Relationship with GOD
More than Just SUNDAY

Beer, Business, and the Bible

It was my good fortune to be born and raised in Chippewa Falls. My family owned and operated a boot and shoe business that shared in the legacy of the lumber industry. I grew up hearing stories of the 'big mill' operated by the Chippewa Lumber and Boom Company and its relationship to the boot industry.

As a child, I imagined the men who kept the mill operational to be just like Paul Bunyan; burly men who cut the pines, pushed them into the Chippewa River, guided them towards the mill, retrieved them, and cut them into lumber.

I learned that the basic needs of these men necessitated proper footwear that would protect them as they moved the lumber from the forest to the water and to the mill. It was also shared that lumberjacks often enjoyed a quality brew at the end of the day to relax and refresh. And, most importantly, it was impressed upon me that the lumber lifestyle required spiritual guidance and a humility towards God the Father.

When I was asked to write this article, I delved into numerous historical records about the Chippewa valley. There I found that the logging industry was humming around the year 1855. Hundreds of families had settled in the region creating a vibrant and industrious community. The expanding business environment and growing population were the probable reasons that Jacob Leinenkugel and his family moved to the area to construct a brewery and that Father F.X. Goldsmith arrived in Chippewa to establish a church. The expanding community also drew John Piotrowski and John Andrejeski to settle into the area and founded the Chippewa Shoe Company years later.

These men worked tirelessly in their own way to bring quality of life to the people along the river. Jacob and his wife Josephine worked side by side establishing the brewery. At the same time, Father Goldsmith traveled from one pinery camp to the next asking for financial donations or labor and materials to build a permanent church structure. The "two Johns" as they were known, saw to it that the lumbermen could have good, spiked, logger boots that were made by local employees.

These early settlers were more than entrepreneurs. They were devout Catholics who lived the Gospel message to love God above all else and to spread charity in the community. Father

Goldsmith's 20-year pastorate resulted in the formation of daughter parishes to the main parish of Notre Dame, Catholic schools, and several fraternal orders and societies. The Leinenkugels went from a two-man operation to a thriving community that included a dormitory for their workers along with a meat and grocery store; all of which were run under the loving eye of Josephine. And the 'two Johns' served the community as honorable and trusted civic and business leaders. They kept a keen eye on the city's public affairs and business climate to ensure its future growth.

The faith-filled tenacity of these individuals quickly attracted more businessmen and families to establish deep roots near the Chippewa River; roots still visible today. Chippewa Falls remains authentically Catholic where the original three parishes built upon its hills still proclaim God's word. And, the Catholic school system which started under Father Goldsmith is still educating students. The business community continues to thrive commercially following the principles of stewardship and fraternity laid down by the early city fathers. Finally, the residents of the valley still extend hospitality and friendship by sharing a world renowned quality beer.

Beer, business and the Bible have combined in the Chippewa Valley to the glory of God through the Catholic faith. The great Catholic writer, humorist, and commentator, G.K. Chesterton, wrote the following about his conversion to Catholicism. "*I had to become a Catholic because it's the only church that does not see a contradiction between a pint, a pipe, and a pew.*" Sounds to me like Chesterton wrote this after a visit to Chippewa Falls!

By Alice Heinzen
Director for Marriage
and Family Life

CELEBRATING

150

YEARS

BUILDING UPON A TRADITION
OF CATHOLIC FAITH

⚓ DIOCESE OF LA CROSSE, WI