A Brief Historical Sketch of St. Casimir's Congregation of Northeim, WI. Souvenir Book of the Diamond Jubilee of St. Casimir's Congregation at Northeim (Newton), Wisconsin. CAP at Orchard Lake.

St. Casimir's Congregation at Northeim, Wisconsin according to all reliable sources is the fourth oldest Polish Catholic parish in the State of Wisconsin. ("The Catholic Church in Wisconsin", published by T.J. Sullivan, Milwaukee, Wis., 1895 - 1898, under the auspices of the Catholic Hierarchy in Wisconsin. - St. Casimir's Congregation in Northeim, however, is described there in a cursory way up to 1898. Just a general historical sketch is found there, with a few dates concerning the organization of the congregation and a list of the priests who had charge of this parish up to that date; quite many of the Polish names of these priests, however, are spelled erroneously. We are giving the correct spelling of all these names as found in the Church Records.)

It is located inland off the shores of Lake Michigan, one half mile north of the village of Northeim, and one and one half miles northeast of Newton RR. Station, and seven miles south of the city of Manitowoc. Heretofore, nobody as yet attempted to write a historical sketch of this parish; at least, as far as the author investigated, he did not come across any historical fragments of this kind; neither did he find any ready-made historical notes on this matter.

The assumed task, then, to write a reliable and brief HISTORICAL SKETCH OF ST. CASIMIR'S CONGREGATION OF NORTHEIM, is connected with more than one or two difficulties. In order to do justice to all parties concerned in this HISTORICAL SKETCH, we must strictly adhere to the general rules of writing a critical history; "The historian should not dare to say something false, nor should he refrain from telling the truth" (Cicero. De orat., 11,15, repeated by Pope Leo XIII, ep. "De Studies" etc., as in manuscript).

In view of this fundamental principle, then, all the historical facts herein adduced will be based on reliable sources, having reference to St. Casimir's Congregation at Northeim, Wisconsin, whether ecclesiastical or civil in character. We shall also be guided by the still existent old Church Records (Baptismal, Marriage, and Burial), and finally, by a genuine and uncontested oral tradition of the old pioneers, some of whom are still alive and in fact quite often like to tell some of those reminiscences to their grandchildren. In fact, all history comes down to us by oral tradition. (Several official documents issued by the diocesan authorities in behalf of this Congregation, especially the transfers of the respective Pastors; also the Annual Reports forwarded to the Diocesan Chancery Office; Recorded DEEDS in behalf of St. Casimir's Congregation; All these Church Records are still well preserved; some of them have been recently bound anew; The authors of this History took great pains in gathering all reliable facts concerning St. Casimir's Congregation from several trustworthy men, born and brought up at Northeim, so as to publish a genuine and critical History of St. Casimir's Congregation.)
Art. 1 ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF NORTHEIM

There is nothing definite in history about the early beginning of our present Northeim; neither is there a trace to tell us the reason why this name had been chosen in preference to another. As the etymology suggests, it seems to be rather of a German origin. Most probably some of the very first settlers in this part of the country were Germans, and for this reason called our present locality by that name. In any event, up to the year 1860, this small place of ours seems not to have been so very important as to designate it at least with a small dot on the map of Wisconsin.

From Kruszka,"Polish History in America", however, we quote the following item about Northeim: "As early as 1861, Polish immigrants began to settle and make their homes in the primeval forests among the Indians in that locality which today is called Northeim. They purchased small parcels of land with the blessed hope that this good soil would provide their daily bread. In the course of time, these very first pioneers induced their friends and relatives, who were either in this country already, or yet abroad, to come and join them in their new habitat in order to bring about a more congenial and more pleasant environment to live in". Thus before long, this entire vicinity along the shores of Lake Michigan became densely populated. In time, these thrifty people acquired some more land in order to enlarge their original possession. The difficulty, however, as a rule with all first settlers, was to first clear the land of brush and timber in order to put it under cultivation. Timber and log of various species was plentiful. Logging was done on a big scale. There were the "Northeim Centerville Piers", from which lumber and logs were shipped to various points. The situation looked very hopeful, because from these financial sources they could realize some cash or at least a barter for which they could secure the necessary farm-implements with which to till the soil.

Not contented with bread alone, these pioneers sought something more sublime. As progress was made in essential contingencies of the material part of life, they also gave thought about the Supreme Giver from whom all good things come. They realized that a suitable place of God's worship in their midst was still lacking in order to make this place what it should be. It is true, that God is everywhere, but these pious people also knew that they should provide for a suitable place where they all could meet and worship God in a fitting manner. This heartfelt desire was discussed quite frequently whenever they came together for some kind of social meeting. And this noble aspiration became in the course of time a blessed reality.

The popular tradition has it that at a christening-party for Frank Leszcz, the son of John Leszcz, the idea was conceived to organize a congregation of their own, and erect a tiny church for the start. Being pious Catholics, they knew very well that, having a suitable place for celebrating the holy sacrifice of the Mass, they could implore a more abundant God's blessing upon themselves and the entire locality.

Art. 2. HISTORICAL FACTS ABOUT ST. CASIMIR'S CONGREGATION

St. Casimir's Congregation was organized in the year 1868. The exact date, however, on which the people held a meeting for the purpose of starting a separate church and organizing a parish of their own, cannot be definitely established. The first baptism registered in the Baptismal Records bears the date of May 21, 1868. It reads: "On May 21, 1868, I baptized Elizabeth, born April 20th,
the daughter of Peter and Mary Brachman. The sponsors were: John Hieps and Elisabeth Sheer”. (Signed) Rev. Bonaventure Buczynski, Pastor.

There is, however, no other historical indication that this baptism was administered already in some kind of temporary church at Northeim. In those days, the priests had the permission to use private houses as centers for divine worship, said Mass occasionally and administered the Sacraments to the aged and sick people who could not go to the neighboring churches, due to bad roads and lack of transportation. A team of oxen, owned by a farmer, was considered in those days a big fortune; a team of horses and some kind of light four-wheeled carriage was looked upon as the property of a well established landlord and a leading man in the community.

The oldest civil Records, a registered DEED, shows that Ignatz Ramion and John Krysiak deeded a parcel of land for church purposes, altogether 3 acres of land. It was on this piece of land, that a tiny framed building was erected, known as the first Catholic church of Northeim.

This edifice did not differ much from the rest of the nearby farm-houses. Just a wooden cross, made out of two pieces of hewn board, placed on the front gable, made it as a distinctive sign of the house of God. According to all reliable reports, supported by the still existent Church Records, the people had only occasional services in this church, attended to by the priest who also later served St. Mary’s church at Manitowoc.

Due to the scarcity of priests at that time, the people of a newly organized parish had to be satisfied with occasional services only when a visiting priest came through this part of the country. Quite frequently, in later years, on Sundays and holydays of obligation, our pioneers came to St. Mary’s church at Manitowoc, where the people were more numerous, had more opportunity to earn better wages in the sawmills, some small factories already existing, and for this reason could afford to have a more steady priest in their midst, as well as regular divine services.

We cannot overlook the historical fact, that up to March 3, 1868, all Wisconsin belonged to the diocese of Milwaukee, having only one Bishop and some thirty-four priests to cover the entire territory and arrange occasional services for the Catholic people and the various scattered communities. (“The Oldest Catholic Church In Wisconsin.”, pp. 460-461: “The parish of St. Boniface, a mixed congregation of German and Irish, was established at Manitowoc, Wis. in 1853, and on March 15 of the same year the Rev. H. J. Nuyts, S.S. Crucis, began erecting a small frame church.” - It was therefore, also this tiny first church to which our people of Northeim belonged. For this reason we have to search for the oldest records of baptisms, marriages and funerals of our people of Northeim in St. Boniface Church.)

There were no concrete highways as yet; not even passable gravel roads. A mere cut through the dense woods and underbrush, along a former Indian trail, part of which was quite often a poor combination of half-rotten logs, stumps and rocks in between, these were the former highways; there was no railroad transportation as yet. The quickest way of getting from one community to another was only on horseback, or paddling a crude home-made canoe on the waterways, connecting the then populated places. But even this kind of transportation was hampered by the abundant snowdrifts on land, and thick ice of the waterways during the long winter months at that time in Wisconsin.

Besides these inconveniences of travel, a priest at that time was appointed as pastor at large for several smaller Catholic communities which today form one or even two counties in Wisconsin.
(Up to 1868, v.g. the present Cathedral parish of Green Bay extended North as far as the boundary line of Upper Michigan; East as far as the shores of Lake Michigan; South as far as Milwaukee County, and West as far as the present boundaries of the State of Wisconsin.)

This historical incident, then, will explain to the reader the reason why St. Casimir's congregation was quite often deprived of a permanent pastor.

**Art. III. CHARTER MEMBERS OF ST. CASIMIR CONGREGATION**

The present generation of our community will be interested, we believe, to see the names of their grandfathers or relatives, figuring on the original list as charter-members of our congregation. *(Old Record Book No. 1 of St. Casimir's Church, Northeim. Although somewhat eaten up by bookworms, it is still preserved and legible.)*


**CHAPTER II. SPECIAL HISTORICAL EVENTS**

*Of Interest To The Parishioners Of Northeim From 1868 To 1943*

All history is interesting, because as Cicero defines it: "History is the witness of time, the light of truth, the memory of life, and a teacher of life." History tells us how people of other times lived; how they battled for home and their existence; what culture they possessed; what struggles they had to make for the upkeep of their homes and families; what they believed in; what works of culture and education they erected in their communities; and finally what lasting achievement was theirs.

While compiling the history of St. Casimir's parish at Northeim we cannot overlook the principal historical facts: religious, political, commercial and social, which are so intimately connected with the growth of the community in this great country of opportunities. Northeim always had, and today possesses some of those outstanding marks which make it a friendly peace-loving community.

Our HISTORICAL SKETCH of ST. CASIMIR'S CONGREGATION would be barren and deprived of historical interest without mentioning at least some of the special events which occurred in the long interval of the last seventy-five years.

**ART. I. The First Church Destroyed by Fire.**

All writers of various creeds agree that even a small, tiny country church inspires new life into the hearts of the worshippers who in any way help in erecting it. Quite often, it is only with a great
sacrifice that a small band of pioneers can afford to build a church. They look upon a tiny country church as the most fitting place to worship God, the Giver of all things, according to the dictates of their hearts. They are only too glad to meet together on Sundays in order to praise the Lord, to assist at Holy Mass, and to listen to a priest's sermon. They are given thus an opportunity to forget for a few hours about their daily work and their hardships of daily family life.

It is also Sunday, when people from the entire district meet their relatives, friends and make new acquaintances with some newly arrived settlers. The divine services are finished; yet, the parishioners are not in a particular hurry to go home. Especially on a bright and warm Sunday, there we see a group of men, talking about the growth of the crop; over there, we see John, Joe, Elmer and several others of their friends in a lively discussion about politics. Down in the basement of the church, the mothers and young ladies of the parish are holding their scheduled meetings, paying their monthly or quarterly society's dues, planning for a parish social or a bazaar etc.

It is the church which gathers the people on Sundays together and makes out of them one well organized parochial family. In fact, it is the church which becomes a center of religious, social and community activities.

This was also the trend of life and happiness of our early pioneers at St. Casimir's parish. For twelve long years, they came to their first erected church. Although it was tiny and of a humble construction, being only a frame-structure, yet, every year they made some improvements within and outside, in order to make it a fitting house of God. On July 21, 1880, however, their heartfelt joy turned into a deep sorrow. Their beloved church was destroyed by fire. This loss crippled the entire congregation and its community-life for some time.

Art II. The Erection of a New Church 1880-1881

For nearly one year, the parishioners of Northeim were deprived of a church. Divine services, however, on Sundays were held in the parish school house. The oral tradition is supported by the historical fact: The Church-Records show a continuance of two priests among these good people of Northeim. The Revs. J. Musielewicz and Arnetus Goch administered several baptisms, and burials during this interval, as proven by their signatures in the respective Records.

The parishioners felt keenly the loss of their first church. But come what may, they had borne patiently the burden of the day. Never depressed in spirit and sacrifice, they held a parish meeting on the third Sunday after the fire, that is, on August 18, 1880, for the express purpose of erecting a new and larger church. In the meantime they had ample time to discuss among themselves in private gatherings at their homes what kind of an edifice they contemplated to erect, how much each family should or could contribute towards the building-fund, how much and what work precisely could be performed by the people themselves in the form of a free contribution by each farmer etc. When the appointed day for a special parish meeting arrived, there was a unanimous vote to erect a new brick church 70 x 40 feet, with a steeple 80 feet high. A special building committee was selected with the instruction to solicit the necessary funds, to let the contracts, and to assist the pastor with the supervision of carrying out the plans.
The exact cost of this structure is not known, because the major part of hand-labor, the hauling of the building material, much lumber, brick, stones and sand came as donations from the wealthier families. *(According to our present rough figuring, this church would have cost at least some thirty thousand dollars. Even today it is one of the finest country churches, well preserved and solid.)*

The fragmentary Records also reveal that the majority of the families, then belonging to this congregation, had contributed a goodly sum of between $50.00 and $100.00 each in cash, which at that time was considered a fortune. Labor at that time was cheap, and money was hard to obtain.

The new church was completed somewhere around the middle of July, 1881, and dedicated by the Most Rev. M. Heiss, Archbishop of Milwaukee, to whose jurisdiction at that time Northeim and the entire county of Manitowoc belonged. The popular tradition has it that the dedication of the church occurred during the harvest time.

It is also to be noted that at that time the congregation consisted of many more families than it ever did thereafter. In about the year 1895, there were forty-eight families on the Church Records, thirty-eight of whom were Polish and the rest German. This incident also explains why priests, attending this parish, had to know these two languages sufficiently in order to accommodate all the people.

According to oral tradition, at one time this congregation numbered nearly twice as many families that is, between 1875 and 1890, after the new church had been erected and a parochial school had been opened. But as time went on, many settlers disposed of their farms and moved away to the larger cities where they earned more money and thus improved their living conditions.

At present, the congregation consists of thirty-five contributing families.

**Art. III. St. Casimir's Parochial School.**

Mention was made above about a larger number of parishioners and also about a parochial school at Northeim. Credit for this achievement must be given to the Rev. Simon Wieczorek, whose very efficient pastorate is recorded from Dec. 1, 1874 until January 16, 1877. It was he who erected a new and modern parsonage at Northeim. Upon the erection of a new priest's house, the former residence was remodeled and converted into a school house. At that time, according to a reliable historical source, published some 37 years ago, it is stated that some eighty pupils attended this parish school. And due to the fact that by all statisticians one child per family gives us the approximate average of families of the respective locality, for this reason our statement above, concerning the number of about eighty families at that time belonging to St. Casimir's parish, is historically corroborated. Briefly, considering all the circumstances of time, persons and place, Northeim became within eight years from its foundation a well established, progressive and flourishing community.

St. Casimir’s school at Northeim was a blessed reality of the good and generous parishioners. They themselves were denied this God-given right of attending a free school, and receiving an opportune education in their homeland under the dictatorial rule of their oppressors. Most of them had to live through the religious persecutions at that time in Prussia and Russia. With profound sorrow in their hearts, they preferred to leave their parents, their relatives, their properties and everything sacred to their memories, and migrate to a strange land, where they had to start anew to
build their homes and raise their families, to work hard and toil in sweat and fatigue. Yet, this new land became for them a God-given land of the free, where everybody may worship God Almighty according to the dictates of his heart, where people may build their own churches and schools for making out of their children God-fearing and law-abiding citizens.

Although a mixed congregation of Poles and Germans, nevertheless there was no trouble whatsoever, when there was a question about opening up a parish school, of supporting it, and sending their children to the same for a religious instruction. Even now, all the Catholic families although of diverse nationalities, live in peace and harmony, love their parish church, and support it according to their means.

**Art. IV. St. Casimir's School a Center of Education and Various Social Activities 1877-1890**

The old parishioners of this place even today cherish blessed memories of their schooldays. As long as the people of this congregation were more numerous and able to support their own parish school, they gladly contributed towards its support, even with great sacrifice on their part. When, however, many families moved away, it was simply impossible to keep up their beloved school.

There is no reliable record as to the exact time when St. Casimir's parish school ceased to exist. According to all indications, however, it must have been around the year 1900.

The acting Rev. Pastor was the supervisor and principal of the school. It was part of his pastoral duties, with the assistance of his parish-committee, to procure the necessary fuel, utensils, furniture and all other items for the upkeep.

It also was part of his pastoral duties to attend to the instruction of the children in branches pertaining to religion and history.

The old people of today quite frequently commemorate with a great respect and love the name of Mr. Anthony Mallek, who for many years had been organist of the church, and at the same time also teacher in the parochial school. Education, music and singing flourished under his competent direction. Again, we find a distinguished mention in "The Polish History of America," in reference to the notable work and accomplishment of Mr. Mallek. We quote the following: "Anthony Mallek had organized a parish choir consisting of 40 members. He met with great success to the extent of developing the best church choir amongst the Polish immigrants in America. Nowhere in this country could a better rendition of Mass in Latin of the most famous composers be heard, except at Northeim. Each and every choir member was an accomplished singer."

The result of this painstaking training in music and singing still manifests itself today. Musical talent and melodious singing is found even today in many homes of our people, thus perpetuating the noble deeds of their forefathers in praising the Almighty during divine services. Even the younger generation of today enjoys community singing.

And there are quite many more praiseworthy things to be said about the flourishing education, imparted to those young people, many years ago in Northeim. Our young people liked in those days to attend school and obtain all the possible education which a country school could offer. Boys and girls alike were anxious to make a complete course of eight grades. They were glad to
help father and mother at home and on the farm; they stayed away from school for a few days in the spring and fall, when their help was needed to plant potatoes, cabbage etc., and in fall to gather crops. But they loved to return to school as soon as possible, notwithstanding their age and height. This explains the reason why Northeim was later well represented by professional men in practically all walks of life.

CHAPTER III. Art. 1. A Chronological List of Permanent Pastors


From January 15, 1878 until April 19, 1879, the following priests were in charge:

7. Rev. F. Fessler * (The initial "F." is as it appears in booklet)
8. Rev. C. Rogozinski
9. Rev. Hyacinth Gulski
10. Rev. A. Bukowski

From April 19, 1879, we again find the following steady pastors in charge of St. Casimir's Church:

10. Rev. J. Musielewicz, from April 19, 1879 until June 20, 1880.
13. Rev. George Fessler, from June 30, 1881, to April 10, 1882 *
15. Rev. J. Dutkiewicz, from Dec. 29, 1885, to January 12, 1887.
17. Rev. John Maczynski, from March 7, 1889, to April 26, 1891.
18. Rev. Z. Luczycki, from May 24, 1891, to January 16, 1893.
19. Rev. Henry Cichocki, from February 19, 1893 to May 18, 1893

From March 10, 1906, to April 7, 1907, the congregation was without a resident priest. The services were held by various priests, commissioned to do so by the Most Rev. Bishop of Green Bay. We find the names of:
24. Rev. E. Magott, from April 7, 1907, until April 4, 1907
25. Rev. F. Kroll, from March 12, 1908, until July 18, 1908.

   From April 30, 1911, after the departure of Father Sokol, the parish again was without a resident pastor. The people, however, had regular services attended by the Franciscan Fathers of Pulaski, and the Salvatorian Fathers of St. Nazianz. On the pages of the various Church Records again appear the names of: Father Sturmius Heartl, Father Raphael Wittig, Father Epiphanius Deibele, and Fintanus Holzknecht.

38. Rev. Anthony Betley, from June 15, 1939, up to the present day.