

Our Catholic History
Rev. P. Eugene Hagedorn, O.F.M.
serialized in *The Teutopolis Press*
beginning on November 12, 1908
as the friars celebrated fifty years since their coming to the U.S.
(edited by Fr. Lawrence Jagdfeld, O.F.M.)

FOUNDING OF ST. FRANCIS MONASTERY, TEUTOPOLIS, ILLINOIS

The Rt. Rev. Bishop H. D. Juncker Invites the Franciscans to his Diocese

In 1853 the diocese of Quincy, then comprising the present dioceses of Alton and Belleville, was established by the Rev. J. Melcher, Vicar General of St. Louis; he was named its first bishop. He however refused the miter at the time, and Quincy never had a bishop of its own, the diocese being administered by the Bishop of Chicago or of St. Louis respectively. On January 9, 1857, the episcopal see was transferred from Quincy to Alton, Illinois; and on April 26, 1857, the Rev. Henry Damian Juncker, pastor of the Emanuel Church, Dayton, Ohio, was at Cincinnati consecrated the first Bishop of Alton. He found a population of 50,000 with fifty-eight churches (five under construction), two female academies, and thirty stations, but only twenty-eight priests and six young men studying for the priesthood. Convinced that his diocese suffered from dearth of priests, Bishop Juncker in the fall of 1857, made a trip to France, Italy, Germany, and Ireland and won a number of recruits for his portion of the Lord's vineyard. Bev. Brickwedde accompanied him. With letters of recommendation from the famous Conrad Martin, Bishop of Paderborn, Bishop Juncker applied also to the Very Rev. P. Gregory Janknecht, O.F.M., Provincial of the Franciscan Province of the Holy Cross. Rev. Brickwedde visited several monasteries of the friars and his imposing exterior and eloquent pleading induced a number of Fathers to volunteer for the American missions. The Provincial assented, provided the definitors of the province and the Most Rev. Fr. General in Rome gave their approbation. The provincial himself, it is asserted, had long cherished the plan to dedicate himself to the foreign missions.

The Invitation is Accepted

The Province Chapter (definitors) granted the requisite permission on August 21, 1858. The following day a letter (in French) was sent to the Rt. Rev. Bishop Juncker, which promised him two Fathers. In this letter the Provincial writes among other things: "Please, do not be anxious about the residence, etc. For the beginning it is sufficient to have a flock in need of shepherds to teach them and to administer the sacraments to them. The rest will take care of itself. Our Holy Father St. Francis also commenced his foundation destitute of all things, and the two Fathers, who are to open a mission in your diocese, will esteem themselves happy thus to become at least somewhat similar to him; for him they are striving to imitate in poverty, in humility, in zeal for souls, and in holy obedience, as their rule prescribes." Truly, words worthy of the sons of the Poverello of Assisi!

The Superiors at Rome also granted the necessary permission and now the project was promptly carried out. Of the many Fathers that had volunteered, three instead of the promised two, were chosen: the Rev. P. Damian Hennewig, from Haltern (Holtwick), as superior (praeses), the Rev. P. Capistran Zwinge, from Grosseneder, diocese of Paderborn, the Rev. P. Servace Altmicks, of Warendorf, diocese of Muenster.

The four lay brothers Irenaeus Drewes of Oynhausen (Paderborn), Paschal Kutche of Schweinsdorf (Breslau), Marian Beile of Herbram (Paderborn) and Julius Schmaenck of Iselberg (Muenster) and the two Tertiaries Edmund Wilde of Knepperider (sp?) (Breslau)ⁱ, and Francis Herman Uphoff of Warendorf (Muenster) accompanied the three Fathers. All these were distinguished for their spirit of humility, devotion and mortification. All have since gone to receive the eternal reward for their labors in the vineyard of their Divine Master.

From Warendorf to Bremen

All nine religious assembled at Warendorf to bid adieu to their dear brethren August 24, 1858. A vehicle conveyed them to Rheda. On the way they recited the beads. At Rheda they boarded the train. The Very Rev. P. Provincial had provided tickets for train and ship, the expenses for their trip, ninety thalers eachⁱⁱ, having been defrayed by the missionary Society of St. Leopold. All with the exception of Tertiary Herman and Brother Edmund, wore their habits and caused a great commotion in not a few places through which they passed. Thus a certain innkeeper in the Protestant city of Bielefeld expressed his opinion, "Das ist (sic) doch eine Weltgeschichte!"ⁱⁱⁱ Some mistook them for Russian emigrants; others seeing Brother Herman carrying the iron used for making altar breads, thought them to be an emigrant "Waffelbaecher."^{iv}

In Bremen and Bremerhafen

When the religious left the train in Bremen, a crowd collected and eyed them from head to foot, and a crowd of curious children escorted them to their lodging place. Finding it to be a low dive, the "Propst"^v of the former Franciscan Church, the only Catholic Church in Bremen, provided suitable shelter for them. August 27, the missionary band sailed down the Weser and at Bremerhafen found the steamer "Bremen," ready for its second trip, awaiting them.

The Ocean Voyage

They were set to sail at four o'clock P.M., but owing to a favorable tide weighed anchor at 4:00 A.M., and our travelers were roused from their slumbers by the noisy clang of the machinery. "I went to the deck," writes Fr. Servace to the Provincial. "There we gazed for a long time upon the continent, until the coast of Hanover, then of Oldenburg, vanished from view and the endless surface of the sea surrounded us on all sides. I cannot say that the sight of the sea made such a powerful impression on me, nor did I experience any of those poetic feelings, which writers in describing a sea voyage claim to have experienced and which they attempt to paint in glowing poetic language. Sober thoughts pervaded my interior. Now was I in the least anxious or afraid, but felt so calm and good-humored, so devoid of cares and full of good cheer as perhaps travelers rarely experience. And what should we fear since we have cast our cares upon the Lord and have placed ourselves under the protection of Mary? The church hymn "Ave Maris Stella"^{vi} never seemed to me more beautiful and deeply significant than this very morning. Howe we speedily hurried on our course towards the longed for goal! But we were not to reach it before getting a taste from personal experience of the perils and hardships of an ocean voyage."^{vii} "Thus the first two days passed, and meanwhile we had covered a considerable distance with great speed. We did not sail through the Channel of Calais, but passed around Scotland because the captain considered this route more advantageous. On the third day (a Monday), when we were steering our course to the north of Scotland between the Scotch islands, our engine was damaged and became useless, a pump having been broken. Happily we had a favorable though slight breeze, so that by means of sails we made some

headway. After three hours, the machinery had been repaired, so that on Tuesday noon we sailed under full steam. We were fortunate in having a very calm sea that day since we were between several islands and might easily have been shipwrecked on one of them in case of storm. We pressed on speedily, as if to make up for lost time, but soon we encountered a new obstacle. The following morning we had a violent and unfavorable wind, which lasted five days and five nights, so that both ship and inmates got a thorough shaking up. During these days as usual at the time of storms, sea-sickness renewed its attacks. Brothers Edmund and Herman suffered most of all. They were exceedingly sick. As we could not offer rich tips to the stewards, the brothers repeatedly suffered from even lack of water. Sea-water was used for washing. Sunday afternoon, while still very stormy, we sat quietly on deck and, though often forced with both hands to grasp for some support, we chanted the beautiful hymn (by Guido Goerres): "Geleite durch die Wellen, Das Schifflin treu und mild."^{viii}

Next morning the storm was over and henceforth our voyage left nothing to be desired. Aboard ship we were treated politely and considerately, though among the passengers were men of diverse conditions of life and of different creeds. Even a Methodist preacher and another Protestant minister were aboard the steamer. These gentlemen were very quiet and unassuming. Thus we found that the great fears which perhaps had formerly been entertained as to the advisability of traveling in our religious garb during the ocean voyage, were entirely unfounded. Some Protestant fellow passengers of Berlin showed themselves especially polite. Already at setting sail from Bremen, they gave expression to the hope of a happy voyage, since such pious men made the trip with them. The crew, however, as we learned later on, were not so glad at first, since all sailors are prejudiced, thinking that storms will overtake them when priests are aboard; hence they commonly begin to curse among themselves as soon as blackgowns board the vessel. Rev. P. Schaefermeyer, later P. Liborius, O.F.M., also made the trip with the friars.

In consequences of said obstacles our voyage during the first week had needs been rather slow; hence we were seventeen and a half days on the ocean until we sailed into the harbor of New York in the afternoon of September 14.

To Be Continued

ⁱ Brother Edmund died in July of 1908, just a few months before this work was published.

ⁱⁱ Ninety thalers would have been about seventy-five or eighty dollars in U.S. currency.

ⁱⁱⁱ "Something unheard of in the history of the world!"

^{iv} "Waffel baker." The iron was over 200 years old and was, at the time of his writing this column, still in use in the missions of Wisconsin. In 1909, the iron was placed in a museum kept at St. Joseph Seminary in Teutopolis.

^v "pastor."

^{vi} "Hail, Star of the Sea"

^{vii} At this point in his letter, Fr. Servace stops to describe the effects of sea-sickness.

^{viii} "Through the wave, guide the boat faithfully and mildly."