The Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne, an American congregation founded in 1900 by Rose Hawthorne, daughter of the American novelist, Nathaniel Hawthorne. Our lives, consecrated through the vows, are spent in prayer, in community, and our apostolate. The community has six free homes in five states: New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Minnesota, and Georgia.

Published in Praise of God by the Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne

WINTER 2002/2003

ROSE HAWTHORNE PROPOSED AS CANDIDATE FOR SAINTHOOD

On Tuesday, February 4, 2003, having determined that Rose Hawthorne (Mother Mary Alphonsa, O.P.) earned a "reputation of sanctity," Edward Cardinal Egan of the New York Archdiocese gave his blessing and approval to begin the diocesan process which opens the cause for her canonization. He named Rev. Gabriel O'Donnell, a Dominican friar, Postulator of the campaign. The Postulator serves as the voice between the Congregation of Rites of the Holy See and those who are participants in the process, including the Archdiocese, the Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne, and the Rose Hawthorne Guild which will promote the cause by distributing information and religious articles.

The Cardinal also appointed a diocesan tribunal and a historical commission whose joint purpose is to investigate the life, virtue and reputation for holiness of Rose Hawthorne (Mother Mary Alphonsa, O.P.), Servant of God. This needs to be demonstrated through the brief of the historical commission. Since there are few living people who can witness to her life, the bulk of the brief will be formed from the documents and records in the Archives of Rosary Hill Home, the motherhouse of the Community Rose Hawthorne founded.

The road to canonization is long and uncertain. A candidate must first be declared "venerable," or worthy of being a role model for Catholics. The next step is beatification by the Pope which requires, among other things, that a miracle be attributed to Rose Hawthorne's intercession. The final step normally requires that a second miracle be attributed to the candidate.

Each person interested in the cause may assist with prayer, and by reporting any favors received. (Prayer cards can be obtained by completing and returning the enclosed coupon.)

SERVANT OF GOD, ROSE HAWTHORNE (Mother Mary Alphonsa, O.P.)

Rose, daughter of author Nathaniel Hawthorne, gave up a life of privilege to care for destitute persons afflicted with incurable cancer. She founded the Dominican Sisters, Congregation of St. Rose of Lima (Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne) for this arduous apostolate. "I set my whole being to endeavor to bring consolation to the cancerous poor."
Rose Hawthorne... A Woman Ahead of Her Time
(Reprinted from Hawthorne Happenings Spring 1994)

The letters and essays of Rose Hawthorne, foundress of the Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne "offer a portrait of a vigorous and inspirational woman who could look at the social evils of her day and see them not merely as deplorable but as a challenge," observes Diana Culbertson, O.P., editor of Rose Hawthorne Lathrop, Selected Writings.

"Rose Hawthorne," Sr. Culbertson writes, "was an exceptional woman whose dedication, sacrifice, and sharp intellectual dialogue set an example that in any age would be hard to emulate. She was far ahead of her time in her thinking on and commitment to social justice. Her essays on spirituality and charity are inspiring and challenging. She was also a very loving woman, with close, tender relationships with her husband and family, and with strong spiritual female friendships. In Rose's time, strong friendships such as that which existed between Rose and Emma Lazarus, and Rose and Alice Huber were very common and beneficial."

The letters and essays take the reader back in time to an age of high values and great expectations.

Rose Hawthorne was an intensely cultured woman, part of the most cultured family tree in America -- the Peabodys and the Hawthornes. She and her husband, George Lathrop, were intimates of the leading literary figures of New England, London and Florence. Rose was herself an author, and had a number of pieces published. And yet she was able to give all of this up and to undertake the work of caring for the poorest of the poor, the most neglected and diseased of her society, in a hands-on way. She took them into her home, changed their dressings, bathed them and fed them, became their friend and their protector. Given that she was dealing with an illness which was considered loathsome and communicable, like leprosy, hers was an act of immense charity and personal heroism.

One of the first women to join Rose in this lifelong work was Alice Huber. These two women shared a profoundly spiritual human love, which sustained them both in this enormously difficult undertaking.

In her introduction, Sr. Culbertson writes that Rose Hawthorne's piety "was completely dominated by her concern for the work to be done: the needs of the patients. When Rose wrote in her diary that she wanted to be of the poor, she knew what that desire implied. Her original concept of the ministry was one that the sisters were never to change. They were to be servants with all that the concept necessitated."

In one of her newspaper appeals for funds, Rose wrote:
"I am trying to serve the poor as a servant. I wish to serve the cancerous poor because they are more avoided than any other class of sufferers; and I wish to go to them as a poor creature myself."

The most fundamental element of the ministry of the Servants of Relief was that only the poor would be admitted to their "homes." The community was not to accept money from the patients, nor from relatives of the patients. Beds were to be free. Further -- and this condition was absolute: there were to be no medical experiments or operations on the patients.

Another concept essential to the work of the Sisters was the insistence that all of the nursing was to be done by the Sisters. There was to be no hired help. (Eventually male orderies were employed for assistance with men patients.)

Referring to the Sister's work, Rose Hawthorne wrote:
"A surgeon among hundreds of wounded soldiers brings a cup of water and a little care to a few of them -- all he can do he does -- with a groan of appeal to Heaven; and in this feeble though devoted way a few women see and succor suffering women who are agonized and forlorn."

Of her religious and charitable beliefs, she wrote...
"A great deal is involved in listening to our Lord, and certainly an active obedience to His teachings may be regarded as of the first necessity."

Rose Hawthorne Lathrop, Selected Writings
Edited with an introduction by Diana Culbertson, O.P.

Sr. Culbertson, an Akron Dominican Sister, is Professor of English and Comparative Literature and Director of Religious Studies at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio.

This book is part of the Sources of American Spirituality Series.
For a copy of the book contact:
In the early days of her work, just before taking the step of becoming a religious sister, Rose described her vocation to one of her companions: "It will be our aim to forget ourselves and our finite life of work in the Lord ... So that you and I may find that our life is radiant in beauty, in not being ours, but the life of Him we desire to be, at whatever cost of our will, and ease. We must try to be brave in order to be made brave, for our ambition is to die daily for Christ, and it is so hard to have the wakful energy to know how to die."

For most of us forgetting is a nuisance and leads to all kinds of mistakes. For Rose forgetting became a deliberate part of her spiritual life. She knew she was often all taken up with her life, her looks, her success, her hurts and failures, her family. She chose the heroic road of forgetting all about herself in order to serve Christ in the guise of those dying of cancer.

You and I don’t want to forget important things, but in a mysterious way, we would find it easier to remember what is truly important if we could forget about being so selfish and self-oriented. In this Rose Hawthorne is our spiritual mentor and example.

Our culture makes much of self-help, self-development, self-promotion. The Gospel calls us to move in another direction, that of dependence upon God and His grace. Jesus speaks of losing one’s life to find it. That’s what Rose Hawthorne’s forgetting of self was all about. The ordinary person can find a life of rich meaning and hope, but not apart from God. Only in Him will we find our happiness and true peace.

Rose Hawthorne’s cause for canonization is meant to place before us the witness of one just like you and me who chose the way of forgetting herself and being at the beck and call of her neighbor. If that encourages us to be more attentive to the duties of our own calling, then Rose Hawthorne’s message has been heard.

I invite each reader to begin to pray that in Rose Hawthorne’s cause God’s will be done and that through the intercession of this wonderful friend of God we will each come to that deeper life which yields a harvest of peace and joy.

Sincerely in Christ,
Fr. Gabriel B. O’Donnell, O.P.
Rose Hawthorne’s Great Compassion

September, 1896

"I took a street car anxiously one day, a Sunday, in order to hunt for the region of the City which should strike me as the best fitted for my attempt at nursing among the poor."

The simplicity of this statement by Rose Hawthorne belied the enormity of the event that had taken place. Rose Hawthorne, daughter of America’s laureate novelist, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and a member of New York’s literary elite, was giving up her privileged life to become a humble servant to the poorest of the poor.

"The East Side proved much the most crowded and desperate."

In fact, the Lower East Side was synonymous with poverty, crime and disease. The poor live in dark, airless tenements... whole families in one room... with only makeshift beds that they rented for the night. But the cancerous poor fared even worse. Because cancer was thought to be contagious, they were feared and often shunned by family and friends, left to die alone and uncared for, in dank cellars and alleyways.

The fire of faith burning fiercely in her soul, Rose Hawthorne, at age 45, moved into a flat on Scammel Street, and there began her life of nursing and sheltering incurable cancer patients.

Rose Hawthorne (Mother Mary Alphonsa, O.P.)

Rose was born in Lenox, Massachusetts in 1851, a year after her father wrote "The Scarlet Letter." She was the youngest of the three Hawthorne children. After a fairy tale childhood, during which the Hawthorne family spent several years in Europe, Rose’s life was overshadowed by sorrow. Her father died when she was thirteen. Within eleven years of his death, she lost her mother, Sophia, and her only sister, Una.

At twenty, and over the objections of her family, Rose married George Lathrop. There were difficulties in the marriage, but with George’s early literary success and the birth of their son, Francie, Rose’s life was relatively stable and happy. Until tragedy struck again. Francie died, at age four, from diphtheria.

Life after Francie was filled with "long spaces of loneliness," exacerbated by George’s excessive drinking. The couple separated several times, only to later reunite.

In 1891, George and Rose converted to Catholicism. The conversion seemed to give Rose’s life new direction. Emerging from the shadow of her famous father and successful husband, she showed herself to be a vigorous and inspirational woman, an intellectual whose ideas on social justice were far ahead of her time.

In 1895 George and Rose agreed to a formal separation.

Rose’s desire to find an occupation that would be the practical fulfillment of her new faith was given direction on hearing the case of a young seamstress of refinement obliged by cancer to give up work. She was operated on at the hospital. Six months later, when found to be incurable, she was given one day’s notice before being sent to Blackwell’s Island in complete despair.

In June, 1896, Rose took a three month course on cancer nursing at Memorial Hospital on West 106th Street. Her first day there she met Mrs. Mary Watson. Advanced cancer had eaten away the center of Mrs. Watson’s face. Rose had to observe as the bandages were removed and the lesions dressed. She survived the ordeal and never again flinched at the ravages of cancer.

September 15, 1896... Rose moved into a cold water flat on Scammel Street, in the Lower East Side, and began treating outpatients and visiting the homes of those too sick to come to her. All the care she gave was free.

In early October, Rose received a letter from Mrs. Watson. The hospital had discharged her as incurable. Destitute and in a state of neglect, she asked, "May I come to live with you?" Rose was elated. She later wrote, "My life of usefulness had begun in earnest."
As news of the charity spread, Rose's small hospital filled with cancer sufferers. Rose supported her little group with pleas to the public.

Alice Huber, who had been seeking a perfect charity to which to devote her life, read about Rose's work and after visiting her, offered to help one day a week. Within months she, too, moved to the Lower East Side. She was the first of many who would take up the work.

Not long after Alice Huber joined her, George Lathrop died. Rose wrote to a friend, "I was crushed by George's death. My heart was filled with love and misery."

People needing care flooded the small hospital that Rose and Alice were operating. Benefactors, determined to find the two women a more suitable home, purchased a building a few blocks away, on Cherry Street. On May 1, 1899, Rose and Alice moved into St. Rose's Free Home for Incurable Cancer.

Rose had always viewed the work as religious in nature. At the suggestion of Father Clement Thuente, O.P., on September 14, 1899, she and Alice became Dominican Tertiaries and received permission to form a religious community. Rose took the religious name Sister Mary Alphonsa and Alice became Sister Mary Rose. On December 8, 1900 they professed vows as members of their new community, the Dominican Sisters, Congregation of St. Rose of Lima.

Despite the fact that St. Rose's could only accommodate women patients, a number of men, in dire need of help, came begging for shelter and care. Mother Mary Alphonsa could not ignore their plight. She rented a nearby apartment which served as the men's ward until the Sisters were able to obtain a facility large enough to accommodate both men and women.

Her constant prayers for that facility were answered when she was offered a sixty room hotel in the country (Hawthorne, New York). The Servants of Relief for Incurable Cancer, as they were known, purchased the hotel and converted it to Rosary Hill Home, which opened on June 1, 1901.

As more women joined the community, the work grew. In 1912 St. Rose's moved to a larger location on Jackson Street, where Mother Mary Alphonsa's spiritual daughters are still serving those suffering from incurable cancer.

Mother Mary Alphonsa died in her sleep on July 9th, 1926. She had served the sick poor with great compassion for thirty years. Mother Mary Rose continued the work, and opened five additional homes. She died on September 30, 1942, in St. Rose's Home, at age 80.
The Founding of the Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne

While the Servants of Relief were still on Water Street a Dominican priest, the Reverend Clement M. Thuente, came one day to thank them for the good care they had given Mrs. Daly, one of his parishioners. He looked to the right and saw five patients, one of whom scarcely resembled a human being. Turning to the left, he saw a little room for the nurses with an institutional bed, having an upper and lower berth. Profoundly impressed, he said as his glance rested on a little statue of St. Rose: “Oh, ladies, if you want to keep up this life and work, you will need most special graces. Join the Third Order of St. Dominic like St. Rose.”

After prayerful consideration, they followed Father Thuente's suggestion and became Dominican Tertiary on September 14, 1899. Mrs. Lathrop took the name of Sister Mary Alphonsa, and Alice Huber, Sister Mary Rose.

In the autumn of 1900 Archbishop Corrigan, after telling the two Tertiary they had passed through a “long, hard novitiate,” granted them permission to make their first vows and to wear the full Dominican Habit, which was given to them by Father Thuente, O.P., on the eighth of December, 1900. Immediately afterward, they pronounced their vows.

When it was suggested to His Excellency that it was a most extraordinary privilege to give the Habit to Secular Tertiary, he answered: “It is extraordinary, but remember they are doing a most extraordinary, heroic work. ‘If this work be of men, it will come to naught. If it be of God, you cannot overthrow it.’” (Acts v 38,39).

On the 25th of March, 1906, the Congregation of St. Rose of Lima received the diploma of affiliation with the Dominican Order. Thus budded forth a new branch on the tree planted by St. Dominic in the thirteenth century.
What does it matter that the world know She is a Saint?

By Mother Marie Edward, O.P.

This special issue of Hawthorne Happenings is dedicated to our foundress Rose Hawthorne (Mother Mary Alphonsa, O.P.). We are excited to announce that the cause for her canonization was opened on February 4th, 2003. The articles in “Happenings” give you details. What might be needed is an explanation of why we have promoted her cause.

The Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, has spoken well as to why individuals are promoted. Their lives witness the love of God to us who still are on the journey to our heavenly home and our life in the Trinity. They show us that it can be done, and in a sense cheer us on. The Saint is an embodiment of a particular light of the Gospel. The Saints bring into focus another piece of Christ’s message for us.

But why Rose Hawthorne?

As her spiritual daughters we have all had an instinctual conviction that she is a Saint. What does it matter that the world knows she was -- is a Saint? Rose is a gift and an example of heroic virtue and faith to all who know about her. She is an American woman, tracing her ancestry to the original Massachusetts Bay Colony. Some of her early years were spent in historic Concord. She was surrounded by the American literary world. Rose loved America! She had a portrait of George Washington at the entrance of the original Rosary Hill and quickly repaired it when it was damaged in a wind storm.

Rose was a wife who loved her husband but suffered from his excessive drinking.

Rose was a mother who loved her son and suffered tremendously from his death as a young child.

Rose was a convert to Catholicism. She struggled to find the Truth and to find her role in the Church.

Rose was the foundress of our congregation and said that the purpose of the congregation was “to fit it’s members for the beatific vision.”

Rose was a Dominican. Invited into the Order as a third order Tertiary, she participated in the preaching of the Dominicans in a most unique way. Her apostolic work gave two fruits. Her acts of charity comforted and consoled. Her acts of charity taught the sanctity and the dignity of the human person. Our present world needs desperately her witness in the gospel of life. In the spiritual realm, her acts of charity built up the Mystical Body of Christ.

Rose loved and cared for people, seeing in them the suffering Christ, and wished to give them the dignity they deserved.

Rose was a woman of deep prayer. It was said of Mother that she would be lost in prayer in front of the Blessed Sacrament, for lengthy periods of time. This confirmed in my mind that she strove to conform her works to God’s will.

Rose was a woman of great trust in God’s Providence. Her last dollars went to others and were always replenished.

In all of the above, so many people can identify with her and perhaps feel that she might intercede to God on their behalf. And so Rose is a gift to the Church and all people seriously striving for holiness, looking for support and a model to follow.

Especially do we need her witness of trust in God. In our culture, we are inclined to trust in ourselves, and not raise our hopes to the supernatural.

This is why we have promoted her cause!

The Rose Hawthorne Guild is established to distribute information about Rose. Should you wish information about her, we ask you to write to the Rose Hawthorne Guild at 600 Linda Avenue, Hawthorne, NY 10532.
Pope John Paul II Describes American Saints as “True Expression of America’s Christian Identity”

On January 22, 1999, during his visit to Mexico City, Pope John Paul II remarked “The Saints are the true expression and the finest fruits of America’s Christian identity. In them, the encounter with the living Christ is so deep and demanding... that it becomes a fire which consumes them completely and impels them to build his kingdom...” Ecclesia in America #15

Certainly Rose Hawthorne’s desire to serve God became a fire in her heart. It burned so fiercely that she was able to relinquish all that she had in order to serve the living Christ by caring for the poorest of the poor. She devoted her entire being in service of God, and her faith enabled her to persevere and triumph under extraordinarily difficult circumstances.

Should Rose Hawthorne achieve sainthood, she will join the ranks of other American women so recognized, including Sts. Elizabeth Anne Bayley Seton, Kateri Tekakwitha and Katharine Drexel.

INVOKING ROSE HAWTHORNE’S INTERCESSION

Following is the prayer, which invokes Rose Hawthorne’s intercession. Should you receive favors, which you believe are through her help, we would be happy to hear from you.

Prayer for the Canonization of Rose Hawthorne, (Mother Mary Alphonsa, O.P.)

Lord God, in your special love for the sick, the poor and the lonely, you raised up Rose Hawthorne (Mother Alphonsa) to be the servant of those afflicted with incurable cancer and with no one to care for them. In serving the outcast and the abandoned, she strove to see in them the face of your Son. In her eyes, those in need were always “Christ’s Poor.”

Grant that her example of selfless charity and her courage in the face of great obstacles will inspire us to be generous in our service of neighbor. We humbly ask that you glorify your servant Rose Hawthorne on earth according to the designs of your holy will. Through her intercession, grant the favor that I now present (here make your request).

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.
Most Sacred Heart of Jesus have mercy on us! (3 times)
Our Father  •  Hail Mary  •  Glory be to the Father.

For a Rose Hawthorne Prayer Card, or more information about Rose Hawthorne (Mother Mary Alphonsa, O.P.) please complete and return the enclosed coupon.

HAWTHORNE DOMINICANS

MOTHERHOUSE AND CHAPEL:
ROSARY HILL HOME
600 LINDA AVENUE, HAWTHORNE, NY 10532
(914) 769-4794

ST ROSE’S HOME
71 JACKSON STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10002
(212) 677-8132

SACRED HEART HOME
1315 W. HUNTING PARK AVE., PHILADELPHIA, PA 19140
(215) 329-3222

HOLY FAMILY HOME
6707 STATE ROAD, CLEVELAND, OH 44134
(440) 885-3100

OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP HOME
P.O. BOX 6805, ATLANTA, GA 30315
(404) 888-9515

OUR LADY OF GOOD COUNSEL HOME
2076 ST. ANTHONY AVE., ST. PAUL, MN 55104
(651) 646-2797

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ROSE HAWTHORNE, OR FOR A ROSE HAWTHORNE PRAYER CARD,

WRITE TO:
THE ROSE HAWTHORNE GUILD
600 LINDA AVENUE, HAWTHORNE, NY 10532
OR COMPLETE AND RETURN THE ENCLOSED COUPON.