

ST. MARY'S SCHOOL HISTORY 1891 - Present

Excerpts from St. Mary's School Centennial



Father Walter Fardy was responsible for designing and building the first parochial school building in New Richmond. He drew plans for a 46' X 50' stone basement, with a two story structure to be erected. The walls were to be of solid brick with a mansard roof with a deck of tar and gravel. It was to have a belfry and a spire. There were two classrooms on the first floor; one classroom, a music room and a laboratory on the second floor. The school was practically hand-built by Father Fardy and his parishioners. A chapel was built on the west side, but an addition planned for the north side was never built.

Work began on June 25, 1890, and was believed that the construction was completed early in 1891. St. Mary's was established as an elementary school and a high school academy. A Sister Marie of Concordia, Kansas, conducted an evening business school, and Father Fardy was among her first class members.

In 1894, a class of four was graduated from St. Mary's Academy. A book, The Catholic Church in Wisconsin, published in 1986, stated that the parish of Immaculate Conception had a parochial school with an enrollment of 120 pupils. Due to heavy taxes for public school and supporting the St. Mary's, St. Mary's was forced to close temporarily. The building was rented and run as a successful business college. In 1897, the building was rented to the New Richmond Public School for the school year.

Both St. Mary's and the Public school survived the Cyclone of June 12, 1899.

St. Mary's reopened in September of 1906 as a parochial school with the arrival of the Sisters of St. Agnes of Fond du Lac. The brick rectory between the school and the church was turned over to the nuns as a convent for the Sisters of St. Agnes. They taught at St. Mary's from 1906 to 1920. St. Mary's was used to teach Irish history. St. Mary's was closed on June 21, 1920 when the Sisters were withdrawn. The building again was rented to the public schools.

The School was reopened in the fall of 1926 with the Benedictine nuns from St. Joseph, MN. Seven Sisters from this order served from 1926 to 1928.

Father Patrick Mahoney came to New Richmond in 1927 and for the fall of 1928 secured the Sisters of St. Joseph of Nazareth on the Lake from Superior, WI. For the next fifty-three years, the Sisters from this order served St. Mary's.

By the 1950s, the old school was quickly falling into disrepair. The enrollment had now climbed to over 250 students in a building built for 120 students. The old school was torn down in 1953. Ground was broken for the new school and convent in 1953. The class of 1955 was the first class to graduate from the new school.

During the 1964-65 school year, it was decided to drop the first grade, however, it was added again the next year.

A kindergarten class was added in 1985. Declining enrollment resulted in the seventh and eighth grades being dropped in 1989, and were re-added later on.

The Home and School organization has been very active over the years in support of St. Mary's. In 1973, the Knights of Columbus renovated the second floor, had have contributed profits from their Basketball Tournaments to help the athletic program and scholarship fund at St. Mary's.

Over the years, St. Mary's has met the educational needs of New Richmond. Over 1800 students have walked through the doors, and have had the opportunity to receive an excellent education through many years of success and tradition.