

## Rev. Johan Henrich Gehling

Fr. Geling was a priest of this diocese. He consistently spelled it Geling, even on his tombstone (which is in German), though it's noted in his record that other members of his family used the 'h' in the name.

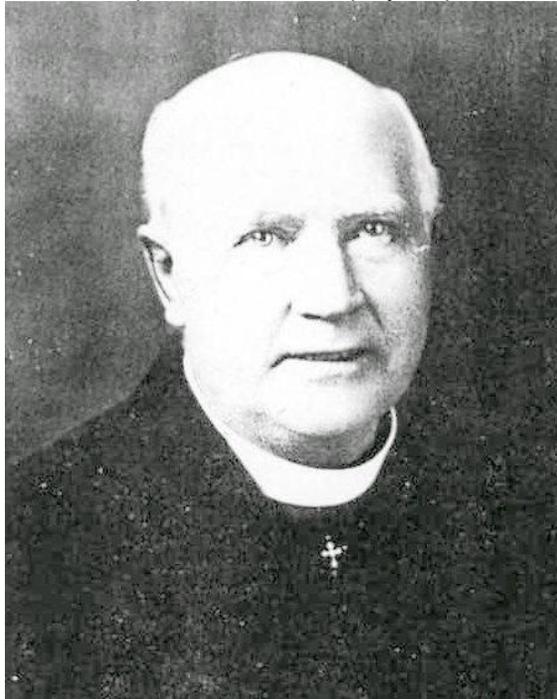
He was born 19 March 1854 in Wessum, Kries Ahaus (Westphalia), Germany. His parents were Herman Geling and Elizabeth Hackford. He attended St. Frances de Sales Seminary in Milwaukee, WI, as did very many German-American priests who served the Midwest. He also attended St. Joseph College (now Loras), and the Grand Seminaire in Montreal, Quebec. This is also ordinary for priests serving in the Midwest, as there were French and Luxembourgeois immigrants. He was ordained in St. Raphael's cathedral for the Diocese of Dubuque, which at the time included all of Iowa into Eastern Nebraska.

His first assignment was OLSD in Festina 1884-1887, where he sang his first Mass after his ordination. He became pastor in Willey at St. Mary's parish, 1887-1901, where he built the first parish school and purchased the cemetery. He was a skilled carpenter and built the altar himself for the school chapel. He also built himself the chapel in the cemetery. He was pastor in Lyons (Clinton Co., Iowa) St. Boniface only a few months. He then became pastor of St. Anthony in Hospers 1901-1911. He was pastor of Holy Angels in Roselle, 1911-1925. He became Censor Librorum in 1921. His health was poor, and he retired in 1925, becoming chaplain in Sacred Heart Hospital in Le Mars, 1925-1932. He died from heart disease in 1932, and was buried at Holy Angels Cemetery, Roselle. Although being named Censor indicates the bishop's respect for his learning, he was remembered at his death as being a man of great kindness and simplicity.

Fr. Geling's longtime housekeeper was the aunt of a seminarian from a large family and a few months before his death, he sent money to the young man to buy his first breviary. That seminarian became our Bishop Greteman, who remembered it in a letter.

Congratulations on the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary! Thank you for your interest in Fr. Geling – so many of our early priests were inspiring servants who are barely remembered. I attach a picture of him. I hope your parish continues to be blessed.

Cecilia Lopez  
Archivist/Librarian  
Diocese of Sioux City



Fr. Henry Gehling

Continued next page

**4-Herman Gehling** was born on 12 May 1822 in Munster, Prussia, died on 19 Jul 1900 in Festina at age 78, and was buried in Our Lady of Seven Dolors. Herman married **Elizabeth Hartman**. Elizabeth was born on 26 Jul 1826, died on 29 Mar 1886 in Festina at age 59, and was buried in Our Lady of Seven Dolors. They had six children.

**5-Rev. Johan Henrich Gehling** was born in 1854 in Wessum and died in 1932 at age 78.

*The Reverend Johan H. Geling was born in Wessum, County Ahrhaus, Government District Muenster to brave and Christian parents. There he attended elementary school and received First Holy Communion in the village church. Then his parents traveled to America and settled in Festina, Winneshiek County, Iowa where the father pursued farming. The son worked part time with his father on the parents' farm and part time on various other farms until he was 21 years old. Then feeling in himself the high calling of the holy priesthood, he entered the priest seminary, where he surrendered himself with eagerness to his studies and completed the classical curriculum. Thereafter, he entered St. Joseph College where he studied Theology for one year. Then he turned to the Grand Seminary in Montreal Canada, an outstanding and renowned educational institution, where he once again for two years performed his studies and then attained the goal of his desire by being ordained a priest on 14 July 1884. On 16 July of the same year, the young pastor celebrated his first Mass in his dear hometown, Festina. At the moment, there was no position available there, so during this time he visited the Reverend Father Wegmann in Roselle and the present town of Willey. Soon thereafter he received the call to Festina where he should work as assistant priest with the Reverend Father Sauter. For three years he remained in the community, whereupon the Reverend Archbishop named him as Rector of Saint Mary's Church in Willey. In the Fall of the same year, due to the eagerness of the young priest, the community was able to build itself a church school, and during the Winter months he himself participated in the instruction of the youngsters until Fall of the next year when the nuns came from La Crosse, Wisconsin. In the year 1895 the school was enlarged through the addition of a second wing.*

*[Der Carroll Demokrat, a German-language newspaper printed in Carroll, Iowa in the late 1800's and early 1900's.]*