

THE  
GENESIS AND EARLY HISTORY  
OF THE  
CONGREGATION OF ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA  
RACINE, WISCONSIN

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## CORRECTIONS

Page 37, line 8, dependent instead of independent.

Page 41, line 4, 1836 instead of 1856

Page 309, line 40, 1878 instead of 1879

## PREFACE

A teasing desire to know more about the origin and development of St. Catherine's Congregation, about the foundresses, and about the shadowy old convent of Holy Cross, Ratisbon, has long been apparent among the members of the Community. But queries remained unanswered, and up to the present time the Sisters have had to be content with a number of pertinent but bare facts. Then through the interest of Mother M. Sabina, the Convent's rich store of primary and secondary source material was collected and classified; and the Convent Archives were much enlarged under the direction of the archivist, Sister M. Fulgence.

It was at this time that the writer was pondering over a subject for a master's thesis. Mother M. Sabina solved the problem by suggesting the writing of the community history. To her, therefore, the writer feels deeply grateful, for the work on this thesis has been most pleasant and congenial.

When the title of the thesis was proposed to the Reverend R. N. Hamilton, S. J., he graciously encouraged the writer and gave her many helpful suggestions. Doctor Edward A. Fitzpatrick readily gave his approval also, and so the work was initiated. For this cooperation the writer wishes to express her sincere thanks.

Sometime previous to this a very valuable manuscript in the German language, the result of months of research in the archives of Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon, and the archives

of the Ratisbon diocese became available through the efforts of the Reverend Frederick Schrems, a nephew of the deceased Mother M. Thomasina. As Father Schrems was Secretary to Bishop von Henle of Ratisbon at that time, the labor of research was greatly facilitated. The writer, realizing the added value this information would give her thesis, decided to incorporate much of its source material, and at the suggestion of Father Hamilton the title was changed to The Genesis and Early History of the Congregation of St. Catherine of Siena, Racine, Wisconsin. For his valuable contribution the writer acknowledges a debt of gratitude to Father Schrems.

Mother M. Sabina and Mother M. Romana, her successor, gave the writer free access to the archives and facilitated the work in every way possible. Since most of the source material was written in the German language and in script, often difficult to decipher, Sister M. Fulgence graciously gave much of her time and worked with the writer on a great number of the translations. Sister M. Canisia also gave her assistance on a number of letters. To them the writer is much obligated.

Some of the most valuable source material, original letters written by Mother M. Benedicta to Bishop Henni, were secured through the courtesy of the Reverend Peter Leo Johnson, D.D., of St. Francis Seminary, St. Francis, Wisconsin. His contribution is deeply appreciated as is also the kindness of Right Reverend Monsignor August C. Breig, D.D., of St. Francis Seminary who permitted the writer the use of the Salzman Library.



The writer also feels under great obligation to the venerable prioresses, Mother M. Ignatia, O.P., of Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon, and Mother M. Hyacintha, O.P., of St. Mary's Institute, Niederviehbach, Germany, for the valuable information regarding their respective convents. The former, Mother M. Ignatia, also went to considerable inconvenience in having photographic facsimiles taken of original documents.

To the Reverend Jacob Heinzinger, D.D., Prefect and Professor in the Ludwigs gymnasium, Munich, much credit is due for giving his time in examining the files of letters in the archives of the Ludwig-Missionsverein in Munich and copying excerpts from the letters written by the first three superiors of the community.

Also the writer wishes to express sincere thanks to Doctor Major Younce and Professor John A. McChrystal for excellent courses in history which have given a fine background for the thesis.

The kindly elderly Sisters of the community who spent much time recalling past events for the benefit of the writer must also be gratefully remembered.

The writer has also been fortunate in obtaining interviews with persons who attended the schools taught by the foundresses. For interesting reminiscences about those early days the writer is under obligation to Miss Ruth Mary Fox who arranged an interview with her elderly aunt, Miss Mary McCormick, Brighton, Wisconsin. Mrs. Mary Hilt, Racine, also gave helpful information in an interview.

For the translation of four Latin documents the writer is deeply grateful to the Reverend Cyril Wahle, O.P., S.T.L., P.G., Chaplain of St. Catherine's Convent, Racine, Wisconsin.

For the first time a history of the Congregation of St. Catherine of Siena based upon the abundant source material available is presented. The writer admits that the value of the work lies chiefly in the fitting together into sort of a sequence a great variety of materials obtained from various sources and the translation of these sources into the English language, so that they might be available to the interested readers.

## INTRODUCTION

The present thesis was born of a desire to give an interested group of Dominican Sisters a more intimate and accurate knowledge of that religious congregation to which they have pledged their loyalty. The immediate occasion which prompted the writing of the early history of the Congregation of St. Catherine of Siena, Racine, Wisconsin, is its Diamond Jubilee in 1937. The story, however, must extend back to the thirteenth century and find its beginnings in the historic Convent of Holy Cross, Ratisbon, Germany.

This thesis, therefore, attempts to outline briefly the vicissitudes through which the famous cloister of Ratisbon passed during the period of the thirteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century. Several features in relation to St. Catherine's in Racine give it more than a passing importance. First, it is the only Dominican Convent now in Germany tracing its origin to so early a date which has never been dissolved or suspended. Secondly, the foundress of the Dominican Convent at Racine was for many years the prioress of Holy Cross Convent, and during her terms of office regular observance was again reestablished after the disastrous secularization of 1803. Thirdly, it was due to this same superior that Dominican foundations were made both in Germany and in America. Today, due to subdivisions, twelve Dominican Congregations, independent of each other, trace their origin back to Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon and to the prioress at the time, Mother

M. Benedicta Bauer. For a great number of American Dominican Sisters, therefore, this German institution is of vital importance and great interest. In relating this history in the first chapter of the thesis, the writer has attempted to present it against a background, religious, political, and historic. The immediate history of the Congregation of St. Catherine of Siena in Racine has its beginning in the advent of Mother M. Benedicta and her companion, Mother M. Thomasina, in America. The writer has traced the history of the community to 1880, for only then might the institution boast of permanence.

For years, old letters, documents, and diaries embalming within them the fragrance of these early pioneer years were stored away and guarded with dragon-like vigilance lest some sacrilegious hand destroy them, not knowing. When dear Mother M. Emily answered her summons to death, the treasure-cove of yellowed papers was opened; the contents, classified and added to the Convent archives. On this rich store of virgin primary and secondary material the writer has chiefly based her thesis.

On the premise that these early pioneers who laid the foundations could best account for their own actions and sentiments, the writer has made an extensive use of quotations and has incorporated letters in full. Indeed, frequently the documents arranged in a sequence tell the story far better and in a much more interesting manner than the writer could possibly present it. The writer feels that this course of action is justified, because most of the

documents had first to be translated and because she is aware that most readers desire to gain their knowledge by this method.

The early history of the congregation abounds in obstacles surmounted, and consequently has a touch of the romantic. The times for the establishment of the convent were particularly inauspicious. The country was in the throes of a civil war, and the economic and financial conditions were at their worst. In fact, the convent was in danger of dissolution from many causes; namely, extreme poverty, the early death of the foundresses, the desertion of members, and finally a troublesome lawsuit which threatened to dispossess it entirely.

The writer submits this thesis with the hope that it will become a source book for those persons interested in American Dominican foundations which trace their origin to the Cloister of Ratisbon.

CHAPTER I

THE ORIGIN AND EARLY HISTORY OF THE CONVENT

OF

HOLY CROSS, RATISBON, GERMANY

1233 - 1845

"In 1230 the Dominicans made a foundation at Ratisbon. Forthwith they took steps to found a convent for Dominican Sisters. On February 22, 1233, Bishop Siegfried could sanction a congregation of young women who desired to live according to the regulations of St. Dominic. The erection of the church and convent of Holy Cross was completed in 1244. This is the only Dominican Convent in Germany existing today and established at so early a period that has never been suppressed." 1

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1. Wilms, H., Geschichte der deutschen Dominikanerinnen, p. 34.

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Thus is epitomized the history of the venerable convent of Holy Cross, Ratisbon, which under the energetic rule of Mother M. Benedicta Bauer (1845-1858) made its splendid contribution to the mission fields in America and from which this zealous, courageous woman herself came in 1858 to participate in the fruits of missionary toil and to found the Congregation of St. Catherine of Siena in Racine, Wisconsin. The Dominican Sisters in Racine, consequently, feel a loving kinship with the Dominican Sisters in Ratisbon and fondly cherish the traditions of the historic convent which their foundress governed for thirteen years. 2

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2. Holy Cross Chronicle, Ratisbon, Excerpt VI, p. 1.  
Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.
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The history of the Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon, is consequently important for the study of the Dominican foundation in Racine, especially since that religious institution, having spanned the rounded centuries, reaches almost to the genesis of the Dominican Order itself. The first convent of women was established by St. Dominic at Prouille in Southern France in 1206, although the Dominican Order was not confirmed until 1216. The second convent was also founded by St. Dominic at the request of Honorius III, at St. Sixtus, Rome, in 1219. This convent soon became famous through the three saintly Sisters, since raised to the altars of the Church: Blessed Cecilia, Blessed Amata, and Blessed Diana. Blessed Jordan and Blessed Diana were the founders of a third convent, St. Agnes of Bologna, established in 1223. <sup>3</sup> If the date, February 22, 1233, the time

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3. Sinnigen, Ansgar P., Katholische Frauengenossenschaften Deutschlands, p. 64. In placing Bologna third, Father Sinnigen excludes the convent established by St. Dominic in Madrid, Spain, in 1218.
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at which the convent at Ratisbon was approved by Bishop Siegfried, were taken as the date of its foundation, Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon, then, would be considered the first Dominican Convent on German soil. Since, however, 1237, for various reasons to be discussed shortly, is the accepted date for its foundation, it will have to relinquish

that honor to St. Mark's, Strassburg, which was founded in 1234. <sup>4</sup> The second German convent was founded by Blessed

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4. Ibid.

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Cecilia of St. Sixtus at Altenhoheneu, Bavaria, on the Inn river in 1235. <sup>5</sup> Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon, was there-

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5. Ibid.

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fore, the third Dominican foundation in Germany and was established only sixteen years after the death of the holy founder, St. Dominic.

Ratisbon, the oldest city in Bavaria, was originally a Celtic town bearing the name of Radasbona. <sup>6</sup> Later it

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6. O'Shea, M.V. (ed.), The World Book, VIII, p. 4933.

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was made a frontier fortress by the Romans. Porta Praetoria, once the main entrance to the long demolished Castra Regina, a former fortified castle, imposingly bears witness to a history of more than two thousand years dating back to the Roman occupation. Proud in its glorious conquests, Rome carried to the frontier, not only Greek and Roman culture, but also Christianity. About 200 A.D. Christian influences began to exert themselves. <sup>7</sup>

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7. Len's, J., "Ratisbon," Catholic Encyclopedia, XII, p. 667.

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The barbarian invasions of the fourth and fifth centuries brought havoc to the valley of the Danube, as to other European territories, almost stamping out Christianity. In the seventh and eighth centuries, however, Ratisbon became the center of Christian missionary endeavor; and men of high courage and burning zeal began to reclaim the land for Christ. St. Rupert about 697, St. Emeran about 710, St. Erhard about 720, and Blessed Albert about 720 worked successfully to reestablish the faith. St. Boniface in 739 divided the Duchy of Bavaria into the four dioceses of Ratisbon, Paussau, Freising, and Salzburg and appointed Blessed Gawibald (739-61) as the first Bishop of Ratisbon.<sup>8</sup>

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8. Ibid., p. 658.

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Among the historic treasures of Ratisbon is the "Alte Kapelle," a famous old church erected by Louis the German in which repose the remains of his spouse Emma and the last of the Carovingian emperors, Arnulf and Louis the Child.<sup>9</sup>

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9. Ibid., p. 659.

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It is also interesting to note that with the German influence the name of Ratisbon changes to Regensburg. Ratisbon is pleasantly situated on the right bank of the Danube opposite the mouth of the Regen. This fact offers the explanation for the change in appellation.<sup>10</sup>

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10. O'Shea, M.V., op. cit., p. 4933.

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The convent of Dominican Sisters at Ratisbon seems to have had its origin in a pious association of women who had banded together in order to live a more pious life and to pray for the success of the Crusades. Similar associations of women were found throughout western Europe at this time.

"Through the many wars and above all through the Crusades the male inhabitants were much decimated, and the number of women and young women who were left alone became very great. In many feminine hearts the same enthusiasm for the holy faith burned as in the hearts of the men who went to the Holy Land. The weakness of their sex hindered these high-hearted women from going to the fields of battle, but it did not hinder them from becoming active in their own way by works of prayer and penance. The convent idea grew among them till the establishments became multitudinous. Through this development a great social problem was solved, for those who were affected by the Crusades were taken care of. A religious problem was also solved; namely, that the weaker sex could also become heroic. In years of persevering penance given to God these women accomplished the same heroic deed which the men offered in a moment of glowing enthusiasm." 11

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11. Wilms, H., op. cit., pp. 31-32.

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The designation Beguine often applied to gatherings of this type, is of Flemish origin. The etymology of the word is uncertain.

"The term is most likely derived from the word beghen in the sense of 'to pray' not 'to beg' as the Beguine did not belong to the mendicant orders. It may also be derived from Bega, the patron saint of Nevelles where, according to a doubtful tradition, the first Beguinage was established. It may again be derived from Lambert de Begus, a priest of Leige who died in 1180 after

having expended a fortune in founding in his native town a cloister and church for the widows and orphans of Crusaders." 12

12. E. Gilliat - Smith, "Beguiues", Catholic Encyclopedia, II, pp. 389-391.

"The Beguine could hardly be called a nun. She took no vows, could return to the world if she would, and did not renounce her property.

. . . . .  
The same aim in life, kindred pursuits, and community of worship were the ties that bound her with her companions." 13

13. Ibid.

Father Wilms describes a change of attitude toward these associations as their numbers increased. Although later in the thirteenth century these pious associations became more united, the tendency was not toward a strict enclosure. As time went on the name Beguine was gradually laid aside, since it had come to connote disdain; instead the terms "pious women", "temperate widows," and "the penitents" were used. One of the reasons for this change lay in the fact that authority frequently looked upon the Beguine with anxiety as often heretical ideas arose and were propagated from among their ranks. For this reason the bishops sought to attach these associations to the newly sanctioned mendicant orders. 14

14. Wilms, H., op. cit., p. 62.

As early as 1200 A.D., such an association of women, some married and some single, had established themselves in the western part of the city of Ratisbon. A special group of these women were known as Penitents. Some years later, under the protection of Bishop Siegfried, they united into one community. The townspeople at the request of the same prelate, donated to them a site called "Stein-grube" upon which to erect a convent. This donation was confirmed by the bishop on February 22, 1233. At the same time the members of the association promised to live according to the rule of St. Augustine and the Constitutions of St. Sixtus, Rome. 15

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15. Schrems, W., Kurze Geschichte des Dominikanerinnenkloster vom Heiligen Kreuz in Regensburg und Seiner Filialen. Manuscript V., p. 3, Archives, Mother-house, Racine.

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An ancient document refers to the convent at this time, establishing the proof of its existence. The document dated 1233 is directed to the council of Ratisbon by the bishop. In it he congratulates the citizens, because like Mahanain (Gen. 32, 1) they have spiritual sentinels on both sides of the city--in the East the Penitents of St. Clare and in the West the Sisters of Holy Cross. 16

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16. Ibid.

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In another document dated May 15, 1278, the Sisters are definitely called Dominicans. 17

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17. Ibid.

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Although the year 1233 might with reason be given for the foundation of Holy Cross Convent, the year 1237 is the date more commonly accepted, and this for several reasons. Although a site had been obtained and permission to build a convent had been granted, yet the erection of the building proceeded slowly, because sufficient funds were lacking. Furthermore, since the convent was to have strict inclosure it was necessary that a permanent income be provided. In 1237, Count Henry of Ortenburg presented the convent with the parish of Schwarzhofen together with all its titles, tithes, and privileges. <sup>18</sup> For this reason the Count of

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18. The title, tithes, and privileges refer to the feudal dues and privileges of the times.

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Ortenburg is considered the founder of the Dominican Convent of the Second Order at Ratisbon. <sup>19</sup>

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19. Holy Cross Chronicle, Excerpt I, p. 1. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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"This donation was confirmed in 1238 by Bishop Siegfried, and in 1307 by Rieza, Countess of Murbach, wife of the founder, and by the Count Palatine of the Rhine and Duke of Bavaria, Rudolph and Ludwig in 1307." <sup>20</sup>

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20. Wilms, H., op. cit., p. 334.

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The document of transference reads as follows:

"Henry, by the grace of God, Count of Ortenburg, announces his greetings to all the faithful. Be it known for the honor and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, Our Saviour, and also especially in reparation for our sins and for the salvation of our parents, our wives, and sons, we donate to the Sisters of St. Sixtus in the suburb of Ratisbon, not only the Church of Schwarzhofen itself, but also our rights of ownership and protectorship, so that in the meantime from the revenues of the Schwarzhofen church a convent chapel be built to honor the Blessed Trinity, Our Blessed Lady, St. Elizabeth, and St. John." 21

21. Schrems, F., op. cit., p. 4. The Archives, Motherhouse, Racine, possesses a photographic facsimile of the original document.

As witnesses to this transference of property from the Count of Ortenburg to the convent, Henry and Albert, "Ordinis Praedicatorum" have placed their signatures. 22

22. Holy Cross Chronicle, Excerpt I, p. 3. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

The chronicle significantly inserts, "perhaps Albert the Great," after the latter's name. There is every reason to believe that such was the case, for St. Albert, as a teacher of philosophy, spent two years at Ratisbon at this time. 23 A quotation from the chronicle account regarding

23. Schwertner, Thomas M., St. Albert the Great, pp. 29-31.

the progress of the convent is interesting:

"Since the necessary means for the erection of the convent were now at hand, the building progressed rapidly. The

convent and the church were completed after seven years and were solemnly dedicated by Bishop Siegfried in honor of the Holy Cross. Since that time the convent has borne the name Holy Cross without any interruption even to the present day. Why the convent was not dedicated to the Blessed Trinity, Our Blessed Lady, St. Elizabeth, and St. John as the donor requested is unknown. It is possible that the convent of Schwarzhofen which was begun at this time as the Count desired was dedicated to the above mentioned patrons. While the convent church was under construction, it is very probable that the Sisters continued to use the Sixtus chapel. One is unable to say whether it was already constructed or in the process of construction. According to Dr. Mettenleitner's chronicle, the building was even then in a delapidated condition." 24

24. Holy Cross Chronicle, Excerpt I, p. 2. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

The explanation which Father Schrems suggests for calling the convent Holy Cross is interesting. He relates that the convent was in possession of a very beautiful Roman Cross of thirteenth century workmanship which might have influenced the choice of the name. This same cross, he further states, was placed as an adornment on the high altar of Holy Cross Convent Church in 1669. 25

25. Schrems, F., op. cit., p. 4.

In 1237, Sister M. Gertraud Gewichtmacher became the first prioress and governed the community until her death in 1277. 26 It may be concluded that she was appointed

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26. Holy Cross Chronicle, list of prioresses 1237-1780.  
Excerpt VIII, p. 1. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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by Bishop Siegfried, for the convent did not receive the right to elect its own prioresses until later when the institution was again given the bishop's approval.

"On March 12, 1244, Bishop Siegfried approved the organization of the Sisters of Holy Cross. At the same time he gave them the right to elect a prioress, to keep a chaplain, and to possess a cemetery. Moreover, they were to share in all the good works and privileges conferred by the Holy See on the Sisters of St. Sixtus at Rome." 27

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27. Schrems, F., op. cit., p. 4.

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The following year February 13, 1245, Pope Innocent IV sanctioned the foundation of the convent as well as the transfer of Schwarzhofen. The pope himself became the protector of the convent and placed it under the care of the Dominican Order. 28

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28. Ibid.

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Thus in the thirteenth century, the classic age of the Dominican Order, the era of brilliant development and intense activity, Holy Cross Convent was founded. Although St. Dominic had died in 1221, St. Albert the Great was astonishing the world at the time with his wisdom. Besides, as was pointed out above, St. Albert was probably closely associated with the foundation of Holy Cross Convent; as Bishop of Ratisbon from 1260 to 1262, the convent came directly under his jurisdiction. Holy Cross has the



distinction of extending back to the time of the second Master General, Blessed Jordan of Saxony (1222-1237). It also shared in the fruits of the progress of the Order under the guidance of St. Raymond of Penafort, the great canonist (1238-1240) and other great Dominicans, such as Blessed John the Teuton (1241-1252) and Blessed Humbert (1254-1283).<sup>29</sup>

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29. Mandonnet, P., "Preachers", Catholic Encyclopedia, XII, p. 356-8.

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The relationship between the brethren and the convents of women at this time was one of respect and aid. The Dominican Friars considered the Sisters a counterpart and a completion of the Order of men. The pious Sisters had the opportunity by prayer and penance to aid the brethren in the work of the apostolate and to call down grace upon the hearers of the preaching brethren.<sup>30</sup> The Sisters of Holy

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30. Wilms, H., op. cit., p. 22. quoted from Cormier, H., La bienheureuse Diane d'Andalo et les bienheureuses Cecile et Aimie. Rome 1892, p. 47.

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Cross Convent fulfilled this obligation, for they led a contemplative life, and thus, the eulogy by Blessed Jordan to the Sisters of Prouille might with equal justice be applied to them. This quotation reads as follows:

"They serve God in truth, reverence Him with love, and with zeal strive after Christian perfection, and in purity and innocence, live holy lives. Through their merits they obtain a crown of everlasting glory; through their virtue they serve as an example to their fellow men; through their life they please the angels and honor God." 31

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31. Wilms, H., op. cit., p. 22.

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Father Wilms gives a very interesting discussion of the first regulations which were followed by the Sisters at this early period. The constitution of the Order was at this time very different from the later constitution, but nevertheless, these early statutes, although not systematically developed, formed the basis of the later one. It began with these words:

"As in the beginning of the church the faithful were one heart and one soul and held everything in common, so also you before God, the Lord, be one in customs and observance."

Continuing the discussion on the constitution, Father Wilms says:

"The necessity of love, of harmony, and of concord in the practice of the observance of convent life was emphasized. Obedience, "stabilita loci," poverty, and chastity were the conditions of profession. The service to God comprised in the first place the Divine Office as it was prayed by the Dominican Friars. Regularity, observance, and common life were insisted upon. After Matins as well as after Compline there was an hour set aside for private prayer to be devoted to meditation or to other pious exercises. Otherwise the Sisters were to be occupied with needlework or studies. On Sundays and Feast days they were at leisure to devote their entire time to spiritual reading and exercises of devotion. Every day after vespers there was to be a conference or spiritual reading in common.

"No one was allowed to be without some occupation. Even such as the weak, who need more rest, must be given some light work as the prioress deemed fitting.

The rules of fasting were in accordance with the constitutions. At table there was to be pious reading. Simplicity was to be observed in dress and furniture. Each one was to be provided with everything that was necessary, but superfluity was to be carefully avoided. Silence was to reign in the whole house with the exception of the workroom where only what was necessary in regard to the work might be spoken. To the sick and to the convalescent special dispensations were to be granted that they might not suffer harm in body or in soul on account of the severity of the rules of the Order. Care was to be taken that no one be exempt from the strict observance under the pretense of illness.

"The various transgressions against the rule were carefully enumerated in detail with proper penance to be enjoined. There were strict regulations regarding the enclosure.

"The prioress was to be elected by the senior Sisters, and the choice was to be approved by the Master General who also had the power to depose her. The Sisters constituting the General Chapter were to be chosen from amongst the community of the convent. To every convent there were to be attached, if possible, six professed Friars of whom at least three were to be priests. These elected their own prior who likewise was to be approved by the Master General. The rule of St. Augustine was to be observed conscientiously by the Friars and Sisters."

The original constitutions end with these encouraging words:

"With assurance may you hope that remaining faithful with God's help, the King of heaven, the Son of the Blessed Virgin, will take you as a bride and will lead you into the familiar mansions of His heavenly palace."<sup>32</sup>

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32. Wilms, H., op. cit., pp. 29-31.

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We owe the preservation of these statutes as well as the rule of St. Sixtus to the fact that this legislation

was applied in 1232 to the Penitent Sisters of St. Mary Magdalen in Germany, who observed it without further modification. 33

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33. Mandonnet, P., "Preachers", Catholic Encyclopedia, XII, p. 355.

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It is interesting to observe that there are many points of resemblance between the original constitutions and the present one. This is especially true regarding the form of profession which in the early document reads as follows:

"I, Sister N., make profession and promise obedience to God and to the Blessed Mary and the Blessed Dominic and to you N., prioress in place of N., the Master General of the Order of Preachers, that I will obey the Rule of St. Augustine and the Sisters to whose custody the said convent is intrusted, to you and to the succeeding prioress, that I will be obedient unto death." 34

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34. Wilms, H., op. cit., p. 31.

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Other regulations are summed up in the following quotations:

"No one could make profession before the thirteenth year or without having undergone at least one year of probation. Every convent was strictly limited to a definite number. The regulations regarding the enclosure and the grill were severe. Communion was distributed fifteen times. The last chapter declared under threat of excommunication that no one without the permission of the General Chapter direct or indirect could erect or transfer a Sisters' Convent." 35

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35. Wilms, H., op. cit., p. 31.

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This original constitution was revised in 1257 by Humbert of the Romans, the fifth Master General of the Order, who was commissioned by Pope Alexander IV to reorganize the constitutions of the Sisters and put them into effect at the General Chapter of Valenciennes in 1259. The Sisters were henceforth characterized as Sorores Ordinis Praedicatorum.

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36. Mandonnet, P., "Preachers," Catholic Encyclopedia, XII, p. 355.

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The Sisters of Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon, made steady progress under the rule of St. Augustine and the constitutions of St. Dominic. These constitutions are conceded by historians to be the most complete among the systems of law by which institutions of this sort were ruled in the thirteenth century. Hauch in his Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands states:

" We do not deceive ourselves in considering the organization of the Dominican Order as the most perfect of all the monastic organizations produced in the Middle Ages." 37

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37. Hauch, Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands, Leipzig, 1902 p. 390 found in Mandonnet, P. "Preachers," Catholic Encyclopedia p. 356.

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The chronicles contain a number of interesting details relative to gifts and donations from the nobility in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

In 1278, Bishop Henry of Ratisbon donated to the Sisters the estate of Kreuzhof near Barbing together with a very interesting Romanesque chapel. Not only was the relationship between the bishop and the Sisters cordial, but the nobility in lower Bavaria also seem to have appreciated the convent, for a document of 1323 gives evidence of three dukes founding an anniversary Mass in perpetuity and exempting the estate of the Sisters from all encumbrances. Later in 1350 King Frederick, the Comely, bestowed upon them a legacy of sixty Bohemian pennies. There are evidences that toward the end of the fourteenth century the convent became somewhat impoverished, for when Bishop Theoderic of Ratisbon in 1383 exacted a subsidiium caritativum from the clergy, a rich citizen, Leopold Gumprecht, paid the tax for the convent. 38

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38. Schrems, F., op. cit., p. 11.

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In citing this evidence of financial need, Father Schrems tersely remarks that at this time the state of discipline in the convent was not any better than the finances. 39

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39. Ibid.

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This is not at all surprising, for monasteries in Europe as a whole, and in Germany in particular, were suffering from relaxed discipline which might be attributed to the following causes. Human weakness and worldly

consideration had its effect. Even religious began to seek for fame, honor, and dispensations. But more important than these factors was the disastrous plague which swept over Europe between the years 1348 and 1350 and which claimed such a tremendous sacrifice of human life. In Germany alone 124,000 religious became victims of the ravaging disease. 40

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40. Wilms, H., op. cit., p. 129.

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"Naturally the effect of these numerous deaths was disastrous to religious discipline and prevented any efforts for reform for many years to come. Many convents stood empty; in many instances those religious who were spared returned to the world. Those who remained in the convents could not observe the rule on account of the small number. Discipline suffered; authority disappeared. Religious sought to get along as well as they could. In order to fill the vacancies left by the plague all who applied to the monastery were received without much regard to their vocation or character.

"Following close upon this catastrophe came the unfortunate Western Schism of 1378 in which the faithful were torn between allegiance to two popes and the Dominicans between two master generals. Then, indeed, authority lost its foothold and disorder reigned supreme. But in this time of greatest need God's help was near. The Dominican Order gave to the world a St. Catherine of Siena, a Blessed Raymond of Capua, and a Conrad of Prussia, and in these three God showed forth his boundless mercy." 41

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41. Ibid., p. 129.

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The unfortunate occurrences mentioned above brought about a decadence of discipline in Holy Cross Convent as it did in other convents and monasteries of the age. The chronicles of Holy Cross Convent state that in 1395 the community numbered twenty-six nuns most of whom came from families of the middle-class citizens of Ratisbon. Their names and the amount of dowry for each one is definitely stated. Their dowries, which were considerable, amounted to from two to ten pounds; these were intrusted to a magistrate and placed on interest. Father Schrems declares in his manuscript that it was clear that these nuns did not enter the convent with high ideals nor did they observe religious discipline perfectly. <sup>42</sup>

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42. Schrems, F., op. cit., p. 11.

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But the period of reform was near at hand through the efforts of Blessed Raymond of Capua, Master General of the Order, and his faithful co-worker in Germany, Blessed Conrad of Prussia. In a letter to the Cardinal Philippus of Alencon, Raymond of Capua speaks of Conrad in the following manner:

"Among them (those religious who wished to live a holy life) I have found a religious, Conrad of Prussia by name, a man whose conduct of life is most praiseworthy and who is held in extraordinary respect in Germany. This religious has done more for the salvation of souls than all the rest of the members of the Order together. Through his influence he has gathered many brothers who are desirous of following him. He has asked me to give him a convent where he may live with them in the service of God and in the work of the salvation of souls without being hindered by anyone." <sup>43</sup>



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43. Mortier, Histoire des maitres genereux, III, p. 524, quoted by Wilms, H., op. cit., p. 137.

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In a letter dated June 13, 1389, Raymond of Capua commissions Conrad of Prussia to begin the work of reform in Germany with the following words:

"Courage in the Lord! I command you in the strength of holy obedience and the Holy Spirit to begin this work manfully as a true son of St. Dominic without fear of opposition." 44

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44. Mortier, Histoire des maitres genereux, III, p. 527, quoted by Wilms, H., op. cit., p. 137.

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In the following year, November 1, 1390, Raymond of Capua announced his will concerning the reform of the whole order. 45

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45. Wilms, H., op. cit., p. 137.

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According to a legend narrated by John Meyer, O.P., Conrad saw in a vision St. Dominic, St. Peter of Verona, and St. Thomas of Aquin by whom he was encouraged to commence the reform. Among other things St. Dominic said, "Follow my footsteps, you and yours, in perfect obedience to the rule. Follow St. Peter in his faith and St. Thomas in his wisdom, and the German province and the entire Order throughout the world will attain an admirable success." 46

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46. Ibid., p. 132.

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The reform of the Brothers began at Kolmar in 1389; the reform of the Sisters, also under the direction of Conrad of Prussia, began at Schonensteinbach on St. Martin's day in 1389 where an old Cistercian Convent was again reopened for those Sisters who wished to follow the original ideal of Dominican life as had been inaugurated in Kolmar by the men. <sup>47</sup>

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47. Wilms, H., op. cit., pp. 137-140.

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From Kolmar and Schonensteinbach the reform spread throughout Germany. Father Schrems states that after several unsuccessful attempts at reform had been made at Holy Cross Convent, the Master General of the Order, Thomas de Firmo, to whom the convent was subject sent, in 1406, a friar to Ratisbon who brought about the desired reform, particularly with regard to the enclosure. <sup>48</sup>

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48. Schrems, F., op. cit., p. 11.

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In 1476 a complete reformation of the convent began. By the injunction of the bishop the enclosure was stringently enforced. Through the efforts of the Reverend John Schwarz, Friar of the Dominican Convent of Ratisbon, who had accomplished a complete reformation in his own priory by dismissing members who were remiss and introducing zealous religious from other houses, the reform succeeded. His plans for the Sisters' convent were similar to those which he had used for his priory. Two exemplary nuns from the

Dominican Convent at Nuremberg were brought to Ratisbon to establish a thorough reform, but since progress was slow, five others from the same convent were added in 1484. These held the office of prioress, sub-prioress, procuratrix, sacristan, and cook. <sup>49</sup>

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49. Ibid., p. 12.

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The convent of Nuremberg had been reformed in 1428 by ten Sisters from Schonensteinbach who came under the guidance of the confessor, Henry Fabri. <sup>50</sup>

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50. Wilms, F., op. cit., p. 147.

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According to Father Schrems the convent chronicles have little to relate concerning the following years, and he concludes that little of the unusual occurred in spite of the fact that the terrors of the so-called Reformation of Luther, 1516-1616, were in full swing at this time. The genuine reformation in which most of the Dominican Convents had participated was an excellent and necessary preparation for the trials and persecutions that followed in the wake of the new heretical teaching. Although many convents were suppressed during the so-called Reformation, the greater number of Dominican Sisters in the reformed convents remained true to their faith in spite of threats and persecution. <sup>51</sup>

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51. Wilms, H., op. cit., p. 178.

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The following pungent paragraph by Father Wilms effectively summarizes the trials endured by religious women in general:

"'Return to the world and wed,' this was the content of the advice given by the new evangelists to the poor Sisters. The procedure against them was generally the following: First the confessor was removed by force, if he had not already apostatized. A Protestant preacher was placed in the convent in his stead. With the intention of forcing the Sisters to adopt the new religion they were compelled to attend lectures given by the heretics. Every Catholic service was forbidden. The administration of the sacraments was impossible unless a priest in disguise or under the cover of darkness could bring the comforts of religion to the suffering inmates. All tokens of the old faith disappeared. Books, pictures, water fonts--all were removed--and often they were destroyed with barbarous vandalism." 52

52. Ibid., p. 179.

Through this tempestuous epoch Holy Cross Convent serenely passed. Father Schrems attributes its remarkable preservation to the regular discipline which the reform had established. He also draws the inference that since Holy Cross Convent was heavily in debt at this time, it did not prove a desirable prize to the religious innovators or to the state. 53

53. Schrems, F., op. cit., p. 12.

The Thirty Years War (1618-1648) brought another period of storm and stress to religious houses. Holy Cross

Convent of Ratisbon has little to record as a result of this devastating conflict except that in 1651 the Swedes plundered the convent. There are no records whatever of the Sisters' fate on this occasion. 54

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54. Ibid., p. 12.

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As the war continued, the population became impoverished. The convent also found itself straightened financially. When the prioress, Clara Otterl, began her term of office in 1640, she had to assume a debt of 20,000 florin, an exorbitant amount for that time. In comparison, however, to the hardships which the Thirty Years War imposed upon other Convents in Germany, Holy Cross Convent, in spite of its poverty, had little to endure.

Father Schrems records a number of interesting items found in the archives of Holy Cross Convent occurring between the period of the so-called Reformation and the Napoleonic wars.

"In 1650 the records show the usual number of members in the community.

"In 1661 Bishop Franz Wilhelm very urgently requested the prayers of the community for his diocese.

"In 1742 the nuns were informed regarding two regulations pertaining to the enclosure.

"In 1757 the Sisters were admonished that the Council of Trent required that the bishop be informed of the profession of any novice one month before the appointed day for her vows.

"In 1760 a plenary indulgence for the feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross was

granted to the nuns and to all who visited the Holy Cross Church, received the sacraments, and said prayers for the extirpation of heresy and the needs of Holy Mother Church; the same indulgence was granted for several other days of the year.

"In 1676 the convent was compelled to sell the estate of Pettendorf and Adlersberg to the Cistercian nuns at Pielenhofen in order to raise necessary funds.

"In 1799, during the term of Prince-Bishop Dalberg, Kreuzhof which the Sisters had acquired in 1278 was sold for 26,000 florin. The interest of the sale accrued to the convent." 55

55. Ibid., p. 13.

The last event named brings the history of Holy Cross Convent within the period of the Napoleonic wars and to the verge of the disastrous secularization from which Holy Cross Convent of all Dominican Convents in Germany, was alone to emerge. 56

56. Wilms, H. op. cit., 333.

To allow the reader to appreciate more fully the remarkable escape of Holy Cross Convent from the state secularization the following quotation of Father Wilms is offered in full:

"The radical changes which the population of Europe underwent in political, religious, and social spheres following the French Revolution and the continent-embracing wars of Napoleon brought not only the downfall of the old German Empire, but also destroyed the religious life as far as regards the German Dominican Sisterhoods.

"The typical statesman was ready to take the possessions of the Church unscrupulously. The losses which the lords had suffered through the French usurpation made the desire of confiscation a reality and gave rise to the secularization. After the French campaign by Moreau in upper Germany the peace of Luneville was made in 1801. This document also records the destruction of the German Empire and the formal suppression of the monasteries. One of the most humiliating conditions of that peace was that the princes who were forced to withdraw from the banks of the Rhine could compensate themselves for their losses by the confiscation of the possessions of the Church and of the free towns in Germany. The disgraceful execution of these compensations continued for two years.  
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 . . . . . The lowly and the great streamed into Paris to request a portion of the lands robbed from the Church and from the towns." 37

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37. Wilms, H., op. cit., p. 307.

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The protest of Pius VII against these disgraceful transactions called the "Enactments of the Delegates of the Empire" was of no avail.

In order to understand this radical change that the Bavarian state assumed toward the religious congregations, it is necessary to note the changes that had occurred in the ruling house of Bavaria since 1780. Maximilian III, (1745-77) was the last of the younger branch of the Wittelsbach line. After his death the elder (Palatinate) branch of the family succeeded to the throne in the person of the art-loving Charles Theodore (1778-99). The last years of Charles Theodore were embittered by many misfortunes. The young French Republic took from him the territory on the other side of the Rhine, and he had also to endure many

humiliations from his subjects. Up to this time Bavaria had been entirely a Catholic country. New conditions arose when Maximilian IV (Joseph) ascended the throne in 1799. This ruler had been twice married to Protestants. With his rule non-Catholics were granted the same rights as Catholics, and Lutheran services were allowed in the Capital. Furthermore, the Government proceeded with severity against all forms of Catholic religious life.

It was during his reign that the religious foundations were secularized, and about 400 convents were closed or despoiled. <sup>58</sup>

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58. Birkhaeuser, Y. A., History of the Church, p. 683.

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The result was that each prince or lord brought about a formal suppression of the monastery or convent as soon as he had seized the possessions. The Sisters were either sent back into the world or were transferred to another convent--a central convent--where Sisters of various orders were forced to live together. Each Sister received a pension which was often very meager. When a number of Sisters lived together in common life, the pensions were sufficient, but as soon as the number diminished the remaining Sisters were often in great need of the very necessities of life. <sup>59</sup>

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59. Wilms, H., op. cit., pp. 308-309.

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The Sisters of Holy Cross during this precarious time were in constant fear of suppression by the State. Precautions were therefore taken. The Sisters were provided



with secular dresses, and the contents of the treasury were divided among them. Unfortunately the account of the convent happenings was burned at this time.

One day in 1803 a commissary entered the convent refectory with a list of names. He interrogated each Sister individually and asked her if she would prefer to remain in the convent or return to the world provided with an adequate pension. To the glory of Holy Cross Convent not one Sister was willing to leave her cloistral home. The nuns of the Franciscan Convent of St. Clara also remained faithful. Thus by God's disposal the two convents in Ratisbon were ceded to the Prince-Bishop Dalberg as a compensation by the State. Not wishing to suppress the convent, he demanded that the nuns take charge of the schools in the city. <sup>60</sup> This request occasioned much consternation at Holy

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60. Napoleon named, even during the lifetime of Bishop Schroffenberg of the House of Wittelsbach, as Archbishop of Ratisbon and Prince-Primate of Germany, Karl Theodore von Dalberg, Elector of Mainz, and assigned him a portion of the earlier ecclesiastical territory. It was only in 1805 that Dalberg received papal consent to exercise the archiepiscopal power (1807-17). Catholic Encyclopedia, XII, p. 657.

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Cross Convent, for the Sisters had hitherto led a life of contemplation. Submission to the order of the Prince-Bishop, therefore, postulated a drastic change in their manner of religious life entirely out of keeping with the purpose the Sisters had in entering the convent. Besides buildings for school purposes would become necessary. The Sisters foresaw difficulty in this, for being strictly cloistered, they could not leave their enclosure. Inferences of

various kinds suggested many disorders which would arise from the situation. In this attitude of mind the Sisters refused to accept the offer. They were encouraged in this by their Father Confessor, the Dominican prior, Raymond Brunner, who assured them that their rule forbade them to teach, and that such a burden would eventually bring about the ruin of the convent. This determination on the part of the Sisters aroused the indignation of the Prince-Bishop. He paid a visit to the convent at this time and forced the prioress, Columba Sonnleitner, to go beyond the enclosure and with him inspect the building for the purpose of selecting and arranging for suitable classrooms. <sup>61</sup>

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61. Schrems, F., op. cit., p. 14.

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The Benedictines of St. Emeran to whose parish the Holy Cross Convent belonged took a lively interest in the undertaking and rendered the Sisters every assistance in their power. <sup>62</sup>

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62. Ibid.

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Measures were now taken to prepare a faculty for the opening of the city school. Three teachers were sent to St. Clara's Convent to obtain instruction in the elementary courses. For three months they worked diligently to prepare a suitable course of study. The school opened with ceremony, and so successful was it that in a short time a fourth and fifth teacher were added. <sup>63</sup>

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63. Ibid.

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The convent and school under the existing regime was subject to vexatious restrictions. The Prince-Bishop Dalberg exacted a tithe of the Sisters' income in money as well as in grain. The tax later became very burdensome to the indigent convent and under King Maximilian I, in 1813, was withdrawn with the reservation that the convent as a mark of its independence must pay ten florin annually to the State. The Prince-Bishop also restricted the number of members of the convent to eighteen. <sup>64</sup>

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64. Ibid.

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The next calamity to threaten the existence of the venerable old convent of Holy Cross is well known to every English speaking boy and girl through Browning's famous poem An Incident in a French Camp. Bavaria alone of the German states had sided voluntarily with Napoleon, and to her discretion rather than to her valor she owed both territorial aggrandizement and a considerable increment of dignity in political power. Upon January 1, 1806, trumpeters proclaimed Max Joseph, King of Bavaria. <sup>65</sup>

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65. Wadeigh, H. R., Munich, p. 32.

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In 1806 and 1807 the Bavarians fought with the French against Prussia and Russia. In 1809 they were forced to defend themselves against Austria until Napoleon hurried

to their aid from Spain. It was at this time that Ratisbon became the center of the conflict, for she was besieged and fired upon by Napoleon's army on one side, and by the Austrian army on the other. Holy Cross Convent was fired upon. The Sisters in consternation fled to the cellars. Was the historic convent, after all, to meet the sad fate of destruction after having been preserved through the centuries? Its doom seemed eminent. Then for some reason--and who will deny the hand of Providence in human affairs--military operations were suspended by the French in upper Ratisbon, and another section of the city was attacked. The conflagration which followed claimed a sacrifice of one-fourth of the town. The Franciscan Convent of St. Clara was demolished, and the abbess with twenty Sisters fled to Holy Cross Convent where in memory of the holy friendship existing between St. Dominic and St. Francis the two communities dwelt together in peace and harmony. The Dominicans accommodated the Franciscans in all charity offering to share with them their poverty. For three years the Dominicans sheltered and cared for the homeless Franciscans until they were able to take possession of the Old Capuchin monastery which had stood vacant since the secularization of 1803. Since then the tie of close and sincere friendship binds the two convents--on the one hand gratitude for charity received, and on the other gratitude for having had the opportunity to practice the charity of the Master who had preserved the convent in so many trials. The Sisters of Holy Cross were

not unmindful of the heavenly protection they had received. A holy Mass was offered in honor of the Mother of God immediately, and a promise was made to recite the rosary every Saturday after dinner in St. Kilian Chapel. This practice is maintained to the present day. <sup>66</sup>

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66. Wilms, H., op. cit., p. 335; Schrems, F., op. cit., p. 16.

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During this time, from 1801 to 1811, the state levied large sums of money, no doubt as a war tax, on the convent. Unable to meet the demands of Minister Weichs the Sisters resorted to the expedient of selling all ornaments of value. Even the precious gems were removed from the large monstrance and were replaced by imitations. In spite of the efforts the amount required could not be raised. In this extremity the Sisters had recourse with confidence to prayer. The death of Minister Weichs, which soon followed, relieved the Sisters from all the embarrassing responsibility. <sup>67</sup>

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67. Schrems, F., op. cit., p. 16.

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The secularization had worked havoc on religious life in general, and even in those convents which remained intact its effects became glaringly evident. The Holy Cross Chronicle records the general deterioration which began to disorganize community life. The Dominican prior, Father Brunner, had played the role of a true prophet in predicting the result of directing a school in connection

with the rule of the Second Order. Irregularities such as individual Sisters keeping private bank accounts, disposing of money, giving presents became prevalent. Since the brewery belonging to the convent was leased, each Sister was given the price of two glasses of beer which she could spend as she liked. Soon each Sister ordered her breakfast to be brought to her cell and purchased any clothes or articles which she needed. <sup>68</sup> From 1833 to

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68. Ibid. p. 17.

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1836 the convent was not under the jurisdiction of any religious superiors, not even the bishop's.

The woeful condition of discipline in Holy Cross Convent related above is not surprising when the actual situation of religious orders in general and the Dominican Order in particular are understood. As a result of the Napoleonic Wars the relation between the individual states and Rome was severed or greatly complicated. The Church had been robbed of its possessions. Many bishoprics were vacant; the religious orders were almost destroyed. The Order of St. Dominic was not spared. In France it was completely uprooted; in Germany almost so. In Spain the same fate followed later. In Italy the Dominican Fathers returned after fifteen or twenty years of expulsion. In Holland the last of the Fathers lived in parishes. In Austria the monasteries under Joseph II were significantly reduced, and the few which remained were under such state guardianship that the regular spirit and the desire for

observance disappeared. <sup>69</sup>

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69. Wilms, H., op. cit., p. 352.

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But a new era for Holy Cross Convent and for the entire Dominican Order was approaching. In 1856 Bishop Schwabl of Ratisbon placed the convent, in spite of remonstrances from the nuns, under diocesan jurisdiction; it has remained so ever since. In 1845 Mother M. Benedicta Bauer, the saintly foundress of the Convent of St. Catherine of Siena, Racine, Wisconsin, was elected prioress. Under her guidance the convent was reformed "and brought to heights before unknown both in external observance and interior fervor." This reform by Mother M. Benedicta will be related in another chapter. <sup>70</sup>

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70. Schrems, F., op. cit., p. 17.

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In this chapter the history of Holy Cross Ratisbon has been traced from its foundation in 1233 through the great social, political, and religious upheavals in both medieval and modern times. Its vicissitudes through the ages have given to it a hoary tradition, bright and dull, reflecting the mercy and protection of God and the assaults of the evil spirits. Through the centuries it has been preserved to the present time and at last under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit it was to expand and increase a hundredfold. Mother M. Benedicta Bauer, was, no doubt, the appointed instrument in the hands of God to

spread the good seed of Dominican life in both Germany and America.

Before taking up the great work of Mother M. Benedicta Bauer, it is requisite to give a brief survey of the branch house at Schwarzhofen which was established soon after the foundation of Holy Cross Convent.



## CHAPTER II

## THE BRANCH HOUSE AT SCHWARZHOFEN

"They have possessed the holy people  
as nothing: our enemies have trodden down  
thy sanctuary."

Isaias. LXII, 18.

The history of the convent at Schwarzhofen begins in 1244, when according to the request of Count Henry of Ortenburg, a branch house was founded by the Sisters of Holy Cross. Schwarzhofen is a small market town in the Palatinate, Bavaria, about thirty-seven miles north of Ratisbon. It will be remembered that it was through the donation of the parish of Schwarzhofen to the Holy Cross Sisters that the erection of the church and convent in Ratisbon was made possible. <sup>1</sup>

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1. Sinnigen, Ansgar, Katholische Frauengenossenschaften Deutschlands, p. 67.

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Unlike Holy Cross Convent, the branch house of Schwarzhofen suffered severely from the revolutionary changes, political and religious, of the medieval ages, and finally it met its doom in the great secularization of 1803.

The first reverses of fortune came in 1266 when King Ottakar of Bohemia with 60,000 warriors invaded the country and almost destroyed the entire village. In 1276 he repeated the attack and left Schwarzhofen a heap of ruins. The Sisters were recalled to Ratisbon and remained there until peace was restored. In 1285

Count Rapoto of Ortenburg on a visit to Ratisbon renewed his father's donation of the parish of Schwarzhofen. <sup>2</sup>

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2. Schrems, F., Kurze Geschichte des Dominikanerinnenklosters vom Heiligen Kreuz Regensburg und seiner Filialen, Manuscript V, p. 5, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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During the devastating Hussite wars, the Sisters again fled to Ratisbon. Both the convent and the parish church at Schwarzhofen were burned sometime between the years 1418 and 1423. Before the Hussite wars had ended, 550 churches and convents in the surrounding territories has been destroyed. <sup>3</sup>

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3. Ibid., p. 6.

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Again after the Hussite Wars the Sisters returned to Schwarzhofen. Through the efforts of Holy Cross Convent a new church and convent had been built. This time it was the Reformation that brought even greater sorrow and distress than the preceding wars had done. As early as 1529 one of the pastors embraced the Lutheran heresy. Although a new pastor was immediately appointed, he was unable to repair the evil begun by his predecessor. The convent lost all its possessions and also the parish revenues when in 1538 another pastor apostatized. The people unfortunately also adopted the reformed faith; and consequently, from 1538 to 1625, for nearly ninety years, no Catholic church services were held in Schwarzhofen. <sup>4</sup>

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4. Ibid., p. 6.

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Again the tide of affairs changed when the Catholic Duke Maximilian of Bavaria through the victory of Weissenberg in 1621 gained possession of the Upper Palatinate. With the aid of the Jesuit Fathers this Catholic warrior succeeded in winning the territory back to the Catholic Church. The success of the missionaries, however, was interrupted by the invasion of the Swedes and in consequence Schwarzhofen again joined the Lutheran heresy. <sup>5</sup>

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5. Ibid., p. 7.

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For the third time the Dominican Sisters of Holy Cross were to return to Schwarzhofen. The famous general, Max Emanuel of Bavaria, who had won distinction in the wars against the Turks at Vienna promised to rebuild a convent for the Sisters. In 1690, he placed at the disposal of the Sisters the so-called Mönchshof of Schwarzhofen during the erection of the convent buildings. Soon after the Sisters took up their abode in the new dwelling, the convent was made a priory in 1712, the membership of choir and lay Sisters having reached the number of thirty-three. The magnificent convent chapel was completed in 1740 and on March 9, 1755, was solemnly dedicated under the title of Our Lady of Victory. <sup>6</sup>

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6. Ibid., p. 7.

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For nearly a half century the convent prospered, but in the great secularization, it, like so many other convents,

was suppressed by an electoral mandate. The history of the convent of Schwarzhofen is the very antithesis of the history of Holy Cross at Ratisbon and by contrast serves to emphasize the divine protection afforded the latter.

The last prioress Mary Dominic Uberin gives an interesting though pathetic account of the extreme hardships the Sisters experienced during the suppression. The Schwarzhofen Convent Chronicle reads as follows:

"On February 21, 1802, the electoral commissary, Herr Von Gropper, from Amberg arrived with his clerk; he showed the warrant of the elector with exceeding courtesy and read it in presence of the whole community. The document invested him with the power to investigate the revenues and the indebtedness of the convent and take an inventory of the church furnishings. On July 9, 1802, the county judge of Neunburg, John Ulrich von Wieland, came to Schwarzhofen accompanied by a formidable retinue of officers of the law. They forced their way into the convent, because the doors were not immediately opened to them. The Sisters were greatly alarmed. The officers entered the refectory and demanded in a threatening manner that not only the sacred vestments and all movable property belonging to the community be produced, but also the personal effects of each Sister. We protested against this procedure, because the former commissary, Herr Von Gropper, had not made such demands. The new commissary, however, took no notice of our protest, and when we begged him to make known the electoral mandate, he not only refused to do so, but insisted searching minutely all parts of the convent and taking inventory of all it contained. Finally he complied with our request and made known the mandate. It required us to leave for the convent at Altenhohenau; eight florin were to be given to each nun to defray the expenses of the four days' journey. But before departing the Sisters were strictly commanded not to take with them any more than bare necessities. We were not even permitted to take our beds which prohibition the infirm Sisters found very difficult to undergo. We hurriedly sent a petition to headquarters for

permission to take our beds with us. Permission was granted not only for this, but permission was given to take our furnishings also. On account of great haste we were obliged to sell the furniture at a low price. As the commissioner was very exact in carrying out directions, there was nothing left to do but to leave our beloved convent. On August 2, a number of the expelled nuns raised tearful eyes towards heaven and amid sighs and tears departed for the journey to Altenhohenau. Many women of Schwarzhofen accompanied the Sisters and bade farewell to them with bitter tears. A few of the Sisters remained a little longer at Schwarzhofen.

"When August 4, came--the day that had always been the happy and joyful feast of our holy founder, St. Dominic, holy Mass was to be offered at four o'clock. After the people had assembled before the church door according to an old custom, the officers extinguished the sanctuary lamp before the Blessed Sacrament and locked the door. There was no alternative now for us, who remained, but to join our Sisters in exile. A short time after our departure the convent chapel which had been recently built was sold. Later it was torn down by the purchaser. The convent proper was soon sold on cash payment to a middle-class business woman, 'Frau' Zengerin." 7

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7. Schrems, op. cit., pp. 8-10.

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The beautiful church so recently completed was sold for the trifle of 300 florin. "Frau" Zengerin, the purchaser of the convent, was a noble woman who had always entertained a high regard for the Sisters. She soon entered into communication with the exiled nuns, and to their great joy welcomed them back to their dear convent in 1809. 8

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8. Wilms, H., Geschichte der deutschen Dominikanerinnen, p. 335.

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Many of the Sisters, and among them the prioress, Dominica Uberin, had the happiness of spending their declining days in their old home instead of at the central monastery of Altenhohenau where religious of all communities who were unwilling to give up their religious life and garb had been domiciled. Devoting themselves to unmolested prayer, the Sisters one by one finished their earthly course, and with their demise the history of the Convent of Schawrzhofen, now over five hundred years old, flickered to an end. <sup>9</sup>

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9. Schrems, F., op. cit., p. 10.

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## CHAPTER III

## THE CHILDHOOD OF MARIA ANNA BAUER

" I have seen  
 A curious child, who dwelt upon a tract  
 Of inland ground, applying to his ear  
 The convolutions of a smooth-lipped shell,  
 To which, in silence hushed, his very soul  
 Listened intently; and his countenance soon  
 Brightened with joy, for from within were heard  
 Murmurings . . . . ."

--Wordsworth

In the still, secluded, lonely, wooded valley of the Naab lies the little village of Pielenhofen, the birth-place of Mother Benedicta Bauer. Dating back to 1245, Pielenhofen on the Naab, is dominated by a religious atmosphere rich in medieval lore on account of the cloistral traditions surrounding the old Cistercian Convent of nuns founded there at an early time. "The history of the convent is the history of the place." <sup>1</sup>

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1. Zieler, H., Führer durch die Klosterkirche (jetzt Pfarrkirche) Pielenhofen bei Regensburg, p. 3.

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The history of the village is briefly sketched by H. Zieler as follows:

"In 1245 the Cistercian nuns through munificent endowments of a Knight of Pielenhofen and Lords of Hohenfels and Ehrenfels gradually built a large convent and church which remained to the time of the so-called Reformation. At this time the nuns were driven from their foundation, but as this section was again regained for Catholicity the venerable Cistercian monks from Kaisheim near Donauworth began a foundation here in 1655. They tore down the old church and built the present beautiful structure. The zealous life of the monks

was extinguished when the monastery was suppressed during the great secularization. For a few years the large building stood empty. In 1806 Carmelite nuns from the suppressed monasteries of Neuburg and Munich inhabited the buildings. In 1858 the Salesian Sisters founded a school there for girls, and they remained there to the present time. The large old convent church is today the parish church of Pielenhofen, for the Sisters have since built a church of their own to the south." 2

2. Ibid., pp. 3-4.

Such was the birthplace, such the religious inspirational environment of Maria Anna Bauer who opened her eyes to the light of day for the first time on July 17, 1803, in a moderately-sized home facing the Naab river. She was the fourth child born to John Michael Bauer and his wife Anna Margaret Klotzl.

Though little is recorded of the childhood of Maria Anna, it may be presumed that she led the ordinary life of a happy, industrious, religiously-minded child, much the same as any child would experience in the home of a middle-class German family. She had the loving care and guidance of God-fearing Catholic parents who taught her the true value of the eternal compared with the temporal. Both parents lived to a ripe old age; her father departed this life at the age of seventy-eight in the year 1837; her mother, at the age of eighty-nine in the year 1855.

3. Document--Staumbaum Bauer--Pielenhofen. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.



As the blacksmith of Pielenhofen, her father seems to have lived in very comfortable circumstances. Only three of the six children born to Michael and Anna Bauer lived to adult life. John Baptist, who was five years older than Maria Anna married in 1832 and became the father of nine children. Michael, about two and a half years younger than Maria Anna, became a priest in 1832 and spent the greater part of his priestly life in close contact with his sister, Mother Benedicta, as spiritual director to the Sisters in the convent which she founded at Niederviehbach.

The close connection between Mother Benedicta and Father Michael Bauer, so evident in later years, developed apparently in their tender, sheltered childhood days at Pielenhofen. Similar inclinations toward God and His saints no doubt stirred their youthful hearts as they assisted at Mass and Benediction in the magnificent cloistral church of the old Cistercian monastery. How the inspirational pictures of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin in the sumptuous high altar must have raised their thoughts on high! Indeed, the grand old church of Pielenhofen was filled with holy reminders of events in the Old and New Testament. The cupola held the picture of the Holy Trinity; the ceiling, beautiful representations of the prophets of the Old Testament, the Descent of the Holy Ghost, and the Visitation. The walls contained pictorial representations from the life of St. Bernard and from the history of the Cistercian Order. The side altars must have held for these children a particular attraction for in one, a scene dear to the heart of every

Christian child was portrayed--the Nativity of Christ; in the other, the great mystery of the Redemption, the Crucifixion of Christ. Closely connected with the Crucifixion was the image of the Holy Face which was to the right of the baptismal font. How often they must have listened to the pathetic story of this venerated picture which briefly given is as follows: It was a possession of the holy Carmelite, Mother Maria Anna Josepha Lindmayr of München, who died in 1726, and who declares in her writings that she often saw the picture weep. <sup>3</sup>

3. Ziegler, H., op. cit., p. 16.

The document on the back of this picture recounts a revelation made to Mother Maria Anna Josepha by Jesus in which He affirms that through this holy picture many sinners would be converted. <sup>4</sup>

4. Copy of document made by Rev. M. Mullbaus of Pielenhofen. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

With such holy associations and constant reminders of spiritual life, it is not astonishing that both Michael and Maria Anna Bauer sought later to consecrate their lives to the service of God in religion.

Happily their childhood slipped by midst the beauty of their natural surroundings--the still peaceful valley of the Naab, the great wooded hills surrounding the village, the starry heavens, the blue sky adorned with white fleecy clouds, the gorgeous sunsets gilding cloud-mountains in brilliant colors.

The great hills at the bottom of which nestled their comfortable home, probably lured them into climbing their sloping sides to gain the height by which they might look down upon a delightful panorama--the ribbon-like Naab quietly threading its way through the village, the historic old monastery so rich in legend, and the peaceful homes of the middle-classes which afforded them so many joys.

Both Michael and Maria Anna later became accomplished musicians. Undoubtedly it was here in the peaceful Pielenhofen that their love for melody and song developed.

As brother and sister became more mature, both of them began seriously to devote themselves to a life of service in religion. Michael began his studies for the priesthood, and Maria Anna sought entrance as a choir nun in the historic convent of Ratisbon, thirty miles distant from Pielenhofen. At that time Holy Cross was the only Dominican Convent existing in Germany. Maria Anna was just seventeen years old when on July 2, 1820, she bravely bade farewell to her loving parents and brothers to enter upon a religious life in a Dominican Convent of the Second Order.<sup>5</sup>

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5. Diary of Mother M. Benedicta Bauer, 1854-1855, Diary II, p. 63. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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## CHAPTER IV

## EARLY YEARS IN RATISBON CLOISTERS

1820 - 1845

"I have chosen you and appointed you to bring forth fruit, and your fruit shall remain."<sup>1</sup>

--John XVI, 16.

The monastic door that closed the world to Maria Anna Bauer on July 2, 1820, ushered her into a rather unsettled religious readjustment after the troublous political upheaval. The Sisters, no doubt, had become quite accustomed to the change consequent upon the secularization of 1803. For sixteen years they had had charge of the school. Indeed, taking into consideration the great number of religious houses dissolved and disbanded, they were very fortunate to have earned the privilege of continuing as an organized community, by encumbering themselves with one of the city schools.

It is impossible to gauge just how far discipline had relaxed, or in what state of decadence the youthful aspirant found the convent. But we know, regardless of the situation, that soon after her entry, Maria Anna received the beautiful and meaningful name of Benedicta on her clothing day, and that on October 15, 1822, she was allowed to pronounce the vows of her religious profession.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Holy Cross Chronicle, Excerpt V, p. 1. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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The convent chronicle reveals little about the young Sister between the years 1822 and 1845. Quotations and references from letters, and inferences from facts about her later life, enable the writer to offer a shadowy outline of the activities of this period in Sister Benedicta's life.

Always fond of music, both instrumental and vocal, Sister Benedicta probably earnestly endeavored to perfect herself in this art. This inference is justified by the fact that even during the time she was prioress, she spent many hours practicing assiduously, especially on the piano. <sup>2</sup>

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2. Diary of Mother Benedicta, 1855, Diary II, pp. 166-235. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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Besides, her activities in America portray her as a very accomplished musician, her early biographers describing her as a veritable organ and piano virtuoso. <sup>3</sup>

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3. Sisters of St. Dominic, Historical Sketch of Saint Catherine's Convent with a Short Treatise on the Order, its Spirit and Devotions, p. 9.

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Sister Benedicta was probably looked upon as a promising teacher from the advent of her entrance into the convent. How long her term of preparation lasted is unknown, but from various references it may be presumed that the greater part of this period was spent as a teacher in the convent school. At the time of her election to the office of prioress she is named as the teacher of the Third Course. <sup>4</sup>

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4. Letter from Father Bauer to Mother Hyacintha, April 14, 1877. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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One simple incident in the life of Sister Benedicta during this period is especially illuminating. In 1827 many of the Sisters of Holy Cross experienced an ardent desire to sacrifice their lives in the missionary labors of America. The occasion which prompted this outburst of missionary zeal was an invitation tendered the Sisters of Holy Cross Convent by the Dominican Bishop of Cincinnati, the Right Reverend Bishop Fenwick, requesting them to found a Motherhouse in his diocese and in time to propagate the Order. Sister Benedicta was among those who enthusiastically volunteered to answer the Bishop's appeal. Preparations were soon underway. Even the day of departure had been set. Unexpectedly the prioress, Mother Catharina Bauer, retracted the permission she had given and commanded the Sisters to remain. <sup>4</sup>

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4. Letter of Mother Benedicta to the Master General, O.P., 1864. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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This little incident in the life of Sister Benedicta does much to clarify her later attitude in regard to the making of new foundations. Unable later to give her own services and to make the sacrifices required of missionaries, she enthusiastically forwarded such enterprises when, as prioress, she had it within her power to do so. Later on when she was freed from the arduous duties of a

superior, she did not hesitate to carry out her early desire to propagate her Order and her religion, but, undaunted by age and illness, fearlessly met and overcame all obstacles.

The convent chronicle records a number of interesting events which occurred during this period. In 1824 the Sisters received permission to have exposition of the Blessed Sacrament on the greatest feast days. They also received the permission to have general absolution on these days. In the year 1826 repairs were made upon the church tower and the bells were recast. It is interesting to know that the names of all the Sisters are preserved on these bells.

In 1833 the prioress, Hyacintha Weikle, took measures to make the buildings more convenient and comfortable. Before this time only three of the Sisters' cells had been heated; namely, the cells of the prioress, the subprioress, and that of the senior Sisters. The cells of the other Sisters were without plastered walls but were simply constructed of boards. In 1835 a reed-covering was built over the dormitory, a wooden structure. <sup>5</sup>

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5. Schrems, F., Kurze Geschichte des Dominikanerinnenklosters vom Heiligen Kreuz in Regensburg und Seiner Filialen, pp. 16-17.

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It was at this time, according to the chronicles, that the community was in a state of deterioration. From 1833 to 1836 no religious superior, not even the bishop, had jurisdiction over the convent. Sister Benedicta, now a

teacher in the convent school, experienced the confusion and laxity that was necessarily a counterpart to such a state of affairs. That she decried the disappearance of community life is evidenced from the firm, but difficult part she played in restoring the primitive fervor and community life on her election as prioress in 1845. <sup>6</sup>

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6. Ibid., p. 17.

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## CHAPTER V

MOTHER M. BENEDICTA BAUER - Prioress

1845 - 1858

"A new and better epoch for the convent begins with the priority of Mother Benedicta Bauer, who during her thirteen years in office brought the convent to heights hitherto unknown both in external practices and in interior fervor." 1

1. Schrems, F., Kurze Geschichte des Dominikanerinnenklosters vom Heiligen Kreuz in Regensburg und Seiner Filialen, Manuscript V, p. 17.

Sister Benedicta was elected to the office of prioress sometime in July, 1845. 2 A firm grave character, a chari-

2. Holy Cross Chronicle, Ratisbon, Excerpt V, p. 1. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

table disposition, and an ardent desire for a life of perfection were, no doubt, some of the qualities she possessed which prompted the senior Sisters to select her as the Mother Prioress of Holy Cross Convent. At the time she was teacher of Third Course in the convent school. A touching little poem written to her as a farewell by the students testifies to the fact that she had won their love and gratitude. 3

3. This little poem was enclosed in a letter dated April 14, 1877, written by Father Michael Bauer to Mother Hyacintha with the following note:

"P.S. Among my letters I found, not long ago, the farewell greeting tendered to

Sister Benedicta, teacher of the Third Course, on the occasion of her election as prioress, by her pupils on the last day of the examinations, August 21, 1845. I as her brother was an eye and ear witness on this occasion."

"Tief bewegt in Schmerz gefühle  
 Kommen, fromme Mutter wir;  
 Ach, so nahe schon dem ziele  
 Das uns trennen soll von dir.  
 Freundlich nimm die Dankeworte  
 Deiner Schülerinnin auf.  
 Dringt ja selbst zur Himmels--Pforte  
 Gern der Kinder Flehn hinauf!

Wie Du unsern Geist gepflegst  
 Wie gebildet unsern Sinn.  
 Wie Du liebvoll uns begegnet  
 Ewig bleibt es uns Gewinn!  
 Segnen werden Deinen Namen  
 Ewig die Du Dein genannt,  
 Den Du ausgestreut, den Samen,  
 Fiel auf dankbar, gutes Land.

Wuchern wird in unsern Herzen  
 Deiner Lehre tröstend Wort,  
 Wuchern einst durch Glück und Schmerzen  
 Bis ans Lebensende fort.  
 Gott der Herr der Welten Lohne  
 Was Du treu an uns gethan,  
 Wenn Du einstens seinem Throne  
 Wirst als Sieggekrönte nahm."

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When Mother Benedicta became superior sixteen choir Sisters and six lay Sisters constituted the community. <sup>4</sup>

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4. Holy Cross Chronicle, Excerpt V, p. 1.

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Although the number was small a difficult task presented itself to the recently elected superior, for she felt called upon to inaugurate again the primitive spirit which should prevail in a Dominican convent of the Second Order.

In Chapter I a brief survey of the woeful state of affairs existing at Holy Cross was given. Adequate causes

for the situation are easily supplied if the tenor of the age be scrutinized. In the unfortunate years that followed the secularization--years of confusion and strange untoward happenings, years which witnessed pathetic and oppressing deeds, years in which religious were rudely forced to leave their peaceful convent homes and dwell among seculars or to live with various communities crowded together in central convents with barely the necessities of life and circumvented by secular authority--it is not strange that perverted ideas of convent discipline should insinuate themselves among the laity and finally influence even the religious. In Holy Cross Convent the rules of enclosure had become very relaxed. Seculars took their meals with the Sisters in the convent refectory; silence was not observed. Each Sister provided for herself and spent her own money independently. Into this turmoil Mother Benedicta was destined to bring order and discipline. <sup>5</sup>

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5. Schrems, F., op. cit., p. 18.

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In this work of reform Mother Benedicta had the prudent and efficient assistance of a noted schoolman and scholar, confessor of Holy Cross Convent, the Reverend Doctor Franz Joseph Schiml. For nine years she worked with him faithfully, and together they accomplished great things for God's honor and glory. Courageous, prudent, and firm, Doctor Schiml stood as a second founder in the reform of the external and internal affairs of Holy Cross Convent. <sup>6</sup>

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6. Schrems, F., op. cit., p. 17.

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Doctor Franz Joseph Schiml was born at Muhlhof, Bavaria, on January 1, 1813, and was ordained a priest on June 1, 1836. He later became a professor of Exegesis, Biblical Hermeneutics, oriental languages, and the introduction to the Old and New Testament. At the same period that he served the Holy Cross Convent as chaplain and confessor, he held the office of Synodical Examiner in the diocese. He was the uncle of Mother Thomasina Ginker, the second prioress of St. Catherine's Convent at Racine. It was probably on account of Father Schiml's close connection with the Holy Cross Convent that his niece joined that particular convent. Father Schiml had become chaplain of the convent six months before Sister Benedicta's election as prioress. <sup>7</sup>

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7. The information given above regarding Dr. Franz Schiml was obtained from Mother M. Ignatia, O.P., Prioress of Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon, in a letter dated March 9, 1936, in answer to an inquiry by the writer.

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The chronicle gives an interesting account of the first year of Mother Benedicta's administration.

"One of the first acts of the Prioress Mother Benedicta Bauer, was the introduction of community life. She brought about this reform before the close of the year 1845. The Sisters brought all their possessions, money, etc., one by one into the priory and placed it at the feet of the superior, who to them represented God--certainly a very touching act." <sup>8</sup>

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8. Holy Cross Chronicle, Excerpt V, p. 1.

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Mother Benedicta as superior was most anxious to have all the Dominican traditions put into practice in her convent. Fearing that the habit had been altered by time, she wrote to the Sisters of St. Sixtus in Rome to inquire about the Dominican garb. In return she received a dressed doll representing the garb of the Sisters at that convent. The Holy Cross Sisters were greatly pleased to find their clothing very similar to that of the Roman Sisters proving that with regard to the habit the original had been retained. The veil, however, had a different form and after a veil from Rome had been received, the Sisters adopted the pattern. <sup>9</sup>

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9. Schrems, F., op. cit., p. 18.

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A wardrobe, according to the rule, was necessary for the common care of the clothing, and since the Sisters lacked the knowledge regarding the arrangement of such a room, Father Schiml traveled to Landshut, a city a short distance away, to examine the linen room in an Ursuline convent in that place. <sup>10</sup>

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10. Ibid.

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The holy rule and the explanation of it by the fifth Master General, Blessed Humbert, was translated anew by Father Schiml. To make sure that the dispensations were

valid, he organized the archives and spent six months in examining the documents and the chronicles. When this great undertaking had been accomplished, His Grace, the Right Reverend Valentin von Riedel, Bishop of Ratisbon, visited the convent and distributed the rule books among the Sisters, at the same time giving dispensations from regulations which the peculiar conditions of the time prevented them from observing. The bishop was very highly pleased with the reform which had been so successfully initiated in the convent." 11

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11. Ibid.

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The library of about six hundred books was catalogued; after that no Sister was permitted to have a book of her own. At this same period folios and other precious volumes were beautifully illuminated with initials and pictures by the Sisters. Some of these books were of historical value while others were of inspirational value, such as the works of Henry Suso. The greater amount of this labor was performed by Father Schiml. 12

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12. Schrems, F., op. cit., p. 17.

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It is a deplorable fact that most of these precious volumes were sold to Coppenrath Book Store in 1876 on the advice of the Reverend Schöttl of the Cathedral Chapter, because the convent found itself in financial difficulties. For these rare manuscripts they received but 3000 florin. 13

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13. Ibid., p. 18

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The music department too was set in order. Various old wind instruments and string instruments which had been relegated to remote corners or discarded were retrieved. 14

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14. Ibid.

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These instruments had no doubt been used in former times for Divine Service. Father Wilms gives a very interesting discussion of the general use of wind instruments in connection with High Mass in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. He relates the following:

"The employment of "Figural - Music" in the service of God became ever more extensive corresponding to the solemnity of the service, especially the Holy Sacrifice. The Sisters in their churches performed on trumpets and French horns. To us this seems inappropriate, but to them it was ordinary. St. Catherine's Convent at Augsburg affords us a glimpse on the progress of this movement. The chronicle relates, 'In the year 1719, on the feast of the Virgin and martyr, Catherine, the patron of the convent, two candidates played the trumpets and the French horn for the first time in the choir. The first was the young woman, Mary Margaret Fabris, a merchant's daughter; the second was Anna Mary de Handen, both from Wemding. The latter had been taught so well by her father that she put all other trumpeters in the shade and became a veritable virtuoso in the art. She played the instrument over thirty-five years, and no one after ever equalled her.'" 15

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15. Wilms, H., Geschichte der Deutschen Dominikanerinnen pp. 272-73.

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Other improvements followed rapidly. A new community room was established. In 1853-1854 the sleeping quarters were enlarged and repaired; a refectory was built and other repairs were made. Beginning with the year 1854 the Sisters again took simple vows for life, and abstinence was introduced. At this time also the foundations of branch houses were made. The years between 1845-1854 were years of great accomplishments for Mother Benedicta and her faithful co-laborer, the Reverend Doctor Franz Schiml.

But the year 1854 brought a heavy trial to Mother Benedicta and her community; for in that year the Sisters suffered an irreparable loss in the death of their faithful, prudent, zealous confessor, Reverend Doctor Franz Schiml. For nine years this noble priest had helped Mother Benedicta guide her community, had given her advice, had visited other communities in behalf of the convent, had been enthusiastically interested in the making of new foundations; now he was called from her by an all-wise Providence. That she felt his loss keenly is attested by the reference she makes to him in her diary. <sup>14</sup>

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16. Diary of Mother Benedicta, 1854-1855, Diary II, p. 20.

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Before tracing the foundations and development of the branch houses of Holy Cross Convent it will be appropriate to pause and learn Mother Benedicta's own evaluation of the great work she had accomplished from her diary in which she pours forth the secret longings, desires, and thoughts of her soul. Here is not found the fearless, energetic,



dauntless woman of action, but the humble, God-fearing, prayerful soul who finds in herself nothing to be admired or praised.

## CHAPTER VI

## EXCERPTS FROM THE DIARY OF

MOTHER M. BENEDICTA

1854 - 1855

"June 8, 1854--(The day on which Mother Benedicta was elected for the fourth term of office.)

"This has been a dismal day, but in many respects, a remarkable one. How glad I would have been to exchange my lot with that of the last Sister! The election today recalled to my mind the years which I have spent in office as prioress. My God! they are past and gone forever, and what remains to me of all the various happenings. God only knows! This only do I know that I did not live up to my good resolutions fully, and notwithstanding my good will, I was remiss in my duties as prioress.

"Alas, under what circumstances was I forced to accept the office. God be praised that the time of turmoil is over. And so, I now take up for the fourth time, with God's help, the direction of children nearly all of whom have received themselves." 1

1. Diary of Mother Benedicta, Diary I, p. 1. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

The reference to the Sisters who had received themselves, no doubt, refers to that period after the secularization when the convent had relaxed in discipline.

"June 15, 1854--The approbation of my election of prioress for another three years.

"A new burden and a new kind of suffering and trial again has been laid upon my shoulders. The conference on this occasion made a deep impression upon me; it placed an indelible mark upon my soul.

The three chosen symbols were meaningful and offered from a well-meaning heart I am sure.

"The first is the rule book--I thought to myself; Ah, the rule book: With this book I am well acquainted. I have taken so much trouble on myself on account of this book--shed so many tears--have had so many misunderstandings--and still I have hardly begun to understand the spirit of it and to put it into practice.

"A remark of the Reverend Confessor was that I could be edified at the many beautiful virtues of my subjects and therefore could not find the office as superior difficult. I thought to myself: 'Would that I will find it so!' These words I considered well, and I concluded with the thought, 'would that I also could be a subject--would that I had these beautiful virtues!' I thought to myself, 'You are like a statue along the wayside pointing out the road to others, but the statue itself never makes any headway.' This thought has oppressed me all day and totally discouraged me. I thought, 'What good is your good will? all your resolutions, trials, and sufferings?--all undergone in vain. In the end you are nearer damnation than if you had been a simple religious.' What will be my sentence before an all-knowing Judge? How humiliated I stood even before my subjects. Dislike and sadness toward the new honor thrust upon me today filled me. I understand better than ever before, that it is a punishment of God, as the rule says, to bear the burden of a superior.

"In the evening I went into the choir and poured out my sorrow before the Lord. I asked Him for His grace with childlike confidence. I begged for grace and for forgiveness and promised earnestly and solemnly to serve Him with great zeal in the future. And this I will do.

"The second symbol was a skull, and it was most welcome. I had selected it when entering my office as prioress as a constant reminder nine years ago. May it never pass from my mind, especially in time of temptation to pride or indolence.

"The third symbol was the cross woven out of hearts. In this respect I never had any doubt in my simplicity that any one of my subjects had any feeling of resentment toward me or I for them--even if at times I was hasty and cross with some. Still they all know that I mean well, and I always make it a point to repair my fault. In the future I shall rid myself of what is gruff." 2

2. Ibid., pp. 7-10.

"June 16, 1854--From now on begins a new epoch in my life. The honor of God, my own salvation, and the salvation of those intrusted to my care hereafter will constitute all my endeavor and strivings. For this I shall need self-knowledge above all things. Consequently, I must practice humility, love, prayer, mildness, quiet, and reflection. These virtues I shall try to obtain in every respect. My first resolution shall be, and it always will remain, to be present at all the exercises and punctually observe the order of the day. Moreover, I shall keep the rule according to the letter, and to the spirit, and in my doubts I shall ask advice from my spiritual director, and finally every week give an account of my interior and exterior deeds and omissions; that is, I shall keep a record in this diary. 'In Thee, O Lord, I have placed my hope, and I shall not be confounded forever.' " 3

3. Ibid., pp. 11-12.

"August 24, 1854--During my prayers I had few distractions. My disposition was good--intent upon my daily salvation. Oh, how earnestly I desire to become a good religious with a true religious spirit! My words are few. I had no desire to speak. My thoughts dwelt on my daily life actions in health. The fickleness, levity, and distraction which take hold of me part of the time are well suited to bring on discouragement, but I will not allow it." 4

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4. Ibid., p. 120.

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"July 26, 1854--This is the last day of my visit (at St. Mary's Niederviehbach). Every minute I meet a Sister in tears. My disposition is sad and melancholy. I feel very sorry for these children. My struggle was all the harder, because I kept it from them and didn't shed a tear. I bade farewell several times to the Blessed Virgin in the church and committed the entire convent very earnestly and with many tears to her care. I had them call the servants, and I gave each of them a gift. Several of the children came and asked to be received into the Order. My conversation on the last day consisted in words of encouragement and comfort, I told them how to keep their account books." 5

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5. Ibid., p. 231.

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"January 7, 1855--Today when rising I tried to be recollected and to prepare for Holy Communion. The meditation on King Herod did not appeal to me. On the contrary I resented as a religious to be put on the level with the archenemy of Christ. It was not encouraging to me. God guard us against such characteristics. The rest of the day was spent in prayer and writing. The hour of recreation was spent in rehearsing the conferences. My sentiments were strange. I feel as though I were all alone in this world. I feel no interest in anything except the concern for my death. I think of that particularly since the death of Reverend Schiml, and it is nearest to my heart in all I do." 6

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6. Diary of Mother Benedicta, Diary II, p. 20. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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## CHAPTER VII

## THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW FOUNDATIONS IN GERMANY

"None of her predecessors had the discernment that she had to place the strength of her house in the service of souls."

--P. Hieronymus Wilms

1. St. Mary's of Niederviehbach

In those early years as prioress, Mother Benedicta was not only solicitous about the spiritual and temporal affairs of Holy Cross Convent, but as a woman of vision glimpsing a far distant future she realized that she could do her mite to advance the Kingdom of God on earth by spreading the good seed of Dominican life. In overflowing fullness she was to experience the truth of the old German proverb, Aller Anfang ist schwer. Generously and whole-heartedly, she was to pay the price in anguish, sorrow, and tears, which, in the inscrutable wisdom of God, seems to be required for the accomplishment of His work.

The initial step taken to spread the Dominican Order of women in Germany was an attempt to acquire the suspended Augustinian Convent of St. Mary's, Niederviehbach. Since the great secularization it had been utilized by the government as a so-called central convent in which religious of dispersed communities dwelt together. The preliminary measures taken to secure the institution afford an interesting study. First, the letter of petition following was addressed to His Majesty, King Louis I of

Bavaria:

"Most noble, most magnanimous King!  
Most benign King and Lord:

"Your most obedient subjects dare to approach your Royal Majesty, because of your true fatherly graciousness and clemency. In this our need we turn to your Royal Majesty.

"For a long time we have desired to establish a branch house, because the number of promising candidates is increasing. But up to this time we have been unable to realize our wish. Our attention has been called by the Rt. Rev. Bishop of the diocese to the central convent at Niederviehbach which for our purpose would be most appropriate. Our present financial circumstances are such, however, that it would be impossible for us to purchase the convent mentioned; therefore, we submit our humble petition that Your Majesty deign to present it to us as a gracious gift. We would take upon ourselves the obligation of establishing a boarding school for the education of girls of the middle-class, and, if the parish of Niederviehbach so desires, also the village school for girls. Great is the favor we solicit from your Royal Highness--we keenly realize this. Only the unbounded confidence which every loyal subject feels in the noble-minded beneficent King Louis when it concerns the advancement of the welfare of his subjects may pardon our presumption. But the recompense from Him, the Rewarder of all good deeds, will be great also. We on our part will pray most earnestly every day of our lives that your Royal Highness may be preserved for the welfare of the Fatherland and that God's choicest blessings may descend most abundantly upon you and upon the Royal Family. A Mass in perpetuity will be founded which will be celebrated on the feast of St. Louis, so that the memory of Your Majesty and the Royal Family will always be held sacred.

"In conclusion we again with deepest respect and complete confidence submit our

humble petition. We commend our entire convent to Your Majesty's grace and favor and respectfully remain,

Your faithful subject,

Mother M. Benedicta Bauer" 1

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1. Schrems, F., Kurze Geschichte des Dominikanerinnenklosters vom Heiligen Kreuz, Regensburg, und Seiner Filialen, Manuscript V, pp. 23-24. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.
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The king's answer was as follows:

"His Majesty the King, as long as no other disposition will be made, has graciously consented to bestow the suspended Augustinian Convent at Niederviehbach upon the Dominican Sisters of Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon, as a branch house with the consent of the bishop of the diocese. An academy for girls of the middle-class is to be opened immediately and the girls' school in the place is to be taken over by the Sisters. The building, formerly a central convent, and still existing as property of the state, must remain the dwelling of the Augustinian nuns as long as they live. The upkeep of the buildings will be borne by the state during the lifetime of the Augustinian nuns. Thereafter the convent must assume the expenses. The right for further disposal is claimed by the royal administration.

Munich, December 28, 1846

By the command of the King." 2

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2. Ibid., p. 24.
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It was especially through the favorable intervention of his Excellency Minister von Abel of Bavaria that the transaction was closed in 1846. 3



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3. Ibid., p. 23.

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This old convent has a history extending far back into antiquity having been established in 1296 by Count Berenger, his wife, and sons. At the time of the secularization thirty-seven nuns dwelt there. Later, in 1803, the state took possession of all the property, even the "Arcanum," the much renowned Niederviehbach water cure for apoplexy. It was then designated as a central convent for dispersed religious. In 1852, six years after it became a Dominican branch house, one aged choir Sister and one lay Sister of the Augustinian Order were still living there. <sup>4</sup>

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4. Ibid., p. 27.

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The name of the convent, St. Mary, was retained by the Sisters after the transfer. A beautiful picture of the Blessed Virgin which is held in great veneration accounts for the origin of the name. <sup>5</sup>

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5. Ibid., p. 26.

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After the Right Reverend Bishop Valentin von Riedel was informed concerning the bequest of the king, he sent the following letter of approbation:

"In as much as his Majesty, the King, has given the convent buildings at Niederviehbach, formerly a convent of Augustinian nuns, as the foundation of a branch house

and boarding school for the education of girls, it is the duty of the Episcopate to take care that the religious spirit does not suffer, but that the rule of the Dominican Order at Niederviehbach--along with the establishment of the school--be observed strictly as it is by the School Sisters in the Convent of Holy Cross here. After he had carefully revised the constitution as herein designated, partly to meet the needs of the proposed aim and partly to keep the new foundation in close union with the Motherhouse and in entire subordination and implicit obedience to the ruling prioress of the Motherhouse, we feel this is assured. The Bishop has approved the statutes and has ordained that the confessor, Father Schiml, dedicate the renovated building. He is to see that the enclosure be kept faithfully and that the apartment of the building assigned for school purposes be appropriate. Furthermore, we expect that the nuns transferred from the Motherhouse will immediately submit a request for the ordinary and extraordinary confessor, applying for such as they know will be willing to accept the position.

Ratisbon, September 24, 1847  
 J. Obendorfer, Vicar General  
 Bavernfeind, Secretary" 6

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6. Schrems, F., op. cit., p. 25.

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Although the transfer of the old cloister took place in 1846, it was only after much renovating that the somewhat deteriorated structures could be accommodated to the purposes for which they were intended. Careful planning of buildings, vision for the future, and discernment of required educational standards manifested themselves in the enthusiastic cooperation of the promoters. The venture was brought to its culmination in the fall of the year. On October 20, 1847, the institution, which now

ranks as one of the outstanding educational establishments for girls in Germany, was solemnly opened with Mr. Reichert, county judge of Dingolfing, presiding as commissioner of the king, and Father Fehlner, commissioner of the bishop. Thus after an existence of six hundred years, this ancient cloister, again became fruitful, giving birth on this occasion to the Dominican spirit of Ratisbon.

For the establishment of this new foundation of Dominican life and learning, Mother Benedicta chose six of her daughters, four choir nuns and two lay Sisters, and with them she made the journey to Niederviehbach where for a space she shared their early trials and hardships. The pioneer Sisters of Niederviehbach were the following: Sister Amanda Von Schenk, superioress; three choir nuns and teachers, Sister Josepha W., Sister Philomena C., Sister Valentina W.; two lay Sisters, Sister Helena Stockl and Sister Wendelina Meissinger. <sup>7</sup>

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7. Ibid., p. 26.

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The writer has found such interesting details and anecdotes about these first Sisters of Niederviehbach that she feels justified in anticipating events somewhat in order to insert them at this appropriate place.

Sister M. Amanda Von Schenk, teacher at Holy Cross Convent of Course II, was the daughter of the poet, Edward von Schenk, who held the position of a Bavarian Minister of State. She guided the community at Niederviehbach as

superior until December 1854.<sup>8</sup> Four letters in the ar-

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8. Wilms, H., op. cit., p. 336.

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chives at Racine written by her attest the deep love she bore to Mother Benedicta. In a letter written by her to Sister Cecilia dated February 27, 1873, she recalls the trials endured by the Sisters at the time of the establishment of St. Mary's, Niederviehbach.

"Oh the dear blessed Mother Benedicta! Oh I am happy that I may see her in eternity. Now it is twenty-five and a half years since Mother Benedicta founded Niederviehbach and brought us here from Ratisbon. Our way was not strewn with roses. We received many thorns, for to carry the cross after the Lord was often hard. The cross is the only way to heaven. Mother Benedicta must surely have experienced this."

In the same letter Sister Amanda claims that she was loved by Mother Benedicta, and that in return for this love she had suffered many hardships for her. The letter ends with another reference to the common foundress of the convents at Niederviehbach and Racine.

"Oh, are we not all children of one father; yes, daughters of our holy Father St. Dominic and daughters, at least many of us, of one mother, namely, the good Mother Benedicta. Through this we are near to each other, and in heaven we will rejoice together under the protection of our Holy Father." 9

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9. Correspondence with the Convent of St. Mary's, Niederviehbach. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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In the same letter, mention is made of three other pioneer Sisters of Niederviehbach. Although in the foundation

of St. Mary's, Sister Philomena is designated as the drawing teacher, in 1873, Sister Amanda speaks of her as the organist, first choir corrector, and music teacher. Sister Valentina, the embroidery teacher, is noted in the letter as sacristan. Sister Amanda characterizes one of the first lay Sisters lovingly in the following words:

"Sister Wendeline was much loved by Mother Benedicta. She has been with us for twenty-one years, coming to St. Mary's from Ratisbon. She bakes wafers and sweets. She is the reader and leads the prayers for Mother Senior. She reads very well. She told me to give her greetings to all the American Sisters." 10

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10. Ibid.

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The choir nun, Sister Josepha Witzlhofer, was destined to become one of the first missionaries to America, and to rule the present Congregation of Holy Cross as its first superior.

Not only are the names of the pioneer Sisters fondly recalled, but also the name of the spiritual director of St. Mary's, the Reverend Michael Bauer, is held in benediction. Father Bauer, the beloved brother of Mother Benedicta, was appointed to Niederviehbach in 1847. Until 1871 he acted in the capacity of novice master, chaplain, and confessor to the Sisters. Besides this he was catechist in the academy, and with two assistants administered to the parish church in Niederviehbach. He later became a staunch friend and great benefactor of the Sisters in Racine. 11

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11. Schrems, F., op. cit., p. 22.

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So rapid was the development of St. Mary's Academy that according to Father Wilms the number of Sisters was increased to ten in the first year. Another increase in number was necessitated in 1852 by the Sisters assuming charge of the day school. One of the later teachers of the day school, Sister Angela Huber, who guided the community of St. Mary's from 1854 to 1856, desired to come to America in order to join the missionary Sisters of Racine. In this, her resolution, she was prevented by the bishop. She confided her ardent desire to Father Bauer, and together they contrived and planned, but with no result, for the bishop remained determined. In a letter of February 10, 1866, written to Mother Thomasina, Father Bauer feels quite confident that Sister Angela and Sister Hyacintha will be successful in obtaining the permission to come to America. He says in part:

"Our Sister Angela works and prays with all her strength to obtain permission to go to America. Sister Hyacintha also wishes to follow her. Sister Angela has gone so far already that Mother Prioress would be glad if she would go, and thus I believe that she will yet get permission from the bishop. Sister Angela also has a dowry of about 2000 florin. That would be something. Not so? Just pray very hard that these two may get away. Sister Angela can also play the piano and would be an able teacher. At the same time she has plenty of good schoolroom humor--by way of confidence. But in America she would hardly have time to play her tricks." 12

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12. Bauer Correspondence. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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Sister Angela always remained interested in the welfare of the Racine Dominicans and was delighted later on to send them patterns for vestments with very minute descriptions regarding the embroidering of the same.

From the incidents narrated above the close connection between St. Mary's of Niederviehbach and St. Catherine's of Racine is clearly demonstrated, but another and a much more intimate and striking link can be traced. If Holy Cross, Ratisbon, furnished the Dominican Sisters of Racine with their first superior and beloved foundress, Mother Benedicta, it was St. Mary's who gave to it the co-foundress and second superior, Mother Thomasina.

One of the first boarders to apply for admission to the academy at Niederviehbach was Theresa Ginker of Neustadt. She remained there until 1852, and then through the advice of Father Bauer, and also possibly through the consideration of her uncle Father Franz Schiml acting in the capacity of father confessor at Ratisbon, she entered at Holy Cross Convent. Here she was received under the name of Sister Thomasina. Years later, when Mother Benedicta resolved to come to America, Sister Thomasina became her loyal companion.

The testimonial granted to Sister Thomasina when she was a student at Niederviehbach will serve the purpose of informing the reader, not only of the superior ability of

the future Mother Thomasina, but will also offer a very graphic example of the course of study offered by St. Mary's Academy.

### Testimonial

"Theresa Ginker, daughter of the Master Chimney Sweep of Neustadt, born July 6, 1834, benefitted by the course of instruction given in the institute for girls of the middle-class in the branch house of Dominicans at Niederviehbach from the year October 1851 - August 30, 1852. Very talented and exceptionally diligent, she made excellent progress and deserves the following special standings:

Religion	Excellent
German	Excellent
Arithmetic	Excellent
Calligraphy	Very Good
History and Geography	Excellent
Natural History	Excellent
Music:	
Singing and Piano	Very Good
Embroidery	Excellent
Knitting and Sewing	Excellent
Spinning	
Domestic Science	

The educational Institute of Niederviehbach truthfully testifies to this August 30, 1852.

Inspector	Superior
M. Bauer, Pastor	Mary Amanda
	vSchenk." 13

13. Testimonial of Sister M. Thomasina, Document III. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

That the flourishing institution of St. Mary's was most dear to the heart of its foundress is obvious from the many reflections, the anxious vigils, the untiring prayers which are recorded in her diary regarding this cherished project. How anxious was she that the same religious spirit dominate the new foundation, that the



Sisters live in peace and unity edifying their young charges by word and example, that the rule be diligently observed! When necessary, she obtained a dispensation from the bishop to give to St. Mary's her personal supervision. On such occasions she conferred with each Sister, admonishing and consoling them. Yet was she ever sympathetic, for she realized the difficulty of their tasks. Sometimes she would arrange for a retreat to be conducted by her reverend brother, Father Bauer, and thus she would assure herself of their spiritual welfare. She did not fail to call upon her faithful protectress, the Blessed Mother, at these visits to the branch house, for the diary records soulful, wistful visits before the famous image in the chapel. 14

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14. Diary of Mother Benedicta, 1854, Diary II, pp. 215-239. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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Although the magnanimous heart of Mother Benedicta must have expanded with joy when she beheld this new enterprise making conquest for Christ, yet she paid the usual price demanded for spiritual gains in the poignant suffering which chilled her soul when through human frailty some of her children did not live up to the high ideals of community life. In 1853 she was forced to expel two religious from the branch house, while in the same year she bade farewell to two Sisters from St. Mary's and two from Ratisbon, who, with her generous aid and help, fearlessly braved the hardships of missionary toil to spread

the good seed of Dominican life in America. 15

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15. Schrems, F., op. cit., p. 27.

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Before turning to the next branch house established by Mother Benedicta it is relevant to add a word about the future course of St. Mary's. In 1863, five years after Mother Benedicta came to America, St. Mary's became independent of Holy Cross Convent. Today with about seventy-four Sisters the institution ranks as one of the finest in Germany. The Sisters have charge of the boarding school, public school, and the continuation school. 16

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16. Ibid., p. 27.

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Following is a list of the vicareesses and prioresses who governed St. Mary's, Niederviehbach, from 1847 to the present time:

"From October 20, 1847, to August 29, 1863, the vicareesses were appointed by Holy Cross Convent, since St. Mary's was a branch house of that convent.

1. October, 1847 - December, 1854  
Sister M. Amanda Von Schenk
2. December, 1854 - August, 1856  
Sister M. Angela Huber
3. August, 1856 - May, 1858  
Sister M. Vincentia Endl
4. June, 1858 - August 1863  
Sister M. Antonina Maler

Prioressees after St. Mary's, Niederviehbach became independent in 1863:

1. August 29, 1863 - September, 1868  
Mother M. Rosa Weigl
2. October, 1868 - November, 1873  
Mother M. Jordan Olschurtz
3. November 30, 1873 - October 12, 1905  
Mother M. Gabriela Kammermeier
4. October 25, 1905 - November 13, 1914  
Mother Petrina Sebald
5. November 13, 1914 - November 16, 1920  
Mother M. Raymunda Murrer
6. November 26, 1920 - February 13, 1930  
Mother M. Salesia Berger
7. February 13, 1930 -  
Mother M. Hyacintha Eder "

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17. List of Prioresses, St. Mary's, Niederviehbach obtained from the present prioress, Mother Hyacintha. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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## 2. Mintraching

The second foundation was made at Mintraching on October 18, 1853, in response to an invitation by the Reverend Joseph Walbrunn, pastor and dean of the place. No doubt, encouraged by the success of St. Mary's at Niederviehbach, Mother Benedicta felt justified in accepting another apparently splendid opportunity to extend the activities and spirit of Holy Cross Convent. This time, however, her endeavors did not meet with the same bountiful reward, and about a year after she came

to America, the branch house was discontinued. The reasons for the failure of this praiseworthy undertaking may be traced to extraneous causes and also to certain conditions inherent in the terms of contract. A royal document dated September 27, 1853, contains the following stipulations:

"The diocese has given the permission conditionally, since it is awaiting a dispensation from Rome. The Sisters of Holy Cross Convent have offered their services for a girls' academy at the beginning of the next school year.

" 1. The girls' school must be separated from that of the boys, and therefore a new building must be erected for the girls at Mintraching. The girls' residing at Mangolding who have to the present time completed their education at the main school at Köfering cannot well be transferred to Mintraching now, but with the consent of the local inspector and in accordance with the present regulations of the village, they may be free to enter the new school at Mintraching if they so desire.

" 2. The girls' school at Mintraching will be in charge of two Sisters from Holy Cross, Ratisbon, and it will be their duty to provide two teachers who will conduct a course of study.

" 3. The school in which the Sisters are to teach and live was built by the pastor and dean, Rev. Walbrunn, from parish funds. The building must remain a girls' school with class rooms for girls and living rooms for the teachers. The maintaining of the buildings of the school for the future according to the agreement will be borne by the aforementioned Sisters.

" 4. The first furnishings and equipment of the school was under the direction of Rev. Dean Walbrunn, pastor of Mintraching. For this purpose he established a school fund.

" 5. For their support the Sisters are to receive the four per cent interest accruing from the fund of 700 florin, but

the capital is to remain under the administration of the pastor. The Sisters are also to receive the tuition from the children both for week days and for holydays.

" 6. The Sisters of Holy Cross will not be responsible for the heating and cleaning of the buildings.

" 7. As a result of the separation of the boys' and girls' school, the income of the male teacher will be decreased. He cannot claim compensation, however, since his assistant will be removed. The Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon, has received a duplicate of the above resolutions." 18

18. Schrems, F., op. cit., pp. 29-30.

The Sisters rejoiced at this accession and enthusiastically looked forward to much fruit from this new branch house. Four choir Sisters and two lay Sisters made up the little band, who, with high hopes, left the mother convent to take charge of the school. 19 Father Schrems does not

19. Ibid., p. 39.

enumerate the pioneer Sisters of Mintraching, but according to Mother Benedicta's diary the following Sisters resided there in 1855. Sister Alberta Schoierer, a mother of council, was vicaress; and Sister Raimunda Graf, Sister Aquinata, Sister Agnes, Sister Elizabeth, and Sister Amanda Von Schenk complete the list. 20

20. Diary of Mother Benedicta, 1855, Diary II, pp. 96-98. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

An estate adjoining the school, "Mintrachinghof" was purchased later at a cost of 43,000 florin. An additional expenditure of 10,000 florin was made to improve the buildings on the land which had been neglected.

At first the school seems to have prospered and the income from the estate proved adequate. But soon emergencies arose which thrust the convent into unforeseen difficulties. The Sisters, having to observe the cloister restrictions, found it impossible to efficiently supervise the workmen and the financial affairs. Those whom they engaged to oversee the concerns of the estate took advantage of their dilemma. The terms of the contract by which the Sisters accepted the school at Mintraching manifested their inadequacy to meet the problems involved. All these misfortunes together with the expenditures necessitated by the foundation in Niederviehbach and the new foundation in America, which was also made in 1853, made it impossible for the Motherhouse of Holy Cross to render further financial assistance. Finally, in the first part of the year 1859, the six nuns still remaining in Mintraching were obliged to return to their Motherhouse, and soon after, the estate was sold at a loss. 21

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21. Schrems, F., op. cit., p. 31.

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## CHAPTER VIII

THE AMERICAN FOUNDATION, WILLIAMSBURGH, NEW YORK

1853

"The seed will fructify if it is sown:  
it will but moulder if hoarded."

--Attributed to St. Dominic

Such are the words which tradition puts on the lips of the holy patriarch, St. Dominic, when against human prudence he sent out his disciples two by two to make spiritual conquests in spite of the fact that his Order was poor and weak and had just been confirmed by the pope. Such, no doubt, were the thoughts of Mother Benedicta Bauer who, as a willing instrument in the hands of Eternal Wisdom, scattered the strength of her venerable convent. In 1847 she had established a branch house at St. Mary's, Niederviehbach, with the express purpose of opening another novitiate so that greater numbers could be trained in Dominican life. Simultaneous with the foundation at Mintraching in 1853 occurred the doubly hazardous undertaking of a foundation in far-distant America. This venturesome project at a time when Holy Cross Convent was depleted in numbers, due to new foundations, depleted in finances, due to the renovation of buildings and the purchase of estates, is amazing; nevertheless, it is indicative of the determination, vigor, and vision which characterized the simple, prayerful, humble, prioress of Holy Cross Convent. For her, there was no hesitation, no half

measures, no reckoning of the cost where the apparent will of God was concerned. The intermediate measures which she took to accomplish her object as reflected in the documents that follow reveal the resolute, direct, and clean-cut fashion with which she was accustomed to proceed.

Relative to the first foundation in America the writer has found a very meager general knowledge and many false conceptions and legends current among those who for various reasons are especially interested. Basing her assertions, therefore, on authenticated documents, the writer will endeavor to clarify erroneous ideas which have in many instances found their way into print, and which, as a result, are continually being disseminated. For this reason many of the documents will be inserted in full which otherwise would be only referred to or omitted entirely.

Before launching into the study of the American foundation in particular, it is requisite to present a preview of the missionary spirit and endeavors of the age. One of the greatest forces to arouse the Bavarian population to an interest in missionaries and in German Catholics in distant countries was the Ludwig-Missionsverein founded at Munich, Bavaria, on December 12, 1838, for the express purpose of giving financial assistance to the Catholic missions of Asia and America. Similar societies had been formed earlier in other countries; namely, the Society of the Propagation of the Faith of Paris--Lyons, established in 1822, and the Leopoldine Foundation of Vienna, established in 1829. <sup>1</sup>



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1. Roemer, T., The Ludwig-Missionsverein and the Church in the United States(1838-1918), p. 1.
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The Ludwig-Missionsverein is of special interest in this thesis as its further development will demonstrate. Between the years 1844 and 1916 this mission society donated a sum of \$892,898.23 in alms to American missions. Through it priests were secured, nuns were enabled to establish convents and schools; orphanages and hospitals, churches and schools were built and maintained. <sup>2</sup>

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2. Ibid., p. 138.
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Through the Ludwig-Missionsverein, therefore, the mission cause became popular in Bavaria. The impetus thus given to the propagation of the faith, and the small, but constant alms that flowed into the treasury from the rank and file of the common people had the effect of incessantly fixing thought on missionary undertakings. Many institutions in Germany under these favorable circumstances and especially as a result of the gracious attitude of the Catholic King, Louis I, were just recovering from the blighting effects of the secularization of 1803. Renewed and purified in spirit, they were ready to accomplish great things. The Poor School Sisters of Notre Dame, a recently established Order were multiplying their foundations throughout Germany and had even established houses in America, thus exemplifying the religious energy of the time. <sup>3</sup>

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3. Mother Caroline and the School Sisters of Notre Dame in America, pp. 18-25.

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Holy Cross Convent which under the leadership of Mother Benedicta Bauer, had just been reformed, inebriated with the spirit of the age, was ready to give further of its strength.

Small wonder, then, that the visit of the Reverend Abbot Boniface Wimmer, C.S.B., an American missionary of St. Vincent, Pennsylvania, at the Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon, seeking Dominican Sisters for the mission fields of America should fire with holy aspirations the hearts of the simple nuns. Small wonder that his graphic descriptions of fruitful labor in a virgin country peopled with German immigrants, neglected and forsaken, because the laborers were few should arouse within them a missionary spirit and zeal. Possibly also the hedged-in life of a reformed convent, where large liberties had been stringently curtailed, dwindled into insignificance as the wider opening for zealous activity beckoned enticingly from afar. Whatever the motive that urged them, the chronicle informs us that a number of Sisters responded to the appeal of the Reverend Abbot Wimmer and volunteered at this time to offer their lives for the spiritual welfare of their countrymen in America.

The chronicle account of Father Wimmer's visit and the response of the Sisters in answer to his appeal is both interesting and instructive:

"In 1851 the first plans were made for founding a branch house of our convent in America. The first impulse for this undertaking came from the most worthy Abbot, Rev. Boniface Wimmer, who during his stay at Ratisbon in the year 1850 or 1851 visited the Sisters of Holy Cross Convent several times and called their attention to the wide field of labor opened for them in America. A few of the Sisters even felt a great desire to go to America especially when Rev. Wimmer promised that he, on his part, would do all that he could to make possible a new Dominican foundation, remarking that in this way he would put the great St. Dominic under obligation to himself. But at this time it was impossible.

"No further steps were taken before the year 1853. Sister Augustine Neuhierl was the first to ask permission to go to the mission fields. Sister Augustine Neuhierl was joined by Sister Josepha Witzlhofer and two lay Sisters, Sister Jacobina Riederer and Sister Francesca Retter, who likewise expressed their desire to go to America, and so the plan was effected. 4

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4. Holy Cross Chronicle, Excerpt III, p. 1. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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It will be noticed that this account of the chronicle does not specify the reason why the foundation in America was considered impossible in 1851. Christine Sevier makes the following explanatory assertion:

"This generous zeal was, however, to be tried and tempered to be put to the crucial test of delay, and the crushing depression of apparent denial, for, after prolonged consideration, Bishop Valentin Riedel, at that time ordinary of the diocese, withheld the approbation and consent necessary for the inauguration of the hazardous venture from which conservative idealists would have recoiled, dismissing it instantly as prohibitive, aghast at the magnitude of the risks to be encountered." 5

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5. Sevier, C., From Ratisbon Cloisters, p. 21.

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Father Schrems in writing about the American foundation of 1853 substantiates the quotation above by remarking that the year before the respective Sisters had made a similar request, but while at that time they were refused, this time they were given the permission. 6

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6. Schrems, F., Kurze Geschichte des Dominikanerinnenklosters vom Heiligen Kreuz und Seiner Filialen, p. 34.

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The document following is a record of the steps taken to initiate the project of the American foundation:

"Today, May 10, 1853, the following Sisters presented themselves in the priory: Sister Josepha Witzlhofer, Sister Francesca Retter, and Sister Jacobina Riederer. In the presence of the Mother Prioress, Mother Subprioress, and all the members of the Council, they expressed their earnest desire of being sent to the missions of America that there they might found a convent of our Order. They confirmed the truth of the above with their own signatures.

Josepha Witzlhofer      Francesca Retter  
Jacobina Riederer

"After this the undersigned consulted regarding this matter and decided unanimously to do all in their power that the praiseworthy purpose be accomplished. They were induced to do this in consequence of a definite written document of Rev. Boniface Wimmer that he would be the adviser and protector of the Sisters:

Maria Benedicta Bauer, Prioress  
Maria Antonina Maler, Subprioress  
Dominika Wittman, Alberta Schoierer, Aquinata Billings, Maria Pia Becker, Raimunda Graf" 7

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7. Holy Cross Chronicle, Excerpt III, p. 2, Photographic facsimile in Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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From the above document it is evident that correspondence had been carried on with Reverend Abbot Boniface Wimmer. In fact this zealous missionary had taken the initiative and had urged the Sisters who desired to come to America to do so. The Sisters, therefore, in answering his letter requested him to explain the necessary measures to be taken in order that they might successfully accomplish their project. All this is made clear in the letter following written by Mother Benedicta to the Right Reverend Bishop Von Riedel of Ratisbon:

"Most Reverend Bishop  
Gracious Lord:

"Two years ago the most Reverend Father Boniface Wimmer during his sojourn in Ratisbon called at the convent several times and repeatedly expressed his great desire of having Sisters from our convent come to the missions of America and there make a foundation of our Order, so that following the example of our Holy Father St. Dominic we might labor in the vineyard of the Lord, not only working out our own salvation, but also working for the salvation of so many neglected children. To accomplish this, Reverend Father Wimmer, repeatedly and very earnestly promised his cooperation, that he might, to use his own words, 'make St. Dominic indebted to him.'

"In January this year he wrote again explaining that since he returned to America he had given much attention to the project of founding a convent of nuns of our Order. He consulted the Dominican Fathers whom he met at the Council of Baltimore a year ago regarding the matter, and Father Superior was

quite pleased with his plans for the immigration of German Dominican Sisters and the making of a foundation in his territory in which the temporal as well as the spiritual welfare of the Sisters could be provided. The effect of this letter was that those Sisters who previously had expressed their desire of immigrating now presented their petitions anew and very earnestly begged that they be permitted to accept Father Wimmer's invitation. Hereupon the obedient undersigned informed Reverend Wimmer of their determination and begged him to inform them what steps must necessarily be taken in order to put their resolution into effect.

"His reply of April 14 was as follows: that the Sisters desirous of becoming missionaries should journey immediately to St. Vincent's as their destination where they would remain for some time to learn the English language under his direction, and at the same time observe all religious obligations of the Order undisturbed as religious. The care of all the rest will be assumed by Reverend Father Wimmer as he definitely assured them in the letter mentioned. In this letter he also says 'Ask your Reverend Bishop for a Dimissory that is a Latin testimonial to the effect that these Sisters (each Sister's name mentioned) are sent to the missions in America to found a convent of their Order, and that they are directed for the time being to me as their counselor and protector.' In regard to the journey he informed us that he had given the Reverend Court Chaplain Müller all necessary directions and we enclose the letter which Father Müller has written in answer to ours.

"The obedient undersigned humbly petitions that your grace may give the aforementioned Dimissory for the two choir nuns, Sister Josepha Witzlhofer and Sister Augustine Neuhierl and also for the lay Sisters Francesca Retter and Jacobina Riederer. Awaiting a gracious answer to this humble petition, we remain in profoundest reverence,  
Your Grace's most humble and obedient,

M. Benedicta Bauer." 8

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8. Holy Cross Chronicle, Excerpt III, p. 8. Photographic facsimile in Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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That this petition was answered favorably is ascertained through the Dimissory given in Latin which follows:

"We, Valentin, by the Divine Mercy and the favor of the Apostolic Chair, Bishop of Ratisbon.

"Since the Reverend Boniface of the Order of St. Benedict, superior in North America, desires that we send to America some Sisters from the Holy Cross Monastery in Ratisbon well qualified for educating young girls, we, therefore, yielding most gladly to his prayers having conferred in council with the prioress and the conventuals of said monastery regarding the virgins who expressed their desire of going into the missions of America and having properly examined these virgins, we send the following: Maria Josepha Witzlhofer, Maria Augustina Neuhierl, with the Sisters Maria Francesca Retter and Maria Jacobina Reiderer under the condition, however, that they remain in the congregation to which they are bound by their sacred vows and under the jurisdiction of the prioress of Holy Cross in case their number should increase and it would be necessary to erect a new monastery in America or in case of exigency that they be allowed to return to the Holy Cross Monastery. We, moreover, confirm Maria Josepha Witzlhofer on whom the prioress has enjoined the government of the newly organized community of virgins. We, therefore, earnestly recommend these virgins whose great zeal for promoting the honor of God we highly esteem, to the most Reverend and Illustrious Ordinary of that diocese under whose jurisdiction they will be, requesting that he will deign to receive them as his daughters with all paternal affection and apostolic charity.

Given at Ratisbon, the Kingdom of Bavaria, May 29, 1853.

Valentin, Bishop of Ratisbon

Paintner, Secretary" 9

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9. Ibid., p. 2.

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Since all permissions had been granted, the Sisters made preparations to carry out their plans immediately. The four Sisters sailed on the morning of July 25, 1853, reaching New York on August 26.<sup>10</sup>

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10. Sevier, C., op. cit., p. 25.

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The brief, simple, but charming account of the journey of these first four Dominican Sisters related in the Holy Cross Chronicle will be inserted as presumably the most accurate record extant. The erroneous opinion current that Reverend Abbot Boniface Wimmer utterly failed to keep his promises and allowed the Sisters to shift for themselves in a strange country is absolutely unfounded as both the following chronicle account and a letter by the Reverend Abbot Wimmer to Mother Benedicta conclusively prove. That he failed to meet the Sisters is true, but that he made no effort to have them taken care of or that he did not visit them afterwards is utterly false. Following is the chronicle record:

"As soon as the decision of founding a convent in America had been reached, as was mentioned before, Abbot Wimmer was notified and was asked for all necessary directions and for his support of the undertaking. After an answer had been received from the Rev. Abbot Wimmer, application was made to the bishop for the required Dimissory. Following the advice of the Rev. Abbot Wimmer recourse was next had to the Court Chaplain, the Rev. Müller, director of the Ludwig-Missionsverein for the necessary traveling



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funds, which were forthwith granted. Toward the end of July or the beginning of August, Rev. Müller, Court Chaplain, himself arrived and accompanied the Sisters as far as Bremen. In the latter part of August the Sisters finally stepped on American soil, not knowing a spot in this great land where they might find refuge. At first they were much alarmed because there was no one to meet them and direct them to St. Vincent's as they had expected. They had much money with them; they were ignorant of the country and at a loss what to do. Finally ecclesiastics approached them. Abbot Wimmer had written to these and had requested them to provide for the four Sisters. For eight days they found lodging separately at the homes of good people." 11

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11. Ibid., p. 1.

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The Chronicle continues:

"Meanwhile the Vicar General at Williamsburgh, New York, the Very Rev. John Stephen Raffener, had been informed through the newspaper that Sisters from Germany had arrived for the purpose of founding a convent, and he decided to engage their services. The four Sisters were willing, and Abbot Wimmer finally gave his consent, since there were good prospects in this place for the Sisters." 12

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12. Williamsburgh is now the downtown section in Brooklyn, New York. In 1853 it was a suburb of Brooklyn.

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"Thus the four Sisters came to Williamsburgh and found lodging in the home of the Vicar General. The two choir Sisters taught in the nearby school, and the lay Sisters directed the Rev. Vicar's household. This situation lasted until May 1854 at which time the Sisters purchased a house with the money they had brought with them. But the house was not a convent, and to remain in a private house in which the enclosure could not be observed was not permissible. What

were they to do? It was necessary for the Sisters to build a convent, but the money they had brought with them had been spent for the purchase of the house. Besides in America where the workman receives a dollar a day, building was expensive. The Convent of Holy Cross had already sacrificed much, and it could hardly be expected to give more assistance. The money which was earned by the two teaching Sisters did not cover much more than that required for their daily needs. Rev. Father Wimmer to whom they explained the difficulty knew the answer. He appealed to the noble heart of King Louis I of Bavaria, and was instrumental in obtaining for the Sisters a gift of 6,000 florin. Furthermore, for the next few years they were to receive a gift of 1,500 florin from the Ludwig-Missionsverein. Thus did they receive aid! A convent was erected and a request sent to the Motherhouse for more Sisters. In the year 1855 three Sisters left from Ratisbon for Williamsburgh, namely, Sister Michaela Braun, Sister Emilia Barth, and Sister Seraphina Staimer. The first superioress in the Williamsburgh convent was Maria Josepha Witzlhofer. She is characterized as a very sensible, wise, and pious woman, well prepared to conduct the household. Possessing the united qualities of high intelligence and great prudence and modesty, she knew well how to take the initiative, so that it would have been difficult to find a better qualified person for the establishment of the foundation." 13

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13. Holy Cross Chronicle, Excerpt III, pp. 1-2.

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From the account given above it would seem that the priests whom Abbot Wimmer commissioned to meet the Sisters at the ship actually did meet them, though apparently they were late, and, as a result, the Sisters had become much alarmed in the interim. The version given by Christine Sevier differs substantially from the chronicle account. Since the latter version is the generally accepted

view it will be given, so that the reader may compare the two. It is evident that the Redemptorist Fathers of New York assisted the Sisters, for such has always been the tradition. Possibly during the first few days in America, the Sisters came into contact with these Fathers through the introductory letters they had received from Father Müller, the Court Chaplain. Miss Sevier's version is as follows:

"The moment of disembarkation finally arrives and they descend the hastily flung gangway, dazed by the bustle and confusion of the pier, stunned, if not stupefied by the absence of Abbot Wimmer, whom they vainly seek among the expectant crowd.

.....

"Soon it becomes evident that there is no alternative but to utilize the Bavarian Court Chaplain Müller's introductory letters to the Redemptorists in New York, to whom they hasten in their extreme need, friendless and forsaken. The welcome accorded them by these good fathers, the sympathy manifested at the recital of their misfortunes, buoyed the downcast travelers, reviving in them the hope that perhaps the initial repulse was but a temporary halt and that the irreparable collapse of their plans would not necessarily follow. The spontaneous gratitude of the disheartened Sisters towards these, their first benefactors, has been transmitted to their spiritual progeny of a perpetual legacy, and the memory of the considerate kindness exhibited by the Sons of St. Alphonsus to the loved foundresses of the congregation, remains a bright spot in the history of the community.

"Our thoughts linger about the disappointed missionaries on this first night in the land of their desires, separated from each other and among strangers, for owing to the efforts of the Redemptorists, Sisters Josepha and Augustine found temporary shelter in New York, while Sisters Francesca and Jacobina were obliged to

accept the hospitality of a pious family in Newark." 14

14. Sevier, C., op. cit., pp. 24-25.

The Sisters did not accept the invitation of the Very Reverend John Raffener, pastor of Holy Trinity Church, until Abbot Wimmer gave his consent. This is evident from the Holy Cross Chronicle and also from the ingenuous letter, delightfully detailed and complete, which was written by the Reverend Abbot Wimmer to the anxiously waiting prioress of the Holy Cross Convent, Mother Benedicta Bauer. The complete letter follows:

"Latrobe, Westmoreland Co.,  
Pennsylvania,  
September 18, 1853.

"Dear esteemed Mother Prioress:

"That your daughters arrived in America, you already know. To the best of my ability I took care that they should be met immediately by a brother religious, P. Nicholas Balleid in New York. It was only after the fifth day of their arrival that I found it possible to see and care for them. Since I knew of no place in the land at this time where they might locate, I came to an agreement with Reverend Raffener, Vicar General of New York, that he would receive them at his parish church in Williamsburgh, a suburb of New York, which has a population of 30,000 inhabitants among which number nearly 15,000 German Catholics.

"The place is exceptional in regard to location and a sphere of labor. How delighted the girls and mothers were when they heard that the Sisters were to come and when they saw them. The Rt. Rev. Archbishop received them gladly. Since there is no convent there, they had to be domiciled for the time being in the rectory

which is attached to the old church. Don't be alarmed at that. The pastor, the above mentioned Rev. Vicar, is an old gentleman, a good priest, and has only one assistant. The rectory is roomy. I remained there four days in order to arrange everything so that by the end of the week the four Sisters had complete enclosure not only on the outside from the people, but also on the inside from the priests. They are rather confined, but it does. They have a kitchen, along side of this, a study, and on the other side a dormitory sufficiently large for all four. I immediately bought four comfortable iron bedsteads in order to find out whether there was room enough, and we found there was still room for a table and chest. The door leading into the kitchen was locked, so that there is no longer admittance. On the outside also I constructed a boarded screen near the door which is under the stairs from which no one has admittance. In this manner I gained an uninterrupted connection with the church and a large room under the church which the Sisters may use for their wash, etc., a storeroom, or they could even sleep there if they wished. A large garden around the church gives ample room for recreation and for work. The school is also connected with the church.

"The future convent will be built on the same place if the Reverend old gentleman so wishes or on the west side of the new church which would be a nicer location. He owns three lots there between which there are two small houses which would necessitate their purchase at an expense of 5000 or 6000 dollars (Krontholar). Again, you must not be alarmed at this; 6000 dollars is a trifling sum here. Through school teaching and an institute the amount would soon be raised. The greatest burden for your children is that they must cook for the two priests, that is, they have them in board. We have arranged an elevator so that the food can be transferred as in the convent; nevertheless, it is disturbing and annoying. But I was not able to make any other arrangements. The old gentleman has received the Sisters especially that he might be provided with a cook and also economize! He is rich, but at the same time very economical. Perhaps

you will inherit some of his money. If he will only give you the building lot, as he has promised, this would be equivalent to receiving 1000 dollars.

"I assure you everything is all right if the old gentleman does not change his mind; that is, if he keeps his promises; and I hope that he will do it, because he can see that it will be to his advantage, and also, because he loves his parish and knows his parishioners want and need the Sisters; besides he is very much attached to me.

"I impressed it upon the Sisters that they shouldn't be too exacting with him; and if they were in need in regard to money or anything else, they should let me know, and I would take the matter up with him. So that the Sisters would not have to keep house for him, the old gentleman engaged a good old widow, I told the Sisters to pay her her wages, because they themselves would often need her, and thus the old gentleman would be satisfied. He is their ordinary confessor; their extraordinary is a Capuchin from New York.

"Pray then with your children at home that the spirit of love, unity, resignation, and patience may continue to reign among them here, and that God, Himself, will direct all for their welfare.

"The two exchangeable notes of 6000 florin and 1000 florin, 4000 of which was in my name, I collected. The Reverend old gentleman wonders if the Sisters could not lend him the money until they need it. He would give them 5 per cent interest. I advised them to do it. He, of course, does not need the money, but he would put it in the bank at 6 per cent and thereby gain 1 per cent. That will make the Sisters worth so much more to him, and the Sisters will benefit thereby. At my departure they still had 2,500 florin in their possession, which will soon be spent, because they have to buy cupboards, etc. The school money will provide for the necessities of life.

"At present there can be no thought of building a convent. We must first see how things go. Besides, for the present it is not necessary. But one thing must be done immediately; namely, one or two candidates well versed in English must be received. You will have no objection, because the nature of affairs requires it. 'He who wishes to accomplish an end must adopt the means.' Those who do not learn English from their youth never become so proficient in it that they can teach it well. You may send us German teachers or candidates, but we must train English ones for ourselves. The School Sisters do this; also my Benedictines, and your Dominicans will have to do likewise.

"Since you have surrendered your daughters into my hands and the Right Reverend Bishop has done likewise in his Dimissory, and since the Right Reverend Archbishop of New York and his Vicar consider me their Spiritual Father, I therefore consider myself sufficiently authorized to make necessary arrangements, and I told Sister Josepha that she should immediately accept any good candidate that presents herself, and I would be responsible for you. I hope that you realize that I am in a better position to know American needs than you in far off Holy Cross, Ratisbon. I mean well with you and yours.

"Now something else; if I had been earlier informed I could have provided a good place for the Sisters in the city of New York at the Capuchin Church. The pastor there, Father Ambrose, scolded me soundly, because I did not tell him about the Dominicans, for he would have been anxious to have them. But now a good thing has been bungled for the present; nevertheless, he would like to know if you would be willing and if it would be possible to send him four Sisters also. He has a house that he could purchase near the church which would be suitable for a little convent. However, he is not certain whether or not he could get it. If he could obtain it, he would like to have German religious for his girls. So if you have four Sisters, (two school Sisters and two lay Sisters) that you can dispense

with (of course you understand good and efficient people) let me know, so that he can call for them if he needs them. For the time being, keep this a secret. I mentioned this to the Sisters at Williamsburgh, but did not mention the place, and I wish you would not mention it to them either, particularly if the matter would be dropped.

"If I managed this affair well or not, I do not know. My intention was good; of that I am sure. I cannot go to Williamsburgh often as it is 400 miles distant and costs me at least 60 florin. But if there is need, I will go. At any rate, I will correspond with my foster children and advise them until they become familiar with their situation and can help themselves. All beginning is difficult! Much will have to be endured, but if one means well with God and is patient, God will help through all.

"All the Sisters were real well. They waited on me splendidly--held me back from leaving as long as possible, and were determined to take no pay for a trunk they brought along for me, and for which they paid 34 florin. You can, therefore, write them and scold them for this. At first they were rather disheartened and diffident, but before I left, September 7, they were full of courage and confidence, and I hope they will succeed. Everything has turned out so well that one must believe it to be the will of God that matters turned out in this way.

"Pray for me and answer soon. I greet you all in the Lord and sign respectfully.

Your devoted,

P. Boniface Wimmer, O.S.B.

"P.S. I am sorry that I had to make the personal remarks about the venerable old pastor. It was necessary for you to know in order to judge my actions, and also to understand the situation of your Sisters. But I must remark that this old gentleman has labored for twenty years in America, that in the beginning he suffered great hardships and



that he has founded many churches and parishes. Now he has much money, because in Williamsburgh he has a large parish and much income, but I do not doubt that he will dispose of all for the welfare of the Church, so we must be lenient in our judgment of him. Remember me as most obedient to His Grace, the Bishop. Of course, you will not make this letter general, but you may show it to His Grace, the Right Reverend Bishop and also to the Reverend Confessor with my kindest greetings, but both must be shown these remarks which I have added so that they may not form a biased opinion of a very worthy priest through my fault.

"When you write to your Sisters address the letter to Sister Josepha in Williamsburgh near New York, care of Very Reverend Mr. Raffainer. Then they will get the letter soon. The letter travels fastest by way of Paris and Liverpool." 15

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15. Archives of Holy Cross, Ratisbon, Excerpt III, pp. 3-6. Copy and Photographic facsimile of the first and last page of the letter in the Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.
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The letter given above is so detailed that comment is unnecessary. It would be interesting, however, to know Mother Benedicta's reaction to the strange turn of events, but the archives of the Archabbey at Latrobe, the Benedictine Monastery established by the Reverend Abbot Wimmer, contain no correspondence from Mother Benedicta. Judging the occurrence from a distance of seventy-five years one must agree with Abbot Wimmer that since "Everything has turned out so well one must believe it to be the will of God." One thing is certain, and that is the foundation in America had the wholehearted interest and support of the apostolic-hearted Mother Benedicta who had not only longed to assume the hardships of missionary life, but who had

volunteered to answer Bishop Fenwick's request for missionaries from Holy Cross Convent. This spirit of generous cooperation becomes apparent in the provisions made for the material welfare of the Sisters. An inventory of the possessions of the Sisters who landed on American soil in 1853 proves that Holy Cross Convent provided 7,700 florin and twenty chests of articles for the church and the Sisters' house worth 3000 florin. Besides this, a record of 1857 shows that an additional sum of 2000 florin was sent to America. <sup>16</sup>

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16. Schrems, F., op. cit., p. 35.

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Of course, this amount did not equal the expenditure which the Motherhouse contributed to the branch houses of Niederviehbach or Mintraching; nevertheless it was a splendid offering. The conditions, too, under which the Sisters came to America were vastly different; aid might be expected in America from sources from which it could not be hoped for in Germany--as the Chronicle states, In America haben sie mehr Hilfe. <sup>17</sup>

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17. Ibid.

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And aid did come to the Dominican Sisters in a most unexpected manner through the Vicar General, the Reverend John Stephen Raffener. So important was the part he played in the American Dominican foundation that a brief account of his life and work is relevant to the subject of this thesis.

Of him Christine Sevier writes:

"Vicar General Raffeiner will always be identified with the establishment of the Dominican Sisters in Brooklyn. To his contemporaries he was 'The Patriarch of German Missionaries' a title won through 'toilsome days' when the scarcity of priests rendered his ministrations heroic, the area he covered being subsequently subdivided into fourteen distinct parishes. His vision of missionary duty was unlimited by parochial boundaries, for 'wherever there were German Catholics there would Father Raffeiner seek them out and minister to them,' declared Archbishop Hughes, 'being prevented neither by the winter's snows, the summer's sun, nor the inconveniences of travel in that day.' " 18

18. From Ratisbon Cloisters, p. 29.

Father Raffeiner was born on December 26, 1785 at Wallt, Tyrol. He first followed the medical profession and was for a time in charge of the military hospital in Milan.

In 1825 he was ordained a priest, and after laboring for some years in the diocese of Brixen, Tyrol, came to New York in 1833. He began his apostolate among the German Catholics and was the first priest in New York City to administer to them exclusively. His activities, however, extended to New Jersey and Massachusetts. He became vicar general for the Germans in the diocese of New York in 1845 and held that position until his death in 1861. 19

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19. Weber, N.A., The Rise of National Churches in the United States, The Catholic Historical Review, Vol. I, Number I (April 1915) p. 452.
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"Ever alert to the needs of the people Father Raffener foresaw future proportions of the German population of Williamsburgh across the East River, then made up of but few scattered families of market gardeners and rope workers, with the same quick foresight, which in later years led to his instant estimate of the services to be rendered him and his successors by the Dominican Sisters so providentially placed at his disposal. Father Raffener now displayed the pure qualities of his apostolic desires as never before. With the Bishop's permission, in 1841, he resigned from the pastorate of St. Nicholas' Church, New York City, when the parish was becoming systematized and his cares consequently becoming lessened, to assume anew the labors of pioneer work in Williamsburgh, living in one room, practicing the most rigid economies.

"Thus was founded Holy Trinity parish in Brooklyn destined to be the cradle of the Dominican Congregation of Holy Cross, where the weak seed, sown in doubt and misgiving became the sturdy tree under whose sheltering branches today are gathered the sick and the infirm, the children of the poor and the desolate orphan. To its founder, Father Raffener, the congregation owes a debt time cannot repay. He rescued the first Mothers when they knew not where to turn, when there seemed no room for them in the vast fields they craved so to enter. Blessed chance by which their compassless way crossed his path! Little wonder that he became an inspiration to the humble daughters of Dominic toiling in the same vineyard, for the same end, strengthened by the same generous purpose! 20

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20. Sevier, C., op. cit., p. 31.
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The Sisters from Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon, did not establish the first community of Dominican Sisters in the United States. The first Dominican Convent owes its existence to the Reverend Thomas Wilson, O.P., the second Prior Provincial of the Province of St. Joseph. This Congregation was of American origin. Father Wilson proposed the foundation of a Third Order of Dominican Sisters to the laity who worshiped in the Church of St. Rose. Seven young women presented themselves as candidates for the new community. The convent was established in 1822 under the title of St. Mary Magdalen, though later the name was changed to St. Catherine of Siena. <sup>21</sup>

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21. The Catholic Church in the United States of America.  
Volume II, p. 123.

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In the diocese of Brooklyn the Ratisbon Dominican foundation ranks third; for the Sisters of Charity had come in 1836, and the Christian Brothers in 1851. <sup>22</sup>

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22. Sevier, C., op. cit., p. 26.

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A brief sketch of the subsequent history of this third religious foundation in the diocese of Brooklyn is apropos.

When the Dominican Sisters established themselves in their new abode at Holy Trinity parish, Williamsburgh, the scholastic year was opening. It is remarkable that in spite of scant time to make the necessary adjustments to an entirely new and unusual turn of affairs, the Sisters,

nevertheless, opened school on September 2, 1853. One hundred forty pupils greeted the white-clad teachers on that memorable day. Viewing the situation today amid commodious school buildings and modern conveniences one is amazed at the courage of these two teaching Sisters, in a foreign land--but recently come from a well-ordered convent with stringent enclosure--plunged into the vortex of activity--called upon to meet unfamiliar situations and to solve strange problems concomitant with early missionary labors in America. Yet these chosen ones with the help of God's grace and their own willing sufferings and sacrifices did successfully cope with an extraordinary unforeseen situation and laid deep and firmly the beginnings of German Dominican life in America.

Discouragement and tears were bravely combated when sufferings and sacrifices, almost too great for human weakness to bear, became the daily portion of these young women who undaunted by material reverses persevered in the glorious task which God had destined for them. And, indeed, the cramped quarters in the basement of the rectory where the Sisters were domiciled for the first sixteen weeks in Williamsburgh, though a poor recompense for the heavy days' work of the overtaxed teachers, must have seemed to them a haven of peace amid the unusual new contacts of American life. Yet these conditions under which the Sisters lived were sure to take a toll of health and strength and life. Sister Francesca Retter was the first to succumb, and on May 22, 1855 offered herself a willing victim on the altar

of missionary endeavor. 23

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23. Sevier, C., op. cit., pp. 24-27.

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Her death occurred shortly before the arrival of another group of Sisters sent by Mother Benedicta Bauer to aid the Sisters in Williamsburgh.

When the new recruits arrived, the living conditions of the Sisters had improved, for with their own funds the Sisters had purchased a little convent in 1854. What a glad welcome resounded through the rooms of the new home as the three immigrants, Sister Michaela Braun, Sister Seraphine Staimer, and Sister Emilia Barth were joined in holy bonds of zeal and love to the pioneer band in America! How the hungry hearts of the homesick pioneers throbbed with pain and pleasure as the news from the Motherhouse in Ratisbon was recounted and the messages of love and encouragement were delivered! What a tower of strength these recruits appeared to the burdened group who had borne the heat of the day! And in reality this second group of Sisters did mean much to the welfare of the community for Sister Seraphine Staimer and Sister Emilia Barth both later became the superiors of the community, which was to be known as the Congregation of Holy Cross. Mother Seraphine governed the congregation from 1864 to 1889, and under her wise and prudent leadership of twenty-five years the nascent forces of the small congregation were coordinated and developed. Mother Emilia Barth held office from 1889 to

1895, and under her administration the congregation expanded and increased in usefulness. <sup>24</sup>

24. Sevier, C., op. cit., pp. 50-51, p. 85.

Sister Michaelia Braun, however, returned to Holy Cross, Ratisbon, unexpectedly in 1857. <sup>25</sup>

25. Schrems, F., op. cit., p. 48.

Soon after the arrival of the second band of missionary Sisters, plans were formulated for the erection of a larger convent, since the house which had been purchased was not adapted for convent life. The Sisters had purchased property on Montrose and Graham Avenues for that purpose, but were retarded by lack of funds from building. Through an appeal of the Very Reverend Abbot Wimmer to King Louis of Bavaria the building was made possible, for through him, a gift of 6000 florin was obtained for the convent. The Ludwig-Missionsverein contributed 23,750 gulden to the Holy Cross Convent, Williamsburgh, between the years 1854 and 1869, thus bringing relief to the needy Sisters. <sup>26</sup>

26. Holy Cross Chronicle, Ratisbon.  
Roemer, T., O.M.Cap., The Ludwig-Missionsverein and the Church in the United States (1838-1918), taken from Archives of the Ludwig-Missionsverein, p. 133.

Although the construction of the convent was begun on June 24, 1857, it proceeded so rapidly that the dedication



took place on November 9 the same year. This structure was henceforth known as the Convent of the Holy Cross. <sup>27</sup>

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27. Sevier, C., op. cit., p. 35.

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Relative to the event of the erection and dedication of the new convent Miss Sevier gives the following charming account:

"The simple dedication ceremonies conducted by Bishop Loughlin were witnessed by the six Sisters who then comprised the entire strength of the community. Always joyful with a sense of duty done, they now faced the future, radiant with optimism and renewed resolve. Few in number, they felt within themselves the prescience of victory.

"A faded picture of the Ratisbon cloister, brought over by the foundresses, hangs in a corridor of this, her eldest daughter in America. It seems a venerable pile, typically medieval, with its dormered casements, and turreted buildings, and balconied alleys regally dominated by the tapering steepled Gothic Chapel. Unutterable feelings rise in the hearts of her children as they gaze upon it, they who despite the modification of the rule, the dispensation from the strict enclosure, have preserved intact in their lives the mystical ideal, all the aloofness from material interests, the sanctity of the affections, the detachment from things terrestrial, essential to the rule of religious.

"Here is also preserved the precious relic of the True Cross, presented to the pilgrim Sisters by Bishop Riedel, it will be recalled, on the eve of their departure from Ratisbon. Much occurred on the way to weary them, after that holy moment so filled with fervor when they received it, thrilled by its very promise of pain. Guarantee of suffering, it was also a pledge of victory, for cleaving to it, they conquered.

"Through its seniority, the Holy Cross Convent has remained the Motherhouse of the Dominican Sisters of the diocese, and till the erection of the present novitiate at Amityville, Long Island, the first novices were here taught to walk the long way of the Saints." 28

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28. Ibid., pp. 34-36.

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It is interesting to note that during the first four years of its existence no American candidates were received by the American branch house. Naturally then, the Sisters looked to Ratisbon for more aid. On April 3, 1857, the petition following was sent to the Motherhouse at Ratisbon;

"We have four hundred children taught in only three divisions; send us, therefore, more Sisters." 29

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29. Schrems, F., op. cit., p. 35.

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The answer to this request came in the guise of temporary aid when Mother Benedicta Bauer accompanied by Sister Thomasina Ginker, Sister Cunigunda Schell, and a candidate, Crescentia Traubinger, arrived October 22, 1858. The third missionary band to arrive from Germany constitutes another story, and consequently will be fully recounted in another chapter.

The story of the Dominican foundation at Williamsburgh, now Brooklyn, New York, is almost finished in as far as it pertains to the foundations which were made by Mother Benedicta Bauer while she was prioress of Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon. For the sake of completeness,

however, a number of subsequent events will be briefly recounted.

After the first few years of hardship a period of progress, development, and expansion was ushered in for the Holy Cross Convent, Brooklyn. Between the years 1863 and 1871 more than fifty candidates were admitted, a remarkable increase when the fact is realized that only three young women sought admission during the first ten years of the establishment. <sup>30</sup>

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30. Sevier, C., op. cit., p. 38.

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These young women, however, were not to form the nucleus of one congregation, but of two. It will be remembered that the Reverend Abbot Wimmer suggested to Mother Benedicta in his letter of September 18, 1853 the possibility of the Sisters assuming charge of a school in New York in the parish of a Capuchin Father. Although Mother Benedicta did not send Sisters to the parish, Reverend Ambrose Buchmeir, O.M.Cap., pastor of St. Nicholas Church obtained three Sisters in 1859 from Holy Cross Convent, Williamsburgh. The Sisters who assumed charge of the girls' school were Sister Augustine Neuhierl, Sister Cunigunda Schell, and a lay Sister Rose Bosslet. For ten years this school might be considered a branch of Holy Cross Convent, but in 1869 a complete separation occurred, and Mother Augustine Neuhierl became the prioress of an independent community. The new congregation is known as the Holy Rosary Congregation and today has its Motherhouse

at Newburgh on the Hudson. The following excerpt from Memoirs of Mother Mary Aquinate Fiegler, O.P., by Sister Philomena Kildee, O.P., contains a most interesting account of the death of Mother Augustine Neuhierl and the unusual revelation she made to her community concerning the American Dominican foundation.

"In May 1877, Mother Aquinata was called to the deathbed of Mother Augustine. Prayers were offered by the community day and night for her recovery, but in spite of all that could be done, the time had come for her to pass to her reward. At half past seven on the evening of May 20, she summoned all the Sisters to her bedside to receive her last message.

"'Dear Sisters,' she said, 'in order that you may never regret having entered this, our Order and Community, I must briefly tell how it came to be established in America. I entered the convent at Ratisbon when very young. We had to suffer a great deal, but I always turned to God and gave my heart to Him alone. I had a special devotion to the Sacred Heart of Mary. For some years I was visited by the Holy Angels. They asked me if I would like to go to a new country, but I answered, No. They remained away for sometime and then returned. The Infant Jesus also appeared and asked me if I would like to go to America, saying that He would help me, and it would be well with me in that country. Again I answered, No, that I would rather stay where I was. Still I added that if He wished me to go, I would do so. In the course of time God directed things so that I came to America to establish these houses for the Order.'" 31

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31. Sister M. Philomena Kildee, O.P., Memoirs of Mary Aquinata Fiegler, O.P., pp. 25-26, taken from Mother Aquinata's Manuscripts, Archives at Marywood, Michigan.

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Thus the two choir nuns who came to America in 1853

each became a foundress of a flourishing congregation, and the first two houses at Williamsburgh and Second Street, New York, both for the time being became Motherhouses. A number of flourishing communities today are branches of these original Motherhouses. Holy Rosary Congregation fostered the following independent congregations which separated from her during the course of sixty years; namely, Congregation of St. Joseph, Adrian, Michigan; Congregation of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Congregation of St. Dominic, Caldwell, New Jersey; Congregation of St. Rose, Seattle, Washington; Dominican Convent, Blauvelt, New York. The Holy Cross Congregation with its novitiate at Amityville, Long Island, gave rise to the following: Congregation of the Queen of the Holy Rosary, San Jose, California, and the Congregation of The Immaculate Conception, Great Bend, Kansas. Two independent congregations have branched off from the Congregation of St. Dominic whose Motherhouse was formerly in Jersey City, New Jersey. They are the Congregation of St. Thomas Aquinas, Tacoma, Washington, and Our Lady of the Elms, Akron, Ohio.

## CHAPTER IX

## LAST YEARS IN RATISBON

1853 - 1858

"As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing."  
2 Col. 6, 10.

The years of gratifying accomplishment from 1845 to 1857 were but the forerunner of great trials and sufferings for Mother Benedicta; however, supported by the courage of her convictions and the powerful grace that springs from silent prayer, she was prepared to accept her crosses with an unembittered trusting heart. Holy Cross Convent after the centuries through the wisdom and foresight of the apostolic-minded prioress had sent forth shoots which had developed to enduring branch houses in both the old and the new worlds. Now circumstances were to arise which would afford Mother Benedicta an opportunity to participate in the fruits of the missionary life and thus fulfill her long-cherished desire.

The year 1853 ushers in the years of poignant grief and suffering; these were the years in which Mother Benedicta became more reflective, thoughtful, and reminiscent. <sup>1</sup> It was under these chastening experiences that her

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1. Diary of Mother Benedicta, 1854, June to September, Diary I, p. 17, p. 120. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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sanguine and somewhat impulsive spirit gradually became mellowed.

Her first great sorrow came in the guise of the Angel of Death which took from her and from her community the zealous priest, Doctor Franz Schiml, her trusted friend and adviser. During the years from 1845 to 1853, Father Schiml had worked hand in hand with Mother Benedicta as spiritual director and chaplain. In September, 1853, he was transferred from Holy Cross Convent, and not long after on November 8, 1854, he died. Never again was Mother Benedicta to be blessed with a priest-adviser in whom she could have the same confidence, and in whom she would find the same unselfish generosity; rather in contact with the succeeding confessors she was to find new trials which demanded the sacrifice of utter effacement and selflessness. <sup>2</sup>

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2. Hiss, Thomas, Correspondence and Lentz, D.J., Correspondence amply prove these statements. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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Three chaplains succeeded Father Schiml during the time that Mother Benedicta remained at Ratisbon. The noted author, Doctor Dominicus Mettenleiter, acted as chaplain from September 1853 to April 1856. He was succeeded by Father Anselm, O.S.B., who remained from April, 1856, to January, 1857. Reverend Aloys Fisher was at Holy Cross during the time that Mother Benedicta and her companions came to America, his stay being from January, 1857 to April 1860. <sup>3</sup>

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3. Copy of list of chaplains of Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon, 1845-1933, Holy Cross Chronicle, Excerpt VII. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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Another cause for great concern to Mother Benedicta during these years was the branch houses which she had founded. Worries about financial affairs and solicitude regarding good order and discipline in the new foundations caused her much mental anguish. At these times she found consolation in offering her Holy Communions for the welfare of her distant children. Frequently when illness kept her from sleep, she would spend the long hours in prayer pleading with the Sacred Heart and the Blessed Mother to bless her endeavors. <sup>4</sup> Indeed she not only

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4. Diary of Mother Benedicta, 1854-55, Diary II, p. 215, p. 239.

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prayed earnestly, but she took an active maternal interest in the Sisters whom she had delegated to the German foundations. With the bishop's permission she visited them, adjusted their difficulties, solved their problems, gave admonitions and advice, and allotted her time to each individual Sister. <sup>5</sup>

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5. Diary of Mother Benedicta, 1854-55, Diary II, pp. 215-239. Letter of Mother Benedicta to Bishop Riedel, November 24, 1846. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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The year 1853 also marked the expulsion of two Sisters from Niederviehbach. At this time also a troublesome litigation was in progress. A certain Sister Theresa <sup>6</sup> had been dismissed from the convent, but wished



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6. Letter of Rev. Thomas Hiss to Mother Benedicta, March 6, 1857. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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to return. Although the whole community voted not to receive the young woman again, the bishop espoused her cause and brought a suit against the convent. A decision was given in favor of the Sisters in the first court of appeal. Bishop Riedel again appealed, and the case was taken to Rome, but it was never settled. <sup>7</sup>

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7. Letter of Mother Benedicta to the Master General, 1864. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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With the advent of P. Anselm, O.S.B., as spiritual director a rather peculiar situation arose in the community. Although, no doubt, a good, earnest priest, P. Anselm, neither prudent nor well informed, caused a great deal of embarrassment to the prioress through his interference in the internal affairs of the community and even with the constitutions. The correspondence between Mother Benedicta and the Master General of the Dominican Order and other Dominican Fathers throws much light on the situation. The particular issue which seemed most to alarm the prioress was the confessor's insistence that another formula of profession be substituted for the traditional one and that the Sisters' profession be made to the bishop instead of to the prioress. Furthermore, it is also evident from the correspondence that some of the Sisters, as a consequence of these changes, began to show signs of

insubordination. The following letter from the Reverend Thomas Hiss, O.P., "socio," clearly demonstrates the extremely painful position into which the prioress was being forced:

"Nanzig, October 10, 1856

"Most Reverend Mother Prioress,

"Indeed, the arrogance of this man is not small if he dares, according to his whim, to discard the rules and the established customs; for what reason would he have? Would the rules be more strictly observed if profession were made into the hands of the bishop? (I couldn't find the three formulas which you said you enclosed.) For God's sake, pray for this man that his diseased brain may be cured. Just take notice of the whimsical contradiction in his bungled arguments.

"Lately he denied the right of the bishop to grant him faculties and wished to obtain them from the Master General himself; and now he servilely places everything in the hands of the bishop, even such matters as the bishop never thought of claiming, knowing that the Church gave him no rights in these matters. You are no Carthusians, so that your profession should be made into the hands of the bishop. Now the following question arises: Would the vows be valid if contrary to the rule of the Order, they were made into the bishop's hands, since he has never been appointed to receive them. In this well-founded doubt you cannot act. I think the bishop understood his rights in this regard, for it never occurred to him to receive the vows instead of the prioress. (Tell the good man in a straightforward way that the matter does not concern him, and that he must be satisfied to act in the capacity of a confessor.) God nor man expects more of him.

"Therefore you must prevent this innovation by all means, even if you must have recourse to Rome. Even if the confessor were right, the good Sisters would still not have won their cause, because the obligation would always remain the

same. Oh, these infants! if you would draw logical conclusions, in certain cases, you should make the following explanation: 'I made my vows into the hands of your predecessors; therefore I vowed you no obedience.' Enough of this. Get rid of this man as soon as possible.

"At present I know of no candidates that are acceptable. If later I should find any at Cleves, I shall be glad to send them to you.

"It just occurs to me that about a year ago I attended the reception and profession in a convent of Tertiaries, and in the presence of the bishop, the novices made their profession into the hands of the prioress, and no one saw any impropriety in the act. A good Nota Bene for your confessor.

"This is the last letter you will receive from me in France, and I hope that our pleasant relations will continue, because correspondence between Bavaria and Prussia will not be any more difficult than it was in France.

Your devoted brother,

Thomas Hiss, O.P.  
Socius" 8

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8. Hiss, Thomas, Correspondence. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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The following letter written a little later is a continuation of the same general subject pertaining to the difficulties and misunderstandings between Mother Benedicta and the confessor:

"Materborn, October 30, 1856

"Most Reverend Mother Prioress,

"This is the first letter on German soil which I have the honor of writing.

If I did not travel by the way of Ratisbon and accept the invitation to visit your convent, the excuse must be impossibility. Your letter was handed to me the moment I set out for my journey; I had already received directions to travel by the shortest route possible. If I had had your letter a little earlier, I might have made arrangements for a route through Ratisbon.

"Next year I hope that you will be able to have a Dominican Father from Materborn for retreat master, provided the bishop does not raise any objections.

"The Scotch Confessor is a prodigious logician, and it seems that the Reverend Ordinary considers it in place to be a pupil to him. Just because the bishop is for the time being the superior of your convent, the venerable and universal common rule must therefore be relegated to the background. Where do you find it written or where does the custom introduce itself except with regard to the Carthusians that the profession is made into the hands of the Ordinary. It is the obligation of the bishop to watch over the religious discipline and the observance of the rules and constitutions, but not to introduce anything new whether it be of his own or any one else's invention. While the convent was under the Dominican provincial, did the bishop ever come to receive the vows of the candidates? I would let the confessor draw a conclusion. Finally, I would submit this question: Are the vows which were heretofore made into the hands of the prioress valid? He will not dare to say, No. If the vows were valid, then, would the vows be valid if made into the hands of another? The vows made into the hands of the prioress are the only valid vows, because they are according to the constitution; and the manner in which the confessor desires the vows to be made are contrary to the constitution; hence invalid. 8

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2. P. Anselm was evidently a Scotchman. This has been ascertained from an address found in Mother Benedicta's Account Book, No. II, which reads: Rev. P. Anselm Robertson, 52 Great Clyde St., Glasgow, Scotland
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"The sick Sister, if she wishes to make profession before her death, should be permitted to do so, but only according to the rules and constitutions, in order, thereby, to protect yourselves against the ridiculous encroachment.

"Put this question to the young nuns, who, on account of this modern method of profession, consider themselves less obliged to obey their prioress: Have the elder members of the French province who were compelled to take vows in Italy, a province not their own, less obligation to obey their prior than those who have been received into the French Order since that time? Whether a prior or a bishop, they are only the representatives of the Church who makes use of them to receive the vows of the religious.

"Yesterday I visited one of the Dominican Fathers in Holland. Among other things I related to the Vicar your experience. He burst out laughing at the absurd fancy of the confessor. You may have to endure unpleasant experiences of every kind to guard your rights as prioress and to prevent invalid profession; so resist with all your might. Notwithstanding your protestation, which you make with all due reverence, he proceeds, and in case you would put hindrance in his way, he will manage through the valet or coachman. The result will be the same no matter what means he will take. If he insists on taking matters into his own hands and putting them through, let the affair come to a crisis, and then you may appeal to Rome in case the metropolitan does not make a decision in your favor.

"Our bishops in France gave up none of their zeal or supposed rights, but as far as I know, none went so far. And, as I wrote you lately, the Bishop of Nanzig looked quietly on as a novice made her profession into the hands of the prioress.

"At my departure I asked one of the Fathers to find one or several postulants, and I am sure he will do his best.

"You will be surprised to learn of the condition here. There are good Christian people and good priests here, but I have many experiences that are unusual and to which I am unaccustomed. First of all I have to contend

with loneliness, and I miss the jovial evening recreation. Instead of the pleasing tones of the French and the clear intelligent German language, I have to listen to a half Holland gibberish. Here you only sin against the vow of poverty in thought. I hope with the help of God that everything will turn out well as I trust in your prayers.

Your devoted brother,

Thomas Hiss, O.P.  
Socius<sup>n</sup> 9

9. Hiss Correspondence, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

Mother Benedicta also presented her difficulties to the Master General who counselled her to submit to the demands of the Bishop, since Holy Cross Convent was under his jurisdiction. His communication is as follows:

"Rome, November 9, 1856

"Venerable Mother Prioress:

"Concerning your communication dated October 24, I have received the following commission from the Master General. He states that he is unable to do anything concerning the matter, since you are not under his jurisdiction, and that it is well for you to adapt yourself to his orders. There is nothing left for you to do, but to make the profession according to the formula prescribed by your bishop.

"To put your mind at ease I must inform you that the scruple you must have with regard to not being Dominicans is groundless. You always were Dominicans; you are Dominicans now; and you always will be such, because you profess the rule of St. Augustine and live according to the constitutions of the Order, and that is all that is required. As a proof of what I said, let me inform you that right here in Rome there is a Dominican Convent of Dominican Nuns, not under the jurisdiction of the Master General, but under that of the Cardinal. The Sisters make their profession word for word

according to your formula, and still it has never occurred to anyone that these nuns are not Dominicans. Most likely your father confessor found one of those formulas and then applied it to you.

"In closing the Master General bestows on you, although you are not known to him personally, his blessing. Likewise very cordial greetings from Father Lentz and myself. Remember us in your pious prayers."

Your brother

At your service,

Albert Flijna, O.P.  
Socius" 10

10. Flijna Correspondence, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

A most delightful and intimate correspondence was also carried on between Mother Benedicta and Mother Bernarda Stockner who was prioress of the convent in Lienz, Tyrol, between the years 1855 and 1861.<sup>11</sup>

11. Wilms, R., Geschichte der Deutschen Dominikanerinnen, p. 375.

The following interesting letter is a concise statement of the life led in the Second Order Dominican Convents of that day; besides it is indicative of the great solicitude Mother Benedicta felt regarding religious discipline, the order of the day, and the constitutions. For this reason the letter is given in full, since the greater part of the contents are direct answers to her questions:

"Most Reverend Prioress,  
Very dear fellow Religious:

"First of all I wish to express

my sincerest thanks for the two books; namely, the Holy Rule and Constitutions and the Commentaries by Blessed Humbert. It is impossible to express the great pleasure you afforded to the entire community. I beg to ask whether or not more of these books may be procured in Ratisbon. What is the cost per copy? I have been considering having some printed and have made inquiries in Innsbruck. I was informed that 300 copies would cost thirty-six florin, a price I consider very reasonable. But these books would contain the rules and constitutions without the commentaries similar to those published in the Italian by the Master General and translated in German. The Commentaries by Humbert I would certainly attempt to get from Ratisbon, if possible.

"Now I shall answer your questions. Regarding the making of profession we observe the following order: In the choir in the presence of the entire community of the relatives, and of the commissary of the bishop, the novice kneels at the feet of her prioress who is seated. She places three fingers upon the rule book, held in the hand of the prioress, and reads the profession aloud as in the enclosed formula. On the twenty-fifth of November this year, Father Albert from Rome was present at the profession ceremonies. He observed carefully and was satisfied; therefore, I hope our holy founder was pleased, since his beloved son was pleased. I have this year put my doubt to the Master General concerning so many lay people coming into the convent during the celebration. His reply was that the ceremonies might take place in the church. Then I presented a petition to the Prince-Bishop's consistory asking that a prohibition be made regarding so many lay persons entering the convent. Everything turned out nicely; only the relatives were allowed to attend the ceremonies.

"The second question was regarding the school. We have the following arrangement. Originally there was no school connected with the convent, but in 1782, the Sisters were commanded to take over the instruction of the children in the city. In Rome even at the present time the Sisters are not burdened in this way. The teaching Sisters in



their community have an order of exercises all their own as the enclosed copy shows. They are not excused from the breviary, however, but they are excused from the psalter, and if much pressed for time from the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin. In the beginning, there was much agitation to excuse the Sisters from the breviary, but the Sisters were all so zealous that none wished to give up their breviary. The program of instruction is just like yours. From eight to ten and from one to three elementary subjects are taught. From ten to eleven and from three till four domestic arts are taught; namely, sewing, knitting, crocheting, embroidery, but not drawing, since this is only a little town, and drawing is not necessary for the girls of the middle-class.

"On feast days Vespers and the Te Deum are sung; on high feast days the Benedictus also. Terce is sung all through the Octave of Pentecost and None on Ascension Thursday. The Salve and the O Lumen Ecclesiae are sung every day and on Tuesday the O Spem Miram. On Saturday the Litany and Inviolata are sung. On high feasts the Litany of the Name of Jesus or the Blessed Virgin is sung in procession from the dormitory. I received a new choral book from Paris, but it contains nothing new except an extra Mass for the higher feast days. But for women's voices this choral is impossible; moreover there is no organ accompaniment. We sing four-voiced music with organ accompaniment. On Sundays and higher feast days of the Order and on feast days we have a High Mass.

"Reception takes place like Profession. The examination of candidates and novices takes place in the priory and is conducted by the Reverend Dean as representative of the Prince-Bishop. Novices and candidates make a three days' retreat. The day before Reception and Profession is free.

"On Sundays and on feast days no one is permitted to do any work whatsoever except the cook, who may prepare the food, the refectorian, and the gardener, who prepares the lettuce. The cook may, however, slice the bread for Monday. In this respect we are very strict. Our program will help to solve many of your doubts.

"All work is done in common; for instance,

the prioress will announce, 'Tomorrow the community will begin to pleat coifs, and each one will receive from the laundress her own coifs for pleating.' The laundress takes care of the drying after the coifs are pleated, keeping everything in the linen room. She distributes, as the need arises, two pieces to each Sister. The cooks, however, receive three pieces of each kind. In the same way the linen and woolen clothes are prepared and mended in common, and kept in the common linen room. The goods for every day and feast day habits are kept in the same way.

"We ourselves prepare the upper and under bed clothes. Each year I buy a hundred pounds of wool, which two senior choir Sisters, who are otherwise incapacitated for work, spin the year round. The weaver weaves the yarn according to the pattern which I give him, and in this way we obtain our needed supply. Each candidate must bring one fine habit for feast days, and this lasts her for the rest of her life, because we very seldom wear them. Every member wears wool only, the sick excepted. Petticoats are of the same material.

"In the year 1848 we established a branch house at Maria Steinach which is forty hours from Lienz. Seven members were sent there. A few years ago I went there with our novice mistress in order to open a novitiate. Now they receive their own candidates, and they already number fourteen members and four candidates. They have a regular choir and pray the breviary. The sick are excused. The teachers here as well as in Maria Steinach say the breviary in common at the school, and during the summer in the garden. No one here or at Maria Steinach may leave the enclosure. The schoolrooms adjoin the convent. The first time I traveled to our branch house, I had episcopal dispensation; the second time, papal. We are very guarded in respect to enclosure.

"The Office of the Blessed Virgin is said daily, but the teachers are sometimes dispensed. The Master General has given permission to our confessors to confer general absolution the same as the priests do in their convents. I would advise you to apply for the same privilege.

Then we also have permission for secular priests who say Mass in our Church to read the Mass of the Blessed and the Saints of our Order, but according to the Roman rite. The priests do not seem to be enthusiastic about that. The Sisters receive Extreme Unction according to the Dominican rite.

"Our relation with the bishop is as follows: Every three years a prioress is elected. The Prince-Bishop appoints some one empowered to conduct a visitation. Each member of the community presents herself to him. The questions are prescribed by the consistory. After this he conducts the election.

"We make perpetual vows at the age of twenty-four. I enclose the formula. The novitiate proper lasts one full year, but the novices remain under the direction of the novice mistress for six years. Father Albert, however, says that in Rome the novices remain under their mistress only four years. My predecessor, Mother Amelia, had placed the lay Sisters under the charge of the novice mistress for six years, but Father Albert maintains that the practice is not a good one, and that the lay Sisters should have a mistress of their own as formerly, and this practice obtains in Rome also. I personally have had the experience that these good lay Sisters devote more time to meditation and prayer than to labor, which, after all, should be the main duty for them. When a new candidate aspiring to become a lay Sister enters, I shall return to the old custom. Candidates will remain seculars one year, novices two years, and for the rest of their lives they will have a mistress of their own.

"I believe I have answered all your questions. I will, therefore, enclose a picture of our staff, for you and dear Sister Amanda, and I beg you to send me one of yours.

"The daily order of our lay Sisters may be desired. At four o'clock they say the required Our Fathers. Then the meditation is read. The cook goes to the kitchen, the remaining Sisters to their work, and those who have no duty remain in the choir.

- 5:20 - Preparation for Holy Communion  
 5:45 - Holy Communion  
 6:30 - Breakfast consisting of a cup of coffee. Those who have the time return to the choir to say the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin.  
 7:30 - Conventual Mass. Then each one goes to her duties. In the kitchen as well as in the Sisters' workroom the rosary is said twice.  
 11:00 - Dinner followed by a short visit to the Blessed Sacrament.  
 1:00 - The Sisters return to their rooms for spinning, and a choir Sister reads for fifteen minutes from a spiritual book. Another fifteen minutes is given to meditation.  
 1:45 - The psalter is prayed. Then the cook goes to the kitchen for preparation. At the Salve all come to the two choirs where the Hebdomadarian gives the holy water.  
 5:30 - Meal--first and second table--the same as at noon. Then the Sisters say the community rosary and night prayers. Those who are well read a spiritual book until 8:30. The others go to rest earlier.

"Every week we have two confession days and receive Holy Communion five times a week. I fear that I am troublesome to you on account of the long letter, but my intention was to do you a favor, for I know the Sisters are interested in the customs of other communities. I greet the Sisters and request their prayers, and I hope to hear from you again in the near future.

"I wonder whether I could get eighty copies of The Rule and six Commentaries of Blessed Humbert. I would like to know first what the charges are before having them sent. We also get the breviaries in two parts from Mechlenia through a book dealer in Bogen.

"Eagerly awaiting a reply, I close in true sisterly love and prayer,

Sister M. Bernarda Stockner  
 Prioress of the Dominican Con-  
 vent of Lienz." 12

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12. Letter dated December 18, 1856. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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The first draft of an interesting letter written about a year after the foregoing correspondence informs us that Mother Benedicta had made tentative plans to further expand the Dominican Order by making a foundation at the Old Cistercian Convent of Waldsassen, Bavaria. The letter addressed to the Ratisbon Cathedral Chapter indicates that negotiations had already been underway and antecedent correspondence had been carried on.

"Most Reverend Cathedral Chapter:

"In a letter dated November 17, the Cathedral Chapter has repeatedly requested the convent to explain fully the proposal as stated in a letter dated February 24, 1857, by which the branch house at Waldsassen might be granted and approved.

"We have in an earlier communication answered the suppositions in as far as we were able in obedience to your request and now will all the more willingly give you a detailed account, since, if the matter is longer delayed, it may be feared that the Protestants will purchase the convent under discussion for their own purposes.

"The convent buildings in Waldsassen are sufficient for an academy, and community and there will be room left for other purposes as the constitutions of our Order require. Important changes will not be necessary. The enclosed blue print plans are drawings of the master mason and they will make the situation sufficiently clear.

"Lying close to the convent building is an arable meadow which could easily be acquired and converted into an enclosed garden. Similarly besides this meadow there are others privately owned which could be purchased in case the convent is founded.

In this regard there would be no obstacle. We would be ready at any time to make the purchase. Evidence regarding this situation can be given, for we have personally visited the place with the bishop's permission.

"The boys' school will be removed from the convent. This will be taken care of by the village congregation. For this purpose the magistrate at Waldsassen will spend the sum of 2500 florin for the purchase of a building for the boys. This sum includes the 1000 florin on hand. The undersigned venerable convent believes that it may readily give the 1000 florin to the village parish, because the parish will still have to furnish 1500 florin. Besides it will have the duty of furnishing the labor and horses that will be necessary in the renovation of the convent. Moreover it will have to furnish free of charge the necessary supply of wood.

"Finally the convent building is so arranged that few changes will be necessary to prepare it for the Sisters' use, and consequently, little expense will be incurred--this expense we are willing to assume, since the parish at Waldsassen will so generously assist us.

"The plans show that the necessary changes are very few. The red line shows where changes must be made regarding the upkeep of the building in the future. We are willing to take all responsibility except such expenses as the royal agricultural department is obliged to defray due to the fact that we are conducting a school for girls." 13

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13. Letter undated, but probably written about 1857.  
Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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The letter ends thus abruptly. Possibly Mother Benedicta's plans for coming to America brought the negotiations to a close. Several statements in subsequent letters written to Mother Benedicta after she had come to

America refer to this convent. Father Müller in a letter dated January 23, 1864 writes the following:

"The Salesian nuns through the efforts of the bishop have bought Waldsassen, the convent which the Dominicans were about to purchase at one time." 14

14. Letter of Rev. J. F. Müller to Mother Benedicta, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

Sister Henrica Mindl of Holy Cross Convent also comments on the sale of the convent and in a letter dated February 23, 1864 says:

"The Cistercian Convent in Waldsassen, so well known to you was purchased by the nuns of Selegenthal for 37000 florin. They shall occupy the same this year." 15

15. Letter of Sister Henrica Mindl to Mother Benedicta. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

For the fifth time in 1857, Mother Benedicta was intrusted with the government of her community; but this time a chain of circumstances arose which altered the whole course of her life abruptly and prevented her from serving the full term of three years. During the year 1858 certain discords and factions manifested themselves. Insubordination on the part of two temperamental Sisters; namely, Sister Cecilia Solleder and Sister Reginald Brunner; was the immediate cause of the disruption. Friction between these Sisters and their superior ever became more frequent and serious. Dissatisfaction and discontent grew apace until the climax was reached in the secret withdrawal

of the two Sisters mentioned above. The pastor of St. Emeran's in Ratisbon was a relative of one of these Sisters and to him they appealed in a pitiful letter. They petitioned that he present their cause to the bishop. Menda- cious accusations against the prioress were made to the newly appointed bishop, the Right Reverend Bishop Von Senestrey. He listened in sympathy to the pathetic recit- al of unfounded indictments against the prioress. Under these circumstances Mother Benedicta resigned her office on July 10, 1858. Mother Mary Agnes Rosenlöhner succeeded her to the office of prioress. Soon after Sister Reginald and Sister Cecilia again returned to the convent. <sup>16</sup> Mother

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16. Holy Cross Chronicle, Ratisbon, Excerpt No. V, p. 1.

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Benedicta, according to the chronicle, suffered intensely from these humiliating circumstances, but she humbly pro- nounced her "fiat." <sup>17</sup>

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17. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

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And yet these self-purifying experiences were but opening the vista to still greater accomplishment. Through them her long-cherished desire of spending herself in the American missions was to be granted. Father Schrems in a letter dated October 10, 1927 says:

"The affair must not be taken too seriously, for Bishop Ignatius, coming into office in 1858, was somewhat radical. But it was in the plan of Provi- dence." <sup>18</sup>



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18. Schrems Correspondence, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine

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And truly that is the way we are taught to look upon all adversity. In his work entitled The Interior Life, Reverend J. Tissot, speaking of the will of good pleasure, says:

"He (God) uses everything to work for the good of those whom His will calls unto holiness; everything, even to the falling of a hair. All that takes place within me, around me, for me, against me, all is ordered, calculated, and interwoven with infinite art by Providence for my advance in the way of holiness.

"Nothing happens by chance; even the most insignificant details of life are all combined for only one purpose, the glorification of God by the holy soul." 19

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19. Tissot, J., The Interior Life, p. 382.

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Subsequent events soon proved the injustice of the unwarrantable accusations brought against the prioress. Soon after Mother Benedicta and her companions came to America, the Sisters of Holy Cross Convent became aware of their error in re-admitting Sister Cecilia and Sister Reginald, for their conduct had not improved. Again discontent and discord were fermented. In their arrogance and insubordination they haughtily declared that if the bishop did not soon grant them a dispensation, they would leave again. Following the above account, the Holy Cross Chronicle naively comments:

"Thus they unconsciously proved that Mother Benedicta was not the cause of their discontent and unhappiness." 20

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20. Holy Cross Chronicle, Ratisbon, Excerpt V, p. 2

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Reverend Schrems in his manuscript gives a brief survey of their life in the following pungent paragraph:

"The two discontented, unhappy Sisters whose journey to America had been previously arranged did not go to America, nor did they remain in the convent. In the end they were expelled. Their success in the world, which smiled on them for a time, was not great, nor did it last long. Reginald caused her brother to fall deeply into debt; Cecilia married a Protestant." 21

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21. Schrems, F., Kurze Geschichte des Dominikanerinnenklosters vom Heiligen Kreuz in Regensburg und Seiner Filialen, p. 19.

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It is not surprising under these circumstances that the resolution to go to America should again awaken in the heart of Mother Benedicta. With high resolve, characteristic of her strength of will, she overcame all obstacles to fulfill that heaven-sent inspiration now ready for accomplishment.

Companions were instant to accompany her to the promising field of missionary labors in the new world. Among those who volunteered to cast their lot with their beloved, but sorely tried Mother, were Sister Thomasina Ginker, a teacher in the "folkshule," Ratisbon, and the niece of Father Schiml, Sister Cunigunda Schell, a choir nun, and Crescentia Traubinger, a candidate. From a letter of Mother Senior Antonina

Malor dated February 3, 1876, from Niederviehbach it is evident that she, too, volunteered to go with Mother Benedicta, for she says in part referring to the unsettled political condition in Germany which threatened the closing of Catholic schools and the expulsion of the religious:

"Yes, we have lived through a distressing era and we are all happy to know that you take such a sincere interest in the woe-ful situation in Germany. Yes, and with sisterly love you would receive us if we were driven out--May God prevent this! Oh this heavy trial--I could not bear it. For me exile would be a double grief. Not alone old and sickly, but blindness makes the suggested journey almost impossible. Fifteen years ago they found me too old to make the journey, and now I certainly could not." 22

22. Letter written by Mother Antonina Malor to Sisters in Racine. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

That Mother Antonina, who held the offices of novice mistress and subprioress in Holy Cross Convent and that of vicaress in Niederviehbach, would gladly have shared the trials of missionary life with Mother Benedicta is also borne out by the following quotation in a letter by Sister Amanda Von Schenk dated February 27, 1873:

"Yes, Mother Benedicta and Mother Senior were of one heart and mind, and therefore, Mother Benedicta's love through Mother Senior has come to all of us. Sister Thomasina, too, was also a beloved child of Mother Senior. You must frequently have heard of Mother Senior from those two dead Sisters." 23

23. Letter written by Sister Amanda to Sister Cecilia, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

Arrangements were soon completed for the third group of missionary Sisters to leave Holy Cross Convent for America. His Grace, Bishop Ignatius Von Senestrey gave his consent after an episcopal commissary had interviewed the three Sisters regarding their project to found a new Motherhouse in America.

Among the questions submitted were the following:

1. Have you considered this plan before God?

2. Is it of your free will that you have resolved to go to the American missions in order to found there a new convent of your Order, together with the Sisters who have already gone to America?

3. What are the reasons that have induced you to make this decision?

Mother Thomasina answered the third question with the following explanation:

"Only for the honor of God and the prosperous spread of the branch house was the motive for the departure, for unless the number was sufficiently large, the purpose could not be attained nor the rule exactly obeyed."

Mother Benedicta gave the same object and also declared that from her youth she had desired to go to the missions.

She thought that through her knowledge of music she could make herself useful in the new convent. If a stranger were to act as music teacher, the rule in the new convent would suffer. She also declared that the last event (namely, her resignation from the office of prioress) did not occasion the decision.

4. Were there previous promises or threats?

5. Do you consider your strength sufficient to endure the hardships of the journey and of the new climate?

6. In case your undertaking should fail, do you reserve the right of returning to your own Motherhouse or are you willing to forfeit this right in the future?

The answer given to this question was as follows:

"I reserve the right of returning to the Motherhouse.

"Upon this explanation the Motherhouse by the bishop's injunction had to make the following declaration in writing for each individual Sister:

"The Motherhouse declares itself willing to receive again into their convent according to rank the three choir and school Sisters who have declared their intention to go to the American missions if they do not succeed in founding an independent convent or if forced by some unforeseen circumstances to return to Europe." 24

24. Schrems, F., op. cit., p. 42.

Bishop Ignatius therefore allowed the Sisters to leave for America on August 16, 1858, under the condition that they belonged to Holy Cross Convent in which they had taken their vows and also that they would remain subject to the prioress of the Holy Cross Convent until a new foundation had been made in America and its constitutions approved by a legitimate authority.<sup>25</sup>

25. Ibid., pp. 43.

Whether Mother Benedicta intended to found a new convent in America or whether she intended to remain at

Williamsburgh with the Sisters who left Ratisbon in 1853 is a question that has been widely discussed. The answer seems clear from the documents.

The bishop's condition just mentioned above made definite reference to the founding of a new Motherhouse.

The following excerpt from the Holy Cross Chronicle also definitely states that the ultimate object of the journey to America was the founding of an independent Motherhouse:

"Mother Benedicta suffered severely as a result of the circumstances of the last year. She desired to go to America, and after the requisite preparations were made, she, accompanied by Sister Thomasina Ginker, Cunigunda Schnell, and a lay woman named Crescentia Traubinger, a daughter of the night watchman in Ratisbon, began the journey September 23, 1858. The object of the journey was first, to remain at Williamsburgh for sometime where in the newly founded convent the language and the customs of the country might be acquired, and secondly, to establish a new congregation with her companions when the opportunity offered itself." 26

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26. Holy Cross Chronicle, Ratisbon, Excerpt V, p. 2.

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The third document which asserts that Mother Benedicta desired to make a new foundation consists in the first draft of a letter to the Master General written about the year 1864. An excerpt from this letter regarding the foundation in America reads as follows:

"In the year 1858 I was released from the duties of my office. Immediately the long-cherished wish of

laboring in the missions entered into my soul. With the permission of the Right Reverend Bishop and the Mother Prioress, I was soon ready to carry out my former plans of founding a Motherhouse of our Holy Order in America, and to propagate the Order if God so willed.

.....

"Then we three Sisters began our journey and arrived in America on October 22. For some time we remained at Williamsburgh. We stayed there about twenty months, and when they could spare us, I in company with Sister Thomasina, a most pious and trustworthy fellow Sister, betook ourselves to the Reverend Father Provincial with the intention of begging advice regarding the founding of a Motherhouse." 27

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27. Letter written by Mother Benedicta to the Master General. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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Mother Benedicta, therefore, came to America with the intention of making a new foundation with the aid of her three traveling companions, Sister Thomasina Ginker, Sister Cunigunda Schell, and Crescentia Traubinger. With this chapter the history of the Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon, is concluded in so far as it relates to this thesis, and the remainder of the work will stress the vicissitudes of Mother Benedicta and Mother Thomasina in America and the development of the Congregation of St. Catherine of Sienna, Racine, Wisconsin, which was established by them.

## CHAPTER X

## THE OCEAN TRIP

DIARY OF SISTER M. THOMASINA GINKER

SEPTEMBER 22 - OCTOBER 22, 1858

"A higher call bids me leave and journey across the sea, where our holy religion is not yet firmly established, that there I may labor for the souls of children and gain them for heaven."

Sister Thomasina Ginker 1

1. Letter of Sister Thomasina Ginker to Carl Ginker, August 10, 1858. Copy, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine. Original in Archives, Racine Courthouse.

According to the Holy Cross Chronicle the four Sisters, Mother M. Benedicta Bauer, Sister M. Thomasina Ginker, Sister M. Cunigunda Schell, and Crescentia Traubinger departed from Ratisbon for America on September 23, 1858. Money for their traveling expenses was loaned to them by the Reverend Joseph Müller, Court Chaplain to Louis I of Bavaria. 2

2. Holy Cross Chronicle, Ratisbon, Excerpt III, p. 6, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

The diary of Sister Thomasina gives a vivid account of the trip across the Atlantic Ocean. Each day is faithfully recorded.

"October first: It was fearfully stormy on the sea. Sickness has already affected many. Both Mother Benedicta and I became very ill, although I tried to



aid Mother Benedicta by supporting her in my arms. Sister Cunigunda attempted to stay on the deck, but was unable to do so. She too went to bed. The cabin is very small and rocks so that one can hardly endure it. I went up on deck and contemplated the people lying on the floor. I watched the waves roll in one after the other. On the one hand one can not but admire the greatness and might of God. No man can describe the grandeur of the sea. On the other hand it is a terrible thing to realize that at any moment the entire ship is in danger of being swallowed up by the waves. The wind blew so violently that it was impossible to keep one's balance and like an intoxicated person one was forced to stagger about.

"The night of October first was frightfully stormy. The water became so deep in our cabin that our shoes and clothes swam around. I was so ill that I found it impossible to get up. About two o'clock in the night we sought help in order that the water might be carried out. Full of love and confidence I turned to Mary, Star of the Sea, in this agitated stormy night. The ship rocked so violently that the dishes fell from the tables. Seasickness prevailed. In the morning only six persons came to table. Mother Benedicta became so ill that I began to fear very much for her. Later she took beer, and after that she did not vomit any more. I felt very well.

"On October fourth we came to the harbor of Havre de Grace where we immediately disembarked. We were able to assist at two holy Masses. In the afternoon Mother Benedicta went with us.

"On October fifth Father Leander read holy Mass. Later we met a German priest, a very excellent man. In the evening we returned to Havre.

"On October sixth the ship left the harbor at about nine o'clock. The wind was very strong. The people who had embarked for the first time became very ill soon after. The view as the ship sailed out of port was charmingly beautiful. There were pretty houses with light towers to the north of the

harbor; the forest trees towered in the background; the familiar sea gulls gave us a last farewell by fluttering around near the ship. This enchanting scene soon disappeared from sight, and only the water with its storm-blown waves and the firmament with its now mournful, now friendly clouds remained for us to meditate on. On October fifth the comet with its long tail was seen distinctly. The sight of the city of Havre with the heavens studded with stars aroused a heavenly inspiration in my heart.

"From October sixth to October seventh the night was very stormy; the storm lasted throughout the following day. Sister Cunigunda and I were both seasick. Mother Benedicta and I remained in bed. The wind was riotous and the waves presented a terrible spectacle as one devoured the other. No one could look upon the scene without being affected. Those traveling third class were a most pitiable sight--the poor children lay on the floor in the dirt, deathly pale, and they seemed about to die. For their beds they had the floor; and for pillows, chests. All the attendants were ill except two.

"From October seventh to eighth the storm was less violent, but it still continued. During the day the boat rocked, but not as much as the day before. One could walk out on the deck, but the wind was so strong that being out on the deck was most disagreeable. Although Mother Benedicta arose early she became so ill that she had to return to bed. She could retain no food except steamed apples which she relished. The steward always prepared some for her. Between nine and ten o'clock fire started in the ship's machinery. No one detected it except Father Leander who had not retired. In a moment the captain and the inspector came and extinguished it. Oh what happiness! This night also was very stormy. On October ninth the storm raged fearfully; we were spared only through the mercy of God. The passengers recovered from seasickness, however, and again regained their appetites. Mother Benedicta stayed in bed the whole day; I went out on deck for a moment. It was raining, and the wind blew furiously. I read for some time and held conversation

with Brother Oswald who was chaining rosaries.

"The people are very friendly. After the evening meal we pray our Matins and the men play cards. They are all very polite and thoughtful.

"From October ninth to tenth the storm was dreadful. I was undecided whether I should get up or remain in bed. I continually repeated acts of repentance and sorrow and implored the protection of the Saints and especially the aid of the Blessed Mother. It is fearfully appalling to be on a ship when the waves are hurled against the ship and then drawn away again. The swaying of the ship to the right, to the left, to the front, to the back awaken alarming thoughts in the poor human heart. The next day was about the same; the waves frothed and hurled great streams of water into the ship. Oh how wretched man is and how great and loving is the good Father in heaven! One is momentarily in danger and may at any time be hurled into the billows; which way will one turn when the ship is in danger? Over me is the heavens; under me, the abyss; to the right and left, the surging billows.

"Mother Benedicta was very ill today. For the first time both of us were inclined to sadness, but confidence and love will once more cheer the heart.

"From October tenth to eleventh it was very quiet; it was very beautiful on deck early in the morning, but soon it began to rain again, and a thick fog remained for the rest of the day. In the evening I went out on the deck again for about fifteen minutes in order to get some fresh air. Mother Benedicta was feeling better although she was unable to be up. Sister Cunigunda and myself conversed about our dear convent in Ratisbon in the afternoon.

"From October eleventh to twelfth the sea was quite fair. Mother Benedicta was unable to leave her bed. The water still remained in the cabin. We could taste it in the food. With the exception of this disagreeableness everything went well.

"From October twelfth to thirteenth the sea was fair but there was an opposing wind as on the first day. It rained in the morning but later it cleared up. Mother Benedicta was able to rise and to go on deck. We put the cabin in order and then brought her back. After we had helped her to bed, she fainted; she rolled her eyes as if she were dying. How frightened we were! I held her in my arms, and Sister Cunigunda gladly assisted me. At four o'clock in the afternoon the storm began to rage again.

"From the thirteenth to the fourteenth the sea was again very stormy, and so it remained the next day. It was necessary to brace oneself in order to remain upright. We gave Mother Benedicta pills at noon, and after that she felt better. In the afternoon the water gradually gained entrance into the cabin again. The food was very poor. Oh God, what a life!

"From the fourteenth to the fifteenth the storm abated. Mother Benedicta felt very ill. We stayed with her until eleven o'clock, and then I went to bed. She again became seasick and felt very weak. The next day everything went well, and on deck it was very pleasant. For the first time I saw fish in the ocean and three birds. The nicest day of our journey on the sea was the feast of St. Theresa. In the evening the moon could be seen reflected in the waters. The sky was so clear and the stars so bright that one was forced to meditate on the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God.

"From October fifteenth to sixteenth another storm broke upon the sea. What misery! At table there was nothing to eat and one was forced to suffer hunger. The men complained to the captain, and in the evening the meal was better. Although both yesterday and today we asked for a little soup and some ice for Mother Benedicta, our request was not heeded. The sick must famish; nothing can be procured. Today I was not on deck at all. Mother Benedicta slept the entire day. It is now six-thirty, P. M.

"From the sixteenth to the seventeenth the storm continued though not as violently

as the day before. One could not remain on deck during the day on account of the wind. For the last three days I have asked for some soup and an egg, but without any result. Such misery! Reverend Father Leander went with me to the judge who promised to give us some soup from the first class. This situation distressed me very much. The sun shines brightly today, but it is very cold. The misery on this ship is very great. Today we were not given a bit of soup, and the meat cannot be chewed; it is so hard. Cold vegetables without salt or drippings are served.

"This afternoon at about four o'clock we saw land in the distance for the first time. Oh what joy! After so long a time terra firma once again.

"From the seventeenth to the eighteenth the night brought another storm which lasted from twelve o'clock to five-thirty. Nothing extraordinary happened and all went well for the rest of the day except that our food was poor. I heard today that the boiler nearly burst on Sunday; it was noticeable that the ship nearly came to a standstill.

"From the eighteenth to the nineteenth all went well again. Early in the morning it rained, and the water greeted me in bed. The boat swayed rather violently until the afternoon. Father Leander visited the overseer every day and requested soup for Mother Benedicta who is still in bed. Oh, what a desire I have to behold land! There is a very heavy fog today and the fog horn is continually blowing in order to avoid a disaster with any ship near by. The evenings are very beautiful but cold. I went on deck for a little while in order to see the red star which is very conspicuous.

"From the nineteenth to the twentieth the boat moved quietly and quickly. The day was very pleasant and the sun was very hot. Mother Benedicta went out on the deck for a little while, but not for too long. In the evening a thick fog gathered suddenly, and it was no longer pleasant on deck. Tomorrow, on the twenty-first we will land with the help of God.

"October 21. We landed happily this evening.

"October 22. We arrived at the convent.

"January 22, 1859 - at seven o'clock in the evening the first letter arrived from Ratisbon." 3

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3. Diary of Mother Thomasina, Diary III, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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## CHAPTER XI

## FIRST YEARS IN AMERICA

## WILLIAMSBURGH

1858 - 1860

"That Mother Benedicta in an age when mankind is disinclined toward change left her quiet convent in Ratisbon to work in the missions of a foreign land makes her doubly worthy of honor." 1

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1. Wilms, H., Geschichte der Deutschen Dominikanerinnen, p. 381.
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Again on October 22, on the arrival of the little band from Ratisbon, greetings were exchanged between the Holy Cross Convents of the new and the old worlds. What were the venerable Mother's thoughts as she realized that at last she was a missionary in America with the dream of her youth fulfilled. The words of Christine Sevier regarding Mother Benedicta seem appealingly appropriate here.

"The reader will have recognized in Mother Benedicta that religious of large sympathies and quiet impulses who as prioress of Ratisbon had first conceived the project of sending the Dominican Sisters of that jurisdiction to America. It was now appointed that she should join them, see with her own eyes the work her generous spirit had created, share herself the hardships her spiritual daughters were enduring, and for which she was so largely responsible--to practically demonstrate the sincerity of her enthusiasm when it became possible for her actually to become associated with the propaganda." 2

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2. From Ratisbon Cloisters, op. cit., p. 38.

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What were Mother Benedicta's reactions when she actually viewed the spirit, the work, the life, and accomplishments of these early missionaries which she herself had sent to America?

One is tempted to speculate on this proposition. Did she notice great changes in the Sisters? Did she approve or disapprove of the necessarily altered observances? Whatever conclusions she drew regarding these circumstances, there is no doubt that these first few weeks with new surroundings, new companions, new interests were as a balm to her much-tried and suffering soul after the trials she had so recently undergone. Did she understand that those who had caused her suffering were but the unconscious instruments in the hands of God obtaining for her the fulfillment of her ardent missionary dreams.

To the companions of Mother Benedicta the new surroundings may have suggested the thrill of adventure and romance. In the following letter which Sister Thomasina wrote to her parents soon after her arrival in America, she vividly expresses her reactions.

Williamsburgh, Convent of Holy Cross  
November 2, 1858

Sincerely Beloved Parents:

You probably long from day to day to receive news regarding my journey. We arrived happy and in good health after a



voyage of twenty-one days. Our ship passed through many dangers on account of the carelessness of the ship's crew, and if it had not been for a miraculous protection accorded us by the dear Lord, we would not have reached our dear home. We traveled a distance of twenty-nine hundred miles through constant storms which continually tossed the ship until we finally reached solid ground.

"Our ship was two hundred eighty feet long and ninety feet wide. The passengers numbered from three hundred to three hundred fifty. We were two days in Havre de Grace - where food and coal were taken on board. At that place we left the boat to visit the churches of the city. The boat set sail October 6, at nine o'clock in the morning. Before an hour had passed, the passengers became seasick. I, however, was spared. We beheld a beautiful sight when the ship left the harbor. The neat little houses in the midst of the trees, the high light-towers on the north, and the lofty forest trees in the background summed up a variety of feelings in the human heart. Sea gulls offered a parting greeting as they fluttered about the boat. This enticing panorama soon faded from view, and after we had sailed through the fearful North Sea, we entered into the great ocean in order to meet our destiny. Here we were in constant danger of losing our lives. It was due to the goodness of God that we did not perish. Twice the ship was on fire when everyone was asleep except Father Leander. In his anxiety he considered whether he should prepare us for death and give us absolution and then allow us to await death either by flames or by the billowy ocean. With the hasty aid of the captain and the crew, this catastrophe was averted. At one time the ship suddenly stopped for the boiler was in danger of bursting, and, therefore, the passengers were in imminent danger of perishing; large waves from all sides lashed above the deck.

"But in all these dangers my courage never failed, and my trust in God did not diminish; for everywhere we are in His hands. Whatever might be encountered on board a ship, we experienced. Even after

we landed a boat with three masts collided with our ship, so that it halted and was badly damaged. Such are the dangers of the deep!

"The conduct of the passengers was most courteous and friendly. The distress of the passengers of the third class was pitiful. They suffered from the cold, from hunger, and from the water. I experienced a heartache when I witnessed their plight.

"But these experiences are of the past. I am enchanted with the beautiful little convent, and the friendly reception of our dear Sisters. I was not lonesome for a moment. America would have an attraction for me as a secular, but in the convent I have the same order and work as in Germany. I have the boys' school and there are very dear children among the group. They are docile and good. The school is under the church—simply boarded off. There is a great scarcity of priests. Although there is much work, there is plenty of nourishment. In our parish there would be work for six priests, but only two priests are in charge. The reverend confessor is a man seventy years and still preaches sermons.

"I can't write to the brothers and sisters this time, because the time is too short. I take this occasion to wish you, my dear parents, brothers and sisters, a joyous and blessed new year. May you have many others filled with joy and happiness. Don't worry about me, because I am well taken care of. All the dear Sisters received me with the most sincere love. Unless there is a special reason, I will not write as frequently as I have been accustomed to write on account of the expense. But if you do not find the postage too much, write and inform me. Let us pray for one another. In heaven, my dear parents, we shall meet again.

"It is as warm here now as it is in Germany in July. Did you receive the box which I sent with the driver, Mr. Brunner? Keep these trifles as remembrances. I wish to thank brother Carl especially for his pious prayers which certainly helped us to

reach America in safety. I promised to write him immediately on my arrival here, but he must be patient, until I know more news to write. Tell him I arrived happy and contented. Greet all whom I know. Even in the New World I will pray for all those to whom I made that promise. In our beautiful chapel, Christ is enthroned in the Holy Sacrament. Enough news for the first time. Fare you well, my dear parents, brother, and sisters. In the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary we shall be forever united.

Your eternally grateful daughter  
Sister M. Thomasina of the  
Blessed Sacrament.

"If you use fine paper like this, the postage will not be so high. My address is:

To Sister M. Thomasina Ginker  
Attached to the German Catholic  
Church of the Holy Trinity in  
Williamsburgh near New York,  
U. S. A.  
via Liverpool by steamer." 3

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3. Litigation 1874-1877 Manuscript III, pp. 12-15. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine. Original in the Racine Courthouse.

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Plans were soon put into effect for the employment of each Sister who had recently come from Europe. Mother Benedicta as she had suggested in her answer to the bishop's commissary, made use of her expert knowledge of music by teaching. Sister Thomasina was given the charge of the boys' school as she relates in her letter just quoted. In a letter to her brother, she describes the joy she experienced in teaching:

"My little boys are always merry, They jump, shout, and yell as if they were wild until I quiet them, but there are very good children among them. On Christmas eve they brought a little Christmas tree to school for me loaded with apples, nuts, and

sweets. I was very much pleased with their little childish idea. I had told them about the dear Christ Child in the crib, and they became very enthusiastic. May our dear Lord help me instill the principles of religion into these young hearts." 4.

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4. Litigation 1874-1877, Manuscript III, pp. 20-21. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine. Original in Racine Courthouse.
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The second companion of Mother Benedicta, Sister Cunigunda Schell, was sent with Sister Augustine Neuhierl and lay Sister Rose Bosslet to take charge of the girls' school in the St. Nicholas parish, New York. Crescentia Traubinger according to the chronicle, was received later on under the name of Sister Dominica; she also became a teacher. 5

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5. Holy Cross Chronicle, Ratisbon. Excerpt V, p. 2. Sevier, op. cit., p. 39.
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After some months both Mother Benedicta and Sister Thomasina found some of the circumstances existing in the newly established convent unpleasant. They missed especially the spiritual direction and the very exact observance of the rule. Of course, the situation was entirely different in America, but apparently the two Sisters were not inclined to make allowances. Correspondence between the Reverend Ferdinand Joseph Müller, Court Chaplain in Munich, and the Sisters gives evidence that older causes of variance began to reassert themselves. 6

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6. Letter written by Father Muller to Mother Benedicta, October 17, 1861. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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Affairs in this regard had evidently culminated in the spring of 1860, and Mother Benedicta determined to leave Williamsburgh to find a new field for her labors which would be more satisfactory to her religious ideals. Plans for the future she had none. Her childlike confidence in the providence of God was sufficient, and He did not fail in this hour of need. From a letter by Mother Agnes Rosenlöhner, prioress of Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon, concerning Mother Benedicta's resolution many facts are ascertained. It will be remembered that the bishop had placed the four Sisters who came to America in 1858 under obedience to the prioress of Holy Cross Convent in Ratisbon. It was necessary then for Mother Benedicta to get permission from Ratisbon before she carried out her resolution. Previous to May 1860 she applied for this permission. The answer she received is indecisive and evasive; but, nevertheless, it encourages her to leave Williamsburgh under the existing conditions. The letter follows:

"Regensburg, May 12, 1860

"Dear Mother Benedicta:

"Your circumstances I can understand in a measure, but it is impossible for me to help you. You declare that it would be an aid to you if you received my permission to go elsewhere. The following is the bishop's reply:

"Those in America must become independent. But before taking that step they must declare if it be their intention to stay in

America or to return to the Motherhouse. They need not come immediately, but they must declare their intention.' That simply is the bishop's reply. Perhaps the best thing for me would be to add no further remarks of my own, because, after all, I can only say, 'become independent and then do what you consider best.' The Reverend Spiritual Director Schöttel told me there was a decision of the Holy Father to the effect that branch houses must become independent within six years of their foundation. Whether this applies to all convents, I cannot say.

"I have informed Sister Josepha that Williamsburgh must comply with this order, and I have written to her several times to this effect. But the letters, it seems, do not reach their destination. The first one, however, they received. I am certain of that, for they acted as if they were insane, and declared they would not agree to any separation from the Motherhouse. They even declared that they would all return to Europe. It is most singular--these people may found convents in America without our permission--may appoint subjects to these houses without asking us--and may leave them at will."

"Most singular dependence on the Motherhouse! I have already told Sister Josepha that she can no longer claim subjects or financial aid from the Motherhouse. What new tricks will these American Sisters be up to when they hear again that they must become independent.

"In as far as you are concerned you are the best judge in your own case. You do not want to come back to us, and no good will come of your staying with those Sisters. Your only request to us is permission to leave the convent. Oh my God, this permission according to my opinion means so much! In the first place the prioress of Holy Cross Convent cannot give you this permission. Secondly, it is equivalent to the Motherhouse opening a new foundation through you, and we would be under obligation to supply a sufficient number of subjects and be responsible for the support of the foundation. To undertake teaching together with Sister Thomasina will lead to

no good results. My opinion would be this:

"If you know that a Dominican nun would be allowed to work as a missionary and found a new house as you or rather Sister Thomasina writes, then certainly we would have no objection. Indeed, everyone of us would wish to be of service to you, so that you might obtain your goal. I wrote to Sister Josepha that she must pay back the one thousand francs belonging to Sister Jacobina, because my subjects are not willing to make a gift of that sum to Williamsburgh. In case you find a little place of your own in America, then Sister Josepha is to turn over the thousand francs to you. The Sisters here want you to have it.

"I wrote to Reverend Abbot Wimmer and pleaded with him to find a little place of your own for you. I gave the letter to a girl by the name of Wiemer. This girl wishes to enter the convent in Williamsburgh--perhaps she is there already. I would so much like to help you, but every aid I could offer you would be contrary to my conscience, and contrary to our constitutions. I wish that help would come to you, but I myself cannot extend any, because the whole affair is contrary to my conscience and convictions.

"You can do as you wish as long as I will not be concerned in any transaction. Therefore, you people in America should become independent, and then you could adjust yourselves according to the regulations which exist in America. You could spread out and work in the missions as the Lord provides occasions. I cannot give a more definite decision than this, and it may probably grieve you.

"Sister Thomasina will tell you the news I am writing to her. God will surely help you. He has always helped in the past. Let these be the words of comfort.

From your

Mother Agnes" 7

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7. Holy Cross, Ratisbon, Correspondence, Archives, Mother-house, Racine.

The lay Sister, Jacobina Riederer who came to America in 1853, had returned to Holy Cross Convent unexpectedly against the will of her superior on April 8, 1860. The reference to the founding of convents is explained by the opening of a school at St. Nicholas parish, New York.

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Even as early as the summer of 1859 Mother Benedicta had been planning on leaving Williamsburgh. This fact is confirmed in a letter written to her by the Reverend Court Chaplain, Joseph Ferdinand Müller, who ever remained a staunch friend, supporter, and consoler.

"Munich, July 12, 1859

"Esteemed Sister,

"If you waited a long time for an answer to your letter, I wish you to believe that it was not my fault, but that of your Reverend Brother. He was here during Lent and told me that he would soon send two thousand florins which I was to forward to America. But only within the last few days did this money arrive. At the time I was not at home; therefore, the sending of the check was still further delayed. I sent the check to the Mother Superior, because the money is to belong to the convent--that is, it is to be the portion of a few Sisters. The letter from your Reverend Brother will contain more information.

"Moreover, he sent me thirty-three florin for a chalice, stationery and pills. All this I cannot send by mail now, but I shall send it later in a box as soon as possible. Concerning the traveling money you owe me--two hundred fifty florin--you need not return it immediately; later you may be in a position to return it, unless I am able to present it to you as a gift. Regarding the forte piano I can do nothing at present unless Mother Superior is willing to remit the ten dollars which I received by a cheap purchase of the bill of exchange over and above.



"Concerning your project--I am not in sympathy with it unless you are offered a convent so that you would not need a building fund. I do not advise you to affiliate yourself to a religious Order of men unless the same would be German Dominicans. With the others you would probably not fare well.

"You knew that in America you would not find the Convent of Holy Cross. America is a mission country which demands much self-abnegation. The sacrifices you make are richly rewarded as you have noticed in your own Sisters as well as in various communities which I have transplanted in America. The rewards are so much greater and the thought that you are working for the kingdom of Christ and the salvation of souls is a mighty incentive. Consecrate to God your talents and your knowledge. The reward is certain. Whatever I can do for the Order I shall do gladly as long as I live.

"The conditions in Ratisbon are even now as far as I know not very pleasant--a proof that it was not the fault of the distant prioress. Disobedience bears its fruit.

"The girl whom you wanted to take along but left behind in Nuremberg is now in Nympfenburg. In the beginning she did not prove at all satisfactory, but she is better now.

"I beg to be remembered to Sister Thomasina and the rest.

"I remain in mutual prayer,

Your devoted,

Jos. Ferdinand Müller

Royal Chaplain" 8

8. Müller Correspondence, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

The two letters quoted above prove that Mother Benedicta had long planned her departure from Williamsburgh.

There is every indication that she communicated with the Provincial of the Dominican Order at Somerset and received an invitation to come there. In the latter part of June or in the first part of July Mother Benedicta and Sister Thomasina took their departure. There is a record in the Holy Cross Convent, Brooklyn, which states the date of the arrival of Mother Benedicta and her companions, but no record of Mother Benedicta's and Sister Thomasina's departure. 9

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9..Letter written by Father Schrems to Mother Emily Acker, July 19, 1927. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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It will be remembered that the Sisters and the candidate who accompanied Mother Benedicta to America in 1858 came with the intention of founding with her a Motherhouse after they had become accustomed to the language and customs of the new world. At this critical period two of these, Sister Cunigunda Schell and Sister Dominica Traubinger refused to leave the convent at Williamsburgh to accompany Mother Benedicta to the West. The Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon, gives the following brief account of the incident. It will be noticed, however, that there is no mention of a sojourn in the South, but the later foundation, Racine, is mentioned testifying to the fact that the entry into the chronicle was made at a later date than the occurrences it narrates.

"Finally she (Mother Benedicta) established the desired convent in Racine, another city there. But a new and bitter trial awaited poor Mother Benedicta. Sister Cunigunda

and Sister Dominica did not care to go further. The Sisters at Williamsburgh had advised these Sisters to stay at the convent where they had the assurance of a permanent place, whereas there would be much uncertainty in a new foundation. These and many other reasons served to strengthen their decision to remain. Mother Benedicta was very sorrowfully affected at this and traveled alone, therefore, with Sister Thomasina who would not be moved by any representations to break her promise to Mother Benedicta. 10

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10. Holy Cross Chronicle, Ratisbon, Excerpt V, p. 3.

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The trust in Divine Providence exhibited at this time by the two Sisters was certainly heroic. With childlike confidence they believed that God would lead them to their goal through the instrumentality of the Dominican Fathers.

## CHAPTER XII

## THE SOJOURN IN THE SOUTH

1860 - 1861

"It is necessary for him who would reach his journey's end sometimes to go round about."

Old Proverb

The sources of information regarding the sojourn of Mother Benedicta and Sister Thomasina in Ohio and Tennessee lie almost entirely in letters written by them or to them. Written at different intervals and to various persons, and very detailed in content, these letters form a veritable sequence; and the events narrated in them offer, no doubt, a very authentic record of the period between 1860 and 1861.

Having Somerset, Ohio, as their destination, where dwelt the Very Reverend J. A. Kelly, O. P., provincial of the Western Province of the Dominican Fathers, Mother Benedicta and Sister Thomasina left Williamsburgh in the early part of the summer of 1861. They traveled by the following route: New York, Buffalo, Erie, Cleveland, Shelly, Newark, Zanesville, Sommerset. <sup>1</sup>

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1. Diary of Mother Thomasina, Diary III, p. 23. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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St. Mary's Convent, a branch of the Dominican Sisters of Springfield, Kentucky, had been established in Somerset in 1830. It was at this convent, four miles from St. Joseph Provincial Monastery, that the Sisters took up their abode

for a short time. 2

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2. A Brief History of the Origin and Development of the St. Cecilia Congregation of Dominican Sisters. p. 2.

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From here Sister Thomasina writes a very interesting letter to her brother in Germany, in which she relates incidents pertaining to her journey south and her departure from Williamsburgh.

Somerset, July 18, 1860

"My eternally dearest  
and sincerely loved Brother,

I hope you have received my portrait. By chance I had my picture taken and am very glad that at last I can fulfill your wish. My dear little brother--you will find two portraits; send one to our good mother. It will make her very happy.

"That I am no longer in Williamsburgh you will have noticed from the few lines which I wrote to you in lead pencil on the trip. You and all my dear ones will be waiting anxiously for a letter which will tell you about myself in the interior of America. In the first place you will be eager to know why I did not stay in Williamsburgh--I was not so happy with the Sisters in Williamsburgh, because they are left by themselves without much spiritual direction. This, if long continued, can have only evil results in America. I wrote to Mother Prioress in Ratisbon asking her for permission to accompany Mother Benedicta to the Dominican Fathers in order that we might place ourselves under their direction for time and eternity. After a somewhat difficult struggle my petition was granted. We did not delay long but hastened to our Dominican Fathers where we were received with fatherly affection by the Father Provincial, and thus we have our dearest wish fulfilled.

"We are stationed at Somerset where there is a Motherhouse of Sisters of the Third Order, and where the Father Provincial is the confessor. We will stay here

until a suitable location is found. I must study the English language diligently, for without a knowledge of English it is difficult to get along in this country. Perhaps in my next letter I will be able to tell you our destination and our field of work and how we fare. Here I am very happy; the Sisters are so good and obliging.

"The scenery here is charming--almost like that at home. Our trip was very pleasant; the people were friendly and cordial. That astonished us. We made a trip of a thousand miles. God always sent some one to take care of us and to give us the best directions for our journey. My dear little brother, I am really happy and contented with the Fathers. You can write to me what you wish. I receive all my letters unopened. I'll write to you what my heart prompts me to write. Do not worry about me, my little brother. The dear Lord gives me the occasion of doing much for Him and for His glory. That suffices.

"Write me and let me know how you like my portraits and whether they arrived safe. After this I shall write once a year only. Otherwise you would have to pay too much, but I will make it worth while by writing a long letter. Farewell, my dear brother. Pray for me as I do for you that we will meet in heaven. The anniversary of our dear father's death is approaching. It will make me shed many tears, for the thought that my good father rests in his grave is a great sorrow for me who am now in a far distant land.

"I had a letter from good brother Vincent before I left Williamsburgh. I was much pleased, because his letter contained all the occurrences and interesting details--even the location of our father's grave. Now I often kneel in spirit at his grave and implore God's mercy for his soul. Are the other brothers and sisters well and happy? If it were not for the great ocean that lies between us, I would want you to visit me in America. But this wish cannot be fulfilled. You have me with you now, at least my picture, but I must be dead in your regard until the great judgment day when we will see each other again.

"Dear Carl, kindly send the enclosed letter to Father Bauer at Niederviehbach. There are likewise letters enclosed for our dear mother and brother Vincent. One thing more--

"When my boys in Williamsburgh heard that I was to leave them, they wept and were very sad. I always had between 136 and 140, and they gave me much work. When I left, they brought me all sorts of things as a parting gift. The parents also were sorry to see me leave. But I was glad to go, because only with the Brothers in religion can I be happy?

"Our home will be either the city of Memphis or Nashville. There are many German inhabitants in these cities, but there are no Sisters as yet for the schools.

"For this time I know no more to write. My dear brother, are you still always happy and contented? The marriage of little Frances is great news to me. I always thought she would follow me to America and become a nun, but God puts in each man's heart the calling for the vocation for which he is destined. This time my letter will travel on the beautiful Ohio before it will reach the World Sea. Once more, my dear brother, farewell, and write soon.

Your sincerely loved,  
Sister Thomasina of the  
Blessed Sacrament." 3

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3. Litigation 1874 - 1877, Manuscript III, pp. 22-24. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.
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Plans soon took shape regarding the two German missionary Sisters for the coming year. In the spring of 1860, the Right Reverend James Whelan, D.D., Bishop of Nashville, and former provincial of the Dominican Order applied to St. Mary's Convent, Somerset, Ohio, for the Sisters who would conduct an academy for the higher education of girls in Nashville, Tennessee. At the time there were only two

churches in Nashville--St. Mary's Cathedral and the Church of the Assumption. The four Sisters selected for the new foundation from St. Mary's were Sister Columba Dittoe, Superior, Sister Lucy Harper, Sister Philomena McDonough, and Sister Frances Walsh. <sup>4</sup>

4. A Brief History of the Origin and Development of the St. Cecilia Congregation of Dominican Sisters, p. 2.

The Sisters appointed for the Nashville Academy asked Mother Benedicta and Sister Thomasina to accompany them and assist them in music and other duties. The Sisters accepted the invitation provided they would be given charge of the German parish at Nashville. This the bishop agreed to do. <sup>5</sup>

5. Letter written by Mother Benedicta to Bishop Henni, January 1, 1861. Copy in Archives, Motherhouse, Racine. Original in Archives of Archdiocese, St. Francis Seminary, St. Francis, Wisconsin.

On the morning of August 15, the four Sisters from St. Mary's and the two Sisters from Holy Cross, Ratisbon, set forth in company with the Right Reverend Bishop Whelan, O.P. From Somerset to Zanesville the trip was made by stagecoach; from Zanesville to Cincinnati by rail; from Cincinnati to Louisville by steamboat; and from Louisville to Nashville by rail. <sup>6</sup>

6. A Brief History of the Origin and Development of the St. Cecilia Congregation of Dominican Sisters, p. 3.



The letter that Sister Thomasina writes to her brother Carl contains a most delightful account of the trip on the Ohio, besides being very informative.

Nashville, December 10, 1860

My eternally and sincerely  
loved Brother:

I have lived continually in the hope of receiving a letter from you, but up to this time I have not heard from you. I do not know if you received my portraits and letter in July. Did you not answer my letter, or did your letters go astray? I have a presentiment that you are anxious about me and that you wonder how I fare, and therefore in the last of this year I will write you a long letter. Have patience, dear brother, in reading these lines through. I have written you about Mother Benedicta's and my arrival in Somerset, and now I would like to recount the details which have occurred since.

We stayed at Somerset until August 15, because the dear God in a wonderful manner has brought us nearer to the goal for which we strive. The most Reverend Bishop of Nashville is a Dominican and was formerly a provincial at Somerset, Ohio. This pious and zealous bishop endeavors to erect schools and institutes in his diocese in order to lead the youth and all his flock to heaven on the path of justice. He bought the land, a house, and a garden two miles from the city for an English Institute. He invited the Sisters from Somerset, Ohio, to this place. The Sisters appointed for the institute asked us to accompany them there and remain with them until next summer when we will go to the German parish in order to open a school and college there. The most Reverend Provincial approved of this, and in company with four other Sisters and the Reverend Bishop we took our departure on August 15, for the new field of labor, Nashville, Tennessee. Now we are with the English Sisters who love us dearly; the Reverend Mother says that she will be very lonesome for us when we leave

for the German parish. In this parish there is very much, oh so much to do for the honor of God and the salvation of souls. Everything is so new and everything is just beginning in this parish. Oh how I rejoice that the dear Lord brought us here in such a wonderful manner. The beginning, of course, is hard since we have nothing except what we earn. Who trusts in God, however, has built on a firm foundation. In April we are supposed to begin with an erection of a convent, and we haven't as much as a penny (smallest coin) for the purpose. It is our hope that the dear Lord will send charitable persons to our assistance in our poverty. We have tried to interest His Majesty, King Louis of Bavaria in this matter, and have written to him. Of course we don't know what he will do for us. Dear little brother, do you know of anyone who would be willing to offer a donation for a foundation such as this?

Well, how is the dear Fatherland? Is all contentment and happiness? I have, my dear brother, a very urgent request. It is possible that Sisters of Holy Cross Convent will come to America, and it would make me unspeakably happy if you would send me your portrait. I would be still happier if I could have a portrait of all the brothers and sisters. Although I am very happy, still I often have a desire to see you, and if I had your portraits, this longing in my heart would be satisfied. Good brother, have the kindness to forward the other letters. Let them read yours also, so that I do not have to write the same news over and over.

Are you not curious to know about the climate and our surroundings? I'm sure you are. We are far in the interior of America--two thousand miles from New York. Here in Nashville we have the healthiest air and the most beautiful scenery I have ever seen. The soil is very productive, and the changing scenery--hills, valleys, fields, woods, meadows, and gardens please the human eye and draw it heavenward to the dear Father who has created all. On our trip from Cincinnati to Louisville, I thought of you and wished you could have been with me to see the beauty of it all. The day was pleasant

and the lovely sun sent its rays unremittingly upon this charming country. In the evening the Reverend Bishop accompanied us to the deck to enjoy the cool evening air. There I learned to know this pious noble man, since Mother Benedicta and I visited with him for about two hours. He can't speak German, but we know enough English to make ourselves understood. He promised to be a father and a brother to us, and indeed he is all to us and would give us the last penny he had if we were in need. I lost a glove on the journey and told him of my embarrassment, and the good Father gave me his. Think of the goodness of his heart. You my dear brother must be happy to know that we have found such good friends in America, who concern themselves about us, and who help us in every way they can.

"My dear brother, I wish you all imaginable good at the beginning of a new year--as much as a truly loving sister can wish you. I want to assure you of my poor prayers all the rest of my life, and I hope that you will always pray for me. Do not put off answering this letter, because I have not heard of you for such a long time.

"Winter here is not as severe as it is at home. There is very little snow. Very often our room need not be heated. The summer's heat however is unbearable. My body was covered with small blisters which opened and caused an irritating burning sensation. See, my dear brother, in the missions we must become acquainted with everything.

"'All for God and because of God.' was the saying of the deceased Reverend Uncle.

"I shall close today. The next time I will give you other descriptions, because I hope we will be in our new home by that time.

"Farewell my eternally unforgettable sincerely loved brother and pray for your

Faithfully loving sister,

Sister Thomasina of the  
Blessed Sacrament." 7

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7. Litigation 1874-1877, Manuscript III, pp. 25-28. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine. Original, Racine Courthouse.
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An account book belonging to Mother Benedicta gives added information about the expense of the journey from Williamsburgh to Somerset and from there to Nashville. An itemized account of this journey reads as follows:

Journey to Zanesville	\$37.00	
Food	4.00	
From there to Somerset	7.00	
Trunks from New York	18.00	
Driver's fee	5.00	
Extra expense for trunks	3.00	
Beer and driver's fee	4.25	
Repairing of trunks	5.33	8

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8. Account book, Number I, p. 101. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.
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That the Sisters spent some time in Zanesville, Ohio, and that they intended to found a Motherhouse there is one of the errors that has found its way into print. This error arose, no doubt, from the fact that notes in the account book give Zanesville as the end of the trip south. The reason for this is that Zanesville ended the train trip, and from there a stage-coach had to be taken to Somerset.

On the journey from Somerset, Ohio, to Nashville, Tennessee, Mother Benedicta gives an itemized account of the losses sustained through the damage to their luggage on the way. The account follows:

"Losses on Journey from Somerset to Tennessee

Oil painting--St. Benedict . . . . .	\$22.00	
Habits ruined . . . . .	10.00	
Books ruined . . . . .	20.00	
Bed curtains . . . . .	4.00	
Picture of Christ . . . . .	5.00	
Altar Card . . . . .	2.00	
Embroidery patterns . . . . .	8.00	
Music . . . . .	30.00	
Piano . . . . .	?	" 9

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9. Account Book, No. I, p. 115, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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It will be remembered that in Sister Thomasina's letter to her brother she mentions the fact that a letter of petition has been sent to King Ludwig of Bavaria for alms toward the erection of a school and convent in the German parish at Nashville. Fortunately the first draft of this letter has been preserved. As indicated by its contents, it is the first letter to Europe soliciting aid for a definite purpose.

"Academy of St. Cecilia  
Nashville, Tennessee

"Most illustrious and mighty King  
Most gracious King and Sir:

"The most humble petition of the nuns  
of the Dominican Order in North America  
requesting your most gracious aid.

"Your Majesty's words engraved on every  
Bavarian heart with indelible lineaments--

'Estatic joy it is to check tears  
from flowing and to help to one's  
heart's content'

give unbounded confidence, with which all  
Bavarian hearts are animated, in your most  
high graciousness and good will. They give  
the poor and needy Dominican Sisters the

courage to put before your throne the present most humble request.

"The submissive truly obedient undersigned is a conventual from the Convent of Holy Cross in Ratisbon. For twenty years I cherished a burning desire to go to North America, there to work in the mission field among the poor neglected children. But Providence disposed otherwise. Before I could carry out my wish I had by order of my superiors to assume the administration of the Convent for thirteen years, and so cast aside every attempt to fulfill my longings. Finally the time drew near when I could be released from my official duties. I sought and obtained permission to go to the missions from my honored superiors.

"The submissive obedient undersigned traveled now in company with a companion to the interior of the United States to Nashville, Tennessee. Here we found a German parish which for many years had neither priest nor church, nor school. A year ago the congregation built a church which seats about fifty families. Now a schoolhouse and a little convent for the Sisters should be built. No one knows how to provide means to obtain this end. Oh, how pitiable is the condition of the dear children in this land. They grow up like irrational children, without religion, all estranged from what is of everlasting worth, in an ignorance which goes beyond human understanding. It is absolutely necessary that a school be erected and that a house for the nuns be built. We live at the present time in a strange house.

"In this hopeless and dejected situation in which we find ourselves, the humble undersigned have a comfort in the kindness of your Royal Majesty. The need is great, very great. You have been an angel of refuge to so many institutions and spiritual societies in this land which had recourse to you in their dire need. May your Gracious Majesty be the same to the humble undersigned.

"May God in His Divine Providence who is visibly with your Royal Majesty move you to incline graciously with a paternal hand to your country's children, and may your favor rest upon them that you may grant us aid to erect a little convent.

"May the great blessing which rests so visibly upon you increase abundantly upon you and your House. The nuns who are in need of such great help will pray fervently for this grace daily and their petition will certainly not be in vain.

"In deepest submission, I remain,  
Your Royal Majesty,

Your submissive and obedient  
Maria Benedicta Bauer

Dominican at present in Nashville,  
Tennessee, N.A." 10

10. Mother Benedicta's Correspondence, Archives, Mother-house, Racine.

Mother Benedicta did not apply in vain to the heart of the Bavarian King. The aim she had in view at this time, however, that is, the erection of buildings in Nashville, was never realized. In fact, it was not long after she sent this request that the plans for building a school and convent in the German parish at Nashville had to be abandoned. The circumstances which induced the change in plans involved the following considerations which Mother Benedicta frankly states in letters written to the Right Reverend Bishop Henni of Milwaukee diocese. The parish neglected for many years, was made up of many apostate families. Those who remained true to their religion were very poor and unable to assume the burden of a new school and convent. Hostilities between the North and South were fast reaching a climax and Tennessee, a border state, was naturally a center of agitation. Besides it became evident that the Tennessee climate especially in summer was

most unsuitable for the health of Mother Benedicta. There is no doubt also that the anticipated lack of spiritual administrations was a very deciding factor in her decision to search for another location.

Mother Benedicta, courageous and dauntless as ever, filled with confidence in God, did not hesitate to shift the whole plan of her future, and so she began immediately to investigate further, praying fervently meanwhile that she would finally reach the goal which God had in store for her. Acting upon an inspiration, she applied to the Reverend Michael Deisenrieder, a priest friend and worker in the missions of Wisconsin. She explained to him the situation in her frank, sincere way, and as her countryman and sincere friend begged him to help her find the desired location for a Motherhouse. True to the trust she placed in him, he immediately consulted the Right Reverend Bishop Henni, his superior, and in a short time was able to inform the hopeful Sisters that they might come to Wisconsin at the invitation of the zealous bishop who would do all in his power to establish them in his diocese. <sup>11</sup>

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11. Correspondence with Bishop Henni and Rev. J.F. Müller amply testify to the truth of the statements above. Letters, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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Happy news! With a heart overflowing with gratitude Mother Benedicta wrote the following letter to the Right Reverend Bishop of Milwaukee Diocese:



"St. Cecilia's Academy  
Nashville, Tennessee  
January 1, 1882

"Most Reverend Bishop  
Most Gracious Lord,

"How shall we find words to express our deep feeling of gratitude and the rejoicings of our hearts at the kind assurance from you that you will welcome two poor nuns to your Grace's protection and fatherly care. For this great favor of the granting of our humble petition we offer Your Grace humble and sincerest thanks. The blessing of the Almighty God which is so evident in Your Grace's career will certainly flow upon you in fuller measure. This will be the most sincere prayer of the two grateful Dominican nuns, and they hope in childlike trust that their prayers will not be in vain.

"With trustful confidence I make bold at this time to inform Your Grace of a few circumstances regarding us. We are Dominicans of the Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon, who two years ago came to Williamsburgh near New York where a foundation by the above convent had been made some years before. Since there was a surplus number at this convent we decided to look for a new field of labor farther inland. Since we knew no one, we went directly to our Provincial with the hope that he would give Sisters of his own Order a kind reception, and we were not disappointed. Father Kelly assured us of his fatherly protection and invited us to remain with the Sisters of St. Mary's, Somerset, until he found a suitable field of labor for us. The Sisters were pleased, because we could serve them as organists and music teachers. Here we were also to receive instruction in the English language. Two months later the Bishop of Nashville came to Somerset to engage Sisters for his newly established Academy of St. Cecilia. Since the Sisterhood of St. Mary's is not very large we were requested to accompany four Sisters from St. Mary's and assist them in music and otherwise in preparation for an exhibition to be held at the end of the school term. We accepted the invitation with the condition, however, that we would

be given charge of the school in the German parish at Nashville. The bishop promised to do this, and with that intention we journeyed to Nashville. The German parish, however, had lost many of its families so that it now numbered only fifty. Seventy-five families have fallen away because of the lack of a church, priest, and school. Those who have remained faithful long for Sisters to instruct their neglected children, but they are so poor that though most willing, they are unable to provide a home for the Sisters or a school except through the charity of generous friends. God will provide!

"We informed Reverend Deisenrieder, our friend, of these circumstances and asked him to interest himself in us since he has known us so long and is acquainted with our intention in coming to America; namely, that we would offer our services for the welfare of the youth in German parishes.

"Regarding our property I wish to state that we have on hand \$500 in money, a beautiful piano worth four hundred dollars, material for needle work to the value of one hundred twenty dollars, also church and secular music valued at two hundred dollars, and a good supply of wardrobe, pictures, etc.

"We can hardly expect support from the Motherhouse any longer since its funds are quite exhausted and the Sisters themselves are in need of the necessities of life, because the state has confiscated their property. In case, however, that other Sisters join our ranks, as they have promised, they would bring their dowry with them also. These in short, are the circumstances in which we find ourselves at present and which we wish to submit humbly to your Reverence.

"May Your Grace accept the assurance of our boundless gratitude, and filial reverence with the humble request that in the future we may remain the recipients of your favor and grace.

Your Grace's most gratefully obedient,

Mary Benedicta Bauer  
 Mary Thomasina Ginker  
 Order of St. Dominic." 12

12. Copy of letter in Archives, Motherhouse, Racine. Original in the Archives of the Archdiocese, St. Francis Seminary, St. Francis, Wisconsin.

The property referred to in the letter which the Sisters lost through confiscation by the state was property in connection with the foundation of Mintraching discussed in Chapter VII.

Filled with joy at the thought of going North and soon living in a German settlement, Mother Benedicts again addresses a letter to Bishop Henni. Ingenuously she describes all the particularities of her present situation.

"St. Cecilia's Female Academy  
Nashville, Tennessee  
January 14, 1861

"Most Reverend Bishop  
Gracious Father and Lord,

"Timidly, but full of childlike confidence in your well-known kindness and affability, I address these lines to you. Since we are so fortunate now as to be permitted to number ourselves among those who have the happiness of calling your Reverence our best father, we turn to you as children still outside the parental roof in order to acquaint you by letter with our present circumstances.

"Father Deisenrieder sent four letters all of which we received just a few days ago. The first one was written in December. He gave us the happy news that by the end of the winter months we might take the 'wanderstab' and direct our course to the good Milwaukee diocese where we shall find Your Grace a kind father, the healthiest climate (which I miss especially) and many German compatriots among whom we shall be so happy to live.

"We had traveled with the Rt. Rev. Bishop Whelan to Nashville in order to open a school in a German parish there. But the parish is so small (fifty families) and on such a low level religiously that a change could hardly be brought about. Under the circumstance we would have to remain here idle for a considerable time--a burden in the English Sisters'

home. When we came here with these good Sisters, we had promised them to lend assistance with the music classes and otherwise, but the number of pupils never exceeded seven--all beginners. Of these seven, one left. The good Sisters hoped that the new semester would bring them new pupils but not a single one reported. Therefore our promise is void; we are released, since with these six pupils we cannot hold an exhibition.

"The Rt. Rev. Bishop has had to defray all expenses, so that we can readily see that we must be a burden to him, particularly since he is often in financial difficulties and much embarrassed on account of expenditures. On the other hand, with regard to our spiritual needs, we are poorly provided for. We two Sisters belong to a regular Order in which we made our holy vows, but here it is impossible to keep what we have promised by profession. These good Sisters have as yet no rule except those of the tertiaries living in the world. Therefore, apparently they have no special obligations. We have to accommodate ourselves to the customs and practices in force, because we are guest Sisters from Germany.

"We have Mass only on Monday on account of the scarcity of priests--so we are told. Here all is empty and void for the human heart. Since the dear Lord is not present in the chapel, we cannot nor do we wish to find comfort there or any other place. Therefore our desire grows from day to day to be released from this situation.

"The climate has been so detrimental to my health that on my arrival here I was very ill for about six weeks--and what is worse the English kitchen does not agree with my nature. Often I find it difficult to partake of food for a week at a time. As a result my nature, so healthy in other respects, will not endure much longer. I often feel very languid and weak, but God will not disdain to accept this trial as a mission offering, because He, Himself, sent it for my good.

"I have now ventured to place the difficulties of our present situation before your fatherly generosity, and even this is a comfort to us to know that you are acquainted with our situation. Surely we may hope to be released very soon from this part of the country. May the dear Lord grant that we may sing the joyous "Alleluja" in that part of the Milwaukee diocese which Your Grace will assign to us as a home in our future field of labor.

"I wrote to our Mother Convent at Ratisbon and invited three or four Sisters who formerly gave evidence of the mission spirit to join us here, because in spring there would be work for them and for us. We also wrote to relatives and friends asking them for donations to the missions. Whether we will receive anything remains to be seen when their letters arrive.

"I asked Mother Aloysia, superior of the Ursuline Convent at St. Louis, to send us postulants. I feel confident that she will help us, since I raised her as a little girl, and she looks upon me as her mother. I feel that we will have assistance enough for a beginning. At home in Ratisbon six hundred girls were instructed by six teachers, and in the branch house sixty to ninety girls, every year. They were trained in various branches; namely, music, elementary and industrial subjects, domestic art, such as cooking, laundering, and other subjects required for a successful housekeeper. But all our teachers were capable--such as could accomplish much and at the same time attend to their religious duties. And so we can also accomplish these important things in the same way under your fatherly direction. If we may only accomplish that which is for the honor of God and the welfare of the dear youth for whose sake we have come to this land, we will be happy.

"In closing we humbly beg Your Grace's blessing and for the future commend ourselves as orphan children to your paternal

heart. With prayer and unbounded and sincerest gratitude, we remain, Your Grace's

Eternally grateful and obedient children,

Maria Benedicta Bauer  
 Maria Thomasina Ginker

Order of St. Dominic" 13

13. Copy of letter in Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.  
 Original in Archives of Archdiocese, St. Francis Seminary, St. Francis, Wisconsin.

The rapturous joy manifested by Mother Benedicta and Sister Thomasina as they read and re-read the encouraging letters of Father Deisenrieder, their friend and benefactor, may well be imagined. Their happiness was, no doubt, the more intense as they both realized the futility of attempting a foundation in the German parish which had been decimated by apostacy and poverty resulting from various peculiar circumstances. Those trying days of the past few months in which hope ebbed as they beheld themselves a burden to the struggling community with no prospects for the fulfillment of their noble dream of service apparent, ended like a sudden shower and left renewed hope like a smiling sun brightening the future.

"The last letter redolent with "unbounded gratitude" and "childlike confidence," glimpses the sanguine and somewhat choleric nature of Mother Benedicta as it portrays her undaunted by past trials and disappointments, eager for the future, confident that God is directing her course. Yes, again she is ready to follow wherever He shall lead.

And God, munificent to those who put their entire trust in Him, was surely directing these valorous much-tried souls, for at the critical moment He led them from the land of dreadful conflict to the peaceful abode of Wisconsin far from civil strife. "Oh the wonderful power and mercy of God!" They left for the North with the coming of spring; on April 12, the Civil War began.

Mother Benedicta has left an interesting account of her finances during this period of waiting and uncertainty. With a fund of six hundred ninety-nine dollars they left Williamsburgh. In New York they spent one hundred forty-eight dollars in purchases for woolen and other goods. Their traveling expenses to Somerset amounted to seventy-one dollars. In Nashville at St. Cecilia's Academy the Sisters earned thirty-seven dollars and eighty cents. With a sum of four hundred eighty dollars they left for Milwaukee. The entire trip from the South to Green Bay, Wisconsin, amounted to one hundred four dollars. <sup>14</sup>

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14. Account Book, No. I, p. 79. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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## CHAPTER XIII

## GREEN BAY WELCOMES THE SISTERS

1861 - 1862

"Let us see if the vineyard flourish,  
if the flowers be ready to bring forth  
fruit."

--Canticle of Canticles, VII, 12

Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the see of the Right Reverend Bishop John Henni, was the first destination of Mother Benedicta and Sister Thomasina who with renewed spirit enthusiastically directed their way northward. Their objective was to confer with the bishop, receive his orders, and locate in that part of the diocese which he would select.

At the Motherhouse of the Notre Dame Sisters, Mother Caroline cordially welcomed the Dominican missionaries and here amid the deeply religious atmosphere, the saintly Notre Dame superior bade them have cheer and comfort while they awaited the outcome of their meeting with the bishop. The northern climate, the invigorating spring atmosphere, with the new life of nature bursting forth in bud and flower, the renewal of acquaintance with German countrymen revived their hope of accomplishing great good in this land of promise.

Significant, indeed, was this visit to Milwaukee in shaping a definite course for the later foundation in Racine. Again the Hand of God may be detected, tangibly



guiding the affairs of the trusting Bavarian nuns who so confidently placed their lives at the disposal of their divine Master. Mother Benedicta, frank and sincere, no doubt, confided the story of her missionary endeavors and expectations to the genuinely sympathetic heart of Mother Caroline who also had experienced sacrifice for love of souls. One would feign picture these truly great women conversing in their mother tongue, recalling sacred memories of home and friends in their adopted country, and exchanging confidences and counsels. Alike in their yearning to accomplish much for the glory of God and rich in the spirit of sacrifice and prayer, they had much to unite them in a common bond. And then, in the course of the conversation, the opportune moment arrives in which Mother Benedicta humbly petitions Mother Caroline for candidates that she may with more assurance begin the work among the youth of Wisconsin. Magnanimous of heart, Mother Caroline promises that she will do what she can to assist her.

True to her pledge Mother Caroline seeks the candidature and there relates the story she has heard from her guests. The young maidens aspiring to become religious listen with sympathy and interest. Then a call for volunteers to help establish the Dominican Order in Wisconsin is given and two girls, Mary Oberbrunner and Cunigunda Lösch, generously answer the summons. One of them, Mary Oberbrunner, as Mother Hyacintha, was later to govern the Dominican foundation in Racine for a period of thirty-five years--a

few of these years being the most critical in the convent's existence. <sup>1</sup>

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1. The Sisters of Saint Dominic, Convent of St. Catherine,  
p. 7.

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The Right Reverend Bishop John Henni welcomed the Sisters to his diocese and designated Green Bay as a temporary abode where they might begin their labors in connection with the German parish in that place. With the two candidates the Sisters journeyed to Green Bay in the early part of April and there received a very warm welcome from the Reverend Henry Joseph Albers and his parishioners. Mother Benedicta in the letter which follows gives Bishop Henni a glowing account of the satisfaction the Sisters found in their new home and surroundings.

"Green Bay, June 6, 1861

Most Reverend Father:

"Ten weeks have elapsed since we came to Green Bay, and I may now say to our beloved Green Bay. During this time we have become somewhat acquainted with the situation. It was requisite that we understand all the conditions before we determined to locate our Motherhouse here. I now take the liberty to inform Your Grace as our best father about the present situation in which we find ourselves and also about the plans we have for the future.

"We came here with timid hearts, because we were informed in Milwaukee that Reverend Albers would not willingly receive Dominican nuns in his parish. But we were greatly mistaken. We found in this priest our best friend, and a father who was deeply interested in our spiritual and temporal welfare. He has proved a well-meaning adviser in every circumstance. We

consider this an exceptional favor from God, since our religious vocation requires of us not so much provision for our temporal welfare, but rather for our spiritual welfare. We are very happy since we feel safe in this respect.

"The German parish also received us most cordially. The people expressed their satisfaction and pleasure when we appeared among them in our white habits. These good people manifest much solicitude about providing us with all necessaries, and they would be ready to make any sacrifices in order to erect a school and Motherhouse if the scarcity of money did not make this simply impossible.

"For the present we have purchased two lots for seven hundred dollars; they adjoin the schoolhouse. We paid three hundred dollars in cash and promised to pay the balance in two years. On these two lots, please God, we intend to build a convent by next year. Whether the structure will be frame or stone will depend largely upon the support we receive from the Court Chaplain Müller of Munich.

"Father Müller has advised me to draw up a petition for funds and to have it approved by the bishop of the diocese to which we belong. I submit the request now that you may kindly approve the petition when you receive it from me.

"With regard to the school here in Green Bay, I can scarcely find words to express the love and affection which the children display toward the Sisters. The number of pupils increases from day to day. The ages of the girls range from five to twenty-five. At first we were under the impression that the young ladies came to apply for admission for their children, but we soon learned that it was their intention to attend the school. How surprised we were that some of them had never received the sacrament of penance.

"The school building is not small, but it will not afford ample room if new members are added to our number. Children of various nationalities are represented in the school among which are Germans, Hollanders, Irish, Americans. We have Lutherans,

and I know not what other sects. May God grant us His blessing!

"We made a chapel by reserving half of one room for that purpose, and in it we have a completely furnished altar. We are looking forward to the day when for the first time we shall receive our Divine Savior into our midst--and He shall abide under the same roof with us, just as in our Motherhouse Convent at home. Reverend Albers intends to give us an altar stone, so that Mass may be said in our chapel occasionally. We herewith present our petition that Mass may be read in our chapel. The chapel is large enough for our children and for other persons.

"In the parish church the pastor arranged the choir, so that we have a secluded place apart from all, where we can be unobserved and at the same time conduct the choir with the school children--a thing very pleasing and consoling to us.

"We thank God every day that He in His mercy has brought us here from the South where we have escaped so many dangers, and that He has guided us to a field of labor in which we find such happiness for body and soul.

"Most Reverend Father, there is another matter which I will commend with childlike confidence to your paternal heart; namely, our constitutions oblige us to make an annual retreat from eight to ten days during which we usually make our confession to the third extraordinary. Your Grace had the goodness to recommend to us a third confessor, the Reverend Rector Heiss, in whom we could put full confidence--a great consolation to us, because he was represented by everyone as a true representative of Christ; moreover we had the honor of meeting him personally. It will surely be a great pleasure for Reverend Albers to welcome him as his former spiritual father and to have him in our vicinity.

"If Your Grace will grant our earnest request and send us the Reverend Rector as our extraordinary confessor the most opportune time for us would be nine or ten days preceding the fourth of August, as we intend to give the habit to two postulants on the feast of our holy founder, and that

ceremony would have to be preceded by spiritual exercises. If our humble petition meets with your favor as we confidently hope, we would send money to the seminary in Milwaukee to defray the expenses.

"Concerning our relations with Reverend Bonduel, I can give you little information, except that until now we have been strangers to him and will probably remain so, for the reason that some of our Sisters do not know the English language, and the others lack confidence in him; besides it seems that this good missionary does not gather with the German Catholic Church, but rather scattereth. Of this we have had sufficient proof.

"Furthermore, he speaks to the people at times as though he were in an ecstasy and vested with authority by Your Grace with regard to the Dominican Sisters in Green Bay. People question us concerning these so-called appointments and wish to know the truth. We know nothing about it; it would seem that he gets his ideas out of a clear sky. The above request is therefore all the more urgent, since we cannot put confidence in the second confessor. We would be very happy therefore, if Reverend Heiss would conduct the spiritual exercises and hear our confessions. This, then, would suffice for another year.

"In closing, I again request Your Grace's blessing and in all confidence and great esteem, I remain

Your obedient,

Mary Benedicta Bauer, O.S.D.

"P.S. I humbly beg for a gracious answer." 2

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2. Copy of letter in Archives, Motherhouse, Racine. Original in Archives of the Archdiocese, St. Francis Seminary, St. Francis, Wisconsin.

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This letter so detailed and interesting calls for few comments. The schoolhouse and the two lots which were purchased are now the site of the present Cathedral of Green

Bay. It was on the advice of Reverend Joseph Ferdinand Müller of Munich that the lots were purchased:

"In America you cannot get along without making debts. The convent lives on; the descendants can pay the debt, and that can be done in your case. Buy the building lots; otherwise the price will constantly increase. If the bishop is willing you will be able to make it a success, and you will find those who will lend you the money." 3

3. Müller correspondence, January 25, 1861. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

Although this letter in reality referred to the proposed foundation in Nashville, yet the conditions were the same in the North and thus the advice is equally applicable. With reference to money expected from Europe, Mother Benedicta had every reason to expect aid. In the letter above quoted the Court Chaplain says:

"Your petition I handed to his Majesty with my recommendation. However at present you can expect nothing. In October he (the king) will consider your petition, because in this month he gives donations to the missions--if the petition is ratified by the bishop, then you will obtain it. The petition must be addressed to the Central Director of the Ludwig-Missionsverein, not to the archbishop. What I can do with the chairman shall be done." 4

4. Ibid.

Although Father Müller exerted every effort to help the Dominican missionaries to establish a Motherhouse, yet conditions in Germany just at this time were not so favorable to the missionary cause. Father Muller says with regard to the German situation:

"Since you left Europe many things have changed. We live in a disturbed, dangerous, rebellious period. The Holy Father has been robbed and oppressed. Italy is in flames. Germany is oppressed by the French. In Spier there is a real slaughter going on. Revolution threatens to break out on all sides, and then things will be worse than in 1848. The Sisters of Mercy like the Jesuits are being pursued because they are so active. You may be glad, indeed, that you are in America, although there a Civil War seems about to break out. But America is an expansive country and there war has room to spend itself. But here everything is narrow and crowded. Let us pray for each other with childlike fervor. Most esteemed Sister, you may be assured that I will continue interested in your welfare, but it is not the same now, since so many difficulties have to be overcome." 5

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5. Ibid.

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To Sister Thomasina on January 25, 1861, he writes in the same vein, showing that he is much interested, yet stating conditions which prevent large donations being given to the missions in America:

"Things are not as good here as you think. And still we Bavarians are the most fortunate of all. War stands at our door. Austria is exhausted and lamed. Prussia, always haughty and selfish, is constantly planning the ruin of Austria. In such times benefactors for the missions can hardly be found. I have hopes for procuring something for you, but not immediately. Borrow money that you can at least secure building lots. It will be very difficult for you to accomplish your work unless your personnel is increased. Good candidates are as necessary as money.

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"I will do my utmost for you with King Louis, but you must not expect anything until November. Our funds for the year are exhausted." 6

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6. Müller Correspondence. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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The missionary father to whom Mother Benedicta refers is the Reverend Florimond Bonduel who, as one of the very early missionaries, attended to the spiritual needs of the Catholics residing in Michigan and Wisconsin. <sup>7</sup>

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7. Sullivan, C. F., The Catholic Church in Wisconsin, p.265.

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The pupils of the school established in connection with the German parish paid tuition. In the first month according to Mother Benedicta's account book there was an income of sixteen dollars and forty-four cents. In the second month, May, the income was nineteen dollars and twenty cents while the expenses were only three dollars and sixty-nine cents. Evidently more girls attended the school than boys, for the month of May shows an income from the girls' tuition of fourteen dollars and seventy-two cents and from the boys', four dollars and forty-eight cents. The income for June was nineteen dollars and eight cents while the expenses were six dollars and twenty-four cents. There was no income in the latter part of July or August except four dollars for tuition and fourteen dollars accruing from the exhibition.

One candidate at least applied for admission to the Order since the arrival of the Sisters at Green Bay; in the letter to Bishop Henni which follows, Mother Benedicta refers to three candidates which she wishes to receive.



"Green Bay, September 10, 1861

"Most Reverend Father:

"With childlike confidence I presume to make this petition; namely, that we may be permitted to give the holy habit to three candidates on the feast of the Holy Rosary, October sixth. The names of the maidens who are to be received are (1) Cungiunda Lösch of Bavaria, (2) Maria Oberbrunner of Bavaria, and (3) Barbara Huber of Hessen-Darmstadt. The first one mentioned is an orphan, and the last two have the full consent of their parents who are now living in America having taken up homesteads in Wisconsin. Since there is no hindrance to the fulfillment of the desire of these young girls except that we obtain the permission from Your Grace, we herewith most humbly ask it.

"We recommend ourselves to Your Grace's fatherly affection and remain in profound esteem,

Your Reverence's humbly obedient  
Maria Benedicta Bauer, O.S.D." 8

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8. Copy of Letter, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine. Original, Archives Archdiocese, St. Francis Seminary, St. Francis, Wisconsin.

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The retreat was given by the Reverend Michael Heiss of St. Francis Seminary as requested by Mother Benedicta in her letter of June 6. The retreat, however, succeeded August 4 instead of preceding it. 9

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9. Account Book, No. I, p. 88. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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An account of this first reception in America is given in the Wahrheits Freund as follows:

"On the feast of the Holy Rosary, October 6, a very interesting celebration took place in our German church of St. Mary's--the reception of three nuns. It was the first celebration of its kind in Green Bay since the arrival of the Dominican Sisters in the city. The religious received were known in the world as follows: Miss Barbara Huber (Mary Dominic of the Holy Cross), Cunigunda Losch (Maria Rosa of the Blessed Virgin Mary), and Mary Oberbrunner (Mary Hyacintha of St. Joseph). The Mass by X. Buhler with organ accompaniment was rendered under the direction of the venerable superior. The Offertory by Schicklermeyer was rendered exceptionally well by the Sisters.

"Our much beloved pastor, Rev. Father Albers, an ornament of the parish and a cordial friend of children, loved, esteemed, and honored by all, was the celebrant of the Mass. After the High Mass the three maidens approached the altar and asked to be received into the Order and then made their promises.

"The pastor, following this ceremony, delivered a beautiful discourse on the sacrificing life lead in the convents, and the purpose of convents. The church was overcrowded, so that there was no place to stand, much less to sit down. All present, Catholics as well as Protestants, who attended the festivity were deeply touched. Tears in abundance were shed. The touching scene which took place in our church will long be remembered. It was indeed a solemn sight to see the three young ladies, to whom the world was offering itself, relinquish its vanities and dedicate themselves to their heavenly Bridegroom in the Order of St. Dominic. Oh what a beautiful thing it is to dedicate virginity and youthful years to the service of God! May God bless this convent in its promising beginning." 10

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10. Warheits Freund, p. 123, August 26, 1863.

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A feeling of exultation and gratitude, no doubt, filled the hearts of the two foundresses as they witnessed

the ceremony of the clothing on the Feast of the Queen of the Most Holy Rosary in this, the first little convent which they could truly call their own. And these young women, too, who, in spite of poverty and sacrifices had persevered in their desire to receive the holy habit of St. Dominic, in all probability realized the joy they afforded their superioresses, for were they not the first fruits of much sacrifice, suffering, and prayer? Instead of two lone Dominicans, there were now five. Consequently the rule could be more accurately observed, and the first novitiate came into being.

The month of the Holy Rosary, October, brought another great joy to the little community, but this time the favor was material rather than spiritual. A most welcome letter from the Court Chaplain, Joseph Ferdinand Müller, announced that the petition of the Sisters for financial aid had at last been answered. The letter is so informative that it will be inserted in full.

"Munich, October 17, 1861

"Reverend and Esteemed Mother Benedicta:

"Now you won't know how to dispose of all the money which you will receive all at once. The Missionsverein gives you 1000 florin which you will receive through the Reverend Mother Caroline Friese. From His Majesty, King Louis, you will receive 1000 florin through Bishop Henni. You will express your gratitude to His Majesty, King Louis, on the receipt of the money. Besides this I have sent a trunk to which your Rev. Brother has added many things. The books and the music are from me. The vestments, monstrance, and missals in three packages are from your Rev. Brother.

This will put you in a situation to relieve the wants of others. You see that we did our utmost to fulfill your wishes. Now its up to you to build a convent. I'm sorry to say that I find no candidates for you. All fear the war and the great distance. Perhaps later there will be one or the other.

"You wish to know how things are at Ratisbon. I know this much that those who left are back and are causing much trouble. Your Rev. Brother can tell you more about it. He visits there oftener. I am glad from my heart that you are so contented and feel at home in missionary life. There is more to be done in the missions than anywhere else. In America labor is appreciated; in Europe it is not; therefore, develop your Order and help vigorously in the building up of the Church. Orders of women in America accomplish much--very much--often more than those of men.

"My very kindest regards to your loyal and zealous companion, Thomasina. She is a model of true affection, worthy of honor and the highest appreciation. May God grant you both many years of united labor in His holy service.

"As far as I am concerned, I have no complaints to make. When age creeps on, many ailments accompany it. Next year I will celebrate my sixtieth birthday. Thus the Lord gives me one year after another.

"The General Convention of all Catholic Societies of Germany was held at Munich on the 9, 10, 11, 12, as it met at Ratisbon earlier. It was a magnificent festive gathering such as was never before seen. At the last session there were more than a thousand present. The splendid speeches were very impressive, and many splendid ideas were expressed.

"And now goodbye. The Lord protect and support you both. Such is ever my prayer for you.

Devotedly Venerable Mother,

Your ready servant,

Jos. Ferd. Müller." 11

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11. Müller Correspondence. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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The substantial financial aid received from Germany made the building of the Dominican Convent a possibility and to this end the Sisters now turned all their efforts. Green Bay, the center of a German Catholic Community, to which they had received so cordial a welcome seemed to them to be a desirable location for a community. Two lots had already been purchased with this object in view, Mother Benedicta consequently again opens correspondence with the bishop proposing her plans and begging permission to carry them into execution.

"Green Bay, December 10, 1861

"Most Reverend Bishop  
Filially revered Father;

"The humbly undersigned ventures to offer a petition to Your Grace confiding in your paternal affection and favor. Since Divine Providence has granted to us through the noble King Louis as well as through the Missionsverein a small amount of money for the erection of a little convent, we desire to erect a convent here as the constitutions prescribe. Moreover we intend to build on the two lots which we purchased with that intention six months ago. We, therefore, humbly beg Your Grace to grant us your permission for this undertaking. From day to day our longing increases for a little convent home of our own where we can live in seclusion according to our rules and constitutions. I hope that the little mustard seed (the little germinating convent) with the help of God will become a large tree under whose branches many virginal souls will seek shelter in order to gain their eternal salvation. May God grant success to this undertaking.

"I venture to offer Your Grace another humble petition; namely, that the Reverend

Father Confessor, Father Albers, be granted the permission of saying Mass occasionally in our chapel during the winter months, because it will be impossible for us to cross the street to the church in snowstorms, the like of which I have never seen or experienced. Besides, on week days there are scarcely more than five or six persons who attend the Mass in addition to the children. At present the children come to the school-room after Mass weeping and half frozen. The chapel could accommodate more people than come to the daily Mass in the church. What a consolation it is for a religious to be able to assist at Holy Mass every day as prescribed by the rule! I humbly repeat my request, therefore, for Your Grace's permission to allow us to have Mass in our chapel during the winter months when it is impossible for us to go to the church.

"In other respects we are perfectly satisfied, and with the rest of the inhabitants we are looking forward to improved conditions. The poverty of the people is so great that it goes beyond comprehension.

"In closing I repeat my humble petition and commend all to your paternal affection.

"Begging Your Grace's blessing, I remain

Your humbly obedient,  
 Maria Benedicta Bauer, O.S.D."12

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12. Copy of letter in Archives, Motherhouse, Racine. Original, Archives of Archdiocese, St. Francis Seminary, St. Francis, Wisconsin.

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It is impossible to ascertain Bishop Henni's attitude in regard to the building of the Motherhouse at Green Bay since the archives contain no answer to the appeal. It is certain, however, that soon after the letter quoted above was written the Sisters themselves began to doubt the advisability of locating in Green Bay.

The town was small; the parish was poor; the country was in the turmoil and throes of the dreadful Civil War. Income from the school had gradually decreased in spite of the fact that a music class had been organized in September, and lessons were offered on the piano and guitar. These circumstances brought perplexing doubts, and the members of the new community were forced to ask themselves, if after all, Green Bay was the destined goal for a Motherhouse. The posterity of these foundresses know, however, that the sojourn at Green Bay was most significant. About this time another maiden of very tender years applied for entrance into the Order. This was Barbara Fox, a little girl of thirteen, the eldest of the six children of Paul and Frances Fox, worthy and honored Catholic pioneers of Wisconsin. It was here that the community found a member who as subprioress and mother general was to guide the destinies of St. Catherine's Convent for many years.

In December, Mother Benedicta, quite convinced that better locations than Green Bay might be found in the Milwaukee diocese, again took counsel with Bishop Henni on the problem of building a Motherhouse.

"Green Bay, December 28, 1861

"Most Reverend Bishop  
Sincerely revered Spiritual Father:

"It would be impossible to neglect sending Your Grace a few lines at the beginning of the New Year in order to express our sentiments of heartfelt gratitude for the many favors of the past year. Receive, Your Grace, as our kindest spiritual father, and promoter of our happiness, our most filial gratitude and sincerest wishes for Your Grace's benevolent and fatherly direction.

We are happy that as Your Grace's children we are giving satisfaction.

"Most Reverend Father, in my last letter I ventured to request Your Grace's permission to erect a convent here in spring; but my doubts increase from day to day as to whether or not this is the best location for our labors.

"Green Bay is so small; the German parish is so poor that scarcely thirty-six children attend school and only about half of these are able to pay two shillings a month. We receive as a rule four dollars to five dollars a month, but our expenses are usually twice that amount. Moreover, our rule forbids the erection of a convent if there is no prospect for continued existence. In this serious situation we place ourselves in the hands of God and those of Your Grace's as our best father and friend next to God. We are ready at any moment to go wherever it may seem best to Your Grace.

"The collections received from Father Bonduel amounted to from thirty-eight to forty cents, and we received nothing at all from the other parishes. If we cannot choose Green Bay as the site for a Motherhouse since the prospects of propagating our holy Order cannot be hoped for, the present schoolhouse is ample enough for the two to four Sisters needed to teach the small number of pupils.

"We have conducted the choir for Sundays and for private High Masses, but we have received no remuneration at all from the parish. And so instead of contemplating the erection of a convent here, it behooves us to place all our trust in the providence of God and all will happen as He designs.

"In closing I again offer my filial good wishes for your welfare, and I offer Your Grace the assurance of our unbounded veneration and gratitude.

"Ever having the honor of remaining Your Grace's most obedient and docile

Maria Bonedicta Bauer, O. S. D.



"Our personnel consists of six Sisters, all capable of giving instruction in every branch and language. May God keep them in His grace!" 12

12. Copy of letter, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine. Original in the Archives of the Archdiocese, St. Francis Seminary, St. Francis, Wisconsin.

The reply to this letter was very encouraging.

"Milwaukee, January 3, 1862

"Venerable Sister:

"I thank you for the kind greetings you sent me for New Year's. My prayer is that the same Divine Providence which directed you to poor Wisconsin will keep your community and cause it to increase for the greater good of thousands of little ones.

"You, dear Sister, probably already know that I always objected to the founding of a Motherhouse in Green Bay. I gladly consent that you establish a school there, but the Motherhouse must always have an independent position, and more spacious grounds. Therefore, I advise you to go to as little expense as possible. I am sure that there are more suitable places.

"Meanwhile continue peacefully with the God-pleasing work, and God will surely bless your home. I wish everyone of the Sisters a Happy New Year and my blessing.

"I remain

Your devoted,

John Martin  
Bishop" 13

13. Henni Correspondence. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

Mother Benedicta soon replied to this letter of the bishop's, and no doubt, urged the building of a Motherhouse

at some suitable place, for the next letter from the bishop cites a number of locations and discusses the merits and the demerits of each. The bishop showed a very fatherly interest in the community and invited the full confidence of the foundresses who apparently looked upon him as their greatest benefactor and their dearest friend in the United States. Nor did he fail them in their time of greatest need, for with kindly advice and moral support he seconded all their efforts to accomplish their aim in the missions of Wisconsin. His second letter regarding the establishment of a Motherhouse in his diocese is more definite.

"Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
February 12, 1862

"Venerable Superior:

"Your letter pleases me, for it contains prospects of some good. In a speedy foundation of a Motherhouse, however, there may be many a trial in store, although I myself desire its accomplishment very much.

"The first question is this: Where is an appropriate location to be found? Should it be in the wide spread diocese of Milwaukee?

"In the first place as I have already informed you, you will have to have an entirely independent property for a Motherhouse; but from whence can the means come so soon?

"Near Jefferson between the two German parishes, land could be secured in a beautiful locality, but the present rectory is too small. A more fitting place in my opinion could hardly be found for a convent. The city of Racine offers great opportunity for school work; but how obtain the lot and the house? The same is true for Kenosha also. In the city of Madison we could obtain a wonderful brick house near a church and a schoolhouse for the ridiculously low sum of 3000 dollars, but this sum is payable in cash. In Sauk City we could have a most beautiful piece of property, five acres

planted with grapevines with an academy and dwelling. This could be had for 4000 dollars--not on easy terms. This place would be very suitable for your purposes--but for schools it isn't so promising.

"You see, dear Sister, that money is necessary before all things in order that your plans may be realized. You are aware that before going to any expense you must get a right appreciation about conditions. Next summer you should take a round trip and view the locations for yourself.

"I wrote Father Albers sometime ago that the four hundred dollars from King Louis has been sent to me through the business manager of the Missionsverein, and therefore you should thank the ex-king.

"According to your judgment, you have my consent for everything--but if you wish to build a convent, you ought to save as much as possible.

Yours most devotedly,

John Martin." 14

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14. Henni Correspondence. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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It is doubtful whether or not Mother Benedicta took the round trip that had been suggested by the bishop in order to view the possible locations for the Dominican Motherhouse. In the latter part of spring plans to establish a Motherhouse in Racine had been definitely concluded, for on May 1, 1862, a purchase of land had been made there. This land is described as S. 38 foot lot 7, B 23 Parmelus. The property was nearly opposite the old St. Patrick's church on Douglas Avenue. It was purchased from Peyton R. Morgan and wife. The section of the city in which it was situated was designated as Canada. The first deed was recorded May 23, 1862. 15

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15. Abstract of Deed--Lechner Property. In possession of the Jacob Hilt Family. Copy, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.
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## CHAPTER XIV

## CONVENT OF ST. CATHERINE

## NORTH RACINE

1862 - 1863

"To everything there is a season,  
and a time to every purpose under heaven."  
Ecclesiastis III, I.

"On the twelfth of this month the Venerable Mother Benedicta Bauer of the Order of St. Dominic with eleven companions arrived here with the intention of founding a Motherhouse of her Order at Racine. For this purpose the Sisters have purchased and reside in a fine spacious house in the northern part of the city. On June 1, they will open a school for the Irish and German children in the basement of St. Patrick's church. May God grant His blessing for this happy, and for the whole city such a wished-for, undertaking. For the neglected Irish youth a Catholic school is of the greatest importance. For the German Catholic children of the city the Sisters likewise intend to open a school." 1

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1. Wahrheits Freund, p. 484, May 28, 1862.

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Racine, of all possible locations suggested for a Dominican foundation, was selected as the future home of the little Dominican band which had gathered about Mother Benedicta and Sister Thomasina in Green Bay. The name "Racine" is significant. It is of French origin and was in all probability first applied to the locality by the Jesuit missionaries when they visited the locality in the seventeenth century. It means as nearly as can be determined "a river filled with tangled roots, and was

given to the river that flows into Lake Michigan at that point." Various Indian tribes had designated the river by the names Kipikawi, Chippicotton, and Shiptoten--all of which mean root. Philo White, writing on the subject of the name in 1845 says: "Racine in French means not only root, as applied to trees, shrubs, and plants, but it also signifies the principle, the base, the source, the foundation, and hence a French writer says:

'Je crois qu'il vent prendre racine ici.' "

The expression Mr. White translates as, "I think that he desires to take his quarters here," a translation that signifies a desirable place to dwell which is born out by the fact that the first white settlers in the country located at the mouth of the Root River. It was here also that Mother Benedicta chose to found her future home and religious community. <sup>2</sup>

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2. Stone, F. S., Racine, Belle City of the Lakes and Racine County, Wisconsin, p. 133.

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Mother Benedicta, the root, the source of all Dominican life in America springing from the historic convent of Ratisbon, chose Racine, (root) as a desirable place for her foundation. The Racine Convent, consequently, claims as its founder the root of the many Dominican congregations which have the privilege of tracing their origin back to the Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon.

The wisdom of choosing Racine as a desirable location for a Motherhouse may be judged from the following facts:

Racine, like Milwaukee and Kenosha, was a child of Lake Michigan and by lake traffic it was nourished throughout its early life.

In 1855 twenty-six vessels were enrolled at Racine as their home port; they consisted of eighteen schooners, five brigs, and three sloops. The river's mouth was a busy place. 2,768 vessels arrived on an average of nine a day during the three hundred six days of open navigation. Imports reached \$3,348,000 and exports \$686,496--a total commerce of over four million. <sup>3</sup>

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3. Whitbeck, R. H., Wisconsin Geographical and Natural History Survey Reprint, Racine, p. 152.

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Even at this early time Racine had become a commercial and manufacturing center. In 1844 Jerome I. Case built his first threshing machine. In 1855 Mitchell and Lewis Wagon factory, which later became Mitchell Motors Company, was established. <sup>4</sup>

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4. Ibid., p. 161.

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When the Dominican Sisters arrived in Racine the population numbered less than ten thousand. The city grew but little during the Civil War decade, rising from 7,822 in 1860 to 9,880 in 1870. Racine had been thirty-five years in attaining a population of ten thousand. <sup>5</sup>

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5. Ibid., p. 163.

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Since there are no records in the archives stating the exact date of the arrival of the Sisters at Racine, the date which the Reverend F. X. Sailer gives in his article to the Wahrheits Freund must be accepted as the most authentic. There is reason to doubt the statement that eleven companions accompanied Mother Benedicta. The chronicle account states that six Sisters arrived at Racine in May, but does not mention their names. 6

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6. Dominican Sisters, Racine, Wisconsin Manuscript Number I, p. 1.

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An article appearing in the Columbia states that Mother Benedicta and seven other younger Sisters and candidates founded a little convent in Racine in May, 1862. The writer is inclined to accept this number as the most authentic for the following reasons: The article was written by the Reverend Innocent Wapelhorst, Rector of St. Francis Seminary, in connection with a litigation process of 1876 in which the convent was involved. The article was approved by the Sisters before it was published. The statistics contained in the article concerning the convent were obtained first hand from the pioneer Sisters. 7

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7. Columbia, p. 4, Nov. 30, 1876. Diary of Mother Hyacintha, Diary IV, p. 69.

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In the northern part of the city, called Canada, the Sisters purchased two houses on St. Clair Street (Douglas Avenue) almost directly opposite St. Patrick's Church.



One of them, a frame building, was purchased from Charles Fountain at a cost of \$1,450; the other, a brick building, from John Coy at a cost of \$700. Both of these homes are still in good condition today and are occupied by private families.

The frame house was used as the first Dominican convent in Racine; a chapel was arranged in the second story in a room facing St. Clair Street. The Sisters, however, attended the services at St. Patrick's Church, of which the Reverend M. W. Gibson was the pastor.

Very soon after the arrival of the Sisters, plans were made to raise funds by the presentation of a Sacred Oratorio in St. Patrick's Church. The Racine Weekly Journal carried the following article concerning the event:

"Sacred Oratorio--There will be a Sacred Oratorio given in St. Patrick's Church on Sunday evening at 7 o'clock for the benefit of The Sisters who have come to establish a school in Racine. The Sisters have kindly consented to sing and perform on the organ and will be assisted by the German Musical Society, under the direction of Prof. Ulrich. This will be an excellent occasion for the citizens of Racine to hear the power and grandeur of the new organ lately purchased by Father Gibson. Tickets 25 cents, to be had at the door and at Mr. Steers' and Mr. Winslow's book-stores." 8

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8. "Sacred Oratorio," Racine Weekly Journal, p. 3, May 28, 1862.

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Both Mother Benedicta and Sister Thomasina were talented musicians and possessed beautiful voices. There is no doubt, however, that Mother Benedicta took the lead in

performing on the organ, for she was considered a skillful musician, in fact, a virtuoso on both piano and organ.

Barbara Fox (Mother Cecilia) also possessed a rare voice and with other members of the community contributed to the success of the evening's entertainment.

This first appearance of the Sisters apparently met with success for in June, the next month, another Sacred Oratorio is announced, with further information regarding the Sisters. The article from the Hacine Weekly Journal follows:

"Sacred Oratorio--This sacred concert will take place in St. Patrick's Church of the Fourth Ward next Sunday evening, the 15th inst., at 7 o'clock. No pains have been spared to give our citizens a rich treat of sacred music, both vocal and instrumental.

"Our citizens will have an opportunity of judging for themselves of the musical capabilities and talents of the nuns and Sisters of St. Dominic who have come to reside in our city, and at the same time, of hearing the grand organ purchased by this congregation.

"The concert is got up for the benefit of Reverend Father Gibson, to enable him to meet the expenses incurred by the Sisters' School.

"The Reverend Pastor's exertions in getting up this school deserves every encouragement. There are already over 200 pupils without any distinction being made of nationality or religion.

"The German Musical Association under Professor Ulrich will assist on the occasion.

"The nuns will give lessons in singing and music on piano, guitar, and melodeon, and embroidery and fancy needle work, to any of the young ladies of the city. For

terms apply to the lady superior at their residence opposite St. Patrick's Church." 9

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9. "Sacred Oratorio," Racine Weekly Journal, p. 3, June 11, 1862.

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According to this article, school was already in progress with a large number of children in attendance. The Reverend F.X. Sailer in his communication to the Wahrheits Freund had announced the date of opening for June 1. If two hundred pupils were in attendance as the Racine Weekly Journal stated, the school rooms in the basement of St. Patrick's Church, without doubt, were overcrowded.

The second school, for German children, seems to have been opened soon after the first, in what is now St. Joseph's parish. About forty-two families living on the North Side of Racine, had organized a new congregation in 1862. These families had formerly belonged to St. Mary's Congregation. They purchased property and erected a school which was first taught by a lay teacher.<sup>10</sup> This school was soon taken over

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10. Sullivan, T.J., The Catholic Church in Wisconsin. p.511.

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by the Sisters as the following letter of Bishop Henni's indicates:

"Milwaukee, November 8, 1862

"Esteemed Superior:

"It grieves me that the English school is making no headway. In general it is a bad habit of the Irish that they will not burden themselves with the cost of the

school when a free school is near by. In your circumstances I can in no wise take it amiss when you wish to give up the poorly attended school particularly since you have only one Sister qualified to teach English, and she can supply in the German school what otherwise would be missing. The English language should be taught also in the German school, especially to the boys. Otherwise they are forced sooner or later to go to English schools in order to acquaint themselves with the language of the land which is customary and proper. If you had a sufficient number of English speaking teachers, I would strongly insist that the parish school should remain in progress, but as matters stand now, I cannot require it of Rev. Gibson or the parish in view of the debts on the church.

"Meanwhile I desire above all that your Order train teacher-candidates in both languages as well as possible, and then with God's help you will succeed even in the parish of St. Patrick.

"It pleases me that the German school in your section is so promising. God grant it! Naturally the Sisters must have permission to walk to that school. I wish, however, that they would endeavor to keep their white habit concealed as much as possible on the street.

"I ask your prayers and the prayers of your community, and in return I give my blessing to you and yours."

Devotedly,  
John Martin Henni

"P.S. I thank you very much for the gift which you sent me. It is too nice." ll

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ll. Henni Correspondence, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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The profession of the two novices, Sister Hyacintha and Sister Rosa, took place October 15, 1862, in the little chapel arranged in the Sisters' dwelling. 12

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12. History of the Congregation of St. Catherine of Siena and Statistics Relating to the Same. 1862 - 1905. Number II, p. 36. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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Four candidates were also received while the Sisters were on the North Side, but no record of their names is extant. 13

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13. Ibid.

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Meanwhile another letter from Bishop Henni indicates quite clearly that the location the Sisters had chosen in North Racine was not satisfactory, and that a transfer of the convent to another locality was being seriously contemplated. Apparently misunderstandings had arisen between the Sisters and pastor regarding the school. The letter following shows both understanding and sympathy on the part of the bishop.

Milwaukee, Nov. 27, 1862

"Reverend Superior:

"I was just about to start for Racine this morning, but the unexpected heavy snowfall prevented me, especially since a carriage cannot easily be obtained so early in the morning. I wanted to see how and where you and your companions might locate in the vicinity of the German Church, so that you may not too hastily make your circumstances for the future even worse. I can well imagine your present unfavorable situation--but what will become of the German school in Canada which you have opened if you move further south? You can hardly plan for a permanent Motherhouse in the principal part of the city where real estate is so high. Of course, you might rent a house meanwhile, and then investigate what

might best be done after observing what turn events may take.

"I beg of you, Venerable Mother, not to sell one of your houses near St. Patrick's to Father Gibson or to his parish under any circumstances. At present the parish is so heavily in debt, and anyway the rectory should stand along side of the church as is proper, and particularly as there is sufficient space there, already the property of the parish. Besides I wish to have your Motherhouse located, so that it will not be dependent on the whim of any ecclesiastic as is now the case with Rev. Gibson. Let us use every caution. As soon as I can send a priest to Potosi, I shall inform you.

"Recommending myself to your prayers, I remain, Reverend Mother,

Your devoted,

John Martin, Bishop" 14

14. Henni Correspondence, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

From the definite references to Potosi, it might be reasonable to infer that the bishop, although he had given up the idea of locating the Motherhouse there, still considered it a prospective location at which the Dominican Sisters might assume charge of the school. That these plans did not mature may be accounted for by the fact that the Sisters, though few in number, accepted other schools which precluded the school at Potosi.

The letter indicates that the South Side seemed to be a more appropriate place for the location of the convent. There is no doubt that the Reverend Francis Xavier Sailer, O. Praem., pastor of St. Mary's Church, had invited the Sisters to take charge of the school there. From the time

of the arrival of the Sisters he had given them friendly aid, and he, it was, who had hailed their coming to Racine as a most propitious event. To the time of his death he always remained a staunch friend of the little Dominican Community; it was through his kindly endeavors that the Sisters assumed charge of their earlier schools. Before the Sisters left the North Side, however, Father Sailer, who had been pastor of St. Mary's Church from September 1856 to October 1862, had been transferred to St. Mary's Church, Port Washington, Wisconsin. 15

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15. Sullivan, T. J., The Catholic Church in Wisconsin, p. 513.

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An interesting letter from the Reverend Joseph Ferdinand Muller, dated December 5, 1862, announces the good news of more aid from Europe and says among other things:

"While the one thousand florin have reached you through Mother Caroline, a letter has reached your brother lamenting the fact that you have received nothing as yet. Outside of a session, nothing can be granted, and there is often no session for half a year, although the chairman had long before made the request. You will also receive one thousand dollars for the following year, but you must keep on applying for it. Make your request at the same time with your acknowledgment. His Majesty, King Louis, has not donated anything to the missions for this year. The banished king of Greece is a great expense to him, because he resides with his whole court at Munich. He goes to Nizza now and returns again in April.

"A packet containing music from your brother and myself was sent for you in a trunk directed to Abbot Boniface. You will receive everything from him.

"I hear things go well in your convent, and you increase in number. That is right and well. Try to train good members. I am sorry that I cannot send you candidates. Shall I send you a good forte piano? I could get one for less than three hundred florin. I sent two to India. They arrived after sixteen months, and when they were unpacked, they were still in tune.

"How is my good zealous daughter Thomasina? Is she well, and are her boys always docile in school? Well, she must make an efficient preceptor's face. Very kind regards to her. I do not forget her in my prayers. Regards also to all the other Sisters. I do not know them, but they are brides of Christ." 16

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16. Müller, J.F., Correspondence. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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Encouraging though the letter of Father Müller was with its promise of more financial aid, it was becoming more and more evident to the Sisters that they could not look upon their present location as a permanent foundation. That the misunderstandings between the Sisters and Father Gibson were becoming acute is very evident from the reply which Bishop Henni makes to Mother Benedicta concerning the situation:

"Milwaukee, Jan. 23, 1863

"Esteemed Superior:

"I have forwarded your letter of petition to Munich with my own request in your behalf.

"I would be sorry and you would certainly regret it in after years if you would move the Motherhouse away from the so-called Canada. Only there is there a



prospect for a Catholic Community, in spite of all the building on the part of the priests and others.

"At this time, only the thought of the future should be the guide--a female community, especially a Motherhouse ought to be near a parish church in this Protestant country. Although the place at which you live now is not fitting, I never considered this as a future Motherhouse. Therefore, patience! Time and the strength (of the community) will show you the right place.

"I should have preferred to see a colony of Sisters at Potosi where preparations have already been made. Port Washington, too, must have English teaching Sisters--if the school is to continue. Moreover the parish has a big debt, so that it would be hardly possible to make headway there at present, even though Father Sailer has good intentions. By and by Father Sailer will be able to raise funds and will do something for the school.

Yours devotedly, venerable Superior,

J. Martin, Bishop." 17

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17. Henni Correspondence. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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While the Sisters were still at North Racine they accepted a third mission, the first one located outside the city. Father Sailer's endeavors to open a Sisters' school at Port Washington had been crowned with success, and he joyfully announces the event in the Wahrheits Freund.

"Since the solemn dedication of our new school a year ago, no other event has so rejoiced the large concourse of Catholics in this city as did the arrival of four religious of the Order of St. Dominic who at the request of the pastor have arrived from their Motherhouse in Racine toward the end of March and assumed charge of the newly founded parish school on Easter Monday. They teach more than two hundred children divided into three groups. God

be praised that we have a school at last.  
This is the remark one hears everywhere." 18

18. Wahrheits Freund, p. 427, April 22, 1863.

Before the Sisters opened the school at Port Washington, property had been purchased on the South Side of Racine on what is now Park Avenue at Twelfth Street. This location was a little south of the district in which a number of prominent Racine families lived and which was known as the elite section according to an article on Racine's history in the Racine Journal News which states: "It was the area surrounding Seventh Street and Park Avenue that the prominent residents of the city back in the early days chose as the place in which to live." Far more important, however, was the fact that the property was five blocks from St. Mary's Church. The site for the new convent was purchased on March 17, 1863, from Maria D. Smith and comprised four lots. The two-story brick building upon the property became the first convent building in the identical location of the present St. Catherine's Convent. The foundresses at last had found a permanent home. 19

19. History and Statistics, No. II, op. cit., p. 3.

It is not certain just when the Sisters moved to their new home, but all records agree that it was in the month of May. The announcement which follows regarding the opening of the school on the South Side sets the date in the very early

part of the month, for the article occurred in the May 13 issue of the Wahrheits Freund.

"Last Monday the Sisters of the Order of St. Dominic opened their second school in this city. The number of pupils has so increased that extra teachers are necessitated. Moreover the erecting of two new schools will have to be undertaken in the near future. Special progress is noticed in the school organized by Reverend Sailer." 20

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20. Wahrheits Freund, p. 463, May 13, 1863.

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The article referring to "their second school" proves the fact that the school at St. Patrick's had already been discontinued, since the school to which the "special progress is noticed" was the one organized by Father Sailer. The parish and the school of St. Joseph's had been organized in 1862 by Father Sailer, and was attended by the pastor of St. Mary's until 1867. The St. Joseph school, however, was also relinquished in the fall of 1863. St. Patrick's school was reopened in 1866 under Father G. Matthew and closed again in 1867. In 1879 it was again reopened and has prospered ever since. The St. Joseph's school was reopened in 1877 and has remained under the direction of the Dominican Sisters. 21

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21. History and Statistics. No. II, op. cit., p. 106, p. 110.

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With the advent of the Sisters in North Racine, a new era for the convent begins, but one in which for many years trial and suffering is still to exercise a chastening influence.

## CHAPTER XV

## THE CONVENT OF ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

## SOUTH RACINE

1863

"Faith is the substance of things  
hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."  
Hebrews vi, I.

The little two-story brick building on Park Avenue at Twelfth Street was destined to become the nursery of the Congregation of St. Catherine of Siena and the final conventual home of the foundresses, Mother Benedicta Bauer and Mother Thomasina Ginker. Their course since their arrival in America had led along devious paths; it had been copiously marked with disappointments and sufferings. With unfaltering confidence and trust in Divine Providence, these religious women had clung tenaciously to high hope and warded off fatal discouragement. Nowhere in their correspondence at any time is revealed the faintest note of regret or depression, but ever the firm faith that God is leading them on and that in His own good time they will reach the goal of their noble endeavor. They were well aware as women acquainted with spiritual life that God's work is always deeply impressed with the cross. Viewing their American missionary experiences they, no doubt, understood that sacrifice like a golden thread had marked and interwoven itself deep in their difficult strivings. In this final convent home they were to undergo the throes of those priceless beginnings in which endurance becomes

the touchstone of heroism and self-oblation.

Added strength came to the little community in the person of Sister Raimunda Graf of Holy Cross, Ratisbon, in the summer of 1863. As a kernel these three tried religious were to surround themselves with the rich fruit of American vocations--and in spite of obstacles increase and multiply.

Intimate and even whimsical in graphic detail are the glimpses afforded us through contemporary correspondence. Such is a letter of Mother Benedicta's to Father Müller describing the early convent:

"We have a house with four rooms and a kitchen, and in it are twenty-four persons--a crowded condition. We are compelled to have novices, professed Sisters, candidates, and boarders occupy one room only as large as my cell in Holy Cross Convent. The second room is the parlor and also the music room. We arranged the third room as a chapel and the fourth is for Sister Thomasina, Sister Raimunda, and myself, and serves as a sitting room and bedroom.

"The school and music money are hardly enough for everyday expenses, because since the war everything is three times as expensive as formerly. We have to pay \$3,000 for the house and lot and the interest. But Divine Providence has helped us so far and will do the same in the future.

"If we only had larger accommodations, we could increase our enrollment and earn more money. The second great need is more Sisters from Niederviehbach. This would be a great help for the Motherhouse in Racine and the branch house. Almost every week we get applications for more Sisters.

"I wrote the Master General to give the Sisters permission to come to us, as the Bishop of Ratisbon will not allow them to come even though they wish to. That is a cross. The call to the convent is seldom witnessed in this country. If candidates do come, they are not efficient. Therefore,

we desire to have the Sisters come from Niederviehbach. We are shut out from Holy Cross Convent. We do not get any answers to our letters. That is a closed paradise where the poor souls wait for redemption. That is what Sister Raimunda tells me; she feels very happy here. We are very happy to have her. She can make artificial flowers which we appreciate very much.

"The climate is about the same here as in Ratisbon. I feel young although I am sixty years old--I feel as though I were only forty. Thanks be to God for everything. Thanks be to God also that we are where we are. With all our poverty we have holy peace and with it paradise; that is an inheritance from our holy Father St. Dominic. 1

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1. Letter written by Mother Benedicta to the Rev. J. F. Müller, Feb. 3, 1864. Copy Archives, Motherhouse, Racine. Original, Archives, Ludwig-Missionsverein. (Cited hereafter ALMV)
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Again Mother Benedicta writes:

"Sometimes there is not one cent to be found in the house and everyday there are twenty-four persons to be fed and among them several poor orphans." 2

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2. Excerpt from a letter written by Mother Benedicta to the Rev. J. F. Müller, February 28, 1864. Original, ALMV.
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Definite information is at hand regarding the activities of these first years on the South Side. Sister Thomasina with an assistant had charge of St. Mary's school in Racine. A peep into her schoolroom discloses the pupils sitting on long wooden benches, the boys occupying one side of the room and the girls the other. School opens with prayer followed by religious instruction. The pupils are attracted by the words of wisdom issuing fluently from the

lips of the sweet-faced demure little nun who so seriously and sincerely expounds the truths of religion. Reading, arithmetic, and music follow one after the other, all taught in the German language. Then a short period is given to translation from the German language to the English. But the period given to calligraphy carries the honors of the day. With expert skill, fine penmanship embellished with light and heavy strokes is patiently taught from the Golden Book text.

The school day is over, but a few students remain, for it is their turn to do the dusting and sweeping.

It was at one of these periods of staying-to-tidy-the-room that the tragedy of the clock occurred. With astonishing temerity one of the monitors assuming unwarranted responsibility decided that the faithful old clock needed a thorough cleaning. So it was plunged into a pail of soap-suds after it had with difficulty been removed from the wall. Here every spot or soil was diligently removed. Forth it came, clean and shining, but for the future, served the schoolroom only as an ornament. <sup>3</sup>

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3. Information furnished the writer by Mrs. Jacob Hilt and Mrs. Matthew Ruetz who as Mary and Elizabeth Lechner attended school at St. Mary's in 1863.

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Mother Benedicta, too, was connected with St. Mary's as organist and director of the choir. In a letter to Father Müller she describes her choir with pride:

"I have charge of the choir and every week I have choir practice. It is composed

of the following voices: six bases, four tenors, five altos, and six sopranos. All the men are Prussions. They have to be instructed like children, but they are very respectful. The choir is very good, and the congregation is well satisfied. I play the organ and our boarders sing the soprano and alto. Sister Thomasina and the novice Cecilia (Fox) also sing in the choir. Sister Cecilia also plays the piano and has begun instruction on the organ. She is a different Cecilia from the one who left Holy Cross." 4

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4. Letter written by Mother Benedicta to the Rev. J. F. Müller, February 3, 1864. Copy in Archives, Motherhouse, Racine. Original, ALMV.
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In Port Washington the school was in charge of Sister Raymunda from Augsburg, Sister Hyacintha from Bavaria, and Sister Imelda from Prussia, and a candidate who was but fourteen years old. The branch house at Port Washington was dedicated to St. Rose. 5

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5. Ibid.
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The first reception and profession ceremonies on the South Side were conducted in St. Mary's Church on St. Dominic's day, August 4. Five candidates were received into the Order, and one novice made her profession. The Reverend Doctor Salzman, as the representative of the bishop, conducted the services. An excerpt from an article in the Wahrheits Freund reads as follows:

"Since the convent chapel did not afford enough space, the services had to be conducted in the parish church. The attendance at the services was very large



because the occasion was so unusual. Even the Americans attended in large numbers. The impression made by the services was profound and inspiring." 6

6. Wahrheits Freund, p. 17, August 25, 1863.

Six months later another reception takes place, and in the following exuberant letter Mother Benedicta not only asks permission of the bishop to confer the habit, but also tells in her characteristic manner, the progress the community is making.

"Racine, December 23, 1863

"Most Reverend Father Bishop:

"The humbly undersigned modestly requests of Your Grace kindly permission to give the habit to the maiden, Elisa Steil, who was born at Potosi and is now twenty-two years of age.

"On December 29, we shall celebrate a four-fold feast. First, the First Mass of Reverend Schweiger; second, reception of Elisa Steil; third, the first communion of a pupil, the daughter of a fallen away Catholic; and fourth, the baptism of a six-year old Yankee child, brought here by her mother, who has disappeared. We will take the child and give it a religious training. (The mother doesn't concern herself about the child; she has no faith.)

"To this four-fold celebration we make bold to invite Your Grace most cordially. Your presence would cause universal joy. The newly ordained priest will conduct the reception.

"Two weeks ago, Reverend Nuyts called with the intention of staying in Racine for the present. We could not offer him living rooms, because our house is too small for twenty-six persons. Furthermore, I do not believe it would be well if he remained with us any length of time, because he is not serious enough for a

religious community of women, and then there would be much evil talk. The man for this place must be serious and abstract like Reverend Deisenrieder. May God grant that he will soon come here.

"If we had room for an English day school, there would be enough English speaking children. But the space is too limited. Five professed Sisters from Germany offered their services for the missions, but the Reverend Bishop of Ratisbon, will not let them come unless we send him the permission received from Rome. I think the simplest way would be if I appealed to the Master General and asked him to find ways and means for the permission. I ask your support for this request. Next spring they would be ready to come.

"We wish you every blessing for the approaching Holy Season of Christmas and the New Year with the childlike request that in the future you will be a kind and good father to us as you have been in the past. We shall always endeavor to make ourselves worthy of your fatherly affection.

"Begging Your Grace's blessing, I remain

With profound reverence,  
Your Grace's submissively  
obedient

Maria Benedicta Bauer, O.S.D." 7

7. Copy Archives, Motherhouse, Racine, Original in the Archives of the Archdiocese.

As in other correspondence this letter again reiterates the necessity of building. In spite of dire poverty and in spite of the chaotic economic conditions then prevailing, Mother Benedicta determined to enlarge the convent by adding a wing to the original building.

A brief survey of the financial situation of the country and of Wisconsin in particular will serve to bring into relief the difficulties of building and construction work at this inopportune time, and the difficulties under which the foundresses had been laboring for the past two years.

The panic attending the outbreak of the Civil War played havoc with the banking system of Wisconsin. The consequences of a previous decade of reckless financiering were abruptly visited upon the people of the state. Industrial and monetary disaster prevailed for a year and a half. The conservative East and rest of the Middle West endured like misfortune.

Of the 110 banks in good standing at the beginning of 1861, forty had failed. Of \$4,580,832 bank notes current on January 1, there remained in circulation at the close of the year, but \$1,590,691. As a result of this collapse, business in Wisconsin, already distracted by the outbreak of the Civil War, received a blow from which it did not recover for almost two years. <sup>8</sup>

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8. Merk, P., Economic History of Wisconsin during the Civil War Decade. Studies, Vol. I, pp. 207-8.

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Gold disappeared from circulation soon after the outbreak of the war. The useful fractional coins followed shortly after. By the summer of 1862 small silver, nickels, and even coppers had disappeared. When paper money showed signs of depreciation, silver change at once was retired. In 1861 the tradesmen of Wisconsin began to issue token

money (shinplasters) to take the place of small coin. In 1862 the cities were flooded with shinplasters issued by irresponsible parties.

"According to the Green Bay Advocate, the shinplasters are to a great extent, mere due bills issued at every two-penny doggery, and there is no dealer of any kind who has a sign hung out but can do banking business at his own counter." 9

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9. Green Bay Advocate, November 27, 1862, quoted in Merk, F., op. cit., p. 233.

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Even government postage stamps were used, and on July 17, 1862 they became legal tender. Interest was high, the legal rate being 10 per cent. By the summer of 1863 the currency problems of the country began to clear up on account of Federal legislation. 10

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10. Merk, F., op. cit., 220-237.

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The Convent of St. Catherine, however, depended on aid from the Ludwig-Missionsverein. The need for more room was urgent, and so in the spring of 1864 an addition running west was added. To lessen the expense the young Sisters among them, Sister Cecilia Fox, did all the lathing. 11

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11. Dominican Sisters, Racine, Wisconsin, Manuscript No. I, p. 7; Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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With the added accommodations, the long cherished dream of opening an academy in connection with the convent became a realization. The advertisement following from

the Racine Weekly Advocate is so complete in detail that no comment on the event is needed.

#### ST. CATHERINE'S FEMALE ACADEMY

"The Sisters of the Order of St. Dominic well known in this and other adjoining states as experienced and competent directors of Female Education, respectfully announce to the citizens of Racine and the public in general that this Academy will be open for the reception of pupils on the 1st of November 1864.

"Pupils of every denomination will be admitted, and no undue influence will be used to bias the religious principles of the young ladies; nor will any of them be permitted to embrace the Catholic faith without the verbal or written consent of the parents or guardians. Uniformity and good order, however, require the attendance of all at morning and evening prayers and the religious exercises on Sunday.

#### Course of Studies

"Orthography, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Grammar, Ancient and Modern Geography, Composition, General and Profane History, Natural Philosophy, Bookkeeping, Astronomy, Algebra, Piano, Guitar, and Vocal Music, Drawing, Painting, in oil and water colors, Plain and Ornamental Needle Work.

"Terms per annum, payable half yearly in advance. Board and Tuition in all the branches of a thorough English Education \$150.

#### Extra Charges

Washing-----	\$18.00
Bed and Bedding -----	5.00
Tuition in Making Flowers -----	15.00
Musinc on Piano-----	40.00
Use of Instrument-----	5.00
Music on Guitar-----	30.00
Vocal Music-----	10.00
Drawing-----	18.00
Painting in Water Colors-----	12.00
Painting in Oil and Materials-----	25.00
Modern Language, each-----	12.00

### General Regulations

No deduction will be made for absence or withdrawal unless occasioned by illness or dismissal.

Pupils will be charged from the dates on which they enter.

Boarders are requested to bring all necessary articles for toilet. Pupils will not be allowed to spend pocket money at their own discretion. Such money must be deposited with the superior of the Academy. But the superior will not furnish clothing or money beyond the amount deposited.

To prevent improper correspondence all letters received and sent are subject to the perusal of the superior, but correspondence with parents or guardians is not subject to this rule.

For further particulars application may be made to the Superior of the Academy. All letters to be addressed to the Superior of St. Catherine's Academy, O.F. Dominic, Racine, Wisconsin.

N. B. Charges for Day Scholars 50 cents per month.  
St. Catherine's Convent, O.F. Dominic, Racine.  
M. Benedicta, Superior, O.F. Dominic." 12

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12. Racine Weekly Advocate, January 11, 1865. The "F" in O.F. Dominic is a typographical error. From other script copies it has been ascertained that the "F" should be St., but the abbreviation "St." is written in such a way that it resembles an "F."

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At first the day scholars and boarders were taught in different sections, but in 1865 no distinction was made. Among the early students attending the Academy were Kate Geraghty of Caledonia, Wisconsin (Sister Agnes, O.P.), Mary McCormick of Brighton, Wisconsin, Gustie Seasengoat of Hartford, Wisconsin, two Miss Bradys and a Miss Dickinson.

Sister Sybelline Daly and Sister Pius Doyle were two of the first teachers in the academy. The subjects were taught in the English language. Mother Benedicta frequently interested herself in the pupils admonishing them to conduct themselves as ladies. Often, too, she would describe the model school she was accustomed to in Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon, drawing comparisons, rather unfavorable to the American institution. 13

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13. Information furnished the writer by Miss Mary McCormick, Brighton, Wisconsin, who attended St. Catherine's Female Academy during the years 1864 and 1865.

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In her communication to Bishop Henni of December 23, 1863, Mother Benedicta refers to the five professed Sisters who have offered their services for the American missions. In this expectation she was destined to be disappointed. A long letter from Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon, definitely cut off all thought of reenforcements from that convent as the following excerpt from the letter proves:

"Your further wish to receive Sisters was made known by the venerable Mother Prioress, but not any of us could make up our minds to go to America. Sister Benigna whom you have repeatedly urged and kindly invited decidedly expressed herself thus:

"To America I will not go; either into a real convent or none at all. That is my principle." She spoke similarly every time she was asked. Humanly speaking, there is no hope for you to get Sisters from Ratisbon. Moreover it would hardly be possible, for, at the present time, we are rather short in teaching members, and the Most Reverend Bishop would not allow anyone of us to go, as he expressed himself several times to our Reverend Confessor--so much in answer to your letter."

After a delightful account of each member in the Holy Cross Convent, Sister Henrica continues:

"But mission spirit--American mission spirit is not to be found here. We would need the Sisters for our own school here, for every Sister complains like you about the neglected children--and these are right here on civilized German soil."

She closes her letter by again referring to the missions:

"Heartiest greetings from all of us. I am somewhat peeved at you, dear Sister Thomasina, but without sin, because you, my former dear companion of the novitiate, haven't written me a single word. Or is it the other way? Are you hurt, because I cannot make up my mind to obtain the rich blessings of the missionary life? But I have no zeal for it; neither can I buy it. Therefore, we will often and sincerely pray for one another.

"And now we will greet each other in the Sacred Heart of Jesus until we live together again in the beyond where I shall honor you as former Mother." 14

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14. Letter written by Sister Henrica Meindl to Mother Benedicta, February 23, 1864. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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From Niederviehbach Mother Benedicta met with no better response. A delightful letter from her brother, the Reverend Michael Bauer, who was the spiritual director at St. Mary's Niederviehbach, gives a graphic detailed account of his efforts to secure Sisters and candidates. Since this is the only letter extant of the great number Father Bauer wrote to his sister in America, it will be quoted at length. It portrays a kindly old man, disheartened at the failure of his strenuous efforts in behalf of the American mission.



"Niederviebach, October 12, 1864

"Dearest Sister:

"You have probably waited day after day for the arrival of the courageous "Frau" Constantia and the children from Ingelstadt, but you wait in vain. These American affairs drive me to distraction, and I must beg to be excused from further quest for American candidates. Just listen to my story, and you will not blame me.

"I traveled to Ingelstadt as you requested me to do in order to interview the two girls recommended by the Reverend Beneficiary, Haslbauer. I found them suitable, and since they seemed so anxious to travel to the missions, I had them come to the Institute at Viebach, where they might see and learn many things before leaving. The Sisters received them in our convent for my sake. A third one arrived also recommended by Reverend Haslbauer. I myself instructed them every day in music on the zither and the piano. The Sisters gave them instructions in painting and needlework. After a month they returned home, because I had given them directions to provide passports. The first and best one obtained her passport; the second one, who is poor but very talented, was unable to obtain a passport, because she is only nineteen years of age and a resident of Ingelstadt. She will have to wait until she is twenty-five, and then the wind may blow in a different direction. The first one was willing to pay for the second's passport. The third one has property but poor health. She didn't obtain her passport either, because her guardian did not give his consent. Oh how I regret the effort I spent on these people.

"One of the servants here was anxious to go to America. She is thirty-six years old, a good cook, and in every respect a fine person. She had cut the linen for coifs and went home to get her passport. From her home she wrote to me that her parents and sisters decidedly opposed her intentions and succeeded through the court in having the passport withheld. Thereupon she entered another convent for a foreign land, but had to return home. Another fiasco!

"Then the one recommended by Reverend Reger, a gardener's daughter, came from Landshut. I had to travel with her to her home in order to obtain her parent's permission. I got their consent under the condition that she would receive nothing but her traveling expenses, whereas the daughter who is about to be married received two thousand francs. Later I heard from her relatives that she had a hemorrhage. I did not like her deceptive character.

"Now Sister Constantia came forward. What joy it created among the nuns and the boarders. She applied to the bishop of Ratisbon for permission. The bishop gave the permission with the remark that it was an unusual case, and that the dispensation had to be obtained from Rome. To hasten matters I wrote to Rome myself. I addressed the letter to the Reverend Raymond Hecking, asking him to obtain the dispensation for us, but I received no reply. Requested again by Sister Constantia, I wrote a second time after about six weeks. I requested Reverend Raymond to answer my private correspondence in my capacity as the confessor to the convent and as your brother, and to inform me whether the dispensation for Sister Constantia could be granted and how soon it could be obtained. But I received no reply. I heard later that the convent itself should have applied for the dispensation; just as though I was so unholy a person as to forbid correspondence.

"In the meantime a country woman of Sister Constantia's announced herself recommended by Father Reger. She was a servant in the Convent of the Sisters of Mercy in Landshut. Her appearance pleased me; also her firmness of character. She is twenty-seven years old, and is a good cook. I believe I mentioned her in my last letter. She came here, called on Sister Constantia and they encouraged each other mutually. On St. Michael's day she left her service, went home, obtained her passport, and made an effort to get traveling money, because her possessions consisted of only one hundred francs. Meanwhile the retreat was conducted here, and during that time I traveled to Wurtzburg where a general convention was convened. On my return I was told by the Prioress Rosa that Sister Constantia had solemnly declared that she

would not leave for America. I remarked that I would give her a week to deliberate and that then I wished her to speak to me directly. She, however, wrote me the enclosed note on the same day.

"The matter was reported to the bishop. Sister "Inconstantia," as we now call her (the inconstant one) had to draw up a statement of her changed intention in a protocol and send it to the bishop. The chancery next sent a letter to the convent stating that Sister Constantia should be reprimanded for her inconstancy. The letter also stated that she should never again receive permission to go to America even if the dispensation from Rome should arrive. Personally, I think "Frau" Subprioress would be the first one to come, but she is always sick. She is too delicate for such a long trip as I noticed when I accompanied her to Strauburg; the two hundred francs were as thrown into the water. One time when she expressed her desire to go to America, she heard the remark: 'If at your age you want to go to America, there can be no other reason but dissatisfaction with things here; and that reason is too ignoble to be recognized.' In short, she received no permission.

"By this time the aforementioned country woman of Sister Constantia's arrived. How surprised she was when Sister Constantia declared to her that she had come to a better mind. But our good Mary Wolf, that is the name of the country woman, could not be deterred. She regretted the inconstancy of her friend and said that she had found a companion from Lauterhofen about her own age who had been with the School Sisters. She can, therefore, be employed as a school teacher. Her name is Maria Poegl. She has four hundred francs and can, therefore, pay the traveling expenses of Maria Wolf. About the end of October, Father Deo Gratias, a Franciscan, a pious monk who has traveled much, will leave for America. He will take these two candidates along. They will bring a nice new velum and all sorts of things from me. These things are now waiting in Ingelstadt in care of the beneficiary, but I have asked to have them returned, so that I may pack all these things together to send them ahead to Bremen.

"Why do you send all your letters via Liverpool--that way they cost just twice as much (45¢) as they would if sent by way of Bremen or Hamburg. The other way they cost only 22¢, and they arrive just as soon.

"The two candidates will leave Bremen about the end of the month. I cannot tell you yet on what boat they will come. I told them to send a dispatch to you immediately on their arrival and that they should stop over with a German merchant in New York until you call for them there.

"Cordial greetings to Sisters Thoma-sina, Raimunda, and Cecilia.

From your brother,

M. Bauer, Pastor" 15

15. Bauer, Michael, Correspondence, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

Of all the possible subjects mentioned in Father Bauer's letter, Maria Poegl is the only one who came to America. She entered the convent on November 28, and was received under the name of Sister Dominica of St. Joseph. Since she lived until the year 1919, she was well known by many of the members of the community.

So pressing was the debt resulting from the cost of enlarging the convent building and so great was the poverty of the Sisters that an appeal was made to Bishop Henni for permission to beg alms throughout the diocese. The bishop graciously gave the following testimonial and wished the Sisters success in their endeavors.

"We hereby grant permission to the religious Sisters of St. Dominic of the Motherhouse of St. Catherine of Siena in Racine in the diocese of Milwaukee to take up collections to supply their necessities especially in regard to the building of the

Motherhouse and to meet the expenditures made thereby.

"In consideration of the future benefit which this institute shall bestow upon schools and religion, we cannot help but recommend most warmly the undertaking of the good Sisters to our clergy and laity.

Milwaukee, September 6, 1864

John Martin  
Bishop of Milwaukee"16

16. Henni Correspondence, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

The arduous and humiliating task of begging from door to door devolved upon the faithful Sister Thomasina who never faltered in her devotion to Mother Benedicta and the mission cause. With a rich candor she describes her experience to King Louis of Bavaria.

"In these sad conditions the Reverend Bishop, a loving father, permitted us to collect in his diocese in order to relieve the direct need. I went from house to house, from place to place, through storm and wind, in order to provide bread for the poor children and orphans which we had taken in. The people were sympathetic and gave according to their means, and, as a result, we were somewhat relieved." 17

17. Letter written by Sister Thomasina to King Louis I of Bavaria. October 28, 1865. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

Though the year 1864 had been a difficult one for the struggling community on account of the building expenses in a time of excessive costs and high prices in general, the Sisters had been able to ward off absolute want through a meager income and through alms. But the winter brought a

terrible calamity under the guise of the contagious disease of smallpox. For six months the sickness raged among its victims, the quarantine cutting off all sources of income. Mother Benedicta fell a victim to the plague and ever after bore the disfiguring marks of the malady. 18

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18. Letters of Mother Thomasina to King Louis I of Bavaria, October 28, 1865. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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The plight of the convent was truly pitiful, but better things were in store for the much-tried religious. The long-cherished desire to which Mother Benedicta so frequently gave utterance was granted. Father Deisenrieder was appointed the resident spiritual director of the community. With a generosity truly admirable he assumed the financial obligation of providing his own rectory and purchased a house and lot on College Avenue in the same block as the convent. His housekeeper, Catherine Roller, soon after joined the community. With the coming of a resident spiritual director a troublesome problem giving rise to endless scruples was happily solved. 19

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19. Pierre, Sister Anastasia, Reminiscences from Early Days, Manuscript IV, p. 16, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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The following paragraph from the pen of Mother Benedicta offers information regarding the spiritual life of the Sisters just previous to the coming of Father Deisenrieder:

"The blessing of God is most truly with us. We can fulfill the Holy Rule here substantially. We pray in choir and alternate in saying the breviary. We have daily meditation and spiritual reading, holy confession weekly, and holy communion twice a week, and spiritual conferences, and all the means for sanctification. Earlier with the permission of the Reverend Bishop, because we were in need of a resident priest, we had to attend a parish church a little distance away. We hope soon to obtain the services of a priest, and then we can keep the enclosure conscientiously." 20

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20. Letter of Mother Benedicta Bauer to the Master General of the Dominican Order, March 18, 1864. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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Soon after the arrival of the resident chaplain, a little chapel was erected at the cost of eight hundred dollars. Though much smaller in size, and a frame building, it occupied about the same position as the present convent chapel. On September 14, 1865, it was dedicated in honor of St. Dominic.

The white altar, white communion railing, and white pews harmonized with the modest simplicity of the chapel's interior. Above the altar the large oil painting of the Rosary group--the Blessed Mother and Child, St. Dominic, and St. Catherine--added a touch of color to the austere surroundings.

Part of the original convent building one and one-half stories high became a chapel annex affording a hall and communion room on the first floor with the choir above. A unique door, on account of its vertical and horizontal

subdivisions, served as a communion table at which the Sisters one by one presented themselves to receive the Sacred Host. The Sisters, after receiving Holy Communion would enter the communion room and there lie prostrate for ten or fifteen minutes, or until the signal was given for them to rise. In the choir above, the community assisted at holy Mass, chanted the Divine Office and performed all required religious observances. For meditation all would kneel on the floor without any support for half an hour. There were but two priedieus in the choir. The crucifix containing the relics of the holy cross always remained on the priedieu of the prioress. A grate in the wall between the chapel and the hall served as the confessional. <sup>21</sup>

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21. Pierre, Sister Anastasia, op. cit., p. 11.

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Another important event in this year was the opening of a third school at Roxbury, Wisconsin, on May 1, 1865, at the request of the Reverend Adelbert Inama, O. Praem. Sister Hyacintha Oberbrunner, the superior, accompanied by Sister Emelda Berensmeier and Theresa Platzler, a boarder, at the academy, assumed charge of the mission. The three schools under the direction of the community had been obtained through the gracious interest of the Premonstratensian fathers, Father Sailer and Father Inama of Innsbruck, Austria.

One by one Mother Benedicta had seen her dreams become realities and now as the summer waned her great



energetic spirit, dauntless as ever, realized that the span of her life was near its end and that her next great venture would be a valiant preparation to meet her God.

## CHAPTER XVI

## THE DEATH OF MOTHER BENEDICTA BAUER

"Her children arise and call her blessed."  
Proverbs, XXVI, 27.

Mother Benedicta, the prayerful woman of deep faith, the optimist whose enthusiastic endeavors could transmute dreams and theories into practical realities, the "benedicta" whose blessed influence still draws the hearts of her spiritual children to high resolve had almost completed her active labors, and during the summer of 1865 offered her final oblation of suffering. Her failing health had become alarmingly evident during the spring months and on examination her fatal malady was pronounced cancer of the stomach.

In this last affliction Sister Dominica not only became a kindly nurse to Mother Benedicta but also a sympathetic and confidential friend. For Sister Dominica the joy and pride of her life in after years was the privilege she had had of administering to the dying prioress. To her Mother Benedicta became a constant source of edification and inspiration; her every wish became a sacred obligation. And many were the spiritual conferences between the loving nurse and the holy patient.

Among the last wishes which Mother Benedicta expressed to Sister Dominica are the following:

She desired that the crucifix containing the relics be placed in the chapel. Her love for the Penitential Psalms

manifested itself in her desire to have her spiritual children recite them daily, and the Miserere several times a day. Ever zealous for religious discipline she admonished the Sisters to keep the rule conscientiously. Finally she requested that a foundation Mass in perpetuum be established for her Reverend Brother and herself.

To the above request she enjoined the destruction of all her writings and letters. Although Sister Dominica tried to carry out this obligation conscientiously, she fortunately succeeded only in part. Nevertheless, many documents and especially the letters of Father Bauer with one exception disappeared at this time. <sup>1</sup>

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1. Pierre, Sister Anastasia, Reminiscences from Early Days, Manuscript IV, p. 25.

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As Mother Benedicta grew weaker, Sister Thomasina was forced to assume greater responsibility. Her love and devotion manifested itself in numerous ways toward her saintly superior. Devoting herself to her class room duties at St. Mary's during the day and deliberating with Mother Benedicta in the evening, Sister Thomasina was obliged to live a strenuous life--strenuous to the extreme. It was to this loyal companion that Mother Benedicta confided her troubles, apprehensions, and desires. Wise woman as the prioress was, she knew that in spite of her accomplishments there still remained much to achieve. The foundation of the Motherhouse had not yet received formal approbation; religious discipline had not been stabilized; many spiritual benefits

for the community had yet to be obtained. All these conditions were explained to the "good" Thomasina who "loyal to the least wish" of her superior promised that all would be carried out conscientiously.

Father Deisenrieder prepared Mother Benedicta for death by administering the last sacraments. Strengthened by the last rites of the Holy Church the much enduring life of Mother Benedicta came to a close on October 13, 1865. She had lived just long enough to see the new chapel dedicated. Thus ended the life of one whose days had been preeminently days of boundless zeal, ardent faith, unstinted charity, holiest simplicity, and deepest consecration to the services of religion.

The words of Father Wilms appropriately and beautifully summarize and appraise the life and deeds of this valiant woman.

"Around the casket of their deceased prioress, Mother Benedicta Bauer, stood ten Sisters on that October 15. They were inconsolable for they realized that she from whom they had hoped so much had been taken from them. Yet it was sufficient that this most courageous and strong woman had conceived the plan of her missionary enterprise and had effected the beginning of its accomplishment. That Mother Benedicta at an age when mankind is averse to change left her peaceful Ratisbon and participated in the missionary labors of a foreign land makes her doubly worthy of reverence. Mother Benedicta was not only a highly cultured, noble, courageous woman, but also one of the greatest prioresses to guide Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon. None of her predecessors had understood as she did how to place the strength of her house in the service of souls." 2

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2. Wilms, H., Geschichte der deutschen Dominikanerinnen  
1206-1916, pp. 380-381.

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The death of Mother Benedicta was announced in the newspaper in Ratisbon. The Sisters of Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon, also through the newspaper gave the following official notice of Mother Benedicta's death as a member of their community:

"It has pleased God the Almighty to call our beloved Sister, the Venerable "Frau" Maria Benedicta Bauer, prioress of a convent in Racine, North America to her eternal reward in the sixty-third year of her life and the forty-third of her holy profession. She died fortified by the last sacraments.

"On the coming Friday, November 24, a Requiem Mass will be offered in the convent chapel for the repose of her soul. Since we announce this publicly, we beg to recommend prayers for our deceased Sister.

Ratisbon, November 20, 1865.  
The Convent of Holy Cross."

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The above clippings are in the Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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The following entry is taken from the Holy Cross Chronicle, Ratisbon, concerning the death of Mother Benedicta:

"In the year 1865 in the month of October Mother Benedicta Bauer died in Racine. She earlier with Sister Thomasina Ginker had established a convent there. Soon Sisters joined the community without dowries, and they lived in their convent in great poverty and much privation. Their work in the schools was greatly blessed according to the account of the bishop of the diocese. The suffering which frequently overcomes a strong heart seemed only to bring Mother Benedicta nearer to God. She understood thoroughly that all worldly vanity is passing. Death brought an

end in this month to her sorrow and suffering and her greatly oppressed heart found a final earthly resting place over a thousand miles distant from her mother convent. R.I.P." 3

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3. Holy Cross Chronicle, Ratisbon, Excerpt III, p. 7. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine. Nearly all of the first Sisters who joined the community brought substantial dowries. The above statement is an error.
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Mother Benedicta Bauer was the first of the community to be interred in the German Catholic Cemetery, now Holy Cross Cemetery, Racine. A small marble stone marks the grave of that apostolic-spirited woman, who had not only "the faith that could remove mountains" but also "the charity which never falleth away."

The "good" Thomasina who had been appointed prioress by Bishop Henni hastened to fulfill her promises to the deceased superior and within the same month penned the following plaintive letter to Bishop Henni, who had taken such a fatherly interest in the community. Her letter portrays the same faith in Divine Providence which was so characteristic of Mother Benedicta.

"October 28, 1865

"Your Grace:

"Our sincerely venerated, filially-loved and dearest Father:

"As a sorely-trying child casts itself confidently into the arms of a mother, so I, full of childlike confidence, hasten to your noble, sympathetic, paternal heart in my difficult and sad situation. With the death of our dear Mother Prioress, God has deprived me and the entire community of a great deal, and truly her loss is irreparable. But God's will be done! He who feeds

the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the field will be merciful to us and will grant us strength to complete the work that was begun for His honor and glory.

"Well aware that I am unworthy and incapable of performing the duties of the difficult task Your Grace has laid upon my shoulders in the name of Jesus, I hasten to you confidently like a child to its father, and earnestly beg Your Grace to tell you all that concerns me and everything that burdens my conscience. May I humbly ask advice and instruction from you? Only in this manner can I be consoled in bearing this heavy burden. To whom should I turn if not to you since, Your Grace, next to God is all to us. If you do that for us, we shall make every endeavor to rejoice Your Grace's heart, so kindly disposed towards us, by living pious lives and by strict observance of our Holy Rule. I humbly and filially beg Your Grace's patience in the future and also your paternal benevolence.

"A few days ago before her death, the dear venerated Mother summoned me. She told me that her heart was burdened with the thought that we had no official document in writing showing the establishment of the foundation of the Motherhouse. She entreated me to have recourse to you immediately after her death and to petition you for the undeserved favor of an official document concerning the foundation, so that she would not have this responsibility to answer for. She commanded me to observe the rule as strictly as possible and to report to the Master General of the Order in order to obtain dispensations from such regulations which until now we have been unable to observe.

"In this matter I am as a child without experience. I beg Your Grace to advise me what steps I should take in this matter. I have another request. (I have the boldness to enclose a letter.) Permissions for all absolutions, etc., were granted only to the deceased prioress, and I am in doubt whether or not I must request them again, or whether Your Grace can grant them to me.

"Third: The Dominican Fathers said that their novices made perpetual vows

immediately. I would like to know if in the future our novices may make final vows at their first profession. Would you extend your fatherly advice to me concerning my important duties? With childlike confidence I will remember you in my prayers and make compensation for every kind service. Accept my heartfelt gratitude for assigning Reverend Deisenrieder to us poor orphans as our chaplain.

"The unworthy humbly undersigned asks Your Grace to bestow upon her your continued fatherly benevolence. I ask your blessing and kiss your ring upon my entrance to my arduous duties.

In deepest reverence and sincerity,  
I remain

Your Grace's most obedient daughter  
of St. Dominic

Mother Thomasina" 4

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4. Correspondence of Mother Thomasina, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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## CHAPTER XVII

## BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF MOTHER THOMASINA

"'Tis hers to pluck the amaranthine flower  
 Of faith, and round the sufferer's temple bind  
 Wreaths that endure affliction's heaviest shower,  
 And do not shrink from sorrows keenest wind."  
 --Wordsworth

Hitherto Sister Thomasina, co-foundress of the congregation of St. Catherine of Siena and its second prioress, has been mentioned only casually in connection with Mother Benedicta. Hence at this point of the narrative it will be appropriate to present a brief resume of the known facts about her early life.

Like Mother Benedicta she was born in a region rich in the lore of convents and monasteries, the most noted being the Cistercian Convent of Waldsassen. In the little village of Neustadt on the Waldnaab, Anna Margaret Theresa Ginker was born on July 6, 1834. She was the seventh child born to Felix Ginker, chimney sweep of Neustadt, and his second wife Maria Margaretha Eckstein Ginker, a miller's daughter of Hofteich. <sup>1</sup>

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1. The litigation 1874-1877, Manuscript III, p. 65. Copy, Motherhouse, Racine. Original, Racine Courthouse.

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The family Ginker, originally Gincherro, had been designated by the Elector Maximilian in 1624 for the occupation of chimney sweeps. The Ginker family had remained true to their Catholic faith having descended from the

Gincher family in Savoy, northern Italy, where they plied their assigned trade until 1902. <sup>2</sup>

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2. Scherms, F., Kurze Geschichte des Dominikanerinnenklosters vom Heiligen Kreuz in Regensburg und Seiner Filialen, Manuscript V., p. 49. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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In the quaint old town of Neustadt, little Theresa, for she was known by the third of her baptismal names, grew up to be a child of a very charming personality and a warm affectionate nature. Of unusual intelligence and industry she merited excellent notes from the elementary school in Neustadt which she attended from her sixth to her twelfth year. <sup>3</sup>

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3. Document, No. I, Neustadt Testimonial Royal Local School Inspector, 1846. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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Theresa Ginker was one of the first boarders of St. Mary's Institute, Niederviehbach, which had been recently opened by Mother Benedicta. It was at the impressionable age of sixteen that she became acquainted with the Dominican Sisters. As a boarder she learned to know and admire Mother Benedicta who, as prioress, visited the institution. Another treasured friendship was formed also with the Reverend Michael Bauer, who, as chaplain of the convent, had charge of the religious directions of the students. Of a highly sensitive religious nature, she resolved at this time to dedicate her life to God in religion as a Dominican and chose to enter Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon.

Theresa's father, a quasi-official and mayor of

Neustadt, in the meantime, had adopted a favorable attitude toward the prevailing German Liberal Party. For a time also he even adhered to the sect known as Old Catholicism. Consequently, he was not in sympathy with his daughter's desire to become a religious, especially since he had looked forward to a splendid marriage for her. After leaving Niederviehbach she took refuge with two of her aunts living in Mitterteich in order to avoid the attentions from suitors and other unpleasant encroachments. To her aunts she confided her religious aspirations and with artless potency and naive craft prevailed upon them to make her dream a reality. On her knees she appealed to them to make it possible for her to answer God's call. In answer to her importunate pleadings these devoted women gave her a dowry of fifteen hundred florin and supplied her with all things needful. <sup>4</sup>

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4. Schrems, F., op. cit., p. 50.

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It was in the fall of the year, October 3, 1852 that Mother Benedicta received the sweet-faced graceful girl of eighteen, who, of all her spiritual daughters was to prove most loyal and true. Her sincerity, devotion, piety, and adaptability, so obvious in the period of her probation, won for her acceptance into the novitiate on June 19, 1853, less than ten months after her entrance. She was received into the Order under the name of Sister Thomasina of the Blessed Sacrament. <sup>5</sup>

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5. The Litigation 1874-1877, Manuscript III, p. 67. Copy Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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The novitiate days were happy ones for this highly intellectual and truly spiritual religious. Sister Thomasina's pleasing personality and affectionate yet resolute nature, made her beloved by her companions and a favorite with her superiors. Her life as a novice was exemplary; her love for the rule and strict discipline, intense. Her devotion to Mother Benedicta, unwavering. The document of approbation for the profession of Theresa Ginker and Cecilia Solleder viewed in the light of subsequent events appears almost ironical. In this document dated July 31, 1855,<sup>6</sup> the

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6. Document, No. VI, Testimonial of Profession, 1855, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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names of the two Sisters who effected such a tremendous change in the career of Mother Benedicta--one through fickleness, the other by constancy--are closely linked together. Not only were these two candidates for religious profession responsible for the future of hundreds of American religious, but for the very Congregation of St. Catherine of Siena itself. Had it not been for the insubordination of Sister Cecilia, the missionary life of Mother Benedicta would probably have remained an unfulfilled dream; had it not been for the loyalty of Sister Thomasina, Mother Benedicta would in all probability never have come west to establish her foundation in Racine. Consequently a Sister Cecilia was as instrumental in the life of Mother Benedicta as a Sister Thomasina.

Sister Thomasina was professed on September 27, 1855. Soon after she applied to take the teachers' examination giving as her preparation three years attendance at the Academy of Niederviehbach and private instruction at Holy Cross, Ratisbon.<sup>7</sup>

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7. Holy Cross Chronicle, Ratisbon, Excerpt IV, p. 3. Archives Motherhouse, Racine. Document, No. V, Application for Teachers' Examination, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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Father Schrems succinctly summarizes her remaining years in Ratisbon in these words:

"After her profession she was active in the public school. She was zealous and faithful in the performance of her religious duties and cherished a great esteem and reverence for her superiors."<sup>8</sup>

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8. Schrems, F., op. cit., p. 36.

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The unswerving loyalty of her devotion to Mother Benedicta was as great in its integrity at the time of poignant trial as in the period of prosperity, and so Sister Thomasina's life became intimately linked with that of Mother Benedicta's in the American missions.

The history of Sister Thomasina in America has already been related, and there now remains but the brief account of the short period when she governed the community as prioress--a time of struggle, hardship, and care. The course of her life was to terminate at the early age of thirty-three, and the last of those years is another story of Calvary's steep.

## CHAPTER XVIII

## ADMINISTRATION OF MOTHER THOMASINA GINKER

OCTOBER 17, 1865 - SEPTEMBER 6, 1866

"Now the good Sister Thomasina who hitherto has directed the convent shall in the name of Jesus rule your family of St. Dominic until a Sister shall be elected according to rule." 1

1. Henni Correspondence, October 17, 1865. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

Thus Sister Thomasina, the loyal and the true, received from Bishop Henni the announcement of her appointment as superior. Hitherto she had but striven to carry out the designs of her superior, leaning upon her ripened wisdom as upon a firm rock. And now as the successor to Mother Benedicta she found herself carrying heavy responsibilities increased by poverty, inexperience, and pioneer days. But with her position came that great heritage of unbounded trust in Divine Providence which had been so typical in the life of Mother Benedicta. Manifesting this spirit of abandonment to the will of God she writes:

"But God's will be done! He who feeds the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the field will be merciful to us and will grant us strength to do the work that was begun for His greater honor and glory." 2

2. Letter written by Mother Thomasina to Bishop Henni, October 28. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

Mother Thomasina's little religious family consisted of eight professed Sisters, seventeen novices, and eleven candidates. Four educational institutions were under her direction; namely, St. Mary's school, Racine, with an enrollment of one hundred sixty pupils; St. Rose's school, Port Washington, numbering two hundred pupils; St. Mary's Roxbury, with an enrollment of one hundred eighty pupils; and St. Catherine's Female Academy, accommodating twenty pupils. <sup>3</sup>

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3. Data found on the back of a letter written by Bishop Henni dated October 4, 1865, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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The reactions of Mother Thomasina to her new responsibilities are best told by herself. In a letter to her brother she writes:

"Oh my dear Carl, the Reverend Bishop has appointed me superior and prioress. I have the care of the whole house, of the schools, and missions, besides the direction of the novices. Oh how burdened I sometimes feel, because I have so few useful members. With all my other duties I must teach, because we lack a sufficient number of teachers. Will you speak to the gracious "Frau" von Auer and ask her to send us some good pious girls, and also some lay Sisters for the kitchen, but especially girls who know music. How does it happen that "Frau" von Auer does not write to me any more. I expected German candidates in October, and I had hoped that they would assist me to propagate the Order. If only America and Germany were not so far apart!

"We had Mother Benedicta's picture taken after her death. I am sending you one. I don't know whether you will recognize me; I have endured much sorrow and

worry for the last four or five years. There is little hope now that I will return to Germany.

. . . . .

"We have quite a few debts as a result of building the chapel and also on account of the death of Mother Benedicta which brought an expense of five hundred florin. 4

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4. Letter written by Mother Thomasina to Carl Ginker, October 30, 1865. Copy, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine. Original in the Racine Courthouse.
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Another letter written to a Dominican Father possibly the Reverend Dominic Lentz, O.P., or the Reverend Thomas Hiss, O.P., is indicative of her inmost thoughts and therefore will prove most interesting to the reader.

"Most Reverend Father Prior:

"It is four months today since the burial of Mother Benedicta. On her deathbed she expressed the wish that I answer your last letter. I had the firm intention of doing so, but my many obligations in the convent prevented me. That "Frau" Veronica Zenner changed her mind was not sad news to us, for if God's blessing were not with us, our work would have been frustrated through a certain person whose name I do not wish to pronounce again. After the evil spirit had been dismissed from our little convent, the old peace and blessed contentment returned. Oh God, what a terrible thing is hypocrisy! I am firmly convinced that if this person had not come to our convent, our severely-trying and afflicted Mother Prioress would still be in our midst. Oh what a loss she is to us whom she has left behind! But she is one of the Blessed in heaven; I doubt it not; she prays for us. Now we have a nice little chapel which was blessed on September 14, 1865. We have our own chapel and four missions in which we instruct one thousand children. A good work must be proved through suffering, and this is true of our foundation.



Oh could I have the great joy of speaking to you personally and acquainting you with American activities! You would not draw the conclusions you have drawn if you knew the truth.

"One desire I have harbored in my heart ever since the appointment has come to me. O had I a capable Dominican to help me develop in the community as much Dominican life as circumstances would allow, how happy I would be. The provincial who was sent to America last fall visited with us soon after he arrived. He was well pleased and promised to visit us often. We get the Directorium from the Brothers, and they have done many acts of kindness for us. If only these good Fathers were German, then my dearest wish should be fulfilled. If I only knew there were some German Dominicans who would like to come to America, I would reveal a secret to you, that gives me the hope of seeing my wish fulfilled.

"Receive my childlike confidence. Perhaps the veil will be lifted a little which has prevented our confidences, and I will find in you once more a solicitous father, true friend, and loving brother.

"My shoulders are yet too weak for this heavy burden; I would like to give you my childlike confidence and receive your advice and help. If my request is granted, you will make me happy with a letter.

"Recommending myself and the convent to your pious prayers and those of the Fathers,

"I remain, with pious veneration

Your gratefully devoted Sister  
in religion,

M. Thomasina Ginker." 5

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5. First draft of letter written by Mother Thomasina to a Dominican Father. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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The member expelled from the community referred to in the letter was Sister Raymunda Miller who seems to have been

a source of great disturbance. Sister Thomasina writing in the name of the prioress in June 1865 petitioned Bishop Henni to grant Sister Raymunda a dispensation from her vows. The immediate occasion for such a request lay in the fact that Sister Raymunda had left her mission, Port Washington, without permission to visit the Franciscan Sisters at St. Francis Seminary before returning to Racine.

A paragraph from the letter reads as follows:

"Reverend Sailer will surely have explained matters regarding her conduct. As far as we are concerned we are in the greatest predicament, because we cannot keep her here in the Motherhouse unless we want the place turned upside down. Her spirit is a restless one and contrary to the Order and the community." 6

6. First draft of letter written by Mother Thomasina to Bishop Henni. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

Since two more schools had been assumed by the convent about one thousand children were in reality under the instruction of Dominican Sisters as Mother Thomasina states in her letter to the Dominican prior.

The school in St. Kilian's parish, Hartford, Wisconsin, was opened on December 9, 1866, and Sister Dominica Poegl placed in charge. Father Deisenrieder, while pastor in St. Lawrence, Wisconsin, had organized St. Kilian's parish and, no doubt, was instrumental in establishing the Dominican Sisters there. 7

7. Account Book, No. II, p. 21. Sullivan, T. J., The Catholic Church in Wisconsin, p. 423.

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7. Account Book, No. II, p. 21. Sullivan, T. J., The Catholic Church in Wisconsin, p. 423.

A little later on January 18, 1866, Mother Thomasina accepted St. John's school, Highland, Wisconsin, at the request of the Reverend F. X. Weinhart. Sister Seraphine Steil and Sister Corona Hargrafen were transferred from Port Washington to Highland to take charge of the new school. 8

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8. Account Book, No. III, p. 20.

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Anecdotes relating to the administration of Mother Thomasina abound in convent tradition and will serve to add a human touch to the history of these pioneer days.

The little Dominican family--professed Sisters, novices, and candidates--would gather familiarly about the youthful superior and the aged Sister Rainunda, known as Mother Senior, for the evening recreation. An artful question might bring forth a rare evening's entertainment as the revered religious from across the seas in answering became reminiscent. Sometimes the dear old Mother Senior would dilate upon the beauty of the grand old convent chapel of Holy Cross or upon the antique treasures in art and relics gathered through the years. More frequently her wistful eyes would grow moist as she described the old Dominican customs. Then when she noted the yearning expressions on the faces of her auditors, she would hastily add with a whimsical smile,

"But conditions are different in America although the Order is the same."

And then graphic plans for a future well-regulated convent

fostering saintly souls and built upon poverty, charity, and simplicity would transmute the dream to shining reality for the moment, and it would mitigate the pangs of the present hardship and suffering.

And Mother Thomasina, in order to keep the memory of the foundress ever fresh, would tell of Mother Benedicta's sufferings and hardships and the great desire she had to found a Dominican Convent for the glory of God and the Order. <sup>9</sup>

9. Information furnished the writer of this thesis by Mother Emily Acker, O.P., Racine, Wisconsin. Summer, 1932.

Mother Thomasina was most austere in her mortifications and penances. She observed Saturday by fasting to honor the Blessed Mother and on that day she never ate the slice of bread placed beside her coffee for breakfast. If anything special was given her at meals she covertly handed it to Mother Senior. On high feast days, however, she always managed to have a treat for the community at one of the meals. <sup>10</sup>

10. cf., Authority in Note 9.

Obedience to the regulations as well as to the rule and constitutions was stringently enforced by Mother Thomasina. Less prone to make allowances for human weakness than Mother Benedicta, she sometimes appeared very sever. The following anecdote proves that Mother Benedicta was aware of this characteristic in Mother Thomasina during the time she held the position of novice mistress.

If dishes were broken, the offender presented herself

to the prioress with the pieces. Invariably Mother Benedicta after giving a suitable penance would say, "Now hurry away to the yard with it, before Mother Thomasina finds it out."

As prioress Mother Thomasina insisted on obedience. One of the regulations for scrubbing the floor was that soft soap be used. A novice, in spite of repeated warnings, was discovered using hard soap for the third time. Instantly the novice was told that she would have to take off the habit and leave the convent. The same afternoon she was sent away." 11

11. Information furnished the writer by Sister Otillia Behnke in an interview, April, 1936.

Father Deisenrieder often treated the candidates with apples. These were greatly appreciated but were never eaten until Mother Thomasina returned from St. Mary's school and gave her permission. 12

12. cf. Authority in Note 9.

Signs of poverty were apparent in this year as in the earlier years; the virtue of poverty had become a necessity. For breakfast a cup of barley coffee, often without milk, with one slice of bread was served. Sometimes a concoction called "Brann Suppe" was substituted for coffee. The "knodal" and "strudeln" appeared frequently for dinner as an appetizing and palatable food. Meat was served occasionally. It became an established custom for the Sisters on the missions to bring or to send provisions to the Motherhouse whenever the occasion offered.

Among the many anecdotes told of the early poverty the following has become a classic; and it well deserves that honor, for the incident borders on the miraculous.

On Christmas night in the year 1866, the Sisters found themselves without fuel. Furthermore, they had no money with which to buy wood. In this dire need they had recourse to prayer and with great confidence appealed to St. Joseph.

During the night the Sisters were awakened by the continuous thud of wood being unloaded. To their amazement and relief they saw a stranger busily engaged in stocking the yard with wood. Interrogating the kind benefactor they heard an explanation something like the following:

"I retired as usual last night unaware of the need the Sisters had for fuel. Whenever I was about to doze off to sleep, I was aroused by a voice which said, 'Bring a load of wood to the Sisters.' The voice haunted me during the slow hours of the night, and to obtain relief I arose and in the cold and dark loaded a wagon with wood and brought it here."

Such direct intervention on the part of Divine Providence served to encourage the little community. 13

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13. Pierre, Sister Anastasia, Reminiscences from Early Days, Manuscript IV, p. 5.

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The candidates attended St. Mary's school during this and the following year. Father Deisenrieder offered his services, too, as an instructor, and successfully taught the younger Sisters and postulants Latin. The communion

room was used as a class room. Mother Thomasina made it a custom to pause before the blackboard filled with Latin exercises when she returned from St. Mary's in order to mark the progress made by the Latin class. <sup>14</sup>

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14. cf. Authority in Note 9.

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The little convent in Racine was not forgotten by the Reverend Brother of Mother Benedicta, and like a ray of sunshine his letters came to encourage and cheer. In the benignity of his fatherly heart, Father Bauer literally adopted all the Sisters of the community as his spiritual children. His letter of May 8, 1866 to Mother Thomasina glows with love and sympathy for the American foundation.

"My beloved Sister in Jesus:

"Now then, we will drop the formal "Sie" and I will henceforth speak with my beloved child and my dear Sister. I have your dear letter dated April 7, and to my greatest joy I realize how visibly the Lord is with you. Oh surely my loving Sister resting in peace with God is continually petitioning His powerful protection for you whom she had to leave as orphans in this world.

"Did you receive the little chest from me together with the rule books? I realize that your situation is beautiful and that it is heightened by the peace that reigns there. Preserve that peace; it will make all your difficulties bearable." 15

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15. Letter written by Father Bauer to Mother Thomasina. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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But difficulties multiplied during the summer of 1866. Sister Johanna, Father Deisenrieder's former housekeeper,



returned from Port Washington before the other Sisters resolved to abandon the religious life. She assumed her old position as the chaplain's housekeeper.

A letter from Bishop Henni gives evidence that all was not well between the Sisters and the spiritual director:

"I fear all right that you have difficulties with your Reverend Chaplain. Indeed it is not a surprise to me, but one waits long for it as you well know. If Reverend Deisenrieder would become a missionary, I would like it better--I will propose it to him when I see him--for by writing, things might turn out for the worse. I wish to proceed cautiously." 16

16. Henni Correspondence. July 26, 1866. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

A few weeks later Father Deisenrieder was transferred to St. Mary's parish, Lake Church. Mother Emily gives an account of his departure in the following rich detail:

"I was returning from town where, as a candidate, I had been sent on an errand. I was amazed and dumbfounded to meet Father Deisenrieder perched high on a dray filled with household furniture nonchalantly driving a team of horses. I was filled with consternation. Surely the good Father was not deserting the Sisters! Breathless I hurried home and went in search of Mother Thomasina. I related the incident hardly hoping my story would receive credence, but the mournful expression and the grave 'Ya Kind' with which my tale was received convinced me that the affair was not news to the prioress." 17

17. cf. Authority in Note 9.

The following paragraph from a letter by the Reverend Francis Hass, O.M. Cap., is indicative of the nature of the

misunderstanding between Father Deisenrieder and the convent:

"I will if at all possible visit you before the time of retreat--perhaps while on my travels. Let your rule and constitutions guide you. Do away gradually with any abuse. Introduce the old practices one by one in a prudent and zealous way with prayer and a realization of your incumbent duty. Fear not, ask not, speak little concerning that which you propose doing. The confessor is charged with the care of the souls and with that only. The order and the regulations of the house do not concern him, and you must act entirely independently as the responsibility is entirely yours. It will be easier for you if your senior fellow Sisters desire it and assist you." 18

18. Letter written by Father Francis Haas, O.M. Cap. to Mother Thomasina, July 9, 1866. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

The great understanding soul of Father Haas soon prompted him to write another consoling letter to Mother Thomasina. In it he gives a mystical interpretation to the trials that were being undergone by the community. His beautiful letter will be given at length.

"Calvary, July 28, 1866

"Reverend Mother Superior:

"I have no other reason for writing to you today except to cheer and encourage you. I received your answer to my last letter. Follow the short outline of behavior which I gave you, and these will suffice for the present. On my journey about the end of September I will stop to see you and inform you about the time of the spiritual exercises.

"A week from today you will celebrate the feast of St. Dominic. I can imagine the wreath of wishes, sorrows, and fears you will place on St. Dominic's altar. One wish is necessary; namely, that of

keeping the Order of your holy Founder in all its purity. The holy Founder will take the responsibilities of your cares and worries. Oh, do you think that the father can forget his true children or that he has no influence before the throne of God. You are to be congratulated if that is your wish and the wish of your children. I feel a sincere and great joy in knowing that you are suffering and that these sufferings are not on account of material needs or conditions. These are like the holy pangs of childbirth without which God will not let His household prosper and succeed. This kind of suffering has until now been lacking. Seek no alleviation in worldly consolation. It would be a reef which would shatter your whole undertaking. Be assured that God will be with you when the world censures you, and the children of the world are uncomfortable near you.

"The ways of God are so different from the ways of human nature, and His judgment is so different from the judgments of men. Pray, and God will be with you. I believe that everything will turn out for the best. What pleased me most was to hear about the cordial unity of your family. It is a proof to me that all are imbued with the best spirit.

"With kindest regards to yourself and your dear fellow Sisters, I remain

In the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary

Fr. Francis Haas, O.M.Cap. 19

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19. Letter written by Father Haas to Mother Thomasina. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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The Sisters arrived at Racine from the missions during the months of July and August. Sister Jordana and Sister Rose of Port Washington brought the ominous tidings that Sister Petrina, the novice, was seriously ill with typhoid fever, and that acting upon the advice of kind Father Sailer,

they had allowed her to remain on the mission. Furthermore, Father Sailer, realizing that the journey to Racine might prove fatal to the sick Sister, had assured them that every care would be bestowed upon the patient by his housekeeper. Mother Thomasina, alarmed by the news and filled with solicitude about her spiritual daughter, resolved to have her brought to the convent and sent Sister Hyacintha to bring her home.

To prevent contagion among the Sisters, Mother Thomasina constituted herself sole nurse to the sufferer. In her charity she devotedly administered to Sister Petrina until she died on August 15. Meanwhile two or three other Sisters contracted the disease.

Since Father Haas found it impossible to conduct the retreat Mother Thomasina, in spite of failing strength, conducted the retreat exercises, gave the conferences, and prepared the three candidates for reception. Untiringly she labored, disregarding the demands of poor human nature. Her firm will which had been nurtured by hardships and trials furnished strength to carry on despite fatigue and a heightening fever.

The reception took place on August 28, and the three candidates, Barbara Jordan (Sister Benevenuta), Josephine Koch (Sister Augustine), and Rosalia Koch (Sister Amanda), went through the beautiful ceremonies of reception in the sanctuary of the chapel. Mother Thomasina, her strength all but spent, with the aid of two Sisters entered the sanctuary and performed her part of the reception rites.

She allowed herself rest from duty and responsibility

only after all was over. But her strength had ebbed too far for recapture, though she had no idea that death was so near--nay, at the very threshold.

Two candidates, Eugenie Bourgeault (Sister Louis) and Maria Kreul (Siste Joseph) accompanied by Father Weinhart of Highland had arrived the day before reception. The kindly friend of the Sisters, Father Weinhart, had decorated the altars for the occasion and gave every assistance to add solemnity to the feast. His presence, genial and sympathetic, generated encouragement to the little community in which sickness and death prevailed like a cloud of impending disaster.

The day after reception, though fatigued and feverish, Mother Thomasina must needs welcome the lately arrived candidates. Sister Louis remembers Mother Thomasina as a beautiful, gracious religious radiating motherly solicitude. She arose as the two young girls entered, welcomed them to their convent home, and then, with a sweet smile said, "Be good children, and soon I will be able to take care of you." 20

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20. Information furnished the writer of this thesis by Sister Louis Bourgeault, February, 1936.

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But the strong spirit of the youthful prioress could no longer withstand the ravages of the disease. Unaware she had contracted typhoid fever while nursing Sister Petrina. For eight days she struggled against the fatal malady, but the frail worn body could endure no more.

In the early morning of September 6, after having received the last sacraments, she yielded her soul to God. The many

wearying experiences, discouraging uncertainties, and the extreme privations resignedly borne had ripened her in virtue, although she was but thirty-three years of age at her death. Her very youthfulness made her death a calamity. The thought of it has always caused regret to the members of the community. With Mother Benedicta she had made a religious foundation; their goal had been accomplished; their work finished.

The forlorn community attended the last rites of their loving mother and then sadly watched the hearse as it slowly withdrew. The candidates garbed in white dresses with black sashes walked behind as pallbearers. Gently they laid the remains of Mother Thomasina next to the grave of Mother Benedicta. The two foundresses were united in death as they had been in life. <sup>21</sup>

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21. cf. Authority in Note 20.

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The eulogy found in the Holy Cross Chronicle offers a fitting close to this chapter.

"She (Sister Thomasina) forsook her father and her mother; she also forsook her Mother Convent where she was greatly beloved. She even forsook her native land to accompany Mother Benedicta over land and sea and to be her stay at the time of her greatest affliction. She rejected the proffers made to her in Williamsburgh and was ready to sacrifice more, even her life, for her superior. On her grave stone might truly be written, 'Here rests a true noble heart. R.I.P.' " 22

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22. Holy Cross Chronicle, Ratisbon, Excerpt III, p. 7. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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## CHAPTER XIX

## THE CRITICAL YEARS

1866 - 1868

"On the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways."

--Romans XI, 33

The death of Mother Thomasina, sudden, unexpected, startling, cast a pall of uncertainty and gloom over the youthful religious of St. Catherine's Convent. Six Sisters had contracted typhoid fever and were hovering between life and death. Sister Raimunda, the dear Mother Senior, although failing in health, aged, and overcome with grief, was yet a comfort to the sorrowing community, for she formed a tangible connection with the great past and the traditions of Ratisbon.

Eleven professed Sisters, five novices, and five candidates, twenty-one members all told, made up the strength of the community. To this orphaned group Bishop Henni's letter brought consolation, encouragement, and organization. The letter bearing the same date as that on which Mother Thomasina died reads as follows:

"Dear Sisters:

"How the news from Reverend Schaffer concerning the death of the good Thomasina surprised me! God grant her eternal light. I shall offer the Holy Sacrifice for the soul of the deceased tomorrow morning. In the meantime I trust that everything will

proceed quietly with resignation to the will of God and according to the holy rule. Moreover, I appoint Sister Hyacintha as superioress --for the time being--that is until the election of the real superioress.

"In this hope I remain in deep sympathy with you all,

Your most devoted,

John Martin" 1

1. Henni Correspondence, September 6, 1866. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

With this appointment, Mother Hyacintha, at the age of twenty-five, assumed the burden of government--a responsibility which she was not to relinquish for thirty-five years. At the age of eighteen Sister Cecilia became mother assistant and retained this office till she was elected mother general in 1907. Mother Raimunda Graf, then a victim of tuberculosis, lingered but two months after Mother Thomasina's death, and fortified by the last sacraments, died on November 2, 1866.

Mother Hyacintha, though not an accomplished woman of the world, nevertheless, possessed those virtues and traits of character which are the crown of womanhood. Dignified, sincere, simple in demeanor; prudent, conscientious, courageous in action, pious, devoted, constant in spiritual life, she was qualified to guide a religious community.

The annals of her early life are brief and simple. Maria Oberbrunner was born in Maria Dorfen near Munich, Bavaria, on January 11, 1841. It was here that she spent her childhood and received the usual education given to a girl of the middle-class. In 1857 at the age of sixteen,



she came to America with her parents. Following the example of many other German immigrants, the Oberbrunner family chose Milwaukee, a city with a large German population, as their destination. About three years later, Maria sought entrance into the Convent of Notre Dame in Milwaukee. It was in the same convent that Mother Benedicta and Sister Thomasina sought hospitality in 1861 on their arrival from the South. <sup>2</sup>

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2. Sisters of St. Dominic--Historical Sketch of Saint Catherine's Convent with a Short Treatise on the Order, its Spirit and Devotions, p. 20.

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The sight of the group of zealous women in the Notre Dame postulate ready and willing to consecrate themselves to God in religion inspired Mother Benedicta to plead for just one of them for her future foundation. Mother Caroline generously acceded to her request and immediately asked for volunteers to aid in establishing a Dominican Convent in Wisconsin. "Maria Oberbrunner and Cunigunda Lösch, aware of a wee voice that whispered 'Come' responded bravely and thus became the first postulants" of the foundresses. <sup>3</sup>

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3. Ibid.

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The reader has been made acquainted with the subsequent events concerning Sister Hyacintha until the time of her appointment to the office of superioress. The strenuous summer of 1866 marked with the ravages of plague and death demonstrated the efficiency and prudence of the young Sister

from Roxbury as one responsibility after another was placed upon her. The choice, therefore, of the appointment of Mother Hyacintha was a happy one.

The Reverend Clement Thuente, O.P., says of her:

"Mother Hyacintha was one of the few humble souls, Divine Providence chose to build up a teaching community, to bring thousands of the little ones to Himself. She in her humility and generosity of heart communicated her beautiful soul to every member and gave her spiritual family its own distinctive characteristic spirit. Her history is the early history of St. Catherine's." 4

4. Ibid., p. VII.

Courageously she shouldered the burden of community leadership, and although in her own heart she restrained a fountain of tears, she brought glad cheer and holy comfort to the disheartened Sisters. Gradually the Sisters who had been ill with typhoid fever recovered their health, but in the meantime many discouraging situations had arisen.

The days of that dismal September were still further saddened by a withdrawal of a number of candidates and novices, for worried parents, alarmed at the poverty and sickness prevailing at the convent, insisted that their daughters return to the parental home. Other parents encouraged the same courses for their daughters, but were met with such steadfast refusal that in admiration of their loyalty to their religious vocation, the solicitous parents became substantial benefactors to the community. 3

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5. Information furnished the writer by Mother Emily Acker, Summer, 1932.

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But the most onerous problem that vexed the new superior and her assistants was that of a financial nature. A heavy debt of \$5,894 rested upon the community. There was no money on interest, and on account of the recent expenses there was no cash on hand; medicine as well as other necessities had to be purchased on credit and that, too, was soon exhausted. Mother Hyacintha one day was forced to borrow one dollar from a neighbor in order to pay the express on a small package, because the agent refused to leave it without pay, and the amount of the small express charge could not be found in the convent. <sup>6</sup>

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6. "A German-American Litigation Against a Female Convent," Columbia, p. 4, November 20, 1876.

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Often there was a scarcity of food. Even kind-hearted Protestants made gifts of victuals, and Racine College also often contributed food to the Sisters.

As has been pointed out in an earlier chapter, the convent was established in a most inauspicious time, for financial conditions throughout the nation had been aggravated by the Civil War. There were but few people who did not feel the scarcity of currency.

"For a quarter of a century the standard of value was imperiled, business disturbed,

and the value of property subjected to uncertainty by a propaganda on the part of a large portion of our people laboring under the conviction that currency was capital and that the free coinage of the silver product of our mines, at the behest of anyone choosing to present the same at the mints would add that vast sum to the capital of the country in the form adapted to current use." 7

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7. Hepburn, A. B., History of Coinage and Currency in the United States, pp. 274-275.

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So distressing were the affairs of the convent that Bishop Henni, no doubt, on account of the apparent lack of leadership, the heavy debt, and the want of a large number of efficient members advised the Sisters to unite themselves with the older Dominican Convent of Brooklyn, New York. This is clear from the Dominican provincial's letter written soon after Mother Thomasina's death. After three quarters of a century we are struck with awe at the prophetic penetration revealed in the lines written by the holy priest. The letter follows:

"St. Rose's, Springfield, Ky.  
Oct. 5, 1866

"My dear Sister Hyacintha:

"I did not receive your letter until last night, and I hasten to reply to it. I feel very much for your distressed condition. The hand of God is weighing upon you in taking away the dear Sister whom you have lost, but God always chastens those whom He loves, and usually before great blessings He sends heavy trials; He proves His children by tribulation. You had last Christmas an evidence of His watchful providence over you when He sent the countryman in the cold night to supply you with

the necessary fuel which you had no means of procuring.

"This fact ought to give you confidence in Him and make you apply to Him in your difficulties with great confidence and unswerving perseverance. Almighty God has merciful designs over you, and it is for you by fervent prayer to seek from Him the enlightenment which you require.

"When the bishop advised you to unite yourselves with the Sisters of New York, did he mean that you were to leave his diocese and go to New York? This is a question which I would like to have answered before I can give you any advice. You know you are altogether under the jurisdiction of Bishop Henni, and it would be very improper for me to interfere in the affair of his diocese. But if he wishes you to leave his diocese, then I would do all in my power to assist you, not only by my advice, but also by other means in my power.

"Hoping to hear from you very soon, I am with every respect and regard for your good Sisters

Yours in our Lord,

William D. O'Carroll, O.P." 8

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8. Rev. W. D. O'Carroll Correspondence. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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And so encouraged, the little community struggled on!

A European priest, the Reverend Leander Schaffer, proved a sympathetic friend to the Sisters during this ordeal; it was he who, though not an authorized chaplain, had yet been sent by Bishop Henni to administer to the spiritual needs of the Sisters. He remained with them about two months, and for forty years after he corresponded with them, often loaning them money without interest. In reference to these early days he writes in 1881:

"It makes me happy to look over the ocean and see Dominican Sisters in piety, zeal, and contented activity laboring in the vineyard of the Lord--these Sisters who in the name of the Lord gave shelter and food to a stranger and who intertwined flowers in his crown of thorns.

"May God's blessing rest on you and on your community and may you live to enjoy the fruit of the effort of those early days." 9

9. Schaffer, Leander, Correspondence, December 24, 1881.  
Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

Father Schaffer held Mother Hyacintha in high regard and recognized in her even at that early time, those fine womanly traits which later gained for her the respect of all who came in contact with her. This is confirmed by the following quotation from a letter written in 1908:

"May the Lord bless you and grant you many more years. May you enjoy some of the sweet fruits of your cares and efforts, of your prayers, your prudence, and your kindness--a blessing which few experience. May God's blessing rest upon you and in His own time give you the wreath of roses which never fades and among which no thorns are entwined." 10

10. Schaffer, Leander, Correspondence. April 12, 1908.  
Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

The noted Capuchin missionary, the Reverend Fabian Bermadinger, became chaplain of St. Catherine's in November, 1866. Coming to America in 1847, he administered to the Catholics in the central and southern parts of Wisconsin. 11 His elegant handwriting in the baptismal records

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11. Sullivan, T. J., The Catholic Church in Wisconsin,  
p. 1016-7.
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of many parishes attests his indefatigable pioneer labors. Although in 1866 he was broken down in health and a victim of tuberculosis, he won the love and grateful remembrance of the Sisters. His presence was a benediction, for so filled was he with the charity of God and kindness of a man of God. Dignified in appearance, meticulous in dress, and precise in action, he won the admiration of all by his charming personality. In him was found that depth of understanding characteristic of the true piety of a man of prayer. His great heart suffered when he became aware of the poverty of the Sisters, and he therefore interested himself in their temporal as well as their spiritual welfare. <sup>12</sup>

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12. Information furnished the writer by Mother Emily Acker and Sister Louis Bourgeault, 1932.
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Death, though not altogether unexpected, came suddenly to this great good man. During the month of July the Reverend F. X. Sailer an intimate friend of Father Fabian's, visited at the convent. Alarmed at his failing health, Father Sailer insisted that Father Fabian come to Port Washington for a vacation. The two familiar friends departed for Port Washington anticipating a pleasant renewal of friendship. The rest of the story is best told by Father Sailer who in a letter written to the Sisters shortly after Father Fabian's death describes the circumstances in a most touching manner:

"St. Dominic!

"The dear spiritual Father of your house and of the Sisters is no more. Father Fabian, the dear pious priest is no more. On the twenty-second at 11:15 the holy man of God completed his earthly career by a gentle and saintly death.

"Dear Sisters:

"Today, finally, I find leisure to inform you of the death of Father Fabian, and I believe that the mournful message will sadden your hearts as much as it has saddened mine--I who have lost in Father Fabian, my only and my truest friend.

"With my assistance and with much weariness and effort on his part, the dear Father arrived in Port Washington on the evening of the nineteenth. He said Mass on Saturday and on Sunday. He felt fairly well till Monday when terrible coughing and expectoration began to torment him. I sent for Dr. Scholl. Dr. Hartwigg also came from a distance of fifteen miles. Both consoled him and said they thought he would improve, while they informed me that his end was near.

"Monday afternoon he threw his arms around me and said, 'Father Sailer, I have come here to you to die.' I tried to console him, but he knew only too well how close death was. At seven in the evening I conducted devotions to the Blessed Virgin for him. The devotions were attended by many people who wept and prayed.

"After devotions the coughing stopped; also the pain in his chest subsided. He even received a few callers, which I as a rule refused. Several times that evening he drank milk of almonds, and it refreshed him. And so we spent the evening. Part of the time he was in bed, and part of the time we walked up and down the room, praying all the time. At ten-thirty I gave him general absolution and administered Extreme Unction. Then we sat side by side, his arm was about my shoulder, while I supported him with my right arm. Mariana wiped the perspiration from his brow. Two theologians prayed with us. At eleven fifteen the dear Father asked



me to lower him. After five minutes a beam of light passed over his face, and the good Father was in heaven.

"For the next half hour his eyes beamed, his face was transfigured so that I thought that by breathing in his face, kissing him, and calling to him I could bring him back to life. I sent for the doctor immediately; the dear Father was gone.

"Excuse me for not describing my grief. But the joy that the saintly priest died in my home gave me so much strength that from the nineteenth to the twenty-fifth; namely, six days and six nights, I remained at his side without any rest. On Tuesday morning at seven o'clock, Dr. Scholl at my request opened the body and--'Great God, it is a miracle,' exclaimed the doctor." 13

13. Letter written by Father F.X. Sailer to the Sisters, July, 1867.

What was the reason for this exclamation? What did he discover? The rest of the letter has disappeared and one can only conjecture. The general feeling among the Sisters and the friends of Father Fabian was that a great good man--one dear to the heart of God--a true Christian and a true apostolic laborer in the mission fields of the Northwest had been called to an eternal reward.

Sister Aloysia Watry and Sister Emily Acker, at that time candidates, were on their home visit in Holy Cross. From Racine they received the message to go to Port Washington to attend the funeral of Father Bermadinger, the beloved chaplain of St. Catherine's.

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14. Today both Father Bermadinger and Father Sailer rest together in the little brick chapel close to the entrance of the older Port Washington Catholic cemetery. In the same frame on the altar in the chapel, their pictures keep their memories ever fresh in the hearts of the parishioners.

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The death of Father Bermadinger was a great catastrophe for the community; eight months were to elapse before the convent was again to be blessed with a resident chaplain--and these eight months were the most critical in the history of the community.

Less than three weeks after the death of the chaplain Mother Hyacintha's first class--a group of twelve were received. The reception took place on August 9. The Right Reverend Bishop Henni added to the solemnity of the occasion by his presence. The following candidates were received: Sister Columba (Margaret Watry), Sister Aloysia (Catherine Watry), Sister Emily (Mary Acker), Sister Ambrosia, (Augusta Stahl), Sister Louis (Jeanette Bourgeault), Sister Josepha (Mary Kreul), Sister Alberta (Catherine McGinn), Sister Aquinata (Pauline LaPlante), Sister Osanna (Mary Davies), Sister Dolores (Christine Rousseau), and Sister Jacobina (Mary Mettman).

The months following this reception were difficult ones and for a time the disbanding of the community seemed imminent. This fact is confirmed by the following letter written by the Dominican provincial to the perplexed and much-tried superioress:

"St. Louis Bertrand's  
Sixth Street  
Louisville, Kentucky  
February 1, 1868

"My dear Sister Hyacinth:

"I received your very sad letter yesterday, and I confess I am at a loss how to answer it satisfactorily. You tell me some want to remain where they are; some want to go to New York; and some want to enter the Third Order.

"The wish of those who want to enter the Third Order cannot, I think, be carried out, for they cannot come from a higher to a lower obligation. Those who desire to go to New York may benefit by the change, but this I think is doubtful. I would advise against it unless all were of the same mind and that the bishop consented thereto and that the nuns and the Archbishop of New York were willing to receive you. I would rather favor the wish of those who desire at all hazards to remain where you have made so good a commencement, where you have had several vocations, and where from time to time you have received favors from God when you were in sore trouble and distress.

"But you say that neither the bishop nor priests have any compassion for you, that you are all young and left without a director. As to the first, remember that the hearts of men are in the hands of God, and when His designs in afflicting you are accomplished, He will incline toward you the hearts of those who are now hardened against you. Besides, bishops die, but communities live. You may have a longer or shorter time to wait, but it is inevitable; the bishop will die, and your community will survive him and the heart of his successor will be drawn toward you. As to a director; this is a more difficult matter. There are very few who are suited to be directors of Sisters, and it is better to trust to the directions given in the constitutions and authorized books of spirituality than to fall into the hands of an imprudent director. You can get all the directions which are absolutely needed for your conscience from your confessor.

"The advice that I would give you is to wait on God patiently. He never abandons those who have confidence in Him and wait for Him. We creatures of a day think waiting long, but if we abandon ourselves to God and strive in all things to be resigned to His will, we shall not find waiting long nor irksome, for God will give us consolation in the midst of our trials. Pray, therefore, that you may have perfect hearts and strive to observe with great exactness your rule and constitutions in the points especially of the chapter of faults, silence, meditation, and office. Fasting and abstinence you are unable to observe unless in a modified way. And I would advise you to be easy in granting dispensations on these points.

"Hoping that the next letter I get from you may contain more cheering news, I am

Yours in our Lord and S.D.,

Wm D. O'Carroll, O.P., Prov." 16

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16. Rev. W.D. O'Carroll, O.P., Correspondence, February 1, 1867, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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On February first this letter was written. On February second the community was astounded to learn that three Sisters had secretly left the convent. What a coincidence! That disaffection had been increasing among a small group had been evident from obvious and suspicious conduct. Mother Hyacintha, apparently ignorant of the exact nature of the disturbance had, nevertheless, sensed the affair and had referred to it in her correspondence with the provincial; and he had on the day before the catastrophe written this prophetic message redolent with encouragement and sound advice. And well it was that his letter arrived to console the perplexed superiors. The

event relative to the Sisters who left is tersely summarized in Mother Hyacintha's diary as follows:

"On the second of February a professed Sister named Pia left the community with two novices. Two she had sent before her and one left sometime later. It made a great disturbance in the convent, and for a while it seemed that the community might disband. The confessor, Reverend E. Etschman, offered little encouragement. In fact, he added much to the already existing confusion." 17

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17. Diary of Mother Hyacintha, Diary IV, p. 1, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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Sister Pius Doyle with the novices, Sister Dolores, Sister Aquinata, and Sister Osanna taught at St. Patrick's school, and it was among this group that dissension was spread. Assuming, no doubt, that the indigent community at Racine would soon disband, Sister Pius accosted a number of professed Sisters and novices concerning her project of founding a new community at Bay Settlement, Wisconsin, where Reverend E. Doems, a Crosier monk, wished to establish a congregation of women to instruct the poorer classes and to visit the sick in their homes. For sometime Sister Pius had carried on a clandestine correspondence with Father Doems whose acquaintance she had made through Sister Dolores, who had been a member of Holy Cross Church, Bay Settlement, of which he was pastor. The affair terminated with the departure of Sisters Pius Doyle, Dolores Rosseau, Aquinata LaPlante, Osanna Davies, and Alberta McGinn. 18

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18. Pierre, Sister Anastasia, op. cit., p. 4.

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The Sisters who left opened a school at Bay Settlement in 1868. Father Doems meanwhile became Vicar General of the Green Bay Diocese and applied to Bishop Melcher for the necessary permission to form a new community. At first the Sisters dressed as Dominicans, but on November 7, 1874, the five members were received into the Third Order of St. Francis. Sister Dolores later known as Sister Christine Rousseau was appointed the first superioress. 19

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19. The Catholic Church in the United States of America, II, p. 192-3.

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The effect of the departure of the Sisters upon the community was evident in a depression of spirit and bewilderment. Even the dauntless spirits of the pioneer Sisters who had weathered the hardships of the early years began to weaken. Mother Hyacintha proposed the advisability of joining the Sisters in New York to a number of members. Soon more novices left the community. The anecdote is told of Sister Benedicta, a novice, who had just cleaned her fifteen lamps as her obedience when she was confronted by her mother who insisted upon taking her home in spite of her pleadings that she be allowed to stay. Sister Ambrosia showed evident signs of a hysterical temperament and was dismissed. Of the twelve members in the reception class only six remained; namely, Sister Columba, Sister

Aloysia, Sister Emily, Sister Louis, Sister Josepha, and Sister Jacobina.

And so another storm was weathered. Better days were near. Through the urgent plea of Reverend Michael Heiss who had become interested in the community, through the Reverend F. X. Weinhart, Bishop Henni appointed the Reverend Jodocus Adolph Birkhaeuser as spiritual director. With this happy event a new era begins for the community. 20

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20. History of the Congregation of St. Catherine of Siena and Statistics Relating to the Same. History and Statistics No. II, p. 10.

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## CHAPTER XX

## THE APPOINTMENT OF TWO CHAPLAINS AND OTHER EVENTS

1868 - 1874

"With the declared intention of devoting his life to the work, and with a zeal born of God and love for souls, Father Birkhaeuser entered upon his appointed task." 1

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1. Sisters of St. Dominic, Historical Sketch, p. 26.

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With sincere gratitude and jubilation the Sisters welcomed the Reverend J. A. Birkhaeuser as their spiritual director in March, 1868. For the next forty years his was the privilege of shaping the destinies of St. Catherine's and stamping it with his own sterling character. His daily life became a model for his spiritual children. His interest in the community and his devotion to it were remarkable. He was personally interested in each Sister under his care and spared no effort to further the spiritual advancement of all. For the temporal welfare of the convent he was no less concerned.

The following excerpt presents a brief summary of his life and activities:

"Father Birkhaeuser was born in Troisdorf, Rhine Province, Germany, on June 8, 1841; he came to this country in 1849 with his parents and made his home in Fussville in this state. He was ordained as priest on December 27, 1863 at St. Francis Seminary. His first charge was St. Louis church



at Caledonia, Racine County, where he remained six months. He entered upon his duties in that church in January 1864. After his short term of service in that church he was chosen as a professor at St. Francis Seminary where he remained until 1867 when he took charge of St. Joseph's church at Hazel Green, Wisconsin. Here he remained until 1868 when in March of that year he was appointed resident chaplain of St. Catherine's Academy in this city. He remained in that capacity until March 1870 when he was chosen as pastor of St. Mary's church of this city. During the time he had charge of St. Mary's Catholic church he also acted as regular Father Confessor at the convent.

"In 1873 he again went to St. Francis Seminary as professor but attended the convent in this city as regular confessor for eleven years. After the death of Reverend Father Seibold who had been appointed as resident chaplain at the institution and who acted in that capacity from March, 1870, until his death in 1884, Father Birkhaeuser again became the resident chaplain which position he held at the time of his death.

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"At St. Francis Seminary he taught the most advanced branches, the classics, church history, moral philosophy, and other branches. He was author of "Birkhaeuser's Church History" which is used in most of the seminaries in the United States and many in Great Britain." 2

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2. "Sudden Death of Chaplain," Racine Daily Journal, p. 1 March 4, 1908. Clipping--Scrapbook of Circulars and Clippings, Statistics and History No. IV, p. 24.
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In spite of Father Birkhaeuser's activities as specified in the brief account given above, St. Catherine's always remained his greatest interest. On September 6, 1868, he introduced the monthly recollection Sunday. On February 13, 1870, he blessed the Stations of the Cross and also the convent. 3

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3. Diary of Mother Hyacintha, Diary IV, p. 1, p. 16.

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The first visitation of the convent was conducted by the Reverend Innocent Wapelhorst, professor of St. Francis Seminary, on August 10, 1870, and lasted from ten o'clock in the morning until four in the afternoon. <sup>4</sup>

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4. Ibid., p. 20.

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It had always remained the custom of the Sisters since the permission given by the bishop in 1865 to go on collection tours. In 1869, Father Birkhaeuser generously assumed this task and was very successful as the following excerpts from his letters testify:

"November 19, Plattesville--I am herewith sending a money order for seventy-five dollars which I collected in a day and a half. I expected to have \$100, but I caught a cold in the storm, and so I had to stay home yesterday and today.

"November 20, Sinsinawa--I will try to collect \$100 for the payment of the small debts. I hope you received the \$75. Don't make the payment till I get back." <sup>5</sup>

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5. Birkhaeuser, Y.A., Correspondence. Archives, Motherhouse Racine.

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The Reverend Patrick Seibold arrived at St. Catherine's on May 2, 1870, to take up his duties as chaplain, because Father Birkhaeuser had been appointed pastor of St. Mary's at Racine. Father Seibold who was now in his sixty-seventh year had retired from parish work on account of feeble health.

Father Seibold was born at Wuertenberg, Germany, September 29, 1804. He made his studies at Ellwagen and Tübingen having for his teachers the gifted Hirscher and the renowned Moehler, the well-known authors of Symbolism. He finished his studies at Rottenberg and on September 14, 1831 was ordained a priest. In 1837 he was appointed to the large and important parish of Weisenau near Ravenberg. While laboring zealously as parish priest, he founded in 1844 the Friedensbote, a spiritual and well-written Catholic weekly, the first of its kind; and therefore he may be considered one of the pioneers of Catholic journalism in Germany. In 1850 Father Seibold came to America, landing in New York on March 17. He labored first in the diocese of Buffalo, and then he came to the diocese of Milwaukee. After laboring eleven years in the diocese, he was appointed resident chaplain of St. Catherine's. Here he led the saintly life of a recluse, his duties requiring him only to read Mass and to distribute Holy Communion. <sup>6</sup>

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6. "Obituary," Catholic Citizen, May 3, 1884, Clipping.

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Father Seibold was a priest of singular piety and great austerity of life. He had no contact with seculars and very little even with the Sisters, his life being one of contemplation, prayer, and penance. The memory of his chaplaincy is cherished with many an anecdote and story, among which are found the following:

Every morning before he read holy Mass, he would kneel before the Blessed Sacrament for two or three hours without

any support. Although he did not hear the confessions of the community, he was most gracious in dispensing the sacrament of Penance if anyone desired his services. He understood well how to console troubled souls. For fourteen years he served the community without remuneration and often loaned money to the convent without charging interest. His emaciated figure gave evidence of a mortified life. For the last twenty-five years he lived, he abstained from meat entirely; his nourishment consisted chiefly of crackers, bread, and milk. <sup>7</sup>

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7. Pierre, Sister Anastasia, Reminiscences from Early Days, p. 13.

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During all the time Father Seibold was at St. Catherine's, Father Birkhaeuser remained Father Confessor and active chaplain, first as pastor of St. Mary's and in 1873, as professor in St. Francis Seminary. The two holy priests were close friends and held each other in high regard. Every week through rain or storm Father Birkhaeuser arrived at the convent, where he heard confessions, conducted religious services, and consulted with the superiors.

The following excerpt from a letter written by Father Birkhaeuser dated May 31, 1875, will indicate his active interest in the community:

"I saw the Archbishop today and received the following faculties:

1. To conduct the ceremonies of reception and profession.

2. Once a month to have devotion to the Sacred Heart with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.
3. To have Thirteen Hours Devotion, but not during the vacation.
4. Don't forget to enter these faculties in the book.

P.S. Since the month of June is dedicated to the Sacred Heart, the Sisters will certainly practice a devotion to the Sacred Heart in common." 8

8. Birkhaeuser Correspondence. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

A number of interesting events occurred between the years 1870 and 1874 which are recorded in Mother Hyacintha's Diary. Among them the following merit mention:

"March 24, 1870--Today we were so poor that we didn't have enough money to buy flour. Entirely unexpectedly we received sixty dollars from someone." 9

9. Diary IV, op. cit., p. 18.

"April 22, 1871--Today Sister Rose (Lbsch) left the convent. She was in the convent for eleven years and was eight years professed. She left because permission was not granted her to leave the convent for one year on account of her health. No foolish notion!" 10

10. Ibid., p. 28.

"August 9, 1873--Sister Vincentia (Watry) was officially appointed novice mistress." 11

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11. Ibid. p. 45.

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"On April 30, the excavating for the building of a new wing 33 by 82 feet began." 12

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12. The Sisters of St. Dominic, Historical Sketch, p. 12.

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The years between 1868 and 1874 were years of progress for the community, quite unlike the earlier years of suffering and hardship. In 1874 the "breathing spell" was to end, as the information of a pending European litigation, the murmuring of which had been heard since 1869, reached the convent.

## CHAPTER XXI

## INVOLVED IN A LAWSUIT

1874 - 1877

"When the need is greatest, God's help is nearest."

--Old German Proverb

The unprecedented litigation carried on against St. Catherine's Convent between the years 1874 and 1877 by Mother Thomasina Ginker's relatives in Germany aroused great interest in both Wisconsin and in Bavaria, Germany. The whole deplorable process, which could have been avoided, was instigated and perpetrated as the result of a malicious falsehood. According to the Reverend Frederick Schrems, Mother Thomasina's relatives received no word of her death until a letter came from an American lawyer stating that the superior of the Convent in Racine, Thomasina Ginker, died in 1866 without making a will and that the heirs, the Ginker family, should state in what manner the inheritance should be disposed. <sup>1</sup>

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1. Schrems, F., Kurze Geschichte des Dominikanerinnenklosters vom Heiligen Kreuz in Regensburg und Seiner Filialen, p. 51.

The inheritance referred to consisted of the property in Green Bay, Wisconsin, and the property in Racine which had been purchased by the foundresses.

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Of course this was untrue for on September 1, 1866 Mother Thomasina had made a will bequeathing the inheritance she had received from Mother Benedicta Bauer and Sister

Raimunda Graf as follows:

"First, after all my lawful debts are paid, I give the residue of my estate real and personal to wit: To (Sisters of the same Order) namely, M. Cecilia Fox, and M. Hyacintha Oberbrunner to hold the same in trust for the use and benefit of the Order of St. Dominic and St. Catherine's Female Academy, and for no other purpose--which is located in the city of Racine in said state of Wisconsin.

"Likewise I make, constitute, and appoint the Right Reverend Bishop John M. Henni and Gerhard Thelen of Racine to be executors of this last will and testament." 2

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2. Litigation, 1874-1877, Manuscript III, p. 90. Copy Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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The will, drawn up by Mathias Kelble, a lawyer of Racine, was probated, remaining in the court from February 26, 1869, to December 1, 1869. The verdict was as follows:

"M. Cecilia Fox and M. Hyacintha Oberbrunner are entitled to take, have, and hold said personal property and real estate in fee and absolutely." 3

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3. Ibid., pp. 113-115.

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As early as 1868 Mother Hyacintha, anxious about the convent inheritance, expressed her dubious state of mind to Father Bauer. He immediately had his own relatives sign a statement that they would claim no property left by Mother Benedicta. He allayed her fears with regard to the Ginker family by saying:

"You need not worry, because the Ginker



family are religious-minded and have the kindest feelings towards the convents. As soon as I get the papers from you, which will give me the required information, I will do all that is necessary for a settlement of the matter." 4

4. Bauer, M., Correspondence, April 17, 1868. Archives Motherhouse, Racine.

From a statement in Father Bauer's letter dated September, 1869, it appears that the Ginker family, contrary to his expectations, made an effort even at this time to secure the convent property for in reference to the probating of the will he says:

"I am overjoyed that the litigation will soon end in your favor, and the Ginker relatives who with avidity have stretched out their wicked hands in desire now can turn back with their covetousness." 5

5. Bauer, M., Correspondence. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

Among the members of the Ginker family, however, the inheritance became a favorite topic for discussion. They were incited and persuaded at the beer table and in public not to renounce their inheritance. Carl Ginker, city clerk of Regenstauf, and Vincent Ginker, chimney sweep of Neustadt, became aggressive agitators, apparently convinced of the justice of their cause on account of the American lawyer's letter. <sup>6</sup> The other brothers and sisters were not so inclined

6. Schrems, F., op. cit., pp. 51-52.

to begin the lawsuit.

The startling news of the pending litigation was announced to the Sisters by Samuel Ritchie of Racine on January 13, 1874. He submitted documents requiring the Sisters to relinquish their property in favor of the Ginker family, threatening a lawsuit if they did not comply with the demands. The legal prosecution of the litigation was announced to the Sisters on June 20 of the same year. <sup>7</sup>

7. Diary of Mother Hyacintha, Diary IV, pp. 50-51.

St. Catherine's Female Academy was incorporated on July 20, 1874, and this was one of the first steps taken to defend the property from the plaintiffs. The trial of Franzisca R uth, Theobald Ginker, Anna Richtman, Sophie Hoffman, Vincent Ginker, Frederick Ginker, and Carl Ginker, plaintiffs, against Hyacintha Oberbrunner and Cecilia Fox, began in the Circuit Court, Racine, on October 17 and ended on November 21. During this distressing time the Sisters continually kept hours of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. Father Birkhaeuser attended all the court sessions. The final verdict against the convent on November 21 was accepted with resignation. With encouragement from Father Birkhaeuser; however, the Sisters decided not to accept the decision but to take the case to the supreme court. <sup>8</sup>

8. Ibid., pp. 51-54.

The decision of November 21 set aside the will and testament of Sister Thomasina Ginker which the probate court had recognized as valid and genuine in 1869, declaring it invalid on account of incorrect legal form. In this trial Van Buskirk and Ritchie acted as the plaintiffs' attorneys, and Fuller and Dyer as the defendants' attorneys.

The litigation began in the Supreme Court at Madison on January 13, 1875, but the decision was not rendered until September 5, 1876. Again the case was decided in favor of the plaintiffs on the ground that Sisters Hyacintha and Cecilia could not hold the property "in trust" for St. Catherine's Convent as this institution was not incorporated at the time. In consequence it was not known as a corporate body and no property could be held or willed in trust. If the words "in trust" had been omitted and the property thereby became the personal property of the two nuns, or if the convent were incorporated as it became later, the will could not have been put aside.

The writer of an article in the Columbia says:

"Now the last two legal decisions have been due to error in form and the whole will has been set aside on account of this. It was the first case of its kind in Wisconsin, and the decision was contrary to the expectations of the best jurists. Even the present judge of Wisconsin, Honorable E. J. Ryan, when consulted shortly before his appointment expressed his opinion that the decision of the probate court was valid and therefore the will, could not be set aside.

. . . . .

"This case robs St. Catherine's Academy of its property and turns it over to such as have in justice and equity no more claim to it than the learned attorneys at Madison. A jurist who for fifteen years was supreme judge terms it the most flagrant injustice ever heard of. It is an attempt to rob money under

the form of law." 9

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9. "A German-American Litigation against a Female Convent," Columbia, p. 4, November 20, 1876.
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Meanwhile Father Michael Bauer in Germany was doing everything in his power to help the Sisters. He appealed to the Reverend Pollman, the pastor of the parish at Neustadt to bring his parishioners, the Ginkers, to a fairer state of mind. He wrote to Carl and Vincent Ginker explaining the injustice of the case. In return he was threatened with a lawsuit by Vincent Ginker who accused him of using insulting language in his letter. He gathered data from the convent of Holy Cross to be used in the trial. In a letter dated September 23, 1874, he says:

"It is true that I am deeply interested in the convent, but why shouldn't I be, for it was founded by my natural sister, the deceased Sister Benedicta, and the present incumbents are the daughters of my deceased sister and therefore related to me." 10

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10. Bauer, M., Correspondence, 1874-1878. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.
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An incident of no little interest occurred at this juncture of the litigation. Mr. Feucht of Farmersville, Wisconsin, visited the convent to make arrangements for his daughter Magdalen to enter as a candidate. Mother Hyacintha received him graciously but informed him that the superiors had decided to receive no more aspirants until the litigation was completely ended. With her usual candor she informed him of the proceedings

suggesting that an unfavorable decision might end in the disbanding of the convent. Mr. Feucht was justly indignant and arrived home in an excited frame of mind. He explained to his family that if each Sister would claim her portion as dowry and the remuneration for her labor, which were justly due her, there would be nothing left for the plaintiffs. So convinced was he of the logic of this line of argument that he induced Father Michael Deisenrieder to go to Racine and lay the case before the superior. 11

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11. Information furnished to the writer of this thesis by Sister Alberta Feucht, June, 1935.

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Whether or not this incident had any bearing upon the case has not been ascertained, but at this time the convent dismissed its former attorneys, Messrs. Fuller and Dyer, and engaged Messrs. Fish and Lee who followed a plan of argument similar to the reasoning of Mr. Feucht, and the proceedings were continued.

The attorneys, Fish and Lee, investigated the case thoroughly. The complainants offered again to settle for the sum of \$7,000 or \$8,000, but the demand was considered exorbitant. The day of trial at the circuit court, Racine, was set for March 4, 1877.

The last court proceedings are best given by a quotation from the Columbia:

"Until now the courts had simply studied the will of Mother Thomasina as such, and decided according to the letter

of the law. The personal claims of the Sisters with regard to the property in question had until now not been the subject of legal investigation. The defendants found themselves forced to become prosecutors and claim their just share of the property in the form of dowries, labor, and earnings as well as donations and inheritance from patrons and benefactors. The lawsuit was to be continued in a different form and come to a hearing on March 15. The hard-pressed Sisters could, with the new turn of events, look forward with confidence to a new decision of the court. The opposite party seemed to fear this, since immediately before the formal opening of the proceedings they expressed their willingness to come to an agreement. The defendants in order to avoid further unpleasantness and postponement of court procedure negotiated with the party. At first they demanded \$2,500 but were finally satisfied to come to a settlement for \$1,500. The courts recognized the compromise and ended the case.

"This was the conclusion of that peculiar lawsuit which for three years has created such a sensation among the citizens of Racine as well as in the surrounding territory. The case has raised much sympathy for the Sisters. Public opinion which was decidedly in favor of the Sisters condemned this seizure of their possessions as an act of injustice which cried to heaven for vengeance. To this sentiment among the people was due to a large extent the successful conclusion of the litigation. The full cost of the lawsuit was \$3000 which sum had been forced from the convent by the prosecutors. Of the \$1500, let them guess what the attorneys received and what the Ginker family acquired. The Ginker family gained nothing by the case except the doubtful honor of having oppressed a helpless community of Sisters, thus committing a great act of injustice." 12

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12. "The End of the Litigation against a Convent of Women,"  
Columbia, p. 4, March 29, 1877.

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These entries in the Diary of Mother Hyacintha adequately reveal the spirit of gratitude and rejoicing that prevailed in the convent at the result of the settlement.

"March 15, 1877--This morning a legal settlement was made at the courthouse. We were given our papers, and the Ginker party was given \$1,500. Many people were present in the courthouse to hear the result of our lawsuit. 'When the need is greatest, God's help is nearest.' The result was wonderful!

"March 16--We had a High Mass of thanksgiving for the success of the lawsuit.

"March 19--(Feast of St. Joseph) We had a High Mass of thanksgiving with Benediction and the Te Deum, and every heart was filled with love and thanksgiving to St. Joseph for his wonderful intercession and help." 13

13. Diary of Mother Hyacintha, Diary III, p. 72.

In thanksgiving for the successful issue of the lawsuit and the fulfillment of a promise made at that period, one member of the community, for the past sixty years, has been appointed to pray an extra rosary every Sunday. Thus God's providence over the community is ever kept fresh in the hearts of its members.

## CHAPTER XXII

## BENEFACTORS AND FRIENDS

1860 - 1880

"Blessed is he that considereth the poor."  
Psalms XLI, 1.

God blessed the community with kind benefactors. Among these the Right Reverend Archbishop Henni and the Right Reverend Bishop James Whelen, O.P., and the Reverend Fathers, Michael Deisenrieder, Francis Sailer, O. Praem., William O'Carroll, O.P., Francis Haas, O.M. Cap., Fabian Bermadinger, O.M. Cap., Adolph Birkhaeuser, Patrick Seibold, Innocent Wapelhorst, and Francis Weinhart all aided the Sisters substantially in various significant ways and gave them in many instances, both moral and financial support. Antecedent chapters of this thesis have disclosed the splendid contributions made by these pioneer ecclesiastics to a pioneer community. A few of these and other benefactors merit special recognition.

The foundresses were much indebted to Father Deisenrieder who took the initiative in establishing them in the Milwaukee diocese. Although Father Deisenrieder acted as chaplain for only about a year, he always remained a loyal friend and in 1869 invited the Sisters to assume charge of the parish school which he opened at LeRoy, Wisconsin. Furthermore, from time to time Father Deisenrieder loaned the Sisters money until the principal reached \$2,200. In



his will he stipulated that the sum was to become a donation to the convent at the time of his death. <sup>1</sup>

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1. "A German-American Litigation against a Female Convent," Columbia, p. 4, November 30, 1876.
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The citizens of Racine also rallied to the assistance of the Sisters. A fair, sponsored by the convent during the time of the trial in the Supreme Court at Madison, demonstrated the genuine sympathy which the people expressed at this trying period. The fair opened on January 18, 1875. It was so well attended and so enthusiastically supported that the Sisters realized a gross income of \$2,256. Since the expenses amounted to \$398, the convent netted a profit of \$1,858. The fair was successful far beyond the Sisters' expectations. <sup>2</sup>

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2. Diary of Mother Hyacintha, Diary IV, p. 55. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.
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The Reverend Michael Bauer, Mother Benedicta's brother, was one of the most bountiful of patrons. From across the ocean he advised, encouraged, and assisted the Sisters. He possessed to a remarkable degree that indispensable but untranslatable virtue of South Germany, "gemütlichkeit." A typical Bavarian, he recognized the ideal factors in human existence; consequently religion, art, and intellectual culture held a high place in his instinctive and reasonable attitude toward life. His letters to the Sisters re-echo

the simplicity, naturalness, contentment, humor, and deep piety of his genial life. To allow the reader to become more intimately acquainted with his delightful personality a number of quotations from his letters will be submitted.

From Dingolfing to which Benefice he had been transferred he writes on September 17, 1870:

"That matters stand well with you pleases me greatly, and I thank God for His goodness. For a long time I have been trying to send the breviary to Sister Dominica, but I have not succeeded  
 .....  
 Besides this I will send you a small chalice, a ciborium, though not a new one, yet very good--a sick burse with silver case and silver oil stocks--and something else! Because the good zealous Sister Cecilia would so much love to play the harp, I have bought one for her--a pedal harp which, though not entirely new, is very handsome, well-kept, and very prettily carved. Besides this, I bought her an instructor--the best to be had in Bavaria. I like the harp myself and often try to play on it. I imagine the good Sister will jump for joy when she receives it. It was made in Paris and purchased by a Bavarian official as a hobby. This man died, and no one purchased it from the widow until I came upon it. Although the harp is valued at 500 florin, I purchased it for the nominal price of thirty florin, with the request that the Sisters pray for the widow, Caroline Gabrel.

"I called on the secretary and spiritual director (Ludwig-Missionsverein) Doctor Kagerer, and placed a request for your convent. Be sure to send in your request and mention your debt. Even if nothing is forthcoming at present, your name will be entered on the list for the future.

"There will be no tariff on the instrument provided its use is for church

services. You will be able to use it in the chapel, and therefore I can make that statement to the commissioner.

"Greet all the Sisters from "A" to "Z" and ask them to pray for me."

"Dingolfing, December, '71

"A proof that the contents of the trunk sent you recently afforded you great joy is evident from the fact that you in turn have given me great pleasure by sending the photographs of yourselves and of your convent. Nothing could have pleased me more; my heart's desire is fulfilled. I should gladly have been present when the trunk was opened, but I can imagine with what curiosity the contents were examined, particularly I visualize Sister Cecilia's joy on finding the harp. I can see her embrace it; and Sister Aloysia, the sacristan, receiving the albs and surplice. I imagine that in these photographs the convent of St. Catherine of Siena with its members have come to visit me in order to express their thanks. Are you not all the spiritual daughters of my unforgettable and much-loved Sister Benedicta, and have not you a claim on my fatherly affection? Although so far distant, we have suddenly come so close to each other that we can daily see and speak to each other. The dear photographs in frames under glass are hanging in my sitting room where I often look at them and talk to them while the ladies keep silence. Since the picture does not show all the choir and lay Sisters, I beg you when the occasion presents itself to send me the names of all the choir and lay Sisters, their ages and their places of birth. All this is of interest to me. I would also like to know the number of pupils in your academy, all of whom I greet although they are unknown to me. During fourteen years I was father to the pupils of the Niederwiehbach academy, and these recollections are pleasant to me.

"The beautiful stole is the work of Sister Valentina of Augsburg. I used it

only on the occasion of the reception and profession ceremonies. The beautiful albs and surplice are the work of Sister Angela's pupils. This Sister lives for your convent and still cherishes the hope that some day she will join you in Racine, especially now since the disbanding of the Sisters in Bavaria is likely.

.....  
 "Regarding myself I may say, thank God, I am well and kept very busy instructing in Latin, German, piano, guitar, and zither--but all of my own choice. Often the thought of my dear Sister Cecilia, who will soon be master of her art, occurs to me. If I look at her photograph, it seems to me she must speak to her spiritual father, but she remains silent. In this world we will scarcely be permitted to talk to each other, but with the grace of God we will meet in the beyond and will make up for lost time when united with my unforgettable Sister, where all will be melody, praise, and love of God.

"From the photograph I see that you have a large music room. How many and what kind of instruments have you?

"Have you a garden near the convent? Am I not very curious? But that is the result of my fatherly affection for your convent. Now I enclose my latest photograph. It is to take my place in wishing you a happy New Year. I ask God to bless the convent with His richest blessings, to keep you strong and healthy, and to increase your number.

"I remember you in each holy Mass and beg your prayers in return.

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"Dingolfing, July 7, 1879

"Weighed down with much writing, I have found little time for a letter to America, but today on the namesday of my unforgettable Sister Benedicta I want to inform you that I am still among the living, and thanks to God, I am feeling well except for the ailments that come with old

age. When one is seventy-two and a half years old, one becomes aware of gradually traveling toward a dwelling in Nether Earth. Pray earnestly that the merciful God will graciously take my soul unto Himself. I have made my will and have bequeathed a note of 1000 florin bearing four and one-half per cent interest to the dear convent in Racine. Since I will need the interest for the remaining days of my life, I have turned the note over to the Ludwig-Missionsverein. The Society will have it exchanged for American money and will send it to the convent. You will have yearly four ember Masses said for the repose of my soul. I have also willed you my feast day vestment valued at 220 francs. Father Joseph (Fox) has seen it and was very much pleased with it. I had intended to send you my piano, too, but Doctor Kagerer advised me not to do so, because in the first place, transportation would cost more than the value of the instrument, and secondly, it would most likely be ruined. Instead, you will receive 1000 francs in gold. Moreover, you will receive two beautiful surplices and probably a red and white vestment and a missal. For these gifts you will remember me in your prayers.

.....  
 "In the Holy Cross Convent things are going badly as I learned from the pastor of the Cathedral at Ratisbon. Things have come to a crisis so that the brewery had to be sold for 30,000 francs. It is feared that the Sisters will lose their property and that they will have to move to Viebach. At the time I visited the Sisters of my acquaintance, the prioress told me that things were not so bad as Reverend Shottl thought they were. After the departure of my sister, Sister Benedicta, an administrator was appointed for the convent. This man intending to make the convent wealthy, speculated in a bank in Vienna, and, behold, the speculation proved disastrous. It would seem that the blessing of God departed with my Sister, because the convent has not prospered since. How I grieve for this venerable ancient convent! Let us pray that the blessing of God may return to it.

"I have not gone to Munich this year and probably will not, because travel becomes daily more of a hardship to me. By the time this letter reaches Racine you will prepare to celebrate your feast day. I offer my congratulations. On the sixteenth of August I will especially remember you at holy Mass that God will bless you and your convent most abundantly and that you may all labor faithfully in the Lord's vineyard and thereby obtain the promised reward.

"With heartfelt greetings to every one of you and with a request for prayers, I am

Your faithful old father,

M. Bauer" 3

3. Bauer, Michael, Correspondence. The letters from which the above quotations are taken are all in the Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

On July 9, 1879, the convent received the news of the death of Father Bauer from Doctor Kagerer who also transferred to the convent the \$418 in gold which he had bequeathed to the Sisters. Father Bauer died at Dingolfing on May 24, 1879 at the age of seventy-three. <sup>4</sup>

4. Diary of Mother Hyacintha, Diary IV, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

Another very special friend of the community was the Reverend Joseph Ferdinand Müller. It was he, who as a personal friend of the foundresses secured the good will of King Louis I of Bavaria and of the Ludwig-Missionsverein. It would be difficult to imagine the success of the Racine foundation were it not for his very substantial aid. The

interests of the German Catholics were his interests, and he felt very disappointed if he could not satisfy all their demands. In 1855 he resigned his position of business manager for the Society, but he remained the agent for several bishops and the German communities in North America. Although officially separated from the Ludwig-Missionsverein, his interest in it continued and he helped wherever he could. It gave him great pleasure if he could forward special donations. These were principally from King Ludwig whose chaplain he remained. Between the years 1861 and 1864 he was instrumental in securing many donations for the foundresses both from the king and from the Society. When he died on February 3, 1864, the Sisters lost a friend who was personally interested in them and in their work. <sup>5</sup>

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5. Roemer, T., The Ludwig-Missionsverein and the Church in the United States (1838-1919) pp. 35-37.

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Monsignor Doctor Paul Kagerer, business manager and Ludwig Ignaz Lebling, treasurer of the Ludwig-Missionsverein, took the place of Father Müller as patrons to the convent. Both of these men made munificent donations to the Society and were of the greatest assistance to the Racine Convent. The donations from the Ludwig-Missionsverein between the years 1861 and 1878 amounted to 10,850 gulden and 4,200 marks. <sup>6</sup>

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6. Ibid., pp. 38-39.

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The Reverend Adelbert Inama, O. Praem., invited the Sisters to take charge of the school in Roxbury, Wisconsin, in 1865. Father Inama had purchased land in the vicinity of Roxbury with the intention of founding a Premonstratensian Monastery there. Failing in this project he wished for the assurance that the land would be used for religious purposes, and therefore, resolved to donate one hundred acres to some religious community stipulating the condition that a religious school must be opened on the premises. He chose the Convent of Racine to be the recipient of his favor, but so violent was the opposition of one member of the Order working with him in America that six years elapsed before the donation was accepted, and then it was received only under condition that Father Inama receive a small cash payment for the land in order that future disagreeable circumstances might be avoided.

Regarding the donation Father Inama writes to Mother Hyacintha on October 3, 1872:

"Your dear letter of September 8, is at hand. I am perfectly satisfied, but I cannot understand why you wish to wait three years before beginning the school building. Besides, I would probably not be able in that case to witness the beginnings of an undertaking so dear to me. I have already selected the spot which I consider best suited for the purpose, which, of course, could be changed if you so desire.

"I believe I have sufficiently proved to you my great desire of seeing a Catholic school firmly established here. Now then, with God's blessing all will work out right, for the project is undertaken for the glory of God, and it is His work. I confidently



hope for the accomplishment of this affair, and that I shall pass from this life to a better world in peace and confidence, but in the meantime patience!

"The dear Sisters here will meanwhile be reconciled to existing conditions. They themselves probably keep you informed. I don't interfere in anything for dear peace sake. The school is still small but will increase in numbers during the next month." 7

7. Inama Correspondence, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

Father Birkhaeuser's letter to Archbishop Henni elucidates the conditions which constantly delayed the accomplishment of Father Inama's plans.

"Most Reverend Bishop:

"Your Grace will kindly permit me to confer with you about the following affair. It may have come to Your Grace's knowledge that Reverend Inama intends to dispose of one or two farms at Roxbury in favor of the Dominican Sisters in Racine, or perhaps he has already disposed of this property. On account of that, Father Heigl is enraged and laments. For the last three years he has been talking about the Sisters, Fathers Inama and Reiner, and myself. Although Father Inama has received permission from his superiors in Europe to dispose of the land according to his good pleasure, and has acquainted Father Heigl of this fact, yet the latter finds no peace and constantly laments the injustice done to his Order.

"Father Heigl quotes Your Grace as having said, 'The procedure of Father Inama in disposing of the property in favor of the Sisters is an unheard of injustice which Father Heigl should not permit under any circumstances.'

"I am convinced that Your Grace never committed yourself in this manner. Nevertheless, Father Wapelhorst has advised me to report this to you. The Sisters made no

effort to get possession of the property, although for two years, Father Inama offered this land to them. Still I was never willing that any negotiations should be carried on. I wished to know nothing of certain stipulations that were made, because I believed the land to be the property of the Order of which Father Inama is a member. However, because I was convinced about the invalidity of his will, and because I doubted whether the property would serve any purpose, I at last accepted his pressing invitation and called on him about three years ago. At this time he showed me his will, and to my surprise, I found that there were no conditions made. It was his desire and still is that the Sisters found a branch house in Roxbury. The will was really invalid and for this reason Father Inama made a deed in the name of the convent which, however, is still in his possession and still not registered. All this, however, did not satisfy me.

'Whatever a monk acquires, he acquires not for himself, but for his monastery.'

"I, therefore, induced Reverend Reiner to write to Father Inama's monastery in Innsbruck and inquire of Reverend Max Gärtner whether Reverend Inama had the right to dispose of his land.

"On March 6, 1876, Reverend Gärtner replied as follows:

'Adelbert Inama personally discussed with me the drawing up of his will and later he sent a duplicate to Innsbruck for the most Reverend Prelate's inspection. Of course it required a few modifications regarding the real estate of the Norbert House and also regarding the temporary dimissory to the missions granted by the Reverend Abbot Alois and renewed by Abbot Johannes, and also regarding the faculty of acquiring property and disposing of it or of lawfully willing it to others. After all this, it was self-evident that the very Reverend Prelate recognized Father Inama's will as valid and justified without any conditions on his part, so that the monastery can have no objection. Therefore there cannot be the least doubt that Father Inama's will regarding his property at Roxbury has been drawn

up in the best possible form. Moreover, Father Inama named no Order in particular in his will to whom the property was to be given. The only stipulation was that a school should be built for St. Norbert's parish and that Bishop Henni should be its executor. Meanwhile the testator during his lifetime has the power to change the original will or add a codicil.

'I do not know what has been done or what will be done in the future. Even after my last return home from America in 1851, I made it my duty to consult with the newly elected prelate regarding St. Norbert's House, particularly regarding the solemn vow of poverty. So as not to burden my conscience there remained no other way but to let the bishop decide. I mentioned the affair to the bishop but was told to let Reverend Fessler decide the question. His answer was as follows:

'Because you two Americans belong to a Society and as missionaries you have received from your abbot the temporary dispensation from your vow of poverty and stability you may with a safe conscience have possession of the property and as far as it is a personal acquisition you may dispose of it. Therefore, Reverend Inama's will is perfectly valid.

"Reverend Gärtner mentions also the Sisters of St. Dominic to whom Reverend Inama intends to bequeath his property according to a letter dated January, 1876." 8

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8. Birkhaeuser Correspondence, (first draft), Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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Although this letter was not written until 1876, the archbishop had already confirmed the grant of land in 1875 as the following quotation from his letter proves:

"I rejoice that your community has received so fine a gift from the superior of St. Norbert's. According to the wish of Father Inama I herewith give permission for the founding of a convent for the Sisters in Roxbury provided that this important

undertaking will not be contrary to the regulations of their Order.

"For that very reason I desire that Reverend Birkhaeuser come to an understanding with the pastor and with the parish. Indeed for a community consisting exclusively of Catholics, a Sisters' convent must be of special importance.

"May God direct the undertaking and bestow His blessings upon it." 9

9. Henni Correspondence, August 20, 1875. Archives, Mother-house, Racine.

The affair of the Roxbury estate dragged on until the year 1878. On September 19, 1878, Mother Hyacintha consulted again with the archbishop and on receiving a favorable reply, accepted the deed from Father Inama; it arrived on September 21, 1878. A contract for the building of a branch house at Roxbury was soon closed with a Mr. Gaukel.

The convent was nearly finished when on October 18, 1879, Father Inama, satisfied that his desire would be accomplished, peacefully died.

The convent was blessed and dedicated to St. Joseph on December 30, 1879, and soon after on January 18, 1880, the convent welcomed its first two little orphans. <sup>10</sup>

10. Diary of Mother Hyacintha, Diary IV, pp. 80-82.

The convent seems to have had a host of friends among the clergy of southern Wisconsin. Entries into Mother Hyacintha's diary refer to frequent visits which these

pioneer priests were in the habit of making. Often they would say Mass in the Sisters' chapel, and frequently also they would make the Sisters happy with a conference on some religious topic. The following Reverend Fathers appear to have visited the convent frequently: J. Corry, M. Deisenrieder, A. Durst, K. Flash, M. Heiss, F.X. Katzer, F.X. Krautbauer, M. Kundig, M. Joerger, M. Obermüller, W. Peil, J. Salzman, F.X. Schmedling, C. Schraudenback, I. Wapelhorst, M. Wisbauer, and A. Zeiniger. <sup>11</sup>

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11. Diary of Mother Hyacintha, Diary IV, pp. 2-80.

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## CHAPTER XXIII

## THE STATUS OF THE CONGREGATION IN THE DOMINICAN ORDER

1870 -- 1880

"For, lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land."

--The Song of Solomon II, 11, 12.

The ten years between 1870 and 1880 were significant as the formative years of the Congregation of St. Catherine of Siena. Many perplexing problems were definitely and conclusively solved. The congregation, as it were, found itself and its status in the Dominican Order, in the community of Racine, and in the commonwealth of Wisconsin. By the year 1880 the convent had reached a state of assurance; the period of uncertainty, insecurity, doubt, and distressing trial was past. The writer in preceding chapters has considered the numerous and menacing ordeals undergone by the foundresses and their successors in establishing the congregation, and there now remains only the task of tracing the steps which clarified the status of the congregation and its final incorporation into the Dominican Order.

The foundresses, Mother Benedicta and Mother Thomasina, never doubted but that the foundation at Racine was a Dominican convent of the Second Order. The reasons are obvious: the foundresses were members of a Second Order in Germany, and in America they observed their rule in as far as that

was possible. Besides, since coming to America, they had observed the counsel given them by the Reverend Dominic Lentz, O.P., Socio; namely, to intrust themselves confidently to the direction of the bishop to which Divine Providence would direct them, and furthermore, to await until they had established themselves, and from experience, learn how far they could live according to the rule. <sup>1</sup>

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1. Letter written by Mother Benedicta to the Master General, 1864. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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Secondly, Mother Benedicta had been most conscientious in obtaining dispensations from Bishop Henni; these mainly pertained to the regulation of the strictly cloistered life which they found impossible to observe. <sup>2</sup>

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2. Henni Correspondence in the years 1861 and 1862 amply proves this statement.

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The supposition was that the Motherhouse in Racine and the branch houses would become convents of the Second Order much like Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon, and St. Mary's Niederviehbach in Germany. The foundations made by Holy Cross Convent in New York were also considered convents of the Second Order, for on December 1, Sister Augustine Nehierl writes to Mother Hyacintha as follows:

"Since we are the only Second Orders  
in America we should not become alienated."<sup>3</sup>

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3. New York and Brooklyn Correspondence. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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Mother Hyacintha, under the same impression, was most anxious to observe all regulations and even went so far as to install the grill. An entry in her diary reads:

"November 30, 1868--Today we tried the grill for the first time. Thanks be to God; it was hard to make the beginning." 4

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4. Diary of Mother Hyacintha, Diary IV, p. 3. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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The Sisters on the same account entirely concealed their faces by drawing down their face veils when necessity required that they leave the enclosure. This custom often gave rise to remarks of an embarrassing nature from the passers-by.

According to the rule of the Second Order, the Sisters were received into the community as lay Sisters or choir Sisters and the former wore the distinctive garb consisting of a white habit, a white veil, and a black scapular. In the summer of 1871, a discussion arose concerning the advisability of adopting an identical garb--that of the choir nun--for the lay Sister. Many good reasons presented themselves in favor of the change. It was rather disconcerting for a single Sister to be garbed differently on the missions. Again, the lay Sister was most conspicuous when she came into contact with the public on account of the white veil. Furthermore, since the community was not strictly cloistered, the lay Sister ought not to be required to wear the garb of the strictly cloistered nun. Father Birkhaeuser strongly favored the change and influenced



Mother Hyacintha to inaugurate the innovation in August, 1871.

Mother Hyacintha who was skeptical about the change consulted with the Reverend Francis Haas, O.M. Cap. It is evident from subsequent correspondence that they conferred with the Master General of the Order, and at the same time made an effort to have the congregation incorporated with the Dominican Order. Father Haas's letter to Mother Hyacintha shows him taking the same fatherly interest in the community as hitherto.

"Calvary, September 15, 1871

"Venerable Prioress:

"You may conclude from my reticence that your affairs pertaining to Rome are taken care of with the same negligence. Don't worry; I sent your letter to the Master General with a copy and a note of my own on the ninth of this month. I hope that in two months' time you will receive an answer. Kindly inform me when this happens. In the future any of the Sisters appointed by you may compose such a letter; nevertheless, you and not the Sister must sign it. Let it pass for this time, however. The expression of gratitude on your part makes me ashamed of myself, for I have done so little. It is another proof to me of your deeply religious spirit, the foundation of which is humility.

"The change which I hear is taking place will make my further assistance superfluous, but I will always be ready to do everything in my power for you and will always be interested in your community. I love your Order in which reigns moderate seriousness and a loving and mild rigor; for that reason I feel confident that it will have a flourishing future. May our hope for your approbation by Rome be fulfilled. Since you have so much to pray for, I must not trouble you to pray for me. Include me occasionally in your many and rich merits. I shall remember you likewise. You, however, venerable Mother, be full of

hope and confidence and as a superior act energetically and with decision. God will not desert you. Come to me in all your difficulties without fear of bothering me. You know you cannot inconvenience a friend. It is my wish that you should not be disturbed about anything.

"With greetings to all, but especially to your fellow Sisters, I remain

Your devoted servant in Christ,

Francis Haas, O.N.Cap. " 5

5. Haas Correspondence. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

The Master General of the Friar Preachers, the Reverend A. V. Jandel, the famous reformer, answered Father Haas's letter personally as follows:

"Rome, October 16, 1871

"Most Reverend Father:

"In the first place I want to thank you sincerely for the fatherly care with which you assist and support the Sisters of our Order living in the city of Racine as is evident from your letter of September 9, and I beg of God to reward you in the manner the zeal of your love deserves. Before I take any steps toward the canonical incorporation of the convent into our Order, it will be necessary to ask the advice of the most Reverend Ordinary under whose jurisdiction it is and without whose knowledge and consent no transfer can be made.

"A very good occasion for bringing this matter and all other questions regarding which you write to an issue will be a consultation with the Reverend Father Visitor, Thomas Burke, whom the General Chapter, recently held, has sent to our province in the United States. He has already set out for New York. If you would write him there, he in turn would give reliable information.

"I am able, however, even now to give you my opinion regarding some of your questions.

It seems to me a sheer impossibility for the Sisters to take upon themselves the strenuous burdens of a cloistered life to which the Sisters of the Second Order are obliged, together with the labor of the active life to which the American Sisters devote themselves. And it seems sufficient if the Sisters content themselves with the obligations and the duties of the Third Order as so many congregations of our Order here in Europe devoted to education and works of mercy. This they do with much success for the greater honor of God, the edification of the Church, and their own personal merit.

"You are quite right, Father, to disapprove of the abuse which has been introduced in consequence of which choir and lay Sisters are classified merely according to age and profession and where there does not even exist the distinction of the habit--a thing quite unusual; indeed, quite unheard of in our Order. Therefore, the Sisters known as "Conversae" should tactfully be induced to wear the white veil and black scapular in the church and in the house.

"Regarding the practice of penance and the use of penitential instruments the superioress may, if she deems it necessary, advise the Sisters privately, so that there will then be no necessity of a public and general suppression. These penances, you know, are not public or general among us, but they should be performed individually and in secret according to the decision or permission of the confessor and under the obedience of the superioress who in certain cases, if there is a reason for it, may hinder, restrict, or forbid individual members to perform them without permission.

"Finally I wish to call your attention to the fact that the Sisters of our Order have no active vote before they have completed the twelfth year of their profession.

"With regard to the rest, the Father Visitator, if you have an opportunity of speaking with him will give you more information concerning the government of the Sisters.

"Meanwhile my best wishes to you, Reverend Father, and my blessing in the Lord to the Sisters. I recommend myself to the prayers of you all.

A.V. Jandel, Mag. Ord. Praed."

"To The Reverend P. Francis Haas,  
Commissary General of the Capuchins,  
United States, Wisconsin." 6

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6. Jandel Correspondence. Copy, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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Father Haas, after the reception of this letter, counseled Mother Hyacintha to have the community remain a Second Order even if by this decision it became imperative that all the schools with the exception of the academy be relinquished. He says in part:

"You desire the last (Third Order) as little as I do, so I advise you at the end of this year to give up your schools. Your remaining in the Second Order according to your own and the Sisters' desire will depend entirely upon your decision, even contrary to the will of the Visitor which, however, I doubt. We have enough congregations which devote themselves to parish schools, and it is not necessary that you should teach them at so great a sacrifice.

"The good spirit that reigns in your house gives me the assured hope that all will be well, and I trust also that the present arrangement of the Reverend Master General regarding precedence will not bring about any friction in your peaceful family. All must consider the change is made for the sake of a venerable old custom and that no slight is intended." 7

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7. Haas Correspondence, November 12, 1871. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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The schools in charge of the Dominican Sisters of Racine at this time were St. Mary's Racine; St. Norbert's,

Roxbury; St. Joseph's, Highland; and St. Andrew's, LeRoy. Contrary to Father Haas's advice, they were not surrendered at the end of the year.

The Master General's letter had a direct effect upon the garb of the lay Sisters. On January 11, 1872, the recent regulation regarding the scapular and veil was revoked and the Sisters were required, in spite of embarrassment, to resume their former dress, because the new regulation was contrary to Article 48 of the constitution and Article 47 of the rule. <sup>8</sup>

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8. Pierre, Sister Anastasia, Reminiscences from Early Days, p. 2.

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No further steps were taken to incorporate the congregation until the spring of 1877. The Reverend Yodocus Birkhaeuser, spiritual director, and the Reverend Innocent Wapelhorst, Rector of St. Francis Seminary, were very much concerned about the incorporation and were anxious to have the Sisters enjoy all the benefits and privileges accorded by the Order. They interested Archbishop Henni in the project with the result that on May 30, 1877, he sent the following petition to the Master General:

"Very Reverend Father:

"The community of Sisters of the Order of St. Dominic in the city of Racine, of this Archdiocese of Milwaukee together with their incorporated daughters present to your paternity through us the undersigned Archbishop of Milwaukee the following:

"Two professed Sisters of Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon, of the Second Order of

St. Dominic, came to my diocese with authenticated documents and with the permission of the Bishop of Ratisbon in the Kingdom of Bavaria as also that of the superior of the convent. They with other pious virgins and with my approbation founded a religious house in Racine in 1862. Shortly after, these two Sisters died, and the surviving young virgins were not able to elect a superior according to rule. Therefore, I, the Ordinary, having been earnestly asked, named M. Hyacintha as the present superioress. They have earned a livelihood by instructing youth in Catholic parochial schools. Therefore, the observance of strict enclosure as well as the fast according to the constitution of the Order was impossible. In other points, however, they endeavored to keep the rule according to the Second Order of St. Dominic, an obligation they had assumed in their convent at Ratisbon. They recited and still are reciting with much joy the entire Divine Office according to the calendar sent to them by the Fathers of the Order of Preachers. They observe the fast on all Fridays of the year and on the vigils prescribed by the rule; also abstinence on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, throughout the year.

"At the completion of the novitiate they pronounce their vows according to the manner of profession indicated in the fifteenth chapter of the constitutions of the Friar Preachers, not however, until death but for a certain number of years and with the changing of the form "famula" according to sex.

"In respect to this community though they were in good faith, yet they were not able to introduce and carry out everything in required form.

"These pious virgins beg of your paternity to declare as valid the less correct and to appoint whatever your wisdom deems proper and feasible for this pious community, particularly that they may become incorporated with the Order of St. Dominic and may enjoy the privileges and indulgences which the popes have granted the Order.

"Your paternity has already conceded the privilege that the confessor may give

The Sisters general absolution. Of course, these pious virgins would be much pleased to remain in the Second Order with the dispensation from the strict enclosure and the fast as before mentioned in so far as that observance is impossible to them. However, if this grace cannot be granted them, then, they desire to be incorporated into the Third Order, but to retain the recitation of the Divine Office and the observance of the strict rule with all pious customs in the manner which these truly pious virgins with most praiseworthy zeal have observed them until now in order that they may be recipients of the graces of the Second Order.

"They are unconditionally willing to accept the form of vows which you will send them and observe whatever regulations you shall make for them. They desire that after they have completed their novitiate and a certain number of appointed years after profession they may be allowed to make their final vows.

"I second these petitions. Tried by many tribulations, these Sisters have exhibited an exceptional religious spirit, and they deserve great gratitude on our part for their zeal in the Catholic education of youth. Although they feel the consequences of poverty, still they are protected from all apparent danger now as far as temporal maintenance is concerned. Every year increases their number. There are at present thirty professed Sisters, seven novices, and nine postulants.

Milwaukee in the State of Wisconsin  
May 30, 1877." 9

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9. Henni Correspondence. Copy, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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The answer to this petition came in the form of a Diploma of Incorporation in which the Congregation of St. Catherine of Siena was admitted as a Third Order. A letter of the Vicar General of the Order explains why the

convent could not be incorporated as a Second Order. The letter is presented in full:

"Highly esteemed and most worthy Lord:

"I make haste to make a favorable reply to Your Highness's letter in which you recommended so highly the Sisters of the Order of St. Dominic in the city of Racine. I am particularly glad to hear that these Sisters show such a splendid religious spirit and offer their services so generously instructing Catholic youth in the vineyard of the Lord. Therefore, although I cannot possibly incorporate the community as a Second Order, because of the lack of strict enclosure and other requirements of the apostolic constitutions which the Sisters would not be able to fulfill, I will gladly receive them into our Third Order in which they can likewise enjoy and take part in all graces, privileges, and indulgences granted by the popes, and common to all the Dominicans of the Third Order. I am herewith sending the required Diploma with my benediction for each single Sister and the entire community. Regarding the past I, on my part, declare as corrected all deficiencies of the past for the purpose of pacifying the consciences of the designated Sisters. In the future, however, Your Highness may use your own good judgment in regard to the modification of their rule, since these Sisters are under your immediate jurisdiction, and you are better acquainted with the conditions of the place and the best manner by which growth and progress of Catholic education may be advanced.

"Furthermore, I wish to express my grateful appreciation for the extraordinary kindness Your Highness has bestowed on these daughters of St. Dominic and which I trust and feel assured you will not deny them in the future. Meanwhile I will be glad to do any service for Your Highness whenever possible.

Your humble servant in the Lord,

Fr. Josephus Mary Sanvito  
Vic. General of the Order of Praed.  
Rom., July 12, 1877." 10



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10. Sanvito Correspondence, Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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The Diploma of Incorporation reads as follows:

DIPLOMA

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"We, Brother Joseph Mary Sanvito, Professor of Sacred Theology and of the whole Order of Preachers, Humble Master Vicar General and Servant."

GREETING

"The Holy Patriarch Dominic, a most renowned Defender of the Catholic Faith, and Soldier of Christ, founded for the suppression of heresy and for combating the interior enemy by penance, the Third Order, called the Order of the Militia of Jesus Christ or of Penance, which was approved by various sovereign pontiffs and especially by Popes Gregory IX, Honorius IV, John XXII, Boniface IX, Innocent VII, and Eugenius IV; and was adorned by them with privileges and innumerable indulgences. Very many faithful Servants of Christ of both sexes have come forth from this Order, in unbroken succession, who were most renowned for the sanctity of their lives, amongst whom deservedly have shone forth the glorious Virgin, Catherine of Siena, the chosen Spouse of Jesus Christ, and St. Rose of Lima, the first flower and model of Sanctity in South America. In consideration of these things, you, most beloved daughters in Christ and devout women of the Monastery in the town of Racine, of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, of the United States of America, have earnestly besought us to be received and incorporated into said praiseworthy Order that you may enjoy the favors and indulgences bestowed on the same. We, therefore, moved by your prayers and pious supplications, by the tenor of these presents and by the Apostolic Authority granted to us, admit and receive all the members already professed, and for all future time those entering the above mentioned Monastery and professing the rules of said Order of the Militia of Christ or of Penance,

with all the favors, privileges and indulgences which other like Religious of the Third Order enjoy and participate, both in life and in death: the assent, however, of the Ordinary of the place being obtained. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

"Whatsoever to the contrary, etc. In testimony of which we have subscribed with our own hand these patent letters and signed them with the Seal of Our Office.

"Given at Rome from Our Convent of the Minerva, the 11th day of July, 1877.

Servant in the Lord

Fr. Joseph Mary Sanvito,  
Master Vicar General of the Order

Fr. Hyacinth Marchi  
Master Prov. of Dacia and Socius." 11

(Reg Fol. 259)

11. Diploma of Incorporation; Document VII. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

The incorporation into the Third Order instead of the Second was somewhat disappointing, but nevertheless, the Sisters rejoiced that the convent was officially recognized by the Order and that they now were recipients of the many graces and privileges accorded to them as a result of the incorporation. Father Haas expresses the situation well in his letter of December 26, 1877.

"You have won out. You are now a definite congregation recognized by the Church, and you are now entitled to all the graces of the Third Order. Don't regret the change any longer--you have been cured of an incurable illusion.

Regarding the constitutions, I was well impressed. Since Father Birkhaeuser leans rather to severity than to relaxation, you need not fear anything. Regulations that are impossible and undesirable can easily be corrected. Have nothing printed within the next three years. 12

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12. Haas Correspondence. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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As a matter of fact, the Diploma for many years had little effect upon the routine of convent observance and discipline. The Divine Office was still chanted, the lay Sisters remained under a special mistress and wore their distinctive garb. Other pious customs and practices remained the same. The Sisters were loath to change many of the observances which were typical of the Second Order. A letter from Father Haas dated three months after the reception of the Diploma shows that he appreciated their position. They had followed many of these customs so long that it seemed almost disloyal to abandon them. In this perplexity Father Haas counsels them:

"The center of gravitation of your question is whether Rome requires of you the rule and constitutions of the Second Order or only allows you to follow the rule and constitutions, and whether you should interpret the text of the Diploma to the effect that you are under the archbishop's jurisdiction.

"If Rome obliges you to the rule and constitutions, nobody can interfere with your observing them. In the other case, however, very much will depend upon the will of the archbishop which in the course of time may become a hazard.

"For the present, do not ask for any dispensations, and no one will force them upon you." 13

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13. Haas Correspondence, October 14, 1877. Archives, Motherhouse, Racine.

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Gradually during the course of the years the Second Order practices were put aside. In the end the Congregation of St. Catherine of Siena adopted its official position in every detail. Hence, we may say that the period of uncertainty and pioneering was over for the community when the document officially establishing its status was received. The year 1877, therefore, may well be chosen as the one which closes the long series of events contained in the genesis of the Congregation of St. Catherine of Siena. The fifty years of development from then to the present time are matters of a subsequent treatise.

In closing this account of the events which properly fall into the present work, it is but just to add that on February 6, 1878, permission was received enabling four Sisters to make perpetual vows.

The following summer on July 22, Mother Hyacintha Oberbrunner, prioress; Mother Cecilia Fox, subprioress; Mother Vincentia Watry, novice mistress; and Sister Imelda Berenmeier, lay Sister, pronounced their perpetual vows.

Prominent milestones in the development of the congregation are the following: the establishment in South Racine of the present convent in 1863; the incorporation of St. Catherine's Female Academy in 1874; the incorporation into the Dominican Order in 1877, and the pronouncement of perpetual vows in 1878.

The foundation of the congregation had been laid deep by severe trials and great suffering. Like its parent convent in Ratisbon it had passed through one ordeal after another, anyone of which might have caused its dissolution. The almost impossible had been accomplished, for "God's hand was steady o'er it" guiding it to its goal. By the end of the decade, 1880, the congregation had attained permanence and stability; it had found its place in the new world, in the archdiocese, and in the Dominican Order; it was the final fulfillment of Mother Benedicta's vision of a foundation in America--an American convent, springing from the cloisters of Ratisbon, with nearly seven hundred years of Dominican tradition.

## APPENDIX

Parochial schools in charge of the Sisters of St. Dominic, Racine, Wisconsin, 1862-1880.

- St. Patrick, Racine, Wisconsin  
 Reverend A. Gibson, Pastor  
 Founded 1862. Closed 1863  
 Reverend G. W. Mathew, Pastor  
 Reopened 1866. Closed 1868  
 Reopened 1879
- St. Joseph, Racine, Wisconsin  
 Reverend F. X. Sailer, Pastor  
 Founded 1862. Closed 1863  
 Reverend A. Foeckler, Pastor  
 Reopened 1877
- St. Mary, Port Washington, Wisconsin  
 Reverend F. X. Sailer, Pastor  
 Founded 1863. Closed 1866
- St. Mary, Racine, Wisconsin  
 Reverend F. Ullemeyer, Pastor  
 Founded 1863
- St. Norbert, Roxbury, Wisconsin  
 Reverend A. Inama, Pastor  
 Founded 1865
- St. Kilian, Hartford, Wisconsin  
 Reverend M. Deisenrieder, Pastor  
 Founded 1865. Closed 1866 or 1867
- St. Joseph, Highland, Wisconsin  
 Reverend F. X. Weinhart, Pastor  
 Founded 1866. Closed 1878
- Holy Cross, Holy Cross, Wisconsin  
 Reverend H. Welter, Pastor  
 Founded 1867. Closed 1869  
 Reverend W. Frantz, Pastor  
 Reopened 1881
- St. Andrew, LeRoy, Wisconsin  
 Reverend M. Deisenrieder, Pastor  
 Founded 1869
- St. Mary, Mineral Point, Wisconsin  
 Reverend F. X. Weinhart, Pastor  
 Founded 1872

- St. Louis, Caledonia, Wisconsin  
Reverend W. Peil, Pastor  
Founded 1873
- St. Anthony, Fussville, Wisconsin  
Reverend A. Foeckler, Pastor  
Founded 1873
- St. Rose, Niles Center, Illinois  
Reverend A. Thiele, Pastor  
Founded 1876
- St. Joseph, Fort Madison, Iowa  
Reverend J. Greiser, Pastor  
Founded 1876
- St. Lawrence, St. Lawrence, Wisconsin  
Reverend A. Weist, Pastor  
Founded 1880

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## B. Diaries

- Diary I. Mother Benedicta Bauer, O.P.  
 June 1854-September 1854. pp. 239.  
 An account of Mother Benedicta's spiritual life, her meditations and comments. Written at the time she was prioress of Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon.
- Diary II. Mother Benedicta Bauer, O.P.  
 December 13, 1854-December 31, 1855. pp. 235.  
 The description is the same as for Diary I.
- Diary III. Mother Thomasina Ginker, O.P.  
 Diary of the Ocean Trip, September 22-October 22, 1858. pp. 34.  
 Besides the diary, this notebook contains references to the travels of Mother Benedicta and Mother Thomasina in America.
- Diary IV. Mother Hyacintha Oberbrunner, O.P.  
 Diary and Day Book. September 1, 1868-January 25, 1897. pp. 147.  
 An entry is made for each day of the week throughout these years. All important events are faithfully recorded. Contains many characteristic comments on daily occurrences. Very valuable for community history.



## C. Documents

- Number I. 1846. Neustadt Testimonial of Royal Local School Inspector-Sister Thomasina Ginker.
- Number II. 1850. Neustadt. Testimonial of Royal Local School Inspector-Sister Thomasina Ginker.
- Number III. 1852. Report of Scholarship, St. Mary's Academy, Niederviehbach, Germany. Sister Thomasina Ginker.
- Number IV. 1853. Testimonial by the pastor of Old Neustadt concerning Sister Thomasina Ginker.
- Number V. 1854. Teacher's Certificate Application. Sister Thomasina Ginker.
- Number VI. 1855. Testimonial of profession in Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon, Germany.
- Number VII. 1877. Diploma of Incorporation of the Congregation of St. Catherine of Siena into the Dominican Order.
- Number VIII. Bauer Family Tree-Pielenhofen, made by the pastor, Reverend M. Mullbausophr.
- Number IX. 1868. "Stammbaum" of Fauer Family, Pielenhofen made by the Officiating minister, Gregor Lehrnbeier, September 29, 1868, and sent by Father Bauer to St. Catherine's Convent in 1868.
- Number X. 1858. Dimissory, August 15, 1858.
- Number XI. 1836. Illuminated Certificate of the Final Vows of Mother Benedicta Bauer, September 19, 1836.
- Number XII. 1865. Will of Mother Benedicta Bauer. June 8, 1865.

(Over and above this documentary material contained in this bibliography an occasional reference has been made to files containing material bearing on persons connected with the convent of St. Catherine and catalogued in the archives under the name of said person. Definite information regarding these documents is given in the footnotes of the text where they are used.)

## D. Excerpts

## 1. Excerpts from original letters which are in the Archives, Ludwig-Missionsverein, Munich, Germany.

## a. Letters written by Mother Benedicta Bauer, O.P.

Racine, December 13, 1862.  
 Racine, January 20, 1863.  
 Racine, January 28, 1864.  
 Racine, February 3, 1864.  
 Racine, March 20, 1865.  
 Racine, June 6, 1865.

## b. Letter written by Mother Thomasina Ginker, O.P.

Racine, February 15, 1866.

## c. Letters written by Mother Hyacintha Oberbrunner, O.P.

Racine, March 24, 1868.  
 Racine, January 13, 1869.  
 Racine, March 7, 1870.  
 Racine, January 21, 1871.  
 Racine, September 7, 1872.  
 Racine, September 24, 1873.  
 Racine, November 6, 1873.  
 Racine, March 12, 1874.  
 Racine, September 1, 1875.  
 Racine, November 23, 1876.  
 Racine, November 24, 1876.  
 Racine, March 24, 1877.  
 Racine, February 7, 1878.  
 Racine, March 1, 1879.  
 Racine, October 23, 1881.

(The Archives of the Motherhouse at Racine contain excerpts of important passages from each of the letters above. The letter of February 3, 1864 is almost complete. These excerpts were made by Reverend Jacob Heinzinger, "Oberstudienrat" and professor in the "Ludwigsgymnasium" in Munich.)

2. Excerpts from Holy Cross Chronicle Ratisbon, Germany.

Excerpt I. An account of the Holy Cross Convent Foundation in 1233. pp. 3.

Excerpt II. A brief account of the history of the Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon, compiled from the chronicle. p. 1.

- Excerpt III. An account of the first American foundation at Williamsburgh, New York and the foundation of the convent of St. Catherine of Siena, Racine, Wisconsin. pp. 8.
- Excerpt IV. Statistics relating to the Sisters who came to America from Ratisbon and an account of Mother Benedicta Bauer in America. pp. 3.
- Excerpt V. An account of Mother Benedicta Bauer's terms of office in Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon and Mother Benedicta in America. pp. 3.
- Excerpt VI. List of prioresses who governed Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon, Germany from 1780 to 1936.
- Excerpt VII. List of spiritual directors of Holy Cross Convent, Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon, from 1843 to 1933.
- Excerpt VIII. List of prioresses who governed Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon from 1237 to 1780. This was brought to America by Mother Benedicta Bauer, O.P.

## E. Letters

1. Bauer, Mother Benedicta, O.P.
  - To Bishop John Martin Henni
  - St. Caecilia's Academy, Nashville, Tennessee, January 1, 1861.
  - St. Caecilia's Academy, Nashville, Tennessee, January 14, 1861.
  - Green Bay, June 6, 1861.
  - Green Bay, September 18, 1861.
  - Green Bay, December 10, 1861.
  - Green Bay, December 28, 1861.
  - Racine, August 27, 1863.
  - Racine, December 23, 1863.

(Copies of the letters above were made from the original letters which were kindly lent to the writer by Doctor Peter Leo Johnson, St. Francis seminary.)

- To King Louis I of Bavaria
- Racine, March 17, 1865 (first draft)
  
- To the Ludwig-Missionsverein, Munich.
- Racine, March 7, 1865 (first draft)
  
- To the Master General of the Dominican Order, A. V. Jandel, O.P.
- Racine, March 18, 1864 (first draft)
- Racine, 1864 (first draft)
  
- To the Ratisbon Cathedral Chapter
- Ratisbon, about 1857 (an undated first draft)
  
- To Bishop Valentin Riedel
- Ratisbon, 1853 (copy)
- Ratisbon, November 24, 1856
- Ratisbon, July 31, 1856.

2. Bauer, Reverend Michael, Brother of Mother Benedicta
  - To Mother Benedicta Bauer, O.P.
  - Niederviehbach, Germany, October 12, 1864.
  
  - To Mother Thomasina Ginker, O.P.
  - Niederviehbach, February 10, 1866.
  - Niederviehbach, March 8, 1866.

To Mother Hyacintha Oberbrunner, O.P.  
 Niederviehbach, January 23, 1867.  
 Niederviehbach, August 12, 1867.  
 Niederviehbach, April 17, 1868.  
 Niederviehbach, January 14, 1869.  
 Niederviehbach, September 2, 1869.  
 Dingolfing, September, 1870.  
 Dingolfing, December, 1871.  
 Dingolfing, August 31, 1874.  
 Dingolfing, September 23, 1874.  
 Dingolfing, November 29, 1874.  
 Dingolfing, October 9, 1875.  
 Dingolfing, November 8, 1875.  
 Dingolfing, February 5, 1875.  
 Dingolfing, February 19, 1877.  
 Dingolfing, April 18, 1877.  
 Dingolfing, November 2, 1877.  
 Dingolfing, July 7, 1878.  
 Dingolfing, March 18, 1879.

3. Birkhaeuser, Reverend Yodocus Adolph  
 To Mother Hyacintha Oberbrunner, O.P.  
 St. Rose, Wisconsin, November 17, 1869.  
 Platteville, Wisconsin, November 19, 1869.  
 Sinsinawa, Wisconsin, November 25, 1869.  
 St. Francis, Wisconsin, May 31, 1875.

To Archbishop John Martin Henni  
 St. Francis, Wisconsin, May 3, 1878.

4. Flijna, Reverend Albert, O.P., Socius  
 To Mother Benedicta Bauer, O.P.  
 Rome, November 9, 1856.

5. Ginker, Mother Thomasina, O.P.  
 To Carl Ginker  
 Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon,  
 August 10, 1858.  
 Williamsburgh, New York, November 13, 1859.  
 Somerset, Ohio, July 18, 1859.  
 Nashville, Tennessee, December 10, 1860.

To Felix Ginker and wife  
 Williamsburgh, New York, November 2, 1858.

To Vincent Ginker  
 Williamsburgh, New York, March 13, 1860.

(Copies of the originals written by Mother Thomasina were made from the originals which are to be found in the Exhibit filed in case captioned Franziska R uth et al vs. Hyacintha Oberbrunner and Cecilia Fox in the Courthouse, Racine, Wisconsin.)

- To Bishop John Henni  
 Racine, 1865 (first draft)  
 Racine, June 10, 1865 (first draft)  
 Racine, October 28, 1865 (first draft)
- To the Socius of the Master General, O.P.  
 Racine, February 13, 1866 (first draft)
- To Reverend Paul Kagerer  
 Racine, January 10, 1865 (first draft)
- To King Louis I of Bavaria  
 Racine, October 28, 1865 (first draft)
- To the Ludwig-Missionsverein  
 Racine, March 17, 1865 (first draft)
- To F.X. Sailer, Port Washington, Wisconsin  
 Racine, 1865 (first draft)
6. Haas, Reverend Francis, O.M.Cap.  
 To Mother Thomasina Ginker, O.P.  
 Calvary, Wisconsin, July 9, 1866.  
 Calvary, Wisconsin, July 28, 1866.
- To Mother Hyacintha Oberbrunner, O.P.  
 Calvary, Wisconsin, September 15, 1871.  
 Calvary, Wisconsin, November 12, 1871  
 Calvary, Wisconsin, October 6, 1872.  
 Calvary, Wisconsin, October 16, 1872.  
 Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, October 14, 1877.  
 Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, December 25, 1877.  
 Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, October 5, 1880.
7. Hecking, Reverend Raymond, O.P., Socius  
 To Mother Benedicta Bauer, O.P.  
 Rome, June 30, 1862.
8. Henni, John Martin, Archbishop of Milwaukee  
 To Mother Benedicta Bauer, O.P.  
 Milwaukee, January 3, 1862.  
 Milwaukee, February 12, 1862.  
 Milwaukee, November 8, 1862.  
 Milwaukee, December 27, 1862.  
 Milwaukee, January 23, 1863.  
 Milwaukee, August 31, 1863.  
 Milwaukee, September 6, 1864.  
 Milwaukee, October 4, 1864.
- To Father Michael Deisenrieder, Chaplain  
 Milwaukee, October 17, 1865.
- To Mother Thomasina Ginker, O.P.  
 Milwaukee, February 19, 1866.  
 Milwaukee, July 25, 1866.

- To the Dominican Sisters  
Milwaukee, September 6, 1866.
- To Mother Hyacintha Oberbrunner, O.P.  
Milwaukee, August 22, 1878.
- To the Master General, O.P.  
Milwaukee, May 30, 1877.
9. Heiss, Michael, Bishop of LaCrosse  
To Reverend J.A. Birkhaeuser  
LaCrosse, Wisconsin, May 7, 1878.
10. Hiss, Reverend Thomas, O.P., Socius  
To Mother Benedicta Bauer, O.P.  
Materborn, Germany, September 22, 1856.  
Nanzig, France, June 30, 1856.  
Nanzig, France, October 10, 1856.  
Materborn, Germany, October 30, 1856.  
Materborn, Germany, January 28, 1857.  
Materborn, Germany, February 4, 1857.  
Materborn, Germany, March 4, 1857.  
(Place not given) June 29, 1858.
11. Huber, Sister M. Angela, O.P.  
To the Dominican Sisters  
Convent of St. Mary's Niederviehbach  
March 21, 1873.
12. Inama, Reverend Adelbert, O. Praem.  
To Mother Hyacintha Oberbrunner  
Roxbury, Wisconsin, October 3, 1878.
13. Jandel, A.V., Master General, O.P.  
To Reverend Francis Haas, O.M.Cap.  
Rome, October 10, 1871. (copy)
14. Kamermeier, Mother Gabriela, O.P., Prioress of  
St. Mary's Convent, Niederviehbach, Germany  
To Sister Cecilia Fox, O.P.  
Niederviehbach, November 1, 1876.
- To Mother Hyacintha Oberbrunner, O.P.  
Niederviehbach, April 5, 1880.
15. Kundig, Reverend Martin, Administrator  
To Mother Hyacintha Oberbrunner, O.P.  
Milwaukee, August 26, 1870.
16. Lentz, Reverend Dominic Joseph, O.P., Prosocius  
To Mother Benedicta Bauer  
Santa Sabina, Rome, February 14, 1856.  
Sancta Sabina, Rome, November 7, 1856.  
Vienna, Austria, May 29, 1857.  
Vienna, Austria, August 22, 1857.  
Vienna, Austria, December 30, 1857.

17. Maler, Sister Antonina, O.P., Mother Senior  
To Sister Cecilia Fox, O.P.  
St. Mary's Niederviehbach, February 3, 1876.
18. Meindl, Sister Henrica, O.P.  
To Mother Benedicta Bauer, O.P.  
Holy Cross, Ratisbon, February 23, 1864.
19. Müller, Reverend Joseph Ferdinand, Court Chaplain  
to King Ludwig I of Bavaria  
To Mother Benedicta, O.P.  
Munich, Germany, July 12, 1859.  
Munich, Germany, October 17, 1861.  
Munich, Germany, January 25, 1861.  
Munich Germany, December 5, 1862.  
Munich, Germany, January 23, 1864.  
  
To Sister Thomasina Ginker, O.P.  
Munich, Germany, January 25, 1861.
20. Neuhierl, Sister Maria Augustina, O.P.  
To Mother Hyacintha Oberbrunner, O.P.  
New York, December 1, 1856.
21. O'Carroll, Reverend William, O.P., Provincial  
To Mother Hyacintha Oberbrunner, O.P.  
Springfield, Kentucky, October 5, 1866.  
Louisville, Kentucky, February 1, 1868.  
Memphis, Tennessee, March 11, 1868.  
New York, New York, April 8, 1868.
22. Rosenlöhner, Mother Agnes, O.P., Prioress of  
Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon, Germany  
To Mother Benedicta Bauer, O.P.  
Ratisbon, May 12, 1860.
23. Sailer, Reverend F.X.  
To the Dominican Sisters  
Port Washington, Wisconsin, July 1867.
24. Sanvito, Josephus, Vicar General, O.P.  
To The Reverend Archbishop Henni  
Rome, July 12, 1877.
25. Schaffer, Reverend Leander  
To Mother Hyacintha Oberbrunner, O.P.  
Reichersberg, Ober Osterreich, November 20,  
1880.  
Reichersberg, Ober Osterreich, December,  
1881.  
Brooklyn, New York, December 12, 1893.  
Reichersberg, Ober Osterreich, December 4,  
1898.  
March 10, 1900.  
. . . . 1906.



26. Schrems, Reverend Frederick  
To Mother Emily Acker, O.P.  
Ratisbon, Germany, October 10, 1926.  
Ratisbon, Germany, July 19, 1927.  
Ratisbon, Germany, August 13, 1927.
27. Staimer, Mother Seraphine, O.P., Prioress of  
Holy Cross Convent, Brooklyn, New York.  
To Mother Hyacintha Oberbrunner, O.P.  
Williamsburgh, New York, November 1, 1869.  
Brooklyn, New York, October 9, 1881.
28. Stockner, Mother Bernarda, O.P., Prioress of  
Dominican Convent, Lienz, Austria  
To Mother Benedicta Bauer, O.P.  
Lienz, Austria, November 4, 1856.  
Lienz, Austria, December 18, 1856.
29. Von Schenk, Sister Amanda, O.P.  
To Sister Cecilia Fox, O.P.  
St. Mary's, Niederviehbach, February 27, 1873.  
St. Mary's, Niederviehbach, February 3, 1876
- To Mother Hyacintha Oberbrunner, O.P.  
St. Mary's Niederviehbach, February 16, 1888.

## F. Manuscripts

No. I. Dominican Sisters, Racine, Wisconsin

A brief chronicle of the principal events relating to the history of the community between the years 1858-1905, pp. 13.

No. II. Dominican Sisters, Tacoma, Washington

A brief history of Holy Cross Convent Ratisbon and the American foundations is given as a preface to the foundation at Tacoma, pp. 5.

No. III. Litigation 1874-1877

Copies of Exhibit filed in case captioned Franzisca R  th et al vs. Hyacintha Oberbrunner and Cecilia Fox, Courthouse, Racine, Wisconsin, pp. 168.

## No. IV. Pierre, Sister Anastasia, O.P. (compiler)

Reminiscences From Early Years

This manuscript contains letters and interviews with pioneer Sisters, pp. 37.

## No. V. Schrems, Reverend Frederick

Kurze Geschichte des Dominikanerinnen Klosters vom Heiligen Kreuz in Regensburg und Seiner Filialen

This manuscript was compiled by the author as a result of research work for source material in the archives of Holy Cross Convent and the archives of the diocese of Ratisbon. It contains copies of valuable documents.

## G. Statistics and History

- No. I. List of missions and mission visitations,  
1878-1900, pp.46.

Contains the date of foundation of the various missions for the years designated and those missions founded earlier which were still in charge of the congregation.

- No. II. History of St. Catherine of Siena Convent  
and statistics relating to the same, 1862-  
1905 pp.288.

This book contains a record of all the important events relating to the community. It also contains the list of missions in charge of the congregation, the date of the foundation of each mission, and the pastor in charge at the time. A complete list of Sisters on each mission is recorded for the years 1887-1905.

- No. III. Reception and profession book, 1861-1904,  
pp.307.

The following statistics are given for each member of the community: birth, entrance, reception, profession, perpetual vows, death.

- No. IV. Scrapbook of circulars and clippings, 1907-1921,  
pp. 200.

Some of this material has reference to the early history of the community.

## II. SECONDARY SOURCES

## A. Books

Anonymous (Mayer, Sister M. Adelaide, O.P.)

Sisters of St. Dominic, Historical Sketch of St. Catherine's Convent with a Short Treatise on the Order, Its Spirit and Devotions. Racine, Wisconsin: Convent Press, 1920. pp. 62.

This is the first book published on the Congregation of St. Catherine of Siena, Racine, Wisconsin. Twenty-eight pages are devoted to the history of the congregation; consequently the information it contains is brief and to the point.

A School Sister of Notre Dame, Mother Caroline and the School Sisters of Notre Dame in North America. St. Louis: Woodward and Tiernan Co., 1928, I, pp. 305. II. pp. 301.

These two volumes bring to immediate attention the remarkable growth and great work of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. It presents an accurate idea of Catholic life in America in the last half of the nineteenth century.

Birkhaeuser, Rev. J.A., History of the Church from Its First Establishment to Our Own Times. New York: Fr. Pustet and Co., 1906. pp. 798.

A brief outline of ecclesiastical history intended for the use of students in colleges and theological seminaries as an introduction to the study of Church History. Prominence is given to a study of Christian Antiquity and Patristic Studies.

Catholic Church (The) in the United States of America Undertaken to Celebrate the Golden Jubilee of His Holiness, Pope Pius X, Volume II, The Religious Communities of Women. New York: The Catholic Editing Co. Copyrighted by Begni Ernesto. 1914. pp. 510.

An account of the history of the foundation and development of the religious communities of women is given in this volume. Valuable facts and statistics.

Channon, Henry, The Ludwigs of Bavaria. New York: E.P. Dutton and Co. Inc. 1933. pp. 240.

The volume contains an interesting account of the Wittelsbach rulers in Bavaria. The author traces the Wittelsbach line from Lintpold I, Duke of Bavaria in 895 to Ludwig III, 1921. Ludwig I receives much emphasis.

Dominican Sisters, A Brief History of the Origin and Development of St. Cecilia's Congregation of Dominican Sisters. Nashville, Tennessee: 1935. pp. 64.

The title of the work is self-explanatory. It covers the period between 1860 and 1935. Part I contains an account of St. Cecilia's Academy and Convent; Part II, an account of the missions. The contents is based upon sources found in the convent archives.

Hepburn, A. Barton, History of Coinage and Currency in the United States and the Perennial Contest for Sound Money. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1903, pp. 666.

The work is especially fine for handy reference. The data and details are

given in chronological order. The appendix contains documentation of importance.

Herbermann, Charles G., et al. (ed.)

The Catholic Encyclopedia. II, V, XII.

New York: Robert Appleton Co., 1910.

An international work of reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church. It aims to give its readers full and authoritative information on the entire cycle of Catholic interests. Individual contributions to each article is the general method.

Hetich, George and Guttag, Julius, Civil War

Tokens and Tradesmen's Store Cards. A

Tentative List of Civil War Tokens and

Store Cards Issued by Merchants of the

United States and Used as Money During

the Period from 1861-1864. New York:

Julius Guttag, 16-18 Exchange Place.

1924. pp. 287.

This book contains photographs of the tokens used in various cities and towns in the United States. The preface gives a brief account of the Civil War tokens and tradesmen's tokens.

Higby, Chester Pen, The Religious Policy of

the Bavarian Government During the Napo-

leonic Period. New York: Longmans, Green

and Co., 1919. pp. 346.

Contains abundant statistics on the period. It is written from a Protestant point of view.

Kildee, Sister Mary Philomena, O.P., Memoirs of Mother Mary Aquinata Fiegler, O.P., First Mother General of the Dominican Sisters in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Congregation of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart. Grand Rapids, Michigan: The James Bayne Co., 1928, pp. 128.

Although this book deals mainly with the life of Mother Aquinata, and the history of the congregation, it also relates facts concerning the history of the Holy Rosary Congregation and its first superior who originally came from Holy Cross, Ratisbon, in 1853.

Leach, E. W., Yesterday and Today in Racine. A Few "Moving" Pictures and Sketchy Portrayals. Racine: Racine Commercial Club, 1915. pp. 40.

This book contains interesting facts about the early history of Racine. Abundantly illustrated.

Merk, Frederick, Publications of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin Studies Vol. I. Economic History of Wisconsin During the Civil War Decade. Madison: Published by the Society, 1916. pp. 414.

The design of the author in this volume has been to limit the economic history of Wisconsin as closely as possible to the period of the Civil War. However, the history extends in reality from 1857 to 1875. Newspaper files furnish the chief source of information. Statistical information

was obtained from reports of boards of trade and publications of similar industrial associations.

O'Shea, M.V. (ed.) The World Book, Chicago: M. F. Quarrie and Co., 1923, Vol. V, pp. 5948.

The World Book is prepared in ten volumes. All articles are written or reviewed by authorities. Very effectively illustrated.

Robinson, James Harvey, and Breasted, James Henry, Outlines of European History. Part I, Chicago: Ginn and Co., 1914. pp. 730.

The text covers the whole field of history to the opening of the eighteenth century. Accurate and brief, it can be conveniently used as a ready reference.

Roemer, Theodore, O.M.Cap., Franciscan Studies No. 12. The Ludwig-Missionsverein and the Church in the United States (1838-1918). New York: Joseph F. Wagner, Inc. 1933. pp. 161.

This monograph traces the historical contributions made by the Ludwig-Missionsverein of Munich to the progress of the Catholic Church in the United States. The Society's Annalen der Glaubensverbreitung. (1848-1915) forms the basis of the work.

Schwertner, Reverend Thomas M., O.P., St. Albert the Great. New York: Bruce Publishing Co., 1932, pp. 375.

A scientific study of St. Albert the Great based upon primary sources. "Bishop, scientist, theologian, philosopher, and teacher, Albert appears



full of life in Father Schwärtner's book.

Sevier, Christine, From Ratisbon Cloisters. An account of the work of the Dominican Sisters in the Diocese of Brooklyn. Brooklyn, New York: 1917. pp. 146.

Part I, "The lure of the Apostolate" deals with the history of the Holy Cross Convent, Ratisbon, and the first Sisters of that convent who came to America. The remainder of the book traces the history of Holy Cross Convent. The literary quality tends to be poetical.

Sinnigan, Ansgar, O.P., Katholische Frauengenossenschaften Deutschlands, II. Auflage Dusseldorf, Germany: Verlag, Th. P. Braun, 1933. pp. 390.

It contains a brief but accurate and scholarly account of the history of all the convents of religious women now existing in Germany. Profusely illustrated.

Stearns, J. W., The Columbian History of Education in Wisconsin. Published under authority and by the direction of the State Committee of Educational Exhibit for Wisconsin, 1893. pp. 720.

The purpose of this volume is to represent the principal forms and agencies of education in the State of Wisconsin. It contains excellent statistics on both public and private educational institutions. These are for the most part based on reports recorded in the office of the State Superintendent of Education.

Stone, Fannie S. (ed.) Bell City of the Lakes and Racine County, Wisconsin. A Record of

Settlement, Organization, Progress, and Achievement, Vol. I. Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co. 1916. pp. 514.

Contains an interesting scientific study of Racine, City and County. It is well documented and contains abundant statistics.

Sullivan, T. J. (ed.), The Catholic Church in Wisconsin. Milwaukee: Catholic Historical Publishing Co., 1895-1898. pp. 1181.

An authoritative account of the history of the Church in Wisconsin is found in this volume. Its information covers the dioceses in Wisconsin and the parishes in the dioceses. The labors of the Wisconsin missionaries and early priests are accurately presented. Religious institutes receive emphasis. The volume carries the "imprimature" of F. X. Katzer, Archbishop of Milwaukee.

Thwaites, R. B., Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. XIV. Madison, Wisconsin: Democratic Printing Co., State Printer. 1898. pp. 553.

Two interesting chapters; namely, "Germans in Wisconsin" and "Green Bay Catholic Church" are found in this volume. Other source material of the same nature is also offered.

Tissot, Reverend Joseph (ed.) The Interior Life Simplified and Reduced to Its Fundamental Principles. Third Edition. London, England: Burns, Gates, and Washbourne, 1913. pp. 396.

Starting from the fundamental principles of St. Ignatius admirably commented upon, the author reaches conclusions that the simplest of logic

suffices to deduce.

Waldeigh, Henry Rawle, Munich, History, Monu-  
ments, and Art. London: Adelphi Terrace.  
1910. pp. 303.

The book contains an excellent  
account of the city of Munich,  
its inhabitants and its history.

Whitbeck, R. H., Wisconsin Geographical and  
Natural History Survey. Reprint, "Racine"  
pp. 138-178. Madison Wisconsin: Published  
by the State. 1921. pp. 252.

This book contains a scholarly  
survey of the southeastern part  
of Wisconsin.

Wilms, P. Hieronymous, O.P., Geschichte der  
deutschen Dominikanerinnen 1206-1916. Dülmen  
in W. Germany: A. Laumann'sche Buchhandlung,  
1920. pp. 416.

Reverend Wilms is the acknowledged  
authority in this field of Dominican  
Research. In this volume he traces  
the foundation, rise and dissolution  
of the German Dominican convents of  
women. He places his history in a  
background of social, political, and  
ecclesiastical history. It is based  
to a great extent on source material.

Ziegler, H., Führer durch die Klosterkirche (jetzt  
Pfarrkirche) Pielenhofen bei Regensburg.  
Ratisbon: Friederick Pustet. 1935. pp. 19.

This book contains a description of  
the church at Pielenhofen. Profusely  
illustrated.

## B. Periodicals

Catholic Citizen, "Death of the Reverend Seibold,  
Racine, Wisconsin." May 3, 1884.

The Catholic Citizen is a successor to the Catholic Vindicator and was for many years the leading Catholic paper of Wisconsin. It was a weekly, published in Milwaukee. Recently it merged with the Catholic Herald and is now known as the Herald-Citizen.

Catholic Historical Review, Weber, N.A., "The Rise of National Catholic Churches in the United States." Vol I, 1916. pp. 422-434.

The Catholic Historical Review was founded in 1913 and was established with the definite objective of stimulating interest in American Catholic History. It is published by the University of America, Washington, D.C.

Columbia, "A German-American Litigation Against A Female Convent." p. 4, November 20, 1876.  
"The End of the Litigation Against a Convent of Women," p. 4, March 29, 1877.

This weekly was established in Milwaukee in 1873. It carries both religious and secular information. The emphasis was placed on news from the Archdiocese of Milwaukee.

Racine Advocate, "Local News" pp.3.

This weekly Racine paper was established in 1842. The writer examined the issues between the years 1862-1866, which are preserved in bound volumes in the Racine Public Library.

Racine Daily Journal, "Death of Chaplain," p. 1,  
March 4, 1908.

This daily is a successor to the Racine Weekly Journal.

Racine Weekly Journal, "Local News" pp. 3.

This weekly was established in Racine in 1856 and had a four-page issue. The writer examined copies between 1862-1868 which are preserved in bound volumes in the Racine Public Library.

Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia. Wimmer, Sebastian

J., "Biographical Sketch Right Reverend Archabbot Wimmer, O.S.B., D.D., Patriarch of American Cassinese Benedictines," III., 1888-1891, pp. 174-192. "The Catholic Church in Wisconsin. Reminiscences of Early Times, The Pioneers, The German Catholic Element." VII, 1896. pp. 225-233.

The Records published by the American Historical Society has for its object the making of Catholic history more generally known. It aims to preserve old books and papers. It was organized in 1884.

Wahrheits Freund, Published by the Weisen Verein in Cincinnati, Hamilton County, Ohio.

This weekly was founded in 1853 by the Reverend John Henni, later Archbishop of Milwaukee. Its object was to aid Catholic life, knowledge, and action. It carries news pertaining to the Catholic Church in the United States and Europe as well as secular news. The writer examined the bound volumes between the years 1853-1870 which are to be found in the Salzman Library, St. Francis, Wisconsin.

### III. Interviews

Hilt, Mrs. Mary, (Mary Lechner) attended the parochial school at St. Mary's, Racine, at the time Sister Thomasina Ginker taught there in 1863-1866. The information and anecdote that she contributed in an interview in April, 1932, have enabled the writer to give a personal touch to that part of the thesis. The home of Mrs. Hilt was formerly the convent of the Sisters of North Racine, her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Lechner, having purchased it directly from the Sisters. The writer through the courtesy of Miss Catherine Hilt, Mrs. Mary Hilt's daughter, visited the home which remains much the same as when the Sisters lived there. Miss Catherine Hilt interviewed her aunt, Mrs. E. Ruetz (Elizabeth Lechner), who also attended St. Mary's school. She, too, obtained some interesting material for the writer.

McCormick, Miss Mary, of Brighton, Wisconsin, a former pupil of St. Catherine's Female Academy, attended the school in the years 1865 and 1866 and was personally acquainted with Mother Benedicta Bauer and many of the pioneer Sisters. Miss McCormick was interviewed on March 31, 1935. She supplied the writer with a fund of personal information, anecdotes, and reminiscences.

Sisters Emily Acker, Louis Bourgeault, Evangelista Thomas, Alberta Feucht, and many other Sisters were interviewed at various times and gave the writer much valuable information from personal experience, relating to the pioneer days. Mother Emily who entered the convent in 1865 and Sister Louis who entered in 1866 were able to give especially valuable information.