

St Martins Catholic Church

Township: T-49-N
Range: R-18-W
Section: 22
Map: [Click Here](#)

Organized: May 16, 1870
Disbanded: Yes - Church Burned
Active: No
Updated: July 19, 2005

Cemetery: There is a cemetery associated with this church. Since the church burned, the cemetery is all that is left of Martinsville, Missouri.

Area: Northwest quarter of the northeast quarter of the section Four to five miles northeast of Pilot Grove; a short distance off of Route 135; on a gravel road.

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

History:

St. Martin's Catholic Church

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

There is also a church in Pilot Grove township, at a place called Martinsville. Father Conrad, above named, preaches here. This church has about fifty families.

St. Martins Catholic Church

From "History of Cooper County Missouri" by W. F. Johnson, 1919

St. Martin's Church - On May 16, 1870, a little log structure, 18x24 feet, called St. Martin Chapel was erected and a cemetery laid out on one and one-half acres of land donated by Daniel Martin. This location was afterwards known as Martinsville.

The original families of St. Martin Church were the following, viz, Daniel Martin, John Martin, Leonard Martin, John Martin, Jr., Jacob Gross, Nicholas Schank, Anton Wiemholt, Philip Wiedel, Mr. Bonan, George Bergerhaus, J. Carvel.

Martinsville was a mission of Boonville, from 1870-1877. It was in charge of Reverend Murus, 1870-1874; Reverend Hoffman, 1874-1877. Martinsville was a mission of Clear Creek, 1877-1897. It was the charge of Rev. W. F. Boden, 1877-1880. Under the direction of Father Boden the second St. Martin's Church, a frame structure was built. In 1880 this mission was taken care of by Rev. N. Reding; in 1881 by Reverend Conrad, O. S. B. of Conception Abbey; in 1895 by Rev. Pius Conrad of Conception Abbey. Martinsville was a mission of Pilot Grove, 1897-1908, under the charge of Rev. Pius Conrad O. S. B.

The present and third St. Martin's Church is a solid brick structure, erected on 2.24 acres of land on the Boonville and Sedalia public road, about one-fourth mile north of the M. K. T. railroad station known as Chouteau Springs. The corner stone was laid in 1908 by Rev. Leo, O. S. B. It was dedicated by Rt. Reverend Ignatius of Subiaco, Ark. January 1, 1909; Reverend Pius O. S. B. became pastor of St. Martin's Parish. On Aug. 31, 1911, Father Pius moved to St. Martin's Rectory. On Jan. 13, 1915, Father Pius was succeeded by Rev. J. A. Koehler of the Kansas City, Mo., Diocese.

The St. Martin Parish at present consists of forty progressive and prosperous Catholic Families, and is in a flourishing condition.

St. Martin's is a Monument to the Faith

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

In 1860 the Locality Had Only Two Catholic Families - 10 Years Later 13 Built a Log Church-Third Is Beautiful Gothic Edifice With \$25,000 School and Priest's Residence Nearby.

THE History of St. Martin's Parish began when John Martin in the year 1860 came to Cooper County and settled on a farm about one-half mile west of the present Chouteau Springs. This farm is now owned and tilled by Mr. Martin's grandson William Day. Daniel Martin, a brother of John, moved into the same neighborhood very shortly after, and these two families were then the only Catholic families within a radius of several miles.

For a period of 10 years these two families, augmented by others, who moved into the same locality, attended services at both Boonville and Clear Creek, although Clear Creek had no resident pastor. The secular priests from Boonville held services at Clear Creek. The families attending there made the journey to either of the churches, a distance of about 10 miles to either, sometimes on horseback, but most of the time on foot, to attend the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

In 1870 the number of families had increased to about 13. These were mostly all of German origin. They decided to erect their own place of worship and Daniel Martin donated a piece of ground consisting of one and one-half acres of land, which had to be cleared first. A log structure 18 by 24 feet was erected. The first logs were raised May 16, 1870. Before the hopes of the few people could be realized, and until their little log church was completed, services were held in the home of Daniel Martin for four successive months, once a month. This home is now owned and occupied by Mr. John Weimholt and is still in a fairly good state of preservation.

When the first church building was completed it was named St. Martin's, mainly because the Martins were the first Catholic settlers and also because they donated the site for the first church. Adjoining the church, land was set aside for a cemetery, which is still the burial grounds for St. Martin's present church and is well kept up.

When the log church was completed and named, it became a mission to Boonville. It seems Father Hilner for a short period was the first to attend the mission. He came but once a month and this not always on a Sunday. Whenever the sacrifice of the Mass was to be offered during the week, the faithful would notify each other. If there were no services on Sunday the faithful would go to either Boonville or Clear Creek to attend Mass. Those who could not go would assemble in their own church to recite the rosary and other prayers.

Father Meurs attended to the spiritual needs of the mission from 1870 to 1874. He was followed by Father Hoffman from 1874 to 1877. In the year 1877 St. Martin's became a mission to Clear Creek. By this time the little log church could no longer accommodate the increased numbers and the still small congregation undertook to build a second church on the same property. Under direction of Father Boden who attended St. Martin's from Clear Creek a frame structure of much larger dimensions was erected.

The people now felt the urgent need of a school, and the old log church, supplanted by the second church, a frame building, was converted into a school. Catholic laymen for several years taught about three months every spring, which routine was changed later on to six months of school every year. Mr. John Immele was one of the first teachers.

In 1880 Father Reding took charge but remained only a short time. These above mentioned priests all belonged to St. Louis Archdiocese under Archbishop Kenrick. In 1881 the Archdiocese of St. Louis was divided and in this division Boonville, Clear Creek, together with Martinsville became part of the Kansas City Diocese, under the Rt. Rev. Bishop Hogan, its first Bishop.

Under the new bishop the Benedictine Fathers from Conception took charge of Clear Creek and the first Benedictine pastor was Father John Conrad O. S. B. He remained until 1895 when his brother Father Pius Conrad O. S. B. took charge, but remained resident priest only for three

years, when he took up his permanent residence at Pilot Grove, Missouri, where in the meantime a mission had also been established. Father Pius held services on each and every Sunday and Holyday of the years 1907 and 1908 at both Pilot Grove and Martinsville since Martinsville had become a mission of Father Pius in 1907.

No priest's residence had ever been erected on the grounds where the two churches had been built, and for that purpose, and because of the difficult access to the church, the roads often being impassable, the congregation decided to build a third church, but at a more convenient place. This at first met with stern opposition from some parishioners. This was partly due to high waters which ruined almost the entire crop of that year, and the people thought they could ill afford to make the change and buy new property. Afterwards there came a compromise and later all were pleased, because of the change. The new site is about one mile east of the old one. In 1908 the first sod was turned for the new edifice and a beautiful Gothic church 102 by 40 feet was begun. Father Leo O. S. B. of Conception laid the cornerstone and in 1911 Father Ignatius Conrad O. S. B. Abbot of Subiaco, Arkansas, brother to Father Pius, the pastor, dedicated the new church. The new church cost about \$12,000.00.

The church was now complete, but the priest's residence was still lacking, and as a result the present residence, a rather small and humble home, was built mainly from the material of the second church. It cost about \$1500.00. On August 31, 1911, Father Pius moved into the newly erected residence, and became the first residential pastor of Martinsville.

On January 13, 1915, Father Pius was succeeded by Father August Koehler, the first secular priest at Martinsville. A great deal was accomplished during his stay of eight years. The greatest of his achievements was the building of St. Martin's School, a beautiful brick building 46 by 46 feet and modern in every detail. This school would be a credit to any parish. It cost about \$25,000.

FATHER P. J. WEBER, a Canadian by birth, followed Father Koehler in July, 1923.

Father Weber made his arts course in St. Jerome's College at Kitchener, Ontario, and his theological course at St. Boneventure's at Alleghany, New York, under the Franciscan Fathers, and was ordained June 11, 1914 by Bishop Charles Colton of Buffalo, New York.

Father Weber who wrote this short history of St. Martin's had some difficulties in acquiring records, data, etc. For a period of 10 years the records were missing at Boonville. Others at Clear Creek were found intact.

Confirmation was conferred the first time in 1878 by Archbishop Ryan. In May 1881, Bishop Hogan confirmed eighteen. He also confirmed in 1884. In the years 1911, 1914, 1917, 1920, 1924, 1926, 1930 and 1032 Bishop Thomas F. Lillis confirmed at St. Martin's.

MARTINSVILLE PARISH is well organized. The few families who have built their third church, house, and school have made many and liberal sacrifices. The country in this part of Cooper County is a good, fertile farming section and should be an inducement for others less fortunate to settle down in good old Cooper County.

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

The History of St. Martin's Church began with the coming of John Martin and Daniel Martin from Bavaria, Germany in 1860. Being the only two Catholic families, they traveled to Boonville to church. But soon, they were joined by thirteen other families in an area between Pilot Grove and Boonville, Mo.; later known as Martinsville.

In 1870, Daniel Martin donated an acre of land, which is now a part of St. Martin's Cemetery, to be used for a church. A log church was built there by the parishioners and was named St. Martin's after the donor of the land.

The church was first a mission of Boonville parish, and in 1877 became a mission of Clear Creek Church and then a mission of St. Joseph's in Pilot Grove in 1898.

The lack of a rectory, plus the poor roads leading to the church site, caused the people of the parish to buy two and a fourth acres from Anton Joseph Wesselman as a site for a new church. The building was erected at a cost of \$12,000, with much of the work of construction being donated. The church was dedicated in 1911. The new location was on the main road between Pilot Grove and Boonville, now Route 135.

In April of 1970, due to a shortage of priests and a trend towards consolidating smaller parishes, St. Martin's was discontinued. The building was sold and torn down.

Saint Martin's School and Church From "Memorabilia of Cooper County", 1990

The year 1970 brought to a close Saint Martin's pariah in Cooper County which began in the year 1870. The school had already closed. This account of its History is taken from two typewritten pages prepared by Florence Robien, dated August 1920.

The first Mass celebrated in this vicinity was said by Father Meurs of Boonville in the home of Dan Martin. After awhile Daniel Martin donated land for a cemetery and little church. It was a log structure, 18 x 24 feet. Some of the families using it were listed: Daniel Martin, John Martin, Leonard Martin, John Martin Jr., Jacob Gross, Nicholas Schank, Anton Weimholt, Philip Wiedel, Mr. Bonan, George Bergerhaus, and J. Carvel. Mary Schank was the first person baptized here. The first funeral was held for Agnes Martin.

From 1870 to 1908 the small parish remained a mission of Boonville, Clear Creek, and Pilot Grove in turn. While Rev. W.F. Boden served during the period of 1877-1880, the second frame church was built.

The final solid brick structure, was erected on 2.24 acres of land on the Boonville to Sedalia public road. This was in 1908 during the Pastorate of Father Pius Conrad O.S.B. The location described it as being 1/4 mile north of the Choteau Springs M.K.T. Railroad Station, and the Choteau mineral springs being 1 and 3/4 miles west of the new church site. The cash outlay being \$12,000 most of the labor and hauling was donated by members of the parish.

The frame Rectory consisting of seven rooms, a bath, and hot water heat was erected personally by Henry Brummell for a cost of \$1,800. On August 31, 1911. Father Pius O.S.B. moved into St. Martin's Rectory.

Just before Easter in April, 1920, the Pastor, Father A.J. Koehler and the church committee, building committee, and the Labor Leaders consisting of: Clernmens Lammers, Frank Hoff, Frank Schuster, Henry Brummel, William Robien, and William Day, met and decided to seek funds to build a new school since a majority of the St. Martin's Parish members were in favor of the new school. At the time there were forty Catholic families with sixty school-age children in St. Martin's Parish.

Almost immediately \$13,000 was donated. It had been estimated that the cost would be \$20,000. In order that building could begin, the rest of the needed funds were loaned by the Pilot Grove Bank at 5 percent interest. On June 24, 1920, 1.76 acres of land adjoining the church grounds was purchased from Anton Joseph and Anna Mary Wesselman for \$440.00 to be used for the

building site. A.G. Krumm of Pilot Grove was hired for the General Contractor. Henry Stretz and Sons of Boonville were given the contract for the brick laying.

July 6, 1920, ground was broken. August 17, 1920, a social on the grounds had this money raising booth, "Buy Ten Bricks And Have Your Name In The Cornerstone Of St. Martin's School". The cost was 10 cents a brick. Under names donating for a brick were Joseph Wesselman, G.W. Hoff, J.B. Esser, Pearl Dwyer, Fred Dick, George B. Esser, Mrs. Joe Fisher of Tipton. There may have been others but no list was found.

Soon after this, on August 29, 1920, the cornerstone was laid. How proud the families of the parish must have been to have their own school! It served the community well but finally changing times caught up with it and the little country Catholic School closed in May 1967, never to reopen.

by Mrs. Harold Kempf

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