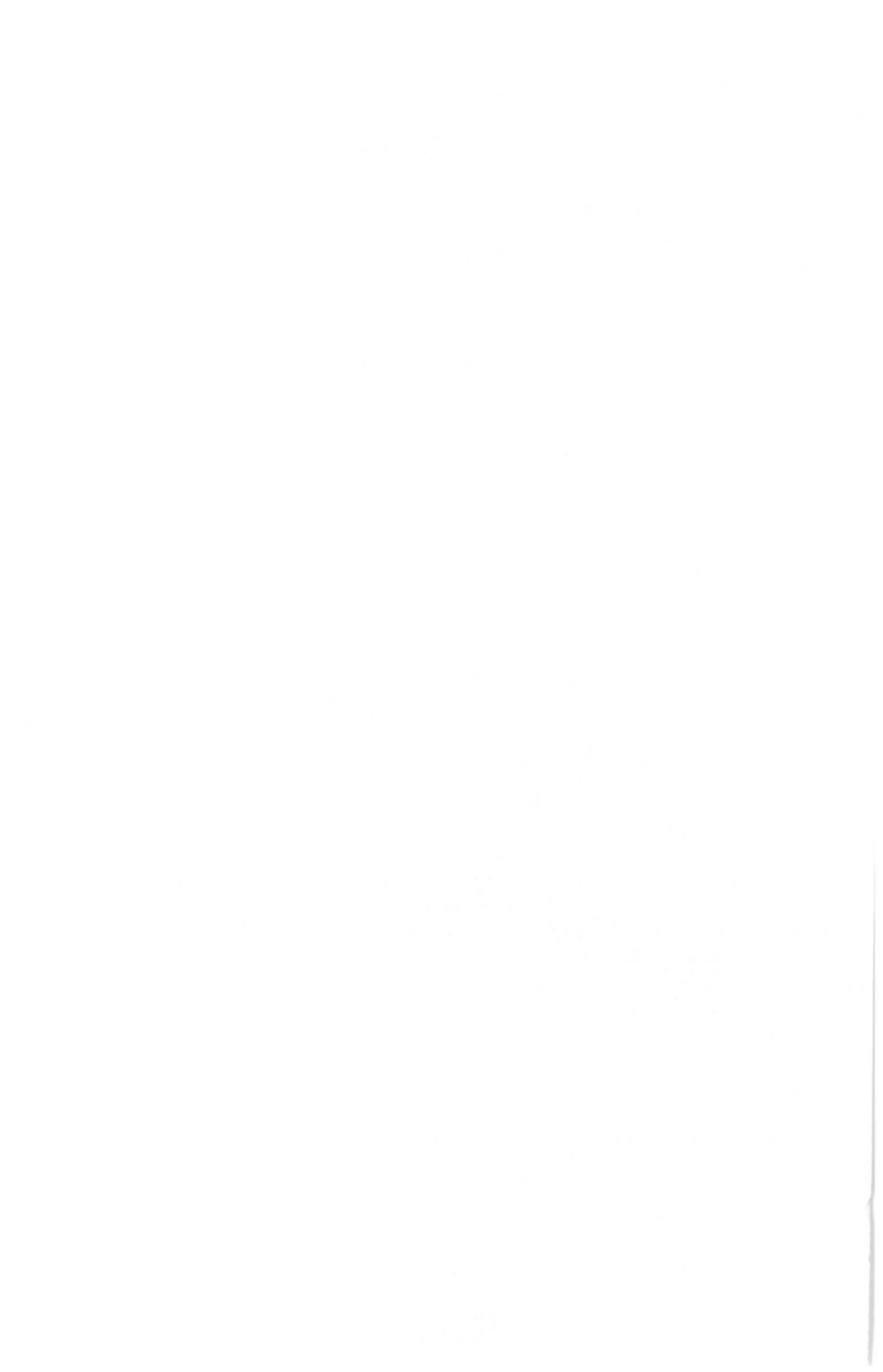


Hard Times on the Hill

...origins of UD



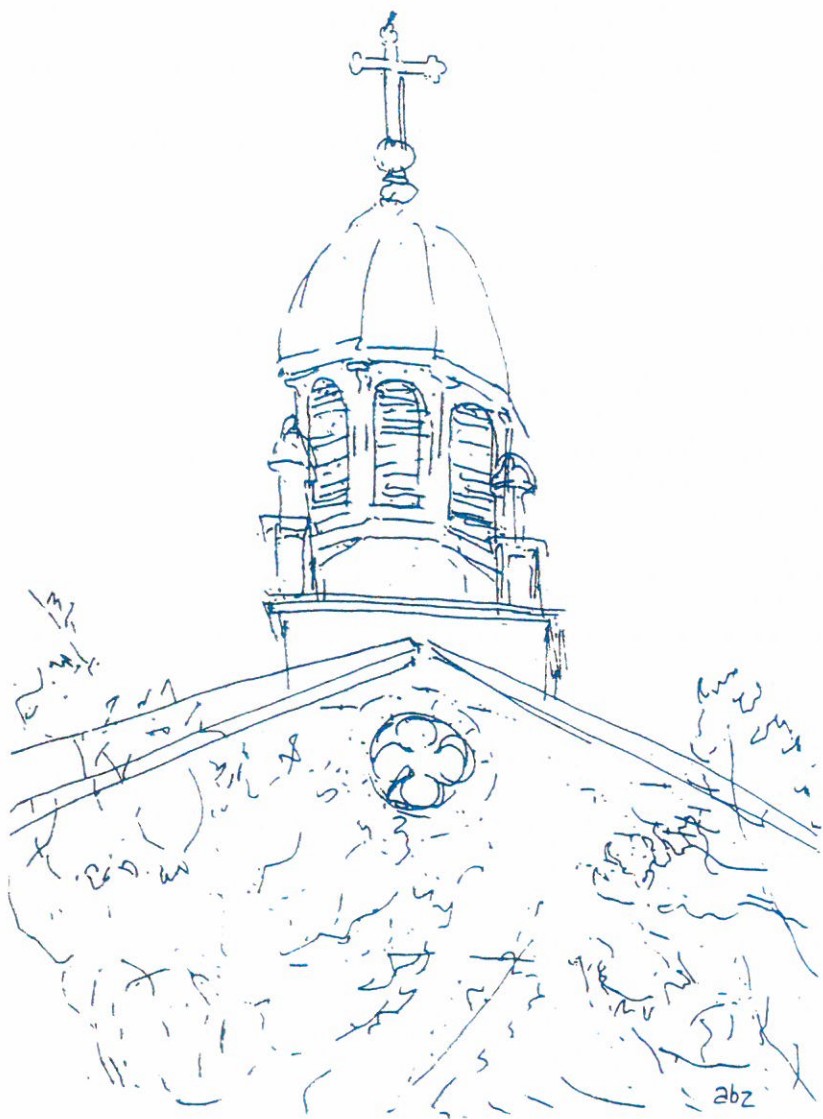
Roz Young



Hard Times on The Hill

a series of eight articles
on the history of UD,
which appeared
in the *Dayton Daily News*
from May 10 to June 28, 1997,
by Roz Young

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Writings on Dayton Overlook UD

Daytonians wanting to find out anything about the history of the University of Dayton would have to look long and hard for any mention of it in Dayton histories. The DeBeers history of 1882 has one page of information, Robert W. Steele simply mentions the establishment of St. Mary's Institute in his 1896 history, and in the 1996 *For the Love of Dayton* there is a brief notation. Craig Mackintosh included a sketch of St. Mary Hall in his *Dayton Sketchbook*, and Robert Frame wrote one paragraph about it.

That is it.

Yet, in 2000, the University of Dayton will celebrate the 150th anniversary of its founding. One-hundred-fifty years in Dayton! Hardly a word in our histories.

The North American Center for Marianist Studies has just published a book, *Father Leo Meyer's 13 Years at Nazareth*, by the late Father John Graves, S.M. The book is a re-issue of an earlier work, but much material has been added from newly discovered writings and letters in various archives.

I know that, ever since I read the book, every time I drive down Brown Street I think about Father Leo Meyer and the hard times the Marianist brothers and priests had on that hilltop site between Woodland Cemetery and the Patterson Homestead.

This series of columns is based on information in this book.

In 1849, Father Leo Meyer was the superior of the Society of Mary's establishment at Strasbourg, in the Province of Alsace. He received a letter from the former mayor of Lucerne, Switzerland, telling that a request had been made by the pastor of Saint Mary Church in Cincinnati for three Marianist brothers to help in the church and school there. Meyer asked to be appointed, and Father Georges Caillet, Superior General of the Society of Mary, granted Meyer's request to go to Cincinnati.

Meyer was 49, a man over six feet tall and weighing more than 280 pounds. He habitually wore a three-cornered hat and a cassock. Because he was unable to bend over to put on shoes or fasten them, he always wore leather slippers.

Meyer put his affairs in order and sailed from Le Havre on May 28, 1849, with a companion, Brother Charles Schultz. After 38 days crossing the ocean, the two landed in New York on July 4.

Traveling through Albany, Buffalo and Sandusky, they arrived in Cincinnati on July 16, only to find that the city was the midst of a severe cholera epidemic. The disease claimed between 200 and 300 victims every day.

Bishop (afterwards Archbishop on July 19, 1850) Purcell asked Meyer to go at once to Dayton, which was also suffering a cholera epidemic, to assist Father Henry Juncker, pastor of Emmanuel Church. He remained in Dayton for a month, helping care for the sick and dying in all parts of the city.

While he was in Dayton, Meyer became acquainted with John Stuart, a member of Emmanuel parish. Stuart owned a 125-acre property on the Lebanon road (now Brown Street) and bounded by Woodland Cemetery and the Patterson farm. Stuart, who had formerly lived in France and still owned much property there, wished to return there.

He offered to sell his farm to Meyer for \$12,000. Meyer's dream was to found a central house of the Society of Mary and establish a boarding school. This looked to him like a wonderful opportunity. He at once wrote to the Superior General for permission (and hopefully funds) to buy the farm.

In August, after the cholera epidemic had abated in Dayton, he returned to Cincinnati to assist at Holy Trinity school. Bishop Purcell welcomed him, encouraged his plans and granted formal permission to the Society to open schools in any part of the diocese.

The priests already in Cincinnati told

Meyer they had not asked for a priest to be sent, but for brothers. Meyer replied that he had not come to meddle in their affairs but to see that the brothers obey the rules and cause no trouble. "Our brothers are not sent into a distant country without having a priest of the Society with them," he said.

Meyer asked the Superior General to send four German-speaking brothers to Cincinnati. The four arrived in Cincinnati on Dec. 3, 1849, after a difficult journey. They were Andrew Edel, Damian Litz, John B. Stinzi and Maximin Zehler. They were soon put to work teaching in the Holy Trinity School, where Father Meyer and Brother Schultz were also assigned.

In January 1850, Father Juncker of Emmanuel Church, asked the Bishop to allow Father Meyer to serve as acting pastor while he made his trip to Europe. Father Meyer was glad to return to Dayton because he had been at odds with the pastor of Holy Trinity Church in Cincinnati.

Before he left Meyer wrote to the bishop, "Habituated to an active life, here I must stand in a corner from one Sunday to the next to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass; in the eyes of the public I have the air of a criminal to whom permission has been given to celebrate Mass. In Dayton at least I will be of some usefulness."

When he returned to Dayton, he again met John Stuart and the two again talked about Meyer buying the farm. The farm had a pretentious two-story house on it, fields, pastures, paddocks, vineyards, barns and stables and a woodland, as well as two horses, two cows, a calf and six pigs.

Meyer hoped to use the mansion, as

it was called, as a mother house for candidates for the brotherhood, and he also planned to establish a boarding school. The price of \$12,000 also included the furniture in the house.

There remained one obstacle (In fact there was more than one, but he did not know it at the time.): He did not have \$12,000.

In the Beginning: St. Mary's Institute

Father Meyer negotiated an agreement with John Stuart to pay the capital \$12,000 price in three \$4,000 payments at intervals of three or four years, leaving it optional to Stuart to spread the payment over nine or 12 years.

He agreed to pay the interest on the debt every six months. He assumed all risk of fire or destruction of the property by accident or otherwise.

Stuart asked for a payment of at least \$500 of the year's interest to be paid on the day of purchase, March 19, 1850, the Feast of St. Joseph.

On that day Father Meyer said Mass in one of the rooms of the house. Afterwards he signed the terms of agreement and, using a little medal of St. Joseph to seal the agreement, he gave

the medal to Stuart. "I have no money now," he said, "but St. Joseph will pay." Stuart took the medal.

Meyer felt he had made a good purchase. Property in the vicinity was selling for between \$60 and \$100 an acre.

Meyer took immediate possession of the crops. He planned to plant a vineyard on the eastern edge of the property and dreamed of realizing enough income from the selling of wine to pay the annual interest on the purchase price.

Brothers Schultz, Edel and Zehler were called from Cincinnati to Dayton, and Meyer also requested some more brothers to come from France. Brother Edel took charge of the garden, Brother Zehler had charge of the farm and

outlying land, and Brother Schultz took charge of the domestic arrangements. The brothers took up residence in the farmhouse a few days before the agreement was signed.

Meyer renamed the settlement Nazareth, in honor of the Holy Family. He reserved a room for himself in the mansion. The farmhouse had two rooms and a large porch on one side. There was only one bed for the three brothers. For utensils, the brothers had one small pot, which they had brought from the ship they came over on, a saucepan, two spoons, two forks and one knife. They used a sharpened piece of wood for a third fork and a flattened piece of wood for a stirring spoon.

Their food consisted of potatoes, flour and corn. Before he left for France, Stuart sometimes gave them milk and eggs.

The brothers prepared a special meal for Meyer when he arrived for the signing of the deed. The meal consisted of potato soup, a dish of potatoes and three kinds of pancakes: one of flour, water and salt; one of water, flour, salt and potatoes; and one of water, salt and cornmeal.

The purchase of the farm was a significant event for the Society of Mary.

It made Dayton the headquarters of the Brothers of Mary in America.

Father Meyer opened a day school for boys on July 1, 1850. He commissioned Brother Zehler to take charge of the school, which was held on the porch of the farmhouse. The age of the first 14 students was from nine to 12, and Brother Zehler taught the entire school, as well as worked on the farm before and after school.

The prospectus for the boarding school, which opened Sept. 1, 1850, announced that instruction would be in reading, writing, English, French, German, arithmetic, geometry and mensuration, bookkeeping, history, geography, drawing, vocal music, botany, agriculture and horticulture. Terms for tuition and board were \$18 per quarter. Tuition for day students was \$3 per quarter. There was an additional charge for supplies, bedding, laundry and doctor's fees, or the parents could furnish those.

Boarders lodged in the Stuart mansion and classes met in the farmhouse.

The school had no desks or benches. Students sat on planks nailed together. A drawing board served as a blackboard.

The school was known as St. Mary's School for Boys.

Father Meyer cooked and washed dishes to free Brother Schultz to work on the farm. He also plowed and planted potatoes, corn and beans.

One morning, Jefferson Patterson came over from his farm, Rubicon, established by his father, Col. Robert Patterson, to see what kind of men the brothers were. He found them out in the field, spreading manure.

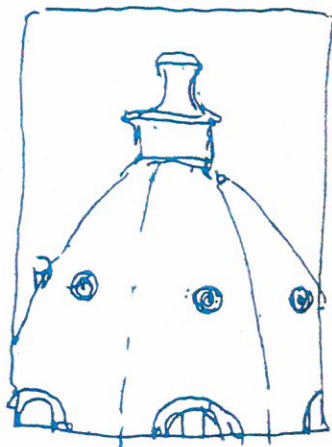
He said he had formed the wrong impression of them, and after his visit he helped them with advice and material assistance.

In addition to cooking, Meyer helped in the garden and on the farm, and in the evenings he knit.

Three more brothers, Ignatius Kling, Anthony Heitz and Andrew Dilger, left Europe for Nazareth in August. They

landed in New York on Sept. 19 and at Cincinnati Oct. 7, 1850. They arrived by canal in Dayton on Oct. 8.

"Reverend Leo Meyer met them at the door, wearing his big straw hat," wrote one of Meyer's biographers. "The first dish he placed before them was green beans. After the meal, he took his basket and told them to accompany him to the orchard for picking up apples.... As there were neither bed nor bedstead ready for them, they had to construct rough bedsteads of boards, sawbucks and ropes; and Brother Kling had to sew the bags for putting in straw."



Food, Money in Limited Supply for Early Years of Community

The little group of monks at Nazareth was poor, hungry and cold most of the time. Their diet was of the poorest kind. All they had to flavor their soup was salt. Their clothes became so thin and ragged that some of the Catholics in Dayton gave them garments from their own closets to wear.

In order to earn a little money, the brothers sold wood, vegetables and apples at the market. They harvested 300 bushels of barley and almost the same amount of apples, and their potato crop was enough for their own use but not enough to sell any.

Father Leo Meyer found himself in political hot water at every turn. The archbishop at one time told him he bothered about things that were none of his business. Meyer wrote to the archbishop Nov. 15, 1850: "How have I lost your good will?" He then begged him to let him know what had caused the rift between them, in order that he could make full reparation.

Archbishop John Purcell may have felt that Meyer's proposal about a seminary was meddling. Meyer suggested that the archbishop should lease five acres for the seminary, renewable every three years. The working brothers living in the farmhouse would develop the land. The archbishop

would "fit up the house, except the linen and clothes of the personnel of the house."

Meyer and the archbishop would agree on a charge for board and room for each person the archbishop admitted to the house, whether a professor, student or domestic.

There was much friction between Father Meyer and Father Henry Juncker of Emmanuel parish. Purcell had told Meyer when he left Cincinnati that he should busy himself only in the community and in no activity in the parish. Then Father Juncker told Meyer that Father Joseph Stephan would come to Emmanuel while he (Juncker) accompanied the archbishop on a tour of the churches in the diocese. Meyer assisted Stephan while he was there. When Juncker returned, Stephan returned to Cincinnati. Meyer learned that the Germans in Dayton were thinking of building a new church, and the archbishop had sent Stephan to direct the work.

Meyer offered to assist Juncker after Stephan left, but Juncker said he could manage alone. "You can guess this gave rise to all kinds of rumors," Meyer wrote to the General Administration of the Society of Mary.

"Some people, learning that we had services, came to assist at them. The

most we had was six persons for Mass, and that only once; and another time there were 15 persons at Vespers. It appears that all this brought umbrage to Father Juncker and perhaps more so to the bishop. Here is proof of this: Father Juncker announced that I had jurisdiction only over the religious who lived in the house and that I was to send away all persons who would come to assist in the services."

This squabbling was not unobserved by the Catholics in Dayton.

Father Meyer also learned from Brother Stinzi in Cincinnati that the archbishop asked his superiors in France to replace Father Meyer with another priest of the Society. Meyer, knowing that the archbishop was going to Rome and suspecting that on his return he would stop at the Society headquarters, wrote to one of the fathers there. "Stay in the vague with the archbishop, settle nothing, be courteous, extend compliments, tell him all the nice things I wrote you about him, complain of nothing and do not say that I have reason for complaint," he wrote. "You need have no fear; he cannot make any reproaches against me founded on fact, even if an investigation were made."

Three young Americans entered the Society in 1851. Soon after they joined, improvements were made in the original

Stuart house. The men made an extra room out of the long porch by enclosing it with windows and siding. They dug a cellar under the north side of the building to serve for a kitchen and refectory. They also built an addition to the barn.

Brother Schultz, who had been the cook, began to have doubts about his membership in the Society. (Father Meyer wrote to Europe that he had expected to be made a priest and was disappointed when he was not.) He left in April 1851 and became a Jesuit.

After he left, Father Meyer added beekeeping to his other duties.

More troubles developed soon. Meyer had scraped together enough money for the March 1851 payment of interest to John Stuart and left the money in his desk drawer. After the midnight Christmas Mass, when he opened his desk drawer, the money had been stolen. He had to borrow \$150 to meet the payment. The entire income from students and boarders of Nazareth was only \$1,200 a year, and it looked as if the September payment could not be met. Besides they needed to buy lumber to make repairs on the threshing floor of the barn.

And then came a devastating blow in a letter from Father Caillet in Europe to Archbishop Purcell.



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Father Meyer's Superior Orders Him to Sell Future University Site

Father Caillet wrote to Archbishop Purcell that, keeping in mind that Purcell had asked to have Leo Meyer replaced by another Marianist priest, he had decided the time had come to make the change. Meyer, he said, felt that he was unappreciated in Dayton, and that a German bishop in Milwaukee would like to have Meyer in his diocese.

"But the big obstacle to this change," he continued, "is the property where he lives near Dayton, which he bought inconsiderately and without consulting us. He cannot pay the price and does not know how to raise funds and face his creditor. I should not care to have the priest who is to replace him faced with enormous debts without the means to meet them on his arrival in Cincinnati."

He said that he was instructing Father Meyer in writing "to resell his domain and pay his creditor. Then, having paid all his debts, he could go and render service to the above-mentioned German bishop, taking with him some good subjects he has in Dayton, letting others go and leaving the teaching brothers in Cincinnati. ... Let me add, God helping, I shall send one or two good subjects who could open a novitiate in your episcopal city. I will not tell him, however, that this good subject is a degreed man and his successor."

Meyer was surprised that Caillet had written to Purcell that he had bought the farm without permission. (Purcell had given permission to Meyer to make the purchase.) "Ordinarily the defects of children are hidden; it seems that Divine Providence had furnished me with this trial, which evidently is not the last," he wrote. "Soon the report (will spread) in Cincinnati and Dayton that the convent of the brothers is to be suppressed, and that Mr. Stuart will come back to retake his farm and that we could not pay for it, etc."

Meyer wrote to the archbishop that the Superior General's order to sell the farm was only conditional and that he did not intend to give it up. He had, in fact, just made the March payment due Mr. Stuart.

More trouble was in store for Father Meyer. The archbishop, while visiting Father Juncker in Dayton, asked Meyer to come to the parsonage. Meyer described what happened in a letter to his confidant in Strasbourg. An elderly woman had come through the snow to go to confession. He tried to get her to return to town, but she refused. Meyer had been warned by the archbishop to hear no confessions except those of the people living at Nazareth, but when she insisted, since there was no confessional

in the chapel, he placed a prie-dieu near the altar, put himself near the altar and heard her confession.

He confessed what he had done to Father Juncker, who told him that her confession was null and invalid since there was no confessional in the chapel and that he must go to her and tell her she would have to repeat her confession. This he did. Meyer then told the archbishop that he was unaware there was an ordinance about invalid confessions where there was no confessional, and added that Father Juncker had confessed women in his room when Meyer was living with him. Both Juncker and Purcell "fell upon me in good style."

Father Juncker accused Meyer of working with some members of the parish who were against him. "I defy anyone to prove that at any time I criticized Father Juncker's conduct," he wrote hotly to the archbishop. To his confidant in France, Father Chevaux, he wrote that Juncker discouraged young men from joining the Society and even went to parents of pupils at Nazareth to point out other schools they could attend. Priests in Cincinnati did the same. "Our good brothers cannot get over it," he wrote, "as they could never imagine anyone could encounter

obstacles just where one would have a right to expect assistance."

The school had not been very successful at first. The brothers all spoke German to one another, and the idea spread that the school was only for boys of German descent. It was difficult to get German boys to continue their education after the First Communion. Furthermore, some people believed that the school, named for St. Mary, ought to be a girls' school. Since admission was only for Catholic boys, the enrollment suffered because the native and wealthier population of Dayton was non-Catholic.

In September 1851, the number of boarders in the school fell to only four, and the day students numbered only six. By May 1852, the enrollment increased, however, to nine boarders and 15 day students.

During the summer of 1852, Meyer made plans to build an addition to the Stuart mansion to accommodate the growth in the religious family and the number of boarders. Prospects for the harvest in 1852 were good, and Meyer pointed out the increase in the value of their land was substantial. A home not worth as much as the Stuart mansion, together with 25 acres of land, a mile beyond Nazareth sold for \$9,000. The Nazareth property had doubled in value

because of their improvements and the growth of the city.

Meyer planned to sell the land between Brown Street and the Lebanon Pike (Main Street) in 1853, but he was dissuaded from doing so by a priest skilled in financial matters, who told him the property would be worth \$60,000 in 10 years.

At the beginning of 1853 there were more than 30 day students and 28 boarders in the school. "The house is as full as an egg," Meyer said.

Ground was broken for a two-story addition to the Stuart mansion in spring of 1854 and was under roof by September. The chapel was moved to the first floor of the addition and was blessed Oct. 1, 1854, the Feast of Our Lady of Victory.

The new addition cost upwards of \$2,000. It was all paid for and Meyer had an account of \$336. The archbishop wanted to know where Meyer found the money. "Your Grace," answered Meyer, "I have an account with St. Joseph."

Dayton Benefactor Helps Meyer Keep School at Nazareth Running

When Father Leo Meyer told the archbishop he had an account with St. Joseph, he was speaking of a benefactor whose name was Henry Ferneding. The two had become acquainted when Fr. Meyer was assistant pastor of Emmanuel parish.

Ferneding, in the hay, grain and malt business in Dayton, had bought a 12-acre, wooded tract of land north of Nazareth next to Woodland Cemetery. He paid \$2,500 for the property and held it until Meyer could acquire it. He also supervised the letting of the contract for the new building and the details and

supplies. He advanced \$1,000 for wages for the workmen.

He also made a gift of \$1,500 to Nazareth. Income from \$1,000 of the gift was for prayers for his family and from the remaining \$500 was for instruction of poor children. The Society said one Mass a month for the living and dead of the Ferneding family during Henry Ferneding's lifetime, and once a year after his death to the third generation.

As the Society of Mary grew, not only at Nazareth but in other parts of Ohio, as well as in Texas, Meyer appealed to the

headquarters in France to send more brothers. Five brothers and one novice came, but when they arrived it was found they were not qualified to teach and were sent to work on the farm. They were dissatisfied. Three remained in the Society, three did not.

Meyer was able to pay the March and September installments to Stuart in 1853, because of the increased number of boarders at the school, the sale of garden produce and some financial help from the schools in Cincinnati.

He also opened a school at Emmanuel Church. Father Juncker, who had always been troublesome to Meyer, interfered in the teaching methods and after six months the Marianist brothers and Juncker parted. It was not until 1874 that they again took charge of Emmanuel School.

Trouble and dissatisfaction with the teaching methods of the brothers in the Cincinnati schools also flared up, and Meyer had severe administrative problems there.

Early in 1854, one of the brothers, Louis Curiec, fell ill and was not expected to live. Meyer thought he ought to provide a burial space for the dead and, after receiving authorization from the township, chose a spot of land south of the farmhouse at the eastern edge of the

property. The property was blessed on All Saints Day, Nov. 1, 1854.

Curiec died in Cincinnati on Nov. 21 and was buried there. About the year 1885 his body was moved to the cemetery at Nazareth.

The country experienced a depression in 1854 and 1855. The price of flour rose from \$4 to \$9 a barrel and the price of butter, beef and eggs doubled. Hundreds were out of work.

Meyer invited Father Juncker to assist at the blessing of the chapel constructed in the addition to the Stuart mansion. He refused to attend.

Meyer was still forbidden to hear confessions except for those living at Nazareth, but he continued to ask for permission to hear confessions of the dying and those who presented themselves at Nazareth for confession.

In August 1855, Meyer experienced a high fever, which lasted for four months. Other brothers also developed a fever, and at one time 15 were in bed with it. Brother Damian Litz made a potion of something that looked like black coffee and tasted horrible. Everybody took two or three tablespoons of it. "The next morning there was no rising," wrote Meyer to Caillet, "but a general sitting. Brother Nicholas Bohn thought it was cholera and was ready to die, as he expressed himself. When Brother Litz

came to me, I told him his medicine had no effect on me.

"He then said, 'You have a strong nature. You must take another dose.' The fact was I had taken for more than two months daily two or three doses of quinine. He gave me nearly a wine glass full and, in less than one hour, I was not anymore able to remain on my feet."

For several days Meyer was unable to work, but he then refused all kinds of medicine and put himself in the hands of God. From then on his health improved.

Some of the brothers thought that the Society of Mary was not prospering in America because Meyer held too much to the old routine of the way things were done in France. Brother Damian Litz wrote a list of complaints to Caillet. There were no awards to recognize excellence in the classrooms. The food was bad. The curriculum was not worthy

of a college. Outsiders called the brothers "ignorant men." No order was evident at Nazareth. When complaints were made to Meyer, he made no effort to redress the evils.

"It is high time for you to help us with a competent personnel," he wrote. "Help us, I beg you; if you cannot, I would prefer to see our boarding school closed by your order rather than see it linger on as a caricature of a college ...". He ended his letter with a statement that Meyer was not the man to bring about prosperity to the community.

One other blow. When Meyer was ill, the clergy of Cincinnati sent a lawyer to Meyer to draw up his will.

He was forced to sign a will, leaving his estate, real and personal, to John B. Stintzi and Maximin Zehler.



Meyer: God Thought this House Too Comfortable for Poor Religious

Brother John A. Brueck had a fever on Dec. 26, 1855, and after baking about 60 four-pound loaves of bread, he went to bed in the afternoon. About 11 p.m. a light disturbed him, and he got out of bed and opened the door. He saw flames coming from the carpenter shop. At the same time, Brother Anthony Heitz, on the floor above, shouted, "Fire! Fire!"

Brueck ran to get water. When he gained entrance to the kitchen by breaking a window, there was no water. They aroused the sleeping brothers, who began dashing around the building, gathering up articles to save.

Brother Damian Litz, director of the boarding school, went to the boys' dormitory, and woke them. He directed the boys to take out the beds and bedding, and then helped the brothers clear the chapel, the study room and classrooms.

The weather was severe. Snow lay about 18 inches deep; the thermometer registered 10 degrees below zero.

The Dayton Daily Gazette of Dec. 28 reported that two fire companies responded to the fire alarms, but gave up

when they encountered such severe weather. When one company returned to its engine house, a messenger from the school told them that Father Meyer had offered \$100 for their help. A group of volunteers then went with their engine to the scene of the fire.

By 4 a.m. the building lay in ruins. Father Meyer took the boys across the street, where a neighbor, Mrs. Kiefer, prepared breakfast for the boys. After the meal they were sent home.

Meyer said, "The Good God thought this house too comfortable and fine for poor religious, and hence He allowed it to be burnt."

The fire was probably caused by sparks from a stove in the carpenter shop dropping onto shavings. Father Juncker invited Father Meyer and several others to the rectory of Emmanuel Church. Three brothers lived in the house in the vineyard, with two laymen. Nicholas Viot, owner of a house under construction nearby, offered the use of his house for two months. Most of the Nazareth staff went there, but there was no heat. Meyer and two other brothers who had gone to the Emmanuel rectory soon joined them there.

Brother Brueck wrote of his experience after the fire: "it was on a Monday morning about nine o'clock

when we left Nazareth. I, still sick with fever, was sitting on the spring wagon and riding around town on that bitter cold morning.

"As Mr. Becker (a layman Father Meyer had befriended and who drove the wagon) had to call here and there, it was after one o'clock when we arrived at Viot's house. I did not feel well and much less so after the kind reception I received from Brother Damian Litz for not coming in the morning, as I was expected.

"Being ordered into the kitchen, I begged him pardon ... as I had to go to bed at the same moment. I was shown by Brother Dilger into a room upstairs, which had no doors. In fact there was no inside door in the house, and the walls were glittering with ice. ... I went to bed; Brother Dilger put some blankets on me and I slept nearly 24 hours, and that all in one string.

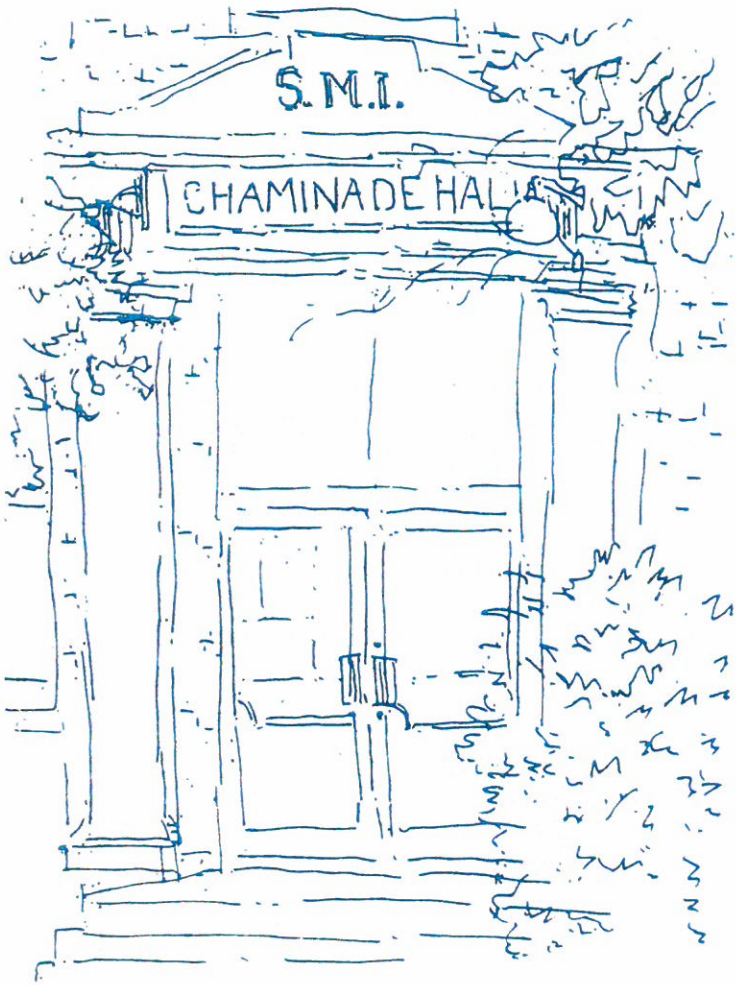
"It was about ten o'clock the next day when I awoke. A strange feeling came over me when I took notice that I was in a room without doors and

glittering with frost. When I came downstairs, I was greeted with, 'He who has risen from the dead.' I was installed (as) cook the very minute.

"And now it was on me to show my skill in the culinary art. that is, to prepare beans for about a fortnight, three times a day in so many ways that they always appeared to be something else than what they were. "

Father Meyer, after much contemplation, proposed to discontinue the school and keep only the farming activities. By the beginning of March 1856, all the brothers were reunited in the old farm building on the vineyard hill.

The farmhouse was not large enough to house all the brothers. Some of them moved into Mr. Becker's house, which had rats, and after one storm the floor was covered with mud. Snow blew in through the cracks in the walls and frequently covered the men in their beds. They used the snow to wash themselves.



Sell Nazareth? Meyer Would Never Allow That

When John Stuart in Europe heard of the fire at Nazareth, he became concerned that Father Leo Meyer would not pay him for the property. Meyer had not made the first payment on the principle.

"Now as I realize that it is useless for me to write to Father Meyer," he wrote, "since he pays not the slightest attention to my desires, I will be obliged to protect myself by other means."

He asked a Dayton lawyer to represent him and proposed that Nazareth should be sold at public auction.

Meyer, of course, vigorously opposed the selling of Nazareth, and asked the archbishop to reassure Stuart.

Father Henry Juncker allowed Meyer to make a collection in the Emmanuel parish to help with the cost of rebuilding. Meyer refused to make the rounds during services asking for money, but he stayed in the sacristy if anybody cared to look him up.

By the fall of 1856, the rebuilding program saw the walls under roof. "We have made some doors and windows so as to be able to live in it this winter," Meyer wrote to Father Georges Caillet in November. "We have plastered only the room that is to serve as the chapel. The house is 80 feet long and 40 wide. We were able to use the bricks of the old mansion and have bought only 3,500.

Other costs were for the masons, \$690; carpenters and joiners, \$400; wood dressing, flooring, window frames and doors, \$300. He needed at least \$600 more to make the building in condition to receive boarders. One class for day scholars opened.

The brothers did much of the work of rebuilding. The south wing "was put up by two bricklayers. The brothers mixed and carried the mortar," Meyer wrote to Caillet, "notably Brother Nicholas Bohn. With the horse cart and barrel, he scooped up water from the brook and filled several hogsheads and carried them to the bricklayers. After breakfast, all hands went to the brick piles, formed two rows, and pitched the bricks from hand to hand and deposited them in heaps along the wall. When they reached the second story, Brother Peter Lenert, a big, strong man, tossed up two bricks at a time with a long-handled shovel.

"When they got to the third floor, they made a heap of bricks on the second floor and then tossed them up to the third floor. Two-thousand bricks were enough for one day. Then all hands went to their different occupations. Brother August Motzung and a postulant went to the brickyard on what is now Chambers Street, near Woodland Avenue, and hauled bricks to the building.

"Good, solid saw logs were hauled from our woods, a few feet north of the present gymnasium, to Mr. Patterson's sawmill down near the canal. He sawed them, cut them to the required size, and our team brought them to the building. With a town carpenter, Mr. Lempert, the brothers did the carpentry work. Of course, the doors, sashes, etc., were made at the sawmill. Providentially, one brother, a Hollander named Martin, was a plasterer, and he did a good job."

In March of 1861, Father Meyer was able to pay the last of the money owed to John Stuart for the property. Stuart wrote to Meyer on March 29: "I have

had this day the pleasure to cancel the mortgage at Nazareth. ... I now congratulate us both for bringing this long account to a close and wish you and your brothers every prosperity and happiness at Nazareth and long life to enjoy it.

"I feel much obliged for your kind offer for part of the farm and to build me a house thereon. I am now, however, getting old, consequently not able to work as I used to when at Nazareth. I at the same time offer you many thanks for your kindness. ..."



Many Voices of Complaint Lead to Founder's Return to France

Much complaint against Leo Meyer continued to be raised by disgruntled brothers who stated that Meyer did little to prepare the brothers for teaching assignments. Consequently, when they went out to the various schools, their training was so poor that they failed in their appointments.

One brother, Thomas Mooney, said, "Little was done at the central house, Nazareth, for training or in any way preparing the postulants and novices for teaching school. Young and old, all worked on the farm. In fact, necessity obliged such a course. The community was too poor to allow them to do otherwise.

"As a natural consequence, many of the young candidates did not persevere, and those of them who did, together with those who were advanced in years, whenever sent out to teach, had to undertake to discharge their very responsible duties without any preparation. Yet by God's great blessing they persevered."

Brother Edward Gorman described a typical day at Nazareth: "During the early days, Fridays and Saturdays were abstinence days. Meat was never served at supper. Wine, beer, or cider were never served at table.

"On Thursday preceding Quinquagesima Sunday, meat was served

for the last time until Easter Sunday. During Lent, this was the daily routine: After the morning meditation, the brothers left church to go to their several places of occupation until 11 o'clock, when they returned for Mass. Office was said during Mass. After Mass, examen; then dinner. When it was too dark, too cold, or too wet, the brothers remained in the tailor or shoemaker shop and studied English. That regulation was too severe, for some good men left us. They said that if they only had a cup of milk (coffee was unknown here) and a piece of dry bread, they could stand the work and hunger, but an empty stomach and hard work was an impossible combination for them."

Brother John Stintzi wrote to Father Georges Caillet, Superior General of the Society of Mary, urging the recall of Meyer to Europe, saying that the future of the Society of Mary in America demanded it, the future of Nazareth depended on it and the infirmities and premature old age of Father Meyer required it.

Brother Andrew Edel painted an unpleasant picture of relations between Meyer and the clergy when he wrote to Caillet that many pastors desired to have brothers, but there was a wall between them and Father Meyer. "They do not

wish to deal with him in any way," he wrote; "they despise him. We are affected in some way by this, but the pastors are not in the wrong. Father Meyer is a fiery, hot-headed man, mysterious and tricky in whatever he says or does. He wishes to tell everyone off. He has a cold heart without kindness. I would like to see him back in France. I admit, nevertheless, he has a good head for business

Meyer did make an effort to repair the situation. With the archbishop's approval on May 17, 1862, he bought the Swaynie Hotel on the corner of First and Race streets in Dayton to which he planned to transfer the pupils of St. Mary's Institute, leaving the Nazareth property for the training of the brothers.

Nothing came of his plans. Bishop Amadeus Rappe of Cleveland, after a trip to Rome, stopped off in Bordeaux to see Father Caillet, suggesting the removal of Father Meyer. Caillet sent a visitor back with Bishop Rappe to try to straighten out the problems.

The visitor was John Courtès, the superior of the province of southern

France. He held long conversations with Brothers Litz and Stintzi, as well as Bishop Rappe, and concluded that any arrangement or compromise with Father Meyer was impossible. He arranged for a retreat for all brothers at Nazareth, followed by a meeting of the Provincial Chapter, at which he found much support for Father Meyer.

Courtès sent minutes of the meetings to Europe. The superiors in Europe decided to remove Father Meyer.

Meyer made a strong defense of all his activities in America, but the decision remained to recall him to France.

He left Dayton on Nov. 24, 1862, and arrived at Le Havre on Jan. 1, 1863. He was appointed director of the orphan asylum at Kembs, Alsace. He went to Rome for two months in 1866, and on his return to France he went finally to Saint Remy, where he died Jan. 28, 1868, a few months before his 68th birthday.

Brother John E. Garvin, in his *The Centenary of the Society of Mary*, published in 1917, likened his life to that of Christian in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. He had come from the Delectable Mountain of a successful career in France to America, where he

walked through the Valley of Tribulation and the desert of Desolation through the Slough of Despond "and just as he was emerging, and had begun to see the lights on the distant mountains of Expectation ... he was called upon to pass his burden to another and to retrace his doleful way back again through slough and desert, even to his distant starting point. But his labors are remembered and his memory will be forever cherished.

"He went with bounding heart and glowing soul

From scenes of triumph - forth to start a new.

He toiled - but all in weariness and pain

And oft in darkness - but the mansion grew!

He saw not clearly, but his faith was firm,

And lo! - he had built better than he knew!" "

Leo Meyer did build better than he knew.

Two years from now, the University of Dayton will celebrate the 150th anniversary of its founding. The founder? Father Leo Meyer.



Design and drawings
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