

History of St. Joseph Parish continued.

1925 – 2003

Catholic Women's Club Activities During This Period



The Women's Club president's record for 1935 – 1936 details many activities sponsored to make money. Some of the special events included a St. Patrick's Day Dinner and Vaudeville and the Annual parish Bazaar. The women prepared food for the Orange Blossom Dining Room, a popular part of the Citrus Festival. The dining room was the only place at the festival where visitors could get home-cooked food, or just sit and visit over a cup of coffee. The men of the parish assisted by transporting food from the Hall to the Festival site. Helen Eastman, possibly the oldest parishioner who has been a member of this parish since birth, was a teenager at this time and remembers working at the Orange Blossom Dining Room serving tables and much more. A Halloween party and a Christmas party with a play were other events. Because the Philadelphia Athletics had their spring practice in Winter Haven, an entertainment called Phillie Phanatic was performed.

These events were not really what could be called moneymakers although much effort was put into each of the affairs. For example, at the St. Patrick's Day Dinner, about 250 people attended, but the net proceeds were only \$140.92. Apparently, the Phollies event was a little more successful, bringing in \$231.25. The most successful moneymaker was the Orange Blossom Dining Room, which netted \$307.00. In all, the fifty women members were able to make \$1,177.29 for the year to be given to Fr. Brown.

At one point, someone discovered that Fr. Brown had not received his \$50.00 salary for eight months. A committee of eight consisting of W.H. Keefe, Matt Smith, Frank Goodman Sr., Sam Pusateri, Louis Ziegler, E.J. Senn, Frank Pierce and Mary Louise Ferguson pooled 98 names and visited all parishioners' homes to collect \$350.50, which was about \$3.50 a family. Considering that one card party given earlier had netted only \$2.60, this collection showed great generosity on the part of the parishioners. In the eight years Father served St. Joseph, he was able to reduce the debt \$11,000.

But all was not efforts to make money. A picture was taken of Father helping to pull the ferry to Bannon's island, probably for a celebration or festivity of some kind. He also enjoyed golf. The young people would hustle to the city golf course, which was located where Polk Community College, now Polk State College, is today. They would vie for the opportunity of caddying for the priests. Also, after attending a Requiem Mass, the young people would pile in Fr. Brown's car for a ride to the cemetery to attend the services there. Returning from the cemetery, the car would rock with Irish songs. Fr. Brown is also remembered as being a deeply spiritual man who provided many spiritual benefits for the parish.

There were only four regular altar servers at this time: Billy Jim Smith, son of Matt Smith; Frank Goodman, Jr.; Ed Wiles; and Dean Neiderkahr. The boys later would also be ushers. One of their unusual tasks was to go to a drug store to purchase the big cigars that were favorites of Fr. Brown.