

[I]n St. Louis, Father Schuermann was assisting at St. John's. He arrived in December, 1922. In the early spring of the following year on March 3, 1923, Father Kroeger died and thereupon the pastorate was conferred upon Father Schuermann. Of the numerous pastors of St. John's, there are at this time only Father Schuermann and the present pastor still among the living.

Father Schuermann was born in St. Louis in the early nineties of the last century. His parents were members of the Holy Trinity Parish in North St. Louis. He there attended the parochial school and began his preparation for the priesthood by attending the Preparatory Seminary on Cass Avenue in St. Louis. For the completion of his studies as a diocesan priest of this Archdiocese, he was sent to Rome. As a student at the American College, he completed his theological course, received his degrees and was ordained in June, 1919. Thereupon he returned to America and on Sunday, August 3, 1919, celebrated his first Solemn Mass in the Church of the Holy Trinity, North St. Louis. His first appointment was temporary care of the Sereno Church in Perry County. Thereupon he was appointed assistant priest of St. Ambrose's Church, St. Louis. After remaining a few years at St. Ambrose, he was transferred by the Most Rev. Archbishop to assist at St. John's during the illness of the pastor.

Here his pleasant and happy disposition and his willingness to assist and cooperate ingratiated him very shortly with the people and the community of St. John's. After his official appointment as pastor of St. John's, he was able to carry on and enhance the program inaugurated by his predecessors. With the World War period over and the resultant booms and depressions, the parish activities were confined principally to conserving the structures previously erected and to continue the fine spirit of the parish.

He inaugurated a mission in 1925 which was conducted by Father Joseph Hoelting of the diocesan missionary band. In 1930, November 30 to December 7, the Franciscan Father Titus, O. F. M. gave a mission. A number of retreats and triduums also punctuated Father's pastorate. In 1923 there was a sanctuary (64) carpet installed. In 1925 in connection with the hall repair and stage scenery, an electric light plant and wiring was placed in St. John's. Some amusing anecdotes are told about the numerous and most unexpected refusals of the electric plant to function just when everything was ready for its service. It was a definite improvement over the lamp and candle age which had preceded it. In the following year the Sisters' house received furnace installation, which greatly added to the comfort of the residence.

A set of vestments was donated by the various societies, and a votive stand was placed in church. The annual parish picnic had been held at Busch's grove but by the new arrangement it was transferred to the parish grounds. With the horse and buggy stage definitely passed there was a provision made for the pastor's automobile in the erection of a garage. This equipment is essential to the efficient conduct of rural parochial work in the present time. With the advent of the auto to the farm homes of virtually all the parishioners, Father Schuermann successfully interested himself in the road improvement of the community.

With the school hall repairs and improvements Father Schuermann arranged for entertainments and dramatic work for the young folks of the parish. Father Schuermann was able to arrange for the satisfactory inauguration of the new school plan . and for the **coming of the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood of O'Fallon, Missouri, following the departure of the Ursuline Sisters**. It also served as a beginning of the so-called congregational singing in line with the Archbishop's and the Holy Father's regulations. Father Schuermann besides his parochial work was interested in the problems of the neighborhood and sought by his counsel to beneficially help in the circumstances.

After twelve years of faithful service, Father Schuermann was in May, 1934 appointed to the pastorate of the St. Mary's Church in Cape Girardeau. He took with him the kind memories of the generous and appreciative people and his years as pastor of St. John's will ever live in the annals of the parish.

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In line with the glorious record which the church has made in providing educational opportunities with religious training for her members in all parts of the world, the mission parish of St. John's from the very beginning felt its responsibility towards providing a religious education and training for the children of the pioneers. The log church had hardly been built for the divine service when a school teacher was installed in the same building throughout the week to give this blessing to the children of the mission parish. Under the Jesuit missionaries the school was organized and although primitive, as the entire district was in those days, it nevertheless served its purpose of conveying a Christian training in combination with the three "R's." There are no official records available concerning the first schools but we know that the enrollment at the very beginning averaged from twenty to thirty children.

The first school building was log-hewn and situated in the old time orchard. The frame weatherboard building which served as the second church later became the second school. The third school building was the old priesthouse and the fourth school building is the present brick structure built by Father Nordmeyer. When the missionary pastors visited at St. John's in the olden days, they would also impart religious instruction to the school children. The teachers of those days were heroic souls who had to make great sacrifices and contend with the discomfort encountered in the pioneer school. The teachers boarded with the families living about the school, just as the pioneer priest on the visit to the mission church would remain with the families who provided them with what was at hand. One of the first teachers was William Hanneken. Although physically handicapped, using crutches, he enjoyed the esteem and good will of all and died at an early age, (July 4, 1868), and was acclaimed the best young man of St. John's parish. William Hanneken was the son of Henry Hanneken and lived with his mother after his father's death at the store conducted by the Hanneken's and Conrad Wibbelsmann. Mr. Stroer, a widower, with his children lived in part of the school building which had been subdivided to provide a meager residence for the teacher. During Teacher Stroer's time, the church music and choir were under the direction of Richard Sellmeier, who was the son of Frank Sellmeier, born in the parish and received his teacher's training at Pio Nono Teachers' College, St. Francis, Wisconsin. He later served as teacher and church organist of various places and achieved distinction in his chosen profession. Children paid their tuition with money if it was available but they usually brought farm products, such as eggs, chickens, butter, and potatoes, in lieu of cash payment.

As the number of families increased more school room was necessary to provide for the growing number of children. There were times when some ladies of the neighborhood taught a term or two of school. In fact, the Jesuit historian, Father Garrahan, speaks of the school in 1855 being competently conducted by an excellent widow. He also speaks of a lay woman from St. John's in 1864 conducting a school at Dutzow, Missouri. Then there was Teacher Turenburg who taught school about the Civil War time and had brought in some books and catechisms from Covington, Kentucky. From Henry Exler we have heard that the first Communion class of 1862 numbered six children among whom were Henry Hafkemeyer, Alma Schultheis, Adelin Brinkmann, and Henry Exler. Teachers Ruhland and Wolff are names of men who taught in that early period.

After varying experiences with the different schoolmasters, the pastor in 1872 had the Sisters take over the school at St. John's. It was Father Schmidt and the Sisters were the Precious Blood Congregation then located at Bell Prairie, Illinois. This charge here at St. John's was one of the first missions of the new American Congregation. The combination building just east of the present Sisters' house was both school and home for the Sisters. With the Sisters of the Precious Blood teaching school, the choir direction was also soon placed in their hands. The Precious Blood Sisters, shortly after coming to St. John's, moved their motherhouse to O'Fallon, Missouri. They organized their convent and their motherhouse, which has since grown to such magnificent proportions and accomplishments. The St. John's School enrollment was at this time about fifty pupils. Shortly after the Sisters' arrival at St. John's, Sister Mary Anna died (1874) and lies buried in our cemetery.

Among the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood who taught in the first decade and were the first Sisters to teach at St. John's, we find the following: Sister Ludmilla, Sister Walburga, Sister Mary Anna (Stifel), Sister Barbara (Sr. M. Pia), Sister Christina (Sr. M. Isabella), Sister Cecelia (Sr. M. Hildegard), Sister Bertha (Sr. M. Ignatia), Sister Anna (Sr. M.

Cunigunda). Of this group several Sisters who taught here are still living. In recalling the pioneer days, they still tell of the kindness and generosity of the pioneer families of St. John's.

They remained at St. John's until 1891, and then withdrew to make room for a lay teacher, Mr. Joseph Beuchler, who succeeded in the capacity of teacher and organist, in the latter years of Father Nordmeyer's pastorate. Perhaps the installation of the new pipe organ somewhat influenced the selection of a man teacher and organist. Teacher Joseph Beuchler was called to direct the school by Father Nordmeyer. The teacher and his family lived in the home vacated by the Sisters. The new teacher had a large enrollment of pupils in the new school just completed by Father Nordmeyer. Teacher Beuchler during his first term of office was able to have a large choir and the Cecilian music which he directed made his choir outstanding.

Joseph Beuchler remained in his work during the remainder of Father Nordmeyer's pastorate and for a number of years in the pastorate of Father Stroomborgen. Probably the largest enrollment the school had achieved was in Beuchler's time. The change from the kind-hearted Sisters to a stern disciplinarian had its repercussions in the behavior of the children. However, the teacher and the children managed to get along sometimes in hectic fashion but without any major catastrophe. The teacher and his family left St. John's about 1896 and moved to Osage County. He died some years ago and his faithful services to St. John's, its school and choir, is sincerely appreciated.

74 100 YEARS FOR GOD AND COUNTRY

Parochial School and Teachers

With the building of the new parochial school by Father Nordmeyer, the modern era of St. John's school began. After the initial few years in the new building had been taught by teacher Joseph Beuchler, Father Stroomborgen and after him Father Brand, sought to have Sisters take over the school and the church and music work.

In August 1897 in the pastorate of Father Brand, the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Francis, Wisconsin, began their decade of teaching at St. John's. The group of Sisters who arrived that year were Sr. M. Ferdinanda, Sr. M. Bonaventure, and Sr. M. Borgia. They remained two years, after which the following Sisters served there one, two, or three years respectfully : Sr. M. Lutgardis, Sr. M. de Sales, Sr. M. Marcella, Sr. M. Augustine, Sr. M. Hilary, Sr. M. Georgiana, Sr. M. Fidelis, Sr. M. Aquinata, Sr. M. Veronica, Sr. M. Francis, and Sr. M. Laura. The last three named Sisters were there the last year, 1906-1907.

Due to a shortage of Sisters in the community and the great distance of Gildehaus from the motherhouse at St. Francis, Wisconsin, the Sisters withdrew from the work here, accompanied by the high appreciation of the parishioners and their children.

Sister M. Dorothy Hafkemeyer is the only Sister in this community from Gildehaus. She is joined by the Mother Superior and all the Sisters of St. Francis in good wishes and prayers for the success of the parish and the parishioners in this year of centennial.

These Sisters lived in the old teachers' house which had successively served as church, school, teachers' home, and Sisters' convent. Faithful to their vocation and content with the meager comforts available under the circumstances they spent ten fruitful years for the advancement and benefit of St. John's. May God bless them for this unselfish service.

Upon the departure of the Sisters, the next teacher to conduct the school was Miss Katie Weber. She had taught at St. Mary's and was now engaged by Father Brand to take over the school of St. John's. She also had charge of the church music, choir and the sacristy work, all being a difficult job for any individual. The school term began in the fall. A mission was conducted at this time when Father Brand became seriously ill and shortly thereafter died. In December 1897 Father Kroeger was appointed the new pastor of St. John's. Miss Weber, exactly and energetically conducting her school and church work, had the esteem of people and priest.

In the pastorate of Father Kroeger, the Ursuline nuns of St. Louis commenced teaching at Gildehaus parochial school. Living in the old convent they were obliged to endure the difficulties of inadequate housing and it was with joy that the

new convent was eventually built and then first occupied by these good nuns. They conducted the schools for approximately twenty-four years and in a short sketch we cannot adequately tell the great good of many services rendered the children and parishioners of St. John's, in this quarter century of teaching and church work. We have no complete record of all the good Sisters of the Ursulines who labored here but these names are recalled: Mother Bartholomew, Mother Evangeline, Mother Hedwig, Sisters Borgia, Philomine, Bada, Aemilda, Martha, Matome, Teckla, Anita, Mathilda and Amata.

There are today living in the parish many who received their training from the Sisters. They and their children are in constant appreciation of the many kindnesses and courtesies extended to them. During the Ursulines' stay at St. John's, there was a more systematized method of school support introduced. There was likewise a gradual increase in the enrollment with an attendance that averaged around sixty to seventy and in the peak year of 1923 reached eighty-two pupils. During this time the school trustees were cooperating with the Sisters and the pastor in the maintenance and the direction of the school. The average tuition of seventy-five cents a pupil was insufficient to provide the full salary of the Sisters and the deficit was each year supplied by the parish.

In 1933 the [Ursuline] nuns cherishing pleasant memories of the many years of instruction and contact in the hills of Gildehaus, returned to their convent at Kirkwood and the continuation of their work in other fields, accompanied by the gratitude of their many friends and well-wishers.

(76) In the fall of 1933, the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood of O'Fallon, Missouri, returned as teachers of our school. An arrangement had been perfected between the directors of school district 41 and the members of the St. John's parish to have the Sisters be the official teachers of the district. Concurrent with the parochial school, which had been conducted at St. John's since the early 1850's, there was the local public school built in 1870 on the land donated by Cyrus Drace to the school trustees of that time, James A. Mealer, Joseph Woods, and Frank Berer. In 1884 district 4 had united with district 2 in the formation of an enlarged school district. The board of directors were James Giersa, Henry Hagedorn, and Henry Gildehaus. W. F. Niebrugge taught the first term of school, six months in length, after the united school districts selected the official name of the school as Oak Grove but commonly known as the Brinkmann school. In 1926, after prolonged agitation in an effort made to reduce the area of the district, a new school site just west of the St. John's church property was selected on land purchased from Frank Busch for the construction of a new district school. The school board of district 41 which established the present arrangement were W. L. Alston, pres., Theodore Brinkmann and Charles Busch, clerk.

Father Schuermann, the pastor at that time, had arranged for the Sisters to be accepted as the teachers for the combined schools. School district 41 and now called St. John's-Gildehaus school, enjoys the distinction amongst highest valuation of 118 rural school districts of Franklin County, Missouri. The satisfactory working of the arrangement made six years ago has been a source of distinct pleasure and satisfaction to the entire community. By a minimum of tax expenditure and by a maximum of service, **the school under the efficient and tactful leadership of the Precious Blood Sisters has progressed to an enviable position among the schools of the county and the state.** At present the lower grades are conducted in the district school and the upper grades are taught in the parish school. This parish school building in the last few years has been completely modernized and both schools are accredited grade A schools of the State of Missouri. For the term of **1940** just beginning there will be an additional room and teacher to accommodate the over ninety pupil enrollment now in attendance.

Under the present plan the children assemble each morning at eight o'clock for Mass. From 8:30 to 9:00 religious instruction is given in the church for the entire school by the pastor.

The present school directors are Charles H. Busch, George Brinkmann, and Henry F. Straatmann. **From 1933 to 1939 the schools were under the direction of Sister M. Illuminata, C. PP. S. -and Sister M. Clara Marie, C. PP. S. These good sisters have by their efficient and kindly teaching won the well-merited ap-appreciation and thanks of the entire community. With the pre-cedents established and the high marks for scholarship and discipline fixed, the schools are now conducted by their successors in the work. The teachers of 1939-40 were Sister M. Marguerite Ann, C. PP. S. and Sister M. Verona, C. PP. S. For the term beginning September, 1940, the following Sisters are assigned: Sister**

Marguerite Ann, Sister M. Theodore, Sister M. Florine, Sister M. Clarita. Assisting in the work at St. John's since 1933 have been Sister M. Hermine, C. PP. S., Sister M. Girarda, C. PP. S., Sister M. Avallina, C. PP. S., and Sister M. Theodore, C. PP. S.

Assisting in the present enrollment of the school has been the fact that a goodly number of children have been daily transported to our school from the Villa Ridge section by the way of taxis. Ben Graser has for the past six years been providing this service for the pupils of that neighborhood. For the past two years there has been a school bus service installed by the pastor which reaches to the Labadie territory and daily covers about ninety miles and last year transported about twenty-five children. The vacation school has likewise been conducted by our school Sisters after the regular term. From four to six weeks in May and June each year we have an additional religious training to supplement the catechetical work of the year and as a more intensive preparation for the first and solemn Communion of the children. The work of the school gives ample evidence of all efforts being made to provide the best possible moral and mental training for our children and to fit them as future parishioners and citizens.

Teachers and Staff pages 141-142

	<i>Spring 1989</i>	<i>Fall 1989</i>
Grade 1	Mrs. Karla Bennett	Miss Cindy Engemann
Grade 2	Sister Bernice Loeffler	Sister Bernice Loeffler
Grade 3	Mrs. Barbara Stein	Mrs. Barbara Stein
Grade 4	Mrs. Michele Gumpenberger	Mrs. Michele Gumpenberger
Grade 5	Mrs. Judith Wilson	Mrs. Judith Wilson
Grade 6	Mrs. Marian Schelich	Mrs. Marian Schelich
Grade 7	Miss Carol Harfst	Mrs. Karla Bennett
Grade 8	Mrs. Sheila Grgurich	Mrs. Sheila Grgurich
Librarian	Sr. Clementine Schneider	Sr. Clementine Schneider
Tutor	Sr. Clementine Schneider	Mrs. Marilyn Bleckman
P.E.	Mrs. Darla McCollum	Mrs. Darla McCollum
Music	Mrs. Machel Carey	Mrs. Mary Ann Kluesner
Cook	Mrs. Darla McCollum	Mrs. Darla McCollum
Janitor	Mr. Bud Schulte	Mr. Bud Schulte
Principal	Miss Ruth Himmelberg	Miss Ruth Himmelberg
Secretary	Mrs. Marilyn Harfst	Mrs. Marilyn Harfst

Sisters who have served at St. John's School since 1939

Sr. Marguerite Ann	1939-1941 Principal 1939-1941
Sr. Verona	1939-1940
Sr. Theodore	1939-1947
Sr. Fiorina	1940-1950 Principal 1944-1950
Sr. Clarita	1940-1941
Sr. Cyrilla	1941-1944 Principal 1941-1944; 1957-1958
Sr. Renilde	1941-1943
Sr. Mary Lilian	1943-1945
Sr. Patrice Marie	1944-1945
Sr. Serapia	1945-1947
Sr. Agneta	1945-1949

Sr. Remigia	1947-1950	
Sr. Justine	1947-1948	
Sr. Floreta	1948-1952	
Sr. Aniceta	1949-1962	Principal 1956-1962
Sr. Florentine	1950-1951	Principal 1950-1951
Sr. Vincentia Hipp	1950-1953	
Sr. Hermine Ruffing	1952-1957	
Sr. Hildegard Block	1951-1956	Principal 1951-1956
Sr. Mary Pius Moellmann	1953-1954	
Sr. Agnetis Schnyder	1954-1955	
Sr. Fidelis Wagner	1955-1956	(now known as Sr. Louise)
Sr. Florine Zerr	1956-1957	
Sr. Marcella Karl	1956-1957	
Sr. Juliana Paker	1957-1958	
Sr. Hedwig Ellerbracht	1957-1958	
Sr. Cleopha Willenbrink	1958-1962	
Sr. Rose Rita Orf	1958-1959	
Sr. Lorraine Crimmins	1959-1960	
Sr. Helen Therese Nienhaus	1960-1962	
Sr. Mary Grace Stiefel	1962-1964	Principal 1962-1964
Sr. Placida Bansbach	1962-1963	
Sr. Cornelia Orf	1962-1963	
Sr. Mary Cyril Orf	1963-1964	(now known as Sr. Alice Catherine)
Sr. Luciana Brinks	1963-1966	
Sr. Anna Cleta Borgerding	1964-1967	Principal 1964-1967
Sr. Maureen McConville	1964-1965	
Sr. Margaret Leo Averbeck	1965-1966	(now known as Sr. Mary Ann)
Sr. Dominica Hindert	1966-1967	
Sr. Ambrose Marie Hemmer	1967-1972	
Sr. Marian Moynihan	1967-1968	Principal 1967-1968
Sr. Antonilla Korte	1968-1970	Principal 1968-1970
Sr. Mary Ann Averbeck	1970-1975	Principal 1970-1975
Sr. Mary Catherine Feldewert	1972-1974	
Sr. Maura Kersting	1973-1977	
Sr. Marie Laurent Klein	1974-1977	
Sr. Rita Marie Kelly	1975-1979	Principal 1975-1979
Sr. Mariam Francis Sikorski	1977-1986	Principal 1979-1986
Sr. Ellen Marie Straub	1977-1980	
Sr. Mary George Hellmann	1978-1988	
Sr. Rosalia Riebold	1980-1983	
Sr. Bernette Henke	1981-1982	
Sr. Clementine Schneider	1983-	
Sr. Bernice Loeffler .	1982-	