

# ISLAND (ST. WENCESLAUS) CHURCH

## TOWN OF WATERLOO



THE ISLAND (St. Wenceslaus) CATHOLIC CHURCH is now (1982) the property of the Island Church Foundation. The registered purpose of that organization reads "... to purchase, maintain, preserve and restore St. Wenceslaus Church (known as the Island Church) in its original location in the town of Waterloo, Jefferson County, Wisconsin."

To provide the public with the early history of the church, and its early construction; the aims of the Foundation and its accomplishments, a series of handouts will be prepared and distributed. This is the first of that series.

Much of the material printed here is taken from the History of St. Wenceslaus, the Island Church that was prepared by Mrs. Harriet Schultz, Lake Mills, in the early 1970's. As a result of her efforts the landmark church is registered in the National Register of Historic Places in Wisconsin, and in the Wisconsin Registered Landmarks. We are grateful for her efforts.

That history reads in part: "... As early as 1838 Joseph Edwards settled in the eastern part of the present Waterloo Township. He was soon followed by other settlers from New England and New York State.

"In 1844, the first of the European immigrants arrived in the Town of Waterloo. M. Ferge and August Langlotz bought farms east of what was then known as the Blue Joint Marsh. George and John Berry came from Saxony to take up land on section nine. About the same time, Bernard and Thomas Heil settled on "The Island" on section seventeen. John Sheridan located on Section nine in 1847. A few families from Southern Germany settled on the "Island" in the late 1840's. Among those were Phillip Daum who came in 1846 and Carl B. Menz and his son Gottlieb, who arrived in 1848. Conrad Setz came from Wurtemberg, Germany with his sons Joseph and Higen in 1852 and was soon followed by Tobias and John Kurz and Felix Lutz.

"Not all the immigrants came from Germany. In the late 1840's

and the early 1850's, several families came from the eastern part of old Austria-Hungarian province of Bohemia, now a part of Czechoslovakia. They came, the most part, from four tiny villages, all within easy walking distance of each other. Some of the families who came from these villages were: The Leschinger and Haberman families from Michelsdorf; the Springer family from Ratzdorf and the Veith family from Knapendorf. These people, like those who had come from Germany, bought land on the "Island" — the high ground — in the Blue Joint Marsh.

"A closely knit rural society grew up in this region of marsh and high land. As early as the 1840's, an attempt was made to provide education for the children who lived in the area. Logs were cut and drawn for the school house — and the project was abandoned. The log Island school was finally built and opened in 1855. It served as a church and meeting place as well as a school. In time, the log building deteriorated and to hasten the building of a new school, a person — or persons — unknown burned the old school house to the ground. A brick school was built in 1885 and served until the school was closed by consolidation in 1953.

"By the late 1850's, the spiritual needs of the Catholic settlers of the "Island" area were being served by priests from St. John the Baptist Catholic Church of Jefferson. Rev. Francis X Minderer and Rev. Wendelin Bernard occasionally made the long trip to the "Island" and said Mass at the home of Thomas Heil. As the condition of the roads traveled ranged, by modern standards, from poor to almost impassable, the round trip usually took the best part of three days.

"The residents of the area felt a need for a church. On February 18, 1863, Anton Christel and his wife Therezia sold an acre of land to John Martin Henni, the first Bishop of the Diocese of Milwaukee, for thirty-five dollars. This land was to be used for a church and cemetery. Here, on a hill overlooking the marsh, was built St. Wenceslaus Church, named for the patron saint of Bohemia. The first priest known to have served the new church was Rev. Hubert Jansen, who came out from Jefferson.

"The church has long been known by the sobriquet as "Island Church." In January of 1872, Father Ivo, an energetic Capuchin missionary from Milwaukee, baptized eight children there and recorded that the church was "locally known as Island". Rev. Joseph Huber, the first resident pastor of St. Josephs Church, Waterloo, who also served the country church, recorded, before returning to his native Baden for a visit in 1877," closed the Church of St. Wenceslaus (Island)". Another record of the closing,

as it appeared in the Oct. 23, 1948 Catholic Herald, reads: "In 1891 Fr. Francis X Hess became the Pastor of St. Josephs Church, Waterloo, and in October of that year it was agreed that the members of the Island parish would join those of St. Josephs in worshipping in the Waterloo Church."

In a reprint of that 1948 article, distributed at the "Centennial Plus Ten" mass at the Island Church on Sept. 30, 1983, there was more history concerning the early Island Church congregation. It reads "First funeral services in the Island Church were those of Joseph Zimbrick, 2 year old son of Ewald and Clara Zimbrick; Rose Miller, 50, wife of Franz Miller; and August Klecker, 56. The first marriage ceremony listed was that which united Edward Leschiner and Emma Setz on Nov. 16, 1875. Other early marriages were those of Joseph Leschinger and Mary Ann Krause, May 2, 1876; Michael Yanker and Rose Stangler, 1877; William Scribner and Amelia Veith, Sept. 28, 1877; Fred Haberman and Mary Veith for whom no date was given." Area families' record a double wedding in the church in 1869 which united in marriage Mr. and Mrs. Frank Fiebiger (Justina Huebel) and Mr. and Mrs. Ewald Zimprich.

In 1977 Father Henry Kalscher, of St. Josephs Church, Waterloo, distributed some background material of the church history with this comment. "The records (that follow) came to my attention this past week, Thursday, Sept. 22, 1977 as I was preparing materials to storage from the old rectory in the new rectory"; The material reads: "Kirchenbuch und Namen Verzeichniz der Christkeitolishen Kirchen Gemeinde in Town of Waterloo, Jefferson County ... Dec. 1867, Namen der Mitglieder

Ignaz Tilg	Johann Feidler	Josef Seykora
Johann Fischer	Sebastian Janker	Johann Fiebiger
Joseph Bartosch	Wenzel Habermann	Johann Jansa
Josef Springer	Franz Habermann	Mariana Blaschke
Franz Mueller	Thadaus Blaschke	Elizabeth Blaschke
Johann Plotz	Franz Skalitzki	Josef Veith
Bernard Leschinger	Johann Kleker	
Augustin Kleker	Thersia Heideman	
Bernhard Heil	Johann Zimprich	
Johann Doubrawa	Wenzel Binstok	
Franz Stangler	Johann Freidl	
Franz Tomscha	Vincenz Faultesek	
Franz Veith	Johann Lukes	
Ignaz Kleker	Josef Freudl	
Ferdinand Veith	Rosalia Hubl	

The next record which gives no year repeats the same names and adds:  
Katharina Luthschinger  
Franz Schuch  
Johann Hubl  
Anton Haberman

"A financial report from 1874 shows the following names with the following spellings:

Wenzel Haberman	Joseph Domee	Wenzl Binstok
Ferdinand Knettig	Wenzel Faltesek	John Fischer jun
Joseph Springer	Andrew Manningham	Augustin Klecker
Johann Fischer sen	Joseph Veit	Thadeus Blaschka
Johann Fiedler	Wenzl Quale ?	Ignatz Klecker
Ewald Zimprich	Thaедus Fiebiger	Sebastian Jenk
Franz Stangler	Johann Mueller	Luis Habermann
Bernard Leschinger	Felix Lutz	Johann Dobrawa
Franz Tomsche	Engelbert Larenzer	Julius Klecker
Anton Fiebiger	Frau Riemer	Joseph Segkora
Vinzens Faltesek	Frau Pfeifer	Ferdinand Veit
Joseph Bartosch	Joseph Setz	Franz Fiebiger
Franz Veit jun	Franz Habermann sen	Witwe Blaschka
Ignatz Tilg	Franz Habermann jun	John Hubl
	Bernard Heil	Engelbert Pitterle

"The book records baptisms from 1872-1888 with some years missing in between.

"The name for the priest in 1872 appears to be P. Ivo O M Cap  
 1874 to 1878 P. Joseph Huber                      1887 H. Victor  
 1879 to 1880 H. Victor                              1888 the priest did not sign  
 1884 to 1885 L. Barth                                his name  
 1885 to 1886 J. H. Koetting

"All the preceding names appear also in the records for baptisms at St. Joseph's."

Other dates and items of interest pertaining to the early history of the Island (St. Wenceslaus) Church, brought to our attention, may be included in the 1983 issue of this series.

It was in 1976 that the Island Church Foundation was organized and incorporated, and since then the church, its upkeep and restoration, and management is its responsibility. The church is non-sectarian, and has served for chapel-like services for weddings, christenings, and anniversary observances, by protestants and catholics alike. St. Wenceslaus services are held the fourth Sunday in September.

The church is open this season the fourth Sunday afternoon, May through September or by appointment. For appointment contact any of the 1982 directors of the Foundation: Layton Zickert, Bruce Schultz, Alfred Klug, Kate Radke, Doris Deppe, Dorothea Fischer, Bernadine Skalitzky, Juanita Blaska, Clarence Kowski, Don Vehlow, Martha Sillman, Theo. Kiesow, Carl Schroeder, Juan Edwards and Ray Radke.

Take Island Church Road, off County Highway G between Lake Mills and Watertown; or Blue Joint Road off Highway 89 between Waterloo and Lake Mills