

1945 – 1973

INTRODUCTION:

One important story of the 1930's remains to be told. Early in 1939 Father Pittini, now Archbishop of Santo Domingo, was on his way home by ship from Puerto Rico when he heard that there were two Americans on the bridge. He approached them and they introduced themselves. "I'm Richard Cushing, from the Boston Office of the Propagation of the Faith," said one. "And I'm Richard Quinlan, Superintendent of Catholic Schools in Boston," said the other. "Two Richards," Pittini remarked. "Then we are a trinity of Richards, for I am Richard too!"

The three Richards struck up a strong friendship and Father Cushing gave the Archbishop a \$5000 gift for a new church in Santo Domingo. Five and a half years later, on September 25, 1944, as Archbishop Pittini lay in a New York hospital, a nurse read him the newspaper account of Father Cushing's appointment as Archbishop of Boston. Pittini remembered the dream of Don Bosco recorded in the saint's *Biographical Memoirs* and decided, "This is the time!"

He recorded in his own memoirs: "With the consent of the Salesian provincial, Father Aeneas Tozzi, I wrote to Archbishop Cushing who immediately asked Father Tozzi to go to Boston, telling him he was planning a memorial to his predecessor, Cardinal O'Connell. It was to be a trade school entrusted to the Salesians."

At last Don Bosco's dream of September 4, 1883, was about to be realized.

BOSTON



On October 11, 1945, the lad who had come as the first aspirant to Newton stepped off "The Owl" (a night train from New York to Boston), as the first director of Salesian work in the city of Don Bosco's dream. He was joined by the provincial, Father Giovanni, Brother Fioro DaRoit, and the seminarian, Brother Ted Ciampi. They met at Our Lady Star of the Sea Church on Moore Street in East Boston and then set out for the nearby John Paul Jones School. The building was an 1898 relic, deserted and run down. But it was for sale; and it was a place to start.

After several hours of waiting for the caretaker in the nippy autumn air, the eager foursome finally gained access to the building-without water, gas, or light; with broken windows, cobwebbed walls, and rotted flooring. Lesser men might have turned back, but Father Angelo Bongiorno and his friend were made of sterner stuff. They accepted the

wonderment and sympathy of their astonished neighbors. Curious youngsters stopped to see who had invaded their neighborhood's forbidden bastion and stayed to sweep, mop and scrub. The youngsters and their parents liked the courageous monks who stopped into the midst of chaos and started making it right. They liked the Salesians' laughter and singing-great softeners for hard work.

Soon the lights were on, a gas stove was connected in the basement, a make-shift residence and an orange crate altar were set up. A boys' club in style of Don Bosco's Oratory was opened while work on the school continued. Mr. Leontine Barros stopped by one day to ask if he could help and began an uninterrupted career as the first Salesian Cooperator in Boston.

On the feast of Saint John Bosco, January 31, 1946, a dedication was held for the "Salesian Oratory." Present were some of the young community's many friends: the local pastor, Father Patrick McCarthy; the club's lawyer and his secretary, Mr. Mansfield and Miss Mullarchy. The chronicler of the day's events recorded, "Mr. John Kennedy, son of the former Ambassador to England, came with Columbia Bank President, Mr. Andrew Porter." Of course Archbishop Cushing was there, "his usual self-humorous and to the point."

By September 9, 1946, the old John Paul Jones School was ready for use. Brothers Julius Bollati and Joseph Botto were called from Hope Haven to organize shops in printing and woodworking. Father Giovannini helped to secure suitable equipment from government surplus. At 8:30 on that memorable Monday morning, six-teen boys registered for classes at the new Don Bosco Trade School.

In the following years, particularly under the direction of Father Rinaldi, whose labors earned him the name "Don Bosco of Boston," the Salesians of the Hub outgrew their first home. In March of 1948 the Salesian Oratory moved from the basement and playgrounds of the John Paul Jones property to the newly acquired Cashman School on Paris Street, where it became known as the Salesian Boys' Club. In 1954, Archbishop Cushing helped Father Rinaldi to acquire the Brandeis Vocational School on Warrenton Street near the Boston Common. That year Father Rinaldi, the brothers, and boys moved the Don Bosco Trade School of East Boston into the upgraded and enlarged Don Bosco Technical School in the heart of downtown.

Father Joseph Caselli took over the old building on Byron Street and with the help of his confreres and friends converted the shop into modern classroom. In September of 1958, he reopened the birthplace of Salesian work in Boston as the Saint Dominic Savio High School.

HIGH SCHOOL SEMINARIES

In 1945, Father Giovanni set out to establish two new seminaries for high school students, one for candidates to the priesthood and one for candidates to the brotherhood. By this time Newton had too many people and not enough room. In addition to a high school department, a novitiate, a college, and the wartime school of theology, Don Bosco seminary's energetic director, Father Felix Penna, had imported fifty-six machines and several Salesian craftsmen in the hope of starting a trade school! The chronicle of the house of aspirants for September 8, 1945, reads: "At the end of the ten-day retreat at Newton, Father Provincial announced that the aspirants were to leave Newton. No place has as yet been found, so temporarily the aspirants will use the camp at Newton."

By September 30, Father John Lomagno had been appointed director of the aspirants' community; Father Mark Ferrito was prefect; Father Joseph Stella Prefect of Studies. Also, parts of the community without a home were Father Lucien Trudel and Brothers Emmanuel Alicino, Edward Capelletti, Clement Cardillo, and Chester Szemborski. On October 6, the new group of forty freshmen and about fifty "old timers" piled onto the back of an International load truck and headed for a home of their own on the Thomas Fortune Ryan estate in Suffern, New York.

Ryan's Villa was nice, but even at the time it was rented, Father Giovannini knew it would be inadequate. The boys remained there for only two years, and their migration began again. During the school year 1947-48, the boys of third and fourth high went with Father Lomagno to live in the farmhouse and ante-bellum mansion of Greyridge Farm (The Filor's estate) in West Haverstraw, New York. In a move strangely prescient of things to come, the boys first and second high were transferred to Saint Michael's School in Goshen and placed under the tutelage of its director, Father Peter Rinaldi.

This arrangement, too, was unsatisfactory. The high school boys placed an obvious burden on the grammar school program at Goshen and the facilities were simply inadequate at West Haverstraw. At the end of the year, the school of theology was mobbed to Aptos, California, and all the aspirants returned to Newton. Finally, in 1951, a temporary cinder-block school building, complete with gymnasium and living headquarters, was finished in West Haverstraw and the aspirants returned. Much of the building and property at this new Don Bosco Juniorate still had to be completed: there was painting, plumbing, and landscaping to be done. When the school was finally dedicated on May 24, 1953, the school's director, Father Joseph Caselli write in its souvenir journal: "My boys, here we shall grow not only in age, but with God's help also in wisdom and grace." At last the high school aspirants did have a place of their own.

PUERTO RICO

During the decade of the 40's, the Salesians from the eastern United States sponsored new works in Puerto Rico. A church at La Cantabra, planned by the Cuban Salesian, Father Savani, became a reality when Father Dominic Battistello led a small group of American volunteers to the Caribbean. Property was bought for the new church and the first wind of a Mary Help of Christians Parish school was built before Puerto Rico was incorporated into the Salesians' Antilles Province in 1949.

PATERSON – TECHNICAL SCHOOL

Father Giovannini was not content to build just one aspirantate for future priests. He needed a place to put the machinery and craftsmen assembled by Father Penna at Newton. He also wanted a specialized school for the training of those future brothers who would teach



trades and technology. Maybe an old New Jersey silk mill built in 1890 would be suitable.

On Saturday, July 1, 1948, Father Giovannini signed a contract for the Harris Brothers Mill at 202 Union Ave, Paterson, and the story of the first days in Boston was repeated on an even grander scale. The diary of one of the first arrivals tells it well:

Monday, August 2, 1948. With the bare necessities of life, the seven brothers listed below set out for Paterson at 8:00 a.m Oscar Anrejasic, Louis Durante, Mario Audero, Aloysius Mazzella, Peter Bersezio, David Tierney, John Cauda.

We reached there at 9:00 a.m to find Father Provincial, Brother Zito, four aspirants from West Haverstraw and a group of workmen already on the job. We lost no time in pitching in to help them. At the direction of the contractor, Mr. John D'Amiello, we began to demolish old partitions, walls, and the flooring that needed to be cleared away before the construction work could be started. Separate groups were organized according to their ability. We had squads of carpenters, electricians, and plumbers all ready, willing, and able to carry out the task of renovating our new home.

On opening day, it was already apparent that applications for day students at the new Salesian training center would far exceed the school's capacity. The Don Bosco Technical High School in Paterson, New Jersey, was dedicated on May 29, 1949. A particular highlight of the Paterson story is the work of Brother Michael Frazette, who decided to celebrate the canonization of Saint Dominic Savio in 1954 by gathering local boys at the school for a fun-filled "Savio Day." He topped it off with a talk on Dominic Savio and a short prayer service.

The idea spread. The kids appreciated it and asked for more. Fathers Joseph Perozzi and August Bosio helped with everything including the job of licking stamps for a nationwide, mail-order classroom club that would provide a wide variety of activities, national contests, and a monthly character-building program suitable for children. By the end of the 1960's, the club could boast of a full-time headquarters staff led by Brother Michael and Brother John Zito, a regular visiting chaplain, Father Paul Aronica, and a healthy enthusiastic membership of one hundred thousand youngsters.

IPSWICH, MA

In 1955 Father Giovannini set out again to conquer new territory. He bought the Proctor estate in Ipswich, Massachusetts, from the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, who had used it for a novitiate. Brother Alicino and Father Pat Corcoran prepared the property for a seminary that would be conveniently located for the New England boys. The school was named in honor of the Sacred Heart and later served as a Salesian novitiate as well as a school for aspirants.

BIRMINGHAM, AL

The much loved pastor of Saint Anthony's in Elizabeth, Father Aloysius Trifari, began Salesian work among the poor of Alabama. With Brother Del Labonte, he opened the Holy Rosary Parish and Saint Bernadette Mission in 1955.

At about the same time, the L.J. Wuckner property was donated for an agricultural school

HUTTONSVILLE, WEST VIRGINIA.

Father Gionannini's plan to introduce this type of work (so very popular in South America) to the United States proved practically unworkable. Such a school required a sizeable staff, but could accommodate only about fifty boys. Despite the hard work demanded of both priests and brothers, finding pupils willing to travel to such a faraway place made recruiting difficult. The school was closed and the property sold in 1964.

Father Celestine Moskal Although there were many pioneers and dedicated workers in the Salesian's eastern province in the years during and after World War II, one man's career serves more than that of any other to sum up the character and achievements of the period. In 1941, Father Celestine Moskal left his post at Hope Haven to serve until 1946 as Director at Ramsey. There he saved the school from declining enrollment by bolstering the family spirit, reinvigorating athletic and cultural activities, and opening doors to day pupils. He prepared the way for the expansion of the school under Father Henry Sarnowski, who in 1954 added Immaculata Hall, rebuilt the library, and prepared the school for Middle States Accreditation.

Father Moskal returned to Hope Haven for a second time as director from 1946 to October of 1949, when he was named first director of Don Bosco Tech in Paterson. In 1954, he became director of the rapidly declining resident school in New Rochelle. There he applied the same cure, which had successfully revived Ramsey ten years earlier. One past pupil recalls that Father Moskal wanted the school to have a first rate marching band and even hired a drill sergeant from a nearby military base to get the boys in shape! In the fall of 1959 Father Moskal pioneered still another work, the Saint Dominic Savio Juniorate in Cedar Lake, Indiana. What was fast becoming an exclusively Lithuanian shrine since its purchase in 1955 was quickly turned into an active American summer camp for boys and a regional seminary for the Chicago area. A tip of the hat for the successful launching of the Cedar Lake venture also goes to the original pioneers, Fathers Vincent Endriunas, Augustine Sabas, Anthony Maujokas, and especially the bearded missionary of the group, Father Anthony Sabaliauskas. It was from the sowing of their labors that Father Moskal began the reaping of an apostolic harvest with the school's first aspirants in 1960.

A NOTE WORTHY OF MENTION

Father Felix Penna In 1958 the former director of Don Bosco Seminary in Newton, the originator of the Salesian Bulletin, the architect of the Sons of Mary program for late vocations, and the creator of Don Bosco Technical Institute in California, was selected by his confreres in the East to accompany Father Giovannini to the society's general chapter in Turin. At the meeting, Father Giovannini was chosen as a permanent member of the society's superior council shortly afterward, his companion, Father Felix Penna, was appointed provincial in New Rochelle, where he remained until cancer forced his retirement in the summer of 1961.

During his three years as superior, he moved at a dizzying pace to advance the work of the province. He established a corporate structure, which gave the offices of the province special status in an autonomous community apart from the school in New Rochelle. With the help of Father Diego Borgatello, former prefect in Goshen, he authorized and sponsored the translation of Don Bosco's monumental biography in nineteen volumes, the Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco. During his term of office he saw the

completion of a new novitiate building at Newton and saw it filled with seventy-two young men, the largest novitiate class in the provinces' history. He also began the move toward accreditation of Don Bosco College by the Middle Atlantic States Association, a process successfully completed by his successor, Father August Bosio, in 1965.

Father Penna had a special concern for the Salesian brothers and their work in technical schools. In order to provide them with a more suitable training place, he moved the brothers in training from overcrowded precincts of Don Bosco Tech in Paterson to West Haverstraw. At the same time, to prevent congestion there, he ordered closing of Saint Michael's School in Goshen and provided that the property be used as a Salesian Junior Seminary for the province's one hundred New York area aspirants. The shifting of seminaries was also left to Father Bosio, whose appointment as provincial came in August 1961.

CHANGING WITH THE TIMES

LOUISIANA

In 1962 Archbishop Rummel of New Orleans invited the new provincial to provide a staff for a new diocesan regional high school in Marrero. Thanks to the encouragement of the archbishop, and especially the encouragement of his successor, Archbishop John Cody, the new school was built on the Hope Haven grounds and staffed by the same community. In June of 1965, however, Archbishop Cody was promoted to the diocese of Chicago where he later became Cardinal. New diocesan authorities in New Orleans opted for a separate administration for Hope Haven. The Salesians, after thirty-three years of service, terminated their contract with the office of Catholic Charities and retained only the administration of Archbishop Shaw High School in Marrero, Louisiana. At about the same time, and at the request of the archbishop, a Salesian priest was assigned to care for the needs of Saint Rosalie's parish in nearby Harvey.

WEST HAVERSTRAW, NY

Under the able direction of Father Peter Lappin, a large national shrine, dedicated to Mary Help of Christians, took shape during the decade; the Saint John Bosco Retreat House was added to the property in 1971.

CEDAR LAKE

Under the direction of Father James Curran, the seminary high school opened its doors to resident non-seminarians and day pupils. To match its new look, the school assumed a new name: Salesian Prep.

MIDWEST

Theological students from the eastern province began studying at the Pontifical College Malloy purchased the Knights of Columbus Center in downtown Columbus, Ohio, to provide them with a place of residence and begin an inner city boys' club.

PAROCHIAL ACTIVITY

Parochial activity in the East was extended to two Byzantine Catholic churches, Saints Peter and Paul in Minersville and Holy Spirit in Williamstown, Pennsylvania. In 1971, Father Orlando Molina and Attilio Klinger began working in the poverty pockets of Freeport, Grand Bahamas.