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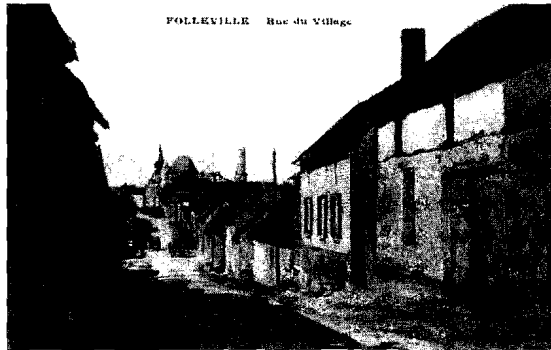
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Postcards from the Past — Folleville, France —

By

JOHN E. RYBOLT, C.M.¹

Although the village of Folleville dates from the fifth century A.D., some traces of a large Roman camp, dating from the first Christian century, are visible to the south. The name Folleville probably comes from a Latin word for leaf (*folium*), referring to its rural setting. The town had been strategically placed on a hill to observe those passing by on the Roman road leading from Lyons to Senlis, Amiens, Boulogne and Britain beyond. This road was located in the valley of the Noye below. Barbarian tribes devastated the area from the third to the fifth centuries. In the seventh century, the king designated the area as a fief of the great abbey of Corbie, located not far away. In the ninth or tenth century, the lords of Folleville began to fortify the area against the Normans.



"Folleville. Rue du Village." French postcard. Librairie C. Dubois, Breteuil.
Vinciantiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL

The most famous lord was Raoul de Lannoy, born of a Flemish family. He was chamberlain and counselor of three kings: Louis XI, who decorated him with a golden chain for his warlike valor, then of Charles VIII and Louis XII. Louis XI spent the night in the castle amid great splendor in 1477, Charles VIII visited here in 1492, as did Francis I in 1546. Henri II arrived for the baptism of Henri, son of Louis de Lannoy, his godson. The eldest daughter of this same Louis de Lannoy, Marie, wed

¹ The following is an edited excerpt from John E. Rybolt's *In the Footsteps of Vincent de Paul: A Guide to Vincentian France* (Chicago: DePaul University Vincentian Studies Institute, 2007), 450 pp. Part historical overview, part travel guide, the book offers an extensive look at sites throughout France, both major and minor, related to the Vincentian Family. The book is available for purchase online at <http://vsi.depaul.edu>, click on Bookstore; or order by phone at 312-362-7139.

Antoine de Silly in 1572, and he thus became the lord of Folleville. His daughter Françoise Marguerite de Silly married Philippe Emmanuel de Gondi, general of the galleys, in 1610. She spent part of her childhood here, and eventually the property came into her possession. She exercised responsibility for the peasants on her lands, with the customary right of proposing priests to the bishop as pastors.



"Folleville. Un des aspects de la Grande Rue." French postcard.
Vinciantiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL

In 1615 and 1617 Vincent resided at Folleville as the tutor of the children of the Gondi family. Antoine Portail, his earliest follower, perhaps joined him, although he was ordained a priest only in 1622. One of the children, Jean François Paul, became the notorious and worldly Cardinal de Retz, known for his part in a rebellion against Cardinal Mazarin. During a period totaling about eighteen months (divided into three periods: 1615, 1617, 1620), Vincent preached and gave missions in the surrounding parishes. The names of two of these are known, Sérévillers and Paillart, where he established Confraternities of Charity in 1620. Vincent also began to experience sickness here, the ailments of his legs which he suffered throughout his adult life. After 1655 the Community celebrated the events of the "first sermon of the Mission" on 25 January, and the saint's recollections (although he is not recorded as mentioning the name Folleville) are preserved in a repetition of prayer on 25 January of that year, as well as in a conference of 17 May 1658.



"Folleville. Tour et ruines du château des Gondy." French postcard.
Vinciantiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL

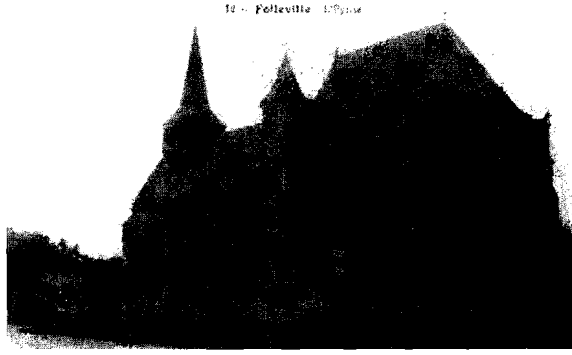
This sermon, delivered on a Wednesday probably in the course of a longer mission, remained in his mind as a founding moment of his life's work. Vincent had previously been giving missions, and already had the practice of urging general confessions, as is known from his petition to the archbishop of Sens on the subject, dated 1616.

At various times in Folleville's history, Vincentians came to visit. One group gave a mission in 1770 and, on concluding this mission, presented a reliquary and dedicated a side altar to Saint Vincent. During the nineteenth century, many Vincentians and Daughters of Charity came on pilgrimage. Many of these people also contributed to the restoration of the church.



"Folleville. Le Château." French postcard. Edition Cartoux-Vimeux, Breteuil.
Vincentiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL

Bishop Jacques Boudinet of Amiens asked Father Étienne to send some Vincentians to take over the parish, which they did in late 1869. The bishop had other plans as well. A large piece of property was bought in 1874. Like the Berceau, to which it was compared, the bishop believed that Folleville too should have some Vincentian presence. His first plan was to receive orphan boys. Daughters of Charity came for this purpose in 1875. Further, he negotiated the building of a train station at La Faloise, and it in turn began to attract pilgrims to Folleville. Meanwhile, because of the deaths of superiors generals and bishops, and because of both anti-clerical laws in France and the first World War, the orphanage closed and the Daughters left in 1904. Another work then developed: a training school for Vincentian brothers, beginning in earnest in 1926. The Vincentians purchased the castle and worked to maintain it. Other buildings were gradually restored and new ones added. This work was later closed and sold. A large statue of Saint Vincent is still to be seen over the main entrance of the school, located across the road from the castle. Today, the town consists of a few houses and numbers perhaps 70 people.



"Folleville. L'Eglise." French postcard. Edition Cartoux-Vimeux, Breteuil.
Vincentiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL

The present stone church, in Gothic style, replaces a church dating from about 1360. It is divided into two parts: the nave, built in the fifteenth century, for the use of the people, and the sanctuary, begun in 1510 and consecrated in 1524, for the family. The nave, built first, was dedicated to the apostle Saint James the Greater. His statue is in the niche behind and to the left of the pulpit. This church was one of the many on the medieval pilgrimage route, the "Route of Paris," to Compostela, Spain. A modern sign by the door of the church as well as an old statue of Santiago above and to the left of the door recall this. Several elements make it clear that the family spent more funds on decorating their part of the church than the people did. The vaulting of the nave is of oak and has eight beautifully carved figures at the base of the ceiling. The vaulting of the sanctuary, however, is carved stone. The windows in the nave are plain, those in the sanctuary more elegant. The floor of the sanctuary is marble, while that of the nave is stone and brick. In both parts of the building there are traces of paint on the columns, and painted crosses recall the bishop's consecration of the church.



"Folleville (Somme). Intérieur de l'Eglise. Le Chœur." French postcard. Hémary Photo.
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Vincentiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL

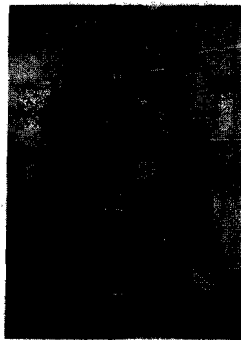
The sanctuary area, the “choir,” was added to the church to serve as the mortuary chapel of the lords of Folleville. It is dedicated to Saint John the Baptist. In earlier years, it was separated from the nave by a wooden altar screen, a *jubé*, taken down at the Revolution. Several notable items found in the interior include:



“Intérieur de l’Eglise de Folleville. Tombeau de François de Lannoy.”
French postcard. Breteuil, Imp. A. Bouteille.
Vincentiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL

(1) The *tomb* of François de Lannoy (d. 1548), son of Raoul, and Marie de Hangest, pictured kneeling, carved from local stone. Above the figures, on the wall behind, are carved heads. Below on the lowest register are the four cardinal virtues. This tomb is surrounded with a fine marble frame in Renaissance style. Both tombs have the figures facing the niche that used to hold the sepulcher of Jesus. This couple were the great-grandparents of Madame de Gondi.

(2) The *niche* used for the wine and water for mass is a sixteenth-century work, adorned with the initials of Raoul de Lannoy and his wife.



“Environs d’Ailly-sur-Noye. Niche de Lavabo dans l’Eglise de Folleville.”

French postcard. Collection G. Chedozeau, F.P., photo.
Vincentiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL

(3) The modern *shrine of Saint Vincent de Paul*, in imitation Gothic, bears the date 1899, with another representation of angels with the instruments of the Passion on the upper wall of the sanctuary. Inside the shrine are figures of saints representing the four cardinal virtues. To one side is an old door leading to a tower; it also gave access to the *jubé*. This area was formerly the sacristy, and the remains of an outer door, now blocked up, can be seen in the left-hand wall. It gave the family access to their part of the church.

(4) Above is a *modern window*, dated 1869, the design of Charles Bazin. Its upper section features several words written on scrolls: Meekness, Simplicity, Humility, Zeal, Mortification, Religion; and then two titles of Saint Vincent in Latin: *Cleri Parens, Pater Pauperum* (Parent of the Clergy, Father of the Poor). There are four figured sections: (a) Vincent hearing the confession of the dying peasant at Gannes, with the text in French: "25 January, day of the Conversion of Saint Paul;" (b) the conversion of Saint Paul, the feast day with the first sermon of the Mission, the text reads: "The conversion of a notable inhabitant of Gannes;" (c) Vincent preaching at Folleville, with the text: "Saint Vincent de Paul preaches the sermon of his first mission at Folleville," which also pictures the *jubé*; and (d) Vincent teaching the three Gondi children, with the text: "Tutor of the three sons of Monsieur Philip Emmanuel de Gondi, lord of the area." It should be noted, however, that this responsibility lasted only until Vincent's return from Châtillon and, that, furthermore, only Pierre, the oldest son, born in 1606, was of an age to profit from the saint's teaching. The others, Henri (b. 1612) and Jean François Paul (b. 1613), were probably too young for him and would have been in the care of others.

Below these pictures are the emblem and motto of the Congregation of the Mission (text: "On 25 January 1617, Saint Vincent de Paul projects the establishment of the priests of the Mission"); Cardinal de Retz archbishop of Paris (text: "The Cardinal archbishop of Paris approves the Congregation of the Mission"); the Daughters of Charity (text: "In 1633 the institution of the Daughters of Charity took place"); and Urban VIII (text: "On 15 March 1655, Pope Urban VIII approves the institution of the Priests of the Mission"). (The windows are not in the right order to correspond with the texts below them, since they were taken down and repaired and put back incorrectly.)

(5) Across the sanctuary, on the wall, is a *tablet* commemorating donors from the Congregation of the Mission and others to this Vincentian shrine, together with a statue of John Gabriel Perboyre, who visited here while he was teaching at Montdidier before his ordination.

(6) The marble *baptismal font*, carved in 1547 for the baptism of Louis de Lannoy. It is mounted on a pedestal of local stone. On the exterior of the basin are four coats-of-arms and the Lannoy chain of office.



LES FONTS BAPTISMAUX DE FOLLEVILLE

"Les Fonts Baptismaux de Folleville."

Vincentina Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL

(7) The *paintings* on the walls are copies of those prepared for Vincent's canonization. They hung previously in the Vincentine house at Montdidier until their transfer here in 1913.

(8) The oak *pulpit* was carved in Montdidier. Recent research has shown that this is in all likelihood not the pulpit where Vincent preached what he later recalled as the first sermon of the Mission, since it appears to date from 1620. Philippe Emmanuel de Gondi and his wife gave this pulpit to the church after their chaplain returned from his brief pastorate in Châtillon, perhaps as a way of locally implementing the decrees of the Council of Trent. This old pulpit, with a seat inside, was restored in 1868. It stands on a small carved leg in the Louis XIII style. Six panels, sculpted with various designs, constitute the body of the pulpit. The back board was replaced in the eighteenth century, and a carved inscription dates from 1868: "On January 25, Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul, 1617, Saint Vincent de Paul preached his first sermon of the Mission in this pulpit. It was repaired with the help of the Congregation of the Mission in 1868." An iron grille was added at that time to protect the pulpit from the pious pilgrims who had, over the centuries, removed parts of it for their own devotion. At the foot of the pulpit are two carved stone portraits. The head facing right is that of Raoul de Lannoy.

(9) The *pews* probably date from 1620, ordered at the same time as the pulpit. Before Vincent's time, men and women were separated in the body of the church, each group with its own altar. The men remained on the right, and their altar was dedicated to James. This altar also served as the main altar for the parishioners. The women were on the left, and their altar had Mary as patron. A niche (*piscine*) in the wall by the pulpit, used for holding wine and water, gives an idea where one altar was placed. These two altars blocked the view of the high altar, but it should be remembered that the church building was divided into two sections: the more elaborate (closed off with a gate in the *jubé*) belonged to the lords, who had their



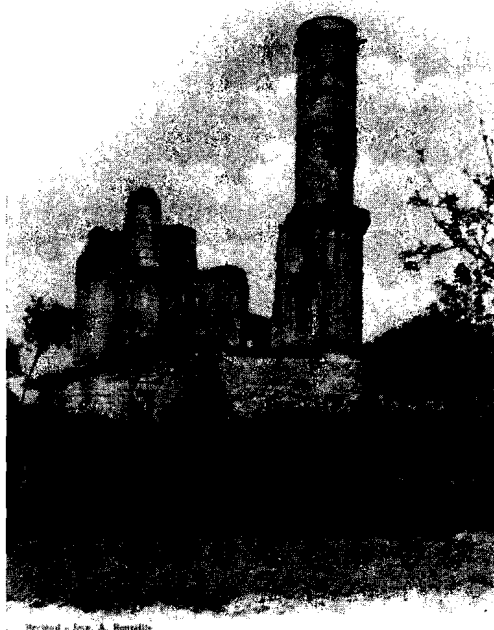
“Folleville. Eglise. La Chaire du Premier Sermon de Saint Vincent de Paul.”
 French postcard. Edition Cartoux-Vimeux, Breteuil.
Vinciantiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL

own chaplain, and the older and more common part belonged to the people, who had their own pastor—doubtless a cause of confusion.

Outside the church, the differing rooflines demonstrate the various ages of the buildings. Also the statue of Mary, fourteenth century, probably comes from the previous church building. She holds the child Jesus on her right arm, but his figure has been partially removed. The small round section held the staircase leading to the altar screen. Below the statue of Santiago by the main entrance is an old sundial, useful in times when clocks were rare.

The De Lannoy family may take its name from the river, La Noye, which runs in the region. In any case, one branch of the family is named Delano, associated with Franklin Delano Roosevelt (d. 1945), president of the United States. His widow, Eleanor, came to visit this ancestral area in 1952.

By the front door of the church stand the remains of an old gate, leading into the castle. Directly on the left is a modern building replacing an ancient pilgrim hospice. Originally a wooden structure situated on a mound, a stone *castle* gradually took shape. The major work dates from the eleventh or twelfth century. Jean de Folleville, at one time ambassador to Spain, restored the castle in the late fourteenth century. At its greatest extent, twice the present size, the castle was surrounded by a dry moat, with access guaranteed by a drawbridge. It was well decorated inside, plastered and hung with tapestries, a luxurious setting, although this is difficult to perceive today. The inner section of the castle, the *donjon* (the “keep”), is most of what is visible today and dates from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. At various times it held prisoners, and some of the graffiti they left became visible during archaeological excavations carried out in the 1930s.



"Tour de Folleville." French postcard. Breteuil, Imp. A. Bouteille.
Vinciantiana Collection, DePaul University Special Collections, Chicago, IL

Large fireplaces are still in evidence, proof of the need to warm the main rooms in the winter. The family had rooms on the upper floors around a central hall. The large circular tower room on the right was that traditionally used by the priest, and therefore by Vincent. The large tower on the left enclosed the kitchen, and below it are storage rooms, restored in 1996. The castle did not fall into ruins but was intentionally demolished by one of its owners, a process that began in 1777. The Vincentians, who purchased the castle in the early twentieth century, sold it in 1965. Since 1988, a local association has worked to preserve and improve it.

To one side in the garden is the *Pavillon*, a former residence for the caretakers of the castle, dating from before the time of the Gondis. Recent archaeological work has shown that some ceiling beams from the castle were reused in this house. Some are decorated and bear the painted initials AM, probably for Antoine de Silly and his wife Marie de Lannoy, the parents of Madame de Gondi. The building now houses a small museum.

To the southwest of the town can be seen, when weather permits, the outlines of the *Roman camp*. This large camp had much to do with the eventual development of the hillside town now called Folleville. Along an old Roman road (the *chemin de la Chapelle*) lying below the town is a tiny *votive chapel*, originally dedicated to Saint Vincent de Paul. It is dated, in its present condition, to 1880.