



CATHOLIC FUNERAL & CEMETERY SERVICES  
OF NORTHERN COLORADO  
A MINISTRY OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF DENVER

## Catholic Funeral & Cemetery Services Loretto Heights Cemetery Facts Sheet

Spring 2022

### **Background:**

- In 1864, at the request of Bishop Machebeuf (the first Roman Catholic Bishop of Denver), the Sisters of Loretto arrived in Denver to minister to the community with a special emphasis in providing a Catholic education to the young people of Denver.
- During their time in Denver, the Sisters of Loretto have been instrumental in the formation of multiple educational institutions including:
  - Holy Family High School
  - Saint Mary's Academy
  - Loretto Heights Academy
  - Loretto Heights College
- Sister Frances O'Leary was the first Sister to be buried at the Loretto Heights Cemetery in 1898.
- Prior to the establishment of the cemetery at Loretto Heights in 1898, Sisters were laid to rest at Mt. Calvary Cemetery. In 1890, Congress authorized the closure of Mount Calvary to create a city park. In 1912, the eleven Sisters who were laid to rest at Mount Calvary were disinterred from Mt. Calvary to the Loretto Heights Cemetery.
- The final burial at Loretto Heights Cemetery took place in 1969 with the burial of Sister Rita Therese DuBor. Since 1969, the Sisters of Loretto have laid their departed Sisters to rest at Mount Olivet Catholic Cemetery in Wheat Ridge, Colorado in a section dedicated to the burial of religious.
- Currently, sixty-two Sisters find Loretto Heights Cemetery as their resting place (including the eleven that were disinterred from Mt. Calvary). In addition to the sixty-two Sisters, it is believed that there may be two children buried at the cemetery as well. It is believed that these two unnamed children may have died because of a fire at the school.
- Currently there are twenty Sisters who have been laid to rest since 1969 in the religious section at Mount Olivet Catholic Cemetery in Wheat Ridge, Colorado.

### **The Decision to Move the Sisters of Loretto:**

- The conversation regarding the future of the Loretto Heights Cemetery began in the 1940's as it became apparent that there was a need to discuss the long-term care of the cemetery. In December of 1941, the leadership at Mount Olivet Cemetery Association and those affiliated with Loretto Heights and the Sisters of Loretto made an arrangement to move the Sisters for a total cost \$774. Shortly, thereafter, the attention of the world turned to World War II. As a result, the move never took place.
- This conversation was again renewed upon the purchase and development of the Loretto Heights property. There was a need to ensure the long-term care and security of the cemetery. Various options were discussed including both the movement of the Sisters and as well as providing deeds for the long-term access and care of the cemetery.

- While different options were discussed, the decision to move the Sisters from Loretto Heights Cemetery to Mount Olivet Catholic Cemetery was determined collaboratively between the Archdiocese of Denver, Catholic Funeral & Cemetery Services of Colorado, and the Sisters of Loretto.
- The decision was made in the Fall of 2021 to move the Sisters from the Loretto Heights Cemetery to Mount Olivet Catholic Cemetery so that they can rest united with the other Sisters of Loretto. This will provide the most respectful, reverent, and long-term sustainable solution for the care of the Sisters.
- While it is not common for cemeteries to be closed and the bodies reinterred to another location, this is not unprecedented. In two other cases, this has been done with the Sisters of Loretto in the United States.
- There were numerous factors that impacted this decision to move the Sisters, but the two primary factors were:
  - Care and protection of the Sisters and the property
  - Ability of the Archdiocese of Denver and Catholic Funeral & Cemetery Services to complete this move in a respectful and reverent manner.

#### **Moving the Sisters of Loretto to Mount Olivet Catholic Cemetery:**

- The team at Catholic Funeral & Cemetery Services has been working with different entities and ministries to plan the respectful move of the Sisters of Loretto to Mount Olivet Catholic Cemetery.
- The move will take place in three phases that may run concurrently at times:
  - The disinterment of the Sisters from the cemetery at Loretto Heights.
  - The transportation of the Sisters to Mount Olivet Catholic Cemetery.
  - The reinterment and committal of the Sisters at Mount Olivet Catholic Cemetery.
- It is expected that this entire process will be started and completed during the summer of 2022.
- A forensic anthropology team from Metro State University will be overseeing the disinterring process of the Sisters to ensure that the best practices in the field are utilized.
- The team at Catholic & Funeral and Cemetery Services is working with clergy and the Archdiocese of Denver to ensure that the process is completed reverently and in alignment with Catholic tradition.
- Upon completion of the removal of the Sisters, a decree will be issued by the Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Denver deconsecrating the ground at Loretto Heights Cemetery.

#### **Additional Information:**

For additional information, please contact:

Deacon Marc Nestorick  
 Outreach Manager  
 303-715-2083  
[Deacon.nestorickm@archden.org](mailto:Deacon.nestorickm@archden.org)