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Did you guess St. Thomas Catholic Church in Buffalo?

St. Thomas Catholic Church began in modest ways. Early newspaper accounts state, "Buffalo is situated . . . 37 miles west of Fargo, 158 miles east of Bismarck . . . its altitude is 575 feet above Fargo."

The first Mass was celebrated on Oct. 20, 1880, in a farm house near Buffalo. At that time, the town was known as New Buffalo, which was a variation of Buffalo, N.Y., and had been the birthplace of both the secretary of the Northern Pacific railroad and Mary Strong, who "donated land to churches and school, that a town might be built."

In 1894 the town's name was shortened to Buffalo. Continuing visits of a local priest during the next year indicated that Buffalo had reached a status of a regular station, a definite place visited regularly.

Pastors from Casselton officially continued the work of the church from 1887 to 1890, with others filling in as necessary to hold Mass in the section house, the school house and the town hall.

The church was built in 1900 for \$2,500. Bishop John Shanley dedicated the church in 1906, naming it St. Thomas after a generous benefactor. In 1908, St. Thomas became a mission of St. Bernard's in Oriska and over the years has been served by pastors from both Oriska and Casselton.

On the occasion of the golden anniversary of the church, the actual grotto was started in 1949 and completed in 1952, with the feast of the Holy Rosary on Oct. 7 becoming another milestone. In 1938, the closed McPhail Drug store was purchased by the church for its parish hall and was used until 1964.

That building now serves as the present post office. In 1968, a parish hall was built on the north side of the church and, in 1969, the altar was reoriented from north to south allowing the social hall to serve as overflow church seating. The interior of the church was completely renovated by 1970, and an open house was held on May 24, 1970.

Father James Ermer is the current pastor at St. Thomas. Father Ermer also serves St. Leo's Catholic Church in Casselton.

History provided by the pastor and parish and compiled by Katie Bowar, diocesan communications assistant.