Linda Schelbitzki Pickle

German and Swiss Nuns in Nineteenth-Century Missouri and Southern Illinois: Some Comparisons with Secular Women*

In the mid- and late nineteenth century, German and Swiss nuns made several foundations in Missouri and southern Illinois. Their archives contain particularly rich material in the way of both personal and historical documents. While doing research on other immigrant women of this period, I began to wonder if these religious women had experienced the American frontier in ways similar to other immigrant women.[1] Other questions presented themselves readily. Could any seeming differences be attributed to their living within a community of women? Did they emigrate for the same reasons as secular women? Did they experience cultural alienation? Did their position within the body of the Catholic Church either cushion them from or expose them to pressure toward rapid assimilation? What changes did immigration make on their outer and inner lives? The present study can only partially answer these and related questions. Because of limits of time and geography, only readily available printed material and archival sources from motherhouses in the St. Louis area were consulted. Any conclusions must therefore be tentative. But perhaps they will also be provocative to other scholars who may be able to examine this topic more thoroughly.

There were two primary reasons for Catholic nuns to emigrate from German-speaking lands in the nineteenth century. The first was their traditional missionary role within the Church. The second was political pressure, stemming from developments in Europe, particularly within the newly-formed German *Reich* in the early 1870s, that made emigration a matter of expediency as well as choice in many cases. Both reasons were at work for nuns who emigrated to Missouri and southern Illinois.[2] Let us look first at the more traditional instances of missionary emigration.

Because of heavy German settlement, St. Louis, southern Illinois, and Missouri in general were areas that particularly concerned German

Catholic prelates interested in keeping immigrants in the Church by recruiting priests and nuns for German-language parishes and schools.[3] Vicars General Joseph Melcher and (after 1868) Henry Muehlsiepen were in charge of the German elements of the St. Louis archdiocese under Archbishop Peter Kenrick from the 1840s until the early twentieth century. They brought several groups of German nuns to this diocese, most notably the Ursuline Sisters of St. Louis (later Crystal City) in 1848 and the Sisters of the Adoration of the Most Precious Blood of O'Fallon in 1875. But they were also concerned with helping other groups, like the Sisters of St. Mary, establish themselves in the diocese, and with providing German-speaking nuns from various orders as teachers in German parishes. Missionary priests in Illinois and Missouri were also instrumental in calling congregations of nuns to their part of the frontier. The initial establishment of the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in Nodaway County, Missouri, was due to the missionary zeal of a monastic community: the Benedictine fathers from Engelberg Monastery in Switzerland. Sometimes enterprising parish priests succeeded in bringing German nuns to their parochial schools.[4] It was due to both a recruiting trip of Bishop Peter Juncker of Alton, Illinois, in 1869 and the wishes of second-generation German parishioners at Piopolis, Illinois, that the Adorers of the Blood of Christ emigrated in 1870.[5] Some missionary sisters also expressed an interest in such work before male clergy approached them. Two examples are Mother Magdalen Stehlin of Oedenburg Cloister in Hungary and Mother Gertrude Leupi of Maria Rickenbach Convent in Switzerland. We will examine the significance of these two exceptional women later.

The second reason for going to the United States, which caused a particularly large number of German and Swiss nuns to emigrate in the 1870s, was political exigency. The *Kulturkampf* of the Bismarck regime sought to end what it regarded as foreign interference in the form of church influence in public education. The so-called May Laws of 1872 and 1873 prohibited members of religious communities from teaching in state schools and then ordered the closing of all parochial schools and even the dissolution of entire religious communities. No congregations were to accept new members. Many German nuns had to choose between leaving their monastic life or leaving the *Reich*. A similar mood of anti-clericalism was also prevalent in Switzerland in the same period. It was largely to prepare for the possible dissolution of Engelberg Monastery that Abbot Anselm Villiger sent two young priests to do missionary work and establish their Benedictine order in the American West (Coff 9). The Benedictine sisters of Maria Rickenbach, whose community Abbot Anselm had helped found and whose spiritual advisor he long remained, also wanted to establish in America a convent devoted to perpetual adoration of the eucharist to which members of their community might emigrate.

These, then, were the wider reasons behind the immigration of German and Swiss religious women to nineteenth-century Missouri and Illinois: missionary work and political pressure. But knowing that nuns made vows of obedience upon entering a convent, it is appropriate to

ask to what extent they, as individuals, could choose to emigrate. When one examines convent annals and community histories on this, it seems that in theory, at least, these religious women had a range of choice in the question of emigration that was wider than that of secular women who came (perhaps even unwillingly) as part of a family group and had no existing structure in Europe to which they could return if they became discouraged or homesick. Nuns could and did return to Europe. An example in Missouri was Sister Marianne Herker, one of the five nuns in Mother Odilia Berger's small group of Sister Servers of the Sacred Heart who came to Missouri in 1872. She returned to Germany in the spring of 1875, "finding the language barrier and the American customs too much of a burden because of her advanced age" (Henninger 12).

In order to ensure as much as possible that only the truly dedicated were sent, it was common practice for nuns to be asked to volunteer for missionary work in America. The response to such requests could be more than adequate. Thus the entire Maria Rickenbach Convent, with some sixty nuns, initially volunteered to go to America (Coff 9). There are indications, however, that such enthusiasm was sometimes influenced by hierarchical pressure. After the little colony of Benedictine nuns had been established in Maryville, Missouri, in late 1874, Mother Anselma Felber wrote letter after letter to Maria Rickenbach, pleading for sisters to be sent to help in the mission, with almost no results. This was, it seems, partly due to a change in the Swiss sisters' attitudes. On February 21, 1876, Father Adelhelm Odermatt of Maryville wrote to Mother Gertrude Leupi: "Was mich gänzlichst erstaunt hat, war die in Ihrem letzten Brief enthaltene Nachricht, es kommen . . . keine Europäer-Töchter."[6] But there evidently were other reasons as well. Sending sisters to America meant a sacrifice to the mother convent, and so a dragging of feet, or even preferential arbitrariness, was sometimes evident. There is an example of this in the Benedictine sisters' history. Within weeks of her arrival in Missouri, Mother Anselma began asking Mother Gertrude to send her a certain Sister Ottilia, who already knew some English and was an experienced teacher. Intermittently during the next few years she asked for this sister to be sent, even after Mother Gertrude wrote that Sister Ottilia was not a suitable candidate for missionary work (letter of Father Adelhelm, 13 Feb. 1875). Yet when Mother Gertrude herself came to Missouri in 1880, Sister Ottilia was among the seven nuns who came with her (Conception Convent daybook entry, 11 Oct. 1880). With such manipulations of power and influence, one wonders how much choice Sister Ottilia was really allowed to exercise in this matter.

Regardless of how free the initial decision to do missionary work in America was, most indications are that it was considered immutable. Mother Anselma was profoundly unhappy in Missouri because of the discord in her little group, the immense workload she and her sisters struggled with, and her own inability to learn English. After six years of missionary work, she wrote poignantly to the new mother superior in Maria Rickenbach after learning that Mother Gertrude was coming to Maryville:

> Es träumt mir viel von Maria Rickenbach, oft muß ich nach Europa zurückkehren, aber immer senden Sie mich wieder nach Amerika. Es ist nur ein Traum, daß es erfüllt wird gewiß nicht, denn ich bin nicht des Reisegeldes wert. Bin hier in Amerika ganz zufrieden und habe keinen anderen Wunsch als erkennen und erfüllen den Willen Gottes, denn sein Wille ist meine Heiligung. (13 Oct. 1880)

This passage reveals the conflict between a desire to return to the homeland and a sense of duty to the wishes of the community and to God's will, as that community had determined it. Mother Anselma also touched here on another reason why religious communities might not readily have sent sisters back to their mother convent after a sojourn in America. It was a costly business to send missionaries abroad, and usually the trip was financed by the dowries of the sisters sent. Once those had been spent for the trip and for initial expenses of the new community, there was little left. In this respect, religious women were in much the same position as other immigrant women: that is, they were subject to financial imperatives. Although in theory they may have been able to return to Europe, for all practical purposes they probably were not.

Financial considerations may have been one of the main reasons that none of the Missouri Benedictine nuns returned to Switzerland, even when their difficulty in adjusting was quite obvious. One of the original five, Sister Agnes Dalie, had problems wherever she was in America. She first moved between Conception and Maryville, then went to the daughter foundations in Yankton, South Dakota, Gervais, Oregon, and Jonesboro, Arkansas. Abbot Frowin Conrad of the Conception Monastery, the spiritual advisor of the American sisters, wrote on April 20, 1887, with an almost audible sigh: "Sister Agnes seems out of place everywhere" (*Early Chron. Hist.: Relationship* 141). But were there perhaps other more personal reasons as well that Sister Agnes was not sent back to Switzerland? Might she not have been welcome there? Indeed, had she (and other "problematic" immigrant nuns) been chosen for an American mission in order to rid the mother convent of a liability? We will probably never know. Mother Anselma Felber evidently suspected something of the sort to have happened in the case of the group she led, for Father Adelhelm of Maryville wrote on August 10, 1875, that she had expressed such concerns to him.

Against a background of political tension, religious women no doubt had fewer choices about either emigrating from or returning to Europe. Thus the first group of Adorers of the Blood of Christ came to Piopolis, Illinois, voluntarily in 1870, but the remaining sisters in the Gurtweil, Baden, convent had much less choice in the matter after the state dissolved their congregation in May of 1873.[7] The American superior Augusta Volk "faßte den Entschluß, nach Deutschland zu reisen und den Schwestern Muth einzuflößen, nach Amerika zu kommen, da sie ihnen volle Sicherheit des Bestehens und ein weites Arbeitsfeld garantieren konnte" ("Chronicles, O'Fallon" 39-40). Forty-eight of them came with Mother Augusta in the summer of that year. The dual impetus behind this group emigration is clear in the chronicler's

explanation: political safety and missionary labor. With such motivations, religious orders of women sometimes showed unusual initiative in the decision to emigrate. One example was the small group of Sister Servers of the Sacred Heart, who came to be known as the Sisters of St. Mary in St. Louis. The difficult situation in their homeland moved these women to initiate contact with American acquaintances in the hope of finding a new sphere for their work (Henninger 6).

The reasons for emigration and for remaining in America discussed thus far are not much different from those that motivated other German immigrants of the same time period: a desire for betterment of the group, often combined with a need to escape from difficult situations in the homeland. For most immigrants, the financial good of the family was foremost. For these religious women, the propagation of the faith and, in some instances, the very continuation of their community were at stake. Although there is little extant personal information about the individual motivations for emigrating of any German or Swiss women, there were no doubt many shadings of reasons for them and for members of religious communities to volunteer to leave their homeland. We gain a few hints of these motives from the essentially impersonal chronicles and histories they left. A wish to serve the needs of Catholic German immigrants was commonly the outward motivation. The nuns did not openly acknowledge that such altruistic motivation could also be individually fulfilling, but this may have played a role in some women's decision to emigrate. The letters of the Landshut Ursuline sisters to their mother superior Augustina Weinzierl during the first fourteen months after their arrival in St. Louis in 1849 offer insights into such personal aspects. Most of their thoughts about self-fulfillment are, to be sure, couched in terms of submission and self-sacrifice. On July 26, 1849, for example, Sister Franziska Magold wrote: "Ich kann Ihnen nur kindlich danken, daß Sie mich nach Amerika sandten, denn hier ist wirklich der Ort, wo man sich etwas für den Himmel verdienen kann" ("Letters to Landshut" 61). Such self-effacement was the accepted mode of expression of religious women, but it did not preclude the desire for spiritual self-fulfillment within prescribed boundaries of activity.

In the case of two of the Missouri founding mothers, however, it seems that missionary work also afforded an opportunity to fulfill more purely individualistic ambitions. Magdalen Stehlin of the Ursulines and Gertrude Leupi of the Benedictines had both evinced an enthusiasm for missionary work before male clergy approached them to take part in such ("Souvenir" 5; Dirig). Once they were in America, they demonstrated a great deal of enterprise in the founding of new communities. Another Missouri founder, Mother Odilia Berger of the Sisters of St. Mary, was active in many philanthropic endeavors in the few years given her to work in America. The needs of the growing St. Louis community caused her to expand the work and the size of her group at a rate which probably would have been impossible in the Old World. The American careers of these three women warrant a closer look, for they illustrate what ambitious immigrant women might attain in "the land of opportunity."

Very few of Mother Magdalen Stehlin's personal documents are extant, but her actions speak fairly clearly. It is not known how close her ties remained to her mother convent in Oedenburg, Hungary, as records there have been lost.[8] But she seems to have been very good at exploiting the relationship she established to the Ursuline convent in Landshut, Bavaria, which she and her small group visited during their departure trip from Europe in 1848. A postulant from that convent joined the four Oedenburg nuns at that time, and the following year the first of several groups of Landshut missionary sisters also made the trip to St. Louis. Indeed, the St. Louis Ursulines were, except for Mother Magdalen and her three Austro-Hungarian companions, a Landshut foundation. Mother Magdalen filled her letters to Landshut with requests for more sisters, for supplies for the group's embroidery work, and for direct financial aid ("Letters to Landshut" 65-66). She got all of them, even though the Bavarian court chaplain Ferdinand Mueller, director of King Ludwig's missionary foundation, had warned the Landshut nuns: "Man wolle auf der Hut sein vor ungarischen Klosterfrauen" ("Chronik"). She also remained firmly in control of the St. Louis foundation, no matter how the Landshut nuns outnumbered her, even after she had left the area. In 1854 Mother Magdalen received a letter from a Father Metzel of East Morrisania, New York, requesting that her group make a foundation there to take charge of German children orphaned during emigration. The St. Louis community agreed to this, and in 1855 Mother Magdalen left St. Louis with three sisters and, the Landshut chronicle records, with the best of the things that had been sent from Landshut. In the course of that summer she sent for eight more of the St. Louis congregation: "jene Schwestern, die ihr am tauglichsten schienen" ("Chronik"). In the meantime, she had left Mother Aloisia Winkler, who had headed the first group of Landshut immigrants in 1849, as nominal superior of the halved group in St. Louis. However, Mother Aloisia had no authority of her own, but had to send Mother Magdalen a daily report and carry out the latter's written commands. This was all done without the permission of Bishop Kenrick, but he soon caught wind of it from the New York bishop, investigated, and forbade Mother Magdalen from returning to St. Louis ("Chronik"; Miller 84-85). This did not stop her from continuing to make new foundations in Providence, Rhode Island, and Ontonogan, Michigan, and it was not until the latter convent came to the attention of church authorities for its "disorderly" nature that the bishop of New York reported all of this to the apostolic chair. The Michigan convent was dissolved by Pope Pius X, who also ordered Mother Magdalen to return to Oedenburg, Hungary, in 1862. She died there in 1868. Mother Magdalen must have been a troublesome person to the church hierarchy, for she evidently set little store by proper procedure. And she must have been a very strong and perhaps not always a very pleasant individual, more intent on asserting her will within her immediate community than in gaining affection. Ursuline histories from St. Louis and New York are notably lacking in expressions of loving remembrance of her, which is unusual in publications of this type. Nevertheless, the

few years of her work in America resulted in Ursuline convents on the East Coast as well as in the St. Louis area that have survived until the present day (Miller 85).

Mother Gertrude Leupi seems to have had the same sort of drive to make foundations as Mother Magdalen. As mother superior of the Maria Rickenbach Convent, she sent out a delegation headed by her assistant, Mother Anselma Felber. This woman, as almost *de facto* next in line to succeed Mother Gertrude as superior, would seem to have been a natural choice for this important mission. But as events soon made clear, she was quite unfitted for the role of strong, independent, adaptable thinker and organizer that was needed in the young American community. Surely Mother Gertrude knew this about her. Why then was she sent to America? In view of subsequent events, one might suspect that Mother Gertrude, being indeed well aware of Mother Anselma's weakness as an administrator, chose her first as her next-in-command at Maria Rickenbach and then to head the American mission in order to avoid having to deal with a strong-minded subordinate and thus to stay firmly in control herself, even across the ocean.[9] An indication of Mother Gertrude's strong-willed character is that she and the Maria Rickenbach chaplain were at loggerheads for several years. By the late 1870s the resulting divisiveness had gotten to such a point that Abbot Anselm convinced her it was in the best interests of the convent if she were to resign her position as superior for a few years (*Early Chron. Hist.: Biogr. Notes* 105-106, 109). Almost three years before stepping down as superior, she began to inquire about the possibility of making a new foundation in the Milwaukee archdiocese (letter of January 23, 1878, from Father Adelhelm). As soon as she had officially resigned in the fall of 1880, she left for Maryville with seven other Maria Rickenbach sisters and set herself up there as superior and rival to Mother Anselma at Conception. On January 19, 1881, she wrote to Abbot Anselm in Switzerland, saying that she had been contacted by Bishop Marty in Yankton to establish a mission school for Indian children there. She urged him to come to America also: ''. . . dann hätten Sie ein *großes* Feld der Arbeit vor Ihnen.'' Her own enthusiasm for this new wide-open field of activities is clear here, as also when she wrote the new mother superior in Maria Rickenbach on June 1, 1881, and exclaimed: ''Hier ist das Land der Zukunft . . . Ach, könnten Sie einmal das herrliche Amerika sehen! So prächtiges Land, so fruchtbar, so lieblich, so schön! . . . dieser große Weinberg des Herrn!'' However, a tinge of personal proprietorship, rather than simple service in God's work, colors her declaration to the same correspondent that: ''Wenn es in der Schweiz so schlimm zugeht, so hoffe ich nach und nach all meine lieben vorigen Schäflein nachzuziehen'' (24 Jan. 1881). This was not to be. Rather, for reasons that are not entirely clear (Mother Gertrude was often moved by mystical experiences to take various actions), she left Yankton in 1891 and returned to Switzerland, but not to Maria Rickenbach. Instead, she bought her ancestral home in Wikon and founded Marienburg, an institute for girls which eventually developed into a convent that was amalgamated with Maria Rickenbach twenty-three years after her death

in 1904. In Switzerland she remained committed to working for the American mission in Yankton. Even before returning to Europe she had established a recruiting house in Einsiedeln to solicit and train candidates for the American mission (Dirig).

An active missionary life less tinged with self-aggrandizement is that of Mother Odilia Berger, the founder of the Sisters of St. Mary.[10] At the age of thirty-two she had joined the poor order of the Sisters of St. Francis. Her particular interests, stemming in large part from her own background, soon became evident when she and another sister went to Paris to help run a home for German working girls there (ca. 1866-70). In 1867 she participated in the foundation of the Sister Servers of the Sacred Heart, a small group dedicated to an active life of service in society. During the Franco-Prussian War the sisters had to return to Germany, where they nursed soldiers and poor families in Elberfeld (1870-72). In America, in addition to the nursing duties they took upon themselves immediately, Mother Odilia founded Lowell in North St. Louis, a refuge home for unwed mothers, which the group ran for three years (1874-77). From 1876 until 1882, they also operated St. Joseph's Orphanage. And in 1877 they opened St. Mary's Infirmary. By the time of her premature death in October 1880 of peritonitis, Mother Odilia had certainly left her mark in the field of social welfare in St. Louis. She also left a thriving community, the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Mary (founded 1879), that has continued her heritage of public service. These three Missouri pioneers, Mother Odilia, Mother Gertrude and Mother Magdalen, are examples of those women, whether religious or secular, to whom the American frontier afforded opportunities for activity that fulfilled their desire for individual self-realization while promoting the good of the community with which they were associated.

Certainly the desire to serve the church, and thus also fulfill oneself spiritually, was foremost among the reasons for emigration for most religious. But as with other immigrants, ties within the community could also be important, both for the decision to emigrate and for success in making an American foundation. Great affection is evident in the letters written to Mother Odilia Berger by the Sisters of St. Mary she sent to Memphis, Tennessee, and Canton, Mississippi, in 1878, during the yellow fever epidemic in those cities. Sister Josepha in Canton signed her letters "Greeting and kissing you in the Sacred Heart of Jesus," and Sister Stanislaus in Memphis, believing she was on her deathbed, gained great consolation in being permitted to write her Reverend Mother a note.[11] The bonds that developed among pioneer sisters who had shared so much could become particularly strong. The chronicles of the St. Louis Ursulines offer an example. We are told that the death of Mother Isabella Weinzierl in July 1850, followed by the sudden illness of Sister Marianna von Pann in early September, proved such a shock to the "already nerve-racked frame" of Sister Augustina Schragl that after an illness of only a week, she succumbed to death on September 17 (Duffy 20). The latter two nuns had been among the original group of four who came to St. Louis in 1848. Both had taken their vows at Oedenburg Cloister in Hungary. The chronicler seems to

believe that there was an emotional connection between Sister Augustina's affection for Sister Marianna and the former's death. The importance of female friendships to women on the American frontier has been well-documented, and examples like the above indicate that much the same sort of relationships probably existed among Catholic immigrant nuns in Missouri and elsewhere.

There may have been a difference, however, between attitudes toward female friendship in secular and in religious groups. In the latter, individual friendships could become a potential danger to the cohesion of the entire community, especially during the difficult early stages of adjustment. The correspondence of the Benedictine sisters in Nodaway County to their Swiss convent documents how divisive such affections, and the antipathies which easily developed parallel to them, could be. After only a year and a half in Maryville, the little group of five separated into two, with the preeminence of the motherhouse at Conception contested by the nuns in Maryville. The ensuing realignments of allegiance were very damaging to the peace of all concerned for years to come. Mother Anselma wrote on August 10, 1876, that Sister Adela Eugster was too much "geneigt zu besonderen Freundschaften" and "läßt sich nichts sagen." The Benedictine Abbot Frowin Conrad in Conception summarized monastic expectations of communal behavior when he commented on the problems among the sisters: "If a community is to prosper, all have to be of one heart and soul with the leader. The smallest disharmony, if nourished, engenders factions which generally lead to the death of all spiritual life" (9 June 1880, *Early Chron. Hist.: Biogr. Notes* 109).

There was no doubt a good deal of pressure on all missionary religious to remain loyal members of the community with which they had emigrated and with which they shared common goals. A sense of betrayal speaks in the following excerpt from the annals of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ in Ruma, Illinois, in reference to a sister who had accompanied Mother Clementine Zerr on a recruiting trip in the spring of 1876: "Schwester Charlotte Zeller war so unedel in Deutschland zurückzubleiben, nachdem ihr Ehrw[ürdige] Mutter wegen Familienangelegenheiten noch einen längeren Aufenthalt dort gestattet hatte" ("Entstehung" 55). But there is also no question that personal, individual likes and dislikes played a role in the lives of these immigrants. The manner in which the members of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ split between the groups in Ruma, Illinois, and O'Fallon, Missouri, in 1875 probably had as much to do with personal alliances between individuals as with opinions about the foundation's affiliation with Rome ("Chronicles, O'Fallon" 55-57; "Entstehung" 47-54).[12] As late as 1880 Mother Clementine Zerr's diary records that Sister Mary Stoer had returned to Ruma from O'Fallon, "da sie in O'Fallon wegen Verfolgung nicht sein könne" (entry of April 22). Whether or not Sister Mary had truly been "persecuted" in O'Fallon, she evidently felt she had been. The fact that Mother Clementine recorded this opinion may also be an indication of her own willingness to lend credence to such personal interpretations.

Such evidence of conflict and changing allegiance within communities of German and Swiss nuns shows that bonds of nationality and culture, and a shared sense of purpose and of cohesion vis-à-vis the outer world, did not necessarily guarantee peaceful or even lasting relationships in the New World. (Of course, this was true of other groups in America as well, as the often virulent contents of the nineteenth-century German press testify.) Nevertheless, these communities of women usually tried to maintain and even enhance their national heritage and with it their group identity. They did this not only by continuing to use German in both their spiritual and personal lives, but also by encouraging and even actively recruiting new members for their groups in Europe. For some of them, like the Ursulines from Landshut and the Benedictines from Maria Rickenbach, it was a matter of course to appeal to the European convents from which they had come. Groups that no longer had a mother convent in Europe, like the Adorers of the Blood of Christ in Ruma and the Sisters of the Adoration of the Most Precious Blood in O'Fallon, or the Sisters of St. Mary in St. Louis, also did active recruiting in Europe, often at the same time that they were on tours to solicit funds for their missionary work. Indeed, all of the communities discussed here did general recruiting of this sort, some of them well into the twentieth century. The Sisters of St. Mary made five such trips between 1893 and 1905 that added 138 members to the community (Stueber, March 1978). The ''German connection'' persisted strongly enough among the Benedictine sisters at Conception that in 1922 and 1923 Sister M. Bernard Willmann was successful in bringing back over forty candidates, most of whom professed vows with her order. This was a variation of the well-known phenomenon of chain immigration. Here, members of a family-like community of women drew other members after them, or were successful in appealing to women of shared beliefs and purpose, as well as of shared cultural heritage, to join them.

There were also more traditional instances of chain immigration, as an example from the Ruma foundation shows. In 1877, Wilhelm Franz Meier, the brother of Sister Anna, came to work as a hired hand for the sisters (he worked free for the first two years). In 1891 he became the tenant of a farm they bought adjoining their convent. Six years before this, in 1885, his widowed mother, Mrs. Anton Meier, and youngest sister, who subsequently became Sister Frances, had joined him and Sister Anna in Illinois. Mrs. Meier managed the house and farm that the congregation bought in the fall of 1885. In the same year that her mother and sister joined her in Illinois, Sister Anna Meier made a four-week trip to Germany, returning in November with two postulants and a younger brother, Otto, who five years later celebrated his first mass in the convent chapel (''Entstehung'' 96, 104, 106). Family as well as religious ties elicited this particular example of chain immigration.

Much of what has been discussed thus far indicates that the history and experiences of immigrant religious women and secular women in nineteenth-century America were similar. In one area, however, their experiences were probably almost identical. Many nuns faced the same

physical hardships of an untamed frontier as did other women of the same time and geographic areas. Religious communities who went to remote rural areas were particularly vulnerable to this sort of hardship. Sizeable portions of the chronicles of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ and Sisters of the Adoration of the Most Precious Blood record the primitive conditions with which the sisters had to contend, and the hard labor necessary to keep starvation from the convent door in the early years at Piopolis ("Entstehung" 55-92; "Chronicles, O'Fallon" 10-16). As women without men, they did all of the heavy labor themselves, from clearing and leveling land for a garden to cutting wood for the winter ("Entstehung" 73-79). Even after they had bought more land for income and had hired help, some of the sisters evidently still worked outside; it was recorded that in October 1906 Sister Regine Muehlhaupt died of a stroke while working in the fields ("Entstehung" 130). The letters of the Benedictines in Nodaway County also bear witness to the simple physical hardness of life in those early years. Sister Scholastica von Matt wrote on July 17, 1876, a month after her arrival in Maryville: "Ich bin am Abend so müde, daß ich zum Beten weder stehen noch knien mag." Father Adelhelm reported on March 5, 1877, that Sister Augustina Kuendig, a teacher with household duties in the rectory who was also in charge of the church choir and the priests' two horses, was "hart geprüft—Versuchungen zum Selbstmord, zum Davonlaufen, so daß sie es kaum aushalten mag." Mother Anselma described on February 15, 1875, how the snow blew into the rectory attic in which she and the first sisters lived: ". . . and last time the whole hall was full of snow." She added: "In America that means nothing" (*Early Chron. Hist.: Biog. Notes* 21).

In the cities, too, the early immigrant sisters did not have an easy time of it. Mother Odilia Berger and her nuns had to beg for food for themselves and their patients; sisters left to nurse poor people sometimes suffered greatly from hunger themselves, even to the point, in one case, at least, of hallucinating about Mother Odilia appearing with a basket of food (Henninger 7-8). One of the Landshut Ursuline immigrants, Mother Angela Oberndorfer, wrote to her parents in October 1849 of the poor condition of the house Bishop Kenrick had placed them in; when it rained, they had to move the furniture from the walls and put containers to catch the water that poured in at the corners of the building ("Letters to Landshut" 79). The letters of these sisters contain many references to the poor living conditions in their first dwelling and requests for all sorts of equipment from the Landshut motherhouse, ranging from proper kitchen pots to fancy embroidery supplies.

There was an emotional as well as a physical cost to emigration that religious women experienced as other women did. This began with the wrenching farewell from the homeland. Even if nuns were dedicated to their missionary purpose, it cost them a great deal to say good-by to loved ones and familiar surroundings. The O'Fallon Chronicle states, for example: "Schwer war der Abschied wohl, da die Stunde der Trennung herannahte, der Trennung von der geliebten Oberin und Mitschwestern, dem trauten, stillen Kloster, von Eltern und dem

schönen Vaterlande, um alles gegen eine Zukunft zu vertauschen, die das Gegenteil verhieß'' (1-2). The Ruma chronicler recorded the touching scene at the railway station in Lörrach when the teaching sisters left. A great throng of children and parents saw them off; children threw flowers through the windows and kept the train from departing for a time by hanging on to the sides of the coaches (''Entstehung'' 39-41).

It seems to have been common practice for emigrating nuns to make a final visit home to bid family members farewell. But in the records of these Missouri and Illinois communities, at least, there are very few references to painful leave-taking from blood relatives, which is a very common motif in the writings of other immigrants. Religious women had left the world behind, and with it, their families, when they entered the convent, and so it was probably considered inappropriate, if not sinful, to allow family ties to interfere with what was considered primarily a spiritual decision to emigrate. Yet there are a few hints that such ties could play a role in both emigration and one's adaptation to America. The above-mentioned Sister Charlotte Zeller of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ, who remained in Germany after having been granted an extended stay ''because of family needs,'' is an example. On December 31, 1876, Benedictine Sister Bernardine Wachter wrote Mother Gertrude Leupi that her mother was well again, having reconciled herself to her daughter's going to America. Mother Aloisia Winkler wrote to Mother Augustina in Landshut, telling her to have candidate Theresa Hubauer buy with her dowry things that were unobtainable in St. Louis, if the latter got permission from her parents and decided to come to America (''Letters to Landshut'' 128). Several of the Landshut Ursuline sisters asked Mother Augustina to inform their parents of their safe arrival (27, 58), and Sister Angela Oberndorfer wrote herself to reassure them: ''Haben Sie keine Sorge für mich, liebe Eltern! Es reut mich noch kein [sic] Schritt. Ich bin innerlich erquikt [sic] und erfreut'' (81). In the sources used for this study, missionary women did not give voice to the pain of separation from family members to any great extent. Family correspondence might reveal more of this, if it could be found.[13]

Instead, the primary stated cause of pain at separation was that from the mother convent. The archives of the Benedictine sisters of Maria Rickenbach contain a detailed account of the departure of their emigrating group.[14] The five sisters selected to leave on August 17, 1874, were allowed to make a final visit to their families, with the stipulation that they had to be back ''daheim'' by July 29 ''und sich nachher ruhig im Gebet und Sammlung auf die Reise vorbereiten.'' On that day Abbot Anselm arrived to supervise what was packed for them (four sets of good clothing, ample underwear, and teaching material). He also announced that Mother Anselma Felber had been designated superior of the group and that she and the four others ''[waren bestimmt] als Missionärinnen, d.h. einstweilen zur Übernahme und Leitung von Mädchen-Schulen, und sodann, wenn möglich, zur Gründung eines Klosters der ewigen Anbetung in Nord-Amerika.'' In the intervening days many tears were shed: ''Wohl verursachte den Scheidenden der Abschied von der geliebten Heimat großen Schmerz.'' Sister Adela

Eugster in particular wept at every opportunity, although she proclaimed: "Ich überfließe von innerem Trost und Wonne, jedes Opfer für Jesus zu bringen!" After breakfast on the morning of August 17, the five departing sisters knelt and with tears asked pardon of all their sisters and begged for their prayers: "Ganz ergriffen knieten auch alle andern Schwestern ebenfalls nieder und baten unter Schluchzen ihrerseits um dasselbe." Then all went to mass, and afterwards the five missionaries visited the convent cemetery for the last time. At noon, all the sisters and the girls in the boarding school assembled in the chapel for a final blessing on the travelers. As the five began to walk away from the convent, almost all were weeping. Mother Anselma turned one last time and embraced Mother Gertrude, exclaiming: "O, meine liebe Mutter!" Sister Adela somehow was left behind in the midst of the other sisters: "Alle stürzten nochmals auf diese einzige zu, bis sie sich mit wahrer Kraftanstrengung den Armen ihrer geliebten Mitschwestern entwand." Those departing and those left behind waved their handkerchiefs to each other until the travelers disappeared from view. The loving detail with which this account was written indicates the pain which such departures brought to those left behind as well as to those who emigrated.

Emotional and psychological stress continued for those who went to the new land. German and Swiss nuns expressed much the same sort of cultural alienation as other immigrants in regard to adjustments to their new surroundings. New York, where most of the groups under discussion here disembarked, was the first shock. The Landshut Ursulines commented on it in particular. Mother Isabella Weinzierl wrote on January 4, 1849: ". . . alles dünkte uns Lächerlich und Närrisch" ("Letters to Landshut" 7). Mother Angela Oberndorfer described the dirty streets, the brightly colored omnibuses ("wie Ostereier"), and the strangely painted houses ("meistens blutrot, und blau mit grünen Läden") that were covered with all sorts of signs and posters. She went on to write that the priest who escorted them in the city "versicherte uns zu unserm größten Schauer, daß es keine Sünde auf der Welt gibt, die nicht hier des Tages mehrmals begangen wurde." This led her to call New York "ein zweites Sodoma und Gomohra [sic], ja viel ärger" (17-18). Sister Franziska Magold commented on the propensity of New Yorkers to set fire to their property in order to collect insurance (26-27). Here this sister sounded a theme that reverberates throughout the comments about America of these religious women, and indeed of many nineteenth-century German immigrants: the materialism of American society. Mother Isabella also commented in her reaction to New York: "So ist der Mensch ohne Religion. Hier strebt alles nur auf eines, das ist Gewinn" (18). Such impressions of American society persisted after religious women left New York. In St. Louis in 1849, Ursuline Mother Angela explained the lack of holidays in comparison to Germany with the American desire not to interrupt business (81). Benedictine Mother Anselma wrote twenty-six years later, on May 30, 1875: "Der recht [sic] Amerikaner lebt nur einmal, sein Gott ist das Geld." Mother Anselma also found American goods and housing far below German standards.

On October 12, 1874, she wrote: "Arm sind die Strümpfe; es scheint, sie sind aus Baumwolle und Papier," and on January 17, 1875: "Mir scheint Amerika aus Flitter zu bestehen." She even went so far as to connect such slipshod workmanship with immorality, and wrote on May 30, 1875: "Das ist aber hier ganz gebräuchlich, in den Kleidern und im Essen der größte Luxus, hingegen im Haus und in den Hausgeräthen die größte Armut. In der Sittlichkeit, glaube ich, gleicht es viel Südamerika. Etwas besser wird es sein." Mother Isabella, commenting on the absence of railway signal-men, asserted: ". . . überhaupt ist die Sorglosigkeit daheim bei den Amerikanern" ("Letters to Landshut" 123-124). Such reactions to American culture and society could have been expressed by either German religious or secular women of similar backgrounds.

The same could be said of other contrasts between America and Europe that the nuns in Missouri and southern Illinois noted. Differences in the landscape were a source of homesickness and alienation. The chronicles of the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood and Adorers of the Blood of Christ state:

> Die neue Welt hatte schon von vorn herein keinen angenehmen Eindruck auf [die Schwestern] gemacht in ihrem winterlichen Zustande: sie schaute kalt, schmutzig, kahl [aus]. Hütten mit Löchern statt der Fenster sahen sie auch auf dieser Tour, wo überhaupt die ersten unangenehmen Eindrücke immer wieder geweckt wurden, denn man kam immer tiefer in Busch und kahle Prairie hinein. . . . Zur Zeit der Ankunft [in Illinois] sah die Umgebung kahl und unfruchtbar aus; der Wald, der in geringer Entfernung sich zeigte, gab dem Ganzen ein fast wildes, primitives Aussehen. ("Chronicles, O'Fallon" 7, 10) . . . die ersten Eindrucke sind gewöhnlich die tiefsten, und das verlassene Vaterland Baden deuchte uns, im Vergleich mit den unkultivierten Gegenden—ein blühender Garten. ("Entstehung" 43)

The Swiss Benedictine sisters in Maryville missed the mountainous landscape of their homeland. Mother Anselma wrote on September 12, 1874, of the newly-arrived group's homesickness: "Am Abend täte es gut, auf den lieben Bergen zu weilen!" In another letter she thanked Mother Gertrude for sending them a picture of the longed-for mountains at home (12 July 1876). Although another of the Benedictines, Sister Beatrice Renggli, wrote in praise of the rolling hill country around Maryville, she also blamed the winds that plagued the sisters on the openness of the countryside (Renggli 266). Mother Anselma mentioned that the shabby rectory they shared at first with the parish priests was rocked by the wind (29 May 1875), on one occasion to the extent that they had to move to a neighbor's house for the night.

Adjusting to other aspects of their Missouri environment was also a problem for these immigrants. Missouri summers were the same burden to them as to many other newly-arrived North Europeans. Mother Isabella Weinzierl wrote that in the intense heat of July 1849 she changed her perspiration-drenched habit three times a day, and easily could change twice that often ("Letters to Landshut" 54). The Landshut letters contain several references to a miserable heat rash that also

afflicted the sisters in that first summer of 1849. Mother Isabella wrote jokingly that Mother Aloisia was "zinoberrot [sic] gefärbt" and looked "ganz amerikanisch" (70-71). The earliest pioneer Adorers of the Blood of Christ became ill the first summer in Illinois:

> Hätten sie selbst besser gewußt und eingesehen, Vorsicht zu gebrauchen bei der Aclimatisierung, so möchte es wohl nicht schlimm geworden sein; aber sie glaubten, trotz Abmahnen der Leute, fähig zu sein, so wie in der alten Heimath das Feld bebauen und in der Hitze Roggen schneiden zu können, thaten es und bald hatten fast alle Fieber, die stärkeren Schwestern so heftig, daß sie für Zeiten von Sinnen kamen und fast nicht ruhig zu halten waren. ("Chronicles, O'Fallon" 14-15)

The lack of shade around their house, or even of curtains at the windows, caused the building to heat up so much during the day that the sisters sometimes had to spend the night on the porch ("Chronicles, O'Fallon" 15). The climatic extremes were also hard to get used to, as Sister Beatrice noted in Maryville (Renggli 266) and Mother Isabella in St. Louis ("Letters to Landshut" 108). The Landshut Ursulines also wrote about the violent thunderstorms in St. Louis, one of them, according to Mother Isabella, lasting three days ("Letters to Landshut" 80, 109).

Aside from the climate, there were other bothersome aspects of life in America. The letters of the Ursuline sisters are quite informative about this. Mother Angela wrote in October 1849 that mosquitoes were a plague in St. Louis and added that although she had seen some birds, she had not heard any of them singing and missed this ("Letters to Landshut," 80). Since we know that the Ursulines lived in what was still a very rural section of the city (they even let their cow run free with others in the neighborhood [61]), it is unlikely that birds were not singing around the convent. Yet it seemed that way to this cloistered immigrant woman. Both Mother Angela and Mother Ottilia also wrote that they missed the sound of church bells in those early years (63, 80). The Ursulines did hear something else: the sound of fire bells and fire wagons. The number of fires in America had astonished them from the time of their stay in New York. Sister Isabella took to counting them: on February 22, 1850, there had been forty since November 1, and at the end of the month she wrote that there had been twenty-one of them in February alone (94, 109). The racial make-up of American society could also be a cause for concern to immigrating sisters. The first group of Adorers of the Blood of Christ were told by a German priest in whose Indiana parish they sought lodging that Piopolis was such an insignificant place that it was not in the church register of parishes. This he took as an indication that "gewiß gehörten viele von den dortigen Ansiedlern zur schwarzen Rasse" ("Chronicles, O'Fallon" 5). The account makes evident the sisters' relief on seeing no blacks among the farmers who came in their wagons to Shawneetown to take them on the last leg of the trip (6).[15]

A specific problem that German and Swiss religious women also shared with other immigrant women was adjusting to American

foodstuffs and cooking conditions. The Adorers of the Blood of Christ "hatten mit Nahrungssorgen weniger zu kämpfen, doch waren sie noch zu deutsch und wußten mit diesen Sachen nicht nach erprobtem Landesgebrauche umzugehen, so daß ihnen manches schlecht wurde" ("Chronicles, O'Fallon" 10-11). The chronicles of the Ruma Adorers list a typical day's diet in the early, hard times, which included a morning snack of parched corn for teachers and pupils:

> Mit Lust wurden die harten Körner von den jungen Amerikanerinnen zerkaut-allein den Deutschen wollte es, trotz sie nicht weniger als Feinschmecker waren, nicht munden. Nur der Gehorsam konnte die eine, vielleicht auch andere bewegen, einige Körnchen zu nehmen. ("Entstehung" 20)

The Ursulines managed to cook German dishes that reminded Vicar General Melcher of his mother's, but Sister Franziska Magold, in charge of the kitchen, had to learn how to deal with American stoves and to do without many familiar cooking utensils to accomplish this ("Letters to Landshut" 60, 105). What made such adjustments even more difficult for the Maryville Benedictine sisters was that none of the first five sent were experienced cooks. So the lack of familiarity with American culinary conditions intensified the frustration of learning to cook. Their letters often referred to the problems and resentments that resulted. Until just before the second small contingent left Switzerland Mother Anselma begged Mother Gertrude to send a sister already accomplished in culinary skills, writing on April 5, 1876: "Hoffe noch, daß statt Scholastika Ida kommen wird. Glaube nicht, daß Erstere für die Küche ist und in die Schule paßt sie ebenfalls nicht."

In an attempt to diminish the cultural shock that awaited them, religious immigrant women, like other women, sometimes brought along items from the Old World which were dear to them. These were not so much personal items, for that sort of "self-indulgence" was not encouraged in nineteenth-century convent life in Europe or America. Instead, there were things like the picture of the mountains around Maria Rickenbach that Mother Gertrude sent the Maryville Benedictines. The 1849 Ursuline immigrants brought along a piano (to enable the sisters to give the very popular music lessons that helped them make ends meet and pay their debts) and a monstrance and other chapel furnishings from the Landshut convent (Miller 81). Perhaps the most impressive example of this kind of "cultural cushion" in Missouri is the convent chapel altar from Gurtweil that the Adorers of the Most Precious Blood brought to St. Louis in 1875. It may still be seen in a side chapel of the O'Fallon convent church.

The most important area of difference between the immigrant experience of these nuns and that of other women pertains to their religious life. Frontier conditions caused hardships in this regard that secular women largely did not share. The Adorers in Piopolis saw four priests come and go in the first months of residence and sometimes had to go for weeks without the spiritual sustenance of the sacraments. Most European nuns were used to having resident priests to minister to them

and convent chapels to worship in. Indeed, the contemporary church definition of *bona fide* female religious orders included strict rules of enclosure, whereby nuns were forbidden to leave the confines of their convent except with the permission of the local bishop (for nuns with simple vows) or the pope (for nuns with solemn vows). Such orders typically had their own chapels or had direct access to the church from their convent. Except in the exercising of their professional duties, they also could communicate with persons outside the community only through a grill. In America, communities with strict rules of enclosure rejoiced when they finally were able to keep the eucharist in their own convent, no matter how primitive the chapel (Miller 82; 19 Nov. 1877 letter of Mother Anselma). The simple lack of enough priests in the new land and of appropriate physical accommodations in keeping with the rules of their order were difficult adjustments for the pioneer nuns.

The demands that the American church put on these women also caused conflicts within their spiritual lives. Orders whose prime purpose had been contemplative were now forced by the needs of a frontier church and the lack of financial support to lead active and financially remunerative lives. Mother Anselma wrote that she was resisting attempts on the part of the local bishop and the missionary priests to take on more schools, as the work itself and studying in preparation took too much time from what she thought of as the primary work of her Benedictine community, the perpetual adoration of the eucharist (May 1877). Inclined to a contemplative rather than to an active life (she had excelled in needlework, not teaching, at Maria Rickenbach), Mother Anselma was unable to reconcile the needs of the missionary church to those of the order whose rule she sought to maintain in the New World. She was not like Mother Clementine of the Ruma Adorers, who accommodated her own attraction for the interior life and contemplative prayer by occupying herself with spinning whenever possible (''Entstehung'' 88).

These cloistered, yet professionally active women had to make many such accommodations to American needs.[16] They often were pressured to change the sections of their rules prohibiting them from teaching boys, ''weil jedoch dies für Amerika unerläßlich ist,'' as the Piopolis Adorers discovered (''Chronicles, O'Fallon'' 11). Rules of enclosure had to be modified in areas where there was no separate convent, or where the convent was not close to the church or school. The Ursulines in St. Louis and the Benedictines in Maryville both experienced this. In 1872 Vicar General Muehlsiepen and Bishop Kenrick requested the Ursulines to change their strict enclosure rules in order to allow small groups of sisters to take over remote parochial schools during the school year (Miller 19). The Sisters of St. Mary began nursing victims of the current smallpox epidemic the day after their arrival in St. Louis on November 16, 1872, and at first refused remuneration in keeping with their vows of poverty. But they soon had to change their practices in this regard, for there was no framework of public charity into which they could integrate their work (Henninger 7-8). Teaching sisters had to modify

their curriculum and even learn new subjects: Mother Isabella worked on her musical skills in the Ursuline convent, for example. They also had to consider the expectations of their American pupils and the latters' parents, as when Mother Aloisia wrote on June 21, 1850, that the new Ursuline convent and school had to have a big lot, "weil die amerikanischen Kinder nicht eingesperrt werden wollen" ("Letters to Landshut" 130).

The most immediate difficulty for these women, most of whom came in constant contact with the American public through their work, was learning English. This was probably more of a problem for nuns than for many nineteenth-century German-speaking immigrant women who had little contact with Americans that might have required a firm mastery of English. Nuns shared the tendency of German speakers to retain language as part of their cultural heritage, and indeed saw this as part of their goal as missionaries. In 1850 the Ludwig-Missionsverein had given the Ursulines money for their new convent with the express purpose, penned at the end of the granting document by King Ludwig himself, that they were to accept only German-born postulants and give instruction only in German (*Souvenir* 12). But such restrictions were impractical, if not impossible, as everyone soon realized, and concessions to American realities had to be made. The Missouri Benedictines and the Sisters of St. Mary and of the Adoration of the Most Precious Blood managed to retain the use of German within the community, even for liturgical use, until World War I.[17] For example, although fifty-two percent of the Sisters of St. Mary were American-born in 1917, community prayers were said in German until that time (Stueber, July 1978). Teaching sisters sometimes split their schools into groups of German-speakers and English-speakers, as did the Ursulines (Miller 157). Some groups, like the Benedictines, had to give up the idea of founding German schools and instead could teach German only as a foreign language (Renggli 268). The sisters employed various means to learn English themselves. The Ursulines first sent two sisters to live with the Visitation nuns in St. Louis for six months and in 1852 sent two more to the Ursulines in New Orleans (Miller 81-83). The Maryville Benedictines had Sister Rose Castel from St. Ferdinand's Convent in Indiana with them from October 1874 until August 1876. The letters of Mother Anselma and others in this group testify to the burden the language problem could be for adult, professional immigrant women like them. But it is perhaps a measure of the tenacity with which such women clung to their heritage in spite of the outside pressure on them to assimilate that many did not become American citizens for a very long time.[18] The archives of the Sisters of St. Mary contain a clipping from the October 10, 1921, *St. Louis Star,* reporting that fifty-five nuns of that order were to be naturalized at a mass ceremony the next day. Similarly, Mother Beate Neukum in O'Fallon, who had immigrated in 1872, wrote her sister on January 25, 1928, that she now had her citizenship papers.

The immediately preceding comments indicate that German and Swiss religious women in Missouri and southern Illinois were both

cushioned from and exposed to rapid assimilation into American society and culture. Their role as missionaries necessitated their familiarity with and some accommodation to the language and cultural expectations of their new surroundings, but life within an enclosed community enabled them to preserve their mother tongue and native heritage for a very long time. Because of their professional commitments and public role, such women probably experienced more pressure toward assimilation in the early years than most other female immigrants, who were active primarily in the home. The material examined in this study indicates that the histories of immigrant religious and secular women in this part of nineteenth-century America show many similarities in regard to reasons for immigration, reactions to the American environment, and physical hardships encountered on the frontier.[19] The differences between the two groups primarily had to do with the communal spiritual life led by the nuns. Missionary work in America meant serious disruptions in the religious practice and regulations of many orders, whereas other immigrant women could continue their domestic and community lives in much the same manner as formerly. The demands of missionary work put great pressure on the relationships among the individuals in religious communities, and separation from mother convents sometimes contributed to a breakdown in the ties that bound groups, as the histories of the Maryville Benedictines, the Adorers of the Blood of Christ, and the Sisters of the Adoration of the Most Precious Blood illustrate. Similar strife or dissolution of the ties within immigrant families and communities no doubt occurred as well under the pressure of frontier change, but women's lives and roles were probably not altered so drastically by them.

By tradition and in fact, religious life in earlier centuries offered women a degree of independence and self-fulfillment that was difficult for secular women to attain. The accomplishments of women like Mother Magdalen Stehlin, Mother Odilia Berger, and Mother Gertrude Leupi show that the American missionary frontier offered opportunities for individual and group attainments that Europe (especially in the anti-clerical era of the late nineteenth century) no longer had. These religious women, and others of less prominence, fulfilled the promise of opportunity of the American frontier. Perhaps they were more successful in this than other immigrant women generally were. To be sure, this impression may be fostered by the essentially private nature of the accomplishments of most nineteenth-century immigrant women and by the paucity of personal documents by and historical sources about them. The relative richness of the sources having to do with German and Swiss religious women in Missouri and southern Illinois also aids in this impression. More work on such women in other areas of the United States is needed to either confirm or contradict the tentative conclusions of the present study.

Westminster College
Fulton, Missouri

Notes

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[1] See Linda S. Pickle, "Stereotypes and Reality: Nineteenth Century German Women in Missouri," *Missouri Historical Review* 79 (1985): 291-312.

[2] In this, as in many other respects, the history of nuns in Missouri and southern Illinois follows the patterns which Mary Ewens, OP, delineates in her wide-ranging and important dissertation on nineteenth-century nuns in America.

[3] St. Louis, with Milwaukee and Cincinnati, formed the so-called German triangle within Catholic jurisdiction in the West (Barry 44-85).

[4] The Sisters of Christian Charity first came to St. Louis in 1880 as the result of such a request (Wagener 24-25, 36).

[5] Piopolis, between McLeansboro and Dahlgren in Hamilton County, no longer exists. The original settlement the Adorers came to was called Belle Prairie until 1878, when the post office name was changed. Throughout this study, it is referred to as Piopolis.

[6] Xerox copies of all but a few of the original Benedictine historical documents cited here are in the convent archives. In those few cases, references are given to the three English translations published by the congregation and listed among the works and sources cited.

[7] I wish to thank Sister M. Pauline Grady, ASC, for allowing me to consult the final draft of her excellent history *Ruma: Home and Heritage* (Ruma, IL: Adorers of the Blood of Christ, 1984) while it was in the last stages of publication.

[8] Although the Oedenburg convent was in what is now Hungary, it seems to have been a very German community within the Austrian empire of that day.

[9] Mother Gertrude's large, bold script would seem to affirm the theory that handwriting is often a key to personality, while the small, regular style of Mother Anselma mirrors her character as her letters reveal it.

[10] Unfortunately, ecclesiastical authorities recommended that a recent biography of Mother Odilia by Sister Agnita Clare Day, SSM, not be circulated at this time. The above biographical information is found in Henninger.

[11] The originals of these "yellow fever letters" are no longer extant.

[12] The Ruma Adorers remained part of the Roman Union, and the O'Fallon sisters decided against joining it. The bishops in the respective dioceses also played a role in this that cannot be detailed here.

[13] The extant letters of Mother Beate Neukum to her mother and sister begin in 1891, nineteen years after her immigration. In response to her mother's expressed wish to see her, she wrote only that her vacation time was too short to allow it (Neukum, 22 August 1891).

[14] The following citations are from the "Aufzeichnungen über wohlehrwürden Frau Mutter Maria Anselma Felber . . ." This ts. contains excerpts from the Maria Rickenbach Convent chronicles. An English translation is found in *Letters from M. Anselma* (2-3).

[15] The history of the relationship of Germans in general and of Catholic sisters and other members of the Church hierarchy to blacks in Missouri and Illinois is worthy of a more detailed study than can be provided here.

[16] The extent to which a religious community was able or willing to make such accommodations was one of the most important factors in its success and longevity in America, as Ewens makes clear throughout her study.

[17] Ewens mentions this as being typical of German-language foundations in America (136).

[18] This may also have been because of personal and communal ties to the European motherhouse. Yet the O'Fallon Sisters of the Adoration of the Most Precious Blood and the Sisters of St. Mary were not associated with German motherhouses.

[19] The interaction of nuns with the male hierarchy of the church is similar in some ways, I think, to that of other women with the men in their lives. But this question is so complex that it merits a special study that would take into account Catholic church policy and practice of the time.

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