

More Highlights on Assumption Grotto's Pastors



Third Pastor, Rev. Charles Gottfried Bolte

January 3, 1894 - November 24, 1899

First Seminary of St. Thomas

Fr. Bolte was listed in In Pare's History pg. 653 on an early class list for the first diocesan seminary in 1854. The seminary of St. Thomas was established by Bishop Peter Paul Lefevre, Detroit's second bishop. His name appears along with four other sons of pioneer families from our parish: Charles Greiner, James Pulcher, John Reichenbach and Wendelin Baumgartner who would become chancellor of the diocese in 1888. Fr. Bolte was the president of the Diocesan School Board before his appointment to Assumption Grotto. He was also the pastor for a time at Old St. Mary's in Detroit. St. Mary's had been under the Franciscan Friars and the Redemptorist Fathers. Many of the parishioners were attached to the religious orders and were dissatisfied with Fr. Bolte who was a secular priest. When Fr. Bolte received a letter of criticism he read it aloud at each Mass reassuring the congregation of his goodwill and his readiness to fulfill the charge laid upon him by the bishop until his death, or until the bishop should decide to remove him. This was not long coming. On July 23, 1893 the Congregation of the Holy Ghost was given charge of the parish and Fr. Bolte was latter appointed pastor of Assumption Grotto on January 3rd 1894.

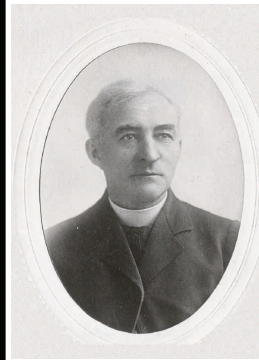
Grotto Archives: Ch142-1893

A letter to Rev Charles Bolte from J. Baumgartner, Sec'y: Permission is hereby granted you to make a loan of \$4,000 for the purpose of building a new school and sisters' house for Assumption Parish in Greiner Wayne Co. Mich. Later he received permission to borrow another \$1,000 to pay on the school. This building lasted for 93 years it was torn down in 1987 due to lack of enrollment and rising costs. #Ch154c-1894

Fr. Bolte's garden and the new school building

Like Fr. Van, Fr. Bolte grew flowers year-round for the church. The rectory had its own green house attached to it. Fr. Bolte was a contemplative who preferred the cultivation of his garden to company. He also kept an outdoor flower and vegetable garden. Visitors who dropped by during the week were likely to find him outside working in the overalls and jacket worn by other farmers of the area. The local fame which Father Bolte's gardens achieved was indirectly responsible for the coming of the Racine Dominican's to the Grotto school. In 1894 several sisters from Centerline chanced to come to the Grotto and see the wonderful flowers, flower house and gardens which were the source of so many happy hours to the then residing pastor, Father Bolte. Sister Reginald was one of these Sisters. He told her of his great desire to have sisters for his school, but he had tried several places to no avail. She suggested he get in touch with the Mother House in Racine. He did and the Racine Sisters took charge of our school on August 4, 1894. They remained in our parish over 70 years. 11D-1982 History pgs. 70-71

Appointment to St. Michael's: The Rt. Rev. Bishop has appointed the Rev. Charles G. Bolte, pastor of Assumption Church, Connor's Creek, to fill the vacancy occasioned by the death of the late worthy rector of St. Michael's Church. Fr. Bolte is one of the best known German priests in Michigan and has labored successfully in many parts of the state. St. Michael's congregation is to be congratulated upon the choice made by the Rt. Rev. Bishop of a successor to Father Schmittiel. Grotto Archives: #Ch154c-1899



Our Fourth Pastor, Rev. James Ronayne

December 1, 1899 – December 1, 1915

Father Ronayne's pastorate was the last during which the Grotto was a country parish with a sizeable group of German speaking parishioners. Life was still slow in those days before the widespread use of the automobile. Parishioners who were children during the first decade of the century remember the priest making house calls on his bicycle, carrying the sacraments to people who could not come to church and visiting the sick. A tombstone with Fr Ronayne's name remains in the cemetery, although his body was later transferred to Mt. Olivet Cemetery. He collapsed in the pulpit while preaching a sermon on death. He continued his priestly functions in his mind saying over and over the baptismal ritual in German. Sister Nicoline recalled Fr. Krebbs saying: "He loved the Germans, Now let's say a Hail Mary for him!"

Letter to Fr. Baumgartner Chancellor from Fr. Ronayne. Connor's Creek Feb. 5 1902 - Dear Fr. Baumgartner, I hereby enclose accounts of Assumption Parish for year 1901. We owe \$700.00 to the Peninsular Bank and we have 155.00 and some odd cents on hand. The substance of a long story made short. I would have sent the accounts in earlier were it not that I am unable to overcome that old superstition that it is unlucky to send in church accounts promptly. Very sincerely, in haste-J. Ronayne. This is the first document pertaining to Fr. Ronayne in our archives. We have nothing from 1899; the time of his appointment. This letter is also the first typewritten letter in the Archives by a pastor. It appears that Fr. Ronayne was the typist. Grotto Archives: 158a-1902

Virtues of Fr. Ronayne: "Fr. Ronayne's two maiden sisters, Kate and Johanna, kept house for him. Kate was the older of the two and thin. Johanna was heavy and limped from having broken her hip. Both sisters were very attached to their bulldog, Buster. An example of Fr. Ronayne's well known frugality was that he owned only one suit with two pair of pants. One day, to the dismay of the sisters, he gave his good pair of pants away to a tramp who came knocking at the door. #159b-1907

Letter from Fr. Ronayne:Connors Creek, Feb 2 1909. - Dear Fr. Baumgartner: I write to you today first and foremost and principally to inform you that the woodchuck came out today with his usual promptness, saw his shadow and after bowing gracefully to the audience returned to his winter quarters leaving the world full of hope. Incidentally and as a matter of form and formality, I write today to send in my accounts which I hereby do with my habitual punctuality. The substance of it all is: first, there is a deficit for school amounting to \$101.92 which deficits amount to \$233.92. I hope to be able to collect this next year. I have really paid it myself but do not tell the people so. Schweigen ist Gold. I have not paid orphan tax but will do it. I forgot it. I owe \$552.44 to contractor and architect and have \$70.00 of it. I will get the balance soon as there are some \$800 of subscriptions still due. Will give you the further information required as soon as it will do any good. Very sincerely, in haste J. Ronayne.---You might tell Father Maron that the Latin for Herman is surely Arminius--The mortgage of \$515.00 is paid released and ready to be burnt. (Note: The reference to Herman and Arminius is better understood after viewing # Ch160e-1909. F.J. Herman is the contractor who erected the new church. He wrote the bishop insisting on payment due him.)

Our last 5 Pastors continued next month