

Catholic Church

The Catholics at Hawera were few and far between when the parish was founded in January, 1875, by Father Pertius.

The first tiny church was a cottage measuring only 18 feet by 16 feet which was shifted from the Waihi cemetery to form a combined church and presbytery. The building was not rain-proof and during the jubilee celebrations in 1925, Monsignor P. J. Power recalled that the Archbishop had to be continually shifting the altar stone during his first visit to escape drips of water while saying Mass.

Father Pertius soon built a beautiful little Gothic church. However, there were many worries over the building at first. Only the walls could be erected and the windows were covered with scrim while the building was some time without a roof.

The first name in the baptismal register is that of John O'Keefe, born and baptised in June, 1875.

It was only a few months before Father Pertius opened the first Catholic school. There, such eminent men as the late Archbishop O'Shea and Father Malone, were taught.

During 1878, Father Ryan, from the American Mission, was in charge. A little two-storied building was added to what had been the first church

Church at Patca

At the beginning of 1879, Dean Grogan came to Hawera and stayed five years. He acquired

some of the present Hawera property, enlarged the church and built a fine little church at Patca.

He was followed by Father Mulvihill who remained until May, 1898. He saw the advantage of a Convent school and within a year brought the Sisters of St. Joseph to Hawera. The new church was built in 1887 and this priest also had churches built at Manaia, Opunake and Waverley.

The next priest was the man who later became Monsignor P. J. Power, a man well remembered by Hawera people for his long and excellent service to the parish and the progress made under his guidance.

He purchased land and laid the foundation stone of a new school at Hawera which was opened early the following year and within a year of his arrival, three substantial buildings had been erected and practically paid for within the parish.

Fine schools were provided for the Sisters of St. Joseph at Hawera and Manaia; branches of the Hibernian Society were established at Hawera and Manaia; churches were built at Okaiawa in 1954 and Auroa in 1905.

School Built

In 1910, the Hawera church was enlarged and additions were made to the Victoria Street school the following year, while in 1912, the present school in Little Regent Street was constructed.

The biggest venture of all was suggested by the late Thomas Lavery in 1916, with the result that collections continued for many years before sufficient money was found for the building of the present beautiful church.

After residence at Hawera for 30 years, Monsignor Power died on October 24, 1927, after a short illness. At the time of his death, £12,500 of the £13,000 required for the new church was in hand and clearing of the section had been started.

The foundation stone of the new church was laid on March 18, 1928, and the opening services were held on December 9,

1928. Archbishop Redwood taking part.

On November 24, 1927, Father P. Cullen, who received the title of Monsignor in January, 1931, succeeded Monsignor Power. His first major task was to pay off the new church which actually cost about £22,000. He found great difficulty maintaining payments during the depression years of the 1930's, but a special fund was opened and eventually the debt was paid off. The old church was shifted to Milmoee Street where it is used today as a recreation hall.

Free of Debt

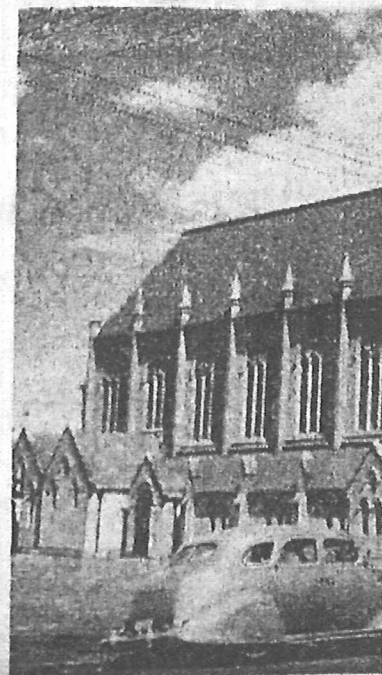
Collections were continued for some time after the church had been paid off and in 1942, a new school was erected alongside the existing school on the Little Regent Street property. Within three months, the new school was completely free of debt.

The new school has been sufficient to serve the district for many years, but with the establishment of secondary school commercial classes, it is not now large enough and it is planned to add two extra rooms this year.

In 1953, Monsignor Cullen built a fine little church at Normanby, but by now the work of the parish had grown to such dimensions that two priests were needed at Hawera. Among those who served the parish with Monsignor Cullen were Father Foley, Father O'Brien, Monsignor Heavey, Father Cavanagh, Father McNeil and, at present, Father Leuthard.

Church Of England

Standing as a monument to three-quarters of a century of Church history, St. Mary's Church, Hawera, with its dignified blend of lofty Gothic design and brick construction, is a far cry from the small gabled wooden building which was first



St.

DN 8/2/1957.