

# TODAY AND YESTERDAY

A COLLECTION OF RECENT DISCOVERIES AND  
ACTIVITIES IN THE IHM ARCHIVES

## Academy III news sparks joy and memories

A long-held dream seems poised to become reality. One of Monroe's most storied landmarks – the St. Mary Academy building – is the focus of an option to purchase agreement with Keith Masserant and KM Cornerstone. Masserant, a former student of the Hall of the Divine Child and St. Mary Catholic Central High School, said he wants to refurbish some of the most historic features, including the marble staircase. The agreement is entering a 24-month feasibility study. Surprise, delight and tears greeted the announcement June 8.



### Good to know:

- 324 Sisters taught there
- 260,000 square feet
- Open 1932-1987
- Accommodated both boarders and day students
- Longest service: Sister Marie Therese Daily, music teacher 1932-1966 (after 23 years at Academy II)



Sister Sheila Gainey  
with students, 1964



## New in Archives: Transcript of 1968 meeting with Merton

Recently the advisory board of the Margaret Brennan Institute asked the Archives to seek out other resources related to Margaret's ministry in spirituality. Archivist Jennifer Meacham sent out inquiries to Notre Dame, Carmelite Sisters, the Association of Contemplative Women, the Thomas Merton Society, and Our Lady of the Redwoods Abbey in California.

From the Abbey came the biggest surprise. First some background: Summer, 1968, the IHM was coordinating conferences on the House of Prayer movement. Margaret Brennan arranged to meet with famed monk and writer Thomas Merton Oct. 11-13 for an informal three days at the Redwoods to explore prayer and religious life.

Margaret took the HOP Founding Committee – Sisters Ann E. Chester, Mary McDevitt, Juliana Bruin and

Catherine Corgan, plus Brother David Steindl-Rast, OSB, friend of the IHMs.

The Redwoods Abbess, Sr. Kathy DeVico, was tickled to e-mail back to Jennifer that Liturgical Press has just published *Merton In California*. “When your sisters were here for the ‘house of prayer’ conferences by Merton it was taped. Finally the right person showed up at our doorstep and now they have been transcribed in this book.” The tapes had sat on a shelf for half a century. Although we have a few private notes from that time, never have we had something like this, or even guessed it had all been recorded. (The book can be seen in the Archives.)

Brother David, now 97, wrote a blurb for the back of the book. He said, “As one of the participants of the [October] 1968 Redwoods Conferences, I can sum up the atmosphere of those days in one word: electrified.”

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## First days: For a ‘wilderness’ a lot was going on

When Mother Theresa Maxis Duchemin and Charlotte (Sister Ann) Schaaf arrived in Monroe some considered it frontier or on the edge of wilderness. Their beginning as a community can only be described as primitive. Wild animals, cold, loneliness, hunger and troubles of all kinds were noted in their writing.

But as they intentionally turned their backs to the world, choosing hardship and sacrifice, life certainly was easier close by. Father Gilbert Enderle, C.Ss.R., in his biography of Father Louis Gillet, said Monroe was relatively prosperous... just across the river.

Here's his description: “At the very time when Gillet and [Rev. Francis] Poilvache came to preach their mission, the weekly edition [of *The Monroe Advocate*], dated March 21, 1844, carried advertisements of five physicians and surgeons, nine attorneys, a soap and

candle factory, a nursery selling fruit trees and berry plants, a steamboat providing trips Monroe-to-Toledo, a tailor shop,

several hotels and rooming houses, and five shipping agents. In addition there were some eighteen merchants, almost all of whom sold ‘groceries and dry goods’ but, beyond those general categories, they branched out into specialty items such as medicines, books, hardware, or confectionary goods. Perhaps the most eye-catching advertisement was that of B[enjamin] Dansard. ‘Whiskey! Whiskey! Whiskey!’ 500 Barrels Whiskey to be sold very low for Cash only.”



— *I Desire to be Everywhere*, pages 165-166

## Revisiting Sisters' poetry

### JUBILEE

In jubilee she ponders now  
what passing years have done,  
how work and prayer and humble care  
brought union with this Son.

Then urged by Spirit's sudden stir  
again, as at the start,  
she sings in wondrous praise of God  
her heart's Magnificat.

If we would earthly measure make  
of ventures in God's name,  
we in this woman's place will stand,  
God's mercy to proclaim.

Rejoice in God exceedingly,  
the Creator God, and Son,  
And sing of Spirit's power and grace  
'til endless ages run.

— Judy Coyle, IHM  
Pentecost, 1996

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### MIDLIFE

(Or when I consider Abraham at 75...)

Leave everything.  
I thought I had. Shall I be off  
Counting stars again?

— Connie Supan, IHM  
1985

## Mother Anna Marie (still) has advice for the future

IHM Sisters well remember the times of Mother Anna Marie Grix. She faced the early days of Vatican II, sending Sisters to Brazil, opening IHM HS in Westchester and Immaculata in Detroit and launching TRI-IHM, among others. She didn't let fear and trembling stop her.



**Mother Anna Marie Grix was no stranger to change and risk-taking.**

As she approached her 90th birthday in 1992, an article in *Spinnaker* recalled her 1954-1966 tenure. She told *Spinnaker* that leadership then, as in 1845, tackled challenges with the same tools that always served the congregation.

In an essay two years earlier, she had laid out her thoughts for IHM leadership in the future. “Changes will continue as time passes, but I believe that with each person’s commitment to accountability and responsible freedom in her personal life, the leaders of tomorrow will make their decisions with the same trust in divine Providence as did those of the past. Prayer, ministry, community, however diverse their forms, will continue to flourish in the Church and in the world if each is willing to ‘leave the work to God to bless and make it prosper’ according to God’s will and the needs of the time.”

# Among Ourselves

The new community slated for Visitation in 1985 first spent time together at Rose Lake. They used it for creating bonds and planning for their year at the House of Prayer. They are (from left to right) Sisters Mary Lou Theisen, Judith Bonini, Paula Cooney, Nan Milliken, Ann E. Chester and Laetitia Lariviere. Except for Ann, Tish, and Mary Lou, the members of the incoming group were new to the experience.



*The IHM Archives seeks to preserve any and all materials that document the history of the IHM Sisters. Please contact the Archivist if you have items to donate or have questions about the types of items appropriate for the collection.*

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