

Provincial House of the New York Province, Rye

“My Own Dear Country”

By Mother Mary Campion, S.H.C.J.

Part III Western Expansion

The spiritual wellsprings of Towanda, the pioneer spirit of Avoca and the adventuresome élan of Chicago and points west brought further fruition to the Society in the U. S. with later foundations on the East Coast, during the latter half of its first hundred years.

St. Walburga's

The Society had long wanted a foundation in the New York Archdiocese, and both the Sharon Alumnae and Mr. Patrick Farrelly had worked indefatigably for this end. Finally in the Spring of 1904, Archbishop Farley granted permission. The chief patroness of this venture was Mrs. Caroline Wheaton of Poughkeepsie, a convert friend of Reverend Mother M. Walburga whose two daughters had attended Sharon and then entered the Society. Msgr. Joseph McMahon of *Our Lady of Lourdes* parish offered the Sisters a teaching apos-

tolate in the grammar department of his unfinished school if the Sisters would provide a building for the interim. Mrs. Wheaton then authorized him to purchase the Seagrist Cottage at 610 West 141st Street. This extensive brick cottage was changed into a Convent, and a stable at the 140th Street side was considerably altered and transformed into a temporary school.

Through the further generous gift of Mrs. Wheaton, the Society acquired in October 1904 the Farrell property, adjoining the Seagrist Cottage, for the establishment of a Holy Child Academy. December brought the completion of the alterations, and the opening Mass was said on December 21, the first anniversary of the death of Rev. Mother M. Walburga in whose memory the convent and school had been founded. *St. Walburga's* grew to such an extent that the Sisters exchanged their property for the northeast corner of 140th



The Glee Club at Rye, and this oil portrait of her sister by one of the Third Seniors are expressions of that "universal language" of art which Mother Cornelia Connelly valued so much in education.

Street, where under the guiding genius of Rev. Mother M. Joseph, a substantial stone building facing the lordly Hudson was erected. On April 29, 1912, the cornerstone was laid by Msgr. Joseph McMahon, staunch friend and benefactor of the Society. Because of his deep admiration and appreciation of the special kind of training in which he thought the S. H. C. J. excelled, he made it possible for many graduates of his parochial school to attend St. Walburga's on scholarship. With this help and the increased enrollment, the swiftly passing years saw from St. Walburga's a continuing flow of vocations to the Society, a devoted Alumnae, and an excellent scholastic achievement recognized in numerous Regents scholarships.

In the February 15, 1951 issue of the *New York Times*, the nuns

read the startling news that the City intended to take over the St. Walburga's property as part of its project for the Harlem Hospital. Six years later, after much litigation, the keys of the convent were handed to the City's Real Estate agent on August 10, 1957. In that interim St. Walburga's celebrated its Golden Jubilee and started its search for a new home in the New York Archdiocese. The search centered in Westchester County where already the Society had opened in *Fleetwood* (September 1948) a parochial school at the invitation of Monsignor John Delaney, pastor of SS. Peter and Paul parish. This school was a barometer indicating educational pressures in the migration of Catholic families and Holy Child alumnae to the suburbs of New

Dialogue Mass is a weekly event at SS. Peter and Paul's School. It is clear from old Journals that participation in the Liturgy was one of Mother Connelly's ideals for the Holy Child schools of a century ago.





Old and young
at Our Lady
of Lourdes'
have become
enthusiastic
members of
the C. C. G.

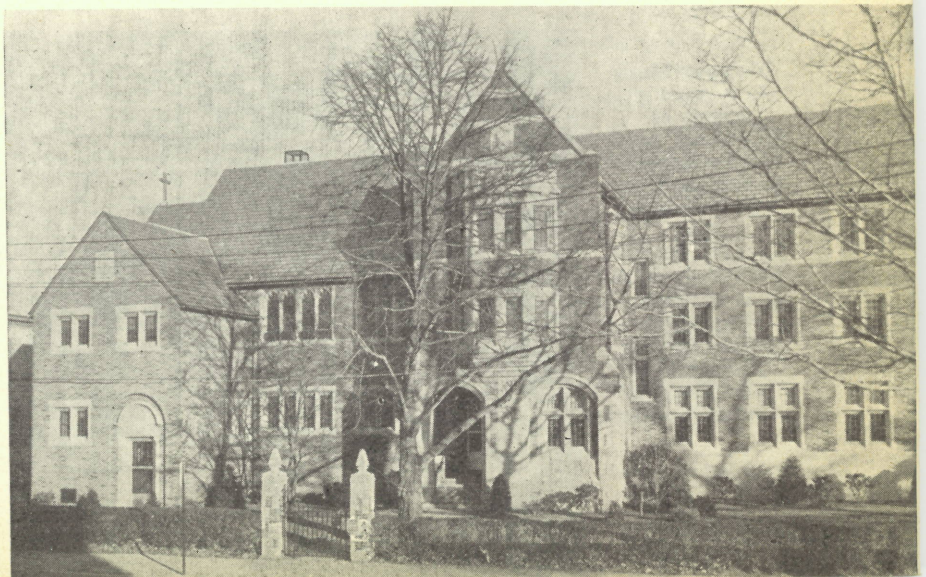
York City. After much prayer and an exhaustive search, the choice for St. Walburga's new site was made at the twenty-five acre Soong estate in *Rye*, twenty five miles from New York City.

The first Mass was said on July 31, 1957 by Monsignor John Scally, an alumnus of the first class in the Seagrist Cottage. A large school unit, built onto the Soong house was occupied in 1959. The adjoining Feinburg property was a providential addition, since in the division of the Provinces on August 25, 1958 it became the provincial house when Reverend Mother M. Fintan was appointed first Provincial of the New York Province.

From October 1904, when Monsignor McMahon founded *Our Lady*

of Lourdes School the [S. H. C. J. had shared the teaching with Sisters of St. Ursula, but had lived at St. Walburga's. In 1943 when these Sisters decided to establish an academy in another parish, Monsignor Stanley purchased their convent and asked the Holy Child nuns to staff the entire school, and to move into the convent. Today the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes typifies the crossroads of a metropolis. The sisters teaching there fulfill Our Lord's command to teach all nations, represented by the Asiatics, Islanders, Creoles, Mexicans, Europeans, North and South Americans. This unique apostolate extends beyond the school in the Release Time classes, to a shifting and rootless population - which recalls the words of Pope

St. Mary's
Convent,
Melrose,
Mass., is a
center of
radiation
for
missionary
zeal - a
permanent
and
practical
zeal which
"gives and
does not
count
the cost."



These Suffern Fourth Seniors at work in their Library typify those of the 46,000 pupils in Holy Child Schools who have learnt — or been taught — to think.



John's Coronation Address: "Here lies the missionary problem in all its vastness and beauty."

With two schools established in New York City, the Society's next venture, in 1909, under the aegis of Reverend Mother M. Paul Keegan, was located in the Boston Archdiocese, at *Melrose*, seven miles from Boston. At the recommendation of Father Gavin, former pastor of Holy Spirit parish in Sharon Hill, the Reverend Francis J. Glynn invited the Society to teach in his parish school, St. Mary's. The growing grade school soon demanded a high school, opened in 1912. Today, besides teaching the 752 children in the grades and 124 children in the high school, the Sisters give religious instruction to a thousand children in the neighboring parishes. Active in school and parish work is the Mission Committee whose devoted interest and prayers have provided generously for our African Mission.

The second foundation made by Rev. M. M. Paul was sponsored in 1912 by Mrs. Thomas Fortune Ryan, who presented to the Society the forty-acre Dininny estate at *Suffern*, situated in the Ramapo Hills about thirty-five miles north of New York City. Suffern treasures its

historic past; in the Indian Wars it was the ancient stockade called Fort George. In the Revolutionary days, Washington once employed its strategic position for his headquarters. The Sisters of this early foundation weathered many vicissitudes, both financial and academic, with courage and joyous acceptance. This intense suffering was the corner stone for the future success and expanding registration that required, in 1927, the construction of a new wing providing a Chapel, Auditorium and facilities for the science department. Suffern is today the Society's only secondary boarding school in America.

The World War I years precluded any physical expansion. Tribute must be paid to Reverend Mother M. St. John McMaster who guided the American Province through these perilous times. Hers was the task to build spiritually, to strengthen by her strong government the sinews of the Society in America, to instill a deep love for Mother Connelly in those around her, and by her sympathy to sustain those with relatives at the Front. In 1922, elected the first American Assistant on the General Council, she helped shape the future expansion of the Society in the United States.



The Oak Knoll Graduation Ceremony takes place in front of Bonaventura Hall.

The request of the parents and alumnae of Suffern to Reverend Mother Marie Joseph for a day and boarding school in northern New Jersey, resulted in a new foundation at *Summit*. This was at first planned as a junior school to feed the high school at Suffern, but applications for the high school students from its beginning pointed to Summit's becoming a college preparatory school, and such it has been since its earliest days. The rolling terrain, wooded with majestic oaks on a ridge of the old Orange mountains gives Oak Knoll its name, and a tract of eleven acres houses the new high school completed in 1956. The junior department was enriched by a very handsome gift in 1954, of a junior school, Bonaventura Hall, given by Mr. and Mrs. Christopher J. Devine. Its beautiful

appointments and exquisite chapel lend beauty to the pursuit of knowledge. Mother Connelly knew that to train future mothers is to sanctify families. The harvest reaped from the practice of this principle is witnessed at Oak Knoll, as ever-increasing numbers of children of Oak Knoll graduates are registered.

Rosemont College

With the continuing establishment of high schools, Reverend Mother M. Joseph judged the impending need for a college in the Society. In the Sinnott estate on Pennsylvania's Main Line, she saw in 1919, the opportunity to plant well and deep for the future education of the Society in the U. S., and under her guidance *Rosemont College* was established. This

At Bonaventura Hall. *Left*: A glimpse of the chapel from one of the entrance halls. *Right*: Happy Juniors in a Classroom.



Part of Kaul Hall, senior residence hall at Rosemont College, named in memory of the late Bertha Kaul Kistler.

house of wisdom too was built on seven pillars: sustaining founders and friends to whom the Society will be forever indebted — Denis Cardinal Dougherty, Rev. M. M. Joseph, the Augustinian Order, Rev. M. M. Ignatius, Rev. M. M. Cleophas, and Mr. and Mrs. Sedgwick Kistler. In 1922, in its first Superior and President, Mother Mary Dolores Brady, Rosemont reached back to the spiritual wellsprings of Towanda. Mother M. Dolores had often read her father's most cherished possession: a personal note of gratitude from Mother Connelly for his help in Towanda's struggle for survival.

Thus the College can trace its spiritual genealogy to those who themselves had been taught and trained by Mother Connelly and had imbibed from her the principles and spirit of the Holy Child Jesus. During the two years that Mother M. Dolores carried the responsibility, she inculcated the Holy Child spirit of simplicity and loyalty



which is Rosemont's dearest endowment; she initiated the continuing building program by erecting a "temporary" stucco building which served as gymnasium and auditorium until 1962 when it was finally replaced by the Alumnae Hall, Rosemont's fifteenth building. Within this span of thirty-eight years lies the saga of Rosemont's spiritual vision, financial courage

**Rosemont
College.
A new
Bachelor
of Arts,
Joan
Mackland,
is congratulated
by Mother
Mary
Anthony.**





Miss Sisk, Miss Canter and Mother Joseph Sarto, railway engineers with Grade II at St. Elizabeth's Book Fair. The trucks contain the children's book reports — no dearth of reviewers in the next generation. The Book Fair is an annual event in the parish whose school has the distinction of a model library created by the organizing genius of Msgr. John H. Harrington, D.L.S.

and academic achievement evidenced in the present enrollment of 550 students, and in numerous scholastic honors.

The responsibility of sustaining the convents, schools, and new college through the trying years of the Depression and World War II fell into the capable hands of Reverend Mother Mary Felix. Her rare talent as Novice Mistress, and her long tenure in the formation of the members of the Society now stood her in good stead through perilous years whose trials called upon deep spiritual resources to sustain the suffering and anxiety besetting every convent. Her wisdom in crucial decisions, her sagacity in business affairs were factors in the survival of the American Province from 1929 until 1936, when a generous, heart-warming gift from England reached across the sea to lighten the great financial burden. With this benefaction, the expansion of the Society, interrupted by these years, could continue — this time with the foundation of St. Elizabeth's School in New York City.

Among the memorabilia of the nuns who labored long and devotedly in *St. Elizabeth's School* are two outstanding events: first, the suddenness of its foundation. For many years the Holy Child Sisters

had taught the large Sunday School of the parish, now 75 years old and still without its own school. Suddenly it was announced from the pulpit, one Sunday in August 1935, that a parochial school would open in September. The rectory located at 187th Street in Upper Manhattan, was transformed into a convent, and the old church completely remodeled for the school whose first registration numbered sixty. The first decade revealed the pace at which the school would grow and all wondered where the mounting school population would be housed. The second striking event occurred on October 20, 1947. Within seconds after the noon recess had emptied the building, the school was enfolded in flames, long since smoldering in the walls, and fanned into curtains of fire by the opening of all doors for dismissal. Five hundred children had emerged safe and secure from the building... The devotion of Mother Connelly to St. Michael for protection against fire had once more borne miraculous fruit.

The Silver Jubilee of the School in 1961 saw a registration of 821 children and a commendable record of vocations: 13 to the priesthood, 2 to the brotherhood, 25 to the sisterhood, including 12 to the Society of the Holy Child Jesus.



**Chapel of the Holy Child
Jesus, New Sharon.**

Provincial House. With the quiet, perduring insistence of nuns determined to complete a task, the Provincial House took root at *New Sharon*, and its virile growth was soon evident. Two years later, a new Chapel, the gift of Mr. and Mrs. John McShain, was dedicated in time for their only child to make her vows. The welcome increase in religious vocations posed a

housing problem as did also the increment in the professed community. In 1950 a new novitiate was completed, and the occupancy of it eased the entire situation.

New Sharon

The crowning achievement of Reverend Mother M. Felix's long provincialate was the purchase of the new Provincial House in Rosemont, in the Spring of 1946. Since Father Carter's time, Sharon Hill had housed the postulants and novices. But a century later found the accommodations cramped, and the privacy invaded by a growing academy. The Centenary of the Society marked the great change by the purchase of the Johnson Estate opposite the College.

In the summer of 1946, Reverend Mother Mary Pauline succeeded Mother M. Felix as Provincial, and her organizing genius guided the transfer and occupancy of the new

Rev. M. M. Pauline (right) and Rev. M. M. Fintan at Grand Coteau, La., in May, 1962. They are standing on the steps of "Bishop's Cottage" where Mrs. Connelly stayed with her children in 1843. The cottage now has an addition and is used as a retreat house.

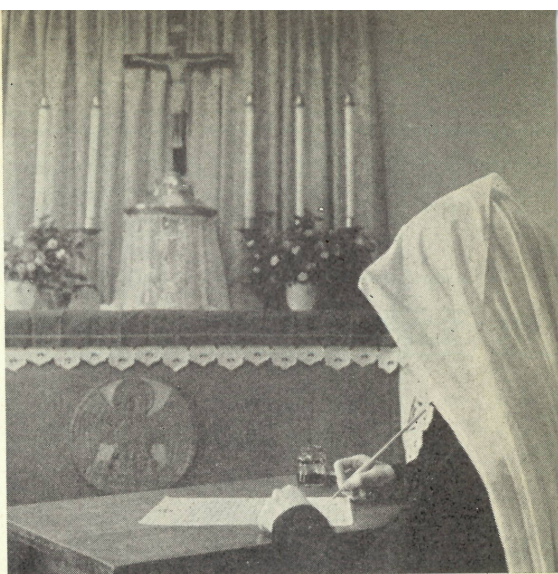


In 1949, the Alumnae of the local Holy Child school pleaded for a junior school at New Sharon, so the Castner Estate with its Tudor mansion, adjacent both to the College and the Novitiate, was purchased.



Grade VI Boys at New Sharon Junior School discussing strategy in the American War of Independence—classroom version.

As the children of this junior school neared the time for transfer to high school, the parents asked for the addition of an academy. Therefore, ten years after the opening of New Sharon, the attractive and



A Novice in the Oratory writing out her Vows before the Profession Ceremony.

well planned senior school was built on the far end of the property. It harbors a temporary wall — promise of future expansion.

Since its Centenary, the Society has kept pace in its development with the prosperity and increased population of the nation. One hundred years ago, Father Carter, suggesting the desirability of a place in the suburbs of Philadelphia for a novitiate and boarding school, received the following reply from Mother Connelly: "Would not Germantown or Manayunk be a beautiful locality for a boarding school and Novitiate? It would have been so in my young days, and when I last visited Philadelphia. There was an excellent country house



First Seniors performing lunch duties in the Coral Gardens of the School of the Holy Child.

At St. Lucy's
a group from
Grade III read
to Mother Mary
Paulita.



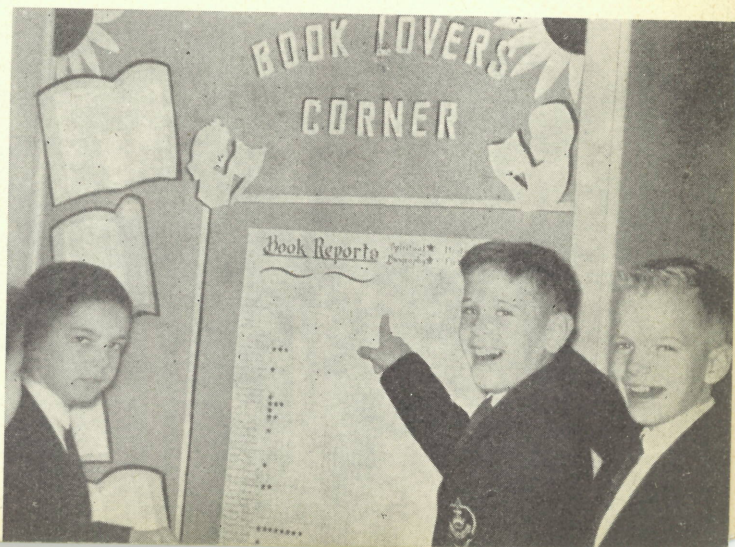
that belonged to my brother just at the back of Manayunk and about a mile or less from Germantown with 50 acres of land running down to the Wissahiccon Creek... It would do beautifully if it could be purchased now. The place was called Shumack Park." It is an interesting link in the history of the Society to note that Reverend Mother M. Laurentia, on her visitation to *St. Lucy's Convent* in Manayunk last year, visited the old mansion that Mother Connelly had suggested. *St. Lucy's Convent*, rich in Colonial and pre-Revolutionary associations is located in the most recently organized parish of the five that serve this old Revolutionary town. The convent staffs the new parochial school, caring for 255 boys and girls of Italian descent.

One hundred years ago too, the Annals recorded that Mother Connelly hoped to found a house in Maryland, near Baltimore on the Caton Estate of the Duchess of Leeds. Though this foundation never materialized, two others have taken root in this region.

The first, in *Washington, D. C.*, was founded during the Marian Year (1954) and happily named the Annunciation. The invitation for this foundation came from the Rt. Reverend Monsignor R. A. Phelan, who knew the nuns at Drexel. Located in Embassy Row, this attractive colonial school, convent and church form a potent unit to serve the 370 children registered. The request of parents for a high school in the vicinity was the impetus for fulfilling, in 1961, Mother Connelly's dream of a foundation in

At Annunciation School,
Washington, D. C.
Do Fred, Robert and Michael
consider themselves as "Book
Lovers" still in the chrysalis
stage?

THE PYLON



A part of the
new convent
at 9029,
Bradley
Boulevard,
Bethesda,
Maryland.



Maryland. Situated twelve miles from Washington in a rural community the convent at **Bethesda** is a charming, white frame building set within ten acres of rolling green country near the historic Potomac River. Seventeen First Seniors form the cornerstone of this new foundation.

Devoted and appreciative Alumnae have played a major part in the development of the Society, and once again in 1959, the New York Province opened a new foundation on Long Island at **Old Westbury**, at the plea of parents, begging for Holy Child Sisters to train their children. The parents'

zealous search for a location finally won approval in the Bliss Estate in Old Westbury, ten miles from Garden City. The hundred children arrive daily in buses provided by their school district, and already plans for a complete new junior school are under way. Since Catholic education in this area is a vital need, the interest and zeal of the nuns reach out to the large Catholic population attending the four non-Catholic schools in the vicinity. Each Friday afternoon, 92 children arrive for catechism classes. For the parents, lectures and days of recollection (a memorable one was given recently by Rev. Martin



Lighting the
Advent Wreath
at Old
Westbury.
There is a
children's Mass
here for the
Cornelia
Connelly Guild
on 16th of
each month.

D'Arcy S. J.) are scheduled frequently.

The Alumnae, always so devoted and instrumental in the location of new schools decided to pool their strength for greater purposefulness, and formed in 1935 the **Holy Child Federated Alumnae**. The purpose is to foster greater loyalty and co-operation among the various Holy Child Associations, and to promote the interests of education and religious and social endeavors according to Catholic principles. As a unifying project each Alumnae Association is asked to sponsor an activity, the proceeds of which in whole or in part are donated to the Federation. The Missions, the Cause of Cornelia Connelly, African and Asian students are the recipients of this good work. A newsletter sent to each alumna is the channel of communication in strengthening the *cor unum*.

When in the summer of 1930, Cardinal Hinsley, Apostolic Delegate to the African Missions, visited Reverend Mother M. Amadeus in Rome to plead for help in the missions of **Nigeria**, his request found an immediate and enthusiastic response. It is no small coincidence that the first American missionary is now the first American Superior General of the Society. Early in October 1930, Rev. M. M. Laurentia joined M. M. Edith and M. M. Joachim in the first mission band inaugurating the Society's entrance into the vast mission field of which Claudel wrote: "Yesterday at Ephesus, Mary put her golden feet upon the Acropolis; today she enkindles Africa from one end to the other." From the single glowing center at Calabar, the Society has developed in three dioceses of Nigeria, and in **Ghana**, with numerous secondary schools,

teacher-training colleges and rural primary schools where the nuns from all provinces of the Society have been privileged to labor side by side, face to face with paganism in their dynamic fulfillment of Christ's words; "You will be My witnesses even to the ends of the earth." (Acts I: 8). No small part of the prosperous growth of the American Provinces is due to the missions, pylonic bases for "the line that carries the light." The diversity of occupation — the spiritual training of the Handmaids of the Holy Child, the missionary training of the lay apostles, teaching on all levels, the care of the twinnery — focus the natural and supernatural talents, inclinations and dispositions uniquely woman's, transforming her occupations into many forms of spiritual motherhood. In this great salvific work of the Society in the Mission field, the American Provinces are happy to have their share.

From her vantage point in eternity, Mother Connelly can look down on this, the centenary of the Society in her own dear country and say in the words of the Epiphany Liturgy: "THY DAWN HAS COME, AND THE GLORY OF THE LORD HAS BROKEN UPON THEE."



"Whatsoever you do to one of these my least brethren . . ."

Approved by Fr. Desmond McCarthy, *Promotor Fidei*