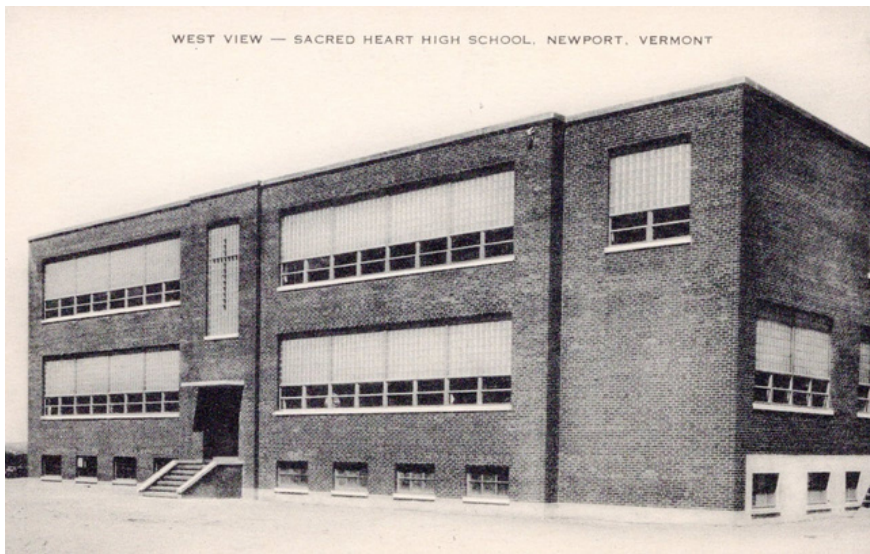


WEST VIEW — SACRED HEART HIGH SCHOOL, NEWPORT, VERMONT



Sacred Heart

*Overlooking beautiful Lake Memphremagog,
the new school stands proud and beautiful...More than a
beautiful edifice of learning, a symbol of faith that has
overcome obstacles...*

The Newport Daily Express, June 9, 1953

**A Social and Architectural History
of the Sacred Heart Complex
City of Newport, Vermont**

You are invited to our **OPEN HOUSE**

Dedication — Graduation of the New SACRED HEART HIGH SCHOOL Thursday, June 11

Congratulations

AND

Best Wishes

TO THE

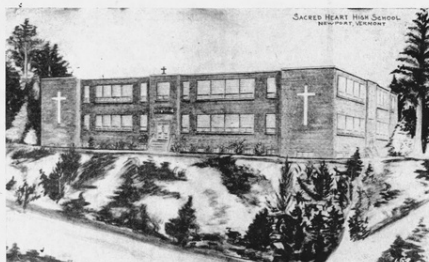
Sisters

AND

Students

OF

**Sacred Heart
High School**



SACRED HEART HIGH SCHOOL
NEWPORT, VERMONT

**New Building Provides Most Modern
Facilities For All Types Of School Work**

Sacred Heart high school, one of Vermont's most modern and beautiful school buildings, has been completed.

Open house will be held Thursday, June 11, and everyone is cordially invited to inspect the building and facilities.

The Reverend Edward F. Ryan, Catholic Bishop of Vermont, will be present to officiate at the dedication ceremonies and bless the new building.

(Continued on page 2)

**Congratulations and
Best Wishes**
to the
Sacred Heart High School

ENJOY LIFE MORE WITH MUSIC
Seguin Music Co.
Newport, Vt.

CONGRATULATIONS



Congratulations, Sacred Heart, on your rapid growth and valuable contribution to the education of our youth.
Richardson Studio

We Supply
the

COAL

Used To Heat
the NEW

**Sacred Heart
High School**

We sincerely wish the Sisters of the Sacred Heart all the SUCCESS they deserve in their future undertakings.

**Davis Coal & Transfer
Co.**

70 Coventry Street

Newport, Vt.

Commemorative issue of *The Newport Daily Express*,
celebrating the Dedication of the new
Sacred Heart High School, June 9, 1953.



Contents

Overview

A Parish Founded

An Educational Foundation

A Most Modern Facility

Educational Evolution

A Community Future

Credits, Thanks, and
Further Information

Overview

Celebrating A Community Legacy

Standing on an expansive bluff over the City of Newport and Lake Memphremagog, the Sacred Heart Complex conveys over a century of educational and community development. With origins that date to the first decade of the twentieth century, the site is testament to the significant and lasting impact of the Daughters of the Charity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on Newport and its environs, and a reflection of decades of educational evolution that shaped the lives of thousands of students and families over the course of the complex's development.

This booklet shares the broad outline of this significant community story, following Sacred Heart's development as an integral community institution. The story is one of people, and lives touched by an evolving school; one of architecture and design, with the innovative built form of the school complex an important reflection of a changing American society and changing landscape of education. Most importantly, the story is one of place, and the continuity that underlies our communities even in the face of change and an unfurling future.



Sacred Heart High School
Women's Soccer Team, 1980



Sacred Heart High School
Marching Band, 1955



Sacred Heart Steps, 1977

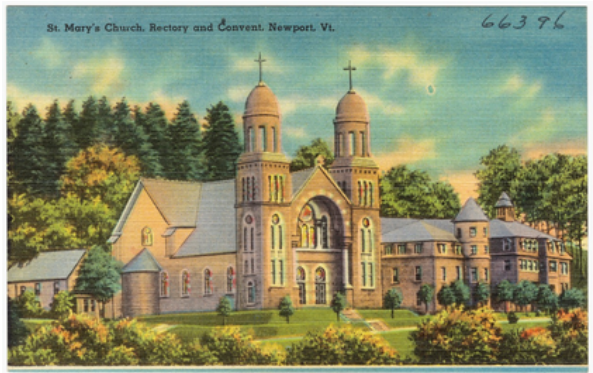
A Parish Founded



St. Mary Star of the Sea Church
and Rectory, 1909

St. Mary's Parish was established in the City of Newport in 1873, with Reverend J.S. Michaud named first pastor. The founding of the parish reflected a surge of Roman Catholic growth in Vermont and the nation during the period, with the decades between 1840 and 1900 characterized by rapid development of Catholic parishes and institutions across the country, largely fueled by expansive immigration, including French, Irish, German, and Polish settlement. According to United States Census Records, in 1830, the United States' Catholic population was estimated at 45,000; by 1870, this number had risen to over 7 million, primarily in the country's northeast.

While contextually embedded within this national demographic context, Catholicism's expansion in nineteenth century Vermont largely stemmed from the region's distinct cultural and geographic linkages to Canada and France, with many of Vermont's Catholic parishes founded by French-Canadian immigrants. Steady immigration from Quebec was a continuous characteristic of Vermont's population growth through the nineteenth century, with Vermont's agricultural lands and lumber industries drawing southward migration through the period. With its location fronting Lake Memphremagog and Canada's southern border, the City of Newport and its Orleans County hinterland were steadily shaped by this inflow, with communities of French-Canadian immigrants growing through the nineteenth century throughout Orleans County's scattered agricultural communities.



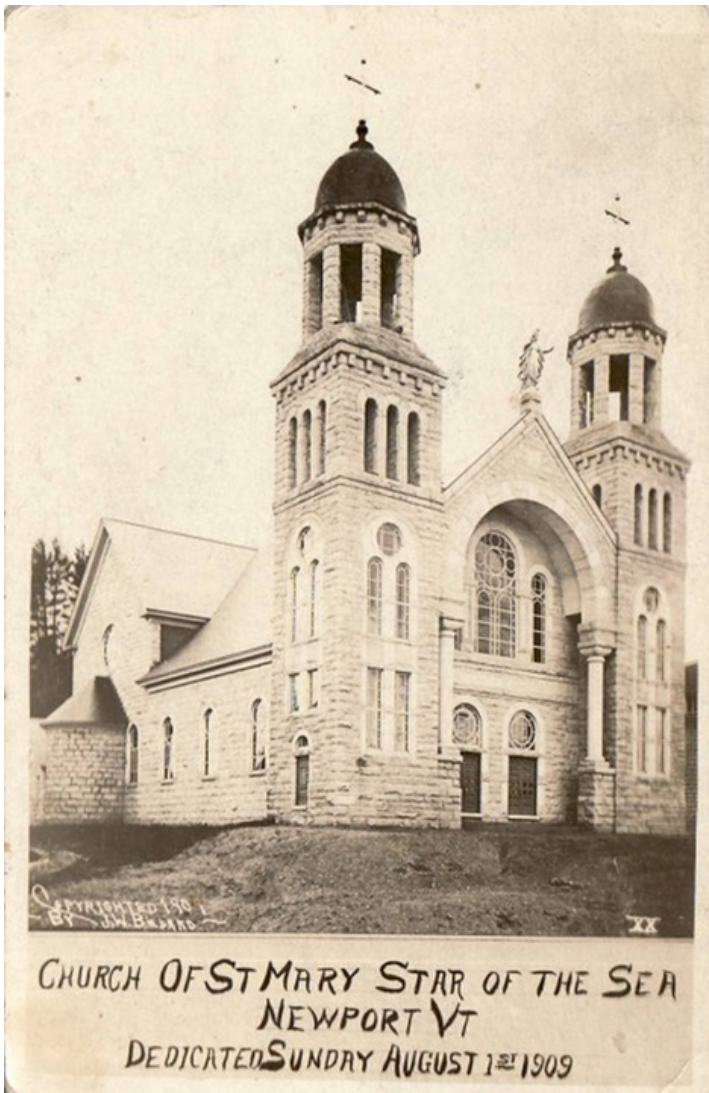
St. Mary's Church, Rectory,
and Parochial School. circa 1930s

Dedication of this church marks the attainment of an object long desired...The church is one of the finest in New England. Built of granite and decorated in the interior in a very beautiful and artistic manner...

Orleans County Monitor, 1909

By the mid-1890s, St. Mary's Parish had grown to 350 families, straining the capacity of the existing church, a small brick church on Pleasant Street. Under the direction of Reverend Antoine P. Clermont, the parish purchased lands on an expansive pine-studded promontory overlooking Newport, the location of the current Clermont Terrace. By 1909, the parish had completed the soaring St. Mary Star of the Sea Church and Rectory. From its initial conception as a lofty granite edifice towering over Newport and Lake Memphremagog, the rusticated Romanesque church was an ambitious and bold statement of the parish's growth and institutional maturity.

Designed in a soaring Romanesque style by Montreal architect William Edward Doran, the expansive church was composed of locally-quarried granite from Derby and designed to hold over 1600 parishioners. The architectural form of the church was a strong testament to the Catholic community's intimate cross-border relationship with Quebec, with the soaring stone facade and twin domical belfries reminiscent of French Jesuit designs across Quebec, though blended with a sophisticated Romanesque form exemplified by its towering inset arch fronting the lake. The scope and architectural sophistication of St. Mary's Church as a religious design was unparalleled in Vermont in the period, and was an emphatic declaration of the Newport parish's growth and cultural identity.



Completed St. Mary's Star of the Sea Church, c. 1909

The Members of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church will have as a place of worship the largest and handsomest church in this part of the state. This will be dedicated as the Star of the Sea for its proximity to Lake Memphremagog. It is a structure that will not only serve as a place of worship for many years to come as a monument to the indefatigable efforts of Rev. Father Claremont, but as a lasting ornament to the village of Newport.

The Barre Daily Times, 1904

An Educational Foundation



Former Sacred Heart School with
St. Mary's Church partially visible behind, circa 1915.
This school was demolished in 1988.

The first years of the twentieth century also saw important institutional expansion within the parish, most notably with the establishment of Newport's first Catholic Primary School. Established in 1905, the school was run by four newly arrived French immigrants, Sisters of the Filles de la Charité du Sacré-Coeur de Jésus (Daughters of the Charity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus) who had been drawn to the parish by petition of Reverend Clermont to address the need for Catholic education of the parish's children. While the Daughters were organizationally distinct from St. Mary's Parish, from inception the school and parish were institutionally interwoven. Upon establishment in 1905, the earliest Sacred Heart School was located at the Pleasant Street site of the parish's first church. By 1910, however, the school had outgrown this space and the Daughters had purchased the former St. Mary's Parish Hall, also known as the Green Mountain Hall, a simple, single-story wood-frame building located on the Clermont Street hilltop adjacent to the newly completed St. Mary's Church and Rectory.

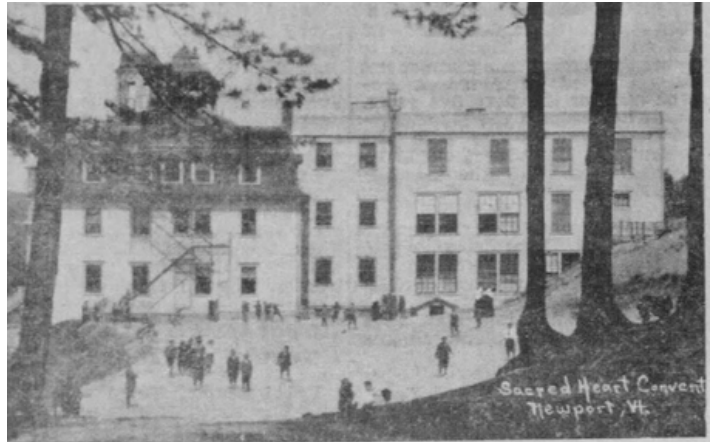


When the Daughters occupied the building in 1910, they expanded the building with a mansard roof level, with multiple additions through the period as the student body grew.

Upon moving to Clermont Terrace, the Daughters immediately expanded the existing single-story structure of the former Green Mountain Hall, adding an additional level framed by a prominent mansard roof. At opening in 1910, the building housed both the Daughter's convent and school, with a reported 80 students in eight primary grades. By this time, the school was also serving boarders in addition to local pupils, with students from both Vermont and Quebec. By 1919, with continuing increases in enrollment and a student population of 449, the building was expanded again, with a large addition housing classrooms, a dormitory, and chapel. By 1940, the Sacred Heart Primary School had expanded to include a High School, culminating in the construction of a second addition to the school in 1947 that included the placement of two additional classrooms. By 1950, steady growth of student population continued to outpace the existing school building, leading to a concerted planning effort for a "Modern School Facility" for ever-increasing numbers of students. The completion of this modern high school in 1952 would greatly expand the hilltop educational complex and usher in a Modern and expansive form to the existing classically-focused architectural face of the complex.

The number of pupils proves that our Convent School is highly thought of by the people of Newport who send their children here instead of out of town to educate their children, and by those out of town who choose this school to send their children...

Newport Express and Standard, 1920



Sacred Heart School with prominent addition, circa 1925

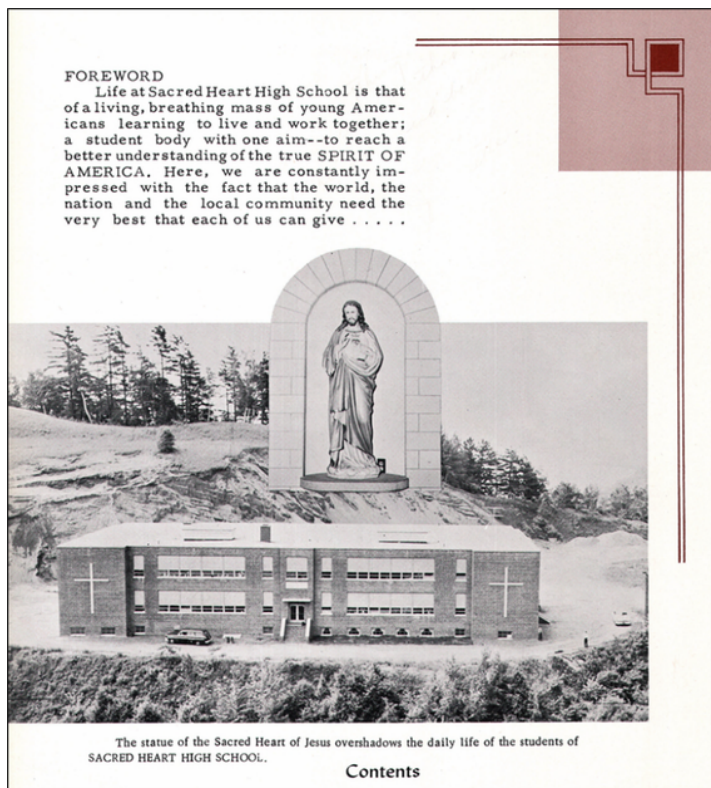


Sacred Heart School and St. Mary's Church looking east from West Main Street, circa 1925

It is becoming increasingly obvious that a modern, permanent building will be needed for the ever-increasing number of students of our school...

The Newport Daily Express, 1947

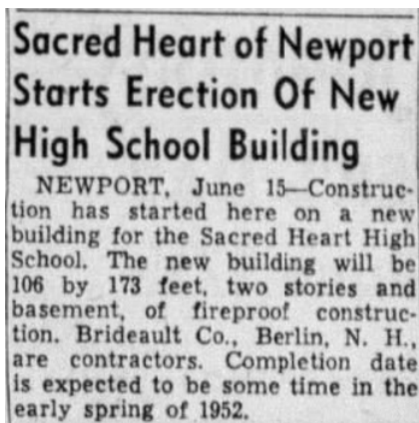
A Most Modern Facility



Sacred Heart High School Yearbook, 1956

In 1947, the Daughters announced grand plans for the future of Sacred Heart School, beginning development of a, "thoroughly modern," edifice for learning. Completed in 1952, the new Sacred Heart High School was a bold and emphatic counterpoint to both the Romanesque St. Mary Star of the Sea Church and Rectory and the modified and much augmented French Second Empire Sacred Heart School. The new brick building was monolithic in form and minimal in design embellishment, reflecting both a seismic shift in architecture and programmatic design during the Post-World War II period and an expanding face of Catholic education and its role in American life.

The 1950s construction of the new Sacred Heart High School coincided with a continued surge in Catholic education across the United States. According to United States Census Records, the Catholic population of the United States tripled from just over 10 million in 1900 to nearly 30 million in 1950. This growth translated to a parallel surge in parochial educational development, as detailed by the United States National Center for Educational Statistics. While only 5 percent of the country's students attended Catholic Schools in 1900, by 1950 this had grown to 12 percent, with more than one of every 10 students in the country educated in a Catholic institution. This national trend was amplified in Vermont, with 12,000 of the state's approximately 72,000 students educated in Catholic schools.



Burlington Free Press, 1951

With increasing numbers of students, parishes across the country initiated educational development campaigns, constructing new schools to house the legions of baby-boomers entering the school system. Importantly, while Catholic architecture had long embraced a classical and historically derived language of design, by this period an increasingly complex strand of Modernism was beginning to shape the church's design ethos. While this evolutionary process was not linear or universally applied, by the mid-twentieth century, influential design practitioners in the Catholic Church had embraced a decidedly activist Modern design sensibility, with Modernism in many senses heralded as a physical representation of the church's ability to grow and shape society in an increasingly mechanized and industrial age. The embrace of Modernism also reflected changing mandates in education, with technical facilities, gymnasiums, and standardized classrooms seen as critical facets of modern education. Within this overarching context, the early 1950s construction of Sacred Heart School was a locally significant expression of the ways in which these evolving perspectives shaped the built form.

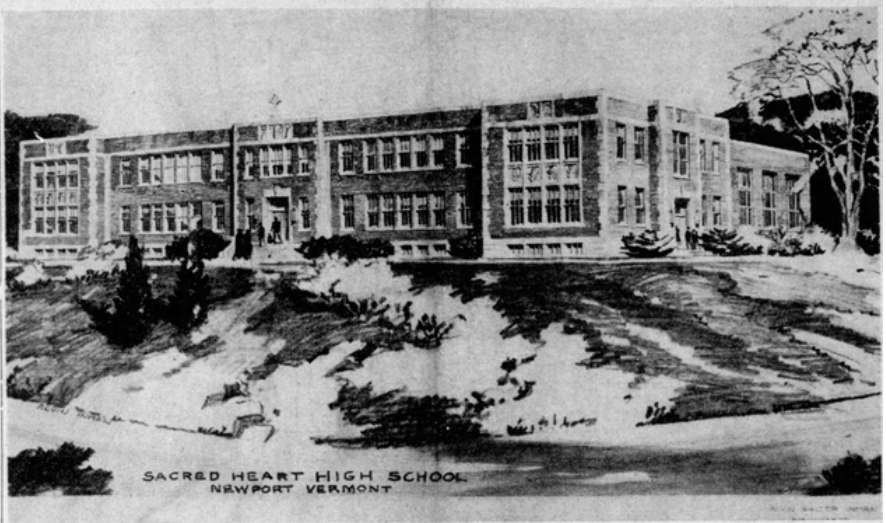
Into the 1950s, the Daughters continued to lay the groundwork for a new high school, with a widely promoted Sacred Heart High School Building Fund garnering community support from numerous parish dinners, craft fairs, and benefit events, as well as Burlington Diocesan support. By 1950, Sacred Heart's school population had topped 600, further adding pressure to the already over capacity school and spurring project planning.



The Newport Daily Express, 1952

Excavation for the new building began in spring 1951. Berlin, New Hampshire-based Brideau Construction Company served as both General Contractor and Architect for the project. Trades work including electrical, plumbing, and interior finish work was procured by local Newport vendors. The new brick building was monolithic in form and minimal in design embellishment, broken only by inset horizontal bands of windows and glass block and understated centered entries articulated in brick and concrete. Within this restrained physical canvas, heightened religious ornamentation was limited to a small number of simple visual cues, with glass block crosses inset above the entries and flanking minimalistic yellow brick crosses fronting the Lake Memphremagog-facing northern façade of the building, creating an understated and clearly defined religious order on the otherwise functional and materially uniform massing of the building.

Proposed Sacred Heart High School Building



Above is architect's version of Newport's new Sacred Heart High School building to be erected soon. Structure is to be thoroughly modern and fireproof and will include gymnasium. Site, at the corner of Pleasant Street and Pleasant Street Extension, is ready but actual construction will await lowering of present high building costs.

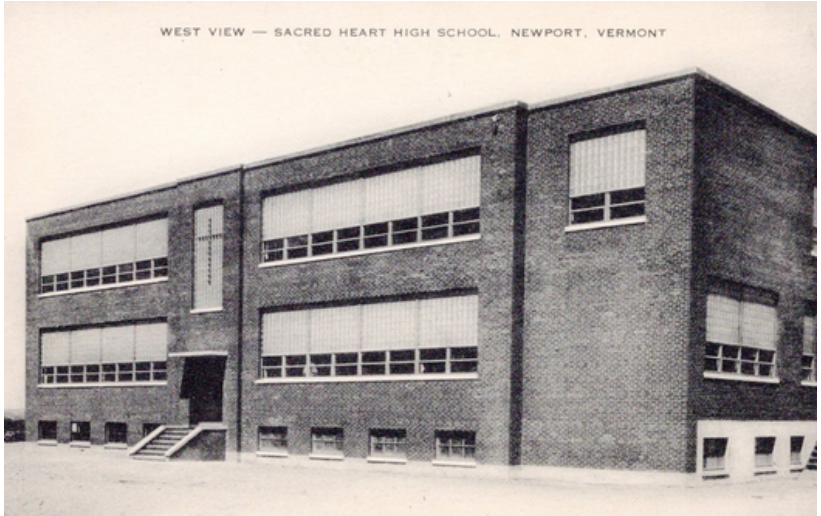
As initially conceived in 1947, the proposed Sacred Heart conveyed a Classical form, ultimately replaced by the Modern design that was constructed.

The Newport Daily Express, 1947

In an evocative statement on the rapid changes in design that characterized the period as Modernism supplanted Classical allusions and forms, as initially planned in 1947, the new proposed high school carefully maintained familiar classical stylistic allusions, with the brick massing defined by vertical bays and pilasters, quoining, and decorative frieze panels, all of which spoke an established architectural design language in a generally classical and historicist form. As ultimately completed in 1952; however, the new Sacred Heart High School building had been entirely reconceptualized and stripped of these established design norms, reflecting a transformative modernistic wave in architectural design that was shaping both the design ethos of the Catholic Church and the nation as a whole during the development period.

The new building provides the most modern facilities for all types of school work...

The Newport Daily Express, 1953

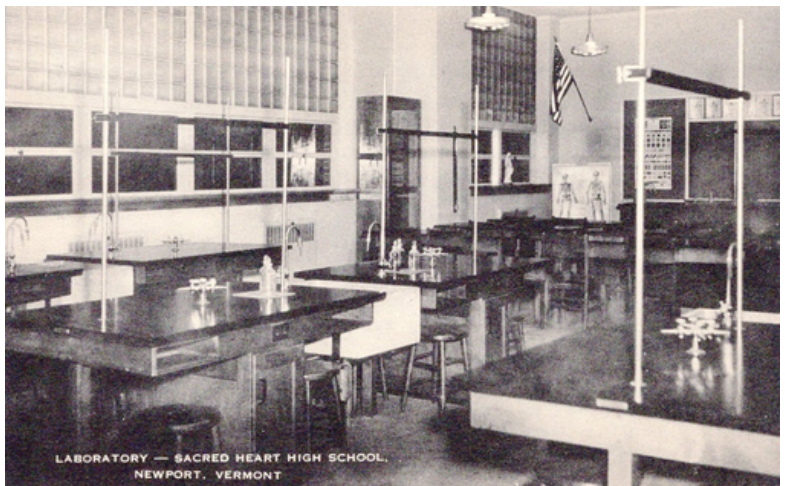


The gymnasium-auditorium is suitable for either sports or scholastic events, folding seats are provided along both side walls for sporting events...

The Newport Daily Express, 1953

Each Home Room has its own wardrobe and book and storage closet, and each teacher has a private locker. Chalk boards and bulletin boards are in each room...

The Newport Daily Express, 1953



A fully equipped chemistry laboratory provides table space for 32 pupils to work on experiments at one time and a special table for electrical experiments...

The Newport Daily Express, 1953

Also on the upper floor is a library with books in all categories such as fiction and reference. A bookstore and reference desk is also located in the library...

The Newport Daily Express, 1953



A beautiful chapel furnished with altar, kneeling rail, Stations of the Cross, and pews to accommodate 180 people is ready for the first mass. Religious statues are a beautiful part of the room.

The Newport Daily Express, 1953



A large and airy music room is well equipped with band risers and platforms for the choruses. Nine individual sound-proofed practice rooms, with pianos, connect with the music room...

The Newport Daily Express, 1953



Sacred Heart High School
Marching Band, c. 1950s



Architectural Plan for the Sacred Heart Convent, Ralph P. Branon, 1968

Against this modernized material backdrop, by 1958, the total enrolled student population of Sacred Heart School had risen to 910 students, with 275 in the new High School and the remainder in the Elementary School, which had fully occupied the early twentieth century school building standing adjacent to St. Mary's Church. By this time, the Elementary School had begun capping classes, with more applicants than could be accommodated by even the expanded facilities. Within this bullish context, the Daughters again modernized the site, constructing a new Convent building adjacent to the High School in 1969. Designed by Burlington architect Ralph P. Branon, the building reflected a modern and confident design, with a warm variegated brick form that was responsive to the adjacent 1950s High School and a further reflection of Modernistic tendencies shaping the Catholic design canon during the period. The convent and school reflected an important interrelationship, with the nuns of the convent also the teachers at the school.



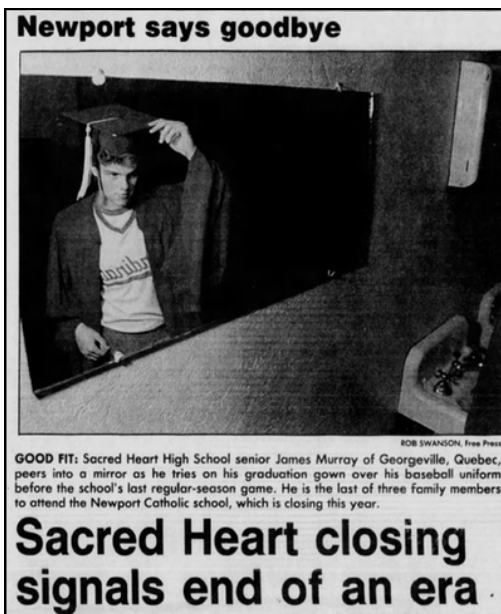
Sacred Heart Convent in 2022

Educational Evolution

The continued surge in Sacred Heart's student population into the 1960s mirrored trends across Vermont and the nation, with 1965 the highwater mark for Catholic student population in the United States. In Vermont, this population crested earlier, with 1958 the highest point for Catholic parochial schools, with just over 14,000 students enrolled in 10 high schools and 27 primary schools across the state.

By the closing decades of the twentieth century, a complex array of factors initiated steady decline in the foundational well-being of the Catholic School framework, including Sacred Heart's, leading to the ultimate closure of Sacred Heart High School in 1988. Importantly, even as the system was surging in the 1950s and 1960s, the schools were increasingly run by "lay" (non-religious) educators and staff. While early Catholic schools were almost entirely, if not entirely, run by priests or nuns who had assumed vows of poverty and parochial service, by the mid-twentieth century the number of lay teachers was beginning to eclipse religious staff. This shift in the workforce had major consequence for the financial solvency of many schools, representing the loss of a financially integrated workforce, as well as effects on the overarching sense of school mission and identity as the traditional religious basis of the schools were increasingly stewarded by lay educators.

Paralleling this strain, by the late 1960s, the modern and "up-to-date" facilities of Sacred Heart High School faced increasingly stiff competition from the newly completed North Country Union High School and other regional high schools that emerged in the period. By 1968, the new unionized public school educated 1,369 students in grades 7-12, a number of whom had, or formerly would have, gone to Sacred Heart. This pattern occurred across the state, as the 1960s brought a wave of modernizing unionizations that fundamentally altered the existing educational landscape for both private parochial schools like Sacred Heart and small-scale public town schools alike. Lastly, the nature of American families evolved in the second half of the twentieth century, as America's family-size as a whole started to decline. As opined by Sister Carol Mackenzie on the eve of Sacred Heart High School's closure in 1988, "When Sacred Heart was first started, there were 18 [kids] in a family, and probably [all] 18 would come."



The Newport Daily Express,
1988

By the early 1980s Sacred Heart's student population was less than one-third of its 1950s and 1960s highs, with a graduating senior class of only 25 by 1988. Closure of the High School was announced in January of that year, with the financial impossibilities of a steadily declining pupil base cited as the deciding factor. "We had marathons, barbecues, car raffles, bingos," mused former school director and parent of alumnae Ray Decelles, "You get tired of raising money. You know, you just do." Henry Smith, a lay teacher at the High School called the closure, "A shock for Newport that was just registering. People have realized its not just the end of a school year, it's the end of a school's history." Parent of student and Vermont author Howard Frank Mosher summed up his own feelings of loss, "We chose Sacred Heart because so many of its students went on to quality colleges...For us, this is just kind of a tragedy."

In a fitting testament to the continued international context of the school, *The Newport Daily Express* depicted a photograph of graduating senior James Murray of Georgeville, Quebec, last of three family members to attend the school, with a simple caption "Newport Says Goodbye." The closure of Sacred Heart High School left two remaining Catholic High Schools in the state: Rice Memorial High School in Burlington and Mount Saint Joseph Academy in Rutland. Both remain open to the present, with one additional Catholic High School in Brattleboro, St. Michael School, reopened in 2019 after a period of closure extending from 1968.

Following the closure of Sacred Heart High School, Sacred Heart's Elementary School occupied the former High School building. Upon the elementary's move, the original Sacred Heart School was demolished in 1988, with the site currently remaining as an undeveloped section of grass and parking lot between the St. Mary's Church and Rectory and Sacred Heart Convent. The Sacred Heart Elementary School remained open until 2007 when this too was shuttered from continuing declines in enrollment and associated financial and institutional strains. Following closure of the school at the site, the Sacred Heart Convent was also closed, with the Daughters moving to their convent in Littleton, New Hampshire.



A vacant Sacred Heart School building in 2023

As a complex, the mid-century design expression, program, and institutional solidity of the Sacred Heart buildings are an architectural and social testament to both an era of rapid community expansion within Newport's French-Canadian Catholic community and an era of complex educational modernization, in which Newport's parochial and public educational systems navigated comprehensive paradigm shifts in the delivery of education to Newport and the region's students. As observed by theological historian Catherine R. Osborne, "Places and buildings are not constituted simply by their material form, but come into being when the financial and cultural power to make a space intersects with the desire to embody a particular kind of future." As a mid-century assemblage, the Sacred Heart Complex is a cogent representation of this structural community evolution in Newport and its surrounding communities, both as a significant statement on its past and an evolving testament to its future.

A Community Future



After standing vacant for over a decade, the Sacred Heart Complex is being reimagined for twenty-first century community use, with the 1952 Sacred Heart School and 1969 Sacred Heart Convent redeveloped for much-needed affordable housing for the Northeast Kingdom. In the conversion from institutional and educational use, Project developer RuralEdge, in coordination with Agency partners, seeks to reconnect the hilltop site to the community foundations of Newport, building upon over a century of stewardship by the Daughters of the Charity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, who sold the site in 2024 in support of the housing project.

The reuse and reimagination of the Sacred Heart School and Convent symbolizes both an investment in the future of the City of Newport and its environs, and a powerful statement of community preservation, with the significant architectural and social legacy of the Sacred Heart community reimagined as a foundation for ongoing community use and growth.

Credits, Thanks, and Further Information

The historic documentation in this booklet was developed on behalf of RuralEdge in coordination with Consulting Architectural Historian Polly Seddon Allen. For more detailed information regarding development of the Sacred Heart Complex please refer to the Vermont Architectural Resource Inventory (VARI) Record and Determination of Eligibility (DOE) for the Sacred Heart Complex (Allen, 2022), on file with the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation in their Online Resource Center (ORC).

Historic Photographs of Sacred Heart School and Sacred Heart Yearbook images courtesy of the Daughters of the Charity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Color Post Card in *A Parish Founded* courtesy of Boston Public Library. Aerial Image depicted in *A Community Future*, courtesy of Century 21 Farm & Forest Realty.

For further reading on the development of parochial education in Vermont and the United States see Ann Marie Ryan's *American Catholic Schools in the Twentieth Century* (2022). For detailed reading on Catholicism and Modernity in architecture in the twentieth century, see Catherine R. Osborne's *American Catholics and the Church of Tomorrow* (2018).

