

Chapter Twelve

THE FINANCIAL SETTLEMENT (May 1926-August 1929)

Two documents were drawn up to arrange for the financial arrangement between the New England area and the Maryland-New York Province. The first and tentative one was worked out by Fr. James McGivney, the procurator of the combined province. It was approved on May 21, 1926 and contained, in addition to allocation of funds and assumption of debts, the understanding that this initial agreement was to be finalized only after three years of trial. On September 12, 1928 the two province procurators (Fr. McGivney and Fr. Joseph J. Williams) were authorized to prepare a draft of a final agreement. This second agreement essentially followed the original one, but it had to make some special arrangements concerning the ownership of Keyser Island, which Fr. General's decree had allocated to New England. Since there was a debt owed by the Keyser Corporation, an agreement had to be made either to have it assumed directly by New England or be cared for on the score that the same amount of money was additionally due to the New England Province from the Maryland-New York Province. This final settlement was accepted on August 4, 1929 by Fr. Edward C. Phillips, the Maryland-New York Provincial and his four consultors: Fr. Francis X. Byrne, Socius; Fr. Vincent A. McCormick, Rector of Woodstock; Fr. W. Coleman Nevils, Rector of Georgetown; and Fr. William A. Devlin, Rector of St. Andrew-on Hudson. On August 27, 1929 the document was signed for the New England Province by Fr. James M. Kilroy, Provincial; Fr. Louis J. Gallagher, Socius; Fr. James H. Dolan, Rector of Boston College; and Fr. Edward P. Tivnan, Rector of Weston.

What were the financial contents of the 1926 agreement? Whatever were the debts of the old province, not spelled out but estimated at \$1,500,000 were to be assumed by the Maryland-New York Province. What did this mean as far as the new province was concerned? It meant no debt for the purchase, modification and past upkeep of Shadowbrook and it meant that there was no debt for the purchase of Weston, its early modifications and the initial costs of the construction of the new building at Weston. However, \$300,000 was due on Weston construction as of July 31, 1926. This became the responsibility of the New England Province as well as all debt contracted thereafter, which could be considerable since construction and equipment bills would continue until the construction was finished in late May, 1927.

It should also be noted that the sums realized by the sale of Yonkers in 1924 had already gone to the common fund under Fr. McGivney. This would also be true of the \$500,000 given by Mrs. Helen Grant, the friend of Fr. Kilroy, to pay for the chapel-auditorium

wing.

The Maryland-New York Province was to receive certain perquisites because of its assumption of the \$1,500,000 common debt. These special perquisites receivable included the revenue from the province farms in Maryland and Pennsylvania, and the annual profits from the Messenger of the Sacred Heart. Fr. deBoynes' figures in 1920 had indicated the annual profit of the farms to be \$31,000 and the profit from the Messenger to be \$80,000. The farms dated back to the old Society, and by will and corporation title had been held for the day of restoration. The Messenger had begun in 1866 by Fr. Benedict Sestini at Georgetown. Subsequently it had been edited from Woodstock (1869), Philadelphia (1885) and later from locations (after 1894) in New York City which were known as Kohlmann Halls. The Messenger had one serious financial setback when its second editor, Fr. Raphael Dewey, once a socius at West Park and editor on its removal to Philadelphia, is said to have absconded with its funds. His name disappears from the province catalogue. His assistant, Fr. John J. Wynne, was later in charge. During Wynne's editorial tenure, there were for a time two Messengers, the Sacred Heart Messenger and a second magazine called simply the Messenger. This latter journal was a cultural and social one, and was the forerunner of America, which Fr. Wynne and some colleagues began to publish weekly in April 1909. For many years the Messenger of the Sacred Heart under such long-term editors as Fr. John H. O'Rourke, Fr. John J. Corbett and Fr. Charles J. Mullaly was a highly praised and profitable venture. In 1929 it was a considerable source of income to the Maryland-New York Province.

It might be noted that in 1927 at the first New England Provincial congregation (which elected Fr. J. Harding Fisher as its procurator and Fr. John B. Creeden as the substitute) a motion was introduced on the subject of revenue from the Messenger, which proposed that one-half accrue to New England. This motion was defeated on the score that final financial arrangements were still pending, but when the final arrangement was accepted, no change was made in the disposition of the roughly \$80,000 annual profit. It still went exclusively to Maryland-New York.

One explicitly financial addition made in 1929 was to grant burses which had been derived from New England to go to the New England Province. All of the other possessions of the old united province remained with Maryland-New York. However, some arrangement in connection with a Keyser debt to St. Andrews was made to reimburse New England from funds derivable from that area to the Jesuit Seminary Guild.

The important change in the 1929 agreement concerned Keyser Island. While Keyser Island had been assigned to the New England Province by Fr. General's 1926 decree, this property was not a province possession, and hence not so easily surrendered. The Island and its

buildings were owned by a series of houses many of which were part of the Maryland-New York Province, and which were asking reimbursement for their corporate funds. To complicate the situation, the Manresa Institute owed a \$10,000 debt to St. Andrew's, and this sum was now a New England Province liability.

To understand this complicated financial ownership, some history of the purchase, resale and expenditures are necessary. Keyser Island was purchased for \$32,500 in late 1888 from John H. Keyser, a New York City alderman who had been associated with discredited political figures. At the time of purchase the property had 23 acres of dry land and about the same amount of what was described as saltmeadow. A causeway of three quarters of a mile supplied a dry road running through the marshy land and was part of the main island property which faced on to Long Island Sound. In addition to barns, there were three houses of which one then and until the island was sold to the Connecticut Light and Power Company was known as The Mansion. In 1889 a Connecticut state charter obtained changed the name legally from Keyser Island to Manresa Institute, though the old term was regularly used in popular speech. The two names were combined on the license plate of the island's automobile -- MIKI (Manresa Institute, Keyser Island). The property by its charter had a tax-exempt status as a retreat house and a summer residence for men engaged in college work.

While the island initially attracted retreatants, especially prominent ecclesiastics on the verge of becoming bishops, and served periodically in its early days as a residence for mission band members, its best known use was as a summer villa. Initially it served this capacity for teachers from New York City and Jersey City. For them it was a kind of replacement for the short-lived villa at Cold Spring Harbor or Oyster Bay as this place was interchangeably known. This villa had been a purchase of the New York Mission prior to its union in 1879 with the Maryland Province. The Boston and Worcester houses had a villa which Fr. Robert J. Fulton had obtained in 1873 during the first of his two rectorships at Boston College. Fr. Francis C. Barnum, who was no admirer of this villa, has left an account of it in the second volume of his *Stray Notes*. A Mrs. Baker, a Boston Quaker, had offered the house provided the surrounding land was bought. This place was on Scanticut Neck which extends into Buzzard's Bay a few miles from the center of Fairhaven. The worn-out main house, close to the water, was on property overgrown with scrub. There were no walks and gardens, and to emphasize its unlovely features, Fr. Barnum writes of an adjacent saltmarsh, mosquitoes, poor water supply and the absence of a clean beach and surf. One would gather that the villa there was a miserable affair.

In the summer of 1889, while Boston and Worcester men still went to Fairhaven, a villa was opened at Keyser and frequented by members of the New York and Jersey houses. On September 9, 1897, when the place had not succeeded financially either as a villa or as a retreat

house, it was leased with the understanding that it would be available for Jesuit use during July and August. The island needed an additional dwelling, but the province was in no financial position to build one either to attract retreatants or to serve as a more commodious villa.

Now comes the plan of Fr. Edward I. Purbrick, the Englishman who was provincial of the Maryland-New York Province from 1897 to 1901. On October 13, 1898 he wrote to individual schools of the province and asked them to buy shares from the province in the Keyser property. Thus the ownership could pass from the province to a group of schools. He pointed out the failure of the place as a retreat house which had been a dominant purpose for which it was acquired. By 1898 the province had spent \$38,552 for the original purchase and improvements. The place must now either be placed on the market for sale or some sale arranged with a group of interested colleges. The cost of the place would be divided into seven full shares with the hope that five might be taken by five larger schools and the remaining two divided for sale to four smaller schools. Initially the cost of a full share was estimated at \$5,507.44 payable either in full or on a promissory note from the province at three percent with an annual interest charge of \$185.24. Each of the purchasers of a half (one-fourteenth) share could buy the share outright at \$2,753.72 or at an annual interest rate of \$82.62 on a promissory note held by the province.

Fr. Purbrick was not sanguine that all those invited to buy would do so. He pointed out that Boston College and Holy Cross had the villa at Scanticut Neck, though only Boston College was its owner. He believed Georgetown, Fordham and Xavier would buy, but he was not sure of any others. Any unsold shares, he noted, would be held by the province, thus entitling it to a place on the Board of Trustees. In an attempt to make the purchase more palatable, he promised that the province would assign a few fathers to the place for retreat work, and a series of brothers for the upkeep. An annual province tax of \$150 would be expected from the corporation for each of the fathers assigned, but the province would make no charge for the brothers. As a way of building up retreats and villa, he proposed that the corporation spend between \$20,000 and \$30,000 for a new structure.

The returns were beyond Fr. Purbrick's expectations. By January 16, 1899, three months after his appeal, three of the five large colleges (Boston, Georgetown and Xavier) were prepared to each buy a one-seventh share. St. Joseph's, St. Peter's, Gonzaga and Loyola of Baltimore were each ready to purchase a half share, which left two of the larger shares unsold. The hold-outs were Holy Cross and Fordham. It was not too long before Holy Cross announced its intention to take a full share, on May 12, 1899. The decision of Fr. Reid Mullan of Boston College to sell the Fairhaven villa probably hastened the change of mind for Fr. John F. (Jeff) Leahy, then the president of Holy Cross. Only on October 10, 1900, when Fr. George Petit had become the rector at Fordham on May 22 in succession of Fr. Thomas J.

Campbell, did Fordham take its one-seventh share. As long as Fr. Campbell, who as provincial had bought Keyser as a province venture, was rector, Fordham declined to share in the collegiate ownership of Keyser. It might be noted that all the promissory notes were called and paid in 1911 when the province needed the money for the purchase of the Lilienthal estate in Yonkers at an extraordinary high price (\$750,000, it is said).

Over the years between 1900 and 1926, other schools joined the corporation whose shares were now priced higher because of money spent on new structures. The first additional school to join was Loyola School which opened in the shadow of St. Ignatius Church, at Park Avenue and 83rd Street in 1901. Ironically, shall we say, its opening for a certain financial clientele was held to be the best thing done for the Catholic Church in New York City in fifty years. Plans for Loyola to join were first broached in 1903. In 1907 a half share was bought and paid for in full by January 25, 1908 and at the increased price of \$5,667. In 1903, for some reason, St. Joseph's, originally a half share holder, was asked to take a full share and to place itself in the financial category of Fordham and Georgetown. In 1903 the price for a full share was \$5,666 but St. Joseph's bought its second half share at the original price of \$2,753.22. In 1915 after some controversy St. Joseph's was awarded a full-share voting right. In 1908, Canisius College, which had become part of the Maryland-New York province from the 1907 dissolution of the Buffalo (German) Mission, took a half share at the new price of \$5,869.24. By 1913 it had paid \$1,469.24. By 1920 it had left an unpaid amount of \$4,400.00 on which it neither reduced the amount owed or paid any interest. With the separation of college and secondary school at Xavier, an original whole share-holder, there was a problem of who owned the share and represented Xavier on the corporation. A similar problem arose in Boston with the separation of the college from the high school and the church.

That the ownership was that much clarified was the result of the work of a special committee appointed to look into this matter in 1920. The members of this committee were three Jesuits who would later be attached to the New England area. At the time two of the three were stationed in New York. These two were Fr. Rockwell, the provincial and Fr. Kilroy, then rector of the 84th Street complex. The third, who died at Worcester during the vice-provincialate, was Fr. Joseph Havens Richards, then the superior at Keyser Island. Through this committee work Fr. Kilroy was made very cognizant of the main and subsidiary problems of the island's ownership and of its use. By the time of the 1929 settlement, the other two committee members were dead.

What was the disposition made in 1929 so that a clean title could pass to the New England Province? The Maryland-New York Province was from its own funds to buy out the shares of the houses in its territory. What was done is not known. The New England Province was like-

wise to buy the shares of Boston College and Holy Cross, both of which were whole share-holders in the island. Whatever may have been done is not evident from the province financial records. As to the \$10,000 debt owed by the Manresa Corporation to St. Andrew's, an exchange of checks took place between the province procurators. On the score that \$10,000 was due to New England for moneys received by the central Jesuit Seminary Guild, a check was made out to the New England Province from that of Maryland-New York. To clear the \$10,000 debt owed by the Manresa Corporation to St. Andrew's, a province house, the New England treasurer gave a check for that amount. Thus each gave to the other and each received from the other a check for \$10,000. Keyser's debt was paid, and Maryland-New York had given \$10,000 more from moneys received for seminary use than the 1926 agreement would have specified. Sic omnia componuntur.

In addition to the complicated financial ownership, there might be noted some of the early construction on Keyser Island, which helped to add to the price of its whole and half shares to which reference has been made. In 1903 the first new structure was erected. Those who knew the island from 1920 to 1955 might be surprised to learn that the oldest of the shore-line residences (Gonzaga, Borgia, Kostka, Xavier) was Xavier. This house was commonly considered to be the best of these four dwellings and was most often assigned to the senior group at a common villa, and yet it was the oldest. The second of these dwellings constructed in 1906 was the Gonzaga at the opposite end of the shore front from Xavier. It had the largest porch and it was from a room facing on its second floor porch that was heard the radio speech of Franklin Delano Roosevelt nominating Al Smith in 1928. In 1907 the chapel was constructed to one side of the mansion and behind the lot on which the Kostka was later built. Early writings note with pride that the altar-rail of the chapel came from old St. Joseph's in Philadelphia and that it had come there from Santo Domingo. It was alleged to have some Christopher Columbus connection.

To make the island more useful, a summer school for regents began there in 1907 under the supervision of a juniorate professor, Fr. Francis P. Donnelly. As members of a star-studded staff were Fr. Rockwell, the dean of Boston College; Charles Macksey, later a professor in Rome; Terrence Shealy, founder of the retreat house at Staten Island; Francis J. Connell, a professor of poetry in the juniorate and a later general prefect of studies; William F. (Daddy) Clark, a distinguished scholar and rector in such places as St. Joseph's, Woodstock, St. Andrew's, and Kohlmann Hall; Elder Mullan, the theoretician of the sodalities and a later tertian instructor; and even the then provincial, Fr. Joseph F. Hanselman, who reminisced on his experiences as both prefect of studies and discipline at Holy Cross.

Nor was the use of the island for summer school in the post-villa season its only later summer use. In 1908 Bishop Michael F. Tierney of Hartford began having the annual retreat of the Hartford diocesan priests at Keyser Island. Fr. George Fargis gave the first

in this line of retreats. This practice persisted until 1930 when the new St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield, Connecticut became the location for the Hartford diocesan retreats. At Bloomfield, Jesuits gave the annual retreats through the years until World War II discontinued them for two years until 1945, when they were resumed. The 1945 retreat was poorly received and thereafter Jesuits were rarely called upon to conduct Hartford retreats. But the memory of Jesuit retreat directors has been held in high esteem by many of the older Connecticut priests. They especially praise Fr. John H. O'Rourke, Fr. Charles Connors and Fr. Edward P. Tivnan.

One might wonder if monarchical rather than oligarchical ownership of the island would have been better for its upkeep and use. Surely at the time the New England Province inherited it, a state of more than benign neglect characterized the place. It seems to take a province rather than this collegiate type of ownership to make a villa, even the kind of one generally understood and appreciated in those days. Perhaps Fr. Campbell was materially right in holding out against an institution owned by a group of colleges even though we do not know his subjective motivation in refusing to join the Manresa Corporation as long as he was rector at Fordham.



The Mansion, Keyser Island