

CHAPTER X

BROTHER SIMEON AND SISTER KATE

“When the world asks “What was it like?” Only the photographer can say “See!”

Mark Denman, Photographer. ¹

Al never mentioned Simeon Schwemberger in his memoir but we know they knew each other well. There were numerous documented contacts, in the form of photographs and correspondence, between the Wigglesworths in Fort Defiance and this Franciscan Friar who lived and worked at the St. Michael’s School and Mission and who was also a pioneer photographer.



Brother Simeon Schwemberger was born George Charles Schwemberger in Cincinnati, Ohio on August 18, 1867. He attended a seminary for high school age youth and became a candidate for the Order of the Friars Minor (Franciscans) in the summer of 1887 and took his solemn vows in 1896. He was assigned to the St. Michael’s Mission Church near Window Rock, Arizona in 1901. (Here he is shown working in a field. ²)

In 1902, Brother Simeon began experimenting with a camera and proved to be talented. He

captured numerous images documenting the daily lives of the Navajo, Hopi and Zuni peoples, their sacred ceremonies, secular culture, homes, and the region. He also took many photos of the Wigglesworths.

Of the 1765 glass plate photographs that survived in the basement of the St Michael's Mission and are now in the Schwemberger Archive at Arizona University, thirty-five are labeled "Wigglesworth." Twenty-five are labeled "Baldwin." (Desba (or Desbah) Baldwin, you will recall, was a maid in the Wigglesworth household). Other pictures relate to the Wigglesworths also, such as one labeled simply "Thomas Eliot." Brother Simeon continued with photography until 1908. Recently another 100 to 200 photos have been found and added to the collection. ³



George Charles Schwemberger ⁴

8/18/1867 – 1/17/1931

Above we see Brother Simeon and his box camera, which used 5 inch by 7 inch glass plates to capture images. He is holding in his

right hand a bulb trigger for tripping the shutter without moving the camera.

And what of Sister Kate? Well, without her Brother Simeon would never have come to St. Michael's and would never have had a camera to begin with because it was she who made both those things possible.



Catherine Drexel ⁵

11/26/1858 – 3/3/1955

Catherine, shown on the left, was the daughter of Francis Anthony Drexel (6/20/1824 – 2/15/1885), a Philadelphia banker who founded the Drexel financial dynasty that would last more than 100 years until the name was finally brought down in 1990 in the “junk bond” scandal involving Michael Milkin and a company called Drexel Burnham Lambert. At DBL’s height it was the fifth largest investment bank in the United States.

Catherine’s mother died shortly after Catherine was born. She was then raised by her stepmother, Emma Bouvier (who was a distant relative of Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis). When her father died Emma had already passed away so Catherine and her two sisters inherited his fortune and embarked on lives of generous philanthropy.

Among many other gifts, sisters Elizabeth and Louise endowed the Francis A. Drexel Chair of Moral Theology at the Catholic University of America.

Catherine Drexel became a nun (as “Katharine” in the Sisters of Mercy) and then founded the *Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People*. Among her many benefactions, she enabled the founding of St. Michael’s School and Mission in 1896 and funded the purchase of the camera and equipment that Brother Simeon used to such memorable effect.

In 2000 she was canonized by the Catholic Church as Saint Katharine, only the second American-born saint, after Elizabeth Ann Seton in 1975. ⁶



Mother Katharine Drexel

Below are some of the pictures of the Wigglesworth Family taken by Brother Simeon on different occasions. They were obtained from Arizona State University Library by Patsy Wigglesworth Fissell, who contributed them to the Wigglesworth Family Collection. (They are reproduced here with the permission of the ASU Library.)

???



This picture, taken in April or May 1913, shows Doc's family in their Sunday best on a porch, seated beneath the Navajo "whirling logs" symbol. On the left is Thomas Eliot, born April 16, 1905, who perhaps had recently celebrated his eighth birthday. On the right is Albert Francis, born in February 1909 and four years old at the time. Edna, 36 at the time, is holding a very, very young John Matthew, who was born on April 5, 1913. The occasion may have been a Christening Party. Note that Doc, who was 41, is clean-shaven with no moustache.



This is Desba Baldwin, a Navajo woman and the family's maid. She is dressed in white, suggesting the occasion may have been her "First Holy Communion." The location is not known.



Albert and Eliot.



Albert Francis.



Finally, here is Doc seated with a young girl, probably one of his nieces.



This detail shows a vigorous, strong and healthy Doc, at ease and projecting confidence.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER XI

- 1. Quote from Mark Denman taken on 1/8/2015 from the website Goodreads.
<http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/photography?page=9>**
- 2. Picture of Simeon Schwemberger taken on 1/8/2015 from the website Find A Grave. Entry for Schwemberger maintained by: Valarie Vine; Originally created by: Spyrose. Record added: Nov 01, 2006. Find A Grave Memorial # 16419446.**
- 3. PBS. Eight. Arizona State University. The Arizona Collection. The Schwemberger Collection.
<http://www.azpbs.org/arizonastories/ppedetail.php?id=31>**
- 4. Ibid.**
- 5. Image of Catharine Drexel taken on 1/8/2015 from the website Nobility and Analogous Traditional Elites. March 3, St Katharine Drexel.
<http://nobility.org/2014/03/03/katharine-drexel/>**
- 6. Wikipedia contributors. "Katharine Drexel." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 7 Jan. 2015. Web. 8 Jan. 2015.**