

Villa Maria Academy  
*Green Tree*  
Malvern, Pennsylvania

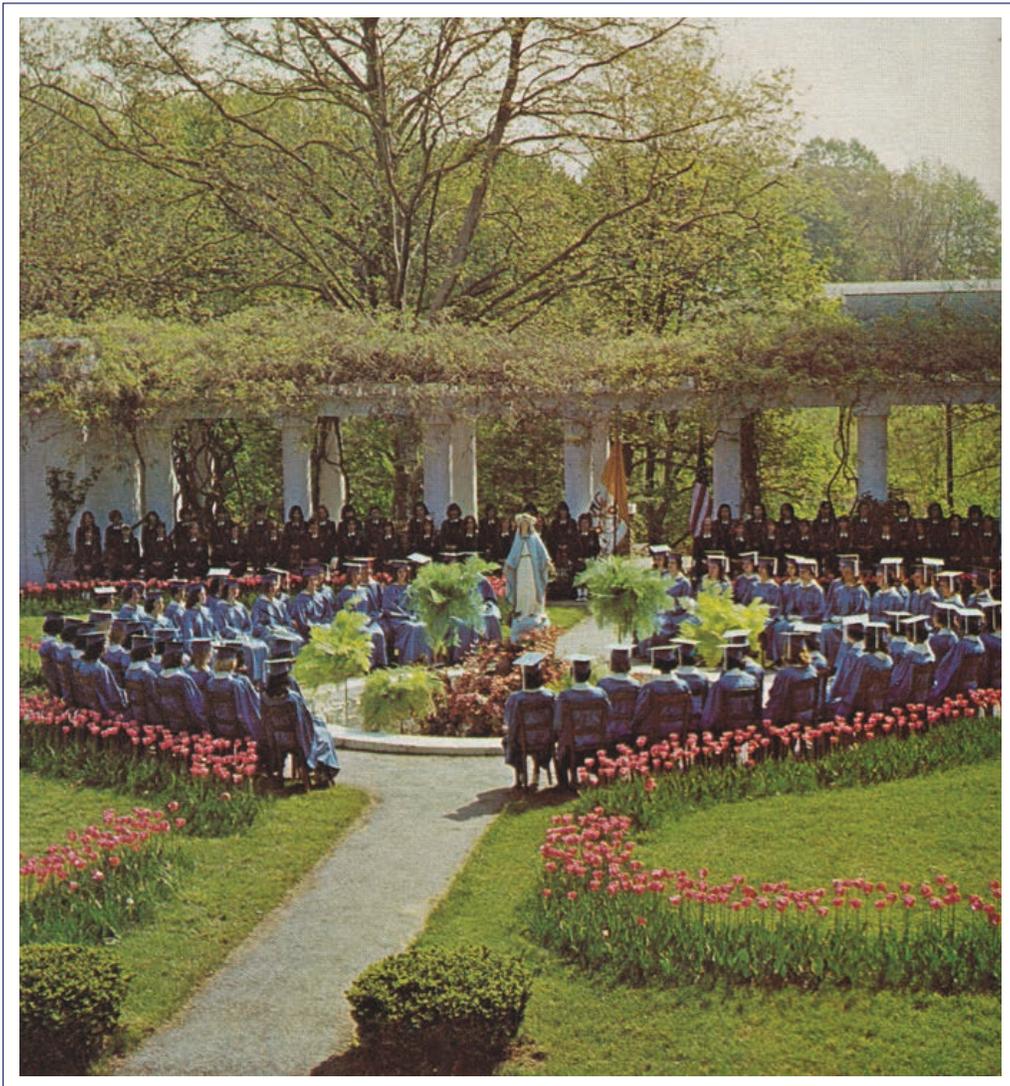
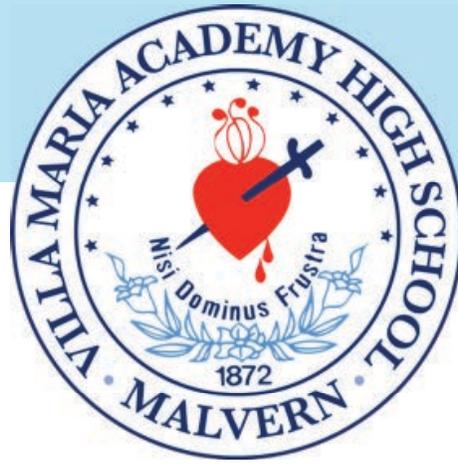


A History of Our IHM Principals

*Since 1872*

# Table of Contents

The Italian Gardens	1
An Introduction	2
Sister Mary Gonzaga Rooney (1872 – 1878)	4
Sister Mary James Sweeney (1878 – 1886)	5
Sister M. deChantal Hayes (1886 -1892)	6
Sister Mary Borgia Eckenroth (1892 – 1893)	7
Sister M. Camilla Maloney (1893 – 1904, 1905 – 1910)	8
Sister Mary McMenamin (1904 – 1905)	9
Sister Mary Irene Lafferty (1910 – 1911)	10
Sister Mary Berenice McDonough (1911 – 1914)	11
Sister M. Loyola Gallagher (1914 – 1925)	12
Sister Mary Crescentia Lamb (1925 – 1931; Green Tree campus)	13
Sister M. St. Margaret Donovan (1926 – 1930; Immaculata campus)	14
Sister M. Immaculata Hayes (1931 – 1935)	15
Sister Louise Marie Betz (1935 – 1939)	16
Sister Mary Esther Carty (1939 – 1940)	17
Sister Mary Andrew Murray (1940 – 1946)	18
Sister M. Catherine Louise Martin (1946 – 1956)	19
Sister M. Carmen Rosa Hamill (1956 – 1962)	20
Sister Maria Assumpta Monaghan (1962 – 1968)	21
Sister M. Thérèse Agnes Bell (1968 – 1971)	22
Sister Marie Agnese O'Brien (1971 – 1974)	24
Sister M. St. Eileen Gilligan (1974 – 1975)	25
Sister M. Lucina Hirsch (1975 – 1981)	27
Sister Mary Kelly (1981 – 2000)	28
Sister Patricia Fadden (2000 – 2002)	30
Sister Marita Carmel McCarthy (2002 – 2012)	31
Sister Regina Joseph Ryan (2012 – present)	32
References and Special Thanks	33



## The Italian Gardens

*Spring 1966*

# An Introduction ...

Villa Maria Academy traces our origins to 1872, when the Motherhouse, Novitiate and boarding school of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, moved from Reading, PA, to a property in the borough of West Chester, PA. In our early days, we were known as The Academy of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. We continued to use that name until about 1878, when the name Villa Maria came into common use.

In September of 1914, the West Chester community moved to Frazer, PA, with the intention that Villa Maria at Immaculata (as the Frazer site was later named) would eventually serve as a Catholic college for women. But for the next few years, Villa Maria operated as an academy for girls in grades 1 through 12.

In the summer of 1924, under Sister M. Loyola Gallagher's leadership, the Sisters took ownership of a 123-acre estate at "Green Tree," a few miles east of Immaculata. The estate's mansion house and adjacent buildings were quickly outfitted to accom-

modate the purposes of an elementary school and a secondary school. Villa Maria Academy at Green Tree opened on May 5, 1925, and grades 1 through 8 transferred from Immaculata, followed gradually over the next few years by grades 9 through 12. The 11-member Class of 1932 (*photo above*) was the first to graduate from our new campus.

No history of Villa Maria Academy can be told without great honor and gratitude being shown to the women who made our school possible: the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, known affectionately to all Villa Marians as the IHMs.

The early leaders of the IHM Community, most notably Sister M. Camilla Maloney (*see page 8*) and Sister M. Loyola Gallagher (*see page 12*), understood the fundamental importance of higher education. So, at a time when a college education was a rarity for men and almost unheard of for women, IHM Sisters were earning their B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in disciplines as varied as biology, education, French, Greek, Latin, mathematics and music. And they passed on this commitment to education to every student who has ever passed through the doors of Villa Maria.

Not only did the Sisters understand the importance of academics, they also recognized the role that athletics plays in the development of young women. A two-page essay on the value of athleticism by Sister Rita Frances appeared in the 1920 issue of *The Villa Marian*. Sister's thesis can be summarized in this quote: *Whatever makes for health and physical vigor also makes for intellectual efficiency.*



*The Class of 1932, which included future teacher and principal Sister M. St. Eileen Gilligan (see page 25), known then as Marie Frances Gilligan (front row center).*

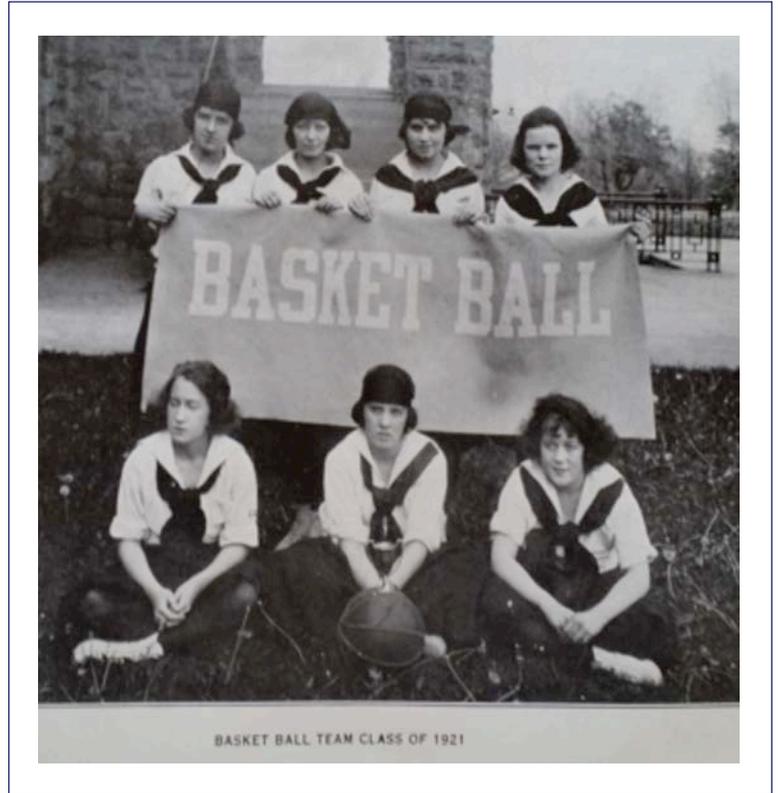
In the early 1920s, Villa's sports included baseball, basketball (*photo right*), swimming, tennis, track (our first-ever meet: June 4, 1920) and volleyball. Our state championships in field hockey almost 100 years later stem directly from this early commitment to physical fitness and team sports.

Throughout most of Villa Maria's 19th- and 20th-century history, the majority of our teachers and administrators have been IHM Sisters. As the 21st century dawned, however, fewer young women were choosing to dedicate their lives as professed Sisters. As a result, the number of Sisters has been steadily decreasing.

In 2013, under the leadership of principal Sister Regina Joseph Ryan, VMA embarked on a strategic-planning initiative that eventually led to the creation of a roadmap for our school to follow as we headed toward our 150th anniversary. And the highest and overarching priority identified for that roadmap was the inestimable importance of fostering and maintaining the influence and charism of the IHM Sisters.

To that end, various programs and projects were organized at school. Sister Regina also established an IHM Charism Committee of Villa Maria's Advisory Board. The mission of that group was to find concrete ways to keep the influence and memory of the IHM Sisters alive and tangible. The result of the Committee's deliberations is this Book of Principals, which identifies and honors the 26 women who have served Villa Maria Academy as principal since 1872. Researching and compiling this book has been the joyful honor of the following Committee members:

- Sister Carol Anne Couchara, IHM '69      VMA alumna and Professor of Education, Immaculata University
- Father Michael Gerlach      Pastor of Saints Simon and Jude parish in West Chester, PA
- Sister Marie Claire Matsinger, IHM      Villa Maria's Director of Mission and Ministry
- Eileen O'Malley Spangler '69      VMA alumna and former president of Villa Maria's Alumnae Association
- Dorothy Martin Toomey '77      VMA alumna and president of Villa Maria's Alumnae Association; teacher and director of Music Ministry at St. Bernadette's parish in Drexel Hill, PA



*Lovingly presented to Villa Maria Academy High School, 2018*

# Sister Mary Gonzaga Rooney

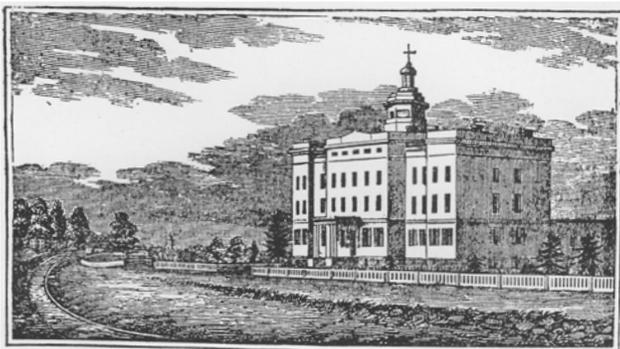
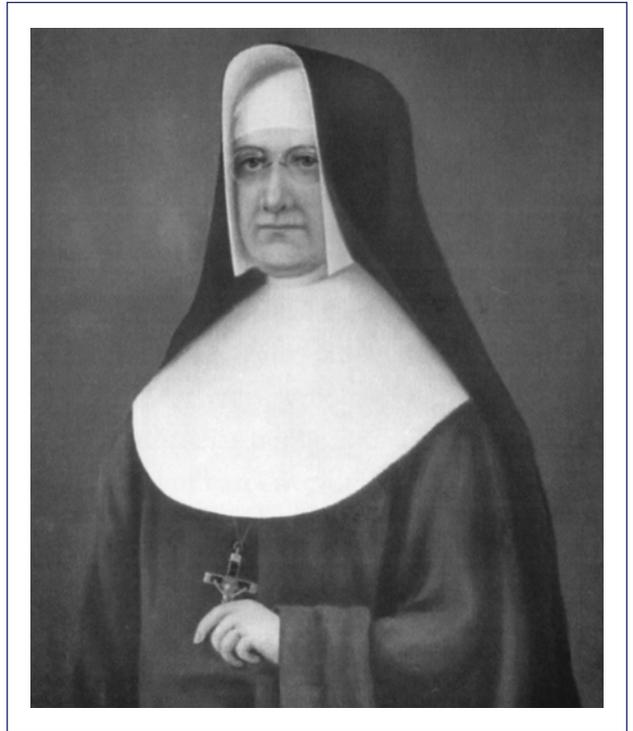
*Villa Maria Academy Principal 1872 – 1878*

## Getting to know her . . .

- Born Catherine Rooney, March 4, 1840, Cathedral Parish, Philadelphia.
- Her parents were Thomas Rooney and Anna Kelly Rooney.
- Catherine entered the IHM Community on December 8, 1859, at the St. Joseph Novitiate in Susquehanna, PA.
- She was given the religious name Sister Mary Gonzaga when she received her habit on March 21, 1860. She professed her final vows on August 15, 1861.
- In 1862, at the age of 22, Sister was appointed Mistress of Novices.
- In 1868, Sister was appointed General Superior of the IHM Congregation, a position she held until 1886.
- In 1872, during Sister's term as General Superior, she was given the further responsibility of principal of the Academy of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (as Villa Maria was called at that time) when the Academy relocated from Reading, PA, to West Chester. The 10-acre West Chester property had been purchased by Bishop James Frederick Wood for \$22,000.
- Shortly after the Academy opened, the following piece appeared in the Catholic Herald on September 6, 1873:

*The Sisters of the Immaculate Heart are making hosts of friends among a class of people who were at first disposed to give them the cold shoulder. But competent teachers, a thorough course of study, careful attention to morals and the recognized ability to impart a good solid education, combining both refinement and usefulness, cannot fail to produce an effect and that effect has been produced by the "Blue Sisters" in West Chester.*

- In 1886, Sister concluded her tenure as General Superior and spent her next three years as superior at St. Theresa Convent in Philadelphia, followed by 25 years as superior at St. Joachim Convent in the Frankford section of the city.
- Sister died on June 23, 1914, at the age of 74. She is buried in St. Agnes Cemetery in West Chester.



WEST CHESTER MOTHERHOUSE...1871

## What was happening in the world ...

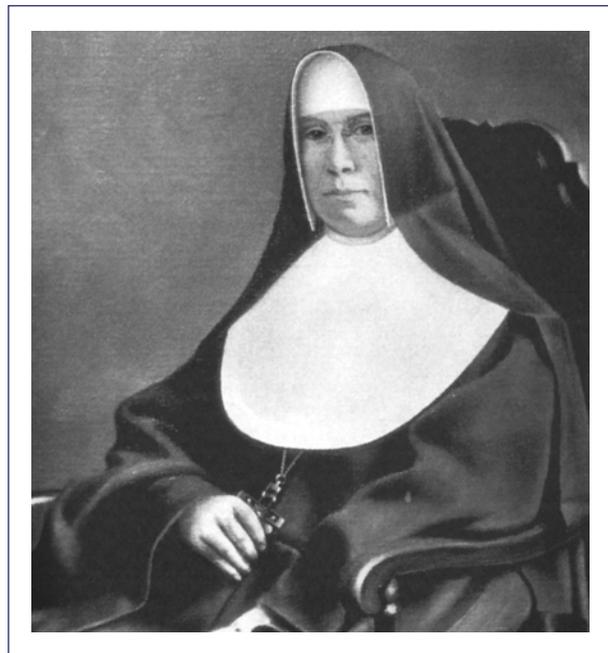
- Yellowstone National Park becomes the first national park (1872)
- Levi Strauss markets the first blue jeans (1873)
- Alexander Graham Bell invents the telephone (1876)

# Sister Mary James Sweeney

*Villa Maria Academy Principal 1878 – 1886*

## Getting to know her . . .

- Born Mary Ann Sweeney, September 15, 1851, in St. Paul Parish, Philadelphia.
- Her parents were Charles Sweeney and Anna Gallagher Sweeney, both from Ireland.
- From 1857 to 1869, Mary Ann attended St. Paul's Academy in Philadelphia for both grade school and high school.
- Mary Ann entered the Reading, PA, novitiate of the IHM Community on December 8, 1870.
- She was given the religious name Sister Mary James when she received her habit on July 21, 1871.
- Sister professed her first vows on September 5, 1872, and her final vows on July 26, 1915.
- She served in varied teaching assignments:
  - St. Francis Xavier Academy and St. John's Academy in Manayunk
  - St. Joseph Home for Homeless Industrious Boys in Philadelphia
  - Villa Maria Academy in West Chester until 1878
- Sister served as directress/principal of Villa Maria from 1878 to 1886.
- From 1879 until 1882, she was also Mistress of Novices.
- Sister's other administrative positions included:
  - 1886-1892: Sister Assistant to IHM General Superior, Sister M. deChantal Hayes
  - 1892-1904: Superior at St. Paul's Parish, Philadelphia
  - 1904-1911: Immaculate Conception, in the Germantown section of the city
- Sister was elected General Superior of the IHM Congregation on March 24, 1913, and was re-elected to a second six-year term on August 16, 1919.
- During Sister's terms as General Superior, she oversaw major events in IHM history:
  - 1913: The purchase of a seaside retreat house in Cape May, NJ
  - 1918: The influenza epidemic, during which nine IHM Sisters died while caring for the sick
  - 1920: Villa Maria College's (later Immaculata College) receipt of its full accreditation and college charter in 1920
  - 1922: The opening of the first South American mission in Peru
- Ten years as General Superior took their toll on Sister and her health declined to the point where she made full-time use of a wheelchair. The story is told that one day Sister said to the novice who had taken her to chapel, "Sister, take my chair out to the two little St. Aloysius Academy boys on the conservatory and make sure they get a good ride."
- Sister died on January 31, 1923, at the age of 71.
- She is buried in St. Agnes Cemetery in West Chester.



## What was happening in the world ...

- Thomas Edison invents the phonograph (1877)
- The first telephone book is published in New Haven, CT (1878)
- Edison also patents the electric light bulb (1879)

# Sister M. deChantal Hayes

*Villa Maria Academy Principal 1886 – 1892*

## Getting to know her . . .

- Born Catherine Elizabeth Hayes on March 25, 1840, in Silver Lake, Susquehanna County, PA.
- Her parents were Patrick Hayes and Ellen McDonell Hayes.
- She attended St. Joseph Academy in Silver Lake and was taught by the Sisters of the Holy Cross.
- Catherine entered the IHM Community on July 13, 1860 and was given the religious name Sister M. deChantal when she received her habit on February 2, 1861.
- Sister professed her vows on August 25, 1862.
- From 1868 to 1871, Sister served as Mistress of Novices at the Reading, PA, Motherhouse.
- Later assignments included serving as convent superior at St. Paul in Philadelphia, St. Patrick in Norristown and St. John the Baptist in Manayunk.
- On August 24, 1886, at the age of 46, Sister was appointed General Superior of the IHM Congregation and was later elected to that position by the Community on August 6, 1892.
- It was during her first term as General Superior that Sister carried the additional responsibility of principal of Villa Maria Academy, which at that time was located in West Chester.
- Sister was re-elected to a third term as Superior of the Community in August, 1898.
- After a short illness seven months before the end of her third term as General Superior, Sister died on January 10, 1904, at the age of 63.
- Sister is buried in St. Agnes Cemetery in West Chester, at the foot of the monument in memory of deceased IHM Sisters, which she had erected.



## Some remembrances of Sister deChantal:

- The third of 13 children, Sister loved family. Her father instilled a love of good reading. Her sister Julia, completely opposite in personality, later entered the Congregation, and, as Sister M. Columba, became a revered legend in the early history of St. Aloysius Academy.
- In the renovation of the Motherhouse undertaken during Sister's administration, a fifth floor was added, along with a four-story novitiate wing, an Academy south wing and fully equipped steam laundry.
- The countryside of her childhood Silver Lake gave her a deep appreciation of nature's beauty. At St. Paul Convent in Philadelphia, Sister planted a garden where young Sisters who taught in nearby church basements could walk in the fresh air. She also purchased a piano so that there would be music in the convent when they came home.

## What was happening in the world ...

- Coca-Cola is invented (1886)
- The Statue of Liberty is dedicated (1886)
- The National American Woman Suffrage Association is founded, with Susan B. Anthony as its first president (1890)

# Sister Mary Borgia Eckenroth

*Villa Maria Academy Principal 1892 – 1893*

## Getting to know her . . .

- Born Lucy Eckenroth on October 16, 1858, in Lebanon, PA.
- Her parents were William Eckenroth of Lebanon and Catherine Kirke Eckenroth of Ireland.
- Lucy attended the Academy of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Villa Maria's name until 1878), in Reading, and graduated from our West Chester location in 1875.
- She entered the IHM Community on August 14, 1877, and was given the religious name Sister Mary Borgia when she received her habit on February 5, 1878.
- Sister Borgia made her first vows on January 3, 1880, and her final vows on July 27, 1915.
- Sister's first and longest assignment was Villa Maria, from 1878 to 1914.
  - She taught 4th through 8th grades for 24 of those years.
  - She served as bursar for 21 years.
  - And from 1892 to 1893, Sister served as our principal.
- Sister spent most of the next 16 years as principal at St. Gabriel in Philadelphia; Holy Spirit in Asbury Park, NJ; Holy Name of Jesus in Philadelphia; and St. Augustine in Bridgeport.
- Sister retired to the IHM infirmary in 1931.
- She died there on December 16, 1950, at the age of 92.

Sister Borgia was one of the original students when Villa Maria opened its doors in West Chester. According to a history of the IHM Sisters written by Sister Maria Alma Ryan in 1934:

*One of the first students, now a venerable golden jubilarian, Sister M. Borgia Eckenroth, tells of her coming to West Chester in September 1872. Neither her mother nor herself had any idea of the location of the school; this was finally determined by the discovery of a large building before which stood some fifty desks, still crated! Sister continues, however, that contrary to her childish dreams of a prolonged holiday, she found herself, in a very few days, seated at one of those desks, hard at work!*



*The Academy of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (left) and the Reading Motherhouse and Novitiate (right), as they appeared when Sister Mary Borgia was a student at the Academy between 1870 and 1872.*



## What was happening in the world ...

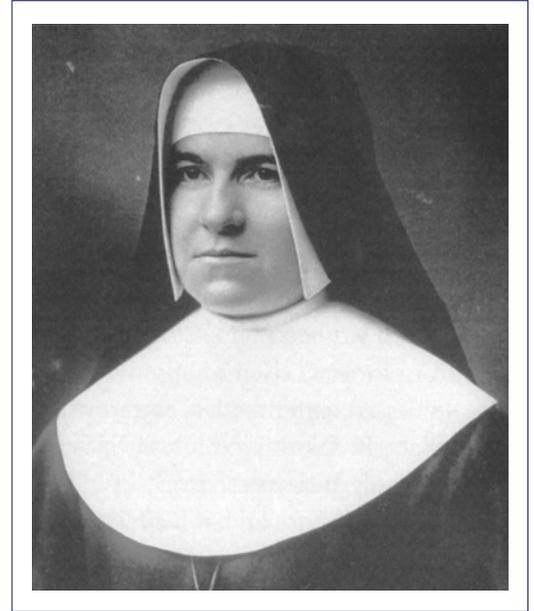
- Ellis Island opens to immigrants (1892)
- The General Electric Company is founded (1892)
- Grover Cleveland is inaugurated for a second term (1893)

# Sister M. Camilla Maloney

*Villa Maria Academy Principal 1893 – 1904, 1905 – 1910*

## Getting to know her . . .

- Born Elizabeth Maloney on November 10, 1852, in Susquehanna Depot, PA.
- Her parents were John Maloney and Catherine Connell Maloney.
- Elizabeth attended grade school at St. Joseph's in Susquehanna and high school at St. Alphonsus Academy in Laurel Hill, PA.
- She entered the IHM Community on September 1, 1870, and was given the religious name Sister M. Camilla when she received her habit on November 22, 1870.
- Sister professed her vows on October 16, 1872.
- In 1885, Sister began a short stint as a teacher at Villa Maria Academy in our West Chester location.
- From 1886 to 1892, Sister served as Mistress of Novices.
- In 1893, Sister was appointed Directress of Villa Maria.
- During her years at Villa, Sister also served as Assistant to the General Superior of the order and as Inspectress of all IHM schools in the Philadelphia Archdiocese (By 1904, there were 28 IHM schools.).
- In 1904, Sister was appointed to finish Sister M. deChantal Hayes' term as General Superior of the IHM Congregation.
- She was elected to that position in her own right on August 5, 1904 and was re-elected to another six-year term in 1910. During those years, Sister also served once again as Villa Maria's principal.
- Sister made the dream of a college for women a reality when she purchased 198 acres of Chester Valley land for \$71,452. Immaculata College was the result.
- After suffering a stroke, Sister died on February 24, 1913, at the age of 60.
- She is buried in St. Agnes Cemetery in West Chester.
- Camilla Hall, the Convent Home and Healthcare Center of the IHM Sisters, is named in Sister's memory.



## Some remembrances of Sister Camilla:

Her letters reveal a deep concern for each Sister's happiness. She championed joy as a special gift. She once wrote, "Nothing injures health like sadness, melancholy and bitterness."

Sister was a woman years ahead of her time. She foresaw the day when advanced degrees for teachers would be required by the state and she prepared well for that eventuality. She arranged for professors from the University of Pennsylvania, St. Charles Borromeo Seminary and West Chester Normal School (later University) to teach Sisters who came to the Motherhouse for the weekend. Sisters took classes in preparation for Catholic University of America examinations. Sister Camilla attended these classes in Philadelphia in rain, snow or sunshine. All this at a time when major colleges and universities were more than 50 years away from fully opening their degree programs to women.

## What was happening in the world ...

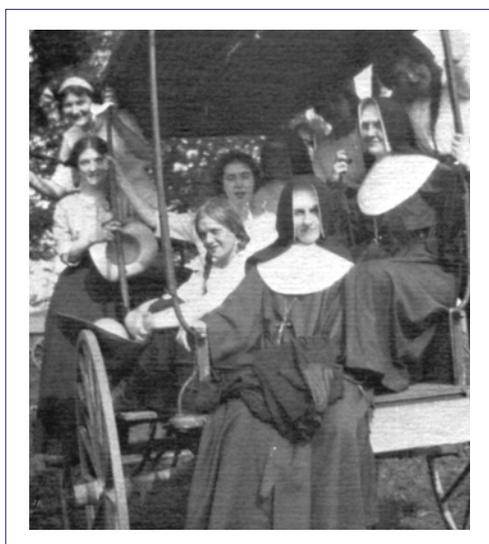
- Henry Ford invents his first gasoline-powered motor car (1896)
- President William McKinley is assassinated; VP Theodore Roosevelt becomes President (1901)
- The Wright Brothers' flight at Kitty Hawk, NC (1903)

# Sister Mary McMenamin

*Villa Maria Academy Principal 1904 – 1905*

## Getting to know her . . .

- Born Katherine A. McMenamin on January 7, 1860, in Philadelphia.
- Her parents were John McMenamin and Katherine Magee McMenamin, both from Donegal, Ireland.
- Katherine entered the IHM Community on September 2, 1887.
- She was given the religious name Sister Mary when she received her habit on January 3, 1888.
- Sister Mary made her first vows on December 10, 1889, and her final vows on August 15, 1915.
- Her early missions included teaching 6th, 7th and 8th grades at St. Joseph in Locust Gap, PA and St. Agnes in West Chester.
- Her longest mission lasted from 1891 to 1904 as principal at Gesu School in Philadelphia.
- Sister served as Directress of Villa Maria in our West Chester location from 1904 to 1905.
- From 1905 to 1926, Sister was principal at five Philadelphia schools:
  - 1905-1912: St. Paul
  - 1912-1918: St. Agatha
  - 1918-1919: St. Thomas Aquinas
  - 1919-1925: A second term at St. Agatha
  - 1925-1928: St. Francis de Sales
  - 1928-1931: A return to Gesu.
- Sister died on January 27, 1934, at the age of 74.



## What was happening in the world ...

- Ford's Model B is first introduced (1904)
- The St. Louis World's Fair showcases the first x-ray machine, an early fax machine and a baby incubator. It also popularizes ice cream cones, Dr. Pepper and cotton candy (1904)
- Albert Einstein develops his Theory of Relativity (1905)
- The United States acquires the Panama Canal (1905)

# Sister Mary Irene Lafferty

*Villa Maria Academy Principal 1910 – 1911*

## Getting to know her . . .

- Born Mary E. Lafferty on November 18, 1867, in Philadelphia.
- Her parents were Daniel Lafferty and Bridget McColgan Lafferty, both from Ireland.
- Mary entered the IHM Community on September 8, 1888.
- She was given the religious name Sister Mary Irene when she received her habit on January 3, 1889.
- Sister made her first vows on December 30, 1890 and her final vows on August 15, 1915.
- Her teaching assignments included:
  - 1890-1891: Villa Maria Academy in our West Chester location
  - 1891-1892: St. Gertrude in Conshohocken (grades 1-4) and St. Joachim in Philadelphia (grades 6-12)
  - 1892-1896: St. Francis Xavier in Philadelphia
  - 1896-1900: Sacred Heart of Jesus in Philadelphia
  - 1900-1905: Mt. St. Michael in Reading, PA
- From 1905 to 1910, Sister served as Inspectress of IHM Schools in the Philadelphia Archdiocese. By this time, there were 39 parish schools.
- From 1910 to 1911, she was Directress of Villa Maria Academy in our West Chester location.
- For the rest of her working life, Sister served as principal at the following Philadelphia schools:
  - 1911-1918: St. Paul
  - 1918-1919: St. John the Baptist (Manayunk)
  - 1919-1924: St. Thomas Aquinas
  - 1924-1925: Holy Name of Jesus
  - 1925-1928: St. Agatha
  - 1928-1930: St. Barnabas
- Sister died on May 25, 1930, at the age of 62.



*Unfortunately, no photos of Sister Mary Irene can be found. So, this photo from around 1910 can serve as a reminder of Sister and her VMA students.*

## What was happening in the world ...

- The Boy Scouts of America is incorporated (1910)
- The Supreme Court breaks up Standard Oil (1911)
- The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire (1911)
- The first-ever Indianapolis 500 (1911)

# Sister Mary Berenice McDonough

*Villa Maria Academy Principal 1911 – 1914*

## Getting to know her . . .

- Born Anna Agnes McDonough, November 19, 1872, in Reading, PA.
- Her parents were Stephen McDonough and Mary E. Duffy McDonough, both from Ireland.
- Anna entered the IHM Community on March 24, 1894.
- She was given the religious name Sister Mary Berenice when she received her habit on August 15, 1894. Sister made her first vows on July 30, 1896, and her final profession on August 15, 1915.
- Sister spent her first 16 years in the classroom, teaching 6th, 7th and 8th grades.
- In 1911, Sister was assigned to Villa Maria as Directress of the Academy.
- From 1916 to 1920, Sister Berenice served as Mistress of Novices, while also studying at Catholic University in Washington, DC.
- From 1920 to 1923, Sister served her first term on the General Council of the IHM Congregation.
- Over the next 12 years, until 1935, Sister was superior and principal in the Philadelphia parishes of St. Anthony of Padua, St. Francis Xavier and Holy Name of Jesus.
- In 1936, Sister was named superior at the Academy of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Fountain Springs, PA.
- From 1940 to 1946, she was stationed at Immaculata College as superior of the convent.
- During these years, Sister did double duty, having been elected for two more terms on the Community's General Council (1935 to 1945).
- Sister's final assignment brought her back to Villa Maria in our Green Tree/Malvern location, as superior of the convent until 1950. Sadly, Sister's health deteriorated quickly and she died at Villa Maria on November 28, 1951, at the age of 79 and is buried in the IHM cemetery at Immaculata.



*Photos of Sister Mary Berenice have been lost to time. But this delightful scene of a 1910 version of Daisy Chain serves as a reminder of her.*

Even as her health failed her, her mental sharpness and sensitivity to others never did:

During the last year of her life, Sister Mary Berenice would read about the plight of a poor missionary priest in India or poverty-stricken nuns in France or a destitute school in Africa. Before long, a package would be on its way with whatever Sister had on hand or could get together to satisfy their specific needs.

On the day she died, she was heartened to learn of Archbishop John O'Hara's appointment to the Philadelphia Archdiocese because she wished to go to Heaven "well-informed."

## What was happening in the world ...

- The Girls Scouts of the U.S.A. is founded (1912)
- The RMS Titanic hits an iceberg and sinks (1912)
- The assassination of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo ignites World War I (1914)

# Sister M. Loyola Gallagher

*Villa Maria Academy Principal 1914 – 1925*

## Getting to know her . . .

- Born Margaret Catherine Gallagher, February 26, 1861, in the Frankford section of Philadelphia.
- Margaret attended grade school at St. Joachim in Frankford, where she played a portable organ at Sunday parish Masses, an early indication of her life-long love of music.
- She graduated in 1880 from Villa Maria Academy and entered the IHM Community on March 24, 1882.
- Margaret was given the religious name Sister M. Loyola when she received her habit on August 2, 1882.
- She professed her final vows on July 16, 1884.
- Sister spent 20 years as a music teacher in various Philadelphia-area parishes and 10 years as the first superior at St. Francis de Sales in West Philadelphia.
- When Villa Maria Academy moved to Frazer, PA, in 1914, Sister Loyola was appointed principal.
- For 21 years, Sister guided Villa Maria and served as the first president of Villa Maria College, which by 1920 was distinct from the Academy. The College was renamed Immaculata College in 1929.
- Sister's belief that "a college is only as strong as its faculty" led her to invite teachers from nearby universities to become faculty members. And her lifelong love of music led her to send Sisters with musical talent to study at the best conservatories.
- Sister was elected the seventh General Superior of the IHM Congregation on April 2, 1923. It was during her tenure that Villa Maria Academy moved to our current location in Green Tree/Malvern in 1925 (*photos below*). After her two terms as General Superior, during which time the IHM Congregation grew from 939 Sisters to 1,410, Sister Loyola returned to Villa Maria in 1935 to become superior of the convent.
- After a short illness, Sister Loyola died at Green Tree on May 26, 1939.



## Fond memories from some of Sister's contemporaries:

- As a novice, Sister was noted for her queenly poise and grace, her startling blue eyes and slender hands.
- She was always the religious and the lady. Her advice to novices was "Wear your habit with distinction."
- As General Superior, she directed convent superiors to provide good wholesome food, to have a well-supplied medicine closet, and to give the Sisters time of extra rest.

## What was happening in the world ...

- Spanish Influenza Epidemic, in which nine IHM sisters die treating the Philadelphia-area sick (1918)
- Prohibition begins (1920)
- The 19th amendment grants women the right to vote (1920)

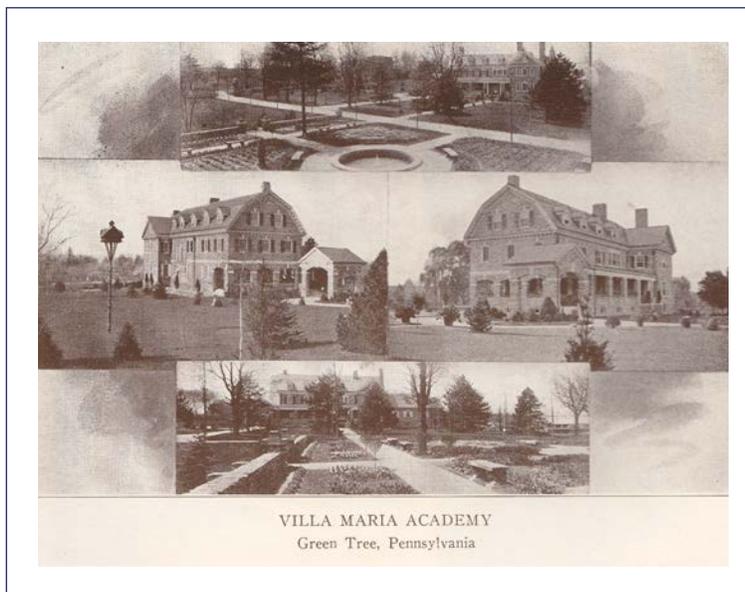
# Sister Mary Crescentia Lamb

*Villa Maria Academy Principal 1925 – 1931*

*Green Tree campus*

## Getting to know her . . .

- Born Catherine Lamb, April 5, 1854, Susquehanna County, PA.
- Her parents were James Lamb and Joanna Simon Lamb.
- From age 6 to age 17, Catherine attended Laurel Hill Academy, where she excelled in music.
- She entered the postulate of the Convent of the Immaculate Heart, Reading, PA, on March 25, 1871, just two weeks shy of her 17th birthday.
- Catherine was given the religious name Sister Mary Crescentia when she received her habit on February 2, 1872.
- Sister made her holy vows September 6, 1874.
- Sister's early assignments included teaching music at St. Paul's Academy and then at St Joachim's in the Frankford section of Philadelphia.
- Her other assignments:
  - 1895: First superior of newly erected school of St. Anthony of Padua in Philadelphia
  - 1910: First superior at Transfiguration of Our Lord, West Philadelphia – a beloved assignment
  - 1918: Superior, St. Francis de Sales
  - 1919: Transfiguration for another six years
- In 1925, Sister became the first principal of Villa Maria Academy's new Green Tree/Malvern campus (*photo above*). Her counterpart at the Frazer/Immaculata campus was Sister M. St. Margaret Donovan (*see page 14*), who served as principal at that location during the gradual transfer of grades 9 through 12.
- Sister also served for 12 years on the General Council of the IHM Community from 1923 to 1935.
- She retired to the infirmary at the West Chester Motherhouse in 1936 and died on April 23, 1937, at the age of 83. Sister is buried in St. Agnes Cemetery in West Chester.



## Fond memories from some of Sister's contemporaries:

- “Sister was always ready with a word of praise and encouragement.”
- “. . . her kindness and maternal solicitude toward anyone who was ill.”
- “. . . never satisfied with second best. Sister achieved success more by encouragement than by reproof.”
- “. . . indomitable courage in tackling difficulties, and her infectious optimism.”

## What was happening in the world ...

- Charles Lindbergh makes the first non-stop trans-Atlantic flight (1927)
- Mickey Mouse makes his screen debut in *Steamboat Willie* (1928)
- The Wall Street Crash ignites The Great Depression (1929)

# Sister M. St. Margaret Donovan

*Villa Maria Academy Principal 1926 – 1930*

*Immaculata campus*

## Getting to know her . . .

- Born Marie Angela Donovan, June 4, 1889, in Sea Isle City, NJ.
- Her parents were Thomas Donovan and Mary McGarry Donovan.
- Marie attended grade school at St. Anthony of Padua from 1895 to 1903.
- She went on to Catholic Girls' High School Annex from 1903 to 1905 and finished her high school education at Notre Dame Academy in Philadelphia in 1908.
- Marie entered the IHM Community at Villa Maria Convent in West Chester on September 24, 1913, at the age of 24. She was given the religious name Sister M. St. Margaret when she received her habit on December 30, 1913.
- Sister made her first vows on December 29, 1915, and her final profession on August 25, 1921.
- Sister's first mission was at St. Agnes Elementary and High School in West Chester, where she taught 8th grade, as well as high-school classes.
- From 1925 to 1926, Sister taught at her alma mater, Catholic Girls' High School Annex.
- In 1926 Sister was transferred to Villa Maria's Frazer/Immaculata campus, where she served until 1930 as our principal during the gradual transfer of grades 9 through 12 to Green Tree. Her counterpart at Green Tree was Sister Mary Crescentia Lamb (see page 13).
- Sister studied at the University of Pennsylvania and Villanova College and received a Ph.D. from Penn in Latin and Greek in 1934.
- With her new Ph.D. in hand, Sister began what turned out to be a 39-year-long teaching assignment at Immaculata College.
- In early April of 1973 Sister became ill and was taken to Chester County Hospital, where she died on April 5, at the age of 83.
- Sister is buried in the IHM cemetery at Immaculata.



*Photos of Sister St. Margaret have been lost to time. But this charming shot of a Sister and her students on the Frazer/Immaculata campus serves as a reminder of her.*

## What was happening in the world ...

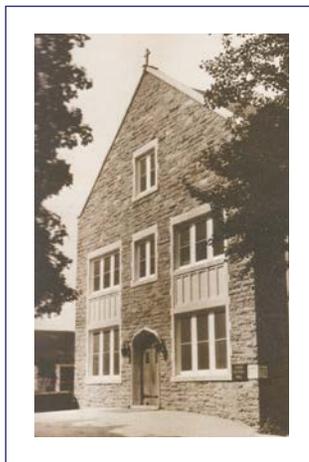
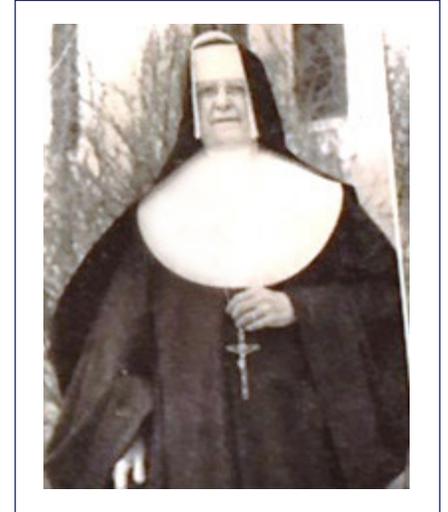
- Broadcast network NBC is founded (1926), followed by CBS (1927)
- The premiere of *The Jazz Singer*, starring Al Jolson — America's first "talkie" (1927)
- Herbert Hoover is elected president of the United States (1928)

# Sister M. Immaculata Hayes

*Villa Maria Academy Principal 1931 – 1935*

## Getting to know her . . .

- Born Helen T. Hayes, January 2, 1875, in Phoenixville, PA.
- Her parents were Simon P. Hayes and Katherine White Hayes, both from Ireland.
- Helen attended Emmet Elementary School and graduated from Phoenixville High School in 1891.
- She entered the IHM Community on February 2, 1898, at the age of 23.
- Helen was given the religious name Sister M. Immaculata when she received her habit on August 24, 1898. She made her first vows on August 23, 1900.
- Sister studied math and social studies at the University of Pennsylvania and later received an M.A. in Education from Villanova College.
- Assignments before Villa Maria:
  - 1899-1902: Sister served in three schools teaching 8th grade: St. Anthony of Padua in Philadelphia; Immaculate Heart in Chester, PA; and St. Ignatius in Centralia, PA.
  - 1902-1915: Sister taught 7th and 8th grades at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Philadelphia.
  - 1915-1930: Sister was given numerous teaching assignments, including Catholic Girls' High School in Philadelphia; St. Bernard High School in Easton, PA; St. John High School in Manayunk, PA; and Immaculate Conception High School in Mauch Chunk (Jim Thorpe), PA.



- In 1931, Sister became principal and superior at Villa Maria Academy. In 1933, Sister oversaw the construction of Good Counsel Hall (*photo left*), which served as a dormitory for boarders and as classroom space for the Lower School. Demolished in the 1980s, Good Counsel was located across the lane from St. Joseph Hall's 2018 location.
- From 1935 to 1953, Sister served as principal and superior at five schools: Holy Name of Jesus in Philadelphia; West Catholic Girls' High School in Philadelphia; Immaculate Heart Academy in Fountain Springs, PA; Immaculate Conception in Philadelphia; and St. Joachim.
- As Sister prepared in the summer of 1953 for her annual retreat, she insisted on tying up a flurry of loose ends as her term as principal at St. Joachim was coming to an end. Though the other Sisters cautioned her to slow her pace, she overcame all protests to have the convent and school in perfect condition. The work proved too much for her and Sister suffered a heart attack and died on June 22, 1953, at the age of 78. She is buried in the IHM cemetery at Immaculata.

## Fond memories from Sisters who lived and worked with Sister Immaculata:

- “Even in her declining years, her ambition and zeal never left her. If she could give orders from Heaven, I am sure that there would be floors to be scraped, rooms to be painted and many similar chores to be performed.”
- “Her every action seemed to be centered on the Community which she loved dearly. Keeping the house repaired was all-important to her, so much so that she herself solicited workmen and materials to make this possible.”

## What was happening in the world ...

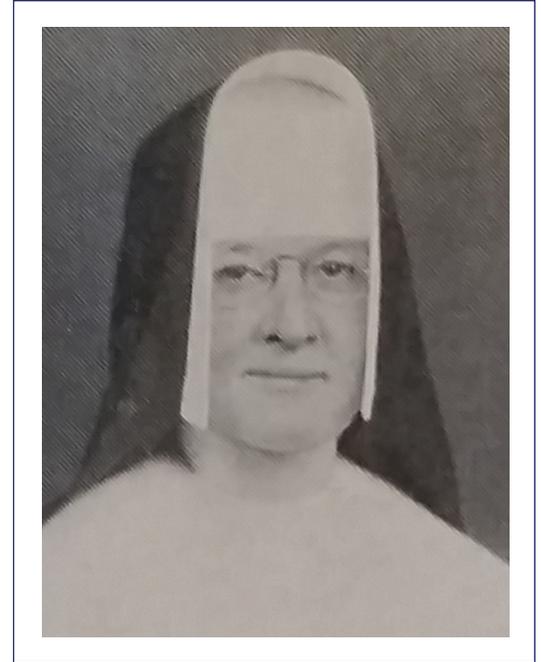
- The Empire State Building opens in New York City (1931)
- Amelia Earhart is the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic (1932)
- The Dust Bowl devastates the Great Plains (1934)

# Sister Louise Marie Betz

*Villa Maria Academy Principal 1935 – 1939*

## Getting to know her . . .

- Born Amelia A. Betz on January 28, 1898, in Philadelphia.
- Her parents were William C. Betz (originally from Germany) and Emma B. Reuter Betz (from Baltimore).
- Amelia attended St. Francis de Sales grade school in West Philadelphia from 1904 to 1911 and then graduated from Catholic Girls' High School in 1916.
- She entered the IHM Community on July 2, 1918.
- Amelia was given the religious name Sister Louise Marie when she received her habit on December 30, 1918.
- Sister made her first vows on December 27, 1920, and made her final profession on August 14, 1926.
- She received her M.A. in Education from the University of Pennsylvania in 1934.
- From 1920 to 1983, Sister served as a high-school teacher and prefect in many schools in Philadelphia.
  - 1926-1935: Catholic Girls' High, her alma mater
  - 1939-1945: John W. Hallahan Catholic Girls' High School
  - 1947-1954: St. Hubert Catholic High School for Girls
  - 1968-1978: St. Agatha parish as a reading teacher
- From 1935 to 1939, Sister served as principal of Villa Maria Academy.
- She retired to Camilla Hall in 1983 and died there on August 26, 1986, at the age of 88.



*Villa Maria's faculty in 1936, including Sister Louise Marie.*



*Back Row (Left to Right)—Sister Cyprian, Sister Louise Marie, Sister Nazarene, Sister Carmen Rosa, Sister Helena Mary, Sister Marie Celestine.  
Front Row (Left to Right)—Miss Brett, Sister Ave Maria, Sister Joseph Aloysius, Sister Marie Concepta, Miss Brinton.*

## What was happening in the world ...

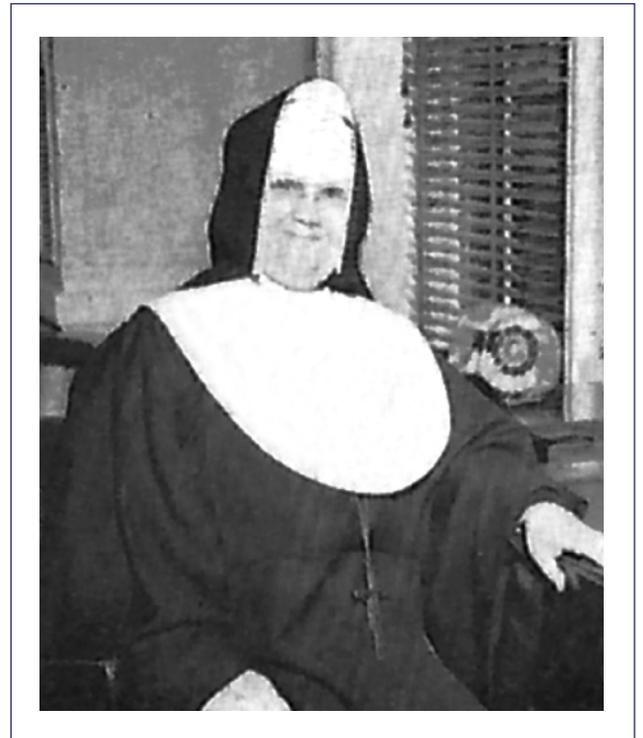
- FDR signs the Social Security Act into law (1935)
- The Hindenburg Disaster (1937)
- Premiere of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937)

# Sister Mary Esther Carty

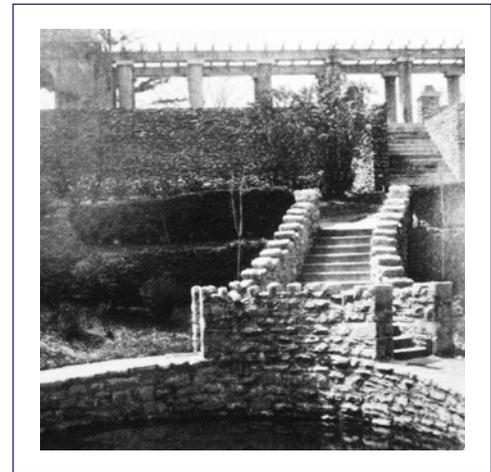
*Villa Maria Academy Principal 1939 – 1940*

## Getting to know her . . .

- Born Alice Marie Carty on February 8, 1895, in Frazer, PA.
- Her parents were James P. Carty and Mary F. Nugent Carty.
- Alice attended St. Francis de Sales grade school, 1901 to 1909; then two years at Catholic Girls' High School in Philadelphia.
- She entered the IHM Community on March 24, 1912, at the age of 17.
- Alice was given the religious name Sister Mary Esther when she received her habit on August 16, 1912.
- Sister was professed on August 18, 1914; she made her final vows on August 4, 1919.
- She received her M.A. in Education and Latin from Villanova College in 1938.
- Sister served at numerous Philadelphia-area schools, including:
  - 1912-1915: St. Agnes, West Chester
  - 1917-1927: Transfiguration of Our Lord
  - 1927-1931: Villa Maria Academy, 5th through 8th grades
  - 1950-1958 and 1964-1965: St. Aloysius Academy in Bryn Mawr, as directress and principal
  - 1961-1964: Immaculata College as superior



*Views of the spring house behind the Italian Gardens, dubbed The Duck Pond, as it looked during Sister Mary Esther's year with Villa.*



- Sister served as Principal of Villa Maria Academy for one year, 1939 to 1940.
- From 1945 to 1957, Sister served two terms as First Councilor of the IHM Congregation.
- She died on September 29, 1971, at the age of 76.

## What was happening in the world ...

- Germany invades Poland, igniting World War II (1939)
- *Gone With the Wind* opens in Atlanta (1939)
- Bugs Bunny becomes a movie star (1940)

# Sister Mary Andrew Murray

*Villa Maria Academy Principal 1940 – 1946*

## Getting to know her . . .

- Born Mary R. Murray on February 8, 1886, in Philadelphia.
- Her parents were Patrick J. Murray and Hannah Delaney Murray, both from Ireland.
- Mary attended St. Teresa Elementary School and High School.
- She entered the IHM Community on October 15, 1904.
- Mary was given the religious name Sister Mary Andrew when she received her habit on December 29, 1904.
- In her early assignments, Sister served as a music teacher at St. Joachim's in the Frankford section of Philadelphia (1907-1908), at St. Gabriel School in South Philadelphia (1908-1918), and at St. Thomas Aquinas (1918-1921).
- Sister served as principal of Villa Maria Academy, 1940 to 1946.
- Other assignments:
  - 1921-1927: Superior and principal at St. Joseph School in Bound Brook, NJ
  - 1927-1935: Founding principal at the Academy of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Fountain Springs, PA
  - 1935-1940: Mistress of Novices at the IHM Novitiate
  - 1940-1951: While serving as Villa Maria's principal, Sister also held the position of Second Councilor of the Congregation (elected to that office three times).
  - 1951-1956: Superior of the Motherhouse, Villa Maria Convent, in West Chester
- Sister died on December 31, 1956, at the age of 70, just three days shy of her Golden Jubilee.



## Fond memories from some of Sister's contemporaries:

- “Tall and stately . . .” “Majestic appearance . . .”
- “Sister never forgot her Sisters in South America. She wrote [to them] frequently because she understood the need of a word from home, when one is far away.”
- “Sister was interested in the Sisters' families, expressed in her familiar and sincere, ‘How are the folks?’”
- “When Sister was the superior at Fountain Springs, a group of Sister-students arrived looking very worn after their year in the classroom. Sister must have studied the Sisters closely because, in a short time, every Sister who seemed in need of it was quietly given a bottle of tonic. Years later, I reminded Sister but she had no recollection of [the tonic] at all. After a few minutes' thought, she said, ‘No, I cannot remember it but what puzzles me is, where did I get the money?’ That, I replied, is just what puzzled us at the time.”

## What was happening in the world ...

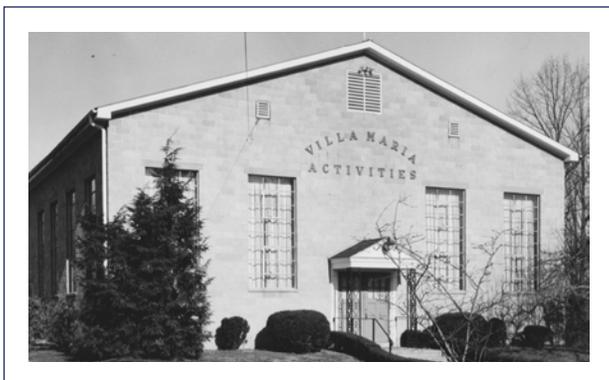
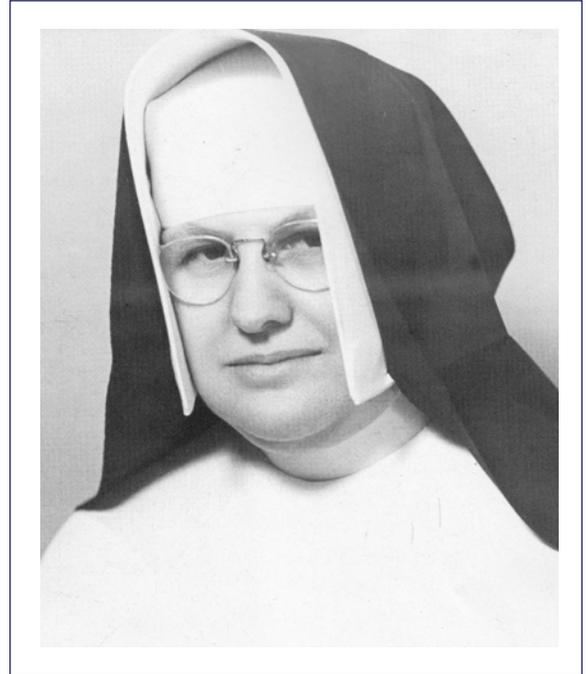
- Japan bombs Pearl Harbor (1941)
- FDR elected to an unprecedented 4th term as President (1944)
- The Allies' D-Day invasion of Normandy (1944)
- FDR dies in April; WWII ends in Europe in May; Japan surrenders in August (1945)

# Sister M. Catherine Louise Martin

*Villa Maria Academy Principal 1946 – 1956*

## Getting to know her . . .

- Born Josephine Martin, July 14, 1895, in Mauch Chunk (Jim Thorpe), PA.
- Her parents were William Martin and Grace Waters Martin.
- Josephine attended Immaculate Conception Grade School and High School in Mauch Chunk.
- She entered the IHM Community on July 2, 1920.
- Josephine was given the religious name Sister M. Catherine Louise when she received her habit on December 27, 1920.
- Sister made her first vows on December 27, 1922, and her final vows on August 15, 1925.
- Her teaching assignments included:
  - 6th and 7th grades at St. Aloysius Academy
  - 9th and 10th grades at St. Patrick in Norristown, PA; at St. Gertrude in Conshohocken, PA; and at St. Cecilia in Coatesville, PA
  - 1927-1940: Academy of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Fountain Springs, PA.
  - 1940-1946: Villa Maria Academy
- Sister received her M.S. in biology from Villanova College in 1941.
- While serving as principal of Villa Maria Academy from 1946 to 1956, she oversaw the construction in 1949 of the Activities Building (*photo below*). Activities served as the venue for basketball games, gym classes, dances, Carol & Ring and graduation until 1986, when the building collapsed under a snow load. It was located near the far end of St. Joseph's Hall.
- At the end of Sister's term as principal, in May 1956, Archbishop John F. O'Hara dedicated the newly constructed Regina Mundi Hall, which housed all high-school classrooms, as well as guidance rooms, the Elinor Langton Memorial Laboratory and a fully equipped cafeteria. The Lower School continued to use classrooms in Good Counsel Hall and Maria Goretti Hall, both of which were demolished in the 1980s.
- Sister enjoyed semi-retirement at VMA from 1956 to 1963.
- In 1963, she retired to Camilla Hall and died there on January 9, 1977 at the age of 81.



## What was happening in the world ...

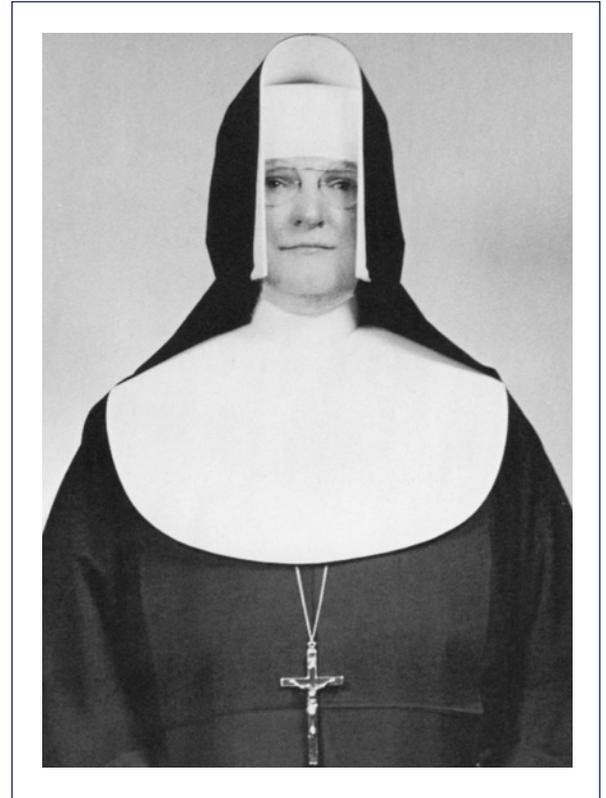
- Polaroid introduces its instant camera (1948)
- *Peanuts* makes its comic-strip debut (1950)
- Disneyland opens in Anaheim, CA (1955)
- Rosa Parks is arrested after refusing to give up her bus seat (1955)

# Sister M. Carmen Rosa Hamill

*Villa Maria Academy Principal 1956 – 1962*

## Getting to know her . . .

- Born Ruby Hamill, October 8, 1908, in St. Martin of Tours parish, Philadelphia.
- Her parents were Edward Hamill and Alice McCann Hamill.
- Ruby attended elementary school at St. Ann and at Holy Name of Jesus, Philadelphia. She graduated from John W. Hallahan Catholic Girls' High School in 1926.
- Ruby entered the IHM Community on September 24, 1926.
- She was given the religious name Sister M. Carmen Rosa when she received her habit on April 20, 1927. Sister made her first vows on August 15, 1929 and her final vows on August 15, 1932.
- She received an M.A. in Education from Villanova College in 1943.
- Sister spent more than half of her working life at Villa Maria:
  - 1928-1956: as a teacher in 5th grade through high school (see the faculty photo on page 16)
  - 1956-1962: as principal and superior. In 1959, Sister oversaw the expansion of Regina Mundi Hall to include two home-economics labs and the large assembly room, Maria Hall.
- Later assignments:
  - 1963-1969: Mistress of Novices at the IHM Motherhouse
  - 1969-1975: Superior at St. Alice in Upper Darby, PA
  - 1975-1981: Superior and principal at St. Charles in Drexel Hill, PA
  - 1981-1982: Vice-principal at Our Lady of Fatima in Secane, PA
  - 1982-1984: Vice-principal at St. Michael in Annandale, VA
  - 1984-1987: Semi-retirement in the school office at St. John of the Cross in Roslyn, PA
- Sister retired to Camilla Hall in failing health in January of 1987.
- She died on July 20, 1988, at the age of 79.



## What was happening in the world ...

- First successful wireless TV remote control (1956)
- Dr. Seuss publishes *The Cat in the Hat* (1957)
- John Fitzgerald Kennedy is elected the first Roman Catholic president of the United States (1960)
- The U.S. launches the first man into space (Alan Shepard) (1961)

# Sister Maria Assumpta Monaghan

*Villa Maria Academy Principal 1962 – 1968*

## Getting to know her . . .

- Born Mary C. Monaghan, September 15, 1910, in Ashland, PA.
- Her parents were Edward J. Monaghan and Mary C. Conrey Monaghan.
- She entered the IHM Community on September 8, 1927.
- Mary was given the religious name Sister Maria Assumpta when she received her habit on August 16, 1928. Sister made her final vows on August 15, 1933.
- For most of Sister's early assignments, she taught music.
  - 1933-1944: St. Cyril, East Lansdowne, PA; Annunciation B.V.M., Shenandoah, PA; St. Joachim and St. Cecilia, Philadelphia
  - 1944-1960: Sister was "legendary" for the 16 years she taught at Little Flower Catholic High School for Girls.
  - 1960-1962: Allentown Central Catholic High School



- From 1962 to 1968, Sister served as principal of Villa Maria Academy. During her tenure, she oversaw major changes:

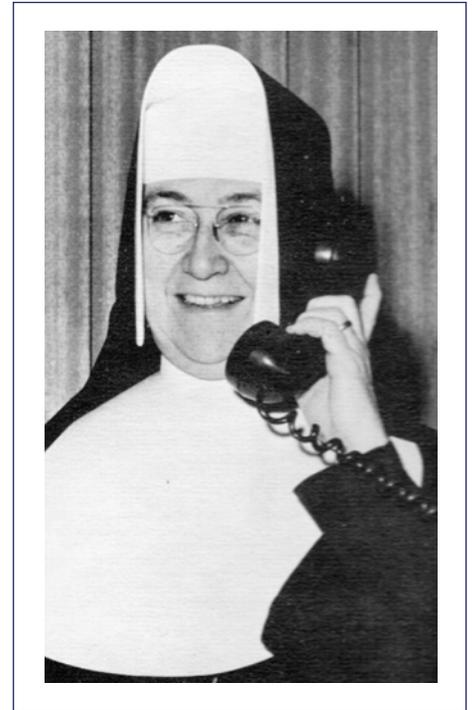
- The building of St. Joseph Hall to house the growing student body of the Lower School. The new building was blessed and dedicated by Bishop Gerald McDevitt in May of 1966 (*photo left*).
- The development of a master plan to position VMA for the challenges of the late 20th century and beyond
- The further renovation in 1966 of Regina Mundi to include Regina Pacis Hall, which housed the library, an infirmary, a seminar room and a Student Council office

- For the next 16 years (1968-1984), Sister served as superior or superior/principal at the following schools: Notre Dame Academy, Miami, FL; Immaculata High School, Somerville, NJ; and Blessed Virgin Mary elementary school, Darby, PA.
- Sister spent six years (1984-1990) as a tutor at St. Bartholomew in East Brunswick, NJ.
- Sister retired to Camilla Hall in 1990 and died there on August 13, 1999.

## Fond memories from some of Sister's contemporaries:

"Sister Maria Assumpta was a master and a dedicated teacher. She did the grunt work and made sure that everything was in good order. She had the patience of a saint."

"Sister often accompanied me as I played my violin. I deeply appreciate the hours she sacrificed to keep me prepared for a concert, and I learned to love her teasing (*Try that again, Queenie!*)."



## What was happening in the world ...

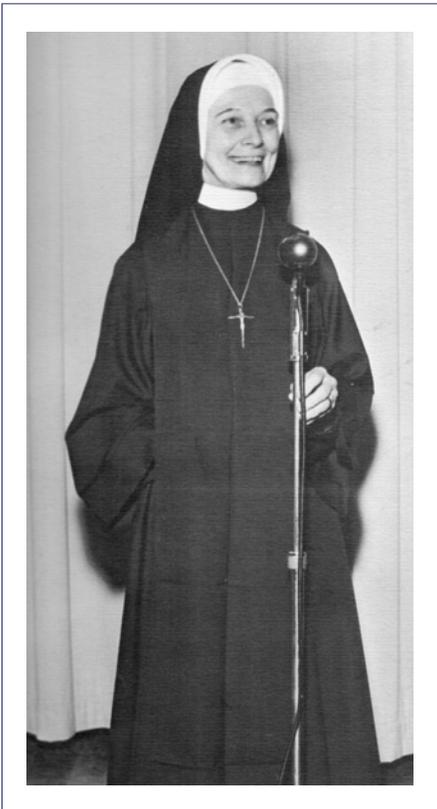
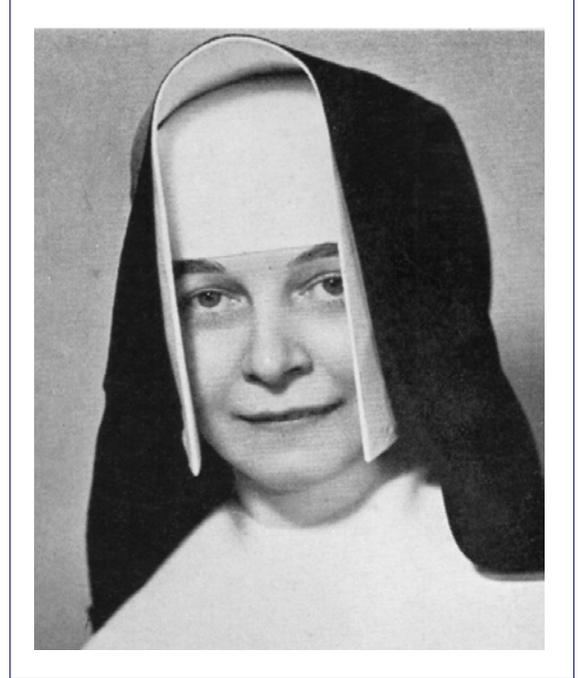
- President John F. Kennedy is assassinated (1963)
- The Beatles appear on *The Ed Sullivan Show* (1964)
- Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr. are assassinated (1968)

# Sister M. Thérèse Agnes Bell

*Villa Maria Academy Principal 1968 – 1971*

## Getting to know her . . .

- Born Hannah C. Bell, March 14, 1906 in Philadelphia, the youngest of six children.
- Her parents were Robert Bell and Mary McKendrick Bell, both of Ireland.
- Hannah attended grade school at St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Edmond and continued her education at John W. Hallahan Catholic Girls' High School.
- After three years at Hallahan, Hannah entered the working world as a secretary. She finished her high school education in 1925 at Villa Maria, when it was still located in Frazer.
- She entered the IHM Community on January 2, 1926.
- Hannah was given the religious name Sister M. Thérèse Agnes when she, along with 23 other young women, received her habit on August 16, 1926. Her religious name honored the Little Flower, who had been canonized just a year earlier in 1925.
- Sister made her first vows on August 15, 1928, and her final vows on August 15, 1931.



- Sister's assignments included:
  - 1928-1940: 3rd and 4th grades at Immaculate Heart of Mary in Chester, PA
  - 1940-1959: Drawing on her work experience as a secretary before entering the IHM Congregation, Sister taught commercial courses for which she was noted for the remainder of her long tenure in education. Her assignments included St. Mary in Phoenixville; Villa Maria Academy; Our Lady of Mt. Carmel; St. Gertrude/St. Matthew, Conshohocken, PA; and Archbishop Ryan High School in Philadelphia.
  - 1959-1968: Immaculate Conception, Jim Thorpe, PA; Annunciation B.V.M, Shenandoah, PA
  - 1968-1971: Principal at Villa Maria Academy. This was Sister's third assignment at VMA. All told, Sister spent 23 years at VMA and St. Aloysius.
  - 1972-1978: Dual duties as Prefect of Activities at Archbishop Prendergast High School in Drexel Hill, PA, and as superior at Immaculate Heart of Mary Convent in Chester, PA
  - 1978-1984: Superior at St. Aloysius Academy in Bryn Mawr, PA
  - 1984-2001: Sister spent her longest single assignment at St. Maria Goretti High School, as a part-time teacher and assistant in the Finance Office.
- Sister retired to Camilla Hall on November 3, 2001.
- Sister died there on January 8, 2008, just two months shy of her 102nd birthday.

### **Fond memories from some of Sister's contemporaries:**

- On the occasion of Sister's 95th birthday in 2001, "Spirit", the Goretti newsletter, reported: "The idea of retirement doesn't sit well with Sister Thérèse Agnes. Technically speaking, Sister "retired" in 1992 at age 86, after a 65-year career as a Catholic schoolteacher and principal. In fact, Sister treated her retirement as merely a transfer from a classroom job to an office job. For the past nine years, Sister Thérèse Agnes has collected tuition and maintained records in the Goretti Tuition and Student Activities Office on a daily basis, winter and summer alike."
- Sister's 95th birthday was noted on WPVI, Ch. 6 in Philadelphia, as they filmed her being fêted by the Goretti girls with harp (her favorite instrument) and song.
- At a New Year's Eve party in 1995 at St. Maria Goretti, Sister modeled her new coat for the other Sisters. It was a momentous event – her first new coat since the opening of Vatican II in 1962!
- Sister had her own copy of the Cary Grant/Deborah Kerr movie, *An Affair to Remember*, which she periodically showed in the Community Room for a "good will" entrance fee which was donated to the IHM Community Fund for the Poor.



*The convent in winter*

### **What was happening in the world ...**

- Astronaut Neil Armstrong walks on the Moon (1969)
- The Beatles break up (1970)
- Cigarette advertising is banned on radio and TV (1971)

# Sister Marie Agnese O'Brien

*Villa Maria Academy Principal 1971 – 1974*

## Getting to know her . . .

- Born Helen C. O'Brien, July 23, 1912, in West Chester, PA.
- Her parents were Joseph J. O'Brien and Elizabeth Wall O'Brien.
- Helen entered the IHM Community on September 8, 1931.
- She was given the religious name Sister Marie Agnese when she received her habit on March 30, 1932.
- Sister made her first vows on August 25, 1934 and her final vows on August 14, 1937.
- Sister's assignments before Villa Maria included:
  - St. Veronica in Philadelphia, teaching 1st and 3rd grades
  - 10 years at West Catholic Girls' High School in Philadelphia
  - 1960-1971: Sister spent 11 years in Florida, seven of them at Our Lady of Lourdes Academy in Miami, where she was the founding principal.
- From 1971 to 1974, Sister served as principal and superior at Villa Maria Academy. In 1971, Sister oversaw the construction of a new wing of Regina Mundi Hall. This expansion included an enlargement of the Regina Pacis Library, the addition of lecture and study halls, locker rooms, a teachers' lounge and a biology lab. In 1973, Sister said farewell to the last graduating class of boarding students.
- After leaving Villa Maria, Sister spent 15 years as superior at the Faculty House at Cardinal O'Hara High School in Springfield, PA.
- From 1989 to 2000, Sister was a staff member at Camilla Hall until failing health led her to the Apostolate of Prayer as a patient.
- Sister died on April 25, 2000, at the age of 87.



## What was happening in the world ...

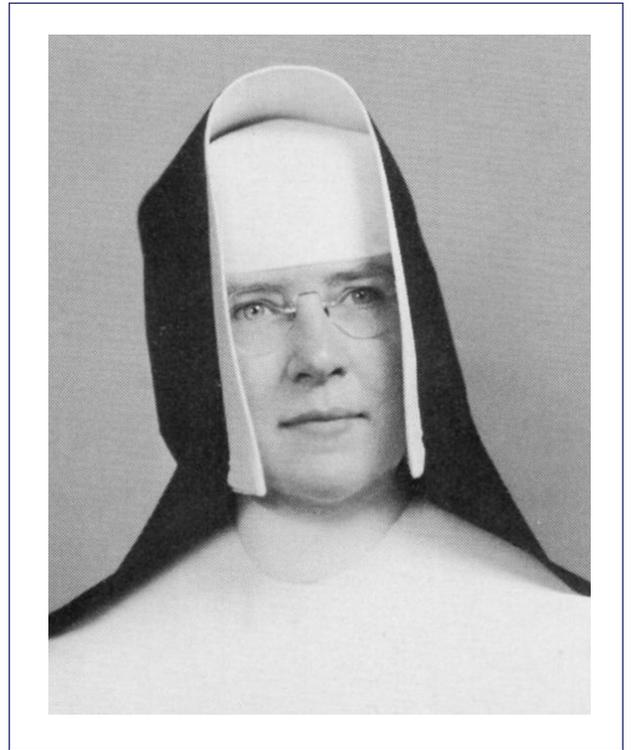
- Walt Disney World opens in Orlando, FL (1971)
- Watergate Scandal (1972-1974)
- Hank Aaron breaks Babe Ruth's 39-year home-run record (1974)
- Richard Nixon becomes the first President to resign from office (1974)

# Sister M. St. Eileen Gilligan

*Villa Maria Academy Principal 1974 – 1975*

## Getting to know her . . .

- Born Marie Frances Gilligan on May 9, 1914, in Philadelphia, the eldest of five children.
- Her parents were John Gilligan and Ellen (Nellie) Jordan Gilligan, both of Ireland.
- Marie Frances attended Our Mother of Sorrows elementary school in Philadelphia for grades one through six. Her family then moved to Highland Park, PA, where she attended St. Laurence School for 7th and 8th grades.
- She graduated from Villa Maria Academy in 1932 (see photo, page 2), where she excelled in the Music Department.
- Marie Frances then matriculated at Immaculata College, where she earned her B.A. in music in 1936. She was a student of piano, organ and cello, and was a member of the Women's Symphony Orchestra.
- She graduated from Immaculata during the Depression and found that there were no jobs available for music teachers. So, she took a position at Dun & Bradstreet in Philadelphia for two years as her way of repaying her family for the education opportunities they had given her.
- Sister once told a newspaper reporter: "I enjoyed working and I enjoyed my friends, but after two years I couldn't wait any longer to join the convent."
- She followed her heart and entered the IHM Community on February 2, 1938.
- Marie Frances was given the religious name Sister M. St. Eileen when she received her habit on August 15, 1938.
- Sister made her first vows on August 15, 1940, and her final vows on August 15, 1943.
- In 1940, her beloved sister, Honora, known as Nonie, also entered the Community and took the religious name Sister Mary Adelaide. Sadly, Nonie died on July 26, 1945, at the age of 29.
- Sister earned an M.A. from the Philadelphia Conservatory of Music in 1947.
- She spent a total of 23 years at Villa Maria Academy, as music teacher and later as principal from 1974 to 1975.
- From 1975 to 1981, Sister served the IHM Congregation as regional superior, while living at Immaculate Heart Convent in Norristown, PA.
- She was also stationed at the following schools:
  - Villa Maria Academy/Oak Lawn, in Lynchburg, VA
  - Immaculata College
  - Superior and principal of St. Teresa of the Infant Jesus in Runnemede, NJ
  - St. Alice in Upper Darby, PA
  - Holy Innocents in Philadelphia
  - St. Pius X in Broomall, PA



## What was happening in the world ...

- Elizabeth Seton is canonized (1975)
- The Vietnam War ends with the fall of Saigon (1975)
- Bill Gates founds Microsoft Corporation (1975)

*Continued on page 26*

# Sister M. St. Eileen Gilligan

*Villa Maria Academy Principal 1974 – 1975*

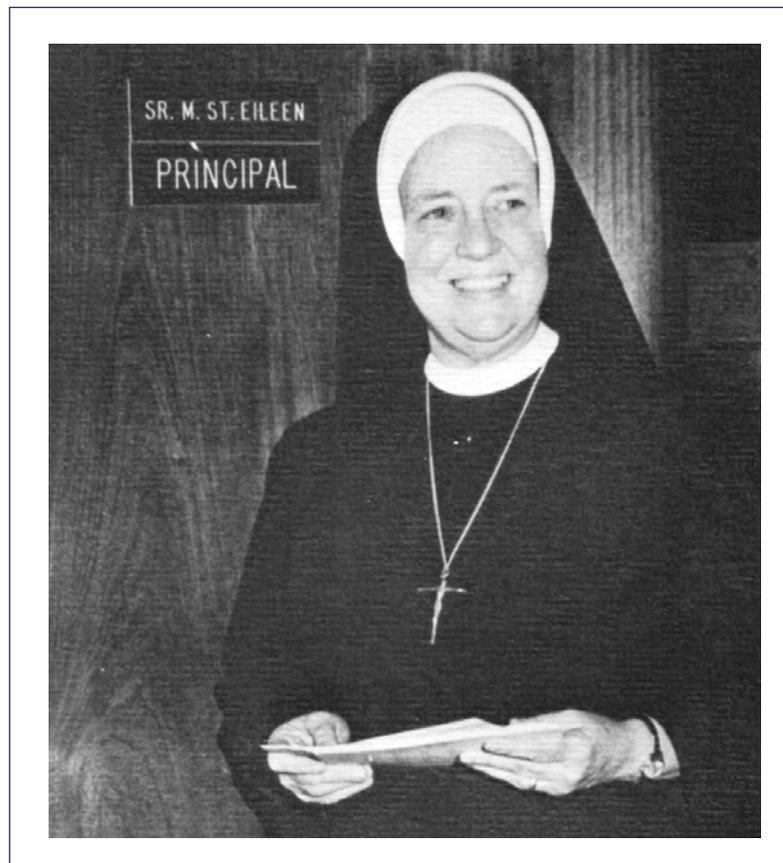
*Continued from page 25*

- While at St. Pius X, in 1996, at the age of 82, Sister was chosen by *Today's Catholic Teacher* magazine as one of the country's 25 most influential educators in Catholic education. She received her award at the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) Convention in Minneapolis.
- Sister retired to Camilla Hall in January 2001.
- She died there on January 18, 2005, at the age of 90.

## **Remembering Sister St. Eileen:**

The Sister who nominated her for the NCEA award in 1996 said this about her: "Sister has so wonderfully woven her love of God, love of music and love of children into a beautiful tapestry of joy and service for many years, and we are truly blessed to experience her gifts firsthand here at St. Pius X. Sister taught me when I was a novice. I've seen her as a student, a teacher and an administrator, working with three-year-olds to college-level students. She has always been the same loving, enthusiastic person."

Sister St. Eileen herself once told a reporter from *The Philadelphia Inquirer* that she thought about retiring when she was 78, but decided that was not the time. "I wake up every morning knowing I have something to do that I love. I'm in good health and I'm going to keep going as long as I feel I have something to give."

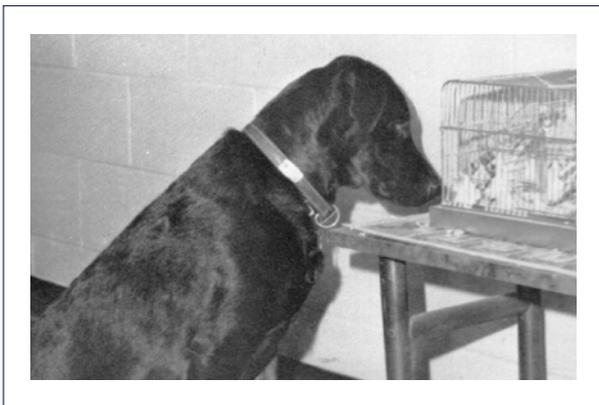
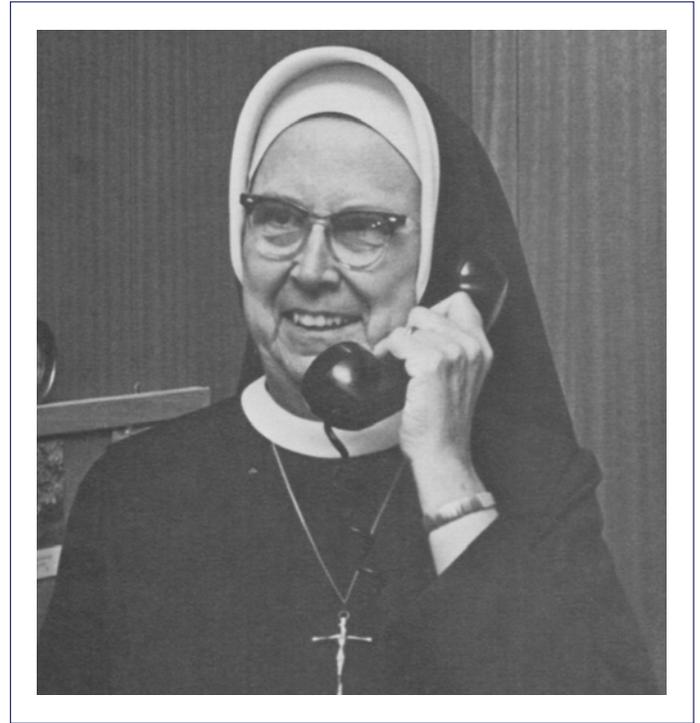


# Sister M. Lucina Hirsch

*Villa Maria Academy Principal 1975 – 1981*

## Getting to know her . . .

- Born Catherine C. Hirsch on April 30, 1917, in Philadelphia.
- Her parents were Albert Hirsch and Ellie J. Burton Hirsch.
- Catherine attended elementary school at St. Malachy and at Our Lady of the Holy Souls. She graduated from John W. Hallahan Catholic Girls' High School in 1934.
- She entered the IHM Community on February 2, 1939.
- Catherine was given the religious name Sister M. Lucina when she received her habit on August 16, 1939.
- Sister made her first vows on August 15, 1941, and her final vows on August 15, 1944.
- She received her B.S. in biology in 1938 from Immaculata College and her M.S. in biology in 1952 from The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC.
- Sister had a long association with Villa Maria Academy, having served as a teacher from 1940 to 1957 and as principal and superior from 1975 to 1981.
- Sister is fondly remembered for her love of her faithful canine companion, Tara (*photo below*).
- During Sister's tenure as principal, Villa Maria's Lower School left the Green Tree campus in 1979 and relocated to Villa Maria House of Studies, the Motherhouse in Immaculata, allowing St. Joseph Hall to be used for the growing high-school student body.
- Sister's other assignments included:
  - 1958-1963: Teacher at Villa Maria Academy in Santiago, Chile
  - 1963-1969: Teacher at Immaculata College
  - 1969-1975: Regional supervisor while living at St. William in Philadelphia
  - 1981-1984: A second teaching assignment at Immaculata
- Sister retired to Camilla Hall in 1984 and died there on May 3, 1998, at the age of 81.



## What was happening in the world ...

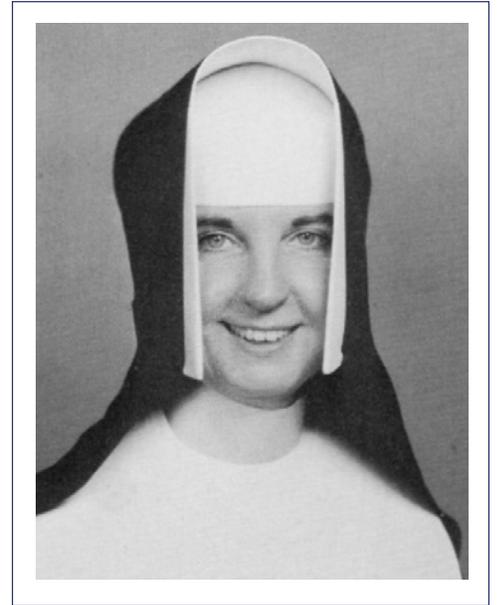
- Steve Jobs founds Apple Inc. (1976)
- U.S. Bicentennial celebrations (1976)
- Elvis Presley dies (1977)
- U.S. boycotts the Summer Olympics in Moscow (1980)
- CNN is founded (1980)
- John Lennon is murdered (1980)

# Sister Mary Kelly

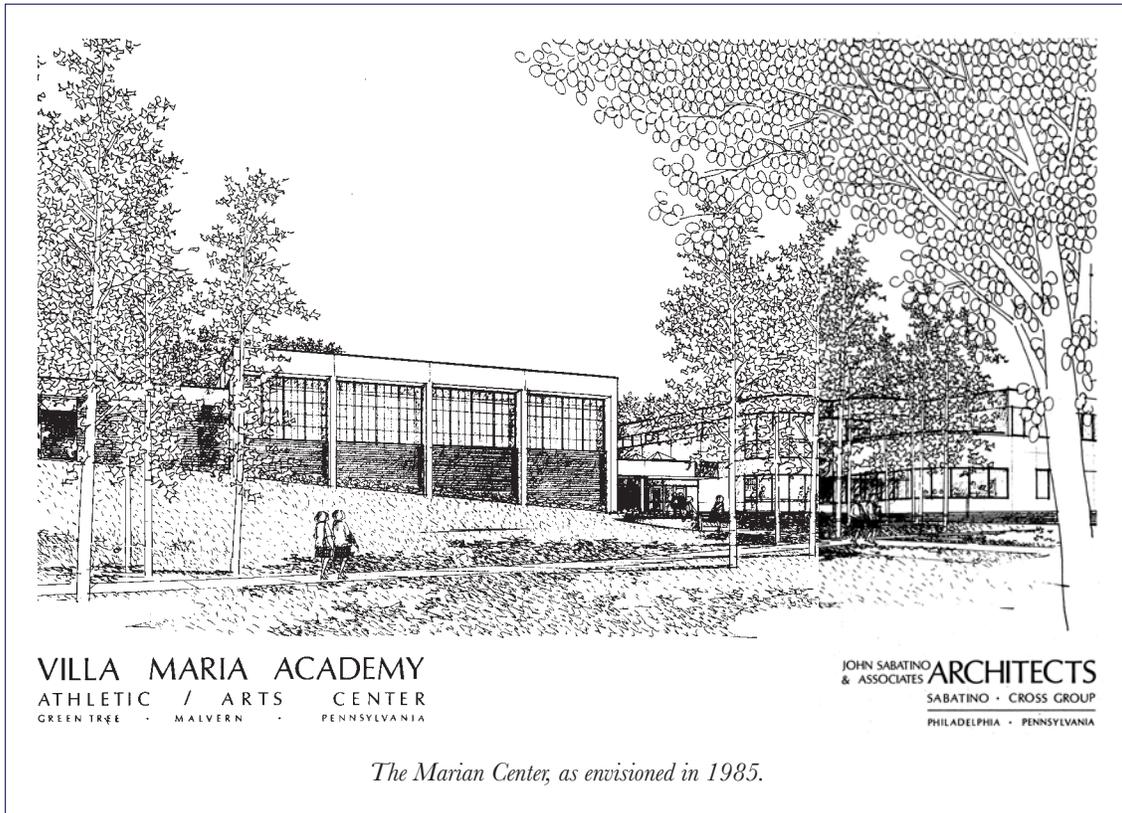
*Villa Maria Academy Principal 1981 – 2000*

## Getting to know her . . .

- Born Mary Catherine Kelly on May 4, 1928, in Strafford (Wayne), PA.
- She was one of the 11 children of John J. Kelly and Margaret Walsh Kelly.
- Mary attended elementary school at St. Katharine of Siena in Wayne, and graduated from Villa Maria Academy in 1946.
- She entered the IHM Community on August 15, 1946.
- Mary was given the religious name Sister Maria Veritas when she received her habit on April 7, 1947. Sister resumed her baptismal name in 1988.
- She made her first vows on April 17, 1949, and her final vows on August 15, 1952.
- Sister received her B.A. in English and French from Immaculata College in 1955 and her M.A. in French from Fordham University in 1965.
- Sister Mary had a life-long association with Villa Maria:
  - 1942-1946, as a student. Among her many activities: editor of the student publication, Vimacady; editor of the yearbook, Reflections; president of the French club; and a member of the bowling team.
  - 1957-1966, as a teacher of Religion, French and English; and as advisor to Vimacady
  - 1981-2000, as the longest-serving principal in Villa Maria's history
- During her years as VMA's principal, Sister oversaw major changes and accomplishments:



- She led several capital campaigns for the renovation of St. Joseph Hall and the athletic fields. Most memorable of all, Sister spearheaded the building of the Marian Center (*photo right*) in two phases: in 1987, the gym, which was originally christened Good Counsel Hall; and in 1997, the arts center.
- Because Sister understood the need to integrate technology into Villa Maria's curriculum, in 1983 the home economics lab was converted to a computer lab, with 14 state-of-the-art IBM PCs.
- In 1989, Villa Maria was proclaimed a National Exemplary School and Sister Mary received the Presidential Award from President George H.W. Bush in the Rose Garden at the White House.
- Sister's other teaching assignments:
  - 1949-1957: 6th grade at St. Gabriel School and St. Edmond School
  - 1966-1972: Our Lady of Lourdes High School in Shamokin, PA
  - 1972-1979: Immaculata High School, Somerville, NJ
  - 1979-1981: Bishop Shanahan High School
- In January 2001, Sister began a new work assignment in the Finance Office at Camilla Hall.
- Sister Mary died at Camilla on January 19, 2013, at the age of 84, after a short illness.



### Fond memories from some of Sister Mary’s contemporaries:

- “Sister Mary was well-read, an educator, a promoter of excellence, and a lover of the arts.”
- “She was very present, walking around the school, visible throughout the day. At dismissal each Friday, she stood at the door and said ‘Good-bye, have a nice weekend’ to each student, addressing them by name.”
- “. . . the perfect combination of brains, heart and soul . . . a savvy businesswoman who knew how to run a school . . . a leader who took a personal interest in everyone in the Villa community.”
- “Warm and inviting from the start of my teaching career at VMA, Sister welcomed me as a new father and allowed me to keep my infant daughter with me many times (in a backpack!).”
- “. . . an exceptional listener, open-minded, sensitive to what others said and what was not said.”
- “Sister Mary helped me to see goodness and joy around me, especially when I was discouraged or frustrated.”

### What was happening in the world ...

- Sandra Day O’Connor becomes the first woman appointed to the Supreme Court (1981)
- The space shuttle Challenger explodes (1986)
- The Hubble Space Telescope is launched (1990)
- The World Wide Web is publically debuted as an Internet service (1991)
- Madeleine Albright becomes the first woman to serve as U.S. Secretary of State (1997)

# Sister Patricia Fadden

*Villa Maria Academy Principal 2000 – 2002*

## Getting to know her . . .

- Born Ruth Patricia Fadden in Canonsburg, PA (near Pittsburgh), one of five children. When she was three years old, her family moved to Prospect Park, PA, and later to Havertown.
- Her parents were Ruth and Gerald Fadden.
- Patricia attended grade school at Sacred Heart in Manoa, PA, and graduated from Villa Maria Academy in 1957.
- She entered the IHM Community immediately after graduating from Villa Maria.
- Patricia was given the religious name Sister Gerald Maureen when she received her habit.
- Sister earned her B.A. from Immaculata College, her M.A. from Ohio State University, and her Ed.D. from Immaculata College.
- She began her teaching career in Philadelphia elementary schools, and later taught high-school math.
- Sister became an administrator in Archdiocesan secondary schools and then in the Office of Catholic Education. She remained in that last position until her assignment to Villa Maria Academy as principal in 2000.
- During her tenure as our principal, Sister oversaw a further expansion of St. Joseph Hall (*photo below*) as it became a state-of-the-art center for math, science and technology, thus realizing part of Sister Maria Assumpta's long-range vision from the mid-'60s.



- Sister left VMA in 2002 to become the ninth President of Immaculata University, a position she held until 2017. She led the University through a transitional period that saw the expansion of educational programs, growth in enrollment, and the addition of men to the traditional-age undergraduate college.

## What was happening in the world ...

- Mother Katharine Drexel is canonized (2000)
- George W. Bush is elected president after a protracted Florida vote dispute (2000)
- 9/11 attack by al-Qaeda terrorists in New York City, Virginia and Pennsylvania (2001)
- Kmart files for bankruptcy (2002)

# Sister Marita Carmel McCarthy

*Villa Maria Academy Principal 2002 – 2012*

## Getting to know her . . .

- Born Regina McCarthy, in Philadelphia's Most Blessed Sacrament Parish.
- Her parents were William and Sarah McCarthy.
- Regina attended grade school at Most Blessed Sacrament and high school at West Catholic Girls' High School.
- She entered the IHM Community immediately after high-school graduation, and was given the religious name Sister Marita Carmel when she received her habit.
- Most of Sister's teaching assignments were in the Archdioceses of Philadelphia and Miami, FL.
- Sister holds degrees from Immaculata College and St. Charles Boromeo Seminary.
- She was principal of John W. Hallahan Catholic Girls' High School before coming to Villa Maria.
- During her 10 years as Villa Maria's principal, Sister oversaw the renovation of Regina Mundi Hall:
  - A new front entrance
  - Additional offices and classrooms
  - Updated infrastructure, including new windows and sprinklers
  - Remodeled cafeteria
- Other campus improvements during Sister's term:
  - Building a parking lot to accommodate 76 additional spots
  - Resurfacing of the track and tennis courts
- Sister celebrated her Diamond Jubilee in the IHM Community in 2017.



## What was happening in the world ...

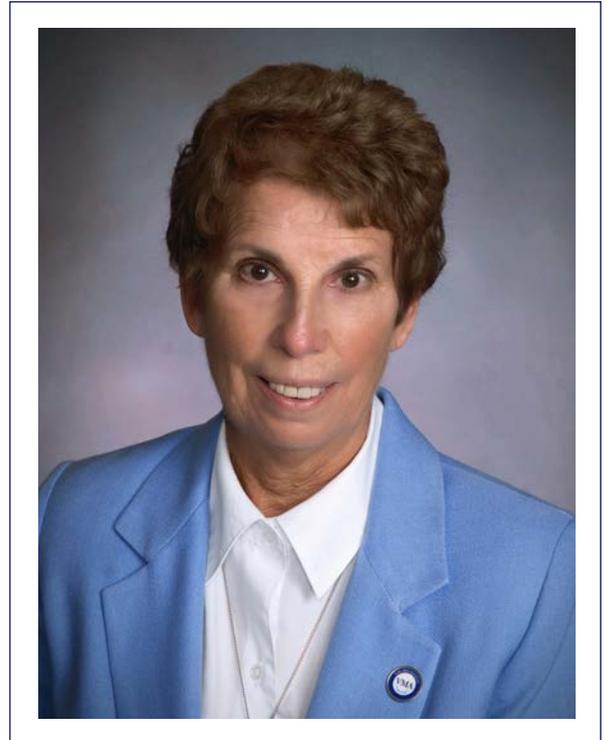
- Human Genome Project completed (2003)
- Facebook launches (2004)
- Hurricane Katrina batters New Orleans (2005)
- Al Gore wins the Nobel Peace Prize for his work on climate change (2007)
- Nancy Pelosi becomes the first woman elected Speaker of the House of Representatives (2007)
- The iPhone debuts (2007)

# Sister Regina Joseph Ryan

*Villa Maria Academy Principal 2012 – Present*

## Getting to know her . . .

- Born Marion Ryan, one of six children of William and Margaret Mary Ryan.
- Sister grew up in Drexel Hill, PA, and attended grade school at St. Andrew the Apostle. She graduated from Archbishop Prendergast Catholic High School in Drexel Hill.
- Sister received her B.A. in French from Immaculata College, her M.A. in Religious Studies from St. Charles Boromeo Seminary, and her Ed.D. in Administration and Supervision from the University of Virginia.
- Sister's assignments over the years have included:
  - St. Mark, Bristol, PA
  - St. Ephrem, Cornwells Heights, PA
  - St. Joseph, Warrington, PA
  - Holy Rosary, Cherry Hill, NJ
  - Most Blessed Sacrament, Philadelphia
  - St. Richard, Philadelphia
  - St. James, Savannah, GA
  - Epiphany, Miami, FL
  - St. Rose of Lima, Miami Shores, FL
  - Our Lady of Lourdes Academy, Miami, FL
  - Bishop Denis J. O'Connell High School, Arlington, VA
  - Immaculata University
- During her term as our principal, Sister has made major contributions to Villa Maria:
  - In 2013 she convened a planning task force, comprising a broad cross-section of VMA's constituents (Advisory Board, administration, faculty, students, current and past parents, alumnae and IHM sisters) to develop the school's major goals for the future. Those goals were eventually identified as:
    - \* IHM Charism and Culture
    - \* Facilities (which led to a master plan for future campus renovations)
    - \* 21st Century Education
    - \* Enhanced Student Experience
    - \* Financial Stability
  - Sister oversaw the completion of the Maurene Polley Turf Field.
  - She directed the ongoing remodeling of facilities: the Learning Commons (formerly the Library) in Regina Mundi and new classrooms in both Regina Mundi and St. Joseph Hall.
  - Sister oversaw the refurbishment of the school's Route 30/Lancaster Avenue entrance (*see the photo on page 33*).



## What was happening in the world ...

- Jesuit Jorge Mario Bergoglio becomes Pope Francis (2013)
- Restoration of U.S. relations with Cuba (2015)
- Hillary Rodham Clinton becomes the first woman to win the nomination of a major political party for President. She wins the popular vote but loses the Electoral College (2016)

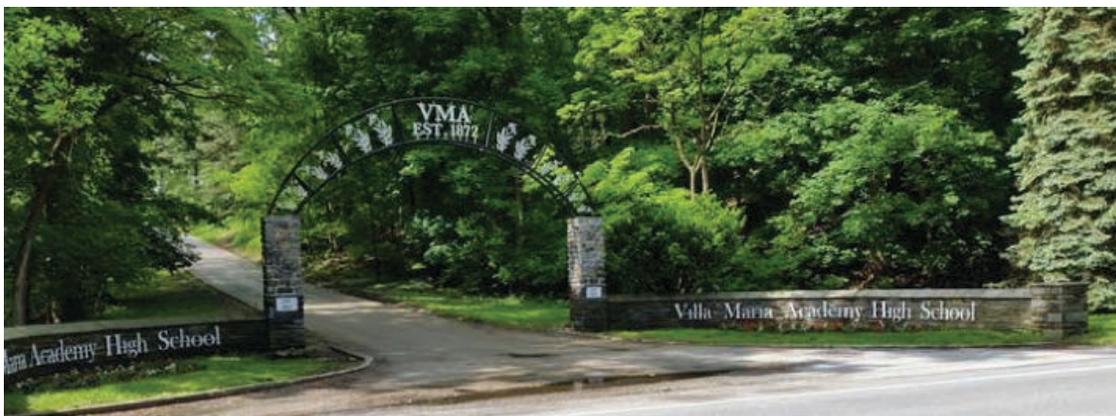
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## Special thanks to:

- Melissa Bemiller Ash, VMA '99, for graciously making available her family's precious copy of the 1937 VMA yearbook.
- MaryAnn Castaldi, VMA '95, for generously contributing her graphic-design and layout talents, without which this book wouldn't exist.
- Sister Rita Lenihan, IHM, for arranging access to the records at the Motherhouse, an invaluable source of information about our principals.
- Dee Ruley Person, VMA '95, Director of Constituent Relations, Villa Maria Academy, for her many kindnesses, but most especially for making VMA's yearbook collection available to the Charism Committee and for promoting the Book of Principals project on VMA's website and Facebook pages.
- Darren Polsz, graphic designer at VMA, for working his Photoshop magic on some of our neediest photos.



*Villa's Lancaster Avenue entrance, refurbished in 2018*



*The Marian Center, 2018*

