

Marty St. Paul

A History of St. Paul's Indian Mission Parish

In the early 1900's three Yankton elders went east to St. Meinrad's Benedictine monastery in Indiana and requested that the monks send help to build a school for the Native children on the Yankton Sioux Reservation. Fr. Sylvester Eisenman was sent to begin the Mission school. He requested help from Mother Katherine Drexel, who is now St. Katherine Drexel. She sent him some Sisters from Philadelphia to begin the project.

Members of Fr. Eisenman's family eventually joined him along with many other lay volunteers. The school developed over the years to become St. Paul's Indian Mission, a boarding school at Marty, South Dakota. In the 1930's a group of the young Native high school girls approached Fr. Sylvester and requested to start a community of religious women who were Native Americans. This initial beginning took shape and became the Oblate Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. Eventually the Oblate Sisters accepted women from other cultures into their Community.

Under the steady growth of many willing hands St. Paul's Indian School developed into a boarding school that housed over 500 resident students. It became a top notch academic-educational institution with an excellent vocational program supported by three large surrounding farms, plus generous donations from benefactors. Many individuals from the dominant culture came here to serve or volunteer for the benefit of the Indian children. Also many of the surrounding neighbors helped in many ways; giving their talents, skills, and equipment when needed. The land initially belonged to Mrs. White Tallow. It was purchased by the Catholic Indian Bureau who then gave the land over to St. Paul's Indian Mission School. The Mission became incorporated in 1955. This incorporation insured the stability of the Mission school.

The building of St. Paul's Church was begun in the last part of 1939 and was completed in 1942. In addition to professional help all the members of the Mission, including the students and many friends in the surrounding area contributed to the project. The quasi-Abbey church building became the center point of the Mission school. In addition to the Mission community there were Native people living in the area who attended the Church. Following the availability of housing grants in the early 70's, three housing developments were constructed at Marty. Eventually the Tribal Center was moved from Greenwood to Marty.

Marty Indian School had grown into a boarding school cared for by a number of Religious communities and many paid and volunteer people who worked together. Under the leadership of the priests and brothers from St. Meinrad's and then Blue Cloud Abbey, the Sisters of St. Katherine Drexel, the Oblate Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament and others, the School continued to flourish. After the close of Vatican Council II in 1965 St. Paul's Indian Mission came under the same kind of dress that the Church has experienced in this Country over the last fifty years. In 1975, in an effort to advance the cause of self-determination, financial considerations, and following the trend of other Indian boarding schools, the Benedictine Community ceded the School to the Yankton Sioux Tribe.

The majority of the buildings and resources came under the control of the Tribe. The Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament began to withdraw in realigning their own Community. Some of the Oblate Sisters remained as teachers. However, eventually the Oblate Sisters focused on the pastoral care of the People, and administered the life of St. Paul's Church. St. Paul's was comprised of a small number of members - mostly Native Americans, but also some non-Indians from the surrounding area. In a real sense St. Paul's was challenged for survival because it had to begin from scratch to build a parish community, and at the same time continue St. Paul's Indian Mission. The faithful services of the Oblate Sisters in continuing the Mission maintained the growth of this small community at St. Paul's with the assistance of a Benedictine supply priest from Wagner until 1984 when the sacramental needs were cared for by Diocesan priests and a Sacred Heart priest. In 1989 the large Benedictine Church and the immediate surrounding lands became an official parish in the Sioux Falls Diocese.

Tyndall St. Leo

ST. LEO'S PARISH, TYNDALL, BON HOMME COUNTY, SOUTH DAKOTA

The Tyndall parish already had its own Catholic church in 1886 when the Czech Catholics began to settle in this area more abundantly. In the early years the priest from Springfield in Bon Homme County traveled there, until in 1892 Rev. Mathew Traynor of Springfield transferred to the county seat and erected a new rectory. From that time Tyndall had a resident pastor. Many of them alternated as it cannot be otherwise in new parishes where conditions are not settled, and no way attractive for a long stay. We mortals are always short of sacred patience, so it is no wonder that we find many changes of persons in important positions. It is worthy of mention that two Czech priests were in this Parish. Rev. T. A. Bily improved and completed the church at a great expense and similarly required and improved the rectory. He worked very well here and his departure from this place is regretted. The second resident Czech priest was Rev. Vaclav Lehecka who spent four years at this parish to the complete satisfaction of the people. At present, there are 30 Czech families in the Parish. The present resident priest is the Rev. Martin F. Dooley, who is collecting contributions for a new Temple of the Lord, and has been successful thus far in collecting \$50,000. The church will be constructed in the very near future. Tyndall and the surrounding area is very rich in people of Czech origin, but the percentage of confessing Catholics is weak. If Tyndall and other settlements would have had a priest of Czech nationality, religious proportions in present times would be altogether more favorable and better. Where there is no priest of Czech nationality, there the Czechs tend to weaken in their faith, becoming victims of a society more or less unfriendly to the church.

So it is in almost all parishes settled by Czechs and not having a priest of Czech nationality. Besides the mentioned Czech Catholic parishes, there exist several isolated parishes, which indeed do not have their own church, but regardless, form a marked percentage of the parishioners of one or another parish. It is fitting to mention the Czech Catholic parishes in Gregory, Kadoka, Wagner, Lake Andes, Geddes and Redfield, S. Dak., where Czech Catholics belong to those churches and are often visited by a Czech priest. This spiritual service has been cared for during the past fifteen years by Rt. Rev. Msgr. Bouška of Tabor. In all these above mentioned places there is a larger or smaller Czech colony.



Catholic Church, Tyndall, S. D. Pub. by Chas. C. Slack & Co., Sioux Falls, S. D.



Dante Assumption Blessed Virgin Mary

CHURCH HISTORY

The Assumption Blessed Virgin Mary Catholic Church of Dante, Lone Tree Township, Charles Mix County was erected in 1909 by CZECH CATHOLICS. The CZECKS had built a small church in Wagner. The town of Wagner was growing rapidly. The CZECKS desiring to retain the Czech Language and customs sold their little church to Marty Mission and decided to build another church in Dante.

Five acres of land for a church site was donated by the Mayo Brothers, Edward S. & H.T. for the church, parsonage and cemetery at Dante. Up until 1910, Dante was called Mayo.

In 1910 Mass was held in the newly constructed church. It did not have pews, seating was provided by planks laid upon nail kegs. To keep warm, each family brought bricks or small rocks that had previously been heated in the kitchen stove oven.

The Charter Members of the Church included: Martin Sycora Sr., Matej Busta & son Frank, Frank Hron, Frank Kafka, John Svatok, Anton Filous, Joseph Valenta, Frank Haki, Mathew Patrik, & John Chak Jr., they assisted with the construction of the church and any other labor that was required.

Improvements continued on the Church, Window panes with donor's names engraved on them (these windows are still in the church today). The young Girls and Matrons embroidered cloths for the altar. Michael Rados, Frank Turek, & Joseph Stepina later did much laboring to improve the church and also made the Altar which is currently used.

Father Wenceslaus F. Mikolasek served as the first priest. There have been several fine Czech priests that served the parish over the years. Until 1972 all of them were Czech oriented. Pastors that served were: Count Hrabec Boos de Waldeck, Vincent Ciner, Fathers Schneider, Liser, Bily, & Msgr. Bouška, Fathers J. H. Dolny, J. Przystarski, Boniface Benkert, O.S.B., Alphonse Biskup O.S.B., Boniface Tomek O.S.B., Fidels Schindler O.S.B., Fabian Fokosta O.S.B., Lawrence Prochazka O.S.B., Adrian Ksepac O.S.B., Fathers Hal Barber, Msgr. Leonard F. Zwinger, William Neuroth, Joseph Anderson, Paul Offerman, Joseph Mardian, and our present pastor Father Glenn Lattrell.

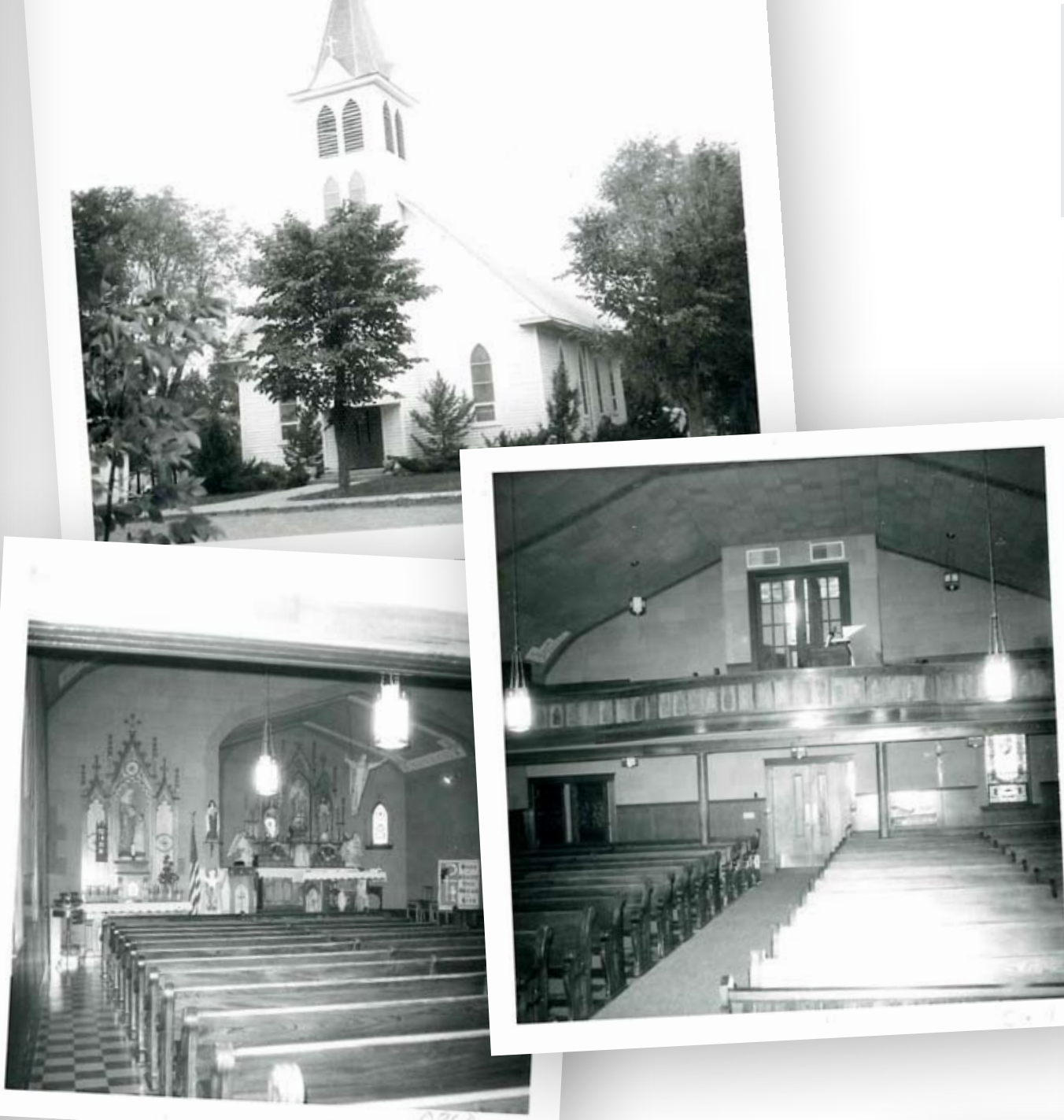
Rose (Soukup) Kocer was the first parishioner baptized in 1909, the first marriage was Joseph Payer and Ann Melmer in 1910, and John Chak Sr. was the first parishioner to be buried in the cemetery in 1910.

In the years that followed the parish grew with the increase in families and parishioners, they decided to build a center that would have a small dining hall and several classrooms. In "1968" ground breaking began and in 1968 the center was dedicated as "OUR LADY OF FATIMA CENTER". Previously the religion classes were held in the church, the parsonage and neighboring family homes. The steel constructed center was 40' x 96' and was divided into nine classrooms, storage room, office, small dining area, small kitchen and entry.

"1979" Came the year when the Parish voted to build on OUR LADY OF FATIMA CENTER. They were in great need of somewhere to hold the Harvest Festival, a large dining room with facilities to prepare and serve large receptions, was constructed. The steel construction building was 40' x 96' and was constructed adjoining the previous structure.

A new addition to the front of the church was added in the fall of 1986. The addition included a large entry with one office, a small chapel room and bathroom. Also at this time water was piped into the church. New carpet was laid down the aisle and in and around the altar.

Since 1909 our parish grew from a few families to one hundred and sixty-seven. We have a large CCD program which totals approximately one hundred children in grades kindergarten through high school. We are proud of our ancestors who gave their time and toil to build our small church and with God's help and our perseverance will continue to fulfill their dream...



Springfield St. Vincent

Springfield (Bon Homme County) St. Vincent

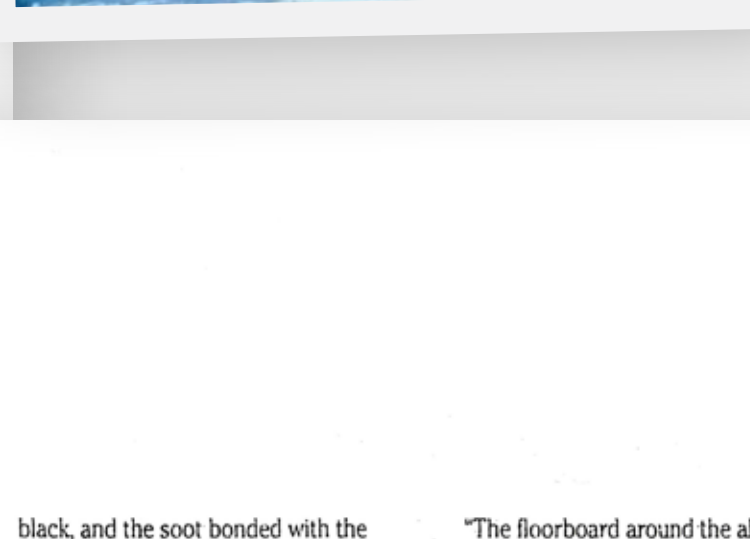
The town of Springfield was one of the earliest settlements in the Territory. Called first Wanari, it was renamed Springfield by the first territorial legislature because of the numerous springs in the area. During the years 1862, the town was abandoned and not revived until Gov. John A. Burbank purchased the site and had it platted in 1869.

Father F. X. Shulak, SJ, ministered among the settlers of Springfield in 1875 and 1876. His baptisms are recorded at Sacred Heart Parish, Yankton. Undoubtedly other priests of Yankton, Bon Homme or Tabor visited the area. In 1886 Father A. Carolan, pastor at Bon Homme, invited the Springfield Catholics to build a church. The following year Father D. V. Collins took up residence in Springfield (1881-84) and also served missions at Bon Homme, Running Water, Scotland and For a time Fort Randall.

Other priests followed at Springfield, Father Bernard J. Kelly, OP. (1884-88), Father James S. Mckenzie (1888-89), and Father Anthony O'Connell (1889-91). The last named added Tyndall and Castalia to his missions.

Catholics of Springfield were first organized as St. Stephen's Parish in 1880; there were 50 members. After 1891 the Catholic Directory recorded a change to St. Vincent's Church.

Southern State College presented a unique situation. There was neither a priest nor church in the town. Since 1948 Catholics -- including students and townspeople -- have had to go to St. Leo's in Tyndall. In 1970 St. Vincent Parish was reactivated and parishioners used the facilities of the United Church of Christ for Sunday Mass. The following year Bishop Hohn and the 12 Catholic households agreed to erect a church adjoining the projected Roman Student Center. Ground breaking was held on Sept. 15, 1971, and the \$340,000 plant was ready for dedication, by the bishop on July 2, 1972. The pastors of St. Leo's continued to share their services with Springfield.



Springfield Church Rises From The Ashes And Breathes New Life

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF
P&J Regional Editor 4/21/2000

SPRINGFIELD -- While St. Vincent parishioners are celebrating Holy Week, they are also celebrating a new start for their church. The church suffered arson Dec. 5, but the fire wasn't discovered until the following day. The sanctuary sustained extensive soot damage, moving Masses to the religious education center.

The Rev. Jerry Kopel said law enforcement officials said the fire probably hit full blast around 5 p.m.

"Our cleaning lady was here at 2 p.m., the guard at the state prison (across the street) said they saw suspicious activity the fence at 4 p.m.," he said. "I was on my way back from a meeting at St. Leo's. When I was told the church was trashed."

Parishioners said they felt violated by break in and damage. Kopel said, "The altar was soaked down with arson. The altar was completely destroyed. The sanctuary sustained extensive soot damage, moving Masses to the religious education center."

"Whoever did it chose their time for the fire. The windows were closed, so the fire consumed itself. If the fire had gotten as it would have spread and burned the church to the ground. While the church didn't burn, the soot was terrible. The carpet and ceiling took a major hit."

The fire was investigated by the Atchafalaya and Trezona (ATF) division and the Bon Homme County Sheriff's Department.

Special Agent Doug Moore said the ATF has been assigned to investigate church fires under federal law. Moore handles criminal investigations for all federal agencies.

"I work on a national police team and investigated Atlanta Olympics and the Oklahoma City bombing," he said.

Spokesman Bob Schmitt said the ATF sends its top lie investigators to cases such as Springfield.

"Law enforcement will 24 hours at the scene until the site is processed and the case closed," he said. "You try to rule arson and everything else and process all the evidence. But this is an active ATF investigation. I we are still pursuing leads."

Nobody has been indicted or arrested, Schmitt said, adding Springfield investigation is separate from the Lakewood fire near Yankton. Persons with information on cases should call the ATF office in Sioux Falls.

After the ATF released the scene, a massive cleanup remained, Kopel said. Soot caused extensive damage to the sanctuary.

"We needed two big tractor trailers to haul out the pews, tables and contents. We had 40 people working one night as we inventoried, cleaned and salvaged whatever we could," Kopel said.

The cleaning lady had put out our hymnals and prayer books with her hands side up or they would have been soiled in between the pages.

The soot was so heavy it was difficult to remove, Kopel said. "We borrowed fans to get rid of the soot, but you couldn't see three inches in front of your face. You thought the carpet was burned up because you couldn't see it."

The interior board around the altar was like toast, and we had to pull up four-inch pieces," he said. "Inmates washed the walls, and the walls were painted to lose the smell."

The church is also installing an electronic surveillance system, special locks and a fire detection system.

Showing a series of photos, the parish named its arson soup supper "Soot Happens" and dedicated the proceeds towards church restoration. A Lutheran Church provided a matching grant, and other denominations and organizations -- along with extensive use of prison inmates -- have stepped forward.

"We couldn't get matching carpets, or we would have had the sanctuary ready for Easter. The bishop plans to be here for the rededication Mass," Kopel said.

Wagner St. John the Baptist

Wagner (Charles Mix County) St. John

Wagner was platted by the Milwaukee Land Company in 1900. The town was named for Walt Wagner, the pioneer postmaster. The following year a frame church was built at a cost of \$4,000 which served the parish until 1918 when it was sold to St. Paul's Indian Mission for \$750. A postoffice was established three miles south of the later townsite of Wagner. The first holy Mass was offered in 1893 in the John Thompson home. The greatest building activity in Wagner occurred in 1905. Father Thomas A. Bily of Tyndall came to minister to his Czech countrymen and in 1901 offered the first Mass in the town. Father Wenceslaus Lehecka came to Wagner in 1903 and it was he who built the first rectory at a cost of \$1,500. He remained a year before being transferred to Lesterville. In 1903 Bishop O'Gorman continued in Wagner for the first time. The following year Father T. Kruszynski was the resident priest for a short time. The newly ordained Father George Ekelley succeeded him and served Wagner for 7 years. The Czechs of St. John's chafed under the ministrations of the genial Irish Father Kelly. They wanted a priest who spoke their language. They bore their disappointment for 5 years and even contributed their share to the erection of the new \$30,000 brick church. But when they believed that their contributions had not improved the rapport with the English-speaking element in the parish, they decided to withdraw and erect a parish for themselves in Dante. This unexpected development left the bishop looking for another Czech priest. It was not easy to find one... Father Sylvester Eisenman (at St. Paul's Indian Mission (later Marty)) learned that the Wagner church was for sale. It was spacious enough having a large sacristy attached to it. The Indians agreed to purchase the building and move it across the prairie. It took three months to accomplish the feat... under the guidance of Father John J. Hyland a parish teaching center was constructed in 1965 at a cost of \$110,000. Twenty-one classrooms, a library and other facilities were provided. Two Oblate Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament from Marty planned the CCD program. (CD)



ST. JOHN BAPTIST'S CATHOLIC CHURCH
110 ft. long by 54 ft. wide. Cost. \$30,000.
REV. F. J. TWOHIG, Pastor, WAGNER, SO. DAK.

Lake Andes St. Mark

Lake Andes (Charles Mix County) St. Mark

Lake Andes was platted in April of 1904. Among the first settlers were Bohemians from the Indian land sales. In 1903 the priest from Wagner began making periodic calls. Father Wenceslaus Lecka offered the first holy Mass in Lake Andes on Sunday, Oct. 2, 1904, in the new depot. After the Mass, an organizational meeting was held to work toward the establishment of a parish and the erection of a church. Wise Father Lehecka began by organizing an Altar Society. The women of the planned parish were an active force in promoting regular church services. They arranged for Mass in the Van Scootter Hall every first Sunday of the month with the priest from Wagner officiating.

After a vigorous campaign to raise the necessary funds, Father George Kelly of Wagner proceeded with plans for construction of a church. The contract was given to Lawrence Donovan who started working in August, 1907. The edifice was completed in August of 1908 at a cost of \$7,500. Bishop O'Gorman dedicated St. Mark's Church on Sept. 26, 1908, and confirmed a class of 16. St. Mark's Parish continued to be served by priests of Wagner until 1913 when a parsonage was erected at a cost of \$3,200, and Father John Delaney took up residence. He attended also to Ravinia... Lake Andes built a parish house in 1930. Fathers of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis served the Lake Andes parish during the Dirty Thirties... The 150 Catholic families of Lake Andes, under the guidance of Father Stephen Schneider, OSB, financed a new church-CCD center on the acreage formerly purchased for a parochial school which was never built. The children of the few remaining Catholic families in Ravinia attended the center. In 1942 Ravinia Catholics had been annexed to St. Mark's. (CD)

