

# A 'moving' experience for St. Thomas the Apostle Parish

By Richard A. Kiley

Passers-by of St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Rochester last Monday, November 10, witnessed something you don't see everyday.

A house moved.

No, not by itself, although there had been stories that the historical edifice, which over the years has been used as a priest house, convent and rectory since the church was established in 1922, was frequented by spirits.

The scene may have looked like something from a Stephen King book, but it was simply a case of Rochester's Shantz Homes, Inc. taking away what had become an unnecessary expenditure for the parish on St. Paul Boulevard.

According to diocesan archivist Father Robert F. McNamara, the oldest section of the house was constructed around the turn of the century, and originally served as a farmhouse for Edward J. Hohman, a peach farmer.

Father John Muckle, the first pastor of the church, added a wing to the house in 1935, which had served as rectory from 1922 to 1978.

"The house was remarkable most of all for its fine gum wood interior," McNamara said. "It (the house) had loads of doors, and they were all made of gum wood."

After the present rectory was built by Monsignor Richard K. Burns, pastor of St. Thomas the Apostle Church from 1954 to 1982, the house served as a convent for the Sisters of Mercy of Rochester, and most recently housed Holy Cross brothers who teach at Cardinal Mooney High School in Greece.

According to Father L. James Callan, current pastor at St. Thomas, the house was at one time "cramped quarters" for three priests and a housekeeper. The Sisters of Mercy lived there for a short time, but moved out in 1978 due to a shortage of nuns. Then, in 1979, the Holy Cross brothers moved in.

"The brothers were allowed to live there, but it was always with the intention that it was temporary; the house served its purpose," said Father Callan, who came to St. Thomas the Apostle four and a half years ago.

Then last spring, Shantz Homes Inc., of Rochester, purchased a piece of property near the church. According to Father Callan, the idea of Shantz taking the house off the hands of the parish was received "somewhat reluctantly" by Frank Schantz, who is a parishioner at the church.

"Frank accepted the challenge and saved the parish a considerable amount of money," Father Callan said. "We're grateful for his willingness to help us out."



Monsignor Richard K. Burns, left, watches the rectory he once lived in being moved. The rectory was moved on November 10 to a lot a half a block away.

Jeff Goulding/Courier Journal

Brother Edward Boyer, C.S.C., principal of Cardinal Mooney High School and a resident of the old rectory for two of the seven years it was occupied by the Holy Cross brothers, mused about old experiences in the house.

"When we first moved in there we asked Monsignor (Richard K.) Burns about stories of any spirits," said Brother Edward, who is in his second year as principal of the Greece high school. "We used to pray in the front room of the house, and sometimes we would hear distinct footsteps in the kitchen."

"Some thought it was the spirit of Father Muckle... I believe he was waked in the house. We used to chuckle about that. I think it was just a matter of getting used to the sounds of the house."



Dianne Sasiadek's first grade class waves goodbye as workers move the house.

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