

St. Stanislaus Church-History of
Talk by Josephine Kukowska 5-26-62

(April 2, 1871)

91 years ago, a group of Polish pioneers in the city of Winona held a meeting to consider the possibility of organizing a parish and building a church of their own. The request for such a meeting came from men(4) within this group. At this momentous meeting it was decided that a church was to be built as soon as possible. Officers were elected and solicitors of money were named.

The response for money was generous enough to purchase lots 5 and 6 in block 16 of the Hamilton Addition for the sum of \$350 which was paid in two installments of \$200 on April 11, 1871, and \$150 on May 9, 1871. The plan for their church was obtained at LaCrosse on August 22, 1871, and by February 5, 1872, a total sum of \$950 was paid on the original house of worship. Among other expenses, a premium of \$18 was paid on a fire insurance policy on September 24, 1872.

Altho the church was ready for dedication in 1872, it was not dedicated until June, 1873, due to the absence of a resident pastor. At this same time there was the blessing of the bells for which there were three collections.

Rev. A. Plut helped the parish pioneers with their financial matters and Rev. Francis Szulak, S.J., who worked among the Polish people in Wisconsin and Minnesota, wrote a list of parish regulations on Dec. 20, 1874, at the house of the Most Reverend T.L. Grace, Bishop of St. Paul, Minnesota.

From this humble origin evolved one of the largest congregations in the diocese.

The early history shows drive toward a well-defined objective. These Polish Catholic immigrants first came to the city of Winona about

the year 1857. They were severely handicapped because they had no knowledge of English, consequently they derived very little spiritual benefit from the sermons at St. Thomas, the only Catholic parish in the city of Winona at that time. They came from the section of Poland which at that time was controlled by Prussia; they were compelled to learn the German language in the schools of their native land. When they arrived in Winona, they found no church where the word of God could be preached in their native tongue so they attended services at St. Joseph's where they could more or less, gain same benefit from the services in the German language. The Polish community of 100 families lost little time in turning their efforts toward the construction of a church where they could worship and have the word of God preached in their own language. At this meeting called on April 2, 1871 there was a unanimous decision to organize a parish under the name and patronage of St. Stanislaus Kostka. A little more than one year later the first Polish church was ready for dedication. It was a small frame building located on the present streets of Carimona and Fourth.

Dedicated in June 1873

Number of Polish families increased rapidly.

In 1883 an addition which doubled capacity of church.

Pastor Byzewski built 1 room schoolhouse and enlarged it later to 6 classrooms for Sisters of Notre Dame who first took charge on Sept. 5, 1887. An enrollment of 230.

A new convent in 1892(Sept.)

The enlarged church no longer than enough to take care of increasing numbers who came to settle in Winona in such great numbers between 1880 & 1890. Congregation faced a decision: to divide the parish or to build a new church of much larger proportions. The parish pioneers

decided to build a large church.

Old structure was torn down and removed in spring of 1894. New structure took 18 months to complete cornerstone was laid on Oct. 28, 1894. On Thanksgiving Day, 1895, the new church was dedicated by Most Rev. Joseph B. Cotter, Bishop of Winona. This church of pressed red brick and stone originally seated 1800-now seats 1600. Evaluation in 1894 was \$86,000.

In April 1898 land was purchased and plans made for construction of 12 room rectory which was completed in October, 1898.

In 1905 about 100 families left to organize congregation of St. Casimir.

In 1905 a new modern school was erected which has 17 large classrooms.

13 Gold stars on Parish's service flag-World War I.

324 members served their country with honor.

16 on Parish's second service Flag-World War II-478 answered their country's call and served with distinction.