

Hampton-St. Patrick

[Missing audio]she's a member of St. Patrick's parish at the age of 91. Beula Patton a member of St. Patrick's parish was interviewed at 303 11th Ave, NE in Hampton, Iowa at the age of 74. Individual who did interviewing was Melinda Machum, 903 Glendale Park Drive, Hampton, Iowa at the age of 12.

117 years ago the first mass was said in Hampton at the home of Stephen Murphy for 9 families. Now we have a new church, dedicated in 1980, and a 198 families. Can you tell us Andy, some of the parish events that have occurred between then and now? I remember the first ST. Patrick church which was a white frame building on 2nd Ave, SE. I am one of the oldest members, I was baptized, received my first communion and confirmation and then was married in that church. When I was growing up, girls and women were not allowed around the altar also we were required to wear a hat or scarf while in the church. We abstained from meat on all Fridays, not only during Lent. I made my first confession to Fr. Rohlman who was conducting a mission in our church. Later, he became Bishop Rohlman. Preparing for my first communion, because we were farmers at that time, I drove a horse and buggy 8 miles to attend instructions. There were four girls and six boys in my class. I was 15 years old when I received. We were also confirmed the same day. When we received we fasted from 12:00 midnight from food and altar. The boys who were altar servers had to learn the Mass responses in Latin. At one time, one of the boys rode his bicycle two miles from his farm home to serve daily mass. The frame church was burned down during mass one morning. While the new one was being built members attended Mass in the memorial hall. Later because of the increase in membership the new church was built at its present location. During the groundbreaking ceremony Fr. Cross advised me not to put the spade too deep as we were not to have a basement. We have wonderful congregation of very good people. Young folks, older people, and children. They have arranged rides for people who do not have a way to get to Mass. They have people praying for the religious teachers and classes. We have excellent workers and unusual talent in our choir. Our pastors have been wonderful. I also remember Fr. Claude Norton's father coming here as a priest to help his son to help his son, Fr. Claude. Also, one of our pastors had a very sore hand that was slow healing. He had the congregation praying the rosary aloud until his hand was well. Fr. Sprolls? came to our house and said mass for us one day. Do you know how Fr. McMahon hurt his fingers? No, I don't. My grandfather helped him move to Cresco. Which priest married you? Fr. Kerper married us in a private ceremony. We raised 10 children. Did you have any of your children go into the religion. Sr. Lana became a member of the Dominican Sisters. What do you know about Fr. Ryan? He was the priest to [inaudible]. I remember Fr. Ryan. In 1890 our first resident pastor said Mass in Stonebrook's Hall and later over the drug store at the corner of 8th and 5th Street. Do you remember the first church? Yes. It's altar cost \$400 and was built in La Crosse, Wisconsin. The pews were built there also for \$240. Were the pews or kneelers padded? No. Do you wish they were now. We enjoyed....[inaudible]. 60 years ago this month, in March, the church caught fire while Mass was being said. Do you know how the church caught on fire? No, we were surprised. The new brick church was built after the fire. When my grandparent's attended Mass there a large round stained-glass window was installed above the altar. Now it is in the back of our new church. I like to look at it while I am serving Mass. Do you know how it was chosen? In 1949 stained glass windows were installed. I know some of the families that paid for them. Mr. Bocke's great-granddaughter and I play together in the summer when she visits

from New Mexico. Dr. Johnson delivered my mom and Mr. and Mrs. [inaudible] are our friends. Do you know any others? That donated the windows? Yes. Uh, Ed's brother, John O'Brien. Today some of the windows are in the Dumont church. You told us that we needed a new church because of the increase in membership. What priest was there then? Fr. McSweeney. Did he stay here when it was built? No, Fr. Bracht was here when the new church was built. I like to ride my bike past the former church. It is used as the Franklin County AAA center and for bingo on Monday nights. We've been visiting with Angie O'Brien. Now we'll learn some more of St. Patrick's history from Beulah Patton. I came here as a young bride and new in the church in 1933. I was welcomed into St. Patrick's fairly new brick church on 2nd Ave, SE and became active very shortly. There were probably no more than 20 families and the church had plenty of room. It also had a good-sized debt that the women worked very hard to eliminate. Geneva was our mission church and their people contributed a share to the expenses of the rectory and helped with the priest salary. We had only 1 Mass here and it was usually early in the morning, 7:30 or 8:00 and the later Mass would be in Geneva. Whenever we were given a new priest he would decide on the time of Mass. This arrangement worked quite well because those with children could have one present, one parent go to early Mass here and the other went to Geneva. We were very grateful for this privilege because then as now, young children could be disruptive. At that time we didn't talk in our church. Even when we cleaned, and it was very impressive. When you came into church you found it very easy to concentrate on God and give your whole attention to him because there were no distractions. There was also the huge crucifix in the front and on the side altars were statues of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph. The one concession to talking in the church was given reluctantly and only because there was no other place. Our catechism class was held in the church after Mass on Sundays taught by volunteer parents. By the time I had children old enough to attend catechism we had enough to have two classes one on Sunday for the younger children and the other on Thursday evening in the church basement. The children from Geneva and Hansel came here too. I'm sure it was difficult for those parents but they were very faithful. Eventually too, the Dumont church was re-opened, due to the efforts of Fr. John F. Ryan, and our priest served all three parishes for some time. Eventually, Geneva was joined with Ackley and St. Francis of Dumont remained a sister church with St. Patrick's and we still enjoy a very good relationship today. Our lady's society was called St. Patrick's Rosary Society and was beginning to grow a bit so we were divided into three circles. Everyone, married or single, and even unmarried men were members. We had a very good attendance at our meetings. That where we planned our projects, but also had time to have fun. Each circle had to earn \$100, later \$300 when we grew to about 20 members in a circle. Those were huge sums in those days and it kept us on our toes to earn it. Each circle was assigned 4 months in which to earn their money. If one circle wasn't using their particular month and another circle wanted to do a money-making project, permission was sought and usually given. Cooperation was very good. One of the circles served a business men's luncheon in the Memorial Hall basement about twice a month. This was their project and no one else would do that. When one considers the food, dishes, silverware and everything had to be carried down there, it was a tremendous effort. One never heard any complaints and everyone seemed to enjoy doing it. Remember, in those days, we had very few dishes, very little silverware, and no cooking ware. Other ways of making money were large rummage sales in which the ladies worked for days. I remember one very large sale in a building that now houses the B&W. We also had card parties in our homes, sometimes we had tables all over the house, even the upstairs. Each member was responsible for getting 8 guests. We charged .25 per person and served a light lunch. Sometimes we had them in the basement of the church

when we had too many for our homes. Another money-making project that our circle came up with was our apron plan. We made tiny aprons with a pocket, made up a little poem, about a penny for your measurements, and sent them to all our friends. Of course, no-one sent their exact measurement money, they usually sent us a dollar and one circle was happy they came across that idea. Besides our circle activities, our whole rosary society banded together once a year and served turkey dinners. A group of women met at the home of one member, dressed and stuffed the turkeys and did much of the preparation. We served as many as 750 people at those dinners. We served them in the Oddfellows Hall, over what is now the B&W. Can you imagine carrying all that food? The dishes and everything it takes to serve a dinner like that? We would also have a quilt or some other large prizes, and sell chances on them, then award the prizes the day of the turkey dinner. We were the first church in Hampton to put on such large dinners. In later years we fixed up our kitchen and dining hall somewhat and had our dinners down there. We didn't just spend all of our time making money. We were very active in the ACCW, now NCCW. Our rosary society would pay expenses to send a couple of ladies to meetings as far away as Cedar Rapids or Dubuque in an overnight stay. In return they would come back and give a full report to the Society, so everyone benefited from the meetings. In the month of May someone would come to Mass early each Sunday and lead the rosary and everyone would join in as they came to Mass. We even done that in later years. It was a nice tradition and certainly encouraged the saying of the rosary. Another responsibility the circles had was the cleaning of the church. Each circle was responsible for the cleaning during the month they were active. Naturally, it fell mostly to the ladies, but many times husbands and children came and helped. Even the small ones could dust and put up the kneelers. It was a work of love. We worked quietly and if any conversation was necessary it was done in whispers. I think we got lots of praying done while we were cleaning once a year. Once a year we got together and had regular old-fashioned Spring house cleaning. We were also responsible for cleaning the rectory, which was an old and not very elegant house next door to the church. Some of us were married in the parlor of that old house, because a mixed marriage couldn't be performed in the church. Neither could any of us, even though Catholic, go up beyond the railing between the body of the church and the altar, except for very special times, such as cleaning, and it was humility that we went into that area. The rectory was in such bad repair, the furniture was old and wobbly, and the kitchen small and inconvenient. When the bishop would come for his rare visits, some of the ladies would carry in their nice dishes, and even sometimes a piece of furniture. I remember one of our priests saying he was afraid that when the bishop sat down in his chair, it would collapse, even if the table didn't. I don't believe that it ever did, but it wasn't too long before things were made better. Most of the priests in those days had housekeepers and they were certainly challenged to put forth great effort to make that house a bit more home-like. They were always helpful to us. Another project we started when we were still rather small was the Cattlemen's Dinner. One circle was contacted and asked to serve a sit-down dinner to 150 men. They quickly decided that it was a pretty big undertaking for so few, so enlisted the aid of another circle. And those two circles served that dinner for several years in the old Kuehne Hotel dining room. Of course we didn't have dishes or silverware to serve that many at one time. For several years we borrowed dishes and silverware from the hotel, from the Oddfellows, from Geneva, and anywhere we could get it. It was a monumental task to gather all those dishes and mark them. After the dinner we had to separate it all and return it to various places. After several years, the time came when we served 500 men, all sitting down at one time. By this time the whole church was involved and we had moved out to the armory. The men were immensely helpful. We took our profits and bought the dishes, 500

of everything, which we are still using. The first year at the Armory, there was a very tiny kitchen of about 12x6 with nothing but a refrigerator, stove, and a single sink. We washed the dishes in the furnace room down below. Next year, we took over the large shower room and set up tables and washed dishes there. Later we carried all those dirty dishes into the shower room, and with the help of the men, passed them out the window and hauled them to the church basement where a group set up wash tubs and washed all those dishes. It took at least a week to gather everything up and a week to sort it all out and return it, but it was a big success. We made money, we worked together, men, women and children and we had fun, even though we were exhausted when it was all over. I think we served that group for about 15 years. A footnote to that Cattlemen's Dinner. Besides preparing all the food, such as peeling potatoes, carrots, and so forth, we baked the pies to serve all those men and the helpers, and that was a lot of pies. St. Patrick's had a Holy Name Society for quite a few years. I'm not familiar enough to explain their function, but I believe it was mainly for Catholic Men to get together for fellowship and sharing their faith. Membership got smaller and smaller and eventually they no longer met. As for youth, we decided at one time that we should be doing something fun for our young people to encourage togetherness for our Catholic youth, so we had parties in the church basement for them. Parents would provide food and records and plan and participate in games and dancing. This went on over a period of time and was fun for parents and the young people. I don't know why that eventually stopped. Another thing we had in our church then that we don't have any more is the mission. Once every year or two a visiting priest would come for a week. Every night we had sermons that I can remember to this day on heaven and hell, on what was right and what was not right, what was sin and what was expected of us and I really believe that it left us better and stronger people. It certainly made you want to work hard to get to heaven instead of the other place. For many months after the mission you never entered the church that there weren't several people making the stations. During Fr. McAvoy's stay here we had our beautiful stained-glass windows put in. It was during rather hard times, but Father approached various families and suggested it would be a tribute to God and a blessing to all. Needless to say, the required number of windows were quickly pledged. I believe that I have taken you through the main events of the earlier years of our parish as I remember them and I don't know how much further you want me to go, but I'd like to add this. During Lent, probably 20 years ago, a group of about 8 ladies decided to get together and form a study club. They had no formal study pattern, but the first thing they did each meeting was say the rosary. Each member would announce the mystery and each one would have a special intention, such as for the sick and dying, for those in nursing homes, for someone we knew who needed prayers. Word seemed to get around that they were praying for people and the group received many requests from others, even not of our faith, to pray for something special for them. Eventually this group was saying so many prayers for so many people, that it took most of their time. However, at each meeting someone brought up a subject of interest to the group, usually from the witness for discussion, and this proved most interesting. One day after rosary, the group turned to discussing how difficult it was to do things we wanted to do, with the facilities we had. Since they were all actively working women in the church it seemed the thing to discuss. One lady was appointed to talk to Fr. McSweeney at a circle meeting that evening about what they thought was a rather ambitious plan. They suggested tearing down or moving the old rectory and taking and talking to the city council into abandoning the alley between the house and the church and building on a nice dining hall and kitchen. Father was receptive to the idea but told us his health would not permit him to get into such a project, but that we had his support and permission to go for it. The council was

approached and our idea presented to them, and that is where the plans originated that advanced the plans for our new church. It's unusual for a priest to have his dad join the priesthood. Many of the people liked Fr. Claude Norton. Fr. Patrick Dunn was married and had 14 kids. After the death of his wife he became a priest. When ill health forced him to retire, he came to live with his son. What do you remember about the father and son combination? I remember Fr. Claude in a very special way because he was instrumental in getting my husband to take instructions and join the church, so of course he's very special to me for that. And Fr. Pat was a kind, patient, man and I think it was because he'd been married and had children and he knew all the frustrations that parents were confronted with. He was the greatest guy to go to confession to, because he would always say, now that's what I call a good confession. And I'd feel like I hadn't really got my point across, and yet I knew it was because, he'd say, you know he knew that you yelled at your children sometime and that you got angry with your husband and that sort of thing and that's what made him such a good, kind, loving, priest. Our churches annual St. Patrick's Day party is a fun time for all of us, especially if you win a prize at bingo, or take home a cake. Can you tell us how that started? As I remember it, a group of young couples planned it, and prepared for the party, it was held at the Boy Scout building, they decorated and brought food and did most of the work. I believe that the same couples are mostly responsible for its preparation and success today. Each month we look forward to reading St. Patrick's Press, how long has the church paper been published? The first issue of Patrick's Press, came out in December of 1983, and the editor said at that time that they may wonder about the purpose of this newsletter, but mostly it's for fun. The idea is to provide a media through which we can learn about and get to know one another. I'm quoting from that first Patrick's Press. Every Fall mom collects slacks and tops of we've all outgrown for the clothing drive. When did this activity begin? I think we've been doing this clothing drive since back in the late 1940's and we'd beg and borrow and get all the clothes we can get and just before Thanksgiving every year and by the 1st of December there's a train on the track in Mason City and we take it up there and it's loaded on that train and it goes to one central distribution point and from there it is sent all over the world wherever it is needed. We have heard about the development of St. Patrick's parish over the past 117 years. It used to be only the priest's responsibility for the workings of the parish. Now it's divided between the father, sisters, and the laity. The role of women has greatly been expanded from guild work to serving on councils and boards of education. The strong commitment of Catholics in Hampton, Sheffield, Alexander, Coulter, Latimer, Dows, Hansel, Airedale, and Chapin will insure the future of St. Patrick's.

1987 oral history project, St. Patrick's parish.