

## Portrait – Mother Pauline

Mother Pauline O’Neill the first President of Saint Mary’s (1895 – 1931) laid the foundation for today’s Saint Mary’s – the builder – not just buildings, but curricula was built to provide a holistic education – mind, heart, physical, etc.

Catalogue 1895 – 1896 – the Statement of purpose: “The education given at Saint Mary’s is of the most practical and comprehensive character. It is intended to train the heart as well as the mind, to form women who will not only grace society with their accomplishments but honor and edify it by their virtues.”

The buildings she built were to enhance student learning in every way, helping students build their character – as women and as educated women – as Saint Mary’s women.

Le Mans Hall – Stella Hamilton Stapleton (1892 graduate) was a good friend of Mother Pauline. In 1916 she gave \$50,000 to start a building fund. When asked several years later on an Alumnae Association questionnaire what she considered her greatest achievement, she said “I had the honor of giving the first \$50,000 towards Mother Pauline’s dream of our present magnificent new College building at Saint Mary’s”. Within a short time the students were raising money through a variety of fund raising events – among them they sponsored a dance and invited ND men – for the first time. In 1920 the Saint Mary’s Club of Chicago responded with a play *The Belles of Saint Mary’s*. By the early 1920’s the fund was approximately \$100,000 and Mother Pauline was able to convince the General Council that a new building could no longer be delayed if we were to maintain our place as a leading Catholic women’s college.

When the cornerstone for Le Mans Hall was laid in 1924 commencement and reunion brought more than 700 guests to the ceremonies – 80 years since the little school opened in Bertrand, MI.

Le Mans Hall - gave promise to the 20<sup>th</sup> century campus and indeed to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Upon completion in 1925 there were those who said “There is no finer college in America or Europe. It is a thing of beauty.” It was and continues to be the jewel of the campus. It was called “The New College” by many.

It was named Le Mans Hall after the city in France where Father Basil Moreau had founded the Sisters of the Holy Cross in 1841. This was the last of Mother Pauline’s buildings. It is fitting that the portrait of the builder hangs in this great hall, on the opposite wall from Father Moreau, and in front of Stapleton Lounge named for Stella Hamilton Stapleton, friend and benefactor of Mother Pauline.

Saint Mary’s yearbook, *The Blue Mantle*, of 1928 was dedicated to Mother Pauline in these words: “Of her prayers and eternal dreams this builder for God has erected an ageless monument to His glory! As long as the towers of Saint Mary’s stand, the spirit of Mother Pauline will abide therein raising them heavenward.”