

THE CENTER PIECE

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OUR LADY OF SEVEN DOLORS CELEBRATES 150 YEARS

June 4, 2017, marked the 150th anniversary of Our Lady of Seven Dolors Church in Millerville. The day was made very special by those who attended the celebration. History of any community is never complete without recognition of the faith of its founders and citizens.

On Pentecost Sunday, June 4, 1867, a congregation was formed that would become Our Lady of Seven Dolors Church in Millerville. The first Mass was held at the home of John Miller and conducted by Father Francis Xavier Pierz, an Indian Missionary, who arrived on horseback from Ottertail City. Father Pierz's records indicate that baptisms and marriages were performed and sacraments distributed on that day and that "thus the Catholic Congregation at Millerville was formed as Prairie d' St. Mary."

The Congregation has been housed in three different buildings, with the first being built in 1868 (pictured at the top right of this page). Two additions made the church building longer and added a wing to the south side. A second story was added. The parochial school was housed in this building from 1892—1893; the second floor was used as the Sisters' quarters. A cross and a belfry were added to the original log building in 1880.

In 1882, a new wood frame church was built seating 400 (pictured at right). In June 1883,



the new building was dedicated, with the sermon delivered in German and English. At this time, the church received its first organ. Sister Humilitias was the first organist. The organ replaced the music provided by Joseph Goetz and his band.

During Father Victor Siegler's ministry in the 1920s, he undertook major construction projects. A new basement church of stone and concrete was built in 1923 for \$25,000, along with a new parish house in 1928, with a cloister walk connecting them for \$14,000. They are pictured below.



Basement Church Built in 1923



Parish House Built in 1928

Father Siegler is credited with solving the language problem by firmly insisting that the

English language be spoken in Church and school.

Building activities came to a halt due to the Depression in the 1930s. The parish did, however, tear down and remove the old house and other buildings and landscaping was done.

When Father Adolph Schmidt came to the parish in 1949, he began raising funds for a new church building. In 1950, the old church was torn down and the lumber used for building the Parish Hall. Being gifted in fundraising, Father Schmidt raised \$134,000 toward the new church building. Plans were drawn up by an architect; however, Father Schmidt died in 1954 before he could oversee the project.

Father Lawrence Botz began construction of the new church building in the fall of 1955 at a cost of \$285,000. The new church had a seating capacity of 450. The church was dedicated on October 25, 1956. The new church is pictured below:



Over the years, improvements have been made to the church and parish hall, including the addition of a convent in 1964.

Not to be forgotten in the history of the Church of Seven Dolors is the need for and construction of the school. The Benedictine Sisters were called to take over the school in 1882. Teaching of the children took place in the annex to the existing church at that time, with their living quarters in the loft. The school term began on the first Monday of September and ended at the end of February for the first year. An agreement was reached between the Sisters and the School Board of District 34 that the nuns would teach six months for the district. The children of the district could attend parochial school free of charge and would receive four months of parochial school.

In 1895, the parish priest at that time tried to build a parochial school that would be separate from District 34. His attempts failed due to the feeling that the community was not large enough to support two schools. However, Father Ignaz Wippich (1910–1921) oversaw the building of St. Mary's Catholic School. Not without controversy, the new school and the village were successful until state law required consolidation. From 1932–1939, the Sisters taught the first two years of high school in addition to elementary grades. The school is pictured below:



150 years and 31 parish priests later, the Church of Seven Dolors is still flourishing and is the heart of the Millerville community. With the growth of the community and the Millerville church, sister churches were formed in Brandon and Urbank.

In an article in a previous issue of The Center Piece, the church cemetery was featured. The records for the cemetery are well-maintained for those wishing to find the graves of their family members and ancestors.

Information for this article was gratefully gleaned from the 150 Year Anniversary Book published by the Church of Seven Dolors. Additional pictures and articles about the 150-year celebration can be found on the Brandon History Center blogspot.

Congratulations to The Church of Seven Dolors for 150 years of building and growing a community of faith.

Pictured below is an aerial view of the church complex.



Veterans Corner



Argonne Forest Unit 278 Legion Auxiliary Members

In this issue of the Center Piece, we are recognizing the Brandon Legion Auxiliary, Argonne Forest Unit 278. When we think of the Legion Auxiliary, we think of them selling poppies in May; but there is much more to this dedicated group of women than selling poppies handmade by veterans. One main focus of the Legion Auxiliary is to help and support our veterans.

Argonne Forest Unit 278 Legion Auxiliary began its long history of service to veterans when eighteen women signed the original charter in January of 1943: May Angen (President), Mari Lea (Secretary), Clara Dahl (Treasurer), Mrs. Leo Smedstad, Mrs. Elda Sletto, Mrs. John Knutson, Mrs. Henry Hanke, Mrs. Harry O. Falaas, Mrs. Edwin Severson, Mrs. Henry Syverson, Mrs. Nick Turchin, Mrs. Ted Plaster, Mrs. Walter Hoving, Mrs. Carl Linnard, Mrs. Clarence Newhouse, Miss Helen M. Johnson, Miss Mayme Johnson, Miss Christine Elness, Mrs. Victor Dorsch, and Mrs. Peter Hoplin.

Front Row (L to R):

Cheryl Johnson, Norma "Rusty" Blankenship – dual member of Legion and Auxiliary due to her service in the Army, Shirley Larson.

Back Row (: to R):

Mary Ann Ostlund, Judy Cress, Jan Bjerkness, Rita Metzger, Mary Rossum, Nancy Anderson.

The Brandon Auxiliary holds six meetings a year. Each month focuses on different events and projects, including supporting needs of the military service members and their families; supporting our firefighters, police officers, sheriff, and deputies; helping with blood drives; celebrating Americanism in our community and schools; doing community service; honoring the Legionnaires; donating school supplies, collecting box tops for education, and contributing to scholarship funds; displaying and selling poppies made by veterans; placing bronze flag markers on auxiliary members' graves and serving lunch after Memorial Day Services; sponsoring a girl for Girls' State; hosting bingo nights; serving treats and coffee for teachers, school employees, and bus drivers during National Education Week; observing Veterans Day; remembering shut-in and hospitalized veterans; and contributing funds to organizations who support veterans.

Thank you, Brandon Legion Auxiliary, for all you do!

Veterans Corner –cont'd



Roger Hanson

Roger Hanson enlisted in the United States Air Force and earned the rank of Master Sergeant. He served his country for twenty-two years and spent time in Duluth MN; Grand Forks ND; Topeka, KS; England; France; Korea; and Germany. Roger passed away April 17, 2016. He was buried at Seven Dolores Cemetery in Millerville, MN, with full military honors accorded by the Minnesota Honor Guard and Inspiration Peak American Legion Post 527 on April 26, 2016.

Thank you to

Dick Gulbranson for pencil, advertising coin and plat book maps.

Brandon/Evansville Schools for pictures of students and teachers (2015-2017) and Chargers poster.

Dorothy & Jim Anderson for Clarence Anderson's baseball glove.

Norb Korkowski for wooden flag display boxes.

Dean and Ruth Plaster for storage shelf.

Lynn & Sharon Rossum for 1936 Roy Strom calendar, Korkowski Implement anniversary mug (1929-1978), advertising pen & pencil.

Our Lady of Seven Dolores for Millerville advertising pie plate and pot holder.

Judy & Jerry Klein for 1949 Brandon yearbook.

Cindy Haffner for pictures, calendars, phone books, pens, etc.

Lisa Meichsner of Etc. Signs for pictures of class of 2015 - 2016.

Suzanne Toft for painting done by Gertrude Loeffler and cookbooks from Ruby Korkowski and St. Paul's Church, Moe Township.

Dudley Gerber for Indian artifacts (rocks and pipe), antique barber kit and antique wooden skis.

Marcia Bolin for \$50 in memory of Charles Bolin.

Gary Lund for \$25 in memory of Charles Bolin.

Gary Lund for \$30 in memory of Doug Hermanson.

Carol Ramler for \$50 for auditorium kitchen fund.

American Legion Auxiliary, Argonne Forest Post 278, Brandon, for \$300 toward auditorium kitchen renovation.



We had to say goodbye to a dear friend and volunteer, Joan Haak. She died at Grand Arbor in Alexandria on July 30, 2017. In her quiet way, she made life easier for us at the History Center. She will be missed.

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BOARD MEMBERS:

Hilda Bettermann
 Florence Bitzan
 Marcia Bolin
 Christella Korkowski
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We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

www.brandonmn.com

Auditorium Kitchen Renovation

Renovation of the Brandon Auditorium kitchen is now a reality! The Minnesota Historical Society has given the go-ahead to proceed with our kitchen project which will begin soon. History Center fundraiser proceeds, individual donations, and the City of Brandon will be paying for the costs of the renovation. Donations will continue to be accepted.

Our Mission Statement

To collect preserve and display articles, pictures, and memorabilia from Brandon, Millerville, and the surrounding area for future generations.

To assist in the preservation of the Historic Brandon Auditorium and other local historic sites.