

**CZECH CHURCHES IN NEBRASKA**

**ČESKÉ KOSTELY V NEBRASCE**

**(Picture)**

**The picture on the cover of this book is of the first Czech Catholic church in  
Nebraska built in Abie 1876**

**Editor**

**Vladimir Kucera**

**1974**

## CZECH CATHOLIC CHURCHES IN NEBRASKA

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(Picture)

Ludvik Benedikt Kucera

Biskup lincolnsky

1888 – 1957

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## AMERICAN REVOLUTION BICENTENNIAL 1776-1976

Vracim vas aspon v myslenkach do tech davnych dob, kdy Prvni z nasich hledali a nasli nove domovy v teto svobodne zemi americke. Pro tisice z nich byla panenska puda Velike prerie vytouzenym snem, konecnym cilem jejich zivota.

Byli to prosti zemedelci a remeslnici, bez skolniho vzdelani, ktere jim Videnska vlada nedoprala. Byli chudi a bez znalosti reci nove zeme. A proto pro dusevni i telesnou bezpecnost, na obranu proti jistemu nepratelstvi nekterych etnickych skupin, pro zachranu posvatneho dedictvi tisicilete tradice naroda, draheho to odkazu narodniho i nabozenskeho, i pro vlastni sebezachovu, zili v houfu, pohromade, jako v jakesi pevnosti, v jakemsi ghetu. Proto take Ceska rec a odkaz predku, byl uchranen i pro budoucnost, zachovan alespon castecne i do nasich dob. Materska rec domoviny, odkaz ceskych dejin, tradice staletych zvyku, kroj, lidovy tanec, laska k Ceske muzice a zvlaste k nasi pisnicce! Proto take i dodnes mame tu v Nebrasce viditelne ostrovy, jakesi oazy, ceskeho osazovani tohoto statu.

Byl to tehdy veliky, ba mnohdy i zoufaly zapas o zivot!

Proto se oni zacali houfovat, shromazdovat, soustredovat. Byli si vedomi, ze jen v jednote je jejich sila a budoucnost. Zacali proto budovat Ceske spolky kulturni, pojistovaci, zakladali ceske skoly, knihovny, hrali divadla. A sila jejich nabozenskeho presvedceni je vedla k tomu uvedomeni, ze v prvopocatchich zapasu o zivot na plodne, ale tehdy take i nehostinne, prerii bude posilen jen plnou oddanosti Bohu, ktery jim urcil tak dramatickou cestu noveho zivota, jejich pout pres more do daleke zeme svobody.

To vse bylo tak mocnou silou, ze po umorne, vysilujici praci, obraceli sva srdce s prosbou o posilu duchovni.

Zpocatku nemeli penez, aby budovali kostely, modlitebny, katolicke nebo protestantske, kde by hledali potrebnou utechu. A proto zacatky tohoto nabozenskeho hnuti ceskych pionyrů v Nebrasce byly velmi tezke. Nebylo penez postavit kostelik a take nebylo knezu a kazatelu, kteri by hlasali Slovo Bozi materskym jazykem. Drnaky a drevene domky byly tehdy mistem jejich nabozenskeho shromazdovani, kde se schazeli k modlitbam a rozjimani. Castokrat jeden z nich precital casti z Pisma a pak si vroucne zazpivali Ceske, kostelni pisne.

Kdyz se pak pozdeji jejich hospodarska situace zacala zlepsovat, dali hlavy a srdce dohromady, pracne sbirali tezko ziskavane dolary, aby si mohli postavit drevenou kapli nebo kostelik. Jaky to byl pokrok, jaka jejich radost, kdyz uz meli po letech stradani vlastni duchovni stanek, stredisko viry, kdy by hledali a nasli duchovni, mravni posilu.

A nemozno take nez nevzpomenout nezmerne obetavosti tech prvnych ceskych misionaru krestanske viry v Nebrasce, kteri tehdy putovali od mista k mistu, casto pesky, na koni nebo na primitivnim voziku, aby navstivili ta mista, kde cesti pionryri hladovali po Slovu Bozim hlasanem v materske reci. Jejich jmena jsou nedilnou casti radostne i bolestne historie ceskeho osazovani Nebrasky.

Venuji tuto skromnou studii a pokus o historii ceskych farnosti a kostelu v Nebrasce znamym i neznamym ceskym osidlencum Nebrasky s vdecnou vzpominkou a dikem za jejich obetavost i lasku nejen k narodni tradici ceskeho naroda, ale take za tu jejich oddanost a vernost nabozenke tradici ceskeho lidu. Byli to oni, kteri zachovali materskou rec a pisnicku, a byli to take oni, kteri upevnili v sobe a zachovali pro budouci generace krestanskou tradici naroda.

**Vladimir Kucera**

(Picture)

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First Czech Catholic Church and rectory in Wilber  
Saline County

I would like you to return with me in thought to that old time when the first of our forefathers were searching for new homes in this free American land. For thousands of them, this Great prairie of the West was their dream, the final aim of their lives.

They were just plain farmers and craftsmen, without the higher education, which the German government of Vienna didn't want to give them. They were poor, without the knowledge of the language of this strange country. Therefore, for their spiritual and physical safety, for their defense against the certain enmity of some other ethnical groups, they started to live in colonies. In this way, they could defend the sacred heritage of the thousand of years of tradition of their nation, so dear a religious and national heritage. They banded together, like in a fort; similar to a ghetto. In this way, also the Czech history, the tradition of century old customs, national costumes, folk dances, love of Czech music and especially our songs. Therefore, we have today in Nebraska visible islands, something like an oasis of Czech settlements in this State.

I then became a great and often desperate fight for life! Because of that, they started to form crowds, to organize themselves becoming concentrated. They believed that: "In Union there is Strength", so together they formed Czech cultural clubs, Fraternal insurance organizations, founded Czech schools for their children, libraries and also dramatic organizations for the amusement of their people.

Together they built places to worship. In the beginning they didn't have money to build churches, Catholic or Protestant, in which they could find the necessary spiritual help. Therefore, the start of this historical movement of the Czech pioneers in Nebraska was very difficult.

When they were able to obtain enough money to build a little church, they were not able to get priests and preachers who could speak their language. There were not many men of God in the beginning, and each missionary had several places to visit; sometimes on foot, horseback or with buggy, to preach to the Czech pioneers the Word of God in Czech. Their names are an unforgettable part of the joyful and painful history of the Czech settlements in Nebraska.

Sod houses or little log cabins were in that time the first places of religious gatherings. Often, one would read the Holy Scriptures, and then altogether and dearly, they sang the Czech church hymns.

When later their financial situation improved, they put their heads and hearts together, barely collecting enough dollars to build a wooden chapel or little church. What wonderful progress it was for them, how great their happiness when after many years of collecting money, they had their own church, the center of their faith, where they could find spiritual and moral support.

I dedicate this humble study of the history of the Czech Parish churches in Nebraska to all known and unknown Czech settlers in this State with great remembrance and thanks for their sacrifice and love not only for the Czech tradition, but also for their devotion and loyalty to the religious tradition of the Czech Nation. They were the ones, who preserved the mother's tongue and songs, and who strengthened themselves and preserved for future generations the Christian tradition of the Czech Nation.

**Vladimir Kucera**

(Picture)

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In 1876, a Catholic chapel

Was built in Milligan, Fillmore Co. – Foto F. Tesar

## **CZECH CATHOLICS IN NEBRASKA**

The Czech Catholics in Nebraska struggled tenaciously in their early days, but they have reason to feel satisfied with what they have accomplished. For a long time they had but one Catholic paper in the United States. In 1867, the first Catholic paper was published in Chicago (Katolicke noviny), but it existed on six months. It was not until 1872 that the Catholic weekly "Hlas" was founded in St. Louis, Missouri. Thus, in the matter of publicity, the non-Catholics had the start. Practically no newspapers of their own and almost no Czech priests or churches added to the struggling for a bare living; it is but natural that the beginning was slow and hard for them. Through the first Bishop of Lincoln diocese, Bishop Thomas Bonacum, came the help needed to support the Czech Catholics in Nebraska. The devoutness of Bishop Bonacum was manifested in his understanding that Czech priests were needed desperately.

Catholic Masses were said in sod houses, private homes and in public school buildings. In Howard County, for example, they met for worship before a cross driven into the ground in the cemetery. As soon as they could obtain enough money they built sod or log churches and occasionally they built frame churches in both eastern and western Nebraska.

The first Mass served for Czech Catholics in Nebraska was in the home of Josef Simanek, near Prague, Saunders County, in September of 1871, by Rev. Frantisek Sulak, S.J. For a long time there was a post office there called at first Plzen after the city in Bohemia of that name. Later the name was changed to Plasi, because it caused confusion in mail delivery with Pilger, Stanton County. Rev. Frantisek Bobal alternated with Rev. F. Sulak serving also in the schoolhouse and although the church was not built until 1878, it is truly one of the oldest Czech parishes in Nebraska.

As far as is recorded, the next Mass served in a private home was in the sod house of Josef Sindelar, Colfax County, on Christmas Day, 1871, by the members of the assembly themselves. Several pioneers had settled there on Maple Creek in 1870, as recorded in the history of Tabor parish. These people continued serving Mass for themselves for some time before the missionaries and priests came.

During the late seventies and early eighties, Colfax County was the scene of greatest activity, for within six years, six churches had been built. It was probably for that reason that there was some agitation in favor of erecting a monastery of Czech Benedictine Order in Plasi or Cedar Hill, Saunders County. Bishop O'Connor had ordained the assistance of the Benedictine fathers from Pennsylvania, Rev. Vaclav Kocarnik and Rev. Siegfried Klima, but the plans were not approved and later the monastery was established in ST. Procopius parish of Chicago.

Thus, for several years Catholics worshipped in homes or buildings allowed for that purpose. In 1877 Bishop O'Connor of Omaha sent Rev. Groenbaum to Europe to enlist the services of Czech and German priests, and a call was issued in the papers of Bohemia for priests that were needed in rapidly forming settlements. Several answered and thus an impetus was given to the building of churches.

According to the addresses published in the Narod calendar 1973 there were these Czech priests in Nebraska: Msgr Frantisek Barta, Omaha; Msgr Vilem Rezabek, Hebron; Donald Bartek, Omaha; Vaclav Bartek, Norfolk; Vilem Bartek, Omaha; Vaclav Beranek, Wilber; O. Ekhaml, Morse Bluff; Fr. Flicek, Auburn; Raymund Hain, Lincoln; Adrian Herbek, David City; Viktor Herman, Schuyler; Denis Hotovy, Curtis; Vaclav Kovar, Howells; Albert Krejci, Omaha; Klement Kubes, Linwood; Karel Kucera, Omaha; Frantisek Leiblinger, Deweese; Jan LesCanec, Lincoln; Jan Ludvik, Lincoln; Frantisek Machovec, Lincoln; Josef Micek, Omaha; Frantisek Oborny, Dodge; Karel Oborny, Verdigre; Rudolf Oborny, Lincoln; Eduard Ourada, Omaha; Jan Pastorak, Prague; Myron Pleskac, Lincoln; Antonin Pluhacek, Heun; Daniel Pohl, Nebraska City; Jeronym Pokorny, Valparaiso; Jan Prachar, Lawrence; Karel Rada, Campbell; Raymond Roh, Prague; Robert Roh, Hastings; Vaclav Sladky, Red Cloud; Earnest Sloup, Roseland; Jan Smutny, Pleasanton; Jan Starostka, Omaha; Leo Sedivy, Hastings; Hubert Spanel Burwell; Antonin Tresnak, Hartington, Eduard Tucek, Lincoln; Antonin Tuma, Omaha; Edward Valasek, Trent on; Gerald Vap, Dwight; Kenneth Varina, Omaha; Karel Kottas Valparaiso; Ivan Vap, Lincoln.

## **CZECH PIONEER PRIESTS IN NEBRASKA**

Augustinsky Cyril was born in Brusperk, Moravia in 1851 and ordained in St. Louis, MO. He died in Veseli, MN in 1901.

Bartik Josef was born in 1857 in Dolni Zahori, Bohemia, being ordained in 1882 by bishop Valerian Jirsik. He died in Omaha, 1919.

Bednar Antonin. His Biographical record is not available.

Blaha Josef was born in Silesia (Slezsko) 1876, and was educated in Italy and Belgium. He then studied at St. Mary's seminary at Baltimore, MD, where he was ordained in 1909 by Cardinal Gibbons.

Blaske (Blaschke) Jan A. was born 1844 in Horni Dobrouc, Moravia. Although he had begun his theological studies, he resigned in order to marry. Upon the death of his wife, he re-entered the seminary in 1876 and in 1877 came to Nebraska to do missionary work.

Bobal Frantisek (later Monsignor), the first resident Catholic priest in Nebraska. He did not have a Czech parish, for he was assigned to Plattsmouth, Nebraska, in 1872, when there were no Czech parishioners. Later Rev. Bobal was assigned to St. Philomena's Cathedral in Omaha. He was later assigned to Fall City where his health failed and in 1876 he left Nebraska. Rev. Bobal was born in 1845 in Luzkovice, Moravia, and was ordained in Louvain, Belgium, coming to Omaha in 1871. While in Nebraska he did missionary work among Czech settlers. He died in Chicago, IL in 1927.

Bogar Martin was born in 1877 in Blatnice, Moravia. He studied in Uherske Hradiste, Moravia, finishing his studies in Olomouc, where he was ordained in 1900. For fifteen years he labored in his native diocese. In Chicago he learned that there was a dearth of Czech priests in Nebraska, so he applied to the Lincoln diocese.

Bor Matej was born in Krastavice, Bohemia. He was ordained in 1887.

Bouska Emanuel Antonin was born in 1865 in Borovany, Bohemia. He was ordained in Chur, Switzerland, in 1889. In 1891, differences between him and the bishop arose which terminated in his leaving the Church. In 1894, after due expiation, he was re-instated. Rev. Bouska became first resident priest in Crete, Saline County, in 1889.

Broz Jan Stepan was born in Kardasova Recice, Bohemia in 1865. He studied in Jindrichuv Hradec, Bohemia, and later with his friend Jan Vranek he entered the

University of Styria in Gratz, Austria. In the Styrian seminary, Bouska and Vranek were also students, and the three became good friends. After the German element prevailed conditions became unpleasant, Broz left with his friends and they all attended the Uni. in Chur, Switzerland. All three were ordained there in 1889, and came to Nebraska. Rev. Broz arrived in Chadron, in 1890 and he served the Czechs, Poles, and Germans. He served several times in Fort Robinson and also met with the Indians while in Gordon, Sheridan County. His work was entirely of a missionary nature. At the end of 1890, Rev. Broz was made Rector of St. Paul church in Howard County, and from there he served Warsaw, the Czech parish in Netolice, and also the Polish parish Boleczyn. Once a month he went to Revenna, Nebraska. In 1894, he was made a pastor in Dodge from where he was transferred to Schuyler, Colfax County, and then to South Dakota, ending his services, when he passed away in 1919.

Coka William was born in 1840 in Cernovir, Moravia, and was ordained in 1866. He came to Omaha, in 1885, from the largest church at that time in the United States, that of St. Procopius in Chicago. He died in Omaha in 1902.

Duda Anton was born in 1871 in Hostice, Mor., and was ordained at Louvain, Belgium. In 1895 he came to Nebraska. In 1900 he moved to Iowa.

Hancik Jaroslav was born in 1875 in Tabor, Bohemia. He studied in Tabor and later in an agricultural academy. In 1897 he accepted the offer of Jan Rosicky of Omaha and as he wanted to learn English he became assistant editor of Rosicky's farm magazine "Hospodar". He found he did not care to continue that work and six months later, he entered the St. Paul seminary in St. Paul, MN and was ordained in Omaha in 1901.

Hody c Jan was born in Lochenice, Bohemia, in 1863, and was ordained in Chur, Switzerland, in 1889. He came to Nebraska in that year. Rev. Hody c was an unusually gifted poet. His poems "Ambrose's Daughter", "The Peasant's Home", and "Exiles", appeared in the leading literary magazine of Bohemia "Zlata Praha: (Golden Prague). Others in the United States publications were printed in the Catholic papers "Narod" and "Hlas".

Hovora Frantisek was born in 1865 in Ceske Budejovice, Bohemia. He was ordained in 1889 in Lincoln, NE.

Hovorka Josef was born in 1846 in Rychnov nad Kneznou, Bohemia. He came to Nebraska in 1877. Rev. Hovorka left this country in 1890 and later he died in Bohemia.

Chundelak Josef His biographical records are not available.

Klein Alois (later Msgr) was born in Frauenthal, Bohemia, in 1866. In 1886 he enrolled in the seminary and devoted one year to a special study of theology and the Hebraic and Arabic languages. Immediately, he matriculated in the Prague University (faculty of Theology). While studying in Prague, he vowed to devote his life to missionary work in America. He was ordained in 1889, and arrived in Nebraska, October 31, 1889.

First he was appointed pastor of St Wenceslas church in Wahoo. In 1891, he was transferred to Crete, Saline County, where he restored confidence between former pastor and bishop. In 1893, he arrived in Brainard, Butler County. When the history of this town is written, the name of Alois Klein will appear on the roll of its builders and distinguished citizens. Since 1893 till July 1, 1947, he has served there as a resident pastor. Today, one is impressed immediately with the external evidence alone. The physical plant, comprising a parish group, is outstanding for a small community; a beautiful church, a modern school, and fine rectory.

Msgr Alois Klein served as Vicar General under three bishops: Bonacum, Tihen and O'Reilly. He was twice chosen as Administrator Apostolic of the Diocese of Lincoln during the vacancies of the Episcopal See. He was honored by being named Prothonotary Apostolic by Pope Pius XI in 1929, being the first Monsignore in the Lincoln Diocese to receive this papal honor.

While serving in Brainard, he also organized the parish in Dwight in 1896, the parish in Touhy in 1897, the parish in Bruno in 1901. He founded a mission in Bee in 1909, and organized the parish in Loma in 1911. With the organizing of each parish, he also organized a branch of the Catholic Workman.

One cannot do justice to the career of this remarkable man in a brief sketch of this kind. A more detailed account will be found in that charming biographical monography entitled "Brainard's Monsignore Klein" written by Rev. Jan Pastorak.

Koutek Josef was born in 1863 in Lipkova Lhota, Bohemia. He was ordained in Chur, Switzerland 1889.

Klima Siegfried, O.S.B. was another pioneer priest in Nebraska, but his biographical record is not available.

Kocarnik Vaclav was born in Kutna Hora, Bohemia, in 1845, and was ordained in 1874. He came to Omaha in 1877. He dies there in 1912.

Kramar Jan, another pioneer priest in Nebraska. His biographical record is not available.

Macourek Josef was born in 1867 in Troubky, Moravia, and was ordained in 1892.

Maly Filip was born in Paclavice, Moravia, in 1840, and was ordained in 1869. He died in Moravia in 1912.

Petlach Karel was born in 1872 in Blansko, Moravia, and ordained in Louvain, Belgium. In 1900 he moved to Iowa.

Pold Frantisek came to Colfax County serving later in Saline County. He was recalled to Bohemia in 1888. With him came to Nebraska a lay brother of the Jesuit Order, Jan Kramar.

Sulak Frantisek, S.J. was born in Necice, Moravia, in 1825, and was ordained in France. For twenty years he did missionary work in Europe as a Jesuit. He died in Krakov, Polen in 1908. He spoke seven languages and was a chemist and a naturalist. He served the first Mass for Czechs in Nebraska in the home of Josef Simanek near Prague, Saunders County, in September 1871.

Tomanek Frantisek was born in 1882 in Moravia and was ordained in 1913. In 1922 he left Nebraska.

Vlcek Jan served in Plasi in the 1900's.

Vranek Jan, later Msgr. was born in 1863 in Lzin, Bohemia, and was ordained in Chur, Switzerland, in 1889. He came to Nebraska in 1890. Jan Vranek wrote a large amount of poetry. A collection of these, under the title "On American Soil" was published by the Benedictine Press in Chicago. He was the most gifted of the Czech priest-poets in the United States. Jan Vranek died in Omaha 1925.

Zalud Frantisek was born in 1866 in Bohemia. He died in Oregon.

## **CZECH CATHOLIC CHURCHES IN NEBRASKA**

**The first Czech Catholic church in Nebraska, SS Peter and Paul, was built in Abie, Butler County, in 1876. In that same year a small Catholic chapel was built in Milligan, Fillmore County, on the Anton Kotas farm, and moved to Bohemian Brethren Cemetery when a new church of Saint Wenceslas was built in Milligan in 1890.**

**In 1877, SS Cyril and Methodius church in Plasi (Plzen), Saunders County; Saint Joseph's church in Heun, Colfax County; and Saint Wenceslas church in Wahoo, Saunders County, were built.**

**In that year, construction of the Saint Wenceslas church in Wilber, Saline County, was begun, but lightning struck it, and the building was sold for other purposes.**

## **FIRST CZECH CATHOLIC CHURCH IN NEBRASKA**

The first Czech Catholic church in Nebraska was built in Abie, Butler County, in honor of apostles SS Peter and Paul. It was small, wooden building, 24' x 48' in size. John Wall, a German Lutheran and ex-soldier, whose wife was a Catholic, donated ten acres of land and sold ten more at five dollars per acre on condition that his body would be interred there.

The church was located in the Southwest Quarter of Section 22, Township 16, Range 4 East. The lumber for this wooden church was brought from Fremont, 33 miles in distance. The church was located on the hill. It was necessary to dig a well 112 feet deep to reach water.

Until June 1918 June 1918, the church in Abie was  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile from town. In that month the church was burned. Later a new brick church was built on the land donated by Vaclav F. Pavel, a member of the parish. Construction was finished in the fall of 1919, and the church was consecrated June 29, 1920. During the pastor ship of Rev. (later Msgr) Viktor Mlejnek, the church was nicely decorated, the parish office remodeled, a parish hall was bought and this patriotic priest founded a Catholic Sokal organization

there. The Catholic Parish of SS Peter and Paul of Abie had a small library with 350 Czech books at that time.

The first visit of a priest to the community of Abie was that of Rev. Frantisek Bobal of Omaha in 1875, who had charge of all Czech Catholics in Nebraska. The first pastor in Abie was Rev. Josef Hovorka, who came to Nebraska in 1877, in 1891; he was succeeded by Josef Koutek, 1891-97; whose assistant was the Rev. Josef Kuen; Rev. Frantisek Zalud, 1897-1902; whose assistant was Adolf Mosler, 1901-02; Vaclav Pokorny, 1902-08; Jan Novotny, 1908-09; Mataj Nemecek, 1909-1916; Jaroslav Hancik, 1916-17; Frantisek Kopecky, 1917-19; Rev. (later Msgr) Viktor Mlejnek, 1919 to October 1932; Anthony Nouza, O.S.B., October 1932 – February 1933; Alcuin Kasny, O.S.B. 1933-41; George Kusha, O.S.B., briefly in 1941, Bonifac Tomek, O.S.B., Cl. Reisdorff, 1958-60; L. Ketter, 1960-61, Edw. Kolar, 1961-62; M. Danko, 1962-68; A. Trausch, 1968-70; Stanley Schieffer, 1970.

## **CATHOLIC CHURCHES AND PARISHES IN NEBRASKA**

### **Box Butte County – Hemingford**

### **Saint Bridget's Church**

In 1887 the Rev. Brophy, stationed at Chadron built a church at Nonpareil, which was then the county seat of Box County and located at that time one mile west and five miles south of Hemingford.

Shortly after this in 1888, the railroad made its appearance. The railway company wanted to establish its shops at Nonpareil, but it seemed there was no one generous enough to give or sell sufficient ground, so the railway established its shops at Alliance and built its line outside of Nonpareil and through Hemingford. This caused the subsequent removal of the church and other buildings to the new Hemingford.

In 1890, Saint Bridget's Catholic Church building was moved to Hemingford from Nonpareil. Saint Bridget's was attended by the Rev. Brophy and Rev. J. S. Broz from Chadron as well as Rev. Jutz and Perrig from the Holy Rosary Mission in South Dakota. In 1914 St. Bridget's was established as a parish.

The first child baptized was Lawrence R. Sochol. The first marriage recorded was that of Agnes Anna and Joe Caha on November 25, 1914. The first burial recorded

was that of twin babies, Irene and Emma Simek, November 21, 1914. The first funeral service was for Verna Urbanovska on February 13, 1915.

Later in 1914, Rev. Keyser served in Hemingford and during his pastorate served the Mission church at Curley built in 1915 and the Mission church of Saint Wenceslas at Lawn.

Deed filed on November 28, 1939 from Matilda Delsing and James Duffy for the sum of \$ 1.00. Legal description: Lots 2 thru 9, Block 15 in Hemingford.

### **Box Butte County – Lawn**

### **Saint Wenceslas' Parish**

In the late eighties there were several Czech colonies in this county, but the droughts drove many of them away. The Parish of Lawn was established in 1888. The first church built, 1887 by Josef Turek, of logs brought from the Pine Ridge country. Later it was replaced by a nice frame building. In the early nineties the following priests conducted services: the Rev. Jan Stepan Broz, Rev. Kloucek, and Jan Zak. During the Rev. Broz's time the poor homesteaders suffered greatly as a result of drought, even drinking water being scarce. Some had to bring water from the Niobrara River, six miles distance. There was never a rectory, consequently no resident priest.

Vaclav Barta, a Czech farmer, wrote in the book "Ceske katolicke osady v Americe" published in 1890, this story about their Parish: "About 60 Czech families settled here and in the surrounding vicinity in the year 1886. They built a wooden church in 1887. The Rev. Josef Hessoun donated the Stations of the Cross to this church."

Another Czech Parish in the vicinity was east of Hemingford, in the same county, where the Rev. J.S. Broz held services in the sod house of Mr. Urbanovsky. Mrs. Urbanovska arranged a table, decorated it with prairie flowers and the Rev. J.S. Broz supplemented with such altar furnishings as he could bring in a valise. Later with help of the Rev. Broz a sod church was built, the parishioners hauling cedar and fir logs from a forest thirty miles away. These churches at Lawn and Hemingford at the time were western most Czech churches in Nebraska, but neither remained as originally established.

Deed was filed on December 15, 1888. The land was purchased from Katie Pesek for the sum of \$50.00. Approximately ten acres in NW Quarter of Section 17, Township 17, Range 51.

**Boyd County – Lynch**

**Blessed Virgin Mary Church**

The Rev. Vaclav Kroupa built the church in Lynch and conducted services there. Some time later the Rev. Frantisek Tomanek had charge and built a Catholic hospital. In 1918, the Rev. Krajicek was sent to Lynch for a few months. There he built a rectory. This Parish was a mixed one, those named having been the only Czech priests.

**Boyd County – Spencer**

**Blessed Virgin Mary Church**

This was a mixed Parish, taken care of as far as Czechs are concerned, by the priests from Verdigre. The first resident priest was the Rev. Vaclav Kroupa. He stayed there from 1900 until 1908, when he was transferred to Ord. He built a large church in Spencer, to replace the little one, and a fine rectory.

**Brown County**

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**Midvale**

A report on Czech Catholics in this county was published in the book “Czech Catholic Parishes in America”, published in 1890: “In the year of 1884 about 20 Czech families settled in the vicinity of the small village of Midvale. In the year 1890 they built a school, where the Rev. Kolin served first Mass on February 26<sup>th</sup> of that year. But, the church was never built there.”

**Buffalo County - Ravenna**

**Our Lady of Lourdes Parish**

The first Mass in Ravenna was offered by the Rev. Boyle in 1883 once a month in different homes. The first church was built in 1887. About 45 Czech Catholic families were in the surroundings of Ravenna at that time. From the year of 1890 this Parish was a

Mission. Priests serving the Ravenna Parish included: Father Boyle of Kearney in 1883; James F. Hayes, 1884-87; T. Haley, 1887-1889; during 1889, the Rev. William Coka and Filip Maly, S.J., from Omaha; 1890-93, Jan Broz, and his assistant, Jan Vlcek, from St. Paul; and 1896-99, Antonin Duda, from Broken Bow. An attempt by Rev. Duda in 1899 to build a rectory failed.

The same year during the winter, the German colony south of town, prompted by a desire to hear the Gospel preached in language which they could understand, organized Saint Joseph's Mission and built a church in Schneider Township. The Czech priests there were: the Rev. Josef Chundelak, Jaroslav Hancik, and Karel Petlach Josef Hovorka. Working at the Mission church in Ravenna from 1900 to 1902 was Father Josef Chundelak from Saint Paul.

Father Jaroslav Hancik was the first resident priest. He built the first rectory in 1903 at a cost of \$2,700.00. He also took care of Mason City Parish from Ravenna.

The new year, 1907, found Ravenna with a new pastor, the Rev. Josef Macourek, who served for the next 42 years until his retirement in 1949. From 1913 to 1930 Rev. J. Macourek also had charge of Saint Joseph's Mission, offering Mass there about twice each month.

Lot 10, Block 12, donated by Erastus and Mary Jane Smith. Deed filed on December 20, 1888. Lots 11 and 12 donated by Lincoln Land Co. Deed filed on December 20, 1888.

### **Buffalo County – Schneider Township Saint Wenceslas' Mission**

Saint Wenceslas' Mission had its proximate beginning in the year 1911, but the history of the Catholic families who made up the first congregation goes back to the time of the early settlers in 1883.

In the year 1911 about 25 Czech families purchased an old Presbyterian church for \$200.00 and moved it with teams of horses and other less modern means to the Schneider Township near their farms, two miles east of the Saint Joseph's Mission. They renovated that structure and built an addition and made it a mission of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Ravenna, naming it Saint Wenceslas'. The church moving committee

included Frank J. Chabal, Frank Kriha, Sr., Vencil Polka, Aniel J. Hervert, Frank Sakala Sr., and Josef Kriha. The first church trustee were Josef W. Skala and Josef Hervert.

The first Mass was offered in the church January 27, 1913, on the occasion of the first wedding celebrated in the church. It was shortly thereafter, on February 9, 1913, that the first Sunday Mass was offered. Both of these Masses were offered by the Rev. Josef Macourek, who served the Mission from its beginning until about 1931.

After the long years of service to the Mission by Rev. J. Macourek, the Mission was later served by Rev. Cornelius McLaughin, 1931-38; John Madsen, 1938-40; W.E. Grace, 1940-42; L.G. Lecher, 1942-43; N. Thees, 1943-50; Cletis Semper, 1950-53.

First infants baptized there were Ed Hervert and Jiri Cizek on April 13, 1913, the first marriage was Albert Pesek and Josie Skala on January 27, 1913, and the first funeral was in 1916 for Josef Novotny.

Father Josef Macourek was named a Domestic Prelate on March 13, 1943. He also served for some years as Vicar General of the diocese. When Msgr J. Macourek retired in October 1949, the Rev. Radziewicz was named administrator and later pastor. During his time the present brick church was built to replace the wooden structure which had served the parish since 1887. The new laminated wood arched church is 63 x 123 feet, seats 400, and equipped with complete hall and kitchen facilities in basement.

Mrs. D. Lafler

## **Butler County – Appleton**

## **Saint Mary's Parish**

The beginnings of this Parish date back to the year 1877 when on October 12<sup>th</sup> of that year, Petr Maly promised to donate ten acres of ground to the Catholic Church Society of Butler County if the ground was used for the good of the church.

These ten acres were located in the NE Quarter of the NE Quarter of Section 1, Township 15, Range 3. The church was built, blessed and took the name of Saint Mary's. On Easter Monday of 1877, the first Mass was said by the Rev. Josef Hovorka. The Rev. Hovorka continued to serve the Parish and say Mass every third Sunday until the year 1890. After him served the Rev. Josef Koutek, Abie; Frantisek Zalud, Bruno; Josef Bauer, Bruno.

It should be said that first settlers of the Appleton community and Parish were generally from Moravia and the first pioneers included the following coming in 1873: Josef Dostal, Frank Zima, Frank Sobolik, Martin Riha, Frank Kozisek, Frank Bogr, Anton Virgil, Ignac Kovac, and Vojtech Hynes. Coming in 1874: Vojtech Dvorak, Frank Stejskal, Frank Sabata, Vincenc Roulenc, Simon Vala, Antonin Maly, Simon Maly, Anton Kopecek, Frank Kovar, Anton Brunner, G. Andel, Kriz and Urbanek, first names unknown. Coming in 1876: Martin Chloupek, Vaclav Prat, Anton Svoboda, Petr Maly, Petr Virgil, Frank Janak, Martin Veleba, Jan Samek, Jan Benes, and Anton Abraham. Coming in 1878: Martin Maca, Leonard Schmied, Jan Masek, Karel Masek, Frank Koutny, Tomas Bastl, Josef Sabata, and Frank Prat.

In the year 1890, a severe windstorm completely destroyed the church. The parishioners decided to build a new church in a more central location. Two acres of land were purchased from Anton and Mary Sonka for the sum of \$50.00, located in the North half of the NW Quarter of Section 12, Township 15, Range 3, which was a half mile south and three quarters of a mile west of the first site of the old church. The bodies from the original cemetery were also moved to the new site.

The second church was built for a sum of \$2,000.00. The first Mass said in the new church was an All Soul's Day in the year 1891 by the Rev. Josef Koutek. He continued to say Mass once a month until his death in July of 1897. He traveled from Abie. Some of the early organizations founded were Saint Joseph Branch No.222 of the Central Catholic Union chartered on August 13, 1901.

The first resident pastor was the Rev. Frantisek Cerny, who assumed his duties in the year 1923. After him served Rev. V. Verhelst, Vaclav Pokorny, Jan Hotovy, Ignac Skopal, Frantisek Kopecky, Josef Blacha, Karel Rada, E.J. Kolar, Msgr Viktor Mlejnek..

The parishioners seeing a need for a meeting place and for social gatherings erected a Parish hall, measurements 40 x 120 feet, at a cost of \$12,000.00 in the year 1922. As time went on the farmers in the community becoming less, the number of parishioners dwindled. The hall was sold to a number of interested individuals in the community in the year \_\_\_\_\_. They had it completely remodeled including air-conditioning and is now one of the popular dance hall in the area.

The Parish is now served by Saint Mary's of David City.

**Butler County - Brainard Holy Trinity Parish**

The village of Brainard was started in the year 1878, when the Stromburg branch of the Union Pacific Railroad was built through these parts. But the first Czech settlers, Matej Slavik and Frank Maixner, had located in this vicinity in 1875. In the next two grasshopper years, they were followed by Matej Kabourek, Frantisek Novacek, Josef Semin, Sr., Josef Jakub, Sr., and Frantisek Dvorak, Sr. A more vigorous tide of immigration ensued in and after 1878.

In 1883, there had been plans of a church in Brainard and the first meeting was held at the Rejda public schoolhouse, District No. 8, February 2, 1884, to consider its possibilities. The meeting was attended by 18 friends of the proposition. An organization was effected with Frantisek Dvorak, Sr., M. Kabourek, and L.J. Kavalec as committeemen. A plot of land approximately ten acres was offered by Frantisek Novacek in Section 10 of Oak Creek Township, but his offer was turned down, for the fact the committee thought it would be better to build church in village than in the country.

The first Mass said in the Brainard community was on October 26, 1884, when the Rev. Vaclav Kocarnik said Mass in the home of Michael Flynn which was located two miles north and two miles east of Brainard. At this time he also baptized three children: Peter, son of Francis and Antonia Dvorak, Clara, daughter of Francis and Francisca Topil, and Anna, daughter of Josef and Francis Svoboda.

On November 18, 1884 a plot of ground, namely Lots 11 and 12, Block 7 of the First Addition to Brainard were purchased for a price of \$62.50.

On April 25, 1885 two acres of land were purchased east of town to be used as a cemetery.

The first recorded Mass to be celebrated in Brainard occurred on May 1, 1887 when the Rev. Jordan Stutz a Benedictine priest of Czech and German descent said Mass in the public schoolhouse.

At a meeting held on November 1, 1887, it was unanimously decided to build a church. Construction began only five days later on November 6. The church sixty feet long, thirty-six feet wide was completed in 1888. On Trinity Sunday, June 10, 1888, the

first Mass was celebrated in the new church by the Rev. Jordan Stutz. This is possibly why the Parish took name of Holy Trinity for celebrating its first Mass on Trinity Sunday.

The next priest was the Rev. Matej Bor who served Brainard once a month. The Rev. Alois Klein came in the year 1889 to Wahoo and served Brainard from there. He was later transferred to Crete, but continued to serve Brainard. He was appointed resident pastor on September 5, 1893. He organized a branch of the Catholic Workman, Saint Ivan No. 16 in the year 1896. In the year 1902 a lodge hall was erected for their meetings and social activities.

It also should be said that another plot of ground, namely lots 22, 23, and 24 were purchased in 1899 for the possibility of building a larger church, but they were later traded.

The cornerstone was laid on June 10, 1906 by Bishop Bonacum of Lincoln. The church was completed in 1908, being 120 feet long and 52 feet wide. The first Mass was offered by Father Klein on December 20, 1908.

In 1916 a three-story school building was built at a cost of 52,000.00. It was blessed on August 23, 1916. A new brick rectory was erected in the years 1927-28 and blessed on June 4, 1928.

Monsignor Alois J. Klein served the Parish for fifty-six years retiring on July 1, 1949. Msgr A. Klein died on July 2, 1954 and is buried at Old Holy Trinity Cemetery in Brainard. He was succeeded by the Rev. Charles Rada.

### **Butler County - Bruno Saint Anthony De Padua Church**

March 1, 1899 marked the inception of a Catholic church in Bruno. The Rev. J.T. Roche of Saint Mary's Church, David City, Butler Co., arrived in Bruno and announced to the Catholic members of the community that he had in his possession a gift of \$ 1000.00, which had been donated by the family of Anthony A. Hirst of Philadelphia, Penn. It was the desire of this generous family that the money be used by any community desiring to build and maintain a Catholic church. Father Roche thought of the Czech pioneers who had entered the area in about 1891 but due to the distance of neighboring churches, found it difficult to fulfill their Catholic obligations. The mindfulness of Father

Roche and the generous assistance of Mr. Hirst were most welcome to these good people. For although they were poor in the material sense, they were rich in their love of God. The joyous meeting of Rev. Roche and the Catholics of Bruno resulted in the selection of four men to serve as building committee. They were M.W. Mahony, Anton Ptacek, Josef Hlavac, and Josef Sabata. These ambitious men moved swiftly, and by May, 1899, obtained donations and subscriptions amounting to \$ 1500.00.

Ground for the building site was obtained and is described as Lots 1-10, Block 14, Village of Bruno (formerly known as Brno or Skull Creek). On May 22, 1899, the contract was let for construction of the church, E.R. Watson of David City, was contractor. The first church became a reality at the cost of \$2550.00. Construction was begun and the building was completed before the fall of that year. On October 10, 1899, the church was dedicated to Saint Anthony De Padua, in memory of Mr. Hirst's deceased son.

Bishop Thomas Bonacum of Lincoln, appointed Rev. Thomas Cullen, V.F., of York, York County, to perform the ceremony of dedication. Present were the Rev. Frantisek Zalud, Msgr Alois J. Klein, Rev. J.T. Roche, and Rev. Jan S. Broz, who delivered a moving sermon in Czech.

From October 1899, to February 1901, the Parish was placed in charge of Father Zalud, who attended its needs from Sts. Peter and Paul Parish in Abie. From February 1901, to October 1901, Msgr. A.J. Klein was pastor and served from Holy Trinity Church in Brainard. It was during his administration that a rectory was built at a cost of about \$2500.00. In October of 1901, Father Zalud became first resident pastor of ST. Anthony church. What joy must have welled in the hearts of these laboring pioneers, who now had a priest and church of their own. This joy, however, was soon turned into sorrow.

At 2:00 a.m. on June 29, 1903, the entire church structure was destroyed by tornado. The building was insured for \$2500.00; however, that sum did not cover all that was lost. Most of the furnishing was destroyed, including the main altar and one of the side altars. A group of men met at the site and salvaged what they could. Enough lumber was reclaimed to construct a small building (now the old Catholic Workman Hall). The remaining side altar was moved into this hall, which served as the church until a new one could be built.

Under the leadership of their beloved pastor, Father Zalud, and an energetic parishioner, Josef Jindrich, the sum of \$2270.00 was collected for the construction of another church. Plans for the new church were drawn by Fisher and Lawrie Architects of Omaha. The church was 40 ft. wide, 84 ft. long and 75 ft. tall. Contractor for the building was a young Czech immigrant, R.P. Basta, of Clarkson, Nebraska. Work on the new church began in 1905; the total cost was \$5000.00.

The church was dedicated August 16, 1905, by Bishop Thomas Bonacum of Lincoln.

At 11:00 p.m., June 15, 1907, a bolt of lightning struck the steeple and damaged it badly. Demonstrating their faith, the people of St. Anthony's quickly made repairs. On Sunday, April 23, 1961 during the 10:00 Mass electrical wiring in the church caught fire. Members of the Parish removed almost all the furnishings, including the organ, which was located in the choir loft, from the church.

Little damage was done, however, the entire structure was rewired, perhaps saving disaster at a latter time. This incident sticks in my mind, as it was one week before my wife and I were married in St. Anthony's. My wife was the former Joann Jisa, daughter of Josef and Anna Jisa, former parishioners and business people in Bruno. An interesting story of this event is that during the fire two men carried the organ from the loft. Then on Friday evening before our wedding it took six of us to return it to its place.

During the administration of Rev. Karel Rada in July of 1978, construction of a resplendent rectory was begun. The new rectory is built of buff colored brick in a very modern design and cost \$21,000.00. This home was completed in May of 1949, by which time Father Rada had been assigned elsewhere.

In 1959, during Msgr Frantisek J. Kopecky's second administration ( he was pastor from 1935-43 and 1949-60) a large brick Parish hall, complete with kitchen, stage and a large meeting room, was built. The hall was named St. Francis Hall, in memory of Msgr. Kopecky.

At the time of this writing, a new church is under construction in St. Anthony's Parish. Groundbreaking ceremonies were held Sunday, May 19, 1974. The new church will be a pre-engineered steel structure enhanced with brick, color coordinated with the

building on the façade and at the windows. The main nave of the church will be 75' wide and 50' long. It will seat 170 persons in a semicircle around the altar.

A lower profile wing on the front of the nave will house the foyer, sacristy, mother's room and restrooms. The entire church will be heated and cooled electrically. The building was designed by Judd Bros. Construction of David City, Nebraska. General contractor is Wilson Construction of David City, Nebraska. Cost of the entire structure will be \$108,374.00. Men to serve on this building committee are Edward Sedlacek, Ellis Proskovec, Louis Koza, Ladislav Svoboda and Herman Ostry.

Many Societies and lodges were formed in the Parish, St. Anthony's Branch No. 53 Catholic Workman was organized on October 29, 1899. Lodge Svaty Vaclav No. 71 of the Western Bohemian Catholic Union was organized May 15, 1904. A Czech circle of the Holy Rosary Society was founded and also a group of the Czech order of the Daughters of Columbus.

Father Frantisek Zalud served as pastor from 1899 to 1901; Msgr. Alois J. Klein served from February to October of 1901. Then again Father Zalud was appointed first resident from 1901-1921. Rev. Francis Cerny served a few months until Rev. Joseph F. Bauer who served from 1922-1931, was appointed. Rev. Jan Hotovy served a few months until Father Damian Kvitek, O.S.B., who served from 1931-33, was appointed. (It is interesting to note that the Czech Benedictines administered many of the Czech parishes during the dry 30's in Nebraska). He was succeeded by his brother, Father Bartolomej Kvitek, O.S.B., who remained until September of 1935. In that year the Rev. Frantisek J. Kopecky was appointed and served until 1943. He was succeeded by Rev. Karel F. Rada, who remained until 1949. At this time Rev. (later Msgr.) F. J. Kopecky returned again to serve until his retirement in 1960. It was in February of 1945 that Father Kopecky received the Scarlet Robes of a Domestic Prelate with the title of Right Reverend Monsignor from Pope Pius XII. The Rev. Vaclav F. Sladky, a Czech refugee priest, served from 1960-1965. He was succeeded by the Rev. George Stoeckinger (the first non-Czech pastor to serve St. Anthony's) who served from 1965-68. The Rev. Anthony T. Traush was pastor from 1968-70. Father Stanley Scheifer came in September of 1970, and is present incumbent.

The first Baptism in St. Anthony's was that of Edward Koza on October 14, 1899. The first marriage was between Josef J. Jakub Jr. (my wife's maternal grandfather) and Frantiska Stava. This couple was married a few years when Mrs. Jakub died. Mr. Jakub later married Kristina Hromas in the Holy Trinity church of Brainard. The first burial was that of Maria Maca on August 10, 1901.

Report compiled by Larry L. Vilda. Reference sources: Bruno Diamond Jubilee Booklet, Czechs and Nebraska, Ceske osady Katolicke v Americe, Dejiny Cechu Americkyh. Special Thanks to Mrs. Mary (Jakub) Proskovec and Mr. Frank I. Rerucha for their information.

Picture

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First church in Brainard

### **Butler County - Dwight**

### **Assumption of Blessed Virgin Mary Parish**

The first Czech Catholic settlers began arriving in the Dwight community in the years, 1878 and 1879, long before the town was ever founded. Most of the early settlers hailed from Moravia. Since there was no church in Dwight, they did attend services at Brainard.

About the year 1895 as more settlers came into the community, there was talk of organizing a Parish. On January 1, 1896, a Parish organization was founded and named the "Catholic Congregation of Saint Mary of the Assumption". Vaclav Krenk, Josef Coufal and Frantisek Houska were elected officers of this committee.

The first recorded Catholic service was held on February 19, 1896, when the Rev. Alois Klein conducted funeral services at the home of Leopold and Antonia Hotovy for their infant daughter, Mary. Seeing a need for a cemetery, Leopold Hotovy donated an acre of land one half mile south of the town for that purpose.

In the year 1908, another acre was purchased for \$50.00. The next service held in the Dwight community was on March 1, 1896, when the Rev. Josef Bartik of Milligan celebrated Mass in the public schoolhouse, which was known as District twelve. (The

building which was the schoolhouse was recently demolished in 1973, as it was the home of the American Legion Post No. 110 for many years).

The first wedding performed in Dwight was conducted by Rev. Klein in 1896 also in the schoolhouse. The wedding being that of Vaclav Krenk and Frantiska Hain. The Rev. Klein continued to say Mass in the school building for three years. The parishioners finally decided that a church was needed. At a meeting on February 25, 1899, Rev. Klein informed the parishioners that the Chicago and Northwestern Railway Co. would donate them a plot of land for a church.

The decision was to go ahead and build a church sixty-eight feet in length and thirty-two feet in width. The church was finished in late August of 1899. The first Mass was offered on September 8, 1899 by the Rev. A. Klein. The first baptism in the new church was that of Marta Matulka on September 8, 1899 and on September 12 of that year Andrew Dosek and Pauline Hayek were married. The first confirmation in the new church was administered by Bishop Thomas Bonacum on October 16, 1905 to 102 persons. For this occasion the church was graced with new altars, pews, four statues and new rugs with entitled an outlay of \$2,786.

In the spring of 1910, Father Klein bought a house and established it as a parochial residence for the new pastor, the Rev. Michael Pazourek, who was appointed resident pastor on July 1, 1910 at that time the Parish consisted of 80 families. Under his guidance, being an avid Sokal from Czechoslovakia, a large Sokal hall was built in the downtown district of Dwight.

As time went on, it was noted that the wooden church was too small for the congregation. In November of 1914 a cornerstone was laid for a beautiful new brick church of Gothic style, 43 by 115 feet, at the cost of \$30,000.00.

In the year 1920, the dedicated parishioners also wanted to give their children a full catholic education, so they decided to build a school for this purpose. Seven lots in the south part of Block 15 were purchased from A.K. Smith for a price of \$3,500. The cornerstone for the new school was laid in the year of 1920 and completed in the year 1921 at a cost of \$92,000, but the Parish inherited a huge debt. About that time, prices for agricultural products had fallen, and the parishioners were inflicted with this huge debt.

Father Pazourek, who served there from 1910 to 1924, was succeeded by Rev. Ferdinand Suesser, who served until his death on May 11, 1929. Since that time the following priests have been pastors: Frantisek Kopecky, 1920-31; Alois Horacek, Jan.-Aug. 1931, and Stepan Srahulek, O.S.B., Aug. – Dec. 1931.

The Catholic school was staffed by the Ursuline Sisters of York, Nebraska, teaching eight grades. They were replaced in the year 1930 by Notre Dame Sisters of Omaha. In the year 1930 under the guidance of the Rev. Frantisek Kopecky a high school was initiated. In the year 1931, the Parish was entrusted to the Benedictine order of Lisle, Illinois. The Rev. Benedict Bauer being the first new Benedictine pastor arrived on December 16, 1931. Under his guidance, the continuance of the high school progressed and gained an accredited status with the State Department of Public Instruction. He negotiated a sale of the Sokol hall to the Parish, and a full basement was excavated under the hall. He also was instrumental in construction of the beautiful grottos that now exist between the school and church. Most of all, he relinquished the debt from \$72,000 to \$40,000.

The Rev. Bauer left in the year 1943, and was replaced by the Rev. Alfons Biskup, and then the Rev. Vaclav Michalicka replace him.

Under the guidance of Rev. Michalicka, the remaining debt of \$42,000 was relinquished. In the year 1946, after the debt was paid, the Benedictine order was removed from Dwight, and again replaced with the Diocessan priests.

The high school was maintained until the year 1961, when the Parish was forced to close its door due to many factors including a declining enrollment.

And finally the grade school was also abandoned. Classes came to an end with graduation day in 1973.

Alfred Novacek

### **Butler County - Linwood**

### **Saint Mary's Parish**

Prior to 1901, priests from Abie and Cedar Hill served to the Mission in Linwood. The first church building, a wooden structure, was built and consecrated in 1901. The first pastor was the Rev. Frantisek Zalud. Czech settler Frantisek Juranek was

responsible for the organization of the Mission, giving not only the lot for the church, but most of the lumber.

Beginning with 1942, many improvements and repairs were made, including painting of the exterior of the church, new windows, electric lights, and gas heating. The interior was redecorated; including statues, altars and sanctuary, and a new organ was purchased.

Frantisek Juranek donated to Saint Mary's Church, Lots 7

And 8, Block 22, for the sum of \$120.00, on October 14, 1901

### **Butler County - Loma**

### **Saint Luke's Parish**

The beginnings of this Parish probably began with the founding of a branch of the Catholic Workman No. 69, when on November 12, 1902; the Rev. Alois J. Klein organized the branch.

The charter members of the branch were Anton Kocian Sr., Ludvik Rezac, Anton Divis, Jan Cidlik, Joe VanErt, Arnold VanErt, Frank Rezac, and Jan Bohaty. As membership in the society increased, they decided on October 4, 1908 to ask permission of the Bishop to build a church. Also at that meeting, officers were elected with Josef Holcapek as President, Alois Ruzicka as Secretary, and Antonin Kocian Sr. as Treasurer. An acre of land was purchased from Jan Nabity for a sum of \$300 to be used as a church site. On March 28, 1909, Josef Holcapek traded an acre of land north of town for some of the church property in town. The land north of town was to be used as a cemetery.

The church was completed in March of 1912, and was designed after the Loucky church, which is near Deweese, Nebraska. The blessing of the church, 36 feet by 76 feet in size, took place on August 28, 1912, by Bishop Henry Tihen. The Rev. Alois Klein of Holy Trinity in Brainard continued to serve the Parish every third Sunday until October 1, 1915.

The first resident priest was the Rev. Michael Pazourek. In 1947 new heating plants were installed in the church rectory. The rectory was completely renovated in 1949. Two buildings were bought in town in 1933, and converted into a Parish hall. New additions were made in the hall in 1949. The interior of the church was completely

remodeled in 1954, and new Stations of the Cross were erected by Bishop L.B. Kucera in February 1955.

The following priests have served the Parish: Father Josef Bauer, 1930-32; Michael Pazourek, 1932-37; Otto Ekhaml, 1937-38; A.A. Huebsch, 1938-39; Edvard Kolar, 1939; F.J. Leiblinger, 1939

The first baptisms were Vilema Styskal, the daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Josef Styskal, and Bernard Kocian, the son of Mr. & Mrs. Joe Kocian, took place on September 22, 1912. The first marriage took place on April 24, 1913, when Karel G. Bartek and Francesca Novak of Loma were married. The first funeral from the church was conducted on November 2, 1912 when Tomas Holcapek was buried.

Picture

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Old St. Wenceslas church – Omaha

### **Cass County - Plattsmouth**

### **Holy Rosary Parish**

The first Catholic Czech known to reside in Plattsmouth was the Rev. Frantisek Bobal, pastor of the Saint John's Church. He had charge of all Czech Catholic in the state, which he used to visit in turn on the fourth and fifth Sundays of the month. During his pastorate in Plattsmouth the cornerstone of a large church of St. John's was laid on September 3, 1875.

Czech priests were invited once or twice a year to administer to the spiritual needs of these people. Among them were Fathers V. Kocarnik, O.S.B., from Omaha and Plasi in 1878; T. Tuerk, S.J., from Wilber, 1880-83; Filip Maly, S.J., 1882-84. In June, 1884, the Rev Jordan Stutz was made assistant at Saint John's for the German and Czech members until October, 1885, when the Rev. Maly came again and served from October, 1885, to September, 1889, followed in October and November by the Rev. Josef Koutek, who agitated for the building of a church. Later, during Father Casney's administration, in 1890, most of the Czech parishioners of St John's withdrew from this Parish and built a church of their own, southwest of St. John's. It was called the Holy Rosary church. This new Parish was organized by the Rev. Josef Koutek.

Under the direction of the Rev. E. Bouska, three lots in Duke's addition to Plattsmouth were bought from Jan Svoboda for \$300.00. A frame church, 75 x 40, was erected, costing \$2,400.00. The church was dedicated October 4, 1891, by bishop Thomas Bonacum of Lincoln, and the congregation separated from St. John's to begin its own career. The Rev. Matej Bor succeeded Rev. Bouska at Wahoo and visited here regularly from 1892 to 1899, when Rev. V. Pokorny of Crete was given charge until February 1902. The Rev. Josef Bartik, first resident pastor, had a rectory, 20 x 20, erected in 1902, costing \$800.00. When he left March 1, 1905, the charge was given to the Rev. Jan Novotny of Prague, who stayed two months and then to the Rev. Antonin Bednar of Crete until February 1, 1906. The Rev. Jaroslav Hancik was the second resident priest, serving from that time until November 16, 1908. The Rev. A. Shine, pastor of John's was given charge of both Parishes from that time until May 3, 1910. The Rev. Jan Vlcek was the third resident pastor, staying until October 15, 1919. The rectory was enlarged, and gas, city water, and electricity were installed.

The interior of the church was also renovated. The next pastor was Rev. Ferdinand Suesser, who served there until April, 1931. He was followed by the Rev. Marcellus Agius, who remained for a little more than a year, serving until August, 1932. Succeeding him was the Rev. Josef Kczmarek, who served the Parish until June, 1936. In the pastorate of Father Kaczmarek the interior of the church was renovated and redecorated. There were also some improvements made on the rectory and the exterior of the house was painted.

Father Kczmarek was followed by Msgr. A.M. Mosler, who took charge in June, 1936, and remained until September, 1937. The Rev. Josef Sinkula succeeded him in September, 1937, and remained until August, 1944. It was during Father Sinkula's time that considerable improvements were made on the rectory, and a full basement, to serve as a Parish hall, was begun under the church.

Father Sinkula, however, did not remain to see the completion of his plans. The work begun by Father Sinkula was brought to a successful completion by his successor, the Rev. Edward C. Tucek, who came to Holy Rosary Parish in August, 1944, and remained until January, 1958,. During his pastorate the basement hall under the church was finished and equipped at an approximate cost of \$10,000.00 New heating equipment

was installed in both the church and the rectory for the approximate cost of \$1,500. A new electronic organ was purchased and installed in the church at a approximate cost of \$4,800.00. Father Tucek was succeeded in January, 1953, by Msgr Josef A. Tupy. In the fall of 1953 the interior of the church, the altars, and the Stations were redecorated. In December, 1954, a chronobell carillon-automatic Angelus was installed at a cost of \$1,375.00, donated by the Altar Society.

Lots 10,11 and 12, Block 19. - Sold for the sum of \$300.00

Deed dated on June 21, 1890.

**Cedar County - Menominee**

Frantisek Zavadil, one of the first Czech pioneer in Cedar County, wrote in the book “Ceske katolicke osady v Americe” (the Czech Catholic Parishes in America), published in 1890, this interesting story about their Parish and church in Menominee: In the year of 1868, we settled six miles south of Yankton, South Dakota, in Cedar County, Nebraska. With the help of German Catholics we built a school and a church in 1869. The Rev. Frantisek Sulak, S.J., served a Mass for us. Later, the Rev. Jan A. Blaske visited our Parish, coming from Colfax County, after him in 1885 the Rev. Krizek, who came from Tabor, So. Dakota. The brick church was consecrated by bishop Martym of Sioux Falls and by bishop O’Connor of Omaha on August 7, 1889, to honor Saint Boniface. It was a mixed Parish.

**Cheyenne County - Lodgepole**

**Sacred Heart Mission**

	Heun	55		Touhy
128				
	Howells	56		Valparaiso 129
	Schuyler	57		Wahoo 131
	Tabor	57		Weston 134
	Wilson	59	<b>Seward Co.</b>	Bee
	Curry	60	<b>Sheridan Co.</b>	Hindera
<b>Cuming Co.</b>	Olean	61	<b>Valley Co.</b>	Netolice 139
	West Point	63		Ord 143

## **Clay County - Saint Martin Church at Loucky**

It would be difficult to write this history and omit the old pioneers that came here in the early 1880's from Moravia, at that time part of Austria. Most of these pioneers came from villages of Upper (Horni) and Lower (Dolni) Loucky, so they named that community where they settled Loucky. It came to pass that a Czech priest, Filip Maly from Iowa would come down once or twice a year to have Holy Mass and serve them with Sacraments, which was in dugouts or sod houses.

In the early 1890's a priest from Milligan, Fillmore Co., Josef Bartik, also a Czech, would come down once in three months or so. In the second half of the 1890's a German priest, Jordon Stutz, who spoke fairly good Czech language came from St. Stephen, P.O. Lawrence. Once a month on Saturdays, he would drive his team of horses and buggy 12 miles to Loucky to a public schoolhouse, where he had Holy Mass and other services including instruction for the children.

In the early spring of 1899, a little chapel (16 x 24) with two windows on the south and two on the north side was built. In 1900, a Czech priest, Frantisek Hovora of Lawrence, came down every fourth Sunday. In 1901, William Wolfe (Vaclav Vlk), of Fairfield donated money for an altar chalice to be bought. This chalice has been used ever since. After five years, Father Hovora left for the old country. Then another priest of Lawrence came to Loucky for about one and half years.

In the late 1906, Father Matej Nemeč, (later Monsignor) came to Fairfield, which was up to that date a Mission, presumably to Harvard or Sutton, Clay Co.. From Fairfield, Father Nemeč had services at the Loucky chapel every other Sunday and every other at Fairfield. In the fall of 1907, a new church under the supervision of Father Nemeč, was started to be built. (The carpenters were John King and Julius Mazour). On the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of December, the main structure of the church was up to the plate and a twister came up and blew everything down. Then after the New Year or in the spring, the building was started again and finished in the fall. It is believed that the first Mass was in the new church on Christmas Day, 1908. There were about forty families that started the congregation and donated to the building fund. Each and every one was of Czech

nationality. One acre of land for the church was donated by Julius Mazour. Also carpenter work was donated by parishioners when the church was built.

On January 6<sup>th</sup>, (on the Three Wise Men day), 1909, four men took up a drive in sub zero weather around the farms to collect donations to buy a bell for the church. They were: Antonin Mazour, who was the driver of the team hitched to a carriage, the other three men (playing the role of three wise men) were Frantisek Bednar as Kaspar, Josef Jedounek as Melichar and Frantisek Vap (Vapik) as Baltazar. When they entered the homes they would sing a song about the three wise men and then they would ask for a donation to the bell. Before they left the house they wrote with white chalk the letters - K.M.B.- (Kaspar, Melichar, Baltazar) above the door. The exact cost of the bell is not known, but the collection that day exceeded a little over the price of the bell. Engraved on the bell are the names of the four men, Father Josef Blaha (pastor at the time), and the two brothers whose firm made the bell in Missouri.

The chapel was torn down and lumber used to build a coal and wood shed. This building stands in the church yard a few steps south of the church. There were donations made to the church such as two statues on the main altar of Cyril and Methodius, donated by Matt Mazour. Two angels on the altar were donated, one by Matt Mouzar and the other by Frantisek Bednar. The two side altars were donated one by Mrs. Antonie Lipovsky and other by Mr. And Mrs. Josef Svoboda. In later years, a Holy Water Fountain was donated by Godley Hubl and Simon Chvala, and a statue of the Infant Jesus of Prague by Julius Mazour, and money for a second altar missal by Mrs. Norbert Cecava, and six black high candle holders for funeral purposes were donated by Simon Chvala.

In 1909, Father Nemecek was transferred and Father Josef Blaha came to Fairfield. In 1910, a new church and rectory were built in Deweese under the supervision of Father Blaha, and he moved to Deweese. The saint Martin Loucky church was a Mission to Assumption church at Dweese for nearly 62 years.

Most everything was in Czech language until in the 1940's when the English gospel was also read. At times an English sermon was given. As the years progressed, more English was added to the services. There were a number of priests serving the Loucky church who were of Czech nationality except two, who were German.

In about 1956, the church of St. Martin was closed and the people had to join the Assumption church at Deweese. About three months later a delegation from Loucky went to see the bishop. Shortly thereafter the St. Martin church was reopened.

When Bishop L.B. Kucera passed away and the new bishop came he strictly forbid the priest to have anything in Czech language at St. Martin. The priest replied: "There are few old people that can not confess only in Czech language". So the bishop graciously gave the priest permission to have confession in Czech, but no more.

The Saint Martin church Loucky stood there for 65 years without lightning rods and never was struck once by lightning. On July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1973 the was closed and the remaining parishioners were asked to join the Deweese Parish. Five weeks later, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August, the steeple of St. Martin church was struck by lightning and it caught fire at once. Many people wondered why that didn't happen in the 65 years. At the time of the lightning there were two or more persons that saw it and they called the fire department of Fairfield and Lawrence. The steeple burned down only to the bell. The bell had cracked in the fire. The lightning also traveled from the steeple all the way under the roof to the west side, knocking out a hole the size of a half bushel basket.

The last wedding in the old chapel was in April, 1908. It was the wedding of Theodor Jarosik and Josefa Novakova. The first marriage in the new church was in May, 1909. It was a double wedding of the two daughters of Mr. And Mrs. Florian Skalka. The older one, Miss Nellie, was married to Frantisek Nejezchleb, and Miss Anna to G. Hubl.

The people of the community are thankful to the Clay Center Historical Society for taking the church over. It is understood that as soon as they can collect sufficient donation funds they will repair the steeple as the Loucky money and insurance was put into the Deweese building fund.

Saint Martin's church will stand as a land mark to show the by passers the sacrifices and faith of the Czech pioneers

Leo Cecava

From the Book of Deeds: Assumption church at Deweese,

Dated November 6, 1907 – Lots 5 and 6, Block 2 and Lots 1 to 6, Block 3 –

Second addition to Deweese for the sum of \$1.00.

**Clay County = Fairfield**

**Saint Aloysius Church**

A Catholic congregation of seven families met in October of 1899, at the home of J.R. Maltby to organize a church. In 1878, twenty families were members and in 1879, they began the construction of a church which was completed in 1882. The Rev. J.G. Glaucher was their pastor. In October of 1882, Father Simeon came from Hastings once a month to minister these parishioners.

From 1907 to 1909, the Rev. Matej Nemec ministered to the Czechs, and from 1909 to 1912, the Rev. Josef Blaha succeeded him. Starting in 1931, no services were held at St. Aloysius for a number of years. The parishioners of the Assumption Church in Deweese had taken down the church building in Fairfield, and built a Parish hall from the lumber in Deweese.

Approximately twelve years later, the Church of Christ in Deweese was struck by lightning and burned, at which time the members of this congregation bought this hall and it became a church again, renamed Church of Christ.

Mr. Leo Cecava of Lawrence related that he knew a Czech lady who said, "My grandparents, Mr. Florian Skalka and Miss Ruzena Peschek (pesek) were married in St. Aloysius church at Fairfield on May 31, 1887, by Father James Simeon."

Leo Cecava

Deed dated October 12, 1879 from the Nebraska Land and Town Co. to the bishop J.Q. O'Connor: Lots 16, 17, and 18 in Block 7, Fairfield

(Picture)

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SS Cyril and Methodius Church in Clarkson

**Colfax County - Clarkson**

**SS Cyril and Methodius Parish**

Records at Saint Wenceslas' Church in Omaha show that the Rev. William Coka and Msgr, Jan Vranek made occasional visits to the Clarkson territory tending to the spiritual needs of the early Czech Catholic settlers. The oldest living settlers identify "Konicek's school" as the place where these pioneer priests offered the Holy Mass and

administered the Sacraments of Baptism and Matrimony. The first church in the territory was Sacred Heart Church at Olean, followed in 1873 by the Holy Trinity church at Heun, which they served all Catholics of Czech origin in the surrounding country.

In 1893, Saint John's church was erected at Howells and attached to the Saint Wenceslas' Parish at Dodge as a Mission church.

The Rev. Stepan Broz, the Saint Wenceslas' pastor, served Catholic then at Dodge, Howells, and Clarkson. It was not until 1901 that the Catholics of Clarkson saw the beginning of their own Parish when the Rev. Broz offered Mass for the first time in Clarkson at the Public school. Records show the Baptism on this occasion of Karel and Jerry Brabec, twin sons of Frank and Kristyna Brabec.

On the same day a meeting was held to discuss plans for building a church in Clarkson. Approximately 38 families made up the congregation. As a direct result of this meeting a contract was let to Rudolf Basta the following spring in 1902, for the construction of the church. The cornerstone was laid on August 15, 1902.

Rev. Karel Z. Petlach, the resident pastor at Saint John's church of Howells, assumed responsibility for the new Clarkson Parish until the Rev. Antonin Bednar could take over. The Rev. Bednar remained until 1905 at which time Father Karel Zak took over and remained until 1918.

On February 11, 1907, the Catholic congregation at Clarkson was incorporated formally under the title of SS Cyril and Methodius Parish. The Most Rev. Richard Scannel, appointed the Rev. Zak as pastor and approved the elected trustees, Jan Brabec and Herman Miller. Rev. Josef Bata came to the church in 1918 and became its first resident pastor after he supervised the construction of the present parish house at a cost of \$11,000 in that first year. In 1920, the church itself was enlarged by the addition of the sanctuary and sacristy.

On August 25, 1921, the Rev. Karel Z. Petlach was name a pastor and served faithfully in that capacity until July, 1946, at which time he was forced to retire because of ill health. He was succeeded by the Rev. Klement C. Kubesh.

The Rev. Lucian Astuto, an Italian, is a present pastor and is only the towns' third no-Czech priest there in more than half of century. He replaced the Rev. Kubesh, the Czech pastor for over 25 years, who spoke the language fluently and who, until recent

years had preached in Czech. Many old parishioners here still use the Czech tongue. The only language barrier, hearing Confessions of some members who still speak Czech, is solved by visits of the Rev. Antonin Pluhacek from the rural Heun Parish south of town.

From the book of Deeds: Pioneer Town Site Co. to Bohemian Catholic Church of Clarkson some out lots and part of out Lot D for the sum of \$ 234.00 – dated April 19, 1902

**Colfax Co. – Dry Creek                      Assumption of Blessed Virgin Mary Church**

A country church was built in 1881. Priests from Heun served until the Parish in Schuyler was established.

The church does not exist anymore. Only the cemetery of Dry Creek is left there.

**Colfax County - Heun                      Blessed Trinity Church**

In the years 1871 and 1872 the Rev. Ewing of West Point held services in the homes of settlers. Between 1873 and 1875 Rev. Frantisek Bobal of Plattsmouth and Rev. Frantisek Sulak, S.J., who were missionaries, alternated. From 1876 to 1879 Rev. Leopold A. Blaske of Olean served regularly. In 1878 it was agreed to build a church and establish a cemetery.

Two settlers, Jan Folda and W. Heun, sold five acres of land each for the sum of one dollar and in 1878 parishioners started the construction of a new church, 30 x 60 feet in size. The Rev. Blaske was the first pastor. After him Rev. Cyril Augustinsky of Columbus served and then Rev. F. Tuerk, S.J., of Olean, During his time a rectory was built.

Next priests serving there were: the Rev. Frantisek Pold, S.J., Filip Maly, S.J., of Crete, the Rev. Josef Hovorka of Abie till 1890. From June 1890 a resident priest was the Rev. Jan Hody c, and from 1894 to 1897 Rev. Jan Vlcek. From 1897 until 1904 Rev. J. Zak. From the year 1905 Rev. Josef Drbal served there, who visited other parishes in Tabor, Wilson, and Dry Creek.

He was succeeded by Rev. Josef Bata and Francis Szcepuchowski, 1917. In 1918 Rev. Josef Bartik began to come from Omaha. For a year thereafter various priests from the vicinity looked after the congregation and in 1920 the Rev. Antonin Folta took

charge. Next to serve there were: Rev. Frantisek Oborny, Rev. Ant. Tuma, Rev. Vaclav Kovar, and Rev. Antonin Pluhacek, the present pastor.

The Parish at Heun was not always known by that name. It was first known as the Holy Trinity Parish and Cemetery at Maple Creek. It was changed to the name Heun, after the name of an early settler, William Heun, because the Post office had also been named after him.

### **Colfax County - Howells**

### **Saint John's Church**

This part of Colfax County was settled by Czech immigrants as early as in 1869. In 1893 they built a church on top of a hill at a cost of \$3,500. In the year of 1900 the church was remodeled and enlarged.

During the Re. J.S. Broz's incumbency in Dodge, he used to take care of this church. In 1901 the Rev. Karel Petlach began to conduct services regularly. In 1902 he was succeeded by the Rev. Antonin Bednar, who in turn was followed by the Rev. Jan Zak. He served there until his death in 1920. The Rev. Josef Drbal was the next pastor.

### **Colfax County – Schuyler**

### **Saint Mary's Church**

In the fall on 1913 Rev. Frantisek Tomanek came to Schuyler to organize a Czech Parish. Services were held in the church of the Irish congregation.

In the early part of 1915 the Rev. F. Tomanek was succeeded by Rev. J. S. Broz, during whose incumbency the churchy was decorated and two bells purchased, the Parish debt amounting to \$3,000 cleared and progress made under his able leadership. When he left this Parish in 1918, for a time there was no resident priest until the appointment of Rev. Jan Krajicek. In 1919, he was succeeded by Rev. Turek's incumbency, attending to the Mission in Wilson. He was succeeded by Rev. Bata. Following priests there: Rev. Vaclav Havlicek, and Rev Viktor E. Herman, the present pastor.

### **Colfax Co.-Tabor Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church**

Tabor is a very old Czech settlement in Colfax County. In May of 1870, a caravan arrived in what is now Lincoln, Precinct, consisted of two wagons. In one was the family of Tomas Dostal, in the other Josef F. Sindelar, Tomas Sindelar and wife, F.J. Jonas and

wife, and Valav Sindelar, single. Jan Maly, a farmer living three miles from West Point, Cuming County, led them to their goal, surveyed their homesteads and provided them with necessary documents. They settled on Maple Creek, Colfax County.

On Christmas Day, 1871, those of the Catholic faith met for the first time in the sod house of Josef F. Sindelar, for service.

In that year Rev. Ewing, a German priest, came a few times and served on the farm of Peter Schad (near West Point.) Later in the year, he went to the farm of Peter Lodl for that purpose, as did Rev. Frantisek Sulak, S.J., and other missionaries. In as much as in 1871 the settlers came in large numbers they endeavored to build a church the following year. But all were poor and they could not raise the money. So on Sundays and church holidays they gathered in the home of Josef F. Sindelar. They came from far and wide so that by ten o'clock a good crowd had gathered. At 10:30 at night, when the bell hung on the window-frame had been rung by J.F. Sindelar, they entered for worship. The altar was a plain wooden cross. After the song by the congregation, one of the older men conducted Mass, which was sung, the other read from the Scriptures. This was followed by the sermon.

In 1874 a public school was built and services conducted there. By that time the members were able to build a church. However, a church had already been built in Heun, eight miles west, and those living near joined that congregation. Later they succeeded in building a church when Josef Sindelar (not the Jos. F.) donated three acres of land for the church and cemetery and also made the first contribution in money. Josef Kaspar brought the first load of brick from Schuyler, Josef Krajicek the first load of lime. Josef Sindelar, as an officer of the church, laid the first brick (only one), Frank Strudl did the masonry work.

The church was consecrated September 1, 1880 by Rev. Mass there on September 15, 1880.

The first child baptized there was Frantisek, son of Jos. Sindelar. The first couple to be married there were Josef Krajicek and Anna Vlasak, the first burial was that of the infant of J.B. Svoboda and the first adult Josef Sindelar, who had given the land.

There has never been a resident priest. The following have served from Heun: Rev. Josef Hovorka, to 1890; Jan Hodyc, 1890-94; Jan Vlcek, 1894-97; Jan Zak, 1897-

1904; Josef Drbal, 1905-15; Josef Bata, 1915-1917; Francis Szczechowski (Cechopovsky), 1917-18; Josef Bartik, 1918-19, Anton Folta from 1918.

In that old time, the Czech Catholics from a vicinity of the settlement of Sangco, Colfax County, were visiting the church of Tabor.

### **Colfax County - Wilson Mission    Saint Mary's of Perpetual Help**

In the late 1860, the first settlers from Bohemia and Moravia arrive in Colfax County. The Wilson Mission and Saint Mary's cemetery, Wilson, were founded in 1882. Mr. And Mrs. Josef Mrazek Sr. donated about five acres of land for the church and cemetery.

Wilson church or Mrazek's church, as it was called, 76 by 40 feet in size, was a Mission of the Holy Trinity church in Heun up to 1914. Since 1914 Wilson has been a Mission of Saint Mary's Church (Czech) in Schuyler, Colfax County.

The first burial in Saint Mary's cemetery at Wilson was that of Matous Salak, age 50, on June 11, 1884, conducted by the Rev. Frantisek Pold, S.J.

The church was consecrated on August 27, 1918, by Bishop J. Harty of Omaha. The first Mass was said by Rev. Karel Zak of Howells, assistant priests were Rev. Karel Petlach of Verdigre, Czech sermon by Rev. Josef Bata from Clarkson.

### **Colfax County - Curry**

In the book, "Czech Catholic Parishes in America", published in 1890, is this short story about the Czech Catholic activities in the vicinity of the small village Curry in that time: "During the year of 1890 about 35 Czech families settled in the vicinity of Curry and visited the Holy Trinity church in Maple Creek".

### **Cuming County – Olean (Oleyen)        Sacred Heart Parish**

In 1874, the first German settlers of Catholic faith in the vicinity of Olean saw the need for a place to worship and decided to build a church for themselves.

This was welcome news to many Czech families also living in this vicinity. They offered their financial help in this endeavor, so they, too, could worship God. (Oleyen is now spelled Olean by the State Highway Department).

In 1876, droves of locusts came and ruined all the farm crops. In this desperate situation Bishop O'Connor of Omaha helped out the unfortunate people and also sent them a zealous missionary, the Rev. Frantisek Sulak, S.J. Through his effort a priest was appointed, by the bishop, to administer this Parish. Someone who could speak German as well as Czech. He was of Czech origin and this was greatly appreciated by the Czech families.

He was the Rev. Jan Blaske, who came on August 30, 1877, and was the first pastor of the Sacred Heart church of Olean. The Czech parishioners also helped with building a house for the Rev. Blaske.

In 1878, the Czechs decided to build their own church – between Olean and Schuyler in the Heun vicinity and consecrated it to the Holy Trinity. The Rev. Blaske came Sundays to say the Mass. Two years later another group of Czechs built the church of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It was located five miles southeast of Olean and about six miles southeast of the present town of Howells. The Rev. Blaske blessed this church on September 8, 1880, and he also came here to say a Mass on Sundays. After the Rev. Blaske was transferred, this Parish was without a priest for almost a year, until the Rev. Frantisek Tuerk was appointed as spiritual administrator.

When this, 24 x 40 ft., church was too small for the growing Parish, a new 80 foot long addition was erected. On October 21, 1882, the celebration of laying the cornerstone was held. The parishioners were surprised to learn that there was two new Czech priests the Rev. Frantisek Polda and Jan Kramar, A.J. The blessing of the church by bishop O'Connor took place on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June, 1883. He was pleased to see a long procession of the parishioners marching toward the church singing a Czech hymn Tisickrat – pozdravujeme Tebe (Hail Holy Queen).

Shortly after that a delegation of Czech Catholics went to Omaha to ask the bishop for permission to build a church east of Olean. Permission was granted and the church built and consecrated to the Czech Patron Svaty Vaclav (Saint Wenceslas) in 1884.

This church, 24' x 40', was located a mile north of Postal Station Dodge. Later two miles south of the church the town of Dodge was founded and in May 1889 the church of Saint Wenceslas was moved to town.

A small church was also built in the town of Howells, and when in 1890 more Czech priests arrived in Nebraska, the Rev. W. Coka made the churches in Tabor, Dodge and Howells independent.

### **Cuming Co. – West Point Assumption of Blessed Virgin Parish**

This was a mixed Parish. There have been no resident Czech priests. The church was built in 1873. In the year of 1890, 14 Czech families belonged to the Parish.

### **Dodge County – Dodge Saint Wenceslas' Church**

The basic origin of this Parish dates back to the early 1870's, when many pioneers of German, Polish and Czech descent settled around the vicinity of where now Dodge stands. The closest Catholic Church to them was Saint Charles, which was many miles to the north of them in Cuming County.

A Parish was finally organized by the name of Olean. Due to national differences the Parish of Tabor was organized southwest of Olean. Another group of Czech settlers organized a Czech cemetery named Saint Wenceslas five miles east of the Olean Parish in the year 1883. This was the nucleus of the Saint Wenceslas Parish.

The first organizers were: Pavel Faltin, Frank Svoboda, Josef Hrouda, Katerina Mares, Frank Hanzl, Joseph Walter, John Hemerka, John Ruzek, Marie Mandl, Jan Stejskal, Jiri Kulhanek, Vaclav Hruby, Josef Jelinek, Jan Venclicek, Vaclav Dostal, Vaclav Mares, Frank Karnik, E. Novak, Frank Holub, Peter Vogeltanz, V. Vlach, Jan Vodvarka, Ferdinand Vodvarka Sr., John Majer, Josef Suva, Frank Chudomelka and Vaclav Krajicek.

In the following year, 1884, these families constructed a 24' x 40' wooden church at a cost of \$1,138.00. Rev. Francis Turek, S.J., blessed the new church and cemetery and celebrated the first Mass in 1884. It was noted that the church was debt free.

When the railroad came through the territory in the year 1886, the town of Dodge was platted, but it was 2 1/2 miles southwest of the present church. After much discussion and dissension amongst the parishioners it was decided to move the church to Dodge. This occurred in the year 1889. Rev. Turek of the Olean church celebrated the first Mass in the church in Dodge.

As the new town grew so did the Parish. So in the year 1893 a new and larger church had to be built to accommodate the enlarging congregation. The second church was dedicated on November 12, 1893. The first resident pastor became Rev. Jan Broz on January 1, 1894. Also in that year a rectory was built.

In the year 1909-10 a three-story brick school was built and it opened on September 1, 1911 staffed by five Notre Dame Sisters.

The town having two strong nationalities Czech and German, permission was granted by the bishop Richard Scannell to establish a Parish for the German nationality in 1913. It was incorporated on June 27 of that year.

A new brick veneer rectory was built in the year 1935. Rev. Francis Oborny was appointed pastor on October 13, 1937. In the late 1940's due to the increasing enrollment it was decided to build an addition to the school. It was completed in 1951, and dedicated on May 13, 1952. The addition cost \$65,000, and built by the parishioners. In the year 1950 the Saint Joseph Parish in Dodge was also assigned to Rev. Oborny and on March 1, 1954, the St. Joseph Parish merged with St. Wenceslas.

In the year 1954 plans were made to build a new Saint Wenceslas church. It was completed in 1956 and dedicated by Archbishop Gerald Bergan on June 27<sup>th</sup> of that year. The new church was 140 feet long and 80 feet wide, and cost \$240,000.00.

The Rev. Francis Oborny was relieved of his duties on June 14, 1973. The present pastor is the Rev. Donald J. Bartek.

Pastor serving the St. Wenceslas Parish: Francis Turek, S.J., 1884-March 1890; William Coka, March 1890-Dec.31, 1890; John Rech, Jan.1, 1890-July 31, 1893-Dec.1, 1893; Jan Broz, Jan.1, 1894-Febr 28, 1915; Josef Drbal, March 1, 1915-May 31, 1920; Karel Petlach, June 1, 1920-Sept. 30, 1921; Jan Turek, Oct. 1, 1921-Sept.30, 1922; Edward Cepuran, Oct. 1, 1922-Jan. 12, 1923; Vaclav Havlicek, Jan. 13, 1923-Nov. 30, 1929; Josef Bata, Oct. 1, 1929-Sept. 30, 1931; Anthony Folta, Oct. 1, 1931-Sept.18, 1937; Rev. Francis J Oborny, Oct. 6, 1937-June 14, 1973; J. Donald Bartek, June 15, 1973.

Assistants: Rev. Jerome H. Dickes, June 16, 1950-June 20, 1958; Duane W. Lukes, June 21, 1959.

Deed Record: July 11, 1892 Lots 5-6-7, Block 22, Dodge were purchased from the Pioneer Townsite Company by Roman Catholic Saint Vaclav Bohemian Church for the sum of \$200.00. Then in 1893, March 25, Pioneer Townsite Co. gave a Quit Claim to the St. Wenceslas Church of Dodge, as the R.C. St. Wenceslas Church of Dodge, as the R. C. St. Vaclav church was unincorporated and was incorporated under the present name, by this Quit Claim. On December 26, 1901 Pioneer Townsite Co. deeded to the church Lot 4, Block 22, Dodge, Nebraska, for the sum of \$100.00. On October 3, 1958, the Church deeded to the Village of Dodge, The E 4 feet of Lots 4-5-6-7, Block 22.

(Picture)

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St. Wenceslas church and rectory

(Picture)

Page 66

Rev. Francis Oborny

**Douglas County – Omaha      Saint Adalbert Church**

In September, 1916, about forty families living south of Hanscom Park, petitioned Archbishop Harty for permission to establish a new Parish in that territory. Permission was granted and in May 1918 the cornerstone was laid and in the same year the first Mass celebrated in the new church.

Located in the basement of the new building, the two upper floors serving as a school and residence of the Sisters. During the school year, 1919-1920, the Sisters de Notre Dame took charge. First incumbent priest was the Rev. Jan A. Blaske.

**Douglas County – Omaha      Saint Rose Parish**

This is a mixed Parish, although the Rev. Frantisek Tomanek, a Czech priest, established it in May, 1918. Services were held in a German home on South 13<sup>th</sup> Street, before that time.

(Picture)

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Old church in Dodge, Dodge County

### **Douglas County – Omaha      The Church of the Assumption**

It was in the fall of 1891 when the Czech Catholics in South Omaha first felt the need to organize. They banded together under the name of the Czech Benevolent Society, forerunner of the Western Bohemian Catholic Union and the Katolicky delnik. With the inspiration provided by the Czech-speaking priests, their desire for a national church became intense and, on May 7, 1893, a meeting of the South Omaha Czech Catholics was held for the purpose of petitioning for a Parish of their own. The determination of the group was not to be denied as they decided to build a church dedicated to the patronage of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. A plot of ground on the corner of 22<sup>nd</sup> and Wyman Streets (now known as 22<sup>nd</sup> and U Streets) was chosen and purchased for the sum of \$1,100.00.

On Christmas Eve, 1893, the Rev. Jan Zak was appointed as Assistant pastor at Saint Agnes with a special commission to attend the spiritual needs of the Czech Catholics of South Omaha.

During the month July, 1894, Rev. Jan Hodyc was appointed pastor of the infant Parish, and he began making arrangements for construction of a church. Plans for a 40 x 60 foot structure were drawn up and approved, and on September 22, 1894, a contract was awarded for a total cost of \$2,999.00. The new church was completed in the winter of 1894 and was blessed on January 6, 1895.

The Rev. Hodyc resigned in April, 1895, and Rev. William Coka was named to serve as Acting Pastor until appointment of Rev. Jan Zak, who was replaced by Rev. Jan Vlcek in June, 1897. The Rev. Vlcek proceeded with plans for a church rectory. It was completed by the end of 1898 at a cost of \$2,500.00. In February, 1900, Rev. Anton Bednar succeeded Rev. Vlcek, but his term was brief and in 1902, Rev. Josef Chundelak was his successor. This pastor is probably best remembered among early pastors, having served in that capacity from 1902 to 1918. Shortly after he assumed Parish command, the original church was enlarged to almost double its size. A large furnace was placed

into operation for improved heating, and electric lights were installed in the church and rectory to replace lamps and candles.

With the immediate church needs then provided, a Parish school received top priority. The southwest corner of 22<sup>nd</sup> and U Streets was selected for the planned school building. Catholic Sokol No. 1. purchased the land in 1903, at a cost of \$14,688.00.

The doors of this school were officially opened in September 1908, with Benedictine Sisters from Lisle, ILL. assuming the teaching duties. After the death of Rev. Chundelak, Rev. J.S. Broz succeeded him. When Rev. Broz died in 1919, Rev. Jan Krajicek was the next pastor.

The Rev. Krajicek soon realized that a larger church would soon be needed. Diocesan transfer resulted in several changes in Assistant Pastors during the next years. With Rev. Antonin Tuma, Rev. Klement Kubes, and Rev. Albert Krejci serving in that position in succession.

In the meantime, however, a very important event took place in this Parish. On May 22, 1932, the “First Son of Assumption”, the Rev. Frantisek Barta, offered his First Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in our church. Four years later, another Parish ordination occurred. On June 6, 1936, the “Second Son of Assumption”, the late Rev. Kocarnik received the Sacrament of Holy Orders. The Rev. Jan Krajicek, who was an active pastor for 23 years, died on November 11, 1948. Under new appointed pastor, Rev. Frantisek Barta, (later Msgr), a gigantic stride to that end was achieved in 1950 with construction of a beautiful brick church and a modern rectory. In 1970, Msgr Frantisek Barta retired and Rev. Robert Gass was appointed pastor. He served until 1973, when he was transferred to Christ the King Parish in Omaha. Rev. Albert Krejci who once served as assistant pastor with Rev. Krajicek is now serving as chief administrator.

Excerpt from a book: Diamond Jubilee-Assumption Church

### **Douglas County – Omaha      Saint Wenceslas Church and Parish**

The first Czech priest in Omaha was the Rev. Frantisek Bobal, who was appointed in the year 1872, to the Cathedral in Omaha and sometimes had a Czech sermon there.

In that time, financial situation of about 60 Czech Catholic families in Omaha was very poor. They could not build a church or pay a priest. It was not until 1877, the Rev. Vaclav Kocarnik, O.S.B., priest, was sent by his Superior, Abbot Wimmer, from Saint Vincent Abbey in Pennsylvania, to work as a missionary among the Czechs in Nebraska. He began his apostolic work in Omaha in very humble surroundings.

On 13<sup>th</sup> Street north of William Street was a wooden hall, 25 x 50 feet, “a dancing place”, a tavern and an apartment of Vaclav Kucera, the owner. It was a place for entertainments with no good reputation. James O’Connor, Bishop of Omaha, purchased this tavern and hall for Czech Catholics. This rather worldly property was entrusted by the Bishop to the Rev. Kocarnik for the religious use of the people in the area. He remodeled the old dancing room into a church, the apartment of the innkeeper into a residence for the priest, and the tavern into a school.

Although the pioneer parishioners made many great sacrifices, it was still impossible for the pastor to meet the expense of maintaining this newly founded Parish, and therefore, Bishop O’Connor, recognizing and admiring the heroic endeavor of this people, extended considerable financial assistance during the first years of the Parish.

In the year 1880, the Rev. Kocarnik moved to Plasi, Saunders County. His successor was the Rev. Siegfried Klima, also a Benedictine priest, who obtained pews for the church. After his departure in the year 1881 a German priest from Saint Joseph’s Hospital assisted in order that Mass could be celebrated every Sunday. During this period the Rev. Kocarnik traveled from Plasi, a distance of seventy-seven miles, by wagon to assist with duties in the absence of a pastor.

The Catholic spirit and life in the newly created Parish was preserved in the foundation of the first Czech Catholic Society in Omaha, the Saint John Nepomuk Society.

The Rev. William Coka came to Omaha on March 15, 1885, and lived temporarily in the Bishop’s home while taking charge of Saint Wenceslas Parish. It was this priest who in the year 1885 started with plans for a new church. Property was purchased at 14<sup>th</sup> and Pine Streets, the present location of the church. The school was completed first, and then the church and rectory. The solemn blessing of the church took place on July 3, 1887. The congregation at this time was composed of 130 members and

80 children attended the school. The land and hall of the first church was sold for a price of \$9,000.00. The new church and school was built at the cost of \$18,000.00.

On January 8, 1893, the Rev. Coka was transferred from Saint Wenceslas Parish and was succeeded by the Rev. Jan Vranek. In 1897 a gas main was laid along 14<sup>th</sup> Street and the new church was then equipped with the gaslights. In this year also, the wooden sidewalks were supplanted by brick.

Upon the recommendation of the famous Czech composer Antonin Dvorak, who was visiting Omaha during the Transmississippi Exposition, the parishioners purchased a pipe organ for the church. It remained in use for forty years.

In 1904, the improvements for the church were completed and installation of the electric lighting system. The Stations of the Cross, which were imported from Czechoslovakia, were purchased by the Saint Mary's Altar Society. The street in front of the church property was paved in 1908.

On July 1, 1922, Edward J. Cepuran (Chapuran), who was born in Omaha, was ordained at Saint Cecilia's Cathedral in Omaha. He offered his First Holy Mass on July 2, 1922, in Saint Wenceslas church, and was immediately appointed Assistant Pastor.

In 1923, a thirty-piece school orchestra was known as the "Beseda". In this year also, the "Kenarv Club" was founded consisting of the young people, in the Parish. The name "Kenarv" reversed, spells "Vranek" in honor of the Rev. Jan Vranek, who was a pastor of the Parish at that time. Upon recommendation of Archbishop J.J. Harty of Omaha, Rev. Vranek was elevated to the office of Domestic Prelate, by the Pope Pius XI, and received the title of Rt. Rev. Monsignor. Following the death of Msgr. Vranek on November 14, 1925, the Rev. Cepuran was appointed pastor.

On June 11, 1926, the Parish was honored by the visit of Bishop Karel Kaspar of Prague, Czechoslovakia, the first Czech bishop to visit the United States. On that day bishop Kaspar celebrated Pontifical High Mass at the Saint Wenceslas' church.

In 1927, the interior of the church was redecorated, including the altars, the statures and the Station of the Cross. The school was also modernized and a small apartment was added for the teaching Sisters. On the occasion of the 1000<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Martyrdom of Saint Wenceslas, 1929, a celebration was held at the Western League Baseball Park, where Joseph F. Rummel, then bishop of Omaha, celebrated

Pontifical Mass and also delivered an English sermon. The Czech sermon was delivered by the Rev. Karel Petlach of Clarkson, Colfax County.

In 1943, the various lodges and societies in the Parish furnished funds to have the statue of their patron saint in the church refinished. In February of 1948 the first Saturday Devotions to the Immaculate Heart of Mary were inaugurated and in 1950, the Rev. Cepuran received the Statue of the Little Pilgrim Virgin, Our Lady of Fatima, from Portugal. The statue is now permanently located on the side-altar of the Blessed Virgin, in the church.

During the later part of March, 1952, the Rev. Cepuran entered the hospital in rapidly failing health, and passed to his death on Good Friday, April 11, 1952.

The Rev. Cepuran was succeeded by the Rev. Antonin Tuma, May 8, 1952, the present pastor of Saint Wenceslas' church.

Father Tuma's achievements since becoming the fifth pastor of this church were numerous. Men volunteers excavated soil under the church for a new parish hall with a modernly equipped kitchen. New heating and air conditioning was installed. The interior church floor was tiled, and new pews replaced the original. Hall wood paneling extends high into the curved archway. As the steeple was lowered or converted into a tower, a circle stained glass window of the Infant Jesus of Prague was set above the main entrance at the front of the church. ON the south wall a double window of stained glass has an inset, life size figure of Saint Wenceslas mounted on a horse, as a warrior of God.

The exterior of the church, rectory and school were covered with aluminum siding. The interior of the rectory and school were renovated. The latter with new overhead lighting and green boards. Two black top parking areas were also provided by purchasing adjoining land. Landscaping of various trees enhance the buildings.

From the Booklet "Diamond Jubilee – St. Wenceslas' Parish, published 1952 – with additional comments by Mrs. Anna Wieduvildt

### **Fillmore County – Milligan      Saint Wenceslas Church**

In the past year 1874 Father Frantisek Sulak, S.J. was the first priest to visit this locality, and he stayed at this time for three days. The next priest to visit here was Father Felix Smutny. Then on another occasion, Father Turek visited here and later Father Filip

Maly, S.J. Father Emanuel Antonin Bouska, who was a resident priest in Crete and had Wilber as his Mission, came to Milligan on a couple of special Catholic Church occasions. Father Josef Bartik was the first resident priest here after the new church was built 1890.

The little building standing in the middle of the cemetery, one mile north and a mile west of Milligan, was the first Catholic church in the community of Milligan. It was built (1876) on the corner of the Antonin Kotas farm and moved onto the cemetery grounds when the new church was built in Milligan (1890). The little church was built in 1876 and on Sundays was the mecca where the people of the entire settlement gathered not only for the purpose of worship but for social and mutually beneficial communion as well.

(Picture)

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Milligan – St. Wenceslas Church – Foto F. Tesar

Father E.A. Bouska and Father F. Smutny came occasionally to hold regular services, but generally services were conducted by Vaclav Boca and Jan Kotas or by both. In this little church the faithful came together every Sunday to recite the Rosary and read the Epostle and the Gospel from a book given to them by a priest. In those pioneer days, the priest traveled from one Mission to another taking care of the spiritual welfare of the faithful.

Credit for crystallizing the idea to build the Saint Wenceslas church belongs to Father E.A. Bouska, who contributed not only of his time but also of his money. At that time Father Bouska was a resident priest in Crete and held services in Milligan only occasionally. Following Father Bouska in 1891 was Father Josef Bartik, the first resident priest here, who continued until 1902. The Rev. A.M. Mosler attended Milligan as one of the missions of Wilber from 1902-07, and from 1907 to 1914. He was a pastor of Odell and Milligan. He was appointed pastor in Crete, September 20, 1914, retaining the Mission of Milligan and Tobias in 1915. During Father Mosler's time that church was placed under the management of the dioceses of Lincoln and the bishop.

Following Father Mosler were Fathers: W. Supik, Alexander, Kopecky, R.H. Verhelst, A. Biskup, O.S.B., P.J. O'Leary, J. Hotovy, E.C. McFadden. The Rev. Jan Kozlik, who was appointed August 1, 1936 served there until 1944, after him Father C.C. Stirn, 1944-52, then S.J. Siegienski, Henehan, and Father Thomas Daly.

The first Baptism in this church was held for Fannie Hodek Haberman, daughter of Frank and Anna Hodek. The first couple married in this church by Father Bouska was Frank Tenopir and Matilda Slepicka on January 6, 1891. The first couple married here by Father Josef Bartik was James Selement and Marie Kotas.

The statues of Saint Mary and Saint Josef and the Saint Wenceslas' picture for this church were purchased in 1889.

Milligan also has two ladies who joined the Sisterhood. Sister M. Geraldine, daughter of the late W.J. and Rose (Hamouz) Bulin, who teaches at Omaha in a catholic school, Sister M. Frances Ann, daughter of Mr. And Mrs. Emil A. Havel, is a registered nurse.

The Saint Wenceslas' church is located on Lot 18, Block 2 in Milligan. From the Book of Deeds: Lots 12, 13 and 14, Block 1 purchased from Josef and Marie Jicha for \$3,100.00. Deed dated March 10, 1915. Lot 15, Block 1 purchased from August Grossman for \$100.00. Deed filed July 24, 2909. Lots 16, 17 and 18, Block 1, purchased from Svaty Vaclav spolek for \$1.00. Deed filed December 28, 1903.

Partly from a booklet published 1963 – 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Village of Milligan.

Sister Bernadette, Marian Sisters, Waverly, sent this information:

“My grandmother was Josie Kotas Radek. She was born April 7, 1877, to Frank and Mary Ann Bernasek Kotas at Milligan. She dies February 11, 1973, at the age of 95 years, 10 months and 4 days. She grew up in Milligan and married Charles Joseph Radek of DuBois, April 23, 1902, in Milligan. They had six children. Eugene Radek their youngest child is my father. In 2939 my father Eugene married Henrietta Salzman. There are five children in our family. RoJean (now Sister Bernadette), Shirley (now Sister Monica), John, Robert, and Patricia. I think Jan Kotas is my great-great uncle.”

## **Gage County – Odell      Blessed Virgin Mary of Perpetual Help**

The earliest this writer has record of Catholic services in Odell were about 1878. At that time a priest from a neighboring Parish came and said Mass in different homes and also at the Odell Railroad station in what was called a “Section House”.

One of these priests was the Rev. Francis Turek. He came whenever he could to say Mass and organize the Catholics together. When he left, the Rev. Filip Maly, S.J., came here occasionally from Wilber to conduct services. Then another priest, the Rev. Rous came here to serve the people and he succeeded in forming a three-member board. They were Josef, Frantisek Masek and Patrick Murphy. The purpose was to see if a church could be built. They immediately purchased an acre of ground for \$140.00. Josef Hajek donated \$24.00, F. Masek \$28.00. The rest was taken up by many collections. Everyone regardless of faith contributed. With such a small sum, it was impossible to think a church could be built. However, Father Rous, a German priest, urged to go on even with a debt.

In 1886 a church was started and completed that year. It was dedicated to the blessed Virgin Mary of Perpetual Help, by the Rev. F. Maly. The cost of the building was little over \$1,000.00. But the debt lingered on and was hard to pay off. Some of the board members wanted to give the church up. Very little was paid off in this following two years and the people were worried the church would be sold.

Once again some members went out to collect. Only \$60.00 was collected, but it helped and the Rev. Maly was made a regular priest here, coming from Pawnee County. He donated his own money for the church and charged nothing for his services and lived only on what the people donated to him.

Times were hard and people were moving in and out and soon Rev. Maly had to leave. He returned to the old country. Then again priests like Father Kloss served here from Lanham, Kansas, also Father Freeman from Wymore, Gage County. As the community was predominantly Czech, it was hard to understand the priests, and so Josef Hajek Sr. wrote a letter and formed a petition and sent it to bishop Bonacum in Lincoln who happened to be going to St. Louis, MO. to visit the Rev. Josef Hessoun and the letter traveled with him. Father Hessoun read it, and as he was sending his own nephew, the Rev. Josef Bartik to Milligan, Fillmore Co., he asked him to take care of the people in

Odell at least once a month. At the same time, the Rev. J. Hessoun donated to the Odell church a fine new Missal, Stations of the Cross and six candles with stands. This took place about 1891.

This was really a boost for the Odell Catholics and everything improved. Payments were made and soon an organ was purchased. Songs were sung in Czech and English as also were sermons.

One event was when the bell was purchased. It arrived at the depot and a parade was held. The bell was drawn by two teams of horses on a carriage, followed by parishioners. The parade was led by the Jan Pecenka Czech band from Hanover, Kansas, and arrived at church and pulled up into the high tower. On this bell are inscribed in raised letters the following: Panno Maria, Svaty Josefe, Svaty Frantisku Xaversky, orodujte za nas!

This same old bell was transferred into the new church when it was built in 1962 and it still tolls there this day.

Not much more could be said of the history of this church as everything continued quite normally. People were born, some died, and moved in and out. They consisted of Czechs, Germans and Irish.

Our new church was built in 1962 when the people decided the old church was too old and beyond repair. And with the help of a good energetic Czech priest, the Rev. Edward Valasek, a new stone church was built and the old one torn down. It is a beautiful church, a pride to the Odell parishioners. Credit has to be given to Father Valasek who worked hard on it. He donated his own money to it, so that it was paid for at the time it was dedicated in 1963. Our congregation consists of 28 families or around 120 people.

It might be interesting to mention that about the year 1900 a rectory was built, a fine two-story building, which still stands here today. Since the beginning of the Catholic Parish in Odell up to this day some 22 priests have served here. The names of those are: Turek, Rous, Maly, Kloss, Bartik, Stuhlman, Mosler, Cadek, Henneghan, Mandeville, Kozlik, Valasek, and Msgr Kean who is in Odell now.

Wm. A. Hajek, Odell, 1974

From the Book of Deeds: Thomas J. Murphy conveyed Lot 2, Clock 1 in North Odell to Right. Rev. James O'Connor on August 4, 1885 for the sum of \$140.00. It was recorded September 23, 1885.

(Picture)

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Catholic Church in Odell

### **Hayes County – Tasov Sacred Heart of Jesus Church**

The early history of the Sacred Heart Catholic church, 12 miles southeast of Hayes Center, is unique in that it is written in the Czech language. To prove this we give the names of participants of the first recorded marriage – February 17, 1890 of Vojtech Vinicky and Frantiska Boruvka.

The first Parish was formed about 1885 and the first church stood west of the present one. The acres of land were donated by Frank Pallas and wife Franceska to Catholic bishop T. Bonacum of Lincoln. This deed was recorded August 2, 1892. This was for a cemetery and wooden building for a church. The Oblate priests of McCook's St. Patrick church have served this Parish since 1908.

(Picture)

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Tasov – First wooden church

In those early days Mass was celebrated only twice a year, when a priest came from eastern Nebraska. The first baptism was recorded in 1887. In the early 1900's parishioners took turns going to McCook about every second month with horse and buggy to bring the priest. Mass was often celebrated on a weekday. The first priest to have a car would come from McCook on Sunday to St. Ann's church (which is about ten miles south-east of Sacred Heart) and then to Sacred Heart on Monday. Names of early priests on baptism records are: Rev. Josef Koutek, Josef Bartik, Alois Klein, and Engl. Ball. Names on baptism records or marriage records are: Frank Pallas, Frank & Mike Broz, Reznicek, Babka, Boruvka, Frank Hajek, Josef Hybl, Josef Erben, Kalina.

These were the earliest settlers, then came the Frank Tabor family, Maria Altman and two sons Frank and Mike Broz, Frank Altman, Albert Vinicky, Petr Kucera and Joe Vlasin are still members of Sacred Heart. Although the church membership is now made up of many nationalities.

My parents and my husband's parents told that before the first Sacred Heart church was built Mass was celebrated in homes whenever a priest could come. My grandfather, Vojtech (Adalbert) Vinicky was a stonemason by trade from his native Czechoslovakia, so he laid the foundation for the first church. Our parents also said crops failed (year we don't know) the bishop sent a carload of flour, etc. to the needy Catholic families of the community, so many had their children baptized so they would qualify for aid but never went to church afterwards.

The legal description of this church is as follows: West corner of the NE Quarter, Section 19, Township 6, Range 31, West 6<sup>th</sup> PM, Thornburg Precinct.

Mr. & Mrs. Frank E. Tabor, Culbertson

Part of this is taken from the Times Republican Centennial Issue

### **Howard County – Farwell                      Saint Anthony of Padua**

Records show that this Parish in Farwell had its beginning in 1887, bolstering its claim to be the oldest Polish church in Nebraska. Rev. Anthony Kawiter, who had taken charge of the Warsaw Mission after the Czechs built the church, soon built another church four miles west of there, near the village of Farwell. He attended this Mission from September 1877 till June 1878, giving it as patron Saint Anthony of Padua.

The first recorded baptism was that of Mary Ann Chalupska, on Sept. 18, 1877. The first marriage was between Jakub Trubl and Anna Novotna on March 5, 1878. Next priest to attend this church was Rev. Filip Maly, S.J., recorded his first baptism in May, 1880.

### **Howard County – Saint Paul                      SS Peter and Paul**

The history of the Catholics of Saint Paul dates back to the year 1878, when the first Catholic settlers, mainly Czechs and Poles settled around Saint Paul. In 1889 a brick church was built at a cost of \$3,500.00 by Czechs and Poles. The first resident priest was

Rev. Eugene Geary. In September 1890, he was replaced by Rev. Jan Broz. At this time Warsaw, Ravenna and Geranium were added as Missions of St. Paul. On January 21, 1894, Rev. Broz was succeeded by Rev. Josef Chundelak, who in turn was succeeded by Rev. Josef Macabre in 1902. Rev. Grobbel, a German priest, began to plan a new church, he was succeeded by Rev. Josef Hovorka, in 1910. Under Rev. Hovorka's guidance, in June 1910, the construction of a new building started. The new church was completed in December of 1911.

### **Howard County – Warsaw**

### **Saint Wenceslas Mission**

This was the first Catholic church built in Howard County and one of the first churches in the state. The building of this church is so closely connected with the development of the Czech colony "Slavonia" and is so typical an illustration of the beginning and evolution of the first Czech settlements, that a more detailed account will not be amiss.

Among the first settlers who came in the year 1875 were Martin Vacek, Martin Slobodny, Jan Holecek and his brother Jan, Vaclav and Antonin, Jan Svoboda and son Karel, Vaclav Toman and his son Josef, Antonin Francel, Matej Blaha and Antonin Chalupsky. In 1876 the following settlers arrived to join the colony, Albert Sevcik, Jakub Sevcik, Jakub Trubl and his brother Josef, and Jan Safarik.

During the year 1876, owing to the death of Antonin Francel's child, the need for a cemetery was felt and Martin Slobodny donated two acres of his land for that purpose. Not having a church as yet, the Catholics set up a large wooden cross in the cemetery grounds, and gathered around it each Sunday to pray and worship God.

In the spring of 1877, the Burlington Railroad sold the settlers 40 acres of land on which to build a church. The congregation purchased the adjoining 40 acres for the sum of \$4.00 per acre. The little band of settlers at once began their plans to build a church. To proceed with the work, they elected a committee of the following: Martin Slobodny, Antonin Chalupsky, Martin Vacek, Albert Sevcik, and Jan Holecek. The building material was purchased and hauled from Grand Island. The carpenter work was done by George Leftwich, assisted by the settlers.

The church when completed was 16 x 28 feet, and divided into two areas, one for the priest's dwelling, and the other for the church. While the church was being built Rev. Frantisek Sulak, a missionary priest from Chicago, offered Mass there. Later that same year, Rev Klawiter, a Pole, from Pittsburg, PA, arrived for the purpose of viewing the lands in Howard and Sherman Counties, planning to establish a Polish settlement, but having nowhere to stay, lodged temporarily in St. Wenceslas church, and ministered to the Czech people of Warsaw. Until the year 1890 Warsaw Mission was attended by Rev. Klawiter and the priests who succeeded him were: Rev. Sebastyaski, Alexander Matousek, S.J., and Filip Maly, S.J.

On March 22, 1890, when Rev. J. Broz was appointed pastor of Saint Paul, Warsaw's St. Wenceslas church was attached to St. Paul as a Mission, and attended from there until December, 1949.

In 1895 the present brick church was built at the cost of \$2,737.50. The contractors and builder were C.V. Svoboda and G. Gruber, who owned a brickyard in St. Paul. This new church was blessed on the feast of the patron saint. St. Wenceslas, September 28, 1895.

Saint Wenceslas Mission is closed at present, the last Mass having been offered there on December 32, 1949.

The Czech language is seldom heard in the Warsaw church now. No longer the beautiful Czech songs of a by-gone time's echo over the Warsaw plains. The time is not far distant, when, as Rev. Broz said: "The bell will toll, in heart-rending tones, for the last sermon of a Czech priest in Warsaw."

And now only Czech inscriptions and names on the monuments in Warsaw cemetery will remind the passer-by of the fact that there lie loyal Czech pioneers, who struggled for a live hood and better future for their descendants.

(Picture)

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Old church Warsaw

## **Knox County - Verdigre**

## **Saint Wenceslas Church**

As time went on and public schools were built by the order of the Government, these buildings were often used on Sundays, for public worship and religious services.

The first priest to preach here was the missionary, the Rev. Frantisek Sulak, S.J., who came at intervals, but the people were too few and too poor to build a church. Beginning with 1880 the Rev. Kriz would come at times from Tabor, South Dakota.

In the early eight's to meet the growing needs of the increasing membership a serious thought was given to the possibility of building a church. This wish and desire was realized in 1884 when the first Catholic church was built in the Verdigre Valley on the two acre piece of land donated by Josef Mlady. All the building material for this first wooden church, 26 x 36, was hauled from Creighton, a distance of 15 miles, on wagons drawn by horses and oxen across the roadless, rugged terrain of the prairie. In May 1885, the first Mass was celebrated in the new church.

(Picture)

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First Church in Verdigre

In absence of reliable records from those early days it is next to impossible to state with any exactness the order of the arrival of these homesteaders. Therefore, in an honest effort to pay grateful tribute to these honored Catholic settlers, we have, in all charitableness of heart, made it a point to avoid any kind of precedence by giving the names: alphabetically in their introduction: Jan Beran, Sr., Lukas Bicek, Michael Cernousek, Jan Divis, Josef Divis, Anton Dusek, Frank Holan Jr., Frank Holan Sr., Josef Holan.

In the year of 1902 a Parish house was built and a permanent pastor was assigned to St. Wenceslas' Parish. Prior to 1902 Verdigre was a Mission to St. Ludger's Church of Creighton.

Due to the rapid growth of the Parish, 31 years later, the old church built in 1884 was replaced in 1915 by a new large brick church 40 x 110 feet at the cost of \$15,500, which serves its purpose to the present day.

The pioneer missionaries and priests who have served St. Wenceslas' Parish are given in a chronological order: Rev. John Dexacher, Xavier Sulak, S. J., H. Schoof, Josef Krizek, Ferdinand Lechleitner, William Coka, Tomas A. Bily, Th. Rabsteinek, Karel Kolin, Jan Vranek, Josef Macourek, Karel Z. Petlach, Vaclav Havlicek, Josef Bata, and Karel J. Oborny.

At present there are seven organizations in St. Wenceslas' Parish actively functioning in various fields of charity, insurance, education, teaching, music, singing, church maintenance, propagation and preservation of Faith and Patriotism.

The present pastor, the Rev. Karel J. Oborny, has served the longest period of any former pastor in the history of the St. Wenceslas' Parish.

The Rev. Karel J. Oborny was ordained on April 2, 1927 by bishop Francis J. Beckman D.D. in St. Cecilia Cathedral at Omaha, Nebraska. Having served for some time as Assistant at Omaha and Administrator at Schuyler, Colfax Co., he was appointed on December 1, 1929, by the bishop Joseph F. Rummel, D.D. to the St. Wenceslas' Church in Verdigre, Nebraska.

Land for the new church – Block 19 was purchased from Pioneer Townsite Co. for \$ 1.00. – Deed filed, February 7 1917.

### **Lancaster County – Agnew                      Saint Joseph's Parish**

Although this Parish is not truly a Czech Parish, many Czech settlers moved into the community in later years, and we felt that a short history of this Parish should be given as there are many Czech parishioners in the community now.

Agnew is located fifteen miles northwest of Lincoln in West Oak precinct in Lancaster County. The property on which the church was built was donated by Joseph Hennessey. The first Mass was celebrated in this Parish on Christmas Eve in the year 1888. Joseph Hennessey and Philip Rohman were the first trustees.

The first church was destroyed by a tornado in the year 1910 and was replaced. In the year 1922 the second church was destroyed by fire and another one was built in the year 1923. The altars and pews for this church came from the St. Wenceslas' church in Wahoo.

The first Czech pastor came to this Parish on May 9, 1935 when Rev. William Rezabek was appointed pastor of St. Mary's of Valparaiso and also took charge of St. Joseph Agnew. He remained until June of 1950. St. Joseph cemetery is located one and half miles west of the church. Three acres of land were purchased from Frank Rohman for fifty dollars an acre in the year 1898.

On the feast of Blessed Agnes Premyslovna, March 2, 1941 a branch of the Katolicky delnik was organized. It took the name of Saint Joseph Branch No. 183. Much credit to the founding of this branch goes to John Polak a member of Branch No. 13 of Prague who moved to Agnew. As we mentioned before, there are now many Czech parishioners in the Parish. Incumbent pastor is Rev. John Glaves.

Alfred Novacek

In the past five priests served as pastors: the Rev. J. Kaczmarek, Marcellus Agius, Msgr. W. Rezabek, Jan Kozlik, and Richard Brombach. Special permission was granted by bishop L.B. Kucera in 1950 to have the Blessed Sacrament remain in the church. Since then Mass has been celebrated once a week.

### **Saline County – Crete**

### **Saint Ludmila's Church**

Since Saint Ludmila's existed during the years when there was a shortage of Czech priests, the history is quite sketchy. Special thanks must be give to Father Anthony A. Kotz and his parishioners, especially Mrs. Teresa (Kohl) Cochnar, for the fine job they did on their book "A Souvenir History of the Crete Catholic Community", which is the main reference for this report.

The first Czech Catholics to arrive in the Crete vicinity were Josef Jelinek, his father Vaclav and his two brothers Frank and Vitus, who arrived in 1864. It must be remembered, at this time the Diocese of Lincoln did not exist and so the churches of Nebraska were under the jurisdiction of the Omaha Apostolic Vicariate. The Czechs, who understood German, attended Saint James church, then known as the "German Church".

At times, Msgr Frantisek Bobal and Father Frantisek Sulak would come to Saint James from Plattsmouth to conduct Czech services and tend to the needs of Czech Catholics in the Blue River Valley.

The Czechs of Crete were very determined to erect a church of their own. They made this request often and wanted to build it halfway between Crete and Wilber. Msgr Bobal disapproved of and discouraged the idea because of the lack of Czech speaking priests who might be available as resident pastors. Those who were determined to keep their faith and could overlook the fact that they were going to a “German Church” attended Saint James from 1873-1881 with Rev. Lechleitner in charge. Others not so liberal waited for the visiting Czech priests.

In 1878, Father Jan Smutny of Wilber, with occasional visits by Czech missionaries, helped care for Czech Catholics here. Several Czech missionaries stopped to conduct services but their names are not recorded. Between 1878-1885 two Benedictine priests, Rev. Vaclav Kocarnik and Rev. Siegfried Klima visited many times.

Father Kocarnik became first resident Czech priest in Omaha. He was later recalled to the Czech Benedictine Monastery in Lisle, Illinois, where he became Prior. From 1885-1889 Rev. Filip Maly, S. J., traveled here from Wilber for the good of the Czech Catholics. With language as a barrier and the old world idea that perhaps their own church was the only solution, the Czechs waited with anticipation for the time when a priest who spoke their native tongue might come into their midst. Although many attended the “German Church” between times, they could not get the feeling of really belonging. Often extra services were held in Saint James church for the Czechs when a visiting priest of their language was here. If conflicts arose, private homes and store buildings were readily available.

Sometimes before 1889, Bishop O’Connor of Omaha saw a dire need for a Czech speaking resident priest in this locality. He had begun preparing a seminarian for this special duty several years earlier. There was a lot of confusion at this time in that some churches had pastors appointed by the Omaha diocese and some by the Lincoln diocese. It took time to define the territories that would be under the jurisdiction of each. Father Bouska arrived in the United States on November 17, 1889, and came directly to Crete. He was in residence at Saint James rectory with Father Gerald Boll and began immediately conducting services in the German church for the Czech people.

Father Bouska, an energetic young man, wasted no time and purchased property on which to build a church and rectory legally described as, “All of lots 5 and 6 in Block

155, City of Crete, Saline County, Nebraska.” The former site of the church is known today as 1005 Hawthorne Street. After seven months of intensive efforts the church was completed by July of 1890. The enthusiasm of the Czech people was beyond measure. The church was named in honor of Saint Ludmila, a Czech saint, a grandmother of Saint Wenceslas. A beautiful statue of her was erected overlooking the main altar. An outside view of the building displayed a typically European style. Although it was painted white, the darker trim emphasized this trend. Dedication services of Saint Ludmila’s were presided over by Bishop Thomas Bonacum of Lincoln and held November 30, 1890. A little later a rectory was built on the north side of the church. The cost of the church and new rectory was \$3,500.00, quite high for the times and it is believed the Parish might have prospered better had it been built earlier when the people were in a better financial state. The congregation numbered about 36 families, some coming from Lancaster County.

In 1891, due to disagreements with the Bishop (the facts of this disagreement are not known), Father Bouska left the church. In 1894, after due expiation he was reinstated and sent by the Holy See to serve the Czech Colony in Tabor, South Dakota. Many priests came after Father Bouska and the Parish flourished. Many instructions being taught in the Czech language. A choir was organized as were Saint Joseph’s Branch No. 41 of the Catholic Workman (Katolicky delnik), organized on March 1, 1898, a Lodge of the Western Bohemian Catholic Union and also a Group of Daughters of Columbus, Lodge Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. With the closing of the Czech Church, the death knell of these lodges too was sounded. Rev. Jaroslav Hancik was the last pastor to serve Saint Ludmila’s and it is thought he left during 1913

The church stood until about 1915. Financial conditions were at their lowest ebb and the church, having been struck by lightning, needed repairs. It was finally closed permanently.

Parishioners who were more tolerant and broad minded accepted the change of membership and so Saint Ludmila’s and Saint James parishes became Sacred Heart of Crete. The church was dismantled in sections and moved to the country to be reassembled as a farm building. This was the final blow! First, the Czech had lost their priest and now their church was gone, too. Some fell away entirely while others moved

away. The consequent hard feeling in the community took years to overcome. Even today reverberations may be present.

Mr. Edward Brt in the book "Czechs and Nebraska" recalls, "After the death of my mother, I was sent to live with my grandmother Barbara Janecek. As grandmother was a faithful Catholic, she taught me the Latin ritual and I served as an altar boy until the cassock came to my knees. I was altar boy to the first three pastors to serve Saint Ludmila's. Mr. & Mrs. Frank Stehlik presented me with a copy of the book, "A Czech Catholic History", as a gift for being altar boy at their wedding in the Czech church."

Pastors to serve Saint Ludmila's were E. A. Bouska, 1889-92; Alois Klein, 1892-93; Frantisek Zalud, 1893-97; from 1897-1901, St. Ludmila's was without a resident priest and was served by priests from Wilber. Father Adolph Mosler, pastor of St. James Church (a German but able to speak Czech) served the Parish from 1901-1913. The first Baptism recorded was that of Rosalia Prochaska on Dec. 4, 1891. The first couple married were Alois J. Koran and Mary Pospisil on December 26, 1891, and the first burial was that of Barbara Vavra on October 5, 1897.

This report compiled by Larry L. Vilda

Sources of reference: History of Crete Catholic Community, Czechs and Nebraska and Ceske katolicke osady v America

### **Saline County – Tobias**

### **Saint Joseph's Parish**

The idea of building a Catholic church in Tobias was conceived in the early spring of 1913. The late Joseph Markey, Joseph Lorenz and Joseph Laun consulted their pastor, the late Msgr. Adolph M. Mosler in Milligan, saying, "We believe we can build a church in Tobias. 'Father said:' I will appoint you three men as the building committee and I will come next week and take two days to drive around and see how much money will be pledged."

Joe Laun Jr. drove his father's car for the group. Since there were four Joes working on this drive, Father Mosler said the church should be named St. Joseph's. The building committee planned a smaller church, but Father Mosler said, "You should think ahead and think big".

Saint Agnes church in Western, Saline Co., only nine miles to the southeast was almost abandoned, Mass was said in it only on weekdays. The building was sold and the money given to Tobias.

Mass was said before the turn of the century on occasion in the Section house in Tobias. The Catholics near Tobias, numbering about twenty families, had to attend Sunday Mass in Milligan. Driving horses ten to twelve miles usually made it an all day affair. Lunch usually taken along so the children could attend catechism classes. On cold winter mornings charcoal burning foot warmers and heated bricks were used to keep the feet warm.

An acreage was bought at the north edge of Tobias and the work began. The parishioners did most of the work, using horse drawn scrapers for excavation. On October 1, 1913, Emma Zeman and Frank Charvat were married in the church, although the interior of the church was not completed at this time. After the dedication in November, Alice Zaruba and Joseph W. Laun were married on November 12, 1913 by the bishop John H. Tiehen of Lincoln. Dinner prepared by the Parish ladies – served at the Tobias Hotel. A special delicacy at the dinner was ‘Old Fashioned Apple Strudel’, made by the late Mrs. A. Charvat.

Anna Slechticky, daughter of a Czech immigrant family was the first child baptized in this church on January 11, 1914. In 1922 the family moved to Ava, Illinois. In 1936, Anna entered the Novitiate of the Sisters of Loretto at the foot of the Cross. Her brother John, entered the Order of the Franciscan Missionary Brothers near Eureka, Missouri, in 1937. Brother Dominic was elected Superior of the Order in 1961. In 1963, he celebrated his Silver jubilee. The oldest brother Anton accepted a position in the Department of Education at Loras College, Dubuque, Iowa. He was chairman of the department.

The first funeral recorded was that of Marie Fisher, November 1, 1914. The church records in 1963 revealed a total of one hundred eighty six Baptisms. There were fifteen marriages, twenty-seven funerals, ninety-three First Communions and one hundred sixty six Conformations recorded.

When St. Joseph’s was built, Milligan did not have a resident pastor, as Father Mosler came twice a month from Odell to say Mass here and at Milligan. Lodging was

provided by the Parish for Father Mosler in the sacristy on a Saturday night after he arrived by train from Odell. Low Mass was said here on Sunday and Father Mosler went on to Milligan. Next time he stayed in Milligan and said High Mass here.

In about 1915 the Rev. Supik became pastor at Milligan and tended the Tobias Mission. On the last Sunday of each month for a time, Father Supik had to say Mass at Wilber, so the parishioners here were obliged to hear Mass in neighboring churches. W. J. Novak, living near Milligan at that time, drove Father Supik to Tobias for several years.

The pastors serving this Parish were the late Msgr. A. Mosler, Fathers Alexander, Kopecky, Supik, Verhelst, Biskup, O'Leary, Mc Fadden, Kozlik, Stirn, Siegienski, J. P. Henehan, T. Daly, and the Rev. V. Beranek of Wilber, Saline County.

The Altar Society has sponsored many food sales and bazaars. St. Joseph's Parish in 1963 was comprised of thirty-five families, some coming twelve miles from Western and Ohio. The first organist was G. Fisher, now Mrs. W. Ulrich of California, Lydia Lorenz, now J. Baxa played for many years. Later organists were Mrs. C. Weidel, L. Nun, Mary Novak, Diane Yeck, L. Maas, and Marylin Kottas.

The above information was obtained from the older members of the Parish, some of who are Nicholas Markey Sr., Frank Rut, Mrs. Sadie Markey, Miss Ann Sakryt, Edward Murphy, William Laun, Henry Lorenz, Mrs. Jos. Baxa Sr., and was compiled by Mrs. W. J. Novak.

Submitted by Mrs. Joseph Baxa Sr., Tobias

The Saint Joseph's church of Tobias is located on Lots 8, 9, and 10, Block 2, in the third addition to The town of Castor (now Tobias). From the Book Of Deeds: Lincoln Land Co. to Rt. Rev. Henry J. Tiehen for the sum of \$1,360.00. Deed filed May 6, 1913

(Picture)

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St. Ludmila's church in Crete, Saline County

## **Saline County – Wilber**

## **Saint Wenceslas Church**

In the early days prior to 1878, a zealous missionary, Rev. Frantisek Smutny, came to Wilber and gathered a number of faithful followers of Church to form a new Parish in Wilber and the surrounding area. In 1878, these people under the leadership of Father Smutny started to build a new church on the lots of Charles Sagl, which are located on Third Street east of the railroad tracks.

Before the structure was finished it was struck by lightning and burned to the ground. Because of ill health, Father Smutny left the new Parish and was succeeded by the Rev. Filip Maly, S. J., who came in 1880. Father Maly dedicated the church to Saint Wenceslas' the Martyr, a saintly Czech Prince, who was murdered for his faith by his brother Boleslav at the urging of his wicked mother Drahomira. At this time, without a church the faithful attended Mass in railroad depot and Hokof's Dance Hall. Father Maly, with missionary spirit, traveled over most of Saline County baptizing and evangelizing. Many were baptized in railroad stations, schools, halls, and even private homes. In one year he baptized 75 individuals. Some people are still living today who were christened by Father Maly.

Saint Wenceslas' Parish bought two lots in the original town of Wilber on June 17, 1882 for the sum of \$100.00 from the estate of Elizabeth Van Fleet. In that same month, on the 26<sup>th</sup>, they purchased two lots adjacent to theirs from the trustees of the defunct Church of Christ Congregation (lots 5 & 6 on which stood a church building 28' x 75') for the sum of \$375.00. The building was thought to be about four years old at this time, yet Father Maly mentioned in one of his letters that the building was quite dilapidated and needed many repairs. Under Father Maly's guidance, the newly acquired structure was completely renovated so much so that he later wrote, "It is in as good condition and as beautiful as any church built in Nebraska". With his own money Father Maly furnished the church with Mass vestments and vessels needed for the celebration of Mass for the sum of \$175.00.

While in Czechoslovakia Father Maly bought a huge oil painting of Saint Wenceslas (5' x 7') for 100 'zloty' (about \$30.00 at the time). It cost \$8.00 to have it transported to Wilber. This picture was hung over the main altar in the newly acquired church.

On March 9, 1885, three lots were purchased to the east of the church. They are legally described as lots 17, 18, and 19, original town of Wilber, and cost \$300.00. These lots were sold June 10, 1886, for \$320.00. There were two small houses on these lots and it is said that parishioners built a rectory from materials salvages from these two houses. The rectory was constructed on lots 10 & 21 just adjacent to the church building. Father Maly again showed his generosity and paid for furnishing the new rectory with his own money (about \$75.00).

The bishop of Omaha asked Rev. Maly to build a school in the Parish and so he went forth collecting money for this project. Records show that some \$300.00 was pledged but there is no record as to how much was collected and what the cost of the one room school was. On May 30, 1887, Father Maly bought lots 7 & 8 in Block 16, Wilber's first addition, which was located across the alley west of the church. Under the leadership of Father Maly the people constructed the school building, which was never used as a parochial school, as was originally intended, mainly due to the shortage of school – sisters and finances.

During the pastorate of Msgr. Adolph M. Mosler these lots and buildings were sold on December 21, 1927, to Vincent Spirk for \$900.00. At this time the money was badly needed to pay paving assessment for the new brick street in front of the church. Mrs. Frank Houser resides in a house located on the site of the former school building.

In 1888, Father Maly was succeeded by the Rev. Matej Bor. During his tenure, stained glass windows were added to the church. These windows were dedicated to many individuals, namely Rev. Matej Bor, Rev. Josef Koutek, Rev. E. A. Bouska, Frank Vitovec, Rodina Pracharova, Vitus Fric, M. Slajs & A. Kovarik, Frank Hayek, Maxie Chmelir, and Bratri Zednikove. When the present church edifice was built, these same windows were repaired and are in the present church.

In about 1888, three beautiful bells were purchased from a bell foundry in St. Louis, Missouri, and a receipt for \$368.00 for full payment is found in the Parish records. These bells were blessed and hung in the belfry of Saint Wenceslas' church and, like the windows, were moved into the belfry of the present church. These bells have been converted electronically and their beautiful tones may be heard daily calling people to pray the Angelus.

In April of 1935 a newly ordained priest, Rev. Jerome Benedict Pokorny, was assigned to Saint Wenceslas. A complete volume could be written on the sacrifices and works of this kindly, humble man. Seeing the condition of the church properties and finances would have been enough to drive most young men off, but not Father Pokorny. (The name "Pokorny" translated to the English means humble, and surely humble Father Jerry was and remains so to this day).

In 1938, he began his great work with the construction of a magnificent rectory next to the old church building on Main Street. Father and a contractor, Mr. Josef Spurek, along with some of the parishioners, made this endeavor a reality. Seeing the four crowded small lots, he sought for more space. He found a new location north of Wilber where he purchased three acres facing Wilson Street, the site of the present day church. Many of the local towns people scoffed and remarked, "Well, I see the Catholics are going to build a new church out in the cornfield". These words were soon to be swallowed, for the church and grounds (in the cornfield) soon became the beauty spot of Wilber and were admired even by the non-Catholics.

The trustees sold the new rectory for the sum of \$4,100.00, which gave them necessary working capital for their building program. To show the wonderful cooperation of many parishioners in donating money and labor, special mention must be made of Mrs. Tillie Prokop, who from 1939-1944, donated her work to keep house for Father Pokorny. She donated not only her work but her furniture, and she paid for the groceries just so the building program might go on. Finally, in 1948, with Parish funds, a very generous donation from the Catholic Extension Society and a loan of \$7,000.00 a new church was built (32' x 100') at the cost of \$24,069.00. The church was first occupied November 1, 1949, and blessed by bishop Louis B. Kucera of Lincoln, on November 30, 1949. The excavation of the basement of the new rectory began November 16, 1949, and was finished July 21, 1950.

For his many works and sacrifices - so few priests have built so much with so little - Father Pokorny was made a member of the Papal household by Pope Pius XII. On June 15, 1955, Father Pokorny was invested with the robes of a Domestic Prelate and given the title of Right Rev. Monsignor. On the same day, a most unique occasion, Father Pokorny's parents, Mr. & Mrs. Josef Pokorny Sr., were awarded the distinguished

cross “Pro Ecclesia Et Pontifice”. This is an award given for outstanding devotion and service to Christ and His Church. After 25 years as a priest, Father Pokorny gave up his title of Monsignor and became a simple Benedictine Monk, working and praying for mankind. He was later recalled to the diocese and is a pastor in Dwight and doing printing work for the diocese. When Msgr. Pokorny left Saint Wenceslas in 1955 all debts were liquidated and the Parish was in sound condition for the first time in many years.

In 1945, Mr. Josef Pokorny, the father of Rev. Pokorny and now deceased, planted, watered and cultivated 100 fine young pine and spruce trees from seedlings, and planted them on the Parish grounds in 1950. These same trees now beautify the church and rectory terrain. Father Pokorny was the only pastor in the history of Saint Wenceslas to have an assistant priest, Rev. Edward Valasek, who helped administer the many missions of Saint Wenceslas during the war years.

In 1956 Rev. Edward Szczech was appointed pastor and during his administration the sanctuary was completely renovated with new altars, statues, communion rail and the interior of the church was completely repainted.

The Rev. Vaclav Beranek came in 1960 and many improvements were made with the help of a very generous donation. The bells were electrified, the painting of Saint Wenceslas has been refurbished and the statues of the Czech Saints repainted and placed in a place of prominence.

Many Czech Societies have existed during the history of Saint Wenceslas Parish; however, at this time all are extinct and that remains of this era is an old charter of the Catholic Workman Branch and an old Banner use by Saint Wenceslas Lodge, which reads “Ceska Rimsko Katolicka Prvni Ustredni Jednota Spolek Sv. Vaclava, Zalozena Roku 1888”. Sacred Heart of Jesus Branch No. 72 of the Catholic Workman was organized December 1, 1902. Lodge Saint Wenceslas First Bohemian Roman Catholic Central Union was organized in 1888. This is the oldest Czech Catholic order founded in the United States. Its humble beginning was in St. Louis, Missouri, in the year 1854, with a handful of Czech immigrants. In the past years this organization has been absorbed by the Order of Catholic Foresters.

Pastors to serve Saint Wenceslas were: Rev. Franchise Smutny, 1878, 1880; Filip Maly, S. J., 1880-1888; Matej Bor, 1888-1892; Francis Raimer served a short time in 1892 to be succeeded by the Rev. Alois Klein 1892-1893; Frantisek Zalud, 1893-1897; Josef Bartik served in 1897, Fredrick Henn 1897-1898; Josef Kuen in 1899, Vaclav Pokorny 1899-1901; Rev. Adolph Mosler 1902-1908; Jaroslav Hancik 1908-1914; Adolph Mosler also served in 1915 (an old book in the Czech language states the priests came and went in rapid succession).

The following served: Rev. Vaclav Supik, 1916-21; Frank Cerny, 1921-22; Father Supik returned again from 1922-24; Michael Pazourek, 1925; John G. Hotovy, 1925-26; John D. Goergen, 1926-27; Rev. Mosler again served from 1927-31; Felix Bronnenkant, 1931; James J. Garvey, 1932-33; William Rezabek (later Monsignor) served from 1933-35. At this time the Parish was at its lowest ebb. The Bishop felt he could not spare good priests for a Parish that was bound to die. It was until the reign of bishop L. B. Kucera that special help was given the Wilber Parish. With the coming of Father Rezabek and his great love for the poor Czech parishioners and his great zeal, he rejuvenated the Parish and brought new life to the congregation.

The Rev. Jerome B. Pokorny served the longest of any pastor in the history of Saint Wenceslas, from 1935-1956. Rev. Edward Szczech served from 1956-60, and Rev. Vaclav Beranek came in 1960 and is the present incumbent at the time of this writing.

The people of Saint Wenceslas were blessed with the coming of Father Beranek, a farm boy, coming to this little rural Parish with his love of the Czech parishioners and the beautiful Nebraska countryside. Father who is quite an inventor and craftsman found work that was needed in the Parish. He designed and built a cooling system for the church and took entire charge of all remodeling work done in the winter and spring of 1974.

Father was pastor during the changes of liturgy and to make the translation, he instructed the people so they accepted the change without much pain. Since Father speaks Czech fluently, his services are in contact demand, as a speaker and for his fine Czech sermons at funerals. He is also active in many community affairs.

The first Baptism was that of Marie Bocek on June 6, 1880. The first marriage was held in September 1882, when Adam Simka married Maria Novak. The first burial

is not clearly known, as the records in this Parish were poorly kept for many of the first years. Most of these dates are thought to be authentic, however, they are not positive due to the condition of church records.

Written by Mrs. Floyd Herman, Edited and additional comments by Larry L. Vilda. - Further references: Dejiny Cechu Americkyh, Czechs and Nebraska, Ceske katolicke osady v Americe

(Picture)

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Abandoned cemetery near Bartu farm near Milligan – Fillmore County – Foto F. Tesar

### **Saunders County – Cedar Hill**

### **Sacred Heart Parish**

The Sacred Heart Church and Parish was the outgrowth of the settling in the community of James N. Noteware, immigration superintendent for Nebraska, who came here in 1868. Attracted by a cedar covered hill, he called it “Cedar Hill”, and chose it for his home. He was soon joined by a group of Catholic Czech immigrants. He, though an Episcopalian, urged them to erect a church of their own. Rev. Cyril Augustinsky, who came shortly afterward, also encouraged formation of a Parish. The Rev. Augustinsky insisted that a church board be elected, to attend to the building of the church. The members elected to the board were Vaclav Bures, Jakub Dvorak, Jan Vyhldal, Vaclav Hajek, and Josef Pabijan.

Mr. Noteware donated 15 acres of his best land for the purpose, reserving a part just north of the church for the burial plot.

Later four large cedar trees and a steel fence enclosing the grave where he lies marked this spot. Three days before his death Mr. Noteware was baptized and made his First Communion and received the Last Sacrament from a German priest from Fremont. He died September 4, 1877. In 1879, the church was completed. Mrs. Noteware continued the work of her husband, giving financial assistance. The Rev. V. Kocarnik blessed the church. Mrs. Noteware became very ill and though over 70 she traveled to Italy for medical aid. Grateful to the Blessed Virgin for her recovery, she and her daughter embraced the Church, were baptized by Pope Pius IX, and made their First Communion. For the remaining three years of her life she was a devout Catholic.

For a time, services were held at the Cedar Hill Mission only occasionally, the priests from Columbus, Fremont, Abie, and Plasi looking after the parishioner's needs. Other priests serving the Parish up to 1904 were Rev. W. Coka, V. Kocarnik, O.S.B., S.B. Koutek, P. Stutz, F. Hovora, M. Bor, and J. Vlcek.

In 1895, a new altar was donated by Vaclav and Anton Hajek, and Vaclav Spevak. That same year bishop Thomas Bonacum administrated Confirmation.

In 1904, Prague's first resident pastor was the Rev. Jan Novotny and Cedar Hill became a Mission to Prague. The Rev. Vaclav Pokorny succeeded him in 1908; Rev. Martin Bogar became pastor in December 1920. In 1924, extensive rebuilding and remodeling of the church took place. Pastors following Rev. Bogar succeeded each other rather rapidly as some of these priests came from Europe to help the Czech Parishes in the Lincoln Diocese. From 1924 to 1926: Rev. Jaroslav Hancik, Ignac Skopal, Adolf Jasek, Frantisek Jemelka, Vaclav Supik, Antonin Rehor, and Ferdinand Pokorny, 1927-30; Alois Horacek, 1931-34; Alfons Biskup, O.S.B., 1934-38; Bede Cernik, O.S.B. The later two priests served the Parish through difficult years of continued drought; in 1938 the Rev. Josef Tupy became pastor.

In 1942, the church was remodeled and redecorated, the walls were refinished with a product called (Nu-wood).

July 1, 1945 the Cedar Hill Parish was separated from Prague and became a mother Parish to Morse Bluff where a new Parish was being organized. The Rev. Jiri Livanec was appointed pastor. In 1951, the men of the Parish installed new light fixtures and in 1952 a new electric organ was installed. In 1955 a new church was dedicated at Morse Bluff and Cedar Hill again became a Mission parish, but this time to Saint George's at Morse Bluff. In 1957 the furnace exploded so a new heating system was installed and the church was redecorated and the sanctuary was rebuilt. In August 1961, the Rev. Jiri Livanec passed away and the Cedar Hill church was closed for several weeks and the parishioners attended Mass at Morse Bluff while Rev. Jan Kozlik of Cedar Bluffs took charge of Morse Bluff while Rev. Jan Kozlik of Cedar Bluffs took charge of Morse Bluff Parish.

In October 1961 the Rev. Henry Denis became pastor of the Morse Bluff Saint George's and Cedar Hill Sacred Heart Parishes. To date (1974) Rev. Otto H. Ekhaml is serving the two Parishes.

The legal description of this Parish: Part of North half of Northwest Quarter of South-west Quarter, Section 36, Township 17, Range 5.

Albin Cihacek

### **Saunders County – Colon                      Saint Joseph's Parish**

The territory around Colon was attended from Fremont in the Omaha diocese from 1869 to 1888. In April 1888, it was placed under the care of the Lincoln diocesan priests. The first Mass said in the vicinity was in Michael Molloy's dugout. Mr. Malloy donated three acres of land for the frame church built about 1877, known as Saint Patrick's, later called Saint Augustine's, which was located about four miles west of Cedar Bluffs. When Saint Mary's church was built in Cedar Bluffs in 1917, St. Augustine's, known as the Malloy church, was incorporated with St. Mary's. St. Mary's of Cedar Bluffs remained a Mission attended from Colon until 1918, at which time a resident priest was stationed in Cedar Bluffs.

In April 1888, the Rev. Charles M. Browne was appointed resident pastor and shortly after built a frame house west of the railroad tracks in Colon.

In the administration of Father Stockinger the rectory was destroyed by fire in 1910. The old side was sold and two corner lots in Colon were bought on which the present rectory was built.

In 1918 work was begun on the church in Colon. The Rev. M O'Sullivan, the next pastor, completed the church, a brick structure costing about \$45,000. It was dedicated Saint Joseph's church on November 19, 1919. Under the leadership of Msgr. Barry in 1946, the church was given a new roof, the foundation was waterproofed, and the interior was completely redecorated. A new organ was purchased for Christmas of 1952. From the beginning it was a mixed Czech-Irish Parish. -

Land for the new church sold by Pioneer Township Co. to Bishop of Lincoln for \$450.00, Lots 1, 2, 3, Block 12 in the Year 1918.

## **Saunders County – Morse Bluff**

## **Saint George's Parish**

Morse Bluff Saint George's Parish was an outgrowth of Cedar Hill becoming an independent Parish, whereas it previously was a Mission to Prague, Nebraska. With the growth of the Prague Parish with its Catholic school, the hierarchy felt the pastor could not give just care to Cedar Hill Parish. Early in 1945, the pastor of Prague and Cedar Hill's, the Rev. Josef A. Tupy with the aid of two prominent businessmen of Morse Bluff, Mr. Emil W. Wolf and Mr. Philip Walla, conferred with the bishop L. B. Kucera. Mr. Wolf offered the garage hall, which he owned, rent free, to the Morse Bluff community to be used as a temporary chapel and Mr. Walla promised to the new Parish priest a house to live in, when available. The new Parish priest appointed was the Rev. Jiri J. Livanec.

Cedar Hill was then to become the mother parish, with Morse Bluff Parish as a Mission, and the pastor was to reside at Morse Bluff. The official transition was not due until July 1, 1945, but the appointed pastor the Rev. J. Livanec was sent to Morse Bluff earlier to prepare and redecorate the Dance hall, so that it would be suitable for a chapel. The house was not yet available so he traveled to Wahoo, Saunders Co., where he had been an assistant priest to spend the nights. Also because of gasoline rationing and height of World War II he spent a few nights in his automobile, but with his pleasant personality, his pioneering spirit and priestly dignity he made friends and acquaintances rapidly.

In a short time the hall had been cleaned and painted. He received a small main altar from the Catholic Extension Society of America, the used side altars and pews were given to him by neighboring parishes. He also had acquired a small house with no modern conveniences. On July 1, 1945, he said his first Mass at Cedar Hill and Morse Bluff Parishes with a large attendance in both churches. Some time later he was able to rent a small modern house, but building a new church was upper most in his mind. He bought some property in Morse Bluff, intending the site to be for a new church. Some parishioners volunteered and built a garage on his property to house his automobile. In 1951, he bought a large modern comfortable house for a church. He resold the previous property.

On October 1954 construction was started on the new church. The church is built of metal with a brick front. The building consists of a church and a social hall. The church is 30 by 80 feet; the social hall is 39 x 37 feet. The cost of the structure was \$24,000.00 and 4500 hours of donated labor. It was completed in 1955. The cornerstone was laid by the Dean Msgr. M. V. Nemecek on September 25, and on that day the first Mass was offered in the new church. Needless to say that up to this time the Masses were said in the upstairs garage hall. It will be remembered by the long stairway and cold Sunday mornings when Father J. Livanec said Mass in his overcoat because of the inadequate heating system.

The new Saint George's church in Morse Bluff was dedicated Wednesday, December 21, 1955. The bishop Louis B. Kucera officiated at the dedication and offered Solemn Pontifical Mass. Later Father Livanec installed a bell, which was formerly used in the Brainard, Nebraska, church. At this time the Cedar Hill church again became a Mission but this time to the Saint George's Parish of Morse Bluff.

August 5, 1961, Father J. Livanec passed away. Funeral services were held August 7, 1961, at the Saint George's church in Morse Bluff with the bishop J. V. Casey officiating. Burial was at Calvary Cemetery in Cleveland, Ohio. He was born in Cleveland, Ohio, August 27, 1914, ordained May 15, 1940 by bishop Kucera at Saint Mary's Cathedral in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Following his death Father Jan Kozlik of Cedar Bluff, Nebraska, was offering Sunday Masses in Saint George's church in Morse Bluff until October 1961, when the Rev. Henry J. Denis was appointed pastor of Morse Bluff and Cedar Hill. He is still serving the two parishes (1974).

Albin Cihacek

Land sold by Wilma Kunkle to St. George Catholic Church – Lots 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 in Block 8 for the sum of \$6,375.00 in the year 1951

### **Saunders County – Plasi (Plzen) Saints Cyril and Methodius Parish**

The beginnings of the Parish of SS Cyril and Methodius at Plasi began in September 1871, when Rev. Frantisek Sulak, a Jesuit, served the first Mass in the farm of Czech farmer Josef Simanek. There were about 20 Czech Catholic families then.

(This Parish was originally called Plzen, and then changed to Plasi, as it conflicted, in mail delivery, with Pilger, Stanton County). Rev. Sulak alternated with rev. Frantisek Bobal, serving in homes or school buildings, being a pastor at Plattsmouth.

Though Mass was held on a weekday, it would be observed as a holy day in the settlement. All would abstain from work and attend Mass. It was considered an honor to furnish the linens, the crucifix, and the candlesticks or serve the priest. It happened one time that those furnishing the candlesticks failed to appear. The farmer in whose house Mass was being celebrated got two big potatoes, made a hole in each, put the candles in and laid them on the altar.

In 1872, Father Frantisek Sulak, proposed to build a church. A church society was formed under the patronage of SS Cyril and Methodius and in 1873; 40 acres of land were bought in United States bonds from the Union Pacific Railroad Company as the site for a church. A portion was set aside for a cemetery. Each member of the church society was asked to contribute ten dollars toward the church. There were 50 names on the list.

The first three years after the formation of its congregation Plasi was visited by grasshoppers and twice by severe hailstorms, which destroyed all crops. Father Sulak happened to be here on one of his missionary visits and, seeing the destruction and misery caused by the grasshoppers, bade the people to form a procession. He had his ritual in his hand and recited prayers for removal of the plague. He turned calmly and confidently to the people and assured them the grasshoppers would come no more. They never did, says a history of the Parish written in 1896.

Father Sulak left in June 1877, and in fall of that year, a frame building, 60 x 36, for the church was begun, and in March 1878 the first services were held by Rev. Vaclav Kocarnik, O.S.B., of Omaha, the first resident priest.

The church was blessed and dedicated by bishop James O'Connor of Omaha, who visited the Mission July 1, 1880. A small town was founded near the church and called Plzen, the name of a town in Bohemia from near which the settlers came. Later Father Kocarnik gave up his post in Omaha and came here, to live in a three-room rectory, built for him in the spring of 1879. He had mission in Omaha, Wahoo, and Cedar Hill as well as smaller missions.

There was disappointment when the project of building a Czech Benedictine Abbey here fell through. Father Kocarnik, having been sent from the Abbey of St. Vincent at Beatty, Pennsylvania, was requested by his Abbot Wimmer to come to Nebraska and try to form a Czech monastery. Rev. Kocarnik worked very hard on this project and at one time two Brothers, namely Brother Godfrey Stibr and Brother Alois Jana, were residents at Plasi and were assisting Rev. Kocarnik in establishing a monastery. Some other sites chosen for the monastery were around Cedar Hill, Sanders County, in Verdigre, Knox County, and of course, in Plasi. Due to many circumstances, the idea of establishing a Czech monastery in Nebraska was dropped.

After departure of Father Kocarnik in 1885, the Parish was without a priest for six months, Rev. William Coka coming from Omaha. In October 1885, Rev. Jordan Stutz (not a Czech) took charge. He was succeeded for a short time by Rev. Filip Maly. During Rev. Stutz's time, in as much as he was a German, dissension arose, and it was not until the latter part of 1889, on October 4, when Rev. Frantisek Hovora came, that a peace ensued. In 1900, Rev. Hovora left for Lawrence, and later for Pennsylvania. His successor was Rev. Jan Vlcek. On April 14, 1901, the church burned and Rev. Vlcek built a larger one. In April 1910, Rev. Vlcek was succeeded by Rev. Viktor Mlejnek, to August 2, 1914, and Rev. Mlejnek by Rev. Alois Gruc, who served from December 14, 1914 to July 20, 1919. From October 1919 to November 10, 1920, Rev. Frantisek Kopecky was incumbent; from December 1920 to January 24, 1926, Rev. Vaclav Pokorny.

From January 24, 1926, Rev. Ignac Skopal. He was born in 1884 in Moravia and ordained in 1909. During the war he was in hospitals and on the Italian front, as a field curate, and received a silver cross for his services in comforting wounded soldiers, Austrian and Italian (prisoners) alike. After the war the bishop of Lincoln, Nebraska, requested two Czech priests and Rev. Skopal came in October 1923, first as assistant to Rev. Matej Bor in Weston. Saunders County. Rev. Josef Blaha served after Rev. Skopal as pastor in Plasi to May 9, 1935. After that Rev. Jan Pastorak was priest for 38 years to June 29, 1973, when Plasi become a Mission of Prague, St. John the Baptist Church, where Father Raymond Roh is pastor now. He serves Mass and is administrator at Plasi.

The Parish celebrated its Golden jubilee in 1927. In 1929, the church was redecorated and several sets of costly vestments were imported from Europe.

In August 1934, a fire completely destroyed the church. The fire was discovered by the pastor, Rev. Josef Blaha, who saved the Blessed Sacrament and had to run nearly a mile to the nearest farm to summon aid. Several other buildings were destroyed at the same time, a lodge hall, a dance platform, but the rectory was saved.

A new church was built and was finished by Christmas of that year. Its approximate cost was \$12,000.00. It was solemnly blessed by bishop L.B. Kucera of Lincoln, October 24, 1935. There was still much to be done in the church when Father Pastorak took charge. Two side altars were erected, 14 pieces of statuary placed, the church basement outfitted for an auditorium, a stage built, and stage curtains placed.

A new Parish house was built in 1952 at a cost of \$13,700.00. In 1953, the Plasi Parish celebrated its Diamond jubilee, and the occasion was graced by the presence of Bishop Kucera.

Father Jan Pastorak came to this church in 1935. Raised in New York, he yearned for solitude so he could write. He found that at Plasi and he has written several religious books in English and many in Czech. When he came, not a word of English was spoken. He gradually made the transition from Czech. Along with solitude, Father Pastorak got plenty of snow the first winter in Nebraska. He was snowed in for two months in the first part of 1936. He didn't see a person during that time. But, he didn't consider leaving.

Written by Frantisek Tesar as narrated by Rev. Jan Pastorak

“After living in the country a while you either learn to love nature or hate it”, Father Pastorak said. Father J. Pastorak learned to love it is shown by the case he have a hundred canaries and several other birds he kept as pets in the parsonage. Looking out over the hilly countryside, the priest said: “Other clergy men who have come here have told me this is paradise, I agree.”

An excerpt from a story written July 8, 1962, by Robert Dorr in  
Omaha World Herald

A beautiful grotto at the church of Plasi was started in 1937 and worked on till 1940 by Joseph L. Pallat. After he returned from California in 1962, the men of the Parish under the direction and encouragement of Rev. Jan Pastorak finished the grotto.

Some of the stones used were in the original church foundation laid in 1877. This grotto fits in with the atmosphere and character of the scene at the Plasi church and adjoining cemetery. The grotto was blessed by Lincoln Bishop J.V. Casey on July 8, 1962. Mr. Pallat was not present. He was so humble he was afraid someone would give him a tribute. The site of the grotto is at the church, where the town of Plasi was located. It died out about 75 years ago when it was bypassed by the railroad, and the only buildings there now are the church and parsonage.

(Picture)

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SS Cyril & Methodius Church  
Plasi Saunders County – Prague

(Picture)

Page 123

Stone Grotto at church of Plasi  
Saint John the Baptist Church

(Picture)

Page 124

St. John's Church & Rectory 1901

As early as 1871, the first Mass in this community was said three miles south of Prague in the Tomas Simanek home by the Rev. Frantisek Sulak, S.J. The first area church was built at Plasi in 1878.

The incentive to organize a congregation and construct a church at Prague originated with the Catholic people of the village and immediate community. With the assistance of the Rev. Jan Vlcek, newly appointed pastor of the church at Plasi, a congregation was organized and the construction of the church (36 x 90) began in the latter part of the summer of 1900 by Karel Urban and Josef Petrzelka. It seems the church was dedicated in honor of St. John the Baptist in deference to the Rev. Vlcek, whose Christian name was John and to avoid conflict on the occasion of the patronal feast with St. John Nepomuk, a neighboring Parish at Weston.

The church was blessed by bishop Thomas Bonacum of Lincoln, on June 9, 1901. The first directors and members of the building committee with Father Vlcek were Messrs. Frank Kubik, Frank Ostry and Jan Tomek.

The response to the building fund by the members of the new congregation and friends was very generous, so that \$5,560.00, including loans of \$1,550.00, covered the construction costs and part of the furnishing of the new church.

Father Vlcek had charge of the St. John's Church as a Mission of Plasi, until November 1904, when the Rev. Jan Novotny was appointed the first resident pastor. A rectory fund was started immediately and a home next to the church was purchased January 3, 1905 from John Bastar for \$1,300.00. The Rev. Vaclav Pokorny succeeded as pastor in August 1908. His administration was the longest in the history of the Parish. The parochial residence was entirely taken down and a more suitable Parish house constructed in 1917, at a cost of \$3,611.00, and again the parishioners responded very generously for they donated 3,079.00

The Rev. Martin Bogar became pastor in December or 1920. He considered a Parish school and to use the lodge hall for this purpose, however, when Dr. Josef Kaspar heard of these plans, he offered to sell his hospital for \$16,000.00. As a result of this, school began in the fall of 1921. Under the leadership of the Rev. Bogar, arrangements were made to purchase the Prague Opera House from Frank Mach, through Dr. Martin Ruzicka, Sr., for a sum of \$7,600.00. This transfer was made March 7, 1928, although the hall was available for Parish use in 1924. It became the recreational center for Parish movies, dances, parties, bazaars, Parish meetings and provided some financial assistance to the Parish.

Pastors succeeded each other rather rapidly during the following years: Fathers Jaroslav Hancik, 1924; Ig. Skopal, 1925; Jemelka, Rehor S.J., and Ferdinand Pokorny, 1926; Horacek, 1927-30; Alfons Biskup, O.S.B., 1931-34; and Bede Cernik, O.S.B., 1934-38. The latter two pastors steered the Parish through its most difficult years because of the continued drought of eight years

The Rev. Josef Tupy was appointed pastor July 23, 1938, and had charge of the Parish for nearly twelve years. During his administration, the most extensive improvements in the Parish's history were undertaken. In 1942, an organ was purchased; in 1943, the walls and ceiling of the church were covered with "nu-wood", new lighting fixtures and a confessional were installed; and in 1944, the Stations of the Cross were donated, the altars and statues redecorated. In 1945, St. John's Parish was separated from

its Mission, Sacred Heart, Cedar Hill, and in 1946, a new Parish hall fund of \$4,667.00 was begun. In 1948 the rectory was extensively remodeled and new furniture amounting to \$10,660.00 was provided.

In 1949, oil furnaces were installed in the church and convent, asphalt tile laid on the church floors, and two and three-fourths acres of land added to the cemetery grounds.

(Picture)

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Msgr. W. Rezabek

Monsignor William Rezabek was appointed pastor to take charge of Parish on Jun 25, 1950. The new chain-link cemetery fence was constructed; Parish hall was painted inside and out by the members of the Parish and preparations began for the celebration of the golden jubilee of the Parish. The Social Club directed the decoration of the Chapel. A new oil-heated steam boiler and gas range were installed in the school; asbestos siding applied to the exterior of the church structure, and gold-plated tabernacle safe was donated by the children, sodalities and altar boys. The Rosary Society had the monstrance gold plated and provided tabernacle curtains in liturgical colors.

(Picture)

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Msgr. Jan Vranek

### **Saunders County – Touhy**

### **Saint Vitus Church**

The first step toward organizing the Czech Catholics in Touhy and vicinity was the founding of a lodge of the Catholic Workman in 1879 by A. Chapek (Capek) and Rev. A. Klein. In 1902 a Parish was organized with Rev. Matej Bor of Weston acting as chairman. The cornerstone was laid May 6, 1903, and the church was completed in September. The first pastor was Rev. Matej Bor, who came every third Sunday from Weston. In 1913 a rectory was built and Rev. Frantisek Kopecky became the first resident priest.

The rise and growth of Saint Vitus church in Touhy followed a unique procedure different from the usual growth of parishes. Usually the Parish is organized, the church built, and then, these tasks completed, the church societies follow as a normal outgrowth of the established parishes.

In Touhy, however, the process was reversed. In those early years there was not a Touhy at all, as we now know it. It was merely a flag station, serving the interests of the farm folk residing thereabouts. The Rev. (later Mosgr.) Alois Klein knew it would be a long time before there would be enough families to form a Parish. If those who resided in that vicinity were neglected, there was danger that some might lose their Catholic faith.

The Rev. Klein's purpose was to establish a branch of a Catholic organization, and thus form some central body until a time should come when they would be strong enough to organize a Parish of their own. The Rev. Klein persisted in this effort and finally the required number of members was obtained and the St. Ladislaus branch of the Catholic Workman – Katolicky delnik was organized in 1897. This organization held together the new Catholic families, united them by a mutual bond, held them to the performance of their Catholic duties, and was the foundation for the present Parish of Touhy and its beautiful Catholic edifice. It was built in 1903 and dedicated to Saint Vitus.

The first Mass was celebrated when the church was blessed October 3, 1903. Before being made a Parish in 1913, the church was attended by Rev. Matej Bor from Wahoo, Rev. Jan Vlcek from Plasi, Rev. Jaroslav Hancik from Plattsmouth, and Rev. Antonin Bednar from So. Omaha. The following priests have served as pastors: Viktor Mlejnek, A. Gryc, Frantisek Kopecky, M. Pazourek, Martin Bogar, Josef Blaha, A. Hanun, L. Donovan, A. Smith, F. Bauer, A.J. Kremer, K Rada, Vaclav Beranek.

Legal description: Lots 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, Block 1.

### **Saunders County – Valparaiso**

### **Saint Mary's Parish**

The first Mass was celebrated in Valparaiso by the Rev. William Murphy in 1886 in the Martin Tighe hall. Until 1913 Catholics of the community attended Mass in Touhy and Agnew. In that year, 13 families, principally Czech, organized and built a church costing \$3,500 under the leadership of the Rev. A.N. Faessler. The church was dedicated

to the Blessed Virgin Mary under the title of Nativity by bishop J.H. Tihen January 21, 1914. The first trustees were Lukas Bartek and V.J. Wais. Since its foundation Saint Mary's Parish had Saint Joseph's, Agnew, as a Mission.

The first pastors were: A.N. Faessler, 1913-19; L.L. Mandeville, 1919-25; O.F. Schlachter, 1925-26; J.J. Kaczmarek, 1926-32; Marcellus Agius, 1932-35; the Rev. (now Msgr.) Vilem Rezabek was installed as the new pastor May 9, 1935, and remained there for 15 years. In Father Rezabek's pastorate many new improvements were made. The present rectory was purchased, as well as the two halls downtown. The parishioners worked zealously and enlarged the basement of the church, which was used for various entertainments and the teaching of catechism. The interior of the church was redecorated, an electronic organ was purchased, and an oil furnace was installed in the church.

In June 1950, the Rev. Jan Kozlik came to serve the Parish. That fall he had the sanctuary redecorated and tile floor laid. Rev. J. Kozlik left the Parish in April 1953, because of illness, and during the next few weeks several different priests served the Parish until the time when the Rev. Richard Brombach was installed. During the pastorate of Father Brombach the Parish has grown to 260 souls.

### **Saunders County – Wahoo                      Saint Wenceslas' Parish**

Saint Wenceslas' Parish in Wahoo (Vahy) is the outgrowth of an early Czech settlement. Before 1875, there were five Czech Catholic families in the vicinity of the present town of Wahoo, without a church in the entire surroundings.

The first Mass in this vicinity was said by the Rev. Frantisek Bobal of Plattsmouth in 1875 at the home of Frantisek Konecny; two and one-half miles from town.

On July 9, 1877, the Rev. Frantisek Sulak, S.J., said the first Mass in Wahoo in the Court House and he also officiated at a marriage. After more Czech settlers arrived, the necessity for having a church became evident and a meeting was called in 1877. A church organization was formed March 29, 1877, and a committee of W. Simodynes, Fr. Lanik, Jakub Novotny, and M. Krumpers was formed. A plan to use a vacant store building in Cedar Hill for a church was abandoned as it was deemed too far from Wahoo.

In July 1878, work was begun on a frame church, 50 x 30, costing \$1,500.00, and the first Mass was celebrated in it by the Rev. Vaclav Kocarnik, O.S.B., who served the Czech Mission first in Omaha and in 1879 from the village of Plasi. Holy Mass was said in Wahoo the third Sunday of each month.

From October 1885, to February 1889, the Rev. William Coka of Omaha attended Wahoo. During his administration, bishop Thomas Bonacum of Lincoln conferred the Sacrament of Confirmation July 4, 1888. The Rev. Matej Bor was named pastor of the churches at Wahoo, Weston, and Brainard March 9, 1889, and took up his residence in Colon. After two months, he moved to Wahoo and had a rectory erected at a cost of \$1,000. He occupied it September 27, 1889. In November of that year, he was succeeded by the Rev. Alois Klein, who found the church too small for the rapidly growing congregation and secured a site for a new church. In the spring of 1891, he began a new frame church, 26 x 70 feet, costing \$7,000 including the contents. His successor was the Rev. Emanuel Bouska, serving December 10, 1891 to February 6, 1892.

The Rev. Matej Bor was again named pastor and he said the first Mass in the new church June 5, 1892. On April 18, 1893 he had the rectory moved to the new site next to the church and remodeled at a cost of \$525.00. A fair was held at which the old church building and the two lots were sold and the debt was lifted. New furnishings were secured for the new church and it was dedicated by bishop Bonacum July 4, 1895. He also confirmed 62 persons that day. There were 55 families in the Parish at that time.

(Picture)

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First church in Wahoo

Father M. Bor built a parochial school in 1911 at a cost of \$25,000. Its teachers were the Sisters of Notre Dame of Florence. The next pastor was the Rev. Jaroslav Hancik, who came February 27, 1915. His successor was the Rev. (later Msgr.) Matej W. Nemecek, who has been pastor here for more than 39 years.

Not long after the entrance of the United States in World War I, funds amounting to \$4,500 were collected and a house was bought for \$4,100 and converted into a rectory to make room for the new church on the old church property. After the war, \$85,000 was collected for the new church. In 1919, the old church was moved and work on the new church began in June 1920. October 13, 1921, the cornerstone was laid and blessed. The dedication on the feast of Saint Wenceslas was held September 28, 1923, by the bishop James A. Duffy of Grand Island. The new Gothic structure, 126 x 50 feet, cost \$106,000.00

In 1932, bishop Louis B. Kucera made Wahoo the deanery center and in 1937, Father Nemecek, the first boy born of Czech parents in the State of Nebraska was made a Domestic Prelate with the title of Right Rev. Monsignor. When Msgr. Nemecek was appointed, there were about 150 families in the Parish. During his pastorate, that number increased to 300 families.

In 1940, the interior of the church was redecorated and a new heating plant was installed. A two-story brick rectory was built in 1955 at a cost of \$50,000. From 1937 to 1940 a Mission in Mead was attached to the Wahoo Parish.

Land for the new church sold by Sophronia S. Lea to Bohemian Catholic Congregation of Wahoo – Lots 1, To 6, and 10, 11 and 12, Block 180, for a sum of \$550.00 in the year 1891

(Picture)

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New Gothic Church in Wahoo

### **Saunders County – Weston**

### **Saint John of Nepomuk**

The first Mass was said here in 1879 by the Rev. Jordan Stutz in the Frantisek Fajman harness shop for 18 Czech families. In 1881, the Catholic population increased and services were held by the Rev. Vaclav Kocarnik from Plasi in the schoolhouse. Owing to the efforts of a group of parishioners, a church was built in 1885, its dimensions being 30 x 50 feet. Mass was celebrated there for the first time by the Rev. W. Coka of Omaha December 8, 1885. The Rev. Jordan Stutz said a High Mass there on the same

day and Father Coka preached the first sermon. The Mission was attended from Omaha and from Plasi at that time.

Beginning in March 1889, the Rev. Matej For held services here once a month until October of the same year, when he was succeeded by the Rev. Alois Klein.

Father Klein attended Weston once a month from Wahoo up to December 10, 1893, then in Crete until September 5, 1893, and from Brainard until February 11, 1901. In 1891, Father Klein enlarged the church to double its former size, and furnished and adorned the interior. He secured valuable additions to the Parish property, adding five lots adjoining the church site, for future needs.

In 1896, he established St. Mark's branch No 26 of the Catholic Workman, the Young Ladie's sodality in 1898, and St. Hedwig's branch of the U.J.Z.A. in 1900. During his charge of Weston, St. John's Parish grew from 32 to 140 families.

On February 11, 1901, the Rev. Matej Bor was made pastor at Wahoo with the Mission at Weston. He soon realized that the church was too small and began to take subscriptions for a new church October 10, 1904. In three days the sum of \$10,000 was raised. The church, which is a brick and stone structure, was built on the site of the first wooden building at a cost of \$20,000. It was dedicated July 25, 1906, by bishop Thomas Bonacum.

In 1933, Miss Viktoria Bartek donated to the Parish, a residence property, consisting of a house and four lots. The house was remodeled and was used as a Parish clubhouse. In 1934, the property in front of the church was purchased by the Rev. Viktor Mlejnek and donated to the Parish.

From 1879 to 1915 the following priests served the Parish: Fathers Filip Maly, S.J., Wilber; Vaclav Kocarnik, Plasi; Emanuel Bouska, Crete; W. Coka, Omaha; Jordan Stutz, Plasi; A.J. Klein, Brainard; Matej Bor, Wahoo.

Father Bor was appointed first resident pastor in 1915. He built a modern two-story wooden structure the same year for a residence. He was succeeded in 1925-29 by the Rev. F.J. Kopecky, the Rev. Michael Pazourek, 1929-31; and Father Kopecky again from January 31, to October 1932. The Rev. Viktor Mlejnek was appointed on October 2, 1932 as pastor and he served there until 1946. In the pastorate of the Rev. V. Mlejnek a building was bought in the business section of Weston and converted into a Parish hall.

The entire church was renovated in 1947. Stained glass windows were installed in memory of all who served in the armed forces, also a new electric organ. In 1953 the rectory was renovated. The interior was redecorated by the pastor himself. Men of the Parish renovated the Parish hall. The Rev. V. Mlejnek was succeeded by Father Otto Ekhaml.

### **Seward County – Bee**

### **Saint Wenceslas Parish**

In the old time, many of the Czech families residing in the vicinity of Bee attended Mass in Dwight. These families came to Bee from the neighborhood of Plasi, Abie, and Dwight.

In 1909, a group of between 18 and 22 families began to think of buying some land in Bee for their own cemetery. A plot was bought near Bee, and was dedicated to Saint Wenceslas in 1909.

In this transaction, these families were served by the prudent counsel and wise direction of the Rev. Alois J. Klein of Brainard. The buying of a plot for a cemetery at Bee and dedicating it to Saint Wenceslas was really a step in the organization of a new Parish and the erection of a church. The task of developing and organizing the Parish fell upon the shoulders of Father Klein. He commissioned George Berlingroff, an architect of Lincoln, to draw up the plans for the new church. An edifice, 36 x 80 feet, was erected, its tower rising 75 feet, at a cost of \$8,000, with the interior furnishing, bringing the total cost to \$11,000.

Before the first Mass was said in the new church, however, a delay occurred owing to the fact that the parishioners of Bee tenaciously adhered to some false counsel, which was given them by persons who tendered this advice with an evil design. The people of Bee, thinking this advice was sincere, followed it in good faith until, finally realizing that the advice was given not from disinterested motives, but from purposes of selfishness, renounced all of that insincere counsel and thus paved the way for the Parish to have Mass said in the new edifice.

Accordingly, the first Mass was said in the new church of Saint Wenceslas in Bee on October 19, 1910, by Father Klein, who also preached the sermon on that occasion and blessed three new statues. After the building was completed and many of the

detailed affairs connected with the organization of a Parish and the building of a new church were attended to, Father Klein left the care of this church in charge of the Rev. Michael Pazourek, a newly ordained priest, who was appointed pastor of the church in Dwight. From Dwight, Rev. Pazourek attended Bee twice a month. The Rev. Josef Bauer was the first resident pastor, and was succeeded by Fathers Frantisek Zalud, Alois Horacek, Vaclav Pokorny, Adam Hanun, and the Rev. A.A. Huebsch, who had been pastor since 1929.

The rectory was bought in 1921 for \$6,000 and the Parish hall in 1925 from the Catholic Workman society for \$5,000. The hall was improved in 1928 at a cost of \$2,500, and in 1937 a spacious kitchen was added, costing \$150.

A major renovation of the Bee Parish plant was carried out in 1951. Remodeling was done on Saint Wenceslas' church, and the interior was redecorated. A new gas heating plant was installed and new Stations of the Cross were placed. The renovation of the complete Parish plat was effected at a cost of \$15,000 because all labor for the projects was donated by parishioners. The Rev. A.A. Huebsch was pastor from 1929 to 1938, and then came Rev. Michael Pazourek.

Under the leadership of Rev. Jan Prachar a new complete Parish center and church were erected in the year 1963 at a cost of \$85,000. The old church was dismantled and sold.

Legal description: Lots 8 and 10, Block 3 – purchased from J.H. Goehner for \$60.00 – Deed filed May 1909  
Lots 9 and 11, Block 3 – purchased from Pioneer Town-Ship Co. for \$60.00 – Deed filed May 7, 1909

### **Sheridan County                      Hinderla**

In the past in Sheridan Co. in Hinderla was established a Czech-Polish Mission in a school building. (Hinderla was between the town of Gordon and P.O. Sandoz). In that schoolroom was celebrated Mass for Czechs and Poles.

### **Valley County – Netolice (Geranium)                      Saint Wenceslas' Mission**

Saint Wenceslas' Mission originated in the prairie district of Netolice later called Geranium. It was located in Valley County 12 miles west of Ord. A few Czech and

Polish families were settling this territory in 1877 and 1878. In 1881, the Rev. Klawiter, a Polish missionary, took up a claim and offered Mass in little two-room sod houses of parishioners.

On January 5, 1881, 13 settlers met to plan a cemetery and erect a church. Vaclav Studlar donated six acres of his quarter section for this purpose. Present at this meeting were: Jan Beran, Josef Ptacnik, Jan Princ, Josef Novotny, Jan Parkos, Jan Zawarski, Vaclav Holoun, Jakub Kosmata, Kazimier Takowski, Michael Bower, Vaclav Studlar, Albert Hosek, and Vaclav Mottl.

On January 12, 1882, Josef Ptacnik and Michael Novotny each contributed one horse, making the team that hauled the first load of lumber from St. Paul, Howard Co., the town with the nearest lumber yard that could furnish the necessary material. Others hauled with ox teams, a distance of about 60 miles.

A frame church, 18 x 32 feet in size, was built at a cost of about \$300.00 It was the first Catholic church in Valley County. Father Filip Maly, S.J., of St. Paul blessed the little church, and offered Mass in it in the fall of 1882. It was named Saint Wenceslas in honor to the patron saint of Czech people at the request of Vaclav Studlar. The nationality of the members was mostly Czech, and a few Polish families resided there.

(Picture)

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The first church – Netolice

The first baptism on record is that of Jan Novotny. He was baptized by Father Frantisek Pold. The first marriage was solemnized on January 26, 1884, between Jan Parkos and Agnes Prsny before Father F. Pold. The first Mission was held in March 1911, by the Rev. F.X. Lepsa, while the Rev. W. Kroupa was pastor.

In the summer of 1882 the first burial took place, it was the infant daughter of Mr. And Mrs. Martin Papousek. Undertakers were unknown on those days, so members of the family, assisted by kind neighbors, prepared the body for burial. Bartolomej Krikac, a carpenter, would build a coffin from plain boards, painted black and lined with white muslin.

In the winter of 1882, scarlet fever broke out. With no means of communication and unskilled medical aid the fever took a heavy toll. On Sunday morning, in the fall of 1882, the little flock assembled and Mass was being offered, a prairie fire was discovered approaching at a terrible rate. The people rushed out of the church to take care of their teams near the church. After a successful attempt, and all danger was past, all returned to church, where Father Filip Maly, S.J., had waited and then resumed Mass.

At the close of 1890 came Rev. J. Stepan Broz, who took great interest in the Czech people, and in two years the congregation had outgrown the little church, which in 1892 was replaced by a new one, 32 x 60 feet, at a cost of \$3,000. Rev. J.S. Broz dedicated the church.

About the year 1892, the young folks, led by Vencel Krikac and Ignac Klima, organized a reading or literary society for the purpose of propagating the Czech language. The first meetings were held in Josef Ptacnik's dance hall and later in the old church. But the society was short lived. The little church was sold and moved away by Josef Novotny.

The Rev. Broz served four years and was succeeded by Father Jan Vlcek, and by Father Josef Chundelak. The Rev. (late Msgr.) Matej Nemecek, a native of Nebraska became the only resident pastor of Geranium, offering Mass first on August 15, 1899. He was a pastor seven years there. In November 1906, he was transferred to Dodge, Nebraska. From 1906 to 1908 priests came from St. Paul and Warsaw.

On September 13, 1932, old settlers of the township and former members of the Parish sponsored a celebration in honor of the Golden jubilee of the church. The day began with a Pontifical High Mass offered by bishop Stanislaus V. Bona, assisted by many priests amongst those was Father Frantisek Oborny of Clarkson.

On October 1, 1957, bishop John Pashang offered a Pontifical High Mass in honor of the Diamond jubilee of the Parish. The church was renovated both interiorly and exteriorly.

The name Netolice was chosen because some of the parishioners had come from a village of that name in Bohemia. The name was later changed to Geranium.

Deed filed June 13, 1881 from V. Studlar. Approximately six Acres in the NW Quarter of Section 23, Township 19, Range 16, for the sum of \$1.00

## **Valley County – Ord Blessed Virgin Mary of Perpetual Help**

Although Ord is the county seat of Valley County, it was the last of four Parishes established in the county. The honor of being the first belongs to Saint Wenceslas' church in Netolice (Geranium).

Two important advances took place in 1900. A newly ordained priest, the Rev. Matej Nemec came from Omaha and took up residence at Geranium, built a rectory, and remained there until 1906. When he left Geranium in 1906 the county was without a priest for a few months. A little over a year later the Parish of Ord was established. In July 1908, bishop R. Scannell of Omaha sent the Rev. Vaclav Kroupa from Spencer to Ord to organize a Parish and build a church and take care of the Saint Wenceslas' church of Geranium as a Mission.

The Rev. V. Kroupa at first lived in a rented house, where he also offered Mass. But a lot was soon bought in the north end of town and plans were drawn for a new church. Its construction was begun in the fall, and later finished at the cost of \$6,000.

The Rev. W. Wolf of Grand Island church dedicated the new church in Ord on May 26, 1909. Ironically, the pews for the church did not arrive until next day, until then planks set on nail-kegs were used for seats, during the dedication. In 1913 a rectory was built.

The Rev. Kroupa remained in Ord until the middle of 1914. His place was taken by the Rev. Ferdinand Suesser (September 1, 1914 – January 1915). He was replaced by the Rev. B.J. Chudecek, who remained only until June 21, 1921. It was during his tenure that seven acres were bought for a cemetery. When the Rev. Martin Lawler came as the new pastor in June 1921, the Mission church of Saint Wenceslas' at Geranium was detached from Ord and attached to the Sargent Parish.

The Rev. Lawler remained in Ord for over 18 years. The church became too small for the congregation and he supervised the work when the church was enlarged. It was during this time that a whole block to the west of the church was purchased for a parochial school. The Rev. Lawler died on December 18, 1940, and is buried in Ord. The Rev. Thomas Siudowski was assigned to Ord (January 15, 1941). During his tenure many improvements were made on the church. On February 1, 1958, the Rev. Siudowski was transferred to Sidney, and the Rev. Stanley Gorak was named to be the new pastor.

The parishioners who were the first supporters of the new Parish were: Vincenc Kokes, Jan Kokes, John C. Meese, Frank Petska (Pecka), Charles Bals, W. Gruber, F. Osentowski, Viktor Dancak, Josef Beran, Josef Carkovski, Frank Kopal, and Ludvik Puncochar. The first baptismal was Emil Puncochar, on April 19, 1909. The first wedding was Josef Kosek and Agnes Hejsek.

The legal description of the church: Lot 3 less 66 feet, Block 35.

## **CZECH PROTESTANTS IN NEBRASKA**

**By Jaroslav Mrazek, PhD**

According to available records, the Czech Protestants, or as they often called themselves, the “Evangelicals”, started to move into Nebraska in the late 1860’s. They usually came together with the Catholics and the so-called Freethinkers. As far as we know, we can trace one stream of covered wagons to Saunders County near Prague, where three Protestant families settled in 1868, and began to gather for devotion.

In the year 1870, six families crossed the Missouri River and settled in Colfax County near Schuyler. After a long trip of many hardships, they arrived on the homesteads, which were to become their future homes.

As they were looking around and seeing nothing but the long prairie grass, Jan Novotny, their leader, spread out his hands and said: “Deti, tak toto je ta zaslibena zeme”. Children, so this is that Promised Land!

There were many other parts of our State settled by the Czech immigrants about this time. No doubt, there must have been many Protestants among them, but we have only scanty records about them. However, during the later 70’s and 80’s a greater number of Czech Protestants arrive and began several settlements of their own, which we shall describe later.

They were part of a great migration from Bohemia and Moravia, which then belonged to Austria-Hungary. They lived in their homelands in political and religious oppression for many centuries. Following the burning of Jan Hus at the stake in 1415, they were known as the Czech Brethren. After the Battle on White Mountain in 1620, they were bitterly persecuted and tens of thousands of them were exiled; some of these refugees later in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, emigrated to America and organized the Moravian Church.

However, it was not until 1781, when the Austrian Emperor Joseph II issued the Patent of Toleration, which allowed the Czech Protestants to organize their own Evangelical Reformed Church in Bohemia and Moravia. It was from these congregations

the early Czech Protestants, poor in the worldly goods but vigorous in their faith, emigrated to America and eventually settled in our State.

The signing of the Homestead Act by President Lincoln gave the movement a big impetus. His name stood for freedom and free land for those who were willing to suffer and work hard for it. No wonder many of the immigrants felt like pilgrims on the way from the slavery of Egypt into the liberty and plenty of Promised Land.

Because of the lack of ordained ministers, the Protestants families began to conduct devotions in their own humble homes. As the word spread about the fertile land of Nebraska and more Czech Evangelicals arrived, there gradually appeared about a dozen congregations, which were organized in the following areas: Prague, Wahoo and Weston in Saunders County; Zion and New Zion in Colfax County; Bohemian Brethren in Omaha and Bethlehem in South Omaha; Thurston in Thurston County; Wilber and Crete in Saline County; Table Rock in Pawnee County; and Burwell (Sedlov) in Valley County. Of these original twelve thriving congregations, only the first eight survived to the present time. In 1921 an additional church, the Bethlehem Chapel near Howells was organized. It has become a part of the Larger Parish of "The Second Mile", comprising also the Zion and Webster churches in Colfax County.

### **Pioneer Ministers**

The first known Czech Protestant minister in the Midwest was the Rev. Francis Kun of Tama County, Iowa. He was ordained in 1849 in Moravia and came to the United States in 1856 to preach the Word of God among his countrymen. In 1860 Rev. Kun became the pastor of a small flock of Czech Protestants at Ely, near Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The congregation, however, could not support him entirely, so he had to farm. In addition, he was called to minister to several pioneer evangelical groups scattered over the wide Midwest. Thus, Rev. Kun was invited in the middle 70's to help the struggling Czech Protestant groups in Nebraska. He was independent in spirit as well as in action, and never accepted any support from any missionary board. He died in 1894 in Ely, Iowa.

The Rev. H.A. Schaufler was another kind of an ordained minister who came to the early Czech immigrants in Nebraska. He learned in Prague Bohemia to speak the

Czech language acceptable, and the Board of Congregational Missions appointed him a missionary among the Czech immigrants in the United States. Rev. Schaffler did a fine piece of work around Cleveland, Ohio, in the early 1880's, where he was gathering new congregations from the "Evangelicals" as well as from all others, whoever would respond to the Christian gospel. In 1885, Rev. Schaffler visited Omaha, Wilber and Crete, Nebraska. However, after some initial success, his effort had no permanent result.

Then in 1889 came Rev. Vincent Pisek, who was sent by the Presbyterian Mission Board to survey the field among the Nebraska Czechs. Born and educated in Bohemia, Pisek studied at the Union Theological Seminary in New York. During his studies Pisek helped with the organization of the John Hus Czech Brethren Presbyterian Church and Neighborhood House in New York City, and after his ordination in 1883 became pastor of that church. Wherever this man of unusual gifts and experience spoke to our Czech pioneers in Nebraska, the people were inspired to renewed faith and sacrifice.

Later came some theological students to help with the activities of the growing number of Czech congregations. Among these student assistants were Vaclav Losa, V.S. Beranek, V. Siller, Philip Reitinger, John Rundus, Adolph Kadlec, Bohdan and Milo Filipi and others. Several of these men became regular pastors in our State, as we shall see from the stories of the developing congregations.

### **Prague Church - Saunders County**

As already mentioned, this group seemed to have the earliest verified arrival of Czech Protestants on Nebraska soil. Soon after, they built sod houses and cultivated some plots to secure their livelihood; they began to long for spiritual food. Among the first families in 1868 were Jan Kubalek, Jan Placek and Matej Vavak. Later arrived J. Prochazka, Anton Kliment, J. Chleboun, Vaclav Novak and many others. A number of times English-speaking ministers of the Baptist and Methodist denominations preached to them. The sermons had to be translated and that was not satisfactory, so they held their own devotions in their humble houses. Some of them took turns in reading the Holy Scriptures, sermons and prayers, which they brought along from their homeland. In the midst of fighting blizzards, dust storms and grasshoppers, learning a new language and struggling for the bare necessities of life, these families must have experienced the very

close reality of God's help. Finally, the Rev. Francis Kun visited them in 1875 and administered to them with the Word of God and the Sacraments. He counseled them to organize a congregation and they did so in 1877.

With great enthusiasm and sacrifice, contributions were collected for the purpose of 40 acres of land, which they bought two and half miles southwest of Prague. A small frame school building was also secured and moved to the property to be used for church activities. Church services were held there every Sunday. The congregation was incorporated December 3, 1879. Rev. Kun was visiting this growing and vigorous congregation once or twice a year until 1889.

In 1888, a railroad was completed through the area. A depot was constructed only two and half miles from the church. Within a year, a little town of 300 people was built around that railroad station. The town's name is Prague (Praha).

During the next few years, the continuing growth of the church demanded larger building facilities. During 1890-91, the Rev. F. Reitingner was coming from Wahoo to minister to the Prague congregation. From 1892, the Rev. Jan Pipal from Omaha and from Wahoo was visiting the church every other Sunday. These were prosperous years spiritually and the congregation decided to build a new church in the town of Prague. Five lots were bought in the village of Prague on which the present church building was erected and dedicated on October 30, 1898. At that time the officers were: Frank Houfek, Josef Vrana, Josef Pecena and the pastor was the Rev. B. Marek.

A few years later the congregation voted to join the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

Following the departure of Rev. Pipal in 1905, the fortunes of the Prague congregation were fluctuating. They had to share their ministers with the Wahoo church, because the feeling prevailed that the Prague congregation was not strong enough to support a resident pastor. The membership roll was maintained in the neighborhood of 80 communicants all through the years to the present time.

The following ministers served the church: Rev. Frantisek Novak, 1905-10; Jaroslav Kucera, 1911-19; Frederick Paroulek, 1919-33; Benjamin Marek, 1933-49; Philip Brun, 1950-51; Donald Proett, 1953 to the present time.

The charter members of the Prague Presbyterian Church were: Jan Kubalek, Josef Houfek, Jan Placek, Josef Vrana, Vaclav and Josef Novak, Matej Vrana, Josef Pospisil, Josef Mach, Josef Kliment, Vaclav Vavak, Franc Placek, Jan Chleboun, Anton Kubik, Tomas Junek, Matej Prochaska, Matej Vavak, Frantisek Slama, Rozarie Machova, Josef Kodes, Katerina Bobkova, Barbora Kasparova, Katerina Vavokova, Frantisek Vekohin, Anna Chlebounova, Marie Vranova, Barbora Plackova, Anna Kybykova, Anton Cuhel, Katerina Cuhelova, Barbora Novakova, Vaclav Houfek, Frantisek Dlouhy, Jan Beranek, Jan Vondra.

Written by Dr. J. Mrazek – with additional comments by Karel Jasa

### **Wahoo – Saunders County**

The Czech Presbyterian Church in Wahoo (Cesko-moravsky reformovany evanjelicky Spolek) was organized on January 8, 1882. Apparently this religious organization first became incorporated on April 23, 1887 at a meeting held at the Odell schoolhouse, four miles west and one-half miles south of Wahoo, Saunders County.

Several Czech Protestant families arrived in to this part of Nebraska and settled around Wahoo and Weston. First to come in May 1875 were: Josef Pestal, Tomas and Josef Trutna, Frantisek Pokorny, Josef Caha (from Krsdorf near Merin), Josef Pallas (Tasov), and Josef Caha from Roznatin, all from Moravia. Later came two families from Bohemia: Josef Cejka (Caslav), and Josef Kliment (Jilemnice). Others: Josef Pokorny and Matej Jasa (Horni Velimovice), Vaclav Jasa (Pocoucov), Vaclav Pallas, Vaclav Svoboda (Cihelin), Jan Pokorny (Strizov), Vaclav Pokorny (Pocoucov), Josef Veskrna (Budikovice), Josef Sklenar (Vanec), Karel Smolik (Okrisky). In 1888 another group coming to Wahoo Czech Church were: Vaclav Buch, Josef Cejka, F. Krofka, Fr. Benes, Josef Svoboda, Vaclav Brich, Jan Trutna, Josef Pallas, Josef Valtr, Josef Novak, Frantisek Kolar, and Josef Krafka.

Many years before the first church building was erected, these people would worship God on Sundays in their homes. At one time these services were conducted by an itinerant minister.

In the autumn of 1887 the congregation secured two acres of land through the generosity of Antonin Trutna and Josef Pestal. On November 11, 1888, the first church

building was dedicated. These services were conducted under the supervision of the Rev. F Kun from Ely, Iowa. A forty-acre tract, upon which the church cemetery is located, one and three-fourths miles to the southeast of the present church site, was purchased one year prior to the dedication of the first church.

Progress for these devoted Christian people was very gradual at first. Money was scarce and drought was often prevalent. In 1894 the complete cash rental from the church's forty acres was reduced to \$18.30. Nevertheless, despite difficult economic conditions, a progressive spirit unmistakably under girded the work.

(Picture)

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The first church and the present manse as they appeared in 1900

On January 2, 1898, the congregation decided to build the present manse. At the turn of the twentieth century the Czech Presbyterian Church records give evidence of a growing Church and an active Church school. By the year 1910 some of the Church families had moved to Thurston County, which resulted in the organization of the Presbyterian Church in the Village of Thurston. In June 1911, the Church sent a delegate to the Czech Convention at Eagle, So. Dakota. The purpose of this convention was to have a central Protestant Organization.

By 1920 a progressive young people's Christian Endeavor had been organized. The church membership had increased considerably and worship services on Sundays and special days were well attended. The congregation was rapidly outgrowing the facilities of their first church edifice.

On May 1927, a special session meeting was called for the purpose of conducting a special visitation canvass to discover whether the congregation would respond favorably to the possible construction of a new and more adequate church building. This action resulted in the dedication of the present church structure on March 17, 1929. Due to the following years of financial depression and drought, the Church carried a small mortgage, which has liquidated in 1943.

As the decades roll by in the history of the Czech Presbyterian Church, we must note that eight pastors have completed their tenure of services among the people of this Christian community. Each has made his own significant contribution by the spiritual structure of the organization in his own respective way.

Between 1890 and 1894, the Rev. F. Reitingger and A. Paulu were ministering to the Wahoo congregation. In 1896, the Rev. Jan Pipal became a resident pastor and was instrumental in bringing the congregation into the Presbyterian Church. He resigned in 1905 and was succeeded by the Rev. Frantisek Novak, who served the congregation until 1910. His successor was the Rev. Jaroslav Kucera, 1911-19; Rev. Frederick Paroulek was a pastor from 1919 until 1933. Under his leadership, a beautiful new brick church was constructed. The Rev. Benjamin Marek gave a dedicated ministry to the congregation from 1933 until 1949. The Rev. Bohuslav Slegr served briefly in 1951-52, as the last Czech-speaking pastor. Since 1953, the Rev. Donald Proett has been in pastoral charge.

The Wahoo church shared most of these ministers with the Weston and Prague congregations.

Sources of reference: a booklet "75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of The Czech Presbyterian Church in Wahoo", published in 1957; a history of this Church, written by Dr J. Mrazek with additional comments by Mrs. Anna Caha of Ceresco

### **Saunders County - Weston Church**

The following men were the charter members of the Weston Church, organized separately in 1888: Vaclav Brich, Josef Cejka, Josef Caha, F. Kravka, Josef Kliment, Jan Jasa, Josef Sklenar, Josef Veskrna, Fr. Benes, Josef Svoboda, and Vaclav Svoboda.

The families were meeting regularly every Sunday in their church. In 1888, the Rev. Kun visited them to preach and administer the Sacraments. In 1890, came the Rev. Pisek, followed by Rev. Paulu and Pipal, Adolf Kadlec, and Rev. Alois Barta. It was the Rev. Barta who brought the congregation into the Presbyterian denomination.

In 1912, the building of the Methodist Church was bought. After several years of inactivity the Rev. Paroulek kept coming regularly to Weston from Wahoo and revived the activities of the Weston Church. He resigned in 1933. The Rev. Paroulek was

followed by the Rev. B. Marek until 1949. Since that time the Weston Church pulpit is supplied by the Grace Bible Institute of Omaha.

### **Saunders County - Zion Church**

The migration of the Czech Protestants into Colfax County began two years later than into the Saunders County. The original families, which came into the Colfax Co. in 1870, were: Jan Novotny, Josef Smatlan, Antonin Kunhart, Frantisek Zrust, Josef Dudek, and Josef Vitek. It is interesting to note that, in the covered wagon train proceeding with these Protestants from Ely, Iowa, were also six Catholic families, who considerably later became the nucleus of their religious work in this vicinity.

Since the Protestants brought their Christian heritage from the old country, many of them longed for God's Word. Under the inspired lay-leadership of Jan Novotny (1805-1888) they soon began to gather in his home for Bible study and reading of the sermons. These devotions must have been warm spiritual experiences, and sources of strength for their daily burdens. As the numbers swelled, other homes were being opened and other leaders took part in the devotions. Most frequently mentioned are Vincent Totusek, Frantisek Fajmon, Pankrac Husak, Anton Kunhart, Josef Husak, Frantisek Sterba, Mrs. Terezie Novotna, and Jan Petr Sr.. Gradually they needed larger rooms, so they began to meet in the near-by sod schoolhouses. In 1875, Josef Smatlan donated two acres of land for a cemetery. It was decided the same year by the Rev. Francis Kun, who arrived for the first time into the vicinity to preach and administer the Sacraments. Great was the rejoicing! After this Rev. Kun made his visit regularly once or twice a year.

After much planning, prayer, discussion and sacrifice, the church construction started in 1888 and the church was dedicated in 1889 as the Zion Evangelical church. However, before the church was completed, Jan Novotny, who then was 83 years of age, died, and his was the first funeral held from the new church.

The location of the church near the cemetery, however, was not suitable to many of the families living west of there. They thought it should have been built in Clarkson, a flourishing town about six miles northwest of Zion. In February 1888, a separate meeting was held by those in favor of this plan. They organized a new congregation and built the

same year a new church in Clarkson under the name of "New Zion". It was completed and dedicated the same time as the "Zion" church.

In 1890, however, both congregations called Mr. Vaclav Losa, who was studying theology at the Union Theological Seminary in New York to labor among them during his vacations. He did such fine work that when he was leaving after two months, one of the Elders said with tears in his eyes: "Come back not only for two months but for twenty years". They realized the need for regular pastoral care, but because there were only a few clergymen available, they had to share them with other congregations. Besides Rev. Kun, Rev. Pisek came several times, and so did the Rev. Antonin Paulu from Wahoo.

In 1893, the new manse was erected near the church and made ready for occupancy by their regular pastor, the Rev. Vaclav Losa, who accepted the call in 1894. The following year, the congregation of Zion was admitted into the Presbyterian denomination and Rev. Losa was installed by the Presbytery of Omaha. At the time, the congregation numbered about 100 members. During his ministry at Zion, Rev. Losa served also the New Zion Church in Clarkson.

Under the Rev. Losa's able leadership, foundations were laid for administrative order as well as spiritual growth of the Parish.

Work among the young people in Sunday school and Confirmation classes made real progress. However, in 1900 the Rev. Losa resigned and accepted a call from the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Presbytery. In the same year, 1900, he was succeeded at Zion by the Rev. Antonin Svoboda, who came from Wisconsin. He also ministered to both fields, besides starting a mission among the families in Maple Creek Precinct. The Rev. Svoboda resigned in 1913.

From now on begins a period of independence and consolidation for the Zion Church. The new generation born in America was getting into the leadership. Farming was a prosperous business most of that time. Up to the end of the World War II, the Zion Church had its own capable and hard-working pastors: The Rev. F.B. Paroulek, 1914-19; Josef Havlik, 1920-38; and Rev. W. Kovar, 1939-45. The work was still carried on mostly in the Czech language. It was a sacred heritage to most of the people. But there were signs on the horizon that an inevitable change was to occur. Rural population was

slowly decreasing and with it the church membership. Czech pastors were hard to find. The next nine years only interim ministers would come to hold services. Then, in 1953, the Presbytery organized the larger Parish of “The Second Mile”, joining the Zion Church with the Bethlehem Chapel and the Webster Church, under one minister, the Rev. Clarence Newquist. He was followed in 1961 by the Rev. Keith Barkly, and in 1963 by the Rev. Robert Achor.

The Rev. Achor was the last ordained minister Zion Church had. He vacated his post in 1966. Since then the congregation has been served by “lay ministers” (not ordained). These lay ministers being mostly high school teachers from the surrounding community. The pastor from the Presbyterian church of Clarkson and Schuyler officiate at funerals, weddings, and other ceremonial functions of the church.

The present members (written in 1966) of the Session are Elmer Makousky, Daniel Novotny, W. Dvorak, Leonard Makousky, Karel J. Novotny, Rudolf Faltin Jr., and B.J. Novotny. Many of these names remind us of the pioneer founders. Though in declining members – only 45 at present – with practically all activities in the English language, the members are still carrying on in the old Hussite spirit the faith of their fathers. Who can evaluate the sowing and the harvest of the God Seed in the lives of countless people for nearly a century?

### **New Zion Church - Clarkson**

The New Zion congregation had a common history with the Zion Church, which is located about six miles southeast of Clarkson. The actual separation occurred when most of the families living west of Zion decided to build a new church building in the flourishing town of Clarkson. Six miles in the horse and buggy days was a long distance for them.

(Picture)

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New Zion Church Clarkson

The New Zion congregation was organized in 1888 and the newly constructed church frame building was dedicated by the Rev. Francis Kun in the following year.

Among the first leaders of the New Zion are mentioned the following: Anton Nykodym, Josef Filipi, John, Lukl, and John J. Zrust. Among the charter members were: Frantisek Travnicek, Frank Ondra, Jan Koza, Josef Vaspir, Josef Filipi, Josef Fajmon, Josef Teply, Frank Nykodym, Vincent Nykodym, Josef Dudek, Jan Travnicek, Ludvik Fridl, Max Hejtmanek, Josephine Holan, Antonin Kubik, Adolf Fajmon, Anton Vasek, and Frank Sir.

During the summer of 1890 Vaclav Losa, then a theological student served both New Zion and Zion Churches. This cooperation in sharing the ministers by both congregations lasted for 23 years. Losa was followed by the Rev. Antonin Paulu, who served until 1895. This year Losa finished his studies, was ordained, and was called by both churches as their pastor. On Sundays, he served the New Zion in the afternoon and the work grew, especially among the young people, when the English language was used. In 1898, the congregation joined the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. After Rev. Losa resigned in 1900, the Rev. Antonin Svoboda was called and served from 1901 until 1913.

In the spring of 1913, the New Zion Church petitioned the Presbytery to have their own pastor. This was granted and in 1914 the Rev. Bohdan A. Filipi was installed as the pastor. The same year a new manse was built at a cost of \$3,600.00.

During Rev. Filipi's pastorate, which lasted 38 years, the church was strengthened remarkably. He was an able and dedicated leader. His services were frequently sought in other parts of Nebraska, South Dakota and Kansas. Much of his energy was also spent in the work of the Presbytery and Synod. In his own church, the women's groups and several choirs were organized. The Rev. Filipi was instrumental in the construction of a new beautiful brick church, which was dedicated in 1923. In 1931, a new pipe organ was installed and in 1952 chimes were added to the church tower. While he was at the New Zion Church, the membership grew from 150 to 359. When Rev. Filipi resigned in 1952, he also retired from the active ministry, but did not live long to enjoy the fruits of his faithful labors.

(Picture)

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Rev. Dr. Jaroslav Mrazek

The Rev. Dr. Jan E. Filinger became his successor in the pastorate of the congregation in 1953. Under the Rev. Filinger's leadership, the Church continued its steady growth. A modern educational addition to the church building was constructed and dedicated in 1961. The Rev. Filinger left in 1966. In 1967 the Rev. Sidney Raymond came to serve as pastor of this Church. He is still serving there at this time.

The church Session at the time of writing consists of Elders: Albert Cerv, Arthur Fayman, H. Hamernik, Milo Molacek, Clarence Musil, Ervin Nykodym, Allan Roether, and J. Zrust. The present communicant membership is officially reported as 685.

In the cornerstone of this church is a small Czech Bible belonging to Vlasta Hamlicek, daughter of Frank Hamlicek.

### **Bohemian Brethren Presbyterian Church – Omaha**

As far as it is possible to find out from old records the first Protestant services for the Czech-speaking people in Omaha were held in 1887 in the home of Jan Blazek Sr.; the minister of the English-language Presbyterian Church leading prayer. Jan Jiral read from the Scriptures in Czech and the Rev. H.A. Schauffler of Cleveland, Ohio, preached in Czech. Miss Barbora Jiral played the organ. This gathering took the name "Bethlehem chapel." During the summer vacation the Rev. Frank Rundus, minister of the church situated between Munden and Cuba, Kansas, conducted services. These early worshippers invited other Czech Protestants and unchurched people to service, which were then held in the Bethlehem chapel on south 16<sup>th</sup> Street.

(Picture)

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Bohemian Brethren Church - Omaha

Later on, a building was bought and placed on a rental lot at 16<sup>th</sup> & William Streets. The Bohemian Presbyterian Church was officially organized August 25, 1889. The worship service was held at 9:30 A.M., and at the organizing meeting, which followed, Josef Vladyka was elected president pro tem and Stanislav Beranek was elected

secretary pro tem. The following were present: Jan Blazek, Jindriska Bastlova, Frantisek Nesladek, Josef Kadavy, Stanislav Beranek, Karolina Berankova, Alfred Schueller, Frantisek Koze, Frantisek Sobeslavsky, Josef Vladyka, Barbora Jirakova, Marie Blazkova, Josef Blazek, Vincenc Kadavy and four children, Jan and Frantisek Blazek, and Vaclav and Anna Nesladkova.

The Rev. V. Pisek from New York occasionally came to Omaha to serve this congregation; otherwise lay members conducted the services. The first regular minister of the congregation was the Rev. Antonin Paulu, who was called in 1890. During his ministry a church was built at 15<sup>th</sup> and William. The following year the Rev. A. Paulu moved to Wahoo, and his place in Omaha was taken by the Rev. Jan Pipal who served the congregation until 1896. For the next three years services were held only occasionally. The Rev. Josef Bren of Racine, Wisconsin, was called, but he changed his mind and did not come. Neither did Rev. A. Kadlec. Finally, in 1899 the Rev. Jaroslav Dobias accepted the call. During his ministry the church building was moved to its present site at the corner of 15<sup>th</sup> and Hickory Streets, and the manse was bought. During that period this congregation organized the South Omaha Czech-speaking congregation, the Bethlehem Presbyterian Church.

The Rev. Bohdan A. Filipi followed Mr. Dobias in 1906. In 1913 the Rev. V. Cejnat succeeded Mr. Filipi, and his fruitful ministry lasted until 1925, when the Rev. Louis Kvetensky accepted a call. Under his guidance the congregation grew and prospered. In 1941 the Rev. Benjamin Rundus served the congregation briefly and during 1942-43. Then the Rev. Josef Holub was called, and he served the congregation until his tragic death in 1956. During his pastorate, the Youth Addition to the church building was constructed in 1947. The Rev. Zdenek Pauk was called in 1957, but he resigned because of ill health. In September 1958, the Rev. Milos Repka, who had escaped from his native Czechoslovakia, was called to serve the congregation. He also engaged in regular Czech radio broadcasting. Under his able ministry the congregation was perceptibly strengthened in several areas. After he resigned in 1964, the Rev. Jaroslav Mrazek, PhD., was called and installed in 1965 and served the congregation until his retirement in April 1969. He was the last Czech speaking minister and is Pastor Emeritus. After he left, Czech services were conducted every Sunday by Joseph Leffler (until his death in July,

1969) and Jaroslav Galda (until his poor health in June 1971.) Czech sermons taped in the 69's by the Rev. M. Repka and other pastors were used for these services. The effort was finally abandoned in June 1971, because those interested become too old or infirm to come to the church. However, English services are still held every Sunday consistently. There are no longer midweek meetings, or meetings of choir, sewing circle, youth fellowship, or men's council, but two women's circles still hold regular monthly meetings. They are the 78-year-old Czech Marta Society and the 25-year-old American Dorcas Circle.

We owe much to the patient guidance of two good friends of our Church, the Rev. Kenneth Johnson and Dr. Howard B. Dooley who served as Moderators of our session in the interims between installed ministers. From April 1970 to August 1973 this congregation was served by the Rev. Ronald Hawkins as Temporary Supply Pastor. The membership of this congregation never exceeded 150. Services were held in both English and Czech every Sunday from 1925 to 1971. Most of the members are of Czech origin or descent, but we do have a number of non-Czech members, too.

Present Church officers:

Supply pastor: The Rev. Howard J. Svoboda

Treasurer and Chairman of Trustees: Frank Kostka

Clerk of Session: Marie R. Galda

Other Elders: George Vesely, Bessie Bukacek, and Harry Gerzeski

Other Trustees: Larry Vesely, Steffie Madison, Stanley Zych

Deacons: Jeroma Novotny, Frank Farka, George Mertz, Kary Mertz

Important dates:

August 25, 1889 organization as Bohemian Brethren Church

September 25, 1889 voted to join the Presbyterian denomination

December 13, 1889 reorganization

October 17, 1901 incorporation

September 24, 1939 observance of 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary

August 23/25, 1940 hosts to Central West Presbytery

August 27/28, 1949 host to Czech Evangelical Union

September 20, 1964 observance of 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary

Parts of this information from a booklet written by the Rev. M. Repka and published in 1964 and a booklet by Dr. Jaroslav Mrazek and published in 1968.

Miss Marie R. Galda

### **Bethlehem Church – South Omaha**

Student of theology at the Omaha Seminary, S.A. Beranek and his wife, started to work with some Czech families in South Omaha in 1893. Their projects were mainly organizing Sunday school and sewing circles in a vacant store, which was also used for Public school classes. The Rev. J. Dobias from the Bohemian Brethren Church conducted worship services. Sunday school teachers were M. Opocensky, A. Micka, L. Kadava and M. Sobeslavsky. Soon after the Church was organized in 1899, the following officers were elected: J. Kadavy, Jan Blazek, F. Svacha, F. Vodicka, S.A. Beranek, and B. Ruzicka.

The church building was erected on 21<sup>st</sup> Street between Q and R Streets in 1901. After the departure of the Rev. Dobias in 1906, theological students V. Miniberger, Milo Filipi, and Rev. A.B. Filipi, took care of the congregation. The Rev. Emanuel Kalina assumed the pastorate in 1913 and the congregation flourished again with improvements of the building and grounds. After his resignation in 1918, the congregation was served by the Rev. Cejnar from the Bohemian Brethren Church. Desiring to have their own pastor, the congregation grew to 160 communicants. After his retirement in 1958, the Presbytery organized a yoke-field with the Park Forest Presbyterian Church; and the Rev. Kenneth Johnson has been the pastor. While the communicant's membership is not growing, mainly because of the changing community patterns, the Church is still making a significant contribution at its original location.

### **Jan Hus Church – Thurston**

It was in 1905 that several families arrived from Moravia to Wahoo vicinity and having taken the friendly advise of the Rev. Jan Pipal, moved to Thurston County, where they engaged in farming. They held worship services in the Sunny Ridge schoolhouse with alternating lay leaders or the occasional help of the following ministers: Rev. Frantisek Novak, Antonin Svoboda, Bohdan A. Filipi, and a student minister Milo Filipi.

On July 17, 1910, the Church was organized by the Omaha Presbytery, with the following officers: Josef Jasa, Karel Jasa, Frantisek Sabacky, Josef Palas, Josef Pipal, and Frantisek Pestal.

From 1912 to 1915, Jaroslav Stulc, a student minister, served the Church during the summer months. During this time and with the assistance of the Presbyterian Board of Missions and Rev. Schwartz of Omaha, a fine brick church was built, and was dedicated June 14, 1914. In 1915, a theological student Josef Leksa began his work in this thriving congregation. After his ordination in 1917, he continued their only fulltime pastor. The Rev. Leksa labored with patience and perseverance until 1922. Shortly after his resignation, several families left the community for economic reasons but the Church kept their worship services and Sunday school going, with the help of theological students during the summer months, and occasional pastoral supplies.

This arrangement prevailed for the next 27 years. The following men gave invaluable guidance and assistance: Rev. V. Cejnar, V. Karasek, Rev. Josef Havlik, Jaroslav Tatter, W. Kovar, Rev. Eduard Holub, and Dr. V. Gregory. From 1949, the Pender Presbyterian Church ministers served also the Thurston congregation every Sunday. They were: Rev. R. Penaluna, Rev. A.P. Kidwell, Rev. F.L. Lepinski, and Rev. J. Thomsen.

The present "two-point plan" with the church in Winnebago was arranged in February 1957. Under this plan, the following have served the Thurston congregation: Mr. Mark Hartsock, a student minister, Rev. Frederick Dawson, and Rev. Norman Phillips. This struggling flock, in 60 years of its existence, has given an outstanding testimony of faithfulness to the sacred heritage of John Hus and a lasting contribution to the community

### **Bethlehem Chapel - Maple Creek Precinct**

Although it was until 1921, that the church was built, the spiritual hunger of the community dates back to about 1880, when the first Czech settlers came to Maple Creek Precinct.

Some of these early settlers brought Scriptures and prayer books with them and these early settlers brought Scriptures and prayer books with them and these were made

use of with families joining in private services. When the Zion Presbyterian Church was organized and built in 1887, some of the Maple Creek people went there to satisfy their religious yearning, but the distance made regular attendance impossible. That was also the reason that the Rev. Vaclav Losa, who came to Zion in 1894, could not attend to the spiritual needs of the forgotten Maple Creekers, as often as would have been desirable. Then the Rev. Antonin Svoboda came to Zion Church in what had become the horse and buggy age. He could visit the Maple Creek community more regularly, generally coming four times a year.

He preached and administered the Sacraments in the old District 22 School, known as the Blazek or the Svoboda School. When the Rev. B.F. Paroulek came to Zion in 1915, that was his only charge, and he could give more attention to the congregation on the "other creek" in Czech, "na druhem potoku" as everyone referred to what is now the Bethlehem congregation. The Rev. Paroulek visited the community once a month and preaching was in Czech only. By this time they are having services in District 11 School.

In April 1920, the Rev. Josef Havlik came to Zion. This was when the church building program was seriously considered. In the spring of 1921, the ultimate decision to build a church was made. Bethlehem Chapel was to be the name of the new church, named for the historic chapel in Prague, Bohemia, where Jan Hus once preached. About 18 families subscribed to the building fund, the average subscription was \$300.00 per family. Jan Blazek donated an acre of land to be used for the building site.

The church was completed and dedicated on October 17, 1921. The total cost being \$4,200.00. The first officers of the new church were Frank Bukacek, Frank Kasal, Vincenc Svoboda, Frank Beran, and Henry Kasal. The work at Bethlehem Chapel now began in earnest with the leadership of the Rev. J. Havlik, who was to be our spiritual leader for some 18 years. The Rev. Havlik left in the spring of 1938 to accept a call from the Presbyterian Church in Hopkins, Minn. In 1939, the Rev. William Kovar came to us and served both Zion and Bethlehem Chapel churches. Before the Rev. Kovar's coming, most of the worship services were conducted in the Czech language. As American families joined the congregation, we changed to English worship.

After the Rev. Kovar left, we were fortunate to have the Rev. Bohdan A. Filipi of the Clarkson church, and other ministers in the area, occupy the pulpit. The Rev. Wilson, a traveling minister, organized the “Parish of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mile”, consisting of Zion, Webster and Bethlehem Churches. Each Church retained its identity. The Rev. Clarence Newquist came to serve the churches in 1954. During the time that he worked among us we realized that more room was needed in the sanctuary, in the choir loft and in the basement for Sunday school room and kitchen facilities. An addition to the church was built in 1958. The Rev. Keith Barkley and his family came to serve the spiritual needs of the Parish from 1961 to 1963. After the departure of the Rev. Achor, the Church was without a resident pastor for sometime. The Rev. Smith came into our midst in May 1968. He has been our able kindly spiritual guide through the past 5 and half years.

It is with deep regret and fond memories, which we will always cherish, that we close this chapter of our lives, spanning some 52 years with our Bethlehem Chapel. The final worship service in this church was held Sunday, October 7, 1973.

The Bethlehem Chapel is located in the extreme northwest corner of the NW Quarter of Section 27, Township 19, N. Range 4 East – five miles east and 10 miles north of Schuyler, Colfax Co.

Parts of this history was written by Mrs. Frank Kasal Sr. and published in the Schuyler Sun on October 11, 1973.

### **Evangelical Congregation Near Burwell**

South of the town of Burwell, Valley County, was organized an Evangelical Congregation. The Rev. Vincenc Pisek preached the first sermon there in 1891. Several times the Rev. Vaclav Losa from Clarkson came to visit. Finally, the Rev. Bohdan Filipi spent the whole summer there in 1900. He was sent by the Committee of Czech Christian Endeavor Societies, which were contributing toward this “Czech Missionary”. His work was quite successful. Worship services were held every Sunday, and young people were trained during the weekdays. When the Rev. Filipi left the congregation in the fall of 1900, he left them without a leader and they never did get organized and gave up the idea of building a church structure.

My old friend, James Rejda or Burwell, sent me this information: “According to the minutes of the meeting, conducted on May 19, 1889, the first officers of the Evangelical Lodge of Sedlov as they were organized, were: Jan Cech, President, Josef Zurek, Secretary, and my father Josef Rejda, Treasurer, with 15 charter members present. That is the size of the story. The congregation met or had their church in the Komensky School. I think District 149.”

### **Methodist Episcopal Church - Milligan**

The foundation for the Methodist Episcopal Church in Milligan was laid around 1904, when a group of women organized a Ladies Aid Society and raised money to purchase the lot. Sunday school was held in various buildings until the year 1924 when a permanent Church organization was founded in the Z.C.B.J. hall under the direction of District Superintendent the Rev. R. Gettys and Henry Ibser of DeWitt.

In 1931, the Rev. E. L. Cohran was instrumental in obtaining a church building from Friend, Nebraska. The building was moved to its present site in Milligan on January 7, 1931. The church was officially dedicated on February 8, 1931. The Rev. Adrian Edgar is the present pastor. Worship services are held at 9:15 A.M. and Church school at 10:00 A.M. each Sunday.

This church is located on Lot 1, Block 13 in Milligan, Fillmore County, about 1/2 block west of the old Burlington train depot building.

(Picture)

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Baptist Group on a picnic at Elmwood Park 1929; Third in the first row (sitting) Grace Krajicek, Second row (kneeling, right end) Marie Gogela, Third row (second from the right) Louis Gogela, Fourth row (first on the left) John Forman

### **The Central West Presbytery**

In 1910, the Central West Presbytery was organized to provide needed fellowship of the Czech-speaking Presbyterian churches in the Midwest. There were 16 churches and 11 ministers in its initial membership. Geographically, this Presbytery covered six

states under the jurisdiction of the Synod of Iowa. The Central West Presbytery held its annual meetings in various churches of the six states, in conjunction with the Conventions (or sjezdy) of the Evangelical Union, often lasting three days.

The Evangelical Union was organized to include Czech Presbyterian churches, which were not members of the Presbytery, but desired to share in its fellowship. These conventions were not only administrative in nature, but especially great inspirational centers of the people of Jan Hus. When the Czech language could no longer be used in the proceedings, the Central West Presbytery was finally dissolved in 1948. However, its powerful spiritual impact has and will live on forever.

References: Pamatnik ceskych evanjelickych cirkvi v Sev. Americe, published 1900, by Christian Meseenger, Chicago, ILL.

Rose Rosicky: A History of Czechs in Nebraska, Omaha Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in USA and the United Presbyterian Church

(Picture)

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Rev. Jan Pipal - 1892-1932

(Picture)

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Rev. Bohdan A. Filipi

## **EPILOGUE**

Pro tuto studii jsem získal pomoc tak mnohých krajanů, kteří k me žádosti poslali informace a fotografie o historii českých, katolických a protestantských kostelů v Nebrasce. Zvláště uvádím Alfreda Nováčka z Dwight.

A díky vám všem za pomoc zachovat pro budoucnost památky českých farností a kostelů v Nebrasce. Byl to Msgr V. Rezebek; Rev. J. Pastorak; Rev. F. Oborny; Rev. V. Herman; pani A. Cahova, Ceresco; pi. C. Formanová, Omaha; pi. A. Wieduvildtová, Omaha, manželé Taborští, Culbertson; A.J. Blaha, St. Paul; Leo Cecava, Deweese; Albin Cihacek, Morse Bluff; J. Rejda, Burwell; František Tesar, Omaha, Larry Vilda, Lincoln; pi. Floyd Hermanová, Wilber.

Zvláštní můj díky náleží Rev. Jaroslavu Mrazkovi, PhD., jehož studii o historii protestantských kostelů jsem s jeho svolením otiskl.

Stejný díky vzdávám těm, kteří přešli rukopis. Byli to: pi. A. Wieduvildtová, Omaha; pi. Grace Krajčková, Omaha; manželé Smrzovi; pi. E. Hamerská, Lincoln, sl. Elizabeth Szeliga, Omaha.

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