

Golden Jubilee History



1891



1941

St. John's Parish

Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin

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OF

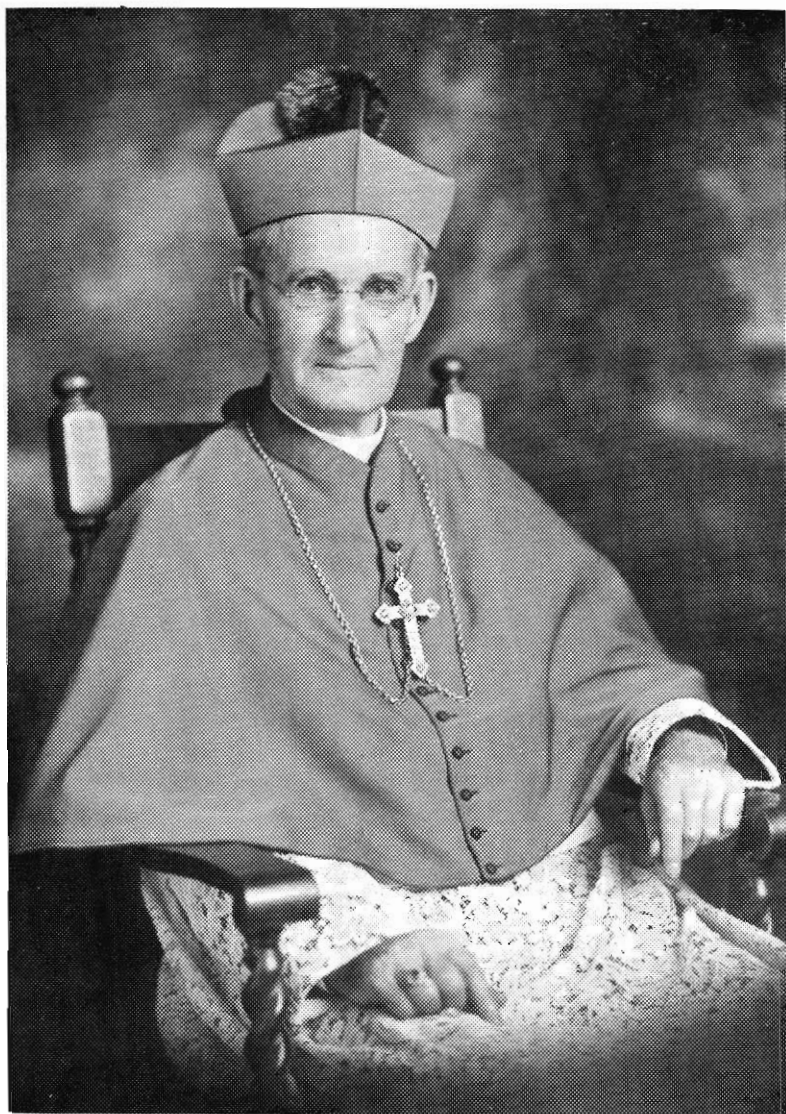
St. John Nepomucene's Parish
Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin

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COMPILED BY

REVEREND PAUL J. MONARSKI



The Most Reverend Alexander J. McGavick, D.D.
Bishop of La Crosse



The Most Rev. Wm. R. Griffin, D. D.
Auxiliary Bishop of La Crosse



The Present Saint John Nepomucene's Church

Foreword

IN writing this history of St. John's Congregation, every effort was made to record the important events pertaining to the origin and development of the parish as accurately as possible. In doing this we strove to adhere to facts and studiously avoided imputing motives and interpreting consequences. Where this may seem to have been done, it was ascertained to be factual.

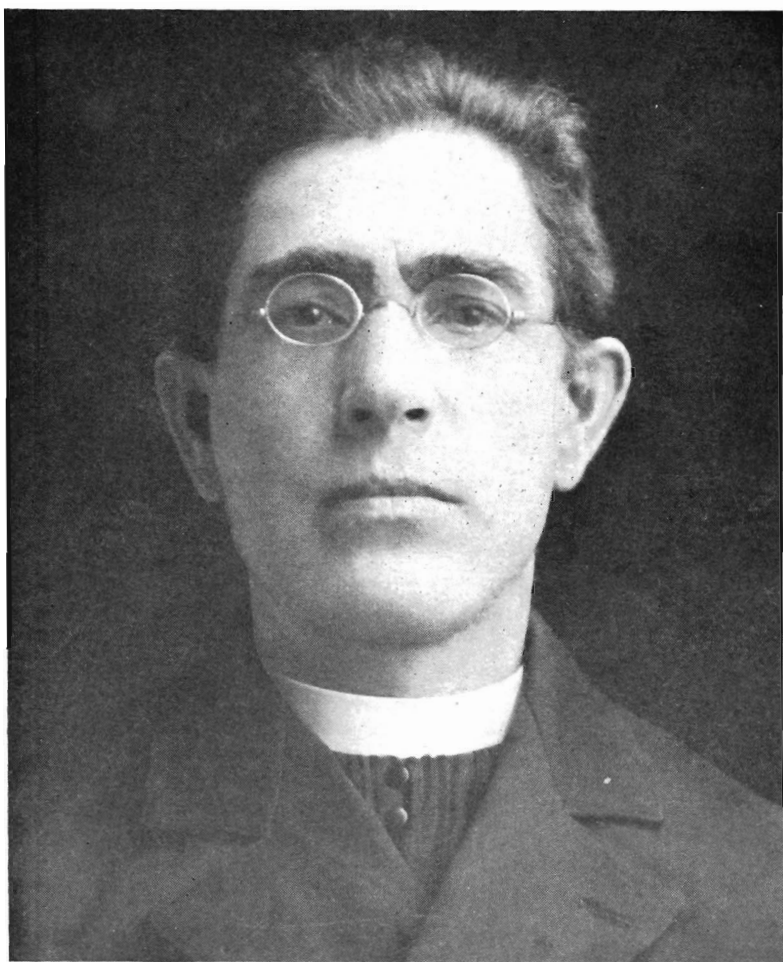
Since documentary records pertaining to the early history of the parish were scarce, we were forced to depend on the memory of the first members of the parish for some facts, but such information was carefully checked for accuracy.

For more definite and detailed information we are indebted to the former pastors of St. John's still living, to the old files of The Courier, which were most helpful, and to the volume, "The Catholic Church in Wisconsin". A few interesting items were also gleaned from the "History of Bohemian Americans" by John Habenicht.

It was naturally possible for us to give more complete and detailed information about the events that transpired during the thirteen years of our own pastorate. We hesitated at first to give comparatively so much more detailed information about our own times for fear that our motives might be misconstrued. However, our hesitancy was overcome by the thought that our task in writing this history would have been much easier had there been more information about earlier times available to us. Besides this, we are fully aware of the fact that while we may be able to tell more about our own times, the pioneer work done by others was far more important.

We dedicate this volume in gratitude to the bishops, priests, sisters and laymen, whose efforts have made possible the source of our spiritual life locally, St. John Nepomucene's Catholic Congregation.

—THE AUTHOR



The Reverend George Kiefner
First Pastor

The Origin of St. John's Parish

PREVIOUS to the year 1891 the Catholics of Bohemian descent, who settled in Prairie du Chien and vicinity, were under the charge of the pastors of St. Gabriel's Church. However, Father A. Phillip Kremer, the pastor at that time, who later became Vicar General of the dioceses of La Crosse, realized that, since so many of his parishioners could speak and understand only Bohemian, and since their national feeling was rather intense, it was best to have them organize their own parish.

Accordingly Father George Kiefner who, as pastor of the parish at Seneca, Wisconsin, had been invited from time to time to give the Bohemian people of Prairie du Chien religious attention, was appointed by the Right Reverend Bishop Flasch to organize the new Bohemian parish at Prairie du Chien.

Father George Kiefner was born May 1, 1863, at Mlynec near Domazlice, Bohemia, where he received his rudimentary education. He then attended the Gymnase at Domazlice. In 1881 he emmigrated to America. He continued his studies in the Benedictine College of St. Vincent, Pa., and completed his studies in philosophy and theology at St. Francis de Sales Seminary in Milwaukee. He was ordained to the priesthood by the Right Reverend Bishop Flasch at La Crosse, June 24, 1889. His first charge was as assistant pastor of St. John's Parish at Marshfield, Wisconsin, where he remained for three months. He was then appointed pastor of the church at Seneca, Wisconsin, which pastorate he maintained until he was appointed to organize the new Bohemian parish at Prairie du Chien.

In January, 1891, certain Bohemian residents of Prairie du Chien approached Mr. John Lawler, an exemplary and influential Catholic of that city, with the request for a plot of ground for the necessary parish buildings. These men were most probably James Reiseman, Albert Kalina and Charles Kalina. However, Frank Uher, Vaclav Lechnir, Albert Cecka and John Fuka are also recalled as having been particularly active in the work connected with

organizing the parish. Mr. Lawler granted their request by presenting to the parish the plot of ground on which the church and rectory now stand. This was, incidentally, Mr. Lawler's last public act, for he suffered a heart stroke shortly after, and died February 24th of that year at the age of 59.

With such a stimulus to aid him in his task, Father Kiefner set out immediately to collect the necessary funds to build a new church. However, the sawmill, now a plant constructing small craft for the government, closed, and many Bohemian Catholics consequently lost the source of their livelihood. Under those circumstances some were unwilling to shoulder the burden of building a church. For that reason Father Kiefner found it necessary to extend his plea for funds to other parishes in Wisconsin and in Chicago before he had sufficient wherewith to build the church.

Laying the Cornerstone

IN the issue of The Courier, a local newspaper, dated June 30, 1891, the following item appeared:

"The Bohemians of St. Gabriel's Congregation of this city have decided to build a new church. They received a donation of building lots near St. Mary's Institute for the new church. This liberal gift is from the Lawler estate".

This seems to indicate that it was about that time or shortly after, that the building of the church was begun. The work on the foundation was done by members of the new congregation who donated their labor. The farmers donated the stone. Frank Rod, Frank Zeman and Frank Kasperek did the mason work on the foundation which was ready for the laying of the cornerstone by the end of August. Concerning this event another article appeared in The Courier under the date of September 8, 1891, as follows:

"The customary formalities of laying the cornerstone were fully observed in Prairie du Chien on Sunday, August 30, 1891 at 2 P. M. Several Catholic so-

cieties, the Bohemian St. Joseph's Society, the Knights of St. Wenceslaus, Lodge 129, and the Catholic Knights of Wisconsin, branch No. 9, formed in procession on Church Street and escorted the Reverend Father George Kiefner, Father A. Phillip Kremer and their attendants from St. Gabriel's Church to the foundation of the new Bohemian Catholic Church on Minnesota Street, east of St. Mary's Institute. The grounds, enclosed by a substantial fence, were filled with people and a dense crowd pressed up to the fence outside to see and hear.

The usual ceremonies were observed by the clergymen. Reverend Father Kiefner delivered an address to the Bohemians in their own language which was listened to with great interest. The speaking was done from a large covered platform on the church foundation, nicely decorated with the American colors.

An address in English by the Reverend A. Phillip Kremer is published for the benefit of our readers, as complete as our limited space will permit:

The Sermon

"Dear friends: Allow me to congratulate you on the success of your united efforts in giving a new temple to God, a place of worship to a large portion of our community, and a new adornment to our fair city. God has blessed the earnest zeal of our departed Bishop, the devotion of his priest, the Reverend Father Kiefner, the obedience of our Bohemian fellow Catholics, and the generosity of our citizens at large. Through the active virtues of all these, we are enabled today, to solemnly lay the cornerstone of a new church. And if the new building will not be grand and costly like the cathedrals built and embellished by the zeal of centuries gone by, it nevertheless will be the tabernacle of the Lord, the sanctuary of the High Priest, in which He will dwell among the children of men.

Moreover, the new church will be a token of devotion and unselfish charity towards God. The very

ground on which it will be built gives testimony to the generous faith of a noble giver. God bless that family.

Every stone in the foundation, every board and nail in the building, every part of the structure, from the marble cornerstone up to the gilt across that will crown the steeple, will give testimony to the living faith of the Catholics of Prairie du Chien. Every dollar, nay every cent, that will be spent on this building, has been earned in the sweat of the brow, and believe me, every penny that was given by the poor man, and came out of his hard calloused hand, shines like the brightest gem in heaven. And the church, after the rays of the rising sun shall have kissed its cross for the first time, though humble and poor it may be, will be transformed into the habitation of the living God, adorned with the sweat drops of the working man's brow, and every drop will be a flashing diamond in the eyes of God and his angels.

It is true, my friends, that the tabernacle we are building to the Lord, is but a poor, humble dwelling, but He is satisfied. He knows we have done all we could to make the building of this church possible in order to promote His glory, augment the love towards God among men, and lead souls of mortal men nearer to God and nearer to heaven.

Moreover you, my Bohemian fellow Catholics and spiritual children, coming from a far off country to the hospitable shores of the land of Columbus in order to increase your temporal welfare, did not intend to leave your God and your religion in the old home, but understanding well that God's claims on us are always the same, whether you be in Europe or America, you have brought your faith, your religion, your charity, and your hope for a future happiness along, in order to live also here according to the laws of the Lord, and to teach your children the way they should walk. And, my friends, you have done well. The one who forsakes God will be forsaken by God. Therefore cling to the cross. Keep the religion of Christ

in your homes and in your hearts. At least you will find that God appreciates your earnest efforts to save your souls.

When you left your old home in that renowned and Catholic country, in the land that gave birth to so many noble heroes and saints, you did not wish to transplant Bohemia into America, nor did you desire to see America transformed into Bohemia, but you came to better your position by becoming Americans. All Catholics in this broad country of ours, native and foreign born, cherish a tender affection toward the 'land of the free and the home of the brave'. Like heroes they stood by the Star Splangled Banner, and woe to the man who would raise his hand against it today, for ten millions of Catholics would rise like one man to punish the offender. As American citizens we are equal and we all enjoy the same privileges and the same sacred duties are laid on our shoulders. 'In America we wish to live and in America, please God, we hope to die'.

As Catholics we believe in the same God, the same sacraments, the same sacrifice, and the same church. We all, Bohemians, French, Irish, Germans, Polish, Italians, all American Catholics kneel down before the same altar and adore the same living God in the tabernacle, though the priest who performs the mystery be a stranger to us all. Wonderful indeed is this operation of the Holy Ghost who has assembled the nations of all tongues in the union of faith.

The Catholic religion is the same everywhere in every land on the face of the earth. How beautifully this sublime truth was expressed when the Holy Ghost came down upon the apostles in the shape of fiery tongues. Many tongues, one God, many tongues, one spirit, many tongues, one Savior, one Church. God gave the apostles miraculously the power to preach the gospel to the different nations in their own language. People did not have to learn the language of the apostles, but the apostles had to speak in the

language of the people. So it was in the first centuries of the Church, so it is today.

You are here in a land strange and unknown to your forefathers. You left your homes, your churches, and your priests and came to this place, and behold even here, where a century ago the savage Indians celebrated their beastly orgies, here, thousands and thousands of miles away from the fatherland, the Church sends her priests to you, her beloved children, to preach to you in your own language, to teach you in your own tongue. And you build this new church, not indeed because your religion differs from that of the Irish or the French or American Catholics, but in order to have a place in which you can pray in your own tongue, and in which Christ's religion is announced in your own language. In conversation the language is of small importance, but when you open your innermost heart in trusting confidence to a loving friend, or in humble supplication and fervent petition to God in the tabernacle, you speak in your mother's tongue.

How homelike this church will seem to you, how familiar the words and hymns that shall resound within its walls as it will encourage you to pray by calling back to your minds those memories so sweet, of the dear words your mother spoke when she taught you your first prayer on her bosom.

I am afraid I have abused your patience too long already, but I have not much more to say. Complete the work you have begun and be united in it. Selfishness and disobedience keep away from you, and the admiration and help of the citizens of Prairie du Chien for the work commenced will be yours. Therefore, what was nobly begun, let it be nobly finished. God's blessing will rest on those to whom Prairie du Chien is indebted for this new church. Amen".

"It was a proud day for our Bohemian fellow citizens and a creditable affair for all who participated. The Bohemian Catholics have already secured

title to the valuable ground on which the church edifice is now being erected. The stone foundation has been laid, most of the material is already on the grounds, and a contract has been let to the skillful builders, Messrs. Leefeldt and Sons who are to have the super structure done by November. This demonstrates what our Bohemian citizens can accomplish, and all our people will generously assist them in their good work and feel proud of their enterprise”.

In another article of The Courier under the same date, the following item appeared:

“In behalf of the members of the new Bohemian church, and all who may feel an interest in it, I wish to return thanks to Mr. J. S. Armstrong for the beautiful cornerstone of Rutland marble which he donated to the church”.

Signed: Reverend Father George Kiefner

Father John E. Prucha, then pastor of St. Wenceslaus parish of La Crosse, and now retired, relates that he brought a large delegation of his parishioners by special train to Prairie du Chien to attend the laying of the cornerstone.

Another early reference to the construction of St. John's Church was found in the issue of the Prairie du Chien Union, another local newspaper of that time, dated October 1, 1891. This article records the fact that in connection with the annual convention of Catholic Bohemian Societies of Wisconsin held in Prairie du Chien September 27, 28 and 29 of that year, the delegates in full regalia, led by the Muscoda Bohemian Band and the local Northwestern Band, marched from St. Gabriel's Church, where the group had attended Mass, to the site of St. John's Church on Minnesota Street. Delegations from La Crosse and Muscoda are specifically mentioned as having been among those who participated in this celebration. At the church, still in its early stages of construction, speeches were made and music was rendered. The ceremonies attracted a large gathering of people.



The Original Church

The Dedication

THE construction work must have proceeded rapidly since the church was ready for dedication by December of that same year. Another article that appeared in The Courier gives an account of that event as follows:

“On Sunday, December 13, 1891, the new Bohemian Catholic Church was dedicated by Reverend Father Schwebach, administrator of the La Crosse diocese. The Reverend Father was assisted by Reverend Father A. Phillip Kremer, deacon, Reverend Father Steffan, sub-deacon, and Reverend Father Kiefner, master of ceremonies. The beautiful and impressive ceremonies were witnessed by an immense assemblage of people, including several Bohemian societies who marched in procession, headed by the Northwestern Band to the church site. It seemed as if all nature smiled upon this religious demonstration, as never was there a more pleasant, balmy and brighter day experienced here, even by the oldest inhabitants, in the

month of December.

The interior of the church is handsomely finished, and the walls decorated with rich scriptural paintings. The size of the interior is 36 x 60 feet with a 19 foot height for the ceiling, and will accommodate about 500 (?) persons. The church is named after St. John Nepomucene, who was born at Nepomuc, Bohemia, about 1330. Having given offense to King Wencel, he was drowned on May 16th by the king's orders in the Moldau at Prague, in the year 1383. He was canonized by Pope Innocent the XIII in 1721.

The Original Sanctuary



The Bohemian citizens have reason to be proud of their new church edifice. They have shown a true christian spirit in which they conceived the plan of building the church and in the remarkable short period in which the funds were subscribed, and in its early completion.

Reverend George Kiefner, pastor of the new Bohemian Catholic Church, has manifested great energy and commendable zeal in fulfilling the mission for which he was sent here by the late Bishop Flasch. May his reward be great here and hereafter".

This interesting item appears in the same issue of The Courier:

"While here last Sunday, the distinguished Catholic Prelate, Reverend James Schwebach, received first intimation of his appointment as Bishop of La Crosse, when a telegram was handed him at the conclusion of the dedication services at which he officiated here".

The "Catholic Church in Wisconsin" informs us that the church building cost six thousand dollars, and the "History of Bohemian Americans" by John Habenicht printed in 1910, states that the church was completed without debt. This fact is the more remarkable when one considers the difficulties Father Kiefner had in collecting the funds.

By the time the church was finished Frank Kautman, an original member of the parish, now 84 years old, had carved a statue of St. John Nepomucene out of wood, which still stands in the center niche on the high altar. He also painted the background of the niche to represent the scene as it appears from Charles IV Bridge over the Moldau in Prague where St. John was cast into the stream, and where the original statue of him still stands.

The First Records

ST. JOHN'S parish consisted of about 150 families at the time of its origin. Vaclav Lechnir and Frank Uher were the first trustees. The first baptism recorded is that of Emelia Johanna Mara, daughter of Joseph Mara and Christina Bebel. The first marriage recorded is that of Joseph Svoboda and Josephine Opat. The first funeral services were held for Albert Svoboda. The first Confirmation took place September 30, 1894, the class numbering 83.

The Catholic Bohemian societies of the parish were then and remained for many years, an important factor in the celebration of important events of the parish. The uniformed members of St. Wenceslaus Lodge No. 129 and St. Joseph's Society marched in procession regularly to celebrate certain feast days, such as the feast of St. John, of St. Wenceslaus and of St. Joseph. The latter is recalled as the most prominent and regular celebration for which these societies turned out in a body.

The First Rectory

FOR about two years Father Kiefner lived in a house about a mile from the church, three blocks directly west of Loyola Hall, the refectory, on the Campion grounds. The closest house to the site now standing is that of Peter Bouzek. Father Kiefner had a gray horse which took him not only to St. John's Church, but also to St. Wenceslaus Church at Eastman, which parish he also attended regularly. It is recalled that Father Kiefner's horse was killed by a train of the Milwaukee Railroad, whose tracks ran close by his home.

The first rectory, the building directly south of the present new rectory, was built in 1893. It was impossible to unearth any reliable information concerning the circumstances connected with the building of the first rectory except that a mortgage was placed on the church property September 15, 1893, as collateral for a loan of

one thousand dollars. According to some parishioners this money was most probably borrowed to pay for the rectory. There Father Kiefner resided from the fall of 1893 until 1899, being absent from his parish only from July to October, 1897, during which time he paid a visit to his native country.

In 1898, the Eastman parish, of which Father Kiefner had charge since his appointment to St. John's in Prairie du Chien, also built a rectory, and Father Kiefner was appointed resident pastor of Eastman, the latter part of December, 1898. His successor at St. John's in Prairie du Chien was the Reverend Father Xavier Till.

The Original Rectory





Father Xavier Till

FATHER XAVIER TILL was born in Chrudim, East Bohemia, December 12, 1861. He was ordained to the priesthood at Koeniggratz, Bohemia, July 5, 1885. He was appointed pastor of St. John's Parish in Prairie du Chien the latter part of December 1898. During his pastorate, art glass windows, which were donated by individual parishioners, were installed in the church, and the belfry which was until then open to the weather, was enclosed. He remained pastor of St. John's until August 1901, and is very favorably remembered by those who recall him as pastor of St. John's. He died May 4, 1921 while serving as chaplain of an orphanage near St. Louis, Missouri.

Father Kiefner Reappointed

HAVING remained at Eastman until February 1901, Father Kiefner served the parishes in Junction City, Wisconsin, and again later in Scerry, Wisconsin. He was also stationed for a short time at St. Wenceslaus in La Crosse. However, in August 1901, Father Till was appointed pastor of that parish, and Father Kiefner was reappointed pastor of St. John's in Prairie du Chien.

The First School

UP to September 1902 the children of St. John's parish attended what was known as St. Mary's Parochial School. The building still stands, the southernmost of the present buildings on St. Mary's grounds, and although it is now used as a warehouse, it has not been altered from its two classroom arrangement. The average attendance was 130 children, many of whom still have vivid memories of their school days there. The two sisters in charge of the school best remembered by them are Sister Philo-

The Original School



thea who died October 1931, and Sister Notkar who died in June 1920; both are buried in St. Gabriel's cemetery.

In the summer of 1902 a two classroom school was built under the direction of Father Kiefner on the northwest corner of a plot of ground directly across the street from the church, which was a gift to the parish by the widowed Mrs. Katherine Lawler of Kansas City, Missouri, and her son Thomas of Dubuque, Iowa. In an article of The Courier under the date of September 16, 1902, an account of the dedication of this new school is given as follows:

"The new parochial school for St. John's Congregation was dedicated with appropriate services on Thursday, September 11, 1902. This new school building was built through the zealous efforts of Reverend George Kiefner, pastor of St. John's Church. The Very Reverend A. Phillip Kremer, V. G. officiated, assisted by Reverend A. J. Joerres and Reverend J. M. Keely. The English sermon was given by Father Kremer and a sermon in Bohemian by Reverend L. Panoch. Among those present were Rector Heinzle, President of Sacred Heart College with Father T. Hegemann, Reverend P. Cones and Father Hanent".

According to the diary of St. John's School, kept by the sisters, classes in the new school were begun on September 16, 1902. The diary also states that Mother M. Clara of the School Sisters of Notre Dame sent Father Kiefner a contribution of five hundred dollars in August of that year, towards the school. Two sisters of the Notre Dame Order were put in charge of the school. Sister Maxentia and Sister Alberta are best remembered as the teachers of those days. A Sister Emmanuel is also recalled as having taught there a little later. The sisters who taught at St. John's lived at St. Mary's Institute.

Father Kiefner remained pastor of St. John's until August 1904. Some years later his health failed and after spending many years of invalidism at the hospital in Mankato, Minnesota, he died there January 12, 1938.



Father Ferdinand Cech

FOR a short time after Father Kiefner left until October 1905, Father Ferdinand Cech, then pastor at St. Wenceslaus, Eastman, took care of St. John's at Prairie du Chien, with the occasional help of the Jesuit Fathers of Campion College.

Father Cech was born July 30, 1878 at Jindrichov, Moravia, Austria. He attended the Gymnase at Kromeriz in Moravia, and studied theology at Olomoue, where he was ordained to the priesthood July 5, 1902 by The Most Reverend Archbishop Theodore Kohn.

Father Cech has vivid memories of his trips to Prairie du Chien by horse and buggy in order to minister to the people of St. John's, especially of those made in bad weather and on extremely bad roads. In October 1905 Father Anthony Bilik was appointed pastor of St. John's to relieve Father Cech of his charge at Prairie du Chien.



Father Anthony Bilik

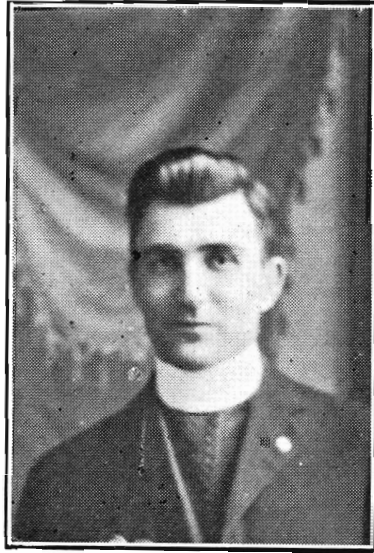
FATHER BILIK was born at Tubesy, near Velehrad, Moravia, June 13, 1873. During his pastorate the sacristy of the church was enlarged, the sanctuary remodeled, and the entire church redecorated. This work was done by Frank Kautman. Electric lights were installed in the church probably about the same time. Electric lights as well as sanitary plumbing were installed in the rectory by Father Bilik also.

Father Bilik was anxious to preserve the Bohemian character of St. John's parish. He frequently deplored the fact that the younger generation was disinclined to learn Bohemian, and that some of his parishioners left his congregation to join St. Gabriel's parish. He felt that their spiritual needs were best supplied through the medium of their mother tongue, and that their support of the church that was built for that purpose was a matter of loyalty for all Bohemian Catholics of Prairie du Chien and immediate vicinity. It seems, however, that this continued to be disregarded and that definite indications of an eventual change in the national character of the parish had appeared already at that time.

Father Bilik was very zealous in the pastoral care of his flock and died as a consequence of performing his duty toward the sick of his parish during the flu epidemic prevalent in 1918. He contracted the disease himself, and died at the rectory October 16, 1918. The funeral services were held October 18, 1918. Father John E. Prucha, then pastor of Potosi, had the funeral Mass but was called to the Sanitarium at its conclusion, to administer the Last Sacraments to a dying Bohemian lady. Father Peter Becker of Cassville, completed the services, conducting the absolution after the Mass, and also the services at the grave in the cemetery. Father Bilik's remains were interred in a grave immediately behind St. Gabriel's church.

Besides the priests already mentioned the following attended the funeral services: Reverend Ferdinand Cech of Hillsboro, Reverend August Vojacek of Prairieburg, Iowa, Reverend Ambrose Kolar of La Crosse, and five Jesuit Fathers of Campion College. On account of the epidemic the Bishop had ordered that no public funeral be held, and although the front door of the church was locked, a few people came through the sacristy to attend the funeral services.

After Father Bilik's death, the Jesuit Fathers of Campion took care of the parish during the interval of a few months, before the coming of the next pastor, Father Cyril Smetana.



Father Cyril Smetana

FATHER SMETANA was born March 22, 1892 at Bloomer, Wisconsin. He attended St. Paul's Parochial School at Bloomer, Sacred Heart High School at Watertown, Wisconsin, and St. Joseph College, now Loras College, at Dubuque, Iowa. He studied theology at St. Paul Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, where he was ordained to the priesthood by the Most Reverend Archbishop John Ireland on June 8, 1917. He arrived at Prairie du Chien to take charge of St. John's parish, December 6, 1918.

When Father Smetana came to St. John's his ability to use the Bohemian language was limited, but practice soon made him proficient in that respect. His efforts in that regard and his genial disposition made him beloved by old and young alike.

Soon after his arrival Father Smetana set out to take the parish census, going from house to house, and visiting all Bohemian families. Among other things he found that,



Father John McNamara

THE REVEREND JOHN McNAMARA, a newly ordained priest, arrived on the same day to succeed Father Smetana, having been appointed temporary administrator of the parish by The Most Reverend Bishop McGavick.

Father McNamara was born at Seneca, Wisconsin, in the year 1896, where he received his rudimentary education. For his classical education he attended Champion College, and for the study of philosophy and theology he attended St. Francis Seminary at Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He was ordained to the priesthood by The Most Reverend Bishop McGavick in June 1923 at Marathon City, Wisconsin. Father McNamara remained at St. John's until June 1924 when the Reverend Francis Boos-Waldeck of Sherry, Wisconsin was appointed his successor at St. John's.

Father Paul Monarski

REVEREND PAUL MONARSKI, the next pastor, arrived in Prairie du Chien to take charge of St. John's parish July 6, 1928. Father Monarski was born at Eau Claire, Wisconsin, January 12, 1897. He received his elementary education in Sacred Heart Parochial School of that city. He made all of his studies preparatory to the priesthood at the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus, Ohio, and was ordained in the chapel of that institution June 11, 1923 by His Excellency the Most Reverend Peter Fumasoni Biondi, D. D., then Apostolic Delegate to the United States, and now Camerlengo to the Holy Father, Pope Pius XII.

Father Monarski was not conversant with the Bohemian language, and for that reason he was not readily acceptable as pastor to some of his parishioners. However, they gradually began to realize that the national character of the parish could not be retained much longer because 1) priests who could speak Bohemian were not readily available, 2) the younger generation was not inclined to keep up the old traditions, and 3) intermarriage made the exclusive use of Bohemian impractical in church as well as in the home. The majority realized also that the younger generation needed to understand the religious instruction more than the older people. Arrangements were made, however, to assure, for the older people, all necessary religious attention. The pastor equipped himself immediately with a sufficient knowledge of Bohemian to enable him to hear confessions in that language in an emergency, and he further secured the services of Father John Prucha, a retired priest living in the city of La Crosse, who has been coming regularly since then, three and four times a year, to accommodate those who preferred to go to confession in Bohemian. In the first years, over one hundred made use of that opportunity. When he came for that purpose in August of this year, only twenty availed themselves of his services. Father Prucha's services

to these few constitute the last remaining vestige of the original Bohemian character of the parish. The needs of a new generation brought about the inevitable change.

However, St. John's parish has not dwindled on this account. On the contrary, it has grown to number about one hundred eighty-five families, in consequence of which the church has become too small. The average attendance at the two Sunday Masses is about six hundred. The church seats two hundred eighty-six with room for about seventy-five children in the balcony. A larger church is evidently needed, and will probably be a reality in the not-too-distant future, since the present typically American character of the parish is an assurance that it will continue to grow.

Material Problems

WHEN Father Monarski came to St. John's the debt on the school was still ten thousand dollars. That and the fact that all the buildings, including the school, were in considerable disrepair, were the first problems of a concrete nature confronting him. The old part of the school was shingled in the summer of 1928, and the roofs on the new part of the school, the church, and the rectory were reconditioned. In the fall a basement was built under the rectory, and a furnace installed. New Stations of the Cross were also acquired for the church.

In 1929 the weekly envelope system was adopted for paying church support. The results were favorable immediately. In the summer one classroom was equipped with new benches.

In 1930 the church windows were repaired.

In 1931 the east and south walls of the school and sisters' quarters were replastered, and new window frames were installed. The classrooms and rooms in the sisters' quarters that were affected by these repairs were re-decorated.

On the eve of Ascension Day 1932, lightning struck the church tower causing about two hundred dollars' damage. The tower had hardly been repaired when lightning



The Present Sanctuary

struck it again in the same place, causing about the same amount of damage which in both cases was covered by insurance. This was repaired and the entire church painted. In the summer of 1932 the sanctuary and altars were redecorated.

In 1933 a new confessional was installed by the Christian Mother's Society.

In 1934 a new furnace was installed in the church and the nave of the church was redecorated. A new furnace was also installed in the school at the cost of six hundred fifty dollars.

In 1936 the sisters' rooms were again decorated.

In 1937 the sanctuary of the church and the school chapel were decorated.

At the parish meeting held January 16, 1938, the pastor called the attention of the congregation to the fact that there were sufficient funds on hand to liquidate the remaining parish debt, and that these funds would be applied to that purpose as soon as payment of the notes be-

came due. He also pointed out that while all of the parish buildings were in fair condition, the rectory was inadequate, inasmuch as one room had to serve as office, study-room and living-room. Frequent callers, especially for convert instructions required better arrangements. The pastor showed drawings to indicate how another room could be added to the old rectory that would serve the purpose if some additional remodeling would be made. After some discussion it was decided to do something about the matter, and a committee was appointed to investigate the feasibility of remodeling the old rectory.

A New Rectory

AT a meeting held January 30, 1938 this committee reported to the parish that it found the remodeling of the old rectory inadvisable, and recommended the building of a new rectory. The recommendation was accepted unanimously. Consequently a building committee was appointed, consisting of the following members: The parish trustees, Cyril A. Plihal, Secretary, and Joseph C. Mara, Treasurer, Emmanuel Rod, John Pintz, Jr., George Konicek and George Polodna.

The Present Rectory



This committee started immediately to do the preparatory work, such as getting the Bishop's approval for the building project, engaging an architect to draw up the plans for the rectory, and getting bids from contractors for its construction. At a meeting held August 14, 1938 the building committee made the following recommendations to the parish: 1) to endorse the Bishop's approval of building a rectory to cost approximately nine thousand dollars; 2) that the new rectory be built on the lot between the old rectory and the church; 3) to accept the plans and specifications for the new rectory as drawn up by John J. Flad, architect, with such corrections and changes as the building committee deemed advisable; 4) to accept the bid of eight thousand seven hundred and ninety-seven dollars made by the general contractors, Konicek and Polodna, for the construction of the new rectory, according to the above mentioned plans and specifications as corrected by the building committee; 5) to approve the construction of a new garage also, the cost of same to be considered extra; 6) to approve the sale of the old rectory to Miss Theresa Falch for the sum of two thousand five hundred dollars. These recommendations were accepted unanimously and their execution was begun immediately.

On August 22nd a number of men began removing the trees that obstructed the building site and on August 29th the contractors began the construction work. Just four months later the rectory was finished. The pastor moved into his new home on January 3, 1939. When the entire building project was finished there remained a debt of two thousand seven hundred and fifty-three dollars.

In 1939 a steel tabernacle, donated by Miss Theresa Falch, was installed on the high altar. New kneelers were installed in the church, and the sanctuary was repainted.

In 1940 a new roof was put on the school, and all the classrooms redecorated.

In 1941 a new electric organ was donated to the parish, the altars were repainted, and the church steeple reshingled.

These were the major improvements made on the

The School

ST. JOHN'S Parish can be justly proud of the work accomplished in the parish school. Its high standard has been recognized in the community for many years. Our pupils have given an excellent account of themselves in the schools of higher education that they attended after leaving St. John's. It is a regular occurrence that our boys and girls appear in the honor groups of these schools.

They have also been consistent winners in various contests held locally and throughout the state, in which they competed with other children of the public, as well as parochial schools.

The programs that have been put on by the pupils of St. John's School at the close of each school year at the Metro Theater, have been outstanding and have consequently attracted general favorable comment. Their latest achievement in this respect was "Tom Thumb Circus", given May 6, 1941.

In these and many other respects, results indicate that, whatever sacrifices were made to maintain St. John's School, they certainly were not made in vain.

The sisters teaching St. John's School for the past several years are Sister Arcadia, Superior, Sister Sophronia and Sister Cyril. Sister Ardonia takes care of their domestic affairs. The enrollment during the last scholastic year was one hundred twenty-eight pupils, twelve of whom graduated in June.

Parish Organizations

THE societies of the parish active at the present time are the Children of Mary for the school children, Knights of the Altar for the altar boys, the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary for the young ladies, Junior Holy Name Society for the high school boys, Senior Holy Name Society for the men, Christian Mother's Society for the married ladies, the Rosary Society for ladies in general, and the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, and Purgatorial Society, also of general membership. The children, young ladies, men

and ladies have their own monthly Communion Sundays. Among the most active of these societies for the material affairs of the parish are first of all the Christian Mother's Sodality, the Young Ladies' Sodality and the Rosary Society. The school children also, under the direction of the sisters, help considerably to raise funds for various parish purposes.

A number of ladies formed three study groups that were active during the past season. They constitute the parish Confraternity of Christian Doctrine.

The School Children's Choir conducted by a Sister, sings regularly at the early Mass on Sundays and on weekdays. The Young Ladies' Choir, also under the direction of a Sister, sings regularly at the Sunday High Mass and on feast days.

In the fall of 1939 a male choir was organized under the direction of the pastor. They have been singing once a month for the men's Communion Mass. The faithfulness of the members indicate that the male choir will be a permanent institution of St. John's Parish.

Conclusion

This concludes the history of St. John's Parish from its beginning to the present time. However, a record of facts does not indicate in any adequate measure the sacrifices required of the pastors as well as the people to carry on the work. Even so, possibly more could have been accomplished. However that may be, we feel that there is sufficient reason to mark a half century of parish life by proper celebration. Accordingly it has been planned to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of St. John's Parish officially on Sunday, October 12, 1941 with appropriate church services in the morning, a parish dinner at noon and a bazaar in the afternoon and evening.

All indications are that the Golden Jubilee year will be a memorable one also for the fact, that, when it comes to a close, St. John's Parish will have liquidated all its debts, and a small sum will be on hand for a new church, which we are confident, will be a reality in the not too distant future.

PARISH ORGANIZATION

Trustees

Cyril A. Plihal, Secretary
Joseph C. Mara, Treasurer

St. John's Ushers

Joseph C. Mara, Chief Usher

Vincent Benda	Emmanuel Kozelka	Henry Polodna
John Bohonek	Joseph Lechnir	Raymund Polodna
Fred Gores	Alfred Lechnir	Jack Pohlman
Dominic Jerome	Dr. T. MacHolda	Vincent Pribyl
Henry Kozelka	Andrew Novak	Emmanuel Rod

Holy Name Society — Senior Branch

155 Members

Emmanuel Rod, President
Vince Benda, Vice-President
B. A. Kennedy, Secretary
John Pintz, Treasurer

Holy Name Society — Junior Branch

31 Members

Howard Mezera, President
Clement Wachuta, Secretary

Christian Mothers' Confraternity

79 Members

Mrs. Art Roth, President
Mrs. Geo. Polodna, Secretary
Mrs. Noonan Campbell, Treasurer

Young Ladies' Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary

37 Members

Marie Long, President
Alice Lechnir, Vice-President
Dorothy Wachuta, Secretary
Rose Kalina, Treasurer

Rosary Society

22 Members

Ann Pribyl, Secretary and Treasurer

St. John's Study Club

Mrs. Fred Schrader, Leader

Mrs. L. Pritchett	Mrs. John Zeman	Mrs. Geo. Konicek
Mrs. John Pintz	Mrs. Art Roth	Mrs. Felix Bohonek
Mrs. Fred Pohlman	Mrs. Geo. Polodna	Mrs. Emmanuel Rod
	Mrs. C. B. Peterson	Mrs. Vince Benda

St. Rita's Study Club

Mrs. Wm. Schneider, Leader

Mrs. Mike Maha, Secretary

Miss Anna Pribyl	Mrs. Lester Stringer
Mrs. Nooner Campbell	Mrs. Francis Schneider
Mrs. Fred Gores	Mrs. Lester O'Brien
Mrs. Cyril Plihal	Mrs. Lowell Tarrence
Mrs. Art Kapinus	Mrs. Wm. Bunders

Mater Dolorosa Study Club

Mrs. Joseph Mara, Leader

Mrs. Alfred Lechnir	Mrs. Mary Johnson
Mrs. Edw. Benish, Sr.	Mrs. Jos. Novacek, Jr.
Mrs. Edw. Benish, Jr.	Mrs. Frank Stevens
Mrs. Edw. Wachuta	Mrs. Anthony Fuka
Mrs. Jos. Marvin	Mrs. John Fealy
Mrs. Stasia Sheehy	Mrs. Henry Novy
	Mrs. John Bohonek

Members of the Young Ladies' Choir

Sister M. Sophronia, Directress

Dorothy Wachuta	Catherine Lechnir	Lillian Novak
Bernadette Valley	Betty Valley	Anna Marie Novak
Alice Lechnir	Anna Konichek	Lorraine Kapinus
Mary Kavanagh	Elsie Konichek	Rose Robejsek

Members of the Male Choir

Edw. Kavanagh, Organist

Lawrence Strauman	John Polodna	Frederick Schrader
Charles Wachuta	Leo Youngblood	Felix Bohonek
George Polodna	John Pintz	Robert Zahn
Vincent Polodna	Howard Mezera	Robert Gores

Children of Mary

122 Members

Knights of the Altar

ST. JOHN'S UNIT

47 Members

Robert Balk, President
Joseph Vopelak, Secretary
Donald Benish, Treasurer

PUPILS OF ST. JOHN'S SCHOOL

Grade 8

Robert Balk	John Lechnir	Marguerite MacDonald
Alfred Fischer	William Panka	Rosemary Panka
George Kalina	Geneva Lynett	Helen Tarrence
John Koresh		

Grade 7

Donald Benish	Kenneth Novey	Mary Jo Gores
Robert Bohonek	Richard Rod	Ursula Kavanagh
LaVerne Jelinek	Gaylord Schaufenbil	Marion Lorenz
Robert Koresh	Joseph Vopelak	Mary Robejsek
Bernard Lynett	Cecilia Benda	Veronica Vopelak
Andrew Mezera	Clara Ann Enders	Dolores White

Grade 6

Clifford Benish	Kenneth Lechnir	Milda Ann Pohlman
Robert Granzow	Arnold Mara	Barbara Ann Reiser
Paul Kavanagh	Theresa Mezera	Teresa Tarrence
Frank Kopet	Jeanette Peterson	Marjorie Weighner

Grade 5

Jack Cejka
Richard Fischer
Michael Garrity
James Glynn
Joseph Granzow
Francis Greene
Patrick McKillip
Charles Pritchett

Reginald Rod
Joseph Tarrence
Edward Vopelak
Robert White
Greta Anderson
Naomi Dolan
Anna Marie Enke
Marguerite Gores

Sally Ann Kaber
Nancee Karnopp
Ruby Lynett
Peggy Marousek
Margaret Mary Mezera
Marcella Panka
Patricia Ann Panka
Rosemary Selch

Grade 4

Clement J. Blum
Gregory Jelinek
Joseph Konichek
Robert Konichek
William Konichek
Donald Novey
James Reilly

Clarence Robejsek
Rose Jean Benda
Loretta Lechnir
Mary MacDonald
Theresa Mezera
Mary Ellen Peterson
Mary Joan Polodna

Joan Richard
Lorraine Scheibel
Nancy Schneider
Phyllis Vopelak
Virginia Vopelak

Grade 3

Denis Benish
Robert Bouzek
Kenneth Bunders
Franklin Fischer
Adrian Jelinek

John Kavanagh
Vergil Lynett
Timothy O'Brien
Roger Steiner
Dorothy Greene

Vera Kopet
Phyllis Mezera
Jeanne Panka
Lois Smethurst

Grade 2

Edward Dolan
Tony Konichek
Jackie Lechnir
Aelred Mezera
Edward Mezera
John Reiser

Ronald Rod
Richard Stark
Jackie Stevens
Patricia Lanke
Nan McPhee
Shirley Pettera

Ann Polodna
Rose Ann Rink
Anna Selch
Dolores Tarrence

Grade 1

Gerry Bunders
John Feeney
James Greene
Mortimer Kavanagh
Donald Kasperek
Joseph Kopet
Allen Lanke
Richard Lanke

Joseph Ludvik
Patrick Lynett
Thomas McGrath
James Schneider
Rodney Smethurst
Richard Stevens
Edmund Tarrence
Betty Dolan

Joan Feeney
Patsy Fischer
Jean Granzow
Sharon Key
Marie Ludvik
Darlene McKillip
Maryann Schloegl
Joann Stark

Life of St. John Nepomucene

(According to Rev. Alban Butler)

ST. JOHN was born at Nepomuc, a small town in Bohemia, about the year 1330. Because he was regarded by his parents as the fruit of their prayers, gratitude prompted them to consecrate their son to the service of God. Even his early education was directed toward that end. In his youth he was sent to the University of Prague where he distinguished himself in philosophy, divinity and canon law, in which two last faculties he proceeded doctor.

After his ordination to the priesthood he was given charge of the parish of Our Lady of Tein. King Wenceslaus, the ruler of Bohemia, hearing high commendations of John, summoned him to preach the Lenten sermons at the court. The Empress was touched by the divine unction of the holy preacher and chose him for the director of her conscience.

While she was loved passionately by Wenceslaus, the fierceness of his temper and his unreasonable jealousy gave her much to suffer. Being very devout she sought consolation in her religion in which she was assisted by the saintly John Nepomuc.

When suspicion of sedition on the part of his brother-in-law aroused a jealous suspicion also of his wife's feelings toward him, Wenceslaus determined to extort from John Nepomuc the disclosure of her sacramental confessions to him by which means the king expected to learn the private sentiments she entertained concerning him, and also any knowledge she may have concerning her brother's intrigue.

Being approached by the Emperor with this impious demand, John sought to explain in respectful manner how injurious such a sacrilege would be to reason and religion. Although rankled by this rebuff, the king dissembled his anger at first, but St. John's intercession in behalf of a servant who had caused the king's displeasure, became a pretext for an outburst of rage against himself. For this so-called offense John was thrown into a dungeon,

but he was aware that the true cause of his incarceration was his former refusal to disclose the sacramental confessions of the Empress. Nor did Wenceslaus longer make a mystery of it. He tried again, at first by promises, to elicit from John the secrets he suspected him to know. But when John remained firm in his refusal to break the seal of confession, the king ordered him to be tortured on the rack and tormented in other ways, hoping that physical sufferings would wring from John what seductive promises could not accomplish, but to no avail.

After a final, futile attempt to force John to satisfy his sacrilegious curiosity by revealing the confessions of the Empress to him, the king ordered him to be bound, hand and foot, and thrown into the river. He was accordingly cast into the Muldow River from the bridge that joins Great and Little Prague on the vigil of Ascension Day, May 16, 1383.

St. John's remains rest in the cathedral at Prague, and on his tomb can be read this epitaph, engraved in stone: "Under this stone lies the body of the most venerable and most glorious thaumaturgus, John Nepomuc, doctor, canon of his church and confessor of the Empress, who, because he had faithfully kept the seal of confession, was cruelly tormented and thrown from the bridge of Prague into the river Muldow by order of Wenceslaus IV, Emperor and King of Bohemia, son of Charles IV, 1383".

Many miracles, beginning at the first moment of his death, have been public testimony of John's favor with God. On April 14, 1719, the saint's tomb, where his body had lain for three hundred thirty years, was opened. The flesh was disintegrated but the bones were entire and perfectly joined together. His tongue was found fresh and free from corruption as if the saint had just expired.

St. John Nepomuc had been honored in Bohemia as a martyr from the time of his death, but to make his veneration more authentic and universal his canonization was demanded. Pope Innocent the XIII decreed his beatification in 1721, and his solemn canonization was published by Pope Benedict the XIII in 1729.