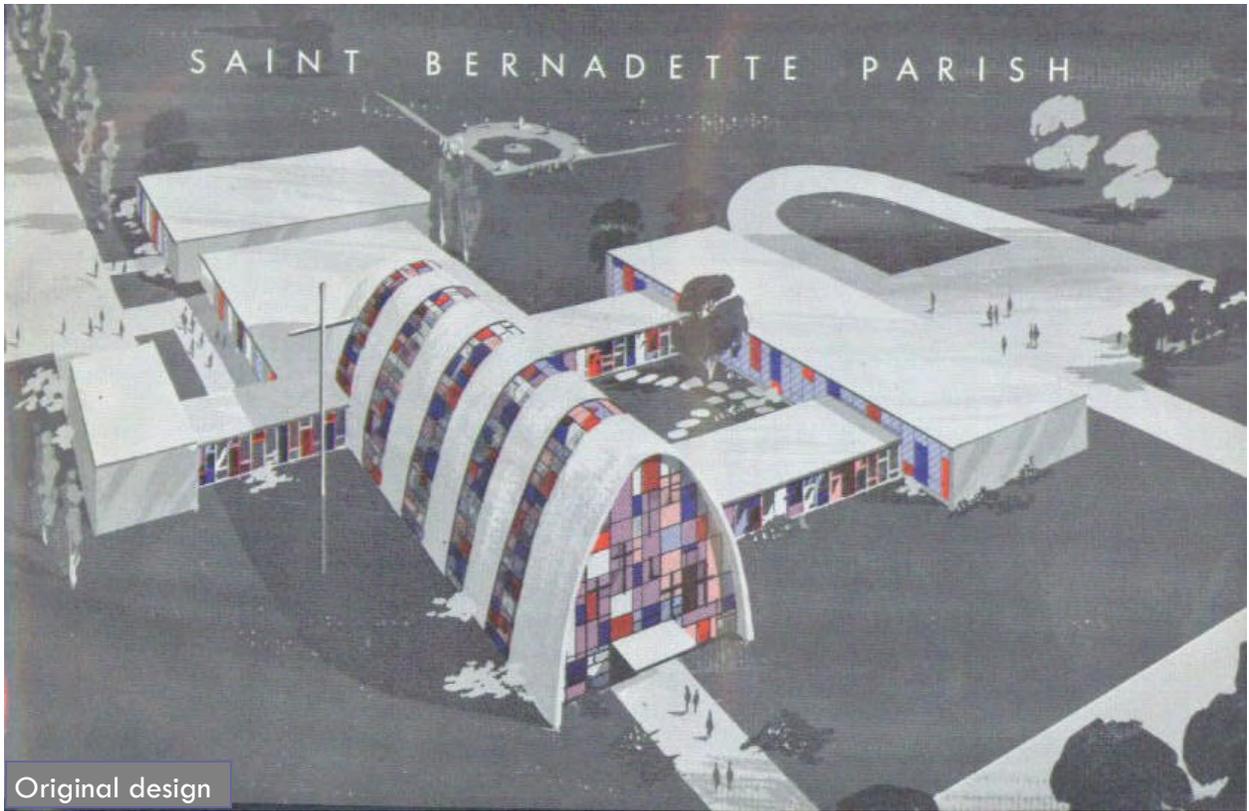


Our History...

- 1957 In July, Archbishop Albert G. Meyer purchased ten acres just south of Good Hope Road, near 76th Street, from Joseph Spartz. The parcel was a consolidation area of both the City of Milwaukee and the Village of Brown Deer. It took the court a year to decide that it belonged to Milwaukee. This controversy delayed construction.
- 1958 In June, with 400 families, the parish of St. Bernadette was established by Archbishop Meyer. Father John A. Arens was appointed the first pastor. A house at 6881 North 91st Street became his rectory. The first Mass of St. Bernadette Parish was celebrated on July 13 in a 110' x 40' canvas tent erected by parishioners on the parish grounds. This Mass is commemorated every year as a tent Mass at our Parish Festival. From July through October, the Sunday Masses at 8:00 and 10:00AM were celebrated in this tent. During the cool months they were celebrated at St. Catherine Church (Granville). The first daily 7:00AM Mass was held on September 1 in a small building adjacent to the rectory, which has been converted into a small chapel.
- 1959 October 11 was the groundbreaking for the temporary church/gymnasium. This phase consisted of a 750-seat church/gym facility, the cafeteria, and the future convent.
- 1960 On September 4, Archbishop William E. Cousins presided at the Solemn Mass and dedication of St. Bernadette Church.
- 1963 The outdoor grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes was dedicated by Father Arens during the 5:30PM Mass for the Feast of the Assumption.
- 1964 St. Bernadette's new school, with eight classrooms, was dedicated by Archbishop Cousins on April 19.
- 1965 Delayed a year due to teacher shortage, St. Bernadette School opened tuition-free with 286 students. 617 children were on the waiting list. Father Arens had a staff of six lay teachers and two Dominican Sisters of Kenosha. 961 families were in the parish at this time.
- 1966 Two more classrooms and a meeting room were added to the school.
- 1967 Six additional classrooms and a library were built.
- 1981 First installation of Parish Council officers and trustees was held on August 24.
- 1983 On May 22, the parish celebrated its Silver Jubilee.
- 1991 In February, 686 parishioners responded to a survey with their ideas for the renovation of the parish church.
- 1993 By June, \$681,850 had been collected for the renovation. Debt was paid in full early.
- 1994 On January 30 at the 11:00AM Mass, Bishop Richard Sklba dedicated the newly-renovated worship space.
- 1997 A Bereavement Ministry was organized to give service to parish families at visitations and funerals held at church.
- 2008 The parish celebrated its 50th anniversary with activities such as a Brewers baseball game, sock hop, celebration dinner, alumni brunch, and a Mass and picnic.
- 2009 Starting with the 2009-2010 school year, the schools at St. Bernadette, St. Catherine of Alexandria, and Our Lady of Good Hope merged to form one school, Northwest Catholic, with classes at two campuses (Our Lady of Good Hope and St. Bernadette).



St. Bernadette Parish Breaks Ground Oct. 11



To Build Temporary Church for 525 Northwest Side Families

MILWAUKEE—Ground will be broken at 3 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 11, for a temporary church-gymnasium for St. Bernadette parish in northwest Milwaukee County.

Fr. John Arens, pastor, will officiate. The temporary structure will be the first unit of a long-range building program for the parish which was established in June, 1958, and which now has 525 families.

* * *

THE BUILDING will be located three blocks south of the Good Hope road, about eight blocks west of N. 76th st. Although streets have not been cut in the area, the building site can be reached from N. 76th st.

building permit for the parish buildings was delayed by a consolidation dispute between the City of Milwaukee and the Village of Brown Deer.

The first parish building, designed by Schutte, Philips and Mochon, Inc., Milwaukee, will include a temporary church with a seating capacity of about 900. By use of a partition, part of the church area can be converted to a gymnasium-auditorium. The building will also include a power plant and cafeteria.

A parish master building plan calls for a future church to seat between 1,000 and 1,200, a school of approximately 20 to 24 classrooms, a convent for 16 Sisters and a rectory for three priests.

* * *

AN ARCH-SHAPED church will be the dominant structure in the future parish plant. The temporary church-gymnasium will be converted into a permanent gymnasium-auditorium.

The area near the church site is in the process of being developed and a Milwaukee County Park is planned directly across the street.

For the past two summers, parishioners attended Sunday Mass in a tent. Issuance of a



*The Pastor and Parishioners of
St. Bernadette Congregation
cordially invite you to participate in the Dedication of
St. Bernadette Temporary Church
at West Denver Avenue and North 83rd Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
on Sunday, September 4, 1960
Solemn Mass at 11:00 a. m.
The Most Reverend William E. Cousins
Archbishop of Milwaukee
will assist in Cappa Magna
and will preach the Dedication Sermon*



Catholic Herald Citizen

May 30, 1959

Propose Church-School For St. Bernadette's

MILWAUKEE — Plans are nearing completion and construction is expected to start by early June on the first building unit for the new St. Bernadette's parish, located at approximately 7000 N. Denver ave., in northern Milwaukee County.

church will eventually be converted into a gymnasium-auditorium.

The master plan, which is expected to develop over a period of years in accordance with parish growth, is arranged to include a future church to seat between 1,000 and 1,200, a school of 20 to 24 classrooms, a convent for approximately 16 Sisters, and a rectory for three priests.

* * *

THE INITIAL building will be a temporary church-school and hall. Designed by Schutte, Philips, and Mochon, Inc., Milwaukee architects, the structure will cost approximately \$350,000.

* * *

THE CHURCH will be the dominant structure in the parish and the convent will be located between the church and school. The rectory will be a two story structure located directly north of the church sanctuary and facing a future Milwaukee County park directly across the street.

The building will contain a multipurpose room adaptable to cafeteria space, meeting room, kitchen, storage facilities, a single family apartment for eventual custodian use, meeting rooms, locker and shower rooms and boiler room. The temporary

Fr. John A. Arens is pastor of St. Bernadette's parish.

(Taken from the directory for St. Bernadette Parish's 25th anniversary)

HISTORY OF ST. BERNADETTE PARISH

Our beginnings, as a parish, can be compared to the life of our patroness, St. Bernadette of Lourdes. One of her most inspiring characteristics was that of humility, and our beginnings were indeed humble.

In July of 1957 Archbishop Albert G. Meyer purchased land on the Northwest side of Milwaukee from a Mr. Joseph Spartz for the establishment of St. Bernadette Congregation. This Congregation would involve people from Our Lady of Good Hope, St. Phillip Neri, St. Catherine, Granville, and St. Anthony, Fussville. From the pulpits of these parishes Rev. John Arens, appointed as founding pastor, told his story: he begged, borrowed, and prayed to get his fledgling flock organized and off the ground. A generous contribution from his former parishioners at St. Mary of Elm Grove helped immensely with the purchase of badly needed essentials.



The first rectory was set up in a private residence on North 91st Street, where Catechism classes were held in the basement.

Fr. Arens used a converted structure located behind the house, which had been renovated, with the tireless help of his new Christian community, as his first chapel. Adult parishioners today can boast of being baptized in a chicken coop! The spirit of generosity, hard work, and sacrifice with which Fr. Arens, by his example, imbued his parishioners, enabled the dreams of St. Bernadette to become a living reality. After six months the parish family already numbered four hundred forty-six.



The First "Chicken Coop Chapel"



The first High Mass was celebrated on July 13, 1958, in a tent which had been erected three blocks south of Good Hope Road on 76th Street. About 700 people were in attendance with several kittens from the neighboring farms scampering about. Later that summer a terrible storm blew the tent down late on a Saturday night; early Sunday morning Fr. Arens was on the phone to his loyal crew of parishioners asking for help. Mass was celebrated as usual right on time. The tent church was used from July to October when cold weather necessitated having Sunday Mass at neighboring St. Catherine.

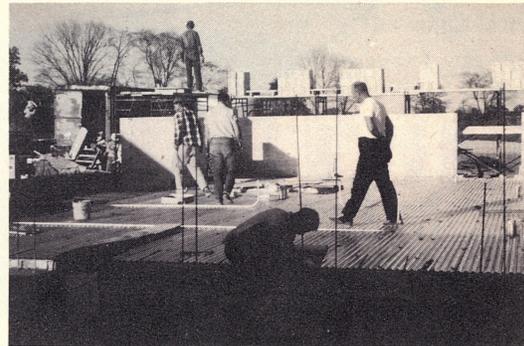


“Angel” at the First Christmas Mass in the “Chapel”

Organizing parish societies was a difficult task without permanent housing. First the Christian Mothers was formed as a social and fund-raising group. Next the St. Vincent de Paul Society was organized for the purpose of bringing back those who had left the church. Both of these groups, and many other hard working organizations, are still active and flourishing in the community of St. Bernadette today.



Construction Started
(Winter - 1960)



Continued Construction



Fr. Arens - Dedication Mass

With our humble tent heritage as a basis for a firm faith, the parish broke ground in Spring of 1959 for the first phase of the building program. This structure consisted of a temporary church facility, which was housed in the 1100 seat gymnasium. The cafeteria and convent were also part of this complex. Bishop William Cousins dedicated the church on September 4, 1960.

Our first folk fair was held in December of 1960 with a Christmas auction, and ten booths representing different countries. The first Mother - Daughter breakfast was held in May of 1961 with the husbands and fathers doing the serving. In August, 1962, the first golf outing was held and it is still an annual event.

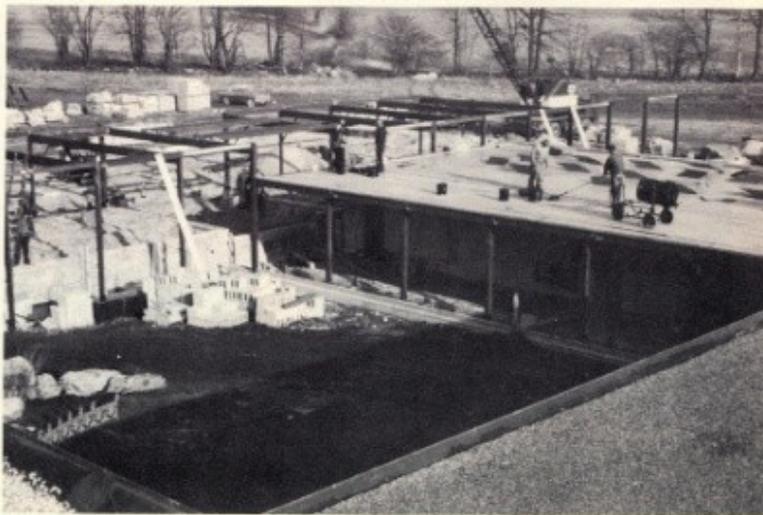


Building the Grotto Shrine

In 1963, the outdoor shrine, which is now the courtyard of the school, was erected through the efforts of Fr. Arens and his muscular crew who literally hauled the stones from nearby fields. To enhance the natural environment, peacocks were given the grotto as a home. As the story goes, the birds became restless and decided to wander. It must have been baffling, to say the least, to hear grown men and women stalking about the countryside yelling "peacock, peacock." To everyone's delight the peacocks were found and returned to the grotto a few days later.

In the early stages of growth of the parish our school children were bussed to Our Lady of Good Hope. Our own school was opened in 1965 with nine classrooms under the auspices of the Dominican Sisters of Kenosha. A few years later, four additional classrooms were built on the west wing plus lavatory facilities, library, teachers' lounge, and music room. It was at this time the Grotto was fully enclosed and the second enclosed entrance to the church was finished. The last phase of construction consisted of two classrooms and an office, which is now used as the staff's lunchroom.

Through prayers and hard work, the spirit of St. Bernadette has continued to grow and prosper. We have developed close ties, through our worship, our work, and our play. We can be proud of being part of this heritage!



Final Stages of Construction

Compiled by: Ruth Thorn, Sherry Moncher, Paul & Bernice Buttita, Mi Pitterle, Betty Bruhn.
(Edited by: Pauline Randazzo)