

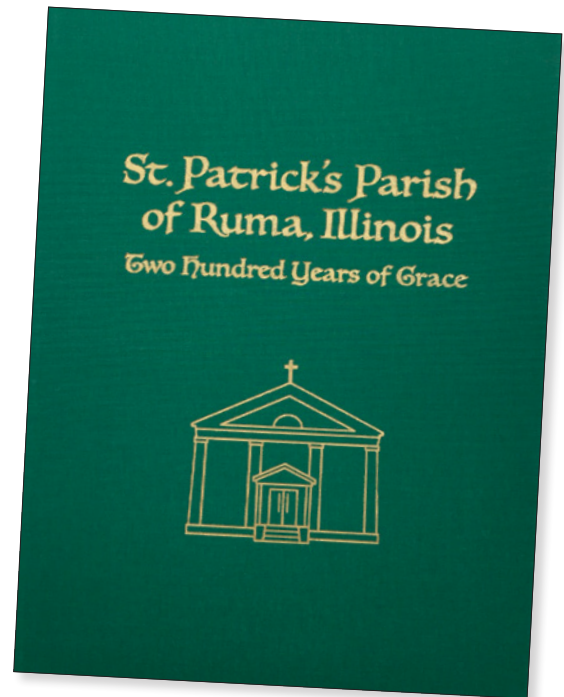
St. Patrick's Parish of Ruma, Illinois

Two Hundred Years of Grace

This deluxe edition tells the charming and compelling story of this small parish in the woods . . . from the first Mass on a chest of drawers in Henry O'Hara's log home in 1818 to the vibrant community of faith that constitutes the parish today.

The narrative is complemented by 203 illustrations, most of which have never been published: baptism and marriage records from 1831 and 1832; St. Patrick's College in the late 1800s; pew rental lists; Ruma's two-story hotel; school pictures from 1895, 1911, 1916, 1950, and 1977; and many others.

These are the stories of countless faith-filled people over the 200-year history of St. Patrick's Parish—stories of a vital and robust church and the people who have nurtured and sustained it.



- 8½ inches × 11 inches
 - 208 pages
 - 203 illustrations
 - Composed in the Arno, Cronos, and Luminari type families
 - Printed on 100-lb. Sappi Flo matte text and hardbound in green cloth with gold stamping
 - Numbered edition, limited to 300 copies
- \$15.00

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St. Patrick's Parish of Ruma, Illinois

Two Hundred Years of Grace

Sister Mary Bernard Braun, A.S.C.

Daniel Franklin

with the Bicentennial Celebration Committee

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1818 · In the beginning

Two great events marked the year 1818 as one of the most memorable in the history of the State of Illinois.

The Illinois Territory had at last fulfilled the conditions set down by Congress for the admission of a state to the Union. In that year, the twenty-first star was added to the blue field of the flag, and Illinois began the process of electing senators and representatives to send to Washington. The small town of Kaskaskia was witness to the first efforts of the new state to establish and grapple with the machinery of state government, which, a year later, would be transferred to Vandalia.

To the north of Kaskaskia, at O'Hara's Settlement, occurred the second event. For the Irish settlers of this area, it ranked in importance with that of the assumption of statehood. Here, Father Pierre Desmoulins, pastor of the Catholic church in Kaskaskia, celebrated the first Mass in the log house of Henry O'Hara and established the parish of St. Patrick's. This heralded the beginning of the oldest English-speaking Catholic parish in Illinois.

To the O'Haras, the Horrells, the Mudds, the Fahertys, the Simpsons, and a half dozen more Irish immigrant families, this meant that they could now sink their roots in the soil of this frontier land. The informal organization of a parish, with the monthly presence of a priest, gave them a feeling of permanence, a bond of unity, and a spirit of independence.



It is not known with certainty just when the first of these families arrived in the Illinois Country or which was the first to do so. On May 1, 1780, Father Pierre Gibault, pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish at Kaskaskia, baptized the five children of Henry O'Hara and his wife, Bridget Bolton: John (9 years old), Therese (7), twins Marie and Bridget (4), and Henrietta (2). Each of the children had a unique godfather and godmother, all of whom were members of prominent French families in Kaskaskia.

The years 1850–1859

Father McCabe left St. Patrick's in 1850. In his place, Bishop James Oliver Van de Velde of Chicago appointed Father James A. Keane, who was pastor for a little over two years. During those years, he baptized 36 children and performed the marriage ceremony eight times. He even was baptismal sponsor for Amelia, daughter of Expedient Blais. For the first time, a Polish name appeared in the register: On March 11, 1852, Doctor Otto Kaminski married Teresa Pape.

By this time, the log chapel had become much too small to accommodate the members of the parish, and it was decided to build a new church of brick. A fund drive (or, as it was called then, a subscription) was organized to collect the money needed for construction. Beginning on October 1, 1852, the parishioners of St. Patrick's were contacted and solicited for funds, a process that was repeated four times. Those who were missed in the first round or who failed to contribute at that time, were contacted in the second, third, and fourth rounds. Shirkers were few; perhaps a dozen successfully avoided all four solicitations. The first drive attracted pledges from 145 parishioners, and several contributed to all four drives, the sums ranging from 50¢ to \$260. The total amount realized from these subscriptions was \$2,252.50.

Bishop Van de Velde made the long, difficult trip from Chicago to O'Hara's Settlement to lay the cornerstone of the new brick church. Upon his arrival on June 24, 1853, he said Mass for the parish and confirmed a class of 40 persons. The following day, he laid the cornerstone of the new house of worship. According to his diary, he was assisted "by Rev. Messrs. Keane, Van Cloostere and Gallagher. Great concourse of people." This was Bishop Van de Velde's last trip to southern Illinois; later that year, St. Patrick's became part of the Diocese of Quincy.

Father Keane did not live to see the church completed or to say Mass at its altar. On October 27, 1853, he died at the age of 31. He was the first priest buried in the churchyard at Tiptown, having also served the mission church there.

Amount of the subscriptions taken up
for the buildings of St. Patrick's church
and parish house
O'Hara's settlement, Randolph Co. Ill.

The 1st subscription began the 1st of October 1852

Subscribers	Sum subscribed and paid.	
	For the church	For the house
Shope, Eugene	\$ 25.00	
Shore, Michael	22.00	
Black, Edward	30.00	
Blanford, Felix	10.00	
Brown, Felix	2.50	
Brown, Paul	5.00	
Brown, Albert	6.50	
Brown, Peter	15.00	
Brown, John W.	25.00	
Brown, George J.	2.00	
Boggs, J.	2.00	
Buller, Thomas	6.00	
Card, Alexander		
Collier, Ralph	5.00	
Connelley, Charles	9.00	
Connelley, John	13.00	
Connelley, E.D.	13.50	
Cook, Patrick	4.50	
Cottam, Thomas	2.50	
Cragan, James	30.00	
Collan, John	1.00	
Dawling, Michael	52.50	
Total	\$ 287.00	

Page one of the first subscription register for building a new church, 1852.

In 1853, Father Timothy Conway became pastor of St. Patrick's. He remained until 1854, when Father John W. Gifford began his service to the people of O'Hara's Settlement. Born in Scotland, Father Gifford was a convert to the Catholic faith and was ordained in Ireland in 1827. He traveled in 1840 to Charles-

ton, South Carolina, where he served as assistant and pastor of several parishes in the diocese there.

In May 1850, Father Gifford was accepted into the Diocese of Chicago by Bishop Van de Velde. Three years prior to his appointment to O'Hara's Settlement, he was pastor of a parish in Springfield, Illinois. Although St. Patrick's parishioners were impressed with his outstanding ability in the pulpit, they soon learned that he was more than a man of words. His pastorate was a period of remarkable growth for the parish.

If handwriting gives evidence of a person's character, then a study of Father Gifford's entries in the parish register reveal him to have been a systematic and orderly person. His writing is bold and consistent. The records indicate his Scottish background—they are brief and to the point. Coupled with his portrait, the records give the impression that here was an energetic man who could accomplish anything he set his mind to do.

The vital statistics of his pastorate are impressive. He averaged 24 baptisms a year—the grand total for the five and a half years of his stay at St. Patrick's was 130.

The records at this time began to take on a cosmopolitan

Continued on page 26

A photograph of a handwritten baptismal entry in cursive script. The text reads: "On this 28th day of June I Baptised Thomas Owen born on the 2nd day of June, son of Michl. Maherty and Ann Hoy. Sponsors John McLaughlan and Harriet Hoy. J. W. Gifford". The signature "J. W. Gifford" is written in a larger, more decorative cursive at the bottom right of the entry.

An 1857 baptismal entry by Father Gifford.

Father John W. Gifford,
pastor from 1854 to
1859.

The cemetery

St. Patrick's Cemetery, one of the loveliest in Southern Illinois, is almost as old as the parish. The first burial, that of Michael Faherty, was made there in 1822. Hundreds of parishioners in the two centuries that followed have been carried to their last resting place in the peace and quiet of this picturesque churchyard.

Tombstones of members of the original families and their descendants are interspersed with those of Butlers, Meaghers, Conleys, Moores, Manns, Dooleys, Glennons, McCarthys, Lonergans, Hesses, McLaughlins, Frawleys, Harestys, Cragans, Kilcullens, Lynches, Siebolds, Hecks, and numerous others.

Adam and Eve are among those buried in the cemetery. Adam, whose full name was Mark Adam Hopp, dropped his first name when he married Eve Steckenreuter. Adam died in 1858, Eve in 1867; both of them survived all three of their children.

Although hundreds of people have moved away from the parish to seek their livelihood in other parts of the country, death has brought scores of them back. They want their final resting place to be near the church of their baptism, in this quaint and tranquil graveyard, with its creeping myrtle, shaggy cedar trees, and ancient maples.



Part of the old cemetery. Four hard maple trees planted in the nineteenth century line the graveyard's southern border.



The 1911 school picture. row 1: William Hess, Paul Mudd, Alfred Braun, George Degenhardt, Anthony Eichenseer, William Marshall, Eugene McDermott, Leo Eichenseer, Nicholas Hess, Herman Hess, Francis McDermott, Henry Eichenseer, Michael Donohue. row 2: Albert Eichenseer, Raymond Fogerty, Eva Degenhardt, Leocadia Braun, Clara Meier, Theresa Eichenseer, Nora Kelly, Clarence Marshall, Cecelia Meier, Isabella Braun, Ellen Myerscough, Irene Donohue, Bessie McDermott, Mayme Eichenseer, Sybil Mudd. row 3: Eugene Meier, Bernard Eichenseer, George Mudd, Rose Eichenseer, Marie Donohue, Lucy Mudd, Clara Mudd, Ethel Mudd, Bessie Shea, Edna Donohue, Gertrude Shea, Janet Mudd, Esther Mudd, Loyola Horrell, Henry Myerscough, Harry Shea, Mae Hess. row 4: Sister Mary Stella Schulte (teacher), Marshall Mudd, Clarence Clerc.

years were brought back from nearby communities like Red Bud, Evansville, Prairie du Rocher, and Modoc. Others came from as far away as Great Falls, Montana; Fort Scott, Kansas; Tulsa, Oklahoma; Mt. Vernon, Illinois; and Jefferson City, Missouri. Among Father Pieper's parishioners buried in 1908 were twins, Irene and Ida Mudd, who were born on January 2, baptized privately, and then died shortly after.

On September 19, 1913, death came for Father Pieper, who had just arrived at his fortieth birthday. He was deeply mourned by his fellow priests, his parishioners, and the sisters at the convent, all of whom had been affected by the saintliness of his life and his love for his fellow humans. His body was laid to rest beneath the shadow of the cross in the parish cemetery, where it remained until 1922. In that year, Father Frederick Witte, fourth

Parish workday, April 29, 2012



Parish milestones

- 1818 First Mass in Henry O'Hara's log cabin home
- 1822 First burial in the cemetery
- 1826 Log chapel constructed on 100 acres of land bequeathed by Henry O'Hara
- 1839 Father John Kenny installed as the first resident pastor
- 1854 First Mass in the new brick church
- 1860 Pew rental system instituted
Funds raised for construction of a rectory
- 1865 Construction begun on St. Patrick's College, intended as a girls' academy
- 1867 St. Patrick's College opened as a college for boys
- 1871 St. Patrick's College sold to Alton Bishop Peter Baltes
- 1874 Church bell, "Michael," installed and blessed
- 1875 Classroom established in the sacristy
- 1876 Frame school ("the old school") constructed
College closed and property sold to the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood
- 1907 Bell installed in the newly constructed bell tower
- 1912 Second room added to the frame school
- 1919 Parish incorporated under Illinois law
- 1922 Frame parish hall constructed
- 1929 Illinois Route 155 built from Ruma to Fort de Chartres
Parish buildings electrified
- 1961 Last year of pew rental
- 1962 First Mass after modernization of the church interior
The first Strawberry Festival held as a fundraiser
- 1965 Brick school opened; frame school closed
- 1973 Recording of "Fly, Cardinals, Fly" by schoolchildren
- 1977 Well dug to supply the parish's water needs
Brick school closed
- 1981 New rectory constructed
- 1991 New parish center constructed
- 1992 Cemetery road built
- 1996 First annual Sweetheart Breakfast
- 2000 Men and Women's Club merged with the parish council
- 2002 Major redecoration of the church interior
- 2013 Parish partnership formed with the Red Bud, Modoc, and Prairie du Rocher
parishes and the convent
- 2018 Bicentennial celebration of St. Patrick's Parish, marking 200 years of grace

We believe · We remember · We celebrate

In 2018, St. Patrick's celebrates its bicentennial as a parish, commemorating its rich history of faith and community, which remain strong after 200 years.

The main celebration on Sunday, September 9 began with Mass, after which the congregation paid homage to ancestors interred in the cemetery. A heritage parade with period costumes then proceeded from the parish to the convent. After a catered meal at noon, the crowd enjoyed tours of the old school and cemetery, a display of antique and vintage equipment, and sales of commemorative wine glasses and medallions. The photographs on the next eight pages manifest the energy and excitement of the day.

In lasting tribute to the past and with enduring faith in the future, this history of the parish was commissioned to commemorate and honor St. Patrick's 200 years of faith, community, and service.



St. Patrick's parishioners, about 2012, with Monsignor Dennis Schaefer at center, near the top.

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