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Submission Guidelines

The Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania solicits and welcomes items for Gathered Fragments addressing the culture and history of Catholicism in Western Pennsylvania.

Gathered Fragments publishes articles and primary sources relating to the parochial, religious, diocesan, and laical history of the Catholic Church in Western Pennsylvania. We also solicit book and exhibit reviews, news, and other items relating to Catholic history in Western Pennsylvania. Genealogical items are accepted, providing they relate to the broader scope of the Society’s mission. Articles previously published elsewhere will be considered with appropriate permission from the original publication. Submissions should pertain in some way to the broader theme of Catholicism in Western Pennsylvania.

Research articles will be considered. Notation of sources must accompany each article. Submitters are urged to consult the most current editions of The Chicago Manual of Style or Kate Turabian’s A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertation for guidelines on proper formatting. Upon acceptance for publication, authors are responsible for locating and obtaining permission for use of images.

Submissions are accepted both electronically and by mail. Instructions will be provided by contacting the Society at info@chswpa.org.

The opinions expressed in Gathered Fragments represent the views only of the individual contributors. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the officers, the members of the board of directors, or The Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania. Advertising in Gathered Fragments does not necessarily imply endorsement.

Membership Information

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The Society also welcomes donations to complete research, as well as to support publishing and preservation projects in local Church history.

Cover Photo

Father Bertin Roll, OFM Cap., traveled the country, bringing his ministry — and his prayer book Mother Love — to the people. Source: Archives of the Capuchin Franciscan Friars, St. Augustine Province

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On a Sunday evening ten days before Christmas 1918, Catholic Bishop J. F. Regis Canevin of Pittsburgh rallied supporters of Irish independence packed inside a Penn Avenue vaudeville house. The Great War in Europe had ended a month earlier. U.S. President Woodrow Wilson had just arrived in Paris to help broker a new world order. The “self-determination” of small nations, Wilson declared earlier, was one of the reasons America had entered the war. Presently, it animated Bishop Canevin.

“Shall Ireland be free, or shall she be the only exception?” he asked rhetorically. “If Ireland be the exception, then lasting peace is doomed to defeat. No pledges to other nations can be kept without freedom to Ireland.”

The audience of 4,000, “crowding every available space” inside the downtown Lyceum Theater, responded with “tremendous cheering,” the Pittsburgh Catholic reported a few days later. For those unable to attend, the weekly newspaper headlined the “Great Meeting to Show Popular Will” on its front page. A second page-one story in the same issue reported the strong showing of Irish separatist Sinn Féin (“Ourselves” or “We Ourselves”) candidates in the United Kingdom’s first general election since before the war. A third story recorded the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs deliberations on Irish independence in Washington, D.C.

In addition to its regular coverage of the priests and parishes of the Western Pennsylvania diocese, the Catholic was a key source about “the Irish question,” as the country’s struggle for independence was known a century ago. The paper had covered Irish events and their larger political and spiritual meaning since its launch shortly before the Great Famine of the mid-nineteenth century. The Catholic’s editorial page, like Bishop Canevin and the diocese’s native Irish and Irish American priests, supported Ireland’s strike for freedom, but also lamented the associated violence, especially when Irish Catholics turned against each other.

At the time, newspapers informed Pittsburghers who otherwise could only learn the latest Irish developments from occasional visits to the city by separatist leaders and their opponents, or the arrival of less-informed immigrants and letters from back home. “In an age bereft of radio and television, Catholic newspapers joined the popular press in serving as windows to the world for the community, presenting a glimpse of things beyond the marginal parameters of the neighborhood and parish,” historian Thomas Rowland has noted. “Consequently, these newspapers expressed attitudes and opinions that went virtually untested by any other source readily available to the Irish American community.”

The Pittsburgh Catholic’s unique history and well-preserved archives make it a vital resource for understanding how many city residents learned about the 1912-1923 revolutionary period that resulted in today’s Ireland and Northern Ireland. Before exploring how the paper presented these early twentieth-century developments to its readers, the focus of this article, it is important to first understand what Bishop Canevin called “Ireland’s seven hundred years of political oppression and tyranny” by England.

Troubled Relationship

Animosity between the two north Atlantic islands spanned disputes about land, politics, and religion. Divisions among the Irish themselves complicated the conflict. Historians often start with the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman invasions and Henry II’s claim of sovereignty over Ireland, each justified by papal reforms of early Irish Christianity. England’s rule of Ireland remained precarious within “the Pale” for several centuries.

This foothold slowly eroded until Henry VIII declared himself king of the island in the sixteenth century. He broke from the Roman Catholic Church when the pope refused to annul his marriage, just as the Protestant Reformation swept across Europe. The pace of Irish rebellions and En-
The Pittsburgh Catholic featured regular coverage of the Irish revolutionary period from 1912 to 1923. The April 7, 1921, issue featured several front page stories about opposition to a humanitarian relief effort for Ireland, while an advertisement for the Western Pennsylvania fund drive appeared on the back page.

Source: Pittsburgh Catholic, April 7, 1921.
English reconquests quickened, with Oliver Cromwell’s rampages beginning in 1649 the most notorious example of the latter. Protestant “planters” from Scotland and northern England soon settled confiscated lands, primarily in Ireland’s northeast province, called Ulster. The authorities prohibited Catholics from practicing their faith and denied other civil and legal rights.

A failed Irish rebellion in 1798 resulted in the repeal of the Dublin parliament and creation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, which concentrated power in London at the start of the nineteenth century. Irish statesman Daniel O’Connell led the repeal of most anti-Catholic penal laws but failed in his efforts to disestablish the political union. From 1845 to 1852, a blight on Ireland’s staple potato crop, worsened by government indifference and landlord opportunism, caused an estimated one million deaths, and forced an equal number to emigrate. The century ended as Irish tenant farmers demanded land reforms and refused to pay rents, while Protestant capitalists in industrializing Belfast, the heart of Ulster, discriminated against Catholic labor.

The feud had remained mostly confined to the two islands until the nineteenth century, when it manifested in America due to the substantial number of Irish immigrants from both faiths, before and after the famine. The Irish were frequently at the center of religious conflicts and labor strife in the United States. Congress and the White House struggled to balance the demands of the domestic Irish electorate and international relations with Britain, especially immediately before, during, and just after the Great War, 1914-1918.

In broad terms, the Protestant majorities of Ulster, England, and America were suspicious of Rome’s influence on Catholics, the majority of Ireland’s other three provinces and a growing force in America’s largest cities. On both sides of the Atlantic, the Irish disagreed over whether the island should remain governed by the monarchy and civil parliament or granted some form of limited political autonomy. Irish Protestants generally favored maintaining the union with the British Empire for religious, cultural, and economic reasons. Irish Catholics tended to support incremental or moderate nationalism through constitutional methods rather than the violent separation urged by militant republicans.

This debate sharpened in the late nineteenth century as Irish politicians in the London Parliament agitated to manage their domestic affairs through home rule, an arrangement like states in the U.S. federal system. The proposal drew strong opposition from conservative Protestants in Ulster. They feared home rule would allow the Catholic Church to govern Ireland, hence their rallying cry, “Home rule is Rome rule.”

As always in Irish matters, there were exceptions — and divisions — on both sides. For example, Charles Stewart Parnell, an Irish Protestant landowner with an American mother, led the parliamentary effort for home rule and land reform. In 1880 he toured the United States to generate support for these ideas, including an address to Congress and a visit to Pittsburgh. While legislative measures began to remedy Irish land issues, the Parliament blocked home rule bills twice within seven years before the end of the nineteenth century.

These developments drew attention in Irish centers across the United States, including Western Pennsylvania. Irish Protestants from Ulster had settled the region since the American Revolution. They helped forge Pittsburgh’s industrial identity, which earned the nickname “Belfast of America,” and became some of the city’s wealthiest and most powerful citizens. Many joined fraternal Orange Order lodges, formed to commemorate the 1690 Battle of
the Boyne in Ireland, when the Protestant King William of Orange defeated the forces of the Catholic King James II. Members balanced their loyalty to Ulster and Great Britain with their new American identities.

Irish and German Catholics also settled in Western Pennsylvania. Their growing numbers necessitated the creation of the Pittsburgh diocese in 1843. Irish-born Father Michael O’Connor became the first bishop of the new see, which covered 27 counties.

The Irish joined the fraternal Ancient Order of Hibernians, which dated to sixteenth-century church defenders in Ireland, while other groups promoted Irish political nationalism and culture, especially language. Pittsburgh’s Irish population ranked fifth largest in America by the end of the nineteenth century. Unsurprisingly, news from Ireland featured prominently on the pages of the city’s newspapers.

Catholic Press
Within a year of his appointment, Bishop O’Connor, joined by “a group of zealous laymen,” founded the Pittsburgh Catholic and served as its first editor. “The Church in America was then passing through a crucial period and an atmosphere of open hostility was hampering her development,” Father John Canova wrote in the paper’s 1944 centenary edition. A growing anti-Catholic press “had let loose over the whole country a flood of anti-Romanism propaganda.” These smears spread to the secular press and the public square, notably the nativist, anti-Catholic riots that erupted in Philadelphia in 1844.

“Our paper shall be principally devoted to the cause of Catholicity in the fullest sense of the word,” the Catholic wrote in its first editorial. “We will endeavor to expound and defend its doctrines, to impart information regarding its history and development, and in general to give every information in our power regarding its condition in our own and in other countries.”

The new weekly joined three dozen other U.S. Catholic papers launched since the 1830s. The forerunners of this emerging Catholic press were the Irish journals that appeared earlier in nineteenth-century America to inform immigrants about political and religious agitation in their homeland, according to Father Paul J. Foik, a Holy Cross priest, historian, and director of the University of Notre Dame library from 1912 to 1924. “Although these papers were not distinctly Catholic in purpose, their sympathetic tone towards those of the ancient faith merits for them a place in any description of Catholic journalism.”

Pittsburgh’s new Catholic paper, which debuted on the eve of St. Patrick’s Day, nodded to Ireland from the start. “As it will be gratifying to a great body of our readers, we will endeavor to give copious extracts from journals and private communications regarding the affairs in Ireland,” one of the paper’s first editorials declared.

Within three years, the Catholic reported on two devastating developments in Ireland: the potato famine and O’Connell’s death. “Our readers naturally enquire with interest, what is the result of the last accounts from Ireland,” began a June 1847 editorial. “We are sorry that every arrival brings tidings more and more sad of the awful effects of the progress of famine and pestilence; so that those who guard against the one are exposed to the ravages of the other.” A second editorial on the same page lamented: “O’Connell has fallen, and with him we are sorry to say, in our view of the case, has passed away all hope of an early redress of Ireland’s wrongs.”

Parnell’s sudden death at age 45, shortly after his extramarital affair became a public scandal, brought more unwelcome news from Ireland in 1891. The Catholic wrote:

In the kingly presence of death may his faults be forgotten and forgiven in the light of our human frailty. Let him without sin cast the first stone. Time was when every lover of liberty, justice, and right, hoped and prayed for the day when poor Erin’s story would be a memory of the past, in the realization of the glorious future the illustrious dead mapped out for her, and to which every energy of his almighty genius was directed.

These un-bylined words were probably written by Francis Patrick Smith, who became the Catholic’s editor a year earlier. Over the next four decades, he would guide the paper’s coverage not only of growth in the diocese, but also the most turbulent period of Ireland’s political history.
**Pittsburgh Catholic’s Editor**

In 1890, the year Smith began his tenure at the *Catholic*, Pittsburgh’s Irish immigrant population peaked at 27,000, about 11 percent of the city population. Now, four decades after the Great Famine, new generations of American-born residents outnumbered their Irish parents and grandparents. Smith was among this cohort. His family emigrated from Ireland prior to the repeal of anti-Catholic penal laws. The future Bishop Canevin, also the son of Irish immigrants in Westmoreland County, was born in Pittsburgh in 1842, a year before the founding of the diocese and 11 years before the future Bishop Canevin, also the son of Irish immigrants in Westmoreland County.

Smith attended St. Patrick Church, the city’s first parish. He was educated by the Brothers of the Presentation, and at age 13 entered the Jesuit College at Frederick, Maryland, where he remained for six years until graduation. He became a teacher at Loyola College in Baltimore but left soon to follow an uncle to Washington, D.C.

In the nation’s capital, Smith worked as a correspondent for the *New York Herald* during the Civil War, getting to interview President Abraham Lincoln. In the post-war period he moved west and served as editor of the *Napoleon (Ohio) Northwest* newspaper and engaged in business on the Titusville (Pennsylvania) Oil Exchange. His lifelong friend Jeremiah Dunlevy, president of a Pittsburgh meat packing firm and business manager of the *Pittsburgh Catholic*, hired him as editor of the religious weekly.

Smith quickly developed a solid reputation as a newsman and Catholic layman. Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., and Mt. St. Mary’s College in Emmitsburg, Maryland, awarded him special degrees in 1893 and 1902, respectively. For a brief period in the 1890s, Father Canevin joined him in the newsroom, before the priest became bishop in 1904. “By the excellence of their editorials he and Smith pushed the paper to the front rank,” according to one newspaper history.

By the early twentieth century, Smith quietly authored the paper’s editorials about Ireland and other topics or read them for approval. “In his work as editor of the *Pittsburgh Catholic*, Mr. Smith kept himself, so to speak, in the background,” one admirer wrote. “Never did his name appear at the end of any article written by him.”

**Revolutionary Period**

Ireland’s modern revolutionary period began in April 1912 with the introduction of a third home rule bill, two decades after the previous effort failed. In September 1912, a half a million people signed Ulster’s Solemn League and Covenant to declare their opposition. The *Pittsburgh Catholic* dismissed the move by the Protestant majority as a stunt that “need not be taken seriously. … The day of Ireland’s glorious freedom, to govern herself, is at hand.”

But the trouble was only beginning. Ulster Protestants also had begun to arm themselves to fight against the implementation of home rule. Government authorities looked the other way, even though the action amounted to potential insurrection. On the other hand, the same authorities harassed Catholic nationalists in the southern part of Ireland as they began to import weapons for their own militia. In one episode, troops opened fire on unarmed civilians in Dublin, killing three people and injuring two dozen others.

“It was a dastardly murder; it was in thorough keeping with the interminable acts of bloody cruelty that have marked the history of Ireland under British rule,” the *Catholic* opined. The paper also overoptimistically suggested the July 1914 event “may prove the immortal hour, for through its gloom and in the bloodshed, in the lives sacrificed, has dawned the true light that hastens on to its glorious consummation a nation’s freedom.”

Pittsburgh’s Irish community mirrored the unrest back home. *The Pittsburgh Survey*, an early twentieth-century sociological study, detailed the harsh working conditions and packed immigrant ghettos of “a city in thrall to an industrial system.” — steel. It reported: “… here the old Irish cleavage has been repeated in the two strong religious elements in the community life.” In April 1914, police were summoned to a melee among more than 200 Irishmen in the city’s Woods Run neighborhood. Press reports described the “Irish riot” as pitting “ardent Home Rulers” against “Ulster sympathizers.” The “mob” blocked the street as they went “hard at it with clubs, fists and bricks” until police “bluecoats” made arrests.

The Parliament in London approved home rule, but immediately suspended its implementation due to the August 1914 outbreak of World War I. In Ireland, both Catholics and Protestants, those for and against home rule, sailed for
the continental battlefields. The debate over Ireland’s political future was put on hold, though hardline separatists who remained in Ireland wished for a German victory against Britain.

**Easter Rising**

On Easter Monday 1916, Irish separatists seized several government buildings in Dublin and announced the formation of a provisional Irish Republic. “We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible,” the separatists declared in their written proclamation. They noted that Ireland’s strike for freedom was “supported by her exiled children in America.”

British authorities quickly quelled the rebellion, which became known as the “Easter Rising.” They regained control of the city and arrested the separatist leaders. The rebels had little public support, since many Irish citizens worried about their husbands, sons, and brothers — whether Catholics or Protestants — still fighting on the continent. The Pittsburgh Catholic expressed the irritation of those who thought the Easter Rising was both ill-advised and poorly timed.

“The newspaper, like most of Irish America, believed that home rule for Ireland, not a republic, remained a gradual possibility and that the British government would “sooner or later, yield every concession necessary to the prosperity of Ireland, and the happiness of the Irish race.”

That expectation turned to anger, though, when the British authorities in Dublin systematically executed fifteen rebel leaders. The Catholic opined afterward:

In the merciless executions … the English government has learned nothing from past experience. Its policy is today as merciless as in the days of Cromwell. … The bloody executions … have done a great deal to darken the future. Will they have a deterrent effect? The men who died knew the risks and took them. Only those who do not understand the Irish temperament imagine that it will. Much more likely have been created feelings which will disturb the relations between England and Ireland for generations. A mischief has been done that is almost irreparable. History teaches the foolishness of thinking that the consent of the governed can be exacted by the exercise of force, instead of conciliation.

While the Easter Rising would loom large in the history of Ireland, it was quickly eclipsed at the time by the continuation of World War I. The U.S. Catholic press and institutional church continued to hew closely with the Wilson administration’s neutral stance on the war. Rather than support the Irish rebels, attention turned to humanitarian relief. The Catholic described an Irish Fair and Bazar to raise...
money as “one of the most elaborate of its kind ever given in Pittsburgh.” It included “a real Irish village … with a shipment of the ‘ould sod’” imported to create a realistic appearance.34

Within a year of the Easter Rising, the United States at last entered the war as an ally of Britain. U.S. Catholic bishops formed the National Catholic War Council to promote martial participation and civic patriotism among the faith’s adherents. Most Irish Catholics in Pittsburgh enthusiastically joined the war effort. “The contention that the majority of Irish-Americans were patently anti-British, and that they generally expressed ‘hopes for a German victory’ is difficult to maintain,” historian Rowland has asserted.35

Thomas F. Enright, son of Irish immigrants in the city’s Bloomfield neighborhood, in November 1917 became one of the first U.S. casualties. “Private Enright was a Pittsburgh boy, a child of the parish of St. Mary’s on Forty-sixth street,” the Catholic reported.36 Originally buried on the battlefield in France where he died, his remains were later returned to Pittsburgh and re-interred with military honors at the church’s cemetery.

American patriotism often accompanied Irish activism. In May 1918, 2,000 Irish Pittsburghers gathered at the Lyceum Theater to support Irish independence and protest the forced conscription of their native compatriots. Similar protests occurred in Ireland. The Pittsburgh event “brought out the strong attachment that exists between the Irish cause and the Irish people and their beloved priests,” the secular, New York City-based Gaelic American newspaper reported.37 County Sligo-born Father Patrick J. O’Connor, pastor of the nearby St. Mary of Mercy Church in the city’s “Point” district, an Irish Catholic ghetto from the mid-nineteenth century, praised “the glorious record of past generations of Irishmen in defense of this great country.”38

Irish War

By the time Bishop Canevin stepped on the same Lyceum stage in December 1918, the Great War had ended on the continent, but a new war was about to begin in Ireland. President Wilson, the grandson of Ulster Protestants, was reluctant to interfere with what he considered the domestic affairs of British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, his ally in the war and Paris negotiating partner. And the Irish disagreed among themselves about the best way to move forward. “The victorious end of the great war, fought to secure for the small nationalities of Europe the right of ‘self-determination,’ finds Ireland a prey to bitter dissensions and riven by political feuds,” the Catholic observed.39

In January 1919, the Sinn Féin separatists again declared independence, established their own parliament in Dublin, and launched a guerilla campaign against what they considered British occupation forces. Over the next three years both sides would commit violence that claimed the lives of innocent civilians and aroused sectarian strife between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland and America. A 1921 truce and negotiated treaty resulted in the Irish Free State of twenty-six counties, while the British government partitioned and retained Ulster as the six-county Northern Ireland under separate legislation. Because these outcomes failed to transform the entire island into a republic, hard-line nationalists and pro-treaty moderates waged a civil war between June 1922 and May 1923.

The Pittsburgh Catholic, typically eight, text-filled pages, was not the city’s only Catholic paper, or its only source of Irish news in this period. Its 17,000 copies circulation was five times more than the Pittsburgh-based Irish Pennsylvanian weekly, but one-tenth to one-quarter the size of the city’s secular dailies.40 Early in the war, editor Smith likely authored this opinion in the Catholic:

It is a significant and gratifying indication of the trend of events, that at the present moment the Irish question is receiving in this country a larger amount of attention than has ever been bestowed upon it at any previous period of our history. The daily papers keep us informed of the growth of the great movement in favor of the grant of self-determination which is now sweeping over this country, and in which the
Catholic hierarchy, the priests and the Catholic press are taking such a prominent part. Scores of meetings to demand autonomy for Ireland have been held in our great centers of population, and the leading prelates of the Church have identified themselves in the strongest possible manner with the claim advanced that President Wilson’s great democratic principle of ‘government only by consent of the governed’ shall be realized and applied in the case of this small nationality, complete, entire and unequivocal justice to the Irish nation.  

The editorial complemented a front-page news story in the same issue that reported on the just concluded Irish Race Convention in Philadelphia, called by the U.S.-based Friends of Irish Freedom to support the provisional government in Dublin. The story noted that “there is no member of the (U.S. Catholic Church) hierarchy hostile to self-determination for Ireland,” including Baltimore’s James Cardinal Gibbons, the son of Irish immigrants who was a featured speaker at the convention. Other prominent prelates also attended, but the Catholic did not report the presence of Bishop Canevin or any other Western Pennsylvania clergy in Philadelphia.

Pittsburgh’s clergy and laity certainly engaged in Ireland’s struggle. More than a dozen priests from the Pittsburgh area joined Bishop Canevin at the Lyceum event two months before the Philadelphia convention. Among them, most had surnames that signaled Irish heritage:

- Reverend Jeremiah J. Brennan, St. Luke Church, Carnegie
- Reverend Joseph Burgoon, St. Alphonsus Church, McDonald
- Reverend Charles J. Coyne, the late Private Enright’s pastor, St. Mary Church, 46th Street
- Reverend John Greaney, St. Titus Church, Woodlawn (Aliquippa)
- Reverend Patrick J. Healy, St. Joseph Church, Aliquippa
- Very Reverend Martin A. Hehir, C.S.Sp., president Duquesne University
- Reverend William Jordon, St. Mary Church, McKees Rocks
- Reverend James Kelly, St. Roselia Church, Greenfield
- Reverend Michael McBurney, St. Francis of Assisi Church, Finleyville
- Reverend Francis J. McCabe, Church of the Annunciation, North Side
- Reverend Daniel McCarthy, St. John the Evangelist, South Side
- Reverend Maurice McCarthy, St. Richard Church, Hill District, chaplain to the Allegheny County chapter of the Ancient Order of Hibernians
- Reverend Denis Murphy, St. Aloysius Church, Wilmerding

• Reverend James J. O’Connor, Church of the Nativity, North Side
• Reverend Patrick J. O’Connor, St. Mary of Mercy at the Point, the May 1918 Lyceum speaker
• Right Reverend Martin Ryan, St. Brigid Church, Hill District
• Reverend Patrick J. Shanahan, St. Joseph Church, Coraopolis
• Right Reverend Stephen Walsh, chancellor, Diocese of Pittsburgh.

The Hibernians and the group’s Ladies Auxiliary attended the meeting. Other organizations at the Lyceum and active during this period included the Irish Catholic Benevolent Union; the Knights of Equity, another Irish Catholic fraternal organization; the Friends of Irish Freedom; and the affiliated Clan-na-Gael (Family of the Gaels), the American sister organization to the Irish Republican Brotherhood.

Other Immigrants
Father Francis J. McCabe regularly engaged in Irish affairs. In January 1919 he wrote a letter to Pittsburgh Congressman Stephen G. Porter, chairman of the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs, then considering recognition of Ireland:

President Wilson insisted on the right of self-determination for the Serbs, the Poles, the Bohemians, the Lithuanians, and other small and oppressed nationalities, but his ears are deaf to Ireland’s appeal for justice, and his mouth is closed against saying a word in her behalf. O, sacred name of Liberty! What inconsistency, what hypocrisy, and what injustice are being sheltered beneath thy aegis! …

Ireland’s case is no more a domestic affair of England than Poland’s is of Germany or Bohemia a domestic affair of Austria. You see, Mr. Porter, how much I am interested in the welfare of the land that gave me my birth. I appreciate the rights and privileges I enjoy as an American citizen.

I would give my life for the flag that guarantees me these rights and privileges, under God, I would like to see the people of every nation of the world enjoy the same rights and privileges.

As Wilson and other world leaders debated the fate of small nations in Paris, Bishop Canevin invited the National Catholic War Council to conduct a post-war assessment of the diocese to make “constructive proposals” for its future.

The diocesan population was doubling from 280,000 in 1900 to more than 580,000 in 1930, while the Irish-born population declined to 14,000 in 1920, less than 3 percent of the city’s population.

The “Report of the Foreign Nationalities in Pittsburgh” chapter of the 706-page Pittsburgh Catholic Social Survey (not to be confused with the earlier Pittsburgh Survey) focused on the newer arrivals from Eastern and Southern Europe, while established Irish and German immigrants were noticeably absent.

The Survey’s “Americanization” chapter concluded: “All that helps strengthen American Democracy out of the aspirations of the democracies of Poland, Bohemia, Hungary, Italy, and other countries should be utilized. We should foster American elements of the democracy of the immigrants and fuse it with our own to the advantage and glory of both.”

But Ireland’s struggle for independence — and its impact on the Irish in Pittsburgh — remained prominent on the pages of the Catholic. In October 1919, Éamon de Valera, president of the provisional Irish Republic, visited the city. Born in America but raised in Ireland, he became a mathematics teacher, then a rebel leader in the Easter Rising. The Catholic heralded his upcoming events at Duquesne University and the Syria Mosque theater:

“Citizens of every race and creed will join with our American citizens in their heart-felt congratulations for this most representative and honored Irishman,” the paper predicted. “He comes to our city to plead the cause which transformed him from the gentle bookman to the fearless soldier — the cause of Ireland. In him is represented the sorrows, the trials, the glory, and the faith of the Irish race,
not only of this our day, but, days, the weary days of age long servitude.”

Coverage Criticized
Despite such supportive sentiments, the Catholic’s coverage faced occasional criticism — for not being even more pro-Irish. Frank E. McGillick, a wealthy Pittsburgh contractor, in a 1920 letter to the editor suggested that the paper needed to do more to encourage Pittsburgh’s Irish community to put its “money, muscle, and brains toward the freedom of their fatherland.” He wrote, “We are the most backward city in the world on the Irish question.” The 55-year-old son of Irish immigrants, McGillick helped organize a June 1919 meeting to publicize support for Ireland’s right to self-determination. He was active in other Pittsburgh Irish events. In 1920, McGillick also led a $1 million capital campaign for Duquesne University.

In an editorial reply to McGillick by name, the Catholic acknowledged that some of its early coverage of the Irish war had been slow and subject to foreign censorship. “In the exercise of a judgment, prudent and safe, it was, at times, thought advisable to be chary in selecting this press matter unless absolutely verified and conformable to the ethics of Catholic Journalism.” But the paper — and this surely was the voice of editor Smith — defended its record on Ireland:

The Catholic here repeats what it has hitherto said, that in not one single issue, from its establishment down to the present day, has a single line appeared in its pages derogatory of Ireland in her just and lawful demands for the vindication of her national rights and freedom from the brutish chains of the Cromwellian savagery of Great Britain. The Catholic has no apology to make on this score; it has no need to resort to equivocation. … The volumes of The Catholic, with which we are absolutely familiar, are proof of our broad, unflinching, no reading between the lines statement. For over seventy-five years the editorial page of The Catholic has been luminous in its presentation of Ireland’s claims.

The war in Ireland grew more brutal through autumn 1920, especially as Britain reinforced its authority with hastily trained and undisciplined recruits. The new force became known as the “Black and Tans” for their mismatched dark green and khaki uniforms, and notorious for their tit-for-tat reprisals to the ambushes of Irish separatists. Civilians usually took the brunt of these rampages in places such as Balbriggan.

“Ireland is now a government of force, more force, and still more force,” the Catholic editorialized a month after its reply to McGillick. “History tells us of no nation that has been successfully governed by brute force, and, we doubt, if Ireland is likely to furnish the first example. We hold no brief for Sinn Féin and still less for those engaged in crime and reprisals, on the one side or the other, but it is right to recall that the direct responsibility for introducing the doctrine of physical force into Ireland rests … in the Ulster revolutionary movement organized [in 1912] to resist the lawfully enacted Home Rule Bill.”

Relief for Ireland
British atrocities against innocent civilians prompted creation of the American Committee for Relief in Ireland. Cardinal Gibbons launched the $10 million fundraising campaign with an appeal published in Catholic and secular newspapers near St. Patrick’s Day 1921. “The whole Catholic Church of America is deeply indebted to the Irish people,” he wrote. “It is not too much to expect that in every parish of our land effective means be taken to collect funds for the relief of suffering in Ireland.”

American Committee leaders in Pittsburgh asked clergy of all denominations to announce the Western Pennsylvania campaign from their pulpits on Sunday, April 3, 1921. The committee emphasized “impartial distribution of food and clothing to Protestant and Catholic women and children who are suffering.” But the Ulster Society of Pittsburgh countered with a quarter-page secular newspaper advertisement that denied the Irish needed American help and alleged the relief appeal was “purely a political stunt.”

Reverend Edward M. McFadden, a Reformed Presbyterian minister originally from Ulster’s County Antrim, initiated the anti-relief campaign. He founded the Ulster Society of Pittsburgh soon after the 1912 covenant signing, organized annual “Ulster Day” commemorations in the city, and testified before the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs...
Select Timeline of Ireland and Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh events in bold

1169-71: Anglo-Norman invasions of Ireland. Henry II declares himself “Lord of Ireland.” These actions were legitimized by the papal bull _Laudabiliter_, issued in 1155 by an English pope to enforce church reforms.

1297: First representative Irish Parliament meets in Dublin.


1542: Crorown of Ireland Act declares Henry VIII and his successors “King of Ireland.”

1593: Start of Nine Years War, an Irish rebellion against English rule.

1609: Beginning of the “Plantation” of Ulster (northeast province of Ireland) by Scottish Presbyterians.

1641: Rebellion by Irish Catholics to reverse the plantations

1649: Oliver Cromwell begins reconquest of Ireland.

1690: Battle of the Boyne (a river valley about 20-minute drive north of Dublin), in which Protestant King William III of Orange defeats the deposed Catholic King James II. This event is the basis of the Protestant fraternal Orange Order and still commemorated each July 12 in Ulster/Northern Ireland.

1695-:

1698: Establishment of numerous “Penal Laws” that restrict or prohibit Irish Catholics to practice their faith, obtain education, hold property or public office.

1764: British troops name settlement of Pittsburgh in honor of William Pitt. Scotch-Irish Presbyterians begin to settle in Western Pennsylvania.

1798: United Irishmen, influenced by American and French revolutions, stage an uprising against English rule. It was quickly suppressed.


1803: Second United Irishmen rebellion fails.

1808: St. Patrick Church established as Pittsburgh’s first Catholic church.

1810: _The Shamrock, or Hibernian Chronicle_, launched in New York City, as the first Irish national periodical in America. Irish papers become a template for U.S. Catholic press.

1822: _The United States Catholic Miscellany_ debuts in Charleston, South Carolina, as the first U.S. Catholic newspaper.

1829: Catholic Emancipation led by Daniel O’Connell repeals most of the penal laws.

1834: Diocese of Pittsburgh created. Michael O’Conn, the Irish-born Jesuit, becomes first bishop of the new see.

1844: _The Pittsburgh Catholic_ newspaper begins publication on eve of St. Patrick’s Day.

1845-49: Great Famine in Ireland sends waves of mostly poor Catholic immigrants to America, including Pittsburgh.

1867: Fenian Rising, another failed rebellion, led by the Irish Republican Brotherhood.

1877: Great Railroad strike.

1878: College of the Holy Ghost (today’s Duquesne University) established.

1880: Irish home rule leader Charles Stewart Parnell (February) and land reform leader Michael Davitt (August) visit Pittsburgh.

1886: First Home Rule in Ireland bill fails.

1890: U.S. Census shows peak 27,000 Irish-born immigrants in Pittsburgh. Francis Patrick Smith named editor of the _Pittsburgh Catholic_.

In May 1921, the British government partitioned six counties of Ulster as Northern Ireland.

Source: Ulster counties, via Wikimedia Commons
1891: Death of Parnell.
1892: Homestead Steel strike.
1893: Second Home Rule in Ireland bill fails.
1900: U.S. Census shows 24,000 Irish immigrants in Pittsburgh.
1904: J. F. Regis Canevin becomes the fifth bishop of Pittsburgh, the first native of the diocese.
1907: Allegheny City (North Side) annexed into Pittsburgh.
1910: U.S. Census shows 19,000 Irish immigrants in Pittsburgh.
1913: Formation of Irish Volunteers in Dublin.
1916: Proclamation of the Irish Republic and Easter Rising in Dublin. The rebellion was quelled in less than a week and its leaders executed.
1917: U.S. enters World War I. Thomas F. Enright, Pittsburgh son of Irish immigrants, among the first Americans casualties.
1918: Anti-conscription protests in Dublin and Pittsburgh.
1918: World War I ends.
1919: Sinn Féin convenes a new parliament, Dáil Éireann, and declares independence from the United Kingdom. Guerilla war begins against police and military in Ireland. U.S. President Woodrow Wilson and other leaders meet in Paris to discuss post-war Europe and “self-determination” for small nations.
1919: U.S. Catholic Church leaders, including Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore, support Irish self-determination at major convention in Philadelphia.
1919: Irish leader Éamon de Valera visits Pittsburgh.
1920: Protestant preachers from Belfast visit Pittsburgh to speak against Irish independence. U.S. Census shows 14,000 Irish immigrants in Pittsburgh, about half the 1890 total and now outnumbered by their American-born children and grandchildren.
1921: The American Committee for Relief in Ireland launched by Cardinal Gibbons and others. The Pittsburgh Catholic supported the drive; the Ulster Society of Pittsburgh and Protestant Ministerial Union of Pittsburgh opposed the effort.
1921: Six counties of Ulster are partitioned by the British government as Northern Ireland.
1921: Truce in the Anglo-Irish War.
1922: Pro- and anti-treaty representatives of Sinn Féin visit Pittsburgh.
1922: Irish voters support pro-treaty representatives. Irish Civil War begins.
1923: Civil War ends as anti-treaty side agrees to cease fire.
against recognition of an Irish republic. He also invited Protestant preachers from Belfast to America to speak against Irish home rule, which included a January 1920 stop at Pittsburgh’s Syria Mosque, site of de Valera’s visit three months earlier. McFadden exclaimed: “I admit that a majority of the people of Ireland want a republic but insist that one third of the inhabitants do not.”

The Protestant Ministerial Union of Pittsburgh also passed a resolution that denied the existence of hunger in Ireland. It cast the Irish relief campaign as a “scheme … of Sinn Féin propaganda to raise funds to assist those who are in rebellion against the constituted authorities of their country.” The resolution urged “our people to do nothing to aid a movement having for its object creating a spirit of antagonism between the United States and its friend and ally in the late war, Great Britain.”

The Pittsburgh Catholic denounced these efforts as “malicious propaganda introduced by bigoted factionalists” under a headline that exclaimed, “Asked for Bread; Received a Stone.” The remarkable issue featured four front-page stories about the controversy, with only the death of Cardinal Gibbons also meriting attention above the fold. An American Committee advertisement on the back page quoted from the cardinal’s campaign appeal. Inside, one of the Catholic’s editorials lamented “Ireland’s Plight” of poverty, while a second urged “all liberty-loving Americans” to attend local fifth anniversary observances of the Easter Rising.

The next week’s issue featured a front-page story about Bishop Canевin’s attendance at an Irish relief event at Kaufmann’s Department Store. His speech was an “earnest, impassioned appeal for the payment of a debt to a people who are too proud to beg, but who are always ready to give,” the paper paraphrased. “It was a speech from the heart of a man whose mind has delved deep into the very core of Irish history and whose sympathy has followed the struggles and sacrifices of its persecuted people through generations of toil and torture.” A second “Ireland’s Plight” editorial implored the Catholic’s readers to “help in as far as your means will permit.”

But editor Smith and the Catholic must have known the Irish relief campaign faced challenges, even before the Ulster Society ad and Protestant minister’s resolution. Bishop Canevin had called for a diocesan-wide collection on Palm Sunday “to avoid the necessity and inconvenience to the people of frequent appeals for the relief of the distressed and suffering people of the various European countries that are represented by parishes in the dioceses of Pittsburgh.” The money was to be allocated “to Poland, Lithuania, Italy, Slovakia, Austria, Hungary, Germany and Ireland.” The collection totaled just over $63,000, with nearly half the funds — $30,000 — sent to Ireland.

Soon after the Palm Sunday collection, a preliminary canvas of parishes for the Irish relief campaign yielded only a tepid response. “In hundreds of homes where they called at the supper hour, the head of the family left a table weighted down with food, to ignore the call from Ireland. It is a notable fact that few gave more than a dollar,” the Catholic reported. American Committee leaders in New York predicted as much when they began organizing the campaign. “The American people are sick of ‘drives’ and weary of putting up with peoples who apparently do nothing but appeal,” one wrote in a planning memo.

Western Pennsylvania’s Irish relief committee soon deployed its own hardball tactics. Their advertisement in the Catholic said the executive committee, in reviewing the donors list, “was surprised to note the number of well-known men and women … conspicuous by their absence.” The committee’s name-and-shame threat targeted the local Irish community, “the very people who have drawn the line when their own flesh and blood is appealing have had their names high up in the lists of every other movement in Pittsburgh.”

As the region’s original $400,000 goal dropped to $300,000, the Catholic lamented that “no campaign ever conducted in Western Pennsylvania encountered so much public opposition.” Nevertheless, the paper declared the effort “a big success.” It promised to publish all the donors in a forthcoming issue, but the list never appeared in print.

Civil War and Beyond

Events in Ireland soon outpaced the relief campaign. Irish separatists and the British government agreed to a ceasefire in July 1921. The British partitioned six counties of Ulster into the new statelet of Northern Ireland to preserve the union with London, regardless of what became of the remaining 26 southern counties. Violence eased but did not end. Sectarian division became more pronounced than earlier in the war as Irish and British negotiators agreed to a treaty in December 1921. Sinn Féin separatists narrowly approved the deal in January 1922 after a bitter debate.

The Pittsburgh Catholic welcomed the development in an editorial:

Let us pray that all may be well in the last analysis, and Ireland, united, will take her place in the parliament of mankind, going forward in the fulfilment of a destiny, grand, glorious and inspiring: as the fitting reward of centuries of untold suffering never dimmed by despair of the ultimate day of her national rehabilitation. … To God, who moulds the hearts of men and holds in His hands the threads of
human destiny, we beseech Him to direct the destiny of this noble and afflicted country, by inspiring measures in her patriotic Parliament, which will establish harmony and enduring peace in the entire island, watered by the tears and prayers of her glorious Apostle, St. Patrick, and assure to the beloved land a future in which concord, freedom and prosperity may reign unhindered.  

But harmony and peace remained elusive for Ireland. Historian Francis M. Carroll has noted that “growing disunity among the nationalist leaders in Ireland was dramatically revealed to the Irish in America” when two rival delegations traveled to the United States in March 1922 on behalf of the pro- and anti-treaty factions. As both groups toured the country, including separate May 1922 stops in Pittsburgh, each denounced their opponents in Ireland “with all the malice and vituperation previously reserved for the British government.” The spectacle “severely demoralized the Irish American community.”

In June 1922, the harsh rhetoric escalated into a civil war, the pro-treaty National Army against the anti-treaty Irish Republican Army. Former comrades-in-arms turned their weapons against each other. Civilians suffered again. “Irish Americans became utterly disillusioned,” one historian wrote.

By now the Catholic regularly published syndicated coverage from the National Catholic Welfare Council’s News Service, including dispatches from Ireland. A September 1922 story reported: “The influence of the clergy and of labor is being brought to bear in an effort to settle the present strife in Ireland … No class is more sincere in the desire for peace than the prelates of Ireland, who are torn with grief at the thought of the fratricidal struggle.”

At St. Patrick’s Day 1923, the Catholic published a News Service story that reported Archbishop George Mundelein had learned details of a secret meeting between both sides of the civil war. The prelate “moved hundreds to tears” at an Ancient Order of Hibernians banquet in Chicago as he
described how the combatants “got down on their knees and said the ‘Hail Mary’” together, implored the intercessions of St. Patrick and St. Bridget, and were earnestly “groping for some way out of their difficulty.” Otherwise, the archbishop insisted, someone should “knock their heads together” to end the civil war.  

A few months later, hardline Irish republican leaders agreed to stop fighting and dump their weapons. The 26-county Irish Free State began the task of establishing a functional civil administration. A July 1923 editorial in the Catholic encouraged harmony:

The peace in Ireland is still maintained, and there is every hope of its continuance. What is wanted is a permanent and honorable peace, which preserves the people’s rights and guarantees the future. All have got to live together in the new Irish State, and it is important that a feeling of amity, and a common purpose of usefulness should underlie the inevitable differences that must arise in any free nation.

The decade of revolutionary fervor in Ireland finally quieted, but the island continued to experience intermittent political and sectarian strife. By June 1932, as Pittsburghers joined other pilgrims in Dublin for the 31st International Eucharistic Congress, the Catholic featured a regular column, “The Irish Situation.” A standing editor’s note from James M. Costin, Smith’s successor, explained the paper provided the feature because of the general interest of current events in Ireland … including the Irish movement in America, especially in Pittsburgh.

The Irish Free State struggled economically for decades. It remained neutral in World War II to avoid altering with Britain. In 1949, the 26 counties of “Southern” Ireland at last became a full republic, while Northern Ireland remained linked to London. In the late 1960s, fresh violence erupted between Catholic nationalists and Protestant unionists in Northern Ireland. “The Troubles,” as the 30-year sectarian struggle came to be known, would generate a new era of Irish coverage in the Pittsburgh Catholic.

As ever, the paper remained “luminous in its presentation of Ireland’s claims.”

Endnotes:

1 “Great Meeting to Show Popular Will That Peace Conference Ratify Claims of Ireland,” Pittsburgh Catholic, December 19, 1918.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 “Strong Sinn Fein Vote Cast in the Recent Election in Ireland” and “Irish Independence Urged at House Hearing,” Pittsburgh Catholic, December 19, 1918.
6 “Great Meeting.”
7 Patrick J. Blessing, “Irish emigration to the United States, 1800-1920” in The Irish in America: Emigration, Assimilation, and Impact, ed. P. J. Drudy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) Table 2.5, 23. In 1900, Pittsburgh’s Irish immigrant population of 24,000 was well below the more than 275,000 in New York City, 98,000 in Philadelphia, 74,000 in Chicago, and 70,000 in Boston. Pittsburgh’s Irish population was about the same as San Francisco, St. Louis, Jersey City, N.J., and Providence, R.I.
10 Ibid.
12 Paul J. Foik, “Pioneer Efforts in Catholic Journalism in the United States (1809-1840),” The Catholic Historical Review 1, no.3 (October 1915), 258.
14 “Ireland,” Pittsburgh Catholic, June 26, 1847.
16 “Parnell Dead,” Pittsburgh Catholic, Oct. 8, 1891.
17 Blessing, Table 2.5, 23.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
29 Proclamation of the Irish Republic, or 1916 Proclamation, or Easter Proclamation, April 1916.
30 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 “The Irish Revolt,” Pittsburgh Catholic, June 1, 1916. Authorities executed Sir Roger Casement, also part of the plot, in August 1916.


“Our Heroic Dead,” Pittsburgh Catholic, November 15, 1917.


“Self-Determination,” Pittsburgh Catholic, December 26, 1918.


“Freedom’s Blast,” Pittsburgh Catholic, February 27, 1919.

“Great Meeting,” 8.


Records of the National Catholic War Council, Catholic University of America, Series 9: Historical Records of Committee & Bureau Box 106/Folder 18: Pittsburgh Catholic Social Survey, 1919, Quote, 3.

Kenneth J. Heineman, A Catholic New Deal: Religion and Reform in Depression Pittsburgh (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 89.

Blessing, Table 2.5, 23.

Pittsburgh Catholic Social Survey, Quote, 589.

“Erin’s President,” Pittsburgh Catholic, October 2, 1919.


Ibid.


Ibid.


Ibid.

U.S. newspapers widely published Cardinal Gibbon’s appeal, including an fundraising advertisement in the Pittsburgh Catholic, March 31, 1919.

Ibid.

“Church Pleas for Irish Relief Tomorrow Asked,” Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, April 2, 1921.

“The American Committee for Relief In Ireland” advertisement, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, April 2, 1921.

Rev. E. Marshall McFadden, obituary, Pittsburgh Press, January 7, 1933, and McFadden obituary in Presbytery of Monongahela (PA) minutes, March 28, 1933, from Presbyterian Historical Society. PHS does not hold cataloged information about the Ulster Society of Pittsburgh, per senior reference archivist Lisa Jacobson. The Ulster Society’s anti-Catholic and anti-Irish independence views are seen in the January 12, 1922, February 16, 1922, and March 14, 1922, issues held in the Harry H. Litty Family Collection, Box 1, Folder 12, “Litty, Harry H. — Clubs & Societies Involved In’ at the Memphis Public Library. Digital copies provided by Scott Healy, History Department, University Press, 1999), 89.

The Gaelic American


Ibid.

Ibid.


The National Catholic War Council changed its name to the National Catholic Welfare Council after the war. The N.C.W.C. Press Department, a news service, debuted April 11, 1920.


Editorial page, no headline, Pittsburgh Catholic, July 5, 1923.

From standing editor’s note below the headline, “The Irish Situation.” Francis P. Smith died January 10, 1929, age 87, after nearly 40 years as editor. His funeral mass at Corpus Christi Church, East End, was attended by Bishop Hugh C. Boyle — his nephew — and more than a dozen priests. Smith is buried at Calvary Cemetery.
Set against the backdrop of historical events, this story chronicles the priesthood of Father Francis James Bailey, ordained into the Roman Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh during the Great Depression. His initial assignment as parochial vicar at St. Lawrence Parish in Pittsburgh was interspersed by appointments as a chaplain with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), where Father Bailey ministered to the young CCC enrollees at forest camps in the western Pennsylvania region. Those experiences as a young priest were a prelude to his enlistment into the Chaplains’ Corps of the U.S. Army during World War II. Ordered into active duty in the European Theater of Operations, Father Bailey was stationed with the 20th Armored Division in Germany. After his service in the military, Father Bailey returned home to resume pastoral ministry for the next quarter century at parishes throughout the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

**Historical Backdrop, Ordination, Early Priesthood**

The story of Francis J. Bailey begins in the early years of the twentieth century, when on August 18, 1902, he was born in Uniontown to Edward J. and Anna (Rosenneck-er) Bailey. Both of his parents were immigrants: Edward from England (his parents were originally from Ireland) and Anna was from Austria. They were married in May of 1893, in Fayette County, PA, where by 1910, the Bailey family lived on Railroad Street in Dunbar.

Growing as the sixth of seven children, Francis had three older brothers — Edward, Jr., Henry, and Charles; two older sisters Rose and Marie; and one younger sister Helen. As with many other men in the region, his father Edward worked in the coal mines, working his way up through the ranks into the position of fire boss, then later assistant mine foreman at the H. C. Frick Coke company. In the early years of Francis’ childhood, the family moved from their home in Dunbar to one on Morrell Avenue in Connellsville.

Starting his education at the age of four in 1906, Francis attended public school for the first six years before transferring to Immaculate Conception School, the new parochial school that had just opened in Connellsville. Francis enrolled at St Vincent College, in nearby Latrobe for his undergraduate studies, where later he entered the seminary.

During his years at St. Vincent, his father suffered from health issues over a five-year span, resulting in his death in January 1928 at the age of 58. On June 7, 1931, Father Francis J. Bailey was ordained in the St. Vincent Archab-bey Basilica by Bishop Hugh C. Boyle. His first assignment as a newly ordained priest was as a parochial vicar for St. Lawrence O’Toole Parish on Penn Avenue, located in Pittsburgh’s Garfield neighborhood. He served in this parish for the next two years, from July 9, 1931, to June 8, 1933.

**Civilian Conservation Corps, CCC Chaplaincy**

While Father Bailey was ministering to parishioners at St. Lawrence O’Toole, he observed first-hand the pitfalls of the Great Depression on local city youth who were desperate for jobs and had little to do to occupy their time. The presidential election of 1932 brought changes that would directly impact Father Bailey’s life. The incumbent president, Herbert Hoover, was defeated by the Democratic Party candidate Franklin Delano Roosevelt, whose platform offered a beleaguered citizenry hope for economic reform and future prosperity. The new president’s extensive array of programs became known as FDR’s New Deal.

Less than one month after FDR’s inauguration into office, Congress ratified the Emergency Conservation Work Act, enabling the new president to issue Executive Order 6101 on April 5, 1933, thereby creating a Civilian Conservation...
Corps (CCC), which was the first and one of the most successful of the New Deal Programs. Designed as a public works relief program, the CCC sought not only to preserve and enhance the environment, but also to provide work opportunities for an ever increasing number of unemployed young men. The CCC served as a cornerstone of the New Deal for the next nine years.

Acceptance into the CCC program was restricted to American citizens who were unmarried, unemployed men between 18 and 25 years of age and from families that needed financial relief. The “enrollees,” as they became known, were processed through the U. S. Department of Labor, and then assigned to work camps administered by the U. S. Department of the Army. On-site reclamation and environmental enhancement projects were designed and supervised by the U. S. Department of the Interior.

In return for their service, enrollees were provided with three meals each day and supplied with Army surplus clothing left over from World War I. Initially sheltered in five-man tents, they later lived in pre-fabricated barracks. With the three necessities of food, shelter and clothing provided, many men lived under conditions far better than they had at home. This, along with physical work outdoors in healthful fresh air environments enabled enrollees to thrive. Each young man earned $30 a month, of which $25 went home to support the family. The physical development, moderate discipline, technical skills, and teamwork experienced by young men in the CCC camps would prove vital to them in securing future gainful employment.

In CCC camps across the country, support personnel normally included a physician, nurses, athletic coaches, an educational advisor, and teachers; in addition, a chaplain circulated among the camps in each region. Thus, it was that Father Francis J. Bailey was reassigned from his initial duties at St. Lawrence O’Toole to CCC chaplain at forest camps in the western Pennsylvanian territory, with his first tour of duty from June 8, 1933 to June 30, 1936. In Pennsylvania, the CCC camps were divided into two districts separated by the Susquehanna River: District 1 to the east and District 2 to the west. Commissioned as a first lieutenant in the Reserve Corps of the U. S. Army, Father Bailey, served in District 2, which included the Dioceses of Pittsburgh, Erie, and Altoona.

In the western Pennsylvanian territory, seventy percent of the CCC enrollees were Catholics, a statistic that was the impetus for the bishop’s appointment of Father Bailey as chaplain. The bishop’s mission was to have Father Bailey provide moral guidance to these Catholic enrollees. As the number of CCC camps throughout the nation and in the state continued to grow, the number of camps in the region assigned to Father Bailey grew over the first two years to include 80 camps.

One of the CCC Camps served by Father Bailey was CCC Camp SP-1-PA, which was located 15 miles north of Pittsburgh, in an area known as Wildwood. The CCC projects in this location were the beginnings of the transformation of unproductive farmlands and depleted forests into what became known as North Park, one of the nine parks currently in the Allegheny County Parks system. A second CCC Camp, SP-3-PA, was located concurrently at what is now South Park.

Reports from CCC Camp SP-1-PA indicated that regular religious services were conducted in the Mess Hall building. A Protestant minister held services on Sundays, while the Diocese of Pittsburgh assigned a chaplain, who conducted services on Wednesdays and Sundays. During his years in his capacity as a CCC chaplain, Father Bailey made it a point to celebrate Mass for Black Catholic enrollees, who were stationed in segregated camps.
In addition to these scheduled religious services, CCC chaplains also were called upon at various times to address specific needs. On one such occasion, CCC chaplain Father Bailey was called into service for a funeral on July 17, 1933, at which time he sang the requiem High Mass for Herman Chuderwicz, a deceased CCC enrollee who was from Pittsburgh. Chuderwicz, along with two other men, had been struck by lightning at CCC Camp SP-51-PA at Pine Grove Furnace in Cumberland County. A funeral service for the second victim, enrollee Robert Armstrong also from Pittsburgh, was conducted by the Protestant chaplain, Reverend Ira Freeman, while the third victim was severely injured but reportedly was recovering. Administrators, including Colonel H. L. Landers, chief of staff of the 99th Division who had supervision over the CCC camps in western Pennsylvania, together with enrollees from Camp SP-51-PA, attended the services, after which they marched to the gravesites where they saluted their fallen colleagues. After the closure of SP-51-PA in 1942, this former CCC camp was converted into a prisoner of war interrogation camp, where thousands of German and Japanese POWs were questioned. This site is now part of a protected area within Michaux State Forest.

Over the span of its nine-year existence, the reach of the CCC program became extensive. Of the 2,650 camps throughout the continental 48 states, 151 were located in Pennsylvania. U.S. territories with CCC camps were Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Overall, over the program’s lifespan, total enrollment in the CCC approximated 2.5 million young men. The program gained substantially: the numbers of which also increased.

In an October 18, 1934, account in the Pittsburgh Catholic, Father Bailey described conditions of ministering to the camps in Pennsylvania’s mountains. He began by relating the demands associated with a workload that included traveling over hundreds of miles to reach the 80 camps where he served, often falling behind schedule. Fortunately for him, as the number of CCC chaplains increased to meet the growing demands, Father Bailey’s burdens eased somewhat, but noting that “…although I now have only twelve camps to look after I’m still a month behind.”

Expressing admiration for the young men at the camps during that first year of the program, Father Bailey wrote “I have lived with and seen things during the past year that I would not have believed; I saw and marveled that men who apparently were without purpose or aim in this world could assume the obligations of the CCC and discharge them as pioneers should.” Describing the character and will of the enrollees, he noted that all but a few adapted to living in tents during the frigid winter months: “In the morning climb out about five-thirty, break the ice on the bucket beside the bed and wash your face.” He also reported that few of the enrollees were ever ill.

Over the course of his first year as chaplain, Father Bailey related how living conditions at the camps had improved considerably:

Look at the present setup. Barracks one hundred and twenty feet long, twenty feet wide, containing between thirty and forty beds, two big stoves that more than heat the place comfortably, a warm mess hall where the men can eat in comfort, shower baths, recreation halls, and for the minor illnesses that fall to the lot of the CCC an infirmary where a doctor sees them every day.

In a subsequent Pittsburgh Catholic article one week later, Father Bailey heaped praise on the work of the CCC enrollees for building 26,000 miles of roads during its first year. With a bit of humor, he described the hundreds of miles traveling along dirt roads and paved stretches as he made his rounds among the various camp sites. More than once, he reported, he had used a pick and shovel that he carried with him to dig his vehicle out of the mud. “I did get out but sometimes it meant losing some of the under part of the car,” then adding, “I got to where I was going, did my work and bounced and jogged off to some other camp.”

With a tone of admiration, he described the completed road building projects of the CCC enrollees who he referred to as “peavies.” Road building began by clearing brush, uprooting tree stumps—at times blasting them out, and smoothing over the deep furrows in cow paths. The “peavies” converted these stretches, first into dirt paths then later, transformed them into miles of sturdy paved macadam roads. Many of those macadam roads were the new gateways leading into the natural beauty of the verdant mountains of western Pennsylvania. That lush terrain captivated Father Bailey. He stated, “…there are things here that will make the beholder gasp at the sheer beauty…” He went on to write, “It is impossible to describe those things; they must be seen.”

As an eyewitness of the individual development of the “peavies,” Father Bailey observed,

I have watched these boys come to camp for the first time. I saw them flinch at the sight of camp and the work to be done. I have helped some weather their first attack of home sickness. I have seen those same boys sixteen months later weep openly because
they could not stay on.\(^{32}\)

Unabashedly, he concluded, “...the CCC is the greatest thing that has ever been inaugurated in this country.”\(^{33}\)

Keen to enhance the religious development of the “peavies,” Father Bailey introduced a variety of activities to further that goal. A report issued in July 1935 from CCC Camp S-117-PA, located in Penfield, where Father Bailey had his headquarters, testified that Diocese of Erie Bishop John Gannon confirmed 95 young men in Sacred Heart Church in the town of St. Mary’s. Those confirmed had received religious instructions from Father Bailey; eight of those confirmed also received their First Communion.\(^{34}\)

Following this Confirmation ceremony, Father Bailey had arranged for a meeting to include chaplains along with other priests and ministers from throughout the state who had an interest in the spiritual development of the young men and religious activities in the CCC camps. Approximately 40 clergy participated, half of whom were priests.\(^{35}\) Father Bailey, who had instituted this special conference, led the discussion. Two other priests from the Diocese of Pittsburgh attended: Father James A. Davin, formerly of St. John the Baptist Church in Pittsburgh and now a lieutenant U. S. Army, and Father Paul A. Nee of St. Mary of Mercy Church, Pittsburgh, who oversaw religious activities at CCC Camp SP-1-PA at North Park. Also, in attendance that day was area chaplain Father Edmond J. Griffin, a major in the U. S. Army, from Camp Meade, Baltimore, Maryland.\(^{36}\)

At this conference, Father Bailey announced that beginning July 22, 1935, he had arranged for a series of three-day missions to be held at each of the CCC camps under his jurisdiction. The missions would be conducted by priests from the Diocese of Erie.\(^{37}\) In a letter written later that summer by Father Bailey to Bishop Gannon, he commended the work of priests from the Erie diocese for their “wonderful success” in conducting missions in seven of the local CCC camps in the Erie area. According to Father Bailey, “Their (the priests) zeal in the work made the missions a success that I never dreamed possible.”\(^{38}\) In one of these camps both Catholics and non-Catholics reportedly participated in the mission. Father Bailey went on to note that during the preceding winter he had conducted religious education classes at 12 of his camps and saw “unbounded possibilities” in extending such opportunities into more of the CCC camps with support from local priests, as well as recruiting Confraternity of Christian Doctrine lay teachers.\(^{39}\)

In the official 1936 report issued by CCC PA District 2, a section on religion and welfare is included. According to the report, both Catholic and Protestant religious services have been held each week within the district since the inception of the program. Only two chaplains were listed as being assigned to the district: Catholic chaplain First Lieutenant Father Francis J. Bailey, and Protestant chaplain Captain Reverend Ira Freeman. Within this report, numbers are provided for the June 1, 1933, to November 30, 1936, timeframe: the total number of religious services held was 21,445 and the total number of attendees was 916,393.\(^{40}\)

Noting the magnitude of the work accomplished, the report provided the following summary:

During the first thirty-four months, he traveled 69,840 miles, visited 842 camps, conducted religious services, visited sick enrollees in camp infirmaries and Government and private hospitals, and performed the various other duties expected of chaplains. This personal record is significant because the records of other chaplains have been just as good.\(^{41}\)

Over the entire nine years of the CCC, a total of four priests from the Diocese of Pittsburgh were commissioned as chaplains in the reserve corps arranging, administering or supervising Catholic CCC religious services in western Pennsylvania. When Fathers Bailey and Davin returned to parish work in 1936, Fathers Paul J. Giegerich and Herbert Butterbach replaced them as the active-duty chaplains for Pennsylvania’s CCC District 2.\(^{42}\)

With his return as parochial vicar to St. Lawrence O’Toole Church in July 1936, Father Bailey had completed his first term as a CCC chaplain. Remaining in the parish until 1938, Father Bailey was once again assigned for a second term as CCC chaplain, with duties beginning on September 20. This two-year term ended January 3, 1940, after which he again resumed his duties at St. Lawrence, where he stayed until 1942,\(^{43}\) which coincidentally was also the final year of the CCC program. At program’s end, Father Bailey had completed two tours of duty for a total of seven years as a CCC chaplain.
One of the many early projects assigned to work crews was the construction of large barracks buildings at the camp site.

Enrollees were provided with an assortment of Army surplus clothing from World War I. Author’s father, Nick Ranalli, pictured.

View of CCC Camp SP-1-PA (Wildwood) as it appeared during the first year of the program in 1933.
CCC enrollees in Company 1383 at Camp SP-1-PA, as did enrollees at other CCC camps, gained technical skills and experience as they came to recognize the value of comradery and the importance of teamwork to successfully complete assigned tasks and projects.

Once completed, the large barracks buildings replaced the Army tents used to house the enrollees. Such improvements were praised by Father Bailey in his comments regarding the progress made during the first year of the CCC program.

CCC enrollees were housed initially in Army tents that could accommodate five men.

The spacious mess hall at CCC Camp SP-1-PA (Wildwood) where CCC enrollees ate most of their meals in assigned seats. Religious services were held here.

CCC enrollees in Company 1383 at Camp SP-1-PA, as did enrollees at other CCC camps, gained technical skills and experience as they came to recognize the value of comradery and the importance of teamwork to successfully complete assigned tasks and projects.
United States Army Chaplain Corps, World War II

In the early 1930s, the CCC chaplaincy reportedly helped to sustain the U. S. Army Chaplains Corps, proving to be the most significant and yet unintended factor in saving the chaplaincy branch of the U. S. Army. In 1932, the proposed Army Appropriation Act called for a severe reduction of the number of Regular Army chaplains from 125 to 45. However, shortly after its inception in 1933, the CCC had more chaplains on duty than did the U. S. Army. When compared to the 125 Regular Army chaplains, the CCC had more than 300 Regular and Reserve chaplains during the height of the program. Although neither the CCC nor its chaplaincy initiatives were ever intended as an army-in-training, the valuable lessons learned by CCC enrollees, and the experiences gained by CCC chaplains were invaluable assets later to the U. S. military effort during World War II.

When the U. S. entered World War II following the Japanese surprise attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Father Bailey was still serving as parochial vicar at St. Lawrence. Soon after, he was reassigned as parochial vicar to St. Philip Parish in Crafton, where he served from March to September of 1942. However, having served previously for a combined seven years as a CCC chaplain, Father Bailey felt called to enlist in the war effort. He transitioned from his role as parochial vicar into military chaplaincy at the rank of captain in the U. S. Army Chaplain Corps, its Motto in Latin reads: Pro Deo et Patria (For God and Country).

Initially, in September of 1942, Father Bailey was assigned to the training school for chaplains for a six-week course that was conducted at Harvard University. Following the completion of this training course, Father Bailey, who now had the rank of captain, was ordered to active duty as chaplain for 13 months at Kodiak Island in Alaska. Other short tours of duty included Fort Riley, Kansas, and at Fort Hamilton, Kentucky. Promoted from captain to the rank of major, Father Bailey next was ordered to active duty overseas in the European Theater of Operations (ETO).
Activated March 15, 1943, the 20th Armored Division was trained as a replacement unit for the combat troops already serving in the ETO. Upon its arrival in Europe, the 20th Armored Division became incorporated into the U.S. 7th Army, which engaged in combat in Germany. Soldiers from the Division reportedly were among those troops that liberated some 30,000 Holocaust survivors at the Dachau Concentration Camp on April 29, 1945. Whether or not Father Bailey was among those liberators remains undetermined. However, ironically, after the Holocaust survivors had been rescued from Dachau, the camp was converted into a holding prison for Nazi SS soldiers awaiting trial. Following V-E Day, the Division performed Occupation duties until it returned to the U.S. in August 1945, and later inactivated from duty on April 2, 1946.

As of May 1945, Army chaplains numbered 2,796 in the ETO. Of that number, the single largest denomination of Army chaplains were Roman Catholic priests, numbering 863. In retrospect, when considering the sparse number of chaplains in the 1930s, it is impressive that the total number of U.S. Army chaplains rose to 8,896, a figure that does not include chaplains from the other branches of the military services.

Post-War Pastorates, Retirement
At the war’s end, thousands of victorious U.S. troops were welcomed home as heroes and resumed their lives as civilians, among them was Major Francis Bailey. Beginning with the return of those troops at the end of the war through to the mid-1960s, one notable outcome was the birth of a demographically large generation known as baby boomers. Those increases in the birth rate prompted demographic shifts away from urban population centers and ethnic enclaves into the nearby suburbs, placing new demands on suburban churches, schools, hospitals, and shopping districts, among others.

After his honorable discharge in 1946, Father Bailey resumed his work as a parish priest in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Bishop Boyle, who 15 years earlier had ordained Father Bailey now assigned the returning chaplain, Pro Tem to Mother of Sorrows in Charleroi for May and June 1946. Soon after, Father Francis Bailey was assigned to what was not only his first pastorate, but as the first pastor at the newly established St. Matthias Parish in Evans City; he served there from 1946 until 1951. In August 1947, Father Bailey was invited to speak at a Holy Name Open House at St. Andrew Parish on Pittsburgh’s North Side. As part of his speech, he described his role as chaplain in both the CCC and the U.S. Army. He related that during his military tour of duty in Europe, he had visited on two occasions with a member of the Third Order of St. Francis, the German Catholic mystic and stigmatist, Therese Neumann of Konnersreuth in Bavaria, Germany. Father Bailey “…declared that Mass, daily recitation of the Rosary, and monthly Communion are the only means of averting universal catastrophe.”

For the next 25 years, Father Bailey would serve as pastor of four parishes throughout the diocese. In 1956, while serving as pastor at St. Robert Bellarmine in East McKeesport, Father Bailey, along with twelve members of his seminary class, celebrated the silver anniversary of their ordination. Celebrating his own jubilee on June 7 at St. Robert Bellarmine, Father Baily celebrated Mass with Fathers George V. Lentocha and Ronald Beaton, C.P., serving as deacon and subdeacon respectively. Both had served with Father Bailey in the same U.S. Army division. Fellow CCC chaplain and grade school classmate, Monsignor James A. Davin preached the homily.
The following spring, Father Bailey was invited back to St. Matthias in Evans City for the 10th anniversary celebration of the parish. Having served as the first pastor at St. Matthias, Father Bailey was the main speaker at a dinner held on May 1, 1957, in Harlansburg.

Also, during Father Bailey’s pastorate at St. Robert Bellarmine, the parochial school like most other schools during that era, faced steadily increasing enrollment brought about by the first wave of baby boomers reaching school-age. As enrollments increased, new school buildings became a necessity to accommodate the students, who were being crowded into the limited classroom spaces available in the older school buildings. On June 8, 1957, Father Bailey welcomed Bishop John Dearden to St. Robert Bellarmine Parish, where they joined in the dedication ceremony for the new St. Robert Bellarmine Elementary School building. The school would be staffed by the Vincentian Sisters of Charity.

In 1965, Bishop John Wright appointed Father Bailey as pastor of St. Agnes Parish in Pittsburgh’s Oakland neighborhood. In 1967, for his final assignment and by his own request, Father Bailey was transferred to pastor at St. Anthony Parish, Bessemer. Father Francis J. Bailey retired from the active priesthood in the Diocese of Pittsburgh on October 13, 1970.

Less than two years after his retirement, at age 69, Father Bailey died on January 17, 1972, at Monsour Hospital in Jeannette. Prior to his death, he had resided at the Vincentian Home for the Chronically Ill in McCandless Township, a suburb north of Pittsburgh. Pontifical Masses were celebrated, one at St. Robert Bellarmine Church with Bishop Anthony Bosco as principal celebrant, and the next day, at Immaculate Conception Church in Connellsville — the church of his youth now in the twenty-year-old Diocese of Greensburg — with concelebrants Bishops Vincent M. Leonard and William G. Connare.

Survived by older brother Charles, older sister Rose, and younger sister Helen, Father Bailey was laid to rest at St. Joseph Cemetery in his hometown of Connellsville.

**Epilogue**

The varied ministries that encompassed the priesthood of Father Francis James Bailey addressed religious and spir-
ittal needs of scores of individuals during both ordinary and turbulent times. His priesthood touched the lives of countless parishioners as a parochial vicar and a pastor in the Diocese of Pittsburgh; of diverse groups of impressionable young men in the forest camps of the CCC in the western Pennsylvania region; and of battle-tested soldiers in the U.S. Army during the Second World War in Europe. A rich priesthood, indeed.

Endnotes:
1 His mother’s name was Mulburga Anna and she was known as Anna.
3 Federal Census, Year: 1910; Census Place: Dunbar, Fayette, Pennsylvania; Page 10A; Enumeration District: ED 23.
4 Ibid.
5 Federal Census, Year: 1920; Census Place: Connellsville, Fayette, Pennsylvania; Page 4A; Enumeration District: 17.
6 “Pontifical Masses Held for Priest, 69,” Pittsburgh Catholic, January 21, 1972, 10.
8 Diocese of Pittsburgh Clergy Record: Bailey, Francis J. 2003. Diocese of Pittsburgh Archive. Throughout the paper, this document was used to validate dates related to Father Bailey’s priesthood and the preferred source when dates in other publications were at variance.
9 Kenneth J. Heineman, A Catholic New Deal: Religion and Reform in Depression Pittsburgh (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1999), 45.
10 Ibid.
13 Ibid.
14 Clergy Record, 1. DPA.
15 Michael Schultz, PhD, email message to author, April 4, 2022.
16 At the time, this area was part of the Diocese of Pittsburgh. In 1951, it would become part of the newly created Diocese of Greensburg.
17 Heineman, Catholic New Deal, 45.
18 Ranalli, “Civilian Conservation,” 27.
19 Ibid., 32.
20 Heineman, Catholic New Deal, 45.
24 Speakman, Penn’s Woods, 1.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 A peavy is a hook used by lumberjacks to move logs. In this region, the term apparently was used as a nickname for the CCC enrollees.
32 Bailey, “First Lieutenant.”
33 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
40 CCC PA District 2 Annual Report, 1936, 16.
41 Ibid.
43 Clergy Record, DPA.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
47 Clergy Record, DPA.
48 “Rev. Father Francis J. Bailey Assigned to Active Duty with Chaplains’ Corps U. S. Army at Rank of Captain” The Daily Courier (Connellsville, PA), September 8, 1942, 1.
49 Ibid.
50 “Rev. F.J. Bailey, Army Chaplain, Promoted to Major” The Daily Courier (Connellsville, PA), February 6, 1945, 1.
52 Ibid.
54 Clergy Record, DPA.
56 “Former Chaplain Talks to Holy Name Meeting,” Pittsburgh Catholic, August 14, 1947.
58 “St Matthias, Evans City” Pittsburgh Catholic, April 25, 1957, 8.
60 “5 New Grade Schools to be Opened,” Pittsburgh Catholic, April 4, 1957, 1.
62 Clergy Record, DPA.
63 “Pontifical Masses held for priest, 69,” Pittsburgh Catholic, January 21-1972, 10.
64 Ibid.
The shortest employment resume in the history of modern-day religious priesthood may be that of late Pittsburgh native, Bertin Roll, OFM Capuchin (1916-2015). Following ordination in 1942, he was appointed Assistant Director General of the Archconfraternity of Christian Mothers. The following year, Father Claude Vogel, minister provincial of the Capuchin Province of St. Augustine, promoted him to Director General, a position he held until his retirement more than sixty years later, the longest term of any friar in one ministry.1 When asked about this, Father Bert, as he was popularly known, told the present writer, in a response betraying his well-regarded sense of humor, “I guess the home office lost my paperwork!”2

Of course, no paperwork was lost. Quite the opposite, as Father Bert was known for keeping and maintaining meticulous records to which all his superiors had ready access; any of the eleven succeeding provincials over the years could have assigned him elsewhere, but none did, recognizing his extraordinary gifts. The Capuchin website has paid homage to this continuance: “Father Bert began his work with the Christian Mothers as a young man of 26, while the Archconfraternity itself was celebrating 61 years on American soil. It’s uncannily providential that this young man was to steer the ship for its next 62 years of life.”3

Father Bert retired in 2006 at age 89 and enjoyed nearly a decade of leisure as director emeritus living at the St. Augustine Friary in Pittsburgh’s Lawrenceville neighborhood, where he often asked fellow friars, “Who in the world has it as good as we do?”4 Though he spent most of his career on the road, St. Augustine’s was his formal residence for more than 71 years. Officially, he spent only two days, the last 48 hours of his life, “outside” the friary.5 Father Bert was ninety-eight when he died in hospice care on January 5, 2015.

The Archconfraternity
Founded in France, the Confraternity of Christian Mothers was brought to the United States through the German Capuchin friars who came to America to escape Germany’s Kulturkampf, which had been hostile to the propagation of the Catholic faith within families.

The Capuchin priests of Pittsburgh had witnessed the Confraternity’s success in Bavaria and recognized that American mothers had the same zeal and concern for their families.6 In 1877, the second year of Bishop John Tuigg’s tenure, the Confraternity was canonically established in Pittsburgh. Four years later, on January 16, 1881, His Holiness Pope Leo XIII raised the Confraternity to the status of Archconfraternity with the right to affiliate chapters wherever the ordinaries approved. Each affiliate shares a fundamental aim:

Christian Mothers are encouraged joyously to undertake the important task of training and sanctifying the young souls entrusted to their care. They are instructed with ways to edify one another by word and deed, to support one another by fervent prayer and in this way become the mainstay of the spiritual life within their own family, and a fruitful source of blessing to the community in which they live.7

Father Roll’s Family Life and Early Education
The youngest child of William and Nora (O’Brien) Roll, Father Roll was born October 5, 1916, and baptized “Raymond Roll” at St. Athanasius Church8 in Pittsburgh’s West View neighborhood. His siblings included sister Helen, and brothers George and Bill, all of whom preceded him in death.

His father, who died in 1973 at age eighty-seven, was a long-time official of the Oliver Iron and Steel Corporation. His mother, a homemaker, was a member of the Christian
Mothers at St. Athanasius; she passed away at age fifty-four in 1939.

As a youngster, Raymond was known for his athletic ability, excelling at baseball, and having been scouted as a potential major-leaguer. However, it was the game of golf that he embraced, a sport he enjoyed playing well into his senior years, one he learned much about as a young caddy at his neighborhood course.9

He attended the parish grade school at St. Athanasius, and in 1936, graduated from St. Fidelis High School Seminary10 in Herman, Pennsylvania.

**Enters the Capuchin Franciscan Order**

Soon after graduation from St. Fidelis, at age nineteen, Raymond entered the Capuchin Franciscan order on July 13, 1936, taking the religious name Bertin.

Brother Bertin professed temporary vows in 1937 at SS. Peter and Paul Monastery in Cumberland, MD, where he had lived his novitiate year. He studied for the priesthood at St. Fidelis Monastery in Victoria, Kansas and at the Capuchin College in Washington, D.C. He professed his perpetual vows in 1940 and was ordained in Washington on May 28, 1942, at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. Returning to Pittsburgh, the site of the friary and provincial offices of the Province of St. Augustine, he was immediately assigned as assistant director of the Archconfraternity of Christian Mothers, a position he held for a brief time before becoming director.

**A Nomadic Ministry**

Though his home base was the Pittsburgh friary, Father Bert’s vocation was a travelling ministry. “It’s great to be a Capuchin, Franciscan priest,” he wrote in 2007. “With permission of trusting Father Provincials, helpful local Superiors, and with the prayers of my family, friars, and friends, most of my priesthood was spent ‘on the road.’” He wore out automobiles regularly, never had an accident, and was proud to be “a Chevy man.” When he was ready to trade in, he always went to Sullivan Chevrolet11 across the Allegheny River, a few miles north of St. Augustine Friary.

He estimated he averaged 30,000 to 35,000 miles per year, and the only state he never visited was Alaska.12 A recent search on the website Newspa-
Father Bertin Roll with Catherine Burger, who served for many years as national secretary for the Archconfraternity of Christian Mothers

Source: Archives of Capuchin Friars, Province of St. Augustine

pers.com, using the Publisher’s Extra feature, returned nearly 1,000 newspaper articles published over six decades in thirty-five states covering Father Bert’s visits.13 One paper reported, “This speaker is a combination of Billy Graham and Ann Landers.”14

His friend and conferee, the late Father Bonaventure Stefan (1928-2017), captured the essence of this nomadic calling in poetic form:

If Bert were a salesman, he would have carried top honors every month. He recorded 3000 miles in driving each month, addressing parish women’s groups, convincing them of the spiritual benefits of the Christian Mothers Archconfraternity, the mothers praying for one another, and always for the children, and often, determined that prayer and example would imprint what God was making available.15

Father Bert was meticulous in tracking his travels. The provincial archive in Lawrenceville maintains volumes of his typewritten reports. Use of the typewriter was a necessity, as according to Father Bonaventure, he was notorious for scribbling when he was not printing and he quoted his father as often saying to him “write bigger, son.”

Father Bonaventure also recalled that Father Bert’s travels around the U.S. every year were punctuated by finding a fellow priest or parishioner with a membership to a golf course. His car was packed with boxes of Mother Love, the 308-page prayer book.16 Still, there was always plenty of room for the golf clubs.17

Radio and Television Pioneer

In addition to his use of traditional printed material, including pamphlets and the Archconfraternity newsletter, Father Bert was a pioneer in radio and television evangelization. In 1950, he addressed the National Catholic Conference on Family Life in Detroit where he advocated for the integration of Christian principles into radio and early television programming directed to parents. “The world today is what mothers are and it will never be any better than the mothers. Our problem is not the training of children in the Christian way but rather training their parents.” He deplored what he called the trend of mothers to permit the sacred things to be crowded out of the home by the things of the world and estimated that 60 percent of the children entering the first grade in Catholic schools cannot make the sign of the cross, but they can describe Superman.18

He took to the airwaves, beginning with radio in 1950. He maintained a radio presence throughout the fifties, and later in the decade was heard throughout the Midwest on Sunday mornings on KMOX, the 50,000-watt St. Louis radio station’s “Church of the Air” program.19 Always the innovator, he turned to vinyl, recording record albums. In 1957 he introduced a series titled “Talks on Record.” The initial recordings consisted of four fifteen-minute talks, two to a record. The topics were family-focused and wide-ranging: “A Mother’s Influence,” “Modesty in Dress,” “Training Preschool Children,” and “Teenage Problems.”20 The parish chorale of St. James in Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania, under the direction of Mrs. John Wolfe, provided the music.21

In 1953, one year after Bishop Fulton Sheen appeared on the cover of Time magazine accompanied by an article calling the Buffalo bishop “the first televangelist,” Father Bert made his television debut. He presented a program on “The Catholic Hour,” as part of NBC’s “Frontiers of Faith” series. Directed at Catholic men and titled “Living Room Retreat,” the National Council of Catholic Men (NCCM) sponsored the half-hour program.
The Catholic Hour will bring a retreat master into American homes, through television, on the five Sundays of March. Father Bertin Roll, O.F.M. Cap., will conduct the “living room retreat” over the NBC-TV network on Sundays at 1:30 p.m. (EST), beginning March 1. The program is carried by 47 stations on a coast-to-coast hookup. Father Roll is the director general of the Archconfraternity of Christian Mothers in Pittsburgh. Well known for his work with mothers and children in home life problems, he has given many family retreats.22

Father Bert’s format included interviewing Catholic stage and screen personalities. On his debut telecast he hosted actors Robert Gallagher, who had just completed a successful run with Bert Lahr in “Two on the Aisle”; Pauline Drake, character actress and former member of “The Jack Benny Show”; Frances Peter, television actress; and David Anderson, who some years earlier was one of the children in the stage production of “Life With Father.”23

Each episode focused on a particular virtue and its practice. The topic of his first installment was “prayerfulness” and he and his celebrity guests discussed solutions to challenges such as “I am distracted when I pray” and “My prayers are never answered.”24

The following year, 1954, he connected with CBS as the television network first launched its “Look Up and Live” series on Sunday mornings. Along with a confrere, Father Simon Conrad, then-professor and librarian at St. Fidelis Seminary in Herman, Pennsylvania, he hosted a half-hour program directed at leading teenagers closer to the Church. The eight-week program, filmed at the CBS studios in New York City, was termed a “television mission.” Father Bert told the Pittsburgh Press that he was using the term “mission” in two senses. “First, it’s to show that teenagers should plan now for proper work in years to come, and secondly that the series will offer a mission in Christian living.”25 During the program he interviewed influential Catholic personalities such as James A. Farley, postmaster general, and journalist and author, Bob Considine.26


One of Father Bert’s favorite mementos was a 1955 message from Pope Pius XII on the 75th Anniversary of the archconfraternity. It read: “The invaluable assistance you provide to mothers in the all-important work of education of their children is a source of great consolation to Holy Mother Church and certainly to our Divine Lord, who so loved children.”27

In 1958, he went to Harrisburg in support of State Welfare Secretary Harry Shapiro who rejected the suggestion of the Pennsylvania Board of Public Assistance that voted 4 to 3 in favor of authorizing relief workers to recommend birth control clinics to persons on relief rolls. Father Bert said the board’s recommendation would cause persons on relief “to die spiritually by advice contrary to the natural and divine laws of God.”28

Central Office Staff
Over the years, Father Bert had a support staff in Pittsburgh at the Archconfraternity central office for which he was always grateful; indeed, it was mutual admiration. In 1982, when the Archconfraternity was celebrating its
40th Anniversary, the staff collectively wrote that Father Bert “treats us, his helpers, and all Christian Mothers with thoughtful kindness and is confident that we can take care of his office while he is away visiting parishes.” The staff at that time included Jill Turok, who began helping as a high schooler and continues to work in the office today. Jill recalls how she looked forward to hearing the stories Father Bert would bring home from the road, and how he frequently recited the admonition, “Patience!” and his lifelong motto “All for the greater glory and honor of God!” Jill’s mother, Jane Bienemann, worked for Father Bert for over forty years, as did Stella O’Such; both women worked well into their late eighties.

Legacy

Asked in 2007 to summarize his vocation, he replied, it was about “the dignity of motherhood, virtues and vices, and training children to be good Catholics.” The results? “In the hands of God!”

And his inspiration? “Mary the Sorrowful Mother, Christian Mothers, and a wonderful office force who mothered me over the years and advised me to come home sane, sober, and single!”

Father Bonaventure recalled that Father Bert quoted his father as often saying, “If you are going to do something, do it right or not at all.” Father Bertin Roll did it right. He died January 5, 2015, at the age of ninety-eight and his mortal remains are buried in the friars’ lot at St. Augustine Cemetery in Millvale, Pennsylvania. *Mother Love, A Newsletter to the Christian Mother* reported, “He died peaceably as he had lived for 98 years. He was a humble friar, a priestly priest, a gentle man with a delightful sense of humor.”

Endnotes:

2 Father Bertin Roll, in discussion with the author, c. 2010.
3 Ibid.
4 “Mother Love,” *A Newsletter to the Christian Mother* 73, no. 1 (Winter 2015).
5 “Roll, 1916-1925.”
9 The now-defunct Highland Country Club.
10 St. Fidelis closed in 1981 due to low enrollment. Capuchin Franciscans staffed the high school and college seminary for 103 years from 1877-1980.
11 Roll discussion.
12 Father Bertin Roll memorandum, April 13, 2007, Archives of the Capuchin Franciscan Friars, Province of St. Augustine.
13 Newspapers.com Publisher’s Extra.
14 Roll memorandum.
15 “Roll, 1916-1925.”
16 The Christian Mothers manual written by German Friar Pius Francisacus, OFM Cap. whose English version was edited by Father Bertin Roll.
17 “Roll, 1916-1925.”
20 Catholic News Service, Newsfeeds, July 1, 1957.
21 *Pittsburgh Catholic*, October 10, 1957, 11.
24 Ibid.
26 “Bob Considine on TV,” *Catholic Advance* (Wichita, Kansas), April 9, 1954, 10.
27 “A Medal for Mother.”
29 “Roll, 1916-1925.”
30 Jill Turok, in discussion with the author, August 23, 2021.
31 Roll memorandum.
32 *Mother Love.*
The Printed Works of Father Bertin Roll

Source: Archives of Capuchin Friars, Province of St. Augustine
“Music! Music!! — The ‘Sisters of St. Joseph’ will be prepared to give lessons,” read an announcement in the Cambria Freeman newspaper. It was the spring of 1871, two years since the Sisters of St. Joseph had established a new foundation in the Western Pennsylvania town of Ebensburg, and the sisters were advertising their availability to teach music. From those early years in Ebensburg to their lives today, Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden have used music as a bedrock. Woven throughout the history of the congregation, music has been integral to the financial, ministerial, creative, communal, and spiritual aspects of their lives.

Music: A Means to Raise Money
In 1869, Mother Austin Kean led two sisters from the Long Island branch of the Sisters of the St. Joseph to establish this new foundation. Shortly after arrival, at the beginning of September, the sisters opened a boys boarding school and started a girls day school by that fall. Within the first two weeks in Ebensburg, the sisters’ first recorded expenditures were on practical items: a washing machine ($29); boxes ($1); spoons and forks ($3); and jars and sugar ($2). While the first four entries of expenditures dealt with the household, the fifth expenditure was $40 for “Freight on Piano,” which was an indication of the importance of this musical instrument. That piano proved its worth, for by the beginning of November, the congregation had earned $24 in music tuition.
Perhaps the congregation benefited at the very beginning from the presence of Sister Hortense Tello, who was purported to have been a highly trained musician, and taught music when she was with her original congregation on Long Island. In March 1871, when Mother Austin decided to return to Long Island, Sister Hortense became Mother Superior and by the next month, the advertisements began running in the local newspaper as one avenue of raising revenue. As with many congregations, those early years were challenging financially.

Offering music lessons to help sustain the congregation financially was a recurring theme over the years. For example, in the 1894 lawsuit *Hysong v. Gallitzin School Board*, sisters were asked to testify and they made passing references to music. The purpose of the lawsuit was a challenge by the Junior Order of the United American Mechanics, which was a nativist group in that period, to the sisters teaching in the public schools in Gallitzin, Pennsylvania.

Embedded in the sisters’ testimony are references not only to music lessons, but also to the ownership of pianos. Court records show that Sister Mary John Keenan reported teaching banjo, guitar, piano, vocal, and sometimes violin lessons after the school day was completed in order to bring in extra income for the congregation. Additionally, there was a room on the second floor of the newly constructed public school in Gallitzin that housed two of the sisters’ pianos to allow the sisters to teach lessons on site. The prosecution scrutinized the fact that the sisters did not keep their wages but rather they gave the money “to the Mother Superior [in Ebensburg],” who was in charge of the money for the entire congregation.

By the early 1900s, the emphasis on generating that much-needed income to supplement the low wages for sisters teaching in the classroom resulted in the school’s convent having at least one sister whose main ministry was teaching private piano lessons and music in the school. In a 1981 oral history interview, Sister Assumpta Becker was asked if she taught other subjects besides music from 1928 to 1932 at St. Titus in Aliquippa. She responded that music “was about all you could handle if you taught piano lessons,” with private lessons beginning at the start of the school day. In fact, school convents often would have a separate music room with a separate entrance for this express purpose.

After the motherhouse and Mount Gallitzin Academy expansion with a 1901 move to Baden, private lessons would also grow, bringing in substantial revenue. The addition of the all-girls Mount Gallitzin High School in 1934 fed into that system at the motherhouse. Sister Aelred O’Dea, who had completed her undergraduate degree in music in 1936, conducted the music program at the motherhouse until 1960. With her oversight, revenues were strong. The financial report for the three-year period of 1949 to 1952 listed revenues from teaching of music at the motherhouse totaling $8,591, which would be more than $94,000 in today’s dollars — a needed contribution to the financial health of the congregation as a whole.

In the early 1960s, the congregation turned to music as a focused fundraiser for its novitiate. These were the years of the international sensation of the “singing nun” and congregations such as the Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden were able to make use of this opportunity, as music was so integral to their congregation. In 1961 and 1963, the congregation produced two record albums: “In a Manger Lowly” and “A Christmas Gloria.” Creating these two albums had its challenges, including obtaining the rights to use copyrighted music. The money realized was nominal, but the experience was memorable for all of the novices who raised their voices in song and for those who know and love the sisters’ music — even through today.

**Music: An Expression of Educational Ministry**

Traditionally, education has been one of the primary ministries for sisters across the United States. The desire of the Baden sisters to impart music education surfaces in letters written by Willie Schmidt, a young lad who attended Mount Gallitzin Academy in the early 1880s. Living at the sisters’
boarding school for three years beginning at age nine, Willie referenced music several times throughout his correspondence. Initially, he commented on the other boys taking lessons, hoping to take some himself. Once he finally began taking lessons, he remarked proudly of his accomplishment, writing, “I am getting along nicely with my music” and mentioning “Sister Mary” as his teacher.14

Throughout the congregation’s history, there were certain sisters who embraced the educational ministry aspect. When nineteen-year-old Sister Crescentia Mulvehill was in her first teaching assignment at Sacred Heart School in Altoona in 1936, she offered to be the choir teacher. Upon taking on the choir, she “did the only thing [she] knew what to do [which] was to teach the things … learned as novices” and she began the choirboys with the Requiem Mass. She loved teaching the boys and succeeded in impressing the bishop at a funeral Mass within a few months of her taking over the choir.15

Beginning in the 1940s, Sister Ruth (Venard) Sattler began her ministry in teaching music, and in 1961, she transitioned from teaching music in the parochial schools to taking over the music program at the congregation’s two sponsored schools at the motherhouse. Over the next few decades, she impacted students with her ministry. One former student, Rita Modic Dargan, Mount Gallitzin High School class of 1964, credited not only her continued love for music to Sister Ruth, but also for her and the other sisters for influencing her values. Almost fifty years later, Rita donated the oboe from her school days to a music program in a rural, underprivileged community.16

In order to be effective teachers, many of the sisters were highly educated in music. Periodic entries in the early ledgers itemized money spent on music lessons for sisters. In July 1893, the congregation expended $5.68 on music lessons for Sister Stanislaus McGinnis.17 By the early 1900s, the sisters had adopted the Progressive Music Series, which would become a dominant music curriculum in schools across the United States. Starting in 1912, this program of “comprehensive teaching books” was produced by the Art Publication Society in St. Louis, Missouri.18 The Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden also used this curriculum, sending sisters to St. Louis for training, and in one instance, bringing in an instructor for a ten-day summer workshop in the technique at the congregation’s motherhouse in the 1950s.19

By the twentieth century, the congregation was sending sisters for further training to colleges. Sister Assumpta Becker was one of the sisters who took summer courses at The Julliard School in New York City before completing an undergraduate degree at Duquesne University (1943).20 Sister Kevin Kerwin, who served as school supervisor of music for both the Dioceses of Pittsburgh and Altoona-Johnstown from 1947-1959, had studied at the Pius X School of Liturgical Music in New York in 1937. She also earned undergraduate (1940) and graduate (1950) degrees at Duquesne University.

Duquesne University in Pittsburgh would prove to be the primary university used for music education because it was in close proximity to the congregation’s motherhouse and many of its ministry sites. Sister Donna Marie Beck, who
as a child took private piano lessons from the sisters in Gallitzin, was one of the first students to earn certification from the university’s music therapy program in 1976. Serving as part of that department’s faculty beginning in 1982, she went on to complete her doctorate in music and spirituality at the university, worked to spread music therapy through her mentoring of students, and at retirement, earned emerita status.

Music: A Way to Channel Creativity
As with other congregations, individual sisters turned to music as an outlet for their creativity. In 1909, “Memories of Mt. Gallitzin,” a series of sheet music for piano, was published, and composed by “A Sister of St. Joseph.” With titles such as “Chapel Thoughts,” “Come Back to Erin,” and “Song of the Ohio,” these compositions were a reflection of their lives as members of a congregation of Irish heritage with a motherhouse sitting along the banks of the Ohio River. The 1916 printing of the series included photographs from their campus in Baden, reinforcing the ties to their motherhouse. The Century Music Publishing Company decided to include the “Academy March,” a reference to Mount Gallitzin Academy, in a national series of “Standard Marches” of musical compositions for teaching. From their earliest days, individual sisters would rarely be recognized for any creative work — whether as a composer, a poet, or an author. Instead, the name of the creator was listed as “A Sister of St. Joseph.” Through the mid-twentieth century, the vow of poverty was interpreted to mean that a sister had no private ownership of anything, which included the ownership of music composition. Interestingly, in 1916, the individual creator of a piece apparently submitted the copyright application for the “A Christmas Carol,” and consequently she was acknowledged. While the words and music were listed as composed by “A Sister of St. Joseph,” the copyright owner recorded was “Sister Victoria.”

Much of the creative work within the congregation was geared towards an internal audience. Congregational events would be observed with songs, such as “Fields Afar,” which was composed to mark the 1926 departure of four sisters assigned to missionary work in China. From the late 1980s to 2000, Sister Ruth Sattler composed liturgical music relating to the congregation’s spiritual life, with titles such as “Jesus is Risen” and “Come to Me.”

Tapping into this creativity, sisters were known to compose songs to give as a gift. Such was the case of “Sunset Hour” in 1923, which was a collaboration between Father C. A. Burns, S.J., who wrote the lyrics, and “A Sister of St. Joseph” who composed the music. This piece was written in honor of the golden jubilee of Monsignor Martin Ryan, a priest who had been part of the sisters’ lives since the late 1800s. While the song was created in honor of Ryan’s anniversary, it was published by Zimmerman Print in Cincinnati, Ohio — an intersection of both public and private facets of the sisters’ work.

Music: Fostering Community
As members of a congregation, sisters have used music to connect with each other, forming a community around their love of and abilities with music. The gathering of sisters to sing and play their instruments is chronicled in archival photographs that depict a tradition. In the years after Vatican II, the sisters became known for coming together publicly to perform music. At St. Mary in Kittanning, in 1974, six sisters not only provided the organist and vocalists for a parish wedding but they received credit for it. By the late twentieth century, several sisters had formed a musical group called the CSJ Musicians. They were popular entertainment at the sisters’ Harvest Festival, an annual fundraiser that was held on their grounds until 2002. Focusing on pieces that projected meaning of life, this sisters’ group played music, ranging from folk songs to John Denver tunes.

Sisters performed not only with members of their congregation, but also with sisters from other congregations. This
was highlighted in the early 1960s with the Diocesan Sisters Symphony Orchestra, an inter-congregational group of sister musicians. Sisters from twelve religious congregations from across the diocese would come together on Saturday afternoons at Duquesne University’s School of Music to rehearse. Their repertoire of music varied, from opera to tango. The admission from their performances went to causes such as the Diocesan Child Center, which supported children with disabilities.

Some sisters would go beyond the Catholic world, as in the case of Sister Corinne Kirsch, who was inspired to audition for the Mendelssohn Choir in Pittsburgh. A few years prior to the audition, she had the opportunity to see the Choir perform Handel’s “Messiah” and soon after, discovered that “ordinary people could belong to that.” After failing at her first audition, Sister Corinne was determined to develop her voice to the level of the Choir. The following summer, she tapped into the knowledge of a retired professor at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, who worked with her to improve her technique. In 1974, she was selected for the Choir. During her first performance, which was Gustav Mahler’s Resurrection, “all of a sudden, the whole Mendelssohn Choir just stood up … It was glorious.”

Music: Feeding the Soul
Because sisters are part of the Catholic Church, music is an integral dimension to their spirituality, and was present as a means of prayer from the earliest years of their lives. Perhaps the best representation of this is a reflection that was written about the 1871 funeral of one of their sisters, who happened to be a young novice:

On the morning of the funeral, after going in procession to the Chapel with the remains of their loved little novice, Mother Hortense took the members of the choir and went to the gallery. Mother herself was the organist and the chief singer. We got through the singing of the Mass fairly well… This shows the love and union that existed among us from the very beginning.
The spiritual nature of music is such that it is part and parcel of their lives, an intangible aspect of religious life. Throughout the year, whether it is Christmas, Lent, or Easter, music is a companion to the sisters as they lift their voices in unison to praise God.

From their early years in Ebensburg to their lives today, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden have lived their lives “close to music.” This is a topic so broad that this article is but a glimpse into that relationship, one that is so integral not just to the lives of these sisters but also to the lives of women religious in general.

[Editor’s note: This article is adapted from a paper presented by the author on June 27, 2022, at the Triennial Conference on the History of Women Religious.]

Endnotes:

1 Mount Gallitzin Academy was the boys boarding school. In the early years, it was called Mount Gallitzin Seminary. Holy Name Academy was the girls boarding school; in 1878, it became coeducational. See Kathleen M. Washy, “A Nineteenth-Century Boy Goes to School: Willie Schmidt, the Sisters of St. Joseph, and Mt. Gallitzin,” Gathered Fragments 29 (Fall 2019), 41-42.


3 While Mother Hortense Tello was known as Hortensia in the Sisters of St Joseph of Brentwood, she signed everything and was known as Hortense by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden. G104 Congregational History, CSJB Archives. Of note, in the 1856 register for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Brentwood, the sisters recorded tuition from music lessons conducted by Mrs. Tello, the mother of Mother Hortense. 1856 Financial ledger entries, Sisters of St. Joseph of Brentwood Archives.


5 Testimony of James Bender, Ibid., 9.

6 Testimony of Preston Sattler, Ibid., 177.


9 Financial Report for three-year period of July 1, 1949 to June 30, 1952 reported income at the motherhouse for music tuition for boys $5,297.60 and for girls $4,904.00. Throughout the entire congregation, for the one-year period of July 1, 1949 and June 30, 1950, “Music Tuition from Music Classes” totaled $63,924.79 ($78,600 in 2022 dollars) at a time when the “School Salary of Entire Community Including Supervisor’s Salary” equaled $130,882 ($1.6 million in 2022 dollars). The income from those private music lessons was essential to the congregation’s finances. Financial Report, July 1, 1949 to June 30, 1950, RG 210.2 Finance, CSJB Archives.

10 The nearby Sisters of Divine Providence recorded two albums as well. “Concert Saturday by Sisters’ Chorus,” Pittsburgh Press, October 12, 1966, 84.

11 Sister Crescentia Mulvehill handled the first album, Sister Ruth (Ve-nard) Sattler the second. RG 304.4 Music, CSJB Archives.


13 The “In A Manger Lowly” album is still sold in compact disc format by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden.

14 Willie Schmidt to G.W. and Ellen Schmidt, October 19, 1883; January 19, 1884; February 1, 1884; February 19, 1884. Transcripts from the Private Collection of Sylvia Francis.

15 Mulvehill, transcript, 1980.


17 Financial journal 1891-1901, RG 210.2 Finance, CSJB Archives.


23 The Sisters of St. Joseph Constitution enacted in Lyons, France, in 1729 and adopted by the Baden congregation at the time of its founding in Ebensburg included the following as part of the vow of poverty: “To banish all idea of property, the Sisters of St. Joseph should not make use of the word mine…” Constitutions of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph (New York: O’Shea & Co., 1884), 48. The same wording is in the 1948 revision of Baden’s constitution. Constitutions of the Sisters of St. Joseph Diocese of Pittsburgh (St. Meinrad, IN: The Abbey Press, 1948), 51. After the Chapter of 1967, the constitution underwent a new revision and this wording was no longer part of the congregational constitution. RG 202 Constitutions and Customs, CSJB Archives.


25 The Sisters of St. Joseph relationship with Monsignor Ryan dated back to the 1880s, when both were ministering at St. Patrick Parish in Gallitzin. During the early 1900s, he was pastor at St. Brigid Parish and the sisters were teaching at St. Richard. The two churches were about a mile apart from each other in Pittsburgh’s Hill District. In a 1927 reference to the acquisition of relics for the sisters’ new altar, Monsignor Ryan is listed as the congregation’s spiritual father. CSJB Archives. RG 603.3 Chapel, CSJB Archives.

26 “Jordan-Patrick Pledges Heard at St. Mary’s Church Altar,” Pittsburgh Leader-Times (Pittsburgh, PA), May 6, 1974, 12.

27 “Diocesan Sisters Swing out on ‘Porgy and Bess’,” Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph, April 5, 1960, 8.


29 For example, at the annual commencement for Mt. Gallitzin Academy, several students “displayed great skill in the manipulation of the piano.” Cambria Freeman, July 16, 1875, 4.


32 Sister Fabian Ryan, interview by Sister Sally Witt and Sister Sarah Dixon, September 18, 1979, transcript. RG509, CSJB Archives.
When six Franciscan teaching brothers from Mountbellew Monastery in County Galway arrived at the small settlement of Loretto in the Allegheny Mountains of Pennsylvania, a story began that resonates today. Loretto had been founded in 1799 by Russian prince, Catholic convert, and priest, Demetrius Augustine Gallitzin, on land deeded by Captain Michael McGuire. Michael O’Connor, the first bishop of Pittsburgh, invited the Irish Franciscans of the Third Order Regular to minister there. The brothers cleared the land and began a school in 1847 that would later become St. Francis College, now known as St. Francis University. It would be one of the first Catholic universities in the United States and the first Franciscan college established. The small band of Franciscan lay brothers, under the authority of the local diocese and bishop, grew in number and ministries.

Desiring to reunite with the religious community of their origin, the Franciscan community at Loretto — then part of the new Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown — received permission in 1907 from Minister General Father Angelo DeMattia, T.O.R. to seek consolidation with the friars of the Third Order Regular, based in Rome. Papal permission was granted in 1908 and the Franciscan communities in Pennsylvania and, likewise, Nebraska were incorporated into the order. In 1910, the houses in the United States were erected into an independent province under the title of the Province of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus with...
its motherhouse in Loretto. A separate American province — the Province of the Immaculate Conception — was established in 1925 with its motherhouse located in Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania.

At its peak, the Province of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus was home to three hundred and fifty priests and brothers which included the members of the Province as well as the later independent communities of friars in India and Brazil. Today, community members work in education and campus ministry (St. Francis University and Franciscan University of Steubenville), parish ministry, retreat ministry, hospital ministry, and maintenance and promotion of shrines and gardens in Loretto.

The stories of the Province of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus — its history, members, and the larger community of Loretto — are worthy of preservation. This article traces the efforts of the province to do just that.

Background on the Father Bonaventure T. Kiley T.O.R. Archives

Thomas Kiley entered the Third Order Regular in 1935. He was given the religious name of Bonaventure. He professed simple vows in 1936 and solemn vows in 1939. Father Bonaventure was ordained to the priesthood on May 14, 1942 by Bishop Richard T. Guilfoyle, bishop of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown. Father Bonaventure worked primarily in the field of education, teaching at various institutions including Saint Francis College, the College of Steubenville and Bishop Egan High School.1

The Archives of the Province of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus began unofficially in 1938. Brother Bonaventure began crafting a series of source books and date books in order to tell the story of the Province as no official archives existed at that time. Following his ordination and some months later the disastrous fire of October 30, 1942, Father Bonaventure continued to collect materials in order to preserve the history of the Sacred Heart Province. Another fire in January 1958, set by a student, Robert Conkling, destroyed the archival collections further, but Father Bonaventure was undeterred. He remained as archivist both officially and unofficially until his retirement in 1990.

Following in Father Bonaventure’s footsteps, Brother Michael Tripka, who earned a Master of Library Science, took over as province archivist for a few years beginning in 1990. Speaking of his time as archivist, Brother Michael said, “I was archivist for three years. The first year was learning what I had in the collections. The second year was deciding what to do with it and the third year was starting to do it.”2 Brother Michael was reassigned to the Franciscan University of Steubenville in 1993.

Over the next couple of decades, several Franciscans served as archivists, including T.O.R. Fathers Fabian McNichol, Richard Davis, and Benjamin Medeiros. In 2004 Brother Bonaventure, who served an eight-year term as archivist, oversaw the move of the archival collections from the campus of Saint Francis University to Kelley Hall on the former Charles M. Schwab Estate, now owned by the Franciscan Friars. It was decided by then Minister Provincial, Father Christian Oravec, to move the archives to Kelley Hall because it was on Province property and was a more suitable location environmentally, for archival materials.

Father Benjamin was succeeded by former-University President Father Christian Oravec, whose main contribution to the archives was the creation of a necrology of the Province, an updated version of which is still used today within the houses of the Province.

Father Christian died suddenly in July 2014. At this point, Brother Michael Tripka was reassigned to Loretto from his previous assignment in Pittsburgh. Joining Brother Michael, in a limited capacity, was Father Gerard Connolly, T.O.R., archivist of the Immaculate Conception Province in Hollidaysburg, PA. Sadly, Father Gerard passed away as the result of a heart attack at dinner in 2015. Today, following national trends in archives of religious congregations, the archives is managed by a lay staff.

The Archival Collection

After the move to the new site (the former tractor barn of Charles M. Schwab, located on the back part of the estate) the work there began on May 11, 2015. For two days, the staff of the archives assisted by the Province’s development staff and executive secretary moved the boxes from the former office of Father Christian, which was located in a cottage building on the estate, to the archives building just across the road. Following the moving of the collections into the new archives building, the archival staff fully organized and catalogued the collection according to archival standards, enabling users greater access to the collection.

Within the approximately 1,000 linear feet of the collection, the archives contains archival and manuscript collections. The archival records document the Province of the Most Sacred Heart and also their seminary, the university, Loretto Borough, and the Sisters of Mercy (Cresson/Dallas branch).3 The archives contains not only documents but...
also artifacts, such as the altar stone of Old Main, which survived the fire of 1942. The records of the Saint Francis Seminary represent the formation of priests and friars for many dioceses, including several in the Dioceses of Altoona-Johnstown, Greensburg, and Pittsburgh.

The archives is also home to an extensive manuscript collection of papers from friars as well as other notable individuals in the history of the Sacred Heart Province and the Loretto area. Of particular interest are T.O.R. Fathers Linus Lynch and Michael Scanlan. Father Linus was one of the friars who worked to establish the union of the friars with the Third Order Regular. Father Michael Scanlan served as president of the Franciscan University of Steubenville from 1974-2000. Through the efforts of Father Michael and others, Franciscan University of Steubenville maintains a very Catholic identity with an emphasis on charismatic renewal.

Manuscript collections include those of early twentieth-century steel magnate Charles M. Schwab; Apostle of the Alleghenies and Servant of God Father Demetrius Augustine Gallitzin; and artist, author, and teacher Sister M. Fides Glass, S.C. The Charles M. Schwab collection contains articles and publications about him as well as photographs and information pertaining to his summer estate in Loretto. Also included in the Schwab collection are construction contracts for the various amenities Schwab included on the estate. The Demetrius Gallitzin collection contains publications about Father Gallitzin as well as memorabilia that was donated by the Sisters of Charity. Sister M. Fides Glass wrote a book on Prince Demetrius Gallitzin and thus had corresponded with Father Bonaventure Kiley as part of her research. Also included in the collection of Sister M. Fides Glass are artworks by her as well as a signed copy of her book, *The Seton Ballad*: a true story in verse and pictures of Mother Elizabeth Seton.
Additionally, the T.O.R. Archives was fortunate to receive donations of material from Frank and Betty Seymour, historians who have been the promoters for the cause of Father Gallitzin’s sainthood. The material donated has further enhanced the intellectual knowledge and archival holdings of collections pertaining to Charles M. Schwab, Father Demetrius Gallitzin, and the Borough of Loretto.

In May 2016, the archives began interviewing friars as part of an oral history project. The first to be interviewed was Father Alex Bombera. Father Alex was the last living friar of what is referred to as the “Old Main period,” and the fire of October 30, 1942. At the time, Father Alex was a novice living on the second floor of Raymond Hall. He noticed the flames and exited the building while heading towards Old Main. Father Alex shouted as he ran toward Old Main, “Friars… friars… the building’s burning… the building’s burning… get out get out!” Father Alex went back and forth from the building to the roadway desperately trying to save religious books, chalices and vestments.

As of summer 2022, a total of thirty-four interviews have been completed with friars and other notable individuals as part of this on-going oral history. The archives also have other oral history interviews that were produced prior to 2016. All of the interviews have been digitized and transcribed. And in the past few years, this digitization effort has extended to the photograph collection, as well as slides and other audio-visual material.

Father Bonaventure T. Kiley’s documentation of the history of the Franciscan Friars of the Third Order Regular Province of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus began the Province’s archives, a solid resource for the history of Catholicism in Western Pennsylvania. The tradition started by Kiley continues through the work of today’s archivists.

**Endnotes:**

2. Interview with Brother Michael Tripka, T.O.R. (August 4, 2016), RG 92 — Oral History Interviews
3. Coming to Pittsburgh from Ireland in 1843, the Sisters of Mercy expanded to Loretto in 1848.
5. Interview with Father Alex Bombera, T.O.R. (May 9, 2016), RG 92 — Oral History Interviews

**Memories of Zach Doll:** My mother was working in the Saint Francis College Archives during the mid to late 1990s. As a young boy, I remember seeing a friar in a black habit; however, I did not know his name. I learned years later, when I began working for the Sacred Heart Province, that the friar in the black habit was Father Fabian McNichol, T.O.R. Little did Father Fabian know of the impression that his work would have on that little boy.

**Spotlight On Archives**

Space is provided for researchers in the archives. The setting includes artifacts from the history of the Province.

Source: Kathleen Washy
The History of St. Michael’s Seminary in the Diocese of Pittsburgh

John C. Bates, Esq.

As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea (for they were fishermen). And he said to them, “Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

—Matthew 4:18-19

In 1843, Bishop Michael O’Connor, first bishop of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, formally established St. Michael’s Seminary in his residence. This seminary existed for just thirty-three years and was only in operation for twenty-seven. Within that brief window, St. Michael’s Seminary proved to have a lasting impact on the Catholic Church in Western Pennsylvania, producing over two hundred priests. The history of this seminary is deserving of an in-depth study, which will be published in Gathered Fragments over the next three years. This is the first of the three-part series. In anticipation of later republication, this history appears in full page format.
CHAPTER I

The Rise of Seminaries

The words above may be seen as the founding of the Catholic Church’s first seminary, for it was during the next three years after this event that the apostles received their education for the priesthood that Christ conferred on them at the Last Supper.

Clergy in the Early Church
From Apostolic times to the time of St. Augustine, there is no documented evidence of special institutions for the education of the clergy. One historian remarked on this period of the Church:

In the early days of the Church, the clergy were fitted for their office, not by a regular course of studies, but by exercise in those ecclesiastical functions which they would hereafter be called upon to discharge. An acquaintance with the history of the life and mission of the Son of God, and an ability to explain to the people the truths these implied, and their consequences, and awake in their hearts a lively faith in the coming of Christ, were deemed sufficient qualifications, if accompanied with exemplary conduct, for entering upon the discharge of ecclesiastical duties.1

Thus, St. John instructed Polycarp and Ignatius at Ephesus and they in turn trained others as they themselves had been taught. In succeeding centuries, bishops saw the need of a thorough training of those destined to hold the office of priest.2

In the half-century before St. Augustine, there were a few instances of local bishops living personally with parochial clergy in common disciplined life — such as St. Eusebius of Vercelli (AD 283-371) and St. Paulinus of Nola (AD 354-431). Perhaps knowledge of these efforts influenced St. Augustine, following his return to northern Africa from Rome in 388, to gather men to his own house for the purpose of educating them under his supervision. His episcopal residence at Hippo became a model for the education of the clergy. From one perspective, it functioned more as a monasterium clericorum in which clergy lived together, than exclusively as a schola clericorum.

In the one thousand years that followed St. Augustine, clerical education underwent a number of changes that involved monastic schools, episcopal schools, and universities. Successive popes issued exhortations and commands to the bishops of their time about the necessity of exercising vigilance in admitting men to Holy Orders; yet there was little papal legislation of universal application on the matter. Much depended on the individual bishop. While monasteries afforded spiritual training to their members, there was no comparable institution for diocesan clergy. Laxity in admitting men to Holy Orders and the absence of formal clerical education contributed to moral laxity of the clergy and attendant abuses that were to stoke the fires of the Protestant Reformation. There were great differences in the condition of diocesan clergy: beneficed priests, clerical servants in the households of the great, poorly compensated parish priests, and priests unattached to a permanent position who said Mass for a stipend. It would take the strong reform spirit of the Council of Trent to comprehensively address the formation and education of the clergy.

The Council of Trent
On December 13, 1545, the Council of Trent convened under Pope Paul III. It would affirm the tradition of the sacraments, including Holy Orders. In a February 8, 1547 speech, Giovanni Maria Cardinal del Monte [later, Pope Julius III] addressed the purpose of the Council: “The aim of the reforming activity is the revival of the pastoral ministry — the cure of souls.”3

During the sessions of the Council of Trent, Reginald Cardinal Pole (1500-1558) undertook the restoration of Catholicism in England during the reign of Queen Mary Tudor and presided at a synod in England in 1555-1556. That synod took the tradition of the cathedral school and applied it to a program for the education of priests. Each diocese was to gather boys at the cathedral church to prepare them for priesthood; they were to be at least twelve years old, capable of reading and writing, and legitimate. The sons of the poor were to
be given preference, although the sons of the rich were to be permitted to attend. The program was called a *seminarium* (seed bed). In a nation noted for gardening, it is not surprising that he thought in terms of a seed bed in a nursery. The English decree drawn up by Cardinal Pole stated:

> that in cathedrals there be educated a certain number of beginners, from which, as from a seed bed (*seminarium*), priests may be chosen who can worthily be placed in charge of the churches.\(^4\)

This was one of the earliest, but not necessarily the first, occasion in which the word *seminary* was used in its modern sense to designate a school exclusively devoted to the training of the clergy.\(^5\)

Unfortunately, the synodal legislation was not implemented before the deaths of both the cardinal and the queen. But the text of the English decree would have an important influence on the subsequent decisions of the Council of Trent regarding seminaries. The Council’s commission of bishops that drafted the seminary decree initially presented a text that was virtually identical to that of Pole’s synod. The commission’s report — *Canones super abusibus circa administrationem sacramenti ordinis* — was presented to the Council in May 1563.

As the 18-year-long Council of Trent drew to a close, it approved a final version on July 15, 1563 — *Cum adolescentium actas* — that stated:

> [T]he holy council decrees that all cathedral and metropolitan churches … shall be bound, each according to its means and the extent of its diocese, to provide for, to educate in religion, and to train in ecclesiastical discipline, a certain number of boys of their city and diocese … in a college located near the said churches or in some other suitable place to be chosen by the bishop. Into this college shall be received such as are at least twelve years of age, are born of lawful wedlock, who know how to read and write competently, and whose character and inclination justify the hope that they will dedicate themselves forever to the ecclesiastical ministry. It wishes, however, that in the selection the sons of the poor be given preference, though it does not exclude those of the wealthy class, provided they be maintained at their own expense and manifest a zeal to serve God and the Church. These youths … may be a perpetual seminary of ministers of God. … [T]hese youths shall be instructed in Sacred Scripture, ecclesiastical books, the homilies of the saints, the manner of administering the sacraments, especially those things that seem adapted to the hearing of confessions, and the rites and ceremonies.\(^6\)

Thus, the Council called for a return to the method adopted by St. Augustine and decreed that every cathedral church was obliged to erect a seminary for the education of future priests. Candidates were to be taught scripture, theology, and the rubrics. Spiritual formation was prescribed. While the internal life of the seminary was sketched in general terms, the local bishop was at the heart of the undertaking. He was responsible for devising the content of training.

Pope Pius IV confirmed the legislation of the Council of Trent in his January 26, 1564 issuance of the papal bull *Benedictus Deus.*\(^7\) The pope set the example for implementing the seminary decree by opening a seminary in the Papal States at Rome on February 1, 1565, under the direction of Jesuits. The pope’s nephew, Charles Cardinal Borromeo of Milan, was to become the most famous and influential early seminary founder.\(^8\)

**Post-Tridentine Seminary Development**

The Tridentine seminary decree provided the institutional arrangement for the seminary but not the model of the priesthood to inform the content of the seminary. Various European historical figures developed themes as to the character of the priest, espousing his separateness from the non-ordained while exhibiting a developed spirituality that identified with the priesthood of Christ. The *ordinand* was prepared to receive the sacrament of Holy Orders and to take on the supernatural work of imparting grace through the sacraments.

The decrees of the Council of Trent as to the education of clergy were gradually implemented. A dual approach developed: establishment of preparatory seminaries where candidates would receive formational training, and theological seminaries where specialized training would be given. The southern German states, the Italian city-states, France, and the English-speaking colleges\(^9\) established on the Continent (due to the active persecution of Catholics in England, Scotland, and Ireland) developed formal seminaries. It was from France, however, that the first seminary program in the United States would emanate.

The concept of education of young men for the diocesan priesthood was advanced in France by Jean Jacques Olier de
In 1642, Olier became curé (pastor) of St. Sulpice in Paris which was the largest parish in the city and probably the largest in France. He installed a community of priests and seminarians at the parish. The Society of Saint Sulpice remained an organization of diocesan priests and was not a religious community bound by vows — it was a clerical community devoted to the training of future priests. Such a seminary was not Tridentine in the strict interpretation of the decree since it was not under the direct supervision of a bishop. But it was an innovative variation on the Tridentine model: a school for the training of diocesan priests operated by a clerical community under contract to a diocese. Enrollment was limited exclusively to candidates for the priesthood, with seminarians separated into younger and older groups — a foreshadowing of the development of minor (collegiate) and major (theology) seminaries.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the great upheaval of the French Revolution and the subsequent years of European warfare closed diocesan seminaries in France and in other parts of Europe. But as Europe’s patterns of seminaries came to a temporary halt, Catholics in the United States of America were beginning formal organizational life — including the establishment of seminaries that would rely on French models of training.

The Ecclesiastical Seminary
The history of diocesan seminaries in the United States, to which we will now turn, must be understood against the foundation established at Trent for ecclesiastical education. The word *seminary* has had different applications. England and the United States applied the word to young ladies’ academies, both Protestant and Catholic. But when qualified by the word *ecclesiastical*, *seminary* is reserved to schools instituted in accordance with the Council of Trent for the training of Catholic diocesan clergy. It differs from the novitiate and scholasticate in which members of religious orders receive their spiritual and intellectual formation. In an ecclesiastical seminary, both are combined. An ecclesiastical seminary is diocesan (sometimes interdiocesan, provincial, or pontifical), under the control of the bishop of a diocese (or several bishops, or the bishops of a province, or the Holy See). A preparatory seminary (*petit séminaire*) offers a collegiate course as preparation for entrance into a theological seminary. A theological seminary (*grand séminaire*) offers courses in Sacred Scripture, philosophy, and theology as immediate preparation for ordination to the priesthood. The word *college* has been applied by the English and the Irish, and in Rome, to ecclesiastical seminaries.11
In 1788, American priests petitioned the Holy See for the formation of a diocese headed by a bishop. Pope Pius VI established the Diocese of Baltimore in 1789 and appointed John Carroll as its first bishop. While in England for episcopal ordination, Carroll was contacted by Father Jacques Andre Emery, superior of the Society of Saint Sulpice who proposed the opening of a Sulpician seminary in the Diocese of Baltimore.¹

The members of the Society of Saint Sulpice, which educated seminarians, sought to escape a France that was in the throes of the French Revolution and its attack on the Catholic Church. Following completion of negotiations with the first American bishop, five priests of the Society of Saint Sulpice and five seminarians landed in Baltimore on July 10, 1791 and proceeded to open St. Mary's Seminary (originally called St. Sulpice Seminary), the first in the United States. It produced its first priest in 1792 when Bishop Carroll ordained Stephen Badin (1768-1853). For many years, St. Mary's in Baltimore would remain the principal center for the education of candidates for the diocesan priesthood in this country.²

But St. Mary’s Seminary would not be alone. In the seventy-seven years between establishment of the American hierarchy in 1789 and the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1866, over half of the forty-three dioceses then existing in the United States undertook establishment of a seminary. These institutions were begun to satisfy the needs of a particular diocese.³ In the early years, little distinction was made between minor and major divisions in such seminaries, but ultimately students were divided into those studying classics and liberal arts (minor) and those studying philosophy and theology (major). Lay students were initially received alongside those preparing for the priesthood; indeed, the paucity of seminarians made it necessary to subsidize the cost of training seminarians by allowing laity to also study at the school.

A second type of American seminary soon developed — conducted by secular clergy and intended to educate students for the diocesan priesthood — but not established by any particular diocese. The best example of this was Mount Saint Mary's in Emmitsburg in western Maryland under the auspices of the Sulpicians. The lay teachers were themselves seminarians progressing toward the priesthood.

A third type of seminary that developed before the Civil War consisted of a group of men assembled in the home of a bishop who were personally instructed either by the bishop or by one or two of his priests. This type of institution was established in 1832 in Philadelphia by Coadjutor Bishop Francis P. Kenrick and served as a forerunner of the present seminary there. This house seminary served Philadelphia until the diocese was financially able to support St. Charles Seminary that was occupied in January 1839 by ten students under the direction of Father Michael O'Connor, an Irish-born graduate of the Urban College in Rome.⁴ O'Connor had been professor of sacred scripture and vice rector of the Irish College in Rome (1833-1835) and subsequently immigrated to the United States, arriving in November 1838 to teach at and later head the seminary in Philadelphia. He would later become the first bishop of Pittsburgh.

A fourth type of seminary would develop: the national (ethnic) seminary. For German Catholics in the New World, the tradition of a close association of their religious faith with their mother tongue led to the development of a few seminaries intended to serve this rapidly growing number of Catholics. In October 1846, Benedictine Father Boniface Wimmer opened a monastery — St. Vincent's — in Westmoreland County in Western Pennsylvania. By 1847, he had established a seminary and a school for boys.⁷

A fifth category of seminary was added on December 8, 1859, when the American bishops opened the North American College in Rome to afford seminarians the opportunity to obtain advanced degrees in the institutions in the Eternal City — a project enthusiastically supported by an alumnus of the Urban College, Bishop Michael O’Connor of Pittsburgh.
The American bishops, meeting in 1843 in the Fifth Provincial Council of Baltimore, petitioned the Congregation de Propaganda Fide, which had jurisdiction over the “missionary” United States, to create several new dioceses, including Pittsburgh. The creation of those additional sees increased the number of American ecclesiastical jurisdictions to twenty-two. A new round of seminary foundings would then ensue.

On August 11, 1843, the papal bull Universi Dominici announced the creation of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, which would consist of 24 counties in Western Pennsylvania (the counties of Blair, Cameron, Forest, and Lawrence were not yet formed in this area), covering a territory of 21,151 square miles with 47 churches, 18 priests, and an estimated 30,000 Catholics out of a total population of 592,000. The document Dilecti Filii, executed the same day, named Michael O’Connor as first bishop of the new see of Pittsburgh.

O’Connor had been born in County Cork, Ireland in 1810. The bishop of Cloyne sent him at age fourteen to undertake studies for the priesthood, first in France, then in Rome where he was a student at the Urban College of Propaganda Fide. A brilliant student, he obtained a doctor of divinity degree following a public disputation. Ordained in 1833 at age twenty-two, he was appointed vice rector of the Irish College in Rome. Invited to teach in St. Charles Seminary in Philadelphia, he arrived in the United States in 1838, with his younger brother James. Michael O’Connor later became president of the seminary in Philadelphia. In 1841, he was appointed vicar general of Western Pennsylvania and pastor of St. Paul Church in Pittsburgh, which was then part of the Diocese of Philadelphia.

Anticipating that he might be appointed first bishop of Pittsburgh, he traveled to Rome in 1843 to petition the pope to permit him to join the Jesuits. The pope refused, saying: “You shall be a bishop first, and a Jesuit afterwards. I will not let you rise from your knees until you promise to accept the Diocese of Pittsburgh.” O’Connor accepted the pope’s will and was ordained a bishop on August 15 by Giacomo Cardinal Fransoni, Prefect of the Congregation de Propaganda Fide, in the chapel of the Irish College. O’Connor was only thirty-two years old.

While still in Rome, the new bishop requested that Cardinal Fransoni write to two of the three European mission aid societies that were the principal financial benefactors of the Church in the United States—the Lyon office of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, and the Archbishop of Vienna in his capacity as president of the Austrian-based Leopoldinen Stiftung (Leopoldine Foundation) — to request money for the transportation to Pittsburgh of the bishop and three priests that O’Connor would need to staff the seminary he planned to open in Pittsburgh, as well as the cost of building and maintaining the seminary. The Society responded with 20,000 francs for the bishop. O’Connor then obtained the commitment of the brilliant young priest, Father Richard H. Wilson, of the Irish College to leave a promising professorial position in Rome to join the new bishop in the journey to Pittsburgh, where he would supervise the new diocesan seminary that O’Connor planned to open as soon as possible. Wilson had obtained his doctorate at the Urban College of Propaganda Fide and had been ordained in Rome in 1843.
The bishop then departed for Ireland to obtain priests, seminarians, and sisters to work in the new see. On his trip from Rome, O’Connor stopped in early fall 1843 in Marseille, the second largest city in France. There, he visited with Bishop Charles Joseph Eugène de Mazenod, who had founded a society of priests devoted to missionary work within France — the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. The order had received papal approbation in 1826, and — reflective of de Mazenod’s training under the Sulpicians — had an apostolate devoted to seminary education. The seminary of Marseille had been re-established in 1827, following the French Revolution and its aftermath, and entrusted to the Oblates. Thus, O’Connor, who had served as vice rector of the Irish College in Rome and had been a seminary professor in the Eternal City, encountered a fellow bishop who was devoted to the formation of seminarians in France. Both recognized that a diocesan seminary was essential to development of Catholic life in their respective dioceses — Marseille, in rebuilding after the ravages of the French Revolution, and Pittsburgh, which was a new diocese in a new country that was beginning to experience the initial phase of a tidal wave of immigration from Europe, much of which would prove to be Catholic.

It was therefore fully appropriate and expected for O’Connor to request of de Mazenod some Oblates for the seminary that the bishop of Pittsburgh planned for his new see. But de Mazenod, as Superior General of the Oblates, responded in the negative to the request — due to lack of personnel. Five years would pass before O’Connor would again request Oblates for his seminary.

Arriving in Ireland, O’Connor went to the national seminary of St. Patrick in Maynooth (County Kildare) to plead his case. Twenty students responded favorably to the bishop’s plea for seminarians to commit to accompany him to Pittsburgh to work in the new diocese. But limited finances dictated that only eight could join O’Connor, and he chose those who were furthest advanced in their studies. O’Connor had received funds from the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in France to pay transportation costs. The others were to follow him to Pittsburgh the next year.

This large group of seventeen travelers (including seven Sisters of Mercy) then departed on the Queen of the West from Liverpool on November 10 and arrived in New York harbor some four weeks and two days later. Traveling via Philadelphia, the party divided into two groups (due to stage coach capacity) and ultimately arrived in Pittsburgh on December 20, 1843. Father Wilson and the seminarians took up residence in the bishop’s home — a rented structure located on Smithfield Street at the intersection with Virgin Alley, in close proximity to St. Paul Cathedral, then located at Fifth Avenue and Grant Street in downtown Pittsburgh. This was the inauspicious beginning of St. Michael’s Seminary.
CHAPTER IV
ST. MICHAEL’S SEMINARY —
THE YEARS OF BISHOP MICHAEL O’CONNOR

A Seminary in the Bishop’s Rental Quarters
Reflecting the decades-long tradition of itinerant priests who visited the scattered Catholics in Western Pennsylvania, the developing congregations had not yet begun to build rectories for resident clergy adjacent to the few existing churches. Rather, priests either stayed briefly in the homes of local Catholics or, for longer stays, rented quarters near a church. Thus, three entries in the Pittsburgh Directory for 1844 reflected this reality for the new bishop of Pittsburgh, his priests, and his seminary:

SAINT PAUL’S CATHEDRAL
Rt. Rev. M. O’Connor, D.D., Bishop
Residence of Clergymen, Smithfield and Virgin Alley

CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Rev. R. A. Wilson, D.D., President
There are but eight students now in the Seminary. Arrangements are being made to erect a suitable building on the lot adjoining the Cathedral. At present the students reside in Smithfield near Virgin Alley.

CATHOLIC CLERGYMEN.
Right Rev. M. O’Connor, D.D., Bishop
Rev. J. F. Deane    Rev. R. A. Wilson, D.D.
Rev. T. Mullen    Rev. H. McCullagh
Dwelling house, Smithfield near Virgin Alley

Pennsylvania Catholic churches in the west (Diocese of Pittsburgh) and in the east (Diocese of Philadelphia) in 1850
Catholics were aware of the history behind the street name. Virgin Alley (“The Way of the Virgin”) had originated during the French presence at Fort Duquesne (1754-1758) when the French carried their dead through the fields by that path from the fort to a burial ground. By O’Connor’s time, it had become a key twenty-foot-wide artery that extended from Liberty Avenue across Wood Street to the burial ground on land given by the Penn family in 1787 to two churches in the block between Wood and Smithfield Streets.  

This seminary arrangement was of the domestic type, pursuant to the Tridentine concept. The seminarians were at slightly different stages near the end of their ecclesiastical preparations. Bishop O’Connor and Father Wilson would have been able to draw from their own ecclesiastical training in Rome to continue the seminarians’ education aboard ship during the month-long trans-Atlantic crossing mid-November to mid-December 1843. Their arrival at the bishop’s residence in late December merely returned the students’ education to land after the period at sea. We can thus date establishment of St. Michael’s Seminary from November 1843.

From the inception of the clustering of students intending ordination with Bishop O’Connor, the bishop identified the enterprise as a seminary; lay Catholics in Western Pennsylvania repeated the terminology immediately. For example, the first issue of the new diocesan newspaper — the Pittsburgh Catholic — on March 16, 1844, included an article on the history of Pittsburgh, in which it listed the three Protestant theological seminaries in the city, followed by a comment that “We could now add the Catholic Theological Seminary, though on an humble scale. We hope, however, that it will soon increase, and be provided with a suitable building.”

From the outset, the bishop, his clergy, and laity considered this arrangement to be a seminary. The name “St. Michael’s Seminary” was in common usage by 1844. There was no formal episcopal announcement per se nor an explanation as to the
selection of the name St. Michael for the seminary — but an observer would correctly conclude that the bishop had selected the name of his patron saint, St. Michael the Archangel, as the name of the new institution. The Pittsburgh diocesan historian, Monsignor Andrew A. Lambing — who later attended the seminary — identified the use of “St. Michael's Seminary” by early 1844, which accounts for subsequent writers dating the start of the seminary to that year, even though there was no separate building since the bishop’s personal residence served double duty to his ecclesiastical charges.

In subsequent years, most published references cite 1844 as the year of the seminary’s opening — with just a few instances where the date is given as 1846, when a separate building was designated exclusively for the housing and instruction of diocesan seminarians with a president and priest-professors. Yet St. Michael’s Seminary, as noted earlier, functionally began aboard the Queen of the West in November 1843 and continued on land with the arrival in December 1843 of the Irish seminarians (and an additional Irish seminarian who was accepted by the bishop upon his layover in Philadelphia) in Pittsburgh — with their priestly formation entrusted to Bishop O’Connor, Father Wilson, and other priests who would function as part-time professors while holding parochial assignments.

Monsignor Lambing, in assessing the accomplishments of Pittsburgh’s first bishop, said of O’Connor:

But by far the most important work undertaken by the bishop at this time and one which evinced his zeal, his judgment and his courage, was the founding of St. Michael’s diocesan seminary for the education of candidates for the sacred ministry. Its beginnings were indeed humble, but it was destined to be productive of incalculable benefit to the diocese and to religion.

The same alumnus of this seminary would later identify several obvious strengths emanating from a local diocesan seminary:

- Candidates are drawn locally, reflecting the belief that God gives among the people the vocations to sustain it; local vocations are not to be supplanted by those coming from another place.
- Youths labor more effectively in their own locality than can be expected of others — they are acclimated and people have confidence in their judgment.
- As the people defray the cost of ecclesiastical education of those destined to serve them, the laity are the first to benefit.
- Such a seminary positively impacts existing clergy:
  - It is a place of meeting for annual examinations, feast days, clergy retreats, and other events that foster a spirit of union in place of the previous isolated missionary nature of priestly life in Western Pennsylvania.
  - Clergy become acquainted with future local priests and neither group is a stranger to the other.
  - A priestly bond reduces transfers of priests to other dioceses, which plagued the early American Catholic Church.
  - Locally trained diocesan clergy more readily encourage additional vocations and parents are more receptive.
  - The diocese avoids the expense of sending candidates to distant educational institutions.

The Pittsburgh Catholic Newspaper
Bishop O’Connor established a newspaper, the Pittsburgh Catholic, in March 1844, just three months after his return to Pittsburgh following his episcopal ordination and just seven months after establishment of the see of Pittsburgh. In the coming decades, that newspaper would chronicle a number of the developments affecting St. Michael's Seminary. While “local” news articles were pointedly brief, these vignettes of seminary history provide information, albeit incomplete yet sufficiently helpful, to identify the bishops’ actions regarding the seminary, as well as the seminarians’ activities and interface with the parochial community. The Catholic provides a limited “public” view of an institution that challenged the commitment and initiative of three successive bishops over thirty-three years, none more so than Michael O’Connor. Debt and the lack of sufficient financial contributions are considered to have caused the seminary’s closure. That is not untrue, but the story is more complex — and thus more intriguing. Let us turn now to the story of St. Michael’s Seminary as best we can recreate it almost a century and a half after its closure — identifying the different approaches of three bishops and examining other issues that were part of a larger story.

A Real Beginning
Less than two months after arriving in Pittsburgh as bishop, O’Connor ordained the first of his seminarians. On February 4, 1844, he conferred the sacrament of Holy Orders on Thomas McCullagh — a first for Pittsburgh. On March 3, four others
CHAPTER IV

were ordained: John C. Brady, Thomas B. O’Flaherty, Michael J. Mitchell, and Robert Kleineidam. The first three were from Ireland, while Kleineidam was from the Prussian province of Silesia. Six months later, on September 1, the bishop ordained Patrick Duffy, Peter Brown, and Tobias Mullen. These eight were the first alumni of St. Michael’s Seminary. One of the early immigrant Irish seminarians, Cornelius McGrath, who had entered St. Michael’s Seminary, transferred in March 1844 to St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia, where he died of “consumption” [tuberculosis] on December 14, 1844.

Financing the Seminary — The Cathedral Trustees and the Congregation
The arrival of almost a dozen seminarians presented immediate financial issues for Bishop O’Connor. The students had to be housed, fed, and educated — in some cases for years, until they could be ordained. As immigrants, the seminarians had no personal source of support and had to rely on the bishop and the diocese. This was a challenge to a newly formed diocese. O’Connor needed funds for ordinary expenses — faculty, food, books, clothing, and lodging. Ultimately, a system of collections would be needed to meet ordinary expenses and to provide for expansion of the seminary. But that solution would only be adopted a decade later, after the bishop exhausted several alternative methods of financing a seminary adequate to the needs of the diocese.

In April 1844, Bishop O’Connor — trying to accommodate Father Wilson, the original seminarians and several new local recruits in the cramped quarters of his own residence — turned to his own congregation of St. Paul Cathedral, of which he had been pastor since 1841, for financial support. He proposed to the cathedral’s board of trustees that the parishioners fund his purchase for $10,000 of over 100 acres of farmland in the borough of Birmingham — a community opposite downtown Pittsburgh, on the south bank of the Monongahela River. The plan entailed division of the acreage into lots that would be sold at a profit. The money raised would fund construction of the seminary. This was the first, but not the last, example of Bishop O’Connor’s enterprising approach to the seminary issue — he would become a real estate speculator in developing, at a profit, the virgin lands of Western Pennsylvania.

But, just four months after his return to Pittsburgh as bishop, the bishop was to encounter cathedral trustees and members of the congregation with a different view. The congregation’s pew-renting members were entitled to vote on financial expenditures. The cathedral’s trustees, who exercised considerable influence within the congregation, balked. Discussions and meetings dragged on for two months. Now that Pittsburgh had a bishop, they became enamored of the idea of creating a cathedral complex of buildings on the European model with which they were familiar. The membership rejected the bishop’s request for approval of his proposal. They could not envision a seminary at a distance from the cathedral. Even the idea of an episcopal residence with space for seminarians was deemed inappropriate; a bishop warranted his own residence. They preferred to have the seminary next to the cathedral. Thus, a joint building project was decided upon: a new episcopal residence and a seminary — two separate buildings — would be built next to the cathedral. Subscriptions would be sought to finance the undertaking. The congregation’s view was parochial, while O’Connor’s was visionary.

O’Connor realistically concluded that he could not come to an agreement with the cathedral congregation, absent becoming completely financially dependent on them. The cathedral parish contained what little wealth existed in the local Catholic community, and functioned somewhat independently of its pastor, the bishop. This was a troubled period in early American Catholic history when conflict developed between bishops and parish trustees.

Trustees were the leaders of congregations of laity who had built or financed the construction of local churches. Canonically erected parishes in this missionary country had not yet developed; rather, Catholics grouped themselves into congregations and built their own modest structures, typically served by occasional visiting priests. As the Church in the United States developed and dioceses were created, the new bishops — who had been educated in Europe — introduced a hierarchical structure into a country where no ecclesiastical structure existed. Issues of authority, power, title, and the administration of ecclesiastical property surfaced. These issues typically arose when a bishop would require that the trustees deed property to him and his successors as a condition to dedicating a newly constructed church or assigning a priest. Control of finances to support the church also presented ongoing disputes. At times, independent-minded pastors added to the conflict. Collectively, this complex of issues was referred to as “trusteeism.”

O’Connor, as a former priest of the Philadelphia diocese, was acutely aware of the conflict that issue had brought to his then-ordinary, Bishop Henry Conwell (1819-1842). Unwilling to push the issue of parish subsidization of St. Michael’s Seminary for fear of igniting a conflict with cathedral trustees and parishioners, O’Connor realistically worked around that potential problem.

The diocesan newspaper chronicled, in two articles, the cathedral parish decision regarding both construction of a seminary building and its financing at a June 14, 1844 meeting convened for that purpose. The first article succinctly noted:
We call attention to the resolutions in another column, expressive of the feelings and wishes of the Catholics of the city regarding a dwelling house for the clergy, and a building for a Theological Seminary, on the lot attached to St. Paul's Church. We are glad to learn that the project is taken up with spirit. About $2000 have been already subscribed at the two meetings that were held for the purpose.18

But the rest of the money was not forthcoming.

That same newspaper issue provided a report on the meeting of the congregation of St. Paul Cathedral, held on Friday evening, June 14, 1844 in the school room, at which the following Preamble and Resolutions were unanimously adopted:

Whereas, The late formation of the Diocess [sic] of Pittsburgh, and appointment of the Right Rev. Dr. O'Connor to preside over it, has secured to us the gratifying advantages arising from the permanent residence of a Bishop amongst us, and whereas respect for our revered Prelate, as well as the interests of the Congregation imperatively calls upon us to provide a suitable residence for our Bishop and his clergy contiguous to his Cathedral, and whereas the Spiritual wants of the new diocess [sic] will also require a Theological Seminary for the instruction of ecclesiastical students, we the Catholics of Pittsburgh here assembled deem the present a fitting opportunity for taking such measures as prudence will dictate, for the prompt erection of appropriate buildings for the above purposes and impressed with the conviction that the ample space on the Cathedral lot as well as the peculiar conveniences of the situation affords valuable facilities for the successful completion of such an undertaking. We therefore respectfully and earnestly invite our fellow Catholics through the Diocess [sic] to co-operate with us in our efforts to effect an object fraught with such benefits to themselves, and importance to religion, therefore, be it

Resolved, That we deem it expedient to provide a suitable and permanent residence for our Bishop and the Clergy of St. Paul's Cathedral, believing as we do the present system of renting houses for them, to be precarious, inconvenient, and must ultimately be attended with loss to the Congregation.

Resolved, That as an Ecclesiastical Seminary will be absolutely necessary, the residence of our Bishop amongst us, points out Pittsburgh as the proper location, and that measures be immediately taken for erecting such in conjunction with a house for the Bishop, on part of the lot of St. Paul's Cathedral.

Resolved, That this meeting adjourn over until Sunday evening after Vespers. In pursuance of this resolution, an adjourned meeting was held in the School Room on Sunday afternoon whereupon it was unanimously.

Resolved, That an immediate subscription be opened under the direction of the officers of the meeting, and also that the Rev. Clergymen of the Diocess [sic], be each a Committee in their respective parishes, for the purpose of collecting subscriptions in aid of the funds required to defray the expenses of those buildings, and that the Rt. Rev. Dr. O'Connor be requested to appoint such of his clergy as he may think proper for the like purpose, together with two of the Laity in each Ward of the City and district to assist them.

Resolved, That the Bishop be requested to appoint a Building Committee for the purpose of taking such immediate steps as he may deem expedient for the erection of the proposed structures.19

In the space of just three months (April-June 1844), Bishop O’Connor would display a multi-faceted approach to obtain the necessary funds for the seminary — true evidence of the priority that the seminary program had in his plans for the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

Role of the European Missionary Aid Societies

While continuing to pursue discussions with cathedral trustees and members of the congregation, the bishop sent a May 1844 appeal to the Paris Council of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith for financial support of a two-year budget (1844-1845) with over two-thirds of the monies allocated for (1) transportation of the remaining ten Irish seminarians to Pittsburgh — 9,000 francs, (2) seminary furnishings — 4,000 francs, (3) maintenance of existing and new seminarians that now totaled twelve — 7,500 francs. The Society partially met his request, providing him with 26,000 francs in 1844.20 For 1845, he requested 40,000 francs, of which more than 80% was allocated for (1) maintenance of seminarians — 7,500 francs and (2) erection of a seminary building — 25,000 francs.21 Elaborating on the final item, O’Connor stated:

he could not postpone construction beyond a year and, if necessary, he was willing to hold back on all else until the structure was completed. He admitted that it was an expensive undertaking; but, he also expressed the view that it would cost less to have a diocesan seminary, noting that this institution was the only one upon which he could rely as a source of clergy for the future needs of the diocese.22
The bishop then convened the first diocesan synod at St. Paul Cathedral over three days in June 1844 (Sunday 16th, Tuesday 18th, and Thursday 20th). Eighteen of his twenty diocesan priests attended, and the bishop openly discussed his seminary plans with them at that gathering.

Bishop O’Connor had initially hoped to rely upon the generosity of the three European aid societies. The French-based Society for the Propagation of the Faith was, as noted above, the first mission society to provide financial support to O’Connor. It would prove to be the one society that continued to provide funds each year and, of even greater importance to O’Connor, make those contributions exclusively to the bishop, rather than to individual priests, parishes, or institutions within his diocese. Support from the Society for the Propagation of the Faith continued in 1845 with a contribution of 30,000 francs, but the Society halved that amount in the following year (1846) when it appropriated only 15,872 francs for O’Connor. The Society’s contributions continued to decline: 8,800 francs in 1847, and 7,920 francs in 1848. This can be attributed to the group’s initial perception that O’Connor’s seminary proposal was extravagant. It was a perception from which the bishop never fully recovered.

The bishop’s requests reflected projects other than the seminary, such as the construction of churches — and reports to the Society had to reflect application of monies to those projects as applied for and as approved. Thus, in a fairly short time, specific European aid for the seminary ended. The Society’s Annals, published annually, recorded the yearly appropriations to Bishop O’Connor over his seventeen-year administration of the see of Pittsburgh:

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<th>Volume No.</th>
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<th>City of Publication</th>
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The value of the Society’s total contribution to Bishop O’Connor would approximate $1,370,000 today. Functionally, the amount represented, in the mid-nineteenth century, less than one dollar per person per year in the Diocese of Pittsburgh — woefully insufficient to meet the growing needs of the truly missionary church in Western Pennsylvania.

The alms received from the other two European mission aid groups were lesser amounts, reflecting the fact that both the Bavarian Ludwig Missionsverein and the Austrian Leopoldinen Stiftung were focused on helping German immigrant communities in the United States, not the broader diocesan needs which reflected an ethnically mixed population that was predominantly Irish and English, with Germans in the minority.

The appropriations of the Ludwig Missionsverein to Bishop O’Connor came early in his episcopacy — 2,799.60 gulden (Bavarian coin) in 1845-1846, before the establishment of Boniface Wimmer’s Benedictines. But O’Connor received no further assistance inasmuch as he was perceived as not friendly to Germans. Rather, that society’s later assistance of 8,082 gulden went directly to German parishes within the Pittsburgh diocese, and Boniface Wimmer’s monastery at St. Vincent’s in Westmoreland County received a stunning 144,113.36 gulden between 1846-1868.25

Bishop O’Connor, in the very early years of his administration, relied upon the three previously mentioned mission aid societies in Europe for grants for the seminary. The aid societies’ concerns with the size of the requests and the bishop’s actual application of the funds (some of which was occasioned by complaints of disparate treatment of Germans in his diocese), quickly led to the end of much of this source of financial aid especially as to his desired seminary.

It soon became apparent that the mission aid groups would not provide all of the funds requested, would not approve the request for a large grant to build a seminary deemed extravagantly impractical, indicated that future aid would be reduced, and proceeded to reduce and ultimately end aid to Pittsburgh. The bishop correctly concluded that Europeans would not satisfy his financial needs and that a combination of foreign and local funds would be necessary.

O’Connor resolved upon a tripartite approach of (1) continued requests to European aid societies, (2) personal solicitations during his and subordinates’ periodic trips to Europe, and (3) encouragement of small contributions from any parish, individual, or society disposed to contribute on an ad hoc basis.

Alternative Fundraising

O’Connor then resorted to an alternative source of funds: periodic trips — some personally and some by trusted diocesan priests — to recruit priests (with an eye to possible seminary faculty members) and solicit funds from bishops, royalty, and Propaganda Fide in Rome. He and his priest-designees visited Ireland, England, France, the German States, and Rome. Results from this alternate form of solicitation — as to priests, faculty, money, and goods — were uneven. But the bishop was persistent and creative.

The third element in his fundraising approach was undertaken primarily through his small, but growing, number of diocesan priests. The bishop made the case for financial support to the one group who clearly understood the need and would benefit directly — Pittsburgh diocesan priests. The bishop initiated this discussion at the first diocesan synod in June 1844, immediately after the cathedral congregation’s rejection of his direct request to the laity. Thereafter, the bishop brought the subject of the seminary’s financial needs to the attention of the clergy at periodic clergy meetings and the annual weeklong clergy retreats. The bishop also undertook regular visitations of all parishes in the diocese, which afforded additional opportunities to talk with both priests and laity in areas beyond the city of Pittsburgh. Moreover, the rotational assignment of parish priests to part-time faculty positions at the seminary personally invested those priests in the development of future priests and facilitated their communicating to others the needs of the seminary — food, fuel, clothing, books, furniture, and myriad items necessary to the proper functioning of an educational institution with a special mission. Using these forums, the bishop was able to enlist broader support among priests, laity, the parishes, and other Catholic organizations.

As Bishop O’Connor controlled the content of the diocesan newspaper, the Catholic began carrying periodic reports of financial contributions from individuals and parishes for the seminary. Parish contributions evidenced the initiative of local pastors who would announce from the pulpit that a seminary collection was to be taken up. Individual priests themselves took the lead. Within the first year, the newspaper published the first notice of the bishop’s receipt of monies toward the new seminary in August 1844:26

![](Acknowledged Ten Dollars for the Theological Seminary, Per Rev. Mr. Gallagher.)
Published acknowledgments of contributed funds were sporadic in the first few years of O’Connor’s administration, but later became more frequent. The amounts were typically quite small and clearly insufficient, sometimes just a quarter or half-dollar.

Competing financial demands upon the small Catholic population in Pittsburgh complicated seminary collection efforts. In October 1844, the congregation of St. Paul Cathedral was faced with the necessity of constructing walls to support the cathedral due to the city’s ongoing re-grading of Fifth Avenue and Grant Streets, which left the cathedral precariously sitting well above the reduced street level. The Catholic observed that:

> when measures for the erection of the house for the Bishop and the clergy with the Seminary were already taken, it was not thought that the congregation could wish all to be suspended on account of this call for the protection wall which will not cost more than about $800 or $1,000 at most.27

This illustrates the intervention of uncontrollable events that served to redirect the contributions of the small number of Catholics in Pittsburgh, many living at the margins of society. In this case, critical work at the cathedral served to delay construction of the bishop’s residence that was to serve as the new residence for the seminarians.

There is no documented evidence that Bishop O’Connor, during his first decade as ordinary (1843-1853), undertook a comprehensive fundraising scheme for St. Michael’s Seminary, such as an annual collection. He would not pursue that approach until 1854, relying in the intervening years on the methods above identified.28 That is surprising in light of an initiative he had undertaken while president of St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia — adapting the approach of the European mission societies, each pastor was named as a general manager for the annual seminary collection and became responsible to select parishioners as local managers. The latter group would then designate solicitors who had the duty to contact ten persons and collect from them one dollar per year in support of the seminary. A report was then made to the subscribers, solicitors, and managers. This plan was popular and productive in Philadelphia.29

At times, the various sources of funds provided just enough financial comfort to keep the seminary afloat. But as we shall see, at other times, facing the financial abyss, O’Connor would be forced to twice suspend his seminary and disperse his seminarians to other locations for the continuation of their ecclesiastical education. This stemmed from the bishop’s need to (1) construct or lease a building to house the seminary, (2) equip the structure with all the necessary and specialized equipment including a sufficiently large ecclesiastical library, (3) pay the travel costs of European priest-faculty and seminarians to come to Pittsburgh, (4) pay faculty, especially those without a parochial assignment, (5) cover tuition costs of students who could not pay for their own ecclesiastical education, and (6) retire principal and interest on loans taken out to buy property and buildings, and maintain the series of structures that would over time serve as St. Michael’s Seminary.

O’Connor never successfully resolved this fundamental issue of finance despite the sequential initiatives he took to obtain money in order to keep the seminary open. As we shall see, the bishop pursued a variety of alternatives including, finally in 1854, institution of an annual diocesan Sunday collection for the seminary. His two successors as bishop of Pittsburgh would also face the issue of the cost to maintain St. Michael’s Seminary — and decisions made by them ultimately led to the demise of St. Michael’s. Accordingly, this pervasive issue will be examined below in the history of the seminary during the administration of each bishop.

Resignation of Father Wilson

By June 1844, Father Wilson asked to be relieved of his assignment as supervisor of the seminarians.30 During this early period, it had become apparent to Bishop O’Connor that Father Wilson left much to be desired in his dual role as seminary rector and principal professor. O’Connor noted in a June 1844 letter that Wilson “was entirely too soft to take charge of young men, some of whom were older than himself. We managed to get on the best way we could for some time, but finally he gave up. He became very anxious to be entirely to himself and to get rid of all charge of students.”31

Wilson, for his part, may have concluded that his instruction was inadequate,
owing to the continued delay in receipt of his many books that had been shipped from Rome to Pittsburgh some four to five months earlier.32

**Turning to the Vincentians for Help**

The departure of Father Wilson prompted O’Connor to ask the Vincentians, whose principal task was the formation of candidates for the priesthood,33 to assume charge of the fledgling seminary in Pittsburgh. O’Connor wrote to his friend, Father Paul Cullen in Rome, as to his plan: “I am forced to try and get Lazarists (Vincentians) for the Seminary.”34

Father John Timon, the American Provincial of this congregation who had met O’Connor while preaching a mission in Pittsburgh in 1842, declined the bishop's initial proposal of a minor seminary to be located in the countryside beyond the city of Pittsburgh, but did accept the bishop's second proposal of a theological seminary in the city of Pittsburgh. Timon promised a staff.35 The attraction to the Vincentians was due both to their seminary apostolate and the fact that they did not necessarily require ownership of the property but were content merely to direct the seminary. But as no American Vincentian was available, the Vincentian house in Ireland agreed to release a member there for service in Pittsburgh. O’Connor then wrote to the Paris Council of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith for funds to cover the cost of travel of the Irish priest and the remaining Irish seminarians who had committed to service in the Diocese of Pittsburgh.36 The Vincentian Superior General, however, intervened to reverse Timon’s decision. O’Connor received word in September 1844 that the Vincentians would not staff the seminary.37

**Potential Relocation of the Seminary to Westmoreland County**

While discussions were underway with the Vincentians, O’Connor considered another option for revival of his seminary: use land available in Westmoreland County as a permanent home for the seminary. Dutch-born Father Theodore Brouwers, O.F.M. (1738-1790) had immigrated to Philadelphia, heard of the need for a Catholic priest in Western Pennsylvania, traveled over the Allegheny Mountains, and on April 16, 1790 bought 315 acres of land known as “Sportsman’s Hall.” Brouwers died six months later. His will bequeathed his properties to the Catholic priest who would succeed him, and his successors forever. Under succeeding diocesan priests, a church was built on the property and dedicated by Bishop Francis Kenrick on July 19, 1835 — and named “St. Vincent’s” after the saint of that day.38 During a July 1842 visitation of Western Pennsylvania, Bishop Kenrick and Father Michael O’Connor, his then-vicar general for the western half of the Diocese of Philadelphia, devised a plan to use the estate and its
buildings for a seminary to serve the Diocese of Philadelphia that then included the entire state of Pennsylvania. Nothing came of that idea at that time.

O’Connor, now bishop of Western Pennsylvania, resurrected the idea of using the site for that purpose. The attraction of sizeable property was strong. He reckoned that the brick schoolhouse (located about 150 feet southwest of St. Vincent Church) could serve as the minor seminary. While preferring a seminary in his see city, the bishop saw the potential and wrote:

We are about to start a college also at Youngstown [St. Vincent’s]. After tomorrow I am to be there and I think I will then make arrangements for a beginning be it ever so small. It will be as a kind of preparatory seminary.

The bishop’s initial hope, developed in April 1844, was that the Vincentians would locate there. The Vincentian Superior General’s later decision not to send any Vincentian priest to Pittsburgh dispatched that hope.

In succeeding months, the seminary project at St. Vincent progressed. Father Michael Gallagher became pastor of St. Vincent’s in late 1844 and quickly proposed use of the land for farming that would financially support students in the planned minor seminary. He also proposed that a community of brothers be established there to work the land, reminiscent of the custom of some religious orders in Europe. Gallagher then gathered six young Germans and Irishmen who had aspirations to the religious life and attempted to establish a diocesan brotherhood. The community did not prosper, and the six novices soon left.

The Seminary as Joint Venture with Cincinnati
As O’Connor recognized that he could not supply the number of priests required to operate a seminary, he pursued the idea of undertaking a minor seminary with the cooperation of his close friend, Irish-born (and also a native of County Cork) Bishop John B. Purcell of Cincinnati. After two months of back and forth, the two prelates came to agreement to establish the seminary as a joint venture. Purcell agreed in June 1844 to release two priests for service at the proposed seminary.

O’Connor envisioned a minor seminary at the site, with a theological seminary to be housed in the still-to-be constructed building in downtown Pittsburgh. Purcell sent Father Joseph J. O’Mealy, a Cincinnati diocesan priest, to help organize the school and to work with Father Gallagher at St. Vincent’s. The choice of O’Mealy was promising. He, like O’Connor and Purcell, was a native of Ireland; like O’Connor, he had studied at the Propaganda in Rome and was the author of two books. Shortly after his ordination, he had been named rector in 1839 of St. Francis Xavier Seminary in Cincinnati. Resigning that position in 1842, he then served as a pastor in Portsmouth (Ohio) before returning to the Cincinnati cathedral. From there, he was sent to Pittsburgh. But the young priest’s efforts to reopen St. Michael’s Seminary came to naught. Aware of the two bishops’ inability to raise sufficient funds to open the seminary, O’Mealy abandoned his efforts after a year. By the end of 1845, O’Connor abandoned plans for a diocesan seminary at the St. Vincent site. O’Mealy remained in Pittsburgh until 1849, serving as pastor of St. Paul Cathedral and editor of the Pittsburgh Catholic.

Suspension of the Seminary and Dispersal of the Seminarians
The bishop faced an ongoing struggle to raise funds (both domestic and European) for construction of a separate seminary building, and he had to confront several realities: the Vincentians would not staff a seminary in Pittsburgh, a joint venture with the bishop of Cincinnati was infeasible, the Westmoreland County site lacked a nucleus of workers to render the site economically self-sustaining, and there was no available faculty since the small number of priests within the diocese was desperately needed for basic sacramental services for the growing Catholic population in Western Pennsylvania. O’Connor made the prudent judgment in 1845 to send his students to seminaries in other dioceses.

He turned westward to his friend Father Martin Spalding at the seminary in Louisville (Kentucky). Four Pittsburgh seminarians were then sent down the Ohio River to Cincinnati on their way to Louisville. In the interim, Spalding withdrew his offer of assistance, and the four seminarians — Michael Creedon, William Lambert, John Hoy, and Joseph A. Gallagher — remained in Cincinnati under the care of Bishop Purcell. There they attended St. Francis Xavier Seminary, adjacent to the cathedral in Cincinnati.

Three other seminarians — Terence S. Reynolds, Richard Gilmour (future bishop of Cleveland), and Edward McSweeny — remained in Pittsburgh and only in May 1845 were they sent to Loretto in Cambria County to be tutored by the pastor there, Father Hugh P. Gallagher. This marked the first of two suspensions of the formal seminary program. But this was only a partial suspension inasmuch as education of some seminarians continued within the Diocese of Pittsburgh — three were instructed by Father Hugh Gallagher and several others remained with Bishop O’Connor at his residence in downtown Pittsburgh.
Plans to Reopen the Seminary

Full reopening of the seminary was never far from the bishop’s mind. Both he and his brother, seminarian James O’Connor, traveled separately to Europe in the fall of 1845 to recruit faculty and obtain funds. The bishop, then in England, wrote to his younger brother in Rome:

You must do everything in your power to keep [Father George Henry] Backhaus [Prussian graduate of Propaganda, who was both scholar and missionary] for us. It will be impossible for me to get up the Seminary without calculating on him. I did not speak to others as I might have done. Speak to himself [Father Backhaus], to the Cardinal [Giacomo Fransoni, Prefect of the Congregation de Propaganda Fide], to [Giambattista] Palma [a notary of Propaganda Fide], to everyone about it.

Try to get them at the Propaganda to order something for us this winter from Munich [the Ludwig-Missionsverein]. The expenses of nuns, brothers, students &c. exceed by about $1,500 what I got at Vienna &c. There is no fair play for us at [the Propagation of the Faith Council in] Lyons.51

O’Connor intended to restart the seminary in 1845 upon completion of the building next to the cathedral as commissioned by the congregation of St. Paul’s. However, contributions to that project lagged, rendering completion contingent upon financial grants from Europe in the form of funding from the Paris mission Society for the Pittsburgh building program. Unfortunately, the Society considered his two-year budget request of May 1844 to be excessive and funds for the seminary were not forthcoming. O’Connor then wrote to explain where the initial funds had been spent, why additional monies were needed, and his continued commitment to a diocesan seminary:52

[The seminary building is contracted for. What I am yet to receive from Paris will be but a small portion of what necessarily must be paid for that object. This now is my most pressing want. I did not think that I could possibly defer the erection of a seminary. I may, by exertions, obtain a supply of priests from Europe, but it is under every point of view far more desirable that the wants of the diocese in that respect be supplied by persons educated in this country…. All these and other considerations made me decide on commencing a seminary last year; the building has been suspended during the winter but will now be resumed and be ready for the students before another year. I have contracted for it at a very low rate. When completed it will not cost much over 25,000 to 30,000 francs…. The furniture of this building and other expenses necessary for its commencement will have to be encountered before the end of this year. It will be my heaviest and at the same time the most important item of expense.53

Less than two months after O’Connor wrote this letter, Pittsburgh was to suffer a disaster. On the morning of April 10, 1845, a spark from an unattended fire to heat wash water — a quarter century before Mrs. O’Leary’s cow of Chicago fire fame — ignited a nearby shed on Ferry Street (Stanwix Street, today). The blaze quickly spread among the tightly packed wooden and brick structures that comprised the mixed residential, commercial, and retail heart of the city where its largely immigrant population lived and worked. Strong winds, warm temperatures, and the presence of cotton fibers and industrial dust in the air primed the fire. By the following morning, one-third of the city had burned to the ground. The fire destroyed 60 acres and 1,200 buildings and displaced 2,000 families (12,000 individuals) from their homes. Estimates of the resultant damages ranged up to $25 million (approximately $233 million today).54 Many were bankrupted. The Great Fire resulted in devastating economic losses to the many Catholics who lived and worked there and now lacked both homes and jobs.
This disaster placed the seminary project in extreme financial jeopardy. The bishop then wrote again to Paris, explaining that the fire had destroyed any hope of local financial contributions to both construction projects — the residence for the bishop and clergy, and the seminary building. He concluded with an appeal to the Society’s generosity and speedy assistance.\(^{55}\)

Compounding the lack of European financial support was the conclusion arrived at by Propaganda Fide in Rome that the proliferation of small diocesan seminaries was unwarranted. Thus, recruitment of European priest-professors and grants from the mission-support societies proved to be increasingly elusive — despite O’Connor’s personal trips to Europe to arouse the necessary support.

In July 1845, construction of the new episcopal residence adjacent to St. Paul Cathedral — delayed by financial issues and the impact of the Great Fire — was resumed. Completion was set for spring 1846, with the bishop planning to move the seminarians into this new structure. But the bishop soon changed his mind.

**Bishop O’Connor as Real Estate Developer: The Rapp Property as Seminary Site**

St. Clair Township was one of the original governmental units established with the creation of Allegheny County in 1788. The township, named for Revolutionary War General Arthur St. Clair, included most of the county south of the Monongahela River. That enormous area was subsequently divided to form Lower St. Clair Township (the northern part with its lower elevation adjacent to the river) that extended from Chartiers Creek in the west to Streets Run in the east. The township would be subdivided many times in later years. One of the municipalities created from Lower St. Clair was Birmingham, which incorporated as a borough in 1828, comprising a section of the south side flats between today’s South 6th Street and South 18th Street. Several municipalities on the south side of the Monongahela River would later be annexed to the city of Pittsburgh on January 1, 1873, becoming part of the South Side.\(^{56}\) But three decades before the annexation, Bishop O’Connor had noted the availability of property suitable for a seminary, when in 1844 he tried unsuccessfully to convince cathedral laity to purchase 100 acres of farmland. Just one year later, in 1845, the bishop revisited his earlier plan and decided to make such a purchase there on his own.\(^{57}\)

Bishop O’Connor — still desirous of a separate seminary building in a tranquil setting removed from the hustle and bustle of downtown Pittsburgh — decided to buy a 37-acre farm from George Rapp, a leader of the Economites. They were members of a Christian theosophy and pietist society founded in Iptingen (Germany) in 1785 by Johann Georg Rapp, also known as George Rapp (1757-1847). Due to religious persecution by the Lutheran Church and the government of Württemberg, the group immigrated to the United States, settling in Western Pennsylvania. On February 15, 1805, members formally organized as the Harmony Society. Their towns were typically named “Economy” after the spiritual notion of the Divine Economy and members were referred to as Economites. By 1825, the celibate group settled in Economy in Beaver County, Pennsylvania, where its decline in numbers later led to formal dissolution in 1906.\(^{58}\)

Rapp was a real estate speculator with a sharp eye for undeveloped land and interested in a quick “flip” of such land to the next buyer who could divide a large tract of land into individual lots suitable for sale. Rapp realized the largest profit by purchasing properties, offered for public sale at auction by the county sheriff as a result of various court proceedings, at bargain prices. Backed by the Economites’ funds, Rapp ventured into Allegheny County where the “boom and bust” cycle guaranteed ample property for public auction, and the growing population produced both real estate developers anxious to “make a buck” in the resale process and buyers and renters (frequently immigrants) desperate for housing and small commercial space.

Buoyed by earlier auction purchases, Rapp proceeded in the summer of 1845 to purchase a farm of “about 37 acres” in what was described as “St. Clair Township” (often popularly referred to as Birmingham, disregarding municipal boundaries) at a sheriff’s sale of the property belonging to John D. Davis held on July 28, 1845.\(^{59}\) The sheriff of Allegheny County conveyed the farm to Rapp by a deed executed on August 1, 1845.\(^{60}\) The purchase price was $5,000. The property stretched from the southern edge of “the Flats” up the ascending hill (“the Slopes”) [where St. Michael’s Church complex would later be built] and included the top of the hill [where the St. Paul Monastery complex would later be constructed], and farther south [to
include the future St. Michael’s Cemetery on S. 18th Street. The land in 1845 lay across the Monongahela River from the rapidly developing urban center of Pittsburgh. The hilly topography was not conducive to farming, clearly indicating that Rapp’s purchase was an investment opportunity designed for a profitable resale.

Enter Bishop O’Connor. Rapp’s original asking price for the property was $16,000 but the bishop negotiated that amount down to $9,500. Rapp almost doubled his purchase price. The bishop’s purchase was concluded with execution of a deed on January 16, 1846. The property’s western boundary was Birmingham and Brownsville Plank Road; the eastern boundary was the future South 18th Street; the northern boundary was the beginning of the Slopes; the southern boundary included what would later become St. Michael’s Cemetery.

Pittsburgh diocesan historian Monsignor Andrew Lambing noted in *A History of the Catholic Church in the Dioceses of Pittsburg and Allegheny* that Bishop O’Connor sold “building lots” parcel by parcel. That would suggest that the entire tract was surveyed, a plat map created, and the plan publicly recorded. Indeed, recording of such a land plan might have been expected since recording of land subdivision plans in the Recorder’s Office of Allegheny County had commenced on October 27, 1809. The *Pittsburgh Catholic* noted in 1848, in a brief mention of Bishop O’Connor’s blessing of St. Michael’s new church, that:

> It is on Pius Street near Centre, in the newly laid out town of St. Michael’s, which adjoins the borough of Birmingham. The street on which it is built has received its name from Pius IX.

This statement suggests that Bishop O’Connor sought to model development of the Rapp property after Father Gallitzin’s successful creation of a Catholic settlement at Loretto in Cambria County. But the reference to “town of St. Michael’s” must be taken in an informal colloquial sense rather than as evidence of the creation of a land plan that was formally recorded in the Recorder’s Office of Allegheny County, to which reference would be made in deeds thereafter executed in connection with the sale and transfer of the property.
with the sale of lots located within that plan.

Some early nineteenth century land development plans were informally drafted, producing charts or maps. Other plans were professionally prepared by surveyors. Some of those land plans were not recorded, and some of those that were recorded are no longer legible or extant. A thorough examination of recorded lot plans in the Department of Real Estate of Allegheny County (successor to the aforementioned Recorder’s Office) — covering the period of time from O’Connor’s purchase of the Rapp property (January 1846) until the prelate’s resignation of the see of Pittsburgh — found no such plan for O’Connor’s property. Plan Book Indexes fail to reference any plans in the name of Bishop O’Connor or the town of St. Michael’s or any name suggesting a connection to the bishop or the Roman Catholic Church. This has led to the present author’s conclusion that Bishop O’Connor did not publicly record a plan of lots for the former Rapp property.

We may deduce that the thirty-seven acres was surveyed, and a plan of streets laid out for the entire tract, but the initial assignment of lot numbers was limited to the area closest to the Monongahela River that was most likely to be quickly developed as the population moved farther south. The next step of recording such a plan was apparently not taken. The following considerations are offered to explain why a surveyed plan of lots — likely lacking a detailed lot arrangement for most of the thirty-seven acres — was not filed of record.

A number of factors precluded a grid street pattern with streets intersecting at right angles to each other, with accompanying uniform-sized lots, for development of O’Connor’s property. A portion of the property had been undermined in the search for coal thus rendering construction atop somewhat risky; a considerable portion was unsuitable for farming; the steep terrain of the slopes and the lack of streets were impediments to quick growth. O’Connor wisely donated land on which to construct St. Michael’s Church in hopes that a Catholic population would be attracted and develop a community. The church was located on Pius Street, a small plateau halfway up the Slopes. This was what the Pittsburgh Catholic would later term the “town of St. Michael’s.” This Pius Street area was the initial section to which lot numbers were assigned to the typical twenty-foot-wide lots (with varying depths). O’Connor’s initial land sales were limited to this area; later property sales on other streets generally lack lot number references, suggesting that both the bishop and his surveyor quickly concluded that the opening of his “paper” streets and the assignment of lot numbers throughout the entire tract would be an incremental process over many years. The terrain determined the layout of streets and effectively thwarted uniformity in lot sizes. The bishop’s donation in 1852 of land in his tract to the new Passionist Fathers for establishment of a monastery atop the hill reflected the reality of the times. The appearance of this religious order in Pittsburgh was unforeseen at the time of the bishop’s purchase of the Rapp property, and his ability to donate two acres to the Passionists evidenced the challenge of attracting anyone, let alone Catholic immigrants, to land that was not readily conducive to residential or commercial use. While the St. Michael’s church development on Pius Street would prove successful, the Passionist Monastery site was a different story — it was at that time truly a Catholic outpost in the wilderness.

A recorded plan with complete subdivision of the entire tract of land into individual lots would have restricted the bishop from later deciding to donate irregular-sized sections of land to religious orders that he sought to entice to Pittsburgh — such as the Passionists, the Presentation Brothers, and the Oblates of Mary Immaculate to name but a few — whose land needs varied from order to order. The absence of legal constraints gave O’Connor maximum flexibility. He could locate a new parish or an institution, or place an incoming religious order on the best sites available, while retaining the ability to sell adjacent properties to generate money to meet pressing diocesan needs and the many demands made of him personally to assist the poverty-stricken immigrants arriving daily in his see city of Pittsburgh. Ideally, Catholic immigrants would be attracted to want to live in proximity to new Catholic churches and institutions, thus providing a stable local population that could financially support these initiatives. From a health perspective, such development on the south side of the Monongahela River would avoid further congestion in the overcrowded slums that then characterized “downtown” Pittsburgh on the northern side of the Monongahela River.

Could any other reasons explain why O’Connor would not have recorded a lot plan for the former Rapp property? It is possible that as head of a fledgling Catholic community, numerically a minority in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, he did not wish to use his name or a Catholic name due to Protestant antipathy against Catholics, which had been exacerbated by the influx of Catholic immigrants. Philadelphia had witnessed nativist riots against Catholics in 1844. From 1845 onwards, Joe Barker engaged in anti-Catholic street polemics in downtown Pittsburgh. Barker would later be elected mayor and would promptly arrest Bishop O’Connor in a dispute over Mercy Hospital. The bishop’s purchase of the Rapp property occurred in the midst of this nativist agitation. Perhaps O’Connor concluded that the absence of a recorded land plan identified with
the Roman Catholic Church would avoid adding to the anti-Catholicism that was increasingly exhibited in Pittsburgh, much of it directed personally against him.

The foregoing considerations are presented to explain in part the absence of a comprehensive recorded land plan for O'Connor's property. Property descriptions in deeds O'Connor later executed to consummate sale of lots to purchasers contained a lot number only for Pius Street properties, but even those also included distance measurements in reference to the property boundaries of recorded plans or adjacent owners or natural monuments (trees, etc.) without reference to an “O'Connor Plan of Lots.” Deeds for lots that O'Connor sold in other portions of his 37-acre tract typically lacked lot number references and relied on a combination of measurements based on distances to other properties, plans, or natural monuments.

Likewise, legal actions involving the bishop's property in Lower St. Clair Township employed references only to lot numbers and made no reference to a recorded plan either in the bishop's name or a “town of St. Michael's.” A case in point was a foreclosure action initiated by Bishop O'Connor against the estate of a decedent owner of two lots on Pius Street. The newspaper advertisement of this court case stated:

**ORPHANS' COURT SALE.**

By virtue of an order of the Orphans' Court of Allegheny County, dated the 2d day of April, 1853, will be exposed to public sale, at the Court House, in the city of Pittsburgh, on Monday, the second day of May, 1853, at 10 o'clock A.M. as the property of Bernhart K. Boehmer, late of the Borough of Birmingham, dec'd, — all those two several lots or pieces of ground situate on the South side of the Monongahela River, near the Borough of Birmingham, being marked and numbered in the plan of Lots laid out by Rt. Rev. M. O'Connor, as numbers 68 and 69; the said lots being continuous, and having a front of twenty (20) feet on Pius Street, in said plan, and running back between lines parallel with Centre Street one hundred (100) feet, preserving an even width throughout, on one of which a cellar was excavated and built. Said Lots to be sold for cash, and subject to the payment of four hundred and eighty dollars ($480.00), balance of unpaid purchase money, to Rt. Rev. M. O'Connor, with interest, thereon from the 22nd day of June, 1849.

ANNA ADELINE BOEHMER,

Administratrix of Bernhart K. Boehmer, dec'd.

As noted above, a number of O'Connor's deeds make no mention of lot numbers. This is true of such significant conveyances as O'Connor's May 27, 1852 deed of two acres to the Passionists for their development of St. Paul of the Cross Monastery atop the hill in the middle of O'Connor's tract of land.

Thus, there is no extant plat map drawn at the time of Bishop O'Connor's purchase that illustrates the boundaries of his large tract and lot division arrangement. In the absence of such a then-contemporaneous document, we are left to rely upon three sources to ascertain the bishop's land plan: (1) the “Coal Hill Lots marked in the Plan of Sidneyville”—a much earlier generic plan for Lower St. Clair Township—that was referenced in the legal description of the thirty-seven acres in the 1835 deed from John McKee to John D. Davis, from which sequentially flowed the sheriff’s 1845 deed to George Rapp, and the latter’s 1846 deed to Bishop O’Connor, (2) a “Plan of Building Lots revised at the instance of Rt. Rev. John Tuigg” in December 1881 and filed in the Recorder’s Office in November 1882, and (3) later published volumes of insurance maps of Pittsburgh. The first provides a general picture of the parameters of the 37-acre tract; the second illustrates the effort of Bishop John Tuigg, Pittsburgh's third bishop, to sell the remainder of the O'Connor tract that had passed successively from O'Connor to Bishop Michael Domenech in 1860 and then to Bishop Tuigg in 1876; and the third illustrates, decades later in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the lot arrangement and street locations as finally realized in the entire thirty-seven acres that had constituted the O'Connor property.

Bishop Tuigg’s “Plan of Building Lots” pointedly used the word “revised” evidencing that his surveyor worked from the original O'Connor plan, albeit unrecorded. It displays only the western half of the thirty-seven acres that remained undeveloped two decades after the departure of Bishop O'Connor from the see of Pittsburgh. The plan envisioned by O'Connor in 1846 has not survived and the failure to publicly record it has denied historians the opportunity to share the bishop’s vision for development. Like many others in that time period, O'Connor relied on the chain of title to land established by successive deeds, without reference to recorded land subdivision plans.

His real estate focus was the portion of the Rapp property closest to the city of Pittsburgh that was best situated to attract lot buyers, support the development of St. Michael's Church and the Passionist Monastery, and produce an income stream from lot sales that would substitute for the decreasing financial grants from the three European aid societ-
ies. He properly concluded that further population growth would create a demand for the remainder of his property. An incremental or section-by-section development of the property afforded the bishop flexibility in his approach to generating income and spurring diocesan growth. While Bishop O'Connor realized an overall profit on total sales executed, the fact that approximately half of the original property remained unsold more than twenty years after he left Pittsburgh is emblematic of both delayed realization of anticipated benefits and the risks inherent in real estate speculation.

As noted above, O'Connor set aside property for St. Michael's (German) Parish and St. Paul of the Cross Monastery. O'Connor retained a farmhouse residence on the former Rapp site for use by the Presentation Brothers (and later St. Michael's Seminary). Parcels not needed for ecclesiastical development were sold to individuals, with prices in the $250-$300 range. Collectively, the sales represented a profit for O'Connor. Diocesan historian Monsignor Andrew Lambing concluded that $100,000 in lots was sold, with unsold lots valued at $162,000. But O'Connor's buyers typically took between two and five years to incrementally pay the full purchase price. The sales and payments extended over some sixteen years. While the bishop sold parcels one by one, he retained the portion of land on which the farmhouse existed that would serve as the next location for St. Michael's Seminary.

The Seminary Relocates to “Birmingham”

The Brothers of the Presentation had arrived from Ireland in December 1845 and the bishop promptly housed them in the farmhouse on his newly purchased property in St. Clair Township (popularly referred to as “Birmingham,” disregarding municipal boundaries) in January 1846. They were to teach the boys at St. Paul Cathedral school in the downtown. When the bishop’s residence was completed later in 1846, the bishop decided to move the Brothers into his downtown residence, due to its proximity to the school — and move his seminarians to the desired rural setting of “Birmingham” where the Presentation Brothers had been living.

While the 1845 suspension of the seminary had occasioned dispersal of some seminarians to Cincinnati and Loretto, other seminarians (as many as seven) had continued to live with Bishop O'Connor in his rented quarters on Smithfield Street until 1846, when he established St. Michael’s Seminary in its own building in Birmingham. In the fall of that year, the seminary opened in the frame farmhouse at the foot of the hill near what would become the site of the original wood-frame St. Michael’s German Church in 1848. The seminary building sat on a parcel of 200 square feet, which had been part of the farm purchased by O’Connor and then subdivided. This marked the second location of St. Michael’s Seminary; in succeeding years, two additional changes in location would occur.

The seminary’s faculty consisted of Father Thomas McCullagh (who had been ordained by O’Connor a mere two years earlier) as president and Father John E. Mosetizh as a professor. Mosetizh (1797-1863), an ethnic Slovenian who had served as professor of Old Testament exegesis at the seminary in Görz (Austria) since 1828, had fortuitously arrived on October 30, 1846 — recruited by Father Peter Henry Lemke during his visit to the German States in Europe in 1845. O’Connor placed the priest in the bishop’s residence and appointed him prefect of studies and professor of dogma, moral theology, and scripture — teaching four hours a day. The bishop surrendered most of his own teaching duties to Mosetizh.
There were initially fourteen students: seven in philosophy instructed by the president, and seven in theology instructed by Father Mosetizh. The building consisted of a kitchen, dining room, living room, a study that doubled as a chapel, two bedrooms that functioned as dormitories housing the seminarians, and a room that was divided in two to house the president and the one professor. Classes were held in the study, as well as in the living room, dining room, and in one of the instructors’ rooms.

A January 1, 1847 report, written by Father Mosetizh to the Leopolden Stiftung in Vienna provided a detailed description of the seminary building in Birmingham, with a nostalgic reflection on its earlier history in the vicinity of the downtown cathedral:

The seminary consists of a small farm house amidst an orchard, comprising 37 acres of land, extending along the slope of the hill on the other side of the Monongahela and fenced in by boards. The Right Reverend Bishop has bought the whole estate for 9,500 dollars, on credit, and hopes in the future to get the necessary financial means enabling him to erect a regular suitable building on this very healthy place, free from the smoke of Pittsburgh…. In the aforementioned small seminary building there are lodged fourteen pupils, seven of whom are studying theology and the other seven philosophy. I am presiding over the former in the capacity of a prefect and professor, and a young Irish priest is presiding over the latter in the same capacity. The whole house contains but four apartments: a study room which has to serve also the purpose of a house oratory, two sleeping apartments, and a room divided by a board partition into two chambers wherein the two teaching individuals are staying. There is no school-room proper; for, the one is giving instruction in his sitting-room and the other sometimes in the study room and sometimes in the refectory. The desks of the students are book-cases at the same time, but unfortunately almost without books; for the present it would be well, if they contained at least ordinary good text-books, but even these are yet wanting.

The nearby St. Michael's Church, after its opening in 1848, was used as the chapel for Mass and other religious services. Few details of the seminarians’ life in this time period have survived. But the Catholic made occasional mention of their participation in religious events — such as their marching en masse in the funeral procession of Sister Mary Aloysia Strange, R.S.M., in July 1847. She was one of the original Sisters of Mercy who had come from Carlow (Ireland) with Bishop O'Connor in 1843. While summer would today be considered “vacation,” at that time the seminarians lived year-round at the seminary, and their studies and responsibilities continued without interruption. Hence, they were fully available for participation in the funeral rites.

An Overture to the Benedictines

By late spring 1847, Bishop O’Connor initiated several months of negotiations with Boniface Wimmer, O.S.B., seeking the latter’s agreement that the Benedictines’ St. Vincent Seminary would become the preparatory seminary of the diocese, with the diocesan seminarians paying the same as German students and being subject to a Pittsburgh diocesan priest who would be appointed prefect. O’Connor wanted to send seven English-speaking students to study in the monastic school. Wimmer recognized that

he had neither the faculty nor financial resources to open a German school at St. Vincent, much less an English one for the bishop’s students. He and his Benedictine clerics still lacked proficiency in English, and he feared that by accepting the Pittsburgh students and an Irish diocesan priest to take charge of them, he would irrevocably surrender control of the educational institution….
precluded a gratis arrangement in any event. One Benedictine historian adds a critical element to understanding the complexity of the issues at stake:

O’Connor wanted Wimmer to establish a seminary separate from the abbey, of which he, O’Connor, would act as rector. O’Connor wanted no distinction between German and English speaking students. Wimmer insisted that the seminary be a monastic school and that the German language be maintained.

The dispute reflected conflicting episcopal and monastic interests (including the bishop’s concern about St. Vincent becoming an abbey “exempt” from episcopal control) as well as growing rivalry between the Irish and Germans for dominance in the American Church. Wimmer rejected the proposal. O’Connor responded, proposing a written contract to avoid future misunderstanding that would include a provision requiring the Benedictines to open a minor seminary as soon as possible and accept diocesan candidates for the priesthood — initially at a reduced rate and later gratis, when the monastery had achieved financially stability. Wimmer would consider accepting the bishop’s English-speaking students on a case-by-case basis if the bishop were willing to pay the customary fees. Rather than lose the Benedictines to another diocese, O’Connor reconsidered his position.

As Benedictine control of the Sportsman’s Hall property had not yet been finalized, there was a concern that O’Connor intended to build a diocesan seminary at St. Vincent’s (with money collected by Father Peter Lemke during a visit to Europe 1846-1847), which the Benedictines would administer while providing “free” tuition and board. Wimmer described his rejection of the proposal thusly:

From an unexpected corner, I had some trouble, which for several months placed in doubt whether I could remain here or not. My most reverend bishop expected me to accept gratis in the seminary I am thinking of next year as many Irish boys as Germans…. With regard to the seminary, I made the concession that I would enroll and instruct free of charge those boys whom the bishop may want to send to us for training in the religious life, but that he must pay an annual fee for board that must at least compensate for their expenses. Concerning discipline and teaching methods, I reserved full freedom for the Benedictine Order, and I set the condition that we pledge to offer only as many courses as we have qualified professors in the house to teach, and that we could never be bound to call up or take professors from elsewhere whenever the most reverend bishop might want to send students to us.

A week after this letter was written, O’Connor realized that the success of Wimmer’s seminary and its German character was assured with the August 18, 1847 arrival of Benedictine Prior Peter Lechner and seventeen young men as candidates for the community. Yet, it was only in November that O’Connor withdrew his demand that a definite number of diocesan seminarians be educated at St. Vincent’s at a reduced rate, promising instead that such students (when accepted by the Benedictines) would pay full expenses. More negotiations ensued, and only in mid-February 1848 was an agreement drawn up between O’Connor and Wimmer that was acceptable to both. The operation of the St. Vincent’s Seminary was left to the Benedictines. In fall 1848, the Benedictines accepted a few of the bishop’s students at reduced rates, and tensions between O’Connor and Wimmer eased for a time.

The bishop had initiated the seminary proposal with Wimmer due to the fact that Father McCullagh had resigned his position as president and professor at St. Michael’s Seminary in late spring 1847. Father John Mosetizh had immediately assumed the presidency of St. Michael’s but expressed a desire to return to Europe as soon as the bishop could arrange for other priests to assume the administrative and professorial positions at the seminary. O’Connor’s overture to and protracted negotiations...
with the Benedictines ultimately proved fruitless. In need of a faculty, he now turned to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

The Oblates of Mary Immaculate

Back in 1843, while passing through Marseille, Bishop O'Connor had visited with Bishop de Mazenod, who was both ordinary of Marseille and founder and superior general of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, an order devoted to the education of seminarians. At that time, O'Connor broached the subject of the Oblates assuming direction of his new seminary in Pittsburgh — but nothing came of the discussion. The order had arrived in French-speaking Canada in 1841, ultimately establishing a province under the leadership of Father Joseph-Eugène Bruno Guigues.

O'Connor now renewed his request for Oblate priests during a June 7, 1848 meeting with Bishop-elect Guigues at the order's headquarters and novitiate in Longueil, Quebec. The request was successful, Guigues agreed, and the details were arranged. Three Oblates were sent from Montreal to Pittsburgh to establish an Oblate community in Pittsburgh and to staff St. Michael's Seminary: Father Pierre Antoine Adrien Telmon as superior, and Father Augustin Gaudet and scholastic Brother Eugène Auguste Cauvin as assistants. The three left Montreal on September 15, 1848 and arrived in Pittsburgh on September 30.

Father Telmon was a prominent figure in French-speaking Canada. He is considered the founder of the Sisters of Charity of Montreal, also commonly referred to as the Grey Nuns due to the color of their habit. Telmon was noted in an article in the Pittsburgh diocesan newspaper just two weeks after his arrival in Pittsburgh. The article, which was a republication of an original Bytown Packet news article, dealt with the episcopal ordination of Father Guigues as bishop of Bytown (Ottawa). Its inclusion in the Catholic was intended to recognize the superior who had agreed to send Oblates to staff the seminary in Pittsburgh, but also to introduce Pittsburghers to a religious order that would soon staff the most important institution in the diocese. A comment in the article presciently identified the possible frustration that Father Telmon felt at his lack of advancement within the Church, which may have played out in his relationship (or lack thereof) with Bishop O'Connor. The article’s comment was:

[T]he Rev. Mr. Telmon is distinguished as a man of uncommon talent, finished education, and untiring zeal. It was supposed that the Rev. Mr. Telmon would have been named first Bishop of this Diocese; but we suppose the present Bishop being his Superior, and a man of undoubted ability and great piety, was, as a matter of course, chosen instead.

The article went on to note the conflict between the French and English-speaking Irish over episcopal and ecclesiastical appointments. The French-born Telmon was about to leave the comfort of the overwhelmingly French-speaking Catholic population of Quebec for Western Pennsylvania where there were few French speakers and a small Catholic population — and the latter was comprised of many Irish immigrants, with almost all seminarians being Irish-born or of Irish descent and headed by an Irish-born bishop. The seeds of conflict between Telmon and O'Connor had been laid elsewhere, many years before. Telmon was an implacable foe of Protestants, having once in Canada burned Protestant Bibles in a public square, thereby bringing upon himself strong remarks from American newspapers.

Upon arrival, the three Oblates found only ten students in the farmhouse in Birmingham, that had until recently been occupied by the Presentation Brothers. Repairs were underway on the structure but the situation was frustrating. The Oblates’ history provides a stark picture of conditions at St. Michael’s Seminary:

Living conditions were difficult. There were only about ten seminarians housed in a building too small for their needs and which was undergoing repairs. In a January 3, 1849 letter, the superior (Father Telmon) with his flair for the dramatic wrote to Mother Bruyère:

“What have I been doing since I last wrote to you? Alas, the same thing I have been doing since my arrival here. I am building, doing framing work, doing carpentry, sweeping the floor, washing up, getting covered with dust, I am ruining my health, I am overwhelmed, I am ruining my clothes to enable us to make our house liveable, that is, to give us a place to sleep and some place to do our spiritual exercises. They would soon hustle me off to the hospital for immigrants to wash me from head to foot, to comb my hair, because lice do not fail to mingle with the dirt and would subject me to a complete overhaul in order to make me presentable. The difficulties of our founding sometimes remind me of what we experienced at Bytown [Ottawa] five years ago….”

While Father Telmon sent news to the Sisters of Charity in Canada, he wrote very little to the Oblates’ founder and superior
general, Bishop de Mazenod. In a November 5, 1848 letter, de Mazenod reproached Telmon for not writing regularly and offered this fatherly advice:

> By founding a house in Pittsburgh in the United States, you are laying the foundations of a new Province but you must act with moderation, without prejudice, without passion, not yielding unhesitatingly to optimism but neither assuming a pessimistic attitude, a detestable disposition with which one can in no way be enterprising and can achieve no good.97

This advice apparently fell on deaf ears, as Father Telmon informed Bishop O’Connor on March 12, 1849 that the Oblates would leave St. Michael’s Seminary. The superior explained that if the Oblates were to stay it would be necessary that the bishop display more esteem and confidence. The bishop had delayed giving the Oblates permission to purchase land on which to establish a permanent house — on the pretext of getting to know the Oblates better.98

Less than two weeks later, on March 23, scholastic Cauvin wrote to Bishop Gigues of Bytown (Ottawa) that: “The establishment in Pittsburgh does not exist any longer.”99 Cauvin confirmed Telmon’s view that Bishop O’Connor displayed coldness and indifference to the three Oblates. Yet, he added:

> In spite of all that, as far as was possible we did our duty. Things were in order and the exercises of piety as well; the seminarians received their formation according to the rule. They were happy with us, as witness the tears they shed at our departure. In a word, the bishop has nothing with which to reproach us.100

The Oblates left the seminary, accusing the bishop of coldness and indifference towards them and of having very little interest in the seminary. Their hasty return surprised Bishop Bourget of Montreal who wrote on June 11, 1849:

> Father Telmon is here … awaiting momentarily a call from the United States in order to set out again. I could not judge whether his fiery talent was compatible with the stolid character of the Americans. I have to admit that I was sorry to see him fail in Pittsburg and I think he would have been wise to let the bishops of [Ottawa, where Telmon had previously worked] and Pittsburg sort out the difference which arose surrounding the founding.101

The founder of the Oblates, Bishop de Mazenod, described Telmon as hard to get along with and sometimes lacking a religious spirit — a continuation of the order’s early assessment of Telmon as having a rebellious and impulsive disposition. The bishop’s insight as to the nature of Father Telmon is best illustrated in his July 20, 1847 letter (written shortly before Telmon’s assignment to Pittsburgh) to the bishop of Montreal in which he pointedly states: “Father Telmon must take himself in hand. He is forty years of age with a lot of talent and zeal. Can it be possible that he would ruin so many fine qualities by his lack of moderation.”102

Thus, the Oblates did not remain long in Pittsburgh — less than six months.103 Their order’s history describes their departure thysly: “Because of the extreme poverty of the house and the little interest shown by the bishop, the Fathers soon returned to Montreal.”104 Yet Bishop Ignace Bourget of Montreal regretted this hurried departure by Father Telmon without consultation with his superiors, including the Superior General, Bishop de Mazenod.105

### The Financial Support Issue Again Arises

The departure of the Oblates was indeed unfortunate. Bishop O’Connor was not unaware of the poor condition of the seminary building. At about the time the Oblates’ arrival in Pittsburgh was certain, he began working with the diocesan priests to raise funds to provide the seminary, and the incoming Oblates, with better living conditions and the amenities necessary for their successful conduct of the institution. That would take money.

Bishop O’Connor and his diocesan priests understood the trifecta of critical issues facing the new diocese: (1) an increasing wave of Irish and German immigration — driven by potato famines in British-occupied Ireland and political upheavals in the German States; (2) a dismal financial picture stemming from the endemic poverty of both native Catholic American farmers and penniless immigrants — with both groups unable to provide adequate support for priestly, parochial, and educational development in the diocese; (3) the challenge of ministering to a population scattered in small pockets over half a state — the isolation of which was compounded by mountains and rivers which impeded both travel and communication. O’Connor concluded that the solution to these challenges lay in a significant increase in the number of priests who could sustain and grow the Catholic faith in Western Pennsylvania and serve to lead poor farmers and impoverished immigrants
into a respectable place in American society where they could obtain employment with an income to support Catholic institutions to service the rapidly growing Catholic population. The bishop had come to conclude that there were two impediments to achievement of his goal of providing for the spiritual care of his diocesan flock and uplifting them within the larger community: financial means were limited and the small number of existing diocesan priests made it unlikely that any could be spared to educate those desiring to become the priests of the future. The imminent arrival of the Oblates would resolve the second problem. The bishop now turned to the fundamental issue of financing the one institution that would advance the progress of the diocese — St. Michael’s Seminary.

During a two-week period in late November-early December 1848, the several dozen priests of the Diocese of Pittsburgh met in their respective two Districts (Western and Eastern) to publicly affirm the bishop’s efforts to sustain St. Michael’s Seminary. On November 22, 1848, the priests of the Western District assembled in conference at St. Michael’s Seminary in Birmingham. Priests in the sprawling wilderness of the eastern part of the diocese met on December 6, 1848 at St. Mary’s Church in Hollidaysburg (Blair County). Each group unanimously adopted the following respective preambles and resolutions, which were then published in the diocesan newspaper in order to publicize to the laity their need to provide financial support for the nascent seminary. The resolutions enacted at the two meetings bear a striking similarity in theme, but the wording reflects the emphases of the separately gathered groups of priests.

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<th>WESTERN DISTRICT</th>
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<td><strong>Resolved 1st.</strong> That we have heard with great satisfaction, that the Diocesan Seminary is placed under the care of the Rev. Fathers, the Oblates of the B.V.M. Their well-known learning, piety and skill, inspire the fullest confidence in the permanent efficiency of the Institution.</td>
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<td><strong>Resolved 2d.</strong> That we deem it our duty, and an important duty, to create a fund for the support of the Seminary.</td>
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<td><strong>Resolved 3d.</strong> That as it is the duty of all the Faithful, both Clergy and laity of the diocese, to contribute, we shall, as soon as possible, bring it before our people, and urge them by our words and example, to be liberal in their donations; and for this purpose will adopt such means for collecting as may best suit our respective locations.</td>
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<td><strong>Resolved 4th.</strong> That we appoint the Rev. Mr. Telmon, Superior of the seminary, our Treasurer, with a request that he will hand over to the editor of the “Pittsburgh Catholic” a list of the names and amounts of the contributions, that it may be published for general satisfaction.</td>
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<td><strong>Resolved 5th.</strong> That the above preamble and resolutions be published for two successive weeks, in a conspicuous place, in the columns of the Pittsburgh Catholic, the organ of the diocese, that the faithful may know our determination, and be prepared to do their duty.</td>
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<td><strong>Resolved 1st.</strong> That we consider the Diocesan Seminary lately placed under the charge of the Rev. Fathers, the Oblates of the B.V.M. as the only source to which we can look for a certain and sufficient supply of efficient Priests, to share with us the duties and responsibilities of the ministry.</td>
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<td><strong>Resolved 2d.</strong> That we will sustain the Diocesan Seminary by every means in our power; and that we feel confident, when the subject is brought before and understood by our Flocks, they will generously co-operate with us in sustaining an institution which, we earnestly hope, is destined to exert a salutary and powerful influence on religion in this diocese.</td>
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<td><strong>Resolved 3d.</strong> That we concur in and approve of all the resolutions adopted respecting this measure by our Rev. Brethren of the western part of the diocese, and that we will cheerfully co-operate with them in every measure calculated to promote the interests of the Seminary.</td>
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<td><strong>Resolved 4th.</strong> That the above resolutions be published in the Pittsburgh Catholic, that the Faithful may be prepared to respond to the appeal we intend to make in behalf of this interesting institution.</td>
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Signed in behalf of the Conference.

E.F. Garland, Sec.

Tobias Mullen, Sec.

From that time, the Catholic intermittently published reports by the Treasurer of St. Michael’s Seminary as to financial contributions received from parishes, priests, and laity on behalf of the seminary. Each such report typically began with the words “The Treasurer of St. Michael’s Theological Seminary acknowledges receipt of the following sums, collected in the churches
Individual amounts ranged from twenty-five cents (with four persons collectively contributing) up to $20, and the largest congregational collection submitted was $120 (the Summit in Cambria County). Individual contributions were typically fifty cents or one dollar; the frequency of “small sums” totaling a mere quarter or fifty cents indicated the pennies contributed by a mix of farmers, workers, and immigrants. Some of the largest collections were from congregations at a considerable distance from Pittsburgh — such as Erie, Mercer County, Loretto in Cambria County, and Clearfield County. Congregations headed by Fathers Tobias Mullen and Thomas Heyden were regular contributors. The published contributions for each year (reported further below) of O'Connor’s episcopate (1843-1860) only exceeded $1,000 in four of those years. During this same period, Catholics were being asked to contribute toward the new St. Paul Cathedral and various local Catholic charities (such as the construction of Mercy Hospital, the St. Vincent DePaul Society, and St. Paul Orphan Asylum), the poor of the city of Allegheny, Irish famine relief, and to maintain publication of the Catholic newspaper itself.

A Benedictine Dissident Joins the Faculty

The bishop then appointed his younger brother, Father James O'Connor (like his older brother, a graduate of the Urban College in Rome) as president of St. Michael's Seminary. Father Mosetizh returned as a professor. However, in the fall of 1850, James O'Connor left his position due to health issues. Father Mosetizh became president and two priest-professors were appointed to train the twenty students. At this time, Bishop O'Connor accepted the teaching services of Benedictine Father Paul Lechner, O.S.B. — former prior of Scheyern Abbey in Bavaria and former novice master at St. Vincent Abbey — who had left St. Vincent's Abbey in a dispute with Abbot Boniface Wimmer, O.S.B. Lechner remained on the faculty at St. Michael's Seminary for only a year, departing in 1851.

Second (Partial) Suspension of the Seminary: 1851-1856

The year 1851 was to prove disastrous for the new diocese and the new seminary. First, St. Paul Cathedral caught fire on May 6, 1851 and was destroyed. Successive reductions in the street grade of Fifth Avenue and Grant Street had left this first cathedral church exposed. The structure’s entrance was some fifteen feet above the lowered street level and a support wall had been built. The building’s distance from street level only complicated efforts to fight the fire. Second, in the summer of 1851, Pittsburgh experienced another outbreak of cholera, in what had become an ongoing series of epidemics of the dreaded disease. The seriousness of cholera epidemics cannot be understated. During the cholera epidemic of 1849, seventy-five parishioners of St. Michael Parish in Birmingham — whose church was immediately adjacent to the seminary — died in the outbreak.

The financial demands necessitated by the construction of a replacement cathedral — the cornerstone of which was laid on June 15, just six weeks after the disastrous fire — and the cholera epidemic merely added to the other financial and health problems that Bishop O'Connor was confronting with respect to the seminary. Father Mosetizh was ill and wished to return to his native Europe for treatment. By mid-April 1851, the bishop asked his brother to resume presidency of the seminary. Although he did not want James to take any risks to his health, Michael O'Connor phrased his request quite pointedly, stating:

“If you cannot come to it, I will probably be under the necessity of breaking it up.... [T]o keep the seminary on its present footing would be little better than keeping up a nuisance.”

Unfortunately, there was no satisfactory resolution of these issues affecting the seminary. At the beginning of the summer
of 1851, the trifecta of financial woes, lack of faculty, and the renewed outbreak of cholera combined to force Bishop O’Connor’s decision to close St. Michael’s Seminary in Birmingham. While the seminary had increased its enrollment gradually until 1851, its developing popularity could not save it.112

As one historian concluded regarding this decision:

O’Connor had placed great faith in the seminary as a means of providing clergy for the diocese and valiantly he tried to keep one going. It was a premature, if not an unrealistic undertaking, however, and O’Connor realized the imprudence of retaining a poorly staffed seminary on a year to year basis that taxed the meager resources.113

By the end of summer 1851, most of the seminarians were sent out of the diocese to three seminaries: (1) St. Mary’s in Baltimore — Richard C. Christy, James Treacy, John C. Farren, John B. O’Connor, and Richard Phelan; (2) St. Francis Xavier in Cincinnati — Francis J. O’Shea, Thomas Walsh, Cornelius M. Sheehan, and Peter M. Garvey, and (3) St. Mary of the Barrens in Missouri — Peter M. Doyle (who subsequently joined his classmates in Cincinnati). Apparently, the location of these seminarians was in flux during this period of their ecclesiastical training, since the Catholic reported in December 1851 that Bishop O’Connor conferred tonsure and minor orders upon six of them at St. Mary of the Barrens Seminary (about eighty-one miles south of St. Louis, Missouri): R. Barrett, Sheehan, Garvey, Cahill, Reardon, and Doyle.114 Since Archbishop Purcell of Cincinnati was O’Connor’s traveling companion, the two prelates may have taken some of O’Connor’s seminarians then in Ohio along with them to Missouri for the ceremony. Three others remained within the diocese, being sent to Father Hugh Gallagher in Loretto (Cambria County) for instruction.115 Thereafter, there was a slight trickle of Pittsburgh seminarians to seminaries outside the diocese; for example, Edward A. Bush was sent to St. Thomas Seminary that was located three miles from Bardstown, Kentucky, in 1853.116

There is also evidence that other seminarians remained for an indeterminate time with Bishop O’Connor at his residence in downtown Pittsburgh. In a March 4, 1852 letter to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in Paris, Bishop O’Connor recounted the bitter attacks on his flock based partly on their Catholic faith and partly on the anti-Irish prejudice prevalent at that time:

The sects pursue us with a bitter hate…. Besides the sects properly so called there is a class of men risen up here who call themselves “Preachers on the streets.” They do not care to claim any particular belief and they do not belong to any sect…. Night and day they preach in the market places and on the street corners where the public assembles. When I say they “preach” I am merely using their words. That which they call “preaching” consists entirely in a series of insults the most infamous that one could say against us, against the clergy, the religious, and Catholics in general…. That which gives power to these men is that in this city more than any other in the United States, we have a great number of Orange Irishmen. They persecute Catholics with bitterness and without shame…. What I fear is that these things will end in a riot. I am sure that that is what they desire and what they try to bring about. Up to the present time with the help of God we have succeeded in maintaining tranquility. For some weeks they have come every Sunday afternoon to give their discourses near the windows of the seminary. They are accompanied by a crowd of desperate men who have no religion or morals and who
wish for nothing more than an excuse to attack us…. It is the Mayor himself who preached on these occasions…. It will be necessary for me to strive to prevent a repetition of this scene, otherwise we will have a repetition of the bloody riots of Philadelphia of 1844.117

This statement ties to the fact that seminarian Richard Phelan, originally sent to St. Mary’s Seminary in Baltimore, returned to Pittsburgh by 1854 to complete his ecclesiastical studies while living with Bishop O’Connor.118

Thus, despite the dispersal of most Pittsburgh seminarians to seminaries in other dioceses with a few sent to private studies with a priest within the diocese, St. Michael’s Seminary still operated informally in Pittsburgh — with instruction again becoming the immediate responsibility of Bishop O’Connor, likely assisted by the few priests assigned to the cathedral parish. This conclusion would be consistent with the fact that several St. Michael seminarians were ordained between 1853 and 1856 in Pittsburgh and elsewhere in the diocese, while those sent outside the diocese did not always return to Pittsburgh for ordination. Accordingly, the “suspension” was not a true suspension, but rather a reassignment of seminarians so as to reduce the number to a manageable group who could be accommodated in Bishop O’Connor’s living quarters. This practice appears to have continued until 1856 when all seminarians (except for those in Rome) were again schooled under one roof.

The suspension of the seminary within the diocese did not alleviate the financial demand that the seminarians’ education placed upon the diocese.119 The former St. Michael’s Seminary building in Birmingham became a convent for two successive orders of religious women.

Pittsburgh seminarians continued their studies both within and without Pennsylvania during the entire five-year suspension of St. Michael’s. A July 15, 1854 report in the Catholic Telegraph on the enrollment at Mount St. Mary of the West Seminary (formerly named St. Francis Xavier Seminary) in Cincinnati listed five students belonging to Pittsburgh, as well as one former Pittsburgher now listed for the newly established (1853) Diocese of Erie. Those students comprised more than 25% of the entire Ohio student body.120

Interestingly, during this hiatus, the First Plenary Council of the hierarchy of the United States was held in Baltimore in May 1852. Its fourteenth decree addressed diocesan seminaries. Bishop O’Connor was the first of three prelates appointed by the Council to prepare a course of studies for ecclesiastical seminaries.121

The Bishop Departs — and Returns

The ten years that followed establishment of the Diocese of Pittsburgh (1843) witnessed a dramatic increase in the Catholic population in the western half of Pennsylvania. Bishop O’Connor’s two visitations to the northern half of his diocese in 1846 and 1851 convinced him that Catholic population growth and the enormous size of the diocese warranted establishment of a new see for the northern Pennsylvania counties. He recommended that the issue be discussed at the First Plenary Council of Baltimore. On May 13, 1852, the assembled bishops decided to petition the Holy See to erect a new diocese with Erie as its seat. In July 1852, O’Connor traveled to Rome to urge favorable action. The Diocese of Erie was established by the papal bull Ex Apostolici on July 29, 1853.122 The new see comprised eleven counties (Erie, Clarion, Crawford, Clearfield, Elk, Jefferson, McKean, Mercer, Potter, Venango, Warren) and two future counties (Cameron and Forest), with an area of 9,936 square miles. The new diocese had twenty-eight churches, fourteen priests, and an estimated Catholic population of 12,000.123

At the same time, O’Connor was appointed first bishop of Erie. He had personally requested the transfer. The archbishop of Baltimore transmitted the bull of appointment to O’Connor in September. O’Connor left Pittsburgh for Erie on October 14, 1853. Some priests and at least one seminarian followed him to the new diocese. Popular dissatisfaction among Catholics in Pittsburgh at the departure of their bishop, and second thoughts among the hierarchy in the United States, led to a restoration of O’Connor to Pittsburgh by a papal brief on December 20, 1853. The document did not arrive in the United States until February 1854, with O’Connor receiving notice on February 23. He departed for Pittsburgh the same day.124 Practically, the bishop had been away from Pittsburgh for some nine months, not counting his trip to Rome.125 In his absence, Father Ed-
ward McMahon, in his capacity as vicar general, had administered the Diocese of Pittsburgh. During that extended period, the seminary issue remained in limbo. Bishop O'Connor would now return to the issue of reopening St. Michael's Seminary.

Possible Seminary Relocation to Lawrence County

Bishop O'Connor briefly considered reopening the seminary on a farm that had been donated by William Murrin in northwest Lawrence County. Using this property for the seminary was the idea of Father Cornelius Sheehan, a young priest stationed at the cathedral. However, an examination of the bequest indicated that such use was not permitted, as only a boys' orphan asylum was specified. The Catholic later commented on this briefly considered site:

Mr. Murrin, who had so generously offered the farm in Lawrence county, would have gladly seen the Seminary established, and grow up under his own eyes, and was not a little disappointed at the change. He acquiesced, however, in an arrangement which is evidently for the greater good. This worthy man will have the happiness, however, of seeing another charitable institution spring up into existence as a fruit of his bounty. The Board of Managers of St. Paul's R.C. Orphan Asylum, to whom the farm alluded to will be transferred, with the Bishop's and Mr. Murrin's concurrence, have resolved to establish there an Orphans' Home.

For the five-year period 1851-1856, the Diocese of Pittsburgh was unable to reopen St. Michael's Seminary. The reasons were several: the need to direct available monies to construct a new St. Paul Cathedral in place of the original building that had burned in 1851, a national financial panic that resulted in the closure of many banks with resultant negative effects on Catholics in Pittsburgh, the separation of the northern part of the Diocese of Pittsburgh to form the new Diocese of Erie with the attendant loss of income from parishes now separated from the see of Pittsburgh, and most importantly the extended absence of the one person totally committed to the seminary — Bishop Michael O'Connor.

Initiation of an Annual Collection for the Seminary

Finances had been a recurring issue for Bishop O'Connor, as noted above. In early spring 1850, the Catholic was enlisted to publicly endorse the efforts of one diocesan priest who had conducted collections among his several congregations for the support of the nascent diocesan seminary. The newspaper's editor called attention to Father Tobias Mullen, one of Bishop O'Connor's original Irish seminarians who had completed his ecclesiastical studies in the seminary as it then operated in the bishop's residence. Mullen had collected $100 from his impoverished congregations in the Johnstown area — St. John Gualbert in the city, along with congregations at the Summit and Jefferson. That was a princely sum in its day. The paper noted:

In another column we give a report of the Collections for the Seminary, made by the Rev. T. Mullen in the congregations under his charge. It is encouraging to find the good work, for this year commenced, and commenced so well. We are authorized by the Bishop to request the pastors of the various churches throughout the Diocese to have the collections for the Seminary taken up as soon as convenient and to have all the returns sent in, if possible, before Pentecost.

There are now twenty students in the Seminary. It is most important that a strenuous effort be now made to sustain an institution in which the most vital interests of the Diocese depend.

But relying on the voluntary cooperation of the pastors was not producing the money needed for the seminary. The meager and sporadic results, as evidenced by the few published reports in the Catholic, ultimately led Bishop O'Connor to take another approach to fundraising.

In the fourth year of the suspension of the operation of St. Michael's Seminary (1854), Bishop O'Connor held a third diocesan synod on May 19. During that assembly, bishop and priests decided that the solution to the financial woes of the seminary would be remedied by the institution of a mandatory annual collection to be taken up in all churches of the diocese on the Sunday within the octave of the feast of Corpus Christi.

The Catholic published the bishop's directive, as issued by Father Edward Garland, secretary of the Committee of Priests and a staunch supporter of the seminary. Father Garland's published letter read as follows:
SUPPORT OF THE DIOCESAN SEMINARY

It will be readily conceded by all reflecting Christians, that nothing is so vitally important to the maintenance and extension of religion as a properly trained and faithful body of Pastors. This also is the judgment of the universal Church expressed in her legislation on the subject. The Ecumenical Council of Trent, Session 23d, Chap. 18th, on reform, enacts, following out the constitutions of Pope Alexander the VII, and the second Council of Lateran that Seminaries for the training and disciplining of young levites for the Sanctuary, be maintained at all Cathedral, Metropolitan, and higher churches. And the comprehensive character of its provisions on this subject in the chapter already quoted, (the longest and most copious in details of all the 25 Sessions of the Council) afford sufficient evidence of the importance it attached to this subject. These provisions for the establishment of Ecclesiastical Seminaries under the control of the Ordinaries, have for their object the opening of sources of a definite character, from which a sufficient supply of laborers for the Lord’s Vineyard might be derived. If, then, even in the ordinary condition of the Church, such institutions are required to supply the succession and increase of Pastors, how much greater is the need of them in this our own land where, in addition to the ordinary supply, provision must be made for the unparalleled and constant increase of population and Churches by immigration.

Wonders have been wrought hitherto by the wisdom and labours of our Bishops, aided by the generous co-operation of their religious and zealous Catholic people, to meet both the ordinary and extraordinary wants of their position. It is true that they were aided occasionally by the generosity of Foreign religious Societies. But, such assistance, though precarious hitherto, is henceforth liable and will probably cease altogether, thus rendering it necessary to rely on solely domestic resources against all contingencies.

In the Diocesan Synod, recently held in St. Paul’s Cathedral our Rt. Rev. Ordinary of this See appointed a Committee of Priests to take into consideration the wants of the Seminary in this Diocess [sic], in order to devise and report some project that might be adequate to their nature and extent. The Committee so appointed, recommended as the result of their reflection on the subject, —

“That, in order to provide for the support of such a number of students for the sacred ministry, as the wants of religion in the Diocess [sic] required, either in the Diocesan Seminary, or elsewhere, as the Bishop might choose, a collection should be taken up in all the churches beyond the limits of the Cathedral city, for said purpose, on the Sunday, within the octave of Corpus Christi, annually; and that in the Episcopal city, the Parish Priest of each parochial district, should appoint collectors to visit the families and individuals of his parish for the same object; and, further, that should the proceeds from these sources by insufficient, the clergymen appointed by the Bishop, as a special Committee, should tax the deficit in an equal manner, and in proportion to the population on all the parishes and districts of the Diocess [sic].”

The Rev. Clergy have engaged to bring the matter properly before their congregations, and to use their exertions for its success. As the Sunday for the first annual collection under this system is very near, in the discharge of the duties of a position in which my Rev. and esteemed associates of the Committee have placed me, I feel it my duty to make this statement, in giving notice of the collection to be held on Sunday, the 18th of June next.

E. F. Garland, Treasurer

Pittsburgh, May 31st, A.D. 1854

Thus, for the first time in diocesan history, Bishop O'Connor and his clergy determined that a diocesan-wide collection would be taken up annually — with agreement that a subsequent tax, based on the population of each parish, might be implemented should the annual collection prove inadequate to fund seminary operations. The Catholic did not report the diocesan-wide results after the June 18, 1854 collection — nor was there a summary report published in any of the remaining years of O'Connor's administration. The same would prove true during the years of O'Connor's successor, Bishop Michael Domenec. Only after the seminary closed, did the diocese begin publication of an annual summary report in the diocesan newspaper. Perhaps the rationale for not publicizing the amount of the total annual collection — and continuing instead the existing practice of periodic publication of collection returns from a handful of parishes — reflected the bishop's desire to shield from public view the real cost of seminary operations and the total of monies collected. Publication of that information might have invited public scrutiny and discussion, possibly leading to reduced collections if the faithful concluded that the financial crisis had passed and generous donations to sustain St. Michael's were no longer needed; conversely, a woefully insufficient collection might have created a morale issue among both laity and clergy.
By early summer 1855, Father Garland again took pen to hand and wrote an article to stimulate contributions for the upcoming 1855 diocesan-wide collection. The appearance of the article suggests that the 1854 collection — the first of its kind in the diocese — did not produce sufficient funds. Garland argued his case persuasively:

**THE DIOCESAN SEMINARY**

In the Diocesan Synod, held in St. Paul’s Cathedral in May, 1854, the Sunday within the Octave of Corpus Christi was fixed on for making the annual collection, throughout the Diocese [sic], for the support of this important institution. The claims of the Seminary on the charity of the Catholic community is [sic] paramount to all others. Without an adequate ministry the precious harvest of immortal souls will be left to perish, religion and her institutions to inevitably retrograde and languish.

The time selected for making the collection is also appropriate, the festival commemorating the institution of the Christian Sacrifice, and the Priesthood of the New Law, whose chief office is the offering of this Holy Sacrifice, which is at the same time the supreme, only adequate and characteristic species of Divine worship, and the most facile means of access to the throne of God for mercy and grace. — The occasion itself should therefore, put us in mind of the duty of praying to God to send laborers into his vineyard, in worthy candidates to fill the ranks of His Holy Ministry. The late Provincial synod urges on us the performance of this same duty; but its fulfillment requires that we should co-operate by other means to secure the promotion of this object. The Very Rev. and Rev. Clergy do not require any argument or exhortation on a subject, the importance of which they so well understand, and of which they will be the zealous exponents to their flocks. The high rate at which the necessaries of life are procurable, should be an additional stimulus to the zeal and liberality of the faithful. Devoted young Levites merit all the sympathies, and encouragement of those to whose highest interests they mean to devote their lives and labors. A constantly increasing ministry can alone meet the wants of religion in the Diocese [sic]. The increase of small missions to congregations requiring the constant ministry of a Pastor, districts recently ministered to by a single Pastor requiring several, point conclusively to the necessity of such increase. This generous Catholic community have it in their power to secure this increase by their liberal and timely contributions, and such being the case, no doubt can be entertained of the result by.

E. F. Garland, Treasurer

The results of the first three years of the annual collection (1854-1856) were sufficient to permit O’Connor to finance the purchase of land (actually two sites, as detailed below) and reopen the seminary in 1856, and then purchase an even larger site and again relocate the seminary in 1857 — before he had sold the property purchased in 1856. This signaled a measure of improvement in diocesan finances. There was no subsequent financial crisis that threatened closure of St. Michael’s until 1876. Thus, the implementation of an annual collection in 1854 achieved the desired result: the seminary reopened two years later and remained open for another twenty years. Nonetheless, finances remained an issue — and the Easter Sunday collection for 1857 was designated for the seminary and characterized as necessary to pay off the debt created with purchase of property for a seminary in Glenwood (which is discussed below).

However, pastors and their congregations were faced with competing demands for limited funds: (a) *at the diocesan level* the expensive rebuilding of the cathedral, obligatory collections for the pope, and fundraising drives to maintain orphan asylums and hospitals and other charitable institutions, (b) *at the parish level* pew rent, the construction of first-time (and replacement) churches and rectories to serve local congregations, the opening of more parish elementary schools, and (c) *outside of the ecclesiastical structure* tuition demands for education in private academies operated by an increasing number of religious orders of sisters, ongoing collections for relief in Ireland as that country suffered a series of famines, and membership fees in a myriad number of ethnic, literary, and educational organizations with varying ties to the Church. Despite the seriousness of the
issue of adequate financial support for St. Michael’s Seminary, it is clear from surviving records that financial contributions were not being made by every parish. To bring everyone into line, Father Garland was again designated by Bishop O’Connor to pen another article on the subject for the August 6, 1859 issue of the Catholic. His statement was brief and pointed:

SAINT MICHAEL’S THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The Pastors of churches who have not taken up the collection, prescribed by the Statute, for this Institution, on the Sunday within the Octave of Corpus Christi, are requested to have it made as soon as sufficient notice can be given to prepare their congregations. The collection has been very successful in several congregations owing to the zeal with which it was urged on them by their Pastors. Pious Catholics will always act generously towards the institutions identified with their Church when the duty of so doing is properly understood and urged upon them. The spirit of their Pastor communicates itself naturally to Christian flocks. It is much to be regretted that, in several congregations, the collections bear no proportion to the number and ability of their members. In all cases the collection should be taken up by the Clergyman, and the names of contributors of one dollar, or even fifty cents, taken down by himself, or some other person by his direction. This the Bishop expects to be done by all Clergymen having charge of congregations. Where it has been neglected, the collections, with one exception, have been unworthy of the congregations. And thus the most important interests of the Church in the diocese suffer from negligence or apathy. The Seminary has been in very successful operation during the past academical year; 25 students, preparing for the sacred ministry, were supported at its expense. This involved an expenditure of not less than three thousand dollars, for which the annual collection is the principal resource, and should come fully up to this amount. With equal and proper zeal on the part of Pastors and their flocks, it is hoped that the annual collection will, in future years, cover the outlay, and keep the Seminary in an unembarrassed condition.

In all future collections the Clergy are requested to go among their congregations and take the names of persons, and amount of contributions of fifty cents or over. The collection, moreover, should not be made to give way to any other object, but to be taken on the day that, for obvious reasons, was appointed by our Rt. Rev. Bishop for that purpose.

E. F. Garland, Treasurer

The instructions to pastors were specific and designed to assure financial contributions by every adult lay Catholic. In light of the synodal legislation, why was this entreaty necessary? The answer lies in the unsatisfactory, and uneven, results of collections for the seminary during O’Connor’s administration. These summary results evidence an ongoing funding issue that was never solved in the time of Pittsburgh’s first bishop (1843-1860):

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Collection Date</th>
<th>Number of Reports in the Catholic</th>
<th>Dates of Reporting</th>
<th>Number of Participating Parishes or Persons</th>
<th>Total $ Amount of Collection</th>
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<td>Aug. 24</td>
<td>1 person</td>
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<td>1847</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>March 6-Sept. 25</td>
<td>21 parishes &amp; 510 persons</td>
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<td>1854</td>
<td>June 18</td>
<td>Jan. 4-July 1</td>
<td>18</td>
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**Resignation of Bishop Michael O’Connor**

**Administration of Father James O’Connor**

| June 10 | Oct. 20-Dec. 1 | 48 parishes | 1,987.12 |

**Administration of Bishop Michael Domenec**

| Dec. 12-Dec. 29 | 6 parishes | 84.31 |

Based solely on reports published in the *Catholic*, the synodal legislation did not produce an immediate increase in parish participation and instead produced a decrease in monies collected for the first four years afterward. Many factors could account for this lackluster result. Only in 1858 did the amount collected exceed that of 1853, the year before enactment of the synodal legislation as to the seminary collection. It is apparent that Bishop O’Connor did not press his priests, as did his brother during his brief administration of the diocese, as regards the collection — relying on their self-interest in educating future diocesan priests. Both O’Connor brothers failed to utilize the *Catholic* to effectively publicize the results — in order to produce better results through the dual mechanism of public recognition through printing individual names and public shame through the non-appearance of a parishioner’s name or a small amount in relation to larger givers. Effective use of the diocesan newspaper would await the arrival of Bishop Michael Domenec. What is not apparent from the *Catholic* and the few surviving diocesan archival records is the amount of money that may have been contributed other than from the annual collection for the seminary or that the bishop directed for the seminary from general diocesan income, neither of which would have been publicized.

Unbeknownst to most priests, and the faithful, was Bishop O’Connor’s plan to retire. The 1859 collection was the last that would be taken up during the administration of Pittsburgh’s first bishop. As we shall see below, he would resign the see of Pittsburgh in May 1860. Let us now return to the story of St. Michael’s during the last five years of O’Connor’s tenure as bishop of Pittsburgh.

**Revisiting the Seminary Issue with the Benedictines**

At the end of 1854 and well into the spring of 1855, Bishop O’Connor undertook a multipronged approach to again providing a seminary within the diocese.

First, he reopened with Boniface Wimmer at St. Vincent’s the issue of inclusion in the Benedictine seminary of diocesan candidates for the priesthood. Pending in Rome was a petition for St. Vincent’s to be elevated from its existing status as a priory to that of an abbey, and to be made exempt from the jurisdiction of the bishop of Pittsburgh. Seeking to influence
the result, O’Connor wrote to Cardinal Fransoni that Wimmer should be required
to admit among the boys whom he accepts in his institute a fair number of diocesan students (one-half
or one-third, as the Holy See may deem proper) gratis or at a very low rate for board and tuition. These
students should be selected by the bishop.138

In April 1855, Propaganda Fide asked Wimmer to address three “seminary” issues in conjunction with Rome’s consideration
of elevation of St. Vincent’s: (1) maintenance of a school at the monastery for “students of the secular clergy,” (2) educa-
tion of some of these students “gratis or at a lower rate than other students” and (3) regular reports to Bishop O’Connor
“about the course of these students’ studies.”139 Wimmer believed that he had agreed to the first concession eight years
previously, the second matter was financially infeasible, and the third was conditionally possible but the bishop “could never
be rector of the seminary.”140 Wimmer compromised by agreeing to grant free room, board, and tuition each year to two of
the bishop’s students.141

The Holy See concluded these matters by issuing an Apostolic Brief on August 24 that raised St. Vincent’s to the rank of an
exempt abbey, but imposed an obligation:

We desire further that in the same monastery of St. Vincent a monastic seminary be maintained into which
secular clerics be admitted, provided that they meet the expenses of their education, and that the bishop, as
Apostolic Delegate, have the right to watch over the education and morals of these clerics.142

Each side could claim victory: O’Connor would have “equal rights with others in the admission of students”143 and Boniface
Wimmer became exempt from the bishop’s control — in addition to being appointed abbot.

O’Connor then became concerned with a provision in the Apostolic Brief — “In the monastery of St. Vincent itself, a
monastic seminary will be maintained into which secular clerical students should be admitted for whom only board is paid.”
The bishop, concerned that this concession was too general and not limited to only seminarians of the Diocese of Pitts-
burgh, asked Wimmer to submit the question to Cardinal Fransoni, prefect of the Congregation de Propaganda Fide.144 The
concern was moot, since O’Connor proceeded to reopen St. Michael’s Seminary and few English-speaking students attended
St. Vincent’s in the next twenty years.

Second, while discussions ensued with Boniface Wimmer, O’Connor also discussed with two of his closest friends in the
American hierarchy — Archbishop John Purcell of Cincinnati and Archbishop Peter Kenrick of St. Louis — the Purcell
proposal to make Mount St. Mary’s of the West Seminary in Cincinnati a provincial seminary serving the area stretching from the Allegheny Mountains to the Mississippi River. Cincinnati had become an archdiocese in 1850 and Purcell thought it opportune to combine resources as all three bishops had been encountering problems in operating a local seminary. The bishops petitioned the pope to make Mount St. Mary’s a pontifical seminary that would enable it to confer doctorate degrees in philosophy and theology. For a variety of reasons, neither idea came to fruition. But O’Connor was also pursuing a third approach to again having a seminary.

The Seminary Reopens in Cambria County: Folly on the Summit

By 1855, the seminary operation had been suspended for four years. Negotiations with the Benedictines were not progressing and would prove fruitless. O’Connor — in his earlier consideration of sites in Birmingham (Allegheny County), Westmoreland County, and Lawrence County — had indicated his preference for a rural setting, at least for a minor seminary if not also for a theological seminary in light of the financial necessity of housing both under one roof. His original desire to have a theological seminary in the see city, close to the bishop and episcopal ceremonies at the cathedral, appears to have yielded to fiscal reality. The bishop now turned next to another plan and another site for a revived St. Michael’s Seminary.

O’Connor continued to rely upon Father Cornelius M. Sheehan to find a site — other than St. Vincent’s — on which to reopen the seminary. Sheehan, like O’Connor, was a native of County Cork, Ireland. He had immigrated to Pittsburgh at age twenty in 1850 and entered St. Michael’s Seminary. When the seminary’s operation was suspended in 1851, he was sent to Cincinnati where he was ordained in 1853 for the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Sheehan was stationed at St. Paul Cathedral, where he exerted considerable influence on the bishop. The failure of Sheehan’s previous proposal to use the Murrin farm in Lawrence County did not lessen the priest’s enthusiasm or O’Connor’s trust in his fellow Irishman.

The first diocesan priest-historian, Monsignor Andrew Lambing, writing more than 100 years ago (1914) described Sheehan as:

recommending some of the most unlikely places that could well be imagined, till he finally succeeded in persuading the bishop to perch it on the top of the mountains at the Summit, the most objectionable place of all, in September, 1856, with himself as president.

This result was occasioned by the bishop and his agent, Father Sheehan, focusing their attention on the county with the second largest Catholic population in the diocese — Cambria County. Cambria was a rural county in the easternmost part of the Diocese of Pittsburgh. It had been created in 1804 and was given the name Cambria — the Latin form of the word Cymru, which is the Welsh word for Wales. This name reflected the ancestry of the county’s early white Anglo-Saxon Protestant population. Ebensburg was the county seat. Catholics identified the county with the settlement activities of both Captain Michael McGuire (a Revolutionary War hero) in 1788 and Father Demetrius Gallitzin, who had established Loretto in 1799 as the first English-speaking Catholic settlement west of the Allegheny Front. The county’s population was 17,773 by 1850 and had seven Catholic churches.

The bishop’s interest in Cambria County was not a secret. Father Thomas McCullagh, one of the original seminarians who had accompanied O’Connor to Pittsburgh and the first alumnus of St. Michael’s to be ordained a priest of the diocese, was serving as pastor to two adjacent congregations in Cambria County — St. Patrick in Gallitzin and St. Aloysius in Summit. The latter community, as will be discussed more fully below, was significant in the developing railroad transportation system replete with thousands of immigrant Irish workmen. McCullagh, desirous of resurrecting the dormant seminary, was instrumental in both raising some $4,000 in contributions from his flock and arranging the donation from a Summit parishioner of seventy-five acres of farmland to the bishop in June 1856.
The receptivity of Catholics in faraway Cambria County, the enticement of money, and the availability of land at no or minimal cost were factors that inclined O’Connor toward locating a revived St. Michael’s Seminary there. A less obvious but perhaps more significant fact was that Father Sheehan had a close family relative, Michael Sheehan, living and working at the Summit. Three Sheehans — Father Cornelius, his younger brother Patrick (who would serve as a seminary instructor prior to his ordination), and Michael — and Bishop O’Connor were all from County Cork, Ireland.

This first site — the seventy-five acres of farmland located in neighboring Washington Township just south of the Summit that had been donated by Ignatius Adams — was too far from Summit and transportation to be feasible and was accordingly dropped from active consideration. So Father Sheehan continued his search for a suitable site — reinforced now with money in hand.

Sheehan identified both a second site that could be repurposed as a seminary and — if we are to believe a locally published parish history — a third site that could be subdivided and sold as individual parcels for a profit that would provide financial support for the seminary. At this point, the telling of the story of St. Michael’s Seminary in Cambria County divides into what is reported only in ecclesiastical history and what can be documented in public records. The former makes for a better story, so it shall be presented first.

St. Augustine Parish in Dysart — a small town in Dean Township in Cambria County that developed along the railroad line during the period of timber and coal extraction — published its history in 1922. This volume is the sole published support for the story that a “third site” was purchased and later sold by Bishop O’Connor. The fact of that history’s publication — even in the absence of any publicly recorded deeds that would support its statements as to the purchase and sale of land pertinent to the bishop’s location and financing of the seminary in Cambria County — warrants inclusion in the full historical telling of matters relating to the seminary.
The St. Augustine Parish history contains this brief mention:

**Bishop O’Connor’s Projected Seminary for Boys.**


The land was heavily timbered with pine timber which was long since cut away; and the location being too far removed from railroad communication for a seminary, the land was sold to different parties, by John Wagner, agent of Bishop O’Connor, the purchasers having been Michael Sheehan, S. J. Luther, Wm. Dishart, Nicholas Wyland, John Wirtner and D. A. Luther.\(^{154}\)

If factually true, this “third site” would be the third instance of Bishop O’Connor acting as a real estate speculator — planning to buy a large tract of land, subdivide it into individual parcels, sell them at a profit, and apply the sale proceeds to provide financial support for diocesan operations, in this case the seminary. This approach had worked successfully in connection with his earlier land purchases in Birmingham and Lawrenceville. Let us turn initially to this reported “third site” in Cambria County — the investment property.

Per the aforementioned parish history, Father Sheehan located a large site of 464 acres of land in White Township in Cambria County. The site was approximately 100 miles northeast of the see city of Pittsburgh and 20 miles northeast of Ebensburg. White Township in Cambria County directly bordered Clearfield County (in the Diocese of Erie) to the north and was only one county away from the westernmost part of the then-Diocese of Philadelphia.

This property was enormous — 25% larger than St. Vincent’s in Westmoreland County. But unlike the land at St. Vincent’s that could be farmed to support the residents of a seminary, this Cambria County site was heavily forested with huge stands of white pine trees, for which the township was named. The land in its virgin state would only be useful for logging purposes, rather than residential or farming purposes.\(^{155}\)

Sheehan, in this scenario, may have received instructions to identify a property of considerable acreage whose trees could be logged for use by the railroad and mining industries in the area — or merely acted on his own initiative after recollecting Bishop O’Connor’s earlier land speculation in Birmingham. The rapidly expanding Pennsylvania Railroad was in constant need of wood in connection with the laying of new and replacement train tracks, the construction of tunnels, carbarns and related needs. Ongoing mining in the Allegheny Mountains always demanded a ready supply of wood — as did the construction of businesses and homes serving the increasing population, especially the many railroad workers.

This site bore nothing in common with the idyllic farmland of St. Vincent’s in Westmoreland County. The bishop had learned from his Westmoreland County experience that farming demanded its own experienced workers and could not be accomplished part-time by students with an existing schedule of academic courses.

The reported land buyers from the bishop were Catholics, and all but one had roots in the settlements established by Father Gallitzin and Father Lemke; one (Michael Sheehan) was an Irish immigrant railroad worker. The land could and would be cleared — mostly for timber for railroad and mining purposes, and some for homestead farming.\(^{156}\) The number and prominence of these local Catholics would give credence to the parish history. Indeed, children of the identified land purchasers were alive and members of St. Augustine parish at the time of the history’s publication.\(^{157}\) It defies reason that such a statement would go into print if not true.
But the above-quoted excerpt from the parish history is subject to challenge on two grounds:

- First, its assertion rings false in light of the fact that Monsignor Lambing’s two histories of the Diocese of Pittsburgh make no reference to O’Connor’s purchase of the White Township acreage. As Lambing’s first history was published in 1880, just twenty-four years after the reported land purchase, and Lambing was himself a graduate of St. Michael’s Seminary, his omission of such a critically important historical fact is telling. Lambing’s second history, published in 1914, includes a history of St. Michael’s Seminary but makes no mention of these land transfers.
- Second, an exhaustive examination of the public land records in the Office of the Recorder of Deeds of Cambria County and other record offices, undertaken in July 2016, failed to locate any recorded deed from William Ryan (the land seller listed in the parish history) to Bishop O’Connor. Further, there were no recorded deeds from O’Connor or an agent of the bishop to the several persons identified as land purchasers. Moreover, there was no power of attorney of record from O’Connor to any person. Finally, the records search failed to disclose a recorded Plan of Lots that would evidence subdivision of the 464-acre tract of land in White Township.

However, one must consider that recording of documents was not the norm in that period in Cambria County — as is evidenced by the absence in the county records of recording of land development plans that would otherwise be referenced in recorded deeds. It is therefore possible — and in the opinion of this writer quite probable — that O’Connor purchased the large acreage in White Township (the “third site”), divided the tract, and sold the lots — all without recording either a plan of lots or deeds. Deeds may have been exchanged between seller and buyers but not recorded, and this not-uncommon practice may have been repeated in subsequent sales. But the next generation of the families who purchased those lots apparently recalled those earlier events and included them in the St. Augustine Parish history published some sixty years later, in 1922.

Perhaps the deciding factor in support of Bishop O’Connor’s reported purchase of the large acreage in White Township is the incontrovertible evidence of his keen interest in real estate and his generally successful results from his earlier purchase, subdivision, and sale of property in St. Clair Township in Allegheny County relative to the seminary in its early years. The bishop would later, in 1857, again demonstrate his zealous pursuit of property for the seminary, by purchasing property near Pittsburgh at sheriff’s sale in order to relocate the institution from Cambria County. These successive actions support this conclusion.

But a “second site,” some twenty miles south in a different part of Cambria County, was to accommodate a revived St. Michael’s Seminary. Father Sheehan’s search led him to the Summit, also known as Summitville. As its name indicates, this was a settlement near the summit on the western side of the Allegheny Mountains, which presented a unique challenge to westward travel and expansion. The town developed in the early 1830s due to its proximity to the intersection of the Cambria,
Huntingdon, and Indiana Pikes with their stagecoach traffic. Summit's eastern edge approximately followed the crest of the Allegheny Front — the height of land between the Susquehanna River watershed to the east and the Ohio River watershed to the west.

Connecting Philadelphia and the east with Pittsburgh, almost four hundred miles to the west, was one of the greatest engineering challenges of that time. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, transportation into the interior consisted of a complex east-west system of canals, dams, locks, towpaths, and aqueducts that was collectively called the Pennsylvania Mainline Canal. The critical section in this canal plan was the thirty-seven mile stretch between Hollidaysburg and Johnstown, crossing the crest of the Allegheny Mountains.161

The Allegheny Portage Railroad was the first railroad to cross the Allegheny Mountains and got its name from the fact that the railroad was designed to carry (portage) canal boats on railroad flatcars over the mountains on a series of ten inclined planes. Each grade, or plane, had a stationary engine which operated a cable to which were attached the railway cars. The ascent from Hollidaysburg to the Summit (Plane no. 6) was 1,398 feet in 10.1 miles; the descent to Johnstown was 1,751 feet in 26.5 miles. The “Portage” opened in 1834 and marked the first time that there was one direct route between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, which took three to five days of travel at that time. The Portage Railroad operated from 1834 to 1854, until purchased by the Pennsylvania Railroad.

The rapid development of Western Pennsylvania was assured when the Pennsylvania Railroad devised an engineering triumph — a railroad line was folded around the ridge of a valley, into a half circle or horseshoe, linking the east with the west. The line was begun in 1851 and built entirely by hand. The 2,375-foot-long curve, at an elevation of 1,594 feet above sea level, opened on February 15, 1854. This was an all-rail route along the Horseshoe Curve, through the Gallitzin Tunnels, and over the crest of the Allegheny Mountains that cut travel time between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh from four days to eight hours.162

In its heyday in the 1850s, Summitville boasted a coal mine, newspaper, post office, three hotels, two breweries, general store and other businesses, a blacksmith, lumber mill, school, two churches, and the Portage Railroad Canal. Jenny Lind, famed Swedish opera singer, and author Charles Dickens were guests at the town’s Lemon House tavern, which served railroad passengers.163

The area was heavily Catholic. The successful colonization efforts of Captain McGuire and Father Gallitzin were followed by an influx of Catholic workers, brought to the area by railroad construction that began in the 1830s. Western Pennsylvania became a hub for the railroad industry because of its abundant natural resources such as timber, coal, and iron; railroad expansion made its raw materials and products accessible to faraway markets. This economic growth and population surge led to the opening of St. Aloysius Church at the Summit in 1838.164 Franciscan friars brought education to Cambria County in 1847, when they established what would become St. Francis University in Loretto.

But neither an identifiable Catholic presence, nor the prominence of the Summit as a railroad center, could justify the selection of the Summit as the site for the reopened St. Michael's Seminary. The seminary’s location here was in the easternmost part of the diocese — 102 miles from Pittsburgh. The problems were many and immediate: virtual inaccessibility due to unpaved roads, accessibility dependent on a limited railroad system still in development, mountaintop location, poor building conditions, extreme winter cold, and the greatest possible distance from the see city and the bulk of the Catholic population of the diocese.

Nonetheless, ignoring such prudential considerations, Father Sheehan proceeded to identify a plot in the main district of the bustling rural community of Summit (then a part of Washington Township, but today a part of Cresson Township).
CHAPTER IV

The lot provided 70-foot frontage on Turnpike Street and extended 175 feet to Chestnut Alley; it was part of a land plan laid out by Moses Canan, Esq.165 This “seminary” lot was centrally located. To the east, just two lots over, lay the intersection of Turnpike Street and Railroad Street, which served as the main road in the town and paralleled the railroad tracks. Even today, the area is referred to as “the mainline.”166 To the west, just four lots over, lay the “parsonage” of St. Aloysius Church in which the pastor resided.

Conditions in the existing building on the selected lot could only be described as “crowded” — given that some two dozen seminarians would be housed with Sheehan, a second priest-professor, and Sheehan’s younger brother Patrick who would also serve as a professor. Given the size of such dwellings in that period, the seminarians likely occupied a modest dormitory, with the two priests each having a small separate room. The building had to provide not just living quarters but also classroom space. In lieu of an incorporated chapel, faculty and students would have walked to the nearby St. Aloysius Church for daily Mass and other religious services. The conditions were truly spartan167 — characteristic of all American seminaries of that period. Such accommodations represented the poor living conditions from which the seminarians (be they immigrants to or born in the United States) had likely come and with which they were personally familiar. The housing also prepared these future priests to live out of small rented rooms while traveling endlessly to serve their flocks scattered in numerous small communities all over Western Pennsylvania.

Sheehan purchased Lot 41 on June 14, 1856 in his own name with $250 of his own funds.168 Again, this was not an uncommon phenomenon since, as previously noted, the common practice was not to title property in the name of either the diocese or the bishop, even though it would be used for ecclesiastical purposes.

Even before the seminary opened in Summit, the building purchased at Summit by Father Sheehan was put to diocesan use. The Catholic announced that the regular clergy conference for the Eastern District would be held there on August 12-13, 1856.169 The seminarians would arrive about two and one-half weeks later.

Thus, at the beginning of September 1856, the seminary reopened at this most unlikely of the sites considered by Father Sheehan — the Summit. The Catholic announced the seminary’s reopening:

**ST. MICHAEL’S SEMINARY.**

We are happy to be able to announce that this institution has been opened under most favorable auspices. Instead of Lawrence county, Old Cambria has been selected for its location. A house was purchased at the Summit, and fitted up for the reception of students, and studies commenced in the beginning of last month.

This Institution is intended, as yet, only for the preparatory studies, but none but those intended for the ecclesiastical state are received. To impress this more effectually on the minds of the students, the cassock has been adopted as the Seminary dress. The experience had, we may say, everywhere shows the advantage of educating those intended for the holy ministry in separate establishments. The ecclesiastical spirit is too antagonistic to that of the world to live when brought into close communication with it. As a general rule, ecclesiastical vocations are retained with difficulty, even in well-governed colleges, where most of the inmates are preparing for secular pursuits. Hence the Council of Trent, and in accordance with this Council, zealous bishops have everywhere, to the utmost of their power, encouraged the establishment of seminaries for the education of ecclesiastics exclusively.

St. Michael’s opened with every prospect of success. There are already twenty two students. Rev. C. M. Sheehan is President, assisted by Mr. P. Sheehan, who completed his theological studies in St. Mary’s Seminary, Cincinnati, but is not yet of age to be ordained priest. Another priest has been appointed to assist in the government and teaching department, so that an efficient faculty will enter on duty at once. After the students had assembled, and had become a little familiar with the place, a spiritual retreat was given by Rev. J. O’Connor, which closed on Thursday, the 16th inst. At the close of the retreat, four of the students, Messrs. J. C. Bigham, J. Holland, J. Keneven [Canevin] and P. Ward, received tonsors from the Bishop.

It is but right to remark here, that the change of location of the Seminary was adopted at the urgent solicitation of the Catholics of Cambria, particularly of those of the Summit, who showed the greatest anxiety to have this Institution in their midst, and contributed generously to the building. Those of the Summit alone subscribed nearly four thousand dollars, besides the handsome donation of one hundred acres of land by Mr. Adams. We trust that they will see the fruit of their generosity in the numerous bands of virtuous young men, who will there present themselves to minister at the altar. The presence of the institution in their midst will, no doubt, inspire many of their own children with the holy desire of consecrating themselves to God in the service of the sanctuary, and the “mountain” may, or rather will, be the point from which the ranks of the Clergy of Western Pennsylvania hereafter be recruited, as it was from there that the light of faith long shone most brightly. The conviction and the hope that this result would follow were amongst the chief motives that influenced the Bishop and those whom he consulted, in yielding to the request of the Catholics of the Summit, to place the Preparatory Seminary in their midst.170
Father Sheehan’s judgment was flawed and his recommendation unsound. Unfortunately for the diocese, Sheehan was one of only two or three priests who were able to exercise considerable influence over Bishop O’Connor in situations that would prove to be financially and otherwise disadvantageous to the fledging diocese. Bishop O’Connor displayed poor judgment in accepting this recommendation of Father Sheehan — thereby abandoning his original belief that a seminary should be in the see city, close to both bishop and cathedral. O’Connor ignored the fact that his seminarians would have no affinity for the Summit — as students were almost evenly split between Irish immigrants and natives of Pittsburgh and its immediate environs. Moreover, Summitville was already beginning its decline — as Pennsylvania Railroad traffic was going through the town, not stopping there as a destination point.

Nonetheless, the bishop proceeded to reopen St. Michael’s Seminary in the fall of 1856, naming Father Cornelius Sheehan as president. Seminarian Patrick Sheehan, the president’s younger brother, was appointed a professor which reflected the prevailing custom of the time to have senior seminarians instruct younger students. Father Francis J. O’Shea was also appointed a professor. Their regime at the Summit would last only one year.

The listing of the seminary in The Metropolitan Catholic Almanac and Laity’s Directory for the Year of Our Lord 1857 (which reported 1856 data) stated:

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ST. MICHAELS SEMINARY
Summitville, Cambria Co.
This institution situated at Summitville, about one mile from the Cresson Station on the Pennsylvania Rail Road, is intended chiefly as a preparatory college for youths who give signs of a vocation to the ecclesiastical state. Terms for board, tuition and washing, $100 per annum, payable half yearly in advance. There are now twenty-four students in the house.
Rev. C.M. Sheehan, President
"   F. O’Shea   } Professors
Mr. P. Sheehan}
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Despite distance and harsh weather, St. Michael’s Seminary survived its first year in Summitville. The Catholic published this brief but positive endnote to the scholastic year:

> We are informed that St. Michael’s Preparatory Seminary closed its first year last week [July 3, 1857] with forty students. Due notice as to the opening of the next session will be given in the columns of the Catholic.\textsuperscript{172}

While enrollment of forty students was a record, one must question whether — given Father Sheehan’s desire to make a success of St. Michael’s — he admitted to the institution lay students who did not have the priesthood as an objective. In a heavily Catholic county such as Cambria, a number of families would have willingly paid the cost for their sons to receive a classical education. The only school in the area with which it was competing was the Franciscan school in Loretto. At some point, lay students were admitted; indeed, by the following year, the Catholic acknowledged that this was an existing policy. The rapid enrollment increase at the Summit suggests that the change occurred during Sheehan’s administration. Indeed, given the preceding five-year suspension of the seminary, the adoption of an “open-doors” policy would have been considered a sound financial decision at the reopening of St. Michael’s.

Sheehan’s operation of the seminary at the Summit continued uninterrupted, given that Bishop O’Connor decided in November 1856 to undertake an extended trip to Europe, for reasons of health, on the recommendation of his doctors. Not surprisingly, the topic of seminaries remained uppermost in the bishop’s mind, as the forthcoming months in Europe were devoted to exploration of plans for American collegiate seminaries in both Louvain (Belgium) and Rome (the future North American College), as previously noted. Upon his return to Pittsburgh in late spring 1857, O’Connor focused his attention on his own diocesan seminary.

Within a few months of opening St. Michael’s at the Summit, Bishop O’Connor realized the folly of the Cambria County location. But the seminary continued to operate at the Summit until he could obtain a suitable new site in Allegheny County and prepare the necessary accommodations. A transfer of operation would not occur until the fall of 1857, by which time O’Connor had arranged the necessary details.
In the interim, the seminary situation appeared unchanged in the public view as classes continued and the school’s president continued to solicit funds for the institution. Indeed, even after completion of one year of operation at the Summit with another set to commence shortly, Father Sheehan journeyed to Pittsburgh in late August 1857 to collect on seminary pledges made previously by cathedral parishioners. The *Catholic* noted:

**THE SUBSCRIPTIONS TO THE PREPARATORY SEMINARY.** — Rev. Mr. Sheehan, President of St. Michael’s Seminary, Summitville, desires us to state, that he has come to town, at the request of his ecclesiastical superior, for the purpose of collecting the subscriptions, that had been so generously made some time ago for the erection of the Preparatory Seminary. He has handed in a list of all the pious benefactors of St. Paul’s Congregation, which we will publish, as soon as he has realized the amount of the outstanding subscriptions. He speaks in the most grateful terms of the kindly and generous manner with which he has been invariably received by every member of St. Paul’s to whom he has appealed in his important undertaking, and he feels confident that there is not a single name on his long list whose owner would not indignantly spurn the imputation of refusing to substantiate his promise.173

This represented Bishop O’Connor’s desire to accomplish payment of the pledges made by Cathedral parishioners thirteen years earlier (1844) when the parish trustees and parishioners resisted the bishop’s plea to purchase land in Birmingham for the seminary and instead opted for a campaign to construct a seminary building adjacent to St. Paul Cathedral. That original campaign was unsuccessful and, apparently, a portion of the promised funds was not paid. Thus, Father Sheehan was entrusted with the task of obtaining the pledged funds, despite the passage of more than a decade.

The school’s second year at the Summit was set to open as scheduled, as the following announcement in the *Catholic* indicates:

> Studies will be resumed in St. Michael’s Preparatory Seminary, Summit, on Monday, the 31st [of August] inst. It is expected of, and earnestly urged upon, the Students to attend on that day, that the classes may be organized and studies commenced immediately.174

However, St. Michael’s Seminary reopened in Glenwood at the beginning of September 1857, but without mention in the diocesan newspaper. What would appear initially to be conflicting information (Summit vs. Glenwood) likely suggests the conjunction of several developments:

- Financial pressures stemmed from the bishop’s purchase of the Glenwood site, his expenditure of funds to retrofit the site’s existing hotel to accommodate a chapel and classrooms, and his need for funds to reimburse Father Cornelius Sheehan for the latter’s advance of monies used to purchase the Summit site so that the latter could be closed as a seminary.
- The bishop assigned Father Sheehan to Pittsburgh in August 1857 to collect seminary pledges from cathedral parishioners made some thirteen years earlier — a true indication of the bishop’s critical need for funds.
- A stock market decline occurred in August 1857 that quickly morphed into the Panic of 1857, a worldwide economic crisis that affected Pittsburgh.
- The bishop needed to buy time in order to deal with the vexing issue of the faculty, principally Father Sheehan, who was owed money for his purchase of the Summit site. O’Connor had to settle with Sheehan since the bishop did not intend to transfer Sheehan with the students to Glenwood.
- The *Catholic*’s four announcements in August of the start of the seminary’s fall 1857 scholastic year at the Summit were a clever way to recall students there to count numbers, announce the bishop’s plan to move the students to Glenwood, and avoid the loss of any of the forty students who were enrolled when the scholastic year ended in July 1857. The fact that the announcement was printed in four consecutive issues of the diocesan newspaper suggests concern about students returning to the isolated rural site.
- Transfer of students who actually reported to the Summit could have been accomplished by use of the railroad station at nearby Cresson for a train ride to Pittsburgh. These students would most likely have been those living in the eastern part of the diocese.
- O’Connor, a practical man, would have considered avoidance of any action that would reduce the number of potential seminarians and the number of priests that would later be ordained from his seminary. The longevity and financial stability of the seminary would depend on the maximum number of students and their attendant financial contribution to “room and board.” This income would have figured in the calculation of the financing of the Glenwood purchase and attendant building renovations.
• O’Connor would most likely have instructed the appropriate pastors in Pittsburgh to advise their own seminarian-parishioners to report directly to Glenwood, foregoing a pointless trip to the Summit followed by a quick return.

• There is no indication that, even for a brief period, St. Michael’s operated simultaneously in two locations: the Summit and Glenwood. Simply put, Bishop O’Connor did not have sufficient priests available to staff two seminaries or pay dual building expenses.

Thus, while payment by O’Connor to Sheehan for the latter’s earlier advance of funds to purchase the Summit site was not concluded by September 1857 and would drag on until mid-October 1857, the seminary operation at the Summit was closed and reopened at the beginning of September at Glenwood in Allegheny County.

Since the bishop’s purchase of property complete with a suitable residential building in the immediate Pittsburgh area was a matter of general knowledge given the highly public manner of its acquisition, neither seminary faculty nor seminarians could have been surprised at the speed or the scope of the bishop’s decisions that were effected in early fall 1857. First, the bishop provided a new seminary close to Pittsburgh. Second, all seminarians transferred there. Third, he selected a new seminary president and some new faculty, transferring all but one of the Summit faculty to parochial assignments.

The two priests at the Summit (Fathers Cornelius Sheehan and Francis O’Shea) would not accompany the seminarians on their return to Pittsburgh; they were dismissed from their seminary positions, effective with the start of the new academic year. Since Father Sheehan had purchased Lot 41 in Summit in his own name, he now understandably wanted to be reimbursed by Bishop O’Connor for whose benefit the purchase had been made. That property was subsequently titled in O’Connor’s name by a deed from Father Sheehan dated October 16, 1857 and recorded two and one-half weeks later on November 4, 1857. The sales price to O’Connor was $250, the same amount that Sheehan had paid on his purchase of the property in 1856.

Another three years would pass before the bishop could sell Lot 41 in Summit that had operated as the seminary. On May 20, 1860, O’Connor executed a deed to Christian Reich, a shoemaker in Summit, for the lot. This stemmed from a defective legal description of the property in the previous deed from Sheehan to O’Connor. Sheehan’s release was recorded with O’Connor’s deed to Reich, thus clearing any title impediment and assuring Reich of “free and clear title” to Lot 41. The difference in the lot’s purchase price and sales price attests to (1) Sheehan/O’Connor’s apparently inflated purchase price reflecting their overvaluation of the property, (2) a subsequent reduction in property values in Summit by 1860 as that community declined in light of a shift in business development to nearby Cresson, (3) O’Connor’s lack of proper assistance from legal counsel and surveyors, and (4) the folly of assuming that investment in real estate is always profitable.

During the three-year interval between closure of the seminary at Summit (1857) and sale of the property (1860), the diocese continued to use the former seminary building for the clergy conferences held for the Eastern District, such as that conducted November 10-11, 1858.

The land transactions were inextricably intertwined with the Sheehan brothers. Severed from his presidency of the seminary and transferred to administer two rural parishes, Father Cornelius Sheehan remained in the diocese for only a year and then departed, never to return. By the time he was involved in the clearing of title to O’Connor’s Summit property in 1860, Cornelius Sheehan was residing in New York City. He would later relocate to Virginia, where he would die in 1875. The younger Patrick Sheehan was ordained in 1857 and immediately assigned as a professor at the relocated seminary — continuing the instructional role he had exercised at the Summit. That faculty assignment lasted but a year. Thereafter, his “career from that time was checkered, and unfortunately not always up to the standard of his sacred calling.” Father Patrick Sheehan left the diocese in 1870, later suing Bishop John Tuigg of Pittsburgh for salary in a highly publicized case that caused con-
siderable concern among the hierarchy. He ultimately lost in a decision rendered by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania in November 1882. Thus, the Summit experience proved to be disastrous in almost every respect.

Relocation to Glenwood in 1857
Bishop O’Connor’s realization of the need to move St. Michael’s Seminary from remote Summit in Cambria County led to his decision to return the institution to the immediate Pittsburgh area. Purchase of an acceptable site was a prerequisite to planning the relocation and arranging sale of the Summit site and the remaining timbered property in northern Cambria County. Thus, while the seminary continued to operate in Cambria County, the bishop proceeded to purchase a suitably-sized site, with the preferred rustic isolation but as close to the city of Pittsburgh as possible — at the lowest possible price.

The 1850s were a period of rapid growth in the Pittsburgh area. Fortunes were made and lost. Many properties were offered, or became available for sale, through advertisement and word of mouth. The bishop had a keen interest in real estate and was an adept negotiator. He was willing to consider any source that might yield a useable property. Hence, it was no surprise that he was willing to entertain purchase of suitable property at a sheriff’s sale.

The site the bishop was considering for seminary use was situated about five miles upriver from the Point (junction of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers that form the Ohio River). It was part of a larger tract of woodland that had been purchased for $10,000 under the 1768 Boundary Line Treaty of Fort Stanwix with Native Americans. In 1784, John Wood built an estate there called Hazel Hill — a name derived from the hazelnut trees that flourished along the Monongahela River. Over time, “wood” supplanted “hill” in the public’s reference to the site as “Hazelwood.” Later, large farms were developed on some of the land. But much of the land remained virgin forest. This area, then part of Peebles Township, lay on the eastern bank of the Monongahela River.

The property under consideration consisted of two contiguous parcels comprising a little over nine acres and extended from the riverbank, with the topography gradually ascending all the way to the base of what today is Squirrel Hill. The property was one of the first tracts of land carved out of the Ross farm and sold to several wealthy men who erected thereon in 1852 a large clubhouse called the Glen Hotel. The building was sited at the mouth of a beautiful glen which would be reflected in that immediate area’s designation as Glenwood. The club members used their influence to have Braddock’s Field Plank Road constructed through the farmland, bifurcating the property into northern and southern riverbank sides.

While some other hotels were built along the road, the Glen Hotel was unique. Located on the north side of the road, it was a members-only club replete with a manager (Joseph F. D. Keating). The Glen Hotel, located about 150 feet from the road, was a very large building with a frontage of 200 feet. A ten-foot-wide porch extended along the entire front of the building with porches at both ends. Two wings extended back from each side of the main building, creating a perfect U-shape. There was an open courtyard between these two wings of the building. There were several outer buildings, reflecting the fact that club’s members conducted horse races at an adjacent racetrack. The club was discontinued by early 1856, but Joseph Keating...
continued to operate the building as a summer hotel in 1856. The hotel was described as having the “most beautiful grounds and shade trees in front, and a most inviting lawn and grove in the rear, springs, arbors and swings have been supplied by nature and art.”

In fall 1856, a suit for partition between John W. Butler and Sarah T. Roggen and others resulted in issuance of an October 10, 1856 order from the Court of Common Pleas of Allegheny County for sale of the two Glenwood parcels containing the closed hotel. Pursuant to the court order, Allegheny County Sheriff Rody Patterson listed the aforesaid property for sale at public auction to be held at 7:30 p.m. at the Merchants Exchange on Friday, November 21, 1856. Bishop Michael O’Connor bid the winning amount of $6,600. The sheriff executed a deed to the bishop the same day. The property consisted of two parcels described in acreage and/or perches (a perch being a linear measure of 16 ½ feet). These parcels were: (1) 9 acres and 19.37 perches lying north of Braddock’s Field Plank Road, and (2) 82.42 perches along the Monongahela River and south of the Plank Road, with the beginning point beginning at a sycamore on the riverbank, along with (3) “uninterrupted use and privilege of a certain spring of water” and the right to convey the water by pipes.

The secular press gave prompt attention to the purchase. The Pittsburgh Gazette noted:

“The Glen Hotel.” This fine building, which was sold by the sheriff, a few days ago, for the small sum of $6,600, is about to pass into the hands of Bishop O’Connor, who proposes converting it into a seminary for the education of such Catholics as desire instruction in the higher branches of literature.

The attraction of this property was its large acreage complete with an immediately useable building. Its attractive rural setting would assure quiet privacy for students and faculty. Its existing use offered sizeable accommodations for over one hundred seminarians and faculty members. Modifications to add a chapel and library would be minimal. The location was convenient, with accessibility to the see city of Pittsburgh via a plank road and riverboats. The price was quite reasonable and the bishop’s timing was perfect since the purchase was consummated shortly before the Financial Panic of 1857 roiled the Pittsburgh economy. Nonetheless, the continued financial problems facing the diocese were evident in the fact that Bishop O’Connor had to incur additional debt to purchase the new seminary site.

Bishop O’Connor, as noted throughout, had a keen eye for real estate. Just as his earlier purchase of the Birmingham farm was made prior to the rapid change of that area’s farmland into residential and commercial plots, likewise his purchase in Glenwood anticipated that area’s later real estate boom.

Benjamin F. Jones, Sr., of the Pittsburgh and Connellsville Railroad (and later of Jones and Laughlin Steel Company) built the first railroad track to service the area in 1861. It was constructed inland so as to respect the residents’ concern about maintaining the river’s aesthetic value. The railroad thus separated Hazelwood into two sections, coining the local terms “below the tracks” and “above the tracks.” The property purchased by Bishop O’Connor was located on both sides of the tracks, but the hotel that would serve as the seminary building was “above the tracks” — in an idyllic area termed “Glenwood” which would also become the name of the nearby railroad passenger station.

The bishop’s purchase anticipated population growth in the area, which later warranted annexation to the city of Pittsburgh on June 30, 1868 as the 23rd Ward (today, the 15th Ward). By 1870, the railway and annexation spurred iron and steel industries, boatbuilding and river trade in Hazelwood “below the tracks.” Only in the 1870s was Braddock’s Field Plank Road between Hazelwood and downtown paved and renamed Second Avenue. The seminary “above the tracks” remained a virtually undisturbed oasis of virgin forests — perfect for the quiet solitude needed for the mix of studies and recreation of the seminarians.

While seminarians reported to Glenwood, most of the existing seminary faculty did not relocate. Father James O’Connor was again named president of St. Michael’s, with Father James Keogh as vice president and professor. Father Thomas Ryan served as the second professor. Senior seminarian Patrick Sheehan who had functioned as a professor at the Summit did relocate to Glenwood where he completed his studies and was subsequently ordained.

While a physical move coupled with a change in the seminary presidency and the introduction of two new faculty members may have been disruptive to the students, that inconvenience replaced the existing disadvantages of distance, winter weather, and the need to sell the Cambria County sites to cover the acquisition costs of the Glenwood property. And there was another pastoral advantage — the Glenwood building’s chapel would soon double as the Mass chapel for area Catholics who would later organize as St. Stephen of Hungary Parish.
Another Overture to the Benedictines

By the late 1850s, Michael O’Connor had served almost two decades as bishop of Pittsburgh and continued to consider retirement and entrance into the Jesuit order. Anticipating such a move, he signed a contract with Boniface Wimmer (now abbot of an exempt abbey) on April 19, 1859, binding the Benedictines to receive and educate seminarians of the Diocese of Pittsburgh that O’Connor and his successors would send. The document read as follows:

This Agreement made this 19th day of April, A.D. 1859, between the Benedictine Society of Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, of the first part and the Rt. Rev. M. O’Connor, Bishop of Pittsburgh, of the second part, witnessed that said Benedictine Society for and in consideration of sundry grants made to them by said Rt. Rev. M. O’Connor doth hereby bind itself to receive and educate in their seminary or college at St. Vincent’s Abbey, Westmoreland County, any students he may send them, to supply them with the same food and education received by other students in said seminary or college as their attitude will require for the sum of fifty dollars per annum. This sum shall be in payment of everything supplied by the Society itself but is exclusive of clothes and books. The students so received shall be bound to observe the rules of the college like all others and be liable to expulsion for misconduct for the same causes. This right so guaranteed to said Rt. Rev. M. O’Connor is guaranteed also to his heirs and successors, and to this the said Benedictine Society bind themselves and their successors.

Given the tumultuous history of St. Michael's Seminary, the bishop wished to provide a solid alternative for the education of diocesan seminarians in the event of future problems — whether finance, faculty, or location. To make his point, O’Connor then sent a number of seminarians from St. Michael's Seminary to St. Vincent’s in the fall of 1859 for one year; they resumed their studies at St. Michael’s in September 1860.

The future of the seminary became critically important to O’Connor in the final (but not yet disclosed to the diocese) year of his episcopal ministry in Pittsburgh. This is best illustrated by a declaration executed by the bishop on July 14, 1859, but not publicly recorded until December 15 of that same year. He had received $7,200 from the estates of Michael Tiernan and Thomas Cassidy “for the support of an Ecclesiastical Seminary or of Ecclesiastical students.” O’Connor had applied $5,000 of that bequest to purchase of the Glenwood seminary site. The bishop pledged property he personally owned between Fifth and Sixth Streets downtown in trust to cover his withdrawal of $300 yearly from the remainder of the bequest. Clearly, the latter yearly withdrawals would be applied for the benefit of the seminarians.

To address the ongoing financial support needs of St. Michael's Seminary, O’Connor had already agreed to admission of lay students who would provide necessary financial stabilization of the seminary. The bishop made this point clear in an article placed in the July 3, 1858 issue of the Catholic — at the close of the seminary’s first year in Glenwood:

The seminary, as our readers are aware, is not intended solely for the education of students in the higher branches of Theology and Philosophy, particular attention is paid to the Preparatory Department, in which those boys who by their good disposition, exemplary conduct, or otherwise, give hopes of their being called by God to the Priesthood, receive that elementary training, in the English and classical branches, which is commonly given in our best Colleges. We are pleased to be able to say that the number of students of this Department during the past year, is such as to afford well founded hopes of a permanent success.

Clearly the prominent article was intended to serve as an advertisement to encourage Catholic parents to enroll their sons in the Preparatory Department of St. Michael's Seminary. It would provide both much needed income for the seminary and an enlarged pool from which some students would opt for the priesthood.

Life and Community at the Seminary

There is minimal evidence available from which to reconstruct the educational curriculum of St. Michael's Seminary. We know that the seminarians studied dogmatic theology, moral theology, scripture, church history and canon law. With two exceptions, we do not know what textbooks they used. Within days of his arrival in Pittsburgh with his first seminarians in December 1843, O’Connor requested “ten copies of the Bp’s. Theologiae Moralisi and Theologiae Dogmaticae, All that were here are disposed of.”

This was a reference to Philadelphia Bishop Francis P. Kenrick’s Theologiae Morali and Theologiae Dogmaticae, which he published between 1839 and 1843 as critical tools in the teaching of his seminarians. Kenrick, like O’Connor, was a graduate of the Urban College of Propaganda Fide and possessed one of the finest theological educations. The difficulty of obtaining suitable books from Europe led Kenrick to author texts that accommodated the American situation, since unchanging moral
principles need application to various circumstances. In short, he attempted to carry on a discipline developed in Europe in an American setting:

American seminaries needed texts suited to their needs, and [Kenrick] responded with the manuals of moral theology that followed a sketch laid out in the Ratio Studiorum of the Jesuits, included some questions from the prima secundae of Aquinas’ Summa and then attended to a wide variety of cases of conscience ordered according to the commandments, the sacraments, and censures.

O’Connor, who had served as rector of the Philadelphia seminary under Kenrick, clearly saw that these texts would be of enormous value in training “missionaries” to minister to both native Americans and immigrants.

The seminarians at St. Michael’s could not have studied these areas in great depth since the entire course of theological studies seems to have lasted for only two years generally. The students had one or two classes a day, and some of the more advanced students acted as teachers to younger students. They would be ordained to the priesthood when the bishop and the seminary president, who had been placed in charge of their training, decided that they had acquired the knowledge necessary for their future work. Published histories of American Catholic seminaries of that time note the absence of such documentation, reflective of the challenging efforts to open and maintain a seminary and to obtain and retain a faculty in a missionary country where daily challenges facing bishops and the small number of clergy did not facilitate historical record keeping.

Bishop O’Connor was a regular visitor at the seminary during its periods of location at Birmingham and Glenwood. This European-trained prelate (like his successor, Bishop Michael Domenec) lived out the directives of the Council of Trent with respect to his seminarians. While limited residential opportunities necessitated that seminarians stay initially in Bishop O’Connor’s own rented residence, later developments took the increasing number of seminarians to their own building(s), sometimes at a considerable distance. The Catholic mentions only one visit by the bishop to the Summit but describes several of the bishop’s visits to St. Michael’s in its Birmingham and Glenwood locations. Ordinations of seminarians to minor orders, subdiaconate, diaconate, and priesthood normally took place at St. Paul Cathedral. There are no mentions of such ceremonies — or of Benediction, Vespers, or Pontifical Masses — at the seminary. This can be explained by the lack of a true chapel in Birmingham and a modestly sized chapel in Glenwood. As will be noted below, this stands in sharp contrast with Bishop Domenec’s approach, especially following construction of an addition with enlarged chapel to the Glenwood building.

Interaction between seminarians and diocesan priests occurred naturally in the early period when seminarians lived at the bishop’s residence near the cathedral. Participating priests would have encountered seminarians during liturgical ceremonies and informally while visiting at the bishop’s residence. The two suspensions of seminary operations when seminarians were sent outside the diocese frustrated interaction with Pittsburgh priests. The isolation of seminarians at the Summit severely limited contacts with diocesan priests. Reopening of the seminary at Glenwood opened new possibilities for contacts. O’Connor, unlike his successor, did not hold clergy retreats at the seminary. The potential for interaction between priests and their future colleagues was stronger for those students who did not return home during the summer months — and that would have been the case for immigrant students.

Ecclesiastical events provided varied opportunities for interaction between seminarians and priests, of which the following are examples. Holy Thursday ceremonies in 1858 were held at St. Paul Cathedral with Bishop John H. Luers of Fort Wayne officiating (in the absence of Bishop O’Connor). Seminarian Frederick Seneca of St. Michael’s Seminary acted as sub-deacon, while “the students of St. Michael’s Seminary also assisted in the ceremonies.” Seminarians were present at the funeral of Father Thomas McCullagh, first priest ordained in Pittsburgh in 1844 after completing his ecclesiastical studies at the bishop’s new seminary (in the bishop’s residence), who died prematurely in June 1859 at age thirty-nine. McCullagh had served, beginning in 1846, as president of St. Michael’s.

The seminary’s president and faculty were frequently in demand as speakers, such as at the opening of St. Francis Academy in Loretto on February 12, 1857. Bishop O’Connor held a diocesan synod at the seminary, rather than at the traditional location of St. Paul Cathedral, on August 12, 1858.

The staffing of the seminary was not exclusively clerical. Bishop O’Connor appointed Mrs. Milburg Kean (1798-1878) as matron at St. Michael’s. She was the granddaughter of Captain Michael McGuire (1717-1793) of Revolutionary War fame, who was the first settler in Cambria County and the donor of land to Prince Demetrius Gallitzin for the establishment of the Catholic community of Loretto in Cambria County. Gallitzin officiated at her marriage, baptized her five children, and counseled her when she became a widow at age thirty. O’Connor had selected Mrs. Kean to manage St. Paul’s Orphan
Asylum in the interval between the departure of the Sisters of Charity and the arrival of the Sisters of Mercy. Her duties at the seminary would have been to provide administrative support to the president and oversee the domestic affairs of the seminary (the provision of food, medical, and laundry services, with attendant budgetary responsibilities). The term “matron” is derived from the Latin word *mater* (mother) and aptly describes Kean’s responsibilities as “mother” to hundreds of seminarians (and resident priests) over time.201

**Examinations**

Post-elementary education in the latter half of the nineteenth century was rigorous. The European format of lectures with written examinations and oral examinations by faculty, often in front of other academics or the public, was the norm. In ecclesiastical education, the developed Roman system of public disputations, where students were presented with certain theses in the subject matter (theology, history, etc.) and subjected to questioning by faculty — and at times by members of the audience in attendance — was carried over to the nascent American seminaries by officials such as Bishop O’Connor, who had been both a student and a professor in Rome. He introduced that teaching approach to St. Michael’s Seminary. Many of the seminary professors had experienced that system and replicated it at St. Michael’s.

O’Connor’s successor, Bishop Michael Domenec — who had also been trained in that system in Europe and had utilized it at the three American seminaries he supervised as a Vincentian prior to episcopal ordination — was quite comfortable with the system. Discharging their episcopal responsibilities as established by the Council of Trent with respect to seminary training, both bishops personally attended and participated in the examinations held at the end of each semester. All students (including the Preparatory Department) were subjected to written and oral examinations, but students in philosophy and theology were examined in the disputation fashion. Presented with certain theses, each student would be challenged by other students, who would contest the theses; clergy who were present (including the bishop) would then enter the contest to test the student’s knowledge of the subject matter and his ability to withstand oral challenges. The degree of mastery demonstrated would attest to both the quality of the faculty’s instruction as well as to the intelligence and educational application by the student. Medals would be awarded. Those students who demonstrated exceptional talent would typically be sent to Rome for continuation of ecclesiastical studies; this increasingly became the case after the opening of the North American College in the Eternal City in 1859.

An example of this approach was provided in a newspaper article that reported, but did not translate, the December 1859 examinations in Latin:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At the close of the Christmas examination, at St. Michael's Seminary, the following theses were defended by Mr. P. Ward, Messrs. E. A. Bush and J. A. Canavin, arguing against them in scholastic form.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. <em>Quae per intuitionem immediatam, vel semilem vel rationalem, cognoscimus, tanquam certa et vera ommino sunt admittenda.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. <em>Conclusionibus, quae per ratiocinia materialiter et formaliter recta derivantur, falsum abesse nequit.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. <em>Auctoritas humana, requisitis ornata conditionibus, in rebus facti persaepe veri nomina gignit certitudinem.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. <em>Falsum est omnia in philosophia esse demonstranda; aliqua enim sunt principia per se clara atque evidentia. Methodus tamen, qui Cartesius ex principio illo inconcusso, Cogita ergo sum, alias omnes veritates deducere valuit, non videtur probanda.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. <em>Judicia quaedam ad hominum vitam physicam vel moralem regendam tendentia, quae seper, ubique et ab omnibus admissa sunt, cum nonnisi ex natura rationali oriis potuerint, ceu vera sunt habenda; attamen, sensus naturae communis, tanquam instinctus rationalis mentum ad assensum impelliens, sine ulla motivorum consideratione, respendendus est prosus; muto etiam minus in consensu totius humani generis primum ac absolutum certitudinis principium reponi potest.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. <em>Certitudinis ultima ratio reponenda est in evidentia objectiva, quae ab intellectu apprehendatur.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The December 1859 examinations lasted two days. Clergy attended the first day’s exams and one of the priests reported to the Catholic their collective satisfaction with the proficiency of the students. Answering in the Preparatory Department was not just “very good” but “admirable.” The reporter noted that:

The thesis, which we give below, were assailed and defended in regular scholastic form, with a free and fluent use of syllogism and distinction, for which we were not prepared. It was easy to see that the Theology classes at St. Michael’s are conducted on the plan of the best European colleges and, indeed, we have often heard worse arguing and a worse defence in some of the time-honored institutions of the old world, than were made at the Seminary, on Thursday. When the regular arguers had done their best, the clergymen present were invited to try a lance against the faith of the defendant. One entered the lists, and pressed the used-up middle term of one of the arguers, by two additional subsumpta; but only to be distinguished to death, like his predecessors. Mr. Ward defended on the occasion, and Messrs. Bush, Tobin, and Burke argued.

| I. | Non uno in loco S. S. Litterae unicum divinam in tribus realiter distinctis personis subsistere doceut. |
| II. | Preclarum vero imprimit exsurget argumentum ad hoc dogma capitale nostrae religionis firmandum, si Joh. x. 30 cum Joh. v. 7 conferamus. |
| III. | Vocabulum Trinitatus iam ab secundo rei Christianae saeculo adlibetur ad numerum Divinarum personarum significandum: tam aera vero est hujus Trinitatis in unitatem recapitulatio, ut licet Filius alius a Patre dicatur nullo modo eum aliud a Patre praedicare fas sit. |
| IV. | Cum, monente Apostolo, proprietas servanda sit sanorum verborum, statuimus cum Angelico Praeceptore, nomina substantiva essentiam significantia, de tribus personis singulariter tantum esse praedicanda, adjectiva, e contra, in plurali, nomina essentialia concreta pro persona supponere posse, non ita autem nomina abstracta quae ad essentiam pertineant. |
| V. | Septem sunt N. Legis Sacramenta a Christo Domino Nostro instituta. |
| VI. | Quae non solum gratiae significandae vin habent, verum eam non ponentibus obiciem conferunt ex opere operato. |
| VII. | Inter haec numeramus Ordinem, quo spiritualis traditur potestas, sacramenta conficiendi et conferendi, aeteraque munia Ecclesiastica rite obeundi. |
| VIII. | Haec praecipue de Sacerdotio N. Legis asserimus quod solis Apostolis proprium, non omnibus fidelibus commune ritu externo in saeculi usque finem propagandum, a Christo fuit institutum. |

Seminary Stability at Last
Location of the seminary at Glenwood brought stability to the institution. The existence of both preparatory and theological departments, the enlargement of the seminary faculty with its degreed members, and the ease of access to the seminary in its new location on a river adjacent to the see city proved attractive to both bishops and seminarians in other dioceses. The bishops of Erie and Fort Wayne sent their seminarians to St. Michael’s for ecclesiastical training, and young men on their own came to the seminary for an education.

But the deciding influence was Bishop Michael O’Connor himself. His reputation as a Roman-trained seminary rector and educator, his assembly of a qualified faculty that included Roman-trained priests with pontifical degrees, and his role in drafting seminary legislation for the Provincial Council of Baltimore combined with the geographical accessibility of Pittsburgh.
(thanks to its rivers and the developing railroad system) attracted students from the eastern and mid-western United States
to St. Michael’s.

Just as Pittsburgh was a major destination for immigrants, so it also proved to be a destination for those seeking to become
priests. Some would receive their entire ecclesiastical education at St. Michael’s; others transferred from seminaries to com-
plete their education; and some would study at St. Michael’s for a time before moving on to another of the few diocesan
seminaries or before entering a religious order such as the Benedictines, Passionists, Redemptorists, or Jesuits.

The problems that Bishop O’Connor faced were not unique among the early American dioceses. Most bishops of newly
established sees had quickly established seminaries in their own residences as had O’Connor at the beginning. All faced the
same issues of physical accommodations, lack of faculty, finances, and the necessity of the bishop personally instructing
students or drawing priests from parochial assignments to teach. Unlike Pittsburgh, most other dioceses operated seminaries
for very small numbers of students.

**Resignation of Bishop O’Connor**

After almost two decades of further reflection on his original plan to join the Jesuits, Michael O’Connor finally acted. He
left for Rome in mid-July 1859 to present his resignation to Roman authorities, leaving his brother Father James O’Connor
as administrator of the diocese in his absence. After considerable lobbying, the bishop obtained papal approval on May 23,
1860, after signing a formal resignation letter dated May 20, 1860. Rome’s announcement of the bishop’s resignation was
received back in Pittsburgh, to which he had returned, on June 15. Rumors of his impending resignation had been circu-
lating in Pittsburgh for some time. O’Connor published a valedictory in the _Catholic_ on June 18 — having already departed
for New York.

The trustees of St. Paul Cathedral then proceeded to convene a meeting of the cathedral congregation and obtained ap-
proval of an address to recognize the heroic contribution of the first bishop of Pittsburgh — particularly as regards the
establishment of St. Michael’s Seminary. That address read in pertinent part:

> St. Michael’s Seminary, too, the work of your hands, blessed with that success peculiar to all you have un-
dertaken in the cause of religion, and now unmistakably promising to become the fruitful source of the
Gospel to dispense the blessings of religion throughout the diocese.205

The laity clearly appreciated the importance of St. Michael’s Seminary and Bishop O’Connor’s continuous efforts over sev-
enteen years to establish and sustain its ecclesiastical program.

At the time of O’Connor’s departure from Pittsburgh in June 1860, he wrote to the Paris Council of the Society for the
Propagation of the Faith and presented the results of the priority he gave to providing priests for his missionary diocese,
to which the establishment and operation of St. Michael’s Seminary was key: he had increased the number of priests in the
Diocese of Pittsburgh to eighty-two from the original fifteen — not counting those ceded to the Diocese of Erie upon its
establishment in 1853, nor the more than twenty priests who left to enter religious orders or serve in other dioceses, nor the
many priests who had died during his tenure. Moreover, he noted that many seminarians had left for other jurisdictions as they
neared the completion of their studies at St. Michael’s Seminary, yet the number of seminarians had grown to 40 and were
being educated in an excellent seminary.206 If Michael O’Connor had accomplished nothing else during his seventeen-year
episcopate, this one achievement surpassed all others in importance.
Endnotes for Chapter I. The Rise of Seminaries:


3. Traditionally, the first seminary was St. John ordained Polycarp (ca. 69-ca. 155) as bishop of Smyrna, which position he held for some six decades, from the close of the first century to the mid-second century. Ignatius (ca. 35-ca. 108) later served as bishop of Antioch.


6. The statement frequently made (see Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. 13 [New York: Robert Appleton Co., 1912], 695) that Pole’s decree was the first time that the word seminarius was used to designate a school exclusively devoted to the training of the clergy, is no longer held to be true.


9. Borromeo presented principles of seminary formation in his Institutiones ad universam seminarii regimen pertinentes, which would influence the conduct of seminaries.

10. The English and the Irish denominated their continental seminaries as “colleges.”


Endnotes for Chapter II. The Development of Seminaries in the United States:


3. This type of seminary included such institutions as the Philosophical and Classical Seminary of the Diocese of Charleston, which was opened in 1822 by Bishop John England.


5. John Baptist Mary David had been a professor and interim president of St. Mary’s Seminary in Baltimore.

6. W. J. Howlett, Historical Tribute to St. Thomas’ Seminary at Poplar Neck, Near Bardstown, Kentucky (Saint Louis: Herder, 1906), 26; M. J. Spalding, Sketches of the Early Catholic Missions of Kentucky from their Commencement in 1787, to the Jubilee of 1826-7 (Louisville: J. Webb & Brother, 1844), 189; J. Herman Schauinger, Cathedrals in the Wilderness (Milwaukee: Bruce Publisher, Co., 1952), 1, 20-51, 42, 55; Dixie Hibbs, Basilica of St. Joseph Proto Cathedral Founded in 1816: St. Joseph College 1819-1889 Bardstown, Kentucky (New Hope, KY: St. Martin de Porres Print Shop, 2016), 3. Flaget was no stranger to Pittsburgh, having ministered as a priest to Catholics in the town in May-November 1792 due to travel conditions that prevented him from heading west to his destination at Fort Vincennes in Indiana. It was during this initial stay in Pittsburgh that the future bishop learned English.

7. The Benedictine plan for an American seminary to provide German clergy in the United States was presented by Rev. Boniface Wimmer, O.S.B., prefect of the Hollandium (a boarding school under royal patronage) in Munich, Bavaria in an article entitled “Uber die Missionen,” Augsburger Postzeitung, November 8, 1845.
Endnotes for Chapter III. The Diocese of Pittsburgh:

1. The text of the papal bull appears in Donald C. Shearer, Pontificia Americana: A Documentary History of the Catholic Church in the United States (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, 1933), 216-218.


5. Szarnicki, Michael O’Connor, 34.

6. The Jesuits’ Woodstock Letters recount the story of O’Connor’s rise to the episcopate in these words: “Thus, the heavy honors of the Church were accepted through obedience, and instead of washing dishes at S. Andrea [at Quirinale, the Jesuit Church in Rome serving the Jesuit seminary novitiate], the would-be novice is crowned with a mitre at S. Agatha [the church of the Irish College in Rome, in which O’Connor was ordained bishop]. “Father Michael O’Connor,” Woodstock Letters, vol. 2 (Woodstock, MD: Woodstock College, 1873), 62.

7. Three mission aid societies had been formed in Europe:

(1) The Society for the Propagation of the Faith: Venerable Pauline-Marie Jaricot (1799-1862) founded the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in 1822 in Lyon, France as a charitable organization to support the missions worldwide. Her brother, who was a student at the Seminary of Saint Sulpice in Paris, spurred Jaricot’s interest. A Council governed the Society in Lyon. A Council was short-lived thereafter organized in Paris — and these became the two French organizations to which missionary bishops such as Michael O’Connor would direct requests for financial assistance. The Diocese of Pittsburgh would receive from the Society $85,600 between 1843-1866 (comprising the entire administration of Bishop O’Connor and the first half of the administration of his successor, Bishop Michael Domenec).

The Society published its yearly Annales de la Propagation de la Foi (Annals), which provided a record of its income and its expenditures. (2) Leopoldinen Stiftung: The Leopoldine Foundation — named after Maria Leopoldina of Austria, daughter of the Holy Roman Emperor and the Empress of Brazil — was established, with the support of both the Church and the Austrian imperial family, in Vienna in 1829 for the purpose of aiding Catholic missions in North America. Its published works were the Berichte der Leopoldinen-Stiftung im Kaiserthume Oesterreich. (3) Ludwig-Missionsverein: This society was established in the Kingdom of Bavaria in 1838 to support the missions in North America and Asia — under the oversight of the Archbishop of Munich and Freising. It published the Annalen der Glaubens-und Missionskunde. Between 1843-1851, the Diocese of Pittsburgh received $1,119. Boniface Wimmer’s St. Vincent Seminary near Latrobe received $12,200 during the same period. Theodore Roemer, Ten Decades of Alms (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1942), 121-122.


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14 The “Royal College of St. Patrick” was established by an Act of the Parliament of Ireland in 1795 to provide a university education for ecclesiastical and lay students. Until then, seminarians had been educated on the European continent due to penal laws against the Catholic Irish. The institution’s principal histories are: (1) Patrick J. Corish, Maynooth College 1795-1995 (Dublin: Gill & MacMillan, 1994), (2) Jeremiah Newman, St. Patrick’s Col- lege Maynooth (Dublin: Eason & Son, 1984), (3) John Healy, Maynooth College: Its Centenary History 1795-1895 (Dublin: Browne & Nolan, 1895), and (4) Salvador Ryan and John-Paul Sheridan, ed., We Remember Maynooth: A College Across Four Centuries (Dublin: Messenger Publications, 2020).

15 The visit to Maynooth and the ensuing developments are described in Tobias Mullen, Reminiscences of The Rev. Thomas McCullagh, of the Diocese of Pittsburg (New York: Office of the Metropolitical Record, 1861) [The greater part of the memoir had appeared in the columns of New York’s Metropol- itan Record in the summer of 1860]. The students who accompanied O’Connor to Pittsburgh were Thomas McCullagh, Peter Brown, Tobias Mullen (future bishop of Erie), Patrick Duffy, Thomas B. O’Flaherty, John C. Brady, Hugh Gallagher, Cornelius McGrath, and Michael J. Mitchell (who joined the party in Philadelphia). Few appear in the published matriculation records of Maynooth by Patrick J. Hamell, Maynooth Students and Ordinations Index 1795-1895 (Maynooth: Cardinal Press, 1982). There is some dispute as to the number of initial seminarians that accompanied O’Connor; the original history of the Sisters of Mercy gives the number as six. See Memoirs of the Pittsburgh Sisters of Mercy Compiled from Various Sources 1843-1917 (New York: Devin-Adair Co., 1918), 10.

16 Szarnicki, Michael O’Connor, 39-40.


19 Until this present work, no comprehensive history of St. Michael’s Seminary has been written. Only three brief treatments of the seminary’s history have reached print: (1) “St. Michael’s Preparatory and Theological Seminary” in Lambing, Brief Biographical Sketches, 324-325, (2) “St. Michael’s Theological and Preparatory Seminary” in Lambing, History, 470-473, and (3) “St. Michael’s Seminary,” Pittsburgh Catholic, September 22, 1910, 20. The Archives of the Diocese of Pittsburgh contain two manuscript histories: (1) Thomas S. O’Connor, “The Life of the Diocesan Seminary in Western Pennsylvania” of ten pages, and (2) James Sullivan, “St. Michael’s Diocesan Seminary” of eleven pages. Both restate Lambing’s published histories relating to the seminary.

Endnotes for Chapter IV. St. Michael’s Seminary — The Years of Bishop Michael O’Connor:

1 “Statistics of the Catholic Church, in the City of Pittsburgh and Vicinity,” Harris’ Business Directory of the Cities of Pittsburgh and Allegheny, 1844 (Pittsburgh: A. A. Andersen, 1844), 60-61. Inclusion of Father Tobias Mullen indicates that the Directory was published after the latter’s ordination on September 1, 1844. The seminarians are not listed.

2 The remnants of the burial ground survives in the courtyard of Trinity Catholic, in the block between Wood and Smithfield Streets. Virgin Alley was renamed Oliver Avenue in 1904 for iron and steel magnate Henry W. Oliver (1840-1904) and extended from Liberty Avenue to Grant Street, between Fifth and Sixth Avenues. William G. Lytle, Jr., “Downtown Property, Purchased in 1788 for 12 Pounds, Assessed at $1,686,400,” Pittsburgh Press, August 10, 1930, Society Section, 8; Albert M. Tannler, “D. H. Burnham & Company in Pittsburgh,” PHLF News 175 (April 2009), 16-21.


4 Lambing, Brief Biographical Sketches, 324; Lambing, History, 63.

5 Secular references to the year of establishment of the seminary vary. For example: First Century of National Existence: the United States as They Were and Are … With an Appendix, Giving the Progress of All the Religious Denominations and Sects, Their Peculiar Doctrines and Ordinances, Their Forms of Church Government, Mode of Worship, &c., &c. (Hartford, CN: L. Stebbins, 1875), in the chapter entitled “Education and Educational Institutions,” provides a Report of the Commissioner of Education that gives Statistics of Theological Seminaries and includes “No. 95. St. Michael’s Semi- nary of Pittsburgh,” in The United States Historical Collections, 4, January 1845, 66.


7 Lambing, “Thoughts on Ecclesiastical Seminaries,” Pittsburgh Catholic, December 29, 1888, 4-5.

8 Bishop O’Connor incorporated the word Catholic into the newspaper’s name to convey the militant character he thought necessary for the paper. In an era of rampant religious bigotry, that was a daring move. The Diocese of Pittsburgh did not own the Catholic since O’Connor preferred to have laymen own and operate the enterprise; capital to start the paper came from seventy-eight founding members. Nonetheless, the paper is identified herein as “diocesan” since O’Connor (and his immediate successors) supervised the paper’s editorial operations and appointed an advisory board of priests. P. F. Boylan was the first printer and publisher.

9 While the paper’s first issue on April 6, 1844 carried the name Pittsburgh Catholic, thereafter the city’s name was frequently omitted from its mast head and was at times spelled without the “h.” When the city officially spelled its name without the “h” between 1890 and 1911, the paper continued to include the “h.” Given these variations in the paper’s name, Pittsburgh Catholic and Catholic are interchangeably used in the text and Pittsburgh Catholic is uniformly used in the endnotes.

10 Other ordinations followed at irregular intervals: William Creeden on June 6, 1847. “Ordination,” Pittsburgh Catholic, June 19, 1847, 108. Many of these priests would in time leave the Pittsburgh diocese for other American dioceses.

12 Real estate investment ventures were integral to O’Connor’s financing of the expansion of the diocese. In 1852, O’Connor sought to convince the newly arrived Passionists to accept as the location of their new monastery the twenty acres that he had set aside from his purchase of fifty acres in Lawrenceville for St. Mary Cemetery. That acreage was “set aside to be sold to defray the cost of the entire purchase.” The Passionists declined the offer, and the bishop sold the twenty acres that would constitute Allegheny Cemetery. Cassian J. Yuhaus, *Compelled to Speak: The Passionists in America — Origin and Apostolate* (New York: Newman Press, 1967), 46.

13 Pittsburg Catholic, June 15, 1844, 108.

14 Subscriptions produced only $2,000. The *Account of Subscriptions towards erecting an Episcopalian residence and Ecclesiastical Seminary 1844* survives in the diocesan Archives. The 48-page ledger evidences that the typical financial commitment of a parishioner was $1 to $2, with some in the $5 to $10 range, and one committing to $300.

15 The following year, O’Connor would himself buy farmland in Lower St. Clair Township, with a portion set aside for ecclesiastical uses (St. Paul of the Cross Monastery, St. Michael Church complex, and a residence that would successively serve the Presentation Brothers and St. Michael’s Seminary); the remainder of the land was sold. Lambing, *Brief Biographical Sketches*, 324. Those developments are detailed below.


18 Pittsburgh Catholic, June 29, 1844, 125.

19 Ibid.

20 The *Annals of the Society* include this entry in the Society’s record of distributions to the missions in 1844: “To the Right Rev. Dr. O’Connor, Bishop of Pittsburg 26,000 fr. — *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith, For the Year 1845*, vol. 6 (London: Published for the Institution, 1845), 146.


23 *Pittsburgh Catholic*, June 29, 1844, 124.

24 For the years of O’Connor’s episcopate (1843-1860), the *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith: A Periodical Collection of Letters from the Bishops and Missionaries Employed in the Missions of the Old and New World*, vol. 5-14, for the years 1844-1853 were published in English in London by the Institution. Beginning in 1854, the *Annals* were published in Dublin for the Central Committee of the Association for Ireland, with a renumbered volume series — which accounts for the difference in volume numbers in the accompanying chart.

25 Roemer, *Ten Decades of Alms*, 121; Roemer, *The Ludwig-Missionsverein*, 106-107, 62. Roemer treated the gulden given to O’Connor as equivalent to $1,119. Alms from Bavaria resumed under O’Connor’s successor; ultimately, the Bavarian society provided the Pittsburgh diocese with $9,000 (not including direct aid to German parishes and religious orders) during the first three decades of its existence (1843-1868). Roemer, *Ten Decades of Alms*, 121, 129.


27 “To the Congregation of St. Paul’s Church,” *Pittsburgh Catholic*, October 5, 1844, 237.

28 The legislation of diocesan synods prior to 1854 has not survived. While it is possible that a synod prior to 1854 directed an annual seminary collection, there is no surviving corroboration in the diocesan archives or the diocesan newspaper.


30 Father Wilson was also serving St. Benedict’s Congregation for Colored Catholics, which he had started with a frame building on Smithfield Street (near Diamond Street) for their use. The Black Catholic population was estimated to total about twenty out of three thousand. This effort lasted less than one year and ended with Father Wilson’s departure. *Pittsburgh Catholic*, October 23, 1941, 2.

31 Michael O’Connor to Paul Cullen, Pittsburgh, August 1844, in “Papers Relating to the Church in America: From the Portfolio of the Irish College at Rome, First Series,” *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society*, no. 3 (September 1896), 360. Cullen (1803-1878) was rector of the Irish College in Rome, and later became rector of the *College de Propaganda Fide*, archbishop of Armagh, archbishop of Dublin, and Ireland’s first cardinal.

32 Michael O’Connor to Paul Cullen, Pittsburgh, August 27, 1844, in *Ibid.*, 354. Wilson took a brief parochial assignment in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, and then left for the Diocese of Philadelphia. He died in Matanzas, Cuba on August 16, 1856. ADP.


34 Michael O’Connor to Paul Cullen, Pittsburgh, August 1844, in “Papers Relating to the Church in America,” 360.

35 Rybolt, *The American Vincentians*, 125, 168. The rural site for the minor seminary was the future St. Vincent Archabbey property in Westmoreland County. Separate seminaries would not have been possible, given issues of finance and faculty.

36 Michael O’Connor to Paris Council of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, Pittsburgh (June 21, 1844), as summarized in Szarnicki, *Michael O’Connor*, 192. O’Connor stressed that this appeal was for financial assistance over and above what he had previously requested. The increasingly expensive seminary program would not ultimately be favorably received by the Society.


38 Lambing, *Brief Biographical Sketches*, 71-75. The 1969 revision of the General Roman Calendar transferred the feast of St. Vincent de Paul from July 19 to September 27.

39 Francis Patrick Kennrick, *Diary and Visitations Record of the Rt. Rev. Francis Patrick Kennrick, Administrator and Bishop of Philadelphia 1830-1851*. Later Archbishop of Baltimore, ed. Francis E. Tourscher (Lancaster, PA: Wickersham Printing Co., 1916), 18, 210. While at St. Vincent’s, Bishop Kennrick wrote on July 16, 1842 to Father John Timon, superior of the Vincentians, about staffing the planned seminary. As noted above, O’Connor revisited the idea with Timon in 1844, but with the seminary to be located in Pittsburgh.

40 Michael O’Connor to James O’Connor, Cambria County, September 16, 1844, as quoted in Szarnicki, *Michael O’Connor*, 56.

41 John Baptist Purcell (1800-1833) served as second bishop and first archbishop of Cincinnati. See Sr. Mary Agnes McCann, *Archbishop Purcell and the Archdiocese of Cincinnati: A Study Based on Original Sources* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1918).


Davis had purchased the property from John McKee by deed dated August 4, 1835 and recorded August 5, 1835 in the Office of the Recorder of Deeds of Allegheny County (now the Department of Real Estate of Allegheny County, hereinafter cited as DREAC) in Deed Book Vol. 49, 172. The purchase price was $8,800. That deed’s legal description identified the acreage as part of the “Coal Hill Lots marked in the Plan of Sidneyville.” Davis fell into debt and a subsequent collection action in the name of Common Pleas of Allegheny County led to issuance of an order to the sheriff to sell Davis’s property at auction.

Deed from “High Sheriff” Elijah Trovillo to George Rapp dated August 1, 1845 and recorded on January 20, 1846 in DREAC in Deed Book Vol. 72, 344.

Deed from George Rapp to Michael O’Connor, dated January 16, 1846 and recorded on January 20, 1846 in DREAC in Deed Book Vol. 72, 346. Typical of real estate entrepreneurs of the time, Rapp only recorded the sheriff’s “incoming” deed to him (executed almost six months earlier) immediately before recording the “outgoing” deed to O’Connor.

Lambing, History, 64. Lambing described the bishop’s purchase of the Rapp property in these words: [T]he bishop had purchased a large farm on the side and top of the hill south of Birmingham, known at present as Mt. Oliver, for which he paid, I believe, $16,000. It was a profitable investment; for afterwards perhaps $100,000 worth of building lots had been sold, the balance was assessed before the panic at $162,000. St. Michael’s Church, the Franciscan Convent, and the Passionist Monastery stand on part of it.

Ibid., 64-65. Lambing stated an incorrect purchase price; the cumulative sales figure was also likely inflated.


See deed from Michael O’Connor to Anthony Calandri et al. [in trust for the Society of Passionists] dated May 27, 1853 and recorded June 7, 1853 in DREAC in Deed Book Vol. 108, 102. The legal description opens with recital of the starting point between land of the Ormsby heirs and property owned by O’Connor. There is no mention of an O’Connor Plan or even mention of any lot numbers.

By the late 1700s, the south side of the Monongahela River became known for its rich deposit of coal — the “Pittsburgh Seam” that stretched for...
miles. Mining of bituminous coal on “Coal Hill” began in 1762. A plan of lots for Coal Hill was mapped out in 1785. Later iterations followed; some were filed after recordation of plans began on October 27, 1809. See, e.g., these recorded documents in DREAC: (1) Coal Hill Lots Plan in Plan Book Vol. 1, 11, (2) Coal Hill Lots Plan executed September 5, 1805 and filed September 7, 1853 in Plan Book Vol. 2, 48, (3) Thomas McKee Plan filed August 6, 1857 in Plan Book Vol. 2, 103, and (4) Edward M. Yard Plan filed March 1, 1859 in Plan Book Vol. 2, 129, which includes part of the O’Connor land tract, particularly as to the Piuss Street area.

The absence of any reference in these recorded plans to an O’Connor Plan substantiates the present author’s conclusion as to the non-recordation of any plan devised by O’Connor. Rather, it appears that O’Connor sold sections of the Rapp property, leaving it to those purchasers to record plans that either conformed to the bishop’s survey lay-out of streets in the former Rapp property or to devise their own named plan for the property they purchased from O’Connor.

The first recorded episcopal plan for O’Connor’s property in Lower St. Clair Township was Bishop Tuigg’s 1882 “Plan of Building Lots” — but that included only the remnant unsold portion west, north, and south of the Passionist Monastery and St. Michael’s Church. Nonetheless, an “O’Connor Plan” survives in lore, and there are instances where nineteenth and early twentieth century legal descriptions in South Side properties contain references such as “line of other lots laid out by Right Rev. Bishop O’Connor” but contain no recordation reference to an O’Connor Plan of Lots. See, e.g., deed of Robert Duncan to John Henshaw recorded August 15, 1853 in DREAC in Deed Book Vol. 109, 489.

O’Connor conveyed the unsold remainder of the Rapp acreage to Bishop Domenecc. Some atlases thereafter identified the plan area under Domenecc’s name. Domenecc conveyed the remaining acreage to Bishop John Tuigg, who revised the original O’Connor plan in December 1881 and filed a “Plan of Building Lots” on November 6, 1882 in DREAC in Plan Book Vol. 6, 295. DREAC incorrectly indexes Tuigg’s Plan under “Tuigg.”

The Tuigg plan makes clear that O’Connor’s purchase from Rapp entitled “the Slopes” rather than “the Flats” and that O’Connor had sold large tracts of land to establish (1) St. Michael parish complex, (2) St. Paul of the Cross Monastery complex, and (3) St. Michael’s Cemetery, in addition to various individual lots around St. Michael Church. Tuigg’s plan encompassed the large undeveloped remainder, stretching from Amanda Street in the west to Winter Park in the east, to St. Michael’s Cemetery in the southeast. The irregularly shaped area stretched from South 18th Street in the south to Manor Street in the north at the base of the Slopes. The remainder tract included these streets: Manor (later eliminated for railroad development), Gregory, Shamokin, Crossman, Pius, Birmingham (now Brosville), Hookstown, Nusser, Magdalena, Welsh, Monastery, St. Leo, St. Paul, Regina, St. Martin, St. Joseph, St. Michael, Thomas, Washington (now Warrington), Sharon, Angelo, Lehman, Mt. Oliver, Proctor, Quarry, Roscoe, Rugoff, Wachtel, and South 18th. Viewed from the perspective of the Flats, O’Connor’s acreage on the Slopes and hilltop was on an approximate line with South 7th Street and South 18th Street in the Flats. None of Pittsburgh’s first three bishops lived long enough to see the O’Connor plan area filled with hundreds of wooden structures built for the better influx of Central and Eastern European immigrants who comprised the workforce in the mills, manufacturing plants, and railroad yards that later lined the south side of the Monongahela River.

Principal among these are the G. M. Hopkins Company Map of Pittsburgh 1872-1940 and the City of Pittsburgh Geodetic and Topographic Survey Maps 1923-1961. These and other atlases and real estate plat maps appear at the Historic Pittsburgh Maps Collection website: digital.library.pitt.edu.

St. Michael’s Parish was established as a German ethnic parish in 1848. The first parish was a frame structure, whose cornerstone was laid on July 16, 1848. The church was dedicated on November 24, 1848.

The Passionists arrived in Pittsburgh from Rome in 1852. They selected, from O’Connor’s remaining property, the ridgetop south of the Monongahela River for their monastery. The cornerstone was laid on August 7, 1853 and the building was occupied in January 1854.

The farmhouse was located on Pius Street, catcorner from what would later be the site of the second St. Michael’s Church (the still-standing brick structure, designed by architect Charles Bartberger, whose cornerstone was laid in 1855 and which was dedicated in 1861). In 1851, the former seminary building became the residences of the Sisters of Mercy, who supervised St. Paul’s Orphan Asylum for boys in part of an adjacent school. The Sisters of Mercy were succeeded by the Sisters of St. Francis in 1868, who also used the building as a convent. The Franciscans’ historian described the wooden structure thusly: “The small, one-story frame house was in a dilapidated condition, sadly in need of repairs, and almost destitute of furniture.” They purchased their residence, with adjoining property, from Bishop Michael Domenecc in 1870 for $10,000. See Memoirs of the Pittsburgh Sisters of Mercy, 78; Sister M. Clarissa Popp, History of the Sisters of St. Francis of the Diocese of Pittsburgh 1868-1938 (Millvale, PA: Sisters of St. Francis, 1939), 12-13, 16, 19; Yuhase, Compelled to Speak, 212; A Story of Seventy-Five Years: Diamond Jubilee 1848-1923, Saint Michael’s Parish, Pittsburgh, Pa. South Side (Pittsburgh: J. P. Killeen, 1923), 12-13, 16, 52-54. St. Michael’s parish, established in 1848, was entrusted to the Passionists in 1853. See Passionists in Pittsburgh, 1852-2002: Sesquicentennial — We Remember, We Celebrate, We Believe — “The First Foundation,” St. Paul of the Cross Monastery (Pittsburgh: St. Paul of the Cross Monastery, 2002).

The four “formal” seminary locations do not include the use of Bishop O’Connor’s episcopal residence (as distinguished from his rented quarters) by various seminarians for periods of time.


Bled, Austrian Aid to American Catholics, 126. Mosetizh’s declining health led to his return to Görz in 1851. Ibid., 128. See also Lambing, History, 165-168.


Ibid., 73-77.


Michael O’Connor to Boniface Wimmer, Pittsburgh, May 8, 1847, and Boniface Wimmer to Michael O’Connor, St. Vincent, May 10, 1847, as cited in Oetgen, Mission to America, 74-76.
117 Ibid., 67.

116 Beaudoin, “Gaudet.”


114 Father Guigues had been appointed first bishop of Bytown on July 9, 1847 but was not ordained bishop until July 30, 1848. O’Connor’s visit occurred shortly before the episcopal ordination. Bytown was established in 1826 and incorporated as “Ottawa” in 1855.


109 The Oblate history gives the date of their arrival as September 30, 1849. Beaudoin, “Telman.” Lambing gives a date of November 22, 1847. Additional information on the three Oblates may be found in Gaston Carrière, O.M.I., Dictionnaire Biographique des Oblats de Marie-Immaculee au Canada, vol. 1-2 (Ottawa: Editions de l’Université d’Ottawa, 1976).

108 “Consecration of Bishop Guigues to the See of Bytown, Canada,” Pittsburgh Catholic, October 14, 1848, 216-217.


106 Father Telmon to Mother Bruyère, Pittsburgh, January 3, 1849, as quoted in Beaudoin, “Telmon.” The letter’s recipient was Mother Elisabeth Bruyère of the Sisters of Charity in Canada. The cause for canonization of Mother Bruyère (1818-1876) was introduced in Rome in 1978.

104 P.A. Telmon to Most Rev. M. O’Connor, March 12, 1849, Diocesan Documents AD 1730 to 1900, no. 567, ADP.


102 Tobias Mullen, “Diocesan Seminary,” Pittsburgh Catholic, December 16, 1848, 316

101 Szarnicki, Michael O’Connor, 67.

100 Oetgen, An American Abbot, 82.


98 Michael O’Connor to James O’Connor, n.p., April 13, 1851, Archives of the Archdiocese of Omaha, as quoted in Szarnicki, Michael O’Connor, 67.

97 Szarnicki, Michael O’Connor, 118-124, 139-146.

96 Ibid., 67.

95 Religious Intelligence,” Pittsburgh Catholic, December 6, 1851, 309. St. Mary of the Barrens Seminary was the original center of the Vincentians in the New World and the first seminary established west of the Mississippi. For its history, see Richard J. Janet, In Missouri’s Wilds: St. Mary’s of the Barrens and the American Catholic Church, 1818 to 2016 (Kirkville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2017).


93 Wm. J. Howlett, Historical Tribute to St. Thomas’ Seminary at Poplar Neck near Bardstown, Kentucky (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1906), 116. St. Thomas Seminary was established by Bishop Flaget of Bardstown (now Louisville) in 1811 and became a preparatory seminary in 1818; it closed in 1869.

92 Michael O’Connor to the Society of the Propagation of the Faith in Paris, Pittsburgh, March 4, 1852, in the Bishop Frederic Baraga Pa-
pers, University of Notre Dame Archives, as quoted in Thomas T. McAvoy, “The Catholic Minority in Early Pittsburgh: The First Bishop: Michael O’Connor, Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia 72, nos. 3, 4 (September, December 1961), 79-80. These incendiary nativist harangues have been described as “insulting and obscene harassments.” Szarnicki, Michael O’Connor, 178. The mayor whom the bishop described was the notorious Joe Barker (1806-1862), who had earlier arrested Bishop O’Connor. The bishop requested that this letter not be published by the Society in its Annals.


John Tuigg to Thomas Heyden, Pittsburgh, October 27, 1851, Diocesan Documents AD 1730 to 1900, no. 643, ADP (“Though seminary suspended, yet students placed into other seminaries and must be supported by the diocese.”). John Tuigg, Diocesan Documents AD 1730 to 1900, no. 140, ADP, 697-702. John Tuigg, “Diocesan Documents AD 1730 to 1900,” 697-702. John Tuigg, “Diocesan Documents AD 1730 to 1900,” 697-702.


The text of the papal bull appears in Shearer, Pontificia Americana: A Documentary History of the Catholic Church in the United States, 278-279.

Szarnicki, Michael O’Connor, 140.


O’Connor’s many trips — to a variety of European countries to raise funds and recruit priests and religious, to Canada to recruit seminary faculty, to Rome to lobby issues for himself or other members of the hierarchy, to various countries including Egypt for medical recuperation, and to Rome to attend events such as the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception on December 8, 1854 — explain in part his delay in resolving the seminary issue. The bishop’s frequent trips, each typically spanning several months, increasingly generated negative comments by clergy and laity.

Lambing, Brief Biographical Sketches, 278. As we shall see shortly, this was but one of several “unlikely places” that Sheehan would recommend to O’Connor.

Later, the property was sold to the Diocese of Cleveland, and is now the site of the Motherhouse of the Sisters of the Humility of Mary.

“St. Michael’s Seminary,” Pittsburgh Catholic, October 25, 1856, 4.

“Collections for the Seminary,” Pittsburgh Catholic (March 30, 1850), 20.

Chapter II — De Seminario of the synodal legislation provided, in relevant part: “Collectio autem pro seminario habeatur in unaquaque congregatio- ne Dominica infra octavam festi Corporis Christi, vel, hoc die impedito, quamprimum fieri potest.” Statuta Dioecesis Pittsburgensis: Lata in Synodo Dioecesana habitata A.D. 1844, cum decrets in aliis synods A.D. 1846, 1854, 1858, et 1869 promulgatis (Pittsburgh: James Porter, 1870), 13. The volume includes the decrees of the first through fifth diocesan synods. The reporting of the first three synods (1844, 1846, and 1854) is cumulative, and does not distinguish between the decrees of each synod.


See “The following returns of the collections made on Easter Sunday for the purchase money of the Theological Seminary…” in the Pittsburgh Catholic, May 16, 1857, 85.


See, e.g., Pittsburgh Catholic, June 25, 1859, 132.

The story of Michael O’Connor’s efforts to reopen St. Michael’s Seminary in the mid-1850s paints an incomplete picture of his role in the establishment of seminaries to meet the spiritual needs of the rapidly growing Catholic population in the United States. This missionary bishop was at the forefront of his parallel efforts to establish seminaries in Louvain (Belgium) and Rome for the training of priests to serve in America. O’Connor’s initial efforts with respect to Louvain stemmed from his presence in Rome for the December 8, 1854 definition of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception. He also enthusiastically supported establishment of a college in Rome — an idea formally suggested by Pope Pius IX in the Brief Obsequentissimas Letters of January 1, 1855; O’Connor would head the committee of three bishops established by the Eighth Provincial Council of Baltimore in May 1855 to pursue the pope’s wish.


Szarnicki, Michael O’Connor, 104-105.

Michael O’Connor to Giacomo Cardinal Fransoni, St. Vincent, December 1854, as quoted in Oetgen, Boniface Wimmer, 112.

Letter from Propaganda Fide, Rome, April 21, 1855, as quoted in Oetgen, Boniface Wimmer, 114-115.


Oetgen, Mission to America, 103.

“Apostolic Brief Erecting Saint Vincent as an Abbey, August 24, 1855,” in Oetgen, Mission to America, 513-515.

Apostolic Brief, July 30, 1855, as quoted in Oetgen, Boniface Wimmer, 117-118.

See the letter of Boniface Wimmer to Giacomo Cardinal Fransoni, St. Vincent, December 18, 1855, in Oetgen, Boniface Wimmer, 172-174. The provisions of the August 24, 1855 papal brief, including those relating to the “independent seminary” for religious and diocesan seminarians are detailed in a letter from Wimmer to Abbot Peter Casaretto, Carrolltown, December 11, 1856, in Oetgen, Boniface Wimmer, 187-190.

Roger Fortin, Faith and Action: A History of the Catholic Archdiocese of Cincinnati, 1821-1996 (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2002), 147-148. Mount St. Mary’s was proposed as the regional theological seminary, with St. Thomas Seminary in Kentucky serving as the provincial preparatory seminary.

Lambing, Brief Biographical Sketches, 278.


of Cambria County Pennsylvania

White Township had only 383 residents. J. A. Caldwell, Atlas

Captain McGuire’s Company per the Ebensburg War Memorial Plaque), and died in 1866 at the Summit at the advanced age of 100. He is buried

he took up a large tract of land, operated the first coal bank in the county (along the old Portage Road), served in the War of 1812 (as a private in

Ignatius Adams (b. 1766) came to Cambria County at age eighteen and was the first settler in 1784 in what would later become Cresson. Here

the establishment of Cresson to the west and down the mountain from the Summit brought the latter’s demise.

The building of the Pennsylvania Railroad line (which purchased the Allegheny Portage Railroad in 1854 but did not use most of the old route) and


out of the “wilderness” and cultivated to make a comfortable home for himself and his family. See “Michael Sheehan (Cambria County, PA),” Find a

Ibid., 121. The full names of the identified individuals were Sylvester J. Luther and Demetrius A. Luther.

munity

History of St. Augustine’s Parish, St. Augustine, Dysart P.O. (Cambria County, PA: New Guide Pub. Co., 1922). Dysart is an unincorporated com-

The Catholic Church in the Dioceses of Pittsburg and Allegheny [1880] and Brief Biographical Sketches [Foundation Stones of a Great Diocese]

[1914].

The original St. Aloysius Church was destroyed in a windstorm in 1925. A succinct history of St. Aloysius Parish and the community of Summit

appears in “Mark Centennial of Summit Parish: Mountain Church was Outpost of Faith During Pioneer Days of Pennsylvania,” Pittsburgh Catholic,

July 28, 1938, 13.

Reflecting both the times and the practice, that plan of lots was not recorded in the Cambria County Recorder’s Office. Letter of Kevin Petak, 2.

David Huber, vice president of the Cambria County Historical Society, interview with author, March 2, 2016. A map of Summit details the property


Indicative of the primitive rural setting of the seminary structure is the information contained in a newspaper advertisement of the June 1, 1857 sheri-

iff’s sale at the Cambria County Courthouse of a lot immediately adjacent to the seminary:

12 ALSO — All the right, title and interest of George W. George of, in and to a lot of ground, situate in the Borough of Summitville, Cambria

County, adjoining lots belonging to St. Michael’s Seminary, and an alley, having thereon erected a double house and stable, now in the

occupancy of David Zimmers.

Sheriff’s Sales,” Democrat and Sentinel [Ebensburg, PA], May 27, 1857, 1. St. Michael’s Seminary was in session at that time.

Deed from Michael J. Smith to Rev. C. M. Sheehan, dated June 14, 1856 and recorded on the same day in ORDCC in Deed Book Vol. 15, 222.

Pittsburgh Catholic, August 2, 1856, 172. The eastern clergy also gathered shortly after the seminary opening, participating in a conference October

14-16, 1856. Pittsburgh Catholic, October 4, 1856, 246.

St. Michael’s Seminary,” Pittsburgh Catholic, October 25, 1856, 268. There are no surviving diocesan archival records relative to Catholics in Sum-

mit petitioning for location of the seminary in Cambria County or of a collection of $4,000 for that purpose. As noted above, Ignatius Adams’ donation

consisted of 75 acres, not the publicly reported 100 acres; see the aforementioned Petak letter regarding the size of the property.


Pittsburgh Catholic, July 11, 1857, 149.

Pittsburgh Catholic, August 22, 1857, 196.

Pittsburgh Catholic, August 8, 1857, 180; August 15, 1857, 186; August 22, 1857, 196; and, August 29, 1857, 204.

Deed from Cornelius M. Sheehan to Michael O’Connor, dated October 16, 1857 and recorded on November 4, 1857 in ORDCC in Deed Book Vol.

15, 837.

The original building on the lot later burned. There are no known photographs of the building or the block during that time period.

Deed from Rev. Cornelius M. Sheehan to Christian Reich, dated August 18, 1860 and recorded August 28, 1860 in ORDCC in Deed Book Vol. 18, 581.

Pittsburgh Catholic, November 6, 1858, 282.
Cornelius Sheehan died on November 18, 1875, in Amherst County (Diocese of Richmond), Virginia and is buried in the Priests’ Section of Holy Cross Cemetery in Lynchburg (Campbell County), Virginia. Sheehan’s obituary candidly acknowledged his failings: “he may have a heavy account to settle, for false pride, for insubordination to severe commands of superiors, for self-will, where self-will was out of place.” “Rev. Cornelius M. Sheehan,” New York Freeman’s Journal, December 4, 1875, as reprinted in The Morning Star and Catholic Messenger [New Orleans], December 12, 1875, 3.

This Father Cornelius M. Sheehan should not be confused with another Father Cornelius Sheehan, also a Pittsburgh diocesan priest, who was born in 1861 (after the Summit seminary days), died in 1903, and is buried in Calvary Cemetery, Pittsburgh.

Lambing, Brief Biographical Sketches, 304.


See James H. Merrell, Into the American Woods: Negotiations on the Pennsylvania Frontier (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2000). The treaty settled land claims between the Six Nations and the Penn family, proprietors of Pennsylvania, where lands acquired in 1768 were called the “New Purchase.” The Purchase Line in Pennsylvania was finalized five years later, separating Indian from British colonial lands.


Deed from Rody Patterson to Michael O’Connor, dated November 21, 1856 and recorded January 15, 1857 in DREAC in Deed Book Vol. 125, 397. The 1.5-month time gap between purchase and deed recordation was likely due to the bishop’s need to obtain the full purchase price. Standard practice would have entailed only a nominal down payment on the day of bid. Tendering of the deed by the sheriff would have awaited submission of the balance of the purchase price; indeed, during the interval O’Connor journeyed to Rome which afforded an opportunity to raise funds. The history of the property purchase was noted at the time of its later sale, and afterwards, in “St. Michael’s Seminary,” Pittsburgh Catholic, May 8, 1901, 16, and “40 Years Ago,” Pittsburgh Catholic, May 8, 1941, 6.

Deed from Rody Patterson to Michael O’Connor, dated November 21, 1856 and recorded January 15, 1857 in DREAC in Deed Book Vol. 125, 397.


Edward McMahon to James Stillinger, Pittsburgh, 1857, Diocesan Documents AD 1730 to 1900, ADP (O’Connor ordered the next Easter collection to be used to liquidate the debt for buying property near Pittsburgh for theological seminary).


Agreement quoted in Szarnicki, Michael O’Connor, 106.

Ferdinand Kittel, Souvenir of Loretto Centenary 1799-1899: October 10, 1899 (Cresson: Swope Bros., 1899), 374. The seminaris included Henry McHugh and “several other students.”

Declaration to Ecclesiastical Seminary, dated July 14, 1859 and recorded on December 15, 1859 in DREAC in Deed Book Vol. 141, 490.

Pittsburgh Catholic, July 3, 1858, 140.


Francis P. Kenrick, Theologiae Moralis, concinnatae a Francisco Patricio Kenrick (Philadelphia: Eugenium Cummiskey, 1841-1843), 3 vol.

Francis P. Kenrick, Theologiae Dogmaticae (Philadelphia: Typis L. Johnson, 1839-1840), 4 vol.


Luers (1819-1871) had been ordained a priest (1846) of the then-Diocese of Cincinnati by Bishop John B. Purcell (1800-1883), who as archbishop of Cincinnati later ordained the 37-year-old Luers as bishop of Fort Wayne in 1857. Luers became a fast friend of O’Connor through Purcell who was, like O’Connor, a native of County Cork, Ireland.

“Holy Week,” Pittsburgh Post, April 2, 1858, 2.

Pittsburgh Catholic, February 21, 1857, 405.

“Retreat and Synod of the Clergy of this Diocese,” Pittsburgh Catholic, July 3, 1858, 140.


Pittsburgh Catholic, January 1, 1859, 346. The Catholic did not provide a translation for readers who had not studied Latin. The Latin text appears as printed, including typesetter’s errors.

Pittsburgh Catholic, December 31, 1859, 348. The Latin text appears as printed, including typesetter’s errors.

Lambing, History, 79, citing the Diocesan Register.


We are deeply grateful to the following donors for their generosity and support of The Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania and its publication *Gathered Fragments*.

We would like to acknowledge the generosity of all donors who made gifts in 2022.

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John C. Bates, Esq. is a graduate of Duquesne University (B.A., M.A., and J.D.). He is the retired Chief Counsel of the Pittsburgh Office of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. He is a former president, a former secretary, and a present Emeritus member of the board of directors of the Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania. He is the author of the Society’s recently published history.

Zach Doll completed his undergraduate degree at St. Francis University in 2009 and a masters of library and information science from Clarion University in 2018. After substitute teaching for six years in Cambria County, he began working in the archives of the Franciscan Friars of the Third Order Regular, Province of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in 2015. In addition to his duties at the Father Bonaventure T. Kiley, T.O.R. Archives in Loretto, Zach began working in 2021 for the Franciscan Friars of the Third Order, Province of the Immaculate Conception in Hollidaysburg.

James K. Hanna holds a B.A. in Social Sciences from the University of Pittsburgh and an M.A. in Theology from Duquesne University of the Holy Spirit. He is an online instructor for the University of Notre Dame’s Satellite Theology Program (STEP) and a freelance writer whose articles have appeared in OSV Newsweekly. He is retired from St. Paul of the Cross Parish in Castle Shannon where he served as Pastoral Associate and Coordinator of Social Ministry.

Mark Holan, a native of Pittsburgh, has written about Irish historic and contemporary topics for more than a decade. His work has appeared in newspapers, magazines, and websites. Mark has made ten trips to Ireland, including a German Marshall Fund journalism fellowship. He has given in-person and virtual presentations to the American Conference of Irish Studies, American Journalism Historians Association, the Newspaper and Periodical History Forum of Ireland, and the Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh. Mark has worked as a reporter and editor, investigator at a private law firm, and most recently as editorial director of a U.S. transportation construction industry association in Washington, D.C. He studied at the University of Pittsburgh and the University of Massachusetts in Boston. He is currently developing a book about how American journalists covered the Irish revolutionary period of the early twentieth century. His work can be found at markholan.org.

Dr. Dennis N. Ranalli is Emeritus Professor and Emeritus Senior Associate Dean, University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine. In 1991 he was a Fellow in the Pew Foundation National Dental Leadership Development Program. Following retirement from his academic career, he has focused his writing on historical topics. His most recent publications have appeared in Western Pennsylvania History magazine of the Senator John Heinz History Center; Reporter Dispatch of the Allegheny City Society; Spiritan Horizons, a journal of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit; Franciscan Spirit magazine published by the Sisters of St. Francis of the Neumann Communities.

Kathleen M. Washy is archivist for the Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden, a position she has held since 2013. Prior to that, she served as archivist for Mercy Hospital/UPMC Mercy for more than twenty years. Since 1992, she has been a member of the board of directors of the Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, holding many offices. She also serves on the board of directors for the Allegheny City Society. She holds a bachelor’s degree from Gannon University and master’s degrees from both the University of Toronto and Case Western Reserve University.

Our Authors
Book Reviews

John C. Bates, Esq.


The chair of the English Department at La Roche University has crafted an intimate biography of Pittsburgh’s famed poet and author, Samuel Hazo. Using the vehicles of personal interviews with the Pittsburgh poet and the subject’s personal journals, the author captures the person and the writer over the course of his life — a true accomplishment!


The long wait for publication of this controversial work is over. An associate professor of history at the University of Dayton has authored a seminal history of the Black American struggle for equality and justice within religious orders of women in the American Catholic Church. The intersection of race, gender, religion, and activism is brilliantly presented. While balanced in presentation, the author does not shy away from the many disturbing instances of discrimination and rejection — including that of the famed Sister Martin de Porres, rejected by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden but accepted by the Pittsburgh Sisters of Mercy. Pittsburgh figures in this history; many names will be familiar to Western Pennsylvania readers. This is a timely and thought-provoking publication.


A church historian at Mount St. Mary’s Seminary in Cincinnati takes readers to more than two dozen sites that reflect American Catholic history — including Father Demetrius Gallitzin’s community at Loretto, Pennsylvania. Father Peter Lemke and Michael McGuire are part of this story; other names will prove familiar to those familiar with Western Pennsylvania Catholic history. A former Pittsburgh resident, Mother St. Katharine Drexel, is also featured in this work. Society board member Mike Aquilina contributed the book’s Foreward. Readers can turn their next vacation into a pilgrimage by visiting the religious sites noted in this volume!

Martin G. McGuinn, Jr., From Swampoodle to Mellon


The author, a grandson of Irish Catholic immigrants and a native of Philadelphia, became a Pittsburgh fixture during his quarter century as an executive at the city’s then-largest bank, Mellon Bank. This autobiography provides insights into his Catholic familial and educational upbringing and focuses upon his challenges, successes and disappointments at Mellon — including his dramatic departure as CEO in 2006. This is an exceptionally engaging volume that readers will not want to put down until they get to the end.


This is the fascinating story of the tumultuous evacuation of thousands of children from Communist Cuba, in which endeavor Pittsburgh-native Archbishop Coleman Carroll of Miami played a pivotal role. While several books have been published on the subject, this latest work provides the perspective of time and focused research.


This work, which won a Nonfiction Award, is a mix of autobiographical memoir and poetry. The author has taught at several local universities, is a tenured faculty member at Carlow University, has won numerous awards for her published writings, and has hosted a radio show on an NPR affiliate for many years. This volume presents her life journey which entailed an early childhood born to an unwed teen from Pittsburgh’s Garfield neighborhood. Raised by the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill at the Roselia Asylum and Maternity Hospital in the city’s Hill District, she was later adopted by a couple in suburban Whitehall and named Janet. The child would develop into a nationally recognized poet. The pain of the author’s life experience will capture the attention of readers; it is riveting and not for the faint of heart.

Joseph P. Chinnici, American Catholicism Transformed: From the Cold War Through the Council (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), table of contents, notes, bibliography, index, 480 pp.

This work draws upon years of archival research to show the development of the American Catholic Church in rela-

Belgian-born Archbishop Jean Jadot (1909-2009) served as Apostolic Delegate to the United States 1973-1980, when Pope Paul VI desired the selection of pastoral bishops who would implement Vatican II. The “Jadot bishops” (103 bishops and 15 archbishops) appointed during this period have long been the subject of historical controversy. This volume is the product of years of interviews by the archbishop’s biographer and provides a candid assessment of the American Catholic Church’s strengths and weaknesses — as well as keen observations about the bishops who were natives of or who served in Western Pennsylvania during the Jadot tenure. The author, a historical theologian with a Belgian doctorate, provides not just a study of Jadot but also a detailed history of the American episcopate.


Commonplace in the United States today is the public shaming of individuals for actual or perceived offenses involving racial and gender “norms.” This volume focuses on “Cancel Culture” and its victims. The author argues that cancelling is counter-productive, destroying people and causes that cancellers purport to support. An entire chapter is devoted to Pittsburgh's Thomas Merton Center and its co-founder Molly Rush. The Catholic-oriented center achieved prominence for the anti-war and civil disobedience activities of Rush and the brothers Daniel Berrigan (Jesuit priest) and Philip Berrigan (former Josephite priest) as members of the Plowshares Eight in 1980. The author is a labor and human rights lawyer and prominent lecturer. His critique is unflinching.


This is the biography of an Irish-Catholic family of twelve children, growing up in the early twentieth century. The Coughlins originally lived in Youngstown, Ohio, but moved to Midland in Beaver County, Pennsylvania. The author, one of the daughters, entered the Sisters of Notre Dame in Cleveland. After seventy-three years in that order, she finally committed her family’s story to writing in order to pass it on to the many descendants of her eleven siblings. This is a delightful story worth reading.


This volume presents an art diary of an acclaimed stained-glass artist whose career spanned six decades. The inventory of his work includes dozens of ecclesiastical windows in St. Lawrence O'Toole Church (now closed and demolished) in Garfield, Sacred Heart Church in Emsworth, St. John the Baptist Ukrainian Catholic Church in McKees Rocks, and St. Vincent College in Latrobe. Silianoff was a native of Wimerding (Allegheny County) who designed for the Pittsburgh Stained Glass Studio in the West End and then opened his own studio in Westmoreland County in the 1960s. He specialized in religious art and architecture. The daughters of the now-deceased Serbian Orthodox artist (1924-2003) have drawn from their father's writings, sketches, designs and work product in assembling this volume.


These are the memoirs of a former seminarian at the Pontifical North American College (NAC) in Rome who recounts his journey toward priesthood, departure from Rome prior to ordination, and his subsequent life. Included in this volume are the memories of some of his former NAC colleagues — including those of former Pittsburgh priest John Groutt, whose story provides interesting commentary on former Pittsburgh bishops John Dearden and John Wright. This is an incisive account of pre-Vatican II seminary life.


Daniel Mannix (1864-1963) was an Irish-born prelate who was sent to Australia by the Holy See to govern the Archdiocese of Melbourne in 1912. He would dominate the Australian ecclesiastical world for over 50 years and serve as a political force in Australia where Catholics were a minority dominated by British-descent Protestants. Mannix’s support for Irish independence from British control embroiled him in conflict in Australia, Britain, Ireland, and the United States. This biography of Mannix includes the interaction of Pittsburgh (later Altoona) diocesan priest Father Morgan Sheedy with Mannix and Irish President Éamon de Valera in that struggle during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Sheedy was the subject of an article in the 2021 Gathered Fragments. This volume evidences the international reach of Father Sheedy’s undertakings.
NEWS FROM THE
Catholic Historical Society

PUBLICATIONS

A book launch for Subversive Habits, Black Catholic Nuns in the Long African American Freedom Struggle by Dr. Shannen Dee Williams was held on June 11, 2022, at Duquesne University’s Power Center. The book is the first full history of Black Catholic nuns in the United States. The event was co-hosted by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden and Duquesne University. The Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania was one of nearly a dozen additional supporting organizations. In 1968, the Diocese of Pittsburgh was the site of the first gathering of the National Black Sisters Conference whose founding director, Dr. Patricia Grey (former Sister M. Martin de Porres, R.S.M.), attended the event along with current leaders of the organization. Representatives of the nation’s three Black sisterhoods — the Oblate Sisters of Providence, Franciscan Handmaids of the Most Pure Heart of Mary, and Sisters of the Holy Family — shared remarks followed by Dr. Williams. More than six hundred guests attended in person or virtually.

Dr. Michael T. Rizzi, who has been a contributor to Gathered Fragments, has authored Jesuit Colleges and Universities in the United States: A History. This work is the first comprehensive history of Jesuit higher education in this country.

The Remarkable Life of Bishop Bonaventure Broderick: Exile, Redemption, and a Gas Station, written by Society board officer and Gathered Fragments contributor James K. Hanna, was recently released.

PASSINGS

Velma (Toni) Uricchio died on January 10, 2022, at age 98. She spent two summers at the diocesan mission in Chimbote, Peru, volunteering as a public health nurse serving the indigenous population. That formed the subject of her lecture for the Society in October 1998 on “Experiences in the Peru Mission.”

Sister Cecilia Murphy, R.S.M., died on June 22, 2022, at age 84. She was a Pittsburgh Sister of Mercy for 65 years. Her Ph.D. dissertation at the University of St. Louis (1974) was “A Reevaluation of the Episcopacy of Michael Domenec, 1860-1877, Second Bishop of Pittsburgh and Only Bishop of Allegheny.” Sister Cecilia served as president of the Pittsburgh Sisters of Mercy from 1974 to 1982. For more than 20 years, she served at St. Vincent Seminary in Latrobe as associate professor, academic dean, and director of field education — in addition to serving on several national accreditation commissions. She was interred in St. Xavier Cemetery in Latrobe.

HAPPENINGS

The Society worked with the Catholic Studies Department of Duquesne University and the Sisters of St. Joseph of Baden as organizers and co-sponsors of the March 26, 2022 Preserving our Heritage Summit: Catholic Archives in Western Pennsylvania. The event was held at Duquesne University. Videos of all speakers are accessible through Duquesne University Conference & Event Services YouTube Channel.

On May 22, 2022, a memorial prayer and waterscape garden in front of St. Stanislaus Kostka Church rectory in Pittsburgh’s Strip District was dedicated to the memory of parishioner Christian Cochran, who died at age 23 of a rare liver cancer. The garden’s centerpiece is a stone angel replica of an antique statue from Italy, with water flowing between large boulders. A video of the memorial garden appears at the parish’s Facebook page.

On July 30, 2022, Father Kevin Dominik of St. Andrew the Apostle Church in the Mid-Mon Valley blessed the new historical marker plaque for Stan “The Man” Musial (1920-2013), a Donora native and St. Louis Cardinals baseball great. The plaque, dedicated immediately after the blessing, was awarded by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. Musial, born Stanislaw Franciszek Musial, was a native Western Pennsylvania Catholic of Carpatho-Rusyn and Polish descent.

CHANGES

The Westmoreland Land Trust has reached an agreement to purchase about 250 acres of the former St. Xavier Academy in Unity Township (Westmoreland County) from the Sisters of Mercy. The property is located off Route 30, across from the Wimmelton housing development near St. Vincent Archabbey. A Pennsylvania historical marker informs that the academy opened in 1845. A fire on March 16, 1972, damaged the academy and convent, which were subsequently demolished. The Sisters of Mercy will retain ownership of the cemetery where six of the original seven sisters from Carlow (Ireland) are buried; they established the order in the then-Diocese of Pittsburgh. The Land Trust plans to conserve the acreage as a sanctuary with public access to
trails and walkways. A $1.1 million grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources will assist in the purchase.

The former **St. George’s Lyceum** in the Allentown neighborhood of Pittsburgh has been converted into Bottlerocket-Social Hall, an alternative comedy club and bar.

The former **Villa Maria Academy** in Erie will now serve as a campus for Erie County Community College.

The former **Bishop Boyle High School** in Homestead is being converted into apartment use.

### TOURS

The South Hills Knights of Columbus Council sponsored a “Knights Pilgrimage to Byzantine Churches” on April 23, 2022 that included St. John Chrysostom Church in Pittsburgh, SS. Peter and Paul Church in Braddock, and Ascension Church in Clairton.

### CITATIONS OF GATHERED FRAGMENTS

The 2018 *Gathered Fragments* article entitled “Portraits of Catholics with Western Pennsylvania Connections: The Famous, the Forgotten, and the Unknown” by John C. Bates is now cited in Wikipedia’s article on “An Altar Boy Named Speck.”


Stephen Werner, author of *The Restless Flame, Daniel Lord, S.J.: Thinking Big in a Parochial World* (2021), has advised John C. Bates, author of the 2019 *Gathered Fragments* article “Father Daniel A. Lord, S.J., and Catholic Action in Western Pennsylvania 1925-1954,” that the latter’s article will be included in the bibliography of the forthcoming revised edition of Werner’s book, which will be available through Amazon.


### UPDATES TO PREVIOUS ISSUES OF GATHERED FRAGMENTS

The 2014 *Gathered Fragments* (with Supplement) contained a list and the biographies of the prelates who were natives of, educated in, or served in Western Pennsylvania. Yearly updates have been provided for the list that now totals 156 prelates.

### The update for 2022 is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position and Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kurt Richard Burnette</strong></td>
<td>Appointed Apostolic Administrator of Saints Cyril and Methodius Apostolic Exarchate of Toronto (Slovakian): March 3, 2022</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Mark Anthony Eckman** | Born: February 9, 1959, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (Diocese of Pittsburgh) 
Ordained a priest of Pittsburgh: May 11, 1985, by Bishop Anthony J. Bevilacqua in St. Paul Cathedral, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 
Appointed Titular Bishop of Sitifis and Auxiliary Bishop of Pittsburgh: November 5, 2021 
Ordained Auxiliary Bishop of Pittsburgh: January 11, 2022, by Bishop David A. Zubik in St. Paul Cathedral, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania |
| **Gabriel Mendy** | Born: April 9, 1967, in Lamin, Gambia (Diocese of Banjul) 
Took perpetual vows in the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (C.S.Sp.): August 31, 1996 
Studied at: Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, obtaining a M.A. in Theology (1998) and a Ph.D. in Systematic Theology (2009) 
Appointed Bishop of Banjul, Gambia: November 30, 2017 
Ordained Bishop of Banjul: February 3, 2018 by Archbishop Edward T. Charles in Independence Stadium, Bakau, Gambia 
Installed as Bishop of Banjul: February 4, 2018, in the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption, Banjul, Gambia |
| **Robert Mikhail Moskal** | Died: August 7, 2022, in Parma, Ohio as Bishop Emeritus of the Eparchy of St. Josaphat in Parma (Ukrainian) 
Burial: Holy Trinity Catholic Cemetery, Carnegie, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania |
| **Donald Walter Trautman** | Died: February 26, 2022, at St. Mary’s of Asbury Ridge, Millcreek Township, Erie County, Pennsylvania 
Burial: March 7, 2022, in the Bishop’s Crypt, St. Peter Cathedral, Erie, Pennsylvania |
| **Rembert George Samuel Weakland, O.S.B.** | Died: August 22, 2022 at Clement Manor, Greenfield, Wisconsin as Archbishop Emeritus of Milwaukee 
Funeral: August 30, 2022 at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 
Burial: September 1, 2022 in St. Vincent Archabbey Cemetery, Latrobe, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania |
Father John T. Murphy, C.S.Sp., third president of Duquesne University (then Pittsburgh Catholic College of the Holy Ghost) had a water pump installed behind the Administration Building, “Old Main,” in 1889. The installation was prompted by additional pollution and contamination to the city’s water system because of the Johnstown Flood. The water had been questionable before this, and Father Murphy was concerned with the health of students and staff. The well was able to tap into the clean water of the aquifer, a.k.a. the “fourth river” under the city. The pump was a popular meeting place for students in the early years of the University. During the infamous 1936 St. Patrick’s Day flood, it was one of the only sources of clean water in the downtown area. As a result, rescuers used Duquesne and its hilltop neighborhood, the Bluff, as a base of operations during the crisis. It was capped in 1938, primarily because students would often drink from the same ladle, causing cold and flu outbreaks during the semester. By that point, city water had improved substantially. Today the pump is housed in the University Archives.

Student use of the pump, 1920s

Father John T. Murphy, C.S.Sp.

Today the pump is housed in the Duquesne University Archives.
Explore Catholic history. The Duquesne Scholarship Collection.

A free online repository with access to past issues of Gathered Fragments, Spiritan Collection publications, the Pittsburgh Catholic newspaper, and more.

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A Catholic University in the Spiritan tradition