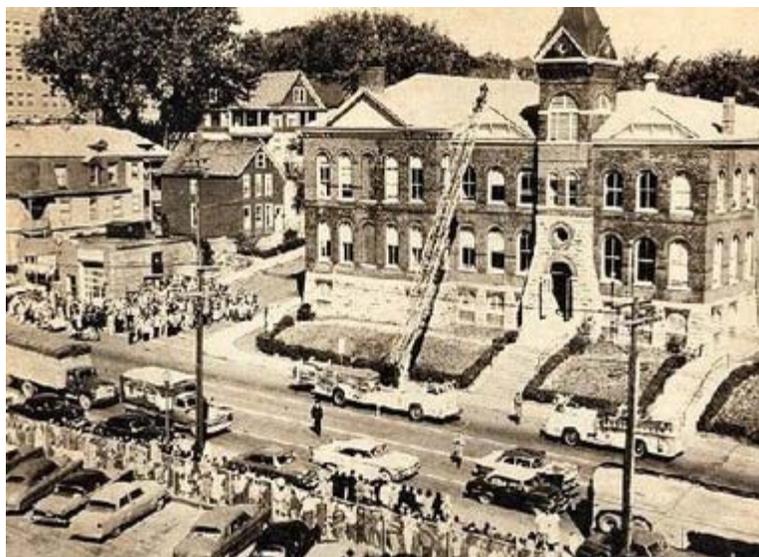


Steps and hedges survive long after St. John the Evangelist Academy's demise

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By **Dick Case** / Post-Standard columnist



Onondaga Historical Association

St. John the Evangelist Academy once stood proudly on Syracuse's North Side. It's now a parking lot for St. Joseph's Hospital Health Center.

Sometimes it's hard to cut the ties to the Old School.

Sometimes you don't have to.

Last week I wrote about a piece of Syracuse trivia in the 300 block of North State Street. It's the set of stairs and a hedge put in when St. John the Evangelist Academy sat on the site, next door to Christian Brothers Academy. Both buildings were torn down in the 1960s and 70s.

The stairway remains. Along with the hedge. Both adorn a parking lot for St. Joseph's Hospital Health Center.

These durable leftovers were called to my attention by Tom Shanahan, Class of 1954. Tom, a student janitor at the time, recalled being chewed out by a St. John's priest for his watering of the hedges. I told him the man was off base; look at how well they've hung in there.

One of the follow-ups to the column came from Christine Young, Class of 1960. She sent me copies of pictures taken of her class standing on the steps. One was when the Class of 1960 held its 50th reunion weekend in 2010.

"It seems so ironic," Christine wrote, "that the steps are still there long after the school closed and was subsequently demolished. Guess we're drawn to the phantom school for photos."

I also heard from Bob Guardino, Class of 1957, who recalled the two large doors at the front of the academy. "They were always locked," Bob explained. "There were boys and girls entrances on either side of the building."

Bob remember the "spit-ball fights" between St. John's pupils and their neighbors at CBA and Prescott, the city school across East Willow Street. All, sadly, have vanished from the scene.

Two remnants of the St. John's parish remain: the rectory, now a lawyers' office, and the church, which is to be home to a

glass company.

Call for history

I had another blast from the past recently when I talked with Arnold Rubenstein about United Radio Service, one of our vintage companies in Syracuse. United was started by Arnie's father, Jacob, in 1923. At that time, it was downtown, on Harrison Street, on the site of the modern Everson Museum.

Arnie's looking for remembrances – "anything historical," he says – for a book on United Radio he's putting together. This would include documents, stories and photographs.

The store is now in the third generation of Rubensteins. It's owned and operated by Jacob's grandchildren, Mara and Phillip.

Contact Arnold Rubenstein at United Radio, 5703 Enterprise Parkway, East Syracuse 13057 or by e-mail, arubenstein@unitedradio.com.

Another explosive story

Richard Pierce, of Pierce Engineering, sent in a footnote to the story of the Syracuse China's making of ceramic land mines during World War II. Richard is a retired plant engineer who worked closely with a ceramic engineer named Gordon Huggins. The mines were tested at Highland Forest, the county park at Fabius:

"One of the best stories was about the famous 'flying steel plate.' As normal testing protocol, the pottery men would set their land mine on the ground with the steel plate suspended above it. By a remote device they would drop the steel plate onto the mine and observe how effective the mine was...One time the Army brought a German tank mine that they had captured and asked the mine experts to test this mine at their research facilities.

"What no one knew was that the German mines were designed to blow up a tank as well as kill or wound the occupants. It was much more powerful than the American's pottery design. Gordon was there when they dropped the plate on this German mine and watched the plate sail high into the air. Of course, he was one of the people setting a new record for the 100-yard dash.

"Gordon eventually retired from Syracuse China and passed away a few years ago. I was able to see and handle one of the actual land mines (less explosives) as they had a couple in the shop...Gordon had most of his right hand destroyed when one morning a glass jar of primer exploded..."

Whoops

My friend, and careful reader, Russ Tarby, wrote to correct an error I had in this week's column about Michael Aubrey's four home runs in a Syracuse Chiefs' game. The contest was May 14, not May 19. Also, one of the two youngsters who captured the last home run ball, was Kodi Dotterer, not Cody Dotterer, according to his dad, Henry.

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