

INSTITUTE HISTORY WORKSHEET

TOPIC: Sister Superior Louise

Places:

Bergen-op-Zoom, Holland: birthplace

Antwerp: where she grew up (moved at age 4 or 5)

Namur: attended boarding school; Novitiate

Cincinnati: home from October 31, 1840 to death

Foundations: (some cities have far more than 1 SNDden house/school)

Cincinnati-6th Street/St. Xavier 1841

St. Mary 1846

Holy Trinity 1848

St. John 1849

St. Philomena 1849

St. Paul 1850

St. Joseph 1855

St. Augustine 1862

St. Anthony 1864

St. Louis 1871

St. George 1877

St. Henry 1877

St. Anne 1867

Toledo-September 1845-1848

Chillicothe 1848

Dayton-September 1849

Boston-November 1849

Lowell 1852 (St. Patrick)

Roxbury 1854

Salem 1855, 2nd house 1878

Columbus 1855 (St. Patrick) 1856 (Holy Cross)

Philadelphia 1856 (Spring Garden Street) 1860

(Filbert & Juniper) 1866/7 (Rittenhouse Square)

Lawrence 1859

East Boston 1859

(Holy Redeemer)

Mt. Notre Dame,
Reading 1860

South Boston

1860 (Sts. Peter &
Paul)

Court Street,
Cincinnati

1867/1868

Hamilton 1869

Chicopee 1869

Holyoke 1869

Worcester 1872

Washington, DC 1873 (Industrial School & St.
Aloysius)

Chelsea 1874

Cambridge 1876

Springfield 1877

Eastern Novitiate 1877

Milford, MA 1880

Somerville 1881

Lynn 1881

Woburn 1884



People & Relationships between them:

Family:

- **Joseph Van der Schrieck: father** - 8th child of parents, studied law, went into export business, b. 1776; died December 17, 1858; moves family to Antwerp 1816/1817
- **Clara Maria Weenan: mother** - native of Antwerp - married 1797, died December 21, 1847
- **Pierre-Jean Van der Schrieck:** oldest son/brother - dies in early childhood
- **Jean-Pierre Van der Schrieck:** 2nd son/brother
- **Cornelius Van der Schrieck:** 3rd son/brother
- **Francis Van der Schrieck:** 4th son/brother
- **James Joseph Van der Schrieck:** 5th son/brother

- **Mary Regina Van der Schrieck:** 1st daughter/sister, marries Francis Anthony Bongaerts in 1828
- **Joanna Petronilla Van der Schrieck:** 2nd daughter/sister, called Jeannette by the family; "Josephine wants to learn languages, so she can become a Religious and go off to convert foreign nations"
- **Henri Van der Schrieck:** 6th son/brother
- **Daniel Joseph Van der Schrieck:** 7th son/brother - b. Dec. 22, 1811
- **Josephine Susanna Van der Schrieck:** 3rd daughter (Sister Louise) – 10th of 13 children, 3rd daughter
- **Pierre Martine Van der Schrieck:** 8th son/brother baptized August 15, 1815
- **2 more sons/brothers** - born at Antwerp

Priest/Religious:

- **Bishop John Baptist Purcell:** bishop of Cincinnati who inspires Louise to volunteer; named archbishop in 1850; dies January 4, 1883 – long-time friend and partner in mission; story of him walking the boundaries of Mt. Notre Dame praying the rosary for the success of the mission
- **Jesuits in Cincinnati:** Louise worked with a long line of them!
- **Fr. Henry Schappman SJ:** cousin of Louise & rector of Jesuit College in Cincinnati; "God gives such souls but very rarely. He gave her for the particular work of founding your Institute in America. Those who come after her have only to continue the work as she began it."
- **Father John McElroy SJ:** requests Sisters for St. Mary's Boston
- **Bishop John Bernard Fitzpatrick:** of Boston - want's Sisters to be independent from Cincinnati
- **Bishop Wood:** 1st aid to Purcell in Cincinnati, later Archbishop of Philadelphia
- **Bishop John Nepomucene Neumann:** Bishop in Philadelphia
- **Little Sisters of the Poor:** SNDdeN help them when they 1st arrive in Cincinnati; Louise always made sure they received any money people gave our Sisters on the streets

SNDdeN:

- **Sister Marie Philippine:** arrived in 1842 & relieved Sister Louise in the Day School so Louise can concentrate on the boarders
- **Sister Alphonse Rodriguez:** 3rd colony, replaces Louise w/Boarders
- **Sister Mary Aloysius:** 1st superior at Roxbury, arrived in 1845; dies at sea in 1874 on way to Mère Constantine's jubilee celebration
- **Sister Desiree:** 1st Superior of Lowell, led community for 27 years; died 1879; in answer to how Sisters can build such large buildings: "Father, we do all this by the blessing which God bestows on us in return for feeding the tramps."
- **Sister Mary Hyacinthe:** arrived in Cincinnati in 1850; Chillicothe, 1st superior at Philadelphia, 1st superior at Reading
- **Sister Francis Regis:** ministered to the African American community at St. Anne for 30 years
- **Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart:** led work for the deaf until her death
- **Sister Marie de St Denis:** Louise's assistant in the East, superior of eastern novitiate
- **Sister Albania:** Novice Mistress in East, brought to Cincinnati to help Louise 1883; 1885 - acting as Louise's secretary, writes to Sisters Julia in Philadelphia and Marie St Denis in Boston of Louise's growing frailty
- **Sister Alphonse Marie:** replaced Louis de Gonzague in Boston in 1852, died 1877
- **Sister Agnes Mary:** replaced Sister Julia in Philadelphia

- **Sister Julia McGroarty (Susan McGroarty):** early pupil in Cincinnati; Louise predicts she'll be an SNDdeN; Louise is her novice director; Julia is 1st American Sister to be named Superior; Louise's assistant last year + of Louise's life; succeeds Louise as "provincial"

Dates & Events:

- **1813:** November 14, born; favorite of father, pet of whole family, especially close to Jeanette, Henri & Daniel
- **1824:** sent to boarding school at Namur
- **1829:** father calls her home after her sister marries – waits 6 years to enter because Father will not reconcile himself to her choice
- **1837:** September 20 - father, Jeanette and a brother accompany her to Namur to enter
- **1837:** October 15 - begins novitiate
- **1839:** May 17 – makes vows
- **1840:** October 31 arrives Cincinnati
- **1841:** January 18 – 3 schools open at Sixth Street
- **1845:** named superior at Cincinnati
- **1861:** visit to Belgium
- **1885:** July – beginning of illness
- **1885:** August – tells Julia she needs her in Cincinnati
- **1885:** September – Julia's arrival and appointment
- **1886:** December 3 – death & burial at Mt. Notre Dame
- **1894:** removal of body to Summit

Impact of War/Political Unrest:

- Bergen-op-Zoom attacked by British when she was a baby – March 1814
- Father may have moved family to Antwerp in 1816/17 because Catholics were a minority in Bergen-op-Zoom and he knew what would happen under William of Orange
- Witnessing battle for Antwerp during the Belgian Revolution – from the rooftop!
- In Belgium: Liberals vs Catholics – threat of expulsion of religious orders
- Anti-Catholic bigotry in USA
- Mexican-American War – brings Fr. McElroy SJ to visit, eventual invitation to Boston
- Issue of Slavery in USA – undeclared war along the Ohio River for a good 10 years before Civil War
- Louise goes to Namur right before Civil War breaks out – anxiety of Community until she returns in May, 1861
- Civil War/Reconstruction: growing African American community in Cincinnati; racism
- Industrial Revolution: increasing crowdedness in cities, need for social work type ministries
- Immigration & issues connected with it as population diversifies

Relationship with Hierarchy & Clergy:

- Tremendous support from Bishops all the way around
- Collaborative with Louise holding to ND values and the primitive spirit (following Louis de Gonzague's example: we'll go home if we can't teach the poor in Cincinnati; we're not coming to Boston unless we can stay united.)
- Friendship with Archbishop Purcell and collaboration until his death in 1883

- Supports Archbishop Purcell during financial crisis
- Healthy respect for priests, standing up for her/our rights, tried her virtue on occasion
- Quote: "She is a woman, of course; but if she were a man, she could govern the United States with a wave of her hand." From Fr. Miles SJ – chaplain at 6t Street

Primitive Spirit:

- Commitment to the poor
- Use of signal
- Style of school (3 tiered);
- Commitment to the poor (300 children in free school in 1845)
- Education of Sisters/all are equal: regular teacher meetings held for all Sisters - including those assigned to parish schools (early school supervisor)
- Desire for unity of east and west
- Watchfulness over primitive spirit
- Attention to novices
- "Avoid even the very shadow of failings against charity"/patient with others
- No distinction between nationalities of Sisters
- Care of the sick: part of why she opened Reading
- Permission to have Blessed Sacrament in houses starting with 6th Street

Spirituality underpinning everything:

- Love for Mary: enrolled in Sodality of Children of Mary; gets it started in Cincinnati
- Rosary as constant reminder of Jesus & Mary with her
- St. Aloysius was her patron saint
- Never alone/never lost sense of God's presence
- Prayer before tabernacle
- Mass/Communion principle source of strength
- "What you cannot remedy you must endure; but when you feel you have no longer strength to bear the defects of others cheerfully, go to the chapel in mind if you cannot go in body, and beg it of the Sacred Heart"

What touched your heart?

- Fearlessness – watching battle from roof
- Commitment to mission – leaving family; giving up idea of going west;
- Opens school for poor girls to learn lace-making & religion; makes arrangements for it to continue when she enters, years later she buys lace to take back to America from it
- Leaving 6th Street garden gate open to give people access to well – Underground Railroad?
- Visitation of eastern houses every 2 years – amount of travel; connections she made to families
- Sisters genuine affection for Louise – their relief when she returns from Namur (partially because of War heating up)

New insights?

- Skilled at sketching, interest in drawing and painting; asked to study English & German; enjoyed boating;

- Her outreach to the poor: before she could enter and throughout her life
- Creative resistance: how she dealt with her father's opposition to entering – some might call it will of steel/stubbornness
- She had family here in Cincinnati – her cousin is a Jesuit at St. X towards the end of her life
- Concern for others: learning to tell time in the dark so she doesn't disturb others
- 1st to instruct converts in Cincy; Negress who was afraid Louise would not give her instructions because of her skin color
- Cincinnati was her ONLY mission, but her travel made her a part of every foundation that was made; Sisters loved having her: "I gave you all smiles when I arrived, you should give me smiles when I go"
- As a rule, did not accompany Sisters to new foundation. Carefully chose superior and left her to it; put Sister in charge of school & trusted her to do it
- She seems taciturn but is known for humor; respect from others rooted in respect for others; known for justice; kindness; calm and dignity most impressed people; peace of her presence; woman of strong purpose yet gentle in carrying it out; most at home/happiest among her sisters; silence/person of few words/felt she needed to be more affable
- How far-flung Notre Dame was known: doesn't have Sisters to respond to requests from Santa Fe, Buffalo, New Hampshire, New Orleans, Memphis, Arkansas, Maryland or Canada
- Amazingly good health until the last 18 months – except for eyesight

If you'd like to read more about Sister Superior Louise, the 1st 7 chapters of her biography are linked at the very bottom of this page: <https://www.sndohio.org/sisters-notre-dame/resources>

Transcription of the letter written to R.F. Driscoll about the schools.

Convent of N.D. 6th St.
Nov. 21st 1883

Rev. Father,

Necessity compels Sr. Supr. To lay before your consideration the difficulties of the Girl's Parochial School and she hopes you will do all in your power to remove them. She desires me to enumerate the reasons for which some change is absolutely necessary.

1st. We can no longer devote to the 3 lowest grades Nos. 7, 8, & 9 the 3 rooms occupied by them, as we need them for our day scholars whose number increases weekly. Since Sept. we have 50 more than that last year, and we have no means of accommodating them suitably but in using the 3 rooms above mentioned. We have no ground on which to build and if we had, is it just Rev. Father, that we should go to this expense for the girls of St. Xavier's Parish, whilst no means are neglected for the support of the boy's school? Our large community is at present more than ever inconvenienced so as to afford necessary room to our day scholars.

The 2d reason for requesting another Parochial school is the smallness of the rooms in the Alley building, the entire lack of playground for over 300 children but especially its abominable locality from which Sr. Supr. Feels herself bound in conscience to remove the sisters & the children under their care, as both teachers and pupils are daily exposed to witness the indecencies and wickedness about which we have repeatedly written & spoken but to no avail.

Allow us Rev. Father to propose that which alone could remedy these different evils. There is on 8th St. a lot for sale on which a school house could be built for the boys and then their school house could be occupied by the girls whose actual school you could either rent or sell.

Sr. Supr. Has written to Father Prov. About these difficulties and as he has kindly promised to call and see her about the matter when he comes to the city, Sr. Super. Thinks well to lay these points before you, Rev. F. in order that you may have time to consider them leisurely before R. Rev. Father Buschart's arrival. Sr. Supr. Would like this change made for next Sept. and until then we shall bear the inconveniences necessitated by circumstances.

Requesting your prayers and blessing, Rev. F.

I remain
Yours very respectfully
Sr. Albania S. ON.D. (Sister of Notre Dame)

Transcript of Sister Superior's reply to Rev. Father Driscoll's letter of the 6th Dec. 1883

Convent of Notre Dame
6th St.
December 7, 1883

Dear Father Driscoll,

Allow me to answer your letter of the 6th Dec.

1st The words "to no avail" meant we saw little hope of remedying our difficulties, therefore we concluded to urge once more, to explain the case by writing as several of yr(your) Rev. Fathers advised us to do. If Rev. Fathers Boesc & Tracy are appointed to find out ways & means to remedy the difficulties complained of, all right, we will wait till they are ready.

2nd We accepted the Cincinnati Mission with the intention of teaching rich and poor, the latter gratis. The Most Rev. Abp. (archbishop) promised to assist us to procure a proper locality by donations and loans. He kept his word and so did we.

When the number of Poor Scholars augmented considerably, as also that of the Day Scholars, we laid our difficulties before you, Rev. Father, and the Parish bought the lot in the alley, building on it the six school-rooms now in existence for which we gave the directions, allowing as many feet as there was space, had there been 20 ft. more, the rooms would have been larger. Four of these are of a good size as the number of the more advanced pupils is smaller but they are too small for the grades 5th & 6th. We are now by the increase of pupils, rich and poor and sisters, in the same difficulties as we were when the St. Xavier's Academy was built, hence our appeal to you Rev. Father as Pastor.

3rd How can you understand from Sr. Albania's letter that we threaten to withdraw the teachers from the Parish Schools, Rev. Father? We ask to have the pupils removed from the alley if possible, and to find rooms for the 300 Parish Scholars, Grades 7, 8 & 9 that we may use these places for our Day Scholars, needing them exceedingly. Volunteering to teach gratis, does not imply, to provide buildings for the pupils, however we did

so as long as we could, having done more than our duty when we could do so, it does not follow that we should continue to keep Parish schools on our premises when the places are needed for those who procure us the means to support those who teach gratis.

4th Your Reverence has forgotten the impression received in a visit to the schools in the alley some 4 weeks ago. You expressed your self shocked at the surroundings.

5th To conclude, I intend, Rev. Fr. To ask leave of our Sup. (Superior) Gen. (General) to contribute three thousand dollars to the expenses the Parish will incur to evacuate the 3 rooms now occupied by the pupils of Nos. (numbers) 7, 8 & 9.

This is the consideration Your Reverence asked from the undersigned who asks a blessing and prayers.

Humbly Yrs,
Sister Louise Sr of N.D.