In the early part of the nineteenth century many men of Polish descent immigrated to the United States from Poland, Austria and other eastern European Countries. They settled in Streator and found employment in the mines and local industries which allowed them to send for their families!

The size of the group presented the possibility of establishing a Polish Catholic church and several meetings were held in the homes to propose and discuss the project. A committee of twelve men were chiefly responsible for promoting the undertaking, visiting families to stir their interest and enlist their support. The committee was led by Tony Parzygnat assisted by Frank Szaflarski, Watler Zaleski, Joseph Walczak, Albert Kubicz, John Matusik, John Ramza, John Dziatki ewicz, Walter Matuszyk, Frank Ramza, Frank Steczek and John Glowicki. The immediate, encouraging response of the Polish people led to the forming of the St. Casimir's Parish.

It was decided to purchase the church building at 401 South Illinois Street from the Beulah Baptist congregation as well as the adjacent residence. The church building was originally a gift of the Czar of Russia to the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893 and was an excellent example of the Russian type of architecture of that period. When the Columbia Exposition ended the building was dismantled, shipped to Streator and re-assembled at the South Illinois Street location. It was used by a Russian Orthodox congregation until about 1910 when it was sold to the Beulah Baptists who used it until it was purchased by St. Casimir's in 1916.

The church building was remodeled and the first mass was celebrated on Christmas Eve, 1916. Dedication ceremonies were conducted on April 15, 1917, by Bishop E. M. Dunne. The first marriage occurred on January 28, 1917, uniting the lives of John Lasak and Mary Kaszycki.

Shortly afterward an addition to the church provided two classrooms to permit the children of the parish to attend their own parochial school. Franciscan Sisters of St. Cunegunda, Chicago, conducted the school until it was discontinued in 1931.

Rev. Mieczyslaus T. Szalewski was the organizer and first pastor of St. Casimir's Church and served the parish until 1923 when he was assigned to St. Stanislaus in Kewanee.

Rev. William G. Wozniak was then appointed pastor and administered the parish until 1931 when he was appointed to the Annunciation Church of Eagle. The house adjacent to the church was occupied by the sisters and the pastor lived in a rented house. Rev. Wozniak established the house
as a rectory by raising funds to purchase a home across the street to the north of the church to be used as a home for the sisters.

Priests from St. Anthony's church served St. Casimir's from 1931 to 1934 when it became a mission with masses only on Sundays and holy days of obligation. Rev. Stanislaus F. Kubiak served as pastor of the church and chaplain of St. Mary's hospital in 1934 to 1935.

When Rev. Kubiak was assigned to a parish in St. Augustine, Illinois, in 1935, Rev. Apolinarius Skopowski was appointed to handle the duties at St. Casimir's church and St. Mary's hospital and remained until 1936.

In 1936 Rev. A. B. Slivinski was appointed to handle the same duties and served until the outbreak of World War II. Feeling the urge to serve God and his country, he asked and received permission to relinquish his charge in Streator and joined the United States Air Force in 1942 as a chaplain.

Rev. Joseph Prokuski was assigned in 1942 to assume the pastorate of St. Casimir's church and chaplain at the hospital. At the end of World War II he instituted a program which led to the repair, remodeling and redecorating of the interior and exterior of the church building. In 1953 St. Casimir's was returned to the status of a parish and Rev. Prokuski initiated weekday morning masses to augment masses on Sundays and holy days. The rectory was completely remodeled and redecorated and occupied by Rev. Prokuski. He was relieved of the duty as hospital chaplain to permit him to devote his full time to the administration of the parish and remained until 1962 when he accepted a call to St. Hyacinth's in LaSalle.

Rev. Marion Switka, the present pastor, was appointed to St. Casimir's in 1962. Shortly thereafter he realized the need for extensive renovating or the replacement of the church building. Spearheaded by Rev. Switka meetings were held to present the facts to the parishioners and their enthusiastic cooperation was spontaneous. The unanimous decision was to replace the old structure and the entire program was presented to His Excellency Bishop John B. Franz who gave his formal consent to proceed.

The old structure was razed in 1964 and a new, modern, beautiful and functional edifice now occupies the same location. Ground breaking ceremonies were held on July 19, 1964. The old building was razed beginning July 22nd and construction of the new structure was started July 27th. Rt. Rev. Monsignor George Dzuryo officiated at the laying of the cornerstone on August 30th. The first mass was celebrated on Christmas Eve, 1964, and the blessing and consecration of the altar was conducted by Monsignor Dzuryo on February 7, 1965. During construction of the new building masses on Sundays and holy days were held in the Polish National Alliance Hall and weekday masses in the basement of the rectory.

The dedication of the new edifice was held on Sunday, June 13, 1965 at a 4 o'clock mass presided by His Excellency Bishop John B. Franz and celebrated by Rev. Switka. Bishop Franz also blessed the building and delivered the dedication sermon. A dinner was served in the Polish National Alliance Hall at 6 o'clock to celebrate the event.

The Altar and Rosary Society has been in existence for many years and the Holy Name Society was organized early in 1964. Both societies have been major factors in the recent growth and enhance-
ment of the St. Casimir's Church.

One vocation emerged from St. Casimir's in its fifty years, that being Sister M. Bernice of the Order of St. Francis, who was from the family of John Kapusnik.

By generously giving their time and talents, organ accompaniment for masses is supplied by Mrs. Geraldine Smith, Gloria Lynch, Diane Safaryk and Jeanie Gura. By the same token, altar linens and decorations and the altar boys’ cassocks are expertly managed by Mrs. Antoinette Hamara and Mrs. Josephine Bandura.