

Eyewitness to St. Bernard's Beginning

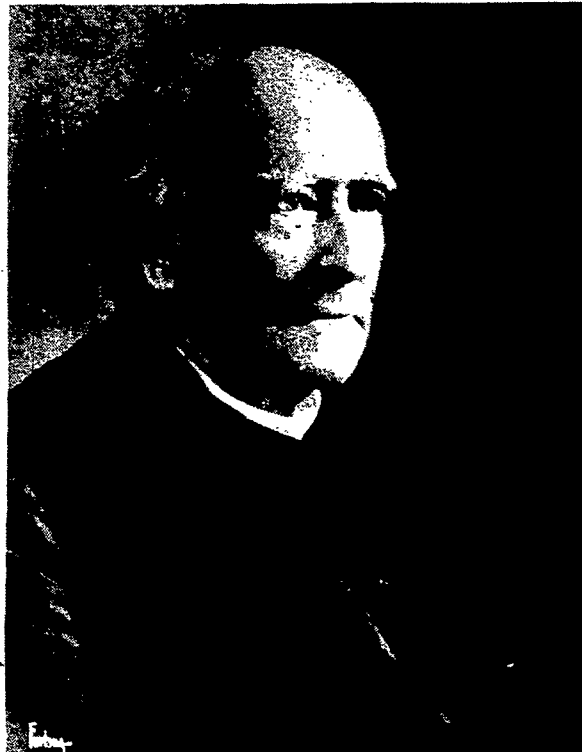
Following is the text of a news story which appeared in the Democrat and Chronicle of Friday, Aug. 21, 1891.

The one stone in the structure of St. Bernard's Seminary; the institution for the education of priests, now being erected near the Holy Sepulchre Cemetery, that is of more consequence than any wall or pillar, was put in place, sealed and blessed yesterday afternoon with appropriate and impressive ceremony.

The day was one of great import to the Catholics of the eight counties which compose Bishop McQuaid's diocese. It marked the beginning of the end of a work in which the bishop has been engaged for years, and in which the people of the Roman church all over the state have been deeply interested.

Priests and laymen from nearly every parish under the bishop's jurisdiction were present, and dignitaries from the East and the West assisted in the services. Probably 4,000 attended the exercises. Had the services been held on Sunday the crowd would undoubtedly have been five times as large as it was, and it was to avoid having so large a turnout that a weekday was chosen for the blessing of the stone.

The bishop feared that his arrangements would be disarranged as they were in New York not long ago, should the exercises be held on a day on which all interested in them could be present.



Bishop Bernard J. McQuaid
Founding Bishop
Of Rochester
And
Founder
Of St. Bernard's Seminary

The visiting priests all took dinner with the bishop, and at 3:15 o'clock left the priest's house in carriages and were driven to the cemetery. The Roman Catholic Uniformed Union awaited the approach of the carriages at the city line and from that point to the seminary acted as escort to the clergy.

A band furnished music during the march to the scene of the exercises. About thirty carriages were in line and in the first one sat the bishop.

It was a few minutes later than 4 o'clock when the priests alighted from their carriages. After a short delay the services were begun. First

the stone, which is situated at the right of the main entrance to the building and just on a level with the floor, was blessed by the Bishop according to the Roman pontifical ceremony.

The ceremony that followed is much the same as that used in dedicating a church. A procession composed of twenty-eight students from St. Andrew's Seminary, eight students from the Troy Seminary, and the visiting priests escorted the bishop around the building chanting the Litany of the Saints and the Miserere. At various points the bishop sprinkled holy water on the walls of the structure and recited prayers

similar in import to those used at the dedication of a church.

When the procession reached the point from where it started, the main entrance to the building, the ceremony of blessing the stone was concluded and then the reports of donations to the building fund were received and deposited in the stone. The gift of each parish was presented through the trustees and the priest, and the individual donations and pledges of the clergy were also received. The gifts of the parishes aggregated \$22,424.05.

The gifts of the priests amounted to over \$42,000.

The donors decided by vote not to make public the amount of their donations.

The bishop spoke from a long platform extending along the rear of the main part of the building from wing to wing. Seated on the platform were all the priests and the trustees of the parishes of the diocese. Following is the Bishop's address:

"The building of this seminary marks a most important era in the history of the diocese of Rochester — a diocese that has at its head a bishop, and a bishop in a diocese that has in his sight his seminary, the training school of his priests. All the churches of a diocese come under the supervision of the bishop, but his seminary is the chief object of the bishop's concern, of his labors and of his prayers.

"Here are to be formed those young men that are to take the places of the elders as they pass away. Here in this seminary the bishop wishes to receive the choicest and youngest of the flock, upon whom rests God's mark.

"Woe to the diocese that has no seminary suitable for its work. Woe be, I say, to the diocese that has had years of existence and yet has put forth no effort to provide for itself such a training school as this one will be.

"In the early days of our country what could a bishop do? Those who flocked over here cried out, 'O, Bishop, give us a priest.' What could the bishop do but appoint priests from those who came over with them?

But in these days the people have a right to see their children marked of God chosen for their priests. When people left the countries of Europe they brought the faith with them and they look to the bishop to supply them with an intelligent and earnest priesthood.

It is only a year or two since His Grace, the Archbishop of Boston, dedicated magnificent buildings, in which the work of preparing many men for the priesthood is being carried on. Not long ago a similar institution was opened in Brooklyn. And now today, the archbishop, with his priests and his people, is eager to open a seminary in the city of Rochester. The Archbishop of San Francisco is busy forming schools and in other parts of the West they are being established.

Is it any wonder, then, that Rochester, full of love for its early religion, having such a priesthood as it has, has decided to build its seminary? Now, you have but to raise your eyes to behold the beginning of the work, for this is what I call it. Other buildings are to be erected in the rear. And, if God favors us, on the outside of us will be erected buildings in which will be carried on scientific study, and on the north will be erected a chapel.

Four months ago the work of building this structure, that rises before you, was begun. I did not expect last year that we would be so far advanced now, but once I saw what my priests would have

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A Brief History of St. Bernard's Seminary

When St. Bernard's Seminary first opened its doors to students in September, 1893, it had already accumulated more than a decade of "history."

Diocesan historians cite Bishop Bernard J. McQuaid's statement that the idea for establishing the institution came directly from Rome — in this instance Pope Leo XIII and members of his curia.

According to the history prepared for the 75th anniversary of the seminary in 1968 by Father Robert F. McNamara, the bishop was directly asked about a major seminary during the time of his "ad limina" report to the Vatican in 1878.

The year following, the bishop decided to lay aside money for the future institution. The first contribution was a \$50 bequest from the estate of Mrs. Richard Vernam. By 1886, the bishop's fund had grown to \$18,107.60, Father McNamara wrote.

Construction was begun in 1891, and Bishop McQuaid's presence was continually felt among the construction crew. "We have all heard of the persistence with which the 67-year-old Pope Julius II clambered up the scaffolding in the Sistine Chapel to watch Michelangelo at work. But his persistence was nothing compared to that of the 67-year-old Bishop of Rochester, who daily climbed every ladder and picked his way

along every scaffold to inspect every detail of progress. The work was therefore as exact as it was speedy, and by mid-August of the same year, the walls were up and the roof was on," Father McNamara wrote.

The chapel was dedicated on August 19, and the entire edifice was blessed the day after, the Feast of St. Bernard, 1893.

That September, 39 students (26 transferees from St. Joseph's Seminary in Troy and 13 from the diocesan preparatory seminary) were welcomed by Pro-Rector, Father James J. Hartley.

Immediately the influx of students, many from other parts of the country, and of the world, made it evident that the seminary plant would have to be expanded.

Bishop McQuaid announced in 1898 that he intended to construct what is now known as Philosophy Hall, a three-story building to the south of the main building. Philosophy Hall was opened in 1900.

The following year, the school was given the privilege of conferring ecclesiastical degrees, by the brief Romani Pontifices of Leo XIII.

A scant four years later it became again evident that an addition was necessary to the school. Bishop McQuaid anticipated beginning construction in 1907, if he had

the money. That was soon assured and the building of Theology Hall, the edifice to the north of the Main Building, was begun. In addition, other construction was in the works: an enlargement of the Chapel and Refectory and the construction of an Infirmary.

Bishop McQuaid, however, fell ill, and on the day of the dedication, with many prelates attending, the bishop collapsed and was anointed. He died the following January, 1909.

The title of pro-rector accorded to Msgr. Hartley was changed to that of rector when Bishop Thomas F. Hickey succeeded Bishop McQuaid as head of the diocese.

On the international scale at the time was the onset of the First World War. The school remained in session during the war but nonetheless felt its effects. A wave of anti-Germanism broke across the country, prompting a group of young German-American priests to contribute to the construction of a flagpole on the seminary grounds. Bishop Hickey attended the formal raising of the first flag in 1916.

Shortly after the war the school was able to liquidate its debt through a drive undertaken in 1919.

Msgr. Hartley, while remaining on the institution's faculty and staying in

residence, in 1923 stepped down from the position of rector.

He was succeeded by Dr. Andrew Meehan, a member of the original faculty, and an almost Bishop of Trenton, N.J. Father McNamara recounts that Dr. Meehan had been chosen for the episcopacy by Pope Benedict XV in 1918. Dr. Meehan, however, petitioned through his physician that he was unable to accept the post because of a weak heart. The petition was accepted.

In a revision of rules, Pope Pius XI, in 1931, while not withdrawing academic authority from the seminary, made it impossible for the institution to any longer grant ecclesiastical degrees.

The last theological degree, a licentiate in sacred theology, was given to Father Francis B. Burns in 1932.

Msgr. Meehan died in January of 1932 and was succeeded by Dr. John Francis Goggin.

During Msgr. Goggin's time the state accorded the school the authorization to confer academic liberal arts degrees. The baccalaureates were first given in 1935.

Three years later, St. Bernard's became the official seminary of the Diocese of Syracuse.

Also during Msgr. Goggin's reign the Second World War

made its impact on seminary life. Seminarians were registered, but as long as they were in study were exempt from induction. The feelings this generated among the citizenry whose family members had been conscripted were often hostile. Father McNamara's story includes tales of namecalling and taunting.

In addition, studies at the seminary were arranged in such a fashion that four years of theology could be completed in three.

Msgr. Goggin resigned Aug. 30, 1948. He was succeeded by Msgr. Wilfrid Craugh, during whose reign, the great watershed of the Second Vatican Council occurred.

"So far as the Seminary went," Father McNamara wrote, "the first obvious effect of the Council's decrees was in liturgical practice.

"St. Bernard's had kept abreast of the gradual changes in liturgical practice. . . . But after the Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy . . . drastic changes were bit-by-bit introduced."

The first Mass in English was celebrated Nov. 29, 1964.

Msgr. Craugh retired the post of rector in 1966, and was named Vicar General of the diocese that year.

Msgr. Craugh was succeeded by his nephew, Father

Joseph Brennan who had been on the faculty since 1958.

It was during Father Brennan's tenure that bonds were formed linking the seminary with the Protestant theological schools of Colgate, Rochester, Bexley Hall and Oberlin Seminary.

Also during his time a wide range of educational changes and events occurred. Among them were the conferring of theological degrees: a Bachelor of Divinity and a Master of Theology; the requiring of Clinical Pastoral Education for its ordination candidates; opening of the doors to laymen and women; and accreditation by the American Association of Theological Schools.

In addition, the school became the site for the Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen Archives and the office of the Diocesan Archivist; and the center for diocesan programs of continuing education, later designated as the Bishop Joseph L. Hogan Center for Continuing Education.

Father Brennan relinquished his post in 1976. The following June Father Frank E. Lioi, a liturgist and associate professor at the school, was named rector.

During Father Lioi's tenure the school became the center for the permanent diaconate program.

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