

# Telegram & Gazette: Bringing back our precious memories

By Joseph Massie

When you read your newspaper, you expect to see the usual news, sports, etc. along with an occasional heartfelt story. But truth be told, T&G has gone above and beyond. T&G gave its time providing the orphaned children of Worcester access to the media as well as numerous staff members. Worcester's St. Anne's Orphanage (SAO) was no exception.

Last year my sister and I visited the Worcester Public Library in search for information about the orphanage of which we were borders back in the 1950s. I came across a Sunday Telegraph clipping (Sept. 16, 1951) of the St. Ann's Orphanage Playground Dedication. Tears rolled down my cheeks as a sixty-year-old memory became a reality. I saw the inclined driveway between playground 2 and 3 where my sister and I rolled a ball to each other, even though it was against the rules.

This revelation was the catapult to our Facebook page and eventually our book 'The Ghosts of St. Ann's Past: Stories of St. Ann's Orphanage Worcester'. We searched all over Worcester for information about SAO. T&G became the major source of our findings. It provided us with a historical timeline and the news from SAO's past.

We also found the compassion and dedication T&G had for the plight of these poor souls. T&G help organize fund drives. The reporters gave their precious time gathering the details for the many stories posted over the years. They included Marion Hutchinson 1942, Jack Deedy 1950, Betty Lilyestrom 1959 & 1966, Marilyn Spear 1966, Gary Mathieu 1967, and Richard Duckett 1987, just to name a few. Many T&G articles didn't even have a staffer's name attached.

It didn't just end with reporting. As you follow the history of St. Ann's Orphanage you see how so many people in and around the Worcester area pulled together to help these kids. 1923 was no exception as SAO's wooden structure, built around 1890, was condemned. T&G and other organizations created 'Orphans' Tag Day'. They collected funds and found 300 local workers who provided free labor to help build a 250-bed brick dormitory for the orphans.

Each Christmas the Gazette Santa came to SAO to visit the children. I have seen clippings from 1942, 1943 & 1954. Upon seeing the clipping from 1954 another memory of mine was solidified. I remember doing a Snowman Dance for SAO's 1954 Christmas. The Gazette Santa, Willard Smith, came to watch the orphans' stage plays. He also entertained the audience by doing a magical act of his own. He then presented the more than 200 children with presents collected by T&G. Now those were the magic moments.

We gathered many newspaper clippings and photos and posted them on our St. Ann's Orphanage Worcester Facebook Page. We also incorporated some into our book. T&G played an integral part with their support of the orphans. Like St. Anne's Orphanage, the hard work and dedication provided by T&G and the community of Worcester have been forgotten by so many people. I can assure you that the former residents of St. Ann's French-Canadian Orphanage of Worcester and their families do remember and thank each and every one of you for your unselfish support. Our newly strengthened memories have helped to strengthen our family bonds.