CHAPTER SIX
THE JESUIT HERITAGE IN WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

Of the more than 790,000 people who today constitute the population of the western part of Massachusetts, about 356,000 are Roman Catholics of the Diocese of Springfield. This diocese was created on 14 June 1870 and, since the creation of the Diocese of Worcester in 1950, embraces the counties of Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire. This chapter is concerned with the relationship of the Jesuits to this part of the Bay State during the early period of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when Indians from the Jesuit missions of Canada terrified inhabitants of the frontier, the modern period of the nineteenth century when Jesuits contributed to the growth of Catholicism in the area, and the contemporary period of the twentieth century when the Jesuits established two foundations in western Massachusetts.

I

The story of the Jesuits in the early history of western Massachusetts was not unlike that in the rest of the Bay State where members of the Society of Jesus were regarded with suspicion. New Englanders hated Catholics and distrusted their priests. This was so true that Massachusetts incorporated this attitude into law before the middle of the seventeenth century. Since there were no Jesuits in Massachusetts to warrant such legislation, it is clear that this hostility towards the Jesuits was a residue of religious conflicts in England.

Moreover, Jesuits were blamed for Indian attacks during King Philip’s War (1675-76). At that time the Indians burned Springfield and slaughtered sixty-four inhabitants at Deerfield. The latter was the Bloody Brook Massacre in September of 1675 when the nearby brook supposedly became red with the blood of the farmers and soldiers killed by the Indians. The
first Catholic church in Deerfield, which was built in 1871, stood on the historic site that is marked by an obelisk today in South Deerfield.

Although there was little or no justification for the early hostility towards the Jesuits, there was some basis for it with the passage of time insofar as the Jesuits were associated with the French, then engaged with the English for the control of North America, the missionaries were not free from the criticism of the English settlers.

Once more, the example of Deerfield is important. This town, which had been settled on the Connecticut River in 1669, was recovering from the tragedy of King Philip’s War when Jean Vincent Baron de St. Castin, a friend of the Jesuits in Maine, attacked the English settlement at Deerfield on 15 September 1694 in retaliation for the English raid against his outpost in Maine. Fortunately for its inhabitants, among whom was their inspiring leader Parson John Williams (1664-1729), the raiding party was forced to retreat.

However, that was not true in the assault on Deerfield in late February of 1704. For Jean-Baptiste Hertel de Rouville, the son of the leader of the expedition against Salmon Falls in the 1690s, led one of the most successful assaults against an English settlement in New England by coming down the Connecticut River with 200 French soldiers and 142 Indians, neophytes of the Jesuits. Forty-eight of the town’s 291 inhabitants were killed and about 120, including Parson Williams, were captured and led off to the Jesuit missions. Later that same year, an attack on Northampton was repulsed.

One alleged explanation for the attack on Deerfield was that the meeting house there reportedly contained the bell intended for the Jesuit mission in Canada. This bell, which had been seized when the British captured the French vessel Grand Monarque, had been sold to a Deerfield man. When the Indians learned that their bell was hanging in a Protestant place of worship, they moved on Deerfield, captured the bell and brought it to old Fort Saint-Louis near Montreal. Today the “Deerfield Bell” can be seen inside the church dedicated to St. François-Xavier at the Jesuit mission of Caughnawaga outside that same city. But it is doubtful that there really was a bell at
Deerfield before the raid on this frontier town.

Parson Williams lived to tell about his experience in *The Redeemed Captive Returning to Zion*, a book published in 1707, the year following his return. His daughter Eunice, who was converted to Catholicism, did not return with her father who had lost his wife and two younger children during his ordeal. Since the family was related to the Mathers, every attempt was made to win her back. One of about thirty who refused to return, Eunice did visit Deerfield occasionally in later years. Down to 1761, Massachusetts had offered her and her husband, a Caughnawaga chief named Ambrose, a grant of land to win her back. But, she rejected the offer lest she jeopardize her eternal salvation.

Her father, Parson Williams, who returned with his sons Samuel and Stephen, told of his experiences with the Jesuits who had tried to convert him. He traveled to Quebec with Father Vincent Bigot who had been appointed Superior of the Jesuits in the August following the attack on Deerfield. Williams talked with one Jesuit who informed the minister that, as the Indians were leaving for Deerfield, he had instructed them to beware of killing the children before they were baptized. Although the Jesuits tried very hard to win Williams over to Catholicism, the Deerfield parson held firm to his own religion. Today the Latin commentary on the Bible, by Father Jacques Tirinus, S.J., which the Jesuits gave Williams at Port Royal in 1706 in their attempt to convert the parson, is located in Old Deerfield at the Memorial Libraries on Memorial Street.

An alliance with the Abnakis of New England was as vital to the English as it was to the French. When Father Sébastien Râle, S.J., appeared to undermine such an agreement, Governor Samuel Shute declared war against him on 22 July 1722, and the Abnakis, including Chief Gray Lock who conducted raids against settlements along the Connecticut River between 1723 and 1725, refused to remain idle. With the death of the Jesuit in August of 1724, the Indians became disheartened and their tribal leaders throughout New England negotiated treaties of peace. One was signed at Deerfield by Governor Jonathan Belcher in 1735 that helped to preserve that troubled town from frontier raids until 1746.
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Another victory for the English settlers in New England was the success of the assault against Louisbourg in July of 1745. Massachusetts had contributed 183,649 pounds sterling to the campaign that was motivated partially by distrust of the influential Jesuit missionaries. One of the chaplains in this crusade was Stephen Williams whom the Jesuits had failed to convert. He was the religious leader at Longmeadow where his sister Eunice visited on her rare journeys to Massachusetts. Like his dauntless father, he had written his own version of his captivity following the raid on Deerfield in 1704.

Despite their setbacks, the French and the Indians continued their assaults on the western frontier of Massachusetts in the spring and summer of 1746. After Mass was offered nearby, the raiders assaulted Fort Massachusetts on the banks of the Hoosac River where Gray Lock, the Abnaki chief of the St. Francis Indians, was killed. Close to Adams, not far away from the site of his death, stands the highest mountain peak in the Bay State, an appropriate memorial for this neophyte of the Jesuits. And St. Stanislaus Kostka Church, named for a Jesuit saint, bears testimony in Adams of another aspect of the Jesuit heritage in this northwestern section of Massachusetts, not far from Mount Greylock.

One cannot pass over the work of Jonathan Edwards (1703-58), the minister at Northampton who was forced to become a missionary among the Stockbridge Indians. Apparently these were the descendants of the Mahicans whom the Great Mohawk Kryn had driven out of the upper valley of the Hudson River in the 1660s. Having settled in the Stockbridge area where they made Lake Mahkeenac their home, they were first evangelized by the Rev. John Sergeant before Edwards came among them in 1751 after he was driven out of his pulpit in Northampton. A monument near the village green in Stockbridge is dedicated to this popular preacher of the Great Awakening (1740-42) who labored there from 1751. His theological works regarded the Jesuits as false prophets and his labors among the Indians indicate that he sought to counteract their teaching.

Yet, as far as western Massachusetts is concerned, there is no military figure that stands out as prominently from the early period of its history as Major General Jeffrey Amherst
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after whom the town incorporated in 1775 is named. Not only did he help to recapture the fortress at Louisbourg in July of 1758, but he was responsible for sending Rogers Rangers against the Indians of the Jesuit mission at St. François-du-Lac when he learned that two of his spies, dispatched to Canada on 24 August 1759 with seven Stockbridge Indians as their guides, had been mistreated. It is true that Amherst did allow the Jesuit Pierre-Antoine Roubaud to return to the desecrated mission once the English had the assurance of the loyalty of the Abnakis, but the damage had been done. France and England soon signed the Treaty of Paris in 1763 ending their long struggle. Although Amherst wanted to lay claim to the property of the Jesuits in Canada so that his family could benefit from these estates, his rival, Governor Guy Carleton of Quebec, thwarted him by having the revenue diverted for the purpose of supporting public education in Canada.

However, the subsequent years of the eighteenth century were not devoid of the Jesuit connection. The celebration of Pope's Day that resulted in the expulsion of the Jesuits from New England in 1755 preceded the suppression of the Society of Jesus by the Pope himself in 1773. General Benedict Arnold, an ancestor of Father John LaFarge, S.J. (1880-1963), stopped at Deerfield to obtain supplies following the capture of Fort Ticonderoga on 10 May 1775. And in Canada the former Jesuits and their Indian neophytes remained sympathetic to the Americans in revolt against England.

II

The link between the early period and the modern period in the relationship of the Jesuits to western Massachusetts is the member of the suppressed Society of Jesus, John Carroll, who had control over the whole of the Bay State as the First Catholic Bishop of the new nation. In his diplomatic mission to Canada in the spring of 1776, he had been very coolly received by Bishop Jean Oliver Briand (1715-1794) of Quebec who had not only refused to promulgate the bull suppressing the Jesuits but had become very effective in keeping Canadian Catholics loyal to the British cause during the American Revolution. Bishop Briand's secretary at that time was Joseph-Octave Plessis (1763-1825), a
descendant of Thomas French, the deacon and town clerk taken captive in the 1704 raid on Deerfield. The example of his mentor was not lost on this student who became First Archbishop of Quebec in 1806 for, in the War of 1812, Archbishop Plessis kept the French Canadians loyal to the British cause at the very time that John Carroll was Archbishop of Baltimore.

Before the Society of Jesus was restored in 1814 John Carroll had such a vast diocese as the American Catholic bishop that his exercise of jurisdiction was rather unknown in the western section of the Bay State. With the appointment of Jean Lefebvre de Cheverus as First Bishop of Boston in 1808 the responsibility passed to a new prelate who had ordained Father Virgil H. Barber, S.J., for the neighboring State of New Hampshire in 1822. Only with the coming of Benedict Joseph Fenwick, S.J., as Second Bishop of Boston in 1825, did this territory begin to witness a flowering of Catholicism. For Bishop Fenwick sent James Fitton, a product of the Jesuit school in Claremont, New Hampshire, whom he had ordained in December of 1827, to the western part of the Bay State.

During the 1820s, the textile mills began to increase in number so that by 1832 Cabotville (Chicopee), once a section of Springfield, attracted Father Fitton to care for the Irish. Arriving in Cabotville in November of 1832, he offered Mass in the homes of Irish laborers who were coming to the area because of the construction of the canals and railroads as well as the mills. On 26 January 1836, he informed Bishop Fenwick that he had purchased land for a chapel to provide services for the growing Catholic population.

But the chapel was not built until the coming of Father John D. Brady. In reviewing the situation, Father Brady found it necessary to purchase another lot in 1839 and the church, dedicated to St. Matthew on 1 October 1843 by Bishop Fenwick, became the first Catholic church in western Massachusetts. Originally designed for 250 Catholics, it was found to be too small, so Bishop Fenwick urged Father Brady to construct churches elsewhere in this vast territory.

When Father Fitton came to Cabotville, he used it as "the rallying point" for his missions to other parts of the four counties. He went as far east as Palmer, as far west as Great
Barrington, and as far north as Greenfield. Father Brady was familiar with this vast area which also included such towns as Holyoke, Northampton, and Pittsfield. And it was to Pittsfield that he next turned his attention.

Although it had been visited periodically by Father Jeremiah O'Callaghan from Burlington in the late 1830s, Father Brady began regular visits to Pittsfield in 1841. The Catholics grew to more than 200 so that, urged on by the Bishop Fenwick's interest and their own enthusiasm, the priest purchased the land and built his church on Mellville Street where Notre Dame parish is located. This church, which was completed early in 1845, was the first Catholic church in the Berkshires.

Moreover, Father Fitton did not neglect Catholics from the area of Amherst, Hadley and Northampton. This last town, which has become famous because of both Jonathan Edwards and Calvin Coolidge, had been visited by Father Jean Lefebvre de Cheverus in June of 1806 when the future bishop prepared for death Dominic Daley and James Halligan, two Catholics who were falsely accused of murder. It was Father Fitton who selected the land that was purchased in 1842 for about 150 Catholics from those three towns. In the spirit of those times when Protestants were warning against the growth of Jesuit education, Rev. Dr. William Allen was residing in Northampton writing his *Report on Popery*, an 1844 document in which he warned against the increase in Catholic priests and against the Jesuits who had recently established themselves with a new college in Worcester. Yet, with Bishop Fenwick preaching the homily, the church, which was the predecessor of St. Mary's and was located on King Street, was dedicated to St. John the Baptist on 25 December 1845 as the first Catholic Church in Northampton.

Springfield, which was a special concern for Bishop Fenwick, did not have a church of its own by the time of his death. From a small number in 1832 (three families and a few single men) Catholics grew to number about 180 by 1836. Once they had purchased land on Prospect Street next to the United States Armory in 1843, it was learned that it belonged to the government. After Catholics entered into negotiations with Colonel J.W. Ripley, the Superintendent of the Armory, Bishop Fenwick came to Springfield on 15 October 1845 and approved
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the sale of the controversial lot.

Under Father George F. Riordan, whom Bishop Fenwick had appointed as the first Catholic pastor of Springfield, the Catholics finally had a church of their own. For, two months after Bishop Fenwick's death in 1846, Father Riordan purchased the old Baptist church on Maple Street and moved it to Union Street. Located near Main Street, it was remodeled for Catholic services and dedicated on 17 February 1847 by Bishop Fenwick's successor, Bishop John B. Fitzpatrick of Boston. Quite appropriately, this church was named St. Benedict's in honor of the late Bishop.

The Springfield Daily Republican for 16 February 1847 gave an account of the dedication at which Reverend James Ryder, S.J., President of Holy Cross College, preached. Father Ryder declared, in that period of anti-Catholicism, that the new church was a bulwark for American institutions. "This is somewhat different from the view, which the opponents of Catholicism have generally entertained of the influence of that religion on the temporal government of the country," observed the leading newspaper of Springfield.

When Father Riordan was covering the missions of the western part of the state, Father William Logan, S.J., of Holy Cross College, helped out at St. Benedict's until his death in 1850. Father Logan, an energetic missionary, was an assistant priest on the day of the church's dedication. His associate, Father Peter J. Blenkinsop, S.J., continued this work until he was appointed the President of the College of the Holy Cross in 1854.

Under Bishop Fitzpatrick, who favored the Jesuits, the Fathers at Holy Cross College did not cease their work west of Worcester. Father Blenkinsop's brother was accepted as a priest in the Diocese of Boston and assigned to Cabotville. During his pastorate (1850-64) in this town, he had the support of the Jesuits, including Father Anthony F. Ciampi who almost lost his life serving the cholera victims, Irish immigrants, in that town. And Bishop Fitzpatrick dedicated two of his churches, St. William's in Ware (1 July 1855) and the Most Holy Name of Jesus (29 May 1859) in Cabotville.

Before Bishop John J. Williams took over as Bishop Fitz-
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Patrick's successor in 1866, the latter had submitted the names of the Blenkinsop brothers as well as that of Williams as nominees in 1865 for Bishop of Boston. While he was Bishop of Boston, Williams took with him to the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1866 not only William Blenkinsop, the brother of the Jesuit who had served as President of Holy Cross College, but also Alexander Sherwood Healy, the brother of Patrick F. Healy, the Jesuit who became President of Georgetown University eight years later and of James A. Healy, future Bishop of Portland.

As Catholics increased with the influx of immigration after the Civil War, Patrick T. O'Reilly was ordained First Bishop of Springfield on 25 September 1870 to care for the Catholics of the western part of the Bay State. The French Canadians, who were a significant proportion of his flock, constructed more than a dozen churches between 1868 and 1890, one of which Bishop O'Reilly dedicated in Indian Orchard to St. Aloysius Gonzaga (Saint-Louis), a Jesuit saint popular among the French Canadians, on 11 December 1873. And at the parish of the Precious Blood in Holyoke, where the Jesuit Edouard Hamon preached a mission for men in 1884, 500 men were enrolled in the League of the Sacred Heart, a number that grew to 1000 by 1890.

One parish which developed a bond with the Jesuits during the second half of the nineteenth century was St. Jerome's in Holyoke. It was founded by Father Jeremiah O'Callaghan who went there in 1856 as the first resident pastor (Bishop Fenwick had sent him as first resident pastor to Burlington, Vermont, in 1830). Father John Bapst, S.J., once the superior of the Jesuits in Maine, preached at the dedication of St. Jerome's on 17 June 1860 while Father O'Callaghan was still pastor (Father O'Callaghan died on 23 February 1861 at the age of eighty-two and a monument was erected to his memory next to the church). In 1882 Father Robert W. Brady, S.J., President of Holy Cross College, preached at the blessing of the cornerstone for the parish school. And Father Jeremiah O'Connor, S.J., of Boston College preached at the rededication ceremonies of the same church.

The story of the Jesuit relationship with the western part
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of the Bay State in the nineteenth century would not be complete if the Sedgwicks of the Berkshires were not mentioned. Because of Father Joseph Coolidge Shaw, S.J., (1821-1851), there is a connection with this prominent family. Father Shaw, it should be noted, was in western Massachusetts during the summer of 1848 when he ministered to the sick at Northfield about three times.

Miss Jane Sedgwick, who contributed to the Catholic churches in Lee, Lenox and Stockbridge, was the niece of Catherine Maria Sedgwick, the Berkshire author. When Father Terence Smith was pastor at St. Mary's in Lee (1883-91), Miss Jane Sedgwick, a convert of Isaac Hecker, founder of the Paulist Fathers, helped to build the parish school. Earlier, when Father Michael Carroll was pastor of St. Joseph's, Stockbridge (1874-85), she had contributed to the building of that church. She was buried in the cemetery next to this church in Stockbridge. Her cousin, Miss Grace Sedgwick (Mrs. Charles Astor Bristed), helped to build the new church dedicated to St. Anne in Lenox in 1911.

Father Shaw was the granduncle of Sarah Minturn, the second wife of Henry Dwight Sedgwick, the author who lived to the ripe age of ninety-six. His first wife, like some of the other members of the family who were not Roman Catholics, is memorialized in the beautiful Episcopal church of St. Paul in Stockbridge. On the east sanctuary wall of this church, there is a stained glass window over the altar depicting St. Paul preaching on Mar's Hill. It is the creation of the artist John LaFarge, the father of the past Jesuit editor of America.

Before the nineteenth century came to an end, a graduate of Holy Cross College, Thomas D. Beaven, became Second Bishop of Springfield in 1892. Bishop O'Reilly had dedicated an enlarged Fenwick Hall at Holy Cross College in 1875, but his relationship to the Jesuits could not match the one that existed between the new bishop and the Jesuit Fathers. As a young man, Beaven had entered the preparatory school of Holy Cross where he was a student from 1862 to 1866 before he entered the college from which he graduated in 1870. And he taught at Loyola College in Baltimore from 1870 to 1872.

Finally, as the century came to an end, Jesuits were in demand as special preachers in the parishes of Western Massa-
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chusetts. Father Francis T. McCarthy, S.J., gave the address for the blessing of the St. Joseph’s Academy in Pittsfield in May of 1896, and Father John F. Lehy, S.J., President of Holy Cross College, served the Bishop by preaching at the blessing of the cornerstone for St. Patrick’s in Williamstown later that same year.

III

The first two decades of the contemporary period in the relationship between the Jesuits and the Diocese of Springfield must be regarded as happy ones because of Bishop Thomas D. Beaven. Not only had he joined in the jubilee celebrations in 1893, but he thought of doing more for his alma mater after he turned the first shovel of soil for the dedication of Almuni Hall in 1904. At conferences held with his clergy in Worcester, Springfield and Pittsfield, he urged them to contribute to the needs of Holy Cross College. The result was that, on 4 September 1912, he blessed the cornerstone of a new building, a monument of the clergy in his diocese, Beaven Hall.

While Holy Cross College had helped to educate priests for the Diocese of Springfield, the Jesuits also attracted students to the Society of Jesus. John Linnehan, who attended Holy Cross College from 1890 to 1891, was a native of North Adams. This Jesuit, who was ordained in 1906, was regarded by his contemporaries as another St. John Berchmans. Known as “A Pittsfield Saint,” he moderated the Fordham Monthly before his death on 9 February 1912 at the relatively young age of forty-one. He was buried at St. Andrew-on-the-Hudson in Poughkeepsie, New York.

Two priests of the Diocese of Springfield joined the Jesuits during Bishop Beaven’s time. One was Father John W. Casey, a native of Lee, who entered the Society of Jesus in 1902, and the other was Father John E. Welch. Father Casey, who had been on the Mission Band for the Diocese of Springfield, brought his experience to the Jesuit Mission Band and also served at Holy Cross College, his alma mater, as chaplain before his death in 1937. Father Welch, another graduate of Holy Cross, was a priest at St. Mary’s in Northampton and at St. Joseph’s in Pittsfield before he joined the Jesuits in 1915 and
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taught at both Boston College and Holy Cross. He died in Worcester in 1956.

For some twenty years between 1906 and 1926, Father Robert Swickerath of Holy Cross College used to visit German-speaking Catholics in Adams and the neighboring towns in the Berkshires around Christmas and Easter. Not only did he take an interest in these people who had migrated from Germany, Austria and Hungary, but he won back to Catholicism those who had not been solicitious about the practice of their religion in this country. This was particularly true in missions that he conducted for that German-speaking colony of western Massachusetts.

When Bishop Beaven died in 1920, he was followed by Thomas M. O’Leary who became Bishop of Springfield from 1921 to 1949. A native of Dover, New Hampshire, Bishop O’Leary had graduated from high school there in 1887 and then spent three years studying under the Jesuits at Mungret College in Limerick, Ireland, before he was ordained in Montreal in 1897. Having served as chancellor to Bishop John B. Delaney of Manchester, who also had studied under the Jesuits, Bishop O’Leary was the Bishop of Springfield when the only two Jesuit foundations in western Massachusetts were established.

The first foundation was the house of studies in Lenox, Massachusetts, which was founded by Father John H. Fisher, S.J., in 1922. “Shadowbrook,” as it became known, was originally part of Oakswood, which Samuel G. Ward, a Boston financial leader had as a cottage. The estate, which went back to 1878, had a chapel where Mass was offered (his wife was a Catholic). It became Campion Cottage when the Jesuits took it over, the building where the agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation stayed while they were investigating the files of a red barn in Lenox for evidence on the Communist contacts with the Institute of Pacific Relations in 1950.

However, it was Mr. and Mrs. Anson Phelps Stokes who developed the property and built in 1893 the mansion that was a landmark of the town before it was destroyed by fire on 10 March 1956. They were not only members of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Stockbridge, but their son, Isaac Newton Phelps Stokes, married the grandniece, Edith Minturn, of the Jesuit
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Father Shaw. Her portrait, showing her in a tennis outfit and her husband in the background, was painted by John Singer Sargent in 1897 and bequeathed to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City in 1938.

Mr. Spencer Shotter purchased Shadowbrook in 1906 and sold it to Andrew Carnegie in 1917. The Scottish millionaire called it “Skibo” after his birthplace, and lived there until his death in 1919. After a brief interlude, the Jesuits acquired the vast estate with the imposing stone building that overlooked Stockbridge Bowl (Lake Mahkeenac). Dr. Serge Koussevitsky, (1874-1951) the noted music director who lived nearby and conducted the summer concerts at Tanglewood, was so attracted by the building that he would bring his distinguished guests from the music world to visit the Jesuits and occasionally remain for Solemn Benediction (the niece of his first wife was married in the Jesuit chapel at Shadowbrook).

The Jesuit foundation at Shadowbrook served as the center of Jesuit activity in western Massachusetts. Named in honor of St. Stanislaus Kostka, it was a novitiate and a juniorate for the training of younger members of the Society of Jesus in ascetical theology and the humanities. The priests who taught there contributed their services to the neighboring parishes on weekends and conducted novenas and gave Lenten talks in the Berkshires. Even the young scholastics contributed to the life of the church in the area by teaching the elements of religion to youngsters in neighboring parishes.

Despite the tragic fire of 1956, when four Jesuits perished, a new building was constructed and opened in 1959. The campaign for the new building was conducted under the chairmanship of Joseph E. Sullivan of Sullivan Brothers, printers from Lowell. The Jesuits expressed their gratitude to Mr. Sullivan by conferring upon him, on 23 May 1959, at Shadowbrook, honorary degrees from their three New England colleges and universities, namely, Boston College, Fairfield University and Holy Cross College.

Unfortunately, the new structure, because of the revolution in the training of priests triggered by the Second Vatican Council, became obsolete. The novices and the juniors moved from the isolation and peace of the Berkshires to the Boston

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area in 1970. Today the large building awaits a buyer, while the tombstones in the nearby cemetery, especially the one for the victims of the fire, remind the visitor of the years that have passed.

The other foundation which dates from Bishop O’Leary’s time is the Cranwell School in Lenox. On 27 May 1939, Mr. Edward H. Cranwell, a New York Catholic, deeded most of the property of the Berkshires Hunt and Country Club to the Jesuits. From the fall of 1939 to the spring of 1975, (when it closed for lack of funds) it served as the campus of a Jesuit preparatory school that included the sons of Latin American officials (the son of Mariano Ospina Pérez, former President of Colombia, attended the school) and such members of the Bay State as United States Senator Edward M. Kennedy and Boston Mayor Kevin H. White (both were enrolled there for a short period of time in its early years). And at least three New England Governors (former Governors of Massachusetts James Michael Curley and Charles F. Hurley, and Governor James B. Longley of Maine) sent a son to Cranwell.

The property at the Cranwell School had evolved from a number of estates. Henry Ward Beecher, the Protestant divine who built his summer home there in 1853, called it “Blossom Farm.” The Beecher Well, still a conspicuous landmark on the property, goes back to his occupancy. When General John E. Rathbone of Albany took over the estate in 1865, he built his own home and called it “Wyndhurst.” Captain John S. Barnes, who acquired the section of the estate nearby, built “Coldbrooke” or what is known as St. Joseph’s Hall. And in 1894 the New York rug manufacturer, John Sloane, tore down Captain Barnes’ building and built one of his own which became the main building named for Mr. Cranwell.

Certainly the most distinguished building on the property is the Pierce Chapel, named for Father Michael G. Pierce, S.J., who has directed the fund raising efforts of the New England Province of the Society of Jesus for a generation. Constructed in 1967, the building is one of modernistic design and is the center of the religious life for a group of Catholics involved in the Vineyard Community. Next to the building is the famous oak planted by President William McKinley when he was a guest
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of the Sloanes and not too far away is the golf course described by *Golf Illustrated* (November 1932) as “one of the sportiest championship 18-hole links in the land.” Given the location and its facilities, it is no wonder that Cranwell became a popular summer camp for boys once classes were over. And the Jesuits used the campus for their annual golf tournament at the close of the summers (around the early 1970s) for the W.E.D. Strokes Trophy.

Two apostolates that sprung up in western Massachusetts shortly after the arrival of the Jesuits at Cranwell are worthy noting. One was the launching of the first Sacred Heart Radio Program in New England. Due to the efforts of Father Matthew Hale, S.J., who died in 1969 after many years of service in Boston with this apostolate, the first such radio program in New England was broadcast from WBRK in Pittsfield on 27 April 1941. The other apostolate was the chaplaincy work at St. Luke’s Hospital in Pittsfield to which Father Robert W. Campbell, S.J., gave many years of his life and which continues today under Father Neil F. Decker, S.J., with the expanded facilities of the Berkshire Medical Center.

Following Bishop O’Leary’s death in 1949, Christopher J. Weldon became Bishop of Springfield in the following year. Back in 1940, perhaps influenced by the establishment of Cranwell, Bishop O’Leary had attempted to have the Jesuits establish a school in his see city. From the outset of his first year, Bishop Weldon was anxious to bring the Jesuits to Springfield. Holy Cross College conferred an honorary degree upon him in 1950 and Boston College did so in 1954, but he was unable to win the Jesuits over to his dream of establishing a college in his see city.

Yet it is noteworthy to recall the efforts that were made between the spring of 1951 and the spring of 1963 by Bishop Weldon. The Jesuits, who were more interested in a high school than a college, did explore the possibilities. They visited various pieces of property, including the old Westfield State College. The whole venture, which had led to the formation of a civil corporation for the proposed high school (Campion High School) collapsed when it became evident that it would be impossible to raise funds within the diocese (a new Cathedral
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High School had just been constructed) to support even a high school.

However, Bishop Weldon did establish two parishes dedicated to Jesuit saints, and these were the first since Bishop Beaven had established St. Stansilau Kostka in Adams in 1902. One was St. Francis Xavier’s in Pittsfield in 1960 and the other was North American Martyrs’ in Lanesboro in 1969. The church in Lanesboro goes back to 1935 when it was built by Father John C. McMahon as a mission of St. Mary’s in Cheshire. Following the canonization of the Jesuit saints in 1930, the Shrine of the North American Martyrs at Auriesville, New York, became a popular pilgrimage for the people of that section of the Berkshires and this new church, which cost $15,000, was named in honor of those Jesuits.

Of the many laymen who have contributed to the public life of Springfield, Roger L. Putnam, a descendant from the Mayflower stands out. Elected Mayor of Springfield three times (1937, 1939, 1941), he became a convert to Catholicism because of the influence of the Jesuit Fathers at their church on Farm Street in London. The American Jesuits at Boston College recognized his contribution to public life when they conferred an honorary degree upon him in 1949. Born on 19 December 1893, he died on 24 November 1972 having held the administrative post of Economic Stabilizer in the Korean War under President Harry S Truman.

Also, the Jesuit relationship to western Massachusetts cannot overlook the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame. Located in Springfield, it includes among its illustrious athletes at least three graduates of Jesuit schools. Robert J. Cousy of Holy Cross College, Edward Macauley of St. Louis University, and Bill Russell of the University of San Francisco are names that basketball enthusiasts will recognize easily.

At least seventy native sons of western Massachusetts have become Jesuits. One can point to the Shea brothers (Bernard, John and Richard); the MacDonnell brothers (John, Joseph and Martin), nephews of Father Joseph F. MacDonnell, S.J., who was professor of ethics at Weston College before his death in 1955; the Moriarty brothers (Frederick and the late Philip) who were born on the same day (1 April 1913) and ordained on the
same day (17 June 1944); and the Sheehan brothers (James and John), one of whom is a distinguished biblical scholar at Marquette University today. At the same time, one cannot forget Richard L. Eisenmann, the Jesuit who was ordained on 6 June 1968 and died in a tragic accident on 2 July 1972 in Brazil where he was working with other Jesuits from New England as a missionary among the poor of Bahia.

Moreover, there are at least three native sons from the Springfield area whose contributions cannot be overlooked: John J. Collins, Richard J. McCarthy and Raymond J. Swords. Father John J. Collins, who entered the Society of Jesus in 1918, was professor of New Testament at Weston College where he founded the *New Testament Abstracts*, a periodical that has served the international community of biblical scholars for a generation. Father Richard J. McCarthy, who became a Jesuit in 1933, was President of Al-Hikma University in Baghdad, Iraq, and, because of his many books published on Arabic studies, held a position (1970-76) as a professor of Ismaic Studies at Oxford University in England. And Father Raymond J. Swords, who entered the Society of Jesus in 1938, expanded the College of the Holy Cross as its president from 1960 to 1970 before he served as the President of Cranwell School from 1972 to 1975.

One aspect of the changing times after the Second Vatican Council was the different educational activities of some Jesuits. While there was one Jesuit studying at the University of Vermont during the 1969-70 academic year, there were five Jesuits involved in graduate programs at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. Also, from 1973 to 1975, there was a Jesuit teaching philosophy at the College of Our Lady of the Elms in Holyoke.

When Bishop Joseph F. Maguire, a member of the Class of 1941 from Boston College, became Coadjutor Bishop of Springfield in April of 1976, the situation of the Jesuits in western Massachusetts had altered considerably since the time when Bishop Weldon went to Springfield. For the two major Jesuit foundations in western Massachusetts, Shadowbrook and Cranwell, had been shut down, and some of the few Jesuits still in the diocese were in newer apostolates. Not only was Father
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Patrick A. Sullivan, former Dean at Shadowbrook, helping at St. Mark’s in Pittsfield, but Father Maurice F. Meyers of Chicago was working at St. Michael’s in South Hadley among the Catholics of the Oriental rite, and Father William J. Richardson of Nebraska was directing research at the Austen Riggs Center in Stockbridge.

The Jesuit relationship, then, with the western part of the Bay State has been a rich and an interesting one for both the Diocese of Springfield and the Society of Jesus. Yet it is a relationship that must look at the tremendous potential existing in this territory for the life of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Roman Catholic Church. For prospects for the growth of social, political, intellectual, religious and economic life of this section of the Bay State depend in good part on more than 500 or so graduates from each of the two older Jesuit institutions in New England, Holy Cross College and Boston College, and upon a growing number from the youngest, Fairfield University. Certainly, the streets off Route 291 and St. James Boulevard in the parish of Our Lady of Hope in Springfield named for Jesuit schools (Georgetown, Holy Cross, Fordham, and Marquette) indicate that the Jesuit heritage is cherished by the city that has the most graduates of Jesuit schools in western Massachusetts.