



Heritage Happenings

Archives Office

May 2022

Lest We Forget...

Completion Finally in Sight!!

In her Memoirs Sister Benedicta Stitch writes: *For the present only one wing was built in order to avoid incurring heavy debts. After a year the building was completed and the Sisters moved in during the summer of 1874. On the 2nd of August the Convent was blessed by the right Reverend F. X. Krautbauer who later became the bishop of Green Bay. The convent received the name "Silver Lake Convent" on account of the beautiful lake near by. Later the name and surrounding territory was changed to Alverno to the joy of the daughters of St. Francis....because on Alverno Heights St. Francis received the Five Holy Wounds of the Crucified. Also the community was placed under the special protection of the Holy Family...*



On August 2, Reverend George Fessler celebrated the first Holy Mass in our chapel. The Rev. Pastor of Meeme delivered the sermon and Sr. Gabriela, Sr. Benedicta and Sr. Lucretia were among those who were present. In the evening, Rev. George Fessler and the Sisters made a tour of the entire building and locked the doors of all the rooms.



Look What's Happening!

The Manitowoc Pilot August 6, 1874

Dedication of the New Convent of the Sisters of St. Francis, at Silver Lake

Next Sunday, August 9th, the new convent at Silver Lake will be dedicated. The ceremonies will commence at 10 o'clock. A. M. after which will follow two sermons, one in the German and the other in the English language. All those who were present last year at the laying of the cornerstone will remember the joyful day they witnessed on that occasion. Many of them expressed the wish to have an opportunity to spend a similar day at the dedication of this building. We therefore inform all the citizens of Manitowoc and its vicinity that there will again be a so-called public festival, at which music and songs and all kinds of refreshments will contribute to make this day as pleasant and joyful as possible. The inhabitants of Manitowoc city and vicinity are cordially invited to attend.

SEPTEMBER 1874: Before the convent was entirely completed, Sisters were sent to clean the rooms. One evening, during an electrical storm, lightning struck in, at the third story, flashed through the house and out of a basement window. It was a "cold stroke". Sister Armella (Rupp) was about 12 steps distant from the place. She could neither move nor speak — yet was conscious. She had the key of the house tightly held in her hand. Two of the Sisters came in and with the help of Sister Zita (Franken) a novice, took her to her bed. They did all in their power to resuscitate her. After about two hours she recovered. She was not unconscious but could neither move nor speak. The next morning one of the Sisters walked to town to bring the tidings. At 5 a.m. she arrived at Manitowoc. The Sisters feared telling Mother Odelia the bad news. Mother's nerves were still in a state of tension from the shock of Sr. Constantia's abduction. To the surprise of the Sisters, Mother said: "O das laest sich noch anhoeren." (Oh that can still be heard.)





Annual Appointments—Changes—Missioning



The time of receiving one's Appointment for the coming year has changed considerably over the years. Sisters remember standing out in the court in summer and a Sister would come over and say "You're coming with me".... And you would be going somewhere you never thought to go. In 1953 an article appeared in the Waukesha Freeman newspaper titled "Nun Likes St. Mary's Kitchen After Wood Stove in Michigan". Heritage Happenings shares this



"Appointment Change" for your enjoyment. For thirteen years Sister Crescentia (Bertels) had been in charge of the convent kitchen at Holy Cross school in Cross Village, Michigan. The school was located near a Chippewa Indian reservation. Oftentimes the Indians brought milk and vegetables to the convent. Each Thanksgiving they brought a turkey for the sisters. *"The kitchen at Holy Cross was homey. The wood stove really wasn't as inconvenient as some people might think. I didn't do any broiling but it was easy to bake when you learned how to regulate the stove. She revealed that the people up there had often offered to buy her a new electric stove, but she refused it. "When it would storm hard in winter the wires would all come down and the electricity would go off. Besides, I like my stove so well." The nun said she really didn't have any favorite dish, but admitted she liked fried chicken. Back at Cross Village, she kept about 45 chickens in the back yard, along with a garden where she raised potatoes, corn, carrots, peas and beans. She doesn't mind not having a garden here in Waukesha. "There's pretty much to do with a garden," she said. There were apple trees, too, around the convent and always a lot of flowers the sisters grew for the church. "I used to help with them, too but there were lots of weeds. That always goes with flowers." Beautiful woods surround the lakeside village, and the neighbor men were good about keeping the sisters' woodshed full. Once upon a time, she related, Cross Village was a lumbering town, but in 1918, a forest fire ravaged the area and burned the lumber mill. Only the old-timers remember it but they often tell about how many homes were destroyed. But the fire missed the Holy Cross buildings, the church and school. Now she will have a six-burner, two-oven electric stove and a garbage disposal unit in the sink. She will now cook for seven Sisters instead of just two. "It will just take me a little while to get used to it all."*

Sister Crescentia entered the convent in 1912, soon after she arrived in America from her native Germany.

THE STORY OF THE HOLY CROSS FIRE MIRACLE



The story of this picture of Our Lady of Victory was told to us by Sister Redempta Mueller who taught at the school at Cross Village. This is a photo of her in 1910. In 1918 the village of Cross Village was destroyed by fire. At the very end of the village stood the Church, Holy Cross School and the Sisters' Convent. A very strong wind carrying pieces of burning wood was blowing in the direction of these last buildings and landing on the roofs. These buildings were very precious to the villagers. They combined efforts to save at least these buildings. A bucket brigade was set up and all tried to water down the buildings as best they could.



All seemed hopeless. The wind grew stronger and it was almost impossible to even think of saving the buildings. When all were about to give up, one of Sister Redempta's pupils, John Keller, said to Sister, "You always taught us to honor and pray to Our Lady of Victory. May I get her picture and hang it outside the school building?" Sister answered, "You will never be able to do that. The wind is too strong." John said, "I will use a spike." Sister said he could. As soon as the picture was nailed to the building, the wind changed direction quite suddenly All the buildings were saved. The people of the village spoke of it as a great miracle. The original picture use to hang in our laundry. It was placed in the Archives some years ago. (PPNT-159)

