THE ST. FRANCIS XAVIER CATHOLIC CHURCH, of Council Bluffs, was one of the first societies formed in this part of the country, even so far in the past as when the Indians had full sway here; and the first priest or pastor was Father De Smet, the great missionary. His people erected a small log church on the bluffs, where the first priest in charge was Father James Powers. Father Doxacher succeeded him. They resided at Omaha, to which diocese the congregation at the Bluffs belonged.

The first Iowa resident priest at Council Bluffs was Rev. Bernard P. McMenomy, who came in November, 1869, from Georgetown, Monroe County, Iowa, but previously from Missouri. He is a native of County Donegal, Ireland, born in August, 1830; was educated at St. Columb's College at Londonderry, Ireland, which institution he entered at the age of fifteen years, continuing there until within a short time before he emigrated to America in 1849. He first settled at St. Louis, and continued his studies there for four years in a seminary under Archbishop Peter R. Kendrick. Then, February 24, 1854, he was ordained and sent to North Santa Fe, in northeast Missouri, where he took charge of a parish. He laid out the town of St. Marysville, and by his own efforts obtained the establishment of a postoffice [sic] there, which he named St. Patrick. After an engagement there of four years he was removed to Edina, Knox County, Missouri, where he had charge of a parish for seven and a half years. Then he came to Georgetown, this State, and from there, in 1869, to Council Bluffs, as before stated.

While at Georgetown he erected some four of five churches, the principal one being the Georgetown church, a large stone building. The others were at Melrose, Chariton (Lucas County), Woodburn (Clark County), and one near Leon in Decatur County; and along the line of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad for some 200 miles he erected many churches.

He has been very zealous in church work. Since his residence in Council Bluffs he has erected the St. Francis Xavier Church, at the corner of Sixth street and Fifth avenue, a large and handsome edifice 60 x 120 feet in dimensions, completing it in 1888, at a cost of over $50,000. Also he built the St. Francis Xavier Academy, in the rear of the church, where there are twenty-five Sisters in charge of a large number of pupils, -- about sixty-five boarding pupils and 250 day pupils. He also erected the St. Joseph Academy, for boys, a good brick building opposite the church. The St. Bernard’s Hospital, conducted by the Sisters of Mercy, is a large, substantial brick building, where the sick and infirm are received without distinction of creed or color. The priest’s residence is a handsome brick structure erected also by him, between the church and the Sisters’ Academy. Under Father McMenomy’s administration here the membership of the parish has increased from about 500 to over 2,000. His assistant in parish work is Rev. T. A. Maloy.

Source: Internet