

# History of Our Parish School and the Benedictine Sisters



Sr. Eileen, 1941

lighting equipment is installed throughout, and a fire-proof heating plant adequate to church is located in the basement of the school.

The school, which is used for both grade and high school purposes, consists of nine rooms, including a commercial department. Necessary exits are provided at all levels to conform to the natural slope of the lot. No disrepair anywhere on the property escapes the pastor's notice and a major program of improvement was entered upon in the spring of 1950. To combat the unlovely ravages of thirty years, Father Fischer had the entire church repainted and redecorated. Those who were witnesses to the striking transformation effected declare it a fitting tribute to Father's true evaluation of the House of God.

Some high school training was offered here as early as 1912, with a modified two year program, but the official establishment of the high school curriculum



## 9th and 10th Grade Class – 1941

1st. row: Stella Brinkley, Hellen Palo, Dot Niederiter, Mary Louise Gano, Celestine Hartle. 2nd row: Dot Smith, Geraldine Schreckengost, Gert Gano, Teresa Hartle Caldwell, Alda Agostinelli, Helen Lahr. 3rd row: Bernie Selker, Paul Weaver, Francis Slagle, Loyd Finney, Chuck Finney, Laverne Niederiter, Art Cunningham, Tony Cherico.



## 9th and 10th Grade 1941 War Scrap Drive

L-R: Stella Brinkley, Dot Smith, Helen Lahr, Helen Palo, Alda Agostinelli, Teresa Hartle Caldwell, Geraldine Schreckengost, Mary Louise Gano, Laverne Niederiter, Tony Cherico, Chuck Finney, Gert Gano, Dot Niederiter, Bernie Selker, Paul Weaver (front) then Art Cunningham.

dates in 1925 with three students enrolled: James Kaltenbach, Anna Selker, and Helen Wilshire. It was not until 1946 that Reverend Fischer added an 11th grade to meet academic, commercial and general graduation standards, followed by a 12th grade in 1947. The first class to graduate from an accredited and fully approved high school did so June 9, 1948. The event marked the fulfillment of a long-cherished wish of the people of Immaculate Conception Parish and the completion of a long-range educational program initiated by Father Fischer. Tremendous sacrifices were channeled over the years by pastors, sis-

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*The new science laboratory. circa 1948*

ters, and parishioners to accomplish this goal. Contributing greatly toward the accrediting was the installation of a new science laboratory and the retention of a new high school teacher. This curriculum included classes taught in the fully equipped science laboratory and other improvements and additions made to receive the accreditation. Mr. J. Gould Smith from the State Department of Public Instruction made the inspection for accreditation and he said the science laboratory was one of the best he had ever seen in a school of that size. He also had high praise for the cooperation that existed between the public schools



**I.C. First Senior Graduating Class - 1948**

*1st row: Caroline Hartle, Sam Amato, Dorothy Reddinger  
2nd row: Delores Rice, Helen Patricia Finkbeiner, Rev. Alexis A. Fischer, Margaret Schierberl and Rita Reinsel.*



**Girls Basketball Team - 1948**

*1st row: Anna Marie Brinkley, Joan Miller, Luella Schierberl, Margaret Schierberl, Dorothy Reddinger. 2nd row: Rita Reinsel, mgr.; Shirley Clark, Dolores Rice, Marian Chericco, Julia Heinrich, Leona Heinrich, Patricia Birocco, asst. mgr.; 3rd row: Mary Lou Kerle, Joann Doran, Margaret Ganoë, Grace Reinsel, Jean Ganoë, Anna Marie Kerle*



**Boys Basketball Team - 1948**

*1st row: Carl Ditz, Eugene Recchio, Edward Keeling, William Keeling, LeRoy Burns. 2nd row: Rev. Alexis A. Fischer, Albert Selker, William Senard, Eugene Heinrich, Edward Skacan, coach.*

of the borough and the parochial school. The first class started out with fifteen members, but one member passed away (Marilyn Himes) and seven left throughout the years. That made the first Senior Class of 1948 with seven proud graduating members. They

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*Christmas 1948 with Fathers Alexis and Alfred Fischer.*

were: Salvator A. Amato, Helen Patricia Finkbeiner, Caroline T. Hartle, Dorothy Reddinger, Rita A. Reinsel, Dolores A. Rice, and Margaret E. Schierberl. This year also marked the year the first yearbook was published. It was called *The Immaculata*. Father Fischer was described in the yearbook by the senior class as "a sympathetic listener in any trial, a willing partner in our festivities, and a zealous co-worker in our endeavors."



*Gathering in the old gym / cafeteria – 1951*

In 1956 Father Fischer retired and he was succeeded by Father Joseph F. Meisinger. During this time the high school was in its heyday, and as many as a dozen sisters were on the faculty serving the elementary and secondary levels, along with a few laymen. During his pastorate, Father Meisinger made many improvements in the school. An aggressive fundraiser was held for these improvements. They published a booklet describing the needs of the school



*Prom King and Queen May 12, 1953*

Jeanne Selker and Leo Gano were Cinderella and Prince Charming. John Reddinger and Helen Aaron also in photo.



**Boys Basketball Team, 1951 – '52**

*1st row, L-R: Tom McNamara, mgr.; LeRoy "Bus" Burns, Maury Sardi, John Reddinger, Frank Ragley, John Hepinger, Bob Burns, mgr.; 2nd row: Rev. Alexis A. Fischer, Joe Galayda, asst. coach; Bill Keeling, Jack McNamara, Leo Gano, Jim Senard, Mike O'Toole, coach.*

and blueprints for the additions. They said that "Our school has faithfully followed the trend in the past years and will without a doubt do so in the future. Our standard classrooms were designed to accommodate thirty to thirty five pupils and in 1940 few of them were filled beyond this number. During the past school year, the number of pupils in every elementary classroom far exceeded the design capacity; fifty-nine

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*Graduating Class of 1957: Front L-R: Patricia Wilshire, Patricia Zacherl. 2nd: Jim Delaney, Fr. Joseph Meisinger, Thomas Siegel 3rd: John Kerle, Barbara Miller, Mary Griebel, Constance Musi and William Flanagan.*

pupils so completely filled the first and second grade room that it was virtually impossible for the teacher to move around." The improvements included an enlargement of the kitchen and cafeteria and the building of a modern and spacious auditorium which doubled as a gym. Then, there was the addition of a very modern four room complex on the west side of the school proper.

In 1960, Sister Charles was Superior; Sister Marcia principal of the grade school; Sister Marie Celine, principal of the high school. In 1963 Sister Sylvester was Superior; Sister Mary Margaret was principal of the grade school; Sister Mary Esther, principal of the high school. On October 27, the feast of Christ the King, an open house was held for parishioners and friends.

During the 1960-1961 there were eleven Sisters serving Immaculate Conception, seven of which were natives of St. Joseph in Oil City. Two (Sisters Mary Liguori and Rosanne) studied at Clarion State College during their first semester, and Sister Adrian studied at the College during the second semester. The enrollment for the grade school as of September 1960 was 261 and the high school was at 64.

The school's cafeteria, with Mrs. Leon Hufnagel in charge, was in full operation for the first day of school on September 6, 1960. All the ladies who worked in the cafeteria did so on a voluntarily basis. On January 8, 1961 Immaculate Conception was host to the Fo-

rensic League, and The Derrick Publishing Company invited students to participate in the Western Pennsylvania Spelling Bee, and named the school as host for the finals in May.

On May 22, 1961 fifteen seniors graduated from the High School. The morning exercises opened with a high mass offered by Father Joseph F. Meisinger. Following the mass a communion breakfast was held at the colonial room and was attended by the graduates, their mothers, and Father Meisinger. Commencement exercises took place at 8 pm in Immaculate Conception Church. Father Robert J. Riley, recently appointed headmaster of Dubois Christian High School, delivered the graduation address. Father Meisinger presented diplomas to the following seniors: Mary Jane Baum, Sally Ann Demarco, John Patrick Dwyer, Carol Ann Hartle, Robert W. Henry, John F. Hultquist, Gerald M. Lawrence, Patrick J. McNamara, Judith P. Radaker, Kathleen Marie Rice, Ruth Ann Sarko, Richard D. Servedy, Karen Vossburg, Mary Grace Zacherl, and Mona Rita Zacherl. Also in May of this year Father David Moynahan, newly ordained, was assigned to serve as an assistant in the parish and become the first campus minister.

The 1961-1962 year found eleven Sisters teaching again at Immaculate Conception. Father Moynahan taught Religion in the High School, and Major Claud Swisher taught classes in Physical Education and Driver Training. There were two lay teachers: Miss Ann Froelich and Miss Patricia Kowalczyk. Cruising down the river became a reality to the Clarion Sisters when, as guests of Mr. Peter Andreoletti of Sharon, they were treated to a boat ride on the Clarion River on a September Sunday afternoon. Sister Mary held the distinction of being the first Sister to enroll as a day hop at Clarion State College, her teaching schedule remaining limited and flexible to permit class work on both sides of the desk. Sister Mary William, recipient of a Penn State Scholarship in Math, had an excellent opportunity for graduate work at the College during both semesters while Sister Loretta and Sister Mary Joan were enrolled for extension courses in undergraduate work during both semesters.

The long awaited announcement of a Fund Drive for the building of a new Convent was made on Sunday, January 28, 1962. The special bulletin emphasized the need of a "New Convent which must be built this year." Extremely gratifying to Father Meisinger and his loyal parishioners was the fact, made known at this time also, that our parish buildings are