St. Ann’s Convent and Academy in Nanaimo

William Barraclough: A recording of an address by Sister Mary Luca, on Tuesday, September 21st, 1971, presented before Nanaimo Historical Society concerning St. Ann's Convent and School at Nanaimo. Miss Luca was introduced to the gathering by Miss E. B. Norcross.

E. B. Norcross: I'm very privileged to be able to introduce us to Mary Luca this evening. I understand that she has been a teacher, a hospital administrator, and I'll give a little more detail about that in a moment. I also understand that she's been a Soroptimist, isn't that correct? And has a, um- One or two Soroptimists in this room so we feel that that perhaps the most distinguished thing of all! [chuckles]

However, we'll get down to proper cases here. Sister Mary Luca has been a sister of St. Ann for over 40 years. As a school teacher she taught junior high school classes in the order schools in Victoria, in Duncan, Vancouver, Kamloops, and New Westminster, and also in Queen of Angels School in Port Angeles, Washington. Between 1950 and '59, Sister was engaged in administrative duties for the congregation of the Sisters of St. Ann. She served six years at Provincial Superior - of the Western Division - which at that time comprised schools and hospitals in B.C., the Yukon, and Alaska.

In 1959, Sister was transferred to Juno as hospital administrator. In 1965, after a six year tour of duty, Sister was transferred again, this time to Mount St. Francis extended care hospital in Nelson, B.C. Sister Mary Luca is a member of the American College of Hospital Administrators, and a graduate of the Hospital Administration and Management course of the Canadian Hospital Association. She served as president of the Alaska Hospital Association, and as chairman of the West Kootenay Hospital area council. She concluded the six year tour of duty in Nelson on August the 3rd, 1971. Presently she is coordinator at St. Ann's Academy, Victoria.

This evening she is going to tell us the history of the St. Ann's Convent here in Nanaimo and its contribution to Nanaimo's progress, I believe, but I'm not going to try to anticipate her remarks. I call on Sister now to speak.

[applause]

Barraclough: Sister Luca is now approaching the microphone to commence her address, but pauses briefly to allow those newly arrived to be seated.

Sister Mary Luca: Mr. President, members of the Nanaimo Historical Society, and friends, thank you very much for inviting me to come to Nanaimo to speak to you. I'm very happy to be able to do this as a contribution and a thank you to the people of Nanaimo for all they
were, and still are, to the sisters of St. Ann. It was never my privilege to teach here but as Provincial Superior I was vitally involved in the school, and I was very sorry when it had to close. I wasn't in the teaching field at that time. By that time I been transferred to hospital administration.

So tonight I will try to recall the history of St. Ann's for you. I am not a Bruce McKelvie, nor am I an Elizabeth Norcross, or the valley of the Cowichan. Nor have I had time in my brief-time since I was asked to do this to do the research required for a comprehensive history of the Sisters of St. Ann in Nanaimo. But I hope that you will enjoy what I have done out of the archives of the Sisters of St. Ann's Academy in Victoria. And they're there from 1879 to the pres- 'til 1966.

Am I speaking too fast? If I do tell me, because I have a habit of racing sometimes.

Blazoned across the province of British Columbia today are blue and gold signs inviting citizens and visitors to join us in celebrating our centennial - the anniversary of B.C. joining the Canadian Federation and becoming a Canadian province; a vital part of our beloved country, Canada.

100 years in British Columbia history is a long time, since it goes back to pioneer days when this was vast frontier wilderness. The Sisters of St. Ann, of which order I am proud to be a member for the last 46 years, go back to pioneer days, and they've contributed immensely to education, hospital, and social service in this province.

From the first log cabin school on the edge of Beacon Hill park in Victoria, the workers of the Sisters of St. Ann has spread throughout British Columbia to the 60th parallel, into the Yukon, and into the [vast pictures?] of Alaska, even to Nome.

Thousands of men and women who've formed part of the resourceful population of this vast Pacific Northwest claim these sisters as teachers and co-workers. In her well documented book, "A Century of Service" published in 1966, Sister Mary Margaret of Scotland - now known as Dr. Edith Down, still a member of the order, teaching on the faculty at the University of Alberta - has entitled one of the chapters in her book "The Teeming 70's". This does not refer to this decade of our day, but to the 1870's a century ago. Fascinating, isn't it? That history repeats itself?

We groan today about the pace of life - the teeming people in the teeming cities. The teeming of [angst?] which challenge us hourly. But the teeming '70's of a century ago demanded courage and excellence to the pioneer [annals?]. And these Sisters of St. Ann met these demands with sincere dedication and heroic strength of character.

7:00

It was from St. Ann's Academy in Victoria that the sisters journeyed north to Nanaimo to serve in the community, arriving here on April the 18th in 1877.
Nanaimo had early mention in the history of British Columbia. About 1850, an Indian chief, in digging for clams on the beach, unearthed some pieces of shining black rock. The rock was soon found to be coal. This event lead to the erection of the Hudson’s Bay Fort near the harbour in 1852, and the subsequent importance of the locality was the coal mining centre. From that time ‘til about 1910 it was the chief point of coal mining in this province.

Although coal was discovered in the 1850’s, the settlers and the miners did not arrive before 1876. Nevertheless, the Superior General of the Sisters of St. Ann, Mother Marie Jeanne de Chantal had, in 1866, made a trip to Nanaimo in company with Mother Providence, who was then the Provincial Superior. Her object was to study the conditions and to judge the advisability of establishing a convent school at some future date.

In 1876, Father Lemmens, who later became Bishop of Vancouver Island, arrived in Nanaimo as the first resident priest. He had come from the American College in Louvain [Leuven], Belgium, filled with zeal for his ministry, but his congregation was small - sometimes as few as six or eight persons. As illustrative of his spirit, Sister Mary Theodore - who was the historian of our congregation - tells us that she asked Father Lemmens why he preached such eloquent sermons to two or three people on a Sunday. And said Father, "It's my duty to preach as it is that of the people to come to church. If they do not do their duty, there's no reason why I shouldn't do mine."

At the suggestion of Bishop Seghers, Father Lemmens invited the Sisters to Nanaimo to open a school. They arrived on April the 18th, 1877. Father Lemmens gave the Sisters his own house, and he went to live in a nearby cabin. The school was opened on May the 1st, 1877, and continued until July the 13th when it closed for the summer vacation. During those two and a half months 29 pupils were registered, of whom 15 were Catholics, the remainder being of other faiths, so that the ecumenicism that we boast of today - and can tribute to "Good" Pope John XXIII in the Vatican Council - was practised in spirit and truth by the pioneer sisters right from the beginning.

The two sister foundresses were Sister Mary of the Cross [unintelligible] and Sister Mary Eleanor [Dignan?], with a Susan [Suckly?] to help in the domestic affairs. Sister Mary of the Cross taught music, drawing, and fine needlework, and thereby started a tradition that [flies down the years?]. Sister Mary Eleanor taught English.

Names associated with the early history of Nanaimo are those of the following pupils, who answered the first roll call in 1877: Mary Agnew; Alan Aikenhead; Alan Ball; Lucy and Sarah Bate; Casey Burn; Elizabeth Biggs; Lucy-Ann and Mary Baker; Leah Brown; Alice and Nellie Cooper; Hyatt Crockford; Josephine Cavassa; Ethie, Emily, and Maude Dunsmuir; Mary Jane and Emily Drew; Leontine Exdine; Emmeth Emmerick; Ann Francis; Sarah Fisher; Alma and Amy Gordon; Frances Klahone; and Mary Gibson. These [unintelligible]
names are recorded in the first register. [Note: Spelling of all names has not been confirmed.]

11:15

Sister Mary of the Cross, the foundress and the directress of the school, came to the west from Montreal when she was 20 years old. She was a [unintelligible] teacher, ever interested in the poor, the [awfuls?] and the sick. And the Indians. She was blessed with an ardent and a generous nature, and very fine literary talents. She devoted herself as Superior of the first convent until 1882, keeping at her post until her strength gave out. She then returned to Victoria, in February of 1882, and died at St. Joseph's Hospital on May the 29th of that year, at the early age of 37.

Sister Mary Eleanor, who shared the honour of founding the first convent school, came to Victoria in 1875. She was a very successful teacher, and won the affection and the esteem of her pupils. Her career too was short, for she died at the age of 27, in October of 1882. Thus the two sisters who laid the foundation of the St. Ann's convent in Nanaimo died the same year within a few months of each other. But their names are held in [many diction?].

In August of 1879 work was begun on a new convent. It was built on the site at Wallace Street and cost $8,605. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could have had a convent for that price today?!

[all chuckle]

The building measured 50 feet by 45 feet, and was three storeys high. Mr.- The president had a good coffee there, when he- Mr. Barraclough!

Barraclough: Yes, yes

Luca: The adjoining section of two storeys included the kitchen and the laundry. The washer for the building was supplied mill- the windmill at the rear, but I couldn't find out in the archives where the water came from. Down the well I suppose.

[audience member says something unintelligible, all chuckle]

Luca: The land donated by Bishop Seghers comprised four lots, and the Bishop gave $2,100 towards the building fund. Now that was a lot of money in those days; he must have worked hard to get it. He probably preached and preached and priested out in some foreign parts or something. Maybe went to Europe.

The mayor, Mr. Bate, and also Mr. Dunsmuir, gave $50 each. That was a tremendous amount in those days, $50 bought a lot! I remember when a penny bought a lot of candy. The pioneer settlers of Nanaimo added $300, and the bazaar conducted by the Sisters netted the splendid sum of $538. Isn't that marvellous for those days?
The pioneers of Nanaimo appreciated the Sister's school, as did the parents, friends, and people of later years. The people of Nanaimo were ever generous towards the support of the office and the school. An outstanding benefactress of Nanaimo convent was Mrs. McQuade of Victoria. Her family had the ship’s chandlers, and you go down on the wharf and you still see McQuade Ship's Chandlers. Well they were very, very generous benefactors of the convent in Nanaimo because of the orphans that were looked after.

So this lady helped the Sisters countless ways. And it was she who landscaped the garden, and put in the vegetable garden and the flower garden, and she even sent her gardener up from Victoria to do the work, and too see that it was done properly. And later on she gave her two beautiful daughters to our order, and they- Both of them- One came west again and served as Provincial Superior, and she died only in 1918!

In 1885 an instance of smallpox, which is always a dreaded scourge, brought alarm to the town. Many families left the place hurriedly, and it was difficult to find anyone to nurse the stricken. The schools were closed on March the 1st, and did not reopen until late in April. Mr. Thomas Morgan, whose family included the worst victims, asked for the help of the Sisters. Sister Mary Theodore and Sister Mary [Salliston?] went to nurse them. One child died, but after days of devoted care, the rest of the family was pronounced out of danger.

And I knew Sister Mary Theodore. She died only in 1952. And she told me, when she was sent on this mission that she was absolutely terrified to go and to look after these poor people with smallpox. And she said "How will I do it?!" And Sister Mary [Salliston?] went in and the first thing she did was pick up the little girl and kiss her, and [Theodore] said "Well if she can do it, I guess I can." so she pulled up her sleeves.

[all chuckle]

On May the 3rd, 1887, a major coal mine disaster in No. 1 Mine cost the lives of 150 miners. Only seven men escaped. When the clearing up was over and the last sad cortège had wended its way, many of the bereaved wives and mothers and families left the area, some of them to return to their native England. The Sisters went out to help the stricken people. But the catastrophe so reduced the population that the school registration suffered a serious setback.

So much of the convent was unoccupied in August, 1887, that at the request of Dr. Praeger part of the building was converted to a private hospital, and this arrangement continued for three years. And in the early history it says that there's a letter in our archives which says that the Sisters offered themselves to serve the hospital as nurses, but not to do with management, but simply to be of service. And there's the letter from the secretary of the hospital of that time - I just forget the date right now and I'm sorry I didn't write it down - but we have the letter in which it tells us that the Sisters offer was appreciated but that right
then their management was excellent and so their services would not be required. But that's an interesting facet, you know?

But, the hosp- The school- The convent was used for three years as a private hospital. During this time the registration numbered only 88 pupils, and the average patient record was 14. The income, however, wisely managed proved sufficient to keep the convent in repair, and even to make some payments on the debt.

In 1890 to 1904 there were only day pupils at the convent, and economic conditions reached a very low end, because the chronicles of those days lament the scarcity of revenue and the difficulties of the hard times. But the fact is also noted that hope and courage did not falter.

A new phase of activity brought renewed life to St. Ann's again in 1904. The orphaned girls in Duncan, then known as Quamichan, were transferred to Nanaimo, and a boarding school was opened and the enrolment increased so steadily that the larger quarters became necessary. Consequently, in the fall of 1906, plans were drawn for the building of a wing 60 feet by 40 feet, three storeys high, at the approximate cost of $15,000.

The building was ready for occupancy in September of 1907, and the children and sisters were delighted with the spacious classrooms, and school days were happy days. But, tragedy struck the convent on July the 11th, 1910. A fire, originating in the laundry, spread quickly. The firemen, under the direction of Fire Chief Parkin, worked heroically, and at first it seemed that the building would be saved. But the water supply was inadequate, and the building, as well as the adjoining parish church, was reduced to ashes.

19:25
And there's a note in the chronicles that says that Chief Parkin, who was Fire Chief in Nanaimo for over 40 years, died in March of 1937, and the pupils of St. Ann's Convent formed a [guard around him?] at his funeral in memory of all the kindnesses he did to the Sisters and convent during all the years that he was there.

The chronicles of that year of tragedy relate how the good people of Nanaimo hastened to the aid of the Sisters and the children. No lives were lost, and although the building was burnt out, the people managed to save all the furniture except that in the dormitory.

The citizens of Nanaimo offered to house the orphan children, who numbered 45 at that time, but the children would not leave the Sisters. So a Mr. Grant offered his five roomed home, and his offer was gratefully accepted. The children slept comfortably on mattresses placed on the floor of the [front room?], and upstairs. And the kind women of the town brought hampers of food and plenty of hot coffee, while the merchants sent up baskets of clothes as the children had what they had on them when the fire started.

Sister Mary Inez - I don't know anybody here who remembers her - she's one of our senior
sisters now in residence at [unintelligible] in Victoria, and I talked to her on September the 6th to get some information on Nanaimo. And I asked her if she remembered that fire, and she said "Yes, I remember it very well, because I was in charge of the children."

And I said, "How old were the children?"

"Well," she said, "They were from a baby 18 months old to girls of 11 and 12."

The Sister mentioned that they had family by the name of Clarke that she remembered very well. There were seven children in this family, and they had been abandoned by their parents, and this little 18 month old baby was one of those seven children. And Sister Inez said she really didn't know how to handle an 18 month old child because they'd never had a baby that young, and so she said to the little girls, the little sister, "Do you know how to feed the baby its bottle?"

And the girl said, "Yes, I can do that. I can feed the baby its bottle." So this is what happened. The little older sister looked after the baby's bottle while the Sister looked after the rest of the kids.

But on the following day, July the 12th, Father [Nikolai?] who was the pastor at Ladysmith, offered the Sisters his brand new school which had just been completed. So on July the 14th the Sisters and children went to Ladysmith. They were followed by two [unintelligible] of furniture for the new home. The children and Sisters spent one whole year at Ladysmith and have happy memories of the time, but they were glad to come back to Nanaimo.

Now the Sisters had erected the convent in 1877 and then had enlarged it at their own expense, and they still owed a debt of $8,000, and they were supporting 45 needy children by their own personal efforts. And so there was no money to rebuild. But with the aid of a government grant of $1,000, with contributions of $800 from the Nanaimo and extension mines, with a magnificent contribution of $4,000 from the people of Nanaimo, and a collection of $2,000 from the people in Victoria - the Sisters went 'round collecting door by door in Victoria - they had enough to give them courage to rebuild, and they did.

Work was begun on the new building in March of 1911 under the direction of Mr. Planter, who became one of the Sister's greatest friends. He had saved the altar in the chapel at the time of the fire and had stored it safely in his home because he felt that a new convent would arise from the ashes.

August the 9th, 1911 saw the return of the Nanaimo pupils and the Sisters to their now completed convent. The work of caring for the homeless, the operating of a day school for boys and girls, as well as the conducting of boarding school was resumed.
But into each life some rain must fall, and not all days are gold days, they have to be laced with grey. And so during 1912 and 1913 there were several severe epidemics of diphtheria and scarlet fever, and hope was very sorely tried during weeks of anguish. Death claimed five little children - three day pupils and two boarders.

Then came the years of World War I with its aftermath of depression, when devoted friends true to the traditions of the past, helped the Sisters carry on their good works. Raffles, bazaars, tag days, became annual events, and down the years the charity and the devotion of the good people of Nanaimo of all creeds lifted the burden of financial anxiety from the hearts of the Sisters whose motto was "To carry out the injunction of Christ, what you do to the least of these my little ones, you do to me."

The names of many, many wonderful benefactors are woven through the history of the Sisters in Nanaimo. I prefer not to mention any, rather than to make an omission which I would regret. But the kindness of the people was boundless and, I understand, still is.

The program of studies that the Department of Education of British Columbia has been taught down the years. Until 1935, the school offered tuition from grades one to eight only, but in September 1935 a three year commercial high school, under the direction of Sister Mary Esther, was begun.

In September 1941, Sister Mary Artemia, a qualified teacher with degrees in commerce, opened a business college at St. Ann's. This new business college provided full courses in secretariat work, bookkeeping, accounting, and general business training for both men and women who wished to enter the field. The new program was designed to offer courses which would meet the needs of the present day. The department was well equipped with up to date, modern business machines and filing systems.

During the years that this department was in operation the registration was high. The students came not only from Nanaimo, but also from the surrounding towns - Ladysmith, Port Alberni, Parksville, Qualicum, Chemainus - as well as some points further north.

Students were trained not only in the regular commercial subjects, but were also given opportunities for extracurricular activities. The Toastmasters Club of Nanaimo provided training in public speaking. Businessmen were invited frequently to lecture to commercial classes. The class attended case hearings at the courthouse as part of its study of business and civil law.

After World War II, ex-service men and women also enrolled for the course, their studies being sponsored by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Cordial relations existed with the Employment Bureau and the Business Bureau, and St. Ann's Convent commercial students were everywhere welcomed as employees.
Sister Mary Artemia directed the school most successfully until 1952 when she was transferred to St. Ann's Academy at Kamloops. Sister Mary Ellen McDonald succeeded Sister Mary Artemia, and continued this splendid work of the commercial classes. In 1964, Sister Mary Ellen McDonald was transferred to Notre Dame University of Nelson as head of the Department of Medical Secretarial Studies. Then Sister [Claudan?] took charge.

Throughout the years the music department, from the early days of the founder Sister Mary of the Cross, enjoyed tremendous success. Examinations from the Toronto Conservatory, the Royal Schools of Music in London, and Trinity College London - as well as the festival classes - were held. Music, singing, and speech merited high on this consistently.

And once again, St. Ann's Convent Nanaimo was plagued by fire. The morning of February 21st, 1955, witnessed a costly conflagration as the fire leaped through the three storeys of the convent, causing damage on each floor and necessitating (among many expensive repairs) a complete rewiring of the entire school. This incident occurred at 7:00 AM, so there was no loss of life - thank God - as everyone was up and preparing for class.

Again, as in early days, the boarding students were cared for by kind friends and neighbours until such time as the dormitories and classes were repaired for use. The Sisters... well this time they just camped at the scene of the blaze, and as I was Provincial Superior at that time I camped with them until order was restored.

Time marched on, and with this passage the boarding facilities were taxed to the limit. At the same time, more and more classroom space was needed for the ever growing school population. Then there was a decline; changing times brought changing conditions. Boarding schools declined and other factors brought about the closing of the high school classes in order to accommodate the elementary and the primary grades. But the business school prospered. In 1962, the students registered 203 students - boys and girls in grades one to seven - and the business college, 47 men and women.

No history of St. Ann's Convent at Nanaimo can be faithfully recorded without mention of St. Ann's Convent Ladies Auxiliary, or I should say, Auxiliary because there were both men and women in that auxiliary. The Auxiliary was organized in April of 1919 to assist the Sisters in the care of the Convent and the financing of it. Mrs. J. S. Dunn was the originator and the first president. Her wonderful assistants were Mrs. William Reynolds, Mrs. Edge Pottington, Mrs. Sorberry, and Mrs. Gertrude Dunbar. [Note: Spelling of all names has not been confirmed.] Mrs. Dunbar was one of the early pupils of St. Ann's, and she always had a very lively interest in the Convent.

All through the years St. Ann's Auxiliary, which was open to both men and women, proved to be the trusty right arm of the Sisters. Each year the Auxiliary sponsored a mammoth bazaar which was of tremendous help in the purchase of classroom equipment, such as
desks, maps, duplicators, microscopes, machines, and even the kitchen benefited by deep freezers.

An important annual event of the Auxiliary was the Mincemeat Day, and I believe this was something to see. The Convent kitchen took on the appearance of a big time factory: women peeling apples; women measuring raisins, currents, peels, suet, oranges, lemons; and all the other ingredients necessary for the 200 pound recipe. [unintelligible] was the pouring of the great big bottle of rum into the mixture.

[All chuckle]

Then the stirring, and the storing into jars and putting it away 'til bazaar day. What fun, and what wonderful memories! And over it all good Sister Mary Thomas Joseph kindly smiling on these wonderful ladies.

But, the wear and tear of the years were showing on the aged convent, which was frame building. New building codes and fire department regulations at each annual inspection call for more and more safeguards and protection. A new building was needed, and the Convent, which was no longer adequate for today's educational developments, needed replacement. In short, a modern school was desirable.

Economic conditions, rising prices, changing patterns of life, even the lifestyle of the Sisters, the decline of the boarding school through 1959-64, brought the sad decision to give the responsibility of the great school to the Parish Council under the direction of the Parish Priest Father Lehane. It was proposed that the music department and the business commercial college would remain under control of the Sisters.

So through to June, 1964, the Parish Council was responsible for the financial management of the grade schools, one to seven. However, in March, 1966, it was decided to close the dear old convent school and substitute a strong organization of religious education for Catholic pupils.

The Nanaimo Free Press of April the 1st, 1966, had an editorial which lauded the contribution of the Sister's of St. Ann, and I quote, "Announcement of a few weeks back that St. Ann's Convent Parish School in Nanaimo would be closed in June will be received with a certain amount of sorrow by Nanaimo citizens. Increased operating costs, and the loss of the Parish hall as a gymnasium," - you know it caved in with the snowfall, eh? - "lead to the decision of St. Peter's Parish Council to close out this structure. It has played such an important part in Nanaimo.

"St. Ann's was not just a convent in Nanaimo. The citizens came to know it as one of the most important educational institutions on upper Vancouver Island. Through its classrooms have moved hundreds of pupils and students, both Catholic and Protestant. From these
halls of learning have come some of the most proficient men and women in business. The Sisters of St. Ann and the Convent students have played their part in community and other affairs.

"Nanaimo will be different when the old convent closes its doors, but there will be happy memories of by-gone days, when Nanaimo was a much smaller community and St. Ann's was playing its part in furthering the education of the young generation." The end of the quote.

On April the 14th, 1966, a further decision was made to close the commercial classes at the same time as the grade school. At the last annual public speaking contest of the commercial department, held at the Kiwanis club banquet, Miss [Geraldine?] Brown won the Nanaimo Realty Trophy for the best speaker.

At this time too, a presentation on behalf of St. Ann's commercial classes was made to Mr. Al [Carfield?] in recognition of his ten year record in instructing St. Ann's Convent public speaking class. The last commercial class was closed on June the 15th, 1966. And Miss Eleanor [Rubin?] of Chemainus was awarded the Drysdale Trophy for the highest honours.

On June 4th, 1966, a testimonial dinner to honour the Sisters of St. Ann for the work accomplished in Nanaimo, from April the 18th, 1877, to June the 24th, 1966, was held in the parish hall. Former superiors and sisters and prefects of study attended as well as many representatives of government, various churches, civic authorities, businessmen and -women, the ladies auxiliary, former students, Sisters, and friends from other cities. Testimonials of gratitude and appreciation were many and sincere.

But how can one describe the closure of a loved convent after nine decades of service?

The competence of the Sisters of St. Ann as educators and their contribution to education and social service in the Pacific Northwest is shown through the influence of their teaching on those who came within their influence. A great number of priests and sisters, at present dedicating their lives to the works of the church, claim the Sisters of St. Ann as teachers. St. Ann's Alumni Association lists doctors, lawyers, businessmen and -women, teachers, and nurses.

St. Ann's Nanaimo commercial department produced a secretary whom the Assistant Adjutant General of Canada, Colonel Frank Clark [Clarke?], considered the choice as secretary for Winston Churchill during his three months stay in the United States in 1945. She was Mrs. Lorraine Donner Wilkinsons. Audrey Alexandra Brown, whose [late?] poems delight us, was also a pupil of old St. Ann's, and often paid tribute to her early teachers.

No history of the Sisters of St. Ann in Nanaimo could be complete without mention of its early missionary bishops and priests. From historical documents of St. Peter's we read, "On
the 6th day of August, 1865, we, the undersigned, Bishop of Vancouver Island assisted by Charles Seghers have solemnly blessed the first wooden chapel that has been erected in Nanaimo under the direct invocation of St. Peter the Apostle, signed, Charles Seghers, priest; Modeste, Bishop of Vancouver Island." - The first Bishop of Vancouver Island.

Further on there is this statement: "In the year of our Lord 1877, on the 10th of June, which was the third day after Pentecost, after celebrating mass we, Charles-Jean, Bishop of Vancouver Island, solemnly bless the place where we intend to construct a new church under the invocation of St. Peter the Apostle, to the north of the chapel already existing and now occupied by the Sisters of St. Ann. The Reverend Joseph Mandart and Joseph Nicolas [Jean-Nicolas?] Lemmens being present. Charles-Jean, Bishop of Vancouver Island."

And a further extract reads, "Blessing the ground for the convent. In the year of our Lord, 1879, on the 27th day of April, which was the second Sunday after Easter, we, Charles-Jean Seghers, after the holy sacrifice of the mass, solemnly bless the place to the west of the Church of St. Peter where it is intended to build a convent for the Sisters of St. Ann and the girls of the mission. The undersigned, Jean-Nicolas Lemmens and Jean [Altoff?], were present along with a great [cloud of faithful?] of both sexes..." - Notice they mention both sexes. - [all chuckle] "...Jean Lemmens, Charles [Altoff?]

The Sisters of St. Ann [unintelligible] lovingly remember with [unintelligible] gratitude and thanks, the Reverend Jean Lemmens, the Reverend Jean [Altoff?], the Reverend W. [Hynan?], the Reverend Joseph [Dongrave?], the Reverend Edward [Sobery?], Reverend Francis [unintelligible], and Archbishop Jean-Charles Seghers.

It was my privilege to know all those priests except Charles Seghers, and host of others whose charity and love and rich gifts of mind and heart enriched the Sisters and all those committed to their care.

To say that life evolves, that change - even radical change - is a fact of life, is to say that men live historically. The past has made the present possible, and in the present the future is constantly developing.

Usually in communities there is a common joy and pride in the past, and this for legitimate reasons. For example, come to all the centennial celebrations B.C. has had since 1946! 1946 we started - Hudson's Bay Company 1946? - down to 1971 the Federation, and we've celebrated them all with great gusto!

So, what was conceived and born in sorrow and hardship grew hardy with work- with years of work and loving care. And so we find, as Tennyson so aptly said long ago (and here I date myself),

"The old order changeth yielding place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
Comfort thyself: What comfort is in me?
I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May He within himself make pure! but thou,
...
Pray for my soul. more things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of.
...
For what are men Better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is ...
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

And so tonight, as we go over the history of St. Ann's Convent, we remember with love and gratitude all of these people are so helpless, and we say with love and sincerity, "Our safe, oh Lord, to reward of eternal life, all those who do us good."

But St. Ann's is not God. It's still here because the Sisters of St. Ann are here and the person of Sister [Mary R Loftis?] and Sister Mary [Norma?] and Sister [Kathleen Ray?] who are carrying on the catachetical work which took the place of the Convent's work of Christian doctrine, and Christian witness is still being given. May God provide that it ever will be and that will be a beacon light and help to the people of Nanaimo for ever and ever.

Thank you and God bless.

[applause]

Norcross[?]: [From far away from microphone] Sister Mary Luca, on behalf of the members of the Nanaimo...

[Audience member, whispering close to microphone]: Just speak up?

Norcross[?]: Historical Society, and friends and guests, we thank you very much for bringing back our memories of the Convent. As you say, things have changed. I am a [native daughter?], and every time I pass that corner I will think of it as a convent. Tonight we have amongst [unintelligible] audience descendent of a lot of those people whose named you mentioned, and I know they were all very interested. And as I say, a [native daughter?], my grandfather was killed in the explosion, but you met him.
And I have brought with me tonight - I didn't know I was going to do this - I have brought with me tonight a piece of work which was purchased no doubt at that bazaar which you mentioned by the sister of the late Mark Bate. This is over 100 years old and I have it in my possession. I have two, the museum has one and I have the other.

Another personal touch, [unintelligible] personal things: The night of the fire my father was a volunteer fireman, he wasn't home for supper. Mother sent us down to the fire hall to see where the fire was, when he'd be home. His lunch bucket [unintelligible]. And it was there [unintelligible].

I had an uncle who was a foreman on the construction of the next Convent. When you built your commercial school, it was my aunt's home that was used as the commercial school, as she moved next door. She was adopted by Mrs. [Survisten?] who was the purchaser of this.

So, it gives me a great pleasure on behalf of all of us tonight to say thank you for bringing back our [unintelligible].

[applause]