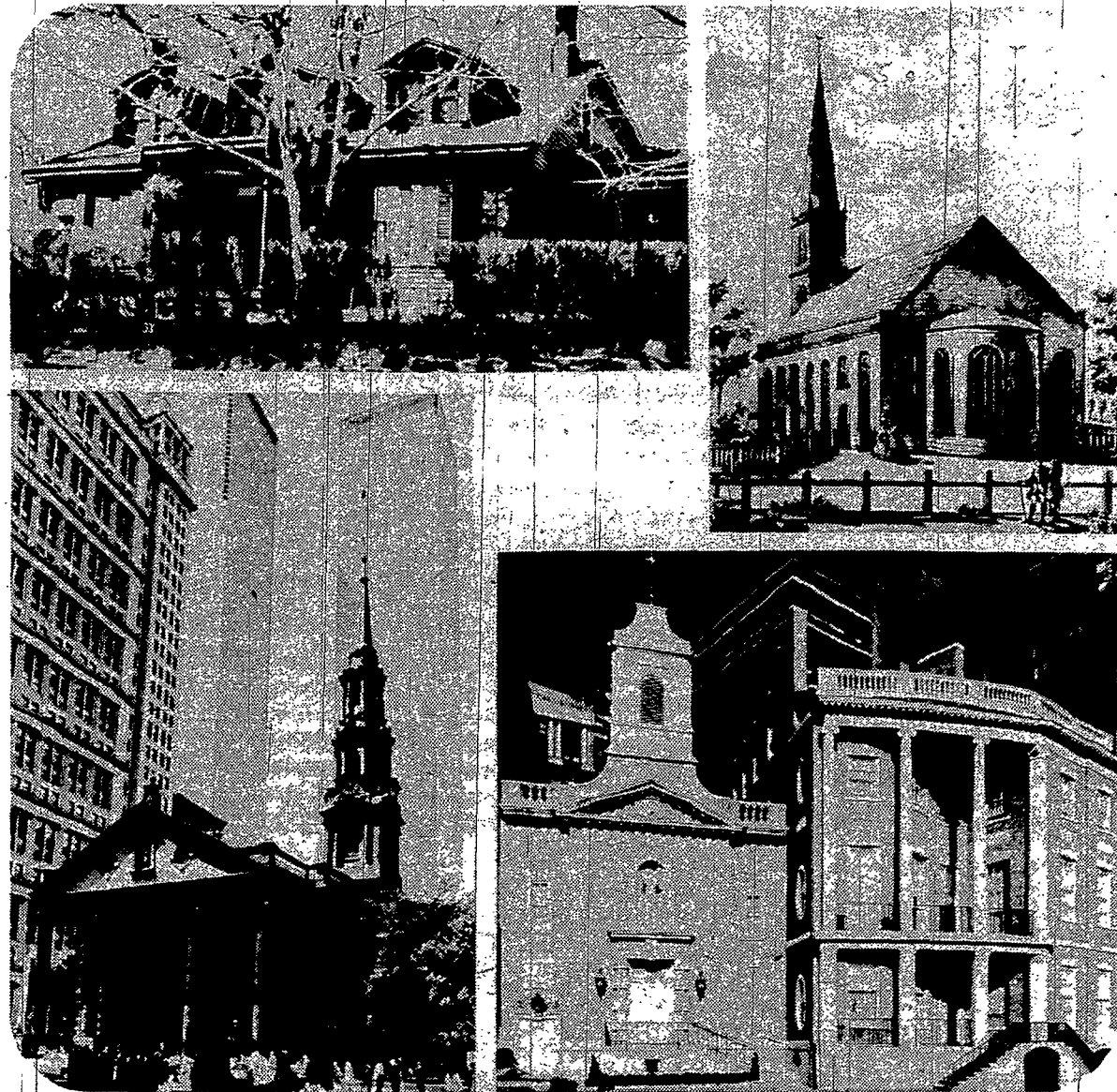




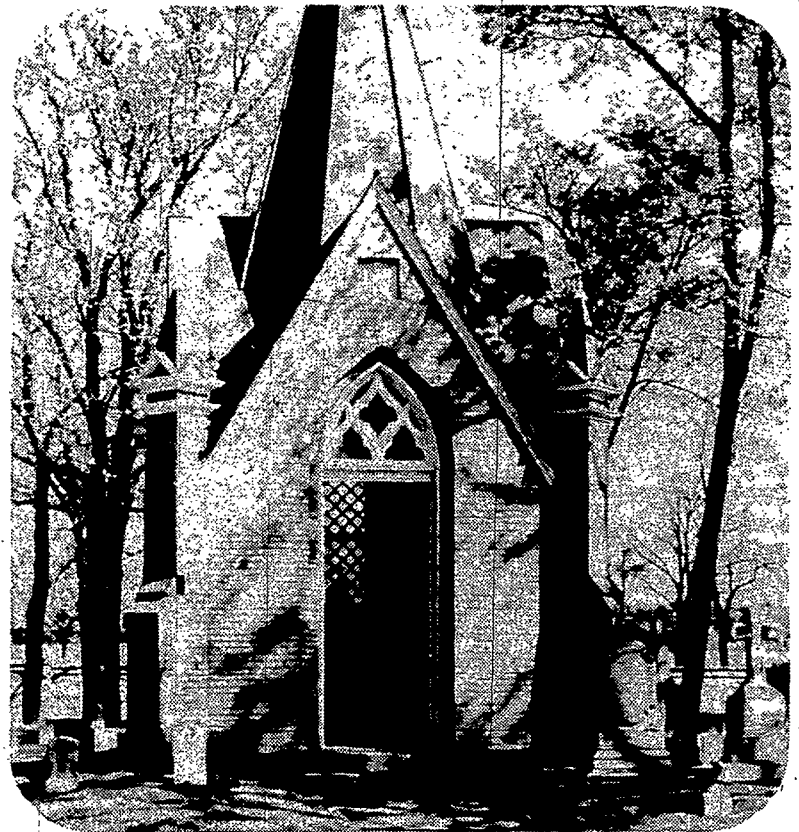
In January 1794, 19-year-old Elizabeth Ann Bayley married 25-year-old William Magee Seton, scion of an ancient Scottish family and heir to the family's considerable shipping and importing interests. As a wedding present for her husband, she commissioned this portrait, painted on a locket. It is in the archives of the Sisters of Charity, New York City. (RNS)

St. Elizabeth: Her Life and Times



New York

Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton was born on Aug. 28, 1774, in New York. Her parents were Dr. Richard Bayley, New York's first health officer, and Catherine Charlton, daughter of the rector of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church on Staten Island. Her mother died when Elizabeth was 3 and a year later her father remarried. She and her older sister, Mary, received little affection from their new stepmother and the two girls began spending a great deal of time with their uncle, William Bayley, and his family at what is called the Pell House (upper left) in New Rochelle, N.Y. The house provided a haven from domestic problems and from the time she was eight until she was 14, Elizabeth spent much of her time there. In all probability, Trinity Church (upper right) in lower Manhattan was Elizabeth's parish church as an Episcopalian. Although all records were destroyed in the fire of 1776, it is supposed that Elizabeth was baptized there. Her five children were christened at Trinity in the years from 1795 to 1802, and she is listed in the church records as a "regular communicant" after 1800. Trinity is shown as it appeared before the 1776 fire. St. Paul's Chapel (lower left), several blocks north of Trinity and part of the Trinity Parish, appears to have been Elizabeth's favorite place of worship before her conversion. She wrote about it often in her diary and prayed there when she was pondering the idea of becoming a Roman Catholic. Completed in 1776, St. Paul's is the oldest public building and the only remaining Colonial church in Manhattan, having survived the great fire of 1776 when the British destroyed much of New York. In 1794, Elizabeth married William Magee Seton, a wealthy shipper and importer. They lived with his family on Stone Street for a few months before taking a house on Wall Street. In 1801, the Setons rented a house at No. 8 State Street, facing the Battery. Two years later, however, William's business failed and he developed tuberculosis. The family decided to go to Italy and set sail in October 1803. William died there in December. Today, the Shrine of St. Elizabeth Seton (lower right) is built on the site of No. 8 State St. Elizabeth Seton returned to New York a widow and lived there for five years, during which she converted to Catholicism. She left for Baltimore in 1808 and never saw her native city again. (RNS)



Where Mother Seton Was Buried

When Mother Seton died in 1821, she was buried beside an oak tree in a tiny cemetery behind the White House until the completion of the Mortuary Chapel in 1846. Her remains were then placed in a vault beneath the chapel floor until their exhumation in 1962 in preparation for her beatification. In 1968 her relics were placed in a shrine at St. Joseph's Provincial House in Emmitsburg. (RNS)

Maryland

In 1808, Elizabeth Seton accepted the invitation of Archbishop John Carroll to establish a girls' school in Baltimore. On June 16, she and her daughters arrived at their new home on Paca Street (upper left), adjoining the newly opened St. Mary's College and Seminary. By September, she received her first students, and, in December, her first spiritual daughter. In March, 1809, Elizabeth took her first vows and received the title "Mother." The infant community adopted a simple black habit and took the name, Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph. Soon after, a wealthy seminarian named Samuel Cooper purchased a farm near Emmitsburg, Md., for Mother Seton's use, noting: "This establishment will be made at Emmitsburg, a village 18 leagues from Baltimore, from whence it will spread over the United States." Mother Seton and her companions arrived at Emmitsburg on June 24, 1809, and on July 31 they moved into a home called the Stone House (lower left). This later date is considered the foundation date of the six religious communities of American Sisters of Charity which trace their origin to Mother Seton. Construction was immediately begun on a larger building and in February 1810 the community moved into what became known as the White House (upper right) and began classes in what was the first parochial school in the U.S. A replica of the first classroom (lower right) at St. Joseph's is maintained with authentic furnishings. The White House also contains a chapel and the room where Mother Seton died. (RNS)

