

# Our History

## Building 'bee' provides first schoolhouse for St. Bernard



By Ellen G. Krenke

In 1947, when the parish decided that it needed a larger space in which to educate its children, a "bee" was held to build a temporary barracks school in one day.

The bee project was organized by Rev. Ferdinand A. Mack, when the parish could not find a contractor to do the job, because they were all too busy, according to an article in *The Capital Times*.

"I didn't think you would be able to do it," said Bishop William P. O'Connor, the bishop of the Diocese of Madison, when he visited the job site. "It is almost like the days of St. Patrick, when he traveled around with a crew of men and erected a little church to serve his recently baptized flock."

St. Bernard had planned an eight-room school with an auditorium and a new rectory with John Flad, an architect based in Madison, but "current building difficulties had made it necessary to postpone these projects," the article states.

During the previous school year, the kindergarten and first through third grades were taught by the Sisters of St. Francis in "make-shift" classrooms in the basement, the article states.

To make room for the fourth grade, the parish got a permit to build the barracks school.

"When the call for volunteer workers went out, the response brought farmer, doctor, lawyer, merchant and high school youth" to the building site, the article states.

In the cutline of the photo, the women of the parish were credited with feeding the men as they worked throughout the day.

Those pictured include some very familiar family names, such as: Odelia Acker; Mrs. Anthony Weinand; Mrs. Henry Acker, Sr.; Nancy Mack; Lee Mack; Bobby Busch; Mrs. Melvin Busch; Mrs. Henry Busch; Henry Ziegler; Eugene Treinen; Carl Frisch; John J.

Adler; Charles H. Dahmen; W.O. Baker; Ray Adler; Henry Reisdorf; John Hensen; Al Kolstadt; Jackie Hensen; Ray Frisch; Jerry Hensen; Bob Dahmen; Danne Hansen; Louis Frisch; Ernest Schreier; Linus Teff; the Rev. Ferdinand Mack; Dr. M.F. Stricker; Math Simon; Richard Blaschka; Adam Annen; Ralph Frisch; Jake Schlump; George Kuepper; Henry Hellenbrand; Joe Mousseau; Nick Ripp; John E. Hilgers; Fred W. Schreier and Joe Niesen.

The two men on top of the framing are identified as August Sternhagen and Emil Gehin.

In a letter to the editor of *The Capital Times*, Mack was commended for organizing the bee: "The spirit of the pioneers still lives."

Two years later, the new school was built with grades one through eight.

St. Bernard was a mission for 51 years until 1940, when Mack was assigned as the first pastor.