



School Sisters of Notre Dame

School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) in Illinois

Some highlights compiled by the SSND North American Archives

- 1859 Eight SSND arrived in Belleville to open the first missions in Illinois – the Institute of the Immaculate Conception (SSND operated school) and St. Peter’s School (parish school).
- 1861 Mother Caroline Friess sent a music teacher and a sister to teach needlework to St. Boniface School in Quincy, Illinois. These special classes for young women were the nucleus of St. Mary’s Institute (later Notre Dame of Quincy and is today Quincy Notre Dame).
- 1862 The first mission in Chicago, St. Michael’s, opened.
- 1871 Sisters living in Chicago experienced the [Great Chicago Fire](#). At St. Peter’s, the sisters prepared to flee as the fire closed in on them. At the last minute the winds shifted and the convent was saved. The sisters at St. Michael’s were not as lucky. The entire convent was destroyed in the fire. The sisters at St. Anthony’s were never in danger and after the fire they provided food and clothing for those affected.
- 1874 Four sisters and a candidate arrived in Washington Heights (now Chicago) to open a parish school, but enrollment was low. Sister Gonzaga Minges, who had worked in Chicago, knew there was a need for higher education for girls finishing eighth grade. She conceived the idea of opening a boarding school for girls in Washington Heights and the beloved Academy of Our Lady was established.
- 1878 Sr. Herlinda Sick opened St. Joseph’s School to serve African American children living in Quincy, Illinois. In 1886, Fr. Augustus Tolton was ordained in Rome, making him the first African American priest in the United States. He was born an enslaved person in Missouri and escaped across the Mississippi with his family, who settled in Quincy. He was educated by SSND and went to Rome for seminary after being rejected by every American seminary. In 2019, Pope Francis issued a “Decree of Heroic Virtue” and granted Fr. Tolton the title of Venerable.
- 1884 On January 5, a fire broke out at the Institute of the Immaculate Conception in Belleville. The fire engulfed the building and made escape difficult. Twenty-two students and four sisters, including the superior, Sr. Jerome Heil, perished in the fire. As a result of the fire, Mother Caroline Friess directed all schools and orphanages to see that fire escapes were accessible. She sent inspectors to the schools to ensure compliance.

- 1890 The SSND were asked to staff Holy Family Orphanage in Chicago. To accommodate the orphanage's diverse immigrant population, the congregation sent eight sisters of German, Polish, English and Bohemian descent to staff the home.
- 1893 Several SSND schools participated in the Chicago World's Fair. Before her death in 1892, Mother Caroline Friess used the invitation to participate to correct the "malicious views entertained by many citizens in regard to Catholic institutions." She tasked her teachers to highlight students' penmanship, diction and language tasks. High school students were instructed to demonstrate their skills in prose, poetry, fancy needlework, wax and hair-work, ornamental pen work and drawing.
- 1899 A [tragic fire at St. Francis Solanus School](#) in Quincy killed 12 students.
- 1907 Sr. Stanisla Kurk was sent to the Academy of Our Lady in Longwood (now Chicago) to run the school's art program. She had trained as an artist in Europe before entering the congregation. At Longwood she established an art studio where she created some of her best-known artwork. She painted portraits of Pope Pius XI, Chicago's mayor, the Illinois governor and the bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend. She later went on to establish the art program at Mount Mary College (now University) in Milwaukee, although her studio remained at Longwood.
- 1908 The SSND arrive in Cairo, the southern-most city in Illinois, to teach at St. Joseph's School.
- 1913 St. Francis of Assisi School in Teutopolis became a public school. In an arrangement with state and local authorities, from 9am-6pm the school operated as a public school, although the SSND who had been teaching at St. Francis since 1861 remained on staff. Religious classes were taught from 8-9am and after 6pm the parish had the right to use the school.
- 1965 The motherhouse for the newly formed DeKalb (later Chicago) Province and Notre Dame of DeKalb High school open.
- 1980 Sr. Carolyn Sur and two Marianist Brothers founded the Vincent Gray Alternative High School in East St. Louis, which provided an alternative education without discrimination based on race, creed or sex to help those with the greatest need. The school continues today as the Vincent Gray Academy.
- 1982 Sister Anne Mayer, SSND, opens Sister House in Chicago.
- 1999 Academy of Our Lady closed and the sisters wanted to maintain a presence and ministry in the South Chicago area. Corazón a Corazón was opened to provide ESL services to adults and after school and summer programs for elementary school students in response to perceived needs in the area.
- 2022 SSND history is still being made in Illinois today, through the daily lives of sisters living out our SSND mission in a variety of ministries!

Chronological list of SSND missions in Illinois (by year of SSND arrival)

Illinois	Belleville	Immaculate Conception Academy (St. Mary's Institute)	1859
Illinois	Belleville	St. Peter	1859
Illinois	Quincy	St. Boniface	1859
Illinois	Quincy	Select School for Girls	1861
Illinois	Quincy	St. Peter	1861
Illinois	Teutopolis	St. Francis of Assisi	1861
Illinois	Chicago	St. Michael Grade and High School	1862
Illinois	Breese	St. Dominic founded 1864 or 1865	1865
Illinois	Chicago	St. Peter	1865
Illinois	Quincy	St. Aloysius Orphanage	1865
Illinois	Galena	St. Mary	1866
Illinois	Quincy	St. Francis Solanus	1866
Illinois	Chicago	Santa Maria Incoronata	1867
Illinois	Chicago	St. Anthony	1867
Illinois	Henry	St. Mary - no name in sketches	1867
Illinois	Highland	St. Paul Grade and High School	1867
Illinois	Quincy	Notre Dame High School	1867
Illinois	Springfield	Immaculate Conception	1867
Illinois	Peoria	St. Joseph	1868
Illinois	Teutopolis	St. Mary's Academy	1868
Illinois	Mud Creek		1869
Illinois	St. Libory	St. Liborius	1869
Illinois	Peoria	St. Patrick	1872
Illinois	Chicago	Academy of Our Lady	1874
Illinois	Chicago	St. Stanislaus Kostka Grade and HS	1874
Illinois	Effingham	St. Anthony Grade and High School	1874
Illinois	Alton	Immaculate Conception	1875
Illinois	Champaign	St. Mary	1878
Illinois	Quincy	St. Joseph	1878
Illinois	Blue Island	St. Benedict	1879
Illinois	Random	St. Michael	1880
Illinois	Belleville	St. Luke	1881
Illinois	Bridgeport		1881
Illinois	Chicago	St. Mary	1881
Illinois	Chicago	St. Alphonsus	1882
Illinois	Chicago	St. George	1884
Illinois	Quincy	St. Anthony	1884
Illinois	Belleville	St. John	1888
Illinois	Chicago	St. Paul	1889
Illinois	Chicago	Holy Family Orphanage	1890
Illinois	Du Quoin	Sacred Heart	1891
Illinois	DuBois	St. Charles	1891

Illinois	Chicago	St. Margaret of Scotland	1893
Illinois	East St. Louis	St. Philip	1893
Illinois	Quincy	St. Rose of Lima	1893
Illinois	Belleville	St. Mary	1894
Illinois	Chicago	St. John Cantius	1894
Illinois	Chicago	Holy Rosary	1902
Illinois	Cairo	St. Joseph	1908
Illinois	East St. Louis	St. Joseph	1909
Illinois	Belvidere	St. James	1910
Illinois	New Athens	St. Agatha	1910
Illinois	Chicago	St. Ambrose	1911
Illinois	Cobden	St. Joseph	1912
Illinois	Mt. Sterling	St. Joseph	1913
Illinois	Teutopolis	Teutopolis Elementary School	1913
Illinois	Chicago	St. Constance	1915
Illinois	Nokomis	St. Louis	1917
Illinois	Teutopolis	Teutopolis High School	1917
Illinois	Effingham	Sacred Heart	1918
Illinois	Chicago	St. Stephen	1919
Illinois	Chicago	Guardian Angel	1920
Illinois	Seymour	St. Boniface	1920
Illinois	Grand Chain	St. Catherine	1921
Illinois	Aviston	Aviston Elementary School	1922
Illinois	Amboy	St. Anne	1923
Illinois	Aviston	Aviston Community High School	1923
Illinois	East St. Louis	Holy Angels	1924
Illinois	Belleville	Academy of Notre Dame	1925
Illinois	Belleville	St. Henry	1925
Illinois	Belleville	Blessed Sacrament	1926
Illinois	Belleville	St. Teresa	1926
Illinois	Breese	St. Augustine	1927
Illinois	Kickapoo	St. Mary	1933
Illinois	Eldorado	St. Mary	1935
Illinois	Ridgway	St. Joseph	1935
Illinois	Belleville	Le Clerc College	1938
Illinois	Freeburg	St. Joseph	1939
Illinois	Chicago	St. Therese Catholic Chinese Mission	1941
Illinois	Washington Park	St. Martin of Tours	1945
Illinois	Herrin	Our Lady of Mount Carmel	1946
Illinois	Chicago	St. Helena of the Cross	1948
Illinois	Chicago	All Saints	1949
Illinois	Chicago	Cardinal Stritch High School	1950
Illinois	Chicago	St. John de la Salle	1950

Illinois	Caseyville	St. Stephen	1952
Illinois	Breese	Mater Dei High School	1954
Illinois	Rockford	St. Bernadette	1957
Illinois	Morton	Blessed Sacrament	1958
Illinois	Chicago	Santa Lucia	1961
Illinois	East St. Louis	East St. Louis Deanery Special Education	1961
Illinois	Carmi	Immaculate Heart of Mary Catechetical Center	1962
Illinois	Aviston	St. Jude Special School	1963
Illinois	Belleville	Althoff Catholic High School	1964
Illinois	Dixon	St. Anne	1964
Illinois	Harwood Heights	St. Rosalie	1964
Illinois	DeKalb	Notre Dame of DeKalb High School	1965
Illinois	Wonder Lake	Christ the King	1965
Illinois	Rockford	Boylan High School	1966
Illinois	Chicago	Mother McAuley High School	1967
Illinois	DeKalb	St. Mary	1968
Illinois	Sycamore	St. Mary	1968
Illinois	Chicago	Santa Lucia-Santa Maria Incoronata	1969
Illinois	Chicago	St. Frances Cabrini	1969
Illinois	Highwood	St. James	1969

Sisters also served in individual ministries which would be too numerous to list. Since 1969, many sisters continued serving in these schools and parishes while others ministered in healthcare, social services, post-secondary education or the arts.