



History of St. Anne

In early spring, 1919, representatives of approximately 100 Catholic families in East Moline & Silvis met to formulate plans for a new church in the area. At that time, Catholics attended services at St. Mary's Church in East Moline. As the population in the area increased, church authorities decided that the East Moline and Silvis area could be divided between Belgian and American (English) speaking Catholics and each parish could be self-supporting.

Bishop E.M. Dunne of the diocese of Peoria assigned the Rev. P.J. Barry of Rapid City to direct the work of the new organization. Rev. Barry, born in Ireland, was ordained in London in 1910. Father Barry gained an enviable reputation as a pulpit orator and because of a very enthusiastic approach to his work he acquired many friends in his brief period of service to the community. Since the work on the American Catholic Church in East Moline was just beginning, the Rev. Barry, because of his organizational abilities, was deemed the logical leader of the new parish. While assigned to the East Moline project, Rev. Barry remained at the Rapid City parish and continued his residence in that community.

At an organizational meeting on March 13, 1919, it was announced that the new parish would be known as Holy Name Parish. Plans were completed to hold the first mass in the Lyric Theater, 7th street between 15th and 16th avenues, on Sunday, March 23rd. Rev. Barry advised that permanent organization of the parish would be matters to be taken up at a meeting to be held in the near future. Plans also included a school and housing for the sisters who would staff the school. In other action, women attending this meeting formed the Altar Society and elected the following officers: President, Mrs. W.A. Courtney, Vice President, Mrs. J.E. O'Brien and Secretary, Mrs. Robert Gunther.

On March 21st, it was announced that a choir of 20 voices was formed and would sing at the first services at the Lyric Theater. Mrs. John Cunningham was the director.

A fund drive, directed by Father Barry, was begun on March 31st, 1919. Funds pledged and collected would be used to purchase property and to cover the cost of construction of the church, school, convent, and rectory. It was hoped that the drive could be completed by Easter. By early May, approximately \$30,000 had been subscribed.

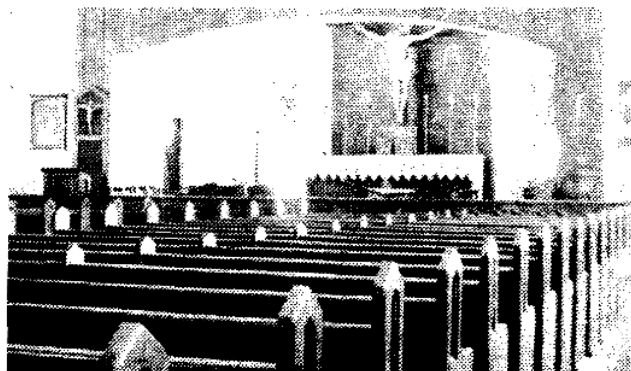
On May 8th, 1919 Rev. Wm. Cleary, who previously had been an assistant at St. Joseph's in Rock Island, and presently pastor of St. Mary's in Mendota, arrived in town with a letter from Bishop Dunne, appointing him as pastor of Holy Name Parish. A petition, appealing to the Bishop to reconsider this appointment and reassign Father Barry to Holy Name, was circulated and signed by many Catholics and Protestants who had become friends with Father Barry in the short period of time he worked on this project. This petition, in no way reflected on the abilities of Father Cleary, nor resentment of his assignment to this area, but rather indicated sincere respect and reverence for Father Barry, confidence in his purpose and deep regret at his departure.

Father Cleary officially assumed the roll of Pastor of Holy Name Parish with the celebration of mass on Sunday, May 18th, 1919. On May 20th, Father Cleary assured the building committee that work would soon begin on the new church at 6th street and 17th avenue. The building committee was composed of: Joseph Gumber, Paul Gumber, George Speck, J.L. Brady, and E.M. Heider. The proposed church would be two stories tall with a large assembly room and hall in the basement.

The main floor (church area) would seat about 500 and the second floor would be classrooms. Ground breaking ceremonies were held on May 28th. Cost of the church and school building would be approximately \$50,000 and a brick rectory was to be built the following spring. The house next to the church site was moved to a vacant lot at 722 17th avenue and was used by Father Cleary as a

Interior of church, today this is the school, teachers' lounge and office.

rectory. Hamilton Dox, Peoria architect, drew the plans and specifications and on June 4, Father Cleary obtained a permit to begin excavation. The permit was for \$35,000 but Father Cleary indicated that "when completed and equipped the total expenditure



would be more than \$50,000." It is not known when and why the name of the parish was changed from Holy Name to St. Anne Parish.

On Sunday, May 9th, 1920 the first mass was held in the new church building. The first service at 9:00 a.m. included the laying of the cornerstone and at 10:45 a.m. a solemn high mass was celebrated by the Rev. Wm. Cleary with Father D.R. Durkin of Rock Island as deacon and Father Neberski of Moline as sub-deacon. Later that month, the church building was dedicated by Bishop Dunne and work on completing the entire building continued.

In May, 1925 Father Cleary announced that the school would open in the fall staffed by the Sisters of Charity, B.V.M. from Dubuque, Iowa. The seven room house on the corner of 6th street and 18th avenue was purchased from St. John's



Evangelical Church for use as a convent. The house was extensively remodeled and increased in size with the addition of a chapel and four bedrooms.

The "old" convent and the house "next door" served as a classroom for 1st and 2nd grades.

Five sisters from Dubuque arrived on Saturday, August 15th, 1925 to take up residence in the convent and began preparations to open the school to an expected

enrollment of approximately 160 students early in September. The second story of the church building had four classrooms with two classes scheduled for each room. The area between the church and the convent was filled in with cinders and served as a playground for the students.

On October 1st, 1925 the first in a series of card parties sponsored by the Altar Society was held in the basement of the church building. Proceeds from these events would be used for the school which began in the fall.

Commencement exercises for the first class to graduate from St. Anne School were held on Tuesday, June 8th, 1926. Father Cleary congratulated the nine graduates and presented diplomas to: Dorothy McClain, Mildred Montgomery, Mary Anne Phelps, Loretta Rodgers, Helen Thorngren, Raymond Hatfield, Matthew Hibernik, John Oscar and James Woodworth.



**Class of
1946**

was utilized as the church while the former church area was converted to classrooms.

World War II halted any attempt to build a new church but construction finally started in March, 1951. The cornerstone of the church was laid in September, 1951 by Archbishop J.H. Schlarman, Bishop of Peoria. The church was dedicated by Bishop Cousins on October 5, 1952 and mass was first celebrated in the new church on Easter Sunday, 1953.



Father
Cleary laying
the first
brick of the
new school
annex.

In 1959 a four classroom annex was completed and in 1962 construction was begun on the parish hall and school gymnasium which is known as Cleary Hall. Construction of a new convent for the sisters was begun in May, 1966 and was ready for occupancy in June, 1967. The convent was built on the site of the original convent and former bungalow used for a school. During construction, the basement of the school was converted into a temporary home for the sisters. Father Cleary, through hard work and dedication became a most well known and admired man in the community. He devoted his entire life to St. Anne's and was very highly respected by everyone who knew him. From the time he came to St. Anne's in 1919 until his retirement in 1972, St. Anne's was "his church". After he entered "eternal life" on August 16th, 1977 his body was buried in a tomb, fashioned with stones left over when the rectory was built, next to the church. The headstone on the grave contains Father Cleary's handprints.

Since the beginning of St. Anne Parish a total of 20 young people from the parish have dedicated their lives to the religious community as sisters and priests. The eleven women from St. Anne's who entered the sisterhood are: Sister Mary Anne Phelps, Sister Janet McGonigle, Sister Margo McIntosh, Sister Mary L. Hynd, Sister Theresa Odendahl, Sister Loretta Marie DeJulio, Sister Ester Lerch, Sister Pierre (Rosemary Aldrich), Sister Marie Canfield, Sister Paula Helenthal and Sister Mary Coie. Tim Granet, a graduate of St. Anne School, was ordained a permanent deacon for St. Pius X Parish in Rock Island. Nine young men from the parish have been ordained as priests. They are: Rev. Raymond Lassuy, Rev. John W. Niemeyer, Rev. Ralph W. Aldrich, Rev. Carl Schulte, Rev. John VanWiel, Rev. Duane Jack, Rev. Thomas Mezur, Rev. Bruce Lopez and Rev. Richard Soseman.

Another milestone was reached at St. Anne's during the summer of 1946. In early August, Rev. Joseph Wolvers was assigned as the first assistant priest to assist Father Cleary and he remained until March of 1953 when he was assigned as pastor in another parish.

In March of 1967, Rev. John F. O'Connor, the first principal of Alleman High School was assigned as Vicar Adjuator at St. Anne's as Father Cleary's advanced age and failing health were making it more difficult to administer the operation of the church. Father O'Connor remained at St. Anne's until 1972.

A total of twenty one priests have served St. Anne's during the first 75 years in East Moline, nine as pastors and twelve as assistants. The pastors are: Monsignor Wm. Cleary (1919-1972), Rev. John F. O'Connor (March 1967-1972), Rev. Edward Bawiec (Three months in 1972), Rev. Michael VanRaes (1972-1978), Rev. Joseph Anderson (1976-1978; co-pastor), Richard Fagan (1978-1983; co-pastor), Rev. Francis Ryan (1978-1979; co-pastor), Rev. Albert Hallin (1983-1988) and Rev. Robert D. O'Connor (March 1988-Present).

**Father John O' Conner (right)
Father Cleary (left)
Celebrating Father Cleary's 60th and
Father O'Conner's 25th anniversary
of ordination.**



Assistant priests include: Rev. Joseph Wolvers (August 1946-March 1953), Rev. Cornelius Hollerich (March 1953-June 1957), Rev. Stanley Malinowski (September 1956-June 1957), Rev. Arthur Bray (June 1957-August 1959), Rev. Robert Gilles (June 1957-August 1966), Rev. Christopher Schramm (August 1959-October 1961), Rev. Raymond Weimer (October 1961-March 1967), Rev. Denis MacKessy (June 1966-June 1968), Rev. George Dorsey (June 1968-June 1975), Rev. Lawrence Sepich (1975-1976), Rev. David Heinz (1979-1985) and Rev. Rick J. Oberich (1985- 1986)

In addition to these men who have contributed so much to the success of the parish, a much larger number of dedicated women have helped immensely in organizing and conducting the parish school. These are the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary who have been assigned to St. Anne's since 1925. Due to incomplete records on file, it is impossible to list the names of all the nuns who have served so faithfully over these many years and so, on behalf of the entire parish family, we extend a huge "thank you" to the B.V.M's and we trust they will be able to continue their service for many more years.