

Our St. John School – Benton Harbor, Mich.



In 1915, five IHM Sisters made the 10-hour train trip from Monroe to Benton Harbor, Mich. to open St. John School for students in grades one through eight.

Once they arrived, they discovered the school building was unfinished. To add to the sisters' disappointment, "When the school bell called the Catholic youth of Benton Harbor, only 76 responded," according to the convent chronicler.

The following year was noteworthy to the chronicler because "nothing of an alarming nature took place." The school added a high school that year, starting with a ninth grade and adding one grade per year. The first senior class graduated in June 1920.

Enrollment increased to nearly 200 students by 1925. The boys' choir became active; a student council was organized; and the newly formed boys' football and basketball teams, known as "the Irish," created a "keen interest in athletics." Girls' volleyball and basketball teams began in 1944.



During the 1950s, the parish built a new high school. The school newspaper, *Irish Spotlight*, first rolled off the press in 1953, and the yearbook, *The Eagle*, was first published in 1954. During the winter of 1958, the chronicler noted that "...we were snowed in to a depth of two free days!"

During 1967, our **Featured Class Year**, 13 IHM Sisters taught the 741 students. The football team defeated rival St. Joseph in the homecoming game for the first time in seven years. On Jan. 27, "At 7 a.m. began the snowstorm that developed into the

biggest blizzard of the automobile age!" The school remained closed until Feb. 1. Snow cancelled classes just a few weeks later during the "second biggest blizzard."



The junior/senior prom took place April 1 in the school cafeteria, and Shoreham Inn hosted the dinner dance on May 3. Seniors picnicked at the Jack & Jill Dude Ranch May 29. On June 4, at 1:30 p.m., the 62 seniors graduated.

A year later, St. John experienced a serious financial crisis. In March 1968, the parish began a campaign to keep the school open another year. Although the campaign was successful, an independent survey showed that the merger of the three Catholic schools in the area – St. John, St. Joseph and St.

Bernard – was necessary for any of the schools to survive. A 1969 merger resulted in the creation of the Lake Michigan Catholic School System (LMCSS).

The last to graduate from St. John Benton Harbor was the Class of 1969. LMCSS still operates for students in preschool through grade 12.

In 1967



The minimum wage in the United States was increased to \$1.40 an hour. The Dow ended the year at 905. Gas cost 33 cents per gallon and a ticket to the movies cost \$1.25.

Detroit's civil disturbance lasted five days; 43 people were killed and 342 were injured.



U.S. astronauts Gus Grissom, Ed White and Roger Chaffee were killed when fire broke out in their Apollo 1 spacecraft during a launch pad test.

The Green Bay Packers defeated the Kansas City Chiefs 35–10 at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum in Super Bowl I.

Ernesto "Che" Guevara, Woody Guthrie, Langston Hughes and John Coltrane died.



The Monkees received an Emmy for Outstanding Comedy Series, and *Mission: Impossible* was named Outstanding Dramatic Series. Frank Sinatra's "Strangers in the Night" won a Grammy for Record of the Year. *Sinatra: A Man and His Music* won an Album of the Year Grammy, and Song of the Year went to "Michelle," by John Lennon and Paul McCartney. *A Man for All Seasons* received a Best Picture Oscar.