

PREVIEW COPY

Mother Caroline

WOMAN OF HER TIME

Mary Caroline Fries

M. Caroline.

PORTRAIT

by Sister Maura Eichner, SSND

i

"Create, if you must,
a portrait of me.

When the French painter,
Daguerre, invented

his process of photography,
I had been in America

only three years. Those
whom we sisters lost in death
we kept in our grieving hearts.

ii

Least of all would I
be photographed. No time.

And Qoheleth was my mentor:
Vanity of vanities: All things

are vanity – a wisdom,
I thought, I could share

with you. Be patient, my sisters,
sympathetic even, with those

who carefully inserted my round
face into the coif of another.

iii

If I had known, that an image
of me would mean so much

to you, I would have asked
one of our sisters to sketch,

charcoal, or cartoon an authentic
image of me on canvas.

iv

We are daughters of our time.

v

But you have had me, and will have me –
world without end – totally as I was

and tried to be – spirit, bone
and flesh alive in words:

Dear ones, believe me –
What cannot
be achieved
by kindness
is unattainable."



I love, as long as my heart beats.

Mother Caroline Friess, 1824–1892

VOYAGE TO AMERICA

Mother Theresa, Sister Caroline, and four others traveled to America on the steamship Washington. Mother Theresa suffered from seasickness. Sister Caroline enjoyed the voyage and was noticeably tanned from the sun by the time she arrived in New York.

CAROLINE • A Life Embraced

Between the 1830s and the 1860s more than one and a half million Germans immigrated to the United States. Among these immigrants was 23-year-old Sister Caroline Friess, a School Sister of Notre Dame, who

with the order's foundress, Mother Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger, and four others, disembarked at the harbor in New York, in 1847. Caroline entered a country with a booming population of almost 23 million, a country

divided into slave and free states. Wisconsin, which would become her home, became the 30th state to enter the union in 1848.

While many found the change in culture daunting, young Caroline embraced life in America. Where some saw obstacles, she saw opportunity. In 1856, at the age of 33, the woman known as Mother Caroline, became a U.S. citizen. She was not blind to the contradictions in American society. That same year she visited New Orleans and witnessed the dehumanizing institution of slavery. She realized that "the American exuberance for freedom" was sometimes at odds with the religious life. "It is hard," she wrote, "to imagine a greater contradiction than the preservation of the original spirit of the Order and America." Still, she took on the task of adapting the School

SLAVE MARKET IN NEW ORLEANS

In 1857, Mother Caroline wrote, "According to the latest count, New Orleans has 160,000 inhabitants, an archbishop, 20 Catholic churches, three men's orders and seven convents, but also 3,000 coffee houses and 15 slave markets! The latter are buildings with large galleries, where on market days the slaves, gaily decorated, are placed on exhibition to be sold or auctioned. How sad when parents hear their children—what pain when the husband, his wife, brother, sister, etc.—traded for money, and then they must separate."



UNITED STATES IN 1847

Mother Caroline embraced life in Nineteenth Century America. She traveled extensively up and down the Mississippi River, and from the Midwest to the East Coast and into Canada.

Sisters of Notre Dame to America, of discerning the non-negotiables of religious life from those things which had to give way to accomplish the mission and paradoxically maintain the unity of the Congregation.

Although the initial ministry of the congregation in America was the education of German immigrants, this vision was soon broadened to include the entire spectrum of the American people. Mother Caroline's contemporary, Bishop J. L. Spalding, described her spirit as "truly catholic." At the time of her death in 1892, there were 2,000 School Sisters of Notre Dame in the United States and Canada, who were teaching 70,000 students in 200 establishments.



BISHOP J. L. SPALDING

Late in his life, Bishop John Lancaster Spalding (1840-1916) of Peoria, Illinois was acclaimed as one of the few Catholic dignitaries who promoted women's rights, including suffrage and higher education. Mother Caroline's broad promotion of the education of women led Spalding to believe that women need not be limited to household activity, but instead, must be given the opportunity to develop whatever gifts God had bestowed on them.



CAROLINE • Precocious Child

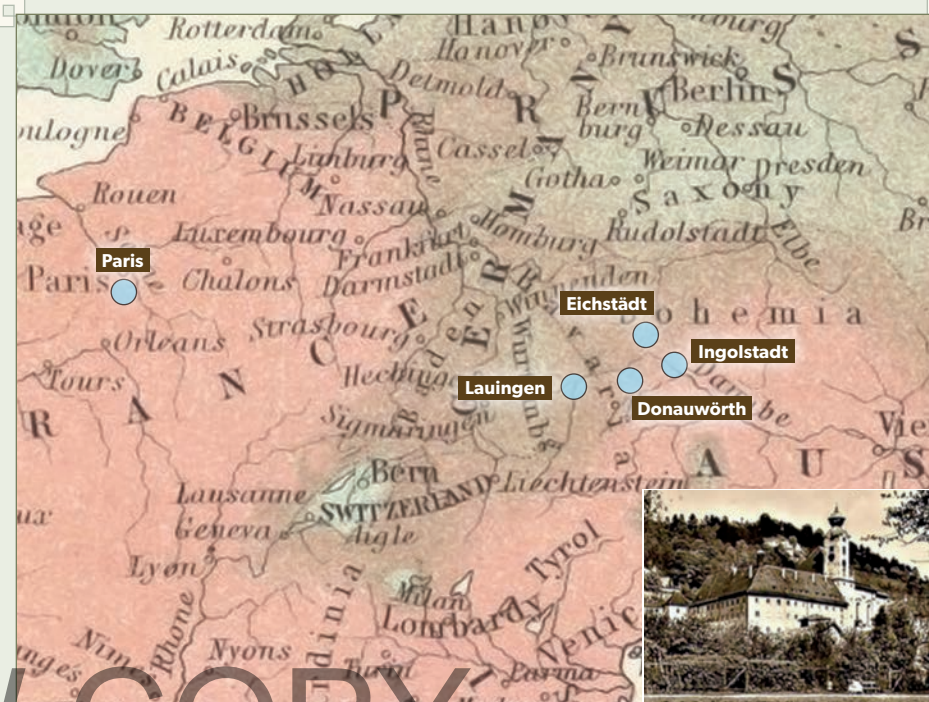
Josepha Friess was a child of France and Germany. She was born in Paris in 1824, her mother the daughter of one of Napoleon's army officers, her father a Bavarian emigre who served as an interpreter to his father-in-law. At the age of four, Josepha and her parents moved to her father's childhood home in Lauingen in Bavaria, stopping at the home of relatives at Donauwörth. It was decided that Josepha would remain in Donauwörth with her grandmother and her uncle, the Rev. Michael Friess, a learned and prominent clergyman. For the next twelve years, Josepha remained with her uncle and grandmother, visiting her parents during school vacations.

Father Friess was a strict but beloved taskmaster, while Grandmother Friess enjoyed indulging her little granddaughter. Mother Caroline later described herself as an "inquisitive, forward child," willful, even stubborn, but generous. She both delighted in her first pair of earrings, and shared her allowance with the poor. At the age of five, Josepha was sent to school in an old Benedictine monastery of Donauwörth. Three years later, when her uncle was transferred to Ingolstadt, Josepha attended a school conducted by Franciscan sisters. When the bishop of Eichstädt called Father Friess to ministry at his cathedral, Josepha again moved. This time she



PARIS 1824

Josefa Friess was born in Paris in 1824, during the Restoration of the Bourbon monarchy (1815-1830) that followed the downfall of Napoleon. The royal government reversed many of the policies of the French Revolution. In July, 1830, a popular uprising brought down the Bourbon monarchy and began the reign of a constitutional monarch, Louis-Philippe.



ABBAY OF ST. WALBURGA

The founding of the abbey dates back to the transfer of the remains of St. Walburga between 870 and 879 to the present site. A moving history of a small church evolving into an abbey followed, including being affected by the secularization in 1806. However, in 1835 King Ludwig I. of Bavaria, prompted a renewal of the abbey. The convent, housing 13 sisters, was allowed to receive new novices, but with the mandate to assume the education and upbringing of the girls of Eichstädt. It was here that Josepha Friess continued her education.

attended the convent school in the Abbey of St. Walburga, conducted by the Benedictines. By the age of fifteen, Josepha had passed the preparatory teachers' examination with highest distinction. She also took lessons in music, drawing, and painting. The violin was her favorite instrument.

Mother Caroline's reminiscences of her childhood and youth reveal a multifaceted girl with deep devotion to the Eucharist (she kept her Holy Communion picture until her dying day), but who cheated at fasting. She loved fine clothing, but love for the poor prevailed over every other consideration. She preferred boys' sports to dolls.



WITTMAN AND JOB

Bishop Michael Wittman (pictured above), cathedral pastor and later auxiliary bishop of Regensburg, urged young Caroline Gerhardinger [Mother Theresa of Jesus] to become a teacher. Like Wittman she realized that education of girls could renew family life and transform society.

After Wittman's death, Father Francis Sebastian Job (pictured below), lent guidance and support in the establishment of the new congregation.



She told her confidante and biographer, Father Abbelen, that

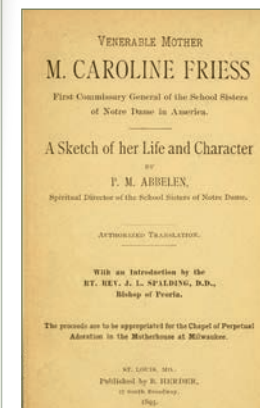
“what she would have enjoyed above all else, was the privilege denied her, that is to preach. She really considered it a misfortune to be a girl, because she could not become a great preacher like her uncle.”

Josephahad determined at an early age that she was called to religious life. Although she loved her teachers, the Benedictines, her uncle felt that her lively disposition was unsuitable for the cloister. Bishop Reisach, who had confirmed her, suggested a community that had been founded six years earlier under the auspices of Bishop Michael Wittman and Father Sebastian Job, the Congregation of the Poor School Sisters of Notre Dame. There was one drawback: her mother would give neither her consent nor the required dowry. Josephah took matters into her own hands. Without consulting anyone, she visited the office of country-justice and requested a poverty certificate, so that, as a pauper, she could enter the convent without a dowry. Her mortified family acquiesced.



“Large hats were worn by young girls, and these large hats, of course, required ribbons to correspond. Josephah, too, wished to have a wide satin ribbon for her large hat. Father Friess, considering this too expensive, required her to trim it with a cheaper quality of half-silk ribbon. She was obliged to submit, but she never wore the hat; it was doomed to mingle with cast-away society in her grandmother’s attic.” —Father Abbelen

“For stubbornness, anger, excessive inquisitiveness and similar faults [her uncle, Father Friess] obliged her to forfeit some pennies out of her saving-bank, which, however was never found empty, as Grandma was always ready to replenish her darling’s treasury. Father Friess was especially strict with her when she pouted after receiving correction for mischief. Once, she actually refused to speak to him for three days. Grandma coaxed her to yield, but in vain. Finally, without Uncle’s knowledge, she promised to give Caroline money, if she would only speak to him again. The child saw her opportunity and, taking full advantage of the situation, did not come to terms until she had obtained twenty-four pennies — quite a sum for a child in those days.” —Father Abbelen



ACCORDING TO FATHER ABBELEN

The title page of Father P. M. Abbelen’s biography of Mother Theresa. Father Abbelen was the Father Spiritual of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in North America, and Mother Caroline’s confidant.

These two stories from the biography illustrate Mother Caroline’s childhood stubbornness.

NEUNBURG VORM WALD

In 1833, the fledgling Congregation of the Poor School sisters of Notre Dame, through the generosity of Father Sebastian Job, began their religious life together in Neunburg vorm Wald. It was there that young Josepha Friess entered the candidature in 1840. A year later, Novice Caroline moved to the temporary Motherhouse in the "Au" on the outskirts of Munich.

CAROLINE ♡ *Seeker and Educator*

In 1840, Josepha entered the candidature of the Poor School Sisters of Notre Dame in Neunburg vorm Wald, where plain food and hard physical work were a challenge to her. Her superiors realized that Josepha might be more profitably employed in teaching. Her strong academic background enabled her to pass the state examination in 1841, and her certificate signed by the Royal Committee of Examiners read "No. 1 — Excellent." Josepha, with seven others, received the habit as novices on September 8, 1842, and Josepha was given the name of Mary Caroline. Mother Theresa was her novice mistress.

Mother Theresa had decided to establish the motherhouse in Munich. In 1841, she opened a house in the "Au" (meadow) outside the city limits, before the permanent establishment in the city in 1843. Novice Caroline was charged with the direction of the boarding school in the Au, and one of the city schools. Her term of teaching came to an abrupt end when the pastor, a former soldier and enemy of the French, learned that she was half-French. Novice Caroline moved to the new motherhouse in 1843 and became directress of the boarding pupils there.

THE CONGREGATION OF THE POOR SCHOOL SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME

From "Origins of Our Congregation" in *You Are Sent*

The congregation of the School Sisters of Notre Dame came to life when God's call found an answer in the hearts of people strong in faith, farseeing in vision, and courageous in action.

Though its roots lie deep in the past, the congregation traces its actual beginning to October 24, 1833, when Caroline Gerhardinger [later Mother Theresa of Jesus] and two other women began a common religious life in Neunburg vorm Wald in Bavaria. Their action was inspired by apostolic spirituality destined to shape their own lives and profoundly affect those of many others.



Stained-glass Blessed Theresa window found in the chapel at Villa Assumpta in Baltimore, Maryland.



God who has given you the desire will also give you perseverance. Pray for it. —Mother Caroline

During these years Caroline, whose constitution had never been robust, suffered from chronic dyspepsia and even symptoms of consumption. Her superiors sought out a number of physicians and even a priest who was purported to have miraculous powers of healing. Caroline had little faith in his powers. As Father Abbelen later described,

“She was a person of solid virtue, hence a declared enemy of all affected piety, excessive credulity, singularity, fantastic and sentimental devotion.... It was her constant endeavor to have her spiritual daughters act upon principles of faith and reason...so as not to be drifted about by fluctuations of the imagination and feelings.”

Father Abbelen went on to write that Novice Caroline’s physical condition “became so precarious, that Father Siegert [the Father Spiritual of the sisters and Caroline’s friend] frankly told her, ‘Sister Caroline, you must die.’ ‘But I do not intend to’ was her determined reply.”

Eventually Novice Caroline’s health improved to the extent that she was able to take vows at the age of twenty-one, on October 15, 1845. She continued to administer the motherhouse boarding-school. As Mother Theresa often asked her to accompany her on journeys, Sister Caroline became exposed to the interests of the order beyond Munich. In 1847, she volunteered to travel with Mother Theresa to America.

FOLLOWING THE CALL

Sculpture outside the Anger Convent in Munich, Germany (Bavarian Province) featuring M. Theresa on the vessel Washington on her first trip to America to follow the call to teach impoverished German immigrant children in the new world.



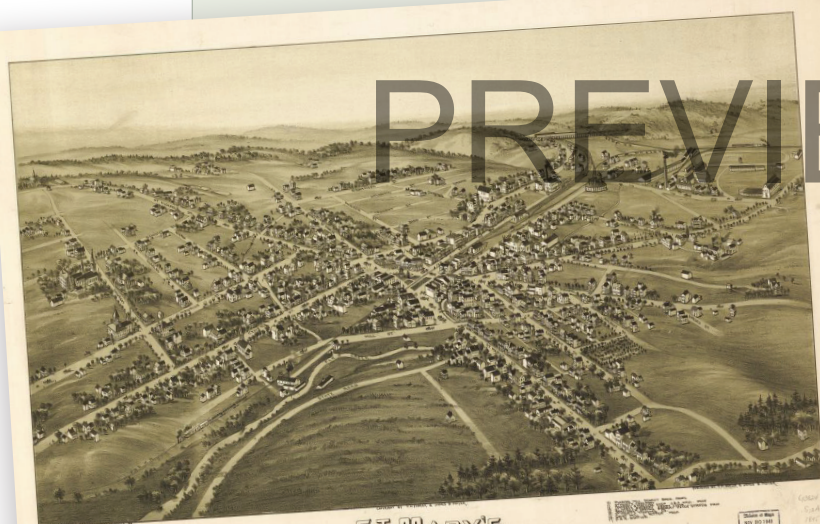
FATHER MATHIAS SIEGERT
Father Matthias Siegert (1804–1879) was a diocesan priest and lifelong friend of Mother Theresa. He was Father Spiritual of the Poor School Sisters of Notre Dame in Munich and a friend to both Mother Theresa and Mother Caroline. He was Mother Theresa’s confidant, educational consultant, and strong support throughout some very difficult years. He died on May 28, 1879, just three weeks after her death.

CAROLINE • Youthful Missionary

Mother Theresa accepted an invitation from the Redemptorists to establish schools in the United States for the education of the daughters of German immigrants. Four sisters and a novice joined her — all volunteers — all knowing that this might well be a lifetime commitment. Sisters Caroline, Mary Magdalen Steiner, Seraphine von Pronath, Mary Barbara Weinzierl, and Novice Emmanuela Breitenbach, sailed into New York Harbor on the steamer *Washington*,

ST. MARY'S, PENNSYLVANIA

In the 1840s a group of German immigrants in Baltimore and Philadelphia formed the German American Catholic Brotherhood Society. Scouts from this group settled what is now St. Marys, Pennsylvania.



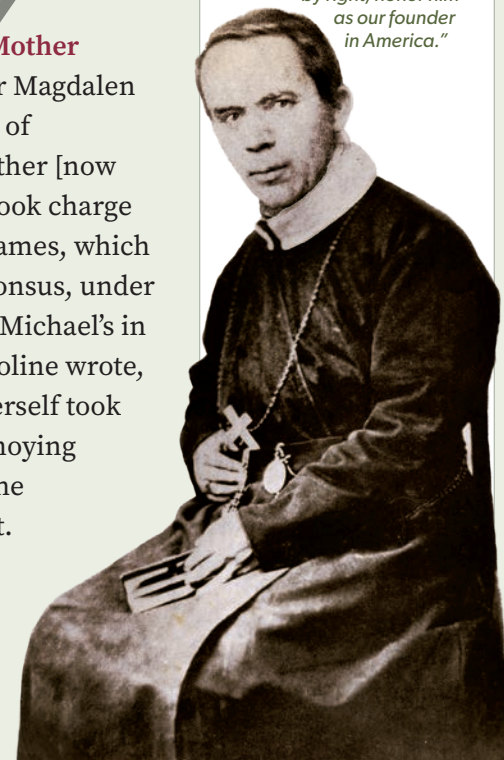
on July 31, 1847. It had been a rough passage. Mother Theresa had been ill below deck for most of the voyage. Caroline, however, thrived on the newness and excitement.

Their early days in the United States were not encouraging. Reports about St. Mary's, Pennsylvania, where they had hoped to establish a motherhouse, indicated that the place was not suitable. However, the sisters proceeded to St. Mary's. Then tragedy struck. Novice Emmanuela, who had been experiencing failing health since their arrival, died in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, never making it to their destination. After Emmanuela's funeral, the little band set out once again for St. Mary's. The sisters took charge of the poor school, but it was obvious that this was no place for a motherhouse.

Leaving two sisters in St. Mary's, Mother Theresa, Sister Caroline, and Sister Magdalen traveled to Baltimore. With the aid of Redemptorist General Superior Father [now Saint] John Neumann, the sisters took charge of three schools in Baltimore: St. James, which served as a motherhouse; St. Alphonsus, under the care of Sister Caroline; and St. Michael's in Fells Point, which about Sister Caroline wrote, "Our Venerable Mother General herself took care of the most neglected and annoying children.... Yet what comes from the heart generally overrules the heart. Soon the dispositions of the girls became more docile, open and sincere, and even affectionate."

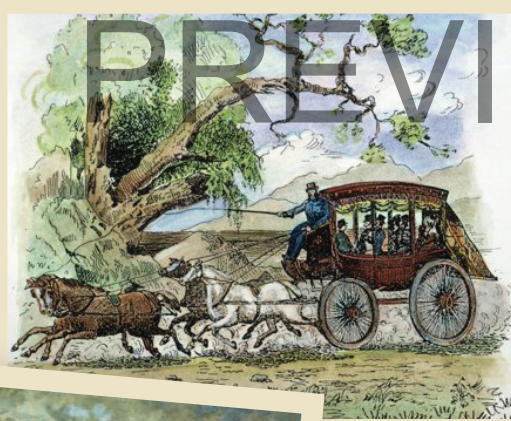
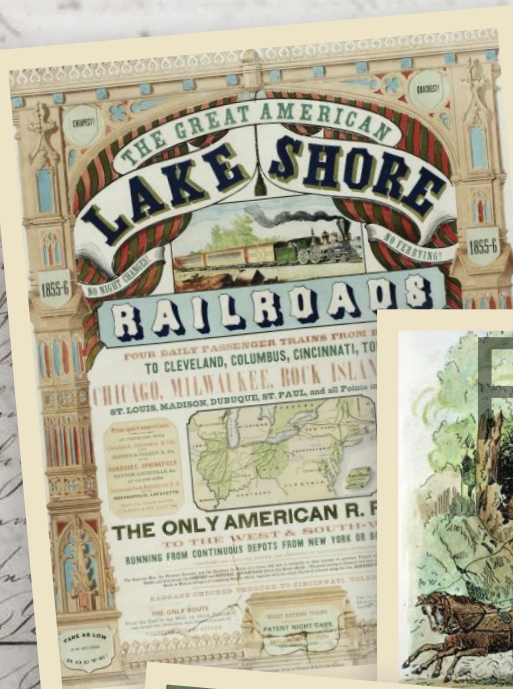
BISHOP JOHN NEUMANN

Of Bishop (now Saint) John Nepomucene Neumann, Mother Caroline wrote, "In the plan of God, he was indeed the instrument which Divine Providence used to develop, strengthen, and prepare the Order so that we, by right, honor him as our founder in America."



Chronik

Der Sankt-Josephs-Vereins
in
Nord-Amerika.



During that first year, Bishop Neumann, whose aid to the order cannot be overstated, invited Mother Theresa to join him on a visit to several Redemptorist parishes where he hoped the sisters would open schools. She took Sister Caroline with her and asked her to record her impressions. In just six weeks they covered 2,597 miles by train, stagecoach, and steamboat, stopping at Pittsburgh, Chicago, Milwaukee, Detroit, Buffalo, New York City, and Philadelphia before returning to Baltimore. The sights and sounds of this new world fascinated Caroline. In her account of the journey, she commented on the smokestacks in smoggy Pittsburgh; the snakes and squirrels in the primitive forests of Michigan and Pennsylvania; seagulls the size of a goose rocking on the glistening waves in Lake Michigan; ships at anchor in the harbor at Buffalo, too many to be counted, each one larger, prettier than the one before; the rainbow in the basin of Niagara Falls, where the falling water creates a heavy mist-like rain; and Rochester, New York, the prettiest city they had seen in America.



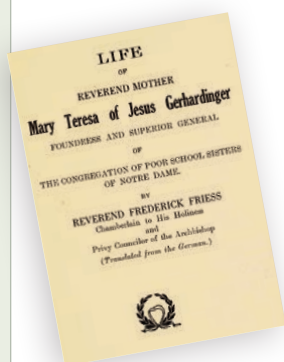
NIAGARA FALLS

In the early 19th century, Niagara Falls became a destination for American and European visitors. Completion of the Erie Canal in 1825 made Niagara Falls easily accessible for the first time. By 1850, 80,000 people were visiting Niagara Falls annually.



Blessings on our work does not depend as much on our learning as it does on our holiness.

—Mother Caroline



MOTHER THERESA'S BIOGRAPHY

Mother Caroline's brother, Father Friedrich Friess, succeeded Father Mathias Siegert as Father Spiritual of the order in Munich in 1880. "Who would have thought that my brother Fritz would be appointed to that important position!" wrote Mother Caroline. Father Friess later wrote a biography of Mother Theresa.

In a relatively short time, Mother Theresa sensed that she might not be a good fit for America. "I feel less capable of being a superior here than in Europe.... Sisters Caroline and Seraphine have a calling for America." Yet she had misgivings about the young sisters. "I am reluctant to appoint either Sister Seraphine or Sister Caroline as superior, and yet none of the other sisters here has the qualifications.... For the present, since she [Caroline] has visited all the places with us, and has learned all the circumstances and conditions, I can probably do nothing but entrust to her the furnishing and visitation of the schools. My conscience, however, is not at peace.... In spite of all that God has so unmistakably given her [Caroline] by way of corporal and spiritual gifts.... she must become more mature and humble. For the present I must appoint Sister Seraphine as temporary vicar."

Despite her misgivings, Mother Theresa proceeded in faith. Years later, Father Friedrich Friess — Caroline's brother and Mother Theresa's biographer, quoted Mother Theresa as saying, *"Sister Caroline is born to rule. If she continues to walk in the paths of humility before God, I shall have nothing to fear. I see that she has been prepared for her calling and its attendant sufferings. The Lord speaks to her heart; of this I am convinced; and therefore, everything will move in accordance with His will."*



Eleven more sisters arrived from Germany in the spring of 1848. Before returning to Germany that summer, Mother Theresa made Sister Seraphine superior of the fledgling group, and placed Sister Caroline in charge of the schools and business affairs of the sisters in America.

A CALLING FOR AMERICA

One of two photographs of Mother Caroline, who is seated center. Seated left is Sister Seraphine von Pronath and to the right, Sister Emmanuela Schmid. Standing left to right are Sisters Theophila Bauer and Seraphica Mitchell.

CAROLINE • Innovative Leader

Things happened quickly. Sister Caroline opened three schools in the coming year: St. Peter, in Philadelphia; St. Philomena, in Pittsburgh; and St. Mary, in Buffalo. As Mother Theresa had predicted, America would challenge the established way of doing things. Sister Caroline, in her role as supervisor of schools, soon realized that the requirement of enclosure (a modified form of the cloistered lifestyle) as specified in the congregation's rule would not be adequate for the American approach to parish schools.

THREE PARISH SCHOOLS

Blessed Theresa Gerhardinger, foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, traveled to Pennsylvania and then to Baltimore where she was helped by St. John Neumann. Through his efforts, the School Sisters of Notre Dame gained a foothold in Baltimore, where they began teaching in three German parish schools in October 1847.



St. Peter, Philadelphia



St. Philomena, Pittsburgh



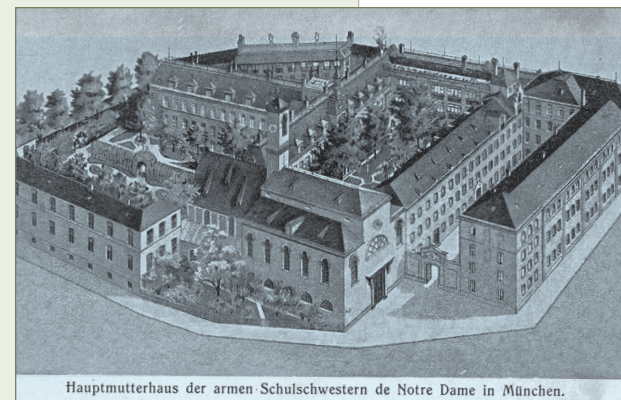
St. Mary, Buffalo

One must consider the intentions before judging the actions.
—Mother Caroline

Sister Seraphine

sent Caroline to Munich to present the needs of the congregation in America, specifically the necessity of relaxing the rule of enclosure.

Caroline arrived in Munich in the summer of 1850. She arrived in lay clothes, with no advance warning, without a companion, and with no letter from Sister Seraphine explaining her reason for being there. Her welcome was less than effusive: she was given a guest room apart from the sisters' living quarters. Whether this was to spare Caroline from unjust judgements of the sisters or to spare the sisters from Caroline's influence is open to interpretation. What is known is that through the intervention of Father Siegert and others, Mother Theresa acceded, albeit reluctantly, to Caroline's request; and three months after arriving, Caroline was sent back to America, having been appointed Vicar General of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in the United States. She was twenty-six years old, and she had full authority over the sisters and their mission in America. Although they corresponded frequently over the next twenty-nine years, she would never see Mother Theresa again.



Hauptmutterhaus der armen-Schulschwestern de Notre Dame in München.

THE MUNICH MOTHERHOUSE

According to Father Friedrich Friess, on June 28, 1841, the King decreed that a Motherhouse be founded in the city of Munich for the Poor School Sisters. For this purpose the abandoned convent of the Poor Clares was turned over to the order. In accordance with the proposal of the government, Mother Theresa undertook the remodeling and renovation. By the end of September, 1843, the new Motherhouse was comfortably furnished, and the Sisters had formally taken possession.



In ihrem letzten Briefe an die Schwestern schreibt Mutter Theresa: 'Ich habe mich sehr freuen lassen, daß ich die Schwestern der Mutterhäuser für mich persönlich erachtet.'



SAINT JOHN NEUMANN

Born in the Austrian Empire in 1811, he became an American citizen at 36 years old in 1848 and died in Pennsylvania in 1860. He was declared blessed by Pope Paul VI in 1963 and canonized a saint by Pope Paul VI in 1977.

St. Neumann is credited with establishing the first system of parochial schools in various parts of the country when he came to Philadelphia.

Decades later Mother Caroline reflected on her youthful ascent to leadership, and she recalled discussing her doubts in a conversation with Bishop John Neumann when she was twenty-nine.

“How often it happens in conversation in which one opens one’s heart; so it happened with me. I complained about my obedience to be Superior of the Order in America — because of my youth, my inexperience, and my incapability — to which the holy man replied spontaneously and naturally: ‘Sister, God strengthens and enlightens the young and the weak; submit yourself to humility. And, by the way, every superior makes mistakes. In the end, it doesn’t matter who made the mistakes. No person, no superior exists, who does not make mistakes or have doubts.’ This consoled me, and the vanity — to do everything right, to be esteemed — was lessened, and I felt satisfied to rely on the help of God.”

Humility and reliance on God became the hallmarks of Caroline’s spirituality and leadership.

The relaxing of the requirement of enclosure was the first of a number of concessions that Mother Caroline requested over the coming years as she worked to adapt the School Sisters of Notre Dame to life and ministry in North America.

The issues again involved enclosure, the teaching of boys, and the role of Caroline herself. The bishops and pastors in America pressured the sisters to adapt. As Caroline worked for the modifications that the American educational model demanded, her intentions were sometimes questioned in Munich.

Mother Theresa wrote to the Cardinal Protector

in Rome: “We have learned that the American Bishops have written the Holy Father asking for more rights and privileges for Sister Caroline Friess.” Mother Theresa feared that the bishops were hoping that a separation for the American sisters from Europe would give them a free hand in the affairs of the Congregation in America. “If... Mary Caroline Friess permits herself so many irregularities now...what will she do in the future.... The Rule will be changed to her taste.... How long can our order survive in America in this fashion? Besides, what will it profit us if we gain all of America and in doing so perish ourselves?”

Despite Mother Theresa’s misgivings, Mother Caroline’s writings never reflect a desire for power or self-aggrandizement. She saw modification in the Rule in relation to her authority as necessary to better serve the mission. She insisted on strong unity between the houses in America which are “...submissive to the Motherhouse in Munich. We have and recognize only one Mother [Mother Theresa] who, in God’s design, brought us to this country and continues to care for us in motherly solicitude.”

When the Lord gives us a job to do, then we must have the courage to overcome all difficulties.

—Mother Caroline



CARDINAL PROTECTOR

Since the 13th century it has been customary in Rome to ask a particular Cardinal to solicit the Roman Curia for the interests of a given religious order or institution. This person, a Cardinal Protector, is its representative or orator when a privilege is sought or when asking for the aid of the Holy See when its rights, property, or interests were violated or imperiled.

May God look upon our good will, strengthen and protect the feeble structures erected by human hands.

—Mother Caroline

CAROLINE • Intrepid Traveler

For ten months of almost every year Mother Caroline traveled thousands of miles back and forth to the east coast, up and down the Mississippi, across the stormy Great Lakes, on muddy country roads, and rumbling railroads. She survived derailments, ferryboat accidents, near shipwreck and a terrible explosion on the Mississippi that changed her life.



STEAMBOAT PENNSYLVANIA

The steamboat Pennsylvania was a side wheeler steamboat which suffered a boiler explosion in the Mississippi River and sank at Ship Island near Memphis, Tennessee, on June 13, 1858.

In 1858, on a return trip from New Orleans on the Mississippi aboard the steamship *Pennsylvania*, a devastating explosion destroyed the boat. Mother Caroline was traveling with an aspirant and Father Anton Urbanek, the Father Spiritual for the order in North America, a man on whom Mother Caroline greatly relied. Father Urbanek was killed and Caroline herself barely escaped. She recounted that a black man on the ship handed her a life preserver and a strong rope and helped her reach a lifeboat. It was

hours before the survivors were rescued and Mother Caroline lost her baggage, her money, everything. She was given clothes, money, and a room to sleep in by women on the ship which rescued them. She recalled that “A Negro slave girl with a noble heart came to me one evening and pressed \$5.00 into my hand. I said to her, ‘No, I will not take money from a slave.’ She said however: ‘I am a slave, but not poor and you should know that slaves can also do good,’ whereupon she hurried away.” That encounter left a lasting impression on Caroline.

After Mother Caroline made it back to Milwaukee, it took a long time for her to recover physically and emotionally from the ordeal. Father Peter Abbelen described Caroline’s state of mind. “... Her nervous system was terribly shattered. For almost three years, she never enjoyed a night’s rest. As soon as she fell asleep from sheer exhaustion, the scene of terror again forced itself on her excited imagination.”

Suffering but undaunted, Mother Caroline continued to travel and to send sisters wherever Providence called them: small towns, rural parishes, urban centers, from New Orleans to Canada, from Missouri to New York. In the words of Bishop J.L. Spalding, “She was one of the great wonderworkers of the early years ... her influence extended beyond the interest of her order.”

Another Horrible Steamboat Slaughter on the Mississippi.

Explosion and Burning of the Pennsylvania.

ONE HUNDRED LIVES LOST.

MEMPHIS, Tenn., Monday, June 14.

The steamship *Pennsylvania* exploded her boilers on Sunday morning, at 6 o'clock, at Ship Island, some seventy-five miles below this City, and was burned to the water's edge. There were 350 passengers on board, and it is believed that 100 of them were killed or are missing. The *Diana Imperial* and *Kate Fyvie* took all they could find on the water on shore. The following are known to have been lost:

Father Deloross, Mrs. Witts and daughter, Foster Hurst, N. and J. Bautecher and Dennis Corcoran, of New Orleans.

The following were lost, as far as is known—that is, they have not been heard from:

Joseph Pilon, of Texas.
Mrs. Witts and daughter.
Mrs. Fulton, St. Louis.
E. Gleason, New York.
H. B. Nichols, Texas.
Mr. Jersey, Missis-
sippi.
Mr. Lister, John Sinkhorn, James Bowles, James Burns, and Wm. Woodford—all of Louisville.
E. Generous, and an English gentleman from Cuba who has a sister living near Burlington, Illinois.
The following were saved, but suffer from injuries:

H. Fisher, John Bloomfield, J. H. Campbell, Frank Jones, John Many, A. Batzy, Francis Platt, of New Orleans, and Xavier Rauch and La Vela, of the French Opera Troupe.

Other passengers injured are as follows:
Henry Clements, of St. Louis, third clerk, scalded.
Wm. Witts, New Jersey.
Mathew Kelly, St. Louis.
Samuel Marks, Pennsylvania.
Charles Stone, Nashville.
Daniel Kiffe, Keokuk, Iowa.
Samuel Woods, second clerk, slightly scalded.
Andrew Lisdoy, Cincinnati.
Wm. Woods and George Bolayer, Pittsburg.
Isaac Wester, Stark County, Ohio.
R. Bert Brotherton, Columbus, Ohio.
James McCormick and Cap'n A. Backus, both of New York.
Charles Ashbrook, St. Louis.
Capt. J. W. Fairfield, Boston.
Henry Shultz and Matthew Commefere, both of St. Louis.

Of the officers of the *Pennsylvania*, Capt. Klemfeler escaped without injury.
S. A. Woods, second clerk, was slightly injured.
Henry Clements, of St. Louis, third clerk, was severely scalded.
James Dozey's, chief engineer, escaped without injury.

Francis Dorrrey, second engineer, is dead.
Almer Martin, first mate, is dangerously injured.
The second mate, name unknown, is badly scalded.
Wm. Jackson, of Lexington, barkeeper, is slightly scalded.
Of the pilots, — Brown, is missing, and Henry Eller saved. Both belonged to St. Louis.
The following are known to have been saved:

Sister Caroline and Sister Mary Ellen, of the New Orleans Convent; and C. McCarthy, of New Orleans;

The Captain, Second and Third Clerks, and Chief Engineer.

The uninjured and saved are as follows:
Isaac A. Tice, of Baltimore.
Mrs. Brotherton and son, of Ohio.
H. A. Smead, Virginia.
J. P. Woolen, Kentucky.
L. Bartlett, wife and child, New York.
A. Marks and lady, and W. G. Massman, lady and child, all of St. Louis.

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CAROLINE ♡ *Servant Leader*

Mother Caroline's letters reveal the heart of a compassionate servant leader. She wrote with great affection for the children in her care and the sisters who joined her in serving them.

In describing the opening of a school in St. Louis, Mother Caroline wrote,

"Scarcely were the festivities over when the fathers and mothers brought their darlings to us.... Oh how the heart of a School Sister rejoices at the sight! The children greeted us with a shy look, for they had never seen Sisters in such clothes. Soon they warmed up.... It was almost evening until we had become acquainted with our little folk."

What cannot be achieved through kindness is unattainable. All must be accomplished through love and patience. —Mother Caroline



The most challenging children touched

her most deeply. She described a new school and orphanage in Yorkville, New York. She was drawn to "... children who for the most part, due to idleness and begging, had been picked up by the police Their parents are either dead or among the cast-outs of humanity. Therefore, children without faith, without all Christian education, with many afflictions in body and soul were given over to us here — lovable only in holy faith ... I admit that this institution is the most pleasing to me of all those we have in America."

Her letters to her sisters are filled with affection and down-to-earth advice. She wrote to a sister who complained about younger sisters in the community,

"My dear [Sister], we all have our faults.

Love thinks no evil. Many a word must be thought over before speaking....

Don't become aroused at the deeds of others, but use mercy and compassion; then God will be merciful to us." She

advised the sisters to go easy on the fasting, to take care of their health. *"We have quite a few Martha's and few Mary's,"* she wrote, and in another letter, *"You imagine many things through sheer anxiety, making gnats into elephants."*



CHILDREN WITHOUT EDUCATION

Mother Caroline describes the deplorable conditions of the time.

"Some children are clad only in rags.... Of stockings and shoes we cannot even talk.... Equipped with a basket and an iron rod, they collect rags, bones, coal and old iron and sell these things for money which they must bring home to their parents. How can such children be brought to school regularly? I could cry!"

*With maternal greetings
prayers and blessings ++
M. Caroline*

Father Abbelen remarked on Mother

Caroline's ability to remember all her sisters, 2000 by the time of her death. In 1885, on her last visit to Munich, on board the ship, Caroline remembered her sisters at home.

“Nine days have already passed, where I in my cabin indulge in dear solitude. In doing so, I am well and feel happy, having an opportunity to make up for my neglected prayers, recollect

myself in God, and also the more intimately and oftener to think of you in order to make known to everyone the fullness of my maternal love. I discovered thereby, that though the distance from the convent — the [Milwaukee] Motherhouse home — be ever so great, there is no real separation. On the contrary there is a very intimate nearness and union of mind. Now I meet this, now another Sister, and then I try to recollect, which one my mind's eye has not yet seen; because I must and will place 'all' before my imagination in order as it were, to tell each one: 'Continue to pray well.'”

SPIRIT OF THE CONSTITUTION AND THE RULE BOOK

In 1865, the rule and constitutions of the School Sisters of Notre Dame were finally approved by Pope Pius IX. Blessed Theresa continued to govern the congregation as its general superior until her death in Munich on May 9, 1879.



ST. MARY'S INSTITUTE AND MOTHERHOUSE

Mother Caroline arrived in Milwaukee in 1851, and with funding from King Louis of Bavaria, she established the first Motherhouse of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in the United States. Mother Caroline later founded a convent and orphanage in Elm Grove in 1855, as well as St. Mary's Institute in Prairie du Chien in 1872. St. Mary's would eventually return to Milwaukee as Mount Mary College in 1928.

FORMER LA CROSSE PRIEST APPOINTED

Owing to the illness of Rt. Rev. Mgr. Joseph Rainer, vicar general of the archdiocese of Milwaukee, who sailed on Saturday for Europe for the benefit of his health, Archbishop Sebastian G. Messmer has appointed the Very Rev. P. M. Abbelen, spiritual director at the mother house of the School Sisters of Notre Dame at Milwaukee, as acting vicar general.

Father Abbelen has spent nearly forty years in the active service of the Catholic church. He was born sixty three years ago in a little village on the Rhine. He came to this country in 1868, and he was ordained a priest at St. Francis seminary. After several years of service

there as a professor he came to La Crosse diocese. He held pastorates at La Crosse, Chippewa Falls and Prairie du Chien. For thirty years he has been spiritual director at the mother house of the School Sisters of Notre Dame.

Father Abbelen is a tall, well built man, a fact which the black clerical robes emphasize rather than conceal. He stands as erectly as a soldier despite his years. He has a kindly smile and beaming eye, which counteract the impression which might be gained from his deep sonorous voice. Withal he is a modest man.

FR. ABBELEN, SSND SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

“Father Abbelen is a tall well built man, a fact which the black clerical robes emphasize rather than conceal. He stands as erectly as a soldier despite his years. He has a kindly smile and beaming eye, which counteract the impression which might be gained from his deep sonorous voice. Withal he is a modest man.”

CAROLINE ♣ *Final Years*

In 1881, Mother Caroline was named to the position of Commissary General of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in North America, a new position to facilitate the government of the expanding congregation in



ST. AGATHA ORPHANAGE, ONTARIO, CANADA

In 1868, Father Eugene Funcken, CR, approached Mother Caroline to take charge of the orphan children in St. Agatha.

Among the provisions of the contract that Mother Caroline made was that the seven women who cared for the orphans would be accepted as candidates in SSND. Six of them entered and professed their vows. Prior to her death Mother Caroline also opened missions in Formosa, Berlin (Kitchener), St. Clement, Walkerton, Deemerton, Mildmay, Maryhill, and Waterloo.

North America. Missions had been established in Canada, and there was now a motherhouse in Baltimore, and there would soon be another in St. Louis. Caroline used her position, to which she had been elected by the sisters, to promote unity across the provinces.

The last years of Mother Caroline's life were not without heartache. A fire in a boarding school in Belleville, Illinois, in 1884, in which four sisters and twenty-two students lost their lives, devastated her. She called it "the most severe blow which ever hit me." But she continued to take a lively interest in schools, in the young sisters, and in old friends.

Look not forward with anxious care but upwards in a spirit of Faith and Hope.

—Mother Caroline

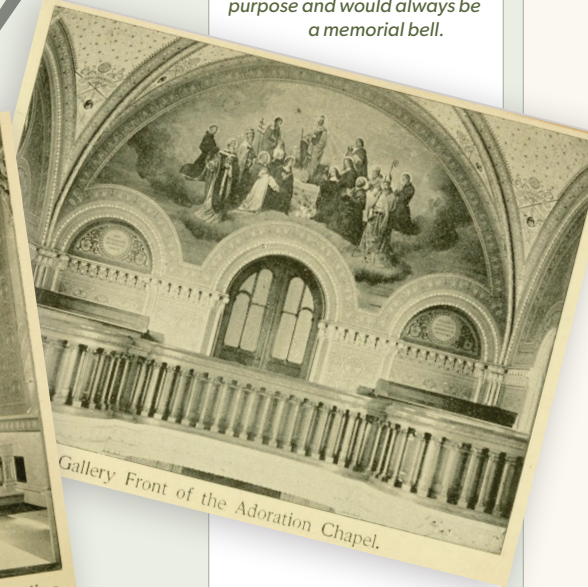
During her final years, she prepared a legacy for her sisters. She built the Chapel of Perpetual Adoration at the Milwaukee Motherhouse. Here her sisters would pray always, embracing the needs of the whole world night and day, year after year. In spite of ailing health, Mother Caroline continued with her duties as Commissary General. In 1892, after a grueling trip to New Orleans, she was bed-ridden for six months. She died on July 22, at the age of 68, just nine days before the dedication of the Adoration Chapel. Her body was laid out there, and its new bell named Carolus in her memory. On it was inscribed in Latin, "Matrem plango. Filias voco." The mother I mourn. The daughters I call.

CHAPEL OF PERPETUAL ADORATION

The construction of the Adoration Chapel started in 1887. The cornerstone was laid on July 31, the 40th anniversary of the day on which the first group of sisters arrived in the US. The chapel was completed in July 1892. Mother Caroline died on July 22, 1892. Her death was announced to the sisters by ringing the adoration chapel bell. It had been decided that the bell would be rung for the first time for this purpose and would always be a memorial bell.



Sanctuary of the Adoration Chapel, built by Mother Caroline.



Gallery Front of the Adoration Chapel.

MOTHER CAROLINE IN MILWAUKEE

In this, her other known photograph, Mother Caroline walks with a novice in the garden of the Milwaukee convent.



You Are Sent, the constitution of the School

Sisters of Notre Dame, states, “Our mission is to proclaim the good news, directing our entire lives toward that oneness for which Jesus Christ was sent. As he was sent to show the Father’s love to the world, we are sent to make Christ visible by our very being, by sharing our love, faith and hope.” The desire of Jesus for oneness was central to Caroline’s understanding of the congregation’s

mission, and remains the cornerstone of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in the 21st century. In a letter to her sisters in 1890, Mother Caroline reminded them of the mission that had been entrusted to them.

“Let us not lose sight of the wonders which our Lord is ready to work in us if, with resolute good will, we faithfully correspond to his grace. Let us be courageous and, with childlike confidence, endeavor to satisfy the yearning desire of Jesus.”

YOU ARE SENT

The original rule of the School Sisters of Notre Dame was approved in 1865. *You Are Sent*, the current constitution, describes Mother Caroline, “who through courageous leadership, adapted the congregation to life on another continent, perceptively reading the signs of the times, risking innovative response to the need of the world.”



MILWAUKEE CONVENT

The convent was often called a “city unto itself,” as the sisters upheld a tradition of strict self-sufficiency. They faithfully served as their own cooks, gardeners, bakers, cobblers, seamstresses, barbers, printers, musicians and any other necessary role. All religious objects — from rosaries to Communion wafers to habits to floral processions to leaflets — were produced onsite by the nuns themselves. At any time, the convent housed not only students and boarders, but also over 150 nuns (active, retired and infirm).



MOTHER CAROLINE HAILED FOR HER CONTRIBUTIONS

At the time of her death in the Milwaukee Motherhouse in the summer of 1892, from across the nation, bishops, pastors, businessmen, and the press hailed

her for her promotion of education and the spread of the parochial school system in the United States, helping to make it the largest private school system in the world.

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[Excerpt]

The Burning Bush: Prayer Is ...

by Sister Maura Eichner, SSND

viii

**After Night Prayer,
when the last candle had been snuffed,
the last uncertain novice
knelt a longer moment at the altar rail,
Mother Caroline leaned back
into the shadows of her pew,
under the choir overhang.**

**She dropped her eyes
to the red sanctuary lamp;
rested them on the tabernacle veil.**

*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts ...
I praise you
I bless you
I glorify you ...*

**One by one, the faces of her sisters
moved before her inner eye,
a long processional of faces: the weary,
dying, grieving, smiling, laughing,
hope-filled, eager, frightened, radiant,
desolate, regretful, lonely, elated.
She accepted them all. She gave them
to God — each one.**

**Deeply, she bowed her head.
She knelt, rose, and left the chapel
carrying the burden
and the splendor of the gift.**

PREVIEW COPY



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Atlantic-Midwest Province