

Follow the Polish Heritage Trail

We welcome you to tour through the central Wisconsin country-side to view the area which is the first Polish rural settlement in the state and the second in the U.S.

Located on quiet, rural roads winding through the glacial terrain with its wooded country-side, lakes, and farm land are reminders of the Polish heritage of this area. The small communities, imposing churches, and several quaint roadside shrines and crosses create a pastoral and spiritual landscape, not unlike the Kaszuby region in northern Poland from which the earliest Polish settlers came beginning in 1857.

Rock-lined fence rows show evidence of the challenge they faced to farm this land. The gracious red brick farm houses seen throughout the area show proof of their success.

Several parks provide an opportunity to picnic and to enjoy the atmosphere of America's heartland.

*A road map of Portage County is recommended for those unfamiliar with the area.
Enjoy your tour!*

*Polish Heritage Awareness Society
Adeline M. Sopa, Chairperson*

ELLIS and POLONIA

Ellis, once known as Poland Corners, is located at the intersection of Hwy 66 and Cty Hwy J. The three taverns are reminiscent of the four saloons of nearly 140 years ago. Gone are the postoffice, blacksmith shop, and general store of what was the first business center of this area.

St. Martin's Catholic Church, organized in 1857, by early German and Irish settlers, just to the west, is the only one remaining of the three churches once located here.

Another, St. Joseph's built by the Polish families of the area in 1864, and the first rural Polish Catholic church in the state, was later relocated 1 1/2 miles to the east to a new community which

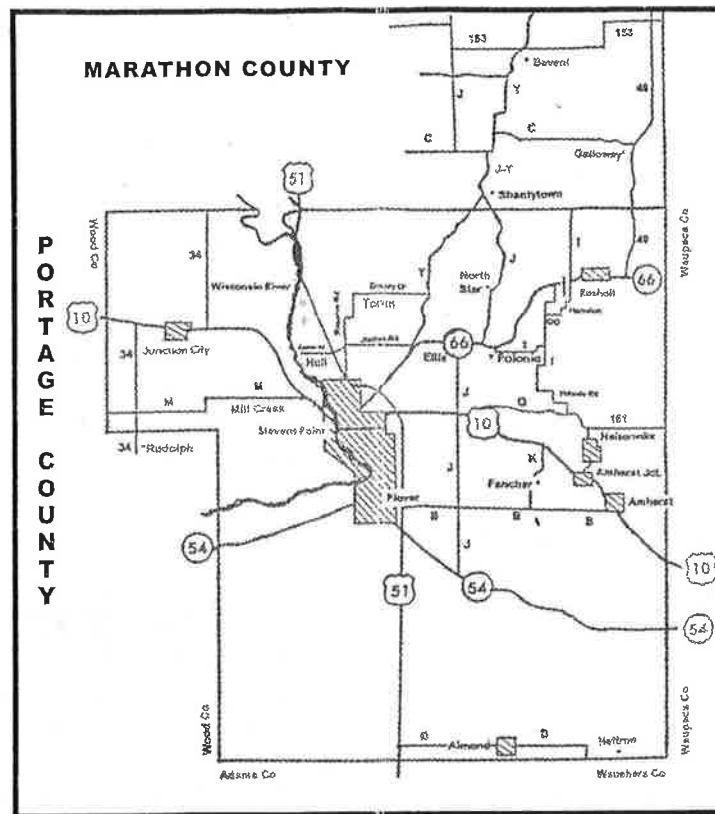
was named Polonia. The close proximity of the saloons to the church had created problems for the Polish parish.

The third, an independent church, was organized and served some of the Polish population for only a short time. The building was razed a few decades later.

Continue east on Hwy 66 to Cty Hwy Z and turn right to view the grounds of what is now known as Sacred Heart Catholic Church. A bronze plaque on the right-hand corner of this church, built in 1934, pays tribute to the first Polish settlers of the area. The cemetery overlooking the church contains the grave sites of most of these people. The modern-day school is still staffed by the Felician Sisters who came to the area at the invitation of the Rev. Joseph Dombrowski after he had moved the parish to Polonia in 1872. The school was one of the first Polish parochial schools in the state. Winnebago Indians were included among the students. St. Clare Orphanage was also the Sister's project in what was their first service in the U.S.

Tour the convent grounds to view Pioneer's Grove with its memorials to the first Felician nuns and to Rev. Dombrowski. Also, stop in the chapel of the Shrine of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart for a quiet moment. Admire the stone fence painstakingly constructed by a handy man, Anton Gostonski, and the children from the orphanage.

Three miles north of Ellis at 3000 Cty J is North Star. Stop to see the building which was at one time a general store and still has the upstairs dance hall which was the gathering place for many parties. In earlier days, this was also the site of a sawmill. Several mills had been located in this area and the logging operations provided an opportunity for off-season work for the farmers.



side of the road as you approach the Cty Hwy B intersection. This intersection was been known as Konkol's Corner for many years. The shrine, one of five in the area, was designed and built by John Konkol on the corner of his farm.

Take B east to Hwy 10 and to Amherst which has several restaurants and shops or picnic at nearby Lake Emily or Sunset lake.

ROSHOLT Area

Can be accessed from Hwy 10 at Amherst Jct. Head north on Hwy 161-Cty Hwy Q to Nelsonville. You may want to visit the Mill Museum. Continue on 161-Q for about a mile. Leave 161 to follow Q when it bears left and follow it for two miles as it winds to the west. Note the stoney field on the right and then turn right on Hillside Road which winds north and west to merge with Cty Hwy I. As you travel north on I, on your left is some of the land of the homestead of the first Polish settler, Michael von Kozickowski, who came to the area in 1857.



FANCHER

3995 Cty Hwy K. Can be accessed south of Hwy 10 east of Custer. Watch for the steeple of St. Mary of Mt. Carmel Church which reaches 156 feet into the sky. The wrought iron gate which reads Boze Zbaw Polske or God Save Poland, exemplifies the devotion of the parishioners to their motherland.

St. Mary's, the first daughter parish of Sacred Heart of Polonia, was organized in 1884. The present Gothic revival building was built in 1905, at a cost of \$25,000, mostly with parish labor and horsepower. Follow K as it turns left to travel south. Notice the Victorian style red brick houses built by many Polish families on either

At 1396 Cty I, on the corner of Hillcrest Road and I, hidden in the trees on the front yard of another familiar red brick house, is one of several crosses still standing in this area.

Continue on I as it winds east and north to its intersection with Cty Hwy Z. As you approach the intersection, you will see a shrine on the northwest corner. Another shrine, not as well tended, is located about a mile away on Cty Hwy OO. Follow I to the north and turn right on OO - the shrine is on the left surrounded by shrubbery. Also notice the huge rocks which have been moved from the fields to fence rows. What a challenge to have had to work the land around them!

Follow OO eastward for one mile and then turn left on Hamilton Road. Follow it for 1.2 miles as it winds north and east to St. Adalbert Road. Turn left and travel north toward Rosholt. As you approach St. Adalbert's Church, you will find a cross on your right nestled in lilac bushes at 3149 St. Adalbert Road and just past the church, also on the right at 3379, stands a very tall white cross next to the driveway.

There is a shrine located on the corner of the church grounds. This parish, organized in 1898, is also a daughter parish of Sacred Heart. The present church was built in 1935.

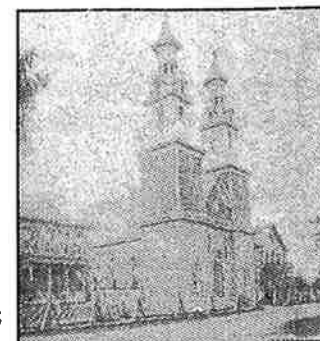
Pioneer Park, located at the Rosholt Fair Grounds, contains the log house of early Polish settlers, John and Antonina (Krefta) Glodowski.

Lake Helen and Collins Lake have park facilities.

STEVENS POINT

Start your tour of the city with the famous Market Square where Polish farmers and their wives brought their produce and animals to market. The Square and the Main Street are on the National Register of Historic Places. Several of the buildings bear the names of their Polish owners. Gateway to the Pineries is an excellent guide to architecturally interesting and historic Stevens Point.

Travel north on N. 2nd Street to St. Peter's Catholic Church, established in 1876, in what was the Polish fourth ward of the city. The present church was constructed in 1897 and is the oldest Polish church building in the county. Notice the Lasecki building across the street which is now the Stevens Point Co-Op.



First St. Peter's Church Built in the late 1870's

The first Polish families to live in the city moved there from the Polonia area in about 1860.

Continue north on N. 2nd and turn right on Maria Drive. At the T-intersection with Union Street, notice the beautiful grounds on the left. Located here is the original Mother House of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Third Order of St. Francis of Assisi, an order of nuns initially established for young women of Polish heritage in 1901. This order has staffed many parochial elementary and secondary schools throughout the midwest. Several hospitals were also administered by these nuns.

Continue on Maria Drive to Schmeeckle Reserve to the UW-Stevens Point campus. On nearby Fremont Street is St. Stanislaus Church established in 1913, to accommodate the growing population in that area.

At the triangle corner of Hwy 10 and Soo Marie Avenue is McGlachlin Park containing a bust of Count Casimir Pulaski - the young Polish soldier who valued freedom so much that he left his partitioned nation to come to America to fight in the Revolutionary War against the British. He was fatally wounded at the battle of Savannah in 1779.

The Synagogue Museum, under the direction of the Portage County Historical Society, located at 1475 Water Street has summer visiting hours.

Further down on Water Street is the location of the well known Point Brewery. Also further out on the south side, just off Business 51 on McDill Pond, is Koziczowski Park dedicated to the first Polish settler in this area.

Stevens Point is also home to one of few Polish language newspapers printed in the U.S., Gwiazda Polarna, and now, GP Light in the English language. Their office at 2619 Post Road (So. Bus 51) has a supply of publications concerned with a variety of Polish subjects.

PLOVER

Bus Hwy 51 south of Stevens Point. In nearby Plover, the Portage County Historical Society is developing Heritage Square, a site containing several buildings of historical significance.

To the west on Hwy 54 is St. Bronislava's Church. The new church was built in 1991, the newest of those with Polish orientation. It stands behind the older red brick Gothic revival church built in 1911. The parish was established in 1896.

There are park facilities at nearby Lake Pacawa which contains a memorial to Korean War veterans.

HEFFRON

Located more than 20 miles south of Stevens Point on Heffron Road on the county line. Leave Hwy 51 at the Almond exit on Cty Hwy D. Travel east through the village to Cty Hwy AA. Turn right on AA and follow it as it winds to Heffron Road to view St. John the Baptist Church established in 1895. John J. Heffron was a local real estate agent who recruited Polish families from Milwaukee and Chicago to purchase farmland in this area.

HULL and TORUN

Follow N. 2nd Street, which becomes Second Drive, north out of Stevens Point for 2-3 miles as it passes under Hwy 51 and follows parallel to the highway to an intersection with Woodview Drive. Notice the recently restored cross - a tradition in the Wojcik family. Continue north on Second Drive to turn left on W. Casimir Road to proceed to St. Casimir's Church. Established in 1871, it was the second Polish Catholic church in this area. The present brick Victorian building was constructed in 1913.



Dewey Drive, Torun

Return on W. Casimir Road to Second Drive and turn right and travel just a short distance to make a left turn onto Jordan Road. In about 3 miles, you will reach the Jordan Road and N. Reserve Road intersection. Notice the cross marking this corner.



Jordan Road & North Reserve Dr.

In years past, crosses were found at most intersections in northern Portage County and southern Marathon County.

Turn left on N. Reserve Road to travel north almost 3 miles to Dewey Drive. Turn left to arrive at St. Mary's Church in Torun established in 1895, with construction of the present church in 1949. A shrine to the right of the church marks the corner of the church property.

A side trip may be taken to Jordan Park, just outside of Stevens Point, by following Dewey Drive to the east and then turning right on Cty Hwy Y to head south to Hwy 66. The park entrance is to the left just before the intersection with 66.

Another choice is to continue north on Y to tour the Bevent area just over the Marathon County line.

BEVENT

Can be accessed from Cty Hwy J off Hwy 10 or from Cty Hwy Y off Hwy 66. J and Y at junction at Shantytown just over the

Marathon County line. Follow J-Y north to the intersection with Cty Hwy C. Turn left on J-C for one mile. The Wierzba shrine built in 1952 is located to the left at the Willow Road and J crossroad.

Return east on J-C and continue past the intersection with Y and follow C-Y as it winds to the north. In less than a mile - at the T-intersection with C, is the location of a white cross with Bass Lake in the background. After you have followed Y as it winds about 20 miles to the north, watch for the Red Cross located on a hill to the left on Bevent Road. The scenic view from the hill includes the spire of St. Ladislaus Church. Continue on to tour the peaceful grounds of the church which was organized in 1895. Another mile north up Y, on the left at Kristof Road, stands a cross at the T-intersection.

Picnic at the lake in Shantytown before returning to Stevens Point via Y. A side trip to the Polonia/Ellis area or the Torun/Hull area is an option.

MILL CREEK and JUNCTION CITY

Take Hwy 10 west out of Stevens Point over the Wisconsin River to Cty Hwy M. Turn left to find St. Bartholomew's Church in Mill Creek established in 1883. The present church was erected in 1910. Continue west on M to Hwy 34. Turn left and continue on into Rudolph which has the well known Grotto Gardens. A local cheese factory provides some of Wisconsin's famous specialties.

Return on Hwy 34 north to Hwy 10. Turn right on 10-34 to Junction City where St. Michael's Church is located on the left. The parish was established in 1881 with the present building constructed in 1958.

Following Hwy 34 north of the village will take you to Lake DuBay and its park facilities or Hwy10 can return you to Stevens Point.

We invite you to travel with us again soon!

Do widzenia!



Follow the Polish Heritage Trail

in



CENTRAL WISCONSIN

A Self Guided Auto or Bicycle Tour

Presented by and the property of the
Polish Heritage Awareness Society
P.O. Box 726 Stevens Point, WI 54481-0726