

Chapter IV - The Transition Period, 1931-1953

Brother Henry Charles (1931-1937) was the first of four provincials who governed the United States Province during the Transition Period. He adopted new policies in an attempt to guide the Province out of the depression and to further the plan of consolidation. Previous administrations had initiated plans to accomplish similar results, but it was during this period that the work was brought to fruition. The proposed goals continued to be the concentration of brothers in high schools rather than grammar schools, and the building of permanent and spacious training centers. Brother Paul Stratonic (1937-1942) and Brother Louis Omer (1942-1948), the sixth and seventh provincials, adopted these policies to help the Province emerge successfully from the depression and the trying period of World War II. Lastly, Brother Thomas Austin (1948-1953), during the last five years of this period, tied all the loose ends and brought about consolidation of the Province. Following his appointment as Assistant General for the three North American Provinces in March 1953, he was able to watch the Province enter a new era of prosperity.

Although these four administrators withdrew brothers from seven schools during these twenty-two years, it was during the Transition Period that the number of brothers doubled from two hundred and eleven to four hundred and twenty-one. It was therefore possible for the Provincials to open and accept ten more promising schools in the United States.

The increase of students and teachers in the province and especially in the New York area inspired the inauguration of two inter-Marist school competitions. They were the Marist Forensics Association Tournaments (1950), and the Marist Basketball Invitational Tournaments (1951).

Towards the end of this period, three of the four Marist communities that crowded St. Ann's Hermitage in Poughkeepsie were settled elsewhere. St. Ann's Juniorate was transferred to Esopus, New York, in 1942; St. Ann's Novitiate moved to Tyngsboro, Massachusetts, in 1949; and the Provincial House was established at Esopus, New York in 1952. As a result of the transfer of the three communities, the Province was able to initiate a twenty year building program for Marist College. Marist Normal School (Scholasticate) had been renamed Marian College, when it received its provisional charter from the University of the State of New York in 1946. (1.)

In addition, a graduate house of studies was opened near Catholic University, Washington, D. C. Thus another dream of the early pioneers became a reality. Each house of studios was thus firmly established and each one had expanded sufficiently to accommodate the brothers and students.

One reason why this was possible was the use of brothers in the construction of several buildings. In fact one of the characteristics of this period was the type and amount of work which the brothers accomplished during their summers and leisure hours. No longer did they build frame extensions to existing buildings; they erected concrete and brick buildings in Poughkeepsie, Esopus and Lawrence. Again for other constructions such as the gymnasium building at Marian College, and the classroom-gymnasium building at Mount St. Michael, construction companies were engaged. But once the shell of the buildings were completed, the brothers finished the paneling, painting, plumbing and electrical work. The application of the brothers to manual work recalled the spirit which characterized the founding brothers in France and reduced expenses considerably.

This period witnessed the departure of the first American Marist missionaries. Following the meeting of Marist members of the Fourteenth General Chapter (1946), held in Grugliasco, Italy, the American Provincial Consultors decided that they would accede to the wishes of the Chapter and established a mission territory in the Philippine Islands. Between 1948 and 1953 fourteen brothers volunteered to staff high schools on the Island of Mindanao.(2.) Several other brothers were loaned to other provinces to teach in schools in Brazil, Rhodesia, New Caledonia, Canada and in Mexico.

Interest in summer camps was also revived during this period. Brothers had been withdrawn from summer camp work in 1930, following the decision to close St. Ann's Camp. To meet wartime emergency in the early forties brothers were sent to various diocesan camps upon the requests from the Archbishop of New York and various

pastors. Then in 1949 a camp was purchased at Center Ossipee, New Hampshire. It was named Camp Marist for Boys. A second camp was donated to the Province by Monsignor Aloysius Dineen of Holy Innocents Parish in New York City in 1950. This latter site, Camp Sunset in Plattekill, New York, was adapted for the use of student brothers at nearby Marian College, and for those in training in Esopus, New York.

Thirty-three brothers died during the Transition Period. Many of them were Frenchmen who had taught in this country from thirty to forty years.

At the end of this period, Brother Thomas Austin was appointed Assistant General. He was succeeded by Brother Linus William in April 1953. Brother Linus found it possible to open new provincial schools, and add to the staff of several others. Larger graduating classes from Marian College enabled the new Provincial to do this.