

August 10, 1977

Last visit to Our Lady of Victory sees antique dealers, wrecking ball

By ARICK SONNEBORN

It took Larry Weaver and Lance Alletzhauser about four days to completely strip all salvageable goods from inside the nearly 70-year-old structure.

They started last Thursday in order to complete the stripping by Mon-

day afternoon when the crane was to move in and start the total demolition of Delhi's Our Lady of Victory Church, 810 Neeb Rd.

By Saturday afternoon the walls had been chiseled away from the 1908-vintage doorways and the entire units had been removed. They had

already sold the vestment cabinets, confessionals and the entrance-foyer assembly.

It seemed to be a cold-hearted process, mainly due to the new-born historical interest and American sentimentality about the wrecking of any long-standing building. But for Our Lady of Victory parish, it symbolizes the start of a new life.

Parishioners have celebrated all Masses in the nearby school building since the old church was vacated after Christmas 1972. Plans are underway for a new church to be built on the parish's land just north of the old church site.

Pieces of the church's interior have already spread themselves throughout the nation. They will continue to live by gracing elegant restaurants, spacious mansions, or possibly come to rest in a new parish.

The architectural antique business isn't that new to Weaver and Alletzhauser. They work their way through many soon-to-be-gone Cincinnati homes and offices. In fact, they were one of the largest buyers of interior pieces from the downtown Albee Theater.

Most of the furnishings are sold to southern buyers, said Weaver. Restaurant chains and managers of large buildings are the most frequent buyers.

Some interior pieces of the old church are still in the Cincinnati area. The entrance foyer was sold to a downtown antique dealer. A resident of Greens Twp. bought the vestment cabinets.

The parish reportedly had the stained-glass windows removed and they were brought by a firm in Louisville, Kentucky. The confessionals went to a Texas restaurant chain along with the prayer rail, while the alters are on the way to North Carolina.

Other items removed by the pair included the rail from the balcony, the shuttle-hole type windows in the

roof, all doorways, lights and various wooden furnishings.

The hand-painted arched ceiling and domed area above the altar, obviously, could not be removed and are now left to the wrecking crane of Allgeier & Son, Inc. Demolition is expected to be completed within the next few weeks.

Although the church was stripped to the brick and stood with gaping holes where stained-glass and doorways once stood, it still contained remnants of those that worked and played within.

Splashed across the walls inside the bell-tower were names of workmen who were either one-time painters or repairmen of the tower. Also included in the list were names of former parish bell-ringers.

Oestriccher & Son, painter, splashed their names in black swaths on the brick. Ferd Dietrich used a pencil to mark the date he completed repairwork on the tower (Aug. 27, 1926; Jan. 12, 1932; Feb. 13, 1935; Nov. 7, 1938 and March 27, 1943). Harry McCarthy continued the tradition and placed his name on the list when he repaired the tower on Sept. 20, 1945. Western Waterproofing Co. boldly wrote they had "waterproofed entire church" in June 1937.

Others who placed their names on the tower wall included J.B. Klausener (Jan. 5, 1909); Al Shan (Aug. 27, 1926); Peter Fisher (Nov. 21, 1917); E. Koeninger (Jan. 12, 1933); Jake Binder (Aug. 10, 1937); Dick Combs (Nov. 7, 1938); A.L. Brill; W. Myers; B. Wessel of St. Bernard (Feb. 12, 1909); and a few newcomers of 1972 vintage almost disfigured the walls with their youth.

After one last climb to the tower's high arches to look through its eyes at throbbing Delhi, it was time to head down to the swaying ladder to the car, take one last look and drive away — always remembering that final visit.



Larry Weaver (left) and Lance Alletzhauser remove a section of the church alter to be shipped through their architectural antique business to southern buyers. The church had been vacated for several years (below) as the parish is planning a new building at an adjacent site. In the bell tower (below, right) names of repairmen and bell-ringers remained as one last touch of sentimentality before the actual demolition began this week. (Arick Sonneborn photos)



PHOTOS BY TERRY DUSCHINSKI

It Happened Last Week, Old OLV Church Leveled

A demolition team chewed away at the back end, first, but through the week the steeple of old Our Lady of Victory Church still stood in the skyline of the township—until Thursday. It was approximately 12:30 p.m. that day that contractors hooked a cable into the midsection of the steeple and pulled it crucifix-first to the ground (see photos above). The crucifix, planted at the top of the sixty-nine-year-old Catholic Church, shattered upon impact. Efforts earlier in the day to remove it beforehand were not successful.

By week's end, the entire church was reduced to

debris upon the ground, waiting to be excavated. A new church will be built nearby.

Parish officials say the parish outgrew the old church more than fifteen years ago. It was not large enough to house the congregation, and was architecturally incapable of having an addition built on. The roof was in poor condition and the steeple was decayed.

The church remained in partial use until five years ago. Services are presently held in a chapel in a school building, as they have been the last several years. The

old church was built for a total cost of approximately thirty-five thousand dollars in 1908. The cost of demolition will run about \$7500.

Crowds gathered, children and grown-ups alike sifting through the rubble for a souvenir, in the final hours of the church's existence.

Pictured below are some of the scenes that unfolded through the week, including the unsuccessful try to save the crucifix and the gazes of OLV Pastor, the Rev. J. Paul Gruber, and assistant, the Rev. Timothy Kellerher, as the church went down.



The Delhi

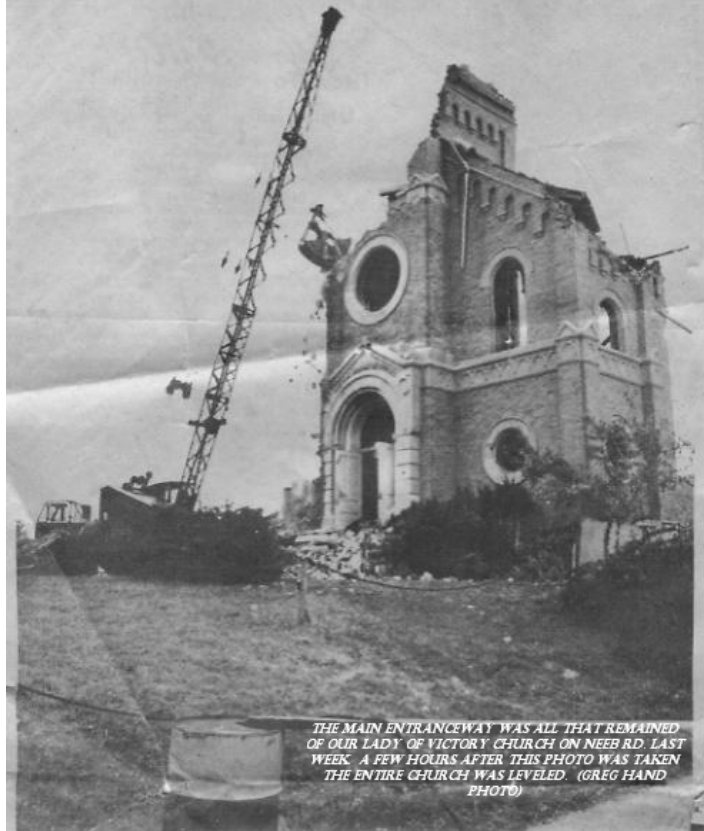
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AUGUST 17, 1977



THE MAIN ENTRANCEWAY WAS ALL THAT REMAINED OF OUR LADY OF VICTORY CHURCH ON NEEB RD. LAST WEEK. A FEW HOURS AFTER THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN THE ENTIRE CHURCH WAS LEVELED. (GREG HAIND PHOTO)

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OLV Church razed

Parishioners and neighbors paid final tribute to the nearly 70-year-old Our Lady of Victory Church last week as the demolition neared completion.

People sat in their cars and watched for hours, others rested on the church grounds on Neeb Rd. as the steeple was removed. Many brought movie cameras, some carried snapshots already developed from their instant cameras.

Crowds of youngsters gathered near the roped off areas, waiting for a brick or shingle to fall their way for a souvenir.

By last Friday morning all the walls were reduced to piles of bricks. Workmen had attempted to salvage

the concrete cross above the arch of the main entranceway. When all but the front corner of the building remained, a workman was sent to break the cross loose from the arch with a sledgehammer. The cross, however, wouldn't budge, and instead cracked.

Those who watched the final demolition had their own observations. Tom Ahlrichs of Springarden said, "I hate to see it go, but at least something good will take its place." His brother, Jay, remembered what it was like inside the church when the balcony floor creaked when walked upon and when plaster would

fall from the ceiling as those inside would sing.

Joan Seilhorst of Neeb Rd. commented that, "I think it's sad, but that's the way it goes. Her family watches most of the demolition from their living room window. "We were sitting in the living room and we left, and when we came back the steeple was gone."

Ray Conaway of Carnack said, "Maybe I'm nostalgic, but why couldn't you put in wooden beams and widen the church out? There's no way anything like this could be replaced."





Neeb Road Getting New Look In A Number Of Ways

Construction work and even some demolition abounds on Neeb Road by Our Lady of Victory. Apartments, offices, road improvements and the removal of OLV Church

should clog the area with bulldozers and cement trucks for the next couple months. Get the details on page three.

Friday, March 28, 1980

NEW CHURCH
of Our Lady of Vic-
tory, Delhi, was
dedicated March 23.
Story on page one.



Archbishop dedicates new parish church in Delhi

OUR LADY of Victory parish, Delhi, celebrated the completion of its new church Sunday (March 23) when Archbishop Joseph L. Bernardin dedicated the \$1,100,000 edifice.

The contemporary-style structure, which seats 880 persons, "has been carefully planned so it can accommodate the renewed liturgy of the Second Vatican Council," the archbishop noted in his homily at the dedication Mass.

Father J. Paul Gruber, pastor, publicly thanked "the over 7,000 individuals of Our Lady of Victory parish who have made this dedication possible."

The parish, established in

1843, numbers 1,500 families.

BECAUSE of the fan-shaped structure of the church, no one in the nave will be far from the altar and lectern. The vestibule is large to provide space for the parish community to gather before and after services — including weddings and funerals.

The Eucharist is reserved in a separate chapel designed for private devotion and for small gatherings at weekday Mass. Two reconciliation rooms off the

chapel offer the options of anonymous and face-to-face confession.

The baptismal font is in the front of the church where the celebration of the sacrament of baptism will be easily witnessed.

The irregularly-shaped building, which includes a bell tower, is made of split-face concrete block. Only the landscaping remains to be finished.

IN HIS HOMILY, Archbishop Bernardin said that the

new church "in every respect...reflects what the Council taught us about the liturgy. At the same time, it is eminently suited for the essentially sacred character of the Eucharist..."

But, he added, quoting St. Paul, "you — the people — are the real church, not the brick and mortar around you. And the foundation for this church, understood in a moral or spiritual sense, is none other than Jesus Christ."

"Unless the moral beauty of our lives matches — and hopefully even exceeds — the physical beauty of this building, this structure will have little meaning," the archbishop said.

"Actually, if our lives do not reflect the Lord's goodness, His love and mercy, His understanding and compassion, then this place of worship becomes a contradiction and our use of it becomes hypocritical. It is the

vitality of Jesus Himself that must become the vitality of this living community."

RECALLING the dedication of the church to God in honor of Mary, Archbishop Bernardin said: "In Mary we have a wonderful model and I urge you to follow her example. It was Mary's total openness to God's will that enabled her to become a partner in the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption..."

"It is this same faith and fidelity that bring us together this afternoon and give meaning to this celebration. It is this same faith and fidelity that will ensure that our worship in this church is authentic, that it will cause us truly to grow in the Lord."

Architect for the church was Robert L. Holtmeier; R.J. Beischel Building company was the general contractor.