

## **Finding Brother Anselm**

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**By Robert D. Newland**

Brother John Kuhn, CSC asked me at one point after the discovery of Brother Anselm's grave how I got involved with this project. It seemed to be the confluence of a number of things. I am a graduate of Cathedral High School in Indianapolis, Indiana, where the Holy Cross Brothers taught for 54 years. Additionally, a recent book about Cathedral contains a very brief history of the Congregation of Holy Cross and its association with the school. After reading the book, I became curious about Holy Cross and began to do further research. Finally, my dad is from Washington, Indiana, which is just a few miles west of St. Peter's, where the Congregation began its American experience. It was this varied association with Holy Cross along with my own amateur interest in history that got me started.

My research took me not only to the library, but to the internet as well. It was there that I first encountered Brother George Klawitter, CSC. (As luck would have it, Brother George came to Cathedral in the Fall of 1967. I had graduated the prior Spring.) After a few exchanges about Cathedral and Holy Cross, he asked me if I would be interested in going down to Madison and searching for Brother Anselm's grave. This request was made on July 27, 2000. He then followed up by sending me some information about Brother Anselm, the Congregation, and Madison, IN. I spent the Fall and Winter reading Brother Anselm's letters in "Adapted to the Lake", as well as researching Springdale Cemetery in Madison. Another great resource was my wife. She is the Associate Archivist for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and she graciously agreed to help me.

Our first excursion to Madison took place on Wednesday, April 4, 2001. Our younger son and one of his friends accompanied my wife and I. We arrived at Springdale (after asking for directions a few times) late in the morning. Springdale Cemetery was founded in 1839. It was Madison's third cemetery. It is located in a small valley on the north side of Crooked Creek on the northwest side of the city. While most of the burial sites are on the valley floor, some extend up Hanging Rock Hill to the north. Madison's second cemetery, Old Third Street Cemetery, was located on the south side of Crooked Creek. Apparently, this cemetery was prone to floods and was eventually abandoned. The headstones were later moved to higher ground at Fairmont Cemetery and Springdale Cemetery. At its founding, Springdale had two entrances. One crossed Crooked Creek on the south side (and is no longer in use), while the other one, the current entrance, is on the east side. For a time, there was a western entrance, but it also is now closed. We stopped at the caretaker's house on the grounds and spent some time talking to the sexton, Bob Leach. He was very interested in our project but told us that cemetery records were destroyed in a fire in 1888. During the winter, I was able to locate a list of the cemetery's inhabitants that was compiled by the D.A.R. in 1941. While Brother Anselm is included in this list, his whereabouts is not. I asked about a Mormon study of the cemetery that Brother George had mentioned to me, but Bob was not familiar with it.

Leach then said that burial on the hill was normally reserved for the poor, and in fact, he thought that he had recently come across a tombstone with the word "Brother" on it somewhere on the hill. Given the severe poverty in which the Brothers at that time lived as well as Leach's recent discovery, we figured the hill was the place to start. All five of us then began to comb the hill. We spent about two hours searching, but to no avail. Before leaving, Bob suggested that when we returned, we might try to search what appeared to be an empty field at the foot of the hill. This is the oldest part of the cemetery and there are a number of graves from the 1840's in this area. The tombstones however, are all laying flat on the ground and are in various states of being covered by grass and shrubs. We were unable to discover why the stones are not upright. Bob feels they were laid flat to prevent vandalism. Bob also suggested that we try and find out if anyone knew what might have been inscribed on the stone: was it the person's birth name, "Pierre Caillot"; was it his religious name, "Brother Anselm"; was it both; was it something else? After arriving home, a subsequent email to Brother George produced the tombstone inscription:

BROTHER ANSELM  
of the Society of St. Joseph  
Born in France  
1826  
Died in Madison  
July 12, 1845  
"His soul please God:  
therefore He hastened  
to bring him out"

Brother George also noted that he got the inscription from a postcard that was in the Brothers' archives.

Brother Anselm was actually born on March 19, 1825, the feast of St. Joseph, in Gennes, France. Gennes is in the province of Mayenne in west-central France and is not far from Le Mans where the Congregation of Holy Cross was founded. The second man to bear that name in what was then known as the Brothers of St. Joseph, Brother Anselm became a novice in the order at the age of 14 on August 23, 1840. He apparently displayed a flair for languages, and it was partially for this reason that Basil Moreau, one of the founders and, at that time, superior of the Congregation of Holy Cross, selected him to be a part of the first Holy Cross missionary colony to the United States in 1841.

While he and his six companions began their ministry in America at St. Peter's parish in Daviess County, Indiana, he soon found himself in the nearby river town of Vincennes, Indiana. For a time, Anselm was joined by Brother Vincent (Jean Pieau); however, Vincent was soon called north to South Bend with most of his compatriots, leaving Anselm, at the age of 18, as teacher and principal of the cathedral's grade school. It also left him to work for and deal with Celestin de la Hailandiere.

The Diocese of Vincennes had been carved out of the Diocese of Bardstown, Kentucky in 1834 and Hailandiere was the second person to head this See. Trained as a lawyer, Hailandiere, hailed from the same area of France, (Brittany) as his predecessor, Simon Brute de Remur. Unlike Brute however, Hailandiere was apparently a very imperious man whom many people, including his own clergy, did not like.

From the twenty letters extant from Brother Anselm, we know that his time with Hailandiere was difficult. The bishop seemed to harass Anselm, giving him, for example, questionable housing. One of his accommodations was so damp that mold would regularly grow on his books and shoes. The room was without heat and so dark that he could barely see to read or write. Although he lived in the bishop's house, he had to walk some distance to the seminary for his meals. The bishop also accused him on various occasions of stealing a kitchen brush, not teaching properly, and giving too much vacation time to his students. Anselm also had to chop his own wood, mend his own clothes as well as teach a class of up to 40 students. While his situation was probably no worse than any other frontier experience, Anselm still felt exploited. His frustration grew to the point that in one letter he told his superior at Notre Dame "...the vow of obedience that I made does not oblige me to kill myself, or to make myself sick to obey the bishop...". On this, Anselm spoke prophetically. Serious sickness was another one of his burdens. In August of 1844, he came down with a debilitating fever that left him bedridden for two and a half days. To add insult to injury, no one from the cathedral bothered to look in on him. It is believed that he had malaria, which was common on the frontier.

Feeling disconsolate from the harassment, Anselm sought help from Hailandiere's vicar, August Martin. Initially, Martin was somewhat sympathetic to the boy and even began tutoring him in natural history. Soon however, Martin also seemed to turn against him. Martin apparently ceased talking to Anselm and stopped visiting his class. The vicar also publicly humiliated him one time when Anselm showed up late for a meal and demanded a reason for Anselm's tardiness. Finally, Martin apparently labeled Anselm "proud" in a letter to Notre Dame; and, Notre Dame, in turn, also seemed to offer little consolation to Anselm.

Anselm longed to be with his compatriots in South Bend. He looked forward to the annual retreat of his community each summer. His July 26, 1843 letter remarks "...I need to know when retreat will begin and if it's necessary to bring my things to South Bend or leave them here." Later on he says, "...after wearing myself out teaching for a year and having the Community's interests in everything I did, it seemed to me that you'd not hold back six or seven dollars to let me enjoy the benefit of the retreat with my confreres."; and, again, "Be assured that I'll do everything possible to go...". It appeared that Notre Dame seemed indifferent not only to this desire, but also to Anselm's plight in Vincennes. In one letter, Anselm tells his religious superior, "I beg you in the name of Mary to get me out of here soon", and in yet another he says, "... please call me away from here for my own good, because I'll perhaps lose my vocation here". The superior, Edward Sorin, on the other hand, appeared disdainful of Anselm. In an assessment that

Sorin made of his charges in December of 1844, only Anselm received adverse grades because of his "weak personality, fragile health, contrary spirit, and bad judgment".

At one point, Anselm apparently tried to finesse his way out of Vincennes. He was apparently a budding artist and wanted to return to France for art lessons. On June 2, 1844, he notes "...how much a good teacher of drawing and painting is necessary at the College of Notre Dame du Lac...", and also notes that "...if he (Moreau) wished to let me go spend a fortnight or more with a good master of oriental painting, I'd consent to teach English at Notre Dame of Holy Cross...". Moreau however, would not bite and referred the request to Sorin ("As for your return to France, I await word from Father Sorin...").

Anselm eventually received his reprieve from Vincennes and in November of 1844 was transferred to another river town, Madison, Indiana. While sickness continued to dog him, Madison turned out to be a breath of fresh air. Even though his working conditions were still a challenge (teaching large classes, lack of supplies and decent clothing), he appeared to enjoy his assignment. He instructed about 60 children in the basement of St. Michael's church and was also involved with community activities.

Anselm's last letter was to Father Sorin and was dated July 10, 1845. While he mentions a number of items, the heart of the text was about returning for the summer retreat with his confreres at Notre Dame du Lac.

We weren't able to return to Springdale until early December. It was the morning of December 2nd to be exact. This time it was just Janet and I. It was unseasonably warm for that time of year and a thick fog covered the valley. We parked the car in the northwest corner of the "empty field". Janet started toward the hill again while I decided to try and search the field. The extreme quiet of the cemetery was occasionally broken by the cawing of a crow; and, accompanied by the fog, set a rather eerie atmosphere for our work. The field looked as though it was pock marked and small clumps of leaves had gathered in many of the depressions. Underneath each of those clumps was a tombstone. Using small garden tools, I began to uncover the stones. I looked first for a date. If it wasn't what I was looking for, then I moved on. The first two stones that I partially uncovered had dates in the 1850's. I felt that I was on the right track. The third stone, which was next to an extremely large (and very overgrown) bush was barely showing the number "184". The rest of the stone was almost completely covered by overgrown grass. I removed the grass just to the right of the number 4 and found the date "1845". I continued pulling the grass away from the stone and eventually saw the word "France". In very short measure, Brother Anselm appeared. Being the cool, collected person that I am, I immediately stood up and screamed at the top of my lungs, scaring not only my wife but the crows as well. Janet returned and we uncovered the rest of the stone. We said a short prayer over the grave and then went into the city to buy a camera. We returned to the grave, took some pictures, made some measurements, left a note for Bob Leach and then went home. Following is the text of the email that I subsequently sent Brother George:



"I left you a voicemail message, but I wanted to let you know by email as well. We found the grave and tombstone today. It is laying flat on the ground and was almost completely covered by overgrown grass and weeds. It is 66 inches long and 17.5 inches wide. The inscription is pretty much as you wrote with two exceptions: The name is spelled "Anselme" and, at the very bottom is written all in capital letters "PRAY FOR HIM". The tombstone appears to be limestone and is in generally good condition. There is some very basic decorative treatment on the top: a gothic window with a cross in the center. The cross is partially broken. We took some pictures and will be sending them to you soon."

Both Janet and I had mixed emotions about the discovery. It was great to have achieved our goal; however, we were sorry to see the adventure seemingly end.

I then became interested in trying to discover more information about Brother Anselm and launched a new adventure. In addition to the Indiana Historical Society and the State Library, I also visited the Jefferson County Historical Society, Historic Madison, and the Madison-Jefferson County Public Library. With Janet's help, we also combed the Archdiocesan archives and made inquiries of Prince of Peace parish, which is the successor parish to St. Michael's. St. Michael's church is now owned by Historic Madison and is used for various civic activities. Finally, I contacted the Catholic Miscellany as well as the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

Our efforts turned up a few small items. Janet was able to locate a very brief mention of the incident in the July 19, 1845 edition of *The Catholic Advocate*:

"Distressing Casualty. – By some accident, the particulars of which have not reached us, brother Anselm, teacher in the Catholic school at Madison, Indiana, met with a very sudden death during the present week. We are told that the worthy pastor, Rev. J. Delaune, came very near the same fate."

A search of succeeding editions turned up nothing. Available editions of various Madison newspapers of that time were also unproductive.

I thought perhaps that there might be a death certificate or burial permit somewhere in the Madison bureaucracy. At the time of Brother Anselm's death however, the only such bureaucratic evidence was an entry in the cemetery register for a particular month. I found that Brother Anselm was indeed duly entered into the Springdale Cemetery register for those who "died from July 1<sup>st</sup> 45 until the 31<sup>st</sup>". Anselm is listed as the 8<sup>th</sup> of 15 entries for that month. The listing notes that he was a "Teacher at the Catholic Church". Finally, Janet was able to locate the sacramental records of St. Michael's parish that duly noted Anselm's death.

While our discovery may not have made "20/20", it still received a few headlines. It was the featured cover story for the February 15, 2002 issue of "The Criterion", which is the newspaper for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. It was also the leading story for the March 1, 2002 edition of Madison's "Weekly Herald", as well as the "Faith" section in

the April 4, 2002 edition of the South Bend Tribune. It also made the Associated Press newswire and was picked up by the April 5, 2002 edition of the "Indianapolis Star" in its "City & State" section. Finally, it was mentioned in two Holy Cross publications: the May, 2002 edition of the Province Review, as well as the Autumn 2002 edition of Notre Dame magazine.

It's appropriate to end this story with the letter that was written to Father Moreau from Father Julian Delaune, the pastor of St. Michael's, about Brother Anselm's death.

My dear friend:

I have sad news for you. Sudden death has taken Brother Anselm away from us. He came to see me Saturday afternoon, July 12, to tell me he was going swimming. After hesitating a bit, I agreed to accompany him. He went into the water about seven or eight hundred feet away from me, in a place which did not seem the least bit dangerous. He went out more than five hundred feet without finding water deep enough for swimming. I was in water about three or four feet deep, a little distance off the bank. All of a sudden, while he was swimming, I noticed an expression of suffering on his face. He went down, but I thought he was doing it on purpose. He came up, then he went down again, while uttering a cry for help. What a moment for me! I was more than three hundred feet away from him and did not know how to swim. We were two miles from the city, with no houses nearby. He came up again and then sank. A moment later he lifted his arms and I saw him no more.

All aghast, I hastened to give him absolution. He had probably received it that morning for, as usual, he had gone to confession, and he went to communion at least every Sunday. I ran to a cabin. A child told me that there was an old man not far away. I ran to him and brought him with me and pointed out from afar the place where the Brother disappeared. "He is lost for good," he told me. "Right there is a drop off at least twenty feet deep, and the current all around is very swift. Anything I could do would be useless." I went home, got some good swimmers together, and procured boats and nets.

All our efforts proved useless. It was ten o'clock in the evening before he was found, five hours after he had drowned. An inquest was held by the civil authorities, and then we brought him back to the church at one thirty yesterday morning. He was laid out in the basement chapel. Some of the Irish settlers watched beside the coffin until daybreak. I clothed him in his religious habit and he remained exposed in the Chapel until yesterday afternoon at four. Everyone was dismayed by the event. Thank God for having borne me up throughout this trial and its accompanying fatigue. Sleepless, and without having tasted food, broken-hearted and yet forced to stifle my grief in order to look after all the details, I suffered more yesterday than I ever thought I could.

At four in the afternoon we brought him to the church. The coffin was uncovered, and the calmness of his features made him look as though he were only asleep. Protestants and Catholics alike gathered to the number of more than a thousand. The choir sang the Vespers of the Dead. With painful effort I preached on Chapter Four of the Book of Wisdom, beginning with verse seven. ["But the just man, if he be overtaken by death, shall be in rest. For venerable old age is not that of long time, nor counted by the number of years...He was taken away lest wickedness should alter his understanding, or deceit beguile his soul."]

I had the thirteenth verse written in English on a black banner: "Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time." After the *Libera*, the children from his school kissed his forehead; then the coffin was closed and covered with the funeral drape. The two schools led the funeral procession with the banner and the cross. The hearse followed, and the people, two by two. I marched between the school children and the carriages. We crossed the city to the cemetery, which is a mile from here.

Your friend,

J. Delaune

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