

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN COLONIAL PENNSYLVANIA

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AMONG the English settlements in the New World, the colony of William Penn held a unique position by virtue of its religious toleration. In other colonies Catholics were proscribed, worship was forbidden and general discrimination and persecution prevailed. But in Pennsylvania there was extremely little anti-Catholic legislation.

The Roman Catholics were not numerous in any colony. Even in Maryland they formed less than one-half of the total population. Too few of them found shelter in Pennsylvania because they could not take part in political life since they were unable to take the oaths required by the English government. In 1757 Lord Loudon reported that there were approximately 1,365 Catholics in Pennsylvania.

Yet, small as was their number, the colonists feared them as intensely as did the people of England. Out of this jealousy and suspicion grew an opposition and oppression which, as often happens, gave impetus to the movement it was intended to impede. It has been said—you may accept it or not—that the rising spirit of nationalism made the English Protestants resent the assumption on the part of the Pope that he had any right to determine the relations of Englishmen to their rulers. Yet nationalism was not a Protestant product. How account for the loyalty of the Roman Catholics of Maryland and Pennsylvania throughout the French and Indian War, and their fixed attachment to the cause of independence, except by ascribing it to a memorable pride of race and spirit of patriotism?

Though Pennsylvania was looked upon as a haven of religious toleration, the Church found her work there not entirely unhamp-ered or free from the common prejudice. An offshoot of the original establishment in Maryland, the Catholic Church in Pennsylvania pushed on amid active persecution, open violence, and

inward dissension. Her story is bound up with the lives and careers of some of the colony's most interesting people and colorful events.

Interestingly enough religious toleration in Pennsylvania was the result, to a considerable degree, of hero-worship. Charles II, to cancel a debt of the crown to Admiral Penn, granted his son on the 4th of March, 1681, a territory in America extending five degrees westward from the Delaware River, with a breadth of three degrees. This became the province of Pennsylvania—Penn's forest. Penn was a member of the Society of Friends and, because of his fondness for James, Duke of York, was fully in accord with the principles of religious liberty which that prince had so much at heart. These views Penn carried out in the province granted to him. Penn said he went "thither to lay the foundations for a free colony for all mankind that should go thither, more especially for those of my own profession, not that I would lessen the civil liberties of others because of their persuasion, but screen and defend our own from infringement on that account."¹

It was in this spirit that Penn and the Quakers drew up a law in England before their departure, later ratified by an assembly of the freemen of the colony in 1682, granting religious liberty to "all persons living in this province, who confess one Almighty God, to be the creator, upholder and ruler of the world . . . and live peacefully and justly in civil society. . . ." They further bestowed political privileges upon all "such as profess faith in Jesus Christ." The significance of the freedom of worship thus granted to all Deists and civil liberties given to all Christians was epochal. This Quaker law was contrary to the Toleration Act of 1689 which excluded Catholics, Jews and Socinians.

Anyone studying the growth and development of Catholicity in Pennsylvania must be struck by the close relationship and kinship of feeling which existed between Quakers and Catholics.² It would not be too much to say that, in many instances, the former made fertile the ground for the latter. In its rôle as precursor of Catholicism in Pennsylvania, Quakerism deserves something more than mere mention. Unfortunately, I have not actual statistics at hand showing what percentage of converts to Catholicism

¹ W. T. Root, *Relations of Pennsylvania with the British Government, 1696-1765* (New York, 1912), p. 223.

² Martin I. J. Griffin, *William Penn, the Friend of Catholics* (Philadelphia, 1884) pp. 71-86.

were won from the Society of Friends, but it must have been worthy of note. However, even when they were not converted, the Quakers in Pennsylvania were the benefactors of the struggling Roman Church. These factions may possibly have been drawn together by the fact that both of them suffered persecution at the hands of their fellows.³ It seems to me, however, quite probable that it was due rather to a similarity in points of belief. The Quaker doctrine of the brotherhood of man and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is not altogether foreign to Catholic doctrine. That the Quaker stops short with an acceptance of divine inspiration is a thing to be lamented, though not entirely inexplicable. However, it is not for us to discuss theology, either Catholic or Quaker.⁴

There were already in the colony in 1682, Dutch Calvinists and Swedish Lutherans. Catholics had made a very feeble attempt at colonization. From the conglomerate stream of races and religions were to come the men and women who were to make the history of the nation and that of the Keystone state.

Penn exerted himself to obtain emigrants from Germany and among the settlers who came there may have been Catholics who sought homes in this and other colonies now open to them.⁵ That considerable numbers of German Catholics lived in Philadelphia at an early date is evidenced by the baptismal and marriage records of Old Saint Joseph's and St. Mary's, by the fact that the first church established by a single nationality was German, and certainly by the fact that roster of priests serving the province during the period of time in which we are interested reads like a German roll call.⁶

As there was constant intercourse between Maryland and Pennsylvania, the Maryland missionaries could easily cross the disputed boundary at Bohemia Manor and visit the rising city of Philadelphia. Shea says that there are indications that Philadelphia was visited at an early date by some Franciscan Fathers, but I find no reference to the fact elsewhere. If we credit a letter to England

³ Anthony Benezet, *A Short Account of the People Called Quakers* (New Bedford, 1799).

⁴ Elizabeth Kite, Archivist of the Catholic Historical Association, Philadelphia will supply material on this phase of Quakerism.

⁵ Oscar Kuhns, *German and Swiss Settlements of Colonial Pennsylvania* (New York, 1901), Ch. VI.

⁶ Penn-Logan Correspondence I, pp. 278-282 and II, 276-420. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division.

dated Philadelphia, August, 1683, a Jesuit Father or some other priest called upon Penn soon after his arrival in the colony in 1682. The letter in question asserts that he died a Jesuit. The point, it seems to me, is rightly one of controversy.

In 1689 began the long series of wars between England and France which involved the colonies. The Quaker assembly refused to put the colony in a state of defense or to aid New York defend her frontier. The refusal, in part, led the crown, in 1692, to deprive Penn of his powers of government and to place the province under the control of the royal governor of New York.⁷ The institution of royal control paved the way for the undoing of Penn's cherished views as to political privileges. The royal commission to Fletcher, as governor of Pennsylvania, directed him to call an assembly whose members before taking their seats should subscribe to the Toleration Act of 1689. By this action a test of office now appeared for the first time in the province and destroyed Penn's plan with respect to political privileges, for thereby Catholics, Jews and Socinians were excluded from the assembly.⁸ Perhaps it would be well, to point out here that, though our chief concern is with the treatment accorded Catholics, there were other denominations which suffered a similar fate.

When the colonies of New York and Maryland for a time were transformed into royal provinces and the Church of England formally established, the fate of Pennsylvania hung in the balance. But Penn, shrewd and cautious, avoided any outward show of his kindly feelings in the affairs of his province, though, in a tract published in England, he urged the repeal of all penal laws against Catholics.⁹

In 1694 Penn's powers of government were restored to him. The Frame of Government of 1696, drawn up by the colonists without Penn's consent, made the English Toleration Act a test of office in the province. This action together with the fact that no objection was made to the imposition of the Toleration Act as a test in 1695 makes it plain that Penn's co-religionists did not share his advanced and enlightened views as to civil liberties. In 1699, on Penn's return to the province, the old order was restored.

⁷ E. B. Greene, *Provincial America* (American Nation Series, New York, 1906), VI, 23, 59.

⁸ W. T. Root, *Relations of Pennsylvania with the British Government*, p. 224.

⁹ John Shea, *Catholic Church in Colonial Days* (New York, 1886), p. 99.

In the first clause of the Charter of Liberties and Privileges, October 28, 1701, which reaffirmed the toleration already established, it was provided: "That all persons who also profess to believe in Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, shall be capable (not withstanding their other persuasions and practices in point of conscience and religion) to serve the government in any capacity, both legislatively and executively, he or they solemnly promising when lawfully required, allegiance to the king as sovereign, and fidelity to the Proprietor and Governor."

The result of Penn's liberality was to increase the number of Catholics who settled in Pennsylvania particularly when Catholic-founded Maryland had fallen away. There seems to be no means of ascertaining who the first Catholics were and who was the first priest. However the visits of priests, under the unmolested kindness of the Quakers, must have begun soon after the founding of the city of Philadelphia. Evidence from several sources shows that Mass was openly offered in Philadelphia at the close of 1707, or early in the ensuing year, and that Lionel Brittain, a man of means and position, became a convert to the Catholic faith.¹⁹

But whoever first brought Catholicism into Penn's colony, it most certainly was the Jesuit Fathers who helped to keep it burning. We must not pause for the historical recording of the strenuous missionary work of these zealous Fathers, to whom being hunted was old familiar business. Their traces are clearly discernible through the provinces of Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey where, disguised in the garb of Quakers, they ministered at stated times to the faithful.

Completely obscured by a radiant offspring, the mother of Pennsylvania's Catholicity to this day lies hidden in a backyard of America's first capital. But that is getting ahead of our story and in so far as it is possible, we want to tell it chronologically.

During those days of general persecution Catholics in most parts of the British Empire acted with great caution so as not to excite hostility, but in Philadelphia they showed less prudence. The fact that Mass was openly said, became known in England, and was made the basis of accusation against Penn, who wrote to

¹⁹ Letter of Rev. John Talbot, Episcopal minister of St. Mary's, Burlington, N. J., to Rev. Geo. Keith, of Connecticut, Feb. 14, 1707-1708. Library of Congress, Manuscript Division. Talbot seems to have been intent upon stirring up trouble.

Logan: "Here is a complaint against your government that you suffer publick mass in a scandalous manner."¹¹ There is, however, no Catholic record as to the Catholic clergyman whose zeal attracted this general notice, nor do we know anything of his flock.

Nor, indeed, is the place where the first Mass was offered clearly settled. Watson, the annalist of Philadelphia, on the authority of Samuel Coates, stated that it was a house at the northwest corner of Front and Walnut Streets. A later historian, Thompson Westcott, raised a doubt by showing that this property belonged to Griffith Jones, a member of the Society of Friends, and one of the early mayors of Philadelphia.¹²

We are equally unenlightened as to the priest who officiated for the Catholics of Philadelphia in 1708; no evidence has been found. None of those who have written on the Jesuit missions in Maryland mention any Father of the society as laboring in Pennsylvania prior to Father Greaton whose name does not appear on the Maryland mission before 1721.¹³ It may have been, as Shea suggests, Father Mansell from Bohemia, or the English Franciscan Father James Haddock, or one of the Scotch Fathers of that order, Peter Gordon, or Clement Hyslop, or indeed some secular priest.¹⁴

In Pennsylvania there is no notice of any priestly service for the Catholics from 1708 to 1729, at which time, according to a tradition recorded by Watson, there was a Catholic chapel near the city of Philadelphia: "At that time Elizabeth McGawley, an Irish lady and single, brought over a number of tenantry and settled with them on the road leading from Nicetown to Frankford. Connected with her house she had the said chapel."¹⁵ Thompson Westcott could find no documentary evidence to substantiate Watson's statement, no Miss McGawley appearing as a land holder in that vicinity, and finding that a Catholic gentleman living near the place conveyed lands to Father Greaton in 1747, he says: "If there ever was any Roman Catholic Chapel near Nicetown, it must

¹¹ Penn-Logan Correspondence, II, July 29, 1708, p. 294.

¹² Thompson Westcott, *Historic Mansions and Buildings of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1877), p. 80.

¹³ Wm. B. Treacy, *Old Catholic Maryland and Early Jesuit Missionaries* (Swedesboro, N. J., 1889).

¹⁴ Thos. Campbell, S.J., *Pioneer Priests of North America, 1642-1710* (New York, 1908-1910), Vol. 1.

¹⁵ J. F. Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia*, I (Philadelphia, 1845), 453.

have been built on this ground bought by Father Greateon and after 1747." But this does not follow necessarily; a purchase of land in 1747 is not incompatible with the existence of a chapel on other ground in 1729.

As early as 1744 Father Schneider¹⁶ visited the Catholics near Frankford and Germantown, and was at the house of Doctor J. M. Brown, performing a baptism there, recording it in terms that show that his host was regarded as a person of some consequence. There is evidence, therefore, that there were Catholic services in that vicinity before the deed of 1747.¹⁷

A question-mark hangs over another matter connected with the early mission in Pennsylvania. Sir John James, apparently of Heston, Middlesex, established a fund of £4,000, which was held by the Vicar-Apostolic of London, and by his direction forty pounds a year were to be applied for the benefit of poor Catholics in London, and the residue to support the Catholic missionaries in Pennsylvania. It was regarded as annexed to the church in Lancaster, and for many years gave twenty pounds annually to four missions in Pennsylvania. The founder of the fund was a convert to the faith, and Archbishop Carroll implies that the German Fathers were introduced into Pennsylvania to attend their countrymen by means of it. "I know no thing more of the generous founder," wrote Bishop Kendrick in 1845, "but this is certainly an evidence of zeal."

That there were Catholics in the province in 1729 is evident from the fact that a boy, born in Pennsylvania, September 22nd of that year, John Royall, entered the Society of Jesus abroad, and died in England in 1770. He is probably the first native of Pennsylvania ordained to the priesthood.¹⁸ It is claimed too that Mass was said about 1730 at the residence of Thomas Willcox, at Ivy Mills, Delaware County, the ancestor of a well-known Catholic family.

After this period of obscure beginnings of Catholicity in Pennsylvania, we come to the more definite fact of the establishment of a congregation in Philadelphia which still exists.

¹⁶ "Some New Notes on Fr. Theo. Schneider, S.J., a German Pioneer Priest in Colonial Times," by Lambert Schrott, O.S.B., *Records of American Catholic Historical Society, of Philadelphia*, June, 1934, pp. 179-185.

¹⁷ James L. Kirlin, *Catholicity in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1909), pp. 64-65.

¹⁸ Maury Walton, *Notes Compiled with the Bicentenary Committee of Old St. Joseph's, Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1933), p. 9.

From the station established at Bohemia, the Fathers of the Society of Jesus in Maryland in time extended their missions into Pennsylvania.¹⁹ Unfortunately no contemporaneous documents are known which record the name of the first missionary or the time and place where the services began.

When the Rev. John Carroll was appointed Prefect-Apostolic, he was directed by the Propaganda to send an account of the Church in the United States. He drew up a paper, as he himself states, "from very imperfect memoirs," which contains many inaccuracies. His statement, however, has been the basis of nearly all that has since been written in regard to the Church in Philadelphia.²⁰

About the year 1730 Father Greaton, a Jesuit, went from Maryland to Philadelphia, and laid the foundation of that congregation, now so flourishing. He lived there until about 1750, long before which he had succeeded in building the old chapel,²¹ and in assembling a numerous congregation, which at his first going thither did not consist of more than ten or twelve persons. He was succeeded by the Rev. Father Harding, under whose patronage and through whose exertions the present church of St. Mary's was built.

In the year 1741 two German Jesuits were sent to Pennsylvania for the conversion of German emigrants who from many parts of Germany had come into the province. Under great hardships and poverty they began their laborious undertaking, which has long since been blessed. Their names were Father Schneider, from Bavaria, and Father Wapeler, from the lower Rhine. They were both men of much learning and unbounded zeal. Mr. Wapeler remained about eight years in America and converted many to the faith of Christ. However, he was forced by bad health to return to Europe. He was the person who made the first settlement at the place now called Conewago. Mr. Schneider formed many congregations in Pennsylvania, built a noble church at Coshenhopen and spread the faith of Christ far and near. He used to visit Philadelphia once a month for the sake of the Germans residing there, until it was at length found proper to establish

¹⁹ *American Catholic Historical Researches*, XXII (1905), 122.

²⁰ Peter K. Guilday, "Appointment of Fr. Carroll as Prefect-Apostolic," *Catholic Historical Review*, VI (1920), 204-248.

²¹ A lease for a lot on Chestnut St., dated Feb. 6, 1729, and preserved in Old St. Joseph's, Philadelphia, substantiates the assertion of Father Greaton's presence there.

there permanently a German priest as the companion of Father Harding. The person appointed was the venerable Father Farmer who had come from Germany some time before and had lived at Lancaster, in the same province of Pennsylvania. This event took place about the year 1760.²² No register, record, or report of Father Greaton exists to throw light on his ministry or to fix the exact date when it began.

Some facts, however, we do know and they have specific meaning for the historian, Protestant and Catholic alike. Forty years before civil liberty was declared, at Fifth and Chestnut Streets true religious independence was established in a little church with a chimney instead of a cross, below Fourth and Walnut Streets. It is strangely significant that part of the phraseology proclaiming civil liberty should have been the very same a Jesuit priest used four decades earlier, in insisting on religious freedom. The facts, as nearly as I can learn them, are these: The erection of the "Popish Chapel" by Father Greaton, 1734, was represented to Governor Patrick Gordon as being contrary to the laws of England, particularly the 12th and 13th of King William II. To this objection Father Greaton countered by showing the Charter of Privileges granted by the late proprietor and confirmed by Queen Anne four years subsequent to the law of King William II. We have reason to observe one of Father Greaton's expressions: "We are and of right ought to be, free and independent of any civil law restricting or debarring our right to religious liberty. We claim the right from William Penn."²³ This stand of Father Greaton for the principles of religious liberty was confirmed by the Quakers. Had he not taken it and had they not supported it, it is difficult to say what might be status of religious liberty in the United States today.

I note with interest that Shea calls attention to the fact that no deed is known to be in existence for the property on which Father Joseph Greaton erected his first Church. If the interested historian will visit St. Joseph's, Willings Alley today, he will find the refutation to that statement. On the wall of one of the colonial parlors can be seen the deed of the present property, written on

²² Account in the handwriting of Archbishop Carroll and reproduced by John Shea, *Catholic Church in Colonial Days*, pp. 386-387.

²³ Maury Walton, *Notes Compiled with the Bicentenary Committee of Old St. Joseph's, Philadelphia*, p. 10.

parchment by hand, the date of purchase being May 14, 1733.²⁴ To the left on another wall in the same room is a document signed by Robert Morris, Edward Shippen (Peggy Shippen Arnold's father), Thomas Willing and Benjamin Chew. This is an agreement reached by the Board of Arbitration, 1787, made up of Catholics and Quakers, giving the Catholics right of way over the property immediately adjoining that of St. Joseph's.²⁵

It is certain that prior to 1740 the Jesuit missionaries in Maryland had learned the condition, numbers and residence of scattered Catholics in Pennsylvania. In 1740-1741, Pennsylvania appears in the records of the Society of Jesus as a distinct mission, under the title of Saint Francis Borgia. Father Joseph Greaton appears as the Superior of the new mission. The plan adopted in Maryland was followed also in Pennsylvania. Lands were acquired by the missionaries with their own means, and held almost always in the name of Father Greaton, as his associates, generally Germans, being Catholic aliens could not take title to land. It should be remembered that Catholics were excluded from naturalization as British subjects.

Father Joseph Greaton (sometimes alias Mr. Josiah Crayton), according to the most probable accounts, was born in London, February 12, 1679, and entered the Society of Jesus on July 5, 1708.²⁶ After making his solemn profession eleven years later, he was assigned to the Maryland mission in 1721. He was certainly for many years pastor of St. Joseph's Church, Philadelphia, and Superior of the Pennsylvania missions. It is lamentable that we have so little that is authentic in regard to the long labors of this one of the founders of the Pennsylvania mission.

Of the two German Jesuits who were his first auxiliaries, Father Wapeler was a native of Nuen Sigmaringen, Westphalia, and was born January 22, 1711. He entered the Society of Jesus in 1718. Arriving in Pennsylvania in 1741, he founded the mission of the

²⁴ The present incumbent of the rectorship of Old St. Joseph's is Fr. J. P. O'Reilly, S.J., to whom posterity will be indebted for the spiritual celebration of the bicentenary and the restoration of the rectory and its historic treasures of colonial architecture, paintings, books, furniture, china and lamps. He has brought to light many priceless pieces of historic value and given charm to the venerable house, once the episcopal residence of the first three bishops of Philadelphia.

²⁵ The lot was on a hill alongside the Quaker Almshouse later made famous by Longfellow's "Evangeline."

²⁶ "Greaton," by Richard J. Purcell, in *Dictionary of American Biography*, VII, 527.

Sacred Heart at Conewago, erecting a log-house. Early in 1742 he purchased some lots in Lancaster, and began to erect a chapel there. This building seems to have been recognized as a church from the outset and was dedicated to St. John Nepomucene. Of Father Wapeler's labors we have scanty notices. He was forced to return to Europe about 1749. His church at Lancaster perished by sacrilegious hands, December 15, 1760, but the Catholics at once began to rebuild. The authorities to their credit offered a reward for the incendiaries. Upon his departure, Father Wapeler was succeeded by Father Neale, who did not survive long, and by then Father Sittensperger. Many of the English and Irish settlers above Pipe Creek, and most of the Germans, were Catholics at this time.

As to Conewago we have little precise information. This district was settled under a Maryland grant of 10,000 acres by John Digges, in 1727, and some Catholics may have come in with the earliest colonists. The first Mass is said to have been offered in the house of Robert Owings, on a slight elevation, about a quarter of a mile north of the present Church of the Sacred Heart which occupies the site of Father Wapeler's humble chapel.²⁷

Of the third of the early missionaries in Pennsylvania, Father Theodore Schneider, we have more satisfactory knowledge.²⁸ He was born in Heidelberg, Germany, April 7, 1703. He is said to have been rector of the university, and professor of philosophy and polemics at Liège. His labors in Pennsylvania began in 1741, so that he renounced a brilliant future in the learned circles of his native land to toil among obscure emigrants in America. His register preserved at Goshenhoppen is entitled, "Book of those Baptized, Married, and Buried, at Philadelphia, in Cushenhoppen, Maxetani, Magunschi, Tulpehaken, etc. Begun Anno Domini 1741." He was pastor of the German Catholics in Philadelphia for many years and his flock formed the majority of the faithful in that city. He records a marriage at Philadelphia "in sacello nostro," being undoubtedly the oldest official record of any ecclesiastical act in St. Joseph's Church. Then we trace him to the Swedish settlement in Germantown, and in the spring of 1742 to Cedar

²⁷ John Reily, *Conewago, A Collection of Catholic Local History* (Martinsburg, 1885), pp. 44, 45.

²⁸ "Some New Notes on Fr. Theodore Schneider," *Records of American Catholic Historical Society, of Philadelphia*, June, 1934, pp. 179-185.

Creek. Toward the close of the year he returned by way of Lebanon and North Wales to Philadelphia and Germantown. February, 1733 marked his coming to Cushenhopen, where, in time, he reared a humble house, rather a chapel for the Catholics of that district than a home for himself, though he never gives it the name of church or chapel. Here he also had a school. In May he founded the mission at Haycock, celebrating the feast of the Holy Trinity in the house of Thomas Garden. Then we find him at Frankfort and his regular stations.

Pennsylvania had receded somewhat from the broad ground of religious freedom early assumed by William Penn. From 1693 to 1775 no one could hold even the most petty office in the province without taking an oath denying the Real Presence and declaring Mass idolatrous.²⁹ None but Protestants were allowed by the act of 1730 to hold land for the erection of churches, schools, or hospitals, and as we have seen, none but Protestants could be naturalized. The efforts of the Pennsylvania governors and assemblies to enlarge religious freedom were constantly thwarted by the home government. The Pennsylvania authorities, though they submitted, seem to have made the laws virtually inoperative in most cases. German Catholics certainly held lands and had churches without any attempt to dispossess them.

The Pennsylvania authorities went further. On their western frontier were Indians, more or less under French influence, who menaced the exposed settlements.³⁰ They knew that the French influence was acquired, at first by the zealous labors of Catholic priests, and they prudently resolved to avail themselves of the Jesuit Fathers in the province to win the favor of the native tribes. Jesuit Fathers, evidently by the wish of and in the interest of the Pennsylvania government, attended conferences with the Indians. The Superior of the Maryland mission, Father Richard Molyneux,³¹ was with the Indians at Lancaster, just before the treaty of the Six Nations was made there in June and July, 1744. As

²⁹ Thompson Westcott, *Names of Persons Who Took the Oath of Allegiance to the State of Pennsylvania, With a History of the "Test Laws" of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1865).

³⁰ French influence is a little over-stressed in Guilday's *Life and Times of John Carroll* (New York, 1922). Cf. Jules Baisnee, *Establishment of the American Catholic Hierarchy* (Baltimore, 1934).

³¹ "Molyneux," by Richard J. Purcell, in *Dictionary of American Biography*, XIII, 81-82.

the Pennsylvanians did not venture to avow their policy, this visit subjected Father Molyneux to suspicion in Maryland.

The decade from 1745 to 1755 was marked by definitive progress in the work of the church. Beside the lot on Walnut Street on which St. Joseph's Church had been erected, a lot adjoining it, and facing on Willing's Alley was obtained by Father Robert Harding by deed of June 5, 1752. Peter Kalm, in his *Travels*, mentions that the Catholics had a great house, well adorned with an organ. It is evident that the original structure had been enlarged.

Rev. Robert Harding, S.J., was born in Nottinghamshire, England, October 6, 1701, and entering the Society of Jesus at the age of 21, was sent to Maryland in 1732.³² Selected about 1750 to succeed Father Greaton in Philadelphia, he was for more than twenty years rector of St. Joseph's. He was one of the earliest to encourage the American painter, Benjamin West. By his love of the poor he acquired the highest reputation as a philanthropist;³⁵ he seconded the claims of the colonists for their rights under the Magna Carta, and gave Philadelphia a second Catholic Church, the land being purchased from Edward Shippen.

Father Schneider from Goshenhoppen attended the German Catholics in Philadelphia and continued his apostolic journeys. His register shows such constant activity as to excite wonder. A remarkable monument of his patience and industry exists in two manuscript missals, which in his few hours of leisure he copied out, in order to have a missal at different stations and thus lighten the load he was required to carry. Poverty made it impossible to obtain a supply of missals, but his patience and assiduity supplied the want. One of these, preserved at the ancient Goshenhoppen mission which he founded, is in a state of perfect preservation. It is a volume six inches wide, seven and a half long, and a half-inch thick. The handwriting once clear and beautiful is still legible and fascinating.

Just when the church was built at Goshenhoppen is not easily determined. The house mentioned by Father Schneider in his register, had evidently been replaced by a church, which must have been of some size and beauty to be styled even in prejudiced exaggeration, "a very magnificent chapel." With respect for antiquity

³² "Harding," by Francis J. Tschan, *Dictionary of American Biography*, VIII, 250-251.

³³ "Caspipina's Letters," in *Pennsylvania Packet*, Sept. 7, 1772.

worthy of praise, the walls of the old chapel of the last century were retained as part of the present church.³⁴

Father Manners was, at this time, in charge of Conewago—that is to say, from about 1753 on—and Father Steynmeyer, known at the mission as Father Ferdinand Farmer,³⁵ soon began his pastorate at Lancaster. After six years' service at Lancaster and its independent missions, during which time he aided in the completion of the Church, he was transferred to Philadelphia. Here his apostolic zeal was given full vent. A practicing physician, a philosopher, an astronomer and a mathematician of considerable ability, this saintly missionary performed his duties as a priest "with much dignity and reputation." His first entry in his register is on September 17, 1758, and his duties as assistant to Father Harding were evidently onerous. His labors, though beginning in Pennsylvania extended through New Jersey and New York. He was called the "Apostle of the Faith" in New York, which, both state and city, he visited often, despite threats of imprisonment, and he was appointed its first Vicar by Archbishop Carroll. On the morning of the birth of American Independence, July 4, 1776, Father Farmer officially witnessed, in St. Joseph's Church, the marriage of James Walsh and Honora Mullarkey, one of whose descendants is at present active in parish work.³⁶

In the meantime, the congregation at St. Joseph's had increased so that the original chapel was enlarged or rebuilt in 1757. Moreover, as ground was required for a cemetery, and also to make provision for the erection, in time, of a second church, a lot extending from Fourth to Fifth Streets was conveyed on May 10, 1759 to two Roman Catholics, James Reynolds and Bryan O'Hara, evidently in trust for the desired object. It was reconveyed the next year to Daniel Swan. The purchase money £328-16-6, was contributed by Rev. Robert Harding and eighty-one other subscribers. The ground was stated to be for the benefit of the chapel. Special reference was made to its use as a burial ground, as by law Catholics could hold land for that purpose. A second subscription was begun in 1762, and was so successful that in the following year

³⁴ John Shea, *Catholic Church in Colonial Days*, p. 446.

³⁵ "Farmer," by Ernest B. Boddington, *Dictionary of American Biography*, VI, 276-277.

³⁶ Maury Walton, *Notes Compiled with the Bicentenary Committee of Old St. Joseph's, Philadelphia*.

the erection of a church was begun on this property—the future St. Mary's.

On November 18, 1755, the benevolence and good will of the people of Pennsylvania was put to the test. Three nondescript vessels bearing approximately 454 persecuted Catholics, sickly, feeble, many half dead, ascended the Delaware. At first, Philadelphians were inclined to view these Acadians as suspicious characters, who, together with the Irish and the Germans aimed at the extermination of the Protestants. Father Harding immediately bent every effort to alleviating their material, as well as their spiritual condition. More than half died within a short time after their arrival, but they died consoled and fortified by the sacraments of the Church. Those who survived were charitably received and soon lost their identity in the general population.³⁷

It is the favorite pastime of people of conflicting interests to represent their cause as being endangered by the encroachments of the other side. Thus it was that in 1755 the Catholics of Pennsylvania were charged with being in league with the French.³⁸ The justices of Berks county, Conrad Weiser among them, laid their case before Governor Morris on July 2, 1755. "We know," said these Daniels of the law, "that the people of the Roman Catholic Church are bound by their principles to be the worst subjects and worst of neighbors, and we have reason to fear, just at this time, that the Catholics in Goshenhoppen—where they have a magnificent chapel and lately have had long processions—have bad designs."³⁹ History has proved the falsity of the charge and the absurdity of the prophecy. Because the priests at Reading and Goshenhoppen, who were accustomed to visit their congregations once in four weeks, announced that they wouldn't return for a period of nine weeks, it was at once decided that they had gone to consult with the French at Duquesne.⁴⁰ The Germans were considered by political circles in London to be certainly hostile to any design for defending the country against the French. The French operations on the Ohio served to increase the odium and suspicion against the Catholics. We make no attempt here to explain the reason for this attitude. It would be futile since peo-

³⁷ J. L. Kirlin, *Catholicity in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1909), pp. 84-86.

³⁸ *A Brief State of the Province of Pennsylvania*, London, 1755.

³⁹ Israel Rupp, *History of the Counties of Berks and Lebanon* (Lancaster, 1844), p. 151.

⁴⁰ John Shea, *Catholic Church in Colonial Days*, p. 433.

ple rarely judge with their reasoning powers but rather with their predilections and their prejudices.

By the middle of the century no amount of suspicion and abuse, active or passive, was sufficient to stem the tide of Catholicity which was gradually gathering momentum in the province. Statistics for some periods are decidedly meager, but the year 1757 is rather well accounted for. In and near Philadelphia there were 72 men, 78 women, Irish or English; and in Chester county 18 men, 22 women—all under the care of Father Robert Harding. His associate Father Theodore Schneider residing at Goshenhoppen, had under his care 107 men, 121 women, all Germans in and about Philadelphia, and besides this 198 men, and 166 women in Berks, Northampton, Bucks and Chester counties; while Father Ferdinand Farmer, then at Lancaster, had 208 men, and 186 women, Irish and German, in Lancaster, Berks and Cumberland counties; and Father Matthias Manners, the missionary at Conewago, had 99 men and 100 women, both Irish and German, in York county. The total approximates 1,365 in all.⁴¹

The availability of these figures for the year 1757 may be explained by the fact that in that year was passed the Militia Act requiring an enrollment of the people indicating their religion. Small as was this scattered body of Catholics the Militia Act required that the number of Papists be ascertained so that they might be excluded from the service. By a special clause every Catholic was required within a month to surrender all arms, accoutrements, gun powder or ammunition, under the penalty of three months' imprisonment. Every Catholic who would have been liable to military duty was compelled to pay a militia tax of 20 shillings—a large amount for the times—to the captain of the company in which he was not allowed to serve.⁴²

By the end of this decade, the Catholics were comparatively free in the exercise of their religion. They had churches openly at Philadelphia, Conewago, Lancaster and Goshenhoppen, and proposed to erect one in Easton. They were, however, proportionately poor, few of their communion being possessed of any large means, but they contributed generously to the erection and maintenance of churches and the support of the priests who attended

⁴¹ J. L. Kirlin, *Catholicity in Philadelphia*, quoting Father Harding's letter of June 14, 1820.

⁴² *Pennsylvania Archives*, First Series, III, 130-132.

them. It was this spirit of determined self-sacrifice which brought them through the next decade at once so trying and momentous for both Church and province.

The position of the Catholics in 1763, however, was not a promising one. The defeat of the French by the English in the Seven Years' War resulted in the tightening of imperial control in the colonies. The menace of the French was now removed, but a new problem was automatically created in the acquisition of a vast transatlantic realm. Statesmanship of an heretofore unnecessary nature was required to govern these new possessions. Quite naturally, the colonists felt this new state of affairs, and Catholics, in particular were conscious of the precariousness of their position.

Since 1759 ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the English colonists had been exercised by Mgr. Richard Challoner, Bishop of Debra, now Vicar-Apostolic of London.⁴³ Had they a bishop of their own their position at the moment would have been more secure. The question of providing these Catholics across the sea with a Vicar-Apostolic or bishop was not a new one—it was discussed as early as 1756. However, it was not until 1763 that any definite action seems to have been taken in that direction and the initiative appears to have begun in England. Bishop Challoner, writing to Rev. Dr. Stoner, Clergy Agent at Rome, September 6, 1763, speaks of the impossibility of his taking due care of Catholics at so great a distance as those in America, and expresses his belief that a bishop or Vicar-Apostolic on the American continent would be most proper.

Pennsylvania apparently recommended itself to the minds of Bishop Challoner and others as the most likely place for the Episcopal establishment. A manuscript in the archives of the Propaganda, written in 1763, reads as follows: "If the Sacred Congregation should deem it suitable to establish a Vicar-Apostolic over the other English colonies and Islands, it seems that the city of Philadelphia, in Pennsylvania, is the most suitable place for his residence, as being a city of large population, and, what is more, a sea port, and consequently convenient for keeping up free correspondence with the other provinces on the main land, as well as with the islands. This additional reason may be given, that there

⁴³ Edwin H. Burton, *Life and Times of Bishop Challoner (1691-1781)*, (New York, 1909), Vol. II; also "Challoner to his Agent in Rome, Stoner, Sept. 14, 1756," *Georgetown College Transcripts, 1756-1776*.

is no place in all the English dominions where the Catholic religion is exercised in greater liberty.”

When, however, the time came for the establishment of a Vicar-Apostolic in the New World, it was not this so admirably heralded site which was chosen as the first Episcopal See. Shortly after the above suggestions were made, the entire Catholic populace in America was dealt a most staggering blow by the dissolution of the Society of Jesus. The Brief “Dominus ac Refemtor,” signed by Pope Clement XIV, July 21, 1773, was soon enforced in the American mission.

On the 6th of October Bishop Challoner transmitted to the clergy in the British Province, all members of the Society of Jesus, the following :

To Messrs. the Missioners in Maryland and Pennsylvania :

To obey the orders I have received from above, I notify to you by this the Breve of the total dissolution of the Society of Jesus ; and send withal a form of declaration of your obedience and submission, to which you are all to subscribe, as your brethren have done here ; and send me back the formula with the subscriptions of you all, as I am to send them up to Rome.

Ever yours,

October 6, 1773.

Richard Deboren, V.Ap.⁴⁴

Well might this have been the knell of Catholicity, not only in Pennsylvania but in all America. Had that been so we should be writing history of the United States quite differently. But the fact that it did not mark the end of the Church accounts for the development of history as we know it.

Through the annihilation of the English Province of the Society of Jesus with its American mission, its priests became itinerant, isolated clergymen, far removed from a bishop, and subject to one unable to visit them, one who had declared to the Propaganda his absolute inability to supply priests for these remote churches. This condition necessitated putting into positive form the previously mentioned agitation for an American organization. The disruption of their order did not eradicate the little company in America. So well disciplined and trained were they, that they reorganized

⁴⁴ Thomas Hughes, *History of the Society of Jesus*, Documents I (New York, 1910), No. 141.

themselves under the title of the Roman Catholic Gentlemen of Maryland and fifteen years later were able to establish a college at Georgetown.

That interest in Catholicism was aroused among many who were in attendance at the Continental Congress is evidenced by the note of October 9, 1774 in Washington's diary: "Went to the Presbyterian meeting in the forenoon and the Romish Church in the afternoon."⁴⁵ The reaction of John Adams to the same services serve the double purpose of throwing an interesting light upon that gentleman's character and showing clearly at the same time the temper of Catholicism in Philadelphia on the eve of the Revolution which was to bring independence to the colonies.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Charles Francis Adams, *Familiar Letters of John Adams to his Wife, Abigail, During the Revolution* (New York, 1876); also John Adams, *Works*, II, pp. 370-395.

⁴⁶ The story of the rise of the Catholic church in Pennsylvania will be concluded in an article "The Catholic Church in Pennsylvania, 1775-1808," to appear in the next number of the magazine.