

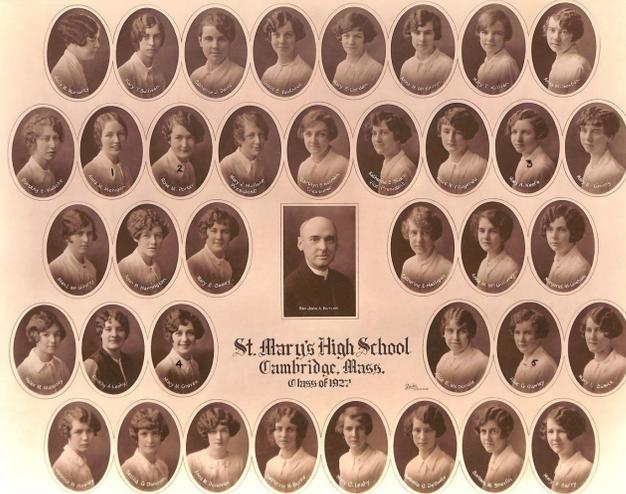
*The exhibit of the Sisters of Notre Dame was highly commended and at the close of the Fair, which lasted six months, a diploma and medal were awarded to fifteen of our houses in Massachusetts, Lowell's parish and day schools being among the favored ones. See XIII., Columbus, Queen Isabella, and*

# Annals from the Archives

## The Class of 1927

The Class of 1927,  
St. Mary's  
High School,  
Cambridge, MA

2014.12  
Sisters of Notre Dame  
de Namur  
New England Archives



**November 2016**

**Written by**

**Nancy Barthelemy**

**Archivist**

**[nancy.barthelemy@sndden.org](mailto:nancy.barthelemy@sndden.org)**

**[sndnewengland.wordpress.com](http://sndnewengland.wordpress.com)**

**[bolparchives.omeka.net](http://bolparchives.omeka.net)**

—During the early to mid 20th century, many girls who had attended Notre Dame schools went onto become members of the Sisters of Notre Dame. When they were asked later in life why they had joined, nearly every single woman spoke of their love of the sisters and it was that love that drew them to religious life. Throughout the 1920s, the Massachusetts Sisters of Notre Dame had on average 36 young women apply every year to become postulants of the congregation. Entrance was divided into two bands, about half joining on specified days in January or February and the other half on appointed times between July and August. Certain graduating years of those Notre Dame schools seemed to draw in more girls than others. 1927 was one of those years. Five graduates from the St. Mary's, Cambridge Class of 1927 ended up eventually becoming members of the Sisters of Notre Dame.

They were Anna Marie Mehigan, Rose Porter, Mary Agnes Keefe, Mary Margaret Graves, and Alice Gertrude Cawley. Unlike many girls, they didn't enter immediately upon graduation, but waited a few years. Anna M. Mehigan and Alice Gertrude Cawley entered together on August 6, 1930. Mary Margaret Graves joined them the following year on Aug. 14, 1931, Rose Porter the year after that on Aug. 9, 1932 and lastly Mary Agnes Keefe entered nearly ten years after her graduation on Feb. 1, 1937.

Like most of the sisters, Anna Marie, now Sr. Mary St. Anne and Alice Gertrude, now Sr. Margaret St. Paul, received their certification to teach during their Novitiate. Both eventually completed their Bachelor's Degrees at Emmanuel by attending the college's summer sessions. Sr. Margaret St. Paul received her BA in 1951 and Sr. Mary St. Anne received hers in 1952. Between them they taught at 23 different schools in Massachusetts.

Sr. Mary St. Anne taught elementary school, but she always loved preparing children for First Communion and would rejoice when her students were accepted into high school. After her retirement in 1978, she took up a new career as a reader at the recording studio for the Massachusetts Association for the Blind. Her friend from St. Mary's, Sr. Margaret St. Paul began her teaching career in Massachusetts. After receiving her BA from Emmanuel, she was transferred to the Star of the Sea School in Honolulu. While in Hawaii, she went to work on her Master's Degree in Education at the University of Hawaii which she completed in 1960. She returned to Massachusetts in 1961 to teach in Cambridge, Woburn and Lawrence before volunteering for a mission in Kenya, where she taught at the Egoji Secondary School for Girls for four years. When the school's regulations requiring teachers over the age of 55 to resign, she petitioned the administration to be allowed to continue her mission for one more year and was granted permission to remain in Kenya. Upon her return to Massachusetts, she spent the remainder of her time at the NDA in Hingham.

Rose Porter entered the SNDs in 1932, taking the name Sr. Ann Margaret. While she ultimately took her first vows in 1935, she left the Congregation only five months later.

Mary Margaret Graves entered the summer of 1931, a year after Anna and Alice Gertrude. She took the name Sr. Agnes Loretta. Like her classmates, she received instructions on teaching in the Novitiate and went to summer sessions at Emmanuel

College and finished her Bachelor's Degree in History and English in 1954. She went onto serve at eleven different schools, teaching mostly in the 8th grade. She ended her career as the Librarian at St. Mary's in Waltham and at the NDA in Hingham.

Mary Agnes Keefe was the last of the St. Mary's Class of 1927 to enter the Sisters of Notre Dame in 1937, taking the name Sr. Mary St. John. Until her entrance, she had worked as a stenographer for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. After her Novitiate, she taught at St. Theresa's in Providence, RI, St. Mary's in Beverly, all the while pursuing her Bachelor's Degree at Emmanuel which she received in 1944. She continued her education, partly at Trinity College, but also at Catholic University where she earned her Master's Degree in Biology in 1948. She returned to Boston that same year and began teaching Biology at Emmanuel, where she taught for the rest of her life, eventually becoming the chair of the Biology Department. During those next few years, she began her work for her Ph.D. which she received from Boston University in 1956. She worked with many of her students to conduct research on the study of parasitology.

Five different graduates. Five different lives in the Congregation. All taught in Massachusetts. One made the decision to leave. One went to Hawaii and Kenya. Another became a librarian. And one took great joy in preparing young children for Communion. Another inspired her students at Emmanuel with her research in Biology. But all were motivated to join the sisters they knew and loved at St. Mary's in Cambridge and to follow them into a life of service.



Anna Mehigan in 1927 on left and Sr. Mary St. Anne Mehigan on right



Mary Margaret Graves in 1927 on left and Sr. Agnes Loretta Graves on right



Mary A. Keefe in 1927 on left and Sr. Mary St. John Keefe on right



Alice Gertrude Cawley in 1927 on left and Sr. Margaret St. Paul Cawley on right



Rose M. Porter, later Sr. Ann Margaret Porter [no photo available]. She left the SNDs in 1935.

#### Sources consulted for this article

- ◆ Sisters of Notre Dame Massachusetts Entrance Records, 1877-2016. SND New England Archives.
- ◆ St. Mary's, Cambridge, MA School Records, 2014.12. SND New England Archives.