

St. Casimir Golden Jubilee Book
1899-1949, St. Casimir Parish
Pages 61 and 62

Looking Back!
(Okciem Wstecz!)

Verbal Account of the Oldest
Parishioners of St. Casimir's
(Ustne Podanie Starszych
Parafjan Sw. Kazimierza)

We have heard it asked many times, "what has become of the 50 years?" Asking our older ladies and gentlemen could we have a short description of our history. The people on this side of the tracks in what is called "over the tracks" wanted our church and our own parish to be organized, the pastor of St. Hedwig disagreed with this. Naturally he wanted a great many people to belong to this parish, and this would have many benefits. But the future members of St. Casimir's did not want their children to travel across the tracks to get to school everyday. All the future members agreed to have a new parish. The people brought the matter to the Bishop in Forth Wayne. At that time His Excellency Joseph Rademacher was bishop, until his death in 1900.

At this time the leading citizens were Casimir Niedbalski, Joseph Kalamaja, John Duszynski, Mr. Bonek, and Mr. Gonsiorowski. John Duszynski had a grocery for years at Dunham and Arnold Streets, this constituted the first business in this subdivision. Mr. Peck was selling lots for this subdivision, and it was feared that they would be short of money for the parish. Therefore John Duszynski helped and himself often lent funds to this cause. A meeting of our founding citizens was held in the home of Mr. Duszynski. Other people who were active in this project are as follows: Andrew Grzeskowiak, Andrew Witucki, Mr. Hajducki, John Gadacz, Joseph Andrysiak, Joseph Kajzer, Mr. Kozlowski, John Markiewicz, Francis Rymer, Peter Andrysiak, Stanislaus Pejza, Anthony Szymanski and James Niemier. Another meeting was announced to take place in the store of Mr. Casimir Niedbalski, at which it was also unanimous on the great deed of founding a parish here.

The people arranged and worked at parties and amusements to raise some money. When a large amount of money was saved, Mr. Gonsiorowski contacted the Bishop, who was the only person who could grant the request. His excellency Joseph Rademacher of Fort Wayne was asked to come to South Bend to visit with the people at the home of Joseph Duszynski, and also to visit with Father Czyzewski, and to direct him to acquire the land, that the new parish could have a beginning, and later to have a meeting with the people. The meeting was held at the hall of Mr. Korpala on Division St. (Western Ave.), but Father Czyzewski, when the meeting opened was not able to persuade the people to put off the parish project to a later time. Later the Bishop in Fort Wayne assured the priest that he would tour the subdivision of the parish, then in a coach drawn by a white horse, he said: "This is a beautiful location for a parish, you have my permission." The affair was concluded, and the people set about working and collecting for a new parish. One Sunday Casimir Woltman, Peter Dankowski, and James Makowski collected 18,000 dollars, and the land was purchased. In those years people gave their entire wages for this collection. Some offerings "lived in flight", this we know since the animals of their gardens, cocks, ducklings were kept by the housekeeper. At that time it was forbidden to go to dances and amusements on Saturday night, and many times people had to get absolution in confession for this. Father Czyzewski was not altogether happy with the way people organized parties, especially if liquor was sold, and when liquor in these affairs happened on Sundays then he asserted, these were not suitable ways to raise money for a church. At this time it was generally the law of the church throughout America, for Catholics to be forbidden to have parties on Sundays. But, somehow, they did not allow themselves to give up. The new parish of St. Casimir's bought its first organ from Mr. Studebaker, and was to have a little space in the church for a stature of St. Stephen. Everyone was asked to give \$4.00 for this cause. When the parsonage was to be built parishioners were assessed \$8.00 per family. The cost of the parsonage was about \$3,200.00 In the first year of the parish, with the church opening on the 31st of December, the parish had about 100 christenings. Among this number is our member and present committeeman Robert Pejza.

Our Earliest Parishioners Who Still Live

Below is a list of our earliest parishioners which was prepared by Father Niemier, our vicar. Lastly we give their names, from oldest to youngest. All except two people have lived in the parish since the very start.

Agnes Wasikowski, 90; Mary Grzeskowiak, 87; Katherine Hudak, 86; Josephine Niedbalski, 85 (wife of Casimir, who did not live in the parish for several years); Vivian Tafelski and Josephine Mackowiak, 84; Lottie Zientowski, Andrew Lyczynski, Michael Nowicki, Elizabeth Zalas, 83 (Mrs. Zalas was among us for 45 years); Francis Kajzer and Francis Weisel, 81; Ladislaus Nowicki, Maryann Nowicki, John Markiewicz and John Banicki, 79 (Mr. Banicki was with us for the last 46 years); Anthony and Maryann Szymanski, Pelagia Lyczynski, Angeline Winkowski, 78; Joseph (77) and Rose (72) Stachowski; Francis and Antonia Milewski, and Vincent Kosik, 75; Constantina Pejza and Hedwig Plencner, 74; Katherine Kosik, 72; John and Emilia Dalka, Mieczyslaus Kaczorowski, 72; Maria Markiewicz, 70.

A odd story, that to qualify as parish founders, people had to help in the basement “shop” of our first parish building. Many in the above list performed this deed.