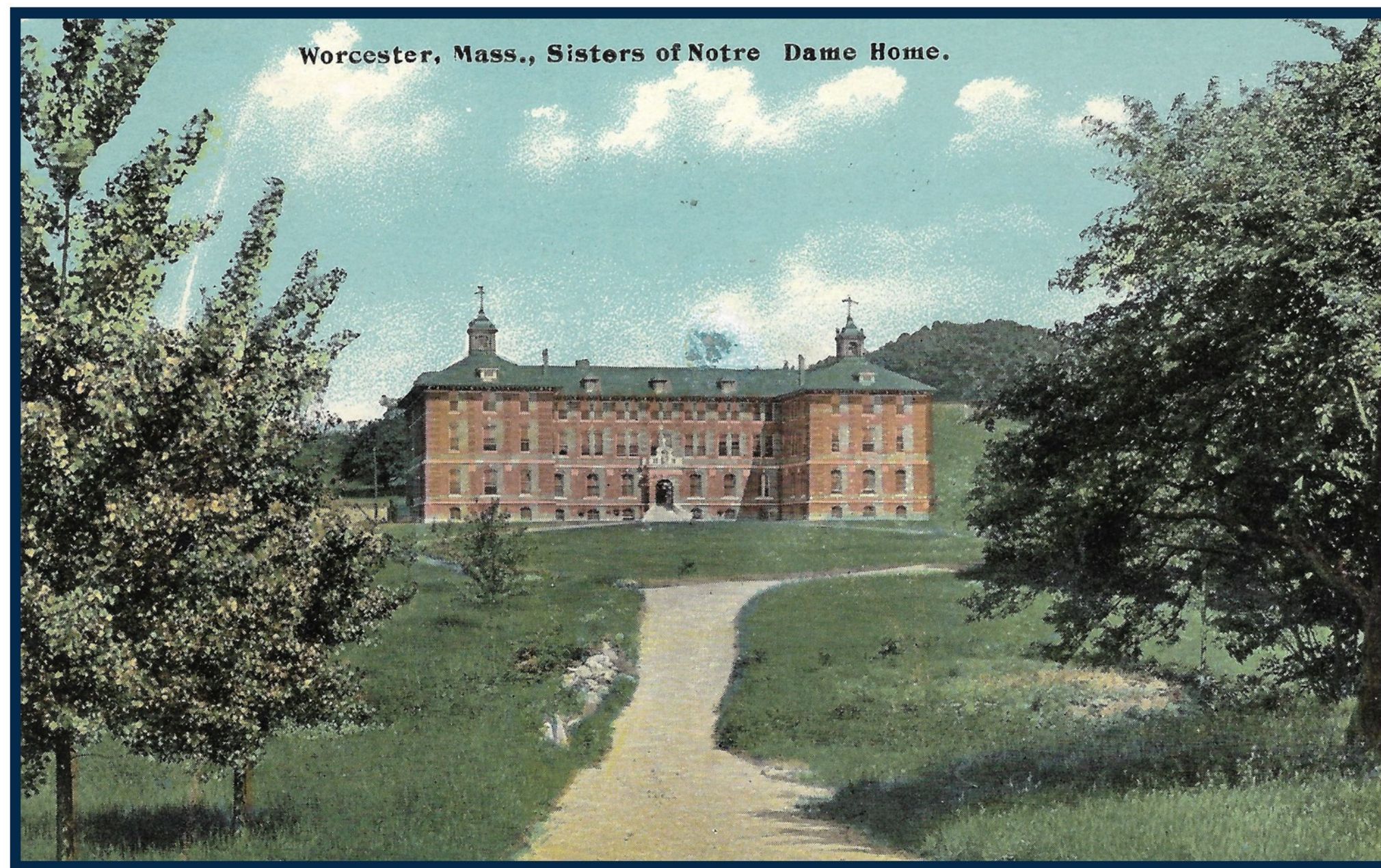


The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and Notre Dame du Lac



The first three Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur came to Boston from Cincinnati in 1849 to open their first mission. With each passing year, the number of women entering the Congregation in Massachusetts increased dramatically. By 1900, there were over 1600 sisters teaching at more than 35 schools. In addition, they also taught Sunday School to the children in neighboring parishes. Often, they raised money for themselves and their expanding missions by teaching music.

While many women were joining the Congregation, those early sisters were growing older and often needed more medical care. In addition, around 10% of the sisters during those years died at a young age. Living in unsanitary environments, without the vaccines and antibiotics that we have today, they often succumbed to tuberculosis, cholera or other diseases prevalent at that time.

While all the Notre Dame convents had infirmarians ministering to ailing sisters, the constant care of someone who was very ill put an extra burden on the community. And none of the convents could take in all the aging and ill sisters living in Massachusetts.

And so, by the late 19th century, Sr. Julia McGroarty, the Provincial for the Sisters in the Eastern United States, knew they needed a home designated both as a retreat and a place of rest.

In 1900, that hope became a reality.

Sister Julia McGroarty

1827-1901



Sister Julia McGroarty was born Susan McGroarty in Ireland on February 13, 1827, the daughter of Neal and Catherine (Bonner) McGroarty. Her family emigrated to the U.S. in 1831 and settled in Fayetteville, Ohio, a small town about forty miles from Cincinnati. In 1841, not long after the first SNDdeNs arrived in Cincinnati to found a new academy, they accepted their first pupil – Susan McGroarty.

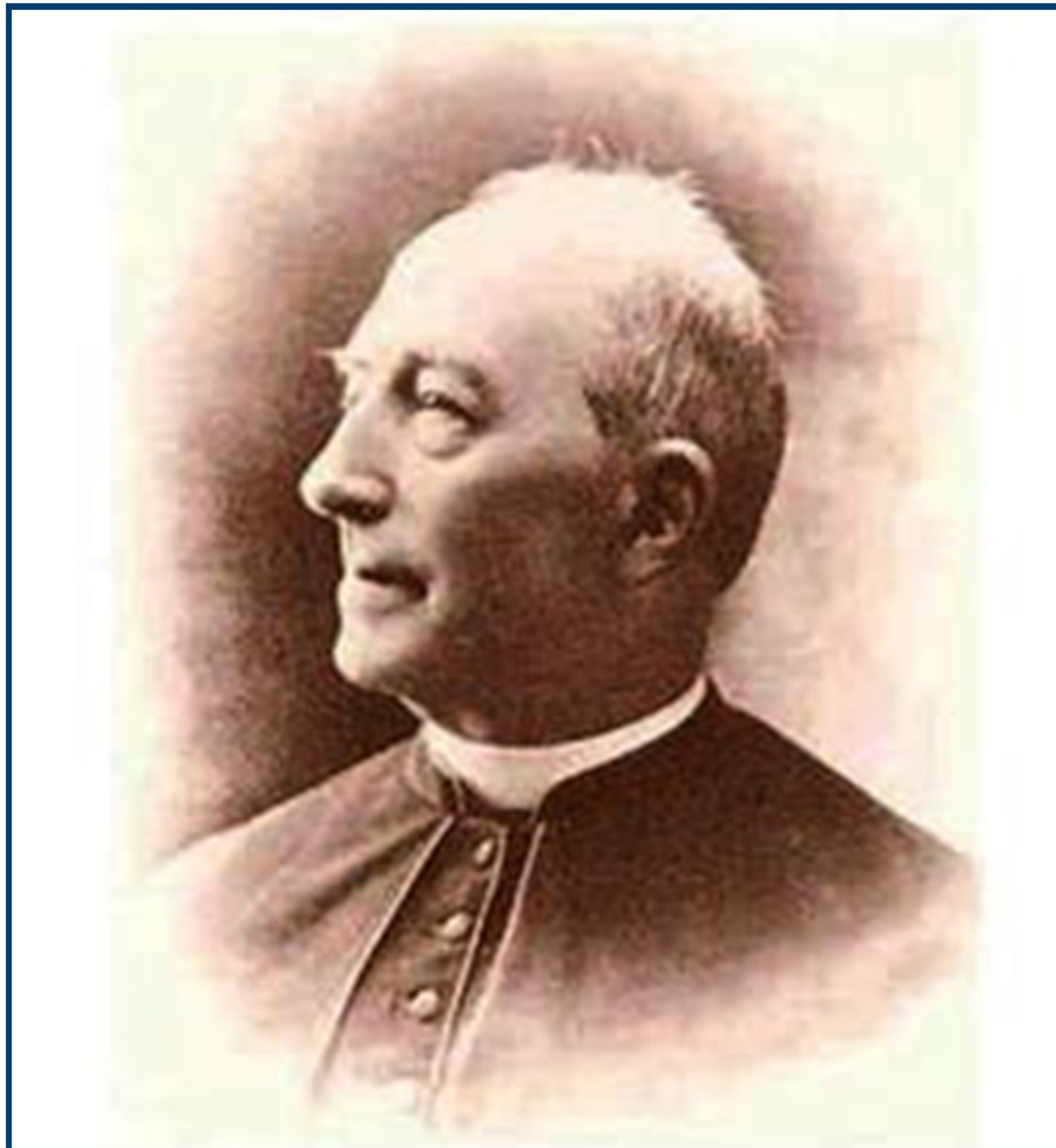
Susan thrived at the new academy and after completing her studies, she entered the congregation in 1846, taking her first vows in 1848. She was placed in charge of the day school in Cincinnati, and in 1854 was sent to the Academy in Roxbury, MA to serve as Mistress of Boarders. In 1860, she was sent to Philadelphia to serve as superior of the community located on Filbert Street.

A few years later she moved the Academy to Rittenhouse Square.

In 1886, Sister Julia was named the Provincial for the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in the Eastern United States. In 1897, she founded Trinity College in Washington DC and in 1900, Sister Julia founded Notre Dame du Lac in Worcester.

Monsignor Thomas Griffin

1836-1910



In 1899, Monsignor Thomas Griffin of St. John's Church in Worcester learned that the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur were hoping to open a rest home for ailing and aging sisters. It didn't take long for him to begin the hunt.

When he heard that the Swan Farm on Plantation Street was on the market for \$18,000, he asked Sister Agnes Aloysius Dalton (1859-1915), the superior of the Vernon Street convent, to examine the property with him.

They both thought it looked to be an ideal location for the sisters. Sister Agnes Aloysius quickly informed Sister Julia McGroarty, and Sister Julia was delighted to tour the farm. It didn't take long for her to agree that it would be the perfect place for "a health resort where sisters, who would be benefitted by a rest, can go to find it. . ."

[Plantation Street Convent Annals 1900-1901]

On February 2, 1900, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur bought the property.

Swan Farm



Swan Farm also known as Coal Mine Farm

Swan Farm was located on Plantation Street, and had long been called the Coal Mine Farm, because coal was easily dug up from the ground, first by the Native Americans and later by the white settlers when they took over the area.

In 1850, Elliott Swan bought the farm, which included a house built in the 1760s, as well as 145 acres of land. Swan never lived on the farm, however, but chose to use it as a rental property.

Because the property had been rented for a long time, the house and other buildings hadn't been updated or maintained and they were in very bad shape when the sisters bought the farm. There was no running water, nor any indoor plumbing of any kind. The handles for the interior doors were the kind of latches used in the late 1700s and according to the annals, not even the barn was suitable for animals.

The first sisters who arrived in early April 1900 certainly had their work cut out for them!

They reported that by the time they had cleaned out the house, there was enough dust and debris to make 3 or 4 large bonfires.

The First Years in Worcester



Swan Farm on left

Vernon Street Convent on right

The Sisters lived at the Vernon Street convent until repairs were completed on the Plantation Street house.

Sister Joseph Mary Costello (1835-1918) was named the first superior for the convent on Plantation Street.

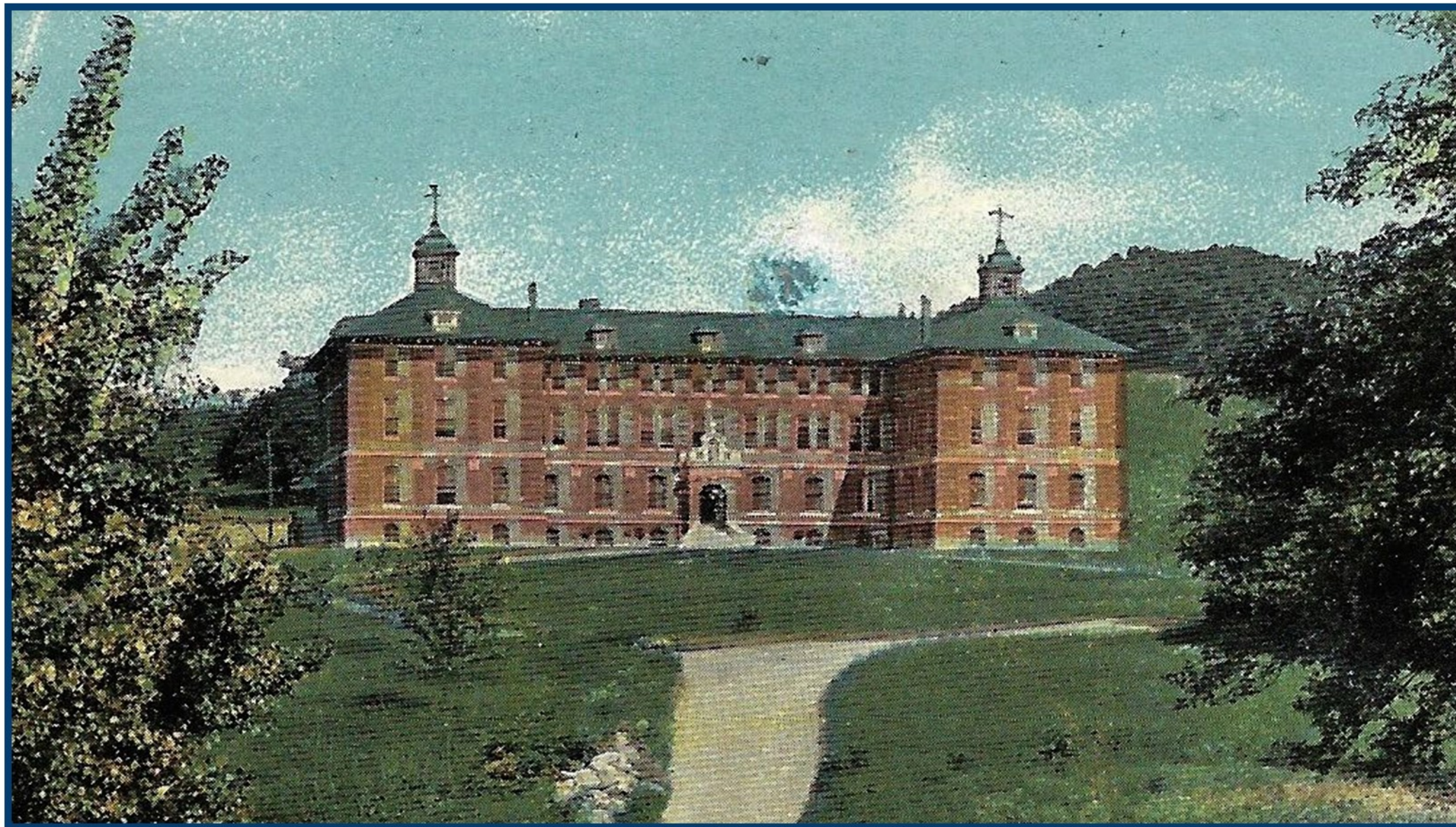
She arrived at the farmhouse on April 9, 1900, with Sister Mary Bernard Webber (1821-1907). During the repair work to both the house and barn, the sisters lived at the Vernon Street convent, traveling 3 miles every day to clean out what they could and supervise the workmen in the repairs.

To pay for the property Sr. Julia McGroarty asked all the houses in Massachusetts to send half of their music money to aid with the purchase and because the property had an orchard, she expected all the sisters in Massachusetts to buy fruit from Worcester.

On April 20th, the tiny community received Sister Josepha of the Sacred Heart McLellen (1859-1935) to serve as their cook; and Sister Mary of the Presentation Behan (1854-1932) to care for the house. On May 3rd, the community received its fifth member, Sister Anastasia McCarthy (1836-1910), who became their clotheskeeper.

On May 12th, 1900, the house was blessed with its first mass in its tiny chapel.

The first decades at Notre Dame du Lac



The construction for Notre Dame du Lac began in 1904 and was completed by the summer of 1905. During the following years, the sisters welcomed not only the ailing and aging, but also many who came to rest and enjoy a short retreat. The first sisters to die in Worcester and be buried in the new cemetery were Sister Agnes of St. Joseph Mulvey (1871-1906) and Sister Mary Simplicia Carey (1872-1906). During those next decades, they continued to pay off the mortgage. By 1920, they had reduced it to \$3000.

During those years, their physician was Dr. Mary V. O'Callaghan (1852-1930), a woman who became a trusted friend. In 1925, when the sisters began preparation for a new chapel wing to be added to the house, they chose for their architect Dr. O'Callaghan's nephew, Edward P. Fitzgerald (1875-1928). He was responsible for the design of a number of buildings in Worcester. Construction began on April 19, 1925 by the contractor J.P. Keating. The stained glass windows were designed and installed by Earl Edward Sanborn (1890-1936) of Boston. He was an artist well known for portraits, landscapes and still-life's, but also as a craftsman of stained glass. He designed the windows for the chapel at Boston College, as well as for Trinity College and the National Cathedral, both in Washington, D.C.

In addition to the chapel, the workers added an elevator, repaired the barn and also constructed a bridge to the cemetery,

Notre Dame du Lac

1930-1975



Notre Dame DuLac Entrance

Between the opening of DuLac in 1900 and the 75th anniversary in 1975, there were always ongoing changes to DuLac. In 1945, an asphalt road to the cemetery replaced the old stone driveway. The following year, the heating system was upgraded with thermostats. Walls were repaired and painted. In 1947, the sisters were excited to add a Bendex washing machine, which was the first automatic washing machine ever produced. In addition, the plumbing was redone so that they were able to obtain hot water whenever they needed it.

In 1965, as the convent became too small to accommodate the sisters, a new wing was completed, named St. Joseph's wing. By 1975, when they held their 75th anniversary celebration, they had cared for more than 1000 sisters since their opening. But every passing year demonstrated the need to care for more and more sisters. With that in mind, they began to plan for the future.



Chapel Construction 1964



1975 Anniversary celebration

DuLac into the 21st Century



1992 Groundbreaking



1999 Groundbreaking

By the late 1980s, the sisters knew the nursing home needed to be expanded. Ground was broken for the addition on March 15, 1992 and construction soon followed. The addition was completed the following year and on June 12, 1993, forty-seven sisters moved into the new wing.

But the work was not over. Plans began for the construction of an assisted living facility. Ground was broken in 1999 and the grand opening was scheduled for October 29, 2000.

Since then the Notre Dame Educational Bridge Center has opened at Du Lac and services continue to expand to include hospice, as well as palliative care for children. Renovations and services are ongoing to continue to meet future needs and the changing times.



Long Term Care Center