

**First Installment of  
OUR JOURNEY TO THE PAST:**

Travels of Sisters Wilhelmina Burkemper and Boniface Konrad,  
September 18 - October 1, 1994  
This journey covers 1681 miles.

We left Oldenburg Sunday, September 18 at 10:45 A.M. and met Maurice and Gertrude Irvin at the Hampton Inn. They were on their way home from attending the Family Fun Day. Both cars followed each other to Bloomington, Illinois, the first stop on our journey. We were overnight guests of the Irvins.

**Monday, September 19**

**St. Mary, Bloomington, IL**

(Sisters and students at St. Mary's, Bloomington in 1936 is pictured top left.) Monday morning we attended Mass at St. Mary Church. The first person we met was Ann McEvoy, who is a niece of Sister Mary Lawrence. She is an associate member of our community and has Sister Laurencia as her contact Sister. After Mass we met Father Ric Schneider, the pastor. Then we toured the school, church and former convent. This latter building has a preschool and offices on the first floor and the upstairs is used as guest rooms.

Father Ric was busy helping with renovating the church basement to make it handicapped accessible.

The school was a bustle of activity. There are plans in the future for four additional rooms for computer, science labs, music, etc. We received a short history of the parish and school. Sister Pia Frumviller served as principal for 23 years. (We served there from 1888 – 1980.)

A point of interest is that there is a public school directly across the street.

Gertrude Irvin took us to lunch then directed us out of Bloomington to our next destination which was:

**St. Boniface Parish, Peoria, IL**

Our Sisters served this parish from 1919 – 1925. After finding the parish buildings about 1:00 p.m., the secretary gave us a tour of the church. Today the interior is quite modern. A beautiful mosaic of the Last Supper adorns the sanctuary wall. It is so inspirational. A statue of St. Boniface is in the rear of the church. It seems it was saved from the fire.

Sister Judith Ann, O.S.B., the principal, welcomed us graciously and warmly. She has been there sixteen years and is the life and backbone of the school. The religious atmosphere the teachers try to instill is evident by the catchy sayings posted in very visible places. This fact was noted at every school we visited.

Our presence in this parish was just long enough to bring Sisters Angeline Hageman and Elise Jacoby to our community.

### **St. Patrick, Minonk, IL (1885 – 1977)**

We arrived at this quiet rural area at 3:50 P.M. At the rectory the very gracious welcoming pastor, Father Gillis, met us. We received a history book. He called Thomas and Elsa McNamara who come over for a short visit. This couple knew and were very fond of the sisters missioned at S. Patrick. The school closed in 1971 because the enrollment was down to 85 students. We toured the school now used for weekly religious studies, then the church and the convent. The gentleman who now owns the convent building showed us the first floor and upstairs what was the chapel. He was proud to be living there. The home contains beautiful woodwork.

### **Immaculate Conception, Kankakee, IL (1912 – 1918)**

It was disappointing not to be able to go there. The parish had consolidated and we did not know which of the three it joined. It would have been dark when we got there and now knowing the city it was suggested we go on to Streator instead which was only thirty miles north.

### **St. Anthony, Streator, IL (1888 – )**

(The Sisters at St. Anthony in 1966 are pictured top right. Left to right are Sisters: Gloria Kellerman, Alice Raymond, Joan Clare Lange, Rita Agnes Werner, and Rebecca Hoffmann) We made a call to Sister Carol Royston who gave us directions to a good motel. She had a meeting that evening and would not have been home to meet us. After we checked in at the Town and Country Motel, we went to dinner in their restaurant. The management had given us a ticket for a complimentary cocktail drink with the meal so we had a glass of wine.

### **Tuesday, September 20**

At St. Anthony Church we assisted at Mass. After that Sister Carol and the secretary took us to breakfast. Then Sister took us to meet the new pastor of one week, Father Jerome Ham, a Vietnamese. Next we visited the whole school, kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Again a religious atmosphere was evident.

Since the convent is used for other purposes, Sister Carol lives in the rectory of St. Casimir Parish which is not in use, although the parish continues. It is within walking distance but Sister usually drives. We were given a history and we also took some photos. All statues are painted a gold color because when the parish renovated they did not have enough money, however the crucifixion group was done in color.

Leaving Streator about 10:00 A.M., we journeyed westward between corn and soybean fields. There was no need to hurry so we leisurely drove along enjoying the crops and seeing them harvested. When one sees nothing else in state after state, we realize there is plenty of food for all. The world hunger is due to unequal distribution and selfish politics and consumerism.

We crossed the Mississippi River at Davenport, IA about 1:00 P.M., drove up to a welcome center that overlooked the River and ate a lunch. There we spent some time just taking in the beauty.

### **Sisters of St. Francis, Clinton, IA**

Now our trip took us north along the river which could be seen now and then until we reached Clinton. A wrong turn several times let us get to the Sisters convent at 3:30 P.M. We were met by Sister Louisa and welcomed by everyone we met.

Their college and convent are connected. At the end of each floor of bedrooms in the convent is a lounge with a whole hillside of trees to view through plenty of windows to make the rooms bright and cheerful.

### **Wednesday, September 21**

After Mass and breakfast we were given a tour of the building, farm and Mt. Alverna Retirement Home. The infirm sisters and other people live in this complex. One sister is 101 years old and is alert. She recites poetry and converses well.

A lady at the homes who was 105 years old was leaving as we came in. She was going to a relative's home to take bread which she does every week. She did not need a walker. When she saw Sister Wilhelmina she gave her a big hug and said, "Isn't she the cutest little thing you ever saw?"

In the archives we were given a copy of a photo of their convent at Gethsemani, KY. We were also given the names of the women who made their novitiate here at Oldenburg.

We also discovered that a novice from here, Hileodora (Rose Schneider), of her own choice, went to that community in 1885 and became Sister Carmel, a good artist and music teacher. We saw several of her paintings which were good.

## **Thursday, September 22**

### **St. Boniface, New Vienna, IA (1861 – 1865?)**

(St. Boniface convent is pictured top middle. It is now a museum.) Another step of our journey commenced about 9:00 A.M. Rain had begun during the night but it was no threat because it was soft and gentle. It was moving eastward and so became less and less but also was getting colder.

New Vienna, IA was our next stop about 11:00 A.M. We went wondering what reception we would get because it was so long ago and our sisters left because of trying circumstances. It is a beautiful rural parish, very spacious and manicured. Father Rosanke was occupied but told us church and school were open and to make ourselves at home. The church is a large true gothic style edifice and the furnishings were just as true to that style. The altar was hand carved of soft gold toned mahogany. The interior of the church had just been cleaned and repainted for their 150 year celebration.

Grades kindergarten through three are enrolled here and the other grades at St. Peter and Paul, Petersburg, IA.

The old building which was the former school, convent and boarding facilities was in danger of being destroyed but the Historical Society of New Vienna, after lengthy negotiations purchased it in 1990. A side door was opened so we ventured in. Four members of the Society happened to be there and after introducing ourselves we received a most gracious and warm welcome. Shortly before someone of the society had discovered that Sisters had been teaching there prior to the Franciscans from La Crosse, WI who came in 1871. These people were overwhelmed with joy to see us. The next hour was spent in touring this museum. We were asked to send a sister doll dressed in the traditional habit. The museum contains many manikins for displaying their clothing heritage. A Sears store was going out of business and these were already on the truck to be thrown away. The historians salvaged them. There were at least 25 of them salvaged. Other visiting historians are amazed when they see the number. You can imagine how realistically everything is displayed.

We left this town with lifted and grateful hearts at about 1:00 P.M.

*To be continued...*