The new Mount St. Benedict Academy with the convent tower and original building in the background. The building at the extreme left of the picture is the school gymnasium.

St. Vincent Hospital became St. Vincent’s Rest Home for the elderly when St. Francis Hospital opened in 1950. Elderly persons needing long-term care were welcomed to St. Vincent’s by the Sisters who were eager to care for them. In 1974 the American Nursing Home Association gave the “Excellence Award” to St. Vincent’s Home in recognition of the excellent health care provided for elderly patients.

In 1963, the high school had outgrown its physical space, and so a new academy building was added with a spacious residence hall, modern equipped classrooms, laboratories, library, and gymnasium.

After twenty years of providing acute patient care in Crookston, in 1970 St. Francis Hospital was converted into a board-and-care home for elderly people not requiring nursing care. Meals, other services, and security are provided for these people.

The Benedictine Sisters undertook many forms of ministry in serving the residents of Polk County, including the visiting of the elderly in their own homes, assisting the poor and underprivileged, working with migrants during summer months, assisting students on the campus of the Crookston Technical College, teaching religious classes in small towns, managing a school for practical nurses, the practice of the professions of law, dentistry, and public school teaching. Anywhere there is a need, the Benedictine Sisters seek to fill the gap. As the culture changes, the Sisters’ apostolate is evaluated and adjusted to meet new needs. Situated in the rural area of the Red River Valley, the Sisters keep pace with farming trends by operating an extensive garden which not only provides most of their food and a surplus for the less fortunate, but also offers an opportunity for experimentation with seeds and soil.

Although the Sisters have opened three hospitals and some twelve schools outside of Polk County, Crookston remains home to each of the sisters. It is here that she will live out her last days and be laid to rest in the community cemetery on the Mount property. The life of a Sister is one of challenge and adventure; it is one of service to God and to fellowmen. At present each Sister is called upon to make a sacrifice of material comforts so as to make possible the erection of a new building for the long-term-care patients of St. Vincent’s Home. Plans are ready to go into building operation in 1976.

St. Benedict taught his followers to continue to adapt to the changing culture, to the location, and to the special needs of the time. Hence the life of a Benedictine community calls for a constant analyzing of the culture, a seeking to support what appears to be good and to offset the evil; it calls for a recognition of the downtrodden and less fortunate, with an espousal of their rights. But it is, above all, a continual striving for self-sacrification and growth in prayer. Hence the motto of the Benedictine must be lived daily: “Ora et Labora.”

THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH PIONEERED IN MINNESOTA

What does it mean to pioneer in a nation which itself had to throw off the yoke of oppression in order to establish a Constitution to guarantee freedom of life, of work, of religion to its citizens?

Mother Marie Jeanne Humbert, founder of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Crookston Province, and her five companions would answer that question with assurance simply because they had thrown off the yoke of oppression by anti-religious forces in France in 1903, and had courageously left country and mother tongue to come to the States and establish a new mission in Argyle, Minnesota. They had brought with them no resources but their faith and their zeal to make the Lord known and loved.

True to the spirit of Father Jean Pierre Medaille, S.J., who founded the Congregation in 1650, these pioneer Sisters of St. Joseph spent their lives only that God might be glorified by their service to others through the education of youth, the care of the sick, and social action to improve the lot of all mankind.

Their willingness to work and to sacrifice soon attracted young American-born women to join their ranks. The Sisters of St. Joseph welcomed them at the same time as they welcomed more of their Sisters from France which still forbade the religious to wear their distinctive garb in public or to teach in their schools. In America the situation was different. Although little more than 125 years old, our nation was expanding by leaps and bounds with the influx of ethnic groups coming to a land which promoted freedom.

The year 1905 saw Mother Marie Jeanne and three of the original pioneers of Argyle arriving in Crookston to establish a school which was to serve the area for 56 years. St. Joseph’s Academy began as a one-pupil school on South Ash Street and grew to become a three-story school on Houston Avenue, a school which would claim 816 alumnae by 1969 when the Sisters collaborated in the consolidation of Catholic Schools in Crookston.

From 1903 to about 1963 the Crookston Province had attempted to fulfill its Congregation’s goals through teaching in 16 primary schools and two high schools; through health care in two hospitals; through religious education in nine centers; and through one foreign mission (Recife, Brazil).

The Sisters of St. Joseph were attuned to the changing times in the 1960’s and they found that the charism of their 17th century founder was very much in keeping with the present day needs. While continuing their work as educators, and as members of the health apostolate, they also concentrated their efforts on meeting the needs of young people and adults in parish centers and in coordinating religious instruction. In 1976 they counted 16 Sisters devoting their time and efforts to this work.

The nation celebrates its 200th birthday this year. The Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph looks back over a history of 326 years. The Crookston Province of Sisters of St. Joseph note their 73 years in the Crookston Diocese.

What will the century after this Bicentennial bring for our nation? The Sisters of St. Joseph — present and future — hope that they can contribute to the restoration of those life values which were held as fundamental by the Founding Fathers of this great nation.

St. Joseph’s Provincial House on Marywood Road, Crookston, was built by the Sisters of St. Joseph to serve as their central house of meeting and of administration, and for novitiate and retirement.

ST. VINCENT’S REST HOME

The first Benedictine Sisters came to the city of Crookston in the fall of 1900 to study the feasibility of opening a hospital in Crookston. Father F. Hufenegel, then pastor of Saint