The zeal which impressed her new Catholic friends was to cause a serious break in Mrs. Seton’s relations with her older non-Catholic connections in the summer of 1806. It has been said that Elizabeth Seton was very fortunate in the number of men of exceptional virtue who crossed her path. If in proportionate degrees these men benefited from her friendship, how much more impressive is the evidence of Mrs. Seton’s influence on women. Her encouragement to Rebecca Seton has already been noted. After her conversion, Mrs. Seton had an even greater influence on Cecilia Seton, Rebecca’s youngest sister and Elizabeth’s sister-in-law. Cecilia, together with her sister Harriet, and her cousin, Eliza Farquhar, had been tremendously aroused by the fervor of Elizabeth’s formal inquiry on the Catholic faith. While Harriet, and “Zide’s” first enthusiasm cooled under parental frowns, Cecilia’s only grew stronger. The girl became obstinate at James Seton’s house where she lived, and many notes passed between her and the “sis” she adored. Elizabeth advised patience and told Cecilia to let the Lord be her first confidant in regard to the “secret” they shared. She must yield to those who had authority over her. “Of course you are a prisoner,” she wrote, “but it is a Prisoner of the Lord.” As the girl’s yearning to become a Catholic increased, her health grew worse. When Elizabeth began to fear that Cecilia might die outside the Church, she wrote to Father Cheverus in Boston, asking his advice. The solace Cheverus wrote in reply allayed her fears but did not dissuade Cecilia. On 17 June 1806 Cecilia made the decision to become a Catholic, and three days later she made her formal profession of faith to Rev. Michael Hurley, O.S.A. The storm which now broke was violent. Up to the time of Cecilia’s conversion, the Setons, Ogden, Hoffmans, and other friends had disapproved of Mrs. Seton’s course of action and family relations had been cool and restrained; but the general attitude had been more one of pity for the “poor fanatic” and her foreign friends. The conversion of one of their blood relations while she was living under their own roof was an entirely different matter. Even warmhearted Dué was alienated for a while.

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*“Zide” was Eliza Farquhar, the third member of the trio of girls so interested in Catholicism after Mrs. Seton’s conversion.*

*Hurley in a letter to Cecilia used the words, “Remember the 17th of June; it stands recorded in Heaven.” Cecilia herself said, “I was received and united to the Catholic Church on the 20th of June.”*
Cecilia had been staying at Charlotte Ogden’s, at 44 Wall Street, when the Setons began to suspect her perfidy. Charlotte Seton Ogden, wife of Gouverneur Ogden, was Cecilia’s older sister. She was the most bitter of all the Setons on the subject of Cecilia’s conversion and it was the attitude of the Ogdens which remained most vividly in Mrs. Seton’s memory in later years. Both Charlotte Ogden and Mary Hoffman Seton accused Cecilia of deception.4 The family first tried to put pressure on Cecilia by confining her to her room. When she remained adamant, they told her that she would be responsible for depriving Elizabeth Seton of her livelihood. It is not clear what the Seton family believed the New York State Legislature could do but they spoke wildly of petitioning to remove Elizabeth from the state, but it is quite obvious that religious prejudice flamed wildly for a time as a result of Cecilia’s conversion. They threatened to send Cecilia to the West Indies on a vessel then ready to sail. They even threatened to burn down Elizabeth’s house over her head.5 When they warned Cecilia that “if she persevered that they would consider themselves individually bound never to speak” to her or Elizabeth again, that she was no longer welcome in any of their homes, she quickly tied up her clothes in a bundle and went over to live with Elizabeth.6 When Charlotte discovered Cecilia’s absence, she wrote a peremptory demand that Cecilia answer the question, “Are you a Catholic?”7 Cecilia replied that she had left Wall Street “in a firm resolution to adhere to the Catholic faith,” and could only return when the family could receive her in that faith.8 When she asked Charlotte about the rest of her clothes, Mrs. Ogden replied acidly, “You had best apply to those who have hitherto supplied you.”9 Later, when Charlotte had calmed enough to relent, she, wrote, “Fearful, you may want clothes, I send you those bundles which you left here. It is likewise your brother’s wish that if you really intend to leave us all, you will let him know where the remainder are to be sent.”10

Meanwhile back at James Seton’s, Mary, his wife, was investigating Cecilia’s bureau and when she found there Catholic literature she immediately blamed Elizabeth for proselytizing the girl. She wrote Cecilia coldly:

In respect to your sister [Elizabeth Seton] I will be very explicit. If she had never been a Roman, neither would you. I decidedly say [that] I firmly believe that she has acted toward me both cruel and unjustifiable, and I candidly own to you so far from keeping your change of religion a secret, I openly shall confess it, that others may not trust Mrs. Seton’s liberality of principle as I have done.11
In spite of Cecilia’s assurances that she would not think of instilling Catholicism in Mary’s children, the James Setons told Cecilia she was no longer an example worthy of the children’s emulation.

When Elizabeth wrote an account of that July of violence and anger to Antonio Filicchi in London, she had high praise for Rev. Michael Hurley, who had “behaved like an angel” and was their one true friend through the crisis. She told Antonio that she wished “the so long desired refuge of a place in the order of St. Francis” could be obtained for his converts. Just what “a place in the order of St. Francis” implies is not clear. Mrs. Seton occasionally referred to a “secret” in her letters to Filicchi; this may have been a secret fantasy to enter [or associate herself in some way with] a Franciscan order. Antonio replied from London that the “new St. Cecilia” should remain with Elizabeth, and he enclosed a letter for John Murray giving orders that Mrs. Seton be allowed to draw unlimited sums. When Elizabeth showed her reluctance to accept such generosity, Filicchi spoke strongly, “I command you” to call upon Murray “for any and for as many pecuniary wants” as Cecilia and Elizabeth’s family might have. Antonio Filicchi had just returned to Italy, having had a miraculous escape in the Alps Mountains which he attributed to Elizabeth Seton’s prayers. He felt a better Christian, he said, through her good example, “Through you my mercantile interests are blessed by God with an uninterrupted success.” It seemed simple justice to Antonio that Elizabeth accept in return a small part of the rewards he had through her prayers.

Antonio was not the sole sympathizer. Francis Matignon wrote from Boston, “A step so courageous of a person so tender in years and in spite of such obstacles, is without doubt, as you have expressed it, a visible miracle of grace...[assuring Elizabeth that] in spite of my silence I take a very lively interest in all which concerns you; I wish every day at Mass the action of God’s grace in all your concerns and a continuation of His favors.” Harriet Seton and Eliza Farquhar hoped the storm would blow over and they wrote Cecilia, “How ardently we long and pray for that

[Although Melville indicated that Mrs. Seton may have sought to “enter a Franciscan order,” it is also possible that she wished to board and teach in a convent school since she had heard of the congregation of religious women established under the auspices of Saint Sulpice in Canada. She may have become acquainted with the Franciscans in Italy through the Filicchi family. Ed.]

The enclosed letter to John Murray & Sons of New York was a scathing denunciation of Mrs. Seton’s “Christian” friends. Mrs. Seton did not deliver it, but Filicchi himself sent a duplicate direct to Murray.

Francis Anthony Matignon was the pastor of Holy Cross Church in Boston which Bishop Carroll had dedicated in 1803. At the time of this letter, 22 September 1806, Jean Cheverus was his assistant. When Cheverus became bishop in 1810 Matignon became his former assistant’s subject and continued to serve at Holy Cross Cathedral, to complete twenty-six years of service in Boston’s first church. Father Matignon wrote fewer letters to Mrs. Seton than some of her other friends.
hour which will bring us to one fold, under one shepherd.” And though they feared the consequences if they should be found in communication with the pariah, they added, “Tell the blessed H. [Hurley] to pray for us.”

The “angel,” Mr. Hurley, so beloved by Cecilia, Elizabeth, and the others was a young Augustinian priest who had come to New York from St. Augustine’s Church in Philadelphia in July 1805 to assist in the crisis caused by yellow fever that summer. At the time he arrived he was about twenty-five years old, of medium height, and possessing a clear, strong speaking voice. He was never polished or elegant, and from a certain brusqueness of manner Cecilia and Elizabeth gave him a secret name, “Whyso.” At the beginning of his stay in New York, he had not impressed Mrs. Seton, but later she wrote to Antonio Filicchi that Mr. Hurley was “very much improved in his official Character, and quite freed from those singularities we used to lament in him.”

James Barry told Carroll that Hurley appeared proud without being so, that he kept only a “proper respectful distance” from the church dignitaries who were “non-lettered spalpeens” who treated their priests like a tailor’s or shoemaker’s journeyman. “Mr. Hurley’s moral character,” wrote Barry, “I have invariably heard applauded. In his church duties he is solemn, dignified, and punctual. Without the least infringement of the truth, he is by far the first ornament of our church.”

It was Michael Hurley who prepared young Anna Maria Seton for her first Communion, and Elizabeth told her daughter, “Remember that Mr. Hurley is now in the place of God to you, receive his instructions as from Heaven.”

Because of the distance of St. Peter’s Church from her home, Mrs. Seton developed during this period the habit of spending Sunday at church. After her first Mass and Communion, she breakfasted with Mrs. Dupleix, the Barrys, or with Mr. Hurley or Mr. Byrne. She sometimes assisted at three Masses in one morning. She would then take her dinner with nearby friends and conclude the day with vespers. After the rift with Mrs. Dupleix following Cecilia’s conversion, Elizabeth ate more frequently at Barclay Street. She spoke of dining on “beefsteak and claret” with Rev. John Byrne when he returned from a visit to Georgetown with news of her sons; and when Byrne was away at Norfolk she and Cecilia dined with

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1 Harriet Seton became a Catholic in 1809 at Emmitsburg. There is no evidence that Eliza Farquhar ever entered the Catholic Church.

2 By the fall of 1806 St. Peter’s Church had the services of Rev. Matthias Kelly, recently arrived from Dublin at Rev. John Byrne’s invitation, and Rev. Michael Lacey who also served at Norfolk, Virginia, during this period. A General History of the Christian Church published by Bernard Dornin in 1807 contains an interesting list of Catholic subscribers, including “Dr. Matthew O’Brien, D.D.,” Rev. L. Sibourd, Rector, Rev. John Byrne, Rev. Matthias Kelly, Rev. Michael Lacey of Norfolk, as well as a “Mrs. S.” St. Peter’s of Barclay Street gave evidence of the rapid turnover in priests, so characteristic of the American Church in the early days of the republic.
their “Whyso.” Needless to say, when Hurley was away from New York he was keenly missed. In May, 1807, when he was called to Philadelphia by his mother’s illness, Mrs. Seton wrote, “I do not like your Philadelphia visits—Pitying Mercy, if you should not [return] ...surely the scourge would fall heavily.” And the scourge was all too soon to fall.

Michael Hurley was not at all happy about conditions at St. Peter’s. When he arrived he had noticed “many gross abuses” which he tried to reform. The conduct of some of the clergy fell short of Hurley’s expectations and he wrote his bishop:

With regard to ourselves I can only say we are not as we should be. I fear some of us seek ourselves and not God—our own conveniences rather than the good of religion. The trustees are evidently discontented and inclined to interfere and adopt violent measures. However as they generally consulted me I have uniformly opposed any step that might lead to scandal or to revolt. There is certainly a great field for exertion here.

On his visit to Baltimore and Washington, in the early summer of 1807, Hurley discussed conditions in New York with Bishop Carroll, and learned of Carroll’s intention of sending Rev. Louis Sibourd to New York as active pastor to Barclay Street. Sibourd had recently returned to the United States from Martinique. When Hurley returned to New York and learned of his own recall to Philadelphia by his superior, Rev. Matthew Carr, O.S.A., he wrote to the bishop, “Rev. Sibourd’s arrival at this [time] is singularly fortunate and seems to presage much good to this distracted congregation.”

Mrs. Seton received the news of Hurley’s impending departure with dismay and she wrote to Cecilia:

St. M. [Michael], our St. M. never known till lost, nor did we know our love and value for him until the blow is struck—He leaves us Monday to return NO MORE—the rector of St. Augustine Church has left it to Him and is going away in ill health...He wishes extremely to see you Sunday morning.

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8 Bishop Carroll had condemned the practice of using the sanctuary as a thoroughfare when he visited New York, but the practice had continued. Hurley also complained that the Blessed Sacrament was carried by school boys from the church to the sexton’s house.

9 Some of the trustees opposed Hurley himself. James Barry wrote Carroll that Andrew Morris attributed politics to Hurley; Barry added, “The good old man got upon that hobby horse, party election, and saw everything as people do in an unsmooth state of mind.” Matthew O’Brien’s conduct was openly criticized in New York City and O’Brien was censured by Bishop Carroll in 1808, as was Matthias Kelly.
The two converts were sad, indeed, the last Sunday they heard Mr. Hurley offer Mass. Elizabeth never quite forgot his earnest admonition, “Sursum Corda,” to them in the face of their grief. Often in the days that followed, when her spirit seemed “deaf to every other remembrance,” his last words sounded in her ears and she took fresh courage. When Mrs. Morris teased Elizabeth and asked if she needed a bowl to catch the tears at Hurley’s departure, Mrs. Seton answered simply, “They stream from my heart, tho’ it rejoices in the happiness he has gained.”

Fortunately for Cecilia and Elizabeth Seton, by the time they lost their strong supporter and friend, the family quarrel was past its bitterest stage. Eliza Seton Maitland, Cecilia’s older sister, had become seriously ill in March 1807 and had asked for Cecilia and Elizabeth. In the course of attending the dying woman, the two converts naturally saw many of their relatives and friends. The family was favorably impressed with Cecilia’s “sweet submissive manner and prudent behavior” and asked her to come visit them. In only a few weeks Mrs. James Seton asked for Cecilia’s assistance with the children again. When Mary Seton died in June, Cecilia was kept on by James Seton to care for his motherless children. The reconciliation with Elizabeth was complete by fall, and she could write Sad who was again in Ireland:

James walked in my room the other morning, took me in his arms like one of the children, asked some questions about a bundle at the Custom House, and seemed to have met me every day of the twelve months I have not seen him—I like that—so all the world should do.

During the confusion caused by Cecilia’s conversion, Elizabeth Seton’s interior progress went steadily forward. She wrote happily to Antonio:

Upon my word it is very pleasant to have the name of being persecuted and yet enjoy the sweetest favours, to be poor and wretched and yet to be happy, neglected, and forsaken, yet cherished and most tenderly indulged by God’s most favored servants and friends. If now your sister did not wear her most cheerful and contented countenance she would indeed be a hypocrite.

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1 It is interesting to note that the first Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph’s to leave Mrs. Seton’s foundation at Emmitsburg went to St. Joseph’s Asylum for orphans in Philadelphia in 1814 at the trustees’ request through Michael Hurley.
Her serenity overflowed and touched those around her and John Wilkes, who was now remarried and prospering, said wonderingly, “Providence does not do so much for me as for you, as it makes you happy and content in every situation.” These were her happiest days. Under particular trials of patience, she found her best consolation in the Litany of the Blessed Virgin. “How sweet,” she told Cecilia, “to entreat her who bore Him in the Bosom of Peace to take our own case in hand—if she is not heard, who shall be?” Once again Elizabeth turned to the practice of keeping a journal, and this series of meditations written from July to November 1807 while household cares pressed heavily, and the distance to St. Peter’s was long, contains one of the most beautiful records of Elizabeth Seton’s love. Here is found the moving meditation on the Blessed Sacrament, which a convert so truly understands.

Which of us having once tasted how sweet the Lord is on his holy altar and in his true Sanctuary, who finding at that Altar our nourishment of soul and strength to labor, our propitiation, thanksgiving, hope, and refuge can think but with sorrow and anguish of heart of the naked, unsubstantial comfortless worship they partake who know not the treasure of our Faith—theirs founded on words of which they take the shadow, while we enjoy the adored Substance in the center of our Souls.

Not that the path was straight upward. Many times during that summer of 1807 she became downcast at the failure of her good resolutions, “the constant presence of reproaches to the little ones,” her darlings, whom she felt she herself deserved more than the trifles of their behavior did. Sometimes the paucity of the fruit that so many confessions and communions bore suggested the idea of abandoning them, “to fly from the fountain while in danger of dying of thirst.” But she raised her heart, as “St. Michael” had commanded, and wrote the lovely praise of Penance:

Oh my soul, when our corrupted nature over-powers, when we are sick of ourselves, weakened on all sides, discouraged by repeated lapses, wearied with sin and sorrow, we, gently, sweetly lay the whole account at His feet, reconciled and encouraged by His appointed representative, yet trembling and conscious of our imperfect dispositions, we draw near

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1 Mrs. Seton had written Julia Scott on 10 November 1806, “J. W. is married as you probably know, and of course I am more interested not to trespass more on his benevolence.” 4.56, Elizabeth Seton to Philip Filicchi, New York, 2 November 1807, CW, 1:480; 4.26, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 10 November 1806, CW, 1:418.
[to] the Sacred Fountain. Scarcely the expanded heart receives its longing desire than wrapt in His Love, covered with His Righteousness, we are no longer the same.39

As her spirit expanded, Elizabeth yearned more and more for retreat from the world. The Montreal scheme which Antonio Filicchi had never abandoned appealed increasingly to both Cecilia and Elizabeth. She wrote Philip Filicchi of her disappointment that the “long anticipated removal of my family to Canada” had not yet materialized.40 She had already written Antonio that the Barrys approved the plan and that James Barry had taken steps to advance it.41 When she began to have serious qualms in regard to the influence of her boarders on her daughters, she decided to consult Bishop Carroll. She wrote him a letter outlining the situation,1 citing the ties which bound her to New York, giving the estimated cost of the Montreal project and asking his advice: She said she would rely on his decision.42 Carroll replied at once, sympathizing with her concern for the girls and agreeing that they should not be exposed to improper company. But, he warned, before Mrs. Seton took any action, she should consider first: suppose the girls were unhappy in Canada—could, Mrs. Seton then return to New York; secondly, could Mrs. Seton get released from her present obligations to the boarders without being accused of unsteadiness?43 Failing to receive a definite mandate to undertake the scheme, the young widow felt she should consider other possibilities.

Meanwhile Mrs. Seton was faced with the declining prosperity of her boardinghouse. The Wilkes brothers continued to pay the house rent, but Post had not contributed for some time, and Mrs. Startin had adopted an orphanm which rather absorbed her interest and charitable contributions.44 More serious was the shrinking of her clientele. Some of the parents claimed to be dissatisfied with the treatment their sons received. By the end of November three out of a total ten had been withdrawn, and Mrs. Seton was “handsomely roasted for not keeping them in better order.”45 She was at first apprehensive lest she had failed in her duty to the boys, but Mr. Harris, who superintended the school they attended, assured her that only great injustice could tolerate such a view.46 The simple fact was that the young boarders followed the attitude of a majority of their elders and began

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1 Mrs. Seton estimated the cost to be about $600 and she told Carroll she could count on more than that from a subscription Antonio Filicchi had arranged for her before he left America. This subscription consisted of annual pledges by friends to the following amounts: Julia Scott, $200; the Wilkes brothers, $200-$300; Dr. Wright Post, $200; Sarah Startin, $200; the Filicchi brothers, $400.

m The orphan was one of the Maitland children, child of Eliza Seton Maitland. Mrs. Startin had other reasons for discontinuing her support, chief of which was Cecilia Seton’s conversion. It was after this event she changed her will to omit Elizabeth Seton and her children.
to grow ungovernable after Cecilia’s conversion. As Elizabeth explained to Antonio, a year earlier:

They have lost a portion of respect for me which it was impossible to avoid while we were the laughing stock of their dinner tables at home, and the talk of the neighborhood here—Mrs. Farquhar’s children being forbidden [to] enter the house occasioned a great deal of amusement to them.47

Elizabeth would have abandoned her boarders then, if Cheverus and Matignon had not urged her to persevere.

Rev. Jean Cheverus and Rev. Francis Matignon in Boston were waiting for a different solution to evolve. The November following Cecilia’s conversion, Rev. Louis William Valentine Dubourg, (1766–1833), the president of St. Mary’s College in Baltimore, stopped in New York on his way to Boston. Accidentally meeting Mrs. Seton, Dubourg conversed with her about her boys and her intentions for them. Elizabeth told him of her hope of entering or residing in a convent in Montreal if the children could be arranged for there, and if she could make herself “useful as an assistant in teaching.” Dubourg told her he felt that some such arrangement might be made within the United States. As Elizabeth wrote Bishop Carroll, “This hope which had hitherto been but as a delightful dream...Mr. Dubourg brought to the nearest point of view and flattered me with the belief that it is not only possible, but may be accomplished without difficulty.”48

In Boston, Dubourg discussed his hopes for Mrs. Seton with Cheverus and Matignon, who were equally impressed. Matignon wrote Elizabeth, “We are entirely agreed on what Mr. Dubourg has proposed for you,” and he went on to say they felt Mrs. Seton was destined to take a great place in the United States where it was definitely preferable that she remain. There was no urgency for the moment, said Matignon; “God has His moments which we need not anticipate, and prudent slowness only ripens and brings to fruition the good desires which Grace inspires within us.”49

While the Canadian dream still lingered, Elizabeth had been in no hurry to pursue Dubourg’s proposal. She wrote Julia:

A gentleman of very great respectability from Baltimore, the Superior of...[St. Mary’s] college there, has endeavored to interest me in the establishment I have heard you mention

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* Charles I. White tells a charming story of Dubourg’s being struck by Mrs. Seton’s fervor at the altar rail. Present researches indicate no archival sources for this account but since White has proved accurate in most other respects, the present writer [Melville] sees no reason to discount the probable truth of the incident. See White, 211-2.
with approbation in Philadelphia, Madam (I do not know who), who keeps the celebrated boarding school—but the aim of my desires if I were to change the present situation is very different, tho certainly the idea of going to Philadelphia, or rather to you, would be delightful to me.50

When Jean Cheverus perceived Mrs. Seton’s lack of interest in anything but Canada that winter, he wrote reprovingly,

Dr. Matignon sends his respects and desires me to tell you he does not know how to procure the rules of the nunneries in Canada. Dr. Dubourg was to converse with you about another project which I should prefer, hoping it would be better for your family and being sure it would be very conducive to the progress of religion in this country [the United States].51

During the early spring of 1807, Mrs. Seton heard nothing from John Carroll, who was suffering from a painful inflammation of the eyes. He had begged Joanna Barry in April to “Make the best apology you can for me to Mrs. Seton whom I am ashamed of having neglected so long.”52 But in May Bishop Carroll gave a blanket approval to Dubourg’s plan, writing, “Tho I am entirely ignorant of all particulars…it is enough for me to know that it has the concurrence of Dr. Matignon and Mr. Cheverus.”53 Dubourg, himself, reopened the whole question when he came to New York early in 1808.

Elizabeth had become very lonely for her two sons at Georgetown and she wrote Bishop Carroll at the end of February asking if the Seton boys might come to New York.54 When Carroll learned that the president of St. Mary’s College was going north he put the Seton boys in his care. Dubourg came to New York to assist with the Lenten services at St. Peter’s Church; he lodged with Andrew Morris. Sibourd had been petitioning Carroll since early February for additional clergy. Sibourd’s first choice had been Rev. Benedict Joseph Flaget (1763–1851), but Flaget demurred on the ground that he would be no good for preaching.55

Mrs. Seton’s boarders had been reduced to five at this time, and the Setons had been forced to move to a house of lower rent. The house was so small that the Setons were living “five in a room and a closet.”56 This time

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* There is no way of determining what school Mrs. Seton referred to, but it seems evident she believed Dubourg planned to establish her in Philadelphia. A Madame Grelaud had a French school on Mulberry Street in Philadelphia early in the 1800’s. This school was very successful and many Maryland girls were sent there. Madame Grelaud was reputed to be a Huguenot and her pupils were chiefly Episcopalians, although some Jews and Roman Catholics attended. See *The Maryland Historical Magazine*, XXXIX (June 1944), 141-9. Dubourg may have hoped to establish a similar school for Catholic girls.
the Sulpician made Mrs. Seton a definite offer of “a formal grant of a lot of
ground situated close to the college [St. Mary’s in Baltimore] which is out
of town and in a very healthy situation.” Dubourg guaranteed the immediate
charge of half a dozen girls and as many more as Elizabeth could manage.
The Seton boys could enter St. Mary’s at a nominal cost, thus leaving free
part of the Filicchis funds for their education.57 In May after his return to
Baltimore, Dubourg wrote to Mrs. Seton:

I have this moment written at large to our worthy Bostonian
friends to submit to their consideration the scheme which
now engrosses all my thoughts. Should they approve of it I
would be for your coming in two or three months and taking
the rent of a newly built house, which in every point of view
would perfectly suit all our ideas at least during the first year,
which, would give you sufficient time to reflect and consult
on the propriety of building.

Dubourg believed it would be premature to buy a house. Renting for
a year would give them time to consult the Filicchis in Italy, “and otherwise
make a trial of our strength and prospects.”58

The spring of 1808, seemed to demand a decision. The ties which
bound Mrs. Seton to New York were being relaxed one by one. James Barry
had died as the new year was ushered in, and Mrs. Barry with her daughter,
Ann, had sailed for Madeira in the hope of improving Ann’s health.59 Mrs.
Sadler and Mrs. Dupleix were both gone to Ireland and the Napoleonic wars
in Europe made their return improbable.60 Conditions within the church in
New York were distressing. Rev. Louis Sibourd, who had replaced Rev.
William O’Brien in July 1807 was very dissatisfied with the caliber of his
assistants and he had written his bishop as early as 8 December 1807,6 of his
intention to resign.61 It required only the approval of her friends to solidify
Elizabeth Seton’s resolution to depart.

The wholehearted approval of the Boston priests was not long in
arriving. On 12 May Jean Cheverus wrote that he and Matignon were agreed
with Dubourg and Sibourd on all points. “We infinitely prefer it to your
project of retreat in Montreal,” he said, and he urged that “prudence, but
not extreme delicacy or timidity” should guide her reliance upon Filicchi’s

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57 There may have been dissatisfaction on the part of some trustees in regard to Sibourd’s diction but the real
reason for his departure was not a recall by his bishop, but Sibourd’s own determination to resign. As early
as 7 December 1807, Sibourd regretted having accepted “the rectory of this church.” On 27 June 1808,
he wrote his formal resignation giving reasons as conscience, poor eyesight, and lack of preaching ability.
Even Dubourg’s offer to go to New York “thrice a year” to help him did not deter Sibourd. In August the
discouraged Frenchman who had “tried to bring back more regularity to the discipline of the church but
found little support in the priesthood,” left for Saratoga Springs, New York, for a rest.
unlimited resources. When Elizabeth consulted John Wilkes and Wright Post, she received their approval as well. They told her she would have no trouble in renting the house she had just taken, for the season was a good one. The only hesitation remaining in Elizabeth’s mind centered around Cecilia. The girl wanted to be with her sister-in-law wherever she might go, but she was restrained by a sense of duty to James Seton’s children and the precarious condition of her own health. Elizabeth was most eager to have Cecilia accompany her but Mr. Sibourd advised against the girl’s going at this time. Dubourg felt Mrs. Seton would have enough on her hands without assuming any added responsibilities. He advised, however, that Cecilia disclose to her family at once her intentions of following Mrs. Seton to Baltimore as soon as circumstances permitted.

Everything was now decided except the actual date of departure, and the route to be taken. Elizabeth wrote Julia Scott that she would come by way of Philadelphia if she could be of any assistance to Julia and her mother who were both ailing. “On your answer,” she explained, “depends either my going round by Sea, or coming to you in two or three weeks by land. But be sincere in your statement as they tell me it will be much less expense to go by Water.” Whether Julia replied or not, the extant evidence does not indicate; but a week after writing this letter, Mrs. Seton was en route to Baltimore by boat. 9 June 1808, found Elizabeth and her three daughters on board the Grand Sachem, ready to leave New York never to return. The words of Dubourg probably matched Mrs. Seton’s feelings as she started south; he had written, “I remain more and more satisfied that even were you to fail in the attempt you are going to make, it is the will of God you should make it.”
Notes

2. Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 3 April 1806, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:5. See 4.20, Elizabeth Seton to Cecilia Seton, CW, 1:409.
4. 6.180, Elizabeth Seton to Simon Bruté, 1 January 1815, CW, 2.294. 7.11, Elizabeth Seton to William Seton, Emmitsburg, 3 April 1816, CW, 2:381.
5. Ibid. 4.24, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 10 August 1806, CW, 1:414.
6. Ibid.
7. Mary Hoffman Seton to Cecilia Seton, New York, ASJPH 1-3-3-17:14.
11. Mary Hoffman Seton to Cecilia Seton, New York, ASJPH 1-3-3-17:15.
12. Cecilia Seton to Mary Hoffman Seton, 1806, ASJPH 1-3-3-4:167; Cecilia Seton to Charlotte Ogden Seton, 25 July 1806, ASJPH 1-3-3-4:170.
13. Charlotte Ogden Seton to Cecilia Seton, New York, ASJPH 1-3-3-17:12, 13.
14. 4.24, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 10 August 1806, CW, 1:415.
15. Antonio Filicchi to Elizabeth Seton, 3 November 1806, ASJPH 1-3-3-10:33; Antonio Filicchi to John Murray & Sons, 3 November 1806, ASJPH 1-3-3-10:34.
16. Antonio Filicchi to Elizabeth Seton, Leghorn, ASJPH 1-3-3-10:26.
17. Francis Matignon to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 12 October 1806, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:35. For a summary of Matignon’s career, see Richard J. Cushing, Father Matignon, Boston’s Pioneer Priest (Boston, n.d.).
18. Harriet Seton and Eliza Farquhar to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 19 August 1806, ASJPH 1-3-3-8:67.
19. Records of the American Catholic Historical Society, I (1887), 173-199. The place and date of Hurley’s birth are undetermined being given as either Ireland or Philadelphia and 1780 or 1781.
20. 4.31, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 30 March 1807, CW, 1:431.
Barry to Carroll, New York, 10 June 1807, AAB, AASMSU, 1-K-5.

4.23, Elizabeth Seton to Anna Maria Seton, New York, 26 July 1806, CW, 1:413.

Mrs. Seton referred to Matthias Kelly as “a very very great acquisition to our Church,” and to Mr. Lacey as “an odd genius.” (4.31, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, 14 March 1807, CW, 1:431; 4.86, Elizabeth Seton to Cecilia Seton, CW, 1:501.) Michael Hurley’s letters to Carroll also testify to the presence of Kelly and Lacey in New York City. Hurley to Carroll, 7 October 1806 and 15 July 1807, AAB, AASMSU, 4-H-2, 4-H-3.


Michael Hurley to John Carroll, New York, 10 March 1806, AAB, AASMSU, 4-G-9.

Hurley to Carroll, New York, 2 January 1806, AAB, AASMSU, 4-H-1; 1-K-5. See Carroll Letterbook I, p. 84, AAB, AASMSU.

James Barry to John Carroll, New York, 10 June 1807, AAB, AASMSU, 1-K-5; Thomas Kelly to Elizabeth Seton, Georgetown, 10 June 1807, ASJPH 1-3-3-2:55. See Louis Sibourd to John Carroll, Martinique, 31 March 1807, AAB, AASMSU, 7-Q-S.

Hurley to Carroll, New York, 15 July 1807, AAB, AASMSU, 4-H-2.


4.31, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 14 March 1807, CW, 1:430; 4.33, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, New York, 10 April 1807, CW, 1:434.

4.54, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, New York, 6 October 1807, CW, 1:469.

4.31, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 30 March 1807, CW, 1:431. Mrs. Seton expresses the same sentiments in an undated draft of a letter to Mrs. Sarah Startin. See 4.119, Elizabeth Seton to Mrs. Sarah Startin, CW, 1:543.

4.38, Elizabeth Seton to Cecilia Seton, New York, 7 June 1807, CW, 1:442.
37 4.55, Spiritual Journal to Cecilia Seton, 16 October 1807, CW, 1:478.
38 Ibid., 474.
39 Ibid., 488.
40 4.56, Elizabeth Seton to Philip Filicchi, New York, 2 November 1807, CW, 1:479.
41 4.46, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 10 August 1807, CW, 1:456.
42 4.57, Elizabeth Seton to John Carroll, New York, 13 November 1807, CW, 1:482. See Barry to Carroll, 17 June 1806, AAB, AASMSU, 1-M-3. This subscription was not being fulfilled in 1807.
43 John Carroll to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 2 December 1807, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:40.
45 4.60, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, New York, 29 November 1807, CW, 1:488.
46 4.58, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, New York, 18 November 1807, CW, 1:484.
47 4.28, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, New York, 4 December 1806, CW, 1:423.
49 Francis Matignon to Elizabeth Seton, 25 November 1806, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:37.
50 4.26, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, New York, 20 November 1806, CW, 1:419.
51 Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 21 January 1807, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:39.
52 John Carroll to James Barry, Baltimore, 2 April 1807, UNDA.
53 John Carroll to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 23 May 1807, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:39.
54 4.66, Elizabeth Seton to John Carroll, New York, 28 February 1808, CW, 1:496.
55 See Louis Sibourd to John Carroll, New York, 14 February, 12 and 19 March 1808, AAB, AASMSU, 7-Q-13, 7-Q-14, 7-Q-5.
56 4.73, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, New York, 23 April 1808, CW, 1:506.
Ibid.

Louis Dubourg to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 2 May 1808, UNDA; Dubourg to Seton, Baltimore, 27 May 1808, AMSV.

4.62, Elizabeth Seton to John Carroll, New York, 3 January, CW, 1:491; 4.72, Ibid., 28 March 1808, CW, 1:504-505; 4.66, Ibid., 28 February 1808, CW, 1:495-496.


Louis Sibourd to John Carroll, New York, 25 December 1807, AAB, AASMSU, 7-Q-10. Ryan, 89 and Peter Guilday, The Life and Times of John Carroll, II, 628, leave an erroneous impression as to Sibourd’s reasons for leaving St. Peter’s in 1808. The next day he wrote Carroll requesting permission to resign. AAB, AASMSU, 7-Q-8. On 25 December 1807, he suggested Jean Cheverus for New York, and added that he would do his best to complete his year but not to depend on him after July 1808. See Letters from January to June 1808 reiterate Sibourd’s intention of resigning. AAB, AASMSU, 7-Q-10. See also AAB, AASMSU, 7-Q-16, 3-E-4. Theresa (Cecilia) Seton and Rev. Louis Sibourd to Elizabeth Seton, 3-4 August 1808, ASJPH 1-3-3-3-2:1. In October 1808, Anthony Kohlmann, S.J., came to St. Peter’s as pastor and vicar-general of the newly created Diocese of New York. This whole chapter of the Church in New York deserves fresh treatment. Both Guilday and Ryan are not only inadequate, but in some instances in error.

Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, 12 May 1808, ASJPH 1-3-3-3-1:9.

4.74, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, New York, 1 June 1808, CW, 1:508.

Louis Dubourg to Elizabeth Seton, 8 June 1808, ASJPH 1-3-3-3-2:1.

4.74, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, New York, 1 June 1808, CW, 1:508.

Louis Dubourg to Elizabeth Seton, 8 June 1808, ASJPH 1-3-3-3-2:1.
CHAPTER 8

A HOUSE ON PACA STREET

Thursday, 9 June 1808, Elizabeth Seton and her three daughters went to the wharf to board the Grand Sachem for Baltimore. Wright Post, who had secured their passage at a cost of fifty dollars, went with James Seton and William Craig to see the Setons safely on board. The eve of the departure from New York had been spent in Eliza Sadler’s former home on Courtlandt Street, now occupied by William Craig; it was the final glimpse Elizabeth ever had of Sad’s rooms, and from the deck of the Grand Sachem she saw for the last time the windows of Number 8 State Street.1 As the packet rounded the Battery, passing from the river to the ocean, and Staten Island loomed ahead, Elizabeth had a sudden overpowering urge to see once more her father’s grave; but the pilot could not conveniently gratify her wish.2 As the New York harbor faded in the distance Elizabeth wondered how her heart could “swell so high and not burst.”3 But she turned to settling the girls for the voyage, and soon they were all seated comfortably on a mattress, becoming acquainted with a Mrs. Smith and her daughter, and receiving kind attentions from the modest young mate, James Cork.4

The week passed rather swiftly and the two mothers relaxed under “the heaven so bright” while the children sang, “Oh where is my Highland Laddie gone?,”5 ate raisins and almonds or sent paper ships overboard toward New York. At first the Seton girls wished to return to Cecilia in New York, but as the voyage continued their thoughts turned toward the south, and they became impatient to land and see “Willy and Dicksy.” When storms came up in the night, Elizabeth kept Bec and Kit in her own narrow berth, holding her hand over the edge to comfort Anna Maria who slept below. Oddly enough, it was Anna Maria, the only seasoned traveler among the girls, who suffered most from seasickness. To Elizabeth, who was traveling for the first time without the protecting care of a male escort, death seemed closer than on previous voyages. She confessed to Cecilia that many times on the trip she resigned her three darlings to God’s care,
while striving to look straight upward “in firm and steadfast confidence.”

In spite of these premonitions, Tuesday evening found the Setons sailing up Chesapeake Bay and Wednesday night, 15th June at eleven o’clock the Grand Sachem docked in the Baltimore basin. Thursday morning dawned almost imperceptibly through the grey mist and heavy rain. By the time all their goods were entered at the customs house, it was after nine o’clock and Elizabeth’s heart was pounding and her hands trembling as she waited for the first sight of their new home.

Baltimore in 1808 was the largest city in Maryland and the third largest in the United States, exceeding in commercial importance even the city of Boston. One of the most rapidly expanding urban areas on the continent, the population numbered between 35,000 and 46,555 inhabitants. Three-fourths of these were white; one-fourth were colored, either, “free persons or slaves.” The harbor was so excellent that ships came right up to the wharf; and as the non-intercourse regulations of the Jefferson administration began to be felt, it was a common sight to find 100 vessels anchored close by with 200 more at the mouth of the harbor. Fell’s Point was a thriving shipbuilding center, and Baltimore merchants in 1800 had proudly given the federal government the sloop-of-war, the Maryland, made in their own city. The Baltimore clipper, which was the perfected adaptation of the topsail schooner, was to become the despair of the British in the years to follow. The most profitable merchant cargoes were of tobacco and wheat. The demand in Europe and in the West Indies for wheat and flour was so pressing that within a radius of eighteen miles the Baltimore area had half a hundred merchant mills, twelve of which were on Jones Falls alone.

As the carriage bore the Setons rapidly from the waterfront, they looked out curiously at a metropolis not greatly changed from that visited by William Dunlap two years earlier. The actor-producer had found the city little to his liking, its manners “such as might be expected in a society formed of commercial adventurers from all nations, and in which slavery exists on the old colonial establishment.” Counting houses were open on Sunday, gambling was popular, with “literature kept in due subordination to dancing and card-playing.” Dunlap noted that Baltimore had more hackney coaches than any other city except Boston, but that the horses were much inferior to those of Philadelphia. Of the public buildings Dunlap wrote:

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8 [The portion of the Baltimore harbor known as the Basin was once more extensive than at present. The tides could reach almost to Baltimore and Gay Streets. The U.S. Congress established the U.S. Customs Service as the first federal agency in 1789 and named Baltimore as one of fifty-nine collection districts. The first Baltimore custom house was at the intersection of Gay and Water Streets. Apparently Mrs. Seton did not arrive at Fells Point as some have speculated. Ed.]

9 The Non-Intercourse Act of March 1809.
I can say but little and I believe little is to be said. Places of worship are numerous for the size of the place, but none remarkable for size and structure. The Court House is a wretched old building standing in the center of the street with an arched gangway under it beautified by a pillory and whipping post.

The brick court house, the New York visitor so deplored, stood where the Battle Monument now stands. In 1808, it was situated on a cliff some sixty feet high, and the turbulent waters of Jones Falls had so undermined the bank that the court house had to be underpinned. The gangway below the court house was the result of Leonard Harbough’s engineering, and on warm evenings it was a popular place for promenading. The year after Elizabeth Seton arrived in Baltimore the old brick court house was abandoned in favor of the new building erected at Lexington and Calvert Streets.

In addition to the court house, Baltimore had a “new and handsome jail,” a theatre, a public library, four “spacious market houses, and an elegant building nearly finished for the Union Bank.” The churches were numerous indeed, totaling twenty-five. John O’Neill’s Introduction to Universal Geography, published in Baltimore that year, stated:

Among the buildings of public worship now finished, the first Presbyterian church claims preference as a handsome specimen of recent architecture; but the Roman Catholic Cathedral now building must when finished excel. Among those buildings for public worship now erecting are a church for the use of the Seminary of St. Sulpice and the College of St. Mary; a Methodist meeting house, and an Episcopal church.

The Sulpician chapel was being dedicated the very day that Mrs. Seton arrived in Baltimore. It was the feast of Corpus Christi and as the tired travelers entered the little chapel inside the seminary grounds off the Hookstown Road they heard the organ’s solemn tone, the “bursting of the choir,” and then, was it possible, “St. Michael’s” voice resounding in the Kyrie Eleison. “Human nature could scarcely bear it.” The little girls

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1 The Battle Monument commemorates the soldiers who died in the Battle of North Point during the War of 1812. It is located on Calvert Street, between Fayette Street and Lexington Street.
2 [Today St. Mary's Spiritual Center and Historic Site on Paca Street includes the Chapel of the Presentation of the Virgin Mary in the Temple, the Mother Seton House, and a Visitor Center. Located at 600 North Paca Street, the site is open to the public and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Ed.]
3 Michael Hurley, O.S.A., assisted at the consecration of St. Mary’s Chapel. John Carroll celebrated the first Pontifical Mass. Hurley had come to Baltimore on 9 June with Samuel Sutherland Cooper, a fervent convert from Philadelphia. Cooper was considering entering the seminary that fall.
clung to their mother in astonishment, and all were filled with delight and wonder at the “awful [deeply reverential] ceremonies seen for the first time.”

Frances Trollope, whose comments on American manners in the nineteenth century were first published in 1832, has left this charming description of St. Mary’s Chapel. Speaking of the great number of Baltimore churches, she wrote:

The prettiest among them, a little bijou of a thing belonging to the Catholic College. This institution is dedicated to St. Mary, but this little chapel looks...as if it should have been sacred to St. John of the Wilderness. There is a sequestered little garden behind it, hardly large enough to plant cabbages in, which contains a Mount Calvary bearing a lofty Cross. The tiny path which leads up to this sacred spot is not much wider than a sheep track and its cedars are but shrubs, but all in proportion; and notwithstanding its fairy dimensions, there is something of holiness and quiet beauty about it that excites the imagination strangely. The little chapel itself has the same touching and imaginary character. A solitary lamp hangs before the altar; the light of day enters dimly yet richly through crimson curtains, and the silence...had something in it more calculated to generate holy thoughts than even the swelling anthems heard beneath the resounding dome of St. Peter’s.

Elizabeth wrote to Cecilia Seton of this same garden, “There is a little mount behind the Chapel called Calvary—olive trees and a Cross—at the foot of it are four Graves. ‘There is your rest’ said Mr. Dubourg as we passed it this morning.” If the garden was a spot designed to suit her meditative moments, the interior of the chapel was to become an integral part of Elizabeth’s life in Baltimore. Here in the morning she went to Communion, and in the evening shared in Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Of the Easter week she spent in Baltimore, she said,

Every night we have Benediction—imagine twenty priests all with the devotion of saints clothed in white, accompanied by the whole troop of young seminarians in surplices also, all in order surrounding the Blessed Sacrament exposed, singing the hymn of the Resurrection, when they came to the words “Peace be to all here” it seems as if our Lord is
again acting over the scene that passed with the assembled disciples.\textsuperscript{19}

The chapel, designed by Maximilian Godefroy who was to design the Battle Monument and the Unitarian Church, contained a subterranean chapel of the Virgin, and it was in the solitude of its depths that First Communion was received by the children whom Mrs. Seton later prepared at Bishop Carroll’s request.\textsuperscript{20} It sometimes seemed as if Elizabeth’s whole life were to be punctuated by the Angelus bells which rang from St. Mary’s at five-thirty, one-forty-five, and a quarter before eight; \textsuperscript{21} they were the melodious signal for the fervent prayers she said upon her knees, as Father Babade\textsuperscript{7} recommended.

On the day of her arrival, however, Mrs. Seton was chiefly concerned with her pleasure in seeing Rev. Michael Hurley again, and her gratitude to Rev. Louis Dubourg and his sister, Madame Victoire Fournier, for the warmth of their welcome. The nieces of the college president greeted the Seton girls with a poem especially composed for the occasion by Rev. Pierre Babade (1763–1846).\textsuperscript{22} Babade was a frail, white-haired Sulpician whose spiritual fervor attracted the Setons immediately. Babade became one of their best friends during the year they spent in Baltimore. Although he was only forty-eight when Elizabeth met him, she usually referred to him in her letters as “our venerable patriarch.”\textsuperscript{23} This same Father Babade was to play a very important role in shaping Mrs. Seton’s future.

Babade was only one of the “most respectable of the French emigrant clergy,”\textsuperscript{24} former friends of the beloved Mr. Tisserant, to whose society Mrs. Seton had access, and she wrote glowingly to Dué, “I find the difference of situation so great I can scarcely believe it is the same existence. All those little, dear attentions of human life which I was entirely weaned from are now my daily portion.”\textsuperscript{25} J. S. Buckingham, an English traveler to the United States in 1808, commented on this French influence on Baltimore society. “The influx of wealthy and accomplished colonists of San Domingo,” he wrote, “who took refuge here at the time of the revolution in that island, and who brought with them the generosity of colonial hospitality and the ease and grace of French manners, served, no doubt, to give a new infusion of these qualities into the society of Baltimore.”\textsuperscript{26} Although Mrs. Seton did not attend the “gayer soirees, the most agreeable that can be enjoyed,” the other aspects of this culture were appreciated by her, and she told Eliza

\textsuperscript{7}Rev. Pierre Babade, a Sulpician priest, had come to Baltimore at the end of the eighteenth century by way of Spain and Cuba. He taught French and Spanish at the Sulpician College for boys. In later life he laid claim to being a founder of that college, writing Samuel Eccleston, “The college of which you are the president owes me its existence as I drew from Havana the numerous and wealthy pupils who raised the little house of St. Sulpice in Baltimore to the high degree of a university.” His name is spelled “Babad” also.
Sadler of her happiness that Anna Maria was now to be molded “in the true style of the French system for young girls and a model for all who wish their daughters to be religious and discreet.” Madame Fournier, the sister of Louis Dubourg, had come from Bordeaux to Baltimore in August 1805. Her hospitality was gratefully received by the Setons. In her capacity as manager of “the domestic part of the college,” Madame Fournier was able also to give practical assistance to Mrs. Seton in the establishment of her school on Paca Street.27

Through her friendship with John Carroll, Elizabeth Seton also had access to the leading English Catholic families in Baltimore, the Pattersons, Catons, Harpers, and Barrys. Bishop Carroll had officiated at the marriage of Elizabeth Patterson and Jerome Bonaparte in Baltimore the same week William Magee Seton died in Italy.28 The Eliza who lost her husband by death in Italy in 1803 was to befriend this younger Eliza who lost her husband to French imperial ambition; little Jerome Bonaparte was one of the lads Mrs. Seton encouraged later in Emmitsburg.29 The bishop’s grand-nieces, “The Three American Graces” as the Caton girls were called, were also to cross Mrs. Seton’s path; one, Louisa, even briefly considered joining the religious community that was conceived during the Seton sojourn in Baltimore.30 Robert Goodloe Harper,6 Emily Carroll’s husband, and one of Baltimore’s leading citizens, offered the protection of his home to Mrs. Seton’s daughter, Catherine Josephine, in later years. It was to the Harpers the bereaved girl went when her mother died in 1821.31 But these events were all in the future; Elizabeth’s present task was to settle her family in Baltimore and begin the work for which she had come to that city.

The Monday after her arrival in Baltimore Mrs. Seton went to Georgetown to get her boys.32 She left the girls with the Robert Barrys, relatives of her former friends in New York. Robert, a nephew of the late James Barry, was at this time the Portuguese consul in Baltimore. He and his wife were unceasing in their kindness to the new arrivals.33 Elizabeth was accompanied on the trip to Washington by Rev. Michael Hurley and a recent convert of the latter from Philadelphia, Mr. Samuel Cooper. Samuel Sutherland Cooper (1769–1843) had a most intriguing career and legends about him are numerous. Born in Norfolk, Virginia, he came to live in Philadelphia quite early in life. For a time he had pursued an active life at sea; but coming under the influence of Michael Hurley soon after the Augustinian’s return to Philadelphia in 1807, Cooper had become a Catholic

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6 Robert Goodloe Harper was elected a member of the House of Representatives of the United States in 1794. He is credited with the toast “Millions for defense” given on 18 June 1798, at Philadelphia. In 1815 he was elected to the United States Senate and was reputed a fine orator. He was a legal and business advisor to Mrs. Seton. He died 15 January 1825.
and was confirmed by Bishop Carroll that October. News of the conversion had reached New York and Elizabeth Seton, having no premonition of the part Cooper was to play in her life, had written to Philip Filicchi in Leghorn on 21 November 1807,

Mr. Hurley who acknowledges so many obligations to you is making brilliant conversions in Philadelphia. A Mr. Cooper of great intellectual attainments waited a few weeks ago on Bishop [William] White and other clergy of note inquiring their reasons of separation, and finding them as they are, was received [into the Catholic faith] on the Visitation at St. Augustine’s Church—he is of family and fortune and [it] therefore makes a great noise.34

The summer Mrs. Seton met him, Samuel Cooper was thirty-nine years old and was contemplating entering a seminary to prepare for the priesthood. Elizabeth confided to Cecilia:

If we had not devoted ourselves to the Heavenly Spouse before we met I do not know how the attraction would have terminated; but as it is, I fear him not nor any other—but such a perfect character is a fit offering to the Fountain of All Perfection. He has my rosary and little red cross by way of memento of our Georgetown expedition.35

The attraction Elizabeth referred to she later described to Julia Scott as an “involuntary attraction of certain dispositions” resulting in an “interest and esteem understood.” Mrs. Scott was assured that “the only result of this partiality had been the encouragement of each other to persevere in the path which each had chosen.”36 The understanding which seemed to exist from the first meeting led Mr. Cooper to take an interest in Mrs. Seton’s friends as well. While he was in New York, in the weeks following the Georgetown trip, Cooper drank coffee with Cecilia and told her how Elizabeth longed for her sister-in-law’s arrival. Cecilia discovered Cooper to be very different from the picture she had created of him, and she wrote Elizabeth that she found him “very silent and retired.”37 Elizabeth replied reprovingly that he was to enter St. Mary’s Seminary [in September of 1808], and added, “I should not wish you to know him as I do.”38 Cooper also called upon Rev. Louis Sibourd, the pastor of St. Peter’s, who was preparing to leave New York, and picked up a package the priest wished delivered to Mrs. Seton.39

\footnote{The “Visitation” mentioned here is the visitation of Bishop Carroll, not the Feast of the Visitation, as one might at first suppose. Cooper had been directed to Michael Hurley by Mrs. Rachel Montgomery, another of Hurley’s converts. Mrs. Montgomery, who was also to meet Mrs. Seton in Baltimore, was a prominent Philadelphia matron whom Hurley had baptized conditionally, 2 February 1805.}
By the end of the first week in August, the package was safely delivered, Samuel Cooper was preparing for his entrance into the seminary, and Mrs. Seton was preparing to receive the first young ladies at Paca Street.

The house which Elizabeth Seton occupied the year she remained in Baltimore was on Paca Street, adjoining the grounds of St. Mary’s Seminary and College. When Rev. Charles François Nagot,¹ (1734–1816), selected One-Mile Tavern as the site of the Sulpician establishment in 1791, it was a quiet, secluded place almost in the forest; but by the time Mrs. Seton arrived, although it was still in the country, it was only a half-mile from town but possibly two miles from the waterfront and business section.⁴⁰ The Paca Street house, which sat between two orchards, was “entirely new” when Elizabeth entered it. She told Julia it was “a neat, delightful mansion...in the French style of folding windows and recesses.”⁴¹ Only a fence separated it from the chapel, “the most elegant in America,” and Mrs. Seton could hear the altar bells of St. Mary’s from her dwelling.⁴² One of her greatest joys in her new home was this proximity to a church, “from daylight till nine at Night.”⁴³ The Seton financial affairs were greatly improved, too, since rent and prices were lower in Baltimore than they had been in New York,¹ and the boys were receiving free tuition at St. Mary’s College.⁴⁴

The school which Elizabeth had come south to operate was slow in getting underway. The two nieces of Mr. Dubourg were the only prospects when she arrived that June, but it was expected the outlook would improve “after the summer vacation when the inhabitants return.”⁴⁵ Early in July Elizabeth wrote Julia,

I have one pensioner only but have two more engaged—several have offered [themselves] as day scholars which does not enter in my plan which I confine to 8 boarders for the first year or two. The best masters of music, drawing, etc., attend the seminary which enables me to procure their services, if necessary, at a very reasonable rate—⁴⁶

¹ Rev. Charles François Nagot, superior of the first group of Sulpicians who were sent to the United States in 1791, is recognized as the founder of the Society of St. Sulpice in the United States. The Sulpicians opened the nation’s first Roman Catholic seminary, St. Mary’s in Baltimore, Maryland.

¹ Wood was $3 instead of $5; rent was $200 instead of $350; a very good servant did the washing, cleaning and cooking for $4.50 a month. Provisions were secured from the seminary at wholesale prices.
In August Cecilia Seton wrote from New York that she was astonished to hear that Elizabeth “had but two scholars” and thought it must be a mistake. Dubourg, however, was not uneasy. Before Mrs. Seton left New York he had said plainly:

I do not feel extremely anxious to see the number of your pupils increased with too great rapidity. The fewer you have in the beginning, the lighter your task, and the easier it will be to establish the spirit of regularity and piety, which must be the mainspring of your machine. There are in the country, and perhaps too many, mixed schools, in which ornamental accomplishments are the only objects of education; we have none that I know, where their acquisition is connected with, and made subservient to pious instructions; and such a one you certainly wish yours to be.

The spirit of piety and regularity Dubourg desired was developing without difficulty. Elizabeth wrote Cecilia in September, “In the chapel at six until eight; school at nine—dine at one—school at three, chapel at six ½, examination of Conscience and Rosary, sometimes before that hour a Visit to someone in our limits or a walk, sometimes the chapel also at three—and so goes day after day without variation.” Although October brought only four boarders besides the three Seton girls, Elizabeth was satisfied. She admitted to Julia that the pain in her breast had weakened her enough to make the seven girls quite enough to manage. In December, nevertheless, the number had increased to ten, and Elizabeth found “from half past five in the morning until 9 at night every moment is full, no space even to be troubled.” Several offers of assistance had come, but for the time being Elizabeth preferred to live “as a mother surrounded by her children.” After school was over at five she could be found “with a Master of Arithmetic stuffing her brain with dollars cents and fractions, and actually going over the studies both in grammar and figures which are suited to the scholar better than the mistress.” In January she wrote to Antonio of Archbishop Carroll’s request that she prepare five children for their First Communion. As her days became busier Elizabeth wished more earnestly that Cecilia Seton might come from New York to assist in the Paca Street school.

Back in New York, Mrs. Seton’s concerns still occupied the thoughts of her friends. On hearing of her safe arrival, John Wilkes had asked to be

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1 Among these was a niece of Dubourg, Louise Elizabeth Aglae Dubourg, Celanire Delarue, who arrived in Baltimore with Aglae Dubourg in July of 1807 but who was not Dubourg’s niece. The other pupils were Julia LeBreton, Isabella Editha O’Conway, and the three Seton girls. The roster of pupils is no longer extant. Julia LeBreton’s name also appears as La Britton; earliest community records give LeBreton.
kept informed of further news “that I may fancy myself with you,” he wrote, “overlooking your concerns which is the next pleasure to enjoying the Society of one’s friends.” Whenever Dué’s husband, Captain George Dupleix, put into New York he sent news to Baltimore, accompanied by gifts for the children. He teased Elizabeth about leaving her letters for Dué unsealed and promised to cure her stinginess by sending a box of Irish waxes. It was Dupleix who made the arrangements for sending on some articles of furniture which had never been recovered from Mr. Hobart’s house after the Italian voyage. Wright Post wrote his sister-in-law that he had no difficulty renting her former residence, and he forwarded a valued picture of Michael Hurley which Elizabeth had left to be framed. He hoped her situation was going to continue as pleasing as it had at first proved. “You know,” he added, “how much we are interested in your prosperity.”

The two New Yorkers most interested in Mrs. Seton’s new venture were her sisters-in-law, Harriet and Cecilia. Harriet was becoming unhappier as time passed and her marriage hopes failed to materialize. She and Elizabeth’s half-brother, Andrew Barclay Bayley, who went by ‘Barclay,’ had for some time been expected to marry, but Barclay had gone to the West Indies and wrote only infrequently. By the time Elizabeth went to Baltimore, Barclay had already been gone two years and was still making only enough to support himself. A letter received in August 1808, “destroyed every hope of his arrival in New York that fall,” and when Harriet went to live with Charlotte Seton Ogden in October her unhappiness increased. She recalled with nostalgia the happier days at State Street with Elizabeth and wrote, “To you I owe more than I can express for instilling principles that will make the rugged paths of life smooth and easy.” Although she was still not a Catholic, she encouraged Elizabeth to pray for her conversion, and the hostile atmosphere at the Ogdens and Farquhars was very distressing to her. She delayed going to the Farquhars as long as she could, writing Elizabeth:

Without Zide it would be insupportable...Whenever a discussion of religion takes place, which is very often, and, I believe, intentionally, too, she defends your dear faith with

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1 The picture of Hurley had been left behind to be framed and Mrs. Seton was most uneasy until she received it. Early in August she wrote urgently to Cecilia, “St. M’s picture, I tremble lest something has happened to it...How unhappy I should be if St. M. knew that it is not in my possession.” 5.5, Elizabeth Seton to Cecilia Seton, 8 July [1808], CW, 2:23. When September came and the picture was still missing Elizabeth Seton wrote again, “What am I to think about St. M’s picture...do do see about it.” 5.9, Seton to Seton, CW, 1:32. On 6 October, Mrs. Seton announced with relief that the profile was safe and “hung under the picture of our Lord.” 5.10, Seton to Seton, CW, 1:33.
more than enthusiastic ardour for which she generally gets a set down from either Father or Mother.\textsuperscript{60}

As Harriet’s birthday approached she longed for the old days when Elizabeth had been accustomed to giving her a rule of conduct for the coming year, and she asked her sister-in-law to write a letter in the vein of admonition and encouragement. When the older woman complied, Harriet’s gratitude was sincere.\textsuperscript{61}

In March Harriet was temporarily elated by a letter from Barclay telling of his recovery from a serious illness. He had moved to a settlement called St. Mary’s and was associating himself with a “medical gentleman.” He promised Harriet that he would see her that summer. When Harriet Seton accompanied Cecilia to Baltimore she did not know that she would never return to New York, that in six months time she would lie in a grave in Emmitsburg.

While Harriet was suffering from pangs of unrequited love of one kind, her younger sister was enduring a frustration of a different nature. From the moment she had said good-bye to her sister-in-law, Cecilia Seton lived only for the day when she might be with Elizabeth and live a devout life.\textsuperscript{m} With exceptional docility she had complied with the wishes of James Seton and the advice of Rev. Louis Sibourd that she remain behind. When James planned to operate a summer boardinghouse, depending on Cecilia to supervise the children, she felt she could not refuse.\textsuperscript{62} James insisted on keeping Cecilia in spite of family opposition to her religion and the danger they saw in her influence over the children. This influence was no figment of the imagination, and Martin Hoffman and Gouverneur Ogden were so worried over the inclinations of James Seton’s daughter, Catherine, that they paid the cost of sending the girl away to school, at Miss Brenton’s in Harlem. Even then the child wrote her cousins in Baltimore, “The more they strive to set me against it the more I shall love it.”\textsuperscript{63}

As if Cecilia did not have enough trials to overcome before reaching Baltimore, others rose to vex her. A young man began calling upon her in the afternoon, ostensibly for the purpose of improving his Italian, but with other more romantic interests at heart. Cecilia wrote fearfully to Elizabeth that she hoped no rumor that she was in love had reached Baltimore; Cecilia was quite indifferent, if the young man was not.\textsuperscript{64} When Elizabeth wrote of her disapproval, Cecilia replied, “I did not wait for your letter to

\textsuperscript{m} [Although Melville uses the phrase “enter a religious life,” extant documentation does not support this supposition beyond Cecilia’s wish to be with her beloved aunt and practice her faith in a “house of peace and retirement.” Cecilia Seton to Elizabeth Seton, 13 September 1808, ASJPH 1-3-3-4:210. Ed.]
be firm and resolute. Did you then think Cecil\textsuperscript{a} would trifle with another’s happiness?\textsuperscript{65}

A more serious complication arose with the determination of Cecilia’s new pastor that she should not leave New York. On 6 October 1808, Elizabeth had written Cecilia, “you will find the best and most excellent assistants to our dear Mr. [Louis] Sibourd that could be obtained are on their way to our poor desolate congregation of New York—I cannot speak my joy, as it will so much glorify the Adored Name.”\textsuperscript{66}

These assistants were in reality the vicar-general, Rev. Anthony Kohlmann, S.J., Rev. Benedict Fenwick, S.J., and four Jesuit scholastics\textsuperscript{9} including James Redmond.\textsuperscript{67} New York had been created a See by a papal bull of 18 April 1808 at the same time as Philadelphia, Boston, and Bardstown. Rev. Richard Luke Concanen, O.P., had been named bishop and consecrated in Rome on 24 April 1808. Delays owing to the advance of the naval war in Europe, and the death of Concanen before he left Italy, conspired to keep Kohlmann the administrator of the new diocese until 1815, when Bishop John Connolly, O.P., arrived 14 November, to assume the duties of his office.\textsuperscript{9}

Anthony Kohlmann had hopes of establishing a school for Catholic children in New York, and Cecilia reported to Mrs. Seton the January following his arrival,

Mr. Kohlmann and Mr. Fenwick are contemplating a situation for me in an academy with a Miss Lacey (niece of the Mr. Lacey that was here) to teach Catholic children. They bid me study hard. I fear the undertaking as I tell the gentlemen they must judge and I will act in obedience to them. Mr. Coleman thinks I could do much more good in such a situation.\textsuperscript{68}

The pastor and his fellow Jesuits became increasingly determined to keep Cecilia from Baltimore, and March found the confused girl writing to her sister-in-law:

Mr. Kohlmann seems more and more averse than ever to my leaving New York. He has gone so far as to tell me I cannot go unless in opposition to his advice and the will of God & that in Baltimore I can do no good—but here I can do much for the glory of God. He is to write you a few lines about it.\textsuperscript{69}

\textsuperscript{a} Cecilia Seton was also called Cecil.

\textsuperscript{9} The others were James Wallace, Michael White, and Adam Marshall.

\textsuperscript{9} Bishop Concanen died in Naples, on 19 June 1810. The Filicchi brothers had done their best to arrange for the bishop’s travel to America. See Peter Plunkett to John Carroll, Leghorn, 3 September 1810, AAB, AASMU 6-U-3.
When Mr. Redmond called on Cecilia he added his disapproval and told her it was foolish of her to even think of going; that moreover it would be a great indulgence.70

Mrs. Seton, knowing the tender heart of her young sister-in-law and the latter’s docility under direction, wrote, “Stay courageously in your station and wait until he [God] makes it as clearly known in you.” 71 While this letter was awaiting a carrier, Mrs. Seton showed Archbishop Carroll Cecilia’s letter and asked his opinion of the matter. “Whatever he decided,” she wrote Cecilia, “I shall conclude to be the will of God, and will never say one word more about your joining me until it pleases Him to show us it is right.” 72 The intercession of Carroll had the desired effect, for on 20 March 1809, Cecilia reported that Kohlmann had heard from the bishop and had then told Cecilia if it was the will of God she should go. He, her pastor, still felt she should wait until fall in fairness to James Seton; but Cecilia was all “for being off the last of May.”73

James Seton was giving up the “Wilderness” house at Clifton, selling the furniture, and moving back into town.74 His daughter Ethelinda Agnes reported in a letter to Anna Maria Seton that her eldest sister, Emily (Emma), returned from Miss Brenton’s school to assume charge of the younger children, and the plans for Cecilia’s departure began to take shape.75 Even her increasing illness did not deter the girl. When she received Elizabeth’s happy note of anticipation, with its homely advice to bring only “a black gown (if you have it) and your flannels—” it was the best medicine she could have had.76 Samuel Waddington Seton, Cecilia’s “much-loved” older brother, wrote Elizabeth on 25 May 1809, that all the arrangements were complete. Harriet and Sam would “make all the party,” he added, “since Brother Carlton cannot be permitted to leave.”77 Harriet was only going to see her sister safely in Elizabeth’s arms; her own plans were more romantic. The most recent letter from Andrew Barclay Bayley spoke of settling in Jamaica and bringing “Hatch” [Harriet Seton] to the island for their first six or seven years.78 The little group set out by sea on the first of June and by 12 June they had arrived at Paca Street, and were welcomed by another poem of Rev. Pierre Babade’s, this time in honor of Cecilia.79 Ten days later, Harriet and Cecilia were on their way from Baltimore to Emmitsburg.

The community, conceived in Baltimore but permanently established near Emmitsburg, developed gradually during the whole year that Elizabeth Seton spent in Baltimore. The desire for a religious routine was present from the very first, and Cecilia wrote whimsically, in September 1808, that she wished for a kiss from Elizabeth, but “I scarce expect it, for I fear your
The nuns who operated convent schools, usually imposed a severe set of rules on the young ladies who enrolled under their tutelage. These rules were designed to keep their pupils at a distance from young men. This may have been Cecilia Seton’s frame of reference for using this term.

Cecilia Maria O’Conway (1788-1865) arrived in Canada in July 1823. In a letter to her family she described herself as “a happy captive to Rules more congenial to my inclinations”; but she added, “Ever venerable will the Institution of St. Vincent de Paul be to my memory...Malicious tongues shall never say that I left the Society through a contempt for it.” See Records, V, 453.

Carroll had doubts that Mrs. Seton should take a vow of poverty considering her circumstances.
my banner which is the cross of Christ; the tender title of Mother salutes me everywhere, even from lips that have never said to me the common salutation among strangers.”84 She spoke of Louisa Caton, “one of the most elegant and highest girls in Baltimore,” wanting to join the community, “she refuses the most splendid matches to unite herself to our Lord.” 85

Louisa Caton was one of the “Three American Graces” as she and her sisters Mary and Elizabeth were called. Her mother, Polly Carroll, was the daughter of Charles Carroll of Carrollton; her sister Mary was Mrs. Robert Patterson, the sister-in-law of Eliza Patterson Bonaparte. During the spring that Elizabeth Seton was contemplating going to Emmitsburg, Louisa Caton was seriously interested in joining her. John Carroll wrote of Louisa:

She is resolved on renouncing the world altogether and joining the most virtuous Mrs. Seton in going with her to a place lately purchased by Mr. Cooper near Emmitsburg in Frederic[k] County, where a Sisterhood is to be begun to be established next month under the direction of this lady for the purpose of training piously disposed females...Louisa is not to join them, if she persists in her intentions, before August. 86

The Caton family was, however, a worldly group and opposed Louisa’s plan. After Elizabeth Seton left Baltimore, Louisa Caton was caught up in a whirl of social enjoyment in Washington. Elizabeth wrote to Archbishop Carroll in August, “Your account of Louisa cuts to the heart—I must say I had other hopes—but patience, she certainly cannot forget all her promises and resolutions.”87 But Louisa was lost to Mrs. Seton. Before August was over John Carroll admitted that his niece was referring “with rapture and gratitude of her entertainment at Washington, and particularly of the perfect freedom which reigns in our sister’s family, and she might add, which she took without reserve.”88

Although their paths diverged so widely after 1808, Louisa Caton and Elizabeth Seton remained friends. Louisa wrote to Mrs. Seton and visited her at Emmitsburg, when she was in the vicinity or relaxing at the Carrollton Manor estate located in Frederick County. The Catons and Scotts of Philadelphia exchanged visits and Elizabeth’s letters to Julia carried frequent references to the high-spirited Louisa. After Mary Caton Patterson was presented to the court of St. James by the Duke of Wellington Louisa met and married Wellington’s aide, Colonel Hervey, later Sir Felton Bathurst. The duke himself applied to Louisa’s mother in Hervey’s behalf,
and Washington and Baltimore learned through Mr. Bagot\(^1\) that Miss Caton was marrying a man of fortune and good looks. Robert Goodloe Harper sent the news to Emmitsburg and asked that Elizabeth Seton be informed, “since I know she will be pleased to learn that Louisa has such fair prospects of happiness.”\(^89\)

The loss of Louisa Caton was offset by the gain of other young women of greater constancy. A young woman of Emmitsburg, Eleanor Thompson, who had wanted to join Elizabeth as soon as she heard of the plan to come to the valley, wrote of her pleasure at receiving a letter from Mrs. Seton the very “day which sealed your consecration to God,” and she added humbly,

> I am but a child, I only begin to crawl in the ways of God, and that interior spirit which detaches us from everything which is not God, and makes the true spouse of Christ, I have to acquire yet. I wish to do it, is all I can say yet.\(^90\)

Rev. Jean Cheverus and Dr. Francis Matignon, to whom Mrs. Seton had written of her intention on 12 March, had prayed for her “every day some time before and ever since.” Cheverus penned the prophetic paragraph:

> How admirable is Divine Providence! I see already numerous choirs of virgins following you to the altar, I see your holy order diffusing itself in the different parts of the United States, spreading everywhere the good odour of Jesus Christ, and teaching by their angelical lives and pious instructions how to serve God in purity and holiness. I have no doubt, my beloved and venerable Sister, that He who has begun this good work, will bring it to perfection.\(^91\)

Susan Clossy\(^9\) arrived 24 May from New York, and Mary Ann Butler came 1 June from Philadelphia, to join the little group who were to make their novitiate in the “beautiful country place in the mountains.”\(^92\) Mrs. Rose Landry White, a widow, and Catherine Mullen were added just before the journey to Emmitsburg began.\(^93\)

The final decision to locate at Emmitsburg was also reached only by degrees. Nearly two decades after the foundations were made, Rev. Louis Dubourg, the first Sulpician superior of the group, and by then the Bishop of Montauban in France, wrote a letter to a fellow French priest in 1828, telling of his recollections of how the community came to be founded in Emmitsburg. This celebrated letter to the Abbé Henri Elèves has formed the

\(^1\) Possibly the British Minister to Washington, the Honorable Charles Bagot.
\(^9\) Also spelled Clossey.
basis of the previous accounts of the location and financing of Mrs. Seton’s “mother house.” Dubourg wrote:

One morning in the year 1808, Mrs. Seton went to find her director, and told him ...she believed she should submit to him what our Saviour had just commanded in a clear, intelligible voice, after her Communion. “Go,” He told her, “Address Mr. Cooper; he will give you all that is necessary to begin the establishment.”

The letter goes on to say that the very same day, but in the evening, Samuel Cooper called on this director, and in the course of a discussion over the education of Catholic girls, Cooper offered to furnish ten thousand dollars for such a purpose. The director asked if Cooper had had any conversation with Mrs. Seton on the subject, to which Cooper replied, “Never.” The letter concluded that Cooper announced:

This establishment will be made at Emmitsburg, a village eighteen leagues from Baltimore, from whence it will spread over the United States. At the mention of Emmitsburg, the priest termed the plan folly. But Mr. Cooper, even while protesting that he did not wish to exert any influence on the choice of location, or the direction the work should take, repeated in an assured tone that it would be at Emmitsburg.

To approximate more closely how the decisions were reached, it is both interesting and essential to consult the correspondence of Mrs. Seton herself at the time these matters were resolved. The question of financing a community of religious women was present in the young widow’s mind almost from the day of her arrival in Baltimore. When writing to Antonio Filicchi on 8 July 1808 she had said:

The gentlemen of the Seminary have offered to give me a lot of ground to build on. It is proposed (supposing such an object could be accomplished) to begin on a small plan admitting of enlargement...in the hope, and expectation that there will not be wanting ladies to join in forming a permanent institution...Mr. [John] Wilkes was willing to assist in forwarding the plan of erecting a small house on the ground proposed, but with such intimation of doubt in

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94 [In the first edition Melville gave the amount as “fifty million francs” but community documents state ten thousand dollars. The original manuscript copy reads: “J’ai cinquante mille francs à votre service pour cet objet!!” ASJPH 1-3-3-2:102. Ed.]
respect of security from these dear Gentlemen, etc., etc...I
dare to ask my Brother how far and to what sum I may look
up to yourself and your honoured Brother in this position of
things.\textsuperscript{96}

Any hope of securing support from John Wilkes vanished with
his letter written Christmas Day 1808 in which he explained “the various
disappointments, crosses, and losses” he had experienced. He regretted that
he could not help her as he wished, but he added that if she personally
needed help he would make “any sacrifice in his power.”\textsuperscript{97} On receipt of this
letter, Elizabeth wrote again to Antonio.

Mr. Wilkes writes me from New York that Mr. Fisher\textsuperscript{w} [sic, Vischer] tells him “the Filicchis have made a \textit{mint} of
money and he hopes they will not forsake me tho’ the ‘old
proverb says out of mind’”—he himself laments that he
cannot come forward to my assistance...I could not dream of
applying to him for assistance in the promotion of a religious
establishment—that establishment can never take place but
by the special protection of Divine Providence...\textsuperscript{98}

Mrs. Seton seems to have associated Divine Providence with the
Felicchis, for the next week she wrote to Philip as well. Her letter to the
elder brother, dated 21 January 1809 contained the following passage:

Mr. Dubourg always says patience my child trust in
Providence, but this morning at Communion, submitting
all my desires and actions in entire abandonment to \textit{His}
will—the thought crossed my mind ask Filicchi to build for
you—the property can always be his—to be sure thinking
of it at such a moment shows how much it is the earnest
desire—indeed it is as much wished as I can wish any thing
which is not already evidenced to be the Will of our Lord.
And if really the thought is practicable on your part the lot of
ground stands always ready...\textsuperscript{99}

Two weeks later Elizabeth Seton wrote a second letter to Philip
Felicchi. This letter, because of its date and contents, and its relation to the
statements made in the Dubourg letter, warrants reproduction in its entirety.

\textsuperscript{w} The letter to which Mrs. Seton refers is dated 25 December 1808 and refers to W. Vischer not Fisher. Mr.
Vischer had married Mrs. Mary Filicchi’s sister, another Miss Cowper of Boston. John Wilkes had made
the reference to the Filicchi good fortune at the close of his letter. The relevant portion reads as follows: “I
was very happy to hear from W. Vischer who married Mrs. Filicchi’s sister & who perhaps you may have
seen as he was going to the Southward, that the Filicchi’s have been extremely fortunate & made a \textit{mint}
of money.” ASPH 1-3-3-2:52.
Baltimore 8th February 1809

My dear Filicchi,

You will think I fear that the poor little woman’s brain is turned who writes you so often on the same subject, but it is not a matter of choice on my part, as it is my indispensable duty to let you know every particular of a circumstance which has occurred since I wrote you last week relative to the suggestions so strongly indicated in the letters I have written both yourself and our Antonio [Filicchi] since my arrival in Baltimore. Some time ago I mentioned to you the conversion of a man of family and fortune in Philadelphia. This conversion is as solid as it was extraordinary, and as the person is soon to receive the tonsure\(^x\) in our seminary, in making the disposition of his fortune he has consulted our Rev. Mr. Dubourg the President of the College on the plan of establishing an institution for the advancement of Catholic female children in habits of religion and giving them an education suited to that purpose. He also desires extremely to extend the plan to the reception of the aged and also uneducated persons who may be employed in spinning, knitting, etc., etc. so as to found a manufactory on a small scale which may be very beneficial to the poor. You see, I am bound to let you know this disposition of Providence that you may yourself judge how far you may concern [yourself] with it—Dr. [Francis] Matignon of Boston with Mr. [Jean] Cheverus the Bishop-elect [to whom] Antonio referred me on every occasion, had suggested this plan for me before the gentleman in question even thought of it. I have invariably kept in the back ground and avoided even reflecting voluntarily on anything of the kind knowing that Almighty God alone could effect it, if indeed it will be realized. My Father, Mr. Dubourg has always said the same, be quiet—God will in his own time discover his intentions, nor will I allow one word of entreaty from my pen—His blessed, blessed Will be done.

In my former letter I asked you if you could not secure your own property and build something for this purpose on the lot (which is an extensive one) given by Mr. Dubourg. If you should resolve to do so the gentleman interested will furnish

\(^x\) Tonsure is one of the first steps a man takes when preparing for ordination to the priesthood. His hair is sheared and he is invested with the surplice.
the necessary expenditures for setting us off, and supporting those persons or children who at first will not be able to support themselves. Dr. Matignon will appoint a director for the establishment which, if you knew how many good and excellent souls are sighing for [this opportunity], would soon obtain an interest in your breast, so ardently desiring the glory of God. But all is in His Hands. If I had a choice and my will should decide in a moment, I would remain silent in His Hands. Oh how sweet it is there to rest in perfect confidence, yet in every daily Mass and at Communion I beg Him to prepare your heart and our dear Antonio’s, to dispose of me and mine in any way which may please him. You are Our Father in him, thro’ your hands we received that new and precious being which is indeed True Life. And may you in your turn be rewarded with the fullness of the Divine Benediction. Amen a thousand times.

MEA Seton

Aside from the little inconsistency in the pledge “nor will I allow one word of entreaty from my pen,” the letter shows quite clearly certain facts in regard to the original scheme for founding the community. First, the connection with Samuel Cooper began to have importance between 21 January and 8 February 1809. Second, the projected location was to be Baltimore. Finally, the Baltimore Sulpicians were not to be the superiors since Dr. Matignon would appoint a Director. As late as January 1810, Bishop Cheverus wrote of the possibility of Rev. J. S. Tisserant being associated with the sisterhood. In any case, it is obvious that Mrs. Seton was quite compliant to whatever should appear to be the designs of Providence, but that she expected these designs to be manifested through the Filicchis in some way or another.

What part the Filicchi brothers might have played if they had received these letters early in 1809 can only be a subject for idle speculation. Months after Mrs. Seton had left Baltimore for Emmitsburg she wrote Antonio Filicchi that eighteen months had elapsed since she had received mail from Leghorn, and the letter that had just arrived was a year old. This letter was the last she was to receive from the Filicchis until the end of 1815. The reason for the hiatus was the Continental System of Napoleon. This system, branded Napoleon’s most grandiose conception, had first appeared, when in return for the cession of Hanover, Prussia had agreed to close her ports to the British. Later in 1806 the exclusion of British goods from the newly
created Confederation of the Rhine, and the sealing of Naples together with virtually all of southern Italy, had extended the principle more widely. The Berlin Decree after the battle of Jena, proclaiming the British Isles to be in a state of blockade, and the Milan Decrees of 23 November and 17 December, denationalizing ships which entered British ports or submitted to British search, were replied to by British orders in council of 16 May 1806, and 7 January 1807. When Metternich prevailed upon the government of Vienna to co-operate with Napoleon by breaking off relations with England, after Tilsit, the continent of Europe was in fact closed against all British trade, and the “blockade became, officially at least, the law of Europe.”

The Embargo Act which passed the United States House of Representatives in December 1807, only assisted Napoleon in closing the ports of Europe more effectively to trade.

Jean Cheverus wrote from Boston on 13 April 1809, that his last letter from Antonio bore the date of 26 March 1806, and he added that he hoped the rumor that Leghorn was to be a free port would prove true “so that we may have news from him and be able to write to him.” But Cheverus declined to act in Antonio’s place, even though he had no doubt Filicchi would be eager to “lend a helping hand to your holy and useful establishment...What Mr. Dubourg proposed is not in my power. I am not authorized to do anything of the kind. I do not even know the name of Mr. Filicchi’s correspondent in this country.” It seems evident that Dubourg had hoped Cheverus might secure funds for the new project in Antonio Filicchi’s name.

Events did not wait for the Filicchi financial encouragement. Even before Cheverus took his pen in hand to reply to Dubourg’s suggestion, Mrs. Seton’s own pen had been busy. On 20 February 1809, she wrote to Rose Stubbs, a New York friend, that Mr. Cooper “has given a handsome property for the establishment of such females as may choose to lead a Religious life...We are going to begin our Novitiate in a beautiful country place in the mountains.” This letter hinted at the Emmitsburg site; one to Julia Scott the following month referred to that place, saying that Cooper was “about purchasing a place at Emmitsburg, some distance from Baltimore, not very considerable.” The letter went on to sound out Julia’s prospects as a possible investor in the new venture.
My Julia, when you write me, say if you have disposed of the funds which the embargo had embarrassed you with... and if you would choose to lend three thousand or two thousand dollars on the best security in either Philadelphia or Baltimore to be refunded in a year. This question you will answer as to a stranger...It will be employed in the purchase of, or rather the arrangement of my future dwelling to be sure, but you are not to consider me in the case—

Julia Scott replied immediately to her friend’s inquiry, saying:

The funds you enquire about are already appropriated. Had your proposal been made at an earlier period, it might have prevented my engaging in a scheme of the eligibility of which I am by no means satisfied, but unable to invest my money to any advantage, the high rents and increased value of real property induced me to procure a lot of ground and commence building a house.

Julia wrote at length of her objections to her friend’s plan to leave Baltimore. How could Elizabeth think of exchanging such security for an uncertain new establishment which probably would not last? Mrs. Scott pointed out the difficulties to be faced in trying to combine rich and poor children in a single scheme, the arduous duties, the lack of experience. Further, Julia questioned, what of the Seton girls? Would they have the same advantages of education that Baltimore could offer? “My dearest friend,” Julia lamented, “you will be overwhelmed—no peaceful hours, no peaceful moments will you know, anxiety and solicitude will cloud your days.”

Neither Mrs. Scott’s apprehensions nor her inability to furnish financial aid deterred the completion of the plan. On 23 March 1809, Elizabeth replied “in unbounded confidence” that the difficulties were all gradually resolving themselves. Samuel Cooper had purchased “a very valuable farm, forty miles from this place, on which all the conveniences of life are abundant.” The necessary cash for the payment had been “immediately obtained from the brother of Mr. Cooper who was very glad to pay him the full value of his Philadelphia lots, as property of that kind is now so valuable.”

The extent to which the vague plans of January had become clarified can be seen in the section of the letter which read:

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5 The Embargo Act had been passed in December and Baltimore received and enforced the law from 23 December 1807 to 16 March 1809. Citizens of Baltimore were all too familiar with the harmful effects of this law. The year Elizabeth Seton was in that city the exports of the state, largely those of Baltimore, dropped from over fourteen to less than three million dollars in value. In 1809, Baltimore had furnished five-sevenths of the state’s export tonnage.

6 The 269 acres of land included two tracts, one of 212 acres and the other, fifty-seven acres.
I shall be at the head of a community which will live under the strictest rules of order and regularity, but I shall not give those laws, nor have any care of compelling others to fulfill them if any person embraces them and afterward chooses to infringe them they will only find in me a friend to admonish, and it will be in the hands of Mr. Dubourg either to rectify or dismiss them. The order of Sulpicians...have a Seminary\textsuperscript{113} and a great part of their property at Emmitsburg on the Mountain where the farm in question is situated...I shall always be protected and taken care of as part of their family.\textsuperscript{113}

Within two months time several changes had been made in the plan originally proposed to the Filicchis in January. Now Dubourg emerged clearly as the first superior of the nascent community; the Sulpicians were to be the ecclesiastical protectors of the group; Emmitsburg was the location of the motherhouse. In one respect the plan remained constant, that of encouraging both a “manufactory” and a boarding school for girls. Yet even the manufactory was to vanish in the problems of space, money, and necessity, after the relocation from Baltimore was accomplished.

If Mrs. Seton’s disavowal of responsibility in her letter to Julia Scott was made to quiet Julia’s fears, she admitted to Cecilia that Archbishop Carroll “at first hesitated on account of the children” whether she should take charge or not. Elizabeth wrote that she had assured the archbishop that Anna Maria was pleased to leave Baltimore and that even if they stayed in the world for her sake, she could be given none of the advantages society deemed necessary.\textsuperscript{114} The fact of the matter was that Mrs. Seton was quite pleased to have an opportunity to remove her eldest daughter from Baltimore influences at this time. Although Anna Maria was only thirteen when the Setons went to Baltimore, Elizabeth told Julia that fall:

Since she is in Baltimore, the woman is so marked in her appearance and manner that indeed you would scarcely know her—her chest is very prominent and the shoulders quite in their right place—here she appears to advantage, as the girls associated with her dress in some style and she, of course, imperceptibly adopts their manner.\textsuperscript{115}

The maturing beauty of the girl was noticeable to others as well as to her mother, and one of the young men of the college who saw Anna

\textsuperscript{113} This seminary of the Sulpicians was Mount Saint Mary’s, Emmitsburg. This school for boys was founded in 1808 but the historians of the college disagree as to the exact details. By the spring of 1809, however, it was definitely underway, having been augmented by sixteen students from Pigeon Hill, Adams County, Pennsylvania.
Maria frequently at Mass at St. Mary’s began to take an interest in the young lady. Before 1803 all the students, with few exceptions, came from the West Indies, foreign-born students continued to enroll during the early years.\textsuperscript{116} Charles DuPavillon, the young man who became friendly with Miss Seton, was a resident of Guadeloupe who was completing his last year at the college during the winter of 1808-1809. Anna Maria was the recipient of bouquets and verses carried by her brothers, Richard and William, and before Mrs. Seton suspected the attachment it had become quite strong. From Father Babade, Mrs. Seton learned that DuPavillon seemed a sincere and solid young man of fortune, and that his only family was a charming mother who resided on the island; but Elizabeth’s heart was filled with alarm by the sudden problem the girl’s interest created. The acceptance of \textit{billets-doux} or flowers without permission was in Elizabeth’s world imprudence of real magnitude. It hurt the mother that, while Anna Maria was being secretive with her, the news had reached New York, and had given rise to gossip. Elizabeth wrote Dué:

My Annina\textsuperscript{bb}—so young, so lovely, so innocent, absorbed in all the romance of youthful passion—as I have told you, she has given her heart without my knowledge and afterwards what could a doating [sic] and unhappy Mother do but take the part of friend and confidant, dissembling my distress and resolving that if there was no remedy, to help her at least by my love and pity.\textsuperscript{117}

Julia Scott, whose own daughter was far more mature, reproved Elizabeth for viewing poor Anna’s conduct so severely. “I believe we expect too much from human nature if we hope \textit{unlimited} confidence from our children, and Anna was too young and had been too little in society to be aware of the impropriety of receiving and answering a letter from a young man.”\textsuperscript{118} Julia feared much more the influence of the Caton girls, whose conduct was much less amenable to correction than Anna Maria Seton’s.\textsuperscript{cc} For her part, Anna Maria was very “sensible of the uneasiness and sorrow she had occasioned,” and she became quite docile and eager to please her mother. Elizabeth, recalling her own impetuous youth, wrote to Julia, “Poor dear child, I do not know how she can be so patient; as I well remember at her age I should not have been.”\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{bb} Anna Maria was affectionately called Annina during her visit to Italy and she went by that name for the rest of her life.

\textsuperscript{cc} Mrs. Seton mentioned the unhappiness of the Catons over Emily’s romantic tendencies. Emily, later Emily McTavish, is mentioned less frequently by historians than are Mary, Louisa, Elizabeth and Peggy Caton. Julia Scott’s daughter, Maria, was friendly with the Caton family, visiting them in November 1808 and receiving Louisa in Philadelphia the following winter.
But until time could test the strength of the attachment, Mrs. Seton was relieved at the prospect Emmitsburg offered her eldest daughter, rather than otherwise. As for the boys, Richard and William could attend the Sulpician school at the Mountain as advantageously as in Baltimore, and thus remain near their mother. Rebecca and Catherine were still too young to be anything more than excited about living in the country. The move of Mrs. Seton’s family to Emmitsburg in 1809 was not at all a foolhardy jaunt in that lady’s eyes, and to many of her friends it sounded as logical as Mary Bayley Post seemed to find it, when she wrote on 6 May 1809:

Since I cannot see you, Dear Sister, it must become my first pleasure to hear that you are well and happily situated. It has therefore been highly gratifying to hear an account of your new residence as you describe it, for its being so like what I have often heard you sigh for...It is of little consequence where that happiness is found, as I am convinced it will always be connected with piety and a desire to benefit others.\textsuperscript{120}

By May the decision was firm for Emmitsburg. Elizabeth wrote Julia Scott that the middle of June was fixed as the time of departure, as the lease of the Paca Street house would be expiring at that time. She wrote firmly,

Now, my dear friend, in His name I entreat you to be perfectly at ease on my account—every comfort and indulgence I could ever wish for will be mine—Mr. Dubourg has appointed a very amiable lady, who perfectly understands the management of things, steward of the family...And having almost as many assistants as there are new children going with us, and having an ample supply of all the good things a substantial country farm can produce, poultry, milk, etc., you can have no reason to be in the least anxious for us.\textsuperscript{121}

By June the four candidates for the new community had appeared dressed alike in religious attire similar to that of Mrs. Seton’s simple costume of mourning. It consisted of a black dress with a shoulder cape, set off by a simple white cap with black band which tied under the chin. On the feast of Corpus Christi 1809, the five women wore this habit for the first time at a public service, the Mass at St. Mary’s Chapel. When Cecilia and Harriet Seton arrived in Baltimore on 12 June, they found their beloved “Sis” the leader of a small but very determined young community of religious women; “estimable characters,” Rachel Montgomery called them, “whose virtues
and good example...will illuminate our darkened hemisphere, and disperse the clouds of prejudice which obscure the reasonable faculties of men.”

On 21 June 1809, the feast of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, Elizabeth Seton set out for Emmitsburg. She took with her Anna Maria Seton, Anna Maria Murphy Burke, the invalid Cecilia Seton, and Harriet. Cecilia’s health made her a logical choice for the first group to leave Baltimore, since it was believed the mountain air would prove beneficial. The younger Seton girls were to follow soon by carriage, while the boys would come in a wagon with the group left behind. By 30 July Cecilia O’Conway, Mary Ann Butler, Susan Clossen, Catherine Mullen, Rose Landry White, the Seton boys, and two students of the Paca Street School, Julia LeBreton, and Isabella Editha O’Conway, had arrived in the Valley.122 The Paca Street house was closed and the Baltimore chapter of Elizabeth Seton’s life was over.

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122 Mrs. Montgomery was a Philadelphia convert of Rev. Michael Hurley, O.S.A., and a friend of Samuel Cooper. She had recently visited Baltimore and had promised to get material for the habits of the new community when she returned to Philadelphia. Her letter of 19 June reported her failure to secure “plain flannel” for the group she so intensely admired.
Notes

1 5.15, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, Baltimore, 20 January 1809, CW, 2:50. In this chapter since most of Mrs. Seton’s letters were written from Baltimore, place names will be omitted, except in those cases where Baltimore is not the place of origin.

2 Joseph Bayley to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 16 January 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-2:98. Joseph Bayley had discussed the voyage with the captain of the Grand Sachem after his return from Baltimore.

3 5.15, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, Baltimore, 20 January 1809, CW, 2:50.

4 5.1, Elizabeth Seton to Cecilia Seton, 9 June 1808, CW, 2:3.

5 Ibid., entry of 14 June 1808, CW, 2:3.

6 Ibid., CW, 2:4.

7 Thomas W. Griffith, Annals of Baltimore (Baltimore, 1824), p. 9. The census of 1810 gave the population as follows: white males, 19,045; females, 17,147; other free persons, 5,571; slaves, 4,672; total, 46,555. John O’Neill’s New and Easy System of Geography (Baltimore, 1808), p. 119, gave the population of the city as 35,000.

8 “Diary of Jose Bernardo Gutierrez de Lara,” American Historical Review, XXXIV (January 1929), 281-282.

9 Ruthella Mary Bibbins, “City of Baltimore, 1797-1850,” Baltimore, Its History and Its People (New York, 1912), 82-83.

10 William Dunlap, Diary (1766–1839) (New York, 1930), II, 375-6, entry for 1 February 1806. The manuscript of this portion of the Diary is owned by the Yale University Library.

11 Letitia Stock, Baltimore, a Not Too Serious History (Baltimore, 1936), 49-50.


13 Ibid.


15 Ibid., CW, 2:7.


17 Frances Trollope, Domestic Manners of Americans (New York, 1904), p. 183.

18 5.1, Elizabeth Seton to Cecilia Seton, 17 June 1808, CW, 2:7.


20 Ibid., 64. The lower chapel was consecrated on 5 March 1809. Here Negroes were taught the Catechism.

21 5.6, Elizabeth Seton to Cecilia Seton, 12 August 1808, CW, 2:25. See Tessier’s Journal, 18 July 1808, ASMS. The practice of ringing the Angelus three times a day on the chapel bell was begun at St. Mary’s on 18 July 1808.

22 Pierre Babade, S.S., “Compliment d’Aglae Dubourg,” Baltimore, June 1808,
See Babade to Eccleston, 12 February 1833, AAB, AASMU, 24-A-8. Both French and English versions of this poetic greeting are preserved at Emmitsburg.

5.7, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, 20 August 1808, CW, 2:29; 5.5, Elizabeth Seton to Cecilia Seton, 8 August 1808, CW, 2:24; 5.10, Ibid., 6 October 1808, CW, 2:34.

5.15 Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, 20 January 1809, CW, 2:48. See Tessier’s Journal, 28 August 1805, ASMSU.

5.2, Elizabeth Seton to Catherine Dupleix, 20 June 1808, CW, 2:9.


5.15, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, 20 January 1809, CW, 2:48. See Tessier’s Journal, 28 August 1805, ASMSU.

5.1, Elizabeth Seton to Cecilia Seton, 17 June 1808, CW, 2:7.

5.3, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 4 July 1808, CW, 2:14.


Robert Goodloe Harper to John Dubois, Emmitsburg, 30 September 1820, ASJPH 1-3-3-2:43; Josephine Seton to Juliana Sitgreaves Scott, 2 February 1821, ASJPH 1-3-3-11:B61.

5.8, Elizabeth Seton to Cecilia Seton, 26 August 1808, CW, 2:30.

5.21, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 23 March 1809, CW, 2:61.

Theresa (Cecilia) Seton to Elizabeth Seton, 7 July 1808, ASJPH 1-3-3-4:202.

5.5, Elizabeth Seton to Cecilia Seton, 8 August 1808, CW, 2:24. John E. McGarity, C.S.P., “Reverend Samuel Sutherland Cooper, 1769-1843,” states incorrectly that Cooper entered St. Mary’s the fall of 1807. This biography of Cooper, published in *Records*, XXXVII (1926), 305-40, is unfortunately the only lengthy account available and perpetuates some other errors of this type. Cooper entered St. Mary’s Seminary, Baltimore, 19 September 1808. See Tessier’s Journal, 19 September 1808, ASMS;
39 Theresa (Cecilia) Seton to Elizabeth Seton, 4 August 1808, ASJPH 1-3-3-4:203. Louis Sibourd added several paragraphs in perfect English to this letter.

40 5.2, Elizabeth Seton to Catherine Dupleix, CW, 2:9. When Mrs. Seton said she was “two miles from the city,” she probably meant the waterfront and business section. White gives the population of the city as approximately 46,000 in 1808. C. I. White, Life of Mrs. Eliza A. Seton (New York, 1853), 483.

41 5.3, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 4 July 1808, CW, 2:15.

42 5.4, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, 8 July 1808, CW, 2:19. See 5.2, Elizabeth Seton to Catherine Dupleix, (June 1808), CW, 2:9.

43 5.2, Elizabeth Seton to Catherine Dupleix, [June 1808], CW, 2:9.

44 5.3, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 4 July 1808, CW, 2:15.

45 5.2, Elizabeth Seton to Catherine Dupleix, [June 1808], CW, 2:10.

46 5.3, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 4 July 1808, CW, 2:15.

47 Cecilia Seton to Elizabeth Seton, 4 August 1808, ASJPH 1-3-3-4:204.

48 Louis Dubourg to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 27 May 1808, AMSV.

49 5.9, Elizabeth Seton to Cecilia Seton, 5 September 1808, CW, 2:31.

50 5.11, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 3 October 1808, CW, 2:37.

51 5.13, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 6 December 1808, CW, 2:41.

52 5.14, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, 16 January 1809, CW, 2:46.

53 Ibid. Elizabeth Seton told Antonio Filicchi that if her school increased she would be “obliged to call” Cecil.

54 John Wilkes to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 29 August 1808, ASJPH 1-3-3-2:51.

55 George Dupleix to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 12 July 1808, ASJPH 1-3-3-11:33; Ibid., 24 August 1808, ASJPH 1-3-3-11:34.

56 Wright Post to Elizabeth Seton, 16 July 1808, ASJPH 1-3-3-11:2; Ibid., 29 September 1808, ASJPH 1-3-3-11:4.

57 Joseph Bayley to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 16 January 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-2:98.

58 Harriet Seton to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 5 March 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-8:75.

59 Harriet Seton to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 12 August 1808, ASJPH 1-3-3-8:72.

60 Harriet Seton to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 29 November 1808, ASJPH 1-3-3-8:74.

61 Harriet Seton to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 5 March 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-8:75.

62 Cecilia Seton to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 8 July 1808, ASJPH 1-3-3-4:200.

63 Catherine Seton [of James] to Annina Seton, New York, 4 August 1808, ASJPH 1-3-3-4:107; Cecilia Seton to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 4 August 1808, ASJPH 1-3-3-4:204.

64 Cecilia Seton to Samuel Waddington Seton, New York, 22 December 1808, ASJPH 1-3-3-4:206.

65 Cecilia Seton to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 8 January 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-4:208.

66 5.10, Elizabeth Seton to Cecilia Seton, 6 October 1808, CW, 2:33.
Leo Ryan, *Old St. Peter’s*, 97. Affairs in St. Peter’s Church in 1808 worried Bishop Carroll who believed “the crisis is as important to Religion as can almost happen.” With Sibourd’s departure in August, John Byrne was left alone with a congregation estimated by some at “more than 52,000 souls.” Carroll wrote to Kohlmann on 15 August, that he wished one of the Fenwicks and Kohlmann to go to New York if Sibourd should fail to return. See John Carroll to Anthony Kohlmann, 15 August 1808, Archives of Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., 65. Hereinafter cited as AGU.

Cecilia Seton to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 8 January 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-4:208.

Cecilia Seton to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 5 March 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-4:209.

Ibid.


Ibid.

Cecilia Seton to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 20 March 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-4:210.

Samuel Waddington Seton to Cecilia Seton, New York, ASJPH 1-3-3-17:11.

[Ethelinda] Agnes Seton to Annina Seton, New York, 31 May 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-4:104.


Samuel Waddington Seton to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 25 May 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-17:4. There seems to be a question as to whether Carlton Bayley, the young doctor, accompanied Cecilia Seton. This letter written just before the departure says he was unable to go. Mother Rose White’s Journal at ASJPH, states that he did come; as do the Annals, I, 85.

Cecilia Seton to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 20 March 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-4:210.

Ibid.

Theresa (Cecilia) Seton to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 13 September 1808, ASJPH 1-3-3-4:205.

5.10, Elizabeth Seton to Cecilia Seton, 6 October 1808, *CW*, 2:34.

*Records of the American Catholic Historical Society*, V (1894), 420-520, contains a brief biography of Cecilia O’Conway by Sara Trainer Smith entitled “Philadelphia’s First Nun.”


Ibid., 66.


John Carroll to Elizabeth Carroll, Baltimore, 18 August 1809, Shea Transcripts, 31-3, AGU. See *The John Carroll Papers*, 3:92.
Robert Goodloe Harper to John Dubois, 8 May 1817, AMSMU. For an interesting account of the Catons and their marriages into British nobility, see Annie Leakin Sioussat, Old Baltimore (New York, 1931), pp. 201-5. The wedding took place on 1 March 1817. Robert Goodloe Harper had married Emily Carroll, the second daughter of Charles Carroll, and was uncle to the Caton beauties.

Eleanor Thompson to Elizabeth Seton, Emmitsburg, 2 May 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-2:17.

Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, Boston, 13 April 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:10.

A-5.10a, Sister Cecilia O’Conway, Memoir, 1805-1815, CW, 2:713. 5.19, Elizabeth Seton to Rose Stubbs, 20 February 1809, CW, 2:57.

Ibid. Rose Landry White was the widow of Captain Joseph White.

Louis Dubourg to Abbé Élèves, 15 June 1828, ASJPH 1-3-3-2:102. Cf. McGarity, 315. This copy of the Dubourg letter was made by Louis Regis Deluol, director of the Seminary of St. Sulpice at Paris, in 1858, for the Daughters of Charity at Emmitsburg. The original was then the property of Count Jules de Mensu who had received it from Abbé Élèves. It has sometimes been mistakenly assumed that the letter was written to Deluol.

A-5.10a, Sister Cecilia O’Conway, Memoir, 1805-1815, 28 July 1809, CW, 2:713.

Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, 8 July 1808, CW, 2:19.

John Wilkes to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 25 December 1808, ASJPH 1-3-3-2:52.

Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, 16 January 1809, CW, 2:45.

Elizabeth Seton to Philip Filicchi, 21 January 1809, CW, 2:52.

Elizabeth Seton to Philip Filicchi, 8 February 1809, CW, 2:54. The M stood for Mary, Mrs. Seton’s confirmation name.

Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 24 January 1810, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:11.

Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, 8 November 1809, CW, 2:89. See Antonio Filicchi to Elizabeth Seton, 30 November 1808, ASJPH 1-3-3-10:39. The letter just received was written by Filicchi 10 November 1808.


Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 13 April 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:10.

Ibid.

Elizabeth Seton to Rose Stubbs, 20 February 1809, CW, 2:57.


Julia Scott to Elizabeth Seton, Philadelphia, 15 March 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-11: B24.

Ibid.

Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 23 March 1809, CW, 2:63.

Ibid., 61.

Ibid. A small note in Simon Bruté’s writing in the archives of Mount Saint
Mary’s University, Emmitsburg, reads, “14th mars, 1809, resolve to buy the plantations of Emmitsburg to found Daughters of Charity...” The deed or indenture was drawn and recorded on 26 April 1809, at Frederick County Land Records. It stated that Robert Fleming for the sum of $6,961 deeded to Samuel Cooper, Louis Dubourg and John Dubois as “joint tenants forever” two tracts of land in “St. Mary’s Valley,” Frederick County. The deed was witnessed by William Emmit and Henry Williams. The original deed is in the possession of the Sisters of Charity, Emmitsburg, ASJPH 1-3-6-2f. The Frederick County Land Records Liber W. R. no. 35, folios 6, 7, 8, 9 record the deed.


114 5.22, Elizabeth Seton to Cecilia Seton, 3 April 1809, CW, 2:64.
115 5.11, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 3 October 1808, CW, 2:38.


118 Julia Scott to Elizabeth Seton, Philadelphia, 15 March 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-11: B24.

119 5.20, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 2 March 1809, CW, 2:59.

120 Mary Bayley Post to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 6 May 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-11:7.

121 5.26, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 9 May 1809, CW, 2:69.

CHAPTER 9

MOTHER SETON

The journey from Baltimore to Emmitsburg in 1809 could not be made in one day. The route the women took that June passed through Westminster, and the road became rougher as their wagon drew farther away from Baltimore. As late as 1815 Rev. John Dubois was petitioning with the commissioners of Taneytown for “a turnpike road to be made between Westminster and Emmitsburg.” Northern Maryland, it is true, had developed rapidly in the early years of the nineteenth century, but the road to wealth lay through Frederick County. The Ellicott brothers had inaugurated a fine road to this wheat-growing area to supply the mills of Baltimore, and after 1805 demands were met for turnpikes to York, Reisterstown, and Frederick. Carroll County developed more slowly, and Westminster did not become a county seat until 1837. This village from which Mrs. Seton sent a note back to Baltimore, had been laid out in 1764 by William Winchester, and was named after him until confusion over the Virginia town of the same name led the Maryland General Assembly to adopt the name of Westminster. Elizabeth Seton used the earlier name when she reported to Louis Dubourg, “We are so far safe tho’ our progress is so much slower than you expected. Your turnpike is to be sure a very rough one and we were obliged to walk the horses all the way.” It may not have been until Saturday (24 June) that the tired women reached Emmitsburg and passed on to “Saint Mary’s Mount” on the other side of the village.

The village of Emmitsburg was not yet twenty-five years old when Elizabeth Seton first saw it. Among the odd notes Rev. Simon Bruté left behind him was one which read, “Mrs. Hughes told me she thought it was about 1786 that she came on the spot of the present town then a complete wood.” According to local tradition the settlement was first called Poplar Fields and tradition has it that the first white man in the area was a Catholic,

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*If the Seton party left on the feast of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, the trip took more than three days in 1809 since 21 June 1809, fell on Wednesday. [Dating the journey is baffling. See Rose Landry White recorded in her journal that “they left Baltimore on the 22nd.” ASJPH 7-2-1, 2. Cecilia O’Conway also records 22nd June as the departure date, ASJPH 1-3-3-4:118, #1. Or did the travelers depart so early in the darkness that some scribes considered the pre-dawn darkness to still be 21 June although the women dated the trip in daylight as 22 June? It is also possible that the reference to departure on the feast of St. Aloysius was given to invoke blessing on the future mission of education of youth by the nascent sisterhood. 6.1, Elizabeth Seton to Louis Dubourg, CW, 1:74, was written from Winchester (sic, Westminster, Maryland) Friday afternoon, which in 1809 would have been 23rd June. Ed.].

b This would be 23 June 1809, if White, 256, is correct in regard to the date of departure. The date of 21 June given in CW is an error since Elizabeth Seton clearly writes “Friday afternoon,” which would have been 23 June, unless Mrs. Seton was mistaken.
William Elder, who gave the Mountain its name in 1734.6 There was already a Catholic church in the village, St. Joseph’s founded in 1793;6 when the Seton party went through.

The property on which the women intended to settle was not in readiness in June and so they rode by their valley farm and went on to the Sulpician settlement on the mountainside. Their first home was a log house situated half-way between the school buildings and the chapel on the hill.7 It was originally designated as a retreat house for Baltimore Sulpicians, and later came to be called “Mr. Duhamel’s House,” but during the month of June 1809, it was the first home of the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph’s.8 Elizabeth Seton wrote happily to Matthias O’Conway, “We are half in the sky, the height of our situation is almost incredible—the chapel elegant Simplicity.” It was here that Elizabeth welcomed her daughters, Kit and Bec some days later, here that Sally Thompson joined the group whose arrival she had so impatiently awaited. Here, too, Harriet Seton began to go to Mass and evening adoration, and on one moonlight night in July made her decision to become a Catholic.9 In later years Elizabeth was to recall that happy month with a grateful sigh, “Oh, oh, how sweet,” and warm praise for the kind reception of Rev. John Dubois, (1764–1842), and Mrs. Thompson’s assistance to the women her two daughters were joining.8 By the end of July, however, the mountain interlude was over; for when the second group of women arrived from Baltimore the farmhouse in the valley

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6 Scharf, I, 590 states that Rev. Matthew Ryan was the first resident pastor. Bruté said Ryan came originally from Frederick. Ryan died on 5 January 1817, yet his name does not appear in any of the accounts after Mrs. Seton’s arrival in Emmitsburg. On 15 August 1796, Father Francis Bodkin of Hagerstown wrote to Bishop Carroll, “I this day met a strange clergyman, a Mr. Ryan. He attends a congregation 34 or 35 miles from this, called Emmittstown.” Apparently his active duties ceased before 1809 for John Dubois was in charge when Mrs. Seton arrived. Father Ryan may have been the priest of whom Dubois wrote in 1816, “When I used to live in Frederick town a scandalous priest was in charge of Emmitsburg, a character queer, violent, in fact insisting on money even to the extent of creating scenes at the altar ...the event had created a schism.” See John Dubois to Antoine Gamier 18 April 1816, AMSM. Copies of letters in the Archives of St. Sulpice, Paris. In 1809 Charles Duhamel came from Hagerstown and was pastor until his death on 6 February 1818. Duhamel was succeeded in his turn by John Hickey, John Dubois, Simon Bruté, Samuel Cooper and Simon Bruté again. Bruté was in charge when Mrs. Seton died in 1821.

7 The Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph’s is the official name of the community founded by Mrs. Seton which appears in the 1817 Act to Incorporate the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph’s in Frederick County, Maryland, ASJPH 3-1-3a.

8 “Excellent Mrs. Thompson,” the mother of Sally and Ellen Thompson, worked at the mountain college. 10.4, “Dear Remembrances,” CW, 3a:522.
was ready to receive its occupants. When Rev. Louis Dubourg returned to Baltimore on 31 July; his “family” members in Emmitsburg were happily united under their own roof.

The Stone House, as it has since been called, housed the young community through their first autumn and Christmas in the valley. It was far from offering all the comforts Elizabeth had so optimistically described for Julia Scott. Sixteen people, two-thirds of whom were adults, occupied four rooms, two upstairs and two down, with one of the small lower rooms used as a temporary chapel. The upstairs was in reality a garret where winter snow sometimes sifted over the women sleeping on the floor. At first only two cots were available, and these were continuously occupied by the sick members of the band. Elizabeth slept on her mattress side by side with Bec and Kit in the room adjoining the chapel. There was no pump inside the house, and drinking water came from a spring in a hollow west of the house; washing was carried further to Toms Creek and was scrubbed rigorously in tubs set up under the trees. Sister Sally Thompson was a godsend to the rest of the women during their first weeks of adjustment to these primitive conditions. Strong and cheerful, well-acquainted with the neighborhood, the Emmitsburg woman

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1 The exact date of arrival at the farm house, or “Stone House” is subject to question. A long-standing tradition in St. Joseph’s Valley has commemorated the arrival on 31 July 1809, but the fact is that 31 July is the foundation date of the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph’s. Evidence seems to point to an earlier date for the arrival of Mrs. Seton, her companions, daughters, and sisters-in-law. The entrance record at Mount St. Mary’s College has the Seton boys listed on 28 July 1809. A chronology compiled by Bruté gives the date of removal to the farm house as 28 July 1809. Mother Rose White’s journal says her party arrived before Sunday, and on Sunday heard Mass and talked with Louis Dubourg. Tessier’s Journal reports Dubourg as being back in Baltimore on 31 July 1809, which was a Monday according to the calendar. It would seem clear that the women must have been in the farm house by 29 July 1809, which fell on a Saturday. The reason for not conclusively accepting 28 July is that Mother Rose’s Journal describes the difficulty her party had in securing food on Friday night, a day of abstinence. It seems difficult to believe these women could have been mistaken about a Friday. Since Friday was 28 July it seems probable that the women moved from the mountain on 28 July, were joined on 29 July by Rose White’s party, attended Mass together on Sunday, 30 July, and on 31 July 1809, they began their first new week as an integral unit. [31 July, feast of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, patron of the Jesuit missions in Maryland, marked the beginning of the sisterhood living a regular way of life in accord with Provisional Regulations of St. Joseph’s Sisters. See A-6.4a, CW, 2: 737. Ed.]
willingly acted as business manager, making the purchases and directing the household concerns.

The sisters were not always able to have Mass offered in their chapel since at this time Rev. John Dubois was the only priest stationed in the vicinity. He served Mount St. Mary’s, St. Joseph’s Church in the village of Emmitsburg, as well as the Stone House. But distance offered no barrier to these eager women. Often on Sunday they would tramp over to the mountain Mass after having already participated in an early one in town or at home. When the early Mass was offered at the farmhouse, the villagers attended. “It was a sight for angels to see,” Sister Rose recorded, “the sick and the well, the young and the old, externs all crowded round the little altar and the sick beds.”

When the community was augmented by two new arrivals from New York, the Stone House literally overflowed, and it became necessary to send some of the sisters to sleep in the house which was being built for their permanent home. This house which is known today as the White House was the original “St. Joseph’s House” of the community and served as the first motherhouse and ministry center. The basic log structure was completed but the plastering remained to be done. Six postulants impatiently awaited its completion so that they might be admitted, but in December Elizabeth told Archbishop John Carroll, “There seems to be no intention of removing us to St. Joseph’s this winter. I have refused to give the least sentiment on the subject, there are so many difficulties in staying and dangers in going that unless obliged in

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*: The Journal of Mother Rose White contains a typical journal of events from June 1809 to August 1817, biographical details of sisters in the community, obituaries, letters and odd items. As second superior of the community Mother Rose was revered and her papers were preserved. A typed paginated copy of the original has been used for these citations. Both the original and the typed copy are preserved at the Daughters of Charity Archives, Emmitsburg, Maryland. There is a tradition that on the first Christmas the sisters had “some smoked herrings for their dinner and a spoonful of molasses for each.” (White, 266.) But the ledger containing the account of the “Sisterhood of St. Joseph” in the archives of Mount St. Mary’s University shows that in the month of December 1809, the women were charged with “5 dozen herrings, 19 lbs. beef, 13 lbs. lard, two turkeys, 1 goose, 128 ¾ lbs. beef, and 2 chickens.” The last two items were secured on 29 December, but the turkeys and goose were listed under 24 December 1809. It would appear that the ladies could have eaten more than molasses and herring for their Christmas repast.

1: The present “White House” is actually a restoration of the original and stands on a location twice-removed from the original site. Some of the timbers and floors are from the original, however, as are sections of the woodwork, the altar, and other cherished items.

[Elizabeth Seton named the house under construction St. Joseph’s House. Ed.]
Obedience, I cannot take it upon me.”

By the middle of January, however, the crowded conditions at the farmhouse necessitated a trial of St. Joseph’s House and Elizabeth told Carroll of their intention. If it proved too cold they could return. “Our moveables are not very weighty,” she added drily. Sisters Sally, Kitty, and Rose were named to go and for several weeks they slept in one of the new house’s unfurnished rooms. When the weather proved stormy the three Spartans remained there all day, spinning at their wheels to keep busy, and the hardiest of the trio would cross the muddy, ploughed ground to bring them something to eat.

Work on the log house progressed slowly and on 25 January Elizabeth noted in a letter to the archbishop that they were still waiting to settle in the new home. Moving day finally arrived in February, and on the twentieth of that month the Blessed Sacrament was carried in procession from the Stone House to St. Joseph’s by John Dubois, followed by the mother and her daughters. Cecilia Seton was so ill she had to be carried but she shared in the general rejoicing. The chapel was completed in March, and the first high Mass within its walls was sung on the feast of St. Joseph.

Elizabeth Seton later described the new house in the words, “We have an elegant little chapel, thirty cells holding a bed, chair and table each, a large infirmary, a very spacious refectory besides parlor, school room, my working room, etc.” But the first spring the community lived there it presented quite a different picture. The carpenters had not even finished and when the plastering was begun the women had to move from room to room to avoid the workmen. On occasion they lived in the hall, and as late as 23 July 1810, Mrs. Seton notified their superior that the masons had only completed the first coat on the cells. Meanwhile the hair kept in the building for the plaster became infested with fleas and the women were plagued by bites while they dozed uneasily on the garret floor. Gradually the shavings and chips were cleared from the yard and permanent steps replaced the blocks of wood at the front door. The house of St. Joseph was settled at last and the ardent community adapted itself to what was to be for most of them their last earthly home. Certainly for Elizabeth Seton it would witness many “miracles of grace,” as Jean Cheverus termed them.

By the time Mary Magdalen Bayley Post visited her sister two springs later the affairs of the house were so well adjusted that Mary commented, on her return to New York:

I left you, dear Sister, with sensations I cannot describe. It seemed to me as if I must have crossed the threshold of existence...It seemed to me I had actually seen an order of
beings who had nothing to do with the ordinary cares of this life and were so far admitted to the society of the blessed as to take pleasure in the same employments.\textsuperscript{20}

The almost complete disregard for physical discomforts which amazed Mrs. Post was second nature to the women of the valley, and Elizabeth said rather impatiently to Julia Scott,

They tell me a hundred ridiculous stories are going about relative to our manner of living here, but I hope you will not listen to them a moment, if they should reach you—and believe me again when I assure you that I have with my darlings true peace and comfort [in] every way.\textsuperscript{21}

Housing problems produced only a momentary delay in the phenomenal growth of the household in the first years in Emmitsburg. Postulants came from many directions. New York contributed to the infant community not only the head, but many members as well. Rev. Anthony Kohlmann, S.J., after his passing reluctance to see Cecilia Seton join the group, became a constant sponsor of new entrants.\textsuperscript{22} On 7 July 1809, he wrote of his pleasure that Susan Clossy was satisfactory to Mrs. Seton, and recommended another young woman, Jane Corbett,\textsuperscript{j} who was a recent convert. By the time Elizabeth had sent her cordial reply to this communication, the Jesuit pastor of St. Peter’s had another candidate, Martina Quinn,\textsuperscript{k} to offer, with the remark:

The more, it seems, you are drawing nigh the time of the contemplated commencement of your religious institution,\textsuperscript{l} the more the grace of God seems to work upon the hearts of those whom, from all Eternity, He has designed for the fulfilling of His holy will.\textsuperscript{23}

Another New Yorker, Mrs. Eliza Grim,\textsuperscript{24} was anxious to join Mrs. Seton at this time but she was discouraged by Elizabeth because of the difficulty of arranging for the Grim children.\textsuperscript{m} Anthony Kohlmann frankly confessed that he hoped his own diocese\textsuperscript{n} would eventually benefit from

\textsuperscript{1} Jane Corbett was twenty-four at the time Kohlmann proposed her name. She came to Emmitsburg but did not remain long in the community. The community records give no details concerning her departure. She was back in New York City, however, when Jean Cheverus stopped there in December 1810. See Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, 4 January 1811, AMSV, Letters I, 2.

\textsuperscript{2} Sister Martina Quinn died at St. Joseph’s on 26 May 1816. She was sixteen when she came to Emmitsburg.

\textsuperscript{3} At this time the sisters were living under a provisional rule at the stone farm house.

\textsuperscript{4} Mrs. Seton finally arranged for one son, Charles Grim, at Mount St. Mary’s on 19 April 1816. She used Filicchi funds provided for her own sons to pay for the Grim boy. Mrs. Grim had other children, however, to care for and there is no record that she ever entered St. Joseph’s.

\textsuperscript{5} Kohlmann left New York City in 1815, two years before the first Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph’s arrived from Emmitsburg.
these contributions to Emmitsburg, and he anticipated the day when Mrs. Seton would return “a small colony of your great order to this city.”25 Again in 1811 he recommended three women to St. Joseph’s, this time a mother and her two daughters. Mrs. Corish, the mother, he explained, “wishes to accompany her daughters* to your convent both to be edified by the example of your pious community and to render in the teaching line all the services in her power.”26

The New York Jesuit was not alone in giving encouragement to the new group. Rev. John Francis Moranvillé, C.S.Sp., (1760-1824), the zealous pastor of St. Patrick’s Church in Baltimore, had begun his efforts in Mrs. Seton’s behalf while she was yet in Baltimore. It was there he introduced Elizabeth Boyle and Ann Gruber to their future mother. After the Emmitsburg establishment was started Moranvillé continued to foster vocations in these young women and he informed Elizabeth, “I communicated your affectionate remembrance to Betsy and Ann...they would not refrain their tears; oh, how they long to see themselves united to the dear family.”27 When the sisters moved from the farmhouse to St. Joseph’s they were able to welcome Father Moranvillé’s postulants, who arrived on 16 March 1810.28

Father Moranvillé sent boarders to Mrs. Seton’s school, as well. Writing to Sister Elizabeth Boyle in 1811 he said:

I am sorry to hear that our good Mother is in a poor state of health. I wish from my heart that God may long preserve her for the good of the community which she supports by her example and her activity. Present her with my best respects and ask her when it will be time to send the three young ladies as boarders from Fell’s Point, and what they are to be provided with.29

When a group of women hoping to become the nucleus of a Trappist convent met with serious setbacks in 1812, Moranvillé suggested that they come to Emmitsburg to join Mrs. Seton. But this tentative plan failed to materialize immediately and the Baltimore priest wrote in October:

You will not see our poor Trappist Sisters; the Superior having promised them to receive them into the order they first chose, they thought it was their duty to wait still more...

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* The daughters, Benedicta and Camilla Corish, remained at St. Joseph’s but the mother, apparently desiring a more cloistered life, later became a Visitation nun.

* This probably was written in 1812 since a letter dated 12 April 1812, also deals with the proposed Trappist convent. The group planned to settle in Pennsylvania at that time. In January 1813, the women were still in Baltimore and Moranvillé said of Mrs. Seton, “Tell her candidly I have wished this long while to have here another like herself to be at the head of my poor Trapists [sic]. The Superior we had has been these six weeks absent from the convent for cause of a weak health.”
I was ready to go with them to Emmitsburg...I hope that...their attachment to their first calling will not be unfavorably interpreted by your dear family.\textsuperscript{30}

The Trappist experiment was doomed to failure nevertheless, and in 1814 when the group withdrew from the United States, the American subjects were given the privilege of remaining. [Lewellyn is also spelled Llewellyn.] Four of these nuns\textsuperscript{4} came to St. Joseph’s “at the earnest solicitation of Rev. Mr. Moranvillé,” on 27 November 1814.\textsuperscript{31}

Rev. John Baptiste David, (1761–1841), who became the second superior of the sisterhood, also added recruits. Arriving at St. Joseph’s for a retreat on 1 August 1810, he was accompanied by Fanny Jordan, Angela Brady, and Julia Shirk, all of whom proved valuable additions to the household. Nor did Rev. Louis Dubourg, their first superior, forget the community when he went to Martinique in 1810, for his health. Soon after his return to Baltimore in early July 1811, he wrote exuberantly to Elizabeth:

Behold, I am just arrived, and what will please, if not surprise you, I sit down to write to your Reverence even before I have seen any of my friends in this part of the world. Pretend after this to be ignorant of the rank you hold in my affections. I bring you two novices and one rather advanced in age...who can patiently sit a whole day at the workbasket, a piece of furniture which you told me you stood in great need of...\textsuperscript{32}

Dubourg’s three protégées were Louise Rogers, Adele Salva, and the latter’s sister, Madame Guérin. Mme. Guérin brought her only son [Eugène] and placed him at Mount St. Mary’s College where the widows of the community educated their sons.\textsuperscript{7} Mme. Guérin served as an added tie between Boston\textsuperscript{6} and Emmitsburg since Bishop Cheverus was interested in her welfare.\textsuperscript{33} Contrary to Dubourg’s expectations, she became a sister in the community, and until her death in 1816 she was noted for her pious and industrious example.

\textsuperscript{4} Two of these women, Scholastica Bean and Mary Joseph Llewellyn, remained and died happily as Sisters of Charity.

\textsuperscript{7} These children later elicited from John Dubois the comment, “Experience has proved to me that although children of a mother who has come to St. Joseph’s commands a double interest from us, they rivet our chains. If they turn out well they double our joy. If they prove worthless, we are hemmed up between the feelings of the mother and the dearest interests of our institutions,” John Dubois to John Hickey, 5 November 1818, AMSMU. Francis Guérin entered on 23 July 1811. [ASJPH records give the son’s name as Eugène Guérin. He continued at Mount Saint Mary’s until his mother died. Sometime after 1816 he returned to Martinique. See Joseph Mannard, “Widows in Convents of the Early Republic: The Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1790-1860, U.S. Catholic Historian, 26, no. 2 (Spring 2008), 111-32. Ed.]

\textsuperscript{6} Mme. Guérin was related to the Wallys of Boston; Thomas Wally was one of Cheverus’ “fervent converts.”
After Louis Dubourg was appointed administrator of the Diocese of Louisiana his affection for the Maryland community continued. Writing from New Orleans on 1 September 1813, he told Simon Bruté at the Mount that although the time had not yet come to establish Sisters of Charity in New Orleans he wished Bruté to “beg of them and their dear Father Superior to keep us in their good will for God’s own hour. Commend me to their prayers and assure them that I do not cease to bear them in my heart.” On a later occasion he told Bruté:

The good news of the valley and mountain covers me with joy. Be assured that my heart is there and will always be. Are they not my children? Majorem non habeo gratiam quam ut audiam filios meos in charitate ambulare. The day when I can have a swarm of bees from the hive of St. Joseph’s will be a great day for me.

Bishops Benedict Flaget and Jean Cheverus, as well, had the sisterhood’s interests at heart, although their efforts were to prove less fruitful as far as the membership of the community was concerned. It was Cheverus who had first directed the Trappistine, Sister Mary Joseph Lewellyn, southward with the remark, “The sister is a very sensible woman and would, I think, make an excellent instructress of youth. Should her expected companions not arrive, I think she would be a valuable acquisition to the Sisterhood at Emmitsburg.” But a later attempt to direct a postulant to St. Joseph’s proved abortive. A young woman of “pretty good English education” and a “strong desire” to become a sister disappointed the Boston prelate. On 20 January 1815, Cheverus confessed to Elizabeth, “The poor creature has dropped on the road vocation, letters, and even gratitude, for she has not favored me with a line...No more of her. Our intentions were pure, the event is in a higher control.”

Bishop-elect Benedict Flaget attempted to bring over French sisters but his effort was to prove equally barren. On his trip to France in 1810 Flaget had visited a “manufacture” carried on by little orphan children of Bordeaux under the direction of the Daughters of Charity. Flaget suggested that some of these women might come to Emmitsburg, perhaps with the knowledge that one of the objectives of the original Cooper-Seton scheme was “to found a manufactory on a small scale which may [prove to] be very

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1 Chief among Archbishop Carroll’s reasons for appointing Dubourg to New Orleans was among which was Dubourg’s ability to speak three languages. Dubourg was about forty-five years old at the time of his appointment.
2 In this letter Dubourg requested “four or five Sisters capable of teaching.” The first Sisters of Charity from Emmitsburg did not leave for Louisiana, however, until 20 December 1829, at the request of Bishop Joseph Rosati, C.M.
3 Sister Mary Joseph Lewellyn and two Trappist monks left Boston on 1 November 1811, and went to St. Inigoe’s, Maryland, where Father Moranville became interested in their concerns.
beneficial to the poor.” In any case, French sisters would prove helpful in training the American women in the spirit and usages of the rule of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac which Flaget intended carrying to St. Joseph’s on his return. Three French sisters, Sister Marie-Anne Bizeray (1778–1849), Sister Servant (local superior), Sister Augustine Chauvin (1765–1818), and Sister Marguerite Woirin (1762–1844), were selected to make the journey to the United States, and on 12 July 1810 the women wrote to “Our Sisters of Mount St. Mary’s aspiring to be of the company of the Daughters of Charity,” and they voiced their hope of joining the American community. The French Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity were brought to Emmitsburg that August, but the French sisters never arrived.

It has always been assumed that the French women did not leave Europe because of obstacles thrown in the way by Bonaparte’s government which denied them passports. Undoubtedly these obstacles created some delay. But other considerations developing meanwhile in the United States may have played a larger part than has been hitherto suggested. The discussion of the French rules during the year 1810-1811 brought to the fore the difficult position Elizabeth Seton held as a mother of five dependent children while she simultaneously acted as the spiritual mother of an infant community. Writing to her close friend John Carroll on 5 September 1811, Elizabeth explained:

The constitutions proposed have been discussed by our Rev. Director [Dubois] and I find he makes some observations on my situation relative to them, but surely an individual is not to be considered where a public good is in question, and you know I would gladly make every sacrifice you think consistent with my first and inseparable obligations as a Mother.

Carroll was always as concerned as Elizabeth herself over the welfare of her five children and he replied immediately, “Before anything is concluded you will hear from me or if possible, we shall see one another. My great anxiety is for the benefit, and consequently, the quiet, union, and perfect contentment of yourself and your interesting family.” But the archbishop’s concern did not prevent the discussion over Elizabeth’s position from waxing warmer in Baltimore and Emmitsburg.

The full names of the sisters are: Sister Marie-Anne Bizeray, Sister Augustine (Ange Françoise) Chauvin, and Sister Marguerite (Marie) Woirin. Community records list Marguerite Woirin as Voisin although Woirin appears clearly in her signature.

Mrs. Seton was a widow and mother with minor children who were dependent on her.

Mrs. Seton wrote that Carroll “considers my welfare more than I do myself & the 5 dear ones as his own.”
Elizabeth’s own mind was very clear in regard to her obligations. Even before the French rules arrived she had told Julia Scott:

The thought of living out of our Valley would seem impossible, if I belonged to myself, but the dear ones have their first claim which must ever remain inviolate. Consequently if at any period the duties I am engaged in should interfere with those I owe to them, I have solemnly engaged with our good Bishop Carroll, as well as my own conscience, to give the darlings their right, and to prefer their advantage in everything.”46

As the discussion of the rules progressed, her conviction never wavered. In February 1811, she told Dué, “By the law of the church I so much love I could never take an obligation which interfered with my duties to them, except I had an independent provision and guardian for them, which the whole world could not supply to my judgment of a mother’s duty.”47 To George Weis, Elizabeth confessed warily, “The only word I have to say to every question is, I am a Mother. Whatever providence awaits me consistent with that plea I say Amen to it.”48 [About six months before, a weary but faith-filled Mrs. Seton had written Weis: “Everything here is again suspended and I am casting about to prepare for beginning the world again with my poor Annina, Josephine and Rebecca, as we have reason to expect from many things passed lately that our situation is more unsettled than ever but, we will be ...[in any] case under the refuge of the most high.”49 Ed.]

The proposed addition of French Sisters at this juncture presented several difficulties. On 13 May 1811, Elizabeth begged Archbishop Carroll for advice and aid in clarifying her situation. Her questions suggested some of the points of discussion in regard to the rules and the French women. She asked:

What authority would the Mother they [the French sisters] bring have over our Sisters (while I am present?)...How could it be known that they would consent to the different modifications of their rules which are dispensable if adopted by us? What support can we procure to this house but from our Boarders, and how can the reception of Boarders sufficient to maintain it accord [sic, be reconciled with] with their statutes? How can they allow me the uncontrolled privileges of a Mother to my five darlings?...My duty to [my Anna]

4 George Weis was a Baltimore resident whose family befriended Mrs. Seton’s group when they started for Emmitsburg in 1809. He remained a helpful friend to the community during his lifetime. His name was spelled “Wise,” “Wyse,” and “Weise” on different occasions. He used “Weis,” himself.
alone would prevent my throwing her in her unprotected [sic, unmarried] state in the hands of a French Mother.\textsuperscript{50}

The issue of the French sisters went beyond the question of Elizabeth Seton’s personal position, however. It involved a disagreement over general policy between Sulpicians Flaget, David, and possibly Dubourg on one hand and Carroll, Dubois, and to a lesser extent, Cheverus on the other.\textsuperscript{51} Both John David and Benedict Flaget advocated the immediate importation of French sisters accompanied by a strict application of the rule of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac.\textsuperscript{52} The more conservative party believed that some modifications in the rules would be necessary in Emmitsburg, and that the time was not ripe for a union with France. Archbishop Carroll, with his Anglo-Irish background, was more prone to stress the disparity between the French milieu which had nurtured the rules and the Maryland scene in which they were to operate. Recalling the controversy three years later he said:

At the very institution of Emmitsburg, tho it was strongly contended for its being entirely conformable to & the same with the Institute of St. Vincent of Paul, yet this proposal was soon and wisely abandoned for causes, which arose out of distance, different manners, and habits of the two countries, France & the U.S.\textsuperscript{53}

It is quite possible that John Carroll would have preferred an entirely American community under his own supervision. There seems to be a hint of such a preference in two remarks he addressed to Mrs. Seton. The first, made in 1809 before the French issue was posed, suggests that it had not been the archbishop’s idea to have even the gentlemen of St. Sulpice direct the infant community. He said:

You know, ever honoured and most esteemed Madame, that after the choice made by yourselves, your chief benefactor, of living under the protection of the priests of St. Sulpice, I surrendered, as much as a Bishop can surrender, your government into their hands.\textsuperscript{54}

Whether or not this remark implied any chagrin at the choice the women made in 1809 to exchange Carroll’s superintendence for that of the French Sulpicians, Carroll’s comment in 1811, after the rules were finally adopted, cannot be misunderstood. He said bluntly:

I am rejoiced...that the idea of any other connection than of charity is abandoned between the daughters of St. Joseph’s
and the Society of St. Sulpice; I mean that their interests, administration and government are not to be the same, or at least under the same control. No one of that body but your immediate superior, residing near you, will have any share in the government or concerns of the sisters, except (on very rare and uncommon occasions) the superior of the seminary of Baltimore, but not his society [the Sulpicians]. This, however, is to be understood so as not to exclude the essential superintendence and control of the Archbishop over every community in his diocese.\textsuperscript{55}

If the archbishop was jealous of his own authority, the Society of St. Sulpice in the United States had members who were equally anxious to prevent their control over the Emmitsburg community of women from passing into other hands. John Dubois was evidently opposed to a union with France at this time, for Cheverus had written to Elizabeth from Boston on 4 January 1811:

I concur in opinion with Mr. Dubois about the propriety of your establishment remaining independent from the Sisters [Daughters] of Charity & continuing to be merely a house of education for young females...However I have some reason to think as you do, that very likely things will speak for themselves & show the usefulness & necessity of leaving you in your present situation. Have another conversation with the Rev. Mr. Dubois on the subject & then do with simplicity what he will prescribe or even wish.\textsuperscript{56}

It was after she received this letter that Elizabeth wrote to Carroll the detailed queries about her own position. It is possible that her letter was prompted by questions outlined by Dubois.

John Dubois was not opposed to union with France, except at this particular time and under these particular circumstances. In 1816, when he was overburdened with two parishes, a college and seminary, and the sisterhood, he reported to Paris:

I desire more than anything else in this world to be free of the care of the sisters but I see no other hope than that of uniting them to some other society to take care of them. If the reverend superior approves, I will try to enter into correspondence on this subject with the superior of the
Fathers of the Mission,\textsuperscript{a}\footnote{[The Congregation of the Mission founded by St. Vincent de Paul in France in 1625, is commonly called the "Lazarists" after their first mother house in Paris, Saint Lazare. In most English-speaking countries they are called “Vincentians.” Ed.]} formerly Lazarists, to see if it were not possible to form a union between the sisters here and those in France...\textsuperscript{57}

Although this suggestion came to naught, it is obvious that Dubois was not categorically opposed to eventual union with France.

The Cheverus letter contained a reference to a third factor complicating the French issue: the different interpretations given the functions and purposes of Mrs. Seton’s group. This last factor was probably more influential in preventing the arrival of French sisters in 1811–1812 than either of the other two. Although both the Rule of St. Vincent de Paul and the openly avowed purposes of the St. Joseph’s community included educational and charitable work, the Daughters of Charity in France at this time were predominantly engaged in charitable activities while the Emmitsburg group was chiefly concerned with the school for girls which was their solitary means of support. There was no question of incompatibility. St. Vincent, as early as 1649, had discussed the work of Sisters employed in teaching schoolgirls. In another conference addressed to the French sisters in 1653 he had said clearly, “The spirit of the Company consists in giving yourselves to God to love Our Lord and to serve Him corporally and spiritually in the person of the poor in their homes or elsewhere; to instruct poor young women, children, and generally all those whom Divine Providence may send you.”\textsuperscript{58} Elizabeth Seton’s community, from its very inception at Baltimore, had cherished the hope of being “very beneficial to the poor.”\textsuperscript{59} It was, rather, a question of emphasis which in the end operated against a union with France at that time. Although the archbishop was a poor prophet, Carroll believed in 1811 that:

A century will pass before the exigencies and habits of the country will require and hardly admit of the charitable exercises toward the sick, sufficient to employ any number of sisters out of our largest cities. Therefore they must consider the business of education as a laborious, charitable, and permanent object of their religious duties.\textsuperscript{60}

He was still convinced in 1814 that while in France “the soul and life of St. Vincent’s institution” was attendance on hospitals and the sick, “yet here in America no more can be required of [the sisters] than a disposition of readiness to embrace that charitable duty, if imposed
on them.” Yet almost at that very moment sisters from Emmitsburg were planning to leave for Philadelphia to take over an orphanage!

Carroll was not alone in fearing this difference in emphasis in 1811. By October even Bishop Flaget, who originally favored the importation of French sisters, confessed to Simon Bruté:

I dread the arrival of the religious women who are to come from Bordeaux. Their hopes will be frustrated; they will be unhappy, be it at Baltimore or at Emmitsburg. If there were yet time to turn them back, I would be of the opinion it should be done. I would wish at least that they be informed in detail of the spirit which reigns in the house at Emmitsburg, of the slight hope of serving in hospitals, and if they wish to come after that, we would not have to reproach ourselves.

It is a matter of history that, when David and Flaget organized the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth in the Diocese of Bardstown not long afterward, they did not import French sisters, but made their first requests for women from Emmitsburg. The requirements of the American frontier community in the first decades of the nineteenth century were noticeably different from those of the older civilization of Europe. When Archbishop Ambrose Maréchal, (1764–1828), the successor to John Carroll, made a report to Cardinal Lorenzo Litta in 1818 he praised the Emmitsburg “Daughters of St. Vincent de Paul” as:

Sisters who live holy lives according to the rules of their holy founder, with the exception of the modifications demanded by American customs and dispositions. They do not take care of hospitals nor could they since the administration of these hospitals is Protestant. Their principal work is the pious education of Catholic girls, those of the poor as well as those of the rich.

Thirty years and more would elapse before the urbanization of the eastern seaboard and the expanding charitable activities of American Sisters of Charity would completely erase this difference in emphasis. It was not until 1850 that the union with France occurred but as a result of different circumstances of time and place. General Assemblies held in Paris by the Society of Saint-Sulpice during post-Revolution France issued mandates which obliged the

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61 Cardinal Lorenzo Litta was Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (1814–1818) at the Vatican.
Baltimore Sulpicians to take action which would enable them to solely focus on their founding charism of preparation of candidates for the priesthood.

It seems clear, then, that in addition to the barriers erected by the Napoleonic regime in France, the migration of the women from Bordeaux was further discouraged by conditions and sentiments prevailing on the other side of the Atlantic. There was a definite reluctance on the part of Elizabeth’s friends, Carroll, Dubois, and Cheverus, to have her position complicated while her children were still dependent upon her. There was an absence of clearly defined agreement as to the general superintendence of religious orders and communities in the still young Archdiocese of Baltimore. But principally, there existed in 1811–1812 a very marked difference between the immediate needs of the Church on the American, Protestant frontier and the experience of the Daughters of Charity in the more stable, Catholic society of Europe. After 1812, the subject of the French sisters never loomed large again while Elizabeth Seton lived.

In spite of the final failure of Flaget’s attempt to introduce French women, he deserves full credit for bringing to the community in Emmitsburg the rules which they were to adopt with minor modification. This rule guided all Setonian Sisters of Charity until the Vatican II renewal which gives contemporary expression to the Charity charism in the Vincentian tradition.65 Before receiving the French rules, St. Joseph’s community had lived according to thirteen provisional rules.64 The women had made their first retreat in August 1809, at the farmhouse under the direction of Louis Dubourg. That same month they had set up a council of three to assist Mrs. Seton and Rose Landry White, the first and second in charge. The council members were Catherine Mullen, Cecilia O’Conway, and Cecilia Seton.65 No permanent pattern of religious life was adopted or confirmed until January 1812. It is scarcely surprising that some confusion and dissension arose to plague the infant community.

On 22 August 1810, Benedict Flaget left Baltimore for Emmitsburg, carrying with him a manuscript copy of the Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity which he had secured in France.66 Several months elapsed while the rules were being put into English copies and not until December did Elizabeth write to Archbishop Carroll, “The Superior desires me to send the constitutions of the Sisters of Charity which Rev. Mr. Flaget brought, as you now have leisure to consider them.”67 More than a year passed before these rules were officially confirmed by Archbishop John Carroll and Rev. John M. Tessier, the superior of the Sulpician seminary in Baltimore. Much

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65 The Vincentian tradition includes the spirit and teachings of Saints Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac.
of this delay was undoubtedly caused by the serious controversy over superiors, both within and without the house of St. Joseph’s, which reached a climax in 1811. Another cause for delay was the series of discussions over the degree of modification necessary to adapt the rules to American conditions and Mrs. Seton’s peculiar situation. A third cause for delay was the disagreement over the exact authority of the archbishop and the Society of St. Sulpice over the sisterhood.

After all the adjustments were made, the constitution and rules remained substantially the same as those Flaget had brought from France. Minor modifications allowed Elizabeth Seton to be head of the community in spite of the dependence of her five children, included education of the young as a specific purpose of the community, and allowed the taking of boarders. The enforcement of the rules and amendments to be made in the future would require the approval of the archbishop, the superior of the Sulpician seminary in Baltimore, and the superior of the community residing in Emmitsburg. When the amended copy was forwarded to Carroll Mrs. Seton said, “The rules proposed are nearly such as we had in the original manuscript of the Sisters of France. I never had a thought discordant with them as far as my poor power may go in fulfilling them.” The archbishop replied that it afforded him great pleasure “to learn that all material points on which a difference of opinion was thought to exist” had been cleared up. “I shall and do now give my approbation,” he wrote, “to the Constitution exhibited to me by Mr. Dubois after they shall have received the alterations suggested by him.” The amended rules were adopted by the women themselves with only one dissenting vote. The final confirmations by the archbishop and John Tessier were made on 17 January 1812. In the words of John Carroll, the sisters were now freed “from a state in which it was difficult to walk straight;” they were able to live by a permanent and acceptable plan.

While the matter of uncertainty over rules was causing confusion, the question of superiors for the community produced outright resentment, and at one time it seemed to threaten the very existence of the sisterhood.

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*At this time the Daughters of Charity in France were governed by documents promulgated by successors to St. Vincent de Paul in the office of superior general of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity: *Common Rules* (René Alméras, 1672) and *Statutes* (Jean Bonnet, 1718). The *Statutes* dealt with the juridical nature of the Company of the Daughters of Charity and may be considered like a Constitution. This is probably the document the Sulpicians and others referred to as constitutions. Sister Rose White in her Journal wrote: “Rev. Mr. Flaget returned from France and brought us the rules, constitutions, and conferences of Sisters of Charity founded by St. Vincent de Paul.” A-6.3a, Sister Rose White’s Journal, *CW*, 2:730. See also Ellin Kelly, Appendix A “The Rule of 1812,” and Appendix B, “Constitutions of the Sisters of Charity in the United States of America,” *Numerous Choirs*, 1:243-80.

*Rev. John Mary Tessier had become superior of the Sulpician seminary in Baltimore after Rev. Charles-François Nagot resigned on 8 November 1810.*
itself. At this point the historian must proceed with the greatest caution since the documentation is very scanty and, in some instances, incomplete. Personalities appear to serious disadvantage. The several complex issues of the first years of the community are all interwoven. In some respects final judgment must be withheld, but it must be suspected that the controversy was the most dangerous the infant establishment experienced.

At the very outset, when the women placed themselves under the protection of the Sulpicians in Baltimore, it was expected that Rev. Charles-François Nagot, S.S., would be their superior. Elizabeth had written to Julia Scott:

The Superior of our Seminary here, who is graced with all the venerable qualities of seventy-five, which is his age, a mind still strong and alive to the interests of our little family as if we were all his own...is going to take charge of our community and reside in Emmitsburg.72

Nagot had gone with Dubour and Cooper to supervise the final arrangements for the Emmitsburg property in April 1809.73 But the old man’s health was not robust, and after his serious illness that summer it became clear that he should not undertake the task. Carroll agreed that Nagot should resign as superior at Baltimore, if he insisted, but stipulated that the Sulpician remain at the seminary at least until May of the following year. In regard to Emmitsburg, the archbishop warned, “You cannot have the same assistance spiritual and temporal always at hand as in Baltimore. Mr. Dubois must often be obliged to be absent.”74

Louis Dubourg thus came to act as the first superior of the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph’s at Emmitsburg. His reign was brief and not entirely happy. Almost as soon as the first sisters arrived in Emmitsburg dissatisfaction arose over Dubourg’s policy in regard to correspondence. The women were forbidden to write to their former confessor in Baltimore, Pierre Babade. Elizabeth admitted to Archbishop Carroll that Father Babade was “the only one of nine different priests I have confessed to from necessity, to whom I ever yet had opened my heart or been able to draw the consolation and instruction so necessary to my situation.”75 Being a convert, she explained, and very much left to herself in spiritual devotions, how could she help being gratefully attached to the “one who has shown unceasing care for my soul, done everything to enlighten it and discover to it the full consolation of our holy faith.”76 Father Babade was beloved by most of the other women as well. In the short time Cecilia and Harriet Seton had known him, he had become their close friend. The zealous priest was consumed with a desire
to see Harriet within the fold, addressing her as his “dear new child in Jesus Christ, and soon, I hope, in his holy church, our common mother.” After Harriet went to Emmitsburg a veritable torrent of supplication followed her, and Babade’s joy knew no bounds when Harriet made her first Communion that September. Mrs. Seton’s daughters were equally fond of the white-haired Sulpician and they had begun an exchange of little notes even before they left Baltimore. Except for Rose White and Kitty Mullen, who had joined the group close to the eve of departure, all the women were “of one heart and voice with respect to Father B.”

The restriction on writing, then, came as a blow to these religious children of Pierre Babade. The five sisters, Cecilia Seton, Cecilia O’Conway, Mary Ann Butler, Susan Clossey, and Maria Murphy Burke, were “greatly chagrined” when Dubourg ordered that, as far as possible “confidence and attachment” to Babade was to be eradicated. Elizabeth told the archbishop, “I should have acquiesced quietly tho’ my heart was torn to pieces but the others could not bear it in the same way.” Dubourg clarified his position by giving the sisters “a copy of the rule relating to correspondence,” which permitted writing to the director each preferred once in two months, on subjects of direction designated. This lessened the feeling of resentment but did not remove it.

While Babade was away on missionary work in the area of Philadelphia, Germantown, and Burlington in August 1809, he received letters from both Dubourg and Carroll instructing him to go to Emmitsburg as soon as possible to receive Harriet Seton into the Church. Happily Babade notified Harriet that as soon as he could finish his work in Pennsylvania and New Jersey he would hasten to “the sacred place which encircles what is dearest to my heart.” He planned to go to Baltimore first, however, to consult the archbishop, who had requested that they discuss the regulations pertaining to the sisters. To Elizabeth Father Babade wrote, “I will explain to him [Carroll], according to my custom, that in order to make a just application of the laws it is necessary to examine the spirit, the purposes and the circumstances. Such has been my procedure in studies of canon law.”

When Elizabeth received word from Dubourg that Babade was coming to Emmitsburg she wrote pleadingly to Carroll, in the name of Cecilia and “the names of four other sisters who desire the comfort and feel the necessity as she does of unfolding their souls to him,” that they be allowed the privilege of going to confession to Father Babade. She added earnestly:
For my part I assure you that if it is not granted to me, you will leave a Soul so dear to you in a cloud of uneasiness which can be dissipated in no other way. It would seem as if our Lord has inspired this confidence in my Soul and in those of many others round me for my severe and most painful trial, circumstanced as I am.\textsuperscript{83}

Meanwhile, Louis Dubourg resigned. Dubourg in later years wrote Elizabeth Seton, “My disposition must be known to you: a sensibility perhaps too great for my own happiness, an openness of heart rather bordering on indiscretion than on reserve.”\textsuperscript{84} It was quite probably this sensitiveness which prompted his action in 1809. The Sulpicians in general felt that Babade was interfering in affairs which did not concern him, which “providence had addressed to another.”\textsuperscript{85} Babade, for his part, maintained that in the exterior affairs of the community he had never wished to interfere, but that in their spiritual concerns he had every right according to the principles of his vocation.\textsuperscript{86} Dubourg’s precipitate action brought matters to an unfortunate crisis. Nagot, too ill to act himself, chose Rev. John Baptist David to assume the duties refused by Dubourg.\textsuperscript{87}

When Elizabeth learned that Dubourg had resigned she was overcome with remorse that any perverseness of hers should have prompted such an action, and she wrote entreatingly to her old friend:

My Father—the pleading of so weak a creature does not merit your attention I know—yet once more be patient with one you have born with so long—it seems but a dream that things are as they are—that you have given your children to a father-in-law while their real father still lives and loves them with a parent’s tenderness—and why—the mother is worthless—pity them—pity her and if she ever even vexes you again, quit her and them forever.

The Rev. Mr. David may make an excellent Superior—his merits as a Father are undoubted, but our Lord did not give him that place with us—the charge was pointedly given to you [and] my perverseness has driven [you away].\textsuperscript{88}

This abject apology quite appeased the capricious Dubourg, who wrote on 13 September, “I wish to be with you tho’ absent, share in every distress, be edified in every good action, assist in every doubt.”\textsuperscript{89} But Elizabeth’s desire to see Dubourg reinstated met with disappointment. Receiving no assurance that Dubourg would resume his former duties, she
penned a letter to Nagot in Baltimore and sent it over to Dubois at Mount St. Mary’s for his opinion. Dubois sent it back after underlining the parts he considered “rather too harsh coming from you.” He told Mrs. Seton he had received a letter from Tessier, and one from Babade mentioning David’s appointment. “Wait,” he advised her, “for the answer of Mr. Dubourg or rather for the visit of the Bishop. Both, with what your own reflexions will suggest to you, will enable you to form a final opinion on a subject of too much consequence to be treated slightly.”

John Dubois, himself, sympathized with Mrs. Seton in her distress and tried to solve the tangle in another way. He wrote to Pierre Babade, offering to ask for him as an assistant at Mount St. Mary’s. Dubois needed aid and he believed that Mr. Duhamel, who was expected to help at Emmitsburg, would be unable to leave Hagerstown for at least another two years. Dubois warned Babade that he might not be able to serve the sisters immediately, if Baltimore should withhold his faculties. Babade replied that he was very grateful for this mark of friendship, but that he felt he must remain absolutely passive in the affair.

There is no record of what Archbishop Carroll advised when he visited the valley in October and confirmed, among others, Anna Maria and Harriet Seton. Soon after Carroll’s departure, Dubourg arrived and Elizabeth renewed her pleas. On 2 November she told Carroll, “I am not without hope that he will again resume his charge as superior—You know there are many reasons why I wish it.” If David should go to Kentucky with Flaget, as it was rumored, the community would have three changes in one year. Since it was her first superior whom she had offended, it was to him she should make reparation. “The truth is,” she admitted, “I have been made a Mother before being initiated.” She saw now that she should have offered her disappointment over Father Babade as a sacrifice to God. She closed her letter with the humble words, “You will see how good a child I am going to be— quite a little child, and perhaps you will have often to give me the food of little children yet, but I will do my best as I have promised you in every case.” The archbishop replied, “If Mr. Nagot, or the council of the Seminary see fit to restore Mr. Dubourg to the place he filled, you may depend upon my concurrence, tho’ I plainly see formidable objections. Your motives for desiring it are truly edifying and worthy of your humility...”

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If Priestly faculties are the authorization given to a Roman Catholic ordained priest by his diocesan bishop or religious superior, legally permitting him to administer the sacraments. Usually, a priest’s faculties are limited to a particular diocese or religious order.
But even before Carroll’s letter was written, the matter was settled. Writing to a friend in Philadelphia on 8 November, John Dubois announced, “The resignation of the late Superior, Mr. Dubourg, and the appointment of the Rev. Mr. David in his place is finally concluded upon. The former could not continue without injuring the college which requires all his time and exertions.”97 A few days later Mrs. Seton received from Nagot a reprimanding letter in which the Sulpician superior refused categorically to reinstate Dubourg. “I am persuaded,” he wrote bluntly, “it is God’s holy will that Mr. David today be superior of your house.” Nagot said he would have preferred that Carroll make the final decision, but since he must obey his archbishop the decision rested with Nagot. He concluded:

Conform with all the simplicity of a humble servant of God, docile to His commands, like a child. Inspire the same sentiments in all your Sisters; it is the true way to have peace and to find that the yoke of the Lord is as sweet as self-will is disquieting and discontenting, so long as one does not know how to conceal it, and sacrifice it, and obey in silence.98

It is not known what Father Nagot said to Mrs. Seton when he went to Emmitsburg in person on 14 November 1809, but a month later Elizabeth wrote to John Carroll:

I have had a great many very hard trials, my Father, since you were here, but you of course will congratulate me on them as this fire of tribulation is no doubt meant to consume the many imperfections and bad dispositions our Lord finds in me—indeed it has at times burnt so deep that the anguish could not be concealed, but by degrees custom reconciles pain itself...I determine dry and hard as my daily bread is, to take it with as good grace as possible. When I carry it before our Lord sometimes he makes me laugh at myself and asks me what other kind I would choose in the Valley of tears than that which himself and all his followers made use of.99

Although Louis Dubourg carried out his promise to Mrs. Seton to ask to resume his former position, when he “saw that Providence had fixed things contrary” to her wishes he wrote sympathetically:

Have patience, be strictly & cheerfully & fairly obedient in action, in heart & judgment & depend upon it. All things will soon wear a different appearance. Our Saviour tries you very surely in your family & in your affections. Shall I pity?
Indeed I dare not, for I am dearly attached to you and I very much hope it is all for your perfection. Oh!! that we could cling to none but God, and equally love him in all things and in all persons!100

Enduring the deprivation of both Babade’s spiritual consolation and Dubourg’s guidance was merely the beginning of Elizabeth Seton’s trials in Emmitsburg. In October, her eldest son William was taken seriously ill, and he was brought from the Mountain to St. Joseph’s. When he grew steadily worse his shroud was made and the last sacraments were administered. To his mother’s intense relief, the lad then made an amazing recovery. But the shroud was used before the year was gone. Harriet Seton, Pierre Babade’s “Magdalena, the child of my heart,” was stricken in the last week of November. On 18 December, she received communion for the last time. For four days thereafter she remained delirious, singing hymns, calling for Babade. Three days before Christmas she died. The shock was overpowering, especially since it was Cecilia Seton who had been the invalid for so many years. No one was prepared for the death of the lovely older sister. Less than a month before, her brother Samuel Waddington Seton had written Harriet, begging her to return as soon as Cecilia’s health permitted. Sam said that if her new religion barred her from the Farquhars, he would gladly take a cottage near town and Harriet could live with him.101 When Elizabeth broke the news to Julia, she added painfully, “So it goes with your friend, tribulation is my element—if only it carries me Home at last, never mind the present.”102

Elizabeth’s friends realized what a loss she suffered in Harriet’s death and consolation poured in from all sides. Dubourg reminded her, “How mercifully our good Lord has treated our Harriet, and what congratulations can be equal to her happiness!”103 David, the new superior, admonished,

Let us adore the unsearchable, but always wise and merciful ways of Providence; and let us more than ever convince ourselves, that Jesus wishes to be the sole possessor of our hearts, to abandon themselves with perfect resignation into His Hands...having no other thought, in troublesome and painful encounters, than to submit lovingly to whatever God will be pleased to ordain.104

Anthony Kohlmann was glad to know that Mrs. Seton was taking her “many trials in the light the saints considered them,” that instead of wavering at the repeated strokes, her courage increased, her confidence strengthened, her love of God grew more and more inflamed.105 Both Cheverus and Carroll were more and more convinced that Elizabeth was marked for special
graces, Cheverus wrote, “I look upon your trials, difficulties, etc., as the stamp of divine favour and protection upon your establishment. Remember St. Teresa [of Avila], St. [Jane] Frances Chantal, etc. Like them, I hope you will become saints and the mothers of many saints.”\textsuperscript{106} John Carroll, who was suffering a personal loss at the same time in the death of his friend, Rev. Francis Beeston, wrote of his dismay on Christmas morning, when the news of Harriet’s death had arrived. He said:

It seems to be the order of Divine Providence to lead you to perfection thro’ the road of sufferings, interior & exterior; and may you always correspond with the graces bestowed on you and walk in the way of the cross with resignation and consequently with much spiritual profit.\textsuperscript{107}

The death of Harriet was followed by a period of continuous illness and sorrow. Anna Maria Seton and Sisters Susan and Martina Quinn were sick with a pulmonary ailment, while Cecilia suffered increasingly from her consumption and was unable to rise without fainting. The house was in reality an infirmary as the new year came in, yet Elizabeth could write:

You must not think our courage fails—Oh no, when the clock struck 12 last night and ended the old year, Annina laying in my arms in a violent ague,\textsuperscript{88} I felt happy, contented, embracing my lot with joy—but this is only the force of grace...\textsuperscript{108}

Only Mary Bayley Post, Elizabeth’s sister who knew her so well, feared the effects of these trials, and wrote, “Knowing that you possess an unusual degree of fortitude does not hide from me the conflicts of mind you endure when your feelings are excited by those who are dear to you.”\textsuperscript{109} Elizabeth’s emotions were to be violently roused as winter waned. In March Cecilia Seton was definitely on the decline and Elizabeth told Eliza Sadler sorrowfully, “Oh Eliza, how many strings draw us up as well as downwards—yet my heart faints when I think of this separation—no one can conceive what she is to me.”\textsuperscript{110} On the advice of Archbishop Carroll and Dr. Chatard, Elizabeth resolved to take Cecilia to Baltimore.\textsuperscript{hh} Accompanied by Anna Maria and Sister Susan, Cecilia and Elizabeth Seton went to Baltimore where they stayed at the home of George Weis near Paca Street, arriving 11 April.\textsuperscript{111} It was a fruitless journey. The week after Easter Cecilia Seton, “innocence and peace itself,” died in Baltimore. Elizabeth and Sister Susan

\textsuperscript{88} Ague is a condition marked by paroxysms of chills, fever, and sweating that recurred at regular intervals or a fit of shivering due to illness.

\textsuperscript{hh} Dr. Pierre Chatard had studied at Paris, Montpellier, and Toulouse before settling in Baltimore. His wife, Marie-Françoise Adelee Buisson, became a firm friend of Mrs. Seton.
started back to Emmitsburg immediately with their sad burden. The death of Cecilia left them almost lightheaded with pain and fatigue, and the two women rode through the dismal rain “as cheerful and gay as two folles.” They could “hardly look at Mr. Clorivièreii with proper gravity” when that young cleric appointed to escort them finally caught up with them at Westminster.\(^{112}\)

It was under this succession of trials that Elizabeth Seton had to adjust herself to the policies of her new superior, John David. Whether David’s attitude toward her was colored by his knowledge of her predilection for Babade and Dubourg, or whether his cold firm method of dealing with women or the new community was simply a matter of principle cannot be determined. But that David intended to rule, and that Mrs. Seton found her superior’s attitude unpleasant cannot be denied. Before the women had even moved from the crowded farmhouse, David issued orders regarding the school to be established, with little concern for the women’s experience and their views. When Elizabeth told Dubourg of her dissatisfaction with David’s pronouncements, the former superior replied:

I have communicated to the Rev. Superior your ideas concerning the school and many reflexions of mine concerning the latitude he should allow you to direct with your own council what is to be done in your house, consulting only when you feel at loss...All things must no doubt be done as gently as possible and if it happens that you are crossed in the best of views, doubt not that it is good for yourself.\(^{113}\)

Dubourg’s sanguine hope that David concurred with him was belied in the letter sent the same day from David to Mrs. Seton. He instructed her, “Take care, Dear Mother, to establish very strict regulations,” and announced, “I have begun to write some regulations for the organization of the school at St. Joseph’s. I will complete them as soon as I can, and after having proposed them to the approbation of my Brothers, I will send them... for your revision.”\(^{114}\)

Elizabeth found Father David’s method of dealing with her community very distressing and by the end of January wrote to her archbishop at length.

St. Joseph’s House is almost ready...now the moment approaches when order must be the foundation of all the good we can hope to do, and as so much depends on the

\(^{a}\) Joseph-Pierre Picot de Limoëlân de Cloriviére (1768-1826), was at St. Mary’s Seminary, Baltimore, from 1808 to 1812. He was ordained in 1812 and served at Charleston and Georgetown Visitation.
Mother of the Community, I beg you to take her first in hand for I must candidly tell you she is all in the wrong—not from discontent with the place I am in since every corner of the world is the same to me if I may but serve our Lord, nor with the intention of our institution for I long to be in the fullest exercise of it—but circumstances have all combined as to create in my mind a confusion and want of confidence in my Superiors which is indescribable...Sincerely I promised you and really I have endeavored to do everything in my power to bend myself to meet the last appointed Superior [David] in every way but after continual reflection on the necessity of absolute conformity with him, and constant prayer to our Lord to help me, yet the heart is closed, and when the pen should freely give him the necessary detail and information he requires, it stops...An unconquerable reluctance and diffidence takes the place of those dispositions which ought to influence every action and with every desire to serve God and these excellent beings who surround me—I remain motionless and inactive. It is for you, my most revered Father, to decide if this is temptation or what it is.115

In reply Carroll admonished her:

Let it be your only concern to progress more and more towards the union of your soul with God, and an entire disengagement from the things of earth. It would be a triumph for heterodoxy and irreligion, and what is of much more consequence, the disappointment of pious and admiring Catholics should anything happen, to shake the stability of your holy establishment...I declare an opinion and belief that its ultimate success under God depends on your sacrificing yourself, notwithstanding all the uneasiness and disgust you may experience, and continuing in your place as Superior.116

The archbishop told her to make every effort to meet Father David who was coming to Emmitsburg soon. This letter contained the first hint of dissension within the sisterhood, a circumstance which could only add to Elizabeth’s unhappiness. Carroll had said, “I will answer our dear Sister Rose [White] and she will receive mine with the more pleasure when handed by [David] whom she deservedly honours so much.”117 Sister Rose, the former Rose Landry White, was ten years younger than Elizabeth Seton,
but like Elizabeth, was a widow. Born in Baltimore on 23 March 1784, Rosetta Landry had married at fourteen a Captain Joseph White, a friend of her father. John Carroll, who had known Rose from childhood, witnessed the marriage vows between herself and Captain White, whom she wed on Valentine’s Day of 1799. When her husband was lost at sea, leaving the young widow with two young children, Mrs. White was given spiritual consolation by Father David, who was then serving in Baltimore. It was David who interested the bereaved woman in charitable work in the city, a work which soon directed her steps toward Emmitsburg. Sister Rose had never joined in the general clamor for Babade, and when David was made superior she was sincerely pleased with the appointment. Her devotion to her former confessor and friend was no less than Elizabeth Seton’s toward hers. In the light of the antipathy which developed between Father David and Mrs. Seton, it is easy to see how faction might arise within the household at St. Joseph’s. It was not long before rumors began to circulate that Sister Rose would replace Mrs. Seton as head of the community.

While Elizabeth was in Baltimore attending the dying Cecilia, her situation was under discussion at the Sulpician seminary on Paca Street. It is quite apparent that this discussion considered replacing her because Elizabeth wrote to Baltimore after her departure, “I shall wait for further directions before announcing to the Sisters the change that is intended in my situation as in Rose’s absence no one else would be willing to take the place of Mother without your immediate order.” Again, when writing to John Carroll, Elizabeth said of Rose, “She was proposed as Mother of this house in my place and everyone in it should prepare themselves for the change (which I was directed myself to inform them by a special letter immediately after my return from Baltimore.)” Whether the archbishop hoped to separate the antagonistic factions or whether David first thought of a division is not clear, but in May Elizabeth wrote to Antonio Filicchi, “Our blessed Bishop intends removing a detachment of us to Baltimore to perform the same duties there. We have here a very good house tho’ a [log] Building, and it will be the Mother House and retreat, in all cases a portion of the Sisterhood will remain in it...” Anna Maria Seton, who had remained in Baltimore after Cecilia’s death, told her mother in June:

The Bishop told me the other day tho as in secrecy (and you will keep it such) that you would probably be down in the fall again, and still more probable not go back. At least he

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8 Margaret Mary Ann, (1801-1804), did not long survive the captain, but Charles White (1803-1839), entered Mount St. Mary’s College, 31 July 1810.

kk Anna Maria stayed with the Robert Barry family. Her friend, Charles DuPavillon, was soon to leave the country and Elizabeth Seton wanted her fifteen year old daughter to have a chance to see him before his departure.
said you would be down before October with a few [sisters],
I hope he means Father [Babade’s] children.122

When Elizabeth read her daughter’s letter, she wrote at once to Carroll stating that “if it should please our Lord to suggest to you any plan of bringing us nearer to you,”123 she had [available funds], $500.00 with John Dubois and $500.00 with Robert Barry, sums she would gladly place in his hands. “Why trouble you with this account—only because I wish you to know whatever concerns us...[so that] you may know how far my means may go. If you think proper to prevent Barry from investing it as he did a little sum of Anna Maria’s which I have no power over, you will tell him to keep it in his own hands.”124

Then in July Sister Rose went to Baltimore “on business.”111 Immediately rumors began to travel to Emmitsburg that she would return as head of the sisterhood. Elizabeth wrote to Carroll to learn if this were true.125 The prelate replied that probably Dubois knew more of the plans of Dubourg and David than he. Neither David nor any of “Mr. Nagot’s council called Directeurs” had informed him of any change. Carroll’s own preference was clearly stated:

Their good sense must and will cause hesitation before they resolve finally to assign to Sister Rose the government of the monastery, and limit you to the school. I once thought that this might be attended with some relief of your present disquietude...but it would be in my opinion a fatal change to the prosperity of the Sisterhood...If therefore it should be again proposed to me, it is my determination to resist the proposal until Mr. David has finished his visitation and made his report.126

Events moved rapidly during the next few months. In July John David came to Emmitsburg with Sister Rose and three new recruits for the community.127 The second week in August saw the arrival of Benedict Flaget from France, with rules and constitutions for consideration.128 In October Jean Cheverus in Boston began his preparations for departure, hoping to reach Baltimore on “the 23, in time to make a retreat” before his consecration as Bishop.129 On 8 November 1810, at a banquet given in honor of the new bishops, Flaget, Cheverus, and Michael Egan, Charles Nagot resigned as superior of the Sulpicians, to be succeeded by Tessier.130 In September, John Carroll had informed Mrs. Seton that Bishop-elect Flaget planned to

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8 This business probably concerned her son, Charles, whom she brought back with her to enter the mountain college for boys. A-6.3a, Mother Rose White’s Journal, CW, 2:728.
9 Ibid. These three recruits were Fanny Jordan, Angela Brady, and Julia Shirk.
take David with him into Kentucky after his consecration, adding, “and of course some change must ensue in the government of St. Joseph’s.”

With the resignation of Nagot and the elevation of Flaget as first Bishop of Bardstown, it began to look as if affairs for Elizabeth might resolve themselves easily. It was with deep joy and newly discovered hope that she welcomed her first meeting with Jean Cheverus when he visited Emmitsburg.

When Elizabeth reported the happy event to Eliza Sadler she described the Bishop of Boston as perhaps less handsome than Mr. Tisserant but quite his equal in “spirit or mind.” Cheverus himself delivered this letter to Mrs. Sadler, who wrote Mrs. Seton that she discovered in Cheverus “his uncommon amiable manners and his being the most chère confrère of our most valued Mr. [John] Tisserant who has the advantage of Bishop Cheverus exteriorly but not in the Spirit of the mind.” Cheverus stopped in New York to administer confirmation in the absence of a successor to Bishop Richard Luke Concanen, O.P. The two friends of over five years of letter writing must have enjoyed several conversations face to face, for two days later Cheverus and Egan came again from Mount St. Mary’s with a note from John Dubois saying he felt sure Cheverus could be persuaded to stay over to officiate on Sunday if the Bishop of Philadelphia would consent to relinquish his claim to Boston’s company. “Exert all your insinuating eloquence,” Dubois humorously advised. “It will have a good effect if it has half the influence which it has on your devoted, etc.” But Cheverus sent his respects and thanks on Saturday, 24 November, and begged never to be forgotten in the prayers of his dear sisters. From the Jesuit mission station at Conewago, Pennsylvania, two days later the Boston prelate wrote his archbishop that he had “visited the holy mountain and have been very much edified.” Elizabeth told Carroll herself of the visit of the Bishops of Boston and Philadelphia, adding, “I need not tell you our consolation in receiving the blessed Bishops, nor how many benedictions they poured upon us—We have been very sensible of this special favor.”

The respite was brief, indeed. Flaget and David made plans not to leave for Kentucky until the following May and the latter showed no disposition to relinquish the reins at St. Joseph’s. Elizabeth learned from a friend who sat next to Father David at a dinner in Baltimore that the Sulpician was openly discussing his plans for the women. He said he had no intention of sending any sisters yet to Kentucky, as he was unacquainted with the country, but that he hoped to establish a community in Baltimore.

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131 The seat of the diocese of Bardstown, Kentucky, moved to Louisville in 1841.
132 The friend was Margaret Cecilia George (1787–1868), the widow of Lucas George (d.1808), who later entered the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph’s 2 February 1812.
“You know who would be Superior,” this friend wrote. “If such a thing does take place it will be merely for the sick alone.”136 When Sister Rose was summoned to Baltimore by David speculation became rife. Rose suffered from distemper that winter and David told Mrs. Seton, “I should have reproached myself had I not in this instance complied with the Doctor’s & Archbishop’s requests. Whatever be the success of our undertakings we must always rest contented when we have followed the advice of those who are to direct us.”137 When weather and lack of proper conveyance kept Rose in Emmitsburg, David became more impatient and sent repeated letters “for her coming at every risk,” and Elizabeth reported to Archbishop Carroll that “from that time on there has been some reserve between us.” She said:

Rose’s virtues are truly valued by me and by us all, but from the time she knew she was proposed as Mother of this house in my place and that everyone in it should prepare themselves for the change, (which I was directed myself to inform them by a special letter immediately after my return from Baltimore), her conduct has undergone an entire change and has been very unfavorable to her happiness and ours.138

Elizabeth was by then convinced that David intended starting a house in Baltimore, leaving the school in Emmitsburg to her, but establishing a charitable enterprise in the city. After Rose reached Baltimore, Elizabeth received a heartening letter from the archbishop in which he said that he had not heard recently “the slightest mention of a proposed change in the government of St. Joseph’s nor of settling our dear Rose here with and at the head of a colony” from Emmitsburg. Rose had not mentioned anything of the kind to him when he saw her recently. Even though he had not directly questioned her on the subject, he had approached the matter obliquely, and felt sure she would have informed him, such was her candor. Carroll said again plainly that any thought of placing Rose at the head of a community would be governed by “good heart rather than the dictates of reason, deliberation, or experience.”

If you should ever be permitted to resign your maternal charge over your community, I would rejoice on your own individual account; but my hope for the continuance of the establishment would be very much weakened...

You have had heavy trials in pursuing the way to perfection, and heavier perhaps still remain; during these, you will never lose sight of the consoling words of Christ, take courage; for I overcome the world.139
Elizabeth said wearily to George Weis, “the Bishop has again committed himself for me. Everything is now in confusion. When and how it will end God only knows. I am always quiet on the subject...but I look to no one but God alone—in a few weeks all will be settled.”

In spite of the fact that David was to leave early in May for Kentucky with Bishop Flaget, he notified the sisters that he would conduct a retreat before he left. This seemed to Elizabeth Seton the last straw. Writing in protest to Carroll she said that this was scarcely the time for a retreat. When the retreat had first been proposed at the time of David’s summer visitation the sisters had been “unhappy.” Now that David was leaving and no new successor was appointed, it seemed futile to discuss the rules with David. She bluntly asked the archbishop to refuse his consent to the retreat at this time. The retreat was not held. At the same time Mrs. Seton wrote David a very spirited letter in which she demanded:

What object can a retreat have at this time except it is to be followed by an immediate application of those rules so long looked for, rules which are to be discussed and presented to the Bishop for his approbation and afterwards to serve as a guide to the Superior providence may assign us—of what use can it be to discuss those rules with any other than the one who is to take your place of Superior as he may on many points think differently from yourself and of course his opinion will subject us to new changes and uncertainty.

Later, when time and spiritual growth had removed her from the exasperation of this period, Simon Bruté wrote on the back of her scratch copy of this letter: “Could you think your poor mother was guilty of such impertinence? O our Jesus, pity the ignorance of such a moment.” But the spring of 1811 found her courage at its lowest ebb, and when David and Flaget started for Kentucky on 12 May 1811, Elizabeth wrote Archbishop Carroll of her discouragement.

Now after two years trial, experience has too well proved how illy [sic] I am qualified to meet the views of the Rev. gentlemen [Sulpicians] who have the government of this house—who require a pliancy of character, I would for some reasons wish to possess, and may eventually be the fruit of Divine Grace, but as yet is far from being attained.

The precise moment of John Dubois’ appointment as David’s successor is not noted in the records of the sisterhood at Emmitsburg. Mrs.
Seton had favored Dubois for some time, writing to Baltimore that, “being on the spot he sees things in a different point of view from those who are distant.” She told Carroll that “Rev. Mr. Dubois in one point has always had my preference as a Superior—he always and invariably has recommended me to refer constantly to you, which is not only in the order of Providence but the only safety I can find for the peace of my mind.”

Toward the end of June Elizabeth told George Weis, “You know there has been a new appointment which will make a new administration—but I am so worn out now that it is almost a matter of indifference how it goes.” This remark scarcely conveys the satisfaction to be expected if Elizabeth knew John Dubois were the “new appointment.” The explanation may be in the letters of John David to Simon Bruté written that summer.

On 18 July 1811, David wrote from Kentucky asking Bruté to tell his “good Philotheas” that their former father hoped they would pray for the work in Kentucky. He commented, “Ah well, the dear Philotheas are gathering more and more around you. How happy I am. Do not doubt that God wishes to use you to lead these brave souls in the ways of perfection.” Since David usually referred to the sisters as “philotheas,” it seems that Bruté was serving them in some capacity. Mrs. Seton in a letter to Carroll some weeks later noted that “Mr. Bruté in the purity of his heart is doing his very best, and much more than it could possibly be supposed so young a man would venture on.” By the middle of September, however, David was lamenting:

The news of the prohibition they have just made of your continuing to be the father of my dear children afflicted me as much as the contrary news had elated me. You might at least have told me the cause for so strange a change. I presume it is because Mr. Dubourg has returned and has consented to take charge. But if they have confidence in you how can they promise him confidence to the same degree?

From this meager evidence it is difficult to do more than suggest that Simon Bruté could have been in charge for two months during the summer of 1811.

Louis Dubourg, who had returned from Martinique early in July, certainly never resumed control, although it is quite true that he maintained a lively interest in the community until his departure for Louisiana.

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99 Philothea is a Greek term meaning “lover of God.” St. Francis de Sales wrote the allegorical character Philothea in his *Introduction to the Devout Life* which was used for spiritual reading by Mother Seton and the Sisters of Charity.
February 1812, he encouraged Margaret Cecilia George, another widow, and Teresa Conroy to enter the community. He recommended that the sisters use the stone farmhouse to quarantine consumptive members. “I may appear over meddlesome,” he apologized, “but what would I appear if I were silent upon what I consider one of the greatest dangers for your institution?” Hoping that no disagreements in the past were remembered, no ill-will harbored against him, he told Elizabeth:

You are too good to set some value upon my friendship. I wish you could know what wounds your apparent suspicion of its sincerity have inflicted on my heart. You have been mistaken, and God has permitted it to try us both. Let his holy will be done. I hope we shall meet in heaven, where no clouds will overshadow our union, no suspicions will distress and harrow our hearts.¹⁵¹

In April, Dubourg sent the struggling community “about 200 images which I thought would be very valuable encouragements for your pupils and some very acceptable to your Sisters.” He wished to be repaid in prayers measured by his needs and not by the value of the gift. He congratulated the women on the approaching feast of St. Joseph’s patronage and added, “I hope the dear Saint will do something for us for having procured him so many dutiful children.”¹⁵²

But John Dubois was the superior of the community after the fall of 1811. Archbishop Carroll’s initial approval of the American modification of the Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity that September clearly refers to a superior residing near the community, and mentions Dubois by name.¹⁵³ The final approval of the Regulations for the Society of Sisters of Charity in the United States of America was given 17 January 1812. Mrs. Seton’s letter to Mrs. Marie-Françoise Chatard in November mentions Dubois’ “double charge at St. Joseph’s.”¹⁵⁴ The chronological table kept by the community shows that the third annual retreat opened 2 February 1812, “by the Superior, Mr. Dubois.” The only thing lacking is the exact date of his accession.

One last word should be added to the subject of these hectic years. Mrs. Seton’s stiffness toward Father David may be partially explained by the fact that during his incumbency she felt under no obligation to obey him. Early in February 1811, she told Catherine Dupleix, “That vow which was binding on my conscience but one year does not exist, as it was no longer necessary, and I am free, and even more free than dear Sad.”¹⁵⁵ Three months later Elizabeth wrote to John Carroll:
It appears, my dear Father, by your letter by Mr. Kenny that you still consider me under religious vows, tho when in Baltimore you assured me that those which have been so inauspicious were no longer binding, and certainly I have made no renewal of them, and I entreat you (for my repose in case of my death before I see you) to relieve me from them if you think any obligation remains.  

The archbishop’s reply was not available but Bruté at a later period wrote of Carroll, “He was extremely attached to her [Mrs. Seton]. He advised her not to take a perpetual vow to her confessor. I have his letter.” Elizabeth obviously was in good conscience in her dealings with Father David. Docility and submission were never easy for her ardent nature. Future occasions would find her hard pressed by the decisions of her superiors; but the one period of what might be misconstrued as flagrant resistance must be viewed in the light of the preceding evidence.

By the fall of 1811 the stormy period was past. The position of Mrs. Seton was firmly established. The coolness between Baltimore and Emmitsburg had vanished. Sister Rose, who left Baltimore for Emmitsburg on 24 May 1811 returned after Father David’s departure for Kentucky, was once more Elizabeth’s most valued assistant. God’s abundant grace provided that the rift was easily healed, for even at the height of the dissension, Elizabeth had said in Sister Rose’s regard, “Our reserve is of the mind, not of the heart; her affectionate kindness to my children binds me by gratitude independent of our spiritual connections.” The community was ready to live by the French rule under the direction of Father John Dubois. From this point on Elizabeth Seton may be truly called “Mother Seton.”
CHAPTER 9. MOTHER SETON

Notes

1 John Dubois to Joseph Carrière, Emmitsburg, 16 February 1815, Archives Mount St. Mary’s University, Emmitsburg, Maryland. Hereinafter cited as AMSMU.

2 Ruthella M. Bibbins, Baltimore, Its History and People (New York, 1919), p. 82.

3 Thomas Scharf, History of Western Maryland (Philadelphia, 1882), II, 929.

4 6.1, Elizabeth Seton to Louis Dubourg, Winchester [Westminster], Friday afternoon, CW, 2:74.

5 Simon Bruté Papers, AMSMU.

6 Scharf, I, 581. This name is given as “Saint Mary’s Mount” as well as Mount St. Mary’s.

7 Simon Bruté sketch, AMSMU. This excellent pen drawing shows the location of the college, the log house, and the chapel.

8 Records of the American Catholic Historical Society, V (1894), 433.


10 Ibid.; See A-6.3a, Mother Rose White’s Journal, CW, 2:723.

11 6.10, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, 8 November 1809, CW, 2:89.

12 6.12, Elizabeth Seton to John Carroll, 14 December 1809, CW, 2:92.


14 A-6.3a, Mother Rose White’s Journal, CW, 2:726.


18 A-6.3a, Mother Rose White’s Journal, CW, 2:727.

19 Jean Cheverus to Simon Bruté, Boston, 14 February 1812, UNDA.

20 Mary Bayley Post to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 14 May 1812, ASJPH 1-3-3-11:16.


22 Anthony Kohlmann to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 7 July 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-2:24.

23 Anthony Kohlmann to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 19 August 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-2:25.

24 Record of Students’ Entrance, AMSMU.

25 Anthony Kohlmann to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 27 September 1809,
ASJPH 1-3-3-2:26.

26 Anthony Kohlmann to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 14 November 1811, ASJPH 1-3-3-2:29. See Rose White’s Journal (1809-1841), entry on Sister Benedicta Corish, 14 January 1814, ASJPH 7-2-1, (32, 41, 58).

27 John F. Moranvillé to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 18 September 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-2:34.


29 Moranvillé-Boyle Letters, 22 April 1811.

30 Ibid., 18 October, no year. See Moranvillé-Boyle Letters, 12 January 1813, AMSV.

31 Chronological Table of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph’s, 27 November 1814, ASJPH 7-13.

32 Louis Dubourg to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, July 1811, ASJPH 1-3-3-2:3. See John M. Tessier’s Journal, AAB, AASMSU.

33 Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, Emmitsburg, 20 January 1815, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:14; Ibid., 24 June 1816, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:15.

34 Louis Dubourg to Simon Bruté, New Orleans, 1 September 1813, UNDA. John M. Tessier’s Journal states that Dubourg left for New Orleans on 18 October 1812. Carroll Letterbook I, John Carroll to Ambrose Maréchal, 12 February 1812, AAB, AASMSU, gives Archbishop Carroll’s reasons for appointing Dubourg to New Orleans.

35 Louis Dubourg to Simon Bruté, New Orleans, 22 July, no year, UNDA.

36 Jean Cheverus to John Carroll, Boston, 16 October 1811, AAB, AASMSU, 2-0-5. See Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, 20 January 1812, AMSV.

37 Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, Emmitsburg, 12 April 1814, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:13.

38 Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, Emmitsburg, 20 January 1815, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:14.


40 5.18, Elizabeth Seton to Philip Filicchi, 8 February 1809, CW, 2:54.

41 Soeur Marie Bizeray, Soeur Marguerite Woirin, et Soeur Augustine Chauvin, Bordeaux, 12 July 1810, ASJPH 1-3-3-2:13.

6.70, Elizabeth Seton to Catherine Dupleix, 4 February 1811, CW, 2:172.
John Carroll to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 11 September 1810, AMSV, I, 17.
6.50, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 20 July 1810, CW, 2:146.
6.70, Elizabeth Seton to Catherine Dupleix, 4 February 1811, CW, 2:172.
6.74, Elizabeth Seton to George Weis, [27 April 1811], CW, 2:181.
6.57, Elizabeth Seton to George Weis, [9 August 1810], CW, 2:155.
6.76, Elizabeth Seton to John Carroll, 13 May 1811, CW, 2:185.
52 Charles Leon Souvay, C.M., “Mother Seton’s Daughters,” a lecture delivered on 31 July 1917. (Privately printed), 16. Souvay stated, “That the idea of the union [with France] came from Father David may be readily admitted.” Mrs. Seton’s letter to Carroll on 13 May 1811, bears out this contention. See also footnote 62.
53 John Carroll to John David, AAB, AASMSU, 8-A-F. This summary is jotted on the bottom of the following letter, John David to John Carroll, 17 September 1814.
54 John Carroll to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 9 November 1809, AMSV, I, 15.
55 John Carroll to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 11 September 1811, AMSV, I, 16.
56 Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, Boston, 4 January 1811, AMSV, I, 2.
57 John Dubois to Antoine Garnier, Emmitsburg, 18 April 1816, AMSMU. Copies from Archives Society of Saint-Sulpice, Paris.
58 Charles L. Souvay, 19. Citing Pierre Coste, C.M., St. Vincent de Paul Correspondance, Entretiens, Documents (Paris, 1923), 9:428-29; 529-532. [“If God is pleased to grant you the grace of being able some day to earn your living, dear Sisters, and to be able to serve villages that are unable to support you, I know of nothing more beautiful. Quoi! by working for others, Sisters will be in a place where they’ll be serving poor persons and educating girls with no contributions whatever, able to do so thanks to the work they themselves have done during their free time! What a favor, Sisters, and what a blessing of God that you who are already in a village or in the parishes, serving
persons who are poor and teaching children, contribute by your work to help others do the same good in the future by bringing your surplus to the Community! If, as we’ve already seen, bees do this by gathering honey from flowers and taking it back to the hive to feed the others, why wouldn’t you, who should be like heavenly bees, do likewise?” #42 “Love of Work,” conference of Vincent de Paul to the Daughters of Charity, 28 November 1649, Marie Poole, D.C., trans., ed., Saint Vincent de Paul Correspondence, Conferences, Documents, 14 vols., (New City Press: New York, 1983-2008), 9:388. Hereafter cited as CCD. “Now, for you to understand this clearly, dear Sisters, you must know the difference between your Company and many others that profess to assist poor persons as you do, but not in the way you usually do. The spirit of the Company consists in giving yourselves to God to love Our Lord and to serve Him corporally and spiritually in the person of the poor in their homes or elsewhere; to instruct poor young women, children, and generally all those whom Divine Providence may send you.” #51 “Spirit of the Company,” Conference of Vincent de Paul to the Daughters of Charity, 9 February 1653, Ibid., 9:465.

59 5.18, Elizabeth Seton to Philip Filicchi, 8 February 1809, CW, 2:54.
60 John Carroll to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 11 September 1811, AMSV, I, 16.
61 John David to John Carroll, Bardstown, 17 September 1814, AAB, AASMSU, 8-A-Fl.
62 Benedict Flaget to Simon Bruté, Bardstown, 17 October 1811, UNDA.
63 Copy of Archbishop Maréchal’s report to Cardinal Litta, Prefect of Propaganda, 16 October 1818, ACUA. See Catholic Historical Review, I, January 1916, 439-53, for the Latin version of the report.
64 The surviving manuscript of these rules is in the handwriting of Sister Cecilia O’Conway but their origin remains obscure. A-6.4a, “Provisional Regulations for St. Joseph’s Sisters” (c. 1809-1810), CW, 2:737. Sister Cecilia was appointed the first secretary of the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph’s. See A-6.3a, Mother Rose White’s Journal, CW, 2:720.
65 12.1, Minutes of the First Council Meeting, CW, 3b:115.
67 6.65, Elizabeth Seton to John Carroll, 5 December 1810, CW, 2:165.
John Carroll to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 11 September 1811, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:45.

A-6.3a, Mother Rose White’s Journal, CW, 2:731. It is not known which sister dissented.

White, 491-2, gives the text of the confirmation. AAB, AASMSU, 11A-G-1, has a copy of the rules of the “Confraternity” of the Sisters of Charity in what appears to be Nagot’s handwriting.

5.26, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 9 May 1809, CW, 2:69.

John M. Tessier’s Journal, 26 April 1809, ASMS.

John Carroll to Charles-François Nagot, Baltimore, 23 September 1809, ASMS. Nagot was very ill in Baltimore in August 1809, after his return from Pigeon Hill. Cf. Tessier’s Journal, 14-16 August 1809.

6.4, Elizabeth Seton to John Carroll, 6 August 1809, CW, 2:77.

6.9, Elizabeth Seton to John Carroll, 2 November 1809, CW, 2:88.

Pierre Babade to Harriet Seton, Baltimore, 17 June 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:72.

Poem composed by Pierre Babade to Harriet Seton, 24 September 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:83.

6.4, Elizabeth Seton to John Carroll, 6 August 1809, CW, 2:77.

Ibid.

Pierre Babade to Elizabeth Seton, Emmitsburg, 20 August 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:63.

Pierre Babade to Harriet Seton, Emmitsburg, 30 August 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:64. Tessier’s Journal records that Babade returned to Baltimore on 6 September 1809.

6.6, Elizabeth Seton to John Carroll, 8 September 1809, CW, 2:81.

Louis Dubourg to Elizabeth Seton, n.p., 29 October 1817, AMSV, I, 54.

Tessier told Babade this. See Pierre Babade to Elizabeth Seton, Emmitsburg, 20 August 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:63. French.

Ibid.

A letter of Charles-François Nagot to Mrs. Seton dated 9 November 1809, refers to a letter of August 1809, in which David’s appointment was discussed, but this August letter has not been preserved. No explanation appears in any archival material for Babade’s failure to be considered as a possible candidate for the role of superior. Nagot’s confidence in David is attested by provisions of his will, drawn up on 29 April 1805, which made David his heir in case of John M. Tessier’s death. See Nagot’s will, ASMS. David was with Flaget in Emmitsburg the last week in August but it is impossible to say whether the subject of superiors was discussed at this time. Cf. Tessier’s Journal, 22, 30 August 1809. For a life of David, see Sister Columba Fox, O.S.B., The Life of the Right Reverend John Baptist Mary David, 1761-1841 (New York, 1925).
88 6.8, Elizabeth Seton to Louis Dubourg, *CW*, 2:86. This is only a fragment of a letter, but the implications suggest that it was written in late August or early September 1809.
89 Louis Dubourg to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 13 September 1809, AMSV, I, 8.
90 John Dubois to Elizabeth Seton, Emmitsburg, 6 October 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-5:16.
91 Pierre Babade, Journal, 11 October 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:65.
92 The sacrament of confirmation was administered 20 October 1809.
94 Ibid., 88.
95 Ibid.
96 John Carroll to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 9 November 1809, AMSV, I, 15.
97 John Dubois to Mrs. Charlotte Melmoth, Emmitsburg, 28 November 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-5:3.
98 Charles F. Nagot to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 9 November 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-2:7.
100 Louis Dubourg to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 15 December 1809, AMSV, I, 9.
101 Samuel Waddington Seton to Harriet Seton, 28 November 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-17:5.
103 Louis Dubourg to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 28 December 1809, AMSV, I, 10.
104 John David to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 28 December 1809, AMSV, I, 23.
105 Anthony Kohlmann to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 17 January 1810, ASJPH 1-3-3-2:27.
106 Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, Boston, 24 January 1810, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:11.
107 John Carroll to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 28 December 1809, AMSV, I, 16.
109 Mary Bayley Post to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 16 March 1810, ASJPH 1-3-3-11:8.
111 A-6.3a, Mother Rose White’s Journal, *CW*, 2:726. See a letter written by Mrs. Seton to George Weis bears the notation, “Dear Cecil arrived in my house April 11,” ASJPH 1-3-3-2:57(2).
113 Louis Dubourg to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 28 December 1809, AMSV, I, 10.
114 John David to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 28 December 1809, AMSV, I, 23.
115 Elizabeth Seton to John Carroll, 25 January 1810, AAB, AASMU, 7-M-7. 6.23, CW, 2:106. The few letters extant of Mrs. Seton to Father David bear out her description. They are characterized by brevity and frigidity. See 6.36, Elizabeth Seton to John David, CW, 2:122; 6.51, Ibid., CW, 2:148; 6.60, Ibid., CW, 2:159.
116 John Carroll to Elizabeth Seton, Emmitsburg, 11 March 1810, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:42. This letter refers to one written the preceding day to Mrs. Seton, but the letter of 10 March 1810 could not be found.
117 Ibid.
118 *Mother Rose White*, (Emmitsburg, Maryland: Daughters of Charity, 1936), ASJPH 7-2-1:2-6. This is one of a series of biographies of superiors of the Emmitsburg community, privately printed for community use. See Record of Students’ Entrance, AASMU.
119 6.34, Elizabeth Seton to John David, n.d., CW, 2:120. This letter is only a fragment beginning “Dear Sir” but internal evidence indicates that it was written immediately after the return from Baltimore, 28-29 April 1810. ASJPH formerly classified it under Nagot, but since Mrs. Seton’s direct superior was John David, and because of the coldness of the salutation and contents, Melville believes it was addressed to David.
120 6.73, Elizabeth Seton to John Carroll, 16 March 1811, CW, 2:179.
122 Anna Maria Seton to Elizabeth Seton, 10 June 1810, ASJPH 1-3-3-9:37.
123 6.47, Elizabeth Seton to John Carroll, 15 June 1810, CW, 2:143. ASJPH has a draft dated June 14 which contains substantially the same material.
124 Ibid.
125 This letter is missing but Carroll’s reply notes its arrival.
126 John Carroll to Elizabeth Seton, 18 July 1810, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:44.
127 A-6.3a, Mother Rose White’s Journal, CW, 2:728.
128 Ibid., 730. “Rev. Mr. Flaget returned from France and brought us the rules, constitutions and conferences of the Daughters of Charity founded by St. Vincent de Paul.”
129 Jean Cheverus to Louis Dubourg, Boston, 2 October 1810, ASMS.
130 John M. Tessier’s Journal, 8 November 1810, ASMS.
131 John Carroll to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 11 September 1810, AMSV, I, 17.
132 6.64, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, 21 November 1810, CW, 2:163.
133 John Dubois to Elizabeth Seton, Emmitsburg, 23 November 1810, ASJPH 1-3-3-5:17.
134 Jean Cheverus to John Carroll, Conewago, 26 November 1810, AAB, AASMSU, 20-L.
135 6.65, Elizabeth Seton to John Carroll, 29 November 1810, CW, 2:165.
136 Mrs. Margaret C. George to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 25 December 1810, ASJPH 1-3-3-2:19.
137 John David to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 23 February 1811, AMSV, I, 24.
138 6.73, Elizabeth Seton to John Carroll, 16 March 1811, CW, 2:179.
139 John Carroll to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, n.d., ASJPH 1-3-3-1:43.
140 6.52, Elizabeth Seton to George Weis, [July 1810], CW, 2:149.
143 Ibid., n.2.
145 Ibid.
146 6.78, Elizabeth Seton to George Weis, 24 June 1811, CW, 2:186.
147 John David to Simon Bruté, Bardstown, 18 July 1811, UNDA.
148 6.82, Elizabeth Seton to John Carroll, 9 August 1811, CW, 2:194.
149 John David to Simon Bruté, Bardstown, 16 September 1811, UNDA. John M. Tessier’s Journal states that Bruté returned to Baltimore on 23 August 1811.
150 John M. Tessier’s Journal, ASMS. Louis Dubourg returned to Baltimore on 6 July 1811; he departed for Louisiana on 18 October 1812.
151 Louis Dubourg to Elizabeth Seton, n.d., ASJPH 1-3-3-2:2.
152 Louis Dubourg to Elizabeth Seton, 7 April 1811, ASJPH 1-3-3-2:4.
153 John Carroll to Elizabeth Seton, Emmitsburg, 11 September 1811, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:45. Copy; Carroll to Seton, Emmitsburg, n.d., Ibid, 43.
154 6.86, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 5 November 1811, CW, 2:198.
155 6.70, Elizabeth Seton to Catherine Dupleix, 4 February 1811, CW, 2:172.
156 6.76, Elizabeth Seton to John Carroll, 13 May 1811, CW, 2:184.
157 Simon Gabriel Bruté, Notes, ASJPH 1-3-3-12:107.
158 Joanna Barry [Mrs. James] to Elizabeth Seton, n.d., ASJPH 1-3-3-2:49.
159 6.73, Elizabeth Seton to John Carroll, 16 March 1811, CW, 2:180.
CHAPTER 10

WARS AND RUMORS OF WAR

While Mother Seton was earning her title of spiritual mother to the religious community, her resources as a physical mother to her five children were just beginning to be tried. Self-effacement and submission to others were the lessons of the controversy over superiors, while her resignation to the will of God would be most tried in the events which ensued.

Anna Maria Seton, the first-born of Elizabeth Seton’s “darlings,” had many claims to her mother’s heart. It was Anna Maria who was most like her mother in the complexity of her personality. Anna Maria had shared the arduous voyage to Italy, and the desolate return; and it was she who most immediately shared the wonders of the new faith. Her very nickname recalled the generous Filicchis, who had called her “Annina.” It was Annina’s budding romance which recalled so poignantly Elizabeth’s own youthful impatience to be with William Magee Seton. It was her maternal yearning to see her daughter happy that prompted Mother Seton to permit the girl to remain in Baltimore after Cecilia Seton’s death, so that Anna Maria might have some last meetings with young DuPavillon before he left for Martinique. After Anna Maria returned to Emmitsburg, her poise and serenity pleased her mother who wrote contentedly to Julia:

We are all all well—Anna as quiet as puss in the corner, keeps her sensibilities all in order—has not [received] letters since I wrote you [but] takes the matter coolly. [She] gathers nuts, dries fruits, and shares in all the amusements of the boarders of the house, and seems to have resigned all to Him who knows best. Yet, her D [DuPavillon] may return when she least expects it.¹

Charles DuPavillon did not return, however; and young Anna Maria had to bear the news that he had made an alliance on the island which was his home.² Although Elizabeth Seton was out of patience with the young man’s conduct, she confessed to Julia, “I am very thankful she is left quietly with me as she seemed to dread the separation had it been ever so small and had long since felt the imprudence of connecting herself so soon, and with so little experience.”³

¹ Charles Du Pavillon was enrolled at St. Mary’s College from 1804 until 1810, according to the college records. Anna Maria met him sometime after her arrival in June of 1808.
After the disappointment of this first romance, Anna Maria Seton drew even closer to her mother. She began to take a great interest in the younger children of the school, helped them to prepare themselves for First Communion, and organized a special group, her “decury,” with little rules and rewards all their own. During the fall of 1811, when Annina was worn out from fever and coughing, when William Seton had intermittent fever, and their mother suffered from an old complaint, Elizabeth wrote to Mme. Chatard in Baltimore, “I never had more tranquility than during these exterior pains—exterior, for my children [are] good, and if they are taken, will go but a little while before and no doubt smooth the way I must follow.” During the leisurely rides on horseback, taken to rebuild Anna’s strength, the mother and daughter shared the pleasure of the view of the Mountain so “very black but the scene below bright and gay,” with the “dear ones skipping” on the still-green meadows with the sheep. But while Elizabeth chatted gaily with Annina, she could not help noticing the burning cheeks, the slender form, the tracking cough. With inner dread she told Julia that, “Anna, my sweet and precious comfort and friend, is undergoing all the symptoms which were so fatal to our Celia and so many of the family.”

When Mary Bayley Post heard of her sister’s suspicions in regard to Annina she was deeply disturbed, fearing that Elizabeth might sink under the repeated trials of all this sickness and death. She asked Elizabeth to send Annina to them for the summer, so that Dr. Post could supervise her recovery. Dué wrote anxiously from New York, too, inquiring for news of the girl who had been so dear to her in days when Mrs. Dupleix was “Aunt Doux” to the little Setons. Elizabeth Seton needed the comfort of these friends; for as winter progressed it was clear that Annina was not going to recover. Elizabeth frantically tried everything that might relieve her daughter’s suffering. She had George Weis send up a stove and a carpet from Baltimore, so that the girl might be moved “down stairs in the room next to our Adored.” When Anna Maria expressed a desire for oysters, the same good man dispatched them.

As Anna Maria Seton’s debility became more pronounced her piety seemed to flourish more noticeably. On 30 January 1812, she received the last sacraments, and the following day she was “consecrated” as a Sister of Charity of St. Joseph’s. It was the gratification of her most fervent wish, and she said happily, “Now it is done, that I may become a Sister and be numbered among the children of blessed St. Vincent.” Hour after hour, when the agonizing pain bathed the fragile body in cold sweat, Anna Maria

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8 Mrs. Seton was suffering at the time from boils under the arms. 6.87, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, 25 November 1811, CW, 2:199.
gasped alternately, “My Mother, My Saviour.” Elizabeth wrote Julia from the bedside in February:

So quiet and so exhausted I know not how soon the moment will come. So, Julia dear, so it is—dear and lovely to be sure is my Darling but much rather would I see her go in her lovely innocence than wait to take my sin and sorrow. She will not allow any of us to shed a tear around her.13

It seemed to Elizabeth Seton that her child was, indeed a saint. “Her precious soul stretching out towards heaven—the singular purity of her life” made the mother regret her own overpowering grief at the impending separation. It was as if the child had become the mother, and in a few months had learned the hard lesson of the years.

When the last change took place and cold sweat, gasping breathing and agonizing pain indicated immediate dissolution, the pain of her eyes [was] so great she could no longer fix them, she said “I can no longer look at you, my dear crucifix, but I enter my agony with my Saviour. I drink the cup with Him. Yes, adorable Lord, your will and yours alone be done—I will it too. I leave my dearest Mother because You will it, my dearest, dearest Mother”—14

It was the mother who in the secret places of her heart cried out:

Eternity always at hand! Oh Amina—I look to the far, so far distant shore, the heaven of heavens—a few days more and Eternity—now then, all resignation, love abandon. Rest in him—the heart in sweet bitterness Amour, anéantisement, abandon. A A A.15

Try as she would, Elizabeth could not repress the tears toward the end as she rubbed those “cold, cold feet.” Annina asked wonderingly, “Can it be for Me, should you not rejoice—it will be but a moment and reunited for Eternity!” Mrs. Seton said later, “Eternity was Anna’s darling word.”16

Mother Rose’s journal recounts the death of Anna Maria Seton in this manner:

She made her vows on her death bed and expired like an angel in the arms of one of the Sisters who was supporting her. Her last movement was to raise her eyes to Heaven and clasp her hands which remained clasped, that we may say she died in prayer. Our dear Mother who was kneeling by
the bed made her offering and retired before the Blessed Sacrament, giving directions that her hands should not be unclasped, which was attended to...so that we laid her out with her hands in the position she had placed them before her death...she died on the 12th of March 1812.17

Friday, at one o’clock, Mother Seton “left her Darling in the woods with Harriet and Cecilia,” and entered a valley of shadows from which she feared, at times, she might never emerge. Jean Cheverus wrote from Boston, “I bless the God of infinite mercy who has granted her to die the death of the Saints and has endowed her dear Mother with the Faith and courage of the Mother of the Macabees.”18 But Elizabeth Seton and her spiritual director knew how severe was the drain upon that faith and courage. From the depths of her desolation she cried:

Our Jesus! Compassionate—Thou so merciful, best, only powerful—Thee alone—I can do nothing but earnestly pray—Jesus, beloved Master—my Jesus—have pity, give at least full grace for the moment. Pity a Mother, a poor Mother, that she may persevere with you in the garden, or nailed to the cross, given up perfectly resigned in her long agony.19

She turned to her old friends in her anguish, reliving in her letters to Julia, to Sad, to Dué, the last months of Anna’s life. She pushed back the icy wave which threatened to engulf her by repeating the phrases of wonder and praise.

The remembrance of my lovely one now forces itself in every moment—her singular modesty and grace of action, the lifting her eyes from the ground to cast the rays of her very soul into mine, which was often her only expression of her desires or wishes. Now I am so happy to think I never contradicted any of them—her rational and pure sentiments set down in so many ways—the neatness and order of all her little affairs, and ingenious way of uniting economy and elegance in her plain and simple dress. This was always a delight to poor Mother but now an admiration and it appears to me I never saw, or shall see, anything to be compared to her—poor, poor, Mother let her talk to you, Eliza—20

To her sister, Mary, Elizabeth sent some of Annina’s little exercises along with a flower from the grave, and she was comforted by Mary’s words, “She is gone to a soil more suited to her celestial and aspiring qualities. She
is gone to bloom in a world congenial to her pure and refined nature.”

Eliza Sadler, in her customary pointed fashion, had replied to the news, “Are you not a favored instrument in the hands of the all wise to raise a family for heaven? I do not tell you my heart bleeds for you—I sometimes feel as if I should rather say rejoice with you.” But rejoicing was not to be easily achieved.

John Dubois, Mrs. Seton’s director, had seen the possibilities for temptation in her adulation of her daughter, yet when he tried to suggest the danger to Elizabeth she withdrew, as if unable to cope with such distinctions. Dubois wrote to Bruté, who had been present in those last hours of Anna Maria Seton’s life, asking him to continue to write to St. Joseph’s. “You do good,” Dubois told him, and as for Mother Seton:

I fear the terrible trial she has had in the death of Annina may have been to arrest or repress the too great pleasure she took in exalting her, too much fear that she would do or say something too human when there was someone in the room...A hundred times I have wished to probe this wound. It is only recently I have dared to touch it.

Dubois, a very humble man, continued with the words:

God grant that you may someday know this soul. What character! But like gold brocade, rich and heavy, how hard to handle. For many years she was flattered too much. As for my part, poor fellow, what can I do? I can say no more; the double role I play here imposes silence. Try to open a heart such as this one—one talks of the surface, the tinsel, one fears to reveal the essential. As a result, you can only judge by appearances and beat around the bush. I have been tempted a hundred times to give up this charge. What a soul it would take, it needs a saint of the first caliber—St. Francis de Sales—and I am only an ugly little wretch. Try to have her examine with you humility, obedience, detachment from everything, renouncing self-esteem, the love of order, uniformity, the rule, in a word, the religious life.

The previous deaths which had deprived Mother Seton of loved ones had found her spirit ready and capable of sustaining the loss. She had

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1 Bruté himself later wrote of this period, “Mother then much tried, as if, she said, she had taken too much complacency and joy in the holy dispositions of that blessed child.” *Mother Seton* (Emmitsburg, Maryland: Daughters of Charity, 1884), 105.
expressed it nicely to Julia in 1810 after Harriet Seton’s death and just prior to the death of Cecilia Seton in April when she explained:

We part—nature groans—for me it is an anguish that threatens dissolution, not in convulsive sighs but the soul is aghast, petrified, after ten minutes it returns to its usual motion and all goes on as if nothing had happened. This same effect has followed the death of all so dear. Why, Faith lifts the staggering soul on one side, Hope supports it on the other, experience says it must be—and love says let it be—^25

But now this easy resignation did not come. Flesh of her flesh, bone of her bone, the first-born child lay in the grave. Mrs. Seton confessed to George Weis that “for three months after Nina was taken I was so often expecting to lose my senses and my head was so disordered that unless for the daily duties always before me I did not know much of what I did or what I left undone.”^26 To Eliza Sadler, Elizabeth wrote six months after Annina’s death, “in truth the separation from my Angel has left so new and deep an impression on my mind that if I was not obliged to live in these dear ones, I should unconsciously die in her.” Resignation was growing, however, as the next words testified, “unconsciously, for never by a free act of the mind would I ever regret his Will.”^27

The struggle resumed in full force when autumn came. Mother Seton described her anguish at her daughter’s grave in these words:

Begging, crying to Mary to behold her Son and plead for us, and to Jesus to behold his Mother—to pity a mother—a poor, poor Mother—so uncertain of reunion—then the Soul quieted even by the desolation of the falling leaves around began to cry out from Eternity to Eternity thou art God—all shall perish and pass away—but Thou remainest forever. Then the thought of Our Dearest stretched on the cross and His last words coming powerfully, stood up with hands and eyes lifted to the pure heavens crying out “forgive they know not what they do.” Did she? adored, did she know?—and all the death-bed scene appeared—at this moment in the silence of all around, a rattling sound rushing towards—along Annina’s grave a snake stretched itself on the dried grass—so large and ugly, and the little gate tied—but Nature was able to drag to the place and strong enough to tie and untie, saying inwardly, my darling shall not be rooted by the hogs for you—then put up the bar and softly walked away—Oh,
my dear ones [are] companions of worms and reptiles!—and
the beautiful Soul Where?28

The fall brought respite, nevertheless, in the form of several healing
distractions. Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté returned to Emmitsburg to become
Dubois’ assistant.3 Bruté, whose relation to Mother Seton will be the subject
of a subsequent chapter, was admirably suited to the task of spiritual direction
of this complex soul. In September, too, Sister Maria Murphy Burke became
mortally ill and called constantly upon Elizabeth for support. Fearing “the
Enemy” would find her too weak, Sister Maria relied upon her spiritual
mother’s assistance, and Mother Seton found reserves of courage which
she had feared destroyed by Anna’s death. Her zeal for souls overpowered
all else and for six weeks she proved a constant ally. “What delight,” she
recorded, “for poor Mother to have been and to be still her Mother—the
natural one was present but the spiritual one who had all her dear little
Secrets of the Soul was the dearest and so more and more united in parting
that it has been hardly possible to escape from her for the last six weeks.”29
Elizabeth found that her work was still far from complete and that Annina’s
“dear Eternity” must wait.

Physical as well as spiritual problems of the community demanded
discriminating attention from Mother Seton and the superior, Father John
Dubois. Chief among the former was the matter of expanding the work of the
Sisters of Charity into other regions. Almost as soon as Bishop Flaget and
his colleague, Rev. John David, reached Kentucky David wrote to Bruté:

We are determined to form a society of virtuous women for
the education of young people of their sex. I believed, when
I was in Baltimore, that the Sisters of Charity would not be
suitable to this work, rather the Ursulines. But since we are
on the spot it is evident that cloistered Sisters would not suit
as well as Sisters of Charity as regards small pupils.30

David went on to request Bruté, who was then at St. Mary’s
Seminary in Baltimore, to secure a copy of the rules of the Sisters of Charity
from the copy in the possession of the archbishop. Father Bruté may have
misunderstood David’s request, for the latter wrote rather assertively in
November:

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28 A note by Simon Bruté says “I was sent to assist Mr. Dubois 28 September 1812,” ASJPH 1-3-3-12:108.
29 Margaret Carey Murphy Burke, Sister Maria’s natural mother, who worked at Mount St. Mary’s, had originally
opposed her daughter’s entering the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph’s. Daniel Nusbaum, “This Venerable
House, Part I: The Beginnings,” Analecta: Selected Studies in the History of Mount St. Mary’s College and
Seminary, I, no. 3 (2000), 8.
You tell me, my dear brother, that I have asked for Daughters of Charity. I assure you I do not recall making this request, for I have never thought of it. I have asked you to make me a copy of the rules...from which I could trace those of our Sisters; that is all. I repeat this request. Perhaps Mr. Nagot who has recovered his facility in writing could render me this service...31

Whether Brute’s failure to comply with David’s demands was solely responsible or not, a year went by before the Kentucky community made any start. David told Bruté in September 1812, “We hope to begin our community of daughters this fall,” and he added that Bishop Flaget would be able to explain more fully on his forthcoming visit to the east.32 Eventually, busy Bruté copied the constitution of the American Sisters of Charity and sent it to Kentucky. David replied on 12 July 1813, that his own community was at last under way. He had “united six girls in a log house on our plantation a half-mile from the Seminary. Thank you very much for the trouble you took to copy the constitutions,” he said graciously. “You could give me great pleasure by copying also the rules; they are very necessary to us.”33

One can only guess what difficulties faced the frontier priest in his efforts to found a community, but by September 1813, he had changed his position in regard to sisters from Emmitsburg, and had asked Mother Seton’s community for the assistant, Rose White. Writing to Bruté on 7 September, David complained:

I am very annoyed that they could not give me Rose [White]; she is perfectly suited to this important work. If Sister Kitty [Mullan] had enough health she would do very well for my purpose. Fanny [Jordan] is the one I need for instruction. But I see that after having given me a choice, they refuse the ones I ask for.34

The council records at Emmitsburg of this period are minimal so that only David’s version of this request and refusal is available.3 It is rather apparent, however, that Kentucky was still without the desired rules, for David’s letter to Bruté continued petulantly, “We suffer also from a lack of rules. I have given them the provisional ones resembling those of St. Joseph’s as far as memory serves me. If they would but send me the order of exercises—but they seem to take little interest in an establishment so far

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3 Council Minutes of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph’s are missing after August 1809 until August 14, 1812.
Bishop Flaget added his voice to the demand, saying “Hasten to have sent us the rules requested for so long a time.”

The first record of relations with Kentucky to be found at Emmitsburg is an entry in the Council Book for 2 April 1814, which reads, “Rt. Rev. John David of Kentucky in accordance with Rt. Rev. Dr. Flaget proposed a union of an Establishment in their Diocese with ours and requiring some alterations.” The council record then set down three questions which such a union posed: was such a union compatible with the Emmitsburg rules; could the bishop of the diocese cause alterations in these rules; and would the novitiate necessarily be located at Emmitsburg. The council of St. Joseph’s appears to have been very liberal in its attitude toward these first three proposals, agreeing that such an establishment was possible, but not at Emmitsburg’s expense; that the bishop could make such alterations as the constitution allowed; and that the novitiate need not be required at Emmitsburg, but that the Kentucky sisters “should be disposed, in case the Council of the Motherhouse required it,” to come to the motherhouse for the novitiate.

John David was not content, however, with the three stipulations the council minutes record. Writing to Bruté that same April he said he had told both Mr. Dubois and Sister Kitty that although he would “consent to have my house depend on St. Joseph’s,” he could not consent to have the superior take the name of sister servant “in a country where the name is synonymous with slave.” He continued in a somewhat dictatorial vein; “I demand also that we form all novices for Kentucky here, and finally that the Superior of the community be named by the bishop, as well as the confessors, ordinary and extraordinary.”

The complete lack of archival evidence that might indicate whether David ever consulted Mother Seton on these issues casts some reflection upon the tact of the Kentucky priest. His own letters, and those of Dubois, to Baltimore leave no doubt as to the arbitrary tone David chose to adopt. Even though St. Joseph’s was quite willing to send one of their number to serve as superior to the Kentucky group, they insisted upon their right to pass upon the qualifications of candidates aspiring to become one of the Sisters of Charity. When this issue came before the council in August, that body voted unanimously “No” to any union with Kentucky on such terms, and the council records thereafter do not refer to Kentucky again. A possible clue to Mother Seton’s attitude during the Kentucky affair is found in a letter to her from Pierre Babade, 19 October 1814, in which the priest said, “You are right, my dear daughter, to tell me, and repeat that you are more wicked
than I can conceive. The foundation of this jealousy and antipathy for your Superior is truly the old Adam. What consoles me is that the new Adam prevails and that you do your duty.” It is difficult to imagine that “Superior” refers to Dubois; it is easier to believe that Babade meant “former Superior” and referred to David. However, this is only a speculation and cannot be used to make a conclusive statement.40

But the proposals for union did not cease, and the debate continued in Baltimore. Dubois wrote to Archbishop Carroll on 10 October 1814, presenting the Emmitsburg version of the controversy. He commented that, respecting Sister Fanny’s appointment for Kentucky, “it is a business which can be referred to the Council of Sisters when the time is come to decide upon it.”8 He approached the matter from a constitutional point of view. Probably no one in Mother Seton’s lifetime better understood the spirit of this constitution than John Dubois, the man who had developed the American version for these Sisters of Charity modeled on the Paris-based community. He pointed out that changes in this constitution could be effected only with the consent of the archbishop, the superior of the seminary at Baltimore, and Dubois himself. He showed that St. Vincent’s regulations allowed for only one motherhouse. In France, where the rules had originated, separate novitiates were not granted to Daughters of Charity even as far distant as Poland at that time. There, no sister could be admitted to her vows without special consent from the central council of the motherhouse, to which six months notice must be given pending an investigation of the candidate’s qualifications. Dubois applied the analogy to St. Joseph’s and Kentucky. “In case we should be informed from Europe, after free communications are established, that even in Poland they are obliged to send Sisters to the Motherhouse...then no more should Sisters be bred there [in Kentucky].”41

Dubois sent these same arguments to his fellow Sulpician in Kentucky, but Father David refused to accept the Paris-Poland analogy. He demanded, instead, an immediate final answer from Dubois. Dubois wrote again to Carroll on 27 October, repeating the necessity for a decision from both the archbishop and Tessier before the constitution could be amended. Dubois in this letter introduced another complicating factor involved in a union with Kentucky. The new community, he pointed out, was supported only by Bishop Flaget’s financial contributions and David’s zeal. If either should fail, St. Joseph’s would be left financially responsible for sisters

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8 The three Sisters who seem to have been David’s choice from St. Joseph’s were Sisters Rose White, Catherine (Kitty) Mullen, and Fanny Jordan. Sister Rose was sent to Philadelphia in September 1814, to take over the orphanage there; Sister Kitty was ill and died on 25 December 1814. Thus by the fall of 1814, David’s choice devolved upon Fanny Jordan.
whose qualifications they had not been allowed to judge. Surely, Dubois urged, “Our precautions cannot appear unreasonable.”

Meanwhile, David had presented his own case to Baltimore in phrases more courtly, but undeniably insistent that the title “sister servant” be abolished, and the Kentucky novitiate be allowed. The archbishop replied that he was delayed by his consideration of Dubois’s “lengthy reasons” on the other side, but found no cause to disapprove David’s two stipulations. Carroll said he did feel that “it should be a matter of agreement between the house of St. Joseph and your establishment how far should extend the intercommunity of property.”

When the archbishop’s attitude became known Dubois dispatched Bruté to Baltimore to deliver a letter which contained Dubois’ most masterly defense of the rule of St. Vincent de Paul as contained in the constitution of the Daughters of Charity. Seven full pages in length, this letter defined for the archbishop the spirit which inspired the constitution. It reviewed the entire case for St. Joseph’s, and again pointed out why David’s desire to remodel the rules according to his personal wishes was not compatible with the concept of the rules the original community maintained. Time and again he adverted to French custom and precedent in the application of the rule. Before the month had passed, Dubois wrote the blunt, decisive pronouncement:

The constitution of the Sisters cannot be modified according to the various opinions of each Bishop. Each of them is at liberty to approve or disapprove of our constitutions for his diocese. If he does not approve of them he can establish another community according to his own ideas. The Sisters of Charity owe them obedience only in what is not contrary to their constitutions once approved.

The proposed union with Kentucky never materialized. The community at Nazareth was the work of Bishop Flaget and John David, and although its rules were based upon the Emmitsburg rule, a modification of those of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac, it was never connected in any administrative way with the first Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph’s in the United States.

While the scheme for expansion toward the southwest was proving abortive, Philadelphia to the north was eager to accept the sisters exactly as they were. As early as 1809, according to one source, Rev. Michael Hurley, O.S.A., the pastor of St. Augustine’s Parish, is supposed to have requested Sisters of Charity for his city. There is also a tradition that after Bishop Egan’s visit to the Valley in 1810, with Jean Cheverus, the Philadelphia
prelate favored the importation of Mother Seton’s daughters. However that may be, on 1 August 1814, the managers of St. Joseph’s orphanage in Philadelphia unanimously “agreed that Rev. Mr. Hurley apply to the Sisters of Charity at Emmitsburg for a matron and two assistant Sisters,” offering $600.00 a year for their services.\textsuperscript{48}

On 14 August 1814, it was decided to send Sisters Rose White, Susan Clossy, and Teresa Conroy in answer to this request.\textsuperscript{49} On 29 September 1814, the first leaven from the motherhouse went forth to Philadelphia. The journey was made overland, and Father Dubois accompanied the three women as far as Taneytown, giving “lessons of economy all the way.” In her journal Sister Rose explained why the travelers went by land instead of sea. “As it was not safe to go by the packets\textsuperscript{h} as the English were still in the Bay, a private carriage was hired, and Sisters went by way of Little York and Lancaster, with directions to beg hospitality on the way...”\textsuperscript{50}

Mother Seton wrote to Julia Scott in Philadelphia:

My Julia, there is one of the sweetest souls gone to Philadelphia from this house, who has lived [in] my very heart and been more than an own sister to me ever since I have been here. She even slept always behind my curtain and has nursed Cecil, Harriet, Anna, William and Rebecca through all her [sic, their] sufferings with inconceivable tenderness. She has the care of the poor orphans belonging to our church with our good Sister Rose White who has the little institution in her care. If you have ever a wish to find a piece of myself it will be in this dear Susan Clossy who is one of her assistants. If you ever see them, love them for me, for they love me most tenderly as I justly do them.\textsuperscript{51}

The three sisters took formal charge of the Philadelphia orphanage on 6 October 1814. Their first endeavors were particularly encouraged by two admirers of Mother Seton from earlier years, Father Michael Hurley and the convert, Mrs. Rachel Montgomery. Sister Rose found the latter who was president of the newly-founded “Lady Managers” of the orphanage, a “kind benefactress and the true Mother of Charity.” Rachel Montgomery worked tirelessly to assist these sisters whose foundation she had hailed so enthusiastically in 1809.\textsuperscript{52} It was Mrs. Montgomery’s society of ladies who paid the traveling expenses of the sisters to Philadelphia, paid their salaries, and furnished their shoes. Mother Seton was deeply pleased at the welcome

\textsuperscript{h} Packets are passenger boats which also usually carry mail and cargo.

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her daughters received and she reported happily to Archbishop Carroll in November:

We have heard again of our excellent Rose [White] by Mrs. Carroll who is much delighted with her and the little establishment. She is full of courage as usual but I believe her greatest difficulty is to resist the abundant kindness poured upon them.53

While Elizabeth Seton was preoccupied with grief and community affairs, the world outside the Valley was concerned with economic distress and war. The Philadelphia venture was begun in perilous times. The war in Europe had interested the Church in the United States as well as the government in Washington. In December 1809, Louis Dubourg had said to Mother Seton, “Above all pray for the church who never was in a more melancholy and frightful crisis than at the present time.”54 On 30 December, he reported that it was believed Pius VII had “died as a martyr to his confinement in the Island of St. Margareta near the coast of Provence.” He asked:

What would you think of making a Novena to the Sacred Heart for the necessities of the Church, and associating to it as many pious souls of your neighbourhood as could be mustered? Propose the idea to your spiritual Father. The Pope in his hasty passage thro’ France, where tho a prisoner he was as much honoured by the people and probably more fervently than if he had been on a throne, was heard to say: Orate & Nolite timere: Pray and fear not. Docile to his fatherly call, I wish all those who love the Church should unite to address to our Lord [with] a concert of fervent prayers.55

Elizabeth had relayed the news to a New York friend with the words, “It is said that Pope Pius VII has gained the palm of martyrdom & probably there is now no pope, or if there is it is a relation of Bonaparte.”56 A year later, however, John David wrote to Emmitsburg that the Pope was still alive, even though the Society of St. Sulpice was “still on foot” in France and “Mr. Emery does not act as Superior.”57 Elizabeth was greatly impressed

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1 Possibly Henrietta (Harrietta) Chew Carroll (1775-1861), wife of Charles Carroll, Jr., the grandson of Charles Carroll of Carrolltown. Mrs. Carroll is listed as a benefactor of St. Joseph’s Asylum, Philadelphia. See Sr. Rose White to Rev. Louis DeBarth, 8 October 1815, published in Records of the American Catholic Historical Society XI, No. 3 (September 1900), 352.

2 Jacques André Emery was the eighth superior general of the Society of St. Sulpice in Paris. In May 1810, Napoleon ordered the Minister of Public Worship to dissolve the Society of St. Sulpice. Emery, at the age of seventy-eight, was compelled to leave the seminary and Sulpician motherhouse.
by the sufferings of Pius VII, and his prayer of submission to the will of God became her favorite prayer for the rest of her life. The prayer was: "May the most just, the most high and the most amiable will of God be in all things fulfilled, praised and exalted above all forever."

Meanwhile, the precarious balance which had existed between the governments of the United States and Great Britain when Mother Seton came to Emmitsburg was daily growing more delicate. When Bishop Cheverus congratulated Archbishop Carroll on having been invested with the pallium in 1811, he had found it "not a little remarkable that the British minister should have been the bearer of it." Augustus John Foster, who had come as British minister plenipotentiary in August, was one of a succession of ministers who failed to produce a peaceful adjustment of British disputes with the United States. He, like David M. Erskine and Francis J. Jackson before him, went home. By June the United States Congress was ready for a war message. Even before the declaration of war on 18 June 1812, President James Madison had asked for 10,000 troops and Governor Robert Bowie of Maryland had, in turn, asked his general assembly to make the appropriations necessary for Maryland’s quota. In Baltimore the guns on Fort McHenry were mounted, and the city became a seething cauldron of conflicting patriotism and pacifism. When the Federal Republican published an ill-advised editorial attacking the war efforts, a riotous mob drove the publishers from the city and, when the editors tried to re-establish themselves in Baltimore an actual massacre resulted, lasting for two days, 27-28 July 1812. The city became notorious over the nation for its violence and disorder. Eliza Sadler, who was then in Wilmingt, Delaware, returned to New York without daring to proceed to Emmitsburg.

Baltimore very quickly became the chief port from which privateers went out to prey upon the enemy. These small craft, bearing such names as *Falcon*, *Globe*, *Rossie*, and *Nonsuch*, totaled as high as fifty-eight, the largest number listed from any port during the war. The British declared the ports and harbors of the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays blockaded on 26 December 1812, and from that time on the shores of Maryland were constantly harassed by expeditions from Admiral George Cockburn’s fleet. When this fleet threatened Baltimore in April of the following year, the Niles’ Register gloomily predicted, “If the squadron remains six months as near Baltimore as it now is, many of the inhabitants, and particularly the poor, will have to seek refuge in the country.” By this time even the

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1 This prayer was: “May the most just, the most high and the most amiable will of God be in all things fulfilled, praised and exalted above all forever.”

1 Augustus John Foster had served previously as secretary to the British legation at Naples. Archbishop Carroll received the pallium on 18 August 1811.

m The Niles’ Register: founded by Hezekiah Niles in 1811, was also known as The Weekly Register and Niles’ National Register. The publication was noted for the reliability of its content about both the United States and the world.
“back country” was beginning to feel the press of war and when the state legislature asked for $16,000,000 that year, Frederick County was second only to Baltimore in her contribution.

The economic effects of the war were felt in many ways by those dear to Elizabeth. Archbishop Carroll’s hope of holding a provincial council was vetoed by Cheverus of Boston, who wrote that in the distracted state of the country a council was scarcely feasible. There had been no news from the Holy Father. Further, in his own diocese the poor had no employment and his purse was empty. The good man wrote, “I am more Parish priest than Bishop,” and had concluded that he seriously doubted “the propriety of holding our assembly at this time and particularly of holding it in your city,” Helen Bayley wrote from New York that her fiancé, Sam Craig, was already gone to South America to try his luck there, to earn enough to marry. Richard Bayley had left the city, too, despairing of ever making a living as a merchant. He had bought a place in the country, near his father-in-law. Richard and Helen Bayley were the half brother and half sister of Mother Seton. Richard Bayley married Catherine White on 26 October 1812.

One friend of Mother Seton was not diverted from her plans by the war. Catherine Dupleix, Elizabeth’s dear Dué, made the long trip to Emmitsburg in September 1813, to visit her friend in the Valley, Mrs. Dupleix had become a Catholic in the fall of 1812. It is not clear just when she became seriously interested in Catholicism, but she had told Mother Seton on 30 December 1811, “I am still what I was when I left you, between both ways, I know you will pray for me when I desire it, which I now do.” The following October, Mrs. Sadler wrote a letter which seems to indicate that Mrs. Dupleix was then a Catholic. In January 1813, Rev. Anthony Kohlmann, the pastor of St. Peter’s, informed Mother Seton that Captain Dupleix had just returned from Lisbon and he feared Mrs. Dupleix might suffer from her husband’s objections. Kohlmann was confident, he said, that “Our Lord has prepared this great soul by imparting to her a confidence and intrepidity, at which she herself was amazed.” He praised the convert as “a mother to a Widow and orphan, and her lively faith goeth a pace with her charity.” It is not improbable that Dué, like Elizabeth before her, did suffer for her change in faith, for Mary Post told Elizabeth that summer that Dué seemed “very unhappy at present” and was anxious to visit Emmitsburg.

When Elizabeth Seton got word that Dué really planned to come she wrote excitedly to Sad:

* The Provincial Councils of Baltimore were councils of Roman Catholic bishops in the United States of America which contributed to the development of ecclesiastical legislation, organization, and administration of the Church in the new republic.
The very possibility of seeing Dué is like a foretaste of heaven to me. If she is only delayed by fear of not finding entrance in St. Joseph’s House, tell her the front door, the back, the side door which will lead her to the chapel, and all the windows up and down, will open at her approach.\textsuperscript{68}

And so Dué came to the Valley and visited her dearest friend in the fall of 1813. Mother Seton’s joy at seeing once again this now doubly-dear friend was overwhelming. That very night she sent off a hasty note to Sad “to say Dué dear is behind my curtain with the children...Could you see my heart in the silence of this moment while she rests—no—you can guess a little and only a little...You shall know at least that this happy Tuesday night 28\textsuperscript{th} she is safe and surrounded by love and tenderness...”\textsuperscript{69}

Catherine Dupleix found Elizabeth living in a very lively household. Based on a report prepared by Simon Bruté for the Archbishop in 1813 there were eighteen sisters, thirty-two paying boarders, seven “pensioners,” and two servants living in the White House.\textsuperscript{o} During the summer months twenty day students also came from the surrounding countryside, although only two or three attended classes in the winter. The “pensioners”\textsuperscript{p} were the daughters of Mother Seton, a protégé of Father Moranvillé, two young Burke children, and two “grandes”\textsuperscript{q} who taught in the school.\textsuperscript{70} Only the preceding July the sisters and Mother Seton had made their vows for the first time as Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph’s under the rule of St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac which had been modified for America.\textsuperscript{71}

Dué visited the community at a time when the most glowing reports could be carried back to New York. The following spring when Eliza Sadler was apologizing for not having written to Elizabeth, she said that since Dué’s return, “I find so much satisfaction in her account of the many comforts of your situation that there seemed little left for me to ask or to wish, except the repeated assurance of health.”\textsuperscript{72} St. Joseph’s seemed like an island of serenity in a national sea tossed by fear and war.

Events in Europe in 1814 were more cheering than those at home. Cheverus wrote on 18 March:

\textsuperscript{a} The Bruté report takes no cognizance of the deaths of Anna Maria Seton and Maria Burke in 1812 and so lists the sisters as nineteen and the pensioners as eight.

\textsuperscript{b} A pensioner was a non-paying boarder.

\textsuperscript{c} “Les grandes” were Mme. Madeleine Guérin and Mrs. Bridget Farrell, both of whom became Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph’s at a later date.

\textsuperscript{d} This simple act, took place 19 July 1813, on the feast of St. Vincent de Paul in the little chapel of St. Joseph’s House. The vows of the Daughters of Charity are private and made again annually on the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which usually is celebrated 25 March.
We are in this town very gloomy and very poor. Our only comfort is to forget home and look abroad. We smile with hope and feel some joy in beholding the wonderful and happy events which have taken place in Europe.73

Father Pierre Babade in Baltimore voiced sanguine hopes that commerce would soon be resumed with Europe and that once more letters could be exchanged with the Filicchis.74 And July saw the reappearance of Filicchi notices in the Boston Gazette.75 The defeat of Napoleon in March, followed by his abdication on 7 April, was second only in Archbishop Carroll’s mind to “the Intelligence received here yesterday of the delivery [of] our Holy Father the Pope from his imprisonment at Fontainebleau,⁸ and departure for Rome. If this should be confirmed, our prayers for our captive Pontiff will be exchanged for a Te Deum.”76 So it was that Mother Seton’s first letter in four years to Antonio Filicchi began with the words, “The glad and happy news of the Restoration of Our Holy Father...”77

The fall of Napoleon, however, left England temporarily free to enlarge her forces in America and new attacks were immediately envisaged against Canada, Louisiana, and Baltimore. Admiral John B. Warren was reported to have said in 1814, “Baltimore is a doomed town.”78 After the disasters of Bladensburg, Maryland, and Washington, D.C., in August, Baltimore prepared for the worst. In September it came. On 11 September, enemy vessels were seen off North Point twelve miles away. The following day, on Monday, a detachment under General Robert Ross was landed. In spite of the death of Ross in the combat, the advance on the city continued, and on 13 September the now celebrated firing upon Fort McHenry took place. The city resisted more valiantly than had the neighboring capital, and re-enforcements poured in from the country towns. Emmitsburg men and students from Mount St. Mary’s co-operated, and one biographer of Father Bruté says he “addressed the volunteers in sentiments of true patriotism...He himself became so anxious that he walked to Baltimore to render ministerial services, if needed.”79 On 19 September 1814, Major General Samuel Smith was free to issue his general order of congratulation to the city for its heroic resistance.80 But it was several weeks before a sense of security pervaded the city. Babade wrote on 19 October, “Today they are saying a very large English fleet has returned to the Bay and already is very near. God knows what will happen.” Father Moranvillé was greatly overworked tending the wounded and wished for Sisters of Charity.8¹ News of the peace negotiations

¹ Pope Pius VII had been made a prisoner by Napoleon at Grenoble, Savona, and Fontainebleau successively. When the Allies entered Paris in March the Pope was returned to Rome amid general rejoicing.
which had started as early as August did not cross the Atlantic for some time, and a feeling of suspense hung over the whole state.

Although the siege of Baltimore was miles away from St. Joseph’s, the progress of the war in 1814 brought it close to Mother Seton in the person of her son, William. In March Elizabeth told Julia Scott:

William seems rather inclined to follow the drum. Young Brent, one of his fellow students and some other of his companions, left the Seminary for a commission. If it was not for the boundless love for Mother and Rebecca and Kitty he would probably be off—poor child—he doesn’t know for what endless regret perhaps—however, I must try soon to get him some employment as he is already in his 18th year.82

Writing to Eliza Sadler about the same time, Mother Seton made similar comments on “Young Carroll” who had “gone out in the suit of Mr. Clay” and William’s chagrin at his own situation.83 She wondered if sending him to New York might be the solution.

Sometimes I have thought of asking dear Craig* to take the four hundred dollars a year Filicchi allows for them [her sons] and fix him in some respectable counting house, but Craig has already had so much trouble with our family and William is not determined in his wish to be a merchant.84

When Eliza Sadler read this letter, and another one by Elizabeth addressed to Helen Bayley, she tried immediately to discourage any thought of reviving New York connections. “You have little in New York to make your thoughts rest there,” she said plainly. “Of the name of Seton there is not one.” As for Craig, he had done no business for three years; his brother Sam was still trying to make his fortune far from New York. The letter to Helen made Sad apprehensive, sincerely fearing her friend would reopen old wounds. In her direct fashion she wrote:

Did you not try to bring back former times, to dwell on them and for a time lose the present in the past? I feel as if you had succeeded but too well. Can you forgive me this freedom—or conceive it possible for me to think so? Yet, honestly, I must

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1 Henry Clay was one of the best-known leaders of the “War Hawks.” After the Battle of Leipzig, 16-19 October 1813, Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh offered to enter upon direct peace negotiations with the United States at either London or Gottenburg. Clay was named, with John Q. Adams, James A. Bayard, Jonathan Russell and Albert Gallatin, to serve as a commissioner, and he sailed that fall for Sweden. Clay refused to negotiate at London and it was not until 8 August 1814, that the peace commission was ready to proceed at Ghent, where the treaty was finally drawn.

* William Craig had married Emma Bayley, Mother Seton’s oldest half-sister. He had been kind to Mrs. Seton before her departure from New York.
confess that if my mind had not been previously satisfied that you possessed every real comfort this life affords the perusal of that letter would have made me see the banishment that circumstances and chances alone had forced you to live in. No one else would feel this perhaps. I look upon your situation as exalted. I like to look upon it as so.85

Sad suggested, as an alternative, turning to the Filicchis, and trying to interest them in William’s plight. Once again Mother Seton’s friends in religion would fill the breach New York could not. She wrote to Leghorn, and while waiting for a reply she confided in Archbishop Carroll as well. Borrowing a phrase from Father Matignon, Mother Seton said:

Your paternal heart has not forgotten William I am sure, but we cannot hasten the moments of Providence. He is 18 this very month and I do not know how he can be sheltered from being called out, which he wishes much to avoid—poor, poor child—he will never know his mother’s heart.86

William Seton did not know his mother’s heart; but Elizabeth Seton tried her best to read his. She suspected that her own hopes for a mercantile career for her son were not his. He seemed to lean toward a career in the Navy. Mother Seton was torn between a desire to keep him safe and her yearning to have his every wish gratified. One may imagine the misgivings with which she enlisted Carroll’s intercession in behalf of an appointment for William, or the mingled emotions with which she relayed to her impatient son the prelate’s words:

Truly since the misfortunes of the city of Washington and the deplorable condition to which the ignorance and perception of our leaders has brought our national affairs, I see little prospect of Wm. profiting by any appointment he may obtain—Yet, every attention will be paid.87

Meanwhile the good offices of Mr. Daniel Brent of Washington had been sought, and Elizabeth wrote Julia in December that William’s “berth in the Navy” had really been applied for, and that he was now at the Mountain “anxiously desiring to be off.”88 Before the naval commission could be secured, an alternative appeared, to Mother Seton’s great joy. Her valued friend, Simon Bruté, was making plans to return to France and he offered to take William Seton with him and set him on his way to Italy. Mother Seton wrote at once to Antonio Filicchi, asking him to consider William as if he were a son. She spoke of her fears for William’s faith if he were to join the

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8 Daniel Brent was Archbishop Carroll’s nephew. He was a clerk in the Department of State.
army or navy. “No kind of business can be done here in the distracted state of the country,” she explained. Until affairs with the British took a turn for the better it was futile to try to place her son in a Catholic counting house in Baltimore. If Antonio would consent to receive her son, Father Bruté would escort him to France. Mother Seton wrote to Carroll, telling him of her plan and said she hoped Anna’s insurance money would be available to defray part of William’s expenses.

Unknown to the community at Emmitsburg, the terms of the peace treaty were drawn up by the commissioners at Ghent, but because this news had not reached the United States, and because spirits had sunk so low, the President set aside 12 January 1815, as a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer. It was amid this gloom and uncertainty that Mother Seton saw her son set out from Emmitsburg for Baltimore, accompanied by the Sulpician priest. When Bruté and young Seton reached Baltimore, all was confusion and delay. William went to Dr. Pierre Chatard’s home to stay until passage from the city could be secured. While he waited, William, who was not at all anxious to leave his native land, tried to secure a place with Luke Tiernan, one of Baltimore’s leading business men. When Elizabeth got this news her hopes rose swiftly that William might not need to go so far from home, and she wrote earnestly:

Let me see it as it is, not considering me but yourself—If you should be received by Mr. Tiernan, surely it would only be to try if you could engage your mind in the career pointed out to you, and you would conduct yourself there as you have always done, with attention and good will to everyone. However, as I know that in such houses, order and exactness are of the greatest necessity, I point them out to you as of first importance.

She was trying so hard to see all sides, William’s personal preferences, Tiernan’s requirements, and the urgent necessity of her own heart. John Dubois preferred the trip to Leghorn; Richard Seton wished his brother would stay in America. Elizabeth concluded with the words, “You have my full consent and blessing for a decision either way. Nature would plead much for your stay, but our God knows best and that is the only wish I indulge.” The delay in Baltimore was most trying to them all. Up until 16 February 1815, Mother Seton was still addressing letters to Baltimore and sympathizing with her son over the painful detention. “How we long for the first letter which will tell us you are engaged in some business with our Filicchis, or which ever way the Patriarch provider will point out,” she wrote.
News of the peace treaty finally reached Emmitsburg, and when Mother Seton heard the rumor she was elated, but she warned her son against excesses of emotion.

You have enjoyed the gazettes so much I know. I cast my eye on General [Andrew] Jackson’s name and read it with pleasure knowing you had read the same more than for the events of the day, for my dear one, your poor mother looks only at souls. I see neither American nor English, but souls redeemed, and lost—but you must—your case is quite different—love your country—and yet also all countries, my William—see things as they are. Passions and excesses you will find everywhere.95

Two days later the peace treaty was ratified. The news of the treaty and the victory of Andrew Jackson at New Orleans were received with “every demonstration of joy” at Baltimore. Mary Post wrote of the celebration in New York:

We have had illuminations, fireworks, and all demonstrations of joy at the return of peace ... Our new State House which is a very beautiful building and said by people of judgement to be the equal, if not superior, to any in Europe was superbly illuminated. The construction of the building is particularly favorable for lighting to advantage and putting up many and appropriate pictures as transparencies. The cupola was covered with variegated lamps and moving lights placed in different situations gave it the effect of enchantment.96

Mary said, now that peace had come, why did William not come to New York to live with them and try to get a place in Abraham Ogden’s counting house? Mary’s own son Lionel was there and she could have Dr. Post speak for William. But Mother Seton and William were now determined upon the European trip. The mother gave her son letters for friends in New York, for Eliza Sadler and John Wilkes.97 To her son she gave her final advice. Simon Bruté was so impressed with these instructions that he made a copy and it is this copy which is preserved at Emmitsburg. Elizabeth Seton omitted nothing. She recommended gratitude to Mr. Bruté, “as our true friend,” filial devotion to the Filicchis, caution with strangers, strict economy in everything. “I beg you so much,” she wrote, “not to give way to national prejudices, but to allow for many customs and manners you will see. Why should not others have their peculiarities as well as we have ours?”98
Then she poured out her heart to him on the subject that worried her most.

My William—and be not, my dear one, so unhappy as to break willfully any command of our God, or to omit your prayers on any account—Unite them always to the only merits of our Jesus and the maternal prayers of our Mother and His. With them you will always find your own poor, poor mother. You cannot even guess the incessant cry of my soul to them for you. Don’t say [that] Mother has the rest to comfort her. No, no, my William, from the first moment I received you in my arms and to my breast you have been consecrated to God by me and I have never ceased to beg Him to take you from this world rather than you should offend Him or dishonor your dear soul; and as you know my stroke of death would be to know that you have quitted that path of virtue which alone can reunite us forever. Separations, everything else I can bear—but that never—your mother’s heart must break if that blow falls on it. Think much of your tender loving Josephine and Rebecca, of Richard’s [wanting to] set out and the future consequences of your example to him.99

From that moment until she died, Mother Seton’s greatest concern was this fear for William’s soul. Her son seemed unable to give her the reassurance she craved. He had a certain stiffness and restraint that prevented him from impressing people as favorably as other Setons had done. When Eliza Sadler met him in New York that year before he sailed she commented, “William has an exterior so grave that one might be induced to think it not natural at his age and think him under some restraint.”100 Bruté, who had known the young man for three years at Mount Saint Mary’s, wrote of William Seton:

A true English and American mien [sic, mind] and character. Good and estimable indeed in many excellencies, but too narrowed by the national [prejudices] and gentleman[ly] selfish[ness] to be raised to great exertions. Could succeed in any study but will have emulation for none and will have rather a life for the other common occupations of the town or country than any pursuit of the liberal arts and professions. I do not even suppose he will engage far in political concerns.101
Elizabeth Seton did not deceive herself as to her sons’ talents. She readily admitted that they were “not brilliant.”102 But she expected and prayed that they might excel in honor and virtue. It was with gratitude and relief that she relinquished her older son to Bruté’s care. Knowing that William would be welcomed in France by Father Bruté’s family and friends, she told Eliza Sadler happily, “God is too too good to me. If you knew the friend who takes charge of him. Dué may tell you. I feel as secure as old good Tobias was.”103 Bishop Cheverus shared Mother Seton’s sentiments, writing to Bruté, “Dear William is lucky to have a friend and protector such as you.”104

On 27 March 1815, Simon Bruté and William Seton left Baltimore for New York. Robert Barry, who handled Mother Seton’s private financial affairs, wrote that he had paid Bruté $700 for William’s expenses before they left.9 He was glad William was on his way to Leghorn. “Although you may have no relish for the world,” he said approvingly, “it is no reason that you should deprive your children of the opportunity of availing themselves of the chances of its lottery.”105 Julia Scott’s gift of $100 was used “to settle the unavoidable expense of his narrow little outfit,” and William was all ready to leave by the 6th of April.106 On the eve of his departure William wrote from New York, “Tomorrow we sail in the Tontine for Bordeaux.” He spoke of his gratitude to the Posts who had provided him with “shirts, cravats, handkerchiefs and all kinds of underclothing.” Uncle Post had even insisted that the young man have a coat and “pantaloons” from the tailor. The Sadlers, Craigs, and Murrays had entertained him royally, and William was leaving New York with warm recollections.107

Mother Seton followed the voyagers’ progress with intense interest. She had scarcely received the news of their departure when one Sunday at the Mountain John Dubois came “running out of the little cell down the hill, without hat, calling “Mother, Mother” with news that Napoleon had escaped from Elba.108 Mother Seton wrote to her son, “Many think the Tontine will return if you should meet the last accounts half way. For me I can but look up and dare not even wish, knowing so little what is best.”109 Before this letter was even mailed she had received news of their arrival in Bordeaux, and Elizabeth relayed the news to Julia that William “is now between Bordeaux which is besieged and Italy which is in a state of insurrection.”110 It was the 100 Days of Napoleon, and Elizabeth’s great concern now became William’s

* Four hundred of this money was the yearly allowance drawn upon John Murray in New York from the Filicchi account. The remainder may have been the insurance money Mother Seton mentioned in her letter to Carroll.
escape from death. But William went safely from Bordeaux to Marseilles, and the next report to Philadelphia notified Mrs. Scott that William

Wrote in the full expression of his heart’s content; says he is quite safe through all the rough scenes around him under his American cockade and Eagle which he is obliged to wear—the most dangerous voyage, both sides of the vessel staved in, cargo thrown over.111

While in Marseilles, young Seton had been befriended by a family named Preudhomme de Borre. Mr. Preudhomme de Borre was “a very respectable old gentleman” who, with his family, had crossed in the Tontine with William and Father Bruté. From Marseilles William wrote his mother, “I lodge with him at the house of his sister, Madame de St. Cesaire, who treats me as the son of her brother.”112 On 15 June, C. Preudhomme de Borre wrote to Father Bruté in Bordeaux that William was already on his way to Italy, not by vessel as had been planned, but by land. The American consul had advised against a Sardinian ship as unsafe, and so William had departed on 14 June, for Nice, from which place he would proceed to Genoa, and finally to Leghorn. Preudhomme told Bruté that a Mr. Parangue, who had known William Magee Seton in New York, had given himself as much trouble over the younger William as if he had been his own son.113 By 17 July, Simon Bruté had it from William’s own hand that he was safe at Leghorn.114 By the end of that month Elizabeth, too, knew her son had arrived at his destination.115

Her worry now became a doubt as to William’s reception by the Filicchis. No reply had yet been received to the letters she had written in 1814, and Elizabeth had expected that once he was in France, William would wait for word of assent from Antonio or Philip before proceeding to Italy. No one could have foreseen the conditions that made necessary the young man’s hurrying out of France. Elizabeth wrote William, “Not that I doubt a moment of every Kindness yet your going might have been ill-timed and inconvenient.”116 To Antonio Filicchi she dispatched a hasty letter of pleading apology for William’s precipitate arrival, saying that her only wish was that his kindness should not be abused. “Scold me if you are angry (but gently) and tell me if anything can be done in any way to alter what I could so little foresee.”117 Writing at the same time to Philip, Mother Seton explained that Carroll, Cheverus, and Dubois had all advised her sending

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1 Archbishop Carroll wrote Mother Seton that two letters from Bruté had arrived with news that on 23 May Bruté had “committed William, in perfect health, to the care of a most respectable family traveling to Marseilles, from which place he could easily reach Leghorn.” John Carroll to Elizabeth Seton, 12 May 1815, AMSV, I,21.

2 Symbols of the United States of America.
William to Leghorn, but “to abuse and take advantage of your goodness to us was far from my intention.”\textsuperscript{118} She explained to the elder Filicchi her fears for William’s faith, and her strong wish to have him live for a time in a Catholic country where he might see Catholics and the Catholic religion “as they are instead of the shadows he sees here.” To Philip, Elizabeth added honestly that her William was a cold, reserved personality. “If only he can master his bad pride I believe all the rest would be secure.”\textsuperscript{119}

When Jean Cheverus learned from Mother Seton her fears he reproached her for doubting the Filicchis for a moment; and soon a letter came from Philip bearing out the bishop’s opinion. Philip wrote, gently chiding her for having “sent your son without previous leave,” but explaining that if William were willing and capable, he should have an excellent chance to improve.\textsuperscript{120} Young Seton was placed in the home of one of the Filicchi clerks to board and he seemed quite pleased with his situation. Antonio Filicchi was at the baths in Lucca when William arrived and her failure to hear from him continued to worry Elizabeth. She wrote a second letter of apology to the younger brother, begging him to send just a few lines. “I am so afraid now that William should forfeit your protection that I think it almost a temptation,” she confessed. “Our God knows the struggles I have had about it.”\textsuperscript{121}

Gradually Mother Seton’s qualms vanished. When Simon Bruté returned from France in November he reported direct word from the Filicchi brothers that William was showing a “favorable disposition to make progress.”\textsuperscript{122} Louis Dubourg, her first superior, was in Rome that September and he had informed Bruté at Bordeaux:

I have seen William Seton in Leghorn. Mrs. Filicchi seemed very much attached to him, and well pleased with his behavior. He also appeared very well to me. We chatted just a moment (for I enjoyed him but half an hour) of his dear Mother, Sisters, Mr. Dubois and yourself.\textsuperscript{123}

The final “treasure of consolation” came with the arrival of Antonio’s long-awaited letter, written on 8 August 1814, but long in coming. Elizabeth sent her immediate and happy reply:

I cannot hide from our God, though from everyone else I must conceal the perpetual tears and affections of boundless gratitude which overflow my heart when I think of him [William] secure in his \textit{Faith} and your protection. Why I love him so much, I cannot account, but own to you, my
Antonio, all my weakness ...[I try to] purify it as much as I can, and our God knows it is their souls I look at.¹²⁴

During the two years William Seton stayed in Leghorn Mother Seton felt secure in the bounty and good example of these excellent Filicchis. She and the sisters never ceased to pray for these “tenderest friends and benefactors.” And to the Filicchis and their American friends it really seemed “a fine bill of exchange.”¹²⁵
CHAPTER 10. WARS AND RUMORS OF WAR

Notes


2 6.80, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, CW, 2:191.

3 Ibid.

4 [Sister Loyola Law, D.C., ed.] Simon Bruté in His Connection with the Community (privately printed, Daughters of Charity: Emmitsburg, 1886), 38. Original letter is Simon Bruté to Elizabeth Seton, 5 July 1812, ASJPH 1-3-3-12:15, (1-4).

5 6.86, Elizabeth Seton to Marie-Françoise Chatard, 5 November 1811, CW, 2:198.

6 6.14, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 27 December 1809, CW, 2:95.

7 6.89, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 2 December 1811, CW, 2:201.

8 Mary Bayley Post to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 8 December 1811, ASJPH 1-3-3-11:12.

9 Catherine Dupleix to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 30 December 1811, ASJPH 1-3-3-11:35.


11 A-6.99a, Elizabeth Seton’s Journal of Anna Maria Seton’s Last Illness and Date, CW, 2:749. Printed in Robert Seton Memoirs, II, 123-134, with some omissions and minor changes.

12 Ibid.

13 6.98, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 18 February 1812, CW, 2:211.


15 10.1 St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi Notebook, CW, 3a:432.


17 A-6.3a, Mother Rose White’s Journal, CW, 2:732.

18 Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, 26 February 1812, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:12.

19 10.1 St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi Notebook, CW, 3a:433.

20 6.104, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, 3 May 1812, CW, 2:216.

21 Mary Bayley Post to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 4 June 1812, ASJPH 1-3-3-11:17.

22 Eliza Sadler to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 17 April 1812, ASJPH 1-3-3-11:B13.

23 John Dubois to Simon Bruté, Emmitsburg, 7 May 1812, AMSMU.
24 Ibid.
25 6.30, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 26 March 1810, CW, 2:117.
26 6.114, Mother (Emmitsburg, 1884), Elizabeth Seton to George Weis, 30 July 1812, CW, 2:224.
27 6.116, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, 14 September 1812, CW, 2:227.
30 John David to Simon Bruté, St. Thomas Seminary, 6 July [1811], UNDA.
31 John David to Simon Bruté, St. Thomas Seminary, 3 November 1811, UNDA.
32 John David to Simon Bruté, St. Thomas Seminary, 8 September 1812, UNDA.
33 John David to Simon Bruté, St. Thomas Seminary, 12 July 1813, UNDA.
34 John David to Simon Bruté, St. Thomas Seminary, 7 September 1813, UNDA.
35 Ibid.
36 Benedict Flaget to Simon Bruté, Bardstown, 21 September 1813, UNDA.
37 Council Minutes, Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph’s, 2 April 1814, ASJPH 3-3-5.
38 Ibid.
39 John David to Simon Bruté, St. Thomas Seminary, 21 April 1814, UNDA.
40 Council Minutes, Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph’s, 18 August 1814, ASJPH 3-3-5. See Pierre Babade to Elizabeth Seton, Emmitsburg, 19 October 1814, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:70.
41 John Dubois to John Carroll, Emmitsburg, 10 October 1814, AAB, AASMSU, 3-F-14.
42 John Dubois to John Carroll, Emmitsburg, 27 October 1814, AAB, AASMSU, 3-F-15.
43 John David to John Carroll, St. Thomas Seminary, 27 October 1814, AAB, AASMSU, 8AF-1.
44 Ibid. A brief of Carroll’s reply is jotted down on the letter he received from David. The full letter as sent to David has not come to light.
45 John Dubois to John Carroll, Emmitsburg, 5 December 1814, AAB, AASMSU, U3-F-16.
46 John Dubois to John Carroll, Emmitsburg, 27 December 1814, AAB, AASMSU, 3-F-17.
Centennial of St. Joseph’s Orphan Asylum, 1814-1914, p. II. This memorial pamphlet has no date or place of publication. ASJPH records give the date of 1 August 1814 for the agreement, when the Managers of the Roman Catholic Society of St. Joseph for Education and Maintaining Poor Orphan Children, Philadelphia, and the Sisters of Charity, through Rev. Mr. Hurley, that two Sisters be sent to run orphanage, ASJPH 7-10-2, #9.

Application of managers of “Roman Catholic Society for Education and Maintaining Poor Orphan Children,” 1 August 1814, ASJPH 7-10-2, #9.

Missions—Establishments Formed Prior to the Union with France, ASJPH 11-0, 3. This is a handwritten record of early missions made by sisters from St. Joseph’s Emmitsburg, in the first half of the nineteenth century.

A-6.3a, Mother Rose White’s Journal, CW, 2:732.

6.175, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 1 December 1814, CW, 2:287.

Rachel M. Montgomery to Elizabeth Seton, Philadelphia, 19 June 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-4:73. See A-6.3a, Mother Rose’s Journal records the early days at Philadelphia, CW, 2:732-737.

6.172, Elizabeth Seton to John Carroll, 8 November 1814, CW, 2:283-284.

Louis Dubourg to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 28 December 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-2:6. Copy. The original is in AMSV.

55 Louis Dubourg to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 30 December 1809, ASJPH 1-3-3-2:7. Copy. The original is in AMSV.


Jean Cheverus to John Carroll, Boston, 3 October 1811, AAB, AASMSU, 2-0-4. See Peter Guilday, Life and Times of John Carroll (New York, 1922), II, 804.

Thomas Scharf, History of Maryland (Baltimore, 1879) III, 1-5. Maryland Historical Magazine, V (June, 1910), 191.

6.115, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, 2 August 1812, CW, 2:225.

Niles Register, IV, 87, cited in Scharf, III, 37.

Jean Cheverus to John Carroll, Boston, 31 August 1812, AAB, AASMSU, 2-0-8. Other letters opposing the council were written by Jean Cheverus 30 December 1812, and 5 January 1813. See AAB, AASMSU, 2-0-10.

63 Helen Bayley to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 4 February 1814, ASJPH 1-3-3-11:38.
64 Catherine Dupleix to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 30 December 1811, ASJPH 1-3-3-11:35.
65 Eliza Sadler to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 29 October 1812, ASJPH 1-3-3-11:14.
66 Anthony Kohlmann to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 17 January 1813, ASJPH 1-3-3-2:31.
67 Mary Bayley Post to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 16 July [1813], ASJPH 1-3-3-11:18.
68 6.139, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, 28 [September] [1813], CW, 2:252.
69 6.141, Elizabeth Seton to Eliza Sadler, 28 [September] [1813], CW, 2:254.
70 Report prepared by Simon Bruté for Ambrose Maréchal, December 1813, Section XXIV, AMSMU.
71 Chronological Table of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph’s, ASJPH 7-13.
72 Eliza Sadler to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 6 April 1814, ASJPH 1-3-3-11:15.
73 Jean Cheverus to John Carroll, Boston, 18 March 1814, AAB, AASMSU, 2-P-1.
74 Pierre Babade to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 28 March 1814, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:69.
75 Jean Cheverus to Elizabeth Seton, Emmitsburg, 20 January 1815, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:14.
76 John Carroll to Elizabeth Seton, 11 September 1811, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:45; Ibid., Baltimore, 29 March 1814, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:53b.
77 6.167, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, 1 July 1814, CW, 2:276.
78 Scharf, III, 99.
79 Sister Salesia Godecker, O.S.B., Simon Bruté de Remur (St. Meinrad’s, 1931), 69.
80 Scharf, III, 123.
81 Pierre Babade to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 19 October 1814, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:70.
82 6.152, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 14 March 1814, CW, 2:263. William M. Seton was born on 25 November 1796.
84 Ibid.
85 Eliza Sadler to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 6 April 1814, ASJPH 1-3-3-11:B15.
86 6.172, Elizabeth Seton to John Carroll, 8 November 1814, CW, 2:283.
Francis Matignon had said, “We cannot hasten the moments of Providence” in his letter of 29 November 1806, when advising Mrs. Seton about her removal from New York. See Francis Matignon to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 25 November 1806, ASJPH 1-3-3-1:37.

6.173, Elizabeth Seton to William Seton, 28 November 1814, CW, 2:284. This letter contains the direct quotation from Carroll’s letter, clearly marked. The original letter from Carroll has not been located.

88 6.175, Elizabeth Ann Seton to Julia Scott, 1 December 1814, CW, 2:286.
89 6.177, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, 20 December 1814, CW, 2:289.
90 Ibid.
91 6.178, Elizabeth Seton to John Carroll, 28 December 1814, CW, 2:291.
93 Ibid., 303.
95 Ibid.
96 Mary Bayley Post to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 7 March [1815], ASJPH 1-3-3-11:19.
99 Ibid., 298
100 Eliza Sadler to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 16 April 1815, ASJPH 1-3-3-11:B16.
101 Simon Bruté’s estimates of character of his students. “William Seton,” AMSMU.
102 6.121, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 29 October 1812, CW, 2:233.
104 Jean Cheverus to Simon Bruté, Boston, 17 March 1815, UNDA.
105 Robert Barry to Elizabeth Seton, Baltimore, 27 March 1815, ASJPH 1-3-3-4:52.
106 6.191, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 30 March 1815, CW, 2:308-309. De Barberey-Code’s Elizabeth Seton gives the date of departure as 27 April 1815. White’s biography gives 6 April 1815. The latter is undoubtedly correct since Eliza Sadler’s letter of 16 April 1815, describes the departure as having taken place some days earlier. See Eliza Sadler to Elizabeth Seton, New York, 16 April 1815, ASJPH 1-3-3-11:B16. A letter of Mrs. Seton a year later seems to fix the date as being 7 April 1815. This letter says “a year ago Sunday” William left; and Sunday in this case was 7 April 1816. William’s
letter dated 5 April 1815, states, “Tomorrow we sail in the Tontine for Bordeaux.”

William Seton to Elizabeth Seton, Boston, 5 April 1815, AMP #339-341.

6.192, Elizabeth Seton to William Seton, 10 May 1815, CW, 2:310.
6.201, Elizabeth Seton to Julia Scott, 14 August 1815, CW, 2:340.

William Seton to Elizabeth Seton, Marseilles, 14 June 1815, ASJPH 26-0-1, (2). Copy. The original is in AMSJ.

C. Preudhomme de Borre to Simon Bruté, Marseilles, 17 July 1815, UNDA II-1-a.

Simon Bruté to Elizabeth Seton, Rennes, 17 July 1815, UNDA.

Ibid., CW, 2:335.

6.197, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, 29 July 1815, CW, 2:333.
6.196, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, 29 July 1815, CW, 2:332.
Ibid., 333.

Philip Filicchi to Elizabeth Seton, Leghorn, 12 August 1815, ASJPH 1-3-3-10:44.


Philip and Anthony Filicchi to Simon Bruté, Leghorn, 6 September 1815, ASJPH 1-3-3-10:45.

Louis Dubourg to Simon Bruté, Rome, 15 September 1815, UNDA. Dubourg was the newly-created Bishop of Louisiana and the Floridas.

6.214, Elizabeth Seton to Antonio Filicchi, 20 November 1815, CW, 2:356.

Ibid., 357.