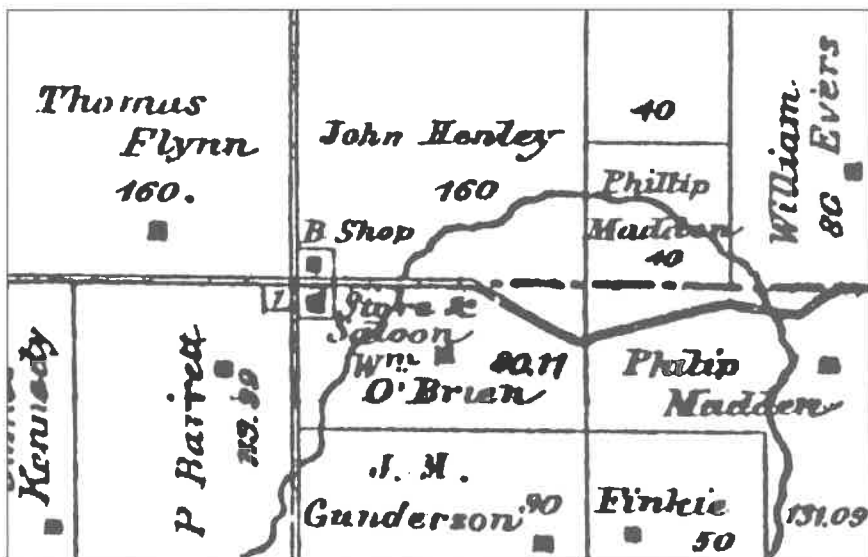
This Map is the site of St. Jeanne de Chantel Church



## THE GHOST OF DEVIL'S ELBOW

After talking to several “old timers” in the area, and reading what records there are in the church archives and the history books, the following story has been pieced together. Some of it is fact and some of it is fiction...but all of it is enjoyable reading. It is left to you, the reader, to decide what you believe and what we have written into the story.

A group of Catholics, living in the Northwest section of Corcoran, decided to build a church. However, this was not the location that was desired by another group who wanted to build in another area. In spite of this controversy, the group went ahead and built the church. The name chosen for the church was St. Mary. It was built in an area called “Devil’s Elbow”. Now Devil’s Elbow was a town consisting of a blacksmith shop, a general store and of course, the inevitable tavern. According to Father Cain, “It was a very good place to get drunk!” Most people we contacted agreed that the community was built at the intersection of “Town-Line Road” (now known as County Road 117) and Bechtold Road. The church was built just north of Devil’s Elbow.



Devil's Elbow

Young Father Daniel Hayes, serving as a pastor in Anoka, was contacted to say the opening Mass on June 21, 1881. Father Hayes was born in Ireland in 1853. He studied for the priesthood in Baltimore, Maryland, and was ordained in the Cathedral in St. Paul, Minnesota, on October 28, 1876, by Bishop Grace.

He and his traveling companion, his brother, who was studying for the priesthood, arrived in Corcoran the day before the June 21st event. During the night, both Father Hayes and his brother died. Record says a kerosene lamp exploded. At the time of his death, Father Hayes was 28 years old. The following is a long detailed account of the deaths and funeral. It is really worth reading because it is a perfect example of the journalism of that day.



**Father Daniel Hayes**

# THE GRIM MONSTER

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## CUTS DOWN TWO HONORED VICTIMS.

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### Father D. F. Hayes and His Brother Jeremiah, Smothered to Death.

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## GENERAL SORROW OVER THE EVENT.

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### The Funeral, &c.

Last week Thursday, at a little before noon, just after the Union had been printed, a messenger arrived in this city, bringing the startling and sorrowful intelligence, that Father Hayes, the beloved priest of this diocese, and his brother, Jeremiah, had died the night before, at Corcoran, in Hennepin county, some sixteen miles from Anoka. As the terrible news passed rapidly from mouth to mouth, men looked dazed and incredulous; and looks, more plainly than words, expressed the hope that it was not true, but when the news was still further corroborated by other messengers, who arrived later, deep and pronounced sorrow welled up in every

breast. This sorrow was not confined to believers in Catholicism alone, but Protestants and unbelievers all felt that a deep, dark pall had indeed fallen upon the city. A good man had passed away, one who was loved and respected by everyone who had the pleasure of his acquaintance.

As soon as a recovery from the first shock occurred, a general desire was expressed as to how it had come to pass, that two strong men, in the full flush of early manhood, should have passed over into eternity so suddenly. The particulars are as follows, as near as the Union could get them from reliable sources:

The two unfortunate men were spending the night with a family named Molan, residing in Corcoran, and at a seasonable hour, both retired into a small and ill-ventilated room to pass the night. It is presumed that they turned down their lamp quite low and left it burning. At the hour usual for them to rise, they failed to appear, and some one went to call them, but receiving no response to repeated calls; the door was forced open and both were found to be dead. Father Hayes laid upon the floor, and his brother upon the bed, both having the appearance that they had made an effort to save themselves. Without a doubt they were suffocated by smoke and the poisonous gasses, generated by the lamp, which had exploded, and was broken into pieces, and which were lying upon a partially burned wash stand, where it had been placed by one of the victims the night previous. The little room was filled with smoke and gas, and it is said, that previous to breaking in the door, smoke was observed to be issuing through the cracks of the door.

Father Hayes was in the habit of making his home with the Molan family, when in Corcoran attending to his mission duties, and the family deeply deplore the sad fate which overtook him and his brother at their residence. No blame is attached to the family for the tragic event. An examination by Coroner Fairburn and Dr. Hamilton of Hennepin county, disclosed but one abrasion caused by a slight burn on the wrist of Father Hayes.

The dead bodies were taken charge of by kind friends, and on Friday evening at about eight o'clock, the cortege conveying all that was left of Father D. F.

and Jerry Hayes, slowly and sadly wended its way through Anoka to the Catholic church, the Congregational church bell measuredly tolling as it passed. The remains were encased in two elegant rosewood caskets. All day Saturday, Sunday and Monday, the bodies lay in state in St. Stephen's church, and were viewed with sorrow by large numbers.

A necessary delay occurred in holding the funeral services, caused by waiting for the arrival of his two brothers, Patrick and Rev. John A. Hayes, one from Le Mars, Iowa, and the other a priest, from Cheyenne, Wyoming Territory; also his uncle, John Hayes from Le Mars. After a rapid journey they arrived in Anoka, at three o'clock Monday afternoon, and immediately, preparations were made for the last sad ceremonies. A large number of people were in attendance, and after an opportunity had been given all who desired to view the remains, a short service was held in the church, followed by the bodies being carried out, placed in the two hearses, and the largest funeral procession ever seen in Anoka, containing nearly 125 carriages, &c, took up its slow and sad march towards the Catholic cemetery, on the west side. The procession was formed in the following order:

Hearse, remains of Rev. D. F. Hayes.  
Rev. John A. Hayes, in surplice, on foot.  
Altar boys on foot.  
Hearse, remains of J. Hayes.  
Priests in carriages.  
Father Matthew, Temperance Society.  
Mourners and relatives in carriages.  
Citizens in carriages.

On the arrival of the immense funeral

cortege at the cemetery, the beautiful burial service of the Catholic church was read, and all that was earthly of Daniel F. and Jeremiah Hayes were lowered into their last resting place. After the conclusion of the services, Rev. John A. Hayes, who officiated, in a few well chosen words, returned thanks to all, of every creed and nationality in the name of a widowed mother and family, for the respect, kindness and attention shown to their loved ones cold in death.

Jeremiah Hayes, the youngest brother, was twenty-six years old, and had received a thorough theological education. He had arrived in Anoka, June 3rd, after concluding a visit with his brother at Le Mars, and expected to spend the summer in this city. He was a man of fine attainments, and his untimely demise is a matter of general and outspoken regret.

Father Hayes was born in the Townland of Ballygarret, County Kerry, Ireland, in 1853, and was consequently but 28 years old. His father, the late Denis Hayes, subsequently removed to Trieneragh, parish of Duagh. D.F.'s. classical education was completed in St. Brendan's seminary, Killarney, Kerry, Ireland. In 1872, he emigrated to America, and immediately entered St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore, Md. In 1876, having completed his theological studies, he was ordained a priest in St. Paul's Cathedral, St. Paul, by Right Reverend Bishop Grace. His first mission was an assistant to Rev. C. Genis, at Faribault, pastor of the Immaculate Conception church. On the 5th of June, 1877, he was removed to Minneapolis, as an assistant to Rev. James McGolrick, where he remained for about one year, and on Feb.

2d, 1878, removed to Anoka to take the pastorate of this city and vicinity. During his residence here, he made many warm friends, even outside of his own church, and his early and sudden death has cast a gloom over the entire city and neighborhood. He leaves a widowed mother in Ireland, and five brothers to mourn his death. His place will be exceedingly difficult to fill for Father Hayes was an able priest, a good friend, a popular citizen and a noble gentleman.

"Whom the gods love die young," was said of old; and when we see a young man full of promise, full of that magnetism of heart and mind which makes friends of all, thus cut down in early manhood, we are almost led to question the wisdom of that dispensation from the great and only God, and it is only the exercise of faith and hope in His eternal justice that can reconcile the stricken ones.

"Bright be the place of thy soul!

No kindlier spirit than thine  
E'er burst from its mortal control,  
In the orbs of the blessed to shine.  
On earth thou wert tender and kind,  
And thy soul shall immortality see;  
Thus our sorrows should cease to repine,  
When we know that thy God is with thee.  
Light be the turf on thy tomb:  
May its verdure like emeralds be!  
There should not be a shadow of gloom  
In aught that reminds us of thee  
Young flowers and an evergreen tree.  
May spring from the spot of thy rest;  
But no cypress or yew let there be,  
For why should we mourn for the blest?  
Though called home in man's early prime,  
In the spring-time of life's brightest joy,  
Thou has gained a far lovelier clime,  
Ne'er ending bliss time cannot destroy.

Let us ever remember thee, then,  
As clothed in perennial youth.  
In mansions not builded by men,  
But eternal and lasting as Truth."

---

The largest and finest assortment of  
furniture ever brought to Anoka, cheap  
for cash at Douglas.

---

#### **Lots For Sale.**

Fifty eligible residence lots in S. & C.'s  
Addition to Anoka, for sale. Enquire of  
Geo. E. Storms.

---

Geo.T. Daniels was elected leader of  
the newly organized brass band, at the  
practice meeting, Tuesday evening. It  
looks now as though Anoka will have a  
good band.

---

W.E. Norris of Oak Grove, has been  
declared insane by the probate court  
of Hennepin county, and has been taken  
to St. Peter, his family believing that he  
can be cared for there better than any-  
where else.

---

New Dray. — I am prepared to do  
all kinds of hauling or draying at short  
notice. Orders left at T. G. McLean's will  
have prompt attention.

J. B. TOURTLOTT.

You will always  
find the  
best stock  
of  
Clothing, Hats, Caps,  
Furnishing Goods, &c.,  
at  
Frauman's, 4 Main street  
Prices the very lowest.

---

#### **Advertised Letters.**

Lists of unclaimed letters in the  
Post Office, Anoka, Anoka Co., Minn.,  
June 13th, 1881. No. 12.

Carlson, Nils	Cummings, S.N.
Godsoe, W.S.	Johnson, Magnus
Kempton, L.H. (2)	Roache, Wm.
J.A. FOOTE, P.M.	

---

A good many people who are accus-  
tomed to go to sleep with a lamp burn-  
ing in the room, or to allow children to  
do so because they are afraid of the dark,  
will perhaps reform the practice after  
learning the sad fate of Father Hayes and  
his brother.

---

**The above article appeared in the Anoka Union on June 12, 1881.**

Years later, the farmer that now owns the land hired a bulldozer to fill  
in the spot in his field where the church had stood.

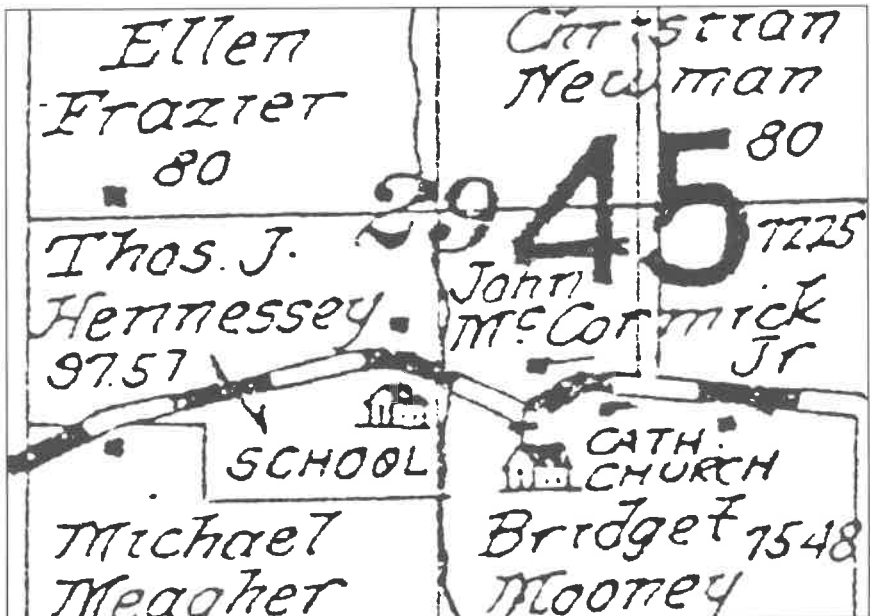
Rumor says the ghost of Father Hayes roamed the area until the present  
St. Thomas the Apostle Church was built. And so, fact or fiction, this  
story becomes a part of the history of the Catholic Church in Corcoran.

## THE LUCK OF THE IRISH

St. Patrick Church has been the hardest to research. Evidently the families of the original members of the church are no longer in this area. It is possible that many families were wiped out by the diptheria epidemic which ravaged Minnesota in the early 1880's. There has been much speculation about the church, but this much is known.

On February 10, 1881, Thomas Hennessy deeded approximately 5 acres of land to Thomas L. Grace, who was then Bishop of St. Paul. The price paid was \$1.00. This land was located in Maple Grove, Section 29.

On July 2, 1881, land was deeded to Thomas L. Grace from the Thomas Murphy estate. This deed was signed by the heirs of the estate: Winifred Murphy, Mary Murphy, Ellen Murphy, and Bridget Murphy Mooney and her husband, Michael Mooney. This piece of property was somewhat over 5 acres and the price paid was also \$1.00. The



1914 Map of Maple Grove

property was also in Section 29.

Reading the descriptions of the property, it seems that the cemetery is located on the property donated by the Hennessy family, and the church was located on the Murphy family property. This piece of property where the church was said to be located is east of the Hennessy Hill School. The old maps of the area show this to be true. In fact, the old maps all agree that this was the location of the church, however, none of the old maps make any mention of the land dedicated to the cemetery.

Early settlers of Section 28, 29, 30, and 31 included Patrick Devery who settled in Section 28 in 1854. He had been born in Ireland in 1818. Another early settler was Patrick Dormody who settled in Section 31. He was also born in Ireland in 1825. No wonder the church was named St. Patrick!! John Cook, John Peters, Thomas Hennessy, F. Hennessy, Courtney and Roelke were other names of early settlers in that area. According to Bernice and Kingsley Hinds, the original log church was built in 1860.



**Hennessy Hill School**

“The History of Maple Grove” which was mainly edited by former mayor James Dean, had this to say about the history of Hennessy Hill School. “The first school was located on the banks of Elm Creek just south of the present

County Road 10 bridge over Elm Creek.” Other sources have told us that there was a saw mill located there also and that there may have been other buildings. The History of Maple Grove continues by saying that the first school was said to be a log structure and was replaced at a later date by a frame building. The present school build-



ing, which sits high on top of the hill above the creek, is considerably east of the original site. It still stands today and looks much the same as it did on the final day of classes which were held in the 1950's.

"The History of Hennepin County" which was published in 1881, says that there was a Catholic Church in Section 29. It says the pastor was Father Augustine Ladriere and that he had been pastor for five years. He came to St. Paul in 1875. He was appointed to Osseo and its missions and remained there until 1882.

The Church of St. Patrick of Maple Grove was incorporated under the laws of the State of Minnesota on December 12, 1882. Signing the papers of incorporation were the Pastor Antinus Payette and the Trustees John Burke and Thomas Hennessy. Father Payette was born in Canada in 1827 and came to St. Paul about 1877. He was assigned to Osseo and missions in 1882 and remained there until 1885 when he was appointed to Dayton and its missions.

Irene Egan, whose father-in-law was an early member of the church, gives an account of her recollections of St. Patrick's. Mr. Egan came to Maple Grove in 1868 as a young man with his widowed mother, five brothers and sisters. His mother's maiden name was Devery. He talked about the early days of the church in this way. "When the church burned down at Hennessy Hill, orders from the Archdiocese came that there was to be just the one church which would be at Corcoran." He indicated that there was opposition and grumbling about the decision, but they knew they had to accept it. The Eagans chose to attend St. Anne's in Hamel.

The oldest tombstone in the cemetery is of a Hennessy, dated 1875. There was a cemetery board formed to operate the cemetery and this organization remains active to this day. Cemetery records show that they obtained 5 acres from the Murphy estate in 1884. They also bought 5 acres in 1886. In 1916, the Mooney family gave land to School District 45. In 1927, the School District sold some of the land to Archbishop Dowling. In 1955 the cemetery land was officially deeded as property of St. Thomas Church. The Constitution of the

St. Patrick's Cemetery Association was adopted in 1930. The priest from St. Thomas Church in Corcoran is a member of the Board of Directors. The association was incorporated under the laws of the State of Minnesota on June 7, 1930. In 1955 the association bought land from Bernard Kelly to give the cemetery all of the land south of County Road 10. In 1963 St. Patrick Cemetery Association bought the building and property of the School District 45.



There are many stories from this area, but the favorite one is this: it is the story of Annie Donahue. She was born in 1881 and died in 1882. Her parents could not afford a stone to mark the grave, so they planted a tree.

In the fall, this tree, which is a maple, becomes arrayed in the most brilliant fall colors. People driving by often comment on the beauty of the tree. Now there is a plaque placed below the tree to dedicate it to Annie's memory.

Although not much is known about this early church, it is evident that these mostly Irish people were dedicated to their religion. Early history books say that the church that was built was large. It too, evidently, went the way of many buildings in that era when it was destroyed by fire.



**A Hennessy Hill Class in early 1900's**

Teresa Lynch in plaid dress

## THE CHURCH MOVES TO TOWN

The 1890's were busy years for America. The United States Catholic population had reached nine million. In the City of Minneapolis alone there had been a half billion feet of lumber cut in one year. Grover Cleveland was the president and Chicago had been host for the World's Fair. James J. Hill had completed the construction of his railroad from St. Paul to Seattle.

In 1898 William McKinley was elected president, and the Spanish-American War broke out. Many of the local men were again called on to fight in this war and there are markers in the cemeteries to show that many of them did not return. But there were really important events occurring right here in our own community.



**Father Francis Swift**

Father Francis Swift had been acting pastor of Corcoran and its missions from 1890-1894. It is not recorded, nor does anyone seem to know for sure where Mass was held, but it seems logical that it was held in Mr. Corcoran's store. The store was originally located on the south side of the road where there are now several homes. After it burned—what else—Mr. Corcoran rebuilt his store on the site of the former Corcoran General Store which was a prominent landmark of the community. It is now the home of the Dale Patnode's.

The next pastor to come to Corcoran was Father Adam Coyle. He was born in Ireland, came to this country and studied at the St. Paul Seminary and was ordained by Bishop Ireland in December of 1894. He was immediately sent to St. Thomas in Corcoran as pastor. It was the task of the young pastor to consolidate the two parishes (St. Tho-

# Articles of Incorporation

of

## The Church of St Thomas. of Corcoran

County of Hennepin, State of Minnesota



Whereas, The undersigned, JOHN IRELAND, Roman Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Saint Paul, Minnesota, deems it advisable to have created and organized a religious corporation within this State, for the purpose and with the powers specified in the Statutes of this State, in such case made and provided, and has associated with him for that purpose L. E. Caillet Vicar General of said Diocese, and Adam Boyle the Roman Catholic Pastor of the Parish of Corcoran in the County of Hennepin and State of Minnesota, and whereas, the said Bishop, Vicar General and Pastor have, in accordance with the Statutes in such case provided, selected and designated to be associated with them in the formation of said Corporation, P. H. Corcoran and J. P. Corcoran two lay members of the Roman Catholic Church, both belonging to said Parish and residents therein.

Therefore, Know all Men by These Presents, That we, JOHN IRELAND, Bishop as aforesaid, L. E. Caillet Vicar General as aforesaid, Adam Boyle Pastor as aforesaid and P. H. Corcoran and J. P. Corcoran lay members of said Church as aforesaid, do hereby associate ourselves together for the purpose of becoming incorporated under the name and for the purpose hereinafter stated, pursuant to the provisions of Title 4, of Chapter 34, of the General Statutes of this State, and do now adopt and sign, in duplicate, the following Articles of Incorporation, viz:

ARTICLE I. The name of this Corporation shall be  
 "The Church of St Thomas. of Corcoran, MINNESOTA,"  
 and the place of its location shall be the aforesaid Corcoran  
 in the County of Hennepin and State of Minnesota.

ARTICLE II. The general purpose of this Corporation is to take charge of and manage all the temporal affairs of the Roman Catholic Church in the said Parish; to promote the spiritual, educational and other interests of the said Roman Catholic Church in said Parish, including all the charitable, benevolent and eleemosynary work of said Church in said Parish; to take charge of, hold and manage all property, personal and real, that may at any time or in any manner, come to or vest in this Corporation for any purpose whatever, whether by purchase, gift, grant, devise or otherwise, and to mortgage the same, sell and otherwise dispose of it as the necessities of the said Corporation may require.



**Father Adam Coyle**

mas and St. Patrick) and to build the new church. He remained in Corcoran until 1903. His sister died in Ireland while he was pastor here and he went to Ireland and returned with his niece, Mamie Cook, whom he raised in the parish house.

The decision was finally made by the diocese to build the new St. Thomas the Apostle Church in the town of Corcoran. Mr. Patrick Corcoran donated the land on which the church was to be built—prime property because it was located on the Minneapolis to Monticello Road. The town was a busy community at that time. There was a

creamery—where the 1050 Club stands today, a Post Office (with Mr. Corcoran as the postmaster) that was located in Corcoran's Gen-



**Maple Leaf Creamery Association**

eral Store, and a blacksmith shop. There was also a mill and Hiller's Garage which was located on the present site of the Stanchion. And,



### **Blacksmith Shop**

of course, there was the “never do without” tavern. St. Thomas was incorporated under the laws of the State of Minnesota on March 11, 1895. The pastor was Father Adam Coyle and the Trustees had already been changed and were now J. P. Corcoran and P. H. Corcoran.

Land adjoining the new church was obtained by the parish on July 16, 1895, when Patrick H. Corcoran deeded a piece of property to the church for the amount of \$1.00. On October 3, 1931, the deed was redone with a new description of the land scribbled in by Father Van der Velden. On October 3, 1895, W. R. Corcoran and his wife Mary also deeded a piece of property to the church for \$1.00. The following report was sent to the St. Paul Diocese by Father Coyle dated January 23, 1896. It was his report for the year 1895-1896:

Baptisms, infants only .....	11
Burials .....	5
Marriages .....	1
Estimated number of families .....	70
Estimated number of souls .....	300
Number of children in religious instruction .....	85

This report was signed by Trustee Treasurer, John Kelly who had been elected in January of 1895 and Trustee Secretary, William Doherty who also had been elected in January of 1895. This was interesting because these men had both been members of St. Patrick's. They were no longer trustees in 1896.

The following is the report that Father Coyle made to the Diocese in regard to the construction of the church:

"I let the contract of the new church to Mr. Austin McInerney of Minneapolis on October 29, 1895, for \$1,515 (dollars). The contractor furnished all the materials and did all the work except building the foundation, hauling the materials, frescoing, and painting. The above \$1,515.00 is to be paid at the following stated times: November 15th, \$500 dollars; December 15th, \$100 dollars; January 15th, \$400 dollars; and the balance when the building is completed. The contractor is to have the church finished March 1, 1896. I closed up the other two churches December 22nd. I had Mass in the new building Christmas Day."

The first baptism held in the new church was on May 2, 1896. William (Bud) Meagher was the baby baptized. His parents were Michael Meagher and Margaret Finn Meagher. His family moved to Minneapolis soon after and Bud was an influential citizen of the North Side of Minneapolis. He was an active member of the Ascension Parish. The first couple to be married in the new church was Thomas McGrath and Kate Gleason. The best man was Cornelius Gleason and the Maid of Honor was Maria McGrath. They were married on May 12, 1896.

Father Patrick McCarron followed Father Coyle as pastor. He was born in Ireland in 1854, was educated in England and in Rome, and was ordained in 1881. He came to St. Paul in 1888 and was sent to



**The Pastoral Residence, 1896**  
(Rectory)





**St. Thomas Church, Corcoran, 1896**  
Present Church, before the basement was added.

Corcoran in 1903. He was pastor of St. Thomas until he died of sunstroke on July 29, 1914.

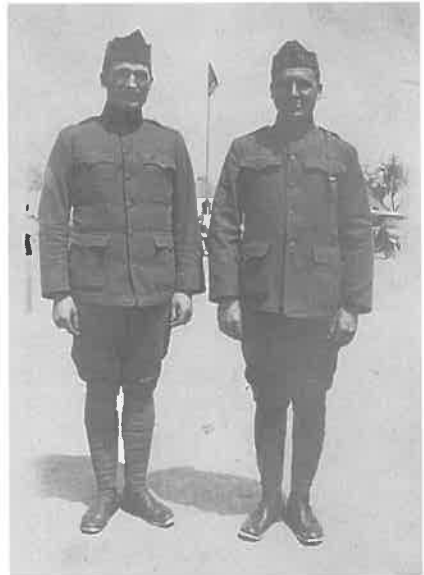


**Father Patrick McCarron**

Unfortunately, after Father McCarron's death, no new pastor was appointed to St. Thomas until Father Soulard came in 1918. In the meantime, the priests from Hamel served the Church of St. Thomas. These included Father Peregor and Father Moetzheim. Father Moetzheim held a meeting before he relinquished the parish to Father Soulard. At this time he appointed Arthur Pounder and James Kelly as trustees. He also presented a bill for two months salary of \$83.32 and a transportation charge of \$25.00. He left the parish with a balance of \$31.46.

This was a trying time for the people of the community. It included the outbreak of World War I and many of the young men went off to war. This was the first time that they had served in a foreign country. There are several tombstones in the cemeteries that contain the names of those soldiers.

Father William Soulard was born in France in 1871. He studied and was ordained in France, coming to St. Paul in 1910. He had been a professor in France before com-



**John Coonan - Pat Duffy**

ing to America. He served at Our Lady of Lourdes in Minneapolis. When he was appointed to St. Thomas, he was also assigned to St.



**Father William Soulard**

Jeanne's as a mission. This was the first time the two parishes had the same priest. He remained here until 1921. He was known as the man with the "big hat" because of the broad brimmed hat he always wore. History of the parishes during this period is very limited. However, there is one matter of extreme importance: In 1920, Father Soulard sold 10 acres in the NW corner of Section 15 to Wil-

liam Modroff. That was the piece of property where the Old St. Thomas Church stood. It was sold for \$700.00. The money was to be used to remodel the "new" St. Thomas Church.



**Father Benjamin F. Audus**

Ordained a priest on  
June 12, 1907  
by  
Most Rev. John Ireland

First Holy Mass  
at St. Thomas' Church  
Corcoran, Minn.,  
June 16, 1907.

First member of  
St. Thomas Parish  
to be ordained.



### **The Bell of St. Mary**

Now hanging in the steeple of St. Thomas Church

## THE BELL OF ST. MARY

If you recall, rumor had it that the spirit of young Father Daniel Hayes roamed the area until his spirit was put to rest in 1896. It seems that there had been a bell cast for St. Mary's Church. The bell was made by the Clinton F. Meneely Bell Company of Troy, New York. When St. Thomas the Apostle Church was dedicated in 1896, there was a special dedication ceremony for the bell when it was hung in the bell tower.

The bell tower and the cross are fascinating features of the church. The cross that tops the steeple is carved from one log. The remainder of the log extends down into the bell tower. It is a sturdy support for the steeple. Originally, the steeple was shingled, but when the new roof was put on, the steeple was wrapped with metal. Inside the steeple hangs a very large bell. It is much larger than the bells found in churches the size and age of St. Thomas.

The face of the bell has the following inscription:



**ST. MARY'S CHURCH**

**CORCORAN**

**A.D. 1880**

**REV. DANIEL F. HAYES, PASTOR**

**GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO!!**

When the bell rings out welcoming the worshippers to the "New" St. Thomas the Apostle Church in "downtown" Corcoran, say a prayer for the young missionary, Father Hayes, and ask that he may continue to be remembered for the work he began so many years ago and that his wish may be fulfilled—that this parish will continue to grow both physically and spiritually.

## ST. JEANNE DE CHANTEL

**M**eantime, up the road a piece, the French Church, St. Jeanne de Chantel, was flourishing. The parish was served from the neighboring town of Hamel, formerly called Lenz. As you recall, these priests ministered to the French people because they were French speaking.

In 1921, Father Van der Velden was appointed pastor of St. Thomas and its mission. Father “Van” as he was called was a Hollander but he spoke French and was able to hear confessions in French. It was the first time the two churches, St. Thomas and St. Jane, although they were independent congregations, had the same pastor.



### **Confirmation, July 17, 1933**

Father Van der Velden is behind  
Archbishop Murray to his left.

Father held an open parish meeting each year. Only the men seemed to attend. It is not known if that was by his directive or if that was the custom. The first meeting that was held was in 1922. At each of these meetings Father read the list of

parishioners and the amount that they had paid on their pew rent assessment. He made a special note of anyone who was not paying their fair share and also read the names of those who had paid nothing.

In 1923 John Morin was appointed Trustee. It is not known whom he succeeded, or who the other Trustee was at this time. In 1924, it was decided that the walls of the church should be washed instead of

painted. Thomas Williams and Amos Pouliot were appointed trustees.

In 1925 it was suggested that a hall be built so they could have a bazaar. However, the next year, the decision was made not to build the hall.

In 1927 Father said something must be done to fix the church. A building committee was appointed consisting of Felix Bolduc and Fred Patnode. Alexis DeMars Jr., and Tom Williams were appointed trustees in 1928.

In 1930, Father announced that the parish would start using envelopes. He also said he was discontinuing the Rosary Society until the ladies could work with the priest. It must be noted here that Father "Van" was known to be difficult to get along with and was very determined that things be done according to his way of thinking only. He did however, hold an election for the two trustee positions. He

## ***Woman Pioneer Jots Down Her Own Obituary***

**Facts of Life Set Forth by  
Mrs. Angelina Dupont, 77,  
Before She Died.**

Before she died Sunday, Mrs. Angelina Dupont, 77 years old, a pioneer resident of the city, wrote her own obituary. This final record set forth in detail not only facts of her own life, but information about her children, living and dead.

Mrs. Dupont, the widow of Joseph Dupont, was born March 23, 1844, in Quebec, Canada, coming to this city in 1856 with her mother. She attended a Sisters' school at St. Anthony Falls and was married in 1859 when she was 15 years old. There were nine children to the union. Mr. and Mrs. Dupont lived on a farm in Corcoran, where she the first French woman pioneer. She was clerk of the parish school district for 20 years.

Funeral services will be held tomorrow in St. Jeanne de Chantel church, Corcoran, where a requiem high mass will be said at 10 a.m. Interment will be in Corcoran.

### **Obituary of Mrs. Angelina Dupont in 1921**

First French woman pioneer in this area

nominated the following: Steve Bolduc, Ephrem Pouliot, William Thibedeau, Maxim Dupont, Louis Dupont, and Fred Morin. Ephrem Pouliot and Fred Morin were elected and served as trustees for many years. The next year saw Father again read the list of givers and non-givers and added a lecture on giving to God. He also told the men that much work needed to be done on the “graveyard”.

In 1932 Father reported on the financial status and included in the donations the amount given toward the summer school and also the amount of work credits for work done on the cemetery. He gave an added lecture because some of the parishioners had recognized a second marriage performed by a Justice of the Peace. The motion was made and passed at this time that anyone being buried in the Church Cemetery had to have all pew rent, current and past, paid in full.

In 1933 it was decided to hold a bazaar. That would be no small accomplishment because the only facility available was the horse shed. Everything else would be at the mercy of the weather and all of the food would have to be prepared at home.

In the next two years the meetings were much the same. In 1935 Father announced that the money situation was better because of the bazaars and card parties. He also announced that any monies made from any events were to be given to the church and not to the societies.

The regular meeting in 1936 was fairly routine, but a second meeting was held to set the price on cemetery lots for “outsiders” who wanted to be buried in the cemetery because it was cheap. The price was set at \$100 which included perpetual care.

Father “Van” left Corcoran at this time and there were no further meetings until the arrival of Father Eichinger in 1945. At that time he met with the trustees and it was decided that St. Jeanne’s would pay one-half of the salary and car allowance for the pastor, one-half of the telephone bill, the stationery and office supplies. They would also pay for one-half of the Skelgas for the heat of the house, and

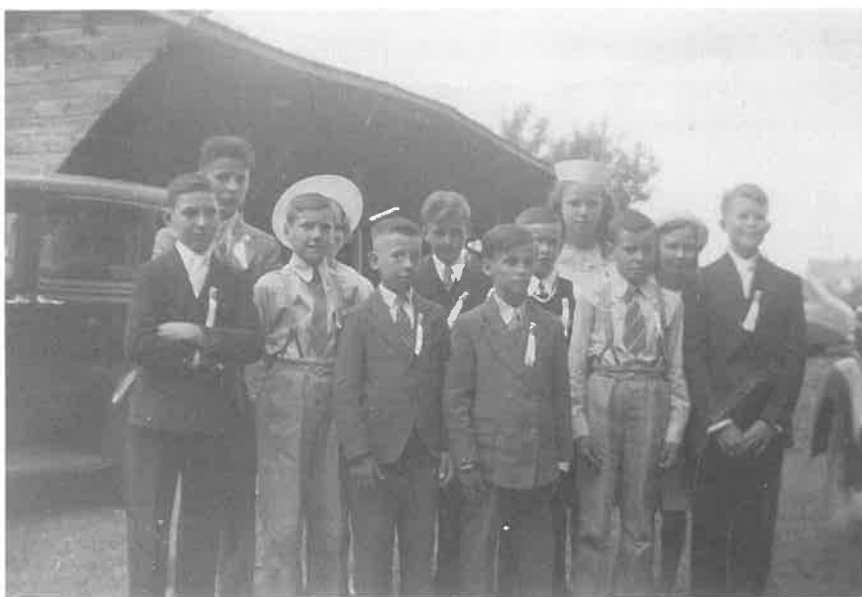


one-half of the oil and electric—credit to be given if St. Thomas were to have any special event. The next year he reported that the church had been repaired and there was still a balance of \$1,133.87.

Father Green arrived in 1946. He came from Cleveland, Minnesota, and the first Sunday he was in Corcoran, he told the people that he did not want to be here because he did not want to leave Cleveland. He only agreed to come to Corcoran because it was close to Anoka where his Mother lived.

Father Green held a meeting in 1948. The ladies wanted to redecorate, but Father said the ceiling needed fixing and the church needed insulation. The work was ordered done and the church was painted.

There were no more meetings recorded until the church was destroyed by a tornado on June 24, 1952.



**St. Jeanne de Chantel Confirmation Class, 1933**

Can you identify any of them?

## THE WINDOWS

Much redecorating has been done at St. Thomas since the dedication one hundred years ago. The walls have been covered and painted and painted again. The statues have been added and moved and moved again. The altars have been added and moved and added and moved. The floor has been tiled and carpeted and recarpeted. Through all this the most significant change has been the addition of the stained glass windows.

Until Father Fink and Father Kinney came to St. Thomas the modern generation was not fully aware of the religious connotations of the windows. Now we realize that the Old Testament is represented on the right side (as you enter the church) and the New Testament is represented on the left side. Now we realize that not only are the windows beautiful, but they are a part of our Christian heritage.

The original contract for the church (\$1,515.00) did not include the stained glass windows that we see in the church today. They were added during the 1930's as you will read in the next chapter.

It is a pleasure to incorporate this insert in this book so that you, the reader may enjoy the windows. The biblical passages were selected by Father Kinney. The production was done by Dick Anderson, an employee of Winslow Printing and a friend of Pat Tadych, a parishioner of St. Thomas. Our deep appreciation to him for his time and his expertise with his own computer equipment.

# *Our Patron*

## *St. Thomas the Apostle*



SAINT THOMAS  
Thomas, the Great Patron Saint of our  
Parish, Apostle, Martyr and Believer.  
My Lord and God  
John 20:28



## ADAM AND EVE

They ate the fruit of the  
forbidden tree. May we  
eat the fruit of the tree  
of the cross and live.

Genesis 2-3

Donated in memory  
of the 1933 St. Thomas  
Dramatic Club.

## CAIN AND ABEL

May we be like Abel  
and offer You the first  
fruits of our labors.

Genesis 4

Donated by  
Mr. and Mrs. John Duffy.





## NOAH

In thanksgiving may we  
offer the Eucharist as  
gratitude for being saved  
from eternal death.

Genesis 6: 9-22

Donated by the  
St. Thomas Ladies Aid.

## ABRAHAM

Abraham was willing to  
sacrifice his son as You  
sacrificed Your Son for  
love of us.

Genesis 12-18

Donated in memory of  
Hugh and Margaret Keran.







## MOSES

Moses fed his people  
Manna. Continue to feed  
us with the Living Bread.

Exodus 2-40

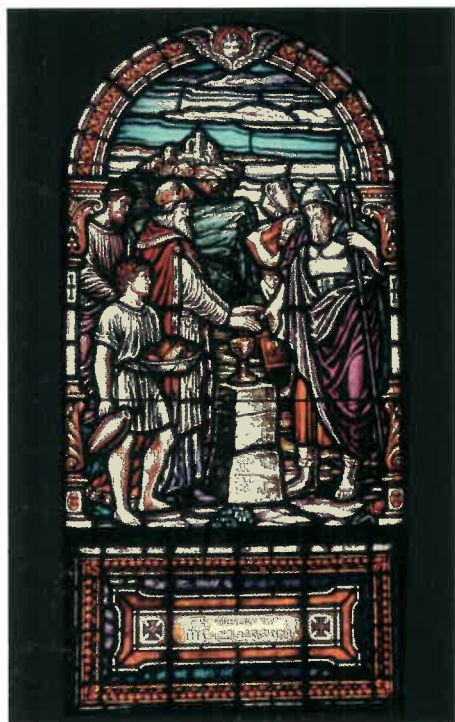
Donated by  
Mr. and Mrs. Frank Geurs.

## MELCHIZEDEK

We join with Melchizedek  
in offering thanksgiving  
to You for many  
blessings received.

Genesis 14: 17-24

In memory of  
William and Mary Audus.



## THE ANNUNCIATION

The Archangel Gabriel  
proclaimed the Good News  
of Salvation to Mary.

Luke 1:26-38



## THE NATIVITY

The first Christmas in  
Bethlehem. May our  
church welcome you  
and all peoples.

Luke 2: 1-7





## JOHN THE BAPTIST

May our baptism prepare  
us to partake in the  
mystery we celebrate  
in the Mass.

Mark 1:1-8

Donated in memory  
of the 1931 St. Thomas  
Dramatic Club.

## MOTHER OF JESUS

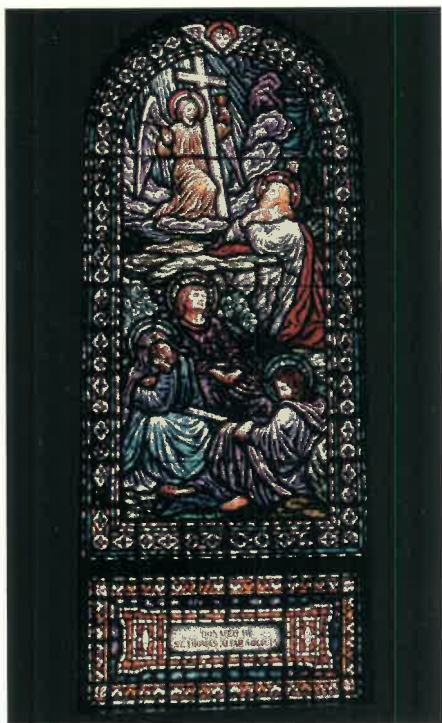
May we appreciate the  
important role you played  
in our salvation.

Revelation 12: 1-6

In memory of the  
wonderful efforts of our  
Ladies Aid.







## THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN

May our prayers make us  
worthy of the sacrifice of  
Your saving Paschal  
Mystery.

Luke 22: 39-40

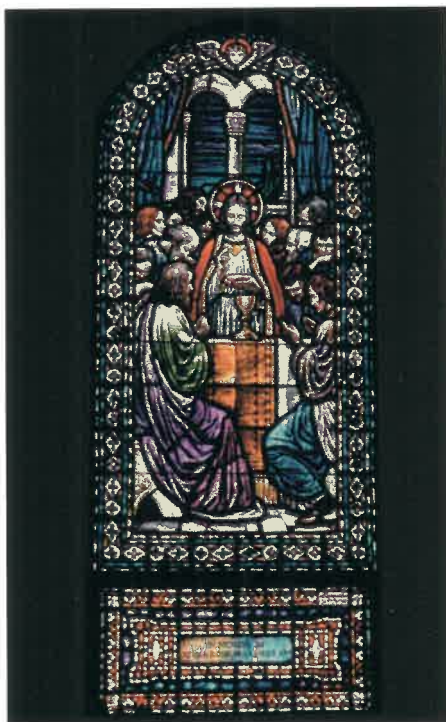
Donated by the  
St. Thomas Altar Society.

## THE LAST SUPPER

We are fortunate to  
participate with You in the  
Sacred Meal of the Holy  
Eucharist.

Matthew: 26: 17-30

Donated in memory of  
Patrick and Ann Corcoran.





## THE CRUCIFIXION

Our Heavenly Father  
sacrificed His Son for the  
redemption of the world.

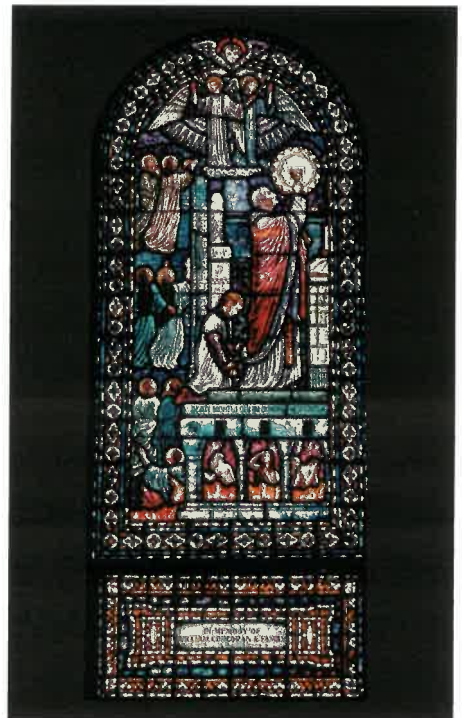
Matthew: 45-46

## THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

We joyfully partake  
of Your holy and  
efficacious sacrifice.

Hebrews 8-9

Donated in memory of  
William Corcoran and  
Family.



## RENOVATION

Father Van der Velden arrived on the scene in 1921. Father “Van”, as he was called, was a very strict disciplinarian. If he received the wrong answer during a catechism quiz, the offender could expect a sharp swat. He insisted the altar boys wear tennis shoes on the altar to preserve the floor. To insure this he bought several pairs of tennis shoes and had them on hand so the boys had no excuse for not serving.

He was a very learned man and had taught at the seminary. He also spoke several languages including French. He had, in his younger days, been an Olympic swimmer according to Gilbert Patnode.



**Cornelius Gleason**

He instituted open parish meetings instead of a corporate meeting. The first meeting after his arrival he raised the pew rent and appointed a committee to fix the church. He did not wait long for the process to begin and at the next meeting he told them that they would add a basement to the building and appointed a committee of five to plan the work. They were to raise the church three feet and dig out the area for the rest. This was to be an act of very hard labor. Some of it they were able to do with scrapers pulled by horses but an awful lot of the

work was done with a pick and shovel and lots of sweat and toil. The trustees at that time were Phil Gleason and Luke Cain. The next year, Father “Van”, held an open election and James Kelly and Cornelius Gleason were named trustees.

At the meeting in 1924 he announced that the parish was \$359.30 in debt as a result of the construction costs. He decided to raise the pew

rent to cover this debt and decided against a fund drive because “Those who don’t pay pew rent wouldn’t give anyhow.” In spite of the debt, he announced that they would put a basement under the rectory and add a back porch.

In the same year, he made the following purchases:

altars .....	\$400.00
carpet runners .....	\$ 84.50
3 chairs .....	\$ 22.50
1 predieu .....	\$ 12.00
6 candlesticks .....	\$ 60.00
altar cover .....	\$ 10.00
hand bell .....	\$ .35
racks .....	\$ .10
side altars, statues, communion railing, and holy water angel .....	\$740.00
vestments .....	\$ 60.00
side altar cloths .....	\$ 12.12
paten .....	\$ 8.20
2 prs. shoes for altar boys .....	\$ 2.50
cassock hangers .....	\$ .15
lumber .....	\$125.00
nails .....	\$ 2.75
varnish .....	\$ 8.15
labor .....	\$ 73.00

These purchases were made with a donation from the Christian Mothers of \$589.45 and the balance, \$1,031.90, was paid by the parish. It is interesting to note that the bell which cost 35 cents was itemized, but the side altars, etc. were all in one account.

Father “Van” was usually complaining about lack of giving. He said that the pew rent only paid for the first half of the year’s expenses and the bazaar paid for the second half of the year. However, this did not stop him from ordering new pews for the church—the cost of the pews would be \$1,300. The people asked that he not raise the pew rent again but to wait a year before getting the pews. However, true to form, he was very unhappy that the vote was to postpone the pur-

chase. He then called a second meeting two weeks later to announce that the company, C. Machner Co. of LaCrosse, Wisconsin, would deliver the pews and accept partial payment and the rest to be paid on installments. He also announced that he was ordering the pews regardless.

At the next meeting, 1927, Father "Van" took roll call by asking each person how much they would contribute. He would also give them credit for hours of work they put in on the church renovation projects. He then announced that he had ordered a new floor for the church. It would be wood and the men would do the varnishing.



**The "Little House"**

Somewhere in this period of time summer school was started. It was held at John Corcoran's house in downtown Corcoran. This was the location of the summer school until the church basement was made available.

This was also the same little house that the Corcoran family donated to the church and which was used to house the School Sisters of Notre Dame who came to staff the summer school in later years.

In 1929 Father named the first ushers. "These men will help to seat the strangers." The first ushers named included: James Kennedy, Lawrence Meuers, Eddie Kelly and Roy Gleason. They were to instruct the people to go to communion up the center aisle and return to their seats down the side aisle.

In December of 1930 Archbishop Dowling died and the Diocese was left without a Shepherd for over a year until Archbishop John Gregory Murray was installed on January 28, 1932. Another big event in

1932 was the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt as President of the United States.

This was the period of the stock market crash and the beginning of the Great Depression but Father “Van” was undaunted. In 1930 he announced that he had ordered stained glass windows for the church. The Ladies Aid announced that they were thinking of disbanding. Father thanked them for all of their past work and told them they could use the funds they had in the treasury to buy two of the windows. He also told them that they should still plan on having the bazaar. He asked the parishoners to be generous and try to donate a window. He also announced that he was starting the use of envelopes.

He was unable to do anything about the cemeteries. He said that he was not in favor of having four cemeteries. He suggested closing the cemetery behind the church. He said it was in such poor shape it would be condemned and he suggested that no one be buried there. (Later he supervised the leveling of the grounds which disturbed some of the graves).

By 1931 all but three of the windows he had ordered were paid for. At that time he suggested that the Ladies Aid could hold some card parties to pay for them. He undoubtedly had no idea how much of a sacrifice it was for some of the people to contribute the money for a window. There was a lot of “egg money” put aside for the price of a stained glass window.

In 1932 he ordered the remaining 5 windows. These windows were not dedicated to anyone so they must have come from the parish funds. In 1933 he laid down some more of his rules: “Baptism: The father of the infant should come to the ceremony and pray. The mother should come and ask to be church-ed. Funerals: No more strange singers—our own singers are good enough, and no flowers!!”

The next year he cautioned the people that they sinned against the fifth commandment which required people to give to the church, and

if they did not give they were stealing from God. Certainly, many of his sermons must have included many remarks about the downfall of the morals of the people with the abolishment of the Prohibition Act in 1933.

It was in 1935 that he published the first financial statement. This was done, he said, "So that everyone could see what everyone else has given". This was his last open meeting as he left Corcoran, and Father Kern was appointed to St. Thomas and its mission St. Jeanne de Chantel.



**Father Joseph Kern**

Father Joseph Kern was born in Switzerland in 1879 and was ordained there. He came to the diocese of St. Paul in 1914. He was, at one time, a director and professor of music at the Seminary in St. Paul. Father Kern arrived in a snow storm on December 10, 1936. When he was stuck in a snow drift, he was unable to call for help because there was no telephone. Upon arriving in Corcoran, he immediately appointed himself Secretary and Treasurer of the parish and set up his own bookkeeping system. His first wedding at Corcoran was to unite Mary Patnode and Peter Thielgas.

Father Kern was a master of many trades. He had built an organ for the Cathedral and among many other things was a master electrician. He immediately set about repairing the Home Electric Light Plant which furnished the church with light, and replacing the generator. He also remodeled the heating plant to make it more efficient.

He established two societies, The Holy Name Society for the men, and the Rosary Society for the women. Both were affiliated with the

National Societies. On the first Sunday of the month, the ladies sat on the left side of the church and received communion in a body. On the second Sunday of the month, the men sat on the right side of the church and received communion in a body. This continued for many years.

Father Kern also ordered what he thought was needed. In 1937 he ordered the Baptismal Font (still used today) and then told the Christian Mothers they were expected to pay for it. They held a card party and turkey raffle to offset some of the cost. The day of the party the heat went out! Father worked on the repairs until he was exhausted. (His health had never been strong. He had been hospitalized several times.) He was forced to go to bed. The women took charge and fired up the cook stoves in the kitchen to heat the basement and the party went on as scheduled. They raised \$38.66.

In order to meet the bills for repairing the heating system, Father Kern cashed in the Dramatic Club saving certificate and the Junior League certificate. The Dramatic Club gave plays each year. They were held in the Corcoran hall which was the upper level of what is now Trepteau Implement Company. One of the early plays was "Bolts and Nuts". Cast members included: Delores Patnode (now Walker), Coletta Aeshliman (now Anderson), Vernice Pounder, LaVerne Patnode, Francis Lynch, Arlene Stauffer, Francis Geurs, Ruth Schock (now Schendel), Roland Schock, Mrs. William Reinking, Ralph Klatt, and Mary Ann Van Donsel. Dances were held in the hall, and meetings of the Catholic Order of Foresters were also held there.

Just as the Winter had been freezing cold, the summer was very hot and it was necessary to buy a refrigerator for the Sisters teaching summer school. The pastor loaned the parish money for this purchase.

In 1938 the two parishes, St. Thomas and St. Jane, tried a joint effort. They put on the Bazaar together. The profits were divided 50\50. St. Thomas used these funds to put electricity in the rectory.



The joint venture did not prove to be successful, so in 1939 St. Thomas tried a harvest collection instead of a bazaar. The deficit was reduced to \$250.00. The Christian Mothers bought altar boy cassocks and paid for whitewashing the church basement and bought 4 dozen wooden folding chairs. That year there was a great deal of trouble with the cesspool. Father tried to do most of the repair work and again fell sick—this time he was hospitalized with a nervous breakdown. The housekeeper, Agnes Fritz, was given a bonus because she did all the janitorial work, tended to heating the church, and did all of the church laundry. Father became ill again the next year and the trustees took over the collection of the pew rent. Father, himself, paid to have the trim on the house painted because, “he was unable to do it”.

In 1939, Pope Pius XII was elected, and in 1940 Hitler invaded Denmark and Norway. In 1938 the polio epidemic ravaged the area; and in November of 1940 this locality was victim of the famous Armistice Day Blizzard. In June of 1941 Germany invaded Russia in what was to be the start of World War II. This was to be followed by the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

In 1942 Father Kern announced that the parish was out of debt. However, the house furnace needed repairs and the Archdiocese was insisting that we pay the back assessments. Father pleaded that the number of Catholics in the community was decreasing because Catholic people were selling their farms to non-Catholics. The Archdiocese agreed to forgive the back assessments and the Christian Mothers paid the current assessment. It was again necessary to hold the annual bazaar. The bazaar, or festival as it is now called, has been held every year since that time.

The next year, at Confirmation time, there was a very heavy rain. The wall of the cesspool caved in, the pump was ruined, and the basement was flooded. Father again became ill. Neil Gleason, Lee Meister, and William Peters solicited funds from the parishoners to pay his medical bills. The Archbishop told him he must resign his pastorate and go to a smaller parish with no mission. He was as-

signed to St. Patrick's of Cahill (which is now Edina). However in those days Edina would have been a rural area. He was happy because he left the parish with a balance of \$700.00.

Father Edmund Coughlin was at Corcoran for a very short time. While he was here he celebrated his Silver Anniversary as a priest. The parish hosted this celebration.

Father Michael Lawler arrived on January 20, 1944. He was born in Ireland and finished his studies at the St. Paul Seminary, and was ordained in 1929. He left Corcoran November 24, 1944. He did plant the large tree in the front of the church. In 1951 he suffered a stroke and remained an invalid until his death in 1969.



**Father Albert Eichinger**

Father Albert Eichinger came to Corcoran on June 20, 1945. He remained here only until January of 1946, but he managed to accomplish much in his short stay. In his first meeting with the trustees, he appointed George Meister to take James Kelly's position as Mr. Kelly was now deceased. He had also gotten bids to have the church reshingled by the Rural Improvement Company. The cost would be \$500.00. At the next meeting he announced a cash balance of \$1,336.65.

## THE BIG WIND



Unfortunately, in June of 1952, a tornado struck the area. Many barns and other farm buildings in the area were destroyed. The church of St. Jeanne de Chantel was destroyed beyond repair. Only the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary survived. The statue came through the storm without a scratch. What a fitting remembrance of that beautiful church! The statue now has a place of honor in the St. Thomas Parish Center.

This was the second wind to hit the area. The first was on Monday, June 23rd, and the storm that destroyed St. Jeanne's was on Tuesday, the 24th.

Father Green made a proposal to consolidate the two parishes. The insurance from the destroyed building would be \$6,500. The parish of St. Jeanne's had \$2,000 cash on hand. Father proposed taking these two funds, adding those amounts to the money obtained by selling the old parish house, and building a new rectory.

The people from the parish of St. Jeanne's were welcomed into the parish of St.



Thomas and have continued to play an important roll in the Catholic Church in Corcoran.

LaVerne Patnode dismantled the church building and used some of the lumber to build hay feeders for cattle and sold them to the area farmers. Some of the windows were put into the barn which was then owned by Louie Patnode on County Road 50. The farm was later sold to John Stewart who attended St. Thomas for many years before selling the farm and moving to Watertown. The church bell was sent to St. Andrew's Church in Elk River.

No longer would the people from the Eastern part of the parish have to struggle with the roads to attend Mass at St. Jeanne's. On the first and third Sundays of the month, eight o'clock Mass had been at St. Thomas and ten o'clock Mass was at St. Jeanne's. On the other two Sundays it was reversed. In the Spring, what is now County Road 50 was not paved, as it is now, and it was a sea of mud. Going up the hill was almost impossible. In the Winter, the snow drifts were piled high. Not being a major road at that time, it was often not plowed until later in the day. But struggle through they did, probably aided by the fact that cars were built a little higher off the ground in those days.



The cemetery of St. Jeanne remains and is well maintained. A monument was erected and dedicated by Father Harold Green, in a special ceremony, to mark the location where the church stood.

## ONE CHURCH

The next era was a period of cooperation. Everyone was finally united under one roof. And that roof was now over 50 years old. And, with this melding of the parishes, the people also entered into the spirit of oneness by working together.



**Father Harold Green**

In 1948 the women initiated the idea of decorating the church. Cavanaugh Brothers of Robbinsdale installed what was called "New Wood" in variegated colors on the walls and ceiling. This served to decorate and also to insulate the building. The total cost was \$1,915.00.

In 1949, it was decided to fix up the basement walls. One wall was buckling and the basement needed to be redecorated and modernized. Cavanaugh Brothers were again hired to do the finishing work. The

men of the parish dug down on the outside of the wall on the west side of the church and relayed the blocks there and also beneath the sacristy. Knotty pine was installed on the walls and New Wood was put on the ceiling. Cupboards were installed in the kitchen. The price of the job was \$2,215.82. New dishes were purchased by the ladies, and the Corcoran Church Chicken Dinner became famous.

In 1950 the parish made a parking lot out of the pasture south of County Road 10 across from the church. However, creatures of habit are hard to train to new ways. Finally, Father decided that men should be stationed to direct traffic to the new lot. In 1952 the parking lot was surfaced. Before that was done, however, some land was purchased from Mr. Harvey Krause. This straightened out the lot and made it more usable.

The 1950's became the period of the "Big Bazaars". After weeks of planning, the week of the Bazaar started, for the ladies, on Tuesday night. Everyone met in the basement of the church to wash every dish and pan and piece of silverware. (The basement was often home to the poor church mice so added precaution had to be taken to insure only the best for the diners.)

The first few years, everyone brought chickens from home which were already cooked and ready to serve. Later things became more "modernized". Then, the ladies met on Friday evening at the locker plant, after it had closed for the day, to clean, wash, and cut up the chickens which had been purchased in bulk. Saturday morning was frying day. Each piece of chicken was floured and fried and then cooked for reheating the next day. At first, this was done on two huge wood-burning cook stoves. They really warmed up the kitchen on an August day. Later these stoves were replaced by gas hot plates.

Hopefully, the frying and table setting was done early, because the ladies had to go home and prepare the rest of their "slip". The donation slip included: a cash donation toward the purchase price of the chicken, a kettle of peeled potatoes, 3 two crust fruit pies, money toward the purchase of vegetables or a pound of butter, and a hand made item for the Fancy Goods booth. In addition to all that, there were chances to sell, and a dish towel (usually a feed sack) to be hemmed and donated to be used for drying dishes on Sunday. Meanwhile, the men were busy outside preparing the grounds for bingo, beer, fish pond, etc.

Sunday began early and there were no "shifts". Everyone worked from the time they finished with Mass until their job was done, or 10:30 p.m., whichever came first. Monday was a full day of cleanup. When that day was over, everything had been returned to its original place and everything was spic and span.

Things got easier in the kitchen when Marian Eull (who was Father Green's housekeeper) directed a home talent play. The proceeds from the play were used to purchase a twelve burner, two oven gas stove—

such an improvement over the old wood burning stoves!

Those were the days for home talent plays. “The Goof from Gopher Gulch,” “ Spooky Junction,” “The Wild Oats Boy,” “Yimmie Yonson’s Yob,” and others were all presented on a home made stage in the church basement. They were not only money raisers, but they also provided fellowship for the assorted age groups of actors and were the main source of entertainment for the community during Lent. In those days there was little entertainment available during Lent—definitely no weddings or dances!!!

After Selmer and Marian Eull moved to Osseo, Joe Dease became the play director. After he moved to North Minneapolis, Gertrude Gleason rallied a group of middle-aged ladies to produce “Sister Susie Swings It”. Price for an adult ticket was 75 cents.

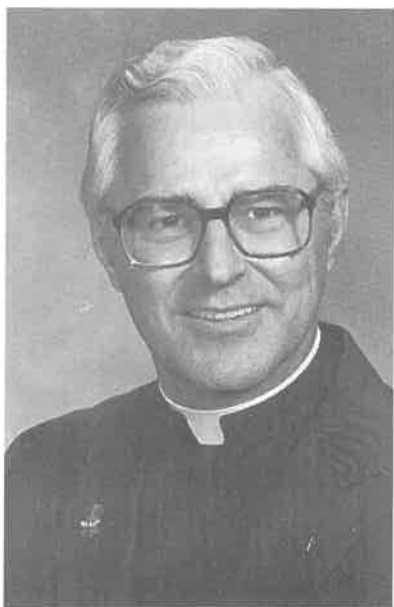
Kay King luncheons were an annual event. These luncheons, put on to advertise a menu of foods, cost the Christian Mothers little or nothing to hold, and provided a good source of revenue. The name of the ladies organization had been officially changed from The Rosary Society to Christian Mothers in 1957, and they became affiliated with the National Organization. The first officers of the newly named society were: Mrs. Luke (Bonnie) Cain, president; Mrs. Jerry (Joanne) Pettit, vice-president; Mrs. Donald (Rita) Pouliot, secretary; and Mrs John R. (Verona) Patnode, treasurer. However the name was again changed in 1959. It became The Christian Mothers Altar and Rosary Society so that all women of the parish would feel they were eligible to be members. At that time there were 94 members in the society.

Summer school was held during this period. The ladies of the parish supplied the Sisters with groceries, fresh fruit and vegetables and made sure the “little house” was ready for the Sisters when they arrived.

Card parties and bingo parties were also popular. At one time the parish was divided into four groups each of which put on a fund raising party. There was even a bake sale held at the Sipe and Grey

Oil Station in Robbinsdale.

In 1958 committees of three women each were set up to clean the church. Each committee served for one month, cleaning each week and scrubbing once.



**Father Francis Pouliot**

On February 23, 1958, Father Francis Pouliot was ordained a priest. He was the first priest from St. Thomas Parish since Father Benjamin Audus was ordained in 1907. On March 2nd Father Francis said his First Mass at St. Thomas. The ladies served a dinner for 125 and also served for a reception for 500 people.

It was during this period of cooperation that the old rectory moved down the road to its present resting place on County Road 116. The new rectory was built and the old garage was converted to a storage shed. In 1959, there were 810 registered parishioners





## POST VATICAN II

The world was celebrating the launching of the first Sputnik into space in the late 1950's when St. Thomas entered into a period of many changes.

Father Green was appointed pastor of St. Mary's Church in downtown St. Paul in 1958. He left Corcoran complaining that he did not want to leave Corcoran and move to St. Paul.



**Father Gordon Mycue**

Father Gordon Mycue was named pastor of St. Thomas in 1958 and would do double duty as the Director of Radio and Television for the Archdiocese of St. Paul. He arrived with his ham radio equipment and set up his tower by the garage and he was on the air. He encouraged others to adopt this hobby. Two of his students set up stations of their own—George Miller and Kingsley Hinds enjoyed ham radio for many years.

One of his projects was the television program, "Quiz a Catholic". He attracted many celebrities including the then very popular Lennon Sisters and singer Carmel Quinn. This program was a weekly Sunday morning show that was very well received.

Father was also founder of St. Therese Care Center in New Hope. He managed to convince some leading citizens that this was a worthwhile cause and started the ball rolling for the acquisition of the property and the raising of the funds for the construction. He also was instrumental in obtaining the Sisters of St. Benedict, St. Paul Priory, to take on the management of the center.



**Father Jerry Patnode**

Jerry Patnode, son of Francis and Ann Patnode, was ordained a priest in the Order of St. Benedict. He took the name Father Louis. He said his First Mass at St. Thomas on June 1, 1968, and his parents hosted a dinner and reception in the church basement.

Perhaps we could also call this the Age of Music. Father Mycue had been educated at St. John's University and had maintained many contacts there. In preparation for the ending of Vatican II and the changes that would be coming, Father moved the organ down from the choir loft and instituted congregational singing.

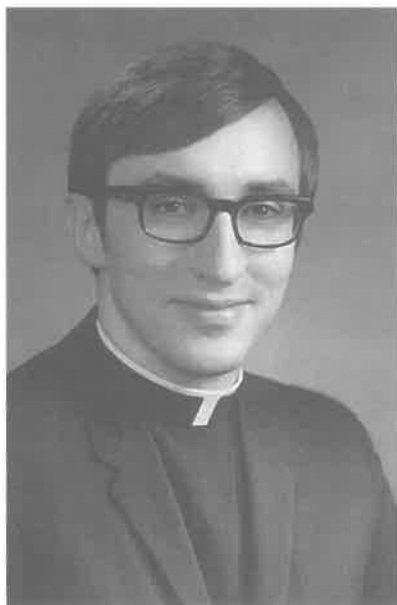
Charles Rasmussen was hired to lead the music program. Many guest musicians from St. John's took part in special observances. Crowds of people would attend to hear the music and Father installed speakers in the basement to take care of the overflow crowd.

Music definitely became a part of St. Thomas. Bands were hired to entertain at the festivals. Polka Masses were held and they also proved to be very popular.

Long before it was required, St. Thomas had put up a temporary altar and Mass was said facing the people. Mass was then said in English!! Banners became the



decorations in the church and the statues of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph were placed in back of the church, the side altars were removed, and the vacated wall space was covered with the colorful banners.



**Father Eugene Pouliot**

red, white and blue kitchen and new red carpeting and drapes were added. The floor in the church basement was covered with blue carpeting.

Father Mycue also organized a very active Religious Education Program. He solicited help from the religious who were within driving distance to assist in the Wednesday evening program. Sister Bernarda was one of the Sisters who were active in the program. She was not only involved in Religious Education, but she also played the organ for the church.

In the midst of all this, Father Eugene Pouliot said his first mass at St. Thomas on May 23, 1970. The sanctuary was crowded with the portable altar, the ceremony crew and the musicians. Thankfully, extra room became available with the removal of the communion rail. A dinner and reception were held in the church basement.

Father Mycue's favorite colors were red and blue and those colors were used extensively. The sanctuary was painted "liturgical red" and the body of the church was painted a light blue. The rectory sported a



**Sister Bernarda, O.S.B.**



**Mamie Patnode**

From the time Charlie and Mamie Patnode built their home behind the church, Mamie became a volunteer member of the staff of the church. She did everything from answering the phone to cooking for the visiting clergy.

Another innovation of this time that left a lasting mark on St. Thomas was the preschool program. In 1971 Catherine Geurs wanted to do a project for credit in her course at the College of St. Catherine. She approached Father and asked if she could plan and execute a three week preschool. There was such a good response from the parish both in volunteers to help with the program and with students interested in such a school that Father decided to make it a permanent fixture of the parish.

The school was set up in the rectory basement and Father took the necessary test to become a certified director. Sister Michael Marie was one of the first teachers. Twenty-five years later, as this book is being written, the St. Thomas Preschool is alive and well. Now located in the Parish Center, it is staffed by the director, Mona Burg, who is ably assisted by Kathy Sonenstahl. It offers an opportunity for three, four, and five year olds to prepare for their formal education. It is also a service that the parish of St. Thomas offers to the people of the community.



## THE PARISH CENTER

**F**ather Stan Maslowski was appointed pastor of St. Thomas in 1981. During his time here he established a Parish Council as was recommended by the Archdiocese. He also established a Liturgy Committee, and an Education Committee.



### **Cooking for Caring and Sharing Hands**

Edith Staehnke and Lynette Deziel

Three civic projects were undertaken by the parish. The first was to prepare a meal each month to be taken and served at Caring and Sharing Hands in Minneapolis. This effort was chaired by Lynette Deziel. After several years, this project had to be dropped because Caring and Sharing Hands had increased the number of people it served and it became impossible to transport enough food to feed all of the hungry. The second project was to become a contributor to the Hanover Food Shelf. This

project remains active at this time. St. Thomas is one of the leading contributors to the Hanover Food Shelf. The third project is the Mobile Mammogram. This project has been chaired by LaDonna Kartak, who makes arrangements for the mobile exam unit to come to St. Thomas and is in charge of advertising the service which is available to all women of the community.

In the winter of 1983-1984, a committee was formed to survey the buildings at St. Thomas and to make recommendations for improving the facilities.

These findings were made by a Volunteer Committee consisting of Bud Gleason, George Gmach, Ken Hage, Paul Hughes, Herman Kashmarek and Bud Ryan.

A survey showed that the number of preschool children coming of age would overwhelm the present religious education facilities within 5 years.

Projected parish growth would require additional space for weekend Masses and there was need for handicap accessibility. Other things noted were that the kitchen and serving facilities were outdated, inadequate, and not up to code.



**Fr. Stan Maslowski**

As Father Maslowski said in his letter to all parishioners, "As you look around our church building, you will see the names of some of our early pioneer families on the beautiful stained glass windows. The decisions these pioneers made, together with their actions, have affected our parish community for the last century. We now have the same opportunity. The decisions we make, and the actions we take, will affect our children and our children's children for many years into the future. Some of us are descendants of those early St. Thomas pioneers. Others of us are new, just as the builders of our parish were

new a century ago. Together we can recapture that pioneer spirit and take a bold step toward our future."

The findings of the Volunteer Study Committee were presented to the Parish Council and subsequently the study committee became the New Building Committee.

The committee set a goal for ground breaking in the spring of 1987. There would be an approximate cost of \$500,000. Half of this would be raised by pledges and half would be borrowed.

The trustees at this time were Tom Sicora and Catherine Meister and the Parish Council consisted of Bud Gleason, Tom Patnode, Charlotte Schalo, Ted Miskowitz, Joan Schlegel, and Delroy Tadych.

A Finance Committee that was formed to solicit the pledges consisted Dwight Benson, George Gmach, Pat Moo, Herman Kashmarek, Jerry Braun, Jerry Joseph, LouAnn Reger, Steve Geis, Bud Gleason and Tom Sicora.

On October 2, 1984 a building committee met with Father Maslowski. The members of the committee were Tom Sicora, George Gmach, Jean Gmach, Mary Oman, Bud Gleason, Connie Jacobson, Ed Channel, Dwight Benson, Paul Hughes, and Herman Kashmarek. They met with Paul Snyder of Armstrong, Torseth, Shold and Rydeen Inc. to start a plan for a new building. Decisions were made as to the needs of the parish. Two plans submitted. The second plan was adopted.



#### **Involved committee members**

Pat McNeil, Vern Hanson, Ken Hage, Bud Gleason

The bids for the building were let, with St. Thomas acting as General Contractor. Finances were handled by Pat McNeil; Ken Hage was the Construction Manager, and the Building Committee consisted of George Gmach, Bud

Gleason, Vern Hanson, Paul Hughes, Bud Ryan, Ken Hage, Herman Kashmarek, and Gary Uhde. Many other parishioners volunteered in a number of capacities.



The building committee visited many building sites and attended many meetings. The site for the building was cleared by removing a large tree, an old tent structure, and moving the old garage.

Ground was broken in the fall of 1987. Bishop J. Richard Ham presided at the ground breaking. The ceremony was attended by a large number of people including Clergy, Trustees, members of the Parish Council, New Building Committee, Finance Committee, and members of the parish.



**Bishop Ham**

Blessing the construction site



**Herman Kashmarek**

Ground breaking



John Gleason and Co. built up the site and construction began in the spring of 1988. Though it was a dry year, one wall was blown down twice by wind and rain storms.

The building provides a hall for a handicapped accessible Mass. It can also be used for banquets and meetings and of course the annual Turkey Dinner. The Parish Center also includes a complete kitchen, eight classrooms, and an office area. The building has three unique windows in the form of crucifixes.

The building was completed in November of 1988 in time for holiday celebrations and the debt was paid off in March 1995.

One project that was begun as a fund raiser for debt reduction on the Parish Center Mortgage was the Food Booth at the Hennepin County Fair. Profits from the four day event were contributed to the Building Fund until the mortgage was retired. After that had been accomplished, the funds have been contributed to various church projects such as the siding for the church, and the new carpeting for the church.



**St. Thomas Food Booth at Hennepin County Fair**



**Exterior of the new Parish Center**



**The Altar in the Hall of the Parish Center**

## THE NEW LOOK

Nothing had been done to upgrade the rectory for a very long time. A committee of ladies took on the task of refurbishing the house. Under the chairmanship of Mary Hage, the plans were made and the work started. Father Paul Jaroszeski had been appointed temporary administrator of the parish, but he was not in residence so it was a perfect opportunity to do some major reconstruction.

A wall was moved to provide a larger entry. New carpeting, furniture and drapes were purchased where needed. Painting was done throughout. The kitchen received new cupboards and new appliances. All in all, a complete face lift would greet the new pastor.

Mona Aeshliman took on the project of having the statues redone and arranged that they be moved to the front of the church and be installed on shelves.

Father Paul, conscious that he would not be present to make the day to day decisions, called on the people to be more responsible for the workings of the parish. A Finance Committee and a Buildings and Grounds Committees were set up.

Another thing Father Paul accomplished, was to legally dissolve the Parish of St. Patrick. On October 6, 1992, the document was signed

**RECORD OF ACTION TAKEN BY THE  
MEMBERS, OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS OF  
THE CHURCH OF ST. PATRICK OF MAPLE GROVE, MINNESOTA**

We, the undersigned, being all of the members, officers and Directors of The Church of St. Patrick, of Maple Grove, Minnesota, a Minnesota religious parish corporation organized and existing pursuant to Minnesota Statutes §315.15, hereby approve and adopt in writing, without any meeting thereof, the attached Corporate Resolution authorizing this corporation to adopt the Articles and Plan of Merger of The Church of St. Jane Chantal of Corcoran, Minnesota, The Church of St. Patrick of Maple Grove, Minnesota, and The Church of St. Thomas of Corcoran, Minnesota of which the surviving corporation shall be The Church of St. Thomas of Corcoran, Minnesota.

Dated: October 6, 1992

NOTE: The above is a copy of the document of the Merger.

by John R. Roach, D.D., Archbishop of The Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis; Kevin M. McDonough, Vicar General; Paul A. Jaroszeski, Pastor; Ellen LaValla, Lay Member; and Thomas J. Baker, Lay Member declaring, under the laws of the State of Minnesota, that the Parish of St. Patrick of Maple Grove was dissolved and was now a part of the corporation formed of the Parishes of St. Jane de Chantel and St. Thomas and St. Patrick. The surviving parish would be the Church of St. Thomas the Apostle in Corcoran.



**Father Joseph P. Fink**

Father Joseph Fink arrived on April 22, 1991 to take up residency in the newly redone parish house. With his arrival, St. Thomas entered into the “Age of the Computer”. An avid computer “hack” himself, Father Joe realized the importance of installing a computer and putting the church records permanently into the computer. Mary Bosscher was hired as a temporary administrator to help implement these programs. The Men’s Club provided funds for purchasing the computer. Records were entered, painstakingly at first, by the staff and volunteers. A new filing system was set up and a new

accounting system was put in place.

At about this time Deacon Bob Bramwell was appointed to serve the Parish of St. Thomas. In addition to assisting at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, he and his wife, Darlene, present the Baptismal Program for those anticipating Baptism. They are also involved in pre-marriage preparation. Deacon Bob is able to perform Baptisms and Marriages.

Father Joe was privileged to have a handyman father who helped

Father realize some of his projects. One of these was cutting back the first three pews of the church so that it was easier to bless the casket at funerals. Another of Father's projects was installing the statues of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph at the front of the church. He mounted the Blessed Virgin on the right hand side and St. Joseph on the left. This caused much confusion as this was the reversal of the traditional way. He explained that the way he looked at it, if they were put up traditionally, they would be facing away from the people who were soliciting their prayers.

Father Joe was also faced with buildings that had been neglected as far as major repairs were concerned. He had the exterior of the rectory repainted, but the siding on the church was badly peeled and would need extensive and expensive preparation before painting could be done. After all, the building had been built nearly 100 years ago. Two purposes could be accomplished at the same time if metal siding was applied. The church would look nice, and the styrofoam would provide added insulation. However, there was no money in the budget for such a major repair. Father decided to hold a fund raising dinner. It was held at the Monte Club and proved to be a pleasant evening for the people attending. Some funds for the siding project were raised by Father's dinner and many of the parishoners contributed toward the cost of the work.



**Father Kinney and Bishop Welch  
at Father's Reception following his Installation**

Father Joe was transferred to St. John's in East St. Paul at Easter time, 1994. Father George Kinney was to be the new pastor of St. Thomas. However, he was still at his assignment at St. Joseph the Worker in Maple Grove until that post could be filled. Consequently, he moved in very slowly. He made every attempt to accommodate the people from both parishes. He had a varied time schedule for Mass so that everyone could have an opportunity to attend daily Mass.



**The Interior of the newly painted and carpeted  
Church of St. Thomas the Apostle at Christmas, 1994**



**The Body of the Church and Choir Loft  
at Christmas, 1994**

Father George took over where Father Joe left off with the redecorating. With volunteer help and a generous donation of paint solicited by Kim Jedlicki, a noble crew worked for two days completely painting the inside of the church and sacristy.

The next project was to re-carpet. Red carpeting was installed throughout. This was the first time in the one-hundred year history of the church that all of the carpeting was the same type and the same color. The new carpeting replaced the green in the sacristy, the blue in the sanctuary, and the two shades of red that went up the aisles. Volunteers also worked on making the steeple bird proof and water proof and installing new lights in the sanctuary.

A most interesting fact came to light when the men volunteers started to paint the steeple. Using a rented crane, the men ascended with materials in hand to paint the steeple and replace the cross at the top. They were sure that this would be necessary because the cross had been there almost 100 years. Not so!!! When they arrived at the top, they found that the cross was hewn from one piece of wood which extended down into the steeple and formed the support of the steeple. Most amazing of all was the fact that the wood of the cross, exposed to Minnesota weather elements for all those years, was still strong and in perfect condition. St. Thomas or Father Hayes was truly watching over our little church.



The Women's Club started their semi-annual used clothing sale. The first few sales were ably chaired and managed by Elaine Backaus. The sale serves a dual purpose. First, people have an opportunity to clean out their closets without throwing away clothing that is still usable, and other people are able

to buy good used items at a reasonable price. In the fall of 1995, Elaine turned the chairmanship of the sale over to Sue Klug.



Father also encouraged the Men's Club in their effort to fix up the church basement. They took on a big project using a limited budget and lots of donated hours of labor and supplies. They took down the old ceiling and put in a new ceiling. The carpeting was removed in preparation for the installation of the new flooring. They removed the partition in the front of the room and

the little office space. All of this will make it more functional as a gathering hall and a pleasant atmosphere for CCD classes.

The next project was the church parking lot. Originally, it had been a marshy empty area that had been filled in. First it was tiled and the tiling corrected the water flow problem. The top had to be resurfaced and sloped so that there would never again be the problem of pulling cars and trucks out of the parking lot.

Father Kinney was also very interested in the history of the parish. Soon after he arrived, he noticed that the church was about to celebrate its big one hundredth birthday. He talked to some of the people who had been parishioners for some time and in this way learned about the colorful history of St. Thomas. Continuing to pursue his interest, he talked to anyone and everyone who had stories or information about the past. That this book is written, can be attributed to his suggestion, encouragement, and prodding.



## THE PARISH TODAY

Many changes have taken place in the last one hundred years. One of the most evident changes is in the Religious Education of the children. In 1896, Father Coyle had reported that he had approximately 70 families in the parish and 85 children enrolled in religious education. Today it is estimated the parish consists of 480 families with 314 children enrolled in religious education. Along with the increase in numbers came the need for a much larger education program.



**Summer School**

The humble beginning of the formal program started in Patrick Corcoran's residence. He probably was also a teacher. He had been the first schoolmaster in Corcoran and would have been the first to volunteer to be an instructor. From there the classes moved up the road to the new

church basement. And later, the summer school was held for six weeks with the School Sisters of Notre Dame staying in the little house and supplying the staff for the school. More space was needed and when the new rectory was constructed, the walk-out basement was finished to provide three classrooms.

Again the program outgrew the facilities. Classes were also held in the sacristy, the choir loft, the body of the church, and the pastor's dining room. The Parish Center has relieved some of the crowding, but in 1994 the program was forced to have two shifts on Wednesday night to accommodate the growing numbers. This is in addition to



**CCD in the Church Basement**

the fact that preschoolers through first grade ages are held on Sunday morning.

The directorship has also been

changed. Formerly the pastor was completely in charge of the program and was usually the lead teacher. St. Thomas has been very fortunate to have had several Religious Education Directors throughout the last twenty years. Currently Lori Patnode coordinates the school and is aided by an active Religious Education Committee. The instructors are all volunteers and receive a lot of help through inservice sessions.

A nice supplement to the program is the Vacation Bible School. This is held for one week in the summer. Debbie Evans has been the coordinator for the past few years. The last two years the staff has been supplied by the Catholic Youth Center. The enthusiasm of the staff and the snacks supplied by the Women's Club have made it an enjoyable week.

One of the reasons that the Religious Education program is able to function so smoothly is because the Men's Club has made support of the program their major project. They hold a pancake breakfast and silent auction in the spring and a turkey bingo in the Fall to help support their projects. However, their chief fund raiser remains the parish bulletin. They sell the advertising and after the expenses are deducted have a nice profit.

One of the purchases of the Men's Club was the bus. The second hand bus was purchased to provide transportation for the youth groups of the parish. The bus has been painted implement green, and now

the "Green Machine" is used for preschool field trips and youth outings. The big youth activity is a ski trip to Lutsen for the senior high students.

The Men's Club also forms a nucleus of active men that are often called on to assist in various projects for the church. One of the newer things they have undertaken is to provide a send off breakfast for the young people that are being confirmed and their families. This brunch is held after Mass and before the class leaves for the Archdiocesan Confirmation Service. They also sponsor a Baccalaureate Breakfast for the graduating seniors and their parents which is served by the parents of the Junior Class. This is a very good blending of the parish as the students from St. Thomas are graduated from at least six school districts.

The Men's Club also manages to keep a social aspect when they play cards following their monthly meetings and also have a little card gathering every Friday night. They sponsor a fishing trip to Lake Mille Lac in the Green Machine. The trip must be for fellowship because the catch of fish is nothing to brag about.



**Edith Staehnke**  
The Caramel Roll Queen

The Women's Club is formed along much the same lines. They have their social activities too which include pot-luck suppers followed by meetings and on one or two occasions a year they go as a group to a local restaurant and let the cooks take a night off. The Women's Club is involved in many projects throughout the year. January and October are both recognized as pro-life months. In each of these months they hold a bake sale with the proceeds going to pro-life causes. In February they sponsor and organize an evening of Marriage Enrichment.



### **Marriage Enrichment, 1993**

pins for the children making their First Communion, and they also give crosses to those being confirmed. They also sponsor a child through the Help-a-Child program and sponsor the Christmas giving to a community in Appalachia. They provide the poinsettias for the choir to distribute to the shut-ins at Christmas time.

This is a chance for couples to attend Mass together and renew their marriage vows, have a delicious catered dinner and listen to an inspiring speaker.

The Women's Club also supports the Religious Education program. They buy First Communion

They also have work bees where they prepare rags to be made into rugs and assemble and tie quilts to be given to the missions. Every May they buy the supplies and make the Mother's Day "Thanks Mom for Life" Corsages which are sold on



Mother's Day. These proceeds also go to pro-life groups. They sponsor the Mammogram program for women in the entire community and every spring they cook and serve a luncheon for the senior citizens of the area. The main fundraiser for many of these functions are



### **Senior Luncheon Quilt Winners**

Rose Brummer and Marilyn Kluck

the Used Clothing Sales which are held in the spring and fall. All in all it can be a very busy program for any women of the parish who choose to become involved.

There are many other ways to be involved in church life at St. Thomas. During Stewardship Month in November,

people are asked to volunteer to become active in the church ministries. This could be as an usher, or greeter. This goes back to the days when Father Van appointed some men to "seat the strangers". The volunteers can be lectors or can be commissioned to be Eucharistic Ministers. Young people, both boys and girls, are welcomed as altar servers.

Another activity at St. Thomas that has changed throughout the years is the music. Traditionally the organ and the choir were in the choir loft. Old familiar hymns were



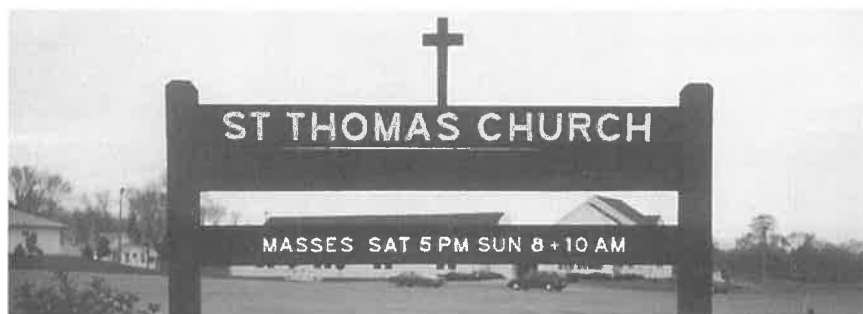
sung by the choir. Occasionally, a high Mass in Latin would be sung. Bonnie Cain played the organ for many years. One of her favorite singers was Joanne Pettit, who continued to sing with the new organist, Sonny Wojciak. With the new regulations from Vatican II, Mass

was said in English and there was also a transition of the music of the Mass to English. Here at St. Thomas, we also had the privilege of having Guitar Masses and for some time Ruth Shodeen led a well organized guitar group who played and sang regularly. At the present time, Gary Campbell is the music director and the choir sings at 10 a.m. Mass. At the other two Masses there is a cantor. For several years the choir has carolled to the shut-ins at Christmas time. They bring joy with their gift of song and the Poinsettias donated by the Women's Club. Both the shut-ins and the choir enjoy a wonderful evening.



Another way of involvement in parish life is by the Volunteer Program. Every member of the congregation is assigned to a team. Each month a different team is responsible for several projects. Members of the team are asked to bring up the gifts at each Sunday or Holy Day Mass celebrated during the month. They host the monthly coffee and donut Sundays. They also supply the volunteers for staffing the nursery during 10 a.m. Mass. They provide food and workers for the luncheon should there be a funeral and are called on to help at any function held in the parish during that month.

So along the way there have been many changes but the same enthusiasm has endured. And though the numbers of people have changed, the spirit and the spirituality have remained with St. Thomas.



## THE BIRTHDAY PARTY A TIME TO CELEBRATE

**W**hen Father Kinney came to St. Thomas, he proceeded to look up several facts about the church, its congregation, its cemeteries and its age. He found this big piece of information...this church is about to celebrate its one-hundredth birthday!!!

It became his greeting to the parishioners he met. How long have you been in the parish? Do you have any old pictures or information that we could use? Would you like to be involved in a parish celebration of this event?



**Father Kinney**  
at work in his office

Due to his interest, it was decided that yes, there would be a birthday party. And, of course, we would assemble a history.

This is where the hard part came in. There were little or no records to fall back on. There were four or more church buildings to try to locate. There were four cemeteries to trace. The records for ceremonies performed in Corcoran

were filed in several of the surrounding churches which had served the area. One hundred years is a long way to go back. We have several parishioners who are in their nineties and can remember early happenings, but they would have been very small children when many of the big events occurred.

*The Early History of Hennepin County*, was written by Rev. Edward D. Neill. He was an early minister in Minneapolis. He states that the first Catholic Church in Corcoran was located in Section 2. This upon further investigation, turned out to be St. Wallburga's original church which was moved up the hill to Fletcher. Every subsequent history written about the area has quoted Reverend Neill without investigating it further.

Having decided that the Church in Section 2 was not a part of our history, we went on from there. We visited the Minnesota State History Center. Without dates, names and so on, it is difficult to obtain much information there. We visited the Archdiocesan Archives. They were very helpful, but much of their information was sketchy and of course was on the diocesan level so some of it was not available to us. We visited the Osseo and Maple Grove Libraries. With the reorganization of the Hennepin County Library System, there is no longer a central source of information in the county.

We visited the St. John's University Archives to read about the early history of the Catholic Church in this area. We also interviewed people who had many items of information and were willing to delve through family history or albums to obtain pictures and memorabilia, and from our research we determined that the original St. Thomas the Apostle Church land was deeded in 1862 in Section 23 of Corcoran Township in Hennepin County.

It has all been interesting. It becomes more apparent that history can be lost very easily if it is not maintained carefully. To this end, we traveled to Moorhead to attend a seminar on preserving church history. Hopefully, when the next history of the parish is written, this little book can be used as a basis. We have tried to verify all the facts. What has not been supported by fact, we have noted as rumor or as a story repeated. We hope you enjoyed the reading.

The day of June 23, 1996, has been planned to be a memorable one. The day will start with Mass. Concelebrating will be the pastor and former pastors, and priestly vocations from the parish. The homily





**Father Dennis Dease**

will be given by Rev. Dennis Dease, President of St. Thomas University and a former member of St. Thomas parish.

The windup will be a birthday cake served under the tent. Throughout the day, the church will be open with displays set up explaining the stained glass windows. There will be pictures of former pastors and pictures of events that took place here. Especially interesting will be the display of early maps of the area which show the names of the early settlers.



## EPILOGUE

As this history draws to its close, it is time to reflect on the future. Perhaps it is said best by our pastor, Father George Kinney. As he approached the year 1995, he said, "I reflect upon the past and the future of St. Thomas. The research we are doing for the parish centennial reveals that we have a proud past, one filled with pioneers and pilgrims who sacrificed much to establish the faith in our community.

"The big challenge for us is to face the next one hundred years with similar faith, vision and courage. There are many obstacles to overcome. With the grace of God, I am confident that we will be equal to the challenge. We look to the past for strength; we look to the future with hope."

## PRIESTS WHO SERVED CORCORAN OR WERE MENTIONED IN WRITINGS

1855	Father Keller served at Osseo
1856-61	Father Herth served at Osseo
1863-	Father Mayr served at St. Michael
1863-66	Father Genis served at Dayton
1866-68	Father Nicholas served at Dayton
1868-80	Father Mauer served at Dayton
1878-81	Father Hayes served at Anoka
1871-73	Father Lechner or Lechore served at Osseo
1873-74	Father Maesfranx served at Osseo
1874-76	Father Lebret served at Osseo
1876	Father Robert served at Osseo
1875-82	Father Ladiere served at Osseo and missions
1878-81	Father Hayes served at Anoka
1885-88	Father Payette served at Osseo
1884	Father Dekiere served at Osseo
1885	Father Heffron served at Osseo
1880-84	Father Leonard served at Dayton
1885-88	Father Payette served at Dayton
1888-93	Father Andre served at Dayton
1893-1902	Father Soumis served at Dayton
1886-89	Father Lanzon served at Osseo
1890	Father Durand served at Osseo
1890-95	Father Pettigrew served at Osseo
1880-88	Father Baucher served at Lenz (evidently served St. Jane's as he was the pastor when land was deeded to St. Jane's). At that time Hamel was called Lenz.
1883-84	Father Hand was appointed to Corcoran and missions
1885-90	Father Mc Golrick was appointed to Corcoran
1894-1903	Father Coyle was appointed to Corcoran to unite the missions
1903-14	Father McCarron was appointed to Corcoran
1906-12	Father Combetti was appointed to Hamel (evidently served St. Jane)

1914-18	Corcoran was served from Hamel— Father Peregord and Father Moetzheim
1918-21	Father Soulard was appointed to Corcoran to serve St. Thomas and St Jane
1921-36	Father Vand der Velden was appointed to Corcoran
1936-44	Father Kern
1944	Father Lawler—January 1944 to November 1944
1945	Father Coughlin—December 1944 to June 1945
1945-46	Father Eichinger—June 1945 to January 1946
1946-58	Father Green
1958-81	Father Mycue
1981-90	Father Maslowski
1990-91	Father Paul Jaroszeski, Administrator
1991-94	Father Fink
1994-	Father Kinney

## VOCATIONS

Some of the men who were raised in the parish and were ordained to the priesthood include: Father Benjamin Audus, Crosier Father Joseph Cain, Father Francis Pouliot, Father Louis Patnode O.S.B., Father Eugene Pouliot, and Father Dennis Dease.

A number of ladies from the parish have taken vows in several religious orders. Some of these are Mary Rice, Mary Francis Lucier, Anne Victoria Morin, Helen Francis Morin, Georgiana Thibodeau, St. Bruno Thibodeau, Mary Edmund Laurent, Patricia Dease, Peggy Corcoran and Patricia Corcoran.

## A SPECIAL THANKS

**T**o the many sources of information that helped make this history of St. Thomas a reality, our heartfelt thanks. Any omission of names, or places, or erroneous facts that were used, was not intentional. The following people, societies, books and records have supplied the facts used in this book.

### **Books used as reference:**

History of Minnesota, written by William Watts Folwell

History of Champlin, written by Orange S. Miller, 1922

Champlin on the Mississippi, written by the Champlin Historical Committee

History of Hennepin County, written by John H. Stevens, 1895

History of Hennepin County, written by Rev. Edward Neill, 1881

The Gopher Historian, 1972

Maple Grove Memories, principal writer, James Deane, 1977

100 Year History of Osseo, written by the Osseo Centennial Committee of 1975

75 Years of St. Vincent, written by Father Boerboom

Awesome Almanac of Minnesota, written by Jean Blaskfield

Outline of the City of Minneapolis, written by J. Fletcher Williams, 1881

The Catholic Church in the St. Paul Diocese, written by Msgr. James Reardon

### **Places visited:**

Archdiocesan Archives—two visits

St. Paul Seminary Library

Minnesota State History Center—three visits

Maple Grove Library—three visits

Osseo Library

St. John's University Archives

### **Seminars Attended:**

Archives Seminar—Concordia University

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Mary Geurs

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