THE LEGACY OF THE

Founding Sisters

A brief history of Saint Alphonsus Health System

Written by Grace Goodwater, Legacy Forward

Saint Alphonsus
A Member of Trinity Health

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Odette Bolano, president and CEO of Saint Alphonsus Health System, the driving force behind the endeavor to tell the founding sisters' story. Without her vision and tenacity to share this history with today's generations, these stories may have been lost forever.

A special thank you to all of the generous souls who gave their time, knowledge, perspectives, and historical materials, which all contributed to the development of this brief history: Sheri Ainsworth, Joe Barnett, Sister Madeleine Clayton, Marissa Click, Mary K. Collins, Robert Cooke, Jim Coughlin, Mike Coughlin, Jacque Crist, Ken Hart, HannaLore Hein, Geraldine Hoyler, Randy Hudspeth, Father Rob Irwin, Sister Helen Jacobson, Monte Kniffen, Ted Marconi, Sister Elsbeth Mulvaney, Sister Dolores Preisinger, Sister Mary Louise Wahler, and Alicia Wolfe.

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Previous image: "Sisters" ceramic sculpture by Angela Niewert, 2007, courtesy of J Crist Gallery
Following image: Watercolor of St. Teresa's Academy by unknown artist, courtesy of Jim Coughlin

Understanding the true heritage of Saint Alphonsus Health System involves more than simply learning about the institution's mission and the core values, which is (paraphrased) to serve the community as a transforming healing presence—committed to caring for the poor, underserved, and most vulnerable—with reverence, compassion, respect, and integrity.

While this motivating goal is a critical piece of what drives Saint Alphonsus Health System to persevere in an uncertain and everchanging world, its roots go much deeper. When new colleagues join the health system, whichever medical center is their home base—the Boise, Nampa, Ontario, or Baker City medical centers in Idaho or Oregon respectively, or any of the health system's medical clinics or administrative services—they are joining the same family, and a similar heritage rings true at each location.

This legacy comes from four distinct orders of Catholic sisters who founded the health system's first hospitals 130 years ago—the Sisters of the Holy Cross, the Sisters of Saint Francis of Philadelphia, the Dominican Sisters of the Portuguese Congregation of Saint Catherine of Siena, and the Sisters of Mercy. These sisters all had different charisms or gifts to contribute to the general welfare, whether that be preaching, teaching, or healing within institutions such as churches, schools, hospitals, or orphanages. Their names, congregations, symbols, logos, and habits varied widely—but they all were united by the same overall mission of showing care, concern, love, and respect for others.

Similar sentiments were echoed recently throughout the health system when many colleagues from across the spectrum of sites were asked to reflect on meaningful words that speak to the experiences over the past several turbulent years in healthcare to create the COVID-19 memorials that are located on each hospital campus. The most common words selected were **compassion, faith, hope, bravery, resilience, and family**, which were perfect descriptions of what all the founding Catholic sisters embodied. Their hope-filled vision was simply to live out and spread the gospel and to serve people, and that's exactly what they did. They journeyed to faraway lands and left their families and everyone they knew and loved (most times never to return). They took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience—and followed the footsteps of the immigrant pioneers as they served across America.

These founding congregations mostly came from overseas, where they had already become adept at establishing schools, caring for children, helping to lead pastoral activities in parishes, and sometimes even nursing the sick (albeit not professionally trained for the job), and they brought that incredible mindset with them when they came to the wilds of Idaho and Oregon to respond to the needs of the communities in the late 1800s. The sisters' lives were not easy. They had monumental struggles, but they got through them together. They may not have always agreed. They certainly had different personalities, preferences, and temperaments—some were headstrong while others were meek—but they lived, prayed, ate, and worked together, respected each other, and made decisions in solidarity.

They were living in another century, dealing with different problems, but those challenges can be seen as replicas of some of the pain, suffering, and hard times we encounter today. It's all relative. So, it's important to remember that their commitment and privilege remains with us, no matter how difficult times can be.

The sisters' legacy is a story of generosity, dedication, self-sacrifice, faith, and love for humanity, especially those who were poor and vulnerable. And this is a story that continues to live on with every new colleague who joins Saint Alphonsus Health System, no matter their role or responsibilities.

The qualities that sustained the sisters more than 125 years ago are the same qualities that live in Saint Alphonsus colleagues and community members today. The spirit of those founding sisters can still be seen and felt throughout every corner of the Saint Alphonsus Health System facilities and beyond, as the care provided to those communities served leaves an indelible mark on the individuals and their families and friends.

We hope this incredible story of determination, grit, commitment, compassion, obedience to their order, and faith provides you the strength and commitment to move their legacy forward in how you continue the work they entrusted us to do.

CATHOLIC SISTERS PIONEERED EDUCATION AND HEALTHCARE IN AMERICA

St. Teresa's Academy (Catholic school for girls) founded by Sisters of the Holy Cross in 1903 (originally opened in 1889 at another location)

The majority of the founding sisters of Saint Alphonsus came from overseas. At that time, ocean liners were expensive and most likely not an option for them, so they undoubtedly came on smaller sailing vessels, taking anywhere from six to fourteen weeks, depending on the weather encountered. Then, they would have to take carriages, boats, trains, and ride on horseback to reach their final destination, wherever that might be.

The earliest pioneers to the Pacific Northwest settled along major stops of the Oregon Trail (and later railroad depots), creating remote towns with sparse populations. Back then, the territory of Idaho and Oregon was literally the Wild West. The climate was harsh and dangerous, the travel treacherous.

Between the 1840s and 1920s, there were successive waves of massive immigration to America, mostly Irish Catholics fleeing their homeland during the potato famine. In 1850, Catholics made up only 5% of the U.S. population, whereas by 1906, they constituted the country's largest religious denomination at 17%.

As these immigrants started settling in wild frontier lands, Catholic priests would ride on horseback hundreds of miles to far-flung locations to visit with parishioners, preach, and perform baptisms, marriages, and funerals. At first, Catholic sisters were often brought in to serve as a ministering presence in the towns while the priests were traveling. As towns grew, gold mines were rushed, railroads expanded, and more people populated the area, the communities' needs increased, and the sisters' roles broadened to include serving in logging and mining camps and educating immigrants in their native language. They opened schools and orphanages—and then progressed to healthcare institutions in a similar fashion.

While religious women were historically depicted as being devout, pious, tolerant, and obedient, what was striking about the early sister pioneers was their adventurous spirit and acceptance of a nomadic lifestyle. Sure, they were animated, prayerful, and hardworking women, but they were also human, and must have had many vulnerable moments when they grew weary and discouraged. They suffered through fires, floods, accidents, sicknesses, and death, but they continually dove headfirst into uncomfortable situations, sacrificed their well-being, and put others above themselves—walking in faith, knowing their path was out of their hands.

They were pulled in different directions, uprooted continually, often without much advance warning, and had to make major life-changing decisions quickly, sometimes with very little information. For example, they learned how to be nurses by nursing on the battlefields. Without any training, they did what needed to be done following a willingness to serve and a way to carry out Christ's healing mission.

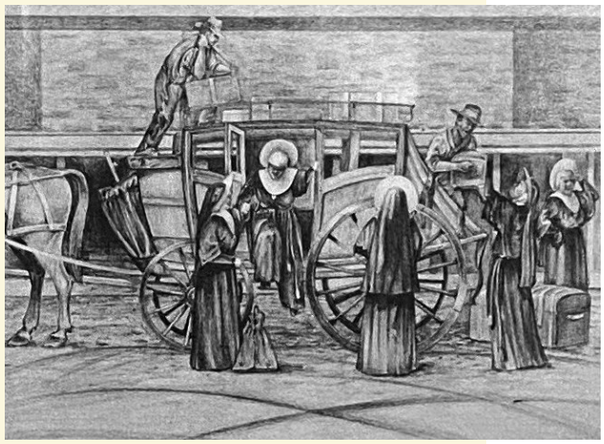
Catholic sisters got their start in healthcare in Europe during the Crimean War in the mid-1850s, when Florence Nightingale made a name for herself organizing the care of wounded soldiers with the help sisters—showing the world that nursing was a profession that could be taught when she established the world's first secular nursing school in London in 1860. In America, 10 years later, many Catholic sisters became involved in nursing through serving during the Civil War—particularly the Sisters of the Holy Cross and the Sisters of Mercy. Before this, their only experience of nursing was likely watching their female relatives take care of the sick at home. From that time on, congregations jumped on the idea that sisters as nurses could really make a difference in caring for large numbers of people, and there was a rise of Catholic-run hospitals and nursing schools.

More than 22,000 nurses were recruited by the American Red Cross to serve in the U.S. Army between 1917 and 1919 during WWI, and most of these nurses were professionally trained by sisters. At that same time, the nation was ridden with outbreaks of epidemics like typhoid fever, polio, and Spanish influenza, and sisters were the ones who were putting their lives at risk to treat the afflicted. After the end of WWII, there was a huge nursing shortage (partly because polio kept many women with children from wanting to work in hospitals).

Over time, each of the four Saint Alphonsus Health System hospitals developed very differently, evolving to meet the needs of its own community, but they all served with the same sense of charity. During the Great Depression, some hospitals lowered their room rates, and it was common for patient registers to display the sisters' commitment to justice with entries stating that bills had been paid in trades of chickens, eggs, milk, vegetables, or fruit jars.

THE SISTERS OF THE HOLY CROSS

Founded Boise's Saint Alphonsus Hospital in 1894 (Today: Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center)



The first five Sisters of the Holy Cross arrived in Boise on August 24, 1889

Saint Alphonsus Hospital was founded on December 27, 1894

MISSION: BE MOVED BY THE SPIRIT OF COMPASSION TO REFLECT ON THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES, DISCERN THE NEEDS OF GOD'S PEOPLE, AND RESPOND AS WE ARE ABLE

The Sisters of the Holy Cross embrace the core values of compassion, faith, prayer, and community. They aim to model the same spirit of compassion that the Blessed Mother Mary emanated as she stood by Jesus at the foot of the cross—while she couldn't necessarily stop the crucifixion, she could be with her son compassionately. Similarly, the Sisters of the Holy Cross reach out with a spirit of compassion to whatever need people may have at the time, whether that be in healthcare, education, pastoral ministry, or helping to feed the homeless.

The sisters' congregation got its start in Le Mans, France in 1836. Father Basil Anthony Moreau enlisted a group of devout laywomen to assist a group of priests who had started Holy Cross College by performing domestic work, teaching, and nursing. Five years later, these women, who became the first Marianites of Holy Cross (dedicated to Mary), received their religious habit as the Sisters of the Holy Cross in 1841. The following year, they took possession of their new convent at Notre Dame du Sainte Croix. Interestingly, the name of the congregation wasn't intended to indicate their devotion to the cross, but rather it identified the name of the neighborhood in Le Mans where the new order was founded—Sainte Croix, which translates to "Holy Cross."

On June 6, 1843, four Holy Cross sisters left the motherhouse in France, accompanied by Father Francis Cointet, to join Father Edward Sorin at his mission at Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana. (Father Sorin had departed for America with five Holy Cross brothers in 1841 at the request of Célestin Guynemer de la Hailandière, bishop of Indiana's first Catholic diocese [Vincennes] to establish a school for boys, which ultimately became the University of Notre Dame, which was founded in 1844). Father Sorin had written for the sisters to come prepared to establish their own academy and teach in South Bend.

After months of travel, the four sisters—Sister Mary of the Heart of Jesus (19), Sister Mary of Bethlehem (45), Sister Mary of Calvary (25), and Sister Mary of Nazareth (21)—through a journey that included weeks on the Atlantic aboard a ship to New York, a paddleboat up the Hudson River to Albany, a steamboat across Lake Erie, and various other canal boat, stagecoach, and wagon rides along the way—arrived safely at their destination in South Bend. The sisters initially helped the priests with housework and laundry, while teaching the neighborhood children and caring for several orphans. Three more sisters were sent to join the original four, and for two years, these seven women lived in a room on the second floor of the new log chapel that Father Sorin constructed.

In 1844, the sisters eventually did establish both a novitiate and a school, St. Mary's Academy in Bertrand (which later became Saint Mary's College when its location was moved to South Bend 10 years later). By the end of 1845, 14 sisters comprised the community, and the following year, Sister Mary of the Cenacle was appointed as mother superior. Over the next decade, the congregation expanded and opened schools and convents in Michigan, Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, Louisiana, New York, Pennsylvania, and elsewhere—extending even to Canada. Sister Mary of St. Angela became superior of the academy, and between 1855 and 1882, Mother Angela and the Sisters of the Holy Cross founded 45 academic institutions.

In 1861, the governor of Indiana asked for help from the Sisters of the Holy Cross to nurse the wounded in the battlefields of the Civil War. While they were mostly teachers—with little to no experience in nursing—when the priest asked the sisters at St. Mary's Academy for help, it's said they all volunteered without hesitation. Mother Angela and 87 other sisters served as nurses in hospitals in Kentucky, Illinois, and Tennessee. The sisters were the first nurses to serve on the U.S. Navy's maiden hospital ship, the Red Rover, which set the stage for the future U.S. Navy Nurse Corps.

In 1869, the Sisters of the Holy Cross in America separated from the motherhouse in France and formed a distinct congregation. Responding to the needs of the country as it expanded westward, the sisters answered the call of Father Lawrence Scanlan (who would later become the first bishop of the Diocese of Salt Lake City) in 1874, when he asked the Holy Cross sisters to come to Utah and start a Catholic school in Salt Lake City. There had been an influx of Irish Catholics migrating to Utah to work on the railroads and in the mines (approximately 800 at that time), and the sisters were requested to help them keep the Catholic faith, attend to their health, and educate their daughters.

Sister Augusta Anderson (who later became Mother Augusta) and Sister Raymond Sullivan journeyed from Indiana to Utah by train, and within a week after their arrival in May 1875, they had drawn up plans for a school (costing $25,000) and set out raising money. They endured the hot summer in their heavy habits, climbing on and off stagecoaches and horses, as they visited every mining camp in the territory securing funds. They were so successful, that by September 6, 1875, St. Mary's Academy

opened with 100 pupils enrolled, and the new school also housed their convent. It was the beginning of an expansive ministry that eventually included several schools: The College of Saint Mary-of-the-Wasatch, St. Ann Orphanage, and Holy Cross Hospital, which opened in October 1875 and the sisters ran for over a century.

Right around this time, the first railroads were being laid from Utah to Idaho (completed to Franklin in 1874) and the population in Idaho was nearly 18,000. About 300 miles northwest from Salt Lake City, Boise was a rapidly growing settlement—with a population of about 1,500 (c. 1875)—that had built up around a fort the U.S. Army had built in 1863 as protection for the gold miners. The city was named the capital of Idaho in 1865, shortly after placer gold was discovered in the Boise Basin (in 1862), and the settlement of southern Idaho started to take off. When Father Toussaint Mesplie arrived at the basin in September 1863, he was astounded to find a population of between 10,000–15,000 people, who had come from the exhausted mines in California—with thousands of these miners being Catholic.

In addition to the miners, the number of railroad workers and consequently ranchers began to increase in the area as well. By late 1883, the Oregon Short Line was completed to Kuna, Idaho, which was only 15 miles by stagecoach to Boise. (The main rail line bypassed Boise because of the steep grade required to reach the capital city.) This growth set the stage perfectly for the development of a school and hospital in Boise.

Shortly after his consecration, Bishop Alphonse J. Glorieux arrived in Boise for the first time to the Kuna train station on June 12, 1885, eager to fulfill his written promise to Pope Leo XIII that his priority in Idaho would be "to erect schools and other institutions necessary or useful to the salvation of souls." After exploring the territory and scouting potential locations, in 1887, he decided to locate his first institution of learning in Boise. Subsequently, he began an exchange with the Sisters of the Holy Cross motherhouse to inquire for help, based on their prior success pioneering healthcare delivery and educational institutions in Utah.

Due to an inundation of requests from parishes for the sisters' help, it took a while for them to respond to and fulfill the request. It is important to note that a few years prior, Catholic Church policy for the nation regarding education had been set at a council held in Baltimore in November 1884 mandating that pastors must establish parochial schools with standardized education practices within two years and must command parents to send their children. Amid many other appeals, Mother Augusta eventually promised Bishop Glorieux in the early part of 1889 that she would send sisters to Boise. However, the bishop was stricken with typhoid fever, and Father Joseph van der Heyden, who was filling in for him, didn't receive word of their coming until immediately before their arrival.

When the five Sisters of the Holy Cross—Sisters Mary Dominica, Digna, Edith, Columbina, and Marcus—stepped off the train at 2:00 a.m. on August 24, 1889, Father van der Heyden welcomed them with the unfortunate news that he had no residence to provide them. They were taken by carriage to the home of J.H. Hawley, where they stayed for a week, while Father van der Heyden helped them look for a house to rent. They settled on a three-room cottage that would serve as a temporary residence while they looked for something more suitable for their convent, which they found a couple weeks later in the O.P. Johnson residence, located on Jefferson Street between 12th and 13th Streets.

On September 9, 1889, with the population of Boise at about 4,000, the boarding and day school for girls, St. Teresa's Academy, opened in St. Patrick's Hall with two sisters instructing 26 pupils, many of whom were the daughters of ranchers, farmers, miners, and widowed men—Catholics and non-Catholics alike. In March 1890, when Mother Augusta came to visit the academy, she purchased a block of property that had belonged to Father Mesplie on Fourth and State Streets, which is where the academy moved to, and graduation for the first class of 60 students was held on June 25, 1890. The school remained at this location until the new St. Teresa's Academy building was completed in 1903. In 1900, the sisters also opened a school for boys in the St. Patrick's Hall building, St. Joseph's School, which was moved to its current location at Eighth and Fort Streets in 1905.

Bishop Glorieux, when he eventually recovered from typhoid fever, next became focused on establishing a hospital in Boise, so he bought a piece of property from the Catholic Church for $275 on November 12, 1891, and sent another request to the motherhouse for assistance with this endeavor. He began raising the funds for construction from the community—including a generous gift of $1,000 from prominent mine owner Joseph Raphael De Lamar from Silver City—which he added to $3,500 he collected during his travels abroad. Within a few years, after receiving a donation of $25,000 sent from South Bend, Bishop Glorieux had the money and help from the Sisters of the Holy Cross to open Idaho's first hospital.

Saint Alphonsus Hospital was founded and accepted its first patient on December 27, 1894, with five sisters, two doctors, and nine employees. Sister Mary Sophia, who was hospital administrator, taught in schools previously. She was assisted by Sister Anthony Padua, who oversaw the kitchen; Sister Margaretta, who was the director of the nurses; Sister Cornelius, who was in charge of the housework and later the women's ward; and Sister Felicia, the only native American in the group (the others were all born in Ireland).

The hospital design included many modern conveniences of the time, such as electric lights, natural hot water, and call bells. In 1896, Sister Mary Fintan arrived to take over as administrator of the six-bed hospital, where she served for a number of years and contributed several advancements, such as improved surgical equipment and obtaining free electricity. In 1902, an addition doubled the size of the hospital, and the number of sisters needed to maintain it grew accordingly.

To keep up with the demands of staffing the hospital and ensure properly trained nurses, it became apparent that the sisters needed to open a school of nursing. Since in addition to classroom education, most of the training was hands-on, it was also a good way to keep the hospital properly staffed and entice young women to come to a growing frontier city such as Boise. In 1906, the sisters established the Saint Alphonsus School of Nursing with the forward-thinking goal of bringing nursing education to the community, and six years later, in 1912, the hospital expanded to 140 beds.

Holy Cross sisters spent many devoted years of service in Boise as administrators, nurses, and teachers. All told, more than 550 sisters came to the city to work at the schools and hospital, providing moral and spiritual support and progressive leadership to the community. From its founding through the 1980s, nearly every position of leadership at Saint Alphonsus Hospital was held by a Holy Cross sister.

One beloved sister, Sister Francis Regis, devoted essentially the duration of her entire life to the hospital, serving there from 1901–1970. Dr. James J. Coughlin, who was medical staff president at Saint Alphonsus Hospital in 1957, treasured a photo of young Sister Regis holding him the night he was born in that same hospital on December 28, 1916. Prior to becoming an orthopedic surgeon, he attended St. Joseph's, where he was schooled by Holy Cross sisters, and he opened his first office directly across the street from St. Teresa's Academy. From his office porch, he and his two young sons would watch the sisters walking in a group early every morning, leaving from their convent in St. Teresa's, saying the rosary—some who were dressed in white peeling away to their jobs at the hospital, while the rest in black continued on another half mile to teach at St. Joseph's.

Sister Regis continued to wear the full white habit, even though in the 1960s more contemporary attire was introduced, and would visit all the patients to give love and support, sprinkling holy water in their rooms. One patient in the 1950s fondly remembered "that little old lady all dressed in white" who came in each night to "hose him down." It's interesting that the human touch that stuck with that patient most was not the surgeon who repaired his broken bones but rather how much Sister Regis cared for him.

Sister Mary Marco—one of the few early sisters who was not Irish but was from Poland—served from 1909–1962 and was the operating room supervisor for 30 years. Herself a graduate of the Saint Alphonsus School of Nursing, Sister Marco was known for being a perfectionist in all she did and was so adept in her work that doctors considered her quite capable of finishing a surgery in cases where the surgeons were called away.

One of the most influential administrators of the hospital was Sister Peter James (Patricia Mulvaney), who taught student nurses at the hospital (1954–1959), held the position of administrator (1963–1972), and served as mission specialist (2000–2012) during which time she established a palliative care program at the hospital—which was groundbreaking, since in 2000, only 25% of hospitals had a palliative care program in place. Her efforts were the precursor to the service expansion of the Palliative Care Clinic that opened in 2016.

Sister Peter James was revered for her courageous decision to relocate the hospital from downtown Boise to its present site on Curtis Road. In 1965, a capital campaign was launched to secure funds for a new hospital and the Boise community, 60,000 in population, came through raising $1.2 million of the $14.5 million needed for the new hospital. With these funds, Sister Peter James purchased a 25-acre undeveloped block of land from the Curtis family that was far from downtown. When groundbreaking began in 1969, there was nothing but dirt roads and farmland at the newly identified hospital location.

Many people at the time, including newspaper reporters who published sentiments of dismay from the community members, thought Sister Peter James was crazy for wanting to move the hospital so far away from the center of town. But after what was no doubt careful discernment of the call of God and of the community's needs—and likely taking her fair share of lumps—Sister Peter James remained steadfast in her convictions and moved the hospital in what proved to be a brave, gutsy, and visionary decision that over time proved wise. In 1972, the hospital was finished, and 18 wheelers transported the patients from the old facility to the new 229-bed hospital location.

In 1979, Saint Alphonsus joined with seven other U.S. medical centers to form the Holy Cross Health System (HCHS). Its name changed to Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center in 1981 to better reflect its growth in the region. The last sister to hold the title of hospital administrator was Sister Patricia Vandenberg, who served from 1983–1988, leaving a 269-bed regional facility that had grown to serve 500,000 people in southwestern Idaho and bordering states.

By the time the year 2000 came around, and HCHS and Mercy Health Services joined to form Trinity Health, only a handful of Sisters of the Holy Cross continued to serve at Saint Alphonsus. One of the remaining sisters was Sister Elsbeth (Beth) Mulvaney (Sister Peter James' [Patricia's] youngest sibling), who became the hospital's mission educator in 1999. For the next two decades, she encouraged hospital colleagues to truly explore the Saint Alphonsus mission statement—along with those sisters who remained as well as the spirit of those no longer serving—and explained to employees, patients, and visitors alike the core values of reverence and commitment and their connection to the Catholic tradition. In honor of both Sisters Beth and Patricia Mulvaney, The Mulvaney Medical Office Building on the Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center campus is named after them.

SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS OF PHILADELPHIA

Founded Baker City's St. Elizabeth Hospital in 1897 (Today: Saint Alphonsus Medical Center – Baker City)

The Sisters of St. Francis came to Baker City on August 24, 1885, to take over operation of a girls' school

St. Elizabeth Hospital opened on August 25, 1897, in the former location of St. Francis Academy

MISSION: BE WILLING TO TAKE THE NECESSARY RISKS TO BE A HEALING PRESENCE, ESPECIALLY WITH WOMEN, CHILDREN, AND THOSE WHO HAVE NO VOICE

From the time of the congregation's inception in America in 1855, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia have been living in loving relationship and service with all people and creation, specifically dedicated to serve—directly and indirectly—those who are poor, marginalized, and oppressed.

The first founding members—a German immigrant widow with four children, Maria Anna Boll Bachmann, who supported her young family by operating a hostel for immigrant women; her sister Barbara Boll; and a young hostel boarder Anna Dorn—were received into the new order by Bishop John Neumann on April 9, 1855.

These three initial Sisters of the Third Order of St. Francis—Mother Mary Francis (Anna Boll), Sister Margaret (Barbara Boll), and Sister Bernardine (Anna Dorn) certainly knew hard times and had experience tending the sick and the poor through the smallpox epidemic of 1858.

As there was not yet a hospital in Philadelphia that accepted patients who were poor, 36-year-old Mother Francis opened St. Mary's, the congregation's first hospital, in December 1860. When she died a few years later of tuberculosis on June 30, 1863, 30-year-old Mother Agnes Bucher succeeded her. At that time, the congregation in Philadelphia consisted of 13 sisters overseeing the hospital and school. Bishop James Frederick Bryan Wood then assigned Mother Agnes as superior general the following year, which some of the sisters were said to have contested. However, she was freely

re-elected as superior in the next election, and the subsequent five that followed. (By the end of her tenure in 1906, the congregation had grown to nearly 800 sisters, serving in 88 missions in 19 dioceses.)

While Mother Agnes may have not been the founder of the order, she was certainly seen as the builder of the institute. Not only did she instruct the location and building for the Our Lady of Angels motherhouse in Pennsylvania in 1871, she also formally incorporated the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, which previously was referred to as "Third Order Franciscans."

On August 24, 1885, at the request of Archbishop William Gross, Mother Agnes sent five sisters—Sisters Mary Stanislaus (appointed as superior of the group), Marcella, Ferdinand, de Pazzi, and Angelica—off to "the wilds of Oregon," as described by Sister Marcella. They were to open a mission in Baker City, a town first established along the Oregon Trail that had become a frontier metropolis and major trading center due to the success of the mining, lumber, agricultural, and herding industries. At the time, the city's population of more than 6,500 was larger than that of Boise.

Mother Agnes' decision was met with some opposition from the sisters at the prospect of going to such an underdeveloped area, but after careful consideration and prayer, she felt consoled to answer the needs of Baker City. As she saw the five women off at Broad Street Station in Philadelphia, she encouraged them to be faithful children of St. Francis. Along their journey to Baker City by train, the sisters stopped in Chicago, where relatives were on hand at the station to replenish their lunch basket. After six days on the railroad—passing buffalo herds and natives roaming the prairies and ending with a traverse of the winding pass through the steep canyon—they made it to Powder River Valley's Baker City, arriving at their destination on Saturday, August 29, 1885, to a warm welcome. Father Peter DeRoo, pastor of St. Francis Church, escorted them directly to the convent, where three parish ladies presented them with a hot meal and a flower bouquet.

At their new home, a sparsely furnished frame building containing five borrowed beds and chairs, a small table, a tin wash basin, and a few candles stuck into bottles, Father DeRoo immediately announced he intended for them to take over operation of the local school for girls, which had been closed and vacated the year prior. This school, Notre Dame Academy, was started by the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary (led by Sister Mary Justina as superioress) in 1874 in a house on the corner of Second and Church Streets. Five sisters had taught the daughters of the pioneer settlers for nine years—until some mysterious and undocumented trials forced them to withdraw from Baker City. Letters from the sisters told of disappointment with the landscape and conditions in the West, and a newspaper referenced "untold hardships and a lack of spiritual help" experienced by those initial sisters.

For whatever reason, the academy had closed, and the Franciscan Sisters were tasked with opening back up a school again. However, they were not especially receptive to the prospect of becoming teachers. In fact, they were so unsure of themselves that the following day, when it was announced at Sunday Mass—to the six parishioners in attendance aside from the sisters themselves—that Notre Dame Academy was to be rededicated as St. Francis Academy under the direction of the sisters, they were hesitant to unpack their belongings. They hoped they would be called to return to Philadelphia; however, a telegram from Mother Agnes at the motherhouse soon arrived telling them to "Remain in obedience. Start your school."

The sisters unpacked their bags, made mattresses from sheep wool, and within a couple weeks, on September 14, St. Francis Academy opened with 60 pupils. The students ranged from first through twelfth grade, with the youngest children being taught separately in the church.

A few weeks later, Father DeRoo asked the sisters to also take over instruction of the boys' school St. Joseph, which had approximately 40 students ranging from 7–18 years of age. Sister Stanislaus was put in charge, and by Christmas of 1885, there were 80 pupils and 15 boarders between the two schools, several of whom would become leading citizens of Baker County. Before the close of the first school year, Mother Agnes came to visit, bringing with her two sisters to help run the school: Sisters Anselma and Cupertino.

In 1887, Sisters Stanislaus and Ferdinand were sent to Pendleton to take over the mission there, where Sister Stanislaus would be superior. Four more sisters were sent from the motherhouse to help them, and over the next several years, the congregation continued to grow, establishing schools, orphanages, and hospitals throughout other locations in Idaho, Washington, and Oregon.

St. Francis Academy graduated its first high school class of three students in 1888. The school continued to function at this location for eight years until 1896, when the increasing number of pupils necessitated the purchase of a larger school building, which was located between First and Main. At that time, Sister Cupertino, who had become superior of St. Francis Academy, having recognized the city's dire need for a hospital, traveled to Philadelphia and requested of Mother Agnes approval to establish one.

In response, Mother Agnes sent three sisters—Sisters Anacleta, Neri, and Philomena (appointed as superior)—to Baker City with instructions to renovate the now-vacant, three-story building on Second and Church, the former location of St. Francis Academy, and to open a hospital at that site. St. Elizabeth Hospital opened on August 25, 1897, with eight patients, and it was dedicated by Archbishop Gross on November 21, 1897. The ground floor of the hospital contained a reception area, pharmacy, and dining ward. The second floor held private rooms, the men's ward, and the operating room. The top floor consisted of more private rooms, the sisters' quarters, and the chapel.

During St. Elizabeth Hospital's first year, Sisters Anacleta, Neri, and Philomena provided care to 115 patients, many of whom were loggers, ranchers, and gold miners. Father Louis Verhaag, attended to the spiritual needs of the hospital as pastor, and the number of nurses increased with the arrival of three more sisters from the motherhouse: Sisters Columbana, Germaine (then superior), and Sigmunda. Two years later, the number of patients had increased to nearly 500, and by the end of 1903, nearly 2,000 patients had been treated at the hospital.

To address a payment system for the care provided, the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia established a ticketing system, similar to one put in place by the Sisters of Mercy in Durango in 1883, where miners would prepay one dollar each month, and, in exchange, they would receive complete hospital services, excluding chronic and contagious diseases. This innovative arrangement of coverage was one of the earliest health insurance plans in the country and the basis of how total cost of care arrangements were developed in the late 2000s.

With the growing patient roster at St. Elizabeth Hospital, it soon became apparent that a larger hospital was needed. The sisters had accomplished so much in the 18 years since their first arrival and laid so much groundwork that by the time Bishop Charles O'Reilly visited the city—after Baker City became a diocese on June 19, 1903—he was able to initiate plans for a new hospital, a new grammar and high school, and a new church within three months, all to be constructed on three blocks of land that Sister Germaine had received in donation.

The new St. Francis Academy was completed and dedicated by Bishop O'Reilly in 1904 with Sister Polycarp being named superior, and the number of students increased to 200, of which 60 were boarders. There were approximately 50 sisters in Baker City working at the academy and hospital at this time. Excavation for the new site for St. Elizabeth Hospital at the corner of Fourth and Baker Streets began in 1908, when published building costs for the project were listed as $150,000. However, after lengthy delays in construction—most likely due to the securing of a contract with actual costs of $668,320—a vibrant community fundraising drive was able to raise the funds to start construction on July 28, 1912, which was celebrated by a crowd of more than 1,000 onlookers.

In articles of incorporation for St. Elizabeth Hospital, which was signed by Sisters Philomena, Germaine, and Anacleta on May 12, 1898, the sisters had committed to open a training school for nurses at the hospital, which they did in September 1911 with four students enrolled. The lecture courses for the school formally opened in January 1912 and were temporarily held in St. Francis Academy due to hospital construction. After the first month of training, students received a monthly allowance, and free medical care was provided. The first class graduated on June 5, 1914. In total, 162 nurses graduated between then and 1949, when the school consolidated with St. Anthony School of Nursing in Pendleton.

The newly constructed 55-bed St. Elizabeth Hospital was completed and dedicated by Bishop O'Reilly on April 23, 1915. Three years later, the hospital, like many others across the country in 1918, faced an influenza epidemic that killed many patients and nurses, including two sisters—one of which was Sister Columbana, who had been heavily involved at the hospital since its first year. In 1921, the north wing of the hospital was completed, enlarging the facility to a capacity of 72 beds.

St. Elizabeth Hospital was approved by the American College of Surgeons on October 15, 1932. Since that time, the exterior appearance remained virtually unchanged. However, in 1958, reconstruction began on the ambulance entrance, which alleviated the use of the building's front steps at the main entry. This building served as the primary facility for more than 50 years, until it became apparent that the hospital could no longer meet state licensing standards, and remodeling wasn't a feasible option.

In 1967, the sisters took another step forward and initiated plans for a more modern, 50-bed, one-story, L-shaped hospital building and support services. The construction program was publicly announced in April 1968 by hospital administrator Sister Sylvina, who shared that the hospital name would be changed to St. Elizabeth Community Hospital to reflect its focus on providing community health and that the new location would be an acre of land on Pocahontas Road near the Highway 30 intersection.

As a result, the community rallied and pledged $400,000 toward the $2-million facility—support which had been intensified after the sudden death of Sister Sylvina, who was fatally injured in a car accident on August 17, 1968. (She had held the position of hospital administrator for four years, and the Sister Sylvina Memorial Library was later established in her honor.) Along with $500,000 provided from a Hill-Burton grant, the sisters contributed the remaining funds (more than $1 million) to complete the community hospital, which included an adjoining convent for them to live in. The new building was dedicated on September 15, 1970, by Bishop Francis Leipzig, and the building on Fourth Street continued to operate under a new function as St. Elizabeth Nursing Home.

Also in 1970, St. Francis Academy was closed after 85 years due to financial strain and a shortage of sisters to run it. The academy's last superior, Sister Ruth Schutz, was reassigned, along with the sisters who had been teaching. At this time, 22 sisters remained in Baker City to work at the hospital and nursing home, and they continued to run the operations until 1975. In May 1987, the hospital staff discontinued use of the old Fourth Street building entirely, when an 80-bed nursing home was built adjoining the hospital on Pocahontas Road. The facility was then renamed St. Elizabeth Hospital and Health Care Center.

The hospital name changed again to St. Elizabeth Health Services in May 1996, when it joined Catholic Health Initiatives, and then changed once more in 2010, when it joined with Trinity Health—becoming its current designation of Saint Alphonsus Medical Center – Baker City. During this period, the hospital underwent additional upgrades, such as a new medical office building and emergency room and ICU expansion. However, the number of sisters dwindled over time, until there were just three—Sisters Clare Inez Karp and Daniel Therese Coyle, who both moved on to perform church service in Tacoma, Washington, and Sister Kay Marie Duncan, who was the last sister to occupy Baker City. Sister Kay took the position as chaplain of Pathway Hospice in 2002 serving Baker County until her departure for retirement in Tacoma in 2012.

THE DOMINICAN SISTERS OF THE PORTUGUESE CONGREGATION OF ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

Founded Ontario's Holy Rosary Hospital in 1912 (Today: Saint Alphonsus Medical Center – Ontario)

The Dominican Sisters opened Holy Rosary Hospital on April 15, 1912

While they raised money to build the hospital, the sisters taught and provided medical care out of a tent

MISSION: TO PRAISE, TO BLESS, TO PREACH: STANDING AS A CLEAR VOICE FOR TRUTH, JUSTICE, AND PEACE THROUGH TEACHING, CARE FOR THE POOR, AND SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT MINISTRIES

The congregations of Dominican Sisters are known for being educators and teachers. In fact, the group of Dominican Sisters who started Ontario's first hospital came to Oregon thinking they were going to open a school. But after learning the desires of the people, they switched gears and changed their focus to opening a hospital to meet the pressing need of the moment.

The Portuguese congregation of the Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine of Siena began in 1865 under the leadership of its founder Mother Thereza Catharina de Salhdana Oliveira e Souza. This small group of sisters, who had been trained in Ireland mainly in education, flourished in Portugal until the revolution of 1910, when the new government expelled all non-Portuguese religious from the country. Religious institutions were closed, property was seized, and monasteries, churches, and convents, were overtaken, often in violent surges.

In 1911, six of these sisters, who had all returned to Ireland after their exile, were invited by a priest from Oregon to come to America to open a convent and school. Father Peter Bowe had been dispatched by Bishop Charles O'Reilly of the Baker Diocese to find a community of sisters willing to start a new life in the States, and the six faithful and courageous sisters, all in their sixties at the time—while they may have been initially hesitant to journey to the unknown—accepted their calling.

These sisters, one German and five Irish, were Mother Mary Catherine Roth, superior and mentor of the group; Mother Mary Patrick Maguire; Mother Mary Dominic Murphy; Mother Mary Antoninus McCabe; Sister Mary Augustine Collins; and Sister Mary Catherine Clayton. Margaret Byrne, a young girl who wished to enter as postulant also joined the pioneering sisters.

Within months, the group was headed overseas, departing on February 11, 1911, and arriving in New York in March after weeks on a sailing vessel. Next stop was Chicago by train, finally arriving in Oregon on March 24 after a weary trip of more than a week of train connections likely on both passenger and freight trains. No doubt coming as a major surprise to them, their journey was not yet complete. Since the moment they arrived in Baker, they received a message that the bishop wished them to settle in Ontario instead to help answer the community's request for a hospital.

When the sisters arrived in Ontario in mid-April, the local pastor, Father Hubert A. Campo, informed them the local businessmen had already committed $10,000 toward the construction of a proper facility for a new hospital. (The town's doctor previously had been seeing patients in his office over the drug store.)

It's important to note that these women weren't skilled in nursing and—truth be told—probably had no desire to open a hospital. In those days before antibiotics, infections of any kind—from strep throat to tuberculosis, pneumonia, whooping cough, or even an ear infection—would often be deadly. Hospitals were seen as a place where people went to die and working there meant the caretakers of the sick were also likely to die. Therefore, when the community expressed its need for a hospital to take care of the sick, and not a school to educate the youth, the sisters were faced with an undesirable situation.

To gain some healthcare knowledge and experience, Margaret Byrne, Sister Antoninus, and Sister Augustine traveled to Pendleton to study and train at the hospital there. Meanwhile, the others got to work raising the rest of the money for the hospital's construction by soliciting donations via advertising, letter-writing, and traveling to the local ranching communities.

They were able to inspire the community and received several thousands of dollars from generous donors. In June, they spent some of this raised money on a tent they pitched outside their rented home, which served as a school and studio for painting lessons. They also began providing medical care there, receiving $30 from the father of their first patient, a frail baby boy.

Mother Catherine selected the location for the property—a five-acre plot on a hill overlooking the town—and purchased it for $5,000. The cornerstone for the new building to be named "Holy Rosary Hospital" was laid on Thanksgiving Day, November 30, 1911.

Within a year, the sisters were able to raise enough money, and construction was finished ahead of schedule on April 15, 1912. Three days later, the first successful surgery was performed in the hospital by Dr. Prinzing, on the first anniversary of the sisters' arrival. There hadn't been enough money secured to install an elevator in the hospital (until $2,000 was donated for an electric elevator in January 1928), so surgery patients for the first 16 years in operation had to be carried on stretchers up several flights of stairs.

The hospital was not profitable those first few years. Financial records from 1914 showed $1,335.25 in unpaid bills, as many of those early patients were farmers and herders who paid in sheep and rabbits.

The sisters kept one of the lambs that were donated as a pet: they named him Tommy, and he was a loved hospital fixture until he started headbutting people and had to be sold.

The sisters took their vow of poverty seriously, sleeping in the basement of the hospital in sparse conditions that were understandably not ideal. After the elevator was installed, they moved to the third floor of the hospital until a convent was built behind the hospital in 1941. This building had a chairlift to assist some of the older sisters up the stairs. They lived in this convent until the emergency room expansion was completed in 1978 in its place, and a new "convent house" was purchased across the street from the hospital.

From the time the hospital was functioning, more Dominican sisters were recruited from Ireland, and many of those sisters working at Holy Rosary Hospital were involved in the clinical and technical fields. Into the 1950s and '60s, many of them worked in the laboratory and in the operating room in addition to holding administrative positions.

In the 1970s, some of the beloved sisters at Holy Rosary Hospital included Sister Bertram, Sister Mary Margaret, Sister Mary Patricia, Sister Cecelia, Sister Patricia Ann, Sister Angelica, and Sister Innocence. Sister Patricia Ann was a young girl from Kentucky, who loved to cheer on any and all Kentucky sports teams; Sister Angelica worked in the radiology laboratory with Dr. Tipton; and aptly named, sweet-as-could-be Sister Innocence was known for riding her three-wheeled bicycle around town.

During the time the sisters owned the hospital, their presence and administration in the facility, in church, and in town was something that the community deeply appreciated. The patients enjoyed having them visit the different rooms to comfort them, no matter what religion they were. And the sisters truly liked running the hospital and living in Ontario. According to the former hospital chaplain, Father Cletus Kirkpatrick (affectionately known as Father Kirk), the sisters wanted to stay in Oregon and planned to be buried in plots they had secured in the Catholic cemetery off Sunset. They were disappointed when their order called them back to the motherhouse in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

By the early 90s, the Dominican sisters no longer held medical or clinical roles at the hospital. Some of them spent several years in the "convent house" in semi-retirement doing volunteer work, before entering a care center or returning to the motherhouse. They were described as a special part of the community, and the "convent house" remained a place—and still is available at the time of this writing—for sisters to use when they occasionally come through town.

In the mid-90s, the sisters transferred ownership of the hospital to Catholic Health Initiatives, and in April 2010, the then-named Holy Rosary Medical Center became Saint Alphonsus Medical Center – Ontario.

Throughout their years in Ontario, the Dominican sisters continually embodied obedience, charity, and flexibility. They consistently demonstrated self-sacrifice and gave of themselves to others, putting everyone else first. They overcame a situation where they were kicked out of the country they had been living in and were able to take advantage of the trial in their life and open-heartedly undertook the adventure to start a new life in America. Following only a desire to teach, help others, and trust in God, these sisters boarded a ship for parts unknown and travelled in dangerous and uncertain lands—only to arrive to find what they were trained for wasn't needed. Their will to adapt to fill whatever the current need may be exemplified their strong character and faith.

THE SISTERS OF MERCY

Founded Nampa's Mercy Hospital in 1919 (Today: Saint Alphonsus Medical Center – Nampa)

Four Mercy sisters arrived on May 30, 1917, to take over management of Nampa General Hospital

To make room for patients, the sisters lived in a tent behind Mercy Hospital for two and a half years

MISSION: TO BRING GOD'S MERCY TO ALL THOSE WHO ARE SUFFERING BY RESPONDING TO UNMET NEEDS THROUGH DIRECT SERVICE AND BY SEEKING WAYS TO CHANGE UNJUST SYSTEMS

For nearly 200 years, The Sisters of Mercy have committed their lives to serving, advocating, and praying for those in need around the world, envisioning justice for people who are economically poor, sick, and uneducated.

The congregation was founded in 1831 in Dublin, Ireland, by Catherine McAuley, who used her social position and inherited wealth to create a safe place to care for and educate the poor and needy women and children in the "scene of wretchedness and sorrow" that was Dublin at the time. She purchased land where she had built a House of Mercy, which opened September 24, 1827, on affluent Baggott Street, where the poor would be visible to the rich, and employment for young women might be more easily obtained.

While Catherine at first was hesitant to move to a prescribed religious structure, she was urged by Archbishop Daniel Murray of Dublin and several advisory priests to have her community become a canonically established Catholic order. She decided to heed their advice to secure success for her mission and took her vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience along with two of her co-workers at George's Hill convent in Dublin. After the ceremony, Mother Catherine McAuley, Sister Mary Ann Doyle, and Sister Mary Elizabeth Harley returned to their home on Baggott Street, which became the first official Convent of Mercy on December 12, 1831. Under Mother Catherine's leadership, the convent established nine other autonomous foundations throughout Ireland and England and two branch houses in Dublin.

By the time of Mother Catherine's passing 10 years later in 1841, the Mercy order had grown substantially in number to 150 sisters and had established a total of 14 foundations. After that time, they became known as the "walking sisters," due to their actions of traveling in small groups of sisters to care for the community outside the convent, ultimately founding schools, hospitals, and orphanages in locations such as Argentina, Australia, Newfoundland, New Zealand, and the United States.

One of the first novices professed at Baggott Street was Sister Mary Frances Xavier Warde. Frances (or Fanny), a friend of Catherine's niece, had moved to the Mercy House in the summer of 1828 when she was only 17 and Catherine was 50. Sister Mary Frances became a prolific founder of Mercy convents, starting with St. Leo's in Carlow, Ireland, of which she became mother superior, before going on to become the American founder of the Sisters of Mercy.

In 1843, at the request of Bishop Michael O'Connor of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, Mother Frances and six other sisters left Carlow and crossed the Atlantic for America. After establishing the first Mercy convent in the States in Pittsburgh, she went on to establish a convent in Chicago in 1846 and Providence in 1850, as well as schools and houses throughout the Northeast, such as in Boston, Harford, Buffalo, and New York. Soon there were Mercy foundations in places like Baltimore, St. Louis, and San Antonio. By 1863, there were 23 Mercy foundations in America, and by the time of her death on September 17, 1884, Mother Frances had established more than 82 Mercy convents, schools, and hospitals in 20 cities across nine states.

After Mother Frances's death, a group of Mercy sisters who had traveled from Providence down to Florida and Georgia, made their way out West to California in 1908. These tenacious, pioneering Sisters of Mercy traveled by foot, carriage, wagon, streetcar, train, omnibus, boat, and ship—invariably suffering through treacherous and painful migrations across desert, mountain, and sea. There are stories of uncomfortable rides bouncing around in coaches through bumpy plains, rough navigations fighting motion-sickness on steamships and riverboats, and snowbound trains stranded in the Rocky Mountains.

In 1901, Sister Mary Baptiste Meyers—who had led a group of four Mercy sisters across the continental U.S. to Durango, Colorado, and opened a hospital in just four months in 1882—was beheaded in a train wreck while traveling to Denver. (The Mercy sisters received a free pass to ride on the Union Pacific Rail thereafter, which many sisters took advantage of for many years.)

In January 1910, a group of just three Mercy sisters who had ventured to Bakersfield, California, were called by Bishop Lawrence Scanlan to Salt Lake City, Utah, under the care of Mother Mary Vincent de Paul Mahoney, to administer at 200-bed Judge Mercy Hospital, which was intended to care for old miners but had been sitting vacant for eight years.

A community of Mercy sisters was formally established there on September 12, and, by 1916, had grown to a much larger cosmopolitan community of 25 sisters from 14 different states and four countries. However, when Bishop Scanlan died in 1915, his successor Bishop Joseph Glass decided to disperse the sisters and demanded the resignation of Mother Vincent, due to her poor health (she suffered from asthma).

When Mother Vincent died on September 9, 1916, at 61, her death certificate said she had died of a broken heart, which was likely close to the truth considering her congregation was being uprooted

once more. Before she resigned, Mother Vincent had visited Pocatello, Idaho, at the request of Father Augustine Baudizzone, pastor of St. Anthony's, who had dreamed of establishing a Catholic hospital in his parish, so thankfully, she departed with the peace of mind that there was a plan in place for her congregation's relocation.

Two weeks after Mother Vincent's death, her place as superior was taken by Mother Mary Ignatius Brady, and the congregation was relocated in groups to Pocatello. But even though the building of the hospital was already partially financed, when the first of the sisters arrived in Pocatello from Salt Lake City, the construction had not yet started, so there was no place for the sisters to live. The first two sisters who came to town rented the Charles Gray House, and when the next four arrived from the train station on September 23, 1916, they found their new home empty except for a couch and a couple mattresses on the floor. By Thanksgiving 1916, most of the sisters had arrived and were able to earn enough money by sewing to pay their rent while the hospital was being built. It was a long road, but St. Anthony's Hospital and an accompanying school of nursing opened on January 20, 1918, and the Sisters of Mercy were applauded for their efforts.

Word of the sisters' success spread to Nampa, another growing community in Idaho, which by 1900 had 800 residents and 10 passenger trains coming through town each day. Townspeople had first started talking about raising $4,000 for a hospital in 1907. In those early days, doctors mostly drove around in horse and buggy to see patients, and serious operations required transporting patients by streetcar railway two or three hours to Boise. The question finally came before the Chamber of Commerce in 1910, which created a hospital committee to investigate actual costs. The report this committee presented to the board suggested that Catholic sisters should manage the hospital. However, in August 1911, Utah Construction Company unexpectedly established a 25-bed general hospital above McLain's Hardware in the Snell Building, where it operated for less than a year. The first patient admitted was a gentleman afflicted with tick fever.

In November 1914, Nampa General Hospital was moved from its busy downtown second-floor location to the Cushman residence, a remodeled house on 11th Avenue and 9th Street South; however, serious financial struggles threatened the hospital, and it was in danger of closing. Talk resurfaced again of having Catholic sisters take charge of the hospital since the board was having trouble managing it. Father J. P. Ries, pastor of St. Paul's, contacted Mother Ignatius in Pocatello to ask the Sisters of Mercy for assistance, which was sorely needed. During this time, the population had exploded to more than 7,500, and the short-staffed doctors and four graduate nurses were battling outbreaks of typhoid fever, polio, and Spanish influenza.

On May 30, 1917, four Mercy sisters—Sister Mary Alphonsus Mulryan, Sister Mary Bonaventure Earle, Sister Mary Raphael Rohrer, and Sister Mary Stanislaus Peters—arrived in Nampa, and were met with much gratitude from the community. They wasted no time, and on the following day, June 1, they took over management of Nampa General Hospital. Dr. George O. A. Kellogg described the transition as happening so suddenly that one day he called the hospital to say he would be arriving with a patient for emergency surgery, and the Mercy sister who answered the phone had no idea who he was.

The Cushman house had eight rooms—one for an operating room and one for a kitchen—leaving only six rooms for patients. There were also two large screened-in porches for the frequent overflow when patient census reached 14. The sisters sterilized surgical supplies and equipment in the oven and instruments in boiling water on top of the range. Before long, the six sisters had the house

overflowing with patients, so there was no place for them to sleep. In a self-sacrificial manner, these sisters spent the next two-and-a-half years living in the "Canvas Convent," which was a tent they pitched in the backyard of the hospital, where they were exposed to the unforgiving Idaho winters and summers, and more mud than they could stand.

One day in the autumn of 1917, Dr. Kellogg introduced the sisters at the hospital to prominent businessman WC Dewey, who was aghast to find they were sleeping in a tent. He told them he would return the next day with funds raised to start building an adequate hospital. When he kept his word and arrived the following day with $9,775 in commitments that he had secured from Protestant businessmen in one afternoon, the sisters were convinced the community would financially support the construction of a new hospital. Within a year, the sisters had raised enough funds to draw up plans for a new hospital—securing $30,000 from the townspeople and supplying the remaining $35,000 in building costs themselves, in return for ownership of the property.

The Catholic Church contributed the block of land at 16th Avenue and Eighth Street South, and on December 9, 1918, ground was broken for a new $100,000 mission-style, two-story hospital, built by dedicated workers such as Mr. Murphy, who did all the bricklaying himself.

The 50-bed Mercy Hospital opened on November 9th, 1919, and began caring for patients on November 17. The sisters agreed to assume all responsibility for operations during a two-year trial period, and to show no discrimination to patients because of religion. The hospital contained two operating rooms, a maternity ward, kitchen, nurses' quarters, and 33 paying rooms. (At that time, a surgical patient who had spent two weeks in a hospital was billed a total of $77.25.) Influenza patients were not admitted, as it was feared they would endanger the lives of other patients. During the flu epidemic of 1918 and 1919, the lives of three Sisters of Mercy in Pocatello were taken: Sisters Clement O'Connell, Katherine Maps, and Mary Agnes Neville.

On April 5, 1920, a three-year training school for nurses opened at the hospital. Until this point, the sisters had no official training courses at the hospital. They learned much on the job from doctors and other nurses and didn't necessarily have specialized areas. They had many responsibilities and rose to the occasion. For example, they could be working in the laboratory in the morning, as a technician taking X-rays afterward, and then assist a surgery later that day.

In 1921, the 15-member Mercy Hospital medical staff was organized with Dr. Kellogg, as first chief of staff, who gave weekly lectures to student nurses. One of the original "Canvas Convent" sisters, Sister Mary Alphonsus Mulryan, who was the first hospital administrator, also taught at the nursing school. Sister Mary Terese Tracy, who came to Nampa as the school's director, later served as hospital administrator and went on to become Mercy Housing's first CEO. (Several hundred nurses graduated from the school before it closed in 1954.)

The sisters made many major and minor decisions over the ensuing years, influenced by two world wars, the Great Depression, and shoestring budgets at times. Nampa's continued growth over the next 50 years was reflected in the growth of Mercy Hospital as it expanded through various remodels. In 1932, a $45,000 expansion increased bed capacity to 86. In 1958, a $450,000 addition brought a new operating room, delivery rooms, patient rooms, and nursery. Ten years later, the new Mercy Medical Center—a $3.5 million 120-bed facility on 12th Avenue Road—was completed in September 1968. A 12-bed special (intensive) care center brought hospital capacity to 162 beds in 1975. Another

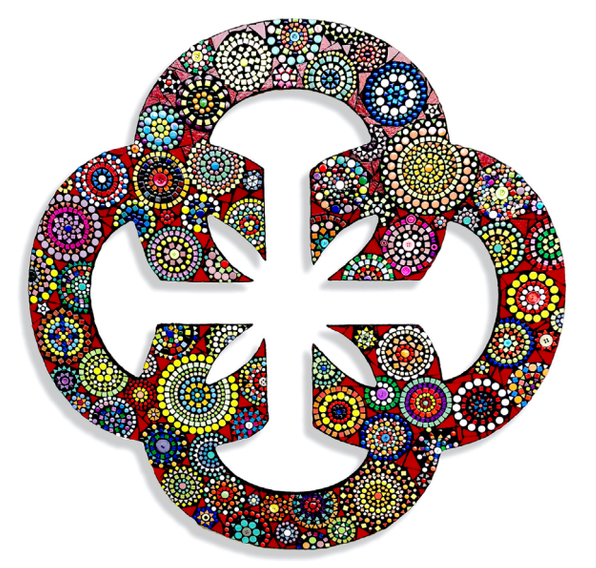
$1.5 million renovation occurred in 1986 to accommodate emergency room and medical record space. Mercy Hospital joined with Catholic Health Initiatives in 1996, and in 1998, a new outpatient facility Mercy North was built on Garrity to be more accessible to the interstate.

Sister Maura Clark was the last Sister of Mercy at the hospital in Nampa. She left shortly after Mercy joined with Saint Alphonsus Health System in 2010.

The Sisters of Mercy were adventurous, women who went where they were sent with great passion. They were compassionate, often accepting chickens for payment or no payment at times, always known for not turning anyone away for care. But they were also crafty and clever minded. One sister recalls hearing stories about the sisters in Colorado heading to certain bars that the miners would frequent after pay day, looking for offerings.

Ingrained in their hearts was their mission to help those in need wherever they went. They were women of deep faith and humor that would carry them forward through difficult situations. They kept on through pain and hardship, which ultimately led to joy, fulfillment, and growth. Together, these remarkable women over the years moved the spirit of mercy across many miles, touching countless souls.

AN HONORABLE HERITAGE TO CARRY FORWARD



A mosaic (of artwork by patients in Nampa) of the Saint Alphonsus Health System emblem, which symbolizes redemption (the holy cross), hope and steadfastness (four anchors), unity, continuity, integration, and enduring faith (interlocking circles)

Entering into the third millennium, the number of sisters actively working amongst the four hospitals was fewer than a baker's dozen. It's unfortunate that religious vocations have been declining, and there are many contributing factors—one being that entering convents has decreased in popularity as America has evolved.

Prior to the 19th Amendment in 1920 and Women's Lib in the '60s, it was common for girls to join a congregation if they reached a certain age and weren't married or if a married woman became a widow. Another factor was likely the flexibility of lifestyle that was demanded of sisters over a long period of time. It was not uncommon for them to get pulled from place to place, year after year; teachers were often transferred at the end of school years and moved someplace else where there was a need—with no goodbye party. That type of selflessness is rare these days. Specifically in the hospitals, when Medicaid/Medicare passed in 1965—in which the government specified that hospital space couldn't be used for anything other than direct patient care—that certainly had implications for the sisters, because they had to find somewhere other than the hospitals to live.

There's a lot of value that comes from considering the past, especially when it comes to remembering there was great purpose in why things were done the way they were. It's important to carry on the mission and the heritage of all the sisters' contributions over the years, honoring the decisions and sacrifices they made. Today, hospital colleagues strive for the same purpose—to prevent and relieve sickness and suffering. The institution's mission is still the same—to care for all people in need and offer a sanctuary of compassion and tranquility to those seeking comfort and relief.

In 2004, construction started for the new central tower on the Boise campus, which opened in 2007 and was designed to create an environment of natural light and colors, art conducive to healing, and quiet places for reflection. Sister Patricia Mulvaney was instrumental in this effort, spending hours with the art consultant Jacque Crist, describing exactly what the art needed to do to create that perfect space of solace and comfort. She wanted the environment and art to convey where the

hospital came from and to connect people with the original tenets of how the Catholic faith was first founded. Without the physical presence of the sisters walking around the hospital, embodying that spirit, their legacy could still exist inside the hospital and in the community, not just in the stories that have been passed down, but in the art displayed as well. The entryway and chapel translated that essence, and throughout the hospital, religious icons were used to represent history through images serving as reminders of the faith.

During challenging economic times, Saint Alphonsus Health System was formed in 2010 when Trinity Health assumed sponsorship of Mercy Medical Center in Nampa, Holy Rosary Hospital in Ontario, and Saint Elizabeth's in Baker City—all previously sponsored by Catholic Health Initiatives. Each hospital name subsequently was changed to reflect that it had now become a Saint Alphonsus Medical Center. This consolidation served to bring together four disparate missions—that all had a similar goal—and build a stable foundation that strengthened the experiences at each of the medical centers.

The Saint Alphonsus emblem was chosen to represent the new health system, with the holy cross as the central element symbolizing redemption, but with four intersecting leaf-shaped anchors representing hope and steadfastness—all surrounded by interlocking circles, which speak to a concept of unity, continuity, integration, and enduring faith.

Saint Alphonsus Health System has evolved immensely in recent years, growing to more than 6,100 colleagues serving the Treasure Valley and eastern Oregon. A new five-story $80 million replacement hospital opened in Nampa in June 2017, representing the largest expansion project in the hospital's 100-year history. The health system further expanded services on all campuses and formed the Saint Alphonsus Medical Group that today is comprised of over 550 physicians and advanced practice providers and an organization totaling more than 1,550 colleagues—with the entire health system now having over 6,000 colleagues who get up every morning ready to minister to those in need.

Despite the many changes the health system has undergone, it has remained committed to caring for the community by providing hope and healing the body, mind, and spirit of all who need care. What it means to be a faith-based institution is not being based on money, fame, or recognition, but on helping people, just as the sisters intended. The health system today maintains the values of the founding sisters, accepting of all whom enter, regardless of faith, creed, class, race, ethnicity, age, or gender. Employee name tags boast the word "Reverence," and ALLY classes are offered that teach colleagues how to live out this respect for others—for example, by asking patients how they want to be referred to, ensuring they feel seen and heard.

It's the calling of today's colleagues to understand what being committed to the sisters' legacy truly means—to take that courageous generosity, unwavering determination, and motivating love for one another that they embodied and carry that gift of compassionate care forward into the community for this and future generations to come.

Looking back more than 100 years later, think of the thousands upon thousands of people whose lives have been changed because of the founding sisters' experiences, decisions, and actions—and the values that helped them transcend. We need to preserve the privilege and entrusted legacy of their incredible work and remember that what we do is important and that even if we might not see the benefits of what we do today, over the long term, the effects can be life-altering for others.

Hopefully, this rich history and legacy will help all colleagues understand the trials, tribulations, passion, and compassion with which the healing ministry of Jesus was founded and continues on with every single colleague who joins the regional health ministry, Saint Alphonsus Health System.

As we completed this beautiful documentation of the journey of our founding sisters, we asked Sister Beth Mulvaney for her thoughts about the legacy they have entrusted to us:

> "As sisters, our most important value has always been to provide care with Compassion. We have also recognized that we could not provide all that care by ourselves but that Collaboration with many individuals and groups was essential. It is heartening to realize that colleagues who continue this legacy are equally committed to those values so that the mission of providing compassionate care to any who come to Saint Alphonsus Health System will carry forward with grace and reverence."

Sister Catherine Sabo

Sister Mary Lawrence Gowan

Sister Mary Alphonsus Mulryan

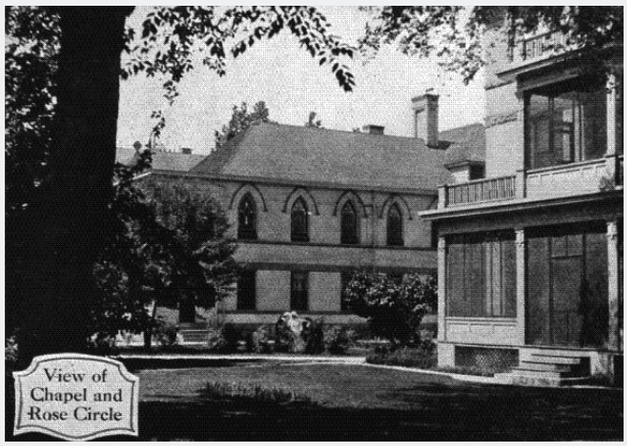
Sister de Pazzi

Sister Paladia

Sister Mary Kevin Kirwan

Original St. Elizabeth Hospital

Sisters at St. Teresa's Academy



View of Chapel and Rose Circle

St. Elizabeth Hospital's second site

Sister Mary Cecilia Aicher

Sister Guntilda

FOR YOUR REFLECTION

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Saint Alphonsus
A Member of Trinity Health

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