

Historical marker to be dedicated at Salesianum

By EDWARD L. KENNEY
The News Journal

Four years before Brown v. Board of Education made school integration mandatory, Salesianum School admitted five black students. The year was 1950, a time of fierce racial hatred and intolerance. But the bold move by Principal Thomas A. Lawless went by without incident.

"I see nothing to apologize for other than the fact it wasn't done years ago," he reportedly said at the time.

Today, that early effort – including Lawless' quote – is being recognized by the Delaware State Historical Markers Program, which will place a blue metal marker at the entrance of the school during a 2 p.m. ceremony at 18th and Broom streets. The marker also belatedly recognizes the school's 100th anniversary, which was celebrated in 2003.

"For over a century, Salesianum has continued to educate students – irrespective of religion or ethnic background – to live in

the example of the gentleman saint, Francis de Sales," it reads.

The original "Sallies," as many people refer to the school, opened in 1903 at Eighth and West streets. A new building was constructed, beginning in 1954, and it opened in 1957 at its current location.

Father Francis Pileggi, who now serves as a proctor for study halls and in the computer room at the private high school, graduated from the original building in 1951, and he recalls things went pretty smoothly the day the five transfer students – Alfred and Thomas Connell, William Jones, James Ownes and Frederick Smith – started class.

"It was just another day," he said.

Fellow '51 graduate Jim Parks, of Brandywine Hundred, was responsible for getting the marker placed at the school.

"I kinda pushed it," Parks said. "I was there when the school was integrated in 1950. I thought that should be commemorated. I'm kind of a history buff, and I like to see things pre-

IF YOU GO

What: Dedication of a Delaware State Historical Marker

When: 2 p.m. today

Where: Salesianum School

served."

Currently, about 20 black students are among the 1,000-plus enrolled at Salesianum, the Rev. James Dalton, school president, said. About 14,000 students have graduated from the school since it was founded.

"It has a great reputation in the Delaware community, academically and in athletics, as well," he said.

Last fall, the school celebrated state championships in football, soccer and cross country, Dalton said. Five seniors also were semifinalists for National Merit Scholarships this year, with another 19 students receiving commendable status.

"Salesianum high school has played such an important role in the city of Wilmington," Pileggi

said. "It's such a prominent school. It is so very well known."

And now it will be known for its role in state history.

C. Russell McCabe, director of the state's archives, plans to officiate at the marker dedication. It will be the 443rd marker to be placed at a historic site since the program started in 1930, according to Karen Donovan, a member of the public outreach team for the Delaware Public Archives in Dover.

McCabe said Black History Month is "a very convenient and appropriate time to do it," particularly because the school's courageous stand might have helped pave the way for the integration of public schools in the state.

"One of the things we look at is institutions in our community that have shaped the character of our citizens and affected the lives of folks who live in these communities," he said of the marker program. "It's going to educate the future generation of students about the rich history of the school."

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TIMELINE

In **1903**, the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales established the all-boys Salesianum School at Eighth and West streets in Wilmington. The school opened in September of that year with 12 students and three French Oblate priests. Some community members referred to the school as "the French College."

The school underwent a major renovation in **1923** to accommodate its larger student body, which was approaching 100. Reconstruction included addition of a small gym, which also served as the school's large chapel.

Over the next 30 years, the school bought additional land, and an annex known as Willard Hall was built at Eighth and Adams streets.

At the time the school was integrated in **1950**, it had about 800 students enrolled at the school. With the student population growing again, the school bought the property at 18th and Broom streets.

Ground was broken at that site **Sept. 8, 1954**, and by Easter **1957**, the 160,000-square-foot Salesianum School was in session. Oblates, students, faculty, parents and alumni helped carry desks, chairs and supplies from the former site into the \$3.5 million facility.

In **1999**, the school's board of trustees approved a \$20 million master plan of construction and reconstruction to be accomplished over a 10- to 15-year period. Work done so far includes a renovated gym, an upgrade of the faculty residence, a new fine-arts center, a new technology corridor, overhauled athletic fields and a new memorial chapel and conference center.

Marker honors Salesianum's illustrious past

Racial integration, contributions to community noted

By Mike Lang
Dialog staff

WILMINGTON — William “Willie” Jones was a freshman at Howard High School in 1950 when he received a visit from Father Thomas A. Lawless, the principal at Salesianum School.

“He asked me if I wanted to try Salesianum,” Jones recalled last week. He and four other boys accepted Father Lawless’ offer, becoming the first African American students at Salesianum and the first black students at an all-white high school in Delaware. This was four years before the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision that spelled the beginning of the end of legal segregation in schools.

Salesianum and the Delaware Public Archives memorialized the entry of Jones and four others — Alfred and Thomas Connell, James Owens and Frederick Smith — Feb. 2 with the unveiling of a historical marker next to the school’s entrance on Broom Street. The marker also commemorates the school’s 103 years in education. A large contingent of



The Dialog/Don Blake

Oblate Father Dominic Ciriaco blesses a historical marker celebrating Salesianum School’s 103 years of education and its status as the first school in Delaware to admit black students at a Feb. 2 ceremony at the Broom Street school. One of those pioneer students, William Jones (left), helped unveil the marker, along with Salesianum principal Father William McCandless.

students, present and former faculty members, Oblates of St. Francis de Sales and community members attended the brief ceremony.

Jones, 69, and current Sallies principal Father William McCan-

dless removed the cover from the marker. A Wilmington resident, Jones was the only one of the five to attend; at least two of the others have left the area, he said.

The blue plaque mentions the founding of the school in 1903 at

Eighth and West streets in Wilmington by three French Oblates; the school’s success in academics, athletics and the performing arts; the success of its graduates; and Father Lawless’ decision to integrate.

Consideration was given to placing the marker at the site of the original school, but C. Russell McCabe, director of the state’s archives, said Broom Street was chosen because it made more sense logistically and because more people would see it there.

Jim Parks, a 1951 Salesianum graduate who McCabe said was the driving force behind getting the marker, recalled the entry of the five students as “a non-event. As far as I know, no one withdrew from the school as a result.” The plaque quotes Father Lawless as saying of the decision to desegregate the school: “I see nothing to apologize for other than the fact it wasn’t done years ago.”

Jones said the students at Salesianum treated him “just like a brother.” A graduate of the old St. Joseph’s School on French Street in Wilmington, Jones said his friends outside the school ribbed him about going to Sallies, but “they said they were glad to see it.”

This was the 443rd marker placed by the Delaware Public Archives, but McCabe said it was a first for him in one respect.

“I’ve been doing this for 15 and a half years, and I think this is the first time I’ve seen one sprinkled with holy water.”

**THE DELAWARE PUBLIC ARCHIVES WILL
DEDICATE HISTORICAL MARKER AT
SALESIANUM SCHOOL
IN WILMINGTON
FEBRUARY 2, 2006 2:00 P.M.**

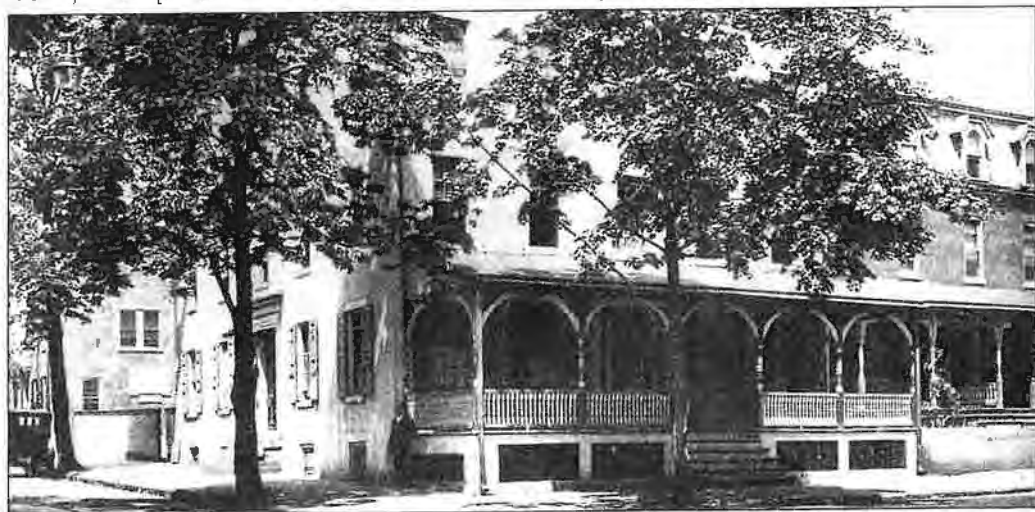
On Thursday, February 2, 2006, a dedication ceremony will be held for the unveiling of a Delaware State Historical Marker which documents the history of Salesianum School – located on 1801 North Broom Street in Wilmington. Legislative sponsors of the marker are Senator Harris B. McDowell and Representative Dennis P. Williams. Representatives of the student body and school administrators will also be present for the dedication. Among the school officials attending will be Rev. James E. Dalton, OSFS, Salesianum President, and Rev. William T. McCandless, OSFS, Salesianum Principal.

The school was founded in 1903 and was located at 8th and West Streets until its move to their current location in 1957. For over a century, the school has continued to educate young men regardless of religion or ethnic background to “Live Jesus” in the example of the gentleman saint, Frances de Sales.

All interested persons are encouraged to attend the ceremony celebrating the rich history of this school. For further information contact Karen Donovan, Delaware Public Archives at 302-744-5048.



Participants in the dedication of Archmere Academy on October 12, 1932, are shown outside the Raskob mansion. This structure initially housed both the school and the Nurbertine priests—officially Canons Regular of Praemontre, abbreviated O. Praem.—who comprised its faculty. Bishop FitzMaurice stands at the center of the photograph. Father M.J. McKeough, first



The original Salesianum School building was located at Eighth and West Streets in downtown Wilmington. A covered porch ran along the east side of the building and there was a backyard, behind the low wall where the automobile is parked, which eventually became the site of a below-ground gymnasium. (Courtesy of the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales.)



Many School Grads on College Papers

Many alumni of Salesianum who are currently attending college, are members of various university publications.

John Gilfillan, a senior at Villanova and a student listed in the 1955 College's Who's-Who, is a staff member of the *Engineer*, an engineering magazine.

Lenard Bellanca, a junior at Villanova, is the copy editor of the *Engineer*. He was the co-editor of the *Review* when he attended Salesianum.

William Parvis, a junior at Catholic University, is a member of their newspaper, *The Tower*.

James Dugan, a former staff member of the *Salesianum Review* and at present a junior at the University of Delaware, is on the staff of *The Review*.

William Ryker, a sophomore at the University of Pennsylvania and former co-editor of the *Salesianum Review* is a member of the staff of *The Daily Pennsylvanian*.

The *Collegian* of LaSalle University is represented by three former students. They are Basil Battaglia, Francis Trzuskowski, and Edward Brownson. Basil Battaglia, a freshman at LaSalle, was former editor of the *Review*; Francis Trzuskowski, also a freshman, was the sports editor. Edward Brownson, a 1950 graduate of Salesianum, is the moderator of the *Collegian*.

James Provost, who was the assistant editor of the *Salesianum Review* last year, is a member of the staff of the *Prospector* at Carroll College in Helena, Montana where he is a freshman.

Salesianum and the *Salesianum Review* especially are proud of these and other graduates who have devoted part of their college life to collegiate newspapers and magazines.

A Christmas message from the Very Rev. Thomas A. Lawless, O.S.F.S., principal of Salesianum.

"Keep the Mass in Christmas"

You cannot keep Christ in Christmas unless at the same time you keep the "Mass" in Christmas. And vice versa. The one calls for the other. They cannot be separated.

Now the "Mass" means sacrifice and "Christmas" means the sacrifice of Christ. With jingling of bells and tinsel evergreens and gift giving and joyful singing we too often forget the poverty and the suffering and the sacrifice and the sordidness of Bethlehem's stable. The ox and the ass were there. The ox, injured to the yoke. The ass, the beast of burden. The sheep and the shepherds came later. Not the most attractive company for Mrs. Highbrow's evening reception in her gold draped drawing room. But there they were! It all began with the sacrifice at Bethlehem, and it ended with the sacrifice at Calvary. The beginning and the end—sacrifice. And everything in between—sacrifice—the Mass of Christ! Yet at Bethlehem, even as at Calvary, there was PEACE, the peace of God—the peace that is bought only at the price of sacrifice, personal sacrifice, individual sacrifice, aye, sacrifice even unto blood.

So, let your Christmas giving be a sacrifice, a sacrifice that hurts you, a sacrifice that will bring peace to you and your near and dear ones at home. Sacrifice that ugly disposition, curb that cutting word, restrain that avaricious desire for what others possess, hide that unkindly feeling, and, thus, in your own little way, in your own little world you will bring peace to all in your home, and you will be sowing the seeds of peace in this war torn world. If your Christmas is a sacrifice, your Christmas will bring you peace—the peace of Bethlehem, the peace of Calvary.

Progress Noticeable At 18th and Broom

Construction of the new Salesianum has progressed to the stage where passers-by can actually see what work is being done.

The foundation has been laid, and the walls are beginning to rise. By next spring, if work continues at the present steady rate, it will be possible to have an idea of the bigger and more beautiful Salesianum.

Late Bulletin

Ambrose Hagarty has been selected to compete in the Merit Scholarship finals on January 14.

Debate Moderators Map Plans for Year

Father Joseph Connolly, the moderator of Salesianum's debating team, recently attended a meeting at Ursuline with the moderators of the debating teams from the other Catholic high schools from the Wilmington area to decide on a topic for the Wilmington Catholic Debating League. The League, which is starting its second year in the present series, is sponsored by the C. Y. O.

The moderators decided on the following topic: Resolved: That the Federal Government should give aid to high school graduates for further training. This is the national high school topic.

The teams participating in the Wilmington Catholic Debating League this year will be Archmere, Saint Elizabeth's, St. Peter's, Salesianum, Ursuline, and possibly Padua Academy.

Father Connolly recently organized Salesianum's debating team for the 1955-1956 season. In addition to debating, Father Connolly is planning a public speaking course for the team and oratorical contests. The members of the debating team are James Cannon, Raymond Coakley, Roy Behlke, Richard Davitt, Peter Ryker and Robert Gamgort.

Canon Tucker's Trip to America Delayed

The principal of Salesianum, the Very Rev. Thomas A. Lawless, O.S.F.S., has announced that the Very Rev. J. Francis Tucker, O.S.F.S., who was expected here at the end of last month, has been delayed. He left Italy on December 11 with the Prince of Monaco.

Father Tucker, who was the first student of Salesianum, was pastor of St. Anthony's Church for 25 years before going to Monaco. Although he is Irish, Father Tucker speaks Italian like his native language.

The current issue of the *Saturday Evening Post* carries a feature article on the work of Father Tucker in Monaco. He has been honored by both the French and Italian governments and by the ruler of the principality for his great service.



Students practice music for the Christmas assembly with Mr. Smith. Students left to right are: James Mulrooney, Nicholas Pettoruto, William Press, Michael Siorso and Donald Taylor, senior class president, who is in charge of the assembly.

Band, Glee Club Will Entertain Students at Christmas Assembly

The Christmas assembly next Tuesday morning will be the culmination of many weeks work on the part of the senior class. It has been planned entirely by the seniors, and many of them will participate in it.

The assembly will offer a variety of entertainment ranging from soloists to the Stardusters, the same group which played last year. Members of the band from school are James Mulrooney, Nicholas Pettoruto and Richard Immediato.

Two graduates of last year's class, James Cara and Edward Szumowski, also play with the Stardusters.

Cummiskey to Spend Christmas in Europe

Charles Cummiskey, a member of Senior 11, will fly to Europe during the Christmas holidays. Charles is leaving today. He will visit many countries including England, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain and Portugal. While in Spain he hopes to visit Pablo Seta, the Spanish exchange student who attended Salesianum last year.

He may also visit the Vatican and hopes to obtain an audience with the Pope.

On December 30 Charles will return home via T. W. A.

The *Review* hopes that Charles will remember the students at Salesianum and keep a record of what happened during his visit, so that the *Review* will be able to tell its readers of his experiences in a future article.

Coming Events

- Dec. 20—Christmas assembly. Holidays begin.
- Jan. 3—Classes resume. Basketball season begins against Malvern Prep.
- Jan. 12—Parents' Meeting.
- Jan. 15-18—Mid-year examination period.
- Jan. 27—Mass in honor of St. Francis de Sales, patron of Salesianum.
- Jan. 30—Founder's Day. Holiday.

Two Per Cent of Teen-agers Criminal, Says Captain Hollahan in Interview

"Ninety-five percent of teen-agers are good, and two per cent are criminal. The other three per cent are marginal, that is, on the verge of crime or normality," said Captain Charles P. Hollahan in a recent interview with the editor of the *Review*.

It is to this marginal group that he tries to devote most of his efforts. The teen-age friends of a person in this marginal group have a lot to do about whether he becomes a criminal.

Captain Hollahan, head of the youth division of the Wilmington police force, devotes his time to the problem of eliminating juvenile delinquency in Wilmington.

He listed ten causes of juvenile delinquency. Briefly, they are: bad companions; disrespect for parents, teach-

ers and police officers; lack of supervision because of death of a parent or divorce; effects of television, movies and news; obscene literature; too much time in the possession of the money; the hangout, and the mood of the teen-ager.

The captain cited the increase in juvenile crime. This year's teen-agers were brought before the courts of the U. S. Crime Commission. They belong to the adults any day now, he said, "but to the teen-ager."

Captain Hollahan, who has been at Salesianum, said, "The teen-agers of Salesianum are lucky to be in their religious education. They feel that delinquency would be much less if all teen-agers were given religious instruction."



Winners of the "Keep Christ in Christmas" poster contest stand joyfully with their winning efforts. Left to right: John Erthal, first place winner with poster on the upper left, Mario DiSabatino, third place winner with poster at bottom, and Richard Tartaglia, second place winner with poster at upper right.

Poster by Sophomore John Erthal Wins "Keep Christ in Christmas" Contest

Eight students competed in the Salesianum poster contest on the theme of "Keep Christ in Christmas." John Erthal, a sophomore, won first prize. Richard Tartaglia, a junior, took second prize. Mario DiSabatino of the eighth grade was awarded third prize.

The three winners were awarded \$10, \$5 and \$3 respectively. Father Mario Bugliosi, moderator of the art club, arranged the contest.

John Erthal's poster depicted the

Blessed Virgin and the Christ Child in brilliant colored clothing. The background of the painting was a dark blue-green.

James Clothier, Rene Sadowski, Edward Kavanaugh, Robert Tinney and Herbert Tinney also entered posters in the contest. All participants are members of the art club.

The posters are on display at different stores around the city for the remaining weeks of the Christmas season.

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