

Saint Clare, Santa Clara, Ca.

Short History

This was the second convent established outside of the San Jose motherhouse complex. The Saint Claire convent was situated on the Forbes Estate near the Jesuit college of Santa Clara when the parish of St. Clare's was created apart from the college and separate from the mission at Santa Clara.

The sisters started the Academy in the mansion of the Forbes estate which they used until they could build a suitable convent and school. The Academy was called Academy of Our Lady of the Angels for the grammar school and later a high school was called Academy of Notre Dame. These institutions had both day and boarding students until the boarding students were phased out in the 1930s. After the boarders left the province used this convent for the elderly sisters who could no longer teach. This use of the convent lasted until the infirmary was built in Saratoga in 1951. Over the years several new convents and school buildings were built. The sisters left when the province did not have enough sisters to staff the school.

Historical Beginnings Records. 1880s-1960. One linear inch, R2 Unit 9 D Box 1

These records contain the collected historical writings on the county of Santa Clara, of the mission and parish and of the college /university. There are two short histories of the convent/house written by the sisters that detail the expansion of this convent and the school and the various uses this house served for the California Province particularly after student boarders were discontinued and it became a place of rest for the older sisters.

Annals, 1864-1974. 4 lin. Inches, R2 Unit 9 D Box 1

These annals were written in French from 1864-893 and translated by Sr. Marie of St. Joseph Oddie in the later years. This school and convent were the first to be established outside the San Jose complex in the more immediate area of the motherhouse.

These annals written by the sisters were a narrative account of each year's events as they happened year by year summation. In the early years, these annals were written as the events occurred. The first years the sister writing these accounts was concerned with the suitability of the building(s) -which were a former large estate building- construction of newer buildings and the constant worry about money to pay for expenses.

The usual events recorded are: the comings and goings of priests, the comings and goings of the in-house superiors, the visitors from San Jose, changes in sisters assigned to this convent and school, the visits of Ma Mere [Congregation Superior] starting 1912 and forward, the visits of the Provincials over the years, extreme weather events noted and unusual events on and about the Santa Clara College/ University that impacted the sisters. The other type of events noted are the internal happenings of the convent and school such as festivals, feast day celebrations and in later years school games.

This was a boarding school as well as a day school. When the boarders were dropped in the mid-1930s., the rooms were used for the older retired sisters which continued until the infirmary was built at Saratoga in 1951. The province used this convent for retreats and vow days as well over the years. A smaller convent was built in 1952-53 which the sisters occupied until 1974. It was turned over to the pariah and school for their use.

Journals, 1944-1968. 1 lin. Inches R2 Unit 9 D Box 2

These journals record the comings and goings of the sisters to doctor's appointments, special visitors and their stays, special recreation times and deaths in the convent. Also listed are changes in the nature of the convent when boarders were no longer part of the household and elderly non-teaching sisters were assigned there for rest until the larger infirmary was built at Saratoga in 1951.

Community Council/ House Meeting Minutes, 1927-1974. one inch. R 2 Unit 9 Box 2

Community Councils consisted of the convent superior, treasurer and one elected member of the convent. These met to discuss the financial reports for the convent and to discuss other items such as sisters going onto vows and gifts to donors and priests. Later on membership was extended to the whole convent while the topics of discussion revolved around schedules for common activities such as communal prayer, meals, house charges, house activities and driving schedules.

Convent Administration Records, 1858-1972. 4 linear inches. R 2 Unit 9 E Box 2; 3

These records document the property, financial, personnel and celebration events information of this convent from 1850s to the 1960s. The property correspondence documents the property title information and the back and forth issues with Santa Clara College/ University over the years. The financial folders highlight the costs of running such a large convent over the years. The sister information was compiled by the archivist in the 1990s. One folder contains a set of instructions extracted from the writing of Sister Superior Julia on the instructions on the vows, mental health, prayers, and community living. These she developed from degrees issued from Namur and Rome. Also included are several folders documenting the centennial in 1964, the Bicentennial of Santa Clara Mission and the 150th anniversary of the school/parish in 2006.

Early School Records, 1890-1912; 1972. 1.6 lin. Inches. R2 Unit 9 E Box 3 and Box 4 8F

These are selective record of the early school which include prospectuses, list of graduates, a register of boarders and a sample of commencement programs covering the years 1890 to 1912. There is a modern WASC evaluation documenting the transition from a sister ruined school to lay administration of the school. Most of the early school academic and attendance records were retained by the parish. These are listed in the first folder.

In Box 4 is a Columbian Exposition Grammar highlighting the work of 3-4 students in the eighth grade at 14 years old.

Clippings, 1952-1964. one inch. R2 Unit 9 D Box 3

These folders represent the collection of clippings from the diocesan paper and the local papers celebrating the new convent, 50th and centennial celebrations of the school. There is one clipping from 1897 about the celebration of the Superior's feast day/ birthday.

Photographs, 1864-1969. 151 items, sizes from 3x5 to 11x17. R2 Unit 9 E; 8 F Boxes 3,4

These photographs record the major events of the sister's lives and of the school and parish. The topics covered include early buildings and grounds, centennial of the parish and the school, the students in activities and processions and later class pictures. These photographs are 90% identified by activity and names of individuals. These were most likely taken by professional photographers over the years.

Student Autograph Books, 1927-1928. 2 items. R2 Unit 8 F Box 4

These two autograph books were created by Genevieve Bushley who was a graduate of the high school the sisters ran at St. Clare. They include poems and signatures of her fellow graduates and some teachers as well.