

# Compelled by Mission: Women's Religious Collections and the Building of America's Schools and Hospitals



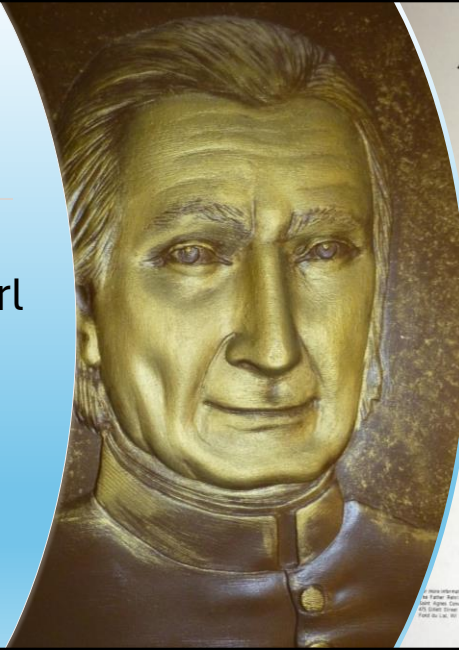
Midwest Archives Conference, May 4, 2024

Jenny Lukomski

Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes

First of all, the title of my presentation is a little misleading. I'm not going to be doing a survey of all the religious congregations in this country, but rather focus on the efforts of the Sisters of St. Agnes in educating and healing in the communities where they served. But I believe CSA's experiences are representative of what was happening with other religious communities throughout this country in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. While every religious community has their unique story, they were all part of this larger movement that filled a desperate need for education and health care in this country. But because sisters aren't as visible as they once were, it seems like we've forgotten about their early contributions in establishing these essential institutions in our communities.

Father  
Caspar Rehrl  
(1809-1881)



I'd like to start off by telling you a little bit about the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes. They were founded in 1858 by Father Caspar Rehrl, an Austrian missionary who arrived in America in 1845, intent on serving the mostly German-speaking immigrants in Wisconsin. Father Rehrl was given the territory bordered by Milwaukee and Green Bay to the north and south, and Lake Winnebago and Lake Michigan to the east and west, an area of approximately 3300 square miles.

He is credited with establishing 32 mission churches over the course of his 35 years in ministry in Wisconsin. Since he couldn't be present at all his parishes all the time, he knew the best way to keep the faith alive in these communities was to educate the children. The Germans even had a saying, "Build the

school first and the school will build the church.” But he had to find help to staff the schools so eventually he decided he needed to create a “teaching sisterhood” for his schools.

After some fits and starts, the first three women were invested into what would become the Congregation of Sisters of Agnes on August 12, 1858. By then Father Rehrl had settled in Barton, Wisconsin, and started a school there that was open to anyone, although he asked the Protestant families to pay 12 cents a month if they were able. Sister Melanie Dulso recalled that when she arrived in Barton in 1861, the school welcomed, “any child, Indian or White, healthy, blind, or crippled...”

Having qualified teachers was something the young congregation had to work toward. One sister recalled that if a girl was 14 and knew a little English, she was sent out to teach. More advanced sisters were sent to Fond du Lac to study with the school superintendent there in order to obtain their teacher’s license. Father Rehrl was savvy, knowing that if they had a license, they could teach in the public schools. If they taught in the public schools, that meant a source of steady income for the congregation.

This is how you can sum up Father Rehrl’s guiding principles when it came to education: 1) every child is entitled to a quality education, and 2) the sisters should be able to teach wherever they were needed.



This is where the woman who came to be known as Mother Agnes comes in. In 1862, 15-year old Anna Marie Hazotte made her way to the Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes. When Father Rehrl first met her, the story goes, he placed his hand on her head and said, “Your name shall be Agnes.” He immediately saw so much potential in her that he gave her the name of the community’s patron saint. Two years later, at the age of 17, she was elected superior of the congregation, a title she would keep until her death in 1905.

In 1870, seeking greater opportunity, Mother Agnes moved the congregation, comprised of 26 sisters, to Fond du Lac, a railroad hub and the state’s second-largest city at the time.

Father Rehrl and six sisters stayed behind in Barton.

Mother Agnes immediately made use of those railroads when she sent sisters to teach at St. John the Baptist School in Defiance, Ohio. This was the first instance of Agnesians being sent out of state. They would remain at St. John's until 1988.

Within ten years, CSA, now with 93 professed sisters, 16 novices, and 14 candidates, had expanded their teaching ministry to 34 schools in six states. But these numbers barely reflect the need for teachers throughout the country.

## Applications for Sisters, 1871-1935

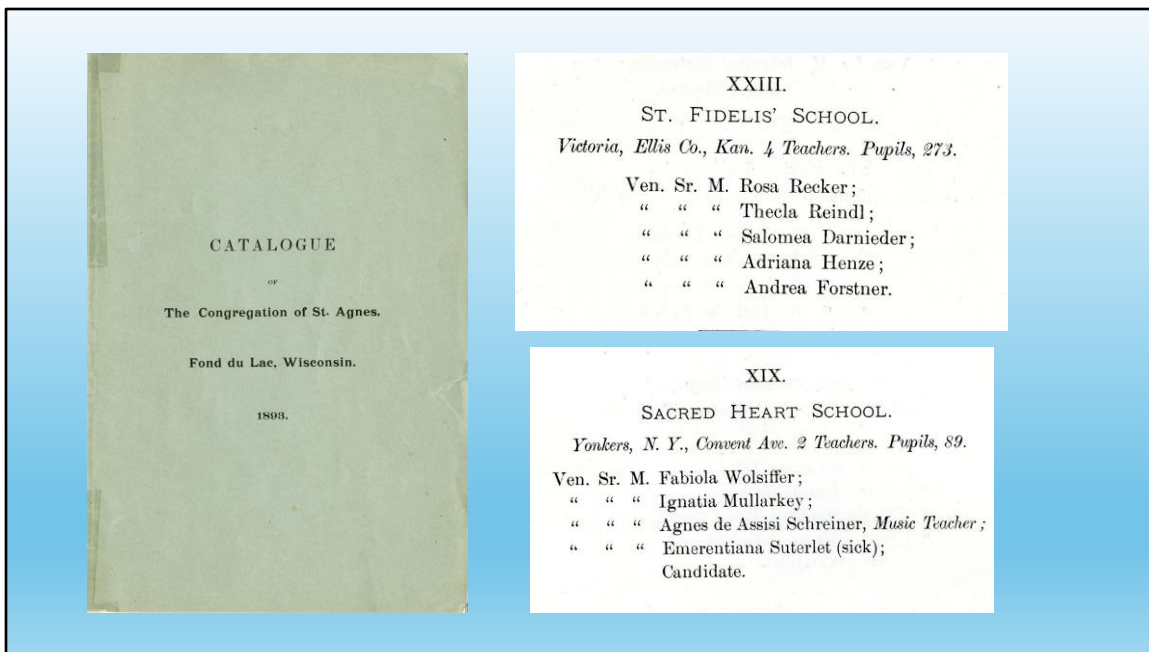
58	Address	Name of Solicitor	No. Required	59	Remarks
1879					
Mar 13	Yonkers, N. Y.	Rev. Benedict C. W. C.	Domestic Work	Not Act.	"
" 28	Aurora, Ill.	Clara Willing	Home for Aged	"	"
Apr. 11	Ellis, Kans.	Rev. Victor C. W. C.	2 Teachers	"	"
May 17	Boyd, Wis.	" A. J. Joerres	2	"	"
" 24	Philadelphia, Pa.	" M. J. Vasey	Domestic Work	"	"
June 10	Watonsville, Calif.	" M. Burelloch	"	"	"
" 30	La Fayette, Ind.	" M. J. Byrne	School	"	"
" 30	Johnsburg, Wis.	" A. J. Litzner	"	"	"
" 30	St. George, Wis.	" P. J. Dawson	"	"	"
July 7	Oak Harbor, Ohio	" A. D. Bader	2 Teachers	"	"
" 10	Spokane, Wash.	" Rev. A. Skinner, Bish.	School	"	"
" 29	"	" " " "	"	"	"
Aug. 16	West De Pere, Wis.	" B. St. Penninge	Domestic Work	"	"
" 22	Marathon City, Wis.	" Benedict, C. W. C.	"	"	"
Sept. 16	New York, N. Y.	" J. Schaefer	Sanitarium	"	"
Oct. 29	"	" Rev. C. A. Mc Keith	Domestic Work	"	"
Nov. 5	Medford, Wis.	" J. Kostner	Hospital	"	"
" 11	Ripon, "	" Rev. Norison	"	"	"

The Applications for Sisters record book shows all the requests that came in to the congregation from 1871 to 1935.

### Applications for Sisters, 1871-1935

Years	Accepted	Declined	Total
1871-1880	18	32	50
1881-1890	18	81	99
1891-1900	4	23	27
1901-1910	3	63	66
1911-1920	6	99	105
1921-1935	9	84	93

I broke down the record book into this chart, and during those six and a half decades, CSA was only able to accommodate, on average, about 15% of all the requests for teachers it received. And this is just schools. Over this same period there were 43 requests for hospitals, 11 for domestic workers, four for sanitariums, six for orphanages, two for homes for the aged, and one retreat house. You can see the explosion of need for teachers especially in those last 25 years represented in this chart. Nearly 200 requests and they were only able to accommodate 15 of them. Imagine that this is taking place all over the country with other religious communities.



And the schools were crowded. This mission list from 1893 shows St. Fidelis in Victoria, Kansas, had four teachers for 273 students; Sacred Heart in Yonkers, two teachers for 89 students. That year, CSA, with its 173 professed sisters, was responsible for 40 schools with 5718 students.

Our Missions record book takes a look at those schools in a little more detail. It shows when a mission was accepted, salaries, number of teachers, and withdrawals. From the entries in this Missions Book we can get a sense of the finances of the parish, the growth or decline of the school, working conditions for the sisters, changes in the educational landscape, and how outside forces affected these parishes.



1870	St. Peter's Dane Co. Wis	
Sept.	Catholic and Public Schools	
	Organist Salary - Church-work	450.00
	Sisters are to furnish the wood for themselves	
	(Teachers three) Mission given up in 1886.	

6		
1879	Texarkana, Texas	
Sept. 1st.	School Salary paid by each pupil	
	See Page 214	1888

St. Peter's in Dane County, Wisconsin, operated as both a public and Catholic school because a public school would not be built in the town until 1920. The three sisters were paid \$450 per year, but they had to provide their own firewood.

In Texarkana, there was no fixed salary as each student paid what they could afford.

- 1913 “Seven teachers; Two music teachers; Two Sisters for domestic work”
- 1915 “Added one Commercial teacher”
- 1919 “High School was opened”

76	
30	<u>St. Joseph's School,</u> <u>Decatur, Ga.</u>
1881	Began with three teachers including Organist and one sister for domestic work. Teachers' salary \$300
1883	Four teachers
1913	Seven - Two music teachers Two sisters for domestic work.
1915	Added one Commercial teacher.
1916	Six grade teachers, one Commercial. One Music teacher. Two sisters for domestic work.
1919	High school was opened.
1920	Seven grade teachers - One Commercial. One music teacher. Two for domestic work.
1921	Eight grade teachers
1924	Three High School teachers.
1925	Eight grade teachers. One High School teacher.
1932	Salary for grade teachers \$2500 High School " 300 Organist " 100
1934	Five high school teachers, eight grade teachers, one music teacher, two sisters for domestic work.
1939	Salary of high school teachers increased to \$400.00
1966	The high school was closed by decision of school of the parish.

St. Joseph's School in Decatur is a good example of the progression of educational opportunities available to students. The school starts out in 1881 with three teachers and continues to grow. By 1913, there are seven teachers, plus two music teachers, and two house sisters. Two years later they add commercial classes. Then in 1919, they added a high school. This all jibes with what is going on nationally with compulsory education becoming the norm, and more businesses needing office workers trained in bookkeeping, stenography, and the like.

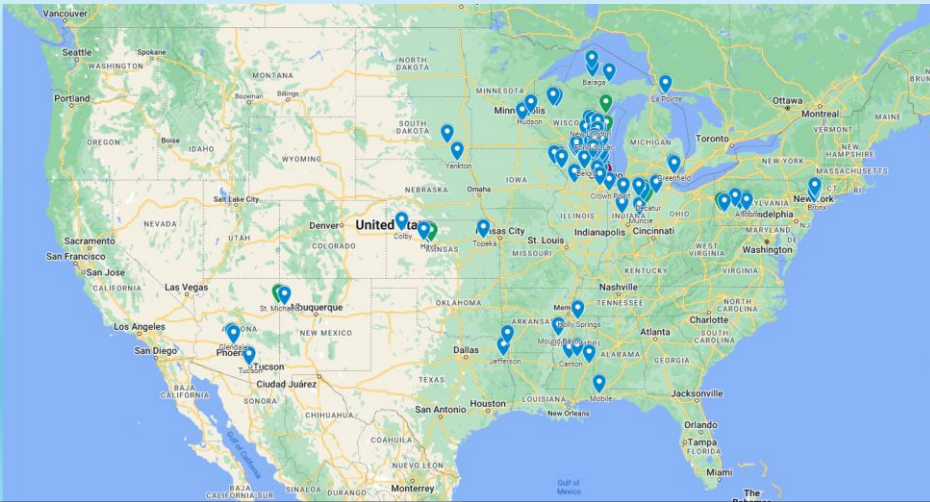
- 1875 “Public school five months; Catholic school five months”
- 1938 “School became a public school. Sisters continue to teach.”

58	
11	<u>St. Joseph's School,</u> <u>St. Joseph, Wis.</u>
1875	Opened the mission with two teachers including organist. One sister for domestic work. Public school five months, Catholic " " " " " "
	Salary for all \$400 Sanctuary work
1932	Two teachers including organist. One sister for domestic work. Teachers salary \$400 Organist, Sanctuary work and priest's board \$200
1938	School became a public school. Sisters continue to teach.
1967	Withdraw the two teachers as the small group of children could readily be absorbed into neighboring parochial and public schools. Mission closed July 7, 1967

Some schools found creative ways to operate when communities had trouble supporting them. When St. Joseph's in St. Joseph, Wisconsin, opened in 1875, it operated as a public school five months of the year, and a Catholic school for five months. The Great Depression caused the school to go public full-time in 1938, but the sisters stayed on until 1967.

## U.S. Schools Served by CSA

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?hl=en&mid=1D2gt.GiDKBhRcXxAAseNqVOWgP14LgTM&ll=39.3804860090053%2C-93.0271754&z=5>



To help you visualize the breadth of CSA's teaching ministry, this map shows all the cities and towns in the United States where CSA has taught throughout its entire history. Green pins indicate two schools in that town, orange is three schools, and purple is five or more.



As you can imagine, with this great need for teachers, teacher training was emphasized in the convent. In 1874, CSA opened its convent school to educate its candidates and novices in subjects like physics, the classics, the Constitution, music, and pedagogy. By 1918, they began sending sisters to summer school classes at both Catholic and state colleges and universities, as teaching became more professionalized and high schools were requiring teachers with bachelor's degrees. And in 1924, the convent school became accredited by the state as a normal school.

But recognizing sisters still needed advanced training to meet the stricter licensing requirements, in the early 1930s,

CSA began sending sisters to the State Teacher's College in Oshkosh, which offered a two-year teacher certification program. Then in January 1936, just as the sisters in the program were preparing to do their student teaching, they were told they couldn't wear their veils while teaching in public schools.

## Marian College



So, they decided to open up their own college. Marian College opened in the motherhouse in September 1936. CSA starting their own college was not as unusual for this time as you might think. Between 1920 and 1942, the number of Catholic women's colleges rose from 54 to 117. So again, CSA is just part of this larger trend in Catholic education.



Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees  
July 7, 1937

Mother M. Aloysia, ex officio president of Marian College, called a meeting of the members of the Board, relative to questions that have arisen in the administration of Marian College. Sister Vera acted as secretary.

Mother Aloysia, who presided over the meeting, brought before the Board the question of admitting young women to Marian College, which had been organized for the education of members of the Community. After a discussion of the situation it was decided to admit those who seem worthy in as far as moral character and high scholarship are concerned. It was also decided that a tuition fee of \$35.00 per semester plus a matriculation fee of \$10.00 be charged. Those desiring individual courses will pay \$5.00 per semester hour of credit.

Various changes in the building were also discussed. It was decided to use the entrance to the old unit as entrance to Marian College, to furnish lockers to safeguard the property of the students, and to provide several minor conveniences.

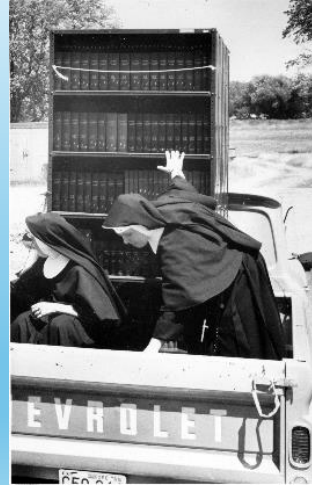
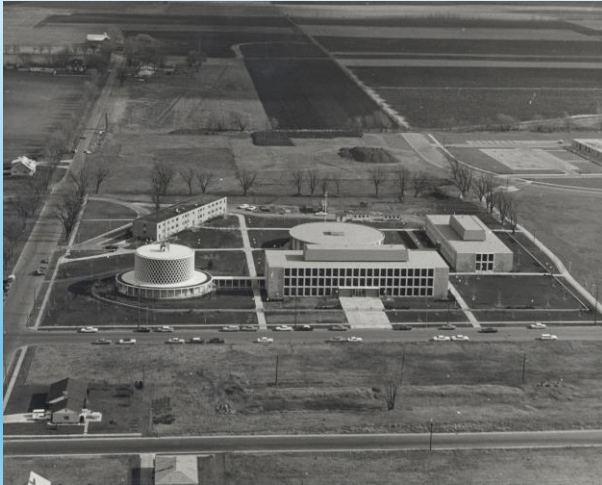
Sister M. Vera, C.S.A.  
Secretary



A year after it opened, Marian began accepting lay women as students. They held evening and weekend classes to help not only the sisters teaching full-time, but also rural lay teachers who needed to stay on top of licensing requirements. Marian was fully accredited in 1960, ...



## Move to New Campus, 1966



... and in 1966, moved to a new campus about a half mile down the road from the motherhouse.

## CSA's Health Care Institutions

- St. Agnes Hospital, Fond du Lac, 1896-2018
- St. Anthony Hospital, Hays, Kansas, 1909-1996
- St. Clare Hospital/Monroe Clinic, Monroe, Wisconsin, 1939-2018
- St. Thomas Hospital, Colby, Kansas, 1941-1973
- Waupun Memorial Hospital, Waupun, Wisconsin, 1987-2018
- Ripon Medical Center, Ripon, Wisconsin, 2011-2018
- Boyle Home for the Aged, Fond du Lac, 1902-1978
- St. Francis Home, Fond du Lac, 1978-2018
- Nazareth Heights, Fond du Lac, 1965-1998
- Nazareth Court and Nazareth Center, Fond du Lac, 1998-present
- Villa Rosa and Villa Loretto, Mt. Calvary, Wisconsin, 2015-2018

I'd like to switch now to CSA's health care ministries. This is a list of health care institutions that were either founded by CSA, or CSA assumed responsibility for at some point. But don't worry, I'm not going to go through the histories of all these institutions. Instead, I'm going to tell CSA's health care story through the works of some of its sisters.

But first, you might be wondering why a bunch of teaching sisters suddenly decided to get into health care. So, I'll quickly tell you the story of how St. Agnes Hospital got started.

# St. Agnes Hospital



MINUTES OF MEETING OF BOARD OF DIRECTRESSES  
January 25, 1895.

1895 The Board of Directresses of the Congregation of Saint Agnes held a special meeting in the Convent of Saint Agnes, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin on January 25, 1895. The meeting was called to order and presided over by Mother M. Agnes, President of the Corporation. The Secretary of the Corporation, Sister M. Seraphine, acted as Secretary of the Meeting.

On motion duly made and seconded, the following resolution was unanimously adopted:

WHEREAS, The Doctors and the citizens of Fond du Lac petitioned the Sisters of the Congregation of Saint Agnes to build a Hospital for the care of the sick in the city of Fond du Lac and vicinity, and

WHEREAS, It appears to the Board of Directresses of the Congregation of Saint Agnes of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin that the erection of a Hospital and its management by the Sisters would be a work of charity and humanity:

THEREFORE, The Board of Directresses of this Corporation shall build a Hospital east of Saint Agnes Convent, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, for the care of the sick, regardless of religious denominations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the new Hospital be called "SAINT AGNES HOSPITAL" in honor of our patron, Saint Agnes, and that Fifty-five Thousand Dollars (\$55,000.00) be appropriated for the building of the Hospital, which sum is to be obtained by borrowing from reliable sources.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That ground for the new Hospital be broken in May 1895.

There being no further business before the meeting, a motion was made to adjourn.

Sister M. Seraphine,  
Secretary.

Mother M. Agnes,  
President.

.....

The actual cost of the Hospital Building was \$47,985.00.

Since the mid-1880s, civic leaders had been asking Mother Agnes to open up a hospital in town. She knew she had neither the personnel nor the resources for such an undertaking, so each time she declined. Meanwhile, other organizations tried to open hospitals and failed. After the Episcopalians' attempt fizzled in 1894, leaders again visited Mother Agnes. This time she told them that if the Fond du Lac community would provide appropriate support, the sisters would seriously consider it. A short time later, an organization called the Fond du Lac Business Man's Association promised they could secure \$55,000 in loans for the project.

In January 1895, the CSA Board of Directresses determined that since the doctors and citizens of Fond du Lac had petitioned them, it would be an act of charity and humanity to move forward with building a hospital. When some businessmen complained that the city didn't need a hospital because people could die at home, Mother Agnes replied, "Oh, we hope to cure people in our hospital, not kill them."

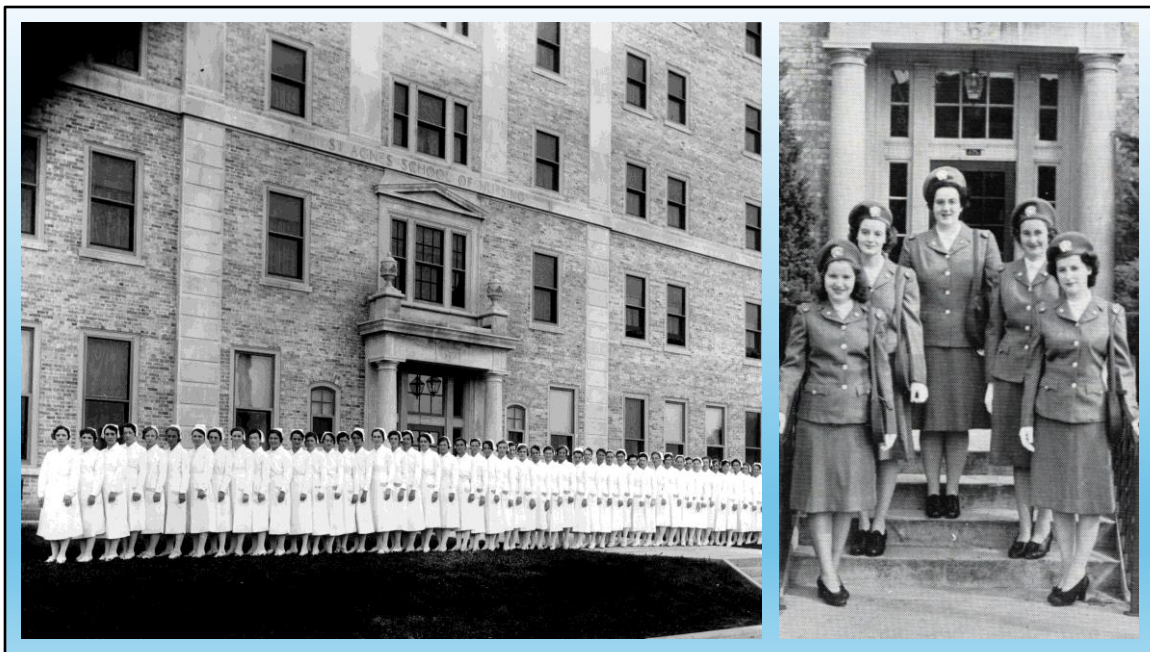
So that was CSA's entry into health care. And now, on to some of our sisters' accomplishments.

## Sister Digna Desch (1897-1979)

- Director St. Agnes Hospital School of Nursing, 1922-1944, 1947-1951
- Director, St. Anthony Hospital School of Nursing, 1951-1956
- Instructor, Marian College, 1958-1970

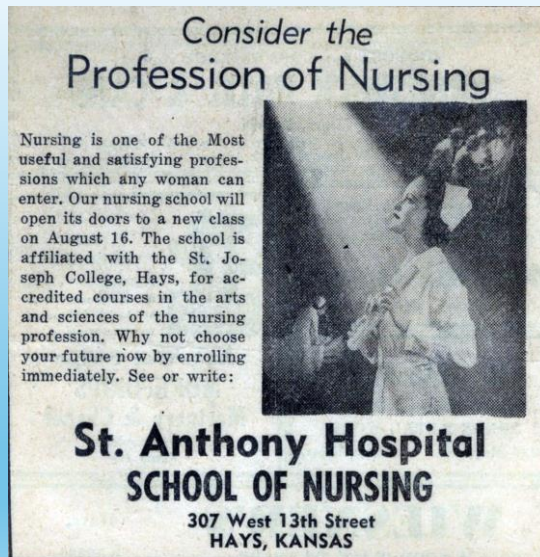


One day in 1922, Sister Digna Desch was told not to report for work at the hospital the next day because the day after that, she would be taking over as the Director of St. Agnes Hospital School of Nursing. The School of Nursing had been established in 1910, after CSA opened a second hospital in Hays, Kansas, the year before, and the congregation needed a training program to staff their hospitals. In 1917, they began accepting lay students. Sister Digna was told it would only be for a year, but we all know how that usually goes.



During her 26 years as director, Sister Digna was responsible for the construction of the School of Nursing building in 1931, and for the school receiving full accreditation in 1940. It was one of the first nursing schools in the country to attain that status. She also instituted the US Nurse Cadet training program at the school during World War II, which graduated 240 cadet nurses with an accelerated curriculum.





In 1951, CSA asked Sister Digna to establish St. Anthony Hospital School of Nursing in Hays. Afterwards, she returned to Fond du Lac to teach nursing and sociology at Marian College for the remainder of her active career.

## Sister Blandine Eisele (1895-1981)

- Introduced Alcoholics Anonymous to St. Clare Hospital, 1940s
- Administrator, St. Anthony Hospital, 1957-1962
- Blandine House treatment center in Fond du Lac and AA chapters in Iowa, Kansas, and Wisconsin named in her honor



At a hospital conference in the early 1940s, Sister Blandine Eisele noticed a sign for an AA meeting. Not knowing what AA was, she went in and was fascinated by what the people said. She brought back what she learned to St. Clare Hospital in Monroe, Wisconsin, and started working with alcoholics. She was met with resistance from doctors, hospital administrators, and even her fellow sisters, who did not understand that alcoholism was a disease. She persevered, holding strong to the belief that there's no disgrace in being an alcoholic, but there is disgrace in not doing anything about it. She slowly began to win over her critics and St. Clare became nationally known for its alcohol treatment program.





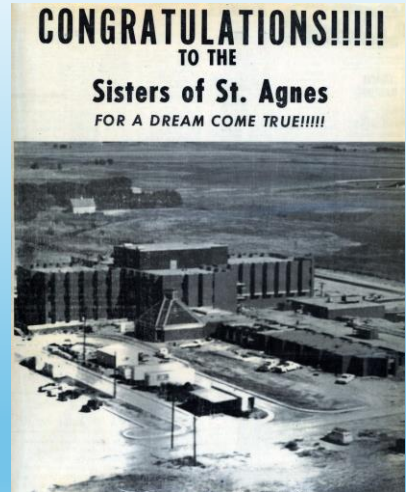
She spent five years as the administrator of St. Anthony Hospital in Hays, bringing her knowledge there, and returned to Fond du Lac in 1962, as a nationally recognized figure in alcohol treatment.

## Sister Irene Kohne (1920-2014)

- Clinical Instructor and Surgical and ER Supervisor, St. Agnes Hospital, 1944-1962
- Administrator, St. Anthony Hospital, 1966-1973
- Administrator, St. Francis Home, 1977-2003



Sister Irene Kohne spent eighteen years as a clinical instructor and supervisor at St. Agnes Hospital before moving into the managerial ranks. She was appointed administrator of St. Anthony Hospital just as the planning of a new state-of-the-art facility was getting underway.



She oversaw the purchase of the land, and the design, construction, and move to the new building. Then she was given a new challenge in 1977, when CSA decided their home for the aged, ...

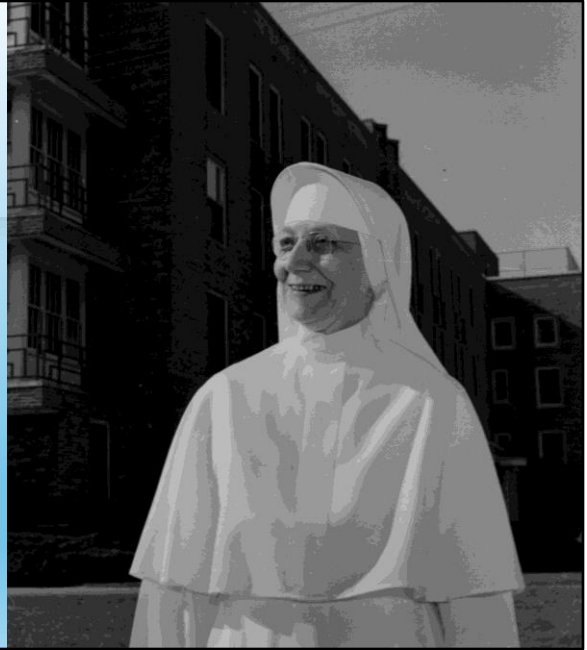


... Henry Boyle Catholic Home for the Aged, could not keep up with the community need for elder care, so they decided to start fresh and build a new facility that came to be known as St. Francis Home. Sister Irene directed the transition from Boyle Home to St. Francis Home.



## Sister Wilfreda Wagner (1907-1996)

- Administrator, St. Agnes Hospital, 1954-1963
- Administrator, St. Clare Hospital, 1963-1984
- Hospice Volunteer, 1984-1989



Sister Wilfreda Wagner spent thirty years at St. Agnes Hospital, the last nine as administrator, taking over in 1954, just as CSA began its largest construction project to date, ...





... adding an eight-story tower with more operating rooms, waiting rooms, and labs. In this picture you can see the CSA motherhouse at the top, the renovated hospital in the center, and the School of Nursing in the foreground. Then in 1963, she arrived at St. Clare Hospital, which she described as “practically bursting.” Sister Susan Stucki, a nurse at St. Clare, recalls, “St. Clare was so busy at that time we routinely had patients in the hall with screens at the head and the foot of the beds. I can remember typing being done for the lab and for x-ray on the stair landings. They literally kept a table with a typewriter on it.” Under the direction of Sister Wilfreda, the hospital went through a major two-phase renovation project in the early 1970s to expand capacity by 150 beds and remodel other areas of the hospital.

Sisters Mary Agreda Touchett (1921-2008) and Anne Jude Van Lanen (1933- )

- Sister Mary Agreda
  - Director, SASN, 1951-1964
  - Head of Nursing Division, Marian College, 1964-1979
- Sister Anne Jude
  - Missionary nurse in Nicaragua, 1960s-1970s, 1990s
  - General Councilor, 1973-1977
- Founders, Hospice Hope, 1980



Sister Mary Agreda Touchett spent most of her career educating the next generation of nurses, turning Marian College's Division of Nursing into one of the best programs in the country. Sister Anne Jude Van Lanen spent many years providing health care to the Miskito and Mayangna people in Nicaragua. Sister Anne Jude was troubled by the way the deaths of some of her family had been poorly managed in hospitals, compared to her experiences with death in Nicaragua. In 1977, she talked it over with her friend and mentor, Sister Mary Agreda. Sister Mary Agreda had recently read something about hospice and after some study, Sister Anne Jude asked the General Superior if she could explore starting a hospice with Sister Mary Agreda and the



third woman in this picture, Peg Cerny, a lay nurse. After three years of jumping through all the regulatory hoops, they accepted their first hospice patient in 1980.



Agnesian HealthCare expands hospice services



What was unique about their program, was that they visited people in their homes when most hospices in the state at that time kept patients in the hospital. Twenty years later, Hospice Home of Hope was established on land adjacent to the current CSA motherhouse. Our sisters continue to volunteer there.

## Sister Mary Mollison (1946-2017)

- Director of Nursing, St. Clare Hospital, 1970-1977
- VP Nursing, St. Anthony Hospital, 1977-1982
- Corporate Director for Sponsorship, 1982-1993
- General Superior, 1993-2001
- Founded Agnesian HealthCare
- Interim President, Marian University, 2005-2006, 2009-2010



By the 1980s, independent hospitals throughout the country were finding it necessary to collaborate to combat skyrocketing costs. In her roles as Corporate Director for Sponsorship, General Vicar of the congregation, and General Superior, Sister Mary Mollison was in the middle of multiple mergers involving CSA's hospitals.



## St. Anthony, Hadley officials plan merger

By MERRY HAYES

Officials at St. Anthony Hospital and Hadley Regional Medical Center today announced plans to merge the hospitals in the hope of improving health care and preventing future financial problems.

"I think it's going to be a great thing for Hays and northwest Kansas," said Tom Toepfer, a member of the planning task force at St. Anthony, 22th Canterbury.

Hospital officials said they plan to spend the next six months studying the business, structural and legal aspects of a merger.

Although the merger is only a proposal, officials are optimistic it will become a reality.

"This is going to go and we feel great about it," said Norman Jeter, chairman of the planning task force at Hadley, 201 E. Seventh.

Jeter and Toepfer cited high costs of providing quality health care as a major reason for consolidation. They said skyrocketing equipment costs and a decrease in Medicare reimbursements have made it more expensive to operate.

"Given the types of technology we have to buy and the services we have to provide, it's expensive," said Sister Mary Mallon, corporate director of institutions for the Sisters of St. Agnes, the religious order that owns St. Anthony.

But officials insisted that neither hospital is in financial straits.

"Neither hospital is losing money," Jeter said. "Both are in the black and both are in good financial condition."

Toepfer said the hospitals can provide better, less expensive health care if they combine their resources and efforts.

"It's simpler for the two of us to work together rather than in opposition," he said.

A merger could eliminate duplicate services, decrease costs to patients and even bring in new services, officials said.

"We're ecstatic about the possibilities of what we can do," Jeter said.

He said patients would benefit from each hospital's specialties, such as Hadley's magnetic resonance imaging and its psychiatric and rehabilitation centers and St. Anthony's radiation therapy department.

Officials said the time to consolidate is now, while both hospitals are financially strong.

"We have no immediate problems," Jeter said. "But when you look down the road five, eight, 10 years, we can see problems."

Officials did not know how a merger would affect jobs because they have not reached that stage in the proposal.

"We don't know how that's going to work out," Toepfer said.

They also have not discussed what the new entity would be called.

"We haven't gotten into detail on anything yet," Jeter said.

The hospitals began discussing a merger in depth about a year ago, but they first broached the subject in 30 years ago, Jeter said.

"The times weren't right. The feeling wasn't right. The community wasn't ready for it," Jeter said.

Toepfer said he does not expect public opposition to the merger because the community would benefit from it.

"If the community knows why we're going about this, they will be very supportive," he said. "We're trying to do something that will preserve the foundation of health care in Hays and northwest Kansas."

■ Histories of the hospitals and physicians' comments. Page 2.

## Merger of hospital, clinic boost for city

TIMES EDITORIAL

The news that St. Clare Hospital and The Monroe Clinic will join forces comes as no real surprise. The only surprise is that the merger didn't come much sooner.

Officials announced Tuesday that the two institutions will merge and move the clinic operations from the downtown area to the hospital location. A spring ground-breaking is planned to begin construction on the new facility, with a 12- to 18-month completion deadline.

Eliminating duplicating services, providing a modern, efficient environment and equipment, and pooling resources and talents is a logical step for both hospital and clinic. The move goes a long way toward ensuring that Monroe-area residents will continue to have access to medical facilities that offer health care equal to or better than any other community in the country.

It offers other benefits as well. Over the years, people from all over the state line area, some from as far away as Chicago, have come to Monroe because of the clinic's reputation for high-quality medical care. Those patients, and the thousands of

others from closer to home who visit the clinic and hospital, also eat in our restaurants, shop in our stores, sleep in our motels and buy their gas and oil in our service stations. Their patronage provides a major economic contribution to Monroe, and, in so doing, goes a long way toward keeping taxes down for John Q. Public.

There are the more than 1,000 men and women who are employed at the clinic and hospital. Almost all of them live in Monroe or the surrounding communities, and it is here that they live and work, spend their income and pay their taxes. They, too, are a vital economic force here.

Finally, the merger includes a modern environment and advanced technological know-how that is just what the doctor ordered for doctor-recruitment programs.

By consolidating the two facilities, the historically renowned medical community here is destined to not only survive, but grow and prosper — and the community will grow and prosper too.

She helped negotiate the transfer of sponsorship of Waupun Memorial Hospital from the School Sisters of St. Francis to CSA. Then realizing the time was right for St. Clare Hospital and its longtime partner, Monroe Clinic, to consolidate their practices, she coordinated St. Clare's purchase of the Clinic, although the new entity would take the Monroe Clinic moniker. In Hays, Kansas, discussions of a merger between St. Anthony's and Hadley Regional Medical Center, a Methodist hospital, had been on-going since the 1960s. In 1991, Sister Mary helped to finally push it over the finish line to create Hays Medical Center.



**THE LINK**

Newsletter for Employees, Volunteers & Medical Staff of Agnesian HealthCare • January 28, 1999

### Local CSA healthcare ministries become 'Agnesian HealthCare'

Agnesian HealthCare has recently expanded to include more than just St. Agnes Hospital and the Fond du Lac Regional Clinic.

Effective January 1, 1999, Agnesian HealthCare became the corporate umbrella organization for all five of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Agnes (CSA) healthcare ministries: St. Agnes Hospital, Fond du Lac Regional Clinic, Waupun Memorial Hospital, St. Francis Home and Consultants Laboratory of Wisconsin.

The project to integrate all five CSA health facilities - during the past two years known as "Healthcare 2000" - was explained during employee forums at all facilities during the week of January 10 and to the media at a news conference on January 13.

"The integration will provide our patients with their essential needs throughout their lives and the most advanced care and services available," explains Bob Kato, president and chief executive officer.

"As a fully integrated system we will also be positioned for a managed care environment as we contract our services with employers and insurance companies. We believe this integration gives us tremendous competitive strength and will help protect our founding Sister mission," he adds.

The following questions and answers were addressed during the employee forums and further explain the integration.

**Q. How will we be connected?**  
A. Each entity has built strong name recognition within their respective community and strong customer loyalty. We don't want to lose these fundamental strengths. There are ways to integrate which preserve our strengths, like combining purchasing volumes and reducing redundant legal fees.

**Q. How will this integration affect me?**  
A. It really is impossible to know how each and every employee will be affected. In all our discussions leading up to the integration, we have taken our employees' best interests into consideration. After all, it's the employees who have made the system what it already is - a leading healthcare provider in the region.

There's no denying that the integration will bring some changes, at this time those exact changes are unknown. But it's important to remember that with change comes opportunities. We are confident that this integration is the right decision for the people we serve, our employees and our future as a strong healthcare delivery system.

**Q. Will my benefits change?**  
A. Employee benefits will remain the same, but we have already joined the St. Agnes Hospital, Fond du Lac Regional Clinic and Waupun Memorial Hospital employee health plans. In doing so, we were able to increase employee benefits and gain \$10,000 in savings at the same time.

**Q. How will the medical staff members be affected?**  
A. Medical staffs at each organization will remain separate. They will retain their same responsibilities for quality, credentialing and other functions as delegated by their respective boards of directors.

**Q. What will happen in each organization's foundations or charitable contributions?**  
A. Charitable contributions will be kept within those organizations where the donations were made. Existing foundation boards will continue their current functions.

**Q. What is our overall goal for the new Agnesian HealthCare?**  
A. Our goal is to become the strongest - caring, technological, financial - healthcare system in the region. This will ensure our employees, our patients and our founding Sisters of our staying power well into our second century.

Sister Mary was a leader in the development of the Fond du Lac Regional Clinic in the mid-1980s, and in creating the partnership between the doctors of the Clinic and St. Agnes Hospital in 1993. This partnership ultimately led to the formation of Agnesian HealthCare in 1997. But perhaps her greatest accomplishment was promoting lay leadership among CSA's institutions and guiding those leaders to integrate the mission of the church into daily operations as sisters began withdrawing from their traditional ministries.





So what do we make of all this? CSA is only one of the hundreds of religious congregations that stepped up to educate the children of this country and establish hundreds of hospitals, schools, and colleges when their communities asked for help. The value of what they've done is immeasurable. The collections of women's religious congregations are a witness to the hard work and dedication of the sisters who, as the CSA mission statement puts it, "participate in the mission of Christ by joyful service in the Church."













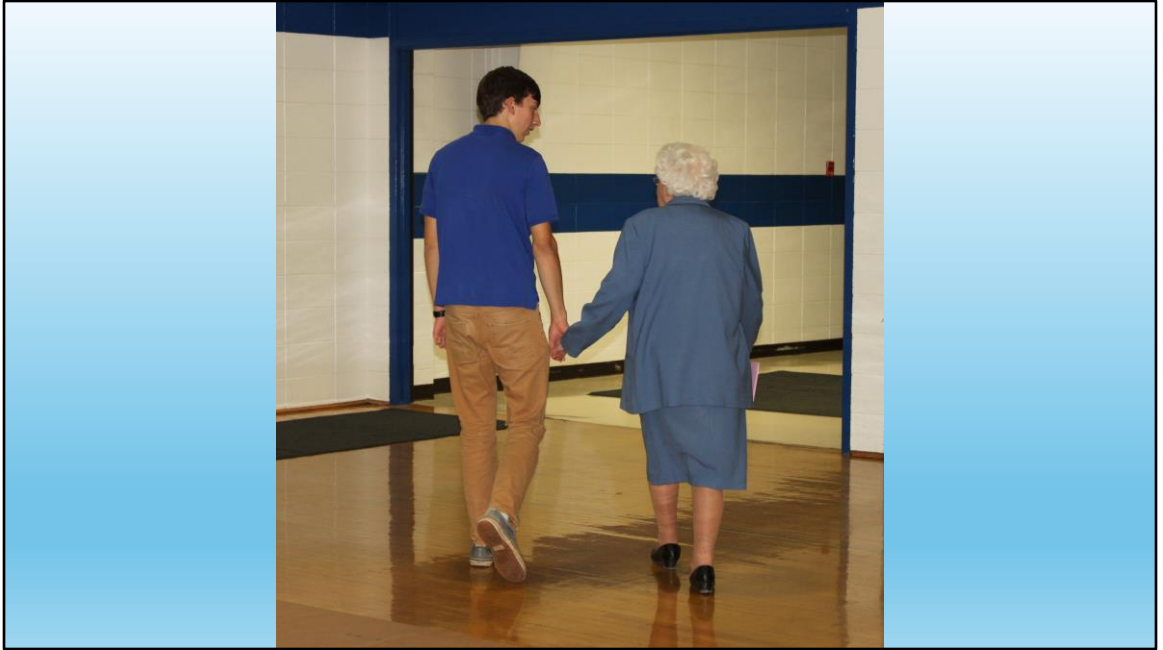






























# Thank you!

[jlukomski@csasisters.org](mailto:jlukomski@csasisters.org)