Mother Praxedes, an astute visionary regarded by some members of the Sisters of Loretto as their second foundress dreamed of a college for women in the El Paso/Juarez borderplex. That hope did not come true but in April 2012 as the Sisters of Loretto celebrate their 200th anniversary many of her dreams have indeed come to fruition.

Born in Ireland in 1854 Praxedes (Susan Carty) joined the order in 1874. Few people had more impact on the early educational development of Las Cruces, NM than Mother Praxedes. Possessing a sharp mind, keen leadership ability, and a command of Spanish she quickly mobilized the community, students, and the nuns to expand Visitation Academy on Lohman Ave. and helped construct the Romanesque St. Genevieve’s Church.

By July 23, 1879 she and other members of the order were establishing the first venture of the Sisters of Loretto in Texas, St. Joseph’s Academy in San Elizario. By 1896 her faith propelled her for the next 26 years into the role of Superior General of the entire order. Over time she saw the Sisters of Loretto establish Sacred Heart Elementary, St. Joseph’s Academy on El Paso St., St. Mary’s School, St. Ignatius School, Guardian Angel School, Holy Family School, St. Patrick’s School, and St. Joseph’s Parish School on Hueco St.

Loretto Academy is proof of her breadth of vision and building genius. She was in St. Louis, gaining a mortgage in 1931 to see her retirement project of Loretto College to completion when she broke a hip which never healed. Nevertheless she returned to El Paso and died Dec 16, 1933 in the convent on Hardaway St. She was 81 years old.

Father J. Garde said at her Requiem Mass, “Her chosen field was Education and she was one of the finest souls to see the necessity of higher education for women. How wisely she planned and how well she executed these plans will be attested to long after our day by the finished product which will be scattered throughout the west and the world.”

“How wisely she planned and how well she executed.”
Mother Praxedes Carty, SL

Mother Praxedes
Photo courtesy of Loretto Academy

Amanda Jewett
Mother Praxedes 2011 Award Winner
Studying at the University of Dallas in 2012