

Sister Mary Consolata Conlan, (USA) 1842-1862, Incorrupt

Martyr of Charity

Nurse during the United States Civil War

Served as Nurse in New Orleans Charity Hospital, Louisiana,

Troy Hospital, New York and Point Lookout, Maryland

Died from Typhoid Fever caring for the Sick and Wounded



Mary Ann Conlan was born on November 17, 1842, in East Boston, Massachusetts to Patrick Conlan and Catherine Conley. She was baptized by Rev. P. Flood and her godparents were her Uncle Michael Conlan and Mrs. Charlotte Green.¹

Mary Ann entered the Daughters of Charity of Emmitsburg, Maryland on March 28, 1861. Mary Ann received the Holy Habit of the Daughters of Charity on September 8, 1861, taking the name **Sister Mary Consolata**. Two weeks after she entered

the Daughters of Charity, the American Civil War (1861-1865) began when on April 12, 1861, Confederate forces opened fire on the Union-held Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina. “The Daughters of Charity cared equally for victims of war whether they themselves sympathized with the Union or Confederate cause.”²

Sister Mary Consolata’s first assignment was at the Charity Hospital in New Orleans.³ In addition to caring for the sick and disabled, in 1861, the Charity Hospital also served as a military and naval hospital. Over a 10 month period ending 31 October 1861, the hospital had admitted 8,665 patients, discharged 7,918 and 799 had died therein. Of those admitted from January to October 31, 1861, 7,088 patients were foreign born, 780 born in the United States. And 787 from the Confederate States, six were uncertain and 4 were born at sea. 144 children were born during that time. Two were still-born, four twins, 69 males and 75 females. Ten (10) pages of diagnoses were reported to the Legislature of the State of Louisiana. The most common diagnoses were Abscess (89), Bronchitis (184), constipation (107), Diarrhea (530), Dysentery (249), Delirium Tremens (91), Debility (87), Intermittent Fever (1604), Remittent Fever (86), Gonorrhea (112), Intemperance (160), Neuralgia (91), Nothing (243), pneumonia (123), Phthisis Pulmonalis (371), pregnancy (184), rheumatism (416), Syphilis, Primary (399), Syphilis, Secondary (106), ulcer (357), uncertain (176), Wounds accounted for a total of 473 as follows: Gun-shot (50 – 4 died); Contused (204 -1 died); Incised (133), Punctured (27), Penetrating (16), Lacerated (40), Poisoned (3). These are the types of patients for whom Sr. Mary Conlan may have cared. In this Charity Hospital Report of 1861, \$1,450 was paid to the Sisters of Charity and \$4,418.20 as wages of Nurses and Employees.⁴

Sister Mary Consolata Conlan was then sent to the Troy Hospital in Troy, New York³ (now called St. Mary's Hospital). The city authorities in Troy had erected temporary buildings for the care and treatment of many immigrants sick with fever who had come to Troy during the famine in Ireland between 1845 and 1848. Money was collected and sufficient funds obtained to erect a hospital on the south-west corner of 5th Street and Washington Street. The cornerstone to this Troy Hospital was laid by General John E. Wool of the United States Army on August 15, 1848, the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. A four story building was completed in 1850 and the Daughters of Charity assumed responsibility for the institution.⁵ This was the location of Sr. Mary Consolata Conlan's second assignment.

On July 14, 1862 twenty-six sisters set sail, with Reverend Father Burlando, from Baltimore, Maryland to the encampment at Point Lookout, a journey that would take 24 hours.⁶ Point Lookout is situated at the southern extremity of Maryland, bounded on one side by the Chesapeake bay and on the other by the Potomac River.⁷ Here the Army would build a massive structure built to accommodate 1,400 men, built on piles about 2-3 feet above ground and covered nearly all the area between the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay. It opened in August 1862 and was well over 500 feet in diameter, had 16 wings, each 175 by 25 feet radiating out from an open central area like the spokes on a giant wheel. On wing contained offices, and the others were wards. The central hub housed the chapel, kitchen, library, reading room and baggage room. The facility would be called the Hammond General Hospital after Surgeon General William A. Hammond.⁸ Sister May Consolata was one of the 26 sisters who traveled to Point Lookout and they probably arrived while construction was underway. Unfortunately, she contracted typhoid fever on the transport and died of typhoid at Point Lookout, Maryland while continuing to nurse the wounded.^{1, 3, 6, 7, 8} A civilian nurse, appointed to Point Lookout by Dorothea Dix, Sophronia Bucklin, recorded in her memoirs regarding the hospital at Point Lookout and the Daughters of Charity:

Our corps of women nurses numbered seventeen. Miss Heald, a Quakeress from Boston, was at the dignified post of matron. The number of patients reached nearly three thousand (3000). Six surgeons were in our medical corps, who each had a round of patients, such as would have astonished the country practitioners, who trundled over hilly roads in an old-fashioned one-horse shay, before a civil war brought to the knife and the pill box its tens of thousands of brave men. Of men nurses, we had the usual liberal supply. A general ward master had supervision over all the wards, and each ward had its master.

Twenty-five Sisters of Charity with their priest and Sister Superior had supervision over the patients in a part of the cottages previous to the finishing of the new wards, and also over the freshly wounded from Fredericksburg, who were assigned to the new quarters after their wounds had been once dressed.

But our duties were entirely separate from them. They had charge of the linen room, however, which was on the lower floor of the hotel, and there we sometimes caught a glimpse of a sweet placid face from under the long white bonnets which they wore. They were ceaseless in the work of mercy amongst those poor suffering soldiers."⁹

[A Daughter of Charity] died, and was buried in the wave-washed cemetery, surrounded by the graves of the soldiers."¹⁰

Sister Betty Ann McNeil, DC described Sr. Mary Consolata Conlan's last days. Fr. Burlando had returned to Baltimore and was therefore not available. A day or two prior to Sister Mary Consolata's untimely death, a local priest, who periodically visited the encampment, heard her confession and she received Holy Communion. When Sr. Mary Consolata's symptoms worsened, this priest, who was stationed twelve (12) miles away, was unable to return before her passing to administer the Last Rites. He did, however, arrive in time to officiate at her funeral and burial service. Most Soldiers were buried wrapped in only a sheet. However, with great respect for Sr.

Mary Consolata and the care provided by the Daughters of Charity, they made a white pine coffin for Sr. Mary Consolata. The doctors and officers served as pallbearers. "The authorities walked in procession and the Soldiers played a march for the dead." She was honorably buried on the banks of the Potomac River.³

The *Sister Mary Consolate Conlan Marker* erected by the Confederate Memorial Park, Inc. records the following inscription:



Entered into the community 28th March 1861
Received the Holy Habit 8th September 1861

Sister Mary Consolata Conlan was one of the twenty-five Daughters of Charity from Emmitsburg, Maryland who cared for the sick, wounded and dying at Point Lookout, Maryland. Sister Consolata contracted typhoid fever on her twenty-four-hour voyage from Baltimore to Point Lookout, Maryland. Two weeks after her arrival, Sister Consolata died on July 30, 1862.

Having no lumber for a casket, the soldiers used packing cases and made her a coffin. In procession, the soldiers played a funeral march and Sister Consolata was buried on the banks of the Potomac River, near the wharf and cottage hospital.

After the war, when the U.S. Government started exhuming the remains of the dead, Sister Consolata's remains were taken to Washington, DC.

"She came in a box and there was a large wooden cross with her name and date of death." When her coffin was opened "Sister Consolata's body was found in perfect preservation, not a particle changed from the day of burial, her habit and cornette not even mildewed."

"There the little figure lay clad in her habit which looked like silk, the hands clasped and holding a Crucifix, the collar had turned black; the lower part of her face looked dark, but no decay; she did not have on the cornette, but the toquos, and that was black; from under it the long hair had grown and swept down the figure and then turned up again, shining yellow hair! The fingernails had grown too but she looked so still and nice!"

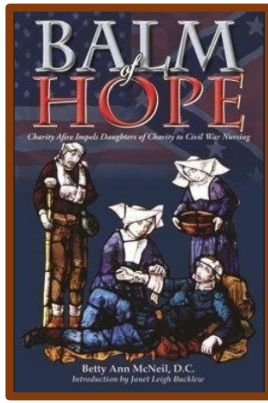
A Requiem Mass was celebrated, and Sister Mary Consolata was reinterred at Mount Olivet Cemetery in Washington, DC.¹¹

Sister Mary Consolate Conlan died from typhoid fever on July 30, 1862. She was only 19 years old, 4 months shy of her 20th birthday. After the war, her body was reinterred. Her final resting place is Mount Olivet Cemetery in Washington, DC (Section 34, Lot 2, Grave 13)¹



References:

1) Personal Communication with Mary Anne Weatherly, Archives Province of St. Louise, Daughters of Charity, 341 S. Seton Avenue, Emmitsburg, MD 21727.



2) Betty Ann McNeil. *U.S. Catholic Historian*. Daughters of Charity: Courageous and Compassionate Civil War Nurses. Vol. 31, No. 1 (Winter 2013) p 51-72. Accessed 20 Aug 2026, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24584778>

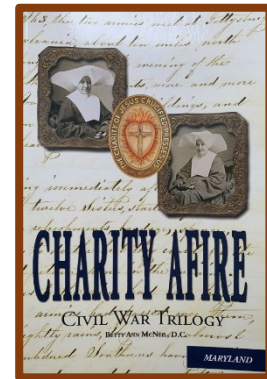
3) Betty Ann McNeil, D.C. *Balm of Hope: Charity Afire Impels Daughters of Charity to Civil War Nursing*. (Emmitsburg, MD: Seton Heritage Shop, 2015). 87-89. (<https://shop.setonshrine.org/>)

4) Tulane University. *Charity Hospital Report 1861: Report of the Board of Administrators of the Charity Hospital to the Legislature of the State of Louisiana, November 1, 1861*. Accessed 21 August 2026.

https://library.search.tulane.edu/discovery/delivery/01TUL_INST:Tulane/12433653060006326

5) Arthur James Weise, *Troy's One Hundred Years 1789-1889: Hospitals*. Accessed 21 August 2026. <http://rensselaer.nygenweb.net/troyhosp.htm>, pages 210, 212 and 216 as transcribed and contributed online by Bill McGrath.

6) Betty Ann McNeil. *Charity Afire: Civil War Trilogy: Maryland*. (Emmitsburg, MD: Seton Heritage Center, 2011), 26. (<https://shop.setonshrine.org/>)



7) George Barton. *Angels of the Battlefield: A History of the Labors of the Catholic Sisterhoods in the Late Civil War*. (Philadelphia: The Catholic Art Publishing Company, 1897), 66-69.

8) *The Historical Marker Database*. Point Lookout State Park: Hammond General Hospital. Near Scotland in St. Mary's County, Maryland – The American Northeast (Mid-Atlantic). Accessed 21 August 2026. <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=1001>

9) Sophronia E. Bucklin. *In Hospital and Camp: A Woman's Record of Thrilling Incidents Among the Wounded in the Late War*. (Philadelphia: John E. Potter and Company, 1869), 79. Accessed 21 August 2026. <https://archive.org/details/inhospitalcampwo00buck/page/4/mode/1up>

10) Ibid, 80.

11) *The Historical Marker Database*. Sister Mary Consolate Conlan. Scotland in St. Mary's County, Maryland – The American Northeast (Mid-Atlantic). Accessed 20 August 2026. <https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=297267> (Location: Scotland, Maryland in St. Mary's County on Point Lookout Road (Maryland Route 5) east of St. Michaels Manor Way, on the right when traveling east at address: 11625 Lookout Road, Scotland, MD 20687)

12) Sister Mary Denis Maher. *To bind Up the Wounds: Catholic Sister Nurses in the U.S. Civil War*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 107-108, 130-131.

13) Sister Eleanor Casey, DC. *The Daughters of Charity of Emmitsburg & the Battle of Gettysburg. Emmitsburg Area Historical Society*. Accessed 20 August 2026. https://www.emmitsburg.net/archive_list/articles/history/civil_war/doc_civil_war.htm

Note: This biography is for all desiring to grow in holiness and follow His Holiness Pope Pius XI address to 2000 nurses assembled at Castel Gondolfo on August 27, 1935 for the II World Congress of Catholic Nurses (www.ciciams.org/ / www.nacn-usa.org/): to first and foremost bring the Christian supernatural, Christ to our patients, bring salvation to souls. May it also help nursing students with your Nursing History course. Source: Diana L. Ruzicka (2022). *The Book of Nurse Saints*. Available at www.lulu.com/spotlight/Ruzicka