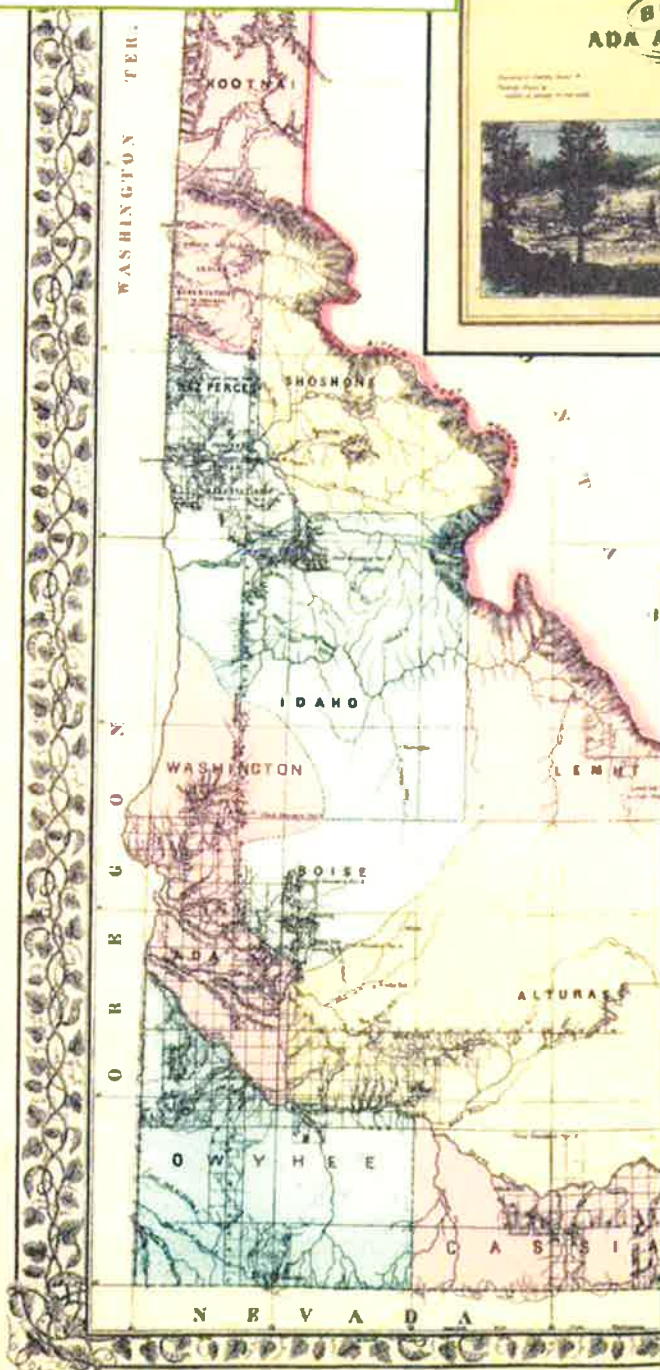
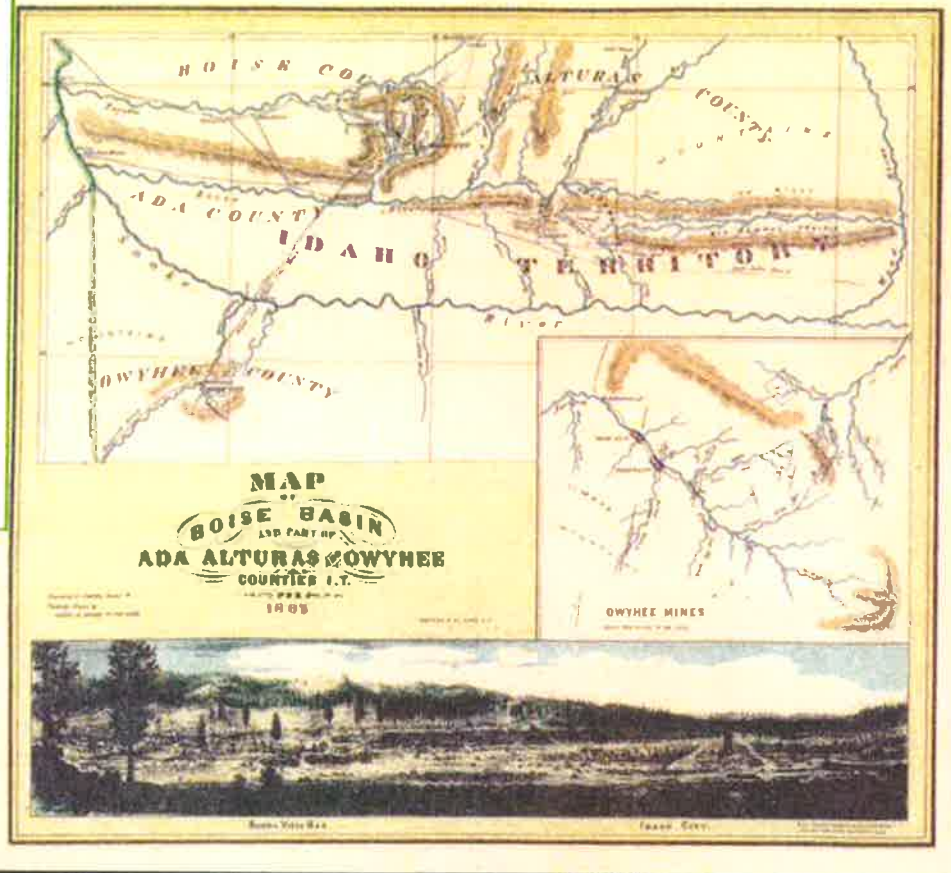


Sacred Shrine

“From its eminence on East Hill, it stands guard over the once proud city. It whispers to the passing pilgrim: ‘I am the Sacred Shrine from which the Gospel first spread through the mountain gulches and over the sagebrush plains of Southern Idaho. The soil on which I rest is holy ground’”

Morse Later: *History of the Parishes*
(unpublished)
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REFERENCES

- Section boundaries
- Lead Mine
- Township boundaries
- County Lines
- City Limits
- Boundary of Land
- Rail Road Lines
- Boundary of County
- Indian Reservations

St. Joseph's View

The belfry lifts the cross into the sky
The staircase beckons the weary up the hill
The whiteness glistens in the sinner's eye
And calms the frenzied faithful to be still.

St. Joseph's church surveys this historic town
From high above its iron-shuttered bricks
Where miners bragged of gold they'd found
And celestials' altars fumed with incense sticks.

Since territorial days this sanctuary has seen
The ups and downs in this golden basin
Through deepest snow and brightest summer sheen
From creaking wagon wheels to Harley Davidsons.

As evening falls on the quiet streets below
The westward view of this old church reflects
The setting sun with its rosy golden glow
Reminding those who live here to pay respects.

Byron Johnson: *Neighbor & Poet, Candidate for US Senate,*
Author of Poetic Justice, Justice of the Idaho Supreme Court

1863

In the spring of 1863, Bannock (now Idaho City) is the largest city in the Pacific Northwest. Fathers Mesplie and Poulin arrive from Oregon City (now Portland) and celebrate Mass in peoples' homes. They purchase what is now known as East Hill, build our first church, and together celebrate the first Mass on November 16,

1863. Three days later, President Lincoln delivers his address at Gettysburg, PA.

1863 - The Idaho World

November 22nd: "Sunday last, at 10 o'clock, the solemn and impressive ceremonies of dedication were performed at the Catholic Church in this city by the Rev. Father Mesplie of Placerville. A melodeon assisted in the musical department, which, under the skillful hand of Father Poulin accompanied by his voice together with that of R. H. Lindsay would have done credit to many an old establishment and long-trained choir. After the dedication services were over, Father Mesplie delivered an earnest and—but for difficulty in articulating plainly in English—a very impressive discourse, taking for the foundation of his remarks 'The temple of the living God.' The church is dedicated to, and is under the special patronage of St. Joseph, whose name it bears."



Three days before our first Mass, Fathers Mesplie and Poulin (back row to right of door) gather everyone to celebrate: the church is ready!

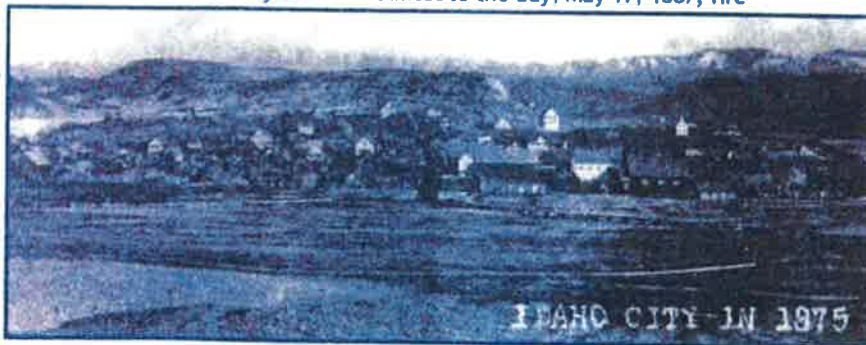
Photo: Parish archives, original source unknown; 2013 digital enhancement.

1860 1870 1880 1890 1900 1910 1920 1930 1940 1950 1960 1970 1980 1990 2000 2010 2020

The Fires of 1865 and 1867

Disaster struck on May 18, 1865. Fire destroyed almost every building on Idaho City's Commercial Street, but St. Joseph's Church escaped the flames. The *Idaho World* reported: "The Catholic Church was saved by extraordinary efforts—One hundred men, we are told, were on the roof at one time." Father Poulin turned the church into a temporary hospital. Cascie Miller wrote: "The Catholic Church was saved and hundreds crowded to seek shelter within its walls. Father Poulin worked that night bravely, a great strong man, he carried patient after patient from the burning hospital and placed them safely within the walls of the church." Two years later almost to the day, May 17, 1867, fire

struck the city again, but this time the church was destroyed. With heroic efforts, Father Mesplie and the people of the community managed to save the furniture, vestments, and all movable objects (including, we believe, the monstrance above the old altar). The loss was estimated at around \$8,500. Father Poulin, who had gone to Portland for treatment of inflammatory rheumatism, returned just two days after the fire. He and Father Mesplie started immediately to rebuild. Mass was celebrated in the new building on June 2, 1867, less than a month after the fire. The newspaper called it "one of the handsomest structures in Idaho." The picture to the right shows the building we are sitting in today, gleaming white eight years after it was built.



St. Joseph's rebuilt and gleaming in fresh white paint (upper right) watching over Idaho City.

Photo: Basin Library Archives; used with permission. 2013 digital enhancement.

Special thanks to the library staff.

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1869: Idaho's First Cathedral

On March 3, 1868, Pope Pius IX declared Idaho a vicariate apostolic. The vicariate and the territory consisted of what is now the state of Idaho and western portions of what are now Montana and Wyoming,. At the same time, the Rev. Louis Aloysius Lootens, born in Belgium, a priest of the Archdiocese of San Francisco, was named first Vicar Apostolic of Idaho. He was consecrated titular bishop of Castabala in San Francisco at the Old St. Mary's Cathedral on August 9, 1868. On his arrival in Idaho, he celebrated a Solemn High Mass at St. Joseph's on February 21, 1869, and as the 1953 *History of the Diocese of Boise* reported: "Thus the Vicar Apostolic of Idaho began its official existence." A few weeks later, during Holy Week services at St. Joseph's, Bishop Lootens celebrated "the first solemn pontifical ceremony of the Blessing of the Holy Oils ever conducted in Idaho on Maundy Thursday, March 25." Hence, St. Joseph's became known as *Idaho's First Cathedral*.

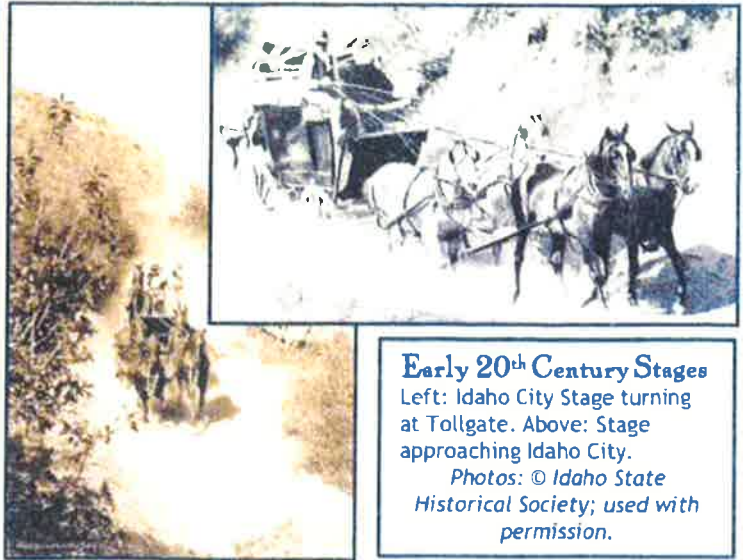


Bishop Louis Aloysius Lootens

Photo: RCDB Archives; used with permission
Special thanks to Michael Brown, Archivist.

1860 1870 1880 1890 1900 1910 1920 1930 1940 1950 1960 1970 1980 1990 2000 2010 2020

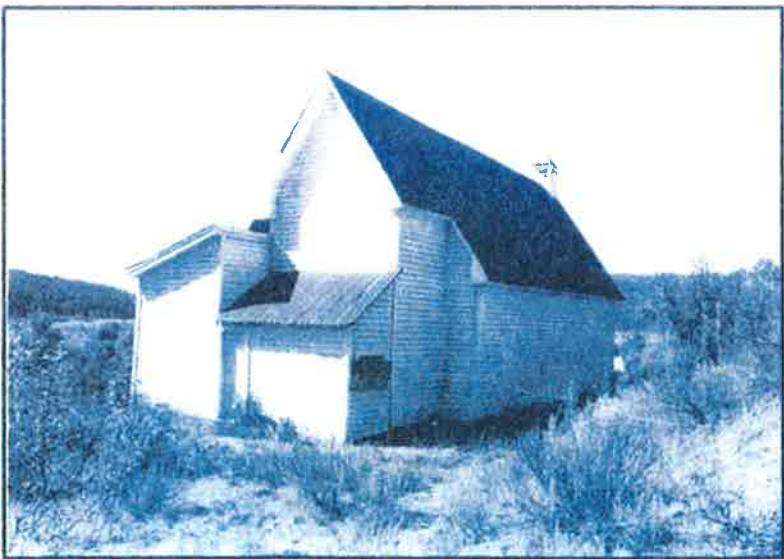
Parish Records	Cost	Adjusted for Inflation 1913-2013
Stage fare to interview Mr. Estabrook. . .	\$10.00	\$ 236.24
Stage fare for Carpenter & Priest	\$30.00	708.72
Hotel (8 days) Carpenter & Priest	\$18.00	425.23
Lipp. & Warner (sundries).	\$17.15	405.15
Carpet (1/2 cost)	\$7.00	165.37
Carpenter hire.	\$25.00	590.60
Wall paper	\$14.00	330.74
Extra border	\$1.50	35.44
Paint, oils, brushes, etc.	\$16.35	386.25
Lining	\$7.20	170.09
Flooring, scaffolding, finishing.	\$36.90	871.73
Window panes	\$1.25	29.53
Brass stands for vigil lights	\$0.50	11.81
Candles	\$2.50	59.06
Oil Print (St. Joseph).	\$14.00	330.74
1 lb. Roman incense	\$1.50	35.44
Missal stand	\$2.50	59.06
Freight on statuary to Idaho City	\$3.00	70.87
Freight on religious items (paintings) . .	\$3.50	82.68
Metal crucifix	\$4.50	106.31
Insurance for three years	\$25.00	590.60
TOTAL (January-December, 1913)	\$241.35	\$5,701.65



Early 20th Century Stages
 Left: Idaho City Stage turning at Tollgate. Above: Stage approaching Idaho City.
 Photos: © Idaho State Historical Society; used with permission.

1913 - Our Golden Jubilee
 By 1910 the population of Idaho City has fallen to 180. We no longer has a resident pastor at St. Joseph's. In spite of the hard times, we raise about \$250 to refurbish the church. At the same time the Extension Society donates the old main altar and the stations of the cross. Twenty percent of the cost of the entire project is spent on the stage coach for the priest, the carpenter, and freight from Boise to Idaho City (eight hours); the downhill return trip is an hour shorter.

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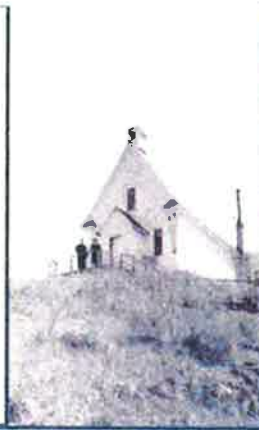


St. Joseph's about 1950
 Photo: ICR Archives, original source unknown; used with permission.

1960 -Fr. Joseph Muha
 Father Joe Muha, pictured to the right, the day before his ordination for the Diocese of Boise at the Pontifical College Josephinum. Arriving in Boise and assigned to St. John's Cathedral, he is sent to Idaho City to celebrate his first Mass in Idaho on Father's Day, June 19th.
 He recalls hearing a confession "in a wood shed behind the altar." This is probably the room with the boarded window in the picture to the left, now our washroom.
 We're honored to welcome Fr. Muha back today.
 Photo: Fr. Muha, used with permission; digitally enhanced, 2013.



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June 1966 Confirmation
 Bishop Treinen comes to Idaho City. To the Bishop's right is Father (later bishop) Nicolas Walsh. To the Bishop's left is Father (later bishop) William Weigand. Father Perry Dodds, our pastor, is to the far right. To the left are the three children who were confirmed. The identities of the children and the woman behind the boy are unknown.
Photos: ICR Archives; used with permission.

1966 – Weekday Mass in Idaho City
 Thursday, May 5, 1966. A visitor takes a picture of the church and then finds Father Perry Dodds celebrating Mass.
Photos: © Idaho State Historical Society; used with permission.

The family in this photo has been identified. The mother, Martina Bilbo Ericson, was a long time parishioner. Her three children are Juanita, Nita and Jeffrey

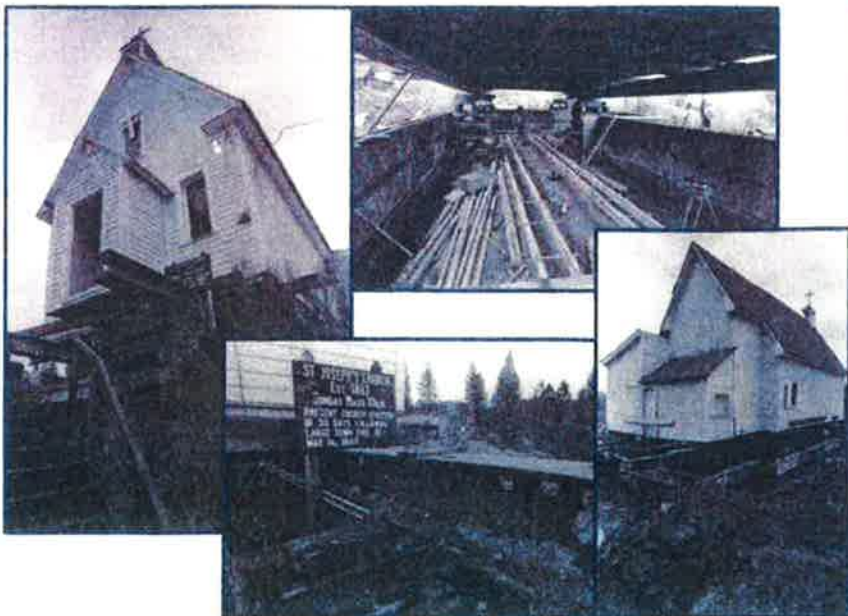
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1967
Centennial of the "New Church"
 Msgr. Edmund Cody comes to Idaho City from Twin Falls to lead the celebration of our 100th anniversary of the first Mass in our new church. The three priests at the rear of the church are Fr. David Kuntz, Fr. John Donoghue, and Fr. James Hilary Nuxoll.
Photos: © ICR Archives; used with permission.



1860 1870 1880 1890 1900 1910 1920 1930 1940 1950 1960 1970 1980 1990 2000 2010 2020



1980
Structural Renovation of the Church
 The current church was rebuilt in less than a month and with no foundation. By 1980 it has settled almost a foot out of square. With a federal grant and generous support from the Diocese of Boise, the church structure is lifted and a concrete foundation is added. The chimneys are removed and we add a small storage room to the rear. Studs are added to the interior walls concealing new electrical wiring. An electric furnace is placed in the crawl space, and a small washroom is added behind the sanctuary. The plans call for new wallpaper and refinishing the floors but we run out of time and money and everything is given a coat of white paint. While the building is safe and secure, we lose much of its earlier interior charm.
Photos: © 1980 The Idaho Statesman (unpublished); used with permission. Special thanks to Archivist Cheryl Oestreicher, BSU Library Special Collections & Archives.

1860 1870 1880 1890 1900 1910 1920 1930 1940 1950 1960 1970 1980 1990 2000 2010 2020



Photos:
(Black & white, lower right): 1976 Library of Congress/Bicentennial Historical American Buildings Survey; public domain.
(Color, above and upper right): 2013 Parish Archives; © RCDB & John Fiedler, used with permission.

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