

The Auburn Foundation, originally the Sacramento Foundation, dates its history back into the gold rush era. Founded from San Francisco in 1857, the early sisters came into an environment of disease, constant change, floods and the challenge to meet the needs of families and youth in an emerging culture.

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Mary Baptist Russell brought her sisters to Sacramento to meet the pressing educational needs of the region and to care for those children orphaned through mining accidents or illness. The rigors of the area were immediately apparent when in 1861 flood waters inundated the city for six months.

The young community found itself engaged in a broad diversity of works. In addition to teaching the children and providing for the educational needs of adults, the sisters were the first visiting nurses in the city, founded a subscription library for the adult population and cared for orphans. All this was done with minimal financial resources support of a very small Catholic population.

Mother M. Vincent Phelan, first superior of the Sacramento foundation.

The Sacramento foundation was a branch house of St. Mary's in San Francisco. Sisters moved freely between the two foundations and Mother Russell was intimately involved in the life of both. In 1886 this would



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change. With
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establishment of the Sacramento diocese in that year, it was thought wise to have the community become an independent foundation of Mercy. Mother Mary Vincent Phelan became its first superior in 1887.

Over the ensuing years, the ministry of the sisters expanded to include health care. In the late 1800's, responding to an invitation from doctors in the city, the sisters took over the administration and ownership of Ridge Home, a small hospital which had been owned by physicians. The following year they moved to larger quarters,

DONATE Mater Miserecordiae Hospital, better known throughout the city as "The Sisters' Hospital."

The sisters were part of the fabric of the civic community. As the city grew so did the outreach of the sisters. By the 1940's the ministry of the community expanded to Shasta County in northern California where they founded both a hospital and elementary school. St.

Joseph Academy, once the only school administered by the sisters found itself one of 12 schools in the diocese staffed by Mercy Sisters.

In the early 1940's the community moved to its present Motherhouse in Auburn. It was at that time that the community

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The Community Today

Today the tradition of Mercy established by the early sisters thrives within an atmosphere of collaboration and partnership. The geographic proximity of the sisters has enabled close bonds to be developed not only among the sisters

themselves, but also with the larger civic community. In the 1980's the community elected to expand its mission through collaboration with others. Two Mercy Foundations were established to support the works of Mercy, one in Sacramento and one in the Redding area. These foundations, initially founded to support health care ministry, expanded to provide ongoing support for the other works of Mercy.

The mission of the Mercy Sisters today takes many forms. In addition to the traditional works of education and health care, sisters are engaged in retreat work, social service and pastoral ministries. The opening of Mercy Center Auburn highlighted a commitment to provide a

place of prayer and spiritual growth for the people of northern California. Spiritual direction and retreat work is a growing part of community ministry.

Sharing ministerial leadership with lay leaders has enabled members to respond to the needs of the time, such as the **DONATE** ally homeless, outreach to immigrant families and children with learning challenges.

The geographic area served by the Auburn Foundation has traditionally been short of religious resources. Today, clerical personnel are unable to meet the spiritual needs of the people. Responding to these needs, several sisters serve as parish pastoral associates and other parish

roles. To better respond to the expanding needs of God's people, sisters joined with members of five other communities in 2008 to form the West Midwest Community. Over 150 years after Mother Mary Baptist Russell came to Sacramento, there is no shortage of needs to which our sisters and associates gladly respond.

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