

A VERY SPECIAL CLASSROOM¹

by Rev. Joseph Stefanelli, S.M.

The first Marianist cemetery in the United States is located on the campus of what is now the University of Dayton. Father Leo Meyer, founder of the American Province, obtained permission from the township authorities to lay out a private cemetery at what was then known as the "Nazareth" convent. He chose a section of land south of the farmhouse and at the eastern end of the property. It was a secluded location and away from the incursion of vehicular or pedestrian traffic. Inaugurated on November 1, All Saints Day, 1854, it continued to receive the departed Marianists until December of 1960.

The original cemetery was a small rectangular plot of 75 by 80 feet. It was surrounded by a wooden picket fence with several cedar trees on each side along the fence line. With time, the area was considerably expanded, to the north and to the east. For half a century, wooden crosses were used to mark the gravesites. In 1907, the wooden crosses were replaced by headstones. The headstones in turn were sunk level with the ground in 1971, and now probably escape the notice of many of the passers-by. But the site is marked by a large granite slab on a granite base. On the slab, erected in 1980, is a plaque reading:

The usual classroom scene of many students and one teacher is here reversed as you, the reader of these lines, stand as a solitary student before a great number of teachers, predecessors of the Marianists now laboring at the University. Here they lie in peace, still expounding to those who listen, with lessons of truth and goodness -- and love of the Virgin Mary in whose service they lived and died.

May their memory inspire you as their lives inspired so many others.

Three other plaques, below the first one, contain the names of all those buried there, in the order in which their graves are located. Place of honor, with the only above-ground marker, and directly behind the granite slab, goes to little Mary Louisa Stuart. Born on

¹ The careful research behind this article was done by the late Bro. Donald Hebel, S.M., when he worked on campus and lived in the Alumni Hall Marianist Community at the University of Dayton.

February 25, 1848, she died four months and twenty days later. Daughter of John and Mary Stuart, owners of the Dewberry farm, she was originally buried in St. Henry's Cemetery (east of the present Dayton [Montgomery County] Fair Grounds). The Stuart family returned to Europe in 1850. Some twenty years later, when St. Henry's was discontinued as a cemetery and the property sold, the

remains of those buried there were transferred to Calvary Cemetery. However, Brother Maximin Zehler was able to obtain permission to re-bury the coffin of the little Stuart girl in the Marianist cemetery at Nazareth, for he considered her parents as outstanding benefactors of the Brothers.

He marked the spot with a small tombstone, surmounted by a smaller praying angel, and her memory has been preserved among us.

The first person to be buried in the cemetery in Dayton was an 18-year-old postulant from Sandusky, Ohio. Jacob Krupp died on Ash Wednesday, February 20, 1855. The last to be buried there was Brother Aloysius Kreipel, who died December 2, 1960, at the age of 77. In between,

not counting the Stuart baby, 305 other persons were buried there. Of these, 284 were Marianist religious. There were also five affiliates; eight other postulants; six novices, and two students.

The first professed religious to be interred in the cemetery was Brother Joseph Radinger. He died on January 19, 1861, at the age of 49. The first "professed-in-America" Brother to die was Louis Curiec. Curiec was born (March 15, 1825) in France, but professed his first vows as a Marianist in Dayton, August 21, 1850. He was the second person to profess vows as a Marianist in the United States (Brother Nicholas Bohn, who preceded him alphabetically, being the first).

Less than four years after his profession, Curiec was assigned (January, 1854) to the St. Joseph Orphan Asylum in downtown Cincinnati as a cook. He died there November 21, 1854, and was buried in St. Joseph's Cemetery, Price Hill, Cincinnati. Only around 1885 were his remains transferred to the cemetery in Dayton.

Neither of the first two Marianists to come to America is buried at the University. Father Leo Meyer left Dayton November 29, 1862, and stopped in Cleveland and New

York on his way back to France. He departed New York December 19, and arrived at Le Havre on New Year's Day, 1863. He spent his declining years at St. Remy, died there January 30, 1868, and was buried in the Brothers' cemetery there. An attempt was made by the American administration in 1909 to have his remains brought from France to Nazareth. However, the General Administration, taking into account the antipathetic political climate in France at the time, did not think the civil authorities would look favorably on such a proposal.

Father Meyer's companion, when he came to America in 1849, had been Brother Charles Schulz. He had joined the Brothers of Mary just two years earlier, at the age of 27. He left the Marianists in 1851 to become a Jesuit Brother. He served in a number of different posts and died August 6, 1907, at Marquette University, at the age of 87.

Of the second group of Marianist "pioneers," Brothers John Stinzi, Maximin Zehler, and Andrew Edel are buried at Nazareth. Brother Damien Litz was the last of the pioneers to die, and was buried in San Antonio.

Among the professed religious whose remains are presently on the U.D. campus there are 266 Brothers and 19 priests. The names include five who held the position of Provincial, either of the American Province or of the Cincinnati Province: John Reinbolt, Landelin Beck, George Meyer, Bernard O'Reilly, Lawrence Yeske.

The list also contains noted names of Marianist chroniclers or historians: John Garvin, Edward Knust, Edward Gorman, John Brueck, Herman Jaske, Thomas Mooney, Paul O'Brien, George Ruppel, William Wehrle, George Meyer, Charles Preisinger among others.

The five affiliates were: Francis Daeges (1845-1933); John Callanan (1846-1933); Francis Herner (1866-1940); and two former religious who returned as laymen to live and die in Marianist communities: Edward Orschell (1872-1939); and Nicholas Joerns (1851-1933).

