

These schools, however, were not the first opportunities for receiving a Catholic education in Waco. That had been available since the very early days of the Church in Waco. Only two years after establishing St. Mary's Parish, Father Bussant had invited the Sisters of Mary of Namur (Belgium) to open Sacred Heart Academy and convent on property immediately adjacent to the church. Although it was a private academy, operated by Catholic nuns, many children of all denominations attended the Sacred Heart Academy until its closing in 1946. Both boys and girls attended the elementary grades at the Academy, but only young women were enrolled in the high school division. It was both a boarding and a day school.

For a number of years a high school for young men (both day and boarding students) was conducted by the Community of St. Basil. The first St. Basil's College, as it was known, was at 8th Street and Clay Avenue and was opened in 1899. In 1902 a new school was built, for north in the city on the site where St. Louis Church and Reicher High School stand today. St. Basil's closed in 1915.

Today, St. Mary's Parish complex covers more than one square block in the near downtown area of Waco and contains the church, school, rectory, convent, parish hall, a kindergarten/nursery and the former convent which now houses selected Catholic students from Baylor University.

The cornerstone for the present church at 14th Street and Washington Avenue, was laid in 1942. The building is constructed in Texas limestone and is patterned after the great Gothic cathedrals of Europe. Extensive interior renovations were made in 1967 and 1968 to facilitate the liturgical revisions following the Vatican II Council. At that time 15 new windows of faceted glass, made in Texas, replaced the art glass windows. These windows carry the theme of the Assumption and the seven sacraments. The enclosed choir room, to the left of the sanctuary, was converted into a chapel and six stained glass windows were also installed there, four depicting the liturgical seasons and two in memory of deceased parishioners. Today, daily mass is said in this chapel and on weekends it serves as a chapel where parents can sit with their infants and small children while still being able to hear and see the entire Mass.

The school, established in 1948, is of the same architecture as the church and is also built of Austin stone.

The present rectory dates from 1972. Prior to that the rectory was in the 40-room mansion originally built by John T. Davis in 1904. That four-story structure burned on the night of February 4, 1971. It had been a showplace of Waco, with its Italian marble porches, tile roof and cut and leaded glass doors and windows. Inside, an imposing central staircase dominated the entrance hall. Three marble fireplace mantels, which the Davis family had purchased from a mansion in New York City, were also a part of the interior decor. After the fire, it was determined that the cost of restoration of the house would have been prohibitive and that some items and artifacts were irreplaceable. It was then decided to build the present structure. Building began on December 23, 1971 and the house was again occupied by the priests September 11, 1972. Bishop Vincent Harris blessed the rectory on October 2, 1972.

The "big white house" at 1415 Washington was built by Mr. Davis in 1926. His daughter, Mrs. Edward Arthur Temple, lived there with her family after the death of her husband who had been the Episcopal Bishop of North Texas. The house was sold by her son, T. Davis Temple, to St. Mary's after her death in 1962. It was used as the parish convent until 1989.