

SACRED HEART CHURCH, OAKWOOD, NORTH DAKOTA
Parish Centennial History - 1981

Part I

Page

8 - Founding of the Parish

19 - Church Trustees

Part II

20 - Age of Progression

21 - Doctors, Post Office, Town

23 - Early Settlers

Part III

39 - Second Era Generation

48 - The School Era

Part IV

57 - Vocations to Religious Life

61 - Pastors

62 - Parish Surviving

70 - Present Day Generation

Compliments of Dick Bernard

www.chez-nous.net/fc.html

Son of Henry Bernard and Esther Busch

Grandson of Josephine Collette (p. 27) and Henry Bernard

Great Grandson of Octave Collette and Clotilde Blondeau (p. 27)



Dick Bernard

6905 Romeo Road

Woodbury, MN 55125-2421

651-730-4849

dick_bernard@msn.com

www.chez-nous.net

www.peacesites.org

www.outsidethewalls.org/blog

www.AMillionCopies.info

Individually and together, we can!



The Oakwood Band with Professor Cote in 1909.



Oakwood Ball Team - 1910: back row, left to right, Wilfrid Parent, John Pellant, Pit Billadeau, Alex Gagnier, Albert St. Antoine, Arthur Pellant, Wilfried Goulet; middle, Alcide Collette, O. R. LaBerge, Alfred Lessard, Wilfred Collette, Ernest LeFevre, Joe LeBlanc; front, Joe Collette, Silvio Goulet, Pete Faille, George Lessard and Bernard Pellant.

Second Era Generation



Harry and Lillie Brosius family (1949): left to right, bottom, Bill, Lawrence and Cyril; top row, Edward, Lucine, Lillie (mother), Harry (father), Donna and Joe.



John Brosius and Rose Ann Currie on their wedding day, April 9, 1918.



Arsen Campbell, son of Joseph Campbell and Alphonsine (Harel) Campbell, and Flora, daughter of Joseph and Apollina (Lanctout) Campbell. They had four children – Antoinette and Oswald who are pictured, and Rene, who died in 1925, and Paul Ivan, who died in 1916.



Mr. and Mrs. Paul E. (Marietta Peterka) Campbell. Paul, son of William and Amanda (Laberge) Campbell and Marietta, daughter of W. S. and Josephine (Burianek) Peterka: front row, left to right, Nancy, Paul E., Jeannie, Marietta and Mrs. Greg (Carol) Gardner; back row, Bill, Tom, Mrs. Robert (Diane) Mihulka and Greg.



Mr. and Mrs. Harold Campbell and family. Harold was the son of Victor and Philomina (Collette) Campbell. Bertha was the daughter of Joseph and Mary Ann (Laberge) Samson. (Both are now deceased.) Their family, left to right, front row, Mrs. Arnold (Judy) Lizakowski, Mrs. Duane (Susan) Carpenter and Mrs. Patrick (Patricia) Buckley; back row, Robert (Joe), Roger, Michael and John (Butch).



Mr. and Mrs. Frank (Marie Gourde) Byzewski. Frank, son of John Byzewski and Polly Stigar. Marie, daughter of Joe Gourde, Jr., and Alphonsina Campbell. Sons are (left) Jeffrey and James (right).



Almond Collette, born and raised in the Oakwood area, married Diana (Primeau) of St. John, N. Dak., in 1926. They farmed in Acton Township. They had nine children - Merlyn of Grafton; Mrs. Melvin (Doris) Benson of Detroit Lakes, Minn.; Ronald of Longview, Wash.; Leroy of Cloverdale, Oregon; Mrs. Curtis (Iris Ann) Holten of Longview, Wash.; Alan of Grafton; Mrs. Bill (Diane) Hanson of Longmont, Colorado; Mrs. Richard (Mary) McCool of Longview, Wash.; and Philip, Longview, Wash., who was killed in a truck accident in 1978.



Arthur Collette, son of Ovide and Olivine (Labege) Collette, married Louise, daughter of Joseph and Alphonsine (Harel) Campbell, in 1916. Children are - Romeo, Mrs. Frederick (Juliette) Lessard, Mrs. Maurice (Agnes) Lessard, Mrs. Simeon (Margaret) Demers, Maurice, Kenneth, Roland, Mrs. Roman (Joyce) Lessard, Mrs. Leonard (Frances) Schuster, and Mrs. Richard (Carol) Narlock.



William, son of Joseph and Alphonsine (Harel) Campbell, and Amanda, daughter of Joseph LaBerge and Georgiana (Boutiller) LaBerge. Amanda and William have been members of Sacred Heart Church all their life until two years ago, when Amanda became a resident of the Lutheran Sunset Home and William resides with his son, Paul, and family. They had seven children. Annette, who died at the age of four. Pictured from left to right, back row, Father Joseph Campbell, Paul, Mrs. Frank (Helen Jane) Osowski, and Edmond; seated, Mrs. Stanley (Alice) Danielski, Amanda, William and Mrs. John (Marie Blanche) Osowski. They have been married 61½ years.



Mr. and Mrs. Elzear Garant: Elzear Garant, son of Emile and Marie (Moreau) Garant, and Eugenie, daughter of Alfred and Eudoxie (Labege) Sevigny. Both are deceased.



Alcide Collette, son of Octave Collette and Clothide (Blonide) Collette, married Beatrice DeSautel, daughter of David and Celina (Robillard) DeSautel, April 17, 1917. They have two children - Mrs. Truman (Evelyn) McCarty of Grand Forks, and Maurice D. Collette of Oakwood. Beatrice passed away in 1967, and Alcide is a resident of Valley Memorial Home, Grand Forks, N. Dak.



Edmond Collette, son of Ovide and Olivine (Laberge) Collette, and Clara, daughter of Eugene and Delvina (Gourde) Rheaume. Pictured from left to right, standing, Mrs. Charles (Theresa) McWilliam, Mrs. Mike (Rose Marie) Emery, Mrs. Robert (Mary) Maisano and Renee; seated, Edmond and Clara Collette.



Mr. and Mrs. William Deloria. Pamela (Collette), (Sabourin) Deloria was the daughter of Arcadus Collette.



Silvio Collette, son of Ovide and Olivine (Laberge) Collette, and Maria, daughter of Charles Z. and Louisa (Pilon) French; left to right, Gerard, David, Dominic, Antonio, Daniel, Bruno, Lionel, Louis; front row, Alice, Silvio, Maria, Mrs. James (Bernadette) Gallagher, and Mrs. Steve (Germaine) Perkerewicz.



Edmund J. Dolan and Mary (McBride) Dolan Family - 1943: Edmund J. Dolan (deceased), son of Alfred T. Dolan and Catherine (Fitzgerald) Dolan, and Mary, daughter of Francis McBride and Sara (Drain) McBride. They came from Iowa in 1919. Pictured back row, left to right, Eugene, Mrs. Norbert (Kathleen) Corriveau, John J., Raymond; front row, Donald, Mrs. Dolan, Dorothy Dolan Kelsh, Mr. Dolan, and Mrs. Hilary (Jeanette) Osowski.



Alcidas Corriveau, son of August Corriveau and Emilie (Sanfacon) Corriveau, married Margaret Krier, daughter of John and Katie (Stuchen) Krier, in 1912. They have two children - Norbert of Crookston, Minn., and Mrs. Maurice D. (Isabel) Collette of Grafton. They farmed in Acton Township until retiring in the Oakwood Village. Alcidas is deceased and Margaret resides at the St. Anne's Guest Home, Grand Forks, N. Dak.



Cypriene French, son of Eustache French and Philomene (LaLonde French), and Ida, daughter of Alfred Parent: left to right, standing, Ernest, Arbella (Mrs. Louis Gourde), and Joseph. Deceased at the time were Ernestine and Eva.



Damas French, son of Alcide and Delima (Sampson) French, and Jennette Sabourin, daughter of Joseph and Alma (Major) Sabourin. Pictured from left to right, standing, Wesley, Duane, Darryl, Mrs. William (Beverly) Garster, and Ordean; seated, Jennette, Mrs. Douglas (Janice) Loos, and Damas. Not pictured is Mrs. Lorne (Shirley) Van Camp of Omaha, Nebraska.



Leo French, son of Oscar and Dora (Sabourin) French (both are deceased), and Emilia, daughter of Max and Laura (Misialek) Schuster of Grafton. Pictured left to right, standing, Mrs. Gary (Jackie) Emter, Karen (deceased), and Robert; seated, Emilia and Leo.



Homer and Clarinda French Family – parents of five children: standing, left to right, Mrs. Leonard (Cecilia) Sass, Charles, Mrs. George (Therese) Samson, Murphy, Anthony, and Mrs. Richard (Agnes Marie) Stewart.



Oscar French, son of Charles Z. French and Louisa (Pilon) French, and Dora Sabourin, daughter of Modeste Sabourin and Malo Sabourin. They had two children – Leo French and Mrs. Reo (Rita) Riopelle, both of Grafton.



Joe French, Sr., Family – Joe (father), son of Cyprian and Ida (Parent) French, and Alma (mother), daughter of Edward and Bridget (Sabourin) Lafreniere. Children right to left, front row, Mrs. Rodney (Marie) Glennen, Mrs. Clarian (Adel) Hudacko, Mrs. Ray (Joan) Irani; second row, Joe, Jr., Gerald, Hector, Lowell, Bennett, and Eugene.



Raymond French (deceased), son of Alcide and Delima (Sampson) French, and Jeanette, daughter of Alfred E. Lessard and Alvina (Demers) Lessard. They had four sons. Pictured left to right, seated, Raymond, Jeanette, Roger (on mother's lap), Donald, Ronald and Gary (lower front) Jeanette French is now Mrs. Earl (Jeanette) Lizakowski of Grafton.



Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Gallagher (Alma Samson) and son, Terry.



Regan and Jan (Morgan) Gourde. Regan is the son of Jeffrey and Margaret (Sevigny) Gourde. Jan is the daughter of John and Dorothy (Danielski) Morgan.



Louis Gourde, son of Joseph and Alphonsina (Campbell) Gourde, and Arbella, daughter of Cyprien and Ida (Parent) French, and daughter, Eileen.



Mr. and Mrs. Victor (Jeanette Lafreniere) Gourde Family – Victor, son of Joseph Gourde, Jr., and Alphonsina (Campbell) Gourde, and Jeanette, daughter of Edward Lafreniere and Bridget (Sabourin): left to right, front row, Mrs. Randy Hanavold (Mary Lynn), Mrs. Jeanette Gourde, Victor (insert), and Mrs. Gary (Judy) Smith; top row, Gene, Ronald, Edward, Joseph, Raymond.



Sons in the John Currie family were, left to right, back row, John and Ambrose; front, Lawrence, Jack Bruski and John Brosius.



In the John Currie family were five girls, left to right, Lilia (Mrs. Jack Bruski); Beula (Mrs. Fred Nelson); Mary (Mrs. Jim Kiley); Minnie (deceased at age 16), and Rose Ann (Mrs. John Brosius).



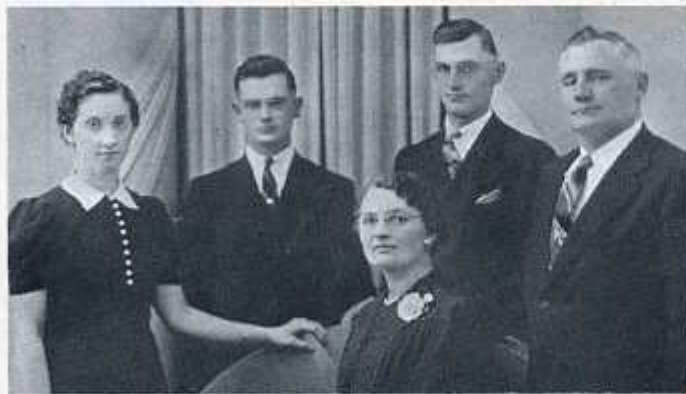
L. P. (Pete) LaCoste, son of Pierre LaCoste and Celanire (Parent) LaCoste, and Mary, daughter of Edward Lafreniere and Bridget (Sabourin) Lafreniere. They had five children – Adalore (killed in action in World War II), Mrs. Joe (Clarice) Turcotte, Mrs. Amie (Elaine) Turcotte, Delina (Sister Angelita), a Carmalite nun, and Albert LaCoste.



Edmond, son of Eugene Lafreniere and Angeline (French), and Marie Louise, daughter of Philorum Sevigny and Laura (Proulx) Sevigny. Children are Paulette (Lauren Roseno), Clifford, Gerilyn, Michael, Katherine (Dean Kirkeby).



Eugene, son of Edward Lafreniere and Bridget (Sabourin) Lafreniere, and Angeline, daughter of Alcide French and Delima (Sampson) French. Children are front row, Theresa (Bender), Arlene (Liles), Anita (O'Hanlon), Mary (Breck), and Joyce (Brown); back row, Edmond, Edgar, Albert, Leo, and George.



Alfred E. Lessard, son of Edward Lessard and Rosanna (LaCoste) Lessard, married Alvina Demers, daughter of Daniel Demers, Sr., and Albina (Primeau) Demers (they are all deceased). They had four children - Blanche died in infancy, pictured are Jeanette (Mrs. Raymond French) and now Mrs. Earl Lizakowski, Maurice, and Frederick of Grafton.



Joseph LaHaise, Jr., son of Joe LaHaise, Sr., and Roseanna (Lessard) LaHaise, and Edith Silewski, daughter of John and Rosy (Gradzieleski) Silewski of rural Drayton, were married in 1936 at Grafton. They moved to a farm 1½ miles northwest of Cashel and lived there for 38 years until the sudden death of Joe, Jan. 12, 1975. They had two daughters who died in infancy and have five surviving sons namely, Duane, Jerry, Robert, William and Richard.



George, son of Etienne Lessard and Sophronie (Collette) Lessard, and Rachel, daughter of Oliver Pilon and Agnes (French) Pilon of the Cashel area, were married in 1922 and lived in their home in the Oakwood village until 1978 when they moved to Grafton. They have always been members of the Sacred Heart Church. They are the parents of (left) Roman, the youngest, Mrs. Harold (Agnes) Kamrowski, the oldest, and Daniel. The boys both live in this area and Agnes is now of Lake George, Minn. George passed away in 1980.

Joseph LeGault, the son of Joseph LeGault, Sr., and Leontine (Baillargeon) LeGault lived in this area all his life. He had one brother, Eugene (deceased), and two sisters, Ann, killed in an accident when young, and Louise (LeGault) Barkman living in California. Joe passed away in 1979.





Joseph Lessard, son of Etienne Lessard and Sophronie (Collette) Lessard, and Bertha (Campbell) Lessard. Pictured are Arsene, Philomena, Roland, Sr. Theresa, Victor, Marcel, Sr. Bertha (Blanche), William, Ernestine and Francis.



Joseph E. Lessard, son of Louis Lessard and Exilia (Primeau) Lessard. Their children pictured are Verna, Vernetta, Beatrice, Rita, Anna, Annette and Richard.



Richard Lessard (deceased), son of Joseph E. Lessard and Alphonsine (LeFebvre) Lessard, and Florence, daughter of Stanley Kowalczyk and Stella (Gonsorowski) Kowalczyk, both are now deceased. Pictured left to right, top row, Mrs. Maynard (Lucille) Reiger, Ricky, Florence (mother); second row, Mrs. Charles (Rosemary) Johnson, Roger, and Mrs. Tom (Mary) Caverly; and seated in front is Richard (father).



Victor, son of Joseph Lessard and Bertha (Campbell) Lessard, and Angeline, daughter of William Collette and Naomi (Patnaude) Collette. They had two children - Bishop Raymond Lessard of Savannah, Georgia, and Mrs. Charles (Evelyn) Smith of Longview, Wash.



Emay Pilon, son of Oliver and Agnes (French) Pilon, married Delphine Collette, daughter of William and Naomi (Patnaude) Collette. Pictured from left to right, Emay, Oliver, Frank, Regina (Munter), Mrs. Marvin Pederson, Jerome, and Delphine.



Joseph Pilon, son of Oliver and Agnes (French) Pilon, married Marie Ann (French), daughter of Andrew French and Aurore (LaBerge) French, in 1925. They lived and farmed in the Cashel area until 1955 then moved to the Oakwood village. Joe passed away in 1970 and his wife still lives in Oakwood. They have two sons, Adalore, East Grand Forks, Minn., and Marvin, Yakima, Wash.



Andrew and Mary (Marie) (Curtin) Rheaume. Andrew, son of Joseph and Louise (French) Rheaume and Mary (Marie), daughter of John and Anna (Galenski) Curtin. Children are Mary Louise and Mrs. Robert (Sharon) Burns.



George Seeba, son of George Seeba, Sr., and Catherine (Hinke) Seeba. George lived in Acton Township all of his life and married Barbara Krier, daughter of John and Katherine (Stuchen) Krier, at the Sacred Heart Church of Oakwood Feb. 15, 1916. George died Jan. 31, 1949 and Catherine died Dec. 17, 1974. Both are buried in the church cemetery. They were the parents of two sons, Leslie the oldest (left), and Cyril (right). Leslie passed away Jan. 3, 1978.



Rene Sabourin, son of Joseph and Alma (Major) Sabourin, and Evelyn, daughter of Joseph and Agnes (Langowski) Dauksavage of Warsaw. They had five children, left to right, Mrs. Edgar (Betty) Fillion, Mrs. John (Lyndis) Lewco, Marcel Sabourin, Mrs. Wally (Susan) Rodgers, Mrs. Mark (Bonnie) Lindsay, Evelyn and Rene.



Simeon Sevigny Family: left to right, sitting, Clara (mother), Agnes, Sister Rose Therese, Simeon (father); standing, Donald, Lola, Fabien, Doloria, Ida, Shirley and Wilfred. Peter Sevigny (insert) died in 1950.



Edward Sevigny (deceased), son of Alfred and Eudoxie (LaBerge) Sevigny, and Emma (Demers) Sevigny. They had seven children: pictured left to right, top row, Mrs. Louis (Alma) Collette, Eugene, Emma, Edward, Victorien and Mrs. Roland (Rosalie) Lessard (deceased); bottom row, Mrs. Oliver (Flora) Pilon, Daniel, and Orell.





Leon E. Sevigny, son of Alfred Sevigny and Eudoxie (LaBerge) Sevigny, and Clara F. Dumas, daughter of Oliver Dumas and Jennie (Verville) Sevigny. Pictured left to right, back row, Wilmer, Mrs. Alwin (Irene) Altendorf, Raymond, Alfred (deceased), Mrs. Al (Olivine) Houdek, Mrs. Ted (Helena) Suda; front row, Mrs. Conrad (Edith) Gierszewski, Mrs. Leon Sevigny, Mr. Leon Sevigny, and Eva Mae Sevigny. Not pictured is another son, Rene, who was deceased at the time of this picture.



Ulric Sevigny, son of Alfred and Eudoxie (LaBerge) Sevigny, and Rose, daughter of Charles and Florida (Pagote) Baillargeon. Ulric passed away in 1930. From left to right, James (youngest), Albert, Francis, Camille; seated, Rose (mother), Mrs. Frank (Martha) Votava, Mrs. Peter (Jeanette) Gourde, and Mrs. Harold (Rose) Roetker.



Ronald, son of Frederick and Clarabell (Campbell) Demers, and Cyrilla, daughter of William and Angela (Dusek) Suda of Grafton. Ronald is now rural mail carrier out of Fordville. They moved there in 1980. Pictured, left to right, back row, Beverly, Robert and Denise, both girls are students at U.N.D.; second row, Mark, Marvin, and Roger; front row, Ronald, Thomas, and Cyrilla.



Oakwood Baseball Team - 1948, taken at the Minto Park: top row, left to right, Simeon Demers (p) (s s), Earl Fee (ex Warsaw catcher), Val Anderson (l b) (p) (c), Gene Dolan (outfielder), Edward Demers (outfielder), Louis Collette (umpire); bottom row, Richard Lessard (outfielder), Fabien Sevigny (l b), Wilfred (Fritz) Demers (p), Gene Sevigny (3 b), Johnny Sevigny (outfielder), Paul Campbell (2 b), and Raymond Dolan (catcher).

“The School Era”

Progression of Education

In connection with school facilities at Oakwood, it is interesting to note that a college once existed in the community. Father Michel Barras, with zeal for the education of youth, undertook the establishment of a private college. According to records the college building was erected in 1896 on the Octave Collette farm, now operated by his grandson, Maurice David, about one half mile west of the Oakwood Village. This college called St. Mary's College of Oakwood was a substantial building, equipped with the best accommodations of the time. It produced a favorable impression upon every visitor that entered its doors. The college, intended to have boarders and day pupils as well, opened in the fall of 1897, with the enrollment of eighty-five students. There were five instructors on the staff. One of the professors, P. J. Murphy, was already acquainted in the Oakwood Community at that time as he had charge of the Oakwood public school from 1893-1897.



P. J. Murphy



Saint Aloysius Academy in 1906.

Father Barras left the parish of Oakwood in June 1898. Perhaps the loss of his initiative in promoting higher education was a factor in the closing of the institution after two years in operation.

Father J. D. Dionne inherited both the college and the parish from Father Barras, but by the end of the year 1899 he left Oakwood after having closed the college for lack of interest, students and support.

A picture of that short lived college would certainly be an item of interest to the present generation. Unfortunately in spite of much effort none has been found. But at least one person, Sr. Mary Edward Lafreniere, reported that she recalled seeing the college but not entering it. She remembered it as being light gray in color and resembling the second addition of St. Aloysius Academy — somewhat. She also said that her uncle, Joseph (Josie) Sabourin, a past parishioner of Oakwood attended the college. Sr. M. Edward was the daughter of Edward and Bridget (Sabourin) Lafreniere, early settlers of the Oakwood community. Unfortunately, Sr. Mary Edward just recently passed away during the writing of this book.



Ordained to the holy priesthood in Fargo, June 2, 1903, Father J. E. Lee was appointed at once as administrator of the Sacred Heart Church of Oakwood and arrived in the parish June 3. Father Lee would be considered as one who deserved much gratitude from the Oakwood community. When he came to Oakwood he was young, strong and full of energy and ambition. Not satisfied with the planning, supervising and financing a beautiful new church, he was also most anxious to provide the opportunity of religious training for the children of the parish. However, he would not make the same mistake of Father Barras of the previous decade. He would not attempt to provide a college education where Catholic educational training of any kind was yet unknown. He would begin at the lowest level and provide the first need, an elementary school.

Foundresses of St. Aloysius Academy, 1906. The date indicated is the day each of the sisters first arrived in Oakwood.

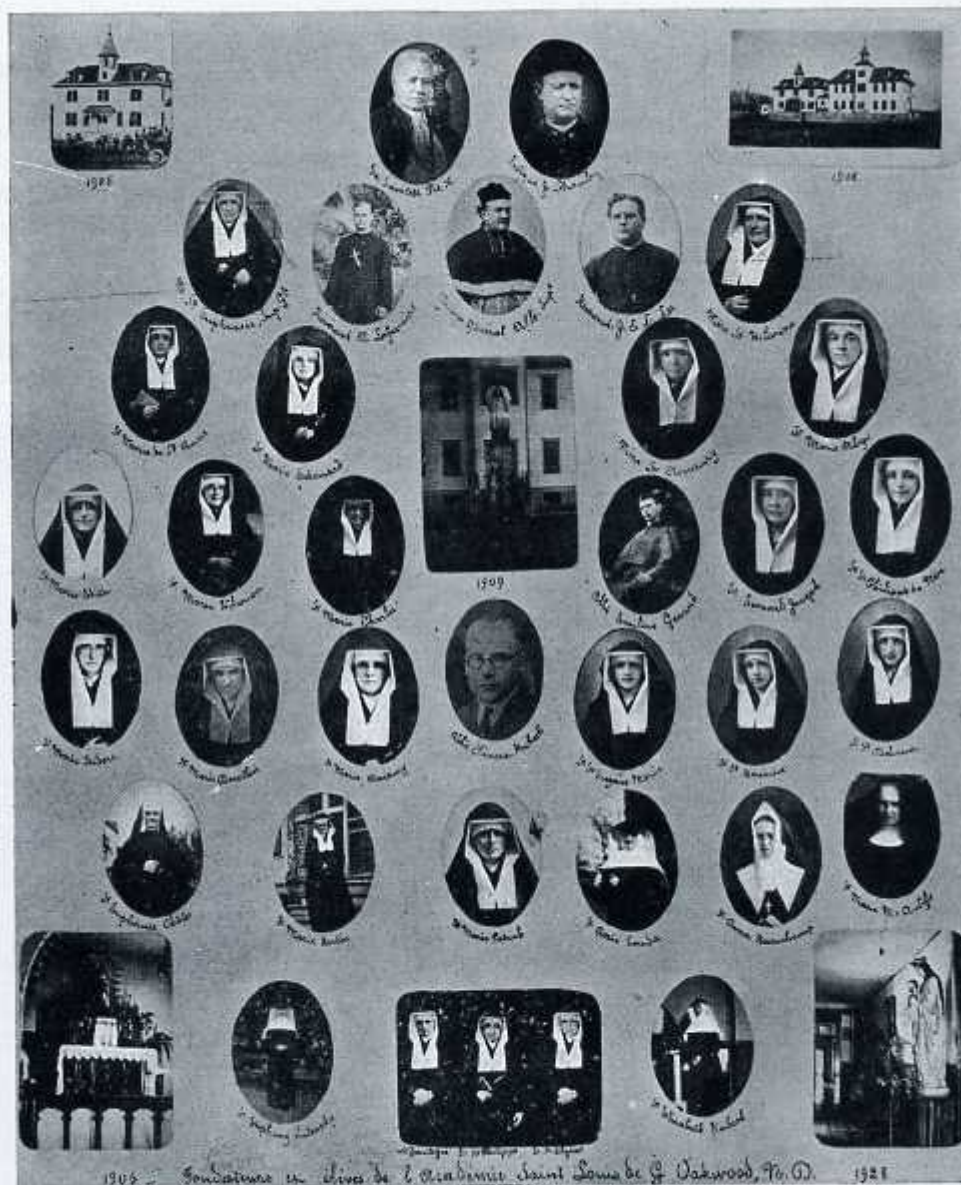
Father Lee with the help of his faithful parishioners erected a convent on the church property which had been donated to the parish by Joseph Charpentier (Carpenter). This building was located north of the newly built church on the banks of the Park River. The people of that particular era in the history of our parish deserve much credit for the sacrifices made to build a school as well as a church. However, the task was not as enormous as it might seem, for while Father Lee engineered the construction of a Catholic school, it was established not as a parochial school but as a private school, financed, owned and operated by the sisters.

The school was put under the protection of St. Aloysius of Gonzaga, a special saint of youth and patron saint of the pastor, Father Lee.

The school to be known as St. Aloysius Academy was to be under the administration and educational faculty provided by the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation, whose motherhouse was Broun Cotes de Nord, France. The Oakwood community had taken advantage of the unfortunate situation in France where so many religious orders were forced to seek refuge in other countries due to religious persecutions. A group of nuns of the order of the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation had, in 1903, entered the diocese of Fargo and opened a Catholic school at Wild Rice, N. Dak.

Hearing of the good work the devoted nuns were doing in Wild Rice during the previous three years, Father Lee asked them to take charge of his school. The sisters quickly accepted the invitation to come to Oakwood.

So to this newly built school, on August 25, 1906, Sr. Amaury arrived as the institution's first superior. She came from Wild Rice, where she had been teaching for three years. She was accompanied to Oakwood by Sr. Adeline. A few days later Sr. Adeline was transferred to Notre Dame Academy at Willow City, N. Dak., another new school then opening its doors for the first



Founders of Saint Aloysius Academy and some pupils who became members of religious orders, from 1906 to 1928.

St. Mary's College

OF
OAKWOOD,
Walsh Co.,

Four miles east of Grafton, and can be reached on G. N., and N. P.

**Music, Drawing,
Classical
and Commercial**

WILL OPEN ITS CLASSES
.. ON THE ..

2ND OF SEPTEMBER.

FACULTY:

REV. M. BARRAS, - President.
REV. J. F. MALO, Vice-President.
PROF. P. MURPHY, REV. J. O'NEIL.
REV. G. GAGNON, REV. J. RUEL.

From the Grafton Record
dated Sept. 14, 1898.

time. On August 30, Sr. Mary Patrick, Sr. M. Benoit and Sr. Gisele arrived. Sr. M. Gustave came to replace Sr. Adeline. The five sisters composed the first religious community of Oakwood.

The great joy of the people of the Oakwood parish and the gratitude of its pastor were expressed by Father Lee the first Sunday the sisters were in the parish. The following is a part of his message that has been reproduced in several accounts of the school's beginning. "We have today the privilege of possessing at last the Reverend Sisters of St. Mary of the Presentation, who came here to spend their life in prayer and in the education of your children. They have left their country, their home, their relatives and above all their own will to consecrate themselves entirely to the service of God. Henceforth, they will live in this parish, giving us the example of Christian virtues. You will see them rise at five o'clock every morning, to offer to God the very first moments of the day. You will see them approach the altar to partake of the Eucharistic banquet where they will strengthen their faith and renew their courage and zeal. You will see them every day spend six long hours teaching your children to be perfect citizens, perfect Christians. Then, the day's work being done, you will see them read their divine office, say their beads and commend to God, their soul and the souls of those committed to their care. This they will do not only one day, but all the days of their life, till the Lord may be pleased to call them to their reward. May they be blessed of God. May they spend among us long years of labor, of self denial, of merit."

When the sisters arrived, the carpenters were still working in the convent and the building was neither cleaned nor furnished. Within the next week the furniture arrived. Some generous ladies volunteered to help the sisters scrub and the whole structure was ready for the students. On Sept. 3, 1906, the doors of St. Aloysius Academy opened for the beginning of the first school year. There were thirty-six pupils enrolled, eight of them as boarders. It is now difficult to realize the inconveniences and hardships the sisters had to undergo during the first years, not the least being the lack of water. Their only source at that time was a well of salty water owned by Mr. Emile Garant about a thousand feet away. But their courage, their spirit of self sacrifice, aided by the grace of God enabled them to overcome any difficulty.

On Sept. 18, 1906, the school was solemnly dedicated by Rt. Rev. John Shanley, Bishop of Fargo. Before the closing of the ceremony of the blessing of the convent, the Rt. Rev. Bishop in a short address told the Oakwood parishioners how happy he felt to be with them. He congratulated them for all they had done for the support of religion in their parish. "For several years," said His Lordship, "I used to worry over your parish, and I often wondered if it would ever be organized according to the desire of the church. But today, I am satisfied with my Oakwood people. You have now a large and beautiful church, your children are brought up like Christians. I am therefore pleased with you. If



St. Aloysius Academy of Oakwood.

you ask me which of the two institutions you now posses, it is better to support the church or the school, I answer without hesitation: support your school first and the church next: for wherever there is a Catholic school, the church becomes a necessity; but if there is no school the church will not last long."

The good work achieved in the St. Aloysius convent was appreciated, not only by the people of the Oakwood Community, but also by those of the neighboring parishes. Thus, the increasing number of students registering for academic instruction and the enthusiasm of parents for the sisters and their spiritual work necessitated the expansion of the school facilities. Consequently, two years later in 1908, a second structure larger than the first was built. It was south of the original building and they could now accommodate some sixty boarders from outlying parishes and all the day pupils of the vicinity. In the first year of operation it gave education to sixty-two boarders and sixty-eight day pupils. To the teaching staff was added Sr. Luc, Sr. Sylvia, Sr. M. Timothee and Sr. Cecilia. This new construction was dedicated Oct. 6, 1908 by Bishop Shanley.

In 1909, Father J. E. Louis Lee donated a statue of St. Aloysius, which was placed on a pedestal on the front lawn of the convent. The pedestal was a gift of Mr. R. Jeffrey of Grand Forks. The ceremony of the dedication took place June 21, 1909, the patronal feast of the school. This statue is now located north of the Shrine of our Blessed Lady, which is across the road from the original site of the Academy.

Eight years of elementary education only had been offered until 1910, when four years of high school was added to the curriculum. The first high school graduating class was in 1914 and consisted of one pupil, Amanda Laberge (now Mrs. William Campbell), a member of our parish at the writing of this book. The first eighth grade graduates in 1910 were Marie Garant and Anaise Baillargeon.

In 1914 County Supt. Erickson moved to close the Oakwood District Public School simply because there were only three pupils in attendance; all the others attended the academy. A request was made to the school board by the Supt. to the State Board of Education to close the public school and grant to the sisters the school taxes of the district. The request was approved by the State Supt. of Public Instruction, and a very fortunate arrangement for the sisters. Although the academy remained a private school, the sisters became the teachers of the public school.

This arrangement prevailed until the passing of the anti-garb measure in 1948. Thereafter, the sisters were deprived of tax money for their salaries and means to operate their school. Father J. L. Bastien was pastor at Oakwood at that time. His contributions to the school were many and had great significance. One of his last, undoubtedly the most difficult, proved to be a most practical arrangement.

With the passing of the anti-garb measure, it became his lot to devise a plan to provide the necessary revenue to keep the academy open. He studied the situation diligently and called his people together. He quickly made them understand, with or without children of school age, the situation called for annual sacrifices in every home of the parish to maintain the school in operation. All land owners in the Oakwood district would contribute \$45.00 per quarter of land and parishioners outside the Oakwood district \$20.00 per quarter. There would be no tuition at the school for the children of the parish. The goal was to raise some \$4,000 each year for the academy.



The Oakwood Hockey Team and Coach, Edward LeClerc. Top row, left to right: David Demers, Marcel French, Alan Collette, Terry Gallagher, Joseph French, coach Edward LeClerc. Bottom row: Francis

Bessette, Donald Sevigny, Myron Demers, Donald Dolan, Richard LeClerc, Delbert French, Ronald Gourde.

At that meeting, a Catholic School Board was formed. The pastor became ex-officio president of the board. Those chosen to serve on the board were Victor Gourde, Bernard Gallagher, Leon Sevigny, Francis Altendorf, Edmund Dolan, and William Campbell. Others who served on the board in later years were Ovilla Demers, Renee French, Donald Demers, Hilary Osowski, Oliver Pilon, Francis Pilon, Ray Campbell, Frederick Lessard, Jeffrey Gourde, Louis Collette and Maurice D. Collette.

Thanks to the wise plan of support for the school, the sisters were able to accept the necessary transition from tax to strictly private existence without suffering any financial difficulty. They continued to operate under this plan relatively well until the closing of their school in 1967.

Father A. J. Richard was always interested in the welfare and education, both academic and religious, of the youngsters of his parish. He always worked zealously for the advancement of the school. He very rarely missed a weekly visit to every classroom in the school. He was also very interested in all extra curricular activities, especially sports. In the 1950's and early 1960's, the high school boys had a hockey team coached by Edward LeClerc in the winter. They had a baseball team coached by Ray Dolan in the summer. While they had few boys with which to participate in organized sports, they did very well.



The Oakwood Hockey Team of 1957. From left to right, back row: Fr. Antonio Richard, David Demers, Eldon Anderson (deceased), Don Sevigny, Richard LeClerc, Maynard Barta, Jerry LaHaise, James

Byzewski, and coach Edward LeClerc. Front row: Myron Demers, Jim Schanilec, Donald Dolan, Alan Collette and Joe French.

During the same period of time in the 1950's and early 1960's the high school had a Catholic Youth Organization. The C.Y.O. was under the direction and supervision of the sisters and pastor, Father Richard. There can never be enough said about the value of the C.Y.O. Its spiritual, social and educational benefits were immeasurable.

Knowing how he felt about the school, it would probably be safe to assume that one of Father Richard's saddest hours during his pastorate at Sacred Heart Church at Oakwood was the day he was informed by Mother Helen that they planned to close the school at the end of the school term of 1967. The high school had already been terminated in 1965. Father Richard had anticipated this possible closing due to the condition of the building. He had already been collecting and setting aside some money to build a new school. But after serving us faithfully for sixty-one years, it became financially not feasible for the nuns to continue operating their convent.

The closing of the school was looked upon with much sadness and a sense of great loss by every one. It was an especially frustrating time for the sisters who were at the school during that last year. Upon their shoulders fell the unexpected responsibility

of disposing of their possessions. Many of the school records were placed on file at the Walsh County Court House with the County Supt. of Schools in Grafton, N. Dak. Some of the students' records were taken to the Grafton Public School with the transference of the children. Some of their furnishings were either given away or sold. Their most valued possessions were taken to Maryvale at Valley City, N. Dak., or transferred to one of their other convents still in operation.

During that last year of school in 1966-67, there were only three sisters at Oakwood. The enrollment was approximately seventy-five pupils. Sr. Patricia Ann was the superior and taught grades six, seven and eight, Sr. Irene Marie taught third, fourth and fifth grades, and a lay teacher, Mrs. Alma Gallagher, taught first and second grades. Sister Gaetan did the cooking and generally took care of everyone.



The staff at the Academy the last year in operation (1966-67). Left to right: Sr. Patricia Ann, Sr. Irene Marie, Sr. Gaetan and Alma Gallagher.



The last high school graduates (1965). Left to right: Doris LeClerc, Mary Margaret French, Jeannie Campbell, Father Richard, Paul Gourde, Alan Gallagher and William Demars.

The last eighth grade graduating class consisted of Daryl Campbell, Bonnie Collette, Rodney Demers, Paul Dolan, Karen French (now deceased), Nancy French, Lowell Gallagher, Patricia Gallagher, Regan Gourde, Earl Lessard and Myron Seeba.

The last high school graduates (1965) were Jean Campbell, William Demars, Mary Margaret French, Alan Gallagher, Paul Gourde and Doris LeClerc.

The Migrant Summer School program really had its start at St. Aloysius Academy prior to being taken over by the Grafton Public School. The Migrant School was in operation at the academy in the summer of 1966 and the summer of 1967. Father Gerald McCarthy was the director of the program with both sisters and lay people working.

The Sisters sold their property to Melvin Durand and Wilmer Collette. They subsequently demolished the convent and have built new homes and now reside on the location where the convent had been situated. They are using the original driveways of the school. The flagpole is also in its original place.



These homes occupy the site of the former St. Aloysius Academy. The Wilmer Collette home is on the left, and the Melvin Durand home on the right.

They both use the original school driveways. The flagpole in the Durand yard is the same one that was in the school yard.

The following is a brief resume of the Sisters who at some time were assigned to Oakwood during the sixty-one years of operation. Mother Amaury was superior from 1906-1929. She is now deceased and buried at Spring Valley, Ill. Mother Marguerite Marie held this position from 1929 until 1938 and again from 1942 until 1946. During Sr. Maxime's reign as superior from 1938-1942, Sr. Marguerite remained as a full time instructor at the high school level. Mother Marguerite died at Broons, France. She had been a native of Belgium. She was succeeded by Mother Marie de la Sallette whose untimely death occurred a year later in Oct. 1947. She is buried in the Oakwood cemetery. Mother Marie de St. Jean was in charge from 1948 until 1954. She is buried at Spring Valley, Ill. Mother Agnes Marie was superior from 1954 until 1960, when Sr. Alphonse Marie was promoted to mother superior. She remained in charge until the closing of the high school in 1965. She had been at Oakwood for thirty-two years. Sr. Carmelita was in charge in 1965-66. Sr. Patricia Ann took over as superior during the last year.



Mother St. Amaury



Mother Ste. Maxime



**Mother Marie
De St. Jean**



**Sister
Alphonse Marie**



**Mother Marie
de la Sallette**



**Mother
Marguerite Marie**



Mother Agnes Marie



Sister Mary Dorothy



**Sister
Bernadette Marie**



Sister Rachel Marie



Sister Elizabeth Marie



Sister Mary Onesime



Sister Pauline Marie

Besides the mother superiors, some of the other sisters who served at the Academy were Sr. M. Benoit, Sr. M. Patrick, Sr. M. Gustave, Sr. Gisele, Sr. St. Helier, Sr. M. Timothee, Sr. M. Auxilatrice, Sr. St. Luc, Sr. St. Jean de Dieu, Sr. Sylvie, Sr. M. Claire, Sr. Sylvester, Sr. Imelda, Sr. Zachary, Sr. Joseph of the Sacred Heart, Sr. Michael, Sr. M. de St. Remi, Sr. Philippe de Neri, Sr. M. Dorothy, Sr. Benoitte, Sr. M. Onesime, Sr. Perpetua, Sr. Bernadette Maire, Sr. M. Cecelia, Sr. Charles Joseph (Anna), Sr. Elizabeth Marie, Sr. Rachel Marie, Sr. Elizabeth Rose, Sr. St. Nicephore, Sr. M. Ferdinand, Sr. St. Jean d'avila, Sr. Loretta, St. Leonard Joseph, Sr. Paula Marie, Sr. Catherine Ann, Sr. Mary Ann, Sr. Pauline Marie, Sr. M. Eva, Sr. Julia M., Sr. Alexandra, Sr. James Marie, Sr. Berard, Sr. Yolanda, Sr. Frances M., Sr. Gaetan, Sr. Mary Jane, Sr. Irene Marie, Sr. M. Joseph, Sr. M. Severin, Sr. Kathleen Amaury, Sr. M. Patrick Gallagher, Sr. M. Gertrude and Sr. Zita.



The above picture was taken on Aug. 22, 1971. On that occasion the people of the Oakwood parish paid tribute to area women who have given their lives to the service of God in the religious life. Former teachers and others who served at St. Aloysius Academy in Oakwood were also honored at this recognition event. Front row, left to right, are Sister Elizabeth Rose, F.S.M.; Sr. Eugene Marie F.S.M. (Amanda Rheaume); Sr. Leonard Joseph, F.S.M.; Sr. Mary Edward, F.S.M. (Virginia Lafreniere, now deceased); Sr. Elzear, F.S.M. (Elzire Garant); Sr. Victoria Marie, grey nurse (Victoria Corriveau); Sr. M. Hermas, Order of Jesus and Mary (Anna Chale); Sr. M. Odile des Anges, Order of Jesus and Mary (Euphemie Chale). Second row: Sr. Gaetan, F.S.M.; Sr. Paula Marie, F.S.M.; Sr. Delvina, F.S.M. (Josephine Rheaume, now deceased); Sr. Marlys, F.S.M.; Sr. Francis Marie, F.S.M.; Sr. Mary Theresa, F.S.M. (Theresa Lessard); Sr. Alphonse Marie, F.S.M.; Sr. Mary Patrick, F.S.M. (Theresa Gallagher); Sr. Mary Aloyse, F.S.M. (Rebecca Corriveau); Sr. Mary Dorothy, F.S.M.; Sr. Rose Therese, F.S.M. (Clarabel Sevigny); Sr. Anna, F.S.M.; and Sr. Mary Severin, F.S.M.

The sisters who served as choir leaders were Sr. Philippe de Neri, Sr. Marguerite Marie, Sr. M. Eva, Sr. M. Maxime, Sr. Elizabeth Rose, Sr. Loretta, Sr. Elizabeth Marie and Sr. M. Joseph.

The people of the Oakwood parish, past and present, will be forever grateful for having had their lives touched by the presence of the sisters in their midst for so many years. Their good influence along with the religious education is still in evidence among the children of this parish because the majority of the parents had the advantage of a good sound Catholic education.

Without a Catholic school, the teaching of religion to the children of the parish which had always been done by the sisters suddenly became the people's concern and responsibility. The majority of the children were taken into the Grafton Public School system. The Grafton schools had release time for religion. It was decided by the Oakwood parish council to take advantage of their offer, and let these children attend religion classes at St. John's parish at Grafton. A small number of children (about 25) belonged to the Drayton School District. No release time was available there. Monsignor Thomas Hendrikson and the resourceful mothers of these children started the first CCD classes at Oakwood for the Drayton District children.



CCD teachers and substitutes. Left to right, top to bottom: Mary Ann French, Jeanette Osowski, Roger Mattson, Pauline Osowski, Elaine Collette, Edmond Campbell, Alice Demers, JoAnn Mattson,

Verna Gourde, Alma Gallagher, Joyce Lessard, Fr. Pat, Pat Durand, Renee Kringstad. Absent: Ramona Demers, Judy Dolan.

After three years, it became apparent that it was imperative that CCD classes had to be implemented for all the children of the Oakwood parish at Oakwood. A group of concerned men and women of the parish with the leadership of Father Anthony Milne set up a CCD program that has since been in operation. With a much larger number of children (about 115) that would now be involved, their biggest difficulty was the shortage of classrooms. But with the kind offer of the use of some homes in the Oakwood village, the basement of the church and some classes at the rectory the problem was solved. Presently there are only about 70 students in the program. Even if many feel that it doesn't take the place of the Catholic school, under the guidance of Father Patrick O'Connell and some very dedicated teachers, it is a relatively effective program.

The history of a very important part of the parish had to be related very briefly. More could have been written. Nevertheless, a few of the things of significance to the people should be mentioned.

The beautiful chapel in the Academy has to be included in the advantages of a Catholic School. Its use helped the children understand, appreciate and practice their faith. The number of times the students gathered together in the chapel for various reasons was endless. There were the weekly masses for the students, innumerable rosaries recited, the making of the way of the cross, countless confessions were heard and an occasional retreat for the older boys and girls. It was not uncommon to see an older student or even a small child sneak into the chapel to say a little prayer or just to kneel there maybe.

St. Aloysius Academy was a source of togetherness for the parish. Any school event was always an occasion for a large gathering. A Christmas program was presented every year in the lower auditorium of the church. Every student participated, giving a reason for all parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles to attend, filling the place to capacity. A yearly junior-senior play, graduation, senior banquet and prom were all events that were attended and enjoyed by everyone.



Chapel in the St. Aloysius Academy, Oakwood, N.D., 1924.

