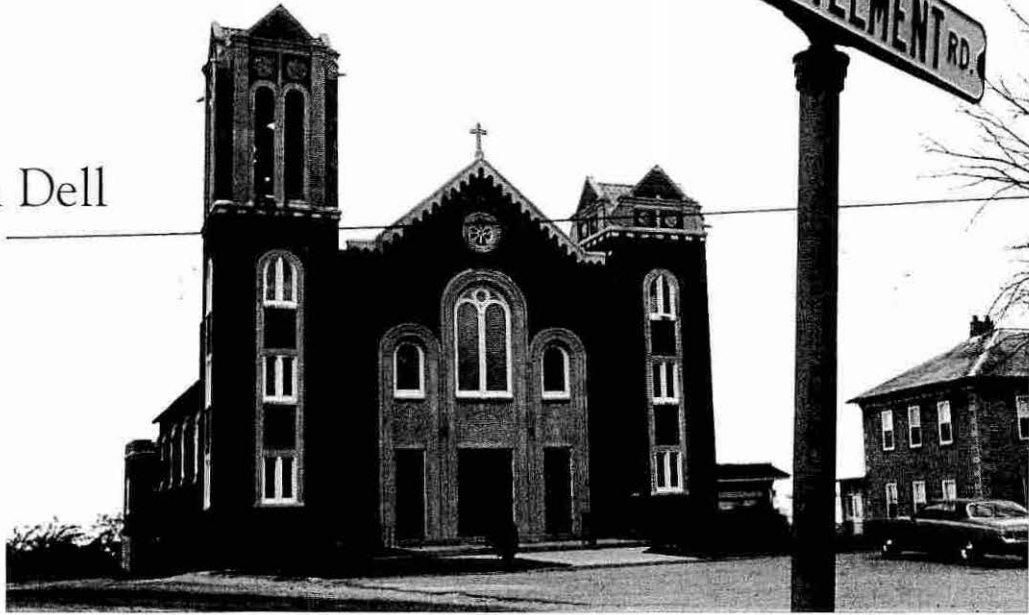


Bay Settlement

A Hamlet in Northeast Wisconsin

by Virginia Dell



Holy Cross Church and rectory stand at the crossroad that has been a focal point for the community since the mid-nineteenth century.

Photograph by Jerry Dell

Bay Settlement today is an address. In the thriving Green Bay real estate market, a view on Bay Settlement Road is prime real estate.

One of the earliest points of European settlement in the state of Wisconsin, Bay Settlement began as an outpost for settlement east and northeast of Green Bay and developed into a thriving community whose businesses and institutions served the needs of the surrounding agricultural area.

Even after the automobile and improved roads resulted in Bay Settlement's decline as a commercial center, the hamlet retained for many years an air of community organized around church, school, and convent. But extension of sewer in the early 1900s along Bay Settlement Road and pressure for housing on Green Bay's rapidly growing east side accelerated a change in character. Though some barns, silos, and open fields remain, Bay Settlement's environs are becoming suburban in appearance.

This article outlines Bay Settlement's history from its beginning until the mid-twentieth century. Its story shares much with other rural communities overwhelmed by urban development.

From Wilderness to Community

Historian Deborah Martin, in her 1913 *History of Brown County, Wisconsin*, described Bay Settlement as the oldest point of colonization in Wisconsin outside Green Bay, De Pere, and Prairie du Chien.¹

Before 1850, Bay Settlement was sparsely settled. Early accounts indicate that the first non-Indian inhabitants lived beside the Bay, rather than at the present site inland, and that "Bay Settlement" referred generally to an area rather than to a specific point of settlement. The tide of immigration into Wisconsin in the mid-nineteenth century² brought settlers into all of the Bay Settlement area, and the present Bay Settlement and Church crossroads became a focal point for services to the surrounding agricultural community. Newspaper articles and other accounts show that the unincorporated hamlet achieved its greatest prominence as a center for commercial services during

last two decades of the nineteenth century. After that time, Bay Settlement's influence as a commercial center began to decline. By World War II, most of its businesses had closed.

The Early Period, 1817-1850

The trader Augustin Grignon, in his *Recollections*, says Bay Settlement was begun "eight miles below Green Bay in 1817, the spring after Fort Howard was established on the west bank of the Fox River."³ It is clear from early material on the Green Bay region that these first settlers at Bay Settlement were French, probably with Indian wives, and that they settled along the bayshore rather than inland where Bay Settlement is presently located. Although they cleared land and farmed, fishing and hunting were their major activities.⁴

In 1820, 290 civilians lived in Brown County, which then occupied all of the east central and northeast portion of Wisconsin. Virtually everyone was connected with the fur trade.

Those not active were described as . . . mostly old worn-out voyageurs, who, having become unfit for the hardships of the Indian trade, had settled down on a piece of land with their Indian wives and mixed-blood progeny.⁵

By the early 1840s, settlement seemed to be concentrating on the escarpment inland in the vicinity of the present crossroad at Bay Settlement and Church roads. This may have been due to an increasing emphasis on farming and less emphasis on fishing as a way of earning a living, or perhaps a period of unusually high water or flooding made the higher land more attractive. Another possibility is that emphasis in settlement moved from the bayshore to the escarpment to cluster around a log chapel built in 1834 on the present site of Holy Cross Church.

One of the earliest accounts of Bay Settlement was by Samuel Stambaugh, U. S. Indian Agent in Green Bay, who wrote in a report to the U. S. Secretary of War in 1831:

There is a small settlement of French and half breeds above the Red Banks on the Bay, and six miles below the Fort, who have cleared and cultivated several hundred acres of land; which is the only white settlement on this Peninsula, outside of the confirmed claims.⁶

The same year that Stambaugh wrote his report, the Menominees ceded the peninsula on which Bay Settlement is located to the United States, making official white domination of lands in the vicinity.⁷

From the 1830s on, more information becomes available on Bay Settlement's inhabitants although reports sometimes conflict and spellings of names vary. Bella French, compiler of a history of the Green Bay area in 1876, says Louis Corbeille, who settled on the bayshore in 1830, found two families there—those of Louis LaResch and Joseph Greenwood. They were shortly joined by the Rouse and Rousseau families, Anton Allard, and others. French says the first American settlers came about 1836. They were Van Renssalaer Marshall, William Sylvester, John Campbell, and Robert Gibson.⁸

Settlers who began to move to the vicinity from eastern states were undoubtedly responding to the public sale of lands in Wisconsin which began in 1834.⁹ Martin, writ-

This former farm meadow on Bay Settlement Road is today a growing housing development. It is just north of the convent, which is visible in the background.

Photograph by Jerry Dell



ing in 1913, lists two other families as inhabitants of Bay Settlement in 1830—those of Isaac Jacques and Amable Gervais. The context indicates that they lived on the escarpment, probably near the site of the present Bay Settlement.¹⁰

The map of Township No. 24, made when the Green Bay area was surveyed in 1834, shows two settlers along the bayshore directly west of the present site of Bay Settlement, J. Rouse and A. Jervais, and south of them along the Bay, the property of Jordan.¹¹



In 1834, the year of the survey, Father Van den Broek, who served a Dutch mission at Little Chute on the Fox River south of Green Bay, built a small log mission chapel on the escarpment where Holy Cross Church now stands. It was to be used when he made a circuit through the outlying areas.¹² Though it is not certain if settlers lived near the site, there were inhabitants a little more than a mile away on the bayshore. But settlement may not have been the determining factor for Father Van den Broek's choice of site; he may have chosen the higher ground for practical reasons, to avoid wetlands below, or for aesthetic reasons such as the view. More likely, he chose the higher elevation for symbolic purposes. Historically, religious places often have been located on prominent elevations. Whatever the reason, the chapel became a focal point and may have been the reason for the shift of settlement from the bayshore to the present site of Bay Settlement. The congregation of that chapel included the families of LaFramboise, Shallifax, Vieux, Rousseau, LaPlante, Baumier, Champeaux, Verbocoeurs, and others.

An 1844 map reproduced in a Green Bay historical bulletin which was identified as "U. S. Chart," portrays Bay Settlement as eight textured squares, presumably fields,¹⁴ which indicates that ten years after construction of the chapel, settlers were occupying lands near it.

By that year, there were enough inhabitants in the Bay Settlement vicinity to

demanding more and better roads. As the decade drew to a close, more and more of the business of the Commissioner of Highways for the Town of Green Bay involved petitions for roads in the Bay Settlement area. In 1848, an east-west road was planned. It began about a mile east of Bay Settlement and followed the route of the present Church Road west toward the bay.¹⁵ Establishing routes of early roads is difficult. Although many followed survey marks, descriptions also included trees, posts, natural features, and the property of individuals. In the early 1840s, the road along the bayshore was

referred to as "The Bay Settlement Road." "The Ridge Road" above the escarpment began to be a frequently referenced transportation route early in the next decade.

In 1845, the Town of Green Bay began requiring licenses for the operation of taverns. The next year, Jean B. LaFramboise applied for and was granted a license to operate a tavern at Bay Settlement.¹⁶ Though an increasing number of licenses were granted to operate taverns and to sell groceries, the Town Clerk ceased giving locations of these businesses. Only by recognizing names associated with Bay Settlement can it be determined that some were in the immediate area. Town records also frequently mention a windmill on the ridge, so at least one facility existed nearby for grinding grain.

Another indication that settlement was beginning to concentrate near the chapel was a cemetery southeast of the present intersection of Church and Bay Settlement roads. Although material in the convent archives dates the earliest graves at 1853, the names of earlier settlers—Champeaux, Rousseau, Allard, LaFramboise, Greenwood, Rouse—were on gravestones in the cemetery. By mid-twentieth century, time and vandalism had reduced the old cemetery to a few fallen stones, most of them broken and beyond identification.

By 1850, the environs of Bay Settlement were still sparsely settled, but habitation was beginning to thicken around the present crossroads. The chapel, the community graveyard, the residents beginning businesses, and the growing network of transportation routes were evidence that the inhabitants were putting down roots.

Formative Years, the 1850s and 1860s

Although settlers from eastern states began to move to the Bay Settlement vicinity during the late 1830s and the 1840s, the area remained sparsely settled until the two decades following 1850. The increasing tide of immigrants into Wisconsin from the East and from Europe reached the peninsula in mid-century.¹⁷ During the 1850s and 1860s, all the lands surrounding Bay Settlement were occupied, and the hamlet emerged as a focal point for institutional and commercial services. The original French-Indians and later American settlers were joined by Belgians, Dutch, Germans, and a few Irish, thus mixing the population in nationality and language.¹⁸

A major influence in the development of Bay Settlement and upon its present character was the arrival in 1852 of the Rev. Edward Daems, a Belgian missionary priest. Father Daems was a member of the same religious order as Father Van den Broek, builder of the chapel at Bay Settlement. Daems had spent some time earlier at the mis-



Many of the buildings visible in this 1974 photograph date to the nineteenth century. The picture was made from Church Road looking east toward Bay Settlement on the escarpment.

Photograph by Jerry Dell

sion at Little Chute, returned briefly to Holland, and came back to establish a permanent institution at Bay Settlement where the log chapel stood.¹⁹ His original charge was to establish a monastery or religious community, but this failed for reasons too complex to deal with in this paper.²⁰ This plan for religious community adds credibility to the theory that the original chapel may have been sited because the location seemed especially appropriate for a religious place. He immediately set about building a church, a small white frame building which cost \$605 and served the congregation until 1931 when it was razed to make way for the present structure.²¹

Parishioners honoring Father Daems in 1875 wrote a description of the Bay Settlement region at Daems' arrival twenty-three years earlier:

This whole neighborhood was but one vast, pathless, howling wilderness, which offered no comforts of any kind, and promised no success in any line to the daring settler. . . . A few miserable, idle log cabins slept by the shores of the Bay; a few squalid ranches dotted the interior with patches of wretched cultivation. There was here a poor chapel, but the sound of its small bell woke only the echoes of a vast solitude. The sun ripened only the harvest of wild oats on the shores, and the beasts of prey made their lairs in security close by the abodes of men.²²

The year after he arrived, Father Daems became responsible for settlement northeast of Bay Settlement by the largest single nationality group to come to the lower part of the peninsula. According to the account written by 1893 by Xavier Martin,²³ son of one of the original settlers and himself a member of the group, ten families from Belgium had decided to seek a new life in the United States. On board ship they learned of Wisconsin and continued to Milwaukee. The Belgians located land near Sheboygan but found that because they spoke only French and Walloon, they were unable to communicate with other settlers who mostly spoke German. By chance, they met a person who told them of many French-speaking people in the Green Bay area, so they traveled on. The men located land near Kaukauna and made partial payment on it.

Departure for Kaukauna was delayed because a child in one of the families died. The funeral was in the Catholic Church in Green Bay; by chance Father Daems was visiting the priest and met the Belgians. He persuaded them to forfeit payments on the land at Kaukauna and settle on the nearest land available to Bay Settlement. He helped them locate and claim government land for which they paid \$1.25 an acre.²⁴

One historian wrote that the Belgians were overjoyed to meet a countryman in the new land.²⁵ Father Daems was pleased to meet Belgians and to be of service. Xavier Martin described the first settlement this way:

The little party were ten miles away from any house, in a virgin forest consisting of a thick growth of pine, maple, beech, cedar, basswood, etc.—many of the trees being five and even six feet in diameter, and some over a hundred and fifty feet high,—without roads of any kind, not even a trail; with no neighbors, no horses, no cattle; nothing but the occasional visit of a wolf, a deer, or a bear, coming around their little huts, and on more than one occasion taking the pork they had brought with them.²⁶

The first Belgian settlement, called Aux Premieres Belges, was located near the present community of Champion,²⁷ about six miles northeast of Bay Settlement. Reports from the first settlers reached Belgium and triggered a stream of immigrants. Xavier Martin estimated that 15,000 came in 1854 and 1856 and that most of them wanted to own land and farm.²⁸

An account in the *Green Bay Advocate* in January 1856 told of extreme suffering of Belgian settlers who were unprepared for the severe Wisconsin winter.²⁹ Business of the town board the next month included relief for settlers in need.³⁰ These hardships were followed by a disease resembling Asiatic cholera which took a high toll. When news of poverty and disease reached Belgium, immigration virtually stopped.³¹ Until Belgian settlers were able to form congregations and be served by priests nearer to their own communities, Father Daems provided services to them. Deborah Martin wrote that

The Sisters of St. Francis of the Holy Cross trace their forebears to 1868 when three young women came to Bay Settlement to open a school. The oldest part of the convent building is today little changed from this 1974 photograph.

Photograph by Jerry Dell

while the cholera epidemic raged, Father Daems "kept his horse constantly saddled, and for that whole terrible period he did not know one night of undisturbed repose."³²

Xavier Martin did not arrive in the Belgian settlement until 1857, having remained in Philadelphia to learn English. When he arrived, he found that few of the Belgians had learned English and that they had remained isolated from non-French speaking settlements. The Belgians at Aux Premieres Belges prevailed upon him to become a schoolmaster. The next year, 230 Belgians marched in a group to vote in town elections at a polling place "near the windmill at Bay Settlement," and after this the roads were repaired, and new ones laid out, and the Belgian settlement received its full share of the county road, drainage, and school funds.³³

There was no road or trail from Sturgeon Bay to Green Bay until a year or two after the Belgians arrived. Then a link was constructed from Bay Settlement to Sturgeon Bay,³⁴ firmly establishing the road on the ridge passing through Bay Settlement as the primary route from Green Bay northeast into Door County peninsula.

During the mid-1850s a number of Hollanders came to Bay Settlement. Most Dutch immigration to Northeast Wisconsin was to the Little Chute area in response to a visit made to Holland by Father Van den Broek a few years earlier.³⁵ The Bay Settlement group may also have learned of it from him.

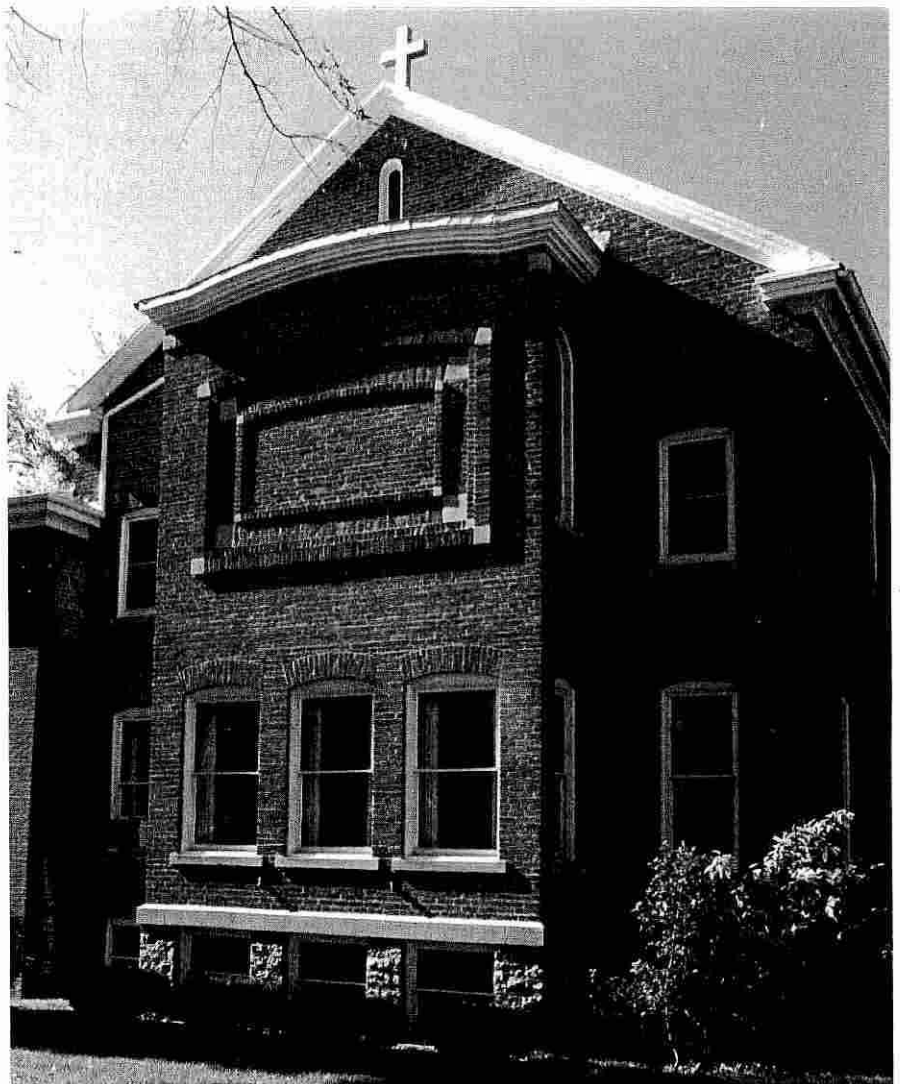
By 1857, there were some businesses including taverns and grocery stores at Bay Settlement, and habitation had advanced to the point that refinements were being introduced. The clerk was instructed at a town board meeting in the fall of that year to "notify all grocery and tavern keepers residing within one quarter mile of the church on the ridge to abstain from selling liquor on Sundays."³⁶

Transportation routes continued to improve. An item in the *Green Bay Advocate* in 1858 noted:

The new road leading to Bay Settlement, popularly called 'The Swamptown Road' is now in excellent condition, Mr. Burkhard having newly planked it and made it one of the best roads of the kind for the distance in the state.³⁷

In 1859, the Town of Green Bay was divided and Bay Settlement became part of the new Town of Scott.³⁸ In the Town of Scott's first year, this account of Bay Settlement environs appeared in the *Green Bay Advocate*:

Few sections of the neighboring country have made greater progress, during the past five years, than the region known as the Bay Settlement. All passengers as they go up and down our magnificent inlet of waters [Green Bay], gaze with delight on the appearance of rural beauty and prosperity which the uplands which meet the view on the side of the shore present. A few years have wrought many changes there for the better . . . Large tracts of land, but a little while since covered with primeval forests, have been cleared away and brought under cultivation, and now promising and paying crops are growing where



recently nothing was to be seen but the unappropriated wilderness. A class of larger and more commodious houses and barns have been built, showing to some extent the means of those who own them. Roads, that until lately were almost impassable, are now in good condition, and may be traveled over with ease, safety, and rapidity.³⁹

Xavier Martin wrote that in 1860, "genuine prosperity seemed about to reward the Belgian settlers."⁴⁰ In that year, Father Daems built the sturdy native stone rector which stands on Bay Settlement Road today just north of Holy Cross Church.⁴¹

In 1861, there came to Bay Settlement another man whose influence remains visible. Gregoire Denis, born in Belgium of parents who immigrated to the Champion area in the mid-1850s, married, at Bay Settlement, a widow who was proprietor of "a small restaurant for the traveling public." The couple quickly saved sixty-five dollars. They invested in groceries and opened a store in a log house at Bay Settlement. Denis got credit to borrow money, bought more stock, and soon the business included a tavern, a private bank, and real estate.

The store stood on the southwest corner of the intersection of Church and Bay Settlement roads. By 1895, when Denis was included in a biographical volume on the region, it was written:

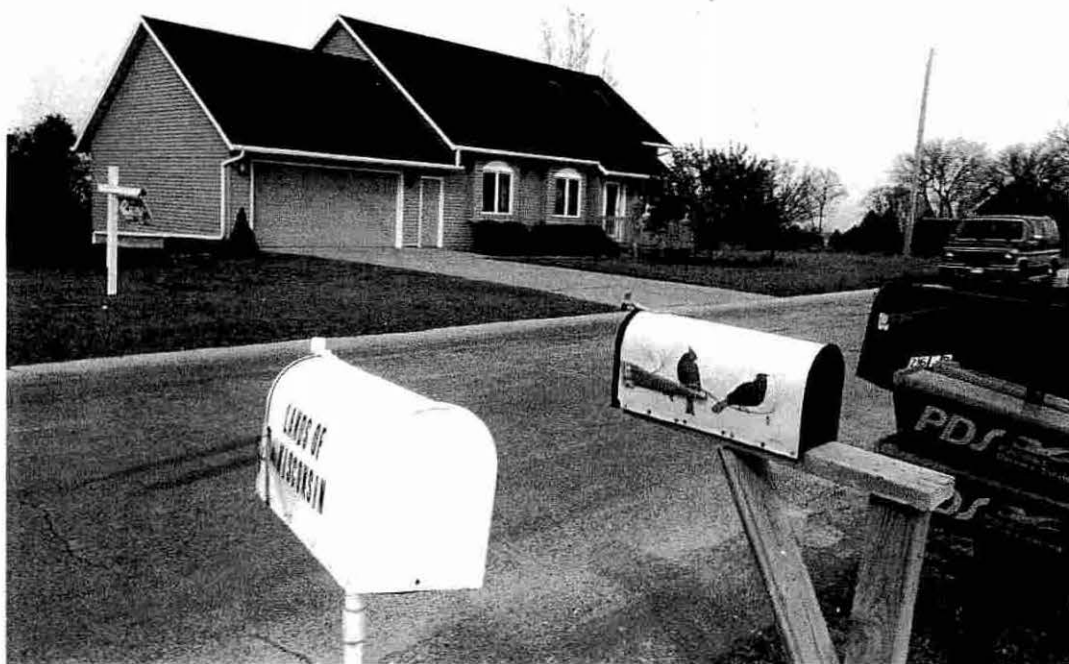
"Among the representative self-made men, and well-known capitalists of Brown County, few if any have been the architects of their own fortune to a degree such as has been attained by the gentleman whose name is here recorded."⁴²

During the Civil War Xavier Martin reported that Belgian men served in the Union army and that women and children maintained the farms.

After the war, "there came an unusual season of prosperity in the Belgian settlements, the like of which had not before been seen, nor has it been since," he wrote.⁴³ A number of sawmills were built on the peninsula after the war, which not only permitted settlers who still had a good deal of timber to sell it but speeded the clearing of land for farming.⁴⁴ By 1867, Bay Settlement had achieved sufficient prominence as a commercial and service center to warrant a U. S. Post Office.⁴⁵

Two other institutions that were begun at Bay Settlement during this period serve the community today. Father Daems was anxious to have a Catholic school at Bay Settlement, and in 1868, three young women, forebearers of the present congregation of Sisters of St. Francis of the Holy Cross, came to open a school. Sister M. Pius Doyl (1845-1911), one of the three, described attendance the first day:

... twenty-five boys and girls whose ages averaged 17 years; at least four or five young men between 21 and 26 years. . . The greatest drawback the Sisters had were the languages; very few spoke English and that was all the pastor wanted taught in school, except Catechism which had to be taught in four languages [French, English, German, and Dutch], 'till the children had acquired a better knowledge of English.⁴⁶



Some today might agree with the mid-nineteenth century description of Bay Settlement as "a class of larger and more commodious houses."

Photograph by Jerry Dell

During the 1850s and 1860s, Bay Settlement became clearly defined as a center of institutional and commercial services. The area near enough to consider Bay Settlement its service center was settled, and early hardships gave way to stability and prosperity.

The Great Fire

This season of prosperity continued for Bay Settlement and environs until the autumn of 1871. On October 8 of that drought year, fires swept from New Franken north to Sturgeon Bay leaving two hundred dead and five thousand homeless and destitute.⁴⁷

The hamlet of Bay Settlement itself escaped the fires, but its inhabitants were touched in a number of ways. Funerals for eleven who perished were held at Holy Cross Church. Since Bay Settlement was on the main route from Green Bay into the peninsula, supplies for survivors to the north, as many as twelve wagonloads a day, moved through the hamlet.

Residents of Bay Settlement had been aware of the impending disaster for two months before it occurred. Sister Pius wrote:

All the country north of Bay Settlement, where the soil was good, was heavily timbered and the settlers availed themselves of the dry season to clear up and burn the timber and brush in order to be ready to plow or break the land. Early in August in the afternoons the sun would be obscured owing to the fires which steadily increased so that towards the end of the month it was becoming frightful. Many times the Sisters and Father Daems would converse over the coming disaster. . . it was even hard to breathe; smoke inside, and smoke everywhere. The cattle suffered for water; many times I was awakened by the noise of people in our creek stealing water. . . That evening [October 8, 1871] the weather changed; a breeze sprung up and after sundown it was almost a hurricane. Little did we think how much destruction the fire wrought that evening.⁴⁸

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Destruction of the resources for many for whom Bay Settlement was the service center undoubtedly had an economic effect upon the hamlet. Since the timber had burned the sawmills did not reopen and residents of the burned-over area turned their attention to farming.⁴⁹ In the *Annals* kept by the Sisters of St. Francis, the aftermath of the fire was described:

"The sufferings and privations endured by the survivors was beyond description. . . it took years for some of these settlers to recover from the effects of the fire."⁵⁰

Xavier Martin had a more optimistic view. He said: "Three years after the great conflagration of 1871, we find the Belgians in better condition and circumstances than ever."⁵¹

The End of the Nineteenth Century

In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Bay Settlement reached a period of maturity as a service center for the surrounding farming community.

By the time Father Daems died in 1879, he had founded Holy Cross Church, the third permanent Catholic Parish in what is now the Green Bay Diocese; the Sisters of St. Francis of the Holy Cross; and Holy Cross School, and had achieved the title of Vicar General of the Green Bay Diocese.⁵²

Active Bay Settlement correspondents during the 1880s and 1890s filed frequent items in the *Green Bay Advocate* reporting on the condition of crops, picnics, Fourth of July celebrations, dances, and excursions to Wequioc Falls. Many of these events were connected with the church and the school and had social as well as other significance: weddings, funerals, first communions, and graduations.

In 1883, it was reported that "among the most important improvements here, are the new buildings of Mr. Gregoire Denis, 'our wealthiest citizen,' who has just completed a fine large stable and a carriage house." The same item listed as prominent merchants A. Gonion, of Gonion, Rubens and Gosin, farm machine agents; Frank Greenwood, meat market operator, farmer and chairman of the Board of Supervisors; J. Malliet, shoemaker, and the Corstens and Craanan stores. In 1889 it was noted that "work on Mr. G. Denis' dwelling is progressing rapidly." The Denis family lived in the back of the store building until the house, still standing on the southeast corner of Church and Bay Settlement roads, was completed.⁵³

Six years later, Palmer Houle, Alex Cons, and Jules Neville were listed as proprietors of hotels and saloons at Bay Settlement, and N. Zeitzuis and Joseph Champeau were saloon owners. In that same year, an item in the *Advocate* described the congregation of Holy Cross Church as consisting of 152 families, "seventy-two of which are Hollanders, six Irish, thirty-one Germans, and the rest French." French-speaking Belgians as well as persons of French descent undoubtedly were included in the last group.⁵⁴

An 1889 plat book shows ten buildings in addition to the church, rectory, convent and school within a quarter mile north, south, east, and west of the crossroads. Gregoire Denis had a dock on the bayshore. The roads followed closely the same routes they have today. Land below the escarpment was divided into long, narrow strips. Some property above the escarpment took the form of long rectangles also, in the manner that original French inhabitants had platted land at Green Bay.⁵⁵ One building was marked as a post office and another as a store, but some undoubtedly served dual purposes as businesses and residences.⁵⁶

An article in the *Green Bay Advocate* appeared under a Bay Settlement dateline in 1890 giving this description of the area:

It is located six miles from Green Bay, on the east bayshore. Although situated on the lime stone ledge, it is surrounded on all sides by some of the best farming land in the state. The business portion of this village consists of three dry goods and grocery stores, four shoe shops, two blacksmiths and wagon shops, one physician and surgeon, four saloons and hotels, two butcher shops, one creamery, two churches (one Catholic and one Protestant), three public schools,

Gregoire Denis, Bay Settlement's "wealthiest citizen" built this house southeast of the crossroads in 1889. (1974 photograph)

Photograph by Jerry Dell

one Catholic school with hundreds of children from all parts of the country. . . A better and healthier place cannot be found in the whole state. The scenery also is very striking. A vast number of visitors and pleasure seekers from abroad can be seen on our graveled streets daily. Two stages are running through here daily; one to Sturgeon Bay and one to Ahnapee.⁵⁷

This description included much that was not immediately at Bay Settlement. The Protestant church and a public school were located about a mile north at Wequiock, which had its own post office. One public school was south of Bay Settlement and another may have been on the bayshore. Attendance at the Catholic school, here given as "hundreds" actually is listed in convent reports for those years at sixty to seventy.

An 1895 biographical volume on prominent citizens listed the holdings of Gregoire Denis as between four hundred and five hundred acres, a residence, and real estate in Green Bay. As proof of his standing, the article noted that Denis had been appointed postmaster at Bay Settlement during the Grant administration, had served for twenty-three years, and was "a life-long Republican."⁵⁸ A *Milwaukee Journal* article also credited Denis with owning a sawmill and a flour mill.

Other prominent citizens were Arnold Corstens, a farmer, shoemaker, and tanner, and Jacob Craanen, postmaster at Bay Settlement, farmer, and proprietor of a grocery business.⁵⁹

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, it is clear that ownership of land and farming activity were important even to proprietors of these businesses. Many of the businesses were those which depended upon farmers' needs. The ties between hamlet and farm seemed inseparable.

The New Century

Bay Settlement began to decline as a service center early in the twentieth century, and by World War II, its influence in a commercial sense had almost ended. Increased use of the automobile, better roads, and the decline of the fourth class post office also contributed to Bay Settlement's decline. The post office closed in 1907.⁶⁰

Bay Settlement Road became a state route during the later part of the nineteenth century and in 1923, became State Highway 57. It was the major route from Green Bay to the Door County peninsula. In 1923 it was hard surfaced for the first time.⁶¹ In a feature article in *The Milwaukee Journal* in 1927, Bay Settlement was described as a commercial center, but no longer in its prime.

Bay Settlement does not today own the dignity of having a United States Post Office allotted to it. . . . The general store, the mill, the Church of the Holy Cross, the convent, the blacksmith shop, the house where the well driller lives, and several homes make what is one of Wisconsin's smallest hamlets. . . .⁶²

The last country doctor to live in and serve the community was Dr. Emil Williams, a native of Belgium, who practiced in Bay Settlement from 1904 until his death in 1916. The house he built on Bay Settlement Road south of the intersection still stands. It was



a double house so the couple who built the house and maintained the property could live in one half, while he had offices and residence in the other. Frank Stoffelen, son of the couple who built the house, and his wife operated one of the remaining businesses at Bay Settlement from 1932 to 1950, a small dairy which primarily pasteurized and bottled milk.⁶³

In 1909, the DePas family moved to Bay Settlement from a farm a few miles north and was active in the commercial life of Bay Settlement for about twenty-five years. Mr. DePas, a blacksmith, had been traveling each week to Bay Settlement to operate a shop on the west side of Bay Settlement Road opposite the Denis house. When another smith closed his shop nearby, DePas bought the business. It was called the Bay View Hall and had a tavern and blacksmith shop on the first floor and a dance hall on the second. One

son, John, also was a blacksmith, and another, Russel, operated the tavern. When the Bay View Hall burned in 1932, Russel DePas opened a tavern in a house on Bay Settlement Road. He operated it for four years, and tiring of the long hours, closed the tavern and took a job outside of Bay Settlement.⁶⁴

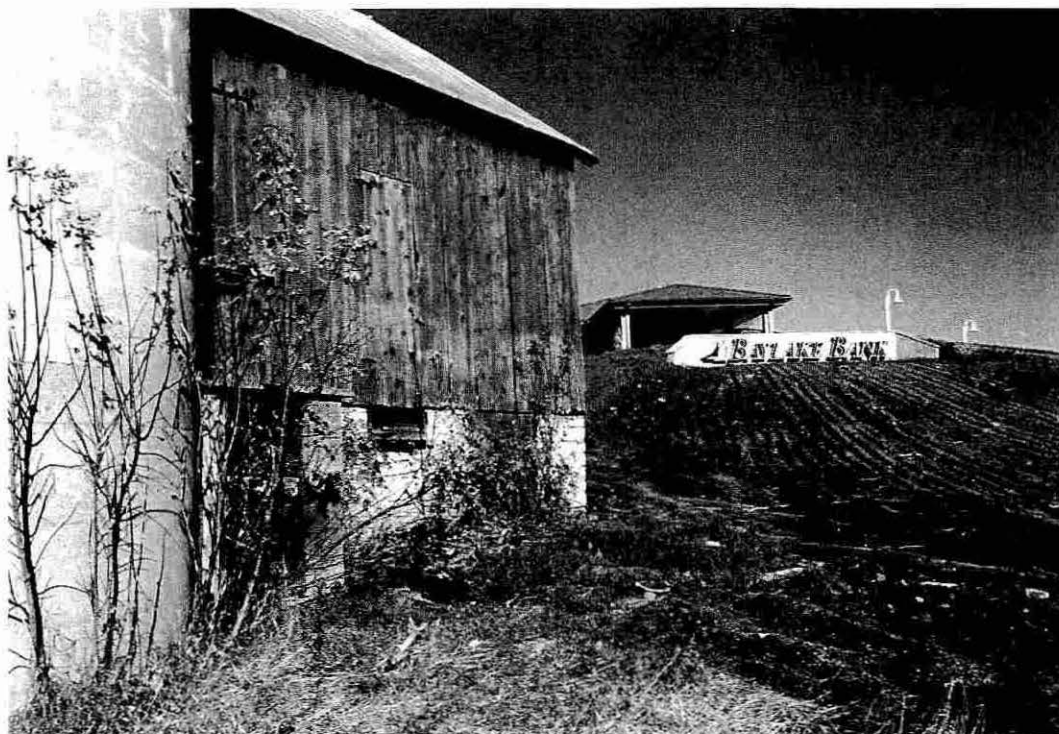
The Denis family continued to be prominent. Their tavern closed at the time of prohibition. Gregoire Denis died in 1923 at the age of 82, but several sons carried on the family enterprises. Edward Denis took active charge of his father's store, and after Edward's death, Louis

Denis operated it until he died in 1945. The Denis store, which had operated continuously at Bay Settlement longer than any other business, closed at his death.

Gregoire Denis had eight children by two wives, but by the time the store closed only three children survived. They continued to be associated with Bay Settlement until their deaths. A son, William, died in 1955. One daughter, Sister Gregory (Barbara), was a member of the convent at Bay Settlement from 1900 until her death in 1960. Another daughter moved back to the family home at Bay Settlement after being widowed and lived there until she died.⁶⁵ The next generation of Denis descendants was granddaughters.

The automobile, good roads, and the lure of a variety of goods, services and entertainment possibilities in Green Bay attracted inhabitants of Bay Settlement's market area away from the hamlet to the city and caused the decline of Bay Settlement's businesses. The institutions at Bay Settlement continued to thrive into the new century. A new building was constructed for Holy Cross School in 1923, and in 1932, a new red brick church replaced the nineteenth century frame structure. These institutions still provided services that people desired to have near their dwellings and to which they had emotional attachments.

But by the end of the first half of the twentieth century, Bay Settlement, which started at its present location as a community clustered around a chapel, had developed into a thriving community providing commercial services to the surrounding agricultural area, had declined, and was primarily a center for institutional services provided by church, a school, and a convent.



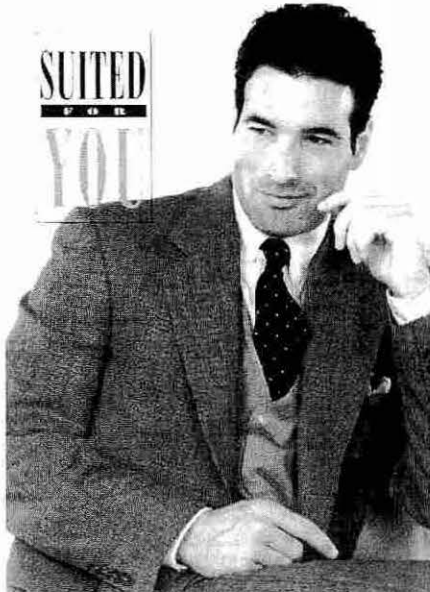
Early in this century, Bay Settlement declined as a center for businesses serving the surrounding agricultural area. But its roots are still evident today as new businesses aimed at serving residents of recent housing developments locate along Bay Settlement Road.

Photograph by Jerry Dell

NOTES

- 1 Deborah B. Martin, *History of Brown County Wisconsin: Past and Present* Vol. 1 (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing. Co., 1913), 320.
- 2 Alice E. Smith, *From Exploration to Statehood*, Vol. I *The History of Wisconsin* (Madison: State Historical Society, 1973), 464-467.
- 3 Augustin Grignon, "Seventy-two Years Recollections of Wisconsin," Vol. III *Wisconsin Historical Collections* ed. by Reuben Gold Thwaites (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society, 1857), 283.
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