

# Onawa's First Catholic Church

On December 16, 1870, the late Bernard D. Holbrook and C. H. Holbrook, bankers and real estate dealers in Onawa, donated to the Rt. Rev. John Hennessy, Bishop of Dubuque, Lot 4 in Block 69, for the purpose of its being the site for Onawa's first Catholic Church—the first Catholic Church in Monona County. With that as a start, interest began to develop among the parishioners who wished for the erection of a church.

In the March 18, 1871 edition of the "Onawa Gazette" we find the following notice inserted by Father McNulty, who was at that time the pastor of old St. Mary's (our present Cathedral) in Sioux City:

"Special Notice: All persons who feel interested in the building of a Catholic Church at Onawa are respectfully requested to meet at the Onawa House on Friday, March 31, for the purpose of making the necessary preparations looking towards its completion. (signed) James G. McNulty, Pastor, Sioux City."

Enthusiasm was high after this meeting and plans for the new church were adopted by the members. However,

nothing further materialized that year, and early the next year Father McNulty was succeeded in Sioux City by Father B. C. Lenehan. Father Lenehan immediately interested himself in the church-building project begun by his predecessor, and the new church soon became a reality. (In later records the name Lenehan is spelled Lenihan.)

In the "Onawa Gazette" of August 10, 1872, we find the following:

"On Sunday the 4th inst. the Holy Mass was offered in the brick schoolhouse in this city. At 2 p.m. the building committee and a few of the members held a meeting at the home of Owen Conlan, and articles entered into between the Church committee and Mr. P. Walsh awarded to him the contract for erection of the new building. Two hundred and ten dollars were paid over to the treasurer, Phil O'Neal, Esq., and this amount is only a partial payment of subscriptions of a very few of the members.

## PIONEER HOTEL



*The old Onawa House, pioneer Onawa Hotel and originally the Morrison Tavern. The Onawa House was the place where Father McNulty met with the Catholics of this vicinity on March 31, 1871 to make plans for the first Catholic Church in Monona County.*