

Sacred Heart Beginnings

1915

Part I of the Series (all information comes from Sacred Heart archives)

The eight zealous Hungarian men who envisioned and took the first steps for the founding of Sacred Heart:

Frank Skrivanek	Steve Horvath, Sr.
Martin Sekeres	Joseph Majoros
John Alex	Peter Majoros
Paul Tulak	Steve Dubranski

A public meeting was held on **September 15, 1915** at the Hungarian Hall.

Resolved, that we establish and found a Roman Catholic Hungarian Parish. Unanimously adopted. The following men were elected by the Hungarian speaking people to head the great undertaking:

President—Frank Skrivanek

Secretary—Gilbert Hegedus, Sr.

Treasurer—Charles Koteles

Trustees—Charles Farkas, Joseph Majoros, Steve Dubranski and Steve Tomosics

Fifty-six Hungarian families and thirty-seven Hungarian single men were present for the enrollment in the new parish.

Second Meeting was Held on September 26, 1915

(Part II of the Series)

It was decided to collect monthly dues from each member in addition to the voluntary offerings that were generously given. Thus, the new Roman Catholic Hungarian Parish began to make its first financial gains. At each succeeding meeting, as the membership became more zealous and active, funds increased and additional ways and means of adding to the Parish income were carefully worked out. Every Hungarian worked unceasingly and made countless sacrifices in order that the new Parish might advance.

Plans were made for the purchase of a church site. A committee of four men—Martin Sekeres, John Alex, Charles Koteles and Joseph Majoros—was formed to look for lots that would be suitable for the erection of a church for the new Parish.

At each subsequent meeting, others presented themselves for enrollment until all the Hungarian speaking people of Catholic descent were enrolled as members. At this point they had no other name than "The Roman Catholic Hungarian Parish."

Meeting of November 24, 1915

(Part III of the Series)

A name was chosen for the new Parish:

"Jezus Szent Sziverol Elnevezett Romain Catholicus Magyar Egy Haz"
or Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Hungarian Parish

Note: Hungarians as a group attended services at St. Joseph's Church in Muskegon and contributed to its support while they were donating heavily to their own new parish. Father Berhorst, then pastor of St. Joseph, encouraged them in their great endeavor and advised them from time to time.

January 16, 1916

(Part IV of the Series)

The decision was made to purchase lots 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 of Block 231—lot 16 having a house on it. An additional sixth lot was purchased. All six lots were purchased by the Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Hungarian Parish members—Martin Sekeres and Steve Horvath being the actual purchasers for the people. The total amount paid for the property was \$2,540, which was taken out of the funds belonging to the Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Hungarian Parish members.

April 1916:

(Part V of the Series)

Permission was obtained from His Excellency Bishop Edward Kelley to collect monies for the new parish. To increase the funds of the parish, collectors were even sent to solicit funds from Hungarians in distant cities.

September 1, 1919:

(Part VI of the Series)

Bishop Kelley sent Rev. John J. Sonefeld to Muskegon. He served as Chaplain at Mercy Hospital and served Sacred Heart. On his arrival, Schoenberg's Hall was rented for Sunday Mass. (Dances were held by Protestants on Saturday night, and the Hungarians heard Mass on Sunday mornings amid the most humble and poor of surroundings). It is here that Sunday Mass was held until the basement of the present Church was completed. Because they were assured by Bishop Kelley that they would have their Hungarian Pastor as soon as it was possible to secure one, they turned over all the deeds to the Bishop as requested.

In 1919...

(Part VII of the Series)

In 1919 the building program was launched. The Hungarian people had intended to build a small frame church, but Bishop Kelley prevailed upon them to build a larger, modern, fireproof building to accommodate all the Catholics of Muskegon Heights.

Under the leadership of Father Sonefeld, the people learned to love him and appreciate his untiring efforts on their behalf. Since he had learned the Hungarian language sufficiently to hear their confessions, they did not continue to press their claims for a Hungarian pastor as strongly as before.

The Cornerstone...

(Part VIII of the Series)

The cornerstone of the church is the strongest evidence of the fact that the parish is a Hungarian one, since the inscription thereon is Hungarian:

Magyar Romai Katholicus Templon, Akakult 1919

The Hungarian wording on the original Parish seal is likewise another salient exhibit attesting to the fact that the parish is Hungarian.

The new church was gradually furnished and equipped through the various donations and gifts of individual Hungarians or groups of them—from the church bell to altars, statues, vestments and the monstrance, etc. etc.

December 31, 1922...

(Part IX of the Series)

To date, the Hungarian people had contributed \$25, 617.16 to their parish. These figures are taken from the original parish records, which were written and kept by the Hungarian Parish officers who were elected each year:

- *Cost of present church to December 31, 1922: \$52,183.57.*
- *1923—Keeping of the financial records were turned over to the pastor, Fr. Sonefeld.*
- *1936—Fr. Sonefeld was transferred.*