

History of Tullamore, Co Offaly

The Superior chosen for Tullamore was Sr. Mary Anne Doyle. Only one Sister could be spared from Baggot Street, Sr. M. Teresa Purcell, who was preparing for her Profession. Mother McAuley brought two other Sisters with her, Sr. M. Clare Moore and Sr. Agnes McAuley, who remained until two postulants entered later in the year. Their new home was quite small but the Sisters set to with a will to make it as like a convent as possible. One room was the Chapel and Dr. O'Rafferty promised the Sisters Mass as often as could be possible. Part of the building was used as classrooms and the Sisters also taught in a "garret" in Thomas Street, just around the corner.

Visitation of the sick occupied a lot of the Sisters time and the instruction of adults engaged them continually. The people were very poor, very many of them illiterate and deprived in spiritual and religious matters and they longed for religious instruction.



Original Convent, Tullamore

Lack of space hampered the work of education and on the 21st April 1838, the second anniversary of the Sisters coming to Tullamore, the foundation stone of a new convent was laid on the corner of Store Street and Bury Quay (now called Convent Road). The Sisters moved into the new convent in August 1841.



2 houses St. Joan's & St. Paul's

Later in the same decade an infant school was built and opened beside the convent and in the 1850s a primary school. At the request of Dr. O'Rafferty, the Sisters, after much discernment, opened a "Pension School" for the daughters of better-off families in the parish. In 1877, a new Chapel, Novitiate and fourteen bedrooms were built. In 1910, a secondary school for girls was erected beside the other buildings on Convent Road.



Sacred Heart School built 1910

The numbers of pupils in the primary schools increased and the community decided to build a Senior School (catering for 4th to 6th/7th standards). They had acquired a site at the end of Harbour Street and in 1932 St. Philomena's School was opened.

Sacred Heart School built 1910 In 1950 the Sisters decided to use part of their "farm" situated in Whitehall (about a 7 minute walk from the convent), to build a new second level school as the accommodation in the original [Sacred Heart School](#) was no longer adequate for the numbers enrolling. 1953 saw the new S.H.S. blessed and opened. It was considered a magnificent building but with the numbers increasing each year, rooms had to be added nearly from the start. 1967 saw the introduction of free education and the school became more cramped and crowded. Eventually, after much to-ing and fro-ing, in 1982 the Department of Education finally decided to help build a very big extension, which brought the school up to almost the size it is today with over seven hundred pupils.



Sacred Heart School, Tullamore

The numbers of pupils in the primary schools kept increasing and the then Parish Priest, Dr. Moran, decided to "split" the town in two and in 1957 Scoil Mhuire opened on the southern end of the town. Seven Sisters helped to staff this school.



Scoil Mhuire, Tullamore

After consultation with Bishop Kyne, it was decided to go ahead with the building of a new convent rather than trying to renovate the old, which had grown too small for the number of Sisters living here. So, in 1960, two small houses owned by the Sisters on Convent Road, and the old secondary school were demolished and the first phase of the building started. This was a new Primary School – a three-storey building known as St. Joseph's. The Sisters, staff and pupils moved in in September 1962. The demolition of Miss Pentheny's house and the additions added to it over the years were next to go and bit by bit all vestiges of the older buildings disappeared and in their place rose the edifice which is now the convent. The Sisters moved in by degrees and were in situ by the end of 1964. The Novitiate Block and the Community Chapel were completed in 1967.



St. Joseph's School

New primary schools opened in the 1980's in a new housing estate in Arden and St. Joseph's School transferred there. St. Philomena's National School transferred to beside the convent and the original building was given to the Sisters who worked with the youth of the town and became [St. Mary's Youth Centre.](#)



St. Mary's Youth Centre, Tullamore

Foundations:

The Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy was only five years old when Mother McAuley founded the Convent in Tullamore in 1836. After eight years the Sisters in Tullamore made their first foundation – the first of many;



1844 - Convent of Mercy, Kells, Co Meath



1848 - Convent of Mercy, Derry

a short-lived foundation to Loughrea in 1850,



1854 - Convent of Mercy, Drogheda, Co Louth

Commercial Road, London in 1859,



1862 - Convent of Mercy, Clara



1862 - Convent of Mercy, Rochfortbridge, Co Westmeath



1867 - Convent of Mercy, Trim, Co Meath



1885 - Convent of Mercy, Kilcormac, Co Offaly

Convent of Mercy, Mullingar in 1896,



1959 - Costa Mesa, California, USA