

# Sister Sanctia's Handwritten Autobiography

**Autobiography April 1877 – 1926**

Sister M. Sanctia {nee} Mary Anne Caroline Cremer

My father Henry Cremer was born in Prussia and came to America when quite young. Mother, Caroline Bechal was born in Indiana. They were united in marriage 1858 in Festina, Iowa, where I was born. I lived there until I entered St. Rose Convent. I am the second of twelve children. I was born on May first on a Friday in 1862. I was baptized by Father Hannasch, on the thirteenth of May. I had a most beautiful and happy home. I was always content to spend my leisure time at home in company with my dear parents, brothers and sisters. Outside amusements had no charm for me as I always found plenty of amusement in my own family circle. As soon as we could lisp small words, my parents taught us the sign of the cross and daily prayers at their knees. The special feasts of the year were always made impressive, the spiritual side being explained, and we enjoyed the material side also.

My earliest recollection of Christmas joys dates back to when I was three years old. Our home at that time was a bungalow and on Christmas Eve my father, unknown to us, concealed himself in the attic and through a hole dropped down all our gifts. I was the youngest at the time and I received toy dishes, furniture, etc. In my delight I gathered all these into my apron and then began to play horse with my brother, using my toys wrapped in the apron for a whip. I shall never forget how I felt when I discovered that my beautiful Christmas toys were all broken to pieces.

One summer day when I was about five years of age I noticed the carpenters suspend work and sit upon the hillside. Presently I saw them in darkness look through smoked glass and stare at the sun which was almost hid. That was my first eclipse I saw. My kind father ever drew our attention to phenomenon in nature, such as comets, northern lights, great storms, sunsets, etc. At a very early age I learned to sew and also to bake, taking great delight in being able to help my dear Mother. Both these accomplishments proved very helpful to me after my entrance into religion. I also helped milk the cows and could relate many funny experiences in this occupation.

When I was six years old, I started to school and had to walk three and a half miles. It was only a public school. I attended there until I was nine years old when Catholic teacher opened a school about one half mile from my home. When I was twelve years old, my sister and I went to New Vienna and boarded with the Sisters in order to prepare for First Holy Communion. How happy I was on that day and how I begged our dear Lord for the grace of a religious vocation. I made my First Communion Ascension Day. In the fall of the same year I took very sick of typhoid fever. I lay eight weeks at the point of death and last sacraments were given me though I had no fear of dying as yet. I recovered.

The following year Dec. 22, 1877, I entered St. Rose Convent at the early age of fifteen, not being fully developed nor recuperated from my recent illness, I was considered delicate of health. I received the veil Aug 1 from Mother Antonia at the age of sixteen, in 1878, the same year and day when our Perpetual Adoration was established a privilege of which I am proud. In 1879 confirmation was given me by Archbishop Heiss, when I was seventeen I pronounced by first vows in 1880, Aug 2 at the age of eighteen. My religious life has been most happy.

I spent my first year as novice in the Motherhouse and the second year in Casinovia. Then three years in Keysville, two years in Luxenburg, four years in Des Moines, three years in Carroll, one year in Muscatine, four years in Trimble, one in Harper. The years between 1898 and 1926 (and up to date) about 28 years I have spent in the Motherhouse, directing the Postulants in needle Art. My most privileged hours are passed in adoration of our Eucharistic Lord in the Chapel of Adoration.

By Sister M. Sanctia - (nee) Mary Anne Caroline Cremer April 1926  
Found in the FSPA archives, LaCrosse, WI

## **A Prayer for a Peaceful Death**

(notes from Sr. m. Sanctia regarding the death of her grandmother, Mary Dollinger – 1851 in Festina)

My mother was born in Indiana and when eleven years old came to Festina with her parents. While on the journey her mother became seriously ill, all feared that she would die before they should reach their destination. She, however, prayed fervently to St. Peter to whom she had a great devotion. There was no resident priest at Festina at that time and it took three days to bring one there from Prairie du Chien, the nearest station. She received all the sacraments and died peacefully on the 29th of June, the feast of the great saint.

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