

The settlement of Richmond is the story of German immigrants in the Sauk River Valley in the 1850's. They rushed in to fill the land west of the Mississippi, opened through treaties with the Sioux, two years after President James K. Polk proclaimed Minnesota a territory on March 3, 1849. At that point, the waterways were the best means of transportation. Prospects were good, and settling in the Sauk Valley meant being on the main thoroughfare of the Red River trade route between St. Paul to the south and Pembina to the north.

There were early enthusiasts ready to trumpet forth the call for settlers in this section. These included James M. Goodhue, the spirited editor of the *Minnesota Pioneer*, and Rev. Francis Pierz, who organized the first Catholic parish in Sauk Rapids in 1853. Both published glowing reports of the delights of the Eden, which awaited the hearty soul. Goodhue had tremendous faith in the future of Minnesota. The editorial pages of the *Pioneer* predicted "a rapidity of growth unparalleled even in the annals of Western progress," and promised that "Here they will find an unqualifiedly healthy climate, fertile and well drained lands, and upon the Mississippi the best market for mechanical products in the Union. With such a population will come not only the arts but science and morals. Our Falls of St. Anthony with hundreds of water powers upon other streams will be turned to manufacturing purposes. Thrifty towns will arise upon them. Our undulating prairies will rejoice under the hand of husbandry; these hills and valleys will be jocund with the voices of school children, and churches shall mark the moral progress of our land."

Goodhue's appeal was of a general promotional character, while Father Pierz's was centered on attracting German immigrants to the Sauk Valley. During 1854 and 1855 he published articles that extolled the homestead possibilities in his mission field. He pictured the area as a most favorable place for settlement. Concerning the nature of the soil, the missionary wrote glowingly: "More than half the open meadows in Minnesota have an excellent black loamy soil, with a splendid mixture of sand and clay and a rich top-soil formed by the plant decay of thousands of years, so that it would be hard to find anywhere in the world a soil better suited to yield a rich return for the farmers' toil." A good water supply was also available, Pierz observed. "I can assure my readers that not half the rivers and hardly a third of the lakes of this beautiful region are indicated on the maps. Moreover, in many places one will find springs of ice-cold drinking water, and if here and there a farmer does not happen to have such a supply at his door, he can in a few days and at little cost dig a splendid well at a depth of from eight to twelve feet. Hence immigrants need not fear any lack of water." The missionary wrote enthusiastically of Minnesota winters, assuring all that they could blot from their minds all notions of their frigid character: "During the three years that I have spent here I have not seen more than a foot of snow, and with the exception of some fifteen or twenty cold days the weather was generally so pleasant that one could work outdoors. During the past winter I have seen German settlers at work in their shirt-sleeves, cutting their wood for building and fencing." Furthermore, the "summer in Minnesota," Pierz declared, "is

more favorable for human health and for the growth of farm and garden products than in any other country in the world.”

Father Pierz strove to prevent German immigrants located in Indiana and Ohio from moving to the South. He had nothing but contempt for the climate below the Ohio River. Thus we find him writing: “In the southern states of North America the climate, the air and the health of the people are quite different. There the winter is much shorter, but it is very changeable and damp and hence injurious to the health. During the hot summer days a host of noxious miasmas and poisonous gases arise from the marshes and mineral-charged soil and hang like a heavy fog and taint the air and the crops. Thus serious fevers, cholera and other epidemics appear and fill the hospitals with patients and the cemeteries with corpses and especially the German immigrants who are not accustomed to such air fall victims in great numbers.” In contrast, wrote Pierz, central Minnesota offered many special advantages for settlement. Wild fruits grew in abundance, while pheasants, elk and deer abounded. The prairies and meadows offered unlimited space for cattle grazing. There was no Indian threat, as he saw it, for they offered no difficulty unless plied with firewater. With the government making treaties with the tribes, Pierz' aim was to convert the aborigines to Catholicism and make them good neighbors.

The missionary invited all Germans who were living in the unhealthy and disagreeable localities of the United States to settle near his missions and to take up land claims at Sauk Rapids and Belle Prairie. He held out the promise of a church already open at the former place. Furthermore, there was a new church under construction west of the Mississippi for settlers along the Sauk River. Father Pierz raised the trumpet to his lips: “Hasten then, my dear German people, those of you who have in mind to change your abode and settle in Minnesota. Do not delay to join the stream of immigration, for the sooner you come the better will be your opportunity to choose a good place to settle. Several hundred families can still find good claims along the Sauk River and in the surrounding country no doubt several thousand families can find favorable places for settlement.”



All was not the unbridled bliss of which Pierz spoke. He failed to tell the German immigrants of the hardships he had undergone in this paradise. Elsewhere he had written of a trip he had made between Crow Wing and Mille Lacs in 1853: "Two-thirds of the distance was made on foot over poor roads through brush and timber and one-third was made by water. We crossed six lakes in a birch-bark canoe weighing two hundred pounds, which my catechist had to carry on his shoulders when crossing portages. My cook carried the kitchen utensils and food weighing about one hundred and fifty pounds. My burden was the whole portative chapel with the articles for Mass and the books, as well as blankets weighing seventy pounds."

It is impossible to travel on horseback in summer because the road lies through five deep, dirty swamps and over thousands of fallen trees and execrable hunters' trails. For two days we traveled amid indescribable hardships. On such a wretched way I often stumbled over roots and once I had such an unfortunate fall that I was obliged to remain where I fell for some time until I was rested and could rise.

“The worst feature of this trip was that in my hasty departure I forgot my mosquito netting and my gloves and for two days I had to keep waving a leafy branch about my head to keep off the mosquitoes who came in never-ending swarms. In this process my hands were tortured. Nevertheless I was so badly stung about the face and on the hands by the bold attackers that I suffered as much pain from the bites as if I had a severe case of nettlerash. At the close of the second day we came so close to the Indian village that we could see their wigwams. Our attention being taken away from the canoe for a moment, it struck a tree in the water and we had to land at once and spend the night in a swamp.”

Pierz's call was heard, and the families began to arrive at the sites of future settlements along the Sauk River. Some of these came to what was later to be called the village of Richmond, in Munson Township. The first permanent settlement made in this section of Stearns County was started in 1855. In March of that year a caravan of ox teams and German families left Coal County, Missouri, and by May they had arrived in Stearns County, where they camped at what was later to be called Thyens Lake, about one-half mile east of the present town of Richmond. In the caravan were four families and two brothers-in-law: Andrew Beumel and family, J. H. Wolken and family and brother-in-law, Joseph Junck (Young) and family and his brother-in-law, Heinrich Bock and family, and G. Herman Brunning.

Young stayed at Thyens Lake, while the Beumel family moved on to make their claim at the future northwest corner of Richmond. Adjoining the Sauk River, this land through the years was known as "The Beumel Farm." The Wolken liked the east side of the Richmond Prairie, but not well enough to stay. They soon hitched up their oxen and were off to the beckoning prairies of the Kansas Territory. Henry Bock moved onto their former claim.



The summer of 1855 saw the arrival of five more claim makers: Peter Seeberger, Frank Schindler, Adam Kolling, the Becker brothers, and Anton Brogelman. In the same year surveyor Reuben Richardson and his family arrived to stake a claim on section twenty-four, which the following year was surveyed and platted. This was

the beginning of the village of Richmond, named after Richardson's wife, the former Cynthia Richmond.

After all were settled, Father Pierz stopped by to see the pioneers who had come in response to his call. Word passed quickly that the following day there would be Holy Mass. It was to be celebrated in the newly erected log house of Joseph Young, who later moved into Swift County. Father Pierz was not one to waste time. With Mass complete, he suggested that the settlers organize a parish and build a log church. All agreed, and the work began.

Two of the future parishioners were appointed to the building committee to collect what money they could from members of the incipient community. Then, they proceeded to select a site for the church. After much discussion it was decided to build the church on the claim that Henry Bock had vacated when he took over the section formerly claimed by the Wolken. In the meantime Mass was offered at Andrew Beumel's cabin whenever Father Pierz was in the settlement.

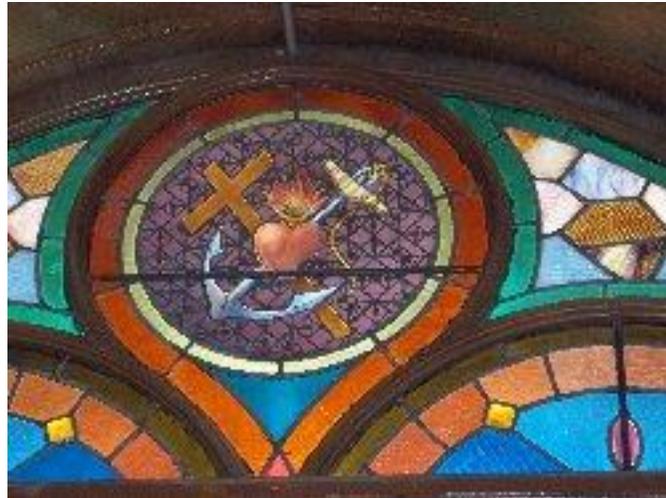
Meanwhile, the small parish was growing daily. Through the summer and fall of 1856, some sixty-five families moved into the settlement. Among them were the Kron and Blasius families, Henry Kalkmann, Herman Schleper, John and Henry Koetter, Henry Gertken, Theodore Weeses, and Anton Bruemmer. There were also the Klostermanns and the Willenbrings. Most notable among these and others in the early years was G. Henry Rolfes. He made his claim five miles northeast of Richmond near the bank of the Sauk. His place was a regular stop for the stagecoach on that route. Teamsters and traveling men who did not know his name called him the Yankee Dutchman. Thus his house came to be called the Yankee Dutchman Hotel.

The Catholic settlers helped with the erection of the first log church. Work, however, was moving slowly when word came that the Rev. Francis X. Weninger, S.J., would be along in a short time to conduct a parish mission. Bishop Joseph Cretin of St. Paul had heard of his success at giving such missions and had asked him to come out and get his new parishes off to a zealous beginning. When Father Weninger arrived for the mission, the chronicler records, "He gave the settlers his best in praise and was well satisfied." Following the mission that ended on August 15, 1856, Father Weninger erected a huge mission cross and turned the new parish over to the newly appointed Benedictine pastors.

The monks who would run the parish were the first [Benedictines](#) to come west at the invitation of Bishop Cretin to take care of German settlers. They arrived in St. Cloud on May 20, 1856, and set up their first monastery south of that city. Headed by their prior, the Rev. Demetrius di Marogna, they were two priests, Fathers Bruno Riess and Cornelius Witmann, who had been ordained in St. Paul on their way to St. Cloud on May 18 by Bishop Cretin; and two Brothers, Benno Muckenthaler, and Patrick Greil. On their arrival they had found much to be desired on this frontier of the Church. As Father Bruno later reminisced: "At St. Joseph there was already a log

church and a pastoral residence under construction. But a few turbulent spirits agitated against the expected monks and went so far as to petition the Bishop of St. Paul begging him not to inflict the monks upon them and not to permit them to come to St. Joseph. In consequence the misguided hotheads had no services till August. At St. James also a log chapel 16 x 20 or 24 stood finished; at Richmond a similar structure not yet under roof; but both congregations had no services through that summer for the same reason." They had the material but not the cooperation.

Father Bruno, however, was looking forward to visiting this turbulent place on July 4, even though he was not assigned as pastor of the St. Joseph-Jacobs Prairie-Richmond territory until August 15. On the previous date he had written: "Three parishes were given to us the day before yesterday, namely, St. Joseph, fifteen miles away; St. Jacob, seventeen miles away; and Richmond, twenty-two miles. I do not know who will take care of these places yet. At any rate as long as we have no horse it is quite inconvenient to go so far *per pedes Apostolorum* in this great heat and added to this is the hardship to carry on ones back everything necessary for the celebration of Mass."

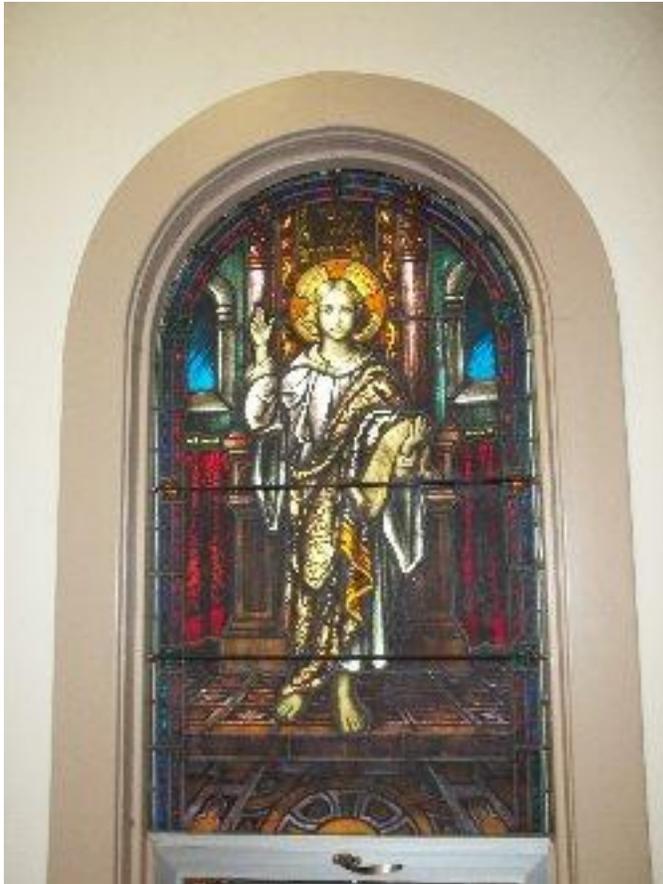


These days were busy for the newly ordained Father Bruno, as can be seen from the same letter: "I read the first Mass there (St. Cloud's first church) and conducted the services since then. Every Sunday I have to hear a few hours confessions; then High Mass and sermon. At two o'clock in the afternoon catechetical instructions until three o'clock and then Vespers followed by English instruction in religion. So you see that I am not able to take it easy."

When Father Weninger came to give the mission at Richmond, Father Bruno accompanied him. At the end of the mission, which was characterized as "a very solemn and impressive service," Prior Demetrius appointed Father Bruno as pastor of St. Joseph with missions at Jacobs Prairie and Richmond. Father Weninger preached the sermon at Father Bruno's installation on the Feast of the Assumption, a day which brought the first serious test of the settlers' faith and courage: "The 15th of August was the beginning of a two year after-mission sent by Divine Providence." During the discourse of the missionary a heavy darkness set in, accompanied, as we thought, by a tremendous hailstorm, the clatter of which drowned the voice of the preacher. But it was something worse than hailstones, for when we left the church our eyes beheld nothing but greedy grasshoppers, which

had darkened the sun and in their descent had struck so heavily upon the roof of our church.

“This small, voracious, yet invincible monster had in a short time devastated all that grows and blooms on the face of the earth. Within about two or three days the fields presented the appearance of having been newly plowed. Then indescribable misery entered the homes of the poor settlers of Stearns County. The entire harvest was a dead loss for those settlers who had taken their abode in this region during the previous year (1855); those, of course, who had settled during the year of the famine, had no crop to lose, as they had not planted any. The first terrible winter was at hand. The few victuals that remained were soon consumed, prices rose enormously, because the nearest market was St. Paul, and it required a full week to make a trip with the ox team. Still hope did not die. What would man be without hope?”



In September, 1856, Father Bruno described the state of the Richmond mission to Abbot Boniface Wimmer of St. Vincent: “Eight miles further (from St. Joseph) is the last station in the Catholic world, namely Richmond. It also has a nice little church and 160 acres of prairie and would give \$300 (yearly) for the service of a priest about twice a month. Over a tract measuring thirty miles by six miles everything is claimed, and as far as I know the people are entirely Catholic, amongst whom are

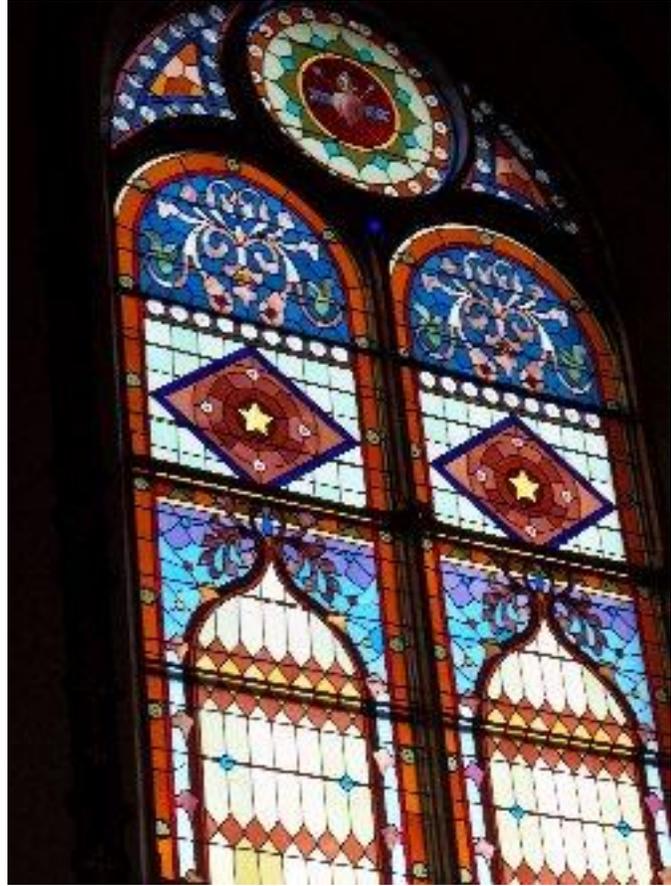
two Frenchmen, one Irish family, and four non-Catholics, namely three German Protestants and one American who doesn't believe anything but who has a Catholic wife. One of these three German Protestants as far as I have heard wished to turn Catholic. He was always in church during the time of the mission. The other two have given contributions to the building of the church and are good, solid characters. New settlers arrive here daily and all German Catholics who came from other states where they lived amongst non-Catholics without a church and without a priest. They came here because they heard they will find here what they missed so greatly there. The great majority of these are good, practical Catholics. How happy were they when they heard that I would give them my services regularly. Not only my hands, but even my religious habit they covered with kisses and tears of joy. Old men come to me with their difficulties even on the street and beg me to remain whilst saying, 'Father, stay with us. We poor sinners don't deserve this grace in any way, but have pity on the innocent children. What will happen to them if they are without a priest and grow up without any instruction, etc., etc.'

Father Bruno had great hopes for the rich prairie land. "If the prairie land is broken, we can get corn enough and one bushel of seed potatoes yields on the average of seventy bushels. We already sometimes have harvested as much as a hundred to a hundred and twenty bushels. In the second year we can get the finest wheat." The cold weather that first winter, however, set in early. On October 1 this same young priest wrote to his abbot: "The winter has already started; it freezes every night. Yesterday from the beginning of Mass until the Offertory the water was frozen." At this time he again described the state of his parishes. "I am not able to give the exact number of families since there are more coming in each week. In St. Joseph there are at present eighty, in St. Jacob over sixty, and Richmond fifty. Sixteen miles in back of Richmond there is another settlement of Catholics of about sixty families who until now belong to Richmond but are not able to come to church since they have no means of conveyance, and who, moreover, are located on the other side of the Sauk River."

Riess was a practical man. Besides writing to the abbot for money and men for the monastery, he showed his great concern for the welfare of his parishioners when he wrote: "Everyone wants to get married. But no girls. Do not forget your promise. But those only that are to your honor and no Englishmen because otherwise the parishes will be disrupted."

After Abbot Boniface's visit in October, 1856, at which time he brought more monks with him, the Rev. Alexius Roetzer, O.S.B., was given charge of the Jacobs Prairie and Richmond missions together with Father Bruno. He was happy at his new task and wrote to the abbot: "I cannot express my satisfaction enough that we are alone now with our present stations. Of course there are a number of difficulties involved because I have four stations to take care of, namely, Richmond, St. Jacob, St. Augustine, and Sauk Rapids, which in no way am I willing to neglect."

Having set in early, that winter of 1856 brought snow and Indians in a proportion not described by previous glowing accounts spread abroad by Father Pierz. "The worst thing here is the raw north wind because against this there is no block-house too thick nor any clothing too heavy that it doesn't go through. Even in our cellar it has found entrance, so that we had to learn how to eat frozen potatoes as a delicacy. Communication is therefore very bad in the winter since the snow freezes on account of the cold and turns into sand dust. Then Mr. North Wind blows over the road which was made during the daytime. The oldest settlers here (three years) don't know of such deep snow as we have now, since it was only about a foot deep in the past. In spite of this deep snow we were honored on



Christmas day by three to four hundred Indians who visited us and who wanted to prove to us that at this time of the year one could camp outside. Since these people wanted to introduce communism they received a visit from the Germans who, protected with clubs as weapons, indicated to them by a sign that they should look for another place where they might find less opposition to their doctrine. They dropped their booty and everything when they saw so many palefaces."

With the coming of summer, in spite of the grasshopper threat, Father Bruno went ahead with plans for Richmond. "I don't doubt in the least that we could maintain all the claims if besides the three very good claim sitters of which you wrote in your last letter, you would also send five claim workers. There would still be wanting after the arrival of the three claim sitters three more names, but I have another speculation in my head, namely this: Richmond is going to be a very important place. It has about one and one-half to one and three-quarters claims for church purposes and that closely adjacent to the laid-out town. The church, however, cannot make any claims; consequently the parish would need two names. Now I believe that we could obtain this land as our property which would be given to us almost as a gift in exchange for some church vestments and furniture. The parish there is still poor and young and wants to sell this land for a ridiculously low price. However, who can buy it? Since there is no owner and the other prairie claim may be able to be worth two dollars or more in one year. Wouldn't that be a good speculation for us?"

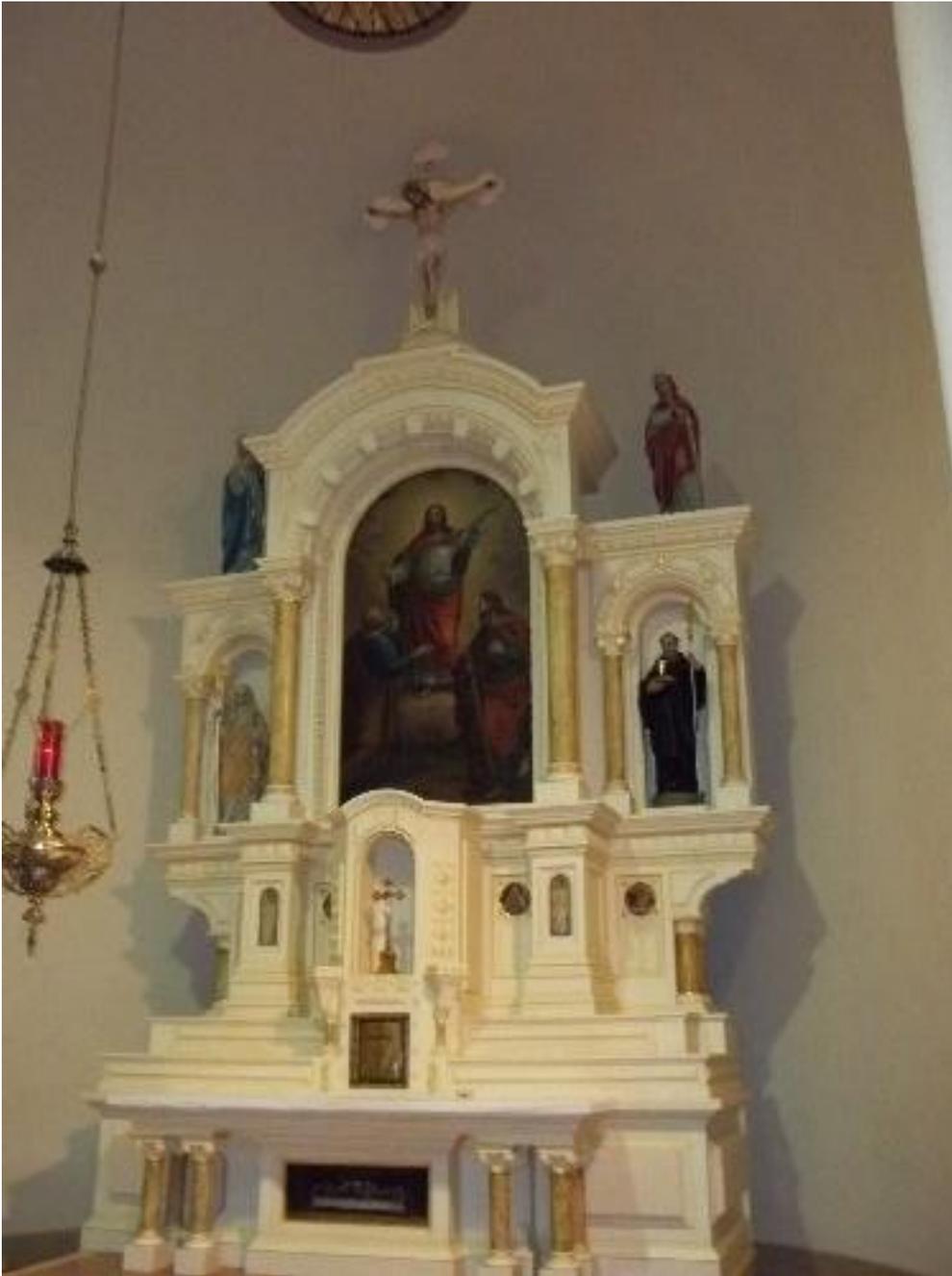
Young Riess closed this letter with another appeal for girls who could marry the young claim sitters: "Father Abbot, ...come and bring a few dozen girls of good character who are anxious to marry. . . The young men are almost despondent because there are always claim boys and no claim girls coming here."



When the eggs the grasshoppers had laid in the previous year started to hatch the minds of the settlers were soon taken from the lack of calm. If the 'hoppers' would not leave before the harvest of 1857 could be assured, the outlook for the young community would be hopeless. Contrary to their hopes the plaguing horde was as hungry the second year as the first. Cattle died from scarcity of food and blood poisoning caused by the bites of the grasshoppers. They were so numerous that one worker hung his coat on a fence post while plowing a field; when he returned to pick it up nothing was left but the buttons. In May, 1857, a decisive step was taken to get rid of the pests. The four pastors of the county, Fathers Bruno, Cornelius, Clement, and Alexius, proposed to their congregations that they vow an annual procession on the feast of St. Ulric, July 4, and on that of St. Magnus, September 6, since these two saints were venerated in southern Germany as the special patrons of those afflicted as the settlers were.

The people were desperate. Seed wheat stood at \$2.00 a bushel, and cash was being loaned at 36% interest, and at some places as high as 50%. Corn in the husks was \$2.00 a bushel, as were frozen potatoes. The corn was ground in coffee mills to prevent waste and then mixed in a stew with the frozen potatoes. There was an abundance of game but no money with which to buy shot. As Father Bruno wrote: "Even the priest at the altar was not secure from their attacks; before Mass the hoppers had to be swept off the altar. The priest had to dress hastily, place the altar cloths upon the altar and be careful to keep the Sacred Host covered with tile paten, and at the elevation had to leave the pall upon tile chalice. During the Mass the altar-boys were kept busy driving away the insolent insects with whips from the vestments of the priest."

God heeded their vow and in the early days of June the 'hoppers' were blown by a brisk northwest wind to other sections of the country. They were not to return again until 1875-76. During the years 1874 to 1877 the whole of southern Minnesota was plagued with these Rocky Mountain locusts. Although this second visitation was far worse than the first, it did not affect the settlers so much since they had supplies and savings to fall back on at this later date.



During the time of the first plague the Rev. Clement Staub, O.S.B., had begun to minister to Richmond's Catholics. On July 2, 1857, he showed his will to master the situation in writing to Abbot Boniface: "I am perfectly satisfied. I have enough work and am able to sacrifice my efforts which was of course my wish. I am also convinced, even though it doesn't go just so well now, that everything will be all right later. I have now nothing more to do than to take care of



Richmond and St. Jacob. There is plenty of work and everything is wonderful confusion. I have, however, started and accomplished quite a deal in both places and with the help of the grasshoppers it will go better as time goes on I have almost the intention to take over the church claim in Richmond. There seemed to be many people there who have the urge to jump claims. There are adjoining the place where the town is laid out eighty acres. The other eighty claims are above the town and comprise fine land but have no wood. In Richmond most of the settlers have settled down this spring."

With the coming of Fathers Clement and Alexius to help Father Bruno in his expanding parish and missions, life for the pastor was still uneasy. In giving an account of the Christmas season to the abbot, Fr. Bruno wrote: "I had during four holidays the whole parish receiving the Sacraments. Every day there was a High Mass and sermon. Vespers and instruction. I am half dead."

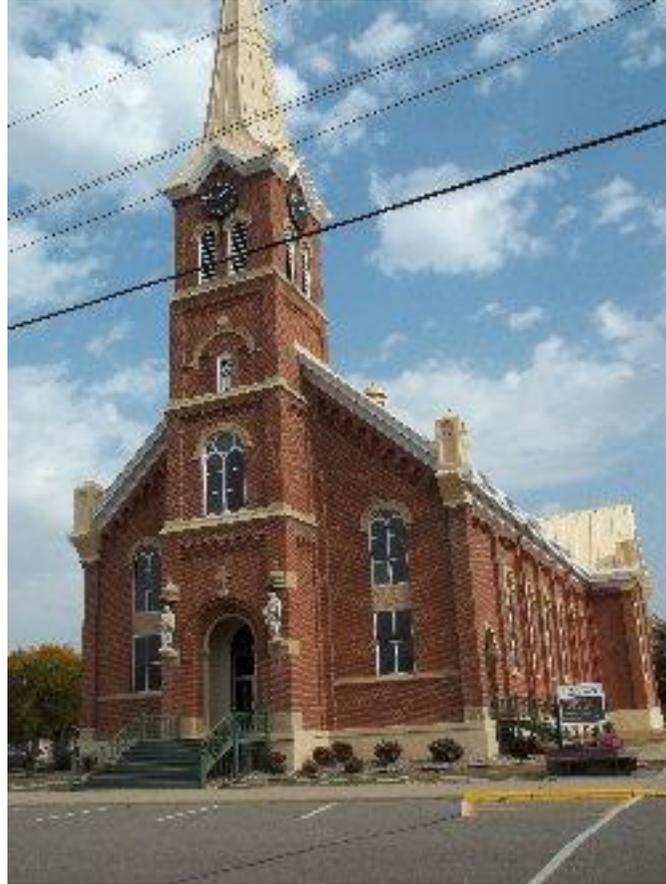
Through all the grasshoppers and poverty, the settlers on the Sauk River kept increasing. In 1856 Richardson had surveyed and platted the land for his proposed village of Richmond. The following year Herman Brunning platted his addition on which the greater portion of the village rests today. At the same time Henry Broker opened the first store; and Andrew Goehring, the first blacksmith shop. G. N. Middendorf and his wife came from Iowa to start a hotel near the Sauk River crossing. They later sold the hotel to O. S. Freeman and started a merchandise store. Another store along the Paynesville road was started by Jacob Simonitch and his partner M. Stockard.



With such rapid growth in but two years, Richmond was ready to assert itself. In 1858 the village was organized, and a year later Munson Township came into being. The first officers of the township were supervisor, Reuben Richardson; chairmen, Andrew Buemel and William Bock; clerk, Henry Broker; Justice of the Peace, Herman Brunning; assessor, B. Pirz; and constable, Samuel Wakefield.

By this time the log church, which had been hurriedly readied for Father Weninger's first mission in 1856, had become too small. Besides the increasing number of immigrants who were moving in, there was the usual increase through marriages and births. Starting with the first recorded Baptism by Father Bruno on August 14, 1856, that of Anna Catherine Seeberger, daughter of Peter Seeberger and Anna nee Schummer, there had been five Baptisms in 1856. There were eight in 1857, and thirty-one in 1858. September 1, 1857, saw the first marriage between Bernard F. Zumwalde, son of Andrew and Anna Zumwalde, and Anna Marie Weber, daughter of Andrew and Anna Weber. Father Clement officiated; while at the end of the month, September 29, 1857, Father Bruno conducted the funeral of Mrs. Anton Brummer, who at the age of thirty-nine was the first member of the parish to die.

To keep up with the expansion it was decided to build a large frame church with a steeple. Although the decision was reached in 1858, that year was filled with the building of the first rectory, so the contract for the church was not awarded until May 30, 1859. For the price of \$332.00 William Wolke and his brother were to erect the new structure. Work was begun in August 1859, and the first services were held in it a year later, September 1860. From that time until the day it burned to the ground, the old log church served as the district school. Under the new pastor, the Rev. Eberhard Gahr, O.S.B., the first schoolmaster, Henry Klostermann, opened classes in the reclaimed building in 1860. Two years later the school was organized. First known as District School No. 1, it was later changed to District No. 20.



The school at Richmond, like so many others that were to come later in the territory, was modeled after what the settlers had known in their homeland. Only in later years did the parochial school system win out in the battle over the proper organization of the Catholic school system in this country. The Benedictines had first written to Germany for available Lehrer Seminar graduates who might be interested in working among the immigrants. In 1871 St. Francis Seminary, Milwaukee, began a normal or training school for young men who had the desire to return to their communities as Kirchen Vaeter, as these schoolmaster-organist-choir directors were called. They also helped as sacristans, directed dramatics, taught catechism, and helped around the church. The first of these at Richmond was, as has been mentioned, Henry Klostermann, who had entered the new St. John's Seminary as one of its first students on November 10, 1857. The most noteworthy of his successors was Lucas Gertken, who taught at Richmond for thirty-one years.

This early pattern was followed for many years in the educational endeavors of the early pastors. Never did it give rise to trouble or confusion. As a correspondent from Richmond wrote to the St. Cloud Register, "Since almost everyone in the district was a Catholic, the parish pretty well dictated the policy of the school. It was practically never referred to as District No. 20 but as Sts. Peter and Paul's School." It

was not until 1951 that the school was finally purchased and made part of the parish property.

In January, 1861, the Rev. Pius Bayer, O.S.B., was appointed pastor. With a new school, rectory, and church, everything looked as if it had settled down to normal growth in the Sauk Valley. But the famed Sioux Indian outbreak in 1862 was to have immediate and terrifying effects on the settlement. The treaties of 1851-53 had failed to settle the Sioux problems. The Indians nurtured resentment, in a great part justified, over the unfulfilled money payments, land adjustments, and loss of reservation lands. These injustices were multiplied by the acts of unscrupulous traders and government agents who were political schemers. The main force of the Indian attack was felt along the Minnesota River, but there was trouble in central Minnesota as J. Fletcher Williams described it: "Western and southern Stearns County, however, suffered severely from the depredations of the red foe. About August 23rd, they committed murders and other crimes near Paynesville. The people of that town erected a strong stockade, and the citizens and refugees from points further west, sheltered themselves therein. A part of the town was burned, but no attack was made on the post. At Maine Prairie, St. Joseph's, Sauk Centre, Clear Water, Little Falls and other places, similar stockades were built, and held by a few determined citizens."



Father Bruno later described how the people fled to their churches for the protection that local leaders failed to give them. The Rev. Magnus Mayer, O.S.B., had been appointed pastor of Richmond in early August of that fateful year, and it was around him that the settlers rallied. In Father Bruno's account his confrere emerges the hero: "The Benedictines in Stearns County did what was in their power to protect the individual settler as well as their congregations." Classes at the college in St. Cloud were dismissed, the director, a civil engineer and a zealous priest, was

stationed at Richmond to reside there in a log hut near the church. At Richmond Father Magnus distinguished himself as an engineer. The settlers with their families, cattle, provisions, and utensils occupied the church, schoolhouse, and stables. The priest's house, a log hut (16x20) was inhabited by a priest who occupied the attic. Father Magnus caused the prairie about the church, school, etc., to be plowed and earth-banks seven feet high to be thrown up. Loopholes were pierced at intervals in the ramparts; two wooden pumpshafts were metamorphosed into field pieces, having been well trooped by the blacksmith. Luckily they were never put to use; they would have been more harm than use to the artillerist.

“These preparations however primitive, allayed the terror of the frightened settlers who thought they were perfectly safe. Father Magnus was recalled to the monastery and I was sent to Richmond. There was lack of arms and ammunition and I drew up a list of all available fighting men, had officers chosen and reported to the Governor that I with these constituted homeguard, with the request to furnish us arms and ammunition. The request was willingly granted, and we were furnished with a quantity of muskets-with the Austrian Coats of Arms on them-also several casks of powder and shot. This infused new courage.”

Food grew scarce. The harvest in the field was ready to be taken in, but no one dared to leave the barricade at Richmond. Not only were the people hungry, the cows bellowed for food. Some of the women and girls were trained to cast bullets. The men under armed cover, went from one field to another for the harvest. When the first weeks of the scare had passed, Father Bruno decided to release his-families from captivity. Then one evening a dozen families arrived with news of a slaughter not five miles from Richmond. This destroyed all hope of leaving the encampment. Later a party of Sioux braves ventured within Richmond territory and there was a short skirmish, but they never attacked in force.

It was only after this move that Company G of the 25th Wisconsin Regiment arrived in Richmond. Surprisingly their appearance caused more local disturbance than all the Indians put together. “The settlers soon lost their tranquility and for some mysterious reason patrols of troops sent out to scout never came back alive. Finally even the Captain was slain, though not a trace was to be found of the Indians. One morning the refugees awoke to find that the soldiers had departed.”

All this terror filled the hearts of the people for only a month, but it seemed like years to them. After the battle of Wood Lake, September 23, 1862, Little Crow and his Sioux warriors left Minnesota and by October everything was back to normal at Richmond. They had weathered another storm. Father Bruno stayed on as pastor until March 1, 1864, when the Rev. Cornelius Wittmann, O.S.B., who had been the second prior of St. John's, took over.

Through the first ten years of the parish the increase in the population had been steady. The old seventy by thirty-two foot church, built in 1860, had grown too small. When the bell finally arrived for this first frame church, the pastor was already planning a new structure. The bell, however, brought joy, for it was one more link with the centuries old tradition of the Germany from which the settlers had come. Now it would ring out to call them to their worship and remind them that even at their work they were once more in their new land grouped around their church. The *St. Cloud Democrat* announced its arrival: "A bell intended for the Catholic church in Richmond passed through here Monday. It is said to be the largest bell in the state." The eighty-eight by fifty foot structure with a seventy-five foot tower, was the third church in Richmond. It was completed in 1866. In 1867 the old log church, which was being used for a school, burned down. Thus Father Cornelius had no more than finished the new church when he was faced with the need of a school building. Although not church property, according to the arrangement of the day, he had a great deal to say about its structure. He had had enough trouble, and the parish voted with him to build the new school of stone. It was to be twenty-eight by forty feet and of two stories. Pankraz Diederich was the overseer and the main building masonry for the project. The parish chronicler records: "He passed the remark to the people to just bring a large pile of stone and he would then feel fine." After seeing the finished structure the *St. Cloud Democrat* remarked: "A new school has been completed at Richmond which is a credit to the place."





As Father Cornelius had prepared the people of St. Cloud ten years previously to make sacrifices for the expression of their faith on the frontier, so he was now proceeding at Richmond. Only two months after his appointment as pastor he had organized the St. Joseph's Men's Society. For the growing German community this was a necessary group that could help in the promotion of frequent Communion, collecting money, and organizing the church fairs.

A year later the Rev. Anschar Frauendorfer, O.S.B., took up residence in the Richmond rectory. In the following years it served as the missionary center from which he and his successors went forth to care for New Munich, Meier Grove, Sauk Centre, St. Martin, Logering, Farming, St. Nicholas, and Spring Hill. This continued until each of these parishes had been set up as separate units.

As so often happened in the development of Stearns County the town at which the Benedictine Fathers had their headquarters for mission work became the shopping center of the district with limited industrial endeavors. One of the first and most necessary shops had been set up early in the history of the town-the blacksmiths. This was followed in later years by other such essentials as brewery, loom, wool factory, sawmill, flourmill, and railroad station. The first of these was the brewery that Claudius Weber established in 1864 on land he had purchased on the east bank of the Sauk River, north of the river crossing. This venture, for which all the labor was done by hand power, lasted about five years. A neighbor of the Weber's, Clement Kost, started a sawmill close to the distillery in 1867 and the following year added a wool factory. These buildings were destroyed by fire in 1870.

The woolen mill adventure had been part of a plan conceived by Father Cornelius in 1866. He had become well acquainted with the problems his people were having in getting the necessary supplies into Richmond. All the dry goods and groceries had to be brought in by ox team. At times such a purchasing trip meant going to St. Paul, which was nearly eighty miles distant. The time consumed in these trips could be much better spent getting more out of the land. To avoid at least the necessity of going for cloth, in 1866 the pastor purchased a loom for the parish. This loom was operated by F. A. Willenbring, who later bought it from the parish, but continued to supply, in cooperation with the woolen factory, much needed woolen fabrics. The last link with outside industry which came in 1886 removed much of the need for home factories. This tie with the outer world was the Great Northern Railroad. Founded in the same year as Richmond, it had wound its way out of St. Paul to Elk River by 1867. Ten years later it was in St. Cloud, but it took another nine years for it to reach Richmond.

While the railroad was being built to Richmond, many of the railroad construction crew stayed at the Richmond House, which had been founded in 1867 by William Wieber. The original structure had ten large bedrooms. A twelve room addition was erected in 1900, which burned a year later, but was replaced by 1903. This hotel served for many years as the stopping place for salesmen visiting the surrounding communities.

As a center of production in the late 1800's Richmond was contributing her share. On September 27, 1866, the *St. Cloud Democrat* reported that Middendorf and Brunnings had shipped to the east 8,000 pounds of butter, 300 dozen eggs, and 600 pair of country knit socks. Even though Weber's Brewery had been out of business for sometime, records of 1879 show that during that year 144 barrels of beer were brewed in Richmond. But such ordinary means did not seem to be enough for the promoters of civic enterprise. In 1880 one of the



biggest wildcat ventures of Stearns County was launched in Richmond. During the early months of that year Jacob Simonitsch, Joseph Berghoff and A. Bussen made plans for mining coal in Munson Township. By March 4 they were at the head of the Richmond Mining Company with a capital of \$10,000. This corporation seems to have dwindled in the following years, but hopes did not die. In 1900 the Eureka Coal Mining Company was organized with a capital of \$70,000 to prospect coal in the vicinity of Richmond. John Lang headed this company.

In April, 1869, the Rev. Corbinian Gastbiehl, O.S.B., took over as pastor of the parish. Remaining until November, 1871, he returned to St. Vincent's Arch Abbey. He was succeeded for four months by the Rev. Benedict Haindl, O.S.B., one of the first priors of St. John's. He did not reside at Richmond, but attended it from the abbey at Collegeville. Father Anschar Frauendorfer was then appointed pastor, and in the

following twelve years the Revs. Anthony Capser, Alphonse Kuisle, Anselm Sauter, and Pancratius Maehren took short terms as pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul.

The guiding of the parish for the decade preceding the turn of the century and the decade following it was left to the Rev. Ignatius Wesseling, O.S.B. Except for the three year pastorage of the Rev. Ludger Ehrens, O.S.B., from January 10, 1901, to September 10, 1904, Father Ignatius was pastor from February, 1884, to 1910, when he died suddenly of pneumonia on November 8. He spent 1901 to 1904 in Washington and California, seeking relief from a chronic respiratory ailment that caused him much coughing and left him with a poor singing voice.

A tall, slender man who was known for his ability to unite the people in a parish project, Father Ignatius immediately put his talent to work upon his arrival at Richmond. Coming in February, 1884, he had the foundation for a new and bigger brick church ready on May 29. The cornerstone was laid by the Most Rev. Rupert Seidenbusch, O.S.B., Vicar Apostolic of Northern Minnesota, on August 24 of the same year. Work was slowed up somewhat during the winter, but on September 8, 1885, the fifty-six by one hundred and sixty foot structure was dedicated by the Rev. Alexis Edelbrock, O.S.B., second abbot of St. John's.

No sooner had the parishioners settled back from the busy days of church building, when Father Ignatius showed them that in the expanding parish was need for a larger school and rectory. The school was started in 1898 and within a year they had moved on to complete the parish house. After the new school was finished, the old granite structure was torn down. The stones were used to build the rectory foundation and the underground boiler room. In spite of all this building, by 1906 the parish was free of debt. That same year saw another happy event, the coming of the Benedictine Sisters to teach the lower grades of the local school, although it still remained a district school until 1951.



All, however, was not happiness in Richmond during these years. Throughout the years as more and more claims had been made the land had increased in value and

the amount of available acreage dwindled. An acre of land had become a thing about which to be concerned. Ever since the erection of the dam across the Sauk River at Cold Spring in 1856, the flow caused by it had extended up the river sixteen miles. It covered a chain of lakes and increased the level of the water from two and one-half to four feet. After forty-five years of seeking to right the situation, the Richmond farmers had their opportunity when the property surrounding the dam came into the hands of Anton Muggli. In January, 1898, some forty of the farmers living along the Sauk River between Cold Spring and Richmond completed the payment to Muggli of \$5,000 for the dam with the privilege of tearing it down. This move would give them a large acreage of meadowland then under water. The residents of Cold Spring, however, took legal steps to prevent the removal of the dam. On the first appeal to the Supreme Court the decision was on the side of the farmers, but the second decision, which was filed on July 4, 1901, was in favor of the residents of Cold Spring. Leaving nothing to chance or law, there were unsuccessful two attempts while the litigation was in progress to blow up the dam with dynamite.

Through the first fifty years of the parish's existence the name of the locality had been called variously Richmond's Prairie and Richmond to the settlers. The government, however, was not so ready to recognize it as such. When Reuben Richardson was named the first postmaster on July 24, 1856, the postal name given to the town was Torah. This was necessary because there was already a Richmond, Minnesota, in Winona County. This village had been platted in 1855 and had filed its name first. The government finally gave in to the practice of the citizens of Munson Township and changed the name officially to Richmond on March 4, 1909, at the beginning of the postmaster M. A. Bussen's term.

After the death of Father Ignatius in 1910, the Rev. Conrad Glatzmaier, O.S.B., assumed the responsibility of guiding the now flourishing parish. He left in September, 1911, to become pastor of St. Mary's in Stillwater. For the next sixteen years the Rev. Gregory Steil, O.S.B., governed the parish. A man of medium height and slight build, he had black hair and a beard that he shaved off the year before coming to Richmond. During his years at the abbey he had been the architect for the quadrangle, the laundry, butcher shop, and many other buildings at St. John's; as well as several of the Benedictine churches throughout the state. Highly respected as a pastor, although a bit repetitious as a preacher, he was a diocesan consultor from 1883 to 1903. The characteristics of his parochial work were strict economy, long sermons, and love for children. A bad stomach caused him to have an emaciated appearance. He died at Richmond on March 16, 1927 of a cerebral hemorrhage. The Rev. Oswald Johannes, O.S.B., acted as pastor for four months after Father Gregory's death until the Rev. Ansgar Osendorf, O.S.B., became pastor in July. At the time Father Oswald took over he was assistant at the parish, a position he had held since 1924.

An assistant at this large country parish had become a necessity in 1891 when the work became too much for one man. In that year the Rev. Clement Dimpfl, O.S.B., was appointed to the post. In the following years he was succeeded by the Revs.

Boniface Moll, Isidore Siegler, Fidelis Lucking, James Hansen, Bonaventure Hansen, Bede Meyenberger, Philip Bahner, Peter Wollnik, Xavier Kapsner, Edmund Basel, Timothy Majerus, Pius Mainz, Anselm Ortmann, and Adalbert Unruhe. After Father Oswald left the parish in 1927, the Rev. Benedict Schmit, O.S.B., was an assistant for a year. He was succeeded by the Revs. Felix Nellis, Leo Hoppe, Roland Kapsner, Aloysius Michels, Cyprian Seitz, Marion Roth, Romuald Bloms, Burkhard Arnheiter, and Arthur Danzl. All but two of this last listing served during the eighteen-year pastorate of Father Ansgar Osendorf.

A native of Richmond, Father Ansgar was not eager to return to his hometown as pastor. Since his ordination in 1896 he had served in St. Paul, White Earth, Red Lake Falls, Barnesville, Callaway, and Detroit Lakes. He came to Richmond well experienced in the conducting of parish affairs. One of the first major jobs he undertook was the building of the sacristy, garage, and fuel bin.

Completed in 1928, the project cost \$5,952. Two years later the balcony was extended and the organ rebuilt at a cost of \$5,095, helping greatly to

enhance the worship that the people of the parish offered to God for graces which had come to them through the years. In 1931 there was another outlay of \$5,500 for the decoration of the church. Eight years later he put rubber tile in the church and sanctuary. The church was insulated in 1942, and this completed the round of six major improvements on the church built in 1884.



In 1946 the improvements on the church were continued by the Rev. Anthony Ronellenfisch, O.S.B., with the fireproofing of the church basement and the replacing of the old different-leveled wood floors with a single concrete slab. The roof of the church was repaired and painted in 1948. Two years later, in June, 1950, Father Anthony left Richmond to become pastor of Jacobs Prairie. He was replaced by the Rev. Maurice Hurrell, O.S.B., who was pastor until July, 1954. One of the first major repairs during Father Maurice's pastorate was done on the stained-glass windows and the pipe organ in 1950. The following year the parish bought the District No. 20 school and the Sisters' house.

For the last two years of the first century of the parish the Rev. Wendelin Luetmer, O.S.B., has been the pastor. In preparation for the centennial year the church roof was painted in 1955, and in the first half of 1956 the interior of the church was cleaned and redecorated. In this last year the skating rink and warming house were set up for the youth of the parish. A recreation center is now in the planning stages. With these recent plans for the youth of the parish, the people of Richmond are already looking forward to the coming century. Urged on by the example of their forefathers, strong in faith and free on the land, they rededicated themselves to their ideals as true and living members of the Church. Through the first hundred years they have shown response to Christ's prayer which must continue to be invoked in the years to come: "That they may all be one, as thou Father in Me and I in Thee."