

LORETTO ACADEMY

In the 1820s, a young Irish boy by the name of John Joseph Lynch saw a picture of the Horseshoe Falls and decided that it was a natural place for people to worship God. The boy became a priest in the Congregation of the Missions, and came to Texas in 1846. In 1856, he founded a Seminary near Lewiston, New York, which is now Niagara University. As Archbishop of Toronto, he obtained six acres of land overlooking the Falls on the Canadian side in 1861, and deeded it to the Loretto nuns, who had established themselves in Toronto since their arrival from Ireland in 1847. On this land was a tavern known as The Canada House, which was renovated and converted into a convent and school by the nuns.

The school opened in September of 1861, under the guidance of the first Superior of Loretto Academy, Mother Joachim Murray. This school attracted day students from Chippawa, Clifton, Drummondville, and Niagara Falls, New York, and boarders from Toronto, Guelph, Buffalo, Rochester and Lockport. The yearly tuition at Loretto was \$80-\$100, a significant amount in those days. In 1864, Mother Regis Harris took over as Superior of the Academy. In 1869, a sturdy stone structure known as the North Wing was built, and plans for a new main building were drawn up in 1879-1880. The new building was completed by the beginning of the 1900s, and was called the Loretto Convent of the Blessed Sacrament.

On January 19, 1938, a disastrous fire destroyed the interior of the South Wing. Fortunately, none of the sisters or boarders were injured, and the stone walls of the building remained intact, allowing for reconstruction. In the interim, boarders were sent to Loretto's sister school, Loretto Abbey in Toronto, and day students resumed classes in the undamaged North Wing. The reconstruction was completed by September of 1938, and the school reopened. The Loretto Academy celebrated its 100th anniversary in 1961. In 1970, the boarding school was closed and Loretto became the Catholic High School of Niagara Falls, until 1982 when St. Paul High School was converted from a senior school. The Loretto Convent and Christian Life Centre is still used as the site of religious retreats for Separate School students, and also hosts many conferences and camps. It is located on Stanley Street, overlooking the Falls, and beside the recently constructed Sheraton Fallsview Hotel.

