

# REMEMBERING THINGS PAST: THE TEKAKWITHA SHRINE

By Sister Margaret Clarke

1945 was a big year for statuary! St. Thomas More moved into the College library, a statue of Our Lady of Victory was installed on the newly-completed Victory Hall nursing students' residence, and it was also the year that Sister Scholastica Bush began writing the community annals. Sister Scholastica was an avid collector of all things collectable and had numerous friends and acquaintances who scoured the local antiques dealers for items she might display in her Tower Hall "museum." She had also acquired a rather impressive group of Native American artifacts (later "loaned" to the University of Minnesota—but never returned—and, we hope, eventually repatriated.) In keeping with her interest in this area, and with no explanatory preamble, on June 14, 1945 she writes: "The statue of Tekakwitha carved out of California redwood by Ben Hagen came today. It is simple, almost crude, and very effective for our purpose." It was a small statue, less than two feet tall, and was probably intended for the Native American section of her museum.

By September of that year, she had a new idea: "I spoke to Reverend Mother about a shrine for Tekakwitha and obtained her approval. Sister Ildephonse has been doing a very lovely piece of landscaping and gardening just beyond the convent garden. The flagstone walk . . . to the left leads just nowhere. Sister said she wished she had a statue to place there as a sort of end goal. I suggested my wood carving of Tekakwitha." Both Sister Ildephonse and Mother Athanasius were enthusiastic; Mother Athanasius mentioned that St. Mary's Hospital had an excellent stonemason in its employ. Sister Scholastica had been collecting rocks for several years for a grotto in the pine grove and donated those to the cause, soliciting donations from other Sisters as well. Sister Monica Laughlin recalls giving some stones collected in Africa by her miner-father. Sister Annella remembers her group of young Sisters carrying the rocks down to the site.

On October 27, 1945, the shrine was completed and dedicated with a procession of College students and Sisters honoring the occasion. The statue stood behind glass in a shingled enclosure, supported by a pedestal of the donated stones. A relic of the saint was housed in a miniature "tepee" inside the shrine. In the 1960s Sisters Alice Lamb and Mercedes Ryan took over the gardening of the shrine area.



*College students at the shrine about 1946*



*The shrine before it was dismantled – 1980s*



In 1997, with the expansion of the College Little Theater, the shrine was demolished, and the current whereabouts of the statue are unknown. In October 1999, a statue of Kateri Tekakwitha donated by the Renier family of Duluth (relatives of Sister Generosa Martin) was installed in a new, simple shrine a few feet away from the original location.



**BLESSED KATERI TEKAKWITHA (1656-1680)**  
Feast day: July 14

Kateri (a form of Catherine) was born to an Algonquin Christian mother and a Mohawk father. As a young child she survived smallpox, which left her scarred and partially blind. She was baptized by the Jesuits, and eventually found it necessary to leave her place of birth and live in a Christian settlement at Sault Sainte Marie. Her life was one of faith and courage, and she was notable for patience, purity, and a love of penance. The Church designated her “Blessed” in 1980, and the process of her canonization is proceeding. One of the windows in Our Lady Queen of Peace Chapel was dedicated to her.

*Photos courtesy of  
Monastery Archives*



Over 135 historical photographs from the archives of the Monastery and the College are now available online on the Minnesota Reflections website, <http://reflections/mndigital.org>. On the Minnesota Reflections homepage, under Browse, click “by collection” and scroll down to College of St. Scholastica or St. Scholastica Monastery, and click “view the collection.” In the Monastery collections you will find pre-1950 photos of the Sisters at work and play and all of the buildings Sisters have constructed, plus a few historical photos from St. Mary’s Hospital