

Brother Ptolemeus, 1911-1914

It was with great confidence that the Marist Superiors in Europe elected Brother Ptolemeus as the first provincial of the United States Province in 1911. As the former provincial of the North American Province he had assisted in the proceedings for the canonical erection of the new province. During the three years of his administration, he was given jurisdiction over two hundred brothers said aspirants.

Brother Ptolemeus' first ambition was to erect a provincial house. The Hermitage property in Poughkeepsie, which was purchased with the intention of making it the headquarters of the new province, had no specific building available for this purpose. Therefore, one of the first acts of the new administration was to set aside funds for that project. Unfortunately, two years later, in 1913, pressing demands for a residence for the brothers in New York City claimed the money which had accumulated.(2.)

In this city Reverend Havens Richard, S.J., rector of St. Ignatius Church, requested two brothers for the higher grades of his parochial school. Although there was a shortage of manpower, this request was honored. Because this Jesuit priest had been the spiritual advisor of the first brothers in Poughkeepsie (1906-1908), the administration found it difficult to refuse his request. But the assignment of two additional brothers to New York City emphasized a serious problem for St. Ann's Academy. At this time four other small faculties were taking up all available rooms in that school, which could not expand as it should. Therefore, funds destined for the building of a provincial house in Poughkeepsie were used to extend the facilities of the Academy.

Another ambition of Brother Ptolemeus was to expand westward. It was he who made the original arrangements to send brothers to western Canada. He and his council thought that the United States Province would in time not only staff the future schools, but develop an autonomous province in that distant land of Manitoba, Canada. During the three years of Brother Ptolemeus' administration, three communities were assigned to the village schools at St. Norbert (1912), St. Anne Des Chenes, and St. Pierre Jolt's (1913). Several vocations to the Marist life from these schools encouraged Brother Provincial in his venture.

Elsewhere in the Province other schools were included in the progress which was being made. Saint Mary's Parish in Manchester, New Hampshire, erected a two-story building for the brothers' school. In 1912 this modern building was named Ecole Hevey, in honor of the late pastor, who had engaged the brothers to teach in the old wooden school in 1890. In Lowell# Massachusetts, efforts to retain the boy until graduation from St. Joseph Parish Grammar school met with success. In 1910, eighteen boys graduated from the eighth grade, whereas in previous years, less than a dozen boys graduated from this school in thirteen years. Slowly the benefits of education won over those who had wished to work in the factories.(3.)

Because of this progress during Brother Ptolemeus' administration fifty-five brothers were assigned to the New England schools. Serious considerations were therefore given by the Provincial Council to establish a preparatory school to train numerous vocations coming from this area. This project materialized ten years later. (4.)

Brother Ptolemeus was relieved from the burdens of office in March 1914. In the years that followed he continued to serve the congregation as master of scholastics (1914-1919), as director of St. Ann's Academy (1922-1925), and as an ad interim director at St. Joseph School in Haverhill, Massachusetts in 1925. He spent the last fifteen years of his life as Director General of the Hermitage communities in Poughkeepsie (1929-1931),o and as a teacher in the Novitiate and Scholasticate. Brother Ptolemeus died in 1940, at the age of seventy-six, at the Hermitage.