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Vincentian Seminaries in Louisiana, 2

BY
JOHN E. RYBOLT, C.M.

Introduction

Part One of this study discussed the history of the Ecclesiastical Seminary of Saint Vincent of Paul, Assumption parish, on Bayou LaFourche. This second part treats of two seminaries in New Orleans, both located in the same building situated next to Saint Stephen’s Church. A period of thirty-three years separated the two. The earlier was Saint Vincent’s Theological Seminary, (1859-1867); its successor was the Saint Louis Diocesan Seminary of New Orleans (1900-1907).

II. The Civil War Seminary (1858-1867)
Saint Vincent’s Theological Seminary,
Bouligny/Jefferson City, New Orleans, Louisiana

Introduction

The state of Louisiana prospered in its antebellum period, suffered through the war between the states and then gradually recovered. In the same way, Vincentian theological education in Louisiana began to prosper, suffered during the war and its aftermath, and then recovered somewhat in the following decades. The seminary at Bayou LaFourche had begun to prosper when a fire destroyed it entirely. Even amid the doubts that would color its entire history, its successor seminary in Bouligny (later called Jefferson City and now part of New Orleans) continued the apostolate of the Vincentian Community for the Church. The aftermath of the war, however, put a definitive end to the seminary.

The Seminary Burns

The turning point in the continuing life of the Ecclesiastical Seminary of Saint Vincent of Paul was the fire of the night of 27 and 28
February 1855. As hinted in the letter dated 28 February, cited in the previous study, one of the immediate issues facing the superior was the placement of his twelve students and their professors.¹ Seven sites recommended themselves: three within the archdiocese (Donaldsonville, Bouligny, New Orleans) and four elsewhere (Saint Mary's of the Barrens, Cincinnati, Mobile, Natchitoches).

First, within the diocese of New Orleans, the Vincentians had had a house at Donaldsonville from 1838. Occasionally, as mentioned previously, faculty members from the LaFourche seminary had considered moving the seminary there.

Second, the Community also had the parish of Saint Stephen, which it founded in 1849, located in Bouligny, then a suburb of New Orleans. At least one surviving letter recommends Bouligny for a new seminary. This location would have the added advantage of being a place to give retreats to priests, besides offering a seminary program.²

Third, the rector, Antoine Andrieu, suggested placing the students and professors in Archbishop Antoine Blanc's home in New Orleans.³ The archbishop, then in France, would probably not have objected to this emergency measure.

Outside the diocese other seminaries were also available. The fourth location was the Barrens, principally a minor seminary. The council of the Vincentian superior general recommended this site.⁴ At the same time, Etienne Rousselon, the vicar general of New Orleans, also asked about sending his seminarians there. In a frank and revealing letter dated 6 April 1855, John Lynch, C.M., the superior at Saint Mary's of the Barrens, agreed to accept students from New Orleans. Nevertheless, Lynch expressed several misgivings. "Send your seminarians whenever you like. I should advise you, nevertheless, that we do not have many places at present, since our house is nearly full." The superior went on to say that life was simple (they used no wine

¹The Catholic Directory for 1856 notes: "There are 12 theological students." No other students are mentioned as living elsewhere. The same notice does not mention the fire, only that "This Seminary is to be rebuilt and reorganized during this year" (p. 160).
²Gandolfo to Étienne, from Bouligny, 24 June 1857, Archives of the General Curia of the Congregation of the Mission, Rome, (hereinafter cited as AGCCM) microfilm reel 2, no. 139.
at table, for example), the climate difficult, and the rule harsh. As a result the vicar general would probably lose some discontented students. Curiously, despite the rigors, Lynch noted that several of the American diocesan students had become either Vincentians or Jesuits.5

Fifth was Cincinnati, where, as mentioned previously, Archbishop Blanc chose to send at least some of his students. The archbishop also placed some of his seminarians at a sixth location, with the Jesuits at Spring Hill College in Mobile, Alabama.

The seventh possibility was Natchitoches, Louisiana. Its bishop, Auguste Martin had been sending his students to LaFourche. Immediately after the fire, he transferred them to his own residence, and then, in 1856, he opened Saint Joseph’s College in his see city under the direction of the secular clergy. In this institution, Martin probably also offered a brief theological course for his seminarians. The civil war put an end to Saint Joseph’s, but the complex continued as a local day school until about 1872.6 In a letter of 3 December 1857, the bishop reported on his college, which was suffering greatly from lack of funds. He, too, lived in extreme poverty: “I have not replaced a single piece of my clothing since 1854.”7

These seven possible locations for a seminary undoubtedly did not make the choice of one any easier. The archbishop’s own hope was to rebuild, probably at LaFourche. He reported on the fire and its aftermath to the Society of the Propagation of the Faith, which had generously supported his diocese. “Only one thing has saddened me... the loss of our seminary, which six or seven weeks ago fell prey to flame, from a fire which began in the bakery of the establishment! This is an enormous loss for us. It was not insured.”8 Blanc continued in this same letter that he had no funds for rebuilding. He hoped to take up a collection in the parishes of his diocese but admitted that gathering funds would be difficult.

A further complicating feature was the issue of ownership. As happened generally in the nineteenth century, two models were pos-

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5Lynch to Rousselon, from the Barrens, 6 April 1855, Archives of the University of Notre Dame (hereinafter cited as AUND), Rousselon papers, I-c-9.
7Martin to Central Councils of Propagation of the Faith, Paris and Lyons, (hereinafter cited as APF), from Natchitoches, 3 December 1857; APF, #3770. Copies are available in Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans (hereinafter cited as AANO).
8Blanc to Choiselat, from New Orleans, 3 May 1855; APF, Lyons, #F02841.
sible. The first was ownership by religious. If the seminary belonged to religious, a bishop would send his students there and pay for their education and upkeep. The second was ownership by a bishop. If the seminary belonged to him, then the bishop would recruit its faculty and keep its financing either in his own or in the faculty’s hands. Both models had advantages and disadvantages. For the archdiocese of New Orleans the issue was which model to follow.

Blanc reported that the Vincentians owned the LaFourche property, donated by him, it should be recalled, but their ownership was conditioned on their use of it for a seminary. “But do these gentlemen believe they are obliged to rebuild it? And could they? We will not be able to know this until July.” The bishop was referring to the sexennial assembly being held in Paris, beginning 27 July 1855. He knew that John Joseph Lynch, superior at the Barrens and the province’s deputy at the assembly, would take that occasion to speak with the superior general and his council on the matter. After that discussion, John Baptist Étienne, the superior general, allowed the provincial to staff the new institution provided the archbishop would build it and the Community would own it, as they had at LaFourche. The decision reached in Paris set the negotiating positions for the parties in New Orleans.

In another report to Propagation of the Faith, dated 20 October, the archbishop reported on the Vincentian decision. Despite the Community’s positive reply, Blanc wrote that he would not be able to begin soon because of the extreme drought in his diocese that summer. Since the resulting harvest was poor, money would not be available. Besides, the archbishop was also facing a terrifying epidemic in his diocese. During it seven priests died, including one Vincentian, Joseph Demarchi, along with several nuns and religious brothers of other communities. Blanc singled out for special mention one convent in which fifteen sisters died of the epidemic. As a result of these troubles, he hoped to persuade his suffragan bishops (of the dioceses of Mobile, Galveston, Natchez, Little Rock, and Natchitoches), meeting in council, to rebuild the seminary jointly for their province.

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9Ibid.
10A sexennial assembly, a gathering held every six years, involved the general administration of the community, and one delegate from each province of the Congregation of the Mission. Its responsibility was basically to decide on the opportuneness of holding a general assembly. This form of assembly, dating from the time of Vincent de Paul, is no longer held.
11Meeting of 30 July 1855, Contassot, “Notes,” 25.
also acknowledged, however, that he could not hope for much from them, since his suffragans were even poorer than he.\textsuperscript{12} As expected, despite some hopes for support from his brother bishops, the archbishop did not receive it.

The archbishop invited Masnou to attend that council in New Orleans on 20 January 1856.\textsuperscript{13} During the discussions, Masnou renewed the superior general’s insistence that the Congregation would take the archbishop’s seminary only if it were Vincentian property. Blanc claimed to be “surprised and disappointed” at this news, and told Masnou privately that this condition “had broken his arms.”\textsuperscript{14} Also, several competing offers came in to Blanc from other religious communities, making the Vincentian position less attractive. Despite their differences, however, Blanc and Masnou came to a compromise, particularly since Blanc wanted the Vincentians and the Vincentians wanted the seminary.\textsuperscript{15} The solution was that the Vincentians would undertake the rebuilding of the seminary as their own property, but with funds which they would collect within the archdiocese.\textsuperscript{16}

Other issues then arose. The Community felt it necessary to leave Assumption parish because the province lacked personnel. Further, what was to be done about the losses to its property which the fire caused and about the money already spent to improve the buildings? The extant correspondence does not satisfactorily answer these questions, but apparently Masnou believed he had obtained the best possible arrangement. As a result, he deputed John Delcros, C.M., then the superior at Bouligny, to head the fund raising campaign.\textsuperscript{17}

Four years later, in a letter dated 24 July 1860, Stephen V. Ryan, C.M., Masnou’s successor and provincial from 1857 to 1868, claimed

\textsuperscript{12}Blanc to General Council of Paris, from New Orleans, 20 October 1855; APF, Lyons, #F02842. This same information is repeated with few differences in Blanc to Central Council of Lyons, from New Orleans, 25 October 1855; APF Lyons, #F02843.

\textsuperscript{13}Masnou to Étienne, from New Orleans, 2 January 1856; AGCCM, microfilm reel 1, no. 197. Masnou reports on the outcome of this decisive meeting in same to same, from Saint Louis, 11 April 1856, AGCCM, microfilm reel 1, no. 198.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{15}The archbishop must have accepted the Community’s position in part because of his long-standing friendship with Masnou’s predecessor, John Timon, with John Mary Odin, and others. See Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission [hereinafter cited as Annales CM] 25 (1860):560. The original is found in Ryan to Perboyre, from Barrens, 3 (5?) September 1860, AGCCM, microfilm reel 2, no. 263.

\textsuperscript{16}Basic information is in Masnou to Étienne, from New Orleans, 2 January 1856, AGCCM, microfilm reel 1, no. 197. The same information is repeated in Ryan to Perboyre, from Barrens, 3 (5?) September 1860; microfilm reel 2, no. 263; see also Burlando to Sturchi, from New Orleans, 4 December 1855, AGCCM, microfilm reel, 1, no. 48.

that the seminary at Saint Stephen’s Church had been built at Vincentian expense, particularly through the exertions of Delcros. Here he probably meant that the collections which Delcros (and others?) had taken up had sufficed to build, but that the Congregation of the Mission likely added funds of its own to what was in fact its own building. Some weeks later Ryan again reviewed the history of the development of the Bouligny seminary and of the archbishop’s concern for the Congregation of the Mission against the background of those other “excellent and learned” religious who had vied for the new seminary. He concluded, “The good Arch-Bishop [sic] well knew and frankly acknowledged what experience had taught us, that the good of the Community and the stability of the establishment required that we should be at home, and the property be our own.”

For some unknown reason, in 1887 Ryan gave a quite different view of the seminary.

The Seminary of the Assumption, on Bayou LaFourche in Louisiana, projected by Bishop Dubourg, was placed in charge of the missionaries by Bishop Blanc. It was destroyed by fire, and rebuilt in New Orleans by Rev. Mr. Delcross [sic], who met a tragic death in 1858 by an explosion of a steamer on the Mississippi, near Memphis; but, owing to want of means on the part of the diocese, it was never opened to students. Rev. A. Venina [sic], his successor, and present Superior, has built a large and very grand church adjoining the seminary in Bouligny, New Orleans.

Opening in Bouligny

Even though not entirely finished, Saint Vincent’s Ecclesiastical Seminary opened at the end of 1858. James J. Buysch, C.M., was its first superior, but he died early in January 1859. Following normal procedures, Anthony Verrina, C.M., the assistant superior, became supe-

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19Ryan to Perboyre, from the Barrens, 3 (5?) September 1860, AGCCM, microfilm, reel 2, no. 263.
rior. 21 To complete the faculty, Verrina appointed Secundo Lavezeri, C.M., dean of studies and professor of dogmatic theology. Also, William Ryan, C.M., the provincial's brother, took charge of the English parish and taught basic courses.

Verrina, however, was fearful and wanted to suspend building, since he saw that there were almost no prospective students. 22 He reported that Bishops Martin (Natchitoches), Michael Portier (Mobile), and William Henry Elder (Natchez), had neither students nor money to support them. Of the suffragan bishops, only John Mary Odin, C.M., of Galveston agreed, since he already had a few students to send to his confreres in Bouligny. Nevertheless, as a prelude of the financial problems to come, Verrina noted that neither would he be able to charge Odin enough to cover costs, nor would Archbishop Blanc himself probably be able to pay. At that same period, Ryan described the seminary and neighborhood as being well run, healthy, and far enough from the city, "with its narrow, ill-cleaned and badly drained streets and lanes, and yet easy of access because within half an hour's ride of the heart of the city by railroad cars, which run every hour and omnibuses which leave every five minutes and run almost to the door. The building is commodious and substantial, capable of accommodating about twenty seminarians with Professors etc., a larger number than they are likely to have for some time." 23

Ryan also noted that although there were many candidates generally, few came from among the native Creole population, or from Europe.

One issue which must have kept students away from New Orleans was the prevalence of sickness, such as yellow fever. 24 In 1859, Verrina proposed extending classes until 15 August to allow time for vacation and to avoid the autumn, the season for epidemics. He hoped to spend the vacation days at the seaside with the students and his confreres. At the same period, Ryan had decided to wait until winter

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21 Ryan to Perboyre in Paris, from the Barrens, 24 July 1860, Annates CM 25 (1860):564. Verrina, a native of Genoa, came to the United States in 1840, entered the Congregation of the Mission the next year, and was ordained in 1844. He came to New Orleans and worked in Saint Stephen's parish until 1868. He then moved to Cape Girardeau until 1878, when he returned to New Orleans, again at Saint Stephen's, where he remained until 1900. He died in Cape Girardeau, 25 November 1904. Biographical materials in DRMA, Verrina file.


23 Ryan to Perboyre, from the Barrens, 3 (5?) September 1860; AGCCM, microfilm, reel 2, no. 263; see also Annates CM 25 (1860):561.

24 Verrina to Ryan, from Bouligny, 21 May 1859, DRMA, Verrina file.
before visiting Louisiana to avoid illness. Perhaps not wanting to scare off vocations, Ryan also stated that many possibilities existed for zealous priests in Louisiana.

Verrina had also been dealing with the deteriorating health of two Vincentian students, Constant Marechal and Thomas Bermingham. Marechal had emigrated with his parents from his native France. He entered the Barrens as a diocesan seminarian and then joined the Congregation of the Mission, in which he took vows 2 February 1857. After a year of philosophy and theology, tuberculosis began to affect him. "He was sent to our house in La Salle, Illinois, with the hope that change of climate might restore his health. After a short stay there, he returned to the Barrens, whence shortly afterward he was sent to Louisiana. But it was all in vain; and he himself felt that his days on earth were few." Marechal died 22 March 1860. His companion, Bermingham, had earlier moved back to Saint Louis, but he survived to 1 July. Despite the losses, Verrina later stated his belief that New Orleans had a good climate in which to recover from consumption.

Although he had many doubts and few students, the superior reported to his provincial shortly after opening that, with five priests at the seminary, he had no need for more. At the beginning, the professors did not have enough to occupy them, since there were only a few students. As a result, Verrina gave them parish work to do, and they began to serve the German, English, and French parishes.

In one of the handful of letters commenting on the daily life of the seminary, Verrina noted, "The seminarians give us no trouble whatever. We treat them mildly, but in the mean time they know that they have to observe the rules, and that we will not deviate an inch from them. One had been sent away by Father Buysch on that account, and it has produced among them an excellent effect."

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26Ibid., 562.
27Verrina to Ryan, from Bouligny, 17 March 1860, DRMA, Verrina file.
28This unpublished account is found in a record of the lives of deceased confreres, *Notices VII, 1848-1866*, 899-901, Archives of the Congregation of the Mission, Paris. It had been sent to Paris for possible publication in the *Annales CM*.
29Verrina to Ryan, from New Orleans, 22 March 1860, DRMA, Verrina file.
30Verrina to Ryan, from New Orleans, 19 June 1860, ibid.
31Verrina to Ryan, from New Orleans, 2 February 1859, ibid.
32*Annales CM* 25 (1860):563. The *Catholic Directory* for 1859 notes that C. Thomas is pastor of Assumption (German), in New Orleans, thus dating his appointment at least to early 1859 (p. 204).
33Verrina to Ryan, from Bouligny, 2 February 1859, DRMA, Verrina file.
Early Doubts

The seminary’s second academic year, 1859-1860, began with five theologians and few problems. The students, according to their superior, “feel themselves as it were in the terrestrial paradise.” The superior concluded his report to the provincial by asking him to visit New Orleans. Ryan did so in December, and the two of them must have discussed the issue of the small enrollment. By the time of Ryan’s visit one student had left, and there remained only four: one each from Natchez and Galveston, and two from New Orleans. For this reason, the archbishop was planning to send his men to Saint Vincent’s College, Cape Girardeau, Missouri, opened in 1858 as a theologate. In addition, Odin and the provincial also agreed, and thus the newly opened Louisiana seminary would be closed. Unaccountably, however, the archbishop began to waver, postponing the decision to the spring of 1860.

At some point shortly thereafter, however, the archbishop completely changed his mind. Verrina had gone to see him, and “instead of meeting with lightnings and thunders as I expected, I met with milk and honey.” The archbishop admitted his error, and was then “perfectly satisfied with the way it was carried on.” Blanc, however, left the decision in Ryan’s hands whether to continue, and Verrina concluded, “I do not know what the Archbishop wants.” In addition, the bishops of the province, who had previously disagreed with their archbishop about opening the seminary to begin with, met in a provincial council. They now agreed with Blanc and urged that the seminary continue. They even discussed opening one or more minor seminaries to generate candidates for the major seminary. Bishop Elder of Natchez must have taken the lead in this decision to expand and hoped to begin shortly.

Two weeks later, Verrina reported that he then had a total of seven theologians since three had arrived from Mexico. Otherwise he had no problems, just a lot of work. On this basis, he urged Ryan not to close

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34Verrina to Ryan, from New Orleans, 30 September 1859, ibid.
36Ryan to Étienne, from the Barrens, 7 January 1860. AGCCM, microfilm reel 2, no. 260.
37Verrina to Ryan, from New Orleans, 12 December 1859, DRMA, Verrina file.
38Verrina to Ryan, from New Orleans, 10 February 1860, ibid.
the seminary. The bishops, he said, would be disappointed if the seminary closed, and the archbishop was again showing himself favorable and cordial to the Vincentian Community, after a period of indifference. Soon after, on 20 June, the archbishop died. The vacancy in the diocese led once again to questions about closing. Bishop Elder hoped it would not. The rumor that John Mary Odin, C.M., of Galveston would succeed Blanch as archbishop aroused hope that the seminary would continue. These rumors proved accurate, and Odin succeeded Blanch, 15 February 1861, but eventually circumstances would force even Odin to withdraw his students.

In the midst of these discussions, some students from New Orleans did enroll at Saint Vincent’s College, Cape Girardeau, as the records show. For example, James MacGill, C.M., reported that military authorities had begun to draft students from the college. As a result, he was sending two seminarians from New Orleans back to Archbishop Odin, since they were both liable for the draft. In another case, Felix Guidry, C.M., MacGill’s successor, felt compelled to raise tuition for students of Odin’s because of the high cost of provisions. Later in the next academic year, 1864-1865, some students transferred from Cape to Bouligny after finishing their preparatory studies.

**General History**

Surprisingly, records from Saint Vincent’s Theological Seminary hardly mention the war between the states. Throughout it, classes and the daily round of spiritual exercises continued, and the ordinations crowned the year. These normally took place in Saint Stephen’s Church, at least those for which records exist: 1859, 1860, and 1863-1867. The year 1863 was truly extraordinary. Bishop Claude Marie Dubuis, Odin’s successor in Galveston, brought forty-nine candidates for the priest-

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40Verrina to Ryan, from New Orleans, 17 March 1860, ibid.
41Verrina to Ryan, from New Orleans, 1 September 1860, DRMA, Verrina file. William Henry Elder was born in 1819 in Baltimore, ordained in 1846 in Rome, and ordained a bishop 3 May 1857 for Natchez. He continued there until 1880, when he was transferred to Cincinnati, where he died in 1904 (Code, Dictionary, 82).
42Verrina to Ryan, from New Orleans, 19 June 1860, DRMA, Ryan papers.
43MacGill to Odin, from Cape Girardeau, 4 August 1863, AUND, New Orleans papers, VI-2.
44Felix Guidry to Odin, from Cape Girardeau, 8 March 1864, AUND, Odin papers.
45Alizeri to Odin, from Cape Girardeau, 5 December 1864, AUND, New Orleans papers.
hood with him from France. Dubuis had briefly studied English at the Barrens after his ordination, and his prefect there was now the superior of the seminary. The bishop and his students had embarked at Le Havre and landed in New Orleans on Good Friday, 3 April, after two months at sea. Because of the civil war, they had to take an oath of allegiance to the United States before being admitted, promising that they would not take up arms against it. The bishop and his recruits immediately went to the seminary at Bouligny, and, one way or another, found lodging there. Two of the newcomers were already priests. Seven were subdeacons who quickly were ordained deacons and priests. Another six received all their major orders during that year. The bishop soon left for Texas, but wrote back a friendly letter, urging the students, among other things, to work on their English.

Ryan, the provincial, arrived shortly after to make an official visitation. He is one of the few to mention the civil war: “After a prolonged absence occasioned by the lamentable civil war in which our poor country is involved . . . .” Quite naturally, with the arrival of so many new students, Ryan found the seminary in a “prosperous condition.”

The new students evidently imparted a much different character to the seminary, which had had so few students up to that point. The following table shows the enrollments of the Dubuis group, as well as those outside the group. Unfortunately for researchers, the sources say nothing about the cost of maintaining this unexpectedly large number of seminarians. These problems probably hastened the closing of the seminary four years later.

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46 Claude Marie Dubuis (1817-1895) was born in France and ordained there in 1844. He worked as a missionary in Texas from 1846 to 1862, when he was elected Odin’s successor as bishop of Galveston. He died in France and is buried there. See L.V. Jacks, Claude Dubuis, Bishop of Galveston (Saint Louis: 1946). He mistakenly gives the date of Good Friday as 4 April.


48 The details of Bishop Dubuis’s students are found in the student diary, kept from their arrival, 3 April 1863, to the closing of the seminary, with final remarks dated 30 January 1868 (“Journal du Grand Séminaire de Bouligny,” diary in DRMA, numbered II-C(LA)-5, Box 1, Saint Louis Diocesan Seminary).

49 Dubuis to Bellaclas, et al., from Brownsville, 4 May 1863. As the diary noted for 16 June, this letter was preserved inside the back cover for posterity.

50 The figures for enrollments are relatively trustworthy, but many uncertainties remain when they are compared with other ordination records. See Ordination Records, AANO; also Ryan to Maller, from Saint Louis, 23 March 1863, AGCCM, microfilm reel 2, no. 276; and same to same, from Baltimore, 6 May 1863, AGCCM, microfilm reel 2, no. 277, noting forty-two seminarians for Galveston then in New Orleans. Another reference, an indirect one, comes in Ryan to Étienne, from Saint Louis, 24 June 1864, cited in Annales CM 30 (1865):286, in which he reported that he had not recently visited his Vincentian confreres in the south since the journey was so dangerous.
The elegantly written student diary recorded major events in French. These are principally ordinations, feast days, vacations, and the departures of the newly ordained to their parishes. One special event, dated 24 April 1863, portrays the new seminarians' amazement over the use of tobacco.

In America, this classic land of liberty, it is not too much to say that we have certain privileges unknown to our confreres in Europe. Three times daily we are permitted to light up together the peace pipe, and to smoke with delight the burning smoke of tobacco. But since, when the sky is overcast and the rain falls in torrents, we are confined indoors, we are deprived of our favorite pleasure. Happily this state of things did not last long. Instructed in the school of his own experience, our good superior was unable to stand much longer the sight of such a painful privation for his children. And so, to let us smoke our pipes in all weather, he had a small building erected which we have adorned with the title of Smoking Saloon. It is specially set aside for this purpose. The pipes are placed there, all lined up in order. At the beginning of each recreation period, a confrere responsible for the care of the Smoking Saloon, and chosen from among the most intrepid smokers, opens the door. Immediately each one seizes his weapon and sets to work... When the recreation is over, all the pipes, obedient to the sound of the bell, assume their accustomed spot to wait for the next occasion.52

The diarist goes on to record the happy times, the songs and laughter of those mainly French emigrés.

The rules governing the seminarians were typical of the rules in the nineteenth century. They regulated silence, visiting other students' rooms, visiting of externs during their off campus walks, personal cleanliness, and care of the good order of the chapel and elsewhere in the house. Students needed special permission to go to the pantry, to enter the offices of the brothers or the infirmary, to eat outside or to skip meals while at home.

Seminarians, as always, could be expelled for specific cases. They were such things as to omit religious exercises regularly, to hit or verbally abuse another, to talk against faith or morals, to read bad books, to carry on suspicious correspondence with others. Drunkenness, anytime, anywhere, was a serious offense. Eating or drinking in cafes, hotels or public places was punishable by expulsion. Leaving without permission could result in the same sanction. To prevent these faults, students were advised to give themselves to the will of God, to recall the rules which Jesus laid down in the Gospels, and especially to reflect on their deaths and their need to appear for final judgment before God.53

Among those ordained in this disturbed period were three men destined to become bishops. Their perseverance and approval by higher ecclesiastical authorities offers a sign of the quality of formation received in New Orleans. They were, in chronological order, John Anthony Forest, Gustave Augustin Rouxel, and Thomas Heslin. Forest and Rouxel were both born in France and received some of their education there. They were ordained the same year, 1863, Forest for Galveston, and Rouxel for New Orleans. Rouxel became auxiliary bishop of New Orleans in 1889, and Forest was nominated for San Antonio in 1895.54

Heslin followed a slightly different path. After his education in Ireland, he emigrated to the United States, and received his education in New Orleans. As Code notes, New Orleans archdiocesan records show a date of 8 September 1869 for his priestly ordination. No explanation exists for the two-year gap between the closing of the seminary in the spring of 1867 and his ordination. Possibly he continued his studies privately. He was ordained for Mobile but worked in New Orleans from 1869 to 1889. He was nominated bishop of Natchez, 53“Régles de Discipline; Motifs et Moyens de bien observer le Règlement,” three loose sheets in the back of “Journal... de Bouligny.”
54Code, Dictionary: Forest, 98-99; Heslin, 132; Rouxel, 255.
18 June 1889, and served there until his death 22 February 1911, the same year as Forest.

That the Vincentians attracted vocations from the seminary is an additional sign of their vitality, no matter how feeble the seminary itself was. Brother John Moerscher, a native of Germany, entered the Congregation, 24 April 1859. At some point he moved to the Barrens, where he professed his vows, 6 January 1862. As a letter from Verrina suggests, Brother Moerscher was nearly halfway through his novitiate in March 1860. Two postulants also joined him.55

Another candidate, Alexis H. Mandine, joined Brother John.56 Even though technically a novice and not permitted to study, Mandine attended seminary classes. He made his vows as a Vincentian 19 July 1863, and in quick succession received minor orders (5 August), and major orders, culminating in priesthood on 24 August of the same year.57 Afterward, he remained at Bouligny as a faculty member.

Two other names also occur in these records, Louis Philippe Landry and Louis de Calatrava.58 Landry came from Donaldsonville, and entered the Congregation of the Mission 1 October 1862, in the middle of the war. The records are unclear whether he entered at the Barrens or in New Orleans. He died 10 September 1918 in New Orleans, where he had worked for many years. Calatrava, a native of Cuba, entered the Community in Saint Louis, 23 February 1867. He did not take vows, but left 14 July 1868. He had studied at Bouligny just before its closing.

The opposite of vocation recruitment was losses due to death and departure. A glance at the details in the appendix to this study will

55Verrina to Ryan, from New Orleans, 17 March 1860, DRMA, Ryan papers. However, another letter (same to same, from New Orleans, 30 September 1859, DRMA, Ryan papers) mentions some novices who hope to join the other novices, apparently at the Barrens. John Moerscher was born 27 August 1825 at Kim, a town in the Palatinate. He was assigned to Saint Vincent's church in Saint Louis, then to the Barrens, to Saint Joseph's and Saint Stephen's in New Orleans, where he died 24 September 1911. His assignment to Saint Stephen's ran from 1896 to 1911, so he was present during the whole life of the 1900-1907 seminary.
56Verrina to Ryan, from New Orleans, 28 September 1860, DRMA, Ryan papers; Verrina to Étienne, from New Orleans, 6 June 1862, AGCCM, microfilm roll 2, no. 328.
57Ordination Records, AANO. Alexis Honoré Mandine was born 10 May 1832 at Touyet, France. He entered the novitiate 18 August 1861 at Bouligny. Perhaps because of the war he could not go to the Barrens. He made his vows 19 August 1863 at Bouligny and was assigned to Saint Stephen's from 1864 to 1877. He then became the provincial director of the Daughters of Charity in Emmitsburg, Pennsylvania, from 1878 to 1892, the year of his death (DRMA, Mandine file).
58This information is found in “Catalogus sacerdotum et clericorum Congregationis Missionis in Provincia Statuum Foederatorum Americae,” original in Archives of the Eastern Province, Jamaica, N.Y.; typed copy in DRMA.
show, through the numerous changes of personnel, with what difficulty the Congregation maintained itself during the difficult years of the war. Personnel records show that in a brief period four young priests died of diseases, and two others left. The house diary describes the effects of the epidemic of yellow fever in 1867.

The scenes in the parish were truly distressing. Sickness in every house, few without some deaths, in some as many as five, and a couple of families became entirely extinct. Poverty and want of attendance hurried many to a premature grave. Funerals passed on all sides up till as late as nine o’clock P.M. No priest could attend them from want of time and often hearses or carriages were not to be procured at any price. For many Sundays we had no high mass or preaching. The attendance at church was small, so many being sick or waiting on the sick, and so many dressed in black and so sad looking that truly the church might be called the house of mourning.

Closing

Roger Baudier, the historian of Louisiana Catholicism, believed that with the financial stresses of the post Civil War period, Archbishop Odin was compelled to close the Bouligny seminary. The more precise reason is that the Vincentians and Archbishop Odin clashed over the support of another large group of seminarians. John Dwyer, C.M., then the seminary diarist, recorded the events clearly.

During the last week of November [1867] the Seminary was once more alive, its splendid old walls and lofty corridors reechoed once more the voices of young levites, all its inmates were busy. The Archbp. had arrived with a large number of new recruits from France. Seventeen intended for Texas left in a few days, ten remained but by the second and last arrival the number was increased to twenty seven. All fine, stout, brave young fellows, they looked well, especially in the refectory and sanctuary.

59Baudier, Catholic Church, 566.
They became attached to the place. They were exceedingly happy. They liked the food. The house, the climate, everything, and all were looking forward for a stirring year of studies. It was found however that the pension allowed by the Archbp. for their maintenance was entirely insufficient, having to furnish clothes, board, stationery and anything that a young man needs for $300 a year. The Archbp. would not hear any petitions for increase of pay, would not give a cent more, so that after many days of discussion, he withdrew the seminarians.

Impossible to describe their regret and ours. Our Seminary was indeed broken up and forever. The last seminarians left on St. Stephen’s day. Farewell! be happier elsewhere, but I am sorry the change took place in my day.60

No records appear to exist which would give details of the discussions. Presumably, the experience of housing the large group of seminarians just four years before colored the discussion. In a letter dated 19 December 1867, the provincial informed Odin that the seminary would cease. Ryan suggested that the archbishop might want to send his students to the Vincentian seminary at Cape Girardeau, Missouri, where Odin had founded the parish some thirty years before.61 A letter written by Verrina on 4 February 1868 demonstrates that the institution had already closed. Verrina had crossed out the letterhead text, “St. Vincent’s Theological Seminary,” and penned in: “St. Stephen’s Church.”62 The school year for 1867-1868 had begun, therefore, its tenth and last year of operation.

From the beginning of 1868, the Vincentian priests continued to use the building as a rectory and probably for other uses until 1900, when the seminary reopened.

Ten years after its closing, Mariano Maller, C.M., penned an interesting, if somewhat inaccurate and biased, summary of the history as part of his report on the special visitation he made at the direction of the superior general, Antoine Fiat.

60“Journal... de Bouligny,” 38.
61Ryan to Odin, 19 December 1867, from Saint Louis, AUND, New Orleans papers.
62Verrina to Ryan, from the Barrens, 4 February 1868, DRMA, Ryan papers.
Previously we had the New Orleans seminary in a place in Louisiana called Bayou LaFourche. As at the Barrens, the confreres grew weary of being isolated and so far from the capital of the diocese. They therefore bought some property in New Orleans with the intention of building a seminary; the seminary was transferred there. Difficulties began soon thereafter, and, as in Saint Louis, they wound up at the door of the seminary. We have only the parish there now....

The house is beautiful and roomy, since it could accommodate the major seminary. The present archbishop, Archbishop [Napoleon Joseph] Perché, is reputed not to care for communities. Moreover, he is burdened with debts. They say he owes 2,625,000 francs [$105,000]. He thus finds it better to send his seminarians off to study in the seminaries of other dioceses. He was not the one to remove his seminarians from us, but Archbishop Odin, his predecessor and our confrere.63

III. The Seminary Reborn, 1900-1907

The Saint Louis Diocesan Seminary of New Orleans

Decisions taken by each of the archbishops of New Orleans helped to define the history of theological education in the archdiocese. Archbishop Blanc was responsible, after years of discussion, for opening the seminary on Bayou LaFourche in Assumption Parish. His death was followed shortly by Odin’s closure of the Bouligny seminary. At Odin’s death, his successor, Perché, immediately opened another seminary. Perché’s successor, Leray, closed it as a cost-cutting measure. In the second year of his episcopate in New Orleans, Archbishop Louis Placide Chapelle made plans for another Vincentian seminary, but, as with Perché, the Saint Louis Seminary was short lived. Perché’s successor, Blenk, withdrew his students. This third section of the study concentrates on the Vincentian-run seminary in the time of Archbishop Chapelle.

63Maller to Fiat, undated report of his visitation of 1877-78, AGCCM, microfilm, reel 1, no. 192. Maller was familiar with the American province, since he had been its provincial from 1846 to 1850.
Theological Seminary, 1870-1881

Archbishop Perché, like Archbishop Odin before him, had wanted a theological seminary in his archdiocese. As one of his earliest acts as archbishop, he opened one at his chancery and home in New Orleans in 1870. As Maller noted above, the archbishop had difficulty maintaining a seminary faculty and raising sufficient funds for a handful of seminarians. That, coupled with other financial problems, led to the appointment in 1879 of Francis Xavier Leray as Perché’s coadjutor and apostolic administrator of his archdiocese, with responsibility of managing its finances. To put the archdiocese on a solid financial footing, Leray decided to close Archbishop Perché’s seminary in 1881. Leray succeeded Perché in 1883, and served as archbishop in his own right until his death four years later, 23 September 1887.

Reopening, 1900

In 1900, after a hiatus of thirty-two years, the Vincentian Community once again undertook the seminary apostolate in and for the Church in the South. The Congregation of the Mission opened the Saint Louis Diocesan Seminary in the same building it had used for Saint Vincent’s Ecclesiastical Seminary from 1858 to 1867. Unlike its longer-lived predecessor, the Saint Louis Seminary has left behind significant records: lists of students, a record of events, and financial account books. This abundance helps researchers reconstruct its brief history in greater detail.

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64Napoleon Joseph Perché, born 10 January 1805 in Angers, was educated in France, and was ordained there 19 September 1829. He did pastoral work in France until 1837, then in Bardstown and New Orleans. He was appointed coadjutor of New Orleans, 8 February 1870, and succeeded to New Orleans on the death of Odin, 25 May 1870. He died 27 December 1883 (Code, Dictionary, 237-38).
65Francis Xavier Leray was born 20 April 1825 in France, and was educated there and in the United States. He was ordained from Baltimore, 19 March 1852 for Natchez, where he lived and worked until 1876. He was elected to Natchitoches 27 March 1876 and then was appointed coadjutor of New Orleans and administrator, 23 October 1879. He became archbishop 27 December 1883, the date of Perché’s death. Leray died 23 September 1887 (Code, Dictionary, 166-67).
66Baudier, Catholic Church, 444, 461; Code, Dictionary, 166-67; White, Diocesan Seminary, 73.
67Baudier, Catholic Church, 566; White, Diocesan Seminary, 174, which carries only a brief notice of this seminary. It was named after King Louis IX of France, a patron saint of Louisiana.
The seminary diary (in the handwriting of William Musson, C.M.) describes Chapelle's initiative in the rebirth of the Louisiana seminary.68

It was July 19th 1899, [feast of Saint Vincent de Paul] while dining with the Priests of St. Stephen’s Church, that Archbishop Louis P[lacide] Chapelle first intimated his intention of opening a Diocesan Seminary, to be in charge of the Priests of the Mission. Nothing was settled at the time: and it was not till late in the Fall of the same year, that Very Rev. T[homas] J. Smith, C.M.V[isitor], was asked by the Archbishop to open a Seminary in the house adjoining St. Stephen’s Church. The request was considered and granted. Moreover it was promised that the seminary would be opened for Students of the Diocese of New Orleans and for Students of other Dioceses, by Sept. 1900.

Accordingly, plans were made ready for remodeling the interior of the third story.

In the meantime, Fr. Verrina, the venerable superior of St. Stephen’s had resigned and his resignation being accepted, he was ordered to St. Vincent’s College, Cape Girardeau, Mo. Fr. Verrina left New Orleans in the Spring. Fr. Landry succeeded Fr. Verrina, as Superior.

The work of painting, decorating and remodeling the interior of the house, was pushed on, so that by Sept. 1, 1900 everything was ready.

During the weeks preceding Sept. 1, the Professors who were to compose the Faculty arrived. Fr. [Dennis] Hurley came from St. Mary’s Seminary, Perryville, Mo. Fr. [John] Nichols was called from St. Joseph’s Church, New Orleans, and Fr. Musson from the Kenrick Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.69

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68Louis Placide Chapelle was born 28 August 1842 in France. He was ordained 28 June 1865 in Baltimore, where he had done some of his studies. He was ordained bishop, 1 November 1891, in Baltimore as coadjutor of Santa Fe. He was archbishop of Santa Fe from 1894 to 1897. He transferred to New Orleans, 1 December 1897, during which time he also served as apostolic delegate to Cuba and Puerto Rico, 1898-1905, and papal envoy extraordinary to the Philippines, 1899-1901. Chapelle died in New Orleans, 9 August 1905 (Code, Dictionary, 40).

69Untitled official diary; DRMA, II-C(LA)-5, Box 1, page 1.
Smith wrote the superior general on 25 August 1899, asking his approval, and adding the reasoning that "we do not in any [way?] want another community to replace us, particularly since several bishops have recently shown a preference for the Sulpicians." A few days later the general and his council approved the reopening of the seminary. Smith included some details of his hasty discussions with the archbishop. The latter had been in a hurry to leave for the Orient, since the pope had appointed him his special envoy to the Philippines, and he would henceforth divide his time between New Orleans and Manila.

To demonstrate his support for the reopened seminary, the archbishop brought together students for his archdiocese who had been studying in other seminaries. Some of those students had been attending Saint Vincent's in Cape Girardeau. Nevertheless, prospects were not great, and at least one Vincentian doubted the wisdom of reopening. "Could such a poor beginning be a sign that this is a work of God?"

General History

The seminary diary and the minutes of the house council are the main sources to chronicle the activities and spirit of the institution. The following notes appear in chronological order by calendar years, not by the academic years.

1900: The seminary opened 12 September, with only five students (one from Natchez, and four from New Orleans). Three other students

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70Smith to Fiat, from Perryville, 25 August 1899. DRMA, copy in Smith papers. Fiat to Smith, from Paris, 7 September 1899. DRMA, Smith papers. The council agreed to reopen the seminary for the fall at the meeting of 22 January 1900 (Contassot, "Notes," 61).
71Smith to Fiat, from the Barrens, 5 January 1900, AGCCM, microfilm, roll 2, no. 447.
72Baudier, Catholic Church, 499.
73This was true at least for 1891. See the Letter Book, page 35, for 30 April 1891; DRMA, Saint Vincent's College, Cape Girardeau, papers. Since Saint Vincent's did not receive seminary students after 1896, no New Orleans students would have transferred from there to the new seminary.
74Louis P. Landry to Fiat, from New Orleans, 22 December 1900, AGCCM, microfilm, roll 4, no. 308.
75This material is taken from several sources: the untitled diary of the seminary, 1900-1907; in DRMA; 198 pp., many pages blank; also from Domestic Council Minutes, 25 August 1900-28 August 1915, unpaged notebook in DRMA, Vincentian personnel catalogues and Catholic Directories. The personnel catalogues were published yearly for 1900-1903; 1904-1905 joint issue; then annually for 1906, 1907, 1908. The Catholic Directories appeared annually. These two sources generally agree on the personnel of the seminary.
came by 22 September, but one of them left by the end of October. The superior was the reluctant Louis Philippe Landry, who remained only one year in the position. The faculty also included Hurley, Musson, and Nichols. Three other priests also were attached to the parish: Fathers John Linn, Thomas Judge, and James Murtaugh. Three lay brothers, (John, Louis, and one other) also lived in the house. On 17 September, the domestic council seems to have taken a weighty decision. Henceforth, priests and students would have the same food at breakfast. The diary says nothing about other meals.

The year continued with the usual round of October devotions: rosary in common, the litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and a prayer to Saint Joseph. Students made their retreat for five days in mid-November. Afterward, they received permission to spend Thanksgiving day away from the seminary, but they had to return by 6:00 p.m. The community celebrated at least part of the traditional Vincentian Christmas novena, beginning 16 December, and went home for a generous Christmas vacation, lasting from 21 December to 9 January.

1901: Two students arrived from San Antonio to begin their studies. The students were kept in the seminary during Mardi Gras, except for one day, on which they could attend the “procession.” As usual for Lent, the Stations of the Cross were held on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays. Easter, too, was celebrated within the seminary. Easter Monday was a free day, but the students had to return by 6:00 p.m. The first academic year ended with an ordination, 14 June.

At the beginning of the second academic year, a new superior had arrived, William H. Musson, C.M. In addition, a new student director had been appointed, Edmund V. Flynn, C.M., himself newly ordained. The ten Vincentians of the house (seven priests and three brothers) made their annual retreat, beginning 25 August, in preparation for the year. Two events stand out: a holiday to mark the burial of the assassinated President McKinley, 19 September; and the extraordinary permission for the students to attend “Gentry Brothers Animal Show.”

1902: As in 1901, a new student arrived in January, this time from France. The one-day outing to attend the Mardi Gras festivities was
also repeated. Ordinations and examinations, both written and oral, preceded the summer vacation, beginning 13 June. In the beginning of the third academic year, twelve students returned, but the total increased to fifteen later in the term. An entry for November records that a singing class had been inaugurated. The diarist did not record student reactions. Besides singing, the faculty offered the standard courses of philosophy, dogma, history, canon law, moral theology, and scripture. Hurley also offered Hebrew, and Flynn taught the natural sciences.

1903: The students returned from their vacations 6 January for a 6:30 supper. The year proceeded as in previous years, with Bishop Rouxel conferring orders in March. Three of the students received priesthood on 2 June, and thus the academic year concluded. In this same year, Father Constant Demion, C.M., came from Paris on an extraordinary visitation representing the superior general. Demion’s report notes only that the seminary had just eleven students. His lack of comments about the seminary may mirror the institution’s lack of importance.78

The fourth academic year, 1903-1904, opened with the arrival on 29 August of Michael S. Ryan, C.M., to be the new “President” of the Seminary. He would hold that office until the end of the 1905-1906 year.79 In addition, a French Vincentian, Ambrose Vautier, joined the faculty to teach moral theology. Through William Barnwell, C.M., the provincial, the seminary had requested from the general council a French confrere, since both the archbishop and many of the seminarians were French.80

1904: For this year’s carnival, the students received leave to attend two days of the Mardi Gras parades, always an important time in New Orleans. As usual, ordinations took place at the end of the year, on 10 June.

To begin the fifth academic year, the students arrived 14 September. The news of the death of Anthony Verrina in Cape Girardeau, 25 November, marked the first term. The parish celebrated a solemn
requiem for the man who had twice been its pastor, for a total of thirty-two years.

1905: In contrast with the previous year, students received permission for outings on three days in March for Mardi Gras celebrations. The usual round of classes, examinations, and ordinations, with an unusually high total of seven, finished out the year.

By the fall, the successes of the previous spring, as measured in the large number of ordinands, had diminished. Archbishop Chapelle died 5 August, and his death would give new focus to the seminary’s problems. Further, the prevalence of yellow fever moved the superior to postpone the opening of the seminary’s sixth academic year to 25 October. Even then, students stayed away. The diarist noted for that day: “To the eternal chagrin of the Arch-Dioece [sic] and Province of N.O. only six students, all of promising fame, appeared on this day.”

In November, the student director and professor of church history, Bernard O’Connor, C.M., was assigned to Long Beach, Mississippi, and William Kelly, C.M., arrived in his place. The diary for 1 December calls the day of O’Connor’s departure “a day of universal sadness.” His replacement, Kelly, did not last long, and on 12 January 1906, he transferred to Saint Louis to join the faculty of Kenrick Seminary. Martin M. Gregory, C.M., replaced him. Such a rapid turnover of faculty was not uncommon in those days. The membership of the Vincentian house consisted in seven priests and two brothers.

1906: In keeping with tradition, the new superior allowed the seminarians to attend carnival. Further, in a rare nod to civic observance, he also permitted them to leave for the afternoon of 21 April, “Confederate Day.” Before priesthood ordinations, examinations were held in geology, astronomy, liturgy, English, natural philosophy, homiletics, church history, scripture and exegesis, dogmatic and moral theology, and philosophy.

When the students returned on 12 September to begin the seminary’s seventh academic year, their former superior, Michael S. Ryan, C.M., had left to become the president of Kenrick Seminary. An extraordinary farewell had marked Ryan’s departure.

St. Stephen’s Hall, on Camp and Berlin Streets, was far insufficient in capacity to contain the immense crowd that had come from the four corners of this great city to join the parishioners of St. Stephen’s Church in a grand evidence of regret on the eve of Very Rev. M. S. Ryan’s
leaving for St. Louis, where he is to be called to the 

presidence of that famous institution of learning, Kenrick 

Seminary.

This large and emotional gathering included the archbishop and 

the mayor of New Orleans. Interestingly, the speeches as recorded in 

that newspaper report did not mention the seminary, but only Ryan’s 

three-year tenure as pastor of Saint Stephen’s.81

John E. Linn, C.M., replaced Ryan. On opening day of the seventh 

and last year, the faculty-student ratio was one to one—five students, 

five faculty members (Fathers Linn, Gregory, Vautier, John LeSage, 

and the student director, Francis J. Remler.) By mid-October, however, 

four more students arrived, and a further two came in mid-December. 

Two other priests, Judge and Francis X. Monaghan, C.M., and two lay 

brothers completed the community house.

1907: The calendar year began with yet another change of faculty. 

Joseph Donovan, C.M., arrived in January to replace LeSage, sent to 

the Barrens. The students received permission to attend three days of 

Mardi Gras parades. In late April, John Glennon, the archbishop of 

Saint Louis, solemnly invested the new archbishop of New Orleans, 

James Hubert Blenk, S.M., with the pallium.82 Glennon visited the 

seminary during his visit, and Blenk followed him on 5 May for his 

first and probably last visit. A month later, three men were ordained 

to the priesthood, and by 21 July, the seminary had closed. The diarist 

noted simply: “Curtain rung down! Good Bye.”

Finances and Enrollments

A brief study of student statistics helps to reveal the problems 

inherent in the Saint Louis Diocesan Seminary. First, although the 

archdiocese of New Orleans regularly sent students, the records show 

that, after the first year or so, students from other dioceses were the

81 “Father Ryan’s Farewell. A Great Catholic Night.” Unidentified newspaper clipping, prob-

ably Catholic Action of the South, undated, in DRMA, Ryan file.

82 James Hubert Blenk was born 6 August 1856 in Bavaria. He was received into the Roman 

Catholic Church, 12 September 1869, at age thirteen. He attended college in the United States and 

studied in France and Ireland. He joined the Marists, 15 August 1878, and was ordained priest in 

Dublin, 16 August 1885. He did educational and pastoral work in the New Orleans archdiocese. He 

was ordained bishop for San Juan, Puerto Rico, 12 July 1899, in New Orleans and was later promoted 

to New Orleans, 20 April 1906, where he died 20 April 1917 (Code, Dictionary, 18).
exception. The following dioceses sent students: Natchez: 1900-1901, 1903-1904 (two students); San Antonio, whose bishop, John A. Forest, was an alumnus of the Civil War seminary, sent students for 1900-1901, 1903-1904, 1904-1905; Brownsville: 1902-1903, 1903-1904; Mobile: 1902-1903, 1903-1904, 1904-1905 (only one student for those years); Indian Territory [Oklahoma]: 1902-1903, 1903-1904 (only one student); and Saint Louis: 1901-1902 (one student).  

The maximum enrollments each year were as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Enrollments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900-1901</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901-1902</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902-1903</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903-1904</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904-1905</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905-1906</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906-1907</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Like the nation as a whole, the students came from several countries. As might be expected, however, American-born and French-born seminarians predominated. This undoubtedly points to the archbishop's success in recruiting French students for New Orleans, for which the majority were studying. Although existing documents do not point to any problems of mixing or of language, some of these irritants probably did exist. In addition, the predominance of French students might account for a gradual decrease in the number of American-born students sent by other bishops to study in New Orleans, as the following chart shows.

**Student place of origin**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>USA,</th>
<th>France,</th>
<th>Bavaria,</th>
<th>Sicily,</th>
<th>England,</th>
<th>Spain,</th>
<th>Italy,</th>
<th>Lorraine,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900-1901</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901-1902</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902-1903</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903-1904</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The information on student enrollments and finances comes from an untitled account book for the seminary in DRMA, Saint Stephen's Church papers.
1904-1905  USA, 3; France, 8; Holland, 3; Sicily, 2; Lorraine, 1.
1905-1906  USA, 1; France, 6; Holland, 2.
1906-1907  USA, 1; France, 6; Holland, 3; Belgium, 1.

Scarce documentation renders difficult any study of the financial support of the seminary. For example, few indications remain of the fees for room and board charged to the seminarians. Aside from income from tuition, the Vincentian Community must have provided the remainder of the funds.

1902-1903: $87.50 per semester.
1903-1904: $64 per semester for board and tuition.\(^{84}\)
1903-1904: $87.50 per semester.
1904-1905: $87.50 per semester.

At an average of thirteen students per year, the seminary income from tuition would have yielded $2275 yearly. It seems, however, that Archbishop Chapelle agreed to pay a subsidy of sorts, bringing the tuition, room and board charges up to $100 per semester.\(^{85}\) Had everyone paid the same amount, the seminary’s yearly income would have averaged $2600. Quite likely, however, not all the dioceses were able to pay the entire charge. As a result, total income from tuition, room, and board was probably much lower.

**Student Life, Academics**

The weekday schedule for 1906-1907 can be taken as typical of seminary schedules elsewhere, and was probably modeled on those used in previous years. Schedules of this type regulated most activities of the seminary students.

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\(^{84}\) Perhaps this was a special rate for someone, since it does not match other figures for the same year.

\(^{85}\) According to the domestic council minutes for 26 February 1902, the archbishop agreed to pay $200 per year per student. See minute book in DRMA, Saint Stephen's Church files. The same agreement is mentioned in Chapelle to Thomas J. Smith, from New Orleans, 25 February 1902, DRMA, Smith papers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A.M.</th>
<th>P.M.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5:00 Rise</td>
<td>1:30 Visit to the Blessed Sacrament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:20 Morning Prayers, Meditation</td>
<td>1:45 Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:50 Mass, Litany of the Holy Name</td>
<td>3:30 Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00 Breakfast, Recreation</td>
<td>4:30 Recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:45 Study</td>
<td>5:00 Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 Class</td>
<td>5:30 Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 Study</td>
<td>6:15 Free Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 Class</td>
<td>6:25 Spiritual Reading, Rosary, Examen of Conscience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:45 New Testament Reading, Examen of Conscience</td>
<td>7:00 Supper,Visit to the Blessed Sacrament, Recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 Dinner, Visit to the Blessed Sacrament, Recreation</td>
<td>8:25 Night Prayers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The seminary followed this schedule every day except Sundays and Wednesdays, both free days. Thursday morning offered the only break for a late rising: 5:30 instead of 5:00. Sundays had two masses: a low mass at 5:50, and a high mass, probably in the parish church, at 10:30. In addition, vespers and benediction were held late Sunday afternoon. On Wednesday afternoons from 1:30 to 5:00, the seminarians took the traditional group walk.86

The seminary followed the standard five-year program of studies: two in philosophy, and three in theology. The few instances of textbooks mentioned in account books at least represent the kinds of...

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books studied: the Baltimore Ceremonial; Julius Caesar (probably The Gallic Wars); the liturgy for Holy Week; Shakespeare’s Hamlet; Goldsmith; Morino (for moral theology); O’Callaghan, on the mass; plus books in pastoral theology, canon law; and a bible. Besides their textbooks, students were expected to bring with them or to purchase at the seminary the following: cassock ($12); Roman collars; surplice ($1.25); a “rabb,” more properly called a rabat, ($0.50); biretta ($2.50); crucifix; statue of the Blessed Virgin, etc. The records report nothing about the students’ normal daily dress, however, nor what they wore when they attended Mardi Gras festivities.

Little exists today to inform modern readers about student life, the normal issues faced by seminary students. The list of students kept for the seven years of the seminary’s existence, however, occasionally preserves remarks about why students left the seminary. “Did not return after vacation,” “Left,” “Sickness,” “Deficient in studies,” are common remarks. More serious are these notes: “Dismissed, Conduct,” “Expelled.” One student left because his parents needed him at home; another unfortunate was “Dropped, Immoral conduct,” the only such note in the entire record.

As to the activities of the faculty, little is known. In 1906, Ambrose Vautier, C.M., commented that the small number of students led to the priest professors having too much time on their hands, not a healthy condition. 92

Alumni

Among those who inaugurated the Saint Louis Diocesan Seminary was Jules Benjamin Jeanmard. Born 15 August 1879 in Louisiana, Jeanmard began his major seminary studies at Kenrick Seminary in Saint Louis. He returned to Louisiana in 1900, where he was ordained a priest on 10 June 1903. Jeanmard was nominated bishop of Lafayette,
8 December 1918, and died 23 February 1957, in Lake Charles, Louis­iana.93

Peter Mathias Wynhoven was another prominent and influential graduate of the New Orleans seminary. He began his philosophical studies in 1904 at the age of nineteen. He continued in New Orleans until the seminary closed and completed his theological studies at Kenrick Seminary. This priest, described as colorful, zealous, and intense, concentrated on works for the poor. He founded homes for men and boys, and one for girls, took an active part in civic life, and published several small books. Wynhoven died 14 September 1944.94

Closing

Thomas O. Finney, C.M., the provincial of the Western Province, wrote about the diocesan seminary to Archbishop Blenk on 30 June 1906, in his first days as archbishop.

The house can accommodate, but not very conveniently, about eighteen students. However, the number of students has so far been so small that these accommodations were more than sufficient. Archbishop Chapelle assured Fr. Smith our late Visitor [provincial superior] that our community would not suffer if we accepted the Seminary in New Orleans. Yet it is difficult to see how we have not suffered, since we were obliged to maintain a corps of professors for ten or twelve students. In view of these things it was thought well to lay before Your Grace the following.

Finney then suggested moving to Long Beach, Mississippi. "We feel that in justice to ourselves something should be done to increase the number of students in the Seminary" since the available places were too many.95

The archbishop responded by discussing his own plans. He wanted to have "a great [that is, major] seminary that will fully come up to the
requirements of an institution that will confer the highest benefits to my diocese and indeed to the entire South." He also hoped to have preparatory seminary and have the Vincentians run it for him. Besides, he had hopes also for a diocesan high school. Since he was new to his job, Blenk asked Finney to give him time to work on his plans, with which he had apparently intended to have Ryan help.96

Finney responded graciously shortly after, saying that the Vincentians would "most willingly undertake this noble work of fostering in young souls vocations to the holy priesthood." Finney, however, needed Ryan at Kenrick Seminary, and had already received a letter from the superior general appointing Ryan there. The sudden death in the previous January of the provincial, William J. Barnwell, occasioned this. Finney closed by asking Blenk to have patience with him in turn.97

During the next several months, the archbishop worked on his plans. Finally, like his predecessors, he withdrew his students at the end of the 1906-1907 academic year, effectively closing the seminary.

Finney reported Archbishop Blenk's decision to Antoine Fiat, C.M., the superior general.98 Even with eight students, Finney wrote, the seminary needed a large number of faculty, and providing them was no longer possible. Because of this, the archbishop had decided to send his seminarians to the Vincentians at Kenrick Seminary but hoped to have more students in New Orleans in the future. Note that the decision was to suspend the operation of the seminary, not to close it definitively: pro aliquot saltern annis suspendere ("to suspend [it] at least for some years"). The general council minutes noted simply that since the seminary had too few students, the archbishop had closed it and sent his students to Kenrick Seminary.99

In the next year, 1907-1908, the archbishop confided his youngest students for the priesthood to the Benedictines at Saint Joseph's Abbey, Saint Benedict's, Louisiana. The Benedictines provided a minor seminary program for them. The major seminarians went either to the Vincentians at Kenrick Seminary in Saint Louis, or to the Sulpicians at

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96 Blenk to Finney, from New Orleans, 16 July 1906 (but in an undated draft), AANO, Vincentian papers. Clearly, the archbishop did not yet realize that Ryan was about to be moved to Saint Louis.

97 Finney to Blenk, from Saint Louis, 22 July 1906, AANO, Vincentian papers.

98 Finney to Fiat, from Barrens, 30 September 1907, AGCCM, microfilm roll 2, no. 534. See also same to same, from Barrens (?), 30 September 1907, AGCCM, microfilm, roll 4, no 515.

99 Meeting of 18 October 1907, Contassot, "Notes," 69.
Saint Mary's Seminary in Baltimore. A minor seminary, Saint Joseph's Preparatory Seminary, had existed previously at Gessen, Louisiana, but Archbishop Chapelle closed it. The Benedictines had also directed Saint Joseph's. Archbishop Blenk did not open a major seminary during his tenure, although the archdiocese later confided its major seminary to the Marists, the congregation of which Blenk had been a member.

The old seminary building at Saint Stephen's remained in use as a rectory from 1907 to 1914. In that latter year, Verrina High School opened in it under the administration of the Brothers of Mary. The high school closed in 1925. The parish grade school then moved into the same building. The historic old facility was demolished in 1960 to make way for a modern grade school, still standing.

Following the pattern of his predecessors, Blenk's successor as archbishop of New Orleans, John William Shaw, took an interest in the training of his seminarians. The archbishop's intentions must have been communicated to the Vincentians, since the provincial council decided in November 1921 that the province stood ready to accept the New Orleans seminary if offered. The former seminary had, of course, not been closed but only suspended—a nicety reflected in the official Vincentian personnel books, which continued to list a seminary at Saint Stephen's parish until 1924. However, the archdiocese did not ask the Vincentians, and Notre Dame Seminary opened in New Orleans in 1923, under the direction of the Society of Mary, the Marists. Notre Dame Seminary continues to serve the archdiocese of New Orleans and several other dioceses under the direction of the clergy of the archdiocese.

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100 Baudier, Catholic Church, 508.
101 Ibid., 537.
103 John William Shaw, born 12 December 1863 in Mobile, was educated in Ireland and Rome. He was ordained priest in 1888 for his home diocese of Mobile. Elected coadjutor bishop of San Antonio, he served there from 1911 to 1918. He was then promoted to New Orleans, 25 January 1918, where he died 2 November 1934 (Code, Dictionary, 271).
104 Vautier to Verdier, from New Orleans, 22 December 1923, AGCCM, microfilm, roll 4, no. 281.
Appendix

What follows is an attempt to reconstruct the names of the Vincentians assigned to the Civil War Seminary. Gaps occur because of biennial publication of the Vincentian personnel catalogues, and since Catholic Directories were not published annually during the war. Note that these names are only of those assigned to the house, not necessarily those teaching in the seminary. In any case, the Vincentian priests at the house often fulfilled multiple functions, such as professors and assistants in local parishes. The superiors are listed first.¹⁰⁵

1856-1857: Anthony Verrina, Secundo Lavezeri, William Ryan, Cornelius Thomas, three brothers

1857-1858: “Ecclesiastical Seminary, New Orleans, will be organized in the fall of this year (1858).”¹⁰⁶

1. 1858-1859: James Buysch, Verrina, Lavezeri, Stephen Masnou, Ryan, Thomas; also (probably erroneously) listed at LaFourche: Verrina and S. Mariliano [Margliano].

2. 1859-1860: Verrina, Lavezeri, Ryan, Thomas, Bro. Terence Murtaugh, two other brothers.

3. 1860-1861: Verrina, Lavezeri, Thomas, Jacquemet, Ryan, three brothers.


5. 1862-1863: Verrina, Thomas, O’Connor, Rubi, two or three brothers.


7. 1864-1865: Verrina, Andrieu, Hickey, Mandine, Bro. Burns, and one other brother.

¹⁰⁵The names in the following list, with variant spellings preserved, come from the Vincentian personnel catalogues and from the Catholic Directories. The Vincentian catalogues appeared with information updated for the following dates: January 1855, January 1857, February 1860, February 1862, and February 1864. The Catholic Directories appeared annually, with the exception of 1862 and 1863. Also, the editions for 1864 and 1865 carried the notice: “Owing to the extremely unsettled state of Louisiana” it had been impossible to receive information about New Orleans. As usual with Vincentian catalogues from the period, only the priests are listed by name. The names of the brothers are supplied from the Catholic Directories or other sources.

¹⁰⁶The Catholic Directory for 1858, 155-56, also listed Verrina and Mariliano [sic for Margliano] at Lafourche, with Verrina having additional duties as pastor of Immaculate Conception, Canal.

¹⁰⁷The minutes of the provincial council for 6 October 1863 record his transfer from Philadelphia to New Orleans. (“Register of the Deliberations of the Council of the Province,” 8. Original in archives of the Provincial Office, Germantown, Philadelphia, Pa.)
8. 1865-1866: Verrina, Andrieu, Hickey, Mandine, two brothers.
9. 1866-1867: Verrina, Beecher [Becherer], Mandine, James Duncan,\(^{108}\) William Kelly (as of 22 September 1866),\(^{109}\) John Dwyer.\(^{110}\)
10. 1867-1868: Verrina, Beecher [Becherer], Mandine, Duncan, F. Guidry (after 8 December).

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\(^{108}\)Duncan took his vows at the seminary in Bouligny, 25 July 1860, and died 17 November 1868, at age 26.

\(^{109}\)Kelly professed his vows at the Barrens, 8 September 1860, and died in New Orleans, 3 September 1869, at age 28.

\(^{110}\)Dwyer died in New Orleans during the yellow fever epidemic, 10 October 1867.