

CELEBRATION OF ONE HUNDRED YEARS FOUNDATION AND COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

St. Mary's Seminary

Leonardtown

June 12, 1939

IT is a sincere personal pleasure for me to be here with you today, at Maryland's oldest institution for the education of young women. And as Governor of the State, it is a gratifying thought that Maryland was in the first rank of the States to recognize the desirability of just such an institution as yours, devoted to the educational needs of young women exclusively.

One might expect to find, somewhere, evidences of "gray hair" in and around an institution that is celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of its founding. Instead, one is met here only with evidences of a spirit of youth and progress, a spirit that apparently looks to the past with due reverence and a desire to learn from what has gone before, but that is equally concerned with the years that lie ahead.

Women have come to play such an important part in the public life of today that we accept such participation as natural and expected. Young women like yourselves, graduating this year from colleges all over the country, will step forth into a world where woman's activities are a constituent part of the everyday life of any community, where women are expected to contribute their share towards the proper functioning of everything that concerns the public good.

Such was not the case, however, to any great extent, even as late as the days of the World War. Prior to that time, instances of participation in public affairs by women were so rare as to evoke public comment. Going back, therefore, one hundred years, to the time when St. Mary's Female Seminary was first established, by an act of the Maryland Legislature, one can only conjecture as to the local conditions of public thought here in old St. Mary's County, that could prompt such a forward-looking move as the creation of an institution of learning for women exclusively.

When such a forward-looking step was to be taken, however, it seems to me that there could be no more fitting place for it than right here in St. Mary's County, home of the historic Colony whose members were to set a precedent for all the world in the independence of their thinking, and in their attitude towards their fellow-man.

I have no doubt that many Marylanders were deeply surprised when they read about St. Mary's Female Seminary in a newspaper article a week ago. As the article said, your Institution is "still strangely little known to Marylanders at large," but, although there will be thousands of young women graduated this year from colleges perhaps much better known than St. Mary's, none of these graduates from other institutions will go forth better equipped to become useful citizens of their country than you young ladies of St. Mary's.

It is interesting to note the extremely brief, but thoroughly descriptive memorandum concerning this Institution that appears in the Maryland Manual, the official compendium of Legal, Historical and Statistical Information re-