

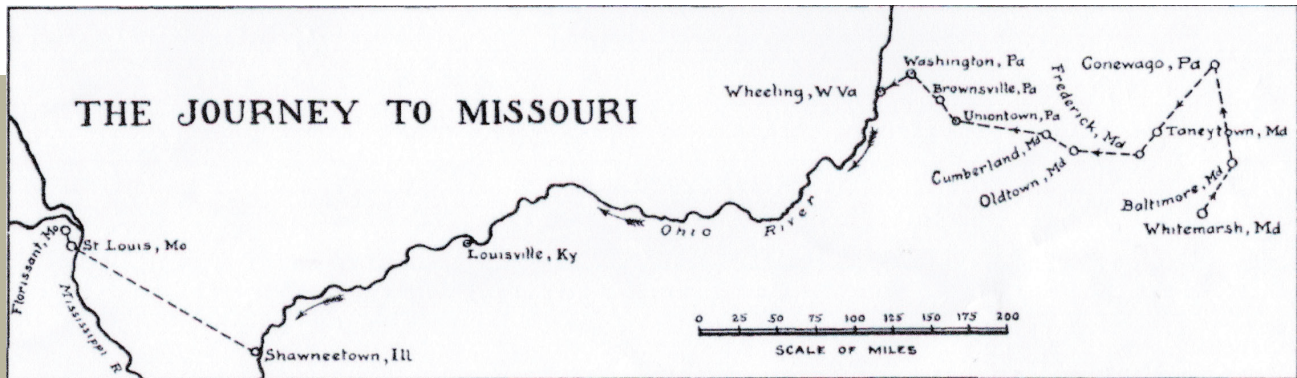


JESUITS®

Recovering the Stories of “Ours” Since 1823:  
The Missouri Province Legacy

Ellen Skerrett

## Introduction



*The route (Cumberland Road, Ohio River, Shawneetown – St. Louis Road) followed by the Jesuit emigrant party of 1823. Compiled by GJ Garraghan SJ, drawn by John P. Markoe, SJ.*

In celebration of the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Jesuits’ arrival in St. Louis in 1823, historian Ellen Skerrett has uncovered stories of “Ours,” some that have been forgotten, others never known. The Missouri Jesuits’ encounter with American life in all its complexity is a transnational adventure story. Thousands of Jesuit priests and brothers devoted their lives to building up this extraordinary mission that began a few years after the restoration of the Society of Jesus in 1814. Their work continues today, extending across the Central and Southern United States, as well as Belize and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

Skerrett’s essay, illustrated with rare documents and photographs from the Jesuit Archives & Research Center (JARC) in St. Louis, explores themes of immigration and adaptation, as well as innovation, occasionally born of failure. As director of JARC, it is my hope that in the years to come Jesuits will contribute their own stories – in their own voices – enriching the historical record. In the words of the late John W. Padberg, SJ (1926-2021), “The architectural, social, psychological and spiritual history of Jesuit dwelling places is still to be told in its entirety.”

– **David P. Miros, Ph.D.**

# Celebrating 200 Years of Jesuits in St. Louis

## The Pioneers

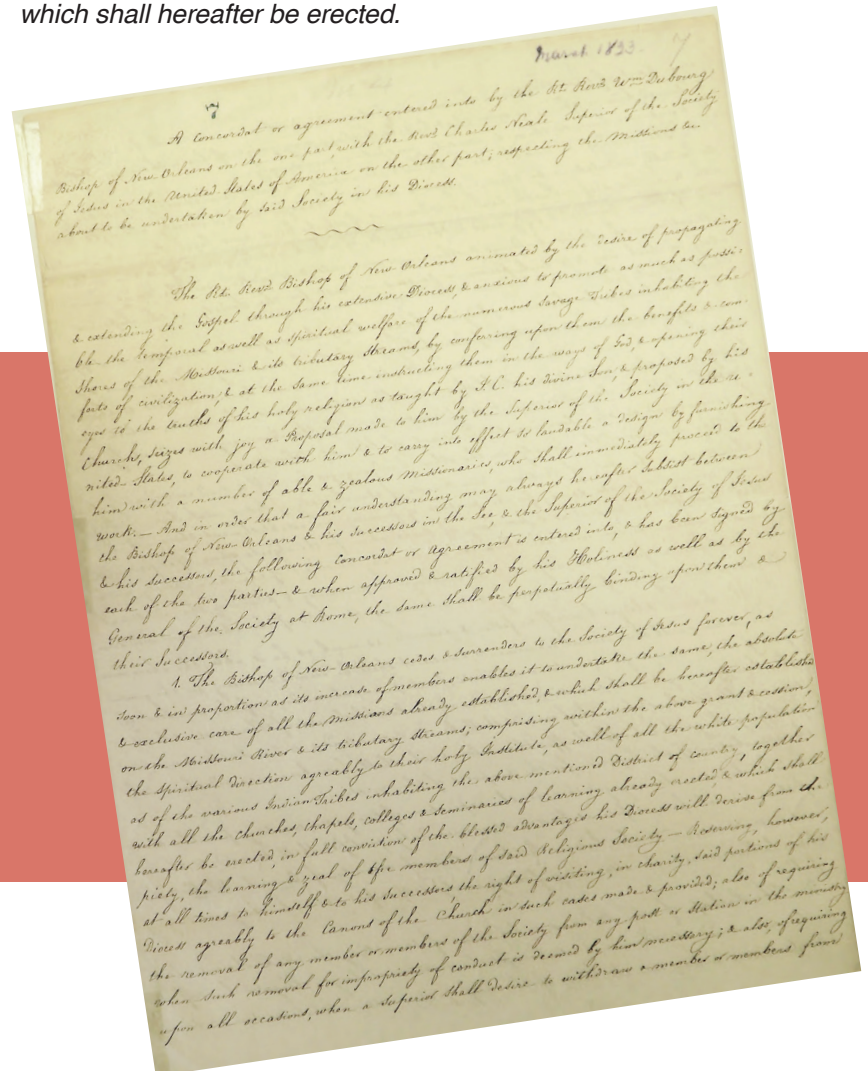
“... the eyes of all are  
turned upon you  
& expect much from your  
prudent exertions.”

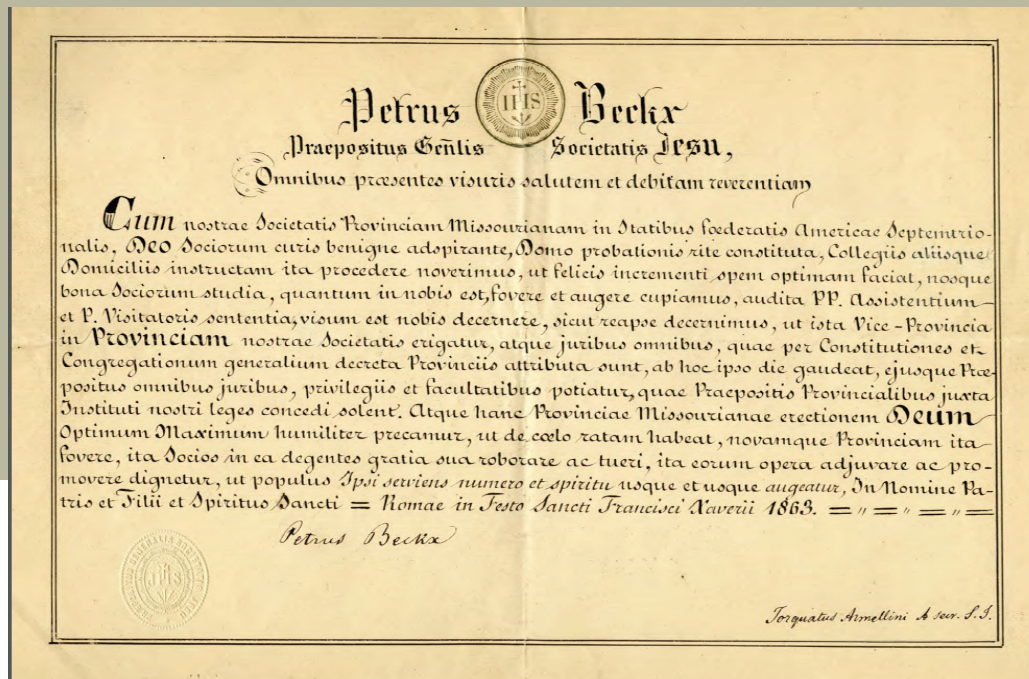
– Bishop Benedict Fenwick to Charles Felix Van Quickenborne, SJ, September 10, 1823

Concordat letter listing all of the churches, chapels, colleges  
and seminaries of learning already erected and  
which shall hereafter be erected.



Superior General Peter Beckx





Superior General Beckx decree establishing Missouri Province



Saint Stanislaus Seminary c. 1883

## *Our Founders*

**Fr. Charles Felix Van Quickenborne, SJ**, superior and master of novices

**Fr. Peter Joseph Timmermans, SJ**

**Francis De Maillet, nSJ**

**Br. Peter De Meyer, SJ**

**Peter John De Smet, nSJ**

**John Anthony Elet, nSJ**

**Br. Henry Reiselman, SJ**

**John Baptist Smedts, nSJ**

**Br. Charles Strahan, SJ**

**Judocus Van Assche, nSJ**

**Peter John Verhaegen, nSJ**

**Felix Livinus Verreydt, nSJ**

With the Jesuits, as memorialized at Calvary Cemetery in St. Louis, were three enslaved couples whose labor, though not freely given, contributed significantly to the establishment and success of the mission:

**Thomas and Mary Brown**

**Isaac and Susan Hawkins**

**Moses and Nancy Queen**

## *The Beginnings*

When the first members of the Missouri Mission – 18 in all – arrived in St. Louis on May 31, 1823, they may have wondered how – in God’s name – they could live up to the terms of an agreement made by Fr. Charles Neale, SJ (1751-1823), superior of the Jesuits in the United States.

The historic document authored by Bishop Benedict Fenwick (1782-1846) of New Orleans on March 19, 1823, entrusted the Jesuits with “absolute and exclusive care” of White residents as well as “various Indian tribes...together with all the churches, chapels, colleges and seminaries of learning” that Jesuits would erect in the years to come. The concordat also envisioned that farm work and construction on the 350-acre property in Florissant, Missouri, would be shared by “two or three Lay Brothers ...with at least four or five or six [N]egroes.”

Not spelled out were expectations for the seven Belgian novices who had travelled with Fathers Charles Van Quickenborne, SJ (1788-1837), and Peter Timmermans, SJ (1783-1824), from White Marsh, Maryland, the last 150 miles on foot from Shawneetown, Illinois. Did they realize that they would be building their own novitiate, with little time or energy for study? Jesuit sources provide no clue except to record that ground for St. Stanislaus Seminary was broken on the Feast of St. Ignatius, July 31, 1823, and on the next day and for months thereafter, Novices Peter J. De Smet (1801-1873) and Judocus Van Assche (1800-1877) distinguished themselves with shovel and axe. The resulting log structure came to be regarded as the “cradle of the Province,” a modest beginning for “the longest continually operated Jesuit novitiate in the United States.”

The steady growth of the Missouri Mission from two priests in 1823 to 29 by 1844, and 55 in 1856, would seem to have been cause for celebration. But Jesuit Superior General Peter Beckx, SJ (1795-1887; Superior General from 1853 to 1887), was far from convinced. Writing to the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith on March 10, 1856, he acknowledged important endeavors in Missouri, Ohio, and Kentucky, and among the Osage and Potawatomi, but worried about the Jesuits’ ability to “carry so heavy a load with such paltry and feeble resources.” He was especially concerned that young novices were not receiving the “very necessary literary and scientific instruction” that was a hallmark of the Society of Jesus.

## *The Beginnings*

*Rock Building,  
Saint Stanislaus Seminary*



Father William Stack Murphy, SJ (1803-1875), vice provincial in St. Louis, acknowledged that “vocations will be scarce in this age and country.” Writing to Maryland Provincial George Stonestreet, SJ (1813-1885), Fr. Murphy confided in 1854 that Jesuits faced continuing competition from Redemptorists whose “zealous converts are greatly taken with the displays and machinery of missions.” Yet Fr. Murphy believed that “we have no reason to be dissatisfied [because Jesuit novices] learn by teaching in the colleges.”

From his vantage point in Rome, however, Superior General Beckx envisioned that the Missouri Vice Province would “notably deteriorate and quickly fall to pieces like a body from which the nerves have been cut away or a building from which the foundation has been removed.”

Despite the concerns from the Jesuit Curia in Rome and being stretched thin in terms of personnel, by the 1850s, the Missouri Jesuits had left their imprint on the urban landscapes in St. Louis and Cincinnati and were looking ahead to a foundation in Chicago.

## *The Beginnings*

The Jesuits’ approach to worship and education had paid dividends, no small feat in light of recurring waves of anti-Catholicism. Throughout the 19th century, Protestant ministers thundered in pulpits about the threat Jesuits posed to American life. In 1831, the Cincinnati Christian Journal expressed “grief and mortification” at the number of Protestant children enrolling in Catholic colleges and schools. Similar sentiments were echoed by the American Bible Society in 1832, warning that Protestant teachers and ministers were desperately needed in the Mississippi Valley to save families from the “bogs and marshes of the Roman Catholic religion.” The concern was warranted. At the time Saint Louis University received its charter from the Missouri State Legislature on December 28, 1832, the college enrolled “more than 150 students, of whom half are Protestant.”



*Young Jesuit instructors at Saint Louis University, c. 1885*



## *The Beginnings*

What Superior General Beckx did not appreciate fully was that religious life in the United States was an adventure for talented and ambitious young men and that it offered identity and community. From their first day in Florissant, recalled Fr. Van Quickenborne, “We all go in full Jesuitical dress at all times and in all places.” While black cassocks were a visible sign of shared mission and purpose, daily life and rituals at St. Stanislaus Seminary also played a cohesive role for immigrant novices from “Belga, Hibernis, Germanus, Gallus, and Hollandus.” Food and drink mattered, too. Jesuit priests, scholastics and brothers enjoyed “wine for the whole community” at least seven times a year on major feast days, events that featured the reading of poems in Latin, Greek, English and German. Also welcome were “extraordinary recreation days,” extra dishes on days honoring “all the present Feasts of the Saints of the Society,” and “dessert pancakes...with molasses or honey.”

Reports to Rome about the seminary buildings made possible by the labor of novices such as Peter De Smet and enslaved men contain few details beyond physical dimensions. In contrast with histories of secular institutions, Jesuit sources did not document dates of construction or architects’ names, much less accounts of dedication ceremonies. But we know that the bricks and mortar and interior decoration mattered. Indeed, in 1841, the original college church of St. Francis Xavier at Ninth Street and Christy Avenue was acclaimed as “one of the most beautiful buildings, for public worship, in the whole Valley of the Mississippi,” nearly two years before its official opening on Easter 1843.

# Jesuits’ imprint on the community brings growth

## The Beginnings



	Quantity	Value
		\$ C <sup>t</sup>
Black	3	75 00
Golden	1	80 00
Green	2	75 00
Vestments Purple	3	75 00
Red	6	100 00
White	3	50 00
		<hr/> 1278.05

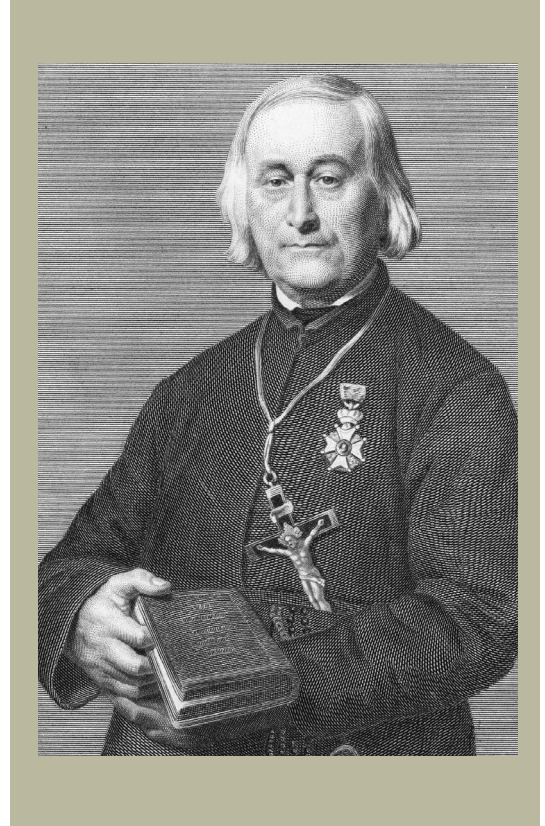
Jesuit ledgers confirm that in 1844, the novitiate chapel in Florissant was valued at \$1,278.05, a significant sum, and included two altars, 16 framed pictures, a statue of the Blessed Virgin and vestments in black, gold, green, purple, red and white. How much of the beauty of these sacred spaces was due to Fr. De Smet's begging cannot be estimated, but his correspondence confirms that he was an indefatigable culture broker.

# Building the foundations

## *Peter J. De Smet, SJ, Missionary and Recruiter*

Ordained in 1827 in Florissant, Fr. De Smet returned to Europe numerous times before 1868. Not only did he recruit and accompany seminarians from Europe – among them future Jesuit leaders Arnold Damen (1815-1890), John Gleizal (1809-1859) and Charles Coppens (1835-1920) – he also sought out works of art. In 1834, during a visit to Belgium, Fr. De Smet acquired a pair of celestial and terrestrial globes by Dutch cartographer Willem Blaeu (1571-1638), and over the next 30 years, he was responsible for the transatlantic shipments of books, oil paintings, candlesticks and vestments for Jesuit colleges and churches in the United States.

His influence went both ways. In 1854, for example, Fr. De Smet worked with New York importer and former Jesuit seminarian John Gilmary Shea (1824-1892) for the delivery of the latest editions of “large



*Peter J. De Smet, SJ*



*Claude and Henry Nolf, descendants of Fr. Peter De Smet's brother, view in 2023 the celestial globe Fr. De Smet acquired for Saint Louis University in 1834.*

## *Peter J. De Smet, SJ, Missionary and Recruiter*

A. M. D. G.  
—  
THE  
WOODSTOCK LETTERS  
A RECORD

& beautiful hanging map(s)” of the United States and Catholic periodicals to seminaries and colleges in Antwerp, Bois-le-Duc and Brussels. In 1856, he acquired 14 Stations of the Cross, costing 3,000 francs, for St. Francis Xavier College Church. He also made sure that Master of Novices Fr. Gleizal continued to receive in Florissant his copies of the Paris journal, *L’Universe*.

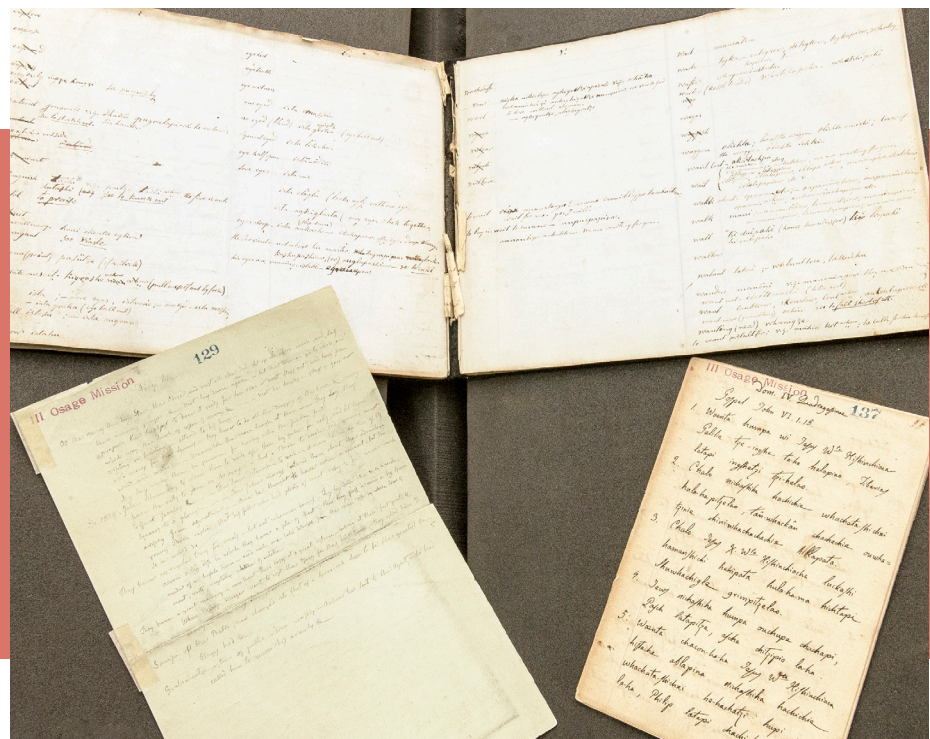
While Fr. De Smet’s influence in recruiting from abroad was significant, so too was the vocation pipeline of young men born and educated in the United States. Rudolph J. Meyer (1841-1912), the son of a German immigrant gardener, attended Saint Louis University from the age of 11 through 17. He entered St. Stanislaus Seminary in 1858, and his potential was quickly recognized by Novice Master Isidore Boudreaux, SJ (1818-1885), the first American-born Jesuit to hold that position. The Society of Jesus offered young Meyer opportunities beyond the dreams of his working-class parents, much less St. Louis society. His 1874 theological disputation at Woodstock College in New York, known as the “Grand Act,” embodied Jesuit hopes and dreams for academic excellence.

Father Meyer’s successful defense in Latin was also a point of pride for Maryland Provincial Joseph E. Keller, SJ (1827-1886). Born in Bavaria, Fr. Keller grew up in St. Louis where his father was a prominent book dealer. His formative years were spent in the family store opposite the Cathedral where he had access to “all the Catholic books published in the United States,” as well as prayer books in English, French, German, Latin, Spanish and Italian. In addition to playing a crucial role in the construction of Woodstock Seminary in 1869, Fr. Keller founded the Jesuit periodical *Woodstock Letters* in 1872. He encouraged members of the Society of Jesus to engage with secular culture, to “meet books with books, learning with deeper learning.” The publication offered detailed accounts of events, institutions, individuals and ideas until 1969.

## Missions to Native Peoples

What comes through clearly in annual reports is the extent to which the Missouri Jesuits were looking to the future. Every seminarian from Europe was expected to master quickly “[the] English so necessary in this Country,” in addition to traditional studies in Greek and Latin. Nineteen-year-old Charles Coppens, SJ (1835-1920), a native of Turnhout, Belgium, recalled learning English from James “Watomika” Beshor/Bouchard, SJ (1823-1889). The son of an Indian chief and a mother born in France, Fr. Bouchard had attended a Presbyterian college in Marietta, Ohio, and was about to become a Protestant minister when he heard the dynamic Fr. Damen preach in St. Francis Xavier College Church in St. Louis. He converted to Catholicism and entered the Jesuit novitiate in 1848. From the 1860s until his death, the “Eloquent Indian” became one of San Francisco’s most well-known orators and a familiar figure in the Pacific Northwest.

Missouri Jesuits early on recognized that parish missions and pastoral work reached more “Americans and the Irish” than their underfunded and understaffed schools. It was a painful admission. St. Regis Seminary for Indian boys in Florissant had



Records from the Osage Mission

## *Missions to Native Peoples*

opened in 1824 with the understanding that the United States government would contribute \$800 yearly, if the enterprise had at least six students. But enrollment never grew enough to sustain the school, and it closed in 1831.

Disappointed but not discouraged, the Jesuits learned valuable lessons from this failure as they began their work in 1847 among the Osage in what is now St. Paul, Kansas. Looking back on this experience 50 years later in 1897, Fr. Paul M. Ponziglioni, SJ (1818-1900), asked his fellow Jesuits, “[W]hat good did after all the Osage Mission bring forth?” In answer to his question, much of the evidence is to be found in the records that mark the collaboration between Fr. Ponziglioni, the son of an Italian count and countess, and Fr. John Schoenmakers, SJ (1807-1883), an immigrant from North Brabant, Holland. They created texts in the Osage language, valued by the Osage Nation, as they constitute “some of the only Osage language documents” in existence today.

One of the main reasons Jesuits succeeded with the Osage where earlier Presbyterian missionaries had failed was their attention to the daily life and cherished beliefs



*Osage Mission, Kansas, c. 1867*

## *Missions to Native Peoples*

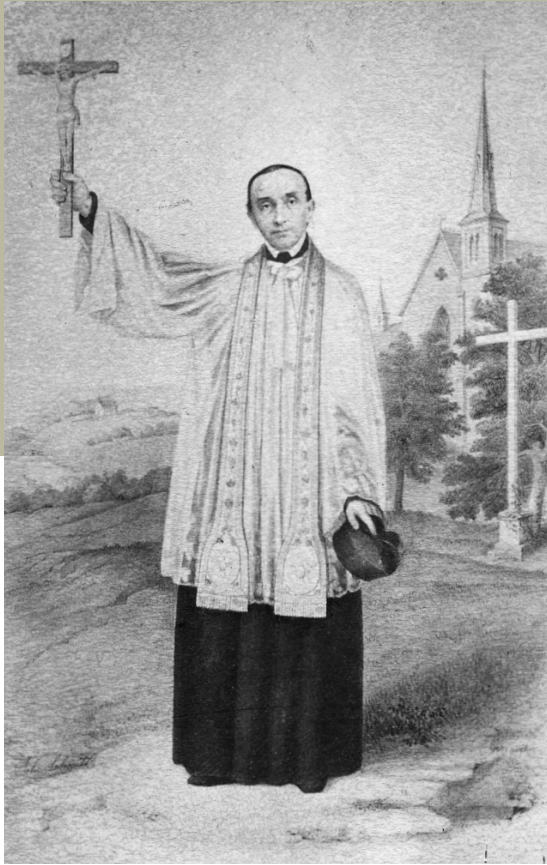


*Saint Francis Church, Osage Mission in Kansas, during Jubilee Celebration of Paul. M. Ponziglione, SJ, February 27, 1889*

of the tribe. It is no coincidence that “Sho-minka” became the Osage word for priest. Father Schoenmakers’ efforts at evangelization reflected a pragmatic bent. In translating prayers from Latin into Osage, he insisted that the shortest version be preferred.

Father Ponziglioni’s handwritten journals reflect a deep interest in ethnography, with descriptions of Osage funeral customs, war strategies and “women’s work.” He marveled at the wonders of sleeping outside “at the hotel of the beautiful stars,” and he created a dictionary that featured 22 words for kin and kindred, 13 entries for “to love,” and 11 terms for the parts of a gun. As unofficial historian of the Osage Mission, Fr. Ponziglioni lamented the decision by tribal leaders to sell their land and move to what is now Oklahoma in 1870. But he took consolation that his work with Fr. Schoenmakers continued as the St. Francis Hieronymo Institute. A rare photograph in the Jesuit Archives & Research Center captures the February 27, 1889, celebration of Fr. Ponziglioni’s 50th anniversary on entrance into the Society of Jesus, with some of the festivities taking place in the new stone church known as “the Beacon on the Plains.”

## *Meeting the Needs of the Local Church*



*Francis X. Weninger, SJ*

The willingness of Missouri Jesuits to change course became a defining strength, rather than a weakness. Father Francis X. Weninger, SJ (1805-1888), a graduate of the University of Vienna, arrived in St. Louis in 1848, but departed soon after to teach in Cincinnati. Widely regarded as “the famous missionary of Our Society among the Germans,” he pressed his superiors to acknowledge the impact Jesuit preachers could make in cities across the nation. Father

Gleizal, master of novices at Florissant, agreed, characterizing parish missions among “Americans and the Irish” as “the work of works.”

Despite his status as one of the Jesuits’ most highly educated members, Fr. Weninger implored Superior General Beckx that: “Colleges are necessary and most excellent things; but they are not what is chiefly...needed in the present condition of things in this country.”

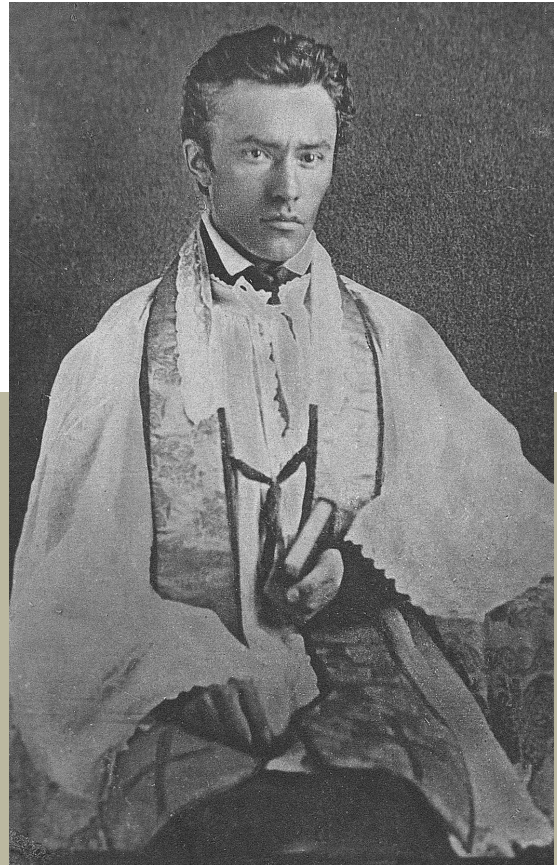
Whether in small rural towns or urban centers, Jesuit-preached parish missions drew large crowds and public notice. This was “excitement of the right kind” – spectacle that combined preaching with devotion. Newspapers spilled columns of ink recreating the scene for their readers, often tallying up the numbers of confessions heard and



## *Meeting the Needs of the Local Church*

communions received. One of Fr. Weninger's earliest missions in 1851 in Hermann, Missouri, concluded with a military band accompanying men and women singing the *Te Deum* as a "magnificent" 30-foot cross was raised. The destruction of the wooden cross during the night by local men did not diminish the effectiveness of the mission. So impressed was the Lutheran minister that he implored members of his congregation to come to the aid of their Catholic neighbors.

Father Arnold Damen, SJ, forged a different path from Fr. Weninger, using his consummate skills as a preacher to direct attention – and funding – for his city-building efforts in Chicago. Born in Leur, Holland, and educated in Belgium, Fr. Damen traveled with Fr. De Smet to Florissant in 1837 where he continued his study of English. It was his fourth language after Dutch, French and Latin. Shortly after his ordination in 1843, Fr. Damen became head of the Free School that enrolled more than 300 young boys. He "begged alms from [St. Louis] citizens" to erect a modern school building on college grounds and worked closely with carpenters and tradesmen who donated their labor. Attuned to the needs of the poor, he convinced "charitable Ladies" to provide uniforms for students.



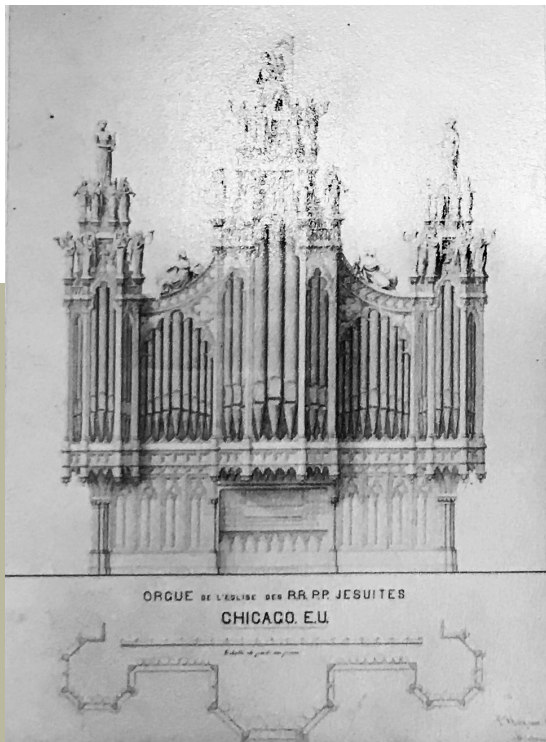
*Arnold Damen, SJ*

## *Meeting the Needs of the Local Church*

Father Damen’s vision of urban Catholicism deepened in 1846 and 1847, when he breathed new life into the centuries-old Jesuit tradition of the Sodality. Sodalities were dynamic organizations to foster spiritual growth for young men and women, drawing members “from every part of the city.” By 1851, the Young Men’s Sodality had grown to include “lawyers, doctors, bankers, merchants, agents, and engineers.” Father De Smet was fulsome in his praise for Fr. Damen’s efforts, writing Superior General Beckx in 1856 that the Men’s Sodality of 300 members “of all ranks of society...is a unique example for the United States.”

Father Damen’s appointment to establish a Jesuit foundation in Chicago came on the heels of a wildly successful mission in August 1856 that drew upwards of 12,000 people, as well as positive news coverage. The Diocese of Chicago was heavily in debt and its immigrant population sorely needed Catholic schools, churches, a hospital, asylums and a cemetery. The only thing Bishop Anthony O’Regan (1809-1866) could offer the Jesuits was “spiritual wealth.”

In what became the stuff of legend, Fr. Damen rejected the bishop’s offer of a parish and the small university of St. Mary of the Lake on the North Side. Instead, he purchased property on the West Side among working-class Irish and German families, confident that “here we will



## *Meeting the Needs of the Local Church*

have a large Catholic population at once, sufficient to fill a large church.” He set about to make that happen, raising funds for a monumental Gothic edifice and opening free schools for girls and boys, even with the worsening of the Depression of 1857.

The Jesuits engaged urban life on a scale unprecedented in America, successfully demonstrating the Church’s commitment to immigrants and the poor. They also challenged Protestant ideas about city life and parochial schools. Father Damen and his colleagues regarded Holy Family Church as a powerful symbol of faith in the future of Chicago when it was dedicated in elaborate ceremonies on August 26, 1860. Parish statistics proved them right, with a congregation of more than 20,000 by 1895 and more than 5,000 students enrolled from grammar school through college.

Although historians have paid little attention to sacred art and the elaborate musical and drama programs that touched the lives of ordinary parishioners and students alike, 19<sup>th</sup> century newspapers took notice. Long before the founding of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1879, Fr. De Smet secured a stunning copy of Murillo’s *Heavenly Trinities* from Belgium for the main altar in Holy Family.

Just weeks after St. Ignatius College opened its doors in an impressive Italianate-style structure in 1870, Holy Family Church next door hosted the inauguration of the largest organ in the United States in a concert that drew professional musicians and hundreds of men and women from across the city.

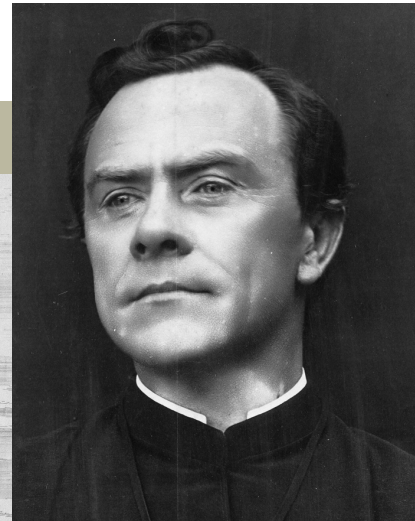
Decade after decade, anonymous Jesuits pasted into scrapbooks the extensive-coverage of public lectures and annual school exhibitions that showcased students’ musical, literary and scientific accomplishments.

While successfully establishing and expanding colleges in Cincinnati, Chicago, Milwaukee and Omaha, the Missouri Jesuits had to start over in St. Louis in the 1880s when their downtown campus was threatened by commercial development. Although plans to relocate had been debated for many years, construction of Saint Louis University’s new campus at Grand Avenue and Lindell Boulevard was delayed until 1888. Reimagining the university and college church in what was then a suburban setting occurred over many years and involved numerous Jesuits. But the work of creating an “English Gothic cloistered compound, one of the finest examples of collegiate design in America” began with Provincial Rudolph J. Meyer, SJ.

## *Meeting the Needs of the Local Church*

Before becoming provincial, Fr. Meyer had served as president of Saint Louis University from 1881 until 1885. Jesuit records do not describe the emotions Fr. Meyer felt at the last commencement in the original location on June 27, 1888, when President Fr. Henry Moeller, SJ, called on alums to “gently and reverently...lower the lid of the coffin of old St. Louis University.” It’s possible he was recalling his own experiences as a student in the late 1850s, studying in the new college library and participating in plays and speeches in the “great hall” beneath noted artist Leon Pomarede’s acclaimed ceiling frescoes. According to the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, about 300 former students gathered for a nine-course banquet “with choice claret and champagne liberally interspersed.” They were bidding farewell to “the oldest educational institution in the city [before it was] razed to make room for the onward march of commerce that characterizes the present day.”

*Rudolph J. Meyer, SJ, as provincial*



*St. Louis University artist rendering*



## *The Hands that Built the Missouri Province*

Decade after decade, the labor of Jesuit brothers was essential to the Missouri Province. Many brothers led lives of unheralded service as community bookkeepers, carpenters, farmers, and tailors. Also, throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, provincials sent a steady stream of Jesuit brothers as skilled craftsmen for the Jesuits' ambitious building projects. In Chicago, Fr. Damen's patience was wearing thin. Days after signing a contract in 1859 with noted architect John M. Van Osdel (1811-1891) to complete the interior of the Gothic church, Fr. Damen and Br. Francis A. Heilers, SJ (1826-1891), continued to "look for Brother Hutten (and) his tools." Although Br. Heilers left no first-hand account of his experiences as a builder in Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Louis, and St. Marys, Kansas, he must have felt satisfaction when his expertise saved the Jesuits considerable money on the galvanized tower of Holy Family Church in 1875. According to his obituary in the Woodstock Letters, Br. Heilers had left Munster, Germany, as a young cabinetmaker, escaping military conscription. He entered the Society of Jesus in Florissant in 1853, and during his nearly 40 years as a Jesuit brother, his "care in superintending buildings sometimes surprised even professional architects."

**Many Jesuit brothers led lives of unheralded service as community bookkeepers, carpenters, farmers and tailors, as well as building craftsmen.**

## *Becoming the Vanguard*

As the Missouri Province grew dramatically, Jesuits began to record different aspects of its history. In that tradition, Fr. Thomas A. Hughes, SJ (1849-1939), in 1907 produced *A History of the Jesuits in North America*. And eventually, in 1938, Fr. Gilbert J. Garraghan, SJ (1871-1942), would publish his monumental, comprehensive three-volume *The Jesuits of the Middle United States*. But in the late 19th century, few of the 400 members of the province had the luxury of time to reflect on their shared experiences or to respond to Provincial John P. Frieden’s (1844-1911) request for information “about what we are doing in America.” A European colleague was interested, and Fr. Frieden hoped to send him statistics on alumni and their professions as well as “any extracts from speeches and writings of [P]rotestants in favor of ...[Jesuit] Schools and Colleges.” In light of lingering anti-Catholic sentiment, there was no outpouring of praise from journals or newspapers. However, an unexpected request came in 1887 from Princeton University President James McCosh (1811-1894) asking for more information on Saint Louis University’s innovative post-graduate course founded by Fr. Hughes.

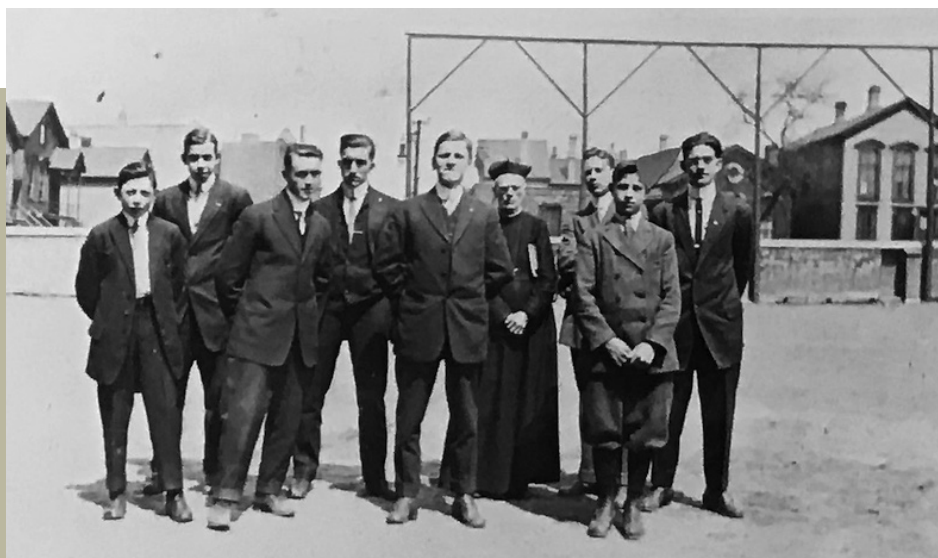
The development of higher education in a specifically American context demanded a delicate balancing act: creating curricula that honored the traditional, nearly 300-year-old, Jesuit *Ratio Studiorum* while meeting American guidelines for colleges and secondary schools. Once again, the Missouri Province took the lead with their 1887 Course of Studies. Not only did it bring the classical curriculum in line with four-year programs in public high schools, it also set a “higher standard...in our schools,” according to Fr. Frieden. Among the textbooks adopted was Fr. Charles Coppens’ *Practical Introduction to English Rhetoric*, published in New York in 1886. Generations of Jesuit-educated students followed his good advice on grammar and composition. Progressive in tone, Fr. Coppens’ textbook offered important lessons about the need to consult original documents, and to understand “what measures led to the happiness and what to the suffering of the common people.”

Only in the Midwest, perhaps, could a Belgian Jesuit for whom English was a second language begin his literary career at age 50. Father Coppens is credited with creating the Juniorate at the Florissant seminary, a two-year period of Jesuit formation focusing on humanistic studies, and he continued to write books and pamphlets during his

## *Becoming the Vanguard*

long years in classrooms in St. Louis, Detroit and Chicago. His 1897 text for Creighton University Medical Students was “the first Catholic treatise on medical jurisprudence” and he was the first Jesuit to offer the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius to the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Chicago. Father Coppens lived to be 85, despite having been treated for tuberculosis as a novice in Florissant with “frequent doses of cod liver oil with brandy to promote digestion!

Seventy-five years after the arrival of the Jesuits in Missouri, Fr. Ponziglioni offered perspective and advice to his fellow priests and brothers. After decades of work among the Osage, he was now ministering to Italian families in Chicago and living in the college building Fr. Arnold Damen had struggled to finance in 1869. Father Ponziglioni acknowledged the breadth and depth of Jesuit outreach that had seen members of the Society of Jesus teaching in great European universities and preaching to cardinals, emperors and kings. Recognizing that he and his contemporaries could point with pride to such a legacy, they nevertheless might still experience “despondency” at particular assignments that did not recognize their talents. Father Ponziglioni counseled the need for continued humility and fraternal charity, especially in urban communities with men of different nationalities, economic backgrounds and political opinions.



*Charles Coppens, SJ, in Chicago with St. Ignatius high school students*

## *A New Mission in the Tropics*



*St. John's College, Belize*

In 1893, at the direction of Superior General Luis Martin, SJ (1846-1906), the Missouri Province accepted missionary responsibility for the territory of British Honduras, today known as the nation of Belize. Could this deployment of priests and resources have been a way to keep alive the original missionary spirit of the Belgian Jesuits? The nascent St. John's College, established in 1896, celebrated its 20th anniversary in 1916 with a new campus to accommodate its steady growth. Small by United States standards, its enrollment of 90 students in 1929 heralded a bright future. The school's complete destruction in the hurricane of September 10, 1931, sent shock waves throughout the province. In the United States, Jesuits were no strangers to disease – yellow fever, cholera, tuberculosis – but the deaths of eleven priests, brothers and scholastics at one time was an unprecedented tragedy. Writing about it in *Woodstock Letters*, Fr. Paul W. Cavanaugh, SJ (1901-1975), wondered, “Will St. John's College on the Latin American frontier ever grace the sunny Caribbean again?” In answer, St. John's College was rebuilt and continues today as a Jesuit high school and four-year college. The Jesuit mission also flourishes in Belizean parishes honoring Jesuit saints Martin de Porres in Belize City and Peter Claver in Punta Gorda.



## *Eyes on the Sky*

Thirty years after arriving in St. Louis, Missouri Jesuits had invested scarce resources to ensure that their university might one day rival Georgetown University's commitment to astronomy. The Washington, D.C., observatory was among the first in the United States, funded in large part by a bequest from the mother of Fr. Charles Henry Stonestreet, SJ (1813-1885), an 1833 graduate of Georgetown who served as president in 1851-1852. In 1854, Fr. William Stack Murphy, SJ (1803-1875), enthusiastically wrote Fr. Stonestreet about the "excellent" telescope recently imported from France for the new college building in St. Louis designed by noted architect Robert S. Mitchell. Plans called for "a sort of observatory and movable dome," and Fr. Murphy expressed confidence that, "In course of time we shall have superior instruments."

The "course of time" was lengthy, but thanks to Br. George Rueppel, SJ (1864-1947), Saint Louis University gained a national reputation, beginning in 1910, for its "geophysical observatory." Born in Rothenback, Bavaria, Br. Rueppel grew up in New York City and joined the Society of Jesus in 1882. Although trained as a librarian, he continued to develop his interest in the emerging field of seismography, aimed at



*George Rueppel, SJ, at the microphone at WEW radio station*

## *Eyes on the Sky*

recording and analyzing meteorological conditions globally. Brother Rueppel brought years of experience as former director of the observatory of Canisius College in Buffalo, New York, as well as hands-on meteorological work at Jesuit colleges in Cleveland and Toledo, Ohio.

According to former Saint Louis University Archivist John Waide, in 1912, Br. Rueppel began sending meteorological data in Morse code from a wireless station at the university to his fellow Jesuits and to telegraph operators “in train stations and farm bureaus across the country.” Initially known by the call signal 9YR, in 1921 Saint Louis University’s station became the second radio station in the United States, and first west of the Mississippi River, to get an official license.

In addition to his work as an earthquake expert, whose opinion was solicited by reporters across the country, Br. Rueppel became the face of the newly christened *We Enlighten the World* (WEW) in 1922. A one-man-show, he read weather reports, played music and broadcast Mass from St. Francis Xavier College Church. As chief engineer of WEW, he laid the groundwork for the popular Sacred Heart Program which ran from 1939 until 2005. At the time of Br. Rueppel’s death in 1947, WEW reached an international audience with “453 outlets [including] 35 Veteran’s Hospitals, and 7 State Penitentiaries.”

**Spearheaded by Br. Rueppel, in 1921 Saint Louis University received the second radio station license in the United States.**

## *Higher Education with a Midwestern Sensibility*

Another leader in Jesuit higher education was St. Louis native Fr. Alexander Burrowes, SJ (1853-1927). Having transformed Marquette College in Milwaukee into a university, he played an equally critical role in Chicago. As president of St. Ignatius College, he established a law school and obtained a new state charter in 1909 for Loyola University, as he went about developing plans for a North Side campus fronting Lake Michigan.

A keen observer of Jesuit life, as provincial, Fr. Burrowes asked superiors in 1912 whether they recommended banning newspaper reading for Jesuit scholastics and brothers. Father John L. Mathery, SJ (1856-1941), president of Loyola University, responded that he believed scholastics especially “ought to know the main important news of the world,” which included politics and football and baseball scores. Father Aloysius Breen, SJ (1867-1960), rector of St. Mary’s College in Kansas, of similar mind, was decidedly against any such prohibition, noting that scholastics were “so very busy during their ‘waking hours’” to do more than take a quick glance at the sports pages. A Midwestern sensibility had taken root.



*Drawing by Nicolas Point, SJ, of communion at Easter at St. Mary's Mission, c. 1842*

## *Marking 100 Years of Ministry*

The 100th anniversary of the arrival of the Jesuits in St. Louis was celebrated in great style on May 20, 1923, with a “procession from the university over Grand Boulevard to the College Church.” Amid a sea of black cassocks were five bishops, Jesuit provincials from the United States and Canada, and rectors and superiors from the five universities, 16 colleges and 15 high schools in the Missouri Province.



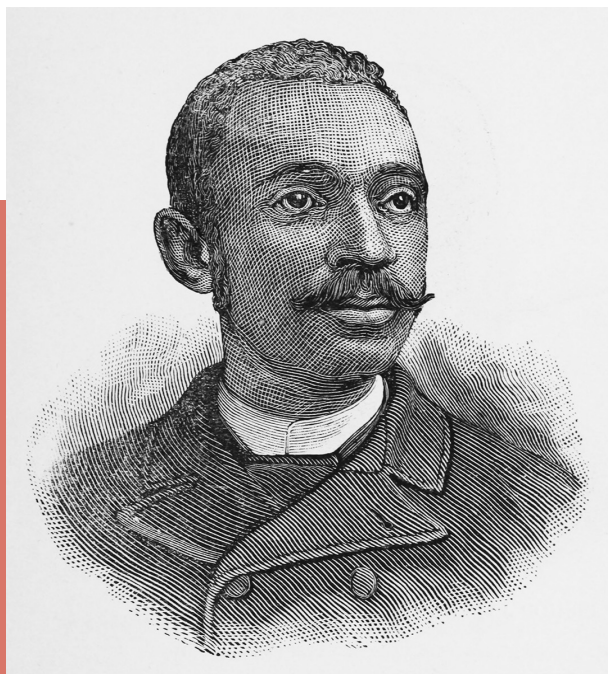
*Jesuit seminarians in Florissant, c.1920*

In his remarks, Archbishop John J. Glennon (1862-1946) exhorted Jesuits to “turn with loving pride to...the source of their inspiration – of their greatness, and under God’s benediction, all their success – dear old Florissant.” Photos taken the next day, when Mass was celebrated for the first time in the new chapel of St. Stanislaus Seminary, reveal an impressive structure with Doric columns and altars of Carrara marble. Directly below was the refectory with its long rows of tables where scores of novices took their meals. The anniversary concluded with a poignant ceremony, Jesuits standing and kneeling during “solemn benediction in the community cemetery.” Yet nearly a century would pass before historians began to reconstruct and acknowledge the lives of enslaved men and women who had helped build the seminary at Florissant.

## *Serving Black Catholics*

Beginning in 1866, St. Ann Church in Cincinnati became a thriving Black parish under the leadership of Dutch immigrant Fr. Adrian Hoecken, SJ (1815-1897). Like his sibling, Fr. Christian Hoecken, SJ (1808-1851), he had been a missionary to Indigenous peoples, ministering first among the Flathead Indians in Montana, Oregon and Washington and then among the Osage from 1861 to 1865. Hoecken's dedication at St. Ann's clearly inspired newly enfranchised Black Catholics.

One of the most well-known members of the parish in the 1880s was Daniel Rudd, founder and editor of the *American Catholic Tribune*. The child of slaves, Rudd (1854-1933), grew up in Bardstown, Kentucky, and lived near St. Joseph Pro-Cathedral where his parents worked as caretakers. According to historian Gary B. Agee, Rudd never wrote or spoke about his status as a slave, focusing instead on the equality he encountered as a Catholic. In an editorial of June 3, 1887, he reminded readers that he had been baptized in 1854 "at the same font where all the rest, white and black, were baptized without discrimination except as to who got there first."



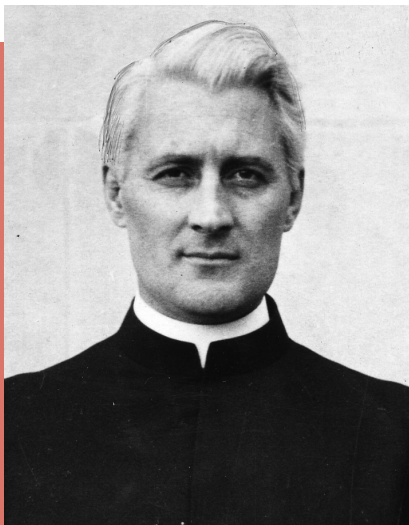
*Daniel Rudd, founder and editor of the American Catholic Tribune  
Image from the Afro-American Press, Public Domain, Wikimedia Commons*

## *Serving Black Catholics*

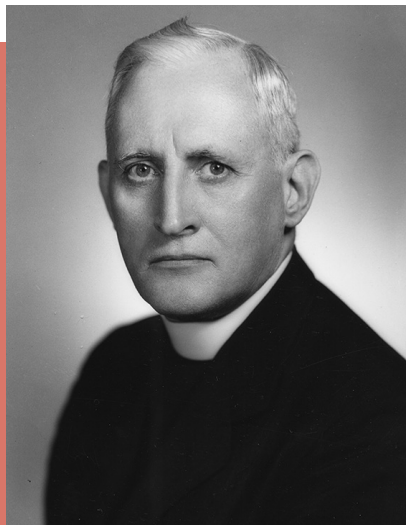
In addition to his pioneering role as a journalist, Rudd founded the Colored Catholic Congress, which met for the first time in 1889, in Washington, D.C. During visits to St. Louis, he reported on the support he had received from the Missouri Province, especially from Fr. Henry Moeller, SJ, president of Saint Louis University, and Fr. Meyer, provincial. As president of the Congress, Rudd pressed for religious education and civil rights. In its second meeting, held in 1890 at the Cathedral of St. Peter in Chains in Cincinnati, the Congress passed resolutions asking trade unions to admit Black members and urged storekeepers “to hire [C]olored clerks in order to advance the business chances of...young men and young women.” The 125 delegates, White and Black, also called for “an abolition of the African Slave Trade.”

Another Jesuit who impacted Rudd was Fr. John S. Verdin, SJ (1822-1889), who had come to Bardstown after serving as president of Saint Louis University. Rudd wrote that he never forgot “the musical sound of [the] kind voice” of Fr. Verdin, his First Communion instructor.

Although few Jesuits followed in the footsteps of Frs. Hoecken and Verdin, their example lived on. Standing on their shoulders were the Markoe brothers. In St. Louis in 1917, Fr. John P. Markoe, SJ (1890-1967), and his brother, Fr. William M. Markoe, SJ (1892-1969), took a public stand, invoking the help of St. Ignatius and St. Peter Claver.



*John P. Markoe, SJ*



*William M. Markoe, SJ*

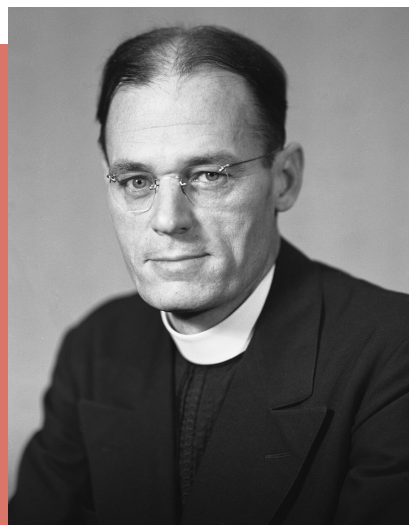
## *Serving Black Catholics*

In a city where Blacks were excluded from public life and institutions and were the target of racially motivated attacks, the Markoe brothers vowed: “to give and dedicate our whole lives and all our energies for the work of the salvation of the Negroes in the United States.”

They made good on their promise, challenging both the citizens of St. Louis and their Jesuit colleagues, in word and in deed. Together with Fr. Claude H. Heithaus, SJ (1898-1976), the Markoes played critical roles in the integration of Saint Louis University in the early 1940s.

In his biography of Fr. John Markoe, Matt Holland recounts the “rarest kind of courage” it took to criticize the Jesuit leadership of Saint Louis University. Newly appointed president Fr. Patrick Holloran, SJ (1906-1969), hesitated to admit Black students to Saint Louis University and, in January 1944, sought the advice of “a small number of alumni and close friends.” Father Holloran was keenly aware of St. Louis Archbishop John Glennon’s long-standing attitudes favoring segregation, but as a Jesuit, he also understood the moral and ethical implications of “discrimination by a Catholic university against [C]olored Catholics.”

Father Markoe forced the issue, enlisting the help of reporters from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and the Black national weekly, the Pittsburgh Courier. There were fireworks to come. When Fr. Heithaus, moderator of the university’s student newspaper, took his turn to celebrate Mass at St. Francis Xavier College Church on February 11, 1944, copies of his sermon were typeset and ready to be printed by St. Louis newspapers and the University News. Father Heithaus minced no words. Only “self-deluded fools” believed the lie that White students would “desert us” if Black students were admitted. The St. Louis Star and Times captured the historic moment: “Falling like a bombshell into the ritual of 8:45 o’clock Mass at St. Louis University this morning, a professor’s scathing denunciation of race discrimination brought the 500 students to their feet.”

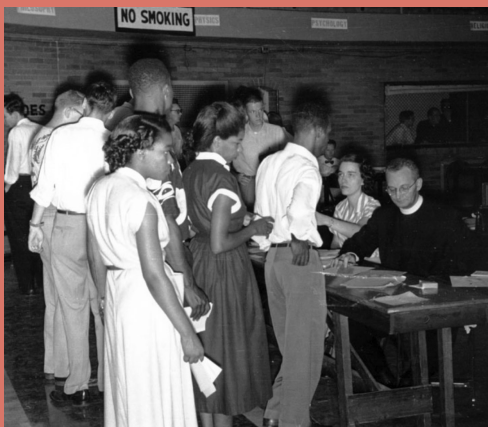


*Claude H. Heithaus, SJ*

## *Serving Black Catholics*

How did Jesuits in the Missouri Province come to challenge the “color line” years before the 1954 United States Supreme Court decision *Brown v. the Board of Education*? Sources in the Jesuit archives suggest the impact of their early personal contact with African-American families. In 1916, Fr. Matthew Germing, SJ (1867-1954), dean of the Juniorate at Florissant, organized the Mission Station of St. Peter Claver in Anglum (later Robertson), Missouri. In a reversal of roles from 1823, when enslaved people worked to construct the original buildings of the Missouri Mission, Jesuit novices and brothers helped to build the church in the “shanty town of the Missouri River ‘Bottoms.’”

The same spirit of cooperation prevailed at Holy Angels Church in Kinloch, Missouri, established by Fr. Arnold J. Garvy, SJ (1868-1950), a literature professor at Florissant. Building on this experience, Fr. Garvy returned to Chicago in 1933 to establish St. Joseph Mission in the parish where he had been baptized by Fr. Damen in 1868. Like the Markoe brothers, Fr. Garvy spent the rest of his life ministering to the needs of African-American families. He authored a now-lost monumental *Bibliography of Negro Life* that he donated to the Catholic Interracial Center in New York City before his death in 1950.



*African-American students register for class in 1951, six years after a homily by SLU Jesuit Claude Heithaus, SJ, became a clarion call for the university to become the first university in a former slaveholding state to integrate.*



*Holy Angels Church, Kinloch, Missouri*



## *Chicago Province Established*

For more than a century, the Missouri Province had sent Jesuit priests and brothers to minister in towns and cities from Michigan to Texas “and from the Great Lakes to the Rocky Mountains.” Such growth had brought challenges for the effective management of ministries and personnel. The success of the Missouri Province prompted the superior general to split the province in 1928, with the result that Jesuit colleges, schools and parishes in Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit and Toledo became part of the new Chicago Province, severing their historic connections to Florissant and St. Louis. According to one account, “it will probably never be known how much the Jesuits of the whole Mid-West owe to the generosity and good judgment of [Provincial Matthew] Germing in the very difficult matter of re-adjusting the province boundaries.”

Even after the creation of the Chicago Province, the Missouri Province with 740 members (353 priests, 115 brothers, 272 scholastics) continued to hold its own, ranking second largest in the United States after the Maryland Province.

**Even after the Missouri Province split to create the Chicago Province, the Missouri Province was still the second largest in the United States.**

## *Evangelism in Popular Culture*

The Jesuit tradition of “teaching for years and years the rudiments of grammar to poor children” bore spectacular fruit in the Missouri Province in the 20th century – in practice and in theory. Father Daniel A. Lord, SJ (1888-1954), and Fr. William J. McGucken, SJ (1889-1943), were classmates in Florissant and became larger-than-life figures during their careers in St. Louis. Both Frs. Lord and McGucken were beneficiaries of a classical education that placed great value on performance, especially through drama, elocution and debate.

As a student at Chicago’s St. Ignatius College, Lord was editor-in-chief of the school’s magazine and played leading roles in elaborately staged productions of *If I Were King* and *Richelieu*, earning him the nickname “Sideshow Dan.” Small class sizes meant that Lord could play in the school orchestra, win elocution medals and experience the applause of audiences in downtown Chicago theaters. The grandson of a Protestant minister and the product of a “mixed marriage,” Fr. Lord credited his Irish Catholic mother for sending him to the Jesuits. It was an investment that paid dividends for the Missouri Province.



*Daniel A. Lord, SJ*

## *Evangelism in Popular Culture*

Father McGucken matriculated at Marquette College, then a small liberal arts institution on the threshold of becoming Milwaukee's first university. In his junior year, in 1908, he was one of three Wisconsin candidates who emerged as finalists for the prestigious Rhodes Scholarship. Had he prevailed, he would have completed his education at Oxford University and enjoyed unparalleled academic opportunities. Instead, he joined the Society of Jesus and began his novitiate in Florissant, living with 50 other men in rooms without screens and reading by kerosene lamps.

Evidence that Fr. McGucken was a rising star in the province came just weeks after ordination in 1923, when he was assigned to graduate studies in England. In 1927, he became one of the few Catholic priests or women religious to receive a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. His dissertation, published as a book in 1932, began a much-needed conversation within Catholic circles – and beyond. At a time when ideas of progressive education were gaining new currency, Fr. McGucken subtitled his study, *The Society's Teaching Principles and Practice, Especially in Secondary Education in the United States*. Nowhere, he argued, had Jesuit education made greater inroads than in the United States which supported “36 of the 182 Jesuit secondary schools of the world.”

Father McGucken regarded the *Ratio Studiorum* as “the product of experience,” a shared inheritance that continued to shape academic life. In his view, colleges could abolish “all entrance examinations, transcripts of credits, and similar educational mechanisms” in favor of a single test that measured “the ability to read.” Among his admirers was Robert Maynard Hutchins (1899-1977), president of the University of Chicago, who appeared on the same stage with Fr. McGucken at a celebration in 1941 marking the 400th anniversary of the founding of the Society of Jesus. Before a large audience at Loyola University, Hutchins acknowledged that secular education had much to learn from Jesuit ideals, especially “if we are to defend democracy in this country.”

In 1943, the Missouri Jesuits mourned the death of Fr. McGucken, their “Educational Statesman.” Although he did not live long enough to see Jesuit institutions embrace his ideas about coeducation, his longtime St. Louis colleague Fr. Lord continued to

## *Evangelism in Popular Culture*

explore creative ways to reach new students and new audiences. Father Lord’s popular Summer Schools of Catholic Action introduced thousands of young men and women to major Jesuit “influencers” of the day: Fr. Gerald Ellard, SJ (1894-1963), on the liturgy; Fr. John LaFarge, SJ (1880-1963), on interracialism; and Fr. Edward Dowling, SJ (1898-1960), an early advocate of Alcoholics Anonymous and the Cana Conference Movement.



*Edward P. Dowling, SJ, in his office.*

In *Father Ed: The Story of Bill W’s Spiritual Sponsor*, Dawn Eden Goldstein paints a vivid portrait of Fr. Dowling as spiritual sponsor of Bill Wilson (1895-1971), co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous. During a visit to the offices of *Queen’s Work Magazine* in 1941, Wilson was astonished to see the chart Fr. John Markoe, SJ, had created about the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* that so closely paralleled A.A.’s Twelve Steps. Yet another crucial, if little-known, connection: It was Fr. Lord’s former student Jack Alexander who, in 1941, wrote the *Saturday Evening Post* article that helped establish Alcoholics Anonymous nationally and internationally.

## *Evangelism in Popular Culture*

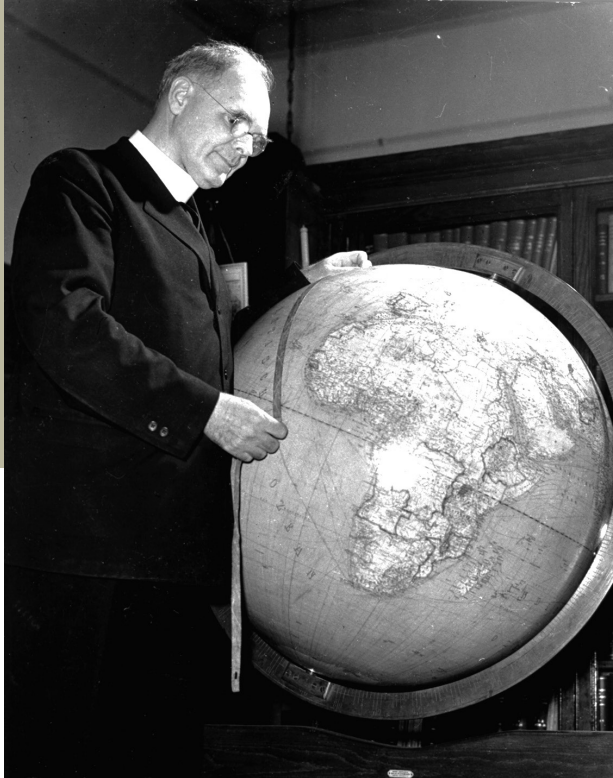
Decades before the Second Vatican Council's decree on liturgy, Fr. Gerald Ellard, SJ, of the Saint Louis University School of Divinity, was providing historical and theological perspectives on liturgical renewal. Fr. Ellard's workshops at the Summer Schools of Catholic Action introduced an estimated 100,000 young men and women to the "dialogue" Mass, first published in 1938. No longer mere passive worshipers, they returned to their home parishes full of hope and determination that they had a role to play in recovering the "laity's lost voice."

Father Ellard's *Christian Life and Worship*, revised in 1940 with illustrations by Ade Bethune (1914-2002), became the standard text used in high school and college classrooms across the nation and a topic of much conversation in rectories and convents. His step-by-step explanations of the Mass and sacraments, along with extended discussions about the Mystical Body of Christ, were a revelation to "cradle Catholics" raised on the *Baltimore Catechism*. Father Ellard envisioned a bright future where Catholics did not consider "What does the Church do for me?" but rather, "What is my function in the Church?"

Biographical sketches of Jesuit professors rarely portray them living in Jesuit community, focusing instead on their academic specialties and publications. What is lost is the sense of shared purpose that came from day-to-day living and the spirited intellectual conversations and arguments that continued over days, weeks, months and years. Official documents such as the 1940 Federal Census acknowledged this critical mass of highly trained and motivated individuals, enumerating by name 226 Jesuit priests and brothers who lived on the Saint Louis University campus. Catalogues for the Missouri Province provide even more detail. For example, the entry for Fr. James B. Macelwane, SJ (1883-1956), director of the seismological station, takes up four lines, with Latin shorthand covering his professional and religious duties, "Script., Exam, N.N. et neo-sacerd, Conf. monial," among others.

In retrospect, third-year philosophy student Walter J. Ong, SJ (1912-2003), began his long and productive scholarly career with the publication of a single poem, *Cosmologist*, in the university magazine *Fleur de Lis* in 1939. More original work

## *Evangelism in Popular Culture*



*James B. Macelwane, SJ*

was to follow – some 457 publications during his lifetime. Seminarian Ong’s mentor and thesis advisor was Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980), who later became famous for his theories of communication, especially his proclamation that, “The medium is the message.” Their shared interest in English Jesuit Poet Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889) led Ong to continue his studies at Harvard; his 1954 dissertation was published in two volumes by Harvard University Press in 1958. After advanced study in Paris, where he was a colleague of French Jesuit paleontologist Fr. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), Fr. Ong returned to the English department faculty at Saint Louis University.

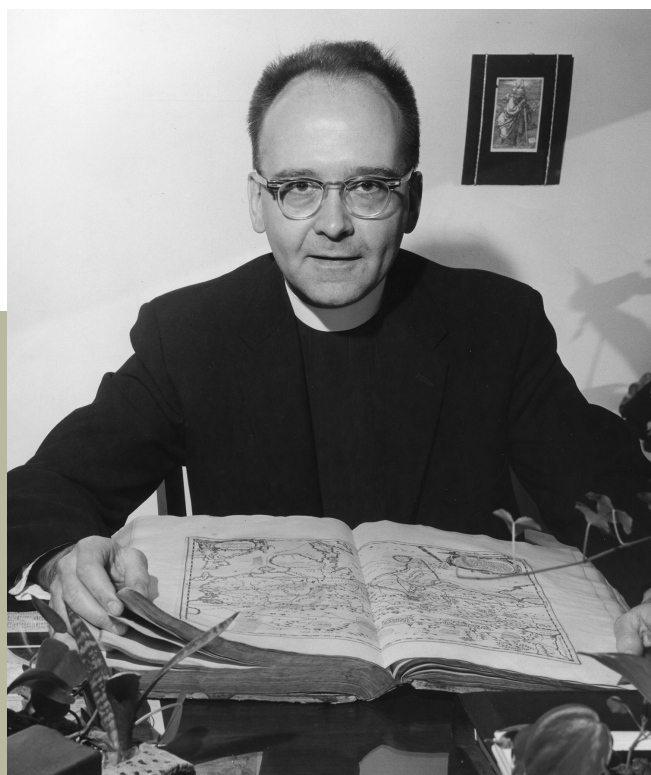
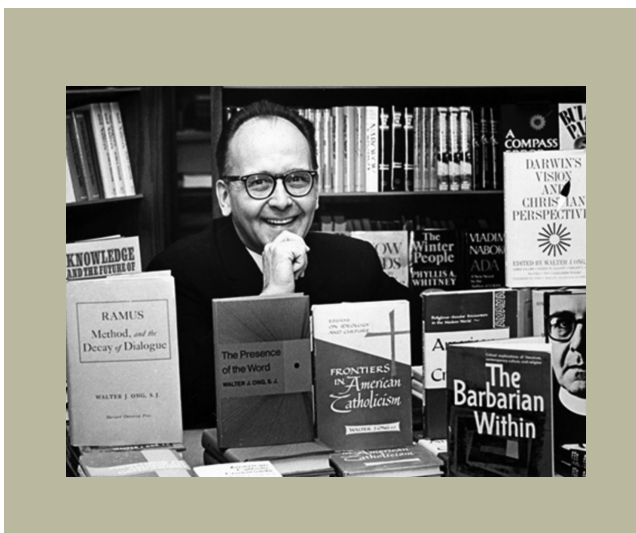
In journal articles, books, talks and classroom lectures, Fr. Ong emphasized the idea that teachers were “in a constant interior dialogue with the past, the present,

## *Evangelism in Popular Culture*

and the future.” As early as 1960, he observed that “voice is coming into its own as never before,” with profound implications for “the media of popular culture.”

Father Ong’s election as president of the Modern Language Association in 1978 – the first and only Jesuit to hold that office – provided him with the opportunity to remind his colleagues that their profession mattered. He presciently observed that machines such as computers would continue to “[extend] consciousness into the external world,” but believed that teachers would remain “at the center of the human life-world.”

Appearing before a large audience in New York, Fr. Ong wore the familiar clerical garb of a Jesuit, and, in clear and precise language, drew on his legacy as a member of the Society of Jesus, arguing that the teaching of writing is “more critical” to students than the teaching of literature. In order to understand the past, he challenged his colleagues, they needed “a reflective understanding of the present.” By embracing “proximity and distance,” Ong believed educators would come to “[generate] our own distinctive questions about the past.”



*Walter J. Ong, SJ, produced 457 publications.*

## *Evangelism in Popular Culture*



*William J. Young, SJ*

A few years ago, the late Fr. John W. O'Malley, SJ (1927-2022), acknowledged the debt he and hundreds of Jesuits owed to Fr. William J. Young, SJ (1885-1970), and his scholarship on St. Ignatius. Born in Chicago in 1885, Young joined the Society of Jesus in 1906 following his graduation from Creighton University. His life's work centered on Ignatian Spirituality and the *Spiritual Exercises*, a retreat experience which Jesuits have been making and leading since the time of St. Ignatius. Following advanced study in Spain, France, England and Italy, in 1924 Fr. Young became dean of the Juniorate at Florissant and later served as novice master at Milford, Ohio, from 1934 to 1948.

Father O'Malley was one of the last Jesuits to make the 30-day retreat under the direction of Fr. Young, which he described as “a life-changing experience...preparing us to live our Jesuit vocation to the full.” Only much later did Fr. O'Malley understand the significance of Young's 1956 book, *St. Ignatius' Own Story*. This was the “first English translation of Ignatius's personal memoir or autobiography...a pivotal work [that] had remained out of circulation since the sixteenth century.” Father Young's books and translations were major contributions to the emerging field of Ignatian spirituality.

It is cause for celebration that historians have begun to examine the extraordinary ways in which Fathers Lord, Dowling, McGucken, Ellard, Ong, Heithaus, Young and the Markoe brothers shaped American Catholic life in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

# Jesuit work molded Catholic life in America



## *A New Era*

Worth remembering is that their lives of faith and service were part of a Jesuit province that numbered almost 700 members in 1955! During their lifetimes, there was yet another division of Jesuit territories and responsibilities, with Chicago giving birth to the Detroit Province and Missouri generating the Wisconsin Province.

The 1960s witnessed tremendous changes in society, the Society of Jesus, and the Church. Jesuits took on renewed energy and focus in the wake of the Second Vatican Council—and of its own General Congregations. But the “vocation boom” that had characterized American Catholicism for more than 60 years was coming to an end. No longer were there large vow classes of young men following a traditional path to priesthood and religious life. Although the total number of Missouri Jesuits remained high, its membership was aging, and a decreasing percentage of its number were young men in formation. By late 1969, with fewer men entering the Jesuit novitiate and taking their first vows, plans were being implemented to close St. Stanislaus Seminary, the first home of the Missouri Province.

It is, of course, difficult to get proper perspective on most recent history. What can be acknowledged is that during the past 50 years, Jesuits have continued to adapt and to serve in a variety of educational, parish, retreat and social ministries. In 2014, as part of a national reconfiguration of Jesuit provinces, the Missouri Province joined with the New Orleans Province to create the USA Central and Southern Province. Jesuits serve as missionaries of the Gospel, albeit in different times and places and circumstances than their forebearers who came from Belgium to St. Louis in 1823. Although stories of today’s Jesuits remain to be told in full, they carry with them the promise of Bishop Fenwick that, “the eyes of all are turned upon you & expect much from your prudent exertions.”

A.M.D.G.

**Ellen Skerrett**

October 2023

**We are grateful to Ellen Skerrett for this look at some of the giants of the Missouri Province. We could not include every Jesuit or every venue of their apostolic labors. There is certainly more to this story, much of which can be found at the Jesuit Archives & Research Center in St. Louis. You are invited to visit.**



Jesuits USA Central and Southern Province  
[www.JesuitsCentralSouthern.org](http://www.JesuitsCentralSouthern.org)

Jesuit Archives & Research Center  
[www.JesuitArchives.org](http://www.JesuitArchives.org)