



St. Lawrence Parish History

The 1800s

In the summer of 1845 Father Michael Heiss and a dozen families celebrated the first Mass ever in St. Lawrence.

In 1846 (2 years before Wisconsin became a State) fourteen families, all recent immigrants from Germany, erected the first Catholic Church in St. Lawrence. The log church was built mainly at night because the men worked their land during the day. It stood on what is now the southeast corner of the cemetery. The church was blessed by Bishop John Henni in October of 1846. Mr. Linus Krebs was one of the founders.

Rev. C. Schraudenbach was the first resident pastor of St. Lawrence and also served the parishes of St. Matthias at Nabob and SS Peter and Paul at Nenno.

Construction of a rectory and school house started in 1847 and in November of 1847 the first confirmation class of 84 was confirmed.

In 1849 Johann and Margaretha Schuetz donated 8.1 acres of land to the Parish and in 1850 Bishop Henni purchased 20 acres of land from Henry and Elizabeth Timp with plans to build the St. Lawrence Seminary. The plans to build the seminary never materialized and in 1863 Bishop Henni sold 10 acres of land to John Sell. That land is known today as Sell Street.

The first marriage at St. Lawrence was on December 12, 1849. Elisabetham Muller and Joannum Schmid were the bride and groom.

The log church was replaced by a larger framed church in 1851 and was built east of today's rectory. In 1861 an addition to the church was built and an organ and two bells were purchased. On Christmas Eve 1861, the lonely settlers heard the chords of an organ and the sound of bells for the first time since leaving their homeland.

Rev. Casper Rehrl, one of Wisconsin's great missionary priests, served St. Lawrence from 1855 – 1856 and was known as the Apostle of Washington County. His ambition was to found parishes and then to travel on to help more souls. It is unknown how many parishes he founded.

The rectory was built in 1874.

The contract for our present church was entered into on January 19, 1880. The Gothic style brick church was completed in 1881 at a cost of \$40,000 and was free of debt when it was consecrated on October 4, 1882 by Archbishop M. Heiss of Milwaukee. The church is the only consecrated church in Washington County and one of only four consecrated churches in Wisconsin.

Sand used in the construction of the church was from a brickyard on Hwy. S. The brick for the church was furnished by Mr. Toll of St. Lawrence and Mr. George Menger of Scheisingerville. The latter had already furnished 200,000 bricks and expected to furnish another one hundred thousand. (From an article in *Washington Republican* dated February 18, 1880.)

There are 4 bells in the tower. The smallest bell came from the wood framed church and bears the date 1857 and the name of the foundry, Meneeley's West Troy, N.Y. The 3 larger bells are dated 1886 and bear the name of McShane Bell Foundry, MD. The largest bell was named in honor of St. Lawrence in memory of the members of the Parish. The second bell is named St. Barbara in memory of Barbara Mueller and Margaret Kreilkamp and the third bell is named in memory of the Blessed Virgin in memory of the Blessed Virgin Mary Sodality and Married Ladies' Society.

On August 15, 1883, St. Lawrence Congregation was incorporated in the State of Wisconsin. The first officers of the Parish were Archbishop Heiss, president ex-officio; Rev. N. Thill; and Trustees Paul Wolf and Anton Mueller. The trustees' term of office was specified as two years beginning February 2, 1884.

The brick schoolhouse (which was located in what is now the church parking lot) was started in 1885 and completed in 1886 at a cost of \$5,000.

The main altar, still a beautiful part of the sanctuary, was installed in 1891 and was purchased from Goyer Bros. in Louvain, Belgium for \$2,346.00.

The altar is hand carved wood. The statues are also hand carved wood. The statue at the top center is St. Lawrence, patron saint of the Parish. On his right side is the Centurion who was converted to Catholicism because of the manner in which St. Lawrence accepted his martyrdom. On the left is the Centurion governor. St. Lawrence is holding a grill because he was grilled by his enemies. The pictures on the side of the altar tell the story of his martyrdom. St. Aloysius is on the left side of the altar and the Saint on the right is unknown. At the bottom of the altar are the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Matthew is pictured with a Lion, Mark with wings, Luke with an Ox and John has an eagle. Enclosed in the altar table are special containers holding the relics of the apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul as well as of St. Fidelis Sigmaringen.



St. Lawrence Parish History

The 1900s-Part One

The pipe organ which is still in use today was installed in 1903 at a cost of \$2,000 and the Stations of the Cross were added in 1907.

On August 27, 1909, the steeple of the church was struck by lightning. The lightning split the steeple in two from top to bottom—one half fell away and the other half remained intact. The damage was so bad that the entire steeple had to be rebuilt.

St. Lawrence was and still is a small community with several taverns. In 1910, a new pastor arrived at St. Lawrence and he had the tavern keepers sign the following agreement: “We the undersigned tavern owners of St. Lawrence promise and hereby obligate ourselves not to sell or give out any drinks Sunday mornings during time of church service, and furthermore, we will keep our saloons closed during the main church service Sunday mornings, as well as on church holidays. For every infringement, we obligate and promise to pay \$10 to the Congregation’s kitty/treasury.”

In 1912 \$4,000 was spent to improve the school, rectory and nuns’ residence. Those improvements included installing modern heating, lighting and plumbing and in 1924 an addition consisting of a dining room and study was added to the nuns’ residence. Between 1926 and 1928 a garage was built to the east of the rectory.

At the annual Parish Meeting on February 2, 1929, plans were approved to build a fire cistern to the west of the church. The cistern was to be 12 feet wide, 10 feet deep and 50 feet long.

The 50th anniversary of the building of the church was held on August 10, 1930. At noon, the Christian Mothers Society served dinner to approximately 1,800 people and at supper served between 900 and 1,000 people. The amount of food consumed was three hundred chickens, four calves, two hundred pounds of pork sausage, one hundred pounds of wieners, six hams and about fifteen bushels of potatoes.

The church hall & kitchen were added underneath the church and completed in 1935. Ground was removed by hand with picks and shovels until space allowed teams of horses and mules to take over. Daniel and Eugene Krebs used sledges and crowbars to remove a two foot thick wall which was on the west side of the present basement. Some of the other men who volunteered were: Philip Redig, Wenzel and Henry Gehl, Anton Mueller, Louis and Otto Krebs, Ed Schnorenberg, Sr. and Henry Schellinger.

A new church roof was installed in 1937 and in 1938 it was decided to brick veneer shut the sanctuary windows “in the best interest of the eyesight of the parishioners and especially in the best interest of the sanctuary itself.”

The main entrance (arch) to the cemetery was built in 1938.

Renovations continued in 1945 and 1946 with a new entrance to the church hall, sidewalks, and driveway to the church. The rectory kitchen and porch and two classrooms in the school were remodeled. Additionally, the church hall was enlarged and the kitchen remodeled, an oil burner installed in church and the entrance to the sacristy was enclosed. Total cost of the renovations was \$6,800.00.

In 1946 there were 140 families in the parish and 100 hundred children attending the school.

The cemetery cross and outdoor altar were dedicated on Memorial Day in 1949. The cross is twelve feet high and purchased from the European Statuary and Art Company in Milwaukee. The lannon stone base is 3 x 6 feet with a top made of Tennessee stone.

In the early 1950s visitors were expected to place 25 cents into a box in the vestibule of the church as a donation for attending services.

Advertising was used for the first time in church bulletins in the mid-1950s.

New flooring and pews were installed in the church in 1957 at a cost of \$11,000.00.

In 1960 the Parish was organized into 7 workgroups to rotate and serve at various card parties and funerals. Group 1 began January 17, 1960.

Also in 1960 new chairs were purchased for the church hall.

When remodeling the old school became too expensive, a decision was made to build a new school. In January 1961, 163 students, grades one thru eight moved into their new school. The class of 1968, eighteen students, was the last class to graduate from St. Lawrence. Classes for grades one thru six were held in the 1968-69 school year. The school closed in 1969 after 82 years of providing parochial education.

The Church was renovated in 1966. The 2 side altars were removed with portions of each used to build a new altar facing the congregation. Rev. Schwaiger's chalice was found concealed in one of the side altars. Rev. Schwaiger served as pastor until 1902. The chalice was placed in the display cabinet located on the south side of the Church. With the help of the various Parish societies the \$15,000 cost of the renovations was paid for with no special collections.

In March of 1966 English was introduced into the Mass.

A new section of the cemetery containing 484 grave lots was added in 1966.

On July 6, 1969 the first Saturday evening Mass was celebrated in St. Lawrence.



St. Lawrence Parish History

The 1900s-Part Two

New furnaces were installed in the church in the early 1970s at a cost of \$4,274.00. These replaced the furnaces installed in 1931. Additionally, the 165 foot steeple was renovated in June of 1971 at a cost of \$2,175.00.

The carillon system was installed in 1973 and in the mid 1970s the church roof was replaced at a cost of \$11,879.00.

In January 1973, the brick school/nuns' residence was demolished and the area became the church parking lot. The Slinger School District rented the present school building until 2003. Today, the parish uses the school for Religious Education classes. The parish rectory, built in 1874, is used for the parish offices.

St. Lawrence began offering communion and wine from the cup on June 3, 1979.

New doors were installed on the front of the Church in July of 1979 and in 1980 ceiling fans were installed.

On March 1, 1981 the first Parish Council meeting was held. Council members were Ed Habersetzer, Lyle Schulz and Nancy Weinert.

The church hall was remodeled in 1982 at a cost of \$9,000.00.

July 1983 an improvement fund was begun for major renovations on the exterior and interior of the church.

Remodeling for the St. Joseph's room began in 1984. Total cost of the remodeling was \$6,700.00.

In June 1985 the Parish Council made the decision to reopen the stained glass windows in the sanctuary.

Lightening struck the steeple for a second time in 1987 ruining the carillon system.

Renovation of the exterior of the church occurred during the summer of 1985. The 165 foot steeple was shingled and painted at a cost of \$7,625.00. The stained glass windows were repaired and painting and tuckpointing of the church were also completed for a cost of \$49,980.00.

The first chili social was held October 23, 1988 and 474 tickets were sold.

Renovations inside the church started in January 1989 and were completed in

December 1989 at a cost of \$110,000.00. The church which can seat 500 people was improved from the ceiling to the floor and intricate woodwork on the altar was painted.

St. Lawrence Church was declared a historical landmark and received a special plaque from the Washington County Landmark Commission in 1990. The historical marker is located in front of the church along Highway 175.

In April 1991 the rectory was tuckpointed at a cost of \$1,950.00.

An announcement in February of 1992 joined the parishes of St. Lawrence and St. Matthias. There were 390 families in St. Lawrence and 180 families in St. Matthias.

Seven gas furnaces were installed in the church basement in May 1993 at a cost of \$23,000.00.

Also in 1993 Christmas cards showing the beautifully decorated church were sold to parishioners.

On August 10, 1994 the cornerstone of the church was opened to reveal its contents. It contained a glass fruit jar which held a rosary, a business card from John Fellenz (builder and contractor of the church), a proclamation written in Latin, a German newspaper dated March 4, 1880 and a copy of the Washington County Republican dated February 18, 1880. Many of the artifacts are on display in the display cabinet located on the south side of the church. A translation of the Latin proclamation states that on May 30, 1880 a wooden cross blessed with salt and water was placed in the cornerstone of the church.

During 1994 and 1995 many needed improvements were made to the rectory and garage at a cost of \$20,932.00.

In the fall of 1995, the Parish entered the computer age with the purchase of a computer, software and work station for \$3,871.00.

The working clocks in the tower were donated by the Lloyd Krebs' family and were blessed April 14, 1995. Prior to the installation of the working clocks the faces of the clocks on the steeple were set at 9:00 to note the starting time of the Mass.

1996 marked the 150th anniversary of the Parish and was a year long celebration of the "Generations of Faith". A cookbook, pewter sculptured ornament and other memorabilia were sold marking the 150th anniversary and the "Generations of Faith" history book was published.

During the summer of 1996 the Church was sandblasted, tuckpointed and waterproofed and the wood trim painted. Cost of the project was \$50,000.00.

**The information was taken from the two books on the history of St. Lawrence Parish
CENTENNIAL JUBILEE 1846-1946 and GENERATIONS OF FAITH 1846-1996**



St. Lawrence Parish History

The 2000s

Our current Feast Day celebration began in 2004. We have been honored to have as Main Celebrants--Archbishop Timothy Dolan, Bishop Richard Sklba, Father Curt Frederick, Bishop William Callahan, Father Patrick Heppe, Archbishop Jerome Listeki, and Bishop Donald Hying.

An elevator was installed in 2005 to provide access to the Parish hall.

The Advent Socials began in 2005. Each weekend during Advent the Parish Council serves as hosts to a different Parish group.

Also in 2005 the Advent sacrifice was started and a Lenten sacrifice was added in 2007. Parishioners are asked to sacrifice a meal and donate the money to a variety of worthy causes.

Three of our Parish youth, Christopher and Steven Recker and Gail Hoefert, attended World Youth Day in Germany in 2005. An interesting side note--Christopher and Gail were married in 2008.

The Youth for Change group was formed in the fall of 2006 and presently has approximately 20 members. Activities the group sponsors include Brat Fry fund raisers, Discipleship Sundays, Habitat for Humanity, Valentines for Soldiers, Shadow Stations of the Cross, and Fall Festival. They also participate in all Parish activities--the chili social, fish fry, Feast Day, and clean up of the church and parish grounds.

During the summer of 2007 refurbishment of the altar was completed at a cost of \$15,000.00.

The Gather Hymnals were purchased in 2007 and Parishioners were offered the opportunity to purchase books in memory or honor of their loved ones.

As part of our evangelization efforts a brochure promoting the Parish was developed and distributed in the Hartford Booster to 6,865 local households in October 2007.

Brenda Breuer and Matt McHugh attended the World Youth Day in Australia from July 4, 2008 thru July 20, 2008.

Archbishop Timothy Dolan joined us for the Feast of Corpus Christi Mass and Procession in May 2008.

The Faith in Our Future Campaign kicked off in the fall of 2008 with 60% of the funds raised for the Parish and 40% for the Archdiocese. With the generosity of the Parishioners the goal was exceeded.

A 72 niche columbarium was contracted for in 2008 with placement and finishing touches completed in 2009.

A fire alarm system was installed in the Church in early 2009.

The Parish website was set up in 2009.

The porch on the north side of the Rectory was replaced in the fall of 2009.

Bathroom renovation in the church hall began in January of 2010. Funds from the Faith in Our Future campaign were used to pay for the cost of the renovations.

Father Dan Crosby presented the Parish Mission from March 22-24, 2010. A special luncheon presentation on the "Spirituality of Aging" was given to the senior members.

In 2010 the Fish Fry committee opted to try their hand at preparing the fish dinner. It was an overwhelming success!

Lightening struck the Parish grounds on April 30, 2010.

Erich Weiss was ordained on May 15, 2010 and he celebrated Mass in St. Lawrence on June 6, 2010. A reception followed the Mass.

Archbishop Jerome ListECKI awarded the first annual scholarships to Katie Cleary and Jane Klink at the Feast Day celebration in August 2010.

With the help of WeEnergies incentives furnace tune-ups (2009) and energy efficient lighting were completed in the church and school (2010 & 2011).

A new phone system was installed in the rectory, school and church in December of 2010.

In December of 2010 a bid was accepted for tuckpointing and painting of the church at a cost not to exceed \$40,000.00 and in 2011 a bid for \$3,070 was accepted for gutter repair on the church.

The Christian Women Society continues to grow and provides many services and funds to the Parish. The group is one of only two Christian Women organizations remaining in Washington County.

Today our Parish serves 585 families (1,250 people) from the surrounding area. A Religious Education program provides instruction for our youth. The Youth for Change, Christian Women's Society and the Knights of Columbus are active organizations providing Parishioners the opportunity to come together in a Christian environment.



St. Lawrence Parish History

Over our 165 year history 25 pastors have served our Parish. We've been blessed with 26 vocations to the priesthood, brotherhood and sisterhood.

Pastors of St. Lawrence

1847 – 1849	Rev. Charles Schraudenbach
1849 – 1854	Rev. Michael Beiter
1855 – 1856	Rev. Casper Rehrl
1856 – 1857	Rev. John B. Weikmann
1857 – 1861	Rev. Joseph Reindl
1861 – 1865	Rev. Michael Deisenrieder
1865 – 1881	Rev. Martin Weiss
1881 – 1889	Rev. Nicholas August Thill
1889 – 1902	Rev. Peter Schwaiger
1903 – 1910	Rev. Albert Theodore Reininger
1910 – 1921	Rev. Peter J. Burelbach
1921 – 1926	Rev. Charles F. Keyser
1926 – 1928	Rev. Traugott Johann E. Hard
1928 – 1933	Rev. Alexander Karrels
1933 – 1945	Rev. Oswald F. Ullrich
1945 – 1954	Rev. William J. Weishaupt
1954 – 1958	Rev. Alfred G. Weber
1958 – 1969	Rev. Alfred L. Esselman
1969 – 1970	Rev. Stanley L. Bartnicki
1970 – 1972	Rev. Henry R. Langenfeld
1972 – 1988	Rev. Francis Sutschek
1988 – 2002	Rev. Alois R. Van Beek
2002 – 2003	Rev. Richard Breitbach
2003	Rev. Charles Wheatley
2003 – Present	Rev. Joseph Dominic

Vocations

Rev. Joseph S. LaBoule
Rev. Anthony Mueller
Rev. Wendel Heder
Rev. William W. Wolf
Rev. Francis W. Elsinger
Rev. Andrew E. Redig

Brother Felix (Wilfred Mueller)
Brother Christopher (Escherich)

Sr. M. Charitas Schnitzler
Sr. M. Rosettina Goeller
Sr. M. Carolissa Bell
Sr. M. Antonie Mueller

Sr. M. Andreella Redig
Sr. M. Robertina Redig
Sr. M. Huberta Redig
Sr. M. Delma Schellinger
Sr. M. Antoniana Stoffel
Sr. M. Justus Strupp
Sr. M. Henrita Stoffel
Sr. M. Sancia Weis
Sr. M. Bernhilde Walter
Sr. M. Fulgence Weiss
Sr. M. Wilfrida Weiss
Sr. M. Aurelia Schellinger
Sr. M. Stephania Schellinger
Sr. M. Irene Beder

Currently, Mark Petri is studying for the priesthood at St. Francis Seminary.