



SISTERS OF THE HOLY NAMES OF JESUS AND MARY

JESUS AND MARY, MY STRENGTH AND MY GLORY



In 1874, four Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary set out by boat from Montreal to the Red River Settlement to assume responsibility for St. Mary's Academy. The Manitoba Chronicles begin with the following entry made by one of these missionaries:



Sister Jean-de-Dieu, Superior



Sister Marie-Elie



Sister Marie-Florentine

“In the designs of God’s Providence, the Sisters of the Holy Names were destined one day to help the Sisters of Charity in their work in the Northwest. The hour to begin this undertaking has arrived and the sisters called to this Obedience are Sisters Jean-de-Dieu, Marie-Florentine, Electa-du-Sacré-Coeur, and Marie-Elie. Unworthy though we are of this great mission, we have accepted it with joy, trusting that the Lord will supply what we lack and make us missionaries worthy of working under the Names of Jesus and Mary.

With faith in this call we are about to depart. The sacrifice is great. But strong in Jesus who strengthens us, we are content. We place ourselves in the hands of Him to whom we have given all.”

MAISON STE MARIE

In 1869 Maison Ste Marie (St. Mary's Academy) was established by the Sisters of Charity of Montreal, Grey Nuns. By 1874, the Grey Nuns informed Archbishop Taché that they wished to return to their mission of health care and work among the poor. The Archbishop, in need of new teachers, reached out to a relatively new congregation of teaching sisters from Quebec. Founded in 1843 by Eulalie Durocher (Mother Marie-Rose) and her two companions Mélodie Dufresne and Henriette Céré, the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary (SNJM) was dedicated to Christian education of young women, especially for the disadvantaged in rural areas.



Maison Ste Marie (St. Mary's Academy)

IN HIS LETTER TO THE SNJM ARCHBISHOP TACHÉ WROTE:

"The needs of education have been growing in my diocese, making it necessary to place a community of Sisters here. This will result in a profitable advantage to this diocese."

The SNJM were honoured by the confidence shown by the Archbishop, and four of them responded to the request. Sisters Jean-de-Dieu, Superior, Marie-Florentine, Electa-du-Sacré-Coeur and Marie-Elie were between the ages of 21 and 27 when they bade their tearful farewells and set out by boat from Montreal en route to their new mission in the Red River Settlement to assume responsibility for St. Mary's Academy.



Jane McKay, one of the first students registered by the SNJMs.



Rosie Derry, student in 1880

The 12-day trek to Manitoba was less than comfortable for the Sisters, rife with seasickness, mosquitoes, extreme heat and little food. They arrived in the Red River Settlement on August 22, 1874 and spent two days with the Grey Nuns in St. Boniface. On August 24 they crossed the river and walked through the mud to Maison Ste Marie (St. Mary's Academy), their new home and mission. At first glance the Sisters noted, "the house is of poor appearance, but it offers us the necessities." Upon further inspection, though, they were impressed by the "exquisite neatness" they found there.

One week later they registered their first students – twelve girls and seven boys. By the end of that year, a total of 126 students had been enrolled in the school.

Over the years, the Sisters remained steadfastly devoted to their mission while enduring many trials. With the passage of the Manitoba Schools Act in 1890, the denominational system of public education was abolished and a non-sectarian system established. St. Mary's Academy became an independent or private school operating with revenue from music and art lessons, boarding fees and donations until the Sisters could manage no longer and instituted tuition fees in 1901. Average fees charged were \$3.75 per month per student.

Many hands were required to meet the needs of the Sisters and the students. In addition to serving as teachers, many of the Sisters were housekeepers, cooks, infirmarians and laundresses. Still others supervised boarders or taught private music and art lessons.



Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary on the steps of St. Mary's Academy in 1915

NETWORK OF SCHOOLS

St. Mary's Academy is one in a network of schools in North America under the direction of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. Other schools in the network include Holy Names Academy in Seattle, WA, St. Mary's Academy in Portland, OR, Holy Names High School in Oakland, CA, Ramona Convent Secondary School in Alhambra, CA, Academy of the Holy Names in Albany, NY and Academy of the Holy Names in Tampa, FL.



Beginning with St. Mary's Academy, which housed the SNJM Provincial Administration, the Sisters established, provided leadership and staffed many schools to serve anglophones and francophones in both urban and rural populations, educating generations of young people in faith and culture.

THE SISTERS' MISSION TODAY IS AS IT ALWAYS WAS: "TO SEEK THE FULL DEVELOPMENT OF THE HUMAN PERSON THROUGH EDUCATION, SOCIAL JUSTICE, CONTEMPLATION AND THE ARTS, ESPECIALLY WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE IMPOVERISHED AND MARGINALIZED."

From the humblest of beginnings in 1869, to its 150th anniversary in 2019, St. Mary's Academy's nurturing of young women in spirit, mind and body has challenged each student to reach her full potential as an individual created in God's image, and to live her life true to the Academy's motto, **HOLD HIGH THE TORCH (TENEAMUS ALTAM FACEM).**



Sisters with college graduates in 1949



Student Mission Representatives in 1973 with Sister Marylyn Gibney (seated, far left)



Sisters with students during Mother Marie-Rose Week in October 2018



I HAVE COME TO CAST FIRE UPON
THE EARTH AND HOW I WISH IT
WERE ALREADY KINDLED.

- LUKE 12:49



Map showing the route taken by the
sisters from Montreal to Winnipeg, 1874.



Mother Marie-Rose

The Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary were founded in 1843 in Longueuil, Quebec by Eulalie Durocher, Mother Marie-Rose.

Mother Marie-Rose believed that education must be grounded in faith and centred in justice, that true learning happens in an environment where one's potential is seen and nurtured, and that the Arts are important in education. She encouraged learning through self-expression. She took the time to dream. She believed that the future can become better than the present when it is embraced with courage and commitment. She believed that an entire society can be transformed if the minds and hearts of young women are properly formed and directed.

After six years as Superior, Mother Marie-Rose died on October 6, 1849, her 38th birthday. Her accomplishments during her short life led Pope John Paul II to beatify her on May 23, 1982, as a woman for all times.

In August of 2014 the day-to-day operations of St. Mary's Academy were passed on to a lay administrator; however, the Sisters remain at the helm of the Academy providing direction and service as owners, members of boards and committees, volunteers and class prayer partners. Significantly, the Sisters establish the mission and purpose of St. Mary's Academy, approve by-laws, elect directors, appoint the president and approve certain financial decisions.

Although the Sisters no longer reside at St. Mary's Academy, their presence endures and will continue to influence and shape the future of the Academy.



IN 2019 ST. MARY'S ACADEMY CELEBRATES 150 YEARS
AND REMAINS THE OLDEST CONTINUOUSLY OPERATING
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL IN THE PROVINCE.



ST. MARY'S ACADEMY

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Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary and Sisters of Charity of Montreal (Grey Nuns) at Résidence Despins in the fall of 2018.