

Saint Gabriel
1836-1986
Sesquicentennial



First Church of St. Gabriel

1817 **Father Marie Joseph Dunand**, a Trappist, was the first priest to minister directly to the mission at Prairie du Chien which was then known as St. John Baptist (later to become St. Gabriel).

1827 The priest destined to begin the work of establishing what later became St. Gabriel parish was the **Rev. Francis Vincent Badin**. May 21, 1827, marks the date of his arrival at Prairie du Chien. He began the construction of a log church. For fear of an Indian attack the project had to be abandoned for a time. Later a log cabin, fifty-feet long, was built on a point some two blocks north of the present crossing from St. Feriole on Washington Street.

1831 In the spring of 1831 the **Rev. Joseph Lutz** reached the mission of St. John the Baptist at Prairie du Chien.

1832 With **Father Samuel Charles Mazzuchelli, O.P.**, the history of St. Gabriel Church properly begins.

He was born in 1807 in Lombardy, Italy. He came to America in 1828, equipped with a thoroughly classical education. After two years of preparation for the priesthood, he was ordained. His first assignment took him to Mackinac Island and later to Green Bay.

It was from Green Bay that he set out in company with Judge Doty for his **first visit to Prairie du Chien**. He made the journey by horse. After riding for eight days he reached his destination on **September 21, 1832**. The first visit lasted fifteen days. Prairie du Chien was left unvisited by a priest from the day of his departure in 1832 till the day of his return in 1835.

1835 On his **second visit**, Father Mazzuchelli came from Fort Winnebago, traveling by sleigh over the frozen river to Prairie du Chien where he remained for three months. He left some time in April, 1835, going down the Mississippi in a steamboat. In his letter to the bishop, he says: "I have started an association for the building of a church; the men pay fifty cents each month and the women, twenty-five cents. But my church will not be built without the assistance of a priest."

1836 It was **during his third visit**, that Father Mazzuchelli, with characteristic energy and foresight, **proceeded to carry out his "darling project"** of building a Catholic church at Prairie du Chien.



Father Samuel Charles Mazzuchelli



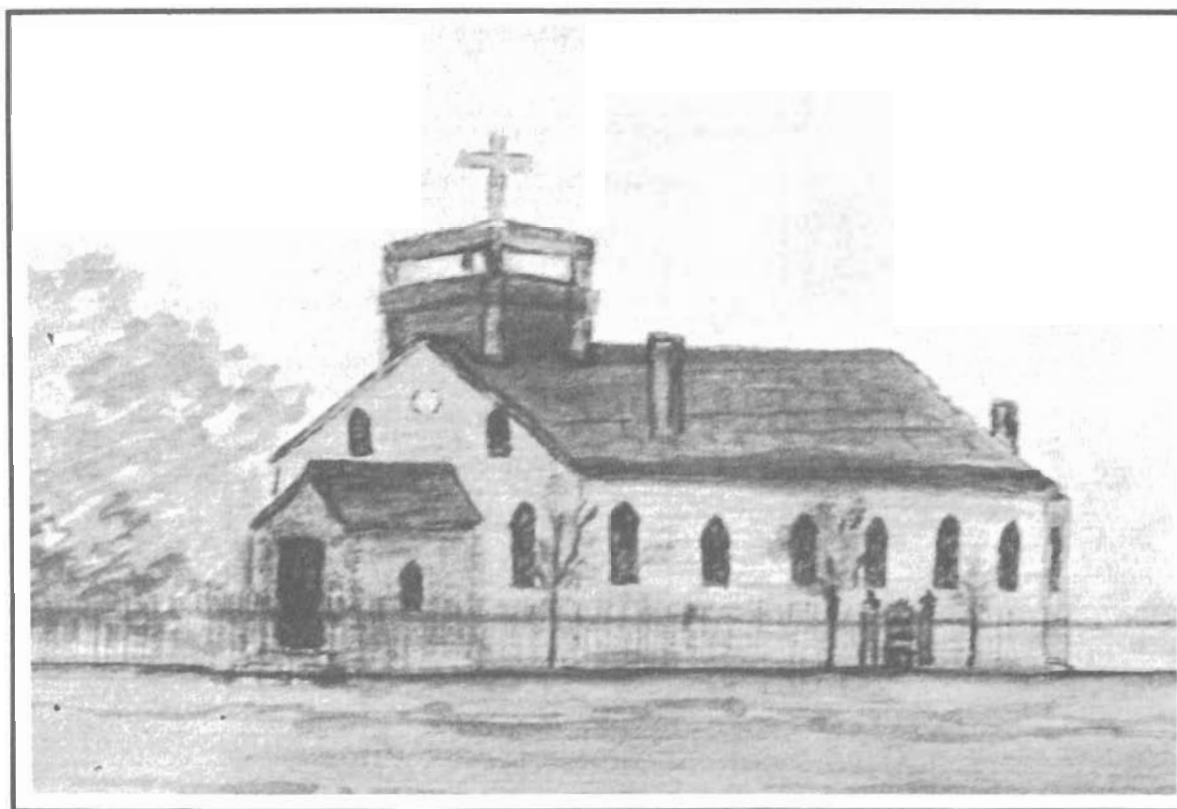
1836

A Protestant gentleman, Mr. Strange Powers, donated four acres of land for the **site of St. Gabriel Church**. The deed to the property was duly drawn up and delivered to the Catholic Bishop of Detroit, the Rt. Rev. Frederic Rese, on February 16, 1836.

1839

By July, the work on the church was sufficiently advanced to permit the ceremony of the **laying of the cornerstone**. Fr. Mazzuchelli was able to report three weeks later, August 15, 1839, "the walls are twenty feet above the ground."

"The stone work is done by Mr. L. R. Marsh, who deserves much credit for his exertions. The carpenter work is in the hands of a good son of Erin, Mr. Benedict F. Manahan, whose zeal for the temple of God knows no obstacle, and whose knowledge of the trade will be sufficiently praised by his work. The unsigned is the superintendent of the building.



"This church measures **50 feet in width, by 100 feet in length**. The walls are two feet thick above the base, built of the good and light stone, found in abundance on the hills which encircle the majestic prairie between the junction of the great Wisconsin River and "the Father of Waters." The style of the church is a chaste Gothic; the front is all hammered range work, ornamented with a marble inscription and niche."

As for the **name, St. Gabriel**, which the parish bears, it is thought that, as Fr. Mazzuchelli had named the congregations at Galena and Dubuque Sts. Michael and Raphael, respectively, he chose St. Gabriel for the congregation at Prairie du Chien to complete the trilogy of archangels. With the building of the church, the activities of Fr. Mazzuchelli at Prairie du Chien came to an end. The new parish had to content itself, for almost a year, with the intermittent visits of a missionary priest from Dubuque.

1840

The distinction of being the first regular pastor of St. Gabriel parish belongs to **Rev. Augustine Ravoux**, who later became a noted Indian missionary of the Catholic Northwest. The first baptism recorded by him was an Indian woman, Marie Louise, age 35. This was in March of 1840. The last entry signed by him was that of John Lawless whom he baptized in the family home in Patch Grove, in September of 1841. Father returned to Prairie du Chien once more in April of 1843. He came down the ice-bound river from the north with the mailman. He arrived on Easter morning in time to celebrate Mass, and the day of Resurrection with the happy congregation.

The particular interest of this visit for us in that the first publication to see the light of day at Prairie du Chien — a **Church History and Catechism in the Sioux language** — was its direct outcome, as it was also the sole purpose of Fr. Ravoux's unheralded coming.

1841

Rev. Joseph Cretin came in 1841 as pastor, providing the printing press and a thirteen-year-old boy as printer's devil. Both press and printer's devil were undoubtedly the earliest in the settlement. With their combined assistance, Fr. Ravoux's precious little work was printed and published under the title, "Wakan tanks, Ti Ki Chanka," (Path to the House of God). Father Cretin did more spiritually for St. Gabriel parish than any who had preceded him. His last record of paster is dated April 7, 1844. In 1851, he was made the first bishop of St. Paul and died there six years later.

1844

The **Rev. Florimond Joseph Bonduel**, esteemed by all for his scholarship and familiarly known among the non-Catholics as the "elegant Frenchman," followed the saintly Fr. Cretin at St. Gabriel.

Prairie du Chien was one of the stops made by Bishop Henri on his first tour of his diocese, undertaken shortly after Pentecost of 1844. He was not favorably impressed by the condition in which he found the parish of St. Gabiel. The following is from a letter he wrote the following year:

"Years ago they began erecting a church 100 feet long, built entirely of stone.

But I found it not only still incomplete, but also burdened with a debt of \$3,000."

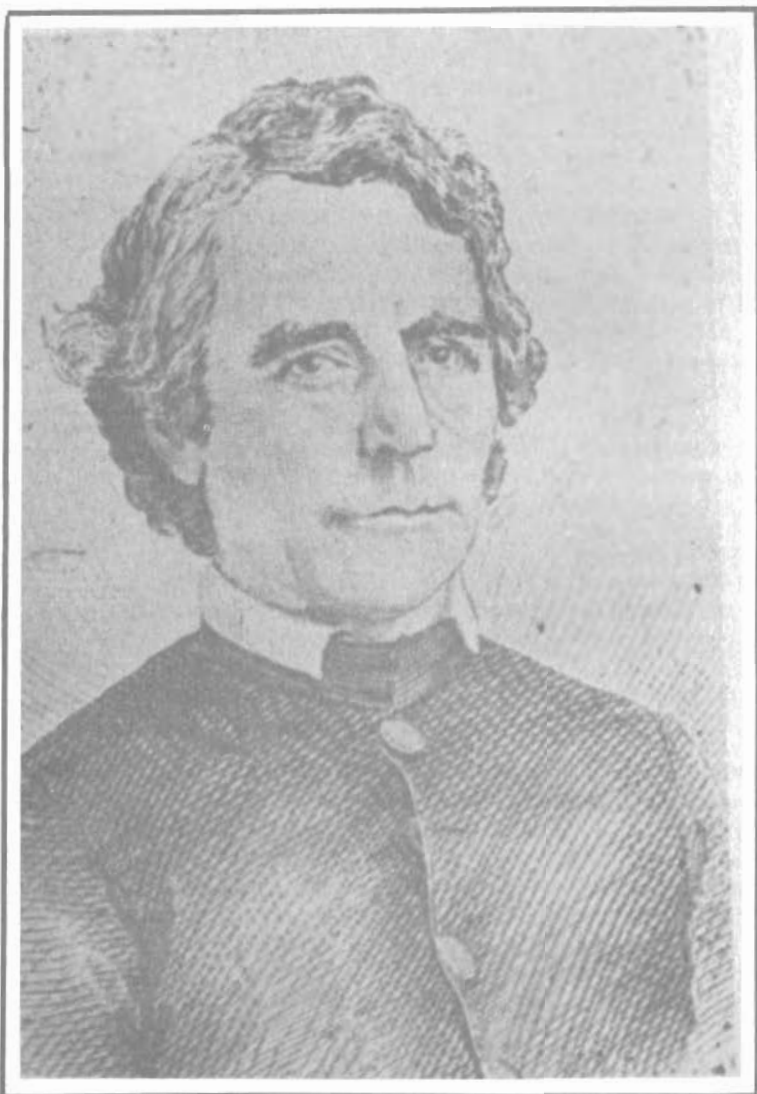


Msgr. A. Ravoux



Msgr. J. Cretin





Reverend L. Galtier

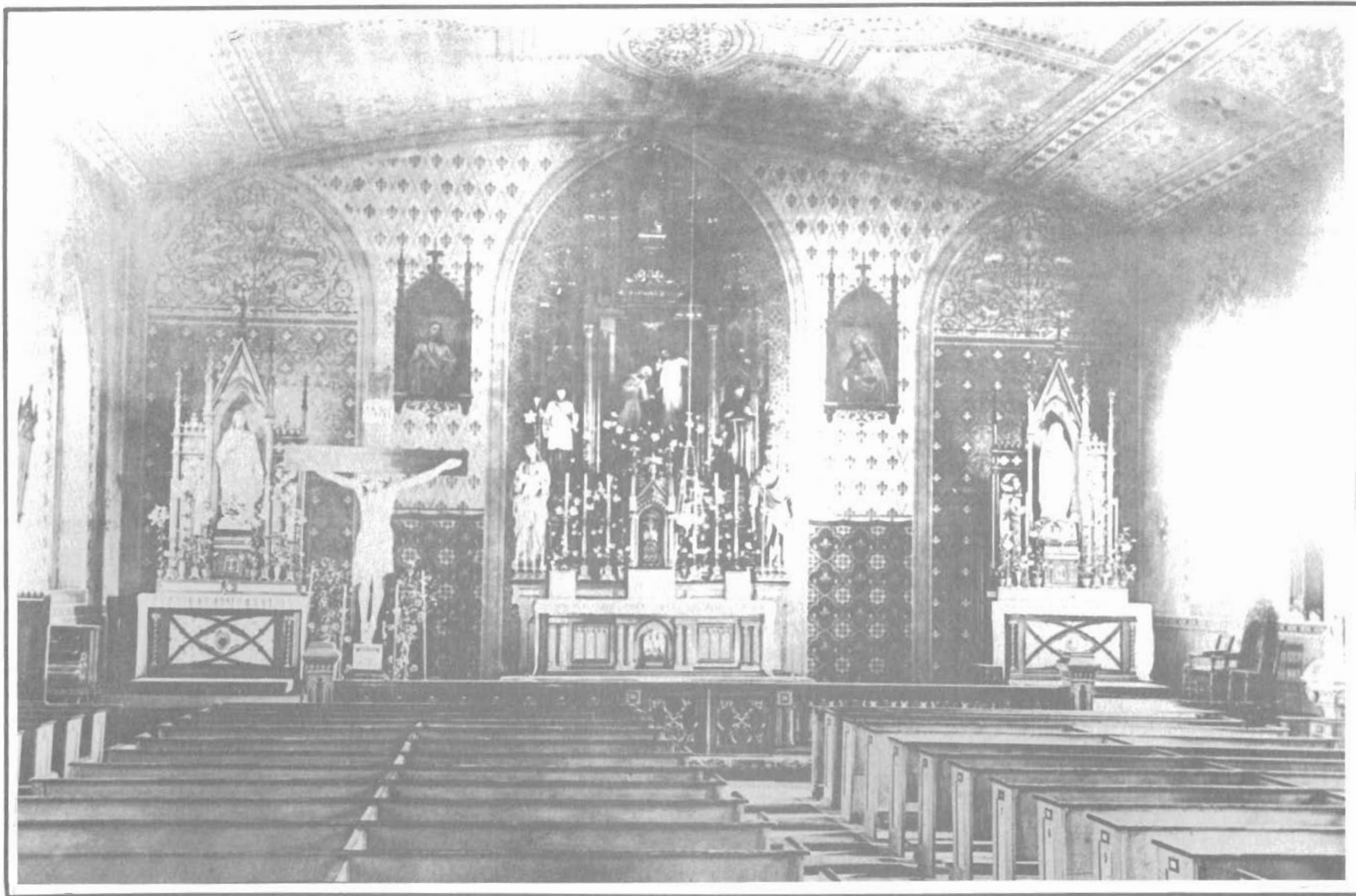
1847

Rev. Lucien Galtier succeeded Fr. Bonduel. St. Gabriel was Father Galtier's third mission and his last. He was born in France in 1811. He came to America in 1838. He was ordained on January 5, 1840, in Dubuque. His first assignment was St. Anthony Falls. He took the first boat upriver that spring. He built the first chapel and named this log building St. Paul. From this the city of St. Paul grew. **He came to St. Gabriel in June of 1847.** For nineteen years he was pastor at St. Gabriel and visited missions as far north as Chippewa, as far east as Boscobel, and south into Grant County. He erected log chapels and churches at many of the Missions. Despite the large debt that hung heavily upon his parish, the progressive pastor somehow managed to install the **Stations of the Cross at St. Gabriel Church.** He is supposed to have built the first spire on the church. **This brought to completion what Father Mazzuchelli had begun eighteen years before: a fully equipped Catholic church in Prairie du Chien.**

He also made two or three trips to Europe. He seems to have had the ambition to become bishop. He was an artist, a singer, and played violin. He was a businessman and acted as banker for some of his parishioners.

Father Galtier died an untimely death in 1866 when he accidentally cut a carbuncle while shaving. He contracted blood poisoning and died the next day — February 21, 1866. Father's home was willed to the Dominican Sisters to be used as a school for French children.





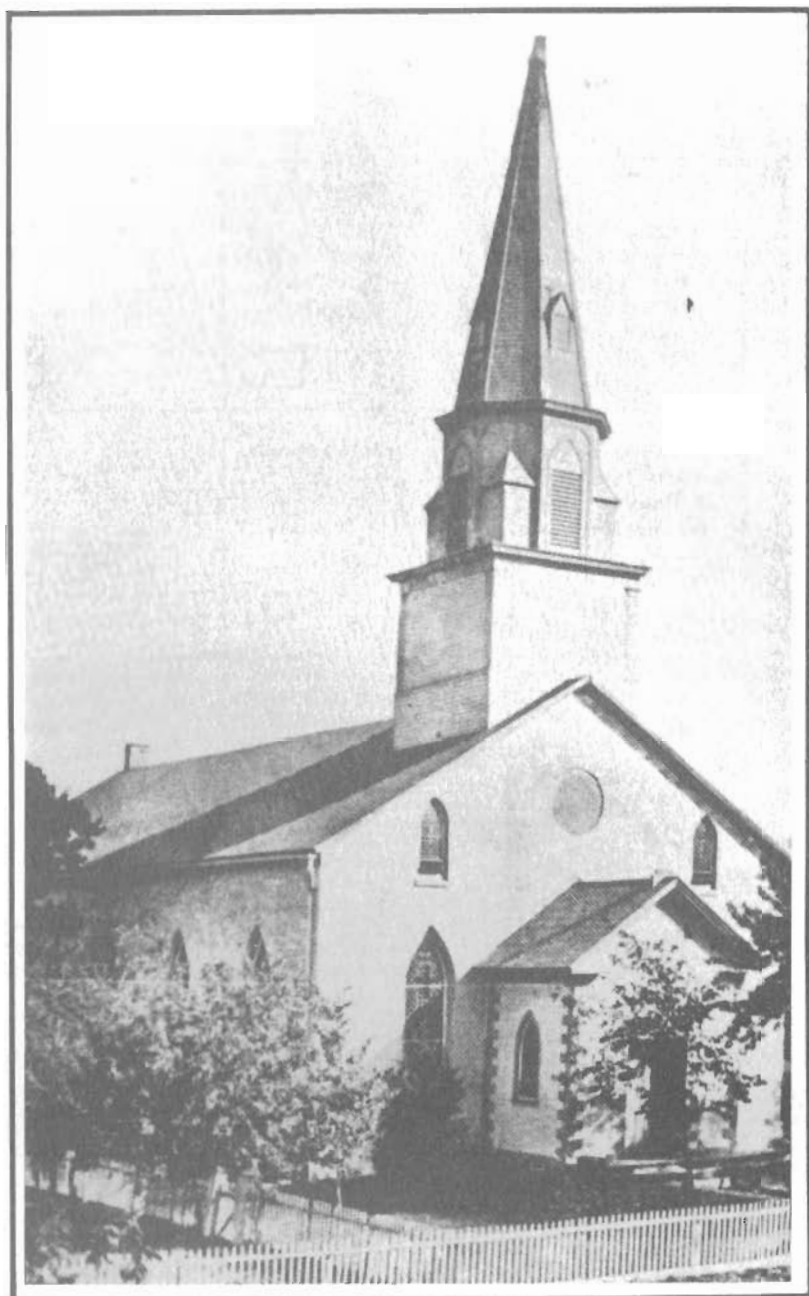
The church as it appeared in the mid-1800's.

1866

1869 or 1870

Rev. Louis Lux

Rev. Anthony Koke. The dates are uncertain because the records had burned.



1877

THE BENEDICTINES came to St. Gabriel on January 1. The pastors were the Reverends Anthony Casper, Meinulph Stukenkenper, Ignatius Wessling and William Eversmann.

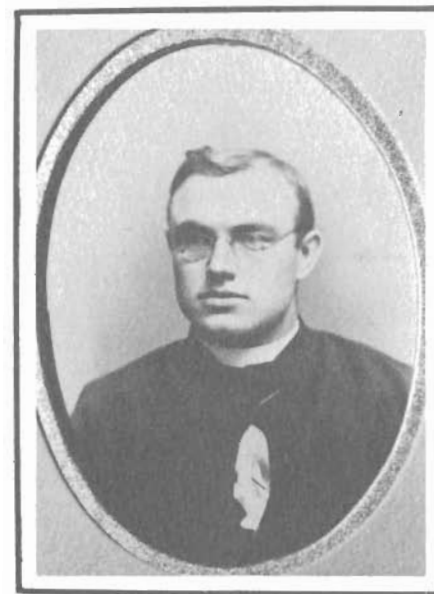
1880

THE FIRST JESUIT PERIOD. St. Gabriel parish was taken over by the Fathers of the Society of Jesus.

1880 Fr. Herman Richard, S.J.

1883 Fr. Ignatius Goerling, S.J.

1887 Fr. Nicholas Greisch, S.J. set himself to remodel the church, replacing the original steeple by a tall wooden one and providing a new front-entry.



Reverend A. Philip Kremer

1891

Rev. A. Philip Kremer was appointed and for the next seven years exercised his pastoral duties. In the **first** year, Fr. Kremer built **Columbian High School** which continued in existence till 1908. It is the northern part of what we call the "old school."

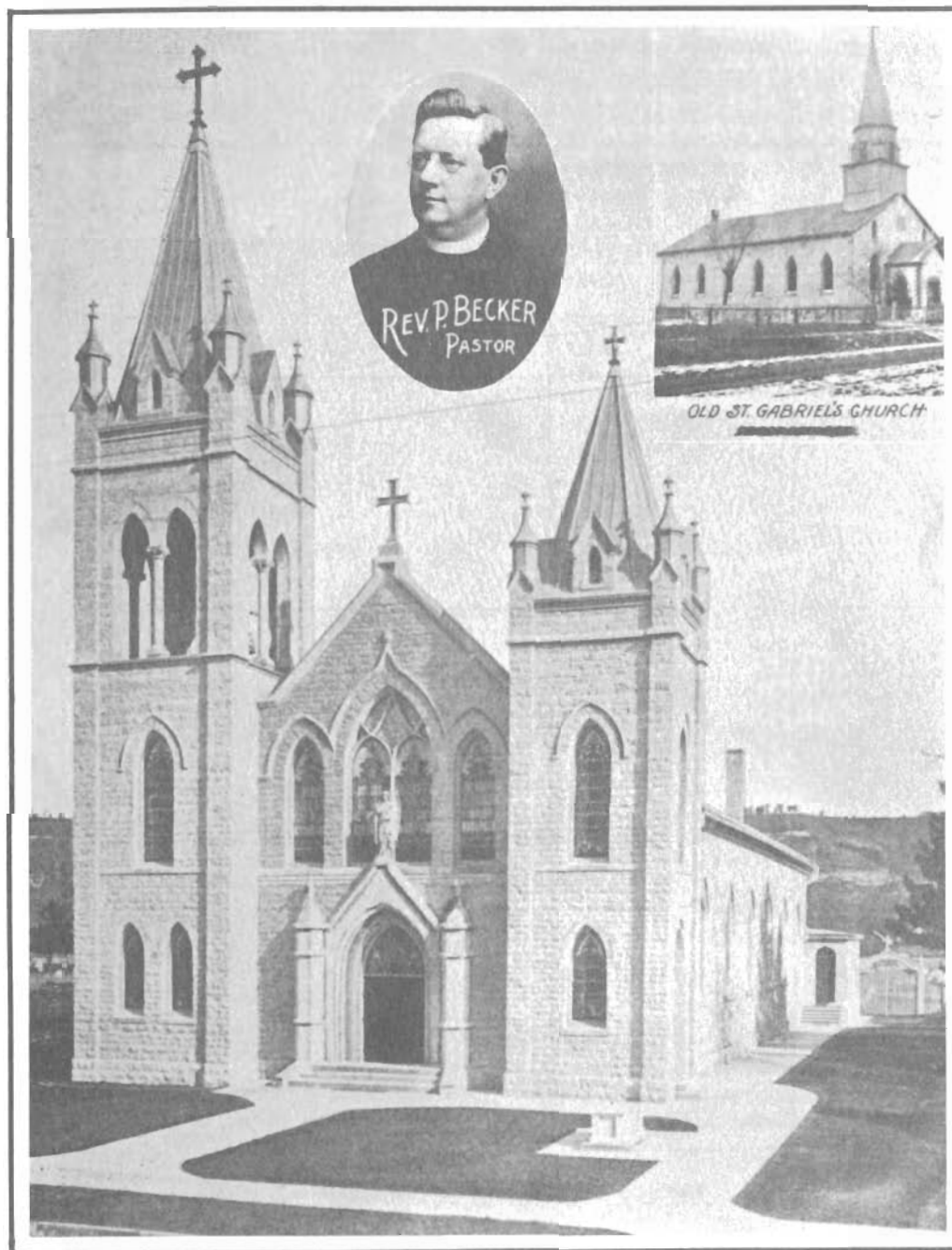
1899

Rev. Alphonsus Joseph Joerres

1907

During Rev. Peter Becker's ten-year pastoral term, he accomplished much for the spiritual and material betterment of the parish. In his first year, he proceeded to transform the "chaste Gothic" rock-church of Father Mazzuchelli to make it conform with a "Grecian" type of his own conception. He built a considerable addition to the east end of the church — that part which today includes the sanctuary and both sacristies. Within this enclosure he erected "Grecian" arches to the front of the high altar. At the west end of the church, he built an addition of solid rock, joining the entry below with the gallery above. In carrying out the masonry work, he finished the front with two steeples, the taller of which contained the belfry and was surmounted by a gilded cross. The major part of the structure, Fr. Becker left as he had found it. The massive walls of native limestone taken rough-hewn from the bluffs that skirt the eastern boundary of the Prairie, stand today as they have stood from the beginning, solid and immovable.

He also decorated the interior of the church. The old pews were replaced with new ones, a pipe organ was added, and the heating system was changed from hot air to steam. Improvements were also made in the school and parish hall. Finally the grounds surrounding the church and school were extensively beautified. When he left his pastoral office, Fr. Becker left a neat sum in the treasury with all debts cancelled.



THE SECOND JESUIT PERIOD

1916 Fr. William Schiermann, S.J.

1920 Fr. Michael Speich, S.J.

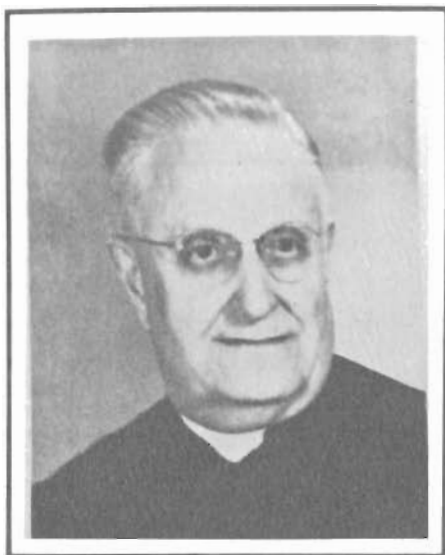
1924 Fr. Mathias Peters, S.J.

1928 Fr. Joseph Blank, S.J. is responsible for the construction
of the school gym in 1935.

1936 Fr. Joseph A. Weis, S.J.

St. Gabriel Church — 100 years old.





1947 Fr. Thomas A. Finnegan, S.J.

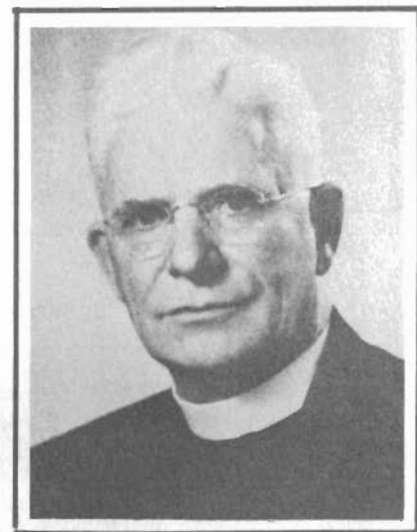


Starting in December 1965, the location of the Mass was transferred to the St. Gabriel School auditorium. Fr. Burns explained that the church was vacated to permit the construction of scaffolding in the church to investigate the cracks in the ceiling.



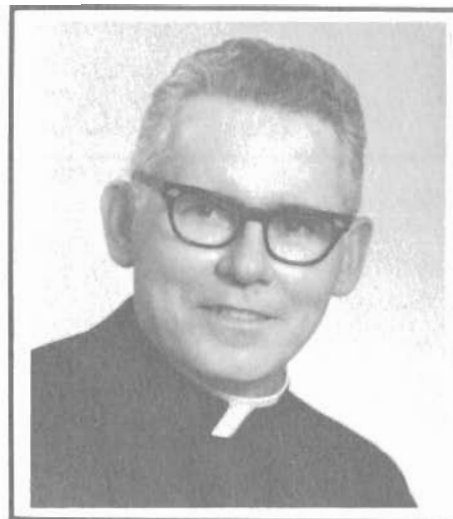
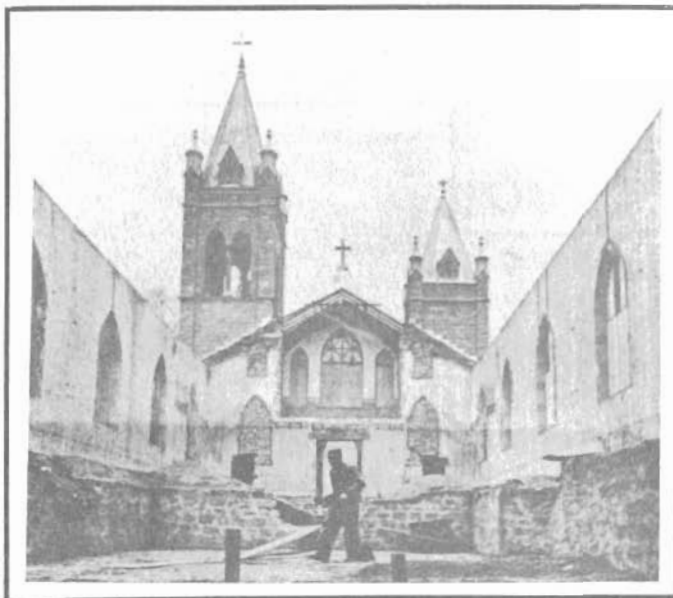
The start of another building period. In 1956, the planning and fund raising started for the new school. The building was started in 1960. It was dedicated September 24, 1961, by Bishop John P. Treacy.

The next project was a new convent for the Sisters. It was dedicated in 1966.



1954

Fr. Earl L. Burns, S.J.



Fr. Eugene E. Zimmerman, S.J.

Unlike the old church with its drop-ceiling, the trusses and decking are exposed, adding to the aesthetic beauty of the entire church. New and better lighting fixtures enhance the beauty of the church and aid visibility.

The Cross which hangs in the sanctuary was made from an original church beam.

The wood paneling of the massive church doors were replaced with English-Fleming glass which serves to express antiquity. The new doors match the other doors erected throughout the church. A new entrance from the parking lot area provides space for rest rooms. Steps have been eliminated at this entrance. The floor of the church has been dropped so that the main entrance has only one step. The stain glass windows have been cleaned and repaired. The cast bronze church bells were wired into an automatic bell system.

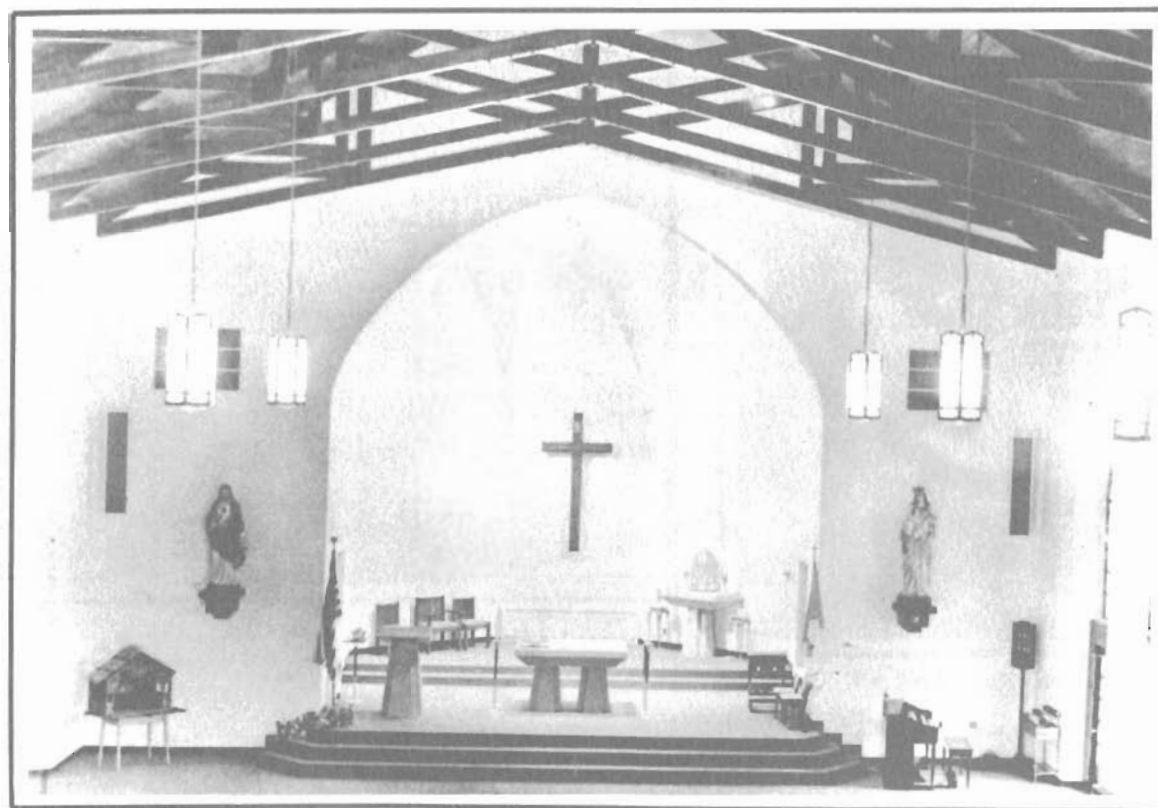
Midnight Mass marked the end of a year-long renovation of 126-year-old St. Gabriel Church.

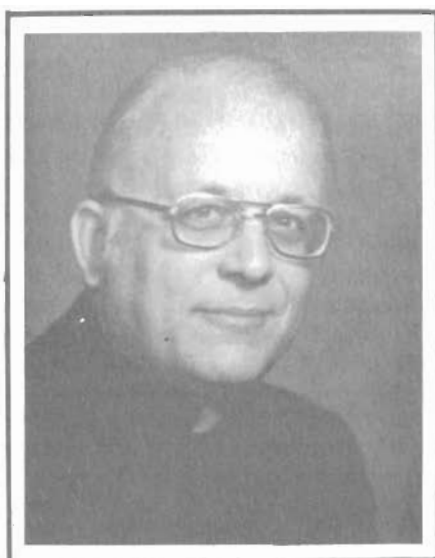
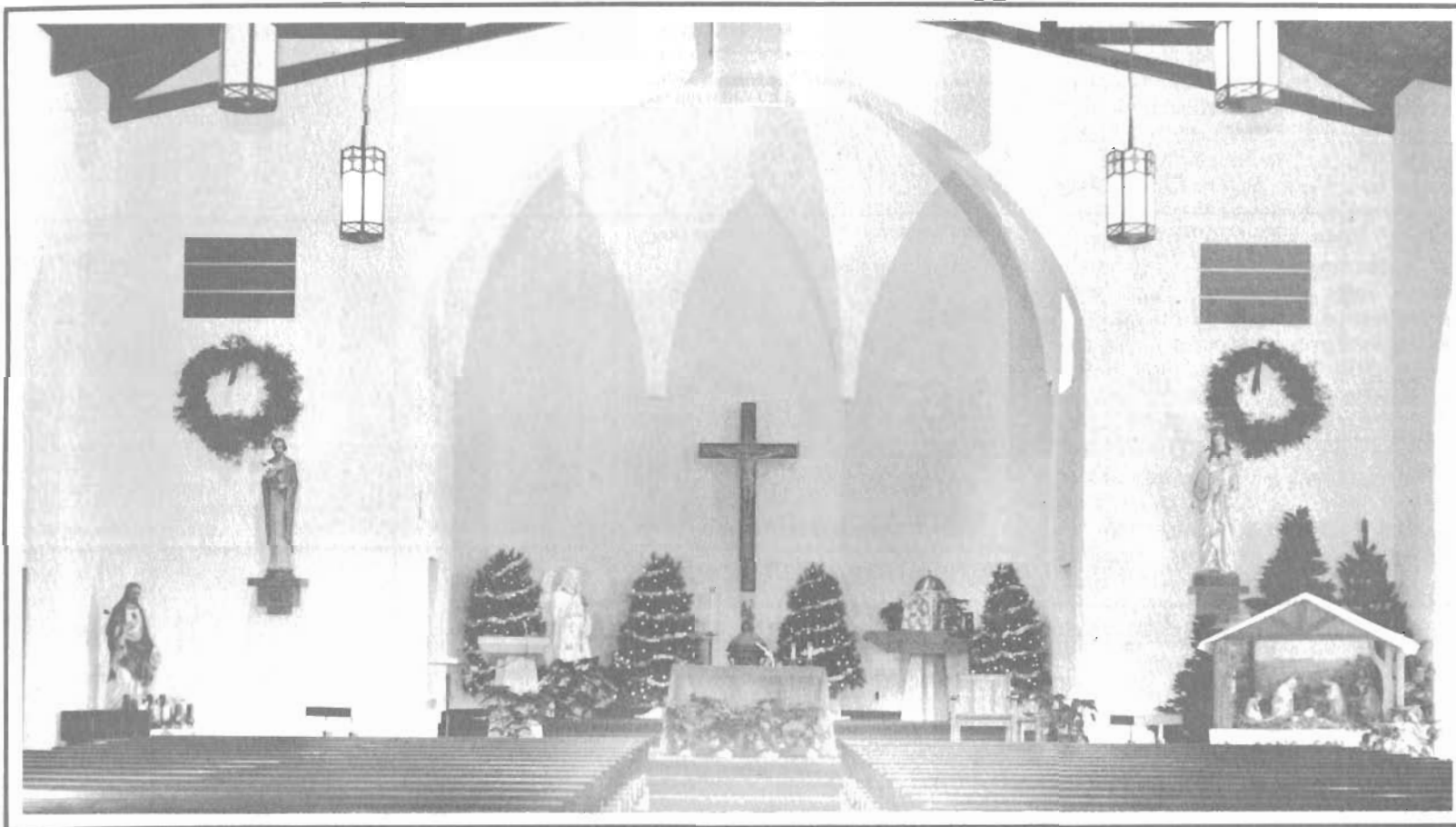
1966

Fr. Eugene E. Zimmerman, S.J. completed the remodeling when Fr. Burns was transferred.

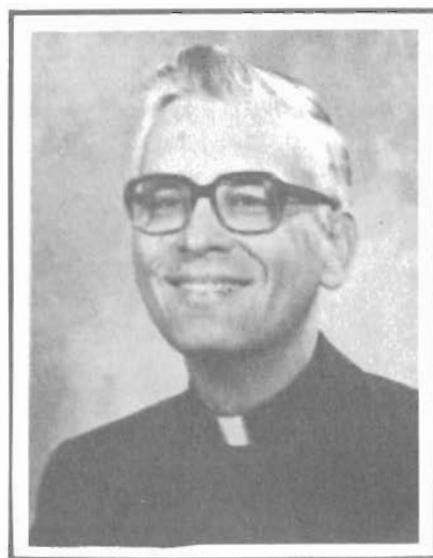
Fr. Zimmerman and the people of St. Gabriel attempted to do two things in the reconstruction of the church — to preserve the antiquity and at the same time to update the church to incorporate the guidelines for the liturgy. A very old baptismal font, made of pewter, was cleaned and repaired for reuse. The Altar of Sacrifice, the Altar of Repose, and the Ambo (lectern) were made of Winona stone with a rough-honed finish to correspond to the rugged strength of the two and three-foot thick walls.

The Stations of the Cross were preserved with the figures antiqued. The frames were simplified and stained dark to match the pews. The pews are of solid northern white oak with a jet ebony finish and open back contour for comfort.

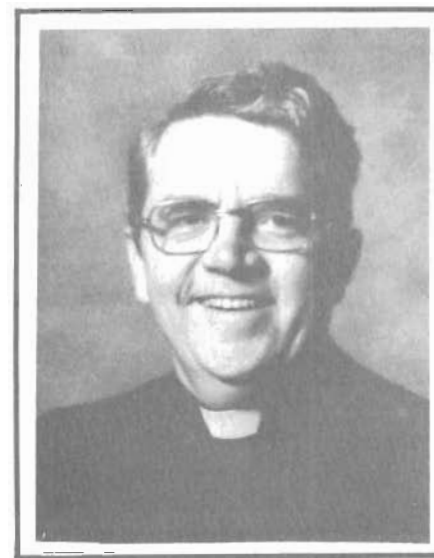




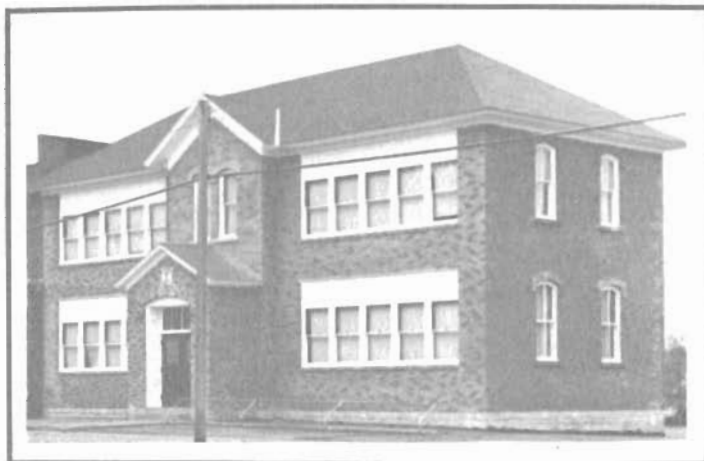
1969 Fr. David W. Brehm, S.J.



1977 Fr. John W. Wambach, S.J.



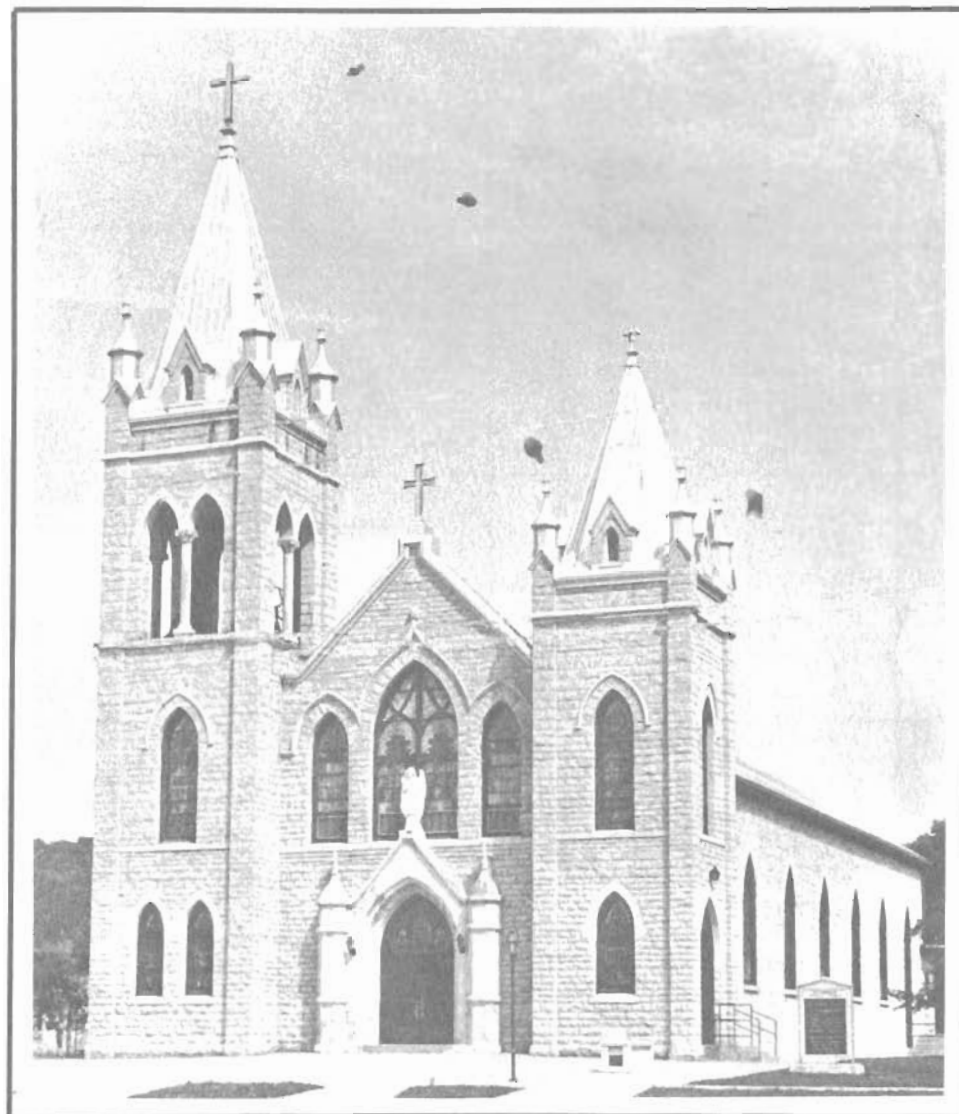
1981 Fr. Hubert Boschert, S.J.



1892 Columbian High School known as the "Old School."



1935 School Gymnasium



1984 St. Gabriel: OUR TRADITIONAL LANDMARK. The statue above the entrance of the church was provided by one of our parish families. The statue was carved from Carara marble in Italy. It weighs some 1500 pounds. This one should not be affected by exposure to the elements as was the case with the original one. The beautiful, delicate white statue carved in wood in Europe, which stood above the front entrance for an unknown number of years, stands this year in the parish museum.

PASTORS AND ASSISTANTS
Saint Gabriel's Church — Prairie du Chien, Wis.

SECOND JESUIT PERIOD

1916 — Fr. William Schiermann, S.J.
1920 — Fr. Michael Speich, S.J.
1924 — Fr. Mathias Peters, S.J.
1928 — Fr. Joseph Blank, S.J.
1936 — Fr. Joseph A. Weis, S.J.

1947 — Fr. Thomas A. Finnegan, S.J.

1954 — Fr. Earl L. Burns, S.J.

1966 — Fr. Eugene E. Zimmerman, S.J.
1969 — Fr. David W. Brehm, S.J.

1977 — Fr. John W. Wambach, S.J.
1981 — Fr. Hubert G. Boschert, S.J.

Asst. Fr. James P. Monohan, S.J.
Fr. Francis J. Rudden, S.J.
Fr. Joseph Wels, S.J.

1936 — Fr. Rudolph Meschenmoser, S.J.
1938 — Fr. Aloysius M. Smith, S.J.
1943 — Fr. Everett J. Morgan, S.J.
1945 — Fr. Louis E. Meyer, S.J.
1946 — Fr. John E. Casey, S.J.

1948 — Fr. Neil P. McManus, S.J.
1951 — Fr. Joseph T. McGloin, S.J.
1951 — Fr. George T. Andrews, S.J.
1953 — Fr. Joseph P. Melchiors, S.J.

1956 — Fr. Edward J. Schneider, S.J.
1962 — Fr. Francis E. Traynor, S.J.
1962 — Fr. David W. Brehm, S.J.
1965 — 2nd Asst. Fr. Gerald J. Day, S.J.

1969 — Fr. Charles J. Scherman, S.J.
1976 — 2nd Asst. Fr. Harold C. Brahm, S.J.

1984 — Fr. Burton W. Pratt, S.J.

ST. GABRIEL CHURCH

RECTORY: 506 N. BEAUMONT ROAD • PRAIRIE DU CHIEN, WISCONSIN 53821 • PHONE 608/326-2404

REV. HUBERT G. BOSCHERT, S.J., Pastor

REV. BURTON PRATT, S.J., Associate Pastor

Mass Schedule:

SATURDAY: 5:15 and 8:00 p.m.

SUNDAY: 7:30, 9:30 and 11:00 a.m.

HOLY DAY: 5:15 p.m.; 6:45, 9:30 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.

DAILY: 6:45 and 8:30 a.m.

CONFESSIONS: 4 to 5 p.m. and 7 to 7:45 p.m.

**Saturdays and day before Holy Days
and First Friday**

BAPTISMS: By Appointment

