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Saint John's Gets its Charter: 1857

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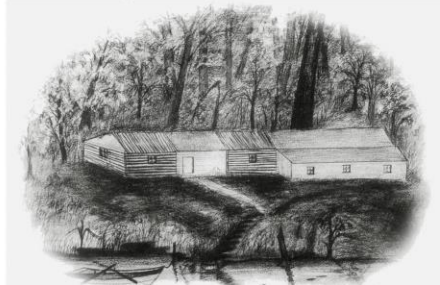
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Laws of Minnesota.

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CHAPTER XLVII.

An Act to Incorporate the St. John Seminary.



St. John's Incorporation



**Fr. Francis Pierz, missionary,
attracted German Catholics to Minnesota**



**Bishop Joseph Cretin
invited the Benedictines to Minnesota**

Worship & Work p. 20; photos p. 38c

Fr. Francis Pierz and Bishop Cretin

After Mass on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, 8 December 1856, Father Cornelius Wittmann, OSB, opened the first school within the present boundaries of Stearns county.

It was a parish elementary school which at the same time inaugurated free public education in central Minnesota.

Worship & Work, p. 46

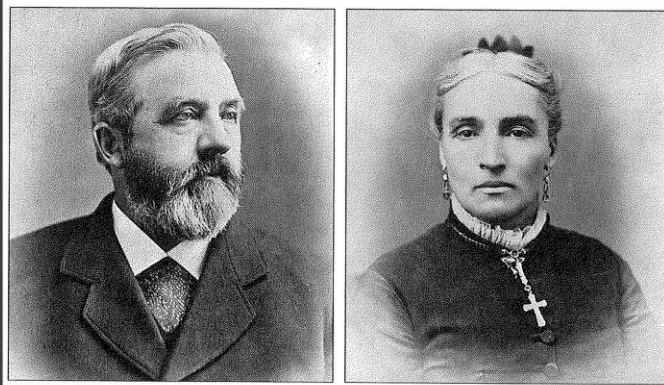


Photo from *Worship & Work*, p. 38d

Cornelius Wittmann starts a school

The first school was in a small frame building owned by Joseph Edelbrock, "who cheerfully donated the use of one of the rooms... It was a free school, for no tuition was asked, and the teacher received no pay."

History of Stearns County, v. 2, p. 1343



Mr. and Mrs. Joseph (Eva) Edelbrock were among the earliest settlers in St. Cloud.

The Edelbrocks "donated" even more to St. John's: their son Anthony was in its first class.

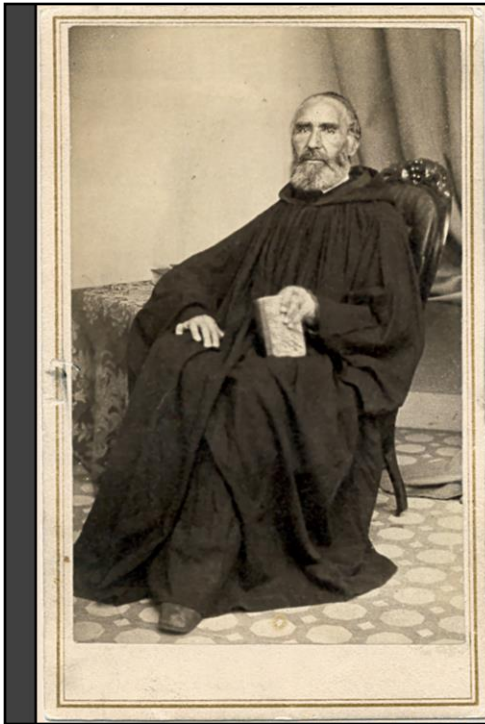
Photo from St. Cloud Into the Millennium: A Pictorial History of St. Cloud, F 614 .S25 1998, p. 10

Edelbrocks provide space

He later became Abbot Alexius Edelbrock, OSB
(1875-1889)



Photo from the Aschman Collection in the St. John's Abbey and University Archives



Father (Count) Demetrius di Marogna, the first prior of the monks of Minnesota

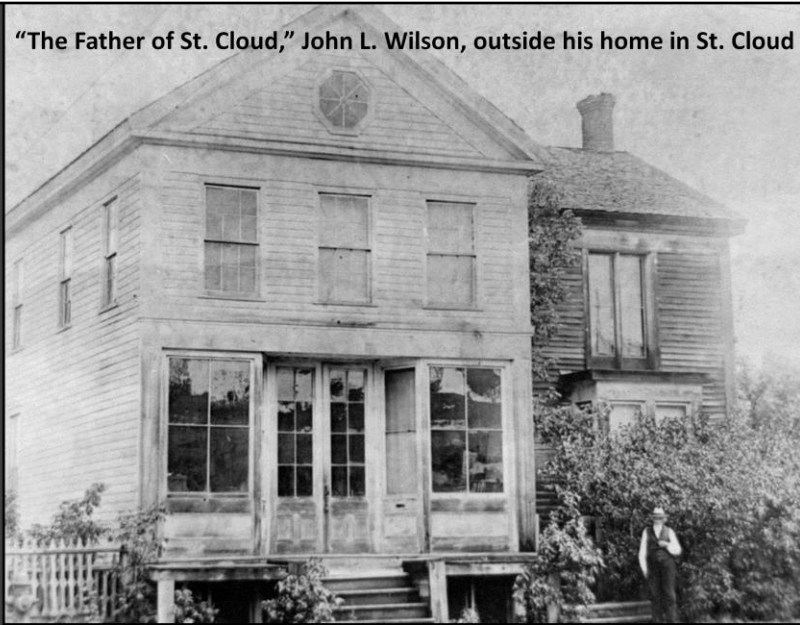
“It was the task of Prior Demetrius... to establish a school in connection with the monastery, and to begin at once a liberal arts seminary program for training native vocations.”

Worship & Work, p. 47

Photo from *A Visual History of Saint Benedict's and Saint John's* [PowerPoint],
http://bdm.csbsju.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CID=10001&OBJECT=5&Abbey&CISDPTA=3

Prior Demetrius di Marogna's task

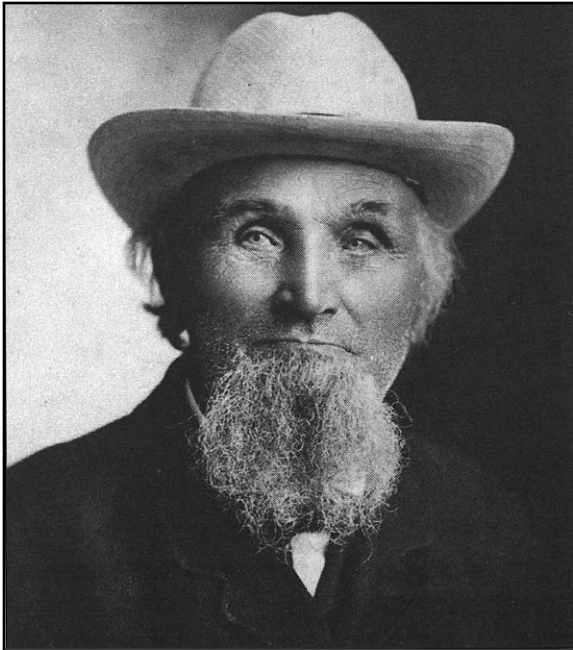
"The Father of St. Cloud," John L. Wilson, outside his home in St. Cloud



5th Ave. & 2nd St. N., 2 blocks north of the present Radisson Hotel

Photo from Stearns History Museum's *Minnesota Reflections* collection,
<http://reflections.mndigital.org/u3/stearns.185>

John L. Wilson



John L. Wilson, the “Father of St. Cloud,” was a representative in the 1857 Minnesota Territorial Legislature.

Wilson worked with Prior Demetrius on proposals to:

- Incorporate the Order of St. Benedict in Minnesota
- Petition for a charter for St. John’s Seminary
- Incorporate the Rothkopp Addition into the city of St. Cloud

Wilson introduced the petition for a St. John’s charter on January 22, 1857.

Photo from St. Cloud Into the Millennium: A Pictorial History of St. Cloud, F 614 .S25 1998, p. 7

John L. Wilson’s efforts for St. John’s

Incorporation

Section 1. *That the members of the religious order of St. Benedict, Demitri Marogna, Cornelius Wittman, Brune Riss, Alexius Roetzer, and their associates and successors in office, which order is instituted for scientific, educational and ecclesiastical purposes, be a body corporate and politic, to be known by the name and style of "Order of St. Benedict," and by that name shall have perpetual succession.*

"That the members of the religious order of St. Benedict...instituted for scientific, educational and ecclesiastical purposes...be known by the name and style of 'Order of St. Benedict'..."

from a copy of a copy of the Charter in the SJU Archives

Charter, Section 1

Sec. 2. The principal object of this politic and corporate body shall be the promotion of the instruction and education of youths, to the acquirement, of which end the corporators named in this act shall be hereby authorized to establish and erect an institution, or seminary, in Stearns county, on that portion of St. Cloud City, surveyed, platted and recorded as Rothkopf's Addition to St. Cloud, to be known by the name and style of "St. John's Seminary."

"The principal object shall be the instruction and education of youths..."

"...to be known by the name...of 'St. John's Seminary.'"

Charter, Section 2

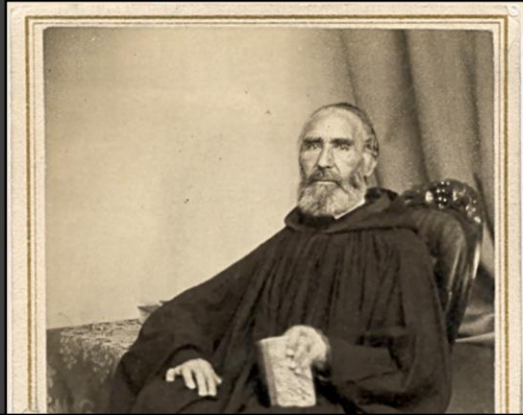


He got the support of an important Catholic:
Territorial Governor Willis Gorman

Worship & Work, p. 38c, p. 49

Bishop Cretin, critically ill, summoned Prior Demetrius to St. Paul, who stayed with him through his illness.

While there, Prior Demetrius lobbied for the charter.



Cretin ill; di Marogna lobbies for charter

As for the (Territorial) legislative process...

When brought before the Committee of the Whole in February, the last sentence of Section Two was amended. Instead of saying:

“...that also good talented boys of the poorer classes may enjoy the benefit of said institution”

...it was altered to say:

“No student shall be required to attend the religious worship of any particular denomination, except as specified by the student, his parent or guardian.”

On **February 9th** a vote to reconsider the amendment was defeated by a tie vote.

Worship & Work, p. 47

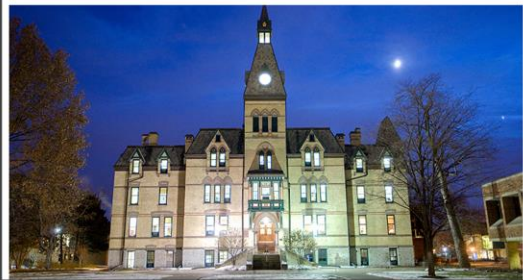
Legislative Process

“The charter was ‘fought desperately’ by three Protestant Ministers in the Republican camp. Three Democratic Catholic lawyers defended the bill.

The opposition to St. John's charter on either political or religious grounds is difficult to understand in view of the earlier charter voted without such amending to [Methodist] Hamline University.

It was an obvious effort...to keep legal status from any Catholic educational effort. Such movements were not new in American history.”

Worship & Work p. 48



Old Main on the campus of Hamline University, St. Paul
http://www.hamline.edu/features/tour/old_main.html

Hamline began as a Methodist institution in 1854 in Red Wing, where it was located until 1869. In 1880 it was re-established in St. Paul.

Worship & Work, p. 527

Charter fight for St. John's, but not Hamline

The charter bill, with its controverted religious amendment, passed the House on February 13, and went to the Council of the Minnesota Territorial Legislature.

Here the amendment was struck out, and the bill quickly passed...
to be returned to the House.

In the House the fight resumed, with an interruption while the legislators attended the funeral of Bishop Cretin, who had died on February 22, 1857.

Striking out the House's amendment further complicated the issue; now it was a question of preserving the honor of the House, and the bill was moved back and forth between the two bodies.

Worship & Work p. 48-49

Charter amendment controversy

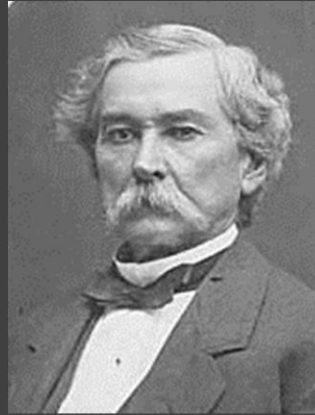
Prior Demetrius let it be known that he would ask Wilson to withdraw the bill if the amendment were retained.

Meanwhile, Wilson was working to exchange votes among his friends who served with him on standing committees.

When Wilson was able to turn the tide, the House concurred to strike out the controverted amendment, and **the bill passed, as originally drawn, on February 27, 1857 by a vote of 24-12.**

The support of Governor Gorman was assured, as he had spoken out not only in support of public schools, but also favorably concerning private seminaries and colleges.

Worship & Work p. 49



Governor Willis A. Gorman

<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/93/WillisAGorman1872.jpg>

Charter bill passes

Take effect

Sec. 10. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage.

J. W. Furber,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

John D. Brisbin,
President of the Council.

Approved March sixth, eighteen hundred and fifty-seven.
W. A. Gorman.

Secretary's Office, Minnesota,
Saint Paul, March 10, 1856.

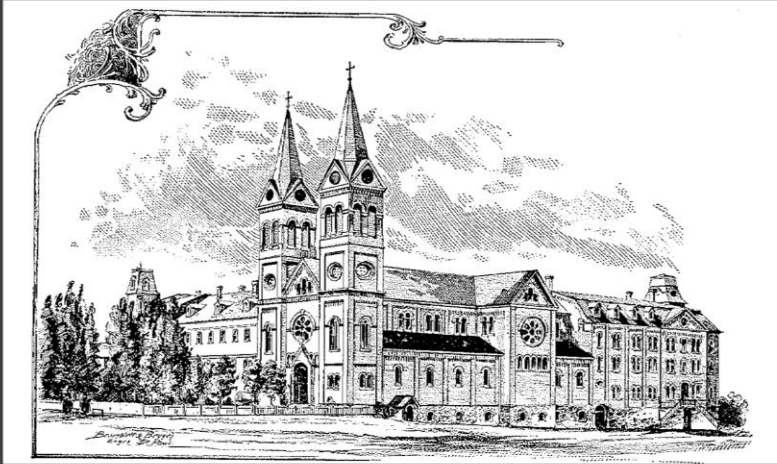
I certify the above to be a true copy of the original on file in this office. - J. J. McCullough,
Acting Secretary.

**Territorial Governor Willis A. Gorman
signed the act authorizing St. John's Seminary on March 6, 1857.**

(Typo?!? Approved in March 1857, but copied by the
Acting Secretary in March 1856???)

Worship & Work p. 50

Charter approval



<http://www.stjohns.edu/2012/03/01/archives-219>

St. John's thus has the distinction of having been chartered as the **first Catholic institution of higher education in Minnesota**, and is also the **oldest Minnesota institution of higher education that has** (unlike Hamline) **enjoyed uninterrupted existence.**

Worship & Work, p. 47

St. John's distinction

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