

# IRISH FAMILIES GATHER AT ST. PATRICK'S

By Claire Robling

There were hundreds of “smiling Irish eyes” Sunday at St. Patrick’s, Scott County, when the Garry-Ryan, Hickey-Roach families gathered for a giant family reunion.

The reunion attracted between 400 and 500 people, most of them Irish and darn proud of it.

“When I was little, I always wished that my name sounded more Irish,” said Mona Strunk from Shakopee, a former Roach. “Most people don’t realize that Roach is even an Irish name.” Mrs. Strunk added that she is 100 percent Irish, as were many of the people at the gathering.

The reunion was called “Homecoming 1979” because the homesteads of the Garry-Ryan, Hickey-Roach pioneers who settled in Scott County during the 1850’s were around St. Patrick and St. Catherine’s, churches the families helped build.

Sunday, the descendants of the original pioneers crowded into St. Patrick’s Church for a special Mass of thanksgiving, which was celebrated by The Most Rev. John Roach, archbishop of the Minneapolis-St. Paul Catholic Archdiocese, and Rev. Francis Roach, pastor of St. John’s Dianney Church in South St. Paul. Both celebrants are grandsons of Michael Hickey and Margaret Murray-Hickey.

The little Church built about a century ago was filled with people, who flowed out of the door, down the steps and around the building. The people seemed oblivious of the heat in the crowded building as they sang and prayed and listened intently to a sermon by Archbishop Roach, who spoke of their heritage as a Christian family.

A brief program in the St. Patrick Hall included the introduction of all senior members of the families and a brief history of the families by Sister Zacchaeus Ryan, who was credited as the chief planner and organizer of the reunion.

“This reunion is a dream comes true, and a dream comes true because of our pioneer ancestors,” said Sr. Zacchaeus. “It is most fitting that we return here today as a large family, to give thanks to God for all that He has blessed us with.”

The families do indeed appear to be blessed – blessed with each other and many, many young children to enjoy and continue the families that settled in Scott County about 125 years ago.

Shakopee Valley News