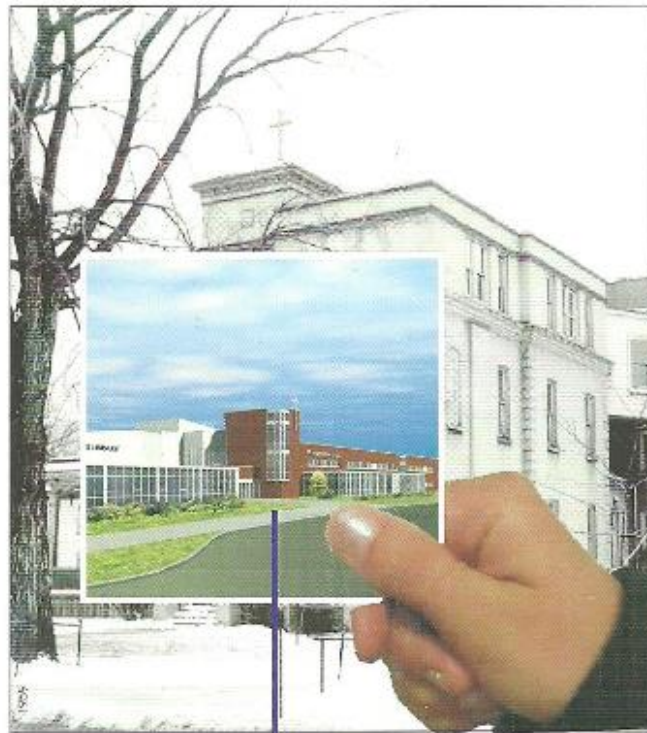
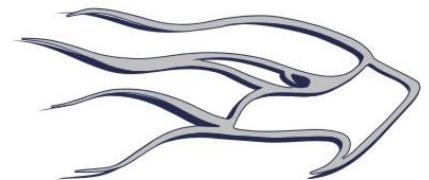




The History of St. Mary's High School



The Tradition Continues



The History of St. Mary's High School

Kitchener, Ontario

St. Mary's High School (SMHS) has undergone many changes throughout its history. Not only has the focus and purpose of the school evolved over time but so has its physical structures.

The evolution of the school has been traced below but this is not a complete chronology. The full history of the school lives on in the memories and legacies of former students and its spirit and traditions continue in the students of St. Mary's today. We honour the sacrifices and the dedication of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, the founders of St. Mary's High School.

SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

- * *Rooted in Faith*
- * *Learning in Love*
- * *Dedicated to Excellence*

*Where kindness matters
community grows!*



SCHOOL CREST

The St. Mary's HS crest contains the motto – "Virtus et Scientia" – virtue and knowledge. It succinctly expresses the aim of the school – to impart profound truths in both the religious and secular subjects so that its graduates may go forth as valiant young people, strong in character, virtue, and learning.

Timeline:

The name "St. Mary's" has a long history in downtown Berlin, Ontario (renamed Kitchener in 1916) with **St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church** (old 1856, new 1903), **St. Mary's Convent** (1885) and **St. Mary's Elementary School** (1859) taking up one block of Young Street's east side between Weber and Duke Streets.

On the west side of Young Street, the **Fathers of the Congregation of the Resurrection at St. Jerome's High School** had been educating boys since 1867 but there was no counterpart for girls.

1907 – Sister Lioba of the **School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND)** established **St Anne's Training School** (also referred to as **St. Anne's Convent School**) for girls interested in becoming SSND and eager to obtain a Catholic high school education. Enrolment = 9. Classes were held at the newly acquired "**White House**" (formerly the Erb family home) at the south-west corner of Weber and Ontario Streets. It would later house the first school library.

1908 – The **Pierce Terrace** (the "**Red House**", later referred to as the **Choir Studio**) on Ontario Street (half a block south of the **White House**) was acquired to accommodate increased enrolment.

1910 - First graduating class prepared for Teacher's College.

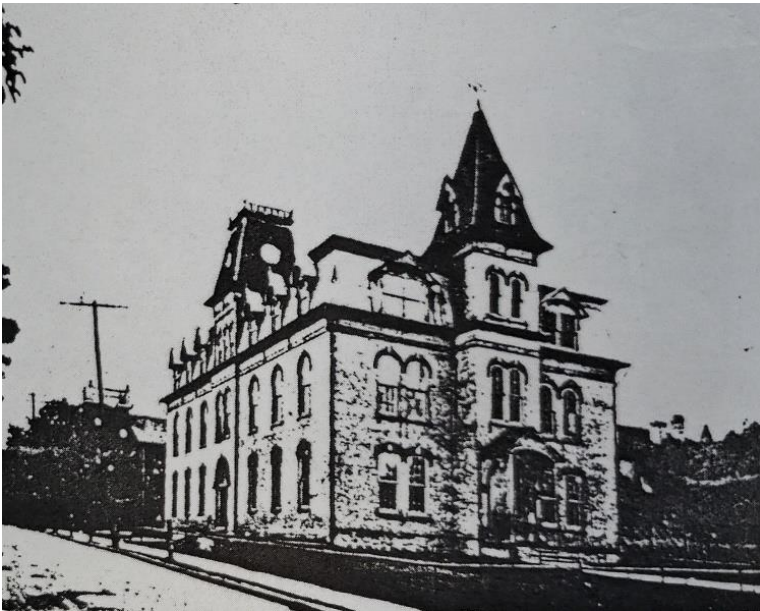
1925 – A new uniform consisted of a navy skirt, middie, and black stockings.

1927 – Girls from **St. Anne's** transferred to Waterdown to attend the new **Notre Dame Academy** (part of the SSND Motherhouse). 84 St. Anne's aspirants became SSNDs during 1907-1927.



(Above) St. Anne's Convent School - the original White House acquired in 1907.

1928 – **St. Mary's Elementary School** (Weber and Young Streets) extended education to grades 9 and 10 to maintain a high school option in Kitchener for Catholic girls. Classes were also taught at **Sacred Heart** school on Moore Avenue in Kitchener and **St. Louis** school in Waterloo on Allan Street.



(Above) St. Mary's Elementary School [original (left) and remodelled (right)]

1930 – The school became officially known as **St. Mary's High School (SMHS)** when **St. Mary's Church** offered its **Parish Hall** and gym along Ontario Street (between the **White House** and **Red House**) for grades 9 to 12. Four new classrooms were built on top of the hall and gym, and a third floor was added to the **White House**. Grades 9 and 10 were funded by the government, while grades 11 and 12 paid tuition. Enrolment = 45 girls.



*The **Parish Hall** (built in 1927) is the large building in the background that still exists today. The school gradually expanded into a refurbished **White House** (foreground) which became known as **Rosary Hall** and was used for a variety of purposes over the years.*

1934 – Grade 13 established with 9 students. Enrolment = 130.

1938 – Two new classrooms were built above the **Parish Hall**, and a new Commercial department was incorporated into the curriculum. Enrolment = 196.

1939 – Home Economics facility was added. Grades 11 and 12 became tuition-free thanks to **St. Mary's Parish** and the assistance of the **Catholic Women's League (CWL)** until the 1950's.

1940 – Classes again held at **Sacred Heart** school until 1942.

1941 – First formal graduation exercises held. Enrolment = 145.

(Below) Group photos from the late 1930's.



1942 – Enrolment = 149.
Graduates = 14.

1944 – Two more
classrooms added from top
floor of **Rosary Hall**.

1946 – Graduates = 25.
27 the following year.

1952 – Graduates = 38.

1954 – A new uniform
introduced: blue blazer,
white blouse, grey skirt,
saddle shoes and bobby
socks. Enrolment = 270.



(Above) Sports teams were known as the “Blues” like this senior basketball team from 1942.



(Left) Statues of Our Lady adorned the corridors, and some were moved along with stained glass windows to the new school in 2002.

(Below) Commercial and Chemistry classes in the early 1950's.

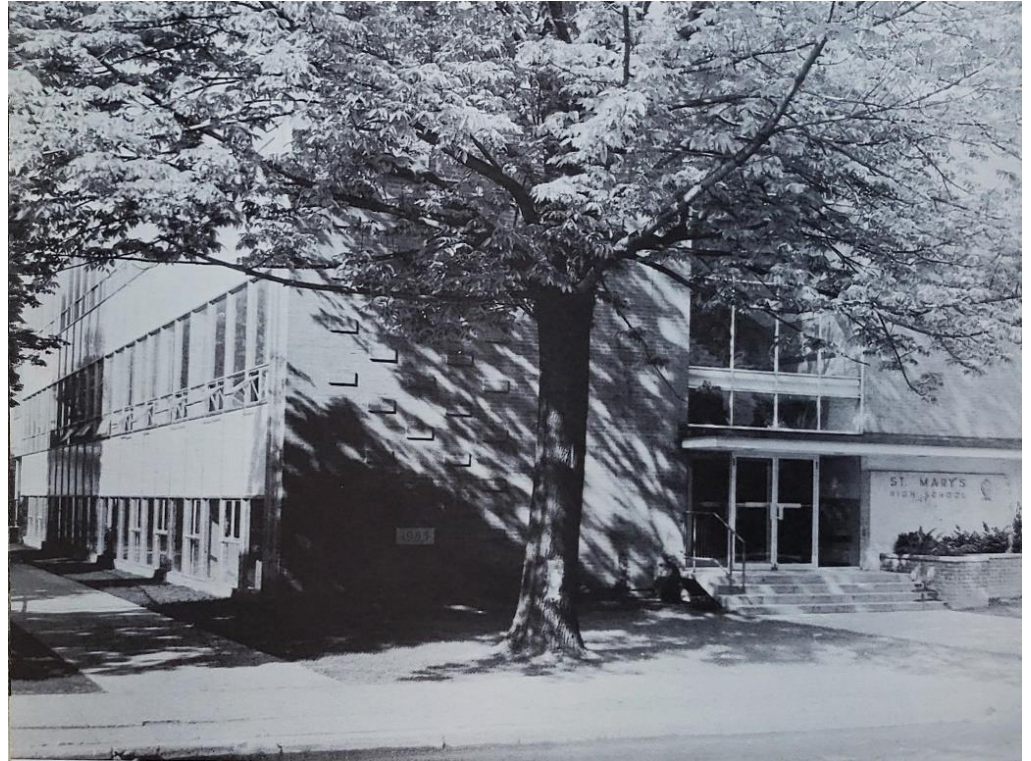


1955 – The **West Wing** opened at a cost of \$200,000. It incorporated a new school front on Weber Street, library, offices, 12 classrooms, and cafeteria for 400 students.

1958 – Enrolment = 528.

1959 – First yearbook “Mary Hi” was published.

(Right) West Wing from Weber Street.



1961 – The **Centre Wing** with an enlarged library, science labs and commercial department opened at a cost of \$450,000 at the corner of Weber and Ontario Streets replacing the **White House** and two other homes. All campus buildings were now connected. Enrolment = 660. Graduates = 79.



(Left) Centre Wing at Weber and Ontario Streets.

(Below) Centre Wing on left, West Wing on the right, along Weber Street.

1963 – Tuition for in-town students = \$50. Additional family members paid \$25.

1965 – Kilts and navy sweaters became uniform options, and the first male teachers were hired.





*(Left) 1961
Grads outside St.
Mary's Church,
56 Duke Street
West.*

1966 – Grade 12
graduates = 101;
Grade 13
graduates = 60.

1967 – Chapel created. Saddle shoes were no longer required. Enrolment = 826.

1968 – Last year of Grade 13 provincial exams. Credit system initiated.

1969 – St. Mary's and St. Jerome's stage the musical "West Side Story" which includes staff and students and begins a long tradition of sophisticated musical drama productions.

(Below) "Jesus Christ Superstar" - 1990





(Above) "42nd Street" - 2008

1971 – Extra classrooms obtained in **St. Mary's Elementary School** (Weber and Young Streets) which had been reconstructed from its original form. Today it is the **St. Mary's campus of St. Louis Continuing Education**, 77 Young Street. (Below)

1972 – Instrumental music is introduced as a co-ed class at St. Mary's and St. Jerome's.

1974 – Semester system adopted. A portable unit containing four classrooms was built in the quadrangle. Total classrooms = 48.

1975 – Enrolment = 1200.

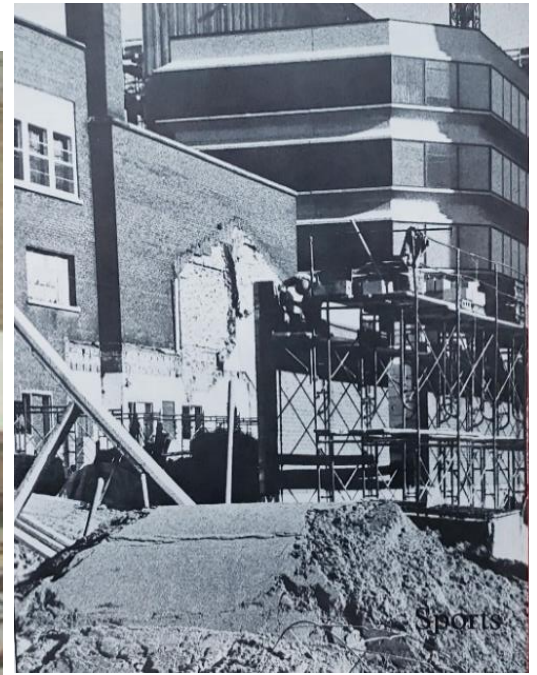
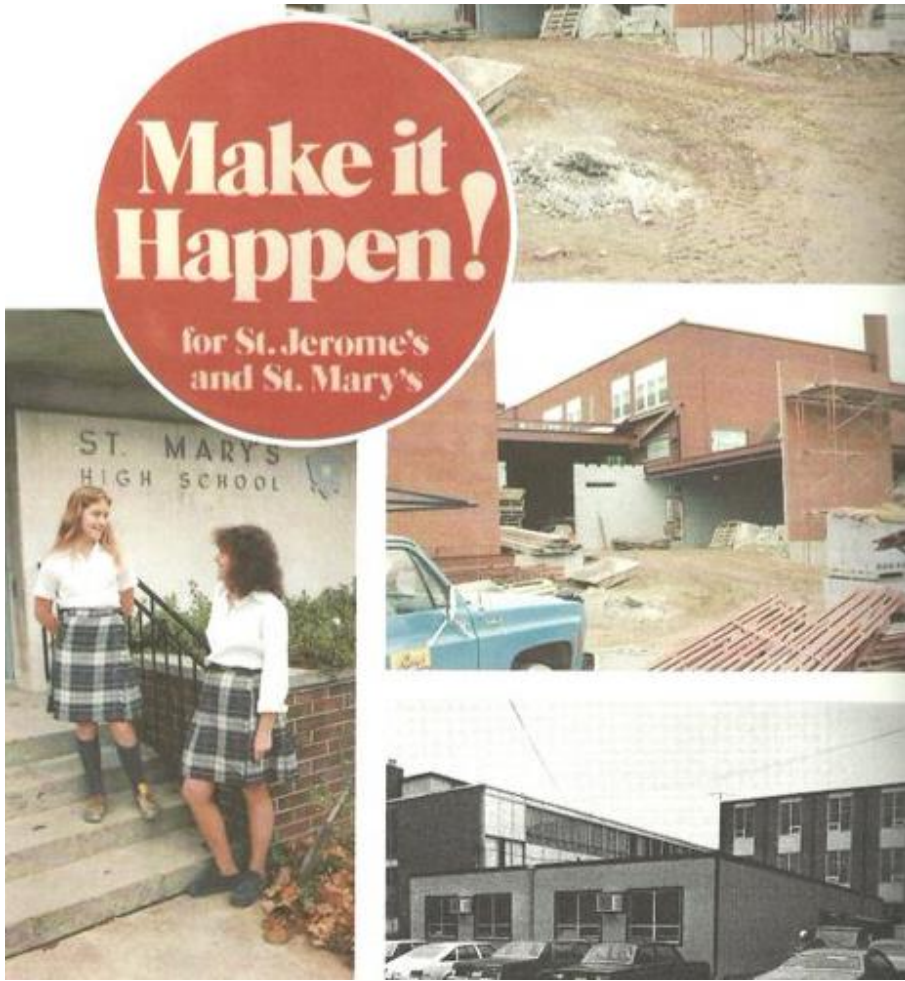
1976 – Four more portables were placed on the parking lot. Houses on Duke Street were demolished to create new parking spaces. Tuition = \$280.
Graduates = 212.



(Below) Group photos from late 1960's and early 1970's.



1978 – Additional portable space acquired at **St. Jerome's HS** (120 Duke Street West).
Graduates = 250.



*(Above) **South Wing** construction; **Corporation square** behind.*

(Left) Fundraising campaigns were the norm such as this example from 1978-1979.

1980 – The **Pierce Terrace “Red House”** (which was being used for Special Education) was replaced with the **South Wing** which included an enlarged gym and stage. Graduates = 260.



*(Above) **South Wing** in foreground. **St. Mary's Convent**, just to the right of **St. Mary's Church**, is now **Lutherwood Housing Services**, 41 Weber Street West.*

The old St. Mary's Elementary School became the **West Campus** building (math/geography). The Centre Wing became the **Green Wing** (Science/Business). The West Wing became the **Blue Wing** housing the cafeteria, main office, chapel, and guidance. The classrooms attached to the South Wing became the **Yellow Wing**. The classrooms in the top floors of the old St. Mary's Parish Hall building (art/hospitality) became the **Silver Wing**. Due to the lack of outdoor practice fields, Victoria Park was utilized.

(Right) Catholic institutions occupied most of two large city blocks bounded by Weber, Ontario, Duke and College Streets.



(Below Right) Student Activities Council, 1980-1981. (Second from right is future CTV news anchor Lisa Laflamme)

1981 – Tuition was \$550 less a \$70 subsidy from the “St. Jerome’s-St. Mary’s High School Education Foundation”.

1984 – The Provincial Government extended funding (phased in) to Grade 13.

1986 – **Corporation Square** (office building on east side of Ontario Street) was used for classroom space and a library eventually taking space on six floors.

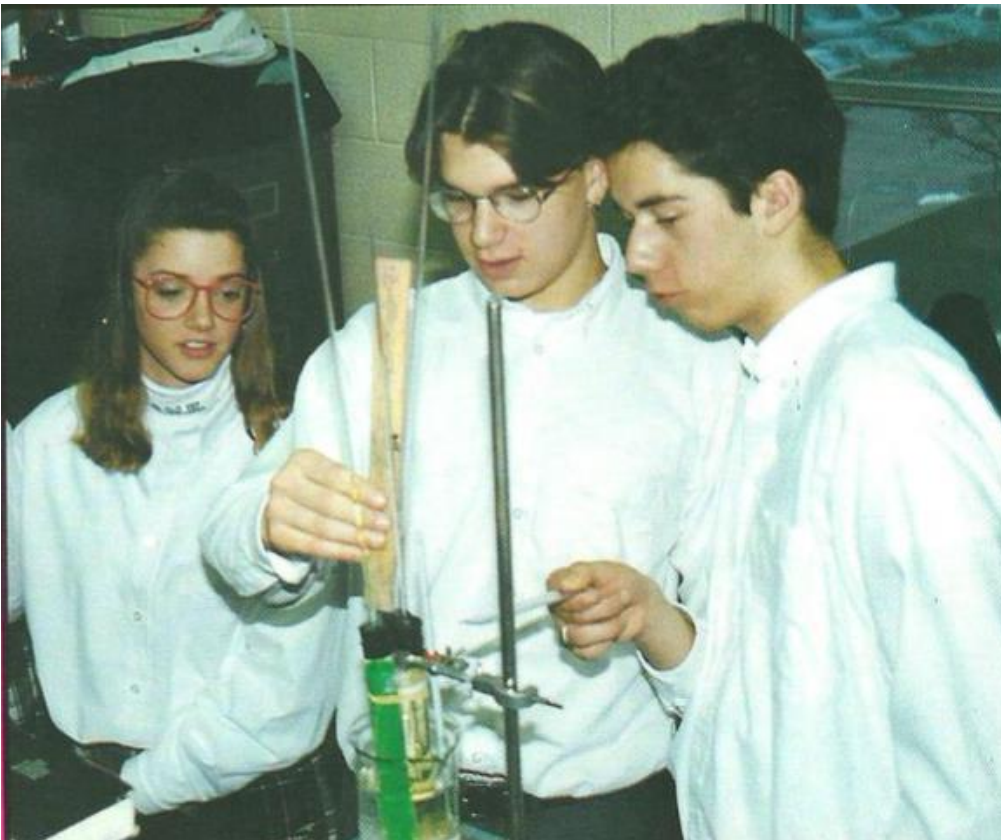
1988 – Grade 13 replaced with Ontario Academic Credits (OAC). 1989 – Enrolment = 1454.





(Above) SMHS girls during the last year of the all-girls school, 1989-1990.

1990 – Co-education (girls and boys) adopted at the same time as the new **Resurrection Catholic Secondary School** on University Avenue replaced the all-boys **St. Jerome's HS**.



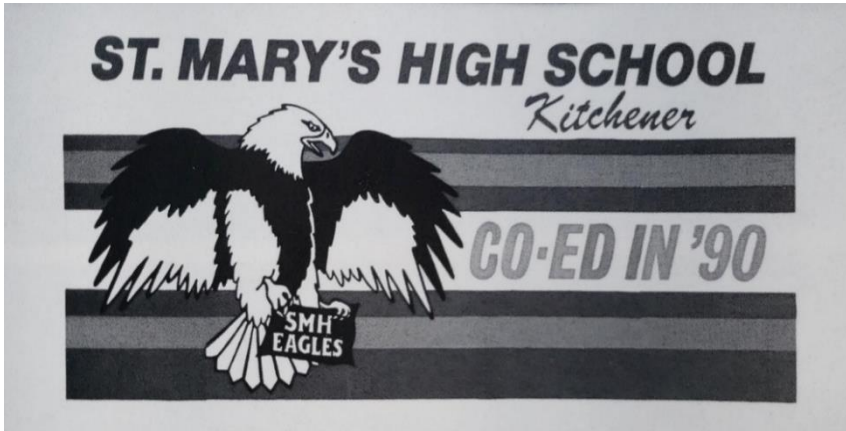
Boys' uniform consisted of white dress shirt and grey dress pants. Enrolment = 1418.

Sports such as boys football and hockey began.

SMHS acquired use of **St. Jerome's HS** classrooms and departed **Corporation Square**.

(Left) Science class in the early 1990's.

The Blues became the “Eagles” and the school is affectionately referred to as “The Nest”.



(Below) Laurier's Faculty of Social Work (Left) and St. Louis Adult Learning Centre (Right) now occupy the old St. Jerome's HS building.



1995 –School Council established.

1990s – Technology programs expanded to include transportation, electronics/computer engineering, construction, manufacturing, hospitality, technology design, hairstyling, and communication technology. Girls permitted pants in place of kilts (mid-1990's).

Enrolment continued to increase and the need for a larger facility became ever more apparent. WCDSB trustees voted 5 to 4 to build a new school off-site.



2001 – Construction of a new **SMHS** building began.

2002 – Last downtown graduating class = 313.



(Below) Principal Cathy Horgan (early 2000's) oversaw the transition from downtown to the suburbs.

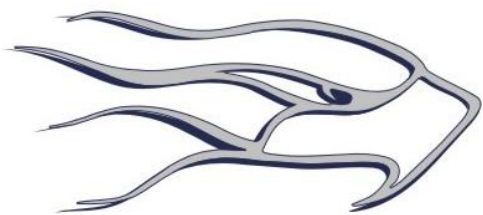


2002 – **St. Mary's High School** moved to a new site south of downtown at 1500 Block Line Road. The new \$26 million school is a state-of-the-art facility with 80 classroom spaces, a 300+ seat auditorium, triple-gym, and two natural turf playing fields on ten hectares (24.7 acres). The new building opened with five portables. The school was surrounded by farm fields and the occasional deer. Capacity = 1530. Enrolment = 1730.



(Left) Triple gym with gleaming floors.

(Below) Alumni Hall features retractable seating.





The uniform consists of white golf shirts and blue cotton pants. Kilts were gradually phased out.

The **Waterloo Catholic District School Board** (*Right*) and the **Downtown Community Centre** moved into the old **St. Mary's HS** site (35 Weber Street West). The **West Wing** was removed and the remaining building was renovated, opening in 2005), and renovated again in 2020.



(Left) The school's Mission Statement continues at the new site.

(Below) New traditions such as plaquing Athletes of the Year and OFSAA medalists began.



2003 – The last year of OAC (formerly Grade 13) graduated. **SMHS** became a magnet ESL/ELD school and the first in the board to offer “Advanced Placement” (AP) programs. Technology programs expanded again to include Health Care and Wood Manufacturing (2005). Active and Community Living programs thrived.

2004 – **Country Hills Branch** of the **Kitchener Public Library** opened as part of the **SMHS** building.



2005 – **West portable building** (*Above*) with 11 classrooms opened and **East portables** were gradually added to accommodate increasing enrolment.

2007 – Enrolment peaked = 2195 (the largest Catholic high school in the province).



(Left and Below)

13 East portables.

2008 – “Specialist High Skills Major” (SHSM) programs started and grew to include 12 designations and 450 students – the largest in the province.



(Right) The student body formed a giant peace sign on the football field, May 2008.



2008 – “Alternative Programming” was initiated, often taking place off-campus at the **Country Hills Community Centre**. It was first known as IPASS (Individualized Positive Alternatives for Student Success), and later as “the Nest”.



2009 – New athletic banners in the gym were raised, listing all championship teams by sport.



Athletics flourished with the increasing enrolment at the new facility.



Win ^{With}
Dignity,
Lose ^{With}
Pride.
-Father Mike Cundari

Many teams and individuals achieved success at District 8, CWOSSA, and OFSAA.





(Left) Students cheer on the Eagles in the triple gym, 2007-2008.

2010 – Site size was reduced to 9.21 hectares (22.76 acres) to accommodate extension of Lennox Lewis Way. “Where kindness matters, community grows” was introduced.

2012 – Students assembled on the field to demonstrate kindness. *(Below, June 2012)*

2013 – Robotics program was introduced. Block Line Road was extended over rail yard to Courtland Avenue providing more access for students.

2014 – Enrolment dipped to 1804 before increasing again.

2015 – Eagles Athletic Storage. *(Below)*



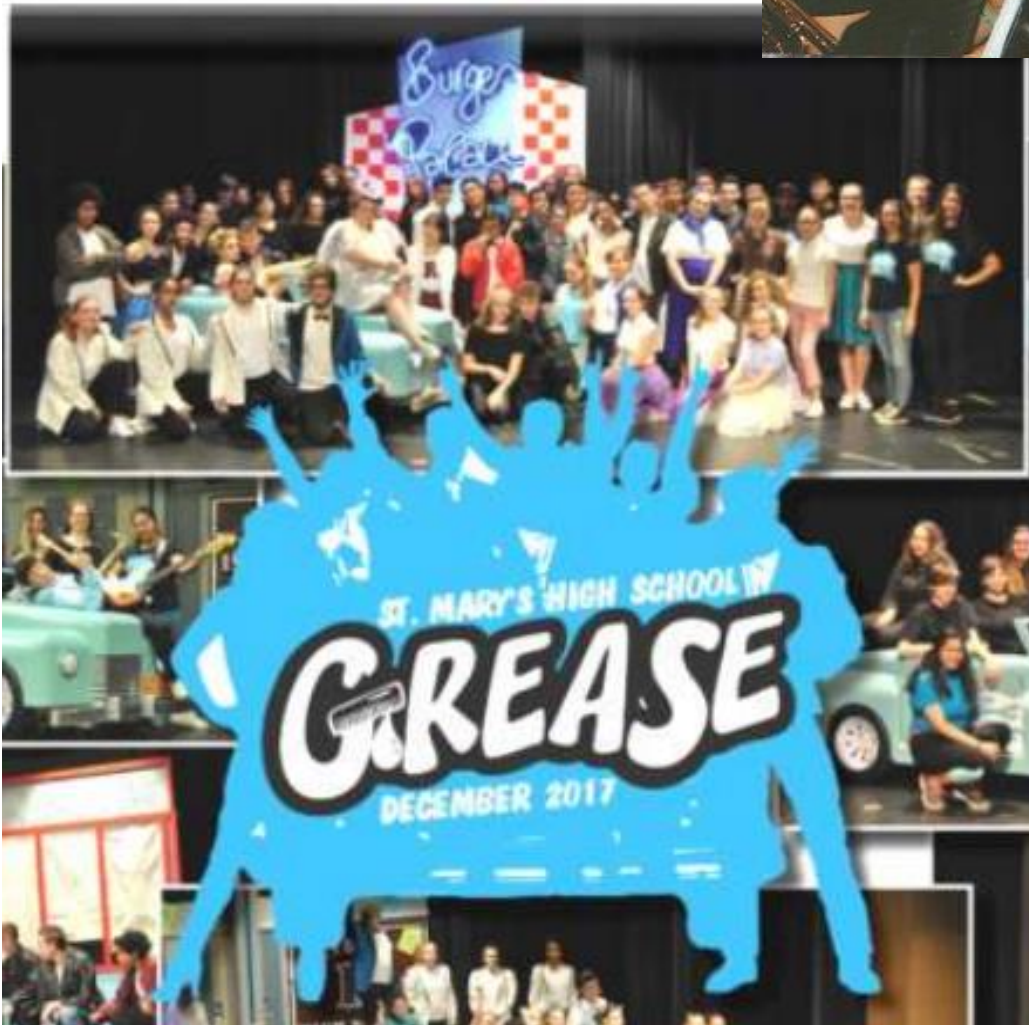
2016 – The school honoured all individuals who contributed to its legacy with the naming of **Eagles Memorial Field** *(Below Left)*.

(Below Right). Anti-bullying campaign.





(Above and Below) Coffee houses, concerts, drama productions, and art displays promote student talent.



2018 – SMHS is proud to have a Vimy Ridge Oak tree on campus, which is a true descendant of one of the Vimy Ridge acorns. It was planted Oct 11, 2018 and was the first of many **Community Legacy Projects.** *(Right)*





(Above) Annual Co-op job fair.



2018 – (Left) “Innovation Week” began and remains an annual event.

(Below) **SMHS** embraced the digital world communicating through multiple channels.



www.stmary.wcdsb.ca



Facebook: #THINK Twitter: #THINK
www.preventingcrimes.ca/THINK



Follow: [James The Eagle](#)

Instagram





(Above) Aerial view of the **SMHS** campus. Other amenities visible include the **Peter Hallman Ballyard** (2007) and the **Activa Sportsplex** (2008). Several multi-unit residential developments were gradually built within 0.5k of the school, with more planned in the future.

2019 – (Right) New exterior signage, and (Below) standardized classroom door signage.



2019 – The “**Ion**” Light-Rail Transit (LRT) commenced operation shuttling students to the Block Line Road Station at Fairway Road, one block east of SMHS.



Clubs and activities have always been part of SMHS.

(Below Right) Students formed a cancer symbol as part of (Below Left) Relay For Life (May 2019).



*(Right)
DECA
business
club.*



(Left) Key Club.



*(Right) Multicultural
activities reflect the
diversity of the school
body.*



2019 – **Central portables** added.
Total portable classrooms = 28.

*(Right) Four **Central portables**
along Lennox Lewis Drive.*



2020 – **SMHS** is the third largest
high school in Ontario.
Enrolment = 2154. Graduates =
450.

COVID-19 necessitated a 3-week March
break followed by remote learning.



During the 2020 – 2021 school year, the school adopted a quad-mester hybrid model of face-to-face, synchronous, and asynchronous teaching and learning. Students were divided into two cohorts. All students and staff wore masks and stayed two metres apart.



15% of students
transferred to **St.
Isidore Catholic
Secondary School**
to obtain 100%
remote instruction.

*(Above)
Physical
Education
teachers
following
Covid
protocols.*



*(Right)
Cosmetology
class.*

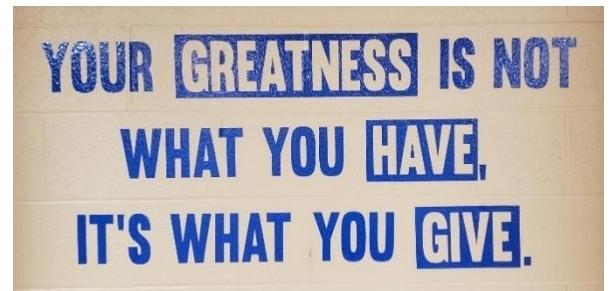
2021 – (Below) Grad Hall opened on the third floor as a tribute to all alumni.



(Right) Jerome the Eagle supports the Umbrella Project.



(Below) Positive messaging and social justice continues to be a focus.



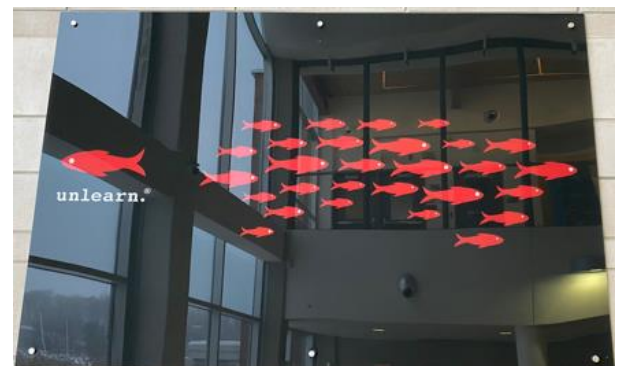
2019 – 2021 – \$345,000 facility improvements funded primarily by the **Hallman Foundation** included a multi-purpose court, green gym, and park benches (*Below*) thanks to the work of **The Legacy Committee**.



2022 – 2026 – New interior signage gradually added.



2023 – Enrolment reached a new record high of 2236.



2023 – Affinity spaces for black and indigenous students established.

2024 – (Right) A new **East portable building** replaced several stand-alone portables bringing the total portable classrooms to 31 – the largest number in the region.



2024 – 500 students attended convocation.

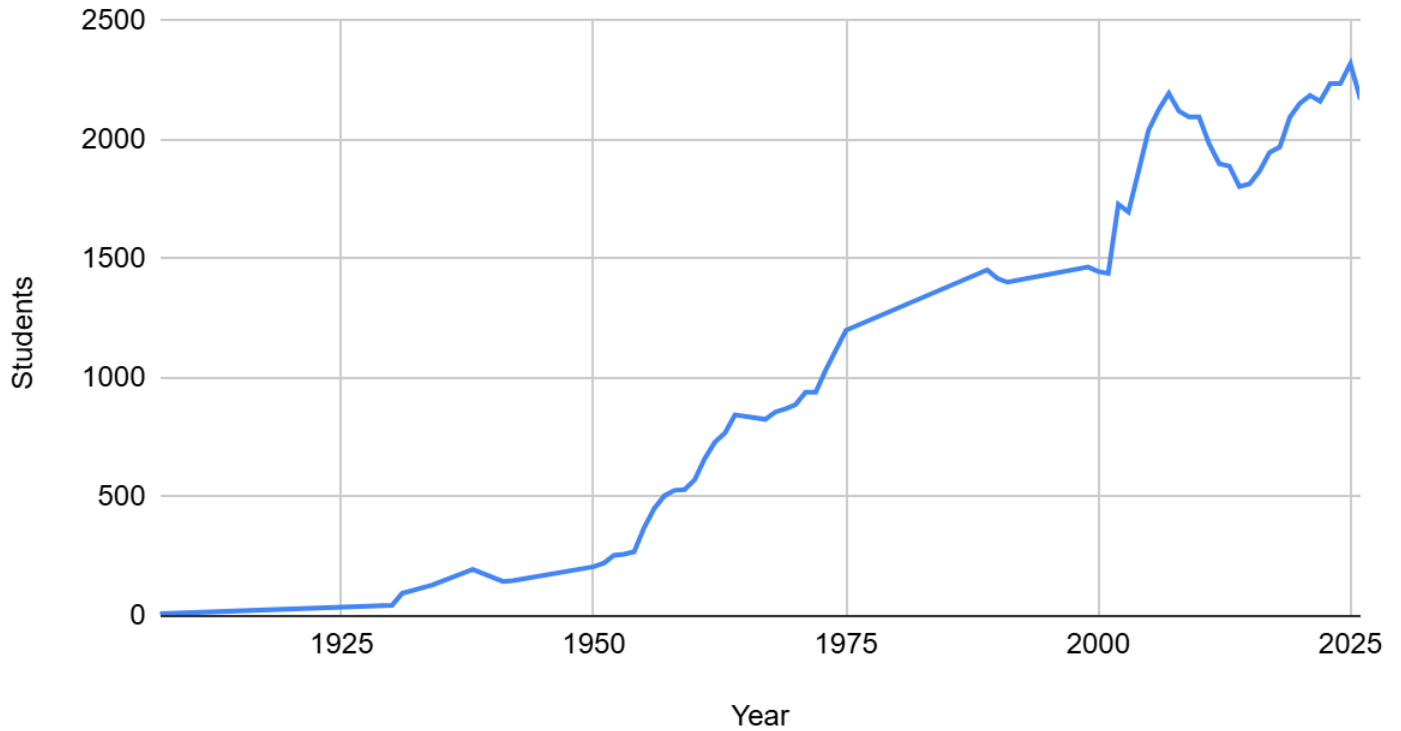
2025 – (Right) The LEAD (Listen, Empathize, and Do Something) anti-racism initiative campaign was launched.

2025 – Enrolment peaks at 2320 (October 2025) before declining to a projection of 2170 in 2026 with the opening of Notre Dame CSS and a reduction in feeder schools from 15 to 10.

(Below) The “Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations” are depicted.



St. Mary's High School Enrolment



(Above) All grade 9's are welcomed by the Principal each year with Link Crew activities. (John Dietrich pictured)

Principals of St. Mary's High School

1907-1927 (St. Anne's Convent School)	Sister Mary Lioba
1928-1930 (St. Mary's Elementary School)	Sister Mary Petrandia
1930 - 1933	Sister Mary Alberta Boegemann
1933 - 1937	Sister Mary John Hartleib
1937 - 1944	Sister Antoinette McCarthy
1944 -1950	Sister Euphrasia Balge
1950 - 1956	Sister Loretto Gies
1956 - 1962	Sister Mary Stella Murray
1962 - 1964	Sister Mary Antoinette McCarthy
1964 - 1971	Sister Mary Carmelita Farwell
1971 - 1980	Sister Gemma Golino
1981 - 1987	Sister Barbara Frank
1987 - 1990	Sister Maureen McGoey
1990 - 1997	Gary Leduc
1997 - 1999	Bernie Farwell
1999 - 2003	Cathy Horgan
2001 - 2002	Pat Gibbons (Acting Principal)
2003 - 2010	Theresa Horan
2010 - 2016	Gale Daly
2016 - 2021	John Dietrich
2021 - 2024	Deanna Wehrle
2024 -	David Jaeger



(Above) The dawn of a new day at SMHS. (Drone photo - 2018)

The **St. Mary's High School** story continues to be written in the lives of its graduates who are continually spelling out the motto of the school "VIRTUS ET SCIENTIA" (Virtue and Knowledge) as they practice kindness towards others. "Where kindness matters, community grows!"



This document was compiled by Vice-Principal Frank Wittmann (2021, 2025) from:

- SMHS yearbooks (primarily 1962, 1975, and 1980 timeline sections)
- "The History of St. Mary's High School", Wanda Cakebread, 1976
- wcdsb.ca/about-us/history
- regionofwaterloo.ca (Region of Waterloo Public Building Inventory)

with assistance from numerous contributors including:

- Sister Mary Joan Helm (Archivist for SSND and former SMHS teacher)
- John Shewchuk (retired WCDSB Chief Managing Officer)
- Michelle Bergauer, Mark Cameron, John Weiler (Retired SMHS teachers)
- Jennifer Passy (Manager of Planning, WCDSB)
- Rych Mills (The KW Record and the series "Flash from the Past")