Sisters of Saint Francis
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interchange
~A Reverence for Nature~

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Dear Friends & Family,

In this issue, we reflect on the Rochester Franciscans' reverence for the natural world... all of creation.

- The late **Sister Margaret Kiefer** wrote her thesis paper on all the trees and bushes planted at Assisi Heights. It was an extensive research project!
- **Sister Joyce Stemper** had a spiritual experience in the Inner Courtyard, *and*
- **Brooke Rice-Stivers,** our Mission Advancement Coordinator, recorded the transformation of the Inner Courtyard to a place of beauty; a project led by groundskeeper and now maintenance supervisor, **Paul Tschumper.**

We hope you enjoy these stories reflecting on nature at Assisi Heights, as you enjoy this last month of summer.

Kathy Gatliff, Editor
Director of Communications & PR

The Landscape of Assisi Heights

By Sister Marisa McDonald, Archives Department

It was the mid-1950s when Assisi Heights became the residence of the Sisters of Saint Francis and the Motherhouse for the Administration of the Congregation. Sister Mary Mark Kiefer (later known as Sister Margaret or Marg) was studying for her Master of Arts degree at Saint Mary's University in Winona, MN. Mother Alcuin thought it would be valuable for the Sisters to know more about what was growing on this new property, and she suggested a topic for Sister Mark's thesis. And so, in December 1958, Sister Mark submitted her thesis:

"A Report on the Landscaping of Assisi Heights, Rochester, Minnesota with Special Emphasis on the History and Ecology of Trees and Shrubs Found There and on Walnut Hill."

She defined three purposes for the thesis:

1. to establish a teaching device in the biological field, easily accessible to Novices and Postulants;
2. to provide background material of a descriptive nature concerning some common trees and shrubs found at Assisi Heights; and
3. to present the material in a non-technical style.

Her thesis was divided into several sections: Landscaping and Ecology; Background Material on Trees for the Teacher; Illustrative Material; and a Bibliography.

Sister Mark began with a general explanation of the landscaping and why certain choices were made: ability to adapt to the wide variety of Minnesota temperatures, the soil and moisture conditions, desire for the trees and shrubs to be easy to grow, to be resistant to pests and blights, and to grow fairly quickly but to be "no more than moderate size, say 25 to 60 feet high." "Each evergreen, deciduous tree or shrub should display maximum beauty through the year."

She described the front area and the Novitiate Court/Saint Clare Court (now called the Outer Court) as having a slightly formal landscape design with concrete paths and geometric shapes. "For the overall picture, there must be unity, balance, and harmony of shapes, sizes, and colors; contrast and variety; and repetition. The house is the predominant subject; everything else must enhance its value."

Sister Mark went on to say that "trees make up only a part of the natural community at Assisi Heights. Other living and non-living members of the community affect the trees and are influenced by them." In homage to her Franciscan spirit, Sister Mark notes some specifics about how "other living and non-living members of the community affect the trees and are influenced by them," by providing details on the soil contents in the choice of plantings. She concludes that section by stating, "there is an organic whole in the natural community resulting in a moving mosaic of living associations."

The next section is titled "Background Material on Trees for the Teacher." Remember that a significant number of the Rochester Franciscans were "Sister-Teachers and Sister-Teachers-To-Be." Besides the teachers, it was also written "for those who surely will find more enjoyment in everyday living by coming on friendly speaking terms with His trees and shrubs."

The thirty-seven pages dedicated to the identification of the trees included scientific and common names, descriptive identifications, mention of harmful diseases and insects, and sometimes references to where additional information may be found.

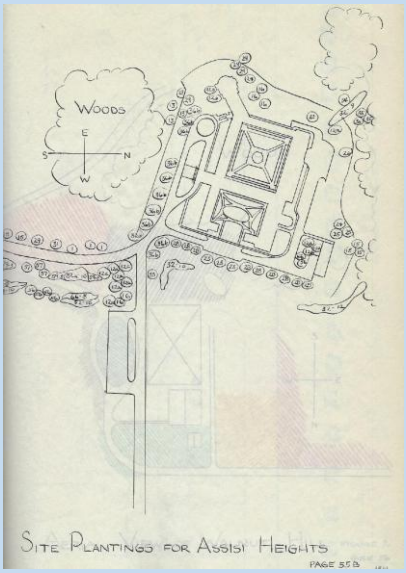
The "Illustrative Material" section includes a listing of the landscape plantings – with names, sizes, and quantity. This was followed by several detailed sketches of where the trees and shrubs were planted around Assisi Heights and Walnut Hill.

She also included pages with the tree names written out at the locations.

Among the many persons acknowledged for their assistance to Sister Mary Mark with the preparation of her thesis are other Rochester Franciscan Sisters: Declan (Joyce) Hassett, who helped with the identifications, Clairvaux McFarland, who prepared the first mappings; and Caelen Wolfe, who gave technical assistance in the last drafts.

I am sure that Sister Mark's diligent capturing of the landscaping around the new Assisi Heights was an inspiration to all those who had the opportunity to use the contents of the thesis in their enjoyment of the grounds.

Sister Mark (Margaret) Kiefer in the 1950s.



Site plantings of trees and bushes.

"Trees are poems that the earth writes upon the sky." - *Kahlil Gibran*

LANDSCAPE PLANTING

ST. CLARE NOVITIATE * SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS
Rochester, Minnesota

Planting Key

Key Number	Scientific Name	Common Name	Size	Quantity
1	Abies concolor	White Fir	4'-5'	3
2	Juniperus horiz. douglasi	Waukegan Juniper	24"-30"	5
3	Juniperus horiz. plumosa	Andorra "	24"-30"	10
4	" Pfiteriana	Pfitzer "	24"-30"	50
5	" sabina	Savin "	24"-30"	48
6	" " tamfolia	"	"	8
7	" " Von Ehron	Von Ehron "	"	12
8	" squata. meyeri	Meyer "	"	5
9	" virg. canaerti	Canaert "	4'-5'	28
10a	" " hilli	Dundee "	"	13
10b	" " "	" "	5'-6'	16
11	Picea glauca densata	Black Hill Spruce	3'-4'	10
12a	" pungens	Colorado " (green)	4'-5'	21
12b	" "	" " "	5'-6'	10
12c	" "	" " (blue)	4'-5'	4
13	Pinus nigra	Austrian Pine	4'-5'	3
14	" mugo mugnus	Mugho "	24"-30"	38
15	" sylvestris	Scotch "	4'-5'	5
16	" stobus	White "	4'-5'	8
17	Psuedotsuga douglasi	Douglas Fir	4'-5'	6
18	Taxus cuspidata	Dwarf Japanese Yew	24"-30"	8
19	" " capitata	Upright " "	4'-4½'	2
20a	Thuja occidentalis pyramid.	Pyramidal Arbor Vitae	4'-5'	6
20b	" " "	" " "	5'-6'	6
21	Tsuga canadensis	Northern Hemlock	3'-4'	4
22	Aesculus hippocastanum	Horsechestnut	2"-2½"	--
23	Acer platanoides	Norway Maple	2"-2½"	5
24	" " schwed.	Schwedler "	"	4
25	" saccharum	Sugar "	"	4
26	" rubrum	Red	"	1
27	Catalpa speciosa	Catalpa	1½"-2"	1
28	Celtis occidentalis	Hackberry	2"-2½"	10
29	Fraxinus lanceolata	Green Ash	"	21
30	Juglans nigra	Black Walnut	"	4
31	Populus alba	White Poplar	"	1
32	" " bolleana	Bolleana "	"	31
33	Quercus palustris	Pin Oak	1"-1½"	2
34	Salix niobe	Niobe Weeping Willow	2"-2½"	3
35	Sorbus americana	American Mountain Ash	1"-1½"	5
36a	Ulmus "	" Elm	2"-2½"	16
36b	" "	" "	3"-3½"	13
37	Acer ginnala	Tartarian Maple	4'-5'	2
38	Amelanchier alnifolia	Saskatoon Serviceberry	3'-4'	6
39	Caryopteris clandonensis	Blue Spirea	15"-18"	32
40	Cercis canadensis	Redbud	4'-5'	6
41	Cornus sibirica	Red-twig Dogwood	2'-3'	5
42a	Cotoneaster acutifolia	Peking Cotoneaster	2'-3'	6
42b	" "	" " (hedge)	2'-3'	152
43	Cydonica japonica	Flowering Quince	18"-24"	28
44	Deutzia variety	Pride of Rochester	18"-24"	17
45	Euonymus alatus	Winged Euonymus	2'-3'	10

Sister Mark's detailed listing of plantings at Assisi Heights, including their common and scientific names.

An Unexpected Visitor

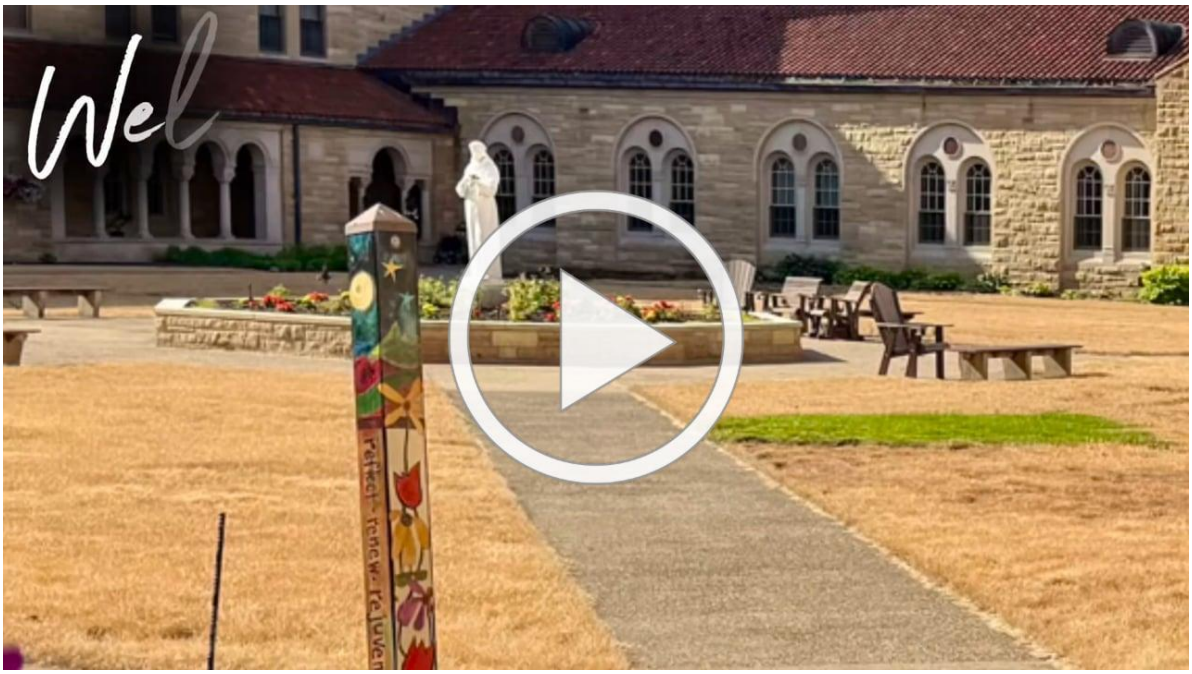
by Sister Joyce Stemper

I was awed and amazed with the wonderous experience of witnessing a bald eagle grace our Inner Court. On the evening of July 10th, a bald eagle swooped down into our Inner Court and landed on top of the roof facing the court. As it rested there, I was reminded of conversations with Native people in the past who shared how the eagle's presence was a reminder to them of the Great Spirit's presence. The eagle rested for maybe 3-4 minutes and then extended the grand expanse of its wings, circled the court, and headed north.

What a beautiful, joy-filled, blessing for all of us who enter, as well as all the creatures who share this space.

I was deeply touched by this gift and still feel it when I walk into the courtyard.

An Amazing Transformation



Brooke Rice-Stivers, our Mission Advancement Coordinator, recorded the transformation of the Inner Courtyard to a place of beauty! Turn on your sound and copy this link and place in your browser: https://vimeo.com/1108116887/e69162d7f4?share=copy