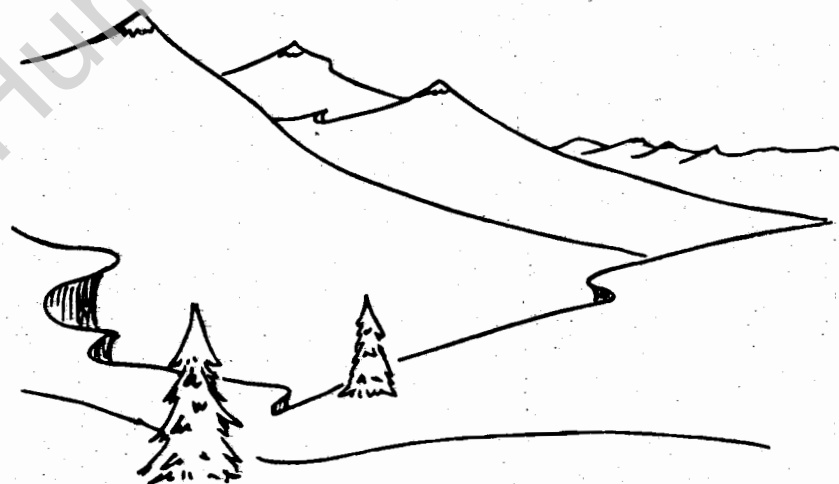


Sisters of Humility in Montana



1906-1986

**The Sisters
of the
Humility of Mary
in
Montana
1906-1986**

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The Diocese of Helena, Montana was established in 1884. The entire state, comprising more than 146,000 square miles, made up the new bishopric. Twenty years later, in 1904, Montana was divided into two dioceses, the eastern part of the state became the Diocese of Great Falls. Thirty-two counties, totaling more than 94,000 square miles, comprised the area. (Appendix A)

Rev. Mathias C. Lenihan appointed bishop of Great Falls

Several months later the Rev. Mathias C. Lenihan, pastor of St. Mary Church, Marshalltown, Iowa, was appointed the first bishop of Great Falls by Pope Pius X. Bishop Lenihan was ordained for the Dubuque Diocese December 20, 1879 following completion of studies for the priesthood at the Grand Seminary in Montreal, Canada. He held the distinction of being the first native Iowan to be ordained a priest and later the first native Iowan to be consecrated bishop.

When Bishop Lenihan arrived in Great Falls he found in his entire diocese 14 priests, 11 parishes, two schools and four Indian missions. Concern for the growth of the Church within the new diocese was high on his list of priorities. As an educator, he believed there was no better way to accomplish this than through the education of youth in Catholic schools. The Sisters of Providence were located in Great Falls in caring for the sick, but no school had been established. In his immediate need the new bishop turned to the Sisters of Humility who had staffed his school in Marshalltown.

Marshalltown school opens

Rev. Peter J. Portz established the first Catholic School in Marshalltown in 1878. It was the first Iowa school taught by the Sisters of Humility outside Ottumwa. Sister Francis Mangan, Sister Vincent Lawler and Sister Bernard Vaughn were the first sisters assigned to organize the school. Sister Vincent, the oldest, was 28, Sister Francis and Sister Bernard, 22 and 19 respectively.

Sister Francis remained in Marshalltown for two years then returned to Ottumwa to head the CHM community for ten years. When she returned to Marshalltown in 1890, Father Lenihan had been pastor of St. Mary parish and school for three years.

The Sisters of the Humility of Mary

An invitation to Great Falls

Upon assuming his Great Falls post, Bishop Lenihan wrote to Mother Vincent Lawler, general superior in Ottumwa, asking for sisters to open a school in the Cathedral parish, St. Ann, in Great Falls. Mother Francis Mangan, Sister Annunciation Mahon and Sister Evangelista Dugan, three experienced teachers, were assigned to pioneer in the west, more than a thousand miles distant.

Mother Francis Mangan

Who was Mother Francis? Some insights into the life of this outstanding woman religious will serve as a framework for her work in the west.

Sarah Jeanne Mangan, daughter of Francis Mangan, was born in Jersey City, New Jersey, April 1, 1856. She had two brothers, Frank and Joseph; a third brother, James, left home at an early age, migrating to Montana. The family moved to Dubuque where the father taught in a Catholic boys' school operated by the Sacred Heart Brothers. When it closed he moved to Des Moines where he taught in the first Catholic school in the city. When his sons were ready for high school, the family moved to Conception, Missouri where the Benedictines were building a monastery.

Sarah Jeanne first came in contact with the Sisters of Humility when they were located in Easton, Missouri. At the age of 16 she became the third postulant to enter the Missouri community, December 8, 1872. She received the habit in Liberty, the Missouri headquarters, July 13, 1873, taking the name Sister Mary Francis. As prearranged by the Pennsylvania motherhouse, she went to Villa Maria, Pennsylvania, for the second year of her novitiate. There she continued her education and was privileged to study music under Mother Anna Tabourat who succeeded Mother Magdalen Potier as general superior from 1864 until her resignation in 1883.

Mother Anna was a gifted organist and violinist who had studied at the Conservatory of Art and Music in Paris prior to her membership in the CHM community. Sister Francis was professed at Villa Maria, August 15, 1875. She is the only Sister of Humility who lived in all three motherhouses. She returned to Missouri to resume her work in schools where teachers were in great demand.

Sister Francis accompanied Mother Mary of the Angels in 1877 in seeking funds for their impoverished missions. Arriving in Ottumwa they met Rev. John Kreckel, pastor of St. Mary Church, who was seeking sisters to teach the boys in his parish. The Visitation Sisters operated a school for girls but their rule did not permit them to teach boys. As a result of the visit the entire group of sisters moved to Ottumwa. Sister Francis organized a school for boys in the basement of the rectory. Enrollment increased and classroom space had to be extended to the next floor of the rectory.

In Montana 1906-1986

The following year, 1878, Rev. Peter J. Portz opened a school in Marshalltown. Sister Francis was assigned to open the first school outside Ottumwa. She remained there for two years before returning to Ottumwa where she was general superior for ten years.

Toward the end of her life Sister Dominica Devlin recalls the first years of her religious life:

I did have a good superior Mother Mary Francis, and some very fine companions in Sister Cyril (Fitzgerald) and Sister John (Dobson)... My three years novitiate and nine years of my young professed life were spent under Mother Francis. I often felt resentful and peeved at her corrections and times since I have realized the solid foundation she laid for me... She made mistakes, she would lose her temper but believe me, she could heal with real love and true kindness so marvelously that you could forget the former and hold forever the latter in your heart. She never deprived you of your individuality; never held a grudge against anyone. I could go to her and talk over everything, come away like I was a real cog in the wheel. No sister was set aside and made feel she was a nobody. Mother was strict but noble and generous in her dealings with others.

Sisters arrive in Great Falls

When Mother Francis, Sisters Annunciation and Evangelista were assigned to Great Falls they left for the west almost immediately. They stopped in Marshalltown, then proceeded to St. Paul where they were scheduled to cross the plains by the Great Northern train route. Arriving in St. Paul they were detained for several days by a blizzard which halted west bound traffic. Arriving in Great Falls, December 7, 1906, the weary travelers were met by Bishop Lenihan, Rev. McCormack and Rev. John Henessy from the Cathedral and driven to Columbus Hospital where they were guests of the Sisters of Providence. (Appendix B)

Next morning Bishop Lenihan suggested a five-block walk to the school and home he had provided for them. It was a large two-story building on the corner of Eighth Avenue North and 15th Street. Formerly the Boston Hotel, later it housed a meat market operated by an uncle of Sister Cecelia Vandenberg. Renovation plans were discussed for classrooms on the first floor and living quarters on the second for the sisters.

During renovation the Sisters began religious instruction classes at the Cathedral for three hundred children who were being taught by lay women of the parish.

The Sisters of the Humility of Mary

On Christmas Eve they attended Midnight Mass celebrated by the Bishop. Immediately afterwards he left for Davenport to attend the funeral of the Most Rev. Henry Cosgrove, D.D. who died following a twelve-year term of office.

The new Cathedral was completed at Sixth Street and Third Avenue North. When it opened, the old church on Seventh Street North between Third and Fourth Avenue was remodeled into a four-classroom school. The sisters traveled the distance to and from school, about a mile distant, by street car.

Mother Vincent visits Great Falls

Mother Vincent, accompanied by Sister Cecilia Darling, made her first visit to Great Falls in 1908 shortly after the opening of the school in the new location. The visit provided the opportunity to assess the work of the sisters and to visit places of historical interest in the city.

Located on the Missouri River, Great Falls played a significant role in the exploration expedition of Lewis and Clark. Coming by boat from St. Louis in 1804, they wintered in North Dakota, reaching the first of the falls they were to encounter seventeen miles south of Great Falls in June, 1805. Today a large power plant has been constructed over the falls. At the base of the falls a three-acre Ryan Dam Park serves as a recreational site for visitors. At the lower end of the park a huge boulder bears an inscription taken from the diary of Lewis, dated 1805. He states that no boat will navigate beyond this point.

Here a portage was constructed from the abundance of piroque and cottonwood trees enabling the explorers to travel overland to a point above the last falls. From here they continued their search of the origin of the Missouri River and a passage to the Pacific Ocean.

In memory of that historical event a giant-sized oil painting has been executed on the south wall of the Great Falls International Airport. It depicts explorers pulling two portage boats on wheels, loaded with supplies, across the barren hilly terrain.

The sisters visited other falls on the river: Rainbow Falls where a rainbow can be seen on a sunny day over the falls, and Morony Falls, each with a power plant. On June 14, 1805 Lewis arrived at Black Eagle Falls. Upon viewing the falls he ascended the hill on the east bank to its highest elevation and viewed the uppermost reaches of the Missouri River bearing west of this point. He described a beautiful little heavily wooded island in the middle of the river below the falls. In one cottonwood tree he observed an eagle had placed her nest in an almost inaccessible spot. Later the falls was named Black Eagle Falls and the nearby town, across the river from Great Falls, Black Eagle. Before descending the hill Lewis saw immense herds of buffalo in the distance. A power plant is located over the falls.

In Montana 1906-1986

Fifteenth Street and Eighth Avenue was only a short distance from the smelter, one of the two largest copper refineries in the world. The sisters often saw entire train loads of raw ore, mined in Butte or Anaconda, en route to the smelter where it was refined. The immense smokestack could be seen many miles away.

Giant Springs, sometimes called the eighth wonder of the world, was a natural phenomenon attracting visitor interest. Located along the shore of the Missouri River which flowed through the city, giant springs bubbled up from unknown depths through sparkling crystal clear water. Natural water greenery added to the beauty of the bubbling panorama. The dazzling scene is never "turned off." Even during severe zero weather when the water maintains a uniform 52 degrees, the springs bubble on, churning and turning millions of gallons of water back into the Missouri River.

Charles M. Russell (1864-1926), renowned western artist and world traveler, lived only a few blocks from the sisters on Fourth Avenue. His log cabin museum, studio and home were popular tourist attractions. Talented in all media of art, his watercolors of authentic life style of many Montana Indian tribes are of importance to researchers of western history. Today the C. M. Russell museum is directed by the Trigg-Russell Foundation. In 1982 the foundation initiated a three million dollar fund-raising project to expand the existing facility. Completed in 1985, the museum features one of the finest western art collections in the nation.

Mother Vincent returned to Iowa with complete knowledge of the problems, successes and immediate needs of the sisters, yet she could not extend much hope that additional personnel would be forth coming. It was the understanding of the sisters that they would continue their work in Great Falls.

Pioneer sisters die

Sister Evangelista returned to Ottumwa in October where she died of tuberculosis Christmas Eve at the age of 28. Sister Cyril became ill with a respiratory difficulty. Hospitalization and a two-week rest with the Providence Sisters in their Fort Benton Hospital failed to bring about improvement in her physical condition. Doctors, resorting to a common practice with tubercular patients, ordered a tent set up for her in the backyard. The outdoor air provided some temporary relief. When she suffered a severe heart attack, her condition became progressively worse and hope of recovery was abandoned. On July 6, 1908 at 1:30 a.m., surrounded by the bishop and sisters, Sister Cyril died quietly in the tent that had been her home for several months. She was the first Sister of Humility to be buried in Great Falls. Within two years of the sisters' arrival only three of the pioneer group remained.

Bishop Lenihan purchased a house at 717 Third Avenue North for the

sisters, a move that brought them much closer to the new school in the old Cathedral Building.

The Ursuline Sisters who were located in nearby Cascade County at St. Peter's Mission opened a school in Great Falls in 1911. (Appendix C)

Formation of a new foundation

In appraising the work of the sisters in Great Falls and the upswing in requests to open schools in Iowa, it is asked why a new foundation was undertaken in Great Falls. When the sisters were assigned to open a school in Great Falls it was not the intention of Mother Francis to break away from the Ottumwa group. Neither was it in the plan of Mother Vincent to continue a steady supply of sisters to a distant area where another order of sisters was actively engaged, the Sisters of Providence.

The term of office of Mother Vincent expired in 1909. Mother Ligouri Ketterer was elected to replace her. When it became apparent that the demand for sisters was greater than the supply, Mother Ligouri wrote to Bishop Lenihan in August, 1909, suggesting the "advisability of recalling our sisters from Great Falls since we are unable to carry on the work properly." There was no response to the letter. On January 24, 1910, Mother Ligouri again wrote to the bishop restating her intention of withdrawing the sisters at the close of the school year. The sisters in Great Falls were likewise notified of their expected return to Ottumwa.

On February 22, 1910, Mother Francis wrote to Mother Ligouri saying Mother Vincent had previously told her that Bishop Davis had decreed that no additional sisters from Ottumwa were to go to Great Falls but those already in the west had the option of remaining there or returning. In the face of that previous arrangement she was disturbed that the sisters were being recalled to Ottumwa. It was clear that Mother Francis was deeply committed in her work and was reluctant to return to Iowa. Correspondence indicated Mother Ligouri sought the advice of Bishop Davis.

Bishop Lenihan wrote to Bishop Davis in Davenport praising the work of the sisters. In a letter dated August 22, 1911 he writes, "... You know that when the late Bishop Cosgrove gave the sisters permission to branch out and open a new foundation at Great Falls, it was the understanding that they had permission to stay as long as they wanted and as long as I was satisfied with them." Continuing in the same letter, "...these sisters have made themselves so useful that it would be easier for me to do without an assistant priest than to do without their assistance in parochial work."

In the final paragraph he pleads, "For the sake of my successors I wish that you would please give me a line, stating that the Sisters of Humility, formerly of your diocese and a branch of the motherhouse at Ottumwa, have

your permission to remain in Great Falls and make a new foundation with novitiate of the same order and that you bless their work. I will consider this a personal favor."

It was apparent that not only the sisters but the two bishops were also involved in the dilemma of remaining in Montana or returning to Iowa. Confronted with the canonical aspect of the situation, Mother Ligouri, on September 4, 1911, appealed to the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Diomedeo Faleoni, D.D., Washington, D.C., to make a judgment.

On November 6, 1911 a decision was handed down to the effect that "The Sisters at Great Falls are members of the Institute of Davenport (diocese) and as such, subject to its Superior." Further, they were to "make an act of submission to the authority of Rev. Mother M. Ligouri, superior of the Institute." On November 15 a formal act of submission was signed by Mother Francis, Sister Immaculate and Sister Annunciation. Mother acknowledged the formal act of submission in a letter addressed to them on November 15, saying, "I am greatly pleased to accept the same and I implore our dear Lord to bless you and reward the humility evidenced in your obedience to the requirements of His Excellency."

The act of submission as directed by the Apostolic Delegate did not bring the controversy to an end for Bishop Lenihan called on Bishop Davis, restating his case and asked Bishop Davis to act as negotiator in appealing to Mother Ligouri. In a letter dated May 3, 1912 to Mother Ligouri, Bishop Davis says Bishop Lenihan fears "his school will be closed and ruined if the sisters leave..." He and they (the sisters) will sign an agreement "never to interfere with your community, or take a postulant from the diocese." Bishop Lenihan further states, "Mother Francis is not obliged by the Apostolic Delegate to return to your community... He feels mistakes have been made and regrets the past very sincerely." Bishop Davis informed Bishop Lenihan that neither one could counteract the decision of the Apostolic Delegate.

In stating the case to Mother Ligouri, Bishop Davis asks if the "order from the Delegate directs you to recall the sisters, or does it leave it optional?" Considering the high level of emotional involvement in the case, Bishop Davis suggested for the best interests of everyone, including the interests of the Church and Catholic education, a severance of the two groups seemed advisable. In his letter he asks, "Will you kindly consider this and permit those sisters to remain and forgive the past...let me know your position in this matter and how your hands may be tied by order from the delegation (sic) at Washington."

Mother Ligouri's response is not on record but the separation was marked by the first profession in Great Falls of two novices.

The Sisters of the Humility of Mary

Postulants enter Great Falls Foundation

Two years prior to this date, September 17, 1910, two postulants entered the community. Florence Thill, 20, a native of Butte and Frances Dimke, 16, Great Falls, received the habit December 8, 1910. They were known as Sister Regina and Sister Loretto. In the history of Great Falls Mother Francis writes, "The profession of the first two novices took place on the 30th of December, 1912, when His Lordship, the Bishop of Great Falls, received their vows, and thus permanently established the motherhouse and novitiate of the west."

By 1915 nine additional postulants entered the community. Sister Catherine Cherpeski entered in 1911, Sister Dolores Patterson entered the community in 1912 and Sisters Agnes Cuddihy, Rose Dimke and Margaret Hines in 1913. Sisters Teresa Watski and Julia Domke came in 1914. Sister Aloysius Domke and Sister Zita Kowell entered in 1915. Other than Bernadette Cherpeski who entered in 1917, there were no postulants until 1925.

The convent on Third Avenue North became overcrowded with the increase in postulants. A larger convent was purchased on Fifth Avenue North and Eighth Street, named Rosary Hall.

High school opens

Many students who completed the standard eight grades in the four-room school in the old cathedral asked for training in the commercial field. A two-year course qualifying young women for secretarial work was offered. Two buildings back of Rosary Hall were remodeled into space for a commercial department which was followed by a high school freshman course. Each year an additional class year was added.

Both grade and high school increased in enrollments until it became imperative to build a larger school. Over 300 students enrolled in the new St. Mary Institute on Fourth Avenue North and Seventh Street in September, 1916. The following June six girls were the first graduated of the high school. "St. Mary's Chimes," the first high school annual, was issued that year.

St. Ann's parish was justly proud of its commitment to Catholic education. Graduates of the two-year commercial course were in demand in business and professional establishments. High school graduates entered other fields of employment. A parish organization of women, St. Mary's Aid, assisted sisters in teaching and raising funds for library books, laboratory equipment, new machines for the commercial department, playground and athletic equipment. In 1929 St. Mary's Aid was renamed P.T.A., continuing the work of the past twenty-five years.

Sacred Heart Convent new motherhouse

With an adequate and well-functioning school attention was focused on housing and membership of the sisters. On August 7, 1920, the sisters

In Montana 1906-1986

purchased lots on the corner of Fourth Avenue North and Tenth Street. A city-wide campaign was inaugurated to obtain donations for the new building. Bishop Lenihan headed the list of donors followed by contributions from local business firms and professional associates. George Shanley, architect, submitted plans for a 47-room structure to meet the needs of the sisters. Mother Francis and her council members Sisters Immaculate, Annunciation and Loretto hired general contractors Jarl and Laskar; A.A. Pinski, plumbing and J. H. Mills, electrical wiring.

On April 10, 1922, ground was broken for the new structure, a three-story H-shaped red brick building with stone trim. Shortly before Christmas they moved from the crowded living quarters on Third Avenue North to a beautiful spacious convent at 920 Fourth Avenue North. The chapel occupied the second and third floors of the east wing. The Gothic altars and statues were mainly the gifts of St. Mary's Aid and friends. The community room, library, reception rooms and offices were also located on second floor. Bedrooms were located on the third floor. The full-size basement contained a large preschool classroom in addition to general purpose, storage, mechanical and other rooms. Dining, kitchen and laundry rooms were also located on the first floor. An apartment for chaplains was located near the north entrance on Fourth Avenue.

Jubilee trip to Rome, Irish postulants

In 1925 His Holiness Pope Pius X declared a Holy Year Jubilee for the entire Church. The Golden Jubilee of Mother Francis coincided with that year. Bishop Lenihan was chaplain of a group of Rome bound pilgrims and invited Mother Francis and Sister Immaculate to join the group as his guests. In Rome a private audience arranged with His holiness, Bishop Lenihan asked the Holy Father to confirm Mother Francis in her office of Mother General for life.

The return trip was made by way of Lourdes, Paris, London and Dublin. While in Ireland Mother Francis met several young women who were interested in religious life. Later through correspondence, Bishop Lenihan directed Elizabeth Lenihan (Sister Mathias, his cousin) and Julia O'Connell (Sister Patricia) to membership in the Sisters of Humility. They arrived in Great Falls in November.

In recalling that span of more than fifty years, Sister Mathias gives her first impression of Mother Francis.

As I knew her, Mother Francis impressed me as being a very secure personality of high intelligence and great wisdom, a person whose opinion I could rely on because of her genuine sincerity as well as her knowledge and experience. Mother had a quiet grace and strong personality. (Appendix D)

The Sisters of the Humility of Mary

Through correspondence the Bishop learned of other young Irish women who wished to join the Sisters of Humility. Lacking the necessary travel funds to Great Falls, Bishop Lenihan advised Mother Francis and Sister Immaculate to go to Ireland, giving them travel expenses for the postulants. When Mother Francis returned in July she brought six young women with her: Kathleen O'Connell (Sister Philomene), Winifred Goulding (Sister Michael), Mary Moynihan (Sister Joseph), Ellen Drinan (Sister Teresita), Mary Ann Lenihan (Sister Clement) and Catherine Walsh.

The following December, 1926, six additional postulants came to Great Falls with Rev. M. J. O'Sullivan, chaplain at Sacred Heart Convent.

The young women included Mary Hayes (Sister Vincent), Margaret Walsh (Sister Bernadine), Mary Quinlan (Sister Angela), Teresa Stack (Sister Raphael), Bridget Murphy (Sister Helen) and Margaret O'Connor (Sister Dorothy). Mary Rice (Sister Bridget) and Catherine Goulding (Sister Anne), the last postulants from Ireland, arrived within the next two years.

Sister Bernadette, 26, sister of Sister Catherine Cherpeski, died September 25, 1927, following a short illness.

For more than twenty years, the ministries of the sisters were carried out in Great Falls. Mother Francis believed a thorough education was important in all areas in which sisters worked, whether nursing, music or classroom teaching. The novitiate completed, sisters pursued higher education at St. Catherine's College, Creighton University, Adrian Dominican College, College of Great Falls and Ottumwa Heights College.

Billings School

In 1928 a request came from the pastor in a poor sector of South Billings to teach a large contingent of Mexican poor who were without education and religious instruction. Sisters Immaculate, Philomene and Bernadine Walsh opened Our Lady of Guadalupe School in an old factory building for a large number of children. Billings offered the community a fringe benefit, for sisters could attend Normal College while living in a community house.

A migratory group seeking employment wherever available, the Mexican contingent was reduced to a small number in three years. The sisters withdrew from Billings.

Bishop Lenihan Retires

In 1930 Bishop Lenihan celebrated a triple observance: the seventieth of his birth, fiftieth of his ordination and twenty-fifth of his consecration as Bishop of Great Falls. The occasion was the announcement of his retirement and return to his native state, Iowa. Retirement, however, was not immediate. Upon

In Montana 1906-1986

returning to Iowa he was promoted to the rank of "Titular Archbishop of Preslavo." Since no immediate successor was appointed to his post, he agreed to return to the diocese as administrator until the vacancy was filled by Most Rev. Edwin V. O'Hara who was consecrated October 28, 1930 in Portland, Oregon.

Lewistown School opens

Catholic education in Lewistown dates back to 1903 when Rev. J. Vermet, pastor of St. Leo's parish, organized St. Mary's, the first Catholic elementary school in the city. The Daughters of Jesus, a Canadian based foundation, staffed the school when it opened with one student. At the end of the first month the enrollment increased to 22 students. Several years later the 100-enrollment school moved to the basement of the newly constructed St. Leo's Church. The Daughters of Jesus withdrew in 1924 and were replaced by two lay teachers.

In 1930, Rev. T.O. Rocque, pastor of St. Leo's requested Sisters of Humility to staff his school. Mother Francis and Sister Regina went to Lewistown to visit the proposed school and discuss arrangements with the pastor and trustees of the church. In a journal of the mission, Sister Regina writes, "The pastor should pay the sisters \$40 each and furnish the house, light, heat and water. The sisters would pay replacement salary for any sisters who became ill." Children were to pay \$1.00 for tuition.

Sister Regina, superior, Sisters Genevieve Kuhn, Dolores Patterson and Gertrude Cassidy arrived in late August to open the school in the church basement. Four large classrooms, library and large recreation room made up the layout. Enrollment the first day was 126 students. On October 25 Sister Regina writes again, "We went to the church to witness the baptism of three of our pupils whom we have been instructing privately." On November 6, "We held a candy sale to pay for the hymn books for the choir. Made \$6.70."

Students entertained parents and friends at a Christmas program. Each child received a gift from the sisters. Sister Regina bought green netting for 9" by 9" bags which were sewed together until "the machine refused to run." Sixty pounds of candy, 20 pounds of peanuts, oranges and apples went into the bags which were given to the children.

In preparing for the first Christmas, the sisters went to the church on December 24 where they decorated the altars and sanctuary with boxwood, poinsettias, roses, etc. In the afternoon they decorated the convent and prepared for other traditional festivities. At 10:30 the sisters said night prayers, then went to St. Leo's for a Holy Hour before Midnight Mass. They returned to the convent at 2:30 a.m. Following breakfast and opening of gifts they retired at 3:30. At 7:30 a second breakfast was served and the sisters returned to the church for three Christmas Day Masses. A turkey dinner was served at 2:30 p.m. Stamina at a low point, the sisters rested from 4:00 to 7:00. Final

The Sisters of the Humility of Mary

retirement was 10:30.

There were relaxing times, on the other hand, to lighten the heavy work load. One entry in the journal reads, "Mr. and Mrs. Urban Schuh took Sisters Gertrude and Dolores for an auto ride around the city and a visit to the creamery. Mr. Schuh sent home ice cream with them." Familiar names appear in the journal. G. Pentecost portrayed Washington in a patriotic program. Betty Byers represented the flag. G. Pentecost graduated from eighth grade in 1931. Walter and Bertha Abel gave two boxes of candy to the sisters at Christmas.

As the years progressed the church basement became overcrowded. Father Rocque acted upon requests from parents and students for a new building to house a proposed high school and provide more space for the overflow grade school. A two-story brick building was constructed at the corner of Broadway and First Avenue. It was named Daniel J. Parke Memorial in recognition of Mr. Parke's financial contribution to the building. It housed the four upper grades and a freshman high school class. Sister Agnes Cuddihy, principal from 1937-1940, is credited in large part for the founding and organization of the high school. The first senior class in 1941 numbered five students. The first four grades remained in the church basement. On May 26, 1938, the first elementary graduation of 21 students took place in the new building.

Sister Joseph Moynihan replaced Sister Agnes as principal in 1941. The school was accredited by the State Department of Education and by the Northwest Association of Secondary and High Schools. The curriculum was expanded to include extracurricular activities of athletics, dramatics, debate, oratory and music. In 1943 there were ten graduates, six boys and four girls. In addition to Sister Joseph, Sisters Helen Murphy, Veronica Kirscher and Marcella Botch served on the faculty.

In 1960 a new modern high school was constructed with six classrooms, library, well-equipped laboratory and six additional instructional areas. Peak enrollment in 1977-78 reached 265 students with 90 in high school and 165 in the elementary section.

The Sisters of Humility withdrew from Lewistown in 1978. Sister Josephine Abel was the last Humility sister to serve.

Lewistown has a rich tradition of Humility vocations. Former residents include Sisters Mary John Byers, Josephine Abel, Marie Wight, Nancy Wooldridge, Joan Marie Schuster, Elsie Tuss, Claudellen Pentecost, Dolores Schuh, Kathleen Hanley and Johanna Rickl.

In May, 1986, Most Rev. Thomas J. Murphy, Bishop of Great Falls-Billings, announced the decision to close St. Leo's Elementary and Secondary School at the end of the current school year. The high school enrollment dropped to 37 students and the elementary school to 100. Factors contributing to closing the school were a "dwindling enrollment, high educational costs and a need for a broader curriculum." Low economy in the area also contributed to the

In Montana 1906-1986

decision to close the schools.

Mother Francis retires

When Mother Francis made the Holy Year Pilgrimage in 1925, Bishop Lenihan asked the Holy Father to make her superior for life. In 1930, Mother Francis, who had reached the age of 74, felt she could no longer meet the demands of the office and petitioned the Holy Father to be released from the appointment. She requested,

I received a document in 1925 from the Sacred Congregation of Religious appointing me superior for life. While I appreciate the honor conferred on me and am very grateful for the same, I feel the burden and responsibility now too much for my age; Therefore I appeal to Your Excellency to be released from this obligation at whatever time the Sacred Congregation sees fit to do so.

On June 10, 1932, Sister Loretto Dimke was elected second superior general. Even though retired from the community office, Mother Francis continued her interest in the sisters and the many administrations of the community. She died January 28, 1944, of pneumonia at the age of 88.

Iowa and Montana foundations reunited

Mother Francis did not live to see the "Rocky Mountain Mission" which she founded reunited with the Ottumwa community. Mother Geraldine Upham, Mother Colette Troja, Mother Rose Dimke, Bishop Ralph L. Hayes of Davenport and Bishop William J. Condon considered the feasibility of an amalgamation of the two communities.

Following the 1944 annual retreat, Conducted by Rev. Michael Harding, OFM, canonist of Washington, D.C., a General Chapter was held at Sacred Heart Convent. The purpose of the Chapter was the revision of the present Rules and Constitutions to make them conform to Canon Law of the Church.

Father Harding explained he had read both rules of the Ottumwa and Villa Maria branches of the Sisters of Humility. Since the Ottumwa constitution had received papal approval he gave preference to it as a basis for revision. The question of union with the Ottumwa community was addressed to the consulting canonist who explained how it could be effected. A ballot prepared by the canonist was cast by each sister. Two questions were proposed; one relating to the revision of the Constitutions and the other directed to a reunion.

The ballots indicated a 99% desire to be "united to the congregation canonically erected at Ottumwa, Iowa."

Mother Rose and Sister Regina were delegated to go to Ottumwa to begin formal negotiations. On December 29, 1944, a special General Chapter of the

The Sisters of the Humility of Mary

Sisters of Humility, Ottumwa, was called to consider the request of the Great Falls sisters to be united with the Ottumwa community. Negotiations centered around constitutions, customs, habit, property, finances and assignment locations. Continued consultation with respective bishops led to a formal petition for union approval from the Holy See. In an October 13, 1946 communication to Mother Rose, Bishop Condon writes,

For many months negotiations have been in progress looking into a union between the Diocesan Community of the Sisters of Humility of Mary with the Pontifical Congregation of the same name of Ottumwa, Iowa. The proposal has been approved by a majority of the members of each community. The advice of the Sacred Congregation of Religious has been sought in a communication dated May 8, 1946 informs us that the proposed union is approved and that the Sacred Congregation is ready to entertain a formal petition of union between the two communities. Accordingly a formal petition is being prepared and will be forwarded to the Holy See as soon as possible.

In the sincere hope that this union of the two communities will promote the spiritual welfare of the members as well as the good of the Church and religion, may I suggest that we all unite in daily prayer to the Holy Spirit and invoke the intercession of the Blessed Mother of God during the time we await the decision of the Holy See.

On June 21, 1947, Mother Rose received a communication from Bishop Hayes telling of the approval of the amalgamation.

I am happy to inform you that the Sacred Congregation of Religious has issued the decree authorizing the union of the Sisters of Humility of Great Falls with the Pontifical Institute of the same name of the Diocese of Davenport. The original document has been forwarded to me by His Excellency, Bishop Condon. The Sacred Congregation has appointed me as its representative officially to execute the decree.

This letter is merely by way of notification so that you may be aware of the fact that the decree of union has been issued. A certain canonical process is in order and it will take several days to institute and carry out that process.

I am very happy that the Sacred Congregation of Religious has acted favorably in the application of union. I am persuaded that the cause of religion will be advanced and that great spiritual fruits will accrue to your institute and to the Sisters of Humility.

In Montana 1906-1986

The Decree of Execution, signed by Most Rev. Ralph L. Hayes, Bishop of Davenport was given at Davenport on June 24, 1947. It read,

Having been commissioned by the Sacred Congregation of Religious through its decree given on May 8, 1947, do hereby declare the afore mentioned decree of the Sacred Congregation by which the Sisters of the Institute of the Holy Humility of the Blessed Virgin Mary of diocesan law in Great Falls, Montana, be extintively united to the Institute of the same name of pontifical law whose motherhouse is at Ottumwa, Iowa, to be executed and that each sister of the Institute of the Holy Humility of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Great Falls shall, upon freely signing the declaration of her acceptance, become a member of the Congregation of the Holy Humility of Mary, an Institute of pontifical law, with all rights of seniority of profession which she formerly held in the Great Falls Institute of the Holy Humility of Mary; moreover, the dowry of each and every sisters of the former Great Falls Institute is to be preserved intact as the dowry of that individual sister and administered according to the norms of Canon Law; further, that any legacies to any Montana house be preserved for the use of such house in accordance with the will of the testator.

The Decree was signed by 40 Great Falls sisters. Sister Pauline Curry was appointed superior (1947-1954) of the Montana community. She was succeeded by: Sister Francesca Foley (1954-59); Sister Maurine Sofranko (1959-65) and Sister Mary John Byers (1965-72). Sacred Heart Convent was sold in 1972.

Vacation schools

Bishop Edwin O'Hara, who succeeded Bishop Lenihan, showed continued interest in the religious instruction of the young, particularly in areas where there were no Catholic schools. In 1929 he inaugurated Vacation Schools, so called because they were scheduled at the close of the school year. They were from two to four weeks in length and provided the opportunity for in-depth learning sessions in doctrine, church music, altar boy training, First Communion and Confirmation instruction. The Sisters of Humility establish the first religious vacation school in Red Lodge which also had the distinction of being the first in the diocese. Sister Regina Thill was one of the pioneer members in the movement.

Sisters were engaged to organize each parish school, often using lay volunteers to help them. Even though it called for a tight end-of-the-year

The Sisters of the Humility of Mary

schedule for the sisters, they valued this aspect of their ministry. In many cases it was the only contact between the people and the sisters. It was an occasion for a parish to become "alive" in a way no "preached" mission could accomplish for children. A pastor welcomed vacation schools, taught by experienced classroom teachers, as a blessing in his parish. They encouraged the sisters to relate to members of their parishes, to reach out to those needing the healing power of love.

There were fringe benefits for the sisters: a refreshing change from routine, a great appreciation of the struggles many Catholic parents made to keep faith alive in their homes. There was a social aspect of sharing and giving: inviting sisters to share a meal in their homes or taking them to visit some of nature's wonders or historical sights. Vacation Schools were held in Rygate, Hobson, Wolf Point, Moore, Geyser, Black Eagle, Grass Range, Fort Shaw, Stockett, Sand Coulee and many other places with interesting names. Records indicate as many as 26 schools were taught by the sisters in a single summer. Often they had sessions scheduled until the opening of the annual retreat.

For the Sisters of Humility, Montana was the beginning of a vacation school trend that was extensively adapted in Iowa and many other states. Many Protestant denominations took up the movement. Though not as numerous today as formerly, the program continues to operate for more than 50 years.

New missions open

Two additional missions opened in 1935 and 1936. Father Henry, superintendent of St. Joseph's Children's Home in Torrington, Wyoming, called on Mother Loretto requesting Sisters of Humility to staff the home. Sister Rose was appointed superior, assisted by Sisters Veronica, Madonna, Magdalena, Philomene and Michael.

The number of children in the home increased, calling for additional sisters. No additional personnel was available which necessitated the withdrawal of the sisters after maintaining the home for five years. The Franciscan Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi of Milwaukee replaced them. The home continues in operation today with approximately 40 children.

The following year Rev. Pettit, Glendive, requested the Sisters of Humility to organize a school in his parish. Sister Veronica was appointed superior assisted by Sisters Theodora and Patricia, arriving at Sacred Heart School in August, 1936. School rooms were partitioned off in the basement of the church for grades one through four. Each year two additional grades were added until the junior high level was reached. Insufficient parish financing prevented the development of a high school. The sisters withdrew in 1980. The school continues to operate.

Another school was yet to open in Montana. In 1948, Rev. A. J. Jarek, pastor of St. Agnes Church, Red Lodge, applied to Mother M. Colette for sisters

In Montana 1906-1986

to organize a school. Sister Veronica was appointed superior, principal and teacher of grades three, four and five. Sister Bernard Bowers taught grades one and two while Sister Patricia had grades six, seven and eight. Mother Rose was housekeeper. There were 54 students enrolled the first year with three graduates. The school operated until 1969.

In 1949, St. Mathias School opened in the extreme eastern section of the state in Sidney. Sister Gabriel Gyenge, Clement Lenihan and Bernard Bowers opened the school with 95 pupils, grades one through six. The following year the seventh grade was added, taught by Sister Alfreda Gorman. Peak enrollment in the years 1960-1963 reached 198. In the late 1960's financial stress forced the discontinuance of grades seven and eight. The enrollment dropped to 91. Finally, in 1971 the school was closed. In 22 years of operation more than 3000 children were educated by the Sisters of Humility.

Catholic Central High School opens

Catholic secondary education in Great Falls was reorganized in 1950 under the direction of the Most Rev. William J. Condon. A \$500,000 modern and well equipped school was constructed at 2500 Central Avenue to include students from the three existing high schools: St. Mary's, St. Thomas and the Ursuline Academy and the graduates of the grade schools of the six city parishes: St. Mary's, St. Gerard, St. Joseph, Black Eagle, Holy Family and Our Lady of Lourdes. Sisters of Humility, Ursuline and Providence teachers, priests and lay persons made up the faculty. Father Harold Arbanas was named principal of the school which was accredited by both the Montana Board of Education and the Northwest Association of Secondary Schools. Peak enrollment reached more than 800 students.

St. Joseph parish on the west side in Great Falls was the eighth school to be staffed by the Sisters of Humility. The parish was founded in 1912 but no school was opened until 1955. Msgr. P.J. Tracy, pastor of St. Joseph parish, led a four-day festival marking the opening of the school. Sister Anna Catherine Collins was appointed principal with five additional sisters for grades one through six: Sisters Magdalena, Lambertine, Marilyn and Corrine. In five years the school reached a peak enrollment of more than 300 students.

Decline of schools

This was a period of prosperity and achievement in Catholic education. As time passed, increasingly greater numbers of students and salaries of lay teachers cut into school budgets, not to mention financial layout for school equipment that was of vital importance to education. In the midst of spiraling costs, Vatican II opened the windows to new assessments and evaluations. As everywhere, one by one, schools closed. Catholic Central in Great Falls was sold to the public school system and renamed Paris Gibson Junior High School.

The Sisters of the Humility of Mary

Decreasing enrollment caused it eventually to close its doors. In 1986 it was reopened as a school for handicapped children.

Sacred Heart Convent becomes rehabilitation center

Sacred Heart Convent which once housed more than thirty sisters who taught in the city became a liability instead of an asset. An agonizing decision to sell the property was somewhat mollified in knowing their home would be a part of yet another ministry, that of rehabilitation of alcohol addicts.

On June 30, 1972, the convent which had housed the sisters for nearly fifty years was closed. Cascade Council on Alcoholism purchased the property to use as a rehabilitation center.

The Most Rev. Thomas J. Murphy, Bishop of Great Falls-Billings Diocese in speaking of the ministry of women religious in the church in Eastern Montana, said,

Accidental factors have changed in our lifetime, such as the religious habit, and large convent living has taken on a new expression. But what has remained has been a constant and essential witness to the value of the Gospel, a ministry of service, prayer and love with and for the Christian community.

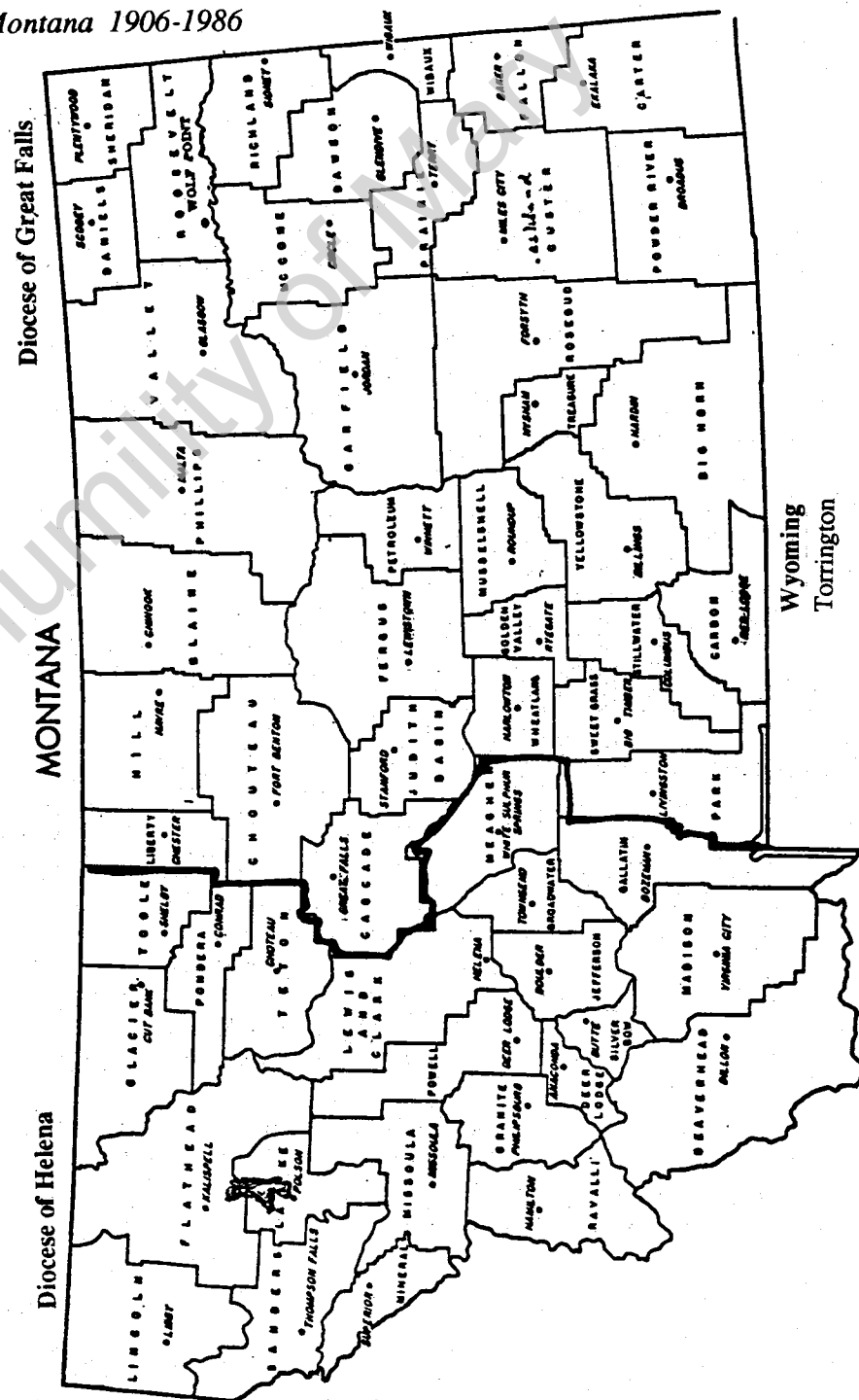
Following the sale of Sacred Heart Convent a large residence was purchased on 401 Second Avenue SW for a center for sisters living in the area. Sisters who were no longer physically able to remain actively employed retired to the Care Center in Ottumwa. Other ministries were pursued, including pastoral work, catechetical instruction, private tutoring, library science, art and instruction of the deaf. Unknown factors brought about the temporary close of the work of the Cascade Council on Alcoholism. In December, 1983, the Rocky Mountain Treatment Center opened a 32-bed private inpatient facility for chemically dependent people. A staff of 19 in the treatment wing on second floor includes counseling offices, group therapy rooms, nursing station, a doctor's office and examination room, lecture hall and chapel.

As we look back with sentiments of nostalgia, we also assess it as a time of great achievement. The sisters responded to the need of education of youth in Montana since 1906 whether in traditionally established schools or in vacation schools in remote areas. They were a dedicated group searching for innovative ways of service. They pursued their work as professionals, ever giving, seldom asking, without headlines or spotlights. They carried the torch of education of youth as did the first Sisters of Humility in Dommartin, France.

Maurine Sofranko, CHM
Humility of Mary Center
820 West Central Park
Davenport, Iowa 52804

In Montana 1906-1986

Appendix A



The Sisters of the Humility of Mary

Appendix B

**Providence Sisters begin a hospital,
orphanage and college**

At the request of the Most Rev. J. B. Brondel, first Bishop of Montana, Sisters Julian and four Sisters of Charity of Providence from Montreal, arrived in Great Falls in September, 1892, to open a hospital. Named Columbus Hospital in commemoration of the Fourth Centenary of the discovery of America, the small unfinished frame building served a population of 10,000 residents.

Within a short time a larger structure was begun on Third Avenue North to accommodate the growing number of patients seeking medical care. Completion was delayed until 1894 because of a national financial crisis and panic. A three year nursing program was added to the hospital.

In 1910 the Providence Sisters founded St. Thomas Orphans' Home for homeless children. When doors were opened for occupancy 88 children were admitted. From home to elementary to high school education followed until the latter became a part of Central Catholic High School.

In 1929 the Most Rev. Mathias C. Lenihan laid the cornerstone for the new \$1,000,000 Columbus Hospital which occupied the entire block on Second Avenue North.

The College of Great Falls began as an Ursuline-Providence venture in 1932. Directed by the Most Rev. Edwin V. O'Hara, the Great Falls Junior College enrolled fourteen students in the Ursuline Academy. A Normal College for teacher-training was opened by the Providence Sisters at Third Avenue and 17th Street. Both schools were accredited by the Northwestern Association of Secondary and High Schools. Shortly after the Ursuline Sisters withdrew and the Providence Sisters became the sole operators under the title of the College of Great Falls.

Today the College of Great Falls has moved to a new location with a spacious campus including numerous buildings. More than 1,000 students are enrolled. A new Columbus Hospital with a 198-bed capacity continues to serve health needs of the community.

Appendix C

Ursuline Sisters open academy

Six Ursuline Sisters from Toledo, Ohio (Quebec based exiles from France) arrived in Montana in 1884 to teach St. Peter's Mission in Cascade County. Eventually, there were four boarding schools, two for boys (Indian and white) conducted by the Jesuit priests and two for girls conducted by the Ursuline sisters. The academy, which held the distinction of being one of the finest boarding schools in the Northwest, began in 1892.

After many requests the Sisters expanded their work to include Great Falls in 1911. Bishop Lenihan laid the cornerstone for the academy in the 2300 block on Central Avenue. The structure was completed in 1912, admitting students on elementary and secondary levels. Strong emphasis was placed on art, music and home economics. Peak enrollment reached 372 students in 1929.

In 1932 educational plans were expanded to include a newly organized a Junior College of Great Falls with an enrollment of fourteen students at the Ursuline Academy. Mother Genevieve McBride was the first dean, supported by six Ursuline Sisters and two Providence Sisters. Later the Ursuline Sisters withdrew.

In 1946 the Ursuline Sisters opened a school in the basement of Our Lady of Lourdes Church. A new school was opened for occupancy the following year. Ursuline Academy students enrolled in Catholic Central High School in 1950 when it opened in 1950, leaving only the elementary school in operation. In 1969 Holy Family parish school opened at 2800 Central Avenue.

Renamed the Ursuline Center, the former academy offers facilities for numerous city and state wide activities including Lutheran Social Services, Engaged Encounter, retreats, Alcohol Anonymous meetings, conventions, Divorce Support, Bible study groups, to name a few.

The Sisters of the Humility of Mary

Appendix D

Sister Mathias remembers Mother Francis

In my personal private conferences with her, Mother Francis gave me a sense of my personal worth and ability and helped me to recognize my talents. She expected me to develop my prayer life and intellectual abilities to the greatest possible extent. She trusted me to carry out my duties with a mature religious attitude assuming personal responsibility for my own life and actions without being concerned with what others might think or say. Others had their responsibilities; it was only necessary for me personally to respond to what God wanted of me.

On general, Mother Francis provided me and the other sisters in my age group with the educational opportunities necessary to develop our talents as well as she, in conference with us, recognized them so that we might be effective religious in the classroom or wherever our avocation happened to be.

Mother Francis herself was a deeply spiritual person and indirectly communicated this spirit to us. She had a great devotion to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, to the Passion of Our Lord and to our Blessed Mother. Despite the fact that she was involved in many activities, she seemed to have time for everything. It seemed to me that she did everything in a mature, orderly way without ostentation.

She was ahead of her time. In 1928, when the CCD movement had not yet caught hold in the U.S., Mother Francis, in cooperation with the desires of Bishop Lenihan, had her sisters teaching summer religious education classes in country places. In 1929 I was one of a group of four sisters who taught religious classes to 200 children in Grades I to VIII in Red Lodge for four weeks.

In Montana 1906-1986

Appendix E

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Appendix F

Chronology of Events

- 1904 Great Falls Diocese established. Most Rev. Mathias C. Linehan, first bishop
- 1906 Mother Francis, Sisters Annunciation Mahon and Evangelista Dugan arrive in Great Falls to open first parochial school in city
- 1907 Sisters Immaculate Lynch and Cyril Fitzgerald join Great Falls sisters
- 1910 Sisters Regina Thill and Loretto Dimke enter western novitiate
- 1912 Great Falls Sisters of Humility become an independent foundation
- 1916 St. Mary's grade school and high school move into new building Seventh Street and Fourth Avenue North
- 1917 First high school graduation of six girls
- 1922 Sisters move to Sacred Heart Convent on Fourth Avenue North and Tenth Street.
- 1925 Mother Francis and Sister Immaculate make Holy Year Jubilee pilgrimage
- 1925 First Irish postulants, Sisters Mathias Lenihan and Patricia O'Connell enter Great Falls novitiate. Fourteen postulants arrive the following year.
- 1928 Billings, Our Lady of Guadalupe school opens
- 1930 Vacation schools inaugurated. First in Red Lodge
- 1930 Lewistown, St. Leo's Elementary School opens
- 1938 Lewistown, St. Leo's High School opens
- 1935 Torrington, Wyoming, St. Joseph Home for children opens
- 1936 Glendive, Sacred Heart School opens
- 1947 Amalgamation of Iowa-Montana foundations
- 1948 Red Lodge, St. Agnes School opens
- 1949 Sidney, St. Matthew School opens
- 1950 Great Falls, Catholic Central High School opens
- 1955 Great Falls, St. Joseph School opens
- 1972 Sacred Heart Convent closed
- 1978 Sisters of Humility withdraw from St. Leo's High School, Lewistown
- 1986 Lewistown schools close

Appendix G

Members of the Montana Foundation 1909-1947

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Mother Francis Mangan | Sister Angela Quinlan |
| Sister Immaculate Lynch | Sister Helen Murphy |
| Sister Cyril Fitzgerald | Sister Dorothy O'Connor |
| Sister Annunciation Mahon | Sister Brigid Rice |
| Sister Evangelista Dugan | Sister Anne Goulding |
| Sister Regina Thill | Sister Pius Bisciglia |
| Sister Loretto Dimke | Sister Clare Friedt |
| Sister Catherine Cherpeski | Sister Carmelita Davis |
| Sister Dolores Patterson | Sister Veronica Kirscher |
| Sister Agnes Cuddihy | Sister Madonna Self |
| Sister Rose Dimke | Sister Barbara Mary Geiger |
| Sister Margaret Hines | Sister Edy the Rademaker |
| Sister Loyola Domke | Sister Toni Geiger |
| Sister Zita Kowell | Sister Miriam Rita Goga |
| Sister Bernadette Cherpeski | Sister Louise Geiger |
| Sister Mathias Lenihan | Sister Josephine Abel |
| Sister Patricia O'Connell | Sister Mary John Byers |
| Sister Gabriel Wolf | Sister Theodora Tritschler |
| Sister Magdalena Goertz | Sister Cecelia Vandenberg |
| Sister Michael Goulding | Sister Bernard Bowers |
| Sister Joseph Moynihan | Sister Ursula Keough |
| Sister Clement Lenihan | Sister Madeleine Kleffner |
| Sister Gertrude Cassidy | Sister Monica Antonich |
| Sister Vincent Hayes | |

Congregation of the Humility of Mary