



St. Gertrude's convent and academy by the Sisters of St. Benedict was incorporated on May 4, 1866. The Sisters reacted a large, two and a half-story limestone building at the corner of Fourth and Atwood Street, south of St. Mark's Church. The convent and academy opened from 1862 to 1880. It later became the Scott County Poor House, and then the second hospital in Shakopee. It is now a parking lot near St. Mark's Church.

Sr. Mechtild Richter, and Sr. Adelaide Elder (Pricilla Jane Elder) arrived in Shakopee and founded St. Gertrude's Convent. Sr. Adelaide was 21 years old.

"When the time came for her to go out to Shakopee, Minnesota together with two other Sisters and one lay sister....She looked splendid in her habit. I again saw her on her western trip to Minnesota. That was the last time I saw our sister Jane," said her brother, Peter.

In a letter to King Ludwig of Bavaria on December 2, 1862, Abbott Boniface Wimmer noted that he founded a little mission in Shakopee for the Sisters "to the great joy of the English and German Catholics. The new convent has its own story. First it was a cow shed, then a horse barn, and now it is an embryo of a woman's convent, but it only serves, in any event, only the most necessary purposes."

Sr. Adelaide entered the convent in Pennsylvania in 1859, received the habit in 1860, and made triennial vows in 1861. She arrived in October and died of tuberculosis two months later.



When the nuns were forced to move from Shakopee to St. Joseph, Minnesota in 1880, they took the coffins of the nuns who had died. According to Jane Hanson, it was believed that Sr. Adelaide's coffin was empty.

The records at St. Mark's Church in Shakopee noted that Sr. Adelaide Elder died two months after arriving in Shakopee on December 21, 1862 and was buried the next day in Calvary Cemetery by Fr. Scherer, O.S.B., who assisted and anointed her before her death.

In the first 25 years at St. Mary's Convent, the community lost 22 postulants and nuns who died of tuberculosis, ages 17 to 30...including Sr. Adelaide Elder.

Tuberculosis is not gone if forgotten. Since 1985, tuberculosis (TB) has slowly come back in the US. Though the number of cases reported in the United States has been dropping since 1992, there were more than 16,000 cases reported in 2000.



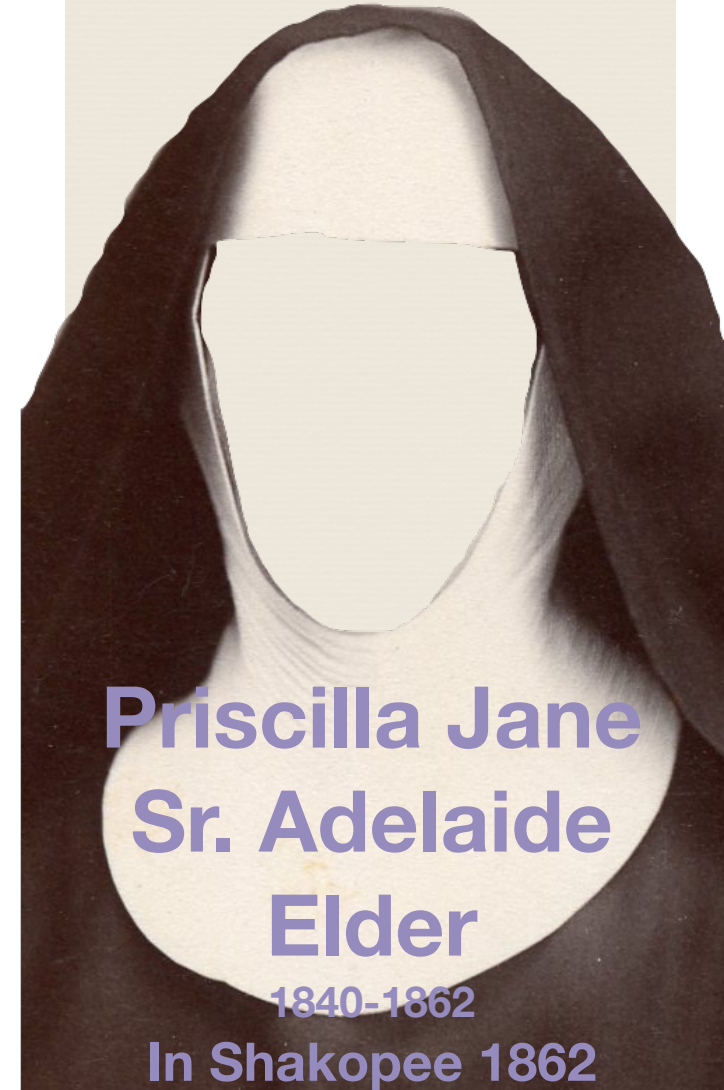
SHAKOPEE HERITAGE SOCIETY
2109 Boulder Pointe, Shakopee, MN 55379

952-693-3865

shakopeeheritage.org



SHAKOPEE HERITAGE SOCIETY



Priscilla Jane
Sr. Adelaide
Elder

1840-1862

In Shakopee 1862



Sr. Adelaide Elder coughed. Crimson droplets appeared on her lips, the first sign of tuberculosis, or consumption, as it was called.

Tuberculosis is something people don't often think about anymore. But 19th century people in Minnesota were frighteningly aware of the symptoms: the flushed cheeks, the bright eyes, fever, loss of appetite, and most of all, the cough. It was feared, but regarded with a peculiar resignation because it was so unavoidable. It was dreaded, but at the same time romanticized. It was a disease that reflected the culture of its time: the victim slowly, gracefully fading away, transcending their corporeal body, their immortal soul shining through, according to *A Gentle Death: Tuberculosis in 19th Century Concord* by Constance Manoli-Skocay at the **Concord Free Public Library**.

In reality, tuberculosis, commonly called consumption in the 19th century, affected the poor more often than the wealthy, females more than males, and people of all ages. Anyone could be a victim, but it was especially prevalent among young adults, cruelly striking down those in the prime of their lives.

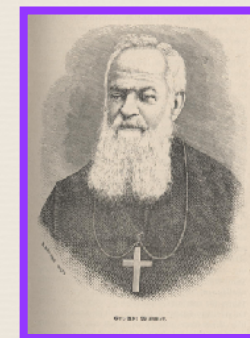
Unfortunately, the disease was not well understood. Its cause would not be discovered until 1882. In the meantime, beliefs



Left photo from the archives of Monastery Immaculate Conception, Ferdinand, Indiana. This might be the only picture of Mother Benedicta Riepp, founder of the first Benedictine convent in America.



Mother Benedicta Rieppn (1825–1862), along with Sr. Walburga Dietrich, and Sr. Maura Flieger moved to America at the request of Reverend Boniface Wimmer, established a community life and opened a school for women.



Right Reverend Boniface Wimmer, O.S.B.

about the disease reflected the cultural and scientific thinking of the time. It was thought that it might be a vaguely environmental, "something in the air"; but more likely caused by the victim's own constitution, either physiologically, psychologically, or both. It was not believed to be contagious, so those suffering from the disease were not avoided. Recommended steps toward prevention included fresh air, a wholesome diet, exercise, and healthy manual labor.

Priscilla Jane Elder was born in 1840 near Loretto, Pennsylvania, according to Jane Hanson in May 2007. Her parents were James Elder (1811-1880) and Ann O'Conner (1819-1898). By 1850, Ann O'Conner Elder had died, and Jane and her siblings were living with various families in the area. Jane's brothers, William (1838-1928) and James (1845-1919) moved to Hastings, Minnesota with their uncle in 1867. Her brother Peter (1842-1926) was a banker in Philadelphia. Thomas (1843-1862) died in the Civil War. And Jane's sister, Mary Ann (1847-1873) went to St Xavier's school near Latrobe, and became a nun called Sr. Mary Leonard.

As for Jane? She went to the convent of St. Benedict convent in St. Mary's,

Pennsylvania and became a nun.

Priscilla Jane Elder told her brother, Peter, that she wanted to be a nun. "After a talk to with a priest, she was pleased as (the priest) told her he would accept her as a sister of the order of St. Benedict's and that she could go to St. Mary's, Elk County Pennsylvania to join the order as same as others who were going to join," said Peter Elder, who told the relatives in a writing "*A Chapter in the Life of Jane Elder*" by Peter Elder, her brother, in 1924. "I was present and saw her off on the way to St. Mary's. I corresponded with Jane all the time she was at St. Mary's."

Boniface Wimmer was a missionary from Metten, Bavaria. He wanted to spread the Benedictine Order to people in America. Boniface asked the Sisters in St. Walburga's in Eichstatt to teach German immigrants in Pennsylvania. Three arrived to America: Sr. Benedicta Riepp, age 27, Sr. Walburga Dietrich, age 48, and St. Maura Flieger, age 30. They left Bavaria on June 12, 1852, and arrived in New York on July 8, 1852, and then to St. Mary's, Pennsylvania on July 22. Before too long, 39 Sisters were at St. Mary's.

Reverend Boniface Wimmer wanted to spend the gospel to the West, and by October 9, 1862, Wimmer, along with Sr Clara Vogel, a lay sister