



## History of St. Mark's Episcopal Church Waupaca, Wisconsin

Episcopal missionary workers came to the Wisconsin Territory beginning in the late 1820s, following Native Americans who had been converted to the Church of England in the East and were moving into Wisconsin. By 1847 there were 25 Episcopal congregations in Wisconsin with 969 members. The Reverend Jackson Kemper (who established the Waupaca church in 1856) traveled an area covering Indiana, Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and parts of Nebraska and Kansas.

From 1856 to 1863 the Waupaca community was small and public meeting places were scarce. Homes and the Methodist Church provided space to hold services when a rector was available, that is. St. Mark's has a prominent place in local history. Founded by early Yankee settlers, the church was a leading social institution for some the prominent residents of the city. In the century the enduring names of Browne, Truesdell, and Hobart (among many others) were prominent in the Waupaca Episcopal Churches survival.

### The Little Brown Church

The first uniquely Episcopal structure, the Little Brown Church, was completed in 1863 and served the congregation (unknown exactly how many) until it and the opera house were destroyed by fire in 1904. The then newly constructed (and still in current use) building was consecrated in 1905 and described in the Waupaca Republican as follows:

The building is made of concrete Bedford stone with a battlement tower surmounted with a gold cross. The building will be lighted by electricity everything being ready. The interior wood work is polished oak and hard birch floors. There are in addition to the altar alcove a rector's room and choir room In fact it is a most beautiful and serviceable (sic) chapel. To this day the same sanctuary serves as our Sunday worship center.

### 1905-2004

At this writing much of the church history between 1905 and 2004 is buried in dusty boxes and files located in closets and basements scattered throughout our community. What little information that is now available is presented in the following few paragraphs, but the search goes on. For the 85 church anniversary in 1941 a booklet prepared by a church committee included these selected excerpts. During the years 1918 to 1923, the Parish was

served by the Reverend Arthur W. Slade upon whose resignation, The reverend Alfred L. Du Domaine was called by the Vestry. It was about this time Saint Mark's Guild staged the very successful home talent play, The Celebrated Case, long remembered by Waupaca residents. During Father Du Domaine's pastorate the most successful preaching mission held was conducted by Father Harrison of the Holy Cross Order. Father Du Domaine served Waupaca successfully and faithfully for about five years. He then accepted a call to Joplin, Missouri and accepted (sic). Father and Mrs. Du Domaine have returned to Waupaca several times during the years and are always welcome home to the Saint Mark's they served and loved.

During the next three years from 1928 to 1931, the Parish was served by the Reverend G. L. Ferguson, The Reverend E. P. Sheppard, and The Reverend H. L. Ewan. The Reverend Albert J. Dubois was called shortly after his Ordination to become Rector of Saint Mark's in 1931. Father Dubois and his mother occupied the Rectory on Main Street and during this time many repairs and improvements were added to the Parish in general. Father Dubois worked very successfully with the young people of Saint Mark's Church. Mr. Robert Holly, Hr. became the Diocesan President of the Young People's Fellowship during this time. During this time the Saint Agnes Guild sponsored two very successful home talent plays, "Page the Prince", and "that's that". A very successful mission was conducted by Father Hoffman of the Order of Holy Cross. Father Dubois received a call to serve at the Cathedral of Fond du Lac as Canon and Accepted. At the present time Father Dubois is the Rector of Saint Agnes' Church, Washington, D. C. Loved and respected by Saint Mark's Church, Father Dubois is well remembered for his faithful and successful work while Rector of Saint Mark's.

## A Peak in St. Mark's History

One might say a peak was reached in Saint Mark's history during these years. From this time however the community as a whole experienced the effects of the depression years. As a result the Parish lost many staunch Church families. The next years were hard ones for the Parish. It was necessary to reduce the budget considerably. Repairs to Church property were most necessary. The Reverend Frank C. Greene accepted the call to be Rector in 1934, and served the Parish about one year. He was followed by the Reverend E. O. Rossmassler, who also served about one year. Father Rossmassler was much interested in Boy Scout work and organized the Cub Scouts. Despite continued depression, the faithful members of Saint Mark's Church have accomplished many things. The Church has seen many improvements both to the interior and exterior. The interior was recently redecorated by the kindness of one (who) loves Saint Mark's Church but prefers to remain unknown. The Guilds have labored unceasingly to maintain the Church. After very thoughtful deliberation, the Congregation decided to give up the old Rectory on Main Street and accordingly it was turned back to the owner in 1941. The coming of several new and faithful Church families into the Parish has added new courage and the future seems far more encouraging by their help.

During the last few years Saint Mark's has enjoyed many delightful gatherings in the Guilds, among the men and at the services. The largest Convocation ever to be held in the Wisconsin Valley district was entertained by Saint Mark's a few years ago. Two successful Church Camps for Young People were held at Wautoma and the future holds more in store.

## 85 Years of Parish History

Thus today Saint Mark's Church looks back along Eighty-five years of Parish history. Happy memories, amusing incidents, discouraging circumstances, tears, joys, and even doubts as to the future. She stands today facing the future, a future marked by more discouragements and difficult times, but confident that the past has been glorious and just as confident that the future shall match the past. St. Agnes Guild holds an important position in St. Mark's history in that during the first half of the 20 century (Mrs. Anna Holmes Waupaca Centennial Booklet 1957). It was an organization of teen-age girls whose work consisted mainly doing altar work, making purificators, washing the linens, and buying new robes for the priests. Dues, in the early days, were 10 cents a month, although other money was gained through sponsored candy sales. New teachers, regardless of whether they were church members or not, were asked to join the group which for many years had husbands of the married girls as honorary members from 1908 to 1911, the membership was at a peak, totaling 45 members. St. Agnes Guild was disbanded in 1957 in favor of combining with all members of the church as one organization. This woman's group cares for the altar of the church, conducts all fund raising projects and arranges for devotions.

At this writing the final chapter in a chronological history of St. Mark's belongs to the Reverend Wilson K. Roane, rector from 1990 to 2004. I am told by John B. Morgan, a member since 1947, that congregations usually totaled approximately 20 individuals when Fr. Roane arrived, and today the average number is 50-60. Father Roane's contributions included the \$500,000 addition in 2000, but perhaps the most memorable highlights of his tenure are the members' minds his enthusiasm, vigorous leadership, outstanding (but short!) sermons, and scholarly knowledge of Christianity.

## In Conclusion

This history will be expanded as more archives and personal recollections are collected. If you have oral or documented contributions which are relevant to St. Mark's history, past or present, please contact me.