

**Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur Records
St. James School, Salem, MA
Finding Aid**

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Collection Summary

Title: St. James School, Salem, MA Finding Aid

Accession Numbers: 2015.34

Dates: 1878-1972

Bulk Dates: 1900-1972

Location: East West Province Archives, Ipswich, MA

Physical Description: 6 boxes, 91 volumes, 114 photographs.

Abstract: The collection contains the convent and school records for the St. James School in Salem, MA, which opened in 1878 and closed in 1972.

Search Terms:

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur - Massachusetts - Salem
St. James School

Provenance: The collection for the St. James Convent was donated to the archives in the 1970s. All school papers were donated to the archives in 2015.

Processing: The collection was processed and arranged in 2015.

Conservation Work: Some removal of staples, papers clips. Minor repair for any tears.

Restrictions: Research is restricted to the archives. Some student records are restricted until 2060.

History of Sisters of Notre Dame in Salem, Massachusetts: The first Catholic Church to be built in Salem was St. Mary's in 1821. It stood on the corner of Bridge and Mall Streets, which bordered the North River at that time. In 1846, Fr. James Conway became the pastor for St. Mary's Church and Parish. Because the city of Salem, like so many other communities in Massachusetts, was experiencing a huge surge in immigrants, Fr. Conway realized the parish needed a school. After purchasing the old "Hodges Estate" on Walnut Street, he had it converted into schoolhouse. Already realizing the need for a new church as well, he also had an old mansion that stood on the site of the present day Immaculate Conception Church moved to the site behind the school to serve as a convent.

In 1855, Fr. James Conway invited the Sisters of Notre Dame to take over this new parish school. In fact, he couldn't have chosen a worse time. Just the previous year, the Know Nothing Party had won election in Massachusetts. Their anti-immigration

policies fueled the rising anger from local residents over immigrants settling into the area. The sisters coming from Cincinnati to Salem arrived at the train station on Monday, September 24, 1855 and no doubt, they were aware of the danger. With them was Sister Louise, the Provincial Superior for all of Eastern United States. She came to insure her sisters would be housed in a safe and structurally sound building. Those first four sisters were Sisters Mary Felcienne [Superior], Euphrasia, Martha and Mary Josephine. While the sisters did not experience open hostility from their neighbors, some people tried to annoy the sisters when they walked from their convent on Walnut Street to St. Mary's for Mass. Several men also attempted to break into the convent and when they failed, they threw stones at the windows until one broke.

St. Mary's School opened on Wednesday October 10th. That first year 130 girls enrolled, taught mostly by Sisters Martha and Mary Josephine in two classrooms. They brought with them their Course of Studies from Cincinnati which described the goal of the Notre Dame education. "*The Christian education of young girls is the primary means employed by our Institute to attain the end for which it was founded, namely: the glory of God. .*" The sisters taught religious education, church history, reading, spelling, writing, arithmetic, grammar, history, geography, drawing, singing, and needlework. By the following spring, the number of students rose to over 200 and another room was prepared in the building to handle the increase. In addition to the daily lessons, the sisters also prepared 56 children for First Communion in May of 1856. And because so many children worked during the day, the sisters opened a night school two evenings a week for any children and adults who wished to learn. Reading, writing, arithmetic and Christian doctrine were taught to those students. During that first year 80 students were enrolled in the night school.

The following September, more than 350 children had enrolled in St. Mary's. And with 2500 parishioners listed in the parish census, Fr. Conway labored for the beginning of new, larger church and parish. And so, ground was broken for the new Immaculate Conception Church which was completed in 1858. The parish continued to grow in leaps and bounds, drawing in more students to St. Mary's, and necessitating more sisters to teach. To handle the growing number of Catholic families and children, St. James Church on Federal Street opened its own parish school in 1864. For the next 14 years, the sisters walked from Walnut to Federal Street to teach the children in the church basement. Finally, in 1878, St. James parish completed its own convent for ten sisters who took charge of the new school building. But its location – beside the North River – resulted in so much dampness in the building, that the Sisters found it almost impossible to teach on the first floor. Being so close to the river, the dampness continued and some Sisters grew ill with diseases of the lungs, such as asthma and the scourge of that time – tuberculosis.

They also struggled with other ailments common in those days – "*Doctor Gaffney was called for some Srs. Had been ailing with the summer complaint.*" The 'summer complaint' was either dysentery or something similar to it, which was caused by contaminated water. Some Sisters were "*obliged to leave by the advice of the Doctor, the air not agreeing with [them].*" [From the 1878-1906 Salem Journal]

These struggles didn't prevent the Sisters from giving to those in desperate need. The Journal for St. James recorded that for Christmas in 1878, the Sisters made gifts of gloves and pies to the children at the City Orphan Asylum, who were cared for by the Sisters of Charity of Montreal, also known as the Grey Nuns.

By the end of the 19th century, the North River that had once flowed near the church was only a canal. The river had been filled in. Not only were the Sisters lives easier, but the land also allowed the children space for a playground. The school remained in operation until 1972 when it finally closed.

Scope and Content Note: The collection contains Convent records, including the register for sisters living at the convent, financial expenditures for the sisters, journals kept by the sisters of daily activities and yearly annals describing the events and activities for the convent and school. The original convent annals were written from 1878-1906. Other annals were written at a later time to document events from memory. Also included with the papers are listings regarding donations to the chapel and convent.

The school records include correspondence, which details real estate sales, letters from children to pastor, information for a formal protest from school to legislature over physician assignments to Catholic schools and other letters regarding school celebrations. Also filed here are papers for the Notre Dame Guild, which was open to relatives of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. These include by-laws, minutes of meetings and member information. The collection also contains class lists, student registers, class attendance registers, some transcripts, teachers' meeting minutes during the 1960s and information for Catholic University assessments for the school. St. James was one of the Notre Dame schools that had an agreement with Catholic University allowing graduates to attend the college without being required to take an entrance examination. To maintain that agreement, such schools as St. James had to meet certain academic requirements. The collection also includes the Alumni Association papers and information on its closing in 1972. Box 5 contains a handwritten listing of graduates on index cards with their last known address. Box 6 holds 114 photographs of the convent, school, student events and Notre Dame Jubilees and celebrations.

Organization and Container List

St. James School Shelves

- St. James Convent Register, 1878-1955.
- St. James Convent Register, 1956-1970.
- St. James Convent Annals, 1878-1906.
- St. James Convent Annals, 1879-1911.
- St. James Convent Annals, 1878-1971.
- St. James Convent Journal, 1912-1922.
- St. James Convent Journal, 1923-1928.
- St. James Convent Journal, 1936-1947.

St. James Convent Journal, 1947-1968.
 Gifts to St. James Chapel and St. James Convent, 1978-1972.
 St. James Convent Monthly Financial Reports, 1950-1963.
 St. James Convent Monthly Financial Reports, 1963-1968.

Box 01

Folder 01 Vow Renewals, 1923-1971.
Folder 02 Correspondence, 1891-1892, 1919, 1964.
Folder 03 Notre Dame Guild Papers, 1939-1972.
Folder 04 Class Lists, 1924-1956.
Folder 05 Class Lists, 1924-1948. [incomplete]
Folder 06 Student Grades, High School, 1916-1917.
Folder 07 Student Grades, High School, 1916-1924. A-B.
Folder 08 Student Grades, High School, 1916-1924. C.
Folder 09 Student Grades, High School, 1916-1924. D.
Folder 10 Student Grades, High School, 1916-1924. E-F.
Folder 11 Student Grades, High School, 1916-1924. G-H.
Folder 12 Student Grades, High School, 1916-1924. I-K.
Folder 13 Student Grades, High School, 1916-1924. L.
Folder 14 Student Grades, High School, 1916-1924. M.
Folder 15 Student Grades, High School, 1916-1924. Mc.
Folder 16 Student Grades, High School, 1916-1924. N-O.
Folder 17 Student Grades, High School, 1916-1924. P-R.
Folder 18 Student Grades, High School, 1916-1924. S.
Folder 19 Student Grades, High School, 1916-1924. T-V.
Folder 20 Student Grades, High School, 1916-1924. W-Z.
Folder 21 Student Grades, High School, 1925-1938. A.
Folder 22 Student Grades, High School, 1925-1938. B.
Folder 23 Student Grades, High School, 1925-1938. C.
Folder 24 Student Grades, High School, 1925-1938. D-E.
Folder 25 Student Grades, High School, 1925-1938. F-G.

Box 02

Folder 01 Student Grades, High School, 1925-1938. H-J.
Folder 02 Student Grades, High School, 1925-1938. K-L.
Folder 03 Student Grades, High School, 1925-1938. M.
Folder 04 Student Grades, High School, 1925-1938. N-O.
Folder 05 Student Grades, High School, 1925-1938. P-Q.
Folder 06 Student Grades, High School, 1925-1938. R-S.
Folder 07 Student Grades, High School, 1925-1938. T-Z.
Folder 08 Student Grades, Grades 4-12, 1936.
Folder 09 Student Grades, Grades 3-12, 1936.
Folder 10 Student Grades, Grades 3-12, 1937.

Folder 11	Student Grades, Grades 3-12, 1938.
Folder 12	Student Grades, Grades 3-12, 1939.
Folder 13	Student Grades, Grades 3-12, 1941.
Folder 14	Student Exams, Grades 3-8, 1938.
Folder 15	Student Exams, Grades 3-8, 1939.
Folder 16	Student Exams, Grades 3-8, 1941.
Folder 17	Student Exams, Grades 3-8, 1942.
Folder 18	Student Exams, Grades 3-8, 1943.
Folder 19	Student Exams, Grades 3-8, 1944.
Folder 20	Student Exams, Grades 3-8, 1945.
Folder 21	Multi-Mental Scores, Grades 4-8, n.d.
Folder 22	High School Transcripts, 1939-1947.
Folder 23	High School Transcripts, 1942-1947.
Folder 24	High School Records, 1958, A-B. [Sealed until 2060.]

Box 03

Folder 01	High School Records, 1958, C-D. [Sealed until 2060.]
Folder 02	High School Records, 1958, E-G. [Sealed until 2060.]
Folder 03	High School Records, 1958, H-K. [Sealed until 2060.]
Folder 04	High School Records, 1958, L-M. [Sealed until 2060.]
Folder 05	High School Records, 1958, N-R. [Sealed until 2060.]
Folder 06	High School Records, 1958, S-W. [Sealed until 2060.]
Folder 07	Catholic University Affiliation Program Brochures, 1964-1968.
Folder 08	Catholic University Affiliation Program Brochures, 1966.
Folder 09	Catholic University Affiliation Program Papers, 1967-1968.
Folder 10	Catholic University Affiliates, 1967-1968.
Folder 11	Catholic University Affiliation Program Newsletters, 1967-1968.
Folder 12	Catholic University Affiliation Program Correspondence, 1963-1965.
Folder 13	Catholic University Affiliation Program Correspondence, 1966-1968.
Folder 14	Catholic University Affiliation Program Evaluation Criteria, Part 1, 1960.
Folder 15	Catholic University Affiliation Program Evaluation Criteria, Part 2, 1960.
Folder 16	Catholic University Affiliation Program Evaluation Criteria, Part 3, 1960.
Folder 17	Catholic University Affiliation Program Evaluation Criteria, Part 4, 1960.
Folder 18	Catholic University Affiliation Program Evaluation Criteria, Part 5, 1960.
Folder 19	Catholic University Affiliation Program Evaluation Criteria, Part 6, 1960.

Folder 20 Catholic University Affiliation Program Evaluation Criteria, Part 7, 1960.

St. James School Shelves

Catholic University Affiliation Program Criteria, 1960.

Box 04

- Folder 01** Catholic University Evaluation, Elementary Teachers, 1960.
- Folder 02** Catholic University Evaluation, High School Teachers, 1960.
- Folder 03** Catholic University Evaluation, School Evaluation, 1960-1965.
- Folder 04** Catholic University Evaluation, School Evaluation Pamphlet, 1965.
- Folder 05** Catholic University Evaluation Criteria, Part 1, 1965.
- Folder 06** Catholic University Evaluation Criteria, Part 2, 1965.
- Folder 07** Catholic University Evaluation Criteria, Part 3, 1965.
- Folder 08** Catholic University Evaluation Criteria, Part 4, 1965.
- Folder 09** Catholic University Evaluation Guidelines, 1965.
- Folder 10** Catholic University Evaluation Report, 1965.
- Folder 11** Catholic University Evaluation Report, 1965.
- Folder 12** Catholic University Evaluation, Information for Committee, 1967.
- Folder 13** Catholic University Evaluation Data, 1967.
- Folder 14** Catholic University Evaluation Data, 1967.
- Folder 15** Catholic University Evaluation Report, 1967.
- Folder 16** Catholic University Evaluation Report, 1968-1969.
- Folder 17** Catholic University Evaluation Data, 1968-1969.
- Folder 18** Catholic University Evaluation Information, 1968.
- Folder 19** Teachers' Meetings, Minutes, 1966-1967.
- Folder 20** Teachers' Informational Papers, 1965.
- Folder 21** Transcripts, 1914-1936.
- Folder 22** Varia, 1937-1971.
- Folder 23** School Anniversaries, 1928, 1940.
- Folder 24** School Anniversaries, 1953.
- Folder 25** Immaculate Conception Anniversary, 1951.
- Folder 26** St. James Alumni Association, By-Laws, 1910.
- Folder 27** St. James Alumni Association, Membership, 1879-1950.
- Folder 28** St. James Alumni Association, Reunions, 1970-2001.
- Folder 29** St. James Parish List, n.d.
- Folder 30** St. James Parish Register, c. 1980.
- Folder 31** School Closing, 1972.
- Folder 32** News Clippings 1926-1972.

St. James School Shelves

St. James School Registers, 1888-1972. [33 Registers]

St. James School List of Graduates, 1878-1951.
St. James School Student Grades, 1914-1927.
St. James School Student Grades, 1928-1935.
St. James School Scholarships, 1928-1935.
St. James School Monthly Reports, 1927-1946.

Box 05

St. James School Graduates, 1885-1964.

St. James School Shelves

St. James School Attendance Registers, 1890-1956. [42 Registers]

Box 06

Photographs, Convent, School and Students, 114 photographs.