

Catholic Church

The present parish has been evolving for over a hundred years. As early as 1846 first immigrants, fleeing their native land because of oppression, settled in Medina township and in the surrounding area. They cleared their lands of timber and laid out farms for villages. Possessors of a lively faith, they did not forget their religion, but looked about for priests to minister them. Very soon the Redemptorist Fathers, who are credited with the first pastoral work in this country, came to the assistance of these good people.

At first, mass was said in any farmhouse where the people could be accommodated; after a short time, however, a small primitive frame church was built in Medina township. Even to this present day, the site of this church and cemetery has retained the name "Catholic Hill".

In 1958, it was decided the parish was to be built in Hudson. Three lots at the corner of School and Spring Streets were purchased for \$337.50. At the time of the purchase a barn twenty-two feet by thirty feet, occupied this site. The structure was used as a temporary church. October 23, 1859 the mission received its first resident Pastor, the Rev. Francis J VanErp. At the time of his arrival there were about 100 Catholic families living in sparsely settled districts in the townships of Hudson, Medina, Pittsford, and Wright. In the pioneer period of the parish's history, both the temporary church in Hudson and the Medina Church were used. Mass was said in Hudson on three Sundays of each month and in Medina on the remaining one. Often the people walked to attend Mass. Their pastor, too, was at times obliged to walk the four miles to Medina to have mass celebrated in their church.

Father VanErp baptized four infants in the latter part of 1859, and thirty-three the following year. There are no marriages recorded for 1859, but four are listed for the year 1860.

First communion and confirmation were administered in Hudson for the first time on April 26, 1861. In the year 1861, a two story brick rectory was constructed on the corner of School and Spring Streets; and addition was made to the temporary church, and two and one-fourth acres of land were purchased for a cemetery on the outskirts of the village.

Father VanErp began excavations for a new church on April 20, 1866. It was completed in 1869. Mass was held for the first time in this church on Sunday, May 30, 1869. In 1872, Hudson's second pastor, the Rev. M.D. Schoeken remained for a one year period; in June, 1873, he was succeeded by the Rev. J F. Elsen. This third pastor was a man inclined toward formality in manner and in dress. He wore a tall silk hat and a coat with tails, event to the post office.

During the early years he placed a tower upon the church and bought a bell. Both of these additions helped to make the church one of the finest buildings in Hudson. In

January, 1877, a Catholic school was begun. An old, abandoned frame schoolhouse on State Street was used for this venture. The first Catholic Fair was held in Hudson in 1878. This activity was inaugurated in order to raise funds for an organ for the church. The fair turned out to be a huge success and the organ purchased for \$1,300 was placed in the church. Sacred Heart Parish now comprised about 150 families.

Much progress has been made since its foundations were first established in 1859. In 1859 Sacred Heart Parish received their fourth pastor, Rev. A. B. Nacy. He was with them until 1899. His successor was the Rev. Joseph F. Hallissey from Detroit. Shortly after his arrival, plans were made to build a new rectory on School and Spring Streets. In a short space of time the rectory, a two story brick structure was completed. A few years later, in 1905, plans were made for a new church and rectory on Market Street. It was decided that the church would be of fieldstone, with cut stone trimmings and that it would have two towers each eighty-six feet high, surmounted by copper domes and tipped with gold crosses.

The seating capacity was to be 500. Stained art glass used in memorial windows would be the gifts of generous parishioners.

The following excerpt from the Post Gazette gives a good description of the important part the people played in the construction of their new church. "Catholic farmers left their crops for a day whenever the chance presented itself and taking their teams, drove to town with a load of stone which they gathered on their farms. Then they stayed all day, and men and horses worked on the excavation for the buildings. They worked early and late. In an incredibly short time there were the basements and foundation trenches all completed and the huge pile of stones was being readily added to, in preparation for the masons and carpenters. Then every man who could handle a stone hammer or a trowel or a saw and hammer, went to work at building."

By October 30, 1906 the church was ready for dedication. Father Hallissey was destined to stay in Hudson many years. His parish grew from 170 to almost 278 families during his stay of twenty-three years as pastor.

Several months after the church was finished, the rectory, too, received the final touches. It was an imposing two story house, the lower half of which was of fieldstone and the upper pressed brick. The bricks used in its construction were the same ones that had been used to build the rectory in East Hudson. In December of 1922, Sacred Heart Parish received another leader, the Rev. William J. Hayden. The need for a school was evident and the new pastor's aims were high. Planning and supervision of this construction was his main interest that continued even after the last brick had been put in place. Owing to Fr. Hayden's poor health, the Rev. R. J. Cunningham was assigned to Sacred Heart Parish in 1941 as assistant. Both priests remained in Hudson until the fall of 1945.

The new pastor arrived in November 15, 1945, the Rev. Bernard P. Hoey. As the seventh pastor of this parish, he was the first to have both school and church well

established on his arrival. The total expansion of Sacred Heart took sixty-nine years. In 1949, June the 14th, Hather Hoey was succeeded by the Rev James P McCabe. At this time a new asphalt tile floor was laid in the church and other repairs accomplished. Even the ringing of the Angelus bells were made automatic through the installation of an electric device, the gift of Mr. B. D. Chandler. The Rev Dominic I. Foley arrived On October 7, 1953. The three years during which Father Foley served the people of Hudson were spent in performing well the ordinary duties of a parish priest. Because of failing health, Father Foley retired from his position as pastor of Sacred Heart on April 17, 1956.

Father George Gaynor arrived to act as temporary administrator of the parish. After three weeks, the Rev. Edward J. Hurley was assigned as permanent pastor. He took over his duties on May 8, 1956. A short time after his arrival, Father Hurley observed the great crowds that annually gathered in the vacation spots near Devils Lake and Round Lake during the summer mons. He could see in these people potential members of a mission church. The summer of 1981 saw the erection of a new church. The establishment of this adjacent mission has great significance in the history of Sacred Heart Parish, for it marks that period of development. A parish that began as a mission of Adrian over 100 years ago was now caring for the spiritual needs of its own mission.

With the completion of this venture for God's glory came also the completion of Father Hurley's short pastorate. He served his flock well in Hudson, and in the providence of God, was destined to accomplish great thing elsewhere. He left for his new assignment on June 26, 1959.

His successor, the Rev. Gerald R. Loewen, arrived the same day. After twenty years of faithful service to the Sacred Heart Parish, Father Loewen left to serve as pastor of St. Mary's on the Lake.

Father Eugene Beiter succeeded Father Loewen on May of 1979. After just three short years, Father Beiter resigned.

Father Jonathon Wehrle, as Associate Pastor at St. Mary's Church, Jackson, succeeded Father Beiter as Pastor of Sacred Heart Church on June 30, 1982.

An outstanding honor was conferred upon one who had formerly belonged to Sacred Heart Parish; on September 8, 1954, Monsignor Henry E. Donnelly, who had been ordained fourteen years earlier in Sacred Heart Church, was raised to the ecclesiastical rank of Auxiliary Bishop of Detroit, and in November of the same year, His Excellency administered confirmation in his home parish. Warmly the people of Hudson welcomed back this son of whom they are justifiably proud.



This is the second Catholic Church; the first one was at Catholic Hill. This church and rectory was on the corner of Wood and Spring Streets. The church was built in 1866 and the rectory in 1869.



Interior of the present Catholic Church.



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