

Built on Rock

Marist College

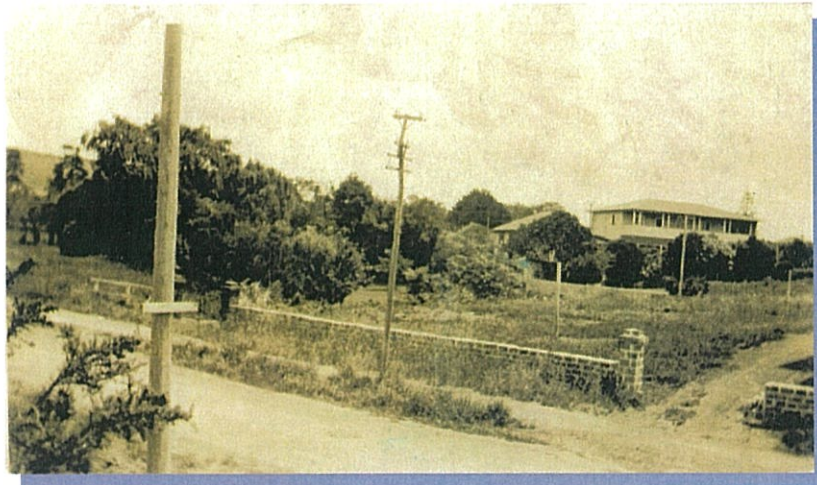
1928-2013

Colin House

&

Gymnasium site

A Pictorial History for the 85th Jubilee Year



Sr. Lorraine Campbell sm

Archivist

Introduction

The origin of this short history was a presentation to the staff in the new gymnasium in January 2013. It was prepared to show the story of that particular part of the property which has seen a wide variety of uses since 1928. It was felt that a wider audience of ex-students might also appreciate it as they await a more extensive history which it is hoped will be completed for our centenary in 2028!

The essay at the back appeared in a slightly fuller form in the Journal of the Catholic Archives Society of the United Kingdom and Ireland in 2011. I hope it illuminates the context in which the College was first established and the spirited way in which the founding sisters, parents and parishioners strove to provide education for young women in Mary's Way.

Sr Lorraine Campbell
Archivist, April 2013



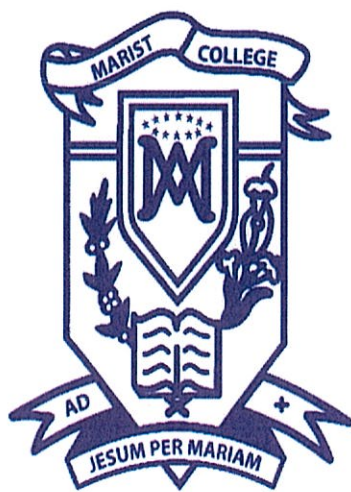
The Original School Crest

This dates from the 1940's. It could have been derived from our college in Sydney – Mt St Mary's where Mother Bernard was the principal.

The original of this crest is in the archives and was found during the demolition of Colin House in 2010

The motto *Omnia ad Jesum per Mariam* – *Omni* in Latin means **ALL**. We are not sure why it was dropped in the revised version which was made some time in the 1960's and is still in use today.

The Current School Crest



The Marist symbols "A" and "M" represent the Latin words "Ave Maria" which means "Hail Mary".

The twelve stars above the letters are also a symbol of Mary, taken from the Book of Revelations, chapter 12.

Beneath the central shield is an open book representing learning under the guidance of Mary.

To the left of the shield is a branch of laurel leaves signifying "honour". To the right of the shield is a stem of lily signifying "purity".

Beneath the shield are the Latin words "Ad Jesum per Mariam" which means "To Jesus through Mary", which is the College motto.

This was the view of Alberton Ave from Mt Albert in 1926.
Mount Albert Grammar had been established in 1922.

Mt Albert 1926



Sir George Grey Special Collection Collections Auckland City Libraries, 1-W737 Used with Permission

Located on the slopes of Te Puke O Wairaka/Mt Albert, an extinct volcano on the Auckland isthmus, the remnants of various ancient eruptions always provided a challenge in the development of the College grounds and buildings.

“Hitting” rock in the course of new constructions inevitably delayed them and added to the cost, but never diminished the commitment to provide the best facilities which could be afforded for the students at the time.

Followers of Jesus are urged to build their houses on rock, not on sand. *Everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like the wise, who built their house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall because it had been founded on rock.* (Matt 7:24-25 RSV).

It is this foundation which has been the most significant in the Marist College’s history. Committed to living the Gospel in Mary’s way the Marist Sisters had come to Mt Albert in 1927 to begin a primary school.

Mother Bernard wrote later of her arrival with Sr. Austin in New Zealand in January 1927.

Monday 24th January was a glorious day in New Zealand: the sun shone, brightly over the beautiful city of Auckland whose suburbs nestle in green valleys or climb up hillsides to many extinct volcanoes of the land, so lovingly called by its people “God’s own Country” .



Sr. Austin &
Mother Bernard,
Feb 2, 1927
process to their
new home

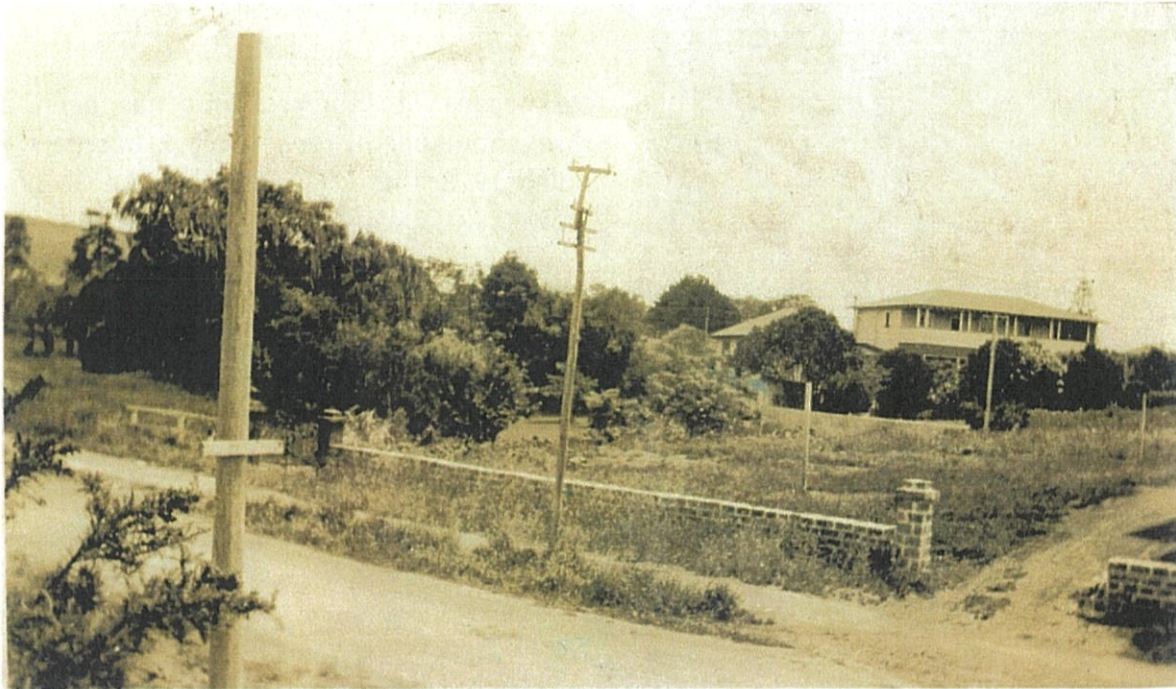
In this picture is Brother Fergus, a Marist Brother (fms) at far left; Bishop Cleary who invited the sisters to New Zealand at back left, and between the two sisters Fr Gondringer sm who wanted the Marist Sisters to establish a school in his fledgling parish.

The two pioneers were Mother Bernard (Mary Gorman, right) an indomitable and resourceful Irish woman and Sister Austin (Pearl Woodbury, left), an Australian.

Born in county Sligo in 1882, Sister Bernard made her profession as a Marist Sister in October 1907. She set out for Australia with four companions to establish the first house of the Marist Sisters in Sydney. She taught in both primary and secondary schools there. In 1925 she was a foundation member of the new mission school at Lautoka, Fiji. The bishop in Fiji was none too pleased when she was sent to New Zealand to begin the mission here in 1927.

Born in 1904, Pearl Woodbury, made her profession as a Marist Sister in September 1924. In 1925 she began her teaching career of forty-eight years as a foundation member of the community at Lautoka with Mother Bernard. She was to be a foundation member of four more communities during her life - Mount Albert, Herne Bay, Karori in New Zealand and of the Blacktown community in Sydney.

Marist Convent High School ca1928



View from Alberton Ave. The stones from this time are still in the front wall.

Sr. Austin made these recollections of the earliest days: *The good people of Mt Albert, led by their good parish priest were very, very kind...Working bees were soon organised to clear the convent grounds – a tennis court was the immediate aim so that water lily pond minus the water lilies had to be filled in and its depth must have been nearly twenty feet. Quite a lot of stones, blasted from the far side of the little stream went into filling that, also the stream itself, but the best pieces of rock were reserved for the stone wall by the street. It still stands solid and firm. The tennis court was a reality before twelve months had passed and lawns were taking shape, the formation of a drive was appearing and young trees planted here and there foretelling something of the beauty that now delights the eye... [Sr. Dominic arrived at the end of the first school term] Now there were three pairs of hands for carrying stones and three pairs of hands for embroidery work in the evenings for a small bazaar was on the horizon already. The Sisters were to buy the property in view of the fact that they intended to open a boarding school and secondary school for day pupils the following year. With great confidence in God's providence, a wonderful spirit of courage and scarcely a bean in the bank account, the property was bought and the contract signed for the building of the boarding school. Thousands of pounds (\$3,000) were involved but the three members of the community prayed much, worked hard and slept peacefully.*



The new convent high school was blessed and opened in March 1928. It ended its days as an art room and was demolished in 1999.



We began with three

...

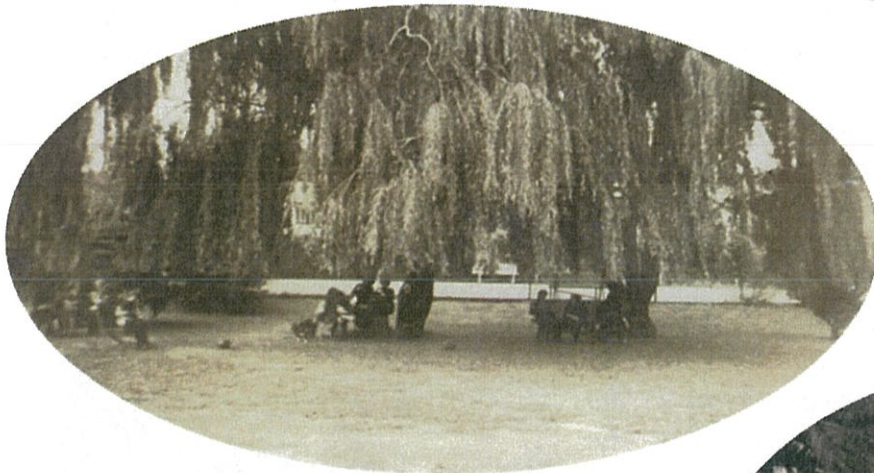
We began with three.... This has been a refrain throughout our history. Only 2 boarders were enrolled 1928. L to R [Mollie Swan, Leola Barry.] Alice Stewart was a day girl.

The modest secondary school was more prosperous in the second year when about 10 pupils received instruction, The work done was mainly commercial. (M. Bernard)

The photos show activities on the front lawn which was gradually cleared.



The tennis courts were soon completed and in use.



The willow trees under which a variety of school activities took place

Shakespeare production from the 1950's



The Building Goes On



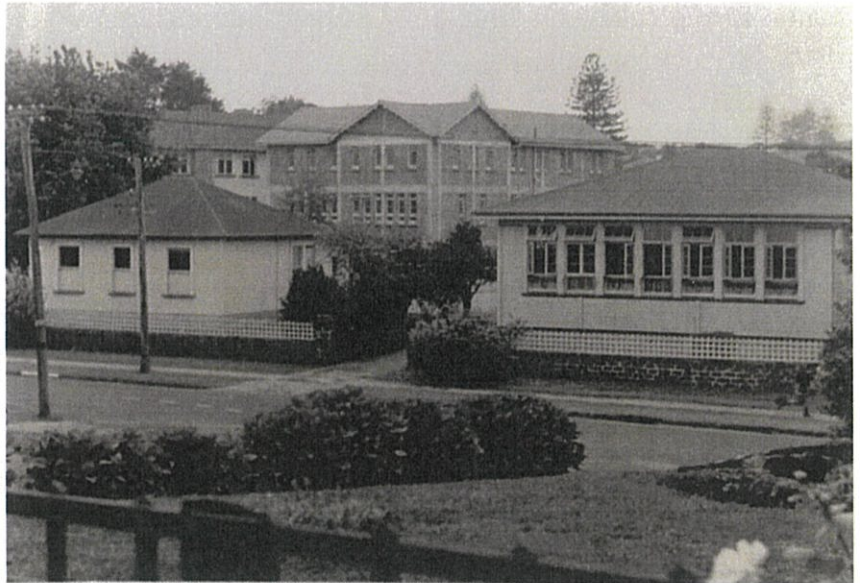
“New” convent built by Mother Benedict 1934. The annex of bedrooms and music suite, laundry for the sisters and boarding school 1946.

The community of sisters continued to grow with both the primary school and the high school. The “new” convent remained in constant use until 1999. It was not able to be integrated in 1982 but was used for Administration and Staff rooms until it was demolished. The distinctive windows were preserved by being incorporated into the corridor outside the Sr. Juliana Library and Information Centre, into the Business Manager's office and as the chapel door to the new convent which was built in Kitenui Ave in 1982.

Colin Block - 1945 – 2010
Boarding top floor, Hall classrooms and science lab, later all boarding. From 1978 Intermediates & classrooms.

Marist Sisters' New Boarding School and Science School, Zealandia Oct 4, 1945

The Amazing Growth of Eighteen Years – Left foreground is the original convent (now the infant school) and right the first school [primary] In the back ground is the convent, and the new block is in the centre. It comprises two science rooms, two classrooms, a cloakroom, lobby, hall, cubicles and dressing



Colin Block completed in 1945 enabled the registration of the College as a Private school in 1948 as it contained the required classrooms. Mother Bernard wrote: *In 1945 the building in brick was begun. Those who are acquainted with the regulations that control buildings since the Great War began, still wonder how a permit was obtained from the government. But the sisters attribute the favour to their founder – Venerable Fr. Colin – for after weeks of waiting for the contractor to obtain all necessary documents, he arrived on the feast of Venerable Fr. Colin with his staff and began work. On the same date a year later Mr Shipman withdrew his staff, and for this reason, the school [building] is called Colin House. The cost was £11,444,15.6*



Whole school 1945 outside the entrance to Colin House. In the back row, second from left, is Jeanette Massey who entered the Marist Sisters and became Sr. Juliana. She was a student here between 1944 and 1947. She was the first ex-student to become the principal of Marist College. During World War II, 1939-1945, there were air raid shelters on the site of Colin House and drills were held. A number of Polish girls came to the college in 1946-1947. They were children who had escaped from Poland, through Russia, Persia/Iran to NZ.



A.K.A The
Dungeon



A science lab was a requirement for registration as a secondary school. The room in the bottom of Colin House was affectionately called "The Dungeon", at least from the 1960's. It was later an art room, boarders' recreation room, 7th form common room and lastly the caretaker's room. The top floor of Colin House was used as a dormitory. When St Joseph's block was built in 1962 part of the lower floor was also used. This photo is typical of the Boarders ready to go home in the 1960's.



After the boarding school was closed in 1978 Colin House was converted to use for Intermediates. 60 students came from Marist Primary because of their roll expansion. They occupied the top floor.

Left: The typing room moved to the downstairs former junior dormitory.

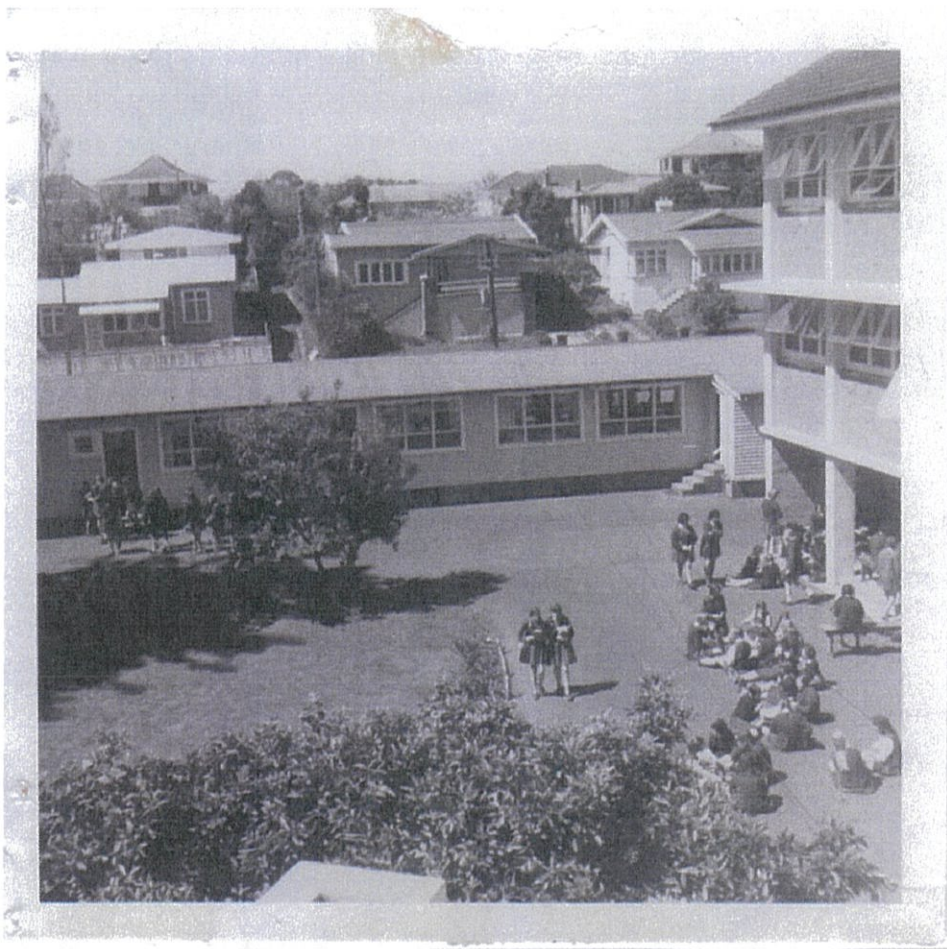
Right: An early intermediate class with Sister Antonia.



Left: Bernadette Ford (nee Scrint), a faithful ex-student from the 1940's doing at the Colin House farewell, what hundreds of boarders and day students have done on the Colin House stairs.

Right: Lorraine Riddell, 1960's, with her niece Claudia Buffalora (year 13, 2013), in what was a general classroom, formerly the original dormitory.





This is a view from Colin House of the drive after the construction of St Joseph's in 1962. The prefabs along Alberton Ave, a block of 3, arrived in 1956 and were moved to make way for the construction of the first gym in 1985. They were moved to the area now occupied by the Sr. Juliana Library and Information Centre. The tennis courts which they covered in 1956 were relocated to their present location. Note the pohutukawa tree has survived all the changes.



The Maori Club was established in 1963 by Sr. Xavier. In this picture they are holding a trophy they won at one of the earliest cultural competitions held among Auckland secondary schools.

All manner of activities!

A view of the front lawn with St Joseph's in the background. Note the open area at the bottom, which was used for PE and Assemblies.

Here Sister Patricia and the boarders mow the lawn and tend to the rose garden.



One of the annual fairs held on the lawn in 1960's until 1990's. Money was always an issue, for staff salaries, and running costs.

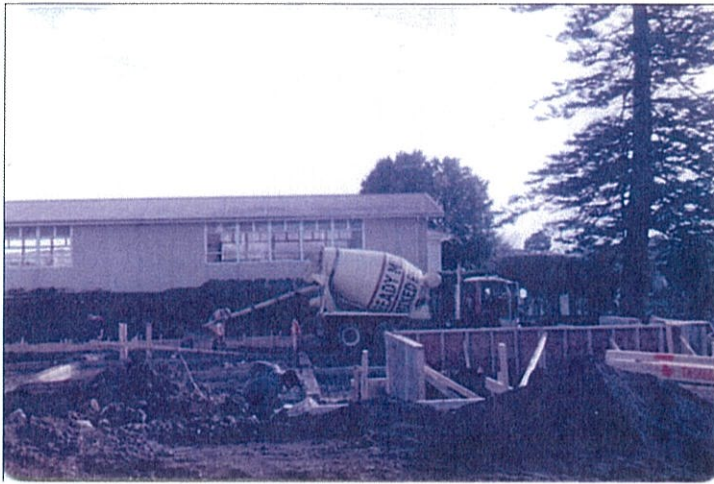
Integration into the State System in 1982 saved the College.



The Overseas club was formed in early 1980's and very quickly became Samoan and Tongan groups as immigrant numbers soared.

We have been multi-cultural from the beginning especially with our Pacific connections.





Growth
promotes
building of
first gym
1985

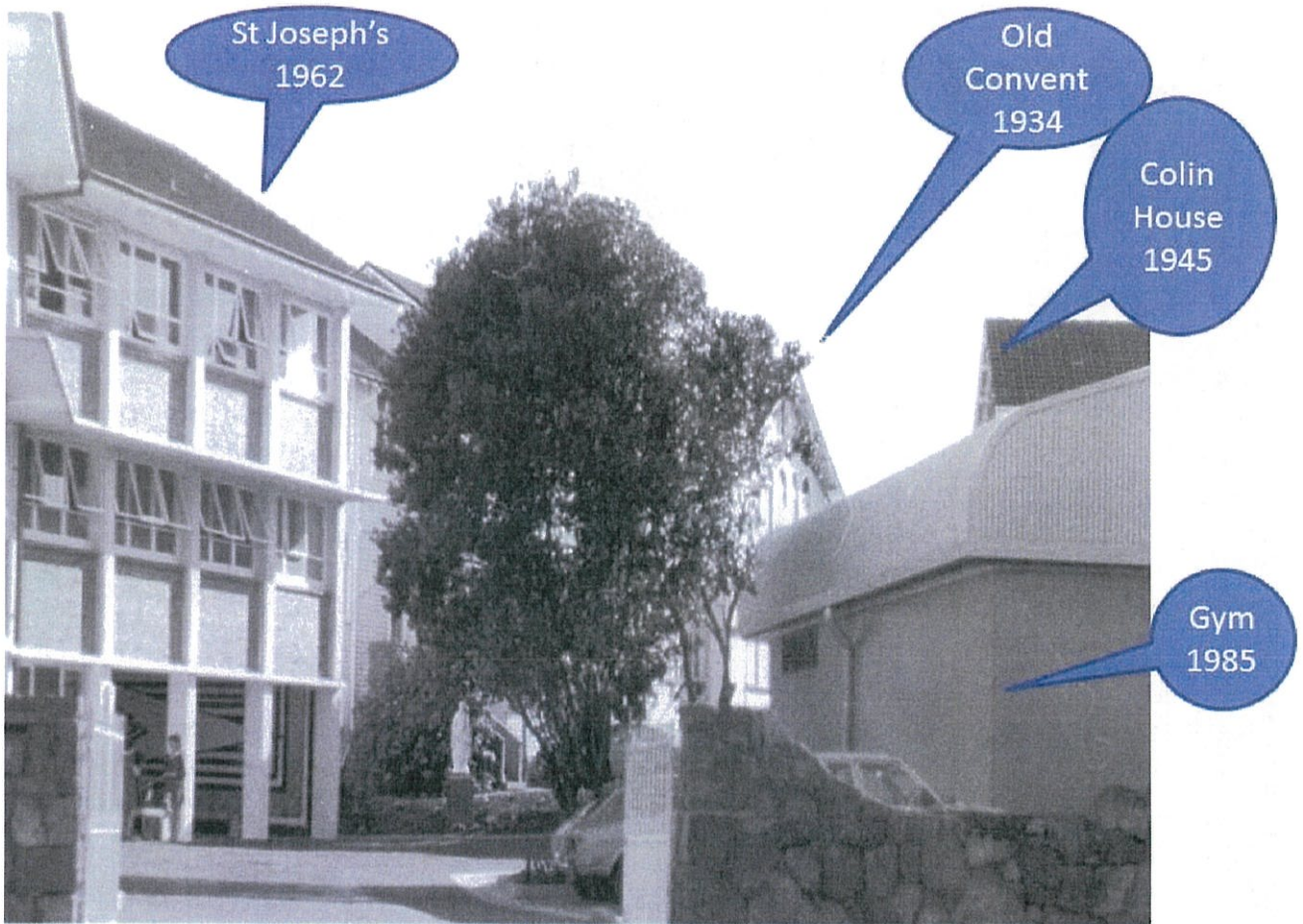
In 1985 construction took place for the new gymnasium/multipurpose hall. The building at the back is primary junior school, which is still there today. The lawn of the previous photo and the circular drive were lost by this construction.



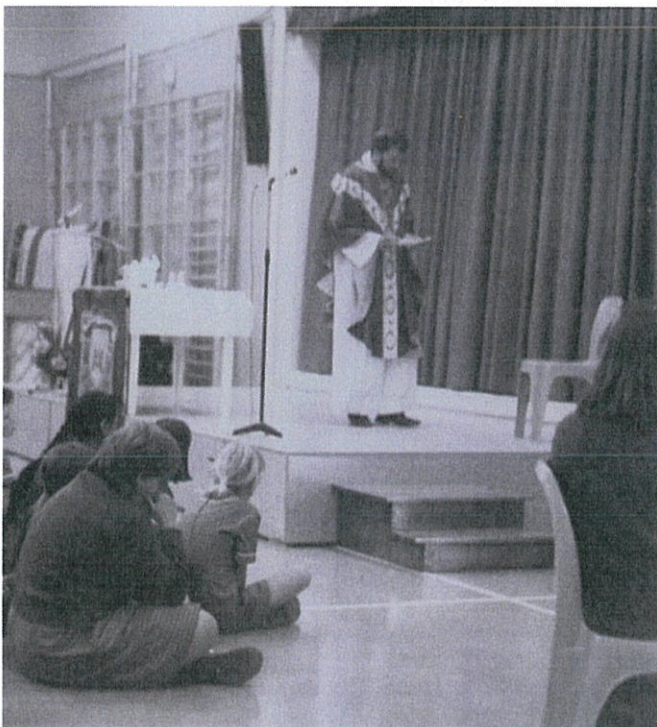
The new gym enabled a range of activities to develop in the College including gymnastics.



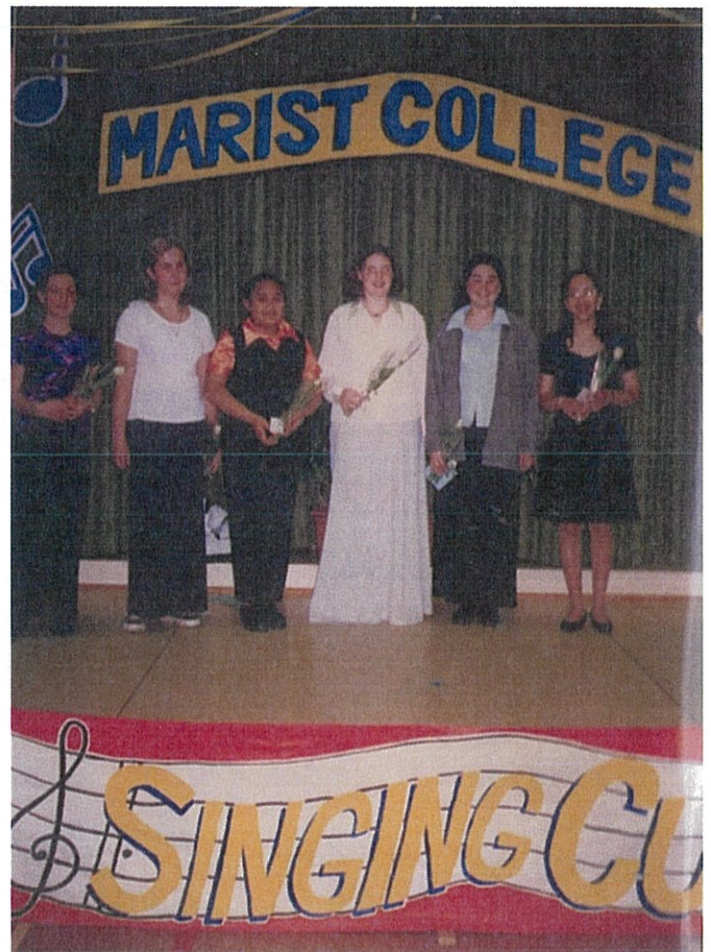
View from Alberton Ave. The entrance was relocated to its present position. Two prefabs can be seen in the left of the picture. These were relocated to the field when the new Administration area was built on the front of St Joseph's in 1995.



This is the view from Alberton Ave in 1985.



Above: Fr Robinson sm celebrates Mass. Everyone fitted in those days!



Right: The annual Singing Cup was held in the gym, a feature since 1962. The winners in 1998.



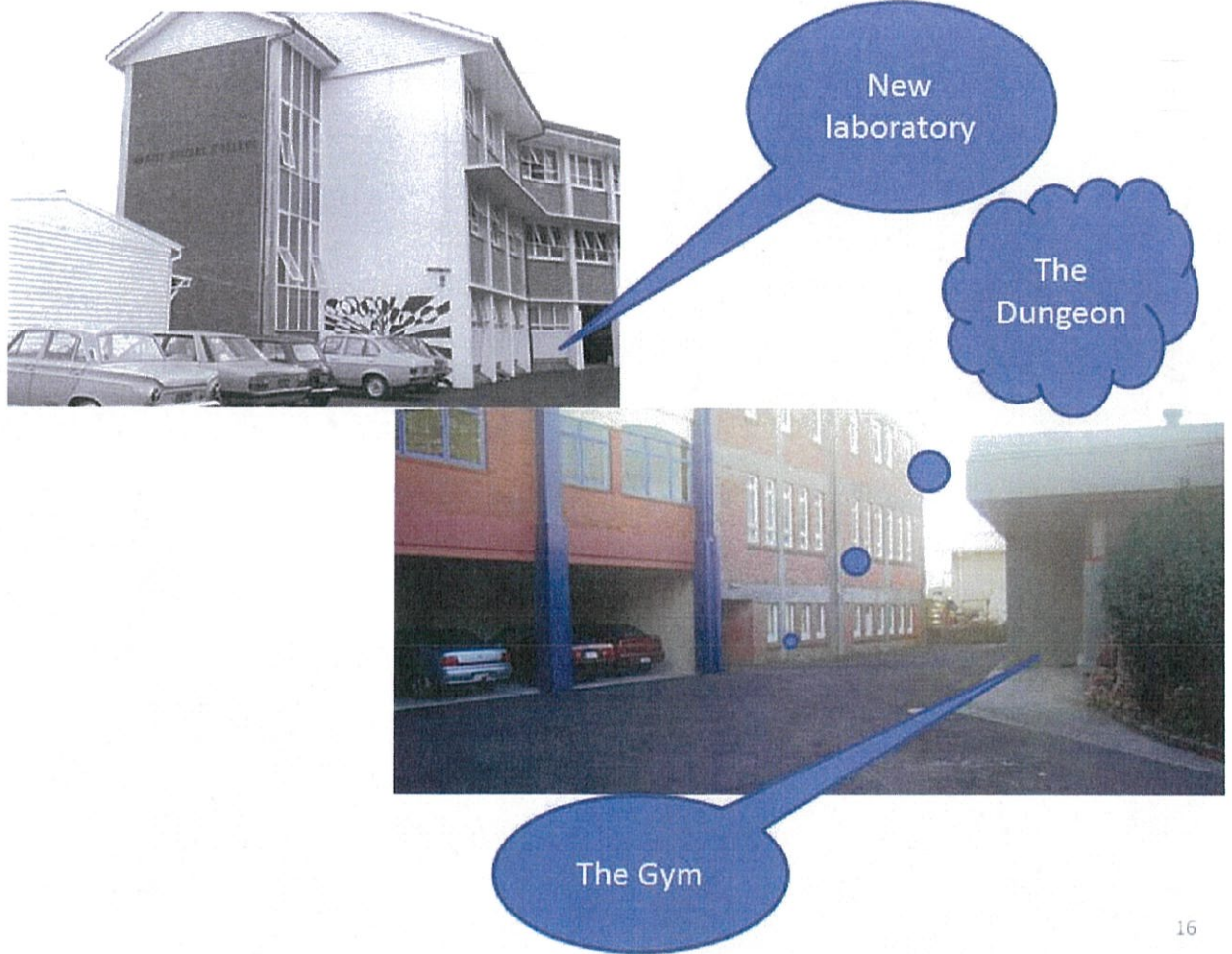
Left: The Demolition of "Old" Convent in 1998. A new convent had been built on Kitenui Ave as Integration would have put the sisters in the middle of the school and unable to have their property delineated. The "old Convent" no longer met building code requirements.

Below: The view from Alberton Ave during construction. Note the original high school building still stands and was used as an art room until the Juliana Library and Information Centre and art room were built in 1999.



Right: The view from the tennis court side when 'Original High School Building' was demolished in 1999





Top Left – A view of St Joseph’s in 1985. Part of the basement had been walled in to create another science laboratory.

Bottom Right—The connection from St Joseph’s to Colin house 1998, staff parking for the Principal and Senior Management. The Dungeon had by this time become the caretaker’s room.

The Marist Sisters gift the College to the Diocese of Auckland 2001



From the time of Integration, the Marist Sisters began to consider their future in the College as staff and as proprietors. The number of sisters available as staff was declining and they felt they could not sustain ownership and all that it meant especially in terms of building development. They negotiated with the Bishop of Auckland to gift the College to him. Negotiations were completed in 2001 and marked by a gathering of the College community and diocesan representatives. Ownership of the College now rests with the Bishop of Auckland as proprietor.

The final phase of development – Demolition of Colin House and the original gymnasium



2009



December 2011

Early 2012



Top Left – The beginning of the demolition of Colin House. A farewell was held for ex-students.

Top Right - The space remained empty while the Board of Trustees worked with the Diocese to get permission for the rebuild.

Bottom Left – The demolition of the first gym began as soon as the 2011 NCEA exams were over.

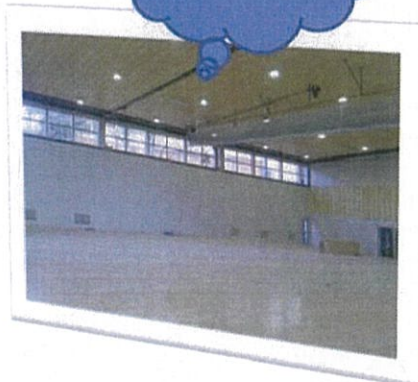
Bottom Right – The site was once again cleared and reshaped.



July 2012

Dawn
Blessing
Oct
2012

October
2012



During 2012 construction continued. A moving Dawn Blessing was held to lift the tapu and to enable the use of the Gymnasium for public examinations.



Blessing and Opening December
2012



Top Left – Karanga to the official guests

Bottom Left - Opening of plaque – Mr. Alan McArdle (Chairperson, Board of Trustees), Bishop Patrick Dunn (Bishop of Auckland, proprietor), Sr. Gemma Wilson (Sector Leader of the Marist Sisters New Zealand), Mrs. Monica Johnson (Principal).

Top Right – Prayer accompanied by the presentation of symbols related to our history: The cross – faith in Jesus Christ as our foundation, The Marist tradition embodied in Jean-Claude Colin and Jeanne Marie Chavoin, and symbols for each department that will teach in the new buildings. Megan Hartevelt brought hers on behalf of the Physical Education department who after long waiting and disruption through every building project since 1982 finally have a wonderful facility.

Bottom Right – a view of the Atrium

A unique feature of this opening was that the guests and the college community were able to see what each new space would be used for.



Left: The Music Suite, with the orchestra performing.



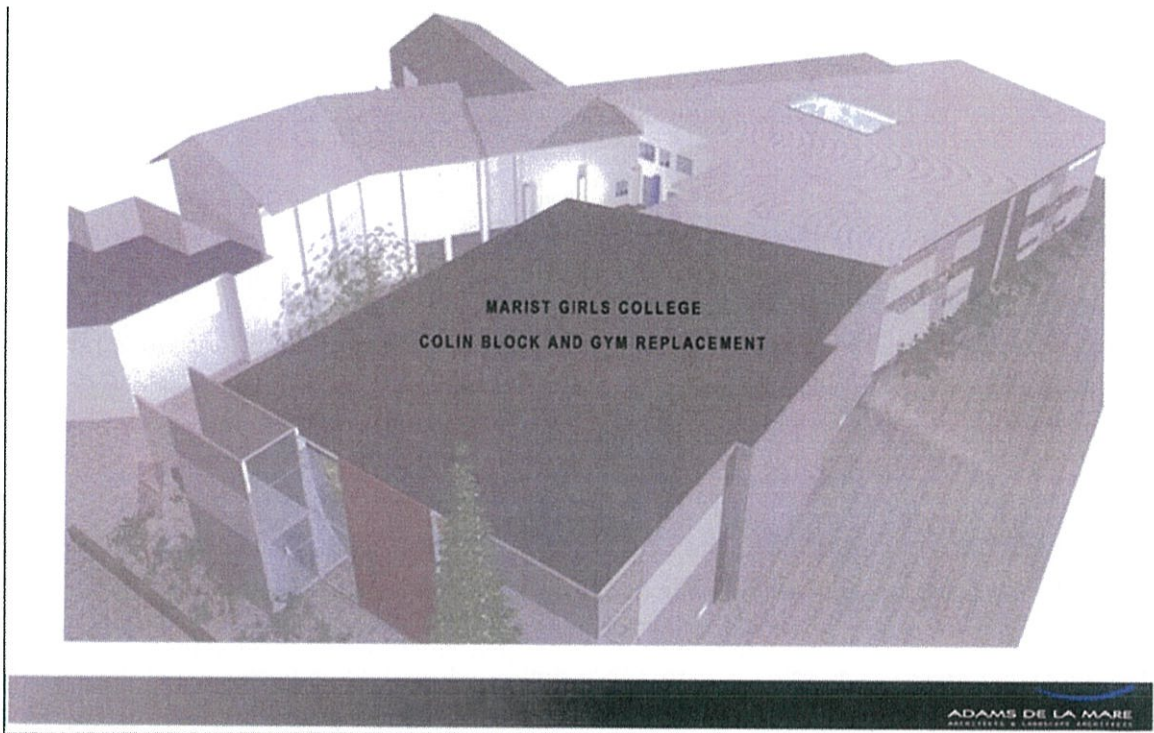
Right: The 2012 Stage Challenge group perform their finale in the Gym.



Left: Kapa Haka wearing piupiu from the 1960's which are stored in the Archives and used for special occasions. The bodices also have the same design as those from the early Maori Club



Right: The new dance room



The architect's view of how the new buildings connect with the current buildings



The demolition of the oldest prefabs and the removal of more recent ones was completed by January 15th 2013.

We are prefab-less for the 1st time since 1956!

Built on rock ...

by Sister Lorraine Campbell sm, Archivist

Located on the slopes of Te Puke O Wairaka/Mt Albert, the remnants of various ancient eruptions have always provided a challenge in the development of the College grounds and buildings. "Hitting" rock in the course of new constructions inevitably delayed them and added to the cost, but never diminished the commitment to providing the best facilities which could be afforded for the students at the time.

Followers of Jesus are urged to build their houses on rock, not on sand. *Everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like the wise, who built their house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall because it had been founded on rock.* (Matt 7:24-25 RSV). It is this foundation which has been the most significant in the Marist College's history. Committed to living the Gospel in Mary's way the Marist Sisters had come to Mt Albert in 1927.

Education from a Marist perspective has always been seen as part of the church's mission of announcing God's love. Within the year and with few resources, they had committed themselves to beginning a private secondary school, which also had a primary section, as well as to continuing to run the parish primary school.

This article will briefly outline the development of a national education system in New Zealand in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and describe the beginnings of Marist College in the context of this history.

A Brief History of New Zealand Education

The earliest Catholic school in New Zealand was opened by lay people in 1841 a year after the Treaty of Waitangi had established a relationship between the British Crown and Maori. Bishop Pompallier and his successors throughout New Zealand, sought religious congregations to establish schools. Initially, under a provincial system, some financial support was provided. But when the provincial governments were abolished in 1876 and a national government established, the provision of primary education aroused debates over the place of religious education and the practice of a denominational faith in the new system. Primary Education, free, compulsory and secular since the Education Act of 1877, concluded with the Proficiency Certificate.¹ The Catholic response was to build their own parochial schools usually staffed by religious congregations of sisters or brothers and sometimes priests.

Students in State schools could, after completing their Proficiency, compete for scholarships to secondary schools, although Catholic students were not encouraged to do so, as such schools were considered "godless". The Education Act of 1917 required all secondary schools, now attended by

¹ Abolished in 1936

37% of children, to offer free places to those who passed Proficiency. There were several secondary schools for catholic boys. But with all students receiving primary education the demand for secondary education for girls was increasing. Though required to be registered after a certain time, these primary and secondary schools were considered private schools. The State gave no assistance to cover costs. The entire Catholic system was built on the sacrificial generosity of parents, parish communities and religious congregations.

The other factor that muddied efforts to obtain state aid was the interdenominational rivalry of the Catholics and Protestant churches at the time exacerbated by rigid positions defending one's own denomination, and bitter arguments during World War One over "the conscription of clergy, Papal neutrality and Irish-self-determination."²

This state of affairs continued through the twentieth century, the church repeatedly putting a case for "state aid". Secondary education became compulsory to age 15 in 1945. The decline in the number of religious to staff schools and the need for more lay staff to be employed, the demands of a widening curriculum and the financial costs of maintaining significant capital expenditure brought the catholic system to the brink of collapse in the 1960's. Since the 1940's, Catholic schools had fallen behind other private schools and state schools in terms of class sizes, facilities and buildings.³ A solution was finally agreed to with the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act 1975, "after much soul searching and long negotiations between Church leaders and Government"⁴ By 1983 the Act integrated all the Catholic schools into the state system of education in such a way that they could preserve and develop their "Special Character". All running costs and salaries were met on the same basis as state schools. It remained the responsibility of the church to bring buildings and facilities up to the standards of state schools.

The Marist Sisters in New Zealand 1927

It is into the earlier context that the Marist Sisters came in 1927. The two pioneers were Mother Bernard (Mary Gorman) an indomitable and resourceful Irish woman and Sister Austin (Pearl Woodbury) an Australian. Born in county Sligo in 1882, Sister Bernard made her profession as a Marist Sister in October 1907. A few months later she set out for Australia with four companions to establish the first house of the Marist Sisters in Sydney. She taught in both primary and secondary schools there. In 1925 she was a foundation member of the new mission school at Lautoka, Fiji. The bishop in Fiji was none too pleased when she was sent to New Zealand to begin the mission here in 1927. "In the years that followed her foresight and enterprise earned her the title 'Bernard the Builder'. Not only did she govern her immediate communities, but her interest and practical help extended to other New Zealand houses as well. She became a well-known figure from Waitaruke, in the far north of the North Island, to Wellington".

² Sweetman, R. A fair and just solution? A History of the Integration of Private Schools in New Zealand, 2002, Palmerston North, Dunmore Press, p29

³ Ibid. p.40 quoting Spencer 1967.

⁴ Catholic Education Office Information Brochure. 2005

Born in 1904, Sr. Austin made her profession as a Marist Sister in September 1924. In 1925 she began her teaching career of forty-eight years as a foundation member of the community at Lautoka with Mother Bernard. She was to be a foundation member of four more communities during her life - Mount Albert, Herne Bay, Karori in New Zealand and of the Blacktown community in Sydney.⁵

These two sisters had come to New Zealand at the request of the parish priest of Mt Albert, Fr. Gondringer sm, to establish a primary school in the developing suburb. Within a year he had encouraged them to purchase the land the parish had bought for them in order to build a High School, but also to reduce the considerable debt of the fledgling parish. "The Bishop has given permission to have a high and boarding school, and says "open soon even if you have only 2".⁶ The permissions were obtained. "Towards the end of 1927 a two story building containing a classroom, dining room and a dormitory divided into cubicles was commenced. "⁷ It was in effect a private school. Mother Bernard was not enthusiastic about the purchase of "such a small property" for "they had aspired to purchasing a property suitable for a boarding establishment"⁸, no doubt with the models from England and Ireland in mind. She also notes "Fr. Gondringer in his zeal for the Congregation had pointed out reasons for opening a boarding school as soon as possible." Without specifying what these were she says they "proved later on to be quite unfounded."⁹

"We began with three students" ... This phrase has often been repeated down the years by staff and students alike at Marist College. Mother Bernard's description of the building in a letter to Mother Marie Joseph, September 1927 when negotiations are going on, stated "It will be a two story and 55 feet long. There will be two classrooms – upstairs landing, lavatory, dressing room with basins and cupboards, two bathrooms, and dormitory (Made wide enough to have corridor later on and two rows of cells. The chapel of course would be under [the] dressing rooms. A great deal can be done in wood – and New Zealand wood is beautiful Now that music lessons are coming on (we have just got three new ones) I think we would easily carry a debt of £2,000 and it will be less about £1700."¹⁰

Sr. Alexius arrived New Zealand in February 1928 and later wrote her recollections of the beginnings of the High School. "Mother Bernard and I were the teachers. [The school] was so small that all classes and pupils fitted into one room. ... Later when numbers increased a room was added at right angles to the verandah and later still a very small portion was added to this and fitted up as a Science room. It was at this stage that we applied for government registration which was not granted until the required number of pupils attended ... and a larger Science room was provided".¹¹ After Colin House had been built, including the required science laboratory, registration was obtained in 1945

⁵ Christieson K., *Necrology of Sisters who have ministered in New Zealand*, 2005 pp11,37

⁶ Letter from Mother Bernard to Mother Marie Joseph, Superior General, 18th September, 1927 ASM-GA

⁷ Christieson, p22

⁸ Mother Bernard personal papers A/5/3 1.3 Mother Bernard on Mt Albert, AMSPANZ

⁹ Mother Bernard personal papers A/5/3 1.3 Mother Bernard on Mt Albert, AMSPANZ

¹⁰ Mother Bernard Letters on the beginnings in New Zealand, 18th September 1927 Mt Albert OC51/73D, AMSPANZ

¹¹ Sr. Alexius, Personal Papers "Memories of Early Mount Albert Days M3.1 A/5/3 AMSPANZ

Mother Bernards letters also indicate Catholic efforts at the time to receive some state aid. Writing to Mother Elizabeth in April 1928 she refers to the issue that was at the heart of Catholic efforts to get state aid, namely the fear of state secondary schools as “Protestant. “You would not be surprised at our endeavours to keep the girls with us for Secondary work if you knew the conditions. Children of seven talk of going to the “Grammar” (Public school) only ... hence our ambition to have a classroom in the Convent - it is large enough for 40 girls The roll grew in 1929 to ten boarders, both primary and secondary. The focus was mainly on commercial subjects.¹² In 1936 the primary school boarders joined the classes at the parish primary school as the secondary school roll began to grow. The parish school did not bring in the necessary finances both to provide education and to meet the sisters’ financial needs. Thus the private school in the convent, teaching a more limited secondary curriculum and music lessons, was necessary for their sustenance. Rose Bourke, a local girl at the time of the arrival of the sisters, and later a Marist Sister, Sr. Margarita, recently gave her impressions of Marist Convent High School she attended in 1936. The teachers were Sr. Kostka – English language and literature, Sr. Alexius- Maths, Botany, Singing, Sr. Mary Mullen – the first New Zealand vocation to the Marist Sisters, French and Latin, Mother Therese – Religion. Sport at the time consisted of nine-aside basketball (Netball) and tennis.¹³

Over the years the roll grew steadily, and the boarding facility catered for 65 girls at its maximum. These girls came from country areas in New Zealand and from overseas. From the beginning the College had links to the Marist Sisters’ missions in Fiji and Tonga, both through students who came as boarders and sisters transferring from one place to another in Oceania and sisters newly arrived from France, England and Ireland. Marist Sisters’ communities had been established in Fiji (1892) Australia (1908), Tonga (1924). In 1955 there were 93 students at Marist College, in 1963 – 250; 1974 – 335 students. The roll at Integration in 1981, was capped at 471, 411 in the College and 60 in the attached Intermediate School. Over the years applications to the Ministry of Education for a roll increase have been granted up to the maximum of 750 girls in 2010.

Marist College has been through various transformations having expanded in its roll, diversified its curriculum and extra-curricular activities, become even more ethnically and culturally diverse, and from being staffed exclusively by sisters is now exclusively staffed by lay staff. It has weathered social, political, economic and educational change. At all times seeking to remain faithful to the principles of Catholic and Marist education, Marist Convent High School, Marist Sisters’ College and Marist College has endeavoured to educate the young women in its care in a holistic way.

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Original article: January 2012, adapted for 85th Jubilee May 18th, 2013

ASM-GA – Archives of the Marist Sisters’ – General Administration
AMSPANZ – Archives of the Marist Sisters Province of Aotearoa-New Zealand

¹² Mother Bernard personal papers A/5/3 1.3 Mother Bernard on Mt Albert, AMSPANZ

¹³ Bourke, Sr. Margarita sm., Reflections 2010