

My Father Frederick Gerlemann had five brothers: William, Eberhard, Henry, Joseph and Carl (Brother Bernard) and two sisters Josephine and Mary.

With these he came to America when eleven years old and settled in New Vienna, Iowa. Shortly after he received his First Holy Communion and was a partner to Conrad Shulte (the later priest). Carl, my father's youngest brother, known to us as Brother Bernard, was great benefactor to our Convent in LaCrosse.

My mother came to this country with her two older sisters. Her name was Catherine Schrandt. She also settled in New Vienna and, was married to father in 1860. Shortly after they moved to Festina, Iowa, which was then pastorized from Vienna. They rented a farm for 8 years, about ½ mile from the church. Festina at that time was called Twin Springs. So they became one of the first settlers in the place.

I was born there December 8, 1861, the eldest of eight children whose names are: Mary, Catherine, Carl, Elizabeth, Anton, William and Antoinette. Father N. Hannasch baptized me. When I was one-half year old I became very ill, and mother besought the Blessed Virgin to spare me, offering her first birth to her service, and the heavenly mother heard the prayer. Later on I escaped a fierce death, being almost torn to pieces by the hogs. Only for my father's quick aid, who with an ax benumbed the ferocious beasts.

In 1867 Father bought 204 acres of forestland; 20 acres of which were tilled. There was a cozy little home on it. It was situated 5 miles from Festina and from that time on, they could speak of luck and blessings. The daily prayer of the rosary in common brought it on. In January 1872 all our debts were paid, and a plan made for the erection of a new house. We children attend an English and German District school. The priest gave instructions there in Catechism.

One month later mother got sick. Three of us went to school the next day, but we were called home at noontime and beheld dear mother dead already; and leaving to us a little baby sister, Antoinette, who my dear aunt took care of. Oh how we children felt without a mother! Father was disconsolate, for he could not get a hired girl to take care of the house, so I had to, being the oldest; and dear poor father taught me how to bake bread. After two years however, we got a very kind stepmother who did all she could for us.

The Sisters' School in Festina opened in 1875 under Father John Urbany's pastorage. I was one of their first boarders.

On July 16, 1877 I entered St. Rose Convent. The sisters had taken me along on their vacation trip. Before I left home, Father ___ Gerlemann, who was preparing to enter St. Francis Seminary to study for priesthood, said to me you must be a Sister and teach my children.

My first Convent days were spent with a severe attack of homesickness. I could have walked over coals to get home. But, seeing Brother Bernard who lived near the Convent at St. Mary's, it all disappeared- for he encouraged me, and had 4 holy Masses in honor of the Sorrowing Mother said on my behalf.

I received the veil August 1, 1878. At that time many postulants from Dubuque Diocese, which was widely stretched, had not received Confirmation. I belonged to that number. So I received this Sacrament during my novitiate August 2, 1879, and made my Profession on August 2, 1880.

My Missions before my Perpetual Profession were: Sherrill, Iowa, Kickapoo, Illinois and Guttenberg, Iowa.

Sister M. Edmunda Gerlemann

1861-1933

Obituary

Mary Gerlemann, our Sister M. Edmunda, was born December 8, 1861, in Festina, Iowa. She was the oldest of eight children. In her infancy she was very sick and her good Christian mother prayed most fervently for Mary's recovery, offering her child as a gift to Our Blessed Lady. Some years later little Mary narrowly escaped being torn to pieces by fierce hogs. When she was eleven years old, her mother died leaving behind her infant girl, Antoinette, to be taken care of by an aunt. Mary received her early schooling partly in a district school and partly in the parochial school which was opened in Festina in 1875. Two years later she sought admission in St. Rose Convent, July 17, 1877. A few years later she was sent to teach the primary grades; first in Dubuque, then at Sherrill's Mound, Kickapoo and various other places including Guttenberg.

During her declining years she lent a helping hand here and there in the Home for the Aged, in the Orphan Home, and lastly in Odanah where she succumbed to a "stroke". She was taken to the hospital at Ashland where she lingered for a few days in hopes of being brought back to the Motherhouse per authority of Mother Assistant and Sister Theodany having gone there for the purpose of accompanying her home. But such was not to be. She died on the morning of the supposed trip, having gone into a state of coma several days before. At the request of her relatives, the remains were brought to LaCrosse and interred April 1, 1933. She had passed away at 6:45 a.m. on March 29. Those present at her funeral some Franciscans and her nearest relatives from Festina and Ossian, Iowa.

Personally, Sister M. Edmunda was of a timid and shy disposition, always comfortable to take a back seat, well meaning and ready to suffer rather than assert herself. She was mortified and abstemious to the extreme.

May she rest in peace.

Source: Archives Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration