

## II - Marist Street Names

### Streets named after Marists in Germany

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In 2007 I had the opportunity to visit Villa Maria, Sydney, for the first time. During a walk I was touched by seeing two streets in the neighbourhood named after Marist Fathers: Rocher Street and Joly Street. Both have worked in Villa Maria as procurators for the Oceania mission of the Society of Mary. Not far from Villa Maria is Futuna Street, close to the Catholic Church dedicated to St Peter Chanel.<sup>1</sup> Villa Maria itself is of course a historical name in the suburb of Hunters Hill.<sup>2</sup> This June, in Québec, I walked along Rue Eymard. Where ever I visit I am now on the look out for streets or places named after a Marist!

For this contribution I limit myself to Germany. Worldwide there are more streets named after members of the wider Marist family, of course. Literature indicates growing interest of local historians to know more about the background to a name for a place<sup>3</sup> or a street. The same interest I presume we would find with people living in those streets. As Marists, we can contribute to explain. The story behind a street name helps us to commemorate our confreres whose names we read on the street signs.

#### **Meppen**

The Marists came to Germany in 1900. The first house and apostolic school was opened in Meppen, Emsland, northwest of Germany. There is no street named after the Marists or a Marist. Leaving the main street to enter the grounds of the present day diocesan school and the Marist community building, one can find a sign with a note about this historical place:<sup>4</sup>

“Marist Fathers. Built in 1901. First house of the German Marists. South Sea missions. Catholic boarding school. Gymnasium Marianum”.

#### **Lähden-Ahmsen**

In 1923, a Marist house was opened in the small village of Ahmsen, about one hour drive from Meppen. Today the village is part of the larger commune of Lähden. In Ahmsen we find two streets of interest.<sup>5</sup>

In 1987, streets were given names in Ahmsen. The street leading to the Marist house was named ‘Am Kloster’ (‘At the monastery’). At the time, it was evident that this meant the Marist house. There was no other religious house in the village. The larger commune had consulted the local representatives as well as the members of the local historical society and then chose the name. In 2014, the house was handed over to the diocese of Osnabrück and is since the residence of Franciscan Friars from India.

In May 1990, a short street (239 meters) was named after a Marist priest who spent much of his life in this village: Pater-Schürmann-Straße (‘Father Schürmann street’). Schürmann was born in 1902 and ordained a priest in 1923. In May 1941 he was present when the community was expelled from the house and region by the Nazi-Government. Schürmann died in 1986. After the war, in 1948, Schürmann started an open-air stage in a nearby forest. Today they show two plays, one for the general public, one in particular for children. The Waldbühne Ahmsen welcomes between 30 and 40 000 visitors each year.

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<sup>1</sup> *History of the Lane Cove Electorate June 2016*. Anthony Roberts MP, Member for Lane Cove, page 19; Hunters Hill Historical Society (2011). *The Municipality of Hunters Hill Heritage Walk*. Hunters Hill Council, Hunters Hill, New South Wales, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> The Hunter’s Hill Trust, *Heritage of Hunters Hill*, 1982 (<sup>2</sup>1977, <sup>1</sup>1969).

<sup>3</sup> Example: L. S. Rickard, *Historic Place Names of New Zealand*, Auckland, Minerva, 1968.

<sup>4</sup> Original German: „Maristenkloster. Erbaut 1901. Ursprungshaus der deutschen Maristen. Südseemission. Katholisches Schülerheim. Gymnasium Marianum.“

<sup>5</sup> I thank Christa Diekmann, townhall of Herzlake, for the respective information and dates on Ahmsen via email, October 2016.

### **Fürstzell**

The council of the comune of Fürstzell near Passau in Bavaria agreed to name three streets after Marists.<sup>6</sup>

In 1980, the August-Wieschemeyer-Straße was named in a new residential area which used to be land of the Marist farm. Father Wieschemeyer had agreed to sell the land so that Fürstzell could develop land for housing. The commune honoured this Marist priest and with him the whole Marist community present in Fürstzell since 1931.

August Wieschemeyer was born in 1904, brother to Franz Wieschemeyer, one time vicar general of the Society of Mary. August worked in Fürstzell for decades as superior, bursar, teacher of Scriptures, and in other pastoral ministries. He died in 1979.

In September 2007, the former Cistercian abbey was sold and a house was build besides it to house the small Marist community. The commune decided to name the small road leading to this house and also to the Marist School 'Maristenweg' (539 meters). This is the present address for the Marists in Fürstzell.

On the other side of the village a new residential area was developed and one of the streets was named after Marist father Hubert Neufeld in 2013. The immediate neighbourhood has streets named after authors of books.

Father Neufeld was born in 1906. He was ordained in 1929. In Fürstzell he taught systematic theology in the Marist Theological Institute. Later he became provincial of the German Province. Hubert Neufeld has published a number of books about Marists like Peter Chanel and books with poems which were fairly successful at their time.<sup>7</sup> Neufeld did in 1976. His brother Willy was also a Marist priest and a known musician. His name was also on the list of proposals for one of the new streets. This did not actualize. However, the Marist school has named one of the music halls in his honour.

### **Mindelheim**

Since 1926, Marist Teaching Brothers live and work in Mindelheim, diocese of Augsburg. In 1965, the local commune honoured their engagement for young people by naming a square after their founder: Champagnat-Platz ('Champagnat Square'). In 1994 a statue of Champagnat was inaugurated.<sup>8</sup>

Marcellin Champagnat (1789-1840) started as diocesan priest for Lyon and was one of the first Marist priests to make profession in 1836. His major work is the congregation of the Marist Brothers (started in 1817), one of the biggest male congregations in the Catholic Church. In 1999 he was canonized.

### **Conclusion**

This small contribution is a sign of gratitude towards the communes who honoured Marist confreres of the past by naming a street after them. First of all, this gratitude is directed towards those confreres who through their life and example have done great things in the spirit of Mary.

A simple but important reason for collecting the story behind a street name is to know. Many do not and will not know the meaning of the name of their street unless there is information available. For some streets and places we Marists can provide such information.

Not the congregation chose the names for the streets or had even asked for it. The reception of the work of these Marists called outsiders to establish a memory of their contribution. In the

<sup>6</sup> I thank Jutta Greiler for information concerning Fürstzell, via e-mail October 2016-January 2017.

<sup>7</sup> *Der Heilige und die Kopffäger. Maristenpater Chanel, der erste Martyrer Ozeaniens*, München, Manz, 1961; 1966; *Maristenpatres (Gesellschaft Mariens) in Deutschland*, in J. Hasenberg - A. Wienand (ed.), *Das Wirken der Orden und Klöster in Deutschland*, Bd. 1, Köln, 1957, 272 – 274; *Bataillon, der Bischof der tausend Inseln*, Furth b. Landshut, Maristendruck, 1962; *Aller Tod ist Tor zum Leben*, München, J. Pfeiffer, 1949; *Lied der Erde*, München, Manz, <sup>2</sup>1961; *Der ewige Ruf*, München, Manz, <sup>3</sup>1961; *50 Jahre Pech*, Furth, Maristendruck, <sup>2</sup>1976.

<sup>8</sup> I thank Br. Augustinus Hendlmeier fms, Mindelheim, for the information, via e-mail October 2016.

course of time and in later generations, their names may not mean much to those who live in those streets. Therefore it makes sense to gather the information and make it available and keep it alive.

To document street names touches on historical geography and on cultural studies. It enables people to know about the place they are living in.

One dimension of Marist history is the history of the Society worldwide and the history of its provinces. There is the other history, local history, the story of houses especially now that so many are closed. Street names encapsulated local history.

Street names you find in the middle of villages or small towns. Street names you find were the people live. In a symbolic way these Marists remain where they always tried to be and give witness: in the midst of the people.