

St. Agnes School – Detroit



St. Agnes School in Detroit opened in 1917 with seven IHM Sisters teaching 180 children in grades one through eight. Enrollment had increased to 330 by the end of the school year; “many high school pupils were refused,” according to the convent chronicler.

High school classes started the next fall. With 471 students and nine grades, the sisters opened an additional classroom and hired a lay teacher. The 10th grade opened in 1919, and enrollment rose to 537.

In the spring of 1920, the chronicler recorded wide-spread concern about a proposed amendment abolishing all private schools throughout Michigan. “As the non-Catholic vote will far outnumber the Catholic vote, we can only rely on prayer to save our schools.”

The prayers were answered. The first graduates of St. Agnes received their diplomas in 1923, and enrollment had grown to more than 800 students by the mid-1920s.

Even during the difficult years of the Depression, the school remained open, active and deeply involved in community service; one room in the school was reserved to collect food and clothing for distribution among those in need. In spite of financial challenges, St. Agnes thrived, instituting a drama club and debate team (“Athletics on the whole were in the background due to financial conditions.”)



The St. Agnes “Panthers” sports teams became more active during the 1940s and ’50s, and the chronicler first mentioned a coach for the girls. The student council was organized during this period; the first “view book,” *The Agnemarian*, was published; a camera club formed; and the science fairs began.

But the late 1950s saw a decline in enrollment. In March 1958, “Cardinal Mooney decided that Blessed Sacrament High School would be closed...and St. Agnes would become a central high school for girls.”

That decision left a student body of 408 in grades one through 12 for the 1958-59 school year. That number increased slightly over the life of the school, but it never again topped 500; even with the addition of a preschool in 1964, enrollment was 414.

By 1966, our **Featured Class Year**, there were 471 students in kindergarten through grade 12; a little more than 100 were in the high school.



The juniors held a dance to help defray the cost of the Junior-Senior Prom, held at Veterans Memorial. **Linda Franklin**, senior class president, crowned the statue of Mary in May, and in June, the seniors enjoyed a picnic at Kensington Metropark and a breakfast served to them by the sophomores. Graduation took place on June 12 at 11 a.m. The **Rev. Francis Granger** presented the diplomas to the 19 members of the Class of 1966. The girls had chosen light blue and dark blue as their class colors; a white lily as their class flower, and the motto, “Only the educated are free.”

St. Agnes High School closed in June 1967, merging with St. Martin De Porres. The vicariate closed the grade school in June 1971 “due to financial burdens.”

In 1966

- The Dow Jones Industrial Average finished the year at 785. The average income per year was \$6,900. The average cost of a new house was \$14,200; the average cost of a new car was \$2,650. Gas was 32 cents per gallon. Medicare began.
- Civil rights activist James Meredith was shot while trying to march across Mississippi.
- As a result of the case *Miranda v. Arizona*, the Supreme Court ruled that police officers must inform suspects of their rights before questioning them.
- Uniform daylight saving time was first observed in most parts of North America.
- The National Organization for Women (NOW) was founded in Washington, D.C.
- It was a bad year for Los Angeles sports fans. The Dodgers lost the World Series when they were swept by the Baltimore Orioles. The Lakers fared only slightly better – they took the NBA Championship to six games before losing to the Boston Celtics. The Montreal Canadiens won the Stanley Cup, winning four of six games with the Detroit Red Wings.
- “I’m a Believer” (the Monkees), “Good Vibrations” (the Beach Boys) and “Wild Thing” (the Troggs) were playing on the radio. Grammy awards went to Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass for “A Taste of Honey” (Record of the Year) and Frank Sinatra for *September of My Years* (Album of the Year).
- Popular films included *Dr. Zhivago*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and *A Man for All Seasons*.
- The first *Star Trek* episode, “The Man Trap,” was broadcast. CBS backed out of plans to broadcast *Psycho*, deeming the movie too violent for at-home viewing.