



ISLAND (ST. WENCESLAUS) CHURCH

TOWN OF WATERLOO-WISCONSIN

HANDOUTS such as this are distributed annually as a part of the Island Church Foundation's efforts to inform the public of history of the Island (St. Wenceslaus) Church, persons involved in the development of the church and more recently, those involved in its preservation.

The Church is a Waterloo Township landmark. It was purchased from the Madison Catholic Diocese in 1977 by the Island Church Foundation, Inc. (ICF).

In 1988 the 125th anniversary of the founding of that St. Wenceslaus Church was observed. In 1988 and 1989 some persons attending the annual picnics shared comments on tape, some such as are shared in this handout. Because of lack of space, comments of Directors of the ICF, past and present, and others taped in 1988 and '89 must be held for another printing.

Marion Haberman Stuntebeck (Frank) of Marshall said that the Island Church on its beautiful site has always been a part of her life. "I was just sick when we heard that the church was to be moved. I love this little church. It is interdenominational now, and that is all right. It is the only way it could be preserved", she said. Mrs. Stuntebeck is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ervin Haberman. Her grandparents, the Frank Habermans and great-grandparents, the Anton Habermans and two uncles are interred at the church cemetery. They had a part in the development of the church in the 1800's. The Erwin Haberman family included a son, Gerald, and four daughters: Marion Stuntebeck, Angela Gmeinder, Doris Dorhorst and Bernadine Skalitzky. Mrs. Skalitzky is a charter member of the Founding Committee and has served as a charter director since 1977.

Bartered With the Indians

Merlin Edwards, 85, shared some history of the Edwards family. Onley Edwards homesteaded the farm in the Island area in 1834 and is credited to be the first white settler here. The family holds the deed to the land, signed in 1840 by U.S. President Van Buren. Onley was followed by his son Guerdon as the land owner; then by his son Joseph; his son Merlin and his son Juan. The latter's son, Jody is involved in the farm management.

Three log cabins and two frame houses have housed the Edwards families. One house burned, before the present home of the Merlin

Edwards was built.

Onley Edwards established a trade business with the Indians, trading furs for sugar and flour and other staples. This was done in the spring and fall when the Indians trekked along the river. Speaking of experiences with the Indians Mr. Edwards shared, "Guerdon's son, Onley II went hunting one day and never returned — the family was suspicious about that".

He recalled the Kypke Grove school, now a home occupied by the Reals family, was built with money loaned by Richard Schroeder — the loan turned out to be a gift.

Heils and Habermans

In 1988, Walter P. Heil Jr. of DePere and Steve Heil, Appleton, great grandsons of the John (Joe) Heils of early Waterloo, visited the Church on picnic day. The Joe Heils were active members of the St. Wenceslaus congregation and the men said they often heard of how their great grandmother was responsible for the organ music in the church. The organ was transported back and forth by lumber wagon, sleigh, or whatever, for special services.

Steven and Walter are the sons of Walter Heil, Jr.; the grandsons of Walter Heil, Sr., who was born in Waterloo. Their mother, Helen Heil, Appleton, encouraged them to attend the 1988 event. They were impressed with the Church's preservation.

Representatives of another family added interest to the 1988 taping. The Haberman family was represented in the taping by Dennis Haberman of Milwaukee and Greg Benedictt, Louisville, Cousins, they are the great, great, great grandsons of Wenzel Haberman, representing five generations. Wenzel Haberman settled in the Island area in the 1850s. Their grandfather, Clyde Haberman was the son of Max and Anna Haberman; Max was the son of Louis and Johanna Haberman. The Wenzel Haberman family included: Louis, Frank, Philip, Teckla, Bernard, Harry and Frederick.

While researching the genealogy of the family, Dennis and Greg stopped at the Roy Haberman farm, within sight of the church, and they found there was a family relationship. Meeting again on picnic day (1988), they reported the Haberman families were represented by 30 persons that day.

All of the mentioned returned for the 1989 picnic. At that time Dennis arranged for bagpipe players from Milwaukee to entertain on the grounds — a special treat.

Rita Duschack Durnasky, Sun Prairie, in 1988 shared that her grandmother, Ernestine Blaschka, had a sister interred at the St. Wenceslaus Cemetery. She remembered the family visiting there often and was happy to see the church restored. Mrs. Durnasky is the daughter of Bernard and Josephine Duschack, her grandparents were Mr. and Mrs. Albert Fullert of Deansville. Her mother attended

St. Joseph School, Waterloo, for a time and walked the railroad tracks from Deansville to Waterloo.

A Milk Stool Incident

Helen Springer Josi (Leslie) mentioned a family anecdote of interest. One of her ancestors worked on the pews when the church was built. There developed a controversy and dispute. As a result of that disagreement, when that man attended services at St. Wenceslaus he provided his own seat — a milk stool — in the middle aisle. Mrs. Josi has a number of relatives with the names of Haberman and Veith in the church cemetery.

Played in the Church

Mildred Bleifuss Meitner (Howard) shared fond memories. She, with her sister, Ann (Kircher) (daughters of William and Elsie Riege Bleifuss) lived on a Fischer farm close to the church. They, with other young people near at hand, played in the church in the years it was neglected. She explained, "We would climb through the northwest window and play church, but we never broke anything". There were times when Father Hess of St. Joseph Church, Waterloo would find them there, "but he never did scold". Some of the young folks of the Ewald Fischer family — Dorothy, Lloyd, Raymond, and of the William Kowski family — Doris, Bernice, Arlene, Clarence, Charles, James and Raymond, were playmates at that time. She remembered one night the Church Bell was tolled late at night. The tolling was planned for early in the day to honor a former parishioner but the rope broke and it took all day to fix it.

A Sunday afternoon drive brought the Kudak family of Lowell to the Island Church for the first time. The historic church and cemetery interested them, especially after they found Blaschka names on gravemarkers — relatives of her father, Albert Drunasky. They made a special effort to attend the 1988 picnic to see the interior of the church. Mr. Kudak was a cabinet maker and they especially appreciated the work on the pews, mentioning the fact that tools for such work were scarce in those days. They were interested in the Stations of the Cross and the Bible on the Altar.

More about that Bible was brought to our attention in 1989 when Janey Wollin Lenius shared some Stockfish and Wollin family histories. The Bible was given to the Church by Edwin and Charlotte Stockfish Wollin of Milford, near Lake Mills. It was brought to America by the speaker's grandparents, the Herman Stockfish family. The Bible is printed in German in the dialect that today may be referred to as "low German". The Edwin Wollin family includes daughters Janey and Ruby, and sons Charles, Jerry and Don. All live in the Lake Mills-Milford area.

Arthur F. Krueger, Watertown, attended his first picnic on the church grounds in 1988. His great grandparents, Julius and Johanna Krueger, have markers in the cemetery. His grandparents has two

sons: Fritz who lived in Waterloo; Carl, and five daughters — Wilhelmenia, Ernestine, Amelia, Augusta and Fredericka.

Langer a Choir Member

Josephine Fischer Niemeyer (Henry), Lowell, daughter of Matilda Langer and Albert Fischer, is a source of much information about the life and times of the Island Church. Her grandparents, John and Julianne Langer, came to America and the Town of Waterloo in 1874. They brought five children with them and five more were born in the Waterloo township. They were: Mary, John, Tena, Vinz, Anna, Wilhelm, Julianna, Matilda, August and Albert.

The Langers worshipped in the St. Wenceslaus Church and the father, John, was a member of the choir. In the late 1880s, they purchased a farm between Waterloo and Lake Mills and that farm came to be known far and wide for the blueberries in the tamaracks. Mrs. Niemeyer promised to share other memories in another printing.

Have Wedding Memories

Janice Henning and William Mosher were married Sept. 12, 1981 in the Island Church in a beautiful candelight service. The Moshers shared that at first the bride-to-be was not too thrilled with the thought of being married there in the primitive church but when they saw the interior, there were no further questions.

In 1988, a couple introduced themselves as Sue Westrick and Paul Radtke and said, "We are going to be married in this church on September 24 of this year". In 1989 Mr. and Mrs. Radtke returned the day of their first wedding anniversary, to attend the St. Wenceslaus Day services, and they presented the ICF with books to be displayed in the book case.

Carol Smith visited the church on August 10, 1989. She was there to count candles and check the seating capacity because her daughter Laurie and Steven Bandy were to be married there on September 23rd. Two other daughters, Lynette and Micky, were excited about the setting and were thrilled with the couple's choice. Mrs. Smith was impressed with the church and recognized it as a beautiful setting for a wedding when she saw it for the first time when a tour group, headed by Hanna Swart of the Fort Atkinson Museum, visited the Waterloo township landmark.

The Church is open every fourth Sunday of the month, May through September, and by appointment. Appointments can be arranged by contacting a Director: Dorothea Fischer, President; Kate Radke, Secretary; Martha Sillman, Treasurer; Debbie and Kevin Quinn, Don Rosberg, Betty Schroeder, Bruce Schultz, Don Vehlow, all of Waterloo; Clarence Kowski, Vice-president; Don Richwalski, Calvin Stark, Lake Mills; Juanita Blaska, Sun Prairie; Bel Giunta, Marshall; Bernadine Skalitzyk, Columbus.