

# St. Ann's Home Marks 50 Years

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at St. Ann's are greying and reveal the normal infirmities of age but all of them can smile. In coming to St. Ann's Home, they have learned "that life can be worth living," even though it is eventful.

Although St. Ann's Home is currently marking 50 years of operation at its current site on Lake Avenue, it had its beginning as an institution for the care of the aged long before 1906. The present-day St. Ann's is actually an outgrowth of an earlier institution, founded in 1873 and known as the "Home



MOTHER HIERONYMO

She pioneered.

of Industry." This institution was organized and established by that almost legendary figure of early Catholic Rochester, the incredible Mother Hieronymo.

This is the same Mother Hieronymo whose name looms so prominently in Rochester annals as the founder of St. Mary's Hospital, the first such institution in the city's history.

As a member of the Sisters of Charity, she came with two nun companions to Rochester in 1857 to found her hospital. At this time Rochester belonged to the Diocese of Buffalo, under Bishop John Timon. Sister Hieronymo's arrival in Rochester was three years before the outbreak of the Civil War and eleven years before Bishop Bernard McQuaid founded the Diocese of Rochester in 1868.

SISTER HIERONYMO started her hospital on the site of the present modern St. Mary's Hospital (Genesee Street and Buffalo Road, now West Main Street) but in quarters vastly more humble. These primitive quarters of the first St. Mary's included two stone stables ("the old barns at West End"), each large enough to shelter a single team of horses.

Despite intolerable conditions and in defiance of financial crisis, opposition and discouragement, Sister Hieronymo refused to quit. She persevered, confident that she was doing the Lord's work.

The Civil War brought a new challenge to Sister Hieronymo and her hospital. This was the task of nursing thousands of wounded and sick Union soldiers. During these trying times, she also launched a major building program to

meet the growing demands upon the hospital.

During the short space of 13 years, St. Mary's, under Mother Hieronymo's direction, grew from its crude beginnings in the stables to a respected and important institution in the early Rochester community.

Then came a day of crisis for Mother Hieronymo and a subsequent decision both of which were providentially destined to lay the groundwork for the future St. Ann's Home, which today joins with St. Mary's Hospital in providing modern Rochester with two great institutions of mercy and charity.

Here is how it happened. In 1870, the Superiors of the Sisters of Charity in Emmitsburg, Maryland, ordered Sister Hieronymo transferred to a mission in New Orleans.

A civic appeal, headed by Mayor John Lutes and other public officials and even a personal plea by Bishop McQuaid failed to gain cancellation of Sister Hieronymo's transfer.

Six months later (March 1871), after completion of her annual vow, Mother Hieronymo decided to withdraw from the Emmitsburg community. Acting on Bishop McQuaid's advice, she returned to Rochester and was received into the community of the Sisters of St. Joseph in April, 1871.

Sister Hieronymo was now a woman passed fifty but she had lost none of her restless energy or courageous spirit. On joining the Sisters of St. Joseph she was assigned to St. Patrick's Girls Orphan Asylum where she launched a new venture which gave reality to one of Bishop McQuaid's longtime ambitions. This was the House of Industry where training for livelihood as well as protection was offered young girls too old for the orphanage and working girls who had no families.

Apparently, it was hoped, that considerable financial support for the new institution would be obtained through the work of the Sisters and the girls. Accordingly, in the summer of 1872, the public was informed of the new institution through the following advertisement, quaint sounding to modern ears:

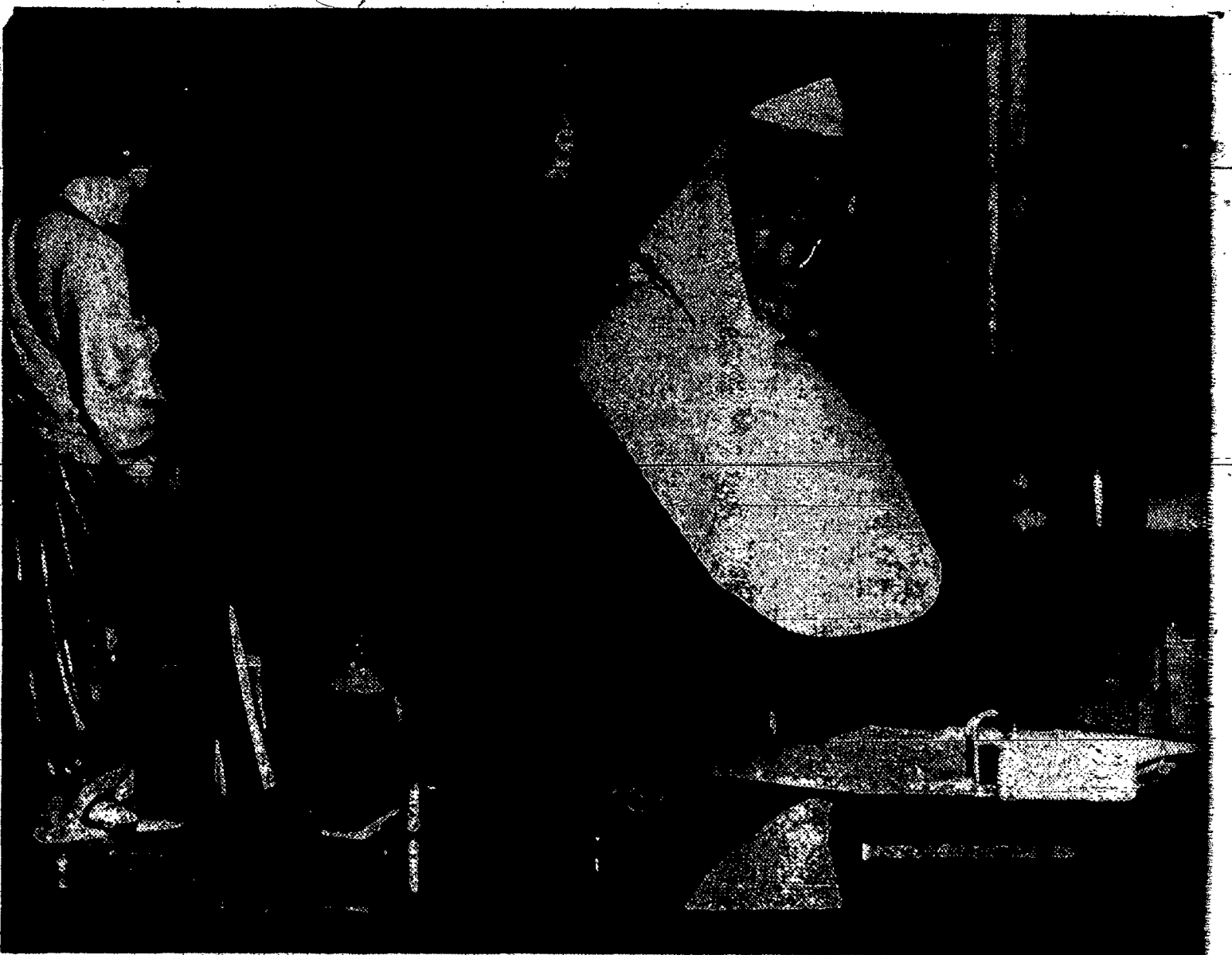
"Family sewing, Dress and Cloak Making, Gold and Silk embroidery, Vestments, Albs, Surplices, Cinctures, Barettas and Soutanes, Badges, Banners, etc., for Societies made to order. Manufacturers of Ladies Suits and Under garments, Gentlemen's Shirts and Ready made Clothing, will find it advantageous to send their work to this establishment."

THE NEXT YEAR the name of the House of Industry was changed to Home of Industry and moved to separate quarters at 40-42 Edinburgh Street. This commodious building was purchased for \$17,000 and wholly financed through a mortgage. Obviously, as was the case when she organized St. Mary's Hospital, Sister Hieronymo was starting her new venture on less than the proverbial shoestring.

Foreclosure of the mortgage on the Edinburgh Street property forced Mother Hieronymo to move her infant institution to 136 South St. Paul Street (now South Avenue), at the corner of Howell Street, in August, 1874. At this site the Home of Industry carried on for 14 years and all the while Mother Hieronymo was planning ahead. She was never content to stand still.

Her genius for thrift and boldness in borrowing money

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Sister Mary Walter, administrator of St. Ann's Home.

## St. Ann's Administrator

Modern-minded Nun Superior decrees end of 'lace curtain' era.

SISTER MARY WALTER, the administrator of St. Ann's Home for the aged, is a kindly lady blessed with the knack for getting things done quietly and efficiently.

When she was assigned to her present position four years ago, the Mother Superior of the Sisters of St. Joseph told her: "You have a lot of work to do here." And since coming to the Home, Sister Mary Walter has been doing a lot of work, and doing it without fanfare or fuss.

Incidentally, her name in religion (Walter) recalls that she is the sister of the Rev. Dr. Walter Kohl, pastor of St. Boniface Church in Rochester.

Sister Mary Walter came to St. Ann's in 1952 with a wealth of valuable experience gained from 25 years of service as a nun and professional nurse on the staff of St. Joseph's Hospital in Elmira.

As a trained nurse, she has a sympathetic understanding of the infirmities and ailments of the aged guests at St. Ann's. As a religious she is mindful also of Our Lord's assurance that what we do for the needy we do for Him.

The smooth operation of life at St. Ann's requires that its director be even more than a nun and a nurse. Among many things, it also demands that she be an engineer, bookkeeper, business director, dietitian, interior decorator and public relations expert. And Sister Mary Walter manages to fill all these roles well.

Like most executive directors of an institution as large as St. Ann's, she has a well-appointed office for the conduct of official business. But in reality her office embraces all the far reaches and levels of the buildings which comprise St. Ann's Home.

Her continuous, daily trips through all departments of the Home, keep her informed on its operations and give her an easy familiarity with its more than 200 aged residents.

Visitors marvel at her mental file on everybody at the Home, the domestic help as well as the guests. "This is Mary. She is good at sewing." "This is Frank. See how straight he is. He used to be an athlete."

She jokes with the men guests about their attendance at the weekly craft class. "Did you go to school today, John?"

Were you on time?" In the kitchen she stops to chat with one of the ladies working there. "Anna, how is your boy in the army?"

Sister Mary Walter has up-to-date ideas on how things should be done. As a result, she has brought a "new look" to St. Ann's. In the Chapel, for example, she explains: "We took some rear pews out of here and now we can bring in 20 wheel chairs."

In the main dining rooms, the old fashioned long tables (army mess style) have given way to modern small tables, enhancing the comfort of the guests as well as the decor. "This is more homelike," Sister explains. "With these small tables our guests can now sit in friendly groups."

The small dining rooms upstairs for those guests unable to attend the main room also give evidence of Sister's spirit of modernity. Here the attractive color schemes of the furniture and dishes impress the envious visitor.

"I just told the Sister in charge of each of these rooms," explained the administrator, "to go buy the color of furniture and dishes she liked. This is the result." The result is wonderful.

Sister Mary Walter's chief pride is the modern, pastel-colored drapes and curtains which adorn the sun parlors and reception rooms.

"We used to have lace curtains," she reports, "but we got rid of those old things."

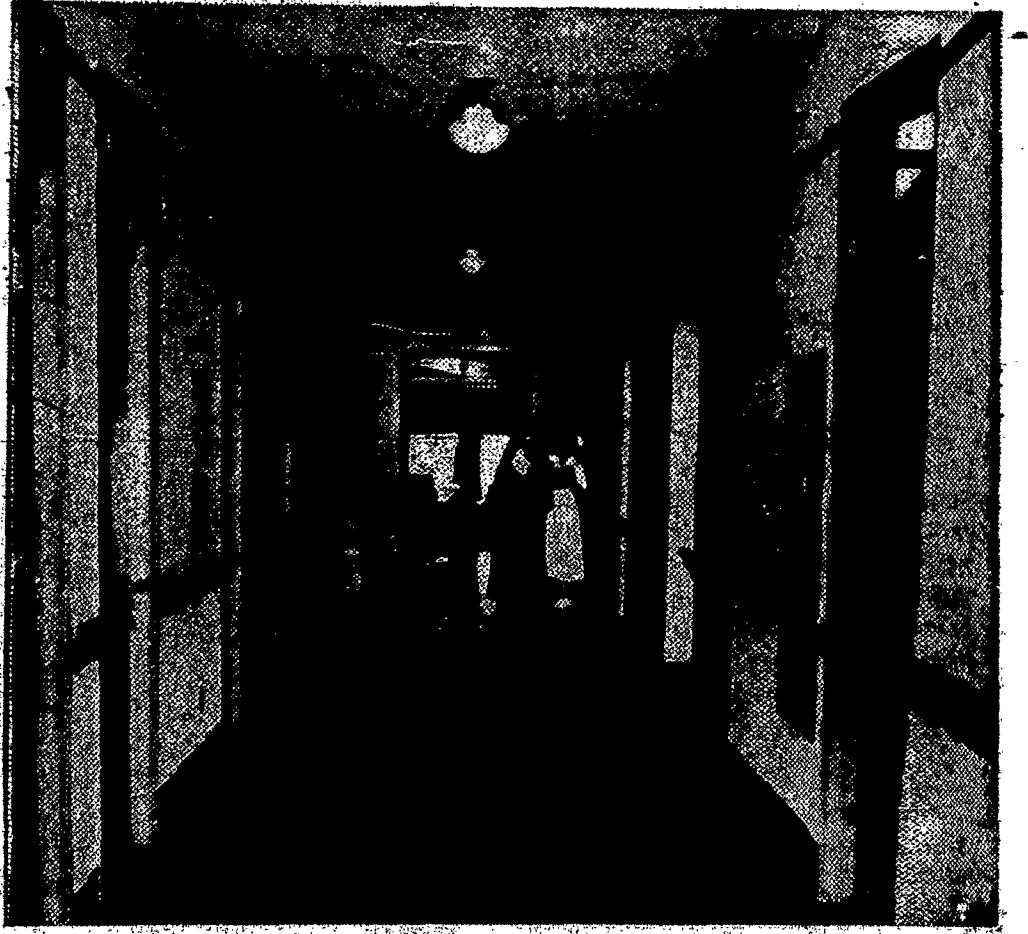
The St. Ann's administrator leaves no doubt in your mind that she firmly believes that the "lace curtain" age belongs in oblivion with the "horse and buggy" era. She wants no part of either.

In keeping with her desire to improve life at St. Ann's, she welcomes visitors and is anxious to have outside groups take an interest in the guests. ("We don't call them old people.")

Among those providing entertainment for the guests, Sister Mary Walter gratefully cites the Catholic Women's Club, the Daughters of Mary of St. Michael's Church, and the pupils of Sacred Heart Cathedral School. She also pays tribute to Mr. Charles Benedict, musical director of Damascus Temple. "He brings his mobile band down here four or five times a year and plays for us," she recalls, "He is a nice man, once he brought me a rosary."

Those who accept Sister Mary Walter's invitation to visit St. Ann's will soon discover that it is no "deadend world" where the aged go to be forgotten.

Under Sister Mary Walter and her staff of 17 Sisters of St. Joseph, St. Ann's is a home "where Rochester's aging citizens have a future."



Corridor in infirmary.