

A SHORT HISTORY OF
CUMBERLAND AREA CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

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History 121 T-C
April 27, 1984

As shown in the following text, many changes have taken place since the first regular Catholic services were held in Cumberland in 1880. The Catholic community of Cumberland started out with only one church, St. Mary of the Wayside, but due to cultural differences among the parishioners, the Catholics soon had two churches and one mission. Added to St. Mary's was St. Anthony the Abbot Church and the Corpus Christi Mission, with one priest serving other congregations as well. Many years went by before the members of the parishes began to again mix with each other. Today, there is again only one Catholic Church in Cumberland, St. Anthony the Abbot. The parish, to include everyone, is called Cumberland Area Catholic Community. In the following pages, I will show how this reuniting of the parishes came about.

The original Catholic population of Cumberland and the surrounding area consisted of Italians, French, Germans, Poles, English and Irish,¹ the Italians having the greatest number. Although they lacked a church, they did have regular services. The earliest Catholic services were held in what was known as the Company Store. The use of the building was provided free by it's owner.² These first services were held by missionary priests from New Richmond, Hayward and Ashland. Among these priests were Father De Paradis and Father Oderic. In 1883, under Father De Paradis, the congregation began construction of a church.³ The building was completed in 1884, but occasional services were held in the

church before its completion. This church became known as St. Mary of the Wayside.

In 1885, the Italians, who felt they were being discriminated against, left St. Mary's. With permission from Bishop Koudelka, they began construction of their own church. This church was built about a mile south of Cumberland near the Italian settlement. The parishioners themselves built the church and even the bricks were manufactured by one of the men, Sabino Donatelle.⁴ This church became known as St. Anthony the Abbot. A cemetery was laid out next to it, which served both churches. The first person to be baptized at St. Anthony's was Francisco Grill on August 18, 1886. The first marriage to take place there was that of Joseph Kirkland to Minia Rayome on October 8, 1886.⁵

From the beginning, the two churches were served by the same priest, living in Cumberland. The first priest to permanently preside over the two churches was Father George Keller.⁶ He became the regular pastor in 1885. He served for about one year. The second priest also served for one year. He was Father Michael Schorlek.⁷ During the time Father Schorlek was here, two important things took place. The first was the incorporation of St. Mary's Church. The date of Incorporation was January 8, 1885. The second thing that happened was a rectory was built adjoining St. Mary's. This rectory was later moved across the street where it became a private residence.

Father Peter Becker served the churches from 1887-1889;⁸ It was during this time that St. Mary's was dedicated. The dedication was by Bishop Flasch on October 24, 1888. The next priests to serve the churches were: Father Charles Jungblut, 1889-1892; Father Peter Dickopf, 1892-1895; Father N. Stolz, 1895-1896; and Father Gerhard Vadder, 1896-1897.

A new rectory was built at St. Mary's around 1900. It was built at the personal expense of the priest here at that time. Father Stephen A. Leinfelder served in Cumberland at two different times. He was here the first time from 1897-1904, and the second time from 1906-1907.⁹ During the two years he was gone, he was replaced by Father Louis Charron and Father P. Condon. The reason for Father Leinfelders absence was that he studied in Europe. While in Europe he received his PhD. and D.D. in philosophy and theology. It was during Father Leinfelder's first years in Cumberland that St. Anthony the Abbot became incorporated. The incorporation date was March 21, 1904.

Father Louis Colaganni came to St. Mary's and St. Anthony's in 1908 and he stayed until 1914. It was during his time as priest in Cumberland that the Corpus Christi Catholic Mission was added to the two other Catholic Churches. Corpus Christi is situated on 2½ acres of land 15 miles north of Cumberland in the Village of McKinley. The church was built on July 5, 6, and 7, 1911 at the cost of \$840.50.¹⁰ The date of incorporation was May 9, 1911.

Father J. Tognali served in Cumberland from February to October of 1914. Father M. Pulch served from October to December of 1914. Then from 1914-1917, Father B. Habraken served in Cumberland. Father Louis Colaganni then came back to Cumberland and stayed from 1917-1920.¹¹ In 1917, it was decided, that because of the Italians' increasing numbers, a new St. Anthony's church was needed. They enlarged and remodeled the church with few problems.

Father Henreus Teuwisse served in Cumberland from 1920 to 1926. It was during this time that a fire destroyed St. Anthony's Church. The parishioners began immediately to rebuild. My great-grandfather, Gioachino Ricci, was one of the men who worked on the construction of the new church. The building was finished in 1929. This is the building that stands today. Although the inside of the church has been remodeled, the structure itself remains the same. It was also during Father Teuwisse's time in Cumberland that the cemetery was incorporated. The official name is St. Mary's and St. Anthony's Catholic Cemetery and the date of incorporation was June 21, 1926.

The next priest to come to Cumberland was Father H. G. Shaney. In the history of the church, Father Shaney has served the longest time, from 1926 to 1948. He presided over the marriage of my grandparents, Michael E. Ritchie and Jessie E. Chido in 1930. Father Shaney also baptized my father, Michael A. Ritchie, in May 1940. He was well liked by all of the parishioners and, therefore, when the

Knights of Columbus were formed in Cumberland, in 1969, they called it the Father Shaney Council. It was during Father Shaney's time in Cumberland that St. Mary's Church was destroyed by fire. The church burned to the ground on Sunday, May 7, 1944. Because of the inadequacy of the local fire department, men of the community formed a bucket brigade to put out the fire. My great-uncle Jack Ritchie was one of the men that helped. After the fire, Father Shaney and the parishioners of both churches immediately began making plans to rebuild. During the period of time in which the church was under construction, the people of St. Mary's attended Mass at St. Anthony's. The building was completed and the first Mass was said in the new church on January 15, 1948.¹² The delay in the construction of St. Mary's was caused by difficulty in getting materials due to World War II. St. Mary's was dedicated by the Most Reverend Bishop Meyer on May 5, 1948. This is the building that stands today, although no services are held there. An interesting feature of St. Mary's of the Wayside is that it was the mother of many Catholic parishes and missions in the area. Other than St. Anthony's and Corpus Christi, of Cumberland, the priests served in Glenwood City, Almena, Spooner, Shell Lake and Clear Lake.

Father James Fagen served St. Mary's, St. Anthony's and Corpus Christi from 1948-1950. During the time Father Patrick Cunningham was in Cumberland, 1950-1954, Father Richard Herrmann was the assistant pastor.

In August, 1954, by decree of the Bishop of Superior, St. Anthony the Abbot became a parish.¹³ Father Richard Herrmann became the first priest of St. Anthony's and Corpus Christi mission, while Father Cunningham remained priest of St. Mary's. St. Anthony's was established as a national parish, meaning only those of Italian ancestry could belong to the parish. Members of this national parish could become affiliated with members of the English-speaking parish but not vice-versa. When the use of Italian was discontinued, the parish could have petitioned the Holy See to dismember the parish as a National Parish and erect it as a territorial Parish.¹⁴ As it is, this has never been done, although people of all nationalities now attend St. Anthony's.

After St. Anthony's was established as a full-fledged parish, the main concern of the people was to build a rectory. The people of the parish joined together in this project and began construction. There was no money in the parish treasury, so the people of the parish pledged and contributed money. My grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Mike Ritchie were in charge of collecting the money. Although money was hard to come by at this time, the house went up and was over half paid for in six months. While waiting for the completion of the house, Father Herrmann lived in the sacristy.

During this time the St. Anthony Alter and Rosary Society was very active. They helped teach catechism, had study clubs and raised money for furnishing the new rectory. The women's

society was very famous for their spaghetti dinner which was held to celebrate the feast day of St. Anthony. People came from all over to attend. Some of the older women also handmade all of the altar linens. They also cleaned the entire church once a week.

The men of the parish were also very active. They still belonged to the Society of St. Anthony the Abbot, which was formed around 1896.¹⁵ This society was on the order of the Knights of Columbus today. They helped raise money for the upkeep of the church and also had a band. The society was reorganized in the late 1950's.

In the time of Father Herrmann, the children of the parish were also very active. Every Wednesday night was known as "church night" in Cumberland. It was a time for Catholic High School students to get together for religious education. This is a tradition that still holds true today.

Father Patrick Cunningham, priest of St. Mary's died in 1954. Father John Schama then came to Cumberland and stayed for about two years. From this time until 1967, St. Mary's and St. Anthony's were served by two different priests. St. Mary's priests were: Joseph R. Mayou, 1956-1960; Philip P. Krembs, 1960-1964; and Thaddeus J. Lesniak, 1964-1967. The priests at St. Anthony's were: Leon Schloemer, 1959-1963; and Joseph McCormack, 1963-1967.¹⁶ It was Father McCormack who baptized me in December of 1964.

In July of 1962 my grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Mike Ritchie, bought a statue of St. Anthony the Abbot and donated it to the church. The statue was made in Carrara, Italy by Giuseppe Pisani. It is made out of White Carrara marble and stands 5 ft. tall. It was placed above the door of the church by my grandfather and his cousin, Bill Ricci.

In 1964, my grandparents again donated to the church. This time it was land near the church for additional cemetery plots. So that the church record could show, for legal reasons, that the church bought the land, it was sold to them for \$1.00.

In 1967, the two churches again came under the leadership of one priest, although there were still two parishes. The priest lived at the rectory at St. Anthony's and the rectory at St. Mary's was turned into C.C.D. classrooms. The priest that served from 1967-1972 was Father Frederick Broast. During Father Broast's time in Cumberland, St. Anthony's was remodeled,¹⁷ although plans for this were made at the time of Father McCormack. In renovating St. Anthony's, many of the statues were taken down. One of the statues taken away was a statue that was almost never seen anywhere else, a statue of the Blessed Trinity. St. Anthony's had to get special permission from Rome to even have the statue made because Canon Law forbids the making of any statue where the Holy Spirit is portrayed in human form. No one really remembers how official permission was granted. Some of the older parishioners

recall that it dates back to the days when Father H. G. Shaney was pastor.¹⁸ Permission was sought from Rome through Bishop O'Connor at the request of one of the local parishioners, Mrs. Carmella Sabato. Other changes that happened during the period of renovation included brightening up the sanctuary area. Where the statue of the Holy Trinity used to be are statues of the patron saint of the parish, St. Anthony and Our Lady of Mount Carmel with her infant son. The baptismal font given ten years earlier in memory of Josephine Curella had been replaced by a new font, that matched the other things on the altar. The font that was donated by the Curella family was moved to the Corpus Christi mission at McKinley. They left many of the statues in the back of the church because many of the people of the older generation were still attached to them. This is how the inside of St. Anthony the Abbot Church looks today.

One of the last Masses Father Broast said at St. Anthony's was the funeral Mass of my grandmother, Jessie E. Ritchie. When she found out that Father Broast was leaving, she said to him that she hoped he would be in Cumberland long enough to say her funeral. One week later she died and was able to have him say the Mass.

After Father Broast left, Father William Green came. He also presided over both churches as well as the mission at McKinley. He served in Cumberland from 1972-1975. During this time, the mission at McKinley, Corpus Christi, was closed. This happened

in 1973. The mission remains closed today although people are still being buried in the cemetery adjoining the church. Father Green was well liked by many of the parishioners and he made many valuable changes in the Catholic community. The main change was changing the name of the parish to include members of all three churches. The parish became known as Cumberland Area Catholic Community. In doing this, Father Green helped to bring all of the people close together and not to think of themselves as belonging to St. Mary's or St. Anthony's but just belonging to the Catholic Church.

Father Albert Verdigan came to Cumberland in 1975 and stayed until 1980. Father Verdigan was also well liked by the parishioners. One of the things that happened during his time in Cumberland was the closing of St. Mary's Church in 1978. St. Mary's is still closed today and everyone attends Mass at St. Anthony's. St. Mary's Church basement is now being rented by the local Knights of Columbus Chapter to use as their meeting place. The rectory is still being used for C.C.D. classes and weekday Masses.

Our current priest is Father Leonard Fraher. He has been in Cumberland since 1980. Of all of the priests that have served the Cumberland parishes since 1885, only two of them are buried in the cemetery in Cumberland. Both of them were pastors of St. Mary's: Father Patrick Cunningham, who died in 1954 and Father Philip Krembs who died in 1964.

An interesting fact is that of all of the members of both parishes, only one has gone on to be a priest. He was Father Wickers of Spokane, Washington. Four Women have gone on to be nuns, One, Sister Madeleva, became president of St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, Ind. Other nuns are Sister M. Clarnita, Sister M. Leo and Sister Sandra.¹⁹

As to the future of the Catholic Community in Cumberland, only the Lord knows. Many things have happened in the Catholic community in the last 100 years. Some have been good and some bad, but the most significant is the reuniting of the parishes. Due to the lack of young men becoming priest, our diocese is introducing a program called "clustering". This means that once again one priest will have to serve more than one parish.

ENDNOTES

- 1 DeGidio, Ambrose Interview on 3-26-84
- 2 Cotone, Henry and Mary, "Italian History", Cumberland: Wisconsin's Island City, Centennial 1874 - 1974.
- 3 Cumberland Centennial Committee, "Cumberland Catholic Community", Cumberland: Wisconsin's Island City, Centennial 1874 - 1974
- 4 DeGidio, Nick and Jovina Interview on 3-27-84
- 5 DeGidio, Ambrose Interview on 3-26-84
- 6 Father Richard Herrmann, "The History of Our Parishes", Catholic Herald Citizen - January 1955.
- 7 Father Richard Herrmann, "The History of Our Parishes", Catholic Herald Citizen - January 1955
- 8 Father Richard Herrmann, "The History of Our Parishes", Catholic Herald Citizen - January 1955
- 9 Cumberland Centennial Committee, "Cumberland Catholic Community", Cumberland : Wisconsin's Island City, Centennial 1874 - 1974
- 10 DeGidio, Ambrose Interview on 3-26-84
- 11 Father Richard Herrmann, "The History of Our Parishes", Catholic Herald Citizen - January 1955
- 12 Cotone, Henry and Mary, "Italian History", Cumberland: Wisconsin's Island City, Centennial 1874 - 1974
- 13 Letter from Bishop Annabring to Rev. Patrick Cunningham and Rev. Richard Herrmann, August 16, 1954
- 14 Letter from Rev. Robert Urban to Sheri Ritchie, March 29, 1984
- 15 DeGidio, Ambrose Interview on 3-26-84
- 16 Father Richard Herrmann, "The History of Our Parishes", Catholic Herald Citizen - January 1955
- 17 Sister Raphall Marie, S.S.J., "St. Anthony's Complete Renovation Project", Catholic Herald Citizen - June 1968
- 18 DeGidio, Ambrose Interview on 3-26-84
- 19 Father Richard Herrmann, "The History of Our Parishes", Catholic Herald Citizen - January 1955

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2. Cumberland Centennial Committee, "Cumberland Catholic Community", Cumberland: Wisconsin's Island City, Centennial 1874 - 1974
3. Sister Raphael Marie, S.S.J., "St. Anthony's Complete Renovation Project", Catholic Herald Citizen, June 1968
4. Father Richard Herrmann, "The History of Our Parishes.", Catholic Herald Citizen, January 1955
5. Letter from Bishop Annabring to Rev. Patrick Cunningham and Rev. Richard Herrmann, August 16, 1954
6. Letter from Rev. Robert Urban to Sheri Ritchie, March 29, 1984
7. DeGidio, Ambrose Interview on March 26, 1984
8. DeGidio, Nick and Jovina Interview on March 27, 1984