

175 SISTER PROFILES:

Mother Basilia McCann

Maryann Seton Lopiccolo

Welcome to St. Joseph's Valley in Emmitsburg, MD where my story begins. As an immigrant family from Ireland, where I, Rosanna, was born in 1811, we looked for a Catholic school for my education. Fortunately, I attended St. Joseph's Free School in Emmitsburg where Mother Elizabeth Seton herself prepared me for First Holy Communion.

After school, I was employed at Mt. St. Mary's, yet my heart was still with the Sisters of Charity across the road at the White House. I remember the difficulty I had in being accepted. I applied to the community in July of 1828 and was asked to wait because there was no room there and Father McGerry, my employer, needed time to find someone to replace me. I waited nearly a year and in February of 1830 I received my habit. And my life was never the same!



CELEBRATING

175

YEARS OF JOYFUL WITNESS

1849 - 2024

I had many assignments in the early days just like others in the young community. One of my first missions was to Baltimore to work in the Asylum in the early part of 1831. After five years, I was sent to Frederick then to Martinsburg in West Virginia. Since I was a very good businessperson and the council knew of my ability to adapt to the “times” and my deep trust in God’s Providence in my life, I was reassigned once again, with the Council planning to send me to a number of various missions, but finally I was sent to New York City in the Fall of 1841.

I was there for about five years, in charge of Rose Hill, which at that time was the new seminary that Bishop Hughes of New York opened. This is where I met James Roosevelt Bayley, Mother Seton’s nephew. My next assignment in 1846 was

even further away than all the rest. I was sent to St. Louis where we worked in a Catholic hospital. For all the travel I did to get there, it was one of my shortest stays, only one year! While I was in St. Louis, a lot of changes were taking place in the community. There was talk of splitting the community away from the Valley and because of all the work that needed to be done, it was getting more difficult to communicate with each other. Everyone was deciding if they were going to stay with the community in the Valley or break off and start a new community, one of which was in New York. It was a difficult choice; however, New York was where I wanted to be. Since I was so far away, I became the last Sister to be listed as making the choice!

Once I was back, I was sent to a local location, to St. Paul’s in

Brooklyn, NY. After about two years I was asked to undertake a very new venture. As you know by now, Bishop Walsh in Canada wanted the sisters to come to Halifax. At first the answer was no, but then in 1849 the Council decided they could send some sisters there and I became the first true Missionary of the community. I was going to another country! Canada! This was very exciting. Halifax was pretty countryside bordering a powerful sea. I still remember Citadel Hill overlooking the city and the harbor. We arrived on May 11, 1849 at St. Mary's Parish and in two weeks we already had about 200 children for the school and two orphans!



Communication between New York and Halifax was difficult because of the great distance, so I had to be creative in raising funds for the young community. Since I had experience in the business world, I held the first bazaar to raise money for our work. Some women entered the Community in those early days, but after their novitiate in New York, they remained there on mission. If this mission in Canada were to succeed and have a future, we should establish a new Motherhouse and Novitiate in Halifax. In 1855, after an appeal by Archbishop Walsh of Halifax to Archbishop Hughes and the Sisters of Charity of New York, the new Community was founded and I was named its first Mother Superior.

Now, as Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul Halifax, our community grew, and we opened many missions in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and eventually throughout different cities in Canada and the US. I remained in Halifax until 1858, when I returned to New York, which was acceptable as new foundations were made.

From 1860 to 1870 I was missioned once again as a New York Sister of Charity to St. Mary's Asylum in Jersey City. Yet, in 1870, just a few months before my death in October, I made a last visit to Halifax to visit "my sisters" and learn of their expanding missions and plans for a new Motherhouse outside the city.

"God's hand is in it all", as Mother Seton used to say, and "sweet is the Providence that overrules us."