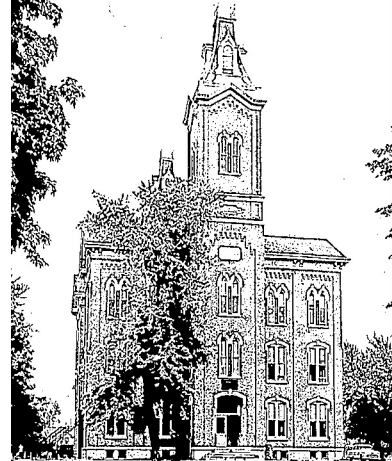


## 1952 Fenwick High School, Middletown, Ohio

The year was 1952. At long last, the hopes and dreams of both clergy and parishioners of the three Catholic parishes in Middletown, Ohio, were about to be realized. There was to be a Catholic central high school in Middletown.

For some time the State of Ohio had been strongly urging Holy Trinity two-year and St. John three-year high schools to combine for a four-year central high school that would be recognized and given standard rating by the Board of Education of the State of Ohio.

Monsignor James F. McNary, Pastor of Holy Trinity Parish had been conferring for many months with Reverend John Oberlander, Pastor of St. John Parish and Father Sylvester Huser of St. Mary's in an effort to arrive at a possible solution. In an almost desperate effort to reach a suitable conclusion, they proposed combining Holy Trinity High School with St. John High School by dividing subjects to be taught between the two schools.



Under this plan, students would change classes, not from room to room, but from school to school! This was deemed an impossible solution, all things being considered, particularly because of the three-block distance between the two buildings and more importantly because it offered little hope of a unified student body.

Most Reverend Karl J. Alter, Archbishop of the Cincinnati Archdiocese was aware of the situation, and so during the year 1951-52 he came to Middletown on several occasions and conferred with the pastors, as well as some interested business men of the city. At a final meeting, one of the priests suggested the possible use of the "Old South" building at 405 South Main Street. This historic building was already 80 years old, having been erected in 1871. It had been used by the Middletown Public School System for many years, and then abandoned, unfit for further use. Vacated in December 1949, the "Old South" building was simply being preserved by the Historical Society because of its graceful level of architecture.

Archbishop Alter sent Bishop Clarence J. Issenman to join the pastors in looking over the building. They were impressed with its possibilities, and Bishop Issenman conveyed their mutual agreement to the Archbishop, who lost no time in writing a letter to the City Commission of Middletown in January 1952. Part of the letter read: "On behalf of the Catholic people and with the approval of the pastors of the area of Middletown, I present herewith for the consideration of the Commission, the proposition of rent, over a period of from five to ten years, of the Old South school building for use as a Catholic central high school for boys and girls in the Middletown vicinity."

The prayers of many Catholic people were answered when the Commission consented to the converting of the Old south building to a Catholic Central High School. The rental fee was set at \$100.00 per month. The lease was to last as long as ten years.

It is to be noted that Mr. Paul Wilson, chairman of the "Use" branch of the committee said that the "use of "Old south" would not only retain the building as a landmark, but would serve as a worthwhile and useful purpose to the youth of our community."

Holy Trinity High School may be said to have had its early beginnings at the turn of the century, when Father Daniel A. Buckley, pastor of Holy Trinity Parish at that time instructed Sister Rosetta Higgins, a Sister of Charity of Mount Saint Joseph (the community of Sisters who taught at Holy Trinity through the years) to establish a two-year commercial high school on the second floor of the elementary school building. The training was excellent and those who were so fortunate as to have been taught by Sister Mary Gertrude McAtee regarded her as one of the most respected business teachers in the city's history. These were the very early days, but were, indeed, a part of what was to come.

It was not until almost a half-century later that Holy Trinity two-year College Preparatory High School was begun. Students completed their last two years at Middletown High School. Through the years, Monsignor McNary, who had become pastor, and the Sisters of Charity who staffed the school always hopefully envisioned a complete four-year high school at Holy Trinity. This was not to be.

Three blocks away in the city of Middletown stood St. John church. In December of 1880, at the request of Father Leitner, pastor, two Sisters of St. Francis of Oldenburg, Indiana, had come to open a school for the children of St. John Parish. By 1890 two more Sisters were added to the staff. In 1908 a Commercial course was offered in addition to the grade school subjects. This marked the early beginning of what was to blossom a half-century later into a three-year College Preparatory High School at St. John's.

Thus it was that in 1952 the generous donations of the good people of the Middletown parishes throughout the years to a treasury that would assist in great part to the leasing and upkeep of the "soon-to-be-born" Catholic Central High School, came to fulfillment.

The hopes and dreams of Priests, Sisters, and Parishioners of Holy Trinity, St. John's and now St. Mary's Parishes were realized. "Old South" became Bishop Fenwick High School.

Yes - it was to be called Bishop Fenwick High School - named for the first bishop of the diocese of Cincinnati. In 1819 Cincinnati was established as a diocese and Reverend Edward D. Fenwick, a Dominican priest was appointed as its first Bishop. Edward Fenwick was the pioneer bishop of this Midwest area. Fenwick High School was named for this noble man, who, more than 125 years ago braved the hardships of those days to minister to the spiritual needs of Catholics in the Ohio Territories. It was fitting that the first four-year Catholic high school should take the name of the first bishop of the diocese of Cincinnati.

Father Julian O. Krusling, a teacher at his alma mater Elder High School in Cincinnati, was appointed by the archbishop to be the first principal. Father Krusling was young, a man to whom work of any kind was a challenge. He was a perfect choice to head the new school, and to be the first to attack the complete renovation of "Old South."

Many of the parents of students who would be attending Fenwick as well as other zealous lay people Catholic and non-Catholic together with the Religious and Lay faculty and clergy assigned to teach at Fenwick worked along with Father Krusling to re-condition the old structure until "Old South" would proudly rear its twin towers as Fenwick High School.

The conversion of an elementary school to a high school after it had been vacant for several years was, indeed, a gargantuan task. There were only three short months of 1952 in which to make the adjustment. Prospective students now became part of the "workforce."

It is interesting to note a few of the changes that were made: The coal bin became the boys' locker room, second floor storage room was converted into a library, teachers' lounge and the medical room became the faculty restrooms. The center hall rooms became the Athletic Office and storage room. Communications systems: a "speaking table" in the office was converted to the public address system. Home economics "dining room" became the music room and many, many more necessary conversions - too many to mention here.

Walls were knocked out and facilities were installed for a cafeteria on the first floor, inside the Fifth Street entrance. On the north and south sides of the building, entrances were converted into fire escapes.

Complete renovation of plumbing, as well as all electric facilities throughout the building was directed and completed by Father Krusling and his wonderful group of co-workers. It was nothing for them to be still going strong at midnight. It may be noted here that those men saved the diocese thousands of dollars by doing all this work themselves.

Innumerable other jobs also had to be done: all floors scrubbed, varnished, and waxed, broken windows replaced, and all windows washed; walls and ceilings to be cleaned and painted. Equipment of all kinds had to be transported and installed in "new" Fenwick.

But the unflinching determination as well as the untiring zeal of Father Krusling to have the work completed by the date set for the opening of Fenwick spurred his loyal helpers on to join him in seeing the task through to completion. Discarded desks and furniture were collected from other high schools in Cincinnati and cleaned and polished.

Registration day was set for August 21, 1952. Because at this time the varnish on the hall floor was not quite dry, the students to be enrolled lined up outside the window of the bookstore to register: one hundred and seventy-nine strong! Books were also distributed to students that day.

Labor Day, true to its name, found some student workers putting the finishing touches on the hall floors. They were determined to wax and buff them until they shone like the "Hall of Mirrors." While engrossed in their task, they were totally unaware of who were striving to find a safe footing along the hall, enroute to the second floor, except to note that two clergymen were attempting to pass them. In a very business-like manner one of the boys said: "Please step over there, Fathers. Walk along the side near the wall. We're trying to finish the buffing."

What was their consternation a few moments later when they learned that the two clergymen were none other than Archbishop Alter and his secretary. They had come to see the "new" high school and to meet the faculty.

The Sisters were engaged at the time of putting the finishing touches on their respective classrooms, when they received word from Father Krusling to come immediately to his office. Not waiting to remove their gingham aprons, they hurried up the stairs in answer to the summons from their principal.

Imagine their consternation when they opened the door of Father's office to find His Grace, the Archbishop and his secretary seated placidly beside Father Krusling! By this time the rest of the faculty had arrived and the Archbishop warmly congratulated Father on the tremendous task he had accomplished, and bestowed on the principal, the "hard-working faculty", and the future students his most sincere blessing.

"Open house at Fenwick brought parents and friends, as well as prospective students to visit the new high school and to meet the faculty. This was the Sunday preceding the formal opening. They came in large numbers and extended a warm welcome to all newcomers among the faculty. All marveled at the unbelievable transformation that had been accomplished. They expressed a true pride in their new school, Principal and faculty.

And so, the deadline had been met. September 3, 1952 marked the formal opening day of Fenwick High School. Reverend Julian O. Krusling, principal, celebrated High Mass in Saint Peter Claver Church three blocks away. The Mass was sung by the entire student body, although they had never sung together before. Sister Charles Louise, O.S.F., Directress of Music remarked that "it was an inspiring and auspicious beginning." Father Krusling imparted a warm and fervent blessing on faculty and students, and Fenwick High School was formally opened.

Upon returning to the school, all assembled in the auditorium to hear their principal give the opening address - sincere and inspiring - at the same time extending a warm welcome to the pioneer faculty and the first student body - 179 strong!

#### **The First Faculty of Fenwick High School:**

Reverend Julian O. Krusling - Principal, religion, civics, sociology

Reverend Walter Sterwerf - religion

Reverend Paul Galvin - religion, Athletic Director

Mr. Bernard Otten - Football and basketball coach, physical education, American history

Sister Charles Louise, O.S.F. - music, glee club chorus, band

Sister Charles Regina, S.C. - Latin I,II,III,IV, Spanish I,II, dramatics, librarian

Sister Edward Mary, S.C. - English I,II,III,IV, school publications

Sister Florence Marie, O.S.F. - algebra, trig, geometry, general math, economic geography, student council moderator

Sister John LaSalle, O.S.F. - typing, stenography, bookkeeping, office training

Sister Marina, O.S.F. - chemistry, physics, biology, general science

Sister Mary Eudora, S.C. - foods, clothing, homemaking, world history

Miss Frances Hornikel - commercial art, mechanical drawing, physical education

#### **MEMORIES OF THE FIRST FOUR YEARS:**

CRIMSON AND GOLD! FENWICK FALCONS!... tremendous pep rallies, football, from 1-10 to 10-1 season records...homecomings...state examiner visits and gives high rating...first Christmas play, "The Other Shepherd"... Ho!Ho!Ho! from Santa Otten...the cheerleaders bringing the first trophy to Fenwick Oct. 9, 1954 from a Tipp City competition... first-prize winner in the American Legion Essay Contest and in the Employ the Physically Handicapped Essay Contest...the girls' first basketball game...our auditorium/chapel...dances at the K of C Hall... the Sadie Hawkins girl-ask-boy dance... sock hops every Friday night at St. John's or the Lounge... the dance where dates were determined by auctioning the box lunch the girl brought...Junior Classical League...The tremendous honor of having Dr. Frank Simon (director of the Armco Band and former player in the John Philip Sousa Band) direct the band for our spring musical... the clothing class's style show...sewing aprons for the first festival...awards at the athletic banquet, graced by famous athlete-speakers...winning state awards in exams at Miami U. in Latin, Spanish, English... the Fenwick Welfare Association (PTA).. First Friday

Mass at St. Peter Claver then the whole student body marching back to the cafeteria for hot chocolate and donuts for breakfast...May Crowning...the view from the turrets...the Turrets Yearbook and Wick newspaper...

Written by Sister Charles Regina, S.C., 1981