



Catholic Churches of the Past in Tripp County South Dakota



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Before Tripp County was organized in 1909 there were small Catholic Missions along the White River in northern Tripp County. St. Peter's Station was located on Thunder Creek in Lone Star Township. The cemetery is still there but in bad condition and needs care. The earliest graves found here date back to 1896. The last are dated 1923. It is believed that some were buried here without markers.

Services were held in homes and no actual chapel was ever built. Charles Collins, an Indian, served as catechist, under the Lower Brule Mission until 1921 when the Chapel of Our Savior at Bull Creek and St. Peter's Chapel became part of the Rosebud Mission out of St. Francis.

Dog Ear Mission was a Catholic Mission near the township line of township 103, range 76, section 31 and township 103, range 77, section 36 on the White River. It was located 4 miles east of present Highway 183 and a mile South of the river near Gunnysack Bottom also called White Lark, Red Water or Hazen Horse Bottom. The records at St. Francis, show that a baby girl was baptized here in 1897 with the name Eulalia Naonkela Greenwood. The cemetery is a little west of Dog Ear Creek. The tombstones are still standing for Emma Old Lodge born November 14, 1890 and died March 8, 1917, and Saves Life, wife of William Eagle Hawk born June 1894 and died June 16, 1925. At one time there was a church built which was later moved to Old Witten in 1923. The church's stone threshold still remains.

Tripp County organized in 1909, at one time had nine Catholic Churches: Immaculate Conception of Winner, St. Isidore of Colome, St. Ann's of Keyapaha, St. Patrick's of Danton, St. Boniface of Clearfield, St. John the Baptist of Witten, St. Mary's of Hamill, St. Michael of Carter and St. Peter of Jordan. Of the nine, only Immaculate Conception of Winner and St. Isidore of Colome are still active churches. St. Boniface of Clearfield and St. Ann's of Keyapaha are inactive with occasional services during the year by the priest from Immaculate Conception in Winner. These two churches are still maintained by former parishioners. St. Mary's of Hamill is now the Church of the Nazarene in Winner. The other churches no longer exist as churches.

The following is a history of the seven churches of the past in Tripp County South Dakota.

St. Michael's of Carter

St. Michaels' was built in 1911 and a Catholic Hall was also built that year. The hall was used for church and public gatherings. The church was located east of Main Street on Block 22. The church was always a Mission Church from Witten and never had a resident priest.

Priests who served St. Michael's were:

1913-1914 Father John Novak

1914-1919 Father Charles Virnig

1919-1920 Father Daniel Kelly

1920-1922 Father P.J. Quilligan

1922-1923 Father J.J. McCool

1923 Father Daniel Kelly

The church was closed and moved to Witten in 1923 and became part of St. John the Baptist Church. It was moved adjacent to and connected to the Witten Church.

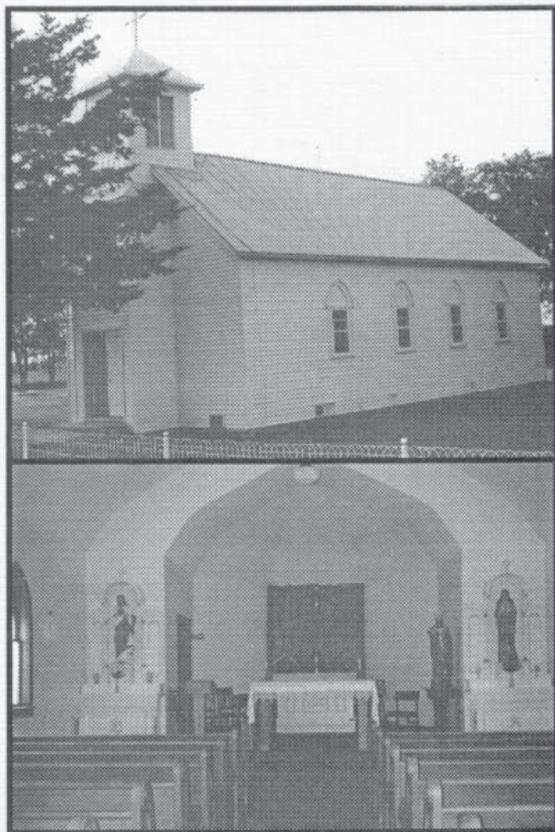
St. Boniface Catholic Church of Clearfield



The first St. Boniface
Catholic Church

In 1909 the first priests assigned to work with the people of Tripp County were Father Anthony O'Hara and Father John Novak. They traveled by horseback or horse and buggy and served the people of the Clearfield area. The early services took place in Clearfield at the Henry Heumann home, other homes and in a school house located where the Lutheran Church now stands. Word of services were passed around and people walked, rode horses or horse and buggy to attend these services. The early priests also served Missions in Keyapaha and Danton. The priests were housed in Winner in these days.

In 1911 Father John Novak was assigned by the Bishop and he had a church erected. It was a 20' x 30' building and stood one half mile north of the Bill Schultz store in the middle of the quarter section where the Clearfield Community hall was later built. There was only one baby in the parish at the time, Clara Storms Frank, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Storms and she was the first baptism in the church.



80th Anniversary 1920-2000
St. Boniface Chapel~Clearfield, South Dakota

The church population grew and a new church was built in 1920 under the direction of Father Bernard Eardley. It was built 1 mile North and a half mile west of Clearfield on land donated by Henry Heumann as he wanted the church near his residence. Henry Heumann came to the Clearfield area in 1910. Roy Rohm did the carpentry work. Father Erdley left Clearfield in 1921 and Father Zephirin Gosselin became the pastor. The church was now served from the Colome parish. The old church was moved to the new site and remodeled into a church rectory. During the building of the new church, Mass was said at the Henry Heumann home. Mrs. Heumann would prepare a dinner for the whole congregation. Later, as Model T's and other cars came in to use, the habit of staying for dinner faded away although people still stopped for coffee and homemade bread and jelly. The Heumanns always did so much for the church, such as cleaning, keeping priests overnight and preparing their meals.

The new church was dedicated March 17, 1921 by Bishop John Lawler of Rapid City. Maude Graves and Bill Kavanaugh were the first people married in the new church.

Many priests have served at St. Boniface:

1911-1914 Father John Novak from the Winner parish;

1915 Father Charles Virnig from the Winner parish;

1916-1917 Father Charles Goergen from the Colome parish;

1918-1920 Father Zephirin Gosselin from the Colome parish;

1921-St. Boniface became a parish with Father Bernard Erdley as pastor with Missions in St. Ann's of Linden (now Keyapaha), St. Patrick's of Danton and Wewela;

1922-1924 Father P. J. Quilligan with Missions the same as above;

1925-Father William J. Meany with Missions named above;

1926-Father John G. Groell with a Mission at St. Ann's at Linden (changed to Keyapaha);

1927-Father John G. Groell with Missions at Keyapaha, St. Patrick's of Danton and Wewela;

1928-1935 Father John G. Groell with same Missions as above but St. Patrick's of Danton closed in 1930;

1936-1949 Father Austin H. Bonner with a Mission at St. Ann's of Keyapaha;

1950-1963 Father Kevin Doyle with a Mission at St. Ann's of Keyapaha;

1964-1968 Father Frank Kruswicki with a Mission at St. Ann's of Keyapaha.

(His residence was in Winner);

1969 - No pastor;

1970-1971 Father George Stroh, S.J., with a Mission at St. Ann's of Keyapaha;

1972 - Father Raymond Burger, S.J. from Wood with a Mission at St. Ann's in Keyapaha;

1973-1980 Father Raymond Burger, now residing in Clearfield with a Mission at St. Ann's of Keyapaha;

1981-1986 Father Raymond Burger with a Mission at St. Ann's of Keyapaha but now residing in Colome;

1987-1993 Father Raymond Burger with no Missions and resided in Clearfield. Father Burger was the last resident priest;

1993-1994 served by Father Brian Lane, pastor of Immaculate Conception Church in Winner;

The church was also served by priests from St. Francis, South Dakota during this time.

The parish officially closed June 3, 1994 due to the small number of parishioners. The parishioners joined Immaculate Conception Church in Winner. The rectory was sold to Ralph Tarrell in 1996 for \$1.00 and moved to his farm southeast of Winner. Through the years the church was a meeting place for their socials and card parties and the scene for many weddings and funerals.

A cemetery was established south of the church shortly after it was built. When the cemetery was organized and planned it was divided into two parts. The east half was for those who wanted lots and the graves on the West half were for those who wanted single plots as was the custom at that time. The southwest corner was reserved for unbaptized infants. There are several unmarked graves in that area. The first person to be buried in the cemetery was Joe Skolasky in 1918. Improvements have been made to the cemetery through the years which include a wrought iron entrance archway built and donated by Leonard Storms, chain link fencing, a small shelter with a permanent box for a guest book, a permanent flag pole and a well and hydrant for watering. Many of the improvements were memorials to loved ones from area families. Burials continue to be held

in the cemetery. The first military service was held at the cemetery on Memorial Day 1979, due to the efforts of Commander Gordon Johnson of the Winner V.F.W. The Winner American Legion Post 169 and Winner V.F.W. Post conduct the services. These services continue and have been held every Memorial Day since 1979. A cemetery fund was established in 1983 to take care of the cemetery along with voluntary labor and donations.

Several former parishioners were interested in maintaining the church as a chapel. Father Brian Lane of Immaculate Conception Church of Winner supported this plan. Several fund raising efforts along with many memorials and personal monetary gifts were made to finance the needed renovations. Gary Fast, with the help from many people, used his carpentry skills to make the needed repairs. Improvements included a metal roof, vinyl siding, foundation and steeple repairs, tree removals and plantings. The interior was cleaned, repaired and painted, a new lectern was built and donated by Don and Fern Jorgensen. Gary Fast along with the help of Leo Storms also did a lot of repair work in the cemetery. Ruth Novotny and Fern Jorgensen refurbished the Blessed Virgin and St. Boniface statues.

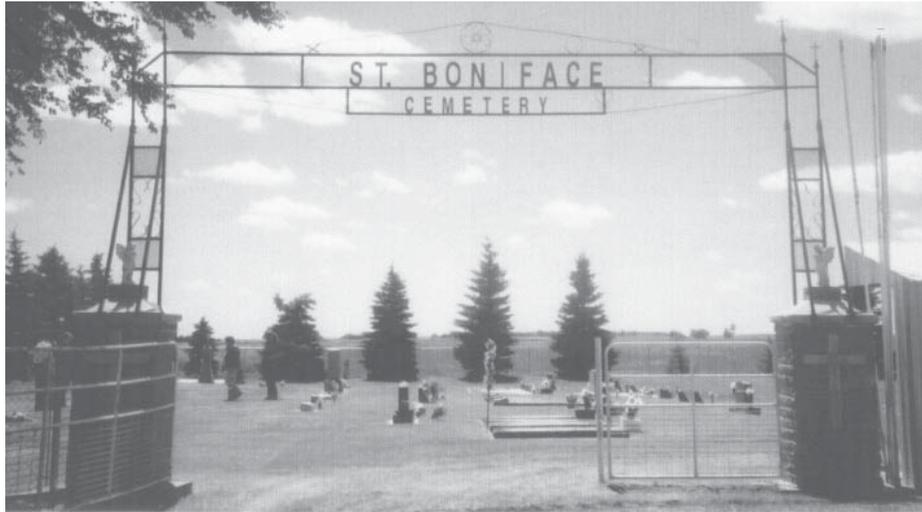
The church and cemetery are still cared for and maintained by former parishioners. Services are held a few times a year by the priests from Immaculate Conception in Winner.

The church and cemetery are a great source of pride for these dedicated people.

Some of the family names associated with St. Boniface Catholic Church are: Steele, Storms, Welsh, Fast, Keierleber, Collins, Volmer, Dougherty and Diez.



St Boniface Parish House
The house was sold to Ralph Tarrel for \$1. He moved it to SE of Winner.
Ralph remodeled it and lived in it at the new location.



St Boniface Cemetery gate made by Leo Storms



St Boniface Church grounds in September 2004

St. Patrick's Catholic Church of Danton, South Dakota



St. Patrick's Church was located ten miles south and four miles West of Colome, South Dakota. Danton, which no longer exists, was located in Lake township, Tripp County, SD. The church was located one and a half miles west and four miles south of the town of Danton on the southwest corner of Section 23. Before the church was built, services were held on the P.H. London homestead in a sod building. The church was built in 1922 on homestead land donated by John Kartak. P.H. London was the contractor. Lin Ballard and Dave Moses were the carpenters with the help of neighbors. Joseph Holden and John Kartak helped to get the church started and built. They also furnished wood for the stove. St. Patrick's was

always a mission church. Mass was said every Sunday and the priests came from Dallas, SD, Paxton, SD and Clearfield, SD. When the weather was bad, the priests stayed with John and Rosie Kartak.

The first Mass was said by Father Zaphirin Gosselin. The first regular priest to come was Father Bernard Erdley, who came from Clearfield. The first marriage was John Kapustka and Dorothy Skolasky in 1926 by Father John Groell. The next priest was Father P.J. Quilligan from Paxton. In 1926 Father John Groell came to the church from Clearfield. In 1931 Father Alfred Abler from Dallas became the priest. He had the parish during the Depression years and the better years until 1950 when he died. Father Robert Ehrenbold was the pastor from 1950-1966 when the parish was closed. He came from Paxton.

Some of the early priests that served St. Patrick's were:

1913-1920 Father John Novak
1915-1916 Father William Meany
early 1920 Father Zaphirin Gosselin
1920-1925 Father Bernard Eardley
1930-1949 Father Alfred Abler
1950-1966 Father Robert Ehrenbold

During the early years the parish had 30 families. They came from many miles around by horse, horse and buggy, wagon or walked. There was an active altar society. The ladies met in

some homes, Flynn Hall at Dog Ear Lake or at the church. They had ice cream socials, quilted, had quilt raffles and in the winter had regular progressive pitch parties. They had an annual bazaar at the Turtle Butte Hall, Wewela or Dog Ear Lake. For many years an annual picnic was held in the Kartak grove.

Jim and Emma Keogh cared for the altar and did the janitor work. When Jim died, Emma continued until she moved to Colome. Problems began then as no one was faithful to come early and start the fire, so it was quite chilly. An oil burner was tried as a solution. This was better but it wasn't big enough for the poorly built building with such a high ceiling. Gradually more families went to St. Isidore's in Colome or moved away. The Clarence Poler, John Wranek, Mike Rhode, Van Kinzer families and Lazarowicz sisters were among the remaining families.

Faithful altar boys over the years were Harold Shea, James Keogh, Jr., Clarence Poler, Harold Kinzer and the Wranek boys.

Lucille Flynn was the organist for most of the years. In later years Nila Kinzer played the organ. There also was a wonderful choir.

Mrs. Dan Shea was a faithful catechism teacher for the first communion class through the early years. Father Abler had summer school classes for many years for two weeks each summer and many mothers were faithful teachers. After Father Abler's health failed in 1949, the Sisters from Winner took charge for the summer classes for a few years. After that the children were taken to Dallas and later Colome.

The church closed in 1966 and the building was sold to Lloyd Kartak who moved it to his family homestead, North of his tree grove and used it for a granary. He later remodeled it into a hog house. The altar was sent to St. Ann's Catholic Church in Keyapaha and the high back pews went to St. John's Catholic Church of Paxton.

Some of the other family names associated with St. Patrick's were William Foster, Max Doezal, Pete Lazarowicz, Bill Knowel, Henry Noelle, William Downs, Paul Gierau, Dan Shea and John Flynn.

St. Mary's Catholic Church of Hamill



The church was located in Hamill which is 22 miles northeast of Winner. As the homesteaders came the spiritual needs of the Catholics were cared for by missionary and residential priests. Hamill was originally known as Wamblee, a government trading post, was one of four town sites platted by the government. The Wamblee Townsite, a land company, donated lots to any denomination that wished to build and obtain a patent from the government for the lots on which St. Mary's was to be built. Father Francis Guessen of Gregory, was one of the

first priests to visit Hamill, celebrated mass in the homes of William McClintock and Charles McElhaney. He baptized Roseland Condon Jordan, daughter of James Condon, the first white child born in Hamill. Father Anthony O'Hara was next assigned to the growing parish. He rode the lumber wagon from Lamro to Winner with James Condon and built the first St. Mary's Church in 1910. The church was built by a carpenter by the name of Roach. From the towns four stores parishioners secured wooden grocery boxes for the altar which was designed and hand carved by Nick Koos. In true pioneer spirit, men of all faiths helped build the church. Lumber was purchased from McClintock Lumber Yard.

Father John Novak had charge of all of Tripp County including Hamill from 1910-1914. Monsignor Charles Virnig, from Winner, was in charge of St. Mary's from 1914-1917. He gave sermons in both German and English. Father Virnig started official baptismal records in 1917. Before then Father Novak kept records in a notebook.

Father Traynor came in 1917 and was the first resident priest. He built the rectory and ate his meals in the James Condon home. Father Nicholas Theis came in 1918 and the Altar Society was officially organized September 22, 1918. Father Theis served as pastor until the appointment of Father Alfred Alber in 1920. In 1920 the Extension Society gave \$500 to the church in the memory of Joseph Sinnott.

A second church was built in 1921 across the street west of the first street. In fact the first church had been built on the wrong lot on the wrong side. This church was larger and built on the right lot across the street from the old church for \$4500. The original church became the sacristy for the second church. Father Ablor had St. Mary's Church plus the Missions of St. Columba at Iona and St. Stephen at Dixon. Merle Casey served as his altar boy. Father Edward Balfe came in 1930 and served until 1935. Mass was said in the rectory during the winter months. Father Padula from Colome served the parish from 1935-1939. Father James Tunnissen was appointed in September 1939. He also served the missions at Iona and Dixon. The church burned when lightning struck the steeple July 5, 1945. Mass was said in the rectory until the completion of

the new church in August 1951. This church cost \$8500. In 1950 the Extension Society gave the church \$3000 in memory of Andrew Aman. The church was sometimes referred to as St. Andrew because of this gift.

Father Tunnissen was transferred to Burke in November 1954 and Father John Cohane of Witten, cared for the parish until January, 1956, when Father Gerald Scherer was appointed pastor of Hamill, Witten and Iona-Dixon parishes. He served until August 15, 1965. During his tenure the rectory was sold and moved to Witten, the Iona church was closed and the flooring used in the Witten church. The Dixon church was closed in 1967 and moved to the 1880 Pioneer Town along I-90.

Father William Diskin of Winner, was in charge from 1966-1967. Father Paul Casper and Father Lloyd, both of Lower Brule and Father George Pinger of St. Joseph's of Chamberlain tended to parish needs until the appointment of Father Joseph Zeller of Winner in 1975. He served until the closing of the parish in January 1977. The church was sold in 1987 to the Winner Church of The Nazarene for \$500 and moved by Klein Moving Company to East Hwy 44 on the edge of Winner. The Land was sold for \$300 to Mel and Joan Mayes, August 19, 1986.

Among the pioneer families of St. Mary's were: William McClintock, James Casey, Nick Mechaley, Matt McLaughlin, Nick Koos, John Casey, Joe Harrington, Bill Mechaley, Al Lipinski, J.T. Loobey, August Zastrow, John Hanig and Paul Heying.

St. Peter's Catholic Church of Jordan

Jordan was located 7 miles west of Winner at the junction of Highways 18 & 183.

St. Peter's Catholic Church was built in 1917 in the town site of Jordan, the original town site, on Lot 10. Before the church was built, Mass was said in various buildings in the town of Jordan. The first Mass was said in 1913 by Father John Novak. The church was built in 1917 under the directions of Father Charles Virnig who said the first Mass in the church. The Jordan church was always a mission church and didn't have a resident priest at any time.

The priests who served the Jordan area and St. Peter's were:

1913-1914	Father John Novak from Winner
1914-1915	Father Charles Goergen from Colome
1916-1919	Father Charles Virnig from Winner
1919-1920	Father Daniel Kelly from Witten
1920-1922	Father P.J. Quilligan from Witten
1922-1923	Father J.J. McCool from Witten
1923	Father Daniel Kelly from Witten

The church was closed in 1923 and moved to Witten. It was in Witten a short time and then moved to Wood where it became the Catholic Church there. The building still stands in Wood, but hasn't been used for many years.

Since the railroad didn't come to Jordan the town died. Some of the old church foundations can still be seen at the Jordan town site. The cemetery was located South of the church in Jordan and has one tombstone left today, a Joseph Londen, 1897-1918.

St. Ann's Catholic Church of Keyapaha



St. Ann's Church is located one and a half miles west and two and a half miles south of the former location of Keyapaha. It stands on a portion of the D.B. Lyons ranch owned by Dick Lyons. Keyapaha was located in the Southeast corner of Section 24 of Holsclaw township 32 miles south and west of Winner. Keyapaha is a Sioux word for Turtle Butte.

Around May 15, 1910 it was discovered that there were a number of Catholics among the homesteaders near Keyapaha in southern Tripp County. The first Mass in the area was performed in the D.B. Lyons

home in the summer of 1916, by a Jesuit priest from St. Francis named Father Sialm. In the fall and winter of 1920-1921, the first church in the Keyapaha area was built. Roy Rohm was the carpenter in charge and he also built St. Boniface Catholic Church of Clearfield. Father Bernard Eardley was sent in 1921 to serve both St. Ann's and St. Boniface and also had St. Patrick's at Danton and Wewela. He was replaced in 1922 by Father P.F. Quilligan. He was replaced in 1925 by Father William J. Meany. Father John Groell came next and served from 1926 to 1935. Father Austin Bonner served from 1936 to 1949 when he died. Father Kevin Doyle served the parish from 1956 to 1963. Father Frank Krusevicki served from 1964-1968. There was no pastor in 1969 -1970-1971. Father George Stroh, S.J. served the parish. 1972-1992 Father Raymond Burger served the parish. After 1992 when Father Burger retired, the parish was under the administration of Father Brian Lane in Winner and also served by priests from St. Francis Mission. The priests who served from St. Francis are Father Wallman, Father Gill, Father Stroyk and Father Strittmatter. When the priests from St. Francis were reassigned, the St. Ann's again was served by the Winner parish priests. St. Ann's was always a mission church and didn't have a resident priest or rectory. The priests resided in Winner, Colome and Clearfield.

On the morning of June 24, 1930, Marie Storms and James Welsh were married in the church. That afternoon



St. Ann's prior to June 24, 1930, when it was completely destroyed by a tornado.

St. Ann's was completely destroyed by a tornado. The parishioners decided to rebuild as soon as they could. This time the carpenter was W.H. Lawler who rebuilt the church under the direction of Father John Groell. The church was finished by October 1930. The Extension Society paid for the altar in the new church. With the help of a \$500 grant supplied by the Extension Society, a new steel roof was put on the church in the fall and winter of 1994-1995. In September of 1995, the interior of the church was painted and vinyl siding replaced the old siding. The siding job was completed in the spring of 1996 and that year the old carpet was replaced. St. John The Baptist Church of Witten donated their large crucifix, their altar, and a statue of St. Anthony when they closed their parish in the spring of 1995. The interior of the church was painted again in 2003. A generous parishioner donated money to St. Ann's for decorations and an air conditioner that was installed in 2007. For a few years Masses were held twice a month on the second and fourth Saturdays of the month at 4:00 pm. St. Ann's was closed in 1994 and is cared for by former parishioners. Services are held a few times a year by the priest from Immaculate Conception Church in Winner.

Some of the family names associated with St. Ann's are Storms, Sharkey, Lyons, Kinney, Volmer, Roberts, Sieler and Glidden. Second, third and fourth generations of these families take care of and attend the church. These families now are members of Immaculate Conception parish in Winner. When the church closed in 1994 only 10 families were members of the church.

St. John The Baptist Church of Witten



Witten, in the early days was a mission out of Winner, South Dakota, although the earliest priest to say Mass in the Witten area was Father Francis Guessen from Gregory in 1909. He said Mass at a pool hall in Red Hill, South Dakota. The school house was also used for services before the church was built. The church in Old Witten was built in 1912. It was 24' x 40' and was located across the road North of the George Worcester home. There was also a parsonage and the Catholic Cemetery near the church. The church wasn't furnished inside at first and the parishioners sat on planks laid on nail kegs and there was very little heat. Father John Novak was the mission priest from 1912-1914. Father Charles Virnig became the resident priest in Winner in 1914 and also served Witten.

Witten ceased being a mission out of Winner in 1920 when Father Daniel Kelly was appointed pastor. In 1921 Father Kelly was transferred to Faith, South Dakota and returned to Witten in 1923. In the interim, Witten was served by Father P.J. Quilligan and Father J.J. McCool. After Father Kelly returned in 1923, the mission churches at Carter and Jordan were closed and the churches were moved to Witten. The Jordan church was later sold and moved to Wood to be used by the Wood parish. That church is still in Wood but hasn't been used for many years. At that time Witten had a population of 100 and had in a sense three Catholic Churches. Besides the Carter and Jordan churches, a mission church from Dog Ear located 20 miles North of Witten near the White River along Hiway 183 was moved to Witten. This church was moved adjacent to the Witten church and the floor from the Mission church at Iona was moved in and placed between the Witten and Dog Ear churches to form a "L" shaped hall on the West side of the existing Witten church. The "three churches" were short lived as the Jordan church was sold and moved to Wood and the church in Old Witten that was moved to New Witten, burned in 1929 shortly after it was moved.

In 1929 the church and parsonage were moved to New Witten and placed in the southwest corner of New Witten. After the church burned, the congregation soon purchased the Carter

Baptist Church that had been moved to Witten and converted into a hall. The church reconverted the building back into a church, St. John The Baptist.

Father Kelly was transferred in 1933. Priests serving after that in succession were: Fathers W. McNamera, Austin H. Bonner, William J. Boat, H. McDonald, George M Huep, Cecil R. Folkins, James Tunnissen, James A. Vorman, Gerald Scherer, William Diskin, F.F. Kruswicki and R.O. Burger.

St. John The Baptist Church closed in 1994 and was sold to Mike Weathermon February 2, 1996 for \$3300 and moved to his farm near Witten. The parsonage had already been sold to Paul and Ruth Tracy April 30, 1971 for \$1250. The church had \$15,000 when it closed including the parsonage and church sales. \$10,000 was donated to Immaculate Conception Church in Winner to pay for their first sound system and \$5,000 was given to the Witten Cemetery Fund. Bishop Charles Chaput of Rapid City said the last Mass in the church when it closed. Someone wanted to buy the church and use it for a hog barn, but the church refused to sell it for that purpose. The churches main altar and large crucifix went to St. Ann's church in Keyapaha, South Dakota. The priest who was serving St. John the Baptist when it closed was Father R.O. Burger.

Some of the family names associated with St. John the Baptist church are: Ruhkamp, Klappel, Kelley, Arthur, Murphy, Bolander, Parlet, Gregoire, Des Laurier, Smith, English, Elder, McElroy, Kauer, Janak, Hilton and Williams.



Rev. John Novak



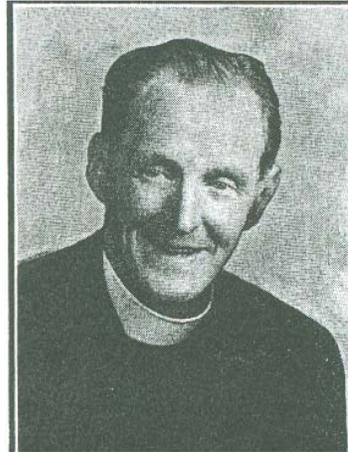
Rev. Charles Virnig



Rev. Austin Bonner



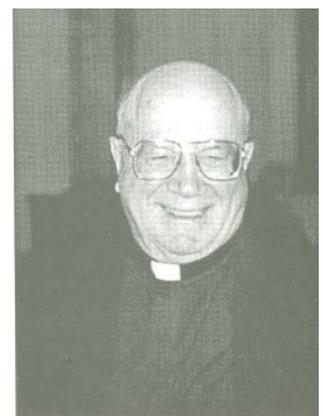
Rev. John Groell



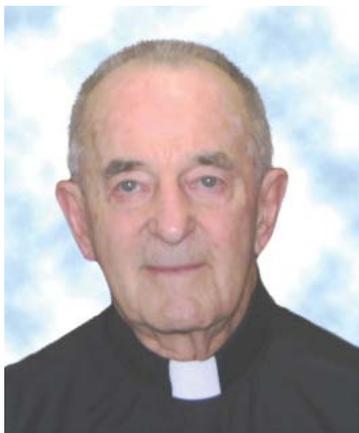
Rev. Kevin Doyle



Rev. George Stroh



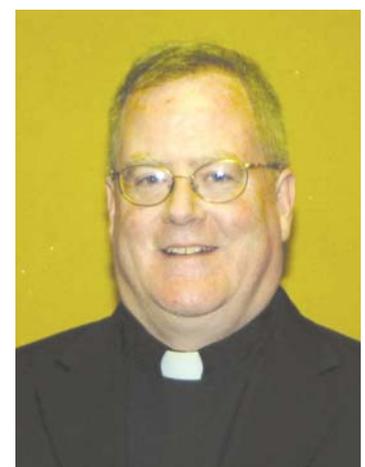
Rev. Raymond Burger,



Rev. Gerald Scherer



Rev. Joseph Zeller



Rev. Brian Lane

Conclusion

These Catholic Churches of the past played a vital role in the lives of our Catholic ancestry in Tripp County. They were not only important to their religious lives but also to their social and political lives. They sacrificed a great deal to start and keep these churches operating. Unfortunately, declining membership forced them to close. These churches continue to influence us yet today. I hope these histories will help preserve these churches for present and future generations.

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