

BEGINNINGS:
Holy Cross High School, Bandura, Bangladesh

1996-6

by

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This is the story of a school and the men who founded it. It is based on chronicles, reports, correspondence, and interviews and is, as far as possible, historically accurate. I have tried to make the story complete without being tedious because although it is history, I want to put the emphasis on the story.

I hope that this small part of the history of Holy Cross in Bengal will show the kind of men our congregation is made of and the things the Lord can accomplish even with weak men. The words of Pope Pius X to Father Gilbert Francais, Superior General, state the reason why I feel this story is important to Holy Cross.

"As for yourself and your religious, take heart and inspiration from the sign of Our loving care; and do for the Mission of Eastern Bengal whatever there is need of doing, remembering that for its sake your Institute with its constitutions and Rules were approved."

Rome

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I. The Main Building

The Bandura mission was established sometime after 1844 when the East Bengal Vicariate lost a civil court suit filed by the Portuguese Augustinians for the possession of the Hashnabad Church which is a mile from Bandura. The dispute began ten years earlier when Rome established the Vicariate Apostolic of Bengal and the Augustinians, based in Mylapore, refused to recognize it. Some pastors submitted to the Vicariate's jurisdiction but others went to court and won back possession of their churches. In 1845 the Vicariate was divided into two vicariates, Calcutta and Chittagong (East Bengal). The first record of an independent mission at Bandura is in December of that year when the new bishop, Thomas Oliffe, stopped at Bandura to lay the foundation stone for the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. A report to the Propaganda Fide in Rome, made in 1866, gives the establishment date for the mission as 1853, the year the Congregation of Holy Cross came to East Bengal, so it is not clear whether the church Bishop Oliffe began was ever finished. Benoit Mercier, C.S.C. was ordained in Dacca on September 9, 1854 and he was assigned to care for the churches of Tumilia, Solepore, and Bandura. At the time, each village was about a day's journey from Dacca but Tumilia and Solepore are northwest and Bandura is southeast of the city. It wasn't until 1861 that Bandura got a resident priest.

In 1869 and probably as early as 1853, the church at Bandura was called St. Francis Xavier church. Whatever building was there was blown down on May 17, 1869 by a cyclone which is reported to have lasted for fourteen hours. Another structure was no doubt built and this one was replaced in November 1878, two years after Holy Cross had withdrawn from the East Bengal, by Dom Bede Birchby, O.S.B. This building was made of brick but it didn't fare any better than the previous ones. A cyclone hit on May 15, 1883 and left only the sanctuary standing. Three years later, Birchby laid the foundation stone for a new building which had been begun the previous December. It was completed in 1889. In late 1891, after Bishop Louage, C.S.C. came to Bengal, Father Michael Fallize, C.S.C., who had administered the vicariate for the two years previous, came to Bandura as pastor. Dom Birchby had remained until October 1891 even though Holy Cross had officially assumed responsibility for the vicariate in January 1889.

Father A.M. Fourmond, C.S.C. replaced Father Fallize in 1894. On Saturday, June 12, 1897 there was a severe earthquake in East Bengal and Father Fourmond just got out of the Bandura Church when the concrete roof crashed in. As Father Edmund Goedert, C.S.C. put it in his unpublished notes, "The beautiful church at Bandura, finished only eight years before and the finest in the diocese, was a total ruin." Within a few months, Bishop Peter Hurth, C.S.C. started rebuilding the church and made frequent trips to Bandura to supervise the work. On December 31, 1897, Bishop Hurth signed a contract with Sri Ananda Mohon Basak to put a corrugated iron roof on the building (100 feet x 40 feet) for the sum of 3,800 rupees. Brother Eugene Lefevre, C.S.C. was one of the witnesses who signed the contract. Bishop Hurth left Dacca for Europe in late January and was gone for nearly a year. According to the contract, the building must have been completed in March or April of 1898. This is the structure, later called the Main Building, that housed Holy Cross High School from June 1912 until December 1976 when Brother John Stephen Emminger, C.S.C. supervised its demolition.

It seems that all of the church buildings at Bandura were on or near the site of the Main Building although this fact can not definitely be established. In 1945, Brother Bede Statler, C.S.C. discovered a line of bricks that ran up the middle of the main building about five feet below the floor. These were taken out and used to repair other structures. Excavations for the new school, begun in December 1976, revealed layers of rubble and what appeared to be a floor, about five to six feet down. This indicates the presence of an earlier building on the site. Further digging in 1977 turned up three skeletons and some pottery buried six feet below ground and about eighty feet east of the Main Building. Brother Joseph Rodriques, C.S.C. recalls that when he was at Bandura in 1912 he had heard

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about a cemetery being in that area but that it hadn't been used for some years before that. A woman who attended the church before it became a school said (in 1977) that there was a cemetery but it was farther east of where the skeletons were found. Archbishop Theotonius Ganguly, C.S.C. who was asked about the matter in the same year, agreed with the woman. Since the old churches in Bengal usually had a cemetery near them this would indicate that the previous buildings were near the site of the Main Building. Finally, when Brother Eugene first came to Bandura in 1893 he recalled (in 1930) that Father Fallize was just building the priests' house and that he and Father had to live in the church for two months until it was finished. Brother Joseph later lived in this same house which was just west of the Main Building and so it seems reasonable to assume that the previous church that Brother Eugene and Father Fallize lived in was on the site of the Main Building.

II. The Amalgamation

Sometime during the year 1909 the managers of the Gobindapur High English School made a proposal to Bishop Hurth that he take over their school, lock, stock and barrel. To this proposal they attached certain conditions. The principle ones were that 1. the school remain where it was, 2. the name of the school be retained "without any alteration," and 3. the new board of managers contain some members "to be selected by and from us, the Gobindapur people." No reply to this proposal has been found but later documents say that Bishop Hurth postponed any commitment until his successor would arrive. The Bishop had been ill for some time but his first resignation in 1903 was not accepted by Rome. His second one in February, 1908 was accepted but he was asked to remain in Dacca until his successor could be appointed. Bishop Hurth didn't find out his successor's name until the following Christmas and then it was only casually mentioned to him as if he already knew. It wasn't until three months later that Bishop Frederick Linneborn, C.S.C. announced that he had been chosen as the new Bishop of Dacca. To add insult to injury, he remained in Europe for almost nine more months and kept the mission allowance he had been receiving during that time. Brother Joseph Rodriques recalls that when the two men, Hurth and Linneborn, finally met in Dacca on December 24, 1909 "you could hear the sound of their yelling all over the cathedral compound." Bishop Hurth left Dacca on January 5, 1910 not, however to retire. Two years later he began his third mission (the first was in Texas) as Bishop of Nueva Segovia in the Philippines. He died there on August 1, 1935.

According to Father Raymond J. Clancy's History of Holy Cross in Bengal, Bishop Linneborn visited Bandura in April 1910 and at that time decided that Golla was a better location for the mission church than Bandura. This was a sensible decision since most of the parishioners lived in the Golla area. The decision bears on later events affecting the Bandura School because the villages of Golla and Gobindapur are right next to each other and both are two miles from Bandura, on the other side of the Ichamoti River. On September 22, 1911, the Bishop sent a proposal to the Gobindapur School governing body in which the first mention is made of an amalgamation between their school and the Bandura Mission Primary School. The proposal's main points were: 1. the name of the new school would be "Holy Cross Bandura-Gobindapur High English School," 2. the Gobindapur managers give over completely all their buildings and furnishings, 3. the managers contribute 150 rupees to move the building to the Golla property owned by the diocese, and 4. the managers accept all liabilities up to December 1, 1911 when the transfer would be made. The Bishop's proposal was quite different from the one the Gobindapur people made to his predecessor, Bishop Hurth, in 1909. They wanted the Bishop to accept the school and the responsibility of running it while they kept some degree of control over it by being part of the governing body. Bishop Linneborn, on the other hand, proposed not only that they give up completely managing the school but further, they contribute toward the expenses of moving the building to his property. From their first proposal it is obvious that the Gobindapur managers didn't want the school to move anywhere, much less pay for doing so. Even the suggested name of the school was different in each proposal. Bishop Linneborn's proposal was presented to the Gobindapur governing body, called a managing committee, by Father Timothy Crowley, C.S.C. who had been at the parish for a year, from

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May 1909 to May 1910. A great deal of discussion must have followed because it was nearly a month before the managing committee replied.

Jagot Chandra Roy Chaudhuri, spokesman for the Gobindapur School managers, wrote to Bishop Linneborn on October 20, 1911 that it would be necessary to keep "a small portion of the building towards the East - say half of it" at Gobindapur in order, as later explained, to fulfill the terms of the original lease on the land. He said that they could only pay 25 rupees to remove the buildings but nothing toward their re-erection. Otherwise, he agreed with the rest of the Bishop's proposal. Father Peter Altenhofen, C.S.C., ordained by Linneborn less than two years earlier, was pastor of the Bandura Church at the time. Writing for the Bishop, he accepted Roy's 25 rupee offer but said that the entire building had to be removed to Golla. He put off the land question until "later on" and ended the letter by saying that if these terms were not acceptable, "the negotiations have to be considered as failed." This letter was sent on October 25th and three days later J.C. Roy Chaudhuri replied. He stated, what no doubt the Bishop already knew, that the proposal means "almost an unconditional resignation for the Gobindapur H.E. School." He then dropped the transfer issue and asked whether the school would be affiliated with the Calcutta University, what classes would be taught, what kind of managing committee the school would have and whether or not there would be a Hindu "and if necessary a Mahamodean" boarding. Silence on the transfer of the buildings was not, however, consent as Father Altenhofen discovered when he returned to Bandura from the Bishop's House after receiving Roy's second letter.

On the evening of November 1st, shortly after he had gotten back to Bandura, Altenhofen was presented with another letter from J.C.R. Chaudhuri. It said that it was "essentially and unavoidably necessary that some portion of the Gobindapur school buildings should remain here for the purpose of a Hindu Boarding" but offered as an alternative to keep two elementary classes there instead. The rest of the letter was devoted to saying how much the Gobindapur people were giving up and how if nothing of the school remained at Gobindapur, the land would be lost to them. The land and the buildings, the letter said, were worth about 1500 rupees. Father Altenhofen, who was known to have a temper, was very annoyed by Chaudhuri's letter. The next day he wrote him a stiff reply and then sent the letter along with a covering letter of his own to Bishop Linneborn. In the covering letter, Altenhofen clearly shows how upset he was over the attitude of what he called the Gobindapur "Babus." The word "babu" is used by Hindus as an honorific form of address but it can also be used in a derogatory way to indicate a person who acts more important than he really is. The latter was certainly intended by Altenhofen when he wrote:

(their letter) "shows the real stupid arrogance and self conceit of these Babus. They want to keep the houses partly for a Hindu Boarding, or at least for a Primary school. Generously they offer you all the furniture (you know what kind it is) for fire wood I suppose. They offer 2 old tin houses, which anyways are useless for them. They offer all the students which they are absolutely unable to keep and to teach. They offer even the teachers, which are with one or two exceptions, at most, great Ignoramuses and officially declared absolutely unfit, with a wow."

Altenhofen reported to the Bishop that he had replied to the Gobindapur managers that he could not forward their letter since it was insulting to him (implying that he lied), that the Bishop was "absolutely resolved not to open any further discussion on the document," and that if they wanted an amalgamation "they have nothing else to do but go to Dacca and register it." He concludes by personally opposing the amalgamation on the grounds of personal honor (his and the Bishop's) and the fact that if the Gobindapur offer were rejected then they would never have any claim over the new school.

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Bishop Linneborn's attitude was less adamant and on November 24, 1911 he signed an agreement with the Gobindapur Governing Body in which the following conditions were set: 1. The school would be called "Holy Cross Bandura-Gobindapur High English School, 2. all properties would be turned over to the Bishop unconditionally, 3. if the land ceased to be used for a school it would revert to the donors, and 4. the land and buildings would be handed over without any liabilities attached to them. The value of the land was given as 400 rupees. Thus the amalgamation was completed and on the Bishop's side the matter was probably considered settled. On the Gobindapur side it obviously was not because it surfaced again just a few months later and then again, a year after that.

Some of the difficulties that arose over the amalgamation as well as those that came about later show what happens when people from two different cultures fail to understand one another sufficiently. Bishop Linneborn and Father Altenhofen were both good men who were able administrators, who learned the Bengali language, and who did whatever they could to improve the conditions of the people they served. Both met an untimely death while working in Bengal. The Gobindapur managers were, for their times, educated men; far more so than most of the people in the area. As literate men, not only in Bengali but also in English, they occupied a high place in the social structure. The fact that most were high caste Hindus added to the respect that others paid to them.

Linneborn and Altenhofen were both from Germany and so they brought with them their European values. They no doubt expected negotiations to proceed in a very straightforward manner and once an agreement was reached, that would be that. The Gobindapur men were Bengali and did not make agreements by what a European would consider the shortest route. Their tradition was to barter over goods, to skip from one point to the next and then back again. The process may have been more time consuming but agreements reached in this manner were no less binding. Thus, what was normal for the Gobindapur managers - to bring up something that had already been "settled" - was frustrating for Altenhofen.

The difficulties, however, were not all cultural. There was a fundamental difference in the positions of the two parties. The Gobindapur managers had been unable to make their school financially solid. Brother Eugene Lefevre said that H. E. Stapleton, Inspector of Schools, told the managers that their school would not be approved by the government and suggested that they contact the Bishop of Dacca to see if something could be worked out. Although they could not manage the finances, the Gobindapur managers still wanted to control the school, at least to some degree. The Bishop, on the other hand, wasn't going to finance a school run by someone else. He did not need the buildings, the land, or the amalgamation. He could have gone ahead on his own except for the fact that the Gobindapur area contained most of the educated people who could be teachers as well as most of the potential students. In that sense he was most prudent to negotiate in the first place. The disagreement over control of the school was basic. The cultural differences served to exacerbate this disagreement.

III. The Two Schools

In a report written on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Bandura school (1937) Brother Andrew Steffes, C.S.C. mentions that the Dacca Diocese had "maintained and managed a primary school at Bandura for well over 80 years." This would place the foundation of the Bandura Mission Primary School sometime before 1857. It is known that Father T. B. Birchby, O.S.B. erected a primary school at Bandura in November 1878 when he was pastor there. Brother Eugene Lefevre recalled that when he visited Bandura in 1886 there was a primary school for boys and girls on the church compound. Brother Eugene returned to Bandura in January, 1894 ('93 according to his recollections) and since Bengali was not his mother tongue, he began to study the language. A few months later he began to go to the primary school to learn from the students and later on he taught them, probably catechism and certainly hymns for church. He said that there were 175 girls in four classes with two men and a woman teaching them. The number

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he gives may also include the boys who were taught in a second shift in the same building. The building itself was made of bamboo matting and may have had a tin roof, although the priests' house only had a straw one at the time. Bishop Hurth came to visit Bandura sometime in mid 1895 and during his three day visit he asked Brother Eugene to return to Dacca. Brother did not return again to Bandura to teach until around January 1912 when Holy Cross High School opened. Up to the time of the amalgamation, the Bandura Primary School probably remained much the same as when Brother Eugene taught there.

Sometime around 1906, Sarat Chandra De made an agreement with Rasik Chandra Roy Chaudhury, Amrita Lall Kaviraj, Keshob Chandra Sarker, and Rajendra Chandra Roy in which he agreed to give them his land for use as a school under the conditions that his sons and ancestors received a freeship in the school, that the fruits from the trees belonged to him, and that if the school were abolished, he would get title to all the buildings and furnishings that were not removed within one year. The rent agreed upon was three rupees a year. The intention of the founders was to have a High English School which would be recognized and aided by the government. From five different sources, including themselves, it is clear that their hope was never fulfilled. Since land was, and still is, highly valued by the people of Bengal, the fact that the Gobindapur managers offered their whole school with the land to the Bishop is another indication of the situation the school was in. It is not unusual for fierce court cases to arise, even between members of the same family, over a small (0.1 acre) piece of land. This attachment to the land may at least partially explain why the Gobindapur managers wanted to keep some control of the amalgamated school even though the land was only theirs to use in the first place. The building itself, according to Father John J. Hennessy, C.S.C., was a "tin shed about 18' x 60', low-roofed and mud-floored." The furnishings were sparse and not in very good repair. The condition of the building bears on later decisions made about the location of the high school.

The public announcement of the opening of the new school was made by Father Peter Altenhofen, C.S.C. in the Bandura church on December 15, 1911. In this printed announcement which was later circulated in the area, the Bandura pastor emphasized the need for parental involvement in the school "to secure the regular and punctual attendance of children at school, to facilitate and encourage study at home, and to watch with attentive interest the moral and intellectual growth of their sons." He invited fathers to visit the school and observe their children at work. "Home-life and school-life will become in this way an harmonious blend of good influences, shaping, forming and molding the mind and character of the boy." Thus, two schools with disparate backgrounds and almost equally poor facilities became the Holy Cross Bandura-Gobindapur High English School whose management, Father Altenhofen said, "pledges itself that throughout the entire course an anxious interest will be taken to further the wishes of parents and to direct each boy towards the attainment of that position in life for which he is intended."

IV. The First Months

Holy Cross High School opened on January 8, 1912 with Father John J. Hennessy, C.S.C. as headmaster and Brother Eugene Lefevre, C.S.C. as a teacher. Both had been at St. Gregory's School which was attached to the Cathedral in Dacca. Brother Eugene had been at St. Gregory's since he left Bandura in 1895 and Father Hennessy since he arrived in the country in 1907. Father Hennessy had been appointed as pastor of the Cathedral and headmaster of St. Gregory's just two months earlier (November 1911). At the same time, Father Timothy Crowley, C.S.C. was appointed as headmaster of Bandura. For reasons that are not known, Crowley was only at Bandura from January 3rd to 7th, 1912, when he and Hennessy were switched. The only clue we have to the reason behind the switch is a later recollection of Father Hennessy that Father (later Bishop) Crowley didn't want to be at Bandura. Hennessy and Crowley were from the same town in Ireland and were novices together at Notre Dame, Indiana. Be that as it may, Father John Hennessy, C.S.C. is considered the first headmaster of Holy Cross High School.

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After a week of registering students and arranging them in their classes, Father Hennessy wrote in the Bandura House chronicles:

"Today, January 15, were held the first regular classes of the Year. The pupils number 157 from Classes II to VII both inclusive. Class VII is the highest as the boys were found too backward to attempt successfully higher classes. The pupils as a whole seem to be much neglected, and to have grown careless and jungly."

Perhaps Hennessy was used to the more "refined" manners of the city students because the word "jungly" is strongly pejorative in Bengali. Nevertheless, Hennessy began the difficult job of setting up a high school in a rural area where students were not influenced by city ways, where teachers were difficult to get and harder to hold on to, and where the weather was anything but helpful. The task was not made any easier by the fact that he and Brother Eugene had to walk two miles through semi-jungle and cross a river in order to get from their house at Bandura to the school at Golla. Naturally, after a hard day's work, they had to walk back.

By the end of March the weather turned hot and as Father Hennessy wrote in the house chronicles,

"Day by day the school house is becoming more uninhabitable. The zinc roof gathers and intensifies the sun's already too hot rays. To add to this the mud floor is like a sandy desert."

Soon after, the rain and hail storms began. Hennessy writes:

"Yesterday, March 27th, Nature rather abruptly broke up our school. About 2 p.m. the wind and rain began to come. Both increased to a gale in a few minutes. The dust and rain could not be kept out, as the window shutters are so fixed that you can't close them when you want to. Within half an hour 200 pupils and teachers looked like so many 'surki' mixers. ('surki' is a red cement-like material used for mortar. ed.) By 3 o'clock the rain abated and all left the school house to seek places where they could be more secure from the elements."

Toward the end of April he writes,

"For the past few days teaching had been somewhat disturbed by rain coming in through our unclosable shutters and hail beating on our zinc roof. It is a clear proof that some of our teachers are not the only forces in noise making. The wind, rain, and hail have succeeded in drowning them, and they have thrown up the sponge."

Nor was weather the only problem for the Headmaster. On April 1st (Father Hennessy's birthday) school attendance was down because there was a rumor afloat that in order to secure the foundations of a bridge, the contractor, who had a vision from Kali, a Hindu goddess, was looking for the heads of 130 young boys to bury with the column footings. This wasn't an April Fool's jest. Such "strange" rumors were a fact of life in rural Bengal. There was also the problem of desks. There were almost none. As Father Hennessy puts it, "Not only is there no place to rest the paper, but no place to place the inkwells. Some have to be put on the ground; others held in the hand, and the pupil's knee serves as a desk." None of this was written to outsiders to help increase the mission contribution. These were entries in the house chronicles and to those who are familiar with local conditions, especially the weather, they sound quite normal for that time. The semiannual examinations were held from May 6th to 10th after which school closed for the summer holidays. The test results, in Hennessy's words, were "very poor"

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and he added, "It is still a mystery unsolved how some of the pupils in Class VII ever got so far. Certainly not on their merits -- apparently on their demerits." Thus ended the first five months of school. It was also the end of the school at Golla. On May 10th it was announced by printed circular that the school would reopen on June 11th in the former church building at Bandura.

It isn't exactly clear how the decision to move the school came about. It wasn't made by Father Hennessy since, in a later incident he said that he didn't care where the school was located as long as everything was all in one place. Father Altenhofen may have had some influence in the matter because the church and rectory were at Bandura while the bulk of the parishioners lived two miles away at Golla. It seems likely that most of the responsibility for the move was Bishop Linneborn's. As early as April 1910 when he first visited Bandura he had said that Golla was a better location for the church (nearer most of the Christians) and had promised to take steps to bring about that change. Of course, even if the initiative had come from elsewhere, the final decision rested with the Bishop.

Although it is not clear what brought about the change it is quite clear that the decision to move the school got a reaction from the people at Gobindapur. On May 10, Father Hennessy wrote, "This moving of the school is objected to by some of the Gobindapur contingent, who are pestering the Lord Bishop of Dacca with requests to cancel the order for the School's removal from Golla to Bandura." As part of their "pestering" the Gobindapur people must have suggested that part of the school remain at Golla because there is a chronicle entry on June 11th which reads:

"Very Rev. Fr. Legrand, V.G. and Administrator of the Diocese came here last week and in the name of the Bishop of Dacca informed the Gobindapur contingent that the High School classes could not be divided, as Kamini Babu & Co. wished, and so he told them that the whole school would be transferred to Bandhura." ("Bandhura" is an older Anglicization of "Bandura")

The man referred to was Kamini Kumar Sen who, along with Jagot Chandra Roy Chaudhuri, had been a member of the Gobindapur governing body. His signature appears on the final agreement for amalgamation, early letters to the Bishop, and again in the difficulties over the Hindu hostel that arose the following year. He was a lawyer and he represented, in 1916, a teacher who had been discharged by Brother Leon Brisson, the then Headmaster. There is no doubt that he figured prominently in all the dealings between Gobindapur and the Bishop. Father Legrand spoke "in the name of " the Bishop who by this time may have been enroute to Notre Dame, Indiana where he attended the General Chapter held there, in August 1912.

One reason the Gobindapur people had against moving the school is that instead of an eight to ten minute walk to Golla, the teachers and students would now have a half-hour's walk to Bandura and would have to cross the Ichamoti River besides. At any rate, the move to Bandura was made although the whole issue would crop up again later. Father Hennessy, writing a number of years later, described the situation this way:

"The tin shed had to be abandoned after the first summer vacation, as the teachers requested the Headmaster to supply them with umbrellas during class hours to protect their little gray matter from the heat under the corrugated iron roof, and so, at the opening of the summer vacation the Headmaster announced that the school would reopen after the vacation, in the large church building at Bandura. This announcement aroused a storm of protest from the friends of the original school. as against the articles of the amalgamation, the tail of which storm is still with us."

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Considering what the school had been through in its first five months, Father Hennessy's weather analogy seems quite appropriate.

V. Home At Last

On June 11, 1912, at 6:30 a.m., classes began in the Bandura Church (the Main Building). The early hour was intended to avoid some of the heat of the day and this "morning school" tradition has been carried on to the present day. Holy Cross High School had found a home which it would occupy for the next sixty-four years until on November 25, 1976, demolition of the Main Building began and foundations were dug for a new, three story, 18 classroom building with a Brothers' residence on the top story.

Brother Eugene was transferred before the school opened at Bandura and Brother Joseph Rodriques, C.S.C. replaced him at the end of June. Both men were born in Bengal; Brother Eugene in Assam and Brother Joseph in Chittagong. Brother Eugene, one of seven children, all boys, was of French and Anglo-Indian descent. The family lived in Calcutta for some time and then moved to Dacca when Eugene's father was made Jailer at the Dacca Jail. Two Portuguese priests from Hashnabad Church, a mile or so from the Bandura Church, served a three year term while Mr. Lefevre was Jailer. The priests had told their orderlies to break up a fight between some Hindus and Muslims during a fair held on the church property. The orderlies fired their guns and killed three or four people. One priest was made porter at the main gate of the jail and the other was put in charge of the bakery. Shortly after coming to Dacca, Mrs. Lefevre died, leaving her husband to care for the children. Brother Eugene was ten years old at the time and he finished his high school education first under the Benedictines and then under the Holy Cross Fathers and Brothers at St. Gregory's School. Brother Joseph, a Bengali, lost his father and mother when he was quite young so he and his brother were raised by the religious at the Chittagong Cathedral. His two sisters lived in an orphanage across the street. Brother Joseph went to St. Placid's High School and later passed his Intermediate and Bachelor's by studying privately. He studied up to the Master's level but never took the examination. Another "native," Brother Benedict Dench, C.S.C., was born in Calcutta on Christmas Day, 1883. He was of Irish descent and began his novitiate at Bandura in January, 1912. He was moved to the Bishop's House in Dacca later that same year probably because Father Hennessy had enough on his hands without being a novice master too.

So in June 1912, Father Hennessy, assisted by Brother Joseph, began again to set up a schoolhouse. There were no partitions for the classrooms and no money to have them put in. This lack of partitions, in Father Hennessy's words, "made the school as quiet as any native bazaar." The iron roof was high but not lined with bamboo matting to insulate the inside of the school from the heat. There were still few, if any adequate desks. At least the walls were made of brick which made the school seem like a palace compared to the Headmaster's bungalow. The latter was a "katcha" house similar to the ones that most of the local people lived in. That is, the walls were made of woven bamboo mats and the roof was made with sheets of corrugated tin. Brother Joseph recalled that some of the wooden posts which were supposed to hold up the roof were so eaten up by termites that it was actually the roof that held up the posts. He also said that when the students came for school, they would peek through the holes in the walls to see what was going on inside the house. This may be part of the reason that Father Hennessy used to say that the students lacked proper manners. Although a temporary church was set up at Golla shortly after the school was moved from there, Father Altenhofen continued to live at Bandura. The parish baptismal records indicate that the Main Building continued in use as a church until January 1913. A permanent church at Golla was completed in September of that year.

The rainy season began shortly after the school reopened and classes had to be suspended for a week because the water was too low for boats and too high for walking. Later, free days were given when heavy rains

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caught students and teachers on their way to school and they had to be sent back home to dry out. At other times, the sound of rain drumming on the tin roof made teaching nearly impossible. Fifty-six years later, when I began teaching in that same building, there were six foot high bamboo partitions which divided it into eight classrooms, two wide and four long. The walls were twelve to fifteen feet high and the peaked roof was twenty-five or so feet tall at its highest point. Each class had fifty students and aside from the noise from a class with a "weak" teacher the only time it was really difficult to teach was when the rain was heavy. It wasn't just the noise but the darkness that resulted from having to close the shutters to keep the rain from drenching the students. There was no verandah and no windows, just large "Dutch doors" along each side of the building. During the April and May hailstorms, the racket of the hail hitting the roof reduced all four hundred of us, teachers and students, to helpless laughter.

In August, 1912, The Officiating Second Inspector of Schools, Mahon Chandra Bose, visited the school and pointed out the poor financial condition it was in. There was no fixed allowance from the Diocese and so the school had to survive mostly on the 180 rupees a month that was collected in fees. Since the teachers' salaries amounted to 124 rupees there wasn't much left over for improvements. Bose also wrote in his report that "as might be expected from the very unsatisfactory condition of the Gobindapur High School from which the boys came, the majority of them are unfit for the classes in which they are reading .." This supports Father Altenhofen's earlier contention that the Gobindapur School wasn't much of a gift. A month after Bose's visit, a raffle was arranged to raise money for desks. Brother Joseph recalls the evenings when he, Fathers Hennessy and Altenhofen, and some of the Christian boarding students used to tear the ticket stubs from the raffle books to get them ready for the drawing. He says that Father Altenhofen kept the rest of the group in stitches by making jokes about the first prize; "a large, upcountry cow." There was probably little laughter when the raffle was over and it netted only 200 rupees, much less than expected.

By mid-September the rains had almost ended and the hot, humid weather returned. As the water level of the rivers dropped, the problem of too little water for boats and too much water for walking arose again and after two weeks of very poor attendance, the school was closed on October 11th for the Puja Holidays (Hindu festivals). When classes resumed a month later, one teacher didn't return and another resigned, leaving Father Hennessy with the job of filling two vacancies with only three weeks remaining before the annual examinations. Finally, on December 21st, promotions were announced and the school year was over. Out of 197 students, only 76 were promoted (38%) and half of those were passed conditionally. Father Hennessy wrote in the chronicles:

"Despite the small number promoted, promotions were made in a very lenient manner.

Nearly everyone who passed in two out of three subjects, (English, Bengali, and Mathematics) was promoted. The pupils' show that it is de-motion many deserved."

Somehow, despite a change of location, poor facilities, poorer students, frequent staff changes, and the vagaries of the weather, the school made it through its first year. This was in large measure due to the tenacity of Father John Hennessy, backed up by his Irishman's wit and supported by Brothers Eugene, Joseph, and Father Altenhofen.

VI. The Hindu Hostel

Holy Cross High School began its second year on January 2, 1913. Attendance was poor due to the lack of promotions which, as Father Hennessy wrote, "kept many away and deterred others from coming." There were students in Classes III through VIII. Class IX was to have opened but no one applied. Father Hennessy was still faced with the problem of how to support the school and in the first week of January he had a meeting with the

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Inspector of Schools, H. E. Stapleton, to try to get a government grant. When Hennessy returned from Dacca, he wrote in the chronicles;

"But it is all humbug. The result is that if I can raise per month 340 Rs. the Government will give 60 Rs., so that the monthly expenses must amount to Rs. 400 before the Government will give the magnificent sum of 60 Rupees.

The same fate met my request for furniture. If I buy 750 Rs. of furniture I 'may' ask for half that amount from the department or govt. This shows in reality how the Govt. is helping to educate the natives. If they would do half as much as they do in print it would be well. The Bishop of Dacca put a large brick building, 40 by 100 feet, at the disposal of the school department (Free); he also furnished (Free) an European graduate Headmaster and a Brother assistant; and in the second year the Government offers 60 rupees per month through the Educational Department -
- Wonderful Generosity.

The Bishop of Dacca has to do single handed what is Govt's duty and what the Educational Department boasts of doing, viz. Educating the Hindus."

In April, Hennessy had another encounter with the government which was even more frustrating. Since the government was "broke" it was decided to hold another raffle to raise money for furniture for the school. The books of tickets for the second annual raffle were printed and ready for the mail when Father Hennessy wrote on April 1st (his birthday, April Fool's Day);

"The District Magistrate was applied to for the necessary permission to run off the Raffle, but the good, conscientious, Indian-youth-loving man could not see his way to recommend our plan of helping the natives, and so we have to back out -- pay the printing bill and burn the books -
- yet we have some hope as there may be an appeal to the Commissioner. *O Tempora! O Mores!*

Perhaps, however, their Logic is not so bad: (A) We have no money to give you; (B) We decree that your plan to raise the necessary money is illegal; (therefore) (C) Do without the money."

There was no raffle that year and all that remains is ticket No. 3333 which is pasted in the Bandura House chronicles as a reminder of what might have been. The diocese must have paid the bills anyway because new desks, a mat for the ceiling, and partitions, were brought that year at a cost of around 1000 rupees. Just before the raffle incident, the government sanctioned a grant of Rs. 80 per month, contingent on the school's raising 320 Rs. The formal request for a furniture grant got the following reply: "Your application can not be entertained now for want of funds." This caused Hennessy exclaim in the chronicles, "*Die immortales!* and the papers are full of accounts of monies given for school purposes."

Money was only one of the major problems that year. A bigger one was the Hindu Hostel -- where to put it. The Gobindapur people returned to haunt Bishop Linneborn. When the school was moved to Bandura, the Hindu Boarding remained at Gobindapur on the site of the original Gobindapur School. Thus, students and teachers had to walk two miles to get to school and when the storms came in February and March, walking wasn't easy. On February 13th Hennessy wrote:

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"The rains of this morning show the absolute necessity of having the teachers and pupils hostel on the school ground and not at so unreasonable a distance as Gobindapur. But someone or many has to pray hard that our Bishop may be enlightened on the subject and see things as we see them. If not, it will soon be R.I.P. for the school."

The situation was complicated in April when the ferryman refused to cross the students and teachers from the Gobindapur side to the Bandura side of the Ichamoti River. There may have been some dispute over who was supposed to pay for the boatman's services. Generally, there is a ferryman at the main river crossings and he is paid a salary by whoever has the rights to the landing. This income is usually meager and so a "bakshish" or tip is given by those who benefit from the service. The Bandura House chronicles mention the fact that the ferrymen were unwilling to cross the teachers and students but give no reason for this. In the same entry (April 15th) Father Hennessy wrote: "So we are awaiting the Bishop's arrival -- to land in Bombay tomorrow -- to see about bringing the hostel to Bandura or taking the school to Golla." It is interesting to note that all during this time, Brother Joseph walked each morning to Golla to teach catechism at a girls' primary school run by the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions. After class he walked back and taught at Holy Cross High School.

Bebhuti Bushan Pal, who taught at Holy Cross High School for many years, was a student in the original Gobindapur School. He suggested, in a 1977 interview, that the reason the ferryman wouldn't cross the teachers is that they didn't come on time to the crossing. The boatman worked during certain hours and if people came later than that, he may have ferried them across for a while but eventually may have become tired of doing so and thus refused to cross anyone who didn't come on time. In those days, the ferryman was paid a salary, in cash or kind, once a year, usually at the festival of Lukki, the Hindu goddess of fortune. Bebhuti Babu didn't think that money would be the reason for not ferrying people across the river.

On April 25th, not long after the Bishop had arrived back from Europe, sixteen Hindus from Gobindapur wrote him a letter and the "Incident of 1913" began. The writers first welcomed Bishop Linneborn back and expressed hope "that your Lordship enjoyed sound health and peace of mind in your Lordship's native land." They then praised the school, Father Hennessy, and English education in general and continued by pointing out that "we were the first in the whole Nawabganj Thana (a 'thana' is a governmental division roughly equivalent to a county in the United States. ed) to start a High English School which worked well and up to the mark consecutively for 4 or 5 years." After a bit more historical background they got to the point.

"What strikes and pains us much is that in defiance of the assurance that was given us by your Lordship, the school has been removed to Bandhura causing much inconvenience to the students of Gobindapur and the Sons of your Lordship's disciples in as much as they have to cross the river."

Then in a move that was not unusual in Bengal, they reopened the whole discussion which had been "settled" in November 1911. The letter continues:

"The removal of the school from Golla has created a great discontent amongst the people of Gobindapur. They had not the least idea whatsoever of its removal at the time, when the deed of gift was written. Your Lordship's order that all classes to Class IV inclusive will be taught at Boro Golla was not carried into effect. The whole school was removed. Your Lordship, everything is at Golla. At Bandhura there is nothing except the building and a similar building

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may be constructed at Golla within the summer vacation. Last of all, we pray to your Lordship that your Lordship will be graciously pleased to order for the construction of a suitable building for the Hindu Hostel at Gobindapur on a pucca (concrete ed.) plinth as your Lordship proposed and for the creation of a building at Boro Golla for the school. The school will reopen ... on the 12th June so all these arrangements should be done before that date."

Whatever peace of mind the Bishop had found in his native land must have fled him when he got this letter. Jagot Chandra Roy Chaudhuri was one of the signers of this letter but Kamini Kumar Sen, who was also one of the original Gobindapur managers, did not. He may have already gone to Dacca where he had a law practice.

The reply to Jagot Roy's letter was written by Father Timothy Crowley, csc who was known for his kindness and gentle manners. He thanked the people in the name of the Bishop, "for the kindly words of welcome which you express in your letter to him today" and returned the Bishop's "sincerest thanks and appreciation." He went on to thank them for their "united interest" in the education of the local children and said that the Bishop was pleased to hear their words of praise for Father Hennessy. Crowley continued:

"Regarding the other considerations set forth in your letter, His Lordship would have me assure you that, at His earliest opportunity, he proposes to discuss these and kindred topics with the Inspector of Schools. His Lordship considers it necessary to invite the judgement of the Dept. of Education in such important matters as those touching the adjustment of classes in a high school curriculum and the establishing of hostel arrangements. Those things are very important as they may condition the normal development of the School."

He thanked the people again and asked them "to continue to assist in building up the Holy Cross Bandhura-Gobindapur High English School." That was it. No doubt the Bishop knew what he was going to do but wanted to have the education department back him up. He may, at this time, have wished he had followed Father Altenhofen's advice about rejecting the amalgamation, but that's only conjecture.

While Father Crowley was writing the Bishop's reply to Gobindapur, the people there presented a letter to Father Hennessy at the school. It went through the entire story of the 1911 negotiations and then requested Father Hennessy "to write something to His Lordship in our favour if you think fit." Hennessy sent the letter, along with a note which read:

"All that I need say about it (the letter) is what I have already written to your Lordship r.e. the absolute necessity of having school and hostel building on the same ground, or in close proximity.

As our school closes next week for the summer vacation it would be well if your Lordship would indicate what is to be done, that the school may grow, so that the necessary may be done during the holidays and before the rains.

To me there seems to be one of two things necessary; either the erection of a suitable building for a high school at Golla; or the bringing of the hostel to Bandura."

Hennessy's note shows his neutrality in the matter which may be why the Gobindapur people asked him to intercede for them with the Bishop. No doubt, if Hennessy had been instructed to build a school at Golla he would have gone ahead with it immediately because he respected the authority of the bishop who was, after all, ultimately responsible for the well being of the school. Of course, there was no question of building a new school at Golla and

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abandoning the one at Bandura. A passage from the letter given to Father Hennessy by the Gobindapur people gives a good idea of what the Bishop had thought of their suggestions on an earlier occasion.

"When we differed on some points and the writing of the document was delayed (the 1911 Agreement. ed.) His Lordship became somewhat dissatisfied with our conduct and said, 'Do you take me to be just like those coolies that run up and down the streets of Dacca with loads on their heads? I am a Bishop and have my sayings no weight?' We felt ashamed and after that we surrendered unconditionally."

Apparently, Father Altenhofen wasn't the only one who had a temper. His fellow countryman, Bishop Linneborn could also get hot now and then. Father Hennessy mailed the letter and his note on April 28th and it arrived at the Bishop's House in Dacca the next day (3:30 p.m. according to the post office stamp. ed).

On April 29th, while Hennessy's letter was being delivered, Father Crowley's letter arrived at Gobindapur and the people drafted and sent a reply that same day. They said that Crowley had misinterpreted their wishes about moving the school by adding the "constriction" that they only wanted up to Class IV in Golla. They again repeated the Bishop's promise to keep the whole school at Golla and then his suggestion to keep only the lower classes there and said that he had not carried out either one. They closed their letter with an unequivocal statement which read:

"But nothing short of the removal of the entire school to Golla will satisfy us.

So we pray to your Lordship that your Lordship will be graciously pleased to order the removal of the whole school to Golla and to keep the Hindu Hostel where it is at present. This being done, all the people round will be satisfied and we shall see our long-cherished object fulfilled."

The next day, April 30th, Father Hennessy wrote one sentence in the chronicles: "A telegram calls me to Dacca." Bishop Linneborn had gotten his letter and probably the second Gobindapur one as well and no doubt wanted to discuss and settle the matter of the hostel and the school. Hennessy returned on May 16th bearing a letter from the Bishop to Jagot Chandra Roy Chaudhuri. In the letter, dated May 13th, the Bishop said that he had seen the Inspector of Schools the day before and that the government felt it imprudent to establish a school at Golla which would then come within the range of the Nawabganj High School and so the Bandura site would remain. The Bishop suggested that the people be consulted how best to establish river facilities and that the Commissioner of Dacca Division might be invited to establish a direct roadway from Gobindapur to Bandura. He further said that the Inspector did not think it wise to have part of the school at Golla and part at Bandura and that the hostel should be under the direct supervision of the headmaster. This latter point was a stipulation of the Bengal Educational Code. It is said that Father Hennessy had the Code memorized. Thus, the decision was made. The school would be at Bandura and a Hindu hostel would be built on the grounds. The Gobindapur people must not have been happy with this decision but there is no further evidence of any correspondence on the matter. They may have felt that the Bishop of Dacca, backed up by the Inspector of Schools, was unbeatable.

There are a few things about the "1913 Incident" that are open to question. First, who started it? Father Hennessy wanted the hostel and the school on the same compound because at least three of his teachers lived in the Hindu hostel and they no doubt complained about the difficulties in getting back and forth to school. The Gobindapur people involved in the hostel as well as those with students in the school shared this concern of Father Hennessy's and offered their solution -- move everything to Golla. The Bishop had only been in Dacca about a week after returning from Europe when this suggestion arrived so the hostel business must have been new to him. Fathers

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Crowley and Hennessy must have had to fill him in on what was going on. It seems, then, that the Gobindapur people started the ball rolling. Once Hennessy's wish to have the hostel and school together was known, the Gobindapur demanded that everything move to Golla. On the Bishop's side, the only sensible course of action was to move the hostel because even if he had the money it would have been foolish to build a new school at Golla when the one at Bandura was, at the time, an excellent building.

Second, is the minor question of how the Gobindapur people interpreted Father Crowley's very diplomatic letter to conclude that he put a "constriction" on their request. Crowley's letter makes no mention at all of having lower classes at Gobindapur and upper ones at Bandura. The letter may have had an enclosure which was subsequently lost, but nothing indicates this. It seems more likely that the people got, by word of mouth, some suggestion about dividing the school or perhaps they just heard a rumor and attributed it to Father Crowley. At any rate, the result was a clear statement by them that they wanted the entire school at Golla, period.

A third question arises as to whether or not the Bishop "hid behind" the Inspector of Schools when the final decision was made to put everything at Bandura. Bishop Linneborn was no weakling and he knew that any decision he made would be carried out. He owed nothing to the Gobindapur people and although the decision to move everything to Bandura was contrary to the people's idea of the 1911 Amalgamation Agreement it was not, in fact, contrary to the agreement itself. So Linneborn's appeal to the government authority must have been a way of showing that he acted with its blessing and may have forestalled further appeals that might have led to an even worse situation. He did, however, make some suggestions for improving the transportation problem and said in his letter that he wanted to work together with the people in the area for the good of their children's education. It is still possible to argue that Linneborn put the onus for his decision on the Inspector of Schools but only further study of his personality can support or rebut this argument.

The new Hindu hostel was not ready when the school reopened on June 16, 1913 but on June 21st, three Hindu teachers moved into the Christian hostel and the Christian boys moved into the Headmaster's bungalow. That may have been more "togetherness" than Father Hennessy and Brother Joseph wanted but at least everyone was "under the direct supervision of the Headmaster" which is what the Inspector of Schools had recommended. The hostel was completed by the end of the year because in January 1914 the Second Inspector of Schools, Harendra Chakravorty, reported that there were two hostels, one for Christians and one for Hindus, on the school property.

H. E. Stapleton, Inspector of Schools, visited Bandura in late June 1913. He wrote in the Official Visitors' Book, "The erection of hostels is a step in the right direction. At present, two are under construction, one for about 15 ordinary Hindus and the other for 12 Namasudras." (lowest caste Hindus. ed.) It is noteworthy that the Inspector of Schools, the highest official in the educational department, made a visit so soon after the hostel issue was settled. It shows that Bishop Linneborn's consultations with him were not a "ruse" to impress the Gobindapur people and that the Bishop had the backing of the government in his decision to move the hostel and keep the school at Bandura. Stapleton mentions two Hindu hostels but it isn't clear whether there were two buildings or two parts of one building. In the same entry, Stapleton remarked; "A serious handicap to the finances is the extraordinary number of free students. Out of 190 boys on the rolls no less than 18 are free and 36 half-free." He went on to write that this number should be cut on the basis of the semiannual examinations and that at the end of the year, only the top five or six boys in each class should be eligible for freeships the following year. This question of exceeding the government quota for scholarships came up again and again, but it was never really resolved. Father Hennessy (and the Bishop), as well as future headmasters of the school, wanted to help educate as many boys as possible. The government wanted balanced books.

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VII. Frustration and Loss

Brother Joseph Rodriques, C.S.C. received "a sudden call by the Bishop" on June 16, 1913, the same day that the school reopened after the summer vacation. He left for Dacca that evening and it seems that his transfer, coming as it did right after all the trouble over the Hindu hostel, was almost too much for Father Hennessy to take. This is what he wrote in the Bandura House chronicles for that day:

"This is the second change of Brothers in 1 1/2 years, both happening in the middle of the year. Tomorrow there will be no one to take up Brother Joseph's classes, except someone comes from Dacca to replace him. For the present it means upsetting and bother in rearranging the teaching programme, and neglect of pupils.

To my successor I would give the advice, 'Do not make out any schedule or class timetable until the moment school opens, or you will, like me, waste your time and energy in plotting and anticipating, and when you have all arranged, as best you can, with the work allotted to each, and the timetable posted up -- lo! a note comes to the office -- somebody goes away. Then you pray for your stars -- in an undertone -- for calling one of your assistants just as your work was under way."

Even though Brother Eugene Lefevre, C.S.C. arrived the next week "to continue the work he left off one year ago" (JJH) this whole business was so upsetting for Hennessy that at the end of the month he entered the number of students in the school, class by class, according to religion, and then stopped writing in the chronicles. At first it was thought that they had been lost but it seems certain now that this is not the case. Father Hennessy simply refused to write them any more. In later years, Brother Hobart Pieper, C.S.C. tried to get Father Hennessy to write down some of his recollections for that "missing" period but he still wouldn't do it, "even when" said Hobart, "I offered to buy him a new pair of shoes, which he needed, and a bottle of gin which he wouldn't mind having." And so, except for a six month period when Brother Leon Brisson, C.S.C. was Headmaster, there are no House chronicles from July 1913 until January 1919 when Brother Peter Hosinski, C.S.C. replaced Father Hennessy.

The 1913 school year, no doubt, continued with its share of bad weather, high water, low water, and the other ups and downs of a rural school. For those who have lived at Bandura, this is a very safe conjecture. We know for sure that there were no further staff changes for the rest of that year. The absence of chronicles prevents us from getting a close look at those times but it is possible to fill in the general outline from the Inspectors' reports in the Visitors' Book and from the teachers' salary book, both of which are in good condition, even after sixty-five years in a tropical climate. Brother Eugene was transferred from Bandura at the end of the 1913 school year (December) but this time there was no replacement.

All through the year 1914, except for one month (February) when Brothers Leon Brisson, C.S.C. and Benedict Dench, C.S.C. were at the school, Father Hennessy carried on alone at the mission. During that year the enrollment went from 198 in January to 230 in August. About 65% of the students were Hindu and the rest were Christian and Muslim. Because of the growing enrollment, an annex was added to the East end of the Main Building. H.E. Stapleton, Inspector of Schools, mentions in August that for the first eight months of 1914 the Bishop had spent 2000 rupees above the regular mission allowance for improvements on the school. In the next breath he recommended that the hostels be renovated. It was the same old story; your finances aren't good so spend more money. The First World War began in that month and for the next few years, money was not easy to come by.

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In January 1915, Brother Benedict Dench, C.S.C. returned to teach at the place where he had begun his novitiate three years earlier. Father Hennessy must have been glad to have a coworker again. Perhaps he was even more pleased since Brother Benedict was a Calcutta born Irishman. Hennessy was born in Killmallock, County Limerick, Ireland. The student enrollment had dropped to 185 (75% Hindu) but by the end of the year was back up to 224. The Officiating Second Inspector of Schools, Gopal Chandra Sarker, visited the school in January 1915 and again brought up the matter of freeships. Sarker wrote:

"The number of free students is much in excess of the limit fixed by the Department. There are 16 Hindus, 3 Muhammadans, and 9 Christian free students. The number should be reduced. It is necessary to follow the Departmental rule as the school is in receipt of a grant-in-aid."

In the same report there is another example of the bureaucratic mentality that had frustrated Father Hennessy in the past. School Inspector Sarker continues:

"The Headmaster has applied for a grant-in-aid for the hostel buildings now under construction and my visit to the school was mainly in connexion with this question. I explained to the Headmaster the conditions under which a grant might be expected and the difficulty of obtaining the sanction of a grant for works nearly completed and constructed on a plan not approved by the authorities of the Public Works Department. He has abandoned the idea of asking for a grant."

As in the case of the aborted raffle, two years earlier, one could imagine Father Hennessy exclaiming, "*Oh Tempora! Oh Mores!*"

Bishop Linneborn visited the school on March 19, the Feast of Saint Joseph. He attended a meeting of the school's Literary Society and wrote the following in the Visitors' Book:

"I was agreeably surprised at the work done and the interest taken in it (the Literary Society) by teachers and pupils. May God bless the common efforts of scholars and directors for the advancement of the school, and may it find always greater encouragement in the results achieved."

These were, perhaps, Bishop Linneborn's last official words to the students and staff of Holy Cross High School. He died suddenly, four months later, on July 21, 1915 at the age of fifty-one. His illness began with a cold which got worse until he was too sick to get out of bed. Brother Joseph said (in 1977) that he was there when the doctor came and gave the Bishop an injection. Almost immediately after that, said Brother Joseph, the Bishop had a brief spasm, stiffened and then died. Father Edmund Goedert, C.S.C. wrote in his unpublished notes that the Magistrate considered the Bishop's death providential because it was wartime and many of the "black" Englishmen in Dacca were putting pressure on him to intern the Bishop because he was a German. It may well have been providence but Brother Joseph recalled that the rumor spread around the mission that the English doctor had killed the German Bishop because England and Germany were at war.

F. C. Turner, Officiating Inspector of Schools, paid a visit to Bandura on July 28, 1915 and wrote in the Visitors' Book that he had had a long talk with Father Hennessy, particularly on the question of retaining "unqualified" teachers. Father Hennessy maintained that the teachers the Department objected to spoke fluent

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English and were of more use than the average undergraduate. Turner wrote, "I most heartily agree with him. ...and I should be glad if Inspectors would, in future, take the trouble to examine the work of teachers whom they consider to be unqualified and not form hasty judgements on their paper qualifications." It was a small victory for Father Hennessy in his battle with the bureaucrats.

That same month, Brother Benedict was transferred and Brother Joseph returned once again. For the next year there is almost no written information on what went on at Bandura Holy Cross High School. Brother Joseph recalled, in 1977, that life went on pretty much as it had in the past. The school facilities had been improved, but he and Father Hennessy still lived in their "katcha" house. He remembers that one day, in late November 1915, Father Hennessy told him that Father Altenhofen had died. Brother was very shocked by the news because Altenhofen was only 33 years old at the time. He had undergone some kind of surgery in Dacca and something went wrong. Altenhofen died on November 24, 1915. Again, the rumor spread that the English doctor had killed the German priest because of the war.

Father Peter Altenhofen, nicknamed "firebrand" by his colleagues, not only suffered from eczema but, in Brother Eugene's words, "he suffered much here from the Christians because he tried to make good Christians of them, and to abolish their pagan ideas." One time, while out on a sick call, Altenhofen was attacked and beaten by some of his own parishioners who were "half drunk" at the time. Had they been sober, they might have had second thoughts because of something that happened to someone else who had attacked Father Altenhofen. That time, a Christian's cows had been foraging in Altenhofen's garden and so the servants were told to take the cow to the government "lock-up" where the owner would have to pay a fine to get his animal back. The owner came to the house and began to abuse the servants and when Altenhofen came out of the house, the man began to call the priest "every name in the book." The others told the man to stop using such abusive language towards a priest but the man persisted. Suddenly, he fell down paralyzed. Altenhofen sent Brother Eugene to get the Holy Oils but by the time Eugene got back the man was dead. It may have been apoplexy or a heart attack, but as far as the people were concerned, God had punished the man for abusing a priest. As far as we know, no such divine punishment was visited on the men who beat up Father Altenhofen later on. We do know that despite the beating, the "firebrand" priest continued to preach against the evils of drink.

Thus it was that in 1915 the mission of Dacca lost its Bishop and one of its promising young priests. For Holy Cross High School it was the loss of two of the three men (Crowley was the third) who were responsible for its establishment. In July 1916, Father Hennessy left Bandura on account of illness and was replaced as Headmaster, by Brother Leon Brisson, C.S.C.. Before he left, Hennessy saw the first Holy Cross students, six in all, take the Calcutta University Matriculation Examinations. Four boys passed; one in the First Division, two in the Second, and one in the Third. (First Division marks have always been for superior performance. Having 2/3 of students pass the matriculation exams was above average. ed.) As a school inspector wrote in the Visitors' Book later that year, "This first success of the school is a matter for congratulations."

VIII. The K. C. Sarker Affair

Brother Leon Brisson, C.S.C. (also called Brother Leo) was born in Quebec, Canada in 1882. After becoming a Brother he was assigned to the Bengal Mission and left Canada for Bengal in October 1912. He lived at Bandura for a month in 1914 and did not return again until June 1916. He took over as Headmaster the next month when Father Hennessy left for Dacca. Brother Joseph stayed on. At this point, the Bandura House chronicles begin again and they reinforce what Brother Joseph recalled -- that Brother Leon was very much in control of things. He set up a separate primary department and initiated a detention class for students who were absent or late without

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sufficient excuse. He also held staff meetings twice a month during which "every teacher has the right to make any remark concerning the good of the school." Leon added that at these meetings, "the Headmaster gives pedagogical advice to the teachers." Brother Leon was authoritarian and a somewhat difficult person to deal with and we can be fairly sure that "remarks for the good of the school" did not include criticism of the administration. The "pedagogical advice" was probably helpful and no doubt, straightforward.

Keshob Chandra Sarker was a teacher in the Gobindapur School and was hired by Father Hennessy to teach at the Bandura school when it opened in January 1912. Sarker's academic qualifications were, "B.A. plucked" which means that he took the B.A. examinations but did not pass them. Even at that, he was the most qualified teacher in the original staff and his salary of 35 rupees a month was double that of the other teachers. By 1916 there were other, more qualified, teachers at the school but Sarker maintained a special relationship with Father Hennessy because, in the beginning, Hennessy didn't know much about running a High English School and he often asked Keshob Sarker for his advice.

In those days, teachers carried a small bamboo stick to class with them in order to "encourage" the students in their work. The so called "cane" was more a symbol of authority than an instrument of punishment but when Brother Leon arrived he had different ideas about discipline and wanted the canes removed. Father Hennessy sided with the teachers on this matter and Keshob Sarker must have had something to do with the decision because from then on, he and Brother Leon didn't see eye to eye. Of course, the next month, Leon was the Headmaster and the canes were taken away. It may have been meant as a humane gesture but the teachers' symbol of authority had also been removed. Sarker's name never appears until suddenly, on July 18, 1916 his resignation letter was pasted in the Bandura House chronicles and under it Brother Leon wrote: "The resignation of Babu Kesab Sarkar is the most important event to be kept in the Annals of Holy Cross H.E. School." No further explanation was given.

Four years earlier, on August 4, 1912, Sarat Chandra De, original owner of the Gobindapur property, wrote to Bishop Linneborn that Kamini Kumar Sen, Jagot Chandra Roy and Keshob Chandra Sarker "after making a conspiracy to deprive from my right of that land have disposed of it, the school room and the furnitures to you." Sen and Roy were principles in all the negotiations and later arguments, between the Bishop and Gobindapur. They were the first to react to the Bishop's amalgamation proposal and were two of three Gobindapur signers of the final amalgamation agreement. Sarker's name, however does not appear on any of the Gobindapur documents.

As it turns out, Kesob Sarker was forced to resign. Brother Leon told Brother Joseph to pay Sarker his salary "privately." Joseph remembered clearly the troubled look on Keshob's face and recalled his exact words, "Why are you so kind today?" which were said in a very sad and plaintive voice. Nothing happened until October when a letter was received from Kamini Kumar Sen, M.A.B.L., Pleader. This letter was pasted in the chronicles. Sen wrote that his client, Keshob Chandra Sarker, was forced to resign and was not paid the salary due him for the first seventeen days of July. He concluded:

"As you have failed to pay up his said dues in spite of repeated reminders, Take Notice that unless the said amount of Rs. 25-8-0 (25 rupees, 8 annas, 0 paisa. ed.) be paid to him within 7 clear days from receipt of this Registered notice, legal action will be taken against you & you shall be liable for costs and damages."

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Brother Leon wrote under the letter: "It seems that our friend has changed his program since he wrote his letter of Resignation ..." He followed up by writing in the chronicles a "true copy" of the reply he sent to Kamini Sen. It said that Keshob Sarker was entitled to the money and concludes with a sarcastic imitation of the Pleader's letter:

"As he has failed to come and ask for his said dues in spite of repeated reminders, Take Notice that unless the said amount of Rs. 25-8-0 be claimed here by himself, and his signature, stamped, be written in our School Acquittance Book within 7 clear days from receipt of this registered answer, legal action shall be taken against him and he shall be liable for costs and damages."

Four days later, Leon received Kamini Sen's reply which stated that "Keshob Babu" had been advised to come and collect the money. Sen expressed pleasure "that the matter which promised to turn into a serious misunderstanding between him and good people like you -- both close neighbors -- has ended well." "After all" he wrote, "all's well that ends well." Sen concludes with a disclaimer of personal concern in the matter by writing, "pleaders are agents for the time being of their clients and have no eyes or hands of their own; but have to look straight to their duty that lies before them."

Rather than lose face by coming to Brother Leon for his salary, Keshob Sarker used a "time honored" excuse in a letter he wrote to Leon. This letter is also pasted in the chronicles. Sarker wrote:

"As my father and mother are both seriously ill I cannot for a moment move from their sides. Under the circumstances I request you to be so good as to send me the said amount of Rs. 25-8-0 by money order and the receipt attached to the School Acquittance Book, will serve the purpose."

Brother Joseph Rodrigues, C.S.C., Secretary of the Managing Committee, duly sent a money order to Keshob Sarker for the amount of 25 rupees and 2 annas. The other 6 annas due to Sarker were deducted to cover the cost of the money order. The receipt was signed by Sarker and when returned, was pasted in the teachers' pay book. It was still there in 1977. Thus, the last Gobindapur "dues" had been paid and Brother Leon wrote in the chronicles, just below Keshob Sarker's letter, "The end of the '*tamasha*.' The Tiger became a Llamb." (a *tamasha* is a roadside show. It implies amateur performance or light entertainment. ed.) There is irony in this entry, the last one Brother Leon ever wrote, because of another incident that happened that same month.

On November 9, 1916, Harendra Chakravorti, the Second Inspector of Schools, along with the Deputy Inspector, came to visit the school. Chakravorti looked over the books and school records and then, accompanied by Brother Leon, made a tour of all the classes. He asked questions of the students and inspected their work. After this, Harendra Babu sat in the common room of the Headmaster's bungalow and wrote his report, in the Visitors' Book. He made a number of comments on keeping records:

"Transfer certificates - These would be best kept on a guard file serially arranged after being numbered as in the admission register and duly cancelled.

Fees and fines realisation book - It should be totalled every month and checked with the collection books.

Time table - one should be kept hung up in the Headmaster's office.

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Committee's minutes book - none forthcoming - The Secretary told me that only one meeting was held in the current year."

There were further comments, most favorable, about the teaching staff, attendance, detention class, facilities, and hostels. There was also a page devoted to the results of his class visits:

"Handwriting is being better attended to in Class VII than in Classes IV and V.

Mental Arithmetic - very weak in IX and VI. The subject may be paid more attention to in every class.

Class VII appeared a bright class. They did well in Sanskrit and in English storytelling.

Boys often lean on their desks while standing to answer a question - efforts are needed to rectify the defect.

I saw some 5 or 6 drawing books in Class V B. They impressed me favourably.

The teachers in charge of the direct method of teaching English should come to their classes far better prepared than I found them."

The report, taken as a whole, is not too bad. The compliments more or less balance the criticisms except in the class visits where the "negatives" outnumbered the "positives" nine to three.

As was customary, the headmaster was asked to send a copy of the report to the Inspector of Schools, with any marginal notes he might wish to add. Apparently, Brother Leon's notes were more than marginal. They were rather insulting to Mr. Chakravorti. The two men must have discussed the report because at the end of it Chakravorti wrote, "Copy to the Inspector's office with marginal notes." When the Inspector of Schools received this document, his reaction was unequivocal -- Brother Leon must go. Thus, a few weeks after writing, "The Tiger (K.C. Sarker) became a Lamb", Brother Leon was gone and Father Hennessy returned to take up the job of headmaster once again.

Within a year or so, Brother Leon left Holy Cross and went to Assam to join the Salesians. From there he went to the United States and was ordained in Paterson, New Jersey on May 27, 1923. Five years later he left the Salesians and went to the Diocese of Odgensburg, New York. As the Reverend Napoleon D. Brisson, he spent the next 22 years there and died on July 31, 1950 at the age of sixty-seven. Some say he was a "character" to the end.

IX. Recognition

When Father Hennessy returned as headmaster in November 1916 there were 251 students in the school: 70% Hindu, 20% Muslim, and 10% Christian. In January 1917, Hennessy made two entries in the Bandura House chronicles and then there is nothing for the next two years. The January 2nd entry gives some explanation for the lack of chronicles; "Rev. Bro. Joseph left for Toomiliah and has not yet been replaced." Even though Brother Eugene arrived soon afterwards it appears that Father Hennessy's resolve not to write the chronicles was still strong. In the same entry, the student enrollment is given as 252 in the high school and 83 in the "patshalla" or primary school. The mention of the primary school indicates that there was a division of classes and probably buildings but that is not clear from other records. The next year (1918) enrollment figures included the primary and high school (Classes III - X) with no mention of Class I or Class II students or where the primary ended and the high school began.

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Gopal Chandra Sarker, Officiating Second Inspector of Schools, visited Bandura on July 20, 1917 and the question of excessive freeships came up once again. His six page report on the inspection of the school includes the following:

"... the number of free students is in excess of the limit sanctioned by the Department. There is much force in the Headmaster's explanation that mostly poor students come to his school, and that many of these will have to give up their studies if they are not allowed to read free. (read means "attend" or "study" ed.) My suggestion is that the fees of some of these students may be paid out of the contribution from the mission fund. This will remove the irregularity without causing any loss to the present income of the school."

This was not so much a solution as it was a matter of juggling the books but in a bureaucratic way, it was ingenious. Apparently, the suggestion was adopted because in later years the Secretary's reports listed "mission aided" students separately. (the Secretary is the head of the Managing Committee, a school's governing body. ed)

At the time Sarker made his suggestion, there were 31 Hindus, 10 Muslims, and 4 Christians receiving tuition help. This was in the same proportion as their respective percentages in the student body. Aside from a comment that one class exceeded (by four) the government limit of students per class (forty) the report was positive and when the Inspector wrote that "the school is much better equipped than most of our aided high schools" it showed how far the school had come in five years. It also showed the interest of the Diocese in making the school a very good one despite the fact that only 10% of the students in it were Christians. At the time of the report, the mission contribution had leveled off to an average of 1500 rupees a year which roughly equaled the allowance drawn by Father Hennessy and Brother Eugene (Rs. 130/month). In August of the following year (1918), the end of the fiscal year, the school showed its first surplus; a grand total of 150 rupees or 1.5% of the annual income.

Brother Eugene was transferred in March 1918 and the next month, Brother Ernest Heller, C.S.C. came to replace him. By September there were 348 students in 14 sections (Classes III - X), 17 teachers including the headmaster, and a clerk. This was to be Father Hennessy's final year at the school and the year he had one more hurdle to get over -- government recognition of the school. In Bengal, as today in modern Bangladesh, education was controlled by the government. At the end of high school (Class X) students had to pass government examinations in all their subjects in order to receive a matriculation certificate (high school diploma). Before a school could send students to "sit for" the examinations it had to be officially recognized by the government. This is where the Gobindapur School failed. It could not get this recognition which meant it did not meet the government standards for qualified teachers, proper facilities, balanced books, and many other smaller items required by the education department.

In July 1914, Father Hennessy sent to Bishop Linneborn a report on the Bandura school to be submitted to the Calcutta University which was in charge of recognizing high schools. By the end of August, the Inspector of Schools, H. E. Stapleton, had not gotten this report and encouraged Father Hennessy to find out what had happened to it because "by a recent circular, the University refused to entertain such applications unless they were submitted at least six months before the beginning of the year for which recognition is sought." In January 1915, Class X was opened with four students but as the Second Inspector of Schools pointed out, "the formal sanction of the University authorities has not yet been obtained." Sometime that year the school was provisionally recognized up to December 31, 1918 which allowed the Class X students to "appear" at the 1916 Matriculation Examination.

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As each Inspector visited the school and made recommendations for improvement, it was more than just friendly advice. Father Hennessy had to try to carry out these "suggestions" if the school were to keep its recognized status. He had to find and keep a qualified staff, maintain and improve the facilities, and at the same time, balance the books. He won support for his views on real vs. "paper" qualifications for teachers from F. C. Turner who inspected in July 1915. He also got support from Gopal Sarker, Second Inspector, who suggested in July 1917 a way to keep the "excessive" number of free students and still balance the books. However, the authorities in Calcutta might not be as understanding even though they based their judgment on the Inspectors' reports.

Gopal Chandra Sarker, Second Inspector of Schools, visited Bandura for the third time on September 9, 1918. At the end of his five page report on the school he made the recommendation that must have brought real joy to Father Hennessy. Sarker wrote:

"The period of provisional recognition of the school expires the 31st December, 1918. It may be permanently recognized from the beginning of the next school session."

On November 20, 1918, the Officiating Registrar of Calcutta University, K. L. Dutta, officially informed the school;

"That the Vice-Chancellor and Syndicate of the University, in a meeting dated October 4 & 5, 1918, has approved the recommendation of the Second Inspector that the Holy Cross Bandura-Gobindapur High English School be permanently recognized as competent to present candidates at the Matriculation Examination."

There were only two conditions; that no teacher receive less than Rs. 20 a month and that the plinth of the hostel be raised.

Seven years of work had paid off. The school that began in confusion with six teachers and 157 "careless and jungly" students had become a permanently recognized High English school with more than double the number of students and triple the number of teachers. Starting with very little, Father Hennessy, the Brothers who worked with him, and the Bishops who supported him, had built up an institution worthy of permanent recognition by the government. By comparison, Saint Gregory's School, begun at the Bishop's House in Dacca in 1890, did not get its permanent recognition until 1924 even though they had applied for it as early as 1913.

Father Hennessy spent a few months of 1918 at the Tumilia Mission which is forty or so miles from Bandura, but he was at Bandura in January 1919 when he turned over the headmaster's job to Brother Peter Claver Hosinski, C.S.C. Then, late in the month, he left for Noakhali, near Chittagong, where he was to be stationed. It is said that as he was leaving Bandura many of the local people held on to him, begging him first not to leave, and then to take them with him "wherever you go." The next day, January 22, 1919, Holy Cross Bandura-Gobindapur High English School had a free day -- in honor of Father John J. Hennessy, C.S.C.

These were the beginnings.