

St. Wenceslaus School Graduates Its Thirty-Second Class



Graduates 1911
St. Wenceslaus
School



Gypsies Red Riding Hood Met in the Woods



Chorus



Dall Drill



Who Saved Red Riding Hood

ST. WENCESLAUS school celebrated its thirty-second anniversary by graduating a class of fifteen—nine girls and six boys—this year. The graduating exercises were held on Sunday, May 7, at the school on Fourteenth street near William street. The graduates are: Barbara Mravenec, Elizabeth Hoffman, Anna Chleborad, Anna Tourek, Amelia Sadi, Agnes Piskac, Anna Kremka, Anna Hincik, Marie Swoboda, Joseph Cochran, Joseph Pavelac, Wenceslaus Vojir, Frank Vana, Philip Krejci and Michael Bosanec.

In honor of the last class to be graduated from the school before rebuilding a most attractive program had been prepared, and was admirably carried through by the participants. After an opening song by a group of girls a series of "games of childhood" were presented, to the delight of the gathered adults. St. Wenceslaus cadets executed a drill in good style and the boys of the school sang "Tenting On the Old Camp Ground." Then followed recitations, dialogues, drills by the small girls and boys, songs, marches and folk dances. Frank Mach, accompanied by Jean Gilbert Jones, played classic selections on the violin, and Miss M. Roman also rendered a violin solo. "Hearts and Flowers," presented by Agnes Sloup, Caroline Bares, Edward Havlicek and Frank Rozmajal, was a very pretty feature of the program.

To Success Through Difficulties.

More than ordinary interest attaches to this thirty-second anniversary of St. Wenceslaus school, because of the seemingly insurmountable obstacles encountered by those who first established the school. Among those listed as its graduates today are some of the best and most progressive business men and some of the most highly esteemed women of that section of the city, and the graduates have scattered much farther afield than even the bounds of Omaha and South Omaha. Many of the towns of Nebraska now number among their best citizens graduates of this school. The Bohemian Catholic parish of South Omaha is very largely made up of the old graduates of this humble school.

One of the Sisters of Mercy who has been teaching in St. Wenceslaus school for many years says she is proud indeed of the record of the graduates. "They have made most excellent husbands and mothers, as

well as good honest citizens," said this sister. "They raise large families, as a rule, and they see to it the children are properly educated and taught to work in useful occupations. I do not know of any better workers or more honest, capable people than the Bohemians of Omaha who have come under my view."

Father Vranek to Build an Addition.

Father John Vranek, who has been pastor of the parish since 1893, is taking particular pride in the fact that during the coming vacation he will be able to build an addition to the school on the south and remodel the old part to make it adequate to the needs of the parish children. This work will cost in the neighborhood of \$5,000, and its completion will be hailed with delight by the parents as well as the children. The present quarters have been long overcrowded and in some ways unsuited to the needs of the school, wherein the attendance has been growing steadily in recent years.

Father Vranek, speaking of his plans and recalling the early history of the school, had enthusiastic praise for the late Edward Rosewater. "He was always our good friend," said the veteran priest, and often visited us. When he went abroad he always sent or brought back some memento for us." And Father Vranek shows in his own home some of these mementoes, blessed by the Roman pontiff of that day, with whom Mr. Rosewater had audience. "The Catholics of Omaha lost a good friend when Edward Rosewater died," says the priest.

Second Parochial School Opened in City.

St. Wenceslaus Bohemian Catholic parochial school was the second parochial school opened in Omaha, the first being the school of the old Holy Angels' parish at Eighth and Howard streets. Later this was moved to Ninth and Harney and called St. Philomena's. St. Wenceslaus school was opened in 1879 for the Bohemian and Irish-American children of the south side. Reverend Mother Michael, at present superior of the Convent of Mercy, and Mother Catharine were the first teachers. While Mother Michael modestly declines to talk about the trials of the early days, Father Vranek and others who know the facts assert that rarely was a school started under more discouraging conditions and carried to most happy success.

The first teachers of St. Wenceslaus school had to walk to the school, then on South Thirteenth street, every day, from Twenty-fifth street and St. Mary's avenue, and back again in the evening. In the early days there were no sidewalks along much of the way and the streets on the south side were not even graded. In stormy and in muddy weather, winter and summer, the good sisters took their way across town every day to discharge their duty to the little ones.



ANNA CHLEBORAD MICHAEL BOSANEC
TWO OF THE GRADUATES NOT IN THE GROUP PICTURE

And some of the early teachers of the school have lived to see more wonderful developments in Omaha than were even dreamt of when they were meeting and overcoming the trials incident to a new city just breaking out of its swaddling clothes. The beautiful, substantial and commodious Convent of Mercy at Fifteenth and Castellar is one of the very influential institutions of education that has sprung indirectly from the establishment of St. Wenceslaus.

Its Modest Beginning.

A dancing hall and saloon was the place secured for the first location of St. Wenceslaus. It stood on a site opposite the present Metz hall on South Thirteenth street and was a frame structure of primitive character, 25x30 feet in size, ten feet high and unplastered. The dance hall was converted into a place for sacred service, the barroom became a school room, and the residence of the owner of the hall became the parsonage of the then pastor, Rev. Father Wenceslaus Kocarnik, O. S. B. He arrived in July, 1887, from St. Vincent, Pa., and was at once priest and teacher. He came to Omaha as the selection of the abbot of his order on request of Bishop James O'Connor, then ruling the Omaha diocese.

When Mothers Mary Michael and Catharine

opened the school one room had to suffice for the Bohemian children and those of Irish parentage. The members of the parish were few in number and were just beginning to acquire their own homes, so that progress was not rapid for several years. Some of the first pupils of the old St. Wenceslaus school are now sisters in the Convent of Mercy, the present principal of the school being one. The monthly income from tuition fees at that time was from \$12 to \$18, the latter being the high mark. That the parents and pupils were determined to win in their educational struggle was demonstrated by their acts. Often the pupils brought the kindling and the coal to heat the room.

Move to Better Quarters.

In 1885 Father Kocarnik exchanged with Father William Choka, and in the following year the Thirteenth street property had become so valuable the parish sold it for \$9,000. Of this amount \$5,000 was invested in new lots at South Fourteenth and Pine streets and a two-room school building was erected on the new site. In the fall of 1889 the building was made over into a two-story structure of four rooms.

January 8, 1898, the present pastor, Father John Vranek, came to the parish. He found seventy-three children and two teachers, but within a year he had increased the number of pupils to 126. Soon a third teacher was added, and then a fourth, the school attendance having increased to almost 200 by 1908. At present there are 212 pupils enrolled.

As a Christmas present to the parish last winter the Kat. Sokol (Catholic Turners' society) bought and paid for an additional piece of property, 25x140 feet, north of the school, for which the society paid \$350.

Architect Nachtigal is now engaged on plans for the new addition to be erected on this property.

"Some children come to this school from Sheeley, from the Riverview park neighborhood, even from as far away as Benson," said Father Vranek. "In the past the St. Wenceslaus school has sent out well educated young men and young women, who have scattered far and wide, and we feel that it will continue to do so. I know of graduates in California, Washington, Colorado, Illinois, Nevada and other states and many are located in different sections of Nebraska. Rev. M. W. Nemecek of Able, Neb., is a graduate of St. Wenceslaus. Others are members of sisterhoods or studying for the priesthood. Graduates of the school have become doctors, lawyers, business men, and all good citizens. They never fail to express their gratitude for the training received at the little St. Wenceslaus school on the south side of Omaha.

"In the early days the school saved money to the city by supporting itself and the self-sacrificing teachers through all sorts of difficulties. The Bohemian Catholics have always had great respect for their school and sent their children here from every section of the city for the benefit of the religious training in school that makes good citizens and founds happy homes."

In the duties of his parish Father Vranek is a very busy man, with sick calls, weddings and the multifarious demands made on a parish priest by a people who look to him for good advice in temporal affairs very often as well as for spiritual comfort and guidance. He knows every man, woman and child in his parish by name and they all know and love him for his fatherly interest, untiring energy and unceasing good work.

Children Work Hard

ACCORDING to Dr. Kuwada, a member of the Japanese House of Peers, more than two-fifths of the 1,000,000 factory hands are women and children. With no laws to fear or evade, says a writer in Success, the mill owners are employing 70,000 children under the age of 14. In the match and tobacco industries particularly the work is for the most part done by children, and of these many are under 10 years of age.

In the spinning mills these child workers are often compelled to continue at their tasks at night without receiving extra pay or chance for rest. For disobedience of shop rules they are lashed and fined, this latter imposition usually wiping out their meager wages.

Most of these girls are recruited from the poor rural districts by agents who lure them on with fascinating tales of city life. The ignorant parents, persuaded that the city will afford their daughters greater opportunity for education and refinement, offer up their children to an existence from which few live to return, and these broken in health and morals.

Omaha's Official Housekeeping Staff

(Continued from Page One.)

If anybody sells you mangel-wurzels for turnips Killian will aid you to have the exchange properly made.

Boards and Bureaucrats.

Boards handle the police and the firemen who protect Omaha citizens and buildings from hold-ups, assaults and fires. Of course, even a policeman cannot be everywhere all the time, and sometimes he misses fire on quick-action jobs, no matter how good and careful the board may be in outlining his duties. The firemen camp with their job night and day, in two shifts, and while water is their main weapon some of them would drown if they had to swim for life. Both branches of this purely protective service for the city household are popular visitors when trouble is close at hand.

Then there are the departments of parks and education, which provide and decorate breathing spots and train the young of the household in the good things to know. They fill roles of great importance in the way of building for the future as well as making the present as pleasant as possible, despite the

Juvenile opinion to the contrary in the case of the school board.

There is also the water board, but its duties up to date have not been much harder than the fearfully tiresome work of keeping reporters out of the meetings where weighty matters of public welfare are being treated with owlesque wisdom.

In the municipal house proper, the big guns are Mayor Dahlman, who by law supervises every detail of the general housekeeping scheme; City Clerk "Dan" Butler, who writes the city's letters, keeps peace among the councilmen and collects the dog tax; Treasurer Frank Fursy, too busy counting money to get married; Fred H. Cosgrove, who supervises all the accounts of the household and keeps the red tape from becoming too badly tangled; Professor Charles Crowley, who dissects gas and seeks out the million and one hobgoblin things that infest the city water; and Emil Wahlstrom, who heads the force of everyday housecleaners camping on the job.

And on Thursday next, May 25, the general household can view all its paid housekeepers on parade, in company dress.