

What's in a Name?

Buildings at the College of Saint Benedict named after Sisters

by *Sister Owen Lindblad and Sister Miriam Ardolf*

Like the tiny seed it was, the College of Saint Benedict (CSB) took root on a patch of ground here in St. Joseph, Minnesota nearly 100 years ago. From one solid structure, buildings for the Catholic, Benedictine, cultural education of young women sprouted and spread with the "good air" and "sunshine" applied by the Sisters of Saint Benedict. Today, many of those early devoted Sisters' names mark the lintels of CSB's halls of higher learning.

There are 22 buildings named after Sisters from the monastery. Here is a complete listing. More information on the buildings is available at www.csbsju.edu/CSB-Archives



S. Dominica Borgerding - Borgerding West Apts.

Sister Dominica spent most of her religious life serving the academy in St. Joseph. She became well-known for the plays she directed which attracted hundreds of theatre goers, some as far away as Milwaukee. She began promoting the idea of a college in 1905 and was the first directress when the college opened in 1913. She is considered one of the foundresses of the college. Apartments in the West Apartments complex are named for her.



S. Irma Schumacher - Schumacher West Apts.

Aside from one year when she taught at Belle Plaine and for time away to study, Sister Irma was stationed in St. Joseph the whole of her active life. Her major studies at St. John's University and at The Catholic University were in German and Latin; Latin became her specialty. She was among the first faculty members for the College of Saint Benedict and is considered one of the foundresses. Apartments in the West Apartment complex are named for her.

S. Grace McDonald - McDonald East Apts.

Sister Grace's name suggests history to all who knew her. She was on the faculty when the College of Saint Benedict first opened and is considered one of the foundresses. She served as monastery archivist and wrote the centennial history of the Sisters of Saint Benedict in St. Joseph, Minn., *With Lamps Burning*. She was a charter member of the Minnesota Historical Society. Apartments in the East Apartments



complex are named for her.



S. Magna Werth - Werth East Apts.

Sister Magna taught the upper grades at Hastings, Minn., and St. Mary's High school in St. Cloud. Then she became a member of the academy staff and eventually on the college faculty where she taught physics and chemistry. Sister Magna was one of the first women to receive a PhD in physics from the University of Minnesota. She was a meticulous teacher and required students to make up lab sessions missed because of free days. A building in the East Apartments complex is named for her.



S. Alfreda Zierden - Zierden East Apts.

Sister Alfreda earned a teaching certificate at the St. Cloud Normal School and taught at a district school before entering Saint Benedict's Monastery. She received BA and MA degrees in German and taught German at the Academy and College. She was moderator for the sodality, was sacristan and served in the Bahamas as a guide to the Blessed Martin de Porres Sisters. She prepared and directed the ceremony for the Consecration of Sacred Heart Chapel. Apartments in the West Apartments complex are named for her.



S. Claire Lynch - Claire Lynch Hall

The first gym facility on campus was in the basement of St. Teresa Hall. In 1961, a new gym/physical education building was completed. Although the size of the new gymnasium met college standards, there was no room for spectators. In 1985, Claire Lynch Hall was completed as a new, larger gym, and the old gym became Murray Hall. It is part of the Haehn Campus Center (HCC) and home to the Blazers. Sister Claire Lynch has the unique history of having been a member of 3 Benedictine Pories. She made first vows at St. Benedict's Monastery in St. Joseph, MN, is a founding member of St. Bede Priory in Eau Claire, WI, and transferred her vows to St. Paul's Priory in 1956. Sister Claire served the College of St. Benedict as professor of history and academic dean. She admitted the first black students, something not appreciated by a group of alumnae. She succeeded in getting the College accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges in 1933. Proud of her Irish heritage, Sister Claire served as the monastery archivist for 15 years and published the history of the Benedictine foundation at Shakopee and St. Joseph's Orphanage in St. Paul. Sister Claire was passionate about studying and acquiring knowledge.

S. Incarnata Girgen -- Girgen West Apts.



Sister Incarnata was an eighth grade and high school teacher before coming to the College of Saint Benedict where she served as dean, assistant to the president, and professor of philosophy, history and psychology. Some of her teaching was on the Luxemburg, Europe, campus. She was a scholarly woman. Her doctoral dissertation was the study of the schools of the American Cassinese Benedictines in the U.S. She translated from German to English and wrote *Behind the Beginnings*, a study of the American Benedictine women. Apartments in the West Apartments are named for her.



M. Richarda Peters - Richarda Hall

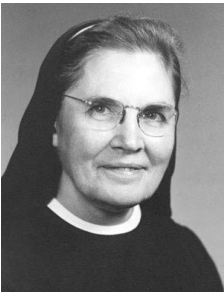
Richarda Hall and the Henrita Academic Building were among the first buildings to go up on the campus, but at the time, they served as dormitory and classrooms for Saint Benedict's High School. After the high school was closed in 1973, the college leased the buildings and renovated them for use as a residence for students and college faculty offices.

Richarda Hall was named for Mother Richarda Peters, OSB, who served as dean of residence and on the college faculty. In 1949, she was elected prioress of the monastery, which at that time included the administration of the college. Mother Richarda's womanly strength and wisdom showed widely during her 12 years of service to the total campus.

From Minneapolis, Mother Richarda graduated from CSB in 1927 with a BA in Mathematics. In 1933, she received her MA in Education from the University of Notre Dame, and in 1943, her PhD in Psychology from the Catholic University in Washington, D.C. Mother Richarda was not only well educated but she was very knowledgeable concerning human nature.



In 1961, Mother Richarda's former students presented a cherished tribute to her by establishing the Mother Richarda Peters Scholarship. This admired woman died in 1972.



M. Henrita Osendorf - Henrita Academic Building

At the same time Richarda Hall was built as a residence, another hall was built just north of it for classrooms for the high school. The building later, as mentioned above, was remodeled to hold the academic departments of the college. It was renamed the Henrita Academic Building (HAB) for another prioress, Mother Henrita Osendorf, OSB.

Mother Henrita was from nearby Richmond, Minn., and was a CSB graduate in 1936. She did some teaching and then went on to earn an MALS degree (Library Science) from the University of Michigan. She served as the CSB librarian from 1938 to 1943.

Mother Henrita was appointed novice director at the monastery from 1943 to 1960. She was another sensible and wise woman whose leadership led her through two six-year terms as prioress of the community. These were the challenging years of Vatican II renewal. She also served on the College Board of Trustees, and, in 1963, officiated at the laying of the cornerstone for the present auspicious Benedicta Arts Center (BAC).



Mother Henrita received the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters from Saint John's University in 1966. Again, in 1973, she received the College of Saint Benedict President's Medal, at which time the Henrita Academic Building was named. She was treasured for her wisdom, kindness and love.

S. Remberta Westkaemper - Westkaemper West Apts.

Sister Remberta taught in elementary schools in Wadena and Swan River.



Interest in nature and blessed with the gift of wonder, she developed her talents in the field of botany. She opened the Biology Department in the College of Saint Benedict in 1917 and taught there for over 50 years. From 1957-1961 she served as the first full-time president of the College of Saint Benedict. She collected and classified over 600 plants from Stearns County. In 1972 she was named Outstanding Teacher in America. A section of apartments in the West Apartments is named for her.



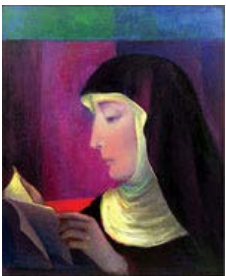
S. Mariella Gable - Gable West Apts.

English language and literature were Sister Mariella's specialties. She was particularly interested in what makes literature Catholic. She was well known for her lectures on Teilard de Chardin and on Dante and was an anthologist of short stories, writer of poetry, essays, and reviews. She was the author of the script for the College of Saint Benedict's pageant. Her name was included in several directories of women in education. Every year the Literary Arts Institute at the College awards the Mariella Gable Award for a book published by Graywolf Press. A section of the West Apartments is named for her.



S. Rogatia Sohler - Sohler West Apts.

Sister Rogatia earned degrees in organic and biochemistry and taught chemistry for 40 years at the College of Saint Benedict. She received several NSF grants for her study in nuclear energy. Retirement included semesters spent in Switzerland with Sister Margretta Nathe and her students. Her hobby was growing and using herbs and producing wines. A section of apartments in the West Apartments is named for her.



M. Benedicta Riepp - Benedicta Arts Center

The groundbreaking for the Benedicta Arts Center (BAC) was in 1961. It was first planned as an auditorium and small additional forum or theatre. However, with the encouragement of the architect and the vision of Mother Henrita and the monastery, a state-of-the-arts center resulted, home to the Art, Music and Theater departments. The members of the planning committee were Sister Mary Patrick Murray (chair), Sister Colman O'Connell from the theater department and Sister Firmin Escher from the music department. The building was completed in 1964.

The BAC is named for Mother Benedicta Riepp, the foundress of Benedictine women in America. M. Benedicta was born in Waal, West Germany in 1825. She entered the Convent of St. Walburg in Eichstätt, Bavaria. At age 27, she was one of three to volunteer for the mission to America to teach German immigrant children. Mother Benedicta came to S. Joseph in 1858. She died here among her sisters of tuberculosis and general poor health. She was only 37 years old. She is buried in our monastery cemetery.



S. Firmin Escher - Escher Auditorium



In 2003, the Benedicta Arts Center was renovated and the Petters auditorium was named. The auditorium was renamed the Escher Auditorium in 2009.

Sister Firmin Escher, OSB, was yet another strong visionary. She earned a BA in music in violin at the MacPhail School of Music, and a master of music degree, also in violin, from the Chicago Musical College. Her lifelong music ministry began at CSB in 1940 as a violin teacher. Her classes soon included the history of music, harmony, ear training and other subjects. Orchestra and choral groups flourished with her direction. She initiated the Campus Singers and produced a number of excellent operas. She was also a member of the

building committee for the construction of the BAC.

Sister Firmin was dean of the college from 1961 to 1972. With her leadership, a core curriculum was inaugurated; nursing became a degree program; study abroad programs were initiated. She helped coordinate the relationship with Saint John's University, and from 1971 to 1977, she served as Director of the Planning Program for the college. From 1977 to 1980, she was Dean of the Fine Arts.

What a treasure Sister Firmin was! She eventually lost most of her eyesight and resided at St. Scholastic Convent until her death in 2009. The monastery has her beloved 18th century violin and it is played occasionally in her honor.

S. Enid Smith - Smith West Apts.



Sister Enid attended the College of Saint Benedict before entering the Benedictine community. She taught high school for five years in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, got an M.A. at the University of Toronto, and a Ph.D at The Catholic University, both in philosophy. She taught philosophy at the college for over 30 years. She was Dean of Faculty for 10 years and named outstanding Educator of America in 1973. For 8 years she was President of the Federation of Saint Benedict. She is known for her sharp wit, deep thinking and championing the cause of women's rights, especially in the church. A section of apartments in the West Apartments is named for her.

S. Margretta Nathe - Margretta Hall



Sister Margretta is remembered for being an excellent teacher of the German language and for her association with students at the College of Saint Benedict. Sister Margretta was a prefect in the college residence and served as Dean of Residence from 1947-1953. She initiated the college's study abroad programs in Germany and led trips to Germany with students from 1972-1982. She was often called upon to translate letters, articles and books from German to English and English to German. She was an avid fan of the Blazer athletes. Margretta Hall, a residence hall, is named in honor of Sister Margretta Nathe.

S. Mary Patrick Murray - Murray Hall

Murray Hall is situated near the center of the college campus and now joins the Haehn Campus Center. Originally it stood alone and served as the college gymnasium and physical education center. That is, up until 1985 when the



building was remodeled into offices and classrooms in honor of Sister Mary Patrick Murray, OSB.

Sister Mary Patrick herself was a graduate of CSB in 1940. She was born in Minneapolis, came to the monastery to become a Sister, did some teaching, and then earned a Masters degree in Latin in 1951 from St. Louis University in Missouri. S. Mary Patrick taught Latin and business courses at CSB from 1941--1963. At this time, she also served as dean of students. Everyone loved Sister "MP." She brought a bright, open view of life and seemed to embrace everyone in her smile.

In 1975, Sister directed the Intergenerational Program at the college. She served as coordinator of the Henrita Academic Building from 1977-1984. She also initiated the Elderhostel Program. All of this demonstrates how her Benedictine hospitality shone out to the world.



S. Nora Luetmer - Luetmer East Apts.

During the 27 years of her professed life, Sister Nora served in leadership positions in the religious community and in the diocese. She taught mathematics and sciences at Saint Benedict's High School and at Cathedral High School in St. Cloud and was principal at Cathedral and St. Boniface in Cold Spring. She was Director of Research and Planning at the monastery and Chair of the Board of Trustees of the College of Saint Benedict. In recognition of her contributions to education, she was given the Pacesetter Award of the Central Minnesota Education Research and Development

Council as well as the Minnesota Catholic Education Association Presidential Award. She died in 1974 at the age of 53. A building of the East Apartments is named in her honor.



S. Colman O'Connell - O'Connell's Pub

Sister Colman was a professor in the theatre department at the College of Saint Benedict from 1954-1976. Her students were challenged to perform the unusual and demanding productions. After her teaching career, Sister Colman served as executive vice president of Planning for the college and was president of the College from 1986-1996. She is currently (2009) serving in the College Advancement Office, where she also served as vice president. O'Connell's non-alcoholic pub in Haehn Campus Center is named in honor of Sister Colman O'Connell.



S. Brian Spain - Brian Hall

Sister Brian taught in elementary schools until 1956 when she was asked to serve in various roles in the Monastery Formation Program. She was the director of the Formation Program from 1969-1972. College alums remember Sister Brian as a residence counselor, a residence staff coordinator, and director of Student Housing and Residence Life. Sister Brian also served as the Benedictine Values Coordinator from 1994-1999. Brian Hall, a residence hall, is named in honor of Sister Brian Spain. She died in 2009.

S. Emmanuel Renner - Renner House

The college's newest building (2005) is Renner House, home to the college president, located across the street from the main entrance of the College. It is both a private home (1,800 square feet) and an important reception and entertaining venue for the college (2,200 square feet). The design of the Renner House echoes the Main Building. It is named after S. Emmanuel



Renner. Sister Emmanuel began her teaching career with high school students in 1952 and then taught at the College of Saint Benedict from 1955-1974. She later

served as Dean of Continuing Education and became president of the College of Saint Benedict in 1979. After her presidency, Sister Emmanuel returned to teaching, serving on boards, working in the college archives and is writing the history of the CSB/SJU leadership initiative.

