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Rosetta Landry White, who succeeded Mother Seton and was called Mother Rose.  
*Courtesy Archives of Saint Joseph's Provincial House, Emmitsburg, Maryland*

# The Journal of Mother Rose White: The Earliest History of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's, Emmitsburg, Maryland

BY  
BETTY ANN McNEIL, D.C.

## Introduction

Rosetta Landry White (1784-1841) chronicled her recollections of various events and periods of the first native community of religious women in the United States. When gathered together these memoirs written on various single sheets came to be known as *The Journal of Mother Rose White*, the earliest record of the pioneering days among the founding members of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's.<sup>1</sup> Her writing provides us with an invaluable account of the community Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton (1774-1821) founded. The *Journal of Mother Rose White* covers the period from June 1809 until sometime after the establishment of the first mission in New York (1817). The chronicler had first-hand experience of the genesis of the sisterhood: the days at Paca Street in Baltimore (1809), the first harsh winter in the Stone House at Emmitsburg (1809-1810), adoption of the rule of Vincent de Paul by the sisters (1812), the first eighteen month novitiate culminating in pronouncement of vows for the first time on 19 July 1813, opening in Philadelphia of the first mission outside of Maryland and being appointed its first sister servant (1814), and the aftermath of the death of their foundress on 4 January 1821 for the fifty-nine surviving members of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's.

One of the earliest women who joined Mrs. Seton in Baltimore, Mrs. Rose White, also a young widow, had lost her husband at sea after just a few years of marriage. Rose Landry had married Captain Joseph White when she was only fourteen, but Bishop John Carroll who officiated at the ceremony did not realize her actual age at the

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<sup>1</sup>See Archives of Saint Joseph's Provincial House (ASJPH), Emmitsburg, Maryland, United States.



Mother Seton's home and school on Paca Street  
next to Saint Mary's College and Seminary in Baltimore,  
June 1808 - June 1809.

*Courtesy Archives of Saint Joseph's Provincial House, Emmitsburg,  
Maryland*

time of the wedding on Valentine's Day in 1799.<sup>2</sup> When she joined Mrs. Seton, Rose was also mourning the deaths of both her husband and her infant daughter. At the time Mrs. White presented herself at Paca Street, her son Charles, who later enrolled in Mount Saint Mary's in 1810, was only six years old (approximately five years younger than Mrs. Seton's youngest son Richard).<sup>3</sup>

Acquaintance with Mother Seton may have begun before Mrs. White actually moved to Paca Street where Mrs. Seton had come, at the invitation of Reverend William Dubourg, S.S. (1766-1833), presi-

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<sup>2</sup>The wedding announcement appeared in the *Baltimore Times* of 15 February 1799. Actually Rose was a few weeks short of her fourteenth birthday on the 25th of March.

<sup>3</sup>Charles studied at Mount Saint Mary's, Emmitsburg, from 1810 until 1818.

dent of Saint Mary's College, to open a school for girls. However, the offer by Samuel Cooper (1769-1843), a wealthy Philadelphia seminarian then in Baltimore, to purchase property and expand the educational mission to include his vision of a continuum of services designed, "on the plan of establishing an institution for the advancement of Catholic female children in habits of religion and giving them an education suited to that purpose. He also desires . . . to extend the plan to the reception of the aged and also uneducated persons who may be employed in spinning, knitting, etc. so as to found a manufactory on a small scale which may be very beneficial to the poor."<sup>4</sup> This generous act of providence changed the sphere of both Elizabeth Seton and Rose White's future activity. Their horizons shifted away from the city of Baltimore and the Sulpicians at Saint Mary's College to the Sulpicians at Mount Saint Mary's College near Emmitsburg. Their future would radiate from a spur of the Catoclin Mountains in central Maryland beside a rural valley, which, according to tradition, Elizabeth Seton named Saint Joseph's Valley.

The Sulpicians nurtured the mustard seed begun by Elizabeth Seton and made it possible for her community to grow and flourish in the spirit of Saint Vincent de Paul and his collaborator Saint Louise de Marillac, who in 1633 cofounded the Company of the Daughters of Charity. The *Régestre* minutes for the Sulpician assembly for 14 March 1809 read, "It is a matter of buying a plantation near Emmitsburg to found there a community of daughters, *à peu près sur le même plan que les filles de la Charité, de St. Vincent de Paul* [similar to the model of the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul] who join to the care of the sick, the instruction of young girls in all branches of Christian education."<sup>5</sup>

Reverend John Baptist David, S.S. (1761-1841), recommended Mrs. White, his spiritual directee, for the nascent sisterhood then forming under the Sulpicians' direction. David had guided Mrs. White well. This candidate of his was a devout Baltimore native who had been active in various charitable projects of David's including membership in a society to visit the sick and the poor.

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<sup>4</sup>Elizabeth Seton to Philip Filicchi, 8 February 1809, *Numerous Choirs. A Chronicle of Elizabeth Bayley Seton and Her Spiritual Daughters. Volume 1: The Seton Years 1774-1821*, 2 vols., ed. Ellin M. Kelly (Evansville: Mater Dei Provincialate, 1981), 1: 124.

<sup>5</sup>Melville cites this quote with one line in French. Annabelle Melville, *Louis William Dubourg*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1986), 1: 177. See [Sister John Mary Crumlish, D.C.], 1809-1959 (Emmitsburg: St Joseph's Central House, 1959).

After their establishment in Emmitsburg, Mother Seton wrote to Archbishop Carroll that, "Our dear Rose is my Treasure—she is truly excellent."<sup>6</sup> The two widows and mothers brought complementary gifts to the American Company of Charity, although it is easy to understand how the inevitable internal interpersonal rifts arose among the sisters of the local community over leadership styles of the two women, especially during the period of tension when David, Sister Rose's sponsor, was the superior, and his postulant was Mother Seton's assistant.

At the request of Bishop John Carroll (1735-1815, first bishop of Baltimore 1789-1815) and Father David, Bishop-elect Benedict Flaget, S.S. (1763-1851), brought from France a copy of the *Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity* in French, which Reverend John Dubois, S.S. (1764-1842), translated and modified probably with Mother Seton's input.<sup>7</sup> Dubois, third superior of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's, had been a chaplain at Les Petits-Maisons of the Daughters of Charity on rue de Sèvres in Paris for several years prior to the French Revolution.<sup>8</sup>

The principal point on which the rules were changed in order to adapt them to American conditions concerned the activities of the sisters in the schools, for the French Daughters devoted themselves entirely to the service of children unable to pay for their education. In the United States, Mother Seton's sisters needed to rely on educational activity for income. Another change related to Mother Seton's children, namely that she be permitted to remain their legal guardian despite her vow of poverty. According to the modified rule which Archbishop John Carroll approved in 1812, Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton's Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's were subject to the superior of the American Sulpicians (who was also the superior at Saint Mary's Col-

<sup>6</sup>Elizabeth Seton to John Carroll, 6 August 1809, *Elizabeth Seton Selected Writings*, eds. Ellin Kelly and Annabelle Melville (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 263.

<sup>7</sup>Annabelle Melville, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton* (New York: Scribner, 1951), 195, 210-13, 218-19.

<sup>8</sup>Dubois belonged to the Society of Saint Sulpice (1808-1826) and in 1795 became pastor in Frederick, Maryland. From there he engaged in extensive missionary journeys throughout western Maryland. There Dubois came to know the growing Catholic community near Emmitsburg which worshiped in the house chapel of the Elder family and later in the Old Saint Mary's Church on the Mountain. Dubois welcomed Mother Seton and her first sisters in June 1809 and surrendered his cabin for their use for several weeks while repairs were completed on their old farm house. During that period, he lived at the (still unfinished) seminary. In 1810-1811, Dubois wrote in revisions to the rule of Vincent in order to adapt it to American needs after Bruté made a copy of the English text. Dubois jointly held the title to the 269 acres of property of the Sisters of Saint Joseph's in his name along with Cooper and Dubourg until after the sisters became incorporated in the state of Maryland in 1817, after which the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's held the title.



In this Filicchi Portrait, Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton is dressed in the "Widow's Weeds" customary in Italy when her husband died at Pisa in 1803.

*Courtesy Archives of Saint Joseph's Provincial House,  
Emmitsburg, Maryland*

lege and Seminary in Baltimore). Therefore, the Society of Saint Sulpice in the United States became the canonical protector of the constitutions of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's.<sup>9</sup>

Before the Emmitsburg community united with the Company of the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul of France in 1850, the American sisterhood had Sulpician superiors, most of whom were familiar with the Daughters of Charity in France prior to the French

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<sup>9</sup>Kelly, *Numerous Choirs*, 1: 268.

Revolution. The Sulpician superiors inculcated and nurtured the Vincentian charism in the American community. Reverend Louis William Dubourg, (the first superior, 1809), preached the first retreat to the nascent community and oversaw their initial establishment. Reverend John Baptist David (second superior, 1809-1811) obtained the *Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity* from France and suggested uniting the American community with the Daughters of Charity in France. Reverend John Dubois (third superior, 1811-1826) modified the *Common Rules* to meet the needs of the Church in America and provided leadership to the Sisters of Charity, along with Elizabeth Seton, during the foundress' lifetime and during the important time of transition after her death until his elevation to the bishopric of New York. In a letter to his superiors dated 1816 Dubois mentioned the possibility of uniting the American community with the Daughters of Charity. Reverend John F. Hickey (fifth superior, 1830-1841) succeeded and also collaborated with Reverend Louis R. Deluol (fourth and sixth superior, 1826-1830, 1841-1849), who sought closer ties to the French



Reverend Simon Bruté, S.S., confessor and spiritual director of Elizabeth Seton at the time of her death.  
*Courtesy Archives of Saint Joseph's Provincial House,  
 Emmitsburg, Maryland*



community because the Sulpicians had been mandated to divest ministries not directly connected with their primary charism of the education and formation of candidates for the priesthood. Duluol successfully negotiated the union with France in 1848-1849. Although never appointed the superior, Reverend Simon Bruté, S.S. (1779-1839), became Mother Seton's spiritual director (1812-1821), and translated the rule of Vincent. Bruté actively promoted Vincentian teachings and spirituality among the early sisters.<sup>10</sup>

Rose's potential was recognized and had been tapped by Dubourg and Mother Seton who delegated responsibility to her at Paca Street for supervising the journey to Emmitsburg for Mother Seton's younger daughters and the rest of the sisters. As the sisterhood was organized, Rose became the assistant in the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's and the one designated to establish the first important missions beyond Emmitsburg at Philadelphia (1814) and New York (1817). After Mother Seton's death, the community summoned Rose back to Saint Joseph's Valley as superioress. This office she successfully held twice for a total of twelve years. During her first term (1821-1827), Mother Rose led the community which at that time operated an asylum and school in Philadelphia, an asylum and pay school in New York, and soon an orphan asylum and free school in Baltimore. In 1821 there were fifty-two boarders in Saint Joseph's Academy, six orphans in residence, and forty poor children in the day school for whom the sisters provided food and clothing.<sup>11</sup>

During her first term, Mother Rose sent sisters to begin asylums and schools in Baltimore, Frederick, Washington, and also their first mission in healthcare at the Baltimore Infirmary in 1823. In 1833 at the conclusion of the term of her successor, Mother Mary Augustine Decount (superior 1827-1833), Mother Rose was again elected. During her second term (1833-1839) the community opened schools in New

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<sup>10</sup>Regarding David, see Kelly and Melville, *Selected Writings*, 12, n. 272. Regarding Simon Bruté, see Melville, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton*, 210-13, 218-19. Reverend John Dubois, S.S., wrote to Reverend Antoine Garnier, S.S., then treasurer at Saint Sulpice in Paris (later superior general 1827-1845), 18 April 1816, about his multiple responsibilities and suggested the union. "I desire more than anything in the world to be freed from the charge of the Sisters [of Charity of Saint Joseph's]—but I see no other hope than that of reuniting them to some other Society which will care for them—If our Superior [then Reverend John Mary Tessier, S.S.] approves, I shall try to arrange correspondence with the Superior of the Priests of the Mission, formerly Lazarists to see whether it would not be possible to form a union between the Sisters here and those of France." See Sister Mary John Crumlish, D.C., *The Union of the American Sisters* (Emmitsburg: Saint Joseph's Central House, 1950), 24-25.

<sup>11</sup>[Sister Delphine Steele], *Life of Mother Rose White* (Emmitsburg: Saint Joseph's Central House, 1936), 268.

York, Conewago (Pennsylvania), Philadelphia, Pottsville (Pennsylvania), Norfolk (Virginia), Martinsburg (then Virginia, now West Virginia), and Vincennes (Indiana), asylums and schools for orphans in New Orleans (Louisiana), Utica (New York), Richmond (Virginia), and Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania), a healthcare mission in Richmond, and broke ground for the chapel at Saint Joseph's, which Mother Seton had hoped to construct. Mother Rose White's death in Frederick, Maryland at the age of fifty-six left a legacy of missionary vision and practical wisdom for the Company of Charity that carried its development forward. The community's mission remained rooted in the events documented on the pages that became a priceless legacy for posterity. Mother Rose is buried at Emmitsburg in the beloved little woods of Mother Seton near her earliest companions.<sup>12</sup>

*The Journal of Mother Rose White* is held in the Archives of Saint Joseph's Provincial House, Emmitsburg, Maryland in the United States. The original sheets which comprise the *Journal* have been collated along with other notations and documents into one bound book, approximately eight by twelve inches in size. The first twenty-nine pages are all in Rose White's handwriting. Ten of these sheets, approximately eight by six inches, are written in fine script on both sides of the page. There are five sheets, seven and one-half by twelve inches, four are written on both sides and one is written on only one side. After the entries in Rose White's handwriting, additional larger sheets are appended. Those appear to be written by a different hand and lack signatures but do provide some anecdotal commentary about early community members. That information is not included here because their author is unknown and internal evidence indicates that they were probably written retrospectively. This article was prepared from a typed copy but the original manuscript was checked for discrepancies. The text of the *Journal* is presented here as written by Rose White but with some editorial corrections made for punctuation, spelling, and paragraph divisions. The original journal lacks subheadings but

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<sup>12</sup>When her mother was in failing health, she came to Saint Joseph's as a boarder c. 1826 and remained until her death. The following entry was written in Mother Rose's old prayer book: "September 10, 1820 [sic], Mrs. Mary Magdalen Landry, my Mother, departed this life, aged seventy-six years five months, and twenty-four days. She died at Saint Joseph's Valley, her body is interred in the graveyard with the Sisters of our Community. Her death was most happy, blessed with all the consolations of Holy Church. She died full of faith and hope in the merits of her Savior and God. May it be the happiness of her children to meet her in Heaven." ([Steele], *Life of Mother Rose White*, 30-31, 153; *Annals* 1821-1832, 254.) For a summary of Mother Rose White's last will and testament, see ASJPH 7-21.

they have been included here to enable the reader to focus more easily on the events and places discussed by Mother Rose because of their significance for apostolic women in the United States.

### The Journal of Mother Rose White

[*Baltimore*]

In the beginning of June, 1809, Mrs. Seton's sisters-in-law, Miss Cecilia and Miss Harriet Seton, arrived in Baltimore accompanied by their brother, Mr. Samuel Seton and Mr. [Guy] Carleton [Bayley], the half-brother of Mother.<sup>13</sup> Miss Cecilia had become a Catholic in New York before Mother Seton left but was prevented from having much intercourse with Mother on account of the great prejudice that existed against the Catholic religion, but the very bad health of Miss Cecilia Seton continued and it was thought she was in confirmed consumption [tuberculosis], and must soon fall victim to its rapid progress. The last and only thing that physicians could offer as a shadow of hope was a sea voyage. This, it appears, Miss Seton would not consent to but begged as a last favor that she might be permitted to come by the way of the packets—as there were then no steamboats—to Baltimore to see her Sister [Elizabeth] Seton.<sup>14</sup>

They readily agreed, seeing that she had but a short time to live—one on whom all the affection of her family was bestowed—of which she was truly worthy as she was a lovely soul. They were so convinced that they put material for a shroud in her trunk and a few yards of black silk to make a dress in case she would live. They arrived safely in Baltimore and the change of air and the great pleasure Miss Cecilia had in meeting her sister, Mrs. Seton, made her feel much better, yet

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<sup>13</sup>Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton's parents were Dr. Richard Bayley (1744-1801) and Catherine Charlton (d. 1777). A half-brother of Elizabeth Seton, Guy Carlton Bayley (1786-1859) was the child of Doctor Richard Bayley and Charlotte Amelia Bayley (d. 1805), and married (1813) Grace Roosevelt, parents of James Roosevelt Bayley, convert, bishop of Newark (1853-1872), archbishop of Baltimore (1872-1877), who is buried in the same mortuary chapel where the remains of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton reposed (1846-1962) at Emmitsburg. The following were half-siblings to William Magee Seton (1768-1803), husband of Elizabeth Seton, by the marriage (1776) between William Seton, Sr. and Anna-Maria Curson: Harriet Seton (1787-1809), Cecilia Seton (1791-1810), Samuel Waddington Seton (1789-1869). At the time she accompanied her sister to Baltimore, Harriet Seton was engaged to Elizabeth Seton's half-brother, Andrew Barclay Bayley (d. 1811) but she broke the engagement after she began considering entrance into the Sisters of Charity.

<sup>14</sup>Packets or packet boats travel a regular route carrying passengers, freight, and mail.



Reverend Louis William Dubourg, S.S.,  
 who invited Mother Seton to Baltimore and  
 became the first superior of the Sisters of Charity.

*Courtesy Archives of Saint Joseph's Provincial House, Emmitsburg, Maryland*

she continued to raise blood and was very weak.

After a few weeks stay in Baltimore she determined to remain with us and Dr. [Pierre] Chatard advised she should leave the city for

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<sup>15</sup>Doctor Pierre Chatard of Baltimore was a physician and friend of the community. His granddaughter entered the Sisters of Charity on 28 August 1857 and became Sister Juliana Chatard (1832-1917).

the country air.<sup>15</sup> The time was drawing near when the little community assembled in Baltimore would leave for the valley, it was thought best that Mother should bring Miss Seton up at once. When her friends who accompanied her saw she was determined to remain, the two gentlemen returned to New York where their business called them, and Miss Harriet Seton determined on accompanying her sister to the Mountain. So they left Baltimore on the 22nd [June 1809], Mrs. Seton, Misses Cecilia and Harriet Seton, Miss Annina Seton and Miss Maria Murphy, afterwards Sister Maria.<sup>16</sup> They arrived at the Mountain and were lodged in the small [log] house on the hill which had been first occupied by Rev. Mr. Dubois, who gave up his room.<sup>17</sup>

Rev. Mr. Dubourg had left Mrs. Rose White in the place of Mrs. Seton to take charge of the family left in Baltimore who were to follow. The persons left were the two children of Mother Seton, Josephine and Rebecca, Miss Cecilia O'Conway from Philadelphia, Miss Mary Ann Butler of Philadelphia, Miss Susan Clossey of New York, two board-

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<sup>16</sup>Anna Marie Seton (1795-1812), eldest daughter of Elizabeth Seton, was called Annina after they returned from Leghorn. Maria Murphy (d. 1812) joined Mother Seton in Baltimore, sponsored by Reverend Pierre Babade, S.S. (1763-1846). Miss Maria Murphy is sometimes referred to also as Sister Maria Burke or Sister Maria Murphy.

<sup>17</sup>The Emmitsburg valley became a haven for refugee Catholics from England because the height of the Blue Ridge Mountains at the Catoctin Spur deterred them from continuing their northwestern flight for religious freedom. They named the easternmost elevation Saint Mary's Mount after Saint Mary's City on Saint Mary's River in Saint Mary's County in southern Maryland from which they had fled. William Elder, Sr., was the American born leader of these English Catholic refugees who left Saint Mary's City in 1728. Elder was the great-grandfather of William Henry Elder, archbishop of Cincinnati (d. 1904). William Shields, Samuel Carrick, and a Mr. Lilly claimed a large tract of land in the area about the time of Samuel Emmitt's patent (1757). When divided, Carrick got west of Tom's Creek, including the knob thereby the name Carrick's Knob for the elevation which William Elder had called Saint Mary's Mountain. (James A. Helman, *History of Emmitsburg, MD.* [Frederick: Citizen Press, 1906], 9. See also Mary M. Meline and Edward McSweeney, *The Story of the Mountain: Mount Saint Mary's College and Seminary*, 2 vols. [Emmitsburg: The Weekly Chronicle, 1911], vol. 1.) Arrival at Emmitsburg of Elizabeth Seton and four companions (Cecilia, Harriet, and Annina Seton, and Maria Murphy) who had left Baltimore on 21 June. Repairs were incomplete on the Stone House, so Reverend John Dubois, S.S., gave them hospitality in a cabin at the mountain until 29 July when they arrived in Saint Joseph's Valley to greet the second group from Baltimore. On Monday, 31 July 1809, Mother Seton and her companions began a regular way of life following an order of day. That date, the feast of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, patron of the Maryland missions, also marks the birth of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's in the United States. See Kelly, *Numerous Choirs*, 1: 127 and ASJPH 11-0.

ers, Miss Isabella O'Conway and Miss Julia La Briton, and a young woman who attended the duties of the house, named Miss Ann Nabs.<sup>18</sup> William Seton and Richard were at Mount St. Mary's College.<sup>19</sup>

[*Journey to Emmitsburg*]

On the 26th of July, a letter from Mr. Dubourg and Mrs. Seton directing us to pack and load the wagon that was sent to Baltimore for us, and come immediately to the Valley. Mother wrote that we would find pebbles for beads, tin cups to drink out of and plates of [word indistinct].<sup>20</sup> We began to make our arrangements and by the morning of the 30th [July 1809] we were ready to start at half past two o'clock. We drove through [St. Mary's] College yard and Madame Fournier, Rev. Dubourg's sister, opening the casement of her window, waved

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<sup>18</sup>Catherine (Kit or Jos) Josephine Seton (1800-1891) and Rebecca (Bec) Seton (1802-1816) were daughters of Elizabeth Seton. After Mother Seton's death Catherine traveled with her brother, William, and his family before entering the Sisters of Mercy in New York (1846) where she did prison ministry and became the assistant of her order (1864-1871). Miss Cecilia (Cis) O'Conway (c. 1788-1865) was the first postulant to join Mother Seton in Baltimore (7 December 1808) and a member of the original vow group. She was also known as Sister Veronica. After withdrawal from the Sisters of Charity (1823), she entered the Ursulines in Montreal where she died as Mother Marie of the Incarnation. As an Ursuline she wrote her family from Quebec that she was "a happy captive to Rules more congenial to my inclinations" and added "Ever venerable will the Institution of Saint Vincent de Paul be to my memory . . . Malicious tongues shall never say that I left the Society through a contempt for it." (Melville, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton*, 428, n. 79.) Isabella O'Conway was a younger sister of Cecilia O'Conway and also a pupil of Mother Seton's in Baltimore. Cecilia and Isabella were the daughters of Matthias O'Conway, a merchant and Spanish interpreter of Philadelphia. Miss Mary Ann Butler (d. 1821), one of Mother Seton's first companions in Baltimore and a member of the original vow group composed the words to several hymns including "O What Could My Jesus Do More." (ASJPH 7-8-2-3: 226, 228.) Miss Susan (Sus) Clossy (d. 1823) was among the first to enter in Baltimore and was a member of the original vow group. Mother Seton described her as "one of the sweetest souls . . . who has lived in my very heart and been more than an own sister to me . . . and has nursed Cecil, Harriet, Anna, William and Richard. (Ellin Kelly, *Numerous Choirs*, 2 vols. [Saint Meinrad, Ind.: Abbey Press, 1996], 2:14.) Miss Ann Nabs (d. 1823) was Mother Seton's housekeeper in Baltimore and moved to Emmitsburg in 1809 with the Setons and became Sister Anastasia after she joined the Sisters of Charity on 14 May 1813. No additional information is known about Julia La Briton except that she had been a pupil of Mother Seton's in Baltimore.

<sup>19</sup>William (Willy) Seton (1796-1868) and Richard (Dicksey) Seton (1798-1823) were Elizabeth Seton's sons. William served in the United States Navy (1818-1834) and married (1832) Emily Prime (1804-1854). He and members of his family are buried in the old cemetery at Mount Saint Mary's near the entrance to the present National Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes. Richard also served in the United States Navy (1822-1823) and was United States assistant agent in Monrovia at the time of his death which was a result of an illness contracted while nursing the first American consul in Liberia, Jehudi Ashmun, who recovered. Richard was buried at sea. Ashmun was an ancestor of Reverend Stafford Poole. C.M. Mount Saint Mary's College and Seminary was founded by Reverend John Dubois, S.S. (1764-1842), in 1808.

<sup>20</sup>Although indistinct, the sentence appears to read: tin cups to drink out of and plates of lesser [quality].

<sup>21</sup>Victoire Fournier, the sister of William Dubourg, had arrived from Bordeaux in August 1805 and had provided gracious hospitality to the Setons during their stay at Saint Mary's Baltimore.



The old Fleming farm house constructed of stone c. 1750 in which the Sisters of Charity spent their first harsh winter of 1809 in Saint Joseph Valley.  
*Courtesy Archives of Saint Joseph's Provincial House, Emmitsburg, Maryland*

her hand to bid us adieu.<sup>21</sup> We were so closely packed in the wagon that it seemed we would be unable to proceed when the wagoner cried out: "When we have gone a few miles the baggage will settle down and you will be more at your ease." (He was a young man of the neighborhood by the name of [William] Harris who married shortly after, and we now have one of his children in the Community by [the] name [of] Sister Joachim).<sup>22</sup>

We were willing to believe what he said, and remained silent each one occupied with her thoughts, which I hope referred all to God. We went on all day, without stopping to take dinner, made use of the provisions we had in the wagon. At night we stopped at a tavern where we had but poor accommodations. We asked for supper, but told them as it was Friday, not to prepare any meat. When we went to supper, there was plenty [of] chicken on the table. Sister Kitty [Mullen]

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<sup>22</sup>Sister Joachim Harris (1812-1873) joined the Sisters of Charity on 25 December 1831 and was sent 9 August 1832 to serve in the Philadelphia almshouse during the cholera epidemic. (ASJPH 7-8-2-3: 262.)

remarked we had told them not to prepare any meat.<sup>23</sup> "Oh," said the woman who waited on the table, "chicken is not meat." We smiled and made our supper on bread and butter, tea and eggs. William and Richard Seton were with us, [and] slept in the wagon with Mr. Harris to take care of our baggage.<sup>24</sup> We rose early and were soon seated in our wagon for another day's journey. We had not proceeded far when Sister Susan [Clossy] was taken very sick and remained so until we arrived at a place where we made our meal which answered for dinner and breakfast, got some remedies for Sister Susan, met at the place where we stopped and received much kindness from him. [Who had provided hospitality].

[Emmitsburg]

Again seated in our wagon we proceeded on and arrived at about four o'clock at the Farm House [the Stone House] of St. Joseph's where we were met by our dear Mother and her three children, Anna, Josephine and Rebecca.<sup>25</sup> (I ought to have mentioned that two weeks after Mother went to the Mountain, Josephine and Rebecca went up [there from Baltimore] in a private carriage.) Sister Cecilia Seton, whose health was wonderfully improved, Miss Harriet Seton, Sister Maria Murphy and Sister Sally Thompson, they had reserved a part of their dinner for us which we sat down to eat.<sup>26</sup> Sister Susan [was] so

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<sup>23</sup>Catherine (Kitty) Mullen (d. 1814) joined Mother Seton in Baltimore (1809) just before the group left for Emmitsburg and was sponsored by Reverend John David, S.S. She also served on the first council of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's.

<sup>24</sup>In July 1809 William Seton was thirteen, and Richard was eleven.

<sup>25</sup>The farm house at Saint Joseph's refers to the Stone House originally built c. 1750. Cooper paid \$6961.00 to Robert Fleming (son of Samuel Fleming) for 269 acres that included two tracts of 212 acres and fifty-seven acres apiece. The deed was recorded on 26 April 1809 in the names of Samuel Cooper, William Dubourg of Baltimore County, and John Dubois of Frederick County, Maryland. Cooper's plan included the establishment of "an institution for the advancement of Catholic female children in habits of religion . . . the reception of the aged and also uneducated persons who may be employed in spinning, knitting, etc., so as to found a manufactory on a small scale which may be very beneficial to the poor." Reportedly Fleming changed his mind about the sale and requested full payment in Gold Eagle coins as a means to force foreclosure and reclaim his property. A neighbor, James Hughes, rode to Philadelphia and Baltimore and secured the requisite amount for Mother Seton. No date is given for this incident but it probably occurred prior to 1818 when Cooper was ordained to the priesthood. (See *Bishop Bruté In His Connection with the Community, 1812-1839* [Emmitsburg: Daughters of Charity, 1886], 315. Elizabeth Seton to Philip Filicchi, 8 February 1809, *Numerous Choirs*, 1: 124. See also Frederick County, Maryland, Land Records, Court House, Frederick, Maryland, WR 7: 366, WR 8: 268, WR 35: 6-9.) In 1979 the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's sold 107 acres with the buildings of the former Saint Joseph College and Saint Joseph's Central House to the United States Government for the National Fire Academy and Federal Emergency Management Agency. This necessitated the relocation of the Stone House. Its move was completed in the fall of 1979 by William Patram who engineered the move from its original site to one closer to Saint Joseph's Provincial House.

<sup>26</sup>Sara (Sally) Thompson (d. 1850), a native of Emmitsburg, entered the Sisters of Charity in July 1809 and was a member of the first vow group in 1813.



sick that the doctor had to be sent for. The news of our arrival soon reached the Mountain and Revs. Dubois and Dubourg paid us a visit and welcomed us to our new home, truly a blessed one.

Rev. Mr. Dubourg and Rev. Mr. Dubois then went to the village, purchased a few cups and saucers, pewter spoons, knives and forks, etc., [and] half a dozen of chairs.<sup>27</sup> We brought our mattresses with us and laid them on the floor as there were no cots or bedsteads. Next morning was Sunday, we had to rise early and go to Emmitsburg to early Mass.<sup>28</sup> All went to confession before Mass, and Communion at Mass, [and] came home much fatigued. All returned to High Mass except two Sisters and Mother.

Mr. Dubourg was starting for Baltimore and wanted to have a memorandum of what was wanting as we had no means to purchase. Our wants were few. All was strange around us, the new house under cover, the carpenters yet at work, and we not knowing exactly what we were to do. However, it was necessary to make some little arrangement of Rules and begin the order of the day . . . <sup>29</sup>

Sister Kitty Mullan was appointed housekeeper; Sister Rose [White], Mother's Assistant; Sister Cecilia [O'Conway], Secretary and School Sister; Sister Sally [Thompson], Procuratrix, washer and baker. The Sisters in turn to cook, all lending a hand at ironing; and our washing place was at the creek, [Tom's Creek], where we took the clothes early in the morning and remained the day; not a plank to stand on or a covering but the tree under which we would place our tubs, and if the rain came on, we would have to bring up our clothes

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<sup>27</sup>The town of Emmitsburg traces its roots to Charles Carroll, Esquire, of Annapolis, who sold 2260 acres to Samuel Emmit, dating the birth of the town of Emmitsburg to 1757. The village was formerly called Carrolls-burgh and also Poplar Fields. (See Frederick County, Maryland, Land Records, Liber F, 237.)

<sup>28</sup>In his notes about Emmitsburg, dated 1823, Reverend Simon Bruté, S.S., who succeeded Reverend Samuel Cooper as pastor of Saint Joseph's parish in 1819, states that Emmitsburg was woods in 1786 when James and Joseph Hughes arrived and built a house (with a chapel) on the northeast corner of the town. Saint Joseph's Catholic Parish in Emmitsburg, dates to 1793 when its first church was built. (Richard Shaw, *John Dubois: Founding Father* [Yonkers: US Catholic Historical Society, 1983], 29.)

<sup>29</sup>An undated copy of the "Provisional Regulations for St. Joseph's Sisters" contains thirteen articles that regulated the community life of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's beginning with rising at 5:00 A.M. and concluding with retiring after evening prayers at 8:30 P.M. (Kelly, *Numerous Choirs*, 1: 129-30.)

all wet and heavy—no accommodations, no water to wash with at the house.<sup>30</sup>

We continued the winter in this way. We were fifteen in the family.

We went every morning to Emmitsburg to [Saint Joseph's Catholic] Church, there being but one priest stationed here, that was Reverend Dubois. Rev. Mr. Dubourg [at that time superior of the new community] after a few days returned to the Valley for the purpose of giving us a Retreat, had an altar made in a very small room, said the first Mass, and began our first Retreat; gave all the meditations as well as the instructions.<sup>31</sup> At the end of the Retreat he requested that each one should make her resolutions, writing them and bringing them to him; that we must not speak to each other nor make known in any way our thoughts on the resolutions we were to take. As the most of us had not made a Retreat of this kind, nor written resolutions, it was well seen that a good priest had here a fine opportunity to discover not only how far we had profited by the Retreat, but also a specimen of our writing and spelling and thus he could judge at once of our knowledge.

He remained some days with us, encouraging us by his heavenly conversation to look forward with the hope of seeing much done for religion; to keep our selves humble, and confide all to our sweet Savior whom we had assembled to honor in the way which would be pointed out to us hereafter. He presented us with a copy of *Christian Perfection* which we had never seen before; also gave a bell to regulate our

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<sup>30</sup>This refers to Tom's Creek whose name appears as early as 1742 in a survey. (Grace L. Tracey and John P. Dern, *Pioneers of Old Monocacy: The Early Settlement of Frederick County, Maryland, 1721-1743* [Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1987], 239.) There are several versions about how Tom's Creek was named. One is that its correct spelling is Tomes Creek after the Tomes, a tribe of Native Americans, who inhabited the area along its banks. To designate it from other nearby creeks (Marsh, Middle, and Flat or Friends) a Tomes brave called it Tomes Creek. The English government called it Tomes Creek Hundred. Over the years the name became modified. (Helman, *History of Emmitsburg, MD.*, 96.) Another version refers to a young man, Tome or Tom, offspring of a squaw mother (of the Tome tribe) and an African-American father, whose surname was Bones. Tome, a grave digger by profession, spent much time near the creek and it came to be known as Tom's creek! Tradition has also passed on a legend about an ancient Native American burial ground situated on the bluff overlooking the creek not far from the Fleming farm house where Mother Seton and her community spent their first in the Valley. (See "Our Lady of the Field," ASJPH.)

<sup>31</sup>At the conclusion of this first retreat, Father Dubourg returned to Baltimore and submitted his resignation as superior general of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's to Reverend Charles Nagot, S.S. (1734-1816), the superior of the Sulpicians in America. Conflict had erupted among the sisters over Dubourg's policy regarding correspondence. Dubourg forbade the women to write to their former confessor, Reverend Pierre Babade, S.S., in whom they had great confidence while in Baltimore. As a result, Reverend John Baptist David, S.S. (1761-1841), was appointed to replace Dubourg. (Melville, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton*, 221-24.)

exercises.<sup>32</sup> His last words were to cultivate plenty of carrots, in order to make use of for coffee, which we used—that and rye were our morning and evening beverage for breakfast and supper. Sister Sally [Thompson] was our Procuratrix and our main help, as she was the only one acquainted with the neighborhood. She made all purchases and directed us in our domestic concerns, and was the first at all that was laborious, having excellent health, and of a most happy disposition to oblige; always cheerful.

In the month of September, her sister, Miss Ellen Thompson, joined the Community; she was of very delicate health.<sup>33</sup> Our good Father Dubois gave us Mass in our little Chapel nearly every morning, and on Sundays also, as he said two Masses, would come to us in all weather. Miss Harriet Seton was engaged to be married to Mother Seton's half-brother, young [Guy] Carleton [Bayley], before Harriet left New York. She wore his miniature round her neck and would often say, "Were it not for this engagement I would remain with you." When she spoke of becoming a Catholic Mother spoke to her of the difficulties she would have to encounter in her husband's family, and perhaps she would not have resolution enough to resist them, and how unhappy it would be for her, if after embracing the Catholic faith were she to fall off, begging Harriet to reflect well, and so she did, for she persisted in becoming a member of the Church, and instructed herself fully. Her amiable and affectionate conduct endeared her to us all. She partook of our homely fare and bad lodgings as cheerfully as any of the Sisters, and would often express her happiness and regret that she would have to leave us. At length the happy day arrived; the 24th of September [1809] she made her First Communion, and a few weeks after, the Most Rev. Archbishop [John] Carroll arrived from Baltimore and administered the Sacrament of Confirmation in our little chapel, and Harriet [Seton] took the name of Madeleine.

Soon after this, William Seton came from the mountain to see his mother and was taken very ill so that he could not return; remained

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<sup>32</sup>Alphonsus Rodriguez, S.J. (1538-1616), wrote *The Practice of Perfection and of Christian Virtues* which was first published in Seville in 1609 and later translated into twenty-three languages. The work, a revision of sermons he had given to novices, is known for its practical spiritual doctrine and clarity of presentation based on sacred scripture and the Fathers of the Church. ASJPH contains a French language edition of this book. (See R.P. Alphonse Rodriguez, S.J., *Pratique de la Perfection Chretienne*, trans. M. L'Abbé Regier Des-Marais, partie II [Paris: Sabastien Mabre-Cramoisy, 1679].)

<sup>33</sup>Ellen Thompson (d. 28 November 1813), sister of Sally Thompson, entered the Sisters of Charity in the fall of 1809 despite her delicate health. She was a member of the first vow group in 1813.



Original community cemetery prior to 1891 erection of marble headstones.

Shows mortuary chapel erected in 1845 by William Seton.

*Courtesy Archives of Saint Joseph's Provincial House, Emmitsburg, Maryland*

very low for several weeks with nervous fever and received all the Last Sacraments. Sister Rose and his Aunt Madeleine [Harriet Seton] made his shroud and prepared everything to lay him out, as it appeared he had but a few moments to live. However, it pleased Our Lord that he should recover. At this time Sister Cecilia Seton was taken ill with a return of spitting blood, and gave us many fears as to her recovery. Madeleine [Harriet Seton] renewed her attentions with all the devotedness of a true sister in which we all united to do our utmost by every care to preserve the life of one so valuable.

I regret not to have mentioned, though it may be brought in its place, that after our retreat given by Mr. Dubourg, he invited us to walk over the farm and select a place for a burial ground. Cecilia [Seton] and Madeleine [Harriet Seton] were of the number. After a survey had been taken of all the grounds, we selected our present spot, and each one made a choice of a spot under some of the beautiful trees that thickly covered the grounds. Madeleine Seton selected hers under the largest oak tree.<sup>34</sup> As we were then near the farm house, we

<sup>34</sup>During the summer of 1809, Mother Seton and her companions took a walk through the thick woods on their property in order to select a site for a cemetery. Although several spots seemed favorable, Harriet Seton's attention rested on a large, old oak tree which she designated for her repose declaring, "This is my spot!" as she playfully threw an apple core against its trunk. (See Charles I. White, *Life of Mrs. Eliza A. Seton* [New York: P. J. Kenedy, 1904], 259.) Her grave became the first of many Sisters of Charity to be buried in this thickly wooded area. The historic oak tree stood until 1984 when it was struck by lightning and had to be removed.

returned home after looking through the new building, [originally called the "house in the fields"], at which the carpenters were then at work.<sup>35</sup> All appeared happy and most grateful to our kind benefactor, Mr. Samuel Cooper, who had so liberally bestowed on us such a home, and to our good friend and superior, Rev. Mr. Dubourg, who had been the happy instrument to begin the good.

Sister Cecilia Seton continued sick. In December, Madeleine [Harriet Seton] was taken sick so as to be unable to sit up and was put to bed. Her bed and that of Cecilia [Seton] were in the room next to the chapel. In the same room Mother slept on the floor with Rebecca and Josephine. When Mass would be said, the door of the chapel would be left open so that the two dear sisters could hear Mass, and often partake of Holy Communion. The people of Emmitsburg would attend early Mass on Sundays, and often Rev. Mr. Cooper, who was then a seminarian, would come to serve Mass. It was a sight for angels to see—the sick and the well, the young and the old, externs all crowded round the little altar and the sick beds.

On one occasion Madeleine [Harriet Seton] expected to receive Communion, though we knew she was not as she had been burning up with fever during the night and broken her fast. The fever had affected her head while her heart was alive to all that was heavenly. She eagerly watched the priest as he gave Communion to each one, expecting he should come to her, but finding him turn to the tabernacle and place the ciborium in it and close the door, she began to speak in the most plaintive sweet voice to our Jesus of her disappointment, so as to cause us all to shed tears. We were unconscious how near was her dissolution. That night, I think, she grew worse. In the morning when Rev. Superior came to say Mass, found her very ill, and administered the Sacrament of Extreme Unction; she had lost her speech. This was on the 21st of December [1809]. On the 22nd in the morning, she gave up her beautiful soul to God. (I forgot to mention that she received the scapular when she made her First Communion.)

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<sup>35</sup>On 20 February 1810 the community moved into their partially completed new log home which Mother Seton named Saint Joseph's House. The Filicchi family helped finance its construction. On 19 March 1810, the first high mass was celebrated in the new chapel there. This building is called the White House because it was later faced with clapboard and painted white. It contains a series of paintings that depict its original appearance and how the campus changed over the years. These are the work of Edward Augustus Seton (b. 1790), the brother of William Magee Seton, Mother Seton's husband. See Kelly, *Numerous Choirs*, 1: 138.



Reverend Samuel Cooper, S.S., who purchased 269 acres of land near Emmitsburg in 1809 for Mother Seton's mission.

*Courtesy Archives of Saint Joseph's Provincial House,  
Emmitsburg, Maryland*

ion.)<sup>36</sup> The morning of her death, her sister Cecilia, who was lying in the next bed, begged to be raised and leaned over and kissed her, thanking Our Lord that He had taken her to Himself. The weather was intensely cold. We laid her out, and put on her the shroud that she had helped to make for William [Seton], who was then well. On the 23rd which was Sunday, she was placed in our little spot in the wood which we had selected and in the place she had chosen for herself. She was the first who died with us, one of the most healthy, and one of the loveliest of her sex both in body and mind. Thus ended the life of the most beautiful Harriet Seton, who accompanied her dying sister from New York only a few months before, when she was taken and Cecilia left.

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<sup>36</sup>The scapular Cecilia Seton received was probably related to enrollment in a Confraternity or Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary. A characteristic of the Society of Saint Sulpice is to promote Marian devotion.

Our beloved Cecilia continued confined to bed and suffering much. Our dear Sister Ellen Thompson was taken very ill, and it was thought she must die. The Doctor had several blisters applied, ordered her head to be shaved, and a [nother] blister. He ordered her a bath. We had no tub large enough and had recourse to an ash barrel, but found it leaked, so Sister Sally [Thompson] took it to the creek and placed it in the water to tighten. In the meantime Rev. Superior offered us a large tub that had just come home for a meat tub.<sup>37</sup> It was sent for and when it came it was too large, the stair case was too small to admit it upstairs. We then sent for the barrel at the creek, which we placed in a small tub filling the barrel. We found it leaked and thought the tub would be sufficient to keep the floor from being wet while we placed our dear Sister Ellen in the barrel of warm water, when behold the barrel gave way so that the tub overflowed, and we had to open the seam of the floor and sweep the water out of the room, and placed the dear sufferer on the bed, who was exhausted by the exertion and a body covered with blisters, yet she was smiling at the drollery of the scene.

Sister [Cecilia Seton] continued very ill and received the last Sacraments and we prepared ourselves to give her up as we thought she could not live. But our dear Lord was pleased in His mercy to let her remain with us for some time longer. She was a model of piety.

After her recovery Sister Sally [Thompson] was taken sick with chills and fever, and before she got well she had to give up her cot for Sister Susan [Clossy] who was sick. We had but two cots for the sick Sisters; all the rest laid on the floor. Sisters became sick several at a time. The good Archbishop Carroll paid us a visit and appeared to be much afraid that we could not keep on with our work. Yet our Lord was pleased to support and enable us to keep up.

We walked every Sunday to the Mountain at this time. There was no bridge nor road to the mountain; we had to go over one by one on horseback when the water was high, and when low, we would walk over the creek on stones, climb the fences, and often lose our way through the thick woods. We would carry our dinner in a sack and often fry our meat at the mountain and take it from the frying pan and place it on a piece of bread without knife or fork, eat standing, and

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<sup>37</sup>From force of habit Mother Rose styles Rev. Mr. Dubois "our Rev. Superior." He did not become so until the resignation of Rev. Mr. David in the spring of 1811.



The Old Church on the hill constructed by Reverend John Dubois, S.S., at Mount Saint Mary's where the first Sisters of Charity worshiped.

*Courtesy Archives of Saint Joseph's Provincial House, Emmitsburg, Maryland*

take a good drink of water, and go up to church and wait for Vespers. Often we would be caught in the rain coming home, at this time we never wore a shawl, much less an umbrella.

When we came to the creek, we would meet a horse which Father Dubois would send from the mountain to take us across, and the oldest Sister would remain standing in the rain by the old oak tree, until all had passed over, then in her turn, she would be taken and sometimes continue her ride to the farmhouse door of our home. Our shoes would be heavy with mud, and our clothes so wet that we would have to change them. We continued this Sunday going to Church for many years, both winter and summer.

We received two candidates at the farmhouse from New York; Miss Martina Quinn and Miss Jane Corbet.<sup>38</sup> We became so crowded

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<sup>38</sup>Martina Quinn (c. 1793-1816) entered the Sisters of Charity 11 November 1809. Jane Corbet (b. 1786), a recent convert, came to the Sisters of Charity in 1810 as a candidate but returned to New York within the year.



that it was thought necessary that some of us should come up to the new house, [the White House], to sleep. Accordingly, Sister Sally [Thompson], Sister Kitty [Mullen] and Sister Rose [White] were named and for several weeks we slept in one of the unfurnished rooms, and would rise often at two, three and four o'clock and go down to the farm [to the Stone House] thinking it was time for morning prayers, and the ground was rough plowed and often very muddy. Sometimes we would be forced to stay all day at the new house, the rain would be so heavy; one [sister] would go down and bring up something to eat. We had spinning wheels and would keep ourselves employed. While sleeping at the stone house, the snow would drift in; one morning Sister Sally [Thompson] and Sister Rose [White] shoveled out nearly two cart loads of snow in the garret where two of the Sisters were sleeping, and did not discover that their beds were partly covered also with snow until day began to dawn through the cracks of the boards, which were the only fastening for the windows, but happily the Sisters took no cold.

Our good Rev. Superior would come to give us Mass on mornings when it would be so cold that his beard would be stiff with the frost, and his hair also, and he would be so cold and so stiff that he could hardly hold the reins of his horse. On Tuesdays he would remain all day as it was the day on which he heard confessions. On the 20th of February [1810], we moved from the farmhouse to the new house [the White House], the Blessed Sacrament brought in procession, Sister Veronica [Cecilia O'Conway] walking before with the bell and the cross, the Rev. Mr. Dubois carrying the Blessed Sacrament next, the Mother and Sisters following.<sup>39</sup> Sister Sally [Thompson] had in her arms Sister Cecilia [Seton] wrapped in a blanket, as she was yet very sick. The present choir was not made until the little chapel was finished, which was complete before March; on the 19th of March [1810] we had high Mass for the first time in the Valley.<sup>40</sup> Sister Cecilia

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<sup>39</sup>The White House was originally located east of the chapel (which is now located at the United States National Fire Academy and Emergency Management Institute.) The house was enlarged c. 1826 and again c. 1838. After the construction of other buildings the decision was made to relocate the White House. In 1845 it was dismantled, board by board, and reassembled by John J. Shorb for \$500. Mother Xavier Clark supervised the project and restored the house to the way it looked in Mother Seton's lifetime. It was moved again in 1917 under the supervision of John T. Bramble of Baltimore because floor boards were rotting from being directly on the ground. A cellar was dug (as in Mother Seton's time) and the house was again dismantled, reconstructed and restored on a site about 50 feet northwest, where it now rests. The mantels, baseboards, most of the molding and chair rails, and the bannister (carved stringer of stairway) to the second floor are original.

<sup>40</sup>Mother Seton called this area Saint Joseph's Valley.

[Seton] continued ill, yet the good Archbishop [John Carroll] thought, and Doctor [Pierre] Chatard also, that if she was brought to Baltimore there might be some remedy resorted to that could not be had here, and she accordingly went down on the 9th of April [1810].<sup>41</sup> Mother [Seton], Sister Susan [Clossy] and Annina [Seton] accompanied her. They stayed at Mr. [George] Weise's near the Seminary of St. Mary's.<sup>42</sup>

We took occasion of their absence to clean the yard round the house which was covered with the shavings and chips from the building, and the only steps to the entrance of the front and back doors was on piles of these shavings which were filled with fleas as the hogs rested on them and surrounded the house. What with the shavings and the hair which was prepared for the plasterers, and which was put for safe keeping in the garret, we were literally eaten with fleas. So, we determined to try and get rid of them, if we could, and set to work with pick axes, spades, wheelbarrows, and a cart, and in a few days we had the greatest part of the rubbish removed, and rolled some large blocks to the front and back door for steps, though we had to bear with the plastering nuisance in the garret, and the men were about to commence plastering, the carpenters being very nearly finished.

Holy Week began, and on Wednesday the Rev. Superior [David] said Mass for us, consumed all the Sacred Hosts in the ciborium, and told us we would have to come to the Mountain for Mass and Communion, so we set out fasting on Holy Thursday, and went to Holy Communion.<sup>43</sup> (As the Sisters formed the choir, we had all the singing to do.) In the evening we returned, and went next morning—Good Friday—fasting, returned in the evening, and returned next morning—Holy Saturday—to Communion at High Mass and the same Easter Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. Received news that Sister Cecilia was no more, she died on the 28th. On the 29th after High Mass had been celebrated—the corpse present—it was placed in the carriage and Mother and Susan [Clossy] accompanied the body to the Valley. Rev. Mr. Clorivière attended on horseback and arrived at the Valley

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<sup>41</sup>Archbishop John Carroll (1735-1815) was the first Catholic bishop in the United States (1790) and became the first archbishop of Baltimore (1811). Doctor [Pierre] Chatard was a physician who had studied in France before settling in Baltimore where he and his wife, Marie, became friends with the Setons and the Sisters of Charity.

<sup>42</sup>Annabelle Melville spells this name Weis rather than Weise. George Weis, a resident of Baltimore, and his family developed a lasting friendship with Mother Seton and her companions as they were preparing to leave for Emmitsburg in 1809. He remained a helpful friend of the community during his lifetime.

<sup>43</sup>Probably Mother Rose is referring to the first Holy Week they spent at Saint Joseph's in 1810 while Reverend John Baptist David, S.S. (1761-1841), was the superior.

about an hour before the carriage.<sup>44</sup> We assembled and went out to meet them as they approached the house. The coffin was brought in the hall, and the body exposed, was taken in the choir, and the same evening placed in the little woods, next to her beloved sister, Madeleine [Harriet] Seton. They were the two first interred in our burial ground, in the places they had selected but a few months before, when in perfect health, at least Madeleine [Harriet] was. Our good Mother felt much, yet was greatly consoled at the angelic life and happy and so edifying death of Cecilia [Seton].

February 22, 1810—received three new scholars.<sup>45</sup>

March 16 [1810]—Sister Betsy [Boyle] and Ann [Gruber] arrived.<sup>46</sup>

Men began to plaster the first story; we moved from one room to



Front view of the log frame of Saint Joseph's House  
constructed in 1809-1810. It was restored in 1917 and  
relocated to its present site, now called the White House.

*Courtesy Archives of Saint Joseph's Provincial House, Emmitsburg, Maryland*

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<sup>44</sup>Joseph Picot de Clorivière (d. 1813), a cleric, who escorted the sisters back to Saint Joseph's from Baltimore when Cecilia Seton died.

<sup>45</sup>Entrance of these students marks the beginning of free Catholic education in the United States which gave rise to the parochial school system.

<sup>46</sup>Elizabeth (Betsy) Boyle (d. 1861), a convert, entered the Emmitsburg community 17 March 1810 and later founded the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul in New York (1846) and was elected their first superioress. Ann Gruber (d. 1840) who was born in Switzerland, entered the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's 17 March 1810. Both were in the first novitiate and vow group at Emmitsburg.

another, and at one time lived in the hall. Our school increased in number, both boarders and day scholars.<sup>47</sup> We had great difficulty in accommodating the boarders. Sisters all slept in the garret on the floor, in the same place as the hair was for the plastering, and often we pass[ed] the night carrying our mattresses from one place to another to find rest; we were so bit with fleas that our skin were [sic] purple in appearance. We began to take in sewing from the Mountain to pay the debt we owed. We made mattresses, quilted quilts, and made all the boys' clothes and mended them; also corporals, surplices, vestments and albs for the Mountain; (did all our own washing, yet, at the creek, never hired a woman to wash until the year 1816.<sup>48</sup> Our Sisters began to fail and the necessity was plainly seen that aid was wanting). In July, Sister Rose [White] went to Baltimore on business as guardian for her son, Charles, and returned the first of August in company with our Reverend Superior who was then Mr. [John Baptist] David; Sister Fanny [Jordan], Sister Angela [Brady], Sister Julia [Shirk] and Charles White, who was seven years old, came up to be placed at the Mountain.<sup>49</sup>

Mrs. Margaret George [a widow] came on a visit and returned again to Baltimore.<sup>50</sup> Father David had intended to give us a retreat, but finding so much confusion in the house with carpenters and plasterers that it was impossible. He had been named Superior by the Archbishop in place of Rev. Mr. Dubourg who was called to Martinique.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Elizabeth Seton wrote to Archbishop John Carroll on 15 June 1810, "Our school is very respectable and has increased to forty, including boarders." (Melville, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton*, 270.)

<sup>48</sup>Sometime prior to 1816 Mother Seton had begun admitting orphans and educating them. There were more deaths in 1816 than in prior years. The deceased were: Sister Mary Joseph Llewellyn, Sister Martina Quinn, Rebecca Seton and Sister Magdalen Guerin. By 1816 Mother Seton had begun the care of orphans, and also had sent three sisters to Mount Saint Mary's to assist there in domestic services: Sister Bridget Farrell, Sister Ann Gruber and Sister Anastasia Nabbs. The Philadelphia mission was then operating and a new one in New York was on the horizon. Demands for the sisters' services were increasing both at and beyond Saint Joseph's valley.

<sup>49</sup>Sponsored by Reverend John Baptist David, the following entered the Sisters of Charity 29 June 1810 and were in the first novitiate and vow group: Sister Fanny Jordan (d. 1867), Sister Angela Brady (d. 1825), Sister Julia Shirk (d. 1848). Charles White, Jr. (1803-1839), was Rose Landry White's son, her only surviving child.

<sup>50</sup>Margaret Cecilia Farrell (1787-1868), the widow of Lucas George of Baltimore, joined Mother Seton and her companions in Emmitsburg 2 February 1812 and later founded the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati in 1852. She was the daughter of the widow Bridget Farrell (d. 1847) who had also entered the Emmitsburg community in 1812.

<sup>51</sup>Martinique is one of the Windward Islands in the West Indies that was under the French crown but had been subject to British occupation 1794-1802 and again 1809-1814.

The carpenters and plasterers finished before winter set in and we began to build a small log kitchen which was under cover before winter set in—the old shed nearly blown to pieces, the last dinner cooked in it was by Sister Rose [White], when a violent rain and wind blew down the chimney and put out the fire, so that she had to bring the pot in the work room to finish boiling the dinner.<sup>52</sup>

Rev. Mr. Dubourg left Martinique the fifth of June, 1811 for Baltimore, brought with him three candidates for St. Joseph's, and arrived in Baltimore June 30th. The candidates were Miss Louise Roger[s], now Sister Louise, Miss Adele Salva, the well, active, zealous, pious and faithful observer of rules, Sister Adele, who took her leave of us a few months since for her true home, Heaven, Madame [Madeleine] Guerin, the sister of Sister Adele; her only son accompanied her and was placed at the Mountain.<sup>53</sup>

On the 23rd of July [1811], Rev. Mr. Dubourg arrived at St. Joseph's in company with the above named persons. After an interview with the superiors, Misses Roger and Salva were admitted as candidates, Madame Guerin as a boarder. This last had made a vow at sea that if she arrived safe to her journey's end, St. Joseph's, that she would wear a brown dress and cap for three months in honor of the Blessed Virgin. She had provided herself with materials in Baltimore, and made her dress and cap with us and put it on. She was employed in the school as a French teacher. Her humility and piety and amiability soon won the hearts of all, and before the three months expired she petitioned for admission as a candidate, was received, and continued to wear her brown dress during her candidateship and novitiate. Her son was placed at the Mountain and provided for.

This good novice finished her novitiate, made her vows, and took the name of Magdalen.<sup>54</sup> As she had been one who had indulged in the goods of the world, she was remarkable for her spirit of mortification; she delighted in the most menial offices. Her hands being very soft and beautiful, she delighted in the dirtiest work, and had charge of the chamber buckets and night vessels which were made of tin. These she

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<sup>52</sup>The location of Saint Joseph's Valley makes it susceptible to violent storms coming suddenly over the mountain.

<sup>53</sup>Father Dubourg encouraged the following candidates whom he accompanied to Baltimore from their native Martinique in order to enter the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's: Louise Rogers (d. 1847) and Adele Salva (d. 1839) entered in late summer 1811. Madeleine Salva Guerin (d. 1816), a widowed sister of Adele Salva, entered in 1812. Eugene Guerin, Madeleine's son, continued at Mount Saint Mary's until his mother died. Sometime after 1816 he returned to Martinique.

<sup>54</sup>Madeleine Salva Guerin took the name of Sister Magdalen.

would scrub and clean, that I have often seen her hands so rough and bleeding from work and exposure, that they would be purple. Her countenance was always smiling; she was full of kindness and preventing care.

Once when she was descending the staircase with a night bucket, she met the Rev. Superior ascending with the Blessed Sacrament to a Sister who was very ill in the infirmary. She was greatly distressed, for fear that there was the appearance of disrespect, and she was not sensible of the Blessed Sacrament coming up, and as soon as an opportunity offered, she threw herself at the Superior's feet to ask pardon. His reply was: "What, my child is there to offend? The God of all charity met a Sister of Charity performing an act of charity, how could He be displeased?" She continued her daily round of duty, giving edification to all until the twentieth of December, 1816. She expired in the greatest sentiments of piety, resignation and love of God. In 1812, Rev. Mr. Dubourg was appointed to go to New Orleans.<sup>55</sup> He petitioned for Sisters to be sent to assist in the duties that he would assign them according to their rules.

Rev. Mr. Dubois was appointed Superior of the Community in place of Rev. Mr. David who had promised to share the labors of Rev. Mr. [Benedict] Flaget whom it was thought would be made Bishop of the West—Rev. Mr. Flaget had gone to France.<sup>56</sup> February 1, 1812, Mrs. [Bridget] Farrell and her daughter Mrs. [Margaret] George, and Miss Teresa Conroy arrived at St. Joseph's.<sup>57</sup> Mrs. George and Miss Teresa [Conroy] as candidates, Mrs. Farrell as a boarder.<sup>58</sup> Mrs. George took the name of Sister Margaret and Miss Conroy kept her name and was called Sister Teresa.

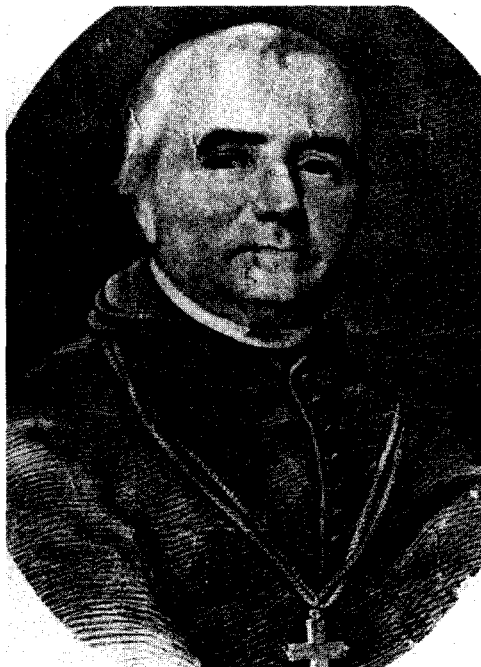
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<sup>55</sup>Louis William Dubourg served as bishop of Louisiana (1812-1826) when he resigned and returned to France where he became bishop of Montauban (1826-1833) and later archbishop of Besançon in 1833. In 1816, as bishop of Louisiana, Dubourg also invited Reverend Felix de Andreis, C.M., (1778-1820), and Reverend Joseph Rosati, C.M., (1789-1843; first bishop of Saint Louis, Missouri 1827-1843) to initiate the first Vincentian mission in North America. (See John E. Rybolt, C.M., "Three Pioneer Vincentians," *Vincentian Heritage*, no. 1 [Fall 1993]: 153-68).

<sup>56</sup>Benedict Flaget, S.S. (1763-1851), was named bishop of Bardstown, Kentucky, in 1810 and became the first Sulpician to be elevated to a bishopric in the United States despite his trip to France to avoid his appointment.

<sup>57</sup>Teresa Conroy (d. 1823) entered the Sisters of Charity 2 February 1812 along with Margaret Cecilia George. They were the last two members to join the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's before the community began its first novitiate. At its conclusion the sisters pronounced their vows for the first time on 19 July 1813.

<sup>58</sup>The widowed mother of Sister Margaret George, Mrs. Bridget Farrell (d. 1847) entered in 1812 and was fondly called Ma Farrell.



Reverend John Dubois, S.S., third superior of the Sisters of Charity, 1811-1826, until named bishop of New York.

*Courtesy Archives of Saint Joseph's Provincial House,  
Emmitsburg, Maryland*

Rev. Mr. Flaget returned from France and brought us the rules, constitutions and conferences of the Sisters of Charity founded by St. Vincent de Paul.<sup>59</sup> Rev. Mr. Flaget received the promise of Sisters to accompany him to America, and the money was provided to pay their passage, and it was thus he received for us the rules, constitutions and etc., but the government under Bonaparte interfered and the Sisters were not at liberty to leave France.<sup>60</sup> The constitutions and rules were submitted to the Archbishop [John Carroll] and the Rev. Mr. [John]

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<sup>59</sup>When Flaget returned to Maryland he brought a copy of the *Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity* to Emmitsburg at the request of Bishop John Carroll and Reverend John David, then superior of the Sisters of Charity. (See Melville, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton*, 210-13, 218-19.)

<sup>60</sup>For a complete discussion of the issues and position of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's vis-à-vis the Company of the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul in Paris, France during the period 1809-1812, (after which the new American community adopted the rule approved by Archbishop John Carroll of Baltimore), see Melville, *Elizabeth Bayley Seton*, 212-221.

Tessier of St. Sulpice [in Baltimore].<sup>61</sup> They were modified to suit this country and translated into English by our Rev. Superior, Mr. Dubois, then read to the Sisters assembled before they were signed by the Archbishop and Rev. Mr. Tessier to know from us if they were approved of by the Archbishop and Rev. Mr. Tessier who had directed them to be translated and made to suit this country.<sup>62</sup> We were all at liberty to adopt these rules or not, free to retire, if we wished to from the Community. All were invited to stay notwithstanding bad health and other infirmities. Each was invited to raise her hand, if she were willing to adopt the rules.<sup>63</sup> All were united but one voice. The good Superior left us for Baltimore, returned in a few days, the constitutions signed, rules approved of by the Archbishop Carroll and Rev. Mr. Tessier.<sup>64</sup> We proceeded to an election of officers and began our novitiate according to the rules of the Sisters of Charity [of Saint Joseph's which were based on the *Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity*], and made our vows at the end of one year.<sup>65</sup> Candidates and boarders increased. The beloved Archbishop paid us several visits, much pleased at the prospect of the work going on.

Our beloved Sister Ellen [Brady], of whom we spoke, continued to suffer more or less until the 28th of November, 1813. She died perfectly conscious, her death was that of an angel. Our Superior [had]

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<sup>61</sup>Reverend John Tessier, S.S. (1758-1840), was the second superior of the Society of Saint Sulpice in Baltimore and as such became the canonical protector of the constitutions of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's. (See Seton to Carroll, 5 September 1811, *Elizabeth Seton Selected Writings*, 273.)

<sup>62</sup>One significant modification made education of female children a primary thrust of the mission of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's. Chapter One, Article 1 reads the same as the *Common Rules for the Daughters of Charity* with this addition, "A secondary but not less important one [purpose] is to honor the Sacred Infancy of Jesus in the young persons of their sex whose heart they are called upon to form to the love of God, the practice of every virtue, and the knowledge of religion whilst they sow in their minds the seeds of useful knowledge." (Kelly, *Numerous Choirs*, 1: 144-45, 152-53.)

<sup>63</sup>This process of consultation of the community and acceptance by each sister of the proposed rules echoes the Act of Establishment of the Company of the Daughters of Charity on 8 August 1655 by Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac. See # 69, Conference "On Fidelity to the Rules," 8 August 1655, *Conferences to the Daughters of Charity* (Norwich: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1979), 717.

<sup>64</sup>17 January 1812 marks the official confirmation of the Rules and Constitutions of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's.

<sup>65</sup>In 1809 the following appointments had been made: Elizabeth Seton, superior and Sister Rose White, assistant. Under the Provisional Regulations for Saint Joseph's Sisters the elections were held on 18 August 1809 for the first council: Sister Catherine Martin Mullen, Sister Veronica O'Conway and Sister Cecilia Theresa Seton. In January 1812, after the Regulations for the Society of Sisters of Charity in the United States of America were approved by Archbishop Carroll and Father Tessier, the first election of officers was held: Mother Elizabeth Seton, superior, Sister Rose White, assistant, Sister Catherine Mullen, treasurer, and Sister Ann Gruber, procuratrix. (See White, *Life of Mrs. Eliza A. Seton*, 296.)



baptized her and had been her confessor and gave testimony that he thought she had not lost her baptismal innocence. He administered the last sacraments, she died a few moments after she had received Holy Viaticum.

The eldest daughter of our Mother, Miss Annina Seton, whose conduct was an example of every virtue, and before she applied to become a Sister she practiced the rules she saw observed by the Sisters, and her early rising at four o'clock never failed both winter and summer, though we then had no fire to say our prayers or meditation, and the weather was intense cold. We had never had a shawl or cloak, even when we went to the mountain during the most severe weather of winter. This amiable child was taken sick, and her malady baffled all skill. A rapid consumption soon hurried her to the grave. She suffered much from a violent cough, chills and high fevers, large gatherings under her arm and heavy night sweats. She was reduced to a mere skeleton—the skin off her bones. In all these sufferings she was patient as an angel and edified everyone around her by her pious conversation. She would assemble the young ladies of the school around her bed and speak to them of the vanity of this world and remind them how shortly since they had seen her amongst them in school, as likely to live a long life in perfect health as they were, and now so soon to be consigned to the grave, that they well knew her affection for her mother, but of what avail was all attachment to the things of this earth since none could save her from death.

This, my dear girls, shows the necessity of placing all our hopes in God and clinging to Him alone. They would be sobbing in tears around her. They loved her as one who had been a bright example of every virtue to them while in school. She made her vows on her deathbed and expired like an angel in the arms of one of the Sisters who was supporting her.<sup>66</sup> Her last movement was to raise her eyes to Heaven and clasp her hands, which remained clasped, that we may say she died in prayer. Our dear Mother who was kneeling by the bed made her offering to God and retired before the Blessed Sacrament giving directions that her hands should not be unclasped, which was attended to, so that we cut open the seams of her night dress and cut those of her shroud so that we laid her out with her hands in the

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<sup>66</sup> Annina Seton was the first Sister of Charity to pronounce her vows after the rule was approved and adopted.

position she had placed them before her death. This dear child was the third of the name of Seton who were first laid in the graveyard and at the spot selected by themselves. She died on the 12th of March, 1812.

[Philadelphia]

Philadelphia application having been made by the trustees of the Orphan Asylum of St. Joseph's, Philadelphia for Sisters to take charge of the Asylum, allowing \$600 a year for the support of Sisters and orphans, the traveling expenses to be paid of the Sisters by the trustees. The call had been submitted to the Archbishop [in Baltimore], who desired much that the Sisters should be sent, though it was at the time of the embargo, and the sum offered for the support was small as provisions were high.<sup>67</sup> Yet, there was an opening and it was thought we ought not to refuse on account of difficulties, so it was agreed to accept the proposal and send on three Sisters, as three only had been asked for.<sup>68</sup> As it was not safe to go by the packets, as the English were still in the Bay, a private carriage was hired, and Sisters [left Saint Joseph's Valley 29 September 1814] sent by way of Little York and Lancaster [in Pennsylvania] with directions to beg hospitality on the way so as to lessen the expense.<sup>69</sup> It was then that a small half flannel shawl was given us to wear, the first worn by the Sisters. One trunk contained all our baggage. We set out September 29, 1814. The good Superior accompanied us as far as [the next town in Maryland], Taneytown, giving us lessons of economy all the way.

At Taneytown we parted, he continued his journey to Baltimore and we to Philadelphia. We begged hospitality as far as Lancaster, as we stopped at Catholic families who received us kindly, and would have done the same at Lancaster, but arrived late and felt a delicacy in disturbing a family to whom we were directed, and whom we would have had to find out the best we could as we were all strangers to the place. We stopped at a hotel and had only to complain of the fine accommodations. Next morning very early we set off for Philadelphia

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<sup>67</sup>The embargo, which had begun before the War of 1812, was still in effect.

<sup>68</sup>The council sent the following to the Philadelphia mission: Sister Susan Clossy, Sister Theresa Conroy, and Sister Rose White who was named the sister servant. The choice of that title, rather than superior, represents one of the earliest examples of the American community using as its model the practices and customs of the French Daughters of Charity. (Crumlish, *The Union of the American Sisters*, 24.)

<sup>69</sup>The English were still in the Chesapeake Bay as a result of the War of 1812 and continuing skirmishes or attacks made sea travel perilous. (See Kelly, *Numerous Choirs*, 1: 169.)

and arrived there in the evening, had to inquire our way as we moved through the streets as we knew not even in what street we were. Frequently the driver, who was a friend of our neighbor Mr. [John] Livers, would give us the reins to hold and would get down from his seat and ask at several houses if they could tell us where St. Joseph's Asylum was.<sup>70</sup> No one seemed to understand him. He became a little tried and one of the Sisters asking him if he had any information to guide him, "O, no," said he, "you might as well ask a pig about a holy day as to ask those people where St. Joseph's Asylum is."

We drove on without knowing where we were going, but our good angel was with us, for wearied with going up one street and down another when the driver stopped and thought he would ask again, when behold! we were before the door of Trinity Church which was next to the Asylum. The carriage being closed the housekeeper of the priest, a good French woman named Justine, approached the carriage thinking it was a corpse brought to be buried, when she lifted the curtain as if by inspiration, she said: "Are you not from St. Joseph's [Emmitsburg]?"

"Yes, who are you?"

"Rev. Mr. [Michael] Hurley's housekeeper."<sup>71</sup>

"Will you tell us where the Asylum is?"

"Yes, you are at its door. Will you get out of the carriage?"

"Yes, if you will tell us where the Rev. Mr. Hurley lives; we have a letter for him."

"O, you are at a very great distance, but give me the letter; I will take it to him."

So, off she went with the letter and we entered the Church. With gratitude and love we made our acts of adoration and remained an hour. By this time, Rev. Mr. Hurley arrived, took us to the asylum where the good old matron was making every preparation to leave the house, and we could not enter before she left—the furniture being hers, we had to wait until things were provided. The children looked

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<sup>70</sup>This was probably John Livers whose family was very supportive of the community and owned property near the Sisters of Charity. The family of Arnold Livers and William Elder, Sr., were related by marriage and were charter members of the Catholic community in the Catoctin Valley that founded the original mission on the mountain where Reverend John Dubois began his ministry in the Emmitsburg area. (See [Steele], *Life of Mother Rose White*, 23.)

<sup>71</sup>Reverend Michael Hurley, O.S.A., (d. 1832) had received Cecilia Seton into the Catholic Church and offered great support to both Elizabeth and Cecilia Seton during family conflict while he was served at Saint Peter's Catholic Church in New York before he moved to Saint Augustine's Catholic Church in Philadelphia.



Depicted in embroidery, the first high mass was celebrated by Reverend John Dubois on 19 March in the new Saint Joseph's House, constructed by Mother Seton in 1810.  
*Courtesy Archives of Saint Joseph's Provincial House, Emmitsburg, Maryland*

poor and miserable; were going to a free school and running the streets like so many little ragged beggars.

We took possession of the Asylum on the sixth of October [1814] and our kind benefactress, Mrs. [Rachel] Montgomery, who was the President of the Lady Managers, and the true Mother of Charity towards the orphans and Sisters.<sup>72</sup> The Asylum was in debt \$5,000. The subscriptions for its support were few; the embargo made goods double price, and it was often told us to reflect that the sum allowed for support was only \$600 a year. They had no occasion to remind us, for our fears were so great that we would not be able to make out that for three months we never ate bread for dinner, but used potatoes, no sugar in our coffee which was made of corn and the poor children had not been accustomed to get any sugar in their morning beverage, breakfast was weak coffee and dry bread, sugar being very high. However, Rev. Mr. Hurley hearing of our not using sugar commanded us to use it, and some was sent. We found the children lying three and four in a bed.

Notwithstanding the embargo which caused such hard times, God in His mercy sent means, and we made out to get separate beds

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<sup>72</sup>Rachel Montgomery, a Catholic convert and friend of Samuel Cooper, was the first benefactor of the sisters in Philadelphia.

for the children. A mixture of boys and girls which we regretted much, but it was told us that it was so because no means offered for separation, and it was with much difficulty it was effected to keep them as they were, but should means offer, the intention was to form separate establishments.<sup>73</sup> The truly good lady who may be styled the Orphans' Mother, Mrs. Montgomery, did all in her power and was always employed, whether in her chamber or her parlor sewing and knitting stockings for the orphans. She presented us the first winter with twenty seven pairs of her own work, the most of our children were small, and the boys' stockings were short ones. The children had scarcely a second change [of clothing]. The Ladies Society had just been formed to assist the Managers and it was they who paid the traveling expenses of the Sisters to Philadelphia, and paid the salary of each Sister—\$36 a year, and found them shoes.<sup>74</sup>

We were going on with many fears that the sum allowed would not suffice and then both Sisters and children had barely necessities. When we would go to market, much time was spent in trying to procure the cheapest articles. It appeared that a merchant on the same street of the market who had been watching us, wrote us a letter begging us not to be so sparing in our purchases, that if at the end of the year we found the sum allowed by the trustees would not meet our expenses we might call on him for any reasonable sum which he would cheerfully give, and begged us to go on with our arduous task. He had not signed his letter but told us by applying to Miss Cauffman, one of our lady managers, would tell us who to apply to. We found out afterwards the name of this good gentleman was [a] Mr. Springer who at the end of the year paid a grocery bill of \$48, though we had not expended the \$600.

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<sup>73</sup>The issue concerning the sisters caring for boys and girls together was a precipitating factor in the decisive conflict between the council of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's and Bishop John Hughes (d. 1864) in New York in 1845. A record of some of the community's concerns about this issue first appears in the minutes of the council meeting of 23 February 1843. "The sisters are authorized to dismiss boys when unruly, and are never to be kept after the age of 12." (ASJPH, First Council Book, 198.) On 16 February 1844: "Wherever there are boys & girls in the same Asylum & Day School—they *must be separated*, [sic] within three months from the 1st of March 1844. The Rev. Supr. [Deluol] will write immediately to each Sister Servant to this effect—" (ASJPH, First Council Book, Article 23.) An extensive search of numerous archives in the United States has not produced a copy of this significant letter. On 27 June 1844: "Are the boys to remain in Baltimore or New York longer than the 20th July? Are we to adopt the system of having matrons [sic] foundlings?—We all say No." (ASJPH, First Council Book, Article 126.)

<sup>74</sup>This society was not the same as the Ladies of Charity founded by Saint Vincent de Paul which dates to 1617 at Châtillon-les-Dombes in France.

Sometimes we would return from early Mass during the week, we would find barrels of flour at our kitchen door, sometimes the kitchen table strewn with the produce of the market. Some of our kind friends would leave us to guess which of them it was. Mr. Ashley was one of the most liberal. When we first arrived in the city, finding us clothed in heavy, thick flannel, very different from what we now wear, he went to Miss Cauffman and put five gold pieces in her hand and begged her to go and purchase bombazette and have it made up for us, that it would never do for us to wear such clothing.<sup>75</sup> Happily before Miss Cauffman purchased the stuff, she spoke to us. We told her it would never be accepted by us and begged she would not put Mr. Ashley to so useless an expense. Finding they could not prevail, they begged Mr. [Samuel] Cooper who was in the city, to write to our Superiors to insist on our wearing bombazette.<sup>76</sup> Our Mother answered the letter thanking them, yet assuring them that our dress could not be altered so they said no more. During this first year we were afraid to call on the Managers and continued to beg alms for the orphans, knowing the house to be in debt. We lived mostly on potatoes, and our fires were mostly of tar from the tar yard. One morning we had but twelve and a half cents in the house. We sent one of the orphans to market to buy a shin of beef, if she could get one, it was washing day and we could not go ourselves. In about two or three hours, little Maurice returned with a large piece of beef, her twelve and a half cents, and a half dollar besides, telling us that a little old woman who kept a butcher's stall asked her if she was not one of the orphans from near Trinity Church. On her answering yes, she gave her the above, and told her whenever we were in want to send to her. We made good use of her kind offer and received large pieces of good meat for the Asylum.

One day, in the octave of Corpus Christi, the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, one of the Sisters was making her fervent supplications for help, as we were told it was likely the sheriff would come and sell the house over our heads. When we returned from church we found our kind little benefactress, who gave us the meat, seated in the parlor.

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<sup>75</sup>Bombazette is a thin plain or twill woven worsted cloth with smooth finish used for dresses and coats.

<sup>76</sup>Samuel Cooper had funded the purchase of the Emmitsburg property for Mother Seton and her community in 1809.

It was the first time she had visited us, renewed her friendly offer, and gave us ten dollars. This was a great help. Soon after this the embargo was raised, the city illuminated and the public rejoicing was followed by an overflow of business, and the market glutted. The time to give in our account came, and to our great joy we found we had called for but \$400. The \$200 remaining we claimed as our due, in case the next year we could not make out with the \$600 allowed. The Managers much pleased; the money remained in their hands. What with our cash donations, charity box donations and eatables, we had made out with the above sum.<sup>77</sup>

Our orphans increased in number. Donations and small legacies, so that the next year we called for less from the Managers, and the third year still less, so that they gave us *carte blanche*. What with donations, charity sermons and legacies, the debt was paid; a fund formed and the Asylum went on increasing from year to year until in its present beautiful location in Spruce Street. Thus our Lord blessed the beginning of our first Asylum and fifteen to twenty orphans, if not more, much poverty, the house under debt five thousand dollars, it is now a splendid asylum—one hundred orphans and no debt, I think, and the boys removed to one of their own.

[*New York*]

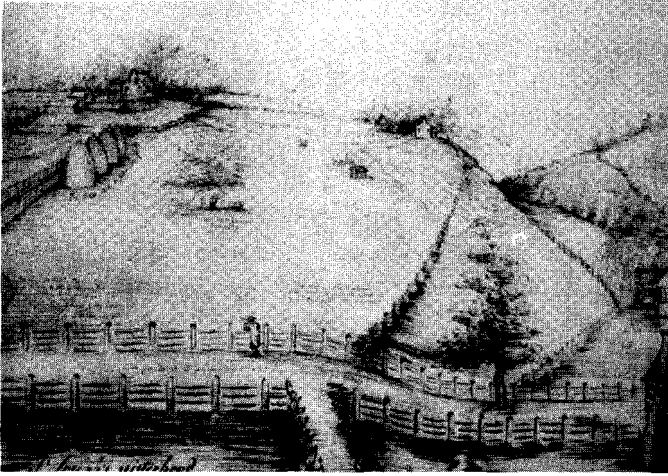
In August, 1817 the Sisters were called to New York.<sup>78</sup> Three were sent to begin an asylum—the house purchased by the Managers who formed a society for the relief of orphans was an old frame house on Prince Street, the front door was two steps below the street.<sup>79</sup> The beginning [was] very poor, yet the people very kind. We began with one orphan and had many difficulties to meet with; the greatest was that we were obliged to admit boys and girls, the same poverty

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<sup>77</sup>The Asylum begun 6 October 1814 later moved from its original site (at the corner of Seventh and Spruce Streets) to Germantown and later closed its doors in 1984 because of changing practices in child welfare services and governmental policies along with the shortage of sister personnel. (See Daniel Hannefin, D.C., *Daughters of the Church* [New York: New City Press, 1989], 20.)

<sup>78</sup>On 13 August 1817 Mother Seton and her council approved sending three sisters to New York in response to the request by Bishop John Connolly for sisters to care for orphans. The work became incorporated as the New York Catholic Benevolent Society. The following sisters were sent: Sister Rose White, Sister Cecilia O'Conway, and Sister Felicite Brady. ([Steele], *Life of Mother Rose White*, 48-49. See also Hannefin, *Daughters of the Church*, 21.)

<sup>79</sup>The corner of Prince and Mott Streets between the two thoroughfares of that day—Bloomingdales and Bowery Roads—marks the beginning of ministry in New York by the Sisters of Charity.



Sketch of Saint Joseph's in 1817 by Reverend Simon Bruté, S.S.,  
spiritual director of Mother Seton and many of the  
Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's.

*Courtesy Archives of Saint Joseph's Provincial House, Emmitsburg, Maryland*

existing, and the same promises made by the Asylum Managers that as soon as means could be secured there should be a separation.<sup>80</sup> This, we regret, is not yet effected, though they have a splendid Asylum accommodating two hundred orphans.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>80</sup>The council, now more seasoned, approved the request for New York but stipulated specific conditions relative to financial affairs, management of the orphans, and reimbursement for the sisters' services, as a result of their previous experience in Philadelphia regarding these issues. (Reverend John Dubois to Bishop John Connolly of New York, 24 May 1817, *Numerous Choirs*, 1: 202.)

<sup>81</sup>Sister Margaret George was appointed sister servant in New York on 26 May 1819 and the next January she wrote to Emmitsburg requesting that sisters be sent to open a pay school in the spring for children whose parents could not afford to send them to Saint Joseph's. The council approved, if the school was for what was considered an English education only. A pay school began at that time but seems to have been entirely dependent upon the asylum. The sisters serving in both programs had the same sister servant and lived in one local community, although different sisters were appointed to direct the apostolic works. The Pay School was suppressed 7 August 1825. (See ASJPH 1 1-0.)