



ST MARY'S
ACADEMY

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School at the Edge

Our reverie [at the Garden of the Gods] came to an end, and with neither stop nor halt we arrived at the site of our new home. The coach halted at the church. The Vicar General, Father Machebeuf's residence was close by. And what an unpretentious one!

I love my school. When I drive up to campus every morning, it looks like a big welcome mat. ... I knew this place was going to make me a better person.

Near two creeks and a scatter of saloons,
a smithy here, a stable and a coach house there,
in this jostle of a place settling in on Rockies' edge
where lure of gold a few years back began a town,
Beatriz, Ignatia, and Joanna settled in themselves

to start a school.

"Mild, efficient care" the ad proclaimed
(and no one barred by creed of any kind)
so daughters of the seekers, searchers, speculators
who tossed their burly luck at Eastern prairie edge
and settled in, these future gentlewomen of the town
came to the school.

But no engineer being at hand, we made use of our heads, and indeed, not only of our heads, but our hearts and souls, to solve the problem [of many grades, boarders, day pupils, music lessons, housework, cooking, spiritual exercises].

The classes are challenging, and the teachers let us go to our limit. But they also make sure we understand.

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That August first, with tasks imposing as the peaks
beyond the edge of hustling town, the three
would welcome pupils, welcome, too, the daunt
to launch Loretto teaching in this frontier place
where, revering "Friends of Mary" as title from of old,
they named the school.

Twenty girls enrolled for its "finished education" at the start,
soon learning academics as well as gentle ways to smooth
the splintered edge of mining town. A strummed guitar, a word
or two in Spanish, a phrase in French, a sketch or painted scene,
an appliqué or other needle art ... the maturing to completeness
that marked the school.

*Resolved, that after dismissing the day scholars, we take the boarders for a walk, in
search of some wild flowers from the prairies around us.*

**There are people, experiences and traditions here that help you become your
own person. ...And the many teachers who inspired me to question things
and opened my eyes to the world. I am definitely ready for whatever's next.**

The quests for beauty and for botany
were twinned as scope of learning, scape of land
combined at prairie's edge. The teachers' knack
for making do with less and what's at hand
created culture in this toughly rumpled town
and fledgling school.

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Fifteen decades on: discovery and dreams  
engage the young who learn by heart and head  
to scan horizons, explore the bounds of Earth  
and mine the lode of wisdom left as legacy  
by the three who journeyed to the frontier's edge  
to start this school.

Note: The italicized lines at the beginning of each section are quoted from the memoir of Sister Joanna Walsh. The second sets of lines at each heading are quoted reflections by current St. Mary's students, one from each of the three schools, Lower, Middle, High, in that order.

Cecily Jones SL  
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