



# Today and Yesterday

*Stories from the Archives*

## *Mother Theresa still looked to as inspiring hope*

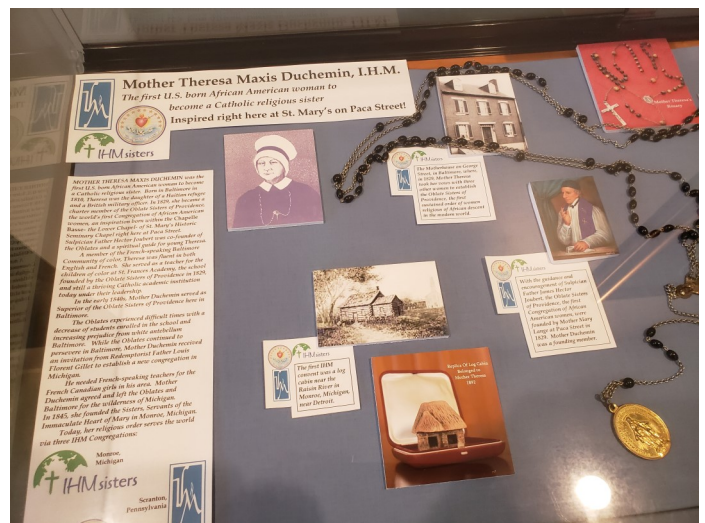
**By Jennifer Meacham Archivist**

The Seton Hill district in the city of Baltimore is home to St. Mary’s Spirituality Center and Historical Site. Here tourists and pilgrims alike can visit a chapel built as part of the first Roman Catholic Seminary in the United States, founded in 1791, and a house that once belonged to Mother Elizabeth Ann Seton, the first U.S.-born Catholic saint. This site, more commonly known as St. Mary’s on Paca Street, is also the birthplace of the Oblate Sisters of Providence.

Their Visitor Center includes informational displays that tell the history of St. Mary’s Seminary and College as well as the larger Catholic community of Baltimore. Among their permanent display cases are ones dedicated to Mother Seton and Mother Mary Elizabeth

Lange, founder of the Oblate Sisters. Earlier this year they decided to install a new permanent display to tell the story of Mother Theresa Maxis Duchemin, an original founding member of the Oblates.

In February the Director of St. Mary’s on Paca Street, Deacon Vito Piazza, contacted the archivists for the three IHM congregations and asked us to contribute artifacts, photos, and information relating to Theresa Maxis. This proved to be a wonderful opportunity to “meet” and collaborate with my colleagues from the East. First via email and later in a virtual meeting using webcams and a program called Zoom, I connected with the project coordinator, Sr. Beth Pearson of the Scranton Congregation, and Sr. Helene Thomas Connelly, recently appointed Archivist for the Immaculata IHMs.



Shown is part of the exhibit’s Mother Theresa Maxis information and artifacts now in Baltimore.

It was agreed that anything that once belonged to Theresa Maxis was far too precious to be loaned, so good quality photographs would have to suffice. The Monroe Archives provided images of the log cabin from the first days of the Congregation and one of her handwritten Book of Prayers. The Eastern Congregations made valuable contributions as

well, including a photo of a tiny replica of the original IHM log cabin that was gifted to Theresa Maxis after her return to West Chester in 1885 — an artifact I did not know existed until now!

At the suggestion of Sr. Beth, and with our enthusiastic support, the archivist for the Oblates

## *Lost in the mists of time? Sometimes we can't say*

The IHM Archives always is an interesting place, if sometimes confounding.

Many people might imagine that a department that houses thousands of document boxes, countless photos and pieces of paper and numerous physical artifacts would be able to answer any question. However, sometimes the collection itself provokes niggling mysteries.

The most recent example is a well-preserved message on St. Mary's College stationery. The note was written in Monroe on March 27, 1908, a Friday.

A photo image of St. Mary's College – often called the second Academy – is at the top. Often referred to as “magnificent,” St. Mary's College had opened in 1905 on the north side of Elm Ave., near St. Mary's church. The building was destroyed in a fire on June 4, 1929.

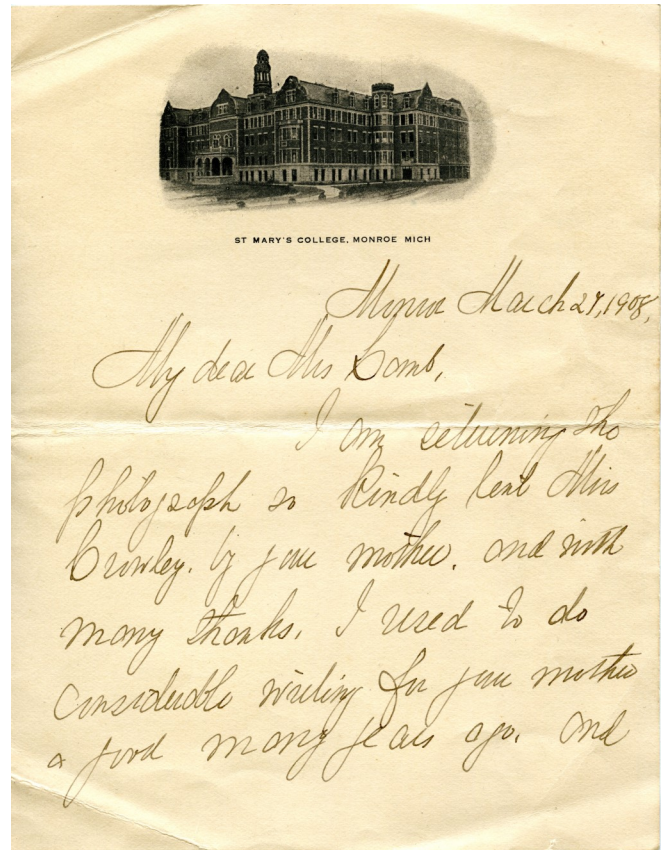
The note's salutation says, “My dear Mrs. Lamb.” It is signed by Mrs. W. Van Miller.

The biggest conundrum is that the note in its envelope was found in a folder of news clippings from the 1960s and 1970s about St. Mary Academy – the *third* academy. Different building, different location, different era.

The note says: “I am returning the photograph so kindly lent Miss Crowley by your mother, and with many thanks. I used to do considerable writing for your mother a good many years ago and it was always a pleasure to meet her in the street. As I said this morning I was in Albany last Feb. and so missed knowing that she had passed away. I trust yourself, and family are well, and I hope some time to have the pleasure of meeting you.”

Mrs. Van Miller lived at 53 Humphrey St. on the other side of the river and several blocks to the east. Mrs. Lamb lived in R.F.D. (Rural Free Delivery) district No. 4.

We can tell you it was postmarked at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. That the notecard is folded allowing for four 6-inch-by-4¾-inch pages. That it is undoubtedly



linked to Monroe, Michigan.

But we cannot tell you why we have it in Archives or why it was saved in a folder of clippings from newspapers published 60 years after the note was written. But as all archivists know, barring more information revealing a clearer picture, it will remain where it was found.



*Continued from Page 1*

was also invited to contribute to this modest but important project. While there is no likeness of Theresa Maxis in an Oblate habit, their Archives was able to provide a photo of the Motherhouse on George Street in Baltimore where the Oblate Sisters of Providence took their first vows in 1829.

Copies were made, the few artifacts shipped, and various items were arranged by the staff of the visitor center. The finished display case was then positioned under a portrait of Theresa Maxis and unveiled on May 15. Deacon Vito expressed his gratitude for the contributions of all four Congregational Archives and for the opportunity to present Mother Theresa to the visitors of St. Mary's on Paca Street. He kindly wrote: "In telling her story, bringing her to life here in the center, may she continue to give us strength, fortitude, hope and encouragement in our own lives. May her legacy continue to change lives and the world."

## *Hall of the Divine Child clock still chiming away in Archives*

Who knows how long it had been lying in a box on top of a cabinet? But when the work-room where it sat was needed for Marygrove boxes the clock gained new life. The plaque on the 22 1/2-inch-long timepiece says 1918-1980. It chimes every 15 minutes and has to be wound in three places weekly. Archivist Jennifer Meacham found the perfect shop to get it running again: Brennan Jewelry Inc. in Allen Park.



## *Mystery photograph: Do you know the story?*

The Archives has many photos that do not include identifications or list time, place and context. At left is one of them.

Do you know Sisters in the photo? Or where it was taken? Or why?

The back of the picture says simply Seminole Indians 1966.

You are invited to contact us with questions and/or information. Call Deb Saul at ext. 321 or e-mail [dsaul@ihmsisters.org](mailto:dsaul@ihmsisters.org) or stop in at the Archives in the afternoon.

Help us preserve the details of the IHM story.



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Since 2000, all IHM sisters have been encouraged to submit individual chronicles to the IHM Archives. These records about your own life and ministry over the course of a year or more add breadth and depth to the documented history of the IHM Sisters. Your contribution will enrich the future record of the IHM, so please be sure your life's story is included in the community's story.

### Facebook favorites: A popular recent Archives post

Sister Mary Dominic (Josephine) Sferrella clearly was enjoying her part in a game of hoops. She was principal at St. Boniface School located in the shadow of Tiger Stadium in Detroit. The school had opened in 1869 for German settlers. The IHM Sisters arrived on Nov. 29, 1872. Their new mission was to operate the school for girls and small boys. Sister Jo was there in 1968 when the Detroit Tigers won the World Series. The convent chronicles say "the city went wild" and students and faculty joined the celebration. St. Boniface closed on Jan. 28, 1971; the IHM had been there for 99 years.



#### *A couple of comments from IHM Facebook posts*

**Lorna Bredehorn:** Spent the summer of '69 at St. Boniface traveling around the inner city organizing & supervising playground activities with a great group of people. Worked with the St. Boniface parishioners parking cars for the Tigers games & watched the moon landing in the convent living room. Many fond memories of a wonderful parish & neighborhood.

**Jessica Viau Hoffner:** I'd recognize that smile anywhere!