

EARLY HISTORY, ST. JOHN'S PARISH (Continued from Page 4)

Father Lynch, generously cancelled the entire debt. In recognition of this grand act of generosity, to remind pastor and faithful, a marble slab was set in the sacristy with this inscription:

ANNUAL MASS FOR
MR. AND MRS. JOHN FITZGERALD
ON EASTER SUNDAY AND
AUGUST 15th
PRINCIPAL DONORS OF THIS
CHURCH

The above Masses are to be celebrated every year as long as the church stands by every succeeding pastor.

In 1884, shortly before his transfer to Grand Island, Father Lynch purchased ten acres of land from Joseph Corener for \$500 for a cemetery. It is called the Holy Sepulchre cemetery, commanding a good view of the surrounding country, and today is one of the best cemeteries in the state of Nebraska. In that same year Father Lynch built the first part of the brick school. In May, 1884, he was succeeded by the Rev. W. J. Madden until September, 1884, when the Rev. Thomas J. Carney took charge of the parish. In the meantime, Rev. Jordan Stutz was assistant to both Father Madden and Father Carney from June, 1884, to October, 1885, attending to the German and Bohemian-speaking people of the congregation.

Father Carney's administration was a great blessing to St. John's parish. He opened the school in the same year it was built, in September, 1884, with one lay teacher. In 1886 he enlarged it to twice its size at a cost of over \$2,000, with six lay teachers, and in 1888 he placed it under the direction of the Dominican Sisters from Sinsinawa, Wisconsin. These sisters had charge of this school until 1913, when the Benedictine Sisters of Atchison, Kansas, succeeded them, until 1920. Thus the Plattsmouth parochial school, after Nebraska City, is the oldest school in the Lincoln diocese.

Father Carney also built the present parochial brick residence in 1889 at a cost of \$3,500 and made many other considerable improvements on the church property. For that reason, he borrowed at different times various sums of money to the amount of over \$6,000. As the congregation, however, seemed unable to pay back this sum, Father Carney very generously donated it to the parish. He died a poor man. When Bishop Bonacum heard of his sickness, he sent him \$100 and Father Carney answered with this short letter to the Chancellor of the diocese: "I received your letter with open arms. Now I can pay my housekeeper and for some medicines. Please thank the Bishop." After two days, he passed away, greatly lamented by all who knew him, on July 2, 1903. His remains were taken to Iliou, N. Y., for interment.

During Father Carney's administration, in 1890, most of the Bohemian members of St. John's withdrew from this parish and built a church of their own southwest of St. John's. It is called the Holy

Rosary church.

After Father Carney's death, the Rev. Bernard Ulbrick had temporary charge of the parish from July to August, 1903, when Rev. William F. Bradley took charge of it until August 1, 1908. In this time numerous articles were purchased, many repairs were made, and a number of memorial windows were placed in the church.

He was succeeded by the Rev. Michael A. Shine, afterwards Monsignor. He made many improvements inside and outside the church property. A steel ceiling was set in the church, and a beautiful main altar, with two side ones, donated by Mr. and Mrs. F. R. Guthmann, were installed; electric lights in all buildings, an air furnace placed in the church, a concrete basement placed under the school with a steam heat plant for school and priest's house, to which he added a front porch. He had Sixth and Oak streets paved and sidewalks bordering the church property on these two streets cemented. After the Benedictine Sisters gave up the school, Monsignor Shine called the Ursuline Sisters from Kentucky to conduct the school. This they did, coming in the fall of 1921, and are now conducting the school with success. Even the non-Catholics have great admiration for St. John's school.

Monsignor Shine's greatest work was in literature. He devoted every spare moment to historical research about Nebraska, especially the territory covering the Diocese of Lincoln, concerning the Church, the Indians and the first white inhabitants. Historically speaking, he is to this diocese what Eusebius of Caesarea is to the Church in the first three centuries. The notes he has compiled in historical data about every parish and mission and priest of the diocese are perhaps the most valuable in the country. He was a special authority on Indian lore and true history of the various tribes of early days. His research work covers a period of over thirty years. The desk he used for nineteen years in Plattsmouth has been preserved by the D. A. R. of Nebraska and is now in Arbor Lodge, bearing an engraved silver plate stating the value of his work to state and nation.

Father Shine had charge of St. John's parish until his death in April, 1927. He was succeeded by the Rev. George Agius, D. D., J. C. D., now a Domestic Prelate.

Monsignor Agius soon paid the \$4,000 debt he found against the parish, provided a fine large chapel to accommodate on week-days the 100 children of the school, and placed new floors both in school and in church. Not long ago the three main buildings were remodeled to quite an extent. Fifth street was paved, and two more lots north of the church property were purchased for a playground for the school children. The latest improvement is the addition of basement rooms under the church building, used as a meeting place for the different religious societies of the parish. A special collection was taken September 17, 1939, for further repairs to the church property.

The membership of St. John's church at the present time is about 400.

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