

INSTITUTE HISTORY WORKSHEET

DATE: May, 2020

TOPIC: After Julie's Death

Growth of Motherhouse

Places:

- **Namur:** Rue des Fossés is now owned by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. It has ample room for everyone and room to grow. The letters during this time will often speak of construction going on there as we and the house do grow. In spite of all the crosses, there has been great expansion.
- **Garden Chapel**

People & Relationships between them:

- **Sœur St-Joseph:** Françoise is still sick – Bishop Pisani writes **Sœur Eulalie:** “May God preserve Mère St-Joseph to us; I am afraid she will sink under this terrible blow, but I trust that God will take pity on your community, which is so useful and fervent, and will leave us that good Mother.”
- **Sœur St- Jean Cardon:** superior at St-Hubert where she sees Julie after Julie's death –She is awakened at night and sees Julie and it is so real for her she thinks Julie has arrived unexpectedly. 2 days later word arrives at St. Hubert that Julie has died.
- **Sœur Anastasie Leleu:** as soon as word reaches Jumet she goes to Namur to support Sœur St. Joseph and help the community.
- **Sœur Stephanie Warnier:** annalist at Namur who gives us such detailed account of Julie's death and events that follow
- **Abbé Trouvelot** – Father of the Faith at college in Montdidier, when Julie dies he goes to Cuvilly to collect testimonies
- **William of Orange:** is King of Holland who became ruler of what will become Belgium on June 20, 1814

Dates & Events:

- **1816: April 8** – Monday of Holy Week and the day of Julie's death. News of Julie's death spreads through the town. And because it is Holy Week – the funeral has to be done by the end of the day on Wednesday. Julie wanted a simple funeral like every other Sister received. The Bishop wouldn't hear of it. So -
- **1816: April 10** – the funeral is held at St. Joseph Church which is about 3 ½ blocks from the mother house. The church is packed – and 400 Sisters and students are part of the procession as Julie's body is taken from St. Joseph's to be buried in the cemetery of the town. It's important to know that most of those Sisters were local because word of Julie's death did not reach St – Hubert, Ghent and other places until after the funeral. Bishop Pisani pays for the vault that will hold her body and orders a large stone to cover the grave. The Sisters were disappointed because they wanted to bury Julie in the convent garden. But they are happy that the spot chosen in the town cemetery is near the Calvary monument.
- **1816: July** – On July 25, 1816, some months after the death of Julie, the funerary stone, which measures roughly 5 feet by 3 feet is ready to put on the grave. When this tombstone is put in place, the tomb is opened for the 1st time. Sisters take small ivory crucifix, large rosary and part of shroud and deliver them to Mother St Joseph. Bishop Pisani de la Gaude had engraved on the stone:
 - The initials DOM (Deo optimo maximo, to the most great and good God).

- Followed by: “Here lies the body of the very virtuous Mere Julie Billiard foundress and Superior General of the Congregation of the Sister of Notre Dame, who led a saintly life and died in Namur, April 8, 1816 at the age of 65. She committed the most precious moments of her life to the education of youth and the establishment of excellent schools justly considered as highways of religion and morality.
- She founded these establishments in Amiens, Ghent, Bordeaux, Namur, Chartron (outside Bourdeaux), Mont-Didier, Rubempre, Jumet, Saint-Hubert, Zele, Andennes, Gembloux, Fleurus, and, having been exhausted of her strength by this work done very diligently for the glory of God, she slept in the Lord greatly missed by those who had followed her, admired by those who had known her. R.I.P.
- **1817: July 17** – tomb opened 2nd time out of fear that William of Orange will desecrate cemetery. Julie’s body is whole. Sisters take it to the mother house and place it in a small vault in the garden. Mère St. Joseph builds a small oratory over the vault that is dedicated to the Holy Heart of Mary. The anti-Catholic mood is such that they are quite concerned that no one know Julie’s remains have been transferred.
- **1838:** February 9 – Mère St. Joseph dies and is buried in the vault
- **1842:** Mère Ignace dies and when the vault is opened to bury her, the Sisters realize floods have damaged Julie’s casket. It is opened for the 3rd time and only bones are left. So they are transferred to a chest.
- **1852:** The small oratory is expanded to be the Garden Chapel dedicated to the Holy Heart of Mary. The neo-gothic style and the altar made of oak seem to have come from the same workshop. Only the Virgin Mary is signed on its base: “François de Tombay, sculptor, 1854.” The sculptor was part of a family of famous sculptors from Liège.
 - **List of Statues:**
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SAINT LOUIS DE GONZAGUE 2. SAINTE ANNE 3. SAINT JOSEPH 4. VIERGE 5. SAINT JEAN 6. SAINTE THERESE D’AVILA 7. SAINT STANISLAS 8. SACRE-CŒUR | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9. SAINT FRANÇOIS D’ASSISE 10. SAINT GREGOIRE LE GRAND 11. SAINT AUGUSTIN 12. SAINT IGNACE 13. SAINT FRANCOIS DE SALES 14. SAINT NORBERT 15. SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL |
|---|--|
- **1854:** Bishop Dehesselle dedicates the Garden Chapel
- **1880: Floods**
- **1882:** Because of the successive floods, the sisters had to build a raised annex for the graves of the first three superiors general. These graves were covered with a marble slab bearing the name and age of the deceased and the dates of her death.
 - Small Monument Text:

Bones and ashes of the servant of God Julie Billiard
foundress of the Congregation of the Sisters of Notre-Dame
died April 8, 1816 at the age of 65 years
RIP
- **1891:** When the town cemetery closed, the sisters took back the tombstone Bishop Pisani had commissioned and it was incorporated in the outer wall of the Garden Chapel.
- **1906: April 9** – tomb opened 4th time in preparation for beatification

- After the beatification of Julie in 1906 and the placement of her relics in the reliquary, the stone slab that had covered her tomb was incorporated into the exterior wall of the Garden Chapel.
 - La Châsse/The Reliquary
 - A work of pure gothic art, the reliquary of Saint Julie Billiard is made entirely of copper, gilded in fine gold with contrasting reliefs in silvered copper. The making of the reliquary was entrusted to the firm of M. Dehin at Liège.
 - The double-sloped roof is divided on each side into 2 compartments presenting, in relief, at the bottom of the enamels, the symbols of the four evangelists. On each facade, there are two scenes:
 - Front Façade: On the face in front, at the right-hand side, a very young Julie teaching the children of her native village, Cuvilly in Picardy. The scene on the left hand side tells the story of the vision at Compiègne in 1793.
 - Back Façade: On the opposite face, the right hand side shows Julie in ecstasy at Amiens on the February 2, 1806; it is revealed to her that her daughters will cross seas to bring the light of the Gospel. The scene on the left shows her death on the April 8, 1816.
 - Right Gable: The gable on the right shows a seated Julie holding in her hands the Constitutions of the Sisters of Notre-Dame; at each side of the saint, an angel carries a banner with the inscription: "Ah ! Qu'il est bon le bon Dieu" - How good God is. And "il a exalté les humbles" (he has exalted the humble) on the other.
 - Left Gable: On the left hand gable, Our Lady is sitting with the child Jesus on her knees.
 - The whole structure rests on six lions rampant, with a copper plaque bearing the following Latin text: "Corpus Beatae Juliae Billiard, quam Pius P.P.X, III idus Maii MCMVI inter coelitis retulit, a Thoma Lud. Heylen, Nam. Apô V idus Aprilis ejusdem anni, reconditum in hac lipsanoteca" (The body of Blessed Julie Billiard, whom Pope Pius X, on the May 13, 1906, declared Blessed, and whose remains Thomas Louis Heylen, Bishop of Namur, placed in this reliquary on April 9 of the same year.)
- **1906: May 13** – Beatification – after which the reliquary are placed under the altar of the Garden Chapel
- **1907:** the marble statue of Julie is placed in the spot where her tomb had been in the Garden Chapel
- **1940-44:** The Garden Chapel is damaged by bombings but not destroyed. In 1940, the sisters had removed the relics of their foundress and these followed them to the different lodgings they were able to find. But the reliquary which was too heavy to carry, remained in its normal place.
- **1948:** Complete restoration of the Chapel, thanks to the generosity of the American missions, particularly of California. Two sacristies were appended and two gothic windows were inserted in the wall above the tombs.
- **1969: June 22** – Canonization
- **2012:** The contents of the Garden Chapel are moved to the Heritage Centre. The reliquary, woodwork, memorial plaques, tombs of Mère St Joseph and Mère Ignace, and statue of Julie and the small tombstone are all placed inside, while the large tombstone is placed in the garden by the entrance.

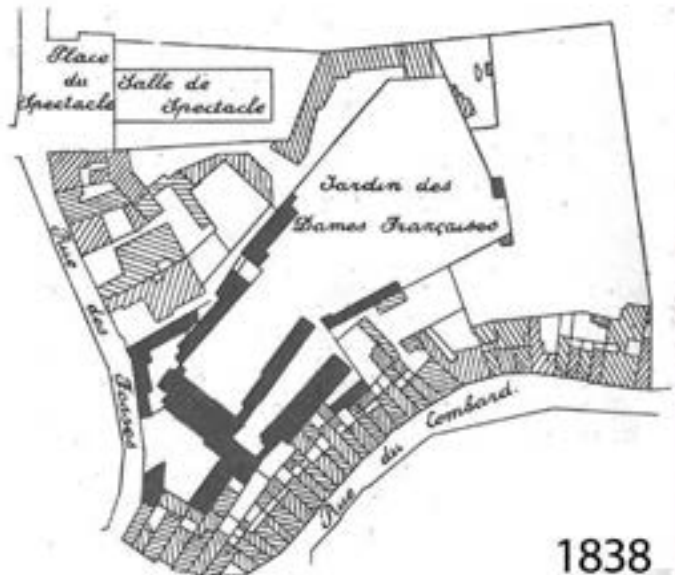
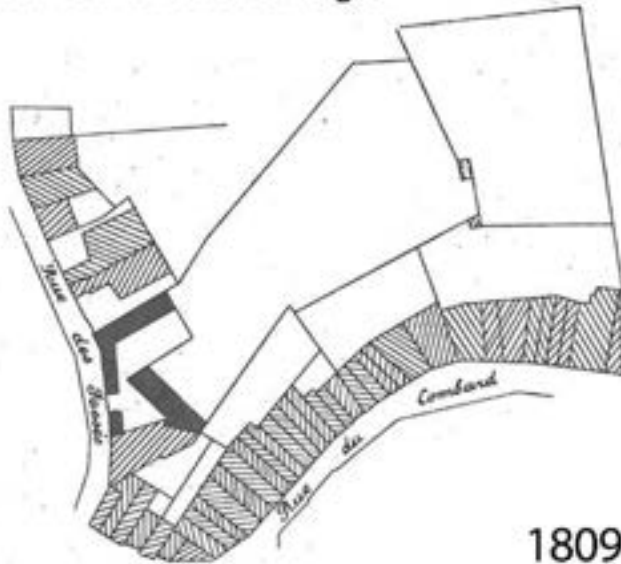


Growth of the Mother House:

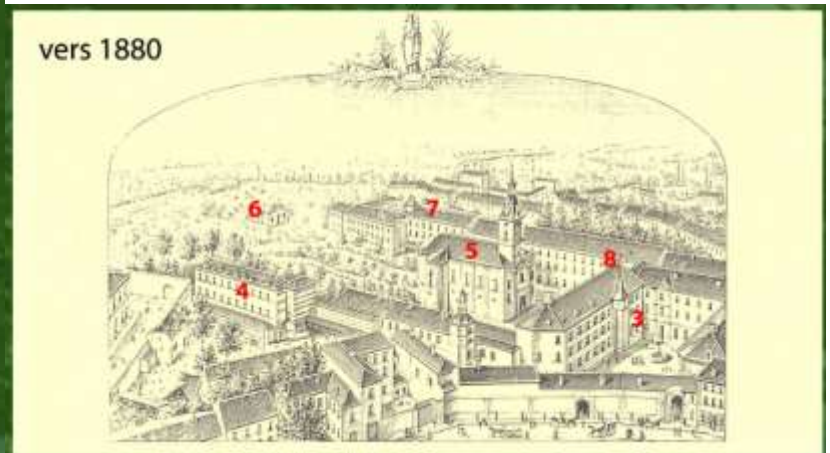
The other piece I wanted to look at today is the growth of the Mother house.

- We start with this image taken from a **1784** map of Namur. You see the street running from the top down – that is the Rue de Fossés, and the green shows the location and size of the home of the Counts de Quarre
- In late **1808** we rent the property, and it is already bigger than it was. You'll see on the slide the solid dark area the property of the Counts de Quarre.

Agrandissement apporté à la maison mère *The Motherhouse enlarged*



- As we saw last time, we were able to purchase the property in December of **1809**, and we start building almost immediately.
- On the right we see the property in **1838** – the year Mother St. Joseph dies. Look at the expansion that has taken place in a little less than 30 years. And you will also notice the city labels our property: Garden of the French Ladies. Also notice the street at the bottom: Rue du Lombard. It be on the maps as we go along and we'll expand in that direction – as well as others.
- By **1868** more growth has occurred. It's a little harder to see our part, but we've expanded down toward Rue Lombard, we've also gotten some property in the back of the buildings along Rue des Fossés, and we've expanded out toward Rue Pepin. And just to put it into perspective – 1868 is in the latter part of Mère Constantine's era.



- This etching is labeled **1880** – and it helps us see dimension to what’s been on the maps.
- The **#6** on the 1868 map and on the etching is the **Garden Chapel**. Number **2** on the 1868 map shows where the public chapel that was built in honor of St. Julie in **1930** was placed.
- Number **1** on the 1868 map shows the location of “Nazareth” on Rue du Lombard. This was a new free school built in 1906 in honor of Julie’s beatification. It was built from donations given from the American Sisters for that purpose. This building survived World War II best, and is still in use today.

Photos of pictures shared in the presentation can be found at:

<http://www.snddenheritagecentre.org/Museum/index.php/foundation-of-the-institute/evolution-at-namur/motherhouse> (Option on the page menu for Evolution at Namur, Reconstruction and Namur today may also be of interest.)

- Reconstruction after World War II changed things up a little bit – but not a lot:



We rebuilt on the footprints of what had been there originally, with the exception of the Humanities wing that is added to the school. The Public Chapel was moved to Rue Julie Billiard. On the right is an aerial photo taken around **1979**.

Impact of War/Political Unrest:

William of Orange and growing anti-Catholic sentiment is the reason the Sisters use to get Julie's remains moved from the town cemetery to the motherhouse.

Relationship with Hierarchy & Clergy:

Bishop Pisani and Msgr. Médard are good shepherds to the community through this period. They tend to the Sisters as they grieve.

Letters of comfort from Bishop Demandolx in Amiens, Père Thomas and Père Varin (Clare, pages 470-474)

Primitive Spirit:

Unity (in grief and in moving forward)

Reading Julie's Conferences aloud

Spirituality underpinning everything:

Devotion to Julie – among the Sisters and the laity

What touched your heart?

Sisters not wanting to let go of Julie after her death; her presence with them

Deep grief

New insights?

We focus on the growth of the mission in the U.S.A. But look at the growth of the mission in Belgium as well.