



March 21, 1922 Opening Day at The Burnham Estate

It was the twenty-first of March, 1922, the first day of Spring. God could not have created a more beautiful day. The sky was a crisp, clear blue. The smell of orange blossoms wafted through the air, and tiny flower buds had begun to break forth on the trees that were the closest to the house. Actually, one couldn't really call it a house -- it looked very much like a mansion from the street. In fact, this beautiful home on Batavia, was the largest and most elegant Victorian home in the area. Today, March 21st, 1922, was opening day for the new home and headquarters of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Orange.

It was an exciting day for all involved. Of course, Mother Bernard, as well as her assistant, Mother Francis, and the book keeper of the congregation, Arthur Lirette, had seen the property before, because this was a big purchase. A loan of \$90,000 had been obtained from the Hibernia bank in San Francisco to finance the 20-acre purchase. This big decision was both a geographical boost and a financial risk.

Mother Bernard had been pondering this potential move for some time. While she loved the redwoods, and viewed them as the eighth wonder of the world, her heart and soul, as well as her zealous instincts told her that at some point the Congregation would need to expand beyond Humboldt County. In reality, she had just finished building a convent in Eureka that was large enough for all the new members. She'd built a school right alongside it and this school was thriving. When the virulent 1918 Flu Epidemic began to wind down, the Sisters began to partner with a couple of local doctors to enlarge and lay claim to a small hospital in town.

Mother Bernard was a key decision-maker about moving the headquarters of the Congregation 676 miles south -- from Humboldt County to the City of Orange. In 1922, this bold move could have been best described by one word: "futuring."

Mother Bernard had been concerned about the isolation of the congregation in Eureka. While there was an ultra-long railway that now joined the bay area to Humboldt County, the easiest route to the north was still by ship. The use of cars was more common, and slowly, highways were being constructed. Still, there was not a Golden Gate bridge; nor was there promise of a bridge to come.

Mother Bernard viewed Eureka as both beautiful and remote. Remote was not going to work for how she envisioned the congregation of the future.

Mother Bernard meant to teach us, her daughters, something important by this bold move:

- 1) Don't be afraid to risk, and**
- 2) Don't be afraid to move.**

Write this quote of Mother Bernard's down and keep it near to you. She didn't write a good deal to us, so each of her words is precious:

**"God will give you something special to do
that he won't ask of someone else,
so pay attention."**