

Chapter 13

Dunn Settlement

In the late 1850's a settlement of Irish Catholics formed in Liberty Township. As there were several in the area, priests from Marshalltown and Eldora organized the scattered families into a parish. Services were first held in the homes.

As the years passed, more Catholics moved into the area. One of the foremost problems of the Dunn Settlement was the problem of proper facilities for Catholic worship. In 1875, Hughie Dunn, Sr., donated one acre of land for the Dunn Settlement Church, known as St. John's, located in the NE corner of his property along the road adjoining the Thomas Dunn property. The church was built by George Haues. The rock for the foundation was hauled by teams of horses from the quarry in Hardin County, then known as Zenia Quarry. All the building materials had to be hauled from State Center as that was the closest railroad. The hauling was done by the parishoners. Dedication was in 1878 and named St. John's Catholic Church. Location was in Liberty Township, Section 9.

After 10 years, the Dunn parish was included in the Eldora parish where they had a resident priest. Billy Dunn was then appointed to teach catechism.

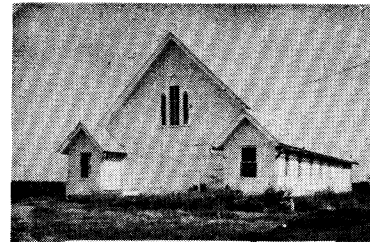
Henry Dunn donated land for the St. John's cemetery in 1860. It is also referred to as the Dunn Cemetery. Henry Dunn also gave a cross costing \$75.00 which was erected in the center of the four Senior Dunn brothers' lots. Prior to the establishing of the Dunn Cemetery, four of the Dunn relatives, who had been buried in the Bevins Grove Cemetery, were removed and reburied in the Dunn Cemetery.

Anna Dunn, daughter of Thomas and Margaret Dunn, was the first child to be baptized in the Dunn church. Tagatoffs were the second married in the church in 1883, and Kate Liston was the last married in 1912. Henry Dunn was the first to die. William Dunn was the first buried in the cemetery and Eliza Dunn was the last to be buried from the Dunn church.

Several Catholic families were settling around St. Anthony so a Catholic Church was organized and built. In 1912 or shortly later, the St. John's Catholic Church closed and merged with the Sacred Heart Catholic Church in St. Anthony. The building was sold to the Liberty Consolidated School in 1926 for a gymnasium. It was moved west of the Liberty School House. As Liberty school closed in 1953, the old church building (gym) was left vacant again. It was destroyed by high winds in 1974.

A marker is all that remains of the St. John's Catholic Church. It is located north of the Liberty School Building.

Excerpts from the Dunn History
Originally written by
W. J. Dunn



**St. John's
Catholic Church**