THE MANUAL LABOR SCHOOL AT NOTRE DAME 1993--

(1844-1917)

AND OTHER EARLY HOLY CROSS INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS IN AMERICA

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BY

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MOUNTAIN VIEW, CALIFORNIA

1993

Father Basil Moreau, founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross, although the product of a classical education himself, recognized the place of manual labor schools (industrial or trade) in the overall pupose of his new Congregation's apostolate even in a very class-conscious era. Writing as early as 1842 he stated:

> We have remarked that as a consequence of the ambition of the middle classes, children have become ashamed at their inferior condition and that of their parents, and strive to seek a fortune in adventurous ways. It is an evil, and in our eyes, a great one; it must, therefore, be remedied. To heal this dangerous wound, so far as it lies in our power, we should like to open an Industrial School for the teaching of the ordinary trades and practical and theoretical agriculture. In this way we might keep those of our pupils who belong to the middle class from the dangers to be met with in other occupations. We could strive to give them a liking for this kind of work and in all this we could initiate them gradually into progressive ameliorations, which a wise experience has confirmed but a blind routine often spurns.[1]

However, due to social and economic conditions at that time, he was not able to put his plan into action. In America, however, Holy Cross men and women were in the vanguard of a movement to provide technical education fo youth not destined for academic pursuits.

This paper will take a look at some length at the Manual Labor School for boys established by Holy Cross Brothers at Notre Dame and consider more briefly somewhat similar schools founded before the Civil War by Holy Cross Sisters at St. Mary's and in New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago.

Apostolates undertaken by the Congregation of Holy Cross have usually followed a period of study and planning, but it must be admitted that the establishment of the Manual Labor School which was conducted by the Brothers at Notre Dame for over seventy years came about almost by chance. In September 1842, the year after the arrival of the first Holy Cross members at Notre Dame, Father Edward Sorin, the founder of the university, agreed to accept five orphan boys to be sent there by Mr. Fresnaye of Philadelphia, the business agent of Bishop Celestin de la Hailandière of Vincennes. Father Sorin had expected these boys to be at least fourteen years of age, but was surprised to learn upon their arrival that they were only ten or eleven years old. In order to find something for these youngsters to do, he placed them in the various shops in which the Brothers produced clothing, tools and other needed items for the institution and its personnel.

By the following year this action led to the idea that these boys should be taught systematically in a school context some trades that would prepare them for "an honorable place in society." In the country there were already numerous orphan asylums which took care of boys up to twelve years old but which did not really prepare them for a place in the adult world. Also, it was hoped that such a school might eventually provide vocations for the Brotherhood and perhaps even for the priests' society.

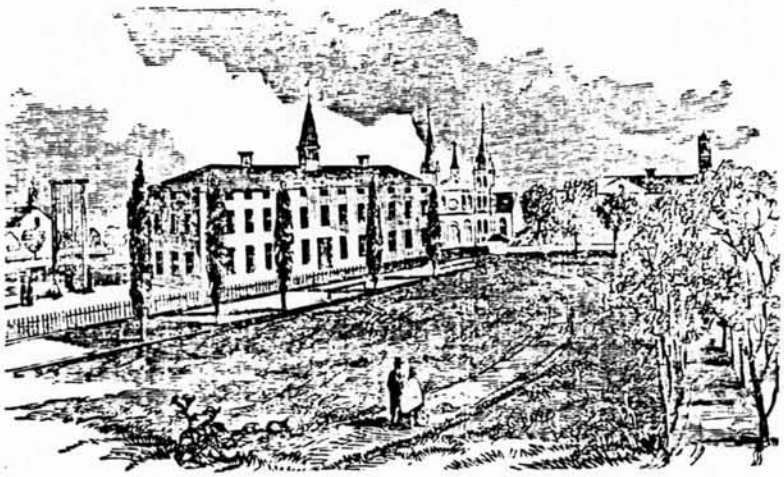
Through the assistance of John D. Defrees, an Indiana state senator, two state charters were obtained on January 14, 1844, one for the university, the other incorporating the Brothers of St. Joseph (as the Brothers of Holy Cross were still known officially) "for the purpose of instructing youth in the science of letters, the art of mechanism, and that of agriculture." Thus was founded the Manual Labor School at Notre Dame, the first Catholic trade school in America. However, it was not until August 14 of that year that the shops were formally declared open and eight apprentices (as the trainees were designated) were enrolled.

By 1846 there were twelve apprentices, by 1852 twenty-eight, and by 1857 the number had climbed to thirty-eight. The all-time high was reached in the late 1860s with over sixty boys in training. Eventually a Council of Direction of Trades, consisting of Father Sorin, eight Brothers representing the various trades, and a seminarian met weekly to plan the work to be undertaken and to settle matters of general policy.

Professor Timothy Howard, an alumnus of the university, writing in 1895 recalled the early days:

> At the rear of the college to the east, stood the Manual Labor establishment having a tailor shop under the care of Brother Augustus, and a printing office under Brother Joseph. I remember well the good Brother and two apprentices who were working hard, printing in a most wretched manner, "Mrs. Herbert and the Villagers.". . . Still a little further back, stood the carpenter shop, a log building under Brother William. To the east of it stood the blacksmith and the gardener's house."[2]

Other shops included that of a cabinetmaker, a shoemaker, and a bricklayer. Farming, of course, was taught



THE MANUAL LABOR SCHOOL

AT NOTRE DAME

Four Locations--

A year after the original Manual Labor School, located behind the Main Building, burned down in 1849, the building above (top left) was erected near where Walsh Hall now stands. In 1869 this structure was moved west about thirty feet (center). It was replaced by a new St. Joseph Hall in 1897 (lower right) After the trade school closed in 1917, wings were added to the building, it was renamed Badin Hall, and became a residence for University students.

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in the fields and barns. The school was a short walk from the farm which not only produced crops of wheat, potatoes, corn, fruits, and vegetables, but through the years also raised outstanding herds of cattle and pigs which provided food for the kitchens. Also, at one time at least forty horses were raised there for farm work and for transportation.

To sum up, as one report put it: "The hum of industry was heard on every side." The products of the shops not only filled the needs of the local personnel but any excess goods were sold to local stores for resale.

At first, the apprentices were housed with the college boarders, an arrangement which was not always a happy one. There was often friction between the two groups, and the college students resented the taunts they received from the apprentices. Separate exits had to be established for them in the refectory, and strict rules of conduct had to be introduced and enforced. Offenders were punished by being made to kneel in the dining room for some minutes or by standing "at the stake" during recreation. This unfortunate situation was eliminated when, in 1848, a two-story wooden building 138 feet long was was erected for the apprentices approximately where Brownson Hall now stands. This rovided space for dormitories, shops, the bakery, kitchen, and sacristy.

The school did not enjoy these facilities for long. On the night of November 19, 1849, fire broke out destroying this building and its contents including the only supply of food and most of the clothing of the apprentices.

Almost immediately after this catastrophe, collections were organized by Holy Cross members and their lay friends to provide urgent necessities and to help rebuild the establishment. Father Sorin even gave this calamitous loss as the main reason for sending a volunteer group of four Brothers and three laymen on a fruitless journey to search for gold in California in February 1850.

In that same year a new building was erected for the Manual Labor School near the front entrance to the campus about where Walsh Hall now stands. This three-story building, 112 feet in length (later extended), included both dormitories and shops. The apprentices were now completely separated from the boarders at the university.

The new structure jutted out into the large undeveloped area leading to the Main Building. In 1868, in order to create an unobstructed park-like quadrangle there the Manual Labor school was raised up onto wheels and moved about ten yards west. This remarkable undertaking both amused and astounded a reporter for The Scholastic, Notre Dame's campus journal, who wrote:

> The large establishment known as the Apprentice House, is now strolling about loose of its mooring. The idea of moving a building 112 feet long, three stories high, and the success which has thus far attended the westward journey of the heavy building will, no doubt, secure a high rank among the engineers of our age to the persevering individual who attempted the feat.[3]

During the ensuing years entrance requirements were developed. Admittance was limited at first to boys twelve to fourteen years of age.if enrolled for the shoe shop or tailor shop. In 1862 this was raised to ages fourteen to sixteen. If to be trained as carpenters, blacksmiths, or masons, the enrollees could not be under fifteen or over sixteen. For acceptance to the print shop, the boy must be able to show evidence of "smartness" as the 1872 prospectus stipulated. In the school's earlier years, an entrance fee of $40.00 was required of any who could afford to pay. Also, the new student was to bring "good and sufficient clothing for one year" and he must present a testimonial to

his moral character and ability to learn the trade he intends to enter. Once accepted, the apprentice was expected to remain in the school until he was twenty-one years of age.

The program was first set up so that during the winter months the apprentice spent his time in regular school work but no shop work; the rest of the year was entirely devoted to shop without any academic classes. In 1873 this arrangement was revised to having the apprentice work at his trade for five hours a day and be in academic classes for another four hours, this for six days a week. It was not until 1890 that the apprentices' hours were reduced to eight hours a day, five and one-half days a week which included two hours in the daytime and two hours in the evening for classes and study periods. The subjects taught were those offered to the commercial students at the university which they could complete in four years and thus be eligible to receive a diploma. Courses included: Writing, Drawing, Bookkeeping, Purity of Language, Public Reading, Music, French, Reading and Spelling, and Arithmetic.

To accommodate this rigorous schedule the boys arose at 5:30 a.m. and were in bed by 9:00 p.m. Only about two hours were assigned to recreation on weekdays. On Sundays and holidays the 5:30 rising was folowed by the study of catechism at six o'clock and breakfast at seven. Recreation then followed until catechism class at nine, inspection at nine-thirty, and Mass at ten. Recreation was permitted in the afternoon. In earlier years this seems to have been supervised walks, but in later years mention is made in the school journal of ball games.

A separate "Play Hall" was erected on the grounds in 1874. The "Grand Opening" of this facility was marked with a program in which a Mr. Gagan, apparently an alumnus of the university, delivered a lecture which The Scholastic assured its readers was "very exhaustive and entertaining" and was

"listened to with much attention." It was only after this presentation delivered with "elocutionary power of a superior order" were the boys permitted to enjoy "some games of foot and hand ball."

The Play Hall was used for a special purpose in May 1878 when the apprentices gave their first program of entertainment. Before an appreciative audience invited from the Philomathean Association and the Philpatrean Society of the university along with youngsters from the Minim Department, they successfully staged three farces, one done in black-face. There were only a few musicians in the Manual Labor School so the Senior Orchestra from the campus volunteered to play some numbers between the dramatic offerings.

From about 1880, boys who worked as waiters in the college dining hall were housed with the apprentices. However, according to an 1881 report of Brother Francis De Sales, director of the house, the presence of these waiters, at the time numbering thirteen, caused disorder as they were "half of the time under no control because of their being most of their time at the college."[4] He and the other Brothers at the apprentices' house urge that the waiters be accommodated elsewhere as most of them are "scamps and no amount of instruction or advice will benefit them one iota, because their bad conduct will show itself when the eyes of the prefects are not on them." Apparently no action was taken on the suggestion at that time, for subsequent reports still list the waiters there in even greater numbers.

Brother Francis De Sales has other adverse comments about conditions at the school at that time:

> The board [that is, the food] is not what it should be; for not only are the victuals of a poor quality but they are very badly cooked, and food badly, or poorly, cooked or recooked many times over (such as we get) is not nutritious. When we get tea, it is the very poorest that can be

> made. The fish is of a poor quality, and badly cooked, and none of our boys eats it. The potatoes are as a rule very cold when they are served on the table.

The director also states that the building is old and in need of repair; is very hard to live in during the cold weather; and that it is impossible to keep it clean on account of the amount of dust which gathers in it. As to the apprentices, there are only fifteen in the house at present, but there are openings in some of the shops which could easily employ more.

Despite all these problems the director concludes his report with some surprisingly positive aspects of the school.

> There is no trouble in the house at present, but a spirit of satisfaction and order reigns in its stead. The boys are punctual in attending to their religious duties, and all go to their duty regularly.

Scholastically, a number of the apprentices did well and moved across campus to the college where they made a name for themselves in academic work. For example, one apprentice in the print shop--James Burns--eventually became a Holy Cross priest and, as such, the tenth president of the University of Notre Dame. Joseph Lyons, mentioned earlier, who started as an apprentice in the shoe shop, became one of the best-known lay professors and scholars in the early years of the university. Writing in 1897 for The Scholastic, F. W. O'Malley had this to say about Lyons and other one-time apprentices:

> . . . he is but one of the many clever men who look back with pride and pleasure to the days when they were students of St. Joseph's Hall. When we consider that several of the most distinguished

> members of our faculty--the class poets of '95, '96, and '97, and many of the most brilliant students in the institution are Manual Labor School men, we cannot but believe that there has been more conscientious work in that Hall than in any other department of the University.[5]

The shop training itself also came in for its share of public praise. For example, Dr Albert Zahm, a Notre Dame professor, in an article which appeared in The American Machinist and reprinted in The Scholastic in 1891[6], describes the part the boys in the school played in assisting the skilled foreman in the Mechanical Engineering Department in building machinery ranging from an engine valued at $1500 to various smaller jobs on dynamos, tools, and patterns. He also makes a point of the fact that the apprentices were also taught to be "men of morals and manners."

Even though many of the shops were moved out of the old building in the 1880s and relocated in the Engineering Building across Dorr Road in order to improve conditions, it was decided in 1897 to build a new hall for the apprentices. St. Joseph Hall (200 x 400 feet), three stories high, was erected a very short distance from the 1850 structure which was then torn down. This new building, designed by Brother Columbkille Fitzgerald, was described by F. W. O'Malley in his article referred to above, as "one of the best equipped, if not the best, halls at Notre Dame." He characterizes the hall as "homelike and comfortable within as its exterior is attractive."

The first floor contained private rooms, a reading room, and a refectory. The second floor consisted of classrooms, a study hall, and bedrooms for the prefects. The third floor was a dormitory. The hall also had its own chapel. The whole building was at first heated with large stoves until the installation later of steam heat.

Despite its new quarters the Manual Labor School did not flourish. The interest in having such a school at Notre Dame had waned at the turn of the century, and finances continued to be an ever-present problem.

The school had never been a money-maker even though its fees had increased through the years. In its first twenty years the entrance fee had gone up from $40 to $100. By 1873 when its courses had been expanded to include branches taught at the University in a four-year program, the charges were $150 a year for the first two years and $100 the for each of the two last years. As a "premium for talent and good conduct, the privilege of attending the courses of the University during a fifth and even a sixth year was offered to those apprentices who were judged worthy of it, for the sum of $150 a year.

The meager earnings of the apprentices could be applied in the form of credits to the tuition charges and for clothing. A report prepared in 1867 listed boys working on the farm for 93 cents a day; blacksmithing 60 cents; carpentry, printing, and masonry, 50 cents. Refectory workers were credited with 50 cents a day; those in the tailor shop had to be satisfied with 20 cents a day. These pay rates probably increased through the years.

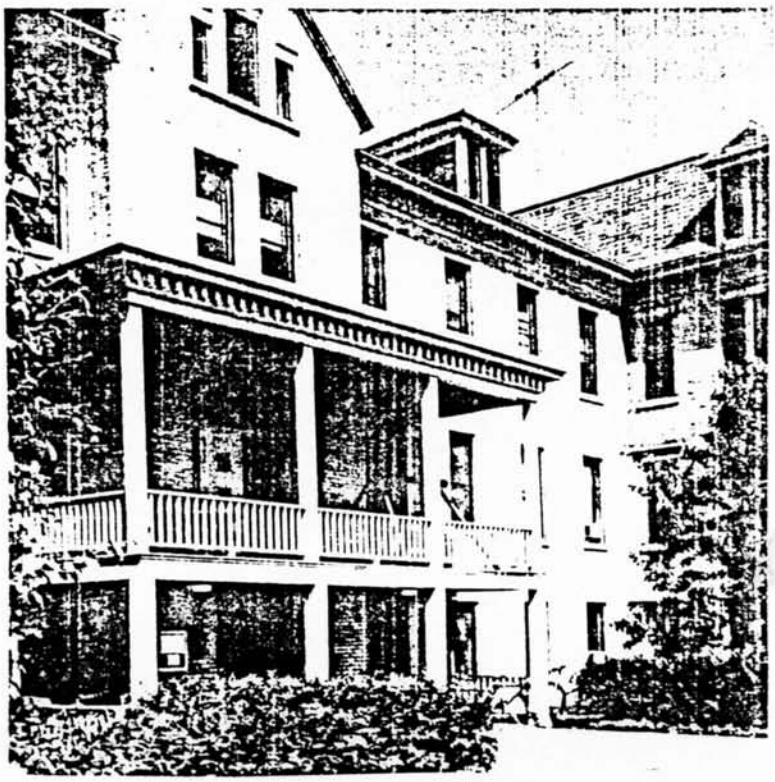
The tight financial condition of the school was, of course, aggravated by a decrease in enrollment in the 1890s. In 1893 there were only five apprentices; in 1895 there were nine. The number of waiters living in the hall, however, went up to thirty-six. In 1895 Brother Boniface, the director, reported that there was then not enough work in

the shops to accommodate more than twelve apprentices.

Somehow, the school continued to operate into the 1900s, but, finally, in 1917, authorities announced that the school was closed to new applicants and that the program would be phased out for those already there by the end of the 1919 academic year.

In retrospect, it can be seen that the Manual Labor School, in general, was a innovative and and successful undertaking for over seventy years during which it repared many young men for going out into the world out into the world to earn a living in a worthwhile trade. Unfortunately, changing times and financial demands were more than could be met by its administrators.

When it was seen that the Manual Labor School would have to close, actions were taken to transform St. Joseph Hall into a dormitory for the University students Wings were added to both ends of the building, and it was given a new name--Badin Hall. In 1970, it once again took on significance in school history when, along with Walsh Hall, it became a residence for a part of the pioneer class of undergraduate women on campus.



Badin Hall today

We will now take a look at five of the "industrial schools" founded by Holy Cross Sisters beginning as early as 1854.

St. Mary's, Notre Dame (1854-1862)

When the Sisters established themselves in Bertrand, Michigan, in 1844, their little school enrolled eight orphan girls and a few neighborhood girls as day pupils. When the school was closed in December 1854, the twelve or fifteen girls there were moved to Mishawaka, Indiana, very close to Notre Dame, where they formed the nucleus of a Manual Labor School. There they remained for only about five months at which time the institution was re-established on what is now the St. Mary's College campus at Notre Dame where it took over a small house on the hill near the ravine.

Sisters Euphrosine Pepin and Eugenia Nail were in charge at first. They were followed by Sisters August Anderson and Liguori Cretien. The girls were taught dressmaking and tailoring. When the school closed in July 1862 places were found for those with no home while others were transferred to the academy there or were sent home with their payment refunded.

New Orleans, Louisiana (1851-1923)

The Sisters in New Orleans established in 1851 what they called St. Mary's Workshop or House of Industry (later to become Immaculate Conception Industrial School) for the training of young needy girls. But, as Father Sorin recorded in the Notre Dame Chronicles, "amidst the dissension that continued to agitate the Society until 1856, little could be done towards its development, and up that time it continued to be an excellent project awaiting its execution rather than a creation."[8]

Mrs. Jourdan, a friend of the Sisters, offered them a

small house in which to house a few orphan girls. Within a year, a larger place was needed and was provided by the Ursuline Sisters on their property, but within a short time it too became overcrowded. Property in the city, bordered by North Rampart, Elmira (now Gallier), Congress, and Good Children (now St. Claude) was purchased in 1855.

By the following year a three-story building was erected on one corner of the property. Here the girls received instruction in sewing (some done for the plantation slaves before the Civil War), cooking, and domestic arts. Standard elementary subjects and religious education were also on the program.

This institution continued in operation until 1923. At that time the younger girls were transferred to a home conducted by the Sisters of Charity, and most of the older girls obtained employment in private homes. A few stayed on at the Academy of the Holy Angels which had been established on the property in the 1860s.

Subsequently, through the years the old orphanage building was put to a variety of uses by the Sisters until, in 1992, it was set up as a residence for young unmarried women in need of housing, counselling, and a place to learn basic homemaking skills. Thus, in some ways the building may be said to have come full circle to its initial purpose.

New York (1855-1856)

In 1855 an attempt was made to found a "House of Industry" in New York City under the direction of Sister Mary of the Five Wounds who had successfully established the New Orleans school. Unfortunately, this institution lasted for only one year when Father Sorin withdrew the Sisters because of a jurisdictional dispute with Archbishop John Hughes. However, thirteen postulants received the Habit there in May 1856. The place was later re-opened as an orphange by Marianite Sisters from France.

Philadelphia (1856-1864)

The holy Bishop John Neumann of Philadelphia (canonized in 1977) invited Holy Cross Sisters to open an industrial school for girls, both boarders and day scholars, in his see city in 1856, and in the following year arranged for them to teach, along with Holy Cross Brothers, at the schools in St. Paul and in St. Augustine Parishes. The Brothers also taught in Assumption Parish, and the Sisters took over St. James around 1861. Select schools were also opened by the Sisters in some of these parishes.

The House of the Immaculate Conception, as the industrial school was designated, was opened on Filbert Street by four Sisters from the recently-closed school in New York. According to a flyer published at the time, the school offered instruction in "mantua-making, plain-sewing, tailoring, making church vestments, embroidery, and the use of the sewing machine." Shirt-making was added later.

It was also advertised that "the school would give young girls of middle and poorer classes an opportunity of receiving an education to fit them thoroughly to fulfill the duties of the station in which Divine Providence had placed them."[9] An entrance fee of fifty dollars was charged boarders for the course designed to take three years for completion. Day students could attend for three dollars per quarter. Special courses cost extra: French was six dollars a quarter, instruction in the making of artificial flowers was ten dollars. Work was solicited from individuals and shops in the city as a source of income.

By 1858, as the enrollment rose, the school moved to a large three-story house in a rather rural location in West Philadelphia in an area now occupied by the campus of the University of Pennsylvania. The property cost the Sisters $16,000, but due to the financial Panic of 1857 and, later, the outbreak of the Civil War, they had a very difficult time meeting payments.

At that time there were eighteen Sisters, two postulants, and forty-six manual labor students to provide for. Strict economies were necessary especially in the matter of food. For example, corn bread was substituted for wheat bread as it cost less than half of the latter. Some fears were expressed that the meals were not nourishing enough for the girls who were constantly at work, and it was directed that meat be served more often and that tea be provided at dinner. Soap and candles were made on the premises.

School rules were quite strict. The first scholastic year--a full twelve months--was probationary in nature. Subjects taught that year were plain-sewing, cooking, and housekeeping. If this first year were completed satisfactorily, a girl was then admitted to one of three branches of instruction--millinery, tailoring, or dressmaking. Those thus promoted formally received the school uniform of a purple dress and cape. a straw bonnet lined with silk, and a medal of the Immaculate Conception on a blue ribbon.

The daily schedule was rigorous, starting with rising at five. A morning work period lasted from seven-thirty to eleven. In the afternoon, after a short recreation period, catechism class, and a reading class, work resumed until six o'clock. An hour's study then preceded the seven o'clock supper. At seven-thirty the girls returned to class for another hour. All retired by nine o'clock. During the day various prayers and religious exercises were interspersed through the busy schedule.

The industrial school in Philadelphia flourished, and the Sisters were happy there. But, in 1864, the New York experience was repeated with the abrupt removal by Father Sorin of all Holy Cross personnel from the various establishments in which they had served there. Although the reasons for this unfortunate action is not perfectly clear, the most likely interpretation is that Father Sorin wanted to prevent the General Administration in LeMans from setting

setting up an Eastern province over which he would have no control. Other communities immediately took over the schools which had been operated by Holy Cross religious with great dedication and effort. Among these was the House of the Immaculate Conception which passed to the control of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd.

Chicago, Illinois (1856-1861)

When Bishop Anthony O'Regan invited the Holy Cross Fathers to conduct St Mary of the Lake University in Chicago in 1856, he also arranged to have the Sisters handle domestic affairs there and at the same time open a select school, teach in a parish school, operate a little religious goods and book store, and establish an industrial school for girls. At first, most of these projects were accommodated in the one large university building. but before long the Sisters built at a cost of $3,000 a separate brick structure for the industrial school on the corner of Cass Street and Chicago Avenue.

The Sisters resided in a frame house located behind the college. Sister Mary of the Compassion Gleason was the first superior there and looked after the store. Sister Euphrasia Mahony came from Washington to be in charge of the industrial school. Others on the staff included Sisters from the school that had closed in New York.

Known as the House of Industry, the new institution advertised that its object "is not only to form young girls to the thorough practices of a special trade, such as Drapery Washing, Tailoring, Bonnet Making, the use of the Sewing Machine, etc., but also to confer on them the benefit of an Education, and above all, the blessing of a complete religious training."

An entrance fee of $25 was required "unless in case of poverty." In its first year of operation only day scholars were accepted except for twelve to fifteen boarders who were

accommmodated for $50 per year. An enrollee could be no younger than twelve years of age. Classes ran from seven to eight o'clock followed by work until noon. After lunch there was recreation "with the sisters" until one o'clock and then work again until six o'clock.

The Chicago school operated successfully until 1861, and the fifteen Sisters living there were reportedly happy, but in that year dissension arose between Bishop James Duggan and Father Sorin over financial and other matters, which led to the withdawal of all Holy Cross men and women from Chicago. The high regard in which the local people held the Sisters is indicated by the fact that when they departed for the train depot, a Captain Gleason who was preparing to go to the Front had his Company, the Montgomery Guard, and an Army band escort the Sisters' carriages to the station.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author thanks the archivists and their assistants at the following Holy Cross archives for their help in obtaining information for this paper: Indiana Province, Generalate, University of Notre Dame, Sisters of the Holy Cross, Marianite Sisters of Holy Cross, Brothers' Midwest Province.