

St. Rita's



NEWS

SOARING PROGRESS

Soaring progress marked the late years of the 'roaring 20s' at St. Rita's.

The Sacrament of Confirmation was conferred on 92 persons on January 23, 1927 for the first time at the new parish. The Most Rev. Sebastian G. Messmer administered the sacrament to the 71 children and 21 adults.

A Dramatic Club was organized, and two comedy-dramas, 'The Town Marshall' and 'Professor Pep-' were staged in 1927.

An assistant was needed by Father Rodenkirch to serve the swelling congregation, and Archbishop Messmer appointed the Rev. Frederick P. Arnold to our parish in February, 1928. Father Arnold only stayed until July, when he was transferred to St. James Parish in Madison, not knowing he was to make an important return to St. Rita's.

NEW AUDITORIUM

St. Rita's now had a good-sized school, but no hall facilities. At the recommendation of Archbishop Samuel A. Stritch of Milwaukee, who visited St. Rita's in 1931, the parish decided to build an auditorium. Mark Pfaller was chosen as the architect by the building committee: Fr. Myers, Joseph Siegfried, John Furumo, Michael Piasecki, Nick Jacobs, Ray Hirsch, Walter Jaskolski and John Guerin.

Construction began in the fall of 1931 and was completed in the spring of 1932. The auditorium (which faces 60th Street) is 99 feet in overall length, made of brick and tile in Spanish style architecture. The roof is Spanish tile and the building is trimmed with cut stone. A stage dressing rooms and motion-picture booth were provided along with meeting rooms on the second floor and a kitchen and dining rooms in the basement. The overall cost was about \$40,000.

About one week before Fr. Arnold's transfer, Fr. Rodenkirch was named pastor of St. Peter's Parish, St. Peter, Wis. He was succeeded on July 11 by the Rev. Charles G. Myers, who came to St. Rita's from St. Rose of Lima Parish, Fredonia, Wis. In February, 1929, the Rev. Leo Skalitzyk came to assist Fr. Myers.

Fr. Myers initiated improvements in the parish grounds in 1930, including the renovation of the auditorium (then the second floor of the school building) into classrooms needed for the September, 1931 enrollment of 375 pupils.

When the City of West Allis cut into the parish property in 1929 and 1930 by widening the streets and laying water mains, sewers and gas lines, St. Rita's purchased five more lots south of the rectory on 61st Street for \$3,500 from the Wanta Real Estate Company.



During the Depression years, Fr. Myers was succeeded as pastor by the Rev. Peter Enrietto. As pastor from 1935 to 1940, Fr. Enrietto implemented three major projects. A janitor's home was purchased from Russell Wickler, a three-room addition was made to the rectory and the church was renovated.

Rev. George R. Budde and Rev. Joseph Spangler were Fr. Enrietto's Assistants.

EARLY FINANCES

In 1926, with over three acres of land, a substantial brick combination church, school and hall, a new parsonage and Sisters' home, the property value of St. Rita's was \$110,000. On December 31, 1926, there was an indebtedness of about \$70,000 leaving a net worth of at least \$40,000.

The pastor's salary that year amounted to \$670 and the combined salaries of the teachers totaled \$975. Heating and fuel expenses were \$1184.86 and the amount paid for light and power was \$291.85.

By 1932, a considerable increase in property had created the following financial picture:

Land	\$55,467.00
Church and school building .	60,000.00
Auditorium	40,286.00
Rectory	7,500.00
Sisters' Home	6,500.00
Garage	325.00
Furniture and fixtures	10,007.00
Total fixed assets	\$180,085.00
Total Debt	142,468.00
Total ordinary income (1932)	14,323.00

The Depression struck St. Rita's hard. In 1935, the total ordinary income was \$2959.08 and the parish net worth was \$181,325.13. In 1936 the parish net worth dropped to \$32,963.66. By January 1, 1940, it had risen to \$38,768.67 but the total liabilities or indebtedness of the parish were \$150,032.28.

The parish indebtedness for the next five years was as follows:

January 1, 1941	\$139,919.58
January 1, 1942	126,150.00
January 1, 1943	105,850.00
January 1, 1944	78,850.00
January 1, 1945	47,000.00

The debt was liquidated in 1945 and a building fund of \$1875 was also started.

ST. RITA OF CASCIA

The patron of our parish, St. Rita of Cascia, was born about the year 1386 at Pocca Porena in the province of Umbria, Italy. Rita wanted to become a nun, but her parents persuaded her to marry at the age of 12. Her husband is said to have led a dissolute life but Rita was faithful to him for 18 years, caring for their children and praying for his conversion.

Her husband was converted eventually, but was murdered soon afterward. Rita convinced her twin sons not to avenge their father's death.

Rita entered the Augustinian convent at Cascia, Italy after being turned down several times for her state of widowhood. After 46 years as a nun, Rita died in 1456 at the age of 70.

Legend has it that once Rita asked for a rose from the garden of Porena in the middle of winter. A rose was brought in full bloom. For this reason, St. Rita is often pictured holding a bouquet of roses.

She was canonized on May 24, 1900. Her feast is celebrated on May 22.

St. Rita's



May 26, 1974

NEWS

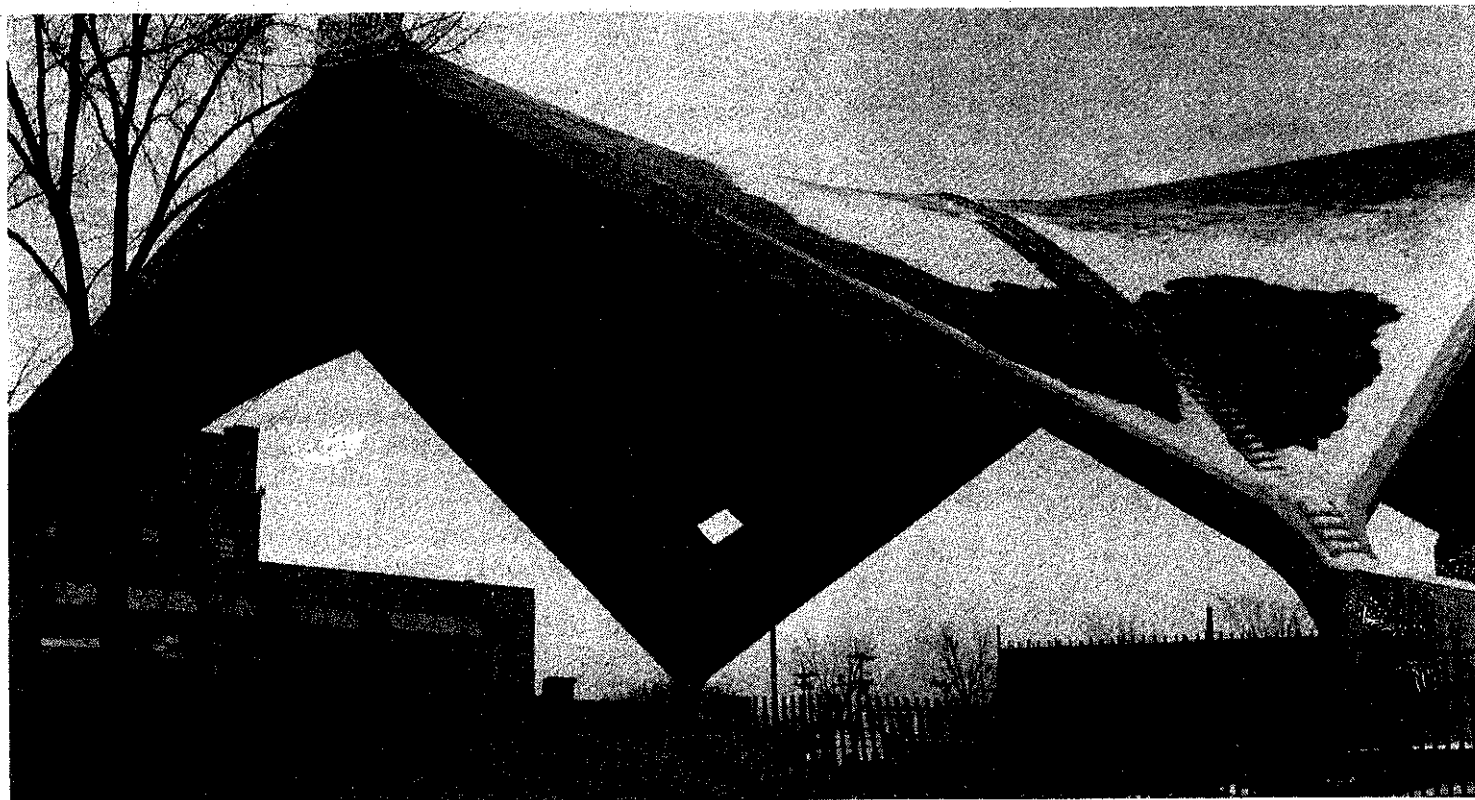
A NEW CHURCH

Dreams and plans of a new and beautiful church building began to evolve in the 1950's. However, it wasn't until April 1, 1962 that the first spade of earth was overturned to mark the beginning of construction of the church. Mark F. Pfaller was once again chosen as the architect for his biggest, most impressively designed project at St. Rita's -- one which won him acclaim throughout the Midwest and even spurred an article in the NEW YORK TIMES.

The TIMES, in an article dated December 13, 1964, describes St. Rita's as 'a new Roman Catholic Church in suburban Milwaukee which combines such traditional elements of church architecture as flying buttresses and stained glass windows with contemporary forms -- a parabolic roof and an open interior plan.'

The 'parabolic roof' of the church is supported by four concrete buttresses at each corner of the building. Although the buttresses are apparently only 11 feet high, each one is sunk nine feet into the ground to support the 800-ton roof -- a thin, three-inch shell of concrete.

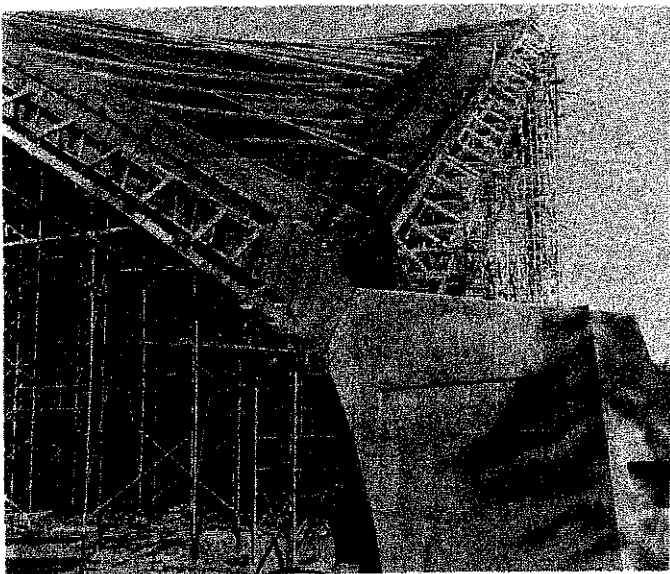
Unlike many buildings, the roof of St. Rita's was erected before the walls were built. A forest of scaffolding supported the roof structure and enabled workmen to reach its broad expanse. Pouring the huge amount of concrete by conventional methods would have required 24 to 30 hours of continuous pouring, so the substance was pumped under high pressure through six-inch diameter hoses. This made it possible to halt the work without a danger of an imperfect bond between old and fresh concrete when work was resumed.



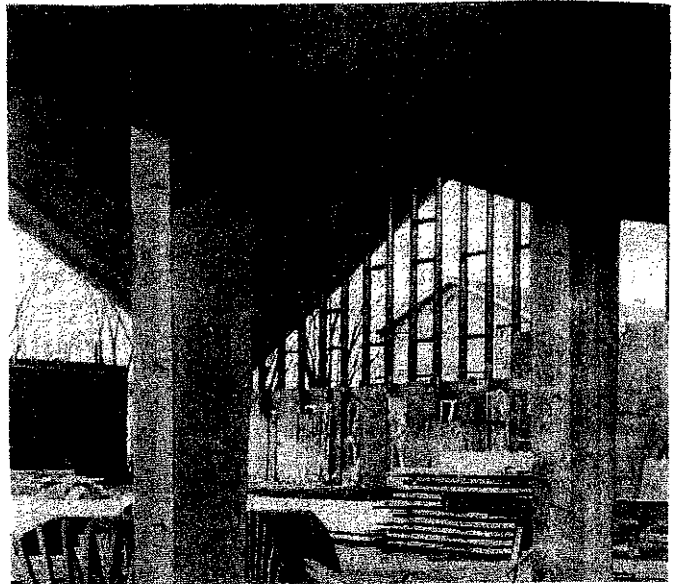
Self-supporting roof and buttresses

With the strong roof and buttresses, no pillars were necessary inside the church. An awesome feeling of space was the result. Church-goers look up at a solid white ceiling embedded with white crystals, reaching to a height of 53 feet at its apex. The marble altar is located in the northeast corner of the church, softly highlighted by a skylight and candles, while the smooth, dark pews are arranged in a fan-shape around the altar. The seating capacity is 1400, plus room for an additional 100 persons in the choir area.

St. Rita's Church did not need its walls for support, either, so they are filled with colored glass and vivid symbolism. The walls are made of pre-cast concrete panels and an aggregate of Red River (Texas) granite mixed with red Levanto marble from Italy. The overall effect is a light red color. Window frames are also pre-cast concrete in a smooth white texture. The stained glass is one-inch thick and set into epoxy concrete. The pieces of glass were cut by hand, chipped with a hammer and faceted, following a sketch made by an artist.



A forest of scaffolding



Building the walls.

The Church is crowned with a golden bell-tower, housing three massive bells, named for three Popes who reigned during the parish's birth and growth: Pope Pius XI, Pope Pius XII and Pope John XXIII.

Roomy sacristies for the priests and servers are located behind the church area. A choir vestry providing storage facilities for music and robes, serves the choir area. Ushers' and brides' rooms are other features of the building, along with large meeting rooms underneath the South end of the church.

A convenient passageway was completed to connect the school, rectory and church. a garage and pastor's quarters were added to the rectory and a tunnel was excavated linking the primary and main school buildings.

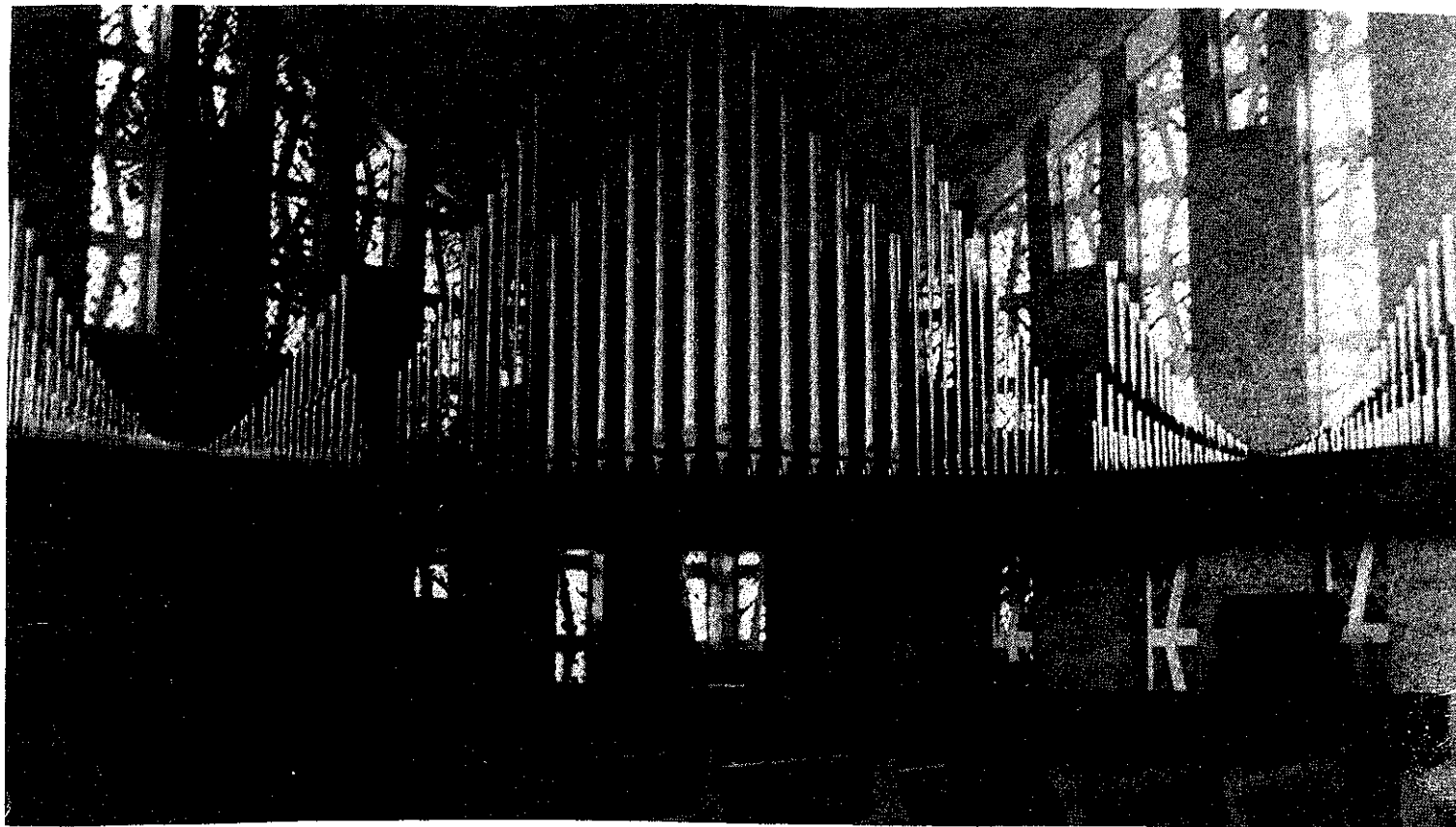
The bells were blessed on October 18, 1963, just two days before the laying of the cornerstone. Bishop Roman R. Atkielski consecrated the altar on December 19, 1963 and the organ was blessed and dedicated on March 29, 1964.

St. Rita's



June 9, 1974

NEWS



The organ and choir loft

DEDICATION

Dedication ceremonies for the new church were held on May 3, 1964. Archbishop William E. Cousins blessed the structure in the morning and delivered the sermon at a dedication Mass celebrated by Msgr. Arnold. The assistant priests, Fr. George Nuedling, Fr. Harvey Brahm and Fr. Karl Acker, acted as deacon, sub-deacon and master of ceremonies, respectively. The Sacrament of Confirmation was administered in the afternoon, followed by an open house.

A grand musical program accompanied the Mass, with the Young Men's Choir singing the dedication ceremony and Proper of the Mass, the combined choirs singing the Ordinary of the Mass, the High School Girls' Choir leading the Offertory Motet, the Grade School Girls' Choirs, the Communion Motet, and the recessional done by the Adult Choir.

A hard-cover booklet with many colored photographs, was published to commemorate the event.

IMAGE AND LIGHT

Perhaps the most striking feature of St. Rita's church is its stained glass windows. Rich color and well-defined sharply cut shapes display traditional themes in modern, angular design. The four large windows have as their themes The Sermon on the Mount, The Motherhood of Mary, St. Rita and St. Joseph the Worker. A smaller window, designed especially for the Baptismal area, represents the Holy Spirit.

Conrad Schmitt Studios of Milwaukee planned and created the windows and Bernard O Gruenke, president of Conrad Schmitt, advised Msgr. Arnold and arch-

itect Mark Pfaller with choosing coordinating accessories for the church as well.

The seated figure of Christ dominates the vividly colored Sermon on the Mount window, in the east wall of the church. Figures representing the Beatitudes appear on either side of the Christ figure. They are intentionally light and shadowy -- some have earned God's blessing, while others struggle in repentance and still others have failed to attain this blessing. Many other symbols taken from passages in the Gospel of St. Matthew, Chapter 5, are shown.

The northwest church window is a blend of lovely blues and is dedicated to Mother Mary. A halo surrounds the figure of Mary with the Christ Child in her arms, repeated in concentric circles of orange and yellow. Flames at the outer edge of the halo represent the sun and the crescent at Mary's feet stands for the moon. To show that the suffering and cross of Christ were apparent from His birth, the figures of Mary and the Infant are superimposed upon a slim cross. Persons of all races are shown at Mary's feet, protected by the rays of her halo.

Our patron saint, St. Rita, is portrayed on the southwest window, pleading with her two sons not to avenge their Father's death. According to legend, St. Rita was forced to marry a cruel man, who repented after her constant prayers. He was murdered shortly afterwards and his two sons sought revenge. St. Rita prayed that they might die before committing murder, and both sons took ill and repented before they died.

St. Joseph the Worker quietly shines from the south wall of the church in soft blue and lavender hues. This is very meaningful to all workers and specifically portrays several trades. The professions depicted below the figure of St. Joseph are from left to right, the mason, with a trowel and plumb line; the architect with a roll of plans; the builder with his tongs;

the patternmaker with his calipers; the carpenter with a hammer and a roadworker with a chisel and pick-axe. There appear also a machinist with two interlocking gears and at the extreme right, a plumber with a pipe-wrench in his hands.

To the left of St. Joseph's head are two doves, representing the offering made by the parents of that time when presenting their children to the Temple. The Star of Bethlehem glows at the top of the window, reminding us of the Nativity.

THE BAPTISMAL FONT

A smaller but important stained glass window forms the backdrop for the corner baptistry. The symbols of the Cross and white dove for the Holy Spirit make up the window's theme. Tongues of flame radiate from the dove. The Baptismal area itself features a step down onto a floor inlaid with wavy lines. This is reminiscent of the banks of the Jordan River, where Christ was baptized. The font is made of Verde Issori (also called St. Peter's Green) marble.

MUSIC FOR WORSHIP

St. Rita's magnificent organ provides a tribute to God that combines stirring music with fervent worship. Designed exclusively for St. Rita's by the Reuter Organ Co. of Lawrence Kansas, the instrument contains 1584 pipes arranged in 27 ranks. The pipes are divided into three main sections. Seen from left to right, they are the Great Organ, the Swell Organ and the Positiv Organ.

The pipes are set to music by playing the three manuals, or keyboards, a fan of foot pedals and adjusting the 30 stops. Rev. Elmer Pfeil of St. Francis Major Seminary and Sister M. Theophane, OSF, of Alverno College helped plan the organ.

St. Rita's



June 30, 1974

NEWS

JUBILEE FESTIVITIES

St. Rita's Golden Jubilee Festivities will begin on July 6 with a Pontifical High Mass at 10 AM. Rev. George Kolanda, pastor, and Rev. Oswald Krusing, former pastor, will be con-celebrants.

Parishioners will be able to socialize on the parish grounds after the Mass, enjoying the refreshments and dancing to the music. The Louis Bashell Orchestra will perform from 1 PM to 5 PM, and a rock band will offer alternate dance music.

Candy and balloons will be distributed among the children by the West Allis Jaycee Clowns. Beer, soda, brats and hot dogs will be available.

Father Kolanda will introduce the charter members of the parish, as well as former associate pastors, at 3 PM.

ORGANIZATIONS

In 1924, a Welfare League was formed to aid the parish materially. The League had two sections, one for men, headed by Nicholas Jacobs and one for women, headed by Miss Mary Juneau.

The League was soon superceded by the Christian Mothers' Society, the Holy Name Society and the Ladies' Sodality. Miss Juneau became the first prefect of the Sodality. The Holy Name Society chose John Furumo as the first president.

A Dramatic Club, organized in 1927, was very popular, as amateur dramatics were in favor during the late 1920's.

Parish organizations existing now include:

Christian Mothers and Ladies of St. Rita, Holy Name Society, Ushers' Society, St. Vincent de Paul Society, Catholic Youth Organization (CYO), Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Explorer Scouts, Girl Scouts, Women without Partners, St. Joseph Guild of Kitchen

Workers, St. Rita Dartball League, Donut Makers, Liturgical Arts Committee, Folk Liturgy Committee, Youth Festival Committee, St. Rita School Library Helpers, and Athletic Board.

In addition, many parishioners devote their time to liturgical organizations such as the Servers, Lectors, Choirs, Commentators and Organists. Others help with wardrobe cleaning and dry cleaning.

Father Kolanda and his associates are further aided by members of the printer crew, office receptionists, accounting assistants, maintenance crews and parish home visitors.

The administration of the parish is handled by the Parish Council, whose members are elected by the parish for one-year terms.

THE USHERS SOCIETY

The Ushers' Society is considered to be the oldest parish organization, founded in 1924.

There are presently 84 ushers, whose duties are to direct people into Church, aid smooth and efficient seating, take collections and assist with special problems, such as helping persons who become ill during Mass.

The group of men meet once a month and sponsor yearly picnics and dances.

Within the last few years, cheerful gold sport coats have been used as the ushers' uniforms, worn with dark slacks, white shirts and blue ties.

The previous uniforms consisted of black coats and black and silver striped slacks.

The current officers of the Ushers' Society are: president, Mike Salfer, secretary and vice-president, Chuck Lelinski, and treasurer, Nic Radovanovic.

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY

The St. Rita Conference of the society of St. Vincent de Paul has a long and unique history.

Dedicated to helping others in need, the organization was started in 1931 by our pastor, Rev. Charles Myers. He saw the need to combat the desperate conditions caused by the Depression in the Highly industrial West Allis area

Fr. Myers acted as spiritual director to the group and the first president and secretary were John Guerin and Elmer Barnes, respectively. However, lack of financial support and a staggering load of needy families caused the fledgling conference to disband temporarily.

In 1935, the new pastor, Rev. Peter Enrietto, reorganized the conference slowly. The following officers were installed:

Spiritual director, Father Enrietto; president, Chas. Wolf Sr.; vice-president, Stan Kwaterski; secretary, Joseph Pritz and treasurer, Joseph Rynders.

The conference was aggregated by the Superior Council on March 17, 1937 and has operated continuously since.

Charles Wolf Sr., still active as an honorary or auxiliary member, noted that John Jankoski was the keeper of the Clothes Room, a position no longer required with the opening of a Store & Salvage Bureau.

The 'Vincentians' took as their motto, 'No work of Christian Charity is Foreign to the Society.' According to current president, George M. Wamser, 'our activities bear this out: dispensing food, clothing, fuel, etc. to the needy, visiting the sick, troubled and lonely or spiritually distressed. Above all, we are interested in the sanctification and salvation of our own souls through service to the poor.'

Other current officers of the society are: John Owens, vice-president; Elmer Leick, secretary-treasurer; Jack Ziebart, former president and chairman of the Blood Bank, and Father Cunningham, spiritual director. John Owens and Elmer Leick have been active members since 1937 and Leick has served in his present capacity all this time.

CHARTER MEMBERS

Our parish is fortunate to have 18 known charter members joining in the Golden Jubilee celebration. These persons were adult supporting parishioners in 1924 and have loyally helped St. Rita's remain and grow. Those members are:

George Gebhard, Philip Fritsch, Mrs. Georgianna Gruber, Mrs. Leo Kay, Lucas Braun, Mrs. Picciolo, Thomas LoDuca, Guy LoDuca, Mr. & Mrs. William Hacking, T.G. Dilworth, Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Zajac, Mrs. Grace Lavinio, Mrs. Gertrude Pearson, Mrs. Nancy Foti, Miss Josephine Serio and Salvatore Serio.

St. Rita's



NEWS

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

The two years preceding the first Mass at St. Rita's Parish, offered on July 6, 1924 in a tent rented from State Fair Park were marked by the patience and persistence of a small group of people who never lost the dream of establishing their own parish.

It must have been gratifying to them as they stepped into their canvas church at 8 a.m. on that July morning to witness the first Mass, for their dedication had finally resulted in the realization of a dream.

In March 1922, that first Mass must have seemed far away. It was then that the first stirrings of St. Rita's Parish were suddenly postponed by archdiocesan authorities as being prematurely conceived.

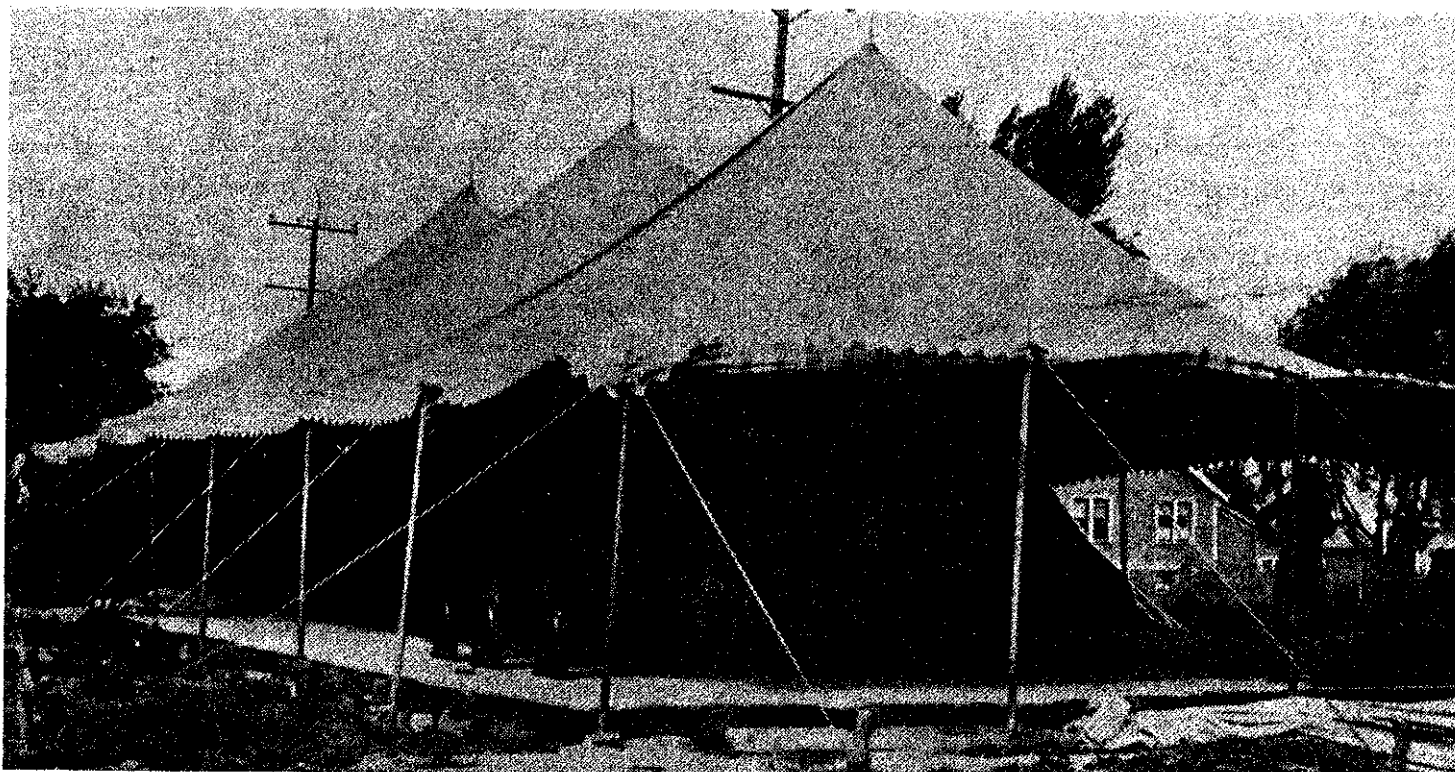
Milwaukee Archbishop Sebastian G. Messmer had authorized the organization of a new parish in the southeastern section of West Allis in January 1922. A meeting was called on January 26.

The response of local Catholics was enthusiastic. St. Rita of Cascia was chosen as the patron saint. The trustees of the parish were elected with Jerome P. Gebhard as secretary and Dr. J. J. Wilkinson as treasurer.

On February 18, a land contract was made to purchase two and one-half acres of the Finger farm on the southwest corner of Lincoln Avenue and Hawley Road (then 51st Avenue, now 60th Street).

Jerome Gebhard resigned in March, but was replaced as secretary by George G. Gebhard. Rev. George Radant was to have been in charge when the unexpected postponement of the project occurred.

Finally in 1924, Rev. Joseph Pierron, pastor of St. Matthias Parish on Beloit Road, was directed to organize St. Rita's as a mission.



Residents of the area, anxious to begin the new parish, met on February 15 at the Longfellow School barracks on 60th and Grant Streets. George Gebhard and Dr. J.J. Wilkinson were re-elected as trustees and the cash balance on hand from 1922 was reported as \$118.15.

A campaign began to raise funds for a two-story building to house a basement church, school and parish hall. Volunteers canvassed the neighborhood for donation subscriptions.

Those who responded were John Rauth, John Braun, George Gebhard, Joseph Noe, Joseph Kastner, Walter Bodus, Joseph Braun, John Blasczyk, Philip Fritsch, Sam Burgarino and Sarro Gebbia.

At a subsequent meeting the following Building Committee was appointed: Michael Piasecki, Stanley Kwaterski, Joseph Noe,

Peter Braun, John Blasczyk, Philip Fritsch, Joseph Kastner and Leo Kay.

The Pfeiffer Construction Company immediately began work on the building.

In the meantime, a large tent with a wooden floor was rented from State Fair Park authorities to serve as a temporary church.

The first Mass was celebrated at 8 a.m. on July 6. It was a High Mass with an English sermon. Confessions had been heard the day before and 16 communicants approached the rail.

One of the parishioners who remembers the tent Masses, said the priests distributed Holy Communion from the large hosts since the parish was so small. He also remembers a heavy rain on August 15, the feast of the Holy Assumption, when the tent leaked badly.

REV. JOSEPH H. PIERRON

Father Pierron was ordained in June 1905. He studied music in Europe for three years, then served as assistant pastor of St. Mary's Fond du Lac, St. Rose's Racine and Holy Trinity, Milwaukee. His first pastorate was St. Patrick's, Lodi. After seven years of service to that parish, Father Pierron held the rectorship of Pio Nono High School from 1920 to 1923. In 1923, St. Matthias Parish in North Greenfield came under his charge. It was while there, that Father Pierron was directed to organize St. Rita's as a mission to St. Matthias. He directed the destinies of the new parish from February 1924 to February 1925,

and subsequently served as pastor of St. Alphonsus', New Munster, and Our Lady of the Angels, Armstrong. In November 1948, Father Pierron was made director of Music at Father Flanagan's Boys' Home, Boys' Town, Nebraska, where he served until his death on April 26, 1949.

Scholarly and wise, Father Pierron knew St. Rita's in its infancy. He, in fact, organized the parish and surely gave St. Rita's 'mission' the same careful service he exercised in his pastorate at St. Matthias. Father Pierron supervised the construction of the original church-school combination that was completed in October 1924. His labors in behalf of St. Rita's were short but important and significant.

St. Rita's



NEWS

ST. RITA'S FIRST BUILDING

St. Rita's first building was completed in October 1924, as cooler weather made the tent church impractical. Located on the corner of 60th Street and Lincoln Avenue, where it stands now, the combination school hall church had a seating capacity of about 450.

Built of tan colored brick with Bedford stone trim, the structure cost \$60,000, not including furnishings. It was 108 feet long and 60 wide. The church was located in the basement. The first floor was divided into classrooms and a parish hall took up the second floor.

Soon three of the classrooms were being used by 120 students, taught by three School Sisters of St. Francis, Sisters M. Thomasellas, superior, M. Cathana and M. Alcantara. Sister M. Ancilla joined as an organist and Sister M. Nivian arrived in December, when the fourth classroom opened to meet the increasing enrollment.

At the time St. Rita's had no living accommodations for the sisters, so they had to commute from the convent on Layton Blvd. until the summer of 1925. Parish records of the time note that 'St. Rita's is an American Language school, . . . it is attended by children of some 12 different nationalities.



FIRST ACTRESS

One of our former parishioners, Mrs. Josephine Geske, (formerly Bugarino) was the center of attention for one hour in 1924.

According to Mrs. Geske, a nativity scene was performed live during the Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve, 1924 at St. Rita's. Josephine, then seven months old, played the part of the Infant Jesus, and was lowered into the manger by her parents, Sam and Mary Bugarino.

NEW PASTOR

Rev. Edward J. Rodenkirch succeeded Fr. Pierron as pastor of St. Rita's in Feb., 1925. Fr. Rodenkirch took charge as the first resident pastor on March 1. The home of John Braun, three quarters of a mile south on Hawley Road, was rented as a rectory until June. Fr. Rodenkirch then moved into a frame house on the south corner of 61st Street and Lincoln Avenue, which had been purchased along with a barn and an acre of land from the Finger Estate.

This house, which faced Lincoln Avenue, was approximately 46 feet long and 27 feet wide. Valued at \$6,500, it had two stories with seven rooms and a large dormitory. The acre of land and the house had been purchased for \$9,800. Renovation of the house cost about \$1,600.

Many uses were put to the building. From June through August 1925, it was a rectory. In September 1925, it became a convent. And in December 1925, it traveled -- to the northeast corner of 61st Street and Hayes Avenue. In August 1949, the Sisters, now 20 in number, outgrew the home and moved into new penthouse quarters above the school. (Today the Primary School building stands in place of the house.)

When the Sisters took over the house in August 1925, Fr. Rodenkirch moved into a newly completed rectory located on 61st Street, about 120 feet south of Lincoln Avenue. The 45 by 25 foot frame structure cost \$5000. An addition of about 14 feet in 1936 brought the number of rooms to 14.

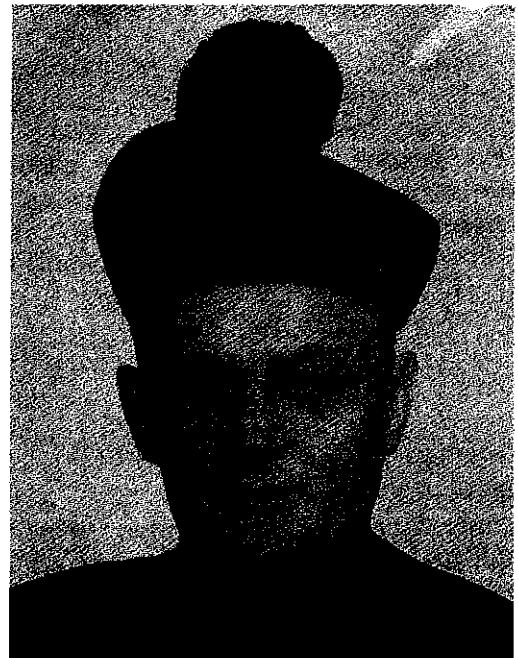
The barn purchased earlier was torn down and rebuilt into a two-car garage, costing \$325.

BRINGING BACK MEMORIES ?

Anyone who has interesting information about St. Rita's history or has pictures or

MSGR. EDWARD J. RODENKIRCH

The Rt. Rev. Msgr. Edward J. Rodenkirch, who became pastor of St. Joseph's parish in Waukesha, Wis., was a pioneer at St. Rita's, succeeding Father Pierron in Feb. of 1925. Father Rodenkirch was ordained on March 24, 1913. After serving as curate at St. Augustine's Milwaukee, for three years, he was appointed professor at Pio Nono High School and in 1919 was named pastor of St. John's, Paris. Father Rodenkirch served as first resident pastor of St. Rita's from February 1925 to July 1928 at which time he assumed charge of St. Peter's parish, St. Peter, Wis.. In October 1945, he was transferred to the pastorate of St. Joseph's, Waukesha. A signal honor was conferred on Father Rodenkirch when, in March 1944, he was named Papal Chamberlain to His Holiness, Pope Pius XII. In July 1949 he was again honored by the same Pontiff when he was created a Domestic Prelate with the title Right Reverend Monsignor,



items concerning the early parish is welcome to contact Kay Murphy at 321-9400 or 541-6565 after 6 PM.

St. Rita's



NEWS

SILVER JUBILEE

After 25 years of struggling and working, St. Rita's had progressed from a tiny tent-church congregation of a few families to a 1200 family parish of modern imposing buildings.

In October, 1949, Archbishop Moses E. Kiley blessed and dedicated the new building which housed the basement church, school and Sisters' residence. This structure joined the auditorium, rectory and original school building to complete the parish complex.

Below, representatives from the 1949 elementary school classes held placards

The school grew from three rooms, 120 pupils and a four-member faculty to an 18 room building with over 960 pupils taught by a staff of 20 Sisters.

Ordinary income, which amounted to \$12,875 in 1925, reached \$93,000 in 1948. Total fixed assets that year were \$700,000.

Spiritual progress paralleled the material progress of the parish. The number of Baptisms went from 15 in 1925 to 242 in 1948. There were 132 First Communicants in 1948 compared to 14 in 1924. There were two weddings in 1924 and 76 in 1948.

showing the number of students enrolled in each grade in 1924.



By its Silver Anniversary Year, the parish could also point to a growing number of vocations among the congregations young people.

The Silver Anniversary, then, was a time for all to feel pride for what had been achieved, and the entire community joined in congratulating the strong, new parish.

A four-day long celebration took place from October 27 to 30. The Archbishop administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to 351 persons, including 83 adults who had been received into the Church during the past two years.

Other festivities of the Silver Jubilee included a historical pageant presented by the school children on October 27 and 28, a Jubilee Ball held October 29 and an Open House on October 30.

After the dedication and Confirmation on the 30th, a second Jubilee Ball was held. Card parties, sponsored by the Christian Mothers Society, were held in the old school building.

In honor of the 25th anniversary, a historical booklet on St. Rita's Parish was prepared. Photographs were taken of each of the school's 'Jubilee classes', from kindergarten up to eighth grade.

Gala touches added to the celebration, such as a huge silver disc with the number '25' erected above the auditorium stage and a cake made as a replica of the new church building and served at the Jubilee Ball.

Casey Zielinski and the late Robert McMahon were co-chairmen of the Jubilee celebration committee.

The Rt. Rev. Msgr F.P. Arnold was pastor at that time, with Rev. Ralph J. Wagner, Rev. Warren J. Schmitt and Rev. George A. Nuedling as assistants.

Major stories chronicling the Jubilee appeared in the Milwaukee Journal, Catholic Herald Citizen and West Allis Star.

ST. RITA'S IN THE 1950'S

New faces began to appear on St. Rita's pastoral and teaching staff in the 1950's. The Rev. Harvey W. Brahm replaced Father Warren Schmitt. Rev. James H. Schulte was ordained on May 31, 1958 and he replaced Father Ralph J. Wagner later that year.

Attending St. Rita's elementary school became more pleasant for children of the parish when the modern primary school building was erected in 1956-57 and the east end of the main school building was remodeled a few years later. The auditorium (or gymnasium) was also remodeled.

And very importantly, ideas of a spacious, artistic new church were beginning to form in the mind of Msgr. Arnold and actual plans for the impressive structure began to take shape.

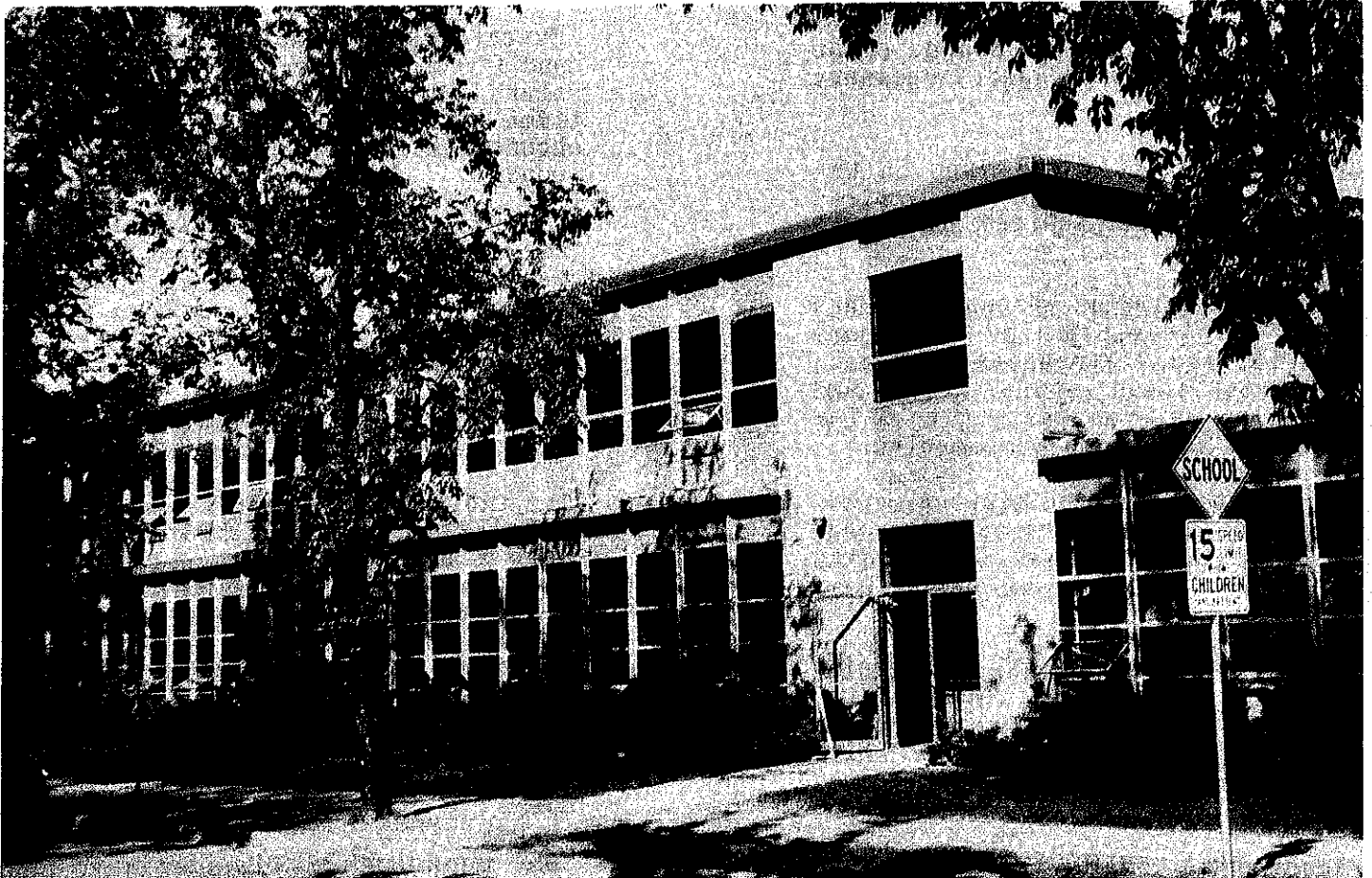
NAMES NEEDED

Names of the 'sons and daughters of our parish' (those who have entered religious orders) are needed for the Golden Jubilee Book, to be published in July. Any parishioner whose son or daughter has entered a religious order is asked to contact the rectory.

St. Rita's



NEWS



THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

CATERING TO THE YOUNG

By the mid-1950's, St. Rita's, under the leadership of Msgr. Arnold, had built an impressive educational system. Twelve new classrooms, a clinic, library and administrative facilities had been added to the eight-room little schoolhouse Msgr. Arnold found when he arrived as pastor.

But the parish had not finished the task of providing educational facilities for its young people. A primary school, one set apart for the very youngest pupils, one catering to their specific needs, was completed in 1957.

Msgr. Arnold and parishioner-architect Mark Pfaller spent a year of reading and studying, visiting other primary schools throughout the mid-west and talking with education experts before settling on the concept of the yet to be built primary school.

What they planned and what the parish built was a school novel and innovative for its time. 'After all, this is the first time we usher a child away from the home and into school. He must learn to like school. He should have the ideal conditions for learning. And he should be comfortable and have fun, too' Msgr. Arnold was quoted as saying at the time.

The new primary school had eight classrooms housing first and second grade pupils. But they were hardly ordinary classrooms.

Away from the older children in the main building, everything in the primary school was designed with the small child in mind.

The U-shaped building was spacious and airy. Bright colors in the classrooms gave a feeling of freshness and activity. Bookshelves, storage units and work tables were on casters to allow children to move them by themselves.

Special posture forming seats were adjusted twice a year to 'grow' with each child. The building was filled with glare-free, radiant and shadowless lighting.

Wide corridors allowed children to play indoors on rainy days. The outside walls of the school corridors contained panes of brightly colored plastic which painted walls and floors with hues when the sun shined.

On cloudy days, children studied under a 'skylight' ceiling of diffused fluorescent lighting which could be switched on by an automatic electric eye, 'just like streetlamps,' Msgr Arnold noted at the time.

Drinking fountains and plumbing fixtures were scaled down for small children. All classrooms were connected by a two-way public address system.

The school cost \$400,000, but was not a 'luxury school', Msgr. Arnold said.

'I suppose we could have put up an eight-room school for \$150,000 with box-like classrooms and open cloakrooms. But we thought that as long as we're building we might as well build it right. It's not cheap, but it's what we want.' Msgr. Arnold commented.

'Everything depends on a foundation. And if you get them off on to the right start liking school and having a good time learning you won't have to worry about the intermediate grades and beyond.

In 1964, a second story was added to the primary school building. Today it has 12 classrooms housing grades one through four. There is also a faculty room/clinic (for eye testing, etc.) and a principal's office.

There are about 350 pupils currently attending the primary school.

The entire upper floor is carpeted and all classrooms throughout the school have a large rug. Every classroom is equipped with a television set, record player and overhead projector.

The school has access to closed circuit TV (the Diocesan channels) as well as the regular channels. The Diocesan channels offer over 180 possible programs designed for pupils of various ages.

Some departmental classes have been started in the primary school. Under this system, pupils move from classroom to classroom for different courses. However, most subjects at the first through fourth grade levels are still taught in one classroom.

Hundreds of youngsters have passed through the primary school through the years. Yet the school has lost none of its fascination and functionalism for each one.

McMAHON ISN'T LATE

The last St. Rita's Golden Jubilee Newsletter incorrectly described Robert McMahon as 'the late'.. McMahon is a former member of St. Rita's and a chairman of the 1949 Silver Jubilee.