



The former St. Clara's School, later the Immaculate Conception School in Oakwood avenue, among the landmarks of East Aurora, is being demolished. The site will be made a parking lot for the parish. The old building has been replaced with a new school at Oakwood and Park place.

## Local Landmark Being Razed After 60 Years as School

**Built in 1904, "St. Clare's Academy" Site to be Used As Parking Lot by Church**

By SAMUEL J. McCOY

A venerable Oakwood avenue landmark is being demolished this week. St. Clare's Academy, more recently known as Immaculate

Conception, succeeded Father Rengel and served as pastor until December, 1900. The Rev. James H. Qusted became pastor April 20, 1901. He made plans immediately for enlarging the church and establishing a rectory.

### Opens School

On April 1, 1904, the Sisters of St. Joseph purchased the Williams property (opposite the rectory) and opened a school with 44 pupils. The pupils were taught in the convent building. In 1904, Father Qusted started the construction of the "new" school; its cost was \$12,000.

In 1905, 103 pupils were attending classes. Sister St. Augustine and Sister Juliana were in charge of the school. On Nov. 4, 1906, the "new" school was blessed by the Most Rev. Charles Colton, bishop of the Diocese of Buffalo. He was assisted by the Rt. Rev. Msgr. Nelson A. Baker (Father Baker, the famed apostle of charity of Lackawanna). Father Qusted died suddenly Feb. 18, 1909.

### Naming the School

The naming of St. Clare's Academy has an interesting background. When Father Qusted saw the need for the "new" school, he formed a committee of the interested ladies of the parish and asked them to canvass the parish for funds. He told them that the lady who brought in the largest amount of donations would have the privilege of naming the school.

The deadline date and time was set. The donations were to be brought to the rectory by 8 p. m. on the fateful day. The ladies showed plenty of apostolic zeal and personal dedication in their appeals.

Finally, the deadline day arrived. The ladies coming to the rectory laid their offerings in sealed envelopes upon the desk in the pastor's office. The room was charged with nervous anticipation; each one in her own mind determining a fitting name for the school if the good fortune should fall to her.

The silence was punctuated only by the loud ticking of a clock. The large hand moved with agonizing slowness. Finally it stood erect at 12. It was 8 p. m., the time to open the envelopes. One after another, they were opened.

Historical records of the Immaculate Conception Church show that the parish was established in 1864. The first resident pastor was Father Miller of St. Mary's Church, Buffalo. He lived in East Aurora from Christmas, 1864, until Easter, 1865. During this time he celebrated mass in the Regulator Building on Main street. From the spring of 1865 until 1890, the few Catholic people of East Aurora assisted at Sunday mass in St. Vincent's Church, Spring Brook.

### Cornerstone Laid

The cornerstone of the first Catholic Church in East Aurora was laid by the Most Rev. Stephen V.

The last entry was Miss Clare Keem. So, Clare did what came naturally: she named the school "St. Clare's Academy".

But time marches on. St. Clare's Academy has given 60 years of excellent service. It has given priests, sisters and lay leaders; parents who have led their children along the path of virtue in the best traditions of Christian manhood and womanhood.

Now, St. Clare's is no more; not quite. The physical building is gone but the past will ever spring eternal in the nostalgic memories of her former students. And in their grateful tribute to those pioneer parishioners whose sacrifice made it possible.