

Faulkton St. Thomas the Apostle



The early settlers brought with them a quest for land, liberty, law, order, and above all, a deep conviction of faith and hope. Before there was an established church in Faulkton, priests from Zell, Orient, Redfield, Gettysburg and Haven held services in private homes, the school house, the railroad section house and the Congregational Church.

While Fr. Martin F. Dooley of Orient attended Faulkton, plans were made for the first Catholic Church building. It was completed in 1904 with Fr. James A. Reilly, the new pastor celebrating the first mass on September 11, 1904. The building was 36' x 60' with a capacity of 200 people. It was dedicated by Bishop Thomas O'Gorman on August 22, 1906, at which time the name was changed from St. Michael's to St. Thomas. At the close of the ceremony, a clear title of the church property, valued between \$7,000 and \$8,000, clear of any encumbrances was presented to the bishop.

In 1907, John M. Gebhart obtained a fine altar from the Catholic Church in Remsen, Iowa; in 1910, Fr. James A. Reilly became the first resident pastor of Faulkton; and on July 2, 1917, the remodeled residence of Mr. and Mrs. A.J. Eaton, was purchased for a parish rectory at a cost of \$4,750.

The ecumenical spirit was not new to the pioneers in 1908. The first organized choir, under the direction of Mrs. John D. Douglas, sang Rosswig's Mass in B flat with Fr. James A. Reilly as celebrant. Only three of the eight were members of the Catholic Church.



Original St. Thomas Church 1904-1956

Seneca St. Boniface



St. Boniface Catholic Church-Seneca
1896-1977

In 1896 the Catholic Church in Seneca was established as a mission by Rev. Father Jaspers of Orient. The first masses were held in a small schoolhouse and then in a feed store that had no floor or chairs. The priest came by horse and buggy and often would spend three days, one day traveling to Seneca, one day there to offer mass, and one day to return. The people were very, very poor and if the priest got \$3 for his trip, he was lucky. About 1897 the people began raising money to build a church. They sold chances on a quilt and sponsored a dinner and dance. All together they carried about \$125.

The Rev. Thomas O'Gorman, Bishop of Sioux Falls diocese, instituted the church parish on July 3, 1903. In 1904 a church was built. Mrs. Veronica Parker, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Leopold Schmidt, was the first person baptized in the new church. From 1905 to 1918 Father J.A. Reilly came from Faulkton to offer mass. In July, 1918, Father E.D. Connally came to Faulkton and also served Seneca, Gettysburg, and Lebanon. Sept. 1, 1920, Father Thomas Shanley came to take care of Faulkton and Seneca. He remained until Dec. 4, 1925, when Father MacMannus arrived. In June, 1937, Father T.P. Coyne came. He established a women's altar society and was responsible for the construction of a new church.

In 1937 a basement structure was begun and for a time people attended services in the I.O.O.F. Hall. In 1939 the church was completed and dedicated by the Right Rev. O'Brady, Bishop of Sioux Falls. The first funeral mass to be offered in the new church was for Mrs. Charles Guttenkauf. In the summer of 1940, sisters came to the area and established a Confraternity of Christian Doctrine.

In June, 1947, Father H.J. Mahoney came to Faulkton and Seneca and served until 1953 when Seneca became a mission of the priest stationed at the new Gettysburg Memorial Hospital, 22 miles west of Seneca. In Oct. 1953 Father Ed Moorman, C.P.S., assumed duties and re-established the women's altar society. In 1955 Father Joseph Anthonissen, C.P.S., came and organized the men's society. In Jan., 1958, Father Leo Fox assumed duties, and under his direction the men's society farmed land. The money was spent for remodeling the church and a good sum put in savings for future use.

In July, 1962, Father Paul Morgan assumed duties from the hospital. During his stay members extensively remodeled the church. New Catechism rooms were added and the basement was paneled. Father Morgan, an established carpenter, built an altar and many altar furnishings. Beginning in March, 1967, Father Francis Weisneski served Seneca until June, 1971, when Father Bruce MacArthur assumed duties. In April, 1973, Seneca again became a mission of Faulkton. Father Thomas Burns was pastor until Sept., 1973, when Father Joseph Deragisch came to Faulkton.

In Oct., 1976, St. Boniface underwent extensive remodeling. Upon completion of the work, the church burned to the ground; the cause an apparent electrical fire. Plans were made to rebuild as soon as possible, and in May, 1977, the basement was begun. Money making activities, insurance funds, and donations provided a good sum for rebuilding. The church at present has about 40 families.

The new building was dedicated on Sept. 21, 1977, with the Rev. Bishop Hoch officiating mass. Rev. Charles Nemmers came to serve the parish in the summer of 1977. The first baby baptized in the new church was Nathan Wheeler, son of Ralph and Clair Wheeler.

Onaka St. John



Onaka (Faulk County) St. John

Before 1903 the Germans from Russia at Onaka were ministered to by priests from Haven. The people were not satisfied to worship in homes or the schoolhouse, so in 1907 they built a rather fine church at a cost of \$8,000. When two years later a rectory costing \$2,500 was provided, Father Patrick A. Kielty was appointed their pastor with missions at Chelsea, Casimir, Carlyle and Cresbard. He remained but one year since the people preferred a German-speaking priest.

Onaka was without a pastor from 1911 to 1916 and the \$4 included the missions, too. Father George J. Reinen was assigned to St. John's 1916-19, with Lowry as a mission. When he was reassigned, the priest from Faulkton came to Onaka. In 1920 Father John Pohlen, O.M.I., took charge of Onaka with missions at Chelsea and Cresbard. He found the little church in disrepair. In 1921 he completed remodeling and enlarging it at a cost of \$8,000.

In 1943 the church building was destroyed by fire. Fortunately the parish had acquired a hall for \$800 at a tax sale. This was still in use as a chapel until the completion of a new edifice in 1948. In 1973 the parish numbered 24 Catholic households.

Orient St. Joseph

Orient (Faulk County) St. Joseph

At Orient a rectory was constructed in 1891 at a cost of \$600 and a small church was provided four years later.

.... Fifteen miles south of Faulkton on the Milwaukee Road, Orient was founded in 1884. That winter Bishop Marty offered holy Mass in the home of Mrs. Mary Deaney. Present were Edward, George, Jane and Margaret Hand and members of the Heneberry family. On this occasion -- the children -- Catherine Hand and William Hineberry -- were baptized. Later Catholic services were held at the George Hand farm where priests were accustomed to stay for the night. The first train reached Orient in 1886. From 1890 to 1895 Father John Hermeling traveled the 30 miles from Redfield to minister to the people of Orient. In 1891 Bishop Marty promised the parish a resident priest if they provided a rectory. Eight acres of land at \$20 an acre were purchased from the railway company for a church site. A small house costing \$600 was built. Into it crowded the Catholics of Orient for their monthly Sunday Mass. The bishop kept his word.

In 1895 Father Peter Lauer became the first resident pastor, serving also Faulkton and Polo, ten miles away. St. Joseph Parish (about 30 families mostly of German and Irish origin -- was incorporated in 1901. A frame church dedicated to St. Joseph was completed in 1895. Father M. J. Straeten served Orient briefly in 1896 when Father Lauer received another assignment. For two years Father J. H. Jaspers exercised his zealous ministry in Orient and organized parishes in Seneca and Lebanon. He was followed in quick succession by Fathers John Schmidt, Michael Sack and Joseph M. Rosel, O.P.M. From 1898 to 1902 Orient was a mission of Gettysburg. Father Martin Penton Dooley was resident pastor 1902-04, serving also Gettysburg, Faulkton, Lebanon and Seneca.

In 1903 the Catholics of Orient saw a storm destroy their little church. For two years Sunday Mass was offered in the public school. During the pastorate of Father James A. Reilly another and better church building was erected in 1905. The parish in Orient also suffered another type of loss. In 1932 both banks in town closed, leaving the church without funds...after the long pastorate of Father John A. Krebs (1916-51), the Oblates cared for St. Joseph's Parish. In 1973 there were 48 Catholic families in the parish. (CD)



Polo St. Liborius

A BRIEF HISTORY

About 1884 a group of Catholic pioneers settled in northern Hand County in Fairview township. That these homesteaders might attend Mass, priests came from Orient, Zell and Onaka and held Mass in their homes or school houses. But as more people settled here, the need for a larger place to worship became evident.

In 1904 these people voted to build a church. Xavier Schaefer donated the land for a church, school and cemetery. These dedicated people under the supervision of Father James Reilly, built the first church by hand. Every Sunday a priest drove out from Orient to have Mass. After Father Reilly came Father Peter Lauer, Father Mathew J. Burkel, Father Krebs, Father Kirley, Father Dooley and Father Pohlen. In 1920 the parish was accepted by the Oblate Fathers of Mary Immaculate and Father Herman Pathmann became the first resident priest. He inspired the people to build a larger church and hall. Later the hall was divided into three school-rooms for a parochial school. A dormitory which housed the sisters and boarding students was built.

Due to Father Pathmann who was a missionary in Mexico and the southern states the spanish design architecture was adopted for our parish. It was a great day in September 1923 when our parochial grade school opened for the first time. It was staffed by the Benedictine Sisters from Sacred Heart Convent, Yankton, South Dakota. The first Sisters who came were Sister Augustine, Sister Beata, Sister Aquinas, Sister Constance, Sister Perpetua and Sister John. We still have the same dedicated Benedictine Nuns only now they come from the Mother of God Priory in Watertown. Father Pathmann stayed until 1940 when he developed cataracts on his eyes and he retired. Since then the parish has been served by many priests. Father Harold (1940-1956); Father Lang (1956-1958); in 1958 Father Cyril Poppe came, while he was here the church was redecorated, the boarding school closed and both dormitories were turned into classrooms. The old school rooms were turned back into a Hall, which was enlarged for a school gym. In 1961 Father Baldus came and the old chapel was paneled into a classroom or parish meeting room. In 1965 Father Hojenski, due to ill health, served for a year followed by Father Lamontagne. In 1970 Father Elmer Brochhaus and now Father James Fox is our present pastor.

Due to increased enrollment the meeting room has been turned into two classrooms and a library. Our church has been redecorated. We now have 75 families, 129 children enrolled in grade school. We have three priests, Father Richard Ormeier, a Diocesan Priest at Platte, South Dakota; Father Dale Harder O.M.I. a parish Priest in St. Louis, Missouri and Father Ronald Herrer, a Vicar Provincial in Recife, Brazil, South America. We have 6 Nuns, Sister Iadore Schaefer (a Sister of Charity) (deceased), Sister Esther Miller, Sister of the Precious Blood, Administrator of St. Joseph's Villa, David City, Nebraska; Sister Elaine Schaefer, Benedictine teacher, Calle Columbia, South America; Sister Jane Gaspar, PBVM, St. Mary's School, Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Sister Jeanette Gaspar, PBVM Nursing Instructor, Presentation Heights, Aberdeen, South Dakota and Sister Rosemary Miller, PBVM, Vice President and Director of Management Education of John Geier and Associates of Minneapolis.

