

1897-1922

Our story actually begins in Italy on September 4, 1883.

THE DREAM

In the presence of the General Council of the Salesians Society, Father John Bosco, related a dream. The account of his dream was recorded by member of the General Council. He described the future Salesian work in South America, constructed the future capital of Brazil (Brazilia) in meticulous detail, and ended by predicting that the Salesians would someday go to Boston. "But when will we go to Boston?" the listeners asked. "Everything in good time" Came the cryptic answer.



In future years little attention was given to this reference to Boston. In 1884 Cardinal McCloskey of New York and the American bishops in their plenary session at Baltimore appealed to Don Bosco to send Salesians to America. Despite the growing need for Italian speaking priests among the immigrants, Don Bosco reluctantly refused. He simply had no men to send.

THE NEED FOR ITALIAN SPEAKING PRIEST

One has only to understand the condition of the Italian immigrants in America in order to appreciate the bishops' need for foreign priests. In 1880 there were only 44, 250 Italian-born persons in America. By 1900 there were 484,027, and in the first decade of the 20th century 2,104,309 Italians came to the United States. They brought with them a strong sense of national pride and the anticlericalism which dominated much of the 19th century Europe.

The predominately Irish clergy in America were unable to cope with what they called "the Italian problem." Church attendance among Italians was very poor, schooling for the children was neglected, and crime and immorality were increasing. Most of the immigrants spoke no English. They gathered together in ghettos for protection. Obviously this isolation them from church and from the rest of American society could do them no good. Something had to be done.

POPE LEO XIII APPEALS

In 1896, Pope Leo XIII himself appealed again to Don Bosco in the person of Don Bosco's first successor, Father Michael Rua. Shortly thereafter, requests poured in from New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco. San Francisco was of particular interest and won for that city the first Salesian foundation in the United States.

Little did Archbishop Riordan of San Francisco realize that Don Bosco had vaguely foreseen his request back in 1860! At that time seventeen year-old Joseph Sasia went to Don Bosco and asked to become a Salesian. "No," came the answer. "But you will join another religious order and someday be of great help to this society." Sasia joined the Turin province of the Society of Jesus in 1866 and was sent to their mission in California. There, he became a good friend of the future archbishop and remained until his

appointment as the Jesuit provincial of Turin in 1893. Sometime after, Archbishop Riordan wrote to Sasia asking him to send Italian speaking priests to San Francisco. Sasia in turn remembered Don Bosco's promise that he would help the Salesians. He contacted Father Rua, and by June 1896, arrangements were being made for the first Salesians to arrive in San Francisco.

In a letter to Father Rua, dated August 11, 1896, Archbishop Riordan welcomed the Salesians to San Francisco. He promised to provide them with church and lodging; he offered to pay their expenses; and in order to prevent "troubles and displeasure" he insisted that they confine their work exclusively to the Italian population.

BEGININGS IN SAN FRANCISCO

THE FIRST GROUP OF MISSIONARIES



The first Salesians to come to America.

Standing: Brother Joseph Oreni & Brother Nick Imielinski

Seated: Fr. Raphael Piperni, Fr. Valentine Cassini

Seated Center: Blessed Michael Rua, Rector Major of the Salesians at the time they came to America.

On March 11, 1897, the first group of Salesian "missionaries" arrived to take over the little church of Saints Peter and Paul at 1100 Dupont Street, San Francisco. Their leader was Father Raphael Piperni, who had joined the Salesians while working in the Holy Land and who later worked in Mexico. He was accompanied by Father Valentine Cassini from Argentina, Brother Nicholas Imielinski of Poland, and the seminarian Brother Joseph Oreni- the First Salesian to be ordained to the priesthood in the United States.

FIRST FOUNDATIONS: TOUGH BEGINNINGS

When the salesians arrived at Saints Peter and Paul Church, there was no one there to meet them. The former pastors, Father Franchi and DeCarolis, had given up the parish as impossible. Lewd newspapers had been tacked on the door of the Church, and anticlerical hecklers jeered at the priests as they walked through town. The church was avoided by the very people it meant to serve.

Beginnings were slow, of course, but there was hope. Father Piperni was a persuasive speaker and had an affable personality. Those who would not come to church to pray began coming just to hear the orator who spoke eloquently in their native tongue.

Brother Imielinski, or Brother Nick as he was called for many years, led the group in



restoring the beautiful things of the church. He washed and painted the walls, added a sidewalk along the outside, and repaired the furnishings until it was once again clean and comfortable. Fifty years later, as the parishioners looked back on their first meetings with the twenty-one year old brother who moved among them, visiting their homes and meeting them in the church, they recalled that he was “ever faithfully present...silently, devoutly, and unassumingly spending himself in his labor of love.”

Under the guidance of Father Piperni, Brother Oreni and Father Cassini opened catechism classes for the children and kept them busy at other times with games and hobbies.

By Easter of 1889 Father Piperni’s group had attracted more work than they could handle. Six hundred children crowded around the church for religious instruction, and adults from as far away as the Mission District were pleading for the services of Salesian priests. In addition, the debt which hung over the church when they took possession had now increased to a disturbing \$9650.

TRUST IN DIVINE PROVIDENCE



Fr. Piperni

To resolve the problems, Father Piperni took two steps.

First, at the cost of \$7227, he hired a certain Mr. Shea to design and construct a mission church at the corner of Croke Street (now Santa Rosa Avenue) and Alemany Boulevard. The church, which towered over the surrounding vegetable gardens and truck farms that dotted the area, was blessed by Archbishop Riordan on Sunday, June 19, 1898.

Secondly, Father Piperni dispatched an urgent plea to Father Rua in Turin for an English speaking priest to assist in the work. When Father Bernard Redahan arrived in the early spring, he began Americanization classes for the immigrants, and English classes for the working people. He helped to straighten out passport problems and prepared many of the Italians for citizenship. For the children, he invited the Sisters of the Holy Family to help him with catechism lessons and soon found that he had 2000 pupils to teach.

THE NEED FOR PORTUGUESE PRIESTS

Four years after the start of Salesian work in San Francisco, Archbishop Riordan again appealed to Father Rua, this time to find help for the Portuguese of Oakland. Many of these Catholic people came to California as emigrants from Hawaiian Islands. Other thousands were enticed by the 1849 Gold Rush. They had established themselves as fishermen off the California coast, but when at home most of them remained (like the Italians) in national colonies with little access to religion or education.

Under the leadership of Father Bergeretti, an old friend and companion of Father Piperni, three Salesians came from Europe to take over Saint Joseph’s National Portuguese Church of Oakland. They were well prepared for the job: one spoke fluent English, another fluent Portuguese, and all spoke Italian. Soon their parish was frequented not only by Portuguese but also by the Italians of the East Bay Area and by the many Mexicans of the region.

By 1915, the hundredth anniversary of their founder's birthday, the Salesians of Oakland felt the need to begin again. A second Portuguese church was built and named after Mary, Help of Christians.

BEGINNINGS IN NEW YORK

In New York, Archbishop Michael A. Corrigan had repeatedly written to Don Bosco and Father Rua, asking them to assist the city's 200,000 Italian immigrants. In April of 1898 he pleaded, "Alas! Must all the Italians lose their faith!" and signed himself, "A Salesian Cooperator." When a favorable answer to his many requests finally came, he wrote to Father Rua: "Everything has been arranged to accommodate the Salesian Fathers and to meet them at the port. For a while the situation will be precarious, but later it will be definitely systematized. I am very happy that the heirs of the zeal and the spirit of Don Bosco will begin their great work in my diocese."

The Salesians Arrive in NY

On November 12 an expedition of three Salesians- Father Ernest Coppo, Father Marcellino Scaglioli, and Brother Faustino Squassoni- set out from Turin for the port of Paris-Havre on their way to New York. When they arrived in the U.S. on the evening of November 28, 1899, the port of New York was completely fogged in. The three new immigrants were happy to step off the boat and into the welcoming hands of the bishop's representatives, Monsignor John Edwards and Father J. Dougherty.

The work assigned to the Salesians was small and, as the Archbishop had promised, quite precarious. Nothing was organized short of two hospital chaplaincies which were intended to support the priests. Unlike the first days in San Francisco, there was no church available, and the living quarters were poor.

Tempted to discouragement

They took over the basement and first floor of a tenement house at 315 East 12th Street, where they officially inaugurated their work for the immigrants with a solemn public Mass on December 8, 1898. Father Coppo, their energetic leader, carefully prepared the tenement basement for religious services and was particularly anxious that there be enough room for the crowds of faithful. On the big day, nine people came.

A shift of priorities was called for. The pioneers distributed leaflets in Italian and announced their arrival in a zealous door to door canvas of the Italian neighborhoods. Through the kindness of their friend, Father Patrick McSweeney, pastor of Saint Brigid's Church on 8th Street, they obtained the use of a large crypt capable of holding 1200 people. At the next big public celebration on Christmas day of 1898, twelve people came. On the following Sunday, possibly because of the cold and snow, only eight persons appeared for the "Italian Mass."

Perseverance pays

However, in spite of the setback the trio continued their door to door house calls and ministered to the Italian Catholics in New York's hospitals. During the Lenten season of

1899, a mission at Saint Brigid's was given in Italian. One hundred persons came to receive the sacraments, and six hundred attended the Easter Sunday Mass. These good people told their friends about the services that the Salesians were offering and about Father Coppo's enthusiastic preaching.

By the feast of Pentecost, May 22, 1899, there were enough parishioners to begin a Saint Vincent de Paul Society for men and a Society of Mary Help of Christians for women. A new parish was born! And on the ninth day of June, 1899, Father Paul Sapienze was accepted as an aspirant. The Salesian work had recruited its first American vocation!

THE EASTERN PROVINCE OF ST. PHILIP THE APOSTLE IS ESTABLISHED

On the twentieth day of January, 1902, Father Rua recognized the labors of the American pioneers. He transferred the responsibility for their foundations from the provincial of Venezuela-Brazil, to Father Michael Borghino of New York. On that day the first American province was established.

Meanwhile, the Italian parish growing up in the basement of Saint Brigid's Church was creating problems for Father McSweeney. It needed a place of its own.

On May 1, 1902, Father Coppo was given the old Transfiguration church on Mott Street. The church had been built in the 18th century by Lutherans. Later it was sold to Episcopalians, and in 1870 the Catholics of New York bought it as a center for Irish immigrants. When the Irish were able to move northward to more affluent areas, the neighborhood near the church was taken over by Italians and Chinese. The Irish parish declined steadily until in 1900 its large parochial school closed for lack of pupils. And when Father Coppo accepted the church for the Salesian Society, it carried a debt of nearly \$50,000.

The now familiar pattern of building from nothing was again begun. Missions and services were conducted in English and Italian. Catechism classes for the children and Americanization classes for adults were promoted by new parish societies. In addition, Father Coppo began a practical weekly newsletter, 'The Italian in America', with articles on every subject from religion to American history. In September of 1903, he reopened the parish school and invited the Sisters of the Sacred Heart to staff it. They continued that labor of love until 1924 when the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians came to Mott Street.



**The Church of the
Transfiguration. Mott
Street, New York City**

Fr. Rua Writes:

So far our story has been mostly one of immigrants and Italians. But when Father Rua established the works in the United States as a separate province, he knew that the

situation would have to change. Vocations were needed. New helpers from the native soil had to be found if the work was to grow. Always the farewell letter of Father Rua to the first missionaries rang out in the Salesians' ears:

“My beloved sons, I am sending you to San Francisco, California, to begin a Great work. I accompany you with my fatherly blessing. May the Lord bless you and your enterprises. May he make you grow and multiply as the stars of the sky and the sand that are on the seashore, so that you may save numerous souls and the kingdom of Jesus Christ may extend to the ends of the earth.”

Vocations: The first Novitiate

The superior in America, Father Borghino, began looking for a place where young men with a desire to serve God in the religious life could be cared for and trained. He had in mind those words Don Bosco left in the little book of Salesian Constitutions: “This society shall take care to foster the piety and vocation of those whose aptitude and piety is to be recommended.” In his chronicle, Father Borghino recorded that he entrusted his search to the Madonna, Mary Most Holy, and that he did not have to wait long for an answer.

It came from the same Monsignor Edwards, pastor of Immaculate Conception Church in New York, who had met Father Coppo's group at the Manhattan dockside in 1898. As a member of the diocesan council, he had recommended to the new Archbishop of New York, Bishop Barley, that the Salesians be allowed to use the old diocesan seminary in Troy, New York. The building was originally erected as a Methodist seminary, later became the first Catholic provincial seminary in New York, and was abandoned by the diocese in 1896 when Archbishop Corrigan opened a new provincial seminary at Dunwoodie. In the intervening years it served as a novitiate for the Christian Brothers and a temporary orphanage run by the Dominican Sisters. But in 1933 it was vacant, and Archbishop Farley was happy to offer it to the sons of Don Bosco. A lease was prepared, thirty or forty pupils were found, and Father Coppo – by now a versatile pioneer – was chosen as the first director.

Hopes for vocations ran high in those early days. Within a year the school was crowded with more than one hundred residents and a large novitiate class must have seemed imminent. A novice master, Father John Focacci, was appointed to stay at the school and take care of those graduates who would indicate a desire to become Salesians. Other members of the novitiate staff were named but were to remain at their regular duties until needed.

Unfortunately, few of the boys attending the Salesian Institute at Troy had any thought of embracing the Salesian life. Only two names from the novitiate class of 1904 are still remembered: Father Filomen Ferrara, who spent his year of novitiate helping Father Coppo at Transfiguration parish, and Father Louis Galli, who later served as director of the first Salesian school in Watsonville, California. Records show that an official novitiate was established at Troy from June 19, 1905, until the summer of 1908, but few young men applied, and we can say that the novitiate did not function at all during most of the early years.

Nevertheless, the experiment at Troy was a landmark in Salesian history, a guidepost

indicating the end of uncertainty. After only ten years in several anticlerical environments, after only ten years of living in borrowed quarters and coping with financial chaos, these first priests and brothers could point to their own churches, fervent parishioners, and economic stability in America. They were a province unto themselves, and felt strong enough to start a seminary. Like the proverbial mustard seed of Saint Mark's Gospel, they could confidently grow and reach outward to new apostolate.

THE FIRST PARISHES

NEW JERSEY - PATERSON

The early failure to attract many native vocations did not prevent the first generation Salesians from expanding their work for Italian immigrants. Father Coppo, founder of every Salesian work on the Eastern seaboard up to this time, was appointed provincial in 1909 and set out in search of new projects. One of his enterprises was a chaplaincy for thirty Italian families in the Sady Hill region of Paterson, New Jersey. It was so successful that in November of 1911, Bishop John O'Connor of the Newark diocese wrote to Father Rua's successor, Father Paul Albera: "I have seen with great satisfaction the good accomplished by the Salesians in the two years they have been working in my dioceses in the city of Paterson. I would be very pleased if they were to accept the care of the parish of Saint Michael and the mission church of Saint Anthony in Paterson. Even now I give them my welcome and promise to give them the care of the two churches." Father Coppo was instructed to accept the project, and he invited the Salesian Sisters to start a parochial school in Saint Michael's parish. (This was their first foundation in the United States.) But he left the administration of the parish in the Bishop's hands. He also sent Father John Focacci to be pastor at the Saint Anthony mission. On December 8, 1911, the former novice master set up a makeshift altar in an old wooden building which served as a church. By 1922 he had turned the decaying little mission into a bustling Catholic center with day-care facilities and grammar school for the children of working mothers. But his greatest achievement was apparent in the pious and well-organized Italian community which he left to his assistant, the future pastor, Father Modesto Valenti.

NEW YORK - PORT CHESTER

A similar foundation was established in Port Chester, New York, at the request of Cardinal Farley and with the permission of Father Albera. Here at the Holy Rosary Church, however, both Italian and Polish immigrants were involved. Father Bernard Gentilini, the first Salesian pastor appointed by Father Coppo, found that the immigrants' worst disease was apathy, and he set out to cure it by opening a night school and a youth center. To reach the immigrants on the far side of town, he sent Father Frederick Barni to say Mass in the homes of willing parishioners. In 1914, they inaugurated a basement on South Regent Street as the "Washington Park Chapel" – future site of Port Chester's Corpus Christi Church.

NEW YORK - 12TH STREET

Father Coppo, meanwhile, had not forgotten about this first home in the 12th Street

Tenement. Neither had he forgotten the increasing number of Italians in New York City. In October of 1900, he turned his tenement basement into a “Club Room” for youngsters – perhaps the first such Salesian youth center in America. And on June 15, 1906, he bought two lots, a stable, and a three story building at 431 East 12th Street. The proprietor, Mr. Louis Walter, accepted a down payment of \$5250, with the rest to be paid from a mortgage loan of \$18,000 at the German Savings Bank.

The Italian bakery on the first floor of Father Coppo’s new building was allowed to remain; the top two floors were renovated for use as a reunion hall and day-nursery.

On May 27, 1906, Father Coppo began negotiations for the payment of \$25,000 on a second house and lot at 429 East 12th Street. It was the faithful friend of the Salesians, Monsignor Edwards, now Vicar General of the archdiocese, who blessed the first chapel of Mary Help of Christians in New York on September 15, 1906.

Father Coppo was replaced as pastor by Father Frederick Barni in 1909, but his grand scale master plan for 12th Street remained. Father Barni slowly began buying up sections of the cemetery which bordered the 12th Street property until he had enough room to construct the basement of a church in September of 1911. After consultation with Cardinal Farley and with a promise of a \$1000 gift for security, the new parish officially opened its “Keating Day Nursery” on February 9, 1916. The Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart were the first to staff it.

Finally, in January of 1916, the trustees of Saint Patrick’s Cathedral purchased the nettlesome cemetery – a lot 63x206 feet between 11th and 12th Streets – for the Italian community. This action cleared away the final obstacle to the building of a large church which was completed and consecrated to Mary Help of

Christians on February 10, 1918.



Church of Mary Help of Christians, 12th St. NYC

The First Schools

“Since it often happens that boys are found so neglected, that unless they are received into a school every care would be expended on them in vain, every effort shall be made to open houses in which, through the assistance of divine providence, they will be provided with lodging, food and clothing” (Salesian Constitutions, 1909).

HAWTHORNE: Even though the seminary at Troy had not worked out well, the large number of pupils there indicated that a boarding school for Italian boys was meeting a real need of the people. A decision was made to abandon the buildings at Troy in 1908. By that time the lease from the diocese of New York had expired. The buildings were old and judged to be beyond repair.

RAMSEY - 1908: So Father Borghino and Father Coppo began to search for an alternate location. Two were found. The first was a small farmhouse with a few cows and some peach groves tucked away in a wooded area near Ramsey, New Jersey. The building was

inadequate, but Father Borghino bought it because he felt it would someday be sufficient to start another seminary and novitiate.

COLUMBUS INSTITUTE, HAWTHORNE: The second property that was bought was another former Lutheran seminary, this time in the Village of Hawthorne, New York. It was called '*The Columbus Institute.*'



The Hawthorne property was ideal. In its announcement of new school openings for September of 1908, the Philadelphia Catholic Standard and Times described it this way: "The Salesian Fathers of New York have acquired through the generosity of Mr. J. McGrane of Brooklyn, a fine building at Hawthorne, New York,

which will be used as a college. It is located about five miles north of White Plains . . . There are a number of buildings on the property, but the main building is especially adapted for use as a school, having already been used for that purpose by a Protestant body. The main building is 200 feet long, facing the east, and commands a magnificent view of the surrounding country for over twenty miles in all directions.

"The other buildings include a fine gymnasium, fully equipped with appliances and well adapted for the use of the students. There is also a faculty house, stables, storehouses, etc. at a convenient distance from the main building, making an imposing group of structures which can be seen for many miles."

The hope of finding candidates for Salesian life was not abandoned at Hawthorne, but neither was the house run as a seminary. This was true despite the fact that the Salesian novitiate was moved there from Troy in 1908.

The first major challenge faced by the Salesians at Hawthorne did not come from the Italians but from the pastoral needs of nearly 4,000,000 Polish immigrants, many of whom lived near New York City. To help them, Father Thomas Patalong and the seminarian, Brother Michael Wjdziaik came to the United States in December of 1910. They were stationed at Hawthorne. Brother Wjdziaik was to study English and to teach; Father Patalong was to work at Transfiguration parish and assist the Polish speaking people of Holy Rosary Parish in Port Chester.

When the number of Italian students at the school in Hawthorne declined slightly, Father Patalong requested permission to admit Polish boys to the school. The first of his pupils, F. Nowaki of Buffalo, New York, was admitted in May of 1912.

Father Patalong advertised the school among Polish speaking peoples as far away as Massachusetts and western Pennsylvania. He charged only \$12 per month, for those who could pay. By September, the Columbus Institute in Hawthorne had twenty-seven Polish speaking pupils.

It is essential, at this point, to recall the difficulties that emigrants of any nation face when they come to a new country. Language barriers and strange customs tend to reinforce nationalistic spirits and make adaptation difficult. This may be especially true when two groups of foreign nationals are juxtaposed in a single, closed educational institute. Only the most genuine Christian charity and infinite patience could maintain peace and order in such a situation.

RAMSEY – 1914 - 1915

In Hawthorne, by 1914, the number of Poles and Italians was about equal, both for pupils and staff. The program was trilingual: classes and prayers were often conducted in either Italian or Polish; the official language of the school was English. A simple joint venture in music or dramatics was apt to be a catastrophe. The problem was similar to that created years ago by the Italian church growing up in the basement of Saint Brigid's. Something had to be done.

The second director of the Columbus Institute, Father Cattori, asked to be relieved. His

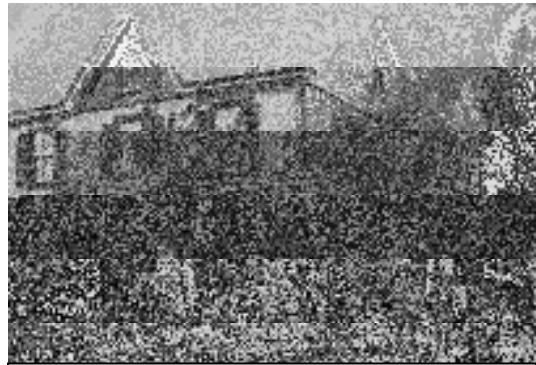
successor, Father Paul Zolin, divided the administration of the school into two completely separate units. A search for a second school was begun.

Ramsey The twenty-five acre property which Father Borghino had purchased in Ramsey, New Jersey, in 1908 would have been suitable for a new school but for one thing. After the purchase, Father Borghino went to Italy. When he returned, the small brick residence building which he planned for future novices was complete, but there were no novices to use it. Father Borghino advised Father Coppo, the new provincial, to sell the property and use the proceeds to buy land closer to the city. Father Coppo therefore sold the Ramsey land to a Mr. J. Block for \$10,000 and bought a small piece of property in Brooklyn.

In 1914, however, events took an unexpected and providential turn. Mr. Block had turned the farm house and brick residence into a Jewish resort home. But his enterprise failed and he was unable to make any of the necessary payments on the property. He returned the entire estate, including the furnishings he had added himself, to Father Coppo on October 14, 1914.

Father Patalong quickly requested that the place be used

as a school for Polish boys. On April 3, 1915, the Polish students from Hawthorne moved



The farmhouse purchased by Fr. Borghino at Ramsey, NJ in 1908



to Ramsey and began preparing their new school.

The first director of that group was Father Robert Wiczorek, a refugee from the Mexican Civil War. With him was Father Patalong, Brother Michael Wjkziak, and Brother Steven Plywacyk, future director of the school. The pioneering spirit of that first group was sustained by their cook, Mr. James Sikora, who later became a Salesian brother.

When the school opened to its new class in the fall of 1915, the first year group held out unsuspected promise for the future of Salesian work among Polish Americans. Three of the boys would become Salesians: Joseph Haluch, Ignatius Kozik, and Celestine Moskal. All three would take their turn as Salesian directors; and all three of them would return to Ramsey as superior of the Don Bosco Polish Institute, later named Don Bosco High School.

On May 31, 1916, the pupils and Salesians invited their Polish friends from every corner of the northeast to celebrate a festivity in honor of Mary Help of Christians. Forty persons attended the solemn Mass celebrated by Father Wiczorek on that day, and listened to a sermon on the meaning of the title "Help of Christians" by Father John Sikora. Picnicking followed, and the day ended with a Marian procession. This was the beginning of devotion to "Don Bosco's Madonna" in Ramsey.

MAHWAH

Also in May of 1914, Father Coppo blessed the Johnson Avenue Clubhouse as a temporary parish church for the Poles of nearby Ramapawa-Mahwah. In the summer of 1916, Father Patalong's efforts to help the Polish employees of Mahwah's American Brakeshoe Company yielded a lot purchased from Mr. Alfred Winter. Early in 1918 a wood frame church for the people of the new Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Mahwah was built for \$6000. Another beginning had been made.

Disaster

Near tragedy struck the Columbus Institute in the early morning of December 11, 1917. Sometime between 1 and 5 a.m. Father Paul Zolin, the director, was aroused by the smell of smoke. He quickly alerted the Salesians and the pupils. With nothing but pajamas and blankets, they rushed out into the snowy cold. A staff member darted off to the pump house, only to find that the valves were shut and the pumps jammed. The pupil, Thomas DeMatei, an aspirant from Saints Peter and Paul Parish in San Francisco, saved the Blessed Sacrament.

Within two hours of Father Zolin's alarm, the fire which had started in the furnace room of the old school building had raced to every floor. The fire department stood by helplessly. Charitable friends from a nearby Jewish refuge saw the fire and came over with offers of clothing and shelter. No one was injured, and the other buildings were undamaged. But the Columbus Institute was finished.

NEW ROCHELLE

Father Coppo and Father Zolin determined that a new home for the school would be preferable to rebuilding the old. With the \$45,000 collected from insurance, they paid the

school's debt and bought the Stephenson estate between Long Island Sound and the Old Boston Post Road in New Rochelle, New York. At the same time they moved the novitiate, which now had several candidates from California, Hawthorne, and Ramsey, to a rented house in Cold Spring, New York.

Plans at New Rochelle called for another attempt at a seminary of some kind, and a new boarding school was considered. In 1919 Father Coppo took over as director and named Father Fred Barni, who had arranged the purchase of the property, as prefect or second in command. The staff from Cold Spring was brought in, and the old Hawthorne community came from their temporary residence at Williamsbridge, Gun Hill Road, the Bronx.

The 'Saint Joseph House of Studies' for Salesian Aspirants was canonically established in Stephenson's old gray stone house (built in 1867) and was blessed the same year by the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Bonzano.

Father Coppo was succeeded as provincial sometime in 1919 by Father Emmanuel Manassero. At the end of that year, Father Coppo went to Philadelphia and Father Barni to California. The new provincial assumed the post of director at New Rochelle and appointed the secretary who had come with him from Italy, Father Giairio, as prefect. In the same year, the brothers who arrived from Cold Spring taught the aspirants, and the seminarians who came from Gun Hill Road began or continued their theological studies.



The Stephenson home, overlooking Long Islands Sound and the town of New Rochelle

NEW ROCHELLE - SCHOOL



Fr. Francis Binelli with his first group of novices at New Rochelle.

On October 3, 1920, the cornerstone for a new boarding school was blessed, and on October 7, 1921, the first novitiate class in New Rochelle was formed under Father Francis Binelli. As we look at New Rochelle early in 1922, we find a single work less than four years old supporting a new boarding school for boys, a house of studies for aspirants, a novitiate, and a theological studentate staffed by Fathers Patrick O'Leary, John Piovano, Simon Majcher, Leonard Ruvolo, Rinaldo Bergamo, J. Alemani, and Peter Truffa. To all this a house of philosophy would be added later in the year. It must have seemed that the calamitous forced march from Hawthorne in

the winter of 1917 had led the first generation of American Salesians to a promised land.

PHILADELPHIA

The division of the Hawthorne school gave rise to a third Salesian work, this time in answer to the repeated requests of Archbishop Edmund Prendergast. On August 16, 1914, Father Peter Cattori, who had asked to be relieved from his post as director of the Columbus Institute in Hawthorne, arrived in Philadelphia to open the Don Bosco Institute. In keeping with the bishop's wishes and Father Coppo's instructions, he set out to give religious instruction to public school children, organize a youth center, and open a small trade school. A tenement house in a rundown part of the city was donated to the Archbishop and loaned to the Salesians for their work. The gentleman who provided the building at 507 South 9th Street also equipped it with furnishings for a club and school of about fifty boys. An annual subsidy for the next five years was promised.

Apparently nothing went right at the new foundation. The neighborhood was too poor and ethnically diverse to unite in support of the "Italians on 9th Street". The local parish priest was gruff and refused to take any interest. The subsidy was sufficient for utilities and food, but not enough to pay for badly needed renovations.

After the fire in Hawthorne, Father Cattori was succeeded in Philadelphia by Father Paul Zolin. The new director made little headway with the physical and financial situation but found success in another area. He used the press provided for the trade school to begin publication of the Don Bosco Messenger, forerunner of the American Salesian Bulletin. By distributing it widely, he made the Salesian work known to the thousands of Catholic laity.

In 1918, the Salesians' great benefactor, Archbishop Prendergast died, and in 1919 the five year annual subsidy for the Don Bosco Institute ended. Father Patalong was assigned there but the work continued to decline, despite the assistance of student brothers like Edward DeMartini. At times food was scarce. The phenomenal growth of the Philadelphia Archdiocese and the demand for new Catholic schools made it difficult for Archbishop Dennis Dougherty to lend financial aid. An experienced and energetic pioneer was needed if the work was to be saved.

In January of 1920, Father Manassero, the new provincial, sent Father Ernest Coppo to Philadelphia. Little is known about Father Coppo's administration there. In 1921 he abandoned the attempt at a trade school and sent the printing press machines by truck to New Rochelle. During the summer of 1922, Father Coppo was called by the Holy See to become bishop and Vicar Apostolic of Kimberley, Australia. Father Peter Truffa received the unhappy task of closing the Don Bosco Institute in September of that year.