IHMs opened St. George School in 1950 and remained there until 1964 when the construction of the Chrysler Expressway caused the razing of the parish buildings. When they arrived, they faced the challenge of creating an academically sound Catholic elementary school for African-American students in inner-city Detroit.

Originally, the parish, like many in the Detroit area, had been founded to serve a particular ethnic group; in this case, Lithuanians, meaning to this undisciplined group…. Pen and paper could never express what went on during this time. Each closing session seemed to be the final act but renewed energy brought the staunch two to their arduous task daily. Undaunted teachers struggle for supremacy, a slow painful process that was not fruitful until about December.”

Sister Catherine (Mary Alan) Cavataio, who was at St. George from 1962-64, the last two years it was open, recalls her years there as very rewarding.

“Our mission there was more than teaching. We helped with many things, like food to eat and clothes to wear. We spent many hours, too, meeting with parents, and getting to know the parish and area.

“Not every student could afford to pay tuition, but those who could brought a dollar each week.”

Explaining that some of the students were older than typical eighth grad-
ers, she recalled one boy who graduated one year and joined the army the next. “His mother was so proud of him. He was the first of her children to get that far in school.”

From start to finish, these were challenging times in which to live; these were times when the pioneers responded to the needs they saw and achieved much with little.
Over the course of the congregation’s first half century, the IHMs had seven general superiors. Mother Clotilda was the longest serving.

### General Superiors 1845-1900

- 1845-49, 1852-59: Theresa Maxis Duchemin
- 1849-52: Alphonsine Godfrey-Smith
- 1859-64: Mary Joseph Walker
- 1864 (Oct.-Dec.): Xavier Eagan
- 1865-69: Gertrude Gerretsen
- 1869-79, 1885-94: Clotilda Hoskyns
- 1879-85, 1894-1900: Justina Riley

Mother Clotilda Hoskyns Brought Diverse Gifts to Office

Lucy Hoskyns was born in 1841, entered St. Mary Academy as a boarder in 1861 and became an IHM in 1863, taking the name Mary Clotilda. From the beginning her talent for administration and sound spirituality were apparent. She became local superior of SS. Peter and Paul, the cathedral parish in Detroit, in 1866 and directress of novices in 1868.

When Mother Gertrude resigned as general superior in August of 1869 because of ill health, Clotilda was appointed to succeed her. On Dec. 8, 1869, she was elected to the office and through re-election remained until 1879. Again in 1885, she was elected general superior, and through re-election remained in office until 1894.

For many years in the latter part of the 1800s, Clotilda significantly influenced the directions the young congregation took as a leader and administrator. No Greater Service recognizes her contributions in shaping the internal organization and life of the community, the development of St. Mary Academy, the establishment of a normal school, and the expansion of missions and schools.

But, we read, “The dearest memories of Mother Clotilda center on her humanness.”

Several examples are given. The sisters ordinarily ate meals meditatively in silence. But, after a long, hard day in school, she would give recreation at the evening meal as a little relaxation. And, during the weeks preceding the opening of school, when the sisters were working hard getting their classrooms and lessons ready, she would carry a basket of prepared food over to the school mid-morning for reinforcement.

The chapel erected in 1890 had no provision for opening the stained-glass windows. The heat there during meditation in the morning was stifling. Clotilda would read the point of meditation, and then disperse the sisters to the adjacent convent park to meditate under “God’s open sky” until she rang her bell signaling them back for the concluding prayers. Clotilda was able to temper the days of strict observance, and she did.

There were 24 professed sisters when she entered the novitiate, 68 when she became general superior and 189 when she left office. Clotilda had touched their lives.

English Proves Problematic for Non-Native Speakers

Sisters assigned to the foreign missions often found that the idioms and words of English were not understood the same way in every culture. Sister Ann Aseltyn used to gather the poorest of the poor, maids and shepherds, under the tree in front of the sisters’ house in northern Ghana to teach them. She knew no local language, but managed to teach them English.

One day, after a hectic day, she told them, “You can come any day except Sunday.” She figured she could have one day off. Later in the afternoon, a parent came to her frantic, wanting to know why his son had been told not to come to the classes. Ann was quite flustered and could not imagine what the children had heard her say. She asked the father, “What is the name of your son?” He responded, “Sunday.”

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