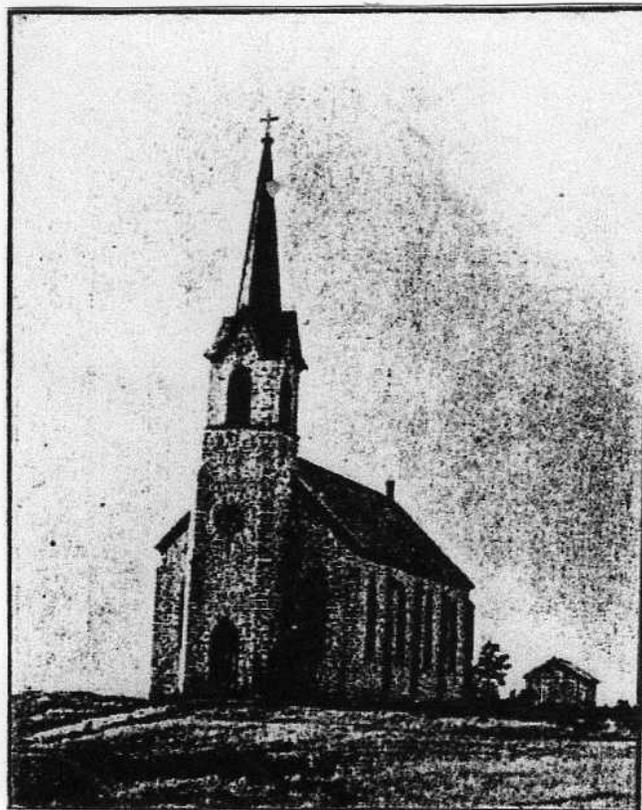


History of St. Martin's Parish



**Charlestown, WI
1866-2005**

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History of St. Martin's Parish Charlestown, WI 1866-2005

The history of St. Martin's Roman Catholic Parish is a story of courage, perseverance and a strong faith in God by a handful of early pioneer families who journeyed across the Atlantic Ocean in 1853 from Silesia, Prussia, to this Land of Opportunity called America. After experiencing the turmoil of living in Silesia, they yearned for the peace, stability, religious freedom, and economic opportunities that America could offer them. The first pioneer settlers from Silesia were the Bernhard Buhl family, plus his three stepchildren, Robert, Joseph and Caroline Kolbe, the Franz Mahlich family, the Joseph Heimann family, the Joseph Koehler family, August Nisler, and Dominic and Josephine Seichter. All but August Nisler knew each other before their emigration to America. This group crossed the Atlantic Ocean to New York City by two sailboats. Bernhard Buhl, Joseph Koehler, and August Nisler docked at the Port of New York on the ship, *Cath Duckwitz*, on July 10, 1853. Franz Mahlich, Joseph Heimann, and Dominic Seichter docked at the Port of New York on the ship, *New York*, on July 23, 1853, thirteen days later. To cope with the choppy waters of the Atlantic and the suffocating conditions on board ship, these six families must have offered many prayers of petition to God and rosaries prayed invoking the aid of their Blessed Mother for a safe journey. They spent six to eight weeks crossing the Atlantic Ocean to New York City, then to Buffalo, NY, by train. At Buffalo they booked passage on a Great Lakes steamer to Sheboygan, WI, and then traveled by horses and wagons to Plymouth, WI. From Plymouth to Hayton, WI, they traveled by oxen and wagons. Initially the settlers arranged to live in Hayton with Bernhard Buhl's brother, Joseph, who had immigrated seven years earlier in 1846 to Sheboygan County, WI; then moving to Hayton in 1852. Those hearty settlers worked together in a spirit of mutual friendliness to build their primitive log homes out of the dense forests that covered Charlestown. The average home was seldom larger than 18 x 24 feet, comprised of a one-story room with a floor made of planks and a windowless loft directly under the roof where the children slept.

In the midst of building a life for their families, the pioneers made God an integral part of their everyday life. Being able to practice their Catholic faith freely without reprisal was extremely important to them. Arrangements were made to have priests from neighboring parishes come occasionally to celebrate the Eucharist in their homes.

There were Catholic immigrant families, mostly of German descent, already settled in the Charlestown area by 1853 such as the Pfister family. They all became neighbors and shared a love of God, family, and country. Soon the Meyer, Gebhard,

Appelbacher, Bruckner, Woelfel, Lackermann, Goeres, and Mitterer families became Charlestown residents. For clarification purposes, only Charlestown families who joined the fledgling St. Martin's Parish have been named.

Below is an 1874 Township of Charlestown plat map. Follow the roads that are known today as County Highway T and Honeymoon Hill Road on the bottom east half of the map and you will find the homesteads of B. Buhl, J. Heimann, J. Koehler, F. Mahlich, A. Nisler, and D. Seichter, besides other well-known Charlestown homestead families associated with St. Martin's Parish.



According to a document found with the old St. Martin's ledgers, Joseph Heimann, Bernhard Buhl, and Andreas Pfister suggested that a little church be erected where they could assemble for Divine Services. Records are unclear when they began to talk about erecting a church, but a Quit Claim Deed was signed by Bernhard Buhl of the Township of Charlestown of Calumet County, WI, on February 25, 1861, relinquishing ownership of five (5) acres of land in Section twenty-two (22) to Bishop John Martin Henni of the Catholic Diocese of Milwaukee for a consideration of \$10. It is apparent that discussions among the interested pioneers of Charlestown to erect a church were underway before 1861. A log church was started in 1864 and completed in 1866. The Society of St. Martin's Church was organized in 1865 by the election of Joseph Heimann and Joseph Koehler as trustees. A Warranty Deed was signed on March 5, 1866, by Bernhard Buhl and Theresia, his wife, of the Township of Charlestown, Calumet County, WI, and John Martin Henni, Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Milwaukee, of the city and county of Milwaukee, stating for the sum of \$10, Bernhard and Theresia Buhl sold eight (8) acres of land to Bishop Henni for the purpose of erecting a church. On Pentecost Monday, May 21, 1866, the church was blessed, probably by Rev. Ambrose Oswald of St. Nazianz; thus, with the grace of God and under the patronage of St. Martin of Tours, St. Martin's Parish in the Catholic Diocese of Milwaukee was established. For this occasion, men, women and children most assuredly arrived decked out in their finest to pay homage to Our Lord in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. So much of the pioneer's energy was poured out in building a church that symbolized their love and devotion for God, the Blessed Mother Mary, and the saints through their Catholic faith; a place where they could come together to become One in the Body of Christ; a place where they could bring their children into the fold through the sacraments of initiation, Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation; a place where they could experience God's merciful forgiveness in Reconciliation; a place where couples who exchange vows in the Sacrament of Marriage mirror Christ's love for His Church; a place where those who ail in body and mind could find the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick to be a sign of Our Lord's healing presence; a place where the parish community could unite to offer solace for those who are grieving for their loved one's passing. Priests from surrounding parishes ministered to the parish and taught that all who are baptized in the Lord are called to be priest, prophet and king to the world. What a joyous day May 21, 1866, was for the new Roman Catholic parish of Charlestown.

"This is the day the Lord has made; let us be glad and rejoice!" Ps 118:24

Also on that day, election of the first parish officers was held. Elected president: Joseph Heimann; secretary: Fritz Goeres; treasurer: Andreas Pfister. Three months later on August 24, 1866, the parish designated two areas of parish land for two cemeteries - one for adults and one for children. One cemetery was east of the church and the other was north of the church.

It is likely the settlers supplied at least some of the wood from their own properties and built the church themselves. The church was heated by a wood-burning stove with kerosene lanterns and candles providing light. The parish consisted of about eighteen families and was a mission of St. Mary's Parish of Marytown, WI, served by its pastor, Rev. Henry Korfhage, of the Catholic Diocese of Milwaukee. Rev. Korfhage visited the parish once a month on a weekday. The first registered families of the fledgling parish were the Appelbacher, Bruckner, Buhl, Gebhard, Goeres, Heimann, Koehler, Kolbe, Lackermann, Mahlich, Mitterer, Nisler, Pfister, Seichter, and Woelfel families.

There is an oral tradition handed down from the emigrant, Joseph Heimann, to his descendants regarding the naming of the parish and placing it under the patronage of St. Martin of Tours. Apparently, Joseph Heimann suggested the new parish be named St. Martin after his home parish in Rathmannsdorf, Silesia, Prussia. Today, Rathmannsdorf is called Ranowice, a town in southwest Poland. Great-grandson, Wilfred Heimann, and his wife, Jan, visited the town of Ranowice in 1947. Its Catholic Church was indeed named St. Martin. With Bishop Henni's approval, the first Catholic parish in Charlestown was named St. Martin. The congregation was indeed blessed to have such a holy saint as their protector and intercessor; one who personified the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy.

From 1866 to 1899 the following priests took charge of St. Martin's Parish:

1866 -	Rev. Henry Korfhage, Pastor of St. Mary's, Marytown
1866 - 1869	Rev. Charles Schraudenbach, Pastor of St. Augustine's, Chilton
1869 - 1871	Rev. Andrew Andolshek, Pastor of St. Augustine's, Chilton
1871 -	Rev. Ambrose Oschwald of the Oschwald Assn. of St. Nazianz
1871 - 1883	Rev. Thomas von der Thannen, Pastor of St. Charles, Charlesburg
1883 - 1889	Rev. Albert Reininger, Pastor of St. Charles, Charlesburg
1889 - 1894	Rev. John Decker, Pastor of St. Charles, Charlesburg
1894 - 1899	Rev. Leonhard Blum, Pastor of St. Charles, Charlesburg

Once the parish was established, income needed to come in and expenses paid out. The first parish collection took place on the day the church was blessed which was Pentecost Monday, May 21, 1866, bringing in \$7.25. After that first general parish collection, amounts collected tended to be under \$2.00. Apparently, there was wood left over from the building of the log church because the financial ledger of July 12, 1866, revealed Robert Kolbe paid \$2.25 for one thousand pieces of leftover wood. Expenditures paid out in 1866 were for record books for \$1.60, painting of the church and altar by Heinrich Göres for \$10.00, and payment to Rev. Father Schraudenbach for weekly conducting of the mission at \$5. per visit and for a chalice he purchased for \$20.

The first baptism was administered on May 26, 1866, and the first funeral took place on June 8, 1866, for Joseph Woelfel. The first marriage ceremony was performed on February 24, 1868, between Joseph Seipold and Angelica Mahlich. Pictured to the left is Angelica in her later years. There appears to be some confusion concerning their correct surname. Is it Seibold or Seipold? St. Martin's Parish marriage records and the Calumet County marriage records states Joseph's surname to be Seibold. However, after Joseph and Angelica farmed in the Township of Brillion in Calumet County for eleven years, they moved to the Antigo area in Langlade County where they farmed. The 1900, 1910, and 1920 federal census records for the Township of Antigo spelled the surname Seipold. The tombstones in Queen of Peace Catholic Cemetery in Antigo for Joseph, Angelica, and some of their descendants also show the surname to be Seipold. Direct descendants still living in the Antigo area confirm the family name is Seipold.



Angelica (Mahlich) Seipold

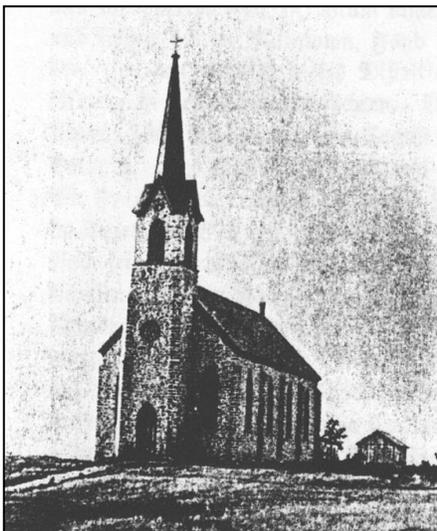
One of the quaint customs of the time was separation of the sexes during all Eucharistic liturgies and devotions. School children were in the front pews - girls on the left side and boys on the right side with the School Sisters behind them. The adults were separated also - the women filled the left side pews and the men filled the right side pews. It has been suggested the practice of separation was intended to keep the minds, hearts, and eyes of the churchgoers on the altar and not anywhere else. This custom continued until the late 1940's when women and men slowly integrated, but the school children still remained separated and apart from their parents until the parish school closed in 1967.

The log church served as a place of Divine Worship for ten years. Under the administration of Fr. Thomas von der Thannen, preparations began for building a new church in the winter of 1875 by getting a portion of the material together. Limestone rock from the local quarry would form the exterior walls. Late in 1876 the foundation was completed and the main walls rose up about eight feet. During the construction period, the masons stayed with the Robert Kolbe family on weekdays and returned to their families on weekends. Early in the spring of 1877, the work resumed with considerable vigor until the church took the form of one of the most spacious and elegant church edifices to be found anywhere in the county. In the December 8, 1877, edition of *The Chilton Times*, it states about St. Martin's Church:

It is built of solid stone in the Rhine Gothic style, and is 110 feet long, 41 feet wide and 30 feet high. The tower is 68 feet high built of masonry, and a well-proportioned spire surmounted

by a beautiful gilded cross extends upwards 55 feet further making the whole from the ground to the top of the cross, 133 feet. The ceiling is 35 feet high from the floor. The sacristy is 16 by 24, and 9 feet high. Members of the congregation clubbed together and delivered all the stone, sand, timber, lumber and, in fact, all the material and burned the lime used in the building besides expending in cash nearly seven thousand dollars for labor and materials. George Woelfel, Robert Kolbe and John Woelfel were on the building committee. Bernard Hauck was the contractor for the stone work; Frank Bettner the plastering; Simon Ley the carpenter and joiner work; and John Pfister the painting. Only twenty-six families subscribed at first towards the church, but since work was commenced, others have contributed liberally, so there is now an indebtedness of only \$500 on the building. Rev. Father Thannen of East Brothertown is the presiding priest and visits the congregation once in two weeks. The present officers of the society are Joseph Heimann, President; Andrew Pfister, Secretary; and Andrew Lackermann, Treasurer.

It was indeed a great undertaking for the small congregation of St. Martin to erect such an imposing structure. With its cross atop the steeple glistening in the



sunshine, it is as though God sent a visual reminder of the blessings He bestowed onto this Catholic community. Charlestown residents could see this church for miles around, standing solid and serene, beckoning the faithful to put aside their work and gather together for fellowship and to worship Our Lord in the Eucharist. In 1877, the church was completed and blessed presumably by Bishop Henni of Milwaukee with seven priests officiating with him. To the left is the earliest photograph found of St. Martin's Catholic Church of Charlestown. It's unknown what year the photograph was taken, probably pre-1900, and no one remembers the structure behind the church.

There are clear records concerning the donation and naming of the bells. In 1877, the small bell was donated by Joseph Heimann, blessed by Fr. Peter Mutz and received the name Joseph. The middle bell was donated in 1893 by Joseph Heimann, blessed by Fr. John Decker and also received the name Joseph. The big bell was given by Constant Heimann in 1902 and consecrated by Fr. Epiphanius Deibele, SDS. The bell received the name Catharina Elizabeth and its sponsors were Elizabeth and Henry Schnell.

Ledger entries describing the activities of the parish at the turn of the century picture the congregation as an energetic community of faithful believers. There were thirty-six German and four Irish families. On every Sunday and holyday and also on one weekday, there was a Eucharistic celebration. Interior furnishings were donated or purchased as the finances became available. Some church furnishings known to be donated by parishioners were: St. Joseph side altar by Erhard Woelfel; pulpit by Joseph Heimann; carpets by Xavier Geiser; communion rail by Louis Woelfel; frames for Stations of the Cross by Fr. Albert Reininger; canopy by Joseph Hanke; triple gong by Carl Meisel. Below is the interior of St. Martin's Church during the Easter Solemnity circa 1912.



On November 4, 1899, St. Martin's Congregation held a meeting to consider incorporation. Minutes of this annual meeting were as follows:

By order of His Grace F. H. Katzer, Archbishop of Milwaukee, a meeting of the members of St. Martin's Congregation located in the Township of Charlestown, Calumet County, Wis, was called on this the 4th day of Nov. A. D. 1899 for the purpose of having said congregation incorporated under the

Law of the State of Wisconsin. The meeting was called to order at 3 P.M. by the pastor of the congregation, Rev. S. N. Thelen, explaining the object of the meeting. A motion was made and seconded to take a vote by ballot on the question of incorporating or not. Those in favor of incorporating should vote by writing the word "Yes," those against incorporating "No." The result of the vote was twenty in favor of incorporating and one against it. After having voted for having St. Martin's Congregation incorporated, they elected the following officers: J. C. Pfister, Sec. 18 votes and Fred. Woelfel, Treas. 9 votes; Jos. Koehler 1 vote, Jos. Hanke 1 vote, John Buhl 2 votes, Geo. Schwarz 4 votes, X. Geiser 3 votes, Geo. Woelfel 1 vote, Const. Heiman 1 vote, John Woelfel 2 votes.

There was an error about John Pfister and J. C. Pfister, which was corrected by motion to read J. C. Pfister.

A committee to estimate the value of Church property then was by motion elected to wit:

Rev. S. N. Thelen, J. C. Pfister, Geo. Schwarz, Const. Heiman.

The estimation was \$5000.00.

After which the meeting adjourned. Sine die.

Under the laws of the State of Wisconsin, an affidavit was signed on December 8, 1899, by Archbishop Frederick H. Katzer and J. C. Pfister who appeared as two of the signers, that St. Martin's Congregation filed Articles of Association with a view of forming a corporation.

St. Martin's Parish was served by area priests until Christmas Day, 1899, when the Society of the Divine Savior of St. Nazianz, WI, commonly known as the Salvatorian Fathers, took charge of the parish. On the following day, December 26, 1899, Archbishop Katzer signed a Quit Claim Deed stating for \$1.00 and other valuable considerations, he relinquished control of the aforesaid St. Martin's land to St. Martin's Congregation and the transaction was finalized in 1903.

When the Catholic Diocese of Superior was created in 1905, boundaries of the Catholic Diocese of Green Bay and the Catholic Archdiocese of Milwaukee were re-drawn; thus some parishes in Manitowoc and Calumet Counties, including St. Martin's Parish, were transferred to the Catholic Diocese of Green Bay.

Sometime between 1866 and 1899, a horse barn was built running east and west along County Highway T where St. Martin Heritage Park hall now stands. It was quite long stretching to Church Road to accommodate the horse-buggy and

horse-sled teams that were tied there while the family attended Divine Services. It was a three-sided structure, open to the south for teams to be driven in and tied to a post. Many current Charlestown residents still remember experiencing the thrill of riding in a buggy or sleigh to church and tying up the horses. With the invention of the automobile, the horse barn became obsolete and it stood empty for years. School children could be seen playing a game of fox and goose around the old wood structure. It was even possible a student snuck a cigar or pipe in the horse barn for a quick smoke. In 1935, the horse barn was demolished and trees planted in its place. Boards and the tin roof from the horse barn were recycled in the Roger Woelfel Homestead barn and garage respectively on Lime Kiln Road, Charlestown.

Salvatorian Fathers who were pastors of St. Martin's Parish from 1899 to 1978 were:

1899 – 1901	Rev. Herman Rogier, SDS
1901 – 1904	Rev. Sturmius Haertl, SDS
1904 – 1912	Rev. Raphael Wittig, SDS
1912 – 1917	Rev. Ludger Gloeggler, SDS
1917 – 1918	Rev. Fintan Holzknacht, SDS
1918 – 1920	Rev. Sturmius Haertl, SDS
1920 – 1924	Rev. Eustachius Goerlich, SDS
1924 – 1927	Rev. Fintan Holzknacht, SDS
1927 – 1936	Rev. Epiphanius Deibele, SDS
1936 – 1940	Rev. Beatus Baur, SDS
1940 – 1948	Rev. Willibald Unger, SDS
1948 – 1950	Rev. Claude Klotz, SDS
1950 – 1971	Rev. Arnulf Buck, SDS
1971 – 1972	Rev. Mark Stangel, SDS
1972 – 1973	Rev. John Aschenbrenner, SDS
1973 – 1978	Rev. David Christel, SDS

The majority of parish records dated before 1920 were in German. They reveal the congregation's major monthly expenses were: paying the salaries of the Sisters, Pastor, trustees and janitor; building and maintenance of the church, school-convent, sacristy, horse barn, shed, and rectory; purchase of wood to heat the buildings; diocesan assessments; insurance premiums.

Children were taught in block schools dotted throughout Charlestown until 1872 when a boarding school was built by the Oschwald Association of St. Nazianz across Highway T southeast of St. Martin's Parish grounds. It served to educate the Charlestown children until St. Martin's Congregation built their own school in 1877 from the logs of the original church. In 1890, a new building containing a convent and school was constructed. With timely additions and renovations, the school served the educational needs of the parish children until 1967 when it closed due to

low enrollment and lack of teaching Sisters. The parish instituted a Religious Education program that would continue to instill Catholic beliefs in their children.

In 1882, the St. Elisabeth Frauen Verein (Women's Society) was established to promote the Christian Spirit in the families and to provide material help to the parish. It joined the Central Christian Mothers Society at Pittsburgh in 1902. The Young Ladies Sodality of the Immaculate was organized in 1904 to promote the honor and love of Mary Immaculate and to give financial aid to the various parish projects. The Marian Young Men Association was organized in 1908 and combined with the Holy Name Society in 1924 to promote the love and respect for the Holy Name of Jesus and to provide financial assistance and manual labor to the buildings and grounds. The Apostleship of Prayer was started in 1902 and the Rosary Confraternity in 1904. The Catholic Knights, Charlestown Branch 194, was organized in 1900 as a Fraternal Life Insurance Organization for Catholics whose purpose was to provide financial aid to widows and orphans and to promote charitable parish activities.

In the early years of the parish, celebrating one's patron saint was called a kermis celebration. St. Martin's patron saint was St. Martin of Tours whose feast was commemorated on November 11. The congregation held elaborate day-long festivities yearly. In 1904 tragedy struck during St. Martin's kermis celebration which was held at the two dance halls the congregation had rented in Hayton. For an unknown reason, the horse barn in Hayton which housed the horses of the dance attendees was destroyed by fire. Besides twenty-eight horses dead inside the barn, James Raleigh, an employee of Mr. and Mrs. John Horst, died while trying to save the horses. What a sad ending to their parish feastday celebration.

One major financial undertaking occurred in 1911 and 1912 when twelve stain glass windows were installed in the church at a cost of \$1720. They were purchased through Carl Brielmann of Milwaukee and transported from Milwaukee to Charlestown by horse and wagon by parishioner, Constant Heimann. How beautiful they were when the sun came shining through during morning and afternoon Masses. Each window proudly displayed the family memorial. It gives one a sense of connection with the past when one reads the names of those long-deceased members of the congregation who worked tirelessly and sacrificed unselfishly to make St. Martin's Church a fitting place for Divine Services.

On July 30, 1916, the Board of Directors and the Building Committee agreed to erect a two-story building measuring 16 x 24 feet to be the sacristy. The mason work was done by Math Klinkner and the carpenter was Joseph Schmidlkofer. The Board of Directors consisted of Fr. Ludger Gloeggler SDS, Pastor, Fred Woelfel Sr., and George Woelfel. The Building Committee consisted of Henry Heimann, Joseph Kolbe and Erhart Woelfel. This same group made a contract with F. W. Mathaeus of

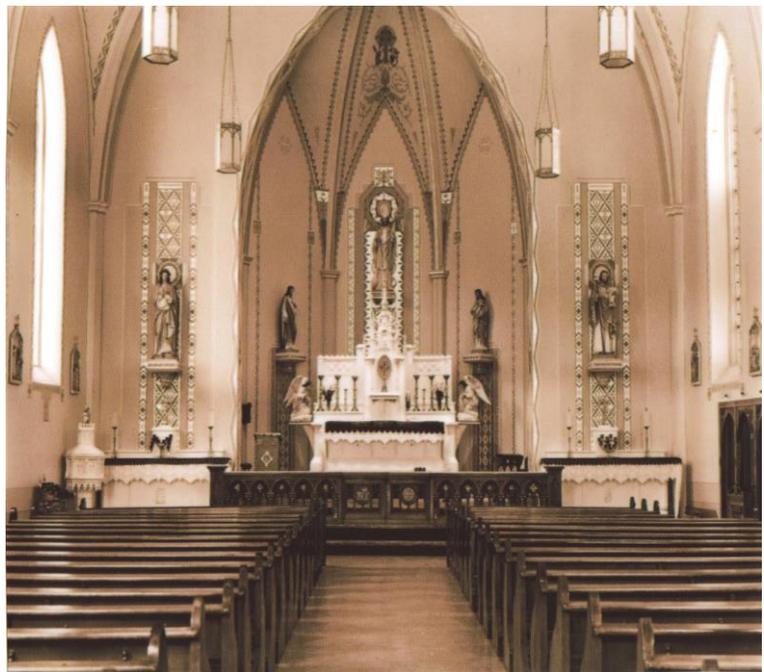
New Holstein for two #260 Mueller Tublar Furnaces and all material required for use by November 1, 1916, for the sum of \$500. Excavation for a basement under the church for the furnaces was to start immediately.



On December 7, 1919, a shed, pictured on the left, was built for the priest's rig. Other improvements included electricity that was installed in the church in 1920 and also in the new rectory constructed the same year. Before the rectory could be built, the graves in the parish cemetery to the east of the church were raised and re-interred in the cemetery behind the church. During the next twenty years, a new church roof was put on, the steeple and outside woodwork painted, and new hung ceiling light fixtures were purchased.

In 1944, Fr. Willibald Unger, SDS, and trustees, William Heimann and Frank Steffen, went before the War Board to get permission to buy the materials necessary to replace the heating system in the church. Rationing of materials for use by the armed forces was in place and need had to be proven. Approval was also given by Catholic Bishop of Green Bay, the Most Reverend Stanislaus V. Bona.

Under the pastorate of Fr. Arnulf Buck, SDS, the church interior underwent an extensive renovation in 1951, with church decorator, L. R. Shrovnal of Kaukauna, hired to do the work. The Renovation Committee consisted of Fr. Arnulf, Frank Steffen, Henry Heimann, Joseph Kolbe, and trustees Victor Geiser and Florian Woelfel. Pictured to the right shows the upper levels of the high altar and two side altars were removed leaving the altar tables in place. The pulpit was removed from the west side of



the church and a confessional was built on the east side. Claude Muellenbach, a parish member and mason, was hired to build the confessional with help from parishioners. Also purchased in 1951 were new Stations of the Cross at a cost of

\$747 which were put in place after the church interior was painted. The renovations were completed in time for the congregation to celebrate its Diamond Jubilee of the building of the present church. To celebrate this occasion a bazaar and dinner took place with the proceeds to be used to install indoor lavatories in the school.

In 1952, Peter C. Woelfel was designated to toll the bells when a parishioner died. From 1952 to 1959 new cupboards were installed in the convent kitchen, water bubblers installed in the school bathrooms, water piped into the rectory, new church pews installed, and an organ was purchased. Parishioners were kept informed on matters concerning their faith through subscriptions to *Our Sunday Visitor*. When the Green Bay Diocese published its own weekly newspaper, *The Green Bay Register* in 1955, the parish switched to the Diocesan newspaper. Nine years later, the parish purchased subscriptions for the entire congregation. In 1959, the congregation voted to erect a parish hall to be used for social functions. Electric Angelus bells were installed in 1961 in memory of Conrad and Agnes Woelfel and Mrs. Mary Heimann.

With the convening of Vatican Council II on January 25, 1959, by Our Holy Father, Pope John XXIII, many reforms in the Catholic Church took place, especially involving the rubrics of the Mass. Mass language changed from Latin to English with the congregation actively engaged in the celebration. A new altar table was built by parishioner, Alvin Buhl, and placed in the center of the sanctuary allowing the priest to face the congregation during the liturgy. No longer would the congregation take a passive role. Rosary that was usually prayed silently during Mass was now prayed together by the whole congregation before Mass. Missalettes were purchased to encourage complete participation and interaction with the presiding priest. The Dialogue Mass was celebrated at the Low Mass with parishioners responding to Father's prayers. At the celebration of the Eucharist, Fr. Arnulf Buck faced the congregation for the first time on April 25, 1965.

In 1966, the congregation celebrated its 100th anniversary of its founding with a two-day schedule of events. On August 14, a Solemn High Mass was celebrated by Green Bay Auxiliary Bishop, the Most Rev. John Grellinger, S.T.D., assisted by parish sons, Rt. Rev. Msgr. Francis Heimann and Fr. Wilbert Buhl, with a private dinner to follow. On August 21, a widespread centennial celebration with Mass, barbecue chicken dinner, games, and entertainment was open to the public.

On February 11, 1968 the congregation voted to establish a Parish Council and elect twelve parishioners to represent the parish. Members of the first Parish Council of St. Martin's Congregation were: Victor Boll, Mrs. Alfred Geiser, Norbert Geiser, Mrs. Victor Geiser, Margaret Horst, Mrs. Art Kolbe, Clem Kolbe, Joseph Mueller, Mrs. Leonard Mueller, Florian Woelfel, Linus Woelfel, and Peter C. Woelfel.



The congregation voted to renovate the sanctuary in 1969. The two side altars were removed and a large wood crucifix was hung along the back wall of the sanctuary. The walls were repainted, a sound system was installed, and carpeting laid in the sanctuary. The renovation is depicted on the left at the 1975 wedding Mass of Dori Woelfel and Jim Schmitz. This renovation was the last major

activity at St. Martin's Parish under the pastorate of Fr. Arnulf Buck. On July 18, 1971, a farewell party was held in the parish hall for St. Martin's only resident pastor of twenty-one years, Fr. Arnulf, and a welcome for his successor, Fr. Mark Stangel, SDS.

The Salvatorian pastors had the responsibility of providing a parish bulletin until 1973 when Kathy Reiser took over the position for five years. In 1978, the Catholic Interparish Ministry in Chilton provided the bulletins. Kathy also typed the Religious Education programs and the Eucharistic ministry schedules.

The congregation continued to make the necessary updates to keep in accord with Green Bay Diocesan mandates. To accommodate face-to-face confession when receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation, the confessional was remodeled in 1976.

In 1977, parishioners donated rock from their fields to be used to build a welcome sign at the foot of the church driveway. One would hear stories from parishioners explaining why a particular rock was chosen to be cemented to form the stone pillars. The sign facing south read, "St. Martin Catholic Church" with the time of the weekend Masses. Facing north, the sign read, "God Bless You On Your Way." The general contractor was John Barany who laid the stones and Bette Daun who painted the sign.



July 1, 1978, marked a milestone in the Catholic Diocese of Green Bay when six parishes, St. Martin of Charlestown, St. Charles of Charlesburg, St. Augustine and

St. Mary of Chilton, Holy Trinity of Jericho, and St. Elizabeth of Klotten, formed the Catholic Interparish Ministry to be served by a team of four priests. Representatives from each of these six parishes sat on the Interparish Committee that consulted with the Pastoral Team on parish matters. The Pastoral Team consisted of Fr. David Christel, SDS, Fr. Paul Brick, SDS, Fr. William Eberhardy, SDS, and Fr. Paulinus Kraemer, SDS. Many good collaborative programs had been developed by the Interparish Team and Committee to the benefit of all the parishes. These include joint Adult Education programs, Youth Ministry, Religious Education programs, Ministry to the Sick and Elderly, Marriage and Baptism Preparation, and an interparish newsletter in addition to the weekly bulletin. The structure of the interparish ministry allowed the pastors each to concentrate in an area of responsibility, such as education, sacramental preparation, health care and ministry, while actively ministering to the people of his assigned parishes. As parish assignments changed, Fr. Paul Schulze, SDS, Fr. John De Groot, SDS, Fr. Robert Casper, SDS, Fr. Gerald Sirois, SDS, Fr. Loren Nys, SDS, Fr. Peter Coffey, SDS, and Fr. Gary New, SDS, joined the Interparish Team. The pastors assigned to St. Martin's Parish from 1978 to 1995 were:

- 1978 – Rev. David Christel, SDS
- 1978 – 1983 Rev. William Eberhardy, SDS
- 1983 – 1985 Rev. John De Groot, SDS
- 1985 – 1989 Rev. Paul Brick, SDS
- 1989 – 1993 Rev. Loren Nys, SDS
- 1993 – 1995 Rev. Gary New, SDS

Under the pastorate of Fr. William Eberhardy, the sanctuary underwent its final renovation. Because St. Mary's Catholic Parish of Hilbert, WI, built a new church, they no longer had use for the altars from their previous church. In 1981, their three altars were installed in St. Martin's Church. The Eucharistic table came from St. Elizabeth's Parish, Klotten, WI. To the right is a picture of the renovated St. Martin's sanctuary during the Christmas season.





The original rose window in the church's bell tower facing south deteriorated to the point that it needed to be restored or replaced. The congregation agreed the rose window would remain in place and the wood framework repaired and painted. Because of the window's fragile state, a circular emblem depicting our parish roots founded under the guidance of Our Creator was inserted in front of the window. The window can only be seen from the interior of the bell tower, and from the outside, only our memories will capture its beauty.

There have been many parishioners over the lifespan of the parish who volunteered countless hours of their time to the everyday maintenance of the buildings and grounds. There were many years when the trustees elected by the congregation were the custodians of the parish, but we also thank those known only to God, and to those we do know such as Victor Boll, Norbert Geiser, Florian Woelfel, and Leonard and Jean Kolbe who volunteered their time for the parish. We thank the sacristans of the parish such as the School Sisters, Agnes Woelfel, Dorothy Woelfel and Sharon Heimann who spent much time decorating the church and making the necessary preparations for the administration of the sacraments. We thank our musicians and their choirs, John C. and Mary Pfister, Peter C. Woelfel, Grace M. Kolbe, Michelle Blatz, Shelly Lorenz, and Deb Schmidt who used their God-given talents to lead the congregation as organist or guitarist.

The Catholic Interparish Ministry existed until July 1, 1995, when another milestone in the diocese occurred with the formation of the Chilton Area Catholic Ministry involving the same six parishes. While maintaining their own Parish Councils and Finance Councils, the six parishes were linked together in one common Pastoral Council by mutual agreement. The Pastoral Council would assist the Pastoral Team headed by the pastor and associate pastor through consultation on all matters that pertained to the mission of the parishes so that faith, knowledge, wisdom, ministry and responsibility were shared for the well-being of the six-parish community. This concept of collaboration resulted from diocesan studies that showed a decline in the number of priests available to serve parishes. It is the first time this model, called "a cluster of parishes," was used in the Green Bay Diocese. The Pastoral Team was led by Fr. Gary New, SDS, as Pastor and Fr. Fred Peters, SDS, as Associate Pastor. During the following ten years Fr. Glen

Sayers, SDS, and Fr. Thomas Apkin served as associate pastor also. Pastor of St. Martin's Parish was:

1995 - 2005 Rev. Gary New, SDS

On June 26, 1996, the parish celebrated its 130th anniversary of its founding with Green Bay Diocesan Bishop, the Most Reverend Robert Banks, celebrant of the Eucharist, followed by dinner and entertainment.



A devastating hailstorm on May 12, 2000, severely damaged the parish buildings. The west side stained glass windows of the church were shattered and debris strewn in every crack and crevice of the interior. The roof and steeple also sustained damage. The school-convent building was damaged to the point that it was demolished. The hall sustained much damage in the kitchen which resulted in replacement of many small appliances. With firm resolve the congregation banded together to restore the church and hall to its former beauty.

Because of a shortage of priests, the same six parishes, St. Martin Parish of Charlestown, St. Charles Parish of Charlesburg, St. Augustine Parish and St. Mary Parish of Chilton, Holy Trinity Parish of Jericho and St. Elizabeth Parish of Klotten, closed on June 30, 2005. A new parish, Good Shepherd Parish of Chilton, WI, was formed on July 1, 2005, from the six former parishes and uses the facilities of the former St. Mary Parish of Chilton. After July 1, 2005, the buildings of five of the six former parishes were open for funerals and weddings only until the Closing Mass took place. The last funeral Mass celebrated in St. Martin's Catholic Church was for Kathryn "Katie" Koehler on October 19, 2005. The last Catholic wedding Mass was celebrated at the marriage of Kevin Schmidt and Yana Romonova Sokolova on September 17, 2005, and the last Baptism administered was on November 14, 2004, for Brandon John Heimann, son of Shawn and Jessica Heimann.

The Closing Mass took place in St. Martin's Church on November 13, 2005, at 10:00 a.m. by celebrant, Fr. Gregory Smith. It was a cold, blustery morning when the church pews filled up for the last time. On the following page is the liturgy program for the Closing Mass of St. Martin's Parish.

CLOSING MASS – NOVEMBER 13, 2005

CELEBRANT: Father Greg Smith

GATHERING HYMN: #344 Table of Plenty

INTRODUCTORY RITE

Incense
Greeting
Rite of Blessing & Sprinkling Rite
Gloria – Sung with ALL Church bells ringing at this time
Opening Prayer

LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading – Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31
Responsorial Psalm – **“Blessed are those who fear the Lord”**
Second Reading – 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6
Gospel Acclamation - Alleluia
Gospel – Matthew 25:14-30
Homily
Sharing of the parish history
Procession of Remembrance
Father will finish prayer at each stop with–“Blessed be God forever!”

ALL RESPOND: “Blessed be God forever”

ALL SING: Refrain of #332, The Lord Is My Light

Prayers of the Faithful

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

OFFERING HYMN: #394 You Are Mine
Holy, Holy, Holy #35
Memorial Acclamation #36
Great Amen #40
Communion Rite
Lord’s Prayer
Lamb of God #41
Communion #452 Blest Are They
#378 Servant Song

Prayer after Communion

CONCLUDING RITE

Greeting
Blessing

RECESSIONAL HYMN: #376 City of God

Remain in pews for closing hymn. After the hymn, Father will invite everyone to come up and kiss the altar and then process out. He and the servers will be last.

OFFICIAL CLOSING OF THE DOORS

After the liturgy, the doors to the church were closed signifying Catholic worship would no longer be permitted in the building. Pictured to the left, Fr.



Gregory Smith closed the doors and formally announced the church was closed. It was a sobering moment. What had been said for years about the parish closing had really happened. After 139 years of meeting the spiritual needs of the Charlestown area, the congregation would no longer welcome new members into its fold with the Sacrament of Baptism, nor join the choir in a resounding chorus of “How Great Thou Art,” nor gather outside

church to catch up on the week's events. There are a multitude of events that will become a chapter in our own book of memories. Following Mass, parishioners, former parishioners and friends gathered for the last time for a social in the hall.

With its church set high on a hill overlooking farmland, St. Martin's Parish was primarily a rural community. Its parishioners were stewards of God's creation. From May through September, Father bestowed the weather blessing during Mass invoking God to grant favorable weather and a bountiful harvest - a tradition not seen anywhere else since the parish closed. The parish property has undergone many changes since its establishment in 1866; only the church, hall, shed, and cemetery remain today.

We were a vibrant Catholic community whose time was cut short by circumstances beyond our control. There will never again be a sense of identity with our former parish community - with the people we saw every Sunday morning. God has a plan for us. We may not always understand His ways, but He has promised us that, "He will always hold us in the palm of His Hand." With that thought we go forward to foster the love of God on earth and spread His Good News wherever we may be.

St. Martin's Parish land and buildings became the property of the newly-formed Good Shepherd Parish of Chilton, WI, and the Catholic Diocese of Green Bay. They, in turn, sold six acres of land and the buildings of the former St. Martin's Parish to St. Martin Heritage Park, Inc. for \$1.00. St. Martin's Catholic Cemetery remains under the administration of Good Shepherd Parish.



In 2006, the cross atop the steeple of St. Martin's Catholic Church was removed and the emblem of St. Martin Heritage Park, Inc. installed in its place. The circle symbolizes its goal to have the heritage of the community without end. The upward spike through it reflects the forward movement as a new community park and museum is established.



The centerpiece of the parish sign built in 1978 was removed in 2006 and two stones donated by Specification Stone/Western Lime, Charlestown, were installed to designate a change in property ownership.



In 2009, with funds donated by the descendants of the Joseph Koehler II family, a historic marker was installed in the southwest corner of St. Martin Heritage Park property designating the former St. Martin Catholic Church as a historic site listed in the Wisconsin Registry of Historic Places. The museum inside the church proudly displays showcases and exhibits detailing the parish history.

This history recalls the end of an era for St. Martin's Roman Catholic Parish and the beginning of a new era for St. Martin Heritage Park, Inc.

St. Martin's Parish Organizations

Christian Mothers Society

In 1882, Fr. Thomas von der Thannen, Pastor of St. Martin's Catholic Parish, established the St. Elisabeth Frauen Verein (Womens Society) with twenty-seven members. Officers of this new organization were Mrs. Elisabeth Heimann elected as President and Mrs. Victoria Pfister elected as Secretary-Treasurer. The Society was under the patronage of St. Elizabeth of Hungary. Their purpose was to promote the Christian spirit in the families and to provide material help to the church. In 1902, Fr. Sturmus Haertl, Pastor, gave the society the good advice to join the Central Christian Mothers Society at Pittsburgh. Shortly thereafter, a banner was bought by the Christian Mothers from Geschwister Burger of Württemberg, Germany for \$106.50, bearing the picture of Mother Ann and her child, Mary Most Holy. Before the parish hall was built in 1960, the Christian Mothers' charitable work and parish fundraisers, such as quilting, card parties and bingo were held in Hayton. When the parish hall was built, the Christian Mothers Society was responsible for overseeing funeral dinners, St. Martin feast day potlucks, and the stocking and upkeep of the kitchen. The twice-yearly cleaning of the parish buildings took place every spring and fall by the Society. The Christian Mothers received communion in a body every third Sunday of the month for decades. When the Young Ladies Sodality disbanded in 1969, the Christian Mothers Society opened their membership to the single women of the parish. From then on, the organization preferred to be called the Christian Womens Society. This organization was very active right up to the time of the parish closing on June 30, 2005.

Young Ladies Sodality of the Immaculate

Under the direction of Fr. Raphael Wittig, SDS, the Young Ladies Sodality of the Immaculate was organized on December 8, 1904, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, with a beginning membership of thirty-three young women. Its purpose was to promote the honor and love of Mary Immaculate, to give financial aid to the various parish projects and to help with the twice-yearly cleaning of the parish buildings. The organization's first elected officers were: President-Miss Elisabeth Heimann; Vice President and Song leader-Miss Frances Woelfel; Treasurer-Miss Katie Gebhard, Sr. A banner, made in France, was purchased in 1907 at a cost of \$83 bearing the picture of the Sodality's patroness, the Immaculate Conception. The Sodality received communion in a body every first Sunday of the month for decades. The organization disbanded in 1969, and the young ladies were welcomed to join the Christian Womens Society.

Marian Young Men Association

The Marian Young Men Association was organized on May 31, 1908, under the direction of Fr. Raphael Wittig, SDS, with a beginning membership of twenty-three young men. The first officers elected were: President-Max Eckes; Vice President-Joseph Anders; Secretary-John Schwarz; Banner Carrier-Conrad Woelfel; Trustees - Peter Geiser and Lorenz Woelfel. The Association was under the patronage of St. Raphael the Archangel. Its purpose was the special adoration of the Holy Mother of God, Mary; that by giving her honor and being faithful to the Church, a true virtuous life was promoted. The Association provided financial assistance and manual labor for maintenance of the buildings and grounds. In 1910, a banner was purchased from Württemberg, Germany, for \$137.41 bearing the picture of St. Raphael the Archangel. This organization combined with the Holy Name Society in 1924.

Holy Name Society

The Holy Name Society was organized on May 4, 1924, under the direction of Fr. Fintan Holzknacht, SDS. The Society was made up of two sections: a junior section for single men and a senior section for married men. The first elected officers representing both sections were: President-Hugo Woelfel; Vice president-Hugo Kolbe; Secretary-Adelbert R. Woelfel; Treasurer-Joseph Bruckner. Its purpose was to promote the love and respect for the Holy Name of Jesus and to provide financial assistance and manual labor for maintenance of the buildings and grounds. In 1930, the Society purchased silk material and decorative braid for \$23.69 to re-design the Marian Young Men Association banner. The picture of St. Raphael the Archangel was removed from the banner and, in its place, a picture depicting the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The Holy Name Society received communion in a body every second Sunday of the month for decades and remained active right up to the time of the parish closing on June 30, 2005.

The Lay Apostolate

A notation in a ledger of January 15, 1928, written by Fr. Epiphanius Deibele, SDS, states:

Members of the St. Martin's Congregation of Charlestown, Wis. appointed for the Lay Apostolate: Mr. J. C. Pfister, Hayton, Wis.; Mr. Fred Woelfel, New Holstein R. 1; Mr. Frank Geiser, New Holstein R. 1; Mr. Fred Buhl, New Holstein R. 1; Mr. Robert Woelfel, Hayton, Wis.

No other information could be found of this organization.

The Rosary Confraternity

The Rosary Confraternity was established in St. Martin's Parish in 1904. The obligation as a member of the Confraternity was to pray fifteen decades of the Rosary each week which may be recited alone or with others. Parish records reveal rosary and benediction services were the highlight of twice-weekly May and October devotions to honor Our Blessed Mother and meditate on events of Our Lord's life. The parish school children would start every morning with the rosary. Before every Eucharistic Service, praying of the rosary was faithfully carried out as well as being prayed daily in the home. Families were united in their belief that praying the rosary helped one grow in holiness and in one's prayer life. From Sister Lucia, one of the children whom Our Lady of Fatima appeared to, says, "My impression is that Our Lady wanted to give ordinary people, who might not know how to pray, this simple method of getting closer to God."

Apostleship of Prayer

The Apostleship of Prayer was established in St. Martin's Parish on March 19, 1902. Its mission was to encourage Christians to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ by making a daily offering of themselves to the Lord, by praying for the Holy Father's monthly intentions, and by fostering a special devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Parish books indicate Eugene Pfister, Elisabeth Woelfel, Mrs. Conrad Woelfel, and Mrs. Alfred Geiser were lead promoters for this organization.

Catholic Knights Branch 194, Charlestown

Catholic Knights Branch 194 was organized on May 27, 1900, as a Fraternal Life Insurance Organization for Catholics whose purpose is to provide financial aid to widows and orphans and to promote charitable parish activities. The first elected officers were: President-Bro. Xavier Geiser; Vice President-Bro. Fred Woelfel, Sr.; Recording Secretary-Bro. Wendelin Schierl; Financial Secretary and Treasurer-Bro. George Woelfel, Jr.; Trustee 1-Bro. Joseph E. Woelfel; Trustee 2-Bro. Andrew M. Pfister; Trustee 3-Bro. Aloys Woelfel. John Gebhard held the first elected banner carrier position in 1905 with the purchase of a new banner bearing the picture of the Holy Family. Also added was the elected position of marshal filled by Carl Mahlich. The Catholic Knights have donated generously throughout its association with St. Martin's Parish with church, school, rectory, and hall equipment. They have co-sponsored numerous brat fries, and porkie and pancake breakfasts with their Matching Fund program. They also made a generous donation toward the restoration of the parish buildings when the 2000 hailstorm hit. Branch 194 continues to be very active in the Charlestown area and St. Martin Heritage Park, Inc.

St. Martin's Parish Catholic Education System

Public education of the children of the Charlestown area was mostly provided by lay teachers who taught in public block schools scattered throughout the township. A block school consisted of a one-room classroom heated by a woodstove and an outhouse conveniently located nearby. The teacher was usually responsible for starting the woodstove early in the morning and adding wood to keep it burning all day besides teaching the children. Since Charlestown was largely inhabited by German emigrants, the lay teacher usually taught in German. Most children came from area farms who were always needed to help with the chores making attendance at school haphazard at best. The United States flag, a photograph of George Washington, and blackboards or slates, were among the furnishings of every block school. While area pastors were available to administer the sacraments and celebrate liturgical services and devotions, parents were largely responsible for passing on the tenets of their Catholic faith to their children. The 1874 plat map for the Township of Charlestown depicts a total of nine schools - eight public schools and one Catholic boarding school operated by the Oschwald Association of St. Nazianz. In one of St. Martin's Parish books, it states that in 1861 the Charlestown children were receiving their education at a block school taught by Sister Helena Ruh and Sister Helena Wochman of the Oschwald Association of St. Nazianz. No other information was provided.

The Oschwald Association of St. Nazianz, commonly known as The Oschwald Colony, was under the leadership of Fr. Ambrose Oschwald. In 1854, Fr. Oschwald, with a band of 113 followers, emigrated from Baden, Germany, to the wilderness of the Township of Eaton in Manitowoc County. He was a man of remarkable virtue, ability, vigor and undaunted courage. Credit for forming the foundation of the village of St. Nazianz has been given to him. The Oschwald Colony was a model of the first Christian community whereby all things were to be held in common. Members worked without wages, but received everything they would need. Any surplus money or materials were to be used for charitable purposes. Fr. Oschwald was responsible for building a monastery for the Brothers, a convent for the Sisters, an orphanage, seminary and two churches. The Colony suffered many hardships-from bitter cold winters to poor harvests. Over time, the community flourished and he became concerned about the area children growing up without a Catholic education. An excerpt from the *Diamond Jubilee book of St. Nazianz* states:

In those days there were few Catholic parishes in that vicinity, and as a result, many children were growing up without a Catholic education.

On April 7, 1861, Fr. Oschwald bought 160 acres of land for \$2000 from William Fuessnicht in Section 27 in the Township of Charlestown, situated to the southeast of the future St. Martin's Parish grounds, for the purpose of erecting a boarding school. With cooperation from the settlers and the Oschwald Colony, a three-story building, pictured to the right, was erected in 1872 to be used as a Catholic boarding school for the children of the entire neighborhood and staffed by the Oschwald Sisters of St. Nazianz. St. Martin's Parish records indicate Sister Helena Wochman, Sister Anna Maria Heil, Sister Magdalena Birkle, and Sister Theresia Ruh staffed the boarding school. Many a child living within a radius of fifty or more miles received his education from those pioneer Sisters of the Colony. Sister Nerina Buhl, a sister daughter of St. Martin's Parish, recalls her father, John, stating the Oschwald Sisters would sometimes stay with the Andreas Pfister family who lived across Highway T to the east of the boarding school. The boarding school flourished for five years from 1872 to 1877. When St. Martin's Parish and other congregations in the area built their own schools, the need for the boarding school diminished. In 1885, the property was sold for the sum of \$6,800. The west 80-acre parcel was sold to Frederick Woelfel and the east 75-acre parcel was sold to Robert Heimann (five acres less according to a government survey).



For decades this building stood empty, its shell was a reminder of the importance it had for the education of the area children. Today there is nothing left to see - only memories of what once was.

When the congregation built the present stone church in 1876, the logs that made up the original St. Martin's Church were used to erect a school. Now area children who were attending the Oschwald boarding school could attend their parish school. In 1890, under the direction of Fr. John Decker, Pastor, a new building containing the school and convent was built. On the west side of church was the finest of gravel which was used for the foundation and sidewalk. The "gravel pit" remained there for decades until around 1940 when it was filled in because the children's safety became an issue. The school had one classroom and it is unclear how many rooms the convent had. It seems in the beginning the Oschwald Sisters were in charge of the parochial school, but for some time lay teachers also helped out with teaching. However, in 1896 the School Sisters of St. Francis of Milwaukee, WI, took over the school and had been in charge until the school closed in 1967.

Under the pastorate of Fr. Raphael Wittig, SDS, the congregation voted to remodel the school and convent in 1907. The classroom was enlarged and a room downstairs and a bedroom upstairs were added to the convent. In 1928, the congregation voted to add a 20 x 18 feet addition to the south end of the smaller schoolroom. This was done under the direction of Fr. Epiphanius Deibele, SDS. In 1934, a new well was drilled and in 1938 the waterworks was installed. From 1949 to 1959, many improvements were made such as indoor lavatories for the children, insulation of the ceiling, a new furnace, and the kitchen re-modeled.



The school, pictured on the left taken around 1929, had two classrooms, one each for four grades on the south side of the school-convent building. The little classroom, containing grades 1 to 4, had an alcove where the Eucharist was celebrated.

The convent was on the north side of the building, consisting of a kitchen, dining room and living room on the first floor, and three bedrooms and bathroom on the second floor. Classes were taught in German until the late 1920's. It's interesting to note that until 1930, 8th grade students had to travel to Chilton to pass a state test in order to graduate. When the parish hall was built in 1959-60, a connecting hallway between the school and hall was also built. Because of a decline in the number of students and the departure of the School Sisters of St. Francis, the school was closed in 1967. School books and furnishings were sold at an auction and the building was rented to Calumet County New Hope Center of Chilton on weekdays for several years.



Sister Leonina, Superior, (now Sister Mary Alice Simanek) locking the doors for the last time marking an end to the 90-year Catholic school era.



Fr. Arnulf Buck, SDS, with school and convent items ready for the auction block.



The last students to graduate from St. Martin's School in 1967 with Sister Leonina (now Sister Mary Alice Simanek) were front row: John Heimann, Diane Heimann, Roger Woelfel and Rose Brunner. Back row: Tom Koehler, Gary Wollersheim, Audrey Boll and James Mueller

The following School Sisters of St. Francis were assigned to St. Martin's School:

- 1896 – 1897 Sisters Ida, Aegidia
- 1897 – 1898 Sisters Eulalia, Michaela, Zita
- 1898 – 1900 Sisters Michaela, Lucida
- 1900 – 1901 Sisters Michaela, Johanna
- 1901 – 1902 Sisters Michaela, Lucida
- 1902 – 1903 Sisters Michaela, Laura
- 1903 – 1906 Sisters Michaela, Petronilla I
- 1906 – 1907 Sisters Michaela, Lazarina
- 1907 – 1908 Sisters Paula I, Frida, Hortulana
- 1908 – 1909 Sisters Paula, Frida, Josephina II
- 1909 – 1910 Sisters Paula, Frida, Beda
- 1910 – 1911 Sisters Pascalina, Jordana, Beda
- 1911 – 1912 Sisters Pascalina, Hereswida, Peregrina
- 1912 – 1913 Sisters Josephina, Ermenhilde, Mauritia
- 1913 – 1915 Sisters Perpetua, Walimberta, Mauritia
- 1915 – 1920 Sisters Perpetua, Walimberta, Thekla
- 1920 – 1921 Sisters Euphemia, Chrysantha, Claretta
- 1921 – 1922 Sisters Michaela, Aqina, Appolonia
- 1922 – 1926 Sisters Michaela, Imelda I, Thekla
- 1927 – 1928 Sisters Michaela, Imelda I, Loyola I
- 1928 – 1929 Sisters Michaela, Verona, Loyola I

1929 – 1930	Sisters Verona, Camilla, Loyola I
1830 – 1931	Sisters Camilla, Imelda I, Loyola I
1931 – 1932	Sisters Viro, Juda, Gerarda
1932 – 1933	Sisters Viro, Juda, Gerarda, Meinrada
1933 – 1934	Sisters Viro, Juda, Alena
1934 – 1935	Sisters Viro, Juda, Cortona
1935 – 1936	Sisters Cordula, Marcellina (6 mo.), Gerald, Eulogia, Procopia
1936 – 1937	Sisters Cordula, Odila (6 mo), Carina, Aquinata II, Bernadone
1937 – 1938	Sisters Michael, Confilia, Seniorina, Alvera
1938 – 1939	Sisters Michael, Adam, Alvera
1939 – 1940	Sisters Bertha, Adam, Alena
1940 – 1941	Sisters Bertha Ambrosina, Alena
1941 – 1942	Sisters Bertha, Ambrosina (2 mo.), Sigismunda, Alena
1942 – 1945	Sisters Bertha, Liberta II, Alena
1945 – 1946	Sisters Rosella, Liberta II, Alena
1946 – 1947	Sisters Anthony, Arnolda, Gislana
1947 – 1948	Sisters Lybia, Liberta II, Gundrada
1948 – 1949	Sisters Lybia, Liberta II, Elvana
1949 – 1950	Sisters Valeria, Liberta II, Elvana
1950 – 1951	Sisters Bertha, Alora, Elvana
1951 – 1952	Sisters Bertha, John Vianney, Wigberta
1952 – 1953	Sisters Bertha, John Vianney, Deotilla
1953 – 1955	Sisters Amata, John Vianney, Deotilla
1955 – 1957	Sisters Amata, Cecilian, Tracia
1957 – 1959	Sisters Amata, Cecilian, Gonzales
1959 – 1960	Sisters Adelheid, Cecilian, Felixina
1960 – 1961	Sisters Concepta, Francis Joseph, Felixina
1961 – 1962	Sisters Concepta, Leonina, Felixina
1962 – 1963	Sisters Concepta, Leonina, Bonita
1963 – 1965	Sisters Leonina, Salesia, Bonita
1965 – 1966	Sisters Leonina, Salesia, Guido
1966 – 1967	Sisters Dulcetta, Diomedia
1967 – 1972	Sisters Leonina and Jeolanta catechized summer sessions

In 1967, the congregation initiated a religious education program on Saturday mornings for grades 1-8 which would continue to instill Catholic beliefs and values in its children who were now attending public schools. Fr. Arnulf Buck addressed the ladies at a Christian Mothers meeting requesting that volunteers come forward to become C.C.D. (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) teachers for grades 1-8. According to Hildegard Geiser who attended the meeting, Fr. Arnulf encouraged the women because of their roles as mothers and teachers of their own children in the home that they would do well as teachers by extending their talents in the classroom. Six women came forward: Rita Forstner Hildegard Geiser, Marcella

Geiser, Alvera Mueller, Ethel Mueller, Romilda Schierl, and student, Janet Geiser. Hildegard said none of us had teaching experience, but we took our responsibilities seriously and did our best. Grace M. Kolbe provided organ music for C.C.D. liturgies. From 1968-1972, former teacher at St. Martin's, Sister Mary Alice Simanek, along with her sister, Sister Mary Frances Simanek, helped with the 1st Reconciliation and 1st Eucharist preparation classes for two weeks in June.

As the C.C.D. program developed, more parishioners and non-parishioners generously gave of their time to be teachers. By 1970, there was a teacher for every grade. In the fall of 1971, Eulalia "Lollie" Mangan accepted the position of coordinator of the C.C.D. program. At the same time, arrangements were made with St. Charles Parish of Charlesburg to send their grades 1-6 children to our C.C.D. program on Saturday mornings. When Lollie Mangan retired as coordinator in 1979, Ethel Mueller succeeded her as coordinator, followed by Kathy Reiser. LaVerne Schmidt accepted the coordinator position in 1982 and continued until the program ended at St. Martin's in 1998. During this time period, a kindergarten class was added in 1985. As a result of the Chilton Area Catholic Ministry being formed in 1995 giving parents a choice of sending their children to St. Mary's or St. Martin's for religious instruction, attendance dropped causing St. Martin's Parish to discontinue religious education at their site in the spring of 1998.

Among those who accepted the call to be C.C.D. teachers for kindergarten through grade 8 were Madlyn Bittner, Melinda Bittner, Melissa Bittner, Amy Bonlander, Lisa Bradley, Linda Brunner, Alice Buhl, Mary Buhl, Dale Chapman, Christine Daun, Linda Daun, Rita Forstner, Tammy Franzen, Hildegard Geiser, Janet Geiser, Janice Geiser, Marcella Geiser, Sharon Geiser, Barbara Gudex, Sharon Heimann, Margaret Horst, Stacy Karls, Cindy Kilgas, Grace K. Kolbe, Esther Lorenz, Lollie Mangan, Mary Beth Mangan, Sharon Meyer, Barbara Miller, Alvera Mueller, Deb Mueller, Ethel Mueller, Laurie Mueller, Susan Mueller, Vicki Olsen, Kathy Reiser, Kathy Riesterer, Rene Riesterer, Romilda Schierl, Greg Schmidt, LaVerne Schmidt, Tim Schmidt, Bernita Selk, Barbara Steiner, Joanne Taylor, Aggie Woelfel, Cathy Woelfel, Debbie Woelfel, and Faye Wollersheim. There were substitute teachers who filled in as needed and room monitors who volunteered in the classrooms.

From the 1950's-1981, St. Martin's high school students in grades 9-12 attended C.C.D. classes at St. Martin's Parish, St. Mary's Parish, Chilton, or St. Charles Parish, Charlesburg, In 1981, St. Martin's Parish offered C.C.D. classes for its high school students. When Chilton Area Catholic Ministry was formed in 1995, all high school students attended classes in Charlesburg or Chilton.

Among those who accepted the call to be high school C.C.D. teachers were Madlyn Bittner, Fr. Arnulf Buck, Fr. John de Groot, Sharon Heimann, Cindy Kilgas, Lucy Propson, Kathy Reiser, LaVerne Schmidt, Joanne Wagner, and Joan Woelfel.

The C.C.D. program was renamed Religious Education (R.E.) in the 1980's. R.E. coordinators, along with their staff of teachers, were conscientious about attending seminars and in-services with the goal of becoming Diocesan-certified. These educational opportunities helped the R.E. staff grow in their faith as well as encouraged them to teach beyond the classroom by organizing seasonal programs such as The Living Stations of the Cross presented during Lent under Lollie Mangan's direction. Prayer-filled cocoons hanging from a barren tree branch were transformed into colorful butterflies at the Easter Vigil service. The decoration of the Jesse Tree was the focal point of the Advent season. The Christmas Eve liturgies were alive with the sounds of children presenting different pageants directed by LaVerne Schmidt, along with a live Nativity scene gracing the sanctuary.

The hailstorm of May 12, 2000, sealed the fate of the school-convent building. Straight-line winds and hail blasted through the west and north windows causing considerable damage throughout the building. It was a tough decision to make because so much history and so many memories of childhood school days were wrapped up in every room, but the congregation voted to tear down the building. It was said by some senior members of the parish that a portion of the foundation was from the original school built in 1890.

With every crushing blow of the backhoe, another wall came down. What a story those walls could tell. St. Martin's Parish had been providing a Catholic parochial school education based on the Bible and the precepts of the Roman Catholic Church since 1877. Hundreds of Charlestown children entered kindergarten or first grade, graduated, then settled in their chosen career or continued on with their education. Growing in wisdom, building character, and putting into practice the Golden Rule, "Love God" and "Love your neighbor as yourself," were all part and parcel of what a Catholic education entailed besides learning the academic fundamentals. The School Sisters of St. Francis and the Salvatorian pastors were models to emulate in the ways of our Lord.



In conclusion, thank you to the Oswald Sisters of St. Nazianz, the School Sisters of St. Francis of Milwaukee, the lay men and women, and our pastors who so generously gave of their time and talent to the parish children.

St. Martin's Parish Rectory

When St. Martin's Parish was established in 1866, priests from Marytown, St. Nazianz, Charlesburg, and Chilton traveled back and forth from their parish to St. Martin's to celebrate the Eucharist and administer the sacraments on a casual basis until 1899. When the Salvatorian Fathers of St. Nazianz took over the parish in 1899, they also traveled back and forth because many Salvatorian priests had employment with the high school and seminary they operated in St. Nazianz.

On January 11, 1920, the congregation voted to build a rectory for their parish priest. The Board of Directors consisting of Fr. Sturmius Haertl, Pastor; the trustees George Woelfel, Jr. and Fred Woelfel, Sr.; and the Building Committee consisting of Henry Heimann, Joseph Kolbe, and John Buhl was in charge of the project. The rectory was to be built to the east of the church where the old graveyard laid. With permission from Bishop Paul Peter Rhode of the Catholic Diocese of Green Bay, graves in the old graveyard were moved to the north of the church in the main graveyard. Arthur B. Kastell of New Holstein submitted a plan for the new rectory and Julius Schroeder was hired as contractor for the sum of \$6066. It was then agreed that Carl Mahlich would deliver the sand used for the building and Carl Oldenburg would do the painting of the rectory. It was voted down not to install waterworks, but electricity was included. A new furnace was installed in 1942 and 1958 and the house was painted in 1935 and 1956. Below are two views of the parish rectory.



Fr. Arnulf Buck, a Salvatorian Father, was the only resident pastor taking charge of the parish from 1950 to 1971. During the school year he would commute from St. Nazianz where he taught languages at the Salvatorian seminary. During the summer months he took residence in the rectory where he cared for the church and surrounding buildings besides carrying out his pastoral duties. The rectory was never used as a residence after Fr. Arnulf's departure. It stood vacant until 1980 when the parish decided the rectory was no longer needed. The rectory was sold

and transported to a lot on County Highway Y in Charlestown where it became the private residence of Elmer Kolbe, a grandson of one of the first families of the parish. It still remains in the Kolbe family.

Before 1920, the John C. Pfister family provided room and board in their home for the priests who came to the parish over the weekend almost from the time the parish was founded up to 1920 when the rectory was built. Thereafter, Miss Louise Pfister and Miss Frances Woelfel served meals for the priests and kept the house in order until Frances died in 1960 and Louise moved to Chilton. Quoting Fr. Arnulf Buck, pastor of St. Martin Parish, from St. Martin Parish Centennial book in reference to the Pfister family, Louise and Frances:



Frances Woelfel and Louise Pfister

“May the Good Lord who does not leave a cup of cold water to the least of his brethren go unrewarded; reward them abundantly for all they have done for his priests.”

Those parishioners who can still remember the rectory facing to the south have only memories of a time when their ancestors had high hopes that building a rectory would ensure the placement of a resident pastor in their parish. When Fr. Arnulf took up residence, the congregation wholeheartedly gave him their support and he, in turn, gave dedicated service to the parish. The congregation missed this man of short stature with a heavy German accent. He mirrored Jesus by living the Beatitudes in his daily life.

St. Martin's Parish Hall

Under the pastorate of Fr. Arnulf Buck, SDS, the congregation voted in 1959 to erect a hall to be used for meetings and social gatherings. A brick and cement block structure that was connected to the school-convent building by a hallway was started that year and finished the following year. Since most of the work was done by members of the parish the cost of the hall was only about \$13,000 which otherwise would have been at least \$30,000. Riesterer & Schnell donated a refrigerator for the kitchen, the Young Ladies Sodality donated a stove, the Christian Mothers donated folding chairs, and the Holy Name Society donated tables and chairs. The hall had a modern kitchen with all the necessary equipment to serve meals to about 150 persons at one time. The hall had been ideal for holding many parish functions such as Halloween parties, Catholic Knights Branch 194 Christmas parties, card parties, dances, rummage sales, summer picnics, funeral dinners and wedding dinners; Catholic School and Religious Education festivities; St. Martin feast day potlucks, and meetings of the parish organizations; besides making the hall available for rental by outside parties. Rt. Rev. Monsignor Jaekels blessed the hall. The first social function in the parish hall was the celebration following Fr. Wilbert Buhl's First Solemn Mass on June 19, 1960. During the school year the hall was used as a gymnasium by the school children.



The picture above depicts how the school and hall looked in 2000 before the May 12, 2000 hailstorm damaged the buildings. Straight-line winds and hail slammed through the west and north side windows blowing debris into every corner and crevice. Coffee urns, food warmers and Nesco roasters were lying in

water. The congregation agreed to restore the hall and construct an addition on the north side consisting of bathrooms and a storage area.



Participating in the groundbreaking ceremonies for the new addition to the parish hall in 2000 is left to right: Stephen Hammen of Hammen Construction, Cathy Woelfel, Joe Heimann, Joe Halbach, Fr. Gary New, Pastor, and Roger Woelfel

The severely pockmarked cross that stood atop the steeple of St. Martin's Church was taken down and is now standing outside the northeast corner of the hall. A new cross was purchased for the steeple. Building the hall was a tremendous accomplishment for so small a congregation, but when one puts their faith in God, anything is possible. Below is a picture of the hall as it stands today.



St. Martin's Parish Cemetery

One gets a sense of the history of the parish when strolling through the rows of tombstones. With each tombstone, there is a story to tell, whether that story is known only to God or there are descendants who pass the story down through the generations. The birth and death dates tell whether this was a pioneer of Charlestown who witnessed the establishment of the parish or a parishioner in 2005 who experienced the closing of the parish. Some tombstones are absent or unreadable due to erosion by the elements; some have epithets and some do not. The early tombstones are in German and the later tombstones are in English. The children's cemetery lies behind and to the east of the church and the adult's cemetery lies behind and to the west of the church.

The residents of St. Martin's Catholic Cemetery were faithful followers of the Risen Lord and believed in His message of eternal life:

"I am the resurrection and the life.
Whoever believes in me will live, even though
he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me
will never die." John 11:25

Written in a parish book on August 25, 1866, is a resolution that all registered families may have claims for graves on the cemeteries of St. Martin's. Evidently, there were two cemeteries staked out - one to the east of the church building and the other behind the church building. The cemetery to the east was referred to as the old graveyard. Financial records and annual meeting minutes reveal that in 1920 the congregation voted to move the graves from the old graveyard to the main graveyard in order to construct the rectory east of the church.

Under the pastorate of Fr. Arnulf Buck, a Cemetery Association was formed to ensure the perpetual care of the graves and maintenance of the cemetery grounds. In 1967, Fr. Arnulf, Peter C. Woelfel, and the two trustees, Norbert Geiser and Victor Boll, formed St. Martin's Parish Cemetery Association. They established rules and regulations according to the Catholic Diocese of Green Bay guidelines and the congregation formally adopted them the following year.

The altar table in the cemetery was used for celebrating the Eucharist on special days such as Ascension Thursday. All Souls Day devotions on November 2 were held in the cemetery with the blessing of the graves.

In 2004, a separate entrance to the cemetery off of Church Road was constructed. A new cemetery monument picturing our former parish grounds was

installed and priest son of the parish, Fr. Roman Mueller, SDS, blessed it on June 26, 2005. Below Roger Woelfel and Joseph Heimann are unveiling the monument.



St. Martin's Catholic Cemetery is currently under the administration of Good Shepherd Parish of Chilton, WI.

St. Martin's Parish Religious Vocations

St. Martin's Parish has three priest sons who have dedicated their lives in their vocation to the priesthood. The late Monsignor Francis C. Heimann and Fr. Wilbert L. Buhl are affiliated with the Green Bay Diocese, and Fr. Roman C. Mueller is affiliated with the Society of the Divine Savior or commonly known as the Salvatorian Fathers.

Monsignor Francis C. Heimann

born: 1893 ordained: 1918 died: 1985
bestowed title of monsignor: 1962

Reverend Wilbert L. Buhl

born: 1934 ordained: 1960

Reverend Roman C. Mueller, SDS

born: 1946 ordained: 1974

The parish also has twenty women who professed vows in the School Sisters of Notre Dame, School Sisters of St. Francis of Milwaukee or the Sisters of the Divine Savior:

Sister M. Coletta (Carolina Buhl), SSND

born: 1830 professed perpetual vows: 1863 died: 1901

Sister M. Alexia (Martha Pfister), SSND

born: 1834 professed perpetual vows: 1855 died: 1870

Sister M. Wolfgang (Anna Gruber), SSND

born: 1868 professed perpetual vows: 1892 died: 1941

Sister M. Coletina (Victoria Buhl), SSND

born: 1868 professed perpetual vows: 1899 died: 1953

Sister M. Fridolina (Barbara Woelfel), SSND

born: 1871 professed perpetual vows: 1902 died: 1951

Sister M. Joachim (Anna Woelfel), SSND

born: 1872 professed perpetual vows: Unknown died: 1959

Sister M. Tharsisia (Josephine Geiser), SSSF

born: 1891 professed perpetual vows: 1923 died: 1962

Sister M. de Cruce (Anna Reiser), SSSF	born: 1892	professed perpetual vows: 1915	died: 1976
Sister M. Anatolia (Caecilia Koehler), SSSF	born: 1892	professed perpetual vows: 1915	died: 1945
Sister M. Raphael (Catherine Gebhard), SSSF	born: 1892	professed perpetual vows: 1915	died: 1973
Sister Nerina Buhl (Rosa Buhl), SSSF	born: 1895	professed perpetual vows: 1926	died: 1991
Sister M. Camillia (Rosa Schwarz), SSSF	born: 1897	professed perpetual vows: 1925	died: 1981
Sister Elizabeth Ann Buhl (Elizabeth Buhl), SSSF	born: 1905	professed perpetual vows: 1937	died: 1995
Sister M. RONALDA (Cleopha Woelfel), SSSF	born: 1908	professed perpetual vows: 1931	died: 1999
Sister Geraldine Buhl (Ottilia Buhl), SDS	born: 1909	professed perpetual vows: 1938	died: 1996
Sister Angela Marie Gebhard (Angela Gebhard), SSSF	born: 1909	professed perpetual vows: 1939	died: 1992
Sister Hildegarde Buhl (Hildegarde Buhl), SSSF	born: 1910	professed perpetual vows: 1941	died: 1981
Sister Antona Mueller (Olydia Mueller), SSSF	born: 1920	professed perpetual vows: 1950	died: 2005
Sister Joan Frances Mueller (Johanna Mueller), SSSF	born: 1921	professed perpetual vows: 1947	died: 2014
Sister Francesca Woelfel (Tharsilla Woelfel), SSSF	born: 1922	professed perpetual vows: 1954	died: 2006

St. Martin's Parish Musicians and Choirs

Sing for joy to the Lord, all the earth;
praise him with songs and shouts of joy!
Sing praises to the Lord!
Play music on the harps!
Blow trumpets and horns,
and shout for joy to the Lord, our King!
Psalm 98:4-6

The Sisters in charge of the parochial school formed and conducted the children's choir. In the course of time an adult choir was organized. Its first and long-time organist seems to have been John C. Pfister and his choir was composed of Victoria Pfister, Mary Woelfel, and John Pfister. St. Martin's Parish ledgers states that from 1887-1894 his wife, Mary Pfister, played under the direction of her husband, John C. During that time period, her choir members were George Woelfel, Robert Woelfel, Mary Woelfel, Anna Woelfel, Andrew Pfister, Lawrence Pfister, Margaret Pfister, Anna Pfister, Joseph Heimann, and Mary Heimann. No transaction has been found regarding when and where the first organ was purchased.

In 1916, Peter C. Woelfel took over the position of organist and played for over fifty years. Peter's choir in the 1960's consisted of George Heimann, Elizabeth Buhl, Louise Boll, Dorothy Woelfel, Marie Roehrig, Kathy Geiser, Bernita Kolbe, Mary Jane Kolbe, Carolyn Brunner and Joan Roehrig.

Grace M. Kolbe became the parish organist when Peter C. Woelfel retired in the middle 1960's. Her choir members were Marie Roehrig, Grace K. Kolbe, Francis Mahlich, Alfred and Marcella Geiser, Alfred Woelfel, Jr., Dorothy Woelfel, Jellane Blatz, Michelle Blatz, Greg and Deb Schmidt, Esther, Kim, Shelly, and Jeff Lorenz, Leon and Karen Geiser, Tom Biese, and Elsie Mueller.

Michelle Blatz was organist at St. Martin's in the late 1970's, playing every other Sunday with Grace M. Kolbe. When Grace retired, Michelle was the full-time organist until the parish closed in 2005. For some years in the 1980's, Shelly Lorenz shared her talents as organist, also. Deborah Schmidt was the parish guitarist who played on a regular basis from the 1990's-2005. Choir members of these three musicians were Grace K. Kolbe, Alfred and Marcella Geiser, Francis Mahlich, Elsie Mueller, Tom Biese, Leon, Karen, Cindy, Derek, Marissa, and Gina Geiser, Grace M. Kolbe, Greg, Deb, and Sarah Schmidt, Dorothy Woelfel, Jellane Blatz, Cathy Woelfel, Lauren Geiser, Deb Mueller.

Hailstorm of May 12, 2000

Friday, May 12, 2000, started out like any other day, a beautiful sunny day; but it ended leaving the parishioners of St. Martin's Congregation stunned. As the morning went by, the sky turned from bright sunshine to gray clouds to skies darker than anyone could ever remember, giving everyone an eerie feeling. Sounding like a passing train, the storm lasted only a few minutes; but in that time, everything in its path was damaged or destroyed. St. Martin's Parish buildings stood directly in the path of a straight-line hail storm, a term no one had ever heard of before. Perhaps, if the hailstones would have descended straight down or at a diagonal, there would have been less damage, but the winds from the west were so intense that the hailstones crashed horizontally against the buildings. The storm windows on the church could not protect the beautiful stain glass windows inside. The hailstones blasted through the five windows on the west side smashing them to smithereens. Pieces of the windows were scattered throughout the interior of the church. Gale force winds and rain gained entrance into the church, plastering the walls and statues with leaves that were ripped off the trees. Its roof and steeple also sustained damage along with the cross atop the steeple. That symbol, the cross, which identifies us with Our Savior, Jesus Christ, which always shone so brightly on sunny days, was severely dented.

The school-convent building was so severely damaged that the congregation agreed to have it demolished. The hailstones also blasted through the west side windows of the parish hall, wreaking havoc in the kitchen. Curtains were shredded, coffee urns, roasters and other equipment were lying in water. The question now asked was,

"What happens now?"

While wind was still blowing through and shards of glass still falling inside the church, Roger Woelfel, a parishioner of the parish, asked Fr. Michael Bigley, SDS, associate pastor of Chilton Area Catholic Ministry, if Mass could be celebrated on Sunday.

Fr. Mike's reply was, "Why not?"

Immediately, parishioners worked together to board up the windows on all the buildings, swept up the stain glass window pieces, cleaned off the walls and statues, and put the kitchen to rights. And so, only two days after the storm, on Mothers Day, with the windows boarded up on the outside, and the west side pews roped off, Mass was celebrated in St. Martin's Church.

“There were tears,” Woelfel said of that first post-storm Mass. “There might even have been one that dripped off of Father Mike’s face.”

To understand the significance of that Mass, one needs to understand that for years the congregation has had a cloud hanging over their parish. There were rumors that their small parish may not be around for long. Rumors of a consolidation with another parish had been around for years, and seemed to gain momentum since the storm. So Mass was held on Mothers Day and throughout the spring and summer, using only the east half of the pews until new storm windows were installed in the fall.

It was a sobering atmosphere when the estimates for repairs came in. It would cost more than \$300,000 to rebuild everything; that included demolishing the old school-convent building and replacing it with an addition to the hall. Insurance would pay more than a quarter million dollars, but the parishioners would still have to raise \$40,000 which they did.



After the Diocese of Green Bay gave their approval for the repairs, the congregation banded together to save their parish and their heritage. Roger Woelfel and Joseph Heimann spearheaded the restoration process. Sign-up sheets were posted weekly in church with a list of that week’s projects. Volunteers were plentiful and each week, when the congregation gathered together for

Mass, progress could be seen. When something needed to be done, the core committee was on the phone and help would come.

Many local businesses took part in the restoration process. A new roof was put on and new shingles were needed on the steeple. Carpets were replaced and pews were sanded and refinished. The entire interior walls were repainted and statues were touched up to cover the stains. The cross atop the steeple was pockmarked and its seams cracked, so it too was replaced.

The most costly and most complicated work was to restore the stain glass windows to their original beauty. Scott Amrhein of High Cliff Studios of Sherwood,

WI, was hired for the task. Church photos and wedding videos were used by the studio to recreate the windows. One detail that needed to be resolved concerned the donor names on the windows. Three of the five nameplates were also broken. The names of two of the three were recalled by parishioners, but one name is still unknown. That window went up as an unknown donor-a nod to all of the parishioners who came before him. (In 2015 parish annual reports dating back to 1905 were donated to St. Martin Heritage Park by the Benjamin Mahlich estate. The 1912 annual report list the expenses of four stain glass windows. The unknown donor of the stain glass window is the St. Martin Young Ladies Sodality).

One year after the hailstorm descended on St. Martin's Parish, the congregation held a Mass of Thanksgiving by celebrant, Fr. Michael Bigley, SDS, to celebrate the restoration of the church to its former glory. That day the new cross atop the steeple reached up into a clear blue sky, the sun shown brightly through the stain glass windows and the parishioners sang with gusto to God, thanking Him for the strength and courage to restore what the founding families of St. Martin's Parish established - a fitting place for Divine Services.



Above is the ribbon-cutting ceremony to commemorate the restoration of St. Martin's church. Back row: Roger and Cathy Woelfel, Joseph Heimann. Front row: Fr. Gary New, SDS, Pastor of St. Martin's Parish within the Chilton Area Catholic Ministry, and Fr. Michael Bigley, SDS, Associate Pastor.

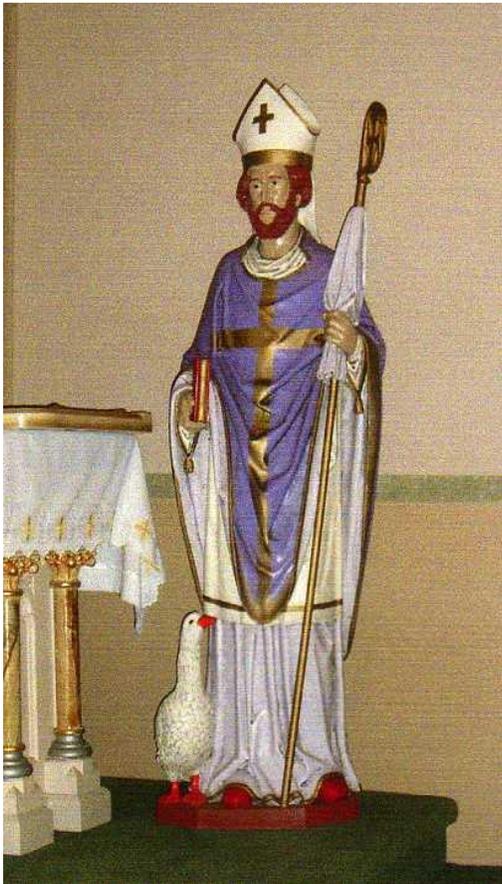
St. Martin of Tours

330-397 A.D.

Feast day: November 11

Intercessor and Patron Saint of St. Martin's Catholic Parish

St. Martin, called the "Glory of Gaul," was born in Pannonia, a town in modern-day Hungary around the year 330 AD. His father was an officer in the Roman army who had risen from the ranks. While Martin was still a child, his father was transferred to a new station in northern Italy. Here the boy learned of Christianity, felt drawn to it, and became a catechumen. The son of a veteran, at the age of fifteen, he was required to begin service in the army. Though never shirking his military duty, he is said to have lived more like a monk than as a soldier.



As a junior officer, he was sent to Gaul - an area of wild land of northwest Europe inhabited by the mostly pagan Frankish people. There were some Christian cities where bishops were established and a Christian civilization was beginning to emerge. Martin was interested in Christianity and tried to find out about it. Its message attracted him, and he started to obey some of its precepts. He earned himself some notoriety by refusing to join in some of the bawdier songs and more outlandish activities of military life. He gave freely to the poor, was kind to his servants, and liked to pray. But he postponed the actual step of Christian baptism.

His first military posting was to Rheims, in modern-day France, and from there he was sent to Amiens, also in France. One bitterly cold night when he was at the gates of Amiens with his soldiers, he met a shivering, scantily-clad beggar who cried out to him for alms. Martin was warmly dressed in the standard-issue thick purple-and-white cloak that was the hallmark of an Imperial officer. Looking at the beggar, Martin knew what he ought to do. He took off his warm cloak and drawing his sword from its scabbard; he cut his cloak in two pieces, gave one half to the beggar and wrapped himself in the other. The following night Martin in his sleep saw Jesus Christ, surrounded by angels, wrapped in the half of the cloak he had

given away. He heard Jesus say to the angels, Martin, as yet only a catechumen, has covered me with his cloak." Our Lord reminded Martin of His words in the Gospel: "I was naked and you clothed me ...in as much as you did it to the least of the little ones, you did it to Me." As a consequence of this vision, Martin was baptized.

At the age of twenty, Martin went before the Emperor Julian and announced his faith prohibits him from fighting. "I have served you as a soldier; allow me now to serve Christ. It is not lawful for me to fight." Julian was angry and accused Martin of cowardice. He was jailed and his superiors planned to put him in the front line of battle. However, the invaders sued for peace, the battle never occurred, and Martin was released from military service at Worms.

Martin declared his vocation and made his way to the city of Tours where he became a priest and a disciple of Hilary of Poitiers. In 361, Martin and Hilary established a monastery in Gaul. This monastery became a center for the evangelization of the districts throughout Western Gaul. He lived the life of a hermit for many years and attracted others to the rule of prayer and meditation that he followed. When he visited his home in Pannonia, he converted his mother, but his father he could not win.

In due course, Martin's holiness led him to be chosen as Bishop of Tours, although he didn't want the job. He tried to run away and hid in a flock of geese, because he felt he would be no good at being in charge of an important section of the Church. But the geese cackled and the noise gave him away. As Bishop, his influence was immense -- he won many converts from the Druid religion to Christianity, and was a central figure in laying the foundation of Christian France. Even as a bishop, he lived an austere life, and was beloved by all.

Martin was Bishop of Tours for over twenty years. In that time, he visited each of his parishes, traveling on foot, by donkey or boat. He continued to set up monastic communities and extended the boundaries of his episcopate.

Martin died around November 8, 397, and three days later he was buried at Tours. Two thousand monks and nuns gathered for his funeral. A church has been built over his grave which is a popular national shrine in France, of which he is patron saint. We honor him as St. Martin of Tours, and if you ever go to Amiens you will see that the site of his encounter with the beggar is still marked today.

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING:

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