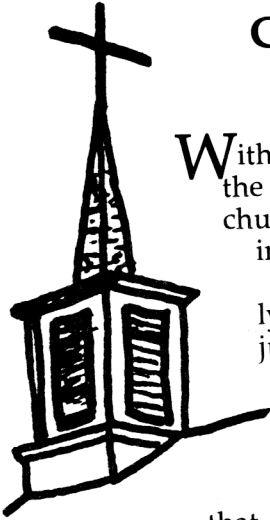


## ISLAND (ST. WENCESLAUS) CHURCH

TOWN OF WATERLOO-WISCONSIN



With the observance of the 125th anniversary of the Founding of the Island (St. Wenceslaus) church, town of Waterloo this year (1988) we are inclined to "think back" to days that we can recall and with which we can identify. Rightly so. Many families and individuals have done just that and are responsible for the restoration and support of that Church, and the Foundation chartered to maintain it.

There are times when it behooves us to "look back — way back" to the years when that Island Church was organized, and before, to better understand the life and heritage of the "Island" before the turn of the century.

A "History of Waterloo" written by the late James Sheridan and published in weekly installments in the Waterloo Democrat in 1906-07, while Mr. J. H. Bolger was the editor, gives much history of the time and area. Mr. Sheridan was born on the "Island". In late life, while practicing law in Milwaukee, he compiled the history, including letters, pictures and information sought from former residents. Many will be quoted in this piece.

Franklin Giles wrote in 1905: "The present Waterloo-Township of Waterloo was a promising district for permanent occupation; its uplands were covered with a growth of young timber with well watered stretches of meadows. The first name given to the level land, south of the village (Waterloo) was Grove Prairie.

Onley Edwards, in 1834, homesteaded in the Waterloo Township, now recognized as "The Island" and is credited to be the first white settler in the township. The land remains in the Edwards name. Onley was followed by his son Guerdon, followed by his son Joseph, his son Merlin and his son Juan. The family holds the deed to that land, signed by U.S. President Van Buren in 1840.

Listed with the names of the earliest settlers, coming here from the east, were: Faville, Crump, Stiles, Story, Perkins, Folsom, Crosby, Brush, Ostrander, Kenyon and so on. Mr. Sheridan wrote: "In 1844 the first of the European immigrants came in the persons of Ferge and A. Langlotz, who purchased farms east of

the marsh known as "Blue Joint". They were joined by George and John Berry of Saxony and "that marked the beginning of the end of the ownership of property in the township (Waterloo) of the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution."

Bernard and Thomas Heil located on the "Island" on section 17 and in 1847 John Sheridan located on section 9. A few from southern Germany became residents of the east "Island" in the '40's. Among these were Philip Daum in 1846; Gottlieb and Charles Menz in 1848. A little later, in 1852, Conrad Setz with this sons Joseph and Higen arrived from Wurtenberg, Germany and were followed by Tobia and Tobin Kurz and Feliz Lutz, according to the history writer who went on to report the family names of Bleecker, Failing, Fuchs, Keller, Biehle, Cone, Youker, Drew, Yelk, Foehling, Story and Deppe that followed. Families from Prussia arrived in 1850 with names like: Kype, Hermann, Heide-man, Woelffer, Neupert, Shenk and Christian families arrived from Switzerland.

In 1852 the first of the Bohemians arrived in the area referred to as "The Island". John Doubrava and Anton Fiebiger blazed the way for the Springers, Blaschies, Fiedlers, Bartosches, Habermanns, Voights, Yelks, Lutschingers, Hiebels, Kleckers and more. Mr. Sheridan added, "Many of these immigrants were skilled musicians and carried with them to their new homes musical instruments and organized themselves into the one time celebrated "Island Brass Band". In 1905 the names Lutschinger, Bartosch, Yelk, Blaschka, Voight, and Segkora were recalled as some of the members of that popular band.

### **St. Wenceslaus Church Organized**

The birth of the Island (St. Wenceslaus) Church is reported in the history like this: "C. Hessel, who arrived with his parents in 1853 and settled upon Dutch Island, says that Father Johnson from Jefferson celebrated the first Mass in the township in 1859, in a private house then owned by Thomas Heil, now owned by Henry Jordan (1906). According to Higen Setz: "All of the Bohemians were Catholic as were many of the settlers from Southern Germany. They wanted to build a church and did so by hauling logs for it from the other side of the Crawfish River. It was finished in 1864 and mass was celebrated every four weeks. A Sister's school was also established, which was largely attended for a few years. This little white church now stands on the corner of the road, surrounded by a little cemetery, nearly opposite the home of Charles Fischer" ... This was four years before St. Josephs Church, Waterloo, was established.

Editor's Note: The first of this series of handouts, printed in 1982, gives the family names involved in the St. Wenceslaus Church, under the heading: "Kirchenbuch und Names Verzeichniz der Christkeitolishen Kirchen, Gmeinde in Town of Waterloo, Jefferson County, and a number of family names mentioned above were listed. An item concerning the beginnings of the Island School, District 4, was printed in the 1985 handout.

It was the custom in the 1800's to give certain localities names. This did cause confusion. Dutch Island was referred to as the area between Stoney Brook and Tammrack Creek. It was surrounded by marsh. On the east this marsh was early known as the Blue Joint, named so for the growth of blue joint grass. On the south side of Dutch Island was Perkins Marsh, on the south of that was Montgomery Island, known now as Newville. Bohemian Island was the name given to the neighborhood settled by people from Austria. Hog Island was applied to the southern section of 3 and parts of sections 10 and 11, and was separated from both Dutch and Bohemian Islands by marshes. The origination of the name "Hog Island" was reported in the 1984 handout of this series. The incident is detailed at length in Mr. Sheridan's writing.

### **Farm Life**

This paragraph is devoted to random items that pertain to life in the area in the 1800's and reported in the history mentioned: "In the fall of 1843, two or three droves of cattle were driven here from Illinois for sale and most settlers bought a cow or two to provide milk and butter. Produce was very cheap; wheat 40 and 30 cents per bushel; potatoes 25 cents; oats 15 cents. It mattered little what the price was, the farmers had no money to purchase" ... "wheat, Indian Corn and oats were given almost the entire acreage. The principal crop was spring wheat. The farmer was in the field early in the day, bags of grain were scattered at intervals across the field to be sown. With a pail on his left arm, or a looped sheet supported on the shoulder filled with the grain, he made great strides scattering the seeds with a sweep of the hand ... The seeder and cultivator were not in evidence until the late 1860's ... The Waterloo Post Office was established in 1868. It cost 25 cents to send a letter (the same as today). The name Waterloo was suggested by a Mr. Wilt, a Frenchman living here, who was one of Napoleon's soldiers, at the battle of Waterloo. ... Ice cream was first made and sold in Waterloo in 1857 by a Mr. Matthie. ... Many from the Island and the area responded to the call to arms and served in the Civil War. In 1863 wheat reached the price of

\$2.75 per bushel; pork \$12.00 per hundred. The farmer paid a shilling a pound for brown sugar and 50 cents per pound for common smoking tobacco. ... "In about 1874 the scheme of a monthly fair was tried. For many months on fair day farmers crowded the streets with cattle, horses, pigs, and so forth. Gypsies and horse traders galore marched up and down the main thoroughfares, drunken brawls and hideous yells rent the evening. The fairs ended with "no regrets". ... Mr. Stiles wrote, "When children went afoot to church and Sunday School we made a bee line for the village. This compelled us to cross the marsh and wade through from 1 to 2 feet of water, for about 10 rods. We carried our shoes and stockings, drying our feet in the sun before dressing them to appear in the village". ... In the 1850's young men cut out and split logs for one cent a piece and helped load them onto the sleighs for that price.

#### THE HISTORY OF THE ISLAND (ST. WENCESLAUS) CHURCH:

- 1863 — Congregation founded
- 1864 — Island Church Building completed
- 1891 — St. Wenceslaus Church was closed, congregation joining St. Josephs Church
- 1970 — The beginning of the movement to preserve the Island Church at its original site in the town of Waterloo
- 1976 — Island Church Foundation chartered to restore, preserve and maintain the landmark
- 1977 — The church was purchased, by the Foundation, from the Catholic Church, Madison Diocese
- 1988 — The 125th anniversary of the founding of the church observed

**The future depends upon the continued support of the Island Church Foundation, dedicated to the preservation of the Church. It can be supported with memberships, memorials, gifts, donations and man hours of volunteer work. All of such have been detailed in earlier handouts such as this.**

Today's Foundation Directors are: Debbie Deppe Quinn, president; Bruce Schultz, vice-president; Martha Derr Sillman, secretary; Bernadine Haberman Skalitzy, treasurer. Directors are: Juanita Blaska. Doris Kowski Deppe, Dorothea Holzhuetter Fischer, Alfred Klug, Clarence Kowski, Kevin Quinn, Kate Woerpel Radke, Don Richwalski, Don Rosberg, Don Vehlow, Bernice Langer Wendt.