

Notes of early days at St. Augustine's Church and

1920

When fire destroyed the west wing of St. Patrick's Boys' Girls' Orphan Asylum (6/2/20), the families of St. Augustine's opened hearts and homes to the older orphaned girls whose dormitory had been utterly destroyed. Even after repairs had been completed on the building, some of the parents asked for the girls to remain with them during the winter. In a few instances paid the West Nozareth Academy.

Oral History

Closing of School

in exercise with Mary Kavanagh McMahon
dying 6/3/20 Rochester Times-Union
Sisters of St. Joseph, Rochester

I can probably find a couple
hours here & there if you need
other things researched or collated or
whatever. Give me a buzz.

Kathy
436-1284

1920

When fire destroyed the west wing of St. Patrick's Boy's Girls' Orphan Asylum (6/2/20), the families of St. Augustine's opened hearts and homes to the older orphaned girls whose dormitory had been utterly destroyed. Even after repairs had been completed on the building, some of the parents asked for the girls to remain with them during the summer vacation. In a few instances paid the tuition for them to attend Nazareth Academy.

11/20/95 Personal Interview with Mary Kavanagh McMahon

11/22/95 Newspaper Clipping 6/3/20 Rochester Times-Union

" Archives: Sisters of St. Joseph, Rochester

Notes of early days at St. Augustine's Church and School.

Sr. Regina opened St. Augustine's School with 23 pupils, 1 & 2 Grades in Feb. 1899

Sr. Anna Marie was appointed Sept. 1899 and had 1-2-3 Grades. (She was there for several years)

During the summer of 1900 a second room, sanctuary ^{and} small room for vestry were added

Original building was all one large room, plus the shed.

Sr. Albina was appointed in Sept. 1900 and remained until Sept. 1902. - then transferred to Canandaigua.

Sept. 1900 Rev. Philip Golding was given charge of the Parish

Before that time four priests took turns conducting services. (Given in Jubilee Book)

All furniture had to be moved out of rooms into the shed, to prepare for Sunday services.

Children's Mass (adults welcome) was at 9 A.M. They sang 3 Hymns during Mass.

High Mass every Sunday at 10.30 Holydays at 9 If a Holyday occurred during the week, the children had to use their caps for desks, as benches would not be removed until Sunday afternoon. Children took all belongings home every time.

Nearly all children carried lunch as only a few lived near by. (South & West of the school.)

There was a large old-fashioned stove in the center of each room and the children used to stand their bottles of drink in a reservoir at the back of the stove, to keep warm for lunch.

Very often, with the aid of the boys, we had to make a fire, as the janitor would be outside trying to clear paths for us to get in.

at that time there were not more than 2 houses beyond St. Mary's Hospital, from there on, it was all open fields on Chibi Ave.

We were (Sr. A.M. & myself) supplied with high rubber boots, as we had to plow through the drifts which were plenty high. The snow-plow (a small one) didn't get up as far as that very often, before about 9 A.M. When it did we could say Alleluia!

Bob sleighs would pick up crowds of children going down the Ave. and we two Nuns had several rides of (?) transportation.

We had baby entertainments at Christmas time also in June. (No admission charges)

The people were all very kind to us.

I had to play the Hymns for the 9 o'clock Mass also for the Little entertainments (some fun, I'd say) We had a small organ.

High Mass

Organist Bertha Masseth

Choir Members John Masseth Thomas Timmons

Mary Reynolds and Mr. —

Two above were St. Andrew's Students
later on ordained

The first 2 yrs. children had to walk to Cathedral for first Communion instructions. Went down alone.

Sept. 1902 Sr. Aidan was appointed and I believe she was there a number of years

Father Golding had Christian Doc. instructions on Sundays at 3 P.M.

Archbishop Hickey who was then the V.G. visited us very often. He and Father Geo. Burns used to say they came up for some fun and believe me they had it. The kiddies told them more than they knew, without charge.

There is a good possibility that these notes
were contributed by Sister Albina Benging.
Congregational records show that
Sister Albina taught at St. Augustine's
with Sister Anna Marie 1900-1902 (03)
Sister Albina died in 1968.

2/4/06

From our SSJ Archives

Permalife
25% COTTON CONTENT

~~5-27-96~~
9.13-96

A sense of welcome is what keeps people coming back

The most significant thing - is the closing of the school

Ten years ago - 1986

At this point in the year, things were coming together, the writing on the wall was that that was the last year.

Button: "Filled with the Spirit; Sent to Serve; St. Augustine School 1986"

Main things jump up:

The gospel choir - photo from 1986

The closing graduation ceremony - all sang "Reach Out And Touch" and all in congregation held hands. It was powerful.

Closing picnic - Park in Egypt - (Joked about going into Egypt)

had a wonderful day together - everyone got a helium balloon and let them go into the sky

Sister and the faculty planned all these activities.

Had a wonderful faculty.

This is all shown in photos.

The first thing Sister remembered:

Dec. 3, 1985 She was at a meeting with Father Trott and the Bishop at Corpus Christi School and at that meeting the paperwork given out to them they could see their school was earmarked to close - that was the proposal. She remembers Father Trott and herself sitting together. He couldn't be there for the whole meeting because he had to get back to Augustine's to say a funeral mass. And so, he leaned over to Luke and said, interrupting the meeting, he'd like to say a few words before he had to go. She said, this is a funeral, too. It was the whole feeling that it really was the end. She remembers leaving the meeting and going to the parking lot and just sitting there and not starting it up. It was during the morning. The faculty knew they had gone and would be waiting to hear what was said. Her first question when back would be "what happened?" She sat in the parking lot for a little while but knew lunch was coming and she could tell them all in one spot. Otherwise she'd have to tell them one by one and after school. They were in the middle of a diocesan planning about schools - this was about a year away. But they couldn't keep going another year. St. Augustine's couldn't continue to maintain it. If kept open another year, the parish would have had to close. How could you choose to make the school

open and close the parish. They had to think about the community and not just the school.

She went back and they had a brief time together. It was very sad. They were too small to support themselves. They had 118 in K-8 that year. They only had 9 kids in 8th grade.

Contrast that with 1968 when she taught there - 705 students. She was there in the end of the 1960s. That's when she taught there.

She lost the 1970s - she was involved with Perpetual Help for those ten years.

She knows she had an influence, as did Fr. Trott and the faculty on coming to deal with this in a positive way. She remembers about some of the earlier meetings - there was a wonderful mix of pastor and concerned parents. A couple came hoping the school would be there for their kids. A wonderful mix of people - black and white, Catholic and nonCatholic.

Father Trott was a wonderful spiritual leader in the sense that He instilled in all the people that were there the message that we need to be discerning to know where God's leading us as a community. Not saying you can't pray that the school won't close, make the school stay here. Helped people get above that and discern where is the Lord leading us? That was a powerful thread that carried through that whole time. It was like a lifeline. Not be griping that the Diocese didn't do this, or we're better than this other school, etc. The focus was, this is where we are, where is the Lord taking us. Let's not fight it, it may be hard. People hated it, were upset, and emotional. It was a hard situation - where do we find life in this. A lot of similarities with the death situation - the denial, the arguing, etc. A big loss in many lives. Sister came at it from that same instance. She was an instrument along with Bill Trott. They had lots of assistance from many good people who could pick up on that spirit and move in that direction.

She remembers one meeting in their faculty room. It was very packed. The couple came that didn't even have kids in the school yet. People shared their concerns, grief, anger, suggestions. Overriding all that was that concern that we need to pray about where was the Lord leading us. Brought them to the next step of where to be on the journey.

When she thinks back, there were two women who were involved. Chris(tine) Schramm - lived on Arnett and now on Hamlet Court. She was chairperson of the Parish Council. Marilyn McAllister was chairperson of the school board. They were both members of the parish. Bill Miller was chairman of the Parent's Association. He was a banker, with Chase Lincoln?, and he's now deceased. African American - prominent professional. Not Catholic. One of his boys was in St. Augustine's School at that time. They were top notch people. Person-oriented, competent, and professional. There never were reactions that you would be embarrassed. They went to innumerable meetings.

In December they knew what was going to happen. In the Spring, it became official.

The meeting was at Sacred Heart Cathedral. Every parish sat together. It was like they were getting a sentence. They were all aware of it. That was a night meeting. They left at 10:00. She remembers driving into the parking lot at St. Augustine's. They got out of the car and they said, "We need to figure out what they were going to do." It would hit the newspaper the next day. How would people react? They knew the media thing would be horrendous.

They went to the convent (which closed when the school closed). They went over and Marilyn, Chris, Bill, Fr. and Luke. Bill and Fr. got on the phone and they worked on what would be appropriate. They drafted a letter to go to the parents the next morning, a letter for the newspaper, a letter for parishioners. So everything would be upfront and orderly. So they wouldn't be dumped on when they walked into the building the next morning. Another meeting at midnight. They provided for Luke who would be hit the next morning. They had things in order and were willing to stay, so they could move into the next day calmly and under control.

The more fun things:

People who had competence to help with the logistics. Dismantling the school after all that time. They were the first school to close in 10 years. A lot of schools in the inner city had closed in the 70s. Then there was a lull. They were the first one now. There was no plan. They knew about it as the diocese and they were a step removed from the day to day dealing with it.

That way it was good. The faculty - people like Bob Graham - they were able to say "What are we gonna do. Let's think about this as a faculty. If it's gonna happen, let's have as much fun and make this the best year that the kid's will never forget." Even though they were losing their jobs.

The news was out there and they could have been gloom and doom. She felt so fortunate to have people surrounding her. She was a wonderful leader and she feels she didn't do it by herself.

Some of the things planned:

Spring concert with surprise Mr. Ed the talking horse and faculty singing. Bob Graham and Sr. Mary Lisa, a nun in the back end of the horse.

They kept having fun.

Charlene Witkowitz was secretary. She was Luke's right arm and was phenomenal. She's from Montana. She saved old newspapers from Montana. They were like night and day from a city newspaper. A want ad from a rancher and his woman to cook, people to do corralling. They'd circle a job and suggest that faculty try one. They had fun about it, together.

All of them got placed in other school by the beginning of the next school year. This was an advantage to being first, because there weren't any rules. Other down the line didn't get to do these things. They could call the shots because the Diocesan Office didn't know what to do yet, either.

The picnic at Egypt Park. Near the end. Some of the closing activity. Took all the kids for the whole day. Parents got all kinds of things from the merchants. Like paint hats from Hunts. Plus prizes, food, donations for prizes. Parent came. Dads took the day off and came and cooked for the kids. Helium balloons at the end.

Graduation

Gospel choir - did a tape as a surprise for Sr. St. Luke. They practiced secretly and got it recorded by a professional.

That year in Feb. was Catholic Schools week. They decided to have a show of strength. Rented War Memorial. The whole place filled with Catholic School students. Their gospel choir was asked to sing.

Luke taught 1968=1971 in jr. high - 8th grade
Came back in 1982. Principal. 1982-86
1986-1996 Pastoral Associate of the parish and then the cluster.

October 10, 1996

Re: windows

Peasants could not read - history of stained glass - put stories of scripture and saints in the windows. Doctrines and saints and scripture are there.

Corpus Christi and Blessed Sacrament window are the same. Blessed Sacrament has a Christmas window. (both body of Christ). Center: Nativity. At bottom: 4 windows - parts of the mystery (fleeing into Egypt, etc.)

Augustine window - St. Aug.

Blessed Sacrament has the incarnation - God becoming man - key doctrine mystery in the church. Bread becoming Eucharist or God. Bethlehem means House of Bread. The manger is the feeding trough for animals. A lot of symbolism. Jesus becomes our bread and nourishment, food.