

*From the IHM Archives...*

***Divine Providence:***

***A Miracle from Start to Finish***

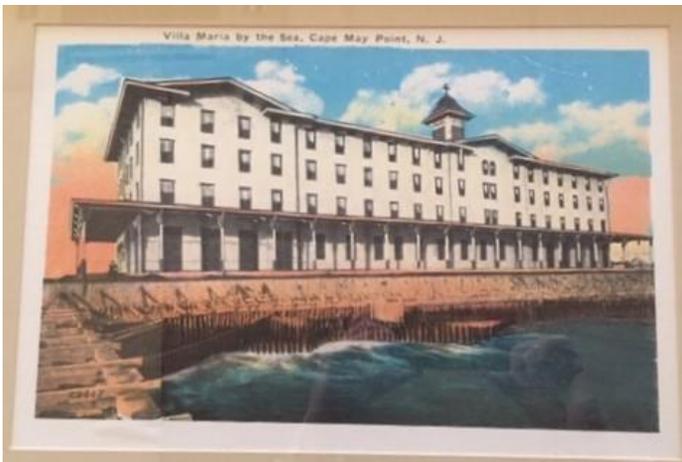
**Villa Maria by-the-Sea, Stone Harbor, NJ  
Retreat House of the Sisters, Servants  
of the Immaculate Heart of Mary**

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**February 2, 1937    Groundbreaking**  
**June 29, 1937     Dedication and**  
**Corner Stone Laying**

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Early in 1936, Mother Kostka McCormick (Mother General from 1935 to 1940) had a serious challenge; both financial and spiritual in nature. The community had previously owned a retreat house in Cape May, NJ. After the hurricane of 1933 and several lesser storms, the coastline had eroded so rapidly that the Retreat Rectory had washed out to sea and the sisters' retreat house was undermined with water. Some sisters remember their senior members recalling that water could be heard swishing under the building.



**Villa Maria by-the-Sea, Cape May Point, N.J., 1913-1936**

Mother Kostka and her council, realizing the need for the sisters' spiritual and physical renewal, explored the southern New Jersey coast, sought church and legal advice, and purchased 4 ½ acres of land in Stone Harbor. Time being a prime concern, plans moved forward. To the chagrin of all, the bids drawn up were well over the planned budget. Later, Mother Marie Alma in her book commented: "There was no alternative, however, so secure in the knowledge that **Divine Providence** would provide."



**1. M. Kostka 2. M. Loyolla 3. S. M. Presentation 4. S. M. Cosmas**

***“Miracle, godsend -- one thing is clear: It was an amazing accomplishment.”***

*-Seven Mile Times*

Groundbreaking took place on February 2, 1937 and the dedication of Villa Maria by-the-Sea was celebrated on June 29, 1937. As many as 300 laborers worked through that winter, many of them extremely grateful for work after the great depression. The term “godsend” was mentioned repeatedly in reports at that time. In a much more recent article of the “Seven Mile Times”, we read: “Miracle, godsend -- one thing is clear: It was an amazing accomplishment.”



*Villa Maria by-the-Sea in progress*



*More recent photo of Villa Maria by-the-Sea*



*Scenes from Dedication Day, June 29, 1937*

*Information gathered from:*

*Ryan, Mother Maria Alma, IHM. Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Lancaster, PA: The Dolphin Press, 1967*

*Contributions to this article from:*

*The staff of the IHM Archives-Villa Maria House of Studies, Immaculata, PA. Information current as of Jan., 2021.*