

## ***HISTORIC LANDMARK AWARDS***

### **St. Alexander School 1925-2001**



On May 7, 1925, Father Kennedy wrote to the Reverend Mother of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in Cincinnati, requesting Sisters to teach in his school. In a very short time, Father received a favorable reply from Mother Adela du Sacre Coeur. Construction of the new parish school was well under way. The Sisters' temporary quarters were a little frame house near the temporary church building, which served also as the "one-room schoolhouse" during the week. The Sisters opened classes with six grade levels on September 21, 1925, with a registration of 56 pupils. After Cardinal Mundelein arrived in December to dedicate St. Alexander's new school, the children soon were moved to a real classroom. The second floor of the school housed the Sisters from 1926 until 1951.

During the years between 1926 and 1951, the school saw great progress in numbers of students enrolled, and additional Sisters to staff the growing school. In 1951, the Sisters moved from the school to 135 South Ardmore. In 1955, the parish had acquired a small house next to the school, the space that was intended for a new, brick convent building. It was used as sleeping apartments for the Sisters.

In 1956, a great "Drive" was launched to finance parish building plans, which included not only a convent, but also an extension to the school. A new "face" included an office, four new classrooms, new fireproof stairways, modern lavatories, faculty rest room, new central heating system, and fluorescent lighting.

In order to prepare the ground for the new convent building, it was decided to move the small, white frame house that occupied this space. It was moved to a small piece of property next to the Sisters' residence on Ardmore Avenue. The moving actually took place on February 16, 1956. Ground was broken on August 15, 1956 for the new convent, and work for the school addition was also begun. On the last Sunday in July of 1957, "Open House" was held in the new convent, now completed, and the new cornerstone of the school was blessed. The Sisters' actual departure from Ardmore Avenue took place in August. In the parish spirit, men, women, and children assisted them.

By September 1959, enrollment in the school reached 830. In 1960, the year began with a record enrollment of 926 children. Monsignor Murray arranged with Father Kerrigan, the pastor at St. John the Apostle Parish, that four classrooms could be used in the unfinished school building at St. John's for 175 students.

After 1960 until 1965, numbers of children at St. Alexander's School ran a steady 800 to

750 each year. After this, enrollment began to decline each year. The enrollment for September, 1974 was 385. Because of fewer numbers, some of the extra classrooms had been put to good use as a primary and upper Resource Centers, and a special Art room.

*Villa Park Historic Preservation Commission — Photograph by Carol Marcus*