

Catholic families alike appreciated that their daughters could receive moral and religious education. By the Academy's second year, enrollment reached 180 students.

Education became one of the Sisters' greatest ministries. They founded seven schools in Kansas — Concordia, Tipton, Herndon, St. Joseph, Clyde, Clay Center, and Beloit. Beyond Kansas, they operated four schools in Chicago, three in Omaha, three in Michigan, and additional schools in Missouri and Wisconsin. Sisters also taught in schools not founded by the congregation, including Salina, Manhattan, and even as far as Wyoming and North Dakota.

In 1922, the Sisters founded Marymount College in Salina, the first all-women's college in Kansas. In Beyond the Frontier, Sally Witt, CSJ, quotes M. Helena describing the Marymount woman as one "who will be able to take their places in society; women who will be an uplifting influence in their homes, in their church and community, and model citizens of their state and country." When Marymount opened, Nazareth Academy moved to Salina and continued for twenty more years until closing in 1942.

Catholic education returned to

Concordia in 1944 with the opening of Notre Dame High School. This meant the sisters did not need to reopen the Academy at the Motherhouse. However, in 1954, they decided to open St. Joseph Apostolic School. This would be a boarding school unlike the previous Nazareth Academy in that it would "prepare young women for religious life while providing secondary education." With a lack of Catholic schools in the Salina Diocese this would fill an important need and kept religious vocations among the options for young women.

By the 1950s, Catholic schools were growing rapidly, and the demand for teachers grew with them. Lay teachers began joining the faculty, including at the seven schools the Sisters operated. Classrooms became overcrowded, and the strain affected the Sisters' mental and physical health. M. Helena wrote to encourage them, "Please do not be timid in asking God to keep you in good health," as more Sisters found themselves exhausted or ill.

Ironically, within the next decade, the problem reversed. Enrollment declined, and Catholic schools began to close. The Apostolic School closed in 1968, sending its students to Notre Dame High School. Just a few short years later, Notre Dame also closed its doors.

She is fondly remembered by her students as always soft-spoken, with steady kindness and a welcoming smile.

Her legacy continues today with a statue at Concordia Middle School accompanied by a plaque that tells her story.



Lady Shirley's SOCIETY PAPERS

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EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE, EXTRAORDINARY STORIES

Dearest Reader,

August has arrived once again, bringing that curious season when youthful minds are reluctantly steered from the freedoms of summer toward the more serious pursuits of education. Parents find themselves wondering how they went from picking tomatoes in the garden to picking out school supplies. Displayed with alarming enthusiasm, notebooks and pens appear on shelves before the fun of Independence Day has passed. They remind us it is time to begin thinking of schedules and routines.

Ready or not, the town's children will soon fill the hallways with tales of summer that ended far too quickly. Comparing schedules, sizing up the new teachers, rekindling friendships, and anticipating sports and activities, one hopes there is at least a mild enthusiasm for their studies.

Society has long maintained that learning is accomplished through recitations, examinations, and the diligent application of oneself to books. Yet this author's experience suggests that wisdom is acquired in a great many other

ways as well. Lessons may come from an afternoon on the playground, an unexpected love of a new subject, a devoted teacher, or even a mistake one fervently hopes no one happened to witness.

This month's Society Paper lead us through enterprises, institutions, and educators that helped shape lives in our corner of the world and far beyond. While school may seem a necessary passage for some, for others it is the beginning of new challenges, relationships, ambitions, and dreams.

For the best stories arise not from lesson plans, but from the people who walked those hallowed halls. Playgrounds become far more than iron slides and jungle gyms. Schools leave their mark upon a community long after the doors close. A young person arriving under difficult circumstances may grow into someone whose influence reaches hundreds of others as an educator.

How fortunate for us that the past leaves us its breadcrumbs to follow and its stories to share.

*Yours truly,
Lady Shirley*

MRS. TRACY

When Emilie "Millie" Lung stepped off an orphan train in Missouri in 1913, she was fortunate to find a loving home. Millie grew into Mildred, a well-educated young woman, who made teaching English and Social Studies her life's work for 34 years.

ON THE PLAYGROUND

If anything is certain, it is change. Playground equipment of previous generations was viewed as simply exhilarating fun, not in the context of equipment safety. The monkey bars and metal slides of our younger years have been replaced by molded plastic and softer landings. No matter how playgrounds evolve, the thrill of climbing fifteen feet of iron treads, a piece of wax paper in hand, and hurtling down a slide at what seemed nearly the speed of sound—judging by the screams of joy and terror—will remain embedded in the memories of many.

The Delmer F. Harris Playground Equipment Company was founded in Clyde in 1925 by Delmer F. Harris, Sr. and later owned and operated by his son, Delmer F. Farris, Jr. Many of the company's designs were developed with the Harris children, their cousins, and neighborhood friends in mind, who often served as eager testers of new equipment. Town recollections note that the Harris family home—the former Priest residence on West Seventh Street—frequently displayed prototype playground equipment in its spacious yard. For forty-four years, they sold and shipped playground equipment to all 50 states, U.S. military bases overseas, and even to Algeria and the Virgin Islands. They ceased operations in 1994.

The Harris Company owned the Banker's Loan and Trust Building, which housed its offices, while slide manufacturing took place in the basement. Many still call it the Harris building. Most recall

the main manufacturing building located on 81 Hwy where Pizza Hut is today.

As the company grew, so did the Harris family's footprint in Concordia. They owned the Delharco Theatre, later known as the Strand. The Strand burned in a fire and many years later the VIP Majestic was built in its place. They also owned the Delharco Court modern cabins, later known as the Shady Lake properties, located near today's Pizza Hut and Taco John's. The cabins were ultimately demolished as part of the floodplain project in that area.

The playground equipment, most all falling under the trademarked "Playmate" line, were made of cold-rolled steel, thick-walled pipe, and painted a specific "Harris Green" color. For many years, the treads on slide stairways bore the casting "Delmer F. Harris Co., Concordia, Kans." before being replaced with an anti-skid pattern. What a treat to find one that still has the original casting.

Of the many pieces of equipment they offered, several pieces still remain at four of our six parks. The "Swedish Gym Exerciser" is still at Hood Park along with a swing set and teeter totter. The "Climbing Tree", 12-sided merry-go-round, a swing set, and a teeter totter are still at Airport Park. There is a ride on sand digger excavator there as well painted in the Harris green, but this author is not certain it was a piece of Harris Playground Equipment.

A "Tri-Swing," teeter totter,

5-sided merry go ground, and a swing set are at Decker Park. The "Tri-Swing" was a design that had unintended consequences. Some children could get the swing to go high enough to go above the three bars that held it to the ground and sometimes they would bump their heads on the poles. Until just a few years ago, Decker Park also featured a "Corkscrew." It was an experimental design installed only at Decker Park in Concordia. The angles provided shipping challenges. What many people colloquially call "the baby park" at City Park has a teeter totter. There used to be much more Harris

ACADEMY FOR GIRLS

The congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph was founded in 1650 in Le Puy, France. At the time, most religious communities kept their Sisters cloistered, believing separation from the world was necessary to protect their safety and chastity. Father Jean-Pierre Médaille, however, followed the teachings of St. Francis de Sales, who believed that love of God — not isolation — was the true safeguard against temptation. Instead of hiding the Sisters away, he placed them directly in communities as teachers, nurses, and helpers of anyone in need. Their mission was simple and radical: to do whatever was needed, wherever it was needed, and to love God and neighbor without distinction.

After the hardships of the French Revolution, the Sisters headed for America. Spending time in New York and later Missouri, they found their way to Kansas. In 1883, the bishop asked them to come to Concordia to build a convent.

equipment in our parks until they were replaced with newer equipment meeting safety concerns.

Many slides, especially those with the distinctive "Deep Wave" design are still in many playgrounds across the country. One such "Deep Wave" slide was located in Concordia's City Park. One particular model, located near the old bandshell, was reportedly the only one ever built. It had a slide on one side and parallel sliding bars on the other. It stood approximately 18 to 20 feet tall and featured a 32-foot chute. It was not for the faint of heart!

and serve the community's growing healthcare and educational needs. Their first convent is where the Manna House of Prayer is today; the Motherhouse we know today was built in 1902.

The Nazareth Convent rises in the heart of Concordia, its size a fitting metaphor for the Sisters themselves — women with the largest of hearts.

Although the Sisters of St. Joseph are most remembered for their impact on healthcare in Concordia, their academy for girls deserves equal recognition. Nazareth Academy opened in 1884. For 58 years, girls boarded trains to live with the Sisters or traveled daily to attend school. In addition to their studies, they learned social graces. The academy was the only school in Concordia permitted to teach the Bible.

Attendance at the Academy carried no expectation that girls become Catholic or enter religious life. Protestant and