

# St. Joseph's of the Lake Church History



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# A Brief History

Located on the Menominee Reservation, the St. Joseph of the Lake Church has played an important role in the continuation of Menominee traditions and was the community center for the South Branch area of the Menominee Reservation for many years.

By 1876, there was a Catholic mission with a farm church (demolished) and a five-acre cemetery on the shore of St. Joseph Lake which Father Masschelein directed by the mission. In 1880, the Franciscan Order took charge of the St. Joseph of the Lake mission, visiting on the first and third Sundays of each month.

Within a period of 15 years the first St. Joseph of the Lake Church was nearly in ruins and unable to accommodate a growing South Branch congregation. In 1891, Father Blase Krake commenced work on the new church. Most of the work was carried out by the South Branch Menominee under the direction of Blase and assisted by tradesmen, Menominee furnished all the lumber for the new building. The new St. Joseph of the Lake church included a sacristy, store room, two rooms for the priest, a kitchen and large meeting room. Most of the \$3,000 cost to build the church was raised by the South Branch community. The church was dedicated on June 17, 1893 by the Rt. Rev. S.G. Messmer, Bishop of Green Bay, placed under the protection of St. Joseph and named St. Joseph of the Lake.

The Franciscan conducted bi-monthly church services at St. Joseph of the Lake Church for many years. During the late 1880's the Franciscan had a school with about 20 children at the St. Joseph of the Lake Church. It was soon discontinued and the children were sent to the school in Keshena.



# *Social Significance of St. Joseph's of the Lake Church*

St. Joseph of the Lake Church has historical significance in both ethnic heritage and social history.

St. Joseph of the Lake Church was significant in preservation and continuation of traditional Menominee life-ways. Historically, Native Americans lost many of their traditional ceremonies as well as their language under the close government supervision that occurred in population centers on the reservations. The Superintendent of the Menominee Reservation lived in the unincorporated community of Keshena and prohibited Menominee language and traditional ceremonies at Keshena. This prohibition may have increased the number of traditional Menominee ceremonies held at St. Joseph's, as the South Branch community is located some 16 miles distant from Keshena. Traditional Menominee ceremonies held in the church or on church grounds reinforced Menominee traditions and included ghost suppers, bean feasts, pow-wows, dances to heal the sick and dying, wakes and funeral suppers.

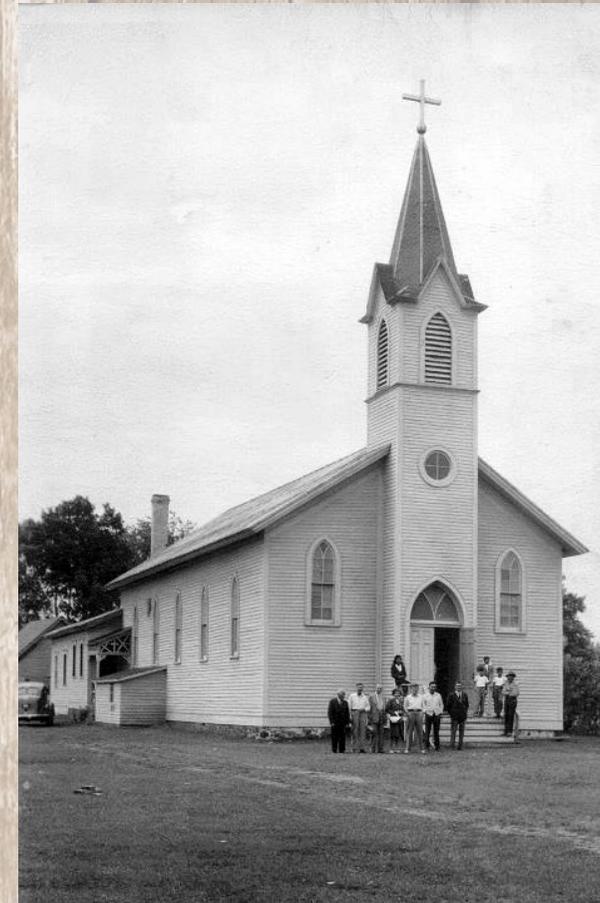
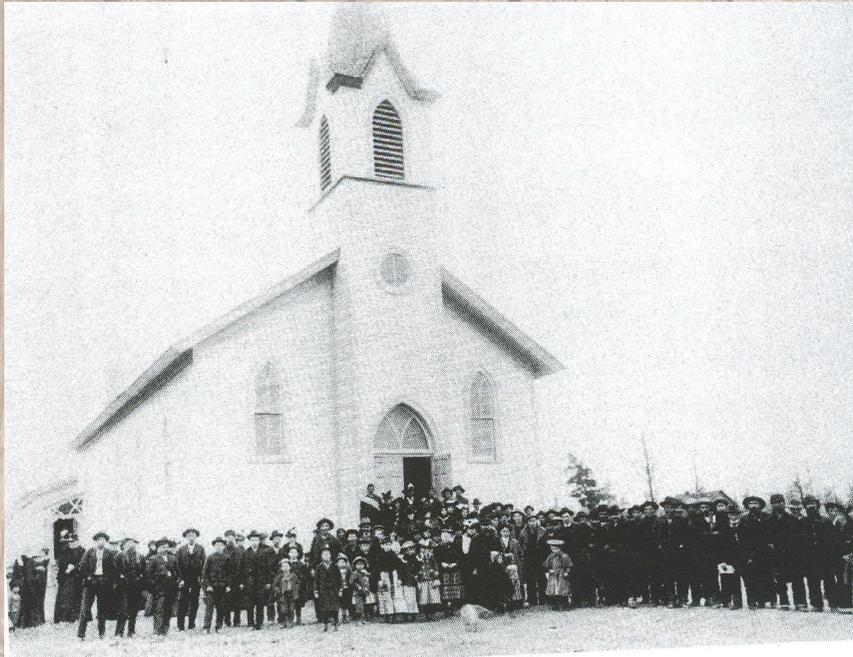
In social history, the St. Joseph of the Lake Church was the only community center in the South Branch area. The church was the polling place for the South Branch community. Social events such as Fourth of July parades, square dances, general gatherings and inners were held in the church and on church grounds.



# Photos of St. Joseph's of the Lake Church Presently



# Historical Photos of St. Joseph's Of the Lake Church



Photos courtesy of: Menominee Historic Preservation



## *Personal Stories of St. Joseph's of the Lake Church*

The South Branch youth attended religious instructions every Wednesday evening, except during the summer months. Our priest, Father Emmet, was the instructor. We used the back room behind the small kitchen, which had long wooden tables with wooden benches. Transportation was a problem for us so Father Emmet would pick us up and give us a ride to the church and drop us off at our house on his way back to Keshena.



Many funerals were held there of loved ones, weddings, baptisms, etc. even though the church was very cold at times during the winter months, we still made it to church and everyone would try to get there early so we could sit near the old heating vents because it was the warmest place to be. At times we could see our breath coming out of our mouths it was so cold.



# *Submit a Personal Story About St. Joseph's of the Lake Church*

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