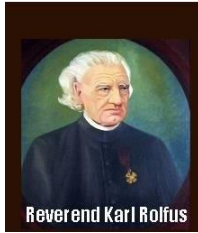


Mother Theresa Weber



Reverend Karl Rolfus

1. 2. In 1845, a group of young German women began the Congregation of the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood of O'Fallon, Missouri in Steinerberg, Switzerland because their native Germany was hostile to the formation of new religious congregations. Magdalena [Mother Theresa] Weber and Rev. Karl Rolfus are revered as their founders. They were founded as a contemplative order dedicated to prayer, simple tasks, and devotion to the Most Precious Blood of Jesus. However, The Swiss government prohibited all strictly contemplative orders, and the pastor saw these young women as an opportunity to improve his parish school so the young congregation embraced the ministry of teaching along with prayer.



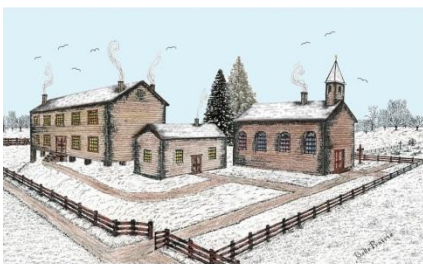
MOTHER A. AUGUSTA VOLK
1825 - 1884

3. Political unrest forced them to make a new foundation in Ottmarsheim, France in 1848. Ten years later they made a foundation in their native Germany, in Gurtweil. Political unrest and hostility drove the sisters to emigrate to the U.S. In 1870, Mother Augusta Volk, considered the foundress in America, accepted the offer of the Bishop Henry Damian Juncker of Alton, Illinois, to come to Belle Prairie, now Piopolis, Illinois

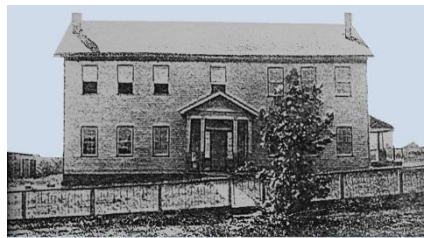


Pioneer sisters, 1870 –first group to come to USA
L-R, top row: Srs. Benedicta, Marie (did not go), Mechtild, Walburga, Josephine, Caroline
L-R, lower row: Srs. Emelie, Theresa, Albertine (the Superior), Philippine

4. The first group of nine Sisters left Gurtweil, Germany, on ship Hammonia, on February 5, 1870.



FIRST HOME OF THE COMMUNITY IN AMERICA—BELLE PRAIRIE, ILLINOIS, NOW PIOPOLIS



1870, Convent at Belle Prairie, now Piopolis, Illinois

5. They arrived in Belle Prairie in late February, 1870, and immediately began teaching in the parish school.

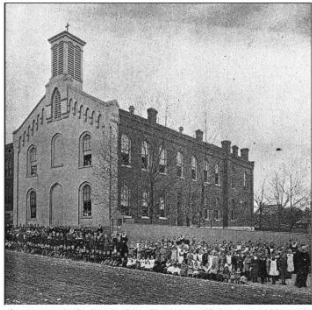
Bishop Juncker was succeeded by Bishop Peter Joseph Baltes who imposed the condition that the community should establish itself permanently in his diocese subject to his authority.



Msgr. Henry Muehlsiepen
Vicar General, St. Louis Archdiocese

Mother Augusta, opposed to limiting the sisters' activity to one diocese only, was unable to accept the conditions of Bishop Baltes for the Community's continued residence in Illinois.

6. She was encouraged to ask the help of the Vicar-General of St. Louis, Very Rev. Henry Muehlsiepen. In December, 1872,



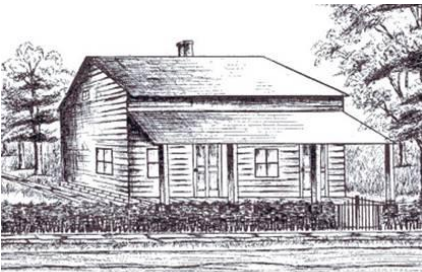
St. Agatha in St. Louis, first Church and School, c. 1872-1885

7. Msgr. Muehlsiepen found a home for the sisters in St. Louis, first with the Ursuline Sisters and then at the parish at St. Agatha. The sisters taught in the school at St. Agatha from 1872 to 1972. The convent was in the first floor of the school building.

Today, the sisters serve the neighborhood with a food pantry managed out of their convent, built in 1892.



Schwesternhaus INDU.
St. Agatha Convent



ORIGINAL HOME OF THE SISTERS, O'FALLON, MISSOURI

8. Msgr. Muehlsiepen helped Mother Augusta locate a site for a permanent motherhouse in O'Fallon, MO, across from the German-speaking parish of Assumption. In 1873, four sisters moved into a log cabin in O'Fallon. Sisters Camilla and Blanche taught in the parish school. The other two sisters helped clear and level the ground [the area had originally been used as a brick-yard], supervised and helped build the convent, overseeing the work and cultivating a little garden.



Motherhouse, Original north wing with chapel,
constructed in 1874

9. The original building, now the north wing, was begun in 1874, completed in 1875.



Altar from Gurtweil in original chapel, O'Fallon



First chapel in Motherhouse in O'Fallon, 1874.
Altar was brought from Gurtweil, Germany.

10. The altar in the original chapel came from the chapel in Gurtweil. It was taken apart and brought to America. This altar is now in St. Faustus Chapel.

11. Beneath the Gothic altar from Gurtweil, the relics of the body of St. Faustus are preserved (under the statue). St. Faustus was a young Roman martyr who died around 270 A.D. Father Herman Leygraaff, chaplain of the Sisters in O'Fallon, obtained the relics and brought them



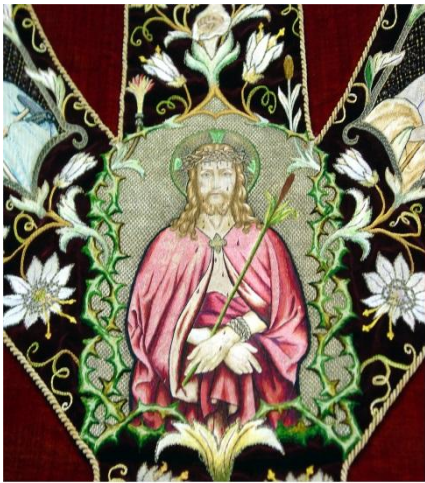
to St. Louis in 1879. The statue of St. Faustus was obtained in 1930.



Motherhouse, northeast wing, erected 1876

12. In 1876, work was begun on a new [northeast] wing of the convent for the Embroidery Department and a school.

The stitching of vestments enhanced with beautiful embroidery was begun already in Gurtweil in 1858. Mother Augusta, the American foundress, was skilled in stitching.



Award-winning chasuble from 1904

Back Detail

13. The Embroidery Department exhibited a chasuble at the 1905 World's Fair in St. Louis. The vestment was awarded a gold medal. This vestment is now in the St. Louis Art Museum.

The Embroidery Department, now called the Ecclesiastical Art Department continues to this day making vestments and paraments for Catholic churches and churches of other denominations.



Award-winning chasuble from 1904



Stole made by Ecclesiastical Art Department for Pope John Paul II, 1999 visit to St. Louis

14. When Pope John Paul II visited St. Louis in 1999, the Ecclesiastical Art Department presented him with this stole featuring the patron saints of St. Louis—Philippine Duchene, Vincent de Paul, Louis IX—and the fleur-de-lis and angels.



Schiller Mansion showing small dorm to rear—the first home of St. Elizabeth Academy



1894, view of new academy building from Crittendon Street. Schiller mansion is to the right.

15. In 1878, a boarding school for girls was housed in the northeast wing of the O’Fallon Motherhouse.

In 1882, the Schiller residence in St. Louis was purchased; the O’Fallon boarding school was transferred to St. Louis under the title, St. Elizabeth

Institute. Later, it was named St. Elizabeth Academy. The Academy closed after 131 years in 2013.

The International Institute of St. Louis, a nonprofit that helps refugees resettle, purchased the Academy buildings in 2014.



16. A Normal School for Teachers opened in December, 1878 at the Motherhouse. This was the beginning of St. Mary’s College of O’Fallon. The college closed in 1988.