

RECOLLECTIONS OF ST. BRENDAN'S BOYS SCHOOL 1950-57

Jerry Dunn

St. Brendan's at that time was an English Catholic elementary school located on the northeast corner of 9th Avenue and Rosemont Boulevard in the Rosemount district of Montreal. The school was under the jurisdiction of the English Sector of Montreal Catholic School Commission (MCSC) or la Commission des Écoles Catholiques de Montréal (CECM). [I'm not sure if there was a separate English Sector at that time.]

To the north of the school and the Girl's school yard was a small rocky field leading to Beaubien Street. To the east was another field which disappeared over my years at St. Brendan's, as 10th Avenue was extended north from Rosemont Boulevard. To the west was a relatively new City of Montreal complex which included a library, dental clinic, and indoor swimming pool. Beyond the complex, between 6th Avenue and 8th Avenue was the PSBGM's Nesbitt School

At that time St. Brendan's consisted of two buildings: the white brick larger building fronting on 9th Avenue and housing the Girl's school and most of the classes of the Boy's school. A separate older, square, and steepled red-bricked building with a high fieldstone foundation, south of the main structure, housed four classes on two floors. This quaint building was demolished sometime in the 1960's or 70's.

As there was no kindergarten offered in English Catholic schools at that time, I attended grades 1 through 7. (I believe the MCSC kindergarten program began around 1970.) The principal of the Boy's school was Mr. Rochford and my teachers in ascending order from grade 1 were Miss Daling, Miss LaSalle, Mr. MacKenzie, Mr. McKeever, Mr. Dericco, and Mr. Claude Picard. (I'm sure my spellings need correction.)

I remember an always crowded school yard with baseball played in season in most every corner of the many cornered yard. Somehow, in those days we could have a baseball game in 15 or 20 minutes of recess time. There were massive games of 'yards' - a kind of touch football using precious tennis balls, smaller games of leapfrog, 'alleys' (what we called marbles), and assorted games involving baseball and hockey cards.

There were monthly 'processions' to St. Brendan's Church, east 6 blocks along Rosemount Boulevard to 14th Avenue, for Thursday afternoon Confession and First Friday Mass. Father McManus was the pastor. Gym class consisted of very occasional gatherings in the painted concrete (terrazzo?) gymnasium for marching. That 'gym' was also the scene for after school detentions which consisted of standing on a line outside the principal's office.

I have few recollections of classroom activities. I remember periodic tests from the school board which were taken very seriously, spelling bees, and French instruction which began in Grade 4 and featured pictorial scenes on large cardboard posters. In those days there were also Grade 7 Ministry examinations. There was milk program with small

glass milk bottles, an in-school banking program, sponsored by the then City & District Bank. I believe it was in Grade 6 that we were brought to the adjacent city swimming pool for swimming lessons, and in Grade 7 we trekked south to a French school on 8th and Dandurand for manual training (woodwork).

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