

Mother Seton's Order Founded First Holy Cross School In 1862

By MARGARET KOCH

Several years ago an elderly woman alighted from a car near Santa Cruz mission.

She looked around forlornly for a few minutes. Then she asked a nearby resident what had become of the convent.

"That was the only home I knew as a child," she said. "I was orphaned and penniless and they took me in."

"They were Sisters of Charity of the order founded by Mother Seton, the American nun who was beatified a week ago today at the Vatican.

And Mrs. Phyllis Patten who tells this story of the aged woman who returned, attended the Holy Cross convent school herself from 1894 to 1898. She has a rich store of memories of the first Catholic school "for young ladies" in Santa Cruz.

She remembers other things too.

FIRST WELFARE WORKERS

"The Sisters of Charity really did the first welfare work in Santa Cruz," she said.

They served as nurses in the county hospital which is said to have stood north of School street on the hill at that time. They visited old people as well as needy families. But the most important job they did was to educate young ladies.

In 1861 Rt. Rev. Thaddeus Amat, bishop of Monterey and



WINGED HEADDRESS
—Like out-stretched birds' wings, the Sister of Charity's starched white cornet has come to symbolize charity all over the world.

Los Angeles diocese, wrote to the religious order's mother house at Emmitsburg, Md.:

"... One of the most important places where sisters are needed is Santa Cruz, California, a nice flourishing village about 80 miles from San Francisco. Steamers run twice a week. Sisters can be in frequent communication with their sisters in San Francisco or Los Angeles..."

The Daughters of Charity order was founded in Paris in 1633 by St. Vincent de Paul. Sisters of Charity, first Catholic women's religious order founded in America, was begun by Mother Seton in either 1808 or 1809. (Contemporary historians place it as 1808; Webster's International dictionary at 1809.)

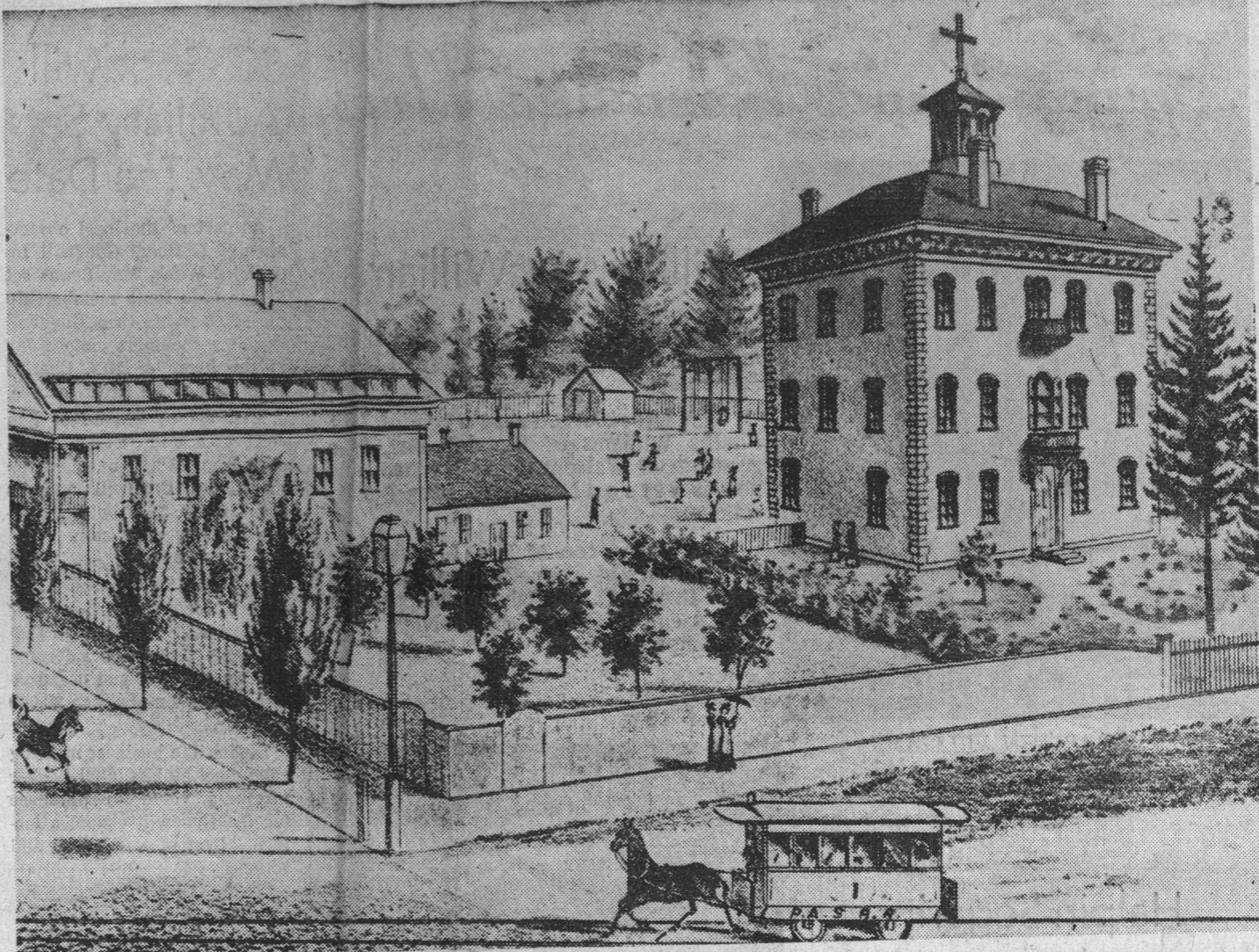
Mother Seton, who became a nun when she was left a widow with five children to raise, later died at her order's mother house at Emmitsburg, Md., January 4, 1821, when she was 46 years old.

The two groups of nuns merged in 1850 and today, 113 years later, there are 46,000 nuns in the order, 11,000 of them in this country. Popularly called "Sisters of Charity," the order's official name is Daughters of Charity.

LONG TRIP WEST

And so, back in 1826, three Sisters of Charity started to Santa Cruz from the east coast. They crossed the Isthmus of Panama on mules, proceeded by coastal steamer to San Francisco and arrived in December.

Headed by Sister Corsina McKay, the three determined nuns acquired the "Golden Eagle hotel," a two and one-half story adobe owned by Judge Blackburn. It stood about where School and Emmet streets corner today; had been built in 1810 and had served as a shelter for women, a fiesta center, a jail and finally, as a hotel.



FIRST HOLY CROSS SCHOOL — Holy Cross convent looked like this in 1865, three years after it was established by three Daughters of Charity from the Maryland order founded by Mother Seton, the American nun beatified a week ago today at the Vatican. The first adobe

school rooms; the third floor as a dormitory.

Mrs. Mary Hall Folsom, now living in Boulder Creek, recalls that boarding students earned credits in domestic science by helping with the chickens, cows and by making bread in stone ovens that had been built in Mission days.

Miss Anna Letitia Kinsley of Live Oak also was a student at the school and her memories center about a fairy-land float constructed by the sisters and students for the Venetian water carnival of 1895. It was drawn by four white horses furnished by her father, then was transferred to a barge for the river festival.

Once each year Patrick Morrissey Sr. hauled in wagon loads of dried hay to be used as fresh stuffing for the children's mattresses.

A second three-story wooden building was constructed in 1890, and in 1893 a new wing was added to the western end of the building which stood in the southeast corner of what is today's playground at the Holy Cross elementary school. Money for the new addition came from donors in San Francisco, Santa Clara and the Santa Cruz area. (During those same years Mission street hill also was leveled and its sides paved with stones.)

Altogether the school served the community for 62 years until the present school on High street was dedicated in 1927. The Sisters of Charity were in charge until 1943 when they were succeeded by the Dominican Sisters.

30 MINUTES TO BREAKFAST

The top floor of the old school consisted of a dormitory and large wash room

schoolhouse (left) originally was the "Golden Eagle hotel." The old horsecar line extended from Santa Cruz beach out of Vue de L'eau, pleasure pavilion located just east of Woodrow avenue, in operation in the 1870's and 1880's.

where 125 girls—in less than a half hour — brushed and braided their long hair and readied themselves for classes each morning.

Silence was the rule at meal-times, Mrs. Patten recalls, while the supervising sister read a book review or a treatise on table manners and general politeness. Only during holiday meals were the children permitted general "table talk."

Sisters were transferred regularly with two exceptions: Sister Henrietta and Sister Agnes, both teachers, remained here from the early 1890's until retirement age.

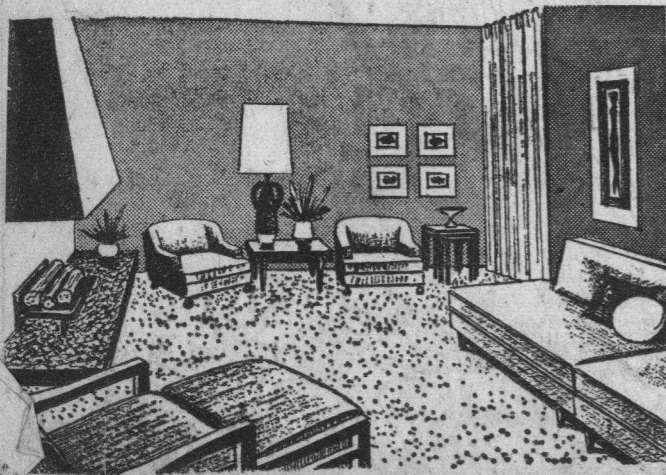
All nuns had special jobs. Others supervised the kitchen, dormitory, laundry and clothing rooms.

A few years ago the late Pope Pius XII suggested that

some religious headdresses be modified. But he specifically exempted this order saying: "No, not the Daughters of Charity, because the white-winged cornet is a symbol of charity all over the world."

Designs for Living

By Don Moore



Sp...

of two mobile chairs and companioning table on the end wall. Chairs, easily rolled on casters, can be moved up closer into the fireside group at will. Small tables, stacked in a nest when not in use, may be pulled up as needed to serve individual seating units.

Color scheme is composed of ice blue, deep blue and mulberry — produces an unusual, sophisticated effect. Wall interest and accessories have been carefully chosen and kept to a minimum to avoid stuffiness.

Want to give your room an up-to-the-minute contemporary look but don't know where to start? Why not begin with one new piece of furniture selected from our wide assortment of hand-picked pieces? Add others as you need them. Come in soon, let us assist you.

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