



Heritage Happenings

Archives Office

June 2020

Lest We Forget...

Beginnings and Endings

In the May issue of Heritage Happenings, the two Foundresses of the Poor School Sisters of St. Francis, Sister Seraphica and Sister Bernwarde, had arrived in Gieboldehausen and were ready to teach the next day. They had two schools for girls with 180 students. Now they needed to get organized...and start doing God's work.



On October 1857 education of the children began in Gieboldehausen.

DINKLAR: In 1860, Pastor Paul Hottenrott asked the Bishop for two school Sisters. (There were only 7 in the Community at this time!!)

After they received the permission of the Bishop on April 17, 1860, Sister Bernwarde and Sister Josepha traveled to Dinklar where they had to live in the parsonage. Then a teacher Linnborn offered them residence. They began school on the 19th of April. On July 9, 1860 the foundation was laid for a new convent. Our Archives has the architectural drawings showing Sisters "cells", classrooms, kitchen, etc. inside and outside in architectural drawing detail. With only a fund of \$1,000, the building was begun with faith in God and the good people of the area. Mission life had its beginnings!



Rollshausen: On October 15, 1862 Sister M. Josepha and Sister M. Xaveria moved to Rollshausen, 3 miles away, where the Consistory had given them the girls' school. On the 18th of the same month the little convent there was consecrated by Pastor Hentze in honour of Saint Joseph and the sisters were solemnly inaugurated there.

Blumenthal: Upon the request of Father Nuremberg, Sister Ignatia and Bernarde were sent to Blumenthal on October 17, 1865 to found a private school. There were 20 children at the school. At first, they lived in Miethe. In 1866 a new house was built which they were able to occupy by the end of October and which was dedicated on the last Sunday of November.

Gieboldehausen: Back home Mother Seraphica was busy with the three remaining novices. By April 1862, five more Sisters had made their vows, leaving just one novice. As members increased, living space decreased and it was finally decided to build a wing on the old building. Construction began July 7, 1862. In addition to this building, an outbuilding containing a cowshed, pigsties, feed floor, etc., and a large wooden shed were built. By October everything was ready and the craftsmen stopped working so that the house would dry out properly.

Dingelbe: December 28, 1865 at the request of the Pastor Richter, Sisters Augustine and Antonie, were sent to Dingelbe where they had been given the girls school. As they could not move into the house intended for them, they lived for several months with a private man, Mr. Maxen. After half a year (approximately) they moved into the house bought for them. The house was consecrated as a convent on October 6, 1866.

Notice: As new missions are taken on, only 2-3 Sisters go to each place. At each of them, no convent is ready and they board with the townspeople until a facility can be built. Also note that in 1865 two missions were accepted within two months of each other...one in October and the other just a couple days after Christmas. They go where they are needed. Also, each house is "consecrated/blessed" and given a name, just like we name our convents...the last being at Imperial called "St. Clare of Assisi".

Lindau: On October 6, 1867 Sisters Benedicte, Mechtildis and Cecilia moved to Lindau, where the Royal Consistory had transferred the girls' school over to the Sisters. Sister M. Benedicte taught the first grade and Sr. Mechtildis the second. Their house was consecrated the same day in honor of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. On October 11, the sisters began teaching the lessons. Lindau was five miles north of Gieboldehausen.



Nesselroden: In 1867, November 20th, two School Sisters, Sr. Xaverie and Sr. Alfonse, were sent to Nesselröden to take over the teaching of the first girls' class, which was assigned to them by the Royal Consistory. They moved into a rented house for the time being, since a new convent had to be built first. Nesselröden was 11 miles from their Motherhouse. This would be the last mission that they would open.

1872 STAT's: 17 sisters in Gieboldehausen, two in Rollshausen, three in Nesselröden and Lindau, two in Blumenthal, Dingelbe and Dinklar for a total of 31 Sisters. The future looked promising!

Gieboldehausen: Sept. 9, 1874: "...the Sisters...were unfortunately recently deprived of their schools there and thus forced to vacate the buildings they previously occupied. Hoping for better times soon, they bought another house, moved into it and turned a hall into a chapel. They wish it to be consecrated ASAP...and to keep the Blessed Sacrament for daily adoration...as the Rule of the Order requires." Oct. 12: permission given.

Dinklar: A letter dated March 30, 1874 signifies "bad tidings": *If the School Sisters are to be given the dispensation in question, a request for it must come from the School Sisters themselves. ... the exercise of coercion—even if only moral—in the filing of such application brings with it grave responsibilities, which I will certainly not take upon myself until it is established with full certainty that the School Sisters will be left in their school service after having discarded their habit.* Signed: Wilhelm, the Bishop of Hildesheim. **Lindau:** June 3, 1874: "We inform the school board that the School Sisters in **Lindau** must be removed..by feast of St. Michael, Sept. 29." They left Oct. 1, 1874.

November 1, 1874: **HOPE:** Reception and Profession: Sister Augustine writes: "I have informed the sisters as well as the young ladies of the even circumstances that face us as a community. None of them all themselves to be frightened On the contrary, they asked me almost daily with begging words to help us stay together. They all desire to share our destiny. We are very happy that we have the Blessed Sacrament with us again. Now everything is much better. We trust and pray that God will shorten the time of our trial."

In 1862 a garden had been purchased for the Sisters and in 1863 a second garden was purchased from farmer Rudolph. Letter June 3, 1875: "The Superior is now claiming that the Vicariate will sell both gardens for the benefit of the School Sisters." By now the Sisters are making preparations to leave Germany.



On February 19, 1875, Sister Benedict became the 13th member of the Community to die bringing the total number of Sisters remaining to 29. A total of 44 girls had been received into the new Community between 1860 and 1875, 14 died and 2 left. With one more death in December, this left 28 who came to America.

Sept. 13, 1875: Sister Augustine writes: "For the last time on this native soil, but with a courageous trust in Divine Providence, we must bid farewell to the Bishop's graces. We will leave here this Wednesday, via Munster to Rotterdam, and on the 18th we will board a ship to cross the wide sea. As always, every morning at the holy sacrifice, your Grace will remember us." Seventeen signatures of the first group to leave followed. Thus ends their time in Germany, facing new beginnings in America. (Many more documents regarding their time in Germany have been translated and are available in the archives.)

