

In 1871 the railroad came through this area, there was a good fertile soil in Hancock County and plenty of prairie hay. A steam hay press was set up between Garner and Britt close to the railroad tracks and hay was shipped out by rail. This brought a group of Czech immigrants by the way of Chicago into Winneshiek County and then on to Hancock County where they found work baling hay. Quite a number of those families settled in this area. Most of them were Czech Catholics, but there was no church in the area so the only time they could receive the sacraments was when a priest came here from Algona or Mason City and because of the language barrier, a Czech priest, Fr. Showlock? and stay at the Joseph Haylick? home and all the Czech people came there for mass. Among the first immigrants were Joseph Haylick, Frank Hoyder, Frank Wellick, Joseph Hdacek, John Tochon, John Virchka, John Edvid, John and Tom Jakovik, and Frank Haylick. Then in 1883 a pastor was appointed to Belmont, with a mission at Garner. Most of the Czech people came to Garner church. Toward the end of the century a well-educated young man of Spillville came here to teach religion in the summer months and then his brother Joseph Dostow came from Chicago, gave the children their first communion. The two brothers felt that the community was getting large enough to build a church of their own. So, Fr. Dostal canvassed the area and signed up about 60 families. It was at this time that Fr. Dostal [helped create] the branch 51 of Catholic Workman's Lodge was organized. The purpose of the organization was to band the Catholics together and encourage members of the practice of their religion. Charter members include the names of Papoosik, Paulada, Mollick, Nedvyed, Burchka, Mross, Benacik, Kaufroin, and Zemack. In a few months more names were added, [names omitted]. Permission was granted from the archbishop to proceed with a new church. So, a new framed structure of 36x50x16 was completed in the year 1900. And Fr. Brosch? was the first pastor. There was no money for church furnishings, so Frank Wallack? offered their new kitchen table for an altar. Planks were set up on empty nail kegs and they were used for pews. Martin Pepusik? who had a woodworking shop in Garner built the pews and later built the altar. The altar was built of hardwood and finished in the natural wood. But then, in later years it was painted white and many parishioners it took some of its natural beauty away. After the new church was built the old altar was put in the basement in a small room. And during the cold winter months, Father used to say weekday masses in that room. But the tornado of 1952 destroyed the altar. Two potbelly stoves furnished the heat. There was no rectory, so Fr. Brush boarded with Frank Randal family, till a parish house was built the following year. On the Feast of St. Peter and Paul, June 29, 1901 Fr. Carolan, Dean of the Mason City deanery and the representative of the archbishop solemnly dedicated the new church. Then Garner lost about half of its parishioners so Garner became a mission served by Fr. Brush for some time. In 1906 Father was transferred to Chelsea and Garner got their own pastor and Fr. Vincent ??? was named to serve Duncan. During his 8 years here, the parish grew but then he was replaced by Fr. Joseph ???? who served here from 1914 to 1916 and then he was followed by Fr. Thomas Malone who was here from 1916 to 1919. Then Msgr. Francis Kopecky came to Duncan and he was here from 1919 to 1936. During these years the parish built a community hall which was used for various gatherings and also entertainment for the youth of the parish. When Msgr. Kopecky was our pastor it was customary if you arrived in church earlier and you were in the ages between 7 and 14 you went and sat in the front pews in church. Msgr. had a short class in catechism before mass. Being a well-educated person, his class was interesting to all those who came earlier. Also Msgr. had a slate board 4 feet by 6 feet setting on the communion rail in the southwestern corner of the church. He as an artist with colored chalk and every Sunday he had a drawing on the board and that was the subject of his sermon. While Msgr. Kopecky was in Duncan Corpus Christi was a big event. It was always celebrated on Sundays. We all gathered in

church and the choir sang a benediction song while Fr. placed the blessed sacrament into the monstrance which he carried. He was followed by the altar boys to the outside where he was met by the Duncan band. He walked under a canopy carried by four of the elderly parishioners. A band played and marched to the south side of the church where an altar was built by one of the homes. Behind the band was the choir and all the little flower girls dressed in their very best scattering flowers on the path as Msgr. was walking towards the altar. The rest of the parishioners followed. There was singing and praying at each altar. The next altar was on the Duncan Hall steps and the last altar was on the north side of the church close to the parish house. These temporary altars were built by families who volunteered to do the work. It took a lot of time but the altars were beautiful and decorated with flowers. During the Lenten season the rosary was said before mass. Joe ????? Benacek volunteered to say the rosary every Sunday morning before mass. He would come early and pray the rosary but did not stop at five decades. Sometimes, if time permitted, he would pray 6 or 7 decades. Finally, Msgr. Kopecky asked to see Mr. Benacek's rosary. He said every rosary he ever saw only had 5 decades. It was in 1936 that Msgr. retired due to poor health and Fr. Raymond Kollman, of Lisle, Illinois took care of our parish for about 9 months. And then Fr. Skluzacek was appointed our priest. Before Msgr. Kopecky retired, he had started a building fund so in the future a new church could be built. With some money saved, and a new church was being planned to replace the old wooden structure. So, under Fr. Skluzacek's supervision a drive was made to raise more money and a new brick structure was built in 1938 and was dedicated October 4, 1938. During these years our children attended a summer school which was conducted by sisters. Later, instead of the summer school, the nuns came from Wesley and had a summer session on Saturday afternoon. Later Fr. Skluzacek started a youth study club. It was under his supervision, and on every Thursday night, it was for all students from grade 9 to 12. In June 1946 Fr. received word that he was transferred to Protivin. So, on June 30, a farewell party was held in his honor. Then July 3rd 1946 Right Reverend Msgr. W.C. Hradecky, came to our parish from Cedar Rapids. He had been a world traveler and his sermons were interesting. He also spoke at many various gatherings about his travels. He stayed with us for 21 years. On June 25, 1951 it was a hot sultry day, dark clouds were building up in the west and about 5:00 pm a tornado hit Duncan. Destroyed our church, parish house, community hall, grocery store, blacksmith shop, and some homes and some farms north of Duncan. We were driving home from Garner watching the clouds, and when we arrived home, we noticed the farm one mile west from our farm had no trees, we drove there and saw that all the buildings were destroyed but the house was standing. We were told that Duncan was destroyed so we drove there but could not get very close to the church as the streets were covered with debris. Walking to the church we saw both ends of the church were standing. The center part was gone. The altar was not damaged and the sanctuary light was still burning. One person was killed, who was sitting in their car next to the grocery store. The next day help came from everywhere to clean up the mess. The sanctuary and the bell tower that were standing were dynamited to get them down. Farmers brought tractors with snow buckets and hauled the bricks into a swamp just southwest of the church. After the low area was filled and covered up the new Duncan Hall was built there. We can say that the Hall sits on the remains of our church. Confirmation was scheduled for June 27th, so it took place on the lawn by the shattered church. The archbishop urged us to rebuild and St. Boniface of Garner offered us the use of their church, till our church was rebuilt. The church board decided that the new building should be built longer as the old church at times was not large enough. The first mass was offered in the new church on the first Sunday of Advent, 1952. And the church and the rectory were blessed by Archbishop Leo Binz on

March 16, 1953. After the construction was all completed Msgr. Hradecky took a five-month leave of absence, and our parish was served by Father Raymond Sigworth. In 1959 to 1960 our parish built a CCD center next to the church with rooms for classes for religious instruction for the children of the church. The building was dedicated on March 27, 1960 and was staffed by volunteer teachers from the parish. In 1967 Msgr. Hradecky retired and moved to Garner and the next 7 months we had Fr. Clarence Frana as pastor. During this time a new entrance was built on the south side of the church where we could enter the church or basement. But in August 1968 Fr. Frana was transferred to Cedar Rapids and Msgr. John Chihak came here from Spillville. In 1971 air conditioning was installed and kneeling pads were put into the pews. In 1973 the church was redecorated and the sanctuary was carpeted. And in 1976 a verdant bell ringer was installed in memory of Frank Patza given by his family. During the 18 years that Msgr. Chihak spent with us, he was raised to the rank of Domestic Prelate, with the title of Right Reverend Monsignor, on October 24, 1974. A parish celebration honoring Msgr. was held then in December. On Sunday, June 6, 1976 our Msgr. celebrated the 40 anniversary of priesthood with a mass of thanksgiving and an open house at the hall. And on August 26, 1986, the Catholic Workman's Lodge had a district convention at Duncan. Archbishop Kucera was the mass celebrant and Mollick Fisherman played the polka mass. Msgr. told us later that the archbishop was skeptical of the polka mass, but Msgr. Chihak assured him that it would turn out ok. During the dinner at the hall, the archbishop complimented the members of the band which made us feel good. On May 7th, 1986 Msgr. was notified by the archbishop that he will be retiring on July 1st, 1986, so on June 1st, 1986 Msgr. Chihak celebrated his golden jubilee with a mass at 2:00. Archbishop Kucera and the priests from the neighboring parishes were here. Mollick Fisherman band played the polka mass. Then on July 1st, Msgr. and Mary his housekeeper, moved to Garner. On July 1st, Fr. Dale Rausch became our pastor, he came here from All Saints Church, Cedar Rapids where he was associate pastor. Duncan will be his first pastorate and he will also take care of St. Mary's parish of Corwith. The Catholic Workman Lodge was organized in the 1880's as I mentioned earlier. As time went on the membership grew and most of the events that took place were sponsored by the KD. When the first hall was built the sign made of stone, above the entrance read in the Czech language ?????? or Catholic Workman Community Hall. Meetings were held there once per month and you could pay your dues monthly. As a young boy I sometimes attended the meetings with my dad, and so did many of my friends because their dads also were members. We were called juvenile members. I can remember [Czech names] were very active in the lodge and sometimes when issues came up it was interesting how the arguments came up, some for and some against, it even got kind of loud at times. But us young members enjoyed listening as it all took place in the Czech language. Our Duncan settlement was always musical, as a small boy, I remember the first Duncan band. Then around 1922 a group of Duncan men and their sons organized a community band with Fritz ??? Granzole of Algona, an instructor who came by train every Saturday and gave us lessons. Later then John ??? took over as leader of the Duncan Community Band. The band played for many years on special occasions around the area. [Over time] it seemed that many lost interest and the band folded. A few years later, three bands started, all from the Duncan area, and they were the Rubbish, Huskers, a family band Ray Silverman Orchestra and Mollick's Accordion Band. Also, in the '20's and '30's a group of the Duncan folks took part in three act plays in the Czech language. These were directed by Henry ??? and Vladimir Fritz. The plays were given in Duncan and then at Spillville and also little Mitchell, Minnesota, also known as Summit. Then in return, the Spillville and Minnesota folks would bring their play and present it in Duncan. Also, in the

'30's we had an athletic club composed of all young men who wanted to build up their muscles and body. This included push-ups, hand rail exercises of all sorts. This was directed by Mr. ??? who came here from Spillville once a week to teach the exercises. Joe P??? was our local instructor. The class was called ????? Sokow?? This went on for some time but later due to poor attendance it was discontinued.

Seems like a women's society is needed to provide for the incidental needs of a church and parsonage. Back in 1901 Fr. Broz enrolled the ladies in a rosary society for both spiritual and material needs. No regular meetings were held but prayer cards with rosary mysteries were exchanged every first Sunday of the month. Members were required to pray every day a decade of the rosary related to the mystery on the prayer card. \$1.00 was set for the membership dues, even though many items were donated to the church by the people, the rectory needed items only women can supply like linens, bedding, curtains, dishes and such. And the Rosary Society ladies saved for such. When fundraising activities and parish celebrations were held all the ladies of the parish worked very hard and cooperated. We must remember these were the horse and buggy days so it was difficult to get involved in more than attending mass. Records show that in 1929 the Rosary Society donated \$50 for a humeral veil used by the priest to elevate the monstrance with the blessed host during benediction. In January 1940 Fr. ?? had a general meeting with 70 ladies attending and a Rosary Society was organized with an election by vote for officers. Mrs. George Urick as president, Mrs. Frank Potz as secretary, and Albina Urich was treasurer. They started with \$18 and some cents, dues of \$1.00 were collected to add to the treasury. These first officers served for 4 years after which they served for 2 years. The ladies met quarterly and four circles were organized with 15 ladies each. The Circles were dedicated to Mary and titled, Mary Mother of Good Counsel, Mary Queen of Peace, Mary Help of Christians, and Mary Refuge of Sinners. By 1949 there were 7 Circles. The first social money-making event was a card party managed by Fr. ??? with the ladies of 1 circle providing and serving lunch. Another circle had a bingo and bunko party the only expense was prizes. You just can't have a party without prizes. Another purpose other Rosary Society was the prayer life and works of mercy. The prayer cards were still distributed, spiritual bouquets were sent to the sick, masses were said for the deceased and living, food showers were held, flowers were furnished for the altars. Young men in the service were remembered with gift boxes at Thanksgiving or Christmas. Items bought for the rectory were linens, tablecloths, silver, curtains, drapes, and even a dining room set. The church needs were varied, cassock, vestments, surplices, altar linens with lace, candlesticks, holy water font, and these were paid for by the society. For many years the society prepared an outdoor altar with fresh flowers for Corpus Christi Sunday. It was such a disappointment when it rained. The St. Wenceslaus Feast Day celebration on Sept. 28th became a tradition for Duncan and the Society was in charge of preparing a meal. I remember 800 or more would be served. Ladies always had a booth of baked goods and harvest items and such to make more money. And there were raffles too. In 1947 the ladies decided not to serve a fall supper and became more involved with projects. Then the tornado of 1951 destroyed our church and the first meeting held after that was Feb. 24, 1952 at the Frank Mishka business place. Plans were made to replace much of what could not be salvaged. Finally, in December after Christmas a regular meeting was held in the church basement for the election of officers. Only 19 members happened to be present. In 1953 we started serving funeral dinners as a matter of courtesy to all members of the parish. 1955 was a busy year with Msgr. Hradecky enrolling all members in the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament. A committee clarified

rules and by-laws as to the policy of lending out kitchen equipment. Dinners were served at 1.50 to 1.75 a plate. And seven more tables were bought for the basement costing a \$169, all of them. The main altar and side altars were redecorated and the Rosary Society donated \$450 of the \$800 needed to do this. A piano was acquired and the tuning was more costly than the piano itself. Again in 1957, the ladies voted to serve the St. Wenceslaus Festival meal. A new stove, large kettles, and more dishes were bought for the kitchen. The basement dining room was painted with volunteer help. New drapes were made for the windows, all before the annual Fall Festival. By July 15, 1958 two circles were in charge for collecting recipes for the cookbook "Bacon style, Duncan style". 1,000 copies were ordered and a re-order of 1,000 more copies was ordered in 1959. Mrs. Louis Nedvid, and Mrs. Frank Potts promoted this successful endeavor, which has grown to over 8,000 books re-ordered to this date of 1987. Retreats at Cedar Falls were attended for several years, stormy weather or not. Many attended the ACCW meetings and several have served on the commissions through the years. Every year we furnish layettes, craft items, bandages, hospital gowns, adult bibs, locally or to the world mission. [end of side 1]

[First part of side 2 missing a minute of conversation] .....and in 1959 a committee was named to contact a contractor to draw up plans for the remodeling. New cupboards were our main concern so the next two years were busy ones for raising money. Besides the regular projects of each circle all were involved in serving food and drink at the 4H food stand in Britt for three long consecutive days. The ladies used their muscle and a little blue pickup to bring in borrowed stoves, refrigerators, and lumber for shelves for the stand. After all this activity and hard work, we had a new remodeled kitchen by June 1961 and all paid for. Well then in 1962 the ladies voted down the St. Wenceslaus meal with 22 yes votes and 22 no votes so a cash donation was asked for from each family and this practice has continued. The honorary circle was started in 1960 with 7 ladies requesting to be a part of that circle. Now we have 15 on the list. A potluck supper for members at the December meeting was held in 1964 and became a yearly event until 1970. Our husbands or one friend as guest really enjoyed this event of gala decorations and a fun program. Along with this, going for some information I noted that prices for our bake sale items were listed as such. Kolaches .40 cents a dozen, pie .50 each, ???, and rye bread .35 a loaf, this in 1966, 20 years ago. Fr. Frana was installed as our pastor in 1967 so the parsonage was cleaned, painted and refurbished where ever needed by the Rosary Society. The 2-year terms as officers came to an end and in 1967 the 1-year terms began with the elected vice-president taking over as president the following year. We also started electing the ACCW chairman to a 10 meetings and bring back the information to report, since volunteers couldn't be found. Meetings were held every other month. We also began to serve communion and graduate breakfasts after mass to honorees, relatives, and friends. When Garner celebrated their centennial in July 1970 we worked at a food stand for two days with all circles working in shifts and furnishing pie and kolaches. And since we worked for the Garner centennial, it seemed only fair that we do the same for Britt in 1978 when they had their centennial, August 4th and 5th. So, a food stand was managed those two days. The society members began the practice of saying a rosary for the deceased on the afternoon prior to the funeral and also 15 minutes before the funeral mass. A rosary committee has been appointed yearly to fulfill this act of love and also to lead rosary before all masses in May and October. Except for funeral dinners, our projects ended and in 1978 had one big project, a Fall Bazaar that netted over \$2,000 and was the best one-day venture that we've had. Had a country store of baking and crafts and a noon lunch in a tea room setting. Continued this

until 1983 with some changes of less crafts, more baking, raffles, and also was held at the hall. Our treasury grew during these years so whatever renovation or replacement or supplies were needed, we had the funds. Our involvement may be social but is good for the church and community. Msgr. had us continue the communion and confirmation breakfasts. The monthly winter breakfast which he encouraged a lot. Circles take turns decorating altars every week with flowers. We are involved with the Children's Christmas Party, serving lunch. We visit and entertain at the Britt and Garner nursing homes 4 times a year and also do our bit at the County Care Facility. We collect food and clothing for the needy, sew layettes, sew adult bibs for the nursing home residents. We make bandages, hospital gowns, collect soap stamps or whatever when there is a need. Msgr. Chihak retired in 1986 after serving our parish for 18 years, and since a new pastor, Fr. Raush, was assigned the ladies of the Rosary Society rallied round and improvements, repainting, and furnishing much of the rectory was accomplished with volunteers again. When even the church proper was undertaken and looking back seems the same story of active, ambitious ladies keeps repeating itself. All for the good of the parish and the honor and glory of God. This was composed by me, Margaret Rubish, a member of St. Wenceslaus parish of Duncan.

In assembling this tape, I used information from church histories written by Margaret Rubish, The History of Duncan by Vivian ??? also visiting with Msgr. Chihak and Fr. Rausch who got me church records, and also visiting with our elderly parishioners. I Sil Malik have attended Duncan my whole life and will be 78 so I remember many of the events and changes that took place. We will be adding parts of our polka mass which was taped at Msgr. Chihak's Golden Jubilee Mass at Duncan. [Music/hymns start]