

CHAPTER XXXII

A JESUIT COLLEGE IN LOUISIANA

§ I. ST. CHARLES COLLEGE, GRAND COTEAU

Sometime during the eighteen-twenties an anonymous memoir under the caption *Conseils aux Jésuites* was addressed to the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda.¹ Its author, who declared himself a priest of fifteen years' experience in Louisiana, expressed the view that the spiritual interests of Louisiana would be materially advanced by the presence of the Jesuits. Let them be given, he advised, some of its parishes, as St. James's or St. Michel's or the Ascension in Donaldsonville, and let them open a college in New Orleans. Bishop Du Bourg had in fact at an early date invited the Society of Jesus to the South. Even before Father Van Quickenborne and his party of novices left for the West the prelate had spoken at Georgetown College of a property near Opelousas, Louisiana, as a promising site for a college. The owner of the property, Mrs. Charles Smith, would no doubt, at the Bishop's suggestion, tender it to the Jesuits. In 1826 Du Bourg made a formal offer of this property to Van Quickenborne. "He offers us," the superior wrote to the Father General in May of that year, "and he will speak about it to your V. Rev. Paternity, a farm of 200 acres, situated at Opelousas in Lower Louisiana. He wishes to assign to the Society some entire district, as much as he gave us here."² Bishop Du Bourg's successor in the see of New Orleans, Bishop De Neckere, also attempted but without success to introduce the Society of Jesus into his diocese.³ Shortly after his consecration De Neckere, a

¹ *Conseil aux Jésuites, Stato della Religione negli Stati Uniti (Scritture riferite nei Congressi 1827, N 9, America) Propaganda Transcripts (G)*

² Hughes, *History of the Society of Jesus in North America*, Documents, 1 1028 Du Bourg had written to his brother, Louis, March 20, 1824, of an offer he made to the Jesuits of three hundred arpents of land, together with a church and house, at Opelousas "The difficulty will be to obtain members of the Society; however, having already a handsome nucleus of them in my diocese, I hope to succeed the more easily in overcoming this difficulty." Kenrick Seminary Archives.

³ Bishop Du Bourg after his return to France in 1826 still continued to busy himself at intervals with the project of a Jesuit college in Louisiana. He wrote to Bishop Rosati of St. Louis "I went to Bordeaux to see some Jesuits in regard to our project for Opelousas, which you have already proposed by letter to the Father

Lazarist, appealed to Father Dzierzynski, superior of the Maryland Jesuits

You probably have learned by now my appointment to the Episcopal See of New Orleans, and the subsequent consecration which I have received at the hands of the Rt Revd Dr Rosati, notwithstanding my utmost indignity and incapacity.

I am therefore now entrusted with the spiritual concerns of this extensive Diocese and although the means of promoting them are very scarce, yet something must be done. It is the common opinion of all who are acquainted with this country that the only means likely to succeed is the establishment of a college and one directed by the Revd Fathers of your Society. In consequence of the wish expressed by a number of the inhabitants here, I have opened a subscription, the object of which is the purchase of a suitable tract of land and the building of a proper house for the intended purpose. The Revd M [Mr.] Delacroix, who had the honor of your personal acquaintance at Georgetown last fall, tells me that he found your Reverence not only not averse to our plan, but even inclinable towards it. If so, I apply with double confidence to your charity for such a number of Jesuits as may take possession of the college we are preparing. You will highly oblige me, if you give me some information about the probable number you may have it in your power to send and what might be the period at which we may expect them. The spot we have in view is one of the most eligible in the State [Iberville]. Immediately on the river Mississippi—sixty miles only above New Orleans from which the steamboat conveyance is equally easy and speedy—five hours suffice to go down and about double that to come up—the parish church is very near and the conveniences for provisions of butchery and bakery at hand. The house and land will be the property of your Fathers without any burden whatever except of the taxes. The desire of most parents to have a house of education in this State is such that we may with reason anticipate every kind of success. In the anxious expectation of a favorable answer I am etc ⁴

Provincial of Paris. I had written myself to the last-named. He does not see the affair as we do. He must by this time have written you his opinion concerning it. It is a proof that the project is not ripe yet, but that it is [ms ?]. God has His time for everything as He ceases not to demonstrate. If we are not destined to accomplish this good, He will do it through others." Du Bourg à Rosati, January 28, 1829 (C). Again, he wrote to Rosati "A college at Grand Coteau and a seminary at Donaldson[ville] should be the object of your pressing solicitude. As to Jesuits for Grand Coteau, I am pleased that you wrote about the affair to the Provincial of France [Paris]. I am going to urge him to grant your request. Circumstances appear to me to be favorable at this juncture when the Government has just closed their colleges to the bitter regret of the whole episcopate and of all Christian fathers. It is an unfortunate concession to the spirit of the age wrung from the most virtuous of kings [Charles X] by a feeble ministry. God grant that it be not the prelude to a host of others more disastrous still" (C).

⁴De Neckere to Dzierzynski, St Michel, July 20, 1830 (B). De Neckere had written July 13, 1830, from St Michel to M De Nef of Tournhout, Bel-

Father Dzierzynski's answer to the Bishop of New Orleans revealed the chronic embarrassment of the Jesuits in America, lack of men. "Nothing would please us more than to be useful to so worthy and zealous [a] Bishop and satisfy all his wishes— But I must confess that notwithstanding my inclination to serve you our means do not correspond to our desire. We are scarcely enough to fulfill our increasing occupations. Our members increase slowly. Let us, however, hope in our Heavenly Father, who as he has given the desire will give the means of putting [it] in execution." ⁵

From Maryland Bishop De Neckere now turned to St. Louis for the realization of his hopes. The Jesuits on their part had scarcely made a beginning in that city when they began to look to Louisiana as a more promising field for their educational efforts. Father Verhaegen, president of St. Louis College, writing to the Father General in January, 1831, expressed his misgivings as to the future of the institution. Its situation was such that no considerable number of boarders could be looked for. Moreover, the Missouri legislature was to open a public college in St. Louis and to this well-to-do Protestants would prefer to send their sons. Finally, the Lazarist college at the Barrons with its hundred boarders and fifty day scholars would always divide with St. Louis the available patronage for higher education. "Our only hope of growth is in lower Louisiana." A letter just then received from the South conveyed the news that the people of Opelousas had decided to build a college and offer it to the Jesuits, a remarkable thing indeed in view of the known prejudices of many of them against the Society. There was no classical college in Louisiana with the result that two hundred boys having homes there were being educated outside the state. Bishop De Neckere of New Orleans had twice invited Father Verhaegen to visit Louisiana in the expectation that he would receive substantial donations and also pick up students for his college. Verhaegen had applied in turn to the Maryland superior, Dzierzynski, for permission to accept this invitation but was answered that since the existing buildings at St. Louis could not accommodate the available number of students, it was unnecessary to seek for more. ⁶

The following year, 1832, Bishop De Neckere visiting St. Louis

gium, a friend and benefactor of the Missouri Jesuits, asking his help for the proposed college "All who take a sincere interest in religion agree that the only means of succeeding is to get hold of the youth by furnishing parents with facilities for a proper education [of their sons] A great number of the inhabitants ask for the Jesuits, but where shall we find them a suitable location? I have not the first penny" Archives of the North Belgian Province, S J

⁵ Dzierzynski to De Neckere, September 3, 1830 (B)

⁶ Verhaegen ad Roothaan, January 15, 1831. (AA)

with his vicar-general, Father Blanc, invited the Jesuits, now separated from the Maryland jurisdiction, to open a college either in Iberville, where he had acquired a house, or in Opelousas, where he held property, or in both places. Verhaegen at once communicated the Bishop's offer to the General, representing that if it were not accepted a rare opportunity for extending Jesuit education would be let slip. Louisiana could be reached from St. Louis by steamer in six or eight days, the return trip being made in eight or ten. If the General were only to send him three professors of the classics, Verhaegen would venture "with some little shifting about of men" to open a college in Louisiana.⁷ Father Roothaan, though not in a position to send the professors asked for, did not show himself averse to the project of a Jesuit school in the South provided, a contingency that may have seemed to him remote, that "men, money and a classical course would be available."

At St. Louis Fathers Verhaegen and Van de Velde were the chief promoters of the idea of a Louisiana college. On the other hand, Father Peter Walsh, also of the college staff, was dismayed by the difficulties of the project. "In view of all this," he insisted with the General, "it seems to me to be entirely impossible for us to begin a new college unless your Paternity send some well-qualified members to our relief. Here in Missouri, where the inhabitants are for the most part illiterate, we have easily been able to meet the exigencies of the place. But Louisianians are quite different from Missourians. A B C schools would not suffice [for them]."⁸ Van de Velde, on his part, laid the issue before the Father General as one of the utmost importance for the Catholic Church in Louisiana.

To instil religion and correct morals into its youth is the only means of reforming the state of Louisiana, almost all the inhabitants of which are Catholics, some pious and well disposed towards religion and our Society, many indifferent, not a few wicked and imbued with the principles of the French Revolution. I am not afraid to declare to your Paternity that if we had three colleges in that state, they would in a few years be filled with students. The wealthier parents now send their children to other states to be educated or even to France, whence they come back with bad principles and morals. Many are consigned to non-Catholic colleges, at least 100 are domiciled at St. Mary's College in this state, about 60 at Bardstown in Kentucky and 40 in our own college of St. Louis. The Bishop asks for only three or four professors to start this highly important undertaking. I have urged him to write directly to your Paternity and make known to you everything that pertains to it. So far he has been fed on hopes and promises. I hope your Paternity will now see to it that this man, who is so religious

⁷ Verhaegen ad Roothaan, August 25, 1832 (AA)

⁸ Walsh to Roothaan, February 15, 1831 (AA)

and so deserving of our Society, will see his wishes realized. How many times has he expressed this wish to me! How many times has he said to me, "this is my desire beyond all others, this is the principal object of my prayers, if only I could obtain this, I should die happy" French is even more important there [Louisiana] than English⁹

Only a few months later than Van de Velde's pressing appeal to the Father General, Bishop De Neckere met with a premature death, a victim of yellow fever. Verhaegen was anxious that the unlooked-for incident should not put a stop to his plans for a college in Louisiana as he let the General know:

In the death of that excellent prelate our institution has sustained a severe loss and I hold it responsible for the fact that the number of our boarders has not increased since the last vacation. The public prints have recorded his praises but not in adequate terms, for in the opinion of everybody he was beyond all praise. He was a saintly, learned and very humble man. A few days after his decease the Reverend administrator, Mr. Blanc, Vicar-General of the diocese and a very great friend of Ours, wrote to me expressing the hope that the death of the Bishop would not hinder the important work in Louisiana, which he was wishing we would take in hand as soon as possible. The same reasons, Very Reverend Father, still exist for our contemplating the opening of a college there and I am not in doubt that quite a number of persons are ready to support the undertaking as far as they can. The Superior of the house of the Religious of the Sacred Heart in Opelousas lately wrote me to this effect, adding that the state of Louisiana lately spent \$20,000 to no purpose in the erection of a public institution, as dissensions made a wreck of the undertaking. So many attempts made by lay people in Louisiana to possess a college prove in my opinion its necessity and augur success for the institution if it be established.

In conclusion Father Verhaegen made mention that three novices, two priests and a scholastic were expected to arrive soon from Maryland. They would be available as teachers after one year, not immediately. If he had but two men at his call who were up in Latin and French, he could begin at once in Louisiana.¹⁰

The house and property at Iberville, Louisiana, which had been acquired by Bishop De Neckere for the purposes of a college, had been purchased by the local pastor, Rev. Aristide Anduze, in his own name with the understanding that the diocese was to take it off his hands. Preparations to do so were being made when Bishop De Neckere's death intervened. Though Rev. Anthony Blanc, the administrator, preferred to do nothing in the business until the appointment of a new bishop, Father Anduze urgently requested that the transfer of the

⁹ Van de Velde ad Roothaan, 1833. (AA).

¹⁰ Verhaegen ad Roothaan, November 12, 1833 (AA).

property to the diocese be made without delay, which was accordingly done Blanc thereupon besought the Jesuit General to accept the Iberville property for a college

It is now, Very Reverend Father, merely a matter of considering ways and means of utilizing a house which cost the diocese dearly but which the diocese will never regret having purchased if the Fathers of your Society wish to take possession of it, and I have reason to believe that they will refuse all the less seeing that Bishop De Neckere brought himself to make this acquisition only through an assurance of some sort given him by Father Chazelle, who is perfectly informed as to the occasion in question Father Ladavière assures me that only your permission is needed for the opening of the college I hope, Very Reverend Father, that you will not make us wait for it much longer, the good of religion in our poor diocese demands it and moreover the house itself is always the worse for not being occupied ¹¹

Rev Auguste Jeanjean, named by the Holy See successor of Bishop De Neckere, having declined to accept the appointment, Father Blanc himself became bishop of the southern metropolis He received consecration November 22, 1835, and shortly after left for Europe to urge in person with Father Roothaan his suit for a Jesuit house in his diocese The July of 1836 saw the new bishop in Rome As a result of his appeal to Father Roothaan, Father Guidée, provincial of France, was directed to canvass in his own province as also in that of Lyons for suitable subjects to labor in Louisiana, decision being made at the same time that "in lasting memory of our predecessors and in accordance with their ancient custom, this Mission as that of Kentucky, be registered in the catalogue of the Province of France" ¹² Returning from Rome, Bishop Blanc visited Lyons and Paris to lay his plans before the French provincials. On August 10 the provincial of Lyons, Father Renault, communicated to the General his ideas on the personnel to be chosen for the Iberville college, which was to be opened in the old seminary building built by Rev Eugene Michaud in 1824

After reading through the entire catalogue with Father Guidée and giving the matter mature consideration before God, I would propose to your Paternity

¹¹ Blanc à Roothaan, October 29, 1834 (I)

¹² *Litterae Annuae Provinciae Parisiensis*, 1836 (G) The Jesuit province of Paris was also known as the province of France, its present designation The province of Lyons was established in 1836, its territory being taken from that of the Paris province, which had included all of France Besides this source, the *Litterae Annuae Missionis Missourianae*, 1838-1841, the minute-book of the Board of Consultors of the Missouri Mission and Vice-Province, and numerous letters, especially of Fathers Roothaan, Verhaegen, Guidée, Van de Velde and Maisounabe furnish most of the data embodied in this chapter

1. Father François Abbadie of the province of Lyons, he has a great desire for the missions of America, he already knows a little English, he can preach, he can serve equally well as professor or surveillant.

2. Father Joseph Soller of the province of France, he knows English and German, he has been a professor of the humanities for several years and can continue to be so, he has a great desire of exercising the holy ministry, but for surveillance and for the offices of minister and sub-minister he feels a repugnance that he does not sufficiently control.

3. Father Pierre de Vos of the province of France, for a long time he has been asking for the American missions, he is, says Father Van Lil, made to be an *operarius* rather than minister of a house although he is actually such at Alost, he would be capable of taking a class

4. Father Pierre Ladavière of the province of Lyons; he will be a man ad omnia, in fine a precious man for setting up this house because of his antecedents

But where is the Superior? I do not see him anywhere this year except at St. Mary's, Kentucky. Last year I sent Father Nicolas Point to that house; he is a man of men for a college although he is drawn by preference to the missions and the Indian missions at that, after the example of Father Van Quickenborne. In case of need Father Point could be replaced at St. Mary's by one of the Fathers whom I propose today to your Paternity.¹³

In the event Father Nicholas Point, then on the staff of the Jesuit college of St. Mary's near Lebanon, Kentucky, was named superior of the new mission while his subordinates, eight in number, the result of Father Guidée's canvassing, were to come from France. These were Fathers Pierre Ladavière and Jean François Abbadie, Joseph Chauvet, a coadjutor-brother, all of the province of Lyons, and Fathers Paul Mignard and Joseph Soller, Henri Duranquet, a scholastic-novice, and Joseph Alsberg, a coadjutor-brother, members of the province of France.

Sixty days of stormy voyaging, December 24, 1836, to February 22, 1837, brought Bishop Blanc and his recruits safely to New Orleans. The Jesuits of Paris and Lyons waited anxiously for word of the safe arrival of the party and when it came the priests among them celebrated thrice the Holy Sacrifice in thanksgiving for the welcome news. Meanwhile, Father Point had left Kentucky for Iberville, where he spent two months looking over the ground and supplying the place of the parish priest in the latter's absence. In the beginning of February, he went down to New Orleans, where rumors of pirates and shipwrecks on the high seas filled the air. Thence he was sent by the vicar-general to Grand Coteau, one hundred and sixty miles northwest of the metropolis, to take up parochial duties and serve as chaplain to the Religious of the Sacred Heart and their pupils. These were man's

¹³ Renault à Roothaan, August 10, 1836 (AA)

designs, observes the chronicler, in sending the father to that locality, but God's design was that he should sow the seed of future harvests. On March 12 Point was in New Orleans to welcome the Jesuit party after its protracted voyage. He at once laid before his advisers all he had seen and heard concerning the Iberville offer. They were unanimous in advising that it should not be accepted. The agreement entered into in France with Bishop Blanc stipulated for a building suitable for college purposes, care of the adjacent church and free, untrammled possession of the college property. Point's examination of the college building in Iberville had shown it to be unsuited for the purpose intended. Its site was unhealthy, being close to the riverbank, which was fast crumbling away. It was, besides, disappointingly small, offering accommodation for scarcely sixty students and was so sadly out of repair that there was no prospect of restoring it without considerable expense. In addition to all this, the townsfolk had a passion for litigation and even then were at odds with their pastor, having laid claim to parochial and college property alike and even to the church itself. Father Michaud, who put up the college building, had broken down and died in middle age under a crushing burden of debts and other annoyances. Iberville was evidently not the place for Point and his community, a view that came to be shared by the Bishop himself and his vicar-general, who now deemed it advisable that the Jesuits, in view of the circumstances, should look elsewhere for a home.

On February 17, 1837, Father Point indited from Grand Coteau a long letter to the Father General in which he detailed the reasons that militated against the acceptance of the Iberville offer, as also the various problems that would have to be faced in starting a college anywhere. "No one of us," he said, "knows enough English to be able to teach it. We shall need at least two English professors and one of Spanish. In Kentucky there is Father Fouché, who knows both English and French. For this reason I think he would be more useful to us than at St. Mary's College. For the kitchen etc., we should need three or four domestics from outside. If we could have brother coadjutors, things would go much better. The price of Negroes and of professors is enormous . . . Then, once established in Louisiana we may hope to move westward some day and go to the aid of the poor Indians, whom one cannot lose sight of" ¹⁴

¹⁴ Point à Roothaan, February 17, 1837 (AA) Father Point, who had a talent for neat and graphic tabulation of data, subsequently drew up and forwarded to Father Roothaan a single-page presentation of all the particulars regarding five of the fourteen offers made, viz Iberville, Mandeville, Rome, Donaldsonville, Grand Coteau. The particulars include e.g., advantages and disadvantages, names of the fathers who personally visited and reported on the several sites, and action

Meanwhile, the newly arrived fathers, housed with every token of hospitality in the Bishop's house in New Orleans, were not idle. During Lent they were at the service of the diocesan clergy, Soller in New Orleans, Abbadie in Assumption parish, Bayou Lafourche, Ladavière in Donaldsonville, De Vos and Mignard in Grand Coteau, and Point "everywhere." All the while the last named was engaged with the problem of a suitable location for the proposed college. Donaldsonville, about eighty miles from New Orleans at the junction of Bayou Lafourche and the Mississippi, was considered and the question seemed almost resolved in its favor. A contract to settle in the town was on the point of being signed when unlooked-for opposition to the fathers on the part of some of the townsfolk made itself felt, and to such a degree that the negotiations were broken off. As a matter of fact, once it became generally known that the Iberville proposition was rejected, a dozen fresh offers were made to the fathers from various points in Louisiana. Grand Coteau, ten miles south of Opelousas in the parish of St. Landry, was to be the ultimate choice.¹⁵ From the very day it became known that the Jesuits had declined the Iberville offer and were looking for a new locality in which to settle, the people of Opelousas had written repeatedly to the Bishop and to Father Point asking that the projected college might come to them. The Bishop himself favored the location and offered to cede to the fathers the parish church of St. Charles in Grand Coteau with its revenues and parochial property, two hundred acres in extent. Ten thousand dollars in money was to be guaranteed to them to cover the cost of a new structure. Two thousand more were promised by a devout lady, apparently Mrs. Smith, and a thousand by the Religious of the Sacred Heart, who had been settled at Grand Coteau since 1822. Lumber and mortar, as needed, were to be furnished gratis, and the clay for the needed bricks was to be dug on the nuns' property and transported free of charge by the parishioners. It was a tempting offer and Father Point sought light in prayer. One serious objection could be raised to the choice of Grand Coteau and that was its remote inland position, which made it somewhat difficult of access from other points in Louisiana. Still, there were

taken in each case. The document, which is in a microscopic but perfectly legible hand, is a marvel of orderly and minute condensation of a mass of correlated data (AA). At St. Mary's College, Montreal, there is a considerable body of unpublished manuscript material produced by Father Point, including detailed descriptions and plans of the Grand Coteau college. Cf. *supra*, Chap. XXVI, § 1.

¹⁵ "Grand Coteau, as the name indicates, is somewhat more elevated than the adjacent tracts of land. It forms to the eye a rough circle of about four or five miles in diameter, bounded by different creeks or bayous with the usual amount of oaks, cypress and hickory trees, from whose branches the ornamental 'Spanish Beard' hangs to the ground." *WL*, 5 17.

dangers in delay. The fathers, becoming more and more involved in parochial work, might lose sight of the educational project which had brought them to America. Moreover, the parents of their prospective students were growing impatient, and if an opportunity like the present were allowed to slip, opportunities of any kind might be at an end and the fathers be compelled to recross the ocean with the stigma of failure on their undertaking. These and other considerations had their influence on Father Point, who in July, 1837, definitely accepted the Opelousas offer.

Some months before that date Grand Coteau had already become the home of the Jesuit colony. On Passion Sunday, 1837, Point with his novice, Henri Duranquet, left New Orleans for the inland settlement. They were lodged on arriving in a house used as the Bishop's quarters when he visited Opelousas. When the decision was reached to settle permanently in Grand Coteau, the fathers engaged in parochial work, except Soller in New Orleans, were sent for and the reunited group thereupon took up residence in the presbytery, which adjoined the church. The Religious of the Sacred Heart provided meals for the Jesuit community and in other ways showed a substantial charity in their regard.

Shortly before July 31 Bishop Blanc arrived at Grand Coteau to lay the corner-stone of the new college. On that day, feast of St. Ignatius Loyola in the Church's calendar, there were services in the parish church at which the Bishop delivered an English sermon congratulating his hearers on the bright promise of spiritual and educational service held out to them by the arrival of the Jesuits in their midst. Then a solemn procession with chant moved to the college-site and the ceremony of laying the corner-stone took place. That same day the Society of Jesus was formally relieved by Bishop Blanc of the obligations it had assumed in the Iberville contract and a new contract was drawn up and subscribed to by the prelate and Father Point. "By that contract there was ceded to us the usufruct in the fullest right of the fields, woodlands, revenue of whatever kind of the parish of St. Charles, so that, while we might not sell the same, we could rent, cultivate and build according to our good pleasure, in so far as we should judge such measures to be useful to the college and for the period during which we held the same, the consideration being (1) that we open a college or boarding-school on the property and (2) that we assume charge of the church and parish."

Various tasks and occupations, among them, learning English, exercising the ministry, enlarging the little wooden church, determining the parish limits, planting trees and fencing in and cultivating the garden, kept the group engaged during the last five months of 1837. For

the opening session of the college the only building available was a poor wooden structure, which in later years served as an infirmary. Every effort was now made to adapt it to its new purpose.

However pleasant the prospect of a Jesuit college in their midst may have been to a large and respectable element in Grand Coteau and the surrounding towns, to others in the neighborhood it was anything but welcome. Anonymous threatening letters which ordered the fathers to leave the place within fifteen days under penalty of public whipping and expulsion began to come in. In Lafayette, the next parish to St Landry's, organizations were set on foot with the avowed purpose of expelling the Jesuits while in Opelousas a newspaper did its best to stir up popular feeling against them. But the parishioners of Grand Coteau were equal to the occasion. They, too, literally rose in arms and day and night kept watch to see that no harm befell the fathers. Their courageous attitude quelled the opposition and the threats of the anti-Jesuit faction came to nought.

At last came January 5, 1838, the day set for the opening of the college. It happened to be a Friday and through superstition not a single student put in his appearance. Three registered the following day. At the end of the month, there were twenty-four boarders and at the end of the scholastic year, fifty-six. It was a trying year for faculty and students alike. The college was understaffed. Father Soller was retained in New Orleans, Father De Vos had care of the parish while Father Ladavière performed the duties of procurator. The teaching-staff was thus reduced to three, Fathers Abbadie and Mignard and Mr. Duranquet. The students were crowded into narrow and uncomfortable quarters, the same room serving for dormitory and class-room. During the day the beds were removed and benches and tables took their place. There was no means of heating the building and when the mercury fell the alternatives were to dismiss the students to their homes or send them to bed. Father Point strained every nerve to relieve the situation. He encouraged his colleagues by a quite extraordinary patience and resignation; he called in lay professors, he hired servants. Feeling, however, that too heavy a burden might be borne by some, he spoke to his subordinates in this strain "When Father General sent us hither, he sent us to the college of Iberville. He had no suspicion of the sacrifices that confront us here nor any intention of imposing them upon us. Neither may I impose them upon you against your will. Are you ready then to put up with the discomforts that meet us here?" The faculty was ready to accept the situation as they found it and Father Point was reassured.

And yet, as if to compensate for the depressing features of the situation, there was, oddly enough, an excellent spirit among the students.

They were quite contented with things as they were and at the end of the session departed for their homes with praise for the college and a hearty promise to return. There were two courses, classical and commercial. Class-contests were frequent, the first one being in the catechism, a timely topic of study, for few of the students on entering knew even the Our Father or Hail Mary. Class exercises were got up in honor of the Bishop, who did not disdain to go picnicking with the boys in the woods and even lent his services as cook to the preparation of the dinner. And so the first session of St. Charles College, Grand Coteau, wore on to the solemn distribution of prizes on October 24, 1838, with a play by the students, "Joseph Sold by his Brethren," and with addresses by Bishop Blanc and the Reverend L. Boué, pastor of St. Michel.

§ 2. THE ST. LOUIS JESUITS AT GRAND COTEAU

When the next session opened, December 1, 1838, the college had passed into the hands of the Jesuits of St. Louis. However short of men for their own institutions, they were at least better circumstanced than their brethren in Louisiana. Hence in the increased personnel they would be able to furnish for service in the South lay the solution in Father Roothaan's eyes of the difficulties that beset the struggling college of Grand Coteau. Accordingly, by a decree bearing date July 14, 1838, and addressed to Father Verhaegen, he had transferred the recently established Mission of Louisiana from the province of Paris to the Mission of Missouri.

Ever since our French Fathers began a college at New Orleans [*sic*] I have frequently had it in mind to unite this French colony of the Society with the Missouri Mission under one and the same Superior, hoping that by such arrangement the aforesaid new college would be furnished the more easily with competent teachers of English and at the same time the Province of Paris, beset as it is with onerous obligations, be relieved of an embarrassing burden. But before carrying my purpose into effect, I thought it well to ascertain the opinion of the Provincial and Consultors of the Province of Paris, who unanimously indorsed the measure proposed. And so, the Father Assistants having been consulted in the matter, it seems opportune that the aforesaid union be carried out. Now, therefore, by these presents I declare such members of the Society as reside in the diocese of New Orleans or in the college therein begun to be subject to your Reverence as Superior *pro tempore* of the Missouri Mission, in the same manner exactly as other members who are attached to the Mission named.

It is incumbent now on your Reverence to execute this decree. And that this may be done properly and in a manner to produce the desired results, I earnestly recommend to your Reverence that in supplying recruits as well as in discharging other business for the aforesaid colony you proceed with

such tact and generosity that not only will they eagerly acquiesce in this new arrangement, but will with every reason congratulate themselves and their college on the change that has been made.

It will be especially necessary for your Reverence to make a personal inspection of the New Orleans colony at the earliest possible date, and since the particular need of the moment seems to be a capable teacher, one competent in particular to teach English, and also an *operarius* of endurance to act as companion and efficient fellow-worker to Father Soller, your Reverence will make your coming thrice welcome, were the colony to find accompanying you on your arrival fellow-travellers such as these and were you to present it with these first pledges, so to speak, of your paternal solicitude.

Finally, I deem it superfluous to caution your Reverence to make no immediate change in regard to customs there existing, even though they appear to be somewhat incongruous, unless indeed the Rector of the college and the graver among the Fathers be absolutely convinced of the necessity of a change, for in matters of this kind one must await a fuller measure of time and experience¹⁶

The decree was awaiting Verhaegen on his return to St. Louis October 17, 1838, after accompanying Bishop Rosati on a confirmation tour through central Missouri. He at once published the document at St. Louis University and on November 14, in company with Isidore Boudreaux, a scholastic, left the city to visit his new jurisdiction in the South.¹⁷

The second session of the college opened with every prospect of success. As many as sixty boarders crossed the threshold the opening day. The next day, feast of St. Francis Xavier, the students began to occupy the new college building, the corner-stone of which had been laid by Bishop Blanc on July 31 of the preceding year. In May the students numbered ninety-six. After that, contrary to expectation, there was little or no increase, the attendance fluctuating between ninety-five and a hundred for the rest of the year. The faculty was soon strengthened by accessions from Missouri. Isidore Boudreaux, arriving in November, 1838, was followed in the course of 1839 by Fathers De Leeuw, Pin, De Theux, Paillason, the scholastics Mearns and Arnoudt and the coadjutor-brothers Barry and Morris. On the other hand, Fathers De Vos and Mignard, of the original staff, were sent north, the one to become master of novices at Florissant, the other to teach dogmatic theology in St. Louis University.¹⁸ Father De Theux wrote to his mother in Belgium directly after he arrived at Grand Coteau

¹⁶ Roothaan ad Verhaegen, July 14, 1838 (A)

¹⁷ *Diarium Universitatis S. Ludovici* (A).

¹⁸ Fathers De Theux and Paillason, Messrs Arnoudt and Mearns and Brother Barry travelled together accompanied by Father Van de Velde, who was conducting

The new residence from which I date my letter is 1400 miles (3 miles make a Belgian league) from St. Louis and 159 from New Orleans. The country is very beautiful and the situation healthy. The parish is one of the best in Louisiana (they give the name of parish here to what in most other states is called a county). I am going to be a missionary once more, but shall have a good assistant, Father Paillasson, a very active, zealous man, with a most accommodating disposition. It seems I shall have some teaching besides. We have a fine college here, built in two years, but far from finished. Already there are seventy boarders, each one paying 1300 francs for board, tuition and lodging, but food supplies cost in proportion. Five francs here are the equivalent of one franc in Belgium. . . . There is talk here of a railroad to pass within gunshot of the college and connect us with the Mississippi. The project, if realized, will be a great boon to the college.¹⁹

The second session, December 1, 1838-December 10, 1839, fairly teemed with trouble. There was a lack of union among the students and anxious parents came to the college to make inquiries. The yellow fever raged for two months, prostrating most of the faculty and many of the boarders, two of whom succumbed to the disease. To make the situation still more trying, false reports began to be circulated outside regarding the cause of the epidemic with the result that a number of students were withdrawn by their parents. "These and similar calamities," observes the author of the *Annual Letters* of the Missouri Mission for 1839, "have inflicted on the college a wound that cannot be healed except with time." "It is not to be wondered at," he continues, "that studies this year were not pursued with the success one might desire. Our people had many an opportunity to practice the virtues befitting our vocation, for instance, charity in helping and consoling the sick, patience in adversity, resignation to the divine will. And hence, beyond peradventure of doubt, the calamities which men call evil redound in the end to their greater spiritual profit." Among those attacked by fever this year was Father Point himself. His life was despaired of. The last sacraments were administered and one evening at the hour of nine the students filed into his room to receive what was expected to be his final blessing. Meanwhile, the Religious of the Sacred Heart in their convent about a mile away were in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, determined not to desist from earnest supplica-

some St. Louis University students back to Louisiana. They left St. Louis April 7, 1839.

¹⁹ De Theux à sa mère, April 24, 1839 (A). Father Victor Paillasson died at Grand Coteau, November 9, 1840. He was born in France June 20, 1799, came to America as a diocesan priest and entered the Jesuit novitiate at Florissant, June 30, 1836. He attended Father Van Quickenborne on his death-bed.

tion till a change was wrought in the father's condition. On towards midnight the patient felt in truth a sudden accession of strength and asked the attendant father to bring him some food. The glad tidings were borne at once to the expectant nuns, who thereupon retired to a well-earned rest.

Father Verhaegen, after a survey (1840) of conditions in the college, concluded that it was not running smoothly under Father Point's administration and recommended thereupon to the Father General that he be given a successor. The recommendation was carried into effect. Father Point in his correspondence with Fathers Verhaegen and Roothaan entered into prolonged and lively justification of his conduct of affairs as head of the college. His inability or reluctance to acquiesce in the judgment of his superiors on the matters at issue was puzzling in view of the undoubted personal piety which marked him all through life. The truth of the matter is that Father Point was an enigmatic character. As was pointed out in connection with his Rocky Mountain career, his lapses on occasion in the matter of submissiveness to superiors apparently find their explanation not in perversity of will but in certain morbid mental states from which he was at intervals a sufferer. For one thing, he had never taken kindly to the transfer of Grand Coteau from the French Jesuits to those of Missouri, being under the impression that the Father General had been led to make this arrangement through dissatisfaction with his management of affairs at Grand Coteau. Father Roothaan replied to Father Abbadie, who was under a similar impression, that this was sheer imagination. Dissatisfaction with Father Point and alleged prejudices against him had had nothing to do with the transfer. The real motive behind it he had made known at the time to both Point and Verhaegen and there was nothing further to add. "The imagination," Father Roothaan wrote, "once in motion makes a man very unhappy and causes him to commit many faults without being aware of it. It is, as St. Teresa says, the crazy member of the household. No, my dear Fathers, the reasons which brought us to unite in one body your own colony and that of Missouri remain always the same and there is nothing to change in this decision" ²⁰

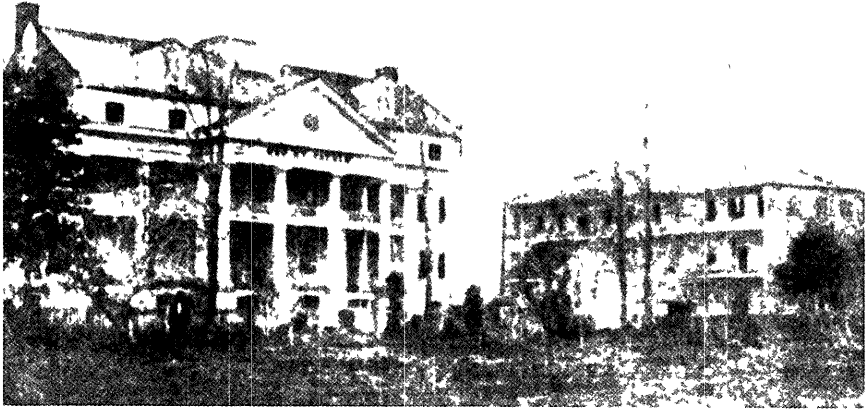
Side-lights on the course of things at Grand Coteau at this period are met with in the correspondence of Pierce Connolly, whose career was one of those tragedies which at intervals throw their shadow over the history of the Church. He was a convert from Protestantism, served for a while on the college staff at Grand Coteau as instructor in English and drawing, and was later raised to the priesthood, which he subsequently repudiated, spending his last years as an Anglican clergyman

²⁰ Roothaan à Abbadie, June 25, 1839 (AA).

in Italy. Meantime his devoted wife had entered the cloister with his approval, becoming foundress of a distinguished Catholic teaching congregation, the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus.²¹ At Grand Coteau Connelly lived on terms of intimacy with the Jesuit community and especially with Father Point, for whom he had a high regard. He wrote to Bishop Blanc of New Orleans

God knows there are few Bishops in America who have not need of consolations and I know no one who might not be pardoned for almost envying our diocese this blessed spot. The prosperity of the College seems to be in proportion to the troubles that have assailed it within and without. It is always (as I have ventured to write to some of our friends in Rome, though it might be considered *lèse majesté* to say so here) upon a better basis so far as regards studies than any Catholic school in the country (*expertus loquor*) and more upon the level with the great schools of the east, and the spirit which pervades the scholars is altogether admirable. Today there was a sort of spiritual tournament of prayers, acts, etc. which would have delighted you. All the oldest as well as the youngest of the pupils entered into it with the same simplicity and everyone or almost everyone of the highest class had communicated in the morning. We all wished for you, but no doubt something of the sort will be prepared for the time of your visit. Some little things also have happened to myself in the classes which would give you great pleasure to hear but are too long to tell. The connection indeed with St. Louis is *entre nous* a severe blow, but I think a letter from yourself to the Father General might put all back again *in statu quo* or at any rate relieve the good and merry Father Verhaegen from a post he was put in, as he told me, so much against his will and which he is so little fitted for at least if Louisiana is to be a part of his province. It is delightful to see him so zealous for his own college and so attached to it, but he is like a child in his notions of the country in general and especially of the South and East. He seems to consider his dear Missouri and Kentucky as the center of civilization and I believe would like to have all Europe as well as America modeled after them. The temporal affairs of the college are far better than could possibly have been expected in so short a time and as far as the rest, I cannot but congratulate you, Dearest Bishop, from my heart and humbly thank God for all that has been done for Grand Coteau. There has certainly been a wonderful Providence in regard to it. In Father Point

²¹ *The Life of Cornelia Connelly, 1809-1879, Foundress of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus* (London, 1922). During Mrs. Connelly's stay at Grand Coteau Father Point was her confessor and spiritual guide. "She always spoke of him with the greatest veneration, saying that it was he who had first kindled in her soul the desire for perfection. She would tell of his wonderful power as a missionary and say that he was believed to have the gift of miracles. She learned later that though he was at the time ignorant of Mr. Connelly's intentions as she was herself, he had yet divined that the priestly and the religious life would be the end of their vocation." (P. 33)



St Charles College, Grand Coteau, La The original brick structure erected by Nicholas Point, S J, in 1838.

especially the more I know him the more I am astonished at our good fortune Of all the PP S.J. [Fathers of the Society of Jesus] that I have met in Italy and France, in Germany, England and America, I certainly do not think there are more than five or six who can be considered equal or superior to him . . .

Father Verhaegen has given us a sad blow in the removal of Father Point, one who so well understood the necessities of the country and the means that should be taken to satisfy them But in God is our help He certainly has nothing to regret, his work here has been crowned with such a success as was beyond all hope—he has done what he had to do and well—the new labors that he is called to will make up more merit and bring with them greater consolation than others of a higher and greater usefulness . . .

I believe nearly all the religious have made their retreat—the last set are now going through the Exercises at the College Our intercourse is so almost exclusively with these holy people that we might almost be considered a *tuers ordre* My little wife took Adeline and the baby along with the servant to the convent and went regularly through the ten days—and the day after they came out I began with Father De Theux and the English half of the Fathers and brothers at the college ²²

On July 21, 1840, Father Point, having been relieved of the rectorship of Grand Coteau, took leave of his community and departed for St. Louis.²³

Father Joseph Soller, one of Bishop Blanc's Jesuit recruits from France, who had been engaged since his arrival in America in ministerial work in New Orleans, was named Point's successor. He visited Grand Coteau August 6 and, after looking over the ground, returned to New Orleans, leaving Father Abbadie in charge of the institution until the close of the school-year The last months of the session 1839-1840 were marked by some disagreeable display of feeling against the Jesuit group on the part of anti-clerical neighbors. Father De Theux returning from a visit to St. Martinville was accosted by a man who threatened to strike him. Father Abbadie received letters threatening fifty stripes to every member of the faculty unless they left Grand Coteau. Finally, there was an outbreak of slaves in Lafayette, a parish adjoining St. Landry's, the blame of which malicious persons attempted

²² Pierce Connolly to Blanc, March 19, 1839, August 4, 1840, October 9, 1841 (I) Connolly later apologized to Father Roothaan with much feeling for having taken sides with Father Point in the latter's differences with Father Verhaegen (AA)

²³ For Father Point's subsequent missionary activities at Westport (Kansas City) Missouri, and in the Rocky Mountains, cf *supra*, Chap VIII, § 4, XXIV, § 9, XXVI, § 1

to fix upon the Jesuits.²⁴ Nothing came of all this unfriendliness, which soon simmered down thanks to the courageous attitude of protest promptly taken in behalf of the fathers by the citizens of Grand Coteau.

The session 1842-1843 showed a marked falling off in attendance and closed with only forty students. Soller, the rector, informed Father Roothaan of the critical condition of the college

Events succeed one another so rapidly that I am obliged to write to you more frequently than you desire. Father Verhaegen wrote to me some fifteen days ago to announce to us that the college of St Charles would be transferred to the banks of Lake Pontchartrain in the neighborhood of New Orleans. He told me at the same time that he was awaiting orders from you. He advised me to announce our departure to the people of Grand Coteau, but still to tell them that we would remain if only they could provide means for the support of the teachers. Here are the conditions which we thought our duty to communicate to a meeting of gentlemen which was called by us

"1st condition. We wish you to be able to assure us that next year at the resumption of classes, that is to say, in mid-October next, we shall have a sufficient number of students for the decent subsistence of the teachers without our being obliged to contract debts. With the low rate for boarding which I made known to you I do not think we shall be able to handle our affairs properly with fewer than 70 or 80 pupils

"2nd condition. We desire to have a guarantee right away or in a few days as to whether we can be assured the number of pupils indicated"

The people of Grand Coteau were greatly distressed over the sad news of our departure. They gave us many tokens of regret, but in the general distress which weighs on Louisiana and brings down all fortunes, they can do almost nothing for us. I have asked Father Verhaegen to come here on the ground, examine everything for himself and make a decision. We have only 37 pupils and even they do not pay. We are finding ourselves in an extremely critical position. In the matter of conduct, application to study and piety our students give us great consolation.²⁵

²⁴ "He [Abbadie] will tell you also of the horrors that were so near overtaking us from an intended insurrection of the negroes and of our anxiety about poor Nace who was one of those that were taken up in our neighborhood. . . a loaded pistol having unluckily been put in his possession by a runaway brother and accidentally discovered in his hands. As for all the threats of lynching the Fathers and driving them out of the country, they have excited nothing so far as I can learn, but a general disposition to protect them." Connolly to Blanc, September 16, 1840 (I)

²⁵ Soller à Roothaan, August 1, 1843 (AA). The circumstances that militated against the success of the college are enumerated in a contemporary document probably of date somewhat prior to Soller's rectorship: "An out-of-the-way and almost inaccessible location, the temper of the student-body, light-minded and independent, the unreasonableness of parents who practiced a sort of idolatry towards their children, the lack of religion and the multiplicity of things to teach, a great number of enemies who constantly seek to harm us, the jealousy of other colleges." (AA).

Father Verhaegen was not to be further distressed with the problem of Grand Coteau. In September, 1843, he was succeeded in the office of vice-provincial by Father Van de Velde, who at once conferred with his consultants about the suppression of the college or its transfer to another place. It was agreed that no action be taken pending the new vice-provincial's visitation of the college. Meantime the students had been dismissed at the close of the session 1842-1843 without assurance being given them that the school would be continued. Van de Velde decided to keep it open and appointed November 21 the first day of the new session, an announcement to this effect being given to the press. Four students registered the first day and the attendance during the year reached thirty. Board and tuition charges were again lowered and externs or day-scholars admitted.

During Father Soller's term of office the disagreement that arose between the college authorities and the contractor of the new building was brought to a happy issue. Father Verhaegen made allusion to it in a letter to Bishop Rosati, December, 1839.

The college of St Charles gets along well, as far as the number of students is concerned, but in financial matters its position is a critical one. Good Father Point, the Rector, having no experience of the Yankee tricks of the country, made only a verbal arrangement with the contractor of the building and now this gentleman does nothing but pile fraud on fraud. His estimates are exorbitant and though our Fathers have made many sacrifices to avoid law-suits, he is so obstinate that nothing we have done satisfied him. I had a talk with him myself, and I think that since justice is on our side, it is better to have this unfortunate affair definitely settled in court.

It appears that no written agreement had been required from Ardennes, the contractor. Work on the building was needlessly delayed. Asked again and again to push operations, Ardennes maintained that the contract was no longer binding on account of unforeseen difficulties. Friends of the college intervened to effect a settlement but in vain. Father Point finally put the matter into the hands of a lawyer, Mr. Simon, whose opinion he communicated to Father Verhaegen. The latter thought the opinion a sound one and replied that the case should be taken into court. Meanwhile, Soller, succeeding Point as rector, dismissed Ardennes's workmen and hired others. He sent Negroes to haul the lumber which the people of St. Martinville had promised the Bishop for the new college; but mischief-makers intervened, as on other occasions, and the Negroes returned without the lumber. Whether legal action was actually taken against the contractor, does not appear. At all events, at his own petition a settlement was finally reached, seem-

ingly on his paying an indemnity of four thousand dollars, though the terms of the settlement are not clear.

Father Soller, who was thought by Father Van de Velde to be lacking in decision and courage, was supplanted in the office of rector, April 17, 1844, by the Missouri Jesuit, Father Van den Eycken, who on taking office assumed the name of Oakley, a clever English rendering of his Flemish patronymic. He was a man of artistic temperament and tastes, a lover of music and an adept in mathematics, which he taught the students during the entire term of his rectorship. During his incumbency the attendance notably improved. His first year began with twenty-three students and ended with sixty-three, his second, with sixty-four, ending with ninety-seven, his third, with fifty-one, ending with eighty-six. The debt, which was twenty thousand dollars in 1843, was almost paid off three years later. Father Oakley introduced Greek into the curriculum, which he attempted to improve and perfect in other ways. The college staff, though never fully adequate to the needs of the institution, was reenforced at intervals by accessions from the North. After the beginning of Soller's administration, these included Fathers Sautois, Truyens, d'Hoop, Parret, Parrondo and Van Hulst, the scholastics Baekers, Coosemans, Florentine Boudreaux and the coadjutor-brothers, Donahue, Schmitz, Offstetter, Dieudonne, Willebois, Van der Borcht, Power and Ryan.

In April, 1846, the scholastics Mearns, Truyens and Van Hulst were raised to the priesthood in New Orleans by Bishop Blanc. Father Oakley could ill spare their services in the college and he urged the Bishop to send them back at the earliest opportunity, though it were the very day of the ordination.²⁶ The improved situation in the college is reflected in lines written by Oakley to the Bishop

Everything goes on marvelously well in the college, our pupils have never given us so much satisfaction, not even when they were only 23 or 30, while at present they are 104 . . . All these terrible mishaps which have made so much noise in the newspapers did not check us in the least and the pupils arrived safe and sound at the College on Wednesday, September 1, at ten in the morning. On the 6th despite all the rains we already had 76 pupils and today we count 98, some are still late.²⁷

§ 3. LOUISIANA STATIONS

While the majority of the Louisiana Jesuits were engaged in educational work at Grand Coteau, a few of their number exercised their zeal in the parochial ministry. The parish of St. Charles had been as-

²⁶ Oakley à Blanc, April, 1846 (I)

²⁷ Oakley à Blanc, September 16, 1846 (I)

signed them by Bishop Blanc as one of the inducements for them to settle at Grand Coteau. It covered a great stretch of territory, reaching to the Gulf of Mexico on the south and including, besides Opelousas, the towns of Lafayette and St. Martinville, and at its southern limit, the district of Calcasieu. The first Jesuit pastor of St. Charles was Father Peter De Vos, who in 1839 was summoned north to take up the duties of master of novices. He was succeeded at St. Charles by Father Theodore De Theux, late professor of theology at St. Louis University. "The parish is immense," De Theux wrote December 24, 1839, to his mother in Belgium, "150 miles long and about 20 wide. We have a good number of poor whites, not beggars, however, and very many slaves. There have been communicants every Sunday—most of them persons of advanced age, who for lack of opportunity or some other reason have not received the sacraments."²⁸

The *Annual Letters* for 1839 dwell on the difficult ministry that fell to the lot of the pastor of Grand Coteau and his assistant. "Scattered over a vast prairie which extends as far as the Mexican Gulf live a number of Catholic families who on account of the great distance and the rough roads cannot reach the parish church. To visit and instruct them in the principles of faith and fortify them with the sacraments is no light task. Among the places visited this year was Calcasieu. The inhabitants welcomed the missionary with enthusiasm and prepared to purchase ground for a church. It is regrettable that owing to lack of workers this promising field cannot be cultivated with proper care." Father Victor Paillason, the assistant pastor, died in November, 1840, and in the course of 1842 Father De Theux was recalled North. His place as pastor of St. Charles Church was taken by Father Florian Sautois, who remained in charge until the release of the Louisiana houses from Missouri.

In New Orleans Soller was zealously at work from his arrival with Bishop Blanc's party of 1837 up to his appointment in 1840 to the rectorship of Grand Coteau. When Point summoned his fellow-Jesuits to assist him in setting the infant college on foot, Soller, at the Bishop's request, was permitted to remain in New Orleans. He was the only German-speaking priest at the time in the city and his services were in constant demand by the emigrants then beginning to reach the American ports in large numbers from Germany. In addition to this ministry he attended the hospital conducted by the Sisters of Charity. His place of residence during these years was at the church attached to the Ursuline convent, of which he was chaplain. It was the General's desire, explicitly declared in the decree effecting the union of the Missouri

²⁸ De Theux à sa mère, December 24, 1839 (A)

and the Louisiana missions, that Soller should, in accordance with Jesuit practice, be assigned a fellow-priest of his order as companion. Verhaegen accordingly decided in March, 1839, to send Fathers Mignard and Ladavière to New Orleans, as soon as Father De Theux and his party should arrive from the North at Grand Coteau. In the event, only Ladavière was sent. He appears in the register of the Missouri Mission for 1840 as superior of the "Mission of New Orleans" with Soller as associate *operarius*. The appointment was perhaps a merely nominal one, for Ladavière at the time was advanced in years, being in fact the senior member of the Missouri Mission. He had entered the Society of Jesus in 1814, the year of its restoration, and had labored in the American mission-field for many years in various places, among them New Orleans. He returned to Europe only to find his way back to Louisiana as one of Bishop Blanc's recruits of 1837. In 1840 the ministry of Ladavière and Soller in New Orleans was brought to an end, the first-named assuming charge of the parish of St. Michel, and the latter going to Grand Coteau to succeed Point as rector of the College. Thereafter, during the Missouri administration of the Louisiana Mission New Orleans appears to have been without any resident Jesuit priest if we except the year 1845-1846, when Father Ladavière was again stationed in the metropolis, residing with Bishop Blanc at his residence of St. Mary's.

The *Annual Letters* for 1839 declare that a Jesuit residence was soon to be started in the German quarter of New Orleans. In that case, comments the annalist, "Ours who disembark so often at this noble port will have a convenient and pleasant place of lodging."²⁹ The residence was not to be established by Missouri Jesuits. While Father Verhaegen began in 1840 to plan for one in accordance with Bishop Blanc's desire that the Jesuits should settle in the chief city of his diocese, in October of that year he decided not to take further steps in the affair pending the arrival of certain subjects whom the General had engaged to send from Rome. These were apparently not sent and neither Verhaegen nor his successor, Van de Velde, opened a residence in New Orleans. In June, 1841, the former wrote to Bishop Rosati in Europe "Bishop Blanc is very anxious for us to open a residence of the Society in New Orleans. The property he offers us alongside of the orphan asylum is large enough and well located, but we are without means to build a

²⁹ A residence and even a college in New Orleans were contemplated by the French Jesuits from their first arrival in Louisiana "It is then with the Superior [of the Missouri Mission] that our Fathers of New Orleans and Grand Coteau will henceforth correspond. It is this same Mission which is charged with the support of the college and residence which there was question of starting in New Orleans" Guidée à Blanc, 1839 (?) (I).

church and house for the missionaries. I believe the spiritual harvest there would be abundant—it pains me accordingly to be compelled to delay the undertaking.”³⁰ When Father Gleizal of St. Louis University visited New Orleans in 1848 to conduct missions in the churches of the city, the impression made by him on the Catholic laity was so favorable that an effort was made to retain him permanently in their midst. A petition to this effect was presented to Father Maisounabe, the recently appointed superior of the Louisiana Mission, which had been made a dependency of the province of Lyons, but circumstances did not allow of the transfer of Father Gleizal to New Orleans. Some had hoped that his influence would be instrumental in securing the funds needed to construct the contemplated residence. But Father Maisounabe was in a position before long to go ahead with the project on his own account. “We shall soon have a residence with a chapel and school,” he informed Elet, the Missouri vice-provincial, June 17, 1848 “The land is bought, I count on beginning to build in July.”³¹ The first Jesuit residence in New Orleans was opened in the midsummer of 1848, Father Maisounabe, its founder, dying a few weeks later.

Sixty miles above New Orleans on the left bank of the Mississippi is the village of St. Michel. Forests of cypress trees extend for miles above and below the town, those near the river being for several months in the year partly under water. The people are of French-Canadian origin, descendants of the Acadian exiles of the mid-eighteenth century who had gone forth from their homes in the North to build new ones in semi-tropical Louisiana. St. Michel had its convent of Religious of the Sacred Heart dating from 1825 and its stone church built in 1832 by Father Charles de la Croix, to whom is due the historic brick church at Florissant.³² It was to this restful Creole village of St. Michel that Father Ladavière was assigned in 1840. His past services to religion

³⁰ Verhaegen à Rosati, June 4, 1841 “Fruit would be produced there [New Orleans] in abundance. The success which Father Soller has met with there proves this assertion. But even though *operarii* were available, this residence cannot be established as the Bishop, besides the property, offers nothing towards building the house and church.” Verhaegen ad Roothaan, April 22, 1841 (AA)

³¹ Maisounabe à Elet, June 17, 1848 (A) Cf. also Albert H. Biever, S. J., *The Jesuits in New Orleans and the Mississippi Valley* (New Orleans, 1924).

³² In a letter to De Smet Father De La Croix recalls in a vein of pleasant recollection his ministry at St. Michel “As to the church I built at St. Michel in 1838, it can scarcely have undergone much change. It was a large and beautiful structure for that country. It cost about \$20,000. I love to recall the hardships and annoyances I underwent to build those two churches and to establish the first convent of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart at St. Michel in 1825, by raising up and down the country a subscription amounting to about \$8,000. God be praised, I should never have succeeded but for the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and the Guardian Angel, whom I invoked constantly.” De La Croix à De Smet, June 25, 1855. (A).

elicit comment in the *Annual Letters* for that year "Here [at St. Michel] resides with a companion the senior member of our Vice-Province, a man who has seen long service May the venerable father continue to labor for many years in pulpit and confessional until the Lord calls him to his reward."³³

§ 4. THE ST. LOUIS JESUITS WITHDRAW FROM LOUISIANA

The annexation of the Louisiana Mission to Missouri was apparently meant by Father Roothaan to be a provisional arrangement only pending the time when the province of Paris should be in a position to equip it with an adequate personnel. As a result, then, of Missouri's uncertain tenure of the southern mission, difficulties arose as to the status of its original members and especially their relation to the provinces in France, from which they were never really detached. The Missouri registers from 1840 to 1847 enter these Jesuits in the list of those belonging *de jure* to other provinces but residing at the time in the Missouri jurisdiction of the order. At a meeting of Father Verhaegen with his consultors in August, 1841, a resolution was passed to the effect that the fathers of the Paris and Lyons provinces should either be permanently assigned to the Missouri Vice-province or else should not be withdrawn before five or six years and then only at their own petition. In March, 1843, a request from Father Boulanger, provincial of Paris, that Fathers Mignard and Soller be restored to him was met by a counter-proposal from Verhaegen that Boulanger take over St. Charles College with its staff from the Paris and Lyons provinces. In September of the same year Van de Velde, the newly appointed vice-provincial, after deliberating with his advisers in St. Louis on the suppression of the college or its transfer to some other place and journeying to Louisiana to study the problem on the ground, decided to maintain the institution at least for a further period of time. Three years later Soller, relieved of his rectorship at Grand Coteau, was sent to join his brethren of the Paris province at their little college of St. Mary's in Kentucky in accordance with the Father General's express desire.

Without the assistance, however, of the French fathers, the Missouri superior did not feel himself in a position to equip St. Charles College with the necessary staff.³⁴ It became, as a consequence, his settled policy

³³ The *Catholic Almanac*, 1842, registers Father Ladavière as Rector at St. Michel, Bringier's P O with the Rev C Moracchini, a diocesan priest, as assistant. Two stations were attended. Father Pierre Ladavière was born in Condrieu, Department of the Rhone, France, September 23, 1777, entered the Society of Jesus August 20, 1814, and died April 3, 1858, at Spring Hill College, Alabama.

³⁴ On account of lack of men Van de Velde was obliged in December, 1843,

not to accede to requests of the French provincials for the recall of their members in Louisiana unless they agreed at the same time to assume entire charge of the college and thus disembarass Missouri of a burden which it was carrying only with extreme difficulty. A resolution to this effect was put on record by Van de Velde and his consultants in January, 1846. In June of the same year Boulanger announced to the Missouri superior that St Charles College had been attached by the Father General to the province of Lyons, accompanying the intelligence with a request that Fathers Mignard and Duranquet be restored to his jurisdiction. Van de Velde deferred acceding to this request until formal intimation of the transfer of the college should come from the General. Such intimation was conveyed by Father Roothaan under date of July 14, 1846:

I judge that it will make for the better government of the Vice-Province to restore the College of St Charles to the French Fathers. An opportunity to execute the plan presents itself now in the opening of a new college, Springhill, in the diocese of Mobile. I decree, therefore, that these two colleges be assigned not to the Province of Paris, but to the Province of Lyons. In the course of this year Father Mailland will send, together with the personnel appointed to begin the Mobile college, one or other Father and perhaps some teachers for the College of St Charles. In view of the slender resources of the Vice-Province, Father Mailland will be at pains to restore to it before long, say within a few years, all such as strictly belong to it and, perhaps, some coadjutor-brothers. Those originally sent from the French Provinces will of course remain.³⁵

to refuse petitions from Bishops Miles of Nashville and Chanche of Natchez for a college, at least for day-students, in their respective dioceses. About the same time an offer to take over a college in Jefferson, La., was likewise declined. "I would consider no further taking over the college in Jefferson with its debts." Roothaan ad Van de Velde, April 10, 1847. "It is deplorable indeed if the college in Jefferson should fall into the hands of the Protestants, but that is no reason for the Society to burden itself with new debts." Roothaan ad Van de Velde, September 7, 1844. (A)

³⁵ Roothaan ad Van de Velde, July 14, 1846. (A) In this same letter Father Roothaan notes that Van de Velde had repeatedly asked for the retrocession of Grand Coteau to the French Jesuits. Van de Velde himself observed in January, 1847, that some of his associates, among them Verhaegen and Elet, disapproved of his giving up Grand Coteau, however, it was for the best interests of all concerned that he had petitioned the General "to annul the decree of annexation and put things back on their former footing." Van de Velde à Roothaan, January 2, 1847. (AA) Cf. also Van de Velde à Blanc (?), August 14, 1846. (I) "It seems that our Fathers of Lyons have agreed to take the college and seminary [Spring Hill] of Bishop Portier. I had written to Rome to propose my ideas on Jefferson College and to ask for subjects if our Reverend Father General would agree to accept it. I then wrote to ask whether, if he thought it proper, the Province of Lyons might also take charge of Jefferson and Grand Coteau colleges. I believe this plan to be

The winter of 1846-1847 was spent by Father Van de Velde in the South arranging the details of the transfer. Father Abbadie was named rector of the college by the General in succession to Father Oakley with the option, however, of declining the appointment. He chose to accept and was accordingly installed in office on February 2, 1847, on which day also, so it was understood, the General's decree of the previous July attaching the two southern colleges to the province of Lyons was to be carried into effect. In this settlement, as determined by the General, Van de Velde thought he saw some practical difficulties. It had been his expectation that the Grand Coteau college would pass into the hands of the French Jesuits of Kentucky, who formed a mission dependent on the province of Paris and had been long enough in the states to make acquaintance with English.³⁶ Now, with the college assigned to the Lyonese Jesuits, he feared that the Missourians would be retained inconveniently long on its staff, until such time, namely, as would be required to give the newcomers practical acquaintance with the vernacular. Bishop Blanc, informed of the situation, advised that no change of administration be made until September 1, 1847, so that the fathers arriving from France might be promptly distributed among the Mis-

preferable to that of lending us subjects of another Province while this Province has independent subjects in the neighborhood" It would appear that the vice-provincial, on receiving the General's letter of July 14, 1846, had appealed to him to suspend execution of the decree, proposing a new arrangement by which the vice-province of Missouri would not only retain Grand Coteau, but also take over Jefferson College in Louisiana Roothaan replied August 27, 1846 "This arrangement made in accordance with the repeated [petition?] of your Reverence cannot any longer be changed." Later, October 8, of the same year, Roothaan wrote to Van de Velde "Even though the Province of Lyons does not accept these two colleges [Grand Coteau and Jefferson], I would altogether dissuade your Reverence from accepting Jefferson The reasons against it are obvious, excessively large debts, as things stand, and a lack of trained members Accordingly, by ceding the College of St Charles to the Province of Lyons I judged myself to be consulting the real welfare and development of the Vice-Province, which would thus the more easily train men in due fashion in letters and spirituality The only reason which seemed to make for acceptance, namely, a good opportunity perhaps never more to return, seems to me no reason at all Provided we have well-educated men, colleges will not be lacking especially in America and certainly your Reverence will agree with me that we ought to think first of educating our men rather than of multiplying houses." (AA).

³⁶ "For more than four years the Superiors of our Society in France have been urging the Superiors of the Vice-Province of Missouri to restore to our Mission in Kentucky the subjects who comprised the community of Grand Coteau at the time this house was attached to the Vice-Province So far circumstances have not permitted them to dispense with these Fathers with the result that this Mission has found itself embarrassed all along and in a position where it was impossible for it to take a single step forward. And yet our Superiors kept on enjoining us to make renewed appeals to Father Verhaegen" Murphy a Blanc, April 25, 1844. (I)

souri houses with a view to their learning English. The Missouri vice-provincial even went so far as to suggest that while the Mobile or future Spring Hill College be given to Lyons, Grand Coteau remain attached to Missouri. But Father Roothaan would admit of no modification in the arrangement he had made, insisting that "the colleges of St. Charles and Mobile and any others that might be founded in Louisiana belong to the Province of Lyons until such time as the erection of a new Province should appear possible."³⁷ A written agreement to cover the terms of the transfer having been drawn up, it was subscribed to by Abbadié on the part of the province of Lyons and by Van de Velde on the part of the vice-province of Missouri.

In the beginning of February, 1847, Father Maisounabe, superior of the Mission of New Orleans, now transferred from the jurisdiction of Missouri to that of Lyons, arrived with a contingent of Lyonese fathers at Grand Coteau. Fathers Oakley and d'Hoop and Mr. Florentine Boudreaux were at once withdrawn from the college, but most of the other Missouri members of the faculty remained at their posts until the summer of 1848. Maisounabe was not in a position to dispense with their services sooner. "First," he wrote to Van de Velde, "I must thank you for all the services you have rendered to the College of Grand Coteau since the direction of it has been confided to our Province. I expressed my thanks to you on this score in the first letter I wrote to you after my arrival in the United States. Yes, according to your own expression [letter of September 19, 1847] you have done everything which you might reasonably be expected to do to save the College of Grand Coteau from failure."³⁸ He then proceeded to offer the restoration of all the Missouri members with the exception of two scholastics and two coadjutor-brothers. He was doing this even at great inconvenience to the college and though not obliged to the sacrifice by any explicit instruction from the Father General; but he was eager to accommodate Missouri and place it in position to man the college of Bardstown, which it had recently accepted. Shortly after writing in this sense to Van de Velde, the New Orleans superior was informed by Father Roothaan "The dispersal of the Province of Upper Germany enables me to assign a number of subjects to your Mission so that you will find it possible to restore to Missouri the subjects that belong to it." In view of these reinforcements Father Maisounabe felt that he could dispense with the services of the Missouri members still resident at the college. Accordingly, on July 19, 1848, the day following the "Distribution of Prizes," Father Van Hulst left Grand

³⁷ Roothaan à (?) Van de Velde, April 10, 1847. (AA)

³⁸ Maisounabe à Van de Velde, June 16, 1848 (A)

Coteau, taking with him a party of five coadjutor-brothers, all of whom were destined for the college at Bardstown. He was followed on July 26 by Fathers De Leeuw and Sautois and three scholastics. They were the remnant of the Missouri colony at Grand Coteau and with their departure the work of the Missouri Vice-province in Louisiana was at an end. The work, dating its inception from Father Roothaan's decree of annexation, July 12, 1838, had lasted a decade.³⁹

³⁹ The question of reannexing the Louisiana Mission to Missouri was reopened in 1852, also in 1861 and 1880