

Key Moments in St. Peter's History

A series of historical highlights from the first 200 years of St. Peter – Libertytown.

Notre Dame Academy Over the Years

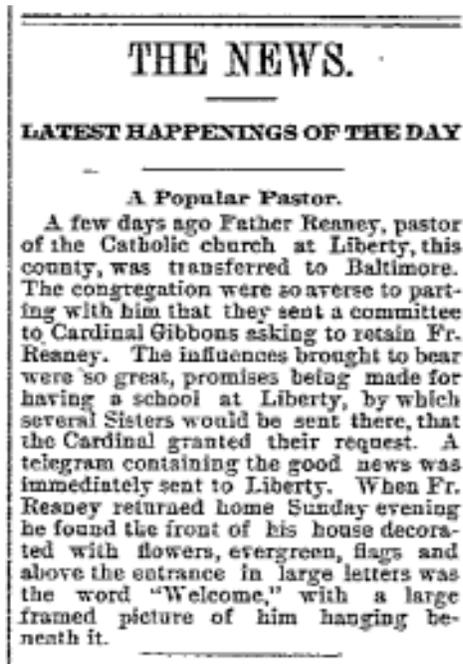


Figure 1 July 5 1890 article in Frederick News

When Cardinal Gibbons announced the transfer of Fr. Reaney from St. Peter's in mid 1890, a committee which was sent to Cardinal Gibbons, in an effort to retain the "popular pastor", promised a Catholic school at Liberty would be built. We can't say for sure why the Cardinal changed his mind, but Fr. Reaney wasn't transferred and St. Peter's benefitted in more ways than one.

Four short months later, on November 6, 1890, Sallie R. Sappington gifted the land which now houses our Parish Offices and Birch Library. Notre Dame Academy was built and opened its doors for the 1892-1893 school year.

St. Stanislaus Kostka was named patron of the school, as evidenced by the plaque which still stands in the entrance of the building. A Polish Jesuit novice when he died in 1568 at age 17, St. Stanislaus is considered a patron of youth, students and novices and his feast day is celebrated on November 13. The saint's patronage of students, combined with the Parish's close connection with the Jesuits since our founding, suggests a possible reason behind this choice.

Notre Dame Academy (NDA) continued to serve the community for 72 years. In 1965, a joint decision was made by the School Sisters of Notre Dame and Archbishop Shehan (at the suggestion of Fr. Flahaven, then pastor of St. Peter's) to transfer the responsibility for running the school to the Parish. NDA thus became a parish school – St. Peter's School. The School Sisters continued to staff the school, but 5 years later in 1970, when the School Sisters announced they would be withdrawing, the difficult decision was made to close, as tuition and Parish contributions would not cover the cost to maintain the school with lay teachers.

In the intervening years, however, the School Sisters produced generations of well-educated young children. Enrollment started small – a mere 8 pupils one year. By 1921, enrollment was in the 20's and the first high school class opened with 4 students. 1927 saw the opening of a separate school for black children (segregation was not declared unconstitutional until 1954). 15 students enrolled in the first class which was initially taught in the Parish Hall (now Sappington Hall); however, neither the high school nor the colored school (as the black school was known at that time) survived for very long. The high school

closed 11 years later in 1932 when the last high school students, Louis (Lochner) Bruchey and Catherine (Riordan) Wantz graduated. The colored school closed at the beginning of the 1935 school year after 7 years, due to low enrollment.



Figure 2 June 11 1950 8th Grade Graduates - Eugene Sappington, Raymond Wright, Fannie Horton, Catherine Stevens, Lawrence Healy and Carl Ingling

Enrollment for grades 1 to 8 continued to increase; however, grades 7 and 8 were discontinued at the end of the 1966 school year. Multiple grades were taught in a single room by one teacher; a more common practice in days gone by. In 1968, Mrs. Jessie Eisel, became the first lay teacher and when the last class year closed in 1970, there were 96 pupils in grades 1 to 6, taught by 2 nuns and 2 lay teachers.

Three of the Williams sisters who attended NDA in the 1950's, Millie Simons, Shirley Moxley, and Judy Riggs,

recently shared some of their memories of NDA – and it wasn't all about school work! The siblings recalled helping the Sisters wash windows with newspaper, weed around the convent/school and help with the laundry. The school did not have uniforms, so the girls alternated with 2 dresses. Country ham sandwich lunches were always brought from home and as a result the girls dreamed of the tuna fish sandwiches that other kids had.

Since the closing of NDA, two well attended reunions, in 1986 and 1988, were held and many photos and memories shared during these events. In 1991, when the Parish Center was dedicated, the Parish combined that dedication with a celebration of the centennial of the NDA.

NDA may be a memory of the past, but it is far from forgotten.



Figure 3 1986 Reunion Sr. Lillian and Sr. Joel with Bertha Sosnowski