

## St. Joseph School – Erie, Mich.



St. Joseph School opened in Erie (then called Vienna), Mich. , in 1855. It was the first mission school outside of Monroe for the IHM Sisters. It closed in 1859 and reopened in 1915 for grades one through nine.

The parish added an additional high school grade over the next several years, and the first graduates received their diplomas in 1919. There were four graduates – and nine priests – for that first ceremony.

Enrollment grew slowly in the largely rural community. St. Joseph School discontinued grades 11 and 12 in 1932 and grades nine and 10 in 1934. By the late 1930s, 164 children were enrolled in grades one through eight. The convent chronicler was delighted to report that, “Electricity was extended to unwired classrooms and drinking fountains were installed...”

Parishioners were diligent about raising money for their school. Parish festivals, “feather parties” and paper drives were just some of their fundraising activities. The school children also raised money in support of the missions.

With the start of U.S. involvement in World War II, enrollment dropped significantly. The chronicler explained that the enrollment “was smaller...because the rationing of gas had made transportation difficult.”



Enrollment increased after the war, and by the late 1940s, more than 300 children attended St. Joseph School. In 1948, “The first grade enrollment was so large (64) that several children had to be turned away and placed on a waiting list...”

With more and more students – nearly 400– the school added an addition in 1952. The Mothers’ Guild was organized; students enjoyed dance classes; and uniforms for the girls became “de rigueur.” It was still considered “rural,” however, and school was closed frequently because the roads were often impassible or unsafe.



A student body of about 500 resulted in another addition to the school in 1957 and yet another one in 1962. In 1963, our **Featured Class Year**, 551 students attended St. Joseph School. “One of the worst snow storms in the history of Monroe County...” closed school for five days. In total, children enjoyed almost two full weeks off because of the weather that winter.

The Mothers’ Guild voted to change to school uniform to a red plaid jumper the following year, but because of great dissatisfaction, changed it to a “blackwatch plaid.” The moms sponsored a trip “to the Cinema in Toledo” for 67 members of the patrol boys and service squad girls. Graduation for the 44 eighth-graders took place on June 2 at the 8 a.m. Mass. Afterward, they and their parents received breakfast in the parish hall given by the seventh grade mothers.

Throughout the rest of the 1960s, St. Joseph’s students continued to receive a quality, well-rounded education. They had a rigorous academic curriculum, but their parents and teachers also encouraged their development in social awareness, with an emphasis on caring for those less fortunate.



Unfortunately, when public funding for private schools was denied as a result of Proposal C in November 1970, St. Joseph School was forced to close at the end of that school year. Staffed by Sisters of Notre Dame of Toledo, it reopened in 1979 for kindergarten through grade two. The parish added grades over the next several years, and the school remains open for pre-school through grade eight.

## **In 1963**

Viewers watching the televised news coverage of President John Kennedy's assassination witnessed Jack Ruby shoot Kennedy's accused killer, Lee Harvey Oswald.

The United States Supreme Court ruled that no locality may require recitation of Lord's Prayer or Bible verses in public schools.

The first liver transplant was performed. Valium was developed by Roche labs.

Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his "I Have A Dream" speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial to an audience of at least 250,000, during the *March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom*.

ZIP Codes were introduced in the U.S.

*The First Family*, by Vaughn Meader, received an Album of the Year Grammy Award. The Beatles released their first album *Please Please Me*.

The Boston Celtics were the NBA Champions after defeating the Los Angeles Lakers in six games. The Los Angeles Dodgers swept to victory over the New York Yankees in the World Series. The Toronto Maple Leafs won the Stanley Cup in five games with the Detroit Red Wings.

Shirley Booth, starring in *Hazel*, won an Emmy Award for Outstanding Continued Performance By an Actress in a Series (Lead). Don Knotts received an Emmy in the Best Supporting Actor category for his role as Barney Fife on *The Andy Griffith Show*.

*The Feminine Mystique* (Betty Friedan), *Happiness is a Warm Puppy* (Charles M. Schulz) and *Cat's Cradle* (Kurt Vonnegut) were published.

Michael Jordan, Quentin Tarantino, Whitney Houston and Brad Pitt were born. Robert Frost, Patsy Cline and Pope John XXIII died.