

# THE HISTORY OF ST. LOUIS PARISH, DYCKESVILLE

## 1863-2000

*By Joyce Allard Lampereur*

The first settlers came to the Red River area from Belgium in 1853. Prior to that there was simply a station there. Father Daems, Rev. Verheeran, Rev. Crud and other priests working on the peninsula visited them occasionally.

St. Louis Parish was founded in 1863, when the parishioners under the guidance of Father Crud built Dyckesville's first church on three acres of land donated by Louis and Octavia Van Dycke, storekeepers in Dyckesville. Louis Van Dycke was one of the first white men to settle in the area which had previously been inhabited solely by Indians, who eked out a precarious livelihood by fishing and hunting in the surrounding territory. Many of these Indians had already been baptized in the Catholic faith, but having no church of their own, attended Mass in Bay Settlement, which was ten miles from Dyckesville.

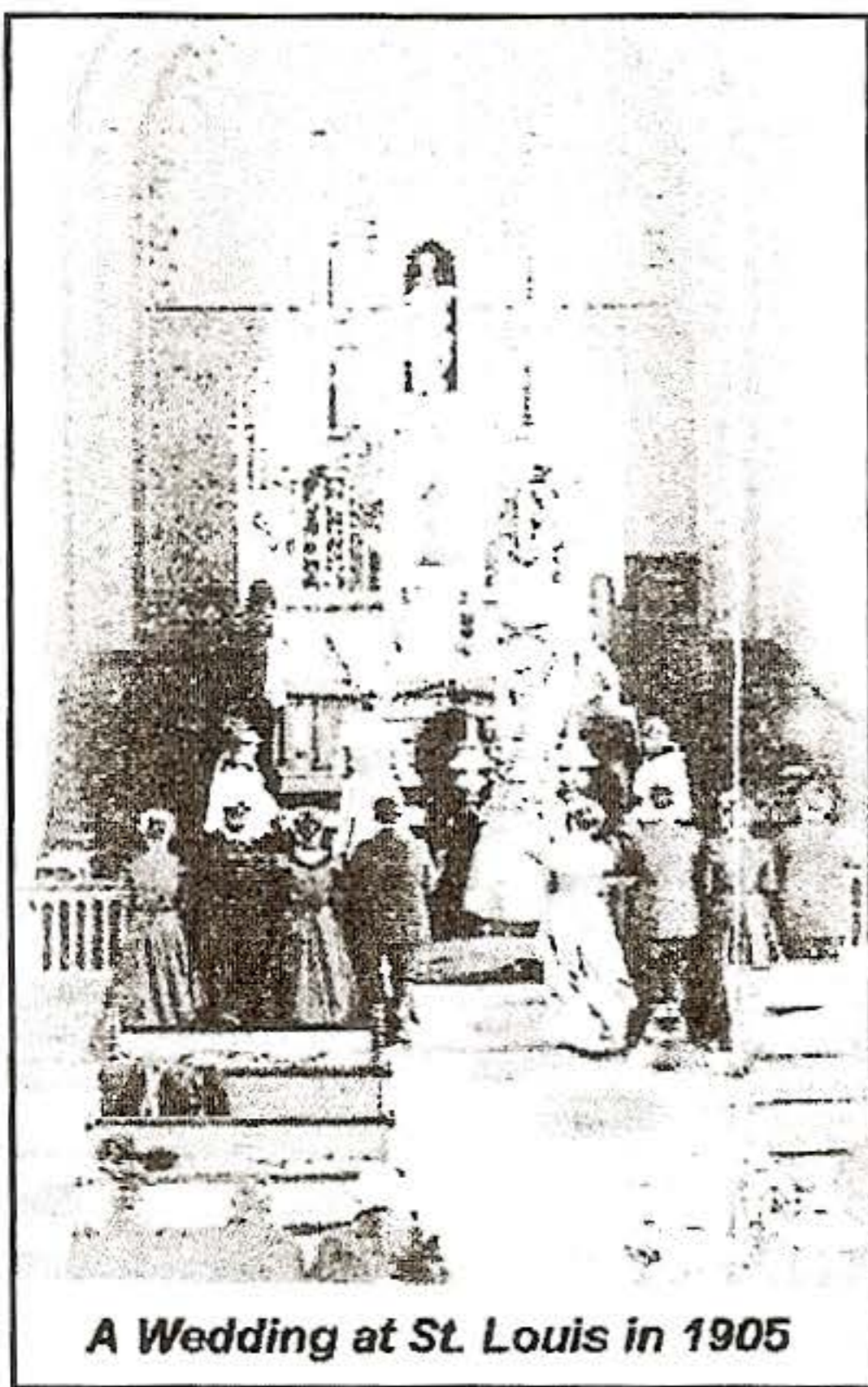
Until 1872, St. Louis Parish was a mission. That year the Rev. Martin Smitz became the first resident pastor. A rectory was built and a sacristy was added to the church. He also assisted at a number of the surrounding missions. During his pastorate the congregation consisted of more than one hundred twenty-five families and was fairly prosperous because of the two sawmills that were actively operating at the time. Father Smitz left in 1874. Dyckesville once more became a mission of Robinsonville.

Father Charles Stein was appointed resident pastor in 1877. St. Louis again became a mission in 1879 when Father Stein left. From 1880 to 1884 Rev. Gregory Pellegrin from Lincoln visited the parish. From 1884 to 1887 several priests; Reverends, Dyckman, Schir, De Bie and Hoevenoos, took care of the spiritual needs of the parish.

From the time when the Van Dyckes made their gift to the congregation the interest of the Catholic section grew rapidly, so much so, that in 1887 they began the erection of a new church. The completion of the building was slow owing to the limited means of the people. In 1893 they finally completed and furnished the building. There were seventy-five families in the parish. They had accomplished a great deal, especially if you take into consideration the fact that the country round about had been practically depopulated since the mills in the area ceased running a few years earlier. During the construction Mass was said in Pete Charles' warehouse which was located about 200 feet north of the present Highway 57 just east of the Kewaunee-Brown County line. The cornerstone of the church bears the initials, V.P., which stand for Vincent Pommier, an outstanding church and business figure at the time.

The Rev. Van Rooy from the Berne Abbey in Holland was sent by his Superior to America to join a colony of priests belonging to the same order, who had located on the peninsula in the diocese of Green Bay. He was appointed assistant pastor at Delwich (now called Namur), in Door County, his Prior being the Very Rev. Bernard Pennings. Here, he had for missions those of Dyckesville, Thiry Daems and one at Robinsonville.





**A Wedding at St. Louis in 1905**

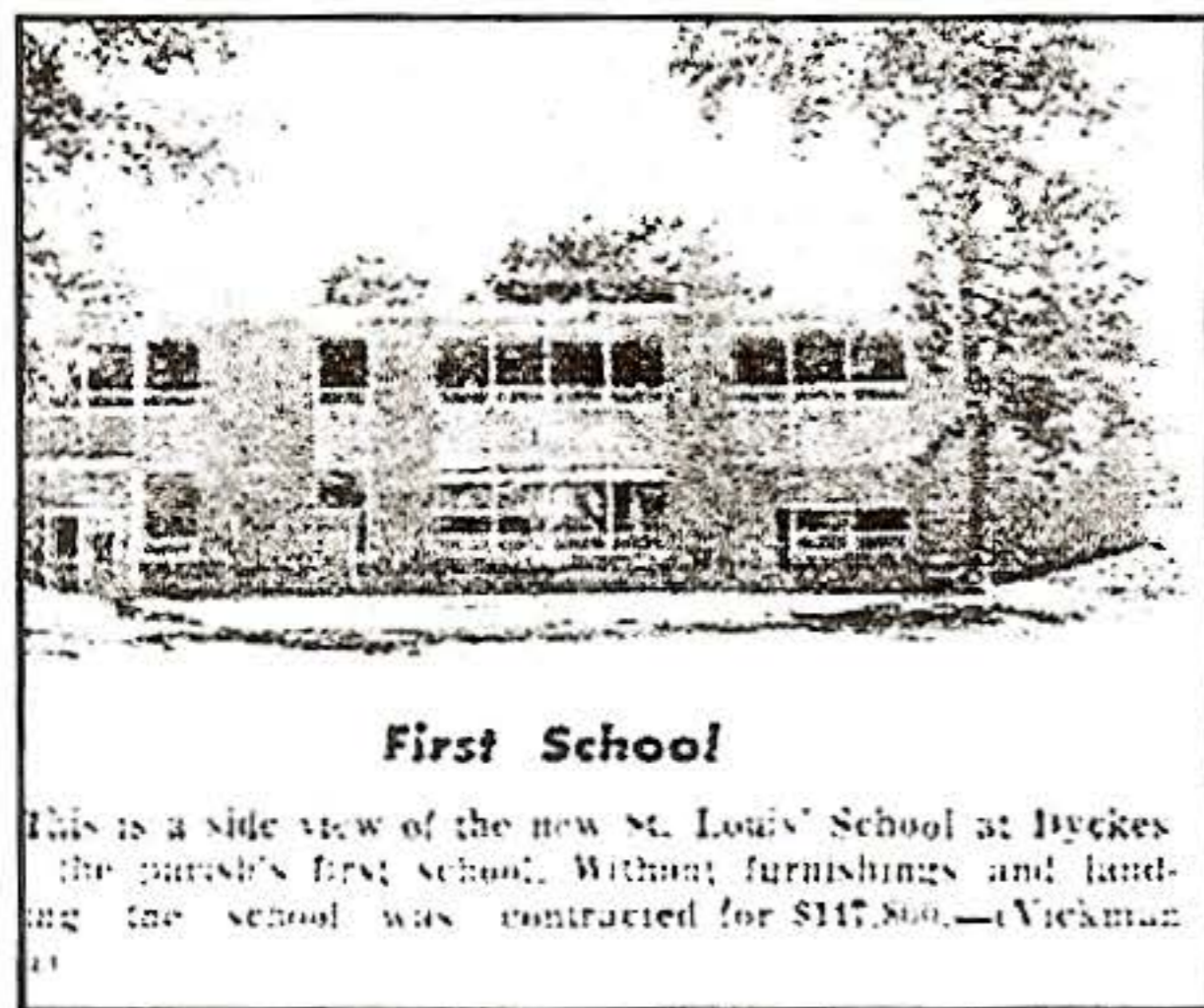
The Rt. Rev. Bishop Messmer appointed him resident pastor at Dyckesville November 1, 1894. He also was in charge of two mission churches, St. Odile's in Thiry Daems and St. Francis de Paul in Marchand (Duval).

Father Van Rooy added a brick steeple to the church and a floor was laid the year after he was assigned to St. Louis Parish. The following year a Gothic altar was built by Joseph Duchateau and Facharie Masset. Joseph Swoboda finished the decorating.

A sacristy was built in 1897, and pews, an organ and lights were added in 1898. In 1899 a well was drilled, in 1900 the barn was built, and in 1901 the parish residence was built. It was replaced about forty years later by the present rectory.

Victoria Stage donated half an acre of land to the parish in 1911. The parish grew rapidly. By 1916 the membership was 587 Catholics at St. Louis Parish, 345 members at the mission church at Marchand and 238 at the Thiry Daems mission.

The parish purchased two and three quarters acres of land for a cemetery from Henry Smeesters in 1921. The church vestibules and confessionals were added in 1925. A porch was built on to the rectory and the barn was torn down about 1930. Picnics were held in the grove during the summer.



**First School**

This is a side view of the new St. Louis' School at Dyckesville the parish's first school. Without furnishings and landscaping the school was contracted for \$147,800.—(Vielman)

Audrey Vandervest, a member of St. Louis Parish, professed her solemn vows at the St. Francis Convent at Bay Settlement in 1949. Today she continues her work within her community.

His Excellency, Stanislaus V. Bona, Bishop of Green Bay, officiated at a Mass celebrating the St. Louis Parish Centennial and the dedication and blessing of the newly built St. Louis School on September 1, 1963. The school was partially financed by the Ida Lego estate.



Sister Martin Vandervest

### **Pastoral Appointments to the St. Louis Parish in Dyckesville**

- 1872 Rev. Martin Smitz
- 1877 Rev. Charles Stein
- 1894 Rev. J.J. Van Rooy, O. Praem.
- 1904 Rev. Clement Smits, O. Praem.
- 1908 Rev. John W. Melchers, O. Praem.
- 1925 Rev. Augustine G. Vande Gevel, O. Praem.
- 1929 Rev. Richard Londo, O. Praem.
- 1933 Rev. Walter A. Paiement, O. Praem.
- 1948 Rev. Ludolph F. Jacobs, O. Praem.

1953	Rev. Blaise J. Peters, O. Praem.
1954	Rev. Ferdinand F. Du Pont, O. Praem.
1959	Rev. Dominic Hockers, O. Praem.
1970	Rev. Gerald Kempen, O. Praem.
1977	Rev. Sebastian Schalk, O. Praem. (Temp. Adm.)
1978	Rev. Kenneth De Groot, O. Praem.
1979	Rev. Peter J. Renard, O. Praem.
1980	Rev. Donald Buzanowski
1981	Perm. Deacon David Ludke, Part-time
1982	Rev. Richard Kleiber
1991	Rev. Richard Mauthe, Administrator
1993	Rev. Richard Mauthe, Pastor
1999	Rev. Timothy Shillcox, O. Praem., Temp. Admin. & Priest Moderator
1999	Sister Marlene Dimmerling, Parish Director
2000	Rev. Joseph Bestler, Minister of the Sacraments

St. Francis de Paul Parish at Marchand (Duval), founded in 1858, was the first to close because of a shortage of priests in the Green Bay Diocese. It had gone from 118 to 70 families from 1988 to 1992. The last Mass was said there on July 5, 1992.

St. Odile's was one of the oldest parishes in northeastern Wisconsin. In 1858 Father Edward Daems started St. Odile's Church. Thiry Daems was named after Father Daems and the Thiry family who donated the land for building a church. The pastor from Dyckesville attended St. Odile's from 1894 until 1959 when it was joined with St. Joseph's at Champion. Prior to 1894 the Martinsville pastor attended it. Services were held at Thiry Daems twice every month in 1894. The last Mass was said at St. Odile's on Oct. 18, 1992.

Church closings are not unusual these days. They are "signs of the times". One can read, with perhaps a fleeting thought of regret, a report in the newspaper of yet another closing. It is, however, another matter to witness and be a part of the pain and sorrow of parishioners when a parish church is closed. Their spiritual lives, the very core of their being, have revolved around the sacred space of their parish church for their entire lives and then suddenly that church is gone. But, as Bishop Banks said, "The parish church is closed but the parish lives on. The parish is not the building. You are the parish, the People of God, with the Catholic faith rooted deeply in your hearts and souls".

St. Louis is a loving, caring community with a deep faith. We have an excellent school with great teachers and a fine religious education program headed by Kathy Cornette. Under Sister Marlene's guidance, our parish continues to flourish. What lies ahead for St. Louis Parish? Only time will tell.

### Sources for Our Parish History

"St. Louis' Church, Dyckesville, Wis.", circa 1894, Author Unknown

Parish Centennial Book, A Century of Progress, 1963, By; Parish CCD Members & Rev. Hockers

History of the Catholic Church in Wisconsin, 1976, By Rev. Leo Rummel, O. Praem.

St. Louis Church Records, Green Bay Diocesan Office

St. Louis Parish Records, Dyckesville

## **CELEBRATING ST. LOUIS SCHOOL**

After 41 years of educating our young people, St. Louis School will close its doors on June 4th, 2004. It is very sad to see this happen, but we need to celebrate the wonderful gift it has been for us and for our school children. So many have received a wonderful education here, and have gone on to become leaders here in our parish and in the community.

I will especially miss seeing the bright shiny faces playing on the blacktop in the morning and at noon. I will certainly miss the children's liturgies every Thursday morning which inspired all of us who would attend. Their melodious voices, their 3-part harmony, and their reflections on the scripture certainly made each Mass a wonderful celebration!

All of us will miss Mrs. Reчек and our teachers. We thank them for their dedicated and caring service to our children. They have inspired our children to become creative thinkers and Christian people, and have dedicated themselves to loving and caring for them. I will especially miss Mrs. Reчек – her courage in overcoming her sickness and disabilities have inspired all. May God bless them in a special way for all they have done for our school children. We ask all to hold them close in our hearts and in our memories.

Love and prayers,  
Sr. Marlene

“Good News” newsletter June 2004

### **Pastoral Appointments to St. Louis Since 2000**

2000 Rev. Joseph Bestler, Minister of the Sacraments

2005 Rev. John Van Deuren, Sacramental Minister

**“Our Protector- Mary”**

**“Our Lady of Beauraing”.**

**From November 29, 1932, to January 3, 1933, the Blessed Virgin appeared 30 times to five children in Beauraing, Belgium, a small village in the province of Namur.**

**A priest from the province came twice a year to Green Bay to sell crucifixes made in Belgium. On one visit the priest said that the children who had seen the visions wanted to donate a statue to the community that had the largest Belgian population.**

**It was determined that St. Louis was the community. Fr Dominic Hockers (1959-70) was our pastor at the time. He received word from a shipyard in Green Bay that the statue had arrived and he was to pick it up.**

**Fr. Hockers had the statue transported to Dyckesville and had it placed in front of our church where it has remained ever since. The statue is a replica of one that stands in a huge shrine in Beauraing, Belgium and is visited by thousands of people each year.**

