

MOMENCE ST. PATRICK ACADEMY

Momence St. Patrick High School Building



Courtesy of Sherree Benoit

THE HISTORY OF MOMENCE ST. PATRICK ACADEMY

<http://www.illinoishsglorydays.com/id799.html>

Momence (population: 3,200) is located in eastern Illinois in Kankakee County, about eight miles of Kankakee and six miles west of the Illinois-Indiana state line. The Kankakee River runs thru the middle of the city, and can also be reached by using state highways 1, 17, and 114.

The community was named for Isadore Momence, who later married the daughter of a Pottawatomi chief, sometime in the 1830's or so. When Kankakee County was founded in 1853, Momence was one of the founding townships.

St. Patrick's Academy was opened in 1906 as a co-ed grade school and all-girls' high school. The Sisters Servants of the Holy Heart of Mary was in

charge when the school opened. Boarders as well as day students were accepted.

The original building was built by Rev. Armand L. LaBrie, who was the pastor of St. Patrick Church, and it grew to the point that additional wings were built in 1910 and 1924. Classes were taught for college prep and commercial students.

The school continued to serve grade schoolers and high school girls alike until around 1965 when the grade school was closed on account of the Sisters Servants not having enough teachers to staff the school. The order had moved a number of its members to bigger city schools to teach, which cut into the staffing of similar schools like St. Patrick's.

The live-in academy was closed in 1965 and the school was closed in 2010. That building housed a number of the dormitories for the boarding students, and also had some good-size parlors when parents came to the visit their daughters at school.

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT MOMENCE ST. PATRICK ACADEMY

Year opened:	1906
Year live-in Academy Closed:	1965
Year School Closed	2010
Year School Demolished	2015
School Colors:	Unknown
School Nickname:	Unknown
School Song:	Unknown

ACTIVITIES

We are not certain if there were any activities at the school, although one would want to have reason to believe there were dances, parties, GAA, music department offerings, and even Catholic school type organizations like Sodality at St. Patrick's. If you know anything, please contact us at the addresses listed below.

WHAT'S IN STORE FOR OLD ST. PAT'S IN MOMENCE?

Lee Provost

October 9, 2015

lprovost@daily-journal.com

https://www.daily-journal.com/news/local/whats-in-store-for-old-st-pats-in-momence/article_a0ff8a80-40df-5d79-9a6e-3b263c895069.html



St. Patrick's Academy in Momence has been closed since 2010. A small group is working to convince the St. Patrick's Church finance committee to meet with a developer from Indianapolis who wants to turn the building into a 32-unit senior citizen independent living center.

The Daily Journal/Mike Voss

No one plans to strap themselves to the brick exterior of old St. Patrick's Academy in Morningside.

If a wrecking ball and bulldozer show up, expect no human chain in protest. At least, that's what those who are trying to save it said.

However, a small group of people is working to convince the four-member St. Patrick's Church finance committee to meet with a developer from Indianapolis who wants to turn the building into a 32-unit senior citizen independent living center.

Greater Local Neighborhoods Community Development Corporation has rehabbed similar buildings, said Nicole Ford, spokeswoman for the save-our-school group.

The effort will not save the four-story, 50,000-square-foot building, however.

Gene Rademacher, of the church's four-member finance committee, said the church is moving on and the structure, built in 1906, will be coming down.

"We've already gone too far and nothing has really changed," he said of the Greater Local proposal. "We do not plan on talking to him [Michael Harold]. We've gone too far to do anything different."

Harold is the director of operations for Greater Local. He said Friday he offered up \$20,000 for the property and would have sought federal tax credits to aid development. He also would have sought to have the building placed on a historical property register.

"I'd love to save this old building, I surely would," he said. "I'd come and talk to them if they'd like. My proposal is there. If they aren't interested, I'm not going to push it."

Rademacher said the so-called save-the-school committee is the only entity objecting to the church's plan to raze the building.

"The feedback we've gotten is that people understand," he said.

He said the Joliet Diocese, the owner of the building, also is not interested in delaying the demolition, which is expected to begin before the end of the year.

“I acknowledge the fact this building would not be the same. But this is a historical building and loved by many,” Ford said. “We think this is a win-win. Save the building, save the church some money. Why not see if it can happen?”

The 28-classroom school closed after the 2009-10 school year. The church board put an asking price of \$350,000 two years ago, but no offers anywhere close to the board’s asking price came forward, Rademacher said.

The neighboring gymnasium will not be razed nor will the parish-owned house located immediately southwest of the gym.

Sr. Patricia Kieffer

I am the second of six children born to August and Marie Kieffer on March 1, 1935 at Little Company of Mary Hospital in Evergreen Park, Illinois. Growing up in the country, I attended L'Erable's one room public schoolhouse in Iroquois County. After grade school, I began attending St Patrick Academy High School in Momence, Illinois earning my way by supervising children at Villa Maria.

One Sunday morning in Saint Patrick's Church in Momence, I felt Jesus calling me to be a Sister. Then during a retreat, I again, felt a strong calling. During my senior year in high school I remember sharing my desire to become a Sister with Fr. Demarius. Ultimately, I waited for a year after graduating and it was on September 8, 1953 that I entered the

Novitiate in Beaverville, Illinois, which began my long journey as a Sister Servant of the Holy Heart of Mary. After my first profession, I worked in the laundry and did gardening for the first five years there. After that, I taught grade school for 25 years in Silver Spring Maryland, Beaverville, Geneva, Joliet, Chicago, and Champaign Illinois. After leaving teaching, my ministry led me to Sacred Heart Mission in Hopkins Park, Illinois where I stayed for twenty years, until 2005 when I moved to St. Mary Community in Kankakee, Illinois.

I have my BA degree from St Francis University in Joliet, Illinois and an MA degree from St. Meinrad School of Theology in Indiana.

