



INTERIOR VIEW OF ST. CHARLES CATHOLIC CHURCH, AHOSSKIE

## Hertford's Only Catholic Group: Church Grew From Porch Gathering

Two Catholic couples, a century apart, have served to keep the embers of their faith warm so that the Roman Catholic Church might be rekindled in the Roanoke-Chowan area during the past 25 years.

The first couple, names unknown, were discovered living in Murfreesboro in 1821 when Bishop John England paid a visit to that town.

The Catholic bishop of Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina was making his first visit to his diocese. On his itinerary, he included a stop at Edenton, where he found a handful of Catholics living in Chowan County. Making the journey up the river to Murfreesboro, the Bishop met with even less welcome, discovering only two Catholics in the county.

After Bishop England's visit in 1821, the history of the Catholic movement in the Roanoke-Chowan area encounters a gap of over 100 years.

The first prospect of rebirth came in 1934, when Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Foreman moved to Ahoskie from Norfolk. The Foremans might well be called the "parents" of the Catholic Church in Hertford County.

In those mid-depression days, Mr. Foreman recalls, the only other Catholic in Ahoskie was a lady whose husband managed the hotel. In fact, it was pretty hard to be a Catholic in this county, he admits, since there was no church and no others with whom to join in worship.

**Drive to Edenton**

"At first we used to drive to Edenton to attend mass," says Mr. Foreman, "but the old bridge there was so rickety that my wife was afraid to go over it. Then we went to Scotland Neck for a while, where there was a mission from Tarboro, called St. Thomas. One of the Franciscan fathers from Tarboro used to serve the mission, but he was often late because of break-downs along the poor road."

As a result of this, Mr. Foreman says he and his wife finally decided to drive to Roanoke Rapids each week, where Father Mc Nerney, who was dean of this section, conducted mass regularly at the Catholic Church.

**On A Sun Porch**

The actual beginning of the present St. Charles Catholic Church in Ahoskie can be traced to Mr. Foreman's sun porch. It was in this unlikely spot that a small group of parishioners met on Wednesday mornings during 1941. Mass was offered there by either Father Bernard Cuskelly or Father Timothy Shannon, from Tarboro. Four more persons—Mrs. Sharron and daughter and Mr. and Mrs. Meyers—had joined the Foremans in worship by that time.

In 1942, Father Giles Wade, T. O. R., succeeded Father Bernard Cuskelly as pastor in Tarboro. The influx of new people during the first year of the war brought a few more Catholics into Ahoskie, and mass was now said on Sunday as well as Wednesday, by either Father Giles or his assistant.

**Store Rented**

Later that year, due to the zeal and devotion of the Foremans and with the permission of Bishop McGuinness, a store was rented at 110 Mitchell Street, and converted into a chapel called St. Richard's. At this time, Edward Ache, Dr. James Shannon, Mrs. Carroll Credle and Dr. Archie Monk were added to the parish.

On Thanksgiving Day, 1942, the first mass was offered in the chapel, which remained in operation until the Sunday after Christmas, 1943, when the owner asked for its return. Until July, 1943, mass was offered each Sunday in one of three Catholic homes—with the Foremans, the Aches, or the Shannons.

**First Pastor**

In July of that year, Father Giles Wade was appointed the first resident pastor in Ahoskie.

Father Giles had a wide distance to cover, in his travels throughout Hertford, Bertie and Northampton counties, contacting persons who desired to continue their devotion to the Catholic Church. "I used to loan him my old car to drive," says Mr. Foreman, "and he lived in a room over my garage, which gave him more freedom to come and go."

The next move for the Catholics was to acquire a building which could serve permanently as a church. The old Jim Eley property, consisting of a frame house and a two-story brick building at the corner of Academy and First Streets, was available for purchase. Through the efforts of the Bishop, \$6,000 was obtained from the Catholic Extension Society, and the property was obtained. Money for remodeling the brick building into a church was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Freese of Baltimore, Md., and numerous anonymous benefactors.

Father Giles, Mr. Foreman, and other parishioners supervised the remodeling, which included rooms for a rectory on the second floor above the sanctuary. Eugene Moore, neighbor then and now to the new church, was instrumental in obtaining the property and was a generous donor to the undertaking.

**First Mass**

The first mass in the new church, named St. Charles, was offered on Easter Sunday, 1944. A dedicatory mass was celebrated by the Very Rev. Eugene J. McGuinness, D. D., Bishop of Raleigh, on Sunday, October 15, 1944, with many high-ranking Catholic clergy and laymen in attendance.

The first baptism recorded in the church archives was that of Martha Louise Shannon, daughter of James W. and Beverly Hastrasse Shannon, on January 20, 1946. Dr. and Mrs. Shannon and their family are now residents of Suffolk.

In 1946, Father Giles Wade was transferred from Ahoskie and Father Raphael Landser became the new pastor. At this time the parishioners were: Mr. and Mrs. Foreman, Mr. and Mrs. Donald Schlenz, Edward Ache and children, Billy, Ted and Mary; Dr. James Shannon and daughters, Beverly, Katherine and Martha; Dr. T. A. Monk, Jr., and daughters, Mary Ann, Helen and Jean; Mrs. Josephine Credle and sons, Carroll and Bernard; Mrs. Evelyn Freeman and son, Revel Lee; Mrs. Baker, M. Stanley of Aulander and Arthur and Hilda Meyers of Woodland—25 in all.

During the postwar years from 1946 to 1954, while Father Raphael was pastor, the little parish grew steadily until there were about 85 members in 1954, when Father Raphael was transferred. It was in this period that the church in Ahoskie really began to reach out and include Catholics in many other communities of this and other neighboring counties—Murfreesboro, Woodland, Aulander, Winton, Lewiston, Colerain, Harrellsville, Powellsville, Rich Square and Seaboard.

With the sizeable increase of children in the parish, Father Raphael started weekly Bible instruction classes for children and adults. Among those who devoted untiring efforts to the children's

**Peddlers On Road In 1830-60**

A familiar sight to 19th century Americans was the pack peddler. Loaded with goods, the peddler was a welcome sight in the tiny villages and on the lonely country roads.

The records of the Hertford County Court for 1830-60 indicate only four of the peddlers who passed through this section bothered to get the required license. Surely there were others.

In 1846, the County Court granted a peddler's license to One "M. Rosenfield." This is the earliest record of a Jewish peddler in the area.

Rosenfield was presented to the Hertford Court by Attorney David Outlaw of Windsor, indicating that this pioneer Jew in the area was plying his wares throughout the Roanoke-Chowan and that he was welcomed.

In 1851, the court granted a peddler's license to Joseph Beasley and in 1852 to Cross Dickens.

In 1856, a peddler's license was issued to Thomas Matthews.

**Mixed Reaction in County For Cameron Road Program**

(Continued from Page 1)

Ahoskie with Murfreesboro, by way of Union, the Blow place, and connecting with the St. John's road above Murfreesboro. All survey work was done and bids almost ready to let, when two county commissioners voiced their opposition to the road. The commissioners from Maney's Neck and Murfreesboro wanted the road to enter Murfreesboro by way of Chowan College. Tactful handling by state high-

way commissioner Merrill Evans of Ahoskie resulted in a solution to the problem—not only was the new road paved, but a two and a half mile link by the college was added. After approval in June 1949, of the Governor's proposed \$200 million bond issue for roads, Hertford County was allocated \$268,000.

During this last decade, most roads in the county which serve a reasonable number of people have been paved. The farmer is out of his rut.

**Training Parish**

In 1954, the parish of St. Charles was called upon to serve the Diocese of Raleigh as a training parish for newly-ordained priests. Father James F. Keenan, newly-ordained, came to Ahoskie under the direction of Father Francis M. Smith of Edenton. Father Keenan says the parishioners here were very helpful to a new priest, and helped make his first year in the priesthood "a very happy and inspiring one." Among those added to the parish in 1954 were the Shaver family of Winton and the Wright family of Ahoskie.

In 1955, Father Raymond Donohue was appointed by Bishop Vincent S. Waters of Raleigh, as resident pastor. During his service until the winter of 1957, the parish continued to grow, reaching a new high of 117 parishioners. A brick home on First Street, adjacent to the frame building rented as a dwelling by the church, was also acquired.

St. Charles's present priest, Father Henry Becker, came to the parish in January, 1958, from posts in Charlotte and Durham. Under his direction, an interracial religious school was conducted last summer by nuns from Elizabeth City, who visit Ahoskie to conduct catechism classes.

In the brief 15 years since St. Charles Church was organized, the support of the church has grown to the point where a mission from the Ahoskie Church is now maintained in Windsor. There, the priest from Ahoskie celebrates mass on Sunday mornings in the movie theater building, since there is no Catholic Church building.

The growth of St. Charles from a tiny mission to a parish supporting another mission must be

directly credited to the faith of two persons, Mr. and Mrs. Foreman, who now divide their time between Virginia Beach and their home on the Aulander highway.

—MARY ELLEN ALBARES

(Information for this article was obtained from a history of St. Charles Catholic Church, prepared by Father James F. Keenan of Lexington; the records of St. Charles Church in Ahoskie; and from Father Henry Becker, W. R. Foreman, Mrs. C. S. Credle and Dr. T. A. Monk, Jr., of Ahoskie.)

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### Explorers Tell of Rivers:

# 16th Century Englishmen Describe Geography of Roanoke-Chowan

The historical significance and romantic appeal of the first English exploration and colonization of North America has, of course, been well exploited and well publicized, especially the justly famous "Lost Colony."

The late 16th century explorations and colonizations also left a rich legacy of history for the Roanoke-Chowan section, too, and this story—of rushing rivers, great Indian towns, pearls, high adventure and wild dreams—comes to life in the written reports of the first Englishmen.

Four documents record the story of the Roanoke - Chowan in the earliest history of the English in North America.

They include the report of Captains Phillip Amadas and Arthur Barlowe, who were sent in 1584 to explore a suitable site for an English Colony in America; the report of Ralph Lane, who headed the first English colony in America; the report of the first months of the "Lost Colony," and "A Brief and True Report of The New Found Land of Virginia," a catalogue written by Thomas Hariot—a member of the Lane Colony and later a famous English mathematician.

Amadas and Barlowe were sent to explore the North American coast by Sir Walter Raleigh. They arrived on the Outer Banks of North Carolina on July 2, 1584, and spent several months exploring the coast.

In their report is the first mention of the Roanoke-Chowan. Evidently, they did not explore the region in person, but from the friendly Indians of the coast they learned:

"Beyond this island (Roanoke) there is the mainland, and over against this island falls into this spacious water the great river called 'Occam' (Albemarle Sound) . . . Into this river falls another great river, called 'Cipe' (the Roanoke), in which there is found great store of mussels in which there are pearls; Likewise there descends into this Occam, another river, called 'Nomopana' (Chowan), on the one side whereof stands a great town called 'Chawanock,' and the lord of that town and country is called 'Ponono.' This Ponono is not subject to the king of Wingandacoa, but is a free lord. Beyond this country there is another king, whom they call Menatonon, and these three kings are in league with each other."

A year later, the Roanoke-Chowan was to be explored and described by Captain Ralph Lane, the head of the first English colony in America.

Lane and his group of over 100 men, arrived in "Virginia" on June 26, 1585, and shortly afterwards built their fort on Roanoke Island.

The written and eye-witness reports of the Amadas and Barlowe explorers created a sensation in England, and a year later the first English colony in America landed on the Outer Banks.

Captain Ralph Lane and his "Roanoke Hundred" landed on June 26, 1585, and immediately built a fort on Roanoke Island.

**First Exploration**

It was not until March of 1586 that Lane and his party explored the Roanoke-Chowan region. By then, Lane had made enemies of many of the Indians on the Banks and on the mainland. More in-

terested in finding riches than in settling colonists, Lane and his men came into the Roanoke-Chowan region looking for gold, and seeking a better spot for a settlement than the sandy, windswept coast.

He was sure that he had both when he arrived in the Roanoke-Chowan.

The setting for the earliest history of the Ft. was well described by Lane, and later, was outlined on maps by John White, leader of the famous "Lost Colony."

Lane's report described the country:

First, the Chowan—"From Muscumunge (an Indian village situated at the site of present-day Edenton) we enter into the river, and the jurisdiction of the Chawanock. There the river begins to straighten until it comes to Chawanock, and then grows to be as narrow as the Thames between Westminster and Lambeth.

"Between Muscumunge and Chawanock, upon the left hand, as we pass there, is a goodly high land, and there is a town which we call the Blind Town, but the savages call it Ohanoak, and it has a very goodly corn field belonging unto it. It is subject to Chawanock.

"Chawanock is itself the greatest province and seigniorie lying upon that river, and the very town itself is able to put seven hundred fighting men into the field, besides the force of the province itself."

Not mentioned by Lane, but on the White map were Ramushonung, located at the mouth of the present-day Meherrin River, and Waratan, located in present-day Chowan County.

The Lane group was most im-

pressed, however, by the Roanoke River.

Said Lane's report: ". . . from the west runs a most notable river, and in all those parts most famous, called the River of Moratoc. This river opens into the broad sound of Weapomeok (Albemarle Sound). And whereas the river of Chawanock, and all the other sounds, and bays, salt and fresh, show no current in the world in calm weather . . . This river Moratoc has so violent a current from the west and southwest, that it made me almost of opinion that with oars it would scarcely be navigable."

Thus the reputation of the Roanoke for violence, a reputation which held true until the present decade, was settled by the Indians who lived upon it, and the first white men who explored it.

Lane further described the length, course, and character of the Roanoke:

"It gasseth with many creeks and turnings, and for the space of thirty miles rowing, and more, it is as broad as the Thames between Greenwich and the Isle of Dogges (islands at the entrance of the famous British river which flows through London), in some places more, and in some less. The current runs as strong, being entered so high into the river, as at London Bridge upon a vale water."

The mighty Roanoke worked great legends in the minds of the Indians who lived along its banks. Lane recorded the fanciful Indian legend about the origin of the river:

" . . . the savages report strange things of the head of that river . . . that from Moratoc itself ( . . . See EXPLORERS, Page 7



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