St. Stephen Lutheran Church

In the year 1891, Pastor Heinrich Greve of Rib Falls, Wisconsin, sought out some Lutheran families between Rib Falls and Wein. These families were not members of any congregations and he tried to influence them to join the congregation at Rib Falls. In the meantime the Chicago Northwestern Railroad planned to build a station half way between Rib Falls and Wein and rumors had materialized that the station should be called Edgar. At the same time, it seemed appropriate to those people to make the attempt to build a small church in Edgar itself, as they were hoping that this area would be settled. There were four families who declared themselves ready to join the church. As these were co-founders along with Pastor Greve their names should be mentioned in the history. They were; Franz Ludtke, Hermann Winkert, Wilhem Schmidt and August Tegge. The two first-mentioned persons took the trouble to collect money in the neighboring congregations for the building of the church as they would not be able to undertake the building of the church without the help of the neighboring Christians. This church became the first house of worship in Edgar and was given the name of St. Stephanus. The dedication took place on the 29th of May 1892. There was a large attendance of Rev. Schmalz's congregation present. Pastor Greve performed the dedication with the assistance of Rev. Schmalz of Wein. These two preached on the text Luke 18:9-14. It was decided that this congregation shall be served as a branch of Wein Church. Rev. Karl Schmalz served as minister until 1910.

Pulpits and altar cloths, as well as candlesticks, flowers and a crucifix were donated by friends. Also the chandelier. The congregation secured a number-board and carpeted the chancel and middle-isle. Drapes were placed to divide off the sanctuary. Woodshed and horse stable were in the back of church. In 1904, a woodshed was built at the south east side of the church which also was used as a horse-stable by the pastor who served the congregation. In the same year they made a foundation under the church and painted the church on the outside.

In the course of the years Edgar became incorporated as a village and became a place of flourishing industries. Pastor Fichen had accepted the call to be their Shepherd and

St. Stephanus Church
St. Stephen's Lutheran Church

Spiritual leader. The congregation became independent. The Ladies Aid purchased a parsonage of which the congregation took possession in 1910. The following men in 1911, pledged $100.00 a piece toward the new church, in addition to the pledges that reached $3,000.00. These men were Daniel Weinkauf, Gust Herman, Chas Greve, Albert Borchardt and Julius Werner. Contribution envelopes were developed. The ground breaking ceremonies were held on June 4, 1949. The Pastor Herman Leschensky was the pastor at the time. The corner stone was placed on May 20, 1951 on the day of dedication of the building. The cost of the building was $90,000.00.

In 1957, the pastor did not have to preach in German and English. Only English was used in the services. In 1960, St. Stephen became a member of the American Lutheran Church. By 1966 the congregation was debt free. At this time the congregation was thinking about enlarging the Sunday School space and building a new parsonage.

In 1968, the present parsonage was built on Third Avenue. The present organ was purchased in 1979 and the church was redecorated in 1984. The original altar of the Little White Church was kept and is still being used.

In 1988, the church changed it's name and merged into the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. In 1994, St. Stephen and St. Peter voted to join as sister churches.

St. Stephen, at the present time, has 285 baptized members. There are 66 children from the Cradle Roll through high school.

The church offers a weekly Bible Study, additional one after Lenten Services. There are two active circles and three active funeral circles. St. Stephen has a active youth group, which has always sent youth to the National Youth Convention. The youth serve the Easter Sunrise Breakfast and participate in the Sunrise Services.

The ladies have a quilting group which meets monthly. The men have an active dartball team and softball team.

In 1997 a handbell choir was formed. St. Stephen has an adult choir and a children's choir. Students are confirmed in the eighth grade and first communion is in the fifth grade.

St. Stephen is active in the Circle of Joy, Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran Social Services, World Hunger, Greater Wausau Christian Services, AAL, Lutheran Brotherhood, Community Projects and Crossways Bible Ministry.

Each summer Vacation Bible School is held. In August, Worship in the Park is held. An annual church dinner is held in the fall. The present pastor is Pastor David Skarsten. The church organist is Charlotte Otto. The adult choir director and handbell choir director is Marla Berg. The children's choir director is Ruth Paul.

The present people serve on the church council: Pastor Skarsten, Ronald Reiche-President, Robert Houts-Vice President, Audrey Kamenick-Secretary, Bev Miller-Treasurer, Duane Zietlow-Financial Secretary. Trustees are Warren Brauneil, Lyle Zernicke and Rodney Zietlow. Deacons are Debbie Scheffler, Duane Kamenick and Todd Holbach.

The following pastors served our congregation through the years:

- Pastor Heinrich Greve 1892-1893
- Pastor Karl Schmalz 1893-1910
- Pastor Ficken 1910-1914
- Pastor William Schultz 1914-1919
- Pastor H. Schroeder 1919-1921
- Pastor Karl Schmidt 1922-1927
- Pastor F. Pohlman 1927-1930
- Pastor George Diemer 1930-1944
- Pastor Martin Stricker 1944-1948
- Pastor Herman Leschensky 1949-1957
- Pastor Roger Schmidt 1957-1962
- Pastor Melvin Tatley 1963-1968
- Pastor Harvey Jaeger 1969-1978
- Pastor Richard Quamme 1980-1989
- Pastor Ronald Nordin 1980-1989
- Pastor Barry Hoerz 1989-1992
- Pastor David Skarsten 1992-current
"The Little White Church"
by: Bertha Koenig

Just a simple wooden structure,
Stands upon a lonely street;
It was once a house of worship,
Where good Christians used to meet.

Many years, it served its purpose,
Member’s first were very few;
But as years passed slowly onward,
The congregation surely grew.

Here they brought their little children,
To be cleansed of all their sin;
Through the Holy Baptism
They were brought unto Him.

Later on they were instructed,
In the precious word of God;
And confirmed before the public
Where they themselves confessed their Lord.

Also many heavy laden,
Brought their troubles unto Him,
To receive Holy Communion,
Which washed away their many sins.

Loving hands were here untied,
and loyal hearts pledged their troth,
before God’s holy alter
be true, “till death do us part.”

Also there were tears and weeping
as they stood beside a bier,
of one, whom they loved so dearly
never more, to see them here.

Now we heard the farewell sermon,
and it really was quite sad,
to think our church was now discarded,
no more service to be had.

But they built a handsome structure
erected to the grace of God.
Where we henceforth are to worship,
serve our master and our lord.

May God’s blessings be upon us,
and to strengthen our mind.
Here to worship without comment,
now, and unto the end of time.

Edgar Presbyterian Church
The history of the church dates back much before the date of the organization, January 27, 1903; or that of the dedication of the first little white frame building in November 1902; or the organization of the Ladies Aid in 1899. For it all started one November day in 1895 when a group of Christian mothers met in the little white village schoolhouse, and without outside aid, organized a community Sunday School. They were concerned because their children were growing up without religious instruction. The teachers were Catholics, Lutherans, Baptists, Methodists and Presbyterians who laid aside their denominational prejudices and united in one great effort to teach the Bible to their children.

Mrs. C. C. DeLong was the first superintendent, Miss Madge Zimmerman and Miss Tillie Scholtz, secretary. The teachers of the fifty students were: Mr. & Mrs. Cardinal, Miss Madge Zimmerman, Miss Tillie Scholtz, Mrs. William Hobart and Mrs. Steve Roberts. Classes met every Sunday afternoon at 2:30 in the schoolhouse.

This Sunday School was not under any denomination. Through the efforts of Rev. Joseph Brown, the Presbyterian Sunday School Missionary from Marshfield, and the Rev. W. C. Carrier of the Wausau Presbyterian Church, it was arranged to have the Rev. C. C. Hamilton of Granite heights, conduct services every two weeks at the schoolhouse, staying over weekends in the homes of the teachers.

One Saturday afternoon while the ladies were cleaning the school for Sunday, a discussion arose over the belief of the Lords Supper. Although there was a diversity of opinion, all believed it a very important ordinance, and as some had not partaken of communion for years, they decided to ask Mr. Hamilton if they could have a communion service in the near future. Some weeks later, twelve believers participated in this first communion service in the schoolhouse.

From 1896 to 1899, after the Rev. C. C. Hamilton discontinued his biweekly meetings, no services were held except for occasional ones conducted by Joseph Brown or W. O. Carrier as they passed through town. Because of these three ministers, the Sunday School came under the influence and guidance of the Presbyterian Church.
elder, keeping the church going during the periods when there was no resident minister. In 1915, the Fred Hartig family joined and he was added to the session as clerk. When Mr. Hartig died, in 1930, the church lost a pillar, for he was the Sunday School Superintendent and choir director as well as clerk of session for many years. However, Mr. Hutchins, who had joined in 1922, took over much of the responsibility, continued as clerk of session and filled other vacancies as needed, even to janitorial duties.

Peter Erickson arrived in 1914 as a student supply, but remained after his ordination until 1919. Addison Chapin, a young man who had spent several years as a missionary to Africa, was called to the Edgar church in 1919, but 22 months later he left to resume his studies. He is especially remembered for his pet monkey which he had brought from Africa and went everywhere with him. One time a group went to Athens by sleigh and the monkey froze the tip of this tail.

It was shortly after the Rev. C. N. Haskins became our minister that a Congregational meeting was called in the village hall and it was proposed that a manse be purchased. A few months later a manse was purchased for $5,250.00, $350.00 having been paid by November 1927 when the silver anniversary of the church was observed. The balance was paid by 1931, principally by the Ladies Aid.

When Mr. Haskins left to go to Wabeno, the Rev. N. C. Ramsey, a returned missionary from China, with his daughters, Pauline and Muriel, took up residence in the manse. They brought with them a wonderful collection of Chinese curios, collected during their 25 years in China, and a room in the manse was devoted to this museum. When Mr. Ramsey left Edgar, he presented it to the Wausau Presbyterian Church. Muriel and Pauline were very active in children’s work and a fine Junior and Senior Christian Endeavors were organized. It was during Mr. Ramsay’s pastorate that our church became independent of the Home Missions Board, and became self-supporting.

Our next minister, Edmund Kornfeld, was ordained here and married a woman from the congregation, Ruth Hartig, who assisted him in various phases of children’s work and planning special music and pageants. During Mr. Kornfeld’s pastorate, the church started to participate in the Presbyterian Pension Plan.

After the Presbyterian Ladies Aid was organized and a building started, the services of the Rev. I. J. Knudson were obtained in 1901 to supervise the dedication and organization of the church. The dedication was held seven years after the organization of the Sunday School and the organization became a reality a few months later. Shortly after, when the church was really in need of leadership, Mr. Knudson died and the pulpit was vacant except for outside supplies until the Rev. J. Cairns Cram was called in 1906. His pastorate is remembered especially by the men of the community for he was an ardent golfer who had played on many of the fine courses in Scotland, and he was instrumental in getting a golf course started just north of the village. In fact, he even made clubs for some of the men. He also organized the first choir and his two year pastorate has been long remembered. The Rev. William Morrison was here for a short time, followed by the Rev. Hugh Rollands and several other student supplies.

The Justin Means family joined the church in 1912. Mr. Means became the only...
When the Kornfelds left for St. Louis, the church felt an additional loss, for their beloved Mrs. Fred Hartig went with them. The church, having been blessed during the Kornfeld’s pastorate, turned again to the Dallas Theological Seminary for a pastor and Ernest L. Hoover was called. It was he who made the arrangements in October of 1937 for our affiliation with Abbotsford and the sharing of a pastor with them. It was at this time that the habit of a lifetime was changed and our Sunday morning service began at 9:00 a.m. instead of 11:00 a.m., to allow the pastor to go to Abbotsford upon completing the service here. This cooperation with Abbotsford continued until 1949 when both churches became part of a new four-church parish, including Stratford and Athens.

During Mr. Hoover’s pastorate, the manse was remodeled and a bathroom and garage were added. The Hoovers too were generous with their musical talents, entertaining many groups with music on their guitars and mandolins. Mrs. Hoover, who was a concert pianist, entertained with her piano selections.

In 1941 when the Rev. George E. Griffiths was extended a call, the congregation was still worshipping in the small white frame church that it had built 40 years before. The members realized that the church was inadequate, that we needed more Sunday School and recreation space, but these thoughts remained only wishful thinking. To Mr. Griffiths, this was a challenge, and he laid the groundwork for the arrangements to procure the church building owned by the St. Paul’s Evangelical Reformed congregation. The two churches had always cooperated through the year and many of the families in the Evangelical church had a definite connection with this church through their young people who had always attended our Sunday School and Christian Endeavor, their church not having enough children to warrant these organizations. Under the leadership of the Rev. W. H. Ortwein, Athens and Anton Hertz, the Evangelical church proposed to turn over their building to the Presbyterian congregation for the sum of $200.00, $25.00 of which would pay the water frontage, the balance going to their Synod. The Presbyterian church voted to accept this generous offer and extended an invitation to the members of St. Paul’s Evangelical Church to unite with us. Thus, to quote from the records, “so an arrangement seems providential”; one body loses its denominational name and identity while the other will lose the church building in which it had worshipped some 40 years; the two thus united with a zeal for the Lord’s work and the salvation of the lost should move forward to the Glory of the Master’s name and the strengthening of His church.

The church building was remodeled, a basement dug and cemented, a new heating plant was installed and the interior was redecorated. It was re-dedicated with services on October 21-25, 1942. Before Rev. Griffiths left to go to Chetek, the church had completely paid for the renovating, and increased its Benevolence Budget from less than $100.00 to $600.00.

The church was without a resident minister for nearly a year after the Griffiths left, but the pulpit was filled every Sunday by students or lay supplies, of which Robert Emery, a Marshfield lawyer came every Sunday for months. Norman Krueger, and T. L. Duckworth also gave of their time and ability.

When the church became a part of the newly organized Larger Parish, Richard L.,
Harrison, a McCormick Seminary student, had been serving the Stratford and Athens churches included Edgar and Abbotsford. He preached here every other Sunday during the summer, and conducted a joint Vacation Bible School. The Rev. William C. Knobloch was called to the office of Pastor for the Larger Parish, arriving in July 1950.

At this time we were a small parish of 85 members with 40 sources of income. Much hard work had to be done to meet the budget that was adopted. In 1953, the budget totaled $4,139.78 of which $700.00 was allocated for Benevolences. In addition, a quota of $375.00 was set for the Twelve Million Dollar Building Fund Campaign to be used for the seminars and new church extensions throughout the nation.

In 1951, the congregation purchased a new Consonata organ, using money from the memorial fund and by individual donations. We had a faithful organist in Miss Dorothy Piehl, until she moved in 1978. Mrs. Ivan Smith labored fruitfully as our choir director until she too moved.

After the Rev. Knobloch and Rev. Harrison left in 1954, the pulpit was filled by the Rev. T. Barney for one year, followed by Rev. T. Clifford Hayes. When he left in 1957, it was decided to have one minister to serve as a director and to be assisted by a student or laymen.

Rev. L. Favivre accepted the call to serve our church in 1959 at a salary of $5,200.00, use of the manse, participation in the pension plan, and one month vacation each year. Edgar’s portion of this salary was $1,508.00.

Our numbers were dwindling in 1959. There was a consolidation of elders and trustees to consist of six members, three of them to be trustees.

This year also brought the Rev. W. Smith as our assistant director.

The church basement was opened for any member of the church for any use sanctioned by the session, but not for Bingo or any game of chance.

Two oil furnaces were installed in 1961 at the low bid of $1,800.00. Later, the ceiling had to be insulated as it was difficult to keep the church warm during the cold winter months.

In 1962, the number of session members was reduced to four instead of five. Elders also served as trustees.

In March of 1963, the Parish Council voted to establish a two point field instead of four with the Athens church to close and the Stratford church to find another church with which to yoke.

Mr. Sid Hutchins, a long time supporter of the church, died in 1963. His presence was sorely missed. He was always there to lend a hand. That same year, in November, another pillar of the church, Mr. Cornelius Ramaker died. His presence in his familiar pew was sadly missed.

Rev. Ted Glidden replaced Rev. L. Favivre in 1963. Mr. Ben Powell, a layman, filled the pulpit many times throughout some twenty years.

Since Abbotsford had the larger parish, Rev. Glidden lived in the manse near the Abbotsford church. The Edgar Manse was rented at $35.00 per month. It was sold in 1971 for $11,000.00.

After the death of Mr. Hutchins, Mr. Merle Gregorson took over the duties of Clerk of Session. In 1966, Mr. Loddie Loskot, a transfer from the Athens church, assumed these duties. He has served in the capacity until the present time. He is to be commended for his many years of faithful service.

The membership rolls were dropping as the young people moved away and the elderly passed away. The roll was 64 in 1965. In spite of the dropping rolls, the parishioners pushed on to improve their beloved church. New cupboards were built in the basement kitchen at a cost of $286.00. A new floor was installed for $475.00 and the youth group painted the ceiling and walls of the basement.

By 1969, the roll had dropped to 56. Rev. T. Glidden surveyed the area for new members, but found that most people had some church affiliation. There were very few unchurched citizens.

After Rev. Glidden left in 1969, Rev. Boyd Jordon of Stevens Point, who was a music major, temporarily filled the pulpit. He will be remembered for his beautiful singing voice. With our numbers down to 50, a strong vocal lead was appreciated.

Dr. Keun Won Park, a native of Korea, came to serve us in 1970. We knew it would be temporary for he had made a promise to his people. The difference in culture added a bit of interest during his stay. A mission project was accomplished by raising $370.00 to buy pulpit furniture for Kausau Presbyterian Church, in Korea. In 1973, he and his family returned to Korea where he accepted the position of professor at the Presbyterian
Seminary, in Seoul. Sadly, after his return to Korea, their 11 year old daughter died of a brain tumor.

October 1, 1973, found the Abbotsford church voting to dissolve the yoke between Edgar and Abbotsford.

Mr. John Billings, a student, helped us out over that summer. Mr. Ben Powell and Rev. Ed George, from Gleason, filled the pulpit into the fall and winter. We were grateful for their loyalty and support.

Our Sunday School dissolved because of lack of children.

By 1979, the Ladies Guild did not hold regular meetings, but did sponsor one pot luck dinner during the Christmas season. Our roll was now down to 26, with 10 families.

Mr. Joe Boettcher, of Colby, has served us faithfully for many years with his words of wisdom.

Dorothy Tess has served our church for 25 years as our secretary and treasurer.

Sheila Tess Rossmiller has served us as organist since 1978. We appreciate her many years of service with her superb talent.

In 1983, the Community Bible Church of Marathon, asked for the use of our church until their new facility could be built. With the cooperation of both congregations, our services were held one after the other for about 2 1/2 years. In return for the use of the church, they paid the fuel and utility bills and also kept up the cleaning, painting, and repair as was needed.

We were able to worship throughout the winter months. It was good to see children again in the sanctuary.

In 1988, the church incurred more expense with the installation of new curb and gutter for our two lots. Our numbers were now 18, with 10 families.

On August 30, 1989, with 17 members and 8 families, it was decided to close this edifice that for 86 years served as a gathering place for the many faithful, some who have gone on ahead to meet their Maker and others who remain behind to find another church where they can contribute their time, talents and resources. We remember those before us who lead the way and who have passed onto the presence of the Almighty.

A scholarship has been set up at Edgar High School using the proceeds of our church Memorial Fund.

A total of 404 people were reregistered in our church roll during our 86 years of existence. In 1940 we had an attendance of over 100.

As one church terminates it's Christian service in the area it is proper and fitting to help another church start anew. Our goal is to help the Covenant community Presbyterian Church of Rothschild in starting their new church.

When our church closed, as of October 1, 1889, the real estate and building reverted back to the Winnebago Presbytery. At that time, the records of the church also became the property of the Presbytery.

St. John the Baptist Church and School

In 1877 settlers began to arrive to the area now know as Edgar. They came from Germany, Poland, Austria, Bohemia and other parts of Europe bringing with them the hopes of a new life of freedom, independence and the desire to worship God in their own way. Among these early settlers were several devout Catholic families who, at the time would attend church at St. Mary's, Marathon or Holy Family Church, Poniatowski.

In 1888 a log church was built on the Joseph Schmirler farm 9 miles west of the settlement of Edgar. Father A. J. Joerres of Colby conducted services when he could get there. The roads were mere trails cut through thickly wooded forests and were often impassable. The new mission was soon abandoned and the people resumed attendance at Holy Family Church.

The completion of the railroad in 1891 brought many people to the area who wished to farm and make permanent homes. The Village of Edgar was incorporated on July 29, 1898. At this time the Catholic population had increased to 29 families who felt the need for a local church. Consequently, a parish was organized whose first consideration was building a church. Considerable agitation arose in regard to the location of the new church. The majority wanted to build the church at the north end of the village. Dominic King alone opposed this location but eventually he also gave his approval. Plans were then made to build at the north end of Fourth Avenue.

The Wausau Herald of 1899 gives this information regarding the meeting:

"On September 2, 1899, twenty families called a special meeting at 3:30 p.m. to discuss building plans. At 7:00 p.m. this same day a notice was given to receive bids and to let out the contract for the building of the
new Catholic Church at Edgar. The successful bidder will be required to furnish a bond for the faithful performance of his contract, the committee reserving all rights to reject any and all bids."

John Arnold Vollenweider and Dominic King were among the committee of five delegated to secure pledges of membership, labor, and support to the new organization. Although little money was available, many pioneers offered logs which were cut into lumber at the Edgar sawmill. Wholehearted volunteer service made it possible to complete the structure by Easter of 1900. Shortly after, Bishop Schwebach offered Holy Mass and officiated at the dedication ceremony. The following names are mentioned in records concerning the first church: Dominic King Sr., Dominic King Jr., Joseph King, Michael Bowe, John Vollenweider, Fred Strasser Sr., Michael Weixelbauer, George Burger Sr., Joseph Wirkus Sr., Paul Gappa, Welch, and Nowaks. Stephen Pempek was employed as carpenter for the building of the church.

The first priest to attend to the spiritual needs of the newly organized congregation was Father Constantin Frydrychowicz, pastor of Holy Family Church, Poniatowski. He conducted monthly services in the years 1899 to 1901. At that time, the priest traveled by horse and buggy through a narrow trail cut in the woods. Often during the winter months, it was impossible to get through. Father Andrew Gara from Poniatowski succeeded Father Frydrychowicz.

The first person baptized in St. John’s Church was Jacob Krause, son of Frank and Johanna (Halkowitz) Krause Sr. Jacob was born March 2, 1901. The first couple to be married in the church were Victoria King and William Welsh.

In 1901, Father Joseph Rhode, chaplain of St. Joseph’s Hospital, Marshfield, made weekly visits to Edgar. He came by train on Saturday morning and stayed until the following Monday. Since there was no parish rectory at that time, Father Rhode stayed with the John Wollenweider family. Father Martin Casper, pastor of St. Joseph’s Parish, Stratford, succeeded Father Rhode. He too, came by train on Saturday and returned to Stratford the following Monday.

Father Theophilus Wojak was the first resident pastor of Sacred Heart Church, Cassel. He received this appointment in June, 1902. One year later the parish at Edgar became his auxiliary charge. In November, 1905, when Father Wojak was transferred from this vicinity, St. John’s had increased from thirty-nine families to one hundred. While Father Wojak was in charge of Edgar, the original frame church was moved from its location at the end of the village street to the present location. The Edgar Land Company decided to open a village street and offered the parish an entire village block in exchange for the location of the church. This property was donated by Mr. Frank Kraus.

In 1905 the parish was again served by Father Martin Casper. In order to accommodate a local pastor, construction was began on a brick rectory. When the first resident priest, Father John F. Ellmaurer, arrived, only the exterior of the rectory was completed. Father was obliged to stay with one of the parishioners until his home was ready for occupancy.

Edgar parish was the first appointment for Father Ellmaurer. In addition to completing the rectory, the parish grounds were landscaped at this time. Stumps and rubbish were removed and black ground was hauled to level the space between the church and rectory.
Father Ellmaurer stated the following regarding the parish:

"With the help of the ladies of the parish, the interior of the new rectory was furnished. There was scarcely any money in the treasury - only $1.75. After completing the census, I took up a collection in order to pay the mortgage which was $500.00, and also to pay for the furniture. I succeeded in collecting quite a sum of money, but the same was not sufficient to pay all the debts. In the year 1907, a three-day bazaar was held, and with the proceeds, plus the amount collected, the mortgage and debt on the house were paid. In 1909, I was taken sick and resigned, leaving $600.00 in the treasury, as also a building fund."

In July 1909 Father Michael Haas was appointed to succeed Father Ellmaurer. Under his able leadership, St. John's was enlarged and remodeled. A sacristy was built, the sanctuary was made larger, and a basement was excavated. A stucco finish was applied to the exterior of the building. Most of the remodeling was done by members of the parish. The walls and ceiling were covered with an ornamental material and the altars were carved by the late John B. Schueller.

In July, 1912, Father Francis X. Orthen, succeeded Father Haas. The dream of a school was now to become a reality! Father Haas had made a personal contribution of one hundred dollars towards a school fund, and with this amount serving as a nucleus, Father Orthen secured pledges and payments from various families. Building was begun in the spring of 1914. The architect, Andrew Roth, of La Crosse, drew up plans and specializations for a four-room school. One room was to serve as a temporary dwelling for the Sisters.

The Sisters arrived in Edgar on October 24, 1914, two days later, St. John's School opened to ninety-eight enthusiastic pupils. Everyone was surprised by the large attendance and the remark; "I didn't know there were so many children in Edgar", was frequently heard for the first few days of school.

Father Orthen was succeeded by Father Augustine L. Olbert. The enrollment of the school was steadily increasing, so Father Olbert's first concern was to secure a permanent dwelling for the Sisters. The parish, therefore, purchased a house from Albert Erny for $1,350.00. The entire building had to be remodeled, however, and a furnace installed, the remodeling costs amounting to $4,500.00. The Sisters moved into their new home in 1920.

Father Olbert realizing the continued growth of the parish would require a larger church began a building fund. This was done by means of the monthly envelope collection, a bazaar assessment and the activities of the parishioners. The fund had grown to the substantial sum of $25,000.00.
and in the spring of 1932 the actual building was begun.

The last mass before the church was razed took place on April 3, 1952. On April 15, wrecking of the old building was begun. It was estimated that the parish would profit approximately $10,000 if they would build a new church at this time of low building costs.

The general contract was awarded to P. O. Nasvik of St. Paul; the heating, plumbing and electrical contracts were given to P. M. Warlum of Neillsville. Lumber from the old building was salvaged and all other materials utilized to the best possible advantage.

The cornerstone of St. John the Baptist Catholic Church was laid Sunday, May 29, 1932.

The new St. John’s Church is in Romanesque architecture 109 x 56 feet. It is of solid brick with travertine stone trimmings and includes an entrance arch beneath a beautiful rose window. On either side of the arch, there is a tower supermounted by a belfry with a copper dome and a wrought iron cross. Between the side windows of the church, slight brick buttresses project thus producing attractive lines. The main floor level is six feet above the street grade. The interior arrangement includes a spacious sanctuary, priests’ and boys’ sacristies, and concealed confessionals. The balcony provides ample space for the choir and organ. The basement of the church is 70 x 40 feet and includes a large, well equipped kitchen.

The first child baptized after the new church was dedicated was Maureen Hughes-

Senn, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ben Hughes. The first couple to be married in the new church were Alex and Jean Kurtzweil Schill in 1932.

After twenty-four years of devoted service to the people of Edgar, Father Obert left St. John’s in 1942. He was succeeded by Father Edwin L. Knauf. The following projects give evidence of the enormous energy Father Knauf put into St. John’s: remodeling and painting of the rectory; sodding and landscaping the cemetery; establishing a cemetery perpetual care fund; initiating the Hot Lunch Program in the school; enlarging the playground; purchasing property east of the church as a parking lot; decorating the interior of the church; adding a canopy and a beautiful maroon reredos to the High Altar.

The new stained glass windows were installed. Each window was donated in memory of a former parishioner. On December 51, 1944, Father Knauf announced to the parish that the building debt had been entirely paid.

In 1944 a Verlinden Pipe Organ Console was installed. It is of the electro-magnetic type, with two manuals and pedal. The organ has 300 pipes which are concealed behind the draperies. The cost of the organ with installation was $2,539.00. It was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Ben Straub.

A school addition fund was begun November 7, 1946. This was done in view of a larger building to accommodate the increasing enrollment. The fund grew steadily and was a substantial amount when the project began.

In April, 1947, Father Knauf was transferred to St. John’s Parish, La Crosse. Prior to his transfer, plans for an addition to the Sister’s convent were drawn up and bids let for the erection of same. Bids had also been made for the construction of sidewalks on the parish premises.

Father Oscar J. Cramer succeeded Father Knauf on April 17, 1947. The summer following Father Cramer’s arrival in Edgar, the Sister’s Convent was enlarged, according to the plans drawn up by Father Knauf. The building was ready for occupancy in September 1947. Sidewalks on the parish premises were also constructed during the summer months. The total cost of improvements was $13,000.00. A small debt remained but it was soon paid.

By 1949 there were 290 families on the parish roster. On Sunday, May 22, 1949, St.
John’s Parish celebrated the Golden Jubilee of the parish.

With the growth of the parish the enrollment in St. John’s School also increased and it soon became evident that the facilities would not meet the needs of this growth and a school addition would soon have to be built. In the spring of 1951 a new 60 x 40 feet two story and basement addition was started. It was a solid brick construction. The new addition doubled the size of the school. Irving Obel, Wausau, was the architect, Louis Schueller, Edgar, had the general contract, Berg Electric Company, Edgar, had the contract for new electric installations throughout the old and new portions of the building. Ewald Schmidt Company, Edgar, was awarded the contract for a new steam heating plant with furnace and radiators to be installed in the entire building.

The fall of 1959 again brought crowded conditions in the classrooms which necessitated the opening of a new classroom in the school. The southern part of the large recital room on the second floor was temporarily prepared for a classroom for the 5th and 6th grades. By October 19, 1959, the final construction work of installing blackboards, bulletin boards and folding doors was completed. The newly built classroom required an additional lay teacher.

In 1960 further remodeling was done to the Sister’s Convent which included the addition of a chapel. This eliminated the necessity for the Sisters to go to church for prayers and devotions. This was especially appreciated by the Sisters during the winter months when the church was not fully heated and the weather was cold and inclement.

Around this time Father Cramer began accumulating funds for a new rectory. By 1964 the fund had grown to a very substantial amount and considering the increasing cost of building materials and manpower, the decision to build at that time seemed a wise one.

It had been decided to build the new rectory on the site of the old rectory, which meant the building would have to be removed. It was sold at auction to Mr. and Mrs. David Socha for $825.00, the highest bid. The garage went to Albert Pelatzke for $150.00. The purchasers had to assume the responsibility and expense of moving the buildings.

The old rectory was moved May 15, 1964 and the new rectory was begun. The building was completed and ready to occupy on March 16, 1965. The house plans included two floors, a full basement, and an attached two car garage with storage space. The rectory included two general offices, a study, bedroom and bath for the pastor, a living room, dining room, kitchen and breakfast nook, plus a 1/2 bath and closet space occupy the first floor. The second floor has a study, bedroom and bath for the assistant pastor, an apartment consisting of a living room, bedroom and bath for the housekeeper, two guest rooms with connecting bath and adequate closet and storage space. The basement has two rooms which can be used for storage or recreational purposes, a laundry room, a fruit cellar and 1/2 bath.

On June 1, 1973, Father Cramer retired as pastor of St. John’s Parish and his associate pastor, Father Francis A. Zimmerer was appointed to take his place. Due to ill health Father Zimmerer left Edgar on October 16, 1974.

Since 1974 there have been three pastors who served St. John’s Parish. Rev. Delbert Malin served until 1983. At that time Rev. Thomas Rudolf was sent to St. John’s Parish and remained in service until 1995. From 1995 until currently Rev. Bernard Raschke has served the parish.

In 1998, St. John’s Parish is continuing the work that was begun so many years ago by the sacrificing founders. Today’s members work and pray to keep the faith alive in the many good works they do.

At this time St. John’s Parish has a membership of about 1500. Presently there are 475 families. Our current pastor is Rev. Bernard Raschke, who began serving St. John’s in August of 1995. We are also fortu-
nate to have an active deacon working for the parish, in the person of Dewey Schulz. His service to the people of St. John’s is greatly appreciated. The Lord will surely bless him.

A great many changes have taken place over the last ten years, at St. John’s School. It’s true, there are different staff members and students. And, of course, new families are joining every year. There are changes in our area of technology, curriculum, and the school building and grounds.

1997-98 was a year of new beginnings, both in the school and on the playground. The Home-School-Parish group was able to raise the monies needed to improve our playground. The result is wonderful! We have a play area for the swings and a playground set that works for all students, grades K-8.

There were a number of renovations, in the school, itself. Rooms were changed around, painted, and redecorated. Most of these changes took place in anticipation of our new Kindergarten...a welcome addition to our school.

We began our Kindergarten program with the 1997-98 school year. Currently, there are 13 students enrolled in the program, which is an all-day curriculum. We enjoy having these students around and are impressed with the success we have achieved.

There is a computer lab, in the school, comprised of 12 IBM computers which are networked. Last year, we received from the Wausau Insurance company, 17 more computers. While these were not new, they were a welcome gift. We now have computers in each of our classrooms. This enables the teachers and students to utilize their knowledge of a subject and do further exploration into other areas of that subject.

While there have been many physical changes in St. John’s School, one thing that has not changed is a commitment to exceptional education. We expect a great deal from our students and teachers, and they receive a great deal, in return. We strive to give children quality teaching, particularly in religious studies. Most importantly, we provide an environment where students feel accepted, cared for and cared about. St. John’s has changed, but love still remains.

**The St. John’s Cemetery**

On July 16, 1900, Mr. and Mrs. William Welsh sold two acres, from their farm, to Bishop Schwebach, LaCrosse, to be used as a parish cemetery. The first burial was on May 13, 1901, for Mrs. Simon, age 89, mother of Theodore Simon, a carpenter.

Perpetual care for the cemetery lots was started in 1944 by Father Edwin Knauf. The cost for an eight grave lot was $75.00. The Wisconsin Valley Trust Co. of Wausau is in charge of the fund which amounted to $9,352.73 in the year 1974. The interest on this investment is used to defray the yearly operational upkeep of the cemetery.

In 1972 the Misses Anna and Lucy Shortner donated $750.00 to purchase an acre of land directly east of the present cemetery to be used when expansion becomes necessary. This land was part of Alfred Berg farm. In 1973, they also erected a large cross near the west entrance in memory of their brother, Frank. The cross which is made of red granite measures 5 feet across the arms of the cross and is 10 feet in height.