

Memories of Festina
By Joan Schissel
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Joan (Buchheit) Schissel's family moved from the Buchheit Farm to the Rudy Holthaus Farm near Festina. They moved to Ossian when she was in the second grade. Her brother was a year younger. In order to finish the school year in Festina it was arranged that Joan and Claude would live in the convent with the nuns. Mom would send eggs, milk and produce with them on Monday mornings. Following is Joan's account of that time.

My brother, Claude, and I stayed with the nuns from March 1, 1940 until the end of May it was a great experience. We were treated like royalty.

Each afternoon a treat was on the table for us. On saints days, like St. Joseph, candy was the treat. The cook, Sr. Mary Josanna, made donuts with chocolate frosting. "Tastiest!"

One day the treat was hard boiled eggs. We both got excited, but they were soft boiled and we did not like them. We ended up throwing them in the outdoor toilet. Back then there was no indoor plumbing.



Sr. Mary Margaret Heil
Sr. Mary Josanna Sabers

The nuns borrowed roller skates from kids and they skated in the school basement. After that they got brave and skated outside on the sidewalk from the church to the convent. Fr. Rubly never saw them. It was great fun!

Sr. Mary Margaret taught 1st & 2nd grade.
Sr. Mary Josanna was the cook.

In June of 1905 Rev. Andrew J. Rubly became pastor of Our Lady of Seven Dolors. The Rev. Rubly was a strict and zealous priest with a conservative, cautious outlook on anything he saw as new or different. He resolutely restricted owning an automobile, calling them "Hollenmachine" (hell machine), even though the parishioners had collected money to buy him one.

By 1911 the school had been enlarged to eight grades. High German was still used as the official language of both the church and school. The use of German continued until the onset of World War I, when German was considered unpatriotic. (Our Lady of Seven Dolors 1979 Anniversary Booklet)

Fr. Rubly followed some the strict old-country German Catholic guidelines as demonstrated in the following account by Joan Schissel.

Father Rubly named most children. He would open the saints book and whatever came on that page was their name.

The mothers stayed in bed for 9 days after giving birth. So Dad and the sponsors would take the baby in for Baptism when they were a day or two old. My oldest brother was to be named Donald but came home as Gerald. My sister was to be Joyce and she came home named Letitsia. Her legal name was Joyce and her baptismal name was Letitsia.

My brother Gerald wanted to go to school when he was five. Father Rubly said no way, he had to be six.

Mom said that he (Fr. Rubly) came to the farm two weeks before school started and said if Gerald could speak English and not German he could attend. Gerald worked hard and went to school speaking English.