

*The exhibit of the Sisters of Notre Dame was highly commended and at the close of the Fair, which lasted six months, a diploma and medal were awarded to fifteen of our houses in Massachusetts, Lowell's parish and day schools being among the favored ones. See XIII., Columbus, Queen Isabella, and*

# Annals from the Archives

## SND Centennial Video



Images of Students From left to right:  
Students creating the year 1840  
Students forming ND for Notre Dame  
Students creating the year 1940

From Notre Dame Centennial Video, 1940  
New England Archives, SND East West Province, Ipswich, MA

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—The year 1940 was a special celebration for the American Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur—it was one hundred years since their arrival in Cincinnati, Ohio. There were many commemorations across the country at Notre Dame Schools. But two Notre Dame alumni—Helen Nugent and Betty Jo Huck—took their remembrance one step further by visiting every single school founded by the Sisters of Notre Dame in the United States. Either they or a friend recorded their journey through America, documenting each visit, school by school. Their travels took them from Ohio to California, Chicago, New England, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Washington DC, and South Carolina, before concluding their tour where they began—in Ohio. This amateur film was transferred to VHS tape sometime in the 1980s. Because of the age of the movie and the less than perfect process of transferring such a video, the result shows the wear of time. The sound is marred by static, the movement of people sometimes jerky and the voices are often out of sync with the performances. Despite its flaws, it is an interesting artifact of an era almost eighty years gone.

This Centennial journey across the United States resulted in a movie one hour and forty-one minutes long. It opens in a manner very typical of productions during the 1930s and early 1940s, by the opening of a book to reveal the title and dedication. The title page in the film bears some similarity to books designed by the sisters and students during the SND golden jubilee of 1890. The scene then fades to aerial views of students positioned to create a shifting design, starting with ND for Notre Dame, then changing to 1840 before morphing into 1940. Helen Nugent, a radio singer from Ohio, opened the recording with a hymn to honor the sisters. She and her companion, Betty Jo Huck, created scripted and staged segments, designed to describe the backgrounds and histories of all the schools across the country.

The two women begin their commemoration with having eight of the Ohio sisters re-creating the arrival of the first sisters in Cincinnati. Nugent and Huck then toured the Sixth Street convent and school, before staging a supposed unexpected meeting between themselves outside St. Xavier's cathedral. There they proposed the tour across the country. Beginning in Cincinnati, they visited many of the schools in the area. The scenes recorded include those from the nursery which was established to care for the smallest children, to various playgrounds where the children played. After finishing their visits to the Cincinnati schools, they departed Ohio for California by American Airlines, which in 1940 was a twin prop plane.

They started their California tour in Belmont before going onto San Jose and San Francisco. The women documented the activities of the girls as they played tennis, basketball, volleyball, practiced archery, swam in the school's pool, and went horseback riding. Also recorded were scenes in the chemistry lab, sewing rooms, library and some of the graduations. As they went from school to school, they offered brief histories of the area and the foundation of California. They concluded their tour by going to the newly established novitiate in Saratoga.

Upon leaving California, they flew to New England. Here they gave short overviews of each of the schools and the order they were founded. Beginning with the Novitiate in Waltham, they then traveled to Lowell, Roxbury, Lawrence, Andover, East and South Boston, Chicopee, Worcester, Springfield, Leominster, Cambridge, Dorchester, Hudson, West Newton, Waltham,

Salem, Beverly, Peabody, Lynn, Somerville, Emmanuel College, Brookline, and Tyngsboro, finally ending their tour with a visit to Providence, RI. At each, they filmed playgrounds scenes and many commencements.

After Rhode Island, they traveled by car to New York, to tour the schools in Brooklyn and then went onto New Jersey. Their next stop was Philadelphia, followed by visits to Maryland and South Carolina. From South Carolina, they turned north to see all the SND schools in Washington DC. Their visit in DC ended with an extensive tour of Trinity College. The video concluded by returning to Ohio to document all the schools throughout the state.

The video films students' calisthenics, which are mostly the same across the country, as well as offers views of fashions and automobiles from those years. There are many visits to classrooms to see the students' work, including art classes and sporting events. They also filmed some kindergartens, as well as student recitals and the sisters on playgrounds helping the girls as they jumped rope and the children as they played their games.

Many of the schools Helen Nugent and Betty Jo Huck visited are no longer open. As would be expected, the movie reveals just how many of the areas and buildings have changed through the decades. But it is also interesting to note that some of the streets and views of cities and towns, as well as a few of the old Notre Dame schools remain unchanged through the years. The area near St. James in Salem is much the same, as is the former St. Margaret's school and convent in Beverly Farms, MA, which looks no different from its appearance in 1940.

The film ends with the closing of the book that was opened to begin the journey.

To view the video of the Notre Dame Centennial journey, click [here](#) or go to youtube.com and type ND Centennial Video into the search box.



Above to the left, the American Airlines plane taken by Helen Nugent and Betty Jo Huck.

Above to the right, some students holding the banner honoring the sisters.

Below to the left, Helen Nugent.

Below to the right, Helen Nugent and Betty Jo Huck leaving Ohio for California.



#### Sources consulted for this article

- ◆ Ancestry.com
- ◆ Notre Dame Centennial Video, 1940.  
New England Archives, East West  
Province, Ipswich, MA.