

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE BROTHERS OF HOLY CROSS 1982-2  
IN CALIFORNIA: 1941-1965

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1941 - 1965

In August of 1965 I completed a Master's paper for the Department of History at the University of Santa Clara in California as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts. The topic of the paper was "The Beginnings of the Brothers of the Holy Cross in California 1941-1955". I had worked on the paper during the summers of 1963 and 1964 and completed it in 1965. The paper had six chapters and an introduction, one each on St. Anthony High School of Long Beach, Notre Dame High School, Sherman Oaks, Rancho San Antonio, Chatsworth, St. Francis High School, Mountain View, and an epilogue.

In the introduction I gave some background on the Congregation of the Holy Cross and on the societies of priests and brothers. In the epilogue I pointed out that before 1940 the Congregation was primarily a midwestern and eastern institution but that after World War II Holy Cross took part in the general western expansion that was affecting many other Americans. It is significant, I believe, that the Brothers first began to work in Southern California (Long Beach and Sherman Oaks) which was the area of California that was first affected by the rapid post-war growth. I can relate to this growth since my family had midwestern origins and ended up in Southern California in 1955.

My personal interest in this area of the transition from one region of the country to another also interests me because I currently reside in Texas and, in fact, work for the Church in Texas and of course that State is a part of the sunbelt region to which many northerners and easterners are migrating at the present time. The Church of the south

and the southwest is growing very rapidly and there is a significant need for additional institutional programs such as schools in our region. Houston, for example, is now the fourth largest American city. The Church there is growing very rapidly and there is a need for assistance from religious communities. The Southern Province of Priests does have two parishes although one is staffed by Eastern Province member

In the next few pages I will summarize the events that brought the Holy Cross Brothers to California to establish the high schools and one boys' home that we currently staff. I will add a few words about one institution that I did not touch in my original paper -- that of Moreau High School in Hayward.

There are many individuals, of course, who have been involved in the establishment of these institutions. One Holy Cross Brother that I mentioned in the paper several times and whom I believe had a greater impact on the growth of the brothers in the 1940's and '50's than is generally recognized is Brother William Mang.

In the view of many people the individual who was most responsible for the brothers' progress is Brother Ephrem O'Dwyer. No doubt Brother Ephrem's tenure as Superior, Provincial Councillor, and Provincial up until the time of his retirement was significant. But as I have been told many times by those who were on the inside in community administration in those days, it was brother William who worked behind the scenes to establish the policies that made it possible for Brother Ephrem to accomplish the remarkable things that he did. Those of us who studied under Brother William Mang at St. Edward's University in Austin hold him in a very special place. Not only was he a brilliant scholar

and in my personal opinion an excellent teacher, but also he was in every sense an outstanding religious and a fine gentlemen. Many of us who knew him primarily as a master teacher felt a very special loss when he died in 1965.

I hope that some day the memory of Brother William Mang can be fittingly memorialized by the Holy Cross Brothers, especially those in the Southwest Province. Within the last few months the new President's house at St. Edward's has been named Mang House in honor of Brother William.

ST. ANTHONY HIGH SCHOOL - LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA

In my chapter on St. Anthony's I pointed out that the Holy Cross Brothers first arrived in California in 1850 when Father Soren sent four brothers to search for gold in order to alleviate the financial problems at Notre Dame. Fortunately, the later efforts on the part of the brothers in California were much more successful than that disastrous expedition in 1850 which the Catta Brothers chronicled in their first volume on Father Moreau.

Two men in addition to Brother William Mang were primarily responsible for the Brothers going to Long Beach to take over the boys' department of St. Anthony's in 1941. Msgr. Bernard J. Dolan was the pastor of St. Anthony's for many years. Msgr. Dolan, who was often referred to as "The bishop of Long Beach" was a very good friend of the brothers and, in fact, was honored by St. Edward's University with an honorary doctorate just a few years before his death. Msgr. Dolan knew Fr. John O'Hara, CSC who was later to become the Cardinal Archbishop

of Philadelphia, but it was Fr. John Cavanaugh, the former President of Notre Dame, who put Msgr. Dolan in touch with Holy Cross Provincial in 1940.

Evidently, Msgr. Dolan and Fr. Cavanaugh were having a casual conversation one evening in Southern California when Cavanaugh picked up the phone and called the Provincial Father Thomas Steiner, asking him if any brothers were available for the 1940-41 school year. Br. William Mang later recalled that Fr. Steiner's reaction was "...my goodness, John, we can't do this sort of thing overnight." The brothers, in fact, did arrive in Long Beach for the '41-42 school year, which was, of course, the same year that WW II broke out.

The first brother principal of the Boys Department at St. Anthony's was Brother Hyacinth ~~S~~<sup>Sn</sup>atecki. The ordinary of the diocese at the time was Archbishop John J. Cantwell. There were four other brothers on the staff that first year.

It is very interesting that from the very beginning the brothers were interested in establishing another institution in Southern California. The San Fernando Valley, the area where ultimately Notre Dame High School was established, was viewed by the brothers within a few weeks of their arrival in Long Beach.

Because of the onset of WW II those first years at St. Anthony's were very difficult ones for the brothers and the rest of the staff. St. Anthony's High School, However, has continued to thrive in a radically changing area in Southern California. Although the school has always had a clientele that was middle and lower middle class, in recent



years it has distinguished itself as a successful inner city institution. The current staff and its principal, Brother Donald Blauvelt are operating what is probably one of the best secondary institutions in the entire southern California area.

Another interesting fact about St. Anthony's high school is that there have been extraordinarily large numbers of vocations to the priesthood and religious life from the institution. The Southwest Province, for example, has several members who are graduates of St. Anthony's, including Brother Stephen Walsh, the President of St. Edward's University in Austin. The school has provided an even larger number of diocesan priests for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and several other dioceses.

St. Anthony's High School in Long Beach has probably done a better job than most of the institutions in the Congregation in providing quality secondary education to those in our society that generally have a difficult time achieving that. To that extent the men who have worked at St. Anthony's from our community have probably fulfilled the objective of Fr. Moreau better than most of us.

#### NOTRE DAME HIGH SCHOOL - SHERMAN OAKS, CALIFORNIA - 1947

The brothers of the United States Province early on decided that a community-owned or property school in Southern California would be desirable. St. Anthony's of course was a parish or diocesan school.

A number of possible locations for the new school were considered. The ones that we know about were in Van Nuys, Huntington Park, Santa Monica, The Wilshire-Beverly Hills District, (on Fairfax Avenue across

from LaBrea Park), Encino, and the site of the original campus of Chapman College on Western Avenue in Los Angeles.

All of those sites, of course, were passed over in favor of the one where the school is currently located at the intersection of Riverside Drive and Woodman Avenue in Sherman Oaks.

In 1944 Brother William Mang went to California and looked at the Riverside Drive site. At the time it was the location of the dairy farm referred to as the "Chase" farm. During this period there was some question as to whether the new school would be staffed by the Holy Cross Brothers or the Holy Cross Fathers or a combination. In January of 1945 Father Steiner, the Provincial, Fr. Cavanaugh, and Br. William Mang, visited the Riverside Drive location and made a firm decision to attempt to purchase it. Overnight the price of the farm jumped from \$39,000 to \$65,000 evidently because the owners found out that officials from the University of Notre Dame were looking at the site. The community administrators decided that that was too much and decided to look around for other sites, specifically, one on Riverside Drive, which was directly across from McKinley Home, an Orphanage, and one located in St. Charles Borromeo Parish in north Hollywood.

In June 1945, the brothers found out that the acreage just west of the Chase dairy farm was available for \$45,000 and they quickly got \$5,000 in cash together and on July 12, 1945 the purchase was completed. The property was actually sold by Lewis & Belle Greenspan to the University of Notre Dame.

An architect was engaged and plans were drawn for a school which would be modeled on the California mission architectural style. The

first classroom building, the Riverside Building, in fact, was modeled after the Santa Barbara Mission and has 21 arches, representing 21 Spanish Missions which extend from San Diego up the coast of California. The correspondence of the period reflects that the actual cost of the construction of the original building and the brothers' house far exceeded the expectations of the community.

It was of course during the chapter which took place in the summer of 1945 that the Congregation of Holy Cross was divided into two societies -- one of priests and one of brothers. Part of the financial arrangement that was made between the two societies was the provision of \$1 million in cash to the brothers. That money was divided equally between two new institutions which were underway, Notre Dame High School in West Haven, Connecticut, and Notre Dame High School in Sherman Oaks.

A ceremonial first shovel-full of dirt was turned in August of 1946 and on June 1, 1947 Brother Rupert Poudreau was appointed the first principal. The school opened on Monday, September 15, 1947, with 120 students. There were two brothers, a priest chaplain, and an athletic coach on the staff.

Over the years the fortunes of Notre Dame High School have reflected the fortunes of Catholic Education in general. The school's enrollment grew to a peak of nearly 1300 in the early 1960's and then dipped nearly in half during the tumultuous '70's.

At the present time there is a steady increase in the enrollment



and, in fact, the administrators indicate that the physical plant could not accomodate many more students than are actually enrolled.

The area around the school obviously has changed very much in the last 30 years and because of the obsolescence of some of the buildings there has been some talk recently of selling the very valuable property and relocating the school at another site..

The school has produced a number of prominent graduates, including a former Speaker of the California Assembly, as well as many successful professional athletes and even a number of hollywood celebrities. A number of the parents of Notre Dame students have been famous as well.

Like St. Anthony's in Long Beach, the school has produced a number of religious vocations to the priesthood and religious life. For some reason despite the fact that over 50 graduates have joined the Holy Cross Brothers, only one is currently still a member of the community.

#### RANCHO SAN ANTONIO - CHATSWORTH, CALIFORNIA - 1953

Although the Brothers took control of the boy's home called Rancho San Antonio in 1953, the story of the institution goes back many years. From 1933 to 1944, the Catholic Big Brothers of Los Angeles operated "Joseph Scott Home for Boys" in Redondo Beach. Joe Scott was a very prominent Catholic layman in Southern California in the '30's and '40's. The home had several locations before it finally settled at the site in Chatsworth where it is now located.

The first Holy Cross contact with the institution was in the person of Father John J. Cavanaugh, CSC. In 1941 he wrote to Mr. Scott indicating that Holy Cross Brothers might be available to staff the institution.

Scott responded that no thought had been given to bringing the brothers to staff the institution. He stated "our institution is so small and our finances so limited that I doubt if we could see our way to entertain your gracious invitation."

Scott made contact with the Brothers again in 1942 and in fact one of the staff members from St. Anthony's High School (Brother Agatho Heiser) actually visited the institution and provided a seven-page report to Father Steiner and Brother William Mang. Brother Agatho's report brought out the unfavorable aspects of the institution, including the fact that it was 35 miles from Los Angeles and "thoroughly isolated". Evidently the physical facilities were very inadequate. There was continued communication between the Catholic Big Brothers and Mr. Scott and the Brothers of Holy Cross through the 1940's.

From 1943 to 1950 the Brothers of St. John of God administered the institution and the Catholic Big Brothers phased out of the picture. They deeded the property to the Diocese of Los Angeles in 1944.

It was about that time that the Knights of Columbus agreed to raise funds annually for physical improvements.

In June of 1951, Archbishop James Francis McIntyre of Los Angeles presided at the first graduation exercises of Notre Dame High School in Sherman Oaks. During the dinner that followed the ceremony, Brother Rupert, the principal of Notre Dame, suggested to the Archbishop the possibility of the Brothers of Holy Cross taking over the management of Rancho San Antonio. Brother Rupert's interest in boys' work stemmed from his eleven years of service at Gibault School of Terre Haute, Indiana. The Archbishop, a few days later, asked Brother Rupert to

contact the Provincial, Brother Ephren O'Dwyer concerning the interest of the brothers.

Archbishop McIntyre actually requested the brothers to take over Rancho in December of 1951. They immediately responded that because of the manpower situation the Brothers couldn't possibly take over the institution until the summer of 1953.

Negotiations between the Archdiocese and the Brothers continued. The Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles, Timothy Manning, was also the Chancellor of the Archdiocese and carried on the negotiations on behalf of the Archdiocese.

At the heart of the negotiations was the question of whether the Brothers would be in sole control of the administration of the institution or whether there would be a board of directors. In February of 1953 the Archdiocese agreed to all of the requests of the Brothers. Brother Carlos Dolan was named the first administrator of Rancho San Antonio and he arrived at the institution on July 14, 1953.

Although the relationship of the brothers to the Archdiocese and the Board of Directors is somewhat different now, Brothers still staff the institution. Brother John Crowe is the current Executive Director.

#### ST. FRANCIS HIGH SCHOOL - MOUNTAIN VIEW - 1955

In the spring of 1954 the Superior General of the Congregation of Holy Cross, Very Rev. Christopher J. O'Toole was in Mountain View, California visiting the chaplain of the Medical Mission Sisters, Father Lawrence Broughal. Father O'Toole was informed that the Holy Cross

Sisters were planning to open a high school for girls in the area and that there was an interest on the part of the community to have a school for boys as well. Father O'Toole informed the Provincial, Brother Ephrem O'Dwyer of the need and correspondence which led up to the establishment of St. Francis High School began.

One of the advantages that the community saw to the establishment of the institution was that it would be community-owned. Most of the schools staffed by the Holy Cross Brothers throughout the United States at that time were diocesan or parish schools. The Provincial Administration was interested in establishing institutions owned and totally controlled by the Holy Cross Brothers both for management and financial reasons. Negotiations for the establishment of St. Francis High School began in December 1955 between Brother Ephrem and the Archbishop of San Francisco, Most Rev. John Joseph Mitty.

On February 14 Brother Ephrem met with the Archbishop, Msgr. Leo T. Maher, the Archbishop's Secretary, and Msgr. James Brown, the Superintendent of Schools. It was agreed that the Archdiocese would give the Brothers of Holy Cross fourteen acres on Miramonte Avenue. Some six additional acres, including some buildings, would be purchased by the Brothers from the local parish. Brother Ephrem asked that a clause be added to the agreement that no additional high school be built in the Mountain View area until the enrollment at St. Francis reached 1,000. That was agreed to, but as later staff members at St. Francis found out, it was not adhered to. Later on, that provision was changed from 1,000 to 800 and another Catholic School, Archbishop



Mitty High School, was built close by. Brother Donatus Schmitz, who had just completed a term as principal of Notre Dame High School, West Haven, Connecticut, was sent to northern California to open St. Francis High School. He was assisted by several other brothers, including Brother Fisher Iwasko, who succeeded Brother Donatus the following year when he became the Provincial of the newly erected Midwest Province of Brothers.

One classroom building was constructed immediately and later on a complete campus was developed at the Miramonte site. There are few private or Catholic high schools anywhere whose physical plants compare to that of St. Francis. Several years ago the school went co-educational and under the leadership of its present principal, Brother Matthew Lyons, is enjoying an excellent reputation.

#### MOREAU HIGH SCHOOL - HAYWARD, CALIFORNIA

One other Holy Cross Brothers institution has been established in California since completion of my master's paper, of which this is a summary, that of Moreau High School in Hayward, California, in the Oakland Diocese.

Early in 1964, Bishop Floyd L. Begin, the bishop of the newly erected Diocese of Oakland, began discussions with the officials of the Southwest Province concerning the possibility of a high school for boys in the Hayward area. The Oakland Diocese had been created out of the Archdiocese of San Francisco.

Bishop Begin's original plan was to open three new high schools,



one in the Hayward area with the Brothers of the Holy Cross, one north-east of Oakland, also for boys, staffed by the Christian Brothers, and a third school for girls that would have been staffed by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet. The pastor of St. Clements parish in Hayward was very much interested in having both a boys' and girls' high school located within his parish boundaries.

The original site for the boys' school was approximately 3/4 mile south of the present campus and set back some distance from Mission Boulevard. The site at the time was a chicken ranch. When the architect began the soil and site study it was discovered that the property lay directly on the Hayward Fault. The building commission of the county refused to grant a building permit for any kind of multi-story educational structure. Since the plans called for a two-story classroom building plus a third floor faculty residence for the brothers, an alternate site had to be chosen. The diocese already owned the alternate site which was part of the existing Catholic cemetery to the north. The campus of Moreau High School, therefore, lies directly between the cemetery and the St. Clement's Church and school property.

In the school year of 1964-65, Br. Eagan Hunter, who was at that time the principal of St. Francis High School, in Mountain View, was the Province's representative to the Bishop and the architect. In the spring of 1964, Br. Fisher Iwasko, the former principal of St. Francis, was appointed the founding principal of the new school but because of his teaching duties in the south at Sherman Oaks, Br. Eagan continued to direct activities surrounding the establishment of Moreau until June 1965.

The original plan was to occupy the new building in the fall of 1965 but construction delays prevented that goal from being achieved. Instead, several classrooms at a neighboring Catholic grade school were used to begin classes for the newly -established Moreau high school. The administrative offices were established in a mobile home and the brothers resided in a rented house not far from the elementary school campus.

During the summer of 1966 the new building on Mission Boulevard was occupied and the brothers assigned to the school moved into the residence on the third floor.

As was the case with most schools begun during the turbulent mid-sixties, Moreau faced some financial and enrollment difficulties. The original plan to build two schools, one for boys and one for girls, was very quickly deemed unfeasible and so in the fall of 1970 the necessary modifications were made so that the school could become co-educational. That decision has been proven to have been an excellent one since the enrollment of Moreau High School today is over 1300 students.

After six years, Brother Fisher was succeeded by Brother Lawrence Young, who is now a priest of the Southern Province. Father Gordon Alcox, a priest of the Indiana Province, served as third principal and the current principal is Brother Joseph Connell.

Although the original plan was that the province would take over ownership of the facility at some future date, the original plan has been altered so that the Holy Cross Brothers continue to operate the school under diocesan ownership. There is a Board of Governors to

which the principal is accountable.

I believe that Moreau High School is the only institution operated by the Holy Cross Brothers which is named after the founder of the Congregation.

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In this paper I have attempted to summarize the master's paper I did at Santa Clara in 1965 and 1966. Perhaps that document will serve as a source of information for people in the future who might want to know exactly what personalities from among the Brothers of Holy Cross were involved in the establishment of these five institutions, all of which are still in operation under the direction of the Brothers.

An appropriate bibliography and references can be found in the original document.

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