

Orphanage of the Holy Child

by Dee Nelson

It's Phoenix Center today, it used to be St. Monica's Home for Women, but none of us probably remember when it was the Episcopal Church's Orphanage of the Holy Child.

The Episcopal Church arrived in Springfield in 1835 and early services were held in the private residence of George Forquer, (IL State Senator and later IL Secretary of State), 220 East Adams. The first baptism celebrated in the Springfield Church was that of Senator Forquer's son.

In 1880, under the direction of Bishop George Franklin Seymour, St. Paul's Orphanage was founded and located in the then vacant Forquer home. Being supervised by Episcopal sisters and women, "It has been a fine work of human salvage, of education and training for underprivileged girl children." The children were known to have "learned to live a normal, happy, home life."

The parish church, which had been constructed at the southeast corner of Third and Adams Streets, moved into a newly constructed church, parish house and rectory on the southwest corner of Second Street and Lawrence Avenue in 1913. At the same time, the orphanage sold the Forquer home and moved into a new brick structure at 107 East Lawrence, directly north of the new church. It was "...a fine, substantial building which has always looked more like a real home than an institution, and that it ought to be, 'A home for Little children.' "

When the orphanage was made an institution of the diocese, the name was changed to the Orphanage of the Holy Child.

The Old Guild of the Holy Child functioned as a supportive entity of the orphanage. St. Faith's Society was founded by "prominent young ladies of the parish, for the benefit and in the interest of the Orphanage of the Holy Child".

Over the years, physicians and dentists, who were members of St. Paul's parish, "freely and gladly" gave their services for the health of the children resulting in a health record that "has been phenomenally good". Business firms throughout the city gave generously toward the support of the orphanage.

Since the above information was taken from a publication printed in 1935 while the orphanage was still in existence, it is safe to assume that the mention of a social trend of placing orphaned or underprivileged children in private homes is precisely what transpired. The concern of the author was, however, the availability of enough Christian oriented homes to develop and nurture Christian values in the children.

Courtesy of Sangamon Valley Collection, Lincoln Library, Springfield, IL: *The Parish of St. Paul's Church*, compiled by Edward Haughton, Rector.