City of Crookston

HOW CROOKSTON WAS NAMED

That Crookston should be named for a rugged soldier, railroad builder, and pathfinder is appropriate. According to the late Judge Watts, the name was first given to the post office (previously called Hawley); then to the township; and finally to the city. When the time came to choose a suitable appellation, naturally there were numerous suggestions. Ames and Aetna were both proferred, as well as Crooksburry. An unauthenticated story about the christening says that one faction thought the town should be named in honor of Crooks and the other, that it should carry the surname of the first mayor, a railroad surveyor, Mr. Davis. The two are said to have flipped a coin to which would be honored. Of course you know who won.

Col. Crooks was the son of Ramsey Crooks, who was associated with John Jacob Astor in fur trading. His mother was the daughter of an early fur trader; thus William was a man of frontier background. He came to Minnesota in 1857 as an assistant engineer with the Minnesota and Pacific; he was chief engineer from 1859 to 1862. In 1861 he purchased in New Jersey the first locomotive used in Minnesota. This famous old engine, named the "William Crooks" in his honor, was placed on exhibit in the St. Paul Union Station in 1969.

Ellery C. Davis, the city's first mayor, was a captain in the Civil War and one of Crookston's first settlers. Educated in the East as a civil engineer, Mr. Davis first came to Crookston in the interest of the Northern Pacific Railroad. When the county was organized in 1872, he was chosen first chairman of the board of county commissioners.

THE CATHEDRAL OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

The Cathedral parish of Crookston was born under another name but with the same patroness. It was organized in 1885 to provide spiritual ministration for the English speaking Catholics of the area who had previously been affiliated with St. Anne's. It was first served by Father Edward J. Lawler, then pastor of Fisher. It was named St. Mary's.

It was not until December 31, 1909 when the diocese of Crookston was created, that it became the Cathedral parish, the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

A frame building erected in the fall of 1886 at the corner of Broadway and Fourth Street served as the first place of worship for St. Mary's congregation. After the completion of the building, Father Lawler moved from Fisher to Crookston to serve the parish. He was succeeded between then and the turn of the century by Fathers John Walsh, F. Watry, J. Connolly, E. Volbrecht, and Philip Murphy. In 1930, Father Francis Hufnagel became the pastor. He served for seven years during which time the congregation experienced considerable growth. In 1907, Father John Smiers was appointed to St. Mary's and he found there a congregation of 175 families and a parish free of debt.

The creation of the diocese of Crookston in 1909 made St. Mary's Church a pro-cathedral and brought Father Joseph Wurm of Aitkin to take up the duties of pastor for 175 families. This position Father Wurm held for over four decades.

It was in June 1910, that the Most Reverend Timothy Corbett was installed as first bishop of the Crookston diocese. With his installation the Cathedral parish, as it is now known, began to take form.

Bishop Corbett directed his first attention to the educational needs of the parish and since 1911 the Cathedral parish has been deeply involved in meeting the academic needs of its children.