

The exhibit of the Sisters of Notre Dame was highly commended, and at the close of the Fair, which lasted six months, a diploma and medal were awarded to fifteen of our houses in Massachusetts, Lowell's parish and day schools being among the favored.

# Annals from the Archives

Sto XIII., Columbus, Juan Spabella, and

## Helen Madeleine Ingraham, 1887-1989

Helen Ingraham in 1905, the year she graduated from NDA in Roxbury



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**Written by**

**Nancy Barthelemy**

**Archivist**

**nancy.barthelemy@sndden.org**

**sndbostonlpswich.wordpress.com**

**bolparchlives.omeka.net**

—Sister Helen Madeleine Ingraham's first association with the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur came in 1901 when she was accepted into the Notre Dame Academy in Roxbury. She had been born Helen Elizabeth Ingraham on Nov. 29, 1887, the youngest of nine children to Henry and Kate (Kirby) Ingraham. Four of the nine Ingraham children died in childhood. The family lived in Saxonville, a small mill village located in the northern section of Framingham, MA. As a child, Helen was called Ellen, after her maternal grandmother, Ellen Kirby. Sadly, when Helen was five, her father died and her mother, Kate, became a housekeeper to support the family.

Helen attended the Framingham Public Schools until 1901, when she completed both her eighth and ninth grade classes in one year. She then was accepted into the Notre Dame Academy in Roxbury as a boarding student. Among the many classes she excelled at were French and Latin, courses she continued to pursue for her college and graduate degrees. She was a hard worker during her years at NDA, eventually working her way up to become first in her graduating class of 1905. Helen took the college entrance examination for Trinity College in Washington D.C. that year and was accepted. Instead, she decided to enter the Sisters of Notre Dame just after her high school graduation. Once she took her first vows in 1908, she was sent to Trinity College to begin work on her Bachelor's Degree. As was the custom then, the sisters taught from September to June, then went to summer school to pursue their own education.

Sister Helen Madeleine taught at the Notre Dame Academy in Lowell from 1908 to 1913, NDA in Roxbury from 1913 to 1918, and for the year of 1918 at the NDA in Boston. During that summer of 1918, she completed her Bachelor's Degree at Trinity College. It was around this time that a committee of sisters formed to prepare for the opening of the college which would be located on the Fenway in Boston. The Boston NDA had moved from Berkeley Street to the Fenway in 1914, to prepare for the eventual opening of the first women's Catholic college in Massachusetts. This committee included Sr. Helen Madeleine. At first the committee thought to name the new school Notre Dame College, but Sr. Helen Madeleine believed that since the NDA would share the same building—at least for a while—people would find the similarity in the names too confusing and think that the college would simply be an extension of the Academy. Sister Mary Borgia, the Eastern Provincial, asked her to think of a different name for the college. "After the meeting, which had decided on Notre Dame, Sister Mary, Dean of Trinity, asked me what I thought of the proposed name. I told her I could not get Emmanuel out of my mind. We reported to Sister Provincial, who was so impressed that she declared: 'It will be Emmanuel College.'" [Memoirs]

Emmanuel opened in the fall of 1919 and Sr. Helen Madeleine was named the College Dean. Those early years were a struggle. Because the NDA also occupied the same building, the college had little space in which to hold classes. For instance, Sr. Helen Madeleine's office often had to be used as a classroom. This continued until 1931, when NDA moved to Granby Street, almost a mile away. During the first two years, she worked to insure that the college would become accredited. This required preparing an appropriate curriculum and hiring professors. The first two years, the courses included Sacred Scripture, Apologetics, Biology, English, Mathematics, Spanish, French, German, Logic, Chemistry, History, Philosophy, Psychology, Economics, Sociology, Oral Expression and Latin, which Sr. Helen Madeleine taught. There was also training in Physical

Education for the students. Accreditation did not come easily, however.

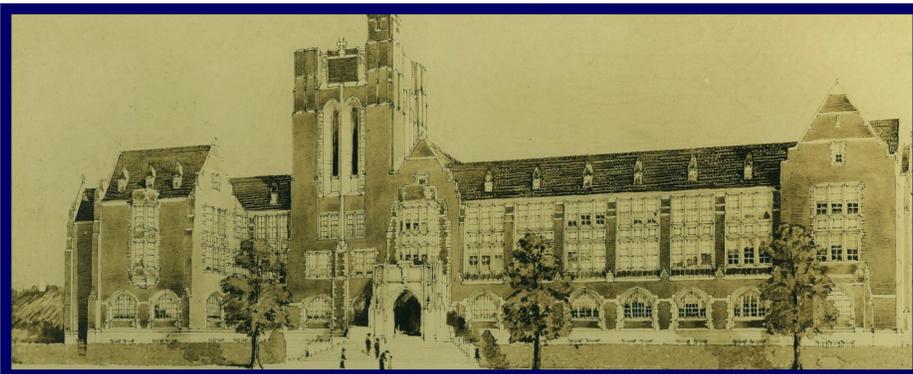
*"An article appeared in a reputable academic magazine stating that legislation was pending in Massachusetts which would forbid any institution to use the word 'college' until it had completed four years of academic work in an acceptable setting, with a full-fledged faculty and student body. When I read that I was aghast. How many students would remain with us, how many would seek admission to Emmanuel with only the possibility of using the word college! All my hopes fell apart. I locked the door of my office and grief overwhelmed me."* [Memoirs] She finally decided to call their lawyer and advisor, Arthur Dolan (1876-1949). He helped them obtain a hearing at the Massachusetts State House on Jan. 21st of 1921. They produced their curriculum and answered all the necessary questions. Accreditation was finally granted on April 12, 1921.

She worked with the students to design the student ring, college flag and to create student departmental clubs. She also organized the student Sodality. Various lecture programs and concerts were included to augment the early curriculum. During those years, Sr. Helen Madeleine was also working on her Master's Degree at Emmanuel. She completed it in 1927, receiving her M.A. in English, with a minor in the History of Art. In 1932, she went to Oxford University in England to pursue graduate classes and in 1940, she received an honorary LL.D. from Boston College and in 1950 received the same honor from Regis College. In 1969 she received a Doctor of Humane Letters from Emmanuel.

In 1950, after serving as College Dean for 31 years, she asked to resign. Mother Monica of the Passion accepted her resignation, but asked her to travel to Japan to help found the Notre Dame Seishin College in Okayama. This request came just as the Korean War started and so she was unable to travel to Japan that year. Instead, sisters at the Notre Dame College in Belmont, CA called, asking if she would help them expand their college from a two year school to a four year college. Once this was accomplished, she then went to Japan in 1951. She helped prepare the guidelines for the new college after which she returned to Belmont to oversee the construction of new college facilities. Next, she received an invitation to go to Honolulu to help with the schools there. At last she was able to return home to Massachusetts. Her work was not completed, though. Mother Josepha de St. Francois asked her to prepare a lecture tour on the culture and traditions of Japan. After the tour, she returned to Waltham to guide the program of studies for novices and for sisters working toward their degrees.

Among her numerous accomplishments include her 3 books, With Heart and Mind published in 1937, Strength Through Prayer published in 1938 and Peace Through Prayer published in 1940. She also translated 11 other books written by Abbé Gaston Courtois from French into English.

Sister Helen Madeleine Ingraham died in Worcester on Jan. 24, 1989 at the age of 101.



Emmanuel College in 1919.

#### Sources consulted for this article

- ◆ *Memoirs of Sister Helen Madeleine Ingraham, S.N.D.*, Sister Helen Madeleine Papers, SND Archives, Ipswich, MA.
- ◆ *Emmanuel College Journal, 1922-1937.*
- ◆ *NDA, Boston, Annals, 1917-1926.*