

PART II

On September 11, 1928 Vincent Smith and Maurice Rousseve, the first two novices of St. Augustine's Seminary, pronounced first vows and became members of the Society of the Divine Word. (SEE B-1).

In the following year the seminary was dealt a terrible blow when its charismatic rector, Fr. Christman, S.V.D., died on February 14, 1929. (SEE B-2).

PART III



PRO MEMORIA

FINANCIAL STRUGGLES AND CONDITIONS OF ST AUGUSTINE MISSION HOUSE.

1920 - 1928

A. First Period (1920 - 1923)

1. Though there were a few laudable and noteworthy exceptions among the clergy, priests as a body were either indifferent towards or directly hostile to our undertaking. Hence, neither did they themselves, in spite of the fact that they were appealed to, do anything for the support of our Seminary nor did they encourage but rather discouraged the laity to contribute towards our new establishment.

2. The Right Reverend Bishops, though they seemed to favor and approve of our new undertaking, failed on the other hand to come out publicly with any sign or word of approbation. Furthermore, they did not try to use their moral influence over their priests to convince them of the necessity of such an undertaking as ours, of the good that might accrue to the church from it, and finally of the blessings to be derived by the Colored people. Thus they did not encourage their priests to give it, on the one hand, their own wholehearted approval and, on the other, to interest their flock in our institution.

3. I would have been ready and willing at any time to appeal directly to our Catholics from the pulpit for help and support. However, the letter by which I asked for this favor of being permitted to plead our Cause from the pulpit was received very unfavorably. The majority did not favor me with a reply, while the few friends that did answer, stated that I would need the permission of the Bishops, which, they went to say, would in most cases be refused.

4. The Seminary is located in the South, and it is the South that is to be especially benefited by it. I should therefore, expect that the South be deeply interested in the success of the Seminary and give the institution whatever possible financial assistance it could. However, it is the South that is more indifferent to the Seminary, more open and outspoken in its hostility -- and this applies to laity as well as clergy -- to the priest working in White congregations as well as Colored, that there is no willingness at all to help us. Even if the South would be willing to help us, Catholics here are too poor and too few to be able to give substantial support.

5. Though I sent appeals several times to pastors in charge of Colored congregations and Missions, the response was always so poor and discouraging that I was forced to discontinue them. The poverty of these congregations was partly responsible for this, but then also the indifference if not secret hostility of their pastors to the



Mission House, played a prominent part.

6. I Appealed several times also to the Sisters in charge of Colored schools and Academies with the hope that they would be able to raise sufficient funds to pay the annual board and tuition of \$250.00 for one or two students. There was no response. They few who condescended to answer, wrote that the pastor did not allow them to raise funds for such a purpose in their schools.

7. I sent similar appeals to all Catholic schools and colleges. Also in this case I was not one whit encouraged. On the contrary, I was told that there was no interest taken in the Colored Missions generally or in our undertaking.

8. The result of this was a great scarcity of benefactors in a position to aid us materially. Added to this, our Society itself was not able to do much in the way of extending financial help during these first years. It was therefore due entirely to the great generosity and publicity of the Colored Board for Mission Work among Colored People, as well as the benefactions of Mother Katherine Drexel and of the late Mr. John H. Murphy, that we could build a temporary home for our first students and were able to live for the first and second years. However, our expenditures were always much greater than our receipts.

9. It must be added that practically all of our first students were poor. Not one of the could afford to pay his full board and tuition, while few were unable to meet even incidental expenses. This was a great burden to the institution, but it could not possibly close its doors to poor but deserving students.

10. At the end of the second year the need of a substantial building in more congenial surroundings became so urgent that it no longer could be postponed. Bay St. Louis was chosen as the future location of the Mission House on account of its Catholic spirit and its nearness to a Catholic center. An appropriation from the Commission for Indian and Negro Missions made possible the purchase of the grounds needed. An additional gift of \$20,000.00 from the Commission enabled us to begin the brick structure which was to become the permanent home of the Seminary. Also our late Bishop John Gunn donated \$10,000.00 towards the undertaking.

B. Second Period (1923 - 1928)

(Now that the Seminary structure was completed, together with a frame building for the dining room and kitchen and a community hall for the priests, new and much more complicated problems presented themselves.)

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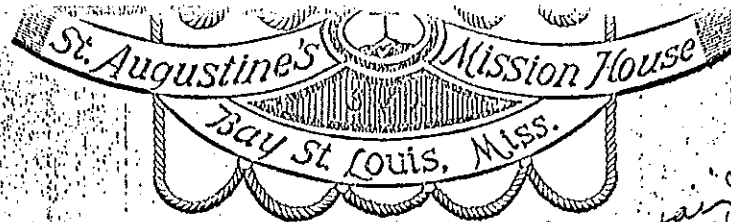
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paying 5% interest annually on this debt.

2. We were now able to admit more students, now that we were permanently located. The number of applications began to increase. However, all of our applicants came from the poorer classes, so that none of them was able to pay for board and tuition.

3. We could now also register a growing interest in our undertaking and with it a corresponding increase of donations. However our receipts were by no means sufficient to balance our living expenses, far less pay for improvements or cover the interest that was accumulating from our \$34,000.00 loan. This compelled us to throw ourselves upon the generosity of our Province to relieve us of this last mentioned burden.

4. We are receiving at present for our support, \$5,000.00 per annum from the Commission of Indian and Negro Missions. But I was told repeatedly that the Commission was not only unable to give us any more than this, but could not even so much as promise us how long this \$5,000.00 disbursement in our favor could last. What we receive from private benefactors does not average more than \$5,000.00 annually. Interest accruing from Scholarships, etc., amounts to not more than \$2,000.00 annually.

5. Our priests, who practically support themselves on the income from stipends, are willing and even anxious to do supply-work on Sundays in our neighboring parishes so as to swell the funds needed for our annual budget. However, the South is too poor to pay properly for these supplies. This is true especially of Mississippi, which gives only \$5.00 to a priest helping out on a Sunday. Besides, our priests are too heavily burdened with work to be able to take over many of these Sunday supplies.

C. Third Period (1928 -)

On account of our extreme poverty in past years, the dormitory equipment and also that of the kitchen were of the poorest kind. Consequently, they could not last very long. It was for this reason that it became necessary to equip the dormitory at the beginning of the present scholastic year, with a complete and new outfit, including bedding, mattresses, sheeting, etc. The increase in the number of our students made it imperative that we enlarge our kitchen and furnish it with a much larger range and a new refrigerator. The dining room also had to be lengthened by thirty feet so as to make it possible that the Scholastics have their own refectory. (Last year they took their meals in the crowded dining room of the priests.) Only that which was absolutely necessary was purchased, yet the total amount for these improvements went up to \$5,000.00.



2. Our greatest need at the present time is a new Seminary building for the Higher Studies. This will cost about \$75,000.00, excluding all equipment.

3. In order to build the Major Seminary we are forced to buy an additional property valued at \$6,000.00. Otherwise, the tract of land already in our possession is useless for that purpose.

4. This ought to be the last year that our present dormitory be in the main building. Space is wholly lacking together with an absence of both room and lavatory accommodations. Besides, it is impossible to enlarge upon what we have now, since the rooms so used were never intended for that purpose. The original plan remains to be carried out, that of having another building for a dormitory. It is to be a simple frame structure affording all possible ventilation and space on account of the length and heat of a usual Southern summer.

5. At present our regular monthly expense, estimating the amount spent for each priest at about \$40.00, omitting all expense of clothing and medical attention whenever needed, that for each of our students at about \$35.00, mounts up to over \$2,000.00 for nine months. This includes only the Faculty and Student-body. Our institution should be able to support at least twice the number of students it has at present if we wish to have Colored priests. Even this latter number is a not very large estimate, considering the percentage of students leaving before completion of their studies in the White Seminaries throughout the country.

6. The printing of St. Augustine's Messenger, the official quarterly of the Mission House, is practically a dead expense. We can not charge more than \$.50 for a yearly subscription. The list of subscribers is too small to cover even the bare expenses of printing alone, omitting all other labor. Yet the publication is necessary to keep friends interested in our work and to gain new friends and benefactors.

7. Last year our expenses mounted to \$30,000.00 and this year, with double the number of students, the increase in the Faculty, and the opening of a Scholasticate with six members, will easily be twice and three times the sum of last year.

8. In this report I have mentioned so far only those things absolutely necessary coming to my immediate attention. I do not refer at all to those things that would be certainly desirable and practically necessary in order that this be a really modern and up-to-date Seminary. Let me name a few of them en passant: a park, a swimming pool, a gymnasium, an auditorium, two well equipped libraries, one for the Preparatory Department and another even more extensive for the Major Seminary, a sum



home near the beach for the Scholastics, and an increase of land for a decent campus. The priests keep themselves busy during their recreation time planning landscapes, building roads, etc., which would otherwise cost us a neat sum every year.

II. VALUE OF PROPERTY:

1. College building	\$60,000.00
2. Community house (frame structure for priests)	6,000.00
3. Kitchen and dining room	8,000.00
4. Laundry	2,000.00

III. STATISTICS OF MISSION HOUSE:

1. Priests teaching	8
2. Lay teachers	1
3. Scholastics	6
4. Students	40
5. Secretary	1
6. Servants	6

In conclusion may I be permitted to say that the Society of the Divine Word has taken a heavy and important responsibility for the Church in the United States, that of giving the Colored people a Native clergy. This is as difficult a task as it is a necessary one. The Society has yielded to the wishes of Rome and the Hierarchy of this country, and promised to educate Colored young men as religious priests and take them as members with the Society acting as their spiritual mother. But neither Rome nor the Bishops could have sincerely meant that the Society should take upon itself the whole responsibility, especially the financial side of it, of this very expensive undertaking of raising a Native clergy, a task which no one else was willing to undertake; but which should be shared by the Church of the whole country. Only if all Catholics of the



United States, Bishops, priests, and lay people help in this work
can God's blessing be expected for it and success be attained.

Mr. John L. ...
(Reverend)