SACRED HEART
FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE COMPUTER AGE

Around the time of the Modoc War there were few Catholic families settled in this area. Father Blanchard was the Parish Priest and his parish consisted of Jackson, Klamath and Lake Counties. He lived in Jacksonville and by the time he could make his rounds of this very large parish, it was three or four years before he could come to Klamath County. He traveled in his old buggy with a span of horses, stopping to visit any Catholics on the way. From Klamath County he traveled on to Lake County.

In 1903 the Klamath district became part of the newly created Diocese of Baker City. On October 9, 1904 Bishop O'Reilly assigned Father John Heinrich to be the first resident pastor of Klamath Falls but due to illness he had to be returned to Baker City for medical attention. Near the end of June 1905 at the request of Bishop O'Reilly the parish was taken over by the Jesuits. Father Balthasar Feusi, S.J. was transferred from Pendleton, Oregon to Klamath Falls and arrived on June 30th, the Feast of the Sacred Heart which prompted him to dedicate the new church under the title of Sacred Heart.

Five days after the arrival of Father Feusi plans were drawn and the building of a frame church began. A block of land had been secured where the Fairview Elementary School is located (between Donald, Fulton, Sargent and Worden Streets). The new church was completed on November 1, 1905. An article in the Klamath Republican on April 25, 1907 reported:
To Dedicate Catholic Church
Bishop O'Reilly Will Be Here In June For That Purpose

Rev. Father Feusi received a letter Monday from Bishop O'Reilly stating he would be here during the last week in June, at which time he will dedicate the Catholic Church in this city. He will also administer the Sacrament of Confirmation and First Communion. The ceremonies will take place the last Sunday of June.

The Bishop will visit Midland, Merrill and Bonanza during his stay here, after which he will go to Lakeview, where he will deliver the Fourth of July oration.

Preparations will be made for special music on the occasion of the dedication of the church.

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The first marriage to be performed in the new church was that of Mike and Martha Lavenik. Father Feusi was transferred in 1908 and Father Tompkin arrived August 4, 1908 to replace him and Father Charles Greenwood arrived soon afterwards to assist him.

In 1910 Father Cunningham succeeded Father Tompkin and Father Greenwood who was needed somewhere else. He enlarged the church building by an addition of an assembly room and Priest's quarters.

On January 27, 1916 the Jesuit Fathers withdrew from Klamath Falls and Father Hugh Marshall was appointed Pastor on March 19th. It was during the time of Father Marshall's pastorate that the church building was moved to the corner of Eighth and High Streets.

Wishing to have a school started, Bishop O'Reilly traveled to Nazareth, Kentucky to request the sisters to come to Klamath Falls to teach. In 1916 Mother Rose Meagher made the trip to investigate the possibilities of both school and hospital. On September 3, 1917, eight Sisters of Charity left Kentucky by train to come to the "wild and woolly" west arriving in Weed, California, the end of the line. The scenery from Weed to Klamath Falls was very disheartening but eventually the sight of the Klamath Lake made things brighter and at last the lights of Klamath Falls appeared, five days later. They found supper awaiting them and Father
Marshall said benediction for them in the poor little church where two candlestick were its only adornment. They were really homesick. School, they learned, was to start on September 10th., two days after their arrival.

Their first home as well as the school was a two-story house on Pine Street at Seventh where the Esquire Theater was later built (now the Ross Ragland Theater). Fifty students were enrolled which included eleven boarders. In 1918 the enrollment had doubled. This included both boy and girl boarders. The girls slept in a dormitory in the convent attic but an addition had to be built to sleep the boys. As more and more children enrolled for classes a bigger place had to be found. A building on Pine Street was moved beside the church and school was held there until land could be bought to build a larger school and convent. Besides the 3 R's, religion and piano classes were included. Geneva Duncan, retired teacher and member of the Historical Society, was amongst the music students to give a concert at the White Pelican Hotel shortly before it burned in 1925.

Land was finally acquired on the corner of Eighth and Jefferson Streets and the original part of the school was built. Father Marshall worked very hard to get the new school building going. There was little money. About 90% of the labor was donated and many of them were not skilled in that line of work. Even the boys around seven and eight years old helped their fathers by packing the plaster between the lath and other "fetch and carry" work. Al (Mike) Lavenik and Keith Ruchonich both remember helping. The building was made of tile brick. The Evening Herald on January 19, 1921 reported:

**NEW ACADEMY NEARLY READY FOR OCCUPANCY**

Working consistently, but pardonably unequal to the task of completing the huge building within the time allotted to them, the crew of men at work at the new Sacred Heart Academy on Eighth street, is now engaged in performing the last tasks, just odds and ends as it were, that are necessary before the building can be occupied.
Sacred Heart School looked like this just after it was built in 1921.
This does not mean that the interior of the Academy will be finished according to the building plans when it is occupied probably a couple of weeks hence. It does mean however, that all the plans for sanitation, fire protection, and general convenience of students and teachers will have been carried out, and while the mural effects and many of the interior conveniences will be missing temporarily, this condition will not detract from the adequacy of the building from a housing, teaching and study standpoint. Work on the interior will not be discontinued, but will be carried on as fast as circumstances will permit.

The Academy will occupy three floors. Designed in accordance with "safety first" precepts, five fire escapes provide exits from the top floor. Also, there are five entrances or exits on the ground floor, which make it possible for class rooms, in the event of fire or other danger, to be emptied within a very few seconds.

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The steps of the new school started right at the sidewalk on Eighth street and the building extended to the alley a distance of about 125 feet. There were three stories. The offices, a Chapel, art and music rooms and the class rooms were on the second floor. The ground floor had a large play room for the boys and one of equal size for the girls, the laundry room, furnace room, bathrooms, kitchen, a dining room for the Sisters, a large dining room for the boarders and a nice little one kept exclusively for the use of the Priests. For years the Priests did not have a housekeeper and it was necessary for them to take their meals at the Academy. During the depression years the "Knights of the Road" were never refused food at the kitchen door. The top floor held the bed rooms for the Sisters and the dormitories for the boarders.

Finding the distance from the Mother House in Kentucky too great, the Sisters of Charity turned the new school over to the Sisters of St. Francis at the end of the 1923-1924 school year. Sister Bonosa was the first Superior and had a staff of eight sisters.

There was a large play yard with swings, rings and a slide and
"The Lord keep thee from all evil; may the Lord keep thy soul."
Ps. 120:7

Silver Jubilee Dinner
Honoring
Very Reverend Timothy P. Casey
on the
Anniversary of His Ordination

1:00 P. M. Sacred Heart Gym

Sunday, April 19, 1953
Klamath Falls, Oregon
room for playing the games of the day; tag, drop-the-handkerchief
and "Go In And Out The Window" plus all the boys' games too.
One of the music rooms overlooked this pleasant scene and for
those having to use their recess or lunch hour to practise their
lesson it was very hard not to be distracted, especially if the
lesson was mainly scales and finger exercises. There were two
large trees at the end of the school yard with a bench built
completely around them so the Sisters could sit and pray their
rosaries as they watched the playground. The students too
relaxed there to read, visit or listen to the birds sing in the
spring. It was a good place for the day students to eat their
sack lunches during the warm weather. The Brandenburgs must have
loved children because their house was between the school yard and
the church. On the alley side of the yard one could see the
little barn over the fence where horses and a cow or two had been
kept by John McAndrews' family until about 1920.

When Father Marshall became ill and had to be replace, Father
Felix Geis was appointed temporarily to this parish, September 25,
1923. On March 3, 1924 Father August Loeser was appointed Pastor
and lived in the little apartment adjoining the back of the
church.

The church became too crowded so the building that had started
as a temporary school became the church and the old church became
the Lycium Hall where meetings could be held. Father Timothy
Casey arrived November 6, 1928 to assist Father Loeser and replace
Father Schmidt.

Father Casey was fresh from the seminary and when we children
met him we always greeted him with a "Good Morning Father" or
whatever time of day it happened to be. We were delighted when
he smiled at us and returned our greeting as his ears and cheeks
turned red at our greeting. We were sorry when he was trans-
ferred in May 1929.

With the debt paid off it was time to plan for a larger
church. The original church (Lycium Hall) was torn down and the
second church moved to the back of the lot where Mass continued to
be said until the completion of the present church and rectory
in October 1929, when it then became the meeting hall. Bazaars,
dinners, card parties and school dances were held there too. The janitor and caretaker, Bill Delury, had a hive of bees at the end of this building for several years.

The construction of the new church and rectory began June 18, 1929 and the corner stone laid August 18th. Both buildings were completed at the end of October and Father Loeser celebrated the first Mass in it November 24, 1929.

Father Geis returned May 19, 1930 and Father Casey returned as his assistant July 1st. and remained until July 27, 1933 when he became Rector at St. Francis Cathedral in Baker City, Oregon.

The school had also experienced "growing pains" and six new grade school class rooms had been added in a wing, making the school an "L" shape against the alley side.

When the Brandenburg property between the church and school became available in 1935, it was purchased and the old house torn down and the yard cleared. Sports for the girls started in 1936 with a volleyball and a net.

Father Casey replaced Father Geis as pastor of Sacred Heart Church July 28, 1937 and by 1943 the parish debt was eliminated, just fourteen years from the time it had been incurred.

Beginning June 1, 1941 the interior of the church was decorated by Theodore Brasch for the cost of $2,000. The scaffolding was placed in different places as he proceeded to paint the curved ceiling over the main altar with a picture of the Sacred Heart surrounded by adoring angels. As the work progressed the scaffolding was placed out in the rest of the church. Being tedious work, it took quite awhile to complete and both the Fathers and the parishioners were happy when they no longer had to walk around the scaffolding.

Three new altars of imported Italian marble were set in place on September 8, 1948. The main altar was donated by the children of Sacred Heart Academy. St. Joseph's altar was donated by Mathew O'Connor in memory of his brother Jerry. The Blessed Mother's altar was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Harry Wright in memory of A.E. Dorsey.

On November 18, 1948 an additional piece of property was purchased from the Sisters of St. Francis to provide sufficient
The cupola at Sacred Heart Catholic Church was painted by Theodore Brauch, who began the painting June 1, 1941. About nine years ago it was cleaned and touched up by a painter from Lakeview.
ground for the new gymnasium and hall. The "Lay a Brick" comm-
ittee was formed in January 1949 and by an all-out effort, funds
were raised to start construction on July 11, 1949. It was
completed January 29, 1950.

Once again the Academy was in need of more classrooms. The
W.D. Miller property on the corner of Ninth and Jefferson and the
Fanny Thompson home next to it were bought and the houses torn
down or removed. By September 8, 1952 the rooms were ready for
use. Then by March 6, 1960 an auditorium, lecture rooms and a
science laboratory had been completed. The auditorium is one of
the best around the area for room acoustics. Many public plays
and entertainment have been held there. The entire debt on the
parish was liquidated on March 5, 1963.

Sacred Heart Academy became well-known for the excellent fine
arts programs offered by the sisters. The music program was
under the direction of Sister Cecilia Francis. For years monthly
recitals were held in the play rooms. They featured piano and
string ensembles and choral. Sister Paschalis, Sister Philomena,
Sister Rose Clare and Sister Rosula were the art teachers. Many
of their fine arts are still visible in the community. Sister
Philomena also taught piano in the earlier years.

Father Casey celebrated his Silver Jubilee of priesthood on
April 26, 1953. He was elevated to the rank of Monsignor
September 14, 1955. Bishop Leipzig officiated at the investiture
ceremony on January 18, 1956. Forty-two priests were present.
Father John Phelan, a former assistant gave the sermon.

Two ordinations have been held at Sacred Heart Church; Charles
Lavin, May 21, 1960 and more recently, Carl H. Gillen on Friday,
December 6, 1985.

About 1977 the old John O’Conner home on High next to the
rectory, which had passed through many hands, the last being Ruth
Carter (the maker of those wonderful pies), was bought and torn
down, the ground leveled and paved for much needed parking beside
the rectory.

The computer age made changes in Sacred Heart School. The
room which was once the boy’s play room became the Computer Room
where not only students of Sacred Heart are taught the skills but
also anyone, young or older, could sign up for computer classes.

In January 1980, ownership of the school officially passed from
the Sisters of St. Francis to the Diocese of Baker.
In the fall of 1984 the sisters moved from their home in the
school building to a newly remodeled convent near the school.
With the additional space available Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten classes were started.
The school celebrated its 70th anniversary in August 1987.
Alumni numbered 1,400 at that time.
The last High School graduating class was in June 1988. Then
only pre-kindergarten through the eighth grade were taught. The
teachers were lay-teachers with the possibility of one sister
being on staff. The name of the school was changed to Sacred
Heart Preparatory School. Then in 1992 the Seventh and Eighth
grade classes were cancelled.

Monsignor Timothy Casey died April 26, 1993 in Baker City at
the age of 89. His body was returned to Klamath Falls to be
buried at Mount Calvary Cemetery.

Then this announcement was made: "After 76 years in Klamath
Falls, the Catholic private school will close its doors perman-
etly Thursday June 3, 1993. It is a sad day for all and especi-
ally those who graduated from this school over the past 76 years.
The decision was made to close the school by the finance com-
mittee of Sacred Heart and the bishop of Baker Diocese. Lack of
money and the dwindling enrollment were the reasons given for the
closure. Only 68 students were enrolled in pre-school to the
6th grade this year. The school had just completed an $80,000.
remodeling earlier this year, including changes to the play
ground, classrooms and front office. The building will continue
to be used by school groups and the community. Father Dreisbach
said no substantial changes would be made to the interior".

The earthquake of 5.9 magnitude on the Richter scale on
September 20, 1993 followed by the 6 point one a few hours later.
made further changes. The quake on December 4th. with a mag-
nitude of 5.1 could have been the final blow. Many buildings in
Klamath Falls received damage and have since had to be
demolished.
The main sanctuary of the church had significant damage when plaster fell from the ceiling and the bell tower was so badly damaged that the engineers feared it might fall through the roof of the church building. Mass had to be held in the auditorium of Sacred Heart School until October 23rd, when the sanctuary had been made safe. More than $200,000 worth of repairs were made to the tower and the building completely inspected and made safe from any further earthquakes we might have in the future. Angelo and Dave Doveri were the crane contractors, Amuchastegui Builders, Inc., the prime contractor.

The Doveris lowered a work platform onto the bell tower on October 15, 1993. A steel scaffolding was erected and the contractors and crew removed the cupola and lowered it to the sidewalk beside the church where it was covered and fenced off until repairs to the brick support structure could be made. Plastic sheeting was placed around the platform so the men could continue work sheltered from the elements. After several months the repairs to the support system were completed and the cupola was replaced on Monday, March 7, 1994 and all services were restored as though no earthquake had ever happened.

The school did not fare that well. Most of the damage to the school was in the third floor of the building. Estimates of repair costs were far too high with an insurance deductible of $310,000. Sacred Heart Church leaders felt salvaging the lower two floors was not economically feasible. The church had planned to use the building for its education program until the quakes damaged it. The city condemned the original part of the school and the third floor from another building that connected the original school building with other wings of the complex. One by one the windows were removed and book shelves and doors were salvaged and stored. Funds were raised by the Alumni Association to remove the cross from the old building and place it in Mount Calvary Cemetery before demolition began.

The original school building was completely demolished and all but a small portion of the foundation on Eighth Street was cleared away. The "L" wing connecting it to the grade school portion was removed but I remember when there was a small, fenced flower garden
and a small grotto with a statue of the Virgin Mary inside, in this "L" portion. It was a cool refeshing place for the sisters to enjoy after school hours.

When the "L" was removed it left two complete, separate buildings. The one facing Eighth Street is the Sacred Heart Education Center where various religious classes are held for children, youth groups and adults.

The auditorium and high school class rooms on Ninth and Jefferson were the newer part of the school. During the winter of 1993-94 the school boiler was acting up and a fire sprinkler-head in the attic over the stage of the auditorium froze and burst, filling the auditorium with water. Since it was a fire sprinkler, the insurance company accepted the responsibility and paid over $85,000. in repairs. Included were new panneling, new carpet runners, completely new stage curtains, new paint throughout and repairs to the ceiling where the water came through.

The auditorium or theater part of the building was leased to Paul Warshauer and with Jan Kelley as artistic director the Jefferson Street Theater, Inc. at 830 Jefferson Street opened February 1, 1995. Acting classes for children through high-school began on February 13, 1995.

The high school class room section has been leased to K.L.E.T.I. Classes are being held for displaced adults to enable them to re-enter the job market.

So educational programs continue to help the community even after Sacred Heart Academy and Sacred Heart Prepatory School are just a memory.

Researched and written by
Mae L. Smith.

Sources of information: A Brief History of the Diocese of Baker; Herald and News; An account written by the Sisters of Nazareth of Louisville, KY printed by them in their SCN News; Interviews with graduates of Sacred Heart Academy; Geneva Duncan; Fr. Charles. Dreisbach and my own memories.
Easter Procession about 1918—Sacred Heart

small boys in front: Hubert Maguire and Al (Mike) Lavenik at age four
2nd row: center—Father Marshall & Bishop O'Reilly

others in photo are: Dick Maguire, James Maguire, Pat McGuiiff, Vance or Charley Matney, Cecil Matt, Lorraine Lavenik, Lucille Calhoun (Baker)