

# Looking Around



By James J. Brown

THE SISTERS of Mercy, whose remarkable record of service to Sacramento and Northern California covers more than a century, were a foresighted bunch. But never the hard, shrewd business heads.

They sat in a rosy real estate position, back around 1859-60. They had cannily acquired the half-block property along M Street, between 10th and 11th, a couple years before. Their thought was to expand the St. Joseph's School, then being conducted in rooms under St. Rose's Church, at 7th and K.

They had only been there a year or two, and already enrolment hovered at 200. But just when they would get funds to expand was a question.

Meantime, they held the M Street property in case.

IN THOSE YEARS the Capitol building of the new young State of California was located in the granite structure which later was to become the county courthouse, at 7th and I. But the state planned to build a magnificent new Capitol and the city had turned over to the state, for that purpose, the block bounded by I, J, 9th and 10th Streets—now the site of the City Plaza.

Groundbreaking ceremonies were held, plans were drawn, architects' drawings were pored over. Then came a legal hitch and the site had to be abandoned.

The state had to find a new location. The selection narrowed on the four-block property bounded by L, M, 10th and 12th Streets—embracing the property owned by the Sisters of Mercy. How the speculators, the robber barons, would have relished their choice bargaining spot!

But the sisters turned their land over to the state for exactly what they paid for it—\$4,850. The location would be worth many times that amount today.

And then they had to turn around and pay \$13,000 for the property at 9th and G Streets on which the present St. Joseph Academy for Girls and the St. Joseph's Convent and Elementary School have been located to these many years.

THUS THE BACKGROUND on the locating of the academy for girls, actually the first finishing school in this region, which attracted resident students from all parts of the state. The Sisters of Mercy had not arrived in Sacramento in 1857 to polish their business acumen, but to establish a school.

The long-range effects of their work with the young women of the raw frontier capital are nigh incalculable. Much of the city's cultural, artistic, charitable and social service activities has been spurred by alumnae of St. Joseph. The sisters themselves, of course, went on to establish other schools, orphanages and hospitals.

In 1907, St. Joseph was already a venerable institution, marking its golden jubilee.

In preparation for the event, a St. Joseph Academy Alumnae Assn. was formed—a group which has come to number more than 2,000 to date. Sister Mary Evangelist Morgan, in her book "Mercy, Generation to Generation," reported:

"Early members included Mrs. Melchior Diepenbrock, whose family is well represented in Sacramento; Mrs. Robert Devlin, who died recently; Miss Annie Artz, now Sister Mary Bernard of the Sisters of Mercy; Miss Rose Sheehan, who died a few years ago; Mrs. Mame Terwilliger, whose son, the Rev. John Terwilliger is one of the priests of the diocese; Miss Emma Von Hatten, for many years the outstanding principal of the Marshall School; Marcella Turman (Yost), Frances Morgan (Brady), May Williams, Mary O'Neil, Ethel Boden and Regina Sexton are early graduates, and recently deceased are Mar-

ALL OF THE ABOVE is prompted by the forthcoming demise of the historic St. Joseph Academy for Girls. So many generations have seen its halls and classrooms.

It is not being torn down. The high school, or academy portion, will be taken over by St. Joseph's Elementary School, which will continue to function. The convent will remain.

There is not the neat punctuation of an era which comes with the razing of a building. The girls will go on next September to the new Bishop Manogue High School for Girls, being built this summer at 21st and Broadway, former site of the Christian Brothers School. It also will be run by the Sisters of Mercy.

But something has ended, a new nostalgia has entered many lives.

Old grads will mark the occasion tomorrow night, with a "Last Dance" in the school auditorium, and on June 19 they will hold a "Reunion Day" and "Fashions of Yesteryear" program at the school for alumnae, families and guests.

Many of them will be able to see Mom's and even Grandma's pictures among the hundreds of old photographs adorning the academy's corridors.