

## **MEMORIES OF OLD ST. RITA'S**

**by Terry Maher**

St. Rita's opened around 1931 in an existing red brick school house, north of Gouin just west of Visitation Church at Sault-au-Récollet\*. There was an orphanage between St. Rita's and the Church, but the church was just a stone's throw away from the school. The nuns would often walk by with the young orphans some marked with circles of ink, which at that time was a treatment for ringworm.

Before St. Rita's opened, English Catholics shared space at École Nicolas Viel, at the corner of St. Michel and Henri Bourassa, called Perras at the time. My older sister had gone to Nicolas Viel in the 20's. The 24 streetcar ran from the Montreal city limits located between St. Michel and Pie IX, west along Perras then south on Millen to Cremazie. There was a single track line running east from the city limits.

St. Rita's building ran lengthwise from Gouin toward the river with separate school yards for girls and boys on either end. A wooden fence blocked the view of the river (Rivière des Prairies).

The principal was Miss Margaret McManiman. I also remember Miss Beasdale and Miss Dockeral. Miss Beasdale was an Olympic runner, and I remember her gone from class for a month for the Olympic Games (probably either in Los Angeles in 1934 or Munich in 1938.) I later met her when she was in her sixties, and she was still a runner. Miss Dockeral married and became Mrs. Lieu, and when I became a teacher she was on staff in my first school.

I also remember two King sisters named Margaret and Peggy. This was rather unusual as Peggy is a nickname for Margaret. Rumour had it that their father, under some strong influence, had insisted that the second girl be so baptized.

\*Visitation Church at Sault-au-Récollet is the oldest church in Montreal, built c.1750 - the original Notre-Dame-de-Bonsecours in Old Montreal, built in the 1600's, had been destroyed by fire in 1754).