

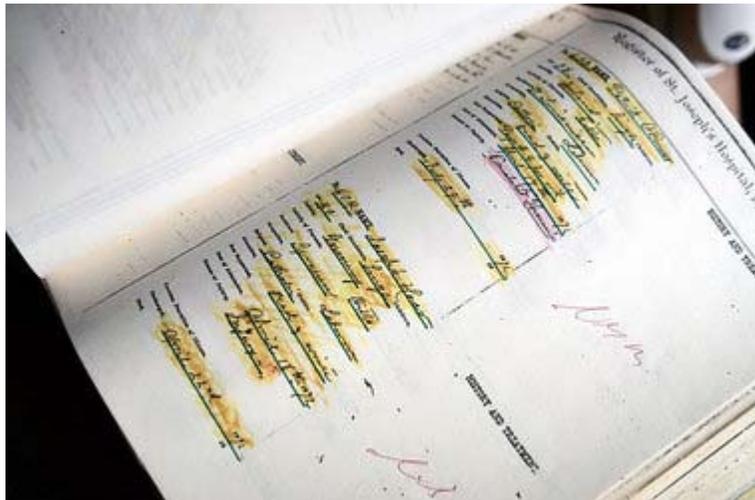
# Mother Marianne Cope's journey to sainthood: "No woman ever went out of Syracuse on a greater mission"

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**Renée K. Gadoua / The Post-Standard**

By



**Enlarge**

**Stephen D. Cannerelli / The Post-Standard**

The Blessed Marianne Museum in the Sisters of Saint Francis Motherhouse on Court Street in Syracuse has relics (such as her entries into the St. Joseph's 1870 admissions records) detailing the life of Blessed Marianne Cope who entered the Sisters of Saint Francis in Syracuse in 1862 and spent the last thirty years of her life serving leprosy patients in Kalaupapa, Molokai. Stephen D. Cannerelli / The Post-Standard

**Mother Marianne Cope's Journey to Sainthood** gallery (19 photos)

Barbara Koob moved from Utica to Syracuse in the summer of 1862, when she was 24, to enter the convent of the **Sisters of St. Francis**.

Twenty-one years later, the woman the world now knows as **Saint Marianne Cope** left Syracuse to work as a missionary among the lepers in Hawaii. Even during her lifetime, many considered her a saint for her bravery, compassion and leadership. She spent 35 years ministering to hundreds of people so feared that the Kingdom of Hawaii banished them to a remote, desolate peninsula of Kalaupapa on the island of Molokai.

"When the roll of the saints is called, Mother Marianne will be there," Syracuse reporter Fred Dutcher wrote in The Post-Standard after Mother Marianne died Aug 9, 1918. "Fifty-six of the eighty years of her life she gave in the service of the Man

of Galilee whose touch made a leper clean, and thirty-five of those she devoted in ministrations to the doomed people of Molokai.

"Mother Marianne's name will live on as that of a woman whose noble self-sacrifice ranks with the death-defying devotion of the martyrs of old. No woman ever went out of Syracuse on a greater mission, none from Syracuse ever gave more than she did. She left all she held dear, her friends, the highest office in the Third Order of St. Francis, which she then held, and every earthly tie, when she heard the call, 'Come to Molokai.'"

Dutcher's prediction about sainthood has come true. In a Christmas present, the Sisters of St. Francis learned Monday that Pope Benedict XVI proclaimed Mother Marianne a saint in the Roman Catholic Church, and she will be canonized next year. The designation came after an intense, detailed process of nearly 40 years. The Franciscan

sisters gathered thousands of pages of research about their heroine, toured the places she lived and worked and collected information about possible miracles, including two the Vatican ultimately ruled were healings of people whose recovery doctors could not explain.

The Vatican earlier this month confirmed it considered **Sharon Smith, of Chittenango, inexplicably recovered** from severe pancreatitis and infection in 2005. In 2004, the Vatican ruled that the 1993 **recovery of Kate Mahoney**, a Syracuse teenager with multiple organ failure, could not be medically explained and was therefore a miracle.

The long journey to sainthood began with a modest life in Central New York. From 1862 to 1883, the future saint walked the streets of Syracuse in her roles as Franciscan leader and administrator of **St. Joseph's Hospital**. She was among the Franciscan sisters who opened the 15-bed hospital in 1869 in a former dance hall and saloon on Prospect Hill.

Mother Marianne was born Jan. 23, 1838, in Germany. Before she was 2, her family moved to Utica and Americanized the last name from "Koob" to "Cope." She moved to Syracuse after her father died of an illness in 1862, while the country was in the midst of Civil War, and military recruiting offices lined **Hanover Square**. She took the name Marianne when she entered the convent.

#### Following in the Footsteps of Blessed Marianne Cope

After a second miracle was confirmed by Theologians, Pope Benedict XVI proclaimed Blessed Marianne Cope a saint on December 19, 2011. Blessed Marianne Cope entered the Sisters of Saint Francis in Syracuse in 1862 and spent the last thirty years of her life serving leprosy patients in Kalaupapa, Molokai. Several Sisters of Saint Francis of the Neumann Communities followed in the footsteps of Blessed Marianne Cope by serving in Kalaupapa, Molokai. In this video they talk about newly appointed Saint. Video by Stephen D. Cannerelli (2:39)

Mother Marianne was diminutive —about 5 feet tall — with a towering personality. Biographical accounts suggest she was a driven, organized and efficient leader who possessed great compassion and kindness. Accounts also hint at some unsaintly traits: a sometimes sharp tongue and perhaps a bit

of impatience.

For most of her time in Syracuse, Mother Marianne lived at St. Francis Convent near **Assumption Church** on North Salina Street, a parish founded in 1845 to serve Syracuse's German immigrant population.

"Pilgrimage and Exile: Mother Marianne of Molokai" is the definitive biography, written by the late Syracuse Franciscan Sister Mary Laurence Hanley and the late Hawaiian historian and writer O. A. Bushnell. The book describes Mother Marianne's life as administrator of St. Joseph's.

Mother Marianne lived at the hospital with the nurse-sisters she supervised while holding two other jobs. She supervised St. Francis Convent and held a leadership role in the larger community of sisters. She made the 30- to 40-minute walk — wearing a full-length skirt and a restrictive headpiece — to fulfill work obligations.

She also lived for a time at St. Anthony Convent, now at Grant Boulevard and Court Street.



Her order had been founded in 1860 by three



Frank Ordonez / The Post-Standard

This banner was hung last week outside Sisters of Saint Francis in Syracuse.

sisters from Philadelphia responding to a request to work with immigrants in Utica and Syracuse, which were then part of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany. The **Syracuse Diocese** would not be created until 1886.

The Syracuse-based Franciscans are one of many men's and women's religious communities that take their inspiration from St. Francis of Assisi, the 13th century Italian friar who cast off his family's wealth in favor of a life serving the poor and weak.

Syracuse was still a young city. There were no telephones here until 1875 nor electricity until 1878, and the Erie and Oswego canals still operated. By the 1860s, work was beginning on the railroad. While the city housed pockets of wealth, many residents — most of them recent immigrants from Europe — worked producing salt.

"The landscape of the North Side was dominated by the salt industry," said Dennis Connors, curator of history at the **Onondaga Historical Association**. "In front of the hospital to the west, you'd be looking across a vast area of salt-boiling blocks lining the Oswego Canal. All of the salt blocks had chimneys. It wouldn't have been the cleanest."

The North Side toward Wolf Street and Hiawatha Boulevard was an Irish area, while the neighborhoods closer to downtown were German. It was mostly a working-class area.

"There were saloons and taverns," Connors said. "It was kind of a rough area, with canal people coming through and salt workers. The salt industry paid good wages and you didn't need a lot of education. You just needed a strong back."

Mother Marianne did not keep a journal while she lived in Syracuse, so it's difficult to recreate her daily routine. She did keep journals while in Hawaii, and some survived, as have some letters. Few of her writings reveal personal thoughts; instead, the majority are business-like records. Several biographical accounts describe her as constantly busy with the administrative work of the order and the hospital.

A clue to her work ethic emerges in a recent biographical account by St. Joseph's Hospital. Mother Marianne is said to have "administered the hospital from top to bottom .. reverence for the patients was her main concern and she could often be found sitting by a patient's bedside after the lights went out. She even sent personal letters of condolences to relatives of patients who died at St. Joseph's."

She believed that everyone deserved to be treated respectfully, including alcoholics and lepers.

"The charity of the good knows no creed and is confined to no one place," she wrote in 1870.

She worked hard and probably was not able to take advantage of the cultural offerings of the day — the March 1868 presentation by Charles Dickens at the Wieting Opera House, Sarah Bernhardt's performance there in 1881 or the

**Cardiff Giant** sensation of 1869 at a farm south of Syracuse.

Since women could not vote until 1920, it's doubtful Mother Marianne would have been directly involved in politics. In 1869, the year the sisters opened St. Joe's, the State Democratic Convention was held in Syracuse. During the 1870s and 1880s, New York City's "Boss" Tweed operated his Upstate headquarters from the Vanderbilt Hotel at Warren and Washington streets.

Mother Marianne lived in Syracuse during a period of great growth. The city's population nearly doubled while she lived here, growing to about 64,000 by the time she left.

Iconic local businesses founded while she lived here include the Easy Washer Company, founded in 1877; Solvay Process, founded in 1879; and Lipe Machine, founded in 1880. **Syracuse University** opened Sept. 1, 1871, at Montgomery and East Genesee streets.

According to city directories, Mother Marianne's neighborhood, in what was then Syracuse's 1st and 2nd wards, included at least four breweries (Zett's, Haberle, Ryan's and National); Baumer candle manufacturing; a coal yard; a lime and plaster yard; a lumberyard; and a public school, bakery and hotel.

Most manual labor was done by immigrants.

"A lot of this work was dangerous," Connors said. "There was no OSHA. Death records from that era tell us people were dying from different diseases, from getting run over on railroads, getting arms stuck in machinery."

Despite the need for more hospital beds, the early Franciscans no doubt endured some discomfort from nonCatholics being treated in "a hospital with nuns walking around and crucifixes on the wall," Connors said.

Assumption Church served Germans and St. John the Baptist served the Irish, Connors said. The area around what is now Prospect and Butternut streets had three Lutheran churches, he said, and Catholics were a minority.

Anti-Catholicism was an undercurrent, and people with different languages and traditions were suspect.

Mother Marianne probably did not experience overt persecution, said Nancy Ring, a retired **Le Moyne College** religious studies professor.

"They did think Catholics were superstitious because of the sacraments," Ring said. "I'm sure she had some odd looks, but because she and the sisters did so much good work, especially with the hospitals, they were respected."

While lives were hard, nuns of the period often had more freedom to pursue unusual vocations than married women, Ring said.

"She was symbolic or typical of a great many religious women of the time who, when they saw a need, reacted to it," she explained. "Wherever there was a need, they picked up and went. They did it in a matter-of-fact way and didn't think they were being particularly brave."

On Oct. 22, 1883, Mother Marianne and her six companions carried black serge bags and small wicker baskets packed with pickled peaches, bread, roasted chicken and fruit from the convent's orchard. The eager party headed from the North Side convent to the railroad station to begin a journey by train to San Francisco and then by steamer to Honolulu.

Mother Marianne was 45. She expected to return to Syracuse in a few weeks, after the sisters settled into a routine caring for patients with leprosy. But she found God had other plans, and Mother Marianne spent the rest of her life in Hawaii.

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