

Saint Joseph Hall

In 1884, a group of German speaking men saw the need to band together for their own benefit. The name taken by this group was the Saint Joseph Mutual Aid Society. Their organization was designed to be spiritually, socially, and financially beneficial to them and their families.

Socially, the society promoted wholesome family recreation of all kinds. One of their goals was to have a place for these activities. With the society's help, in the fall of 1892, the construction of Saint Joseph's Hall was complete. The members of Saint Boniface were then able to come together as one family and enjoy some of these activities. Men, women, and children, were all expected to showcase their talents and add to the joy at parish gatherings.

Talent was not lacking in music, song and drama, because all this had been learned, loved and appreciated in the homeland they had left. In addition to talent in the arts, many parishioners were extremely skilled athletes, as the Germans were use to hard work and working with their hands.

Saint Joseph Hall was built on the southeast corner of North 18th and North C Streets. The front of the building faced west on North 18th Street. A flight of stairs lead to the two entrance doors on the west side of the building, with a stage on the east end. Below was a half basement with its entrance on the east side of the building. It was heated by open flame gas stoves. Unfortunately, an exterior photo of the hall could not be found for this publication.

Saint Joseph's Hall was used for years and still evokes happy memories for many parishioners. It was also an integral part of the school as every musical show, play, piano recital and graduation was held there. The building, however, eventually fell in disrepair and was declared unsafe. In the early part of 1961, it was torn down and the property was used for playground space. That same property now serves as the northwest corner of the parish parking lot.



May 1950, graduation class in front of the stage in St. Joseph's Hall

Playgrounds

When Saint Boniface School first opened, there was a lot of room on the parish property for playground space. There are records of the school children being outdoors, eating from their sack lunches, and then playing on dirt piles. Old pictures also show large swings on the grassy area between North B Street and the south side of the school.

Saint Boniface has been blessed with many generous parishioners. One such couple was Mr. and Mrs. Leo Hammer. Over the years, they gave many gifts to the parish, one of which is still being used today. When the Hammer's discovered a need for playground space for the school children, they decided to help. On December 22nd, 1946, they bought three adjoining lots on the northeast corner of North 19th and North B Streets, and generously donated the land to the parish. This property, located directly across from the school, provided much needed playground space for the children. The cost for this property was approximately \$4,500.

While the parish was growing, so was the need for additional play areas for the students. Saint Joseph's Society, a very active organization in Saint Boniface, came with some help. At their meeting held in the church basement on the evening of Tuesday, April 11th, 1961, an offer submitted by the pastor and approved by the Bishop was made to purchase property the society owned. This property was located at the northwest corner of North 19th and North C Streets. At that meeting, it was agreed to sell the property to the parish for \$2,500. That property provided the additional playground area that was greatly needed, and is still being used today for the younger school children.

The last property added to the parish for a playground area was in 1984. Three adjoining lots on the northwest corner of North 20th and North B Streets became available. Pastor Father Hilary Filiatreau, before moving back to Subiaco Abbey, made sure the parish acquired that land, as it backed up to the existing playground on North 19th Street. With its purchase, the playground became the width of the whole block. This enlarged playground, appropriately name Hilary Field, was fenced in for the children's safety and has now been used for many parish functions, including baseball practices and the yearly Lawn Socials.

One area of the parish that has always been used as playground space is the parking lot. In the early years, students had to play around all the construction that was going on in the parish. In later years, the parking lot was paved, making a dry place to play on rainy days. The After School Care program, located in the church basement, also uses the parking lot for a play area.

The last space made into a playground area was built to go with the new Infant/Toddler program that was developed in April 2011. This fenced, grassy area is on the east side of the new school building, only a few steps away from the school's lower north entrance and the south entrance to the Hall.