

RAMSEY COUNTY  
**History**  
*A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society*

*Stanford Newel, Proposal Rock,  
and Newell Park Widows*

**Newell Park Celebrates  
Its Centennial**

**Winter 2009**

Volume 43, Number 4

Page 11

*Courthouse Sculptor*

**Lee Lawrie**

*Paul D. Nelson*

—Page 3



*Two of Lee Lawrie's architectural sculptures,  
Liberty (top) and The People, on the façade  
of the St. Paul City Hall and Ramsey County  
Courthouse, Fourth Street entrance.  
Photo courtesy of Paul D. Nelson.*

## RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

*Executive Director*

Priscilla Farnham

*Founding Editor (1964–2006)*

Virginia Brainard Kunz

*Editor*

John M. Lindley

## RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

J. Scott Hutton

*Past President*

Thomas H. Boyd

*President*

Paul A. Verret

*First Vice President*

Joan Higinbotham

*Second Vice President*

Julie Brady

*Secretary*

Carolyn J. Brusseau

*Treasurer*

Norlin Boyum, Anne Cowie, Nancy

Randall Dana, Cheryl Dickson, Charlton

Dietz, Joanne A. Englund, William Frels,

Howard Guthmann, John Holman, Elizabeth

Kiernat, Judith Frost Lewis, Rev. Kevin M.

McDonough, Laurie M. Murphy, Richard H.

Nicholson, Marla Ordway, Marvin J. Pertzik,

Jay Pfaender, Ralph Thrane, Richard Wilhoit.

*Directors Emeriti*

W. Andrew Boss

George A. Mairs

Richard T. Murphy Sr.

### EDITORIAL BOARD

Anne Cowie, *chair*, James B. Bell,

Thomas H. Boyd, John Diers, John Milton,

Debra Mitts-Smith, Laurie M. Murphy,

Paul D. Nelson, Richard H. Nicholson, Jay

Pfaender, David Riehle, G. Richard Slade,

Steve Trimble, Mary Lethert Wingerd.

### HONORARY ADVISORY BOARD

William Fallon, William Finney, Robert S.

Hess, George Latimer, Joseph S. Micallef,

Marvin J. Pertzik, James Reagan,

Rosalie E. Wahl.

### RAMSEY COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Jan Parker, chair

Commissioner Tony Bennett

Commissioner Toni Carter

Commissioner Jim McDonough

Commissioner Rafael Ortega

Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt

Commissioner Janice Rettman

Julie Kleinschmidt, manager,  
Ramsey County

*Ramsey County History* is published quarterly by the Ramsey County Historical Society, 323 Landmark Center, 75 W. Fifth Street, St. Paul, MN 55102 (651-222-0701). Printed in U.S.A. Copyright © 2009, Ramsey County Historical Society. ISSN Number 0485-9758. **All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reprinted or otherwise reproduced without written permission from the publisher.** The Society assumes no responsibility for statements made by contributors.

Fax 651-223-8539; e-mail address: admin@rchs.com; web site address: www.rchs.com

# RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 43, Number 4

Winter 2009

THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS ON DECEMBER 20, 2007:

The Ramsey County Historical Society inspires current and future generations to learn from and value their history by engaging in a diverse program of presenting, publishing and preserving.

## CONTENTS

### 3 *Courthouse Sculptor*

Lee Lawrie

*Paul D. Nelson*

### 11 *Stanford Newel, Proposal Rock, and Newell Park Widows*

Newell Park Celebrates Its Centennial

*Krista Finstad Hanson*

### 20 *Growing Up in St. Paul*

The Teen Years and OLP

*Susanne Sebesta Heimbuch*

*Publication of Ramsey County History is supported in part by a gift from Clara M. Claussen and Frieda H. Claussen in memory of Henry H. Cowie Jr. and by a contribution from the late Reuel D. Harmon*

## A Message from the Editorial Board

How often do we drive past a familiar scene and fail to appreciate the history behind it? In this issue, three writers take us on a tour of places we think we know but whose rich stories are rarely told. Paul Nelson gives an in-depth look at Lee Lawrie's architectural sculptures on the exterior surfaces of the St. Paul City Hall and Ramsey County Courthouse. More famous for his artwork at Rockefeller Center in New York City, Lawrie's Courthouse sculptures combine graceful forms with a sense of purpose as they illustrate concepts such as industry, justice, and liberty. Nelson will be giving a talk and guiding a tour of St. Paul architectural sculpture on March 29 at the St. Paul Central Library—join him if you can.

Susanne Sebesta Heimbuch takes us back to the early 1960s with her evocative look at Catholic education at Our Lady of Peace High School, which occupied the current site of William Mitchell College of Law. And Krista Finstad Hanson revisits the story of Newell Park, which for a time in the 1920s and '30s was a neighborhood gathering place buoyed by vigorous community support. Thanks to the efforts of many, today this revitalized park serves as a jewel in the Hamline-Midway neighborhood. Explore your county's roots, and discover new perspectives from your armchair!

*Anne Cowie,*  
Chair, Editorial Board

---

# *Growing Up in St. Paul*

## The Teen Years and OLP

*Susanne Sebesta Heimbuch*

**O**ur Lady of Peace Convent, student speaking.”

Answering the convent telephones on weekends and vacations, and cleaning science classrooms, I worked my way through my freshman and sophomore high school years, beginning in 1959. With its well trimmed, palatial front lawn, Our Lady of Peace High School for Girls, or as the boys at Cretin High School called us, the Old Lady’s Penitentiary, resided in St. Luke’s former grade school, a two-story Romanesque-style brick-on-brick building, that now houses the William Mitchell College of Law.



“There’s Sister. Quick, roll your skirts down.”

At OLP, 1,000 young girls wore navy blue collarless business jackets and matching gored and flared skirts for uniforms with starched and ironed white broadcloth collared shirts. On city busses before and after school, years ahead of the miniskirt fad, we rolled up our skirts at the waistband to show off our knees for any boys we might see. My students today make similar but more daring defiance against the knit white collar shirt they wear, rubber banding the back tightly to show off their bust development and their lace camisoles.

The boys we had hoped to see were from Cretin High School; St. Thomas Academy, then located on the campus of St. Thomas College before it universified itself; and the always off-limits public school, Central High School, full of Protestants whom my Catholic parents hoped I would neither befriend nor date.

“You ask her.”

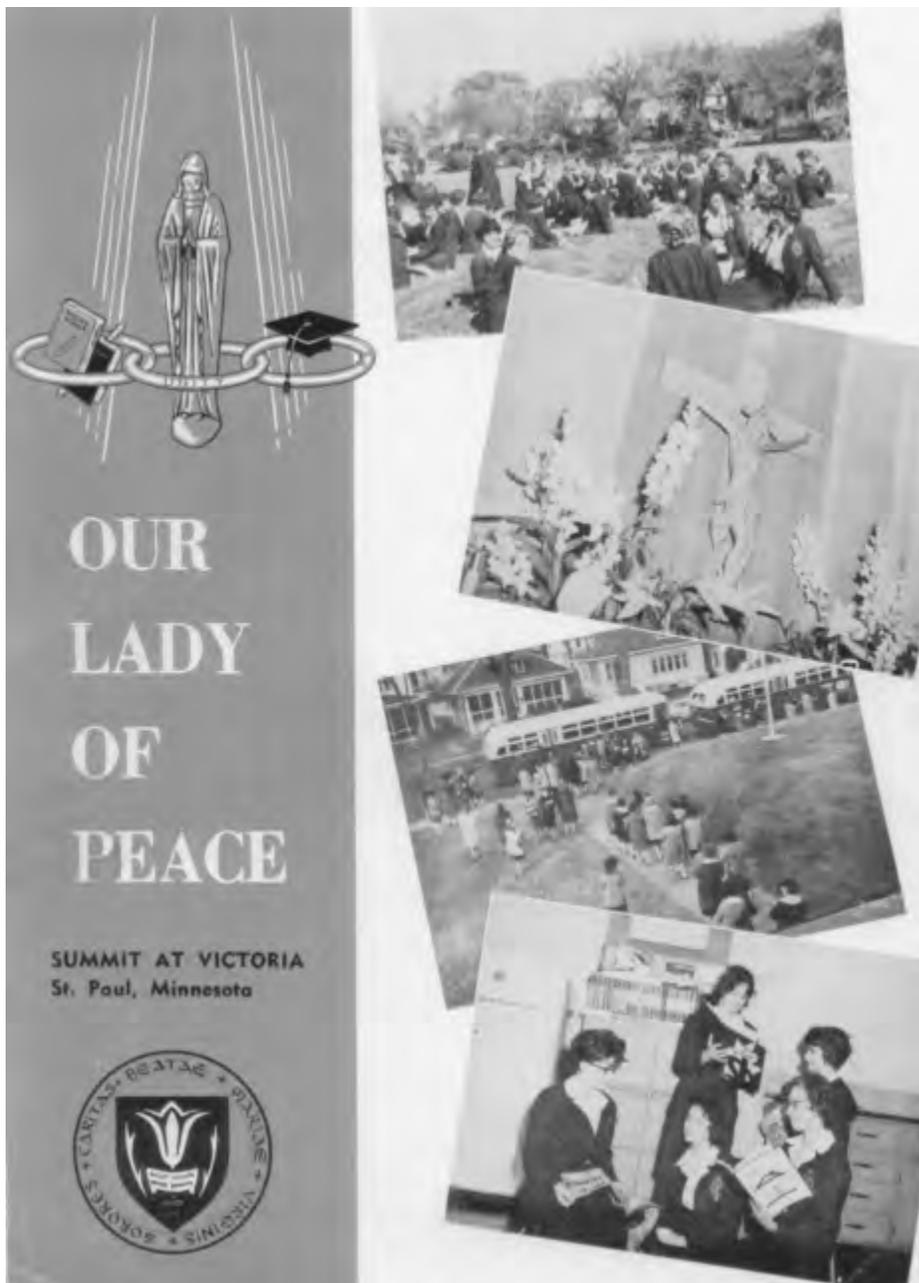
“No, you ask her.”

In the last days of summer 1959, Patsy Jungwirth and I, classmates at St. Mark’s Grade School, filled with fearful anticipation and curiosity, walked across Dayton Avenue and east to the home of Margo Zackowski, who was one year older and had completed her freshman year at OLP.

“You’ll like it. Don’t worry,” she said as she smiled down on us from her extra year of height. Patsy and I looked at each other, not at all sure. Margo’s two little sisters

---

*This 1952 photograph shows Sister Mary Adorinus (left), the first principal of Our Lady of Peace High School, with Sister Mary St. Clara, who taught food and home economics at the school. According to McCall’s magazine, Sr. Mary St. Clara was identified as one of the nation’s outstanding women that year. Roy Derickson photo, courtesy of the St. Paul Dispatch.*



*The first page of the yearbook for the Class of 1963 at Our Lady of Peace High School shows a number of typical school activities along with the OLP seal. Photo courtesy of the author.*

played Peekaboo at us from behind her while she talked through the locked screen door. Rarely did these three girls play outside. They spent their summers at “The Lake,” returning athletic, tan and parentally cherished with only days to spare for haircuts, last-minute shopping, and shoe shining before the first day of school.

Patsy and I had spent our eighth-grade summer hanging out in jobless and moneyless boredom, while my parents

tried to divorce and hers had yet another baby. I cut my own hair.

With other neighborhood kids, we had played Red Rover, Red Rover, Send Colleen Right Over in the street, and sandlot softball at Aldine Park, across Marshall Avenue, where I was always chosen last. We’d watched summer television, boring even then, babysat here and there, and spent hours sitting on her front steps with some of her many sisters,

hoping that Larry Scovill or Dickie Frey, or any boy except my brothers, would stop to talk with us.

On the first day of school, worrying all the while, Patsy and I together with other girl graduates of St. Mark’s Grade School boarded the Number 21 Selby Lake city bus at Dayton and Fairview avenues. We got off at Victoria Street and walked south to 880 Portland Avenue, where we entered the old section of school through the backdoor next to the office of Sister Mary St. Cecilia, BVM, principal.

“Our students excel in their studies and become the educated women of the next generation,” Sister Mary Pauletta, BVM, said in a greeting that limited our lifetime options to motherhood, nursing, or teaching. In the fall of 1959, only a few could predict how the yet-to-arrive 1960s women’s liberation movement would change this view, although studies continue to indicate that separate sex schools favor girls with more leadership opportunities.

Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary—BVMs—were headquartered in Dubuque, Iowa. Many had been Jesuit-educated and many had traveled internationally. At OLP, every classroom had a round-topped niche in the wall for the thirty-six-inch-high statue of the serene Blessed Virgin Mary, hands folded in prayer undisturbed by the antics of girls who prayed and studied in these rooms each year in classes of twenty or thirty or fewer.

Beginning in freshman year, I was assigned to OLP’s college preparatory program with its math, biology, chemistry, physics, and Latin requirements dictated by the curriculum of Ivy League prep schools in the East, although we took chemistry last instead of physics so girls would be ready for nursing programs in college.

With other Honor students at OLP, I was enrolled in a recently developed program called “New Math,” the selection process dictated by our Iowa Testing scores. Hoping to catch up with the achievement-prone McIntyre and Clancy cousins on my mother’s side, all of whom were straight-A students, I felt honored to be in a college prep program and taking difficult subjects, but I did not feel honored enough to work hard.



The members of the author's homeroom taken in her sophomore year at OLP. She is fifth from the left in the second row. Photo courtesy of the author.

"Let me help you with your math," my dad would say and when he did, we got it wrong. No amount of arguing with Sister that my dad was a mechanical engineer at General Mills would convince her that my answer was right. Arguing with Sister and my wrong answers led me astray; freshman year was my only year of Honors math. I preferred science anyway, and for fun read the *Popular Mechanics* and *Popular Science* magazines my dad bought to encourage his four sons, my younger brothers.

I hated Latin, and except for science and *Green Mansions* read for English class, the academic life of school did not engage me much. But at OLP, I felt safe from the locker-room tone set at home by four brothers and a macho, post-World War II father. The nuns, well-traveled and educated, were women ahead of their time, liberated from the demands of husbands and babies. Looking back on those years from the perspective of today, my mother's passive way of coping with my father's Archie Bunker-style rough words and the demands of having six children in nine years seemed weak in comparison.

Patsy was not enrolled in the college preparatory program and got to take sewing. I was jealous because I already knew how to sew, taught by my father's mother who had sewed, crocheted, or embroidered every piece of soft goods in her

south Minneapolis home. I thought sewing would be an easy class for me, but college prep girls were not allowed.

At lunch, Patsy and I made new friends, mostly girls from her home economics and typing classes. My college prep classmates included school leaders whom I liked but was afraid of. I envied their poise and polish and social know-how: Beth Dugan, Susan Eldredge, Katherine Faricy, Carol Muske, Nancy Reusch, Nancy Riehle, Marge Rogers, Judith Zimmerman, and others. Many already knew each other from sporting events between St. Mark's and St. Luke's grade schools or from high school events attended with older siblings. Some were related to each other.

In freshman year spring, even though mother said I couldn't date until I was sixteen, I went to a St. Thomas Academy dance with Jim Murray, whose father had been a college classmate of my dad's. Both Murray parents were attorneys and the friendship had been rekindled by the separation agreement my parents negotiated, while weighing the Catholic Church's position against divorce.

My mother was especially pleased I dated the son of attorneys, never mind that he had a BAD-BOY reputation. She put a bra on me even though I had nothing to fill it with. Together we sewed my blue dotted Swiss over taffeta tea-length

dress and she gave me her aurora borealis necklace to wear. At the dance I introduced Jim to my first cousin and his upper classman, Larry McIntyre, an academic star, and, as a result of all this familial connection, Jim was most gentlemanly, saving his bad-boy action for other girls.

At OLP, we had a freshman-year Mother-Daughter Tea in the school's Tea Room and a sophomore-year Father-Daughter Dance in the auditorium. Although she could barely say hello to my teachers, my mother was well behaved at the tea, but my father spent the entire dance picking at spots of dirt and missing buttons on his jacket, and wishing he had gotten a haircut. He pointed out, but mostly avoided, the other fathers he knew from St. Mark's Church, St. Thomas College, the University of Minnesota, and his employment at Ellerbe Architects, Toltz King and Day engineers, and General Mills.

While I attended OLP, the country enjoyed the election of the first Roman Catholic president, John Fitzgerald Kennedy. In Irish-Catholic circles in St. Paul, more was made of his Irish ancestry than of his religion. We prayed at the end of every Mass for the conversion of the Jews, a benevolent, if condescending, action. Catholic women covered their heads in church with hats, brightly printed scarves, or lace doilies, and everybody

went to confession every two weeks or so. Unlike the secular world of today, religion held us deeply, kept us in line, and made us fearful of doing wrong.

“Bless me, Father, I abandoned my best friend.”

In sophomore year, Sister Mary Mildred Ann, BVM, was my homeroom and religion teacher. She also taught biology in a lab with cabinets filled with jars of animal life pickled in formaldehyde, including a human fetus. (How did she get that, given the church’s view on abortion?) She charged through hallway from lab to homeroom like a steamship at full power—tall, purposeful, and fast. We scattered when we saw her coming.

Sister Mildred Ann set up a TV-tray in the freshman-sophomore hallway to hand out 500 samples of Quest, a sanitary napkin deodorizer, and frequently lectured us about daily bathing. She inspected uniforms and usually gave her “Best-Pressed Shirt Award” to Clare Carlson. Sister wrote a note to my mother, demanding an improvement in my hygiene and advocated the purchase of additional underwear and a second white-collared uniform shirt. Mother complied angrily when she returned from the Glen Lake Sanitarium or St. Peter’s Mental Hospital, where she tried to recover from my father’s alcoholic excesses.

“You are smart and in the college prep program,” Sister Mildred Ann said in a Friday after-school conference she set up with me to direct the part of my future that was not academic. “You must make friends at your own level. For the rest of the year, I don’t want to see you sitting with Patsy Jungwirth. You are in our college prep program and she is not.”

“Can we be friends at home?” I asked Sister, but Patsy, who lived in one of the two historically significant, turreted Victorians next door on Dayton Avenue, would have none of it.

“If you aren’t my friend at school, you aren’t my friend,” Patsy shouted at me and slammed her solid front door as I stood alone on her screen porch in the Friday twilight.

I was inconsolable at first. I had thought of Patsy as “My Only Trustworthy Human Contact,” while my parents took turns moving in and out of the house, my mother often hospitalized for months at a time



*The author and John Runyon in the photo of them that was taken at the Cretin High School Senior Officers’ Ball. Photo courtesy of the author.*

for depression or living with my McIntyre cousins for time-outs from my father’s rantings and physical abuse. He later said, “I never hit your mother,” and that was probably true, for he had mastered perfectly the body slam he learned playing football for St. Thomas College in the ’30s.

When she wanted to resume her domestic duties, mother would tell my father to move home to his mother, Grandma Christine, on 37th Avenue South in St. Helena’s parish in Minneapolis across the slender wrought-iron Lake Street Bridge that so beautifully arched above the Mississippi River between steep treed

embankments, where my brothers fished for catfish.

In the Tea Room, as the cafeteria was called by nuns trying to dainty-fy us, we were conscripted to sit with our homeroom. The next Monday, I sat with girls I didn’t know well. Mary Kay McMahon was one of them and she asked me easy questions about homework and teachers. Patsy wouldn’t look at me, sat with her typing and home ec. friends, and laughed a lot. The good sisters hoped these girls would support themselves as hairdressers, stenographers, seamstresses, or cooks until they left the work force to stay home with children as my mother had.

Clueless about making friends, I looked around in each class. I kept my head down, watched other girls slyly. I said feeble “Hi’s” to girls I knew from St. Mark’s grade school, Marcia Loos, Donna Mack, and Susan Childers, and to girls I barely knew. I looked away quickly in case they didn’t respond.

Playing volleyball in gym class I noticed that Kathy Blakeley walked like Dickey Frey, whom Patsy and I had had crushes on in seventh grade.

“You walk like Dickey Frey,” I said to her. I felt shaky and impertinently bold, unsure how she would respond. I talked to her because she was my height and brunette like me.

Dickey Frey’s grandmother lived across Dayton Avenue from me. Mrs. Murphy was the mother of Father Terrance Murphy, president of St. Thomas College, who later negotiated the school into university status. Father Terry was Dickey’s uncle. Dickey had dark, deep-set eyes, and sensuous lips that tempted girls to think about the sin of kissing. He shambled a little sideways as he walked.

“Who’s Dickey Frey?” Kathy gave the only possible response, and smiled at me naturally instead of getting mad at the tastelessness of my comment. Thus began a long friendship and great adventure for me.

Kathy was from Immaculate Heart of Mary grade school, but had made friends with girls from St. Luke’s. Through her, I met Ginger Winterer and Patty Willie. Together with Ginger’s neighborhood friend, K. C. Kennedy, who was one year older, we called ourselves “The Big Five.”

determined to have a personal clique that rivaled the leadership cliques running OLP's social and academic doings.

On a hayride with this clique, I met Mike Murphy, Chuck Moe, the Clifford boys, and the Spitzmueller boys from St. Luke's, and Jack Walsh from Immaculate Heart. Upstairs in the barn afterwards, we drank Coke Cola and ate Old Dutch potato chips. We played LP records on somebody's record player, rock and roll and big band. I danced with everyone who asked me.

I favored Jim Spitzmueller. Years later I learned Jack Walsh staked his claim that night saying, "Susie's MY girl." And so it was "Jack and Susie," for junior year. Jim wouldn't trespass on his friend's territory. Kathy Blakely was moonstruck by Mike Murphy from that first night and they are still married to each other, three daughters and countless grandkids later.

We partied as a group at each other's homes, mostly Ginger's, K.C.'s, Patty's, or the home of Mike Casey, a St. Mark's boy, who had a car far before anyone else. Once I invited everyone to my house, but they wouldn't stay because no parents were home, only younger brothers and a baby sister.

I made my dress myself for the OLP Junior Prom, with mother's help, when she was home and Grandma Christine's help when mother was on one of her time-outs. On prom night, I took Jack, Candy Cane, and Mike Casey to my McIntyre cousins' upper duplex apartment on Lincoln Avenue to show my finished dress to my mom. "That's nice," was all she said, shutting the door. I saw my cousin Larry behind her watching all of us with curiosity.

"Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. I kissed a boy."

On OLP prom night, prior to the dance, we brought our dates to school for a reception in the auditorium, with sugar cookies. "We want to see your dresses and meet your dates," the good nuns said, and indeed they did. Our fourteen-inch-from-the-floor hems were measured and our bodices inspected for modesty. We wore our white gloves. Corsages perfumed the air.

Earlier we had spent whole class periods practicing proper introductions, naming the older person or the woman first.



*The author (center) and two classmates from OLP in Philadelphia during her senior class trip to New York City, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. in April 1963. Photo courtesy of the author.*

"Sister, this is Jack. Jack, this is Sister," I stammered in hoped-for correctness.

"Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. I have been immodest."

During my senior-year car ride from the school reception to the prom ballroom, I used a seam ripper sewing tool to remove the lengthening ruffle that made it possible for my short skirt to pass inspection. These days, students would think their civil liberties had been violated if similar inspections were instituted, but we (mostly) complied because many of us believed that the good sisters had the power to send us to hell for all eternity for disobedience.

I met my senior year boyfriend, John Runyon, at a Friday night mixer at St. Thomas Academy, then located on the grounds of St. Thomas College, in St. Paul. During a song everyone else was dancing to, I saw him staring at me across the room. Like the Tony and Maria dance scene in Bernstein's *West Side Story*, I liked him instantly. I still admire the creative computing power of his prodigious brain.

During Easter vacation, John disagreed with his father, G. Lee Runyon, a 3M manager, and spent the entire day hiding out with my brothers and me, on bicycles, exploring the banks of the Mississippi near the Veteran's Memorial and the St. Paul Seminary. His mother came by at

midnight to take him home. While maneuvering his bicycle into the back of their family station wagon, my father flirted with Mrs. Runyon. Betty Runyon had gone to St. Mark's grade school with my mother. My dad knew Lee from University of Minnesota alumni events.

That exchange gave me a glimpse into the lives of classmates I envied, for whom one of the blessings of growing up in St. Paul was that their parents had known each other from youth, and every one knew everyone else's children.

Every year for my four years of high school, in a program that would anger today's mavens of Education Standards, we were indoctrinated with religion as a credit class: History of Catholicism, Art of Catholicism and, in senior year, Preparation for Marriage and Family Life. Each week, Father Joseph Kuncel came from the St. Paul Seminary, to lecture all the senior girls together in the auditorium, lisping through his missing teeth. We studiously took notes on his lectures to write essays for religion class about my body as a temple of the Holy Ghost, the evils of fornication, the problems of adultery, the sanctity of life, and why the church is anti-abortion.

In the spring, I signed up for the East Coast senior class trip. *West Side Story* was a hit movie and I had to, just had to, see New York. Never mind that the cost of the trip was equal to the amount of tuition I still owed OLP. I signed up for the trip and paid in full from my earnings at St. Luke's Rectory where Pat Willie and I shared the job of domestic assistant, cooking breakfast on weekends, and answering phones after school for the priests.

We were paid one dollar per hour, and with that money I bought my social wardrobe and paid for my senior class trip to New York. I paid all of my junior year tuition and about half of my senior year. Kathy Blakeley worked at the Grand Theater where I saw *West Side Story* twelve times, each time while waiting for her to get off work.

Ours was the last class to take the senior trip by train, an education itself in proper travel behavior unchanged from Victorian times, and a glimpse into transportation history. In each direction, we disembarked in Chicago to attend Sunday Mass. In

New York, the Brooklynners, Bronxers, and Puerto Ricans flirted with us. I fell in love with the New York patter, now called "Deli Abuse," and the accents. We saw the original musical comedy, *Bye Bye Birdie*, on stage in New York. We ate lunch in Wanamaker's Tea Room in Philadelphia after looking at the Liberty Bell, and marveled at the bulky-sweater-pencil-skirt-with-loafers look of Philadelphia coeds.

In the White House, I touched the yellow velvet wallpaper Jackie Kennedy had just installed and the guard was on me in a flash. At Annapolis, we attended a field parade where cadets threw their hats into the air after marching to and fro in military formation. Geraldine Ostertag and another girl got in trouble with our nun chaperones for talking with some of those boys afterwards.

On the train we slept in our coach seats, learned to groom in a tiny sink. I bought two Gant shirts and new baby doll pajamas for the trip. My hotel roommates were Kathy Blakeley, Sally Long, and another girl we were mean to. I wore a boy's spy-style raincoat with red, zip-out lining received in a box of charity from parishioners of my uncle, Father

Eugene Sebesta, a Catholic priest, who was assigned at that time to St. Anthony's Parish in Minneapolis, and later located in Henderson and Jessenland in the New Ulm diocese.

Late one Friday afternoon in senior year, hunkering myself down as low as I could in my desk, I was hand sewing the hem on a large pink bow for my prom dress. Sister Mary Bertrand, BVM, caught me, of course. She was mean at first, but she acquiesced when she learned that the boy's school prom was *that* night.

At graduation, the Sisters wanted the balance of my tuition paid, but I was out of money, having spent my earnings on my clothes, my social life of soda pop, potato chips, *West Side Story*, canoe trips, and hayrides; and that wonderful New York-Washington trip.

"I'm not made of money, you know," my father began his rant at me. "I have your brothers to think of and the house payment." But in the end he paid the balance, which he truly could afford, and I was permitted to graduate, although in the white cap and gown photos of girls walking across the stage to receive diplomas, you can't tell which one I am.

"Bless me, Father, for I entertained thoughts of temptation."

For the last of the proms, the Cretin High School Officers Ball, I stayed out all night with John Runyon driving from house party to house party afterwards, where parents chaperoned. With other graduates of 1963 Catholic high schools of St. Paul, John Runyon and I danced close and slow for song after song, steaming our young bodies together and professing our passion, if not our love, for each other.

"Susie, Susie," he whispered in my ear while we danced and the pre-sunrise sparrows began to chirp.

At the exact moment we might have begun to sin, his mother, carrying two platters, entered the dimly lit family rec-room, where Johnny Mathis crooned "The Twelfth of Never."

"Who wants a sandwich?" she sang.

*Susanne Sebesta Heimbuch subsequently graduated from the University of Minnesota. At present she teaches English to middle-school students in Los Angeles. An earlier "Growing Up" that she wrote about her years on Dayton Avenue appeared in our Summer 2007 issue.*

## Whatever Happened to Our Lady of Peace High School?

"St. Paul's New High School for Girls" was the headline in the August 25, 1951 edition of the *Catholic Bulletin*, a weekly newspaper (now called *Catholic Spirit*) published by the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis. The article went on to explain that the new school, to be known as Our Lady of Peace (OLP) High School, would occupy the building that had formerly been St. Luke's Catholic Church grade school. The building that OLP was to occupy became available when the grade school decided to relocate to 1065 Summit Avenue. Today this school is known as St. Thomas More School and the former St. Luke's parish merged on January 1, 2008, with the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary to form the Church of St. Thomas More.



*The first St. Luke's School at Portland Avenue and Victoria Street, which was constructed in 1904 for about \$35,000. Photo courtesy of St. Luke's School.*

Located at the intersection of Portland and Victoria streets, OLP was owned and operated by the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose headquarters was in Dubuque, Iowa. This order of nuns was nationally known for the excellent teaching it provided to children in the schools it managed. A day school, OLP enrolled only girls and just freshman attended classes in its initial year. Consequently on the opening day of school on September 10, the OLP student body numbered 113, representing thirty-one different parishes in the Twin Cities area. The establishment of OLP fulfilled an invitation that Bishop Joseph Crétin had made in 1852 to the Sisters of Charity, BVM, that they open a girls' school in St. Paul.

According to building permits in the St. Paul Building Permits Collection at the Ramsey County Historical Society, in 1931 St. Luke's parish (church building located at 1550 Summit Avenue) erected a school building for about \$280,000. This building replaced a school that St. Luke's had constructed on the same site (880 Portland) in 1904. Another building, a convent, was adjacent to the school.

OLP was a strong educational institution and was just one of a number of Roman Catholic schools in the Twin Cities area. In the early 1970s declining enrollments began to affect all the schools in the archdiocese. One newspaper report stated that in 1964, there were 178 schools in the archdiocese. When OLP closed at the end of the spring term in 1973, that total had declined to 132. Escalating costs was the primary reason for the school closures. The Sisters of Charity contracted with a local real estate company to handle the sale of the now-vacant building on Portland.

Ironically, rapidly increasing enrollments at the William Mitchell College of Law (WMCL), which had outgrown its quarters at 2100 Summit, forced the law school's trustees to actively look for a larger facility. In 1975 the college decided that the OLP site was the school's best choice for relocating in the Twin Cities. After much negotiating, which



*The second St. Luke's School, which was built in 1931. Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society.*



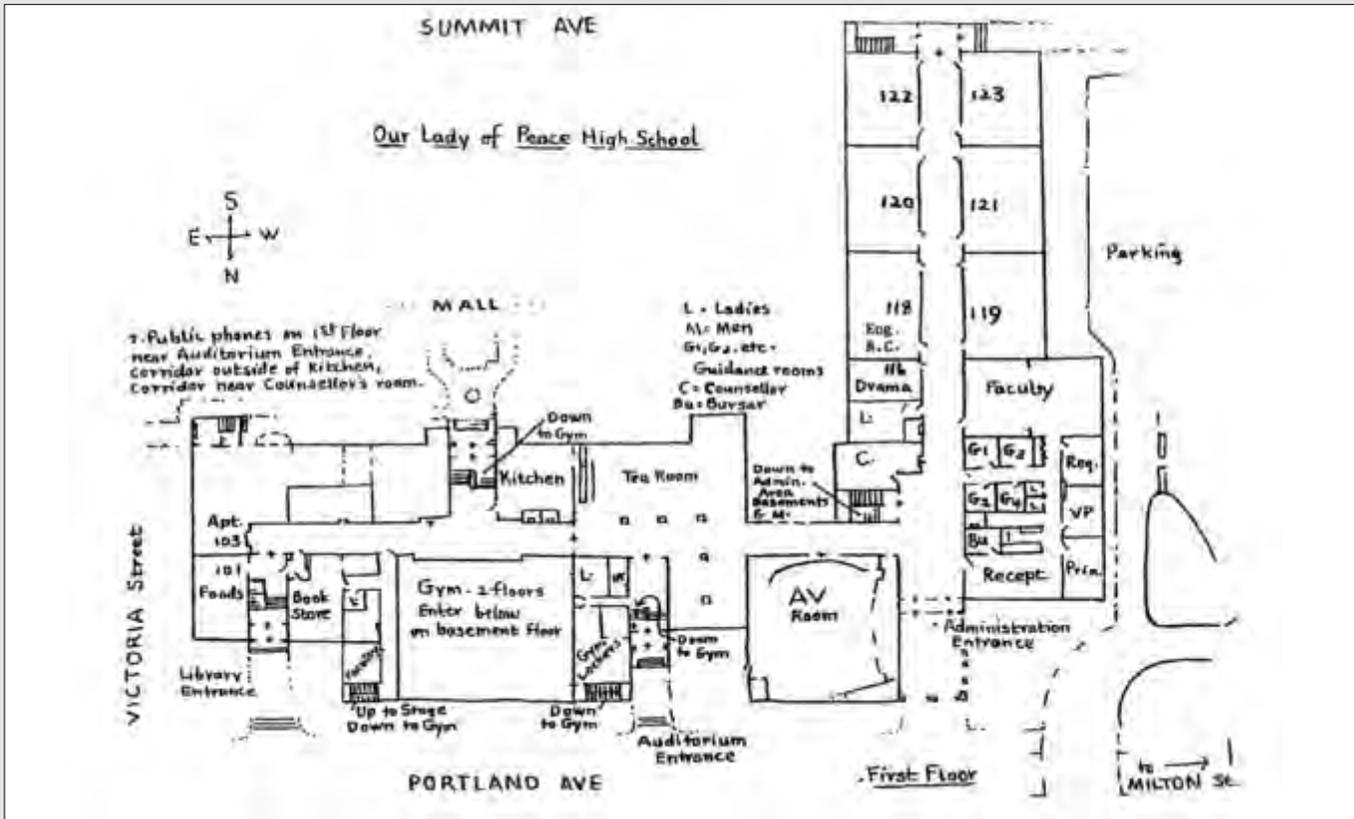
*Our Lady of Peace High School in the early 1960s. The street in the foreground is Victoria Street. Photo courtesy of Susanne Sebesta Heimbuch.*

involved at least one other party that wanted to buy the OLP facility, the law school bought the OLP building for \$1.325 million on November 7, 1975. WMCL's trustees initially deferred action on the separate, free-standing convent, but a short time later they went ahead and purchased it. The proceeds from the sale of OLP that the Sisters of Charity, BVM, received were used to provide financial support for retired members of their order.

Following the sale, WMCL's administration renovated the OLP building, moved to the new site in August 1976, and changed its address to 875 Summit Avenue. The law school held a celebratory dedication of its new facility on October 29, 1977, with Chief Justice

Warren E. Burger making the keynote address.

Today the 1931 St. Luke's school building is the wing of WMCL that faces Portland Avenue. Carved in the stonework above the former high school's entrance (now an emergency exit for the law school) at the east end of the building is "Our Lady of Peace." Similarly, in several of the former OLP classrooms, there remains a small shelf that once held a statue of the Virgin Mary. Another artifact of OLP that exists today in one WMCL office is what was probably a small altar with the symbol for the sisters' order and their motto (*Sicut Liliam Inter Spinis*) engraved on the front. This same symbol and motto, which is a shortened form of the Latin aphorism,



A blueprint of Our Lady of Peace High School showing the location of classrooms, offices, and the first-floor Tea Room that served as the school's cafeteria. Today the area identified as "Mall" includes a parking lot. The law school's main entrance and library are located at the south end of the wing on the right, which was added to the school in 1953. Blueprint courtesy of an OLP alumna.

*"Sicut lillium inter spinas, sic amica mea inter filias Adae"* or "As a lily among brambles, so is my love among the daughters of Adam," also remain carved in the granite near the now unused door of the former convent, which faces North Milton Street. Gone completely, however, are the former principal's office and adjacent administrative areas.

The former OLP site changed again in 1989 when WMCL broke ground for the construction of a new library that would be an addition to the high school building at an estimated cost of \$7.5 million. The new library was designed so that it faced Summit Avenue and tied the formerly free-standing convent to the main building. On September 16, 1990, the college dedicated its new library and other physical improvements to the OLP facility with a ceremony that included an address from Supreme Court Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. The new library was named



The William Mitchell College of Law today with the Chief Justice Warren E. Burger Library (far left) facing Summit Avenue. Photo by Maureen McGinn.

for WMCL's most eminent alumnus, Chief Justice Burger. In 2005 the law school again expanded its facilities, but despite all these changes and additions,

the OLP high school remains a central part of the law school's educational facilities.

John M. Lindley

Published by the Ramsey County Historical Society  
323 Landmark Center  
75 West Fifth Street  
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

U.S. Postage  
PAID  
St. Paul, MN  
Permit #3989



*In 1909 someone named Clara, who lived on Capitol Avenue, sent a postcard (top right) of the Frog Pond that once existed near Hamline University to a friend in North Dakota. That Frog Pond was then located on the site of today's Newell Park in St. Paul's Hamline-Midway neighborhood. The postcard and the adjacent photo of Newell Park on a fall day in 2008 show just how much this park has changed in 100 years. Postcard courtesy of Steve Trimble; photo courtesy of Krista Finstad Hanson. For more on the centennial of Newell Park, see Krista Finstad Hanson's article on page 11.*