

## Salesian New York and New Jersey



Approximate distance from New York City to:

Cold Spring: 50 miles (80 km)

Goshen: 60 miles (97 km)

Hawthorne: 26 miles (42 km)

New Rochelle: 16 miles (26km)

Newton: 60 miles (97 km)

Ramsey: 30 miles (48 km)

Troy: 150 miles (241 km)

# Out of Our Past

## An American Venture into Seminary Training

Philip Pascucci, SDB

### Preamble

**M**y dear boys, cabbages grow bigger and better when they are transplanted, and so it is with our oratory. It has moved from place to place, but wherever it has gone, it has thrived and our numbers have rapidly increased.... We began to have a real oratory at St. Philomena Hospital, where we had a chapel all our own in quiet and convenience. We seemed to have found a permanent place for ourselves and to have settled in peace, but Divine Providence again desired us to leave and move here. For how long? We don't know. Whatever happens, let us hope that like transplanted cabbages, our oratory will draw an increasing number of boys... Let us cast all our worries at the feet of Our Lord, who will take care of us. He has already blessed us, helped us, and provided for us. He will also find a suitable place for us, for His own greater glory and the good of our souls.<sup>1</sup>

That is part of the well known talk which Don Bosco gave to his boys when they were forced to move from place to place for their Sunday gatherings. That became known as the wandering oratory. This is the story of another transplanting, another wandering. It is the story of the long, hard struggle of the early Salesians in the United States to found a permanent house for the training of young Salesians.

### Disaster Strikes

At about 5:00 A.M. on December 11, 1917 the shout went up: "Fire! Fire! Wake up! Hurry! Wake up!" So went the alarm throughout the boarding school building known as the Columbus Institute in Hawthorne, New York.

---

<sup>1</sup> Lemoyne, Giovanni Battista, S.D.B., *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco*, An American Edition Translated from the original Italian, Diego Borgatello, S.D.B., Editor-in-chief, Vol. II, 1841-1846 (New Rochelle, New York: Salesiana Publishers, Inc., 1966), p. 239.

Fortunately, Father Paul Zolin,<sup>2</sup> the director of the school, was an early riser. He smelled smoke, investigated, found the fire, and spread the alarm. Boys from the age of about nine to seventeen dreamily rubbed their eyes, but the brothers in charge of the dormitories, with the priests, urged the boys to hurry, grab a few clothes, and get out of the building.

Meanwhile the fire department was called, and by the time the men arrived all the boys and all the Salesians and staff were out of the burning building, at a safe distance, shivering in the cold at that early hour, under a dark and starless sky during that murky December morning. It had taken no more than three minutes, so the scanty record reads, to evacuate the building. The school chronicle states that if the boys and Salesians had been awakened only a few minutes later, all would have perished in that inferno. The Blessed Sacrament was saved by an aspirant from San Francisco, Thomas DeMatei.<sup>3</sup>

As it turned out, the water in the pump and pipes was frozen, and the helpless firemen, with no water, could do no more than watch with the students and Salesians as their beautiful school building burned away to rubble and ashes. So relates Father John Divizia,<sup>4</sup> the only known living survivor of that tragic event.

What was the origin of Columbus Institute? How had the Salesians come to be there? What was the sequel to the fire? The remainder of this essay will attempt to answer these questions.

In 1903 the Salesian works in the United States, which started in 1897, consisted only of churches and missions for the care of Italian immigrants, and the entire country comprised the Province of St. Philip the Apostle, with Father

---

<sup>2</sup> Paul Zolin was born in Italy, on July 21, 1879. He was ordained in Albany, New York, on December 23, 1907. In 1939 he was appointed secretary to the Apostolic Delegation in the Philippines. During World War II he was arrested by the Japanese because he was an American citizen. Toward the end of the Japanese occupation of the Philippines, all prisoners were to be executed. But, two hours before the contemplated execution, American paratroopers liberated them. Father Zolin died in Australia on August 21, 1963. (See the obituary letter for Father Paul Zolin.)

<sup>3</sup> *Cronaca dell' Ispettoria Salesiana. 1896-1939* (New Rochelle, N.Y.), p. 27. See also "Columbus Institute Destroyed By Fire," in *The Don Bosco Messenger*, January 1918, pp. 7-8. See also a partially preserved *Souvenir Journal*, 1928, p. 15.

Thomas DeMatei was born in San Francisco, on August 26, 1896. He professed as a Salesian at Cold Spring, New York, on September 8, 1919. He was ordained in his home church of SS. Peter and Paul, in 1924. He died in Watsonville, California, January, 1950. (See the obituary letter for Father Thomas DeMatei.)

<sup>4</sup> John Divizia was born in New York City, on October 22, 1905. He professed as a Salesian in 1927, and was ordained in 1935. Father Divizia is, at present (April 1996) incapacitated due primarily to age, very poor eyesight and poor hearing. Otherwise he is in good health.

Michael Borghino<sup>5</sup> as the Provincial. An urgent need was felt to have some place for a boarding school to train youths who showed some interest in a vocation to the religious life of the Salesians and to the priesthood.

## The First Planting

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the Methodists had erected a large and imposing building on a hill overlooking the town of Troy, in the State of New York. Their purpose was to establish a college for Methodist youths. The idea was not successful, and Cardinal McCloskey<sup>6</sup> then bought the building and property from the Methodists, to be used as a seminary for his students.<sup>7</sup>

Archbishop Michael A. Corrigan<sup>8</sup> succeeded John Cardinal McCloskey in 1885 as Ordinary of the Archdiocese of New York. Soon Archbishop Corrigan built a new seminary in Yonkers, New York, and in 1896 the New York seminarians left the building in Troy for the new one.

The old seminary soon became the home of the novices of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Later it became an orphanage when that of the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill, New York, was destroyed by fire. The Sisters rebuilt their orphanage, and the children and Sisters moved back to Sparkill. Once again the seminary was vacant.<sup>9</sup>

Enter Monsignor John Edwards.<sup>10</sup> He, with Father J. Dougherty,<sup>11</sup> had welcomed the first three Salesian pioneers to New York City on November 28, 1898, in the name of Archbishop Michael Corrigan. Through the agency of Monsignor Edwards, the Salesians rented the property in Troy from the Archdiocese during the summer of 1903.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Michael Borghino. See footnote in Philip Pascucci, "Once Upon A Time In Old New York," *Journal of Salesian Studies*, 3 (Spring, 1992), pp. 19-20.

<sup>6</sup> John Cardinal McCloskey. See footnote, Philip Pascucci, *op. cit.* pp. 6-7.

<sup>7</sup> *Cronaca. 1896-1939*, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Michael A. Corrigan. See footnote, Philip Pascucci, *op. cit.* pp. 7-8.

<sup>9</sup> *Cronaca. 1896-1939*, p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> John Edwards. See footnote, Philip Pascucci, *op. cit.* p. 16.

<sup>11</sup> James J. Dougherty. *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Cronica. 1896-1939*, p. 9.

## Troy: Description of the City <sup>13</sup>

The city of Troy is situated eight miles northeast of Albany, on the east bank of the Hudson River. Its population in 1900 was 60,551, which slipped to 54,269 by 1990. From Troy navigation on the Hudson extends 151 miles to the sea at New York City. The Erie Canal, completed in 1825, began at Troy and extended westward 137 miles. Troy is a pivotal point for the two great valleys, the Hudson and the Mohawk valleys. It is a meeting place of old trails paved with history and teeming with modern traffic, leading to New York City in the south, Buffalo in the west, and Canada to the north.

Troy can boast of manufacturing, shipping, lively business operations, beautiful residential areas in and around the city, and fine public schools. In addition, there are also successful Catholic schools.

Famous educators in Troy were Amos Eaton and Emma Hart Willard. The former was head of the first faculty of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and the latter was the founder of the "female seminary" that grew into the famous school now bearing her name, the Emma Willard School. Troy also has an excellent public library named the Hart Memorial Library, built in 1897 as a memorial to W. H. Hart, by his widow, Emma.

## The First Salesian School, Aspirantate, and Novitiate in the United States

The first director of the school in Troy was Father Ernest Coppo.<sup>14</sup> He readied the place for about thirty resident students who might have a vocation to the Salesian life and priesthood. By the end of that school year there were more than 100 boys whose youthful ambition was the priesthood. In addition to the school, a Salesian novitiate was begun on December 8, 1904, with Father John Focacci<sup>15</sup> as Master of Novices. The novitiate was canonically erected on June 19,

---

<sup>13</sup> "Troy, City, New York," *Encyclopedia Americana*, International Edition, 1969, Vol. 27, 161-163. See also "New York, State of," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1911, Vol. XI, 30-31.

<sup>14</sup> Ernest Coppo. See footnote, Philip Pascucci, *op. cit.* pp. 14-15. Note: That footnote erroneously states that Bishop Coppo died at the Salesian Mother House in Turin. He died at Ivrea, near Turin, Italy.

<sup>15</sup> John Focacci was born in Amborzasco, Italy, on May 24, 1875. He professed perpetual vows in 1893, and was ordained a priest in 1899. He was sent to the United States in 1904 and worked mostly in parishes as a pastor. On April 5, 1952 he died at the age of 77. (See the obituary letter for Father John Focacci.)

1905.<sup>16</sup> There were ten novices that year, but only two persevered. They were Louis Galli<sup>17</sup> and Filomeno Ferrara,<sup>18</sup> who was a priest already.

Things did not last for the Salesians in Troy. The old building, being in poor repair, would have required a very large sum of money to bring it up to standard. Furthermore the great distance of Troy from New York City (c. 150 miles), which was the principal center of the Italian immigrants and the Salesian works, necessitated much weary traveling time to and from Troy in those early years of the twentieth century. Consequently the Salesians were induced to look elsewhere for a place more adapted to their needs and purpose.

## The Lutherans and Concordia Collegiate Institute

The Lutherans had for some time placed on sale a four-story, brick building, 50 by 100 feet, with a large basement. It had been constructed in 1893 at a cost of \$66,371.99, of which \$9,000 was for the land. The Lutherans had also built a fully equipped gymnasium of wood, 80 by 40 feet, a faculty house, stables, and storage houses. The place had served as their seminary in the town of Hawthorne, New York.

With a growth in the number of Lutheran students, a serious problem arose. The members of the Lutheran Seminary Board were astonished one day by the emergency call from the steward, “We have no water.” A severe drought had brought to a head a situation which all had been hoping could be solved.

Because it was estimated that it would cost a minimum of \$26,000 to rectify the problems of the inadequate water supply and the sewage system, it was deemed imperative that the school be moved. A new site was secured in Bronxville, New York. Also, there was the opportunity for the Lutherans to sell the property to Mr. Jay Fitzpatrick, on behalf of the Salesians.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Cronaca. 1896-1939*, p. 12.

<sup>17</sup> Louis Galli was born at Sherman Island, California, in 1885. He entered the Salesian school in Troy, New York, as a candidate in November, 1903. He professed in 1905, and was ordained a priest on September 18, 1912. Father Galli worked mostly in parishes in California. He died in San Francisco, on February 13, 1962. (See the obituary letter for Father Louis Galli.)

<sup>18</sup> Filomeno Ferrara was born on November 5, 1874, in San Biase, Italy. He professed on October 7, 1906. He worked in New York and in San Francisco. He died by drowning in Lake Mahopac, New York, in July, 1910. (Information supplied by the Salesian Central Archives, Rome, Italy.)

<sup>19</sup> Wilbur H. Luecke, “The Sojourn of Concordia Collegiate Institute in Hawthorne,” Vol. 40, January, February, March, 1964, No. 1, (*The Westchester Historian of the Westchester County Historical Society*), pp. 7-8.

## The First Transplanting

Since the buildings comprising Concordia Collegiate Institute were of fairly recent construction (1893), and the property not far from New York City, in such peaceful, rural surroundings, the site seemed to be the perfect place for the boarding school the Salesians contemplated.

Cardinal Farley<sup>20</sup> gave a generous donation toward the purchase of the property, and in 1908 another donation came from Mr. John McGrane, who was a benefactor and cooperator of the Salesians.

To fulfill their dream of a school where vocations might be fostered, the Salesians opened a boarding school which they named the Columbus Institute, in honor of the noted discoverer of America. The school consisted of grades five through eight, and classes began in September, 1908. However, the school was not intended to be exclusively for boys with a desire for the priesthood as at Troy.

On July 16, the Feast of our Lady of Mount Carmel, in 1908, the Salesians arrived. As a token of their thanks to the Help of Christians, they dedicated the school chapel to Mary Help of Christians, and they erected her statue at the main entrance of the building.<sup>21</sup>

## Dedication of Columbus Institute, Hawthorne

The Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Diomedo Falconio,<sup>22</sup> blessed Columbus Institute, Hawthorne<sup>23</sup> on May 16, 1909. At that solemn dedication the first

Philip H. Horne, *Mount Pleasant: The History of A New York Suburb and Its People: Hawthorne, Thornwood, and Reynolds*, (Hawthorne, N. Y.: Abco Agency, et al., 1971), p. 45.

<sup>20</sup> John Farley was born in Ireland, on April 20, 1842. He was ordained in Rome, Italy, on June 11, 1870, and on December 21, 1895 he was ordained a bishop. He became the fourth Archbishop of New York, and on November 27, 1911, he was made cardinal. Cardinal Farley died in New York, on September 17, 1918. (See F. D. Cohalan, "Farley, John Murphy," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, V, 839-840, 1967.)

<sup>21</sup> Eugenio Ceria, p. 812. See also *Cronaca. 1896-1939*, p. 17.

<sup>22</sup> Angelo Raffaele Gennaro Diomedo Falconio was born on September 20, 1842, in Pescocostanzo, Italy. He professed in the Order of Friars Minor, on October 12, 1864, and took the name of Diomedo in religion. He was ordained a priest on January 3, 1866. He was ordained a bishop on July 17, 1892. On September 20, 1902 he was named Apostolic Delegate to the United States. Pope Pius X made him a Cardinal on November 27, 1911. Cardinal Diomedo Falconio died on February 7, 1917. (See the *Encyclopedia of the Catholic Bishops in America. 1789-1989*, 10 volumes, published by the Knights of Columbus, pp. 41-42.)

item on the official program was the welcome address to the numerous visitors and well-wishers. Here is an excerpt from that address :

Today this institute is officially dedicated. From now on it will gladly welcome within its walls all those boys who are anxious to learn the sweet-toned Italian language, as well as to obtain a thorough knowledge of English. The great aim of the Salesian Fathers will be to impart a sound moral training to the boys under their care, whilst preparing them to become useful American citizens. The cultivation of vocations for the priesthood will receive all due attention. In a word, the great scope of Columbus College [sic] will be to train its pupils so that whatever walk of life they may follow, they will be an honor to the Catholic Church and to the great American republic.<sup>24</sup>

In a booklet<sup>25</sup> published for the dedication of Columbus Institute is found the prospectus. Here are some extracts:

Columbus College [sic] is situated on a pleasant elevation, overlooking the Railway Station in Hawthorne, N. Y.; it is in the vicinity of White Plains, and only a few miles from the City of New York.

The healthy climate, the beautiful scenery, the nearness of the college to the metropolis, but above all the sound education and solid instruction, which the Salesian Fathers impart, will, without doubt, be incentive enough for those parents who desire to educate their children properly, to send them to such an educational institution.

<sup>23</sup> The village of Hawthorne was originally called Unionville and was part of the Township of Mount Pleasant. The village is twenty-six miles from midtown, Manhattan, New York.

In 1901, Sister Mary Alphonsa founded a branch of the Dominican Sisters, raised \$28,000 to buy from the French Dominican Fathers a 60-room house on nine acres of land. Her order, now informally known as the Hawthorne Dominicans, converted the hilltop estate into the Rosary Hill home for the care of persons with terminal cancer. In 1990, Rosary Hill had about fifty patients. It is now a landmark in the community.

A local newspaper reporter began a drive that led in 1901 to naming the expanding community “Hawthorne,” in honor of Sister Alphonsa, for she was the daughter of Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Today Hawthorne, though originally a German community, is predominantly Italian and Irish. It is still a quiet, mostly residential town. The earliest census figures available are for 1940 when the population was 2,062. The 1990 census counted 5,000 persons. Information in this note taken from Mary McAleer Vizard, “If You’re Thinking of Living in Hawthorne,” *The New York Times*, August 19, 1990, Sec. X, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> From a partially preserved *Souvenir Journal*, 1928, p. 16.

<sup>25</sup> From the booklet *Solemn Dedication of Columbus College* (Hawthorne, N. Y., May 16, 1909), p. 2.

From the *Programme of Studies* the following are some of the items:

1. For the scholastic year (1908-1909) the studies will comprise all the "Grades of Grammar," and the first year of "High School." There will also be a course in philosophy for young men who desire to study for the priesthood, and work among the immigrants.
3. The study of the Italian language is obligatory on all.
6. At the end of each month the Director will send to the parents exact information concerning the conduct and progress of their children.
7. At the request of parents their children may be admitted to the study of other modern languages.

Regarding Conditions For Admission, here are three of the four articles :

1. Boys under the age of eight or over sixteen as well as those who have been expelled from other educational institutions, will not be received.
2. When entering, boys must present certificates of baptism, vaccination, and good conduct.
4. Smoking is prohibited in the college, and no student is allowed to retain money.

Regarding the *Pension and other Expenses*, we read among other items the following:

1. The pension is the same for all; viz., \$15.00 per month, and this covers laundry expenses.
3. Each student must pay \$10.00 at the beginning of the scholastic year for fire, light, ink, and for the use of the pillows and mattress, etc.

There are only the following two items concerning the *Time Table* :

1. The School will open each year on the tenth of September, and will close during the last week in June.
2. The student's time is so divided as to allow him eight hours for mental work, and five hours for recreation and physical exercise alternately with his studies.

Finally, there is the heading *Extra Subjects*:

1. Typewriting and shorthand are taught in the higher grades (7th and 8th grammar and High School) so as to prepare the student as quickly and as thor-

oughly as possible for commercial life. For the use of the typewriter (which will be for at least one hour a day) the nominal sum of \$1.50 per month will be charged.

2. Bookkeeping.

3. Lessons on the Piano. One lesson will be given each week, and practice each day for not less than half an hour. For this \$4.00 per month is charged.

4. The lessons in gymnastics, singing, declamation and drawing are given gratis, and all must attend them unless they are legitimately dispensed.

An advertisement which frequently appeared, sometimes with and sometimes without a photograph of the buildings on the grounds of Columbus Institute, in successive issues of *The Don Bosco Messenger* during the latter years of the Institute, was the following:

### COLUMBUS INSTITUTE, HAWTHORNE, N. Y.

Grammar School for Boys. Conducted by the Salesian Fathers. Don Bosco's preventive system of education, so highly praised the world over, a chief feature. Special advantages for the study of Latin, French, Italian, Bookkeeping, Typewriting and Music. Boarders, \$200 per scholastic year. For Particulars apply to the Reverend Director.<sup>26</sup>

Columbus Institute prospered from the time of its opening, so much so that to the four grades of grammar school, the first year of high school was added in September, 1917, with the intention of adding another grade each year.<sup>27</sup>

## Columbus Institute Divides

The number of boys at Columbus Institute, mostly sons of Italian and Polish immigrants increased from year to year. Being pressed to provide something for the large number of Poles in the New York metropolitan area, Father Coppo wrote the following letter on July 19, 1912 to John Cardinal Farley:

To His Eminence Cardinal J. M. Farley, D.D., Archbishop of New York

I beg to inform you that following Your Eminence's decision that we remain at Columbus Institute, Hawthorne, and the Seminary for Foreign Missions be opened elsewhere, we have decided to ask Your Eminence's permission to inaugurate there a section for students of Polish and Slavish [sic] extraction to be added to the Italian section. With the help of God and

---

<sup>26</sup> *The Don Bosco Messenger*, January, 1915, No. 1 to November, 1917, No. 11.

<sup>27</sup> *The Don Bosco Messenger*, Vol. VI, No. 10, October, 1917, p. 9.

the charity of men, Columbus Institute could become for the emigrants in the US what the proposed Seminary will be for foreign missions.

To help us in defraying the necessary expenses, I humbly desire to ask Your Eminence's permission, 1) to form a society of persons willing to assist us with prayer and money, 2) to collect in the Italian and Polish Churches whenever permission can be obtained from their Rectors.

To save Your Eminence's time, I beg to enclose herewith a form for such permission. If you would kindly sign it and forward same to me, you would greatly oblige yours

Most Respectfully in Christ,

(signed) Ernesto Coppo, S.C.<sup>28</sup>

On July 23, 1912 an answer was sent to Father Coppo that the Cardinal would lay the matter before the Consultors. Apparently the desired permission was eventually granted, because the number of Polish and Italian students soon became about equal. Accommodations became crowded, and since it was not possible to meet all the requirements of the Polish contingent, two separate communities were formed in the school.

Then in 1915 Columbus Institute became like a beehive when a group of bees swarm and fly away to form their own hive. To Ramsey, New Jersey, the Polish boys to the number of forty-eight went with the Polish Salesians to found Don Bosco Institute. The property there had been bought in 1906 by the Provincial, Father Michael Borghino. Later it was sold, and still later bought back. There in Ramsey, in bucolic surroundings like Columbus Institute, another Salesian boarding school which was to be exclusively for Polish boys was begun. The expressed purpose was to promote religious and priestly vocations. The number of students increased, and the original owner's home on the property was enlarged.<sup>29</sup>

The school's avowed purpose prospered very well, for over the years to the present time, the school, originally called Don Bosco Institute and now known as Don Bosco High School, had fostered over 160 vocations, mostly diocesan

---

<sup>28</sup> Archdiocesan Archives of New York (cited hereafter as AANY), I-15. Letter from Father Ernest Coppo, New York, N. Y., July 19, 1912. S.C. (Salesian Congregation) were the initials after a Salesian's name. Since 1948 the initials have been S.D.B. (Salesians of Don Bosco).

<sup>29</sup> *Cronaca. 1896-1939*, p. 23. See also Eugenio Ceria, Vol. IV, 1910-1921, pp. 174-175.

and some Salesian. Bishop Alexander M. Zaleski,<sup>30</sup> of the Diocese of Lansing, Michigan, was one of the vocations, plus many monsignors.

After the departure of the Polish contingent, the Columbus Institute continued at the desired pace. Then, as already seen, disaster struck in that fateful early morning of December 11, 1917. What would the Salesians do now? Where would they open another school so as to promote priestly and religious vocations?

## Wandering, but Determination Hardens

The Provincial, Father Ernest Coppo, and his council were determined to have some place where aspirants, novices, and young professed could study and be prepared for the apostolate in the Salesian Society. Thus, after the Hawthorne fire, the Salesians accepted the offer of the Archdiocese of New York to take temporary charge of the Church of the Immaculate Conception in the Williamsbridge section of the Bronx, New York City. There the young professed Salesians were housed and did their studies. The Salesian priests had the responsibility for the parish.

Meanwhile, for the novices, a place called the Loretto House of Rest was rented from the Archdiocese of New York in the town of Cold Spring, New York. To Cold Spring, then, on August 30, 1918, at 8:30 A.M. ten of the twelve future novices left the school in Ramsey on the trip to their new home. Two other novices came later. Father John Focacci was to be the Master of Novices and the cleric William Ryan,<sup>31</sup> the assistant. The twelve novices were: Joseph J. Banach, Anthony A. Ciampa, Edward J. DeMartini, Thomas J. DeMatei, Leo A. Godlewski, Joseph Haluch, John P. McEniff, Silvio A. Mancini, Patrick J. Miller, Stanislaus A. Milos, Joseph Olstowski, Edward H. Peugnet.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Alexander M. Zaleski was born on June 24, 1906, in Laurel, New York. He graduated from Don Bosco High school, Ramsey, New Jersey. He was ordained a priest on July 12, 1931, and was ordained as Auxiliary Bishop of Detroit, Michigan, on May 23, 1950. Bishop Zaleski was appointed Bishop of Lansing, Michigan, on December 1, 1965. He died in 1975. (See Felician A. Foy, O.F.M., ed., *Catholic Almanac* (Huntington, IN., Our Sunday Visitor, Inc.), 1975, p. 528 and 1987, p. 480.)

<sup>31</sup> William Ryan was born April 30, 1890, in Minnesota. He entered the Salesian school in Hawthorne, New York, on August 25, 1913. He professed triennial vows on October 3, 1915, at Foglizzo, Italy. He professed perpetual vows in Cold Spring, New York, on December 8, 1918. He was ordained a priest on September 23, 1923, in New Rochelle, New York. Father Ryan died in Watsonville, California, on June 13, 1961. (See the obituary letter for Father William Ryan.)

<sup>32</sup> *Cronaca. 1896-1939*, p. 29. See also *Diary of the Novitiate of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*, Cold Spring, New York, 1918-1919, p. 2.

## The Novitiate At Cold Spring<sup>33</sup>

To this picturesque and historic town the novices of 1918-1919 wended their way. The events of that trip were recorded by an anonymous novice. According to the chronicle the journey from Ramsey took practically all morning. It began in a Ford truck to Nyack, New York. Since the ferry to Tarrytown, New York, across the Hudson River had just left, some of the future "Salesian Warriors," as the chronicler called them, took a walk through Nyack to buy some candy, some song sheets, and "that wondrous weapon of musical torture, a harmonica." They found candy in a 5 and 10-cent store, but no song sheets and no harmonica. What song sheets did they want? Some of the favorites of those days: *Over There*, *Tipperary*, and *The Old Oaken Bucket*.

Meanwhile the ferry had arrived, and they hurried to get aboard. Upon arriving in Tarrytown the future "Salesian Warriors" had a two hour wait for a train to Cold Spring. Again the search for the music and the harmonica, and again no luck. They did buy some souvenir postal cards.

Finally the steam locomotive puffed its way into Tarrytown, and the novices boarded the train for an hour's ride along the scenic east bank of the lordly Hudson. Having arrived in Cold Spring, a foraging expedition went out to neighboring stores for food. After lunch a visit was paid to the local pastor, and

---

<sup>33</sup> Cold Spring is in the Hudson Highlands, a 15-mile length of the river that hasn't changed much since Henry Hudson first sailed past in 1609. The highest mountains on the river are here, rising straight up from the banks, and the Hudson reaches its greatest depths here as well. It is a stunning sight at any time of the year, but particularly in the fall, when the mountains are ablaze with colors.

Cold Spring is a small, pretty, nineteenth century village in Putnam County. It is 200 feet in altitude. The 1900 census was 2,549, while it increased in 1990 to 4,789 persons. The nation's first iron ship and also the Parrott gun, a fieldpiece later used extensively in the Civil War, were constructed in Cold Spring. When President Lincoln came to inspect the guns, Colonel Robert P. Parrott, the inventor, demonstrated his cannon by firing it across the river. Lincoln was bored. "I'm confident you can hit that mountain over there," he said. "So suppose we get something to eat. I'm hungry."

One of the most charming buildings in the Hudson valley is the Chapel of Our Lady in Cold Spring. A man named Gouveneur Kemble donated both the site and the funds to build the Chapel, which was completed in 1833. Originally a Catholic chapel, it is now an ecumenical church serving the entire community. The Lady Chapel, as it is called, with its view of the Hudson has always been an attraction for artists. It is a favorite landmark for all those who sail the Hudson.

Information in this footnote from the following sources: Tim Mulligan, *The Hudson River Valley: A History and Guide*, Illustrations by Stan Skardinski (New York: Random House, 1985), pp. 145-148. *New York: A Guide to the Empire State*, Compiled by Workers of the Writers' Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of New York, American Guide Series, Illustrated (New York: Oxford University Press, 1940, Fifth Printing, 1955), p. 576.

having ascertained the time of morning Mass, the group took a walk around town. People stood by and gazed at the young men in “unabashed curiosity,” relates the chronicler.

On August 31, after Mass in the parish church of Our Lady of Loretto in Cold Spring and breakfast at home, the pastor, Father Joseph E. Bergan, visited the house and gave the novices a sketch of the history of the locality.

The house of novitiate in Cold Spring had been canonically approved as such on April 3, 1918, and the novices officially began their novitiate on the following September eighth. Judging from the chronicle of the house, the year passed quietly and peacefully, as novitiates generally do, especially in the sleepy, little town of Cold Spring.

The last chronicle entry is dated August 29, 1919. It says that the ten-day retreat before profession began that evening and was preached by Father Peter Truffa,<sup>34</sup> and Father Frederick Barni.<sup>35</sup> During the day the novices together with Father Truffa and Father Daniel F. Sheehan, the assistant parish priest, went for their last motor boat ride in Father Sheehan’s boat, the “Hibernia,” up the Hudson as far as the Newburgh Yacht Club. The chronicler described the ride as “delightful.” He then adds, “We can never thank Father Sheehan enough for his kindness in donating the use of his motor boat for our various trips during the last few months.”

It can be mentioned at this point that all the novices professed first triennial vows on September 8, 1919, with the exception of Joseph Olstowski.

In a kind of epilogue the chronicler wrote, “This closes the Diary of the Sacred Heart Novitiate. For the graces, blessings and trials of the past year we offer to Thee, Almighty God, eternal thanks.”<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Peter Truffa was born in Casale Monferrato, Italy, on April 4, 1883. He professed triennial vows on March 2, 1901, at Valsalice, and perpetual vows at Novara, Italy, on October 18, 1904. He was ordained a priest on December 7, 1914. Father Truffa was incardinated in the Diocese of Sancta Maria Ormensis, in Sault Ste-Marie, Canada, on August 7, 1936. He died in St. Joseph’s Hospital, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, on July 10, 1949. (Information supplied by the Salesian Central Archives, Rome, Italy.)

<sup>35</sup> Frederick Barni was born in Vignale Monferrato, on January 19, 1868. He professed perpetual vows with St. John Bosco presiding, on October 5, 1885. He was ordained a priest on February 21, 1891. Blessed Michael Rua sent him to England. From there he was sent to South Africa, and in 1902 he went to Jamaica in the West Indies, where he endured hardships and privations for seven years. In 1909 Father Barni was sent to New York to be the pastor of Mary Help of Christians Parish on East Twelfth Street. In 1919 Father Barni was assigned as a curate at SS. Peter and Paul Church in San Francisco, California. He died on October 13, 1939, in Watsonville, California. (see the obituary letter for Father Frederick Barni.)

<sup>36</sup> *Diary of the Novitiate of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*, pp. 3, 5, 7, 9, 159, 161.

## The Second Transplanting

After the fire in the Hawthorne school there was much discussion about whether to rebuild whatever the fire had destroyed or to sell the entire property. The cost to rebuild seemed prohibitive, since the insurance company awarded the Salesians only \$45,000 for the loss of the school building. That money went partly to pay the remaining debt which the Salesians had contracted when they bought the property and partly to acquire a new piece of property in New Rochelle, New York. It was not until 1925 that the Salesians could sell the Hawthorne property. It was sold to the Sisters known as the Mission Helpers of New York.<sup>37</sup>

### New Rochelle: Something of Its History<sup>38</sup>

New Rochelle was founded by French Huguenots who were seeking religious freedom. They named their settlement after La Rochelle, the last stronghold of the Huguenots in France.

In 1654, the Indians sold their land to an Englishman named Thomas Pell. A group of Huguenots purchased a tract of land from John and Rachell Pell on September 20, 1689. The deed conveyed 6,000 acres in return for 1,625 pounds sterling and added, as a gift, 100 acres of the French Church, all with the condition that Jacob Leisler, who was the agent, pay to Pell or his heirs "one fatt calfe on every fouer and twentyth day of June YEARLY and every year forever if demanded." The payment of "one fatt calfe" is a ceremony carried out symbolically to this day.

Huguenots continued to emigrate from Europe to New Rochelle, and even some persecuted Acadians from Nova Scotia came. French was spoken, and many out-of-towners sent their children to New Rochelle to learn French. Philip Schuyler, a general in the Revolutionary War, and John Jay, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, were instructed in French as children in the private New Rochelle boarding school conducted by Reverend Pierre Stouppe of Trinity Church.

During the American Revolution, the British General, Howe, made his headquarters for a few days in New Rochelle. At least one skirmish actually took place in New Rochelle. That was when American soldiers, led by Colonel Anthony Walton White, fired on the British and killed sixteen of their men. This

---

<sup>37</sup> Eugenio Ceria, Vol. IV, pp. 174-175. See also the correspondence between attorney George J. Gillespie and Rev. Thomas DeMatei in the archives of the Province of St. Philip the Apostle, New Rochelle, N. Y.

<sup>38</sup> *New Rochelle*, published by the League of Women Voters of New Rochelle, N. Y., 1989, pp. 1-4. See also Mary McAleer Vizard, "If You're Thinking of Living in New Rochelle," *The New York Times*, January 17, 1993, Sec. C/WR, p. 7.

encounter took place on August 5, 1779, on the Old Post Road near Main Street and Lispenard Avenue.

During the 1800s, with road building and the coming of railroads, New Rochelle became popular as a summer resort. It is about sixteen miles from midtown Manhattan. The city is 10.4 square miles in area, including nine miles of waterfront, inland waters, and public parks. Its picturesque setting along Long Island Sound has earned for it the title, “The Queen City of the Sound.” New Rochelle numbered 67,625 people in 1990, up from 36,213 in 1920.

## St. Joseph’s House of Studies

How had the purchase of the New Rochelle property come about? We have seen how a house in Ramsey, New Jersey, was established for religious and priestly vocations. We saw that after the Hawthorne fire our clerics were housed and studied in the parish house rented from the Archdiocese of New York. It was obvious that a permanent place was desperately needed where the Salesians could train candidates for the Salesian life and priesthood.

After a careful survey of several desirable locations, a fine piece of property with a large, sturdy, stone mansion on it was found on the shores of Echo Bay in New Rochelle, New York. The place had been known as the Stephenson estate. The stone mansion had been built by Mr. John Stephenson,<sup>39</sup> and it became his summer home. Eventually two Jewish doctors acquired the estate. They used the mansion and grounds for a sanatorium for some years. Towering trees, luxuriant vegetation, a few cows, and a large vegetable garden were on the property. The place, only sixteen miles from midtown Manhattan and with public transportation to and from New York City, was ideal for the Salesians to begin anew their education venture. Therefore, the Salesians bought the property through a benefactor whom they reimbursed. The cost was \$105,000.00, of which \$42,000.00 was the down payment, and a mortgage was taken out for the remainder. That was on March 20, 1919.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> John Stephenson was born in Northern Ireland on July 4, 1809. His parents came to New York, in 1811. In 1831, John designed and built the first omnibus made in New York. He became the chief streetcar builder of the world. Stephenson secured ten patents during his life, all on streetcars. During the Civil War his factory constructed gun carriages and pontoons for the government. Stephenson died on July 31, 1893. (See the *Dictionary of American Biography*, 11 volumes, Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York, N. Y., Vol. IX, pp. 583-584.)

<sup>40</sup> Eugenio Ceria, Vol. IV, pp. 174-175. See also *Cronaca. 1896-1939*, p. 32. See also the deed to the Stephenson Estate and the mortgage in the archives of the Province of St. Philip the Apostle, New Rochelle, N. Y.

The newly acquired property and the stone mansion were blessed by the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop (later Cardinal) Giovanni Vincenzo Bonzano<sup>41</sup> on June 12, 1919. The time had now come for the Salesians to terminate their temporary stay in Williamsbridge, and so on July 10, 1919, the Provincial, Father Ernest Coppo, wrote to Archbishop (later Cardinal) Patrick J. Hayes<sup>42</sup> the following letter:<sup>43</sup>

Your Grace:

From Ramsey where I am for my Retreat, I send you my heartiest thanks for the document you have sent me.

I avail myself of this opportunity to inform Your Grace that before leaving New York for my Retreat, I wrote to Monsignor Mooney, V.G., telling him that the Rev. Dr. Tracey is now at Williamsbridge and I would be greatly obliged if I were notified as soon as possible of the day in which I may hand over to him or to Whomsoever your grace will appoint, the administration of the Church of the Immaculate Conception.

It is indeed with much regret that I beg to mention once more the fact that since last February the time allowed by my Superior General has expired, and I do not know how to remain any longer at Williamsbridge without infringing even a well understood *epikeia*. I told Dr. Tracey and I beg now to repeat that whilst I am forced by obedience to leave that place, I will always be pleased to assist my successor there with all the means at my disposition.

---

<sup>41</sup> *Cronaca. 1896-1939*, p. 32.

Giovanni Vincenzo Bonzano was born in Castelletto Scazzoso, Italy, on September 27, 1867. He was ordained a priest on May 21, 1890, in Rome, Italy. On February 1, 1912, he was appointed Apostolic Delegate to the United States, and was consecrated bishop, on March 3, 1912, by Pope Pius X. Bishop Bonzano was made a Cardinal on December 14, 1922. He was appointed by Pope *Pius XI* to be the Papal Legate at the XXVIII International Eucharistic Congress, held in Chicago, Illinois, June 20-24, 1926. Cardinal Bonzano died on November 26, 1927, in Rome. (See *Encyclopedia of the Catholic Bishops in America 1789-1989*, 10 volumes, published by the Knights of Columbus, pp. 43-44.)

<sup>42</sup> Patrick Joseph Hayes was born in New York City, on November 20, 1867. Patrick entered St. Joseph's Seminary, Troy, New York, in 1888. He was ordained a priest on September 8, 1892. On October 28, 1914, Cardinal Farley ordained Father Hayes Titular Bishop of Tagaste. On March 10, 1919, Bishop Hayes became the fifth Archbishop of New York. He was made a Cardinal on March 24, 1924. He died on September 4, 1938. (See "Hayes, Patrick Joseph" in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. VI. pp. 958-959. 1967.)

<sup>43</sup> AANY, 0-5. Letter from Ernest Coppo, S.C., Ramsey, N. J., July 10, 1919.

Asking once more your pardon for this new trouble, I beg to remain yours

Most Respectfully in Christ,  
Ernest Coppo, S. C.

On July 15, 1919 the Archbishop, through his secretary, sent the following reply to the above letter:<sup>44</sup>

Dear Father Coppo:

His Grace has received your letter of July 10, and bids me say that he knows of the letter you have sent to Monsignor Mooney. For a very short time longer, the Archbishop must ask you to continue the administration of Williamsbridge. In the meantime, he asks you to be a little patient and realize that you shall be allowed to depart within another week or two.

With a blessing from his Grace, I am,

Sincerely yours in Christ,  
Jos. P. Dineen  
Secretary to the Archbishop

In order to conclude the move of the Salesians from their two temporary homes, Father Coppo sent the following letter to Father Dineen on August 2, 1919 from the Sacred Heart Novitiate in Cold Spring, New York:<sup>45</sup>

Rev. and Dear Father Dineen:

May I ask that you be so kind as to give the following informations [sic] to His Grace the Most Reverend Archbishop of New York?

1. Following instructions given by His Grace to the Rev. Dr. Tracey, we have agreed that on the 24th inst. I will introduce him and Father S. Focacci to the Italians at Williamsbridge respectively as their Pastor and Assistant Pastor.

2. The Salesians will leave Williamsbridge on Sept. 1.

3. Next September, our novices will complete the year of their novitiate and will then be sent elsewhere for their studies.

4. In consequence of that, we shall not need any further, the use of the Loretto House of Rest at Cold Spring which was so kindly granted by His

---

<sup>44</sup> AANY, 0-5. Letter from Jos. P. Dineen, New York, N. Y., July 15, 1919.

<sup>45</sup> AANY, 0-5. Letter from Ernest Coppo, S.C., Cold Spring, N. Y., August 2, 1919.

Eminence, the late Cardinal Archbishop of New York, when our Hawthorne School was destroyed by fire. We expect to vacate the place at Cold Spring on September 15.

5. The caretaker appointed by me last year, with Mgr. Dunn's permission, is willing to continue in his office and take care of the place without any other recompense besides the free use of the caretaker's cottage and of a small parcel of land.

If you will kindly let me know his Grace's will on the subject, you will greatly oblige

Yours respectfully in Christ,  
Ernest Coppo, S.C.

Thus the professed who were living and studying at the parish house of the Immaculate Conception in Williamsbridge were brought to New Rochelle. Likewise the newly professed from Cold Spring were housed in New Rochelle. Therefore, the Stephenson estate with its mansion became St. Joseph's House of Studies. It became a high school for boys aspiring to the Salesian life and priesthood, a novitiate, a house of philosophy, and a house of theology all wrapped up in one. That gives an idea of how concerned the Salesians were to have their own place to train their candidates.

The young Salesians from Williamsbridge began or continued theology. The recently professed from Cold Spring began college courses and the study of Philosophy, and they also taught the few high school aspirants at that time.

In the meantime events were taking shape regarding the development of this new house of formation. Father Coppo, though his term as Provincial was rapidly drawing to a close, planned a new building and dreamed of a school which would, in a special way, foster priestly and Salesian vocations. Therefore, he wrote to Archbishop Hayes this letter:<sup>46</sup>

October 8, 1919

His Grace the Most Rev. P. J. Hayes, D.D.  
Archbishop of New York  
New York City

Your Grace:

I beg to send you herewith enclosed a copy of our *Prospectus*, humbly asking that it be examined, approved or corrected according to your Judgment.

---

<sup>46</sup> AANY, V-1. Letter from Ernest Coppo, S.C., New Rochelle, N.Y., October 8, 1919.

You will notice that the purpose of this school is to foster religious and priestly vocations.

When we happen to meet a priest of your diocese willing to grant permission to collect in his church for the benefit of poor boys who lack means to follow their vocation, may we be allowed to do so?

Thanking your Grace for your kindness, I beg to remain

Respectfully in Christ,  
Ernest Coppo, S.C.

There is no record that Archbishop Hayes changed anything in the *Prospectus*. However, we know from the word “Consultors” written at the top of Father Coppo’s letter, that the Consultors must have discussed it, and that permission was given to collect funds in churches where the pastor permitted it from the word “Yes” alongside Father Coppo’s request for that.

*The Prospectus of St. Joseph’s House of Studies* <sup>47</sup>

The first item in the *Prospectus* is a brief explanation of the value and ideal of a priestly and religious vocation. It then gives a summary sketch of Don Bosco’s life and work. There follows a brief description of the Salesian Society and its work. The *Prospectus* proper follows, telling where the school is located and the size of the property. It seems worthwhile at this point to quote some of the items.

Regarding the Object of the House of Studies the *Prospectus* says:

In order to avoid confusion, it is necessary to explain that this is not an ordinary College [sic] nor a Reform School. The object of St. Joseph’s House of Studies is to foster religious and priestly vocations.

Boys who desire to join the Salesian Congregation will be given preference, and in as far as conditions allow, other students will also be received, if they give indications of a priestly vocation and are able to meet the prescribed requirements.

It is to be clearly understood, that St. Joseph’s House of Studies is not a “Reformatory.” Priests are never recruited from young men who were sent to Reform Schools to correct their bad habits. Only exemplary young men are to be admitted.

Among the Requisites For Admission here are some numbers:

---

<sup>47</sup> AANY, V-1. The enclosure in the letter from Ernest Coppo, S.C., New Rochelle, N. Y., October 8, 1919.

2. A medical certificate of good health of both the applicant and his parents.
4. A letter of recommendation from the applicant's Pastor, and from the Principal of the school.
5. A letter of application from the candidate.
7. The fee is \$25.00 a month, payable in advance. This fee does not include medical attendance, school books, and individual expenses.
10. Smoking, or the use of tobacco in any form, is forbidden.
12. Parents and relatives are allowed to see the pupils on Sundays and legal holidays from 2:00 to 6:00 P.M.

Under the heading *Parents of Our Students* is some advice and encouragement to the parents to help their son to succeed. There follows an *Agreement* to be signed by the parents in which they promise: 1. Not to object to his [their son's] vocation; 2. To take him home without any objection, on request of the Rev. Superior; 3. to provide the necessary outfit, and pay \$ ... [sic] every month, as per agreement.

Information follows about *Burses for Scholarships*, and finally *Favors to Benefactors* in the form of prayers and suffrages for those living and deceased.

The cornerstone of the new school building which Father Coppo envisioned was blessed on October 3, 1920, by Monsignor Michael J. Lavelle.<sup>48</sup> The oration on that occasion was delivered by Monsignor John P. Chidwick.<sup>49</sup>

The original plan and drawing of the new school building as conceived by the architect, Paul Cerina, was a fine looking, three-story structure. The present structure, which is a little more than half of the original plan, went up in three stages: 1920, 1924 and 1925.<sup>50</sup> The gymnasium was built in 1927. It merited

<sup>48</sup> Michael Joseph Lavelle was born in New York City, on May 30, 1856. He was ordained a priest at St. Joseph's Seminary, Troy, New York, on June 7, 1879. Father Lavelle was assigned to St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York City, where he spent all his priestly life and was appointed rector in May, 1887. He was honored as domestic prelate in 1904 and as prothonotary apostolic in 1929. Msgr. Lavelle died in New York City, on October 17, 1939. (See "Lavelle, Michael Joseph" in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, McGraw-Hill Book Co., N. Y., Vol. VIII, pp. 540-541, 1967.)

<sup>49</sup> John Patrick Chidwick was born in New York City, on October 23, 1862. He was ordained a priest in the seminary at Troy, New York, on December 17, 1887. Father Chidwick gained fame as chaplain of the US battleship "Maine" when it was blown up in Havana harbor, Cuba, in 1898. His heroism on that occasion was praised in a dispatch from Captain Charles Sigsbee, the Commander of the "Maine", to John Long, Secretary of the Navy. Father Chidwick was appointed a papal chamberlain and served as pastor of St. Agnes Parish, New York City, until his death on January 13, 1935. (See "Chidwick, John Patrick" in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, McGraw-Hill Book Co., N. Y., Vol. III, p. 565, 1967.)

<sup>50</sup> Chronicle of the Salesian House of New Rochelle, N. Y., p. 2

this entry in the well known publication, *New York: A Guide to the Empire State*, “Salesian College, 148 Main St., a school for training young men for the Catholic priesthood, was founded by the Salesian Fathers in 1919. The large modern gymnasium fronts the street. Driveways lead through the 30-acre campus.”<sup>51</sup>

In September, 1921 Salesian Institute, as the school was originally called, was inaugurated and inhabited. It ceased to be only for candidates to the Salesian life and priesthood, and boys were accepted for the upper grammar grades and high school.<sup>52</sup> The Chronicle of the house records that in 1927 “The house of New Rochelle now changed its title from the general one of Salesian Institute to the more specific one of Salesian High School.”<sup>53</sup>

The Salesian tradition and the Salesian rule of those days was that a classical high school course, as opposed to that in a school of arts and trades, was for youths who might have a vocation or in whom a vocation might be fostered.<sup>54</sup> Thus, the new school, in accord with Father Coppo’s letter of October 8, 1919 and the *Prospectus* sent to Archbishop Hayes, was conducted with vocations to the ecclesiastical and religious state as its purpose. This school, like most other

For a good photograph of the architect’s vision of the school building, see The Don Bosco Messenger, Vol. IX, Nos. 7 and 8, September and October, 1920, inside back cover and inside front cover, respectively.

For photographs of the laying of the cornerstone, see The Don Bosco Messenger, Vol. IX, No. 9, November, 1920, pp. 1, 3, 5. In several issues of The Don Bosco Messenger during the 1920s there are photographs of the sections of the school as they were built.

<sup>51</sup> *New York: A Guide to the Empire State*, p. 247.

<sup>52</sup> *Chronicle of the Salesian House of New Rochelle*, N. Y., p. 1

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

At that time, to call a school an “institute” was not pejorative. In fact, it denoted a school of better quality which specialized in one or more fields of education. However, words sometimes take on a new or an additional connotation, as is experienced even at this period of the American societal experience. The name “institute” exists still, though in names of colleges and universities; e.g., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Virginia Military Institute, Pratt Institute, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and many others.

The course of studies followed in Salesian High School was and is that prescribed by the Regents of the State of New York.

<sup>54</sup> See Rule 5 of the *Constitutions of the Society of St. Francis de Sales*, written by Don Bosco and presented to the Salesians on August 15, 1875. See also Rule 5 of the *Constitutions* presented to the Salesians by Don Rua on September 8, 1906; also Rules 6 and 7 of the *Constitutions* presented to the Salesians by Don Rinaldi on December 8, 1923.

Salesian boarding schools with a classical course of studies, was conducted along the lines of what is called in these times a junior seminary.<sup>55</sup>

## How St. Joseph's House of Studies Fared

While the new house in New Rochelle was being organized and conducted along the desired course, the new Provincial, Father Emmanuel Manassero,<sup>56</sup> arrived on October 9, 1919. He had been appointed on August 1, and Father Coppo had finished up his own term of office while awaiting the new Provincial. Soon after Father Manassero's arrival the development of the house of New Rochelle described above was set in motion.

August 21, 1920 saw the canonical approval of the novitiate at St. Joseph's House of Studies. Father Francis Binelli,<sup>57</sup> the famed and saintly Master of Novices, whom Don Bosco himself had once appointed, was the one who, by his teaching and example, led so many young men to embrace the Salesian way of life. During the years that the novitiate functioned in New Rochelle fifty-four novices were under Father Binelli. Ten of them had been for the lay brotherhood.

---

<sup>55</sup> These schools required daily Mass with confessors present in confessionals, morning prayers, Rosary, Litany of the Blessed Virgin, night prayers with "good night" talk. Also required were two Masses on Sunday with a homily at the second Mass which was either sung or the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin was recited, Sunday Vespers, sermon, and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Required also were various novenas, triduums, Exercise for a Good Death every month, and a three-day spiritual retreat each year. To all this should be added that the timetable in the boarding school was very close to that of the junior seminary.

<sup>56</sup> Emmanuel Manassero was born in Benevagienna, Italy, on September 13, 1873. In August, 1885, he entered the Oratory in Turin. There he came to be known by Don Bosco, to whom Emmanuel went for the Sacrament of Penance. Don Rua admitted him to the novitiate in September, 1888, and on October 11 of the following year Don Rua received his perpetual profession. Emmanuel Manassero was ordained a priest on Holy Saturday, April 4, 1896. From 1919 to 1927 he served as Provincial of the United States. It was during his term of office that the San Francisco Province came into being in 1926. Father Manassero saw to the construction of the Church of SS. Peter and Paul in San Francisco. After a number of additional assignments, he retired to Sacro Cuore Parish, Rome, and after suffering much from a stroke, he died on May 29, 1946, at the age of 73. (See the obituary letter for Father Emmanuel Manassero.)

<sup>57</sup> Francis Binelli was born in Caresana, Italy, on February 26, 1863. As a young cleric he asked Don Bosco for the privilege of being sent to the foreign missions. Almost jokingly, Don Bosco answered that his mission would be that of forming Salesians. On June 29, 1886, Francis Binelli was ordained a priest. Soon afterwards he was appointed Master of Novices, and for forty-two years he fulfilled that office in various countries, and lastly in the United States. On July 16, 1931 he had surgery for a digestive infection. He died on Saturday, July 18. (See the obituary letter for Father Francis Binelli.)

During the summer of 1927 the novitiate together with the philosophy students was transferred to Goshen, New York, where a school had been opened in 1926, the property having been purchased in 1925. There, during the novitiate year 1927-28, Father Binelli had nine novices, one of whom was for the lay brotherhood.

As might be expected, not all the novices persevered to the end, but forty of them did become priests. All together the total number of candidates who passed through St. Joseph's House of Studies for either high school and novitiate, or as philosophy and theology students numbered between 85 and 90.

During the years of St. Joseph's House of Studies a fair number of distinguished dignitaries visited and stayed for either a few hours, or for a few days, or even weeks and months. Such visitors included Blessed Bishop Luigi Versiglia, Archbishop Patrick J. Hayes, who came to visit Archbishop Piani. He also gave a conference to the Salesians; Bishop John J. Dunn of New York, Archbishop Pietro Fumasoni-Biondi, Apostolic Delegate to the United States; Archbishop Guglielmo Piani, the Apostolic Delegate to the Philippines; Archbishop Felice Guerra of Santiago, Cuba; Bishop Dominic Comin of Guayaquil, Ecuador; and Bishop Ernest Coppo, former Provincial in the United States; plus several diocesan priests and Monsignori. Also several major superiors from Turin: namely, Fathers Paul Albera, Peter Ricaldone, Arthur Conelli, George Serie, and Anthony Candela stayed at St. Joseph's House of Studies either on official visitations or as guests during their journeys.<sup>58</sup>

## Products of Salesian Education after the first twenty-five years

Besides priests and religious, what else had Salesian education in Troy, Hawthorne, and New Rochelle produced? In May, 1928 Brother Anselmo J. Petazzi organized a get together of alumni. Several dozen young men assembled at the New Rochelle school. An account of the meeting was written by the alumnus, Joseph Bove, M.D. The group organized the “Salesian Alumni Association of the Salesian Schools of New York State.”

To celebrate the beginning of the Association, a baseball game was played between the alumni and the students of Salesian High. The students won.

In his report of the alumni meeting Dr. Bove says, “The real treat came after the game, however, when we were all introduced to the new Very Rev. Provin-

---

<sup>58</sup> See the *Elenco Generale della Societa Salesiana. 1920-1928*. See also the *Chronicle of the Salesian House of New Rochelle. N. Y.*, pp. 1-4; and the *Cronaca della Ispettorica Salesiana. 1896-1939*, pp. 32, 34-41.

cial, Father Richard Pittini, S.C. He immediately became part of us, and we became part of him. He gave all of us the 'once over', and what did he see? He saw the young boys of years ago turned into men, physicians, dentists, pharmacists, lawyers, musicians, and business men."

At a meeting in September, 1928 a Constitution for the Association was adopted. The officers elected for a period of one year were: Dr. John F. Sabbia, President; Joseph J. Guadagno, vice-president; Nicholas Collara, Correspondence Secretary; Charles A. Galotta, Financial Secretary; Louis F. Petrocelli, Treasurer; Dr. Joseph Bove, Lecturer and Historian; Dr. Louis S. Sabbia, Salvatore Giangrande, and P. J. Bizarri, Trustees; Very Rev. Richard Pittini, S.C., Chaplain. Meetings were to be held regularly in January, April, July, and October. The motto was "Carry on."<sup>59</sup>

### The Third Transplanting

Father Manassero handed the reins of government of the New Rochelle Province to Father Richard Pittini on November 9, 1927.<sup>60</sup> The new Provincial soon realized that St. Joseph's House of Studies in New Rochelle, while it achieved good success, was now crowded and needed more space. Besides, the Salesian High School needed an outdoor recreation area in addition to the gymnasium then under construction. A new environment was therefore sought for St. Joseph's House of Studies.

Several prospective properties on Long Island, New York, and in New Jersey were inspected. The search finally settled upon a large farm with a 5-acre lake and a wooded area in Newton, New Jersey.<sup>61</sup>

Therefore, on May 2, 1928, Father Pittini sent the following letter to Bishop Thomas J. Walsh, asking for permission to open a House of Formation in Newton, New Jersey:

The Rt. Rev. Thomas J. Walsh, D.D.  
Bishop of Newark  
Newark, N. J.

Your Lordship:

In the performance of my duties as new Provincial of the Salesians of the Ven. Don Bosco in the Eastern Province of the United States I immedi-

---

<sup>59</sup> *The Don Bosco Messenger*, Vol. XVII, No. 9, December, 1928, pp. 25-26, 31.

<sup>60</sup> *Chronicle of the Salesian House of New Rochelle*. N. Y., p.3.

<sup>61</sup> *Chronicle of Don Bosco Seminary*. Newton. N. J., 1928, p. 1.

ately saw, on coming to this country, the absolute necessity of a special “House of Formation” for American youth called by God to our religious life.

On the other hand my Superiors, my confreres and our friends, among them some conspicuous members of the American Episcopate, urged me to realize this purpose as soon as possible.

The main object of this “House of Formation” should be to prepare many and fitting teachers for *day and boarding* pupils belonging to the poor and middle class of society, without distinction of nationality, but with a particular advantage for *young Italian-Americans*, who have a natural tendency for our schools.

After long and useless trials in different places, Divine Providence put at our disposal a large, quiet, and moderately priced property near Newton in Your Lordship’s diocese. We have almost agreed with the owner, and the only thing now necessary is the canonical permission of your Lordship.

The House in its full development will consist of: (a) a High School for aspirants to the Salesian life; (b) a Novitiate; (c) a Philosophical Studentate.

It will bear the name of *Don Bosco*, whose pure spirit has to hover over it and whose Beatification we hope to be near.

I not only ask the benevolent permission of Your Lordship, but I feel certain that Your Lordship will take this cradle of the Salesian work in this country under your particular and paternal protection.

Since the beginning of the scholastic year is not far away, I beg for a prompt consideration of my petition in order to arrange the many difficult preliminaries for such an undertaking.

With sincere appreciation for the kind consideration which I trust Your Lordship will please give to this matter, I am,

Your Lordship’s Obedient Servant,  
(Rev.) Richard Pittini, S.C.<sup>62</sup>

The desired permission was dated August 14, 1928, brief, handwritten, completely in Italian, and signed “Tommaso Giuseppe Walsh, Vescovo di Newark.”<sup>63</sup>

An agreement for sale of the Horton farm and mansion to the Salesian Congregation was signed on April 17, 1928, by the Galante family, who owned the property. The actual purchase was dated September 12, 1928,<sup>64</sup> and the price of

---

<sup>62</sup> Archives of Don Bosco Seminary, Newton, N. J., Folder 3. Letter from Father Richard Pittini, New Rochelle, N. Y., May 2, 1928.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, Folder 3. Letter from Bishop Thomas J. Walsh, Newark, N. J., August 14, 1928.

<sup>64</sup> Archives of the Province of St. Philip, the Apostle, New Rochelle, N. Y. Newton file, Real Estate: deeds, title insurance, mortgages, 1928.

the entire property, including the Horton Mansion with all its furniture and equipment, and a long list of farm tools, animals, feed, and various supplies amounted to \$49,000. Another ten to twelve thousand dollars was spent upgrading the heating system, sanitary improvements, plastering, and painting. A few Salesians from Goshen, New York, helped with the work, so that by November 24, 1928, all the clerics and novices transferred from Goshen to the Horton mansion in Newton, New Jersey. There were eight faculty and staff, twenty three novices, five of whom professed on December 8, two philosophy students, and a hired cook, adding up to a total of thirty-four persons.<sup>65</sup>

In the meantime, canonical approval for the founding of the house of formation was given by the Rector Major, Father Philip Rinaldi, on October 12, 1928.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> *Chronicle of Don Bosco Seminary*, 1928, pp. 2-3.

<sup>66</sup> Archives of Don Bosco Seminary, Folder 2, letter from Father Philip Rinaldi, Turin, Italy, October 12, 1928.

## Settling In At Newton <sup>67</sup>

Father Pittini's principal preoccupations were St. Joseph's House of Studies in Newton and obtaining vocations. He promoted vocations by traveling to schools and even to diocesan and religious seminaries to speak about Don Bosco and the need for vocations. He had decided that a regular seminary building must be built in Newton, because, while the Horton mansion would do for a start, it was much too inadequate. The expense that would be incurred in building a seminary building would be a heavy one, especially since the great depression was raging.

It was estimated that the cost to build would run to at least \$250,000<sup>68</sup>. Nevertheless, Father Pittini believed it was absolutely necessary, if the Salesian work in the United States was to make progress. In the December, 1928 issue of *The Don Bosco Messenger* Father Pittini wrote a long letter to friends and cooperators. After earnestly asking for financial support for the new seminary building, he wrote:

---

<sup>67</sup> Newton is the county seat of Sussex County, in the northwestern part of New Jersey. It is 750 feet above sea level. Newton (New Town) originally included nearly all of the present Sussex County which lies east of the Kittatinny Mountains. With time Sussex County was divided into townships, and the town of Newton became very much smaller. Today Newton is mostly residential. It is about sixty miles from New York City. The 1990 census counted 7,521 people.

Newton's Greek Revival county courthouse, with six Doric columns, looks quite impressive. Newton is also the commercial and banking center for Sussex County. In spite of the increasing traffic through the town, it retains a certain charm of its own with its many nineteenth century shops and homes. Newton can boast of a fine, modern hospital; the Sussex County Historical Society's headquarters; the Dennis Library, which is a branch of the county library; the Newton Fire Museum; and the Merriam House, now a rest home, but once the home of the founder of the Merriam Shoe Company. The house is a splendid example of Queen Anne Architecture. Newton has three Protestant churches and one Catholic church not far from one another.

St. Joseph's House of Studies was situated on a hill, within the town limits of Newton, about a mile out from the town's busy center, and in the midst of fields of grazing cattle and growing corn and alfalfa. It was a quiet, peaceful, bucolic setting when the Salesians arrived in 1928.

Information for this note is from: Barbara Westergaard, *New Jersey: A Guide to the State*, (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1987), pp. 242-243. See also John T. Cunningham, *This is New Jersey From High Point to Cape May*, Maps by William M. Canfield, (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953), pp. 11-18. See also *History of Sussex and Warren Counties. New Jersey. with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of the Prominent Men and Pioneers*, Compiled by James P. Snell, in two volumes, Vol. I: Sussex County, (Philadelphia, Pa.: Everts & Peck, 1881), pp. 247-248.

<sup>68</sup> *The New Jersey Herald*, Newton, N. J., June 4, 1931, preserved in the Archives of Don Bosco Seminary, folder 18. See also folder 16.

I would have you imprint on your minds in large letters: VOCATIONS, VOCATIONS, VOCATIONS, that you might never lose sight of the great need there is for good priests to extend God's kingdom on earth. May you be generous enough to help us in our noble cause, and I assure you that your reward will be "exceeding great."<sup>69</sup>

In order to encourage donations, *The Don Bosco Messenger*, during the 1930s, published photographs of the seminary building as it was being constructed and afterwards. There were also formal and informal photographs of the seminarians, aspirants, novices, and philosophy students. At various times there were lists of donors and their amounts, ranging anywhere from \$1.00 to over \$2,000. With the explicit permission of Patrick Cardinal Hayes, there were his photograph and his note which said:

Please find enclosed check of \$500.00 as my personal contribution towards the erection of your Seminary at Newton, with my blessing for its success.

Sincerely yours in Christ,  
Patrick Card. Hayes<sup>70</sup>

At this point in our walk through the past it seems worthwhile to quote from the chronicle of Don Bosco Seminary during those early years.

July 6, 1930: Camp Don Bosco opened with thirty-nine boys. On July 7, at 5:30 P.M., the Camp was blessed. Some prominent Newton citizens were present; namely, Father Michael J. Donnelly, pastor of St. Joseph Church in Newton; State Senator Cole; Mr. William Dolan, the Seminary's lawyer; and Mr. Quinn, President of one of Newton's banks.

August 30, 1930: Father Patrick O'Leary paid a visit to Newton. He remarked about the natural beauty of the scenery, and he predicted that the day was not far distant before the Salesians would receive their degrees before leaving the seminary to teach.

February 11, 1931: Today marked the official occupation of the new building. In the morning Father Director read the *Oremus* and sprinkled the hall and corridor with holy water. Mass was celebrated and a temporary chapel erected. After breakfast the Brothers and aspirants moved their belongings to the new building, leaving the novices alone. In the afternoon we had the pleasure of hearing the voice of the Holy Father over the radio.

---

<sup>69</sup> *The Don Bosco Messenger*, Vol. XVII, No. 9, December, 1928, p. 21.

<sup>70</sup> *The Don Bosco Messenger*, Vol. XIX, No. 4, July-August, 1930, p. 1

## Don Bosco Seminary Becomes A Reality

In the January-February, 1931 issue, on page one of *The Don Bosco Messenger* is another of Father Pittini's letters. It was addressed to “our Cooperators, Alumni, and Friends”. Here are three paragraphs from that letter:

It is at Newton that the outstanding step has been taken in the erection of our Don Bosco Seminary, raised up as the best American Homage to our Blessed Founder. I hardly know how to thank you, dear Cooperators, for whatever contributions you may have made toward the completion of this Seminary, which is destined to be the heart of our Province and the main source of its expansion.

Vocations. In fact, the number of Salesian vocations increased during the past year as never before. Our Province never before had the actual number of fifty two Seminarians, disposed to follow Blessed John Bosco.

This is exceedingly promising and the best testimony of God's blessing upon us.

From the *Chronicle of Don Bosco Seminary* we read the following brief description of the dedication of the new building:

June 12-13, 1931: Archbishop Pietro Fumasoni Biondi, D.D.<sup>71</sup> Apostolic Delegate to the United States, having been invited by Father Provincial, arrived from Washington, D.C., accompanied by a police escort, Father Provincial, and others. At 8:00 P.M. the Archbishop blessed the cornerstone and the chapel, and then he addressed a few words to the persons present. The Archbishop offered the Community Mass and distributed Holy Communion to the Community. After breakfast he solemnly blessed [the statue of] Don Bosco. Immediately afterwards the Rt. Rev. Msgr. John A. Duffy, V.G. delivered the oration of the day in the presence of a large gathering. Father Patrick O'Leary also addressed the audience. His Excellency departed in the afternoon. Father Provincial sang a Solemn High Mass in the presence of a large delegation from St. Anthony's Parish of Paterson who came to see the main altar for which they had paid, and Father Shay of Rochester, New York, preached an appropriate sermon.

---

<sup>71</sup> Pietro Fumasoni-Biondi was born on September 4, 1872, in Rome, Italy. He was ordained a priest on April 17, 1897, and a bishop on December 10, 1916. He left Rome for Kandy, India, in January, 1917. He was appointed by Pope Pius XI Apostolic Delegate to the United States on December 14, 1922. The same Pope made Archbishop Fumasoni-Biondi a Cardinal on March 13, 1933. He died on July 12, 1960, in Rome. (See *Encyclopedia of the Catholic Bishops in America 1789-1989*, 10 volumes, published by the Knights of Columbus, pp. 45-46.)

The dedication of the new building inaugurated the change of name from St. Joseph's House of Studies to Don Bosco Seminary, but St. Joseph remained the patron of the House.

## The Flourishing of Don Bosco College Seminary

Father Pittini's<sup>72</sup> term of six years as Provincial came to an end in November, 1933. He was entrusted by the Rector Major, Father Peter Ricaldone, with the work of establishing a Salesian school of arts and trades in Santo Domingo. Soon after that assignment he was elevated to the Archbishopric of Santo Domingo.

Meanwhile Father Ambrose Rossi<sup>73</sup> was appointed Provincial of the New Rochelle Province. He was welcomed at Don Bosco Seminary for the first time on November 11, 1933. Father Rossi can be likened to a second founder of the Seminary in Newton. He paid off its large debt, and his great desires for the Seminary were to beautify the grounds, and to secure the approval of the college program by the educational authorities in Trenton, New Jersey, so that the Bachelor of Arts degree in philosophy could be awarded to the graduates of the Seminary.

Father Rossi so instilled both these goals into the minds and hearts of both the faculty and the students, that on March 18, 1938 official notice was received that the college program had been approved for five years. Therefore, Don Bosco Seminary awarded the Bachelor of Arts degree in philosophy for the first time on

---

<sup>72</sup> Richard Pittini was born in Tricesimo, Italy, on April 30, 1876. He was ordained a priest on January 22, 1899 in Montevideo, Uruguay, having gone there as a missionary immediately after his profession in 1893. From 1923 until 1927 he was the Provincial of the Province of Uruguay and Paraguay. He spent thirty years in those two countries. In 1927 Father Pittini was appointed Provincial of the New Rochelle Province. His great preoccupation as Provincial was vocations. In 1933 Father Pittini's term as Provincial ended, and in 1935 he was chosen to be the Archbishop of Santo Domingo. He was ordained bishop on December 8, 1935. Worn out and blind, Archbishop Pittini died on December 10, 1961. (See the obituary letter for Mons. Richard Pittini.)

<sup>73</sup> Ambrose Rossi was born Cortenova, Italy, on April 23, 1893. On September 23, 1923 he was ordained a priest. From 1925 until 1930 he was the Director of the Missionary Institute Cardinal Cagliari, in Ivrea, Italy, and from 1930 to 1933 he was the Director of the Institute Conte Rebaudengo, in Turin, Italy. From 1933 to 1941 Father Rossi was the Provincial of the New Rochelle Province, and for a time also of the San Francisco Province together. The latter Province included Australia in those years. In 1944 he was assigned to the Institute Don Rua in El Salvador. There his piety and zeal prompted him to build a magnificent church in honor of Mary, Help of Christians. Father Rossi died on March 26, 1964, in the City of San Salvador. (See the funeral homily for Father Ambrose Rossi by Reverend Rafael Alfaro.)

June 24, 1938, when eight of its graduates received that degree. From that time on the House of Newton was called Don Bosco College.

World War II began in Europe between Germany and Poland on August 26, 1939. Therefore, Father Rossi established a school of theology in the house at Newton for those students who would have gone to Europe for their theological studies prior to priestly ordination, but were prevented by the war. There were seven students of theology that first scholastic year, 1939-1940. Theology students studied at Newton each scholastic year through 1947-1948, at which time they were transferred to Aptos, California.<sup>74</sup>

The years from 1928 to approximately 1949 were the years given to the founding and establishment of the house and the strengthening of Salesian ideals, customs and traditions. The years from 1950 to 1965 were those of dramatic growth in numbers of seminarians and in the expansion of facilities.

By 1945 the House of Newton was already beginning to feel growing pains. In October of that year the high school department with its aspirants left for temporary quarters in Suffern, New York, until things were ready for them in West Haverstraw, New York.<sup>75</sup> The theology students departed and went to Aptos, California, in September, 1948. These moves left Newton with the novices in the Horton mansion, and the philosophy students in the building which Father Pittini had built.

An important development in 1951 was the introduction of the “ Sons of Mary” program which Don Bosco himself had begun. Meanwhile, the novitiate classes were growing in numbers, so that the old Horton mansion became quite inadequate to the new reality. This necessitated the construction of a new novitiate building. That building, which cost over half a million dollars, was blessed by the Rector Major, Father Renato Ziggitti, on the feast of St. Joseph, March 19, 1960, and was named St. Joseph’s Novitiate.<sup>76</sup>

The increase in numbers of novices resulted in an increase of philosophy students. This in turn required the construction of a building just for education and academic matters. This new building became known as the scholastic building and housed everything having to do with the college program. It was blessed on May 24, 1964 by the Bishop of the Paterson Diocese, James J. Navagh.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>74</sup> *Chronicle of Don Bosco Seminary*, 1933, p. 43; 1938, pp. 27-29, 32; 1939, pp. 40-41.

<sup>75</sup> *Chronicle of the House For Aspirants*, Suffern, N. Y., 1945, p. 2.

<sup>76</sup> *The Salesian Bulletin*, Vol. 8, No. 5-6, May-June, 1960, pp. 3-5.

<sup>77</sup> *The Salesian Bulletin*, Vol. 12, No. 9-10, September-October, 1964, pp. 2-5.

## The Decline of Don Bosco College Seminary

Enter Vatican II. The shock waves produced in the Church when this Council finished its work in 1965 are well known from secular and religious sources. In the New Rochelle Province the total number of Salesians declined steadily from 546 in 1965 to 236 in 1992. The confreres in Eastern Canada, to the number of 36, became a vice-province in 1988 and were no longer numbered in the New Rochelle Province. In addition, 65 confreres from the Province died between 1965 and 1992. Besides all this, the number of novices declined steadily from a high of 68 in 1963 to five in 1992<sup>78</sup>

As the number of pre-novitiate candidates and novices became fewer, so did the college student body. In order to increase the number of students, Salesian Sisters were admitted on an experimental basis. That proved unsatisfactory, and the Sisters then became extension students on their own campus and received Don Bosco College credit.

In 1968, the Provincial, Father John Malloy, began toying with the idea of opening Don Bosco College to the public. Toward that end he wrote to the attorney for the Province, Richard T. Graham, seeking advice in the matter. Mr. Graham, after studying the question and conferring with knowledgeable legal counsel in New Jersey, answered Father Malloy on March 15, 1968.

The substance of attorney Graham's letter to the Provincial was that a change in the corporate structure must indicate that Don Bosco College is effectively a secular college. Though training for the priesthood would be present, it could not be the main function, and there would have to be enrollment without regard to religious faith.<sup>79</sup>

Many discussions took place and reasons were presented for and against opening Don Bosco College to the public.<sup>80</sup> The policy adopted was to draw as many seminarians, religious and diocesan, as possible. For some years a fair number of Capuchin seminarians, a few Benedictine students, and several from the Allentown Diocese attended Don Bosco.

During the late 1960s and 1970s several important developments took place as regards the life of the College and Seminary. Among them were the development of a boys' club and a summer day camp. In 1966 the accreditation by the Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges (MSA) was achieved. That accreditation was renewed in 1976. Another development was the cooperative

---

<sup>78</sup> *Salesian Directory 1964-65*, New Rochelle, N. Y., pp. 39-47, Roster of Confreres. Also *North American Salesian Communities Directory 1992-1993*, New Rochelle, N. Y., pp. 60-67, Index of Persons.

<sup>79</sup> Archives of Don Bosco Seminary, Folder 61. Letter from Richard T. Graham, New York; N. Y., March 15, 1968.

<sup>80</sup> Archives of Don Bosco Seminary, Folders 68, 82, 108, 109, 120, 124.

plan between Don Bosco College and St. Peter’s College in Jersey City, New Jersey, whereby Don Bosco seniors could receive New Jersey teacher certification.

In 1985 cooperation with the Sussex County Community College (SCCC) enabled Don Bosco College students to pursue certain specialized courses useful for certification. To help boost the sagging enrollment at Don Bosco a few lay students from the local area were admitted in lower division courses.<sup>81</sup>

All these initiatives and efforts gave some hope and longer life to Don Bosco College. Nevertheless, with fewer and fewer candidates for the religious and priestly life entering the College, the future did not look promising. In the midst of growing gloom, two very important evaluations of Don Bosco College took place. Somewhat ironically, the validity of Don Bosco College Seminary was affirmed in spite of the enrollment problem.

The first evaluation was from the Middle States Association in 1986. Here is the final paragraph of the draft report of the MSA team:

By way of closing, we applaud the College for the fine work that is being done. We are amazed that so few of you can do so much and do it so well. We feel confident that administrators, trustees, faculty and students recognize the areas of concern that we have highlighted in this report, and that you are as anxious as we are that they be promptly addressed so that Don Bosco College can continue to offer high, quality education, preparing its students for this very special life they have chosen, and can fulfill its mission with that integrity, autonomy and freedom so essential to the pursuit of truth.<sup>82</sup>

The accreditation by the Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges was once again awarded to Don Bosco College in 1987 for ten more years.<sup>83</sup>

The other evaluation was that of the Congregation for Catholic Education, and authorized by the Vatican to study and evaluate seminaries in the United States. The evaluating team made a number of recommendations for improvement, but their official report had high praises for the manner in which the Seminary College operated.

The commendations included the quality of formation, the priestly example of the faculty, the admissions procedures, the philosophy courses, the study of

<sup>81</sup> Archives of Don Bosco Seminary, Folders 108, 109.

<sup>82</sup> Archives of Don Bosco Seminary, Folder 114.

<sup>83</sup> *Sussex County*, Sussex County, N. J., published by Sussex County Chamber of Commerce, 1989, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 66. Found in the Archives of Don Bosco Seminary, Folder 117.

English, Latin, and religious studies, the program for teacher certification, the apostolic formation, and the dedication of the faculty, both religious and lay.<sup>84</sup>

That report, dated August 18, 1988, was sent by William Cardinal Baum of the Congregation for Catholic Education to His Excellency, the Most Reverend Vincenzo Fagiolo, Archbishop Emeritus of Chieti-Vasto, Secretary for the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes at the Vatican. Copies of the report were sent to the Provincial, Father Richard McCormick; to the Rector Major, Father Egidio Vigan; to the Bishop of Paterson, Frank J. Rodimer; and to Bishop John A. Marshall.

## The Closure of Don Bosco College Seminary

In the spring of 1989, the decision of the authorities of the Province was to close Don Bosco College Seminary. The principal reason given at meetings of the confreres was that it was far too expensive to keep the College open with so few students. The scholastic year 1988-1989 saw a total of twenty-four students, nine of whom graduated in June, 1989. Meanwhile, a choice was made to locate a formation community in South Orange, New Jersey, near Seton Hall University.

Probably the handwriting was already on the wall as regards Don Bosco College when St. Joseph's Novitiate and twelve acres of land were sold in May, 1989 for \$4.2 million to Sussex County for their various offices.

The next development was a lease agreement signed on August 17, 1989 with the Sussex County Community College (SCCC) whereby the scholastic building, half of the first floor of the resident building, and 90 acres of land were leased for three years at \$665,000 over the three years.

The New Jersey Chancellor of Higher Education, Dr. T. Edward Hollander, expressed his regret in seeing Don Bosco College close, and requested that it remain in operation until all students were duly taken care of. Thus, the last graduation class of seven students (two Salesians, one Capuchin, one Salesian Sister, a permanent deacon, a lay woman, and a layman) were awarded the Bachelor of Arts degree in philosophy on May 19, 1990. Then on June 30, 1990 Don Bosco College surrendered its charter to the education authorities in Trenton, New Jersey.<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup> Archives of Don Bosco Seminary, Folder 136. Letter from William Cardinal Baum, Rome, Italy, August 18, 1988.

<sup>85</sup> *The New Jersey Herald*, July 7, 1989, p. 2; August 18, 1989, p. 1, preserved in folders 117 and 123 of the Archives of Don Bosco Seminary. See also Folder 129, containing a memorandum and a letter from T. Edward Hollander, Trenton, N. J., December 6 and December 26, 1989, respectively.

On July 1, 1991 Father Timothy Ploch succeeded Father Richard McCormick as Provincial of the New Rochelle Province. During the same month the decision was taken by the Provincial Council to lease the entire residence building and property to the SCCC, and by the end of the following month all the Salesians had vacated the premises.

Province Day was celebrated on March 21, 1992 with a large gathering of conferes in Newton for the official closure of the foundation which began as St. Joseph’s House of Studies in 1928.

Finally, in the evening of June 30, 1992, exactly two years after the relinquishing of the College charter, the Salesians signed a contract with the SCCC to sell to them all the buildings, including Camp Don Bosco, and all the remaining property of 155 acres for \$8.5 million.<sup>86</sup>

### What Hath Don Bosco College Seminary Wrought?

As our walk through the past comes to a close, it seems logical to ask, “What did Don Bosco College Seminary accomplish?” One answer can be in the form of the following statistics:<sup>87</sup>

Registered College students. . . . .	1,776
Extension students (Salesian Sisters). . . . .	150
High school students who did not enter DBC . . . . .	350
Graduates from Don Bosco College Seminary . . . . .	750+
Priests and Religious Brothers from DBCS . . . . .	540+
Priests from Don Bosco College Seminary. . . . .	430+
Estimated number of campers in 63 seasons. . . . .	16,000

---

<sup>86</sup> *The New Jersey Herald*, July 1, 1992, p. 1, preserved in Folder 117 of the Archives of Don Bosco Seminary. See also Folder 130.

<sup>87</sup> These statistics were compiled from the records of Don Bosco College by Father Frank Klauder, who was President of the College for twelve years (1974-1986) and was a professor of philosophy at the College for very many years. See Don Bosco Seminary Archives, Folder 128.

Mere numbers cannot tell the whole story. God alone knows the amount of good which those who passed through the portals of Don Bosco College Seminary produced.

## Epilogue

We have now arrived back at Don Bosco's talk to his boys which is quoted in the preamble of this essay. It is apropos to quote again a few sentences from that talk, "We seemed to have found a permanent place for ourselves and to have settled in peace, but Divine Providence again desired us to leave and move... For how long? We don't know."

During the nostalgic gathering at Newton on March 21, 1992 to bid farewell to Newton, Father Peter Rinaldi was one of the speakers who reminisced about the past in Don Bosco College Seminary. He closed his talk with this prayer:

Understandably for many of us this celebration is tinged with more than a touch of sadness. Newton for us is no more. But this should not dampen our fervor as we say, "Thank you, Father. Thank you for the place that nurtured generations of laborers in your vineyard. But, Lord, we will never think of Newton as a gravestone. We will always think of Newton as a milestone in the history of our Salesian family in North America. Lead us onward, Lord, to ever greater achievements."<sup>88</sup>

To that we can say, "Amen!"

---

<sup>88</sup> *Newton Memories*. A videotape of the official closing of Don Bosco College Seminary, Newton, N. J., March 21, 1992. This videotape is in the Archives of the Province of St. Philip, the Apostle, New Rochelle, N. Y.

Father Peter Rinaldi was born on June 5, 1910, at Lu Monferrato, Italy. He came to the United States as a missionary aspirant in 1925. He professed first vows on August 5, 1927, and was ordained a priest on July 7, 1935, in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin, Italy. His assignments over the years were teacher, director of religious education, director and finally pastor of Corpus Christi Parish in Port Chester, New York, from 1948 to 1977. He then divided his remaining years to priestly work at Corpus Christi Parish and to promoting the Holy Shroud. He died of a heart ailment on February 28, 1993, at the Cottolengo Hospital in Turin, Italy. (See the obituary letter for Father Peter Rinaldi.)