

A Match Made In Heaven...The History of St. Ignatius Loyola Day Nursery and the Life of Nicholas Frederic Brady (1838-1930)

On July 12, 1915, Nicholas Frederic Brady sent a letter to the Rector of St. Ignatius Loyola and he said, "I beg to offer to the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola the building at 240 East Eighty—Fourth Street for a Day Nursery in memory of my father, Anthony Brady. The only condition I make is that none shall be denied the use of its facilities on account of race, creed, or color. It is my intention to support this nursery during my lifetime, and leave an endowment commensurate with its needs thereafter." He promised a new site and purchased it, and on this property he erected a magnificent five-story Gothic Revival cast stone structure to be the home for the children and Sisters.

A new chapter developed in the ninety-seven year history of St. Ignatius Loyola Day Nursery. The program began in a small house located at 243 East 82 Street on June 10, 1910, under the corporation of the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, the direction of Father Martin Scott, S.J., and the Ladies' Auxiliary. Under the patronage of the Ladies' Auxiliary, the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola Boy Choir gave a concert at the Hotel Plaza on March 23, 1914 for the benefit of the Day Nursery children. The Day Nursery offered a night shelter, too; the children were referred to as orphans. In 1913, the Day Nursery relocated to 142 East 82 Street and the Sisters of Bon Secour managed the program until 1917; they were succeeded by the Sisters of Charity. The Day Nursery offered peace of mind and security to young mothers desperately trying to secure employment and care for their children in what was the poor tenement community of Yorkville.

It was Nicholas Frederic Brady's love for church and children that naturally engaged him in the special ministry of the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola. For one to fully appreciate the depth and breadth of Nicholas Frederic Brady, it is necessary to detail his spirit of generosity and his love for Church, Charity, and Genevieve. Nicholas was born in Albany, New York, on October 27, 1878. His father, Anthony N. Brady, emigrated from Ireland at a very young age and was responsible for the family's wealth. His mother, Marcia Meyers, an Anglican, was from New Hampshire.

Nicholas was raised Episcopalian. He graduated from Yale University in 1899. In 1906, he married Genevieve Garvan, a devout Catholic, of Hartford, CT. It was Genevieve's influence that brought Nicholas to the Catholic Church shortly before their marriage. Nicholas and Genevieve were parishioners of the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola. They lived at 910 Fifth Avenue, New York. They did not have children of their own. As philanthropists, much of their charity involved children. Nicholas and Genevieve used their wealth as a means to serve their church and community.

Nicholas was a leader, visionary, and great financial power of his day. He was the President of New York Edison Company, the chairperson, owner, and/or director of dozens of corporations including Westinghouse Electric, Chrysler Corporation, Emigrant Savings Bank, and National City Bank, just to name a few. He was responsible for extending Brooklyn Rapid Transit into Manhattan and for the consolidation of gas and lighting companies. He studied Pope Leo XIII's Encyclical, "Rerum Novarum," on the condition of the worker. Nicholas was intellectually and spiritually guided by the many books he read on ethics, social justice, papal encyclicals, and canon law. Nicholas initiated fair wages and benefits for his employees and respected the dignity and sanctity of every human being. He held high ideals and conducted business with integrity and fidelity.

Nicholas was a modest and humble individual who loved the quiet life while at home in his personal library. Nicholas, a noble and devout Catholic, once made this statement to a Jesuit friend, "what are rich people but the trustees of God for the deserving poor and honest labor...the natural law seems to say plainly enough that adequate wages should be the first payment...the working man's right and dignity should come before high dividends".

When the Jesuits celebrated their Golden Jubilee in 1916, it was Nicholas, Chairman of the Jubilee Committee, who underwrote all the expenses for the entire weeklong festivity. Nicholas and Genevieve loved art and enjoyed much travel to Europe searching for antiquities to decorate their summer home, *Inisfada* (in Gaelic, *Inisfada*, means Long Island). This home was built for Genevieve in celebration of their 10th wedding anniversary. *Inisfada*, a Tudor Elizabethan mansion located on Searingtown Road in Manhasset was built in 1916 and completed by 1920. Many dignitaries and heads of state visited *Inisfada*, including Queen Victoria of Spain and Madame Curie of Belgium. In 1936, Genevieve turned over the estate to the New York Province of the Society of Jesus. *Inisfada* opened to the public as St. Ignatius Loyola Retreat Center in 1963.

Nicholas and Genevieve had given over one million dollars to the Vatican by 1926. Nicholas was the personal friend of three Popes. He took a leading part in the organization and development of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York under the leadership of Cardinal Hayes. The following honors were conferred upon Nicholas: Knight of Malta (he founded the American chapter), Knight Commander of St. Gregory and Knight of St. Gregory, Knight of the Supreme Order of Christ, Papal Chamberlain and Papal Duke.

Nicholas and Genevieve were leading Catholic laypersons in the world. Genevieve received a Doctor of Laws from Georgetown University. Genevieve was awarded the following honors, a Laetaere Medal from the University of Notre Dame; Order of the Knight of the Crown from King Albert of Belgium; Cross of Malta; French Academy Award; and Papal Dutchess. Genevieve succeeded Mrs. Hoover as Chairperson of the National Girl Scouts of America and was Vice President of the Welfare Council of New York.

By 1930, the Brady's had given more than 2 million dollars for the buildings and grounds of the Jesuit Center in Wernersville, PA. Just two months before the Jesuit Center opened, Nicholas Frederic Brady passed away in his New York residence on March 27, 1930. A Requiem Mass was celebrated at the Church of St. Ignatius Loyola on March 29, 1930. Nicholas is buried in a crypt beneath an altar in the main chapel at the Jesuit Novitiate at Wernersville, PA. His Eminence Patrick Cardinal Hayes issued a statement in the public press which reflects his personal attachment and keen sense of loss: "Church, country, and city may well lament the passing of Nicholas Frederic Brady, a lovable personality whose sublime Christian faith, unbounded charity, inspiring family life, notable citizenship, and sensitive fidelity to high ideals in business relations leave an impress long to be remembered and cherished by a host of friends who deeply mourn their personal loss." Genevieve Garvan Brady died in 1938 and is buried in a vault next to her beloved - Nicholas.

"Mr. Brady was an old friend for whom I had great personal affection and esteem. In his death the community sustains a loss of a man of enterprise, courage, great philanthropy and kindness."

Alfred E. Smith, New York Governor

"He lived in virtue. He lives in glory. He will live in memory."

Joseph Pizzardo

Archbishop of Nicaea

Under-Secretary of State of the Holy See

Today, St. Ignatius Loyola Day Nursery, a Catholic preschool, proudly stands steadfast to its mission and unwavering commitment to excellence. For the past ninety-seven years, this program has offered a "home away from home" environment to approximately ten thousand children. The Day Nursery continues to offer a quality daycare service and a comprehensive educational program. This program focuses on the uniqueness and well-being of every child, thus fostering their social, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual growth. The Day Nursery provides a firm foundation on which children can grow in mutual respect for one another's similarities and differences. In partnership with parents, it provides a nurturing and stimulating environment for the children, affording them a foundation built in faith, love, and knowledge.

Currently, 124 students ranging from 2 to 5 years of age are enrolled in the half-day and full-day programs. The Day Nursery's original mission was to serve the working poor. Today, our mission and outreach include families of all income levels, which allows us to continue our commitment to single parents and low-income families; financial assistance remains an integral component in our program. The Day Nursery is often referred to as a mini "United Nations"; families represent approximately 35 countries from around the world; many of the children are bilingual and some are trilingual; all faiths are embraced and celebrated. Families, friends, and the community, at large, are involved in fundraising events. In keeping with Nicholas Frederic Brady's tradition of charity and love, this community of faith is mindful of others less fortunate. Through community outreach, the children have a keener sense of their external world, teaching them moral and ethical values, emphasizing responsibility and respect for all living creatures. The spirit of Nicholas Frederic Brady lives on in the fabric of the Day Nursery community. He lives on not only in these walls but in the hearts and minds of all who come through our doors.

We are blessed with a rich heritage.

We are privileged to be a part of this community.

It is our collective responsibility to preserve what has been given us.

Catherine M. Skurka
Director of Development
St. Ignatius Loyola Day Nursery
www.stignatiusloyola.org

"A House of Bread: The Jesuits Celebrate 70 Years in Wernersville, PA, by Kathy M. Scogna

"Fifty Years in Yorkville 1866-1916," by Rev. Patrick Joseph Dooley, S.J.

"Nicholas Frederic Brady – A Memoir," by Rev. James J. Daly, S.J.