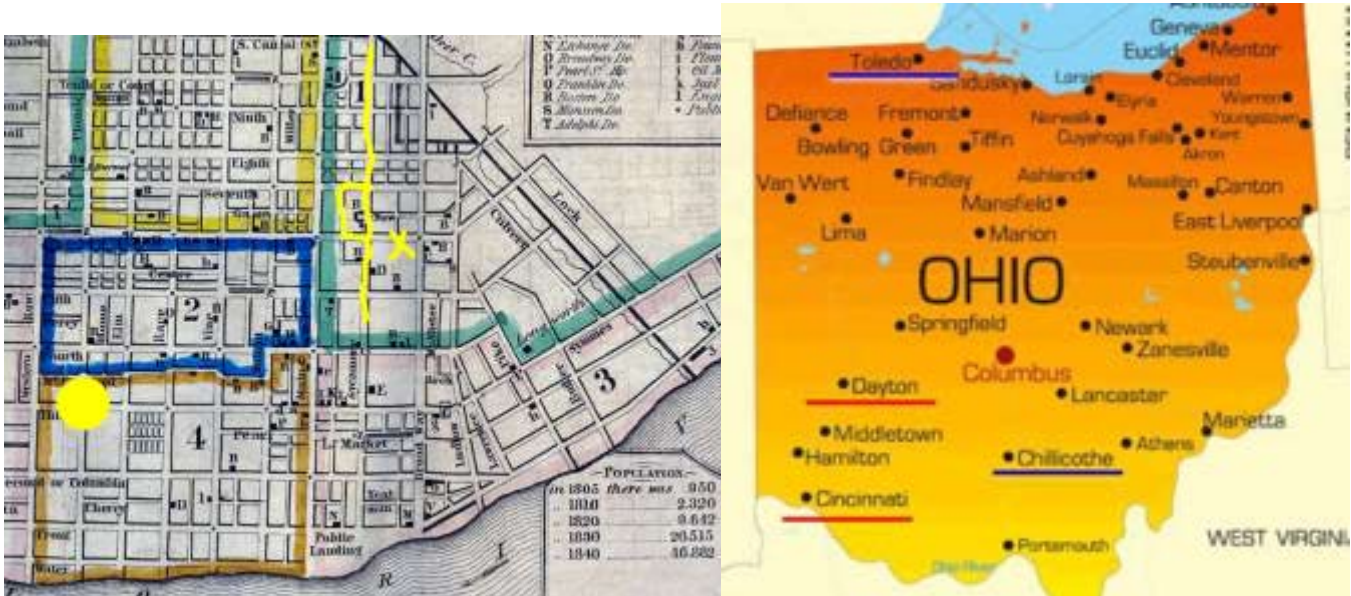


Mission to Cincinnati in 1840

- Antwerp Harbor – departure point
- The *Eliza Thornton* – ship they sailed on with 14 other passengers
- Cincinnati – 1840
 - Sisters of Charity at Third & Plum Streets offer hospitality (yellow circle on map below)
 - Sycamore Street – rented property near Cathedral, too small (Cathedral is yellow box by yellow line below – there is a “B” within the box, line is part of Sycamore Street)
 - Sixth Street – 32 room Spencer Mansion less than a block from Cathedral (yellow X below)
- Toledo – 1845 closes because of unhealthy conditions in 1849
- Chillicothe – 1848 (opens & closes 3 times, final closure in 1891)
- Dayton – 1849
- Boston – 1849



- Mère Ignace – missions 1st group to Cincinnati
- Bishop John Baptist Purcell – Bishop of Cincinnati
- Baroness Teresa de Coppens – reason Purcell comes to Namur
- M. Brassacq – Purcell's vicar general acting for him in Europe
- Bishop Deheselle – Bishop of Namur who does his best to safeguard SNDdeN interests
- Fr. Amadeus Rappe, OP – Sisters' chaplain on voyage, accompanies them to Cincinnati
- 1st 8 Sisters
 - Sister Xavier: 51, from Luxembourg, infirmarian & experienced teacher, committed to the poor, loved preparing children for their 1st communion, Toledo foundation, 1st SNDdeN to die in the U.S.
 - Sister Melanie: 43, from Namur, 1 of 1st pupils at Namur: knew Mère Julie & Mother St Joseph well, brought 20 years teaching experience, Toledo foundation, dies of Cancer at Sixth Street in 1854
 - Sister Marie Pauline: 24, from Bruges, educated at Ghent, 1st mission as to Antwerp, music teacher, proficient in English, instructed adult converts, died of cholera in 1849

- Sister Humbeline: 28, pronounced her vows August 30, 1840; an art teacher, left the community before end of 1848
- Sister Ignatia: 30, teacher, instructed adult converts, horrible English, practical & business like, Superior of Dayton foundation in 1849, Superior of Columbus in 1860 & built 1st SNDdeN owned home & school (Rich Street), returned to Europe in 1870, died at Nouveau Bois in 1892
- Sister Rosine: 27, did the housework & cooking, horrible English, merry, happy-hearted, Mt. Notre Dame foundation stone, died 1896
- Sister Louise: 27, born at Bergen op Zoom, Holland, attended boarding school at Namur, best at English among 1st group, taught religion to all classes, worked with adult converts, helped with business negotiations, made 1st novice director, named superior in 1845
- Sister Louis de Gonzague, Superior: 30, born at Namur, superior of Thuin at 25, horrible English, great letter writer, encouraged gifts in others, insisted we stay in city with the poor, helped with cooking, portressing, cleaning and laundry to free those more proficient in English for ministry, led Toledo Foundation, arranged for Dayton & led foundation in Boston, summoned back to Namur because of ill health in 1852, PR person for US mission, died in 1866

Dates & Events:

- **1838: February 24** – Mère Ignace elected mother general
- **1838: September** – Purcell visits Namur to deliver letter to Baroness de Coppens
- **1840: March** – letter from M. Brassac requesting Sisters
- **1840: August** – first eight gather in Namur for final preparation
- **1840: September 3** – first eight Sisters depart the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in Namur, Belgium and head to Antwerp. Sr. Louis de Gonzague is named the Superior.
- **1840: September 9** – Board the *Eliza Thornton*,
- **1840: September 14** – favorable winds finally carry the *Eliza Thornton* to sea
- **1840: October 19** – The *Eliza Thornton* arrives in New York. Our Sisters stay with the Sisters of Charity for three days.
- **1840: October 22** – Sisters make the 7 hour journey to Philadelphia by boat and railway.
- **1840: October 23-27** – Sisters make the journey to Pittsburgh by railway and canal boat.
- **1840: October 31** – Sisters arrive in Cincinnati by steamboat via the Ohio River
- **1840: November 10/11** – Sisters move into rented house on Sycamore Street
- **1840: November 19** – word finally reaches Namur of Sisters' safe arrival
- **1840: December** – Sisters acquire & move into the Spencer Mansion on 6th Street
- **1841: January 18** – Sisters open a free school, day school and boarding school at Sixth Street.
- **1841: February 2** – 1st American enters (Mary Hughes – she will leave in May of the same year. The 2nd enters on July 31 and is buried in the cemetery at MND. Both are named Mary.)
- **1845:** Sister Louise made superior at Sister Louis de Gonzague's request
- **1845:** Sister Louis de Gonzague leads foundation to Toledo (closes in 1848)
- **1848:** Chillicothe (closes the 3rd & final time in 1891)
- **1849:** Dayton & Boston foundations

Impact of War/Political Unrest:

- Anti-Catholic bigotry in US – did not wear habits when traveling or out in public
- 1841 decision of US Bishops that every parish will have a school insures we will serve the poor: immigrant church
- Mexican-American War – Fr. McElroy

Relationship with Hierarchy & Clergy:

- Collaborative, consultative
- Fatherly concern of both Bishop Dehesselle & Bishop Purcell; friendship of Fathers Rappe, McElroy & DeSmet
- Bishop Purcell has nothing ready for us in Cincinnati except hospitality with the Charities
- Fr. Edward Purcell a bit of a problem – tries to put us in Brown County – Louis de Gonzague's threat to go back to Belgium

Primitive Spirit:

- Commitment to the poor
- December 19, 1840 letter to Sisters in Cincinnati: desire that distance not exist in Institute; letter writing between secondary houses and mother house as way to preserve unity
- Adaptability
- Equality
- Courage
- Obedience
- Unity
- Importance of Prayer

Spirituality underpinning everything:

Deep discernment: both initially as Sisters and community discerned who would go and in carrying out the mission once they arrived:

- Prayer (constant for herself and the rest of the SNDdeN)
- She consults & gathers more information
- Weighs all the pros and cons that are brought up/she thinks of
- Makes a decision & continues to pray until a sense of peace and joy within provide confirmation
- She asks the Sisters to pray as she makes arrangements
- She writes to all the communities asking for volunteers to write her a letter answering the following questions:
 - How long have you wanted to go to America and what effects has this desire produced in you?
 - Can you name the source of the desire? Of the motives that have enabled you to persevere in it?
 - Have you maturely weighed before God all the difficulties with which this undertaking is surrounded, and whether the thought of all this has shaken or diminished your desire?
 - Do you think your health is sufficiently robust to be able to bear, over and above the fatigue of the journey, the necessarily hard and laborious life which will be your's in so distant a country? (Mère Ignace goes on to say, "Answer these questions quite simply and very truthfully, so as not to put me in the position of exposing you to danger of spiritual shipwreck. Test your spiritual strength while you are still in Belgium...")
- Asks a novena to the Holy Ghost to guide the choice of Sisters to be followed immediately by 1 to Our lady asking her special protection for the undertaking. (Mère Ignace, pg. 175-6)
- Simplicity & prayer kept them united in God's goodness
- Cross is central
- Devotion to Mary

What touched your heart?

- The process Ignace used to name the Sisters who would go to America – rooted in prayer and discernment

- Advice of Bishop & Mere Ignace to Sisters (text of both at end of document)
- Journal of trip to Cincinnati copied out and sent to every house, every house says prayer of thanksgiving and has Mass said – Where 1 of us is, all of us are: everyone was involved in success of mission
- Louis de Gonzague's advice to Julia in 1860:
 - Extra ½ hour a day: prayer before the Blessed Sacrament
 - Lift up each Sister & beg the grace to be Christ to them
- Prayer, prayer, without it we can do nothing!

New insights?

- The time that went into the letters – and how they were used to grow the mission
- 4 of the 1st 8 had a horrible time learning English
- 1st group of 8 is multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-generational
- Relationships
- Louis de Gonzague was a wonderful choice for Superior
- Connections to 1st Sisters – from photos in parlor to relationships
- Who did they form?
 - 1841-1849
 - 34 enter
 - 8 leave as novices, 5 after profession
 - Ages range from 17-28
 - Multi-lingual & multi-cultural:
 - Ireland, Georgia, Germany, France, England, Prussia, New York, Massachusetts, Canada, Ohio, Kentucky

The Letter Bishop Deheselle gave to Sister Louis de Gonzague in a sealed envelope with instructions to open and read it once they were at sea (Mère Ignace, pages 180-181):

My dear children in Jesus Christ,

Here you are on the open sea sailing towards your new fatherland. While contemplating the vast ocean you will, no doubt, exclaim, 'How great is God! How magnificent is His power!'

Allow me, dear children, to offer you a few words of advice, upon which I would ask you to meditate during your voyage, after your arrival, and, indeed, always.

1. First of all, I exhort you to remain firm and unalterable in your vocation, and inviolable devoted to the Institute of Notre-Dame;
2. Never change one iota of your Rule;
3. Be ever united among yourselves by the purest and closest bonds of love and charity;
4. Never lose sight of the end of the Institute, even in favor of what may appear a greater good, and never forget that your chief work is the instruction of the poor;
5. Arm yourselves with an invincible courage. Put all your trust in Him who commands both wind and sea.

My good wishes and my prayers accompany you. Good-bye, dear children, may God bless you! May we all meet again in a happy eternity! Amen.

† Nicolas-Joseph, Bishop of Namur

Counsels of Mere Ignace to the Sisters as they left Belgium (Mère Ignace, pages 182; Sister Louise, page 59):

1. My first and last recommendation, the one on which I most insist, is that you observe the holy Rule faithfully and lovingly.

2. Guard carefully, as the pupil of your eye, the spirit of simplicity, which is the distinctive characteristic of our Institute. Be simple in your thoughts, words, actions; in your devotions; in sort, in your whole conduct.
3. Love prayer and meditation. These are indispensable means for preserving you in the fervor of your vocation. Have a strong and tender love for Jesus in His divine Sacrament, to draw from that adorable source, strength, light, courage, and all the graces of which you stand in need.
4. Sacrifice yourselves generously for the interests of God. Fear neither pain nor labor.
5. Study Our Lord hanging upon the Cross, and calling upon you to follow Him.
6. Be very united; have but one heart and one soul; love, sustain, and help one another.
7. Have a most tender love for Mary. She is your mother, and she is such in a very special manner. Be then her children, daughters all devoted to her honor and that of her adorable Son. Yes, love Mary and cause her to be loved until the last moment of your lives, and she will come to meet your soul and conduct it to the Heavenly Jerusalem where I hope to sing eternally with you the praises of Jesus and Mary.”