

Educational efforts highlighted news of '20s

By Father Robert F. McNamara
Guest contributor

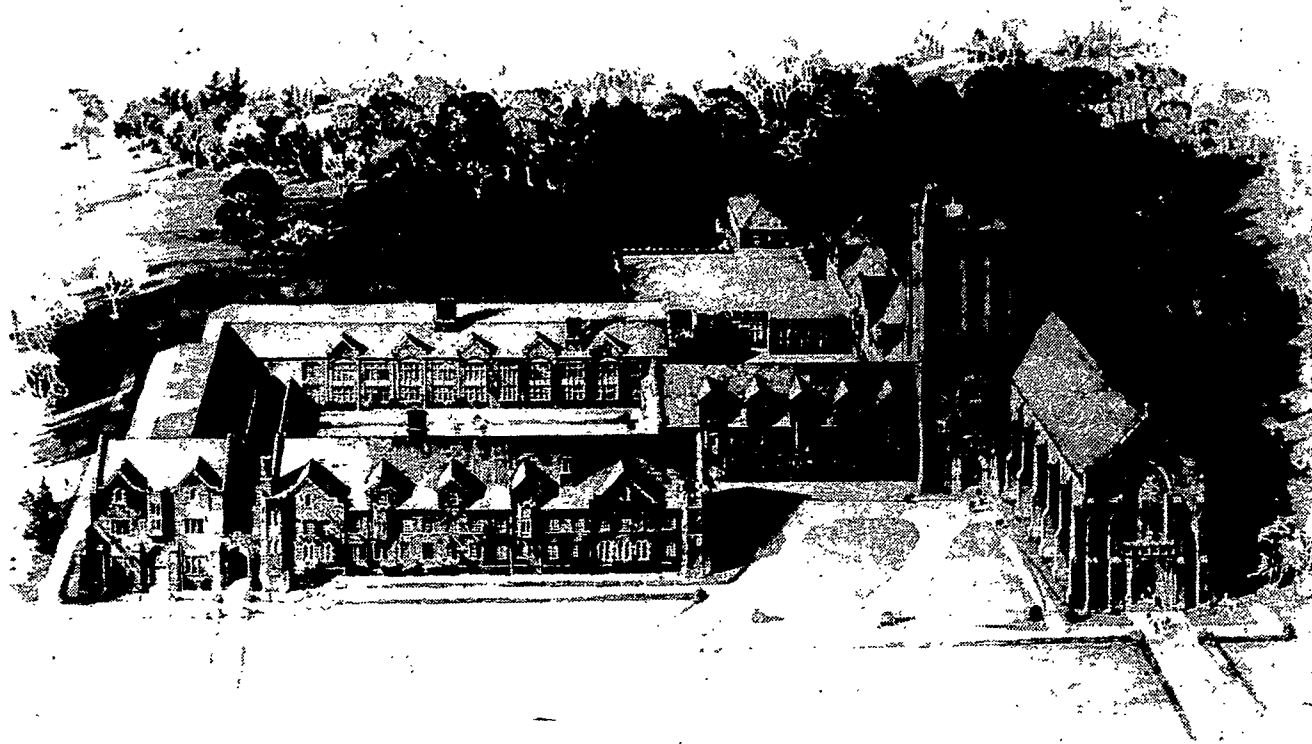
Decade No. 4 in the annals of the *Catholic Courier* ran from 1919 to 1929. What was the outstanding diocesan event of that period?

I would say there were two outstanding events: the foundation of Nazareth College and the opening of Aquinas Institute. Nazareth College was an outgrowth of Nazareth Academy. Aquinas Institute would give birth to St. John Fisher College.

The high school that came to be called Aquinas was 30 years younger than Nazareth Academy. The academy has always been operated by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Rochester, a religious order initiated in 1868 by Rochester's first bishop, Bernard J. McQuaid. In 1871, the order's first superior, Mother Stanislaus Leary, purchased a residence on the northeast corner of Jay Street and Plymouth Avenue North, just up the street from St. Patrick's Cathedral. Here she housed both the community's motherhouse and a girls' secondary school, named Nazareth Academy, to serve both day and boarding students.

The academy's first graduating class, in 1877, had one member, but Nazareth grew rapidly in subsequent years. Nobody was more responsible for its high scholastic quality than Sister Marcella Regan. Named principal in 1882, she served in that capacity for 58 years. As early as 1891, the academy was granted a charter by the New York State Board of Regents; when its curriculum won state approval in 1896, its graduates were awarded the same privileges enjoyed by those of Rochester Free Academy, the public high school. Sister Marcella eventually became so well-known in educational circles that in 1940, Frank P. Graves, New York state commissioner of education, did not hesitate to declare, "I have never come in contact with a greater educator than Sister Marcella of Nazareth Academy in Rochester."

By the mid-1990s, the school had outgrown its facilities. The sisters therefore built for it the home that it still occupies at 1001 Lake Ave. When the doors of this pleasantly relocated school swung open in 1916, several hundreds of students flocked in.



Nazareth College of Rochester, founded in 1924, moved to its current East Avenue campus, next to the Sisters of St. Joseph Motherhouse, in 1942. File photo

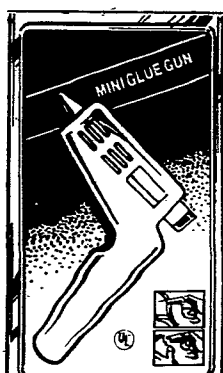
By that time, an increasing number of Nazareth graduates were going on to college. The first American women's college was Notre Dame of Maryland, inaugurated by the School Sisters of Notre Dame at Baltimore in 1896. Other women's orders had followed suit. Nevertheless, by the mid-1920s there was no Catholic girls' college within the diocese of Rochester. Thus many young high school graduates who could not afford to travel away to school were deprived of the privilege of earning degrees at a Catholic institution. Among the Rochester Sisters of St. Joseph the question therefore arose: Should they found their own college? In a sense these sisters already had advanced beyond high school education

when in 1889 they opened a normal school, available not only to their own nuns but to lay women as well.

The vote to start a college was favorable. Nazareth College of Rochester opened on Sept. 25, 1924, and received formal incorporation by state law the following April 9. The original home of the college bore witness to its parentage. It was the handsome old Rouse residence at 981 Lake Ave., in the shadow of Nazareth Academy.

Because the Rouse home had a front porch enclosed with plate glass, it came to be fondly called the "Glass House." Mother Sylvester Tindell, superior general of the sisters, was the first president. Three other sisters and

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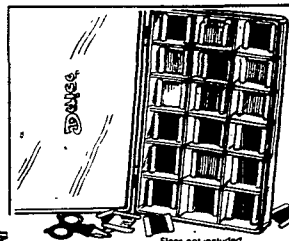


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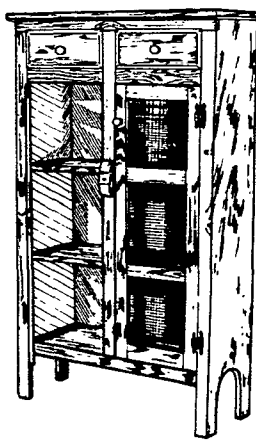
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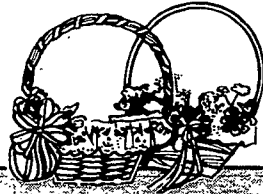


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