

*The exhibit of the Sisters of Notre Dame was highly commended and at the close of the Fair, which lasted six months, a diploma and medal were awarded to fifteen of our houses in Massachusetts, Lowell's parish and day schools being among the favored ones. See XIII., Columbus, Queen Isabella, and*

# Annals from the Archives

## Chief Justice Earl Warren And the Sisters of Notre Dame

Earl Warren, 1891-1974  
Governor of California and  
The 14th Chief Justice of the  
Supreme Court



July 2018  
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—During the 1940s, the enrollment at the Academy of Notre Dame in Tyngsboro grew rapidly. By 1948, the sisters wrote that once again, they had a large student body, hovering just under 500, with 80 of those being first graders. As usual, when school opened, the sisters were busy with teaching and upcoming events. The Tyngsboro Annalist wrote that “no sooner were we back in school than we were forced into line practicing for the upcoming CYO parade. We practiced ‘left right’ and ‘eyes right’ from morning till night.” Despite being “forced” into the parade, both the sisters and students met the challenge. “School spirit rose to a new peak—NDA would not be outdone in any way.”

While the students were perfecting their march for the parade, the sisters worked on the float. “By night and by day, the sisters made flowers—thousands upon thousands of them. Finally the truck arrived that was to be decorated. The carpenter and his assistant came. Our workmen helped. The Sisters helped. The Boarders helped. The Day Pupils came back on Saturdays to help! Everyone was ‘afloating’ . . . the glorious sunburst on which was stippled in green, The Queen With Her Teens of Tyngsboro could be seen blocks away. . .”

During the preparation for the parade, the sisters and students would conduct their practice along the Academy’s driveway. Not far from the end of the driveway on Middlesex Street was a stop for the Boston and Maine railroad. One day, during the last week of September, the sisters and students were startled to see the Governor of Massachusetts, Robert Bradford, and Leverett Saltonstall, the U.S. Senator from Massachusetts waiting at the train station. They had come to meet Earl Warren, the Governor of California. Governor Warren was Thomas Dewey’s running mate during the 1948 campaign for president. For the last two weeks of September, Governor Warren was on a campaign tour through 31 states, using a train with 14 cars for his journey. With him was his wife, Nina, and daughter, Virginia.

On September 28th, he was scheduled for a stop in Tyngsboro before going onto Lowell for a rally. The Annalist wrote that “As soon as the girls reached the gate, [at the end of the driveway] they were ushered across the street to the station by the Governor’s aides. . .” The aides had supposed the students and sisters came for the chance to meet Governor Warren’s train. While they waited, the Tyngsboro Postmaster made the rounds introducing the Sisters to the Governor. Both Governor Bradford and Senator Saltonstall “seemed to be amazed that there was a school of such a size up here in the town of Tyngsboro and both seemed impressed by the fine girls who marched so grandly across the highway! (Little they knew how hoarse we were for the past week getting that smart bearing!)

There were reporters with cameras waiting for the arrival of the Vice-Presidential candidate, but before they could snap

pictures of the sisters or students, Governor Bradford noticed the reluctance of the sisters to be photographed and stepped in to ask them not to embarrass the sisters or students. *“By this time the train was whistling in. The Governor left us and we stayed put—behind the gate. From the back platform of the train Governor Warren spoke to the crowd—our girls being the largest part of the crowd. . . . just as promptly his own daughter Virginia, who was his travelling companion was summoned from the press car to come to stand on the platform [She was then 20 years old] . . .her first question was: ‘Did you get out of school just to see the Governor?’ No one seems to have been told we were marching for a parade. The next thing we knew our girls were singing ‘Cheer, Cheer for old Notre Dame with all the spirit that any occasion has mustered. Then the train pulled off. As it passed the gate, Governor Warren spied the sisters and spontaneously his wave came to us . . .A few days later our Governor wrote to Sister Superior to tell her . . . [that the meeting with them] ‘was the most colorful incident of the trip. . . .’*

The 1948 election famously had predicted Thomas Dewey to be the next president, but Harry Truman surprised many by winning the election. Earl Warren returned to California to be the first person to win the governorship for the three terms in a row. He didn't finish his third term, however, because President Eisenhower nominated him to replace Chief Justice Vinton when he died in 1953. After his confirmation to become the 14th Supreme Court Chief Justice, however, Warren disappointed Eisenhower by espousing more liberal views that he had expected. Eisenhower was reported to have said it was *“the biggest. . .mistake I’ve every made.”* Warren went on to lead the Supreme Court in desegregating schools and sought equality in the criminal justice system. He also, famously, led the Warren Commission after John F. Kennedy's assassination.



Virginia Warren, 1928-2009  
c. 1950

#### Sources consulted for this article

- ◆ Academy of Notre Dame, Tyngsboro, Convent Annals, 1934-1972.
- ◆ *Boston Globe Archives*, 1872-2018.