

History of St. Joseph Parish, continued.

1925-2003

The First Catholic Church in Winter Haven



Other early churches established in the area were the Presbyterian, Baptist, and the Methodist churches. The Methodists had built a small frame church in 1906 located on what is now Avenue A, SW. between 5th and 6th Streets, in the area of the Firestone store today. By 1913 the Methodists, now of Beymer Memorial United Methodist Church, were ready to build a larger brick structure. They offered to sell their small church to the Catholic community of Winter Haven for \$759.00. Father Latiolais, who was serving the growing parish as well as St. Joseph in Lakeland, applied to Bishop Michael J. Curley of St. Augustine for funds. When \$1000 was supplied from the Extension Society, the building was purchased and moved to what was then Howard Avenue but is now Avenue B SW, just west of the original Masonic Hall. No details as to how the church building was moved from the Methodist site on Avenue A SW to Avenue B are known. The purchase was completed in November, 1914 but the little frame church required renovations to prepare it for Catholic worship. Father Latiolais and Matthew J. Smith did most of the work fixing up the inside because, as Father Latiolais noted, the parish was small and the members needed money to establish their homes, families and businesses.

