

## CHAPTER II:

# A Flock With Two Shepherds

For a time, Bishop de Cheverus of the Diocese of Boston had the help of only one priest for Vermont, Fr. Pierre Marie Mignault, of St. Joseph de Chambly in Canada, whom he appointed to be his Vicar General in 1818. Fr. Mignault was also given responsibilities and support by the Bishop of Quebec to whom he reported after his journeys around Lake Champlain, explaining conditions and frequently asking for help. His duties as pastor and as



Fr. Pierre Marie Mignault, Pastor of St. Joseph de Chambly, Vicar General of Boston 1828, New York 1834, Burlington 1853, Albany and Montréal

Vicar General left him little time for practical missionary work and he realized the need for priests who would remain among the people in the Champlain Valley on the Vermont and on the New York side of the lake. The New York side appears to have taken up much of his attention, perhaps because it was organized earlier. The other reason for Fr. Mignault's special concern for the Catholics of the Champlain Valley was the fact that his father had been a lieutenant in the Revolutionary Army.

After one of his trips around the lake in 1824, Fr. Mignault wrote that he had baptized 82 children. There was a parish at Trombly Bay, New York, in 1790 and a church at nearby Corbeau (Coopersville, New York) in 1818. The records of the 82 baptisms have not been found at Chambly.

The earliest information on the administration of the sacraments by a French Canadian priest in Burlington is in the form of a photocopy of a record written by Rev. Francois Matignon, who baptized 17 persons on Sunday, October 15, 1815.<sup>18</sup> Strangely enough, he recorded in English. This information is recorded in the archives at Boston.

The first resident Catholic priest in Vermont was Rev. Jeremiah O'Callaghan, a native of Ireland, assigned to Burlington in 1830. He was to serve all Catholics, which at that time meant Irish immigrants and the French Canadians. He did not speak French and he had his own way of spelling French names. Tetreault and Nadeau became Tetron and Nadon and Laurent became Lorrain. The brevity of his recording must have shocked the French Canadians. In recording marriages, Fr. O'Callaghan gave the names of the groom, the bride and two witnesses, date and usually the residence of the groom.

18. Rev. Francois Matignon: Record of 17 baptisms, October 15, 1815. Found in Archives of the Archdiocese of Boston.

The French Canadians were accustomed to a more ceremonious recording, brought from France to Canada, whereby a marriage record took up at least a long paragraph in the register, sometimes a whole page. Parents' names were recorded, indicating their parish, using the maiden name of the mother, and the full Church format was followed each time; the witnesses were named, sometimes with their relationship to the married couple. The members of the wedding party signed the register if they were able, or a note was made by the priest that they had declared themselves unable to sign. Such a lengthy procedure would be difficult for a priest in a large territory with a scattered congregation, but it does point up the cultural differences the French Canadians faced every time they tried to practice their religion.

Lack of a common language and an understanding of the culture could not help but limit the effectiveness of sermons, hamper confessions and lessen rapprochement in general. Whatever the reasons, the dissatisfaction was mutual, and at times, openly expressed.

A church was built to serve both congregations in 1832, on the land now used by Cathedral Parish for St. Joseph Cemetery on the north side of Archibald Street, land donated by Colonel Archibald Hyde. The Canadians were never happy in this church and the land was to be the cause of subsequent controversy. This land has always been considered to be a donation by Col. Hyde. There is an entry in the diary of Bishop Fenwick dated August 27, 1830:

*"The Bp. receives a letter from the Revd. Jer. O'Callaghan, in which he is informed that he is doing exceedingly well at Burlington and the adjoining places- that there are a thousand Catholics in Burlington and he is offered gratis a lot of land for a Church."*

It is therefore startling to discover that the deed to this land states that Hyde received a substantial price for the land. The following excerpt contains the essential points of the deed:

*"Excerpt from Quit-claim deed*

*Grantor: A. W. Hyde*

*Grantee: Rev. Fenwick*

*In consideration of the sum of \$500.00 received from the Right Reverend Father in God, Benedict Fenwick of Boston in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Boston . . . release and forever quit claim unto the said Benedict Fenwick, his heirs & assigns forever, 5 acres of land (described) . . . for the erection, perpetual*

*maintenance and convenient accommodation of a Church, for the worship of God, according to the rites of the Holy Roman Catholic Church, by the Roman Catholics of Burlington and its vicinity, a Seminary and Parsonage, with all convenient out houses for the Accommodation of said Church, Seminary and Parsonage, and all such other Buildings, Establishments, or Institutions for the promotion of Piety, Charity and Learning, as may from time to time be erected on the premises under the direction of the Bishop for the time being of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Boston, or of such other Roman Catholic Diocese as the Town of Burlington and its vicinity may hereafter be attached to. . . . And I, the said Archibald W Hyde, . . . will have no right, title or claim to the premises.*

*Dated the first day of November, 1830.'*<sup>19</sup>

Fortunately Bishop Fenwick made another entry in his diary following the execution of the above deed and it serves to dispel all doubt:

*"December 8th. Understood that a Mr. Archibald W Hyde, a Protestant lawyer of Burlington had forwarded to me the Deed of 5 acres of land near the College which he intended as a donation in behalf of the Catholic cause in Burlington - went to his house to thank him for it. Afterward went to view the premises - found the Lot situated just as I would have wished for a Church. The situation being sufficiently central;'*

We can only conclude that the \$500.00 was never paid, but stated in the deed to ensure the Bishop's legal rights to the property. It was sometimes difficult for the Catholic pastors to acquire land in those days, especially in instances where there was prejudice against the Catholic Church.

Into this state of affairs came an interlude, short, but tremendously important to the survival of a Catholic community among the French Canadians of the Burlington area. They had the services of a resident French priest from June 1, 1834 to October 12, 1835.

The Society for the Propagation of the Faith had now been in existence for two years at Lyon, France, and in September 1832, Bishop Fenwick wrote to Mr. Pelagaud, one of the more active members of its Council, to request French-speaking priests for his diocese, which still included the six New England States. Mr. Pelagaud in turn wrote to the founder of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Fr. Marie-Joseph-Pierre Coudrin, on Picpus Street in Paris. Fr. Coudrin responded that he would send two priests but that they must be assigned so that they would not be separated for long periods. There was much delay and several letters while the problem was

discussed because Bishop Fenwick wanted to place one of the priests at the missions for the Passamaquoddies and the Penobscots in Maine, and the other at Burlington to serve the French Canadians in a wide area of the state. Fr. Coudrin never retreated from his stand that it was a rule of their order that their members should be at least two in the same residence and not separated for long periods. Also, it seems to have been closer to the spirit of the Picpus Fathers to work for the "*conversion of infidels*" rather than to minister to the faithful.

Finally, on the feast of St. Anne, Friday, July 26, 1833, at 5:00 AM, two priests embarked on LA CREOLE at Le Havre. They were Edmond Louis Demillier, age 30, who was to be the superior of the mission to the two Abnaki tribes, and Amable Francois Germain Petithomme, age 36, whose services were intended for the Penobscots of that mission, but who was reassigned by Bishop Fenwick to Burlington. In his role as superior, it was Fr. Demillier who reported to Fr. Coudrin for himself and for Fr. Petithomme. The priest who housed them at Le Havre supplied them with many of the necessities for their future work. He located an altar stone containing the relics of St. James the Greater, the first martyred apostle. It was accompanied by a certificate signed by the Archbishop of Paris, Monseigneur DuBelloy.

On the trip of 28 days, there were nine Catholics, among whom were the wife of the Captain, and Pierre Alexandre Kielchen, the Russian Consul, with his wife and three children. The Kielchens had become Catholic only six months previously and were very zealous. They travelled to Burlington in 1834, as evidenced by the Church Register kept by Fr. Petithomme.<sup>20</sup>

The two missionaries arrived in Boston, August 23, 1833 and went on to Maine. Their remarks on customs in Boston indicate that culture shock was not confined to poor unsophisticated French Canadians.

*"They (the Bostonians) do not know soup. Bread is a luxury. Wine is even more scarce- one little glass of Madeira a week. Coffee is not scarce but one must know in advance that it is coffee, for it has neither the taste nor the color. Same with chocolate. Much use is made of beer and cider. Fish is plentiful and excellent. The city of Boston is very beautiful. All the streets have sidewalks; they are straight but badly paved with loose cobblestones. The houses are superb, many of granite which is sawed like marble. Only one church for the 10 or 12 thousand Catholics, nearly all Irish immigrants and consequently quite poor. This*

19. Abbreviated from "Land Records, Town of Burlington," Volume 10, p. 7 (Nov. 1, 1830).

20. St. Joseph Church Register of Baptisms (1834), pp. 6 & 8.

church is the Cathedral of the Holy Cross. The Protestants have 5 temples, chiefly belonging to the Unitarians who are high society.

We are forced to wear borrowed "cravates," because we cannot wear the ones we brought with us. Here the clergy are allowed to wear only black or white ones, and on Sunday, white only. Everything is expensive. What costs 8 or 10 sous in France costs 50 sous in Boston. A costume, without vest or pants, costs 100 to 125 francs. The costume is black but cassocks are not worn outside the house. You can see, Father, that we are quite embarrassed and restricted ("genes") and that it is prudent to be well equipped before undertaking the voyage.'<sup>21</sup>

Fr. Amable's stay among the Indians terminated May 3, 1834, when he returned from a trip among them to find a letter from Bishop Fenwick directing him to begin a mission along the St. Lawrence River and in the villages where there were French people in the Champlain Valley. He left May 7, stopped in Boston to see Bishop Fenwick, and reached Burlington by June 1, as evidenced by his entries in the Church Register, where he became the first resident missionary priest to the French Canadians. Shortly after his arrival he became seriously ill and received the last Sacraments. This occurred between July 6 and 27 since this was the only period of any length when he did not record baptisms, marriages or deaths. The Kielchen family from Boston was vacationing in Vermont; Mrs. Kielchen became the nurse for Fr. Petithomme. This explains the otherwise puzzling appearance of such a name in St. Joseph Church Register. C.E. Kielchen acted as godmother at the baptism of Elizabeth Charron, age 24 or 25, on September 14, 1834, at "l'église Ste. Marie;" in Burlington. Fr. Amable Petithomme was both minister and godfather. Ten days later he rehabilitated the marriage of the same woman. On September 24, Mrs. C.E. Kielchen and Fanny Kielchen were witnesses of two separate marriages. Pierre Alexandre Kielchen was godfather on August 27, for a baptism performed at "La Maison Bolduc;" in Vergennes where 11 baptisms took place.

Fr. Demillier continued to state his case in the letter of September 18, 1834, reporting that Fr. Amable was no longer with him, as the result of three extremely pressing letters from Bishop Fenwick, and that Fr. Amable had left Pleasant Point, Maine to carry out the Bishop's orders. He wrote further (in French): "His mission is more taxing than

mine, even though he is dealing only with French people and is in a city not far from Boston. Those who inhabit Burlington are the riff-raff (le rebut) of Canada. They are uneducated and without morals. They left their country to escape starvation or legal prosecution. An Irish priest who lived among them was never able to accomplish anything with them. They occupy a section of the city and are scattered in the countryside as far as Lake Champlain. M. Amable is nearer to the Indians than I am. The Iroquois are almost his neighbors.'<sup>21</sup> Fr. Demillier stated how hard it was for him to be alone, but that they felt they could not refuse the bishop. He asked for another priest or at least a lay brother to be with him. We must take into account that the above quotation represents Fr. Amable's first impressions, as perceived by Fr. Demillier, who was unhappy at being deprived of his companion. Both had recently arrived from Paris, where the characterization of "Les Filles du Roi" (Daughters of the King) in Canada, as the securings of the streets of Paris had developed. This attitude undoubtedly influenced their reflections.

The "Daughters of the King" were so called because the King of France had young marriageable girls recruited to go to Canada, marry and populate the country. Their passage was paid by the French government and some of them at least were given doweries by the King. One of their chief early detractors was Baron de la Hontan, a young military adventurer from France, who was 17 upon arrival in Canada and wrote one of his most damaging letters that year. He later published his letters as a book, a best seller in Europe and reprinted 20 times. His characterization of "Les Filles du Roi" as prostitutes was requoted for years without research, according to Silvio Dumas in his "Les Filles du Roi en Nouvelle France."<sup>22</sup> The last of these young women arrived in New France in the summer of 1673. In all, they accounted for over 15 percent of the French inhabitants of the territory and became the ancestors of nearly all of us who trace our roots through that part of America.

To quote from Elmer Courteau in his listing of these young women in *Lost in Canada*?:

*"The women came from every economic and social class. Many were orphans and widows. Many were penniless. The majority were from larger towns and the adaptation to the very primitive living conditions of the wilderness must have been extremely difficult . . . but most of them, amazingly, adapted well, and . . . today can count among their descendants more than 5 million Canadians and Americans 'spread from sea to shining sea' . . . Except for approximately 80*

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21. Letter of Fr. Demillier to Fr. Coudrin of Sept. 18, 1834. Found in the Archives of La Congregation des Sacres Coeurs de Jesus et de Marie, Rome, Italy. The letter is included in "Memoires pour servir a l'Histoire de la Congregation des Sacres Coeurs," Troisieme Partie, ca. 1840, by P. Hilarion Lucas, p. 336. The letter itself is written by Pere Edmond (Demillier) 30 August 1833, from Boston.

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22. Silvio Dumas: *Les Filles du roi en Nouvelle France: Etudes historique avec repertoire biographique*. (Societe Historique de Quebec; Quebec City; 1972), Cahiers d'histoire, no. 24, p. 3.

*filles du roi, the origin of all the known daughters of the king ... is known, and 52+ percent ... came from just two provinces of France, the Ile-de-France and Normandy.*<sup>23</sup> (Ile-de-France is the region circling Paris.)

The allegation that these women, as a group, were of low moral character is vigorously denied by Dumas. Many were chaperoned by nuns on the voyage, lived at the convents and prepared for marriage.

The remarks made by Frs. Amable and Demillier did not go down in history with as persistent a reflection on the French Canadians of the Burlington area, but no doubt there was some basis for them. We should remember that it was the usual fate of immigrants to be scorned by those of the ruling culture. The qualities and accomplishments that made the immigrants respected in their homeland had no value in the eyes of those already entrenched in the new land. The newcomers often suffered loss of dignity, job opportunities and self-respect.

It is more agreeable to quote from Robert Rumilly, in translation:

*"At first sight the poorest of a nation - those incapable of earning a living- are the ones who emigrate. On the contrary, often they are the most daring, the most energetic; who face the unknown and accept the risk, instead of bewailing their lot. The emigrant Canadians wish to earn their bread, but also to practice their religion."*<sup>24</sup>

Certainly there must have been those who fit Fr. Amable's description. In fact, Bishop Fenwick in 1839, writing to the Coadjutor of Quebec in regard to a dispensation, said: *"They have lately moved into Burlington, at this time the refugium peccatorum, and there live as man and wife .."* Rev. Jean Frederic Audet of Winooski expressed the same thought more mildly in French: *"From 1830 to 1840, there were unfortunately in Winooski as everywhere else some Canadian families who did not always bring honor to their compatriots."*<sup>25</sup> Granting the presence of those fleeing from justice or from political persecution, the uneducated and those without morals, should we not judge the French Canadians by their accomplishments as well? Just as the Catholic Church flourished and grew strong in early Canada in the midst of an immigrant population, so

23. Elmer Courteau: "The King's Daughters" from genealogical publication *Lost in Canada?* A series of nine articles in Vol. II, No. 2, April 1976 through Vol. IV, No. 2, April 1978, especially p. 86.

24. Robert Rumilly, p. 28.

25. Rev. Jean Frederic Audet, *Histoire de la congregation canadienne de Winooski, au Vermont* (Montreal; l'Institution des sourds-muets; 1906).

also did a strong French Catholic community develop in Burlington from those early immigrants who struggle through two failures in establishing their own Church to eventual success in 1850, when St. Joseph Parish was established. This parish gave birth to two more French Canadian parishes - St. Francis Xavier, Winooski in 1868 and St. Anthony in Lakeside, Burlington in 1902.

Although the majority of the French Canadian immigrants were poor and uneducated and had to make the support of their families their first concern, they persisted in trying to found a French Canadian religious center. They were assisted, even though temporarily, by the presence of notable figures, such as R.S.M. Bouchette and Ludge Duvernay, educated and politically active persons. They were also encouraged by the efforts of Fr. Pierre Mari Mignault and the missionaries who came from time to time.

When Fr. Petithomme arrived in 1834, his efforts to serve the French Canadians appear to have been heroic and fruitful. He came into a situation already established where the first and only Catholic Church was largely an Irish parish with an Irish pastor, Fr. Jeremiah O'Callaghan. Most of the records left by Fr. Petithomme were of administration of the sacraments at St. Mary Church. Fr. O'Callaghan had arrived in 1830. St. Mary Church was blessed and dedicated by Bishop Fenwick on September 9, 1832. There are no drawings or sketches of this church, but Bishop Fenwick's diary reveals that it was Gothic style. It was on the land donated by Col. Archibald Hyde, as mentioned above, at a site presently in the center of St. Joseph Cemetery. The church was intended for both the Irish and the French, a somewhat impractical arrangement since the French did not understand English and Fr. O'Callaghan did not speak French.

When Fr. Amable Petithomme arrived, services for the two congregations were held separately. Problems were caused, however, by traditional and cultural differences in the two congregations and the two priests. Physically, Fr. Petithomme belied his name, which means "little man." He was described as massive, with a powerful voice, an imperious tone and abrupt gestures, all of which he sometimes used forcefully and threateningly. His courage was unshakeable. Fr. Mouly,<sup>26</sup> who made that characterization speculated that it was hard to imagine the "Irish priest" preaching with such vigor. Fr. Amable always wore his soutane (cassock) in public. He wrote to his superior remarking with obvious disapproval that Fr. O'Callaghan appeared in public both "en clergyman" (in clerical suit and sometimes in civilian clothes and celebrated only Low Masses. Fr. Amable sang High Masses on Sundays and also sang Vespers, of which he stated that Fr. O'Callaghan had no knowledge. Fr. O'Callaghan charged a fee for baptisms

26. Mouly, p. 12.

which shocked Fr. Amable. Fr. Amable rented pews, a practice Fr. O'Callaghan publicly condemned. Another Irish priest, Rev. John Brady, came to the parish that October, a man whom Fr. Amable had known in Paris, but his presence did nothing but emphasize the culture gap. Fr. Brady was in the area for only a short time.

The missionary work continued. Fr. Amable recorded 107 baptisms by the end of 1834. It is not surprising that few of these were newborns. In fact, Bishop Fenwick had told Fr. Amable in July to baptize children even if the parents were not married, but to be sure that the godparents were good Christians. In addition to the baptisms that he recorded at St. Mary Church or in the environs of Burlington, Fr. Amable made at least 18 trips out of Burlington, including Charlotte, Fairfax, Grand Isle, Hinesburg, Milton, St. George, Swanton and Vergennes.

Fr. Amable (which means "lovable") had a suitable first name as he was amiable and popular, having won the friendship of Col. Archibald Hyde. Fr. Mouly credits Col. Hyde's ultimate conversion to Fr. Petithomme. Col. Hyde had other similar friendships and was well-disposed towards Catholics, but he did not become a Catholic until the end of his life in 1847.

On July 28, 1835, Fr. Amable wrote to Fr. Coudrin, his superior in Paris:

*"Moreover, seeing that I had built with my own hands with the help of a few Catholics a small house in Burlington, and from an old school house, had made a pretty little church . . . :<sup>27</sup>*

No land records have been found to help us identify these structures, but there seems to be no reason to doubt that they did exist. We have Fr. Amable's own statement in a photocopy of his letter. Also, Fr. Amable is described as handy with tools, and there are accounts of his having built other structures elsewhere. He stated that the Russian Consul in Boston had provided furnishings for the modest rectory in Burlington.

During the early part of his stay in Burlington, Fr. Amable would record in the Church Register the name of the town where he was administering baptism and the name of the owner of the house that he was using. A baptismal record of November 7, 1834,<sup>28</sup> states that it was

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27. Letter from Fr. Amable to Fr. Coudrin, July 28, 1835. This is the most direct reference that Fr. Petithomme makes to the possibility of a chapel (church) having existed on Prospect Hill, possibly in the Old Mt. Calvary Cemetery, which will be referred to subsequently in the manuscript. Found in the Archives of La Congregation des Sacres Coeurs de Jesus et de Marie, Rome, Italy. (cf. above).

28. St. Joseph Church Register of Baptisms (1834), p. 11.

*"dans ma maison:"* There is, however, no record that states that any marriages were performed other than in St. Mary Church.

To add to the credibility that there was a chapel as well as a rectory, Fr. Mouly mentioned that Fr. Amable received a masterpiece from France to decorate his chapel. The donor was Abbe Louis-Joseph Desjardins who had obtained it from his brother, Abbe Philippe Desjardins. The latter had saved the masterpiece, along with several others, from the public auctions during the French Revolution and had sent them to Canada where Abbe Louis-Joseph was living. The nature of this masterpiece remains uncertain. Searches on the subject have been inconclusive.

In the letter of July 28, 1835, Fr. Amable reported also that he erected a cross on April 11, 1835, the first in the Burlington area. It was 36 feet tall and three feet across and was put on its base at ten o'clock at night, amid predictions that it would be vandalized by morning. The next day, Palm Sunday, the procession wound its way to the cross triumphantly. Fr. Amable said the cross was erected in a cemetery which he had established. His register shows six burials in 1834 and five in 1835 but in *"Cimetiere Ste. Marie:"*

Another letter by Fr. Amable stated:

*"... and as I am the only priest who sings the Mass, the people, who are very much pleased by the singing and the ceremonies of the church, come crowding to my chapel:<sup>29</sup>*

This small chapel was the first place of worship specifically for the French Canadians in the Burlington area. It was constructed by July 1835. Fr. Petithomme gives no clue to its location but other indications suggest that it stood in what later became Mt. Calvary Cemetery, on additional land owned by Col. Archibald Hyde.

We know that Fr. Petithomme and Col. Hyde were good friends. In light of later evidence, it now seems likely that Col. Hyde allowed Fr. Petithomme to convert a structure on this land south of Archibald Street for use as a chapel, which would account for the lack of land records.

Other convincing evidence of the location of the chapel appears in a letter of December 29, 1850, by the first pastor of St. Joseph Church, Rev. Joseph Quevillon.<sup>30</sup> The 1850 church had been opened on December 22. Evidently prior to that date Bishop Fitzpatrick of Boston had administered Confirmation to the French Canadian children, for Fr. Quevillon wrote:

*"He took the trouble to come to our ancient chapel and gave confirmation to the Canadian children:"*

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29. Amable, *loc. cit.*, p. 364.

30. Letter of Fr. Quevillon to Bishop Fitzpatrick, Dec. 29, 1850. Found in the Archives of the Archdiocese of Montreal.

What ancient chapel would there be in that area if not the 1835 chapel?

Old Mt. Calvary Cemetery was established in 1878. In 1872, the records of the newly formed young ladies' organization of St. Joseph Parish, "*Les Enfants de Marie*;" disclose that Fr. Cardinal gave them "*his chapel in the cemetery*" and they and Fr. Cloarec had it restored.

On November 15, 1873, Bishop deGoesbriand gave permission to Les Enfants de Marie to have a Mass said in this chapel on November 21. This organization held its elections "*dans la chapelle du cimetiére*" until 1876.

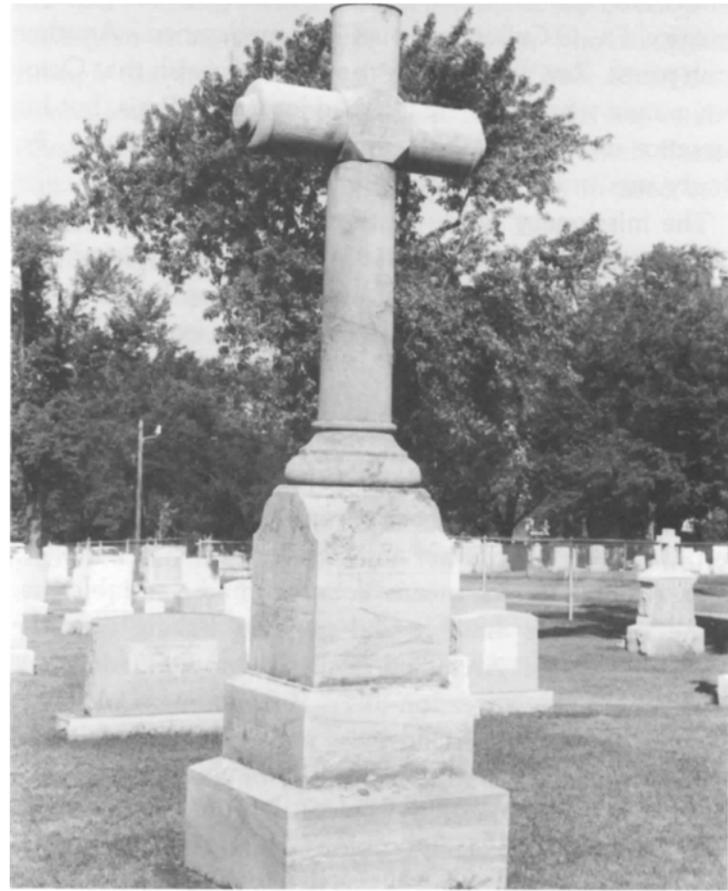
The use of this chapel for the French Canadians before the opening of the 1850 church is substantiated in an extract from the diary of Bishop Fitzpatrick of Boston:

*"Dec 2, Monday. The Bishop gives confirmation in the hall occupied as a chapel by the Canadian Catholics. Are confirmed in all 73, of whom 36 males 37 females. Rev. Mr. Quevillon, who was sent to this mission some months since by the Bishop of Montreal, appears to be a very zealous and efficient clergyman, though somewhat odd in manner and appearance. The Canadians are now building in Burlington a very neat brick church which is already roofed. The Bishop spends the remainder of the week in Burlington and returns to Boston on Saturday, Dec 7:"*

In 1892, Fr. Cloarec recorded in the *Annales* of the parish that Rev. Francois Yvinec was buried in the "*chapel in the cemetery*:" No evidence of this chapel remains in the cemetery or the cemetery records, including information of its dismantling. The above date is the last evidence of its existence. Fr. Yvinec's grave is in the northeast section of the cemetery and is marked by a large monument. Five other Breton priests are buried with him in Lots 855 and 856 in the cemetery plan of 1906, designated as the St. Joseph Church Lot. The next burial in this lot was in 1902, with no mention of a chapel. It seems likely that the chapel was dismantled in 1900 along with the 1850 church. This would mean that Fr. Petithomme's chapel lasted 65 years.

Fr. Petithomme worked for the faithful but he also sought conversions. During his mission in Burlington, he baptized 202 persons, gave First Communion to 114 and instructed 45 Catechumens. In early 1835, Bishop Fenwick suggested that Fr. Petithomme solicit funds in Canada to build a church in Vergennes but this effort never materialized. A wooden chapel was built in that village, however, in 1845 and a church in 1874.

In the letter to Fr. Coudrin on July 28, 1835, Fr. Amable revealed that he had become unhappy in Burlington. As early as December 19, 1834, he had published a statement in French in the *Burlington Free Press* denying a calumny about his demand for money from a penitent before granting absolution. Such a charge would have been galling to a priest with Fr. Amable's attitude about fees. From this let-



Monument to the Breton priests buried in Mt. Calvary Cemetery. Considered to be the site of the chapel built in 1834-35 by Rev. Amable Petithomme, 55.CC., for the French Canadians. Rev. Francois Yvinec was buried in the chapel in 1892

ter, it is clear that things were going badly between him and Fr. O'Callaghan. The High Masses made Fr. Amable popular with the people but not with the Irish pastor. Years earlier in 1819, Fr. O'Callaghan had consulted Fr. Hilarion Lucas, Fr. Amable's religious superior, regarding usury and had written a book on the subject, which he claimed to have been approved by Picpus House, the Sulpician House in Paris.

Fr. Amable continued in his letter that he believed he had fulfilled his mission in Burlington - he had "*planted the Cross*:" He asked for a new territory or retirement. He asked specifically to be sent to Baie Ste. Marie, only 50 lieues (about 124 miles) from Pleasant Point, Maine, where Fr. Demillier was stationed. He had been invited to minister to an Acadian parish. He and Fr. Demillier would be able to see each other weekly and hear each other's confession. He said he could not confess to the Irish priest but had confessed to Fr. Mignault, the Vicar General of Boston. He concluded by saying that he would be traveling through Boston on his way back from a meeting in Baltimore and hoped to pick up from Mr. Kielchen, Fr. Coudrin's response. He added that Mr. Kielchen, "*is our greatest friend and protector, for without him I do not know how we would have managed*:"<sup>31</sup>

31. Amable, loc. cit.

An earlier development was the arrival of a protest from Fr. Coudrin to Bishop Fenwick because his two missionaries had been separated. The bishop responded on May 18, 1835, that he would send Fr. Amable to the Penobscots at Old Town, Maine. He made it clear that his only reason for so doing was to conform to the rule of the religious order that there be at least two members at each mission, for mutual confession and support.

Fr. Amable left Burlington for Boston, October 12, 1835, in response to the bishop's summons, and by November 1 was among the Penobscots. The assignment did not really make the two missionaries available to each other since they were separated by 160 miles of difficult forest travel. For Fr. Demillier the situation was bearable. He had a facility for the Indian tongue, was able to preach and hear confessions and made progress in learning English, a second language for the Indians. Fr. Amable, however, had no talent for either language and considered learning the Indian language an unnecessary effort. Few of the Indians spoke French and he had to use an interpreter for confessions and sermons, and the few Indians who could interpret were not always the most trustworthy. Fr. Amable's difficulty with English is apparent from his records of administering the sacraments to the Irish while he was among the Penobscots.

For these reasons, and because one Indian threatened his life, he asked for a transfer. Simultaneously, he was being invited repeatedly by his friend, L'Abbe Jean Sigogne, to

take the parish at Baie Ste. Marie. Bishop Fenwick reluctantly granted Fr. Amable his "*Exeat*" so that he could leave the diocese. With the approval of Fr. Demillier, Fr. Amable presumed on Fr. Coudrin's concurrence and left for Baie Ste. Marie to serve the Acadians in Nova Scotia, June 4, 1836. Here he had great success among the Acadians, as did Fr. Demillier among the Passamaquoddies, but both missionaries were needed in another fast-developing area. For various reasons, Fr. Demillier did not leave his mission but died among the Passamaquoddies in 1843. Fr. Amable was sent to Valparaiso, Chile, then to a mission in California, and back to Valparaiso where he died in 1855.

Clearly Bishop Fenwick had valued the services of these two missionaries and had been a friend to them as well. With his facility in French, he enjoyed playing on words, saying he wished he had "*Des milliers de Petits Hammes*" (Millions of Little Men).

It is particularly fortunate for St. Joseph Parish that Fr. Amable's register of baptisms, marriages and deaths was returned to the parish. Fr. Amable must have taken these Church Registers with him when he went among the Penobscots, since he used these to record the Indian and Irish data of Old Town, Maine, until June 1836, almost 8 months after he had left Burlington. Eventually, these Church Registers were returned to Fr. O'Callaghan at St. Mary Church in Burlington, Vermont. They are currently part of the St. Joseph Parish Church Records.