

F-20

Sisters' Cemetery, Campbellsport, Wisconsin

(School Sisters of St. Francis)

From the records of St. Joseph Convent, Campbellsport, WI

This introduction was written by S. Connie Halbur, former archivist for the School Sisters of St. Francis.

The School Sisters of St. Francis were founded in New Cassel (now Campbellsport) in 1874. The convent here was headquarters for the order only a few years, however, and then after a very brief stay in Winona, MN, moved to Milwaukee. At that time, the convent in Campbellsport became the place where sisters came to rest in the summer months, or to be cared for when ill. The order was young, and so were its members. The median age the first 10 to 20 years was probably in the 20s! So one would hardly expect that there would be many deaths. However, TB was rampant at that time, and took the lives of many young sisters, as well as many other young adults. The first two known deaths in the order occurred in 1881. One of them was one of the foundresses, *Sister Clara Seiter, who died on April 24, 1881*. She is not on the chart below.

A few explanatory notes:

1. There are probably a few omissions, as record-keeping in the order was far from ideal at that time. The foundresses were dynamic, energetic women, but record-keeping was not a high priority for them. Most records were drawn together years later, when memory was the only source of information remaining.
2. There is some confusion as to the surnames of some of the sisters from the first 20-25 years. Again, one reason is the inadequacy of early record-keeping. Also, sisters usually did not use their surname at that time.
3. There are undoubtedly errors. The death date given for a few of the sisters differs from one record or reference to another. Records other than death registers include many contradictions.
4. It is almost certain that the first grave markers were simple wooden crosses, or something of the sort. The order was poor, and could hardly afford headstones until it was more securely established. By the time there was sufficient money to buy headstones, the inscriptions were no longer legible. This may account for the inconsistency of many of the early records. Indeed, we have four different death dates recorded for one sister, and it was only with much research, and an accidental discovery of an account of her death by someone who had witnessed it that we could determine which of the dates was correct. The date on the headstone was grossly wrong, suggesting that it was a replacement of the original marker! By the time the headstone had been put in place, no one remembered the exact day.
5. The earliest sisters' burials are near the driveway, east of the crucifix. To some extent, they are mixed with other burials. In later years, the sisters had their own larger plots.
6. Approximately 1,100 sisters are buried here. Many sisters are buried elsewhere. Besides this cemetery, the largest School Sisters of St. Francis cemeteries are in Milwaukee (Calvary and Mt. Olivet), Rockford, IL, and Omaha, NE. A few sisters are buried at the place where they died, and others are buried in their home parish cemetery or on family plots.

About the arrangement of this book:

There are three sections:

- Arrangement by date of death (All sisters who died in a given year are together, but the month and day are not used in the sort.)
- Arrangement by surname
- Arrangement by place of burial (section, rows)