

# Barquilla de la Santa Maria

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## Courage and Modesty in Plenty: The Life of Madeleine Vinton Goddard Dahlgren

by Donald M. Schlegel

Part 4 (Concluded, from Vol. XXVI, No. 10)

### Literary and Social Pursuits

By the 1870s Madeleine's old school friend, Lida Gillespie, had become Mother Angela Gillespie, C.S.C. and was producing *Ave Maria* magazine, to which Madeleine contributed.<sup>30</sup> She carried on a correspondence with her old friend James A. Garfield (some 41 letters are preserved in the Library of Congress). Her home in Washington in the 1870s was at 14th and L; later she lived on Sheridan Circle; in 1888 at 1895 Thomas Circle; and for many years at 1325 Massachusetts Avenue. In 1873 she completed a book *Etiquette of Social Life in Washington*, which was her most influential one, for it was used by all of Washington society. It was published in five editions from 1873 to 1881 and in a final edition, *The Social-Official Etiquette of the United States*, in 1894. The Washington newspapers called Madeleine the "social queen."

In 1873 she founded the Washington Literary Society and was its first Vice President. For six years the Society met in her house and it became a salon for a large circle of literary acquaintances. With her genial disposition, literary taste, and unusual intelligence, her entertainments were among the most popular in the city. At the regular evenings in her home (and a few others)

musical programs were rendered, impromptu papers were read, lectures were delivered by able people, and readings and recitations from Shakespeare and other classics were given. All of this was much enjoyed by "the persons fortunate enough to be invited to these literary gatherings."<sup>31</sup>

One such evening at Mrs. Dahlgren's was chronicled by a newspaper correspondent from Australia and appeared in Melbourne's *The Age*



Mrs. Dahlgren's residence on Thomas Circle.  
(Courtesy of the District of Columbia Public Library)

in May of 1877. The guests numbered about 100 and included some of the most celebrated statesmen, politicians, and professional men, and the diplomatic corps and their ladies. The guests began to arrive at about half-past eight and were received by Madeleine. Until about nine o'clock there was general conversation and inspection of new paintings brought for review by various artists. At nine the formal proceedings opened with the reading of the minutes of the previous meeting. Next a short essay written by an army officer, a West Pointer, was read, concerning his Indian experiences. There followed the head of the Meteorological Department, who read a paper on the mode adopted in America for foretelling storms and changes in the temperature. Discussions of the papers were followed by supper and then music and singing. There was a concert of piano, violin, and harp and songs in several languages, "the executants being amateurs of no mean powers." After some further time for discussion, the president announced that some of the ladies would recite poetry. The guests commenced their departures at about half-past eleven. "Such evenings as that I have described here," wrote the correspondent, "are the roses in a whole desert of dreary receptions" at which the conversations usually revolved around "the price of gold and the prospects of the Presidential election."<sup>32</sup>

For some time Madeleine was President of the Ladies Catholic Indian Missionary Association of Washington, D.C. As such in 1877 she called attention in *The Sunday Herald* to an article written for the October, 1877 *Catholic World* by her friend Mrs. Ellen (Ewing) Sherman. This article took the government to task for its discriminatory policies and practices toward Catholic Indians, which denied religious freedom to them.

In 1876 Madeleine purchased an old tavern on the summit of South Mountain in Maryland, once a noted hotel and resort, as a summer home.

Located on the National Road between Boonesboro and Middletown, it was some 130 years old then and is still in use today. She renovated it inside and out and called it "Fairview". It was said that she owned nearly 8,000 acres in the vicinity. The local populace, as well as her tenants, appreciated that the renovation supported the local mechanics, laborers, and merchants and noted her generosity and charity, "freely extended to all" in that neighborhood.<sup>33</sup> Her summer home on South Mountain, like her home in Washington, was "the center of a cultured throng of friends in whose society she found great pleasure as they also found in her."<sup>34</sup>

In 1881 and '82 she built the chapel of "St. Joseph's of the Sacred Heart of Jesus" across the road from her summer home for the use of family, guests, and neighbors. This Gothic chapel was constructed of native stone and wood, quarried and felled on the hill behind her house. The interior was finished with walnut panels and a marble floor. The white marble altar was imported from Italy and the chapel's 400-pound bell was cast in Baltimore. Also known as the Dahlgren Memorial Chapel, it was supplied with priests from Washington and other places during the summer months, when the site was cooled by the "mountain zephyrs." Madeleine had the remains of her husband Converse Goddard and their son Lt. Vinton Goddard (died 1877) interred there.<sup>35</sup>

#### Literary Works

As one might expect, a conservative, traditional Catholic perspective runs through Madeleine's essays and novels. Many of her works were criticized, sometimes unfairly, one suspects. Even the *Catholic Columbian* remarked, "Her pen, so useful to her when writing on social, political and general subjects, was not so gifted as a medium of fiction and verse, though her essays in the latter fields were not devoid of

merit." The following is a list of her books and some of her articles that have come to notice.

1874 -- Translation of Adolphe de Chambrun's *The Executive Power in the United States: A Study of Constitutional Law*. James A. Garfield, the future president, wrote in its preface, "The work has been done with so much grace that the reader discovers nothing in the style to indicate that it is a translation."

1878 -- December 7 *Ave Maria*, story on a cure by the Water of Lourdes of George Morgan, a laborer, who was almost crushed to death in an accident.

1881 -- *South Sea Sketches, a Narrative*, based on letters she had written home to her children Romaine and Vinton in 1867-1869. This is primarily a description of Peru and Chile, but she did not hesitate to bring her Catholic thinking into the matter and apply lessons to the United States.

1882 -- *Memoir of John A. Dahlgren* was based largely on the Admiral's journal. The large book was reviewed by *The Literary World* of Boston (14/38) which found it "upon the whole good." "An over-fondness of praise, where the statement of the simple fact would have been a more subtle eulogy, may well be pardoned to the wife of a truly grand and heroic man, such as Admiral Dahlgren certainly was."

1882 -- *South Mountain Magic, a Narrative* is an account of the ghost stories (including some of her family's experiences), mysterious beliefs, and supernatural symbols of the South Mountain descendants of the German settlers.

1883 -- *A Washington Winter*, a novel, was intended to be a caricature of some of the types of persons found in Washington society. The sketches were drawn too sharply, however, and were taken too personally and too seriously. The

novel was severely criticized by *The Literary World* of Boston (14/268-9), which found the sketches of "scoundrels, and adventurers, and frauds, and ignoramuses in Washington" not faithful and "certainly...not pleasant." According to Marian Gouverneur, "It was not well received as her criticisms upon the wives of Cabinet Officers and others were such as to invoke general disfavor and arouse bitter resentment."<sup>36</sup> It did, however, produce enough income to pay for the marble altar in the chapel on South Mountain.

1886 -- *The Lost Name, a Novelette*, in the form of an autobiography, traces the life of Ernest Desmarests through college triumph, love, and a search for mysterious ancestors, with a touch of the supernatural. One reviewer noted that its "high-flown" language was pleasantly distinct from the realistic psychological studies of some contemporaneous novels.

1887 -- *Lights and Shadows of a Life, a Novel* was first published in *Brooklyn Magazine* c. 1885. It traces the complicated life of a young southern girl and her relationship with a Frenchman who might have a black ancestor.

1887 -- *Divorced, a Novel*. Both *Divorced* and *Lights and Shadows of a Life*, ostensibly written to uphold the 'distinctively American' animus against interracial marriages, were criticized for convoluted Gothic plots that often were at odds with Madeleine's moralizing. *Divorced* was panned by reviewers in the *Brooklyn Eagle*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and other papers.

c. 1888 -- *Abbess Makrena Mieczyslawska*, is a translation from French of a testimonial by the abbess, originally published by command of the Holy Father. The Polish Mieczyslawska (1797-1864) was Mother Superior of a Basilian cloister in Minsk. After the partition of Poland, the Russian authorities imprisoned her and other Greek-Catholics who refused to recognize the

Czar as temporal head of the Church. She escaped to Rome in 1825. There are few sources for the Abbess in English, which makes Madeleine's translation all the more valuable.<sup>37</sup>

1892 -- *Chim: His Washington Winter*

1895 -- *Samuel Finley Vinton*, a sketch of the life of Madeleine's father, first appeared in the *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society Quarterly*, IV (1894), pp 231-262.

1896 -- *The Secret Directory, a Romance of Hidden History*

1896 -- "The Story of a Convert," the story of her own conversion to the Catholic faith, published in *The Rosary Magazine*, December 1896-February 1897.

1899 -- *The Woodley Lane Ghost, and Other Stories*, apparently a posthumous collection of articles and short stories.

#### Later Life

In 1883, after publication of her *A Washington Winter* caused a firestorm of reaction in Washington, she left the capital and lived for "several seasons" at South Mountain. This no doubt increased her love affair with the area and its people. "Besides building two churches, establishing schools and a library, she has sent several of the brighter school-boys [of the South Mountain vicinity] to college at her own expense, and often gives lessons in language and music to the school-girls."<sup>38</sup>

Madeleine's generosity on South Mountain was in a sense outdone by her true charity to her brother-in-law, William de Rohan. William was a brother, ten years younger, of Admiral Dahlgren. He had a falling out with the family at the age of fourteen and left home, going to Texas where, it was said, he joined Davy Crockett and

was severely wounded at the age of seventeen. Soon after that he came to Washington and reunited with his brother, working for him for a time, but they quarrelled again and William left for foreign parts, apparently never again to reconcile with his family. He took as his name a form of his mother's family name of Rowan. In time, it is said, among other adventures around the world, he became an intimate friend of Joseph Mazzini and a most trusted lieutenant of Giuseppe Garibaldi; he organized, embarked, and led the Garibaldi British Legion from Britain to Italy. Thus, he was antagonistic towards Madeleine's husband and an enemy of her Church. Yet, when in 1888 the *Washington Sunday Herald* announced that William was paralyzed and in want in France, Madeleine caused inquiries to be made and, finding the facts to be as stated, she sent funds and had William brought to Washington and cared for him in her own houses there and on South Mountain.<sup>39</sup> (He died in 1891.)

In 1881 Madeleine sent her son Eric Dahlgren to Georgetown University. Eric later married Lucy Drexel, second daughter of Joseph W. Drexel of Philadelphia. She also sent her son John Vinton Dahlgren to Georgetown, where he received his A.B. degree in 1889. John continued there, received additional degrees, and completed his work with an LL.M. degree in 1892. He married Eliza Drexel, sister of Lucy and third daughter of Joseph W. of Philadelphia. John and Eliza's infant son Joseph died in 1891 and Eliza built the Dahlgren Chapel of the Sacred Heart on Georgetown campus as his resting place. James Cardinal Gibbons officiated at the cornerstone laying in May, 1892. John was an attorney for the New York Department of Buildings.

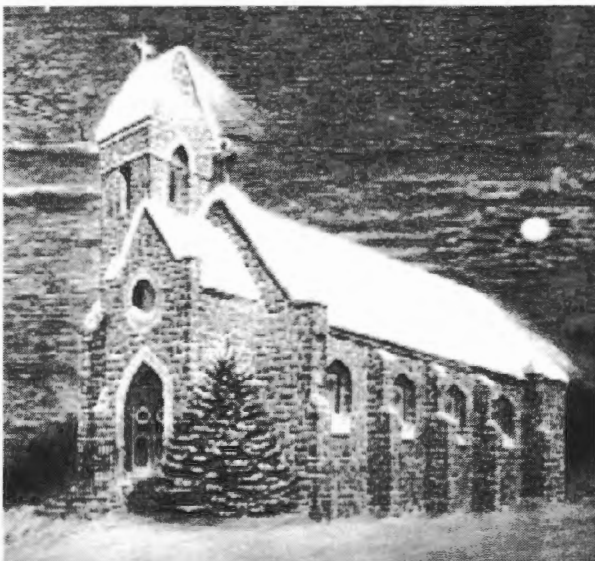
By 1890 Madeleine's busy life was winding down. In 1889 Mrs. A. De Montaigne wrote a description of her, generously calling the sixty-four-year-old "now a woman of middle age, with a figure rather inclining to embonpoint. He iron-



gray hair is parted smoothly over a high forehead, and her blue eyes glisten with intelligence. She dresses plainly and has retired from society, devoting herself to superintending the education of her two sons. Most of her time is spent in literary pursuits."<sup>40</sup> In 1895 *The Washington Sketch Book - A Society Souvenir* barely devoted a paragraph to her. "Mrs. Madeleine Vinton Dahlgren has been a prominent figure in literary and social circles for many years. ... This lady had the courage to write on so intricate a subject as Washington etiquette, and has also written numerous sketches and novels that have had extensive sale. Mrs. Dahlgren's home is one of the most attractive on Thomas Circle, and has been the scene of many brilliant entertainments."<sup>41</sup>

Madeleine died in Washington on May 28, 1898 at 11:15 pm. She was buried at South Mountain, in the crypt of the chapel she had built, with her first husband and their son. Other members of the family were interred there in later years.

The Dahlgren Chapel on South Mountain was not used after 1925. In 1959 the family remains were moved to St. Michael's cemetery in Poplar



*The Dahlgren Chapel on South Mountain*

Springs, Maryland and in 1960 the chapel was sold to Richard B. Griffin, who began its restoration. In 1996 it was purchased by The Central Maryland Heritage League Land Trust and today it can be used for private services. The summer home now is the South Mountain Inn.<sup>42</sup>

Sarah Madeleine Vinton had gone a long way for a girl from Gallipolis.

#### NOTES

30) McAllister, Anna Shannon, *Flame in the Wilderness*; Sisters of the Holy Cross, 1944; 235-236

31) Logan, Mrs. John A., *Reminiscences of a Soldier's Life*; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913; 275, 355, 417

32) Madeleine Vinton Dahlgren, *Scrapbook II*; with thanks to Georgetown University Library, Special Collections.

33) Boonesboro *Odd Fellow*, Nov. 7, 1878, from *Scrapbook II*

34) *The Gallipolis Tribune*, June 10, 1898, quoting the *Catholic Columbian*

35) Howe, *Historical Collections of Ohio*, 1896, I/681. Williams, Thomas, J., *A History of Washington County, Maryland...*; Hagerstown: Runke & Titsworth, 1906; I/482. Information supplied by The Central Maryland Heritage League.

36) Gouverneur, Marian, *As I Remember*; New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1911, pp 377-378

37) A copy of the translation is in *Scrapbook I* in the Georgetown University Library Special Collections. Its provenance is not indicated.

38) Washington Letter in the *Cincinnati Commercial Gazette*; in *Scrapbook II*, page 9

39) Georgetown U., *Scrapbook I*, pp 51 and 61; from *Graphica*, Dec. 16, 1887 and the *Sunday Herald*.

40) *Evening Star*, Oct. 24, 1889; in *Scrapbook I* page 74

41) Hinman, Ida, *The Washington Sketch Book: A Society Souvenir*; Washington: Hartmen & Cadick, 1895; p. 97

42) Information supplied by The Central Maryland Heritage League.

**St. Patrick Parish, Clarksville  
(Junction City), Perry County  
Register of Baptisms, 1835-1847**

(Continued, from Vol. XXVI, No. 10)

page 40

February 5 John Green (born the 5th of July, 1841), son of Moses Green and Catherine Eddington; spon. Patrick Keenan. A O'Brien

same day William (born 9 December, 1843), son of Moses Green and Catherine Eddington; spon. Patrick Keenan. AO

February 6 Martin (born 5 November, 1843), son of Martin Dumolt and Ann Koble; spon. Patrick Keenan. AO

same day William (born 19 December, 1841), son of James Hoy and Melinda Skinner; spon. John Hoy and Rose Makin. AO

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March 5 Patrick Gordon, son of William and Catherine Gordon; spon. Mary McClane and John Hoy. AO

same day Robert, son of John and Mary Curran (born Feb. 3); spon. George Hoy and Margaret Curran. AO

March 6 Bernard, son of Thomas and Mary Sullivan (born 2 March); spon. Hen. McGreevy and Ann Gilligan. AO

same day Catherine, daughter of Maurice and Mary Moriarty (born 1 March); spon. Edw. Gilligan and Mary Low. AO

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March 17 James (born 2 Feb.), son of William Seals and Rosanna Dougherty; spon. Arthur McCar... and Mary McCullough. AO

same day Mary (born 5 March), daughter of James Clark and Ann Sweeny; spon. William Sweeny and Marg. Scally. AO

[same day?] Elizabeth (born Feb. 15), dtr of George Flowers and -- [sic] Adige; spon. Joseph Flowers and Elizabeth Flowers. AO

April 7 Helen, daughter of Michael McGilly (?) and Bridget; spon. Bartholomew McGreevy and Cath. McGreevy. AO

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Bridget, daughter of Henry Blessington and [blank]; spon. William Diamond and Cath. Downy. AO

April 21 Catherine (born April 17), daughter of Allen Clark and Lydia Ann Whipple; spon. Alexand Clark and Cath Clark. AO

April 21 Anastasia, daughter of Bartholomew Crosby and Ann Crosby; spon. William Patrige and Ann McCain. AO

May [blank] William (born 14 June 1842), son of Thomas Sutton and Mary Ann Sutton; spon. John Dougherty and Grace Dougherty. AO

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same day John (born 3 Jan. 18..), son of Thomas Sutton and Mary Ann Sutton; spon. Ed Grogan and Ann Kenny. AO

May [smudged] John (born 30 April, 1841), son of Michael and H... Loague; spon. James and Ann Loague. AO

same day David (born Nov. 9, 184..), son of Michael Loague and Ann; spon. James and Ann Loague. AO

June 17 Alice, daughhter of William McCabe and Cath Rafferty; spon. Henry A. McGreevy and Mary McGreevy. AO

same day Januarius McGahan, son of James and Esther McGahan; spon. Pat Dimond and Roseann Sees. AO

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July 2 Elizabeth, daughter of Patrick Dimond and Ann Dimond; spon. William Diamond and Mary Diamond. AO

same day Patrick, son of Timothy Lavin and Mary Lavin; spon. Cornelius and Bridget Dougherty. AO

July 22 Catherine (one month old), daughter of Francis and Elizabeth Myers. AO

same day [blank], son of John Stately [perhaps Hateley] and Elizabeth Stately; spon. John Stalter and Catherine Stalder. AO

August 6 Philip (born 1st this month), son of Patrick and Elizabeth [page 46] Maskill; spon. James McGreevy and Margaret Ferguson. AO

August 8 Thomas, son of John Studer and Mary Hann.. (born 1 Aug.); spon. Thomas Do... AO

Aug. [smudged] James (born 4 A.), son of Adam Beaver and L...; spon. Francis Be... and Mary Deckoe. AO

Sept. 15 John (born 14th of this month), son of William and Elizabeth McGary; spon. Bernard Grimes and Mary Grimes. AO

October [blank] Charlotte, one month old, daughter of James Clark and Mary; spon. Sarah Gordon. AO

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October [blank] Catherine, daughter of John Mc Hatton and Mary McGerry; spon. John McDonald and Cath. McGerry. AO

October 20 Rose Schriver, born 4th, daughter of John Schriv.. and [blank] Clark; spon. Cath Rowe. AO

October 22 Harriet Rowe, daughter of John and Catha [sic] Rowe; spon. Mary Clark. AO

same day Appolonia Gongloff (4 months old), daughter of Jacob Gongloff; spon. Appolonia Gongloff and Henry Gongloff. AO

November 17 Elizabeth (born 1[?] November), daughter of Jacob Hitz [?] and Mary Hitz; spon. Joseph Weible and Elizabeth Weible. AO

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December 1 Daniel (born 23 November), son of Daniel McCan and Ann [Nancy Cassily] McCan; spon. Philip Cassily and Mary C.. AO

December 2 Eliz. Ma... (two months old), dtr of Michael Maher and Mary Maher; spon. Patrick Siece [Sees] and Louisa Downy. AO

December 3 James, son of Stephan Fagin and Alice Fagin; spon. Patrick Keenin and Mary Keenin. AO

December 15 Jerome (born 21 ...), son of James Tatman and Mary Snyder; spon. Helen Rowe. AO

"Given to the Bishop thus far."

page 48

**1845**

[The year 1845 begins on page 57, below.]

...[July?] 13 William (born 20 June), son of George Whitman and Elizabeth Hair; spon. John McGough son of Thomas and Ann McGough daughter of Philip Grace. EHP

same day Catherine, born 9th of this month, daughter of John McGravey and Maryann

Carr; spon. Henry Gilligan and Elizabeth Gilligan, children of Henry. EHP

August 17 Cornelius [Constantine] McDonald, son of Daniel McDonald and Sarah; spon. Cornelius Dougherty and Ann McGreevy. AO

same day Michael, son of Daniel and Sarah McDonald; spon. John Dougherty and Grace Dougherty; both born the same day. AO

page 50

August 25 John, son of Allen Clark and [blank] Clark (born yesterday); spon. Daniel and Rose McCormic. AO

September 15 Hugh Murphy (born Sept. 4), son of Hugh Murphy and Ann; spon. Hugh and Lydia Cullom. AO

October 14 James, son of James and Roseann Reynolds (born Sept. 27 [or 29?]); spon. Henry McGreevy and Charity Farquer. AO

October 19 Luke, son of William McGahan and Charity; spon. Pius Braddock and Ann; born yesterday. AO

October 26 Thomas, born the 25th, son of Thomas McF... and Ann McDowel; spon. James Loague son of Patrick and Rosetta EHP

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November 2 John (born 21 Sept.), son of William Seals and Rosanna Seals; spon. John McCartney and Eleanor Gongloff. AO

November 2 Samuel, son of William Hoy and Charlotte Hoy; spon. James Clark and Sarah Gordon. AO

December [blank] Ann, daughter of James Clark and Ann Clark; spon. John Clark and Mary McCullough. AO

page 52[This page is marked in the margin, "Hocking County."]

December 31 Catherine (2 years 11 months old), daughter of Enos Mullen and Lucinda; spon. Jacob Eckenroth.

same day Martha (1 year 2 months old), daughter of Enos Mullen and Lucinda Mullen; spon. Thomas Colman.

same day Mary (1 year 2 months old), daughter of Enos Mullen and Lucinda; spon. Elizabeth Colman.

same day Josephine (2 years old), daughter of John Dupry and Catherine; spon. Jacob Eckenroth.

same day Mary (8 months old), daughter of William Anderson and Mary; spon. John Dupry. AO

page 53

[no date] George (born 29 October 1845), son of Martin Dumolt and Mary; spon. John and Mary Stalter. AO

(To be continued)

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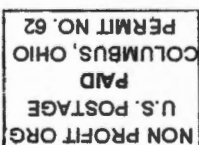
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