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Training Nurses and Young Ladies in Utah:
St. Mary's of the Wasatch College, 1926-1959

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The Sisters of the Holy Cross have played an important role in health and education in Utah since 1875. It has changed over the years from running hospitals and schools to Holy Cross Ministries' current role in helping with health, education, and immigration concerns. At a previous Holy Cross History Association meeting, I shared experiences from women who trained at Holy Cross Hospital. Today I will expand that presentation by adding some history of St. Mary's of the Wasatch College which operated from 1926 to 1959. After giving a brief history of the college, I will share the experiences that the Holy Cross Hospital students had at St. Mary's.

St. Mary's Academy started in 1875 as an option for non-Mormon students to attend schools without the Mormon influence. At the time the LDS Church offered schools through their ward (congregations). The only other choices were Protestant schools taught by missionaries who hoped to convince the Mormon youth of the evils of their religion. Reverend Lawrence Scanlon who became the first Roman Catholic bishop in Salt Lake City asked the Sisters of the Holy Cross to establish the school and a hospital to serve the Catholic miners who were working in Utah.¹

¹ Bernice Maher Mooney, *Salt of the Earth: The History of the Catholic Diocese of Salt Lake City, 1776-1987* (Salt Lake City: Catholic Diocese of Utah, 1992), 57.

A Sister of the Holy Cross history including some interesting stories about the founding of the school which will be difficult to prove. According to the history, the Sisters begged for two summers in the mining camps asking for funding for the school. They also went to Brigham Young who according to the record “gave them a warm welcome but no aid.” That might have been because according to one study Young said referring to the free Protestant schools, “If these schools can receive our children—and they are receiving many—and teach them, without money and without price, send your children there.”² There might be some question about that quote though since it came from a former Mormon author. T. B. H. Stenhouse. Young actually wondered if the schools would really be free.³

Eventually the Sisters raised enough money to open the academy. But the history continues, “The Sunday before the Academy opened . . . the leading Mormon Bishop announced from the pulpit that no Mormons would be permitted to send their children to the Sisters’ school without being cut off from the church.” As a Mormon historian who has researched Mormons who attended the Protestant schools, I am not sure of the source of that statement or even who the “leading Mormon Bishop” would be. The common belief of most Protestant missionaries was that their missionary efforts were not successful. According to a Congregationalist, “The major result of the Utah Christian schools appears to be that we are training Mormons to serve as

² Sister M. Campion Kuhn, C.S.C., *History of the Sisters of the Holy Cross: Saint Mary's, Notre Dame, Indiana* (National Historical Publications Commission, Microfilm Publication Program), 86. I would like to thank the Saint Mary's Convent Archives for providing me with a paper copy of this history and other information. Sister Bernice Marie Hollenhorst and Sister Jeanette Fettig were especially helpful.

³ Brett David Dowdle, “A New Policy in Church School Work:” The founding of the LDS supplementary religious education movement, 1890-1930” (Master’s Thesis, Brigham Young University, 2011), 45-46.

Sunday School teachers, young folks leaders and bishoprics in the Mormon church. They take our . . . , education but not our religion, and use it to strengthen their own institutions.”⁴ The attitude might have been different though towards the Catholics. There is evidence that the Mormons accepted the Catholics because their schools were mainly for their own members and not to convert the Mormons. Brett Dowdle quotes Mormon officials who praised the Catholic system and even suggested that the Mormons follow their example by establishing LDS schools.⁵

Despite any concerns that the Sisters of the Holy Cross had about their new educational venture, the academy opened with one hundred students including Protestants. Over the years the academy had more Protestant than Catholic students. My guess is there were also probably some Mormons. The Academy started out in downtown Salt Lake City. I remember a sister telling me at one of these meetings that Brigham Young wanted the school moved out of town so the school was at least a day trip by wagon. While the story makes very interesting folklore, it would be hard to document. Brigham Young died in 1877; the Academy moved to the east bench in 1925.

⁴ C. G. Hammond, undated memorandum, quoted in Lyon, “Evangelical Protestant Missionary Activities in Mormon Dominated Areas, 1865-1900” (PhD Diss, University of Utah, 1962). 251.

⁵ Dowdle, 45. The following footnote (note 42) on the same page gives some interesting background. “In 1892, George Q. Cannon praised the emphasis on the need for students to be taught by members of their own faith, concluding, “Catholicism is a growing influence in consequence of the excellence of their educational establishments.” He thus encouraged Latter-day Saints to follow the Catholic model and ensure that Mormon children were taught by Mormons. George Q. Cannon, quoted in Karl G. Maeser, “Church School Papers.—No. 16,” *Juvenile Instructor*, 1 October 1892, 608. Similarly, in 1904, Anthon H. Lund applauded the Catholic example of providing religious education for their children. Anthon H. Lund, Discourse, October 6, 1904, *Conference Report* (October 1904): 10. Indeed, in a 1926 meeting of the General Board of Education, Apostle David O. McKay referred to the proven successes of the Catholic schools in an attempt to defend the maintenance of the remaining Church schools. General Board of Education Minutes, 3 March 1926, folder 3, box 27, Centennial History Project Papers, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah .”

The Sisters had purchased 400 acres in 1921 at 13rd South and 30th East from a country club that planned originally to use the land for a club house or a golf course.⁶ Since Salt Lake City is laid out on a grid of six block to the mile from South Temple, the new school was seven miles from the LDS Salt Lake Temple, the center of the city. So if the move was not by Young's request, why did it move? According to Mary O'Carroll, a 1930 graduate from the college, the academy moved because "the downtown site was deteriorating; the old area went bad." She also remembered one of the reasons for selecting the new site was there was a reservoir with a good water source.⁷

When the Academy moved, the school's name was changed to St. Mary of the Wasatch, named for the surrounding mountains on the east side of the Salt Lake Valley. O'Carroll recalled there was a contest to select the new name. At the same time, the Sisters started a college using the same name as the academy.⁸ According to the Holy Cross Sisters' history, the goal was to have a college attached to its major academies.⁹ Local Catholic leaders supported the idea. Bishop Joseph S. Glass who served in the diocese from 1915 until his death in 1926 felt that the intermountain west needed a Catholic college for women.¹⁰ According to the province centenary

⁶ Mooney, 172; Louis J. Fries, "One hundred and fifty years of Catholicity in Utah : souvenir volume of the installation of the Right Reverend John J. Mitty, D.D., as Third Bishop of Salt Lake on October 7th, 1926" (Salt Lake City: Intermountain Catholic Press, 1926), 120.

⁷ Quoted in Gael Wirth, "St. Mary's of the Wasatch," Archives, Roman Catholic Diocese of Salt Lake City, Cathedral of the Madeline, Salt Lake City, Utah. (Hereinafter cited as SL Diocese Archives.) I appreciate the help of the Diocese Archivist Gary Topping for help in finding material there.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Kuhn, 86.

¹⁰ Mooney, 145.

history, “The opening of the College of St. Mary of the Wasatch marked an epoch in the educational work of the Sisters and was an event of distinct significance in the . . . cultural life of the intermountain states.”¹¹

The Sisters hoped that the college would draw students from Utah, Wyoming, Nevada, Oklahoma, and New Mexico, states where there was not a Holy Cross college. But the College had greater hopes “that students from states still further away will seek the invigorating mountain climate.” As a result, “the expectation of citizens of Salt Lake is that within a few years the college and academy will be one of the greatest catholic colleges for women in the United States.”¹²

Advertisements for the college always carried similar statements about the college’s virtues. They explain that the College “exists for the individual student and her needs. The whole girl is the subject of its care” which included physical, academic, social, and spiritual life. In addition, the college was “dedicated to the development of her capacities, her advantages, her ambitions, that in her home community the student may qualify for the fullness of life in and for God.” After explaining the college offered bachelors of art and science and special training in nursing arts and medical technology in connection with the Holy Cross Hospital, the advertisement concluded, “Located high up the mountainside east of Salt Lake City, St. Mary’s

¹¹ Sisters of the Holy Cross, *Our Provinces: Centenary Chronicles of the Sisters of the Holy Cross* (St. Mary's of the Immaculate Conception, 1941), 11, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah.

¹² Fries, 120. A 1966 pamphlet raising money for the academy listed the goals of that school as “to direct the intellect in the search for truth, to inspire schoolchildren to see the highest intellectual moral excellence, to aid students to choose the career most suited to their needs and abilities, to assist students in developing individual talents, to train and equip Christian women to take their place in the modern world, [and] to produce the mature, emotionally stable women of character.” “St Mary’s of the Wasatch Pamphlet,” 9033, Utah State Historical Society.

of Utah commands one of the most majestic panoramas in the world and offers to its students the unparalleled out of door life of this unique setting.” Students could take science, art, music, and home economics courses. Outside of the classroom they could picnic, hike, and ski at nearby resorts.¹³

Sister M. Madeleva Wolff became the college’s first president. She moved from the Sister’s provincial home in Ogden to the college. She recalled though that the early years at the new location were not ideal. The area was on the edge of town very near the canyon. There seemed to be no other civilization around. “We had often been cold, sometimes hungry. Coyotes had cried under our windows at night. Water shortages had left us parched and unwashed during all but unbearable months in summer. Once at least every winter we were snowed in.”¹⁴ Others remembered hard times. On July 10, 1930 there was a very dry spring and the sisters prayed for rain. When there was a major downpour, Sister M. Eustachium’s request changed slightly, “For a moderate rain, O Lord, we beseech thee, hear us.”¹⁵ Mary O’Carroll complained about the howling wind.¹⁶

Despite these concerns, there were very positive feelings about the college. Sister Madeleva felt the seven years she spent at the College were some of the best years of her life. “Our faculty was better than good.” The students rated highest on the teachers’ license exams. And despite the hardships, Sister Madeleva explained, “Frequently, we walked in groups up the mountainside and back, returning to make hot chocolate in the social hall. . . . The amenities of

¹³ Promotional Pamphlet, SL Diocese Archives.

¹⁴ Quoted in Mooney, 144.

¹⁵ “Holy Cross Nuns Forced to close St Mary College,” *Intermountain Catholic Register*, May 1, 1959.

¹⁶ Quoted in Gael Wirth.

our lives would have been impossible anywhere else.”¹⁷ Mary O’Carroll recalled the beautiful building. She enjoyed having lunch on a catwalk. She loved the heavy carved doors and molding and the small chapel with its oak altar and heavily carved icons.¹⁸ Sister Madeleva praised Bishop Glass’ gift of European art that “made the school an art museum.”¹⁹ O’Carroll enjoyed helping to paint that space.²⁰

The College worked with other colleges. A professor at the Holy Cross University of Portland recalled that professors from there sometimes taught summer courses for teachers in Utah.²¹ The University of Utah provided teachers and guest artists and invited the College to its programs.²² Because of this connection, the University of Utah accredited St. Mary’s of the Wasatch College in 1930. Three years later the College was listed as a junior college by the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools. In 1935 it was listed on the “A” list of four-year colleges that granted degrees in “science and arts and letters.”²³

In 1954 the academic senate of the Catholic University of America approved St. Mary’s. The Very Reverend James M. Campbell praised the “courage and generosity” of the sisters who started the school and explained, “Much good has been accomplished for the good of the Church but at the heroic price of great disproportion between efforts and results which only people of unusual missionary zeal are willing to pay.” The newspaper article continued that the approval

¹⁷ Quoted in Mooney, 144.

¹⁸ Quoted in Gael Wirth.

¹⁹ Quoted in Mooney, 144.

²⁰ Quoted in Gael Wirth.

²¹ Comment at the Holy Cross History Association Meeting, June 9, 2012, Portland, Oregon.

²² Quoted in Mooney, 144.

²³ Ibid., 173.

was not accreditation which the university had already received. But the designation did show that St. Mary's met the Catholic education standards and could receive information from Catholic University and could draw on its experience for accreditation advice.²⁴ In 1957 the College was also elected to the Association of American Colleges.²⁵ Shirley Paxman explained that St. Mary's was "a very highly accredited high school and women's college. . . . It was a wonderful academic institution for women."²⁶

The *Salt Lake Tribune* occasionally carried articles about events at St. Mary's of the Wasatch College. These included a Valentine Ball, an annual event for alumnae. In addition the student body put on plays, and Christmas programs.²⁷ The papers also reported graduation. In 1949, for example, the graduates were urged to have a Christian philosophy.²⁸ Bishop Duane Garrison Hunt often spoke at the graduations and praised the College as a Christian school that could "bring God's ideals down from heaven" that could be used in life.²⁹

The surviving records at the Salt Lake Diocese archives show other activities. A catalogue listed a wide variety of courses. In 1937 the college published *The Mountain Peak* quarterly. In later years it was called *Wasatch Winds* and read much like any high school or

²⁴ November 12, 1954 article, Utah State Historical Society.

²⁵ "Elected to Assn of Am Colleges," *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 15, 1959, 30-4.

²⁶ Shirley Paxman Oral History, Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, 2-3. (All oral histories are part of this collection.).

²⁷²⁷ For example, in 1959 there was a snow carnival, a variety show and a senior play. *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 31, 1959, 22-3; March 10, 1959, C1, and April 29, 1959, C-1. The Valentine Dance was listed as an annual event for alumnae in 1952.

²⁸"Graduates Urged to Keep Life Philosophy," *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 6, 1949, 18-1.

²⁹²⁹ "Bishop Hunt makes plea at dedication rites," *Ibid*, June 15, 1958, 30-4.

college paper. Clubs included Sodality which “foster[ed] an ardent devotion and reverence toward the Blessed Virgin Mary.” Sister M. Ann Josephine was the sponsor and the club held a book fair and a penny drive, and distributed Christmas baskets to needy families. There was a glee club, a house committee for boarders, and a club for commuters.³⁰ Carol Roberts recalled, “I was a piano player, so I took music and singing.”³¹ Helen Bland learned to “transcribe [music] from one key to another.”³²

In early years the College published a combination literary magazine/yearbook. The first *Berry Basket* came out in 1929 and was dedicated to Sister M. Bertilde and the pioneer sisters with special thanks to Sister M. Madeleva. It included a tribute to each student and their qualities and then there were essays and articles. In the 1930 the biographies were written “after the manner of Chaucer” and in 1931 “they were patterned after the Song of Hiawatha” and included pictures of some of the students dressed as Indian maidens. Later there was a separate literary magazine, the *Silver Sage* and a yearbook *Cor Marie*.³³

In 1957 the College dedicated a \$175,000 gymnasium and auditorium named Augusta Hall after the school founder. The president of the University of Utah George Thomas explained at the dedication of the new building that the college’s educational purpose was “to build Christian charity and true citizenship.” He continued, ““I want to assure you that university students graduated from this institution have proved by their scholastic and general abilities the solidity of the training given here. In this new and larger building dedicated today, I am sure you

³⁰ Copies of the newspapers are in the SL Diocese Archives. The information about the Sodality Club comes from the *Cor Marie* yearbook, 1957, SL Diocese Archives.

³¹ Carol Roberts Oral History, Carol Roberts Oral History, 2.

³² Helen Bland Oral History, 8.

³³ Copies of the literary magazines and yearbooks are in the Salt Lake Diocese Archives.

will do even greater and better work.”³⁴ John Sillito pointed out that the University of Utah supported the college because the university saw the college as a feeder school. Although the college was a four year school, some students transferred to the University of Utah after two years. St. Mary’s provided a good place for new students to adjust to college life in a small and friendly setting.

But the College did not last much longer. In 1959 the Holy Cross Order suggested in a “Case Statement for the Endowment Program” that the College be closed so that the Sisters could work other places.³⁵ According to the April 25, 1959 *Salt Lake Tribune* the only all-girls’ college in Utah’s capital would be closing. The article explained that the Academy would continue, but the college faculty would be transferred to other institutions. The article noted that in 1957 St. Mary’s had sold some of the College to a real estate company. It also suggested that the College would be used as a Holy Cross Provincial Home when the current headquarters moved from Ogden.³⁶ Three days later the newspaper reported that twenty students interrupted Bishop Hunt after he conducted mass at the Holy Cross Hospital to protest the closure. The students argued that the College was the only Catholic school between Denver and San Francisco.³⁷ But the students’ protest had no impact. The decision had already been made. At the final graduation program, Bishop Hunt praised the College as a “sanctuary” against the “premise that humans rights came from organized society.” For Hunt the school was “detached at a safe

³⁴ “Holy Cross Nuns Forced to close St Mary College.”

³⁵ Mooney, 173-74.

³⁶ “To Close to make way for move,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 25, 1959, B1-7.

³⁷ “Group protested,” *Ibid.*, April 28, 1959, 8-2.

distance from the rest of society, yet close enough” that the “young people [could] build up strength of character.”³⁸

Why was the college closed? The *Intermountain Catholic Register* explained on May 1 that “the year 1959 will be a historic date for the sisters and for the area.” According to the paper, two months before the fire marshal in Ogden had reported that the seventy-year-old provincial house in that city was no longer safe as the residence for sick and retired sisters. There was no other place to move them other than to St. Mary’s of the Wasatch, and the only space there was what the college was using. The article concluded, “The many friends of the college will join the sisters in their sorrow that circumstances have made this move imperative.”

I wonder if there were other reasons. One reason might have been attendance. Mary O’Carroll graduated with 28 other women in 1930.³⁹ But the numbers were usually not that high. There were six in 1941, 10 in 1944, 4 in 1950, 17 in 1952, 12 in 1957, and 11 in 1959. Even the entire enrollment was low. The 1957 yearbook has pictures of 57 students including 23 freshmen and the rest distributed equally with the other classes. The 1958 yearbook has 65 student pictures with 22 sophomores and 25 freshmen. In the article about the closing of St. Mary’s College, the reporter mentioned that there were 74 students enrolled. It seems to me that it would be hard to justify having a college course for so few students.⁴⁰

Another reason why the college might have been eliminated was there was an increased focus on Catholic high school education which might have drawn the focus and some funding from the college. In 1956 Mother M. Hilary suggested to Bishop Hunt that the Church sponsor

³⁸ “Grads,” *Ibid.*, June 2, 1959, 21.

³⁹ Gael Wirth.

⁴⁰ See *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 25, 1959; June 3, 1952; June 4, 1944, 16B; Cor Marie Yearbook, 1957, 1958, SL Diocese Archives. I checked random years of the *Salt Lake Tribune*.

male and female high schools. Hunt replied that it was “not unfavorable” proposal but suggested that a boys’ school near St. Mary’s would be “successful” while a girls’ school in the city would not be “welcomed or supported” by the Catholic members in Salt Lake City. Hunt explained, “The Catholic people in Utah, more so than those in other states, wish to keep their boys and girls together; this because of the constant fear of marriage with Mormons.”⁴¹

Hunt’s views prevailed. At the end of January 1959 Hunt announced a campaign to raise one million dollars to build a new Catholic central high school. One suggested location for the new school had been at St. Ann Parish, but the new plan was to have the school in front of the Judge Memorial School and to combine the grade school and the high school. During the next months the campaign was the headline article for the *Intermountain Catholic* and by the first of April the diocese had exceeded its fundraising goal. The Catholic leaders started taking bids for the new building in June.⁴² That same year the Sisters of Charity completed a new St. Joseph Villa retirement home. The Holy Cross Hospital started a campaign that year to raise one half a million dollars.⁴³ While the St. Mary’s of the Wasatch Academy continued and even added a kindergarten, high school education seemed more important than college. This combined with the need for a new Holy Cross provincial home and the low enrollment might have been the college eventually closed.

I believe one of the main reasons that the college did not close earlier is that the students at the Holy Cross Hospital School of Nursing took their academic classes at St. Mary’s. In 1926 the Holy Cross Hospital used St. Mary’s of the Wasatch College to provide classes for its

⁴¹ Duane Hunt to Mother M. Hilary, Holy Cross Provincial, June 6, 1956, Salt Lake Diocese Archives.

⁴² *Intermountain Catholic Register*, January 30, 1959, February 20, 1959, March 4, 1959, April 3, 1959, June 19, 1959.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, May 1, 1959, June 19, 1959.

students which had operated only at the hospital since 1901. The nursing students also had an option of completing a five-year Bachelor of Science degree rather than only the three-year diploma program by taking additional classes at the college.⁴⁴ In 1935 the American Hospital Association recognized the St. Mary's pre-nursing program. According to one hospital nursing students, those in the training program were "expected to be involved in all the activities going on at St. Mary's while we were students there. We were a fairly big part of the studentbody."⁴⁵

With that background information, I want to share some of the delightful experiences the nursing students shared in a history of the nursing school and the oral history interviews that my office conducted. Most of the classes were at the hospital so the focus is usually there. My mother, for example, spoke briefly in an interview about Holy Cross Hospital but did not mention St. Mary's. But I interviewed one of her classmates who told me a story about St. Mary's. The length of study at the college varied. Some years the nursing students went for one semester, four months. Others said they were to the college for an academic year nine months.

Some of the students lived at the college. The class of 1941, for example, remembered that there were housing shortages.⁴⁶ The class of 1945 remembered their first night at the college where they were given a supper of lettuce, cheese, bread, and butter. Immediately after the meal, some local women called home and got more food. After that the students who could took their dirty clothes home and brought back food.⁴⁷

The same class recalled that at St. Mary's "we felt totally isolated from outside civilization. St. Mary's was far above any other houses and no bus transportation." Other classes

⁴⁴ Mooney, 86.

⁴⁵ Ruby Hayes Oral History, 2-3.

⁴⁶ *History of the Holy Cross School of Nursing*, 15.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 97.

remembered taking a cab into town but remembered that they had to dress properly if they were leaving the campus. “We had to wear skirts or dresses, a hat, nylons, and gloves. . . . We were checked by the nuns to be sure that’s how we left.”⁴⁸

Some classes lived at the hospital and took a city bus or a Holy Cross Hospital bus to the college.⁴⁹ One class commented that they prayed for snow when they were not prepared for Sister Clare Assisi’s chemistry class. “We knew the bus couldn’t make it to St. Mary’s.” Snow days did not always cancel class though. One year the bus driver was determined to make it. Everyone had to walk the last block. But “if our two sister classmates could make it we didn’t have any excuse.”⁵⁰ Another class recalled, “We had many fun times on the bus. . . . Some of used the ride to catch up on sleep, cram for an exam, and in lighter moments, making up songs that we never dared to let the Sisters hear.”⁵¹ Unfortunately, these songs were not preserved so I could share them with you now.

The nursing students most often referred to two concerns at the college: how cold the building was and how poor the food was. Some of the interviewees thought that the Sisters left the windows open for fresh air. Others complained that the Sisters had on so many clothes that they did not notice the temperature. As one student explained, “We were not as insulated as they were. . . . The sisters didn’t seem to mind because they were pretty well padded up.”⁵² One

⁴⁸ Ibid; Lorraine Falsony Oral History, 1-2..

⁴⁹ *History of Holy Cross Hospital*, 124. This is from the class of 1953.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 125. This is from the class of 1954. Carol Roberts recalled in her oral history interview that on snowy days “we would all go to the back of the bus in the wintertime, and when the bus driver couldn’t make it up the hill, he’d say, ‘Okay, get out.’ We would have to get out and walk the rest of the way.” Carol Roberts Oral History, 2.

⁵¹ *History of Holy Cross Hospital*, 130. This is from the class of 1955.

⁵² Ibid; Rita Pressetto Judd Oral History, 2..

Mormon interviewee told the BYU student that the temperature was is like in a LDS church where the thermostat is set for men in suits and not women in dresses.⁵³ To deal with the cold, the students wore coats, hats, knee highs, and even mittens, “leaving mittens on except when we needed to write.”⁵⁴ One student recalled the school was “the spookiest place. We would get in the elevator, and we thought we were in one of those haunted houses.”⁵⁵

The other concern was the food. The hospital sent picnic baskets for the nursing students with sandwiches, fruit, and cookies. The class of 1955 wrote, “We. . . carried large metal picnic baskets with sandwiches, fruit, and cookies provided by the hospital kitchen. The sandwiches were dry and tasteless, the fruits more often than not were overripe and/or bruised; and sometimes the cookies were not too bad.”⁵⁶ One student said with a tone of disgust, “I still remember the taste of those sandwiches.” But she added that she was not sure that the St. Mary’s cafeteria was any better.⁵⁷ And one student had better memories of the food when she lived at the college. “We ate in a nice dining room with the nuns. The nuns sat at the head table, and we all took turns sitting at that table. After each meal they’d bring in two pans, one with soapy water and one with raise water. We’d all wash our dishes at the table and dry them.”⁵⁸

⁵³ Janice Evans Oral History, 2.

⁵⁴ *History of Holy Cross School of Nursing*, 130.

⁵⁵ Shirlynn Campbell Oral History, 2.

⁵⁶ *History of Holy Cross School of Nursing*, 130.

⁵⁷ Ruby Hayes Oral History, 1-2.

⁵⁸ Lorraine Falsony Oral History, 1-2.

The interviewees talked about the classes they took at St. Mary's. These included sociology, English, physics, religion, bacteriology, and other general education classes.⁵⁹ Billie Skinner recalled, "We had a Sister that taught us sociology. She really let us get by with lots of things. We didn't study very hard in that class, but we all liked her."⁶⁰ Not everyone agreed. Helen Bland recalled, "Sociology I never did really care for."⁶¹ Mary Jo Canarella recalled three credits of English "requiring compositions to be written every week. We had a course called Logic and Rhetoric."⁶² Ruby Hayes said that only the Catholics had to take the religion class, but everyone had to wait until it was over for the bus to leave.⁶³

Virginia Baldwin remembered that the classes were hard. "Several girls . . . kept saying, 'I'm not going to make it; I'm not going to pass the test,'" She saw the fear as a self fulfilling prophecy when she continued, "And they didn't." She had no fear. "That never occurred to me that I wouldn't make it."⁶⁴ The 1956 class though feared the exams and passed. In recalling the May exams at St. Mary's, the spokeswoman wrote, "Somehow we all managed to pull through. Must have been by the Grace of God! Don't think we could have made it any other way."⁶⁵ Clara Brannan was relieved when she finished at St. Mary's. "The last day of our classes at St. Mary's of the Wasatch, we had a banquet. Following the banquet, we all were back at the school of

⁵⁹ Clara Brennan Oral History, 5; Carol Roberts Oral History, 2; Helen Bland Oral History, 2; Lona Boothe Oral History, 3; Mary Jo Canarella, 6; Marjorie McQuillan Oral History, 2-3..

⁶⁰ Billie Skinner Oral History, 3-4.

⁶¹ Helen Bland Oral History, 2.

⁶² Mary Jo Canarella Oral History, 6.

⁶³ Ruby Hayes Oral History, 2-3.

⁶⁴ Virginia Baldwin Oral History, 1-2.

⁶⁵ *History of Holy Cross Hospital*, 136-37. Class of 1956.

nursing which is now an office building adjacent to Salt Lake Regional. They call it Moreau Hall, and that's we lived. We were so elated about being finished with St. Mary's that we sat up and talked."⁶⁶

While most students mentioned other classes, they most often remembered the chemistry and anatomy classes. Cecila Jensen, my mother's classmate, recalled an anatomy class where she and "another gal that was just full of mischief . . . took our skeleton [referred to as Columbus] out of its little closet and put one finger in its mouth and crossed it legs and put it back in the closet." The teacher, an army nurse, opened the closet and saw Columbus. "She started to laugh. And she laughed and she laughed and she laughed; she had to dismiss the class." Cecila was not sure why she was singled out as the prankster. "I wouldn't do such a thing," She was told "never to do such a thing again."⁶⁷ While this teacher was an army nurse, the interviewees from other years remembered all of the teachers were nuns.⁶⁸

One student recalled a map with all the muscles marked on it. "We studied really hard the night before because we knew she was going to ask us" to identify muscles. The teacher had a big pointer "and pointed to me." She was glad that she knew the answer. She added, "I was so scared. She was scary, but we sure did learn."⁶⁹ The 1941 class found Sister Ann Josephine very helpful "in encouraging downcast students after anatomy session with Dr. Frueenberger."⁷⁰

Most students recalled Clare Assisi's chemistry class because it was very hard. A student recalled she was "a no-nonsense nun." Apparently the Sister did not like a brand of soap—one

⁶⁶ Clara Brennan Oral History, 5.

⁶⁷ Cecila Jensen Oral History, 7.

⁶⁸ Majorie McQuillan Oral History, 2-3.

⁶⁹ Shirlynn Campbell Oral History, 5-6.

⁷⁰ *History of Holy Cross Hospital*, 93. Class of 1941.

version says Dial and one says Lifebouy. After naming the brand though, the story is the same.

“One of the gals put a bar of soap on her desk. [The Sister] came in and started teaching the lesson. She picked up the soap, went over, raised up the window and tossed it like a football, never saying a thing.”⁷¹

One student recalled that they had to wear nylons to class. A classmate blew up a chemistry experiment, and when the students got back to the hospital, their nylons were full of holes. For her it was “a funny incident. We laughed, but we were careful not to laugh when [the sisters] could see us.”⁷² Another student said, “We had a chemistry teacher that scared the hell out of us. She used to ask the questions and then call the name. There were lots of box elder bugs. She’s play pool with them with her finger in the windowsill between the question and calling the name. We would just sit there shaking.” One class period when not enough students knew the answer, she “kicked about half the class out because we didn’t know the answer” and told the students to go study. But the interviewee added, “She was a tough bird, but she was good.”⁷³ And another student remembered, “The Sister that taught chemistry would stand up in front of the class and twirl her beads on her hand. She said, ‘Miss Mortimer, I would like to know what . . .’ The fact that I was going to be called on scared me to death.” Eventually “we got used to” the questions.” She summarized, “As a whole our teachers tried to support us so were learning in the process and feeling comfortable” but added that was “most of the time.”⁷⁴

But not everything was serious learning. One student felt, “The nuns were humorous. They were a lot of fun. Up at St. Mary’s one of them used to play tennis with us all the time.

⁷¹ Carol Imhoff Oral History, 2-3.

⁷² Shirlynn Campbell Oral History, 5-6.

⁷³ Marjorie McQuillan Oral History, 2-3,

⁷⁴ Billie Skinner Oral History, 3-4.

She'd roll up her skirt and tie it and play with us. They'd go hiking with us. They were really good. They were human people. They were just as nice as anybody.”⁷⁵ Virginia Baldwin recalled that the students had four to six beds in the rooms at St. Mary's.⁷⁶ When asked about the women she lived with, Marjorie McQuillan recalled, her classmates were “all for the devil” and then laughed. “When we were at St. Mary's we lived on one floor. The bath was up another floor. One gal was always pulling pranks on us. So when she was in the bathtub once, we ran and got her clothes and took them away. She had to go through the halls nude.” Fortunately, “she didn't run into anybody.” McQuillan continued, “We were nice kids, but we had a lot of fun. We worked hard and played hard. We didn't have a lot of social life, but we had a good time.”⁷⁷

There were other formal activities. There was a “wonderful choir” that Sister Teresa Marie directed at the hospital and the college. “She let anyone who wanted to sing in the choir sing.” While one student felt she had no musical talent,” she felt that was “a rich experience because [the instructor] was a superb musician.”⁷⁸ Other students took part in basketball, baseball and track. The college competed against similar schools in Salt Lake including the nurses' training program at St. Mark's Hospital and the LDS University. The school even went to St. Anthony, Idaho to play.⁷⁹ Shirley Paxman explained, “The Sisters were very concerned about the well being of the nurses and being physically cared for was very important to them.”⁸⁰ In 1937 the school newspaper recorded that Bishop Hunt felt, “It is a pleasure to watch those

⁷⁵ Lorraine Falsony Oral History, 5.

⁷⁶ Virginia Baldwin Oral History, 2.

⁷⁷ Marjorie McQuillan Oral History, 3-4.

⁷⁸ Shirley Paxman Oral History, 8-9.

⁷⁹ Carol Imhoff Oral History, 7-8.

⁸⁰ Shirley Paxman Oral History, 8-9.

girls come back and fight after a good drubbing in the first half. They may not be winning games but they are building character.”⁸¹ The newspaper declared that one year in the 1950s St. Mary’s had its first winning season and won the conference.⁸²

Things have changed a great deal. St. Mary’s of the Wasatch Academy closed in 1970.⁸³ The Holy Cross School of Nursing closed in 1973. Holy Cross Hospital has been sold and is now a for-profit Salt Lake Regional Hospital. Those who went to the Salt Lake City meeting will remember the mass in the hospital chapel and the reception in what was the students’ dorms. The area where the college was is now a high class neighborhood sometimes still called St. Mary’s and there is a street named after Sister Madeline. Carol Imhoff recalled the larger area is now called Federal Heights. “There’s nothing but rich homes up there now.”⁸⁴ Just before the Salt Lake City meeting, I drove up to the area and saw the tower gate which according to the 1945 class was the gathering place for smokers. The problem was after winding around on a steep road, I found construction tape surrounding the gate. It was in the process of being torn down. I

⁸¹ *The Mountain Peak*, 1937, SL Diocese Archives.

⁸² I read this in one of the issues of the newspaper in the 1950s, but I did not record the date.

⁸³ Mooney, 174. The Salt Lake Diocese Archives includes a statement by Bishop Joseph Lennox Federal about the sale of the St. Mary’s property and the closing of the St. Mary’s of the Wasatch Academy. “The sale of St Mary is painful for all of us. Yet I do not know how it could have been avoided. I think everyone should know that it is a problem that the Sisters of the Holy Cross and the Diocese have been struggling with for many months. The renovation and maintenance of the building would have been an expense that neither could carry. No viable plan could be devised for the Church use of the property. Therefore, it was put on the market for sale, and now after eighteen months the sale has been finalized.”

⁸⁴ Carol Imhoff, 3.

decided not to have you take the wounding trip in the Holy Cross Ministry bus to see the land where the school used to be. Any other parts of the school had been torn down years before.⁸⁵

While there is nothing physical left of the St. Mary's of the Wasatch College, there are still memories. Graduates of the hospital school of nursing still gather once a year for lunch (although the numbers are getting smaller and older each year). I found a Facebook page for graduates of St. Mary's of the Wasatch College. When these groups gather on the internet or in person, they remember the faith and courage of the Holy Cross Sisters. A friend Shirley Paxman who attended St. Mary's and Holy Cross Hospital during World War II, recalled, "We had great teachers. . . . These were women who dedicated their lives. The only thing they did was teach. You can't compare their sense of serviced to anything else because they are not a lot of people that are as committed to service as those Catholic nuns are."⁸⁶

Students from the college have similar memories. Gael Wirth, one of the last graduating class, wrote her time at St. Mary's "was probably the best time of my life" because it was "fun and serious." She was "being an adult but still playing like a child."⁸⁷ In 2007 at a reunion of the 1957 class, Joan Brusatto Toole, the class president, recalled the chapel which was "a

⁸⁵ The Utah Heritage Foundation is having a house tour on October 16, 2012 to some of the houses in the St. Mary's area that were probably built when the Sisters of the Holy Cross sold some of the property in the 1950s. The Heritage Foundation describes the area, "Salt Lake Modern is hosting a tour of four private mid-century modern homes in the St. Mary's and Oak Hills Neighborhoods of Salt Lake City. Named for St. Mary's of the Wasatch Academy, the private Catholic girls school that stood in the neighborhood for more than fifty years, St. Mary's and Oak Hills developed rapidly in the mid-century era as new construction technology and affordability allowed Salt Lake City to expand up the east bench above Foothill Drive." <http://www.slmodern.org/2012/02/08/salt-lake-moderns-tour-of-st-marys/>

⁸⁶ Shirley Paxman, 5.

⁸⁷ Quoted in Gael Wirth.

centerpiece of calm and beauty,” the mountains that were “sentinels,” and the baby breath flowers around the school in the spring time. But most of all she remembered, ““The spirit of the dear Sisters of the Holy Cross—who taught us so much, melded us into women of strength, character, ideals, encouraged us, broadened us, and yes, loved us, remains with us also.” For her “St Mary’s was a place all its own—an oasis of hope, beginnings, [and] peace. It lives within all of us.”⁸⁸

Over the years that it operated, St. Mary’s of the Wasatch College provided valuable education for women in the Intermountain West. The article announcing the closure in the *Intermountain Catholic* referred back to University of Utah President George Thomas’ comments. “The work done by the Sisters of the Holy Cross in the new building has fulfilled Dr. Thomas’s prophecy a hundred fold. Into the intermountain community has been graduated women of integrity and culture, fine Christian citizens who have contributed their talents and virtues to the up building of the West. The City of Salt Lake and the whole intermountain area is the poorer for the closing of the College and they join the Sisters of the Holy Cross in regret that necessity impels the change.”⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Reunion Publication, 2007, St. Mary’s of the Wasatch College, SL Diocese Archives.

⁸⁹ “Holy Cross Nuns Forced to Close St. Mary’s College.”