

*Founding of the First Convent of Mercy at Sandy Point
July 28, 1893/Independence Day, Peru July 28, 1821*



Today we celebrate the four Sisters of Mercy who arrived at Sandy Point on July 28, 1893. Sisters M. Antonio Egan, M. Corsini Dempsey, M. Veronica Payne and M. Sylvester Carver travelled on the SS Harlow from Providence, Rhode Island, USA to their new mission in Sandy Point on the West coast. This event marked the second foundation of our Congregation in the country of Newfoundland.

The foundation was funded primarily by Mrs. Henrietta Brownell from Bristol, Rhode Island. She had decided to use some of her wealth to finance the establishment of a convent in a missionary country.

In 1873 Father Sears had expressed his dream of having a community of nuns to educate the young women of his parish", which then comprised most of the west coast of Newfoundland. He wrote: *"Could we afford to establish a good seminary of Instruction for females as the first beginning we would gain much. A convent of five or six well-educated nuns would be of the greatest importance..."* Father Sears dream finally came to fruition some twenty years later in a marvellous chain of events that could only be seen as the providence of God at work.



In her book *Woman of Providence: The Life of Sister Mary Antonio Egan, rsm*, Sister Charlotte Fitzpatrick notes that the *Evening Telegram* August 12, 1893, reports on the arrival of the Sisters with these words, *"The people displayed the most unbounded enthusiasm and interest in the arrival of the nuns and flocked around them in their own simple ways as the harbingers of great future blessings to this place."*

Mrs. Henrietta Brownell died four years later in October 1897 while waiting for a ship to take her on her annual visit to Sandy Point. Her trunks, already on the ship, were packed with gifts for the children and these sailed on to Sandy Point.

Sister Mary Antonio left the west coast in 1917 and died at Litledale on February 1, 1939, at the age of 87 years.

"Mother M. Antonio spared no effort to impart to the children in this land of her adoption, all that they might take of the education and culture for which she was so remarkable ... The work don for education in Newfoundland by Mother Antonio and her sisters is incalculable. Thoughtful students of the country and her times can give a fair appreciation. Only in the Book of Life is a full record preserved."

Monitor, Feb. 1939



July 28th is 'Fiestas Patrias' which is celebrated by all Peruvians including our eight Sisters who live in Peru. On this day in 1821, Perú became an independent country, marked by the words of the leader, José de San Martín, *"From this moment, Peru is free and independent by the general will of the peoples and by the justice of their cause that God defends. Long live the country! Long live freedom! Long live independence!"*

*Hurrah for foundations,
makes the old young and the young merry.*

Catherine McAuley