



Heritage Happenings

Archives Office
September 2023

Lest We Forget...



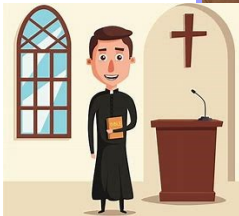
The June issue of Heritage Happenings ended with the question: *Who were the original chaplains that worked with our Sisters during the early foundation years.* Father Joseph and Father George Fessler are already quite well known, but what about the others mentioned? From 1878 until 1905 Diocesan priests were assigned to be chaplains for the Sisters at Holy Family Convent. Father Joseph Fessler, Founder, served as spiritual director from 1866 beginning at Clarks Mills, then St. Boniface and finally at St. Joseph's, Alverno. His brother, George succeeded him in 1880 until May 28, 1885 when he died at the early age of 37.



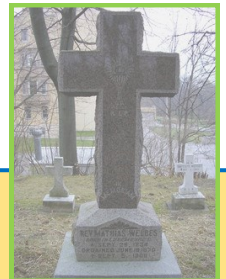
Rev. Anton Gerhard (Anthony), age 41, served here only for about 4 months from after May 28, 1885, death of Father George, until September 1885. He had accepted a Professorship at St. Thomas Theological Seminary at St. Paul. Minn.



Reverend Jacob Peter Van Treek, age 30, served during Mother Odelia's time taking Father Gerhard's place from 1885 until 1888, when he was missioned to Sheboygan. Rev. J. P. Van Treek was the second child of 11 children born to Peter Jacob and Anna Maria Schulen Van Treek. He was born March 9, 1855, was ordained June 27, 1880 and had a brother Joseph who became a priest. Two of his sisters entered the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity: Sister Pancratia and Sister Eustachia.

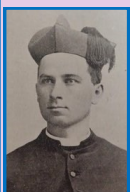


Rev. John H. Niehaus was born in July 1860 in Germany and was ordained October 12, 1884. He served as Assistant at St. Joseph's in Milwaukee from 1884 until he was sent to Alverno in December 1887. He was only here about three months, til February, so very little is known about his time here.



Rev. Peter Henry Welbes was next. He was assigned to Sisters at Silver Lake in February 1888 and stayed until July of 1890. It was him who deemed it necessary to add on another wing for the purpose of obtaining room for a more suitable chapel (St. Francis Chapel Wing). Several Welbes are buried in our cemetery but relationship to him cannot be traced: Sister Thomasine, daughter of John H. Welbes and his brothers Rev. Mathias Welbes and Thomas Welbes.

Little is known about the next five chaplains except birthdate, ordination, missions served and death date.
Rev. Mattias Oberlinkels: July 10, 1890 to Nov. 16, 1892;



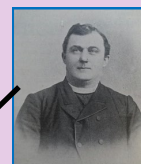
Rev. Norbert Dieringer (age 34): Nov. 16, 1892 to Aug. 26, 1897;



Rev. Anton Rossbach: Ordained in 1887;

at Alverno Sept. 3, 1897 to Aug. 2, 1898 (age 39);

Rev. Peter Holfeltz (age 42): Aug. 1898 to Dec. 1900.



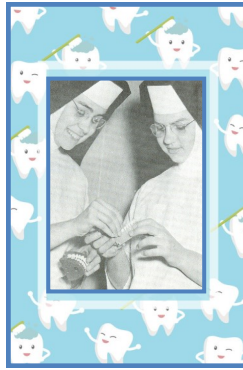
Rev. Joseph Van Treek: brother of Rev. Jacob (age 39): here Dec.

1900 to Nov. 1905. After 1905 Salvatorian Priests became Chaplains until 1928.



DENTAL CLINIC

You've heard of the Flying Nun and the Singing Nun but Sr. Jessica and Sr. Florita could be called the "Drilling Nuns."



This September it will be 65 years since they opened the convent dental doors



Sister Jessica was known to have said: "I love to go to the dentist because then I can sit down." referring to Sr. Florita checking HER teeth every 6 months.

In 1922 when St. Rita's wing was constructed, the dental department looked like this. In the 1950's need for dental care at the convent became acute when the local dentist retired and left the 2-operators convent clinic vacant.



Sr. Florita and Sr. Jessica had entered the convent in 1951. The creative juices of Mother Edna Ryan were at work and the idea of preparing two Sisters to be dentists seemed just the solution. On August 15, 1953 they both professed their first vows — and they

were promptly sent off to Marquette University School of Dentistry. They graduated in 1958.

The dental department was remodeled and modernized to make accommodations for them. They were 25 years old!! In September 1958 they opened their doors for business.

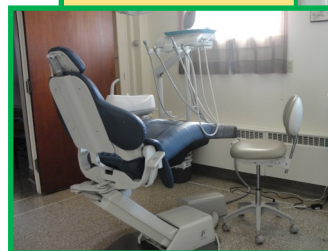


Looking back they probably remember all that has changed...

- ...taking x-rays
- ...making dentures
- ...new equipment



Over the years their services have extended far beyond the walls of the convent especially to the poor and the elderly. They served as consulting dentists at St. Mary's and St. Paul's Nursing Homes as well as extended care at Holy Family Hospital. They volunteered at St. Joseph's Medical/ Dental Clinic in Waukesha and



When refugees began to come to the area, Sr. Margaret Speigl would bring the children to the Sister-Dentist to be cared for.



Sr. Jessica recalls: "In the early days of our practice we did our own extractions. One Sister for the impending loss of one of her wisdom teeth was a solemn occasion as she was escorted into the department on the funeral cart by 6 willing pallbearers who were singing the Requiem!"



On October 1, 2013 Sister Florita retired from dental work.

Sr. Florita: "One time our Chaplain met the two of us in the elevator in the infirmary. He commented he was supposed to see the dentist twice a year. Since he saw two of us that should take care of his year!"



Sister Jessica taught Dental health to a number of First graders. She learned to be wary of asking if they had any questions when one little girl asked: "What makes you smell so good?"