

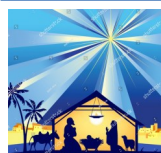


Heritage Happenings

Archives Office

December 2024

Lest We Forget...



Our Oldest Nativity Crib



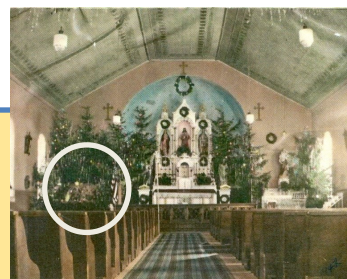
Sr. Concordia Thull was received in 1887. In 1959 Sr. Concordia Thull identified this wood crib as the one used in the first chapel. She was 97 at the time but with a keen memory. She remembered the old chapel (this would have been Patio Lounge when it was a chapel) perfectly and was thrilled to see the old crib again. Some time later the crib was stored in St. Alexis dorm in the first cell to the left of the east door. When that area was remodeled, it was placed on the first bed in that dorm. When Sr. Teresita went to get it, it had disappeared and could not be located. It was not known who took it or where it might have been. When the St. Francis attic was cleaned out in 2017, this wooden, hand made crib was found. It is believed to be the crib identified by Sister Concordia. It is hand-carved out of wood with bark covering and coated with brown paint. Statues used: Goebel's



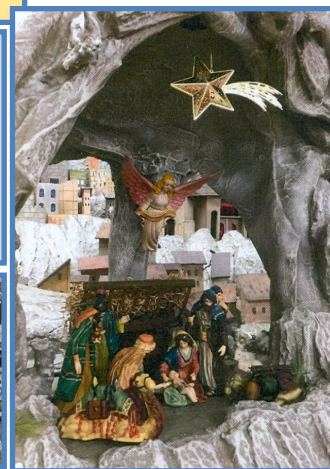
Cross Village Nativity Created in 1898



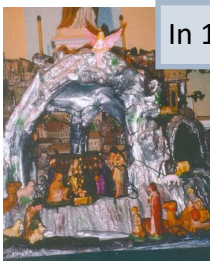
In 1897 Sister Loyola Gremminger was missioned at Cross Village, Michigan...and she made their Christmas Nativity. It was once no more than an old tree stump which she had discovered while walking out in the woods. A natural artist, she recognized its possibilities, and, at her bidding, some of the strong, young Indian men lugged the heavy stump home for her. She trimmed, cleaned and polished the old stump into a proper stable. Then she built a town to go with it. She used bark to fashion little hills, and the houses of various shapes and sizes snuggled between were made from wood of cheese boxes from the Mother-house and old cigar boxes. Some had open windows and doors for the Christmas lights to shine through. The boxes were painted by Sr. Loyola to look like a town.



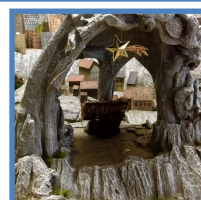
A set of steps going up through the hills ended where they entered an arch. The village spreading out and up behind the manger scene covered the entire five-foot, three tiered altar. The first creche figure figures were made by the native ladies from corn leaves and sweet grass.



In 1979 parishioners painted it silver.



Years later is was again restored to look more like its original wooden stump image. Now we need to go see it!!



Merry Christmas





On the 800th year celebration of the first Christmas Crib by St. Francis of Assisi and Lord John and the faithful of Greccio, the following poem *Twas the Week Before Christmas* was presented in 2023 at the Diocese of Madison's San Lucia Dinner for young women discerning Consecrated Life. Sr. Kathleen, Sister Theresa Feldkamp and Sister Julie Ann performed this choral reading, written by Sr. Kathleen. Sr. Mariella designed this Christmas card.

'Twas the Week Before Christmas

Twas the week before Christmas when deep in his heart
St. Francis returned from his prayer place set apart.

His soul was on fire, his eyes danced so bright,
A dream he envisioned for this Christmas night.

So down to the village of Greccio he sped,
While visions of worshippers danced in his head.
But the church was all empty, the streets, oh so gloomy
No singing, no lights, no wreaths, a place very doomy.

So Francis went to ringing that church bell with zest,
Come out here, he shouted, and you will be blest.

With grumbles and mumbles and hesitant feet
The villagers bunched up right out in the street.
Then Francis addressed them with voice loud and clear
How is it that one finds no Christmas 'round here?

The people all shuffled their feet and looked down
They knew that their's was the sorriest town.

No matter, said Francis, let's agree to do better,

Who has a donkey? Go loosen her fetters!

And not just a donkey but a cow or an ox?

One unafraid to climb up these rocks!

Sheep! We'll need plenty and maybe a goat,
Perhaps you could tie merry bells round their throats!

Wait now, don't go as I'm not yet nearly done,
There must be some hay and fresh straw by the ton!
A manger, we'll need. One built of fresh pine wood,
And all of this quickly and with cheer if you could!

The people all looked at each other with shock,
And cast eyes straight up at the mountain of rock.

Where are you my friend, Lord John, always true?

Greccians ran from me, but they'll listen to you!

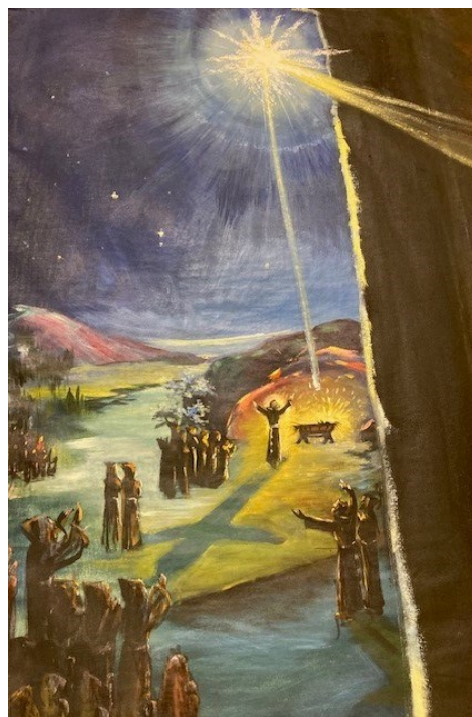
Lord John then stepped forward and bowed 'fore the
Saint

Holy Francis, we'll do it and with not complaint.
Now Greccians be off to your barns and your homes,
Get all Francis asks for, be quick with no moans!

So all rushed away to the east and the west
To north and to south to bring forth their best.
By Christmas at midnight, they climbed to the cave

The old ones all telling the young to behave.
The air was all frosty, the stars twinkling bright
All wrapped in the silence of this winter night.

To wonder or protest, what was this about?
But then Father Francis spoke with voice devout.



Painting by Sister Victoria Masil

Brothers and Sisters this night oh so holy
Began in a stable far off and quite lowly.
Have you forgotten, neglected, ignored,
The miracle which on this night Mary bore?
Twas Love that came into our world as a child,
Twas Love on which carpenter Joseph had
smiled.

And did our Child-Savior just come long ago?

And just in that stable distress undergo?

Greccio people, this night, please awake!

From all that is frenzied, please make a clean
break!

Open your hearts and make ready each soul,
A baby, He makes no demands but consoles.

Here we gather in this cave at the altar,
Let no minds turn to doubt and no voices to falter
But here in the manger, no less in the bread.

Messiah has come as the Scriptures have said.
The God who is Love made us in His likeness,
Now sends His Son, a Babe filled with bright-
ness.

So never forget, keep a faith most sincere,
In Bread or in Baby, his presence is clear.