

History of the Society of the Sacred Heart in the Archdiocese of St. Louis

August 22, 1818

After traveling up the Mississippi River from New Orleans in the steamboat *Franklin*, Rose Philippine Duchesne and her four companions arrive at the Market Street landing in St. Louis; they are the first women religious in St. Louis. They first arrived in this country from France earlier that year, on the Feast of the Sacred Heart, May 29, 1818.

September 7, 1818

Bishop Louis Dubourg sends the five religious to St. Charles, where they take up life in the “Duquette Mansion,” near the Missouri River.

September 14, 1818

Philippine and her companions open the first free school west of the Mississippi, with twenty-two girls too poor to pay any tuition. This is the beginning of the [Academy of the Sacred Heart](#) and international Sacred Heart education.

October 3, 1818

The boarding school opens with three girls from St. Louis: Emilie and Therese Pratte and their cousin, Pelagie Chouteau.

1819-1846

The St. Charles location proves to be too remote to attract students, so on September 3-6, 1819, the nuns and their boarding pupils move to a new location, in Florissant, now the [Old St. Ferdinand Shrine](#). They are unable to move into the promised building until December 21-24. The new site is home to a boarding school and school for Indian girls, and eventually a novitiate (1820-1842).

1820

Mary Ann Layton from Perryville, enters the Society of the Sacred Heart at Florissant, the first vocation from America. She is followed soon after by Emilie St. Cyr.

July 2, 1826

The Diocese of St. Louis is created.

1827

The Society finally finds a house in St. Louis City. In urging Philippine to open a house in the City, St. Madeleine Sophie Barat wrote, “I tell you candidly, I prefer (St. Louis) to all others just now. You must have a center, a Mother House in that part of the world, which will be able to support the other houses. St. Louis is the place to choose ... A Mother House for America is absolutely necessary. What city would be more suitable than St. Louis?” The “City House” is located in St. Louis, at Convent and Broadway. Philanthropist John Mullanphy leased the property for 999 years, on the condition that an orphanage would always be maintained alongside the boarding and day schools. Several orphans arrived with Philippine and two other nuns.

1828

The first free school in St. Louis opens at the City House, with French and English sections.

1828

The house in St. Charles reopens as convent and boarding school.

1836

The Children of Mary Sodality is established at City House.

December 7, 1846

The City House is incorporated by the State of Missouri as a “Female Seminary of Learning.”

1846

The house at Florissant is closed; the Sisters of Loretto take over the school the next year.

1849

Five religious and three children die of the cholera epidemic at City House in eighteen days; Archbishop Kenrick comes several times to console the many who are ill.

November 18, 1852

Mother Duchesne dies at St. Charles: Archbishop Kenrick declares her “the noblest and most virtuous soul he had ever known.”

October 23, 1855

Mother Duchesne’s remains are exhumed and found intact. They are transferred from the cemetery to the little round chapel of Our Lady of the Pillar in the garden. The cornerstone is blessed and laid by Pierre De Smet, S.J.

March to May, 1861

The St. Louis convent is threatened constantly with attack by troops from both sides of the Civil War. Children who can go home do so; all who can leave the city, but the nuns stay because some children with them cannot go home. May 13, they accept Archbishop Kenrick’s offer of his country home eight miles from the city.

September, 1861

Against advice, the nuns reopen the City House school with thirty-eight boarders and thirty-four day pupils, better than they expected in the midst of war

1867-1873

Religious of the Sacred Heart take charge of a free school for girls at the Church of the Annunciation at 6th and LaSalle Streets. (The parish closed in 1951.)

1867

Nancy Bakewell, eleven years old, is cured miraculously in St. Louis through the intercession of Madeleine Sophie Barat; the miracle is accepted for beatification of Madeleine Sophie Barat in 1908. Nancy Bakewell attended the beatification in Rome.

1872

St. Charles Borromeo Parish in St. Charles moves from the convent to a new location two blocks to the west; a new chapel is erected for the convent at St. Charles in 1882.

July, 1872

Maryville opens as a boarding school in the country south of St. Louis; its later address is Meramec and Nebraska Avenues.

1880

The first house of the Society in New Zealand is founded at Timaru by Mother Susannah Boudreau and four companions from Maryville, St. Louis.

1893

The City House is transferred to a new location at Maryland and Taylor Avenues; Archbishop Kain made several visits during the first year.

1910

At the request of Archbishop Glennon, the Children of Mary Sodality opens the Catholic Outing Home at the old Clay Mansion on Florissant Road, once the summer home of Archbishop Kenrick. It was a summer vocational program for poor children, both girls and boys.

1916-1921

At the request of Archbishop Glennon, five Religious of the Sacred Heart take responsibility for the Cathedral School at the new site on Lindell Boulevard; 150 children enrolled the first day. In 1921, the work is entrusted to the Sisters of St. Joseph.

1917

Classes begin at Maryville College

1918

The Society celebrates the centenary of the foundation of the American mission at St. Charles. The name of Mother Duchesne is inscribed first on the list on a bronze plaque commemorating pioneer women at the Jefferson Memorial Museum, Forest Park.

1929

The academy at Maryville is transferred to Villa Duchesne.

1932

Barat Catholic Action Center is opened at Maryville, a center of activities for girls and women. Sophie Barat School for adolescent girls at risk is operated at the center.

March 17, 1935

Rose Philippine Duchesne is declared "venerable."

May 12, 1940

Rose Philippine Duchesne is beatified in Rome by Pius XII.

June 13, 1952

The sarcophagus containing the remains of Blessed Philippine are placed in the Shrine at the Academy of the Sacred Heart, St. Charles.

1961

Maryville College moved to Conway Road, Creve Coeur.

January 1967

The [Shrine](#) to St. Philippine Duchesne, remodeled by William Schickel, is completed.

1982

The Society of the Sacred Heart in the United States merges its five provinces into one with headquarters in St. Louis.

July 3, 1988

St. Rose Philippine Duchesne is canonized by John Paul II.

June, 2003

The archives are moved into a former public library on West Pine in the Central West End.

October 2008

The headquarters of the United States Province are moved to 4120 Forest Park Avenue.

July 2013

The United States Province unites with the Canadian Province to form the United States – Canada Province. It is still based in St. Louis.