



### **History of St Hedwig's Parish.**

The Diamont Anniversary 1891-1966 St. Hedwig's Congregation, Thorp, WI, p. 18-31. CAP at Orchard Lake.

### **Territorial Development**

St. Hedwig's Congregation established in 1891 lies in the northwest section of Clark County in the Townships of Thorp, Withee, Worden and Reseburg.

Before the coming of the first white settlers, little is known of the Indian history of this area. Apparently this territory was occupied by the Chippewa, Menomonie, Winnebago, and Dakota Indians around the middle of the 17th century. All tribal Indian claims to Clark County lands were ceded in 1837. However, individual Indian families, were still seen and lived in some parts as late as the early 1900's.

The settlement and development of this area was due to its vast stretches of timber, immediately tributary to the great waterways. The two largest, the Black River flows north and south, while the Eau Claire branches in the west and flows into the Chippewa River. Originally about one-fourth of Clark County was covered with white pine and three-fourths was covered with hardwood and hemlock. This timber was sent down the Black River to La Crosse and down the Eau Claire by way of the Chippewa River to Winona and other points. The best hardwood was in the townships which are located through the middle and eastern parts of the County. Some was found in the northern portions of the towns of Worden and Reseburg. Large forests of hardwood were also found in the Towns of Thorp and Withee. These northern townships also had a large quantity of hemlock. The oak belt extended from the west side of the Black River, north through Taylor County. The early settlers who came into this area moved up from La Crosse and up the Black River establishing settlements as they moved northward. From 1853, when this area first became Clark County, and for the next thirty years, the great natural wealth of the County was poured out into the bosom of the streams. Thus Clark County rapidly became a logging Center. The Eau Claire Lumber Company had secured extensive holdings of tract land in the Township of Thorp and Withee in the 1860's and in the Townships of Worden and Reseburg in the 1870's. Two miles east of the present country church of St. Hedwigs, the Sterling Lumber Mill established in 1888 was one of the largest lumber companies and employed over 200 people.

The mills became more common with the increase of rail-road transportation facilities about 1880, namely, the Wisconsin Central R.R. now known as the Soo Line. When the pine had begun to disappear, the hardwood situation began to occupy an increasingly important place in the industrial life of this area, and a number of head, stave, and box factories were built. More and more people began to settle in the area as the Railroad was a direct link with larger urban areas. Some of the

hardwood was used in making charcoal and coke to be shipped north for use in the iron furnaces. One such charcoal pit operated in Thorp.

The city of Thorp began about 1872 when J.S. Boardman built a log shanty on the southeast quarter of section 30. E.A. and J.S. Boardman lived together in this shelter, while J.S. Boardman built a log house on the site of the present public school.

In 1873 more log cabins began to spring up as more settlers made their homes in what is now known as the city of Thorp. In 1873 the stork brought its first white baby to the little town in the wilderness. Mr. & Mrs. E.A. Boardman became the parents of a little girl. In 1874 the first school was built for the children and Mrs. Almeda Edmunds of Black River was the teacher. This same year the first post office was opened on the farm of B.J. Brown, who was also the postmaster. On January 21, 1876, the county board organized the township of Thorp. The first town election was held on April 4, 1876, and 29 votes were cast. It must be noted here, that the community was not known as Thorp at this time but as "Northfork" because of the river. Slowly the community began to expand, stores were erected, the first illicit saloon was established about this time, and a box car served as the first depot. By 1881 a new depot was built. In 1881 also the community received its present name as "Thorp. "

As Circuit preachers made their rounds through the areas and brought religion to the people, the First Baptist Church was erected in 1882. Visiting priests from other communities made their rounds to take care of the Catholic population in Thorp and in 1885 a small wooden church, named St. Bernards was erected to care for the Catholic population.

Eventually, township after township was denuded, leaving in the track of the loggers rotting stumps, dead timber, brush, rubbish, and standing trees that were unsuitable for the logging purposes. The loggers would come in fall and leave in the spring, taking their wages with them. There was a certainty that the time was not far distant when all the best land would be preempted, and this caused a number of home seekers to consider the prospect of establishing farms amid the forests of Clark County. Individuals secured small tracts of land in the town of Thorp in the late 1860's and in the town of Withee in the 1870's and 1880's. One such land grant in the Town of Withee near the location of St. Hedwig's Church was granted to Joseph Deland in 1873 and to a Charles D. Gilmore in 1872.

The men who had established their little homes in the wilderness planned, first to work in the woods in the winter months, and devote the summer to gradual clearing and the development of farms. However, with the gradual closing of the logging operations in the late 1890's, many found themselves without money, and resources with<sup>^</sup> their prospective farmland still unlearned. Hard times developed and many foreclosures on the land were made, so much so that many left, while others struggled on hoping for better days. Many of the pioneers that remained, turned their attention more and more to agriculture and dairying. The soil where the timber had been cut off was admirably adapted for this purpose.

W.R. McCucheon, the town clerk of the Town of Withee furnishes us with the following census statistics as appears in the Thorp Courier Edition of July 17, 1885: "Whole number of males, 279; females 170; total population, 449; number of males fit for military duty, 198. "

## POLISH SETTLERS

About 1885 land speculators began to appear on the scene, purchasing acre upon acre from the lumber companies and in turn selling it at a fair price to Polish immigrants, who were leaving their native country because of the unbearable conditions abroad. These people first migrated into the big cities of America looking for better lives and conditions. They were contacted by the land owners who encouraged them to buy forty acres of land and promised them a lucrative life. Many of the Poles and Lithuanians settled in cities

like Buffalo, Philadelphia, Chicago and Milwaukee. Many times they purchased parcels of land through newspaper ads. Never having seen the land, they arrived in the Town of Withee area and found denuded land far from being ready for farming. It was only through hard labor and sweat that they were able to prepare arable land.

The Poles by tradition were always devoted and loyal Catholics. Wherever they settled, they immediately built a church for worship. Usually, a Polish priest from native Poland would arrive and act as their shepherd. The first Polish settlement as recorded by Fred L. Holmes in his "Old World Wisconsin," was established in Texas, while the first in northern Wisconsin was Polonia, Wisconsin in Portage County in 1857. The oldest Polish Church in Wisconsin still stands in that community. The Poles as they migrated to northern Wisconsin became farmers. They prospered as men of the soil, where others had failed. Six families were the first to settle in Polonia.

Records are very scarce for establishing the first Pole to settle in the Township of Withee where St. Hedwig's Church is located. What evidence the writer has was gathered from interviews with old settlers of the area who still are alive or passed into eternity during 1967.

It seems that Valentine Malecki was the first known Pole to arrive in the Thorp area in the year 1888. His first trip was only to purchase some land in the area. He returned to Northern Michigan where he worked as a logger, but when his family joined him in the year 1888, he finally settled in Thorp. His daughter, Mrs. Elsie Roytek who just passed away, recalls the early days. Paul and John Zwolinski about this time had already built their log shanty, so the Malecki family lived with them until their own cabin was complete. Either one or the other could be recognized as the first Polish settlers in the Thorp, Withee area.

Within the radius of the big sawmill located at what was then known as Sterling, the logging operations were drawing to an end about the year 1890. Polish land agents, Mr. Felix L. Piotrowicz and Mr. E.I. Slupski of Milwaukee began purchasing the land from the mill. They divided it into 40 acre farms and sold them to the Poles with promises to establish a Polish settlement in the Thorp area, known as Posen. Originally Posen was to be established on the site where the Lombard Cheese Factory stands. Advertising in Polish newspapers throughout the Polish settlements paid off. Families of Poles and Lithuanians began migrating into the Townships of Thorp and Withee. Bernard Deniskiewicz, Feliks Mikolainis, and Martin Grobacki arrived in 1889 to join Malecki and other Poles in the area. Feliks Mikolainis was the first Lithuanian National to settle in the Township of Withee.

The Thorp Courier in the March 20, 1890 issue reports the following families arriving: "Anton Dziurzynski, Alexander Koubsha, Valentine Kulig, Florian Anyzewski, and Thomas Strugula." Anton Balcer was also settled in this territory at the time. By 1891 the local paper reported there were many Polish and Lithuanian families settled in the woods, northeast of the city of Thorp.

## ST. HEDWIG'S CHURCH

By June 1891, it was decided to change the location of the new Polish Church from Sterling to a point two miles east of the Thorp Village. This is the site on which St. Hedwig's Church stands today. In the month of June the people began building their first little wooden church in order that they might worship God as they were trained in their native country. The timber was donated by the mill and all the men who wanted the church, worked very hard to complete it. By September of 1891, the Church was complete to the joy of of the Catholics.

On Sunday, September 27, 1891 the Polish and Lithuanian Catholic Church was dedicated by Father Constantine Frydrychowicz, who was pastor of St. Bartholomew Church, Mill Creek, Portage County, Wisconsin. Services began at 9:30 a. m. with the whole congregation gathered in their best clothes to witness this great event. Father Frydrychowicz dedicated the church and preached the sermon both in Polish and German because guests of both nationalities were present. Miss Gorman, a music teacher from Neillsville played the organ and directed the choir. Others who assisted in this event were Mr. & Mrs. Wiltgen, Mr. & Mrs. L.H. McGuire and Mr. R.A. Winter. After the dedication and blessing of the church, Father Frydrychowicz was appointed by the Most Rev. Schwebach, Bishop of La Crosse Diocese, as the administrator of the parish. The dream of the immigrants was a reality.

More and more Polish and Lithuanian settlers kept arriving into the area, while Mr. Piotrowicz and Mr. Słupecki continued making visits to the village from Milwaukee. The people worked hard to build a community of substantial log houses.

One must acknowledge here that the pioneer priests of those days were great missionaries, who travelled great distances to serve people in areas where there were no priests. It took much courage and zeal for the faith to accomplish such things. The Poles were never neglected by their native priests, who migrated into America together with the people in order to serve them by offering them the teaching of Christ. It was through their efforts that so many beautiful churches were built. It must have been difficult to travel over wild areas by horse, horse and buggy, or ride in the caboose of the freight train in order to bring the Catholic Faith to the people.

About October 1891, dissension broke out in Posen between the pastor and some of the people of the parish. The first disagreement was over the vote on what to name the new church. Some people wanted the name to be "All Saints" while others wished to name it "St. Hedwigs. " The majority voted to name it St. Hedwigs in honor of the Polish Queen and saint. Piotrowicz was happy that the church was named after the saintly Queen.

A serious disagreement arose also at this time between Father Frydrychowicz and the land agents, Piotrowicz and Słupecki. One must understand the times and conditions of that period. Nationalism was prevalent in the United States. There were battles and division between Polish Organizations in America and division among the clergy and Polish newspapers. At this time because of the many poles in Wisconsin, some of the Polish Clergy demanded from Rome a Polish Bishop. As the clergy argued, the Polish people also began to take sides. Communication was only through Polish newspapers; editors would not give the facts, spreading error and rumors, which brought on dissension. Most Bishops in the United States were of German and Irish extraction and did not understand the battle because of language difficulties and frequently had facts misrepresented to them. One can readily see why there was also dissension and disagreement in Posen.

It would seem that Father Frydrychowicz was not well liked because from the writings of lay people he was blamed for the dissension that arose in St. Hedwigs. May the reader judge for himself. The writer can understand how easily a situation can develop when the priest travels and visits a mission on occasions and listens to the problems of his people without time for investigation and verification, and tries many times to defend his people, only to find that he builds up more enemies.

The following article appeared in the October 29, 1891 (Vol. VIII, No. 51) edition of the Thorp Courier: "Felix L. Piotrowicz of the land firm of Słupecki & Co. of Milwaukee, who has been locating settlers on N-W L. Co's land in this vicinity the past year, was arrested here on Friday last at the instance of a Polander named Stanislaus Nadolny, to whom Mr. Piotrowicz has sold some land in July last, claiming that he had bought the land with the understanding that all the timber left on the land should belong to him, but that now N-W L. Co. steps up and claims all the merchantable timber. Mr. Piotrowicz appeared before Justice Marsh the same day of his arrest and his examination was set for November 2, his bail being placed at \$500.00. His bail was immediately secured by the register of deeds William Zassenhaus signing the bond and Mr. Piotrowicz returned here the same day. The Courier has no particular interest in this matter as to the manner in which Messrs. Piotrowicz and Słupecki have been doing business, but it seems that Rev. C. Frydrychowicz, the Catholic priest located at Edson who also has charge of St. Hedwig's congregation here, has been instrumental in making this arrest and also causing the insertion of slanderous lies in "Wiarus" a Polish Paper published at Winona, Minn, which states that Messrs. Piotrowicz and Słupecki have been fleecing all newcomers here of their hard earned dollars and sending them adrift penniless. Further it states there are at this time 250 Polish families in a destitute and starving condition in this vicinity, many of them begging for bread to sustain life. This is one of the most stupendous stories heard of, as there is not a word of truth in the bold assertion. The priest further states that the land sold these people is of poor quality and unfit for cultivation, also claiming gross misrepresentation on the part of Messrs. Piotrowicz and Słupecki in selling this land to the settlers, when the facts are that the land is nearly all up to the average in this county, and is good, tillable soil, is nearly all sold on contracts, all of which read alike, and the above named settler who had the warrant issued for Mr. Piotrowicz, had his contract 3 weeks before he affixed his signature and returned it. Messrs. Piotrowicz and Słupecki deny any wrong doing on their part and left here on Sunday evening for Winona to fully investigate the affair and secure satisfaction. "

In the November 5th, 1891 edition of the Thorp Courier, a dispatch from Neillsville states that Piotrowicz and Słupecki were exonerated and charges by Mr. Nadolni were dropped. The trial of Słupecki & Co. vs. the Polish Paper, "Wiarus" of Winona at which time a Mr. Derclowski was in charge, ended in a deadlock as the jury could not come to any conclusion.

The Land agents continued to settle many Poles in the area, but in the year 1895, June 5, they dissolved their partnership. Piotrowicz operated independently as did Mr. Słupecki with little trouble between them and Father Frydrychowicz, as the pastor of St. Hedwigs was transferred to North Creek that same year.

To close the issue and unbiasedly allow the reader to pass judgment on the affair, that left so much dissension and bitterness between the people and the priest which lasted for many, many years to come, the following is quoted in the October 8, 1896 issue of the Thorp Courier, referring to the Milwaukee Sentinel and Milwaukee Journal articles.

"Ślupecki victims to sue: The victims of Edward I. Ślupecki, major of the 4th regiment, Wisconsin National Guard, who disappeared shortly after the annual encampment at Camp Douglas, have engaged an attorney... Ślupecki, it is claimed, advertised himself as a money loaner, and advanced various sums on the homes of his clients, and secured mortgages thereon. He informed them that they could repay the sums loaned them in installments and have the amounts of their payments deducted from the principal, thus stopping the interest. Mr. Ślupecki's clients were not familiar with business principles, and many of them could neither read nor write. It is the theory of attorneys having the matter in charge that he appropriated the principal part of the installments paid, merely paying the interest due on the money which he had himself borrowed off other loan agents... The complainants in the actions to be brought are Michael Schultz, who borrowed \$850.00 through Ślupecki on his homestead and has since paid \$650.00 for which he received no credit; Frank Jagodziński, who borrowed \$1,000 and has reduced it \$400 without receiving credit; John Dolny, who borrowed \$750 and has paid \$175 without credit; and Pauline Prytyeski, who borrowed \$550 and has paid \$350 without credit... There are a number other cases which have not yet found their way into the hands of lawyers. The principal part of the money loaned by Ślupecki was obtained by him from Milbreth and Co... Milwaukee Sentinel. "

Thorp Courier Edition, Vol. XIII, Oct. 29, 1896, states the following:

"Edward I Ślupecki, the South Side real estate dealer whose sudden disappearance about 2 months ago caused much comment, has safely arrived in Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa... His affairs are to be straightened up, it is claimed as soon as possible, and it is believed that there will be left a margin for the wife after all the property has been sold and debts paid. The debts include about \$2,000 which he received on mortgages... Milwaukee Journal. "

As far as this writer knows, Mr. Piotrowicz was not involved, for he continued to settle Poles in the area. It was a period of turbulence and envy that created much of the difficulty between the priest and people. One must understand the character of the Poles to better understand the behavior of the people of Posen. During those early days of dissension the land agents who had sympathetic friends in Posen, encouraged a delegation with petitions and complaints to go to the Most Rev. Bishop Schwebach of the Diocese of La Crosse. As often is the case, the Bishop investigated the complaints and defended his priest. When Father Frydrychowicz received his letter from the Bishop of the charges with the signatures of the petitioners, he was very disturbed in heart and soul. He couldn't believe that his defense of the people who could read and write but little, would bring so much unhappiness to him. He felt very hurt and often would repeat his heartbreaks in his sermons. This so antagonized many of the people who were against Father, that they walked out of the church. One can easily understand the situation from the standpoint of the priest, who tries in behalf of people, only to find as Christ did, that his own would not receive him.

The first Baptism recorded in the Baptismal Book by Father Frydrychowicz took place on the 27th of September 1891. Two infants were baptized, namely Peter Szczok, son of John Szczok and Marian Polanaszek, and John Hoffman, son of John Hoffman and Eva Wycznska. Peter was born the 17th of June, 1891 and his sponsors were Felix Piotrowicz and Frances Balcer John was born July 12, 1891 and his sponsors were Stanislaus Nadolny and Rosalie Jaskowiak. Father Constantine Frydrychowicz baptized both infants. The second baptism took place on the October visit of the priest, namely,

Oct. 25, 1891. He baptized Edward Szubert, the son of Stephen Szubert and Antonina Glamkowski, the sponsors being Louis Glamkowski and Agnes Kotecki.

The first marriage recorded in the books of St. Hedwigs was between George Kozlowski, son of Thomas Kozlowski and Agnes Guzik, daughter of Jacob and Regina Guzik; the witnesses being Francis Banas and Anna Kalinowski. The wedding took place on Nov. 25th, 1891.

The first recorded funeral took place under the pastorship of Father Jachminiak.

For the first wooden church of St. Hedwig's furnishings were donated as follows: Messrs. Piotrowicz and Slupecki gave the new parish one white chasuble, one Mass Chalice, and a holy water sprinkler. Father Frydrychowicz purchased white, purple, green, and black chasubles. Mr. Smogur donated \$20.00 for the black chasuble, the Rosary Society paid for the purple; John Kaczynski for the white, and the parish bought the green.

When in the summer of 1893, Father Frydrychowicz declined with the permission of the Most Rev. Bishop to attend St. Hedwigs, he was transferred in September of that year to a Polish Parish in North Creek. Father Francis Jachminiak replaced him in St. Bartholomew's Church, Mill Creek and His Excellency appointed Father Jachminiak as administrator of St. Hedwig's Church in Posen. Father Francis would hold services in his Mission twice a month, coming either by train or by horse and buggy.

It would seem that Father Jachminiak could handle the situation well in Posen temporarily as the author of the History of St. Hedwigs relates: "Now a moment of peace and joy prevailed in the parish. Unity and order were restored." (translated from Polish by Rev. E.A. Masalewicz.

With unity reigning in the parish, the people could now advance forward in their growth of faith, traditions, and church institutions. Yet fortune would not have it so. As we will see trivial things can sometimes grow into large antagonisms, that change the course of events. Unfortunately Father Jachminiak was a victim of the times in Posen.

Father's first action was to call a meeting of the Parish and lay plans for the operation of the institution. His intentions were sincere. He was a young and zealous priest, just ordained. A parish Secretary and Treasurer were legally elected. It was agreed that to support the young parish each family would pay \$6. 00 a year for the operation and maintenance of the church.

Polish families continued to settle in the area, together with those of Lithuanian extraction. Mr. Roshol from Eau Claire advertised land in the Township of Withee, and many more Poles heeded his call and settled in the northwest area.

As the influx of emigrants grew, and as economically the times were bad due to the condition of the farm lands, any job was worth the effort. By way of passing, Mr. John Slota, a young Polish gentleman was added to the force of clerks at the Garrison's Mercantile Company's Store in Thorp. Due to language difficulties, the Poles decided to boycott the stores in Thorp. In order to avoid friction with the rural emigrants, Mr. Slota was named to this position in September of 1892. In December of 1892, Mr. Peter Przybylski was appointed duty clerk in Wiley's Store in the village.

About the year 1895, Father Jachminiak was angered by a group of dissenters (krzykacze, as described by the writer of the original parish history), of whom there were few in number. It doesn't take many to create trouble. The underlying antagonisms created in the early days of the parish came to life again. This time, the cause for dissent was "who is going to rule the parish." A certain

vagabond arrived in the area, posing as an organist and seeking a position. Since the parish could not afford an organist and services were only held twice a month, Father and the majority of the parish decided against hiring an organist. The minority group would not accept the decision and reasons given by the Pastor, called a special meeting on the steps of the church. They chose their own President and called him the "chairman" and unanimously agreed to hire the "so called" organist. The legitimate trustees elected by the Parish at the first annual meeting were not present. The elected trustees were Benedict Zawacki, treasurer, and Mr. Valentine Przybylski, the secretary. The illegitimate chairman ordered Mr. Zawacki and Mr. Przybylski to be removed from their offices and replaced with their own appointees. As the author of the original history of St. Hedwig's states: "Here the weakness of human nature develops into nonsense" (translated from Polish by E.A.M.). Now came the demand for the Parish Books. The request was refused by the legitimate trustees who using their common sense, sent the books to Father Jachminiak in Mill Creek and described the situation to him.

That same night at a very late hour, Father Jachminiak arrived at Posen to moderate the situation. In the morning when the parishioners gathered for the Sacrifice of the Mass at the usual hour, the organist took his place at the organ, without the knowledge of the priest. As Father Jachminiak entered the sanctuary from the sacristy, the organist began to play the Pastor feeling the revolt against authority and the wishes of the majority of the people, did not begin Holy Mass, but returned to the Sacristy. He removed his vestments, entered the sanctuary again and addressed the people. Pleading with them for unity, with no response, he finally announced to the congregation: "My children, there will be no Mass today; it hurts me deeply that among you exists this darkness" and left the church, returning immediately to Mill Creek.

One would think that the plea would bring a semblance of thought and unity. This was not the case. It grew into something much greater, bringing out into the open the bitterness and antagonism that existed in the parish.

Soon the dissenters, so called rulers, demanded the Parish Books from Father Jachminiak, who refused under any conditions to give up the property of the parish. It is unfortunate what stubbornness can do. The process of public law was

called into the affair by the illegal trustees. Justice Burke of Thorp presided at the hearing. The whole case centered around Church Canon Law, authority of the Bishop, and the pastor. The court declared that since it was not the official annual meeting called by the President of the Parish, namely Father Francis Jachminiak, and since the pastor, himself was not present, the illegal trustees had no right to demand the parish books as they had no authority. The case was closed. As the writer of the original history of St. Hedwigs concluded: "Justice triumphed over nonsense. "

The group of dissenters were so angered at the loss of their case, that they left St. Hedwig's Parish and built their own Independent Church, two miles east of the mother church, what is now the property of Mr. Hoffman, the town chairman.

## THE POLISH INDEPENDENT CHURCH

What began with a little misunderstanding turned into a schism which still exists to the present day in the area. Many reasons may have their validity for the rise and growth of the schism. In the opinion of the writer, the primary cause could have been the turbulent period of nationalism, ignorance, the new life in this country, the antagonism towards the clergy due to the feudal system in Poland as well as the language difficulties. The dissenters first met at the Valentine Malecki log cabin as recalled by the daughter Elsie. Mrs. Malecki was very hurt with the whole idea, but the plight of women in those days was submission completely to the will of the husband. The daughter relates the frequent prayers of the mother to return to St. Hedwig's Church, prayers that were answered in later years, as the mother and children returned to the true church.

The small group of about 25 families finally built a small wooden church. They petitioned the Most Rev. Schwebach to make this a Catholic Parish and send them a priest. Even in those days it was not logical for the Bishop to accede to their wishes with St. Hedwig's Church, a mission at the time, only two miles away. Angered at the unwillingness of the Bishop to work in their favor, they finally built a small wooden church, two miles east of the present St. Hedwig's country church, on the land that now belongs to the Hoffman family. For two years they tried desperately to locate a priest but failed. In the meantime, a Mr. Glish and Mr. Feliks Mikolainis carried on the "worship service." Finally on May 30, 1897 they became known as an "Independent Church." The first President of the group was Philip Jasinski, secretary, John Kurtinaitis; treasurer, Feliks Mikolainis. The little parish was first named "All Saints Roman Catholic Church" but later became "All Saints Independent Church." Land for the church was donated by Anton Malinowski to the amount of two acres. The following were the first parishioners of the Polish Independent Church: John Glish, Philip Jasinski, Anton Raczykowski, Joseph Bogumil, Anton Malinowski, Valentine Malecki, Mike Marcinkowski, John Grajkowski, Joseph Prymas, John Gurbacki, Leon Praw" ineski, Paul Polanaszek, Frank Nowobielski, Frank Zwolinski, Clement Holaburda, Joseph Gaska, L. Glamkowski, Felix Mikolainis, Joseph Ryterski, Marcely Karpinski, John Zuzelski, Anton Pendriegalski, Frank Pastemacki, Peter Glysz, Julian Fijalkowski, Jacob Biskupski, Julian Luzinski, (information received from Mr. Hucker from the original books of the Independent church). Fortunately with the grace of God and the many prayers of families, many of these returned to the original and mother church, St. Hedwigs by 1909.

The first Bishop of this church was Anton Kozlowski, of Chicago, the first priest to visit the church was Vincent Zaleski of the Polish National Church. The Thorp Courier early editions record weddings and funerals that took place from this church. The Independents also had their own cemetery which still exists west of the Ted Papierniak farm. One may still read the tombstones that stand there. Mr. Hucker who

has a farm nearby, cares for this cemetery. Mr. Valentine Matecki is buried on this cemetery. The Independent church ran dances and other events to raise money for its support. During the week of Nov. 25, 1897 the Thorp Courier reports: "about \$35 being realized by the large attendance" at a dance.

At this time also it is worth mentioning as quoted in the April 26, 1900 edition of the Thorp Courier, "a celebration in honor of an ancient personage named Pusias, who preached to the Lithuanians over 2000 years ago was held at the home of Felix Mikolanis in the Town of Withee on Sunday last. Speeches, declamations, dancing, singing and a social dinner was the order and enjoyed by

all present. " The paper continued: "The attendance was about 30 persons. " One can gather from this news item that the Lithuanian community was strong and enjoyed their traditional and native customs in the new land.

As many people who temporarily left St. Hedwigs, began to return to their mother church, the funds and support of the Independent Church decreased and it was difficult to maintain it. By 1925 the church and rectory were moved to the Leneski farm at Sterling Corners, where it was used for a granary. In 1940 the buildings burned to the ground. About this time St. Mary's Polish National Church in Lublin began its operation as the handful of members from this area became members of the Lublin church. Small religious articles were taken by Rev. Klos to Washington, Pennsylvania, while the organ, pews and books were moved to St. Mary's Polish National Church in Lublin, Wisconsin.

One elderly person, who today is deceased, told the author that many of the families that joined the Independent Church returned quickly to St. Hedwig's Church in 1897 because they were shocked and horrified at a sermon preached by a visiting priest from Chicago at the National Church. The preacher condemned the Catholic Church by screaming: "Precz z Rzymem - Away with the Catholic Church of Rome. " Many of the people could not have their heart and soul in a church that was condemning the Catholic Church they loved so much. Only one thing remained for them, namely to reconcile with the true church.

Meantime as the split developed in 1895, Father Jachminiak continued to attend the needs of St. Hedwig's Parish and offering the sacrifice of the Mass and other services twice monthly.

During his administration the first recorded burial in the books took place at the parish church and cemetery. On March 1, 1894 Holy Mass was offered for the repose of Stephen Rutkowski and burial took place at St. Hedwig's Cemetery. On July 25th of the same year, Anna Moronczyk died at the age of 38 and was buried July 28th in the new cemetery. On December 1st, 38 year old Michael Deniskiewicz, killed by a falling tree was buried by Father Jachminiak.

In March of 1896, Father Jachminiak, who for almost three years served St. Hedwig's Parish, was relieved of his duties sad and disappointed. He was succeeded by Father Constantine Frydrychowicz as pastor of St. Hedwigs. The parish lost its status as a mission and now officially became a Parish with a resident Pastor.

Father Frydrychowicz remained at St. Hedwigs for only one year. The resentment towards him still remained in the minds and hearts of many. As the first resident pastor. Father lived in the Barret Home, where at present Mr. John Wnek resides. Later he lived in a home across from the wooden church where at present stands the Joseph Panek barn. Miss Lena Kramer kept house for the pastor.

This same year, June 17, 1897, the Sacrament of Confirmation was administered for the first time by the Most Rev. Bishop James Schwebach of the Diocese of La Crosse. That day was a general holiday for the Polish-Americans who entertained their Bishop in a royal fashion. Upon his arrival, the Bishop was met at the depot by Rev. Constantine Frydrychowicz accompanied by about 50 members of his congregation mounted and well bedecked with flags and banners appropriate to the occasion and escorted the Bishop to the residence of Father Frydrychowicz east of the village. As one old timer put it: "the celebration was very beautiful especially to see the joint efforts of the whole parish. Father Constantine in spite of his weaknesses, was a hospitable host, friendly and pleasant. But there were those in minority who only looked for trouble and brought more dissen-

sion into the parish. "

On September 2nd, 1897 Father Frydrychowicz relinquished his pastorship at St. Hedwig's and was transferred to a western area of Wisconsin in the Diocese of La Crosse.

In the opinion of this historian, it would seem that the appointment of Father Frydrychowicz in 1896 as pastor of St. Hedwig's brought only more grief to the priest. The hidden resentment by some again came into the open. It would seem that a small group of parishioners would not give him any peace.

On Dec. 2, 1897 after Father Frydrychowicz had already been transferred, Vol. XV, No. 2, Dec. 2, 1897 edition of the Thorp Courier records this story:

"Father Frydrychowicz and Miss Lena Kramer were arrested near New Richmond last week by Sheriff J. W. Page and Constable Jas. Connors. They were charged with setting out poison for animals while residents of the town of Withee last summer. W.H. Frawley of Eau Claire is their attorney and district attorney Geo. B. Parhill appears for the State. The case was set for trial yesterday. "

The Dec. 9th edition continues:

"Miss Lena Kramer, arrested two weeks ago on the charge of complicity in the cattle poisoning affair, was discharged from custody without the formality of a hearing, it being apparent that she had no knowledge of who the parties were that committed the crime."

The paper continued the story of the affair as follows:

"Rev. Constantine, arrested on charge of setting out poison last August and causing the death of two cows belonging to a neighbor named (withheld by author) was tried before Justice Joseph Burke and a jury last week, the trial beginning on Tuesday morning and ending late on Friday night. The verdict of the jury was not guilty... About 25 witnesses appeared and were examined, Mr. Joseph Bogumil acting as interpreter for a number who could not talk the English language. The jury consisted of James Boylan, Jas. Heagle, Henry Leibols, John McGrogan, Herman Banderob and E.L. Snyder. The verdict was rendered in less than an hour after the attorneys finished their cases."

It must have been very embarrassing to the priest who rendered the sacraments to the dying, forgave their sins, baptized their children, and offered the prayers of the parish, to be accused in such an unchristlike manner. Yet those were the times and mentality of the people in dissension and antagonism towards the priesthood.

Years later as one of the parishioners recalled: "It was very unjust and humiliating. Years later I remember it was discovered that the poison water holes were caused by unexploded dynamite which did have some effect on the water and land. Men in making the land arable for farming used dynamite to explode and uproot the stumps of trees that were cut down for lumber. What ignorance of facts could do to innocent people!

With the arrival of Father James Korczyk, the successor of Father Frydrychowicz as the second pastor appointed to St. Hedwig's Parish by the Most Rev. James Schwebach, peace finally descended upon the parish. Whether the mistakes of the past and the humiliation of the former pastor, the personality of the new priest, or more understanding and communication between priest and

people brought more Christian Charity, only God will someday pass judgment.

New families continued to arrive into the Township of Wi thee and the parish grew in members. Farm land continued to improve. As the family farms of 40 acres grew, the parish received more support economically, improvement of the parish materially was made possible and gradual progress opened a new era. As the early parish historian states in his chronicles: "Father Korczyk did much good for the parish. "

Under his leadership and the support of loyal people of the parish, about June 16, 1898 a new, neat and large residence was erected, directly south of the church, two miles east of the Village of Thorp. The cost of the whole project was \$500.00. Much of the labor was donated by a handful of parishioners. In December of 1897 a bell had been purchased and was placed in the belfry in time to ring out the call to the people of St. Hedwigs to midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. The bell weighed seven hundred pounds. The cost was \$100. 00 with the parishioners donating \$1. 00 each for the bell. It must have made the early pioneers proud of their accomplishment.

When there is love and unity between people and priest, how easily can a parish grow and improve in the work of God. How easily the common good of all can be served. A new beautiful fence was built around the cemetery. Three new altars were installed in the church, and three beautiful large statues were also purchased.

Father Korczyk even though he brought unity and love into the parish turned in his resignation as pastor on Feb. 9, 1900. Being an educator and a highly capable individual in that field, his love remained in the field of education. In the opinion of the author, Father Korczyk must have been a tremendous person as man and priest. The following is quoted from the Feb. 9, 1900 edition of the Thorp Courier: "The Courier is sorry to announce the resignation of the Rev. James Korczyk, who had charge of the Congregations of St. Hedwig's Polish Catholic and St. Bernard's Church in this village for the past two years. Rev. Korczyk has labored here with excellent success, made a host of friends, and his departure to assume a charge elsewhere is universally regretted. "

When Father Korczyk was appointed Pastor of St. Hedwig's Church in 1897 he was also placed in charge of St. Bernard's Church in the Village of Thorp which at the time was still a mission.

The Most Rev. James Schwebach, Bishop of La Crosse appointed Rev. Joseph Biela as the third pastor of St. Hedwigs to succeed Father Korczyk. Father Korczyk was temporarily assigned to Menomonie, Wis. and later as Pastor in Phillips, Wisconsin. While pastor in the Township of Withee, he also cared for the parish in Weyerhauser, Wisconsin from 1897 to 1899. The church was built by Father Constantine Frydrychowicz in 1897.

Father Biela on his arrival in February was met by many members of the Congregation, wishing him welcome to Posen. Succeeding Father Korczyk was not easy, but Father Biela followed closely in his footsteps. He continued the good work both spiritually and materially as a devoted and loyal Pastor of St. Hedwigs. As one old parishioner expressed himself, "Father Biela was well loved. " He continued, "he was a reasonable and considerate priest, thrifty, and a great preacher. If necessary, he criticized us with sincerity for the good of the parish, but always with charity and equality. He never demanded any favors. " The parish continued to grow both in numbers and spirituality. Dissenters of 1895 continued to return to their mother church.

After fifteen months of service, Father Joseph Biela in June of 1901 voluntarily resigned his pastor-

ship of St. Hedwigs and St. Bernards. He was assigned by the Most Rev. Bishop James Schwebach to the Polish Parish in Poniatoski, Wisconsin. Father Ignatius Orlik of Buffalo, New York was named Pastor of St. Hedwigs's Parish and Father E. Beyer of Milwaukee, Wisconsin became Pastor of St. Bernard's Congregation in the Village of Thorp.

Father Orlik on assuming control of the Parish immediately called a meeting of the Parish to discuss the affairs and the future, since the Polish population was growing fast and the Parish Church was becoming too small. The first recorded Parish meeting took place on June 30, 1901. The Pastor's salary at the time was \$700.00. Nothing important developed in June but on August 25, 1901 a special meeting was called for the purpose of discussing the building of a new church. The parish was willing to spend about \$10, 000.00 for the new church. It was decided that each family and each single person would be assessed \$25.00 for this purpose. The members of the parish were in agreement. Father Orlick continued the improvement of the parish. About the Fall of the year, the rectory was repaired and a new and deeper well was installed. The discussion on the new church continued for a while.

The question arose whether the new church should be built on the present site of the wooden church or should be moved to the village. The problem was hotly debated.

On November 22nd, 1902 the Sacrament of Confirmation was administered by the Most Rev. James Schwebach, Bishop of La Crosse for the second time in the history of the parish. The Bishop came quietly without the fanfare and celebration of his first visit under Father Frydrychowicz. The class this time was rather large.

During Father Orlik's time, the St. Joseph's Association met annually. At a meeting held in October 1903, five members joined, raising the membership to 55.

On September 7, 1903, the School District near the church opened with Miss Lulu Roth as the teacher. Many of the children of Posen attended the public school in the church vicinity.

On January 1, 1904, at the annual meeting of the parish, it was decided that the new church would be built on the present site of the old wooden church. From the moment a new church was discussed, the question arose as to where the new church should be located. A dispute developed, with some desiring the church north of the village of Thorp, while those in the vicinity of Posen demanded that it be built on the old site. It was also decided that the new church should be built of brick, 130 x 60 feet. The parish had over 400 families residing in its vicinity and the word was out that many more Polish families would be moving into the area.

A building committee of 15 members was appointed by the Congregation as follows: Andrew Zaborowski, Louis Galmakowski, Val Przybylski, S. Wietrzynski, V. Budzinski, Anton Stroinski, Joseph Kotecki, Anton Balcer, Joseph Lesniewski, Vincent Izydorek, Leon Trawinski, Joseph Budzinski, Ignatius Woitkiewicz, Frank Neiman, John Giwojna and automatically the two trustees at the time, John Wnek and Florian Anyzewski.

It seemed that cooperation was lacking between the committee and Father Orlik, because Father was accused of taking over the operation without informing the committee on the progress made. This can easily develop because at times all members could not be contacted under the conditions that existed, and decisions had to be made quickly and firmly. Furthermore, knowledge through education rested more in the hands of the priest than in many men who were constantly busy

tilling the soil. It is the opinion of the author, that the disagreement was major even though very little is mentioned in the parish minutes. The report in the April 28th, 1904 edition of the Thorp Courier disputes the version given in the parish minutes, namely that Father Orlik did not cooperate with the committee. We quote: "The building committee of the new church of St. Hedwig's Congregation met on Sunday last. The plans and specifications prepared by an architect at Chicago were examined, and it was decided that same would be advertised for bids to contractors to erect said church and furnish all necessary material. The structure is to be 66 x 135 feet and the seating capacity will be about 1500 persons.

The building of St. Hedwig's new church was progressing slowly. A sidetrack for the railroad was laid in Sept. of 1904 for delivering the material necessary for the building. On Tuesday, Nov. 22, 1904 after the celebration of a High Mass, the laying of the cornerstone took place. Present at the ceremony were Father Gara, of Independence, Father Pescinski of St. Peters, Stevens Point, Fr. Korczyk of Wisconsin Rapids, and Father Wojak of Cassel. Father Orlik was a hospitable host and entertained the clergy present and the special and honored guests, in the rectory.

It must have been very ironic to Father Orlik to hear harsh comments made about him as he was canvassing the parish with horse and buggy to raise funds and collect the promises parishioners made to support the building of the church with the \$25. 00 per individual. It involved the collection taken at the Mass during the laying of the cornerstone. When Father Orlik turned in only \$5. 00, word spread around the parish that the Pastor must have kept the money for himself. When questioned, Fr. Orlik explained "the expenses for the affair in hosting visiting clergy, guests, and payment to the preacher took most of the money. " The explanation was fair. It is not the obligation of the priest to put on affairs for the parish to make them more dignified and then stand the expense from his own pocket. Good and generous people always were of the opinion, that the parish should stand the expense within reason. One can see the mentality of many of the people of St. Hedwigs at the time as the historian wrote: "the prestige of Father Orlik dropped tremendously, as he was accused of being a poor manager. "

On March 12, 1905 it was decided to incorporate the Parish under the statutes of the State of Wisconsin. Therefore on March 30th, St. Hedwig's Congregation of the Town of Withee filed articles of incorporation with the Secretary of State. There was no capital and no stock. Incorporators were Phillip Kramer, L.I. Orlik, Paul Zwoliński and Martin Burzyński. This was accomplished in September of 1905 through the influence of Father Orlik, the Pastor, and Father Gara of Independence to whom the parishioners of St. Hedwig's referred to as "the Golden Voice" because of his ability to preach.

About this time the little money that remained in the parish treasury was almost exhausted. The economic squeeze was on. Active building operations on the church throughout the summer were suspended. The architect of the church was Louis Novy of Chicago, who himself was in charge of the operations on the spot.

While work was suspended on the church due to lack of funds, a change in the administration of St. Hedwigs took place. In September of 1905, Father Orlik was transferred as pastor of Posen by Bishop James Schwebach and assigned to North Creek near Arcadia, Wisconsin. In his place, Father Francis Xavier Pudlo of Mill Creek became pastor in Posen.

Father Pudlo on his arrival already had knowledge of the financial situation of the parish. He was determined to complete the church as soon as possible. He inaugurated a special collection for the

church, each Sunday during Holy Mass. He was an energetic man full of zeal for the work of Christ. He began a census of the parish, visited the homes of his parishioners and pleaded with them to give private loans to the parish. On November 29, 1905 \$7, 800. 00 was borrowed by him from the following parishioners: "Five years after date for value received, St. Hedwig's Congregation of Posen, Thorp P. O., incorporated under the law of the State of Wisconsin, promises to pay: 1. Hoffman, John; 2. Somgur, John; 3. Anyzewski, Florian; 4. Nowobielski, John and Andrew (brothers); 5. Budzyński, Vincent; 6. Glamkowski, Louis; 7. Kotecki, Joseph; 8. Obrycki, Thomas; 9. Hoffman, Frank; 10. Słupski, Stanislaus; 11. Szymczak, Michael; 12. Morgan, Joseph (alias Kostrzewa); 13. Izydorek, Vincent; 14. Szczok, John; 15. Giwojna, John; 16. Mazurek, Stanislaus; and 17. Niedzwiecki, James; the sum of seven thousand eight hundred dollars at the rate of 7% per annum interest rate until paid. This note is given as security to said creditors who have personally given mortgages with notes in order to provide money for building the new church of the above said congregation; for which payments the whole congregation of St. Hedwig's Church declares itself responsible by the Board of Directors for St. Hedwig's Catholic Congregation: By James Schwebach, President; A. Kramer, V.G.; Rev. Fr. X. Pudlo, Pastor; Martin Burzynski, Treasurer and Mikolaj Jasinek, secretary." (Quoted from Parish Minutes dated 29 Nov. 1905).

As the money was now provided, the building of the church continued until completion.

Father Pudlo who was solicitous about the spiritual welfare of the Poles in 1905 also took care of the people of Junction, where the present St. Mary Czestochowa church stands. The following are excerpts from the history of St. Mary Czestochowa, Junction written by Rev. Edward A. Masalewicz while Pastor there in 1958 for the Golden Jubilee. It reads as follows: "The settlers of the area sought out a Polish speaking priest because of their language, one who could be better understood and could more fully participate in the work of the Church. St. Hedwig's Church at Posen, Wisconsin seemed like a solution to the problem, but it was a little too far to travel, especially in inclement weather. Nevertheless, many of these people made the journey to Posen and joined the Polish parish. Father Pudlo, pastor of St. Hedwig's, received them kindly and always had a sympathetic ear to their troubles and ministered to their spiritual needs. By 1906 the community grew rapidly... this gave rise to the thought of establishing a new parish and erecting a church, thereby eliminating the difficulty of travel and giving the Polish settlement an opportunity to increase their faith by more active participation in the Divine Sacrifice as well as the reception of the Sacraments...." As plans were developing, "The committee immediately contacted Father Francis Pudlo of Posen in order to consult him on methods to be employed for bringing the cherished dream to completion. Father Pudlo was overjoyed with the choice and lent a sympathetic ear to the project. He attended the next meeting of the group and delivered an 'elegant sermon.' He inspected the area, commended the people on their choice and zeal, and promised to apply for permission to the Most Rev. Bishop James Schwebach to organize a parish and erect a new church.... In the Fall of 1907 permission was granted by the Bishop to build the church... As difficulties arose, Father Pudlo very zealously and untiringly as pastor, encouraged the people to complete the house of God.... Finally after hard work, the church was completed on Nov. 13, 1907.... The first Mass was offered on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 1907 by the priest who had so much to do in guiding the people of Junction, Father Pudlo, the Pastor of St. Hedwig's in Posen... In February 1908, the parish was officially incorporated by the Bishop. Father Pudlo was officially appointed as pastor of the new church which was attached as a mission to St. Hedwig's Congregation, Posen

(Thorp), Wisconsin. " Father Pudlo was the Pastor of St. Mary Czestochowa for a few years until it was impossible for him to handle both parishes. In 1910 Junction became a Mission to St. Mary's Church, Stanley, Wisconsin.

Meanwhile Father Pudlo did not forget the spiritual education of the youngsters. He announced on the third Sunday of September, 1905 that Sunday School for children will be held on the last Sunday of the month after Vesper devotions. He, himself, would act as the instructor. About this time John Wnek donated a new chalice to the parish costing the amount of \$125.00. It was imported from Europe.

During the winter months, there was no work on the church. Father Pudlo received permission from the Bishop to make trips to Chicago and Milwaukee preaching sermons in the Polish Churches begging for money, so that the church in Posen could be completed. A loan of \$10, 000. 00 was secured from the Chippewa Falls Bank. The trustees now had to post bonds, the treasurer, \$1, 500. 00 and the secretary \$500. 00.

At a special parish meeting, February 2, 1906 with Mr. Alex Wachnik, the contractor, the bills were read, with Mr. Wachnik agreeing that he would complete the church for the sum of \$19,990.00 and weather permitting, he would finish the church by April 1, 1906. This did not materialize and so on July 29th, 1906 it was decided to grant Mr. Wachnik \$400. 00 more to complete the church. In August of the same year, it was agreed to spend \$1, 890. 00 for church furnishings with the contract going to a Mr. Felix Kamrowski. Parish picnics and auctions were inaugurated in order to raise the money. The first such affair was held on Nov. 18 and 19, clearing almost \$543.00. Overjoyed with the success of the auction, the parish decided to hold another one in July 1906.

On July 12, 1906, Father Pudlo administered first Holy Communion to 58 boys and 56 girls. This was Father's first class at St. Hedwig's and he was proud of it. With so many children in the communion class one may readily understand how fast the parish had been growing and the necessity for a new and larger church. Father Orlik was looking far into the future when he recommended the building program.

Also on July 4th, the annual picnic was held and it was a huge success. Hundreds of people visited the grounds and inspected the new church "being built, the edifice being 136 feet long and 64 feet wide and to the top of the steeple, 120 feet high, built of solid brick with a full basement under the whole structure. The outside work on the building is about completed and finishing work on the interior is progressing satisfactorily. (Thorp Courier, July 12, 1906 edition).

Towards the end of July Father John Rayski was visiting with Father Pudlo, in order to collect his big prize, namely forty acres of land donated for the picnic by Mr. & Mrs. Ignatz Wojtkiewicz, members of St. Hedwig's Parish. These kind people made the gift in order to defray some cost of the building of the church. (Clark County, Register of Deeds, Dec. 18, 1905). Father Masalewicz can verify some of the sacrifices made by the good families, as one daughter wrote to him during the Diamond Jubilee celebration as she made her gift to St. Hedwig's on May 28th, 1967, stating: "St. Hedwig's Church stands as a monument to my parents, for in those days they only had three cows, sold one of them to help build their church, tears come to my eyes when I stop and think of the hardships they underwent as they lived in a log cabin and has so much love to give. " She continued, "I am having my friends deliver in person my personal contribution of seventy-five dollars in memory of my late parents, John and Antonia Jarocki. " (Josephine Church Naketin).

Interior painting of the church was done by Mr. S. Kujawski as the church was being readied for service. The altars, pulpit, and confessionals were completed. The moment for rejoicing was now at hand. Every parishioner who almost two years ago began working on the basement, could now see the fruits of his hard work. Every tear, sweat, and sacrifice was incorporated in the bricks and steeple that rose high to heaven as a symbol of faith and love for God in the Posen area. Even those who were always against progress and opposed those who strove by unjust criticism had to shake their heads and join those rejoicing. Father Pudlo was happy about the accomplishment, even though it meant so much grief and hardship to him.

The big day arrived, the dedication and the blessing of the new church, October 17, 1906. Priests and guest came from near and far. The Wisconsin Central Railroad offered 1 and 1/3 discount fares within the radius of fifty miles from Posen. The Most Rev. James Schwebach, Bishop of La Crosse Diocese dedicated and blessed the church and administered the Sacrament of Confirmation in the presence of a capacity church. That day God blessed St. Hedwig's with beautiful weather. The Rev. John Tokarz, Pastor of the Church in Flensburg, Minnesota delivered the sermon in Polish, while the Rev. John F. Kosinski of Chicago, Illinois delivered the English sermon. Some of the clergy who assisted the Most Rev. Bishop and Father Pudlo were: Rev. J.M. Korczyk, Wisconsin Rapids; Rev. Michael Klosowski, Plover, Wis.; Rev. Teofil Wojak, Beaver Wisconsin; Rev. Joseph Kampa of Mil-waukee; Rev. A. M. Arentz of St. Bernards, Thorp; Rev. Wil-liam Redding, Colby, Wis.; Rev. G. Pesh of Tomahawk, Wis., Rev. A.W. Gara, Independence; Rev. J.W. Gara, Pine Creek, Wis., and Rev. John Tokarz of Flensburg, Minnesota.

The following is a description of the new Church taken from the Thorp Courier, Vol. XXIII, No. 40, August 16, 1906 edition:

"St. Hedwig's Polish Catholic Church located 2 miles east of Thorp, which has been under construction for nearly 2 years past, is approaching completion. The contractor, A.F. Wochnich, has completed his work on the installation of furniture and furnaces. It is expected to have the building ready for dedication early in Sept. The structure is built of solid brick, over a 12-foot full basement, 66 x 135 ft. in size, the auditorium from floor to ceiling in the center being 45 feet in height and will seat 1200 persons. Ten massive fluted columns in the interior support the roof, arched in ca-thedral style, the architectural effects being enhanced by beautiful plaster cast figures and ornamental work. A gallery or balcony over the vestibule extends across the entire width of the interior being 65 x 36 feet in size with an arched center for the location of an organ and the choir. The platform for the altar is also very large, with handsomely finished and spacious vestry rooms on each side. The wall and ceilings are finished in natural color, and the floors of hard maple. Fourteen large stained glass windows, portraying artistic life-size figures embellish the beauty of the interior and outside appearance. The windows are valued at nearly \$2, 000. 00, several of which were paid for by individual members of the Parish. Three entrances at the front of the building lead into the vestibules, the outside and interior of the center entrance being the handsomest and largest. The tower is 135 feet in height, of massive proportion, surmounted by a cross finished in gold. The basement contains two handsomely finished committee and school rooms of ample sizes, also a chapel 57 x 66 feet in size, maple floors and hard finished plastered walls and ceilings. Four Boves hot blast furnaces are being installed to heat the building. The contract price of the structure was \$18, 000. 00 but necessary changes made since beginning work, and the constant advance in price of building material, increases the cost of the building to the neighborhood of \$23, 000. 00. This

does not include the windows, pews, altar, furnaces and smaller furniture, which when installed, will increase the cost about \$7, 000. 00 more, making in all, when everything is complete an investment of about \$30, 000. 00. To the earnest, consistent and untiring efforts of Father F. Pudlo, pastor, and all members of his parish which now numbers about 370 families, belongs the credit of erecting the beautiful edifice, which will stand as a monument to their utmost exertions and prove a lasting remembrance to their noble and generous liberality for generations to come. "

With the new church used for services now and the excitement over, Father Pudlo continued to make trips to Milwaukee churches and Chicago in order to pay off the debt on the new church. Many affairs sponsored by the parish continued to take place in order to keep the money flowing for the worthy project. Whether the situation was one of hardship on the part of the people economically, or whether through ignorance and stubbornness they refused to support their institution, one may never know. This we do know as the records show, that Father Pudlow gained much support from the outside through his sermons in other parishes of the cities, raising money for St. Hedwig's. Times in Posen were not that difficult as the Thorp Courier often mentions the successful and well to do Polish farmers.

The so called "Pew Rent" was initiated at this time with the first front seats \$10. 00 for 2 places; seven center rows of pews \$8. 00 for 2 places; back rows of pews \$6. 00 also for 2 places; every family was obligated to rent 2 pews and single persons, one pew. It was an ingenious method for educating the people of the parish of their obligation to support their own parish. In later years because of this, dissension developed and gave a bad example to visiting people who desired to attend Holy Mass. Many people became convinced that they "owned" the pews and would not allow anyone to sit in them. The origin of the pew rent system dates back to the annual meeting of January 2, 1907.

Even though financially St. Hedwig's was struggling, a janitor was hired, namely Dominik Slota, who was paid \$10. 00 a month. The organist Helen Balcer received fifty cents for Sunday Music and for singing at the worship service.

In April of 1907, the main altar and baptismal font were painted white by Mr. S. Kujawski of Posen for the sum of \$65. 00. The altar and baptismal font are still white in the church as they were painted in 1907.

The Independent Church two miles east of St. Hedwig's still flourished in a poor man's way. A Rev. Klawitter, who was the priest, had been taken to the Clark County Poor Farm because of financial difficulties by Feliks Mikolainis in Oct. 1905, was finally replaced in 1909 by Rev. L. Grochowski of Joliet for services only. Father Grochowski would only make sporadic visits. For over four years there were no ser-vices until the arrival of Father Grochowski. Father Pudlo continued working with zeal to bring many of those who left St. Hedwig's back to the true church. His zeal and efforts paid off, because by this time many of the families returned.

In March of 1909, Mr. Valentine Malecki, the friend of Father Frydrychowicz passed away at the age of 55. He was buried from the Independent Church which he helped establish. A priest from Chicago Polish National Church conducted the services and burial took place in the Independent Cemetery, just west of the Ted Papierniak farm.

In October of 1909 the feast of St. Hedwig and the Forty Hour Devotions were celebrated in a sol-

emn way. For the first time the custom of inviting as many priest as possible for the occasion was inaugurated by Father Pudlo. Those who assisted on this celebrated day were: Rev. James Gara, Pine Creek; Rev. John Rayski, North Creek; Rev. Ignatius Mordarski, Bevent; Rev. F. Kupka, Poniatowski, Wis.; Rev. Lucien Kufel, Friendship; Rev. F.C. Ciszewski, Cassel; Rev. Ignatius Miller, Stanley; Rev. Leo Pollock, Eau Claire; Rev. John Karcz, Hatley; Rev. Theodore Malkowski, Polonia; Rev. W. Krzywonos, Junction City; Rev. Stanley Koperski, Toron, Wis.; Rev. J. Pociecha, Albin; Rev. J.M. Schraum, Colby; Rev. J.M. Riesterer, Chippewa Falls; and Rev. A.M. Arentz, Thorp, Wis.

An interesting item that appeared in Vol. XXVI, No. 50, October 28, 1909 edition of the Thorp Courier stated: "The Congregation of All Saints Church in Lublin held a meeting on Sunday, October 17, for the purpose of erecting a priest's parsonage. A committee of two, Joseph Wrana and John Kozy, were chosen to do some collecting for the benefit of the building. " It would seem that the church in Lublin already existed. In the early days of St. Hedwig's, people from Lublin travelled to Posen for Sunday services. In the opinion of this writer, after checking various sources, it would seem that Mr. Wagner in the Courier had mistaken the name of the Lublin Church which happened to be named St. Stanislaus from its inception. In the history of St. Stanislaus Church, Lublin, Wisconsin written by Rev. Edward Cyz in June 1967, the following is quoted: "A hardy life presented itself for the early Catholic settlers. There were no bridges or roads in those days. The Catholic settlers of Lublin attended church services in Thorp, Wisconsin, a distance of twelve miles. Despite the hardships and the small number of Catholics, an attempt had been made by these inhabitants of Lublin, to locate a Catholic Church. "

Father Cyz continues, "A petition had been sent to Most Rev. A Schinner, D. D., Bishop of Superior Diocese, in 1907, requesting that a Catholic Church be built in Lublin. The land and the lumber for the construction of the Church had been donated by the State Land Co. With the Bishop's con-sent, the Church was built and completed in 1908. " It would follow that the parsonage in question would be for St. Stanislaus Church as already there was a resident Pastor in the person of Father T.F. Malecki, followed by Rev. B.J. Barca. It would appear that All Saints Name was used inadvertently, since it was so often brought into focus through the Independent Church and the Independent Polish National Church of Lublin took its origin first in 1925 when the era of its predecessors existence in Posen came to an end.

Father Pudlo issued his annual report for the year 1906 in the January 10th, 1907 edition of the Thorp Courier, in the manner of statements of receipts and expenses, as the paper was the best source for promulgating this information to his people.

The Pastor in his thoughtfulness for the employees continued to raise their salaries each year. Pew rent because of the need of money was raised in 1910 to \$15. 50 for front pews; \$13. 50 for center pews; and \$11. 50 for back pews.

In June a recommendation through the leadership of Father Pudlo was made to remodel the old wooden church for a school. Since the early days of the parish, the Bishop and each pastor beginning with Father Korczyk saw the need of a parochial school for the Polish children of the Posen area. At the annual meeting a majority of the parishioners voted against the school. This was the beginning of a struggle between the priest and many parishioners until the year 1950 when the parochial school was built. This hurt Father Pudlo very much. He fought a false notion of the people that "there was no need for a school, since the parents did not go to school, neither do their

children need any Catholic School. As soon as they are old enough they can either get married or go to work. " It took years and years to break this kind of thinking.

Father Pudlo again raised the issue of school on January 3, 1916 at the annual parish meeting, only to find the opposition just as strong. In his own writing as translated from the Polish language by the author, he writes:

"Father Pudlo presented this idea of a school, Jan. 3, 1916, sending his resignation to the Bishop, because the parishioners would not agree on the school issue. The Bishop refused the resignation on the basis it was not good for the parish. On August 20, 1919, Father Pudlo personally approached Bishop Schwebach with the school problem and would not return to Posen again. On November 3, 1919, he was transferred to Arcadia, Wisconsin after 14 years of service at St. Hedwig's. I give one word only to my successor, Father Korczyk that he will never build a school in Posen. "

Father Pudlo before his departure, namely the last seven years of his administration, encountered difficulties as the opposition from some members began to grow. In need of money to improve the parish, loans had to be made, many times from private parties. The following notice appeared in the April 11, 1912 edition of the Thorp Courier:

"Notice to the money loaning public: The Polish Catholic Federation of laymen, of Thorp, Wisconsin, hereby gives notice to all persons loaning or about to loan money to St. Hedwig's Catholic Congregation of Thorp, Wisconsin, that the said Federation, consisting of over 200 members of said Congregation, will not become responsible for the payment of said loan; that the said Federation by unanimous vote has authorized this notice to be given to the public. Dated March 26, 1912; Signed: Martin Burzynski, President, Stanley Kujawski, Sec-retary. "

Though it hurt Father Pudlo and in spite of the opposition, the church was insured for \$35, 000. 00 and the premium paid. The low rate for cemetery graves, namely \$5.00 a lot was raised to \$25. 00 a lot. A lot consisted of 8 to 10 graves for a family. By January 1913, even though operating costs were high, the debt stood at \$11, 090.00. Most of the private loans to the members were paid off, while others who could afford it, wrote off the loan as a gift to the parish.

In the February 5, 1914 edition of the Thorp Courier, Father Pudlo again published his annual report: It read as follows: total receipts \$6, 502.23; total expenses \$6, 160.99; balance on hand 1 January 1914, \$341.24. The debt stood at \$10, 090.00. About this time also, namely July 29, Father Pudlo was present at the neighboring parish for the laying of the cornerstone for the new St. Bernard's Church in the Village of Thorp.

Another big achievement during his administration was the installation of 3 new bells in December of 1914, so that the voice of the church through the ringing of the bells would sing out through the Posen area calling its people to worship. These same bells are used for the same purpose today. The clocks on the steeple of the church were also installed at this time.

Since electricity was coming into the area in 1915, Father recommended electric lights for the rectory and a bathroom. Prior to this kerosene lamps and candles were used, while the bathroom was the outdoor type. This was approved at an estimated cost of \$600. 00. Electricity for the church was also discussed and approved.

Trouble developed between the priest and the trustees concerning the payment for the electricity

installation with the firm of Hanson and Zaborowski. The cost concerned was the \$200.00 difference that was approved by the trustees at the meeting. The firm wanted \$800.00 while the annual meeting approved expenditure of \$600.00. Father Pudlo wished to pay the bills as they were just and fair. Many opposed this and dissension arouse. The trustees were removed as Father Pudlo mentions in his diary, "because they ran things as they wished without consultation and with opposition to the Pastor. The trustees were removed by Bishop Schwebach.

On April 17, 1917 to help Father Pudlo in the administration of the parish and to care for the welfare of the large parish, a newly ordained Assistant Pastor was appointed by the Bishop. The new assistant was Father Bronislaus Szymczak. His arrival marked another step in the growth of St. Hedwig's Parish in Posen. Father Szymczak did not remain too long with Father Pudlo. The atmosphere in the parish was not too pleasing because of the dissention and opposition to the pastor. For a newly ordained priest it would be hard to understand the situation. Against the wishes of Father Pudlo, the young priest took off mysteriously on June 9, 1917, never to return to Posen. Father Szymczak was assigned to another parish by Bishop Schwebach, while Father Pudlo continued to administer the parish and fulfill the duties of pastor and priest by himself.

About the year 1918 due to the many deaths of older people of the parish, the cemetery was enlarged on the north side of the church.

Finally as mentioned on page 30 in the school issue paragraph, Father Pudlo, the energetic and hardworking priest asked for permission to leave St. Hedwig's Parish, Posen on November 3, 1919, never to return to Posen. The many dissensions, heartbreaks and lack of appreciation of his priestly work, especially the opposition to the idea of a Catholic school which was so close to his heart for the good of the Polish children so that through education someday they could represent Posen successfully in various walks of life, he was moved in conscience to make the decision, which to him was important and sad. He was transferred on November 3, 1919 to St. Stanislaus Church, Arcadia, Wisconsin.

From September 1905 to November 1919, Father Pudlo baptised 1, 080 children and adults; Performed 189 marriage ceremonies; buried over 350 people of the parish; heard over 18, 797 confessions of his people guiding them in their spiritual life; and made 786 sick calls by foot and horse and buggy throughout his parish. During his pastorate and under his instructions, 992 children and adults were confirmed; over 1, 201 children were instructed in catechism by him, receiving Holy Communion for the first time.

In 1914 there were about 525 families in the parish with a population of over 2, 053 souls. There were five vocations from the parish, three to the Holy Priesthood and two young ladies became Nuns.

During his administration, donations to Poland amounted to the sum of \$50. 00. The parish property was valued at \$100, 000. 00. He paid out about \$37, 000. 00 in expenses, of which the parish paid \$27, 000.00 from its offerings and pew rent. Father Pudlo's efforts, namely preaching contacting friends brought in the other \$9, 000.00 while Father himself contributed \$1, 000. 00 to St. Hedwig's.

Father Pudlo was a good priest who labored hard in the vineyard of the Lord. Maybe some of his decisions did not agree with others, yet his efforts proved that he had St. Hedwig's close to his heart. All his acts and judgments were sincere for the common good of the parish. The mistakes he made in judgment we are all prone to make.

St. Hedwig's up to this time was blessed with wonderful, zealous and educated priests, who spared no sacrifice for the good of God, the Church, the Parish, the country and their people. Unfortunately, the minority that opposed the priests so often, lacked Christian Charity, and forced these priests to forsake Posen and devote their priestly talent and zeal in other Parishes of the Diocese of La Crosse.

Father Pudlo reported the following donors and their gifts to the Parish of St. Hedwig's, he completed and still stands sixty years later, possessing many of these items, as listed in the History of Clark County: "three gold plated chalices, donated by John Wnek, Smogur and John Kowieski, value \$260.00; two composition statues, donated by St. Moczarny, valued at \$64. 00; St. Hedwig statue bought by M. Turek, valued at \$50. 00; pair of Angel statues, donated by Andrew Nowobielski, valued at \$45.00; hanging crucifix, donated by Kutnarowski brothers, valued at \$65.00; Zinc Corpus for cemetery and the wooden cross, donated by George Zukowski, valued at \$100.00; white moire antique canopies, donated by M. Burzynski and Joseph Szerlong, valued at \$90.00; brass candelabra, bought by Cl. Haburda, valued at \$65. 00; gold sensoria, donated by Andrew Nowobielski and his sister, Anna Kobylarczyk, valued at \$300.00. Roman Missal, and one group of stations of the Cross, donated by Florian Anyzewski, valued at \$99. 00; The Main Altar in the church, donated by Andrew Zaborowski, valued at \$700. 00; several small things donated by Joseph Kotecki, valued at \$50.00; goods for the church, Rev. Joseph Kampa of Milwaukee, valued at \$100.00; red chasuble, donated by Wiltzius, Co., of Chicago, valued at \$15.00; pair of dalmatics and a black chasuble, donated by Pustet Co. of Cincinnati, Ohio, valued at \$50.00; black cope donated by Father Pudlo, valued at \$25.00; white cope donated by the Rosary Ladies of St. Hedwig's Parish, valued \$45. 00; two albs, donated by St. Joseph Society of the Parish, valued at \$25. 00; white chasuble, donated by the confirmation class of 1911, sacrifices of children, valued at \$105.00; flowers for the altars donated by the Sisters of the Rosary of the Parish, valued at \$25.00; cemetery cross, donated by F. Szatalowicz, value \$25. 00; pair of vases for flowers, donated by John Koman, valued at \$5.00; mission cross, donated by John Kowieski, valued at \$3.00; Christmas Crib, donated by A. Dombrzalski, valued at \$25.00; red chasuble, donated by F. Klaster Co., Green Bay, Wisconsin, valued at \$25.00; Ciboria, donated by Lohmann Co., of St. Paul, Minnesota valued at \$10.00; chandelier, (which still hangs in the center of the nave) donated by John Hoffman, valued at \$85. 00; white stole, donated by W. Stominski of Chicago, Illinois, valued at \$10.00; for a window, group stations, and furnace in the rectory plus other things, Father Pudlo donated \$705. 00; hardwood flooring for the priest's rectory donated by Michael Zaborowski, valued about \$100.00; composition statue, donated by M. Najdychor, valued at \$22. 50; composition statue, donated by Nick Jasinek, valued at \$10. 00; composition statue, donated by Josephine Izydorek, valued at \$10.00; Tabernacle for the altar, donated by Math. Brucis, valued at \$500. 00; six wax candles, donated by Peter Borowick, Sr., valued at \$5.00; altar cloths donated by Miss Mary Borysiewicz, valued at \$25.00; smaller articles for the rectory donated by P. Osowski, valued at \$5. 00; smaller articles for the priest's house, donated by John G. Bogumill, valued at \$25. 00; glass doors for the rectory, donated by M. Gavin, valued at \$25. 00; gold plated sanctuary lamp with extension and tube for hanging (still in use) donated by P. Borowick, Sr., and P. Borowick, Jr., and wife valued at \$325.00; Collection in Chicago from friends of Father Pudlo brought \$802. 36 and in Milwaukee \$699. 50. The Tower clock by special collection, valued at \$650.00; church bells also by special collection, valued at \$555.00; group stations of the cross, some were donated by members of the congregation and others by collection at \$90.00 each, valued at \$1,260.00; Ornamented windows were bought as follows: Father Pudlo,

Joseph Szerlong, Frank Hoffman, Sisters of the Rosary Society of St. Hedwigs, St. Joseph's Society, First Communion children of the class of 1906, Michael Manczuk, Vincent Budzinski, M. Gavin of Milwaukee, the congregation and school boys. The group stations of the Cross: Father Pudlo, Florian Anyzewski, M. Tomkowiak, Simon Maslowski, Francis Wojciechowski, the European Statue and Art Co., (2) Anna Lasota, and Paul Holubowicz. The remainder came from collections from the Congregation. " (History of Clark County, Wisconsin, 1918, compiled by Curtiss-Wedge, H.C. Cooper Co., Winona & Chicago, Pages 737-738).

Records show that the first wedding that took place in the new church was that performed by Father Pudlo on October 22, 1906. Miss Anna Hoffman was united in marriage with George B. Zukowski. The first funeral is difficult to establish. Three are listed in the month of October 1906. They are October 6, that of Catherine Machiniak; Oct. 10, Joseph Nowobielski and Oct. 16, Eva Jasinska. The author could not establish the first baptism to take place in the new church.