

*From the IHM Archives...*

♪ ♪ *Villa Maria, We Love You!* ♪ ♪

## *Anticipating the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Villa Maria Academy*

### **An IHM Story of Divine Providence and Dedication to the Mission**



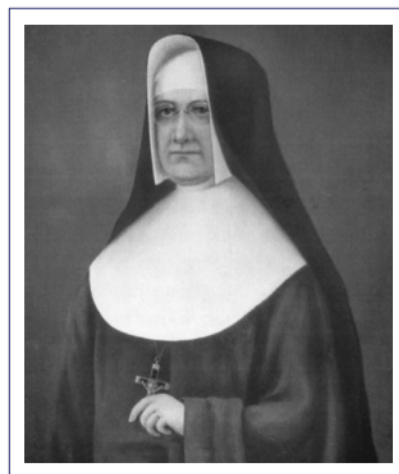
What prompts the beginning of a great endeavor? In speaking of Villa Maria Academy, the clear answer is two-fold -- the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the dedication to the mission. Throughout the 150 years of the life of Villa Maria Academy, these two motivating forces have merged to provide the impetus and the momentum of every decision.



*VMAHS Class of 1932*

Villa Maria Academy traces its origins to 1872, when the Motherhouse, Postulate,

Novitiate, and boarding school of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary moved from Reading, PA to a property in the borough of West Chester, PA. In the early days, the Academy was known as the Academy of the Immaculate Heart of Mary until about 1878, when the name Villa Maria Academy came into common use.



**Mother M.  
Gonzaga Rooney,  
IHM  
First Principal,  
1872 -1878**

When Mother Camilla Maloney purchased the land in Frazer, her intention was the establishment of a Catholic college for women; however, in 1914 before the college opened, the site, which is now Immaculata University, became the home of Villa Maria Academy, having moved from West Chester. Unfortunately, full accreditation as a college required that the girls in grades 1-12 be separated from the college students.



*Basketball  
Team, Class of  
1921*

Miraculously God provided an estate, located several miles to the east along Lincoln Highway at Green Tree. In May of 1925, Villa Maria Academy, Green Tree, opened for grades 1-8, with the high school students leaving Immaculata for Green Tree one year at a time.



*Theresa Maxis Student Union, VMAHS*

Under the leadership of Mother Claudia Honsberger, Villa Maria Academy Lower School, grades 1-8, relocated, this last time to the west wing of the Motherhouse complex on King Road.

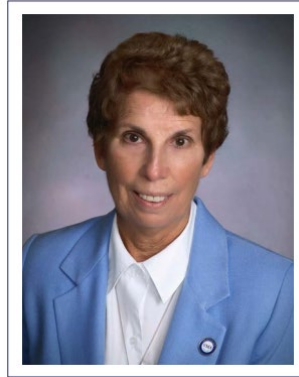


*Villa Maria Academy LS*

It seemed fitting that Villa Maria Academy returned to the Motherhouse, the place where it began so many years ago in West Chester.

Throughout its history, Villa Maria Academy has been blessed with dedicated principals, loyal teachers and staff members, generous and supportive parents, and enthusiastic students.

Villa has also been sustained by dedicated IHM Sisters in community leadership, who have been open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, as well as dedicated to the ongoing mission! Divine Providence has and will continue to lead us!



Sister Regina Ryan  
VMAHS Principal  
2012 - Present



Sister Susan Joseph  
VMALS Principal  
2012 - Present

*Information gathered from:*

*“An Abbreviated History of Villa Maria Academy” by Sister Susan Joseph*

*Annual Report: 2020-2021, Villa Maria Academy Lower School*

*A History of Our IHM Principals Since 1872  
IHM Charism Committee of Then Villa Maria Academy High School Advisory Board  
Completed: November 2020*

*Contributions to this article from:*

*The staff of the IHM Archives-Villa Maria House of Studies, Immaculata, PA.*

*Information included is current as of Aug., 2022.*