

Historically Speaking

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The St. Libory Catholic School dated back to 1888. Above, the students of 1907-08 show their patriotism. As the picture notes the pastor was Rev. A. Heimes and the teacher was N. Mayer. The first wooden Catholic school at St. Libory is still standing.—Photo courtesy of Ron Sack

Howard County Parochial Schools

(Several issues back I mentioned that I would write about the parochial schools that were located in Howard County. The topic became side-tracked, but here it is—thanks to Ron Sack. All the information is from him or his sources as noted.—Julie Spilinek)

St. Libory's Catholic School, St. Libory • 1888-1968

By Ron W. Sack with additional information from the West Nebraska Catholic Register and the U.S. Catholic Directory.

Of the four Catholic schools that once existed in Howard County, the school that had one of the longer runs was St. Libory.

Its history begins in 1888. During Father John Mueller's tenure, the first wooden frame school was built. Louise Heck was one of the first teachers in the earliest days of the parish.

Father August Heimes served as pastor from 1907 to 1914. It was during his pastorate that a large, three-story brick school was built in 1913 and dedicated by Bishop James A. Duffy.

A Message From the President *Jessie Kiser*

Happy holidays!

This is my last message to you as your Historical Society president.

There will be a Christmas celebration in the village again on December 7th. Attend if you can.

Thank you to the board and members of the Historical Society for all you have done to help me this year. I really appreciated it.

Thank you—Jessie Kiser.

Together, during the early years, both the original wooden school and the brick school building would serve the students. Later the wooden school building would serve as a winter chapel. As of 2011, the wooden school building is still standing.

In the early days, boarders resided on the third

floor of the brick building until the early 1940s. At some point in time, the sisters also lived there. Later on the sisters would move into the former two-story rectory.

The layout of the brick school building was as follows: kindergarten, first, and second grades were located on the south side of the first level; third, fourth, and fifth grades were located on the north side of the first level; an office and community room for the sisters were located on the south side of the second level; a small library was located on the east side of the second level; sixth, seventh, and eighth grades were located on the north side of the second level; boarders resided on the third level; a chapel, kitchen, and laundry room were located in the basement. Children brought their daily lunches.

Sisters of St. Francis were the first religious order to teach in St. Libory. Later the Sisters of St. Joseph of Concordia, Kansas, took over, but only for a short time. From 1911 to 1945, the School Sisters of St. Francis, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, taught in the school. In 1945, Monsignor Henry Muenstermann obtained the Sisters of St. Joseph



By 1913, the St. Libory Catholic School was using their old wooden school, as well as their new brick structure

of the Third Order of St. Francis of South Bend, Indiana, to teach, and this community stayed until the school closed its doors in 1968.

For a brief period, St. Libory's Catholic School offered high school. Its first graduating class was in 1922.

Records from the U.S. Catholic Directory in 1935 indicate three sisters from the order of the Sisters of St. Francis taught 54 pupils. In 1948, records indicate five sisters from the order of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Third Order of St. Francis taught 61 pupils.

1954 records indicate Sister M. Siegfriede served as principal of the school and she was assisted by Sister M. Stella, Sister M. Agnette, and Sister M. Catherine (cook).

In 1996 the old brick school building was demolished and a modern parish hall with classrooms for religion education classes was constructed. Parishioners saved the old wooden "St. Libory School" sign which proudly greeted students every day. It is now displayed in the parish hall.

Parishioners credit the school for fostering many vocations; 18 in all including 16 sisters and two priests.

St. Anthony of Padua's Catholic School, New Posen/Farwell • 1884-1967

By Ron W. Sack with additional information from the West Nebraska Catholic Register and the U.S. Catholic Directory.

About 2.5 miles south of the current village of Farwell, was the settlement of New Posen. It was founded by the Poles. The greatest of the organizers at St. Anthony of Padua's Parish was a Jesuit by the name of Father Ladislaus Sebastyanski, S.J., who signed his first record on May 25, 1884. During his 2-year stay, he first built a rectory and then a school, but the small combination church, school, and living quarters were destroyed by fire. They would later be rebuilt. Father Sebastyanski would arrange for the Franciscan Sisters to come to St. Anthony's and gave them his living quarters and built another rectory. The school would flourish even though the railroad missed New Posen.

In 1925, the majority of the congregation voted to move the church building to Farwell. On the last of December, 1925, Father Joseph Hinzman

became the new pastor. He was instrumental in the erection of the new parish school, rectory, and convent.

The "new" and expanded church was dedicated in Farwell on May 5, 1926. On the same day, the cornerstone of the new school, rectory, and convent was laid. Classes at the school began in September, 1926. The brick school proved to be a town landmark.

Felician Sisters were chosen to operate St. Anthony's.

The U.S. Catholic Directory records indicate that, in 1935, four Felician Sisters taught 49 pupils. In 1948, records show that two Felician Sisters taught 31 pupils. Enrollment over the years fluctuated between 30 and 80 students.

St. Anthony's school closed in 1967 due to economic reasons. The building would be used for CCD classes. As of 2011, the building still stands in Farwell. A small museum is located in the lower level of the building.

St. Joseph's Catholic School, the school of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Paplin (Chojnice) • 1880s-1927?

By Ron W. Sack, with information from the Polish Heritage Center and the West Nebraska Catholic Register.

Early roots of Catholic education at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish began in the late 1880s when Father Francis X. Stuer, a Jesuit priest, real

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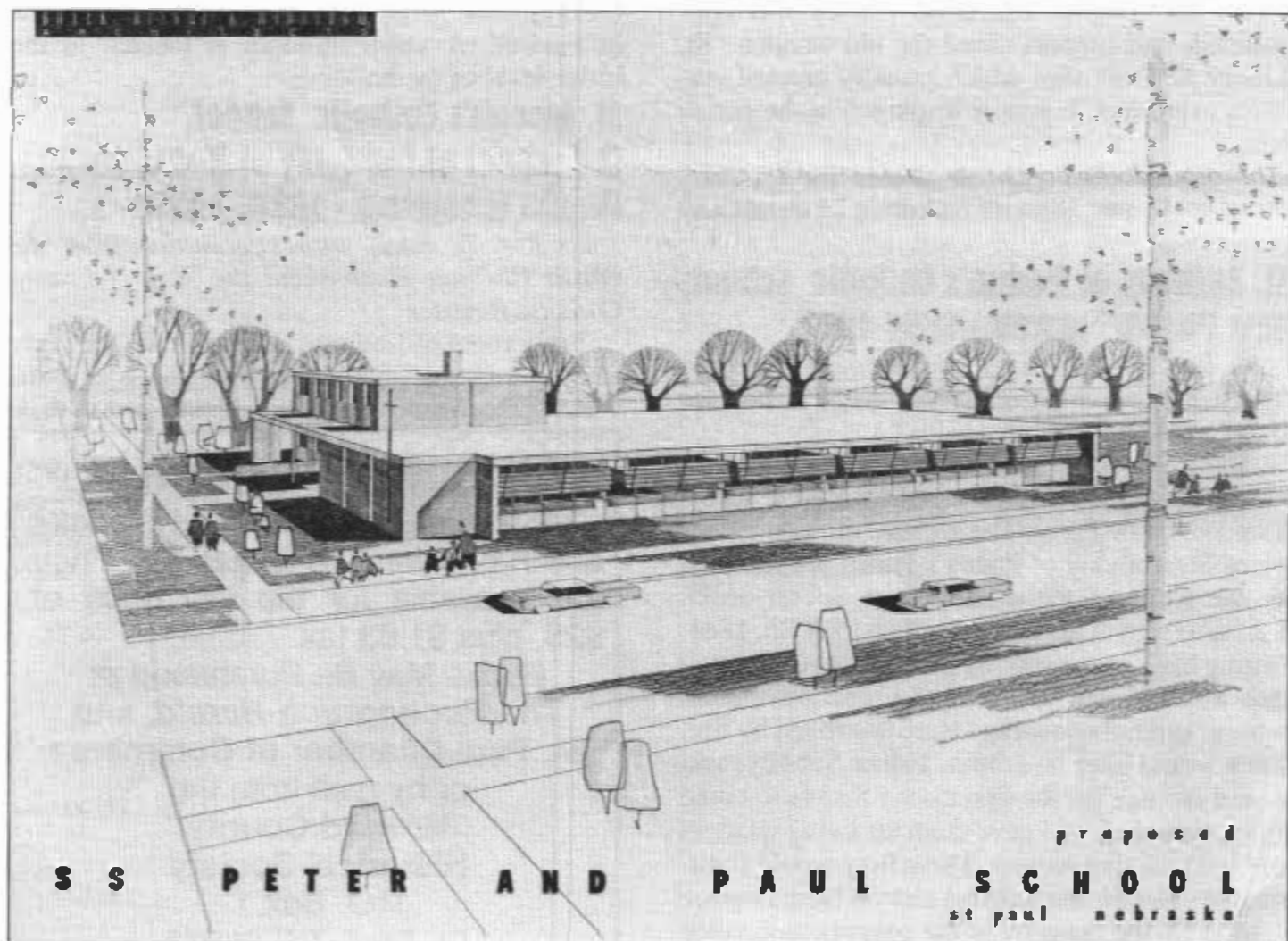
ized the great need for a Catholic school in Paplin (Chojnice). The congregation was large, since it not only consisted of parishioners from Paplin (Chojnice) but also those from Loup City, Rockville and Arcadia. He felt the children not only needed a good education in secular subjects, but most of all in religious education. Upon his arrival, Father Stuer soon influenced four Swirczynski girls to become nuns and John Krance (who later became a professor and librarian at Creighton University) to become a Jesuit. With this inspiration, a Catholic school was started.

It was too difficult for the pastor to handle all of this alone, therefore Father Stuer requested his Superior to send help. Two Jesuit brothers were assigned to assist Father Stuer; Brothers Chmielwowski and Kraemer. They resided with the

pastor and conducted classes in two rooms upstairs in the rectory. Those two classrooms with Jesuit Brothers as teachers were only a temporary arrangement. The parish ultimately needed a boarding school and teachers. So in 1890, Father Stuer obtained the Franciscan Sisters. He gave them his own rectory. In 1891 a new school was built on the east side of the church, a frame building consisting of two classrooms. Church records indicate that the school was named St. Joseph's Catholic School.

The first sisters to teach at Mount Carmel School were Sister Sebastian, Ignatia, and Prudentia. The very next year Sister Leocadia replaced one of the sisters and the following year Sister Leocadia was replaced by Sister Adalbert. Sister Casmir came in 1893.

Besides educating the children, the sisters cared



Father Figlerski's rendering of the proposed Catholic School at Ss. Peter and Paul Parish. —Courtesy of Ron Sack



The groundbreaking of Ss. Peter and Paul's Catholic School was held on September 2nd, 1960.— Photo courtesy of Ron Sack

for the sick of the parish. The school flourished over the years, especially when Father Boleslaus Radka arrived.

The teaching sisters left the school in 1927.

When Father Ireneus Jarka was called back at the parish in 1932, he made an effort to get the sisters to come back to teach, but due to the drought and the Great Depression, the parish could no longer afford to maintain a school and it closed.

Vocations were abundant at Mount Carmel. 19 women entered the convent as well as one priest. Many credit the early formation of the Catholic school for these vocations.

Ss. Peter and Paul's Catholic School, St. Paul • 1961-1986

By Ron W. Sack with additional information from the Howard County Herald

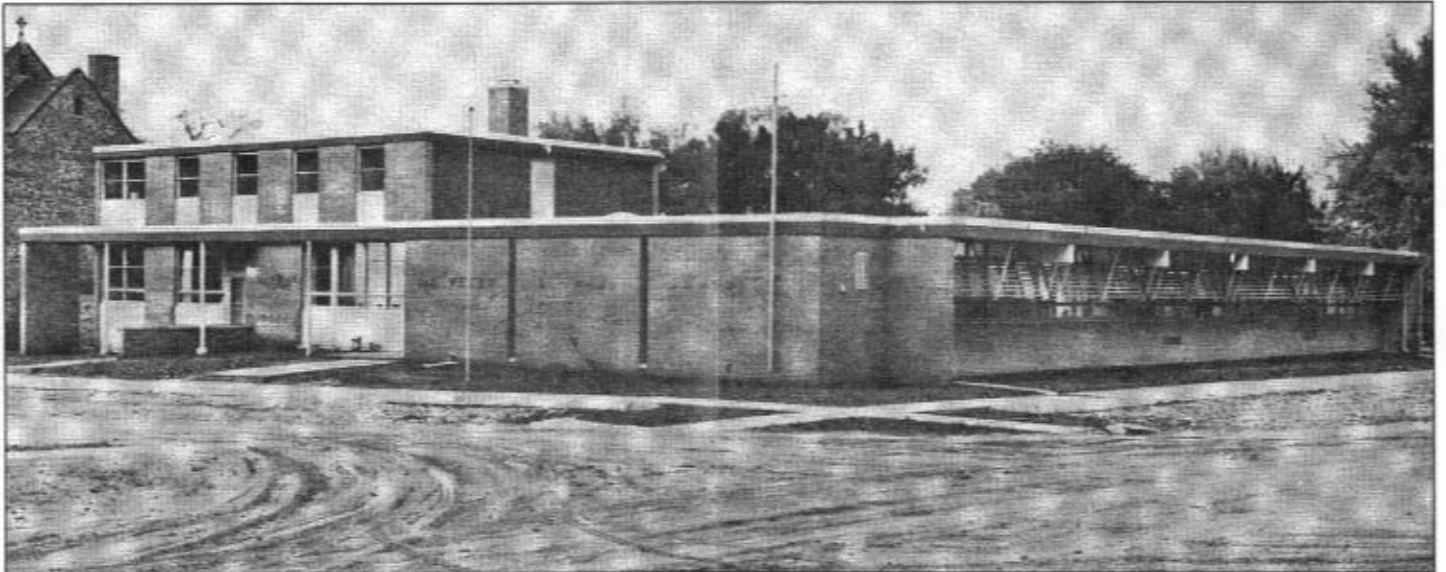
Official ground-breaking for Saints Peter and Paul's Catholic School occurred on September 2, 1960. Construction started shortly afterwards on September 10. Parishioners were ecstatic. Saints

Peter and Paul's Parish would finally have its Catholic school. It had been hoped to build a school in the 1920s when additional lots were purchased, but a rectory was built instead. Undaunted, the parish held together and dedication day finally arrived.

The school was completed on August 11, 1961, and was opened September 5, with an enrollment of 80 pupils. The Benedictine Sisters, whose motherhouse is at Yankton, South Dakota, staffed the school.

The solemn dedication ceremonies took place on October 29, 1961, with Bishop John L. Paschang officiating.

During the dedication ceremonies, Father Anthony C. Figlerski proclaimed, "Today, October 29, 1961, we have cause, indeed, for rejoicing on the achievement of a great work, the building of Saints Peter and Paul School. The successful completion of a project of this kind requires unlimited confidence in God, great courage and endless sacrifices. It requires the cooperation of all groups and members of the



The Catholic School in St. Paul as it appeared in 1962, prior to paved streets. —Photo courtesy of Ron Sack

parish, all of whom are motivated by the same ideals and the fulfillment of one's duties and obligation to future generations. To sum it all up—prayer, work, sacrifice—on the part of the priests, who formerly served here, and the people of Saints Peter and Paul Parish, have combined to make possible the beautiful new school and convent, which we dedicate today. Thanks be to God."

The school's design is an L-shaped building consisting of a one-story classroom wing with a

full basement and a two-story convent wing, also with a basement. The structure was designed so that additions could be made on the roof for another story or extended to the south side.

In the school proper, there were five classrooms, an office, workshop, music room, and library.

The sisters' convent wing consisted of five bedrooms, a large community room, two conference and reception rooms, and a dining room adjoined by a fully-equipped kitchen. The sisters' private



Ss. Peter and Paul School's building continues to be used by the church for their religious education classes and the parish offices. —Photo courtesy of Ron Sack



This photograph is of the Ss. Peter and Paul school convent chapel.—Photo courtesy of Ron Sack

chapel, with a sacristy, was located on the first floor of the convent. Total cost of the construction for the school and convent was \$211,759.

The building committee members included Cyril and Louise Shaughnessy; George and Pauline Sack; Edward and Mary Ann Nevriy; Edward and Marie Mannlein; William and Bobbe Gordon; William Sidel, Jr.; Harold McDermott; Otto Havlik; August and Grace Mudloff; Peter P. Sevcik; Joseph Rott, Sr.; Edward and Martha Jarecke; and Lucian Bogus.

The school was always staffed by the Benedictine Sisters of Yankton, South Dakota. The first group of sisters who taught at the school included Superior and principal Sister Maxine Schaefer, who also taught the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Sister Medarda Heimes taught the third, fourth, and fifth grades and Sister Patricia (Christopher) Heirigs (later a principal) taught the first, second, and third grades. Sister Hedwig Scheifele was the housekeeper. Additional sisters who taught over the years included Sister Elmera Keiser, Sister Alfreda Brandner, Sister Evangelista Leibold, Sister Tarcisia Schaeffer, Sister Rosina Grad, Sister Aelreda Reifenrath, Sister Gabriella Baumberger, Sister Delores

Rush, Sister Elizabeth Schroeder, Sister Erwina Traub (cook), Rosina Ann Schock (principal), and Sister Victorine Stoltz (principal). Sister Maria del Rey Mangan was a substitute teacher. Some of the lay teachers included Ellen Partsch, Kay Scarborough, Jim Hinrichs, Ben Gabriel, Monica Kramer, Kristi Dunlap, Theresa Lenniger, Jan Koperski, Kelli Seward, Collette Dubas, Nancy Harrington, Kayleen Lukasiewicz, Ronda Kruger (PE), and Jan Glaser.

Students also took part in daily Mass before classes began.

The first graduation from the eighth grade was held on May 25, 1962, with a class of nine.

As times changed, so did the school. Initially the school taught first through eighth grades. That later changed to first through sixth grades. However, in the early 1980s, a kindergarten class was added.

In 1986, the School Board voted to close Saints Peter and Paul's School due to declining enrollment. Sister Victorine served as the last principal at the school.

Today the building still stands and houses religious education classes and parish offices.

Nysted Folk School, Nysted • 1887-1936

By Ron W. Sack

The spiritual father of the Folk School movement was N.F.S. Grundtvig, who believed that man's entire life was a God-given gift with a value in itself. He fought for a school where learning, development, and enlightenment were their own rewards. Its main object was to lay a foundation for a fuller and richer life. The Nysted Folk School was an American outgrowth of this movement. The school opened December 1, 1887, with six students, in an abandoned wooden frame building formerly used as a store. Work began in 1888 on a better building, which was enlarged in 1908, and 1910, when a high tower was added. There were 59 students in 1894 and 68 in 1911-12. World War I brought chauvinistic patriotism which threatened the Danish language and traditions of the Folk School. The drought and Great Depression drove people away from Nysted. In 1936 the Folk School closed.



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INSIDE: The parochial schools of Howard County are featured in this issue. The information and pictures are courtesy of Ron Sack.

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