

HIGHLIGHTS

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Holy Name

Church Was Like A Home To Some

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The parish records show that the first baptism in Vanceboro's Catholic Parish was administered to Nealie McVickers in April, 1928.

The first sacrament, according to the book now kept by Father Mulholland in Washington, was administered on May 28, 1928.

So 1928, as near as anyone can figure, is when the Holy Name of Jesus Church—usually just "Holy Name" to members—was built on Main St. in Vanceboro.

That means the building will have a lifespan of about 53 years, because the old church is slated to be swept away this summer to make way for a new bank.

The loss has old-time members feeling a bit wistful, but not bitter.

"I hated to see them close it, because it was like a home to me," Vanceboro's Evelyn Waters said. "But I understood. Now I'm just glad somebody can get some use out of it."

Railroad mission

Holy Name was closed in 1977, when membership dwindled and the building fell into disrepair. Now, with destruction scheduled, the parish has come full circle from the time when the mission was run from a railroad car that came to town periodically.

"I remember that they had a railroad car that came around," Mrs. Waters said. "I'm not sure when the church was built, but 1928 sounds close."

Mulholland, of Mother of Mercy Church in Washington, was the last priest to serve Vanceboro. Though his records show a flurry of parish activity beginning in 1928, he said that is not proof the building was up by then.

"Sometimes we start a mission, and the priest comes up, say, from New Bern. The records would start then. But the records show some confirmations around Vanceboro in 1928, so there must have been a church there—that's my thought," he said.

Holy Name served largely as a highway mission, a function that was reduced when the U.S. 17 bypass was built. The church

had its own resident pastor then, who lived in a now-rundown house next the church.

Still, even after the bypass, Holy Name served five local Catholic families and several individuals. Perhaps the most loyal was Waters, who watched the parish's decline.

First, the resident priests went, and Vanceboro was served by clergy from New Bern and Washington. Eventually, she said attendance got pretty poor.

"There just weren't enough members to keep it going, and so much needed doing to the building. The church just wasn't growing, and when a church is not growing you might as well let it go," she said.

Proud heritage

The 1977 closure scattered the members to churches in New Bern, Washington and Grifton, but left behind a proud heritage.

Mulholland ticked off a few of the resident priests, some he knew from records and some from personal memory.

There was Father Jude McCauley and Father William McShea. There was Father Charles Gable, who worked for the Catholics in Eastern North Carolina for years.

The building itself is somewhat of an architectural heritage. It is probably the most architecturally unique building in Vanceboro, and many have admired its clean lines and fine wood, stone and masonry work.

Since 1977 many a local has daydreamed about renovating the place. Last year Ed Lancaster, a Vanceboro native now teaching art at the University of Illinois, considered buying the property for a local studio.

Wachovia finally made a deal for the property with the Catholic Diocese office in Raleigh.

The present Wachovia Bank in Vanceboro has inadequate parking, and traffic jams often clog the area on Fridays. The firm decided a move up the street was in order.

To build their new bank Wachovia's contractors must remove the building Southeastern Construction Company of Charlotte put up more than 50 years ago.

The building is a local landmark, and more than a few are sad to see it go.

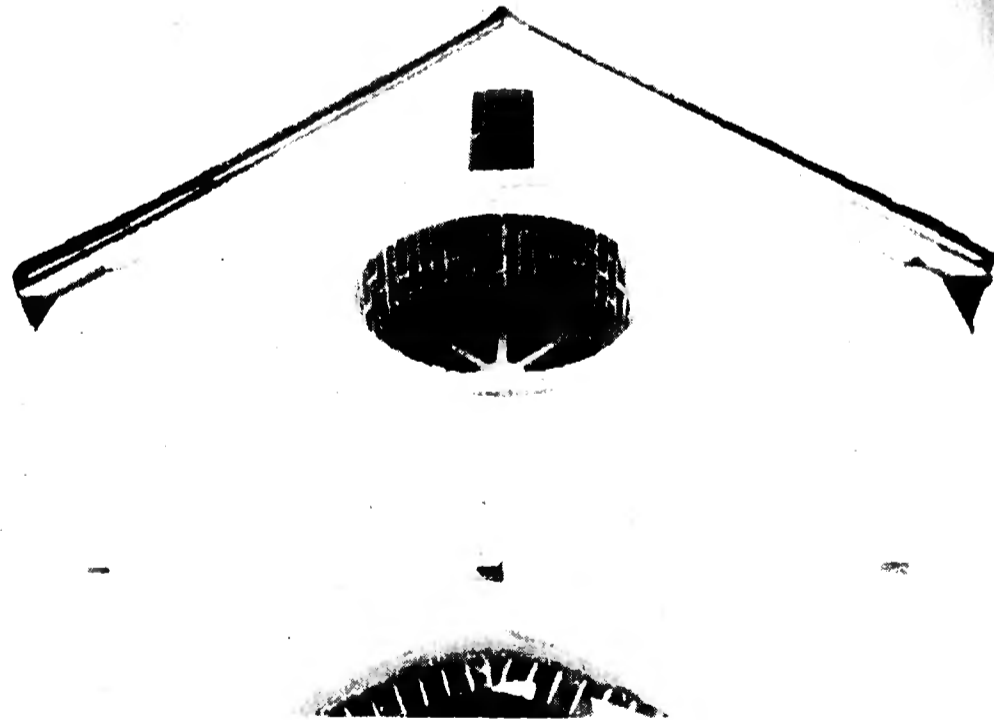
"It bothered me when they closed it, but it's been closed a long time now. I'm glad somebody is getting some use from the property," Mrs. Waters said.

Local Wachovia President Alton Whitley said the final deal was to be closed tomorrow. He was not sure, he said, exactly when work on the site would begin.



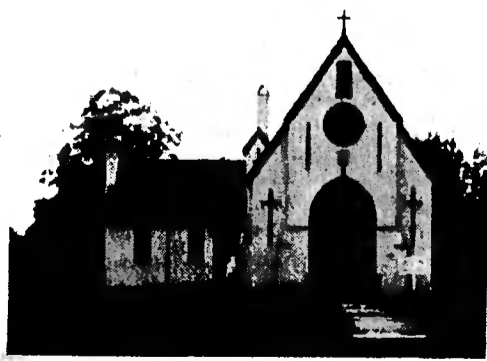
Bent rain gutters and encroaching vines are signs of the buildings four-year abandonment.

(staff photo)



Many have admired the church's stone and masonry work.

(staff photo)



Holy Name of Jesus Church

The Save The Highlights Sweepstake

Lucky Numbers for the week of April 23, 1981:

1st Place 644
2nd Place 305
3rd Place 837

The rules for Save The Highlights Sweepstakes are on page 10. Read all about it, it could mean money to you!