



Foundation of the
Sisters of Charity of Halifax

February 17

Origins

- [The Sisters of Charity, Halifax](#), Nova Scotia, Canada, is a branch of the Sisters of Charity founded in 1809 by Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton.
- Mother Seton's foundation in Emmitsburg, Maryland, gave rise to a branch in New York City and other locations in the United States. The Halifax branch was an off-shoot of the New York congregation.



The Sisters Arrive at Halifax

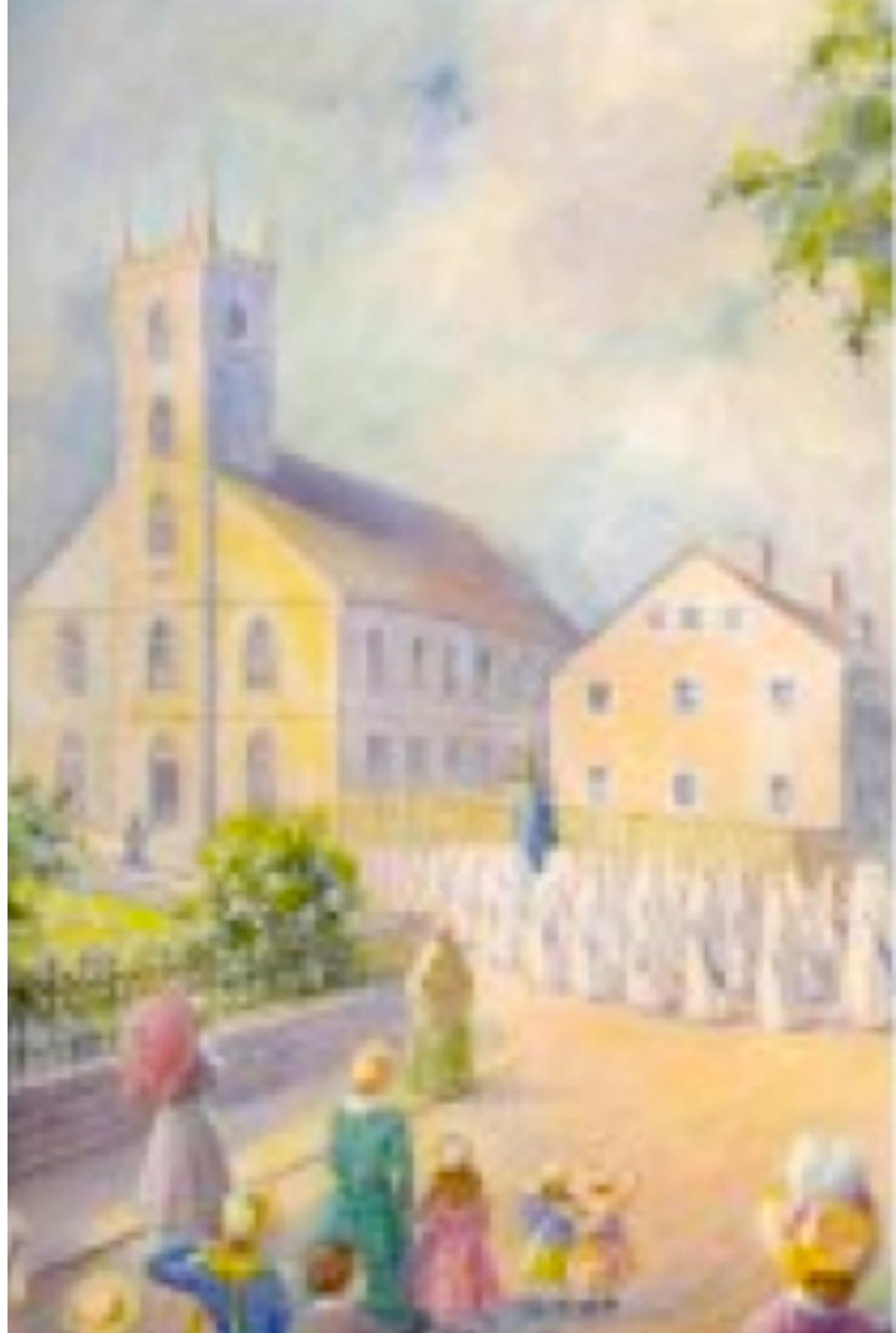
- 1849: The town of Halifax, Nova Scotia, was preparing for its one hundredth birthday. Its Archbishop, William Walsh, needed sisters to serve at their one parochial school, located in the cathedral parish of Saint Mary.
- In response to the Archbishop's appeal, four Sisters of Charity of New York— Mary Cornelia Finney, Mary Vincent Kerr, Mary Rose MacAleer and Mary Basilia McCann— came to Halifax.



Convent, School, Orphanage

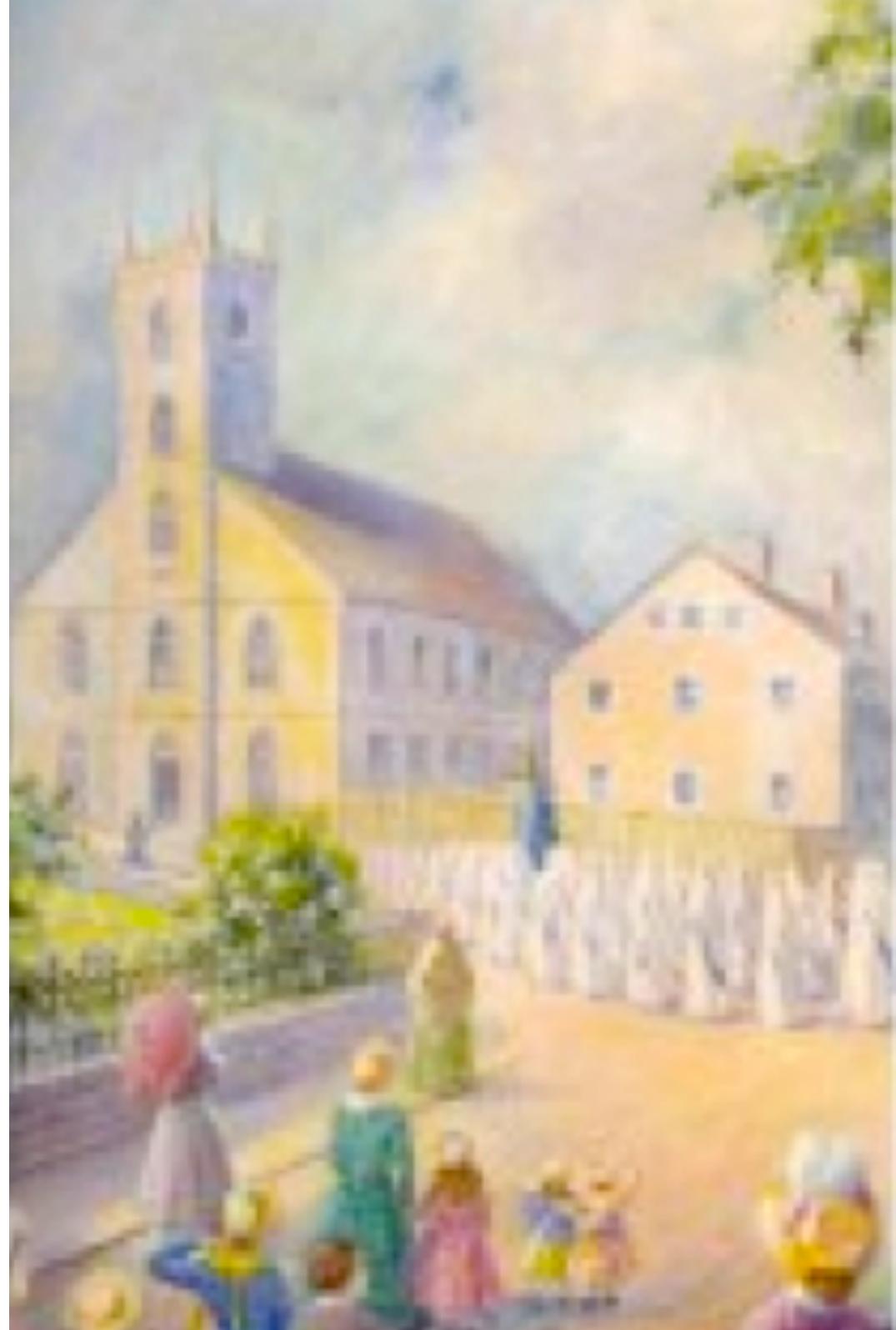
- The Sisters soon established a convent, girls' school and orphanage. By the end of their first year, the enrollment at the school had doubled to 400 and the orphanage had 20 children.
- As their work grew, they knew that more local recruits would be needed, because of the hardship of travel from New York. So it was necessary that the Halifax sisters become a separate community with its own novitiate.

**May Procession at St. Mary's, Halifax.
Painting by Sister Agnes Berchmans Landry.**



1855: Motherhouse established

- In December, 1855 the new motherhouse was established in Halifax, and on February 17, 1856, the diocesan community was approved by the Pope. All this was accomplished less than seven years after the arrival of the Sisters in 1849.



**May Procession at St. Mary's, Halifax.
Painting by Sister Agnes Berchmans Landry.**

Adaptation of the Rule

- The Halifax community based its original rule on that of the New York community, but with adaptations appropriate for Canada and the archdiocese of Halifax. The rule was similar to that of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul in France, with one major exception: that the education which the Sisters were bound to give, only to poor children, was extended to all female children, in whatever stations of life they may have been. For this the Sisters received a compensation, out of which they saved as much as they could to provide a free education to poor Orphan Children.

**First Mount St. Vincent Academy Building,
c. 1873**

