

ORIGINAL HOLY CROSS CHURCH LOCATED JUST EAST OF KEYSTONE WHERE ONLY A CEMETERY REMAINS NOW. A historical marker has been planned for the site of what pioneers once envisioned would become another Notre Dame.

Line fence lingo

By CHARLIE GEBHARD

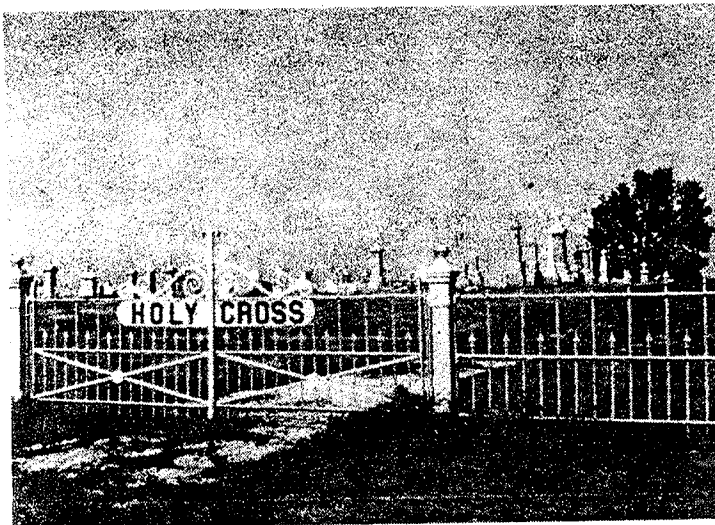
It never occurred to me until I was in Van Horne one day recently and got introduced to three Irishmen in a row that there is quite an Irish settlement between Van Horne and Keystone though the area was probably more solidly Irish at the turn of the century. There is a reason why the Irish families located here. It ties in with the fact that the Immaculate Conception Catholic Church parish at Van Horne is presently seeking funds to place a historical marker in the old Holy Cross cemetery where so many Irish are buried. This cemetery is located only a mile east of Keystone where the Holy Cross mission was established and a church built which served Catholic farmers of the area for many years. Today only a cemetery remains. Directly across the road is the farm of Harold Ritscher.

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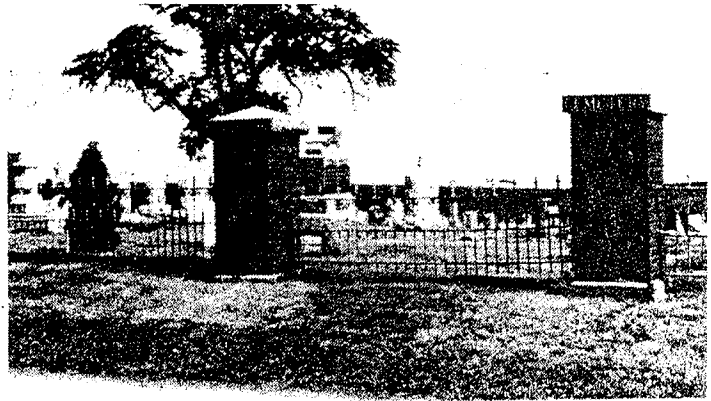
Once it was hoped to build another Notre Dame here. The whole



HOLY CROSS CEMETERY TODAY. The site is directly across the road from the well known Harold Ritscher farm one mile south east of Keystone.



THIS USED TO BE ENTRYWAY TO THE HOLY CROSS CHURCH. It was a parish church from 1870 until 1903 when it became a mission of the Immaculate Conception Catholic church at Van Horne. It was officially closed in 1928 and the building removed many years later.

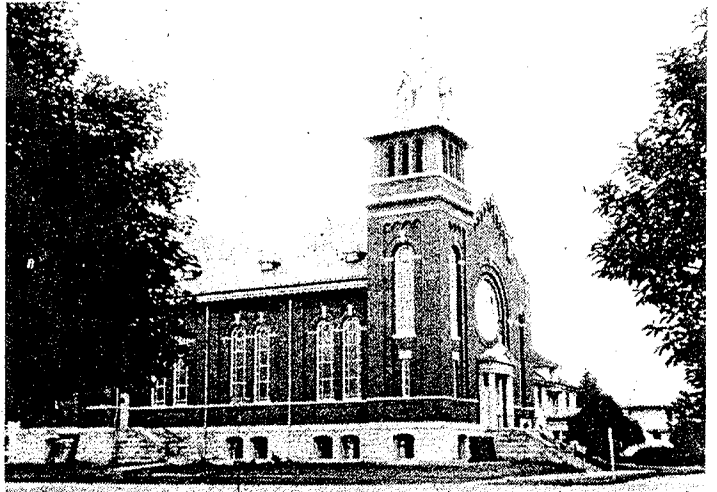


CALVARY CATHOLIC CEMETERY SOUTH OF VAN HORNE ALONG HIGHWAY 30. Like the Holy Cross cemetery it is still being used. At one time it was referred to as the "Kelly" cemetery because so many Kellys are buried here. Both cemeteries served the Irish settlement between Van Horne and Keystone.

story, much of which was recounted here in this column several years ago, had its beginning when an Irish pioneer named James Murphy deeded two whole sections of prairie land in this area to the University of Notre Dame to pay for the education of his two sons.

It followed that in 1867 the Rev. Paul R. Sillin with Brothers Cesaire and Aloysius came out from Notre Dame to take possession of the land and to care for the needs of the early settlers. They intended to open up a college here later.

Father Paul, as he came to be affectionately known by residents all over Benton County, drove his old horse "Sarsfield" all the way to Iowa from Indiana with his mass kit and other needs

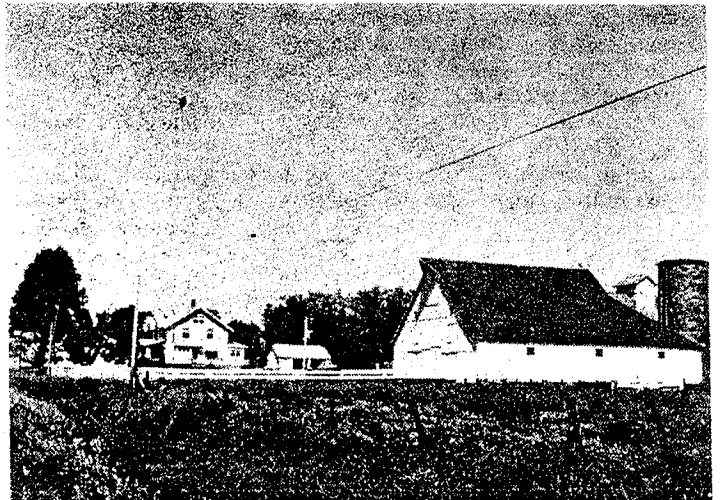


VAN HORNE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CATHOLIC CHURCH. This church was built in 1915 to replace the original, a frame building erected in 1895 which was destroyed by fire in 1914. Present pastor is Rev. John J. Pitzen. Parishoners at the pioneer Holy Cross church were absorbed by this church in 1928.

in his buggy. The two Brothers drove two yokes of oxen with wagons loaded with implements to break up the fertile prairie and raise potatoes to supply the community and the students at Notre Dame.

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It seems that Father Paul was a good businessman as well as a zealous priest and he persuaded many Catholics to settle in the area and soon disposed of 1280 acres of land, reserving five acres for the church and cemetery. A church was erected, 30 x 60 feet in dimensions in the fall of 1869 and completed early in 1870. The first Mass in the new church was celebrated on June 19, 1870 and the 100th anniversary of the occasions was duly observed by residents of that area three years ago.



TYPICAL OF THE MANY FARMS WHERE IRISH PIONEERS ESTABLISHED THEMSELVES IN THE AREA BETWEEN KEYSTONE AND VAN HORNE IS THIS FARM OF RONALD BARRY. Here his grandfather, Patrick Barry, settled 108 years ago and the farm has been in the family ever since. Ronald's father was Matt Barry.



RONALD BARRY FARM HOME TODAY. It was built in 1918 to replace the original house which was located a short distance east. The Barrys have four children, three of whom are married and live elsewhere while the fourth, a daughter, Carol, graduated from the University of Northern Iowa recently and plans on a teaching career.



SALEM CEMETERY ALSO LOCATED IN SAME GENERAL AREA AS OTHER TWO BURIAL GROUNDS PICTURED HERE. It serves the parishioners of the Salem United Methodist church in Van Horne of which Rev. Roger Tappmeyer is pastor. Van Horne area Lutherans who attend church services at St. Andrew's Lutheran in Van Horne (Rev. Glenn Renken pastor) have their burial grounds over near Newhall in the St. John's Lutheran cemetery, a story about which will appear at some future date.

that cemetery was that of Julian Schell who died in 1859. One grave which stands out is that of Corporal John Kelly, an Air Force gunner with the 20th Air Force, who crashed and was killed during World War II in 1944.

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Still another cemetery in the area just south of Van Horne one mile is the Salem cemetery where most of the Van Horne residents, other than Catholics or Lutherans are buried. (Lutherans have been buried in the St. John's Lutheran Cemetery two miles west of Newhall, a picture and store about which will appear sometimes in the future).

The Salem cemetery is large and like the two burial grounds mentioned earlier, is also very well maintained. Some of the names noted on the grave markers include those of: Schulze, Fry, Grote, Werner, Schlue, Smith, Thompson, Kerkman, Marquardt, Boomgarden, Yakish, Surber, Dircks, Kraft, Schlarbaum, Blue, Hauser, Wold and Fry. A surprising number of war veterans are buried here including at least two Civil War veterans, Benjamin Boetzfield and William Engelking.

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It is worth noting that from the earliest days Keystone was primarily a German Lutheran community and remains so to this day. The spirit of tolerance and friendship between the pioneers of different faiths who were close neighbors in the Keystone-Van Horne area, was in the best American tradition and has continued down through the years among the descendants today. Both Keystone and Van Horne and wonderful towns in which to live.

As you progress westward from Keystone you begin to find Czech families here and there. The Catholics among them are members of the Catholic parish at Vining west of Elberon.

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This is one of the richest agricultural areas in Benton County and there are lots of beef cattle and hogs to be seen on the farms. Some of these farms, of course, have become extremely well known not only around Benton County but all over Iowa.

You get the feeling when you drive through this region or visit with people on the street in Van Horne or Keystone or not on the farms nearby, that regardless of what happens to the value of the dollar, to price controls or to the economy in general, they are self-reliant enough to make it!

Father Gillin was succeeded by Rev. Richard Maher as pastor in 1880 and in 1884 by Rev. Joseph Gleeson who served until the summer of 1888. At that time the parish property, including five acres, was deeded to the Archdiocese of Dubuque and Rev. Thomas Reynolds came. The first parish building burned down in 1880 and was replaced with a new house in 1881 which continued to serve as the parish residence until 1903.

In 1889 an old store building was purchased in Keystone and moved to the parish grounds to serve as a school and sisters arrived to take charge but the school closed after four years for lack of pupils.

The Chicago Milwaukee and St. Paul railroad had been extended west from Cedar Rapids in 1881 and the town of Van Horne had come into existence and with it in 1895 Van Horne got a Catholic church. Members of this parish increased in numbers rapidly while the Holy Cross parish declined. When a parochial residence was erected in Van Horne in 1903, Holy Cross became a mission and remained such until 1928 when the church was officially closed.

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Today there are still many Irish families living in the area between Keystone and Van Horne and oddly enough there are two cemeteries, both Catholic, in which most of these deceased pioneers are buried. Among those buried in Holy Cross cemetery is Brother Aloysius, one of the three first arrivals! The Holy Cross cemetery continues in active use as does the other cemetery located on the north side of Highway 30 to the southeast. It is known as the Calvary cemetery though in earlier years it was generally referred to as the "Kelly" cemetery because so many Kellys have been buried there.

Visiting the Holy Cross cemetery today the familiar Irish names stand out everywhere. To mention only a few, there are: O'Brien, Pieper, Donnelly, Greene, Maguire, Darcy, Boies, Coughlin, McIntier, Maher, Callaghan, Meyocks, Donovan and a whole host of Barrys.

The enormous impact the coming of the Notre Dame fathers more than 100 years ago had upon this area of Benton County is plainly evident.

Meantime the Calvary cemetery likewise contains a host of Irish names, among them: Kelly, Ryan, McKenna, Teomay, Donahue, Hickey, O'Brien and more. Perhaps the first burial in

6 Times, Vinton, Iowa, August 3, 1973

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