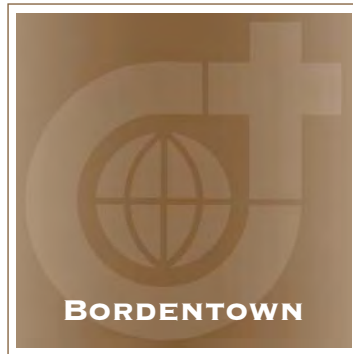


Communities of the Word

STORIES OF THE CHICAGO PROVINCE



THE BORDENTOWN STORY, 1941 – 2012

Rev. Raymond Lennon



PREFACE

It has been a great satisfaction for me to write this history of the Divine Word Missionaries in Bordentown, New Jersey. My joy comes from the fact that Bordentown was the first Divine Word Missionary house that I entered, back in 1952, some 11 years after its foundation. It was then known as St. Joseph's Mission House. During the two

years that I spent here as a student I came to know many of the first Divine Word Missionaries who established this community as a house of studies for belated vocations. Although I was only 16 years old and was in my junior year of high school when I arrived here, I happily was considered part of the belated vocation group that was allowed to enter this program.

In writing this history I have been fortunate to have access to rich, local archival information and a set of house chronicles that afford an ongoing history of what happened since the first Divine Word Missionary arrived on these grounds. I have tried to be as objective as possible in what I have written. The text is longer than I expected, and more intimate. In a way, I have been caught up in the mystique of these historic grounds, the fascinating people who lived here, and the marvelous ministry of all those who have been privileged to call Bordentown home. My hope is that these pages show you what I mean.

I want to thank Fathers Patrick Connor and Leo Dusheck, Dr. Andrew Cosentino and Mr. Michael Hanlon for their help in preparing these pages.

Father Raymond T. Lennon
Bordentown Class of 1954

PROLOGUE

The Point Breeze property in Bordentown, New Jersey, which the Society of the Divine Word bought in 1941, has a most interesting history on its own that is treated here briefly as a prelude to the history of the Society of the Divine Word on this property.

One of the earliest owners of the property, which is now historically and affectionately known as “Point Breeze,” was Joseph Bonaparte, the eldest of eight children born to Carlo Buonaparte and Marie-Letizia Ramolino Buonaparte on January 7, 1768, in Corsica, Italy. The famed historic figure Napoleon Bonaparte was the second son born in this family. In time, he changed the spelling of his family name from Buonaparte to Bonaparte. Napoleon’s famous military career led him to become the emperor of France, at which time, he made his older brother, Joseph, the king of Naples (1806) and of Spain (1808).

After Napoleon’s defeat at Waterloo (1815), Joseph Bonaparte, under the name the Count of Survilliers, came to the United States in 1815 and “at the advice of his brother Napoleon to reside between



Joseph Bonaparte.



The second Bonaparte mansion.

New York and Philadelphia within reach of news and yet in a locality sufficiently secluded to secure immunity from constant visits.” On July 2, 1816, Joseph bought from Mr. Stephen Sayre a farm in the immediate vicinity of Bordentown, New Jersey, on the banks of the Delaware River. This farm, known as Point Breeze, comprised 211 acres, cost \$17,500, and became the nucleus of an estate ultimately covering more than 1,800 acres.¹ (Sayre had once been the high sheriff of London.) The transaction was concluded in the name of a third person, Mr. James Carret, a citizen of the United States, because at the time a noncitizen could not purchase property in the State of New Jersey. Soon afterward, however, the State of New Jersey passed an act enabling Joseph Bonaparte to hold the property in his own name.

Joseph built his first mansion on a bluff overlooking the Delaware River, called “Point Breeze” due to the strong winds that blew up the Delaware River. The mansion was exquisite and regal, housing a magnificent library and art collection—both considered the best in the country at that time. This elegant mansion burned down in January 1820. The good people of Bordentown helped salvage most of the books, art collection, and furniture from the burning mansion. Joseph then remodeled his stables, adding on to that structure the new second building that was to be the mansion he built for himself as well as another house for his daughter. Both structures were a bit distant from the bluff above the Delaware River and Crosswicks Creek where his first residence stood. These new structures were near the public road, presently called Park Street. In this second mansion, he again placed his marvelous art collection and library. His daughter lived in the second

residence, called the Lake House. Joseph also took time and care to embellish the land with beautiful gardens and scenic carriage ways.

Some of the interesting visitors whom Joseph entertained at Point Breeze were the French generals Marquis de Lafayette, Jean Victor Marie Moreau, Bertrand Clauzel, Charles Francois Antoine Lallemand, and other French exiles. Some of the great American men of this time also found their way to Bonaparte's house: Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, John Quincy Adams (sixth president of the United States, 1825–1829), General Winfield Scott, Commodores Charles Stewart and Robert Stockton, Nicholas Biddle, and Stephen Girard, to mention a few.

Joseph Bonaparte lived off and on at this house until 1839. In 1832 he sailed for England and remained there until 1835. Again he sailed for England in 1836, returning to Point Breeze in 1838. In 1839 he returned to England where he suffered a stroke. In 1841 he took a steamboat from London to Genoa, Italy, in 1841. From there he made his way to Florence where he lived with his family at Villa Serristori. He died there on July 28, 1844, at the age of 76.

Prince Joseph, Joseph Bonaparte's grandson, sold the estate of Point Breeze in the summer of 1847 to Mr. Thomas Richards, who three years later conveyed the property to Mr. Henry Beckett, son of Sir John Beckett, the British consul in Philadelphia. The younger Beckett had such an extreme dislike of everything French that he moved into the gatehouse (originally the gardener's or the secretary's house, at the entrance of the property) and, before building his own mansion, he sold, removed, or destroyed everything on the estate that reminded him of Joseph Bonaparte.

The Vincentian Fathers of Philadelphia bought Pointe Breeze in 1874, and the priests used it for a summer house until 1911, when they sold the property to Mr. Harris Hammond.

Mr. Hammond spent a great deal on improvements to the house and grounds. He added on to the Beckett mansion with a wraparound structure that enclosed the old mansion.

Mr. Hammond spared no money in embellishing his new home with fireplaces and a majestic stairwell, just off the elegant rotunda. He put crystal chandeliers in the ballroom, the parlor and dining room, and in the master suite on the second floor. He built a beautiful pavilion, with wrought-iron pillars and a copper roof, next to a 13-foot-deep swimming pool. The grounds were again alive with beautiful trees and boxwoods.



The Beckett mansion.

He hired stonemasons to build a large Chinese water garden that was to have had small boats floating in the water. The majority of the floors were built with inlaid wood or marble. The dining room, private study, and parlor were paneled with pine that had come from a castle in England. Mr. Hammond also built a secret wine cellar that was accessible from his private study through a hidden metal stairwell that led to the basement. In the wine cellar, he had many bottles of wine and liquor that evidently were purchased during Prohibition.

When the Divine Word Missionaries bought the property, they discovered the entrance into the secret stairway behind a moveable bookshelf in Mr. Hammond's private study. The superior called the police, who removed all the wine and liquor bottles from the secret cellar area and broke them because the liquor had been purchased clandestinely during Prohibition and was illegal.

Mr. Hammond lost everything in the stock market crash of 1929, and the bank took over the Point Breeze land and houses. After being derelict for many years, Point Breeze was bought by the Society of the Divine Word in 1941.

Information on the Bordentown property taken from the advertisement for its sale in 1941 by Walter F. Smith & Company, Montgomery and Academy, Trenton, New Jersey, is as follows:



The Hammond mansion.

Sale price: \$165,000

Taxes: \$5073.63 per year.

Acreage: 242 acres, 3 swimming pools, tennis court, croquet court, beautiful formal gardens and flower gardens.

Only ½ mile from Bordentown and 6 miles from Trenton.

THE PURPOSE OF THE SVD IN BORDENTOWN— HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

In the “Chronicle St. Joseph’s Mission House, Bordentown,”² the very first entry tells the story of the history of the SVD presence in Bordentown. It was written in January 1941:


For many years, it had been thought desirable to have a Mission House in the neighborhood of the metropolitan areas of Philadelphia and Harrisburg, or a New Jersey Diocese. This section of the country was thought to be a rich field for vocations and mission support. When the Very Rev. Father Superior General Joseph Grendel was here in 1936, it was more or less adopted as a definite policy to endeavor to obtain admission into a diocese in this section of the county.

1013A

For further information apply to
National Real Estate Clearing H.
 112 West 42nd St. New York 36, N. Y.
 Offered by letter on a full contract only. Pat. Off.
 Owners: Eastern Mortgage Service Co., Charles E. Law,
 173B-2 W. 42nd St., New York 36, N. Y.
 1933.
 Property: **Trenton-Bordertown, Ed. Bordertown, N. J.**
MORTGAGE: Free and Clear. TAXES: \$2073.63 per yr.

Interest: 6% on the balance; interest will accrue to holder until 4-30-36 and 4-30-41.

Walter F. Smith & Company
 Real Estate Brokers and Auctioneers, Trenton, N. J.



See illustrated brochure for further details.
 Inspection by appointment only.
 Motion pictures of this property may be seen at Preview Inc.

PRICE: \$165,000
BORDERTOWN, N.
 Burlington Court

Offered subject to change or withdrawal without notice.

Copy of the sale listing, 1941.

When division of the Province was made in the summer of 1940, it was with the understanding that as soon as possible the Eastern Province should establish another Mission House in this area. Thus it was one of the Very Rev. Provincial Francis Humel's first cares to make inquiries for an opening in one of the desirable Dioceses. At first, things looked quite hopeless. His early inquiries met with as unfavorable results as those that had been made before the division of the Province.

In January 1941 Father Provincial Humel visited Bishop William Aloysius Griffin of Trenton with Father Bruno Hagspiel, who was an old friend of the bishop. The latter was very gracious and promised to consider the matter, but could not give an immediate answer, because he had similar requests from other communities. The provincial suggested that the bishop should call on the Divine Word Missionaries if he needed priests for working among African Americans. After receiving assurance that he would consider the matter, the provincial left for Girard, while Father Hagspiel went to Jersey City. The very same day the bishop, who had considered the matter, got in touch with Father Hagspiel. Since the latter could not break his engagement, they

met in Pennsylvania Station in New York City, and between trains discussed the question of opening a parish for Blacks in Trenton in the near future. This led to the early appointment of Father Joseph Ford as first pastor of the contemplated “Church for the Colored.”³

The letter that Bishop Griffin of the Trenton Diocese sent to Father Humel in response to a letter sent him on February 14, 1941, is as follows:

Bishop’s House
901 West State Street
Trenton, New Jersey

February 18, 1941

Very Rev. Francis B. Humel, S.V.D.
Provincial, Eastern Province
Society of the Divine Word
Girard, Pa.

Dear Father Provincial:

Thank you very much for your kind letter of February 14th. I am very happy to know that you look with favor upon my request to have your Community take charge of the proposed Negro Parish and Social Center in Trenton, and eventually of a small Negro Parish in Asbury Park, and that you will present it to the Council. This is very good news to me and I shall await with pleasant anticipation the word that both the Council and the General have approved of your request. I also await with pleasure your coming to Trenton when we may discuss this matter at length, and also the other matter of interest to you—a Foundation in the Trenton Diocese.

I am writing today to Father Hagspiel to ask him if he will not interest the Missionary Sisters, Servants of the Holy Ghost in conducting this with the Fathers of the Society of the Divine Word. I should like you also to say a good word to the Sisters in behalf of the project. This I think will be an agreeable arrangement both to the Fathers and the Sisters.

Thanking you for your kind interest and your prompt attention to my pressing request, I remain,

With sentiments of esteem,
Sincerely yours in Christ,
+William A. Griffin

The following letter from Bishop Griffin came to Father Provincial Humel a month later, on the SVD's assuming responsibility for two parishes for "the colored."

Bishop's House
901 West State Street
Trenton, New Jersey

March 27, 1941

Dear Father Provincial:

This will serve to confirm our verbal understanding and agreement, namely that the Fathers of the Society of the Divine Word are to take charge of the Colored parishes in the Cities of Trenton and Asbury Park, within the confines of the Diocese of Trenton.

It was further understood that the Fathers of the Society of the Divine Word be given a Foundation in the Diocese of Trenton, the terms and conditions of said Foundation to be established and determined when property suitable to these needs, and approved by us, is secured.

With a blessing upon your work, and every good wish, I remain,

Sincerely in Christ,
+William A. Griffin
Bishop of Trenton⁴

Since Father Humel was able to satisfy the bishop regarding the black parishes, he felt that he could now press the bishop on the establishment of a mission house within the confines of his diocese. The bishop's only stipulation was that we should not settle in the northern part of the diocese nor near other religious communities or tax-free institutions.

Then started the hunt for property. Father Humel enlisted the aid of Father John Cohill, whose home was in Elizabeth, New Jersey, and who was well acquainted in those parts. Father Cohill was at the time traveling, lecturing, and collecting for the Peking University in China. Together Fathers Humel and Cohill visited various properties until finally, at the suggestion of a real estate agent with whom Father Cohill was acquainted, they came to Bordentown and looked at Bonaparte Park, with its 242 acres, mansion, grottoes, secret tunnels, and historical background. This property had been unoccupied for 11 years. In 1929, as noted, the former owner, Mr. Harris Hammond, lost it through bankruptcy to the Trenton Mortgage Company. As far as the two priests were concerned, from the start, this seemed to be the ideal location. The price quoted was rather high, but it was thought that it could be bought for much less than the \$165,000 asked.

On February 26, 1941, Father Humel took three of his councillors to see the place to confirm his optimistic impressions. Shortly after this, it was learned that an option had been taken out on the place by another party and that it would not be available for some time, if at all. It was thought that the option was for \$75,000. It looked as if the work done so far had been in vain. On the feast of the Solemnity of St. Joseph, however, Father Humel received word from Monsignor Richard Crean, chancellor of the Trenton diocese, that the option had expired and that the Bordentown Military Institute had decided not to buy it. Since the Society of the Divine Word was not incorporated in the State of New Jersey, the bishop suggested that the Diocese of Trenton buy the property for the Society. Mr. Thomas Major of the Watson Real Estate Co. was the agent who helped greatly in securing the lowest possible price. He proved himself a real friend to Father Humel and the Society. On June 18, 1941, the Diocese of Trenton closed the deal with the Trenton Mortgage Company for \$55,000 – a real bargain!

In the meantime, on April 1, 1941, Father Joseph Ford had arrived in Trenton to be the first pastor of the newly established “colored” parish, the Church of Our Lady of the Divine Shepherd. He lived at the cathedral rectory while the building, a former Negro Masonic temple, was being remodeled. He moved into his new quarters on June 15. The church was dedicated on October 5, 1941.

The first confreres of St. Joseph’s Mission House (the name given to the new enterprise) stayed with Father Ford before settling down at Bordentown. Father Peter Weyland was temporarily placed in charge of St. Joseph’s and arrived on July 1. Father Emil LeSage, who was here on a visit with Father Humel, was the first overnight guest on July 2.

On July 3, 1941, St. Joseph’s Mission House was incorporated under the title “Society of the Divine Word, St. Joseph’s Mission House.” The trustees were

Very Rev. Francis Humel—president of the corporation

Rev. Peter Weyland

Rev. Emil Lesage

Rev. Hugo Aubry

Rev. Joseph Ford

The rector of the house at any given time was to be vice president of the corporation. Now that the Society of the Divine Word was incorporated by the State of New Jersey, the property was turned over to us by the Diocese of Trenton on July 25, 1941.⁵

On July 9, 1941, “Holy Mass was celebrated for the first time by Father Weyland in the former dining room which was made into a cozy little chapel.”⁶

The first confreres to join Father Weyland were Brothers Joachim Oros and Kostka Piotrowski. On July 5, 1941, Bro. Joachim arrived to cook for the community.

Brother Kostka arrived on July 7, 1941, to help Mr. Forko, the man who was a nursery expert and former superintendent of the grounds under Mr. Hammond’s ownership. He was kept on by the Trenton Mortgage Co. to maintain the property during the 11-year period that the estate belonged to the bank. Mr. Forko was then kept on for a time by the Society, at his old salary, to train the Brothers. The whole house was in need of a thorough cleaning, and much repair

work was necessary. This work would last for a few years, such as a thorough cleaning of the mansion, removing the old shutters from the windows, replacing broken windows, working on the heating system, fixing the plumbing, covering the roof openings, and taking all the ivy off the walls of the mansion.

The dining room of the house was slowly turned into a temporary chapel where Father Weyland celebrated Mass on July 9, 1941. Furniture was donated by friends of the community as well as by the community in Girard, Pennsylvania. Kitchen utensils were bought as needed. Repair work by Tell & Company of Trenton had to be done on the flat roof to keep the rain from leaking into the house. The damage done to the floors, plaster, and paint by leaks in the roof over the years was extensive. The Smith Construction Company of Trenton was called in to help, along with the few confreres, to put the place in shape. Much of the painstaking work was done by Father Weyland and Brothers Joachim and Kostka. Brother Willibrord (Willie) Beemster and others were temporarily “loaned” by other houses to help put the house into livable condition.

The chronicle states that the first supply work (pastoral help to local parishes) that our missionary community offered was at the request of Father Frederick Halloran of Sacred Heart Parish in Trenton, New Jersey. He asked the Society to celebrate Mass on the prison farm in Bordentown on July 13, 1941.⁷ The names of the confreres who served for years in this ministry are cited later.

In September 1941 Father Walter Hafner arrived to work for vocations for the following school year. At first, there had been the hope of opening the house as a high school seminary in September 1941, but for various reasons, this never materialized. It would take some six more years to get everything ready to open the house as a seminary for belated vocations.

On November 5, 1941, Brother Willie arrived to help Mr. Forko, replace Brother Kostka, and start the farm work. Brother Willie was to become one of the most well-known and beloved confreres to live in the Bordentown community. He was highly respected for his intense prayer life, the simplicity of his life, and his kindness to everyone. Yet he was known to keep a sharp eye on the orchard and would shoo away anyone who would dare to steal the apples. He spent the rest of his life as a member of this community, until God called him to heaven some 47 years later, on February 23, 1988.

Father Emil Lesage was appointed the first official rector of St. Joseph's Mission House on November 17, 1941. He relieved Father Weyland of all administration, so that Father Weyland could totally dedicate himself to working on the restoration of the house. Father Weyland eventually returned to the (then) Western Province, which had loaned him to this new venture, but expected him to return to Techny. In relating the arrival of Father Emil Lesage, the chronicle adds,

Father Rector Anthony Deppe, SVD of Girard brought him and his personal effects by car. A great truck load of potatoes was also sent from Girard. It was a cold night in Girard and some of the potatoes froze. The weather in Bordentown was still mild and continued so for several weeks. Brother Christopher and Brother Gabriel "escorted" the potatoes. The former stayed on a few days to cheer up the community and to repair the big chandelier in the rotunda. Brother Gabriel stayed until Christmas, enjoying the much needed change of air and picking up several million leaves from the lawns.⁸

Confreres assigned to Bordentown during its first years are cited in the chronicle:

Brother Kostka Piotrowski	July 1941–October 1941
Father Peter Weyland	July 1941–August 1942
Brother Joachim Oros	July 1941–November 8, 1944
Father Walter Hafner	September 1941–November 1941
Father Gerald Rabe	September 1941–June 1942
Father John Cohill	November 1941–August 1942
Brother Basilius Engel	November 1941–September 1942
Father Emil Lesage	November 1941–June 1946
Brother Willibrord Beemster	November 1941–February 1988
Brother Kilianus Müller	December 1941–September 1942
Brother Josephus Colwell	December 1941–October 1944
Father Leander Martin	March 1942–April 1942
Father Nicholas Geldens	May 1942–June 1942
Father Johann Lange	June 1942–December 30, 1945
Brother Corsinus Smutny	July 1942–April 1943
Father Lester Dooley	September 1942–September 1944

The confreres assigned to the two black parishes of Our Lady of the Divine Shepherd in Trenton, New Jersey, and St. Peter Claver in Asbury Park, New Jersey, were to be members of the Bordentown community until they had enough members to form their own district. Confreres including Fathers Joseph Ford, Vincent Smith, John Buys, Alex Leddie, Dennis Guiner, and others were assigned to these two parishes over the years.

By Christmas 1941 the Bordentown community grew to the following ten confreres: Fathers Weyland, Rabe, Cohill, Hafner and Lesage, and Brothers Joachim, Willibrord, Basil, Killian, and Herman Joseph. The author of the chronicle, remembering what Christmas was like in the Techny community, described their first Christmas in the mansion that by now was known as St. Joseph's Mission House:

Father Weyland and Brothers Killian, Herman Joseph, Willibrord, Joachim, and Basil celebrated Christmas as solemnly as possible under our primitive conditions. As the scribe in the *Christian Family* magazine had it: "The beautiful little chapel of St. Joseph's Mission House saw its first Christmas Mass on the morning of December 25, 1941. Amid the majestic silence of Bonaparte Park, the community of St. Joseph's knelt in adoration before the cradle of the Infant Savior. There were neither the pomp and ceremony of brilliant liturgical functions such as one had in our larger Seminaries, nor were there heard the joyous carols of young enthusiastic seminarians; but there was present the calm and peace of the Christ Child which depends neither on time nor circumstances."⁹

The chronicle goes on to add:

The Brothers attended a little entertainment at Father Ford's parish (Our Lady of the Divine Shepherd) in Trenton, put on by the colored children under the direction of the Sisters of St. Francis. The Brothers always enjoy these visits with Father Ford. He is a genial host. There is always plenty of fun and laughter.¹⁰

There were efforts to work at self-sufficiency through fund-raising, with letters to benefactors proposing such helps as the novena of St. Joseph and the Poor Souls. On the feast of Pentecost, May 24, 1942, the community finally had a magnificent chapel in the former ballroom of the mansion through the work of Father Weyland and the Brothers. There were three altars, Stations of the Cross, and beautiful statues placed on two altars dedicated to our Blessed Mother and St. Joseph. On August 17, 1942, Father Weyland returned to the Western Province¹¹ and to his teaching assignment in Techny, Illinois.

Over the years, the community continued the work of restoration and updating of the Hammond mansion, with the continuing help of the Smith Construction Company of Trenton. There were also many able Brothers and priests who had expertise in plumbing, carpentry, painting, and electricity, who continued “on loan” from other houses in the Eastern and Western Provinces. They helped put the house in good condition.

True to the missionary spirit, the confreres reached out to make themselves known and eventually offer their services where needed to neighboring diocesan parishes. One reads of the visit that the rector made to the local parish of St. Mary:

Our relations with the Bordentown parish are also very favorable. Father Whalen was very gracious when Father Rector and Father Cohill visited him. His assistant, Father French, is also very friendly.¹²

As soon as there were priests assigned to the community, they began to answer the diocesan pastoral needs, according to their availability. This ministry continued for many years in the parishes of Bordentown, Yardville, Roebling, Florence, Mount Holly, Hainesport, Willingboro, Moorestown, Trenton (St. Raphael’s, Holy Angels, Sacred Heart, St. Anthony’s) Hightstown, Kendall Park, Lambertville, Lakewood, Spring Lake, Flemington, Metuchen, Old Bridge, Bound Brook, New Brunswick, Somerville, and the Bordentown Reformatory. Pastors called upon them when they needed substitutes for vacations, days off, or sickness.

Fund-raising to support the new house began during their first year at Bordentown, and, as we read in the chronicle:



First Christmas at Bordentown, 1941.

December 9, 1941, we received the first \$1 donation in the mail. Father Provincial had written an appeal letter to all former subscribers to C.F. [the *Christian Family* magazine] and Girard benefactors, asking them to correspond with us from now on. It was consoling to see something come in for a change, after looking at accumulating bills and other debts.¹³

Another big help in meeting the expenses that first year came from the sale of some land:

Dec. 10, 1941, the SVD sold four and a half acres of the land, the strip nearest to Bordentown, to Bordentown Military Institute for \$6,500 which helped pay the land tax and other accumulated bills.¹⁴

The entry from December 22, 1941, reads:

Today we definitely began the chaplaincy to the Poor Clares. Father Rabe had been “filling in” temporarily for over a month. Since the Sisters like this arrangement, they asked Monsignor Crean that it might be made permanent.¹⁵

The official request for the Divine Word Missionaries to be chaplains to the Poor Clares came from Sister Mary Maddalena, PC, Abbess:

Poor Clares
Monastery of St. Clare
Bordentown, New Jersey

December 19, 1941

Right Rev. Msgr. R. T. Crean, Chancellor
155 North Warren Street
Trenton, N.J.

Right and Dear Monsignor:

We received your very kind letter of the 16th inst. In regard to a permanent Chaplain.

We would prefer to continue the present arrangements with the Fathers of the Society of the Divine Word who are at present serving our Community as temporary Chaplains. Of course, understand that having the Fathers coming back and forth every day will require a little more salary. Do you think a salary of \$30 a month would be satisfactory.

A conference once a month would be all that is necessary, and we would not have to start them now until after the new year.

Your special intentions are being remembered in our several perpetual Novenas as also in the one we are making at present in preparations of the great feast of Christmas.

Sincerely in the Lord,
Sr. Mary Maddalena, P.C.A.

At the bottom of this letter, Father Humel penned the following:

The above was officially accepted in a letter to Msgr. Crean on December 29, 1941. The only new condition added was that they pray for the success of the work of the Society, especially at St. Joseph's Mission House and for the conversion of the negroes of Trenton.¹⁶

The priests of the Society of the Divine Word have honored this commitment to be chaplains to the Order of the Poor Clare Nuns from 1941 and will honor it as long as the Society of the Divine Word has a residence here in Bordentown. There has been a certain sense of grateful joy in serving the Poor Clare Nuns because when our Father and Founder, St. Arnold Janssen, wanted to buy the first mission house of the community, he received a substantial monetary gift from the Poor Clare Monastery in Dusseldorf, Germany. The circumstances are related in Father Josef Alt's book:

The Poor Clares asked her [Mother Franziska Schervier] for advice regarding the best use of a sum of 9,000 marks which was at their disposal but which the convent wanted to give away in order to remain faithful to the principles of holy poverty.¹⁷

For many years, the Bordentown Divine Word community has sent over a generous food basket to the Nuns on certain liturgical feast days as our token of gratitude for the German Poor Clares having helped St. Arnold purchase the first mission house in Steyl, Holland.

Some mention should be made of the Sisters of St. Francis, a group of Austrian religious who had been brought over to the United States to cook for and wash the clothes of the community in some of our seminaries. They worked in our houses in Conesus, New York; Epworth, Iowa; and eventually in Bordentown, New Jersey. They also were asked to teach in the grammar school that was opened at Our Lady of the Divine Shepherd in Trenton, New Jersey. They were a teaching order of Sisters, and in the 1950s they gradually stopped cooking at our mission houses. (They eventually went to Panhandle, Texas, where they were able to attract vocations to their community.)

The chronicle entry for February 6, 1942, states:

Sister Banka, the Visitor [superior] of the School Sisters of The Third Order of St. Francis of Vienna, arrived to have a preliminary look at the Gate House, which is being “loaned” to them for five years for their US Mother House and Novitiate. It will need some fixing up before it is a home!¹⁸

An interesting addendum on February 22, 1942, refers to the Sisters’ eventual decision to open the convent:

This month there was quite a bit of dickering and consulting about the Sisters’ House. One plan was that the Sisters should pay us rent and we should remodel the House. The other plan, which was finally adopted, was to let the Sisters have it rent-free for five years, but they should bear the expenses of repairs and remodeling.¹⁹

From the time the Society of the Divine Word moved to Bordentown, people interested in the Joseph Bonaparte story started visiting the grounds and inquiring about the Bonaparte remnants on the grounds. It is interesting to read in the chronicle the reaction of the provincial to such visitors, expressed in a letter to the rector, mentioned in the chronicle entry of January 25, 1942:

Many visitors have come to visit the grounds and the Mansion. These visitors have heard about our “wine cellars” and “marble bathrooms” and “secret tunnels and closets,” and they keep coming at all hours. They take up a lot of time. Father Provincial wants us to “deglamorize” the House and to show the visitors only the first floor.

Another letter from the provincial is referred to in the chronicle entry of May 18, 1943: “Father Provincial writes again definitely forbidding visitors to be taken above the first floor and into the basement and wine cellars. Efforts to ‘deglamorize’ the place have failed so far.”²⁰

Among the illustrious visitors to Bordentown was Brother Homobonus Stiller, who came on February 22, 1942. Brother

Homobonus was one of the first Divine Word Missionaries sent to America by the Founder, St. Arnold Janssen. The chronicle writer states: “Brother Homobonus of Girard, the ‘Grand Old Man of the SVD’ pays us a visit.”²¹ How wonderful to sense the love and respect that the confreres evidently had for this great man, whom the Founder had sent to America to help and to be a companion to Brother Wendelin Meyer, the first Divine Word Missionary to set foot in the United States.

Older confreres will remember the periods of silence and the recitation of the Quarter Hour prayer that was practiced in all our houses throughout the world. When the confreres moved into the Hammond mansion, one of the concerns they had during the remodeling was how to signal the time throughout the old mansion for the confreres to begin saying the Quarter Hour prayer. Their solution was to place a clock with chimes in the great rotunda in the center of the building, and that is where the clock remained from 1942 until the fire in 1983, ringing every 15 minutes. The chronicle announced its arrival:

On July 31, 1942, the new hall clock from the Herschede Co., bought with the help of a benefactor through Herman Frank Jewelers, Inc. of Chicago arrived and was placed in the downstairs hallway so that its ringing of the quarter hour could signal to the confreres to pray the Quarter Hour prayer.²²

Since our house was dedicated to and under the special protection of St. Joseph, the confreres initiated a solemn novena in honor of St. Joseph, on behalf of all the benefactors of the house during the nine days of March 11–19, 1942. The response to this novena was so positive in respect to the number of prayers requested and the financial help received that it became an annual event. As an example, on August 13, 1942, “Mr. Pieri of Atco, NJ, brings a small statue of St. Joseph to be put above our entrance outside. The cross and the pedestal for the Sacred Heart Statue were placed in the rotunda.”²³

One of the sadder events of the time was the departure of Father Weyland, who did so much to repair the mansion. He returned to his assignment at St. Mary’s Seminary in Techny. The scribe of the chronicle wrote of his departure:



Franciscan Sisters at gate house / convent.

Father Weyland was only temporarily in the Eastern Province. When the new Provinces were formed, he was assigned to the Western Province. During the course of this year, Father Provincial Michel of the Western Province was here on a visit. At that time, Father Weyland and he came to a definite understanding that he was to teach in the seminary beginning next September. St. Joseph's owes much to Father Weyland and his friends. Not only did he remodel, repair, and furnish the chapel, but by writing to his many Philadelphia friends, he paid for it all. Besides this, he received chairs, tables, beds, and other furniture. It is to be regretted that he did not leave a list of these friends and what each gave. It would be desirable to know what they gave when they come to visit us. The *Christian Family* magazine for August has the pictures of Father Weyland and his three beautiful altars, as well as a farewell eulogy.²⁴



Tunnel entrance from Crosswicks Creek.

On August 18, 1942, another important guest who graced the new St. Joseph's Mission House was Dorothy Day, founder of the *Catholic Worker*.²⁵

Other notable events are cited in the chronicle; some of these take on a serious note while others tend to the humorous side.

October 4, 1942, the feast of St. Francis. Bishop Griffin came to have a joint dedication of the former gate house as the Sisters' convent, in which the Franciscan Sisters were already living, and St. Joseph's Mission House and Chapel.

The Sisters were overjoyed, for they have been longing to have Our Lord in their chapel for several months—and now all of a sudden, St. Francis came to the rescue! After the bishop left about 7:30 p.m., we took the Blessed Sacrament over to their house in procession, saying the rosary on the way. Father Ford said the first Mass in their chapel the following day.²⁶

November 28, 1942. One of the most dedicated and beloved lay teachers of Divine Word Missionaries made a surprise visit. He had taught at several different seminaries in the Eastern Province at Miramar, Massachusetts, and at Girard, Pennsylvania. The scribe writes, "Professor Ernest Collyer, or rather Corporal Collyer [he had served in the U.S. military] pays us a visit over the weekend."²⁷ Years later, after the amalgamation in Girard with the diocesan seminary in Erie, Mr. Collyer was invited by Father Paul Connors, principal of



The mansion ballroom becomes a chapel.

Bordentown Seminary High School, to come and lend his talents to the students here.

Toward the end of 1942, it seems that St. Joseph's Mission House has given permission from the provincial to receive some sailors as guests due to the request of Father Nicholas Geldens, a Dutch confrere who was a chaplain to the Netherlands' Merchant Marines. The two who came evidently liked to get out and have a good time. The chronicle states that on *January 11, 1942*:

One was brought home by the State Troopers at 2:30 a.m. and the other arrived one morning at 4:30. They are naturally good boys, but have no motives [*sic*]. They must have had a good time. Though financially a success, the sailor business has to stop. Father Provincial allows one more at the urgent request of Father Geldens, but we cannot risk the reputation of the House.²⁸

Everyone who has visited the mission house and, later, the Divine Word Seminary and Residence has been impressed by the beautiful statue of St. Joseph that, as our patron, watches over the community and had also witnessed, on February 2, 1983, the tragic burning and eventual destruction of the community residence (the mansion). The chronicle reports that, on *January 18, 1943*:

Brother Basil takes advantage of the mild weather to begin work on the pedestal for St. Joseph out front. The little statue of St. Joseph we had above the entrance was “traded in” for this big one, which we received at a very reasonable price because we forwarded the plaster model. Brother Joe provided the benefactors to pay for statue and pedestal.

February 16, 1943. It was noted that “St. Joseph (the statue) went up on his unfinished pedestal today. He must weigh about 800 pounds. It took all Brother Basil’s ingenuity and several extra helpers to get him up there.”²⁹

Subsequently a minor tragedy occurred. On *January 15, 1964*, the chronicle states lightning decapitated the statue of Saint Joseph on our front lawn.³⁰ Fortunately, some in the community were able to place the head back on the statue so that St. Joseph continues to this day to look out and watch over all who come to our residence.

March 1943. An extraordinarily busy month, as the chronicle tells us. On March 3, 1943, Father Humel visited the Bordentown community and brought the news that Father John Buys would be pastor at St. Peter Claver Parish in Asbury Park, New Jersey, with Father Vincent Smith as his assistant. On March 8, 1943, Father Smith arrived at Bordentown to spend a few days before taking up his work in Asbury Park on March 12, 1943. St. Peter Claver Parish would be the second African-American parish in the diocese. The first parish was Our Lady of the Divine Shepherd in Trenton, New Jersey. Both parishes were staffed by the Divine Word Missionaries as part of the agreement that Bishop Griffin required in granting permission to the Society to open the house in Bordentown.³¹ There is an interesting entry in the chronicle in which the scribe writes, “On March 30, 1943, Father Buys and Father Smith are presented to the Bishop and are given substantial financial backing.”³²

April 11, 1943. The scribe writes:

Dedication of St. Peter’s Church at Asbury Park. A beautiful day. All the Brethren except Brother Joe attended. The Church was beautifully decorated. The Rectory was very presentable. The ceremonies were impressive, although the little Sanctuary cramped our style! Father Vincent Smith was



St. Joseph standing watch over the property.

celebrant (coram Episcopo). Father Buys read the gospel and the announcements. Father Ford preached an eloquent sermon. The Bishop thanked everybody. The rest of us made ourselves either useful or inconspicuous. After Mass, the dinner at a public dining hall was not such a success due to overcrowding. Speeches after dinner were good.³³

The priests at Bordentown began to help out at a local prison from the early years. There is a listing of various priests doing ministerial services for several nearby prisoners. Father Ralph Roina is cited as singing the High Mass at the local Bordentown prison on April 25, 1943, and Father Joseph Faikus had Christmas Mass there on December 25, 1943. Father James Mullaley had Holy Saturday confessions on April 11, 1944, and then Mass at the prison on Easter Sunday, April 12, 1944.³⁴

At times, one comes across entries by the scribe that reflect his personal feelings and those of the community, such as these two: “Father Dooley is transferred to Miramar. The sunshine of our house is to leave us.” “Father Faikus was also scheduled to return to the Western Province, but Col. Finnegan, Chaplain at Fort Dix, secured his services as auxiliary chaplain for the German prisoners. We’re all glad to have Father Faikus stay with us.”³⁵

Many were the visitors who came to spend time, either on retreat or just for a rest, at Bordentown. One of the most famous visitors to grace the house was His Eminence, Thomas Cardinal Tien Chen Hsin,

who came on April 10, 1946, a red-letter day for the community. The scribe writes in the chronicle:

His Eminence Cardinal Tien paid us a visit. He arrived in Trenton from Washington at 12:45 p.m., behind a police escort. He was taken to the Church of Our Lady. Arrived at the seminary for some photos, and had a meal (prepared by the Sisters in Hammond's dining room. Our winter chapel had been hastily dismantled for the occasion by Brother Ignatius and crew). After a walk around the house, the Cardinal was whisked away to Spring Lake where he was the "guest of Bishop Griffin in the person of vicar general Msgr. Reilly."³⁶

BELATED SEMINARY

Throughout the years 1943 to 1947, St. Joseph's Mission House was essentially a residence for the Divine Word community. The priest confreres helped out in parish ministry, and priests and Brothers both worked to repair the mansion, for the twofold purpose of:

1. Eventually opening a seminary for belated vocations;
2. Having a place for confreres to rest and make a retreat.

The confreres quickly found St. Joseph's Mission House ideal for a rest, as its location between Philadelphia and New York offered much for those who liked to visit historic sites. Furthermore, Bordentown was about an hour's drive from the Atlantic Ocean at Asbury Park.

In 1947 the provincial moved the school for belated vocations from St. Michael's Mission House in Conesus, New York, to St. Joseph's Mission House in Bordentown, New Jersey. The hope was to welcome men who had discerned a vocation to the missionary religious life after graduating from high school. Some had served in the armed forces in World War II or (later) in the Korean War, but had not done college work. Others may have done college work, but they did not have sufficient knowledge of Latin and Greek, which were prerequisites at the time for anyone pursuing clerical studies in the Catholic Church.

The letter that the rector of St. Joseph's Mission House sent out to the public on August 15, 1947, announcing the beginning and the purpose of the seminary tells an interesting tale:



Thomas Cardinal Tien with children from Our Lady of the Divine Shepherd,
Trenton, New Jersey.

I am very happy to tell you what is happening at St. Joseph's Mission House, Bordentown, New Jersey. A few years ago, the Society of the Divine Word bought the historic Bonaparte estate in Bordentown.

We shall open our preparatory school here with 25 young men on September 9. We are limited to this number both by space restrictions and by the nature of the curriculum. On explanation, I wish to mention that the study plan of the Society of the Divine Word follows rather closely the Jesuit system of education. Four years of high school, taken in one of our five preparatory seminaries, followed by two years novitiate, then two years Juniorate, two years philosophy, and the required four years of theology. That gives us a 14-year course. At Bordentown, we have set up an accelerated curriculum to supplement and complete any high school studies previously undertaken, so as to prepare the students in Latin and Greek, for entrance into the novitiate of the Society within one or two years.

In the name of St. Joseph's Mission House and the Society of the Divine Word, we Priests and Brothers wish to give you our humble pledge of service, loyalty, and sincerest esteem.

Humbly and devotedly yours in Christ,
Father Robert Hunter, SVD
Rector³⁷

The first student arrived at St. Joseph's Mission House on September 4, 1947: James Gleason from Syracuse, New York. He stayed a day and a half and then left. Other students arrived on September 6, 1947, to form the first class of seminarians at St. Joseph's Mission House.³⁸ Two of the students who came from St. Michael's Mission House to continue studies at Bordentown went on to become Divine Word Missionaries. They were Father Charles Heskamp, who has subsequently worked in the United States doing educational and pastoral ministries, and Brother Stephen Kerekes, who worked in Papua New Guinea and in the United States. One of the students who entered St. Joseph's Mission House in that first class was a former World War II Air Force bomber gunner, Richard Kraft, who became a Divine Word priest and spent his life in the Philippines. As some of these first students to enter the mission house went on to become Divine Word Missionaries, others became diocesan priests.

The *Bordentown Register*, a local newspaper, on September 26, 1947, had an article on the front page informing the public about the blessing of St. Joseph's Mission House that was to be dedicated as a seminary on September 28, 1947. The blessing was to be done by William A. Griffin, bishop of Trenton, and the public was invited to attend the ceremony. Bishop Griffin read a message from Pope Pius XII, who sent his apostolic blessing and the hope that God would prosper the work of the Society of the Divine Word.

Then, October 9, 1947, saw the results of the General Chapter elections in Rome. The provincial, Father Humel, was elected to the General Council. This would necessitate a change at the head of the province.

The house chronicler notes on June 15, 1948:

The first graduating class saw nine boys graduate and go to the novitiate in Techny. Monsignor Crean, chancellor of Trenton,

presented the diplomas. Monsignor Megan, SVD, delivered the commencement address, a definitely mission approach. Some thirty priests from the vicinity stay for lunch.³⁹

In the summer of 1948, Father Theodore Bauman built a dormitory on the former greenhouse foundation, to accommodate the increasing number of students who were expected to come in September 1948.

The following dates chronicled in the official record are all significant in the history of Bordentown:

September 8, 1948. Eighteen new students arrive for the second scholastic year and join the 12 students who returned from last year. The total number: 30.

November 11, 1948. Another set of important visitors comes to St. Joseph's Mission House: "Most Rev. Superior General Aloysius Kappenberg and Father Adolf von Spreti, his secretary, arrive on the 'America' in New York. Visit Bordentown for three days."

December 8, 1948. "Big news. The boys are permitted to go home for the Christmas holidays as an experiment."

June 20, 1949. There were ten men who were members of the second graduating class. Among them were William Caffrey (from New York City), who became a Divine Word priest and worked in the United States in the ministries of education, formation, leadership and pastoral ministry; and Hugh Stout (Philadelphia) who joined the Society of the Divine Word, but left during theology to become a priest of the Diocese of Camden.

September 7, 1949. School enrollment: 11 old ones and 17 newcomers, for a total of 28 students.

June 16, 1950. There were 13 members of the third graduating class. James Franks from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (he became a Divine Word priest and missionary to Papua New Guinea) and Edward Tuohy of New York City (he, too, became a Divine Word priest and was assigned to do teaching, formation ministry, and retreat ministry in the United States).⁴⁰

September 7, 1950. "Registration for new school year. Eleven seniors from the past year and 18 new boys."

November 2, 1950. "John Hays Hammond Jr., brother of the gentleman who owned our Mansion, stopped with his long R.C.A. trailer to look at his brother's old house. We discovered that he is a famed inventor."



The 1949 graduating class with Bishop Griffin.

February 2, 1951. “His Eminence, Thomas Cardinal Tien, SVD, arrived in Hoboken, on the Dutch Liner ‘Venda.’ He was greeted by Most Rev. Bishop McDonald of New York; Most Reverend Bishop James A. McNulty of Newark; Most Rev. Bishop Cury, OFM, from China; Archbishop Yu-Pin of Nanking, China; Rt. Rev. Msgr. Fulton J. Sheen, National Propagation of Faith Director; Very Rev. Robert C. Hunter, Divine Word Provincial; Very Rev. Casimir F. Murawski, Rector of St. Joseph’s Seminary, Bordentown; Rev. Clifford J. King, Secretary to the Cardinal.”

June 19, 1951. Fourth commencement exercise of the seminary has eight graduates. None went onto the priesthood with the Society of the Divine Word. Robert Dubois (New Brunswick, New Jersey) became deaf during his novitiate year, went to the Buffalo School for the Deaf, studied philosophy and part of theology before leaving the Society.

September 5, 1951. “A small enrollment this year as the boys come in. There are 11 old boys from last year and nine new, a total of 20. Two more boys arrive, which adds up to 22.”

January 11, 1952. A great day came for the community when “the final payment of debt to the Province was made today. It was \$55,000.”⁴¹

June 17, 1952. “Fifth Commencement exercise at St. Joseph’s Seminary. Thirteen young men will enter the Novitiate this Fall, the largest class so far.”⁴² Not all 13 entered the novitiate. Five of these graduates: Donald D’Valle (Meadville, Pennsylvania), Dennis Flynn (New Brunswick, New Jersey), Leonard Fracek (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania), Gerald Garry (Schenectady, New York), and Norman St. John (Utica, New York) all became Divine Word priests. Gerald Garry and Norman St. John were assigned to the United States, Dennis Flynn was assigned to the Philippines, Leonard Fracek was assigned to New Guinea (he subsequently left the priesthood), and Donald D’Valle was assigned to Paraguay (he, too, left the priesthood). Clement Gawlik (Milwaukee, Wisconsin) was ordained a diocesan priest for Papua New Guinea, and Edward Cronin (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) was ordained a diocesan priest.

June 1953. John Murnane (Utica, New York) and Cyril Smith (Illinois) graduated with the others and eventually became Divine Word priests. John Murnane was assigned to Brazil. Cyril Smith was assigned to Argentina. Both later left the priesthood.

June 1954. Raymond Lennon (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), James Keck (Decatur, Illinois), and Robert DeGroot (New York) were graduates and became Divine Word priests. Father Lennon was assigned to Brazil, Taiwan, the United States, and Canada, where he was active in teaching and in formation work. In 1982 he was elected the last provincial of the Eastern Province. In 1985 he was elected for two successive terms as the provincial of the newly formed Chicago Province. He was rector of the house of studies in Washington, DC; Bay St. Louis, Mississippi; and Bordentown, New Jersey, in succession.

James Keck was assigned to Ghana, Africa, and Robert DeGroot was assigned to Argentina. Both of these men left the priesthood.

June 1955. James Williams (Spotswood, New Jersey) and Thomas Scanlon (Brooklyn, New York) were graduates in this class and became Divine Word priests. James Williams was assigned to the United States, worked as a U.S. Army chaplain, left the Society and was incardinated in the Seattle Archdiocese as a diocesan priest. Thomas Scanlon was assigned to the Philippines and later died in a car accident there.

June 16, 1956. There were 18 graduates from the seminary. Among them, the only one to make it to the priesthood in the Society of the Divine Word was William Shea (Dorchester, Massachusetts). Father Shea was stationed at Perrysburg, Ohio, and Erie, Pennsylvania, and

then became provincial of the Eastern Province from 1976 to 1982. He subsequently became rector of Bordentown and was in office when the Bordentown (Hammond) mansion burned on February 2, 1983. After his term of office in Bordentown he was assigned to the Epworth, Iowa, community, where he still resides.

September 7, 1956. There were some 19 students for the belated school. However, the chronicle does not state how many graduated in 1957. This would have been the last graduating class from Bordentown as the belated school moved to Miramar College in Duxbury, Massachusetts.

Student Population from 1947 to 1957	
Year	Number of Students
1947	23
1948	30
1949	28
1950	29
1951	22
1952	17
1953	35
1954	37
1955	35
1956	21
1957	31

Students from These Years Who Became SVD Priests and Brothers

Twenty-six priests were ordained for the SVD. Twelve priests were ordained for their home dioceses or other religious orders. One Brother made perpetual vows in SVD.

Divine Word Missionaries

Father Charles Heskamp

Brother Stephen Kerekes

Father Richard Kraft

Father William Caffrey

Father James Franks

Father Edward Tuohy

Father Donald D'Valle

Father Dennis Flynn

Father Leonard Fracek

Father Gerald Gary

Father Norman St. John

Father John Murnane

Father Raymond Lennon

Father Robert DeGroot

Father James Keck

Father James Williams

Father Thomas Scanlon

Father Michael Bonner

Father William Shea

Father Charles Thomas

Father Vincent Ohlinger

Father John Seland

Father Carl Seewald

Father Wilfred Reller

Father Frank Charles

Diocese/Religious Order

Father Charles Rolland

Father Hugh Stout

Father Edward Cronin

Father Clement Gawlik

Father Harold Doty

Father Joseph Lesage

Father George Parker

Father Ernest Hayes

Father Bernard Rigney, OSFS

Father William Waytowich

Father Nathan Willis

Father John Cassidy

PREP HIGH SCHOOL SEMINARY

August 5, 1958: “Change over. Belated vocation school to be moved to Miramar. High School from Miramar to St. Joseph’s.” A new chapter had been opened.⁴³

Earlier in that year, 1958, the provincial, Father Raymond Weisenberger, and his council decided to close the belated vocation school at Bordentown and to move it to Miramar, Duxbury, Massachusetts. Miramar became the junior college. Bordentown would henceforth be the site for the four-year high school minor seminary. The mansion continued to serve both as a residence for the Divine Word community and as classrooms for the high school students until plans for a new complex of buildings were approved to satisfy the needs of an increasing student population.

The complex of buildings to be built at Bordentown was to be in the style of a mini-campus with separate buildings that included a classroom building, a dormitory, a food service center with dining rooms and a kitchen, administrative house offices, and a gym.

For April 1, 1962, the chronicle reads:

Cardinal Tien blesses site for new school buildings. Bishop Ahr delivers a brief sermon. Bishop Ahr spoke of his own personal happiness that the Divine Word Missionaries had decided to enlarge their facilities at Bordentown for future missionaries for the entire world. This, he said, he considered a great honor for his Diocese: “I believe that anything that is done for the benefit of the Mystical Body anywhere in the world is done for the benefit of the diocese.” He was also very eloquent on that point. He then praised the Fathers, both those present at the seminary now and in the past, for their zeal and sacrifice in assisting the priests of the diocese in their office of the care of souls here, “for which I myself and the priests are extremely grateful.”⁴⁴

On July 3, 1966, the chronicle states, “Dedication ceremonies of new school/dorm buildings and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Society of the Divine Word in Bordentown.”⁴⁵ Bishop Harold R. Perry, SVD, was the presiding prelate who blessed the building. The day was quite warm, with the temperature reading 103 degrees. The



The completed school building with the mansion in the background.

gymnasium was not part of the original complex, but when it was built, it was the largest high school gym in Burlington County.

In time, other religious communities requested to send their high school seminarians to live and study at the Divine Word Missionary campus.

When the Society of the Divine Savior (Salvatorians) closed its St. Pius X High School Seminary in Blackwood, New Jersey, in 1967, the bishop of the Camden Diocese approached the Society of the Divine Word and asked permission for those students and others from the Camden Diocese who wished to continue their studies to attend Divine Word Seminary. The superiors also welcomed, at this time, the students from the Trenton Diocese.

Some years later, in 1972, the Society of St. Louis de Montfort, which had a high school seminary in Bay Shore, New York, began to consider closing its school. Contact with Father Paul Connors, the principal of Divine Word Seminary, was initiated. In September 1972, some 25 Montfort students, along with three members of their faculty—Father Michael Tucci SMM, Father William Farrell SMM, and Sister Joan McNeil DW (Daughter of Wisdom)—accompanied the students in their move. In June 1978 the Montfort Missionaries discontinued recruitment for high school vocations and ended their contract with the Society of the Divine Word at Bordentown.

In the spring of 1977 the Marist Priests and Brothers visited the Divine Word Seminary High School to inform them that they would be closing their high school seminary in Pendel, Pennsylvania, just across the Delaware River from Trenton. They wanted to offer those students, who wished to continue their high school program, the chance to do so by studying at Divine Word Seminary. Eleven seminarians for the Marist community came at the end of August 1977, and with them came a formator, Father Joseph McLaughlin SM. Once these students graduated, there were no other minor seminarians recruited for the Marists. Father McLaughlin then was happy with his assignment to the Philippines.

Student Population from 1959 to 1983	
Year	Number of Students
1959	28
1960	26
1961	27
1962	32
1963	44
1964	73
1965	97
1966	96
1967	57
1968	57
1969	85
1970	71
1971	71
1972	65
1973	90
1974	72
1975	59
1976	57

1977	47
1978	54
1979	54
1980	45
1981	49
1982	48
1983	44

Despite the great number of students who studied at Divine Word Seminary High School from 1958 through 1982, only a small number went on to Divine Word College in Epworth, Iowa, and a still smaller number made perpetual vows or were ordained in the Society. Those who were ordained to the priesthood or made perpetual vows as a Brother were the following:

Father Eric Vargas was assigned to do formation/pastoral ministry in the United States.

Father James Liebner was ordained, did Hispanic ministry in the United States, and later was assigned to Taiwan/China.

Father Dennis Callan was ordained in Taiwan and assigned to Taiwan, and then to Korea.

Father Jack Cannuli was ordained and assigned to Taiwan/China. He later left the priesthood.

Father John Breslin was ordained and assigned to the Southern Province. He later left the priesthood.

Brother William Brennan made perpetual vows and was assigned to the Philippines, and then to Australia, where he remains after leaving the Society.

High school students who studied at Bordentown and were ordained for a diocese or another religious community were as follows:

Father John Czahur	Trenton Diocese
Father Robert Keyes	Trenton Diocese
Father Anthony Testa	Trenton Diocese
Father Francis McGrath	Trenton Diocese
Father Chris Howell	Trenton Diocese

Father Edward Jawidzik	Trenton Diocese
Father Raymond Leonard	Metuchen Diocese
Father Mark Swope	Philadelphia Archdiocese
Father Michael Murtha	Philadelphia Archdiocese
Father Stephen Mitko	Trinitarian
Father Charles Connaty	Camden Diocese
Brother Michael Gajarski	OCSO Trappist

The diminishing number of candidates entering the high school seminary and the small number of graduates who became members of the Society of the Divine Word led the superiors to consult the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), founded by Father Louis Luzbetak, to do self-studies on all the seminary high schools that the Society had in the United States. Father Adrian Fuerst OSB, in charge of the study, examined the formation, academic, and apostolic programs in each of the Divine Word high schools and found them to be good. One of the main problems surfaced by the study, however, was the question of an ideal and healthy enrollment number of the student body. The study set a limit below which the particular high school should close, as the programs offered would be challenged by the small student population. While the CARA studies were quite objective and sound, they created understandable tensions among the school faculty and the community members who were anxious about the ever present possibility of the school eventually closing. The Bordentown community was dealing with the low enrollment problem when a tragedy hit on February 2, 1983, that would lead to the closing of the seminary.

CLOSING OF THE HIGH SCHOOL SEMINARY

On February 2, 1983, the Hammond mansion, which served as the chapel and the religious community's residence, suffered a tragic loss.

A major fire in the mansion gave occasion to question the viability of keeping the high school seminary open. After painful discussions, consultative meetings, and a Provincial Chapter, it was decided to close the high school seminary at the end of May 1983. Father Superior



The mansion rotunda before and after the fire.

General Henry Heekeren and his council; the Trenton diocesan bishop, John Reiss; and the majority of the Divine Word confreres working in the school were supportive of the Provincial Chapter decision to close the high school seminary. Everyone was informed of the decision, once the Provincial Chapter ended. Yet it was not an easy decision for some of the confreres, the lay faculty, and the student body to accept. Efforts were made to take care of the students who were still interested in studying for the priesthood or religious life. Fortunately, they were welcomed to enroll at St. Joseph's Seminary High School in Princeton, New Jersey, run by the Vincentian Fathers and Brothers. Father William Shea, the rector of Divine Word Seminary, went with the students and remained with them during the next two years. Mrs. Maggie Bessette, formerly school secretary at Divine Word Seminary High School, was hired as the high school secretary.

The future of the Society of the Divine Word at Bordentown was one of the concerns at the last Provincial Chapter of the Eastern Province, held just prior to the amalgamation of the Eastern and Northern Provinces. The discussion as to what to do with the burned-out mansion was solved when it was determined by structural engineers that the entire building had to be razed to the ground. Initially it appeared that only the third and second floors of the Mansion had suffered any significant damage. The intense heat of the fire, however,

had literally pulverized the bricks and twisted the supporting steel beams. The entire building had to be torn down. The razing of this historic building took place in September 1984. At the same time the Provincial Chapter made the decision to maintain a presence at Bordertown.

It was most fortunate that, years before, all the province buildings were listed under the Christian Brothers' insurance program. In the case of the Bordertown property and buildings, Christian Brothers took out another policy on our property and buildings with a New York company that, in turn, took out a policy with Lloyd's of London. A representative of Lloyd's was at the scene the morning after the fire and met with the rector, Father Shea; the provincial superior, Father Lennon; and the house lawyer, Mr. Thaddeus Raczkowski. The Lloyd's lawyer informed these men that the insurance policy allowed for reimbursing the community for replacement value of what was destroyed. The community had to come up with house plans, architectural plans, and an interior description of the mansion. In addition, a proposal was made to have various companies estimate a replacement value of the destruction that was acceptable to Lloyd's of London. The companies chosen were Short and Ford Architects from Princeton, New Jersey; the structural engineers were Blackburn Engineers, also of Princeton; and the mechanical/electric engineers were Seeler-Smith Inc. from Atlantic City, New Jersey. When their estimates were completed, Lloyd's of London did not initially accept them, since their own estimates were much lower.

The community was fortunate in having Mr. Raczkowski as its lawyer. He successfully challenged Lloyd's position and won for the community an acceptable and just amount. This money enabled the Society to begin remodeling the former high school classroom building into a comfortable residence, comprising 32 private rooms (each with bathroom facilities), a beautiful chapel, conference room, laundry room, and a large and pleasant living room with windows that overlook the Delaware River.

The renovated residence was blessed by Trenton diocesan bishop John Reiss on May 9, 1987, and was dedicated to serve the needs of both an active and a semiretired community of Divine Word Missionaries. In his homily, as reported in the diocesan newspaper, *The Monitor*:

Bishop Reiss paid tribute to the Divine Word Missionaries for the many sacrifices they have made during the years carrying the message to all parts of the world. Noting that this is a good place to return to, he expressed the “hope that the retirees will not feel that their work is over. We need a powerhouse of prayer for vocations. Please keep on praying for vocations, especially those to take your places. Enjoy yourselves, yes; but don’t just sit around. When you are able, we can use you to carry the Word around the Trenton Diocese.”⁴⁶

SALES OF PROPERTY

The following is a listing of the lease and sale of parcels of the property owned by the Divine Word Missionaries in Bordentown since 1941. All references made in the statements can be found in the documents that are in the archives at Bordentown.

The first piece of property that was sold by the Society of the Divine Word is registered on December 10, 1941:

We sold 4½ acres of our land (the strip nearest Bordentown) to B.M.I. (Bordentown Military Institute) for \$6,500. This sum came in handy for tax and other accumulated bills, and really didn’t last too long. Mr. Major, who had become tireless on our behalf, treated Father Provincial and Father Rector to dinner at Glenk’s Mansion to celebrate.⁴⁷

There were no further transfers of property until June 1967, when there was a lease between Cyn Don Holding Corp. and Divine Word for a period of 40 years (with an option for 59 more years) regarding property now on Route 206. This land now houses the Point Breeze Apartments.⁴⁸

On August 8, 1969, there was a Declaration of Taking by the State of New Jersey by legal condemnation of a parcel of land on Route 206 to be used for highway purposes. The commissioners (three Burlington County freeholders) were to submit their report to the Superior Court on or before February 3, 1970.

On February 18, 1971, a Memorandum of Lease was executed between R.M.D. Co. and Park St. Associates regarding sublease of premises described in schedule A (not included).⁴⁹



Aerial view of Divine Word Seminary in the 1970s.

Records for February 29, 1982, show a deed between the Society of the Divine Word and Point Breeze Associates, Ltd., conveying in fee simple two plots of land totaling 11.179 acres (Block 1701 lot 56 in Bordentown City = .456 acres, and the Bordentown Township tract = 10.723 acres) for the sum of \$355,850 (where Point Breeze Apartments are located). The deed was signed by Father Raymond W. Sanders, secretary, and Father William E. Shea, president of the Society of the Divine Word Corporation.

In April 1996, a settlement statement was signed between the Society of the Divine Word and R.M.D. Co., and the State of New Jersey, Department of Environmental Protection, regarding the sale of the following:

Block 1701, Lot 14, Bordentown City for an easement for the sums of \$400,000.

Block 56, Lot 1.01, Bordentown Township in fee simple, for the sum of \$1,500,000.

Total: \$1,900,000, of which \$1,143,592 went to Divine Word, \$3,361.00 to R.M.D., and \$3,046 to SVD lawyer (Kessler).

Divine Word also received a separate payment from the State of New Jersey of \$5,042.88 as a tax refund.

Presently, the property that the Society of the Divine Word has leased as easement to Green Acres is 64.1 acres. The remaining property owned by the Society is 58.4 acres.

INTERESTING CONFRERES AND LAY STAFF

Everyone who has ever been assigned to the Divine Word foundation in Bordentown, as confrere or lay faculty/staff, has made a special contribution to the hospitable spirit that has always characterized this community. While highlighting individual members of the community and staff is difficult, those who have left a discernible mark on the community deserve singling out.

* * *

Father Peter Weyland arrived in 1941 and was one of the first pioneers to help set up the community and house in Bordentown. His expertise in art and his ability to do hard work offered the right combination to put the old mansion into shape. He spent long hours doing manual work to bring out what was once the beauty of the Hammond mansion. He also single-handedly secured furniture and financial aid from friends to help the struggling community. He was the first superior of the community, from July through November 1941, but then wished to relinquish that responsibility so that he could dedicate himself to the work of making the mansion livable for the confreres. Father Weyland returned to Techny, Illinois, on August 17, 1942, where he taught art and sculpted many beautiful pieces, especially of Mary and the crucified Christ. His works adorn the vestibule hall before the Techny chapel entrance.

* * *

Father Emil Lesage was appointed in late November 1941 as the first official rector of the community and stayed on in that position until June 1946. He was known as a compassionate and kind man, pleasant as a superior, and interested in the confreres. Father Lesage was one of those confreres whose goodness led him into many positions of leadership as rector in various houses and as spiritual director in Techny.

* * *

Brother Willibrord (Willie) Beemster was assigned to the Bordentown community in 1941 to help settle the new establishment.

He worked on the grounds, the farm, and the orchard, becoming known all over the area for his apples. He was a real sign of God's goodness and kindness to all who met him and received his apples. Trenton's Bishop Ahr was often the recipient of Brother Willie's apples. The write-up in the *Trenton Sunday Times* gives a summary of Brother Willie's life:

This afternoon at 2 p.m., several hundred friends of the 74 year old Brother will gather at Divine Word Seminary to join with him in celebrating his 50 year career as a religious Brother. Brother Willy was born in Green Bay, Wisconsin, and joined the Divine Word Missionaries at Techny, Illinois, in 1926. He always wanted to go to the missions of Indonesia but his superiors said he was needed at home for a while. He never did get to Indonesia but in his years as a religious man, he has aided his faith through prayer and self-sacrifice and by inspiring younger men to strive for the missionary vocation.

After Brother Willy made his vows, he was assigned to clerical work because he was thought too frail for heavy labor. He pleaded with his superiors to let him work outside with nature and after five years of office work, he was assigned to the O-Neh-Da vineyards in Conesus, NY. Later he did farm work at the Divine Word Seminary in Duxbury, Massachusetts. Then he came to Bordentown. At Bordentown, he started a chicken farm to support the missionary seminary that was housed in the old Hammond Mansion.

Brother Willy arose early each morning to pray before tending to his apple orchard. After working he still had time to do what is his greatest joy — praying. While others slept, Brother Willy would be at prayer in the chapel.

Brother Willy has five sisters and two brothers still living. One brother and two sisters belong to religious orders.

Bonaparte Park, which surrounds the seminary, lends itself to many legends of the wealthy and historical figures who had owned the land. Perhaps someday, there will be another legend told around the park of a man who was neither kingly nor rich, only good.⁵⁰

* * *

Father Vincent Smith was a member of the first class of African-American Divine Word Missionary priests ordained in the United States, in 1934 at Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. The four were initially assigned as priests to work in the newly created Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Lafayette, Louisiana. In 1943 Father Smith was assigned to the Eastern Province to do pastoral ministry with the African-American community in the Trenton Diocese where, during the years from 1943 to 1948, he worked at both Our Lady of the Divine Shepherd Parish in Trenton and St. Peter Claver Parish in Asbury Park. He was esteemed and loved by the people he served and was a sought-after confessor for many of the diocesan priests. Since there was no New Jersey District community at the time, he belonged to the Bordentown community.

After spending some fruitful years in pastoral ministry, Father Smith asked for a dispensation from the Society of the Divine Word to join the Trappist order at their Gethsemani monastery in Kentucky. Prior to coming to St. Augustine's Seminary in Bay St. Louis to begin his studies to become a Divine Word Missionary, young Vincent had wanted to be a Trappist. This connection with the Trappist community came to him as a result of the fact that his father was the chauffeur of the archbishop of Louisville, Kentucky. The Gethsemani monastery was in the jurisdiction of the archdiocese. When the archbishop would do the priestly ordinations at the monastery, the chauffeur, Mr. Smith, would bring along his young son, Vincent. He eventually applied to join the Trappist community but was refused because he was African American. The only other option he had at that time in the Church in the United States was to join the Divine Word Missionaries, which led him to go in the seminary in Bay St. Louis in 1921, He was 27 years old at the time. In 1928 he pronounced his first vows, and in 1933, his perpetual vows, and was ordained to the priesthood in 1934. In the late 1940s, Father Smith entered the Trappists at Gethsemani, where he made his novitiate and professed vows as a Trappist monk. Then when the Trappists began their new monastery in Piffard, New York,

in 1951, Father Smith was one of the monks assigned there. He became their novice master and died on March 27, 1952, at the age of 58.

* * *

Father Robert Hunter was appointed as the second rector of Bordentown in June 1946. He left office in 1948 to become provincial of the Eastern Province when Father Humel was elected to the General Council in Rome. Father Hunter was provincial for two terms in the Eastern Province, then appointed again as provincial of the Southern Province for two terms, and praeses of the Mission Procure House on Beacon Street in Boston, Massachusetts.

* * *

Father Andrew Adamek was assigned to the Bordentown Community in 1948, where he was a teacher and eventually became a full-time prison chaplain at the nearby Bordentown reformatory. In 1962 he was transferred to Girard, Pennsylvania, and eventually had permission to work in a parish in Staten Island, New York, where he served until he experienced coronary problems and then went into retirement in our Pittsburgh house. He was a jolly and happy-go-lucky person. In his prison ministry he had an ease in dealing with the prisoners and was quite creative in working with them. He became well known for his annual Passion Play.

* * *

“Brother” John Goch came to Bordentown as an ordained deacon as he was not approved for ordination to the priesthood in the Society of the Divine Word. He would have been a member of the ordination class of 1943. He was known as “Brother John” to all the students during the years of the belated vocation school. He served the community as house treasurer and was a good example of a man who prayed a lot. Students were often edified with his time spent praying in the chapel in the evening hours. His kindness and humility impressed all who would meet him. Finally, Francis Cardinal Spellman, archbishop of New York, ordained John Goch to the priesthood on May 28, 1955, for the Diocese of Alexishafen, Papua New Guinea. The bishop of Alexishafen was John’s former prefect during his years of theology at Techny, Bishop Adolph Noser. After having worked in New Guinea for five years, he returned to the United States for medical care. Due to medical problems, he was not able to return to New Guinea; Bishop Noser asked him to do fund-raising for the Diocese of Alexishafen.

He was given the honor of domestic prelate with the title of Rt. Rev. Monsignor on December 28, 1962, by Pope John XXIII, at the request of Bishop Noser. He died on July 30, 1964. In his heart, he always remained a Divine Word Missionary.

* * *

Father Nicholas Bisheimer was the fourth rector of the Bordentown community and was here from June 1952 to June 1958. He was a very down-to-earth rector, accessible both to the confreres and the students. He was at ease also as teacher and as superior of the house. Those of us who had him as rector never saw him angry or visibly upset. He seemed capable of managing the community without transferring any anger or frustration he might have felt. In 1958 he was appointed the provincial of the Northern Province in Techny, Illinois.

* * *

Father Andrew Rentko was ordained in 1949 and assigned first to Sacred Heart Seminary in Girard, Pennsylvania, as a teacher and formator, then to Bordentown in 1952 as a dynamic vocational director of belated vocations. He was a success in this ministry and helped fill the house with young men interested in the missionary vocation. He was transferred to Sacred Heart Seminary High School in Girard in 1958 as house treasurer, and then in 1962 he and Father Wilbur Wagner were the cofounders of the Mexican Province. On April 24, 1962, he came back to Bordentown and gave a farewell talk to the community, telling about his new mission in Mexico where he was to do great work. He spent the rest of his life in Mexico and died there on April 26, 2000.

* * *

Mr. John (Jack) McCullough began teaching at Divine Word Seminary, Bordentown, in 1958. He had his master's in English literature from Villanova University. He taught at Divine Word for twenty-five years until the seminary's closing in June 1983. Mr. McCullough was always among the most beloved of the teachers, due to his competency in teaching Latin, English, and forensics and for the enthusiasm that he brought to the classroom. The esteem that the students, faculty, and Society had for Mr. McCullough was seen in two rewards that he received after the school had closed. On June 18, 2005, he received the first Ernest J. Collyer Award, presented to him at the alumni gathering, which took the form of a rocking chair

made by the Amish of Lancaster, Pennsylvania.⁵¹ A few months later, on November 18, 2005, he was honored by being the first person from the Bordentown staff to receive the prestigious Verbum Award for his outstanding service as teacher and mentor at Divine Word Seminary High School.⁵²

He and his wife, Helene, who taught art for years at the school, along with their two daughters, lived in the small cottage at the entrance of the property. When the Divine Word students went to the Vincentian High School Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey, Mr. McCullough was hired as a teacher there.

* * *

Father Martin Padovani came to the Bordentown community in 1961, one year after his ordination. In 2011, celebrating his golden jubilee, he has the unique distinction of holding the record for the longest assignment at Bordentown. As a result of his talks and writings, he is also the best-known Divine Word Missionary in the community. When Father Padovani arrived here in 1961 he began working in the vocational ministry. While busy in that work he found time to pursue a master's degree in counseling at the University of Iona in New York. When he was relieved of his vocational work, he entered into the counseling ministry, where he has had a phenomenal impact in marriage counseling and in helping people deal with their psychological problems. Father Padovani has also been a blessing for the many priests and religious who have found their way to his office for the help that they needed. He has also become a much sought-after speaker on many of the modern problems that people face in their daily lives.

Many of Father Padovani's talks have been recorded on tape and DVDs. He is the author of two books that have been a great help to all who have read them: *Healing Wounded Emotions* (1987) and *Healing Broken Relationships* (2006). Jesuit psychologist John Powell wrote in the foreword to Father Padovani's *Healing Wounded Emotions* the following sentences, which are a witness to the help Father Padovani has offered people over the past many years:

Two of Martin Padovani's themes, brilliantly described in these pages, are like the two legs on which we humans walk across the face of this earth on our life-journey to God's

house. The first is a sense of personal worth, which is the backbone of human identity and the essential foundation of human happiness. The second is a sense of personal responsibility. In this context, I have often thought of us humans as either “owners” or “blamers.” We either accept a personal responsibility for our lives, by owning our actions and reactions, or we blame them on others.⁵³

In June 1993 Father Padovani became the thirteenth rector of the Bordentown community, serving three terms in this ministry.

* * *

Among all the wonderful lay staff who worked here at Divine Word Seminary and then at the residence, Mrs. Rosemary Finizie stands out for her commitment and dedication to the community for a period of some 44 years. She began work here as vocation secretary to Father Martin Padovani. Then when Father Padovani went into the counseling ministry, she stayed on as his secretary. Over and above her secretarial duties, she was a great help in the organization and remodeling of the new residence. Her dedication and commitment were recognized by the province, when on November 1, 2006, the Chicago Provincial Council announced that she would be the 2006 recipient of the prestigious Verbum Award.⁵⁴

* * *

Father Paul Connors was ordained in 1963 and assigned first to Miramar, where he taught and worked as house treasurer. He then worked as a formator and teacher in Sacred Heart Seminary, Girard, Pennsylvania. He was assigned to the Bordentown community in 1970, where he became principal of the seminary high school and the ninth rector of the community. He ran a well-organized school with a competent and professional faculty. He led the school through the Middle States accreditation process, which it received in 1974. Father Connors was a creative and sensitive person, who left his mark on the school. Upon leaving Bordentown, he went on to work in the development office of the province; was rector of the Miramar Retreat House in Duxbury, Massachusetts; pursued a master’s degree in spirituality at Berkeley, California; and worked as spiritual director at Divine Word College in Epworth, Iowa. In 2000 he returned to spend his last years in Bordentown, where he died on October 9, 2005.

* * *

Mr. Ernest Collyer taught in the Divine Word seminary educational system for his entire career. On May 15, 1978, the Bordentown community celebrated his fiftieth year as a teacher in the Society. Among his many former students was Father Superior General John Musinsky, who wrote from Rome that Mr. Collyer was one of the greatest teachers he had during his years as a student in Girard, Pennsylvania. Mr. Collyer taught English, speech and Latin. He was esteemed by the students both for his depth of knowledge as well as for the gentle and kind man that he was.

* * *

Father Patrick Connor was born in Australia in 1929 and joined the Society of the Divine Word there. He then came to Techny, Illinois, for his theological studies and was ordained in 1957. He was a missionary in India for nine years and was sent to get a master's degree in counseling from Fordham University. After he received his degree, he found that India forbade the entrance of foreign missionaries, so he was missioned to the United States. Here he has done vocational ministry, retreat work, and parish preaching, and has been the chaplain at Princeton's Stuart Country Day School of the Sacred Heart, Lawrenceville School, and the Grey Nuns Academy of the Sacred Heart in Yardley, Pennsylvania. Father Connor is considered one of the greatest Divine Word preachers in the United States. A series of his homilies has been printed in the booklet "The Right Words." Most recently, he has become nationally and internationally known and acclaimed for his interesting book, *Whom Not to Marry*, which is a result of having counseled young people contemplating marriage over the many years of his priesthood. The impact that he has had on the lives of so many is mirrored in the words that Mr. Sanford Bing penned:

If we think hard, we can all identify a small group of people who have had a significant impact on our lives. Father Pat Connor has been one of those people for me.

Intelligent, well read, a great story teller, a humorist with unusual wit, and with a seemingly unlimited reservoir of appropriate and meaningful quotes, Father Pat is above all a person of faith who respects and embraces people of all religions and beliefs.

I, among many others I am certain, strive to be a better person because of the influence of Pat Connor. Stuart has been blessed to have him as part of their community.⁵⁵

* * *

Father Francis Mahon was one of the first Divine Word Missionaries to set foot on the Bordentown grounds. He and Father John Cohill, later bishop in New Guinea, came to scout the property for the provincial before the Society bought it in 1941. Father Mahon and Bishop Cohill were both from Elizabeth, New Jersey. Father Mahon was later assigned to Bordentown on September 10, 1971, as house treasurer. He was known as the consummate gentleman, always well groomed and courteous in his dealings with the confreres, and for his generosity and sensitivity in financial matters. He died as a member of the Bordentown community on February 3, 2007.

* * *

Father Victor Butler hails from the beautiful Caribbean island of Dominica. He entered the high school seminary at Bay St. Louis and did his novitiate, philosophy, and theology at Techny. He was ordained on February 2, 1964, and was assigned initially to the Northern Province, where he worked both in the Divine Word parishes in Chicago and in the Perrysburg, Ohio, seminary high school. He moved to the Bordentown community for a couple of years; studied at Fordham University for his master's degree in sociology; and then in 1973 became pastor of Our Lady of the Divine Shepherd Parish in Trenton, New Jersey. He was pastor until 1977, when he was assigned once again to the Bordentown community. He became a very popular priest at Holy Cross High School in Delran, New Jersey, where he taught religion and was chaplain to the student body. He has worked in Holy Cross High School from 1979 to about 2011, and has had an enormous influence on the student body, to whom his compassionate and welcoming presence has endeared him. Over many years, Father Butler has also been a well-known and respected figure in the charismatic community. He is currently assigned to the Divine Word Residence at Techny in retirement.

* * *

Father Donald Ehr became provincial of the Eastern Province once Father John Musinsky was elected superior general in 1967, and then

was elected two more times as provincial. He came to Bordentown as the tenth rector in 1976. In an effort to keep the seminary financially viable, he held the famous Cotillions once a year and introduced weekly bingo, at which he was present as a worker every Friday night. On leaving office as rector he spent two years in Our Lady of the Good Shepherd Parish in Trenton, alongside Father Edward McGuinn, and then went on to the Northern Province, where he was pastor of St. Elizabeth Parish in Chicago, Illinois.

* * *

Brother Dennis Logue was ordained at St. Mary's Church, Bordentown, New Jersey, on September 8, 1975, as the first permanent deacon in the Diocese of Trenton. He worked for years in the Bordentown reformatory prison system and at Corpus Christi Parish in Willingboro, New Jersey. Later on, he became aware that God was calling him to the priesthood, and he studied at Pope John XXIII Seminary in Massachusetts. He was ordained a priest by Divine Word Bishop Joseph Francis on May 21, 1983, at St. Mary's Church in Bordentown. He was given faculties to celebrate the sacraments bi-ritually and helped in the various Church communities in the area. He worked for years as hospital chaplain in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, then as pastor in the West Virginia parishes. He spent some years as chaplain to the Pink Sisters in St. Louis, Missouri, and currently lives at the Divine Word Residence at Techny in retirement.

* * *

Brother Richard Morrill was a teacher and formator in the high school seminary. He finished his master's degree at Trenton State Teachers' College; was missioned to Granby, Québec, Canada, for three years; and then to St. Kitts in the Caribbean, where he was headmaster of the Cathedral School. In 1990, when it was found that he had cancer, he was reassigned to the Western Province, where he taught at Verbum Dei High School, Watts, Los Angeles, California, and received cancer treatment. He was beloved by both faculty and students. Brother Richard died at Techny, Illinois, on February 21, 2007.

* * *

Father David Streit was a teacher and formator in the high school seminary at Bordentown. He was transferred to do the same work in Erie, Pennsylvania, and later sent to St. Paul's University,

Ottawa, Canada, where he was spiritual director for the Divine Word seminarians studying there. From Canada he was missioned to St. Kitts in the Caribbean and in 1988 was assigned to Rome where he spent 23 years as assistant secretary general on the Society of the Divine Word generalate staff. He currently lives at the Divine Word Residence at Techny in retirement.

* * *

Father Raymond Lennon was a graduate of Bordentown's beloved St. Joseph's Mission House, class of 1954. He was sent to Brazil, where he studied theology and was ordained in 1964. His first assignment was to teach English at Taiwan's Fu Jen University. In 1970 he returned to Brazil, where he taught at the Catholic University of São Paulo and did formation work with the young SVDs. In 1975 he transferred back to the Eastern Province and became the principal at Divine Word Seminary High School until 1982. In June 1982 he became the provincial of the Eastern Province, and in 1985 he became the first provincial of the newly formed Chicago Province in Techny, Illinois, a position in which he served for two terms.

After his years of service as provincial were over, he was assigned to Montreal, Québec, for parish ministry and formation work. In June 1993 Father Lennon was assigned to the Washington, DC, community as rector for two terms. In 1999 he was appointed rector of St. Augustine's community in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. He returned to Bordentown in June 2002, and from 2002 to 2008 he served as the fourteenth rector of the Bordentown community. He was appointed rector of the Bordentown community again in 2014.

* * *

Brother Xavier Eshman is a proud graduate of Ohio State University. His first foreign mission assignment was to Argentina in 1970, where he worked until 1977, when he was assigned to teach at Divine Word Seminary High School in Bordentown. Students considered him an excellent teacher—always prepared for class. He did everything to make classes interesting and was willing to spend extra time to make sure the students learned the material. Moreover, he was always willing to take on extra classes or work that was needed in the school or in the community. Consequently, he was a much beloved teacher and confrere. After the fire in the mansion and the subsequent closing of the school, Brother Xavier volunteered for work

in the Paraguay Province where he went in 1984. For the next twenty-five years he was principal of the Divine Word-sponsored agricultural school in Paraguay before returning to Bordentown in 2009.

* * *

Father William Shea was also a graduate of the belated vocation school of St. Joseph's Mission House in 1956. He had served in the U.S. Army and graduated from Boston College before entering Bordentown prior to going to novitiate. After ordination he taught and did formation work at the Divine Word seminaries in Perrysburg, Ohio, and Girard, Pennsylvania. When the Girard seminary closed, he accompanied the seminarians who went to study at St. Mark's Seminary in Erie, Pennsylvania. Father Shea became provincial of the Eastern Province in 1976, and then served as the eleventh rector of Bordentown from June 1982 to June 1985. He currently resides at Divine Word College, Epworth, Iowa.

* * *

Brother Patrick Hogan was the first Brother to be the rector of the Bordentown community. He assumed the position of the sixteenth rector upon the resignation of Father Walter Miller in August 2009. As a young Brother, he was missioned in 1962 to the China Province, where he spent some 28 years. He began working in the Fu Jen University finance office in Taiwan. One of his great achievements was bringing the scientific and technical equipment through the Customs Office for the various university departments. In 1968 he returned to the United States to do undergraduate studies at Seton Hall University. He finished graduate studies in linguistics at Georgetown University, Washington, DC, where he received his masters' degree in 1975. After a stint teaching at Divine Word College, Epworth, Iowa, he returned to Fu Jen University, Taiwan, where he became the head of the Chinese Language School. Upon retirement from that position, he was called back to the Chicago Province, where he was in charge of the Divine Word International Conference Center at Techny until he was assigned to the Bordentown community in 2004.

CONTRIBUTIONS THE HOUSE HAS MADE TO THE AREA

Divine Word Missionaries have been living in the city of Bordentown since the Society purchased the property in 1941. They have made every effort to be good neighbors to the wonderful people of the city of Bordentown and the surrounding towns. The activities in

which the confreres have been involved, as well as the programs that have taken place on the grounds, give evidence of their good will and of their desire to be good neighbors, as noted here.

Religious Happenings

- The Divine Word priests celebrated daily Eucharist for the St. Mary's Parish community of the city of Bordentown from 1941 through 2010, when the parish was given an associate priest.
- For the past 35+ years, one of the priests has been a professional marriage counselor who five days a week offered his services to the local community of the city of Bordentown.
- For 30 years, one of the priests has taught and been counselor and chaplain at Holy Cross High School, Delran, New Jersey.
- Over the past many years, five of the priests have been involved in prison ministry at Yardville Correctional Institute.
- There has been individual spiritual direction/counseling offered over the years by the priests to people of Bordentown and elsewhere.
- Special retreats and days of recollection are periodically offered to Religious Sisters, priests, and laypeople.
- The house is used for retreats and spiritual gatherings of the Divine Word Missionaries who come from Canada, the United States, and the Caribbean Islands.
- Several priests go out each weekend morning to offer the Eucharistic liturgy at various parishes/religious communities in Chesterfield, Willingboro, Hainesport, Riverton, Cinnaminson, Moorestown, Washington Crossing, Spring Lake, and at times in Princeton. They also help at neighboring parishes for reconciliation during the seasons of Advent and Lent.
- Two of the priests are often requested to preside at the funerals of the local people of the city of Bordentown at the various Bordentown funeral parlors.
- For the past ten years, one of the Brothers has been involved in the Trenton soup kitchen and has also been a volunteer teacher of English as a Second Language to immigrants.
- Upon request, the priests have visited with the sick of the city of Bordentown to offer them consolation and prayers.
- The community has a prayer request book where people can write in or call to have the confreres pray for special needs.
- The community has opened the former student dormitory

annually for the past ten years to a group of Ohio University students who come to work in Trenton's Martin House projects during their spring break. These students join the community for breakfast and the evening meal.

- The community provides lodging twice a year for a group of Christian men who do Christian ministry in the local correctional institute.

Cultural and Other Happenings

- From 1947 through 1983, Divine Word Missionaries maintained a prep high school seminary in the city of Bordentown for the training of candidates interested in the priesthood and religious life.
- The community twice hosted, at the request of the mayor and the council of the City of Bordentown, free of charge, the reenactment battles of the 1776 War of Independence. The last one was hosted in 2007 to celebrate the 325th anniversary of the city's foundation. Some 1,000 re-enactors and guests pitched tents, rode horses, and fired cannons on our property for several days.
- For the past eight years, there have been eight ongoing education conferences offered to the public of the City of Bordentown. The subjects are of general interest, ranging from spirituality, the history of Bordentown, and famous people from Bordentown, to topics on good health, among others. These conferences have been free of charge.
- In recent years, there have been symposiums on Joseph Bonaparte, on the Native Americans who once inhabited Point Breeze, and on the plant life found on the property. At the last symposium, some 500 people attended various activities, highlighted by the presence of the French ambassador from Washington, DC.
- There are constant tours throughout the year offered to the public who wish to visit historic Point Breeze and find out about Joseph Bonaparte.
- For the past 15 years, the community has hosted—and still hosts—twice-weekly meetings of one of the largest Alcoholic Anonymous groups in the area.
- For the past six years, the community has hosted—and still hosts—a once-weekly meeting of Narcotic Anonymous for the people of Bordentown and the surrounding area.

- For the past 16 years, the community has hosted—and still hosts—groups of youngsters from Bordentown and elsewhere who practice softball in the gym and, when the weather permits, on two outdoor softball diamonds. They are here every night during the week and during the day on Saturdays and Sundays throughout most of the year.
- The community has allowed couples who get married to walk the grounds and to have their wedding pictures taken at the Chinese garden. The grounds have become one of the most sought-after scenic places for such photographs.
- The community has welcomed people to walk through the grounds to enjoy the beauty of nature and the peace and quiet that is offered here.
- For the past six years, the community has hosted archaeological digs by professors and archaeology students at Monmouth University. They are doing research on the first mansion of Joseph Bonaparte and on the Native American inhabitants of Point Breeze, whose history on these grounds goes back some 10,000 years. The community will continue to allow such archaeological digs to continue in future years.
- The community has participated in the annual Christmas Tour and Garden Visit of Bordentown's Historic Houses.
- The community has hosted visits of dignitaries from Europe who come to the Bonaparte estate, as well as relatives/descendants of the personnel who served Joseph Bonaparte while he lived on these grounds.
- The community has hosted, upon special request, private tours of the original Bonaparte gate house, which is used as a private residence by the missionaries.
- The rector has welcomed into our residence for dinner many of the people who are members of the City of Bordentown Historic Society and City of Bordentown Committee members.
- The community allows free access to the City of Bordentown Fire Department as it trains its personnel.
- The community has allowed free access to the City of Bordentown Police Department to use the property periodically for various exercises.
- The community has warmly cooperated with all requests from the City of Bordentown authorities and organizations for the

use of the property. For example, the Bordentown Elks Lodge holds its annual Easter Egg hunt for the City of Bordentown and Bordentown township children on the grounds.

- For the past five years, the rector has opened up the former students' dormitory to store, without charge, all the furniture of Bordentown's historic Gilder House while this house is being restored.
- The community participates in the Save the Cats organization's program on our grounds. Cats as well as other wildlife are protected and given proper treatment by the organization.

APPENDIX

Chaplains in the Bordentown and Yardville Correctional Facilities

Father Ralph Roina

Father Joseph Faikus

Father Andrew Adamek

Father George Zetts

Father David Streit

Brother/Father Dennis Logue

Father Norman St. John

Father Andrew Hadalski

Rectors

Father Peter Weyland 1941–1941

Father Emil Lesage 1941–1946

Father Robert Hunter 1946–1948

Father Casmir Murawski 1948–1952

Father Nicholas Bisheimer 1952–1958

Father Walter Hafner 1958–1961

Father Raymond Sanders 1961–1967

Father Edward McGuinn 1967–1968

Father Stephan Szmuto 1968–1970

Father Paul Connors 1970–1976

Father Donald Ehr 1976–1982

Father William Shea 1982–1985

Father Norman St. John 1985–1993

Father Martin Padovani 1993–2002

Father Raymond Lennon 2002–2008

Father Walter Miller	2008–2009
Brother Patrick Hogan	2009–2014
Father Raymond Lennon	2014–

Conferees and Laypeople Buried in St. Mary’s Cemetery, Bordentown

Brother Willibrord Beemster	died February 23, 1988
Brother Patrick Cannan	died February 25, 1989
Father Joseph Fleishaker	died April 17, 1997
Brother Thomas Granfield	died September 24, 2000
Father Vance Thorne	died September 30, 2004
Father Paul Connors	died October 9, 2005
Father Francis Mahon	died February 3, 2007
Father Norman St. John	died May 10, 2009
Ms. June Butler—sister of Father Victor Butler	
Mr. Anthony Wochowiak—homeless person who worked for the community at times	
The Doeblers—great benefactors of the community	

[*Editor’s note:* A list of the scribes for the Bordentown chronicles can be found in the Supplemental Material of these histories in the Chicago Province Archives.]

NOTES

1. “Joseph Bonaparte in Bordentown,” *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, May–October 1893, 82.
2. Much of the material contained in this history of Bordentown is taken from the *Chronicle St. Joseph’s Mission House, Bordentown, New Jersey*. Hereafter it is cited as “Chronicle,” with references to volume and page numbers. The present quote is from that chronicle.
3. Chronicle 1:3, 4.
4. Divine Word Archives, Bordentown, New Jersey.
5. Chronicle 1:4–8.
6. *Ibid.*, 8.
7. *Ibid.*, 9.
8. *Ibid.*, 11, 12.
9. *Ibid.*, 15.
10. *Ibid.*

11. When the one Society of the Divine Word province in the United States was first divided, it became the Eastern and Western provinces. Eventually there came the Southern Province. Then, when a new province was established on the West Coast, the four U.S. provinces were Eastern, Northern, Southern, and Western. In 1983, the Eastern and Northern Provinces were combined to make the new Chicago Province.

12. Chronicle 1:13.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid., 13, 14.

15. Ibid., 14.

16. Letter to Bordentown – Divine Word Archives, Bordentown, New Jersey.

17. Josef Alt, *Journey in Faith: The Missionary Life of Arnold Janssen*, (Studia Instituti Missiologici SVD 78), Steyler Verlag, Nettetal 2002, XVIII + 1078 pp.

18. Chronicle 1:19.

19. Ibid., 20.

20. Ibid., 26.

21. Ibid., 20.

22. Ibid., 31.

23. Ibid., 32.

24. Ibid., 33.

25. *Christian Family*, October 1942, insert.

26. Chronicle 1:37–38.

27. Ibid., 40.

28. Ibid., 47.

29. Ibid., 47, 49.

30. Ibid., 185.

31. Ibid., 5.

32. Ibid., 52.

33. Ibid., 53.

34. Ibid., 55, 67, 71–72 passim.

35. Ibid., 75.

36. Ibid., 98–99.

37. Divine Word Archives, Bordentown, New Jersey.

38. Chronicle 1:116.

39. Ibid., 128.

40. Ibid., 131–45 passim.
41. Ibid., 146–53 passim.
42. Ibid., 155.
43. Ibid., 170.
44. Ibid., 176, 177.
45. Ibid., 192.
46. *The Monitor*, May 14, 1987, 11.
47. Chronicle 1:13, 14.
48. Deed Book 1663, 784–803.
49. Deed Book 1756, 604.
50. “His Happiness Is Work and Prayer,” *Trenton Sunday Times*, October 29, 1972.
51. Chronicle 2:252.
52. Ibid., 284.
53. John Powell, SJ, “Foreword,” in Martin Padovani, *Healing Wounded Emotions*, (Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 1987).
54. Chronicle 3:64.
55. “The Right Words: Twelve Stuart Sermons”, by Patrick Connor, SVD, 2005, p. 3