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THE SISTERS OF THE HOLY CROSS
IN COLORADO, IDAHO AND CALIFORNIA
IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

BY

SISTER CHARLOTTE MARIE BAYHOUSE, C. S. C.

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The Sisters of the Holy Cross who arrived at Notre Dame in 1843 and opened a school and orphanage for girls across the Michigan state line in Bertrand had spearheaded a growth which allowed the foundation of Saint Mary's of the Immaculate Conception across from Notre Dame in 1845, the first nursing corps on the Mississippi during the Civil War, and expansion through the Midwest and East.

By 1875, the transcontinental railroad opened the vast western half of the continent to pioneer farmers, miners, and entrepreneurs of all sorts. Sister Miriam Ann Cunningham, CSC and Brother Franklin Cullen, CSC, have detailed our beginnings in Utah (1875) and South Dakota (1878).¹ The names Saint Mary's Academy and Holy Cross Hospital (1875), Sacred Heart Academy, Ogden (1878), Saint John's, Silver Reef (1879), Saint Mary's, Park City (1882), Saint Lawrence Hospital, Ogden (1887), Saint Joseph's, Eureka (1891), and Salt Lake's Saint Ann's Orphanage the same year resonate with rich memories even today.

In July, 1884, Bishop Joseph Machebeuf, Vicar Apostolic of Colorado and Utah went to Saint Mary's to beg for Sisters for a school he planned for Grand Junction, the Colorado railroad town which had been founded two years earlier. His arrival during the General Chapter insured him a hearing. As the Congregational Archives notes, all the Chapter members met with the Bishop in the parlor. He must have been a very eloquent pleader, for without further research into conditions in the new town, Mother Angela dispatched five Sisters to Grand Junction in September, 1884. According to Sister Helena Bushu, who was one of the five Sisters and a scholastic at that time:²

A home was to have been rented for the Sisters. When they arrived, late in the evening, they found a family occupying the home promised, with but one bedroom for the Sisters – all five of them!

The next day they did manage to get the house question settled; but they found that the school that was being built was a public school. There was no way they could teach in the school. The pastor had no funds and many debts. The Sisters had a difficult time, but picked up coals along the railroad tracks to have heat for themselves during the winter months. They did teach school in the church basement, but only a few children attended.

Sister Helena remembered one instance regarding three Sullivan brothers, all bachelors, who had come West to help build the railroad and had purchased farm property in the area. On one occasion the Sisters came home from teaching school to find a dead deer sitting in their parlor. The Sullivan brothers had been out hunting and wanted to give the Sisters a surprise. The Sisters took the deer to the butcher shop and traded it for meat and groceries.

When the situation became known at Saint Mary's the Sisters were at once recalled. The archives simply mentions that three missions were closed July 1, 1885 – one of them being Grand Junction. At that time the West was so poorly known that one archive record lists the mission as Grand Junction, "Dakota." An addendum in the archives notes: "We lost money on that!"

The next year (1886) the apostolic pastor – identified only as Father McGinty – of the little farming town of Woodland, just south of Sacramento, California, made his entreaties for sisters to take charge of his school. Mother Angela, Provincial, (Father Sorin was still Superior General) promised to send him some as soon as she could find them.³ Later in the spring the Council sent her a telegram, telling her that since she was in the West investigating the possibility of opening a hospital in Cheyenne, Wyoming, she should visit Woodland. Accompanied by Sister Annunciata McSheffery, Mother arrived in Woodland, and both were pleased with the prospect.

The first Sisters left Notre Dame on July 26, and arrived nine strong in Woodland five days later. Father McGinty provided them with a house, but the sisters furnished it. They began immediately to clean and furnish the house and were ready to take boarders and open a day school by August 16.

At the close of the first year there were eighteen boarders and one hundred five day pupils. The art department was quite a success. In the local archive we read that "the school will have to be supplied with first class teachers at all times as a secular college has been opened in the vicinity (this was Cal Davis) which leaves nothing undone to gain pupils."

At the first Commencement Exercises the Honorable E. F. Baker compared the Sisters' house to "an artificial furnace in a treeless and shrubless plain" and further stated that the Sisters' efforts had transformed the barren surroundings. The Academy, destined to be a favorite mission to dozens of Sisters and students, was well and truly launched.

Life flowed smoothly – more boarders came, curtains around their beds provided more privacy for them, hot water made bathing more enjoyable for both sisters and students, and music and art classes flourished. Then on April 19, 1892, Sister Lucretia, the superior, wrote:⁴

At three a.m. an earthquake occurred. The first shock came at ten minutes to three on Tuesday morning. The house swayed to and fro, East/West, North/South like a vessel tossed by angry waves; the effect was similar, many became seasick. The noise was terrible. . . We flew to the chapel in our

nightdresses; the beautifully adorned Easter altar was denuded of all ornaments. The Sanctuary lamp was swinging full length back and forth. Vases and candlesticks lay all in a mas. We said fifteen decades of the Rosary and the stations before we had courage to leave the chapel. . . . Everyone was in class at a quarter to ten on Thursday morning when the roaring came again and another more severe shock. Fortunately, every door was open, and within an instant Sisters and children were on their knees in the yard . . . I took my insurance papers and money in my pockets and we abandoned the house for the rest of the day. Our boarders acted nobly; we sent the day pupils home. Some of the Sisters were beside themselves. We all felt better, however, after the telegram was sent to the Mother General [by then Mother Augusta was General of the newly erected Sisters' Congregation] asking for prayers. . . I assure you it took all my nerve to be brave before everyone, for the people did not expect to see us cowards even in the face of death.

[Her letter continues on April 24] We had three shocks last night but quite light. . . Even the poor animals were terror-stricken. Horses look in the direction of the roaring, snort and run; no one can hold them; chickens run and flutter; cows and other animals, dogs and cats keep as close to mankind as possible. I assure you we had no Protestants then – all carried Holy Water and beads, regardless of creed, and some non-Catholic girls wished to go to confession when the Catholic girls went. One has asked for baptism.

Again all was relatively calm, despite another small earthquake and an anti-Catholic attack, which failed to daunt the Sisters. The number of boarders increased, and though diphtheria and scarlet fever raged in the town and made many homes desolate, not a child attending the Academy was stricken. The 1899 archive closes with: "At this writing the house does not owe one red cent and the prospects are good." The year 1900 closed with the Bishop's permission for a Midnight Mass to usher in the new century.

But this euphoric state was shattered on January 3, 1901 by a really big rain storm. I quote the archivist again.⁵

The night of the third of January was made memorable by a terrific wind and rain storm which did considerable damage to fences, trees, and arbors on the grounds. The Cross and arch of the front gate were thrown into the street, but Sisters Aquilina and Oswald braved the storm, went out into the darkness and brought in the Cross, Sister Aquilina remarking, "No one will step on that Cross tonight, though we may all be dead by morning." The Sisters remained up the greater part of the night praying and trying to protect the house, which rocked and swayed like a little bark beaten by angry waves. The children went to bed quietly and slept peacefully all night. Sister Barbara went through the house with blessed candles, and after promising three Masses to the Sacred Heart, said, "Go to bed

now, Sisters; I think we are safe." "Twas a relief," the Sisters said afterwards, "to hear such assuring words," though Sister Julia got ready for death and changed her clothes so she would be clean when found.

After the Woodland foundation in 1886, all Orders had many requests for Sisters to help, as pastors all over the country tried to obey the command of the Third Council of Baltimore (famed for the Baltimore catechism) to provide a school for every parish. The Apostolic Vicar of Idaho, the Right Reverend Alphonse J. Glorieux, petitioned our General Council for Sisters for his Boise City cathedral parish in far-away Idaho Territory. In 1889 arrangements were made for the Sisters to go to Boise in the fall. In the meantime Bishop Glorieux became very ill during his visitation in the north of Idaho and no one had been warned to prepare for the arrival of the Sisters – who arrived at the Boise railroad station at two a.m. on August 24. Their arrival is recorded in the local archives,⁶ but I will quote a much more graphic report from the pen of the Academy chaplain, Father Joseph Van der Heyden, also preserved in the Congregational Archives at Saint Mary's.

These founders, whose names will ever be held in grateful remembrance by the people of Boise were Sisters Mary Dominica O'Brien, Digna Gatch, Edith Condon, and Columbina Dempsey. . . . Though the sisters were expected, nothing was prepared to receive them. Early in the year Mother General had promised to send a contingent of Sisters to Idaho, if enough could be spared for that purpose. The promise being conditional, no preparations were made for their coming. The news that they would come and their arrival were almost simultaneous. They landed at the Boise depot - then situated a mile from the city on the lonely sagebrush plain – at two o'clock in the morning, August 24. It is easier to imagine than to describe the feelings of the Sisters when they stepped at that hour of the night on the creaking platform of the rickety shanty which served as the railroad depot. After days of traveling through the forbidding desert of Wyoming and Idaho, they saw no immediate prospect as yet of resting their eyes on anything but sagebrush and alkali; for apart from the depot there was nothing else in sight except another dilapidated building, which by the faint glare of a lantern hanging over the entrance, displayed a sign revealing its use as a hotel. From the platform of the depot they were unceremoniously hustled into the bus that was to take them to the city; on their way to it down a steep hill, and across the bridge that spans the Boise River, they could not on account of the darkness and the closed conveyance which carried them and their fortunes, get any idea of the beautiful panorama that in the daylight greets the eye of the weary traveler as he descends from the sandy sagebrush covered bluff overlooking the city into the beautiful valley luxuriant with vegetation and rich with pleasant looking homes – a veritable oasis in the desert to which the French Canadian trappers gave the name of Boise (wooded). I have heard one of the Sisters say that her drooping spirits were somewhat revived on this occasion by hearing the matutinal rooster, which, being a domesticated bird, plainly convinced her that she was no longer traveling through a desert but had

reached a spot inhabited by members of the human family. shortly after making this reflection, she and her companions were brought to realize that some of God's chosen and noblest souls lived in this seemingly forsaken land; for the driver had orders to take the good sisters to the home of Hon. James H. Hawley where they were received by the charitable hostess, Mrs. Hawley, with open arms. Happy in being the first to greet the weary travelers and bid them welcome to their new western home, her only thought was to bestow every attention her kind heart could suggest upon those who had left all to labor in this uncultivated field of Catholic education. They enjoyed the hospitality of this devoted family for a week, at the end of which time they moved to a little three room house on 12th, between Idaho and Bannock Streets, and began to prepare for the opening of school. From the annals preserved at the Academy it appears that the first attempt at housekeeping made quite an impression on the minds of the Sisters; for several incidents of the day have been carefully noted by the annalist. Thus she relates that whilst two of the little band had been deputed to purchase the more indispensable articles for the household, the others remained at home to put the modest establishment in order and incidentally to prepare for dinner; but alas! neither the provisions nor the utensils that had been ordered and were anxiously expected had reached their destination that morning, and that day, the little community had to be content with a dinner of green apples boiled in a teapot.

School was set to begin in September and on the eighth, twenty-six girls arrived. It was apparent that they needed a more suitable dwelling with accommodations for boarders and classes, along with housing for the Sisters. They found a rather larger building about a block away, and on Sept. 21, all moved into it, with the understanding that they could rent it for \$40 per month for an indefinite future.

Sisters and students stayed in this crowded house until Mother Augusta came to make her first visit in March, 1890. She helped the Sisters buy two blocks on State Street between Fourth and Fifth. These two blocks were the final location of Saint Teresa's and Saint Alphonsus Hospital (which would be built in 1892). On March 26, the Sisters moved into the building already standing on one of the blocks and the Bishop came to bless it. From that time on, as the archivist noted, either he or Father Van der Heyden offered Mass daily in their chapel, for which many friends had sent furnishings. Very different from the early situation in Mormon Utah!

During the summer vacation of 1890 Sisters Dominica and Digna went out collecting to the mining camps at DeLamar, Silver City, Idaho City and Placerville. The miners were generous, and, along with donations, the Sisters secured several boarders.

With the help of the Bishop and members of the Cathedral parish, money was raised and the cornerstone laid for a permanent building on the feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel, 1891. As the building grew it was put under the protection of Mary, and Saint Joseph was asked to

provide needed funds. The entire three-story building, costing \$10,500 was ready for use and opened in January, 1892.

All progressed smoothly, and on September 8, 1900, Articles of Incorporation were secured from the Idaho Secretary of State through the efforts of the Honorable James Hawley, a true friend of the Sisters. This made Saint Teresa's a chartered institution with power to confer its own diplomas. The Board of Trustees had sisters Francis Clare, president; Remigius, secretary; and Lewis, Diego, and Lucy, members. In the next year, the earnest efforts of the Bishop secured from the legislature the right to obtain for Saint Teresa's graduates state certificates which entitled them to teach ten years on the successful passing of state examinations. Governor Frank Hunt, Hon. James Hawley, Timothy Regan, and Chief Justice Ralph Quarles all helped to secure passage of the bill.

On July 15, 1901, Miss Helen Coston, Saint Teresa's first graduate, was elected County Superintendent of Schools in Ada County. Several of the graduates of that time entered the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross, and the school could no longer be viewed as a pioneer effort, but rather as an accepted fact.

Bishop Glorieux was one of the most zealous of the pioneer churchmen in the Intermountain West, and on September 20, 1891, he wrote to Mother Augusta:

I was informed by Sister Dominica that you were willing to start a hospital in Boise. Thanks be to God! I spoke about the project to several prominent gentlemen who are confident that a hospital will be a success in Boise, and who even offered to go around with a subscription list. . . These several gentlemen and myself will leave no stone unturned until we have complied with all of your conditions.

On October tenth, Mother Augusta replied to the Bishop: "I will do my best to send Sisters next September to open your hospital provided it can support itself."⁷

When Mother Augusta made her visit in October, 1892, she and the Bishop agreed on the terms of providing the hospital. The property had already been purchased by the Sisters in 1890 in the name of Saint Teresa's; so it was agreed that the hospital, when opened, should pay the academy \$2500 with interest from the date of the purchase of the property.

Ground was broken in April, 1893, and on July sixth of the same year the first stone was laid, under the supervision of Mr. J. K. Holland, the architect. Then came the first stumbling block – the financial depression of 1893, though it was counterbalanced partly by the low price at which various contracts were taken. Necessary funds were advanced by the Motherhouse and the building was ready for occupancy. The Sisters moved into it on December 27, 1894. St. Alphonsus was ready for launching.

The hospital archivist wrote enthusiastically:⁸

All modern conveniences – electric lights, call bells, telephone, etc., are in the building but of all the conveniences the one most appreciated by the invalids is the artesian hot water used for bathing and heating. This water is highly impregnated with sulphur. Its temperature is 170° Fahrenheit and its healing and medicinal qualities are equal to those of the famous European thermal springs.

A few pages further on in the archives we read: "Admission is given to rich and poor, white and black, and Christian and Jew alike." The doctors of the staff and generous citizens had contributed largely to the success of the undertaking.

The issue of the Boise Evening Star for January 23, 1895 gushed:

On the last and brightest day of the fair for the benefit of Saint Alphonsus Hospital, all nature is in harmony with the grand enterprise. The morning air was cool and crisp enough to make existence itself a pleasure. As the day advanced the sun shone out resplendent in the heavens. . . The day has ben phenomenally outstanding. The splendid result fills all hearts with rejoicing and with gratitude, primarily to Him who holds all hearts, all purses, and the issue of all purposes in His hands, . . . but a tide of gratitude wells up also from all hearts to the noble souled citizens and visitors for the generous manner in which each one has performed his and her share in the good work.

Sister Cornelius McCabe made her religious profession in the hospital chapel on August 15, 1898. Bishop Glorieux officiated, assisted by three of his priests, including the Academy chaplain, Joseph Van der Heyden. The ceremony was the more interesting as it was the first religious profession ever made in Idaho.

Early in September Sister Cornelius received a telegram ordering her to join the Sisters in Utah who were going to Lexington, Kentucky, to nurse the sick and wounded soldiers of the Spanish-American War. The next year Sister was assigned to Salt Lake City. That same year Father Thomas, the hospital chaplain became insane and tried to kill some of the Sisters. The Bishop was not at home to take charge of him, so since he had become violent, the Sisters were obliged to send him to jail, from which he was committed to the state asylum for the insane. Never a dull moment.

In the last year of the nineteenth century, Bishop Glorieux, who had been keenly interested in establishing a school for the boys of Boise, succeeded in getting Sister Lucy Russell to open one in a corner room of Saint Patrick's Hall (the parish hall of the Old Cathedral). The first session began with thirty-four boys, Sister Lucy, and Margaret Seeley, a 1900 graduate of Saint Teresa's. Their classes proved popular and the number of boys had risen to fifty before the end of

the school year. Miss Seeley left Boise to become Sister Sienna, C.S.C., and Sister Lewis O'Brien took her place. So the third Boise foundation was launched.

Meanwhile the Bishop had been opportuning Holy Cross for Sisters to open a school in the eastern part of Idaho, in the railroad center, Pocatello, and in September, 1892, his wishes had been granted. After two months spent in preparing, the Sisters arrived in November. Sisters Mansueta Sullivan, Nativity Coleman, Luigia Laphen, Vitalia Golden and Carlotta Egan were sent with Sister Mansueta as directress. (Note the Irish surnames among the Sisters. This did not please the pastor, Father Van der Donckt, a Luxemburger).

It had been agreed that the Sisters should collect the tuition from the pupils and do the best they could about meeting their expenses. The first year this did not prove sufficient, though the parents did their best to pay the fees.

During the first ten years, five directresses were sent to Pocatello, and a goodly sheaf of letters between Father Van der Donckt and the current Superior General indicates that none were pleasing to the pastor. From the tone of the letters, one is led to judge that Father thought the Sisters were getting more than their share of receipts from the school, though the local archives (pp. 12/13) show a deficit the first year and a very small surplus after that, mainly the music teacher's receipts.

In fact, several times the Superior General asked Father if he wanted us to leave so that some other kind of Sisters might better serve the school. But the Sisters stayed, and after this stormy decade, things settled down and the Sisters stayed until 1958, by which time another school had been opened in a new parish and the population had decreased in Saint Joseph's Parish.

While all this activity was going on in Idaho, requests were coming to Saint Mary's from California, where the mission in Woodland was making a great impression. Most of the Western houses built in the 1800's were in areas connected with the railroads or predominantly occupied by miners; and their shanty towns located in deep gulches and desert areas made for exceptionally rugged living. But the mission in Fresno, like that in Woodland, served people on farms with no schools close by, so boarding schools proved to be the best answer to their need.

In the year 1891, the Reverend Andrew Garriga, pastor of the church in Fresno, California, through the recommendation of George St. Louis and with the approval of Right Reverend Bishop Mora of Monterey and Los Angeles, made application to Sister M. Lucretia, superior of Holy Rosary Academy in Woodland, for Sisters of the Holy Cross. Sister Lucretia passed the word to Saint Mary's.⁹

The first step toward locating at Fresno was made in the fall of 1892, when Mother Augusta, Superior General, accompanied by Sister Lucretia, visited the place and found it to be a

promising field for the labors of the Sisters. . . The matter rested thus till the following year, 1893, when at Father Garriga's persistent urging the mission was accepted in August.

In October, Sister Florian Hacket, accompanied by Sister Eleanore O'Brien, prepared (after being met at Chicago by Mother Augusta and Sister Praxedes Braddock) to take the train to California to open another house. But the death of Father Edward Sorin, occurring at this time, delayed them briefly and they started west on November 7, 1893, and arrived in Fresno on November 12. They were met by Father Garriga, who provided comfortable quarters for them at Foley's Hotel until the following day, when they took up their abode in the hospitable family of Mr. and Mrs. J. Ryan. The local archives tell the story of the first days laconically:¹⁰

Previous to their arrival Father Garriga vacated the parochial residence, and now offered it to them for school purposes till they could build . . . On December 6, they took possession of the parochial residence preparatory to opening school. . . A select day and boarding school was opened on January 5, 1894, with fourteen pupils in attendance, which number increased to forty by the first Closing Exercises on June 15. The school which was begun in the parish house was transferred to a building nearby, which served from 1894 to 1897. . . The work on the new school was completed on August 25. That very night disaster struck!

The Daily Evening Expositor for August 26 carried the shocking story.¹¹

A little before nine o'clock a neighbor noticed what for a moment seemed to be a lamp in the southeast corner of the school building. He remarked that it was a strange time for a lamp to be burning there. Even before a reply could be made flames were bursting from the windows of the room, and all at once the whole building seemed on fire. Someone ran for a fire alarm box, but before the firemen could arrive the fire had spread to the house in which the Sisters had hoped to live.

The building in which the fire originated had been built by the school department as a temporary high school and sold to the sisters when the new high school was completed. The Sisters had moved it to the lot on which it burned at an expense of \$800. The other building was a private residence formerly owned by a parishioner. They had planned to move themselves and their academy into these buildings in time for the commencement of the fall school term, which began in September. As it was, they were obliged to continue in the crowded space they had been using. The Expositor concluded a lengthy article on a sympathetic note:

The Sisters of the Holy Cross have expended all their available funds, something like \$6000, to prepare the buildings for the school. Last year they charged a small fee for tuition; this year it was their intention to throw the school open to all and charge no tuition fees.

Of course, that was no longer possible, but school was carried on as if all were as it should be until the following February, when a beautiful house was bought for the Sisters at the corner of "R" and Mariposa Streets, along with two adjoining lots on which a new school building was erected the following summer.

This building was ready for occupancy on October 23, 1898 when Bishop Montgomery came from Los Angeles just in time to bless the building. At the same time the YMI¹² presented a beautiful American flag, which was raised on the school immediately. But things did not go smoothly for long. A fire, for which no cause could be assigned, broke out at midnight in the pupils' clothes room. The February 21, 1899, edition of the current Fresno paper carried a vivid – if somewhat exaggerated report – of the incident.¹³

The Convent of the Sisters of the Holy Cross had a narrow escape from destruction by fire Saturday night or Sunday morning. About the midnight hour one of the Sisters sleeping on the third floor was aroused by a crackling sound and on investigation discovered that the building was on fire. She quickly aroused the other Sisters and the boarders, and in a few minutes, an alarm was turned in, and a volunteer fire brigade organized. The presence of mind and courage of some of the Sisters was wonderful while the lung power of others reached the highest note of the scale. The shrill cry of "Fire!" rang out on the still night air and with its echo returned many willing helpers and curious spectators. . . . The origin of the fire is mysterious but it is believed to have been caused by the nibbling of the domestic mouse on that household necessity, a match. It started in the girls' (boarders') wardrobe and the poor girls lost all their Sunday finery. The writer has his fears that it was caused by a very brilliant skirt igniting the other clothing and that hereafter only subdued colors will be allowed. After the fire the sisters quickly recovered their composure, though they had lost a night's sleep, and many prayers were offered for their escape. Sister Flavian [must have been Sister Florian who was one of the pioneers. No Flavian is listed on the obedience lists] had a very narrow escape from the flames, having opened the door of the wardrobe where the fire originated. While the fire was a cruel shock to the sisters, it was a blessing that the night was no calm. Had a high wind been blowing, nothing less than a special intervention of Providence could have saved the beautiful Convent and the new school. A cheerful spirit (the Insurance Companies) will soon wipe out the traces of the midnight alarm.

On such an encouraging note the Academy of Saint Augustine prepared to enter the twentieth century. The successors of this gallant pioneer effort are still very much alive in the Fresno community.

The last California foundation in the nineteenth century was made in the loveliest California City, San Francisco by the Bay, in 1894. For years it was the Mecca for CSC visitors from all corners of the United States.

Saint Charles Parish was founded in 1887, and almost at once, its zealous pastor, Father Patrick J. Cummins, began asking for Sisters to help him start a school. As always, Mother Augusta promised to send him some as soon as she could find them. By January, 1894, matters had progressed to the point of details – salaries, housing and the acceptance of boys as students. In those days the Sisters were known to work primarily with girls, but in his letter to Mother Augusta on January 16, 1894, Father Cummins wrote:¹⁴

I desire also that boys be kept as long as possible. It was because I heard that you taught boys in the Woodland school that I first thought of asking you to take charge of my school. Our boys must be cared for as well as the girls. I trust therefore that you will be able to retain the boys to the age of fourteen. There is a Sisters' school in this city in which boys are kept till they graduate.

Mother Augusta replied:¹⁵

As to the larger boys, we cannot go beyond the limit of our present Constitution which says that boys may be taught by the Sisters of the Holy Cross until twelve years of age – which does not agree with your wishes. I am sorry for this little difference as I am fond of the beautiful California. If you are still thinking of inviting us, please let us know soon.

Apparently, the matter was settled satisfactorily, since on July 12, Sister Lucretia wrote to Mother Augusta: "We are on the same street as the church in a conveniently arranged house – and the classrooms and appointments of school furniture are very cheerful and complete." The Sisters destined for the new school in San Francisco left Saint Mary's, Notre Dame, on Thursday, June 28, 1894, expecting to arrive in San Francisco on July 3rd, but owing to a strike of railroad employees they were delayed in Ogden, Utah, for two weeks, and did not arrive in San Francisco till July 20th. The train was guarded all the way by U. S. Militia, as were the bridges and stations along the route, forcibly reminding the elders of the party of eastern travel during the Civil War of thirty years before.

Meanwhile, Mother Augusta had dispatched Sister Lucretia (whose letter to announce her arrival in San Francisco appears above), superior in Woodland, to take Sisters from her house to open the school there. So, on July 4th, Sister Lucretia and four of her Sisters traveled by stage from Woodland to Sacramento, no trains being allowed to run, and by water from there to San Francisco. Providentially, the coast was guarded, and contrary to their worst expectations, they had no difficulty in landing at their destination. On July 7th, the Sisters took possession of the comfortable two-story house a few blocks from the school. They opened with 150 boys and girls.

On the Feast of Our Lady of Loretto, the Most Reverend Bishop Reardon, Ordinary of the City, honored the school by his presence. He complimented Father and the pupils on having Sisters of the Holy Cross as teachers, saying that they were old friends of his and that he had

watched with pride and pleasure the successful issue of whatever they undertook; and he felt certain that Saint Charles would not prove an exception to that rule.

The school accommodated pupils from grades one to ten, thus providing teaching up to the college level, and in 1898 one of the graduates, Margaret Mary Norton, entered the novitiate at Saint Mary's and another entered the Sisters of Mercy. Three ninth grade boys went that year to Menlo Park to begin their studies in the diocesan seminary. Class attendance had reached three hundred and the number of Sisters had risen to ten. And, as was the regular procedure in all the Holy Cross schools during the nineteenth century, elaborate closing exercises including the whole student body, marked the end of that especially noteworthy school year. Miss Morton, an unusually gifted pianist and vocalist, was featured in a number of the program items.

Aside from the short-lived Spanish-American War scare in 1898, life was smooth and pleasant on the Pacific Coast. But is it not possible to omit an occurrence of 1906, which marks all sorts of changes in California history and culture – the EARTHQUAKE. The local archive entrance for April 18th reads:¹⁶

At fifteen minutes after five o'clock San Francisco and neighboring towns were visited by an earthquake. Buildings collapsed and many people were killed. The Sisters' house was only slightly shaken – pictures thrown from the walls, statues broken, and the plaster on the parlor walls thrown down. Immediately after the earthquake, fire broke out and raged for three days. Saint Charles Church, the pastor, and the Sisters have escaped the flames though the fire reached the opposite corner.

Schools were closed indefinitely and the Sisters were parceled out to Holy Rosary and Saint Augustine's. School reopened on July 23, 1906, but the Sisters were the guests of the Dominican Sisters for the next year and a half.

A letter dated May 4, 1906 from Sister Albertine, who had been sent to Fresno, addressed to Sister Bertha at Saint Mary's reveals better than any other accounts I have found the shock and suffering caused by the infamous "Quake." I cannot resist the urge to share it now. There is a copy of the original letter in the General Archives at Saint Mary's.¹⁷

I know you must be dreadfully worried about the San Francisco Sisters. God has spared us in a special manner. The earthquake did a great deal of damage and what was not demolished by the earthquake was consumed by fire. Just think, dear Sister, seven square miles destroyed by fire. How we escaped, I cannot understand, for the fire came within fifty feet of our church and convent. The soldiers dynamited at least two squares ahead of the fire to prevent its spreading, but when they reached our corner, they found that the dynamite had given out, so the fire was left to take its course. Think of it. Instead of coming in the direction of the Convent, it turned and we were saved. At that time we were not near the house

but like all the city we had gone to the hills. It seems, dear Sister, as though we have lived two centuries in the past two weeks. . . .

At the time of the great disaster only three of us were in the city. Our school had closed for a week's vacation and the Sisters had gone to Fresno and Woodland and Monterey for a week. Sisters Ivan and Elvira were sleeping on the second floor and I was on the third. When the shock came, I jumped out of bed and fell on my knees. Then the folding bed pitched forward and fell with a crash to the floor. I started downstairs to be with the other two. . . . Our house was flooded, all the pipes being broken. The priests ran to our house to make us come out, as they were afraid the house would collapse. . . . When the fire was within two blocks of us, the priest called me out, ran to the church, broke the tabernacle, threw the ciborium with the consecrated hosts into a satchel, handed it to me, and told me to take care of the Blessed Sacrament. I never left it out of my hands night or day for two days. When we returned to our convent we fixed a place for our dear Lord. Mass on Sunday was said on our lawn. Sixteen Catholic churches were totally destroyed, the others more or less damaged; all are unsafe and propped.

. . . Our convent was turned into a relief station and we fed almost every day, not less than fourteen hundred people. At present, four of us are in Fresno, receiving every kindness at Sister Florian's hands.

. . . Dear Sister, will you please send me a pair of cords? We are badly in need of clothes, but Sister Florian is supplying us with these. Please pray for us all. Sister Albertine.

So we end the story of the pioneer Sisters of the Holy Cross in the West, nineteen missions if we include those around Salt Lake City and Ogden, as well as the two in Deadwood, South Dakota. Just as a matter of interest and to complete the story of the nineteenth century, there were ninety-two foundations in the Midwest and the East in those years, many of them lasting only a year or two.

END NOTES

1. Sister Miriam Anne Cunningham, "Sisters of the Holy Cross in Utah"; and Franklin Cullen, CSC, on the Gold Dust Trail and Other Western Adventures. History Conference papers on file in the Congregational Archives at Saint Mary's, Notre Dame.
2. Saint Mary's Archives - account of an interview Sister Bertrand Sullivan, a native of Grand Junction, had with Sister Helena Bushu, in July, 1946. Sister Helena was the youngest of the Sisters sent to Grand Junction.
3. Holy Rosary Local Archives, pp. 2-6.
4. Ibid, pp. 19 ff.
5. Ibid, p. 26.
6. Local Archive Narrative, Saint Teresa's Academy, p. 16.
7. Augusta file, Congregational Archives.
8. Saint Alphonsus Hospital Archives, p. 21.
9. Saint Augustine's Academy Local Archives, pp. 14 ff.
10. Ibid, 16.
11. Preserved in Local Archives and now in General Archives.
12. Young Men's Association.
13. A Clipping pasted in the Local Archives.
14. Letter in Congregational Archives.
15. Letter in Augusta file.
16. San Francisco Local Archives, pp. 49 ff.
17. Attachment to p. 52, San Francisco Local Archives.