

## Celebration Sunday

# St. Ignatius celebrates 90 years



**RT. REV. MSGR. Maurice Walsh** was the first priest ordained from St. Ignatius parish. He was ordained in 1913 and was pastor of St. Phillips church in Battle Creek at the time of his death in 1946.

If it weren't for the great forest fires of 1871 and 1881 which swept through the upper Thumb, members of the St. Ignatius Parish in Austin township would be celebrating their church's 109th or 99th anniversary Sunday.

Instead, they will be celebrating its 90th anniversary. The church is located on Cumber Road, about 1 1/4 miles east of M-19.

A big celebration is planned for present and past church members.

Following the 11 a.m. mass, there will be an open pit beef barbecue. The rest of the meal will be potluck.

Parishioners are being encouraged to wear old style clothing and there will be judging for the best costumes.

A tent-covered wood floor will be set up for dancing. The Barney Schubring band will play polka and square dance music from 12:30-3:30 p.m., after which the local

band headed by Ray Walsh will play music for the younger church members.

There will be games, including sack races and horseshoe pitching, dunking tank, pie baking contest, hay rides and an exhibit of old photographs.

Previous pastors of the congregation have been invited to attend the festivities. Expected to attend are Father Norman Van Poppele, now retired and living in Saginaw; Father Arthur Mulka, now in Leelanau county; Father Richard Siefferley, West Branch, and Father Joseph D. Ryan, Linwood.

Also expected to attend is Father William O'Shea, the second priest ordained from St. Ignatius. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. Charles O'Shea live near Tyre. Father O'Shea is pastor of the churches at Wilnot and Mayville. He was ordained in 1971.

Joseph Walsh of Harper Woods is also expected. At

age 92, he is the only present or past member who was alive when the church was dedicated.

Father Gerald Kukla has served St. Ignatius and St. Joseph Catholic church at Argyle for four years. The rectory is at Argyle.

Jim Zmich has been organist at St. Ignatius for more than 25 years.

### EARLY HISTORY

The early history of the churches at Freiburg (usually spelled Freiburg on county maps) and Argyle are intertwined and both represent triumph over adversity.

The first Catholic family to come to Austin township was Maurice Clifford and his wife, Elizabeth O'Shea, who first emigrated from Ireland to Canada. They came to Tyre about 1859.

By 1870, there were several families there, which formed the nucleus of the Austin township parish, all

of whom had fled from war and oppression in their native countries of Ireland or France.

Lumber cut for the first church burned in the great fire of 1871.

The first Catholic settlers in Argyle township came for the same reasons about 1861 from the Alsace-Lorraine area of France, which was sometimes claimed by Germany.

It was not unusual for the men from Argyle and Austin townships to walk 20 miles to Ruth on a Saturday evening for confession and Holy Communion, then mass on Sunday morning, then walk home.

By 1880, plans for a central church to serve both townships had been made. The location was to have been by a quarter mile west and one mile south of the present location of St. Ignatius, by the cemetery that still serves that church and St. Joseph. Mickey Walsh is the present sexton.

The lumber was cut and all was in readiness, but it was not to be. The great fire of 1881 destroyed the lumber, as well as many of the

would-be parishioners' homes and barns.

Mass was said for the first time in the area in 1882 in Austin township by Father A. Marker from Ruth at the home of Maurice Clifford. After that, he said mass there about six times a year.

By 1888, it was decided that due to the growing population and poor roads, it made more sense to build two churches, one at Freiburg and the other at Argyle.

Lumber was cut again and St. Joseph church was dedicated in 1889; St. Ignatius in 1890. The exact date of the dedication of the latter church is unknown.

The priest at Ruth continued to serve the two missions until 1904, when Rev. Alex Conus was appointed pastor at Austin, with Argyle as a mission. Two years later, Argyle was made the home parish with a parish house erected, with Freiburg as the mission.

### RECENT HISTORY

Present membership of St. Ignatius is 97-100 families. Membership has remained

fairly steady over the years, according to Patricia Walsh, one of the parishioners who has been working on the history of the church. Those attending the celebration Sunday will receive a booklet describing the history.

In contrast to St. Joseph, where the original building was replaced by the present stone structure in 1934, the structure at Freiburg is original.

The major change came in 1963-64, when the building was jacked up, the original stone foundation removed and a new cement foundation put in place. The fellowship hall was built about 1966.

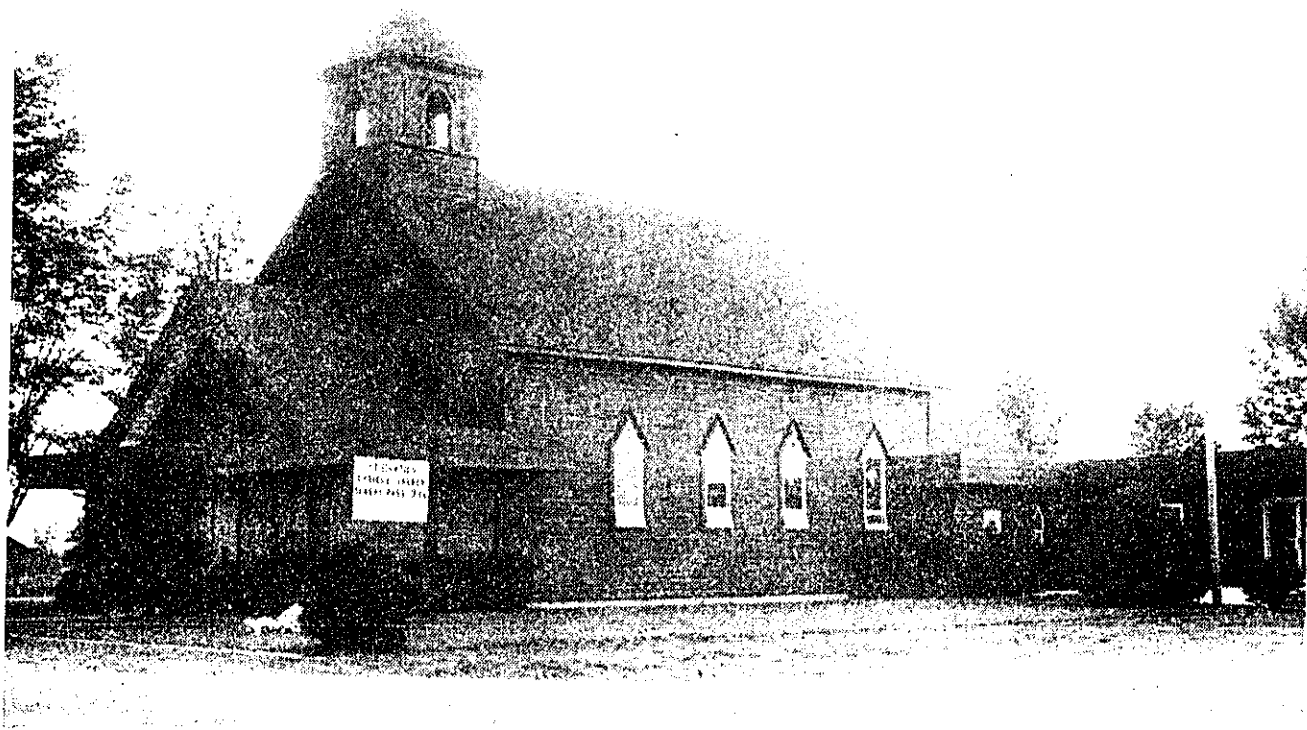
The stained glass windows, bell and chandeliers all date from when the church was built.

Building of the church 90 years ago was a community effort. Parishioners donated yellow pine for lumber, shingles and nails, plus sacks of oats to be sold for cash to buy needed items that weren't donated.

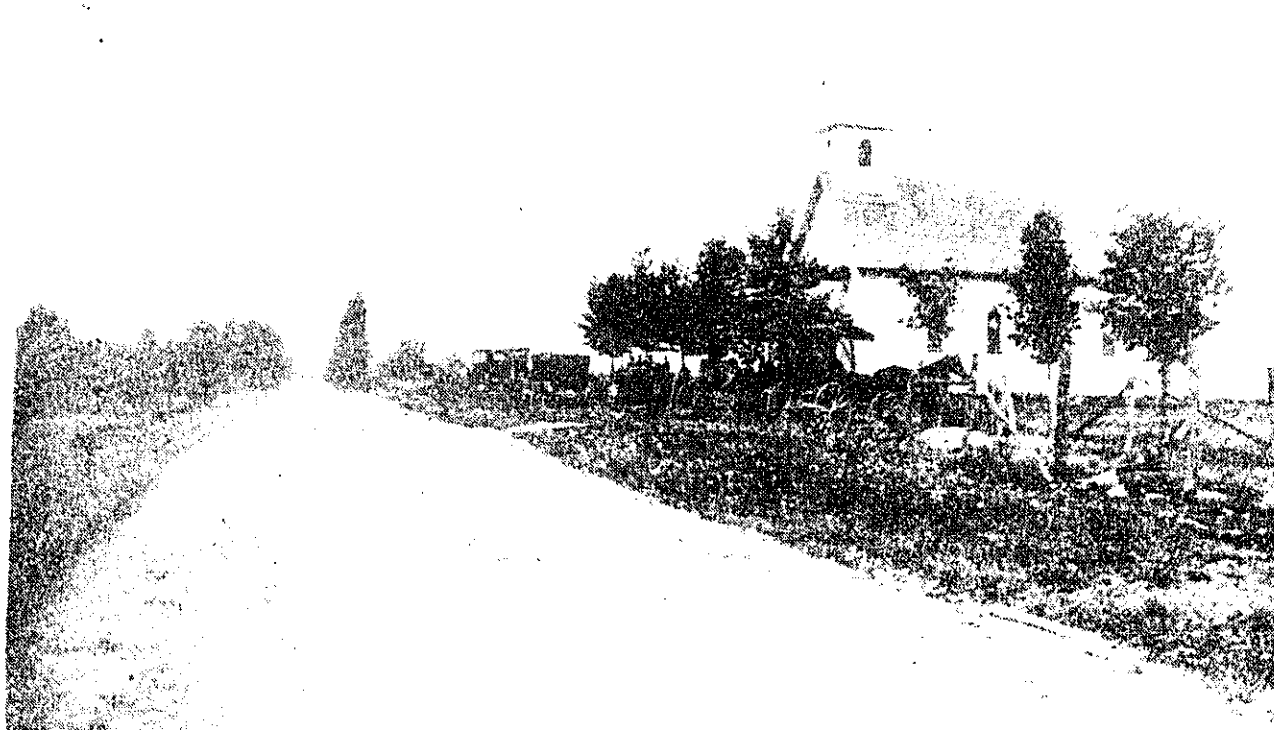
That spirit remains, as present day parishioners do much of the upkeep of the grounds and building.



**ELLEN WALSH, Sister Augustine**, was the first parishioner from St. Ignatius to become a nun, joining the Adrian Dominicans in 1891. She was mother general at the time of her death in 1933. Photo was taken when she was a school teacher prior to entering the convent.



**ST. IGNATIUS CATHOLIC CHURCH** has been standing on Cumber Road, east of Freiburg in Austin township, Sanilac county, since 1890. The entrance-way at left was added in 1963-64, when the original foundation was replaced. The fellowship hall, part of which is shown at right, was added in 1966.



**ST. IGNATIUS** -- The cars parked along Cumber Road would indicate this photo of St. Ignatius Catholic Church was taken about 1910-15. Freiburg proper, which at one time had a hotel, general store and school, is about a quarter-mile down the road to the west.

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