

St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Parish

No. 8 of a Series on Our Parish's First 100 Years

The corner stone of St. Charles Church, which bears the inscription "A. D. 1910," was laid with impressive ceremonies on the afternoon of Sunday, April 24, 1910. In the absence of Archbishop Messmer, who was in ill health, the ceremony of blessing the stone was conducted by the Rt. Rev. Joseph Rainer, vicar general of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and rector of St.



Francis Seminary. He was assisted by Rev. John Henry Schiefen, deacon, and Rev. Eugene Gehl, subdeacon. Ceremonies began with the blessing of the place where the altar was to stand, then proceeded to the blessing of the corner stone. The Litany of All Saints was chanted by the priests in attendance. After the choir had sung the "Veni Creator," Burlington native, Rev. Anthony Weiler, preached the sermon. The corner stone was then put in place in the foundation and the walls of the new church were blessed.

Enclosed in the corner stone before it was sealed were copies of the two local newspapers, the Standard Democrat and the Free Press; the Milwaukee Sentinel; and two church papers, Excelsior and Columbia. Also enclosed, after Rev. Philipp Dreis, St. Charles' pastor, had read it in three languages, Latin, English, and German, was a commemorative document which said "In the year of our Lord, 1910, on the 24th day of April, this being the 4th Sunday after Easter, under the pontificate of Pope Pius X, when the Most Rev. S. G. Messmer was Archbishop of Milwaukee, and the Rev. Ph. Dreis rector of St. Charles' congregation, Mr. William Taft being president of the United States of America, Mr. James Davidson, governor of Wisconsin, and H. E. Zimmermann mayor of the city of Burlington, and the Rt. Rev. Joseph Rainer, vicar general of Milwaukee, was blessed and placed onto the foundation the corner stone of St. Charles' church in the presence of a large number of priests and people."

The summer of 1910 was a busy one for the board of trustees, the building committee, and the pastor, as well as for the contractors and workmen. Work on the building, especially the part to be occupied by the school, was pushed so that the school could open in September. At times, as many as twenty-five men worked on the building. By the first part of June, about three-fourths of the brick work was finished; and by mid-June the masons and carpenters had the walls up to the top of window frames on the part that was to be two stories high.

The iron roof supports were put in place in mid-July, and a couple of weeks later the building was enclosed. Also in July, 150 school desks and three teachers' desks were ordered for the school. On August 5 the Standard Democrat reported that the Milwaukee firm which was putting

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The corner stone, partially hidden behind the branches of the bush in the center of this 2009 photo, is on the front right corner as one faces the original building.

on the slate roof had a gang of eight men at work and that they had one side about finished. The same paper reported that the school rooms in the front of the building were lathed and ready for the plasterers.

On September 2, the paper reported that the carpenter work in three of the school rooms had been finished and that these were now in the hands of the painters. It was thought that the school rooms and hall would be completed so that school work could be commenced about September 15. The paper also reported that the interior of the church auditorium was being lathed, that the carpenters would start their work there as soon as the school rooms were completed, and that the painters were at work finishing the exterior.

As construction was progressing, the congregation continued its fund-raising efforts.

Its first ice cream social of the season, held on July 26 at the residence of Mrs.



The large house nearest the camera, on the corner of State street and what is now N. Perkins boulevard, was where Mrs. Elizabeth Kennedy hosted an ice cream social fundraiser for St. Charles in 1910. At far right is St. John the Divine Episcopal church.

Elizabeth Kennedy on the corner of State street and what is now N. Perkins boulevard (diagonally across from the Lincoln School site), was largely attended and “realized a snug sum” (nearly \$100) for the building fund. A second social, which brought in over \$110, was held on Mrs. Ruby Leiendecker’s lawn on the west shore of Brown’s Lake on the afternoon and evening of August 11. Conveyances left the post office corner for the lake both afternoon and evening. (At that time, the post office was on the northeast corner of Washington and Pine streets.)

As the other Burlington schools started their fall terms during the first full week of September, the children who planned to attend St. Charles school enjoyed a longer vacation as the school rooms were not yet finished. Finally, on Sunday, September 18, 1910, at 6:30 a.m., the first Mass at St. Charles was celebrated in one of the school rooms; and the next morning, Monday, September 19, Mass was celebrated for the school children and school, with an enrollment of 112, was opened. It was expected that the enrollment would increase when fall work was out of the way and the children could be spared from the farms.

The pupils were divided into three rooms with Sisters of the Dominican Order of Racine in charge. The higher grades were taught by Sister M. Sophia, the

intermediate by Sister M. Dolores; and the primary by Sister M. Claudius. Sister M. Diana was the house sister. The Sisters stayed at the home of Mrs. Mary (nee Verhalen) Smolensky on Kendall street until the fourth school room, which they were to use as living quarters, was made ready for them.

The first Mass at St. Charles was celebrated on Sunday, September 18, 1910, at 6:30 a.m., “In honorem B. M. V. Septem Dolorum” - the seven dolours, or sorrows, of Mary. These are the sorrow at:

- the prophecy of Simeon;
- the flight into Egypt
- having lost the Holy Child at Jerusalem;
- meeting Jesus on his way to Calvary;
- standing at the foot of the Cross;
- Jesus being taken from the Cross;
- the burial of Christ.

(to be continued)