

Sacred Heart Catholic School

1881 to 2006

The early history of the Sacred Heart congregation begins in 1850, when Joseph Maurer established his home in Shawano. The present site was obtained from Mr. Maurer, who had been elected the first county judge of Shawano County. He deeded a strip of land 120' x 240' for one dollar, in 1863, later, he deeded two other parcels. This is the land on which the present church and school are located. All of the property so deeded, is known as Lot 1 of block 37 on the assessors map of the city of Shawano. For many years thereafter his family, and the other Catholics who came to Shawano, were obliged to go to Keshena to attend Mass. Very often they had to travel on roads that were nearly impassible.

In 1867 the first church was erected under Father Cajetanus Krautbahn, Capuchin Father from Keshena. In 1872, Father John Cheboul, a missionary, built a little addition onto the church to enable the priest to live there. In 1877 a priest house was built and an organ was purchased. A two-acre cemetery was purchased at the cost of \$35.00.

The first school building, known as Sacred Heart School, was purchased by Sacred Heart Parish in 1881 from the Shawano Public School System for \$550.60. The wooden structure was the former Lincoln School; it was a two-story white framed building with a recitation room. The school had been built in the early 1870's and had served the entire school needs of the city, with high school classes in the upstairs rooms, and grade school classes on the lower level. Further growth made building a new school on the site of the present Lincoln School necessary.

When the Parish purchased it, it was then moved across the street to the present Sacred Heart location. Reverend Amadeus Massochelain and Reverend Father Zephyrin Englehardt, OFM, pastors of St. Michael's Church in Keshena requested the Sisters for Shawano which at the time was a Mission Parish of the church in Keshena. The request was made to Reverend Vincent Halbfus, Provincial of the Franciscan Fathers of St. Louis who then in turn contacted The Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet. The Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet arrived from Saint Louis, Missouri on October 25 th, 1881 to take over the school. In charge was Mother Mary Augustine Meeman, other teachers were Sister Mary Mathilda, Sister Anthanasia, and Miss Nellie Burns, a graduate of St. Joseph's Academy in St. Louis, came with the Sisters as the music teacher. The school opened for classes on November 7 th, 1881. The parish boasted of forty-five families at this time. In this same year a well was dug for twelve dollars.

Shawano was the first mission of the Sisters of Saint Joseph in the Diocese of Green Bay. Their congregation was founded in 1650 in France. Two and a half centuries later, surviving the French Revolution, the congregation spread through all Catholic Europe and to every continent. The first mission band to America left Lyons in 1836 and the first foundation was in Carondelet, a village south of Saint Louis. Today you will find the Sisters of St. Joseph, St. Louis Province, are in most states of the U.S., and in Canada, Chile, Japan, and Peru. You will find them in elementary and secondary schools; in homes for children, for the poor and outcast, for refugees, for the homeless, for the aged; in parish and diocesan administration; in hospitals and clinics; in offices and courts; on college campuses; along country roads. To serve wherever they are able to continue meeting the needs of the People of God.

During 1888 – 1890 Father Steinbrecher was instrumental in organizing a Boy's Sodality and the Society of Christian Mothers and Branch 132 of the Catholic Knights of Wisconsin. He was long remembered for his extensive charity and popularity with the children.

In 1889 Sister Herman Joseph Gorman began to build up a department for Higher Education. This continued for about ten or eleven years. However, it was thought best to close it as the number of pupils that continued on to high school did not compensate keeping a Sister for the work.

In the fall of 1898 Father Kaster was replaced by Father Louis C. Becker as pastor. During his pastorate the sisters' home was erected. In 1908 the first school building was purchased by W.H. Schumacher and moved to 701 S. Main Street. Mr. Schumacher used it as a second furniture store. Later, Ben Sanders and Lemuel Wright used it as a furniture store. Eventually it was torn down, and a new building took its place. In 1908 a new school was built. The stately figure of Father Becker, donned in overalls and carrying a saw and hammer became a familiar sight. The brick building had six classrooms, three on each floor. The basement consisted of an open area on the north half and the rest of the basement was used for a cloakroom, rest rooms and the boiler room.

When the Murdock Hotel burned down in 1948, Orville Luchenbach acquired the fire escape, which Phil Hoffman and Carl Radtke, Sr. installed on the school. In the 1950's the cloak room area was used for scout meetings. In 1955 the first lay teachers were hired.

July of 1960 was the beginning of the present school. The second building was razed to make way for the new one. Construction began in April of 1960 and was completed in September of 1961 for a construction cost of \$350,000, just three years earlier the new church construction had been completed for \$250,000.

Sister Frances Borgia Robillard was the principal for the new school. Sister Mary Bede Baeten and Sister Teresa Lawrence DeRoche were two of the listed teachers. Sacred Heart had seven full-time and 3 part-time lay teachers as staff. There were 253 students in grades 1 through 8.

The new state of the art school boasted two stories, with five classrooms on the first floor and seven classrooms on the second floor. On April 16 th, 1961, the 6 th, 7 th, and 8 th grades, were moved into six rooms ready by that time for occupancy. By September of 1961 the whole student body occupied the school, using eight rooms. This was the first time in several years that the whole student body was under one roof. Four classrooms still stood vacant and at the time were rented out for use by the Shawano Public School system. During construction, classes were held in the church basement, the Eagles Hall on Division Street and in the Utility building.

His Excellency, Stanislaus V. Bona, Bishop of Green Bay, blessed the new school on March 25, 1962. Reverend Joseph Schaefer was the pastor of Sacred Heart parish and dean of the Shawano deanery during the construction of the new school. He had been pastor of Sacred Heart since October 4 th, 1960. At the time, Father Taddy was Father Schaefer's assistant.

In 1970 a Home and School Association was organized with the following committee directing its activities: Mmes. J. Albright, D. Barker, L. Hoffman, M. Huebner, J. Naber, G. Qualheim, R. Siegfried, E. Kort, H. H. Brunner, M. Bystol, F. Prokash, and F. Samels. Sister Rose Celine was the advisor. Officers were elected the second year; Co-Presidents – Mr. & Mrs. James Czechanski, Co-Vice Presidents – Mrs. & Mrs. Richard Schermetzler, Secretary – Mrs. Edgar Kort (Andrea), and Treasurer – Mrs. Robert Kohlin (Jacqueline). Four meetings were held during the year.

In 1973 Sister Rose Celine of the Sisters of St. Joseph was the principal with some professional laywomen as teachers (eight full-time and three part-time) of the 325 pupils in grades one through eight.

On September 23 rd, 1981 there was an article by Jane McBride published in the Shawano Evening Leader. Ms. McBride had interviewed then principal Sister Theresa Geiger. Sister Geiger had just started her position at Sacred Heart filling a three-month vacancy. Of the four nuns still teaching at Sacred Heart three of them were from the original order of St. Joseph. Sister Geiger was a member of the St. Francis order out of Milwaukee. Sister Baeten and Sister DeRoche of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet were still teaching in 1981, they had been teaching here for the last 20 years. Sister Geiger went on to say "Today the students all wear red, white or navy blue. Once upon a time they wore uniforms, but that got too expensive. A peek into the classroom varifies the school spirit. The red and blue is amazingly consistent." Sister Geiger also believed that Catholic education serves the function of instilling Christian values and

faith, and provides a good academic atmosphere. Even in 1981 it was stressed that the parents have a "tremendous" role in the education of their children. Tuition was \$65.00 for the first child, for two children it was \$110.00, and for three children it was \$145.00. In 1981 the cost to educate a child was \$2,000.00 and in 2004 the cost to educate a child was \$4,450.

Also, in 1981 the parish purchased and renovated a home directly across from the school for the convent residence for the sister teachers and Sister Grace Mahoney, who was in residence with them.

Another major change at the school happened in the early 1980's, all the existing windows were replaced with new Pella energy efficient windows. In 1998, the school board approved the purchase of 30 new computers for a computer lab to be housed on the second floor of the school. This was a major improvement for the school children.

The last sister to leave Sacred Heart was Sister Evelyn Antoine in 2000. After retirement she went on to Spring Green, Wisconsin to work with another Catholic school.

In 2004 there was the addition of the elevator, which now makes all three levels accessible for everyone. This project was in conjunction with the new Gathering Space of the church.

2005 brings Sacred Heart Catholic School an updated computer lab, SmartBoard and projector with generously donated funds from the Bleser Foundation. Our student body is at 140 pupils; all of our teachers are lay teachers for Kindergarten through 8th grade, music, and PE. The support staff includes our pastor, principal, secretary, director of religious education, two janitors, and a cook.

Father Len Evers has been our spiritual leader since 1980. The children attend mass during the school week with an all-school mass on Thursday. Lois Maczuzak is the current principal of Sacred Heart Catholic School. She has been in Catholic education most of her academic career.

Staff changes in 2006 included MaryEllen Waldvogel, the Director of Religious Education for the past 14 years, relocating to Door County. In November Sister M. Gemma Therese Harvey came to us as the Director of Faith Formation. Sr. Gemma was responsible for overseeing all religious aspects of the children's religious education. Another addition to our school and parish in November 2006 was Ms. Amy Koehler, as Middle School Faith Formation Coordinator and Youth Minister.

In July 2009, Mrs. Linda Patzke joined our parish staff as Director of Religious Education, replacing Sr. Gemma. Ms. Maggie Melchior became our Coordinator of Middle School Faith Formation and Youth Minister upon the resignation of Ms. Koehler.

July 2010 will bring a new Director of Religious Education to our parish. Ms. Melchior remains as our Youth Minister and has taken on the added responsibility of the middle school religious education through the youth ministry program.