

Church Completed -- Description

By the end of the summer, despite several short delays because of war conditions, the building was nearing completion. The Rosary Society was able to use the completed basement hall for the annual fall dinner on October 19, and this was the first use made of the new edifice.

On November 9, 1941, the last divine services were held in the old St. Bernard's Church. The next day, November 10th, the men of the parish removed all the furnishings from the old to the new Church and the new edifice was ready for God's Worship. Since the following day was Armistice Day, it was decided to have the first Mass in the church on that day, and offer prayers of Thanksgiving as well as prayers for peace.

The November 13th edition of the "Onawa Sentinel" recorded this event, and gave a description of the Church as follows:

"Two Masses, one in thanksgiving to God for His blessings during the erection of the church, and the other, a prayer for peace on the anniversary of the cessation of hostilities of the first World War, marked the informal opening of the new St. Bernard's Church at Blencoe on Armistice Day, Tuesday. The first Mass was offered up by Father B. V. Greteman, pastor of the parish, and the second by Father T. J. Rush, M. S., of the LaSalette Missionary College at Milford, in the presence of the members of the parish.

"Under construction since last May, the new building is not yet fully completed, because of the lack of a few materials, but the small amount of work still to be done will not hinder the holding of services in the structure in the future. The furnishings from the old church were transferred to the new on Monday of this week by the members of the parish, and will be used until the new furnishings can be obtained.

"The new edifice, erected at a cost of nearly \$25,000 will provide Blencoe with a completely modern church structure. Built in a modified type of Romanesque architecture, the church combines beauty with practicability. It is a semi-fireproof building, the exterior walls of three-toned tannish brown brick, trimmed with a pink Kasota stone and covered with a roof of the latest type cement asbestos shingles in greenish-grey hues. Over the front of the church is a Celtic cross of pink Kasota stone, while over the tower belfry is a copper covered wood cross almost six feet in height.

"The church is entered from the South through modernesque designed double doors which lead into a small vestibule. East of the vestibule is a glass-enclosed, sound-proof Mothers' room enabling the occupants of this room to follow services in the church proper. The

west door in the vestibule leads into the tower, which contains steps to the choir loft and the basement hall as well as to the belfry. The nave, or auditorium, of the church is entered from the vestibule through twin glass-paneled doors. The interior of the nave is surrounded with a glazed-tile wainscot in shades of tan surmounted with a sand-finished plastered wall; the arched, nave ceiling, supported by bolted trusses, is covered with insulated acoustical Nu-wood in variegated colors of tan, laid in a pleasing design. The off-set on the west side contains a built-in confessional, and, in balancing this on the east, is a shrine alcove. The floor of the nave is maple, and all trim on the main floor is of selected birchwood.

"The sanctuary, flanked by sacristies on the east and west, is floored with quarter-sawed oak, and has a three-step platform leading to the altar. On either side, too, are built-in, side altar shrines of birch containing the statues of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph.

"At the south end of the church, and over the vestibule and Mothers' room, is the choir loft, well lighted with a large Rose-window, and adequate in size for the church choristers. The nave of the church is lighted by eight large Romanesque arched windows containing a Florentine storm sash to which later will be added leaded stained glass windows.

"In the basement of the building a recreation and meeting hall is provided that can easily accommodate over several hundred persons. Entrance to this hall is gained through the west tower door, and a back entrance to this hall is also provided. Besides this large recreation hall, which is faced with glazed-tile walls, the basement contains also ladies' and men's toilets, a storage room, a furnace room, and a large, modern kitchen. A driven well in the basement, provided with an electric pump and tank, supplies water for the building, and a private sewage system has been installed. The concrete basement floor is covered with a terra cotta colored cement topping, while the ceiling in this recreation hall is of ivory colored Nu-wood.

"In the furnace room is an oil-burning, forced-air heating plant and air conditioner specially built and installed by the Campbell Heating Company of Des Moines for both winter and summer comfort. This system changes all the air in the building every few minutes.

"This new edifice will replace the old St. Bernard's Church which has served the Catholics of this community since 1903. It will be the third Catholic Church erected in Blencoe, the first having been built in 1836, when Father Daly was pastor. This will be also the third site for the Catholic church, the first having been north of the present Blencoe State Bank; the second where the old church, built in 1903, is located today; and this new church on an acre site, donated by Mr.