

## THE FAIRFAX CHURCH

The first Catholic church in Fairfax was built by Fr. John in 1875. This cradle of Christianity in the wilds was located on the state road in Johnson county about six miles southeast of Fairfax. For the construction of this primeval temple oak logs were hauled from the Henderson mills on the Iowa river below Robert's Ferry. From this same mill, which was the only one at that time in these parts, except the Snouffer mills in Cedar Rapids, the early settlers hauled the lumber for their log cabins and for the shelter sheds for their limited livestock. This pioneer church in Fairfax district was afterwards removed to Walford, later to the site of the present building.

After Fr. John came Fr. Urbin occasionally from Norway. He returned to Bohemia and died there.

Among the early settlers were John Flaherty, who came in 1855; John B. Murray in 1858, Wm. McNamara, Andrew Stark, whose children now enjoy the fruits of his labors; the McDonalds, O'Connells, Donohues, Wienekes, Wickies, Brechts, Springer. Barretts, O'Hara, P. Flynn, Foleys, Cook, Haydens, Hager, Cahill, Langan. Killeen, Kehoe, Meehan, Harrington, Lilly, Murray, Cannon, O'Brien.

Before this time however there were some scattered settlers in and around the site of the present town. Among the early settlers were Thos. Murray, father of J. B. Murray and Charles Murray of this city, John B. Murray who came from Illinois in '56 or '58, and located in Benton county, John Flaherty, father of P. Flaherty, who came from Illinois in '55 by way of Iowa City. In those days

There were very few settlers and the country around was densely wooded where the wild deer and wolf held undisputed sway. The nearest and only Catholic church was in Iowa City and there the pioneers journeyed periodically to make their peace with God. There were no roads, and travelers were compelled to follow the beaten path through thicket and forest. In these jonrneyings danger and difficulty were ever present. The hardships endured for the sake of religion remind one of the experiences of Saul of Tarsus. Whenever Father Emmons came from Iowa City to Cedar Rapids, his intention was declared some days before and a herald brought the glad news to the settlers who came in from their desert haunts and swelled the congregation at Cedar Rapids. These were literally the days when these faithful pioneers, poor in the world's goods but rich in faith, hungered and thirsted after justice.

When the church was built at Cedar Rapids the faithful at Fairfax were looked after for some years till their number increased. Fr. Urbin, who was stationed at Norway, later on also aided in keeping the lamp of faith burning brightly. This was along about 1868. Later on Fr. John Chemlar took care of their interests till in 1875 Father O'Farrell came to abide with the faithful of Fairfax and was their first resident priest.

The field of operation in Fairfax was too limited for the zeal of Father O'Farrell and he remained only a short time, lie was succeeded by Father McCaffrey who was energetic in his labors, but because limited-



in his resources was not able to accomplish much, and time hung heavily on his hands. He left soon after. After this time, however, things began to look more encouraging and we find some such sturdy men as John Flaherty, Thomas Murray, John Murray, Pat Harrington, Wm. Harrington, Maurice Cahill, Andrew Garrett, John Sears, Henry Wickie, putting their shoulders to the wheel and from their limited resources, giving material aid in the upbuilding of conditions. The next resident priest was Father Quinn who came from the east. He was a man of action. He set to work and organized the parish in practical shape, and doubtless had he been spared Fairfax would be today one of the leading parishes in Linn county. He died after two years from pneumonia contracted while attending to his flock.

After the death of Father Quinn, charge of affairs was assumed by Father Kelly, who was succeeded by Father Richardson, who enlarged the church edifice, which still remains a monument of early days and pioneer conditions, hut hardly in keeping with these days of opulence and ease. After about four years pastorate in Fairfax, during which time he attended Cedar Rapids west side people, he was transferred to the west side of Cedar Rapids and built the first church in that place.

This church was located at Second avenue and Fifth street west and was a frame structure 60x32 feet. It was at this time, April 18, 1886, that St. Patrick's parish was first organized, and Father Richardson was its first pastor and he retained the charge until his death in September 1888. Father John Brogan assumed the charge of Fairfax parish in April. 1886, and remained seven years, during which time he labored earnestly for the good of religion and was much beloved by the people. During his pastorate he built a beautiful, well equipped modern residence, which still remains and is occupied by the present incumbent. After Father Brogan's removal Father John Hogan assumed the charge of the Fairfax parish and during his stay of live years he labored zealously to pay off

The indebtedness on the church property and has improved things generally. He afterwards exchanged Fairfax for his present charge Van Home, and Father Thomas Reynolds of Van Home came to Fairfax where lie remained till his death. He was succeeded by the present pastor. Rev. P. Reynolds, who has done much to better conditions and who hopes one day to build a church in keeping with the present enviable Status of this wealthy community.