



Heritage Happenings

Archives Office
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Lest We Forget...



Our History Continues: In the September issue, Theresa Gramlich was busy teaching school during the months before summer work began. We continue with Mother Gabriel's account related to her new companions.

On September 8, 1867 Mary Ann Graf, Josepha Thoenie, and Rosa Wahl joined Theresa. Mary Graf came first to Clarks Mills to see if she would like to stay with Theresa; after a few days or even weeks, she went back to St. Nazianz to get Josephine and later still came Rosa Vahl. Rosa had taught school after my sister had taken sick at Nazianz. When Rosa came to us, Father Joseph had her go to Maple Grove, to teach 3 months in the district school. My six months at White Law had been finished in October (1867). So Father Joseph had Mary Graf and myself get ready for Milwaukee to advance more in our studies at the venerable Notre Dame Convent. Until now we wore a candidates bonnet, but during all the time we stayed there at the convent, we wore a brown face veil to distinguish us from their candidates. This was December 1867. Mary Graf was called back to Clarks Mills in March 1868 by Father Joseph. In January, Rosa came also to advance herself. She stayed nearly 2 years. I was summoned back the end of May 1868 by Father Fessler.

Who was Theresa Gramlich's sister who got sick and was replaced by Rosa Wahl?

Maria Anna Gramlich was six years older than Theresa. She was born August 23, 1836 in Schlierstadt, Germany. She arrived in the Port of New York with her parents, and her siblings: Antonia, Catharina, Theresa, and Clemens on the boat John H Ryerson on September 17, 1854. Eventually they reached St. Nazianz where she joined the Oswald Sisters. Her picture notes the bonnet-like veil that was worn at that time by many religious orders.

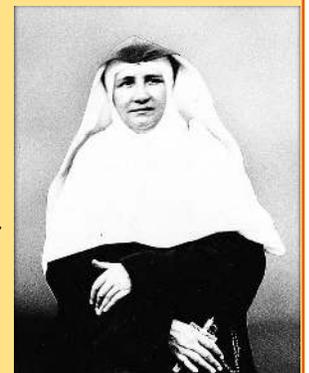


In her book "Alverno" written in 1916, Sr. Florence Kientz noted: *"Feeling the necessity of mental and spiritual training for a calling so high, ...presented themselves as candidates at the Notre Dame Convent in Milwaukee."*



What was the "venerable Notre Dame Convent"?
St. Mary's Institute was founded in 1850 by Mother Caroline Freiss. Who was she???

Mother M. Caroline Friess was a tremendous pioneer in the early founding days of the Notre Dame Sisters in America. She was born near Paris, on 24 August, 1824, and entered the convent when only 16. She was one of the first to volunteer for the missionary work in the New World, and emigrated to America in 1847. In 1848 she visited Milwaukee on an inspection tour of possible sites for a new mother house. In December 1850 headquarters of the order were officially moved to this city. She was only 26 years old!! She was appointed full charge of the Notre Dame Order in America, a teaching order. On 2 January, 1851, St. Mary's parish school was opened and St. Mary's Institute for boarding and day pupils soon afterwards. It soon became evident that it was Sister Caroline who was to develop the young congregation. It was she who befriended the young girls from Manitowoc, WI and assisted them in their schooling and spiritual training. She died at Milwaukee on 4 August, 1905, aged sixty-two. Take notice of her habit especially the top of the veil, very much like our first one. *Now, what was Notre Dame Convent like?*



"Father Joseph had Mary Graf and myself get ready for Milwaukee to advance more in our studies at the venerable Notre Dame Convent."



Could it be assumed that Mother Caroline classified them with "candidates" rather than students when Theresa says "Notre Dame Convent". By now the institute and convent were well established and organized. Do you remember the list YOU were given??? Here's the 1868 list for candidates:

1. a straw mattress or feather bed
2. 2 pillows
3. 1 woolen and 2 quilted covers
4. 4 sheets and 2 bedspreads
5. 1 dozen handkerchiefs
6. 4 neckerchiefs
7. 6 hand towels
8. 6 nightcaps
9. 2 black aprons
10. 6 petticoats
11. 2 corsets or bodices, underwear
12. 6 table napkins
13. 2 flannel skirts
14. 3 dark & 2 white nightgowns
15. **2 black merino dresses (What are these??)**
16. 2 black scarves, gray mittens, **brown veil**, black shawls
17. summer & winter stockings, underskirts, shoes
18. Etc.



Black Merino

Put yourself in their shoes for a few minutes, listening to Father say that you needed to "get ready" to go to Milwaukee!!! Who would take care of the house? What did they need to bring? What would they wear? How would they get there?

Let's speculate for a bit.

Imagine their excitement now living together, getting use to each other, deciding on a daily schedule, praying about founding a new community, being guided by Father Fessler to do such,

Busy, busy hands!!!



Starting in September until they left, when they weren't teaching, their hands must have been very busy putting together

clothes, quilts, aprons, nightgowns etc. that they would need. Remember: these girls were poor, not making a salary, no sewing machines, no electric lights. Did they really bring ALL these items? Who knows... they weren't planning on staying there. Maybe the Oswald Sisters helped them gather the items and make their candidate habits.

Theresa says: *Until now we wore a candidates bonnet...* Rosa, Mary Ann and Josepha wore the Precious Blood habit. From later photos, the "bonnet" of candidates was like this photo (1873) of Sr. Armella. It can be assumed that together they agreed on a veil all were familiar with.



Black Merino: Merino was the name of a sheep from which wool was sheared. The wool was then carded, combed and made into the fibre used for spinning to make yarn. It was then used for knitting stockings, weaving material, for dresses, crocheting, shawls. We know there were sheep at Clarks Mills and St. Nazianz...but not what kind. ...Imagine shearing



sheep, carding and combing the wool and then spending evenings getting it ready for spinning!! Photo at the left shows the carders used and then the spinning wheel on the right. Sister Teresita, original organizer of the heritage Room, was able to set up this spinning wheel and use it to make yarn just as the older sisters did years ago. Sisters also were known to knit their stockings for summer and winter use.

NEXT MONTH: Information on the face veil and their classes.