



Celebrate “80 + 10”!

In the early 1890s, the trains finally came to Asheville from the east, and by 1889 they came from the south. This led to a steady growth in population for the area. The only Catholic Church in the area was St. Lawrence, near the center of Asheville.

It is December 25, 1926. You are a Catholic living in West Asheville and you want to go to Mass to celebrate Christmas. The Mass will be held at St. Lawrence Catholic Church in Asheville. Just how are you going to get there? The trolley is not running. You do not have a motorcar, very few people did. Perhaps you were lucky enough and got a ride in a horse-drawn conveyance. Rode a horse? Walked? It is a long way. And there is no Smokey Park Bridge (built circa 1955). The high for the day was 62 degrees and the low was 43 degrees with .42 inches of rain following .25 inches of rain from the previous day--not very good conditions to travel to Church.

Some relief came to you in 1927 when St. Lawrence opened a parochial school with a chapel in West Asheville and dedicated it to St. Joan of Arc. (We will learn more about this in a future article.)

The Catholic population in West Asheville was growing rapidly. This, and the ongoing travel problems, resulted in Bishop Hafey of the Diocese of Raleigh to establish the new school and chapel as the parish of St. Joan of Arc (March 1928). He appointed Fr. Francis Gallagher as the first resident Pastor and assigned a debt of \$14,250 to the new parish. Within 4 years the property on the corner of Haywood Road and then Pisgah Avenue (now Mitchell) was purchased as the Rectory.

Drawings for the new Church situated on Mitchell Avenue were dated 1930.

There are more details and many pictures of the buildings, students, teachers and pastors in a great compilation by The Historical Commission, St. Joan of Arc Church, 65th Anniversary, 1993 Celebration. The Commission was composed of 19 named members and chaired by Joan Johnson.

