

HISTORY & FOLKLORE



IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CHURCH IN 1927

History of Immaculate Conception Church, Liberty, Texas

During the years from 1821-1836, which was the period of struggles of independence, first from Spain and later Mexico, Texas Catholics near Liberty suffered a shortage of priests and relied on two missionaries who traveled the piney woods of East Texas to administer the Sacraments. In 1831, while Texas was still under Mexican rule, the city of Liberty was officially laid out in town squares. The church square designated at the time is the present location of the Catholic Church property in Liberty.

The first resident priest was the Rev. Peter La Cour who remained in Liberty from 1853-1860. Shortly after he arrived he arranged for the purchase of the Catholic Cemetery and petitioned the Liberty Town Council for the southeast corner of the original church plaza. Construction of the first church began in December 1853. Dr. E.J. Gillard donated the lumber for the building.

After the completion of the wagon bridge across the Trinity River in 1914, Dayton Catholics were afforded a transportation link with the church in Liberty and attendance increased. By 1924 the church was badly in need of repair and inadequate in size. Ernie Pickett had recently formed an oil company and vowed he would build a new church

if his efforts became successful. The well was successful and through his generosity the third Immaculate Conception church was built and dedicated in 1927.

As the congregation grew, Immaculate Conception became too large for a single missionary priest and Fr. Michael Hurley was appointed resident priest in 1930. In 1965, a church committee began developing plans for a new church. On the very day architectural plans were presented, it was learned that the Diocese of Beaumont had been created which was to separate the Catholic communities in Dayton and Liberty. Nevertheless, plans went forward for the

new building and the old church was burned in 1967 to defray the cost of demolition. Soon the parish began the construction of the new church. On Holy Thursday, 1968 the first Mass was celebrated in the building. Immaculate Conception School (1948-1968), which educated thousands of children in East Texas, now houses the Religious Education programs and Parish office. Recent additions to the Catholic Church complex include a rectory built in 1980, The Dawn Fourticiq Memorial Chapel, and Marion Hall which were dedicated on September 21, 1986. Currently plans are underway to renovate all the church buildings.



From The Liberty Gazette, Thursday, June 5, 1980 –
Wyliene Trousedale holds a stainless bit for horses in this 1960 photo by W.R. Johnson. The bit was marketed and sold extensively by Saddlerock Corporation, a Dayton area group who, with Bob Gray, produced Texas Rodeo, the first regular national television program to originate somewhere other than New York or Los Angeles. The corporation, now differently constituted, markets Using the American Quarterhorse, a quality book by L.N. Sikes. Wyliene won a lot of acclaim in those days in various beauty and talent competitions.



From Illustrated Press of Liberty County, Thursday, October 24, 1963 –

The Albert Reids' new restaurant on new Highway 90 at Virginia Street, across from Slay's Food Market and Johnson Motor Co. The Reids are well known as creators of "The Stump" restaurant in Liberty. The new one, to be run in addition to the other restaurants owned by them, has a beautiful interior dining room as well as drive-in service. The name of this colorful establishment is Reid's Broiler Burger.

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Dr. A.G. Braddick