

HISTORY ST. MARY MAGDALENE PARISH  
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ST MARY MAGDALENE CONGREGATION OF WAUPACA

MISSION CHURCH 1890

The early Catholics of Waupaca were without a church and some attended Mass at Lanark and at Manawa.

On March 30, 1890, the doors of St. Mary Magdalene were first opened by the Rev. P. J. Dillion, resident pastor of Lebanon. The first members purchased the church on Division Street, now owned by the Seventh Day Adventists, from the Congregation Church for \$1,000. The early families were John Hearn, Ignaus Chady, Wincell E. Chady, J. W. Heany, J. W. McCullough, Martin and John Wallace, Matt Weisen, Emma and Mary E. Grossen, John Gallagher, Mrs. Holmes and Luce family. Most of these families were of Irish descent. From July 1890 to December 1891, Rev. O'Brien came from Manawa. From December 1891 to July 1892 a vacancy occurred at Manawa. During this time, Waupaca was served by priests from Custer, Portage County, one being Father Schwartzmeir. Father Lorigan resumed services in July 1892 until November 1893, when Father F. X. Steinbrecher was appointed pastor of Lebanon with missions at Waupaca, Northport, Weyauwega and Manawa. Father M. H. Clifford served from 1895 to 1897, when Father F. Vollebreght became pastor of the Manawa church. He served Waupaca, still a mission. The Rev. Joseph Tiepel took over the duties in 1899. He was succeeded by the Rev. H. Gellenbeck in 1900 and the Rev. J. Darche in 1901.

EARLY CHURCH

Waupaca ceased to be a mission on March 28, 1902, when the Rev. A. B. Billion became the first resident pastor. The same year Ss. Peter & Paul of Weyauwega became a mission of Waupaca. Also, the Veteran's Home (now King) was served by Waupaca. Father Billion remained until December 1903 when he was succeeded by Rev. Wm. B. Mortell who served until December 1919. Rev. J. C. Short followed Father Mortell and during his pastorate the house on the corner of Badger and Division Streets, now the site of our present church, was purchased. This house served as the rectory and weekday chapel until 1932. Rev. A. S. Dusold served from April 1922 until September 24, 1924. On this date Rev. A. O. Rielander became the pastor with Weyauwega and King as missions. Father Rielander inspired his congregation of then about 45 families to begin raising funds for a new church. Their dream was realized when the church and rectory were dedicated by Bishop Paul F. Rhode, Bishop of the Green Bay Diocese, on November 20, 1932. Father Rielander left on September 14, 1937, to serve as

Chaplain at King. Rev. Frank Schoettl came to the parish that September and two years later was succeeded by Rev. D. L. Krembs. During Father Krembs' pastorate, the interior of the church was completed with the installation of altars, organ and stained glass windows. Upon the transfer of Father Krembs to Manitowoc in December 1954, Rev. Michael S. Wasniewski became our pastor and served until October 1969 when he retired from active ministry. During his pastorate the C.C.D. (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) School was built and dedicated by Bishop Aloysius J. Wycislo on June 25, 1967. The C.C.D. building furnished ample room for the catechism classes on Saturday which are taught by men and women of the parish. A new altar was donated by Dr. W. H. Remmel in 1967 and marked the change in the sacrifice of the Mass being offered with priest facing the congregation, Mass in English, and many other changes which were adopted. Pews were refinished, the sanctuary and sacristies were carpeted. During the time of Father Wasniewski, a Blessed Sacrament Prep Seminary was established in 1950 five miles West of Waupaca and the priests and brothers assisted in our parish until they closed in March of 1971 and the property was sold later. This was a great loss to our parish which was growing too rapidly to be adequately served by one priest. Father Michael Bablitch became our pastor October 1969 and was to remain until June 1974, when he resigned for reasons of health to take a smaller parish. His biggest project was the acquiring of 4 properties adjoining our church property on South State Street to be used for parking.

Upon the resignation of Father Bablitch in 1974, Rev. Michael J. Clifford from St. Bernadette's in Appleton was assigned to Waupaca. It is interesting to note the name of Father Michael H. Clifford in our early history (1895-1897) was a great uncle of our present pastor, the latter being named for him. Father Clifford has completed the parking lot project, redecorated the church and rearranged the sanctuary to conform to the new liturgy. A Leadership weekend was held in the Fall of 1974. From this came a Planning Committee and Steering Committee for a Parish Council. The Steering Committee formulated the Constitution for the Parish Council which was formally voted approval by the entire parish on September 21, 1975. A Nominating Committee was formed seeking nominations for the 7 positions on the Parish Council with elections at the end of October and the first official Parish Council meeting taking place in November 1975.

#### SOCIETIES

The women organized prior to 1900 to care for the needs of the altar, made vestments for the altar boys and supplied the choir with hymnals. Later they became St. Mary's Altar Society and had many fund raising projects as well as taking care of the church. In 1940 the Altar Society became the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin, a spiritual organization. They continued their work of church support, added to it Devotion to the Blessed Mother and also engaged in the activities of the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women through affiliation with the New London Deanery. Mrs. Sidney Miller served as Deanery President for two years and other members have acted as Deanery Chairmen. Membership is 129 active and 5 honorary. During the time of Father Bablitch, about 1971, the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin was discontinued and the members formed into study groups called Guilds. The main organization is known as "The Women of St. Mary Magdalene." Total membership is 116 divided into 5 guilds as of September 1975. Some 450 women belong to our parish. Honorary members are Mrs. Genevieve Christofferson, Colby Wisconsin; Mrs. Margaret Kehl, Amherst, Wisconsin; and Mrs. Herman Knight, Mrs. Clifford Hales and Mrs. Agnes Bemis all of Waupaca.

Other societies now active are the Holy Name first organized by Rev. A. O. Rieler about 1925. They were joined by the men of St. Peter & Paul, Weyauwega, and attended Holy Name rallies throughout the County. Mr. Albert Kreeger was one of the charter members. When Father Krembs reorganized the Society in December 1939, there were 53 members with E. J. Hart as President. Dr. J. H. Brueckner was President in 1968 with a membership of 70. The Holy Name Society was discontinued. The Knights of Columbus Council No. 3432 held its first meeting July 9, 1951, with Tom (Carroll) Lewis as the first Grand Knight and membership numbered 39. In 1960 the Council was named for the late Charles Dombrowski, an early promoter. Mr. Maurice Freiburger was District Deputy from July 1960 to 1964 and membership increased to 77. Lewis Schroeder was Grand Knight. In 1975 Walter Kolonick is Grand Knight, they meet regularly once a month, and membership is now 107. Arthur Dushak is the present Financial Secretary serving in that capacity since 1954.

#### RELIGIOUS VOCATIONS

Two daughters of Mr. & Mrs. John Bauer, Sr., are nuns. They are Sister Anthony of the Monastery of our Lady of Charity, Green Bay; and Sister Bernard of the Order of the Sorrowful Mother, Port Washington. Mr. & Mrs. E. J. Hart are the parents of Sister Ann Mary, Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity, Manitowoc. Rev. William J. Rimmel, S.D.S., ordained September 9, 1967, the son of Dr. & Mrs. W. H. Rimmel, is the first priest of the parish. He celebrated his first Mass for the parish on September 16, 1967.

#### CHOIR

St. Mary Magdalene's first organist was Mrs. Mary Hearn Leahy. Later Mrs. James Carew played. The organist and choir director for the longest period was Mrs. Marie Haebig Osborn who after 50 years resigned in 1974. Stephen Kempken succeeded her.

#### GEMETERY

St. Mary Magdalene cemetery was purchased by officials of the congregation of Waupaca on March 4, 1891, for the sum of \$125. They were the most Rev. F. X. Kaster, D.D., Bishop of Green Bay; Rev. John Schwartzmeyer, pastor; and J. W. McCullough and John Gallagher, trustees of St. Mary Magdalene Congregation. In May 1960 an acre of land north of the present cemetery was purchased by the Gemetery Association for \$150. A total of \$1,684.00 was expended that year to prepare it for a burial ground. Dr. W. H. Rimmel was president. Special mention should be given some of the early members for their zeal and work in establishing a suitable burial ground. They were the Chady families; Mrs. Genevieve Heaney Christofferson, who served as president, prepared a plat which is still in use; Mrs. Mae Hopkins Blechel and Mrs. Clifford Hales who served as treasurers; and Mrs. Albert Kreeger who served as secretary. Under the guidance of Father Bahlitch, and with the cooperation of the Gemetery Board, the cemetery improvements which were made include a new irrigation system, fence, tool shed and name sign - plus the purchase of 9 adjoining acres from Raymond Campbell for \$1,200.00. Dr. W. H. Rimmel deserves special mention for his most faithful and concerned interest in the cemetery. Members of the Kenneth Forrey family have been excellent caretakers for several years.