

BROGAN CABIN



This year marks the 35th year, of the dedication of the Brogan Cabin at Old Falls Village.

Willow Springs settlement, which once stood at the corner of Mill Road and Town Line Road, was founded by Brogan and five other Irish families in 1842. The settler's first concern was shelter, and the log house was probably built that spring with trees felled from the adjoining swamp. At that time cabins were built for immediate shelter. The cabin was crudely constructed with a mix of mud and animal hair holding the logs (oak and elm) together.

Father Martin Kundig (from the Diocese of Detroit, who later became the Vicar General of the Milwaukee Archdiocese) was in that same year appointed the only priest in Southeastern Wisconsin. He traveled on horseback, ministering to far flung congregations. The Chancery office records show that in May of 1842 in Brogan's one room cabin, He celebrated the first Mass in Waukesha County.

The cabin continued to be the settlement's meeting place until the next year, when the congregation joined with the Catholics of Brookfield to form St. Dominic's Church.

Records show that in 1848 Brogan and his wife Mary donated one acre of their property so a new church could be built. That Church, St. James, still stands.

Brogan's young wife Mary, was the first person to die in Menomonee Falls. When Brogan remarried soon after, his was the first marriage in town.

With the cabin being the site of the first mass in the county, there are three “firsts” connected with this pioneer family.

When James died in 1875, his wife sold the log cabin. Since then it has had several owners and has undergone several architectural modifications. The cabin was occupied until 1979 when the last owner, Edward McLaughlin of Sussex, recognized the historical significance of the home and donated it to the Menomonee Falls Historical Society.

When all the Grand Knights of All Saints Council met in December 1980 to discuss the best way to celebrate the Councils’ upcoming 25th anniversary and also the Knights of Columbus Centennial Celebration, it was unanimously agreed to look for a project that was memorable and would be long lasting.

Dennis Farrell, made a presentation to the Knights of Columbus, All Saints Council No. 4240 of Menomonee Falls. The Council decided that, to celebrate their 25th anniversary, they would take on the project of relocating the Brogan cabin to Old Falls Village.

In February of 1981 the complete estimated cost was presented to the council for approval and the sum of 9,000.00 was budgeted for the project.

In March of 1981, a meeting was held at St. James Church. A representative of Old Word Wisconsin explained the historical importance of preserving the cabin and the history of its construction. A sketch was made with a numbering system to coincide with metal number tags on parts of the cabin. The actual dismantling of the cabin was started in April 1981.

The cabin originally stood at W220 N6400 Town Line Road in Lannon, and was 16 feet by 22 feet. The original cabin had a dirt floor and whitewash was found on the interior walls. The construction of logs using the inverted “V” notching technique and the use of square headed nails, was evident. Over the years the upper loft was transformed into a second floor, and the

interior and exterior were covered in clapboard. From time to time additions were built onto the house, then removed. Reports from residents who knew of the cabin in the early 40's, also claim the cabin had been used as a hen and hog house for a time.

The house was moved by dismantling it and moving it log by log as it was less expensive than moving the cabin whole. The restoration began with the members of the council using their equipment and know how applicable to the situation. Logs that had to be replaced were furnished from a woods in Eagle Wisconsin. A split shingle roof was put on, which according to members of Old World Wisconsin, is the first and only one of its kind in Wisconsin. During the dismantling and restoration it is estimated that over 110 members were involved with the work force and the project took about 800 hours. The All Saints Ladies Auxiliary and a council member who owns a catering service, furnished food when needed on the job.

When the cabin was ready for the finishing touches, plans were started for the dedication. Bishop Brust was contacted and heartily approved of the program and agreed to celebrate Mass and preside at the dedication.

In keeping with history, Father Bandle, Council Chaplin, portrayed Rev. Kundig by arriving on horseback. The fourth Degree Honor Guard escorted Bishop Brust followed by Fr. Bandle. Robert Buth, council member and Deacon took care of the preparations for the Mass.

The day of the Mass and dedication was beautiful with 150 members and guests attending the ceremonies. Publicity was covered by the local news, the Milwaukee Journal and television station, channel 4.

During the ceremonies, the legal papers were turned over to the village president, and then The Menomonee Falls Historical Society President accepted the Brogan Cabin from the Village. Following the dedication and Mass, everyone was invited to the council clubhouse for refreshments.

Memorabilia of Catholic Church history was to be displayed inside the Cabin, and its history was to be put on the walls in mounted frames for all to read. A dedication plaque was to be placed by the outside door.