

St. Patrick's Church Colesburg, Iowa



1877 - 1940



1940 - 2017



St Patrick's Church, Colesburg

The history of St. Patrick's Church goes back to the first half of the nineteenth century. On the national scene this period marked the influx of large numbers of immigrants from Ireland and Germany and the westward movement of people in the United States. The first settlers in the Catholic tradition to arrive in this northeastern section of Delaware County in the early 1840s were Irish. This fact explains why the parish is named in honor of St. Patrick, famed apostle of Ireland.

The Most Rev. Mathias Loras, D.D., was appointed bishop of Dubuque in 1837. A man of great foresight and zeal, Bishop Loras purchased a church site in Colesburg in 1854. This action marks the beginning of the parish as a mission. Prior to that date Mass was offered in the homes of Catholics on an irregular and infrequent basis.

The first church was built in 1862. Another was erected in the summer of 1877 which burned in 1940. The present church was built on the same site. It was extensively remodeled in the late 1940s. The cemetery was donated by John McMahon, and the oldest tombstone bears the date of 1857.

The religious needs of Catholics in the Colesburg area were ministered to by the pastors of Holy Cross until about 1871. Father Michael Lynch was the first priest to serve the religious needs on a regular basis. In consequence, the earliest records of Baptisms are at Holy Cross up to 1864. The records from 1864 to 1871 are lost. Later records are with the Elkport records. From these it is known that 40 or more families attended services at Colesburg.

Apparently, however, services were not available on a very regular basis with the result that many of the original Catholic families either moved to other areas or affiliated with other religious traditions. The influx of German Catholic families from nearby communities slowed down probably because there was no resident priest at Colesburg. The records indicate that around 1923 there were only seven families left.

In January of 1924 Father John Theobald of Columbia College (Loras) was appointed by the bishop to care for Colesburg. He drove from Dubuque each Sunday to offer Mass and administer the sacraments. By 1928 there were about twenty-eight families, eloquent testimony to his effective work. In 1930 Rev. John H. Mayer was appointed resident pastor. Note at bottom: The parish now serves 86 families.

Compiled by Rev. John J. Friederick

Fire Destroys Colesburg Church

January 25, 1940

St Patrick' s Catholic church, an historic landmark of Colesburg, was reduced to ashes by fire last Friday afternoon. The fire started at about 1:30 p m and fanned by a frigid gale, soon enveloped the entire frame building into a shaft of flame and endangered the parochial residence and other nearby buildings. It was only through the efficient work on the part of the local and neighboring fire departments in sub-zero weather that the other buildings in the vicinity were saved. Rev. Father Joseph Bohr is pastor of the congregation. He was quite recently assigned the pastorate.

(Summary of rest of the article that appeared in the Dyersville newspaper)

A passerby noticed the fire and notified Rev. Bohr. The fire possibly started by an overheated furnace or flue. Help was hindered by snow packed roads. Father Bohr tried to save some of the items from the sanctuary but was driven back by the flames. The building was insured for \$5,000. but the loss will be a blow to the 30 families of the parish.

It was estimated that the church was built some 60 years earlier. An old building without a steeple was erected around 1858. Mr Joseph Moreland Sr. donated the land to the congregation.

Some early pioneer families included the Flynns, Hogans, Henrys, Stegers, Kerrigans, McQuirks, Warrens, McMahons, Georgens, Kennedys, Glynns, Adams, Kellys , Fitzpatricks, Browns , and Vorwalds.

Taken from the *Dyersville* newspaper.

Cornerstone of Colesburg Church Laid

May 7, 1940

Archbishop Beckman Officiated at the Ceremony

Impressive services marked the laying of the cornerstone of the new St Patrick' s church at Colesburg, last Sunday afternoon, which was attended by a large congregation of members of the parish and surrounding territory.

Promptly at 2 o' clock Archbishop Beckman and Reverend clergy marched from the parochial residence to the site of the new church. Arriving at the steps to the entrance of the church, the litany of the saints was sung by the clergymen. The chanters were Rev. Father Halbach and Rev. Father Ament, both of Dubuque. Then followed the blessing of the stone after which it was imbedded in its place and sealed by Paul Kramer, of Dyersville contractor. After the ceremony was completed the document, a copy of which was inclosed in the cornerstone was read by Monsignor Wolfe of Dubuque. The document contained a brief history and facts in connection with the construction of the church.

His Excellency Archbishop Beckman delivered a brief sermon in the course of which he took occasion to congratulate the parishioners of Colesburg church on their efforts in erecting the fine new structure which replaces the one destroyed by fire some months ago. He stated that Protestants as well as Catholics are commended for their hearty cooperation in the establishment of the edifice.

Following is a copy of the document read and placed in the cornerstone.

The cornerstone of St Patrick' s church, Colesburg, Delaware County, Iowa was laid on the 5th day Of May 1940 by His Excellency Francis Joseph Beckman, S.T. D., Archbishop of Dubuque. This event occurred during the second year of the Pontificate of His Holiness, Pope Pius XII.

It was followed by listing of state officials, members of the parish, special donations, those helping in construction, and other acknowledgments.

Taken from the *Dyersville* newspaper.