



From the Archives

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THE OLD AND THE NEW ST. RITA'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

By Frank Baldassare

The original St. Rita's Elementary School, situated north of Gouin Boulevard, opened in 193, as noted in Terry Maher's excellent article. Before relocating in the late 1950s to its new site on the corner of Durham and Sauriol Streets in Montreal's Ahuntsic district, the school served the English-speaking population of what was then a rapidly developing area of the city.

Orlando Sbragia was among the first principals of the old St. Rita's School in Montreal-North. In the mid 1950's however, Fred Keenan served as principal of the new St. Rita's. Its annex was across the street from the main building. St. Rita's was a feeder school to St. Pius X. The church, by the same name, was conveniently located on the north-west corner of the school. Father Healy, Father Fitzpatrick and Father L'Allemant were the priests attached to the parish. During that period, Glen Hogan and Albert Courtemanche held the positions of vice-principal until each was later appointed principal of his own respective school. Fred Keenan's wife, Celia taught grade 4, and all five of their children attended St. Rita's.

I began my teaching career at St. Rita's Elementary School in 1959, along such notable colleagues as Des Ryan, Pete Galley, Mary-Ann Rusk, Kevin Lyng, John Reiser, Orlando DiGironimo, and Louis Balena. I taught Grade 5 and then advanced with the same group of students to Grade 6 and 7. In 1962, in what was considered a promotion, I was transferred to Marymount High School.

While an exact closure date is not universally cited in official records, community history indicates that the school building was eventually transferred from the English Catholic system to the French Board, now known as the Centre de Services Scolaire de Montréal (CSSM) formerly the CSDM. The demographic shifts and dwindling enrollment that affected many English schools in Montreal likely led to its formal closure as an annex for other institutions.