Providence History

Pre-History

The area was populated by various Indian tribes, including Apache, Comanche, and Karankawa tribes.

1691

Spanish explorers and priests discover an Indian village near the head of what is now known as the San Antonio River and rename it San Antonio de Padua.

1716

Spanish expedition leaves some soldiers and their families in San Antonio.

1718

The Alamo is established (Mission San Antonio de Valero).

1730

Spanish settlers from the Canary Islands arrive- ten families and five bachelors.

1733

Millstones from the king arrive and the Canary Islanders build a mill named Molino Blanco or White Mill on the San Antonio River. The Army Corps of Engineers later straightens the river for street layout as the city grows. The mill operates until about 1830. At the time the stones are used by another mill, three blocks downstream, and are presented to Mrs. Drought in 1901. The remnants of one millstone are mounted on a cement/rock pedestal on the front lawn.

1835

Siege of Bexar. Texas revolutionaries inspired by Ben Milam camp on the grounds of the old Molino Blanco. The group included Tejanos led by Juan Seguin and blacks such as Hendricks Arnold. The revolutionaries take control of San Antonio and the Alamo from the Mexican Army. Ben Milam's challenge is noted on a historical granite marker on the front lawn.

1836

The Battle of the Alamo. Santa Ana's army takes back control of the Alamo and San Antonio. Santa Ana is finally defeated later at the Battle of San Jacinto near Houston, and the Republic of Texas is formed.



1845

The Republic of Texas becomes a part of the United States. 1861-1865 – Texas becomes a part of the Confederate States of America.

1866

The Congregation of Divine Providence (CDP) arrives in Texas from France.

1868

The CDPs arrive in Castroville and build their convent and school, now the Moye Retreat Center.

1896

The CDPs establish Our Lady of the Lake University in San Antonio. Afterwards, they open several schools throughout San Antonio.

1901

Henry P. Drought, an attorney and investment banker, builds the house on the property of Molino Place and Saint Mary's Street.

The house was designed by the famed architect Atlee B. Ayres.

The dining room fireplace features tile from the Alhambra with Sanskrit inscriptions. Other fireplaces feature tiles from Italy and France. When laying the foundation at the back of the house, the millrace of the Molino Blanco is found. Mr. Drought and his wife, nee Mary Ethel Tunstall, raise four sons in the house. Mrs. Drought helps found the Battle of Flowers Parade, and is the honorary life-president of the San Antonio Art League. The new San Antonio Symphony holds rehearsals in the downstairs parlors. Winston Churchill's mother visits the Droughts. The Broadwood square grand piano now in the Gold Dining Room at OLLU is a gift of Lady Churchill.

1924

While installing a new oil heating system, the Molino Blanco foundation is uncovered.

1943

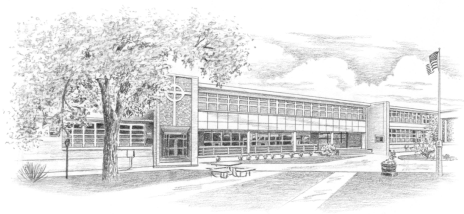
The widowed Mrs. Drought dies and the house is left empty.

1950

The Drought House and property is purchased by the CDPs. Furniture and art pieces are sold or donated to various museums and universities in San Antonio.

1951

Providence High School opens, established by the CDPs, consolidating five of their small high schools. On May 6, 1952, the archbishop blesses the school and dedicates it to Our Lady of the Assumption. Tuition was $5 per month. Until1968, Providence students use the Central Catholic High School gym. The school itself stands on the site of the Drought's stables and buggy barns.
The Drought Library is converted into the Sisters' chapel. The altar canopy is now in place on the second floor over the library circulation desk. At times, up to 26 nuns live in the house while teaching at Providence. In 1964, outdoor porches are enclosed and the servants' quarters upstairs remodeled to provide more living space for the nuns. The CDPs' dog, Nicky, a black cocker spaniel, is the resident mascot of the school. From 1951 to 1959, the Pro-Vue student newspaper hosts a gossip column called "Nicky's Notes."



1959

The CDPs purchase Duran's Restaurant at the corner of Molino Place and Saint Mary's and it becomes the Marian Music Conservatory.

1963

A rectory is built to house the priest/ chaplain of Providence, Rev. B. Mullaney.

1968

The gym is built and first used in May for the Baccalaureate Mass.

1987

The house is named a protected historic site by the San Antonio Conservation Society.

1995

The remaining Sisters move out of the house. The house is used for faculty meetings and as offices by the Business Office and Health Coordinator. One wedding is held in the house during this time.

2004

The Building on Providence campaign (BOP) is established to update the campus grounds with donations received the same year.

2005

The school expanded to include middle school grades 6-8 .

2006

The Mullaney House is remodeled into the Avery Art Studio for students, thanks to a gift from Jim and Estela Avery (Class of 1970). The first phase of the BOP campaign is completed.

2007

During river excavation for the River Walk Museum Reach, the old channel heading toward the old mill property is discovered.

2008

Phase II of the BOP campaign is underway. Restoration of the house begins, funded by foundation grants and donations from Harvey E. Najim, Jim and Estela Avery and many other generous donors. The name of the school is changed to Providence Catholic School.

2010

The Najim Campus Center opens, with Development, Alumnae and Admissions offices on the third floor, the school library on the second floor, and event space on the first floor. A business safe once used by Mr. Drought can be found in the new library and other artifacts found during the renovation of the house are on display in the school.

2011

The Performing Arts Center, located in the former school library space, opens with a new dance studio, choir room and offices for the Performing Arts Department.