

# St. Patrick's Church Kickapoo, Illinois

Established 1837



## SAINT PATRICK'S CHURCH

Kickapoo, Illinois

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On Saturday, August 24, 1839, the Peoria Register and North-Western Gazeteer carried the following story written by Samuel H. Davis, editor and publisher.

“At the West end of Kickapoo Town the corner stone of a Catholic Church was laid a few weeks ago, and the building is now in the progress of erection. We understand that the donors felt encouraged to enlarge the design since the work was commended, and that the building when completed will be of most respectable dimensions. We are under the impression that there are very few persons of this religious denomination among the settlers in that township, though we doubt not that the erection of this house of worship will be the means of drawing together a considerable society.”

The church referred to by Mr. Davis is St. Patrick's Church, located in St. Patrick's Cemetery, Kickapoo, Illinois. Whether the church was begun in 1837, as many old-timers say, or in 1839 as the historical archives record, is still debated. What is not debated, however, is that, as Mr. Davis indicated the church was of “most respectable dimensions” for its time, and it did prove to be the “means of drawing together a considerable society.”

Father John Blaise Raho, the first priest assigned to serve the settlers of the area, indicates in his letters that the corner stone was laid on August 4, 1839. Father Raho also gives the church its proper historical perspective by the following inscription he placed beneath the corner stone.

“Pope Gregory XVI was reigning as the Successor to St. Peter. Bishop Joseph Rosati was Bishop of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, which included the Kickapoo territory: Martin Van Buren was President of the United States; and Thomas Carlin was Governor of the State of Illinois.”

The ground for the church, and for the cemetery that surrounds the church, was donated by William Patrick Mulveny, a native of Dublin, Ireland. The grave of Mr. Mulveny lies just a few feet South of the church. Men and women of Kickapoo built the church. Timbers were hand hewed and pegged. The sandstone was quarried near Joliet, Illinois and hauled to Kickapoo by oxen cart. The men laid the stone while the women mixed the mortar.

St. Patrick's Church remained the only Catholic Church in the area until 1861. At that time the German Catholics purchased a former Episcopalian Church in the Village of Kickapoo. This became St. Mary's Church. Mass was offered in both churches until 1921 when the present St. Mary's Church of Kickapoo was built. The two parishes were then combined and Mass was no longer offered in St. Patrick's Church on a regular basis.

St. Patrick's Church was, more or less, abandoned and allowed to deteriorate until the early 1960's. At that time the Bishop Rosati Council, Knights of Columbus, in cooperation with several other Knights of Columbus Councils in Central Illinois, requested permission from Bishop John B. Franz, then Bishop of Peoria, to begin a restoration program for the church. In granting permission, Bishop Franz wrote the following words of encouragement.

“It is gratifying to know that the Bishop Rosati Council, No. 5034, Knights of Columbus is willing to sponsor this project by soliciting the cooperation of K. of C. Councils throughout the Peoria Diocese in an effort to raise the necessary funds, I readily endorse this project and wish you every success in your efforts.”

With these words of encouragement the work was begun. While no one had to “handhew” timber or “quarry” for stone in the restoration program, it did involve many hours of backbreaking labor for the men of the area who volunteered their time and talent. The restoration program took three years and two months to complete. A rededication ceremony was held on the Feast of All Saints, November 1, 1964.

Today, the church still stands as a tribute to those who brought the faith to this part of the world, and to those who for thirteen decades have preserved the faith for the present generation in the Kickapoo Area.

Perhaps the spirit that moved the pioneers to build the church in the 1830's and which inspired their descendants for many generations to worship in the church; and, which encouraged the local residents in the early 1960's to restore the church to its original state, is best reflected on the stones in the cemetery that surrounds the church. The weather-worn tombstones record the pious sentiments of the bereaved and thoughts of humble resignation and trusting faith. Through these messages cut in stone the pioneers speak to us now separated in time by many generations.

# Priest Assigned to Kickapoo

The following resided in either LaSalle or Peoria

Father John Blaise Raho	1837 - 1845
Father John Drew	1845 - 1847
Father Willim Feely	1847 - 1848
Father Raphael Rainaldi	1848 - 1851
Father Nicholas Stehle	1848 - 1851
Father John C. Brady	1851 - 1854
Father Thomas O'Gara	1855 - 1856

From 1856 to 1861 the area was served by priests who resided at St. Mary's Church, Peoria, Illinois.

The following were resident pastors in Kickapoo.

Father Thomas Frauenhofer	1863 - 1866
Father R. J. Oberle	1866 - 1867
Father M. Lyons	1867 - 1867
Father Jeremiah Murphy	1867 - 1868
Father Max Albrecht	1868 - 1871
Father Leonard Schaeffer	1871 - 1872
Father William Schamoni	1872 - 1876
Father William Kuchenbuch	1876 - 1877
Father E. F. Ryan	1877 - 1880

(Only St. Patrick's)

Father Anthony Schmitz	1877 - 1887
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(St. Mary's until 1880: Then both churches)

Father Leonz Zumhuelh	1887 - 1892
Father A. E. Buchler	1892 - 1896
Father Adolph Geyer	1896 - 1898
Father Charles Steuer	1898 - 1908
Father Benno Blaschke	1908 - 1909
Father Francis S. Hess	1909 - 1913
Father Edward J. Kutter	1913 - 1931
Father John Kleinsorg	1931 - 1933
Father August L. Mey	1933 - 1972
Father Lawrence M. Morrissey	1972 - 1987
Father Lawrence Sepich	1987 - 1992
Father Harry A. Pierjok	1992 - 1999
Father Eric Powell	1999 - 2002
Father Patrick M. Riordan	2002 - 2009
Father Joseph Dondanville	2009 - Present

CONTRIBUTIONS MAY BE SENT TO SAINT  
PATRICK'S CHURCH FUND % St. Mary's Church  
Of Kickapoo, 9910 W Knox Street, Edwards IL 61528 - 9510