

32. Church and School

Now we will turn to a short study of how things were in church and school in the early days in New Vienna. The Catholic Church was an integral and very important part of life for the new German settlers. The history of the parish can be traced back to the first days in the 1840s when the first families came to the area from Ohio in search of farmland. On January 6, 1846, Bishop Mathias Loras of Dubuque celebrated Mass at the home of Hermann Wiechmann, the first Mass celebrated in the New Vienna area. For the next two years, Mass was celebrated at the Wiechmann home.



In 1848, the first permanent church structure was built. This wood building measured 24 feet (7.3 m) by 30 feet (9.1 m) and had walls that were 10 feet (3.0 m) high. An addition to the church served as a school and Convent in 1850. By 1853, the population had increased to the point that a new structure was needed. Construction of this new church was completed in 1855. The church was 64 by 100 feet (30 m) with 22-foot (6.7 m)-high walls. A local resident, William Steffen, Sr., was sent with two teams of horses to get three bells for the church. He arrived back in New Vienna just before Easter; the bells were raised in time to chime for the first time on Easter Sunday. This second structure was used until 1887. This was the church that my grandfather Heinrich would have helped to build once he got to New Vienna in 1854; and this is the church my grandparents, my parents, my aunts and uncles and cousins, and my brothers and sisters who were older than I, would have attended.



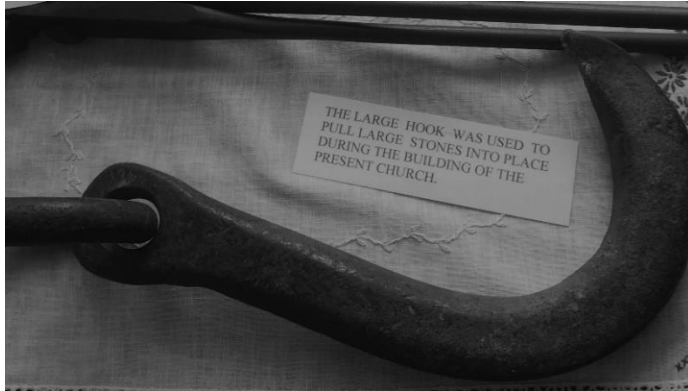
The new church was started four years before I was born. This photo shows the church in the distance when it was first under construction, and this is the view my family saw each time they came into New Vienna. Notice the horses and buggies on the right.

In 1887, the third and present building was completed. This building is 172 feet (52 m) long by 62 feet (19 m) wide. The walls are 35 feet (11 m) high. The stained-glass windows are 14 feet (4.3 m) wide by 30 feet (9.1 m)

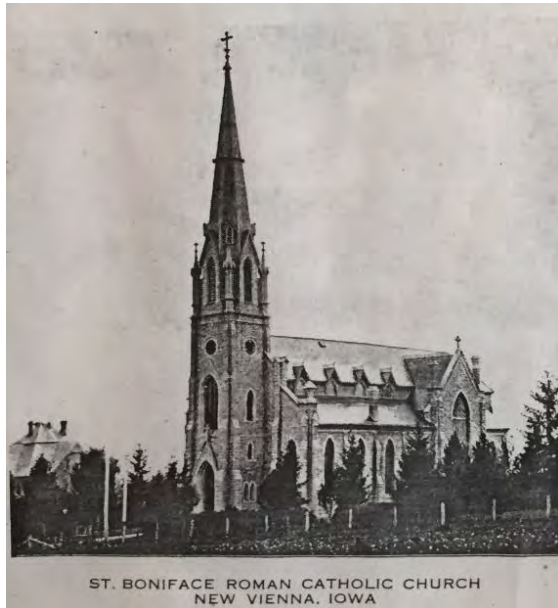
high. The steeple is 200 feet (61 m) high.



This is a wonderful photo of the church while under construction from 1884-1887, and you can see the frame school, convent, and boarding house to the south of the church, on the left. The massive size of the church structure is highlighted by the small size of the men working at its base and on its roof.



It is quite amazing, really, to think of that huge church being built without the benefit of machines and cranes that we have today. The large iron hook in this photo was used to hoist heavy stones up by pulley into place as the church was being built.



The photo on the left shows the finished church, and the one on the right shows a charming rendition by the artists who created the long wall mural in the New Vienna Area Historical Museum.



This is the way the church looked while I was living there, Little Dear One. The communion rail, lower center on this photo, is the original carved communion rail from the second church. The high altar was built by E. Hackner of La Crosse, Wisconsin and cost \$5,000. There are five altars in the church that are made of carved wood, and they are all still there in the church today. This photo was taken after the electric lights were installed in 1916, but before the sound system was installed. The photos below were taken in 2018 and show how perfectly the church has been preserved all these years.





Particularly noteworthy in this beautiful church, in addition to the striking 200-foot-tall spire and the exquisitely carved wooden altars, are the organ, the stained-glass windows, and the carved wooden pews. The organ was built in 1891 by the Schuelke Organ Company. It is one of the few intact Schuelke organs that still exist today. Aside from regular maintenance, the organ has remained basically unaltered over the years. One of the few alterations made to the organ was the addition of an electric blower in the 20th century. The stained-glass windows in the church were created by Victor Vander Forst of Muenster, Westphalia, Germany and installed by George W. Misch of Chicago at a cost of \$2,671. They are an astonishing 14 feet (4.3 m) wide by 30 feet (9.1 m) high. The main altar in New Vienna cost \$5000. Many parishioners donated parts of the church, including stained glass windows and altars. The total cost of the St. Boniface Church completed in 1887 in New Vienna was \$49,809. During church services the boys and girls were segregated into separate sides in the pews. Families paid rent on their pews and put a family cap or hat holder in their pew, with the family name inserted into the holder. Children who attended St. Boniface

School attended Mass every day. In the winter the daily Mass was held in the basement to conserve fuel for heating.

The church Johnnie's family attended and supported in Petersburg was also very beautiful. Here is a photo of it taken at the time of its dedication in 1905. The entire parish is in the picture, so I'm sure Johnnie's family is in it also. The men are on one side and the women on the other and there are not a lot of children in this picture. Maybe the photographer thought there were too many of them!



One of the side altars in this church was donated by my Johnnie's mother's family, the Hoefers. Cousin Fred's paternal grandmother's family donated the main altar at Petersburg (the Deppe family) and it cost the equivalent of 30 acres of land, which would be a \$300,000 donation of Petersburg land today.

I always liked the view coming into Petersburg from New Vienna, because the road led right up to



the church, and that is all you focused on as you came into town, which gave you a sense of stability and peace. The first church building for Saints Peter and Paul parish in Petersburg was constructed of limestone in 1868, and that limestone from the original church was ground up to make the cement foundation for the new church. Here is an interesting side note from Cousin Fred: “My great-grandfather, Henry Mormann (daughter Rose married Frank Althoff), talked the railroad into building a spur line to about 4 miles south of Petersburg so the limestone from Stone City (Grant wood paintings!), could be transported for the new church. Farmers hauled the stone on their wagons from the rail spur to the church site. Henry Mormann was a farmer and also an entrepreneur. He converted the spur site to a livestock buying station to buy cattle and hogs to ship to Chicago. He built a general store at the site, which is where my grandmother worked before she married my grandfather. When the parish built a new rectory, Henry purchased the old one and moved it to the store. When he lost the beautiful 160-acre farm, still considered the best land at Petersburg according to the current owners) with bad investments (lost \$70,000 in one day in the stock market in 1925), he moved his family to the house at the store.”

The present Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Petersburg was commissioned by Pastor William Sassen in 1903 and completed in 1906. It was constructed of cut-stone quarried in Stone City, Iowa, in the late Gothic Revival style, designed by Dubuque architect Martin Heer. The church is cross-shaped, 150 feet by 54 feet, 74 feet wide at the transept. The tall central tower and spire rises to 145 feet, flanked by two 120-foot-tall towers on the corners of the façade. The Dubuque contractor F.D. Schnak built the church. The altars and confessionals were crafted by Hackner Altar Co. of La Crosse, WI. The interior frescos were created by Joseph Walters of Dubuque. The stained-glass windows were designed and manufactured under the direction of Victor von der Forst in Munster, Germany. The church was completed for \$85,000. The pipe organ was built by Tellers Organ Co. of Erie, PA in 1939. The Rectory was built in 1917. The Petersburg Church is the first Consecrated church in Iowa and in 1994 was entered on the National Register of Historical Places. The Sts. Peter and Paul Cemetery was established off the church grounds, and my Johnnie’s grandmother Catharine was one of the first people interred there when she died in 1867 at age 35.

The Sts. Peter and Paul Church looked very similar inside to the St. Boniface Church in New Vienna, with beautiful stained-glass windows and carved wooden altars. This church also factored into my wedding day even though I did not get married in it. My brother Joseph was marrying Johnnie’s sister Elizabeth, and I, of course, was marrying my Johnnie, so we had a double wedding. Johnnie and I were married in the St. Boniface Church in New Vienna at the same hour that Joe and Lizzie were getting married in the Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Petersburg! The bells of both churches rang out. Then we all came together to celebrate for the rest of the day. The newspaper wrote a lovely article about us.

A BROTHER AND SISTER WED SISTER AND BROTHER

Unique Wedding Ceremony In Cruebel and Sebers Families Took Place Tuesday.

Sister and brother marrying brother and sister, the two wedding being performed at the same hour one in New Vienna and the other in Petersburg, was the unique double nuptial event in the Sebers and Cruebel families, which transpired last Tuesday morning.

The marriage of Miss Elisabeth Cruebel and Mr. Joseph Sebers, occurred in St. Peter and Paul's church at Petersburg. The wedding ceremony was performed by Rev. Father Nacke, who also read the nuptial mass. The bride was attired in a gown of white silk, trimmed with beeding and lace, wore veil and carried apple blossoms. She was attended by Miss Caroline Cruebel, sister of the bride, who wore a pink silk dress. The groom was attended by Arthur Sebers, his cousin.

The marriage of Miss Mathilda Sebers and Mr. John F. Cruebel, took place in St. Boniface church, at New Vienna, Rev. Father Luetko, officiating at the nuptial ceremonies and highmass. The attendants were Miss Regina Sebers, sister of the bride and Mr. John Cruebel, brother of the groom. The bride's wedding gown was of white silk, trimmed with beeding and lace. She also wore a veil and carried a bouquet of apple blossoms. Her maid was attired in a gown of pink silk.

Following the church ceremonies, the two wedding parties went to the Cruebel home near Petersburg where the reception was held. Over one hundred families were invited and the reception was one of the largest ever held in the vicinity. A bountiful wedding banquet was served and the usual festivities were in order throughout the day.

The parents of the young people, who figured in this double nuptial event, are Mr. and Mrs. Henry Sebers of New Vienna and Mr. and Mrs. John Cruebel of Petersburg. The families are among the most prominent and highly respected in their respective localities. The young ladies were born and reared in the vicinity where they grew to young womanhood and by their noble traits of character have won the admiration and esteem of hosts of friends. The young men are among the progressive and capable young farmers of their respective localities. Both are of excellent character and have the qualifications and opportunity to make a success of life. The newly-weds will go to housekeeping on farm. They have the heartiest good wishes of their many friends.

In the early days, wedding ceremonies were often held on Monday mornings at 8:00 a.m. to accommodate the need to fast from midnight the night before in order to receive Holy Communion during the Nuptial Mass. As weddings became larger and more elaborate, they were often held on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays since the family needed time to prepare for the dinner and reception in the home. After Mass the wedding party would go to breakfast, usually hosted by a sibling or godparent, and then go to a studio for photos. There were no photos taken in the church then. The dinner (noon meal) was usually for immediate family only at the home of the bride. The reception was held beginning in the late afternoon, after the farmers had time to finish their chores, and then continued on into the evening at the bride's or groom's home. The wedding couple usually stayed at the home of the bride on the wedding night, and some of the guests would try to keep the groom up late, playing cards on the stairs going to the upstairs bedroom, etc. to tease the new couple. Most of the weddings in my family were on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Friday: Wednesday 01/13/97, double wedding; Wednesday 01/21/03, double wedding; Tuesday 01/19/04, double wedding; Wednesday 01/12/10; Tuesday 11/22/10, double wedding; Friday 01/02/20; Wednesday 02/02/21; and Friday 02/7/22. Most couples would have only two attendants, a bridesmaid and best man. In this newspaper notice you can see that Joe's best man was his brother Arthur and Lizzie's bridesmaid was her sister Caroline. My bridesmaid was my sister Regina, 14, and Johnnie's best man was his brother Henry, also 14. The newspaper made a mistake listing his name as John. Receptions were held at the home of the bride's or the groom's parents. Our joint reception was held at Johnnie's house, with over 100 families attending, meaning a total of 300 or more people including children. As the article said, it was one of the largest wedding celebrations ever held in the area. A good deal of preparation went on before the wedding, such as painting, papering and cleaning. Neighbor women would come the day before the wedding to make preparations for the meals and then come back to serve the meals the next day. The men would serve as bartenders. This was an especially big production for our wedding, because we had what the article called "a bountiful wedding banquet." In the earlier days, since homes could not accommodate a large number of people, those not invited to the wedding would come to chivaree the couple. They would bring all kinds of noisemakers and go to the new couple's home and make noise until they were invited in for the party. A dance was often held in a barn or a shed, and that is what we did, in Johnnie's family's big barn. What a day that was, Little Dear One, truly a day to remember always!

The photos below show some of my favorite things about church: the Christmas Manger tableau that was set up on one side of the church on the first day of Advent each fall, but with an empty manger for the Baby Jesus. All throughout the month of December we would visit the Manger and pray for the coming of the Christ Child. Then after the Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve, the baby would appear in the manger and we would all visit the manger to kiss the infant's feet.



The second photo shows the Corpus Christi Shrine that was used to display the tabernacle as it was carried through the town in a long procession led by the German Band. Other favorite religious holy days and observances for me were Forty Hours, First Friday celebrations, the Feast of the Assumption in August, the May Crowning of the Blessed Mother in May, the glorious bell ringing on Easter Sunday, and of course the very important Solemn Communion Day for all youth of the parish. (Photo below)



This is a photo of the 1904 Solemn Communion class. My dear cousin Frank is in this photo, the boy above and just to the left behind the priest in the center. Frank is my Uncle William's son, born one year before me. He died at the age of 21 on July 31, 1912, four days after being kicked in the stomach by a horse. That was another very sad day in our family. Johnnie and I were already in Bloomington and had a one-year-old baby, your father. It was hard to come back to New Vienna and place that young man in a grave in the St. Boniface cemetery. Here is his obituary and his

internment notice.

**KICKED BY HORSE;
INJURIES FATAL**

**FRANK SEBERS OF NEW VIENNA
MEETS ACCIDENTAL DEATH**

Struck By Horse While at Work in Barn Saturday—Death Followed Wednesday.

Frank Sebers, son of Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Sebers of New Vienna passed away at 3 o'clock Wednesday afternoon, the result of injuries he sustained, when he was kicked by a horse, last Saturday. He was 21 years of age.

Shortly after the noon hour on Saturday Young Sebers went out to the barn to harness his team preparatory to going to the field to work, where the harvest was on. When near one of the animals it suddenly kicked striking him in the stomach. He staggered out of the barn and his folks who were out in the yard seeing he was hurt rushed to his

side. He was taken to the house and a surgeon was summoned. His condition had been precarious since, and on Wednesday became grave when all hopes for his recovery were shattered. Death finally relieved his suffering as above stated.

Frank Sebers was born on the old homestead, near New Vienna on Sept 26, 1891. All of his young life was spent in the vicinity. After completing his education he began work on the farm with his folks, which he continued up to the time of the fatal accident. Surviving are his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Sebers, seven sisters, Theresa, Mrs. Anton Beckmann Andover, S. D.; Mary, Mrs. Leo Ahlers of New Vienna; Laura, Francis, Emma, Eugenia, Loretta and three brothers, John of Groton, S. D.; Emil and Laurence at home.

The news of the untimely death of the young man came as a shock to the people of the vicinity, to whom he was well known and admired for his upright character and manly traits. The bereaved family have the sympathy of all in their sad bereavement. The funeral will be held to St. Boniface church, at New Vienna Saturday morning.

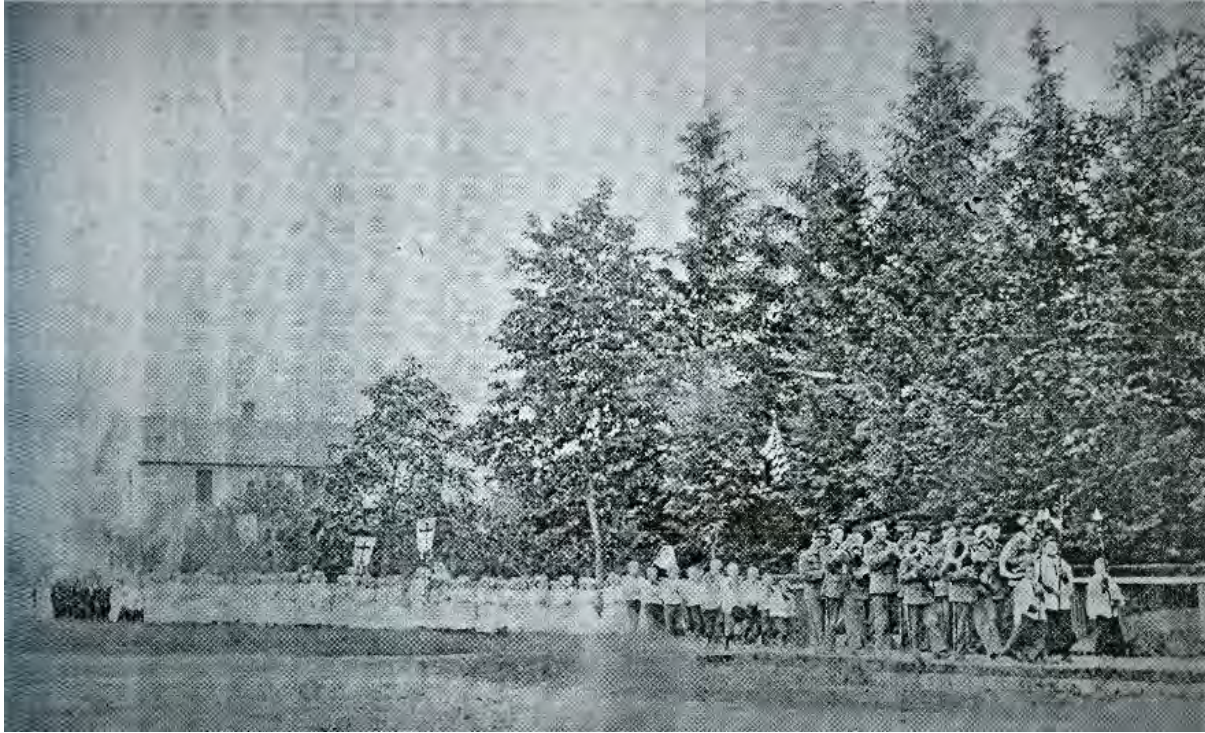
YOUNG MAN IS LAID AT REST

Funeral of Late Frank Sebers Held At New Vienna Last Saturday.

NEW VIENNA, IA., Aug. 8.—The funeral of the late Frank Sebers, was held last Saturday morning. After the requiem highmass, his earthly remains were laid to rest in St. Boniface church yard in the presence of a large number of sorrowing relatives and friends, who deeply regret the demise of the promising young man. Among those from out of town in attendance were his brother John Sebers and wife, of Groton, S. D. Mrs. Anthony Beckmann of Lake Andover S. D.; Mr. and Mrs. John Gruebel, Bloomington, Wis.; Peter Puetz and wife, Petersburg, Henr Lammers and daughter, Henry Wessels, and wife, Petersburg. A Rahe and John Wessels and wife of Dyersville.



We have already seen my Solemn Communion photo, from 1905. The next two photos show how the parish came together to honor and recognize the Solemn and First Communicants and welcome them into the fold of the Catholic Church community. The day began with a long procession led by the parish priest and the altar boys carrying large candles. They were followed by the German Marching Band playing their rousing music, then the Communicants being honored, and finally the parents, sometimes carrying the banners of the parish sodalities and organizations of the church. It was all quite exciting and thrilling for us.



The First Communion Day is one of the most important milestones in a Catholic child's life. In the earlier days a child received First Communion in the second grade. Their religious education classes at school prepared them, and on the appointed Sunday the children would wear their special dresses and suits, assemble at the school, then go in a group to the church where they sat together in the front of the church, with the nuns behind them. Their families would bring lunch, and after the Mass everybody would go to the old school to have lunch. Then they all stayed in town to wait for the afternoon Scapular investiture. At about age 12 or 13 children made their Solemn Communion, which was like a "rite of passage". Solemn Communicants dressed in special clothes and group photographs were taken. Sometimes individual studio photographs were taken after the Solemn Communion Day.



The day was so important in those days, in fact, that the parents of the First Communion Class of 1886 donated a stained-glass window in honor of their children. Some of my Riesberg cousins were in that class. Here we see a photo of the entire window, 14 feet wide and 30 feet high, and a close-up of the dedication saying in German "In honor of the First Communicants of the year 1886."

In the early 1900s St. Boniface had a Young Men's Society who were noted for producing some fantastic plays as well as other activities. New Vienna put on a lot of plays then in which adults and community members performed as well as school

children.

St. Boniface Hall
January 29 and February 1, 1915
 NEW VIENNA, IOWA

"DER NACHTWAECHTER VON DERENDINGEN."
 DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Buergermeister	Fr. Freking
Tuerich, Nachtwachter	H. Gerken
Kalliko, Medizinarat	Fr. Bohnenkamp
Bleesent, Bendant	E. Ferner
Stueckebeln, Richter	F. Roth
Tom Brake, Ratsherr	R. Kluesner
Pit Wimpel, Ratsherr	E. Neuhaus
Knoerrig, Ratsherr	G. Wilhelm
Kukelskora, Ratsherr	G. Hermann
Georg, Antadoner	And. Ploessel
Johann, Bedienter	J. Lies
Ethelplapp	W. H. Kramer
Duoppelmann	Al. Ploessel
Peter Pumpernickle, Cafenewaerter	G. Steffen
Anton, Polist	B. Kass
Frau Medizinarat	A. Klostermann

"DIE BEIDEN AMERIKANER."
 DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Neil, Amerikaner	G. Steffen
Robertson, Amerikaner	G. Steffen
Peregrino, Hebebestzer	Fr. Schroeder
Faustino, Kellner	E. Hofer
Mong, Franzose	W. H. Kramer
Murabatto	L. Kluesner
Kreuser, Deutscher	F. Freking
Stern, Musikler	E. Kerper
Schmaroll, Arzt	H. Gerken

"Nachtwachter von Derendingen."

- (1) Overture—"Kling of Diamonds" C. J. Rockwell
New Vienna Cornet Band.
- (2) I Akt.
- (3) "Moonlight Will Come Again" Thompson
St. Boniface Choir.
- (4) II Akt.
- (5) Overture—"Contest of Gladiators" B. G. McFall
New Vienna Cornet Band.
- (6) III Akt.
- (7) "Die Wacht am Rhein" Wil alm
St. Boniface Choir.
- (8) IV Akt.
- (9) March—"United States Navy" G. M. White
New Vienna Cornet Band.
- (10) "Die Beiden Amerikaner"
- (11) March—"Loyal American" U. L. Skages
New Vienna Cornet Band.

Press of The parrotia Commercial.

ST. BONIFACE HALL
 NEW VIENNA, IOWA
 JANUARY 21 AND 24, 1916

DER LINDENHOF.
 DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Endwig Lindenberger	Frank Schroeder
Klara, dessen Frau	Art Rahe
Ulrich, dessen Sohn	Fr. Freking
Franz, dessen Enkel	R. Warborg
Karl, sehr Brudel	J. Herbers
Bernhard	P. Roth
Giovanni Bildhaeder	A. Vaske
Leberecht, Makler	G. Hermann
Silberstein	E. Kerper
Erdmann, Direktor	W. H. Kramer
Stenger, Buchhalter	J. Vaske
Fritz, Wirt	J. Lies
Gottlieb, Advocat	R. Kluesner
Bettler	J. Schroeder
	G. Wilhelm

DIE FIDELE GERICHTSSITZUNG.

Richter	Fr. Freking
Angeklagter	Art Rahe
Gerichtsdienner	P. Roth

DER LINDENHOF.

- (1) Medley Overture—"A Trip Around Town" F. Beyer
New Vienna Cornet Band.
- (2) I AKT—Zimmer auf dem Lindenhof.
- (3) March—"The Emblem March" Will Huff
New Vienna Cornet Band.
- (4) II AKT—Zimmer auf Lindenhof.
- (5) March—"Tremendasy" Chas. A. Luse
New Vienna Cornet Band.
- (6) III AKT—
- (7) Selection—"Songs of Germany" Mackie Beyer
New Vienna Cornet Band.
- (8) IV AKT. (a) Arme Dachstube
- (9) Overture—"Spirit of Liberty" H. C. Miller
New Vienna Cornet Band.
- (10) IV AKT. (b) Ulrich's Zimmer.
- (11) March—"Three Rings" Wm. H. Talbott
New Vienna Cornet Band.
- (12) V AKT. (a)—Gartenwirtschaft.
- (13) March—"The Eagle's Home March" Francois A. Meyers
New Vienna Cornet Band.
- (14) V AKT. (b)—Zimmer auf Lindenhof.
- (15) March—"The Belle of York" B. F. Crumbling
New Vienna Cornet Band.
- (16) Monologue W. H. Kramer
- (17) Die Fidele Gerichtssitzung.
- (18) March—"33rd Iowa N. G. March" T. J. St. Clair
New Vienna Cornet Band.

Most of these were in German until WWI. Here are two playbills from 1915 and 1916.

The old parish hall was used for many activities before it was demolished. School plays, box socials, roller skating, dancing, and basketball games were some of the activities. In earlier days it had an upstairs that was used for

classrooms for boys who were taught by a professor. The old parish hall/gym/2nd church/school are all the same building. It was used for many different things over the years. When it was a school, it had four classrooms on the first floor and a library and large auditorium with a stage on the second floor. After the new school opened in 1925, the building was remodeled, and made into one floor again, that was a basketball court. There was one bench running around the court for seating, and bleachers were set up on the stage at the end of the court for extra seating for games. There were two dressing rooms/rest rooms under the stage for the home and visiting team. The gym was used for the chicken suppers, feather parties (a bingo, fall festival, raffle party in which the prizes were roosters, ducks, geese and a door prize of a turkey. This was held in early November for Thanksgiving entrees. The fowl could also be purchased. So all of these remembrances bring us to the next topic we will discuss, schools.

Because the German immigrants to New Vienna had often received their educations in Germany, they valued educational opportunities for their children and put a high priority on schools as well as churches. The first school in New Vienna was started in 1847, 3 years after the settlers arrived, and was held in the settlers' homes, with John Klostermann as the first teacher. Later, classes were conducted in a sectioned-off part of the log church. This was the original St. Boniface Parish School, although it was operated as a public school. The St. Boniface School had its first permanent building in the village in 1870, and prior to that the children attended school in a country school that was closest to them. Heinrich and Maria Segbers bought their farm from John Klostermann, so they definitely knew him; and we can assume Heinrich would have discussed the education of his children with him. The Segbers' oldest child Mary was five when they came to New Vienna, the second child four, and Henry, my father, less than one year old. Then two more boys were born in New Vienna. So from 1854 on, Heinrich's children would have needed education and may have had a combination of learning opportunities: being taught by their parents and provided with books brought from Cincinnati, attending the log church school, and possibly having a teacher board with them on the farm. In exchange for free room and board the teacher might transport them back and forth to the school each day or provide education in the home. Their formal education probably ended when they became proficient in basic skills, but their independent educations went on for a lifetime. I remember my father as a prolific reader, always reading newspapers and magazines in the evening, and I remember lots of German-language books in Grandma's house. The two youngest Segbers children would have gone to the St. Mary's Country School when it opened in the mid-1860s because St. Mary's was only ½ mile from their home. By the mid-1860s Heinrich's oldest three children, including my father, would have been finished with school, but the two youngest, John and William, would have attended St. Mary's.

Country schools were built in response to an act passed by the First Territorial Legislature in 1839, which provided that there should be a common school or schools in each county that should be free and open to everyone between the ages of 9 and 21. Each county was to organize districts that were to maintain a school for at least three months a year. Funds were originally paid for by parents of the students and later by tax assessments. New Wine District (New Vienna) was a district without a school, so a parishioner of St. Boniface Church asked the pastor there if they could use the St. Boniface School as a District School, which explains why seventh and eighth grade students at St. Boniface had to take the County test and their teachers had to have County certification.

Information about the country schools is difficult to get because records were sketchy and people's recollections and memories are not always accurate. Also, each school might have several names: the official district school name and the name the local people gave the schools, typically neighborhood or family names. Of the five country schools close to New Vienna and attended by New Vienna area children, the likeliest candidates for the Segbers/Sabers children were the St. Marys' School and the Colony School. The Carroll School was in Section 11 of Township 89; the Hickory Valley School was located in the east central part of Section 14 in that same Township; and the Columbus Independent School was in the same Township. The Colony School was about two miles from the Henry Sabers house, and more than three miles from the Heinrich Segbers house. Also, it was in another school district and did not start operation until 1902. The St. Mary's school was approximately ½ mile from the Heinrich Segbers house, ¾ mile from the first Henry Saber's house, and about 1 ½ miles from the new Henry Saber's house. It started operation in the mid-1860s. Therefore, the St. Mary's School was the school the youngest Segbers and oldest Sabers children attended.

In the photos below we see the location of the St. Mary's Country School ½ mile from the Segbers' farm, the original tabernacle that was in that school, and the original bell that called the children to classes in that school.



The St. Mary's Country School was a public school but was unusual in that it had an altar and a tabernacle. It is reported that in the early days, priests would sometimes visit the school and say Mass. It was built on the corner of the Willenbring farm, so it was also known as the Willenbring School. It was probably built in the mid-1860s and closed in the late 1890s. The last teacher was Henry Smith. In 1887 after the new church was built, the second church was converted into a school, with the nuns teaching there, with more structured grades, and more boarding options available. Country schools were more ungraded, with children attending school until they were about 12-14 years old. Their education level, which is on some census data, was determined by the last reading book they completed. Both German and English were taught, with various schools adopting their own methods of doing so, sometimes depending on the language proficiencies of the teacher: one language in the morning, another in the afternoon, one language for certain subjects or certain days, etc. The report card was usually in German so that the parents, who may or may not have been proficient in English, could read it. I knew how to read and write in German, and some of our classes were in German and used German textbooks, but in school I often talked with my friends in English. At home my older brothers and sisters often reverted to German when

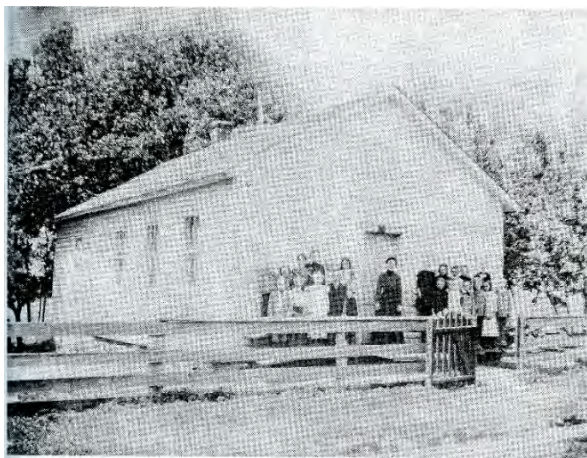
talking with each other or my parents, but those of us who were younger used English more easily, especially those of us who went to the boarding school. As we have seen in 1916, in response to the anti-German hysteria of World War I, the State Superintendent of Schools in Iowa issued a decree forbidding the teaching of foreign languages in Iowa schools. This was meant to show distancing from Germany. The Catholic schools did not have to abide by this policy, however.

St. Mary's Country School started to lose attendance and closed by the late 1890s. No records remain of students or teachers, but it is assumed that most of the neighborhood children attended it prior to the opening of the new school in New Vienna. Joseph Herbers, a former student, recorded the following about his school days at St. Mary's School:

In my early days the rule was to start school at 5 years old. We went to a public, one-room schoolhouse a half mile from our home. Henry Smith was our teacher. We had another house on our farm, and here is where he lived. His salary was \$40 a month. He taught for 10 months In the winter when there was a snowstorm or severe cold, the folks would get us with a bob-sled. We would sit down on the bottom of the box and the driver would cover us up completely with blankets. If I remember correctly, the highest number of students in the school was 26. We were taught from ABC to our dismissal at twelve years of age. We had no grades. After this we had to go one more year to the parochial school in New Vienna for more religious instruction in preparation for Holy Communion. During recess in bad weather, we played in school – Button-Button or Fruit Basket Upset. In the summer we played ball. Our ball was made of old wool yarn wound tight and covered with denim cloth. Our bat was a piece of a barrel stave about 18-20 inches long shaved down on one end so we could get our hands around it. The pitcher would stand to the side of the batter, throw the ball straight up. If the batter would hit the ball out into the field, the girls would spread out their aprons (they wore aprons these days) and try to catch it. We had two bases besides the one where the batter stood. These bases were in a straight line. If a fielder got the ball and threw it across the base line in front of the runner, the runner was out.

My father would have attended the church school with his two older sisters and finished their educations there. The two younger Segbers children probably switched from the church school to the St. Mary's School when it opened. If they were in school until age 12, they attended St. Mary's from when it opened until 1871, when the last Segbers child William was 12 years old. My oldest brother John would have started school ten years later, in 1881 or 1882, and my Uncle William's first child seven years after that. The Riesberg cousins were a little older but could have gone to St. Mary's for a while, too, as could have some of the John Roling and Teresa Halbur children, half-siblings to Mary and Anna Roling. Before my father built our new house, the one I grew up in, my older brothers and sisters walked to the St. Mary's School each day, about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile. If the weather was very bad, they might stop off at our grandparents' house before continuing on home, to warm up or get out of the rain or just to get a warm cookie or slice of bread from our grandmother. They would not stay long, though, because they had after-school chores and then homework. My Uncle William's children were all born in Heinrich and Maria's house and would have attended St. Mary's starting in 1889, but, as we will see, by that time my brothers and sisters had transferred to St. Boniface School. But we always felt a loyalty to St. Mary's Country School because it provided the educations for many of Heinrich and Maria's large family of Segbers, Riesberg, Sabers, and Sebers. For the duration of its existence there was always a family member

in attendance at St. Mary's. It is not certain what exact year the school closed, but if we estimate it was closed in 1898, and suppose that the wonderful old photo below was taken then, there would be four of my cousins in this photo, the children of my Uncle William. As we can see, there are 18 students of widely varying ages in the photo, plus one teacher, presumably Mr. Smith, the last teacher at the school.



St. Francis School 1911-1912

Country schools were usually simple one-room buildings, often with an exterior, detached outhouse. Here are several more in the New Vienna area: the St. Francis School 1911-1912 with a female teacher and about 18-20 students, again of widely varying ages; the Carrol Country School, left below; and the Ovel children at Bremen Country School, right.



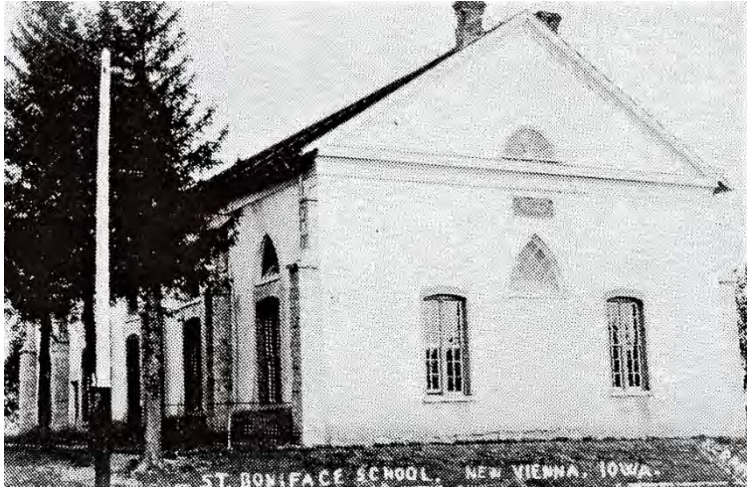
Once my family moved to the new house my father built, we were much farther from St. Mary's School, but very close to a road. At the same time that my father's economic circumstances were improving there were significant changes happening with the St. Boniface School, making it much more attractive for parents who wanted and could afford good educations for their children. In 1862 New Vienna had asked an Indiana order of Sisters to come to New Vienna to teach. They had a conflict with the pastor, Father M. Orth, the Sisters declaring that the Pastor expected them to do too much with the resources they had. The townspeople asked both the Sisters and the Pastor to leave. In 1866 Rev. John B. Weikmann was appointed pastor of St. Boniface, and at his sudden death in 1870 Rev. Conrad Schulte was appointed pastor. Under his guidance a frame school was built, and this was the first permanent school building erected in New Vienna. By 1872 the enrollment in the school was about 100 students, and Father Schulte invited the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration of La Cross, Wisconsin to teach in the school.



Having had one bad experience with teaching nuns, the parishioners had misgivings about the new nuns because of the language barrier between the nuns and the parishioners. The parishioners spoke German and wanted to retain their strong language heritage, but the nuns, who were from all over the country, spoke mostly English and maybe no German at all. The parishioners were also afraid that the nuns were not prepared well enough academically and could not manage the discipline required for rowdy boys. Father Schulte, however, visited the school every day to monitor the teaching and the behavior of the

students, and the situation improved. The students learned both German and English. This photo shows the original convent for the nuns, as it looked in 1880.

In 1882 Rev. Frederick W. Pape was appointed as pastor. During his years as pastor the parish



grounds were landscaped, the present church and rectory were built, and the old rectory, now the Heritage House Museum, was remodeled as a convent and boarding house. The old church, seen in this photo, was renovated to become a school, and this is the school I attended for all my school years, 1896 to 1905.

In 1885, the year after my father built our new house, Professor B. W. Schulte was hired to teach at St.

Boniface, and he taught at the school for 20 years. This meant that he could take charge of some of the education for the boys while the nuns continued to teach and take care of the girls, the boarders, and the church. The boys and girls were segregated in the upper grades. The Professor became the school master, which helped to accredit the school as a county public school. Both Sisters and lay professors then taught at the school. The hiring of Professor Schulte was probably the most significant factor influencing my father to send us to St. Boniface, because he wanted the discipline and expertise of the male presence for his sons as well as the strong Catholic education provided by the nuns, and he wanted his children to attend an accredited school. For two years my brothers and sisters had to walk 1 ½ miles to and from school every day, John, Anna, Mary and then young William, but they were enamored of our new house and willing to walk that distance. We all waited eagerly for the completion of Father Pape's plans to build the new church and make a new, much larger school building out of the old church.

The new school building contained four large classrooms plus a lunchroom on the main floor. There was a wide hall down the center of the building. The second and third graders occupied one room while the fourth and fifth graders were together in another. Another classroom contained the sixth and seventh graders and the eighth graders had a room of their own. The upper floor consisted of a library and an auditorium with a stage. This was the building that was later converted into a gymnasium and parish hall used for plays, basketball, roller skating and social gatherings such as the Labor Day Picnic. By 1898 the classrooms in this "gym" were inadequate to service the increasing student enrollment so an addition was added to the Sisters' residence across the street which provided a fifth classroom for first graders. The second church/school remained as a school until 1925, when a new school was opened, and the old building became a parish center/gym/auditorium, which it remained for many years. The second St. Boniface School is the one that I attended from 1896 to 1905, and the photo below of the older girls with the nun is how we dressed and looked as we went to school.



After the new church was built and the school conversion of the old church completed, along with the conversion of the former rectory into additional classroom and boarding house space as well as a convent, my father transferred all of us to St. Boniface School to take advantage of what he considered better educational opportunities. At that time my oldest brother John was 11 years old, Mary was 9, Anna was 7, William was 6, Elizabeth was 4, Anton

was 2, Joseph was 1, and the last five of us were yet to be born. Farmers with older boys would sometimes send their children to school with a horse and buggy. The horse would be boarded in town during the school day. John was old enough to drive his brother and sisters to school then, by horse and sleigh in winter or horse and farm cart or buggy in spring and fall. When John left school in 1890, William took over the driving until he too left school in 1893. Then Elizabeth convinced our father that she could handle the driving, at least when the weather was good; but for a few years we relied heavily on neighbors for rides to school, since we had the opportunity to partner with other families living on our road. By the time I started school in 1896 Anton was ready to drive, and then Joseph, but when Joseph left school in 1898 my father decided that the remaining five of us would board in town to go to school. Katharine and I started there together in 1898 and then Arthur joined us in 1899, followed by Regina in 1901 and Andrew in 1904. New Vienna resident Art Ries lived about 5 miles out of town and boarded at the school in 1925 and 1926 and wrote about his experiences in the *Roots and Wings* book. There were eight nuns and 26 children during the week. Art's older siblings went to the country school, but there were so many children in his family that they kept a permanent cot in the boys' room at the boarding school. Art was dropped off Sunday night and picked up Friday afternoon.

The convent/school/boarding school building offered a place for students to stay during the week. This was more common for families who lived further out. From 1920 on, it was very common because Fr. Reinert, St. Boniface pastor from 1920-1950, insisted that children had to attend two years of school at St. Boniface before they could make their Solemn Communion. Parents had to provide the bed for their boarder at the convent. Since Art Ries had nine siblings, his parents just kept that bed at the convent year after year because they had a child staying there every year for about 20 years. Art told some great stories about convent living. The boys slept in one large room upstairs in the convent and the girls in another. A nun slept in the room with the boys with a cloth partition, so there was supervision. But the boys were clever. There was a toilet in the convent, but it was for use only by the nuns. Outhouses in the back were supposed to be used by the children. The boys, not wanting to get up in the night and go to the outhouse, started peeing out of the window, onto the roof of a porch. That worked fine until one morning when it had snowed during the night and the nun looked out of the window and saw the yellow snow! Art also told one of his daughters how the nun would check to make sure that the boys had their hands outside of the

covers, regardless of how cold it was, lest they “touch themselves”. Sometimes, as Art says in the article, it was a long week away from his family.

In 1923 the parishioners of St. Boniface commemorated their pastor’s Silver Jubilee by starting a fund for a new school in his honor. That school opened September 9, 1925, with an enrollment of 250 students, at which time the parishioners began a fund to construct New Vienna’s first high school. But all my brothers and sisters were finished with their educations by then, so none of us had the opportunity to go to high school.



This three-story school building in Petersburg is where my Johnnie and his brothers and sisters went to school. It was built in 1890 under the guidance of Rev. Stephen Maasjost, pastor at Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Petersburg and staffed by the same Franciscan Sisters from Dubuque who taught at St. Boniface School in New Vienna. At the time Johnnie went to school, from 1893 to 1901, there were about 100-130 students. He was four years older than I, so he was out of school and working on his father’s farm for four years while I was still going to school. But I did not meet him until 1908 after a

performance at the parish hall in New Vienna. He and his father helped to build the new Sts. Peter and Paul Church that was built when Rev. William Sassen began his pastorate in Petersburg. Johnnie’s father was always very religious and insisted on regular church attendance and religious observances in his family. I always wondered if that were because his father converted to the Catholic religion when he married Johnnie’s grandmother.