

Twenty years ago a room in a private house served as a place of worship for the Catholics of Oakland and nearly the whole of the present County of Alameda. A priest from the Mission of San Jose occasionally made a visit to celebrate mass and administer the sacraments, and even these occasional visits had to be omitted during the rainy season, owing to the bad roads. The first church, a building of the most modest description, was erected in 1853 through the exertions of a few of the congregation, and for some time was the only Catholic place of worship in the whole of Alameda and Contra Costa counties, with the exception of the old Mission. Subsequent additions made by the Rev. Fathers Croke and King increased the size of this edifice until it was capable of holding a congregation of several hundreds, but this, too, has become entirely inadequate to the needs of the population of Oakland, although three new parishes have been formed in the county. In 1869, Father King determined to erect a church on a scale commensurate with the promised importance of this city. Plans accordingly were prepared for a building surpassing in dimensions anything in the State, though only with the intention of erecting a part of it at first, a design which has been carried out in the present structure. The foundations were laid in that year, but various causes retarded any further progress until May, 1871, when the superstructure was commenced, and pushed vigorously forward since. Although not quite completed, the church was dedicated on the 23d of June last. The ceremony of dedication was performed by the Archbishop Allemany. The sermon was preached by Father Gallagher, to whom, nearly twenty years ago, the Catholics of Oakland were in a great measure indebted for their first place of worship.

The new church is of wood, with heavy brick foundations, and built in the strongest manner, with double walls firmly braced together. The nave roof principals are supported by posts twelve inches square and fifty-four feet long, to which the principals of the aisle roofs are secured at a height of about thirty-four feet, and these at the outside rest on posts eight inches square and strengthened by side buttresses. The style of the building is early Gothic, and it consists of a nave, side aisles, chancel and two front towers. The latter are to be surmounted by spires at a future period, but even in their present state, their height (one hundred and four feet to the top of the pinnacles) and size give a highly imposing appearance to the front. The roof is open; on the inside, the spaces between the principals and tie beams, and the latter and the arch braces in both nave and aisle roofs, being filled in with light and elegant open-work tracery. The ceiling is paneled and painted blue, with stars; the wood work being painted white with flower patterns in tertiary colors. At the sides the arch braces under the roof timbers are terminated in carved niches, intended to receive statues of the twelve apostles. The cornices are also of wood, the arches between the nave and aisles and the chancel arch being, with the walls and ceiling under the organ gallery, the only plaster work in the building. The organ gallery projects only a few feet into the church, thus allowing its full dimensions to be better appreciated. The windows are filled with rich stained