If you wish to visit the cathedral built by St. John Neumann, it’s on 18th Street and Ben Franklin Parkway. Follow Reed Street to Broad Street. Turn right onto Broad and continue on Broad to Washington Avenue. Turn left on Washington to 18th Street. Turn right onto Benjamin Franklin Parkway. Cross the parkway to get to the Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul. Take special note to the windows located high in the structure; Bishop Neumann feared destruction by the Know-Nothings and other nativist parties. Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Chapel now is located where the rectory of the bishop once was. The altar that is on the current motherhouse grounds was in that rectory. It was there that Sister Francis Bachmann, Sister Margaret Boll, and Sister Bernardine Dorn professed their vows on May 26, 1856. When leaving the cathedral, take Vine Street east to Broad. Get on 676 east; follow signs for Chester and the entrance to I95.

If you want to stop for lunch: Indulge in one of Philadelphia’s own fantastic cheesesteaks at Geno’s or Pat’s. To get to either, continue on Reed Street to 9th Street, turn right.

Keep the happy, historical memories for your lifetime!
Note the row of stores from Lawrence Street to 5th Street. Holy Family Home and a tobacco shop were located on the left hand corner at 253 Apple Street (now Lawrence Street). According to an 1850 census, the Bachmann family lived in the rear of the tobacco store (now a bakery). The Philadelphia City Directory for the years 1852-1854 confirms that a Miss Bachmann conducted a tobacco shop at Franklin (now Girard Avenue), east of 5th. It was here that Barbara Boll and Anna Dorn joined the widow and her children. In obedience to Bishop Neumann’s directive, the lease of this dwelling was allowed to expire in 1856 and another home was needed.

On the southeast corner of 5th and Girard is St. Peter the Apostle Church. (Go 1/2 block; in the back of the church on Lawrence Street is the parking lot.) This is the church attended by our founding sisters and where Bishop Neumann invested them on April 9, 1855.

Look for congregational memorabilia in the museum which is in the lower church. St. John Neumann’s body rests beneath the altar here.

When exiting, continue down Lawrence, (it’s one way); at the first right, turn onto W. George Street; make another right turn at the next corner onto 5th Street; a final right back onto Girard then turn left on Lawrence. (You are now going north.)

Continue up Lawrence Street to 1517 Lawrence (three blocks above Girard between Jefferson and Oxford Streets.) The convent, part of row houses on the right, was blessed by Rev. Hespelein on September 17, 1856, and dedicated as St. Clara Convent. Here new members of the congregation were welcomed, the first being Louisa (Boll) Heyer (Sister Johanna), the widowed sister of Mother Francis, and Sister Margaret, as well as Frances Schoenenberger (Sister Brigitta). While living at this location, the sisters began a ministry of caring for the sick.

Leaving St. Clara Convent, take the first right turn to 4th Street (1/2 block). Take another right onto Girard. The original St. Mary’s Hospital was on the southwest corner where currently there is a firehouse. Opened on December 10, 1860, the hospital’s ministry was led by Mother Francis. It was here that she died on June 30, 1863.

Travel south on 4th Street to Reed Street (approximately 30 blocks from St. Clara) to where the sisters began teaching at St. Alphonsus School in 1858. To make access to the school more available, Mother Francis rented a house on the corner of Reed and Horstmann Streets. (An abandoned hospital is located where the buildings of St. Alphonsus Parish had been.) However, the number of women entering the congregation soon caused Bishop Neumann to recommend that Mother Francis look for a larger dwelling.