

Sligo Foundation

They lived in a small rented house in Gaol Street (now Old Market Street). Later they moved to George's Street (now Lord Edward Street). They distributed Famine Relief for the Board of Governors daily. They had a House of Mercy. They visited in the fever hospital. They instructed people for the Sacraments.

From its inception, girls joined the new foundation. In the early years the professions and receptions were held by Bishop Brown in the public chapel and were of great interest to the local population.

St. Patrick's Convent was founded in a time of great poverty, during the Great Famine. Donations for the building had been made by people of all denominations and free labour ensured its completion. The Society of Friends donated food and clothing for the poor and medicine for the convent dispensary. This was remarkable generosity at such a time.

In 1849, in Holy Week, the Sisters moved to St. Patrick's Convent, on Chapel Hill. The Convent complex included classrooms, a House of Mercy, an orphanage, together with a public laundry which provided much needed finance and created employment for local women and girls.

In that year on the 15th of August, there was an outbreak of cholera in Sligo. The priests, doctors and Workhouse Authorities asked for the Sisters to come to work there, as the nurses had fled in fear of the disease. Because none of the Sisters died from that cholera outbreak, the present altar at the Holy Well, Tobernalt was erected in thanksgiving. This was the beginning of the much needed and appreciated apostolate of nursing, continued in the Fever Hospital, in the Workhouse, and later still in St John's Hospital.

On the 24th of September, the Sisters formally opened the first school for Catholic children in the new St. Patrick's Convent, under the National Board. One hundred children were enrolled. Within three years, an Industrial School was established with 150 girls learning needlework and crochet. From these beginnings, the Sisters initiated and managed primary schools, an Industrial School, an orphanage, a laundry, a renowned sewing school, a farm, a bakery, a dairy, a cookery school, a boarding school for students aspiring to go to training college and to teaching. They incorporated other primary schools into the complex, initiated typing and shorthand classes and developed a secondary school complex.