

# SACRAMENTO DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

Vol 4

Father John E Boll, Diocesan Archivist

No 16

## THE DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO BUILDS A RETIREMENT CENTER FOR ITS PRIESTS



Photo by John E Boll 2013

### Curé d'Ars Priests' Retirement Village

#### HOW THE IDEA BEGAN

The idea of a priests' retirement facility began in this way. In the late 1980s, the Passionist community at Christ the King Retreat Center in Citrus Heights met with Bishop Francis Quinn to discuss their hope of expanding the facilities of the retreat center. They were seeking permission from the bishop to begin a campaign to raise the funds. At the same time, the Passionists were hoping for a large donation from the diocese of one million dollars. Their plan included the building of a housing facility that would contain 40 rooms for retreatants plus a large conference room with some smaller meeting rooms.

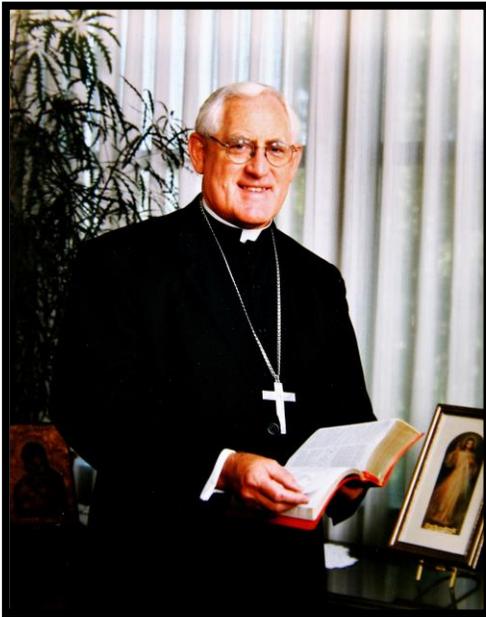
It so happened that diocesan officials had been discussing the needs of retired priests and the possibility of building a retirement facility for them. With the Passionists' request to the diocese for financial help, Bishop Quinn and his advisors wondered if some of the land owned by the Passionists in Citrus Heights could be used to build a priests' retirement facility. The diocese

decided to contribute one million dollars to Christ the King Retreat Center in exchange for 12 acres of land deeded over to the diocese. The Passionists agreed with one condition, that the diocese build a separate entry to its property because they thought a common entry would cause confusion. After the transfer of the property, Bishop Quinn and his advisors took no immediate action but began to consider how best to use the recently acquired land.

### **BISHOP WEIGAND TAKES UP THE CAUSE**

Bishop Quinn retired as bishop of Sacramento in 1993 and the issue of a priests' retirement facility became the responsibility of the new bishop of Sacramento, Bishop William Weigand. Bishop Weigand made the decision to do a feasibility study of the land acquired from the retreat center to see if a priests' retirement center could be built there. Jim Plumb, a Sacramento architect, was hired to do the feasibility study.

### **PLANS TAKE SHAPE FOR A MAJOR DIOCESAN FUND DRIVE**



**Bishop William Weigand**

In the fall of 2000, Bishop Weigand hired a company to test the fundraising capacity of the diocese to pursue a diocesan-wide capital campaign to meet certain identified needs, including the retirement village for priests. The study concluded that there was support among the clergy and enough financial resources in the diocese of Sacramento to do a successful campaign.

In addition to the renovation of the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, the building of a retirement center for priests was an important part of the case statement. The diocese moved forward with the campaign and was able to reach the \$50-million-dollar goal of the campaign. Now it was certain that building a priests' retirement facility would happen but done in phases.

### **FURTHER NEGOTIATION FOR ADDITIONAL LAND**

In preparation for the priest retirement center, the diocese purchased an additional 2.5 acres of land from the Passionists on June 25, 2002 for \$250,000. This brought the size of the parcel owned by the diocese to 14.5 acres.

In November 2002, the Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District, using its right of eminent domain, attempted to purchase from the diocese 1.33 acres of land along Van Maren Lane for the construction of a much-needed sewer pumping station. The district offered \$175,000 for the land. The diocese did not accept this low offer and went to court to contest the district's offer. The diocese won the case. In February 2005, the Sanitation District purchased the 1.33 acres for \$460,000.

## PREPARING FOR CONSTRUCTION

Jim Plumb was hired to design all the facilities of the retirement center, both commercial buildings and residences. Monsignor Robert Walton, Moderator of the Curia and Vicar General of the diocese, was part of the team that worked with the architect. It was Mr. Plumb who decided the floor plan of the apartments and his wife Nancy Pape did the interior design.

On June 8, 2001, a panel was formed to interview a select group of contractors who were bidding for the contract to build phase one of the retirement facility. The panel members were Tom McNamara, Father Nicholas Duggan, James Plumb, Tim Lein, Monsignor Robert Walton and Robert Massa. The contractors selected for interviews were Rod Read & Sons, Unger Construction, Sunseri Construction and Otto Construction.

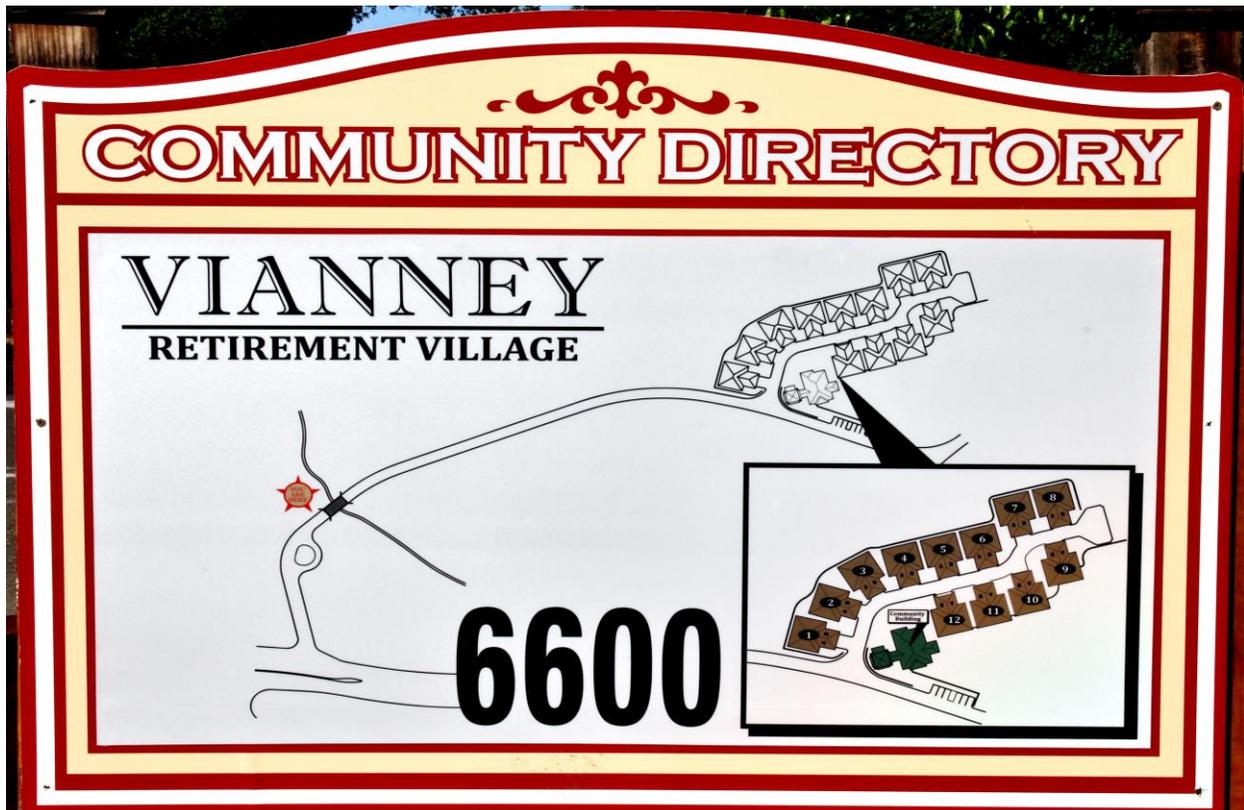


Photo by John E Boll 2015

**The Master Plan of the Priests Village**

## CONTRACTORS SELECTED FOR THE PROJECT

Construction was divided between two companies. Unger Construction Company was selected to do the site work, bridge work and construction of the community building including the chapel, kitchen, dining room, community room, library, bathrooms and two guest rooms. The cost of the site work was \$1,006,279. The costs of construction of the community building was \$515,720 and the bridge \$83,294, totaling \$1,605,293. In 2003 duplexes 2, 3, 4, 5 and 12 were built for a total cost of \$1,050,035 or \$105,000 per apartment.



Photo by John E Boll

### Construction of Duplexes Begins at the Village



Photo by John E Boll 2012

### The Footings of Unit 8

## DEALING WITH THE CITY OF CITRUS HEIGHTS ABOUT THE OAK TREES



Photo by John E Boll 2011

### The Old Oak Grove on the Village Property

A major issue was dealing with the City of Citrus Heights over the oak trees. To remove an oak tree, the diocese either had to pay the City of Citrus Heights an expensive fee or plant a new oak tree on the property. The fee for removing an oak tree was determined by the diameter of the tree at its base. The Crosswoods Homeowners Association wanted the trees on the diocesan property left as they were because the residents liked the ambiance of trees and open space. Of the 14.5 acres of land, only 4.5 acres could be used for building because of the oak trees. Janet Ruggiero, a parishioner of Holy Rosary Parish, Woodland was the City Development Director for the City of Citrus Heights. She helped the diocese obtain the necessary permits so construction of the retirement village could begin.

### ANOTHER SNAG TO DEAL WITH, THE BRIDGE

As Phase 1 began, the diocese was informed that contractors could not cross the existing bridge onto the property with heavy equipment until the bridge was reinforced and widened. This called for a structural engineer's re-design which was done quickly at an addition cost of \$13,800. Gates were installed at the bridge so the village would be a gated community if the priest residents chose to make it so. For eight years the gate was left open but as more strangers began to walk or drive into the village to look around and after two robberies occurred at the village, the priests decided it would be safer if the gates were closed. There is a call box at the entry gate so visitors can call the priest they want to visit. The priest can open the gate by remote control from his home telephone so guests can drive into the village.



Photo by John E Boll 2015

## **The Reinforced Bridge Crossing the Creek**

### **PHASE I**

The first phase of construction including the community building and five duplexes was completed and ready for occupancy in December 2003. The first residents were Fathers Ronan Brennan, Nicholas Duggan, Michael Cormack, Cipriano Ramos, Larry Ryan (who stayed only a short time) and Tony Gurnell. When Fathers Ryan, Ramos and Gurnell needed more care, the first two moved to Mercy McMahon Terrace and Father Gurnell who was suffering from cancer moved to the rectory of Presentation Parish until his death on July 5, 2007. These priests were succeeded by Fathers Patrick O'Rafferty, Rodney Hall and John Hannan.

### **PHASE II**

On March 27, 2009, the bidding process began for units 6 and 7. The construction bidders were Jackson Construction, Cimorelli Construction, Rod Read & Sons and M.P. Allen. The contract was awarded to Rod Read & Sons for \$420,000 to construct duplexes 6 and 7. Construction was completed on February 1, 2010 and the four priests who took up residence by July 1, 2010 were Fathers Albert O'Connor, Liam macCarthy, Colm O'Kelly and John Boll who had just retired.

### **PHASE III**

In 2011, the Diocese of Sacramento decided to move forward with the construct of two more duplexes at the Priests Retirement Village. Bidding opened on October 21, 2010 with four bidders: Cimorelli Construction, Rod Read & Sons, Jackson Construction and TODDCO Builders. Rod Read & Sons had the lowest bid at \$418,000 and was awarded the contract to construct duplexes 8 and 11. Because the bidding was done late in the year, the winter rains prevented the start of construction until spring when the ground was dry and permits obtained. Construction began on May 11, 2011 and the duplexes were completed on November 25, 2011.

The new residents for these apartments were Fathers Patrick Lee and Kieran McMahon in unit 8 A & B and Brendan McKeefry and Maurice O'Brien in unit 11 A & B.

#### **A PROPERTY MANAGER HIRED**

On January 27, 2004 Rod Read & Sons made a proposal to manage the Priests' Village for one year for a flat fee using the staff of Lakeview Village with an evaluation after that year. They have continued to manage the Priests' Village even after the Lakeview property was sold by the diocese. There was no price change for their services until the summer of 2014 when the Read Company asked for and received a modest increase. Patty Read is the liaison between the village residents and the diocese when something needs to be repaired or taken care of.

#### **PHASE IV**

There is space available for two more duplexes and the diocese is planning to build these last two residences in either 2017 or 2018. When those apartments are completed, a total of 22 retired diocesan priests will call the Priests' Retirement Village their home. According to the master plan, there is space to construct two or three more duplexes along the driveway entering the retirement village if needed.

#### **BUILDING A WALKING TRAIL AT THE VILLAGE**

Father Liam macCarthy has always loved nature and the outdoors. After settling into the retired life in 2010, he thought it might be a good idea to build a walking trail around the perimeter of the property through the old standing oak trees. He talked with the other priests at the village about his proposal and they thought a walking path would be an asset to the village.

The first task was to clean up the fallen limbs and debris around the oak trees. Over the years some trees died and had fallen to the ground. Fathers Michael Cormack and John Sullivan were involved in this cleanup effort.

Father Liam started cutting down the poison oak that had grown up around the trees. He said he was not allergic to poison oak but after a few weeks cutting that dangerous pest, he came down with a severe poison oak rash and had to be treated by his doctor for it. He now has a new respect for what poison oak can do to the human body.



Photo by John E Boll 2015

**Fr Liam macCarthy Works on the Trail**

## CLEANING UP THE PROPERTY



Photo by John E Boll

Fr Mike Cormack rests a moment on the Work Day

In 2011, Father John Sullivan who lived in residence at Holy Family Parish before moving to the village, contacted the local parish's Knights of Columbus about giving a hand to clean up the dead branches and trees on the property. The Knights came on Saturday, November 11, 2011, with chain saws and wood splitters and cleaned up the property.

In the continuing months, Father Liam continued his work on the walking path along the perimeter of the village property. Even some members of the Diocesan Pastoral Center under the leadership of Tom McNamara came one Saturday to spread decomposed granite on the new pathway. After nearly five years of work, the pathway is completed and a number of the retired priests take a daily walk around the property on the path. We appreciate the hard work Liam put into developing and maintaining this path through the oak trees.

## HOW THE COMMUNITY IS ORGANIZED

To live at the Priests' Village, a priest has to be independent and able to care for himself. Each priest prepares his own meals and most take care of their own apartment. A few have hired a service to clean their apartment on a regular basis.

Mass is concelebrated daily at 9 am. On Sundays, the community Mass is celebrated at 9 am in the chapel.

### The Village Mayor

From the 18 priests living in the Village, one is elected to serve as coordinator for the year. We call that person *The Mayor of the Village*. The first mayor was Father John Sullivan followed by Father Liam macCarthy and then Father John Boll. Father John Hannan was recently elected mayor for 2015-2017. Community meetings are held when necessary and that is not very often.



Photo by John E Boll 20111

Statue of Saint John Vianney

### **MONTHLY COMMUNITY DINNER**

The priests at the village have dinner together on special occasions in the community dining room. Since some of the priests have good cooking skills, they volunteer to prepare the meal. In addition, a small team from the Holy Family Knights of Columbus comes on the third Wednesday of the month to prepare and serve dinner for the priests at the village.

### **THE RETIRED PRIESTS REMAIN VERY ACTIVE**

A good number of our retired priests help in parishes on weekends and sometimes on weekdays. They are a tremendous support to their brother priests who minister in parishes by providing coverage for them during vacations and sabbaticals. We owe a debt of gratitude to our retired priests for their generosity to help their brother priests throughout the diocese.

### **THE RETIRED PRIESTS OF THE DIOCESE**

Sacramento has over 80 retired diocesan priests. Some have returned to the country of their birth to live in retirement; others have purchased their own home and live in various places; 9 live at Mercy McMahon Terrace in Sacramento, and 18 live at the Priests' Retirement Village in Citrus Heights.

We thank Bishops Quinn, Weigand and Soto for their support in creating a priest retirement center and the People of God of the Diocese of Sacramento who, over the years, have supported the Priests' Retirement Fund which provides sufficient funds for our retired priests to have a decent life in retirement.

If our retired priests were asked if they enjoyed their years in active ministry, they would say, "Yes, I enjoyed being a priest very much and now I love my time of retirement." We wish all our retired priests good health, a joyful spirit and many years of happy and fruitful retirement.



Photo by John E Boll 2014

**One of the local Wild Turkeys**



Photos by John E Boll 2013

**A Rose from Father John Hannan's Rose Garden**



Photo by John E Boll 2012

**The Village Chapel**



Photo by John E Boll 2015

**The Interior of the Chapel at the Priests' Village**



Photo by John E Boll 2011

**One of the Duplexes at the Priests' Village**