THE INSPIRATION
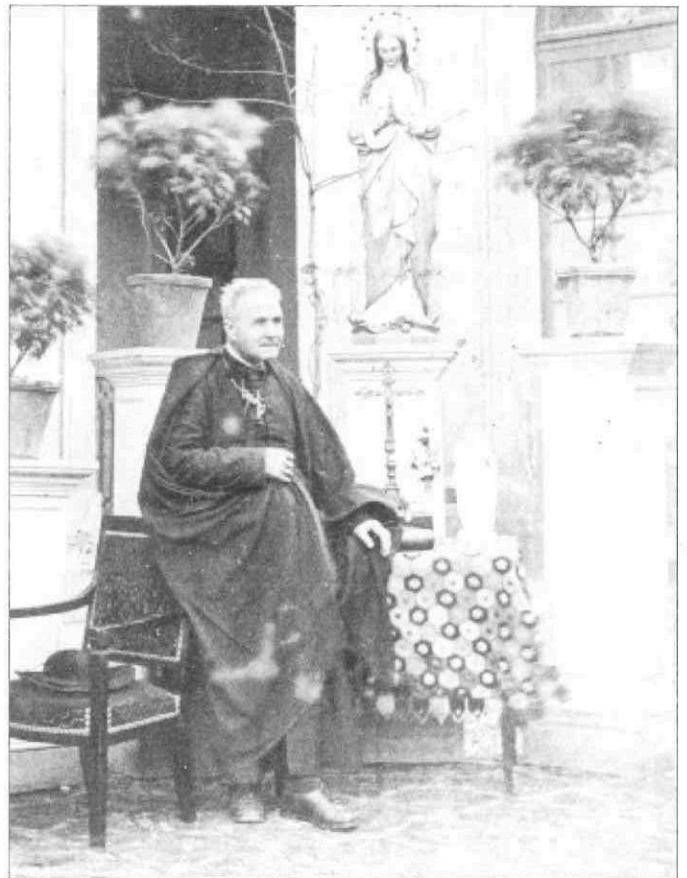
Once upon a time there was a spirit of goodwill. Our story of Marymount starts with a young French priest named Jean Antoine Gailhac who had the potential of a brilliant academic career but chose to throw his lot in with the poor and became Chaplain to the struggling City Hospital at Béziers. Gailhac, with the Apollonie Pelissier Cure and her companions, started a new religious congregation at the Good Shepherd chapel in Béziers for the Sisters dedicated to the Religious Sacred Heart of Mary (RSHM). Gailhac's dream had become a reality.

During the 1830's France was ruled under King Louis Philippe. The political climate was unstable; the Industrial Revolution was in progress and troubled agricultural years followed. Rural populations began to flock to the cities only to find poor housing and low wages. Religious congregations began taking charge of institutions devoted to health care, social aid and education of the masses. Hospitals, orphanages, boarding schools and shelters directed by religious congregations multiplied. In Beziers, Father Gailhac's orphanage, Refuge of the Good Shepherd, assisted with improving and addressing some of these unfortunate social conditions.

Eighteen years later, France was proclaimed a republic and euphoria followed. Under the democratic rule of Napoleon Bonaparte, the right to vote was extended to all male citizens.

Dynamism was evident throughout, lending rise to the community in Beziers. Mme Cure was fully occupied with working for the orphans and young women whom Gailhac tried to save from a life on the streets. Her work led to the establishment of a boarding school with a twofold mission: the Christian education of the daughters of local wealthy vineyard owners and financial help for the orphanage. The communities of sisters began to expand beyond France.

Father Gailhac

Apollonie Cure-Pelissier

It later became time to extend the religious community beyond France. By the 1870's contacts were established in Ireland, England and Portugal. Thanks to Miss Margaret Hennessey, an Irish woman who offered them a place, the community opened a school that housed twelve students in the city of Lisburn, Ireland. That same year, the foundation opened a school in England named *Saint James Catholic School* in Bootle, near Liverpool.
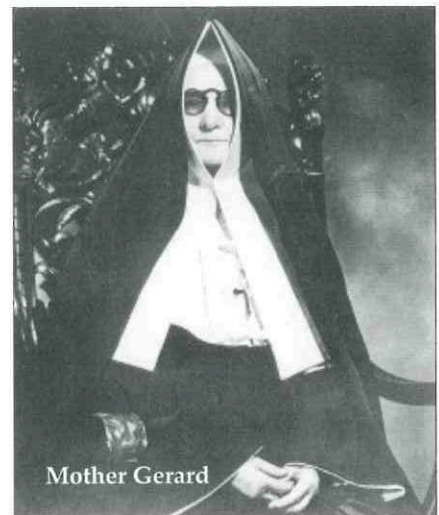

Mother Butler

An expansion of the RSHM community continued to flourish during the next thirty years. The leadership, cleverness, faith and strength of Mother Mary Joseph Butler, led to the establishment of Marymount, *La Montagne de Marie*. As one of the first established schools, Mother Butler began planning an intellectual and cultural center for the interchange of American and French Catholic girls in Paris, France. By 1921, the search for suitable property in Paris was begun. This search entailed visiting several locations both in the city and the suburbs, none of which showed much potential.

The first property purchased, near the Trocadero, proved to be unsuitable terrain and was sold soon afterwards. Mother Butler and Mother Gerard went to Neuilly, a suburb of Paris, and found a home for sale at 72, boulevard de la Saussaye. They purchased the home that very day. It would take time to secure Marymount as an established school, but they knew that with each decade of growth, Marymount had secured its position as a respected educational institution throughout Europe.

Through the dedicated efforts of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, doors opened at Marymount Schools in Tarrytown on the Hudson, New York City, Los Angeles, and Rome. These schools were affectionately known as *Mary's Mountain*.

The educational reputation of the Marymount schools was so well received that they opened two colleges in the United States and one in Canada. In Europe they expanded to Surrey, England and Barcelona, Spain. In addition to the establishment of Marymount schools, the RSHM order was responsible for organizing educational support for communities in Columbia (Bogota, Medellin, Baranquilla) and Rhodesia (Umtali).

Mother Gerard