

History of Catholic Schools in Meadville - St. Agatha School, Founded in 1852

The first St. Agatha's school building was erected in the early 1850's at the rear of the lot on Pine and Liberty Streets. The school was located between the church and the rectory, both of which were at the Pine and Liberty Street corner at that time. The pastor, Rev. Anthony Reck, secured the services of laymen as teachers, until he could arrange to have religious teachers take over the school. IN the mid 1850's, the services of the Sisters of St. Joseph were secured, and the school has been taught by them since that time.

By 1898, the school had become overcrowded, and the pastor, Monsignor Francis Winter, laid plans for a new and larger building. The three building on the site were sold at auction for removal, and architect Joseph Brenot of Oil City was asked to draw up plans for a new school. The contract for construction of the 65x90 feet building went to Albert Huttlemeyer at a price of \$14,000. On January 25, 1899, the Most Reverend John Fitzmaurice, Bishop of Erie, dedicated the finished structure.



When Father Andrew Weschler came to St. Agatha's Parish as assistant pastor, Msgr. Winter turned over to him the administration of the school. Father Weschler at once saw the need for a Catholic high school in the area, and in 1909 inaugurated a three-year commercial course at first. The high school developed steadily and the curriculum was expanded into a fully accredited four-year high school with both academic and commercial courses. The year 1913 was a memorable one with the first graduation held in Saint Agatha High School. Three graduates received their diplomas: Hildegard Lorz, Myrtle Furman and Peter Reasbeck and the school was fully accredited for advancement to higher education.

By the late 1940's the school was beginning to show its age. The facilities were inadequate, and much of the edifice beyond repair. Father Weschler, therefore, began plans for erecting the present St. Agatha School. The contract for construction was given to Joseph Rey, with plans made for building first the gymnasium, and later the rest of the building. Ground breaking took place in 1950, and dedication of the new school was made in 1953.



With the decreasing number of teacher-nuns, and the increasing costs of lay teachers' salaries, the combined high and grade schools became, in the late 1960's almost impossible for St. Agatha's parish to support. Accordingly, in the fall of 1968 the high school was separated from the grade school, and put on a basis of inter-parish support with St. Brigid's parish. Management of the high school was place in the hands of a board composed of the pastors of St. Agatha and St. Brigid parishes, and lay men and women of both parishes. Support from parishes was based on the number of students from the parish in attendance at the high school. The name of the school was then changed to Meadville Christian High School.

In 1971, came a proposal to combine St. Agatha and St. Brigid schools. The attempt to keep up a joint high school was abandoned, and the remaining grade school was expanded to occupy the entire building, and was managed jointly by both parishes approved by Bishop Alfred Watson in 1972. The name of the school changed finally to the present day Seton School, named after the American Saint, Mother Elizabeth Bayley Seton, of Philadelphia and Kentucky.

St. Brigid School

The 2nd church building purchased was the Methodist church buildings at Arch and Liberty Streets. A parish school was opened there, and staffed by the same Sisters of St. Joseph who were now teaching at St. Agatha's School, and who had previously staffed a similar parish school at Frenchtown for St. Hippolyte Church, and were, in 1869, to open Spencer Hospital further up on Pine Street.

Under Rev. John Madigan, a new school was erected in Dock Alley (Clinton Court) behind the new church. This two-story frame building was furnished and officially opened by Rev. James Dunn, who succeeded Father Madigan in 1874, and was responsible for the new church building dedicated in 1881.

In 1882, the frame school was moved from Dock Alley to a site on Arch Street next to the Church, and a new wing was added. By 1912, the school had 170 pupils, with four Sisters in charge.

Under Rev John Mark Gannon, later Bishop of Erie, a new brick school was built and dedicated in 1917, housing eight grades, and a gymnasium for students, to be used also as an assembly hall for parish activities. This school prospered until 1973, when it was joined with St. Agatha's as Seton School, and the present building is now CHAPS.

Seton School

Since 1973, Seton School has been going strong. We currently have 182 students PreK-8th grade. Sister Mary Carol Hoke was the last nun left and retired in 2009 at the age of 80.

St. Agatha 1913-1968 **880 Graduates**

This was the last of the "High School" Graduations

Elementary Graduates in 8th Grade

St. Agatha Elem. 1969-1972 **61 Graduates**

Seton Elem. 1973-1975 **28 Graduates**

Seton Elem. went to 9th grade 1976-1983 **120 Graduates**

Then Seton Elem. went back to 8th grade graduates from 1984 - 2022 **538 Graduates**

Graduates per class since 1985...

1985	16	1998	23	2011	13
1986	14	1999	19	2012	9
1987	12	2000	13	2013	9
1988	15	2001	18	2014	8
1989	15	2002	13	2015	13
1990	17	2003	19	2016	13
1991	18	2004	20	2017	13
1992	11	2005	11	2018	8
1993	18	2006	16	2019	12
1994	22	2007	14	2020	9
1995	16	2008	9	2021	3
1996	17	2009	12	2022	19
1997	22	2010	9		