

# ROCHESTER HISTORY

Edited by Ruth Rosenberg-Naparsteck  
*City Historian*

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## The Academy of the Sacred Heart

*by Vincent Lenti*





*Main entry and adjacent rooms of the Academy of the Sacred Heart at 8 Prince Street, 1968, (Hans Pedelt, Landmark Society, Rochester)*

*Cover: The Academy of the Sacred Heart at 8 Prince Street, 1968.  
(Hans Padelt, Landmark Society, Rochester)*

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*Interior of the Academy of the Sacred Heart at 8 Prince Street, c. 1968.  
(Hans Padelt, Landmark Society, Rochester).*

### **Closing Sacred Heart Academy 1968-1969**

On February 12, 1968, the administration of Sacred Heart Academy, a private elementary and secondary Catholic school operated by the Society of the Sacred Heart, announced that the venerable Rochester institution would close its doors and discontinue operation in June of the following year. The announcement was made by Sister A. McDonell, R.S.C.J., superior of the school,

*who outlined in a news release the basic reasons behind the decision to close the 113 year old school:*

*Consideration has been given to the mounting cost of education, the inadequacy of our present buildings, the tremendous outlay needed to build and maintain a school of the future, and the fine Catholic high schools where openings are available. Members of the Father's Advisory Committee have explored many avenues and presented a number of proposals. These have been reviewed, but no acceptable solution has been found.<sup>1</sup>*

It is interesting to note that, in addition to mentioning various financial considerations, Sister McDonell also referred to the "openings" for students in area Catholic high schools. Less than a half dozen years earlier, the Rochester Roman Catholic Diocese had opened two new high schools, Bishop Kearney in Irondequoit and Cardinal Mooney in Greece. These schools were both co-institutional (rather than co-educational), with separate classes for boys and girls maintained in separate wings of the school buildings. The two new institutions joined four other Rochester area high schools - Aquinas Institute and McQuaid Jesuit High School for boys, and St. Agnes High School and Nazareth Academy for girls. The competition for high school students had rather dramatically increased.

At the time of the announcement that the Academy would close, the school had an enrollment of 280 students, including forty-three boys and girls in its kindergarten. Except for the kindergarten, Sacred Heart Academy was a girl's school and enrolled 150 students in its elementary school and 87 in its high school. The Academy was, therefore, a relatively small institution, and Sister McDonell acknowledged that "a small school cannot make it as a school of the future in this day and age." In 1968, the school was staffed by a faculty of fifteen lay teachers and eleven sisters. Tuition costs were between \$500 and \$650 depending upon the grade level of the student.

The news of the academy's closing met with much sadness and considerable surprise among those who had come to admire and appreciate the contribution which the Sacred Heart nuns had made in Rochester. As a courtesy Mother McDonell sent out the following letter to parents, alumnae, and friends two days prior to the official public announcement:

*For a long time the problems of our school here at Prince Street have been under consideration. A final decision has been reached by the Province of the Society of the Sacred Heart: Prince Street will close in June, 1969. This decision is painful and difficult for you and for us indeed for all the Religious of the Sacred Heart.*

*Such a decision, and our concern for all whom it affects, requires that no delay be made in informing you. At the same time, we want to express our gratitude to all of you for your genuine interest during these last years. Especially, we thank the members of the Fathers' Advisory Committee who have given so generously of their time and support. They have studied the problems, worked unselfishly, communicated with experts in the field of education; indeed, they have done all they could to solve these problems. The proposals have been reviewed, but no acceptable solution was found.*

*Through the many years we have been in Rochester we have experienced the loyalty and appreciation of parents, alumnae, students, faculty, friends, and devoted employees. Our roots are deep; the ties that bind us are unbreakable. We count much on your prayers and understanding in the difficult months ahead. For all of us this is a time of great sacrifice, but also, a time to grow in trust.*

A grand tradition of excellence in education and dedication to the students who turned to the Academy of the Sacred Heart in Rochester was coming to an end. In addition to maintaining a very high academic standard, the Sacred Heart Academy had a reputation for developing the best possible personal qualities in its students. Its stated aims were "to form manners and principles of the young ladies and train them up in the habits of order, politeness, neatness, and industry."<sup>2</sup>

The academy had been founded in 1855 by the Society of the Sacred Heart, an order of nuns which was dedicated to educating young women. Established in France by St. Madeleine Sophie Barat during the chaotic years of the French Revolution, the Sacred Heart sisters had first come to the United States in the 1818. By 1968 the order numbered more than 6,500 members worldwide, and they operated thirty-five different schools in America. To prepare for the closing of its Rochester academy, Sister McDonell announced that they would not admit a first grade during its final year of operation. However, the school would continue the other

grade levels if enrollment was conducive to the aims of good education. In June 1969, however, the Academy of the Sacred Heart would close its doors after 114 continuous years of educating young women in Rochester.

### **Troubled Beginnings in Buffalo, New York 1849-1855**

The Rochester Academy actually had its origins in nearby Buffalo, and its establishment in that city was associated with the Rt. Rev. John Timon, D.D., who was appointed Buffalo's first Roman Catholic Bishop in 1847. His new diocese encompassed most of western New York, including Rochester. Until 1847 all of New York State was under the jurisdiction of the Bishop in New York City, but in that year two new dioceses were created, one in Buffalo and one in Albany. John Timon was a Vincentian priest (after St. Vincent dePaul, their founder), an order of Catholic priests sometimes called "Lazarists" because their original headquarters had been at the ancient Priory of Saint-Lazare in Paris. During the French Revolution and other upheavals of that time, the Vincentians had been dispersed and lost their churches in France, Poland, Italy, and elsewhere in Europe. But they had re-established themselves in 1817 and experienced a marvelous revival during the next few decades. The Vincentians first came to America to assist in the vast Diocese of Louisiana which then extended from the Gulf of Mexico to the Canadian border. Father Timon ministered principally in the south and southwest, and while in Missouri and Louisiana he became acquainted with the work of the Sacred Heart sisters.

Because of his high regard for their work, Bishop Timon asked the Sacred Heart sisters in Manhattanville if they might send several members of their congregation to Buffalo in order to establish a school in his diocese. In response to his request, a group of nuns led by Mother Trincano arrived in Buffalo from New York on June 22, 1849, after a journey of thirty hours. They soon established themselves in the Sherwood House on Lake Erie and opened their new school in September with four boarders and fourteen day students. They had a total of fifteen cents in the convent treasury. Eight of the eighteen students were non-Catholics, and this group included Mary Abigail Fillmore, daughter of Millard Fillmore, then

the Vice-President of the United States and soon to be elected President in the 1850 elections. Facilities at the new “Buffalo Academy for Young Ladies” were very spartan. The chapel altar, for example, was a make-shift arrangement involving the placement of wooden planks across the backs of several chairs and then covered with a table-cloth.

Establishing the school and attracting sufficient numbers of students proved to be an arduous task. The convent journal, faithfully maintained by one of the sisters, included a comment in October of the school’s first year that people were “frightened by our poverty and dare not send us their children, lest they be wanting in comfort and convenience at the convent.”<sup>73</sup> The community’s leader at the time was Mother Branagier. She had arrived in the United States too ill to immediately continue to upstate New York and only arrived in Buffalo in October. Her continued ill-health led to her departure two years later, and the rapid succession of new leaders clearly suggests that health concerns and the general difficulties of their vocation took a heavy toll on these poor Sacred Heart nuns as they valiantly attempted to establish themselves in Bishop Timon’s city.

In 1850 the Buffalo school moved to a new building which had been purchased for them by the bishop who felt that the original location was too far from the center of town to draw sufficient numbers of students. During their second year in this location, one of the boarding students was taken seriously ill and died five days later on May 9, 1852. This was the beginning of a terrible outbreak of cholera in Buffalo which would result in the death of several students and a number of the nuns as well.

By late summer the situation had become extremely serious. The convent journal recorded that “cholera invaded our city two months ago and has been raging all summer.”<sup>74</sup> One of the nuns became ill in August, dying on September 2, and the health situation was so serious as to delay the opening of school in September due to understandable parental anxiety. So many were ill that Bishop Timon moved the sisters to his own home to care for the sick and dying. He was helped by several of the older students who remained to care for the nuns.

In October 1852 the sisters were able to move back to their own convent and to re-open their school. However, enrollment



*Front entryway of the Academy of the Sacred Heart at 8 Prince Street, 196S. (Hans Padelt, Landmark Society of Rochester).*

was only fifteen students instead of the anticipated thirty. On New Years Day, the convent relocated to the Gates homestead on Delaware Avenue and Allen Street. The new house was apparently well-situated and solidly constructed, although it was unspeakably dirty when they arrived. This was apparently to be only a temporary location for the Sacred Heart sisters and their school, since plans were being made for constructing a new convent in nearby Ellysville which they would call “Our Lady of Victories.” The cornerstone for this new facility was laid on September 19, 1853. In the meanwhile the Buffalo school had opened for its fifth year, with an enrollment of only twenty-eight students, seven being boarders from Rochester.

In the spring of 1854 it became apparent that there were serious problems with the construction of the new convent. In June the nuns hired an architect to inspect the work, and he concluded that the walls were too weak to support the superstructure of the building. The existing work, therefore, was condemned, and the Sacred



Heart sisters could only recover \$500 in damages. With the realization that the Buffalo Academy had thus far met with so little success and so many problems, the community of nuns began to discuss the possibility of relocating their school to Rochester. They had received several requests inviting them to do so, and the prospect of beginning anew in another location began to look more and more appealing. In the meanwhile the situation in Buffalo continued to deteriorate, with enrollment declining to twenty-two students in September 1854. The 1854-1855 school year would prove to be the last year in Buffalo for the Sacred Heart nuns.

### **Rochester and the St. Paul Street School 1855-1863**

On June 26, 1855, a group of the sisters from the Buffalo convent arrived in Rochester to select a suitable location for their new convent and school. They were welcomed by Owen Gaffney, who was one of the leading Catholic laymen in the city at that time, and after a short while selected a house and lot at 27 North St. Paul Street which they purchased from its owner, Dr. John B. Elwood. The house was on the west side of the street on a 153-foot wide parcel of land, with the rear of the property extending back 200 feet to Water Street.<sup>5</sup> Within a short time the sisters moved into their new Rochester home, although they had to sleep on the bare floor for the first week before their furniture arrived. Among those who enthusiastically welcomed the sisters to Rochester were the Redemptorist priests who staffed nearby St. Joseph's Church. In the coming years they established a close relationship with the Sacred Heart sisters, offering financial support and serving as confessors to the nuns.

On August 17, 1855, the Rochester school opened for its first term. Rev. Mother Kennedy was the new Superior for the convent, which had a total of fourteen sisters in residence. There were thirty-five enrolled students, including several boarders from Buffalo. The course of study included reading, grammar, writing, analysis, arithmetic, bookkeeping, algebra, history, geography, elocution, composition, poetry, chronology, mythology, botany, philosophy, chemistry, astronomy, geometry, geology, logic, needlework, embroidery, etc., certainly enough to keep fourteen nuns very busy in teaching thirty-five students.

Tuition was \$10 per quarter, although pupils under the age of eight paid only \$7. Boarding students paid \$130 per year. Piano and voice lessons were available at an additional fee, but lessons on the harp were available at no extra charge. All students were required to study French, the language spoken by the Sacred Heart nuns, and instruction was also available in Spanish, German, and Italian. Within a few years the prospectus for the school boasted that the meals were excellent and abundant, adding that “the health of the pupils is an object of constant solicitude and, in sickness, they are attended with abundant care.”<sup>6</sup>

The school held its first commencement in July of 1858, there being only one graduate, Katherine Sharp, who had previously studied with the sisters at their Buffalo location. Since coming to Rochester, the Sacred Heart nuns had improved the facilities of their new convent and school. By 1860 they were accommodating fifty or more day students and over two dozen boarders. The building which the sisters had purchased in 1855 contained a front and back parlor on the first floor, the latter being converted into a chapel. What had been the dining room in the house was used for a coat room by the commuting students. A community room for the nuns was located above the parlor on the second floor, and the refectory was located above the chapel.

The nuns also added a wing to their St. Paul Street building to provide for a large classroom on the ground floor and an equally spacious dormitory room on the second floor with accommodations for thirty-two students, each bed curtained off for privacy. Behind the building was a large garden extending to Water Street in which the sisters grew flowers plus strawberries, asparagus, spinach, and other vegetables. They also had a small vineyard and various fruit trees including peach, apple, and pear. A carriage drive led from St. Paul Street to a small barn, and behind the barn was a hen house and chicken yard. All of this in what is now the heart of downtown Rochester!

In April of 1861 a bill to formally incorporate the Rochester Sacred Heart Academy was approved in Albany by the New York State Assembly. Six months later, the Academy was declared tax exempt by the Rochester Board of Supervisors. More and more students were attracted to the school, which was enjoying the kind of success which had totally eluded the nuns when they were in Buffalo. With success, however, came a new problem. The facili-

ties on St. Paul Street were inadequate for the increasing numbers of students, and a new location in Rochester was urgently needed.

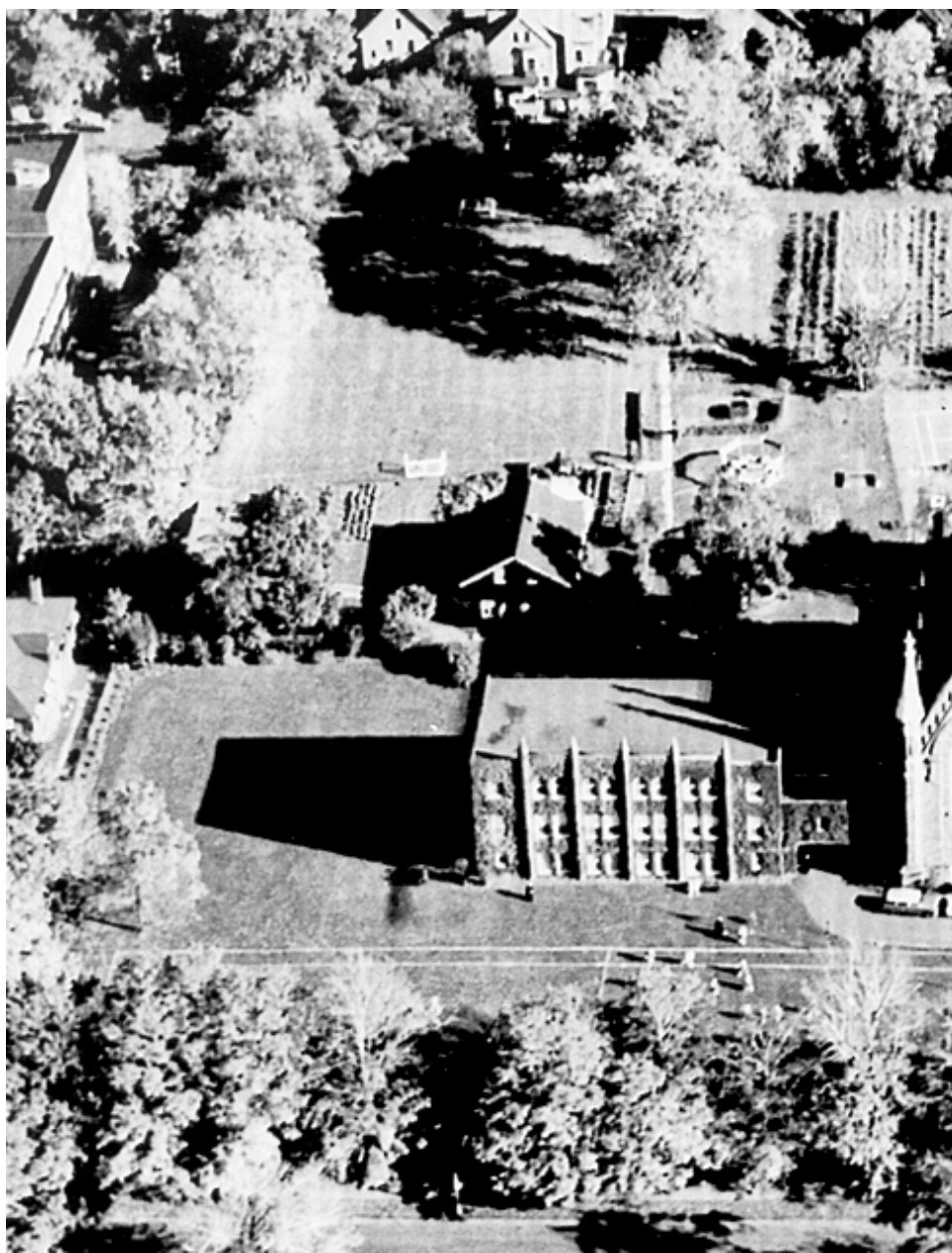
### **New Beginnings on Prince Street 1864-1890**

In 1863 the Rev. Mother Clémence Cornélis arrived to become the new Superior of the Rochester convent, and she immediately began to seek a new location for the convent and school. In December a house and property were purchased on Prince Street from John W. Dwinelle.<sup>7</sup> The purchase price was \$17,500, the deed of purchase being dated December 18, 1863. Immediately after the New Year the Academy of the Sacred Heart opened for business at its new Prince Street location, just off East Avenue. The original property on St. Paul Street was sold later that year to George Clarkson.

The house which the Sacred Heart sisters had purchased was located at No. 8 Prince Street. It was an imposing, Italianate-style residence with three floors above a half-basement. Typical in design of many better homes of its time, it had a large center hall with parlors opening on the left and right, and to the rear. The center hall featured a beautiful tile floor and contained an imposing marble fire-place, one of several in the house. Inlaid marquetry panels on the floors, crystal chandeliers, and richly detailed plaster work on the ceilings were distinguishing features of an imposing residence. The exterior of the house featured a cupola and a broad porch across the front. All of these details remained basically unchanged throughout the Academy's long history on Prince Street

Almost immediately after occupying their new facilities, the sisters constructed an extension to the rear of the building which increased available space by about fifty percent. In 1869 another extension was made to further increase the school's space, this area later serving as the location for the school's library and being distinguished by a stamped metal ceiling and cast iron columns. In addition to this construction, the school acquired various adjoining parcels of land in 1868, 1869, and 1871. These were sold, however, in 1888 when the convent and school property was reduced to the limits of the original purchase.

Two years after first occupying the Prince Street facility, the Academy gained its youngest student with the arrival of Minnie



*Aerial view of the grounds of the Academy of the Sacred Heart at 8 Pri*



nce Street, 1961. (U.S. Province Archives, Society of the Sacred Heart)

Moran. Minnie was eighteen months old. Her mother had died and her father decided to entrust her to the care of the Sacred Heart sisters. She was placed under the care of Sister Hanley, who was in charge of the infirmary, and she lived in the infirmary until she was old enough to begin attending classes. Minnie Moran remained at the convent for sixteen years before leaving to attend another school in Brooklyn, New York.

In 1870 board and tuition at the Sacred Heart Academy was \$200. Students remaining at the school during the summer vacation which extended from the first week in July until September first were charged an additional \$30. All boarding students were required to have uniform dresses, six changes of linen, six napkins, two pairs of blankets, three pairs of sheets, one counterpane, six pillow cases, six towels, one white and one black veil, a silver or plated goblet, fork, spoon, knife, napkin ring, work box, dressing box, combs, brushes, etc. In addition to the tuition charge, there was a \$5 entrance fee, plus charges for books and stationery, use of the library, and music lessons. French was still taught to all students, and instruction in Spanish, German, and Italian remained available at no additional charge.

At about the same time, the Sacred Heart sisters opened a “free school” on their property for the children of Rochester’s poorest Roman Catholics. It was housed in a new building erected to the rear of the Academy itself. Although enrollment was originally restricted to girls, in time they admitted some boys. This “free school” became known as the Parish School, although it was obviously not connected with any of the Roman Catholic parishes. The school did important work for the children of less affluent Catholics, and enrollment grew to more than 150 students. However, more and more Catholic schools were being opened and operated by the city’s Roman Catholic parishes, and, as a consequence, the need for the “Parish School” at the Sacred Heart Academy gradually lessened. Therefore, it was eventually closed, and the sisters once again focused all of their energies on the Academy.<sup>8</sup>

Enrollment at the Academy continued to increase, putting a strain on the available facilities. Therefore, a new building was added in 1875 on the north side of the property, connecting with the original house. The building was designed by Charles Coots, who practiced architecture in Rochester from 1872 to 1881. He had earlier been associated with Andrew J. Warner, Rochester’s most prominent nineteenth century architect. Coots was an advo-



*The chapel of the Academy of the Sacred Heart at 8 Prince Street, 1968.  
(Hans Pedelt, Landmark Society, Rochester)*

cate of the Ruskinian Gothic style of the French Second Empire, and his design for the new building was a reflection of this style of architecture. The building is “T-shaped” with an 80-foot frontage, extending 101 feet to the rear. Three stories high with a mansard roof typical of the style, it was constructed of plain brick with stone trim. The rectangular section in the rear provided the Academy with a large lunch room on the first floor and a large class room and art room on the upper floors.

The number of students during the 1875-1876 school year stood at about one hundred, and there were six girls in the senior class. A relatively large number of the students chose a religious life by becoming sisters, many of them joining the Sacred Heart order. The Keller family saw four of its daughters become nuns, as did the Duffy family. These were years when Catholics families tended to be large, and the majority of these families saw at least one of their sons become a priest, and at least one of their daughters also enter the religious life.

## **The Construction of the New Chapel 1890**

On June 16, 1890, the cornerstone was laid for a new chapel to be constructed to the north of the existing buildings. It was to replace a temporary chapel, which had been used since the opening of the convent and school thirty-five years earlier. Bishop McQuaid presided over the ceremonies which began at 10:00 in the morning and included the blessing of the chapel walls and the imparting of the Episcopal blessing. The architect chosen to design the chapel was Adolfo-Druiding of Chicago. Little is known about his life or his work or why he was chosen as architect-other than the fact that he apparently specialized in Catholic ecclesiastical design.

Druiding used the French Gothic chapel as the model for his chapel in Rochester. This choice was hardly surprising since there was much Gothic revivalism in America during the nineteenth century, mostly based on the English but some on the French style. The exterior walls of the Sacred Heart chapel are of brick except for its stone facade which is dominated by a large stained glass window flanked with corner turrets on either side. There is no entrance on the facade, however, since access to the chapel was through the academy building. The interior of the chapel features an elaborate vault. The sanctuary area is defined by a great chancel arch supported by columns and dominated by a white marble altar standing in a richly decorated apse. In addition, the sanctuary included two small altars on either side of the main altar, the one on the right dedicated to Joseph and the Christ Child, and the one on the left to Mary.

Greatly adding to the beauty of the interior are pointed stained glass windows, seven on the north wall and four on the south. The interior furnishing of the chapel included beautiful oak-carved choir stalls along the lateral walls. At the rear of the chapel is the organ loft, also built of oak, and below the loft is the narthex which is lighted by a small stained glass window. The total cost of all the stained glass windows-eleven along the north and south walls and both the large and small windows facing Prince Street was \$7,600, an impressive sum at that time.

The most unusual feature of Druiding's chapel, however, was the inclusion of a small balcony on the south wall which was ap-





*Our Lady's Shrine in the back garden of the Academy of the Sacred Heart at 8 Prince Street. Undated. (U.S. Province Archives, Society of the Sacred Heart).*

parently designed to be used by students who were housed in the adjacent infirmary. In an intriguing article which he wrote for the Rochester Historical Society, Carl Hersey argued that Druiding's design had to have been inspired by the Chapel of Sainte-Chapelle in Paris, commenting that the little balcony in the Rochester chapel "is closely paralleled by the recessed aperture on the right side of the Sainte-Chapelle through which the King could observe Mass in privacy."<sup>9</sup> Hersey reasoned that the presence of such a rare feature in both chapels could hardly have been coincidental.

The Sacred Heart Chapel in Rochester cost an impressive \$30,000. The sisters had come a long ways since 1849 when they had only fifteen cents in their treasury. H.H. Edgerton was the building contractor, and Joseph May was responsible for the carpentry. The firm of Whitmore, Rauber, and Vicinus was respon-

sible for the stone work.

The dedication of the completed chapel took place on August 5, 1891, with Bishop McQuaid celebrating a Solemn Pontifical Mass. He was assisted at the altar by an assistant priest, two deacons of honor, two deacons, a master of ceremonies, and an assistant, plus the customary acolytes. Given the relatively small dimensions of the chapel (approximately 91 feet long and 34 feet wide), one can only assume that the sanctuary was rather crowded for the occasion. One of the deacons was the Rev. E. J. Hanna, later to be selected as Archbishop of San Francisco. The sermon was preached by Archbishop Walsh of Toronto. In his remarks, Walsh paid tribute to the Sacred Heart nuns by stating that they "have not been behind hand in Christian education and they have not been slow in building gems of sacred architecture, to help to elevate the taste of their pupils."<sup>10</sup>

The music at the dedication included the singing of the "Cecilia Mass" by the sisters, assisted by several of the students. The organist was the distinguished Eugene Bonn from Rochester's St. Patrick's Cathedral,<sup>11</sup> who taught piano at the Academy. He was a nationally respected and influential Catholic church musician, who was also Professor at St. Andrew's Seminary (and later at St. Bernard's Seminary). The ceremonies marking the dedication were an appropriate beginning for a chapel which would serve the needs of the Sacred Heart Academy community for the next seventy-nine years.

## **Years of Accomplishment**

1891-1969

The Academy continued to flourish during the closing years of the nineteenth century. It remained a small school, partly due to the individual care with which each student was treated but also because the academy's facilities did not permit a larger enrollment. Each year there were only about four or five graduates. At the time of Bishop McQuaid's death in 1909, enrollment was only 115, of whom 50 were boarders. Enrollment basically remained between 100 and 150 students until the mid-1950's. An "Alumnae Association of the Rochester Convent of the Sacred Heart" was established in 1904 and held its first meeting on October 20 of that year. Because of the small number of graduates, the association was a rather intimate group.

In 1910 the Sacred Heart nuns opened an “Italian School” for the children of Italian immigrants who were beginning to arrive in Rochester in large numbers. The first students in this school consisted of four brothers, and within ten years enrollment had grown to almost 100 students. In 1920 the school hosted its first Italian School Alumni Day, with 70 former students in attendance. It continued in operation for another five years but was discontinued because there were not enough sisters to staff both the school and the academy.

The seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Rochester Sacred Heart Academy was celebrated on June 26, 1930. At that time various alumnae and friends began collecting contributions for the construction of a gymnasium which was built at a cost of \$30,000 in 1931 to the rear of the original convent building on the site of the Italian School. The architects for the gymnasium were Arnold and Stern, and their design called for an interesting and rather attractive brick structure with small turrets resembling those of the chapel. The gymnasium had a seating capacity of 400 and provided a locker room and showers as part of general facilities for use by the Academy’s students.

Further improvements in the facilities were made throughout the 1930’s. There were general repairs in 1936 followed by new landscaping in 1937. A much larger project was undertaken in 1937 and 1938 with the construction of a new classroom building on the north side of the complex, connected to the chapel by an enclosed bridge. Of all the Academy buildings this was perhaps the most functional and least pleasing. The architect was James B. Arnold, and he designed a two-story brick building whose only distinctive feature was the presence of small turrets similar to those on the gymnasium. The new building, built at a cost of \$44,000 was blessed by Bishop Kearney on September 19, 1938, and it provided the Academy with a generous amount of classroom space plus a small auditorium.

With this new addition, the Sacred Heart Academy now extended 350 feet along Prince Street. On the south side of the property stood the original home purchased in 1853. To the left was the building of 1874, the 1890 chapel, and finally the new school building. It is interesting to note that there was never an effort to harmonize the architectural styles of the various buildings. Italianate, Ruskinian Gothic, French Gothic revival, and early twentieth century functional brick all seemed to happily coexist in a strangely

harmonious fashion. Even looking at the buildings today, it really does seem that they belong together no matter how divergent their architectural styles may be.

The new facilities of 1938 allowed for an increase in enrollment at the Academy, but it wasn't until the late-1950's that the student population exceeded 200. Even in 1955, the school's 100th anniversary, there were only 156 students and a total of twelve graduates. By 1959 there were almost 200 students enrolled in the elementary and secondary grades, plus an additional thirty-five in the Academy's kindergarten, which was located on the ground floor beneath the chapel. By the mid-1960's, shortly before the Academy closed, enrollment reached 250 elementary and secondary students, with an additional 70 in kindergarten. Despite these increases, however, the Rochester Sacred Heart Academy remained a small school, too small to survive beyond the middle years of the twentieth century. When the decision was made to close the Academy, one alumna simply stated that she was "heartbroken." She was undoubtedly speaking for all who had come to know and love the school during its 114 years in Rochester.

### **The Prince Street Buildings Since 1969**

The general location and the attractive setting of the Academy's buildings, combined with the facilities which they could offer, made their preservation and continued use a somewhat easier task. The buildings were purchased in 1968 by Dr. John Dengler, who approached his new ownership of the property with sympathy for the historic and architectural value of the buildings. He was soon to find a group of diverse tenants, each of whom found something about the facilities suitable to their needs. Empire State College soon occupied the original school building, and Rochester Business Institute utilized some of the Academy's space to provide dormitory rooms for its students. The former school also became the headquarters for the American Cancer Society for a number of years, and the gymnasium served for a time as the location of a karate school. The Elizabeth Clark Dance Workshop occupied the chapel from which the pews had been removed. It provided an ideal space for their programs. The Academy's school building at the north end of the building complex has provided a home for the Cobblestone School, a pre-kindergarten through eighth grade private school founded in 1983.

The great variety of use to which the facilities were put must have been reassuring to the alumnae and friends of the Sacred Heart Academy. No wrecking ball was needed at 8 Prince Street. In 1974 Paul Malo, Professor of Architecture at Syracuse University, visited and inspected the buildings on behalf of the Landmark Society of Western New York. In his detailed seven-page report he commented as follows:

*Problems of preservation are largely problems of adaptive use. Where there has been notable success in saving historic buildings, there usually has been resourcefulness in finding uses. Although the interiors of the original Prince Street House, and certainly the interior of the Chapel, warrant preservation in their original form, nevertheless this large institutional facility could not be maintained as a museum. The costs of maintaining such an old structure, with elaborate roofs, towers and dormers, is formidable, and the change from such public use as education to new, revenue-producing functions returns a property from tax-exempt status to the tax rolls. Clearly, to make such a building live, it must pay its own way.<sup>12</sup>*

In concluding his report Malo stated that he wished “to assure all who share personal nostalgia and historic appreciation of this landmark that it is being lovingly tended.”

The latest development in the use of the Academy’s buildings has been to create sixty beautiful apartments in the original house and the addition of 1875. By 2003 the new owners of the Chapel Hill Apartments are making renovations and use of the other buildings on the site. The work has been carefully planned and insures use of the buildings for many years to come. Their continued presence on Prince Street serves as a reminder of the unique contribution which the Sacred Heart nuns made during their many years of commitment to the education of young women in Rochester.

*Our life at Prince Street is complete; a space in time has passed. But it is by no means an empty space, for it is filled with memories and hope. And it is by no means ended, for each of us keeps it alive with her as a very important chapter of her life.<sup>13</sup>*

*Vincent Lenti has been a member of the faculty at the Eastman School of Music since 1963 and previously wrote The Eastman School of Music for Rochester History. He has long regretted that the Academy of the Sacred Heart closed before either of his daughters (born 1977 and 1989) were able to attend the school.*

## Sources

It would be impossible to write an account of Rochester Academy of the Sacred Heart without being deeply indebted to Elizabeth Madden's brief history which was published in connection with the Academy's 100th anniversary: *A Century of Love: Academy of the Sacred Heart: 1855-1955* by Elizabeth C. Madden (Rochester, New York). Also indispensable is Louise Callan's history of the Sacred Heart nuns in America: *The Society of the Sacred Heart in North America* by Louise Callan, RSCJ. (Longmans, Green & Co., 1937). Additional information can also be found in *The Life and Letters of Bishop McQuaid* (three volumes) by the Rev. Frederick J. Zwierlein (Rochester, 1925, 1926, 1927), and in *The Diocese of Rochester in America: 1868-1993* by the Rev. Robert F. McNamara (Rochester, 1998).

The author is grateful to Christine Wilmot for her recollections of student life at the Academy; to Robert Vogt for his assistance at the archives of the Rochester Roman Catholic Diocese; to Sr. Margaret Phelan, RSCJ, Sr. Frances Gimber, RSCJ and Sr. Mary Louise Gavan, RSCJ, at the national archives of the Society of the Sacred Heart in St. Louis, Missouri and to the Landmark Society of Western New York for allowing access to their records and files.

## End Notes

1. Unidentified newsclipping, Rochester, New York, February 12, 1968.
2. Unidentified newsclipping. Rochester, New York. February 12, 1968.
3. Sacred Heart Convent Journal, October 1849.
4. Ibid. August 2, 1852.
5. Some sources have stated that the original school was located on the site where the Church of Our Lady of Victory now stands on Pleasant Street near St. Paul. This must be in error, since contemporary accounts clearly state that the school was on St. Paul *facing* Pleasant Street and extending westward towards the Genesee River.
6. Madden, Elizabeth C. *A Century of Love: Academy of the Sacred Heart: 1855-1955*. Rochester, New York. 1955. p.15.
7. Prince Street had formerly been known as Boody Avenue, named after Azariah Boody who owned the property. The change in name to "Prince Street" was in honor of one of Mr. Boody's favorite horses.
8. The Rt. Rev. Bernard McQuaid, who was selected as Rochester's first Roman Catholic Bishop in 1868, attached great importance to the establishment of parochial schools in his diocese.
9. Hersey, Carl K. *The Gothic Revival Chapel of the Sacred Heart (1890), Rochester, New York*. The Rochester Historical Society Publications XXV. Rochester, New York, 1972. p.166.
10. Madden, op. cit., p.34.
11. St. Patrick's was the original Catholic parish in Rochester, having been founded in 1823. It served as the Cathedral for the Diocese of Rochester from 1868 until 1937, when the building was sold to the Eastman Kodak Company.
12. Malo, Paul. *Sacred Heart Academy: A Report to the Land mark Society of Western New York*. April 10, 1974.
13. The opening of Christine Colucci's valedictory at the final commencement ceremony in 1969. Courtesy of the archives of the Rochester Roman Catholic Diocese and quoted with the kind permission of Ms. Colucci.

*Back cover: Plum Alley in the rear garden near the gymnasium gave the Academy of the Sacred Heart at 8 Prince Street, a restful, rural setting, undated. (U.S. Province Archives, Society of the Sacred Heart).*

