

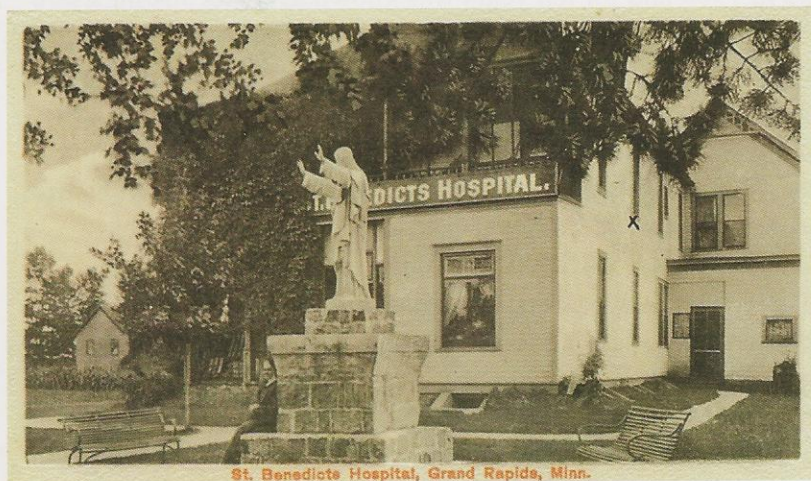
REMEMBERING THINGS PAST: THE SACRED HEART SHRINE

By Sister Margaret Clarke

Once upon a time, about a thousand million years ago, the earth's crust developed a large crack extending roughly from where Kansas is now, making a sharp right turn at the "forehead" of the Lake Superior "wolf" and continuing down into Michigan. Uncountable tons of hot melted rock flooded up into that crack, eventually solidifying into the rock formations now known as the Duluth Gabbro and North Shore Volcanics. This heavy, dark rock underlies not only the Duluth area, but a significant portion of northeastern Minnesota.

Somewhat more recently, a bit more than a hundred years ago in 1900, a group of Benedictine Sisters purchased eighty acres of land lying on this ancient rock on the outskirts of Duluth, intending to build a school and motherhouse. Within a few years they had added an additional forty acres, and then another forty. The last parcel of land purchased turned out to have a rock quarry capable of furnishing enough of the gabbro—locally known as "blue trap"—to construct the entire building that was completed in 1909. In 1920 and 1928 additions to this building, now known as Tower Hall, were also faced with the gabbro quarried on site. By this time, the amount of usable stone was depleted, leaving a sheer cliff backing a space like an amphitheater on the "back forty."

Meanwhile, back in Grand Rapids, Minnesota, the Sisters were operating St. Benedict's Hospital, which they had opened in 1898. A member of the local clergy, Father Louis Beuchler, gave the Sisters two large outdoor statues for their property: one of St. Scholastica and the other of the Sacred Heart. When the hospital was closed in 1912, he indicated that the statues should go to the site of the new motherhouse in Duluth. St. Scholastica was installed in front of the recently completed Villa Sancta Scholastica, and the statue of the Sacred Heart was moved to the Sisters' cemetery.

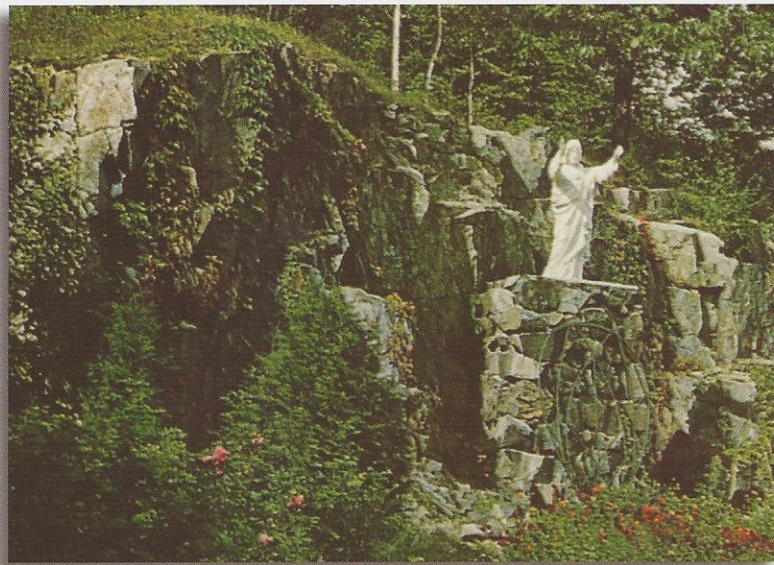


The original location of the statue in front of St. Benedict's Hospital, Grand Rapids, Minnesota about 1910



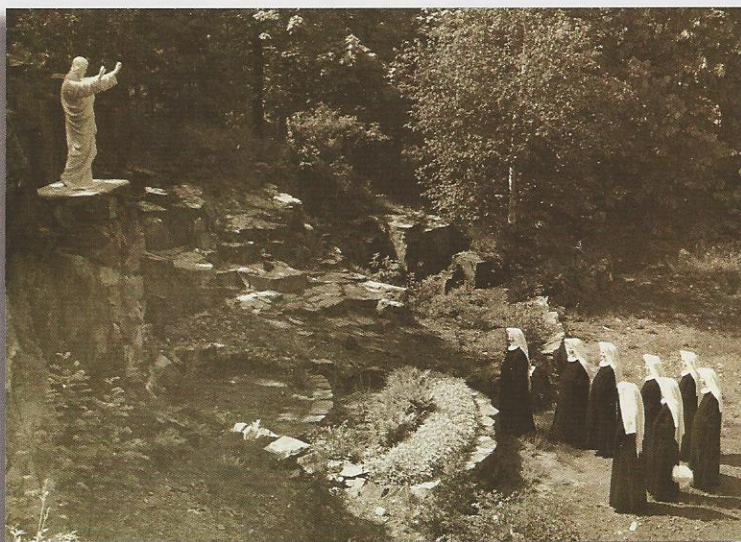
The Sacred Heart statue in Gethsemane Cemetery, its location from 1913 to 1946

In 1946 the Sacred Heart statue was moved to the former quarry. A stone pedestal was constructed by stonemason Mr. Louis Lenta, father of Sister Petra. Using chunks of a concrete slab, Mr. Lenta built steps to connect the floor of the quarry with the top of the cliff. An elaborate system of gardens was laid out and given into the care of the novices. The gardens eventually extended from the foot of the statue itself down a winding path bordered by flower beds to the south end of Stanbrook Hall.



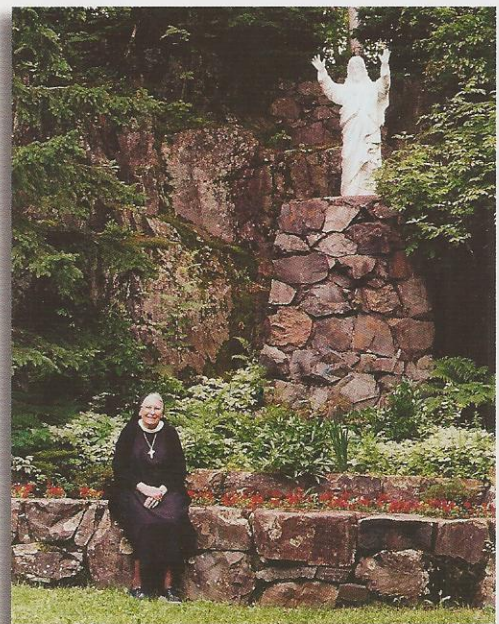
The Sacred Heart Shrine in the 1950s

The Sacred Heart shrine became a popular destination for Sisters, students, and retreatants, both for private devotions and public worship services. As the number of novices has decreased over the years, the scope of the gardens has also diminished. With the construction of Stanbrook West and the BHC, access has become a bit more difficult, but for those who seek a quiet place for prayer and reflection, the statue still stands, as Sister Scholastica Bush noted in 1946, “with arms extended in benediction above the buildings.”



Novices visit the shrine in 1949

Photos from Monastery Archives



Sister Petra enjoys her father's stonework.



Over 135 historical photographs from the archives of the Monastery and the College are now available online on the Minnesota Reflections website, <http://reflections.mndigital.org>. On the Minnesota Reflections homepage, under Browse click “by collection” and scroll down to College of St. Scholastica or St. Scholastica Monastery, and click “view the collection.” In the Monastery collection, you will find pre-1950 photos of the Sisters at work and play, and all of the buildings we have constructed, plus a few historical photos from St. Mary’s Hospital.