

THE STORY OF ST. JOSEPH'S HILL INFIRMARY, near Eureka, Missouri, in 4 Talks TALK ONE: THE BEGINNINGS

It was just fifteen years ago, in the Spring of the year 1927, that a truly great work was inaugurated in the State of Missouri. At that time three Franciscan Missionary Brothers visited St. Louis. They were poor as regards the goods of this world but rich in the love of God that burned in their hearts. And they had an idea. Knowing that their love for God could best be expressed and put into practice through love for their fellow-men, especially the poor and the sick, they conceived the idea of establishing a nursing home for male patients of all types, especially those afflicted with incurable diseases.

With this noble idea in mind they looked about for a suitable location for carrying on this great work. It happened that at this particular time there was an old abandoned building located in the beautiful LaBarque Hills about eight miles southwest of Eureka, Missouri. It had formerly been the Novitiate of the Sisters of Mercy of St. Louis, but, at the time the Brothers heard of it, had been abandoned for some fifteen years. Nevertheless, they decided to visit the place and look it over.

As this little band of three Brothers approached what was to be their future home and, later on, a refuge for the poor and afflicted, they were greeted by a most discouraging situation. They walked into a building that had been at the mercy of the elements for years. The walls were still standing but the roof, and under the roof the ceilings had given way. Frequent rains had washed through the leaking roof ruining the plaster throughout the entire building. The windows were either gone or broken. Rats and owls haunted the deserted rooms. There was no heating plant, no water, no plumbing. The electric and telephone wires were miles away. No beds or furniture remained in the desolate rooms.

Outside the surrounding grounds were in harmony with the delapidated structure.

Weeds and rubble abounded, the haunt of gophers, rabbits, snakes and other animals.

What a prospect for this small band of Missionary Brothers come to make this their home so that they might share that home with the blind, the lame, the paralyzed, the cancerous, the epileptic, the gangrenous, those suffering from chronic, malignant, incurable diseases: Could this place possibly be transformed into such a home? Humanly speaking, no. But