

Chapter Nine

SHADOWBROOK: ITS EARLIEST PERSONNEL

In view of the fact that Weston was originally designed as a philosophate for both parts of the united province, it is not surprising that a fair number of Maryland-New York men constituted its original personnel. Yet Shadowbrook, which was a noviceship and juniorate for New England, had numerous members of the Maryland-New York Province. This is less surprising when it is considered that the noviceship, at Yonkers, New York from 1917, moved in late June of 1923 from Yonkers to Shadowbrook with its dominantly Maryland-New York faculty, coadjutor brothers, and a sizable number of Maryland-New York novices.

Foremost among these arrivals was Fr. J. Harding Fisher (1875-1961) a native of New York City. At the time of his appointment as novice master on August 22, 1922, he had been an associate editor of America since 1914. In that capacity he was the right arm of Fr. Richard H. Tierney, the editor from 1913 until crippled by a stroke in early 1925. When there had been thought of appointing Fr. Fisher as rector of St. Andrew's in 1918, Fr. Tierney had fought what he considered a waste of editorial talent and graciousness. He won that battle. In 1922, he seems to have learned too late of the proposed assignment of Fr. Fisher as novice master, and he could hardly consider this post as insignificant and capable of being filled by almost any Tom, Dick or Harry. While at America Fr. Fisher had kept alive his ascetical drive by giving a variety of retreats. It hardly needs to be mentioned that his learning, insight and friendliness made him a hero to so many of his novices. Yet he could also be a firm man.

The second man in charge of noviceship life, Fr. Gerald A. Dillon, was a native of Yonkers, who had studied at Holy Cross. He was from 1903 to 1917 either socius or minister at St. Andrew's, and both at Yonkers from 1917 to 1923. He was the acme of versatility. As minister he could keep up the house and farm and flowers. He could take a regular Sunday morning call to St. Bartholomew's while in Yonkers. He could so review Latin grammar that it took on a new meaning even for those who had studied it for four or more years. He was a genius at organizing and imparting Greek grammar in all its moods and tense. As a prefect of reading he was exacting, yet genial. His catechetical lectures were a joy to attend, and when he gave points for special occasions or in the absence of Fr. Kelly, his points were fresh and their lessons lasting. For a whole three weeks of villa in 1922 he gave memorable points on meals in which Our Lord joined or in which he hoped to join. After one year at Shadowbrook in the dual capacity of minister and socius, he gave up or was deprived of the office of minister. Henceforth to his death on April 3,

1925 he remained only as socius, teacher of grammar, sub-minister and catechist to the coadjutor brothers. In addition to his extended burden of severe headaches, he seemed to feel strange in this second house he had remodeled as a noviceship. And he whom so many admired and imitated as did the late Leo A. O'Connor, was himself a hero-worshipper of Fr. George Petit with whom he had worked harmoniously for so many years. Perhaps in some moments of sorrow and pain, he might have sought temporal solace in smelling the fragrance of the many flowers he cultivated, but which he always urged his assistants never to smell. They might become, he held, over passionate or over-enamoured of fragrant odors. So convincing was his way of stating this prohibition that it took a long time and struggle to overcome this inhibition. Expertus loquor!

Another New York staff member, Fr. Francis J. Lamb, came to Shadowbrook for one year after having been the sixth spiritual father at Yonkers. He was the first of these to hold the position for more than a year. Among the predecessors were Edward I. Fink (1917-1918), Thomas J. Campbell (1918-1919), John F. Quirk (1919-1920), Francis W. McCarthy (1920-1921), Michael P. Hill, author of the once popular Catholic's Ready Answer (1921-1922). Fr. McCarthy, once a distinguished diocesan priest in Pittsburgh, had long been a member of the mission band, was a self-trained Dante scholar and a raconteur of interesting data on distinguished people. If left to initiate and steer his monologue, he could be most informative, but he did not take kindly about anyone trying to move the stories in some different direction or on to some other subject. He equally dreaded the noise which the novices made on the tin-covered stairways.

Without detracting from Fr. McCarthy, who was ordinarily pleasant, the most outstanding but awesome figure among these spiritual fathers was Fr. Thomas J. Campbell whose name has often appeared in these pages. He stands out particularly to this writer because he taught French -- Fenelon's Telemaque -- to the juniors at St. Andrew's in the summer of 1923. The course was less French than it was the glory of the New York mission and the place of the New York houses and men in the earlier days of the Maryland-New York Province. Granted that he could be dour and some would say jansenistic, he could inspire by his words and his life work. In addition to being rector of Fordham twice, and Maryland-New York provincial, he had been the second editor of America (1910-1913), the author of three volumes on pioneer priests and laymen in North America and the author of a general history of the Society. This last work was poorly proofread for its numerous factual errors and has too apologetic and defensive a tone. He was an eloquent preacher on innumerable occasions. His volume of Occasional Discourses could still inspire confidence in the glories and abilities of past generations. There were, as Horace says, great men before Agamemnon and the 31st General Congregation.

One of Fr. Campbell's notable discourses in New England was his eulogy of Fr. Sebastian Rale, S.J. when a monument, originally erected

by Bishop Benedict J. Fenwick, was restored on more ample territory at Norwidge work, Maine due to the efforts of Bishop Louis Sebastian Walsh of Portland. Strangely in the present plaque on the monument where there is reference to the original erection of the monument by Bishop Fenwick and of the placing of the current plaque in 1940 by the Knights of Columbus of Maine, there is no reference to Bishop Walsh's work. Moreover the date of the first monument is erroneous and would seem to extend Bishop Fenwick's lifetime into the episcopal career of Archbishop John J. Williams.

It might be noted that a group of New England novices visited the Rale monument and its surrounding cemetery and wooded area in the summer of 1974 very close to the 250th Anniversary of Fr. Rale's death on August 23, 1724. They noted the mistake in the date on which the original monument was set up. They had been made acquainted with the historical data on Rale in a community mass homily. Some wonder if today's young Jesuits know anything of our Jesuit saints or blessed or of the distinguished past and contemporary Jesuits. Rale, along with Bobola, Aloysius, Stanislaus, John Francis Regis, Bernardine Realino, Peter Claver, Edmund Campion, the North American martyrs, Claude de la Columbiere as well as Fr. William J. Murphy, Fr. William J. Kenealy, Fr. James Coleran, Fr. James M. Kilroy, Fr. Edward (Bunny) O'Keefe, and Fr. Edward (Doc) Bunn are a few whom they have in recent years had homilized. So, if reading lives of saints and famous Jesuits is not as honored and common as it once was, homilies at community mass help to supply information and inspiration.

In the procurator's post at Shadowbrook, New England men appear. After serving as procurator at America Press, at Woodstock and Holy Cross, Fr. Joseph J. Williams was assigned to Yonkers in this capacity in 1922 changing places with Fr. William A. Coyle who had been treasurer at Yonkers since 1918. Fr. Coyle, a native of southern Connecticut, had been educated at the old St. Francis Xavier's College and as a result joined the New York Mission and was a novice at West Park. Fr. Williams spent one year at Shadowbrook in this procurator's work, and was followed for a year by Fr. James J. Carlin, whose term as president of Holy Cross ended in 1924. By his fellow Jesuits at Holy Cross Fr. Carlin was credited with financial acumen. As a result of the 1920 drive he was able to have built Loyola Hall, now Carlin (1922), St. Joseph's Memorial Chapel (1924), the enlarged football stands, and leave money for Fr. Dinand to expend on the library, now known as the Dinand Library. Fr. Carlin probably would not have favored Fr. Dinand's dream of bringing the steps of the library down to the original Linden Lane. Fr. Carlin left Shadowbrook after a year to go to the Philippines, first as rector of the Ataneo in Manila, and then as the first American superior of the mission. While returning to the Philippines via the United States from Rome in 1930, he died in Los Angeles. His remains were returned to Holy Cross for funeral mass and burial. He is one of the few Holy Cross rectors to be buried there, and to have his grave visited especially

at the time of the annual Holy Cross Alumni reunions.

With the opening of the juniorate merely for poets in September 1923, one juniorate teacher was necessary. Here, too, Maryland-New York was called upon. The first poetry teacher of Latin, Greek and English was Fr. Joseph A. Hogan, who between 1917 and 1922 had taught in turn both poetry and rhetoric at St. Andrew's. He was called now from his native Philadelphia to teach the one year of juniors since all New Englanders, who might have been assigned there as rhetoricians, remained at St. Andrew's. Despite a cooperative and alert group of poets, Fr. Hogan was not happy in these Berkshire surroundings. They may have reminded some of the Alps, but Fr. Hogan found the sunrise and sunset at 18th and Thompson as exhilarating or more so than those in the Berkshires. Hence after a year he returned to Philly where he remained at work until his death in 1961.

There was but a small number of New Englanders in this poetry class. These included James E. Risk, the first by seniority to pronounce vows at Shadowbrook, Arthur Tribble and Harry Muollo, the later victims among four of the March 10, 1956 fire, and Senator William H. Cusick. The Senator had begun his noviceship at Poughkeepsie, but some disability suggested its continuation at Yonkers. In later years, Fr. Cusick was able to make the word "pendet" do valiant and widespread service in warding off answers to difficulties. To this number of novices who came from Yonkers to Shadowbrook in 1923 to constitute the first juniorate class must also be added John C. Ford. John had suffered from tuberculosis as a novice at Poughkeepsie and spent over a year at Monroe thus missing his poetry year at St. Andrew's. With his condition improved he was assigned to the more healthful Berkshires for his juniorate from 1923 to 1925. Along with these pioneer New Englanders there were several from Maryland-New York: Frank Bradley, Jimmy Martin, Joe Rooney, John (Ben) Welch, Tom Stokes, Bill Schlaerth, Charles Rohleder, Eddie Heggerty (the Guerilla Padre), John Murray of Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, John Carroll, Bill Kelly and Leo Washila who left. As of 1976 only Martin, Welch and Murray survive of these Maryland-New York men.

The opening year also received a corps of veteran coadjutor brothers from Yonkers: Br. Benny (Biniakiewicz), Br. Tony Gale, Br. Tommy Glennon, Br. Michael Goergen and Br. Thomas Meehan. They brought expertise in care of chickens and clothes-room, of baking even out of one's own head, of farming and slaughter of animals, of sacristies, parlors and of kitchens and buying. Each in his way also aided there, as they had at Yonkers, in the training of novices. Some of us thought Br. Meehan did as much of that training as did Fr. Kelly. Until his death in 1976 he was the last survivor of this group that shared hardships and really incredible living conditions at Yonkers. After leaving Shadowbrook in 1927 Br. Meehan was in charge of the kitchen and procurement at Weston until 1942. Then he was the brother on whom so much depended at Cheverus both at home and with the tradesmen in the city. Finally ill health brought him to

Weston in 1972 after a long career as an operarius inconfusibilis. To this group of pioneer Yonkers' brothers were added Br. John J. Casey, who had made his postulancy and noviceship in Yonkers and who left in a few years, and also Br. William Kavanagh, who had charge of the heating system.

When a new group of novices arrived that summer of 1923, while New Englanders predominated, there were several novices from the Maryland-New York Province. Poughkeepsie did not suffice in space for all the new applicants, and moreover it still had New Englanders among its second year novices and both years of juniorate. It is significant to note the sticking power of these first group of New England novices at Shadowbrook. Twenty of them survived deaths and departures to attain their golden jubilee in 1973. Never before had there been such a large number of golden jubilarians for any 50th year in this province. 1976, which might have broken this record in numbers, lost two by death in the months preceding their jubilee -- Fr. William L. Kelcher and Harry L. Huss. Nineteen made the jubilee, thus leaving the 1923 year as a facile princeps one.

The summer of 1924 brought some changes and additions, but Maryland and New York people still predominated. From New England in addition to Fr. Carlin as treasurer, Fr. Leo A. Dore was assigned as minister and professor of history. This subject had not been taught in first year such as was done at St. Andrew's by Fr. Patrick J. Dooley, author of Makers of Woodstock and the story of the Jesuit parish in Yorkville. This parish began as St. Lawrence O'Toole's, and the title remains in the lower church at 980 Park Avenue. The upper church was called St. Ignatius. A former Jesuit, Fr. Sam Mulledy, when serving as pastor at St. Lawrence, had proposed to Bishop McCloskey that it be assigned to the New York Mission. While Fr. Dooley's history course was relatively ordinary, it was not a dictated course such as the one which Fr. Dore gave to the juniors for some four years. The "historia excurrenda" of the ratio has often in the past been taken over-literally. When Fr. (later Bishop) William A. Rice was minister and superior at Shadowbrook, he taught history to the juniors and built up a quite extraordinary collection of books. For some years history was a summer course taught by a series of regents or theologians. Then once again a full-time man was assigned to teach history to the juniors. Among these full-time teachers were Fr. Edward H. Finnegan, William L. Lucey, James F. Geary, Thomas F. Grogan, Harold J. Kirley and Arthur H. Pare. With the juniorate discontinued, and few non-college graduates in the collegian program, history courses are studied at the colleges (e.g. Boston College, Fordham, Spokane) where such collegiate programs take place.

The Maryland-New York Province in 1924 continued to supply the teachers for the principal subjects of Latin, Greek and English which one man taught to his class of either poets or rhetoricians. Fr. Thomas A. Becker as a young priest had worked with the Spanish Fathers

in the Philippines. From 1914-1922 he taught sophomores at Boston College and, in the early non-resident days at Chestnut Hill, walked commonly from the college campus to Harrison Avenue. From 1922 to 1924 he taught rhetoric at St. Andrew's requiring a weekly Greek composition, Greek and Latin distichs, plus almost daily polished translations into contemporary English of Cicero's discourses. For one year he taught the poets at Shadowbrook. He was a most erudite person with a prodigious memory who had genuine humility. For many a novice or junior he waited naturally (really supernaturally) to hold open a door even when the young Jesuit approached from a distance. He was happy to settle in the background.

To the foreground as a teacher and personality there arrived in 1924 as Dean, professor of rhetoric and pedagogy, Fr. William Coleman Nevils. He had been a professor at Holy Cross, and at Poughkeepsie, Dean of Georgetown and substitute Regent for Fr. Edmund Walsh in the Foreign Service School. He does not appear to have had the classical profundity of Fr. Becker, but he was a dominant figure who had poise, assurance, affability, in short with *duende*, as well as with white hair. With Fr. Fisher he could open doors in Lenox and Stockbridge that would have had no meaning or interest to Fr. Becker or Fr. Carlin. He could announce that Shakespeare always repeated key terms in threes, then turn a page and find a fourth without even a smile of embarrassment. Some characterized him as somewhat of a fakir, but a genial one who could pass on this quality to colleagues and students. In 1925, in advance of the official terna, his name was proposed to Fr. General as the next possible rector of Boston College. Fr. General believed that in these days close to the establishing of the independent New England Province, a native son should be appointed. In 1928 Fr. Nevils departed from Shadowbrook, ostensibly to be once again the Dean of Georgetown, but was soon appointed its rector to replace Fr. Charles W. Lyons.

When in 1925 Fr. Becker left Shadowbrook to return to Poughkeepsie and when the numbers of juniors had notably increased, two New Englanders were first assigned as teachers. The one who spent but one year there was Fr. John F. Shea, the oldest of three brothers in the province; Bernard, a philosophy teacher and faculty librarian at Holy Cross; and Richard G. who taught rhetoric and served as a chaplain at Boston College with a career as a military chaplain between these collegiate tasks. Fr. John after teaching first year theology at Weston in the opening year of the theologate (1927-1928) and after a brief stay in the North End at St. Mary's served in Jamaica for a long time using his canonical knowledge and working industriously for the Chinese there. In later years from Pomfret he aided in diocesan parochial ministry, and at Holy Cross heard the confessions of people in many walks of life, never sparing himself in the time given to this ministry. His language was a salty type without giving offence.

The second New Englander to come in 1925 to teach the juniors,

Fr. John E. Lyons, remained there except for his year of tertianship (1927-28) both as a teacher and then as rector until May, 1937. Very high blood pressure, for which he underwent an experimental kind of operation, ultimately forced his retirement. But it was not an empty one since he did retreat work until his death in late 1942. Fr. Lyons had the panache of Fr. Nevils with its strength and weaknesses.

The death of Fr. Dillon in April 1925 necessitated a temporary Socius for the concluding months of the year 1924-25. From tertianship came Fr. Francis L. Archdeacon (Archie) who the following year returned as principal of Regis High School where he remained until the summer of 1936. As a full-time Socius there was assigned a close personal friend of Fr. Fisher's. This was Fr. Joseph S. Didusch, a biology teacher from St. Joseph's in Philadelphia. He remained in this position but one year. Later he served as Superior at Wernersville where Fr. Fisher was Master of novices. At times the friendship in this more touchy situation wore thin. Just how far should we go, it might be asked, in collaborating administratively with friends when others might just as well suffice.

In 1926 with the establishment of the province there was assigned a New England Socius -- Fr. John H. Collins. After two years of this work and tertianship, he became a professor in the juniorate until 1937. Then he began a varied career: teacher at Holy Cross, Minister at Weston, Superior at Pomfret, director of the mission bureau, minister at Loyola House, treasurer at Newbury Street and Pomfret, Spiritual Father and teacher at Xavier. He identified himself with raising funds for the Iraq Mission and worked on the editing of El Bagdadi. In spare moments he translated Spanish spiritual writings and authored some of his own. As more than a sixty year man in the Society and a jubilarian in the priesthood, he resides in well-deserved retirement at Boston College High School from whose original location he entered the Society in 1911.

This same year, 1925, brought to Shadowbrook one of its most esteemed priests. This was Fr. Thomas F. White, who filled the dual post of treasurer and Spiritual Father from 1925 to 1937. A native of Charlestown, where he was born in 1856, Fr. White had entered the Society at Frederick at the age of 30. Earlier with a brother he had managed a grocery store owned by his father. At the age of 27 being convinced of a priestly vocation, he had gone to Holy Cross to prepare himself at its prep division, then an integral part of the College. After completing his noviceship, and two years of juniorate, he had been a prefect at the prep department of Fordham for three years. Then followed at Woodstock a two year philosophy course and three years of theology with ordination at its close in 1898.

His active career began immediately. For three years he remained at Woodstock as its minister and procurator. With such a different type of formation in contemporary times, it is difficult to realize how important and influential was once the minister in a large scho-

lasticate. With an efficient, kindly and thoughtful man, these years could be most pleasant, as they could be very trying under a martinet or a suspicious man, or of one who thought the minimum of the well-being of the community. Fr. White was one of the ideal ministers. He had the position again for a year after his tertianship in Florissant. Then came three years as minister at Xavier in New York and three more as prefect of St. Francis Xavier Church. In 1909 he came to Boston as the Superior of St. Mary's where he introduced an 11:30 mass for the convenience of former parishioners who could come more easily from their new homes at this later hour on Sunday.

When the Society in New York City bought land at some high price in Brooklyn in 1908 to start a high school and college, a heavy debt of interest annually was imposed on Xavier. Soon the Xavier College charter was transferred to Brooklyn and in 1913 both Xavier and Brooklyn were placed under one superior, Fr. Joseph H. Rockwell who had become rector at Xavier in 1911. Now there was need for a dependent superior at Xavier. This was a strange situation for this first independently established house by the New York Mission, very soon after it had taken over St. John's College and for a time St. John's Seminary from Bishop Hughes in 1846. But Fr. Maas as provincial plumped for an independent superior for Xavier. Hence Fr. White who was Fr. Rockwell's choice as his assistant at Xavier became its superior until 1919. Woodstock had just experienced one of its less promising ministers in Fr. Duarte, therefore in 1919 to bolster the spirits of its community, Fr. White arrived a third time as its minister. This work lasted three years. A temporary worsening of his health effected his assignment as superior to Keyser Island for the three years prior to his coming to Shadowbrook in 1925.

His long experience as a minister and superior made him a perceptive sub-minister and senior father. This is shown even in slight ways. In 1932 when three scholastics arrived one summer evening after a long journey to begin summer teaching and retreat, it occurred to Fr. White, though seemingly to no one else, that even scholastic visitors might be treated according to hospis venit, Christus venit. So he brought out some crackers and wine, the first wine one of them at least had ever tasted in his twelve years in the Society.

Fr. White served as a wise nestor at Shadowbrook for twelve years. The severity of Berkshire winters effected a change to Holy Cross as Spiritual Father for two years, and to Weston in the same capacity when he was 82. In less than two years he was dead after only a few hours of final illness. Others knew him much better than this writer, but even a casual knowledge, reinforced by the testimony of those who lived with him, can conclude how blessed to self and others can be the golden years of a kindly, mortified and zealous priest. On this high note can be ended the Shadowbrook personnel.