

## Ritter biography donated to New Albany-Floyd County Public Library; work at birthplace to continue

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— It's been more than four decades since his death, but Cardinal Joseph Ritter's biography has finally been written.

Ritter was and remains the only Catholic Cardinal from Indiana. He was born and grew up in New Albany before leaving for the St. Meinrad Seminary.

The book, titled "Joseph Elmer Cardinal Ritter, His Life And Times" was written by Monsignor Nicholas A. Schneider and was published two months ago. On Monday, a copy of the book was donated by the Cardinal Ritter Birthplace Foundation to the New Albany-Floyd County Public Library.

Cardinal Ritter's niece, Virginia Ritter Lipps, and her husband, Paul, made the presentation to Library Director Steve Day.

The book presentation also was a good way to launch what is expected to be "an exciting year" at Ritter's birthplace, 1218 E. Oak St. in New Albany, according to David Hock.

Hock, president of the Ritter Foundation, said work will once again resume in the fall to build an addition and restore the interior. The house was dedicated as an Indiana Historic Landmark last year, four years after work to restore the property started. Considering the current condition and the labor and supplies — much of which were donated — Hock values the house today at about \$250,000.

The foundation received a boost earlier this year with a \$200,000 grant from the Horseshoe Foundation of Floyd County. Hock said that money, along with about \$150,000 more, will complete the renovations.

"The city had condemned the property before we got a hold of it. It was in pretty bad shape," Hock said. "We are just getting ready to take off again."

Hock said the book should help with the restoration efforts and shine light on Ritter's work.

"It's good to have something to show people about what he did," he said.

Ritter was born in New Albany on July 20, 1892, and was ordained to the priesthood on May 30, 1917. He became Bishop of Indianapolis in 1934 and integrated Catholic high schools in the city 17 years before the landmark Supreme Court case of Brown v. the Board of Education.

Ritter also integrated the Catholic schools as Archbishop of St. Louis. He became Indiana's only Cardinal in 1961.

"We're very proud," said Virginia Ritter Lipps, prior to making the book presentation Monday.

She said she always knew Ritter as Uncle Bishop. She said he would try and return home for Thanksgiving and Christmas each year.

"This is wonderful," she said of the book. "You never think when you are kids that something like this is going to happen."

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Photos



Stephen Day, library director for the New Albany-Floyd County Public Library, accepts a biography of Cardinal Ritter from Paul and Virginia Lipps on behalf of the Cardinal Ritter Birthplace Foundation on Monday. Virginia Lipps is the niece of Cardinal Ritter. Staff photo by Kevin McGloshen



"Cardinal Ritter" by Joseph Elmer is the first biography of the New Albany born Catholic cardinal. The book is currently available at Destinations Booksellers in New Albany. Staff photo by Kevin McGloshen



The Cardinal Ritter Birthplace Foundation is still seeking donations for complete renovations on the former Cardinal's New Albany home located on Oak Street. Staff photo by Kevin McGloshen