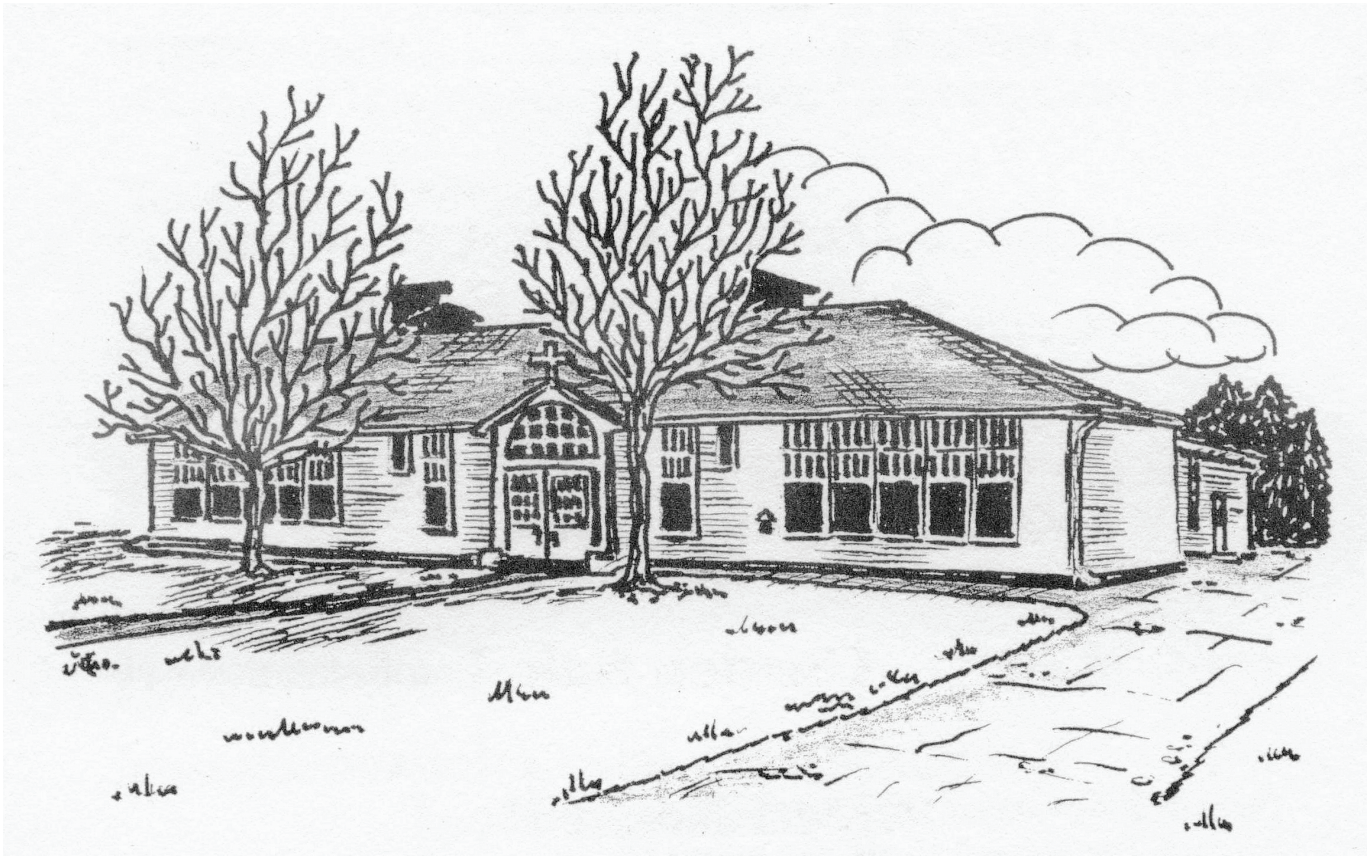


Saints Peter & Paul School
REMEMBRANCE BOOK
Three Rivers, Massachusetts



“Remembering a Special Time in Our Lives”
~1921—1973~

Introduction—Dedication

Those of us who formed what became known as the “Reunion Committee” really did not know what to expect when we began to plan a general reunion of our former parochial grammar school at Saints Peter & Paul Parish, Three Rivers, Massachusetts.

After the initial meetings, it quickly became apparent that the seven of us (Paul Brozek, who attended the school from 1968—1972; Margaret Brozek; Louise Kareta, Class of 1973; Diane Pikul, Class of 1972, Maryann Wostena, Class of 1973; Michael Wostena, Class of 1970; John Yurkunas, Class of 1960) could easily work together because we all retain a deep affection for our “alma mater” and believed in what we were doing. At Saints Peter & Paul, the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph taught us our Catholic faith, not just one hour a day, nor one day a week. Rather, our faith was integrated and permeated all our subjects and activities. We lived and breathed our Catholicism, along with a special pride for our Polish heritage.

Our grand “REUNION of Saints Peter & Paul School” was held on Saturday, October 15th, 2005. It began with a late afternoon Mass offered by current pastor, Fr. Stefan Niemczyk for all living and deceased students and the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph, who were assigned at our school.

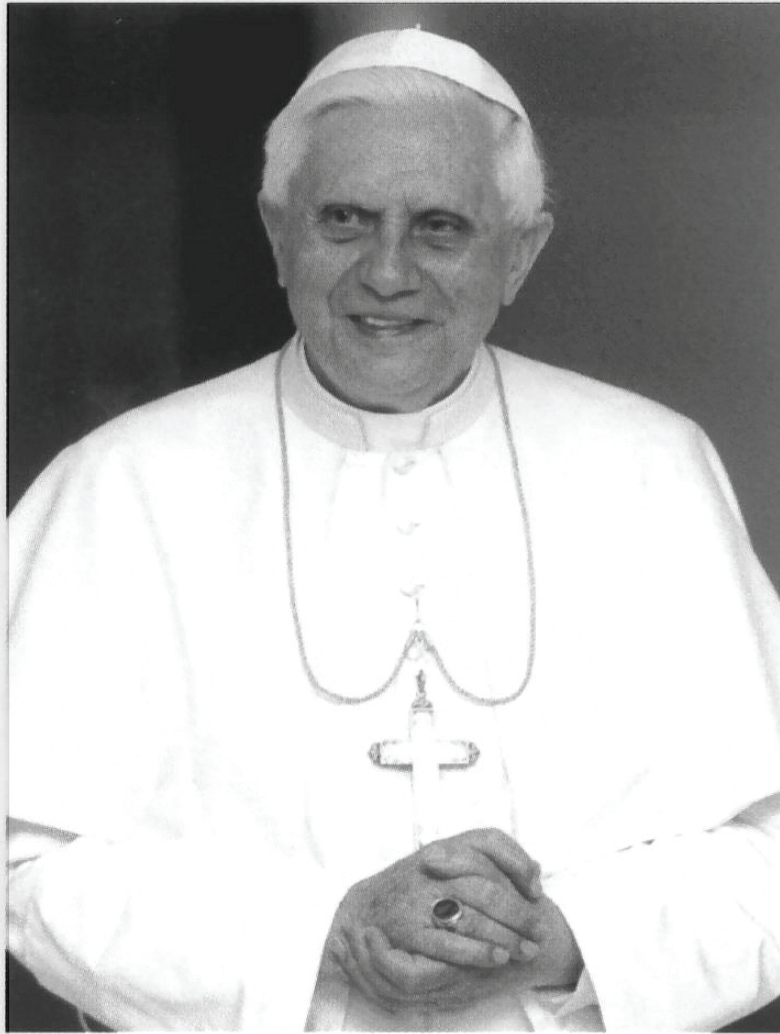
Following Mass, the Reunion Banquet was held in the former school (presently the parish hall). I served as Master of Ceremonies and our speakers included State Representative Todd Smola (R-Palmer), Louise Kareta, Genevieve Janosz (toastmistress), and our special guest speaker Sister M. Andrea Ciszewski, F.S.S.J. representing the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph.

What a delightful surprise for us to learn that the late Sister M. Lucentia (Cecilia) Nadolski, the last superior/principal of Sta. Peter & Paul, had a twin sister who also joined the Franciscan Sisters. We were pleased and honored to welcome her twin, Sister, M. Benilda Nadolski, F.S.S.J. to our celebration.

The book you now hold in your hands is the “frosting on the cake” of this Reunion of Saints Peter & Paul. It includes the graduating classes from 1923 through 1973, a history of our school, and other related recollections. We hope it will assist you and anyone else interested to remember not only “a special time in our lives”, but also a vital portion of the history of Saints Peter & Paul Parish and the local community.

We dedicate this “REMEMBRANCE BOOK” to each student, Franciscan Sister, Pastor, and Assistant Pastor who was a part of Saints Peter & Paul School from 1921 to 1973.

Michael J. Wostena, Reunion Committee Co-Chairman



*His Holiness
Pope Benedict XVI*

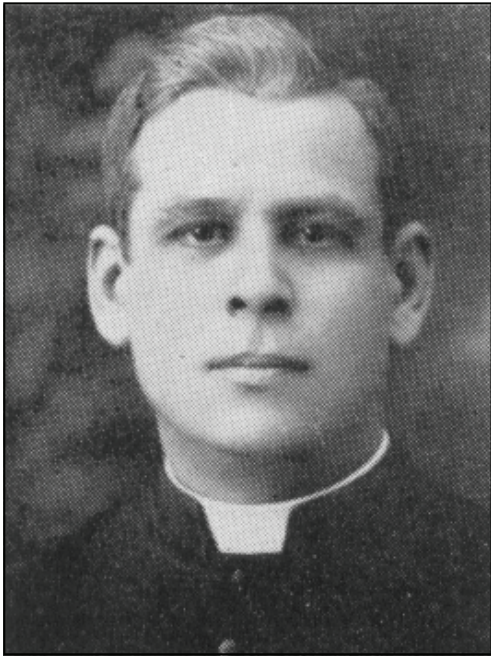
His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI
Vicar of Christ, Successor of St. Peter,
Servant of the Servants of God
[2005—]



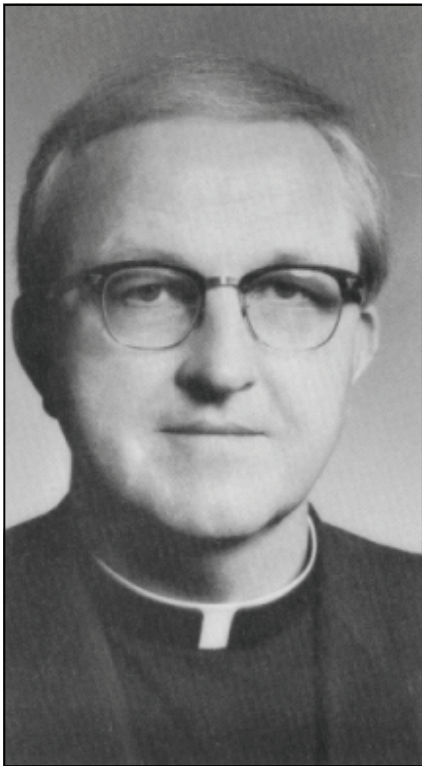
His Excellency, Most Rev. Timothy A. McDonnell
Eighth Bishop of Diocese of Springfield, MA
[2004—]



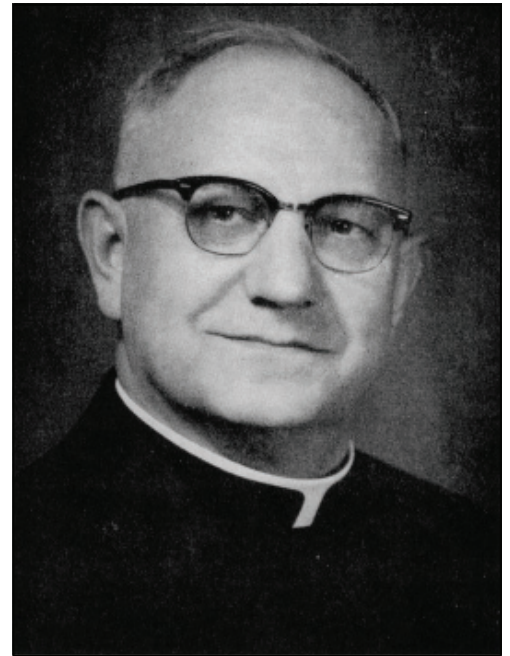
Rev. Stefan J. Niemczyk
Sixth pastor of Sts. Peter * Paul Parish
[1998—]



Rev. Andrew S. Krzywda
Third pastor of Sts. Peter & Paul
[1913—1947]



Rev. Robert J. Ceckowski
Fifth pastor of Sts. Peter & Paul
[1972—1997]



Rev. Msgr. Alphonse A. Skoniecki
Fourth pastor of Sts. Peter & Paul
[1948—1972]



Michael Wostena
Reunion Committee
Co-Chairman



Louise Kareta
Reunion Committee
Co-Chairman



Paul Brozek
Reunion Committee



Diane Pikul
Reunion Committee



John Yurkunas
Reunion Committee



Mary Ann Wostena
Reunion Committee

A History of Saints Peter & Paul School

Three Rivers, Massachusetts

1921 – 1973

By Michael J. Wostena, Class of 1970

BEFORE THE SCHOOL

Saints Peter & Paul Parish was organized in 1902 through the efforts of the St. Joseph Society of Thorndike. That organization, previously established in 1895 to unite the Polish immigrants in the area, had petitioned the Bishop of Springfield in Massachusetts for the establishment of a church to serve the needs of the large Polish immigrant population in the four villages of the Township of Palmer.

With the approval of the Most Rev. Thomas Beaven, Bishop of Springfield, land was purchased and ground was broken at “*Four Corners*,” a site equidistant from the four villages of Three Rivers, Thorndike, Bondsville, and Depot Village. **The church was dedicated on September 24, 1905.** Rev. Waclaw (Wenceslaus) Lenz was appointed as the first pastor and he served until 1911.

The second pastor, Rev. Wladyslaw (Ladislaus) Kielbasinski, served from 1911 to 1913. He was in poor health and resigned the pastorate to return to his native Poland.

THE “KRZYWDA ERA”

THE SCHOOL IS OPENED

Rev. Andrzej (Andrew) Krzywda was named the third pastor on April 1, 1913. Born in Poland on November 18, 1878, he was ordained a priest on December 19, 1909. At age 31 he was a bit older than many men ordained at the time, yet he became a pastor only four years after ordination. He would have the longest pastorate to date (34 years). It was during his administration that plans were made for the creation of a parochial school. Father Krzywda was convinced of the need for the parish to educate its youth not only in “*reading, writing, and arithmetic*,” but within the context of the Catholic faith, with an appreciation for Polish culture and heritage. In its early years, lessons were logically taught in the Polish language.

The large property belonging to Saints Peter & Paul Parish would easily provide for the locating of another structure. With the rectory situated at the corner of Main and Sykes Streets, and the church building to the right of the rectory, it was decided to build the school to the right of the church.

Construction of the school began in 1919. That same year, the parish purchased a twelve-room house across the street from the school site for \$3,312 from the Smith sisters (Philomena and Rose). The school’s architect was Bruno Wozny of Springfield and John Topor of Easthampton was the contractor. The one story, wood frame building was completed and dedicated in August 1921 at a cost of \$70,000.

A building directly across the street from the school was purchased that would serve

as the convent for the teaching sisters.

Father Krzywda contacted the Motherhouse of the **Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph in Hamburg, New York**. With the approval of **Rev. Mother Mary Clara**, the pastor secured the services of that congregation to staff Saints Peter & Paul School.

Saints Peter & Paul School opened its doors to children of the parish for the first time **in September of 1921**. The student population numbered approximately 400. Nine Franciscan Sisters comprised the first staff of the school: **Sister Mary Aloysius, first principal**, and Sisters Mary Agnes, Mary Amalia, Mary Euphrasia, Mary Eusebia, Mary Fabiana, Mary Germana, Mary Leondra, and Mary Victoria.

Sister M. Aloysius served as principal of the school and superior of the convent until 1924. For the school year 1924-1925, became the new principal and superior. An *“Alumni Association of Saints Peter & Paul School”* was organized in 1925 by the Rev. John Oszejca, curate (assistant pastor) from 1925 to 1926.

After the first principal (Sister Aloysius), all her successors were teaching principals at Saints Peter & Paul. Likewise, one Sister always held the dual positions of principal of the school and superior of the convent. The third Sister named to those positions was **Sister Mary Aloysia** from 1925 to 1933.

Sister Mary Dominic was appointed principal and superior in 1933. **Sister Mary Salome** succeeded her in 1940, and she served for one year. **Sister Mary Cleopha** became the sixth principal and superior in 1941 and she remained until 1947.

School year 1947-48 began with a new principal and superior. As the school doors opened in September 1947, **Sister Mary Bogusława** began her six-year term. The end of World War II was now two years in the past, and things were looking up for the nation. However, before the year was out, sadness would fall upon the Three Rivers parish.

For a brief time in the history of Saints Peter & Paul Parish, three priests were in residence: the pastor and two curates. From 1943 to 1947, these clergy were Father Krzywda, pastor, and his two curates, the Rev. Joseph Szczepaniak (appointed in 1933) and the Rev. Walter Swider (from 1943 to 1947).

Christmas 1947 was a little less joyful for parishioners, students, and friends alike. Father Krzywda died on December 18 of that year, one day before the 38th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. He was 69 years old and had been in declining health in the years preceding his death. It was truly the end of an era as the parish bid farewell to the man who had guided them for thirty-four years. Father Joseph Szczepaniak, curate, was named temporary administrator and led the parish in mourning for their longtime, beloved shepherd. A new pastor would not be named for another two months.

THE “SKONIECKI ERA”

MOTHERS CLUB/ A CAFETERIA/ UNIFORMS

Bishop Thomas O’Leary appointed the **Rev. Alphonse A. Skoniecki** as the fourth pastor of Saints Peter & Paul on February 22, 1948. Father Skoniecki came to Three Rivers after serving as pastor at Our Lady of Częstochowa Parish, Turners Falls for over twenty-three years. Born in Poland on July 16, 1894, he was ordained a priest for the Springfield

Diocese on June 2, 1917. He was an enthusiastic supporter of Catholic education and proud defender of Poland's heritage.

The Rev. Casimir Switalski was also named the new curate in 1948. The Rev. Henry Kreczko succeeded him a year later.

Father Skoniecki was also a great supporter of Catholic education. He was convinced of the need for parish schools to form their children into adults with solid faith who loved and appreciated their ethnic heritage. He encouraged the Sisters to continue teaching the Polish language to the school children.

The new pastor quickly set about taking a look at the physical plant of the parish, including the school. Due to the late Father Krzywda's ill health in his final years, many situations had not been addressed. One of these was to repair the sewer problem in the school for the health and well being of students and teachers alike.

Knowing that the women are the backbone of most parishes, another of Father Skoniecki's initial projects was to gather the mothers of the school children into an organization. He established the **Mothers Club** as a material support organization for the parish school. In connection with this, hot lunches were served for the first time in the school cafeteria beginning in September, 1948.

Among their many endeavors, the Mothers Club provided for annual Christmas parties for the school children and the annual field day in June which typically saw the students and Sisters enjoying themselves at Mountain Park in Holyoke, Mass.

More physical improvements for safety and comfort were done in 1950 with the construction of new cement sidewalks were constructed in front of the church and school.

A new curate arrived in Three Rivers in 1952: the Rev. John Aubertin who would serve for nearly eight years.

A year later (1953), **Sister Mary Theodore** was named the new principal and superior. That same year, the school cafeteria received an updating that included new tables, china, and kitchen equipment through the efforts of the Mothers Club.

After three years, Sister Theodore was transferred in 1956. **Sister Mary Veronica** who served for the next three years succeeded her.

On April 17, 1954, Father Skoniecki was honored by the legal Polish Government in Exile (London) with the title "*Commander of Polonia Restituta*," the highest honor bestowed by the Polish Republic. He was commissioned a Colonel in the Polish Armed Forces. A testimonial dinner was held in Father "Colonel" Skoniecki's honor on Nov. 20 that year at St. Stanislaus Hall, Three Rivers.

The parish, including the school children, feted Father Skoniecki in 1957 on the ruby jubilee (forty years) of his ordination to the priesthood.

In thanksgiving to God for a successful surgery and recuperation, Father Skoniecki funded the **Our Lady of Czestochowa Chapel in the Vatican Grottoes**. The chapel's consecration took place in Rome on June 1, 1958. Later that year, His Holiness Pope John XXIII honored Father Skoniecki by naming him a Prelate of Honor (**Monsignor**). However, this honor was not recognized by the local Bishop of Springfield at the time.

During Father Skoniecki's administration, school uniforms were introduced for the students. For the girls: a navy blue jumper, worn with a white blouse, blue bow tie, blue knee

socks, and an “SPS” emblem on the jumper. For the boys: a light blue dress shirt, navy blue slacks, navy blue tie. A navy blue blazer, with school emblem on the breast pocket, was later added for boys and girls.

Sister Mary Viola was appointed as the tenth principal and superior in 1959 for a six-year term. At that time, 249 students were enrolled in grades one through eight.

Beginning with the graduating Class of 1960, caps and gowns (white for the girls, maroon for the boys) were introduced for the eighth grade commencement exercises in June. This attire replaced white formal dresses for girls and jacket and tie for boys.

The parish welcomed a new curate in 1960. The Rev. Sigmund (“Ziggy”) Kwiatkowski replaced the departing Father John Aubertin.

A teacher beloved by all, Sister Mary Tobia, returned to Three Rivers in September 1960 as first and second grade instructor. Sister had previously served at Saints Peter & Paul from 1934 to 1937. With her maternal charms and instinct, Sister Tobia was born to teach the little children. She endeared herself to both students and parents. Years after her assignment in Three Rivers ended (1967), numerous alumni and their families kept in contact with Sister Tobia via correspondence and visits.

In 1961, a new boiler was installed in the school basement. As various repairs were made over the years, it was Father Skoniecki’s desire that a new school building be constructed. A large reserve fund of money was raised for this purpose. Naturally, a project of such size would have to meet with the approval of the Diocesan Chancery Office. Over the years, discussions were held, promises made and broken. In the end, regrettably, Father Skoniecki’s dream was never realized.

THE 1960s: A DECADE OF CHANGES

In 1962, the parish again rejoiced as their shepherd marked another significant milestone in his priestly life: the forty-fifth anniversary of his priesthood ordination. The celebration was held in October of that year with an anniversary Mass in the church, followed by a testimonial banquet at the National Guard Armory in Ware, Mass. The first and second graders, under the direction of their teacher, Sister Mary Tobia, carried white satin hearts with the golden number “45” in the center to honor “Father Pastor.”

In the 1960s, the **baseball team** led Saints Peter & Paul School to many victories, becoming the recipient of many awards and trophies. Later in the decade, a **basketball team** was formed with some of the schoolgirls participating as cheerleaders for “*The Saints.*”

During the school year 1964-1965, the Mothers Club purchased new room darkening shades for the skylights in the auditorium. These easily darkened the hall when needed for such purposes as movies for the school children during the annual Christmas party given by the Mothers Club.

June 1965 meant the end of Sister Viola’s six-year term as principal/superior. When school year 1965-1966 began in September, **Sister Mary Lucentia** was now in charge. Sister Lucentia would be the eleventh and final principal/superior of the school and convent. She would serve for eight years.

The Millennium of Christianity in Poland was observed all year long in Polish-

American parishes throughout the country in 1966, and Three Rivers was no exception. The theme of the plays performed by the children at the June 1966 graduation exercises reflected this celebration of one thousand years of Catholic faith among the Poles.

“AD MULTOS ANNOS”: FIFTY YEARS A PRIEST

Father Skoniecki observed a great milestone in 1967: his Golden Jubilee as a priest. The parish came together to honor their shepherd. In June, the celebration of their pastor's fifty years as a Roman Catholic priest include a Solemn High Mass of Thanksgiving with Bishop Christopher Weldon of Springfield and dozens of his brother priests in attendance. The school children honored “Father Pastor” at the graduation exercises in the school hall, and a testimonial banquet was held at the National Guard Armory, Ware, site of the 45th anniversary celebration five years earlier.

It was the custom for the school children to participate annually in the Midnight Mass Procession at Christmas. All the girls were members of the Children of Mary (“Dzieci Maryi”) Sodality. Those boys who belonged to the Altar Boys Society served at the Procession and Mass, and other boys marched in Procession and were present at Mass. The children would meet one half hour before Midnight Mass in the school hall.

On December 24, 1967, as the children entered the school, they were met with a surprise: the Franciscan Sisters were now wearing a modified habit, replacing the traditional one worn since their congregation was founded in 1897. Gone were the Franciscan cord, Franciscan Crown (seven decade rosary), large white collar (“bib”), and high headpiece. The most astonishing thing to the children (and most parishioners as well) was the fact that one could now actually see the Sisters' hair in their new, modified veils! But regardless of the style or their garb, the Sisters would remain identifiable as religious, always wearing a distinctive habit as an important witness to their commitment, throughout the remainder of the school's existence.

Another innovation for the Franciscan Sisters, as well as in other religious communities, was the allowance of Sisters to use their baptismal names instead of their religious names. Some of the Sisters assigned in Three Rivers would adopt this new practice.

The start of the new year 1968 saw a change in curates. Father Ziggy was appointed a pastor and he was replaced by the Rev. Eugene Ozimek. Later that year, although a new school building would not be possible, the students returned to classes in September to find the old wooden desks (most of them seated two students) replaced by more modern metal desks. Each of these desks sat one student and contained sufficient space for books and supplies. They ranged in size/height to accommodate the various grade levels. The older desks were offered for free in the summer of '68 and many former students came by to take one or more home as quite a souvenir from their school days.

In September of 1969, the school children returned for a new year wearing new uniforms. The navy blue jumpers, slacks, and blazers were replaced by the prominent color of red. The girls now wore red plaid jumpers, white blouses, red ties, beanies, and blazers. The boys' uniform consisted of white shirts, black ties and slacks, and red blazers. A new “SPP” monogram appeared on the blazer pockets.

The Mothers Club purchased an automobile (a white Chevrolet) from Walker Motor Sales for the Sisters, their first ever. Sisters Lucentia, Consolata and Josephine accepted the keys to their new car in October, 1969.

Also in the Autumn of 1969, Father Ozimek was transferred. As another priest was not readily available from the diocese, Father Skoniecki secured the services of a temporary replacement, the Rev. Arcadius Boryczko, a native of Poland and a member of the Society of Christ, a religious congregation.

With the change in school uniforms came also a change in graduation attire. For their commencement exercises, the Class of 1970 wore their new uniforms instead of the caps and gowns of the previous decade. This would be the graduation attire for the remainder of the school's existence.

In August 1970, the diocese assigned newly ordained Rev. Joseph Jancewicz as curate at Saints Peter & Paul. Like previous curates, Father Jancewicz was also placed in charge of the parish's C.C.D. (religious education) program for public school students of the parish.

The years following the Second Vatican Council brought many changes to the Church. One of these was the beginning of the decline in religious and priestly vocations. The Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph were not immune to this change.

For a long time, five or six Franciscan Sisters were assigned to Saints Peter & Paul School. One of these, like Sister Mary Mieczyslawa, was a "domestic Sister," i.e., she cooked for the Sisters and cared for the convent. When Sister Mieczyslawa retired to the Motherhouse in Hamburg in 1966, she was not replaced, leaving five Sisters for the Three Rivers mission. One Sister each taught double grades (one and two; four and five; six and seven; or seven and eight).

An example of this was the teaching staff for 1970-1971: grades 1 & 2 – Sister Mary Jane (formerly known as Mary Lorraine); grade 3, First Holy Communion – Sister Mary Electa; grades 4 & 5 – Sister Josephine (formerly Mary Gemma); grades 6 & 7 – Sister Helen Marie (formerly Mary Leonille); grade 8 – Sister Mary Lucentia, principal.

THE SCHOOL GOLDEN JUBILEE

September 1971 marked fifty years for Saints Peter & Paul School. A change in the number of Sisters assigned to Three Rivers came for that school year (1971-1972). In the summer of 1971, the Mother General transferred Sisters Electa and Josephine to other assignments. But only one of them would be replaced. The teaching staff for 1971-1972: grades 1 & 2 – Sister Mary Jane; grades 3 & 4 – Sister Edna Marie; grades 5 & 6 – Sister Helen Marie; grades 7 & 8 – Sister Cecilia (formerly Mary Lucentia), principal.

Meanwhile, at the parish, changes were happening, too. Father Jancewicz left the parish in January, 1972. His departure meant that there would be no further priest assigned as curate (outside of temporary priests on loan) since the Springfield Diocese was also experiencing a decline in vocations. Saints Peter & Paul became, effectively, a one priest parish.

A happier occasion was celebrated in **1972**. That year marked the **75th anniversary of the founding of the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph. Saints Peter & Paul School had**

turned fifty the previous year. In April 1972, a combined celebration was held that included a Mass of Thanksgiving offered by Father Skoniecki. Numerous current and former teaching Sisters were present for the Mass and for the reception that followed in the school hall, honoring both the Franciscan Sisters and the school. This would prove to be a high point in the school's history.

Enrollment at the school was on a decline since the late 1960s. Father Skoniecki and the Sisters decided, regrettably, to phase out grades 1, 2, and 3 for the school year 1972-1973. That decision was made when the Motherhouse informed the parish that Sister Helen Marie was being transferred after June, 1972 and would not be replaced. This left three Sisters on staff: grades 4 & 5 – Sister Edna Marie; grades 6 & 7 – Sister Mary Jane; grade 8 – Sister Cecilia, principal.

“DO WIDZENIA, ‘FATHER PASTOR,’ & “BOG ZAPLAC!”

More changes affecting the school continued. Father Skoniecki, pastor for nearly a quarter of a century, retired in October, 1972. His last public appearance apart from Masses was at the annual “Feast Day Plays” given by the children in his honor in the school hall. At that October performance, his successor was present with him. The Rev. Robert Ceckowski was appointed new pastor of Saints Peter & Paul Parish.

A native of Westfield, Mass. and Holy Trinity Parish there, Father Ceckowski himself was a product of parochial grammar education. The Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph also staffed Holy Trinity School, and one of Father Ceckowski's aunts had herself entered the Franciscan Sisters congregation.

After contracting a bout with pneumonia requiring his hospitalization at Wing Memorial Hospital in Palmer, Father Skoniecki's departure was delayed. He received dozens and dozens of loving get-well messages from his beloved school children. In November, the Reverend Monsignor Colonel Alphonse Alexander Skoniecki retired to a small home in Turners Falls, not far from Our Lady of Częstochowa Church, the site of his previous pastorate. The veteran priest would remain there until his death at the age of 81 on July 26, 1975. After a funeral Mass at Our Lady of Częstochowa, he was buried at that parish cemetery, also in Turners Falls.

In January of 1973, Mother Mary DeSales, superior general of the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph sent Father Ceckowski a letter. In it, the Mother General, herself a former teacher in Three Rivers, wrote that she would be transferring the three Sisters at Saints Peter & Paul when the school year ended in June. But Mother DeSales' deeper regret was that the order would no longer be able to staff the school in Three Rivers.

BITTERSWEET FAREWELLS

Father Ceckowski studied the situation. The decision was made not to contract with another teaching order of Sisters. An all-day teaching staff was ruled out as too costly. Thus, the new pastor announced to the parish that Saints Peter & Paul School, after 52 years of

service to the parish and surrounding community, would close its doors at the end of the school year 1972-1973.

In June 1973, for perhaps the first time ever, the annual commencement exercises and plays were not held. A graduation Mass for the eighth graders was offered as usual. The graduates received their diplomas from Father Ceckowski at that Mass. That same month, **the three remaining Sisters: Mary Jane, Edna Marie, and Cecilia**, were honored at a small, bittersweet open house-type reception held in the school hall before leaving for their new assignments. This marked **the end of Saints Peter & Paul School**.

When the new school year commenced in September 1973, for the first time in over fifty years, the classrooms, cafeteria, and hall at Saints Peter & Paul School were silent. The sounds of children within, and happily playing outdoors at recess were noticeably absent to all who passed by. An important era had ended in the history of Saints Peter & Paul Parish.

Father Ceckowski brought back the sight and sounds of young ones when he established a nursery school (pre-Kindergarten) in the parish that opened in October 1980. Another order of Sisters, the Little Servant Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, who had come to the parish after the Franciscan Sisters in 1973 as religious education teachers and sacristans, were now in charge of the nursery school. When the Little Servants were forced to withdraw from Three Rivers, the Sisters Minor of Mary Immaculate took over the staffing of the nursery school in 1990. They remained until 2001 when, for the second time in its history, Saints Peter & Paul witnessed the closing of a parish school.

Father Ceckowski continued as shepherd of Saints Peter & Paul Parish until his death on December 30, 1997. He had served as pastor for twenty-five years. After his Funeral Mass in Three Rivers, he was buried in his family's plot at St. Mary's Cemetery, Westfield.

The Reverend Stefan Niemczyk was appointed as Father Ceckowski's successor in January, 1998. A native of Poland, Father Niemczyk was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Springfield on January 31, 1987.

As this book is compiled, **memories of Saints Peter & Paul School have remained over the years**. After its closing, the former school was renovated with interior and exterior physical changes. The building, formerly used for the nursery school and weekly bingo, is still used for religious education classes for grades K-12, and for meetings, dinners, and various events like card parties and craft shows. It is primarily, a parish hall. However, when referring to that venerable building, most people still refer to it as ***"the school."***

FLASH FORWARD TO THE REUNION: A FITTING "THANK YOU!" & "GOODBYE!"

The reality of those memories was the reason why seven individuals, six of whom attended the parish school, formed a committee in January 2005. Paul Brozek (attended the school from 1968-1972), his wife Margaret Brozek (who attended St. Joseph School, Ansonia, Conn.), Louise Kareta, Class of 1973, Diane Pikul, Class of 1972, Maryann Wostena, Class of 1973, Michael Wostena, Class of 1970, and John Yurkunas, Class of 1960 decided that, since 2005 marked the 100th anniversary of the dedication of Saints Peter & Paul Parish, and since 32 years had passed since the parochial school's closing, it was time to

truly honor the former school. And the committee wanted to do it in style. Prior to the event, seven committee meetings, open to the public, were held in the former school.

Tony & Penny's of Ludlow, Mass. were secured as caterer's for the affair. Friendly Ice Cream, Wilbraham, Mass. generously donated vanilla ice cream as part of the dessert. Ludlow Printing was responsible for printing of the tickets, commemorative holy cards, and programs. A brass vase of red and white carnations from Maryniski's Florists, Palmer, Mass. stood before the speaker's lectern, and the same flowers graced the tables throughout the hall. A bottle of Merlot and a bottle of Chardonnay stood at each table, purchased at Ramadon's Package Store, Three Rivers, Mass.

A **School Reunion Celebration** was planned for **Saturday, October 15, 2005**. This would be for all students, both graduates and those who might have attended for one, two or more years. Also welcome were spouses/parents/family of students, and former members of the Mothers Club. The Celebration began with a **Mass** for the living and deceased students and Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph at 5:15 P.M. in the church. This was followed by a **social and banquet** in the former school. The Reunion was attended by nearly 200 people, and included former students from each decade of the school's existence, i.e., the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. **The Polka Jamboree**, a six-piece band, performed at the Reunion. Three of the musicians (Paul Brozek, James Brozek, and Steven Brozek) were former Saints Peter & Paul students.

Seated at the head table were Father Niemczyk, current pastor of Saints Peter & Paul Parish; Deacon Edward Tenczar, Class of 1941; State Representative Todd Smola (R-Palmer) who presented a citation honoring the school, Genevieve Janosz, Class of 1928 who served as toastmaster; Louise Kareta, Class of 1973, Committee Co-Chair who delivered remarks in behalf of alumni; Michael Wostena, Class of 1970, Committee Co-Chair and Master of Ceremonies; and **Sister M. Andrea Ciszewski, F.S.S.J.**, honored guest speaker.

Since so much time had passed, unfortunately most of the teaching Sisters were either already deceased or too ill to attend. Sister Andrea, interim Superintendent of the Springfield Diocesan Schools, represented the Franciscan Sisters.

Seated among the guests at table was **Sister M. Benilda Nadolski, F.S.S.J.** who came with Sister Andrea. An added delight and special connection was that Sister Benilda, stationed at St. Stanislaus School, Chicopee, Mass., was the twin sister of the late Sister M. Lucentia (Cecilia), the last principal/superior of Saints Peter & Paul School.

One of the classrooms in the school was set up as the "*Memorabilia Room*" containing old textbooks, uniforms, report cards, graduation programs, awards, and hundreds of photographs.

A delightful evening, filled with happy chatter, laughter, some tears, music, and even dancing was enjoyed by all. Former students and other guests were able to relive memories of a time when life was a lot simpler. **It was a fitting tribute to a beloved institution that educated over a thousand children for over a half century in the history of Saints Peter & Paul Parish.**

Saints Peter & Paul Parochial School

Grades 1-8, 1921-1973

Three Rivers, Massachusetts

Perhaps the names below will help to conjure more memories for you of the years when you were a student at Saints Peter & Paul School!

Under the administration of three pastors of Saints Peter & Paul Parish:

Rev. Andrew Krzywda, 1921-1947

Rev. Msgr. Alphonse A. Skoniecki, 1948-1972

Rev. Robert J. Ceckowski, 1972-1973

The first principal/sister superior and faculty of the school (1921)*:

Sister M. Aloysius, principal & superior

Sisters M. Victoria, M. Amalia, M. Eusebia, M. Agnes, M. Fabiana, M. Germana, M. Euphrasis, & M. Leondra

The eleven Principals of the School/Superiors of the Convent (one sister shared both roles)*:

Sister M. Aloysius, FSSJ – 1921-1924

Sister M. Jolenta, FSSJ – 1924-1925

Sister M. Aloysia, FSSJ – 1925-1933

Sister M. Dominic, FSSJ – 1933-1940

Sister M. Salome, FSSJ – 1940-1941

Sister M. Cleofa, FSSJ – 1941-1947

Sister M. Boguslawa, FSSJ – 1947-1953

Sister M. Theodore, FSSJ – 1953-1956

Sister M. Veronica, FSSJ – 1956-1959

Sister M. Viola, FSSJ – 1959-1965

Sister M. Lucentia, FSSJ (later Sister Cecilia) – 1965-1973

**[Information courtesy of Sister M. Gerard, FSSJ, Archivist of the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph, Hamburg, N.Y. (Sept. 2005)]*

Franciscan Sisters of Saint Joseph

Staffing Saints Peter & Paul School, Three Rivers, 1959-1973 & Other Notable Facts

(Similar statistics covering the school years from 1922-1959 unavailable at time of printing)

School Year 1959-1960

1. Sister Mary Viola began her term as the new principal of our school and superior of the convent. She replaced Sister Mary Veronica.

2. For the first time, the 8th Grade Graduates wore caps & gowns (white for girls, maroon for boys) at their June 1960 commencement (replacing white dresses for girls and jacket & tie for boys).]

Grades 1 & 2 – Sister Mary Fidentia

Grade 3 (First Holy Communion) – Sister ???

Grades 4 & 5 – Sister ???

Grades 6 – Sister Mary Viola

Grades 7 & 8 – Sister ???

Principal & Superior – Sister Mary Viola

also in residence at the convent – Sister ???

School Year 1960-1961

1. Sister Mary Tobia returned for her second assignment in our school. She had taught here earlier from 1934-1937.

2. The parish welcomed a new curate (assistant pastor), the Rev. Sigmund Kwiatkowski. He replaced Rev. John Aubertin who was named a pastor elsewhere.]

Grades 1 & 2 – Sister Mary Tobia

Grade 3 (First Holy Communion) – Sister ???

Grades 4 & 5 – Sister ???

Grades 6 & 7 – Sister Mary Viola*

Grades 7 & 8 – Sister ??? **

Principal & Superior – Sister Mary Viola

*taught grade 7 girls

**taught grade 7 boys

also in residence at the convent – Sister Mary Mieczyslawa,

Franciscan Sisters of Saint Joseph

School Year 1961-1962

Grades 1 & 2 – Sister Mary Tobia

Grade 3 (First Holy Communion) – Sister Mary Liguoria

Grades 4 & 5 – Sister Mary Laurianna

Grades 6 & 7 – Sister Mary Viola*

Grades 7 & 8 – Sister Mary Loyola**

Principal & Superior – Sister Mary Viola

*taught grade 7 girls

**taught grade 7 boys

also in residence at the convent – Sister Mary Mieczyslawa,
who cooked for the Sisters

School Year 1962-1963

Grades 1 & 2 – Sister Mary Tobia

Grade 3 (First Holy Communion) – Sister Mary Liguoria

Grades 4 & 5 – Sister Mary Laurianna

Grades 6 & 7 – Sister Mary Viola*

Grades 7 & 8 – Sister Mary Loyola**

Principal & Superior – Sister Mary Viola

*taught grade 7 girls

**taught grade 7 boys

also in residence at the convent – Sister Mary Mieczyslawa

School Year 1963-1964

Grades 1 & 2 – Sister Mary Tobia

Grade 3 (First Holy Communion) – Sister Mary Liguoria

Grades 4 & 5 – Sister Mary Laurianna

Grades 6 – Sister Mary Viola

Grades 7 & 8 – Sister Mary Alfreda

Principal & Superior – Sister Mary Viola

also in residence at the convent – Sister Mary Mieczyslawa

Franciscan Sisters of Saint Joseph

School Year 1964-1965

1. The Mothers Club purchased room darkening shades for the large skylights in the ceiling of the school's main hall.

2. Sister Viola's term as principal & superior (1959-1965) came to an end.]

Grades 1 & 2 – Sister Mary Tobia

Grade 3 (First Holy Communion) – Sister Mary Liguoria

Grades 4 & 5 – Sister Mary Laurianna

Grades 6 – Sister Mary Viola

Grades 7 & 8 – Sister Mary Alfreda

Principal & Superior – Sister Mary Viola

also in residence at the convent – Sister Mary Mieczyslawa

School Year 1965-66

1. The year began with a new principal for the school and superior of the convent: Sister Mary Lucentia, who would be the last sister to fill those positions.

2. The vernacular (English, Polish) was allowed in the celebration of the Mass.]

Grades 1 & 2 – Sister Mary Tobia

Grade 3 (First Holy Communion) – Sister Mary Liguoria

Grades 4 & 5 – Sister Mary Laurianna

Grades 6 – Sister Mary Lucentia

Grades 7 & 8 – Sister Mary Alfreda

Principal & Superior – Sister Mary Lucentia

also in residence at the convent – Sister Mary Mieczyslawa

(who retired to the Motherhouse at the end of 1965-66)

School Year 1966-67

1. The Millennium of Christianity in Poland was observed in 1966.

2. Father Pastor (Rev. Msgr. Alphonse A. Skoniecki) was honored with a Solemn High Mass in the church and a Testimonial Banquet at the Ware National Guard Armory on the occasion of his Golden Jubilee as a Priest in June, 1967.]

Grades 1 & 2 – Sister Mary Tobia

Grade 3 (First Holy Communion) – Sister Mary Liguoria

Grades 4 & 5 – Sister Mary Laurianna

Grades 6 – Sister Mary Lucentia

Grades 7 & 8 – Sister Mary Alfreda

Principal & Superior – Sister Mary Lucentia

Franciscan Sisters of Saint Joseph

School Year 1967-1968

1. In January 1968, Fr. Kwiatkowski was transferred. He was replaced by Rev. Eugene Ozimek as the new curate.

2. The Sisters appeared in their new, modified habits for the first time at Midnight Mass 1967 (“the Sisters really do have hair!”).

3. The last large Confirmation ceremony, including students grades through 12, took place in May 1968 with Bishop Thomas Manning, O.F.M.]

Grades 1 & 2 – Sister Mary Lorraine

Grade 3 (First Holy Communion) – Sister Mary Electa

Grades 4 & 5 – Sister Mary Natalie

Grades 6 – Sister Mary Lucentia

Grades 7 & 8 – Sister Mary Alfreda

Principal & Superior – Sister Mary Lucentia

School Year 1968-1969

1. The students returned to school to find their old wooden desks replaced by new ones.

2. The exterior of the church received white aluminum siding, the dark wooden pews inside the church were replaced by pews in a lighter wood finish, and the interior of the church received a fresh coat of paint, while Father Pastor continued to await permission from the bishop to build a new school building.

3. Late in 1969, Fr. Ozimek was transferred. He was replaced by Rev. Arcadius Boryczko as assistant pastor.]

Grades 1 & 2 – Sister Mary Lorraine (Mary Jane)

Grade 3 (First Holy Communion) – Sister Mary Electa

Grades 4 & 5 – Sister Mary Gemma (Josephine)

Grades 6 – Sister Mary Lucentia

Grades 7 & 8 – Sister Mary Alfreda

Principal & Superior – Sister Mary Lucentia

Franciscan Sisters of Saint Joseph

School Year 1969-1970

1. The students' school uniforms changed. The navy blue jumpers, boys' slacks, & blazers were replaced by red plaid jumpers, red blazers, & black boys' slacks.
2. In October, 1969, the Mothers Club purchased a car (a white Chevy from Walker Motor Sales) for the Sisters, their first ever.
3. In August 1970, a new curate was assigned to our parish: the recently ordained Rev. Joseph Jancewicz.
4. Caps & gowns for graduation (white for girls, maroon for boys), in use since 1960, were replaced. For the remaining four graduations (1970, 1971, 1972, & 1973) the 8th grade graduates would wear their school uniforms for commencement exercises.
5. The Class of 1970 was the last class to celebrate their Graduation Mass with both priest & people facing the altar (the altar facing the people went into use in the summer of 1970)]

Grades 1 & 2 – Sister Mary Jane (formerly Sister M. Lorraine)

Grade 3 (First Holy Communion) – Sister Mary Electa

Grades 4 & 5 – Sister Mary Gemma (Josephine)

Grades 6 & 7- Sister Mary Consolata*

Grades 8 – Sister Mary Lucentia**

Principal & Superior – Sister Mary Lucentia

*also taught grade 8 math

**also taught grades 6 & 7 English

School Year 1970-1971

Grades 1 & 2 – Sister Mary Jane

Grade 3 (First Holy Communion) – Sister Mary Electa

Grades 4 & 5 – Sister Josephine (formerly Sister M. Gemma)

Grades 6 & 7- Sister Mary Leonille (Helen Marie)*

Grades 8 – Sister Mary Lucentia**

Principal & Superior – Sister Mary Lucentia

*also taught grade 8 math

**also taught grades 6 & 7 English

Franciscan Sisters of Saint Joseph

School Year 1971-1972

1. In January 1972, Fr. Jancewicz left our parish. With the numbers of diocesan priests already starting to diminish, he would be the last official assistant pastor in our parish.
2. 1972 was the 75th Anniversary Year of the Franciscan Sisters of St. Joseph. A special Jubilee Mass was offered in April with a gathering of many former teachers and students.
3. This was a double celebration, also observing the Golden Jubilee of the school.
4. After the transfer of Sister Josephine, the number of Sisters on staff dropped from five to four.
5. The final Graduation Program on a Sunday afternoon in June was held; diplomas would be given at the Commencement Mass in 1973.]

Grades 1 & 2 – Sister Mary Jane*

Grade 3 (First Holy Communion) & 4 – Sister Edna Marie

Grades 5 & 6 – Sister Helen Marie (formerly Sister M. Leonille)

Grades 7 & 8 – Sister Cecilia (formerly, Sister M. Lucentia)**

Principal & Superior – Sister Cecilia**

*also taught 8th grade math

**also taught 1st & 2nd grade English

Franciscan Sisters of Saint Joseph

School Year 1972-1973 – *The End!*

1. After the transfer of Sister Helen Marie, the number of Sisters onstaff dropped to three, necessitating the elimination of grades 1, 2, & 3.
2. The last “*Feast Day Plays*” (annually held in October) for “Father Pastor” (Skoniecki) were performed.
3. Father Skoniecki retired in November 1972 after a quarter century as pastor. Our parish honored him and his service at a farewell reception that month at St. Stanislaus Hall, Three Rivers. He was succeeded by Father Robert Ceckowski.
4. Mother Mary DeSales informed Father Ceckowski him that the three remaining Sisters would be transferred to other assignments at the end of the school year. After another religious community could not be found, and the use of lay teachers was deemed cost-prohibitive, the new pastor decided to close the school.
5. Our parochial school closed in June, 1973 after 52 years of existence. That month, our remaining three Sisters were honored at a bittersweet farewell reception in the school hall.]

FINAL FACULTY:

Grade 4 & 5 – Sister Edna Marie

Grades 6 & 7 – Sister Mary Jane*

Grade 8 – Sister Cecilia (formerly, Sister M. Lucentia)**

Principal & Superior – Sister Cecilia**

*also taught 8th grade math

**also taught 6th & 7th grade English

Saints Peter and Paul School Three Rivers, Massachusetts

Photographs of Graduating Classes 1923 to 1973

These photographs are reproductions of the graduating class portraits which are on display in the Saints Peter & Paul Parish Hall, our former school. Through the efforts of Paul Brozek, Louise Kareta, John Yurkunas, Michael Wostena, Maryann Wostena, these photographs are available for the first time in print. Each of the portraits was photographed digitally with a Canon 10d SLR type digital camera at high resolution and then carefully digitally restored with Adobe Photoshop and Corel Paint Shop Pro software. Because of the condition of the original portraits, names of class members are not always visible.

It is the hope of the reunion committee that each of you will enjoy having a personal copy of these invaluable photographs, which capture the history of our school in, perhaps, the best way possible.