

Centre Bow

Prepared by Jeanette Lammers

Constance

St. Joseph Parish

Updated 2017

The first Catholic farmers of Centre Bow traveled to St. Helena until 1877. The Pastor of Bow Valley came to Centre Bow until 1886, and then the Hartington Pastor served the religious needs of Centre Bow for a year. In 1887 Centre Bow became a mission of Menominee.

The first school was erected in 1874 with B. Josten as teacher and the new schoolhouse was built in 1884 on the property where the ball diamond was located.

The Post Office was housed in homes. Joseph Kremer was postmaster in 1874, John Meyer in 1893, Anton Serres in 1899 and Isidore Hofmaier in 1905. The Post Office was discontinued in 1909.

St. Helena was the first church to serve northern Cedar County. Menominee was the second and Centre Bow was the third. When the railroad came through in 1906 the first school and post office were moved to the west. Carpenters; Ferdinand and Clement Walter, Joseph Kube, built a frame church and William Mueller Sr. The Church was completed in 1894, and then in 1899 lightning damaged the tower and entry. Repairs were made and a second sacristy was added.

In 1895 a miracle occurred at the residence of the schoolteacher, Martin Eberhard. He was a Lutheran minister until 1892 and became Catholic. He arrived in Constance in 1893. The miracle was the cure of his daughter Clara who had suddenly become ill with what seemed to be brain fever and sleeping sickness. During one of her few conscious moments she insisted that Fr. Renner say a Mass in honor of St. Clara and St. Cecilia. Immediately after the Communion Clara became conscious and in two weeks was fully restored to health. "Truly," concludes Professor Eberhard, "an indubitable proof of the power of the Sacrifice of the Mass, in which Our Divine Savior is really and truly present."

"Gods Ways are Wonderful "Gottes Wege und Wunderbar", was written by Martin Eberhard, in 1906.

In 1896 there were 68 families attending St. Joseph. Father Baumgartner was the first resident Pastor. The early pioneers of the Parish were Anton Schumacher, Henry Foeke, Henry Ausdemore, Joseph Kremer, Bernard Welchert, Jacob Schieffer, Clem Asbre, John Meyer, Ferdinand Buschelman, and Joseph Willenbring families. With Fr. Brass as Pastor, Crofton St. Rose was a mission of Constance until 1908. Father Pieper came in 1909 and Fordyce and Holy Cross (Lammers Ranch) became a mission of Constance community. The Hegge Station and John John Store were a vital part of the Community as well.

The brick school cornerstone was laid in 1924 under the direction of Fr. Hundt and Henry Stuckenhoff. Henry Stuckenhoff builder of our School and the Immaculate Conception Church in St. Helena was a brother-in-law of John Lammers.

Our School building, which is now our Parish Center, has a full basement, 4 classrooms, a gymnasium and a stage.

Fr. Westerman arrived for a few months and then Fr. Latsch arrived in 1928. Fr. Latsch remodeled the southwest classroom for a chapel to be used during the cold winter months. He also planned the annual picnic or Bazaar and "God's Acre" in which each farm would donate one *acre* of corn, yearly. These are very important fundraisers still today.

Fr. Buehler came in 1942. In 1951 Fr. Kluthe came to St. Joseph, and in 1954 The Benedictine Sisters arrived and became the teachers of the school until 1968 when the school was closed. Twenty-six students went to St. Rose, 24 to West Catholic and 20 went to school at Hartington Public, Crofton Public, and Cedar Catholic.

It was a sad day for the Constance parish to lose the school as there was a gym and hot school lunches, while West Catholic or St. Rose did not have either.

In the 1970's the Church was renovated in accordance with Vatican II. In 1993 the Crèche (Nativity) was located (sold at auction years earlier) and refurbished by Jeanette Lammers, and returned to St. Joseph Church. Another sad day was 1978 when we no longer had a resident Pastor after Fr. Don Stortz left. Fr. Kraft came in 1978, Fr. Cleary in 1982, Fr. Leise in 1986, Fr. Steffensmeier in 1991, Fr. Grimmond in 1992 and Fr. Wasikowski for a few years. Priests came from Fordyce or Crofton to say Mass. Fr. English till 2004, Fr. Schmitz till 2007, Fr. Fulton till 2014 and Fr. James Keiter ~~presently~~.

Cliff Steffen is the cemetery caretaker.

We still pray to St. Joseph every Sunday to guide and keep our parish family.

There are 6 stained cut glass windows on each side and back, and two in the Sanctuary, these two are a different style. The Crèche' was purchased in about 1940 by Fr. Buehler. None of the original statues from 1940 remain in the church today. Refurbishing the church started in 2009 and new altars made by Melvin and Fred Arens were installed in time for Easter 2012 and by 2014 the statues were all displayed.