

St Johns Catholic Church

Township: T-47-N
Range: R-19-W
Section: 11
Map: [Click Here](#)

Organized: 1850
Disbanded: No
Active: Yes
Updated: July 19, 2005

Cemetery: There is a cemetery associated with this church.

Area: Northwest quarter of the northwest quarter of the section about five miles west of Pilot Grove, Missouri. Established in 1851. Clear Creek, Cooper County, Missouri.

Records: These church records were microfilm in the late 1950s by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

History:



St. John's 1883 building



St Johns - New Church ; Photograph From "Pilot Grove Centennial 1873 - 1973"

St. John Catholic Church

From "History of Howard and Cooper Counties Missouri", 1883

There is a Catholic church in Clear Creek Township; the old building was a frame one; a brick is being put up at this time (1883). The pastor in charge is John Conrad, O. S. B. This church has about fifty families.

St. John's Catholic Church

From "History of Cooper County Missouri" by E. J. Melton, 1937

ST. JOHN'S CATHOLIC PARISH MOVES FORWARD

The History of the Founding of the Church and School at Clear Creek and Their Subsequent Development Is a Chronicle of Progress and Achievement-Many Stalwart Men of God Have Served as Priests and the Sisters Do a Fine Work in Teaching Youth in Academic Subjects and Religion-Church and School Develop Christian Character-The Reverend Father Herzog, the Present Pastor, Has Labored Faithfully and Effectively, and With the United Support of an Enthusiastic, Devout People.

About 1840, a small band of Catholic families, some from Germany, others from various parts of Missouri, took up government land in the western part of Cooper County along the fertile valleys of Clear Creek and of the Lamine river. The settlement was named Clear Creek.

According to Church Records, the following men with their families had built homes before 1850: Stephen Young, Lawrence Sommers, Adam Aulbach, Jacob Beck, Theodore Berster, John Diel, Jacob Diel, Bertram Felten, Frank Grotzinger, Gregory Klenklen, Henry Jansen, Michael Schoen, F. M. Larm, Frank Stolzenberger, Bernard Twenter, Anthony Youngamp, John Walz, Anton blessing and George Zoeller.

The hardships of these first settlers were many and their labors arduous, but their greatest concern was to obtain the consolations of religion. Father Helias, the apostle of Central Missouri, visited them once or twice a year. In 1850, Father Tuerk of Boonville was induced to visit them occasionally on a week-day to minister to their spiritual wants, offering the Sacrifice of Mass in private homes -thus bringing joy and contentment to the faithful.

Father Tuerk was succeeded by Father John Meister, also of Boonville, who took care of the little flock for two years. He in turn was succeeded by Father Hildner.

The number of families steadily increased. Father Hildner and the people decided to build a little log church, for which Lawrence Sommers donated ground. Henceforth Father Hildner came from Boonville every fourth Sunday to minister to the people.

He was succeeded by Father John Meurs, who encouraged the people to build a one room log house with an attic, which served as living quarters and office during his weekend visits. This building was later used as a school in which many of the present residents absorbed knowledge, and which still stands as a landmark of those pioneer days.

Father Hoffman of Boonville succeeded Father Meurs, and came to Clear Creek once a month.

In December 1877, Archbishop Kendrick of St. Louis appointed Father Boden to be the first resident pastor to the people of Clear Creek. He built a four-room pastoral residence and served the people until January 1880, when Father Reding took charge. Ill health forced him to resign 18 months later.

When on September 10, 1880, the Kansas City Diocese was established, Clear Creek was placed under the jurisdiction of Bishop Homan, who asked the Benedictine Fathers of Conception, Missouri, to take charge of the parish, Father John Conrad was the first one appointed.

By 1884, the parish had grown to such an extent that the old log church could no longer accommodate the congregation. A new church was built. Rock for the foundation was quarried on the Twenter farm adjoining the church property, and brick was made on the W. C. Young farm about one mile away.

The cornerstone was laid in the summer of 1884, and the church was dedicated the following spring. Father John Conrad had charge until 1895, and was succeeded by his brother, Father Pius Conrad.

He was pastor but a short time when he established a new parish in Pilot Grove, which he served from Clear Creek, and, three years later, moved to Pilot Grove as its first pastor.

Father Ambrose Bucher took his place at Clear Creek, and a few months later was succeeded by Father Fintan Geser, during whose pastorate of about two years, an addition was built to the rectory, which building has been used since 1910 by the Benedictine Sisters of Fort Smith, Arkansas, who conduct the school of the parish.

The next pastor was Father Boniface Zimmen, from June 1900, to January 1905, and was succeeded by Father Ildephons Kuhn. He proposed that a larger and more beautiful church be built, and the people, full of enthusiasm, set out with zeal and zest to erect a house of worship more worthy of the Lord. They gave freely of their means and labor, so that on August 20, 1906, the cornerstone of the new brick church was laid.

On this occasion Father F. F. Kueper, pastor at Tipton, Missouri, more than 50 years and now retired at St. Joseph Hospital, Boonville, preached the English sermon, and Abbot Conrad of Conception, Missouri, preached in German.

The Gantner and Stretz Brick Company of Boonville made the brick near the church grounds and did the brick work.

On September 8, 1908, Bishop Lillis of Kansas City dedicated the church. Its cost, including all furniture, was \$20,000. Father Ildephons, having studied art in European schools, was not satisfied with having the church frescoed, but proceeded to use his talent as an artist to adorn the House of God with paintings portraying the life of Christ. This work has been pronounced by many art critics as a masterpiece.

In addition to the beautiful paintings, other ornaments and objects of devotion were put into the church. Among these are the 14 Stations of the Cross, donated by Bernard Horst; a two-manuel pipe organ, donated by Mrs. Henry Twenter in memory of her deceased husband; and three bells weighing 1800, 900 and 600 pounds, donated by Mrs. Joseph Twenter in memory of her deceased husband and son, Leonard. These bells have a harmonious peal when in unison they announce the hours of worship. They were installed by W. J. Cochran & Son of Boonville, Missouri in August 1922. Mrs. Theodore Twenter donated a beautiful gold tabernacle and Mrs. Henry Wessing made a donation for a pulpit, as memorials to their deceased husbands. Bernard T. Twenter, fulfilling the wish of his deceased father, Henry Twenter, donated an iron fence and entrance for the cemetery.

In 1910, the parishioners were called upon again to show their good will, when Father Ildephons asked them to build a new rectory. This was built of brick to conform with the church. It is a commodious two-story building for which material from the old church was used, and the parishioners donated many days of labor, so that the cost was held down to \$5,000.

In June, 1916, the Benedictine Fathers of Conception, Missouri, gave up the parish and Bishop Lillis appointed Father F. J. Kalvelage to take charge, July 1, 1916.

The people of St. John's parish always realized that a school was necessary to develop good Christian citizens, and, consequently, had a school even before they had a resident pastor. Bertram Felten was the first teacher, and had the children come to his home several days each week, and there instructed them in religion as well as in reading, writing and arithmetic.

After the log cabin was built, which served as Father Muer's rectory over the weekend, school was held in this building during the week. Jacob Karm also taught the school for a short time.

When Father Boden took charge of the parish, he induced two Franciscan Sisters from Nevada, Missouri, to conduct the school for one year. Since they had no residence on the church grounds, Bernard Twenter boarded and lodged them in his home, one fourth of a mile from school. During Father John Conrad's pastorate, a frame school was built at a cost of \$500 and John Pachlhofer was the teacher for a number of years.

In 1900 the Benedictine Sisters of Clyde, Missouri, were engaged to teach the school. Their work went on until 1906, when the school was discontinued while the church was being built. In 1908, it was reopened with Sisters from Boonville in charge. These Sisters lived in the above-mentioned log cabin until Father Ildephons moved into the new rectory in 1910, when the old rectory became the Sisters' residence.

On April 4, 1917, the school, together with all contents, burned to the ground. Church, rectory and Sisters' residence were in great danger of destruction, but the people from near and far rushed to the scene, and, having formed a bucket brigade, saved the buildings. In the spring, 1918, Father Kalvelage undertook to build a new school, and by September it was completed and furnished at a cost of \$10,000, and was paid for in donated Liberty Bonds.

As every good Catholic parish has its religious societies that work for the spiritual welfare of the individual as well as the general good of the Church, so St. John's parish has its societies for all members.

The Sacrament of Confirmation was administered for the first time on September 18, 1878, by Archbishop J. J. Ryan of St. Louis and thereafter every few years by the Bishop of Kansas City. The first baptism by a resident pastor in this parish was that of Anna Mary Young, daughter of Henry Young and Catherine Twenter Young, January 8, 1878.

The first marriage was contracted between Theodore Twenter and Mary Diel, April 3, 1878.

The first person to be buried in St. John's Cemetery was Henry Jansen, who died April 7, 1851.

About twelve young ladies of the parish have entered the Sisterhood, and one young man, Charles A. Bauer, son of Mr. and Mrs. Joe Bauer, entered the Priesthood.

There are at present about 60 families or about 290 souls in St. John's parish, with an average of 60 pupils attending the parochial school, which is taught by two Benedictine Sisters from Fort Smith, Arkansas.

Father L. J. Herzog is the present pastor of St. John's parish. He was born in New York City, October 20, 1891. He spent his early years in Plantersville, Texas, and at the age of 12 moved with his parents, four brothers and four sisters, to Buffalo Park, Kansas. He attended the parochial and public schools and in 1907, left his home to begin his training for the Priesthood at Conception College, Conception, Missouri.

Having been graduated in the spring of 1916, the following September he entered St. Meinrad's Theological Seminary in Indiana where he completed his studies and was ordained, June 9, 1919, in Kansas City by Bishop Thomas F. Lillis.

His first appointment was Saints Peter and Paul Church at Boonville where he assisted Father Jennings from July 1, 1919, to June 30, 1921. He was then transferred to Tipton to assist Father F. F. Kueper until February 8, 1926, when his bishop assigned to him the pastorate at Clear Creek, to succeed Father F. J. Kalvelage, who was transferred to Billings, Missouri.

Father Herzog found St. John's parish well organized, its members dutiful, loyal to Church and State, all buildings in excellent condition, received the hearty cooperation of his people, and has spent more than 10 pleasant years, laboring faithfully and zealously for their spiritual welfare and for the honor and glory of God.

St. John's Catholic Church
From "Pilot Grove Centennial 1873 - 1973"

Catholicism in the Clear Creek Community appears to have had the beginning in 1840 when two Catholic families from Germany, Stephen Young and Lawrence Sommers settled on government land here. Within two years, twenty-one more Catholic families had taken up government grants.

When Father Helias, a Jesuit Priest of near Jefferson City heard of the Catholic settlement, he made several visits each year, bringing with him the sacraments. Soon, the Rev. George Tuerk, pastor of the Sts. Peter and Paul Parish in Boonville, visited settlement each week to offer mass in the homes of Peter Beck and Chris Whitman.

In 1856, the first church was built on an acre of land donated by Mr. Lawrence Sommers. A church of homemade brick was built in 1884. By 1906, there was danger of the building collapsing, and in that year Father Ildephonse Kuhn encouraged the people to build a larger and stronger church. In 1908, the building was completed, and was dedicated by Bishop Thomas

Lillis. This building drew a great deal of attention because Father Ildephonse, who was a talented artist, painted the "Fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary" on the high ceiling of the church and a group picture, "Christ Preaching to the People" above the sanctuary.

On April 4, 1917, the adjoining school burned, and the roof of the church started to burn but it was saved by a bucket brigade. Further tragedy struck the church on May 28 1955 when a severe tornado ruined the beautiful church beyond repair. Under the guidance of Rev. Kevin McGonicle, a new church and rectory were dedicated on May 10, 1957.

It might be said that St. John's Church was the parent church of St. Joseph's in Pilot Grove. Both of these were missions of St. John's.

**St. John The Baptist Church Clear Creek, Mo.
From "Memorabilia of Cooper County", 1990**

As early as 1840, a small band of German Catholic families wended their way westward and settled in the fertile valley of the Lamine river in the western part of Cooper County, Missouri. The Stephen Young and Lawrence Sommers families were the first to take up government land to settle. Between 1840 and 1850, the following men and their families came to build their future homes: Adam Aulbach, Jacob Beck, Theodore Berster, John Diel, Jacob Diel, Bertram Felten, Frank Grotzinger, Gregory Klenklen, Henry Jansen, Melchior Kraus, Andrew Neckerman, Anton Schibi, Michael Schoen, F.M. Larm, Frank Stolzenberger, Bernard H. Twenter, John B. Twenter, Anthony Youngkamp, John G. Walz, Anton Wessing and George A. Zoeller. The greatest hardship of these first settlers was that they had not the consolation of their religion. Father Helias, the "apostle of Central Missouri", visited them once or twice a year. In 1850, Father George Tuerk of Boonville came occasionally on a weekday to administer to their religious wants. He celebrated Mass in the homes of Peter Peak and Christ Wittman and others. He was succeeded by Father John Meister and Father Hildner. In 1855, the number of families had grown to such an extent that it was decided to build a church, for which purpose Lawrence Sommers donated an acre of ground. The church, benches and altars were of logs from the surrounding woods at practically no cost. The church was dedicated in 1856 to St. John the Baptist and Father Hildner came from Boonville every fourth Sunday to conduct services. His successor, Father John Meurs, encouraged the people to build a log house of one room with an attic, which he used as his living quarters and office when he came to hold Divine services. It was used as late as 1917 for a classroom. Father Henry Hoffman succeeded Fr. Meurs.

In 1877, Archbishop Kenrick of St. Louis deemed that the parish was sufficiently strong to support its own pastors. St. Martins, Mission of Boonville was given to St. John's.

The little log house was not a fit dwelling for a resident pastor, so another residence consisting of 4 rooms was built at a cost of \$600.00. Fr. Nick Reding followed Fr. Boden on January 8, 1880.

When the St. Louis archdiocese was divided, St. Johns passed to the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Kansas City. In 1881, Bishop Hogan gave the Benedictine Fathers of Conception, Mo. charge of this parish and the Rev. John Conrad was appointed by his Abbot to be pastor of Clear Creek.

By 1884 the old log church was too small and a new church became a necessity. Believing in strict economy, the farmers quarried the rock for the foundation and the bricks were made on the W.D. Young farm about a mile from the church. The cornerstone was laid in the summer of 1884, and the church was dedicated the following spring. Father John was succeeded by his brother, Fr. Pius Conrad, O.S.B., who in a very short time started a new parish in Pilot Grove. Fathers Ambrose Bucher, O.S.B., Fintan Geser, O.S.B., Boniface Zimmer, O.S.B. all served St. Johns from 1895 to 1905. Fr. Ildephonse Kuhn, O.S.B. next took charge. The church built in 1884 was poorly constructed and it became dangerous to hold services there. When Father Ildephonse proposed that another and more beautiful temple, worthy of the Eucharistic King, be built, the people were enthusiastic and for the third time gave freely of their means and labor. The

cornerstone of the new brick church was laid on Aug. 20, 1906. On this occasion, Father Kueper of Tipton preached the English sermon and Abbot Conrad O.S.B. of Conception abbey preached in German. On Sept. 8, 1908, the Most Rev. Thomas F. Lillis, then Bishop of Leavenworth, dedicated the church.

Then, having studied the art of painting in Europe, Father Ildephonse proceeded to use his talents to beautify God's house. Therein he painted the 15 Mysteries of the Holy Rosary that adorned the ceiling, the large group picture of the Sermon on the Mount above the sanctuary and a picture of St. John the Baptist baptizing Our Lord. This had been pronounced by many art critics to be a masterpiece.

A Member of the congregation donated a set of stations of the cross imported from Germany, and the paintings of these are being used. Other donations were: a large two-manual pipe organ, a gold tabernacle, a canopied pulpit and a set of three bells, the smallest of these still in use. An iron fence and entrance for the cemetery were donated after a cemetery Association was formed in 1923. A new rectory of brick to conform with the church was built in 1910. This church and rectory were damaged by a tornado on May 28, 1955, and both were razed to the ground. Also razed at this time was the grotto built before 1917, and stood as a tribute to Mary, the Mother of God.

A new church of simple design and a new rectory and convent were erected. The church was dedicated in the parish's centennial year, May 10, 1956. At this time, St. Joseph's parish of Clifton City became a mission of Clear Creek.

In June of 1916, the Benedictine Fathers gave up the parish, and the Rev. Francis J. Kalvelage, appointed by the Bishop, took charge of St. John's July 1 of that year. He was succeeded by Father Leo J. Herzog, who served from 1926 until July 1, 1937, when the Benedictine monks returned as pastors. Father Willibrord Beck was pastor until Oct. 30, 1937, followed by the Rev. Hilary Hill, O.S.B.; in 1940 Father Martin Stolberg; in 1942 Father Leo Gales; in 1952 Rev. Kevin McGonigle; and in 1962 by Father Ignatius Potts. On Sept. 1, 1963 St. John's was given to the newly formed diocese of Jefferson City. Diocesan priests took over the pastorate; Father Ferdinand Bonn from 1964 to 1968, and then Father Ralph Siebert until March 1970, when St. John's merged with St. Joseph's parish of Pilot Grove.

Mass is celebrated at St. John's each Sunday and Holy day.

Vocations from this parish are: Father Karl Bauer, Rev. Charles Bauer, C.P.P.S., Rev. Mr. Ralph Reuter, deacon; and Sisters Catherine Reuter and Maura Horst, Benedictines of Clyde, Mo.; Sisters Meinrada Bonen, Pancratia Bonen, and Andrew Bonen, Bernice Kraus, and Irma Twenter, Benedictines of Fort Smith, Ark.; Sisters Gregory Bonen, and Anthony Bonen, Sisters of Mercy in Kansas City; Sister Angeline Young, Sister of St. Francis of the Poor in Columbus, Ohio; Sister Adelaide Walz, Benedictine Sister of Our Lady of Peace Convent, Columbia, Mo.

Sodalities were founded during a Mission in March 1882.

The Clear Creek Council No. 2261 of the Knights of Columbus was instituted on April 24, 1921.

Realizing the need of Catholic education, the people had a school from the early days. Bertram Felten, in the 1840s, had ridden horseback to the homes to teach the children and had, with his wife, conducted classes in religion and elementary subjects in their own home for those who could come several days a week. In the pastor's absence, classes were held in the first log cabin built to serve Father Meurs as a rectory. Jacob Karen also taught school for a short time.

While Father Boden was pastor, he asked two Franciscan Sisters of Nevada, Mo. to teach for one year. They boarded with a parishioner.

In the pastorate of Father John Conrad, 1881-1895, a school large enough to seat 35 pupils was built and John Pachelhofer had been the master of learning. About 1900, the Benedictine Sisters of Clyde, Mo., had charge of the school until 1906, as the school was closed during the building of the new church.

Benedictine Sisters from Pilot Grove, Mo. took over the school in 1908. They moved from the one-room log rectory into the four-room structure once the new brick rectory was built in 1910.

In 1909, the school was enlarged and repaired, and, on April 4, 1917, it burned to the ground. Forming a bucket brigade, the people saved the church, rectory, and sisters' residence, which caught fire from flying embers. As the public school, a quarter of a mile away, had already closed for vacation, the use of the building was granted for the remainder of the school term, and one of the sisters was hired to teach in the public school for the coming term. The four higher grades were taught there, while the lower grades were taught in the first log cabin.

In the spring of 1918, five acres of land were purchased north of the church and ground was broken for a new school, to be built of brick in keeping with the church and rectory. It was completed and furnished by Sept. 22, 1918, on which day it was blessed by Bishop Thomas F. Lillis.

The sisters stayed with the new school, moved into the new convent in 1952, and remained with St. John's until changing times and needs brought about the school's closing in 1969. The following year religion classes were taught by members of the parish.

Kitchen facilities had been added in July 1951 for school lunches and is now being used for parish and community affairs. This school stands to remind us of days gone by.

by Levina Reuter
