

CHAPTER IV: Hope Thwarted is Shortly Renewed

The French Canadians returned to ministry and worship with St. Mary Parish after Fr. Ance's departure in late 1843; this became a transitional period before St. Joseph Parish was established in 1850. Church Records for French Canadians were again kept at St. Mary Church during this time. One marriage recorded by Fr. Mignault, May 5, 1845, as well as a list of 236 persons confirmed in Vermont by Bishop Fitzpatrick, between September 24 and October 3, 1848, are preserved in the Boston Archdiocesan Archives (Appendix 1-1). All other known records were recorded at St. Mary Church during this period.

Bishop Fenwick became very ill in 1844; Bishop Fitzpatrick was appointed his coadjutor. On January 29, 1845, Bishop Fitzpatrick replied to a letter which Bishop Bourget of Montreal evidently had written to Bishop Fenwick. He explained that Bishop Fenwick was too ill to be consulted on a vexing problem, that of establishing a house for the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Burlington. It would pose a problem because it would require the transfer of Fr. O'Callaghan, since the Oblates⁴⁷ were not willing to live in Fr. Ance's old house.

A second matter considered in this letter was handled easily by Bishop Fitzpatrick. It concerned receiving a profession of faith from Rev. and Mrs. William H. Hoyt of St. Albans. Apparently Bishop Bourget had suggested that perhaps the couple should delay until Bishop Fitzpatrick could come to the area to receive their profession, and that this should be done in a solemn manner before a sizable congregation. Bishop Fitzpatrick was almost abrupt in replying that it was a simple matter of the couple's going to confession, making their profession of faith according to the formula of Pius V, receiving absolution and conditional baptism and living as all Catholics should. He said that it would be wrong for them to delay until he could go to St. Albans, and that no doubt Fr. Mignault could accommodate them, if they could travel to Montreal, and that two or three witnesses would do.

Rev. and Mrs. William Hoyt's reception into the Catholic Church does not appear to be directly related to French Canadian affairs but it eventually did have its impact on St. Joseph Parish. It introduced a movement in New England Catholicism similar to the "*Oxford Movement*" in England. It also is an example of the interrelationship of the United States and Canadian religious affairs at the time, and of the care that was exercised by the bishops on both sides not to intrude on what the other might consider to be his domain; it also points up the cultural differences.

Revs. William Hoyt and John Henry Newman never met, but Hoyt was strongly influenced by this Anglican Vicar of St. Mary's in Oxford. He revered the man, read all his writings and shared in his soul searching. As with Newman, his courageous profession of the Catholic faith led others into the fold. William Hoyt was baptized on July 25, 1846, by Fr. Richards, a Sulpician of Montreal, whose own story is interesting.⁴⁸

Rev. William Hoyt's wife, Anne Deming, their daughter, Anna, and their three other children were baptized by Fr. Mignault on August 2, 1846. Mrs. Hoyt was the sister of Maria Deming, wife of Captain Nathaniel Tucker who was converted in 1847. It was Captain Tucker who helped the French Canadians acquire land for their church in 1850. The Hoyts were followed into the Catholic Church by the three Barlow sisters of St. Albans. As a result of this conversion, another fifty persons joined the Church at that time. Anna Hoyt joined the Carmelites and later the Daughters of the Heart of Mary in 1871. Rev. William Hoyt had been minister of the Episcopal Church in St. Albans. The Barlow family home became the site of the Villa Barlow Convent on Fairfield Street, presently the St. Mary Parish Center. The original building was torn down and a new structure erected in 1979.

Bishop Fitzpatrick succeeded Bishop Fenwick in 1846. Having studied in Paris, Bishop Fitzpatrick spoke French. In 1848 he spent time in Vermont; between September 24 and October 3, he confirmed 236 persons as mentioned above, in Burlington, Vergennes, Swanton, Fairfield, Montpelier and St. Albans.

August 26, 1849 marks the resurgence of a desire for a permanent St. Joseph Parish. On that date, a certain Francois Biron (Appendix A-2) wrote a letter to Bishop Bourget, as follows:

(This letter was written on stationery with a heading showing a wide view of the Burlington waterfront, as shown on next two pages.)

48. As a young Protestant Southern minister, newly ordained, under the family name of Richard Jackson, he conceived the rather amazing project of travelling to Montreal for the express purpose of converting the Superior of the Sulpicians. The Superior was perceptive enough to discern the good faith of the young minister. Rev. Jackson was converted himself to the Catholic faith instead. He joined the Sulpicians and as a member of the Sulpicians then received Mr. Hoyt into the fold.

47. Archives, Archdiocese of Montreal, 195.103, 845-3.

Burlington, VT 26 Aout 1849

Mes Seigneurs Monseigneur,

C'est avec respect que long prend la liberte d'adres-
ser a votre honneur, pour vous laisser asavoie la situ-
ation des canadiens Catholiques icit a burlington et
aux environs, dans le cas de maladie, on est pas capa-
ble d'avoir le secours d'un pretre, sans avoir de Largent
comptant et paiye d'avance, et comme le reverend
pretre dici est souvent absent, pour des quinz jour et
plus a la fois, l'eglise se ferme en gle, et personne n'est
capable dy rentrer pour prier et adorer dieu. C'est jour
icitr-- ille est venu un pretre et les clef lui ont ete refuses
les t:anadiens Catholiques sont souvent meprises dans
l'eglise. On vous prie de bonne graces que sil etait
possible de nous envouyer un frere ou un missionaire
de temps en temps enfin que les pauvres Catholiques
puissent aller a confesse et communier, ill li en a une
grande quantite d'egare, come un troupeau egaree, ill
se fait une assemble, et une neuvaine et ille ont ramase
six piastres et demi et vous l'ont envoiyer pour faire
dire des messe et par la grace de dieu appaiser le
cholera en Burlington. C'est avec beaucoup de peine
que Ion examine la situation des canadiens icit ille
sont insulte et repouser dans leur eglise ille sont flatte
et encourage daller et assister aux eglises egaree, les
gens qui ont envoiyer cette bagatelle argent, ille vou-
drait savoir, si vous lavait re9u, l'argent a ete envoyer
le demier du juillet, ayez la bonte de me faire asavoie,
si vous lavez re9u,

Monseigneu On prie dieu, et vous d'avoir un pas-
teu r, s'il est possible

on demande humblement vos saint priere parce que
nous som sur un terrain etranger,

je suis avec un humble respect votre serviteur

Francois Biron⁴⁹

Translated from the French, the letter reads as follows:

Burlington, VT 26 August 1849

Mes Seigneurs Monseigneur:

It is with respect that we take the liberty of address-
ing your honor to make you aware of the situation of
the Canadian Catholics here in Burlington and in the
surrounding areas. In case of sickness, we cannot
have the help of a priest unless we have cash, paid in
advance, and since the reverend priest is often absent,
for fifteen days or more at a time, the church is locked
and no one can enter to pray and to adore God. One
day recently a priest arrived and was refused the keys.
The Canadian Catholics are often slighted in church.
We pray you with good grace that if it is possible you
send us a brother or a missionary from time to time
so that the poor Catholics can go to confession and
communion. There is a large number of strayed, like
a scattered flock. A meeting was held and a novena
made and we collected six dollars and a half and sent
it to you to have Masses said so that by the grace of
God the cholera would be alleviated in Burlington. It
is with great sorrow that we consider the condition of
the Canadians here. They are insulted and rejected in
their church and they are flattered and encouraged to
go and assist at the separated churches. The people
who sent you this trifling sum of money would like to
know whether you received it. The money was sent
the last of July. Please have the kindness of letting me
know whether you received it.

Monseigneur, we pray God and you that we may
have a pastor, if it is possible.

We humbly ask your holy prayers because we are
in a strange land.

I am with humble respect your servant.

Francois Biron

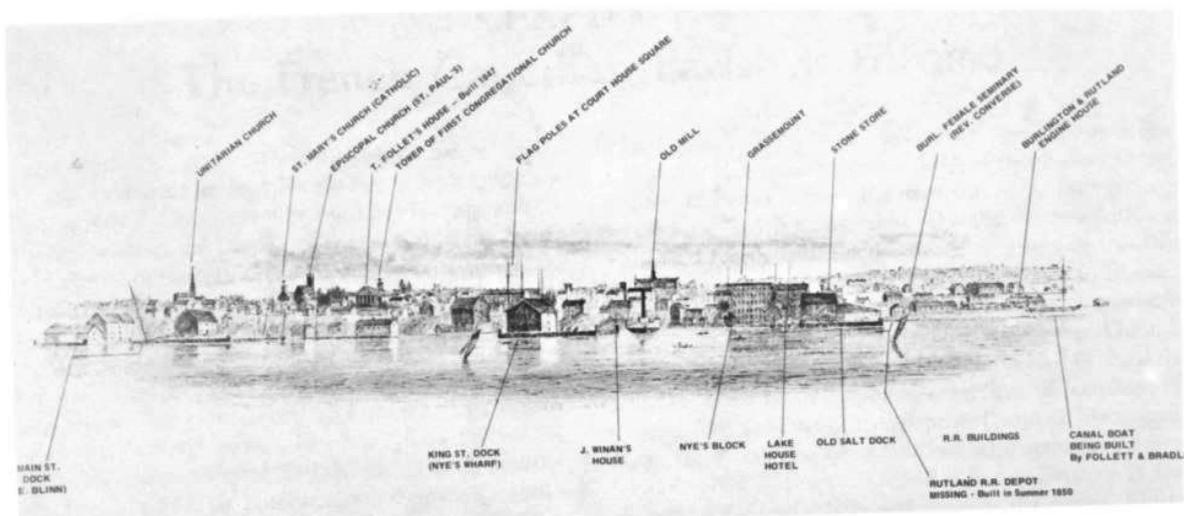
The key to St. Mary Church mentioned in the above let-
ter now reposes in the Archives of the Diocese of Burling-
ton. It is made of iron, six inches long and weighs four
ounces.

It is hoped that the bishop appreciated the naive crossing
out of the first request to substitute a more reasonable one,
but leaving the first in evidence. Possibly the bishop did
not receive many letters which the writer did not trouble to
rewrite. Unlike the previous letters from the French Cana-
dians of Vermont to Bishop Bourget, this letter has no liter-
ary style and the French is written phonetically in several

places. It is a simple statement by a working man of condi-
tions he finds intolerable, and which he is determined to
change.

There is no record of an answer by the Bishop of Mon-
treal to this letter, but it did have an effect, since we know
that within eight months, a parish for the French Cana-
dians was established.

49. Letter from Francois Biron to Bishop Bourget, August
26, 1849. Archives, Archdiocese of Montreal, 195.13F
849-1.



1840 Burlington Harbor