

Wood Was Hauled Across Ice When Fairland Church Burned

St. Mary of the Snow,
Fairland

Mass was first celebrated in the Belgian settlement about two years after the arrival of the settlers in Northeastern Wisconsin. Mass was said in 1858 by Father Daems of Bay Settlement in the Guillaume Delwiche residence, half way between the present church and the shore of Green Bay. Later Mass was said off and on by other Crozier priests from Bay Settlement who carried their vestments on their back as they walked to and from this wooded area, shortly before, Indian wilderness. A small table covered with a white cloth with the crucifix and two candlesticks made up the altar.

Early in 1860, regular services were held here, presumably once a month. Later three acres of land were donated to the diocese by Alexander Evrard and a church edifice was erected thereon. It was built of logs and measured about 25 feet in width and 40 feet in length. This church too was generally called Delwiche, was in use until 1875. Different priests came on occasion but had difficulty among the Belgians in that they could speak neither French or Belgian. During this time the congregation included the northwestern part of Brussels, the northern part of the town of Union and all of Gardner. Children from all over this settlement boarded and were educated for a nominal fee at what is now known as the Chapel in Robinsville, then known as the Chapel de Aux Premiere Belges.

The years following the great fire (1871) must have been years of great prosperity in this area for in the year 1874 a total of \$1368.08 (an unusual amount for those times!) was collected of which \$1078.68 was spent in the building of a new church to which later was attached a parochial school. It was an unpretentious frame building but large enough to accommodate about 100 families.

In 1875 accounts show that receipts for the year amounted to \$237.65 with the annual expense listed as \$231.36. The priest whose name is not known received \$63 for the year.

By 1880 the flourishing congregation was set back by the building of a new church by the people of Brussels which left the church only half filled.

From 1860 to 1885, St. Mary's was a mission of some neighboring parish, Rosiere, Bay Settlement, Champion or Robinsville and was visited by a priest only once a month with the exception of a wedding or funeral. In early church records of the year 1875, latter written up by Father Vanden Elsen are found the following names of the members of the congregation: Pierre Descamp, Eugene Simon, Nicolas Simon, J. B. Jadin, Eugene Lampereur, Antoine Chaudoir, Charles Descamp, Guillaume Delwiche, Francois Gilot, Charles Colis, Alexander Degrandgangage, D. Renard, Gabriel Dekeyser, Guillaume Gerondale, Emil Befay, Martin Bay, Leopold Hiron, Alexander Glime, Francois Pierre, Julian Dachelet, Alexander Herlache, Ignace Zephirin, Joseph Pommier, John Moore Ferdinand Coco, Drierdonne Mallien, J. B. Draize, Gregoire Wautier, Joseph Bommeur, J. J. Motquin, Antoine Virlee, Hubert Lebedelle, Alexis Franc, Eugene Dejardin, Etienne Dandois, Constant Delveaux, Dennis Baudhuin, Joseph Baudhuin, Melchoir Latour, Francis Patris, Prosper Gervais, Charles Gerondale, Wautier Dekeyser, Joseph Conard, Francis Degrandgangage, Celestin Farins, Pierre Jauquet, Joseph Jauquet, Pierre Martin, J. B. Destree, Leopold Neuville, Denis Befay, Guillaume Vandergate, Mag. Moore, Maurice Moore, Charles Jeanquart, Joseph Charles, Jacques Charles, Antoine Charles, Clement Geniesse, Antoine Busvoirt, Gustave Colbat, Toussaint Dachelet, Joseph Quartemont, John Molony, Lambert Renard, Joseph Thaysse, J. B. Delfosse, Martin Colard, J. B. Herlache, Francois Spingaire, Joseph Bourniville, Joseph Dubois, Mike Kirby, Justin Chaudoir, Pierre Bourniville,

John Baudhuin, Antoine Virouven, Gustave Pensis, Gaspar Martin, Alexis Charles, Francois Conard, Gaspar Dury, Eli Meunier, Joseph Fontaine, and Victor Degrandgangage. Many of these people have direct descendants now in the parish.

The church was without a steeple until 1890 at which time \$206.65 was spent to erect the steeple and buy the bell. Late in 1884 the parsonage was built, at a total cost of \$546.35. Father L. Stevart was the first resident priest coming to the parish in 1885. The school was started in 1889 and Sisters taught from about 1890 to 1924. On February 12, 1892 the church with the school annex was destroyed by fire.

Steps were immediately taken to rebuild the church. Under the supervision of Father Vanier who came in 1890, plans were drawn for a larger church. The farmers hauled logs to the mill at Brussels where they were sawed into pillars, rafters and rough boards and a squadron of sleighs went across the bay to Oconto for dressed lumber. The farmers donated their work of excavation and built the stone foundation. The structure was completed by November, 1893, although Mass had been said in the new edifice as early as December of 1892. The walls were not plastered however for the first winter and Mass was said in the district school in cases of severe weather.

When Father Pennings came here in November 1893 a vacant farm house was purchased with the intention of moving it to be used as a house by the Sisters and a classroom for the children. But these plans were abandoned when the oxen which were hitched onto runners placed beneath the structure could not be made to pull unisonally. The house was dismantled and the material used in the construction of a building for this purpose which was used for thirty year (1894-1924).

Father Pennings remained at St. Mary's until 1898 at which time he returned to Holland and on his return founded St. Norbert's Abbey and college in DePere. White Fathers of the Norbertine or Premonstratensian order have since been in charge.

To succeed Father Pennings, came Father Van Heertum who stayed here only until July of 1899 but is kindly remembered by the older people for his sound advice and counsel. Then came Father Crielars, better known in "Delwiche" as Father John. During his stay, brick veneering was added to the exterior and old old-fashioned wood-burning stoves were replaced by a woodburning furnace installed in the basement under the sacristy. During his pastorate, the interior was also decorated. He would commute to his mission in Brussels by horse and buggy or horse-drawn sleigh.

In 1908, came Father Gloude-mans. He also had to attend to the needs of his mission in Brussels but by this time the automobile was being used and Father Gloude-mans often would offer a ride to some of his parishioners who sometimes would walk several miles to and from church, and return again for Vespers in the afternoon. He stayed until 1919.

Father Vanden Elsen came to Fairland in 1919. An accomplished musician, Father Van (as he was known to many) wrote the Mass of St. Helena. During his pastorate in 1940, the sanctuary was remodeled and redecorated, a new sacristy was built, and new pews were purchased.

Father DeCleene, the present pastor of St. Mary's came in 1952. The church interior was redecorated in 1957. A new parking space was since cleared and blacktopped and the rectory kitchen was remodeled last summer. A new furnace has been installed in the church and in the rectory.

The sisters of St. Francis convent teach summer school for two weeks annually and the children of grade school age are given further catechetical instruction by Father DeCleene who personally transports the children from the Fairland grades each Thursday. Children from the

grades elsewhere in the parish commute to the church for their instructions Saturday mornings.

The high school study club which was founded several years ago meets Monday evening during the school year under the direction of Father DeCleene.

Though St. Mary's has not been rich in vocations, the congregation is now edified by the entrance of Mary Jo Monfills into convent life this year. Other nuns from this parish were Sr. M. Edward (Englebert), Sr. M. Berckman (Meunier), Sr. M. Agnes (Mallien), Sr. M. Irene (Conard), and Sr. M. Claudette (Jeanquart).

The first baptismal rites recorded here were held on January 19, 1885, the first marriage October 19, 1871 and the first funeral January 19, 1885.

St. Mary's now has a Holy Name society with 84 members. Its officers are George Lampereur, Harry Lampereur and David Chaudoir.

The Altar society has about 45 members of which Mrs. Raymond Baudhuin is president, Mrs. William Delfosse, secretary, and Mrs. George Lampereur is treasurer. Through the efforts of the society, the church has been equipped with new Stations of the Cross, kneelers, altar linens and vestments.

The Young Ladies sodality has a small membership of about 20 girls with Rose Marie DeKeyser, Esther Mallien and Janice Englebert as its officers.

In the early days of the congregation, church music was under the direction of the "clere," singer and teacher of the group who for many years was Pierre Baudhuin. In the absence of a regular visit by a priest, the "clere" would take charge of the services—offer catechetical instruction, lead in the singing of hymns and pray the rosary. Later Prosper Baudhuin, Jacques Gerondale, Marcellin Baudhuin in turn were either choir masters or singers. The first organist was Mary Jadin; later Mrs. John Virlee. In succession came Mamie Denis, Esther Lampereur and Mrs. William Struck. In 1920, Lema Fontaine (later Mrs. Joseph Boulanger) became the organist and remained at that post until 1937 when she was succeeded by Margaret LeRoy (now Mrs. Clarence Monfills). Henry Gerondale became choir master in 1912, a position he resigned in 1937. Henry Mallien, a life long member of the parish celebrated 50 years with the choir in 1956. The combined choirs number about 20.

The congregation now numbers about 160 families though this number is greatly increased with the influx of the resort population which necessitates a third mass during the summer months.