

New England Area

St. Peter's School, Lewiston, Maine

The first Marist community to be assigned to the United States arrived in Lewiston, Maine, in 1886, at the request of Father Mothon, O.P., Rector of Sts. Peter and Paul parish. Brother Come and three other brothers took over the boys' department of this parish grammar school.

Although the brothers were well received by both the school authorities and the people, they soon met with serious difficulties which caused them to withdraw in 1894. According to a Maine law students were required to attend school for only four months of the year.(85.) A remark published in later years makes the situation clear:

Brother Bonaventure even recalls having had 154 present on certain days in his double-grade classroom with ages all the way between seven and seventeen while 182 were on the roll.(86.)

Most of these boys worked for eight months of the year in local mills. To attract them to the school and to retain them, the brothers employed a variety of means. The situation, however, remained unchanged, so that the school work became progressively disappointing. Thus irregular attendance of the pupils and excessively large classes created problems that the brothers found impossible to cope with.

The Reverend Pastor traveled to Europe to confer with the major superiors and to allay the latter's concern. However no mutual agreement seemed possible and the Superior General decided to withdraw the brothers.

Although the brothers remained in Lewiston but a relatively short time, their work and influence was noted by several pastors of the New England area. These in turn requested brothers for their schools. The outcome was that in 1893 three other schools were staffed by Marist teachers.

Ecole Hevey, Manchester, New Hampshire

The second Marist community to staff a school in the United States was assigned to St. Mary's parish in Manchester, New Hampshire, in 1890. Monsignor Hevey, the second pastor of this large and prosperous parish, had visited the Marist superiors in France the previous year to request Marist Brothers. As a result Brother Vitalicus and eight brothers arrived in Manchester during the summer of 1890 to assume the management of St. Mary's School.(87.)

For fifty-one years two generations of Franco-American boys in this city were taught by the brothers. In the beginning classes were very large. For instance, in one first grade there were one hundred and thirty boys.(88.) These overcrowded conditions again evoked anxiety in the superiors. Happily the situation improved in 1912 when a modern brick building named after the late Monsignor Hevey was erected.

As the years rolled on the parish was divided so that many students left to attend other parish schools. Other hardships confronted the brothers, despite the good work accomplished and consequent esteem which the brothers enjoyed. The economic crash of 1929 and the resulting economic difficulties were a first cause of hardship. The Amoskeag Cotton and Woolen Mills, which employed three fourths of the population of the city, went bankrupt.(89.) The scarcity of money eventually led the pastor to suggest a decrease in salary for the brothers. Because the latter could not continue supporting themselves with a curtailment of revenue, they were withdrawn in the summer of 1941. Ten years later the brothers were asked to return, but other commitments in the Province made this move impossible. Because many brothers are graduates of Ecole Hevey or taught there, it has remained a source of pleasant memories in the Provinces.

St. Joseph High School, Lowell, Massachusetts

The pioneering brothers who taught in Lowell at the turn of the century have but the old building to remind them of the grammar school, which was one of the most prominent Marist schools when they taught there. Today seventy years later the changing times has found the brothers in a different residence and teaching high school students only.

In 1890 eight Marist Brothers, under the direction of Brother Chryseuil, were sent to the Oblate parish of St. Jean Baptiste to organize a boys' department of the parish school. Four hundred and fifty boys coming from this large Franco-American population composed the student body. For fourteen years all classes were taught in French.(90.) In 1904 the diocesan authorities directed that all subjects be taught in English. One hour a day was for the teaching of French. The original French brothers had no alternative but to try to master the new language as fast as possible. For this purpose summer courses for the brothers were held at the school. According to a report made in later years:

In 1904, the community of Lowell housed its first vacation course. Rev. Brother Zephiriny and Mr. John Corcoran came from New York to give lessons in English to the members of the community and to visiting brothers. Similar courses were given several times after to chosen groups of brothers assembled in Lowell, under the presidency of Rev. Brothers Peter Vincent, Boniface, Austin Mary, and others.(91.)

One of the more serious problems in this school, like other New England schools at the time, was the large number of students who left school before graduation in order to work in the mills. Of a peak enrollment of 1,220 in 1896 only two students graduated.(92.) In most cases the parents withdrew their sons after the sixth grade or after their first communion. This situation was slightly improved in 1910 and after when eighteen boys or more graduated from the eighth grade each year.

In 1907 and again in 1920 a high school department was organized, but without success because of limited enrollments. In 1934, at the strong insistence of Brother Emile Nestor and Brother Boniface, St. Joseph High School was at last firmly established. Following the economic crash of 1929, the faculty was reduced in some grades, and the Grey Nuns of the Holy Cross took them over.

As the high school slowly developed more brothers were withdrawn from the other Grades in order to teach in the High School department. Since 1950 only the eighth grade has been retained by the brothers in the elementary department. In recent years the school has taken on the character of a Central High School. The latest enrollments indicates that nine brothers of the Poughkeepsie Province teach 226 students. Forty of these are from the parish.(93.) At the end of a four year \$77,000 renovation program (1956-1960) the school today prides itself in the latest facilities.

St. Anne School, Lawrence, Massachusetts

In 1892 a Marist staff arrived at St. Anne Parish in Lawrence, Massachusetts, at the request of the Pastor, Father Portal, S.M. This priest heard good reports of the brothers teaching in Lewiston, Maine, and wrote to the superiors at St. Genis Laval in France for their services in his parish school. Brother Angelicus, the first director, and five other brothers arrived in this Franco-American parish to begin the arduous work of organizing an efficient school. Their success can be evidenced by the following: "What had been an unruly group of boys turned out to be the pride of Father Portal, and the relief of the local police officers."(94.)

For fifty-eight years the brothers staffed this school. The student body ranged from four to five hundred. From 1920 to 1928 a high school department was established at St. Anne's. Here again the lack of applicants for this department discouraged its continuance. In 1935 Brother Mary Florentius, Principal of St. Ann's, sought the backing of the pastors of greater Lawrence for founding a high school for boys of their parishes.(95.) It was the start of Central Catholic High School, one of the best known schools in the Boston area. When it began, a number of brothers were withdrawn from St. Anne's Marist faculty of twelve to teach in the new high school. (96.) Fifteen years later, in 1950, the four remaining brothers were finally withdrawn and the Sisters of the Good Shepherd took over the boys' department.

Central Catholic High School, Lawrence, Massachusetts

After the decline of Marist activity in New England, prosperous Central Catholic High School is a source of pride and joy for the many brothers who formerly taught in that area. In September 1935 fifty-five students composed the first two classes of Central Catholic in the Knights of Columbus building in Lawrence. From this building they moved in November into an abandoned public school, Hampshire Street School and others.(97.)

It was a hazardous venture which needed friends. They were found in the Central Catholic High School Welfare League, and the Ladies Auxilliary. With their help funds were accumulated through well organized social activities for student scholarships and for expansion purposes.(98.)

The faculty for the first year consisted of Brother Thomas Austin Principal, and Brother Joannes Marius.(99.) Their work bore fruit after three strenuous years of unceasing activity. A few months after the founder of the school, Brother Florentius, died in 1938; 281 students moved from three temporary quarters into the new building.(100.) Brother Joseph Abel and the succeeding directors slowly developed this small school into an institution which today accommodates 915 students.(101.)

In 1948 Brother Nilus Vincent, treasurer of the school, was appointed construction engineer of the gymnasium project. For two years a group of fifty brothers spent holidays and summers erecting a 200 x 300 concrete gymnasium-classroom building. In 1950 His Excellency Archbishop Richard J. Cushing of Boston dedicated this structure. Again in 1958 a building program to replace the frame residence for the brothers and to build additional offices and classrooms was begun. In 1960, the silver jubilee year of its foundation, the brothers moved into the prepared quarters in an additional story on the gymnasium building. This project was initiated as part of a ten year expansion program. For the years to come the brothers of the Poughkeepsie Province hope to increase the enrollment to reach the many applicants who now have to be refused.

St. Joseph School, Haverhill, Massachusetts

The Marist Brothers arrived in Haverhill, Massachusetts, at the request of Father J. Remy, S.M., of St. Joseph's Parish. In September 1903 Brother Priscillianus, Director, and two other brothers began their work of education in this parish grammar school. Their initial success pointed to a very promising future. With the enrollment gaining year by year, there were four hundred and thirty students taught by nine brothers in 1911.(102.)

The work of the brothers was carried with the usual Marist efficiency until the depression years during which the number of students and faculty members slowly dropped. In 1947 there were only four brothers at St. Joseph's. Because the emphasis at this time was on secondary education, Brother Louis Omer, Provincial, withdrew the brothers in June 1947. Today many of the sons of former pupils of this school are registered at nearby Central Catholic High School in Lawrence for their high school study.

St. Jeanne D'Arc School, Lowell, Massachusetts

The history of the Marist Brothers at St. Jeanne D'Arc School in Lowell, Massachusetts is very brief and has less significance in the growth of the Province. After repeated requests for brothers, Fr. Eugene Turcotte, O.M.I., an alumnus of the brothers' school in Lowell, obtained three brothers in 1936 to teach the upper grammar grades of the school. Brother Charles Raymond was named principal of the 125 boys in the boys' department. By 1946 the brothers were needed for high school work. Since this school showed little promise in further development, the Grey Nuns of the Hol Cross took over the boys' department and the brothers were reassigned elsewhere.

St. Joseph Juniorate, Tyngsboro, Massachusetts

The history of St. Joseph Juniorate runs through twenty-seven years. It starts in 1922 with the erection of a building under the competent supervision of Brother Aloysius Mary, who planned accommodations for

approximately sixty to seventy-five students. Until 1949 this institution prepared the Marist vocations from the New England area. Since that time it has served as a novitiate.

The plan to build a boarding school and juniorate in the New England area was envisioned many years before it was actually implemented. From 1907 until 1913 the idea was debated.(103.) It was only in 1921 that a suitable location for a building was located three miles from the Marist community in Lowell, on the 240 acre Wanalancet Farm in Tyngsboro, Massachusetts thirty miles from Boston.(104.) It was purchased in 1922 for \$16,000.(105.) A beautiful colonial building dating back to 1676 served as a community residence until the main building was completed.

Brother Edmund Alphonse was appointed director and first master of juniors in August 1924 when twelve Poughkeepsie juniors were transferred to Tyngsboro.(106.) Until 1932 the juniorate was conducted solely as a grammar school; in 1939 the grammar school was replaced by three years of high school.

The Juniorate property includes 300 acres of land, sixty-eight of which are under cultivation.(107.) During the Second World War the farm produce and meat from the cattle and pigs insured a constant supply of fresh foods at a time when these were costly items.

On December 3, 1933 a fire destroyed much of the furniture and ruined part of the third floor of the juniorate. The Book of Annals on this date reads:

Fire visited the establishment during the evening and destroyed the top story of the building and indirectly caused serious damages to the rest of the building and the furniture. A providential dynamite hole dug in a nearby swamp during the fall by Brother Joseph Orens allowed the firemen to save two-thirds of the building. (108.)

What seemed to be a terrible blow was a blessing to the developing Province. With the insurance money received, the third floor was rebuilt, and an elaborate chapel and another dormitory were added to the Community facilities. This money came fortunately at a time when the depression had greatly reduced finances of the Province.

In 1949 the Juniorate became a novitiate and Brother Joseph Damian and his forty juniors were transferred to the old novitiate house in Poughkeepsie, New York.

St. Joseph Novitiate, Tyngsboro, Massachusetts

In August 1949 Brother Louis Omer, Master of Novices at the Poughkeepsie novitiate, took up residence with his twenty-three novices and his faculty in the Tyngsboro Juniorate.(109.) That September over fifty postulants joined the novitiate group. This group formed the first novices of the Novitiate invested with the Marist cassock on July 26, 1950.(110.) Since that time sixty to a hundred young men have studied here each year.

Succeeding Brother Louis Omer as master, Brothers Pius and David assumed the direction of the training program for candidates for the Marist life. In 1954 only high school graduates were accepted in Tyngsboro. Since that time the first year of study has been devoted to college work, and the second has been reserved for subjects proper to a novitiate. Since 1949 three hundred candidates have received the Marist habit in Tyngsboro.

In 1959, as a result of the division of the Province, a separate novitiate was established in Esopus, New York, for the candidates of that Province. The Tyngsboro novitiate, which was assigned to the Poughkeepsie Province, continues to educate candidates for that Province.

St. Ann Camp, Isle La Motte, Vermont

With the establishment of St. Ann Camp, Isle La Motte, Vermont, in 1908, the Marist Brothers became pioneers in the Catholic summer camp movement in the United States. Brother Zephiriny, founder and director of St.

Ann's Academy in New York City (1892-1904), had organized a summer camp for students at St. Ann's at such places as Ruxton Falls, Granby, Beauceville and St. Vincent de Paul in the Quebec Province, Canada; and at Walkill, New York. His purpose as mentioned in "Faded Laurels" in the Bulletin of Studies:

(A) desire to keep on our register boys with no home entrusted to us by foreign or traveling parents, caused the opening of the vacation service. It proved very attractive to other boys and parents as well on account of the country, the educational traveling and healthful sports which it afforded.(111.)

Thus in 1907 a site on Isle La Motte on Lake Champlain was rented for ninety-nine years from the town of Auburn, Vermont.(112.) Here St. Ann Camp was established, and here it prospered for the next twenty-three years. Its peak enrollment was 125 in 1925. The depression again took its toll as the Provincial Administration decided to close the camp in 1930, but delayed the closing until 1931. No other attempt was made to establish a summer camp for the next eighteen years.

Camp Marist For Boys, Center Ossipee, N.H.

Camp Fritz in Center Ossipee, New Hampshire, was purchased for \$65,000 by the Province of the United States in 1949. The excellent three hundred acre property located forty miles from Manchester, New Hampshire, provided the brothers with two large frame administration buildings, a suitable dining hall building, recreation hall building, several large bungalows, a dozen private cabins and a fine beach on Levitt Bay.(113.)

Brother Benedict Henry was named director of the camp, now known as Camp Marist for Boys, and charged with the renovation program for the opening of the first season in 1950. Forty brothers made up the first faculty of administrators, counselors, and workers.

During the ten years Brother Benedict headed this camp he supervised the moving of several bungalows to make way for the construction of seven long bungalows to accommodate 210 boys; expanding the beach facilities to include 220 yards; constructing a large colonial-type chapel, Our Lady of Fatima Chapel, two faculty residences, a canteen, stables; and directed several renovation projects.(114.) He also supervised the inauguration of intercamp and sports programs so as to make Camp Marist well known in the region. When he was assigned elsewhere, he left with the satisfaction that the camp had prospered well and that it had gained membership in the National Catholic Camp Association.

In 1959 the Camp was entrusted to the Esopus Province. Brother Joseph Abel was appointed to succeed Brother Benedict. Brothers from both provinces continue to compose the faculty of seventy each season.