

## Chapter Eight

ACQUIRING A NOVICESHIP

At a very early stage in the history of the New England vice-province a serious search began for a novitiate. One might surmise from the limited size of some of the dwellings considered that a noviceship, separate from a juniorate, was believed to be, if not an ideal, at least a satisfactory arrangement. Since the noviceship was a direct replacement for Yonkers, which was exclusively a noviceship, this concept would not be strange. In such an arrangement, New England juniors would share the juniorate at St. Andrew's as did its rhetoricians when a juniorate at Shadowbrook in 1923-24 was limited to first year juniors. In some correspondence and in accompanying brochures left by Fr. O'Gorman, the first vice-provincial, it is evident that the early search for a novitiate was centered in Fairfield County rather than in any part of Massachusetts.

By October 12, 1921 Fr. O'Gorman wrote to Fr. J. Havens Richards, then the superior at Keyser Island, to learn the appraised value of a Lewis estate in Ridgefield, Connecticut. The consultants were considering this place as a noviceship. The property had been judged satisfactory, if the price were equally so. This property was in two parcels, separated by a road. One portion of 50 acres and with a 2000 feet frontage on the road was highly improved. The remaining half was unimproved. Although the brochure indicated that only the improved portion was for sale, the real-estate dealer, Mr. Thomas Cooke of Greenwich, Connecticut, made it clear that the remaining portion was also for sale. Even beyond the 50 to 60 acres of unimproved land constituting the Lewis estate, there was another separate and unimproved acreage of 100 acres. This did not seem to come into any question of sale. But all this unimproved acreage could give the possibility for some day erecting a large house of studies capable of housing noviceship, juniorate and the necessary staff.

The main fire-proof building of hollow tile and stucco had on the first floor a porch entrance, a reception room, library, den, living room (27 x 23), billiard room, sun porch with a fireplace, dining room with an adjoining pantry, kitchen, laundry, two toilets, servants' dining room and a butler's room. The second floor had five large rooms and two bathrooms. The third floor had two family bedrooms, a large open attic over the service portion of the house connected by a rear staircase, plus six smaller rooms and two bathrooms. In all, there were six fireplaces. An electric elevator ran from the cellar to the third floor. The house was heated by a combination of a hot water and a hot-air furnace. There was a separate hot water system. The building received its water, as did the town of Ridgefield, from Round Lake at the rear of the Lewis property. On this

lake the estate had a 900 feet frontage, however no boating or swimming was allowed in view of the reservoir function of the lake. Nevertheless, the property did have a pond and a fresh water spring. It was abundantly covered with trees and shrubs, especially mountain laurel bordering the lake. Additional attractions were a vegetable garden, some fruit trees, a flower garden and an excellent grass tennis court.

On October 17, 1921 Fr. Richards replied that the appraised value was \$221,950. Some months later, in February, Fr. O'Gorman wrote to Fr. Himmel, then the replacement at Keyser for Fr. Richards, to learn if he knew of any Jesuits who had recently visited the estate -- a situation which Fr. O'Gorman had hoped would not be true. On some such visit, Mrs. Lewis had indicated a willingness to accept a reasonable offer. From a letter of Mr. Cooke to Fr. Himmel it is clear that at some time in this search an offer had been officially made of \$150,000 in cash. This offer had been judged too low. Fr. O'Gorman also indicated somewhat earlier than February that he had not been supported by his consultors on this purchase. Nothing else on this matter appears either in Fr. O'Gorman's diary or in the consultor's minutes. The Lewis Estate as a possible novitiate just disappears.

Another search began. Fr. Himmel on March 8, 1922 was asked to look into The Castle -- an estate in Newtown, Connecticut, said to be suitable and commodious enough for 50 or 60 novices. This place would clearly not include a juniorate. This property was owned by a Mr. Booth who resided at the Strathfield Hotel in Bridgeport, Connecticut. He indicated his readiness to show it to Fr. Himmel. The data on this place comes from its brochure. The property was east of Newtown on an elevation 800 feet above sea level. It had 54 acres, mostly meadows with some woods. The main house with outer walls of cut stone had 45 rooms and 15 bathrooms and had been constructed at a cost of \$500,000. Water came from a town supply and from an artesian well. As special features, the brochure mentioned a billiard room and a large swimming pool in one wing. A steam boiler supplied sufficient heat even for the coldest winter days. As to further location, it was a half mile from Newtown proper and one mile from the Newtown Railroad Station. Also, one quarter of a mile from the house was Taunton Lake, suitable for rowing and fishing. On March 30, 1922 Fr. O'Gorman's reply was negative, but he commissioned another search.

At least by very early April, 1922 Fr. Himmel was asked to examine another Ridgefield estate. At this same time Fr. O'Gorman indicated his lack of encouragement in this matter from his consultors. But to his own mind, if he could obtain the place in question for \$150,000 but no more, he would judge he had a buy. Here all our sources of information on this property come to an end.

Perhaps the lack of backing of the consultors on property in Fairfield County and the suddenness with which some of these searches conclude may have been the result of learning of property in western

Massachusetts, capable of housing not only novices but also juniors. It is one of the serious lacunae in the vice-province history that nothing appears extant in document or literary form of the initial learning about the availability of Shadowbrook. In the vice-province consultors minutes for September 26, 1922 a reply denying permission for its purchase came from Fr. General, although some consultors thought that it was chiefly the negative voice of Fr. Joseph F. Hanselman, the American assistant. Fr. Hanselman had been prefect both of discipline and studies at Holy Cross, its rector, the Maryland-New York Provincial, rector of Woodstock all prior to his appointment as Assistant. How soon a request for purchase had gone to Rome is unknown. How soon prior to that, a study had been made of the feasibility of Shadowbrook, and by whom is also unknown. But the reasons advanced from Rome puzzled Fr. O'Gorman. He wrote to Fr. Laurence J. Kelly, the provincial in New York, wondering about what was behind the refusal. The grounds cited by the General were two and interconnected reasons. The house had been the dwelling of a millionaire, and the whole area (Lenox-Stockbridge) was a rich man's paradise. A novitiate in such surroundings would be inappropriate. What was replied to this difficulty is also unknown, as is likewise what later response granted permission. But starkly in the minutes of the consultors on October 23, 1922 Fr. James F. McGivney, the procurator of Maryland-New York of which the New England vice-province was but an administrative division, was authorized to go ahead with the purchase of Shadowbrook. There was, at least, one great difference between this place and those sought in Fairfield County. For its day, Shadowbrook could accommodate juniors as well as novices. The Fairfield County places could not. Moreover, the price of \$200,000 was less than was expected from the owners in Ridgefield and Newtown, and not much more than Fr. O'Gorman was prepared to pay for what would have been limited to novices' accommodations.

Prior to the buying of what became the large Shadowbrook estate by Anson Phelps Stokes in 1892, a small portion of this property had been bought by Samuel Ward, referred to as a King of Lobbyists. He had three sisters one of whom, Julia Ward Howe, is the best known, and was a friend of Emerson and Longfellow. In 1844 he had bought a tract of land on the open-meadow slopes of Baldhead not too far from the lake and built a large mansion of dark wood known as Oakwood. In his home, Sam Ward had a chapel since his wife was a convert to Catholicism. In 1892, Stokes purchased the Ward estate plus a large tract below it in the valley and up the eastern slope of Baldhead. It consisted of some 1000 acres of land on one side of the Richmond Mountain. From his neighbors the Higginsons he acquired the corner of land on which his gate house was built. The Higginson property later came to be known as the Gould estate from the marriage of a Higginson daughter to John Gould, a New York lawyer.

After planning on a site more related to the rows of elms which he had planted, Mr. Stokes was convinced by his architect, H. Neill Wilson, to build instead some 3000 feet back from Lake Mackinac

with an elevation of about 200 feet above the lake. When completed in 1893 by James Clifford, a Lenox builder, at a cost of half a million, the dwelling was the largest private one in New England, and the second largest in the United States. When one sees the empty site today, it seems small. It must be remembered that the Stokes house had turns near the middle and at both eastern and western ends. The entire estate on which this mansion was built came to have two divisions. One consisting of 358 acres was known as Shadowbrook, and the remaining 642 acres were designated as Shadowbrook Farm. It was the portion of 358 acres that was acquired in 1922 by the Society of Jesus. The farm section down in the valley had a great variety of buildings, and the designs of Mr. Wilson for these structures rather than the mansion won the commendation of a London professor as at that time the most important piece of American architecture. In time many of these farm buildings were converted into a Stokes home and, oddly, the house library was made over from the original ice house.

The main house which received less early architectural acclaim than the farm buildings was built of Pittsfield marble with upper stories of stucco with charred cypress for outside timbering. It had 50 rooms and could accommodate 150. On the non-farm section of the property there was also the gate house, guarding with a huge fence the main entrance to a road which in Jesuit days was termed Rosary Lane. Oakwood, the Ward home, was demolished except for its eastern wing and maintained initially as a gardener's cottage. It became Campion Cottage during Jesuit occupation. As Campion, it housed the tailor shop, bakery, chapel, several living rooms and a second story porch. It served as the dwelling place for the Jesuit cadre, maintained at Shadowbrook from the fire of 1956 to the opening of the new building. It has since been demolished. An entrance from the Richmond Road led down past this cottage to the main dwelling, and this road was for many years the main entrance way to the novitiate. Only many years later did Rosary Lane come to serve this added purpose. There was also a workman's house at a second exit to the Richmond road at the more remote Western section of the property. Nearby was located a greenhouse.

One day when Mr. Stokes was riding through this property, his horse stepped into a hornet's nest, became startled and ran Mr. Stokes into a tree crushing his leg. An amputation was necessary. As he recuperated, Mr. Stokes lost his interest in his Shadowbrook mansion, and in 1898 built a new one at Noroton, Connecticut where he could yacht on the Long Island Sound. In time, this became the location of a school for the Religious of the Sacred Heart. From 1898 to 1906, with the exception of its 1901 use as a resort hotel, Shadowbrook was idle. In 1906 it was acquired by Spencer P. Shotter, a New Orleans planter and financier. The precarious character of his fortune led to the snubbing of him and his wife by Berkshire Society, which was still in its glory especially in the summer season. Mr. Shotter put the property up for sale in 1912 but its sale price was impounded by

those to whom he owed money. For a few months in 1915 it was rented by Mrs. Arthur Vanderbilt. In 1917 Andrew Carnegie, already sick at heart because of the failure of his well-financed peace efforts, bought the place for \$300,000 from Shotter's debtors. It reminded him enough of Scotland in his youth. He beautified the grounds with gardens, paths and a pool with a fountain. Ill since the spring of 1919, Carnegie died early on the morning of August 11, 1919. His funeral was held in the ballroom (later the Jesuit Chapel) and he was buried in up-state New York. By the fall of 1922, Mrs. Carnegie sold the property to the Maryland-New York Province for \$200,000. There appear no written details on the negotiations.

Although the chief and habitable portion of the property is in Stockbridge rather than in Lenox, the post-office address, after being West Stockbridge for many years, finally became Lenox. The center of the town of Lenox was much closer than the insignificant center of West Stockbridge or the more aristocratic center of Stockbridge. By 1923 neither Lenox nor Stockbridge were any longer the literary centers that they had been with names of residents, neighbors and visitors such as Hawthorne, Emerson, Kate Douglas Wiggins, Catherine Sedgewick, William Cullen Bryant, Herman Melville, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Edith Wharton and Richard Watson Gilden. Lenox was reported to be more the home of the later bad millionaires rather than of the earlier allegedly good ones. Whatever her category among the millionaires may have been, one nearby wealthy resident up in the hills was Kate Buckingham, a Chicago spinster. Her will bequeathed money to Chicago for a vast monument of Alexander Hamilton to grace the Chicago equivalent of the Charles River Esplanade. Once it was hoped that she would remember Shadowbrook in her will. The days of servants by the dozen had passed in Lenox and Stockbridge. For the small amount of idle-rich luxury that might meet the eye or the ear of a novice, Fr. General had little to cause him worry. Teaching catechism at St. Patrick's in West Stockbridge was not the social equivalent as teaching for Miss Farrell (accent on the second syllable) at Foxhollow in much later years. The novelty of life in a former millionaire's home and area was taken in stride without any stumble.

Fr. Gerald A. Dillon, who in December 1921 was proposed as first superior at Weston, assumed charge of remodelling the mansion for novices, juniors and faculty. He had had experience with their needs from his years as socius, minister at St. Andrew's and minister-socius at Yonkers. The first floor could be left relatively intact. The Pompeian entrance lobby was stripped of some finery and became St. Joseph's Aula, and its walls were filled with special collections of books. The ballroom was an obvious room to be fitted out with an altar and benches for a chapel, since the sacristy and its extra altars were located in the refreshment room off the ballroom. The parlors were naturals. The morning room became the conference room. The dining room became the refectory and the elevator near the entrance was removed and replaced by an iron staircase. The kitchen had to be expanded, but the second and third floors were essentially

changed. In place of large bedroom and study arrangements, walls had to be torn down to supply dormitories of varying sizes, study halls, classrooms, subsidiary chapels and along narrow corridors an extended wash section with sinks, shelves and mirrors. Rooms at the west end of the second floor were retained for the faculty, and in a corresponding portion of the third floor there were brother's rooms, guest rooms, small dormitories and an infirmary. The third floor and half of the second did not mirror luxury or even notable convenience. With time these sections became overcrowded. The novice and junior dormitories were supplied originally with thick alcove curtaining, but the inability to get adequate breathing air in these dorms led to their early removal.

Fr. Dillon and Br. Meehan travelled many times from Yonkers to the Berkshires, stopping occasionally and briefly at Poughkeepsie. When in some later stages of preparations two or three novices, who were aiding with the work as a trial, were expected to retain grades between themselves and the poets who had been their fellow novices the year before in Yonkers. Juniors were reprimanded if they fraternized even a few minutes with these guests without having gone through a series of permissions often from unavailable people.

No one seems to have written up the trip in late June, 1923 from Yonkers via Poughkeepsie to Shadowbrook such as was done minutely concerning the January 1903 move from Frederick to Poughkeepsie. On the day of the brief stop at St. Andrews, all the juniors, who knew the Yonkers novices, had left early by rowboats pulled by two motor boats for Cornwall on Hudson, the port, as it were, for the villa at Monroe. After lunch that day, the Yonkers community continued on to its new home and settled in gradually to life in a house far more huge than Yonkers and on grounds in which the comparable Yonkers walking, playing and working space would be swallowed quickly. One should not rhapsodize on the journey and arrival, since the first supper appears to have been from tin plates on an improvised table in Campion Cottage. Without beds, initially, the novices slept on mattresses laid out on the floor. But no one, it seems, gave a full contemporaneous account of the early days, and the house diaries and pictures perished in the fire.