



Our Religious Heritage
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SEVENTEEN OF A SERIES

ST. PATRICK'S

In July 1930 a young priest, just beginning his pastoral career, came to St. Patrick's Church in Colesburg as its first resident pastor.

It was a small and struggling parish with only 28 families and, for the next eight years, this young priest ministered to his flock which slowly grew and prospered until it numbered 36 families when he was transferred in 1938.

This young priest was a native of Dyersville, Rev. John H. Mayer.

Rev. Mayer, after a long and busy career throughout the archdiocese, returned to Colesburg as pastor of St. Patrick's Church two years ago. He is now a Rev. Monsignor and his parish has matured and numbers 74 families now.

The history of St. Patrick's as a mission goes back to 1854 when Bishop Loras purchased a church site in the present town of Colesburg. The mission was served by pastors of Holy Cross until 1871 and later was attached to Elkport. Most of the first settlers were Irish who began moving into the territory as soon as it was opened up for homesteading. The earliest recorded burial in St. Patrick's cemetery is from 1857.

During the early years Mass was said in the homes on an irregular basis. Father Lynch, who has been mentioned in the early history of many of our area churches, was the first to say Mass in the Colesburg area.

The first church was built in 1862 and a cemetery plot was donated by John McMahon. However all records of the church between 1864 and 1871 were lost and later records of the

people in the Colesburg parish are with Elkport records. At first they were fragmentary but later quite complete. We know from these records that a new church was built in Colesburg about 1876 and 40 or more families attended services there.

Apparently, however, services were so irregular that many of the original Catholic families either moved to other areas or intermarried with people of other religious affiliations.

The parish dwindled in size until in 1923 there were only seven Catholic families left in the area.

In January 1924 Father John Theobald of Columbia College (Loras) was appointed by the bishop to care for Colesburg and drove from Dubuque each Sunday to say Mass. He must have been very effective because, by 1928, the parish recovered to the extent that there were 28 families and in 1930 Father Mayer was appointed resident pastor.

Priests who served St. Patrick's as a mission church are listed as follows: From Holy Cross, Fathers Michael Lynch (1859-64), Dan Maloney (1864-70), and Richard A. Byrne (1870-71). From Elkport, Fathers G. Gaul (1871-72), M.J. Quirk (1872-75), B.W. Coyle (1875-82), John Fogarty (1882-84), P. Corbett (1884-87), M. Sheehan (1887-93), E.L. Dullard (1893-98), and Daniel Minogue (1898-23).

The present St. Patrick's Church was built in 1940 after fire destroyed the second church. In 1972 there were 14 First Communions, 12 baptisms, one marriage and four funerals in the parish.