



The History of Immaculata School

Cincinnati Archbishop John Purcell was very interested in establishing Catholic schools in his archdiocese and was likely very supportive of a school at Immaculata. Soon after the first Mass was said at Immaculata in December of 1860 a school was begun. The first class of seven students met in the choir loft. As the number of students grew, classes were moved to the front pews of the church and then to the west sacristy.

In 1865, a free-standing, one-room brick school building was constructed on the west edge of the church property along Church Street (known today as Guido Street). This building was replaced in 1868 by a limestone, two-story, four-room school just north of the one-room brick building. A third story was added to the limestone building in 1871. The brick school was then used as a chapel and was eventually razed in the 1920s.

Henry Bollman was born on Mt. Adams in 1849 and was a student in the first class at Immaculata. Mr. Bollman said this in an excerpt from a short essay he wrote in 1931 about his life on the Hill: "When the church was finished we had no school, so the choir was used. From there to the first pews of the church, then to the left hand sacristy on the west side. When the wind

blew in a certain direction the room would fill with smoke, so that school would have to be dismissed until the wind had changed. After this the brick house was built in back of the church where the west end of the house was used for a school. They were building the small brick school when I made my First Communion."

Grades one through eight attended the four-room limestone school and each room housed two grades. Students were taught in German by lay teachers and an occasional priest. That changed in 1877 when Archbishop Purcell invited the Cincinnati Sisters of Charity to come to Mt. Adams and teach the Immaculata children. The Sisters accepted the offer and moved into the vacant Immaculata Rectory. The first Superior was Sr. Mary Rose Studor.

A public school opened on the Hill in 1895 with kindergarten as well as grades one through eight. Since neither Mt. Adams Catholic school offered kindergarten classes, Catholic children attended the public school for kindergarten. Mothers decided which Catholic school their children would attend; generally those of German heritage sent their children to Immaculata, and Irish mothers sent their children to Holy Cross School which opened in 1888.

Fr. John Philip Maerder was appointed Pastor of Immaculata in 1914 just one year after his ordination. He was 32 years old, full of energy and immediately set about making improvements. His first move was to eliminate tuition at Immaculata School, immediately endearing him to his flock. He remodeled the basement of the school and turned it into club rooms for the children and young adults of the parish. Fr. Maerder also revitalized the Immaculata Athletic Club and it later enjoyed great prominence on baseball fields and basketball courts around the city. He was notorious for spontaneously declaring a "free day" for the school children, often frustrating the Sisters and the student's mothers.



Immaculata school children in a September 20, 1882 photo. Photograph courtesy Walt and Ann Carroll.



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Not one to rest on his laurels, Fr. Maerder added an addition to the south end of Immaculata School in 1917. The addition included a large third-floor hall with a stage, a second-floor community room and on the lower floor, a room for a kindergarten. A cornerstone was placed at the southwest corner of the addition that recognized Fr. John and it remains in place today.

Immaculata School closed in 1946 due to decreasing enrollment and Immaculata students attended Holy Cross School two blocks away. Immaculata School was converted to a two-year commercial high school, and students city-wide who had completed the eighth grade were eligible to apply there. The first class of nineteen graduated in 1948. The only teacher during the first year of the commercial high school was Sister of Charity Fiddles O'Conner.

The first-year curriculum of the commercial high school included religion, English, bookkeeping, word study, literature, shorthand and general business. Students were given the opportunity to specialize in one of three fields the second year: stenography, bookkeeping or clerical. Tuition was \$70 a year but the parish paid half and the students were responsible for the other half.

The final class graduated from Immaculata Commercial High School on May 31, 1959, and then the school was closed. The students who had completed their first year were offered the option of finishing the second year at Seton High School. Twenty-three students took advantage of the offer and twenty-two of them completed the program. The former principal at Immaculata, Sr. Lucy Ignatia Luckey, taught the students during their second year.

The vacant Immaculata School building became a school for special needs children on September 1, 1963. The first class of seventy students at the Springer School was taught by the Sisters of Charity. Springer School moved to Roselawn in 1973 and eventually settled in O'Bryonville where it still resides.

When the Springer School left Mt. Adams, the old school building housed the Mt. Adams Community Center which provided educational and recreational programs for a \$15 annual membership fee. Unfortunately, the parish could not support the program, as the \$3,300 annual rent it received did not cover utilities and services and the program ended in 1980. The old school building now serves as a parish and community center.

The Sisters of Charity continued teaching on the Hill until 1976 and sadly left Mt. Adams when Holy Cross School closed. They spent ninety-nine years teaching students from the Mt. Adams community.

~Jim Steiner



First class of Immaculata Commercial High School Students in a 1948 photo. From left, seated Natalie Rechten, behind her, Joan Divine, next in order from left are Nancy Fagin, Marylind Huedepohl and Pat Kimbal. Photograph courtesy HCI Archives.