

THE SECOND CATHEDRAL OF ST. PAUL  
HISTORY OF THE CATHEDRAL PARISH OF ST. PAUL FROM  
1851 TO 1857

by

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## PREFACE

The history of the second cathedral of St. Paul is the story of the growth of the Catholic community in St. Paul during a period of great social, economic and physical development in the town. Changes affecting the lives of many of the citizens frequently occasioned changes and adjustments in the parish. The brevity of this period of the history of the cathedral parish reflects the temporary and changing conditions of life in the frontier town. Most evidently, it manifests the increase in the number of parishioners and the growing needs of the newcomers. In a word, the study of this period of history reveals the efforts of Catholics in St. Paul to keep the Church apace with the changing world in which they lived.

The study of this church building easily becomes a study of the people who built it and used it. Many physical characteristics of the building are significant for bringing to light the faith, devotion and vitality of the Catholic community. The size and shape, the art and objects of devotion, the construction and use of space, the changes and remodeling of the building reflect and illustrate the needs and activities of the community. The examination of the building is as valuable as it is necessary for an adequate understanding of the parish history.

This dissertation is an attempt to reconstruct the significant events in the lives of those who used the brick

building as a place of worship, a residence, a school and a gathering place for social activities. It is a continuation of the study begun by Rt. Rev. Msgr. Richard Moudry who told the story of the Catholic Church in St. Paul from its beginning up to the construction of the log chapel that was the first cathedral of St. Paul. In this first period of the cathedral parish history, the activities and contributions of individuals are particularly significant for the historian. During this second phase of the parish's history, the activities of groups or societies of clergy and parishioners play a more important role in the history of Catholicism in St. Paul.

Important facts which other historical studies of this period have neglected to relate and disturbing inaccuracies found in many history books influenced the present writer in his selection of subjects to be treated in this dissertation. The first chapter is an attempt to clarify the intentions of Church officials when they erected the brick building. Contemporary, local newspapers gave confusing accounts about the purpose of the building and wholly inaccurate information about its cost. The second chapter is the result of a study directed to determine the period of residence at St. Paul for the seminarians and priests of the diocese. This study should prove particularly helpful to historians who will write about the parishes which were started by these pioneer priests. Many of the histories of these parishes are filled with inaccurate information. The third chapter is a compilation

of the important facts dealing with the establishment of the parish societies which trace their origin to this period. The final chapter is a short summary, based on the improvements made on the building, of the use to which the Catholics of St. Paul put the brick building during its thirty-eight years of service.

The individual sources consulted for this study were of value for only specific topics; none covered the scope of the whole paper. The several local newspapers, which were eventually merged to form the Minnesota Pioneer and Democrat, were most valuable for information regarding the construction of the building. More recent publications, the Catholic Bulletin, and its predecessor, the Northwestern Chronicle, carried valuable summaries of events which took place in the building. The letters and reports of Bishop Cretin and Father Ravoux to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith gave a clear indication of the needs of the diocese and the Catholics in St. Paul. Several articles which appeared in the Acta et Dicta, a publication founded to promote the writing of local Catholic history, has a considerable amount of material on the use of the building.

Many of the facts contained in this dissertation were first located by Monsignor Moudry who originally had intended to cover this phase of the history of the cathedral parish also. The author is deeply indebted to Monsignor Moudry for the use of the fruits of his research, and also to the many

people from whom he received help in gathering this material, especially to Sister Helen Angela Hurley, C.S.J.

The author is grateful to the Most Reverend Leo Binz, D.D., for making it possible to initiate and complete this study, and to the Rector and Faculty of the St. Paul Seminary, under whose auspices this work was undertaken. He wishes to express his gratitude to the Reverend Patrick H. Ahern, M.A., Ph.D., director of M.A. dissertations and seminar work, for evaluating and correcting the manuscript; to the priests of the Cathedral parish and of the Chancery of the Archdiocese of St. Paul for making available the records in their offices; to the librarians and/or archivists of the St. Paul Seminary Library, the Minnesota Historical Society Library and the Jerome Library at St. Joseph's Hospital for the help they gave so generously; to his classmates for their assistance, especially to Reverend Patrick F. Mullaney for reading the manuscript; to Mr. Gene A. Scapanski for typing the MS; and to all others who have shown an interest in this undertaking and given encouragement.

An historical work possesses its greatest value when it assists the reader to understand better his own age because of his knowledge of the past. It is hoped that this history of the second cathedral will encourage an appreciation of our heritage from this period and an accurate evaluation of its significance.

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CHAPTER I  
THE BRICK BUILDING

The first church to give evidence of the Catholic faith in St. Paul was erected in 1841. A handful of Catholics under the leadership of Father Lucian Galtier built a crude wooden cabin to shelter the members of the community while they worshiped their Creator. This humble beginning placed under the patronage of the Apostle to the Gentiles gave its name to the community which it served. Two years after the building had been erected, it was much too small to accommodate the Catholics who gathered for the single Sunday Mass, but Father Galtier did not have the funds to build a larger church.<sup>1</sup> His successor at St. Peter, Father Augustin Ravoux, enlarged the chapel in 1847. By doubling the original size, he made it possible for the building to serve the community for another four years.

By the time the chapel had again become inadequate, Church officials had learned about the large number of Catholics in the town, their need for a resident pastor, and the need for a larger church. Father Ravoux's solicitude for the spiritual welfare of the Catholics in St. Paul and the vicinity was reflected by several Bishops in the Seventh Provincial Council of Baltimore

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<sup>1</sup>Archives of the Archdiocese of Dubuque, Lucian Galtier to Mathias Loras, St. Peter, Dec. 12, 1843, quoted in Richard P. Moudry, "The Chapel of St. Paul" (Unpublished Master's Dissertation, St. Paul Seminary, 1950), pp. 57-58.

in May of 1849. Bishop Mathias Loras of Dubuque, in whose diocese St. Peter was located, suggested that a new diocese be erected as a solution to the problem. He was supported in this request by Bishop John Henni of Milwaukee whose territory extended to the eastern bank of the Mississippi and by Bishop John Hughes of New York who sympathized with the needs of Father Ravoux.<sup>2</sup> In the Petitio sent to the Holy See, the Fathers of the Council asked that a new diocese be established corresponding to the boundaries of the proposed Territory of Minnesota and that St. Paul be designated as the See City.<sup>3</sup>

The Catholics in St. Paul were still awaiting a decision from officials in Rome when they began to consider plans for the erection of a church which they hoped would be the cathedral. Their expectations were reflected in the reports on the subject in the local papers. In August of 1849, one of the newspapers announced:

The Catholic church is about to found a diocese in Minnesota, with the seat of the bishop at St. Paul. This will insure the building of a splendid Cathedral here, to

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<sup>2</sup>Eugene J. Roden, "Augustin Ravoux, Pioneer Priest" (Unpublished Master's Dissertation, St. Paul Seminary, 1954), p. 132; Augustin Ravoux, Historical Map and Tableau (St. Paul, 1903).

<sup>3</sup>Augustin Ravoux, Reminiscences, Memoirs and Lectures (St. Paul: Brown, Treacy and Co., 1890), p. 60 in which he refers to a letter: John Henni to Ravoux, Milwaukee, Jan. 31, 1850. Bishop Cretin was the choice of the Council according to the letter: Joseph Cretin to Abbe Bernard, LaHavre, Jan. 11, 1851. This letter is found in an English translation in the Archives of the Archdiocese of St. Paul (hereafter this source will be designated as AASP).



supply the religious wants of the members of that denomination, and incidently add to the architectural beauty of our growing town.<sup>4</sup>

Three months later, the same paper reported the rumor that "A large house for worship will be erected by that society next summer."<sup>5</sup>

The discussion over the location of the cathedral continued throughout the spring of the following year. There had been no information from officials in Rome that might have supported any of the speculations of the parishioners.<sup>6</sup> These local conjectures caused a stir that resulted in a contest between several communities for the designation as See City. The newspapers indicated that several sites had been proposed for a cathedral. St. Anthony Village was mentioned as a possible site because Pierre Bottineau and others in the area were willing to donate land.<sup>7</sup> Father Ravoux finally put an end to the rumors by selecting a spot in upper St. Paul. A newspaper made note of the incident. "Our townsman, Vital Gueron (sic)<sup>8</sup> has made

<sup>4</sup>Minnesota Chronicle and Register, Aug. 25, 1849.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., Dec. 29, 1849

<sup>6</sup>Archives of the Archdiocese of Dubuque, Augustin Ravoux to Mathias Loras, St. Peter, Dec. 19, 1849; Ravoux to Loras, St. Peter, Aug. 6, 1850.

<sup>7</sup>F. Fletcher Williams, A History of the City of St. Paul and of the County of Ramsey, Minnesota (St. Paul: Minn. Historical Society, 1876) p. 257.

<sup>8</sup>Vital Guerin, one of the founders of the town, had donated the property for the log chapel. For a short biography of him, see Moudry, "Chapel," p. 11 n. 22.

a deed of such grounds in St. Paul, as are desirable for the erection of a cathedral, and we are informed that the cathedral will undoubtedly be erected in our town and not in Saint Anthony, as was reported.<sup>9</sup>

In July, 1850, the Bulls for the erection of the diocese and the appointment of Rev. Joseph Cretin, Vicar-General of the diocese of Dubuque, as its bishop were issued and three months later the information reached St. Paul. The bishop-elect was informed of the situation in St. Paul by Father Ravoux and encouraged to come to the city in order to buy property for a cathedral while suitable sites were still available.<sup>10</sup> Cretin decided not to follow this advice because he was still hesitating over the acceptance of such a responsibility and, instead, sailed to France to consult with friends there on the matter. Meanwhile, the Catholics in St. Paul interpreted his failure to come to St. Paul to select property on which a cathedral would be built as an indication that he was not interested in a new location, although they still retained their hopes for a new church. This seems to have been a common opinion since one of

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<sup>9</sup>Minn. Pioneer, March 6, 1850. There does not seem to be any evidence for a written contract on this occasion and consequently we may infer that the agreement, if it was such, was only verbal, but most likely it was merely a suggestion. See n. 14.

<sup>10</sup>Ravoux, Reminiscences, pp. 60-61. Father Ravoux was foreseeing the day when St. Paul would be host to a thriving Catholic community and the center of Catholic activity in the territory. Bishop-elect Cretin relied upon the frequent correspondence of Father Ravoux for information about the condition of the diocese before arriving in St. Paul in 1851.

the local papers indicated that a new building would merely replace the old log chapel on Bench Street,<sup>11</sup> while another said: "This pile of logs is soon to be removed, we understand, to give place to an architectural pile, worthy of that branch of the Church which has produced an architect, painter, and sculptor, like Michael Angelo. (sic)"<sup>12</sup>

Father Ravoux did not draw that same conclusion from Cretin's actions. Instead, with that foresight and forwardness so characteristic of the early pioneers, he made a contract for deed with Vital Guerin for two blocks of property shortly after Cretin left for France.<sup>13</sup> The property consisted of block number Seven in St. Paul proper bounded by Sixth and Seventh, and St. Peter and Wabasha Streets, and lots two to eleven in block Eight of Guerin and Bazille's addition bounded by Eighth and

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<sup>11</sup>The Minn. Pioneer reported on Nov. 21, 1850: "The Catholic Church, for which part of the building materials are already upon the ground, is to be erected on or near the site of the old church between Third and Bench streets, overlooking the lower plateau." Quoted in W.G. LeDuc, Minnesota Year Book for 1851 (St. Paul: LeDuc, Nov. 4, 1851 - preface date), p. 38.

<sup>12</sup>Minn. Democrat, Dec. 10, 1850.

<sup>13</sup>This seems to be the time at which a true contract was made in spite of what was reported by the papers earlier (see n. 10). This later date for the bond is supported by what Ravoux had written in his Reminiscences (p. 61): "After his departure for France... I bought of Mr. Vital Guerin twenty-one lots for \$800.00, and for \$100.00 the lot on which now stands the cathedral (third cathedral)." Bishop Cretin sailed for Liverpool on Nov. 16. For further discussion on this date, see Roden, "A. Ravoux," pp. 139 n. 56 and 140.

and Ninth, and St. Peter and Wabasha Streets,<sup>14</sup> Father Ravoux indicated that a cathedral and a school would be erected on this site.<sup>15</sup>

The problem of paying for this property and the building of a new church made Cretin hesitate about accepting the responsibility of a bishop for the diocese. To the Society for the Propagation of the Faith he wrote on December 10: "I could not bring myself to accept this important task before assuring heretofore whether I could rely upon indispensable help for a diocese where everything is to be established."<sup>16</sup> He made his needs more specific in January of the following year when he told the officials of the Society:

A church, as simple as possible is absolutely necessary, say one of 100 or 130 feet which will not cost less than 30 or 36 thousand francs - a house for the bishop to be also used as a residence for missionaries and a few seminarists. That house, with its furniture, cannot be built for less than 25 thousand francs (\$4,890.00).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Augustin Ravoux, Articles on Various Subjects (St. Paul, 1838-1903), "Tempus Tacendi et Tempus Loquendi", pp.3-4; Ravoux, Reminiscences, pp. 60-61.

<sup>15</sup>Augustin Ravoux, Labors of Monsigneur Augustin Ravoux at Mendota, St. Paul and Other Localities, from the Spring of 1844 to July, 1851 (St. Paul; 1897) p.5.

<sup>16</sup>AASP, Joseph Cretin to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith (hereafter designated as SPF), Paris, Dec. 10, 1850. This quotation and the others found in this paper are taken from reproductions of the typed translation known as the "Hickey Collection" which is found in the archives of the Sacred Heart Seminary, Detroit, Michigan.

<sup>17</sup>AASP, Cretin to SPF, LaHavre, Jan. 28, 1851. The value of the franc in 1851 is computed at \$0.196 for this paper.

There was little improvement in the financial condition of the diocese after Cretin was consecrated the first Bishop of St. Paul on January 26, 1851 on the advice of Bishop Alexander Devie of Belly, France. When the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, which Bishop Cretin had hoped would be most generous with their funds, had made it known that they could give him little help that year, he turned to private parties and institutions. He collected very little in proportion to what was needed,<sup>18</sup> but a newspaper in St. Paul optimistically reported: "We are informed that the pastor of the Catholic Church in this place, who is now in Europe, has been very successful in securing funds for the erection of a cathedral."<sup>19</sup>

While the Bishop remained in Europe trying to procure funds and laborers for the priestly ministry, preparations were made in St. Paul for the building of a new church.<sup>20</sup> There were some who still felt that the site was not very good because it was not centrally located but their objections did not affect the decision of Father Ravoux which proved to be quite wise in the

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<sup>18</sup>AASP, Cretin to SPF, LaHavre, May 23, 1851: "All that I have been able to collect by private appeals does not amount to 4,000 francs (\$785.00). I have advanced for this mission over 12,000 francs (\$2,352.00) of my money."

<sup>19</sup>Minn. Democrat, April 8, 1851.

<sup>20</sup>The Bishop urged the Jesuits to come to St. Paul because he considered them the best missionaries available. After his return he asked the Trappist Monks of Dubuque and other religious to come to his diocese.

years to follow.<sup>21</sup> A local newspaper proudly reported on May 27, over a month before the arrival of the Bishop:

The Catholic Church owns two blocks of lots on Wabasha street. Upon one is to be erected a Cathedral, and upon the other a College. We learn that a convent will be established on the same property. We see that workmen have commenced digging and hauling stone, preparatory to commencing the contemplated improvements. The Bishop's residence will be built first. The Bishop is daily expected.<sup>22</sup>

When the Bishop arrived in St. Paul on July 2, 1851, he immediately approved a set of plans and allowed the workmen to begin the actual construction of the building.<sup>23</sup> The original plan for two buildings, a church and a residence, was modified because of lack of funds to make one building serve both purposes. A local newspaper recording the progress reported that on "Monday morning July 14, about 24 Irishmen, volunteers without pay, are at work on the foundation of the building." Believing that this structure was not a church, it went on to say:

We see the workmen employed in excavating the cellar and the foundation for the new Catholic College.... Bishop Cretin informs us that during the present season, but one wing of the college will be erected forty-eight by eighty feet, two stories high, and of brick. We predict that this college, in a very short time after its completion, will be among the wealthy Catholics of the Mississippi valley, the most popular institute of

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<sup>21</sup>Catholic Bulletin, (hereafter designated as CB) Sept. 5, 1914 and Acta et Dicta, IV (July, 1915), 82. These references contain the sermon delivered by Archbishop John Ireland during the final services in the third cathedral, Monday, Aug. 30, 1914.

<sup>22</sup>Minn. Democrat, April 8, 1851.

<sup>23</sup>According to William P. Murray, it was only a few days after his arrival that actual construction began. Father Ravoux,

learning in the U.S!...the Catholics have subscribed eight hundred dollars towards paying for the building.<sup>24</sup>

The use of this building as a church was only a compromise in the original plans of the optimistic bishop. He explained the situation to the officers of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith thus:

The Catholic church is worse than a stable! To put a stop to that sort of scandal and not being able to erect a decent building, the Prelate is building a three story house of eighty-four feet over forty-four feet. The first story shall be used for schools, the next one as a church, and the top one for the clergy. Later on, the building could be used as a college or seminary. All this is to be completed next October and will cost 24,000 francs (\$4,704.00).

Cretin went on to describe in this letter the high cost of erecting a building in the town. There were plenty of carpenters, stone masons, and laborers but the men demanded wages that were considerably out of proportion to the economic conditions of St. Paul. He also reported that he could not rely on the donations from the parishioners to pay any of the construction costs since most of them were poor immigrants. He tried to point out that he would have to depend heavily on the Society to meet the originally estimated cost of \$4,704.00. Up to that time, \$1,960.00 had been paid from diocesan funds

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Vital Guerin, Charles Bazille and Eugene Larpenteur were the bishop's principal advisors for this and other projects. AASP, MS by August L. Larpenteur, Jan. 31, 1912 (no title).

<sup>24</sup>Minn. Democrat, May 27, 1851.

and \$484.00 had been borrowed to pay for materials and labor.<sup>25</sup>

The Bishop was forced to seek funds from other sources to meet the actual \$7,000.00 cost of the building. He acquired an additional 10,000 francs (\$1,960.00) from his patrimony in France which he used for this purpose.<sup>26</sup> Father Ravoux received permission to seek funds for the project from friends in St. Louis, but his efforts were unsuccessful.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>AASP, Cretin to SPF, St. Paul, August 20, 1851. According to his report to the Society on Jan. 8, 1851, the diocesan revenue would be about 1,000 francs. There were about 1,300 people living in St. Paul in 1851. The Catholics were the largest denomination. Father Ravoux had indicated that there were only 220 Catholics there in 1850 (AASP, Ravoux to Loras, St. Peter, Dec. 16, 1850, transcript in AASP). These few people pledged \$800 but we cannot be sure that the full amount was collected due to the poverty. Borrowing money during these times was economically unwise as Daniel Fisher indicated in a letter to Arthur J. Donnely in May of 1852: "There is no money--as all the wealth is controlled by a Fur Company (North West) who own nearly all the shops and employ a great number of workmen and never circulate any money--they loan it at 60 per cent! They pay their men in provisions..." (AASP).

<sup>26</sup>CB Sept. 5, 1914.

<sup>27</sup>"In those days every person in St. Paul was poor - no millionaires then - and the church was poor. Father Ravoux, full of expectations to build a new church, suggested that we have four of the old pioneers each execute a note for five thousand dollars, payable in one year from its date, with 1 per cent interest due and after maturity at the rate of 2 per cent a month until paid. He thought that the bankers and moneyed men at St. Louis would jump over one another to get hold of such paper. As a matter of fact the church was to pay the principal, the makers to pay the interest. The scheme was a good one, but it did not work. The notes were sent to St. Louis for discount. Up to the time they had a look at the notes there was a strong church influence in favor of their discount, as the makers owned at least two-thirds of the city of St. Paul, but when the old bankers and brokers made an inspection of the notes, and found that each and every one of the same had a signature, with his mark, it struck them that the banks of St. Louis were hard press-



While the bishop was worrying about funds, the work on the building continued at a rapid pace. The cornerstone was laid in late July or early August.<sup>28</sup> The foundation and lower walls of the first story were built of native limestone quarried from the site and the nearby banks of the Mississippi. The other two and a half stories were made of brick. By the end of August, the walls had been erected up to the second story. It appeared that the structure could be finished in October,<sup>29</sup> but an accident caused a short delay in the progress. A newspaper reported.

Thursday last (September 4) one of the centre beams of the second story of the large brick Catholic Seminary which is being built in St. Paul, broke for want of proper support in the centre, and fell down with all the other beams of the second story into the basement, knocking some holes in the unfinished walls. Mr. Charles Bozille (sic) was standing upon the scaffolding built upon these beams, when they fell, but received no injury

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ed; in fact, did not have the amount of money necessary to accommodate their customers, much less make discounts on outside papers, lying a little, just as St. Paul bankers do whenever they think the paper is not gilt-edge. They could not understand how a man who could not write his name was good for two thousand dollars, although it was tried to be impressed upon their minds that the earlier kings of England always made their mark or signed official letters with a stamp, that writing was menial work and that it was only fellows who were educated for scavengers who ever attempted to write; the story did not work. The notes were not discounted, but were returned to the makers by Father Ravoux, and he and I might tell a story in this regard; the Father, however, was disgusted...." A speech by William Pitt Murray in the St. Paul Sunday Pioneer Press, May 26, 1895.

<sup>28</sup>In a section of the paper headed "Catholicity in Minnesota," the Boston Pilot reported on Aug. 9, 1851: "The cornerstone of a new and commodious church has been laid at St. Paul lately."

<sup>29</sup>AASP, Cretin to SPF, St. Paul, Aug. 12, 1851.

in falling.<sup>30</sup>

The progress on the building drew the attention and admiration of many since it was one of the few brick buildings among the numerous frame stores and residences of the town. One of the local papers proudly announced:

The walls of the Catholic seminary buildings, in course of construction in this place, we notice are rapidly rising; and the main building will in a few months be completed, and will be one of the handsomest and most elegant (sic) pieces of architecture in the North West.<sup>31</sup>

By September 30 the brick work was completed and the workmen started to put on the roof.<sup>32</sup> On November 3, the priests and seminarians moved into the residence section of the unfinished, new structure in order that their former residence could be used by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet who had arrived the day before.<sup>33</sup> The church was blessed in December and opened

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<sup>30</sup>Minn. Pioneer, Sept. 11, 1851. Charles Bazille, a French-Canadian settler who came to St. Paul in 1843 from Prairie du Chien, was a carpenter by trade and ran a lumber business for a few years. He married Annie Jane Perry in 1845 and later bought the claim of Benjamine Larrivier which was incorporated in the city of St. Paul with Guerin's addition. He was described as "generous recklessness" in giving away real estate and together with Guerin, donated the site of the capitol. He built many buildings in St. Paul and may have been the contractor for the brick building. See Williams, History of St. Paul, pp. 143-144; Thomas M Newson, Pen Picture of St. Paul Minnesota, and Biographical Sketches of Old Settlers, (St. Paul: The Author, 1886), pp. 43-44.

<sup>31</sup>Minn. Democrat, Sept. 9, 1851.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., Sept. 30, 1851.

<sup>33</sup>For the determination of this date, see Moudry, "Chapel," pp. 137-38; Acta et Dicta, XV (July, 1915), p. 256; Sister Helen Angela Hurley, On Good Ground, (Minneapolis: University of Minn. Press, 1951), p. 25.

for use shortly thereafter.<sup>34</sup> Even at this time the building was not finished because there was no money available for plastering the basement and completing the living quarters.<sup>35</sup>

Throughout the period of construction, the newspapers frequently referred to this building as the new Catholic school. From the time it was first used and throughout its history, the building was used for school purposes. The Catholics of the town never seemed to consider it a true church and they rarely referred to it as their cathedral. The room in which Mass was said hardly resembled those edifices found abroad which bore the title of cathedral. The people were probably reflecting the feeling of the bishop who wrote after the building was completed that "No church has been erected at St. Paul's."<sup>36</sup> To the Society for the Propagation of the Faith he wrote in one letter: "There are about seven Protestant Temples in St. Paul and not yet one Catholic Church. I cannot apply that name to the large room where we say Mass,"<sup>37</sup> and in another: "the diocese has not even any church for a cathedral."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>CB, Jan. 27, 1917; J. Hanson, Centennial Chronological Paragraph History of the City of St. Paul, Minnesota, 1776-1876 (St. Paul: John Jay Lemon -printer, 1876), p. 13.

<sup>35</sup>AASP, Fisher to Donnelly, May, 1852; CB, Sept. 5, 1914; AASP, Cretin to SPF, Jan. 5, 1853. In February, \$1,568.00 was still needed to "finish the church and house" according to Cretin to SPF, St. Paul Feb. 8, 1852. (AASP)

<sup>36</sup>Report for the editors of the Metropolitan Catholic Almanac, and Laity's Directory for 1852. (Baltimore: Fielding Lucas Jr.), p. 150.

<sup>37</sup>AASP, Cretin to SPF, St. Paul, June 5, 1852.

<sup>38</sup>AASP, Cretin to SPF, St. Paul, Feb. 11, 1853.

There was ample area around the brick building for later improvements.<sup>39</sup> The building itself was located on the southwest corner of the block. Soon an area was cleared between the structure with its spacious front yard and Sixth Street to provide a playground for the pupils of the school. To the north of the building in a large cultivated plot grew vegetables, flowers and the apple trees brought by the Bishop from France which the seminarians tended.<sup>40</sup> On the eastern side of the lot where the third cathedral was to stand, there was another garden in which melons, corn, and other kinds of vegetables were raised.<sup>41</sup> Directly behind the building was a temporary belfry which supported the large bell donated by Mr. and Mrs. L. Robert.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>The material in the following paragraphs was taken from Anatole Oster, "Personal Reminiscences of Bishop Cretin," Acta et Dicta, I (July, 1907), pp. 73-88, and three pages of diagrams by Anatole Oster and annotated by James Reardon describing the building as it existed about 1854. (AASP)

<sup>40</sup>AASP, James Keller to Archbishop John Ireland, St. Paul, Nov. 6, 1895; "Some Reminiscences of the Old St. Paul's Seminary in Early Days" by Ralston J. Markoe (MS in AASP); St. Paul Dispatch, Oct. 10, 1863.

<sup>41</sup>Northwestern Chronicle, August 9, 1889.

<sup>42</sup>Minn. Pioneer, Nov. 6, 1915. The bell was consecrated on Oct. 30, 1852, and suspended on a makeshift support of four posts early in November. The following statistics on the bell were obtained from the late Msgr. George Ryan: weight: 800 lbs., height: 28 in., diameter: 34 in., tone: "B" flat, manufacturer: Coffin Bell Co. The bell has been used in the third and fourth cathedrals. Recalling the outstanding service the bell has given, the CB for March 6, 1915, reported: "For more than sixty years the bell summoned Catholic parishioners to Mass, announced the Angelus hour, and tolled the departure of the faithful to 'Calvary'. The bell was also rung at times of fire, passing of the 'Maine' Liquor Law (to which the donor, a dealer in liquor, objected), and other occasions of importance." The bell is now hanging in the Selby-side bell tower of the fourth cathedral.

In 1854 the small bell which stood beside the old log chapel was hung under the cover of this larger bell, a fitting symbol of the growth of the Church in St. Paul.<sup>43</sup> Other structures erected on this block were a cellar, a combined woodshed and lime kiln, a "special school", and a stable.

The church proper occupied the whole second story of the building and measured only forty-four by eighty-eight feet. There were four rows of pews on each side of a rather wide middle aisle in which benches were placed when needed. When the moveable benches were used, about 500 people could be seated. The sanctuary located at the west end of the building was separated from the rest of the church by a railing that ran from one side of the building to the other and protruded into the body of the church at the center to make room for a moveable pulpit. The altar was located in a semicircular recess in the wall that separated the sanctuary from the sacristy. Four confessionals were located in this wall, Bishop Cretin's being on the extreme end of the gospel side, another on the epistle side, and two others behind the altar. These were so arranged that the confessor sat in the sacristy and the penitent knelt in the sanctuary. The Bishop's throne was located near the southern wall of the sanctuary.

Two side altars stood against the straight part of the wall that separated the sanctuary from the sacristy. A statue

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<sup>43</sup>Minn. Democrat, Nov. 11, 1854. This bell had been used on the steamer "Argo" and was donated by Hon. Henry M. Rice after the boat sank in 1847.

of Our Lady of Victory was placed above one of the altars<sup>44</sup> and surrounded with decorations and paper flowers made by the sisters and parishioners. Over the altar of St. Joseph was placed the banner of the Temperance Society bearing in gold letters on a green silk background the motto "In Hoc Signo Vinces."<sup>45</sup> Two elaborate tablets, the one containing a list of the English-speaking members of that same society, and the other the French-speaking members, hung on either side of the main entrance. The building also contained one of the three precious organs found in the town at this time.<sup>46</sup>

The basement was reached by several entrances on the ground level or by a single stairway in one of the corners. It was

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<sup>44</sup> "The statue was given to Bishop Cretin, first Bishop of the then frontier See of St. Paul, in the year 1851, by the Abbe Desgennettes, his friend and former classmate in the renowned Seminary of St. Sulpice in Paris. The Abbe Desgennettes was one of the foremost priests of France. He was pastor of the Church of Our Lady of Victory in Paris -- a noted shrine and place of pilgrimage. A Confraternity of the Blessed Virgin had been established in the church and each year tens of thousands of pilgrims came to worship before the shrine of Our Lady of Victory. The statue enthroned upon it was held in such honor that Pope Pius IX sent a special crown of gold to grace its brow.

"The statue presented to Bishop Cretin is an exact facsimile of this noted image of Our Lady of Victory. No sooner was it given a place of honor in the log chapel which served as the first Cathedral of St. Paul than it became an object of veneration and love to the little band of devout Catholics who formed the nucleus of the present Cathedral parish, and to their successors in the more pretentious edifice which replaced this primitive church..." (CB, March 13, 1915). This statue can now be found in the vestibule of St. Mary's Chapel on the grounds of the St. Paul Seminary.

<sup>45</sup>AASP, Oster to James Reardon, Oct. 10, 1903.

<sup>46</sup>Minn. Democrat, Nov. 1, 1854.

divided by a corridor running the full length of the building. The southern half had three rooms: a large schoolroom, a parlor, and the kitchen. The other side was divided into four rooms: a dining room opposite the kitchen, a housekeeper's room, a storeroom, and the parish library. The building was heated by four large furnaces located in the basement and some small stoves on the third floor.

The third floor contained the rooms of the Bishop, clergy, and seminarians. Bishop Cretin's room was in the southwest corner. One of the rooms on the south side was used occasionally by Father Ravoux. There was also a large room used by the seminarians as a classroom, a room occupied by the German priest, Father Michael Wirtsfeld, and a guest room. The seminarians' dormitory was located in the northeast corner of the building. A small guest room separated this one from another also used by the seminarians and later by the Brothers of the Holy Family. A church goods room, the corridor leading to the stairs, and the secretary's room completed this floor. In the garret there was a bathroom, water storage tank, and living quarters rented out to a teamster.<sup>47</sup>

The exterior of the building was very simple and unadorned. Shutters were placed on the sides of the windows in later years.

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<sup>47</sup>The CB (July 15, 1950) described the building as "A red brick and stone structure...." A paper in the Archives of Cretin High School, entitled "History of the Community," describes the building in the 1880's as a "three-story yellow brick building...." Covering the whole dilapidated building with a coat of paint in later years would have been entirely consonant with the other efforts at renovation employed on the building.

Two crosses, one at each end of the structure, towered over the steeply slanting roof. The plain, high walls gave the appearance of great solidity while the six smoking chimneys gave evidence of the constant activity within. The building was the pride of the citizens of St. Paul and they frequently pointed it out to visitors as one of the landmarks of the town.

It was in this building that the pioneer bishops and priests lived and worked and in which many of the first seminarians of the diocese received their training for the priesthood.



## CHAPTER II

### THE RESIDENTS OF THE BRICK BUILDING

The bishop's efforts to erect a suitable church in St. Paul were exceeded only by his endeavors to acquire men to work in the diocese and the growing city. Because of the close ties between the settlers of St. Paul and the people of France,<sup>1</sup> the bishop did not hesitate to present the needs of the diocese to the Catholics of France during his visit there in 1851. With enthusiasm he had spoken to religious communities, seminarians and parish societies about this poor frontier diocese that needed money, church goods, teachers, seminarians and missionaries.

With only four priests for the whole diocese, Cretin was most anxious to acquire missionaries. He had hoped to interest a religious order in sending men to work among the Indians but none were available for such work. He was more successful in persuading diocesan clergy to come to St. Paul. Because of the high cost of transportation,<sup>2</sup> he was forced to choose from among those who volunteered their services.<sup>3</sup> He decided to take two priests and four seminarians with him back to St. Paul.

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<sup>1</sup>St. Paul was originally a French-Canadian community and French was spoken on the streets for several years. The first pastor and the first bishop of St. Paul were French.

<sup>2</sup>AASP, Cretin to Bernard, Le Harve, May 22, 1851. The cost of transportation for each person was about \$300.00.

<sup>3</sup>AASP, Cretin to Bernard, Lyons, March 21, 1851. "I might have had three or four, but I must reckon my expenditures in relation to my resources which so far, do not amount to much." One of these prospects may have been Claude Robert who came to St. Paul in 1854.

The seminarians were acquired as a result of the lectures which the bishop had been permitted to give to the students of several seminaries in France. From the major seminary at LePuy he chose John Fayolle, a subdeacon, and Marcellin Peyrogrosse, a cleric in minor orders. From other seminaries he accepted Edward Legendre and Louis Rochette, both subdeacons. During a delay at the port of Le Harve in May the bishop advanced Fayolle, Peyrogrosse and Rochette a step closer to the priesthood.

The two priests who volunteered their services were Canon Francis de Vivaldi and Father Dennis Ledon. Father Vivaldi was a rather colorful figure who had sought refuge in France after being exiled from Italy. Father Ledon, who came from Montluel, the town in which Bishop Cretin had been born and raised, had been ordained only a few years earlier.<sup>4</sup>

When Bishop Cretin and the five volunteers<sup>5</sup> arrived in St. Paul on July 2, 1851, they were met by Father Augustin Ravoux and probably also by Father James Patrick Moran. The former had been working alone in the St. Paul area since 1844, and the latter had begun his labors at least two months before the bishop

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<sup>4</sup>Father Ledon became acquainted with Bishop Cretin and his needs while the bishop was visiting his relatives. It was under much the same conditions as these that Father Cretin had accepted an invitation from Bishop Loras of Dubuque to come to America fourteen years earlier.

<sup>5</sup>Rochette did not arrive in America. According to the Boston Pilot for August 9, 1851, the delay in his coming was thought to be only temporary.

arrived.<sup>6</sup> Cretin decided to keep Canon Vivaldi in St. Paul to help at the Cathedral for a short time before sending him to the Indian mission at Long Prairie. Father Ravoux returned to St. Peter's at Mendota, and Father Ledon was sent to care for the congregation at St. Anthony Falls.<sup>7</sup>

Bishop Cretin kept Father Moran at the Cathedral as the first permanent assistant priest. The young priest, who had been born and educated in Ireland, had come to America at the solicitation of Bishop Mathias Loras of Dubuque for whose diocese he had been ordained.<sup>8</sup> Soon after his arrival in Dubuque he had been sent to St. Paul where for two years he worked with the English-speaking residents. Before he left the diocese in 1853 for reasons of health, he had encouraged many Irish immigrants to come to the territory of Minnesota through the letters he wrote for newspapers circulated in the East and in Ireland.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> According to the marriage register of the Cathedral of St. Paul, Father Moran witnessed a marriage in the area on May 1, 1851.

<sup>7</sup> According to the records of the Cathedral parish Father Ledon worked in St. Paul before he was able to take up permanent residence at St. Anthony Falls in May of 1852. He remained at this post until November of 1855 when he returned to St. Paul.

<sup>8</sup> Bishop Cretin had probably made arrangements for Father Moran to be transferred to St. Paul during his stay in France and probably paid the cost of Moran's passage to America.

<sup>9</sup> Articles by Father Moran appeared in the Boston Pilot on Sept. 16 and Oct. 11, 1851. He is also credited with influencing the Ireland family to seek a residence in St. Paul (AASP, CBA; Chancery Office of the Archdiocese of St. Paul, Clergy Files).

The bishop, Father Moran and the three seminarians lived in two shanties located on the original church property while they awaited the completion of the new building. One building, located just north of the chapel, was eighteen feet square and the other, east of the chapel, was about ten feet square. Classes for the seminarians were held in the vestry of the chapel. The seminarians were given a little more room in their living quarters when the bishop left his quarters in the larger building to live at the home of Mrs. Amable Turpin where he paid for room and board.<sup>10</sup>

The seminarians moved to the third floor of the new combination church, rectory and school in the late fall. In an unfinished classroom they continued their studies under the direction of the bishop and his two assistants who lived with them on the third floor. They, in turn, did the chores for the community of priests and seminarians, directed and assisted at the liturgical services of the parish, taught, preached and baptized when they were able.

The seminarians made their most significant contribution to the parish in the field of education. The bishop's zeal for the education of the children had prompted him to start elementary schools at the Cathedral as soon as space and teachers were available. As a complement to the girls' school which the sisters had been conducting since November, a boys' school was

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<sup>10</sup>(Ambrose McNulty), The Diocese of St. Paul: The Golden Jubilee (St. Paul; Pioneer Press, n.d.), pp. 139-40

opened in December in the basement of the brick building. Edward Legendre and Marcellin Peyrogrosse, who were described in the local paper as a "core of learned professors,"<sup>11</sup> taught the boys for the remainder of the school year. They were assisted and later replaced by Daniel Fischer after their elevation to the priesthood in September of 1852.<sup>12</sup> After his ordination Father Peyrogrosse was made the superintendent of the boys' school and secretary to the bishop.

The seminarian, Daniel Fischer, was well-suited for the work of teaching because of his command of the English language, but he did not like the assignment. When Cretin persuaded him to come from New York in the spring of 1852 to teach in St. Paul, the bishop expected that a group of brothers would arrive in September to take over the school. Because the brothers did not arrive until 1855, the bishop was forced to keep him in the school teaching the "unruly brats" as Fischer once referred to them.<sup>13</sup>

The bishop was very concerned about the future welfare of

<sup>11</sup>Minn. Democrat, Nov. 18, 1851

<sup>12</sup>There are no records substantiating Legendre's ordination, but his name is found prefaced with the title of "Reverend" in the Catholic Directory for 1852 (p. 150) and in "Proceedings, Constitutions and By Laws of the Catholic Temperance Society of St. Paul" (AASP) dated March 14, 1852.

Legendre and Peyrogrosse were the first priests to be ordained in the brick building. Father Fayolle had been ordained the previous year in the log chapel.

<sup>13</sup>AASP, McQuaid to Ireland, Rochester, May 12, 1905; Keller to McQuaid, St. Paul, (about February, 1853).

the diocese when the brothers did not arrive as expected and because two of the priests<sup>14</sup> left the diocese at this time. He decided to take measures to foster native vocations. Early in 1853, he began a preparatory seminary with two students from the regular school whom he thought might have vocations to the priesthood. The two boys, John Ireland and Thomas O'Gorman, later recalled the occasion on which this institution was established as follows:

Down into his school basement he went, and there chose two boys whom he had already admitted to serve in the sanctuary, and leading them upstairs to the altar of the Blessed Virgin, he said: "My dear boys, let us kneel and say a prayer. I put you under the protection of God and of His blessed Mother; you are the beginning of my diocesan seminary, the first seminarians of St. Paul."<sup>15</sup>

The "select school" as he called it, was located in a small building on the south side of the residence. Here courses in Latin and other special subjects, not taught in the regular school, were given.

Daniel Fischer probably taught most of the subjects in the "select school" and in the regular school at this time. After his ordination to the priesthood in May of 1853, he also aided Peyrogrosse in attending the missions attached to St. Paul.<sup>16</sup> In 1854 when Thomas Murray, a seminarian from Du-

<sup>14</sup>The two priests were Fathers Moran and Legendre.

<sup>15</sup>(McNulty), Golden Jubilee, p. 90. See also CB, Dec. 14, 1918 and Ravoux Reminiscences, p. 70.

<sup>16</sup>The missions attached to St. Paul at this time were St. Croix, Stillwater, Credit River, Hastings and Point Douglas.

buque,<sup>17</sup> took over the classes, he was sent to Stillwater. At that time there were over forty students in the regular school.

In 1854 Ravoux returned from France with seven seminarians: George Keller, Francis Hurth, Valentine Sommereisen and Anatole Oster from the Major Seminary of Strassburg, Louis Caillet and Felix Tissot from Lyons, and Claude Robert from Le Puy.<sup>18</sup> After their arrival, the residence became a full-time seminary once again. Father Peyrogrosse taught most of the classes in theology, Father Thomas McManus,<sup>19</sup> who had replaced Father Fischer at the Cathedral, assisted him at times, and Thomas Murray, their classmate, was the English instructor. The bishop was the rector and spiritual director. The seminarians attended classes in a large room on the third floor during the day and cared for the large gardens surrounding their seminary

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<sup>17</sup>Murray attended a similar residence school at the Cathedral of Dubuque before he came to St. Paul. He had received minor orders at this seminary.

<sup>18</sup>Father Ravoux had taken John Ireland and Thomas O'Gorman to France to begin their seminary training in September of the preceeding year. The bishop had instructed Ravoux to acquire additional workers during his sojourn in Europe. Cretin had probably spoken to the seminarians at Strassburg and LePuy during his stay in France.

<sup>19</sup>Thomas McManus, an immigrant from Ireland, had studied theology at Baltimore and was ordained before he arrived in St. Paul in June of 1854. He was forty-six years old at this time. Besides caring for the Catholics at St. Paul, he frequently administered to the surrounding missions until he was assigned to Credit River late in 1855.

when they were not studying. They also assisted at the ceremonies in the Cathedral. The seminarians in major orders preached and baptised whenever they accompanied the bishop on his visitations to the missions.

George Keller and Thomas Murray were the first ones in this group of seminarians to complete their studies for the priesthood. The bishop ordained them on September 23, 1854. Father Murray continued to teach the seminarians and children of the parish after ordination. Toward the end of the year he was given the care of the missions attached to St. Paul. After his ordination Father Keller was sent to Little Canada for eight months. He then returned to St. Paul to minister to the spiritual needs of the small community of German-speaking Catholics which had been cared for previously by Father Michael Wurtzfeld.<sup>21</sup> Keller lived at the brick residence and celebrated Mass each Sunday at nine o'clock for them. When the Germans erected the church of the Assumption in 1856, Father Keller was appointed the first pastor of the parish.

On May 7, 1855, the residents of the brick building were

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<sup>20</sup>George Keller was thirty-one when he was ordained. He had received tonsure and minor orders at Strassburg in 1852 and he may have received major orders soon after his arrival in St. Paul. The day after his ordination, Father Keller took charge of the French and English community at Little Canada where he succeeded Father Fayolle.

<sup>21</sup>Father Michael Wurtzfeld may have been ordained in Germany before he came to America. He had been a priest two years when he came to St. Paul from Philadelphia seeking a more healthful climate. He remained in St. Paul for two years.



saddened by the death, caused by consumption, of twenty-eight-year-old Father Peyrogrosse. He was the first priest to die in the newly-formed diocese. His remains were first buried in the cemetery located on the present site of St. Joseph's Academy and then later moved with great ceremony to Calvary Cemetery.

Soon after Peyrogrosse's death five brothers of the Congregation of the Holy Family from Belly, France, arrived to take over some of the burdens which the few residents of the building had already found too great for them. They took up residence on the third floor of the building and began to teach in the school immediately and by contributing their talents and time to the instruction of children and the care of the sick and poor of the parish they became an important adjunct to the small community in the bishop's house. They worked in St. Paul for almost two years.

John McMahon<sup>22</sup> also became a resident at the building for the few months prior to his ordination in March, 1855. He assisted at the parish for a short while before he was sent to care for the missions south of St. Paul. Father Ledon then came to the Cathedral and worked with Father Murray as an assistant at the parish until the death of Bishop Cretin.

Four more seminarians completed their studies and were ordained before the end of the next year. In September, 1855,

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<sup>22</sup>Father McMahon, a native of Ireland, studied philosophy and theology at St. Sulpice in Montreal. He came to St. Paul to be ordained. He may have been urged to labor in St. Paul by Bishop Alexander Tache of St. Boniface who visited Bishop Cretin frequently.

Claude Robert was advanced to the priesthood. He remained at St. Paul until a residence was completed for him at his mission in Little Canada. Valentine Sommereisen, Claude Hurth, John Mehlman<sup>23</sup> and Anatole Oster<sup>24</sup> were ordained in 1856. The first two left their school-residence to work in the missions at Mankato and Palestine respectively, and Father Mehlman, who had resided only a short time at the seminary, spent several years at Shakopee. Father Oster, who after ordination became the bishop's secretary and traveling companion on visits to the German communities, continued to reside in the brick building. He assisted Fathers Ledon and McManus in caring for the members of the Cathedral parish.<sup>25</sup>

The other two seminarians, Louis Caillet and Felix Tissot, did not complete their studies at St. Paul. After the bishop's death in 1857, they were sent to St. Mary's Seminary in Perryville, Missouri. A year later they were ordained by Bishop Clement Smyth, O.C.S.D., of Dubuque, since the See of St. Paul was still vacant.

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<sup>23</sup>Father Mehlman probably came from Ireland. Cretin ordained him in July of 1856. He left the diocese in 1859.

<sup>24</sup>Oster received minor and major orders at St. Paul. He may have fallen a year behind in his studies because of his duties as secretary to the bishop.

<sup>25</sup>In October, 1856 Father McManus replaced Father Murray who was sent to Stillwater.

The many priests<sup>26</sup> and seminarians who labored in St. Paul during the period of the second cathedral made a significant contribution to the growth of the Church both in St. Paul and in the Territory of Minnesota. Their zeal for souls and love for the poor and distressed endeared them to the hearts of the wandering immigrant and the sophisticated city dweller. Through their efforts, the faith was firmly established in areas where religion was practically the only evidence of civilization.

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<sup>26</sup>Other priests who served at St. Paul were Fathers Stanislaus Augustin Bernier and Joseph Goiffon. Father Bernier worked in St. Paul for only a few months. He died in the same city on August 31, 1857 (Catholic Directory for 1858, p. 234). Father Goiffon worked at St. Paul in December of 1857 and during the first few months of 1858.

CHAPTER III  
THE PARISHIONERS

The town of St. Paul grew rapidly during the six years that the cathedral church of St. Paul was located in the brick building. Eighty-nine platted additions, totaling 3,101 acres, augmented the original ninety acres by 1857. The businessmen of the town covered the enlarged town area with homes, hotels, stores and warehouses, and still there were barely enough public facilities to meet the needs of the growing population. Almost eight thousand more people became residents of St. Paul between 1850 and 1857,<sup>1</sup> despite the discouraging inconveniences caused by muddy streets, fires, lack of water and insufficient facilities for sewage disposal.

St. Paul was attractive to both Europeans and Americans because of its numerous economic opportunities. Located at the transfer point from river to overland travel, St. Paul was the passageway to the new Minnesota Territory.<sup>2</sup> Through its streets passed furs from the north and supplies from the east. Because of steadily increasing commerce and a continual growth in the transportation industry there was a constant demand for planners

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<sup>1</sup>Williams, pp. 266 and 381. In 1850 a census revealed that there were 257 families in the town and a resident population of 1,294. Seven years later, the residents numbered 9,973.

<sup>2</sup>The signing of the Traverse de Sioux Treaty with the Indians in 1851 made available to settlers over seventeen million acres of land west of the Mississippi.

and builders, public servants and politicians, financiers and bankers. Unchecked speculation in real estate and business was especially appealing to those who were in a hurry to build a fortune.

Many of the original settlers of St. Paul were French Canadians who had abandoned the fur trade and the pioneer settlements in the north to farm on the banks of the Mississippi. Although there were few of them then and in later years, nevertheless they did exercise considerable influence in the affairs of St. Paul because of their large real estate holdings.

The St. Paul pioneers were often visited by the natives of the region. During the summer months it was quite common to see Indians roaming the streets of the town. In spite of the laws prohibiting the sale of liquor to Indians, they usually managed to drink to excess. When they had no money left to spend, they would go from house to house begging for food and clothing. The poor and destitute wretches often fought, stole and even killed in the streets of the town.

Other national groups began to arrive in the town in large numbers in 1852. New England Yankees were the earliest arrivals among the newcomers. They were attracted by the demand for public servants and industrious leaders. Since they had the funds needed to establish new businesses and the ability to influence popular thought, they soon became quite influential. The Irish and German immigrants came to St. Paul to make a new start in life a few years later. They were unable to contribute capital or leadership to the town at first because of their poverty and

foreign culture, but it was these people who augmented the Catholic population of St. Paul.

The arrival of English- and German-speaking Catholics presented special problems for the bishop and priests in St. Paul. The French Catholics had been accustomed to the French language and piety in their worship. Only with great difficulty did the clergy, who were mostly French, adapt themselves to the language and customs of the English-speaking parishioners. John Ireland recalled years later when he was Archbishop of St. Paul the difficulties which this difference presented for the community worship when his father brought the family to St. Paul in 1852:

We had, at the high Mass, sermons in English and French, and the surroundings of the church, the open prairie in the early summer covered with wild rose and daisy, proved so attractive to the people that it was difficult to enforce punctuality in attendance. When the French sermon was going on, the English-speaking people would seek the prairie, and when the English sermon commenced, the French portion of<sup>3</sup> the congregation would hie themselves to the fields.

The Germans found it more difficult to accept the French-Irish compromise. Eventually they formed a separate congregation. On Sunday morning they attended a Mass for the German-speaking people in the brick building until they were able to build their own church and school.

Soon after they arrived some of the immigrants organized societies to preserve their cultural heritage and to encourage

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<sup>3</sup>NC, August 9, 1889.

participation in social events. A group of Irishmen began to meet sometime before 1854 in the basement of the brick building.<sup>4</sup> During the winter of 1855 they were incorporated as the Benevolent Society of the Sons of Erin. The members of this organization were particularly active each year on the feast of St. Patrick, giving the town a fine display of their Catholic faith. They paraded down the main street,<sup>5</sup> to the cathedral to attend Mass, during which the bishop preached, and then they went to the St. Paul House for a formal banquet! Usually people of other nationalities joined the Irish in this celebration. In fact, many of the citizens of the town seized upon the Irish celebration as an excuse for taking a holiday.

Some members of the Irish benevolent society later formed a military company, known as the Shield's Guards, which marched in the St. Patrick's Day parade and in other parades during important celebrations. They also served as a voluntary militia when major problems arose which demanded police action. In 1857 they were reorganized under the command of Captain John O'Gorman,<sup>6</sup> and called the "St. Paul City Guards." In the Civil War this group offered many experienced soldiers for the First Minnesota Regiment.

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<sup>4</sup>Catholic Almanac for 1854, p. 171.

<sup>5</sup>Pioneer and Democrat, March 18 and 26, 1856. In 1856 there were three hundred men and two bands in the parade.

<sup>6</sup>Pioneer and Democrat, August 14, 1857.

The German-speaking Catholics of the parish were also active in organizing societies. Soon after their arrival they established the German Reading Society which helped to promote an appreciation of the German culture and language.

Bishop Cretin was responsible for the establishment of a Catholic temperance society in St. Paul less than a year after he took possession of his see. The bishop had not been the first to recognize that the hard labor and frequent disappointments of frontier life were bringing many to a miserable fate at the mercy of the bottle. Even before his arrival there had been much interest in the temperance movement among civil leaders. Soon after he came to St. Paul the bishop joined the crusade to abolish intemperance, personally seeking out individuals who needed encouragement in their endeavor to practice sobriety and assisting the families made destitute because of intemperance with clothes, food and money.<sup>7</sup> As a result of his encouragement, many Catholic people decided to seek mutual help in

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<sup>7</sup>The bishop's advice on the matter of drink was very sane as can be discerned in his advice to a missionary: "Tell them that to take a glass of wine or beer or wisquer (sic) -is not a great sin, may be no sin at all, but it is a great virtue to abstain from taking it for charity sake and for the good example to keep away the poor people from slavery." (AASP, Keller to Grace, No place; March 10, 1895.)

The following tribute was given to the bishop for his personal temperance apostolate:

A very perceptible change has taken place among this large portion of our population within the past two months, which is mostly owing to the exertions of the good Bishop. His works have carried joy and smiling plenty to the hearth of many a previously heart-stricken and destitute family. May heaven prosper the deeds of all such truly Christian philanthropists. (Minnesotan, March 20, 1852).



being faithful to their pledges of abstinence by the formation of a temperance society. On January 11, 1852, they officially organized the Catholic Temperance Society of St. Paul for this purpose.<sup>8</sup> The memorial plaques of this temperance society, which hung in the vestibule of the church, carried the names of nearly 150 members. In order to facilitate discussions at their monthly meetings, the members voted to split into two groups, one for the French-speaking and one for the English-speaking. Each had their own meetings until 1853 when the waning enthusiasm of many of the members of the organization prompted the Irish to invite the French to form a single society again. During these early years the members campaigned for the adoption of prohibition laws. In April, 1852, the "Maine Liquor Laws" were approved by a vote of the majority of the citizens. Later these laws were declared unconstitutional by the courts.<sup>9</sup> Interest in the temperance movement began to decline among the Catholics when temperance ceased to be a political issue and the members of the society no longer met.

The Catholics of St. Paul, in spite of their success in working together in promoting social events, were unable to achieve unity in supporting political causes affecting their interests. The lack of leadership was the greatest problem. Most of the Catholics were not well-established in the town this early, with the result that few of them entered politics

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<sup>8</sup>AASP, Proceedings of the Catholic Temperance Society for 1852.

<sup>9</sup>Williams, pp. 323-324.

or sought government positions. Also, many of the Catholics were immigrants, and their foreign culture and customs often isolated them from the more influential citizens who came from the east:

The Catholics failed to acquire popular support for their interests despite the fact that they were in the majority in the town. This was evident in their attempt to obtain government support for Catholic schools. Bishop Cretin feared that the public schools, which were strongly Protestant in their religious orientation, would be harmful to Catholic children who attended them. On the other hand, he found that the Catholics were unable to support their own schools at this time. Resorting to extreme measures, he considered the possibility of having the territorial constitution amended to allow parochial schools to ask for and obtain state support. He instructed Daniel Fisher, a seminarian and teacher at the cathedral school, to draw up a bill incorporating his ideas into the law. When the bill was presented in the House of Representatives on February 16, 1853,<sup>10</sup> newspaper articles immediately attacked the bill on both religious and political grounds. Doctor Edward

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<sup>10</sup>The bill, introduced by William P. Murray, was accompanied by a petition presented by William Randall signed by Pierre Bottineau and 101 others from St. Anthony. Louis Oliver presented a like petition from Firmin Cazeau and 139 others of St. Paul. The bill was refused a third reading by a vote of twelve to five. cf. Robert Packard, "Church-State Relationship in Education," (Unpublished Master's Dissertation, St. Paul Seminary, 1958), pp. 5-9; and Hurley, pp. 68-71.

Neill, a prominent Protestant divine and superintendent of the public schools, led the opposition to it. He wrote and spoke out vigorously against denominational schools. There was hardly an influential voice in support of the bill which was defeated on February 25, 1853

During the following year there was another display of this type of nativist opposition to Catholics by citizens of St. Paul when a claim jumper had been evicted forcibly from land belonging to Father Peyrogrosse. This property, located in Dakota County, was to be the site of a new church. Once again the newspapers carried criticisms<sup>of</sup> "ambitious" Catholics both in Dakota County and St. Paul. The editorial opinion expressed in the Minnesotan, which spoke for the Whig Party made up of local businessmen, reflected the "Know-Nothing" sentiments so popular in the East.<sup>11</sup> The rival political party, which was making a bid for the immigrant vote, objected to the bigotry of the Whigs through David Olmstead, the editor of the Minnesota Democrat. Although the treatment of this issue was more political than religious, several non-Catholic leaders, among whom were William Pitt Murray, Honorable Henry M. Rice and Governor Willis A. Gorman, spoke out in affirmation of the right of Catholics to enjoy the benefits of democracy and freedom.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>For a full account of opposition to the Catholics on this question, see Hurley, pp. 66 ff.

<sup>12</sup>There were a few Catholics in public office, but they were not significant in politics at this time. Among them were Auguste Larpenteur, William B. McGrorty and Louis Robert.

Much of the hostile feeling toward Catholics that resulted from these attempts of Catholics to uphold their rights was tempered by the charity shown to citizens of every religion by the bishop, priests, sisters and Catholic people during local crises. In 1854 a cholera epidemic broke out in the town which was without a hospital or public medical services. The sisters cared for the more serious cases in the old log chapel while the bishop hastened to complete an unfinished hospital which had been given to him the preceeding year.<sup>13</sup> The bishop used his own money to finance the construction and several parishioners donated lumber and labor. This institution became a symbol of the charity of Catholics in the town, and the newspapers often commented on the good which the sisters accomplished there.

St. Paul was also faced with the perennial problem of caring for the poor and sick immigrants who arrived at the Jackson Street warf each summer. Some of these people were carried off the boats and left in the streets without money or friends to care for them. Others were forced to take refuge in delapidated shacks and conserve their meager resources so they would have enough money to purchase food and firewood during the winter. For several years Bishop Cretin worked almost alone

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<sup>13</sup>Doctors John Day and Christopher Carlioz of St. Paul had started the hospital project in 1851 but they were unable to do more than acquire a site and gather materials. The land and materials, valued at about \$1,500.00, was given to Bishop Cretin when it appeared that he might be able to acquire some sisters to run it. This hospital stood on the present site of St. Joseph's Hospital (NC., Feb. 9, 1894; Minn. Dem. March 10, 1852).

in caring for these unfortunate newcomers and other people in need. With his own money and a few donations he recieved from the citizens of St. Paul, he provided the needy with food, clothing and lodging.

In 1856, several of the cathedral parishioners, who desired to follow the example of their bishop in caring for the poor formed the St. Joseph Confraternity of the St. Vincent de Paul Society.<sup>14</sup> The members pledged to participate in the work of visiting the sick, paying board and room for the homeless, supplying firewood, distributing food and clothing to the poor and giving them friendly aid and counsel. At weekly meetings they gave an account of their activities.<sup>15</sup> The members did not pay dues, but they willingly contributed small amounts of money whenever the need was made known. New members were admitted to the society on the merits of their moral character. It was not long before the society was recognized as the leading charitable organization in the city.<sup>16</sup> The members were quite active until shortly after Cretin's death when interest in the work for the poor declined.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>CB, November 8, 1913; August 1, 1925.

<sup>15</sup>Meetings of this society and most of the other organizations functioning in the parish were held in the basement of the brick building for the next three decades.

<sup>16</sup>CB, April 8, 1916. The Constitution and By-laws of this society were drawn up by a committee consisting of William McGrorty, William Markoe, William Brownson, and Auguste Larpenteur.

<sup>17</sup>NC, June 22, 1867. In 1859 there were about one hundred members.

The Society for the Propagation of the Faith, which was officially established in St. Paul in 1854; gave the parishioners an opportunity to aid the poor and spread the faith on a broader scale than that engaged in by the St. Vincent de Paul Society.<sup>18</sup> There was no fixed membership for this society since all Catholics in the diocese belonged to it by reason of the prayers they offered and the money they donated. The bishop put off establishing this society in his diocese for two years because his flock was too poor to make a significant contribution. Much to his surprise, \$182.00 was collected the first year. The following year the total amount came to only \$26.00 due to the death of the director, Father Peyrogrosse. In 1856 the bishop launched another campaign for donations to the Society and succeeded in raising about \$87.00.<sup>19</sup>

The Archconfraternity of Our Lady of Victory was another organization of the parish in which membership was merely determined by willingness to give some help. The society had been established in 1852 by ladies of the parish who cleaned and cared for the church in the brick building. The members made a practice of attending the Sunday evening services held at the church in honor of St. Mary. Later they came together in a single society with members of another pious group, called the Society of the Holy Rosary and of Our Lady of Charity, which had been organized in 1853 for the purpose of encouraging the daily

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<sup>18</sup>AASP, Cretin to SPF, St. Paul, February 22, 1854.

<sup>19</sup>AASP, Cretin to SPF, St. Paul, March 21, 1856.

recitation of the rosary. This new confraternity labored for "the help of the poor and of the sick, religious instruction of children, and the decent support of the sanctuary."<sup>20</sup>

Many of the societies which were organized during the period of the second cathedral enjoyed a long history. They give evidence of faith and zeal that has continued to flourish in the many parishes which have been formed from the original cathedral parish and in several institutions begun during these years. Some of the societies continued to use the old brick building as their meeting place after they had been established in other parishes.

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<sup>20</sup>Catholic Almanac for 1852, p. 150. This group was called the Archconfraternity of the Sacred Heart of Mary. Another organization called the Society of St. Ann, which is mentioned first in 1857, probably replaced this group.

CHAPTER IV  
THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS OF SERVICE

For six years the brick building which housed a church, school, seminary and rectory was the meeting place for the Catholics of St. Paul. The parishioners came to this rather impressive structure to attend Mass and receive the sacraments, to seek spiritual and even monetary assistance, to learn about the truths of their faith and the principles of English grammar, and to enjoy the fellowship of other Catholics in performing works of charity. They all received the same service regardless of their condition, financial status or nationality. Even the Indians were frequent visitors. Delegations from the various tribes living in the Minnesota Territory arrived at the kitchen door to present their grievances to the bishop and receive a free meal.<sup>1</sup> Many traveling clerics were hospitably received and lived in the building during their stay in St. Paul.<sup>2</sup>

The brick building was the church for the cathedral parishioners until a more suitable place of worship could be constructed. Before the building had been completed and for several years afterward, Mass was celebrated in the church three times

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<sup>1</sup>NC, August 9, 1889.

<sup>2</sup>Among the visitors were such noted churchmen as Bishops Alexander Troche of St. Boniface and John Timon of Buffalo, and Father Samuel Mazzucelli.



each Sunday and twice a day during the week.<sup>3</sup> Almost from the day that it was first used as a church the bishop looked forward to the day when a more dignified and proper place of worship would be erected. As early as 1852 he wrote: "We celebrate Holy Mass in a big room that can be used as a church for three or four years, but henceforth we must prepare for the erection of a decent church that must be completed in four or five years."<sup>4</sup> Two years later he said: "We absolutely need a church, the room that is now being used as such is insufficient."<sup>5</sup> The Catholic population continued to increase and in March of 1856, he informed the officers of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith that the church room was capable of holding only a sixth of the town's Catholic population.<sup>6</sup> Later, Father Ravoux claimed that many souls were being lost because some of the parishioners were unable to attend Mass in the "hall" that was being used for a cathedral.<sup>7</sup>

The bishop prepared for the erection of a new church by solicitating funds. Not wishing to use the alms of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith for this building as he had done for the brick building, he sent one of his priests to the

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<sup>3</sup>Sunday Vesper services and evening devotions in honor of St. Mary were also regularly conducted in the church.

<sup>4</sup>AASP, Cretin to SPF, St. Paul, June 25, 1852.

<sup>5</sup>AASP, Cretin to SPF, St. Paul, February 22, 1854.

<sup>6</sup>AASP, Cretin to SPF, St. Paul, March 21, 1856.

<sup>7</sup>AASP, Ravoux to SPF, St. Paul, July 15, 1857.

eastern part of the country to solicit contributions. When his emissary returned with about a thousand dollars, he began to plan for a church costing \$10,000.00.<sup>8</sup> In 1855, he appointed nine men to serve on a committee that supervised the collection of additional funds from parishioners and the citizens of St. Paul. The bishop received \$658.00 in donations before the work on the building was started and an additional \$3,162.50 was raised by the committee before the bishop's death in 1857.

Bishop Cretin desired to build an imposing edifice but lack of funds prevented him from carrying out his plans. The building was to be twice the size of the brick building. The original plans called for rather elaborate decoration and a steeple 250 feet high. The construction proceeded very slowly because the bishop refused to go into debt. The site was excavated during the summer of 1854, but two years later the walls were only a few feet high. On July 17, 1856, during one of the yearly clergy retreats, Bishop John Timon blessed the cornerstone. After this event, the bishop was forced to discontinue supervising the construction because of his critical illness. When he died on February 22, 1857, all available funds had been spent and he had done little more than lay the foundation of the church.

Despite their efforts to conserve diocesan resources for the new church, both Bishop Cretin and Father Ravoux, who

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<sup>8</sup>The total cost of the building when completed amounted to \$33,647.94.

managed the affairs of the diocese after his death, found it necessary to spend money on the brick building. In 1854 the bishop asked the Society for the Propagation of the Faith for assistance in paying for sanctuary furniture.<sup>9</sup> Father Ravoux spent \$106.00 in 1857 for repairs on the church room.<sup>10</sup>

The new church was completed by Father Ravoux a little more than a year after the death of Bishop Cretin. With borrowed funds and new plans he was able to have the building roofed during the fall of 1857. On June 14, 1858, he celebrated Mass for the first time in the unfinished basement of the new church.

The space in the brick building that had served as a church was badly needed at this time for additional classrooms. The Brothers of the Holy Family were conducting in the basement of the building a free school for boys and a school supported by tuition. The basement rooms were quite crowded with the over a hundred pupils who attended these two schools.<sup>11</sup>

During the summer of 1858, the new bishop of St. Paul, Thomas Langden Grace, partitioned the second floor of the building to make five classrooms and an office. New floors were also laid. These improvements made it possible for him to move the free school for girls, taught by the Sisters of St. Joseph, into the brick building, which then became known as the

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<sup>9</sup>AASP, Cretin to SPF, St. Paul, March 21, 1856.

<sup>10</sup>AASP, Ravoux to SPF, St. Paul, December 3, 1857.

<sup>11</sup>Dunigan's American Catholic Almanac, (New York: Edward Dunigan and Brother, 1858), p. 241.

Cathedral School.<sup>12</sup>

Bishop Grace started a seminary in the building again in 1863.<sup>13</sup> Twenty boys who showed signs of a vocation were then placed under the direction of Father Oster and Mr. William Markoe. They occupied several of the classrooms on the second floor until it was necessary to use these rooms, two years later, for the regular parish school.<sup>14</sup>

Many of the old parish societies, which had been organized in the basement meetings rooms, continued to use the building for their meetings. Among the newer organizations that also used the building were the very popular societies for young men and women. While the minor seminary was in operation all the seminarians were members of the Sodality of Our Lady which met in a chapel in the basement of the building.<sup>15</sup> They also formed a band which practiced in one of the rooms on the third

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<sup>12</sup>In the spring of 1860, the priests who assisted at the cathedral parish left the rooms on the third floor and moved into a new rectory. For nine years they had shared the use of the rooms with the seminarians, the brothers, the pastor of the German parish, and many visitors and guests.

<sup>13</sup>Bishop Cretin had hoped to establish a permanent seminary in the hospital building but there had never been enough vocations during his time to warrant such a move.

<sup>14</sup>AASP, Ralston J. Markoe to Oster, St. Paul, October 25, 1905: AASP, "Some Reminiscences of the Old St. Paul Seminary in the Early Days" by Ralston Markoe, October 18, 1908.

<sup>15</sup>NC, October 29, 1887.

floor.

When Father John Ireland, rector at the Cathedral, succeeded in obtaining the services of the Christian Brothers for the boys' school in 1871 he had the classrooms remodded and new desks installed. He also remodeled the rooms on the third floor which the Brothers used as a residence for the next seventeen years. These improvements made it possible for the Brothers to accept two hundred and fifty boys that year.<sup>16</sup>

From time to time during their administration of the school the Brothers made repairs or changes that were absolutely necessary to keep the building habitable. But the work that they had done neither improved either the appearance of the building nor contributed to its stability. The structure was weakened considerably in 1886 when a fire burned through half of the roof over the Brother's residence.<sup>17</sup> This damage was repaired quickly and the building continued to serve as a school and a residence for the Brothers for another three years.

In March of 1889 the students left the old brick building and moved into a new school. They took with them a brick from the old building as a memorial and placed it on the director's desk.<sup>18</sup> The Brothers remained in the residence section of the building until August when a new residence was acquired.

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<sup>16</sup>Brother Hubert Gerard (ed.), Mississippi Vista, (Winona, Minn.: St. Mary's College Press, 1948), pp. 181-182.

<sup>17</sup>Gerard, pp. 186-187.

<sup>18</sup>Gerard, p. 187.

The dismantling of the brick building in August of 1889 occasioned a sermon by Archbishop Ireland on the utilization of the building by the Catholic people of St. Paul.<sup>19</sup> He said: "The old building is indeed a landmark, telling us the early history of the church and the city as no other edifice will ever again tell when this shall have been no more." Of all his memories about the building, those of Bishop Cretin, its builder, were most cherished by him. Bishop Cretin, he said, had "suffered and died in the old building and that simple fact makes it dear and precious."

The archbishop recalled some of the history of the building and then called attention to the event which had occasioned his talk. He spoke the thoughts of many of his listeners when he said:

At last came the day when the venerable old building was condemned to go. The city had grown from one thousand to 200 thousand souls. The prairies disappeared, the swamps were dried, the hills lowered, and progress in its relentless march declared that the old building should go. Time and so-called progress have no regard for sacred memories--they make no room for sentiment or veneration.

In his closing remarks the archbishop indicated that the greatest significance of the building was that it had served the Catholics of St. Paul in a variety of capacities for thirty-eight years. Its value in history was not lessened because it housed the cathedral for only six years, but rather, he said, this was evidence that God's church had kept pace with material progress.

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<sup>19</sup>NC, August 9, 1889.

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