

# A TOUR OF CORNELIA'S PHILADELPHIA



VENERABLE CORNELIA CONNELLY, 1809-1879  
FOUNDRESS, SOCIETY OF THE HOLY CHILD JESUS



# VENERABLE CORNELIA CONNELLY, 1809-1879

Foundress, Society of the Holy Child Jesus

*"Give me, O Lord, a love full of action."*



## Please join us in praying for the Beatification of Venerable Cornelia Connelly

*O God, who chose Cornelia Connelly  
to found the Society of the Holy Child Jesus,  
inspiring her to follow the path marked out  
by your divine son, obedient from the crib  
to the cross, let us share her faith,  
her obedience and her unconditional trust  
in the power of your love. Grant us the favor  
we now implore through her intercession...  
and be pleased to glorify, even on earth,  
your faithful servant, through the same  
Christ our Lord. Amen.*



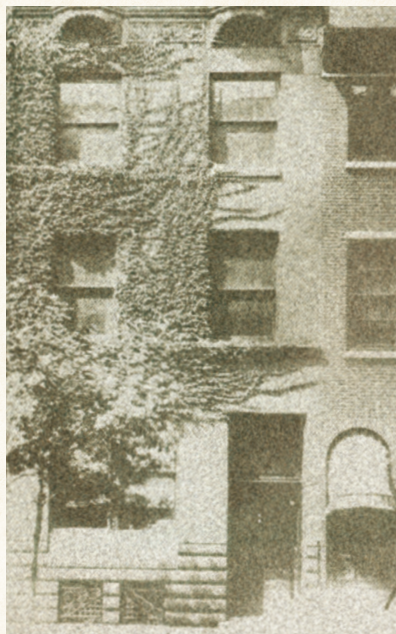
## VENERABLE CORNELIA CONNELLY

In 1809, Venerable Cornelia Connelly, Foundress of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, was born on Filbert Street in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where the Declaration of Independence was signed little more than 30 years before. With her trademark resourcefulness and verve for life, Cornelia fully embodied the independent spirit of her birthplace, where she would live until the age of 22.

As a wife, mother of five children, three of whom died at an early age, and convert to the Catholic faith, Cornelia faced unimaginable adversity with courage and determination, transforming her personal heartache into an unwavering faith. Her devotion to God and calling to serve led to the founding of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus in Derby, England, in 1846, a few years after her husband, Pierce Connelly, had decided to enter the Catholic priesthood.

Through education, teacher training, and a commitment to “meet the wants of the age,” Cornelia impacted the lives of thousands of people worldwide. Her work endures today, as the Society continues to flourish more than 140 years after her death in 1879, with over 400 Sisters carrying on her legacy in Africa, Europe, North America, and South America. The Society’s motto is Actions Not Words.

To learn more about Cornelia, visit the Society of the Holy Child Jesus website at [\*\*www.shcj.org/american\*\*](http://www.shcj.org/american).



*After her mother's death in 1823, Cornelia lived at 719 Spruce Street with her half-sister and brother-in-law, Isabella and Austin Montgomery.*



# TOUR OF CORNELIA'S PHILADELPHIA

On Cornelia's Philadelphia tour, we will visit a few places that shaped Cornelia's childhood and young adulthood and "walk through" the Philadelphia she knew.

## St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

19 South 10th Street

- Cornelia was baptized at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church by Rev. James Montgomery, rector of the church and brother-in-law of Cornelia's half-sister, Isabella Bowen Montgomery.
- St. Stephen's was built in 1823 and designed by William Strickland. It was considered Philadelphia's first "Gothic" church.
- Portraits of Cornelia, as well as her brother-in-law, James Montgomery, hang in the rector's office.
- One of the paving stones in the hallway is the gravestone of John Bowen's daughter. John was Cornelia's half-brother.
- The name of Cornelia's brother-in-law, Lewis Duval, is engraved on the hallway wall. He was a benefactor of St. Stephen's. Lewis married Adeline Peacock Duval, Cornelia's sister.
- After her mother died, Cornelia lived with her half-sister, Isabella Bowen Montgomery, and her husband, Austin Montgomery, from 1823-1831. St. Stephen's Archives asked the Holy Child Sisters why Cornelia and Pierce were not married at St. Stephen's. According to the Society's Archives,



*Cornelia was baptized at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church.*

Isabella did not approve of Pierce. Therefore, Cornelia and Pierce were married by Bishop William White at the home of her sister, Adeline Peacock Duval, near 13th and Chestnut Streets in Philadelphia.



*Historical marker at St. Stephen's Church.*



## Christ Church

20 North American Street

- Founded in 1695, Christ Church is a national shrine.
- In 1727, construction began on Christ Church and was completed in 1754.
- Cornelia's parents, Mary Swope Bowen and Ralph Peacock, were married here on February 22, 1798, by Bishop William White.



*Sideview of Christ Church.*



*Cornelia and Pierce Connely's marriage was registered at Christ Church.*

- While Cornelia's marriage to Pierce Connely is recorded in Christ Church's registry, the couple was married in the home of Adeline Duval, Cornelia's sister, at 13th and Chestnut Streets on December 1, 1831.

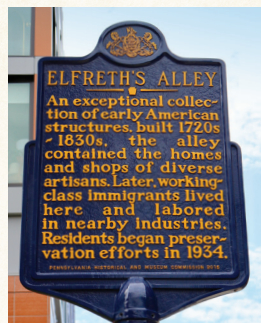
## Elfreth's Alley

Between 2nd and Front Streets & Arch and Race Streets

- Elfreth's Alley is the oldest continually occupied street in the United States, with 33 houses built between 1713 and 1811. (Cornelia was born in 1809.)
- Named for blacksmith and property owner Jeremiah Elfreth, Elfreth's Alley was home to the 18th-century artisans and tradespeople.



*View of Elfreth's Alley.*



*Elfreth's Alley is a national landmark.*



## Bishop White's House

309 Walnut Street

- The Reverend William White married Cornelia's parents in 1798, as well as Cornelia and Pierce in 1831. He also ordained Pierce an Episcopal minister in 1828 at St. James Episcopal Church of Kingessing, at 6838 Woodland Avenue in Philadelphia.
- The Bishop White House was built in 1786-1787 while the Reverend William White, Rector of Christ's Church, was in London to be consecrated Protestant Episcopal Bishop of Pennsylvania.
- Bishop White's house was sold after his death in 1836, and the National Park Service took possession in 1951. It is now a national shrine.
- Bishop White was well-known for his hospitality, so there is much reason to believe that Cornelia and Pierce often visited this home.

## Christ Church Burial Ground

340 North 5th Street

- Isabella Bowen Montgomery, Cornelia's half-sister, and her husband, Austin Montgomery, with whom Cornelia lived from 1823-1831, are buried here (close to the main entrance).
- Benjamin Franklin and his wife are buried here. It's a tradition to throw a penny on Ben's grave.
- Other signers of the Declaration of Independence are also here: Joseph Hewes, Francis Hopkinson, George Ross, and Benjamin Rush, M.D., who was a prominent physician.



*The late Helen McDonald, SHCJ, leads Holy Child Associates through Christ Church Burial Ground, 2018.*

## The Betsy Ross House

239 Arch Street

- The Betsy Ross House was built in the late 18th century and is an example of middle-class living. It's likely that Cornelia's widowed mother had lived in a similar house.

## Quaker Meeting House

320 Arch Street, between 3rd and 4th Streets

- Built in 1804, this is the oldest Friends Meeting House still in use in Philadelphia.
- The Quaker spirit of tolerance was a part of Cornelia's growing up in Philadelphia.
- The Quakers influenced the treatment of enslaved people in Pennsylvania. If an enslaved person remained in Pennsylvania for a certain length of time, he or she was free.



# Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul

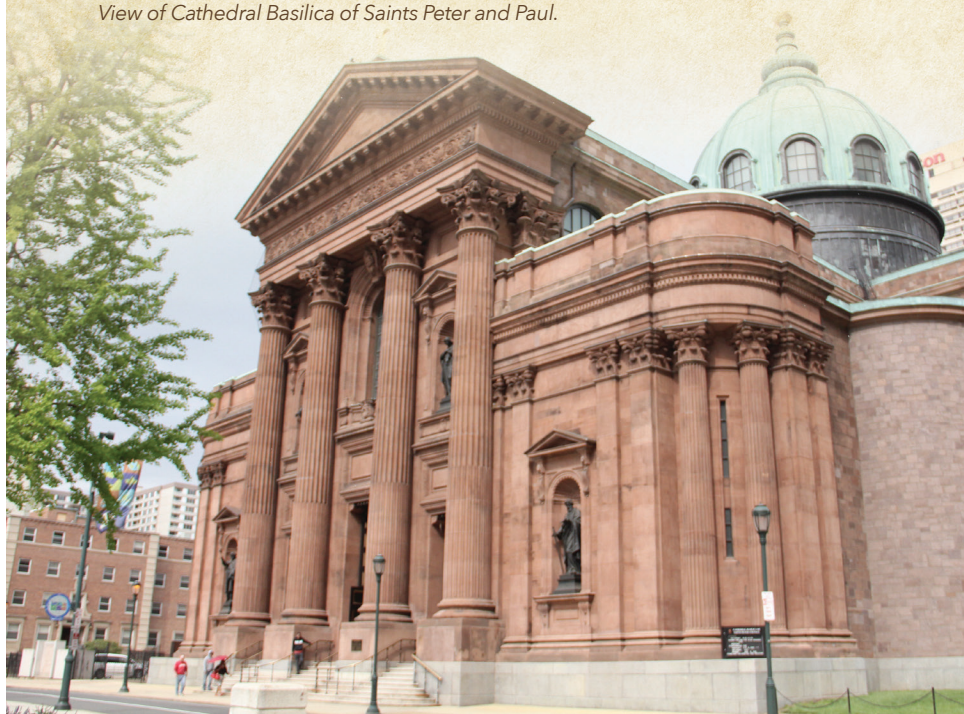
18th Street and Benjamin Franklin Parkway

- The cornerstone for the Cathedral was officially laid in September 1846, a few weeks before Cornelia founded the Society of the Holy Child Jesus in Derby, England. The Cathedral opened in 1864.
- In honor of the 175th Anniversary of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus, the Cathedral established a memorial to Venerable Cornelia Connelly and a Shrine of the Holy Child.
- Cornelia offers inspiration to all who seek the will of God in their lives, especially those in difficult marriages and who have suffered the death of their children. Please visit the Cathedral and pray for Cornelia's beatification. (See inside front cover for prayer.)



*The Holy Child Shrine and Memorial to Venerable Cornelia Connelly is located to the right of the of the main entrance of Cathedral.*

*View of Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul.*





# HISTORY OF THE SOCIETY OF THE HOLY CHILD JESUS

On October 13, 1846, at the request of Pope Gregory XVI, Venerable Cornelia Connelly began what would become an international congregation of women religious in the Catholic Church in Derby, England. Two days later, on October 15, Cornelia and three postulants assisted at their first Mass as a religious community. October 15, 1846, is formally recognized as the date of the founding of the Society. For 175 years, the Society's members have lived out Cornelia's vision to "meet the wants of the age."

Today, the Society's ministry spans four continents, where our Holy Child family lives the mission ***to rejoice in God's presence and to help people believe that God lives and acts in them and in our world***. The Sisters work collaboratively with others in educational, spiritual, pastoral, social justice, and healthcare ministries. The Society's leadership resides in Rome, Italy, with Province Leadership teams in Europe, America, and Africa.

Cornelia's Philadelphia was created by Society of the Holy Child Jesus – American Province in honor of the Society's 175th Anniversary. Text supplied by the late Helen McDonald, SHCJ.



## Society of the Holy Child Jesus

AMERICAN PROVINCE

1341 Montgomery Avenue  
Rosemont, PA 19010  
610-626-1400  
[www.shcj.org/american](http://www.shcj.org/american)