

# Immaculate Conception Church Hawesville

In the days before the first Church was built, services for the Catholic families in Hawesville would be held at the homes of its members.

In 1854, at the request of Bishop Spalding of Louisville, Father Bede O'Connor, who resided in Cannelton, Indiana, began preparations for the construction of a church in Hawesville. On August 17, 1858, Bishop Spalding purchased a lot from Mr. and Mrs. Steven Powers and Mr. and Mrs. James Stone at the price of \$400.00. The building was constructed of hand-hewn stone, a product of this area, by Mr. Bill Snowden. The church was completed in 1871.

During most of those earlier years, there was no resident pastor at Hawesville. For many years the pastor resided in Cloverport, and due to the large congregation there, which required two Masses on Sunday, it was necessary for services in Hawesville be held on Saturday.

Later when Fr. Rives became pastor, he was stationed in Reed, Kentucky and commuted by L & N Railroad. He would arrive in Hawesville on Saturday afternoon, offer Mass at 6:00 am Sunday, and then return home on the 7:00 am train, which enabled him to have Mass in reed later in the morning.

In 1937, floodwaters did extensive damage to the altar and the interior of the church, which necessitated much repair work. During Fr. Gerst's pastorate, the church was redecorated throughout.

In 1947, Bishop Francis Cotton purchased a house and some land from John and Catherine Robbins. The home became the rectory. He appointed Fr. Higdon, pastor of Browns Valley, to come to Hawesville to oversee the building of the Catholic Elementary School. Through generosity of parishioners, the first Catholic School in Hancock County was dedicated on November 1, 1947, staffed by the Sisters of Loretto, whose residence was built over the school. Hawesville received its first assistant priest at this time, Fr. Walter Hancock.

In 1949, under the pastorate of Fr. Anthony Thompkins, a high school was constructed.

As the parish grew, a house and lot were purchased from Mrs. Ella Givens Heavern in November of 1957. The cornerstone for the new and larger church was laid in September 1958, and the church was dedicated in February 19, 1959. The stained glass windows from the original church were placed in the new church.

In May of 1969 the High School was closed and in 1992 so was the Elementary School. In 1995 the church offices were relocated to the High School building. A new rectory was purchased and the old one torn down. On that site next to the church a new Parish Hall was constructed in 1999.

Our faith has been strong, and we are thankful to God. We pray that our faith may continue to grow for generations to come.

