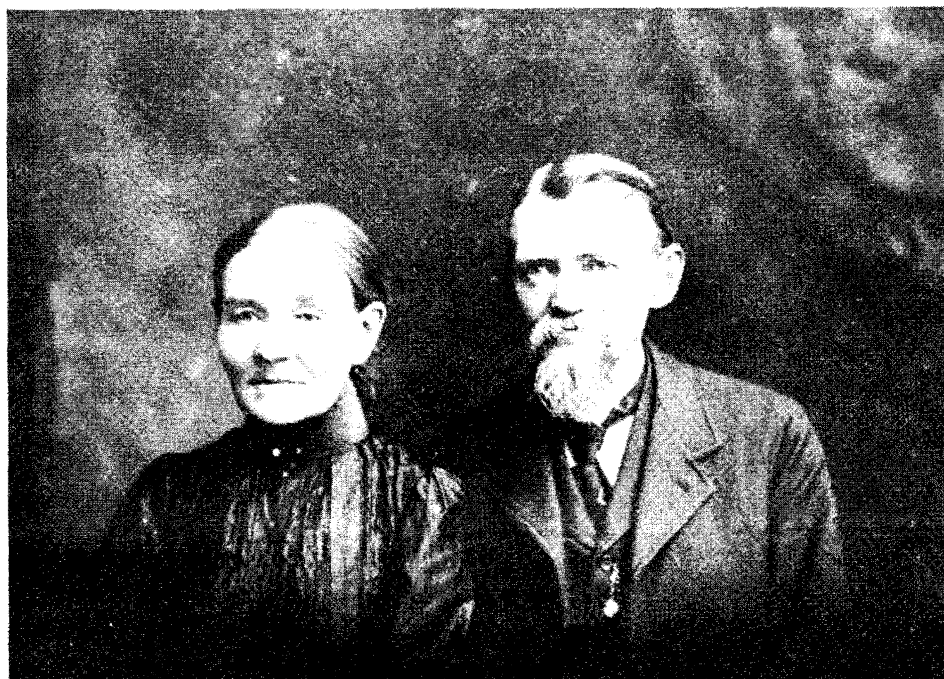


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Professor Henry and Mrs. Theresa Lagemann

PROFESSOR HENRY LAGEMANN
OF THE PONTIFICAL COLLEGE JOSEPHINUM
(1839 - 1907)

While a student at the Academy at Münster in Westphalia, Germany, Sergeant-Major Joseph Jessing met and befriended a younger student named Henry Lagemann. This was about 1864 or 1865, when the two students were about twenty-eight and twenty-five years old. At this time in Münster, Jessing organized the Gabelsberger Stenographen-Verein, a society to promote the use of Gabelsberger shorthand among stenographers. Lagemann became this society's first secretary and with Jessing spent many pleasant hours in the work, on which he often reminisced in later life. The paths of the two men soon diverged, neither one foreseeing that in God's Divine Providence they would later cross in America and merge, their talents and efforts harmonizing for the furtherance of the work of the Church.

John Henry Lagemann was born on March 9, 1839 in the village of Lastrup by Lönningen, which lies about fifty miles southwest of its territorial capital of Oldenburg in northwestern Germany. He was the youngest of three sons of John Henry and Margaretha (Meyer) Lagemann. His paternal grandfather, John Henry von Gudemann, had married Maria Gertrude Lagemann, who was heiress to her family's home, the "Lagemann Hoff." Von Gudemann took over this property and took his wife's "title" or name of Lagemann, which was in accord with ancient custom in that part of Europe. (1) In accord with another old custom, the subject of this sketch and his two brothers were all given the first name of John and were distinguished by their second names, Wilhelm, Joseph, and Heinrich or Henry. Therefore he was usually known as "Henry" Lagemann.

Though he was not destined to inherit the family's farm, which eventually was taken over by his eldest brother, as son of a landed family Henry Lagemann was given the opportunity to seek an excellent formal education. After attending his parish school he took private lessons from a curate in the neighborhood of Lastrup in preparation for the Gymnasium or college. He began his higher education in the year 1856 at the town of Vechta and then spent six years at Meppen in Hanover, where he obtained his degree. In 1863 with a few student friends he entered the Academy at Münster, where under distinguished professors he studied Philosophy, Theology, and Philology. Mr. Lagemann had a poetic soul and was a great lover of nature; at Münster he gained his thorough knowledge of Ornithology, Botany, Physics, and Geology, the basis of his future teaching career in the natural sciences. (2)

It was at Münster that Lagemann met Joseph Jessing and there also we know that his thoughts turned strongly toward his maker. His family still possesses a certificate dated 2 February 1864 attesting to his membership in the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary under title of the Immaculate Conception. He considered and pursued the intention of becoming a priest, for by January of 1866 he had left Münster and was studying Theology and Church History at the American College at Louvain in Belgium. These studies were cut short by illness. After just six months he returned home and eventually took a teaching position in a merchant-school in Lohen, Oldenburg. He stayed in Lohen but a short time, for the "Wanderlust" soon gripped him and in 1868 he landed in Baltimore, Maryland.

At this point, events moved rapidly in his life as he changed quickly from child and student to husband, father, and teacher. He proceeded almost immediately from Baltimore "to join a former fellow-student, the Reverend Ferdinand Steinlage, who was stationed at Hamilton, Ohio at the time. Quite unexpectedly the teacher at Hamilton turned out to be his old Westphalian friend, Joseph Jessing. It was Mr. Lagemann who helped and coached Father Jessing in refreshing his Latin preparatory to entering the seminary." In the autumn of 1868 he obtained the position of teacher and sexton at St. Philomena's Church in Cincinnati. He soon passed the state examination and began a career of several years' duration as a teacher in various public schools, both district and intermediate level. On July 16, 1870 at Blessed Trinity Church in Cincinnati he married Maria Theresia Schroeder, a native of Schapen bei Lingen, Osnabrück, Hanover, in northwestern Germany. (4) Henry and Theresa had five children: Mary Josephine (1871-1887), Ignaz (born 1873), Julius (born and died 1874), Leo F. (1875-1876), and Joseph (born 1877), all born in Cincinnati, where they resided at 23 Price Street. They later moved to Randolph Street in Woodburn.

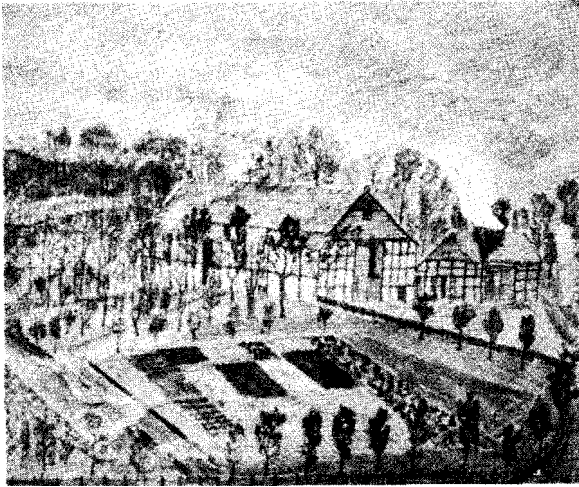
On the same day on which the marriage of Henry Lagemann and Theresa Schroeder was blessed at Blessed Trinity Church in Cincinnati, July 16, 1870, Joseph Jessing was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Columbus by Bishop Rosecrans at nearby Mt. St. Mary's of the West. While Lagemann taught in the Cincinnati schools, Jessing was sent as pastor to Pomeroy, Ohio, where he began his two great works, his orphanage which later became the Pontifical College Josephinum and his newspaper which supported the orphanage, the Ohio Waisenfreund. Mr. Lagemann was to become one of Jessing's loyal aides in both of these works.

Father Jessing moved his orphanage and his growing newspaper from Pomeroy to Columbus in 1877. It was three years later, in 1880, that he thought of his old friend Henry Lagemann and invited him to join in his work. From that time on Lagemann was a frequent contributor to the pages of the Ohio Waisenfreund. He regularly answered all questions sent in by readers concerning the natural sciences, while also contributing numerous translations and adaptations from English-language fiction. He made a similar contribution to the Question-Box of the Cincinnati German newspaper, the Warheitsfreund. (5)

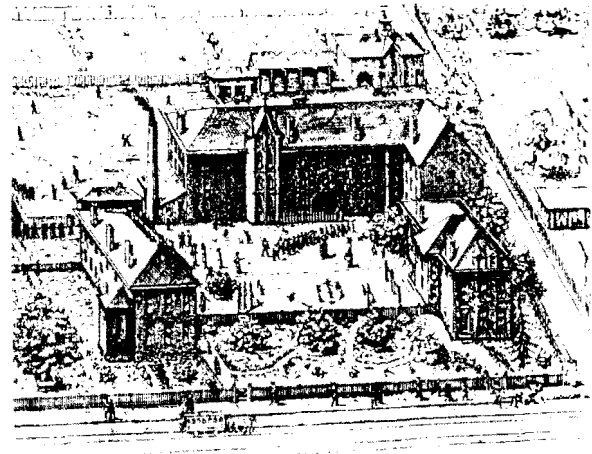
At first, Mr. Lagemann must have made his contributions to Father Jessing's newspaper via the postal system, for he continued to live in the Cincinnati area and followed his teaching profession. He was still living in Woodburn in 1882 but had left the Cincinnati area by the summer of 1883. According to an account published in 1907 (6), he came to Columbus in 1882, but there is no other evidence of his presence here before 1886. The first document recording his residence in Columbus is the deed, dated September 30, 1886, whereby he purchased from Joseph T. Baker and wife a brick house at 356 Miller Avenue, where he and Theresa made their home. (7) This home was just north of Rich Street and about two miles from the downtown area. The 1887 Columbus directory lists Mr. Lagemann as a "clerk." It also lists the firm of "Lagemann and Baker" on the southeast corner of Main and Fourth streets but gives no clue to the nature of the business. Half-way between Lagemann's home and this business along the Main Street horse-car line was Father Jessing's St. Joseph's Orphans' Home.

Lagemann's move to Columbus was providential for the Josephinum; when Father Jessing received the overwhelming response to his offer to educate two poor boys for the priesthood and decided in the autumn of 1888 to hurriedly gather a faculty and open a seminary, Mr. Lagemann was available to serve as one of the first faculty members. That first year he taught only German but in subsequent years he also taught Physics, Botany, and Zoology. In these, the crowning years of his intellectual life from 1889 until 1907, in addition to teaching he continued to contribute to the Ohio Waisenfreund and was named its associate editor in 1905; he contributed to botanical magazines; he continued to amass a fine collection of botanical specimens (which was eventually given to the Josephinum); he was a prominent member of the Horticultural Society of the Ohio State University and served as chairman of its committee on Botany until 1906. "The esteem in which Professor Lagemann was held is shown by the fact that he was made an honorary member of the Josephinum Alumni Association despite the fact that he was a layman." (8)

As he reached the middle of his seventh decade, his health beginning to fail and the quality of his work declining in his own eyes, he began to prepare for the certain transition from this life to the next. His will,



The Lagemann Hoff, Lastrup, Oldenburg



The St. Joseph's Orphans' Home, 1886

written in 1903, besides providing for his wife and their surviving sons Ignatz and Joseph, directed that small sums be given to institutions which because of their work or their need had attracted his interest: St. Joseph Seminary for Negro Missions, in Baltimore; Holy Rosary Industrial School in Galveston; the Vicar Apostolic of Prince Albert, Sasketchewan; the Society of the Divine Word, Schermersville, Ill.; and the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration at Clyde, Missouri. (9)

Professor Lagemann died on Friday June 21, 1907, "fortified by the holy rites of the Church." His funeral at Holy Rosary Church was under the direction of the rector of the Josephinum, with burial at Mt. Calvary Cemetery. At his passing, the Ohio Waisenfreund praised him with the following words:

All who knew the straightforward, unaffected man and had gained an insight into his truly natural but unselfish character will agree that he was a man without guile, an upright and loyally devoted Catholic man of conviction, whose aspirations were directed not toward earthly but toward unperishable reward.

He had ably seconded the works of Father Jessing, the education of the seminarians and the publication of the newspaper which supported them and the orphans, as long as he was able, up until a few months before his "blessed end." He was truly a gift to the Church in this country, and his co-editors of the Waisenfreund rightly asked their readers for prayers in remembrance of the "professor, friend, and benefactor of the Josephinum."

NOTES

- (1) See the article "Surname Inconsistencies in Northern Germany" by Robert E. Stiens, C.G., in the Tri-State Trader of Jan. 15, 1983, reprinted from German-American Studies, Spring 1975.
- (2) Ohio Waisenfreund, 26 June 1907, p. 103

- (3) Miller, Leo F. et alia, Monsignor Joseph Jessing (1836-1899), Founder of the Pontifical College Josephinum; Columbus: Carroll Press, 1938, pp. 8 and 223.
- (4) Information on Professor Lagemann's family and the pictures were supplied by his grandson, John W. Lageman of Columbus.
- (5) Miller, op. cit., quoting O.W. of May 4, 1898; O.W. 26 June 1907.
- (6) Obituary clipping, probably from the Columbus Dispatch of June 22 or June 24, 1907.
- (7) Franklin County Deed Record 179 p. 603.
- (8) Miller, op. cit., citing Josephinum Alumni Journal I/26 & 32; II/25-27; and Catalog XX of the P.C.J., page 48.
- (9) Franklin County Probate Court, Will Record BB, pages 417-418.

MONSIGNOR JOSEPH JESSING
AND HIS PONTIFICAL COLLEGE JOSEPHINUM
by Monsignor John P. Kleinz

(Conclusion)

In the see city of Columbus, the printing press which symbolized so much of his work became the center of an industrial school which Father Jessing added to his orphanage. He wanted, he said, to teach his orphans, who were all boys aged ten to seventeen, "useful crafts and trades." In the years that followed he added new buildings to the property he had acquired on East Main Street in Columbus. In the trade school the orphans could become printers, tailors, shoemakers, farmers, or carpenters who made church furniture.

From the printing shop the Ohio Waisenfreund continued to roll off the presses every week. The paper became one of the most popular German Catholic weeklies in the country. It publicized his work, carried his appeals for help for the orphans, and was a popular exposition of the Catholic Faith for thousands of families which had immigrated to the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Father Jessing was the editor and principal writer for the Waisenfreund, which he had founded in Pomeroy to support his orphanage. From 1873 until his death he would fill its columns with an amazing variety of topics. Each week the paper provided a summary of national and international news, articles on geography, travel, history, short stories, and a question-and-answer column in which Jessing answered queries on matters ranging from religious questions to child rearing and folk remedies. The major articles were on religious topics: apologetics, historical questions, lives of the saints, and Protestantism. No better proof of Jessing's unswerving loyalty to the papacy can be given than the 833 columns on 254 popes (from Peter to Pius VI) which Jessing wrote in the pages of the Waisenfreund over a sixteen year period, from 1882 to 1898.

Father Jessing wrote profusely on Martin Luther and the Reformation. One of his proudest possessions was a complete set of Luther's books in the original German. Father Thomas A. Thompson, S.M., until recently a professor of history in the Josephinum College of Liberal Arts, wrote an article, "Monsignor Joseph Jessing on Martin Luther: a Nineteenth-Century Catholic View of the Reformation" in a recent issue of The Josephinum Journal of Theology.

(3) He analyses the several books Jessing wrote on Luther with most of the material in them taken from his columns in the Ohio Waisenfreund.

Here is how Father Thompson characterizes the spirit in which Jessing wrote them: "Jessing's writing was always straight-forward, forceful, comprehensible, and he never shrank from controversy. It was in the pages of the Waisenfreund that his many articles on Luther and the Reformation first appeared." Writing in Jessing's biography, Father Joseph C. Plumpe spoke of Jessing's "endless polemics directed against Luther and Lutheranism" as appearing to be "injudicious [in] some of its aspects." (4) Father Thompson continues, "Read in the present conciliatory atmosphere between Catholics and Protestants, Jessing's columns appear hopelessly tendentious, incessantly argumentative. However, Jessing wrote a century ago, at a time of persecution of the Catholic Church in Germany and of nativist prejudice against Catholics in the United States."

One day early in 1888, Father Jessing sat writing at his desk in the haphazard collection of buildings at 821 East Main Street which housed the orphanage and trade school he had founded there eleven years before. He was editing -- and writing -- that week's issue of the Waisenfreund. Some of his many faithful readers had written to ask his help in getting priests who could minister to them in German.

It was the time of the great immigration. In answer, Father Jessing wrote that day a short article on the subject of helping poor boys study for the priesthood. With sudden generosity he offered to take two boys himself and start their education if they would come to him. The response was surprising. Thirty boys wrote -- in German -- begging for direction and assistance. Father Jessing, with the saintly simplicity and the tremendous trust in Divine Providence and his patron, Saint Joseph, which marked his whole life, decided to start his own seminary alongside the orphanage and trade school. Nobody would have to pay any board or tuition. He would call the seminary the Collegium Josephinum -- the Latin for "College of St. Joseph," the patron of poor religious founders everywhere.

On that day in 1888, the priest who had done so much for the German Catholics of the United States founded his seminary to form priests who could offer their priestly ministry to them in their native language. He was full of zeal for the country which had granted him its citizenship. He was eager to help in the conversion of non-Catholics of this country. His experience had taught him a deep compassion for the poor and needy. All these motives blended into his decision to make room for the seminarians in the buildings on East Main Street. By October of 1888, twenty-three boys had gathered at the Josephinum to begin their preparation for the priesthood. Somehow Father Jessing recruited a small faculty of priests and laymen to help him teach them the high school subjects which became the basic elements of the liberal arts curriculum. Jessing intended to send them to Rome for their philosophical and theological studies. That proved unfeasible, and the Josephinum expanded to include the full range of clerical studies.

Joseph Jessing died on November 2, 1899, but before that he had the joy of seeing six of his seminarians ordained to the priesthood on June 29, 1899, the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul. The ordaining bishop was the Apostolic Delegate to the United States, Archbishop Sebastian Martinelli.

On May 6, 1891, Father Jessing had written in his Waisenfreund a paragraph which may be regarded as his spiritual testament to the many priests ordained at the Pontifical College Josephinum since that first ordination in 1899:

We teach our students not to strive later on as priests after the things of this world, nor to seek distinction before men, nor the conveniences of life and riches; they should rather...strive for learning and virtue, with the resolve to work one day with zeal for the glory of God, and the salvation of souls.

The priest from Westphalia achieved extraordinary things for the Catholic Church in America. Denied the chance to wield a sword in defense of the Pope and the Church (he had tried to join the Papal Army in Italy), he used his powerful pen for that purpose; he founded a flourishing Catholic paper. Taught by the poverty of his youth and his compassion for the poor and forsaken, he started an orphanage. Educated under difficult circumstances, he opened a trade school. Ordained a priest after unusual financial hardship, he organized a seminary which charged no tuition or board. He was fired by love for the Holy See; he offered his seminary to the Pope. He would be glad to know that the latest addition to his seminary was dedicated in 1982 as The Pope John Paul II Education Center, which houses the A. T. Wherle Memorial Library.

The Pontifical College Josephinum moved to its present spacious campus two miles north of Worthington, Ohio, in 1931; it remains what one might call the Pope's American seminary and operates today as the heir of a long tradition which began at MUnster in Germany in 1836 with the birth of Joseph Jessing. It owes its existence today to the vision of Monsignor Jessing and to the generosity of American Catholics, particularly to those of German origin and descent who supported it generously through the early years of its history.

From its beginning as a seminary ninety-seven years ago, it has sought to serve the Catholic Church in ways that respect the broad scope of her mission in this country. In its earlier days it gave special service in preparing, for the entire country, priests who could minister effectively to German-American Catholics. For a long time it has served particularly poor and missionary dioceses in this country by educating priests who wished to serve especially in such areas. In recent years it has designed special programs for those, Hispanic and otherwise, who minister to Hispanic-Americans. For two decades it has also helped educate candidates of the Salesians of Don Bosco, who now serve as missionaries in this country and abroad.

To say that the Josephinum remains the only pontifical seminary in the United States is to point out the broad scope of its interests; it was not established to serve any single diocese. The Apostolic Pro-Nuncio to the United States, Archbishop Pio Laghi, is its Chancellor and exercises ecclesiastical jurisdiction over it as its Ordinary. The seminary has direct ties to the center of the universal Church in Rome, especially to the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education. Its alumni serve a great variety of dioceses -- in 46 dioceses in the United States and in eleven countries abroad.

As of September 1, 1984, there were 112 seminarians, eight part-time non-seminarians and two full-time non-seminarians in the College of Liberal Arts. In the School of Theology on the same date were 86 seminarians, two women non-seminarian candidates for degrees, and ten part-time non-seminarians. These students are taught in the College by nine full-time professors and twenty-five part-time teachers and in Theology by thirteen full-time and ten part-time members of the Faculty. The members of the Administration and Faculty are priests, sisters, laymen, and laywomen. There are approximately 1,010 ordained alumni and 4,500 lay alumni.

Guided by the Catholic ecumenical principles outlined by the Second Vatican Council, the Josephinum has offered a complete program by its association with other seminaries in the Columbus area. The generous cooperation of Lutheran Trinity Seminary in Columbus and Methodist Theological School in nearby Delaware, Ohio, greatly expands the academic program, the library resources, and the ecumenical perspective of the students.

In conjunction with the Columbus area theological schools, the Josephinum participates in programs with the professional schools of the Ohio State University. Interdisciplinary seminars with the College of Law, the College of Medicine, the College of Education, the College of Social Work, and the School of Nursing are conducted on the University's campus in Columbus.

Monsignor Joseph Jessing would find his institution a quite different place from the small seminary he inaugurated almost a hundred years ago, but he would find that his effort to provide priests for the Catholic Church in America still thrives at the Pontifical College Josephinum.

In his time, Monsignor Jessing was called the "Don Bosco of America." When he died in 1899, the headline in the Columbus Dispatch of the next day was "The Great Benefactor of Youth is Dead." In 1896, the Columbus Sunday Morning Press began a long article on "The Work of Father Jessing" which credited him with "the building up of the most remarkable institutions in the world." The "most remarkable" seems a bit exaggerated, but there is no doubt something special and -- one can say it -- unique, about the orphanage on East Main Street which became the Pontifical College Josephinum.

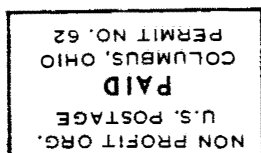
NOTES

- (1) Editor's note: According to the Waisenfreund, Father Jessing was still negotiating for the property in October of 1874.
- (2) I am indebted for the details of Father Jessing's sojourn in Pomeroy to Father Leo E. Gillen's A History of Sacred Heart Church, Pomeroy, Ohio, who wrote that he had compiled it from various sources.
- (3) The Josephinum Journal of Theology, Vol. III, No. 2 (Fall/Winter 1984).
- (4) Miller, Leo F. et alia, Monsignor Joseph Jessing (1836-1899), Founder of the Pontifical College Josephinum; Columbus: Carroll Press, 1936; p. 159.

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