

Claremorris

Some people from Claremorris walked to Ballindine to meet them and welcome them. They were followed by three additional Sisters on 6th January - Srs. Patricia Bodkin, Joseph Kennedy and Aloysius Henderson. Sr. Magdalen McDonnell was appointed Superior of the newly founded Convent. Fr. McHale intended to make Claremorris an Independent Foundation with its own Novitiate. In November 1877, two Postulants - Margaret Mary Judge and her sister, Mary Clare Judge, were admitted and received in 1878. Due to the early death of Fr. McHale and the financial and legal problems which ensued, it was not possible to develop Claremorris as an independent house. The Novitiate was discontinued and the Novices were transferred to Tuam.

Fr McHale's motive for bringing the Sisters was to alleviate suffering and to do good to the poor. They immediately engaged in visitation of the sick and dying and visited the Workhouse to comfort the residents.

In 1878: the nucleus of what was to become St. Joseph's College began in the "Coach-house" where Sisters held classes in cookery, laundry and sewing for the women of the area. This enabled the women to make some money. Later, vegetable gardening and beekeeping classes were added, followed by butter-making and poultry-keeping. In 1900, these classes developed into a residential Training Course for girls in cookery and rural domestic economy. This progressed successfully under the Department of Agriculture until government funding was withdrawn in 1984.

A school for the children of the needy was also opened in 1878 and this was housed in the Farm Buildings at the rear of the residence. These were very difficult times for the Sisters as they received no remuneration until 1882, when the school was placed under the Board of National Education.

In 1906, a small number of boarders were admitted and they were accommodated in the convent building. New classrooms were built in 1907, and in 1924, the senior classes in the Primary School operated as a "Secondary Top". The Secondary School did not open until 1940 and it became one of the "A" grade schools in the country. They worked under appalling conditions with no running water for toilets, and the only heat was from small stoves in the classrooms. Later, the convent was reroofed and a central heating system was installed. In the process of re-roofing, the top section was raised, to provide extra accommodation for the Boarders. When a new Primary School was opened in 1956, the former school was renovated and modernised as part of the secondary school. The debt incurred put a huge strain on the convent resources. This was managed by careful budgeting and ploughing Sisters' salaries into the school.

Many extensions were added over the years -1966, 1967, 1968, 1970, 1976 and 1978 and 1979. These developments provided extra sleeping accommodation, science laboratories, gymnasium, library, art room, canteen; playing courts for tennis, basketball, volley ball and hockey; an ultra-modern technology room, media education facilities etc. together with a major extension in two phases completed in 1987. They believed in the saying, "*The future of humanity lies in the hands of those who are strong enough to provide coming generations with reasons for living and hoping.*" (The Church Today).

The boarding school closed in the year 2000.

The trusteeship of Mount St. Michael's Secondary School is with CEIST and the ownership of the property has been transferred to EDUCENA.

The Primary School has been transferred to the Diocese.

The convent closed in 2000 and it was sold in 2002.