Analecta

Selected Studies in the History of Mount St. Mary's College and Seminary

**This Venerable House**

**Part I: The Beginnings**

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A visitor, approaching from the north, first sees Mount St. Mary’s College from some distance, a cascade of Maryland granite buildings descending down the slope of Saint Mary’s Mountain from a point midway up the forested rise. A tall campanile crowned with a golden statue of the Immaculate Conception clearly indicates it is a Catholic institution. On the terraces below the campanile, the increasing weathering of the grey-brown stone of the buildings tells of a long history … one that stretches from the four-lane highway slicing cleanly through the lowest level of the campus, to the rocky and winding paths through the gardens above the campanile, and finally on to Indian Lookout, at the very point between sky and earth that marks its farthest boundary. Even from a distance, it appears to be full of life. Bells are heard, muted by the great oak and maple trees, but bright and vital nonetheless. A flag is folding and unfolding from a tall staff in the midst of the white cupolas and dentils of the Georgian buildings. A shout may be heard from a playing field, echoing against the mountainside. Distant music is playing somewhere, contemporary and raucous. After nearly two hundred years, Mount St. Mary’s is still unwinding its history, still justifying its ordered sprawl across 2,000 acres of northern Maryland and across the story of Catholicism in America.

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The Story Begins

The Revolutionary War, which had made a united nation of what had been colonies dependent upon England, brought special problems for its Catholic citizens. They were few in number, not more than 25,000, with half that number located in Maryland. The rest were scattered, and priests to minister to their needs had reason to feel overwhelmed: There were 19 priests serving Maryland; five were known to be working in Pennsylvania; and only one priest was located in New York in 1776. There were a few other missionaries, apparently under no one’s jurisdiction, but their names and works have gone generally unrecorded. It is not surprising that all of them were foreign-born and trained: French, Irish, German. They were nominally subject to English bishops, and amid the fervor of a newly won independence, that was not a comfortable position. Shortly after the Declaration of Independence, Father John Carroll convinced the small band of clergy to petition Rome to appoint a bishop for the United States. Rome delayed finding a solution until 1786, then sent a mandate that satisfied no one. The new nation was made a vicariate, subject to the bishop of London. Perhaps the only point of the papal bull that pleased the petitioners was the naming of Father Carroll as vicar general. At least he was a person of stature: intelligent and well-spoken, and native-born. The founding of an American Catholic Church had begun.

John Carroll had been born in Upper Marlboro, Md., on January 8, 1735, a member of one of the most illustrious families of the land. At the age of 13, he was sent abroad for his education, studying first at St. Omer’s in Flanders, long a center for English-speaking Catholics, who were disenfranchised in England and yet unestablished in America. Later he completed his work at the College of Liege and Bruges, then under the care of the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits. At the completion of his course of studies in 1769, he was ordained a priest and shortly afterward became a member of the Society of Jesus. He was a faculty member at the College of Liege and Bruges in September of 1773 when news came that the Pope had suppressed the society and made their properties subject to the judgment of national courts. Father Carroll promptly went to England, where for two years he served as secretary general of the dispersed Jesuits, conducting their business before the courts as their holdings were dismantled. Finally, in 1775, he returned to his native country and took up missionary work in the colonies of Maryland and Virginia. He soon made his reputation as a patriot and an orator in the hectic days that preceded the Declaration of Independence.

In 1776, at the request of the newly formed Congress of the United States, Father Carroll, Charles Carroll of Carrollton and Samuel Chase went to Canada as an official delegation sent to convince Canada to remain out of the conflict between the states and England. The delegation was unsuccessful, but as a result of the prestige attached to this appointment by the Congress, Father Carroll took a preeminent position among the Catholics of America. The position of vicar general was particularly dissatisfying to Father Carroll. Though it allowed the Catholics of the country to organize and direct their own work, he was himself left subject, not to Rome, but to the bishop of London. He set about convincing the papal curia and the Pope himself that the situation needed changing. It was a delicate interchange, for Father Carroll did not wish to appear covetous of a bishopric for himself. Rome debated, consulted the clergy of the vicariate and finally, after three years, reached a decision. On November 6, 1789, the United States was made a diocese, with the seat at Baltimore and with John Carroll as the first bishop.

Father Carroll was consecrated at Dorsetshire in England on August 15, 1790. Within days, he received a group of Sulpician priests from Paris who asked him to allow them to establish a seminary in Baltimore. No one was more aware than Bishop Carroll of the need to educate young men for the priesthood in the new country. Missionaries were few; Catholics were scattered and for the most part poor. Except for the little college that had just been founded in Georgetown, there was no school in the whole country for the higher education of Catholics. The Society of Saint Sulpice was welcomed wholeheartedly.
The Society of Saint Sulpice had been founded for the sole purpose of conducting seminaries to educate candidates for the priesthood. At this point in their history, however, Father Emery, their superior general, allowed his priests to take up missionary work and even to conduct colleges in the missions for the education of young men, whether destined for the priesthood or not. It was understood that such a deviation from their founder’s purpose was to be temporary because of the unusual demands of the United States.

On July 10, 1791, four Sulpicians arrived in Baltimore: Fathers Garnier, Levadoux, Tessier and Nagot, who was the local superior of this small company. Before long a house had been purchased and Saint Mary’s Seminary of Saint Sulpice was formally opened on October 3, 1791.

Saint Mary’s was a major seminary; that is, the students pursued studies in philosophy and theology, with the presumption that they had completed a course in the humanities at a minor seminary or college elsewhere. Needless to say, there were few candidates. In an effort to provide a source for major seminarians, the Sulpicians opened Saint Mary’s Academy in Baltimore in 1799 as a minor seminary. Because they feared their academy would hurt the growth of the Georgetown college, they accepted only foreign students into the school. Nearly all the students had emigrated from Cuba, and the Spanish government, alarmed at this exodus of her citizens to the United States, ordered all of them to return to Cuba in 1803. In order to save the academy from collapsing, the Sulpicians opened the doors to all students, Catholic or non-Catholic, whether destined for the ministry or not. Now known as Saint Mary’s College, it flourished, and by 1805 had received a charter from the state of Maryland to confer degrees.

All of this began to make Father Emery in Paris quite uncomfortable. Instead of a temporary involvement in college education, his priests had become the sponsors of an enterprise that had all the marks of a permanent foundation. He decided to recall all the Sulpicians back to France, where, due to the destruction caused by the French Revolution, there was a need to reestablish seminaries. There were so few subjects in Baltimore that it seemed extravagant to leave the community there—by 1800, there were 13 Sulpicians attached to Saint Mary’s Seminary but fewer than a dozen students. Bishop Carroll protested the decision, but it was only the direct intervention of Pope Pius VII that kept the major seminary open in Baltimore. Saint Mary’s College continued to prosper until 1852, when, by a prior arrangement with the Jesuits, it was replaced by Loyola College of Baltimore, and the members of Saint Sulpice were freed of this work they considered so alien to their purposes.

In the meantime, in 1805, the Society of Jesus was reestablished by Rome, and the Jesuits assumed responsibility for Georgetown College. From the beginning, Sulpicians had taught at Georgetown, and one of them, Father DuBourg, had even been president there from 1796 until 1799. For the same reasons that had foreshadowed the suppression of Saint Mary’s College, the Sulpicians removed themselves, after 1805, from any connection with Georgetown.

Father Nagot, superior of the American Sulpicians, continued to feel strongly that a specifically minor seminary should be established to provide candidates for the major seminary, Saint Mary’s. Saint Mary’s College, now open to all students, was not fulfilling this task. Thus, he accepted the offer of the use of a large estate in Pennsylvania, Pigeon Hill, near Conewago, to begin one. The owner, Mr. Joseph Harent, was in France studying for the priesthood and decided to transfer his property to the Sulpicians. On August 15, 1806, Father Nagot, with three theologians from Baltimore as his fellow teachers, opened the new school with a dozen or so students, mostly local children, along with a few from the West Indies. Things looked hopeful for the future of this minor seminary. Then, in 1808, everything fell apart.

Father Nagot fell ill while on a visit back to Saint Mary’s Seminary and could not return to Pigeon Hill. The three theology students, James Moynihan, Roger Smith and George Sheinfeld, were not experienced enough to conduct the school by themselves, and the
Sulpicians in Baltimore were needed on the faculties of Saint Mary's Seminary and Saint Mary's College. Not only were no priests available for the new work, but Mr. Harent had notified Father Nagot that he would be returning from France in September of 1809 and would need the use of at least part of the estate at Pigeon Hill. A priest had to be found, somehow, to direct the minor seminary, and a place to locate it had to be found as well. It was at this point that Father Nagot fixed his mind on Father John DuBois, a missionary in western Maryland. For three years John DuBois had been asking for admission into the Society of Saint Sulpice.

**John DuBois**

The career of John DuBois was well known to Father Nagot. Born in Paris on August 24, 1764, John DuBois grew up during the twilight of the French monarchy. He studied the humanities at the College of Louis le Grand, having as classmates Camille des Moulins and Robespierre, two men who would later become figures of terror to John DuBois. He entered the Seminary of Saint Magliore and was ordained for service in the Archdiocese of Paris on September 27, 1787. He had been a brilliant student who had so impressed the archbishop of Paris that he had been ordained early; his first appointments in that city were prestigious ones. He was attached to the parish of Saint Sulpice, the largest and most important parish in Paris, and named chaplain for the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul at the Hospice des petites Maison. This hospice was one of their most important establishments in Paris.

Unfortunately, as the madness of the post-revolutionary period of France spread—to a great extent at the instigation of his two classmates from the College of Louis le Grand—it was dangerous to be in such a conspicuous position as was Father DuBois. Inevitably he would find himself forced to deal with the constitutional oaths. These oaths, demanded by the new republican constitution, were meant, quite simply, for the destruction of religion in that country. Those priests who could do so ignored the existence of the oaths; but when confronted with them, they had to sign or accept imprisonment, even death. In June of 1791, Father DuBois received word from friends in the government that his arrest was imminent. Through these friends, the De Noailles family, he was able to obtain a passport and a letter of introduction from the great LaFayette. DuBois fled in disguise from Paris and set sail from Havre for America.

Arriving in Norfolk, Va., in July of 1791, he immediately placed himself under the jurisdiction of Bishop Carroll. He presented LaFayette’s letter to several leading families of Virginia, including Patrick Henry. By November, he was situated in Richmond, living with a Captain Coleman, and tutoring Patrick Henry’s children in French. He learned English from Patrick Henry and others in exchange for his teaching. Although well received by the more educated leaders of Virginia, even to the extent of being invited to make use of the capitol building in Richmond to celebrate Mass, he was impeded in his ministry to the ordinary people by his lack of English. He felt keenly the need to be of use. On November 1, 1791, he wrote to Colonel FitzGerald in Alexandria, in French:
I have just learned, Sir, that there are several respectable Catholics at Alexandria, among whom I do not fear to count yourself, who are continually deprived of the consolations of their religion. I hold myself subject to the direction of the Bishop of Baltimore, whether I will settle for a while at Richmond. If my ministry would be agreeable in your city, it would be a pleasure and an honor to go there from time to time to exercise its functions; I do not ask any contribution for this, I ask only for the consolation of being useful. However, if it should be necessary to go there frequently, I would ask that a horse be furnished me upon which I may make the trip. I am indebted to Mr. William Hunter for this good news, and for the honor of assuring you of my profound respect.

Although a Frenchman, I am beginning to speak a few words of your English, and I hope to speak it perfectly in time.

For three years, Father DuBois continued his work in Virginia. Then in 1794, Bishop Carroll, satisfied that his English was good, appointed him pastor of the parish in Fredericsttown in western Maryland. It was a parish that included the whole of western Maryland, much of Virginia and, in fact, nearly everything between Baltimore and the Mississippi. Only he and Father Badin, the first priest ordained out of Saint Mary’s Seminary in Baltimore in 1793 and now working in Kentucky, ministered to that vast area.

Fredericktown (now Frederick) had had a church-house since 1763, founded and maintained by the Jesuits until their suppression in 1793. Until the arrival of Father DuBois, these former Jesuits had kept their legal relationship under a state charter as “The Corporation of Roman Catholic Clergymen.” They were unable to accept new members, however, and as their numbers dwindled, they could no longer care for Fredericktown. The church-house, dedicated to Saint Stanislaus Koska, had been built during the period of repression following the repeal of the Act of Toleration in 1662. For more than a hundred years, Catholics were not allowed to build or use churches, but could meet only in private homes. The result was the construction, in several places, of church-houses, built to look like homes, with false chimneys in place of steeples, and a room or two for the use of the priest. Such was Saint Stanislaus. In 1794, it was much too small to accommodate the congregation, and Father DuBois undertook the construction of a new church to be called Saint John’s. It was an ambitious and costly project, and many doubted that it would ever be completed. Roger Brooke Taney, later chief justice of the United States, and a close friend of Father DuBois (Father DuBois officiated at his marriage to Francis Scott Key’s sister, Anne Phoebe, in 1806), said, “We all thought that the means could not be raised to pay for such a building and that the church would never be completed and if completed, would never be filled with Catholics.” The cornerstone was laid on May 15, 1800. Eventually, it was paid for and so well-filled with worshippers that it had to be replaced with a larger building in 1833.

During his pastorate, Father DuBois also built a small church in Barnesville, Md., far to the south, dedicated to Saint Mary, as well as a church dedicated to Saint Peter in Harper’s Ferry, Va. (now West Virginia). He quickly gained a reputation as a builder and as a person who seemed to find resources where none appeared to be. But he was no dreamer. He approached these projects from a practical point of view, studied advantages and disadvantages, and made sensible decisions based on need. Of the small church built in Barnesville, Father DuBois wrote to Bishop Carroll in 1807 in his still rather quaint English:

I have already brought a plan to build a brick church in Montgomery County; in the 1st place I submitted to the votes of the heads of families the choice of the spot whereon it is to be built. I pointed out 3 spots shewing the conveniences and advantages of each. The 1st was the old place where the wrecks of the church are, the 2nd was Medley’s, the 3rd was Barn’s Ville, a little town built on a spot adjoining & partly including Zachariah Knott’s plantation. Nobody voted for the old place, 2 only voted for Medley’s, and all the rest voted for Barn’s Ville—accordingly I fixed upon this last place to build the church upon.
The Catholic community of Emmitsburg, a small town on the northern border of Maryland, not far from Gettysburg, was of particular concern to Father DuBois. There were two churches there, one a church-house built by William Elder in 1743 and serving a mostly English congregation, and a church, Saint Joseph’s, built in 1793 and serving a mostly Irish congregation. At first only the church-house, known as Elder Station, was served by Father DuBois. Saint Joseph’s was in the care of a Father Ryan, one of those vague and seemingly unattached priests who appear in several places during this period. Apparently he was not under the jurisdiction of Bishop Carroll and ran Saint Joseph’s according to his own lights. According to Father DuBois, his demands for money were so unorthodox that the parishioners of Saint Joseph’s gradually left the congregation, preferring Elder Station and the orthodoxy of Father DuBois. When no more than seven or eight persons remained at Saint Joseph’s, the priest left, and Father DuBois took charge of both congregations.

This “schism,” as Father DuBois called it, put a strain on the old church-house at Elder Station, and it was clearly necessary to build a church of proper size to hold the congregation. In 1793, Alexius Elder had deeded a piece of property to Bishop Carroll to build a church. When Father DuBois, in 1805, inspected the land, he decided against the site, and instead chose a spot halfway up Saint Mary’s Mountain. With the help of Arnold Elder, Alexius’ son, he was able to buy the property for the new church as well as an additional 26 acres. These latter acres he purchased with his own money, with the help of his family in France. He wished to give the land over to the church’s use but retain ownership himself so as to have a refuge in his old age.

On his move from Fredericktown, he brought with him a young man, James Moynihan. Just before the move, Father DuBois wrote to Bishop Carroll, on November 28, 1805:

> I have now with me a gentleman by the name of Moynihan who introduced himself as one whom you intended to recommend to me, had he, as he expected, come back from Saint Mary’s County to Baltimore. He says he wishes yet to continue his studies in order to prepare himself for the holy orders, but that his resources being scanty, he means to keep a school for a support in the meantime, the more necessary as an account of his age, more time will be wanting for him to overcome the difficulties attending the studies of Languages, Philosophy and divinity, and requests me to help him in the said studies. I told him I was ready to give him every help in my powers, provided you would give him your approbation to this plan and recommend him, he being an utter stranger to me. His modest and pious deportment induced me to invite him to stay with me, until he should get a recommendation from you which I insisted upon as the first necessary step. He wrote to you accordingly but received no answer. He is uneasy on this score and at a loss what to do. Altho his conduct since he has been here has confirmed the good opinion I had of him, he must produce that recommendation since he has engaged with Mr. Jos. Smith and others to give it as a condition which myself I required before he should open a school for our Catholic children. I am glad he has determined to stay here. He appears to be a quiet, pious, orderly man, and will take off my shoulders some of the monstrous weight which I have to carry. As for his abilities, it is impossible for me to pronounce as yet, but no doubt his advanced age will render study harder for him.

James Moynihan remained with Father DuBois through the move to Emmitsburg. Almost immediately, he and Father DuBois gathered together a handful of students, young boys of the neighborhood, and began their school. This 1805 foundation was, in a rudimentary sense, both an academy that taught the basics of the humanities and a seminary with Father DuBois preparing James to enter Saint Mary’s Seminary in Baltimore, where he could complete his studies and be ordained. The physical set-up of this endeavor is not clear. It appears that James lived with Father DuBois in the log cabin, and that classes were held in another building, referred
to in several letters as “The Brick House.” The location of this latter building is unknown, but must have been nearby. It may have been the plantation house known as “Haylands,” which certainly was occupied by students for a time in 1809. Within 50 years, however, writers unanimously identify the first classroom building with a small cottage known as “Chinquapin” and refer to it as “The Cradle of Mount St. Mary’s.” Yet this cottage was not of brick, but of logs and stucco. Chinquapin, the cottage, was also certainly used as a school building by Father DuBois in 1807 and 1808, but there is no evidence to show that it was the 1805 schoolhouse.

In April of 1805, Father DuBois bought an additional parcel of land, apparently to build his school in a more permanent fashion. At the same time, he petitioned the Sulpicians of Baltimore to admit him as a member. For the moment, he was refused.

James Moynihan remained with Father DuBois for two and a half years, the almost forgotten first companion of the priest in the work of education. In 1807, with the permission of Bishop Carroll, James transferred, not to Saint Mary’s Seminary as he had hoped, but to Pigeon Hill, where he taught at the new minor seminary and continued his studies under Father Nagot. In less than a year, by a strange turn of events, he was back again with Father DuBois on the mountain. In the fall of 1807, Father DuBois again asked for admission into the Society of Saint Sulpice, and was again put off.

It was Father Nagot, as superior of the Sulpicians, who had twice rejected the petitions of Father DuBois. But a year later, in August of 1808, in view of the state of things at Pigeon Hill, the request was reconsidered. He delegated Father DuBourg, the president of Saint Mary’s College, to visit the site in Emmitsburg and evaluate the situation. While he was there, Father DuBois, with Father DuBourg’s permission, purchased additional lands, some 64 acres, adjoining the property purchased in 1805. It was decided that a new college would be built on the property to replace the floundering minor seminary at Pigeon Hill. In December of 1808, Father DuBois was finally received formally into the Society of Saint Sulpice. His first assignment was the presidency of Mount St. Mary’s Seminary.
**The Founding**

December 8, 1808, is generally accepted as the founding date of Mount St. Mary’s, coincident with the assumption of the presidency by Father DuBois. Some writers, however, date it from September 24, 1808, with the purchase, in the presence of Father DuBourg, of property for the institution. Father Brute, who joined Father DuBois in caring for Mount St. Mary’s, set the date of foundation as April 28, 1807, when Father DuBois purchased a smaller piece of property below the Church on the Hill, probably with the intent to build rather than rent a school building for the students taught until then by himself and Mr. Moynihan. Still others date the foundation from April 28, 1809, when the few students still left at Pigeon Hill transferred to the mountain. The most probable date is in late 1805, when Father DuBois and James Moynihan moved from Fredericktown to Emmitsburg and began their education of local children in the humanities, while Father DuBois continued his teaching of philosophy and theology to James. Whatever the correct date, it is certain that in 1858, with the celebration of the golden anniversary of the institution, 1808 became fixed in tradition as the founding date of Mount St. Mary’s College and Seminary.

The year 1809 was a complicated and busy year for Father DuBois. As soon as the weather permitted, he began clearing land below his little cabin near two abundant springs (later known as DuBois’ Spring and Duhamel’s Spring). He and Father DuBourg had decided that this was the ideal place to build the seminary. As soon as the land was cleared, construction began on a school building: a long, two-story log house that would contain classrooms and a library on the first floor and dormitories on the second. The refectory or dining room was to be on the basement level, with linen and work rooms in the attic. At the same time, next to this building, work began on a second log house to contain the kitchen, a dining room for hired help and the slaves on the first floor, and an infirmary and rooms for workmen on the second floor. Completion of these two buildings was projected for September of that year. In the meantime, Father DuBois continued to occupy his two-room log cabin, known as “The Cot,” and his few students were housed at Chinquapin.

In early April, Joseph Harent notified Father Nagot that he would be returning from France earlier than expected, and that he would need his lodgings at Pigeon Hill. Though nothing was ready at the mountain, the students had to be transferred there. Accommodations were hastily arranged for them in the neighborhood, and on April 26 the first two boys arrived, Daniel O’Connor and John FitzGerald. Two days later, on April 28, eight more arrived, along with two of their seminarian-teachers, James Moynihan and Roger Smith. By the end of the first year, there were 39 resident students and seven or eight day students. The tuition was set at 80 dollars per year, but few of the students could pay. The Sulpicians had given Father DuBois $3,000 to complete his construction. Much had to be used for other purposes that the superior of Saint Mary’s in Baltimore and his advisors insisted upon: barns, some small additional land purchases and the like. Thus, barely $500 was left for the seminary buildings, and Father DuBois found himself in serious debt.

Hardly had the students settled in, when news came from Baltimore that Mrs. Elizabeth Ann Seton was on her way to Emmitsburg with some companions who were forming a religious community. Along with her were her four daughters, two sons, sister-in-law and three young women intending to join the new society. Mrs. Seton had actually begun her foundation in Baltimore, but a wealthy sea captain who had decided to study for the priesthood, Samuel Cooper, had offered her substantial financial assistance if she would locate in Emmitsburg. Father DuBourg, who had brought her to Baltimore to begin a school for girls, agreed to this, and for this purpose property was secured near Father DuBois’ seminary. A stone house on the property was being readied for their arrival. When they came, however, it was still without windows or doors, and the only solution was for Father DuBois to move out of his log cabin and give it over to their use. They arrived on June 22 and remained in the “Cot” for six weeks.
Gradually things came into order. The sisters transferred to their new home in the valley, which was dedicated to Saint Joseph; the seminary buildings were ready for use; and more and more students sought admission into Mount St. Mary’s. From the very beginning, not all were intending to go on to the priesthood. The earliest class records that we have, those of 1811, indicate, for example, that Charles Allain “will be a merchant,” his brother “will be a man of company,” Solomon Arthur “will be a lawyer” and his brother William “will be a merchant.” Others, of course, were intending to be priests. George Elder was noted as having “a solid vocation.” He was ordained in 1819 and later founded Saint Joseph’s College in Bardstown, Ky.

Among the students were three young men, Charles, John and James Burke, who had arrived with their mother, Margaret Carey Murphy Burke, sometime in early 1809. Margaret became a significant part of the Mount’s history in its earliest years. She was born in Dublin about 1770 and apparently immigrated to Philadelphia with her first husband, Murphy, around 1794. After his death in 1798, she married an Irish sea captain named Burke, who in turn died about 1807. Her brother, Matthew Carey, a well-known political exile and publisher in Philadelphia in the late 1700s and early 1800s, kept up a steady correspondence with his sister. Her letters to him provide a great deal of information.

Margaret arrived with five of her children, the three boys mentioned above and two daughters, Teresa and Cecilia. According to her letters, Margaret was employed by Father DuBois as a sort of superintendent of the institution for the sum of $70 per year for her housekeeping duties. He also agreed to provide education for her three sons, to have two of her three daughters educated by Mrs. Seton in the valley and to transport her possessions, furniture, trunks and the like, from her former home to Emmitsburg.

Margaret’s first letters are full of praise for Father DuBois and his educational abilities with her sons. But the cost of transporting her goods turned out to be much more expensive than the founder had expected, and, since Margaret and her two daughters were living in one of the small log cabins belonging to the college, there was no room to store her trunks and furniture. The goods were outside in the weather, becoming seriously damaged, Father DuBois was unhappy over the cost of moving them to the mountain, and the two had a falling out reflected in the complete lack of praise for him in her letters after 1810. The three boys were living in the college, of course. Charles, who turned out to be not much of a student and ended up running away from the college, is on the books until 1813. John and James, both of whom were apparently good students, remained until August 1817. Of their later careers we know nothing. Her oldest daughter, Anna Maria Murphy, had joined Mother Seton earlier as one of her first sisters in Baltimore and died in Emmitsburg on October 15, 1812. Her two younger daughters, Teresa and Cecilia Burke, were educated by the sisters in Mother Seton’s school, but, again, of their later lives there is little information available.

It appears that after June 1810, following the rift between the founder and Mrs. Burke, she left the Mount and conducted her own school in town. Her letters to her brother during this period indicate that she was having serious financial difficulties, and that may be the reason why she moved after 1814 to Baltimore.

What Margaret’s position at the Mount was is not entirely clear. In a letter to her brother, dated May 22, 1810, she said, “I am here at present very comfortably and respectably established and have the entire management of all but the school. My word passes for law, Mr. D. is entirely biased (sic) by my judgment & all the inmates of the establishment behave to me in the most respectful manner. … For this year Mr. D. allows me 70 dollars with a solemn promise of doubling it next year if at the winding up of the year he finds his income here will allow it. …”

Apparently, at one point Father DuBois even considered having Mrs. Burke conduct a school for local children at the college. Writing to her brother on September 12, 1809, she noted that Father DuBois had spoken to her about open-
ing such a school, but she concluded that it would be too far from town over rugged roads to have much hope of success, and besides, “... in my opinion there is no comparison in the respectability of the two situations in prospect before me, that of the charge of the school or as superintendent of the Seminary. That last is, comparatively speaking, high life compared to the other.”

Margaret Burke, for a short two years at the very beginning of this institution, was clearly an important part of the establishment. How it is that she was entirely omitted from any of the earlier histories of the Mount is a matter of debate. But there she was, indeed, and clearly the first lady “administrator” of Mount St. Mary’s.

By September of 1810, there were 90 students. A seminarian, Mr. John Hickey, was sent from Baltimore to help Father DuBois. James Moynihan continued at the Mount until 1813, when he transferred to Baltimore and was finally ordained. Roger Smith, who had also come from Pigeon Hill, taught until 1812 and was ordained in Baltimore in 1815.

Until 1810, Father DuBois continued to care for the congregations of Barn’s Ville, Harper’s Ferry, Fredericktown and the two churches of Emmitsburg, Saint Joseph’s in town and the Church on the Hill. He also cared for Mother Seton’s small community, which after 1809 also included a boarding school for girls. These tasks, added to the responsibilities of a seminary that had immediately become, de facto, a college as well, were more than he could do. In 1810, Father Charles Duhamel, a Holy Ghost Father, came to be pastor at the college but was not on the faculty. Father Francis Maleve, a Jesuit, took up the Frederick circuit, which included Barn’s Ville and Harper’s Ferry. Father DuBois continued with the sisterhood, the Church on the Hill and the seminary-college. Even that was almost more than one person could be expected to do.

In June 1811, Father DuBois was officially appointed the superior of Mother Seton’s Sisters of Charity. In addition to providing the sacraments and counseling, he had direct responsibility for the quickly growing community. There were 101 students at the Mount by September of 1811. With only three teachers to help him, and many of the students unable to pay their tuition, Father DuBois was going into deeper and deeper debt. The various land purchases were partly owned by Father DuBois and partly owned by the Society of Saint Sulpice in Baltimore. To regularize matters, it was decided to transfer Father DuBois’ property to the Sulpicians, who would ultimately assume responsibility for it. This was done on September 18, 1811. The Sulpicians agreed to give Father DuBois $600 per year to help support him. Considering that Father DuBois was losing nearly $2,000 a year on tuition for seminarians alone, the money from Baltimore was not significant. In fact, it stopped coming shortly afterwards.

On October 14, 1811, Father Tessier, who had become the new superior of the Baltimore Sulpicians following Father Nagot’s term, agreed to a contract that would prove a serious problem to Father DuBois. Arnold Elder and his wife, Clotilda Phoebe Green, had offered to transfer their 226 acre plantation, which adjoined the college property, to the Sulpicians. In return, an annuity of $800 per year, plus other considerations amounting to an additional $200, the right to reside in the house and provision of two horses, two cows, pasture and wood for burning so long as husband and wife should live, was granted them. Father DuBois was very much against accepting this dubious bargain, but while he was away from the Mount on some business, Father Tessier sent Father DuBourg to sign the papers and finalize the arrangement. On his return, Father DuBois refused to give his signature to the transaction, but that was only a nicety in any case. The contract stood. Arnold Elder died very shortly afterwards, but his widow remarried, and, as Mrs. Brooke, lived until 1833, benefiting the whole time from Father Tessier’s ill-advised generosity. At first the Sulpicians in Baltimore agreed to pay $500 of the sum; but by 1813, Father DuBois was obliged to pay the whole amount. This obligation was to cause considerable friction between Father DuBois and Baltimore, and would nearly
bankrupt the college. For the whole time, Father DuBois and his community nonetheless treated Mrs. Brooke with the greatest kindness and concern, an admirable patience and charity to say the least.

With a lack of adequate teachers, and with serious financial problems, 1811 was a bleak year. During the summer of 1812, Father DuBois made a formal decision to set aside the Baltimore rule of accepting only Catholics and only seminarians, a rule that had, apparently, not been enforced from the beginning. The decision was a pragmatic one. Quite simply, the non-Catholic students were the paying students, and he needed the funds.

The following year was clouded by war with England, but brightened at the Mount by the arrival of one who would come to be known as the cofounder of Mount St. Mary’s and “The Angel Guardian of the Mountain,” Father Simon Gabriel Brute, an émigré from France as was Father DuBois.

**Father Brute**

Father Brute was born of wealthy parents in Rennes, France, on March 20, 1779. He first prepared himself for a career in medicine, having been graduated from the Medical School of the University of Paris with first honors in 1803. At that point, he decided, rather, to be a priest and entered Le Seminaire de Saint Sulpice in Paris. He was a brilliant student, and deeply spiritual. He was ordained in 1808 and became a Sulpician. Father Brute took a position on the faculty of theology at the diocesan seminary of Rennes, where, the following year, he met Bishop Flaget, a fellow Sulpician and bishop of the newly created diocese of Bardstown, Ky. Bishop Flaget asked Father Brute to come to America, and in 1810, he arrived in Baltimore.

From 1810 until 1812, Father Brute taught philosophy at Saint Mary’s Seminary in Baltimore and did missionary work on the eastern shore of Maryland while he tried to master English. Although he was able to minister in English, he never achieved the polish and elegance of Father DuBois, whom he met while in Baltimore. The two immediately became close friends. On May 7, 1812, Father DuBois wrote to Father Brute in Baltimore a charming letter in the style of the day, which expresses the bond that had grown between them:

> Just a few words, my dear little brother; not for lack of good will but for lack of time and because I do not wish to miss this opportunity. I just came from Vespers. At Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament we sang the hymn of our longing for heaven; videbimus, amabimus, laudabimus. Do keep on writing to me; it is my only consolation. This cannot displease our Good Master, since it draws me to him even more than to you. Continue to write to Saint Joseph’s. By doing so you will accomplish some good. I say this in order to reassure you, not to flatter your vanity. By the way, be on your guard against introversion, especially against whatever might be too affectionate, too personal, towards those to whom you write or about whom you speak, whenever there is danger that the heart may become too attached. But this apart, why should we too not love one another? As for yourself, you remind me of nothing else but God, whom I love together with you and through you. As for
myself, poor, miserable sinner, I have nothing but my wretchedness to draw you to me.

Their relationship over the years continued to flourish. Father DuBois, however, thought of Father Brute as something of a dreamer, albeit a saintly dreamer, and was careful not to give him responsibilities for administering the institution. On his side, Father Brute stood somewhat in awe of Father DuBois, and whenever he found reason to criticize, though living in a room right next to the president, he wrote him notes and even long letters rather than face him.

In August 1812, Father Brute was assigned to Mount St. Mary’s by Father Tessier, and Mr. Hickey, the seminarian who had been so helpful to Father DuBois, returned to Baltimore to complete his studies for the priesthood. Father Brute brought with him two seminarians who had sailed with him from France in 1810. The first of these, Anthony Deydier, who had been ordained a deacon but had decided not to continue his studies for the priesthood at that point, taught at the Mount for the next four years. The other seminarian, Julien Romeuf, was in poor health and came to the Mount for the sake of the good climate. It was too late for that to be of any good to the young man. He died at the Mount on August 4, 1813.

Mr. Hickey, while assisting Father DuBois at the Mount, must have been tutored privately in theology, as was, perhaps, Roger Smith. In 1812, there were other students acting as teachers who were also likely to have been studying theology. Archbishop Carroll (Baltimore was made an archdiocese in 1808) conferred tonsure on seven students at the Mount on October 12, 1812, and it would seem that they also would have been studying divinity, since admission to the clerical state was not usually conferred except upon major seminarians. There are no records extant from this period for major seminarians at the Mount, but it had been understood from the beginning that it was to be only a minor seminary. Father DuBois, perhaps in 1812, made a decision to keep some students on as major seminarians in order to help in teaching the younger students. This did not set well with the Sulpicians in Baltimore, who were absolutely opposed to the existence of a second major seminary in the archdiocese. Father DuBois and Father Tessier argued the case again and again, and until 1818, the Mount never referred to itself as a major seminary, though there were major seminarians studying there. The archbishops of Baltimore (Carroll until 1815, Neale until 1817 and then Marechal until 1828) tolerated the situation, perhaps even gave tacit permission, but it was only in 1818 that Archbishop Marechal gave formal permission to conduct a major seminary, and that was to be for just two years. Theologians were then expected to transfer to Baltimore for the last two years of their education. However, that restriction appears to have been lifted, and by 1823 seminarians were completing their work at the Mount and being ordained there. This retention of major seminarians to serve as teachers at Mount St. Mary’s caused serious conflict with Baltimore.

In 1812, and for two years thereafter, the enrollment of the college-seminary decreased because of the war with England and the depression that had settled over the United States. In 1812 there were just 64 resident students and 12 day students. In addition, the household included Fathers DuBois, Brute and Duhamel; Mr. Dussein, who managed the farms; seven “Masters,” i.e., the teaching seminarians, of whom only Moynihan was paid; 20 men and women who worked the farms and did domestic tasks under the direction of Henny Tompson, who barely had control of things; two orphans who were under the care of Lucy Tompson in the laundry; five young black children, slaves, who were still too young to do serious work; and three retired persons, Mrs. Brooke, of course, Henny Tompson’s mother and an old slave named Pompey, who was a great favorite of the students because he supplied the wayward with tobacco, a forbidden item at the Mount. Of the 20 adult workers, seven were slaves, either owned by the college or on loan from their masters as payment for the education of their owners’ children.

Despite the apparently haphazard nature of the institution, it was, in fact, far from that. Father DuBois was an excellent manager. In 1812, his total debts, which appeared so ominous to
Baltimore, were less than $8,000. In fairness, the Baltimore Sulpicians feared that debt because they would ultimately be responsible should the venture fail. They owned it, and they had a debt of their own in Baltimore of nearly $50,000. As far as the students were concerned, Father DuBois was a stern disciplinarian, but at the same time a pleasant friend who could argue over a game of marbles during recreation and thoroughly enjoy himself. When he arose from his knees, however, the game was over, and the serious business of schooling in the humanities was resumed in full force.

A Complete Education

The educational system was based on the system of France and included a seven-year course of studies leading to graduation for the lay students and to a four-year continuing course in theology for those intending to become priests. There were no degrees offered until after the charter of 1830 was granted by the state of Maryland. Students could enter at almost any age, some as young as seven, but the usual beginning age was nine or ten. Of course, there were older students at the beginning level as well, some even in their 30s.

The greater part of the year was spent in school. The only vacation ran from July to August 15, with many students staying on even for that brief hiatus. Christmas, Easter and other holidays were spent at the college. The majority of the students were residents, with the exception of a few day students who came from their nearby homes early each morning.

Only a small percentage of the students continued their studies through the full seven years, and most of these were continuing on to the priesthood. Students came and went, pursuing their studies to a level that their parents felt sufficient or could afford, or that the students themselves felt adequate. Once a year examinations were held, and those who succeeded were promoted to the next level, and so on through all seven levels. A student could be on several levels at once, or tables, as they were then called, depending upon his success or failure in the individual examinations. He could, for example, be taking first level Latin and fourth level English at the same time. In addition to the examinations, students were evaluated yearly, in writing, on their “writing, behavior, talents, judgement, memory, temper, manners, religion, health and application.”

According to the class records of those early years, the sequence of studies was as follows:

First Level: Spelling and Reading, Latin Grammar, Arithmatick (sic) and Geography

Second Level: Spelling and Reading, Latin Grammar, Arithmatick and Geography

Third Level: Spelling and Reading, Latin Grammar, Arithmatick and Geography

Fourth Level: English Grammar, Latin Grammar, Arithmatick and English Literature

Fifth Level: English Grammar, Latin Grammar, Arithmatick, English Literature, Greek

Sixth Level: English Grammar, Latin Literature, Arithmatick, Geometry, Elocution, Greek and Rhetorick

Seventh Level: English Grammar, Latin Literature, Arithmatick, Algebra, Elocution, Greek and Rhetorick

Some of these terms may be confusing because the matter studied was broader than the title indicates. Arithmatick, for example, included handwriting and bookkeeping, algebra, geometry and rational arithmetic. Geography included mensuration, surveying, map-drawing and plots. Rhetoric included poetry, moral philosophy and natural philosophy. English Literature also included composition. Students were able to take courses in Spanish, French, drawing and music
as they so chose. Of course, all were obligated to take “catechism” through the seven levels.

Troubled Times
By 1814, matters seemed to be going well. The number of students had increased to nearly 100 again; the debts were being held in check despite the fact that Father DuBois had had to start paying the full annuity to Mrs. Brooke in 1813; and the perpetual complaints from Baltimore about the teaching of theology and the admission of lay students seemed to be on the wane. Following his ordination in Baltimore, Father Hickey was reassigned to Mount St. Mary’s and took over as bookkeeper for the institution along with teaching duties, thus relieving Father DuBois of an immense burden. Although there were few luxuries of any sort, the basic needs were all met. Father DuBois’ major concern for the moment was the lack of an adequate library. Father Brute graciously offered to allow the Mount use of his personal library of some 1,500 volumes. It was, however, in France.

Father Brute had other reasons to return to France. He wished to visit his aging mother, and it was an opportunity to collect funds for the American missions. In addition, Mother Seton wished to send her oldest son, William, to apprentice with the Fillicchi Brothers, old family friends of hers in Leghorn in Italy. William had been a student at the Mount along with his brother, Richard. It was decided. Though it would be a journey of only six or seven months, the priest hated leaving the Mount, the sisterhood and the village of Emmitsburg; he had grown to love all three. As he was preparing for the journey, he was further saddened by word from the Sulpicians of Baltimore that he was recalled from the Mount and assigned to Saint Mary’s College in Baltimore.

Saint Mary’s College had flourished under its first two presidents, Father DuBourg and Pasquit, but suddenly, in 1814, it lost many of its students and new ones were not coming. Father Pasquit resigned and Father Brute was named president to succeed him. Neither Father Brute nor Father DuBois was happy about this situation, but there was little that either could do. Father Brute wrote to the superior general of the Sulpicians in Paris to request permission to make the journey to France anyway, prior to assuming the new post in Baltimore. He noted also to the superior general that Father DuBois
was overburdened in Emmitsburg. Though Saint Mary’s College in Baltimore was struggling to keep alive, Mount St. Mary’s was filled, nearly to capacity.

Father Brute took over as president of Saint Mary’s three days after his return from France. Records of his administration are few, but it appears that he was a good administrator. He also taught natural philosophy while there, and was much admired as a teacher. However, the number of students remained low, and Father Tessier, as superior of the Sulpicians, and therefore of both Father Brute and Father DuBois, looked upon the situation with great fear for the future. His advisors, somewhat panicked by the large debt in Baltimore and the lack of students, urged him to take some serious action. Accordingly, in early January of 1816, Father Tessier and his council of three other Sulpicians passed several resolutions on the matter and sent them on to Father DuBois.

The resolutions were shocking to Father DuBois. The Mount was to be reduced to a minor seminary only. All theologians would return immediately to Baltimore. The teaching of college students was forbidden and lay students could be trained only to receive their first communion and no more. It was the ruination of Mount St. Mary’s. Who would teach the minor seminarians if the theologians left? How would the debt be paid off with no lay students, since most of the seminarians were from poor families and unable to pay for their studies? What made the gentlemen of Baltimore think that the collegians dismissed from the Mount would go to Saint Mary’s College in Baltimore? Indeed, they had chosen the Mount, or their parents had, because of its tranquil location, because it cost less than half the tuition of either Saint Mary’s College or Georgetown College, and, frankly, because Father DuBois had an excellent reputation as an educator. The gentlemen of Baltimore would destroy a flourishing institution in the vain hope of bolstering a failing one. On January 18, 1816, Father DuBois threw up his hands in despair and resigned his office of president effective the following September.

Another of the complaints of the Sulpicians was that Father DuBois, after years of struggling with inefficient workers under the not-so-capable hands of Henny Tompson, had, in 1815, brought in the Sisters of Charity to run the infirmary, kitchen and laundry of the college. They were housed on the very premises, in the attic of the kitchen house, as a matter of fact. Father DuBois made every arrangement for the sisters to have little or no contact with the students, and it was all quite proper in his eyes and in the eyes of Mother Seton. Nonetheless, he was told to remove them from the Mount. Without their dedicated help and supportive presence, all would be chaos.

Father DuBois’ resignation was not accepted. For two years he argued and pleaded his case with the Sulpicians in Baltimore and with the superior in Paris. In fact, it became a stalling tactic: the collegians, major seminarian-teachers and sisters remained at the Mount awaiting a final resolution of the matter.

In February 1818, Father Duhamel died after a short illness. Father DuBois was distraught at the loss of a dear friend. The full burden of caring for the Emmutburg parish again fell on his shoulders. He turned to his dearest friend, Father Brute, and convinced him to resign the presidency of Saint Mary’s College and return to the mountain. For some time Father Brute debated with himself, but once decided, he was unalterable. He resigned the presidency and announced his intent to return to Father DuBois’ institution. Father Tessier concluded that any arguments would be to no avail and reluctantly gave his permission.

What a joy to have Father Brute back again. Father DuBois must have felt that all would be well again. After all, his brother Sulpicians had given him Father Brute as a helpmate again. Good will and good sense would certainly prevail.

He had not reckoned with the stubbornness of the council members advising Father Tessier. In May of 1818, a hasty decision was made in Baltimore to suppress Mount St. Mary’s. A special messenger was sent to bring the news to
Father DuBois. It seemed better to get it over with quickly, rather than sending the news by mail.

The messenger was followed by a letter, received on May 28, from Father Tessier, formalizing the decision. Father DuBois was quick to respond:

I was grieved this morning on receiving your letter of the 28th of this month, to see a man of your prudence and charity led by impetuous advisors into measures so in opposition to your character. It seems that since they have made you pronounce the interdict of this poor seminary, they are afraid that we will get out of it and are in haste to make you deliver the coup de grâce. I will never stop talking about the indecency of such haste, about the folly of making the pronouncement about the finances of which you say that you know nothing, about the impossibility of continuing this doomed establishment about whose resources you know nothing, while your three confrères, who are your advisors, tell you unanimously that they think otherwise.

…You satisfy yourself by sending me the sentence of death pronounced by your wise sanhedrin. Was it necessary to send a special messenger, at the cost of $3.00 per day? The postal service was not fast enough to suit you to carry the distressing news to your brothers?

Father DuBois made it clear to Father Tessier that he had not the right to remove him from office, that only the superior in Paris could do so. He had written to Father Garnier, the superior general, and placed the affair before him. Furthermore, he had written to Archbishop Marechal, the new archbishop of Baltimore, and laid the case before him as well.

The reply from Archbishop Marechal was simple and direct. Mount St. Mary’s could and should remain open, provided Father DuBois could provide surety to Baltimore for the unpaid debts. The reply from Paris was equally reassuring. The Baltimore Sulpicians were relieved of jurisdiction of any sort over Mount St. Mary’s; instead the Mount would come directly under the jurisdiction of the superior general and his council in Paris. Fathers Joubert, Damphoux and Babade, Father Tessier’s advisors on the suppression, refused to believe the reprieve granted, and wrote disturbing letters to Father Brute indicating that the surety would never be provided and that the suppression would indeed take effect.

Father Brute went personally to Baltimore to attempt reconciliation, but to no avail. Writing later to Father Babade, he said, “The intentions doubtless are very good. They will go with each one of us to our eternity, but how much evil is done, and will be done in this world, with good intentions.”

Archbishop Marechal, unhappy over the open dissent between two important institutions in his own archdiocese, consulted with the Sulpician superior general to find a solution. After much deliberation and agony for all concerned, it was decided to transfer all of the property of the Mount from the ownership of the Sulpicians in Baltimore to the ownership of Father DuBois, who would hold it for the Society of Saint Sulpice and make a will deeding it to them upon his death. It was acceptable to Father DuBois, though looked upon with suspicion by his Baltimore confrères. The properties were sold to Father DuBois on November 3, 1819, for a sum of $8,000. Now, with even greater debts, but also with greater determination, Father DuBois plunged into the work of directing his seminary-college. He was hard pressed for the moment because, in the midst of the dispute, in June 1818, Father Tessier had summarily recalled Father Hickey to Baltimore, not so much as leaving him time to bring his books up to date. Father DuBois had protested this, and pointed out that the superior in Baltimore had no right to recall him. But the tender conscience of Father Hickey would not allow him to disobey the order of Father Tessier, though its legitimacy was in doubt. Father DuBois was forced to add the task of bookkeeping to his many other duties.

Fortunately, Father Brute was of great help to Father DuBois, alternately assuming the care of the parish in Emmitsburg and the Church on the Hill. In August 1818, Father Brute was appointed chaplain to the Sisters of Charity as
well, a charge that brought great satisfaction to both him and Mother Seton, who held each other in high esteem.

During the upheaval, the number of students at the Mount had again declined, perhaps due to the uncertainty for the future. Unfortunately, the dispute between the Gentlemen of Baltimore and Father DuBois was well known publicly, and certainly some were hesitant to commit their children to an institution that appeared to be in very shaky condition. Not until 1822 did the Mount’s student population again climb to more than 100.

In 1821, Father Hickey returned to the college. He had become quite ill and returned only to recuperate. It was a slow process; more than a year passed before he could pick up his work at the Mount again. Father DuBois took great care of him as one of the treasures of the Mount.

Father DuBois had reason to do so. On January 4, 1821, he had lost his close friend, Mother Seton. She had died at Saint Joseph’s in the midst of her sisters, and Father DuBois felt a loss that he could not express. They had labored together to consolidate the sisterhood, to lay the foundations for her institution, and to insure the future of their good works. They had toiled together in education and in religion. They had suffered blows together and had consoled one another in the day-to-day difficulties of their labors. With her death, Father DuBois felt an emptiness that would never again be filled.

The Future Brightens

By 1822, the number of students at the Mount had risen significantly, though the institution had not advertised save by word of mouth. Father DuBois realized the need for a more permanent structure and began to make plans and gather funds for it. Until that time, the only stone building on the campus was the spring-house and bakery, which had been constructed in 1810. It still survives on the campus, enlarged and remodeled as Barrett Art Studios, having served as a chapel and as a science building at different times in its history.

If Father DuBois was to commit himself to the construction of a permanent and costly building, he also needed to be assured that he would have major seminarians as teachers, or “Masters,” as he preferred to call them. He wrote to Archbishop Marechal and placed the matter before him. Not without hesitation, the archbishop recognized the problem, and on February 15, 1823, he wrote to Father DuBois giving permission for philosophy and theology to be taught on the condition that seminarians from dioceses other than his own be the only ones allowed to complete their studies at Mount St. Mary’s. His own were obliged to do their whole course at Saint Mary’s in Baltimore, with a few exceptions made for teachers, who could do two years of their work at the Mount, then transfer to Saint Mary’s and complete their work there to be ordained in Baltimore.

Until 1822, there was no comprehensive listing of Catholic foundations in the United States available. To fill that need, William H. Creagh published the first volume of the Laity’s Directory to Church Service in New York in that year. For the first time a complete description of Mount St. Mary’s came before the public. It is so complete a presentation that it deserves to be reprinted here in full:

Mount St. Mary’s Seminary
Near Emmetsburg (sic), Frederick County, State of Maryland.
Rev. Mr. Dubois, Principal

This Establishment was founded in the year 1809. It was first intended only as an Ecclesiastical Seminary. Its situation, remote from the vices and dissipation of cities, appeared best calculated to train up in morality and virtue the youth, destined to become one day patterns of it, and apostles of religion. The healthy and pleasing prospect which extends around as far as the eye can behold; an excellent spring of the purest water which issues out of the rock, and supplies all the houses and gardens; extensive pleasure grounds; all the local and moral advantages it possesses induced many parents to solicit admission for their children although not destined for the ministry. Their request was granted more readily, as, besides training up many children to virtue and science, it afforded a use-
ful employment to young ecclesiastics, who, whilst they were pursuing higher studies, devoted a part of their time to teaching inferior classes; relieved the institution and themselves of the expense of their education, and supplied the seminary with able masters, whose very calling was a pledge of their moral, religious and modest conduct, and who thereby made an apprenticeship in the art of governing, so necessary for future pastors. This attempt succeeded the most sanguine expectations of the undertakers, and so constant has been the public patronage towards it, that it has been thought unnecessary to insert any advertisement concerning it in the public papers; hence it became known only within a small circle of friends, until lately, when it gradually drew the attentions of the eastern, western and middle states of the West Indies, and South America, whence pupils are sent to it.

This Seminary is situated at the foot of a branch of the Blue Ridge Mountains, in a most healthy and romantic part of the country, two miles from the town of Emitsburg (sic), in Frederick County, state of Maryland, about fifty miles from Baltimore, and nearly the same distance from the seat of government. It has extensive courts, terraces planted with trees, well cultivated gardens, and a farm from which the tables are abundantly supplied. The buildings, some of which are only temporary, consist in a log-house for the students, one hundred and twenty feet long and two stories high, a stone house for washing and baking, three stories high, ninety feet by forty.

The number of students amounts now to eighty; that of the tutors, who are all young men intended for ministry, amounts to twenty-two, besides three clergyman.

The care of the small children, and the health of all the pupils, is under the superintendence of the sisters of charity, who have themselves an establishment within two miles of the seminary. Some of those ladies, who have devoted themselves by annual vows to all works of charity, preside over every department which can interest the health, the cleanliness and welfare of the children, as well as the interior economy of the house.

The parish church is erected on the ground of the seminary, on the declivity of the mountain. A fine organ and choir, and the number of attending ecclesiastics, added to the neatness of the church itself, and of its ornaments, give to the divine service a solemnity seldom to be obtained anywhere else.

The system of education embraces-

The Greek, Latin, English, French, and, for such as wish it, the Spanish languages; it is also contemplated to add the German, when the local situation will permit it.

Geography and the Mathematics in general, with practical applications of the principles of Mensuration, Surveying, Drawing, Maps and Plots.

Poetry, Rhetoric, and Moral Philosophy. Natural Philosophy is not taught for want of apparatus, which the present building will not, as yet, permit to be introduced.

Great care is taken to inculcate the Rules of Grammar and Syntax in every language, especially of the English; and the parents are at full liberty to designate or except any language and a particular regard is paid to the intended destination of each youth; although the learning of Latin is generally recommended to those who are to remain a few years, as perfectly compatible with their other studies, and best calculated to promote their education.

Arithmetic, Writing and Book-keeping, are particularly attended to, for those who are not to receive a classical education, and are intended for commerce.

Nothing is omitted to promote in every student a spirit of emulation.

The Seminary is under the government of a President, and Vice-President, and twenty-two Professors, Prefects and Assistant Tutors.

The government is mild and paternal, but the discipline is strict and regular; the greatest regard is enforced for decency, propriety and morality; and no child is permitted to go abroad, unless attended by at least one of their tutors, except parents themselves send for them.
The Catholic religion alone is professed, without excluding those who should profess another, but attendance to the divine service and accustomed exercises can by no means be dispensed with, a rule which the good order of the house requires.

No uniform is required for the students, who may be supplied with clothing, by or at the will of the parents; but blue cloth coats for the winter, and nankeen, or home-made striped cotton for the summer are generally recommended for them; as the greatest simplicity, and the strictest economy, are observed by the seminary, and requested of the parents.

The terms are:

For Boarding and Tuition (to be paid half yearly in advance) including washing and mending, per annum

$135.00

Extra charge for French (if learned by the student)

10.00

Extra charge for pens, ink, mending materials, &c, &c

4.56

Use of bed and bedding (unless furnished by parents, who will then be at liberty to take the same away when the child leaves the seminary)

8.00

Annual doctor’s fees (unless the parent’s prefer to run the risk of a bill in case of sickness)

3.00

Pocket money, at the option of the parents, 12 cents per week.

The prices of stationery, books and clothing, cannot be specified, as they respectively depend upon the age, class and wearing of the child; all that can be said, that the strictest economy and simplicity are observed. Medicines are furnished at the apothecaries’ rate.

Parents who would prefer to pay by the whole, may do it with $225—to be paid half yearly in advance (not including the doctor’s annual fees and pocket money, which, for particular reasons, are excepted.)

Students must be supplied at entrance with 4 Summer suits, if they come in the spring; Three winter suits, if they come in fall—1 of the said suits, at least, must be new for Sundays, the others sufficient to last for the season. They must also have 6 shirts, 6 pair of stockings, 6 cravats (if they wear any), 6 pocket handkerchiefs, 6 towels, 1 tooth brush, 1 coarse and fine comb. If parents prefer to furnish the bed and bedding, they must bring a mattress, a pillow, 2 pillow-cases, 2 pair of sheets, 4 blankets, and buy at the seminary one of the cots, which, for cleanliness sake, are made on a particular construction.

Bills of expenditure are forwarded at the close of every six months, either to the parents or guardians, if they live in any of the neighbouring states, or to their correspondents, who must be appointed by the parents within those states, if they live in the eastern or western states or in foreign countries. His correspondent must be personally answerable for the regular payment of the expenses of a child, and bound to receive him in case it became necessary to dismiss him from the seminary.

Every four months, or thereabouts, a printed bulletin is sent to the parents, stating every thing which can interest them respecting the improvement, application, talents, morals, temper and behaviour of their child.

The vacations commence on the first of July, and end on the fifteenth of August, exclusively, when all the students must have returned to the seminary; a rule which cannot be neglected by parents without doing much injury to the improvement of their children.

Should any of the children be withdrawn from the seminary before the expiration of any one quarter, no deduction can be made for that quarter, unless withdrawn on account of sickness, nor can any be made for the vacation, during which parents are at liberty to leave the children at the seminary, or call them home.

The Mount on Its Own
This was the first public announcement of the existence of Mount St. Mary’s, and the result was a significant increase in students the following year, 1823. That year also witnessed continuing problems with the Sulpicians of Baltimore. Even though all connections between Baltimore and Emmitsburg had been severed, with the Mount coming directly under Paris, the council in Baltimore began writing to Paris, and little by little convinced the superior general that the rule of Saint Sulpice was being violated by the existence of two major seminaries in the same diocese. Father DuBois and Father Brute both resisted any suggestion that the Mount should give up its major seminary, but in the end, Paris gave in to Baltimore and ordered DuBois, once again, to give up the college and major seminary and reduce his institution to a minor seminary.

Recognizing that he could not give up the college, since it supported the institution financially, and that he could not give up his major seminary because it provided him with teachers, he drew the only conclusion possible: he would have to sever relations with the Society of Saint Sulpice entirely. He wrote to Father Tessier in Baltimore on Christmas Day of 1824 that, since it was a “sine qua non” that he close the college and major seminary if he wished to remain a Sulpician, and that he could not close them without in fact also being forced to close the minor seminary as well, and see the whole institution in ruins, then he was “ex facto” no longer a Sulpician. This decision rested in Father DuBois’ belief that the directive was impossible unless Baltimore was willing to provide financial support and teachers for the minor seminary, which was precisely what Baltimore was unwilling to do! Father DuBois could only lay the clear logic of it all before the superior general and his council in Paris and let them decide it. In any case, he insisted that he would not continue as president of a minor seminary that would assuredly collapse; he offered his resignation effective immediately if Paris should decide to reduce the Mount to a minor seminary.

Everyone was in quandary. Father DuBois had a directive that he could not obey in conscience. The Baltimore Sulpicians felt in conscience that they could not staff two major seminaries in the same diocese. The superior general and his council saw the justice on both sides and the damage that would be done however they should decide. Archbishop Marechal prudently kept his silence.

Father Brute’s mother had died in France in the spring of 1823, and he wished to return home to settle family affairs and, if possible, to gather funds for Mount St. Mary’s. Shortly before leaving on his trip, in March of 1824, he wrote to his brother, Augustine, that there were 14 theologians and five students of philosophy in the major seminary, along with 78 collegians. That total of 97 was a drop from 1823, when there had been 105 students, and may have reflected the dilemma in which Father DuBois found himself.

That Father DuBois had no intention of conceding in this struggle is evidenced by the great disaster that befell him that same year. Construction on the new building had gone forward, and on June 6, 1824, only a few last touches had to be made. Some rooms were already in use, and the science instruments had been moved into a second-floor room. Up in the attic, under a graceful cupola that topped the handsome three-story building in Georgian style, a pile of rags and sawdust had been left by workmen. Shortly after midnight, the cry went out that the new building was on fire. Flames were already curling around the cupola while professors and students carried books, furniture, lab equipment, whatever they could, from the floors below. There was no system to force water up to that height, and carrying water in buckets quickly proved useless. Father DuBois and his community could only watch helplessly as the building burned into total ruin. Father DuBois could only say, “The Lord gives and the Lord takes away.” There was not a penny of insurance to cover the loss.

The next day his students laid on his desk a touching letter of condolence and encouragement. It was drafted by two students, John McGerry and Michael Egan, who would in the future be no less than presidents of the institution, but for the moment they were grieving and affectionate children. “Receive … respected
President,” the letter ended, “the sincerest feelings of us all—be assured that we will not be wanting in anything that may be beneficial to our beloved institution. We love her more in her calamity than in her prosperity, we feel still more attached to her in her ruins, than in the proudest hours of her magnificence; and present you this artless effusion of our feelings as a pledge of attachment, an assurance of esteem, a mark of the tenderest sympathy and the most unaffected condolence.” It was signed by every student of the school.

Father DuBois’ reply was to tell them that he thought he had made a mistake when he placed the new building on the slope above the upper terrace, and that he would rebuild below the old site. He immediately measured out the position on the ground and began arrangements for soliciting funds to replace the loss. The people of Emmitsburg were particularly generous to Father DuBois, as were friends throughout the surrounding settlements. The major seminarians went from place to place, asking for financial help. Father DuBois asked Father Tessier for letters of recommendation that he might present in Canada, where he intended to go to seek help. In fact, he never made the trip, but his determination to rebuild was absolute, even in the face of the impending decision from Paris.

The cause of the fire was never clearly established. It was rumored that it was set by a workman who would have been without a job once the building was complete, and later rumors had it that some such workman had confessed on his deathbed. The truth of the matter is probably that the oily rags and sawdust under the cupola caused a spontaneous combustion that destroyed the building. For fear of arson, however, the students were given permission to stand guard at night. For several years it was the custom at the Mount to awaken students in the morning by the sounds of the student guards emptying their guns in the most convenient manner—shooting them off—for Father DuBois would not allow a loaded gun inside the building.

The structure was rebuilt on a somewhat larger scale than the first, to finally open on December 16, 1827. Fortunately, the furniture and equipment had been saved from the earlier building and were stored in hopes that the new structure could be realized. It would be a great feeling to have as much space as the planned new structure would provide. There were serious struggles ahead to complete that plan, but at least the
onerous debt was growing rather than diminishing.

The care of the Sisters of Charity in the infirmary, the kitchens and dining rooms, and in overseeing the domestics, gave everything direction and order. Except for the large debt, all was in place.

Then in August of 1826, word came to Father DuBois that he had been named bishop of New York. He immediately realized that the financially burdened college had to find some security before he left. Several possible solutions were proposed by him and others. The first order of preference was to hand the whole thing over to the Sulpicians. After all that had happened, and in view of the large indebtedness, they refused. The Jesuits were asked to take over the Mount, but they too declined. There was some consideration given to placing the college in the care of the Sisters of Charity; this seemed an unlikely solution. Some consideration was also given to forming the priests of the college into a religious congregation that would insure continuity by accepting new members, brothers as well as priests. This latter proposal was deliberated several times in the years that followed, but never materialized. Someone, unknown to us, suggested that the college be sold to a group of non-Catholic laymen who wanted to begin a military school, but Father DuBois, in a letter to Father Tessier in Baltimore, lambasted that as a completely foolish notion.

As the day drew near for Father DuBois to leave his beloved Mount, it was finally decided that he would deed the property over to two young priests of his faculty, Father Egan and Father McGerry, the latter of whom had just recently become pastor of Saint Peter’s Parish in Washington. Father Brute understood that he would be a third party to this arrangement, not as a holder of deed, but as a member of a kind of council that would govern the institution. In short order, however, Fathers Egan and McGerry gently informed him that he was mistaken, and that they alone were in charge. There was no apparent animosity, but Father Brute felt that he had been somewhat unjustly passed over.

Father Egan assumed the presidency and Father McGerry the vice-presidency, while Father Brute retained the position of superior of the seminarians.

On October 6, 1826, Father John DuBois, after 21 years of labor at the Mount, left quietly for Baltimore to make his retreat before being consecrated bishop on October 29. He took with him only a couple hundred dollars to pay his expenses until he should arrive in New York, and a few personal items. All else he left behind as the saddened community bade farewell to its founder and father.

An era had come to an end. The foundations were laid, and if the structure was shaky, it was nonetheless much loved, and the faculty and students left behind were determined that the founder’s work would not fall. It would take the work of a saint to accomplish the next steps in Father DuBois’ enterprise. As his carriage pulled away from the assembled community, in the shadows of the great trees the small figure of Michael DeBurgo Egan continued to wave until the last dust of the carriage had settled. Now it was on his shoulders, and neither he nor the growing family of the Mount knew yet what a crucifixion it would be for him. The “Little President,” as he came to be known, turned to the ruins of DuBois’ dream and determined that it would rise again from ashes and stand a monument to the hopes of that first mountain family.
older log buildings were still retained, having been saved from the fire by students carrying buckets of water up to the roofs to wet blankets used to extinguish flying sparks.

In March of the following year, the college had 127 students, more than it had ever had. All departments were flourishing. There were more seminarians at the Mount than in Baltimore. Father Brute no longer acted as pastor in Emmitsburg and was giving his full time to the seminarians as their superior. He continued to act as chaplain to the Sisters of Charity, but no other obligations kept him from the task of forming the future priests of his adopted country. On March 20, word finally came from Paris to Father DuBois. The Society of Saint Sulpice abdosed itself of all jurisdiction over Mount St. Mary’s as well as over any members of the society who intended to remain at the institution. Thus Fathers DuBois and Brute ceased to be Sulpicians, as well as the young priest, Father Honoratius Xaupi, who was then teaching at Saint Mary’s but had informed Father DuBois of his intention to transfer to the Mount. He came to the mountain the following autumn, and, except for two or three years during which he apparently worked in the missions, he remained on the faculty until his death in 1869.

Now all obligations were Father DuBois’, and Archbishop Marechal gave him leave to conduct his college as he saw fit. Permission was still not formally given to conduct a major seminary, but rather it was simply allowed without any permanent decision from the archbishop of Baltimore. Father DuBois and his successor presidents of Mount St. Mary’s petitioned for a formal installation of the Mount as a major seminary almost every year, but it was only in 1884, after deliberation by the American bishops during the third Plenary Council of Baltimore, that the Mount was finally established on a permanent basis as a recognized major seminary.

If Father DuBois had any misgivings about his separation from the Society of Saint Sulpice, he never mentioned them. Father Brute, however, felt the separation keenly, and until his departure from the mountain, some 10 years later, he was still hoping for a reconciliation and a return of Mount St. Mary’s to the family of Saint Sulpice.

The financial problems were serious. Despite the good management of Father DuBois, there was a debt of $30,000. The president felt confident that it could be overcome in time, but he was already 62 and the cares of age were showing. His faculty now included six priests: Father Brute, who was vice-president and superior of the seminarians, Father John Hickey, who also acted as pastor in Emmitsburg, Father Michael DeBurgo Egan, Father John McGerry and Father Charles Constantine Pise, the first Catholic chaplain to the national Senate and a well-known writer. There was also Father Patrick Duffy, who left shortly after this and was replaced by Father Honoratius Xaupi. There was just one layman on the faculty, Mr. Cornelius Moynihan, unrelated apparently to Father James Moynihan, who had been Father DuBois’ first teaching companion.

The Cradle of Bishops

Among the seminarians who acted as teachers for the college were some of the best known names in Catholic history in America. In those early years, they included: John McClosky, later founder of the diocese of Albany and, after becoming archbishop of New York, the first American cardinal; John Hughes, the first archbishop of New York; John Purcell, later president of Mount St. Mary’s and then first archbishop of Cincinnati; William Quarter, first bishop of Chicago; George Carroll, first bishop of Covington; Richard Whelan, first bishop of Wheeling; Francis Gartland, first bishop of Savannah; and no less than five other future presidents of the Mount: Fathers Egan, McGerry, Jamison, Butler and McCaffrey. Probably at no other time had any institution included so many distinguished individuals on its faculty all at once.

There was a large student body of bright, loyal young men, but many of them could pay only part of their tuition, if anything at all, and the
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