

FSSH History 1876 – 1880

Story Location-Source	Detail History	
Germany to America 1876	Sisters leave Germany	In 1876, just a decade after its inception, the community of the new Order, the Franciscan Sisters of Seelbach was faced with the problem of finding a new home on foreign soil; the hostile government of Bismarck had no place for them in the Empire. Belgium, and strange to relate, the Holy Land, were countries considered as havens of refuge and possible fields of future missionary activities, but after a chance meeting with the Reverend Dominic Duehmig of Avilla, Indiana, who was at that time on a visit to his native land, the Sisters decided to come to America, the land of opportunity, where religious foundations were sadly needed as Father Duehmig had truthfully informed them. The story recorded in German in this book states that when the Sisters arrived in New York, they stayed with the Franciscan Sisters of the Poor in a Hospital in New York.
American Roots 1876-1908	Others came from Germany to join	Before the close of the year, Reverend Mother M. Anastasia, the foundress of the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart in America, and her three assistants who so heroically blazed the trail for future endeavors of the community were joined by other members from Tretenhof. The arrival of several more Sisters somewhat later brought the number to twenty-seven, or nearly one-half of the sixty members who constituted the community at Seelbach on that memorable day when the Sisters were notified that they must vacate their convent and discontinue their work of charity in the German Empire.
American Roots 1876-1908	Chapel and Addition	The arrival of these Sisters would necessitate larger living quarters; therefore Rev. Father Duehmig immediately called for working men. The erection of an adjoining building and a chapel was now commenced. The Sisters had gone daily to the parish church in Avilla to attend Holy Mass.
American Roots 1876-1908	Arrival of Sisters from Germany	As the building was nearing completion, there came from Germany on August 1, 1876, Sisters M. [Franziska Sprau], M. Coletta [Himmelsbach], M. Ludovicka [Graf], M. Luzia [Lucia Deck], M. Seraphina [Huber], M. Cecilia [Kohler], M. Ottilia [Dollinger], M. Armella [Kranz], M. Pia [Bischler], B. Georgia [Steinenbrunner], M. Bertha [Falk], M. Justina [Kari], and the candidate, Catherine Rumpf; also Brothers Nicholas and Daniel; Theresia, Victoria and Lidwina who had been making their homes with the Sisters.
American Roots 1876-1908	Arrival of second group from Germany	That same year, on September 30, Rev. Joseph Flach came as chaplain. With him came Sisters M. Kunigunda [Brossmer], M. Philippina [Metzger] and M. Ida [Flaig]; Brothers Wendelin, Ludwig and Joseph Busam; two others who had been making their homes with the Sisters, Magdalena Meyer and Stephan Weber. Brother Wendelin took charge of the farm. This extra help gave some of the Sisters time to begin the study of English.

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		Commencing on September 1, Sister M. Barbara [] daily attended the Avilla school to become versed in the Methods of Teaching.
American Roots 1976-1908	First Holy Mass in New Chapel October 20	Words cannot describe the joy and gratitude of the Sisters as on October 20, 1876, the Rev. Father Duehmig offered the holy sacrifice of the Mass for the first time in the new chapel. Up until this time, the Sisters had to go quite a distance to the Avila church but, from now on, they would have our Blessed Lord dwelling in their midst in the Most Blessed Sacrament.
American Roots 1876-1880	Solemn Dedication November 19	The solemn dedication of the new chapel took place on November 19, by the Vicar General, the Rev. Father Benoit of Fort Wayne.
American Roots 1876-1880	First House in America purchased -- Beginning of Sacred Heart Home for Aged	The site in Rome City where the present Kneipp Sanitarium is located was suggested by the Right Reverend Bishop as a likely place for a Home for the Aged. After some investigation, however, this was thought impracticable. The land seemed low and the price asked for it, exorbitantly high. Finally, a farm near Avilla, situated in the parish of Father Duehmig and belonging to Mr. Thomas Storey, was purchased by the Sisters for \$12,000.00 and the pioneers moved into their own establishment. This was remodeled and enlarged to accommodate those arriving from Europe. Place was also provided for a number of elderly persons who wished to make their home with the Sisters. Thus, the Sacred Heart Home for the Aged came into existence.
American Roots 1876-1880	America - Arrival in Fort Wayne, Indiana	On May 17, 1876, Reverend Mother Anastasia Bischler with three companions, Sisters M. Brigitta (Herr), M. Zita [Beck], and M. Barbara [Kastner], and Rudolph Joërger, a member of the Tertiary Order sailed for the United States in search of a place where their high ideals to serve God and suffering humanity might be continued. Arriving in New York on May 31, the guiding hand of Divine Providence let them to Fort Wayne, Indiana, where they were warmly welcomed by the Right Reverend Joseph Dwenger, C.P.P.S., D.D., Bishop of the Fort Wayne Diocese. Accepting the proffered hospitality of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ for a few weeks, they set about seeking a desirable place for a foundation.
American Roots 1876-1880	Study of English	During this time and up until April, 1877, Miss Mary Klotz, a teacher of English, came to the Sisters' home to give them a course in that language

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American Roots 1876-1880	First School Avilla	A public primary school in the Avila parish was our first mission. It was taken charge of on May 15, 1877. Sister M. Franziska Spraul was appointed local Superior; Sister M. Ottilia, nurse and housekeeper; Sister M. Barbara and Sister M. Ida, teachers. During the month of May, Sister M. Hermina and Sister M. Luiitgardis came.
American Roots 1876-1880	Three Orphans Avilla	Three orphans, Julia Kramer, aged 5; Mary aged 4 and Frank, age 3, were taken into the Sisters' home in October.
American Roots 1876-1880	Second School - Hessen Cassel	On August 16, Sister M. Kunigunda, Sister M. Hermina, Sister M. Luitgardis and Sister M. Philomena were sent to the second mission to take charge of the school, the organ and nursing. The mission was at Hessen Cassel, near Fort Wayne.
American Roots 1876-1880	Two more Sisters from Germany	During the month of May, Sister M. Hermina and Sister M. Luiitgardis came.
American Roots 1876-1880	First Retreat Avilla	In August, the first Retreat was given by the Rev. Father Clementine, O.F.M., of the St. Louis Province.
American Roots 1876-1880	Three more Orphans Avilla	Three orphans were taken in by the Sisters. They were Joseph Schuler and Rose and Catherine Groh.
American Roots 1876-1880	Two From Germany	On December 14, two more Sisters—Sister M. Rosalia and Sister M. Theresia arrived from Germany.
American Roots 1876-1880	Third School Dyer	A third school was taken charge of by our Sisters at Dyer, Indiana, on March 28, 1878. One of the Sisters sent to this mission was in charge of the organ.
American Roots 1876-1880	New Chaplain Avilla	In March 1878 the Rev. Joseph Flach was transferred to Dyer as pastor. The Rev. Theodore Berg, a sickly priest, was appointed by the Bishop.

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American Roots 1876-1880	Fourth School Ege	A fourth mission was started on April 9, 1879 in Giradot Settlement (Ege), Noble County, Indiana. Sister M. Brigitta, Sister M. Justina and Sister M. Georgia were sent there to take charge of the school and the organ.
American Roots 1876-1880	Joliet -starting of a hospital	This small beginning passed through the usual hardships and trials that seem to be the lot of all new foundations. The number of Sisters gradually increased and, in 1880, the Rev. Gerhard Becker, O. F. M., conferred with Archbishop Feehan of Chicago, relative to plans for the founding of a hospital in Joliet, Illinois. It was the Archbishop's wish that a hospital be established there and entrusted to the charitable care of the Sisters. In December of the same year, Father Gerhard wrote to Mother Anastasia, the Superior General of the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart, telling her of his plans and of the wishes of the Archbishop. Failing to receive a favorable reply, he paid a personal visit to the Motherhouse and reiterated his appeal for "only two or three Sisters," knowing that others would soon follow. Father Gerhard's appeal struck a responsive chord in Mother Anastasia's heart and she consented to send Sisters Ottilia, Georgia, Philippina and Franziska. They arrived in Joliet shortly after Christmas, 1880. They were under no illusions as to the mission they were undertaking. "You must depend solely upon Divine Providence", were the Archbishop's parting words when the four Sisters started on their journey. Arriving in Joliet, the Sisters were furnished a home by Mrs. Mary Stoos at 509 North Hickory Street until such time as funds would be raised to build the proposed hospital. Shortly after coming to Joliet, an epidemic of typhoid fever broke out in the community and the Sisters spent many weary weeks traveling from home to home to care for the suffering and when all hope was gone, performed the last rites for the dead and the dying.