

WASHINGTON

Portland, Oregon, 9 November 1880–Seattle, Washington, 9 November 1880

Sisters Mary Francis Xavier (*Vitaline Proost, 1831-1911*); Mary Martinien (*Margaret Wilders, 1842-1916*); Mary Sebastian (*Rose of Lima Roy, 1847-1896*); Mary Laurentia (*Catherine Halford, 1849-1931*)

In 1853, Seattle was a tiny town of one hundred residents situated on Elliot Bay in the northwestern corner of what had just become Washington Territory. However, its proximity to both water and an ancient forest, with trees as tall as 400 feet, helped Seattle develop into a thriving city of 1,200 by 1870. As the forests disappeared, the city grew, attracting a rough crowd that quickly gave Seattle a reputation for prostitution, gambling and liquor. Local government was ineffective, basic services were severely neglected and the educational system was virtually nonexistent.

Toward the end of the 1870s, Reverend Francis Xavier Prefontaine (1838-1908), Pastor of Our Lady of Good Help parish, appealed to the Sisters of the Holy Names in Oregon to establish a school in Seattle. In August 1880, Superior General Mother Mary Olivier (d. 1904) and Oregon Provincial Superior Mother Mary of the Seven Dolours (d. 1926) traveled to Seattle to investigate the possibility of a foundation there. During their visit, they purchased a parcel of land situated on the corner of Second and Seneca streets for \$6,800. The school was to be built there and completed in December 1880.

On the morning of 9 November, Sisters Mary Francis Xavier and Mary Martinien boarded a ship in Portland and headed for Kalama, Washington Territory. Once there they disembarked and traveled by train to Tacoma, the terminus of the

Northern Pacific Railway. They boarded a second ship to Seattle and finally arrived at nine o'clock in the evening. They were met by the Sisters of Providence, with whom they stayed for several days until their furnishings and household goods could be unpacked.

On 12 November, Mother Mary of the Seven Dolours arrived with Sisters Mary Sebastian and Mary Laurentia.



Convent and Academy of the Holy Names
Seattle, Washington, circa 1880

After Mass, we all visit the place which is to be our future home. The school is pleasantly located. It overlooks the bay and from it a grand view of the Sound may be obtained. At first sight it might seem that the ordinary trials of life are not to be encountered here as elsewhere, for this bright balmy morning breathes but of peace.

— HOLY NAMES ACADEMY (SEATTLE) CHRONICLES, 12 NOVEMBER 1880

The school, still under construction, was two stories with a basement. The first floor had two large classrooms while the second served as the dormitory. The Sisters moved into their house on nearby Hoyt Street and waited for winter term to begin. They were particularly happy when their home was blessed and they could attend Mass in their private chapel, although the building itself provided other challenges.



Seattle foundresses
Circa 1880



Academy of the Holy Names
Seattle, Washington, circa 1884

During the [blessing] ceremony some of the Sisters, reanimating their faith, asked St. Patrick to free the place from noxious vermin with which it is infested. The petition, we trust, will be granted.

— HOLY NAMES ACADEMY (SEATTLE) CHRONICLES, 11 DECEMBER 1880

The school building was completed in December. In January, Holy Names Academy opened for its first academic term.

We opened today with twenty-one pupils, one boarder, and four for music. We place all our confidence in the Sacred Heart, trusting that under its sweet influence these pupils entrusted to our care during this year, may advance in virtue and science.

— HOLY NAMES ACADEMY (SEATTLE) CHRONICLES, 10 JANUARY 1881

By June, there were nineteen boarders and thirty-five day pupils. Within a few years, Holy Names Academy outgrew its first building, moving to a new site in 1884 and again in 1909. The school, which currently has 650 students, continues to thrive. It has graduated over 8,500 young women since its founding.

Holy Names Sisters began working in Spokane (1888), as well as in other Seattle-area schools in the early 1890s.



View of Seattle overlooking Puget Sound and the Olympia Mountains
Circa 1909