

CHAPTER 7

TO MICHIGAN, WISCONSIN AND THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY

In 1830 Edward Fenwick extended the American Dominican mission beyond the frontier to the Mississippi River. Into the wilderness he sent alone, as he himself had gone into the Ohio forests, a newly ordained priest twenty-three years old. He was Samuel Mazzuchelli, a native of Milan and descendant of sturdy Celtic Lombards who had once moved down through the Alps to the welcoming Po Valley. In the years ahead Samuel Mazzuchelli would broaden dramatically the American mission of the Order of Preachers, evangelizing natives and newcomers of many cultures. He would preach and teach without ceasing, and establish communities of friars and sisters to do the same. He would found a multitude of parishes, build their first churches and open schools for their children and a college for youth.

When Samuel arrived at his first mission, such possibilities were unimaginable; but the spiritual hunger of the people was clearly evident and his vocation certain. In the spirit of his biblical patron Samuel and from his own experience he could later say,

Let us wake up then,
open our eyes,
and if we are called, set out for any place where the work is
great and difficult; but where, with the help of Him who sent us,
we shall open the way for the Gospel.[\[1\]](#)

Why Samuel became a Dominican is not known. In his youth there were no friars left in Milan and no Dominican house in Lombardy. All religious orders in Italy were close to extinction.[\[2\]](#) He was sent to study in Rome when the reviving Province of Lombardy was reopening the ancient center of Dominican study at Sta. Sabina. With the new class of students Samuel, whose religious name was Brother Augustine, profited from the courses of excellent professors, along with wise directors of formation in religious life.[\[3\]](#) From his courses and readings Samuel compiled handbound notebooks which he kept with him all his life and used in his preaching and teaching.

In the summer of 1827 the Milanese youth was ordained a subdeacon. During the following final year of study he met a German-American priest, Frederic Rese, who was sent to Rome by Bishop Fenwick to seek missionaries for his needy diocese. On hearing him Samuel decided to volunteer for the American Dominican mission in the Diocese of Cincinnati.

The new head of the Order of Preachers was Giuseppe Velzi, who as provincial of Lombardy had brought Samuel to study in Rome. In spite of the critical needs of the Order in Europe, he consented to Samuel's desire and sealed his approval by "constituting as missionary for North America" one who was not yet a priest.[\[4\]](#) With Frederic Rese as guide, Samuel set out for

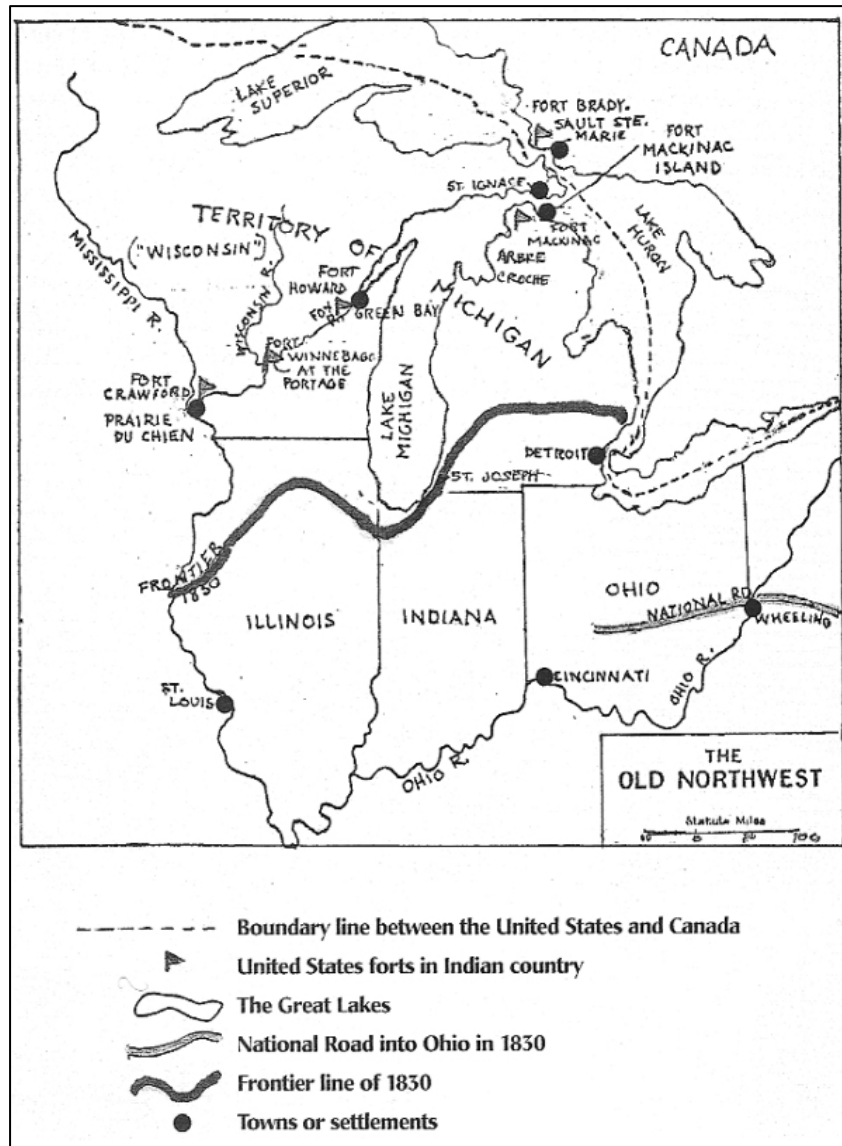
America at the end of June, 1828. He stopped in Milan to bid farewell to his widowed father and try to help his family understand his mission.

The travelers then went on to France. On reaching the old Roman city of Lyon, Rese suddenly changed his travel plan. He went to Germany, and after two months directed the youth to go on alone to the United States. On October 5, 1828, Samuel Mazzuchelli boarded a small sailing ship, the *Edward Quesnel*, bound for the Port of New York. The passenger list of twenty-nine persons reflected the diversity of the early immigrants. A Scottish merchant, an English lace maker, a French watchmaker, and the American wife and daughter of the ship's captain accompanied the Italian novice as they journeyed together toward their future.^[5]

After forty days on a sea of recurring storms, the ship docked in New York on November 15, 1828. Samuel set out alone by stage and riverboat for Cincinnati. Arriving at last at the "Queen City of the West" after eight days on the Ohio River, the youth whom Rese had written as "sent by the Master General" was welcomed warmly by Bishop Fenwick. In that kindly veteran of the missions, Samuel found a friend and lifelong exemplar, who in the spirit of St. Dominic had given himself wholly to the service of the Church.

For almost two years Mazzuchelli prepared for ordination to the priesthood, mentored by the bishop and the Dominican friars of Somerset, Ohio. From them he learned how to respond at any hour to the pastoral challenges of preaching, teaching, and consoling the sick and dying on the frontier. Early in February of 1830 he was present to welcome the first Dominican sisters who came from the convent of St. Magdalen in Kentucky to found the community of St. Mary in Somerset. Their zeal, and that of the Dominican women he met briefly in Kentucky, would inspire him later to found the third American community of Dominican women at Sinsinawa, Wisconsin.

On September 5, 1830, the Church of Cincinnati celebrated the priestly ordination of Samuel Mazzuchelli.^[6] Several weeks later Bishop Fenwick sent the young priest to the place where the needs of the people seemed most urgent: the northernmost part of the old Northwest. Far beyond Ohio, and larger than that state, the region spread west from Lake Michigan to the Mississippi River and north to Canada.^[7] The wilderness was interrupted only by scattered Indian villages, fur trading posts, and a line of American forts reaching diagonally from the Canadian border southwest to the Mississippi River. The mind-boggling assignment given the new priest was to be "missionary and parish priest of the North-West Territory, with particular care for Mackinac Island, Green Bay and Sault Ste. Marie."^[8] He would be the first resident priest in the entire area since the Jesuit Fathers had been withdrawn fifty years earlier by the papal suppression of the Society of Jesus. All Bishop Fenwick could do for the bereft people was to send itinerant priests to them in succeeding summers and try to visit them himself each year.



Map of development of the "OLD NORTHWEST" in 1830

After a journey of many days through Ohio forests to Detroit, then north by a fragile boat on the rough waters of Lake Huron, Samuel Mazzuchelli arrived at his mission base on Mackinac island as winter was literally closing in. There he met his first parishioners, a motley society of cultures and languages. There were French Canadians and Americans working for the fur-trade empire of John Jacob Astor. There were soldiers guarding the straits from the heights of Fort Mackinac. In the surrounding forests were scattered villages of Woodland Indians, chiefly of the Chippewa and Ottawa tribes. On the island were many **métis**^[9] whom Presbyterian missionaries from New England were working zealously to educate, Christianize and Americanize.

Bishop Fenwick gave the priest two broad goals: to revive the faith of the neglected French Canadian Catholics and to bring the Gospel to the native peoples. The center of the young missionary's new life was the small church of St. Anne, a reminder of the days when the Jesuits, whom he called "the unforgotten padres," lived among the people and kept their faith alive. Now,



Wigwams to which Menominee families welcomed the missionary to proclaim the Gospel

he found, many Catholics were "indifferent and untroubled by devotion, owing to the lack of instruction, of priests, . . . and everything that could win them to virtue."[\[10\]](#)

Father Mazzuchelli suddenly encountered the intense anti-Catholicism of the era.[\[11\]](#) The Mackinac Presbyterian minister, William Ferry, launched weekly lectures to discredit Catholic beliefs. The Dominican responded by inviting Protestants, Catholics, and Ferry himself, to a series of fourteen lectures on Catholic teachings to which listeners could respond, and even interrupt the priest.[\[12\]](#)

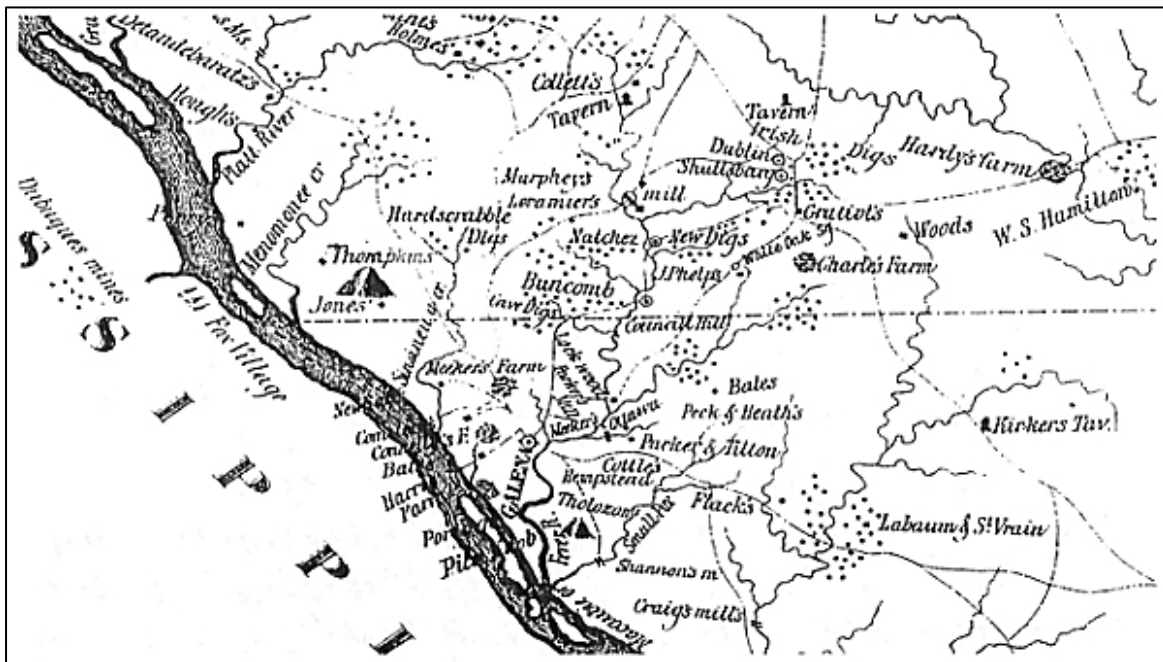
The Dominican friar directed his energies not to polemical disputations but to the spiritual care of baptized and would-be Catholics. When possible he journeyed in all directions to minister to the people in scattered villages of Indians and trading posts. At Sault Ste. Marie on the Canadian border, he found no church building but preached to the people in the shade of a majestic oak tree beside the rushing waters of the rapids.[\[13\]](#)

Although a shade tree would do to begin with, settlers needed a regular place to gather for worship, a church to symbolize both their faith and the stability of their new settlement. Discovering this need very soon, Father Mazzuchelli helped the people in every place to build their own church. Only months after he arrived in the North, early in the spring of 1831, he initiated the construction of St. John the Evangelist church in Green Bay, the first Catholic Church in Wisconsin. The second was that of St. Gabriel the Archangel at Prairie du Chien on the Mississippi, which is still in use. Many have called the Dominican friar the "Builder of churches in the upper Midwest." In reality he was the builder of Christian communities, helping the people to form their first parishes in forty places in Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois and Iowa.

Their first building may have been made of mats, logs or stone, but each one sheltered a lasting parish, an *ecclesia* or church of living stones.

Members of the Indian tribes of the old Northwest were of great concern to Bishop Fenwick who visited them regularly and sent them missionaries when he could. Because of his zeal Father Samuel became the first Dominican friar to live and work among the Indians of the United States. [14] From 1830, when he first met the Menominee natives, to 1835, when other priests followed him in that ministry, Father Samuel ministered chiefly to the Menominee and Winnebago peoples, the latter now known by their original name, the "Ho-Chunk Nation." He also knew and served the Chippewas or Ojibway, and the Ottawa Nation.

The priest set out to learn the way of life of the natives by visiting their villages, accepting their hospitality, and eating their meager food. He went with families to harvest wild rice, make maple sugar, and fish through winter ice. Later he described each people's traits and customs, the work done by women and men, their love of children and respect for the elders. The priest experienced their severe hunger in winter and the suffering of families when the government plied them with liquor in place of needed goods and withheld unfairly their treaty annuities or funds for education. After studying the religion of the natives, the missionary stated with conviction that, contrary to the opinions of some Christian observers, their superstitious practices were not idolatrous.



The "DIGS" of lead miners along the Mississippi, with the location of the Jones home at Sinsinawa Mound

In his catechetical effort, the missionary blended Indian ways and language with Catholic worship. At Sunday Vespers they chanted the Psalms of David, singing alternately one verse in Latin and the next in their own tongue. The missionary compiled a prayer book for the Winnebagos entitled *Ocangra Aramee Wawakakara*, the first printed work in a Sioux language. He had it printed in Detroit in 1833. In the following year the first item ever printed in Wisconsin (then a part of Michigan) was his liturgical calendar, *Kikiwawadendanoiwewin*, or Almanac of the year's feasts in the Chippewa idiom. He preached the Gospel to the natives as to any other people. Father Mazzuchelli's appreciation of native languages and customs brought him into the

arena of Indian education. In March of 1819, the United States Government approved a yearly appropriation of \$10,000 for the "civilization and education of the Indian people." The Episcopalian mission received the entire fund. When the Menominee leader Chief Oshkosh protested, declaring that he would employ a lawyer and send the case to Washington, the agent threatened to have the chief "deposed." In 1835 Mazzuchelli wrote to President Andrew Jackson in protest, meticulously reviewing the injustice suffered by the Indian people, but in vain.[\[15\]](#) No school opened by the missionary received aid, despite the requests of tribal leaders, the allocation of funds for all Indian schools and the observance by the schools of all government requirements.

During the first five years of his labors among the native peoples, the young Dominican weathered the rigors of the frontier, experienced the anti-Catholic sentiments of government officials, and witnessed the tragic unfolding of the Jacksonian policy of Indian removal. He condemned the deleterious effects of the fur trade and alcohol upon tribal life, exacerbated by constant removal from their lands. Like many 19th century missionaries, he viewed the natives as "children of nature" who would become civilized once they embraced Christianity. Yet he affirmed many aspects of tribal life, marveling at the Indians' devotion to family and spirit of hospitality generously offered to strangers. He applauded the natives' sense of community and the common good. These traits, he noted, were not readily found in the nations of the world "among whom 'mine' and 'thine' are carried to such lengths as to necessitate so many laws. . . ."[\[16\]](#)

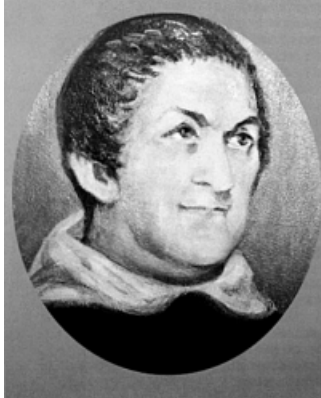
One day in the spring of 1835, Samuel Mazzuchelli left Prairie du Chien to ride south along the Mississippi to Galena, Illinois, to board a riverboat to St. Louis. On the way he discovered the flourishing lead region near the Illinois line where men were laying claims and digging ore from the richest deposit of lead in the world. The miners were coming from every direction, even from the British Isles. By 1835 families had begun to arrive to farm the rich soil near the two river cities of Galena on the east bank and Dubuque on the west. On arriving in the settlements, the traveler discovered nearly three hundred Catholics who had lost two priests in the recent cholera epidemic. They were pleading with Bishop Joseph Rosati of St. Louis to send a priest to this northern part of his diocese. When Father Mazzuchelli rode into their midst, they urged him to come to them.

The traveler soon boarded the riverboat to St. Louis, then went up the Ohio River to Somerset to see the Dominican provincial, Nicholas Young. The Catholic settlers upriver immediately petitioned the Dominican Master General, Tommaso Cipolletti, to send the missionary to their region. He gave his enthusiastic consent.[\[17\]](#) So began in 1835 the Mazzuchelli mission in the upper Mississippi Valley which lasted eight years. During the first four years, he was their only priest among the families settling rapidly on both sides of the Great River. His life now differed from that in the primitive conditions of the northern wilderness, but the mining frontier offered equally demanding pastoral challenges. For Italian readers he described the beginnings in Galena:

On the second floor of the house of a good Catholic he erected a makeshift altar which transformed the room into a church, poor and narrow indeed but . . . the cradle of the good and exemplary congregation of the faithful which later formed there. In that

same room, at the right of the altar, on a poor bed he peacefully spent his nights studying the best means of erecting a house for the Lord in that new, important city.[\[18\]](#)

Samuel Charles Mazzuchelli, O.P.



Samuel Mazzuchelli was loved by his parishioners, who called him affectionately Father "Matthew Kelly." He also gained the respect of Protestants. While Lyman Beecher announced from his Boston pulpit the immediate takeover of the West by the pope, life on the mining frontier necessitated a spirit of cooperation rather than fear of "Romish" conspiracy. As Mazzuchelli moved from place to place to form parishes and build churches, he soon made friends with Protestants. They contributed to the building funds and presided at the cornerstone layings of new Catholic churches.

The Italian friar who became an American citizen supported American ways of decision-making and collaboration and was held in high regard by all citizens. Less than a year after he arrived in the lead region, the Territory of Wisconsin was created from that of Michigan to extend from Lake Michigan west to the Mississippi. When the first territorial legislature met in 1836, its thirty-nine members, of whom only three were Catholic, chose Samuel Mazzuchelli to be their chaplain. After serving for one week, he declined the honor for the sake of his ministry and set out among the rising towns to form nascent parishes and build churches on both sides of the Mississippi River.

In July 1837, Pope Gregory XVI established the new Diocese of Dubuque, west of the Mississippi, a region soon to become Iowa Territory. There the Dominican friar was the only priest. The arrival of Bishop Mathias Loras in 1839 marked the beginning of a long friendship and partnership in ministry with the Dominican friar. The bishop depended upon Mazzuchelli's mature missionary experience and gifts, especially his zealous preaching. The two men often preached parish retreats together. After one retreat Loras reported to Bishop Rosati in St. Louis,

Mr. Mazzuchelli preached like an Apostle every night for 1 or 2 hours, and a half-hour in the morning, lasting to 12 days. As for me, I tried to accomplish something by my prayers and hearing confessions. [\[19\]](#)

In April 1843, Samuel Mazzuchelli accompanied Bishop Loras to Baltimore to be his theologian at the Fifth Provincial Council of the Church in the United States. Among the sixteen bishops present was the Dominican missionary Richard Miles, Bishop of Nashville. No council Act would be more welcome to

Mazzuchelli than the bishops' request for the formation of two new dioceses, Chicago and Milwaukee, which embraced his missions in Illinois and Wisconsin. Because his six-year assignment to the Diocese of Dubuque by the Master General was now ended, the priest's presence at the Baltimore Council was his last official service to Bishop Loras. However, he would return often to Iowa at the request of bishop, pastors and parishioners.

At the close of the Council Samuel sailed home to Europe. As he explained, the journey was made because of "several serious illnesses, the need of rest, the pressing needs of the missions,

the very cordial consent of the bishop of Dubuque and many other reasons of less importance."[\[20\]](#) He went directly to Milan, where he soon regained his strength and began to pursue several projects for his stay in Europe. One was to write a full, reflective description of his fourteen years on mission in the United States. For this work he offered two reasons. The first, he wrote, was "to satisfy the eager wish of a number of devout persons, including the religious of the renowned Order of Preachers to which the missionary has the honor of belonging."[\[21\]](#) The second was to contribute from his experience to the Church history of the United States, especially with documents concerning dioceses recently erected in his mission region.

Soon the missionary learned that in response to the recent Baltimore Council, the Catholics in Wisconsin Territory would now belong to the new Diocese of Milwaukee, and those in northwest Illinois to the Diocese of Chicago. The missions up and down the eastern shore of the Mississippi were ready for the rapid development of the Church as growing numbers of families arrived hungry for the Word of God, the Eucharist and other sacraments.

Within a year the priest completed his Italian *Memorie*, or Memories of A Missionary Apostolic,[\[22\]](#) a work of 366 pages published in Milan. Then he turned to the project suggested seven years earlier by Tommaso Cipolletti, Master General, to establish in the midwest a second American province of Dominican friars.[\[23\]](#) He obtained without delay all needed authorizations from the Holy See and the Order. The Dominican Master General Angelo Ancarani appointed him Commissary Provincial of the new American province of St. Charles Borromeo, with authority to receive men and women into the Order, establish a novitiate, and staff missions in any place approved by the local bishop.[\[24\]](#)

In August 1844, Samuel Mazzuchelli returned from Italy. Before the end of October he purchased 800 acres of land in southwestern Wisconsin, a mile north of the Illinois boundary. On the height called Sinsinawa Mound, he established the center of the new province, calling it the "Missionary House of St. Dominic." It was to be a center of Dominican life and education, and of ministry to surrounding parishes. Only a few days after the purchase of "the Mound," as the place would always be known, a young German immigrant named Joseph Poelking came there "to live as a brother with the Rev. S. Mazzuchelli."[\[25\]](#) He was the first of twenty men who would enter the Order by way of Sinsinawa.

The new Bishop of Milwaukee, who had served in the Diocese of Cincinnati with Bishop Fenwick, was Swiss-born John Martin Henni. He offered Mazzuchelli a hearty welcome, stating that the greatest need of the region was for "missions, churches and common schools among those thousands of emigrants that are daily, & more than ever, pouring into Wisconsin & forming settlements."[\[26\]](#) Beyond the need for common schools, Father Samuel foresaw two additional needs for education: a college for men and an academy which would soon offer college studies to young women. In 1846 he opened Sinsinawa Mound College for men, which he dedicated to St. Thomas Aquinas.[\[27\]](#) The education of young women, he hoped, would be entrusted to Dominican sisters. He had already observed this model of ministerial partnership among the Dominicans in Kentucky and Ohio. He had asked for sisters from both those places, but none could yet be spared.

In 1847 Vincenzo Aiello sent three men from Italy to the new Wisconsin foundation. Unready for the hardships of community life and the frontier missions, they abandoned the enterprise one by one within three months, to the dismay of Father Mazzuchelli. His own Dominican nephew, Francis Mazzuchelli, who studied and was ordained in the United States, also returned to Italy.

However, new hope for the foundation came in the same summer when two young women of St. Dominic's parish at Sinsinawa asked Father Samuel to be received into the Order. By the end of 1847, four women had accepted the founder's invitation to form a Dominican community in Wisconsin.^[28] Mary McNulty and Mary Routane were received as novices on August 4, 1847. They were members of St. Dominic parish, Sinsinawa, and teachers in nearby district schools. Both had been Sisters of Charity, founded by Elizabeth Seton, and were seasoned missionaries.^[29]

Sister Josephine Cahill, one of the "Cornerstones" of the New Dominican Community



In December of that year two more women were received as novices. Margaret Conway, an Irish-born native of Canada, took the religious name of Sister Clara. Mary Fitzpatrick, an Irish immigrant, became Sister Ignatia. Early in April of 1848, Judith Cahill, whose family had come west by wagon from Pennsylvania, was received as Sister Josephine. The little community did not experience steady growth. Rather, its stability seemed quite tenuous and it appeared destined to fail. The hardships of frontier life and the founder's difficulties with the Italian friars seemed to anticipate failure.

By the close of 1848 the community numbered seven women. Several taught in the district schools while others attended to the household duties at the Mound. Sister Josephine recalled that in the village of Shullsburg they had no furniture; they slept on straw beds on the floor and lacked even a table for meals. Theirs was "always a cold dinner, often not enough. A piece of bread and a glass of water; a glass of milk was a luxury."^[30]

Discouraged, the prioress Seraphina McNulty concluded that the group should disband. Early in 1849 she and Ermeline abruptly withdrew from the community. Father Samuel proposed that, after a day of communal reflection and prayer, the four remaining novices gather to determine their future. On February 5 they asked the youngest novice, Sister Rachel, to decide. She responded, In the name of God let us remain together in our present community."^[31] Four women made their religious profession in St. Dominic's church on August 15, 1849. They were Sisters Clara Conway, Ignatia Fitzpatrick, Josephine Cahill and Rachel Conway. Their founder called them, fittingly, the "four cornerstones" of the new Dominican community of Sinsinawa.

The year that followed was critical for the new community and its founder. They endured together a series of crises that affected the future of the sisters, the province and the Dominican

mission in mid-America. Although officials of the Order and bishops of the region fully supported the mission, they could not help with money or personnel.

Father Mazzuchelli believed that the difficulties in the establishment of the Dominican province resulted from his own inability to govern. He asked several times to be relieved of the position of Commissary Provincial, a petition finally granted in 1849. By arrangement with Joseph Alemany, provincial of the friars' Province of St. Joseph, Samuel Mazzuchelli formally resigned, an action soon confirmed by the head of the Order. He moved to the village of Benton, Wisconsin, fourteen miles from Sinsinawa, and continued to minister to parishes at New Diggings, Shullsburg, Benton and neighboring stations. He assisted the Fathers who came to administer the Sinsinawa college by teaching, serving on their board of trustees and giving student retreats.[\[32\]](#)

The sisters remained at the Mound. When their founder learned that they were asked to do more housework than teaching, he objected to the provincial Joseph Alemany that "the four excellent Sisters will be kept mainly as servants, and the children of the country without Christian education."[\[33\]](#) Soon they moved to Benton to join the mission of their founder who helped them find places to teach in the district schools.[\[34\]](#) Their earnings enhanced the financial welfare of the young community and contributed to the operation of St. Clara Academy, which they opened in Benton in 1852 with Father Samuel as superintendent.

The move to Benton proved fortuitous for the growth of the young community. After five years with no new members, in 1853 an Academy student, Ellen Barry, was received as a Dominican novice, taking the name Sister Agnes.[\[35\]](#) During the following summer the annalist of St. Mary's, Somerset, recorded that on July 15, 1854, "The Sisters Joanna Clark, Magdalen McCurnan, Mary Louisa Cain & Mary Rose Callerher left St. Mary's to go to Benton, Wisconsin."[\[36\]](#) Their arrival in response to an earlier request by Father Mazzuchelli brought joy and hope to the fledgling Wisconsin community, which grew overnight from five members to nine! A year later three of the newcomers returned to their Ohio community, but Sister Joanna Clark remained in Wisconsin. She was elected prioress (a responsibility she had held in Somerset) and became the founder's valued associate, beloved by all.

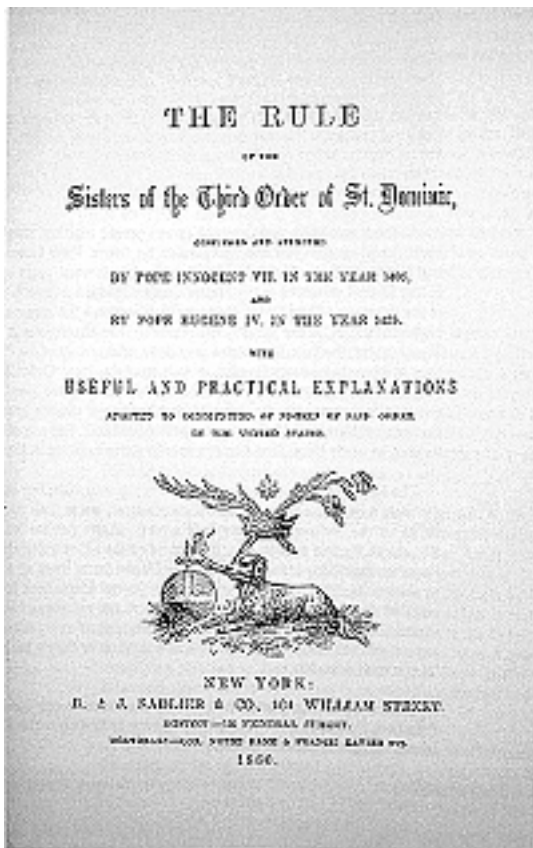
The sisters opened St. Clara Academy in Benton to offer secondary education to daughters of the settlers. Samuel Mazzuchelli was superintendent, and instructed both students and teachers in scripture, literature, astronomy and physics.

The academy drew increasing numbers of young women to the little mining town. They came from such distant places as Kentucky, Tennessee and New England. Some of the "scholars" asked to enter the Dominican community. One of these was Cassie Stevens, a lively learner from a Presbyterian family of Boston who had become a Catholic while at the Academy. Two years after returning to her home on Beacon Hill, she became a novice among the Dominican women whom she had known in the Academy. Later she wrote of the spirit of generous poverty which she experienced among the sisters:

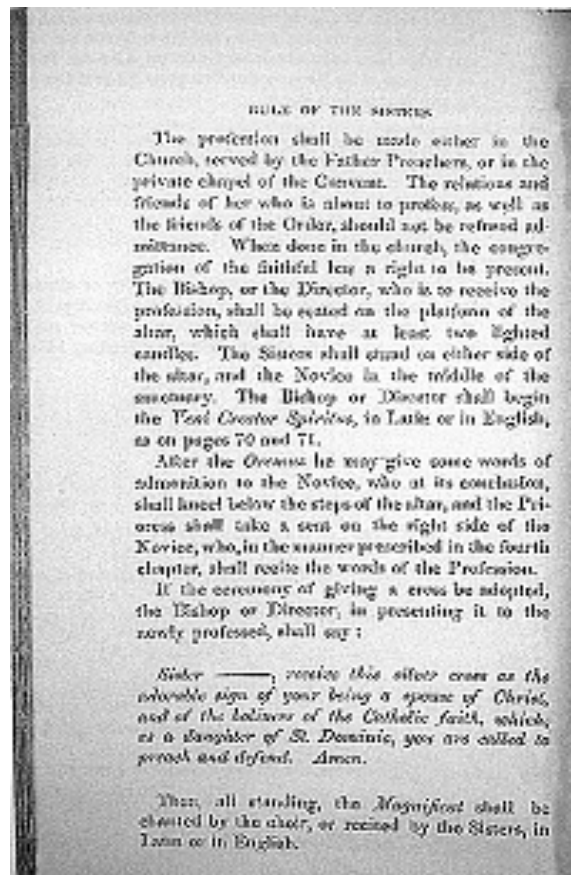
Their privations were many, and some of them severe, but not beyond their power of cheerful endurance. Their observance of holy poverty put both priest and sisters in closer

sympathy with the people, most of them poor miners struggling for the merest necessities of existence. It is true that in one sense, for the sisters as well as for the miners and their families, it was a poverty of necessity, but it was elevated and sanctified by the spirit in which it was borne. It was voluntary poverty in the highest sense, since the sisters all had comfortable homes to which they were free to return. . . .With joy did they build their religious institute on that most stable of foundations, Holy Poverty.[37]

As the sisters lived, worked, studied and prayed together, they created common bonds based on the spirit and traditions of the Order. Their founder lived that spirit and taught them the Dominican way of life. After several years of experimentation Father Samuel presented to the Master General Jandel a translation of the Latin Rule of the Dominican Third Order, giving for each section a full commentary on its meaning for the life and active ministry of Dominican women religious in the United States. Together with the Rule, the volume included a brief history of the Order of Preachers, lives of more than twenty Dominican women of the Third Order, and the Rule of St. Augustine translated by Bishop John England. There were also notes on keeping community records. All were bound into a handsome volume printed by D. J. Sadlier Company of New York and known as the Rule of 1860. The compiler hoped it would be used by many Dominican communities in active ministry in the United States.



The Rule of the Third Order translated into English by Samuel Mazzuchelli, O.P., with commentaries useful for the Dominican Sisters of the United States



Selection from the Rule describing the ceremony of religious profession for Sisters of the Third Order

The Sinsinawa women kept no cloister or rigorous fasts; nor did they rise during the night to pray the Divine Office. Such practices, wrote their founder, were "of little or no use" where the sisters kept schools or the climate was extremely cold. Dominican life and mission on a frontier called for adjustability and common sense. However, many Dominican women in the United States lived an active life and tried to observe the rules of the cloistered nuns.^[38] Several adaptations in the Rule of 1860 revealed the Italian priest's grasp of the political and economic realities of life in the United States. The Rule contained no reference to choir or lay sisters. All enjoyed the same rights and obligations, regardless of education or family background; all voted for community leaders.

Samuel Mazzuchelli envisioned all the Dominicans as one family in the Order of Preachers. He shared that vision in his prophetic dedication of the Rule of 1860 to the Master General Jandel. He wrote,

TO THE MOST REV. A.V. JANDEL,
Master-General of the Order of Preachers

The promise made to us by our Father over six hundred years ago, that we shall grow numerous among the nations, and that he shall help us with his prayers before the Lord, has had its full accomplishment; and although in our age, owing to the peculiar state of society, an interruption of that constant growth has taken place), the sky of the future seems to clear before our sight, and to promise a new, and perhaps a greater and more useful religious family to that great champion of the faith, St. Dominic.

That branch of his Order which was by him intended for a more extensive purpose, and for the closer connection with all classes of society, from an humble station in the Church, rises on this continent to usefulness and importance. The Sisters of the Third Order of Preachers . . . bid fair to become in this land a great portion of that numerous family alluded to in the prophetic words of our holy founder.

While he was establishing the community of Dominican women Father Samuel did not neglect his pastoral responsibilities or decline any call to preach and teach, On Sundays he gave the people of his parishes in Benton and New Diggings an instruction before Mass and a sermon on the Gospel of the day. The instruction was usually on the books of the Bible. studied throughout the year. One young listener described his preaching in these words:

His long lectures before mass on the Old Testament & the usual sermon after the Gospel were always most inspiring & listened to by us, his poor ignorant congregation, with such rapt attention that you could hear a pin drop in the church. His language was always so simple & unctuous that any child could understand it.^[40]

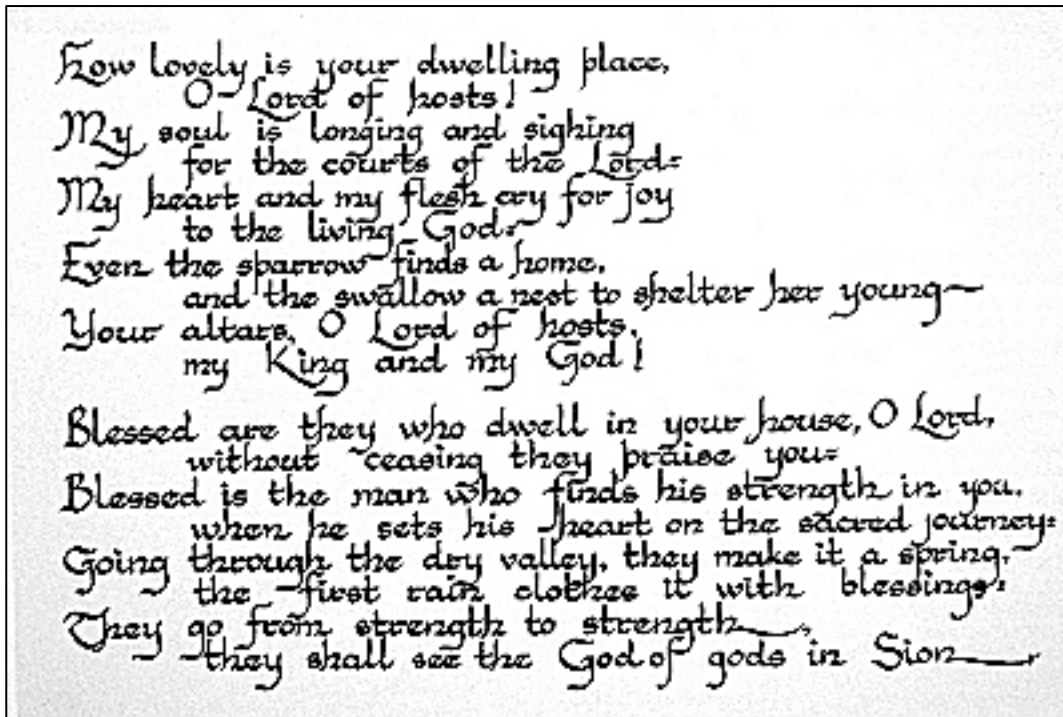
The priest did not write out his instructions or sermons, but recorded them throughout each year in sturdy account books. Preceding his topic of instruction [*In*] and subject of the Sunday sermon, he noted weather and road conditions which might affect his rural parishioners. A page for February 1851 includes the following entries:

6. Benton. New-Digging.
 mid. In Tobias return to his father
 he opens his eyes, no sermon.
 15. New-Digging. Benton
 In. 4th Com. of the Church
 windy sermon on the word of God.
 (from the way believe it)
 22. Benton. New-Digging. In
 mid. Arch Raphael reveals himself
 Tobias, Loren. Sermon on
 the meditation of the Passion
 of Christ.
 29. New-Digging. Benton. In.
 very cold. The 6th Com. of the Church. In.
 On the three temptations of
 Christ in the Desert.

Page from Father Samuel's record of sermons and instructions, February 1852

The priest's profound understanding of the meaning of *call* made him respond if possible to every summons, whether from a distant mission or a person close by who was in need. So it happened that the summons of a dying parishioner led to his own final call. Going into the country in the bitter cold of winter led to his death from pneumonia on February 23, 1864, at the age of 57. He answered that summons joyfully, recalling aloud the words of the psalm, "How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord God of Hosts!" The mourners knew that some of those tabernacles were the churches he had built, the parishes he had formed, and the hearts of people to whom he had brought the good news of the Gospel. One eulogy at the time of his death spoke for many persons in these words:

He who was once the only priest west of Lake Michigan has left the people of the extensive region in mourning. He was a good man, faithful to his vocation, prompt and zealous in the performance of every duty, inflexible in principle, but so mild, affable and obliging that in him seemed to have been centered for a time all the reverence and respect of a heterogeneous and frontier people.[\[41\]](#)



The psalm recited by Father Mazzuchelli on his deathbed

NOTES

1. **The Memoirs of Father Samuel Mazzuchelli, O.P.** Tr. Maria Michele Amato, O.P and Mary Jeremy Finnegan, O.P. (Chicago: The Priory Press 1967) 8-9; hereafter **Mem**.
2. In Europe the Dominicans, like other religious orders, suffered from the effects of the French Revolution and the succeeding political oppression. Property was confiscated, convents and houses of study were closed, libraries stolen and scattered. Common life was nearly obliterated, chapters and elections were suspended. No friars were found in France, where the Order was founded, until it was restored there by Henri Lacordaire. In 1850 when Alexander Vincent Jandel was appointed Master General, he stated "I am surrounded by ruins." Under his leadership, the Order in Europe returned to life. See Benedict M. Ashley, O.P, **The Dominicans** (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1990) Ch. 8.
3. Velzi was appointed Vicar General in the absence of Dominican elective chapters. His efforts to restore the Lombard Province and establish a flourishing study center were notable, beginning in 1825 when Mazzuchelli was professed.
4. The unique ceremony is recorded among Velzi's official acts in Archives General, Order of Preachers (AGOP) IV, 269, 31. As head of the Lombard province of the Order, Velzi, along with his assistant Tommaso Cipolletti, knew the youth well, and both were pleased at his request.
5. Manifest of the ship Edward Quesnel, arriving in New York from Le Havre November 15, 1828. SDA XI, 9.
6. **Mem** 20.
7. The mission area lay outside the Diocese of Cincinnati, but was assigned to Bishop Fenwick's jurisdiction. It would later include the Upper Peninsula of Michigan Territory, created in 1837, and the State of Wisconsin (created in 1848).
8. The missions in French Canada were abandoned after 1773, when the Society of Jesus was suppressed by the pope. Catholics were left without a resident cure for fifty years.
9. The **métis** at Mackinac and Green Bay were children of French-Canadian fathers and native Indian mothers.
10. **Mem** 23.
11. See Ray Allen Billington's classic history of American anti-Catholicism, **The Protestant Crusade 1800-1850: A Study of the Origins of Nativism** (New York: Macmillan, 1938.)

12. **Mem 31.** The conflict at Mackinac lasted through a second year, and is described with careful documentation in Keith R. Widder, **Battle for the Soul** (Michigan State University Press, 1999) Chapter IV, "Evangelical Ministry to the Multi-ethnic Community at Mackinac, 1822-1837," 69-101.
13. **Mem 56.**
14. One early Dominican missionary from Ireland, Charles Ffrench, O.P., ministered to Abenaki Indians in Maine in the 1830s.
15. Samuel Mazzuchelli to President Jackson, St. Louis, May 10, 1835. SDA II, 23.
16. **Mem 50.**
17. Cipolletti knew Samuel Mazzuchelli well from the years he was a student at Sta. Sabina. In responding with enthusiasm to the request from the lead region, he proposed that the priest consider establishing a house of the Order there, and possibly a province! Tommaso Cipolletti to Samuel Mazzuchelli, Rome, Jan. 30. 1836, SL. Copy SDA. XII, 133.
18. **Mem 151.**
19. Mathias Loras to Joseph Rosati, Dubuque, Oct. 24, 1839, SL. Copy SDA II, 55.
20. **Mem 274.**
21. "To the Reader" **Mem XIV.**
22. **Memorie Istoriche ed Edificanti d'un Missionario Apostolico dell'Ordine dei Predicatori.** (Milano: Ditta Boniardi-Pogliani, 1844).
23. Cipolletti to Mazzuchelli, Rome, (Oct. or Nov.) 1836, Draft, AGOP XIII, 04600:53. Copy SDA
24. Angelo Ancarani, **Patent to Samuel Mazzuchelli as Commissary of the Master General, Jan. 12, 1844,** AGOP XIII, 04600:18. Copy SDA PA 29.
25. Recorded by Mazzuchelli in his small handwritten "History of the Missionary Establishment of Sinsinawa Mound, Wisconsin, 18441847." Original SDA II, 167. Poelking was professed as a lay brother. Later, at the request of Mazzuchelli, he was ordained a priest. He died in 1866 at St. Rose, Kentucky.
26. Bishop John Henni to the President of the Society of the Propagation of the Faith, Milwaukee, June 22, 1846, SDA XIII, 56.
27. The Sinsinawa Mound College was incorporated by the first legislature of the State of Wisconsin in 1848. It drew students from families in the Mississippi Valley. It was closed at the end of the Civil War, but its influence was spread to distant places by young men who entered the Dominicans from Sinsinawa.
28. "Book of Records of the Convent of St. Clara in the Diocese of Milwaukee, State of Wisconsin, " Aug. 4, 1847; Dec. 26, 1847. Autograph record by Samuel Mazzuchelli. SDA.
29. No information has been found about the early life of Mary McNulty, but she had served in St Louis, taught at St. Joseph's Boys School in Philadelphia, and directed a German orphanage in Cincinnati. Mary Routan was born in England in 1822 of a French Presbyterian family and became a Catholic through the Oxford Movement.
30. From the Personal Journal of Josephine Cahill, 6. SDA.
31. Book of Foundations, Appendix I, 1849, 4. SDA.
32. One student, Charles McKenna, was inspired by a Mazzuchelli retreat to enter the Order. He became the founder of the Holy Name Society in the United States. O'Daniel, **Very Rev. Charles Hyacinth McKenna, O.P.** (New York: Holy Name Bureau, 1917) 39.
33. Mazzuchelli to Joseph Alemany, Benton, Wisconsin, Mar.11, 1850. UNDA. Copy SDA II, 160.
34. Sister Clara Conway taught in the Benton district school for a salary of twenty-five dollars a month. The usual monthly salary for a female teacher in 1860 was \$14.50.
35. "Book of Records," Aug. 15, 1853. SDA.
36. Annals of St. Mary's Convent, Somerset, Ohio. Columbus Dominican Archives. The four women traveled by riverboat on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers and by stage from Galena to Benton.
37. Sister Charles Borromeo Stevens, **Golden Bells in Convent Towers** (Chicago: R.R.Donnelley, 1904) 69-70.
38. See Mary Cecilia Murray, OR, "From Second to Third Order: Transition in the Regensburg Family of American Dominican Women from 1853-1929." (Ph.D. dissertation, Drew University, 1994) 36-41.
39. Samuel Mazzuchelli to Alexander Vincent Jandel, Benton, Wisconsin, Easter Sunday [Apr. 24] 1859. SDA, P.A. 43.
40. Vincentia Williams, "A School Girl's Impressions of Father Samuel When She was Fifteen Years Old." n.d. Original SDA XIV, 122.
41. Judge Charles Corkery, "Death of Very Rev. Samuel Mazzuchelli, Proto-Priest of the Northwest," **San Francisco Monitor**, May 28, 1864. Copied in the **New York Metropolitan**, but with author unnamed.