

Salve Regina University

Digital Commons @ Salve Regina

Faculty and Staff - Ebooks

Faculty and Staff

1971

The Paths of Mercy on Aquidneck Island

Mary Eugena Poulin R.S.M.
Salve Regina University

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.salve.edu/fac_staff_ebooks



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Poulin, Mary Eugena R.S.M., "The Paths of Mercy on Aquidneck Island" (1971). *Faculty and Staff - Ebooks*. 2.

https://digitalcommons.salve.edu/fac_staff_ebooks/2

Rights Statement

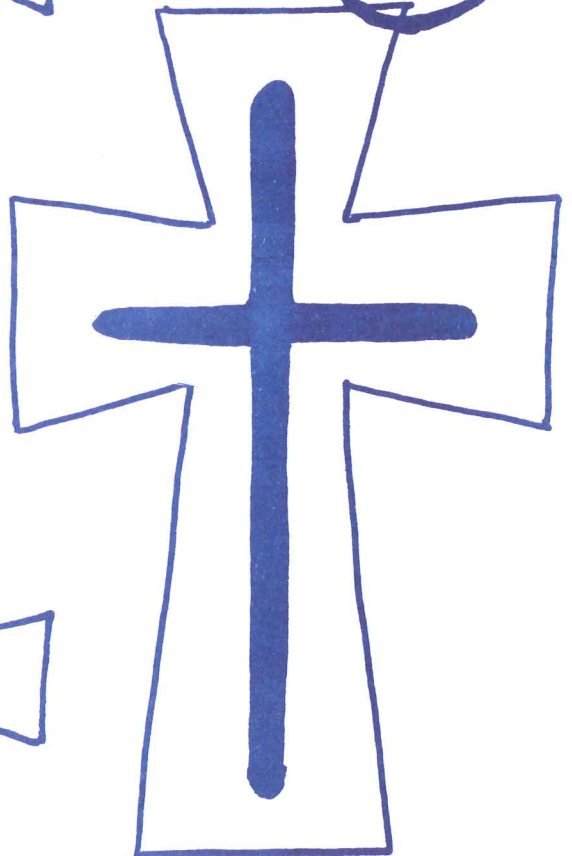
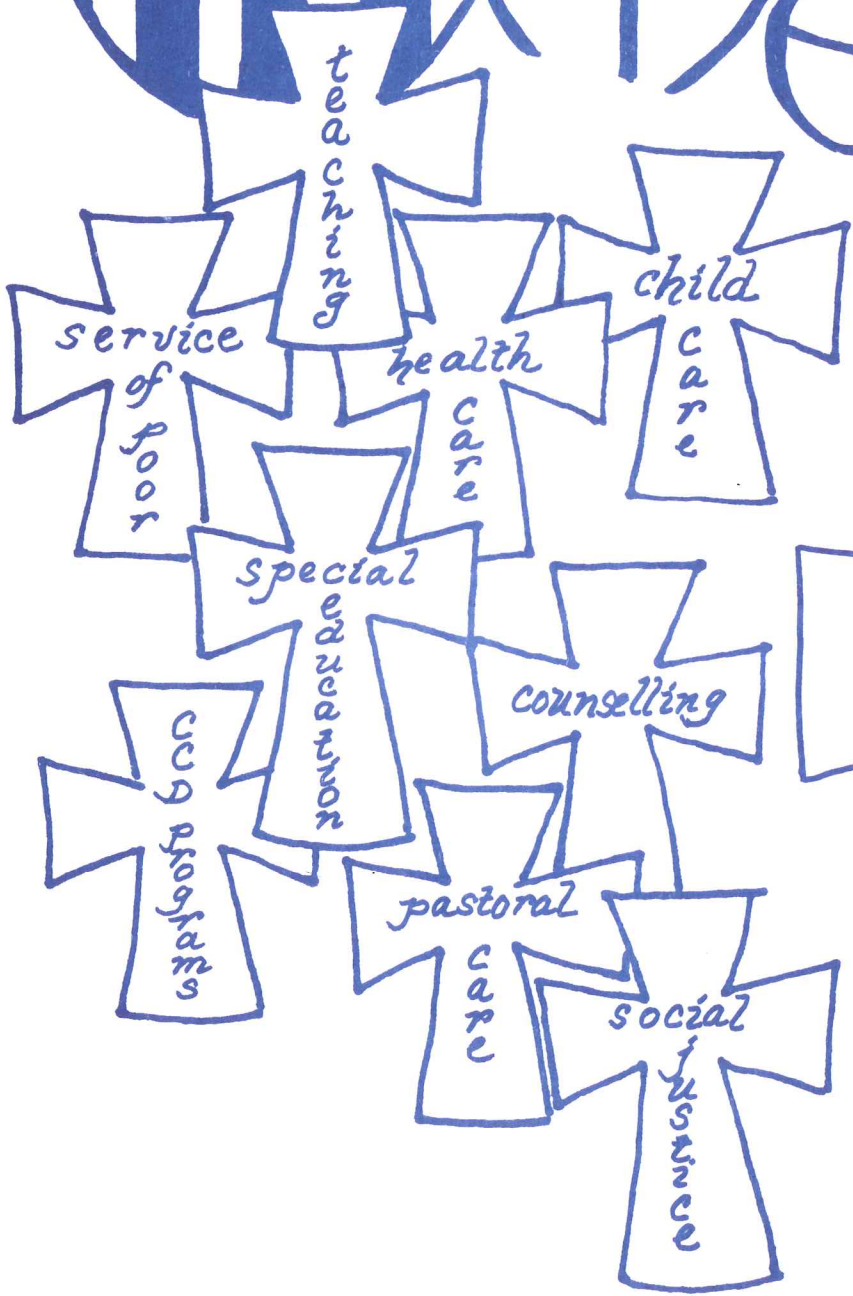


In Copyright - Educational Use Permitted. URI: <http://rightsstatements.org/vocab/InC-EDU/1.0/>

This Item is protected by copyright and/or related rights. You are free to use this Item in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. In addition, no permission is required from the rights-holder(s) for educational uses. For other uses, you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s).



MERCY



THE PATHS OF MERCY

ON

AQUIDNECK ISLAND

by

Sister Mary Eugena Poulin, R.S.M.

APRIL 28, 1979

SPIRIT OF THE INSTITUTE

of the

SISTERS OF MERCY

"To devote our lives to the accomplishment of our own salvation and to promote the salvation of others, is the end and the object of our Order of Mercy. These two works are so linked together by our rule and observances that they reciprocally help each other. We should often reflect that our progress in Spiritual Life consists in the faithful discharge of the duties belonging to our state, as regards both ourselves and our neighbor, and we must consider the time and exertion which we employ for the relief and instruction of the poor and ignorant as most conducive to our own advancement in perfection."

Spiritual Instruction
Catherine McAuley
Archives, Bethesda, Maryland

EARLY CATHOLICISM ON AQUIDNECK ISLAND

Roman Catholicism attained a toehold in Newport as early as the Revolutionary period. Records cite that the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was celebrated by the French priests who accompanied the allied troops to Newport. Before the turn of the century refugees from the French Revolution sought shelter on Aquidneck.

In January 1827, Reverend Benedict J. Fenwick, second Bishop of Boston, dispatched his cathedral assistant, Reverend Patrick Byrne, to visit Rhode Island. On Aquidneck Island, Reverend Patrick Byrne discovered that the Catholic population was more numerous than he had anticipated. Large-scale construction at Fort Adams and expanded mining operations in Portsmouth had attracted Irish immigrant laborers. According to Father Byrne's account, approximately one hundred eighty persons received the sacraments during his visit. Consequently, the following year Bishop Fenwick appointed Father Robert Woodley to investigate the feasibility of establishing a church in Rhode Island. The inhabitants of Newport exhibited such enthusiasm that Newport was chosen as the most advantageous location. As a result, Saint Mary's was incorporated on April 8, 1828, as the first organized parish in Rhode Island.

The Sisters of Mercy Begin

During this time the cornerstone for a Religious Order was being laid. The origin of the Sisters of Mercy stemmed from one woman's inspiration and desire to serve the poor, the sick and the uneducated. Catherine McAuley, a devout Irish heiress, initiated her work by establishing a residence in Dublin for homeless working girls and orphans. The Religious Order was founded on December 12, 1831 when Mother Mary Catherine McAuley and two companions pronounced their vows of Religion in the Presentation Convent in Dublin. Pope Gregory XVI officially confirmed the Order of the Sisters of Mercy July 5, 1841.¹

American Foundations

Mother McAuley personally longed to extend her Mercy mission to the United States. She bequeathed this desire to one of her loyal companions, Mother Mary Frances Xavier Warde. The foundress of the first American Convent of the Sisters of Mercy came to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, December 2, 1843 with a community of six sisters. At this time in history, the diocese of Hartford included the states of Connecticut and Rhode Island with Providence serving as the episcopal residence. In 1850 the Right Reverend Bernard O'Reilly, D.D., who had recently been appointed second Bishop of Hartford, applied for Sisters of Mercy from the Pittsburgh community. On March 11, 1851² Mother Frances Xavier Warde and four Sisters arrived in Providence without ostentation³ due to the continuing religious intolerance in New England during this period.

The Sisters Arrive in Newport

A school at Saint Mary's parish had been in operation since 1846 under the direction of a lay teacher, as was then the custom.⁴ The Sisters of Mercy arrived in Newport in 1854, largely as a consequence of personal friendships between Mrs. Goodloe Harper and members of the Order. In 1843, on her way through Philadelphia to Pittsburgh, Mother Frances Xavier Warde had met Miss Emily Harper, the beautiful young granddaughter of the patriot, Charles Carroll. The two became immediate friends. Until their deaths, Emily and her wealthy mother, Mrs. Goodloe Harper, were generous benefactors to the Sisters of Mercy.

The Harpers owned "The Rock," a summer residence in Newport and were desirous of having a convent of Mercy established on the Island. In pursuit of this goal, Mrs. Harper purchased a parcel of land opposite the Church on Spring Street. At the request of the Harpers, Father Fitton, pastor of the Church, donated a small cottage nearby which had previously served as a chapel while the new church was being constructed. This cottage was relocated on the Spring Street lot and a wing was added to each side in order that the building could be utilized as a convent and parochial school. The convent was named Saint Mary's of the Isle.⁵

St. Mary's Convent School Begins

As superior of the new convent, Mother Frances Xavier Warde chose Sister Gertrude Bradley who had recently professed vows in Providence.⁶ Accompanied by three other Sisters, Mother Frances and Sister Gertrude sailed on the steamboat "Canonicus" from

Providence, at 2:00 p.m. on the rainy afternoon of May 3, 1854 and disembarked at Newport, "The Eden of America," as it was then called. The only vehicle available was an old "hundred and two"⁷ coach, which provided transportation to Spring Street.⁸

Upon entering the convent the Sisters discovered there was nothing to eat or drink. Later, however, the Pastor did send his housekeeper to the convent with some bread and tea. The house was unheated and must have been a very humble and uncomfortable dwelling for we read, "But the cottage was subject to a nocturnal plague of fleas and rats which made it all but uninhabitable."⁹ Despite this extremely cold reception and with meager provisions, the Sisters settled themselves in their convent and prepared for their ministries.

Less than a week later, on May 8, 1854, two Sisters opened the parochial school to approximately sixty pupils. For a time the Sisters were in charge of the girls, while the boys continued under the direction of the former school master, Colonel W. K. Delaney.¹⁰ Meanwhile Christian Doctrine classes, sodalities, and other religious activities were organized; the Sisters visited the sick and attempted to alleviate the conditions of the poor with money donated by some of the more affluent summer residents.

Although the number of Sisters was small, they succeeded in attracting new members and in arousing interest and respect among their Newport neighbors. One year after their arrival on July 11, 1855 the residents of the island community crowded into the newly erected Saint Mary's Church to view for the first time on the island, the religious reception ceremony of two young women. "There was an immense crowd present, mostly Protestants."¹¹

The Misses Hannah Sullivan and Mary Ann Madden received the habit of the Sisters of Mercy and the religious names of Sisters Mary Ignatius and Mary Regis, in a service presided over by Bishop O'Reilly¹² assisted by Right Reverend Doctor McGill of Richmond, Virginia, and the Reverend Father Fitton. "It was a very solemn and imposing occasion and one which will not soon be forgotten."¹³

The Academy is Founded

As the school grew from its modest beginning to approximately four hundred students, the need for a larger facility was recognized. In 1865 the cornerstone for a school was laid and in the Spring of 1867, the Sisters welcomed their students into the new edifice on Levin Street, presently Memorial Boulevard. When the children vacated the convent classrooms for the new school, twenty-eight girls remained to form the nucleus of St. Mary's Academy which opened in October 1867.

The aim of the Academy was to instruct students who wished to pursue special studies or further their education. This Academy prepared for life many of the outstanding citizens of Newport. Among its illustrious graduates were the author of the first Diocesan History of Rhode Island, Bishop Austin Dowling, D.D., later Archbishop of St. Paul, Minnesota, and the renowned and gallant Newport lighthouse keeper, Ida Lewis. The Academy remained open until 1924 when it was replaced by the larger diocesan high schools, De LaSalle Academy for boys and St. Catherine's Academy for girls.

The Defray Controversy

The Sisters' work was not always appreciated by the inhabitants of Aquidneck Island. One unfortunate incident occurred in December, 1875. It was alleged that Father Grace, pastor of Saint Mary's had refused to bury from the Catholic Church, Geneva Defray, a nine year old girl. The young girl's father declared that this was the result of her attendance at the public, rather than the Catholic school. Although Father Grace denied the accusation, the press gave extensive coverage to the affair. The controversy then developed into public schools versus Catholic schools. The following is cited from the Newport Daily News: "Knowing as we do, that public schools give a better and much more thorough education than can usually be obtained in the parochial schools . . ." ¹⁴ This indication of open hostility and lack of esteem for the sisters' efforts in the educational process was an unpleasant situation which continued to beleaguer the small Mercy community.

Regardless of the difficulties the Sisters continued in their work, and by 1884 the "Catholic School Question" had evidently begun to subside. The following is a Newport school committee report which publicly acclaimed the excellence of St. Mary's Schools.

The number of pupils to each teacher is considerably larger than is allowed in our public schools, which must require hard work on the part of those in charge, and yet it was evident that the burden is cheerfully and faithfully borne . . .

The brief visit of the chairman of the school committee and his associates was sufficient to show that those schools are in charge of faithful and competent teachers, who are devoted to their work . . .

Whatever difference of opinion there may be as to the question of secular or parochial education, it must be admitted that the schools of Saint Mary's parish are in the highest degree creditable to those who have them in charge.¹⁵

The "New" Saint Mary's Convent

Meanwhile the Sisters continued in the tradition of Mother Catherine McAuley and Mother Xavier Warde, serving the poor, visiting the sick, and teaching both children and adults. The number of Academy students and the increased faculty required for both schools rendered the original convent inadequate. In July 1880, the old building was razed and the Sisters moved to a rented house on William Street. On the 21st of December of the same year, the new convent and Academy was ready for occupancy.

The Sisters Teach in Saint Joseph's Parish

Saint Mary's continued as the center of Catholicism on Aquidneck Island for many years. Priests of Saint Mary's tended the needs of all on Aquidneck Island and in Jamestown. Portsmouth existed as a small mission where Mass was usually celebrated once a month in Saint Clement's chapel, which had been built in 1882. Saint Mark's, Jamestown, served only as a summer mission until a chapel was erected in 1891 on land donated by the Wilcoxes of Delaware.

The growing number of Catholics and subsequent demands on the priests and Sisters caused Bishop Hendricken to divide Saint Mary's parish in 1885. The northern part of Aquidneck Island became the territory assigned to the new

Saint Joseph's parish. The Sisters went each Sunday morning from Saint Mary's to teach Christian Doctrine in the new parish.

The Twentieth Century

With the beginning of the new century, the scope of the Sisters' ministry was broadened when on April 2, 1911 the parish of Saint Augustin was canonically established. The Reverend Father Martin Reddy, first pastor, built a church and a school. In 1912 the Sisters of Mercy opened a convent on Carroll Avenue with Sister Mary Borgia Hannah as the first superior. They provided a staff for the school, taught Christian Doctrine classes and began sodalities.

During the pastorate of Father Redihan, a convent on Harrison Avenue was purchased for the Sisters. Later they moved into another convent on Harrison Avenue. By the 1950's the latter convent became so dilapidated that a new convent was erected on Eastnor Road. When the Sisters withdrew from St. Augustin parish in 1970, the convent on Eastnor Road became the parish rectory.

There was further expansion of the Sisters' work with the opening, in 1914, of the Sunday school in Jamestown. Two Sisters traveled by ferry each Sunday to instruct the island children in Christian Doctrine. This apostolate continued for fifty-four years.

Mercy Home

The Sisters established Mercy Home and School in 1915, following the example of Mother Catherine McAuley whose first charitable work was a house for homeless girls and orphans. Sister Anastasia

Brown served as the first superior of Mercy Home. The resident orphan boys and girls received not only elementary and junior high school education, but were also instructed in music, manual arts, domestic science and needlecraft. The school grew so rapidly that six years after its establishment a nearby Newport estate "Castlewood" was purchased to enlarge the institution.

Mercy Home and School served the Aquidneck Island Community until May 1, 1941. The Home was closed as a result of the government's request for the land. However, the residents were welcomed into St. Aloysius Home in Greenville, an orphanage also staffed by the Sisters of Mercy.

A Catholic Women's College

It had long been the wish of the Sisters of Mercy in the Providence diocese to open a Catholic women's college in Rhode Island. This educational ideal evolved from the foundation begun in 1851 by the Sisters who established the first Catholic High School for girls in the state, Saint Xavier Academy, in Providence. The realization of this goal began when the General Assembly of Rhode Island took action on a bill introduced by Representative Edmund Flynn on March 6, 1934, granting a charter to the Sisters of Mercy for Salve Regina College. Without funds or property, the community demonstrated their faith in God and began to prepare Sisters to staff the College. Efforts were made to amass library materials to be utilized when the college became a reality.

On March 20, 1947, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Goelet presented their summer estate, "Ochre Court," to Bishop Francis P. Keough to be used for educational purposes. The Bishop had the deed transferred

to the Corporation of Salve Regina College. With the land and the building procured, the College opened its doors to a freshman class of fifty-eight students on September 21, 1947. Mother Mary Matthew Doyle, then Provincial of the Order, was the College's first President, and Sister Mary James O'Hare, former principal of Saint Xavier Academy, served as the first Dean.

Later in February of 1948, Mr. Goelet made a second gift of property, his stables, which became known as Mercy Hall. Another residence, Moore Hall, opened on April 1, 1951, a memorial gift from Attorney Cornelius C. Moore, better known as "Mr. Newport." During the 1960's Salve Regina College campus continued to expand with Miley Hall, a large modern dormitory, honoring Mother Mary Hilda Miley, second President of the College and O'Hare Academic Center, commemorating Sister Mary James O'Hare, the first Dean.

The Regional School

The dearth of Sisters, led to the closing of Saint Augustin's School in 1970. The following year, pressured by the financial limitations and a shortage of Sisters, the Regional School Board, directed by its president, Mr. Francis J. Boyle, together with the Sisters of Saint Joseph and the Sisters of Mercy, spearheaded the creation of Newport County Catholic Regional School. This institution received the support of six parishes on the island.¹⁶ The elementary school housed in three buildings is staffed by Sisters of Saint Joseph, Sisters of Mercy and lay faculty. In 1979 it has an enrollment of over five hundred students.

Mercy Ministries

The Sisters of Mercy during the last one hundred twenty-five years have touched innumerable lives on Aquidneck Island. Salve Regina College has maintained its excellence as a liberal arts institution and provides opportunities for several graduate programs. The Newport County Catholic Regional School continues to provide leadership in Catholic School education in the diocese. The Sisters teach and coordinate Christian Doctrine classes in several parishes.¹⁷ They also visit the sick and serve as Eucharistic Ministers both in the Churches and in the homes of the sick. The Sisters continue to be vital instruments of parish renewal and deeply involved in the religious and civic concerns of the Island.

FOOTNOTES

¹The decree issued later under date of July 5, 1841, stated:
"His Holiness in an audience on June 6, 1841, approved it (the Institute) unreservedly and benignly confirmed the Rules and Constitutions . . . as stipulated. Degnan, Sister M. Bertrand, Mercy Unto Thousands (Maryland: Newman Press, 1957). p. 318.

²The Rhode Island foundation is dated from March 12, 1851, the first day the Sisters assisted at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in their new land and the feast of Saint Francis Xavier, who was Mother Frances Xavier Warde's patron saint.

³" . . . The nuns traveled in secular garb - black cashmere dresses with white tulle caps with a little trimming of white gauze." Carroll, Mother Austin, Annals of the Sisters of Mercy (Catholic Publication Society, 9 Barclay St., N. Y., 1889) pp. 59-60.

⁴" . . . In the early 40's lay women taught for Bishop Tyler," Gately, Sister Mary Josephine, Seventy-five years in the Passing (Providence: Providence Visitor Press, 1926) p. 80.

Of these (schools) all but one had functioned previously under lay administration" O'Connor, Sister Mary Loretto, Mercy Marks the Century (Providence: Sisters of Mercy, 1951) p. 124

. . . Saint Mary's parochial school (Conn.) for girls, which had been established with lay teachers in 1834" Healy, Kathleen. Frances Warde: American Founder of the Sisters of Mercy (New York: Seabury Press, 1973). p. 236

⁵Two years previously, on one of the five islands of Cork, Ireland, Mother Frances' sister, Mother Josephine Warde, founded a convent named Saint Marie's of the Isle from which the Newport convent derived its name. Carroll, op.cit., p. 410

⁶"In the dim, narrow chapel of the old Stone House, Saint Xavier's Convent, Sister Mary De Sales Kelly and Sister Mary Gertrude Bradley made their vows; they were the first Sisters of Mercy to do so in New England. (1852) Gately, op. cit., p. 82

⁷This coach was probably one of the Concord variety, manufactured by Abbot-Downing Company in Concord, New Hampshire between 1828 and 1889. These coaches usually accommodated nine to twelve passengers. The number

"102" may refer to the year of design and style. "Clues to these numbers lie buried under countless layers of paint. Each restored stagecoach reveals important parts to this giant jig-saw puzzle of stagecoach builders." Frizzell, John and Mildred "American Stagecoaches" Hobbies Magazine, January 1972.

⁸On entering the coach they perceived it was already occupied by two "viragoes" who immediately began to harass the five Sisters. When the coach finally arrived at the Spring Street cottage, Father Fitton greeted them and offered them umbrellas to protect them from the teeming rain. Before leaving the coach, Mother Frances turned to their tormentors and politely thanked them for their attention. This caused the shrews no little embarrassment. Carroll, op. cit., p. 409.

⁹Ibid., p. 411

¹⁰". . . The Irish company was under the command of W. K. Delaney, a pedagogue in charge of Saint Mary's parochial school, whose methods of drill and discipline, like those in his school, were unique and amusing." Pearce, B. S. Recollections of a Long and Busy Life. p. 150 cited in O'Connor, op. cit., p. 94.

¹¹Newport Daily News, 11 July 1855.

¹²Six months later the "Pacific," on which Bishop O'Reilly was a passenger, was lost at sea.

¹³Newport Daily News, 12 July 1855

¹⁴Newport Daily News, 27 November 1879.

¹⁵Newport Daily News, 29 February 1884.

¹⁶Saint Anthony's, Saint Augustin's, Saint Barnabas', Saint Joseph's, Saint Lucy's, and Saint Mary's.

¹⁷Saint Anthony's, Saint Augustin's, Saint Mark's, Jemestown; and St. Mary's.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Carroll, Mother Austin, Annals of the Sisters of Mercy, Vol. III and IV, Catholic Publication Society, 9 Barclay St., N. Y., 1888.
- Conley, Patrick T. and Matthew J. Smith. Catholicism in Rhode Island: The Formative Era. Providence, 1976.
- Cullen, Rev. Thomas R. The Catholic Church in Rhode Island. North Providence: Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, 1936.
- Degnan, Sister M. Bertrand, R.S.M. Mercy unto Thousands. Maryland: Newman Press, 1957.
- Dehey, Elinor Tong. Religious Orders of Women in the United States. Indiana: W. B. Conkey Co., 1930.
- Gately, Sister Mary Josephine. Seventy-five Years in the Passing. Providence: Providence Visitor Press, 1926.
- " The Sisters of Mercy, Historical Sketches. New York: Macmillan Co., 1931.
- Healy, Kathleen. Frances Warde: American Founder of the Sisters of Mercy. New York: Seabury Press, 1973.
- O'Connor, Sister Mary Loretto, R.S.M. Mercy Marks the Century, Providence: Sisters of Mercy, 1951.
- Sisters of Mercy, Leaves From the Annals of the Sisters of Mercy, Vol. II, New York: The Catholic Publishing Society Co., 1883.
- Reverend Mother Xavier Warde. New Hampshire: Marlier and Company, 1902.
- Pamphlets and Magazines:
- A History: St. Mary's Parish, Newport, 1978.
- St. Augustin's Church: Silver Jubilee 1911-1936. Newport: Eckhart Printing Service.
- Sisters of Mercy Centennial in the Diocese of Providence 1851 - 1951. Visitor Press, Providence.
- Newport Daily News. 1854-1890.
- Hobbies Magazine. - January 1972.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1851 Arrival of Mother Frances Xavier Warde and four Sisters in Providence.
- 1854 May 3, Saint Mary's Convent established.
May 8, Saint Mary's School opened.
- 1855 First Reception Ceremony held in Saint Mary's Church.
- 1867 New building of Saint Mary's School opened.
Saint Mary's Academy opened.
- 1880 July, old convent demolished.
December, new convent completed.
- 1885 St. Mary's Parish divided and Saint Joseph's Parish created.
Christian Doctrine classes in St. Joseph's parish begun.
- 1911 Saint Augustin's parish created.
- 1912 Saint Augustin School and convent established.
- 1914 Jamestown Christian Doctrine classes begun.
- 1915 Saint Augustin Convent relocated on Harrison Avenue.
Mercy Home and School founded.
- 1921 Mercy Home and School enlarged
- 1924 Saint Mary's Academy closed.
- 1934 Charter for Salve Regina College obtained.
- 1941 Mercy Home and School closed.
- 1947 Presentation of Goelet Estate to Sisters of Mercy.
Salve Regina College opened.
- 1951 Moore Hall Residence opened.
First Commencement of Salve Regina College.
- 1955 Accreditation of Salve Regina College.
- 1965 Miley Hall erected.
- 1967 O'Hare Academic Center opened.
- 1970 Saint Augustin's School closed.
- 1971 Saint Mary's School closed.
Newport County Catholic Regional School established.

APPENDIX

ITEMS OF INTEREST FROM THE NEWPORT DAILY NEWS

Reception Ceremony

July 11, 1855

Two young ladies took the white veil or, in other words entered the Order of the Sisters of Mercy yesterday afternoon at the Catholic Church. The services were conducted by Bishop O'Reilly assisted by Bishop McGill and the Rev. James Fitton. The address was delivered by Bishop McGill. There was an immense crowd present, mostly Protestants. We shall give a more detailed account of the ceremony tomorrow.

July 12, 1855, Vol 11 N58

The services at the Catholic Church, The Holy Name of Mary, on Tuesday afternoon, were exceedingly solemn and impressive; and we propose to give some description of it for the benefit of those who were not present.

As the clock struck five, the procession, headed by the crossbearer and assistants, angels, so called, on this occasion, a select number of children attending the school of the Sisters attired in white dresses, with wreaths, bouquets and baskets of flowers, to the number of twenty-eight, moved from the hall door of the Convent, accompanied by the Mother Superioress and other ladies of this religious community, in the usual dress of their Order, to the Church and through the centre aisle to the Chancel, where they were received by the ordinary of the diocese, Right Rev. Bishop O'Reilly, Right Rev. Dr. McGill, of Richmond, Va.,

Rev. Mr. Fitton, Pastor of the Church, and his acolytes and assistants. If ever this Church might be called beautiful, and truly it is a masterpiece of Gothic art of the early decorative style, it was indeed so to the eyes of the immense audience assembled on this occasion,--with its gilded altars, adorned with statuary, lights and vases in chaste profusion.

This is what is termed the ceremony of reception. The Postulants, who were to be admitted to two years noviceship, that is, a time of probation before they are allowed to unite themselves with the Order, the object of which is to attend the sick, the aged, prisoners, and to educate children, were Miss Hannah Sullivan, called in religion Sister Ignatius, and Miss Mary Ann Madden, Sister Regis. These two young ladies in bride's attire, pure white, with white lace streaming from their heads, on which were wreaths of beautiful flowers, knelt between the Superioress and Assistant, the local Superioress of this city, Sister Mary Borgia, while the choir sang "Gloriosa Virginum," etc. This being finished, the Celebrant, the Bishop of the Diocese, recited the prayers used on such occasions. The sermon was preached by Bishop McGill, and was a fervent, excellent and most practical production. After the address by Bishop McGill, the Postulants were conducted by the Superioress and assistant before the Celebrant, who sat on the platform of the altar, when the following questions were propounded and answered:

Celebrant: My child, what do you demand?

Postulant: The mercy of God, and the holy habit of religion.

Celebrant: Is it with your own free will you demand the holy habit of religion?

Postulant: Yes, Right Rev. Sir.

The Celebrant then asked of the Superioress if she had made the necessary inquiries and was satisfied as to the vocation and sincere desire of the Postulants, to which she answered in the affirmative. The Celebrant again addressing the Postulants asked of them if they had thought deeply upon the subject, and were in expectation of being able to carry the yoke of our Lord Jesus Christ, solely for the love and fear of God. To which they severally replied in the affirmative, relying, as they said, on the mercy of God. After these questions and answers, the Superioress and Assistant retired with the Postulants to the Sacristy, to change their secular dresses, wreaths, veils, jewelry, etc., for the religious habit of the Order - The procession having returned to the chancel, during which time the Choristers in the Choir and Chancel sang alternately the Cxiii Psalm. The Celebrant continued the form of prayers, while the Superioress and Assistant placed the white veil on the heads of the Postulants and presented them with their cinctures, rosaries and crosses. Here all knelt while the Choir sang the hymn, "Veni, Creator Spiritus," invoking the influence of the Divine Spirit. After this the Celebrant continued other prayers and gave the final blessing, while the Choir sang the beautiful Psalm cxxxii, Ecce quam bonam, behold how good and how pleasant a thing it is, etc. The procession then returned in the same order as it entered. It was a very solemn and imposing occasion, and one which will not soon be forgotten.

Funeral

December 10, 1874

Funeral of a Sister of Mercy -

At noon today the funeral of Sister Mary Alphonsus of the Sisters of Mercy was solemnized at St. Mary's Church, Father Grace officiating. The deceased had been an invalid for some time but had greatly endeared herself to the Catholics of this city. The remains were followed to their last resting place by Mary's Catholic Benevolent Society, the Children of Mary, and the children's societies of St. Aloysius and the Infant Jesus, and many persons not connected with organizations. The funeral procession contained over nine hundred persons, and extended from Washington Square to Warner Street.

St. Mary's Catholic Sunday School

April 3, 1875

Connected with St. Mary's Church is a Sunday school containing over six hundred scholars under the charge of the Sisters of Mercy. The school has two sessions of an hour each. The Sisters are aided by young ladies from the parish, and monitors selected from the day schools.

Funeral

January 3, 1877

Honors to the dead - The funeral of Sister Basilia who died so suddenly on Sunday last was solemnized from St. Mary's Church yesterday. The storm was so severe many who would otherwise have been present were kept away.

The remains of the departed were enclosed in a plain rosewood casket, without any ornamentation and the plate bore this inscription:

Sister Basilia Duffy
Died Dec. 31, 1876
Aged 28 years

The casket was brought into the church and put on a catafalque, which had been placed near the altar where it was surrounded by one hundred burning candles. A select choir sang appropriate hymns and Rev. Father Grace conducted the requiem Mass for the repose of the soul of the departed after which he delivered a very able and eloquent sermon which was listened to with great interest and moved many to tears.

The remains were deposited in the Catholic cemetery alongside the sister who died a few years ago. Among those present from abroad was the Reverend Mother of the Order in the State, Sister Climacus and Mother Superior Sister Juliana, from Fall River. Many sisters and others from abroad would doubtless have been there but for the storm, causing the detention of the cars and steamboats. As it was impossible to reach the cemetery in carriages, Mr. Anthony Stewart took one of his heavy teams and leveled the streets leading thereto and for which he deserves no little credit.

The funeral arrangements were in charge of William J. Quinn and Thomas Galvin.

Funeral

January 6, 1877

The following is an example of Victorian poetry:

IN MEMORIAM

Sister Mary Basilia

At the Convent of Mercy, Newport, R. I.

December 31, 1876

Cold, cold, in the snow,

Sweet sister, low you lie.

Pure, pure as the snow

Your life, so young went by.

T'was frail, frail as the breath,

Of roses sweet in June;

T'was fair, fair as the light

That gleams from silv'ry moon.

Like to a meteor's flash,

That life so fair, went out.

And like the rose it shed

Too soon its leaves about.

Ah me! Too soon it sped,

Its way to Heaven above,

Too soon it left us lone,

To weep, but yet to love.

This well your day is done,

And all your ills are o'er;

Ah Sister! now you taste

That bliss you longed for sore

Your spirit pure has fled
Its prison cell of clay!
With angels now you tread.
Thro' flow'ry paths your way.

Oh, may we strive like you,
A bright crown too to win!
And may we guard our lives
From every stain of sin!

St. Mary's Academy

July 1, 1879

The annual examination of classes at this Academy took place yesterday. The Rev. Dr. Grace and Father Clinton, with a large number of the parents and friends of the pupils, were present. The exercises were opened by a short address from Dr. Grace full of advice and good counsel to the scholars, after which a most thorough and satisfactory examination in music, the English branches and classics was undergone by the pupils, and the proficiency manifested argues well for their industry and diligence, and indeed reflected great credit upon the good sisters Ursula as superior, and Sisters Zita and Josephine as principals in the young misses' and young masters' departments.

Miss Mary Horgan and Miss Katy Callahan, two of the graduating "stars" received two silver medals for proficiency in music, having acquitted themselves with great credit in that branch of their studies. These two young ladies bid fair to make their mark in the musical world. Miss Mary Beatty gave evidence of advanced

scholarship and received also a silver medal. The Misses Mary Fitzpatrick and Mary Coen were honored with silver medals for proficiency and good record in general studies. The Misses Nellie Casey, Annie Boyle, Josephine Reagan, Maggie Buckley and Helena Doherty, of the graduating class, also received, for advancement in their English and classical studies, very appropriate and valuable books. The undergraduates were found to be well advanced in their elementary studies and received particular praise and credit for the close application and attention manifest in their different studies. Dr. Grace dismissed the school for a two-months vacation with a few brief, appropriate and touching remarks, concluding with his blessing and tendering to them a solemn and affectionate invocation of happiness during their future life.

School

July 24, 1880

The Church of the Holy Mary Our Lady of the Isle, situated on Spring Street, was erected about the year 1850. It has the largest congregation in the city, but we are not able to give the exact membership. The Rev. Dr. Grace is the pastor with Rev. Father Clinton as assistant. The Sunday School is in charge of the Sisters and has about 560 scholars. It holds two sessions on each Sabbath.

Sanitary Protection Association

Wed., April 12, 1882

The secretary reported that since the last meeting, inspection has been made of the residences of Rev. Mr. Peet, Professor Pumpelly, and Mr. Samuel Tilton, two houses of Professor Gammell,

and the Convent of the Sisters of Mercy. With reference to the latter, it was mentioned that though membership in the association had been obtained in the usual manner, there existed a provision in the constitution in accordance with which the inspection "of any school house, church or other public building whose sanitary condition if faulty may imperil the health of citizen or member of his family, will be met from the general fund of the association." The occupants of the convent were wholly engaged in charitable work, the fees received from the instruction given in that building being more than counter-balanced by the uncompensated labor in the larger and public school. The sisters had promptly carried into effect the advice of the association regarding vaccination of the children under their charge, and they had shown equal wisdom in requesting the association to assume the sanitary direction of their new building. The clause quoted probably covered the case, yet to remove all doubt, Dr. Storer moved that the present year's fee for inspection of the Convent of Mercy be remitted to the Sister Superior. Seconded and passed.

It was stated that in accordance with the vote of the council a communication had been sent to the State Board of Health requesting it to extend to the city authorities of Newport any aid that might be necessary towards preventing further extension of small-pox. Mention was made of the fact that a previous memorial of the council through its executive officer to the National Board of Health had been sent by that board to Governor Littlefield, by him to Mayor Slocum and by that gentleman read to the Board of Aldermen, as the Board of Health of Newport, though a copy of that communication had apparently been refused by His Honor to the representatives of the

press. Mention was also made of the promotion of the city physician to the State Board, and to the chairmanship of that Board lately filled by the deceased Dr. King, and the hope was expressed that as the latter gentleman, at/^{first}so conservative, eventually came to sympathize with the object and methods of the association, it might also prove the case with the new incumbent.

School

June 14, 1882

The inspection and improvement of the sanitary condition of St. Mary's Parochial school made at the instance of the acting pastor of St. Mary's Church . . . special attention was called to the constant evil resulting from the presence of a liquor saloon within a few steps of the entrance of St. Mary's Parochial School frequented daily by over 400 children of both sexes.

June 30, 1882

The closing exercises of the school year at St. Mary's Academy were held yesterday afternoon at the convent . . . Had the privacy with which the exercises were intentionally conducted permitted, the presence of a larger audience, not a parent, whether father or mother, and no matter what their sectarian sympathies, but who would have said that those children are fortunate who while living at home, are able to spend the school hours of each day in so peaceful a place as the convent and under the guidance of teachers, so gentle, so amiable, and so devoted to their work as the ladies of the Sisterhood of Mercy.

SCHOOL

February 29, 1884

ST. MARY'S PAROCHIAL

His Honor, Mayor Franklin, upon the invitation of the chairman of the public school committee, accompanied also by Superintendent Littlefield and Collector Cozzens, made a brief visit this morning to St. Mary's schools on Levin Street. The party was very cordially received by Reverend Dr. Grace and his associates, Father Thomas Grace and Father Doran and shown through the several grades, in each of which there were interesting exercises. Though a very cold and uncomfortable morning, the several rooms were well filled, and everything seemed working in first class order. The number of pupils to each teacher is considerably larger than is allowed in our public schools, which must require hard work on the part of those in charge, and yet it was evident that the burden is cheerfully and faithfully borne. The schools were found well graded, with a system of promotion similar to that in use elsewhere, the numbers in the primary and intermediate classes largely predominating. The singing of the pupils showed thorough training in this department, and was very gratifying to the visiting party. While in one of the girls' schools, where sixty or more were engaged in this exercise, in response to a remark as to the fine appearance of the class, Dr. Grace called the attention of the visitors to the fact that no "bangs" were observed. However, some "bangs" had invaded even these precincts, though they were combed back so as not to be easily seen. In one case in a more advanced class one bang had actually got loose in spite of the rule, so hard is it to stay the progress even of a senseless fashion.