



A History of  
**ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY**  
The Formative Years  
1860-1990

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**A History of St. Thomas University:  
The Formative Years, 1860-1990**

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## **Dedication**

This work, in both its web version and its abridged printed version,

is dedicated to the memory of

Msgr. George W. Martin,

a man of wonderful humanity and integrity.

## Preface

The author, Bill Spray, former professor in the History department at St. Thomas University, researched the archival and other materials upon which this history is based, was unfortunately stricken by Alzheimer's disease and rendered unable to see the work to completion. As Spray's former History colleague, I agreed after my own retirement to prepare the work for publication. The university is publishing the full account of its history from 1860 to 1990 on its website <[www.stu.ca](http://www.stu.ca)>. It is also publishing in printed form the section of the work that focuses on the decision to remove the university from Chatham to Fredericton in the late 1950s and early 1960s, as well as the actual move in 1964 and its aftermath, entitled *Church, Politics and STU: The Relocation of St. Thomas University from Chatham to Fredericton*. Proceeds from the printed book will be donated to St. Thomas University's William A. "Doc" Spray Bursary Program and the Rhinelander History Fund.

My chief regret is that my good friend Bill Spray has been unable to supervise the preparation of his own work for public presentation to his former students and colleagues at St. Thomas and to the people of his home town of Chatham. My chief pleasure in the process of rewriting Bill's work has been to learn so much about New Brunswick history, its Catholic dimension, and the antecedents of my own university, where it has been my great honour and pleasure to spend my professorial career.

Tony Rhinelander

Fredericton

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Both Spray and Rhinelander wish to thank their faculty colleagues and the many officials of St. Thomas University, and in particular President Dawn Russell, for their continued interest, encouragement and support of the project.

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## Introduction

Institutions, no matter how long-lasting or bureaucratic, are made up of the people within them. The history of St. Thomas University therefore is a unique reflection of the individuals who made up St. Thomas at every stage of its development during its one hundred thirty “formative” years from 1860 to 1990. During that time it grew dramatically. It began life in the town of Chatham as a small, faith-based academy dedicated to educating the children of English-speaking Roman Catholics in the valley of the Miramichi River in the northern part of the province of New Brunswick. It became a modern, secular, post-secondary, undergraduate, liberal arts university situated in the southern part of the province in the capital Fredericton on the campus of and affiliated with the provincial university, the University of New Brunswick.

The story of St. Thomas's first century is a Catholic story, more specifically the story of the anglophone Catholic community of the Miramichi in the latter half of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries. It began with its founding as St. Michael's Academy by James Rogers, the first Bishop of Chatham, in 1860. **Chapter 1** relates its tenuous, and discontinuous, existence during Rogers's forty-year tenure. **Chapter 2** relates how the institution was revived thanks to the efforts of Thomas Barry, the second Bishop of Chatham, during his tenure from 1902 to 1920; in 1910 its name was changed from St. Michael's Academy to St. Thomas College when its administration was entrusted to the Catholic Order of the Basilian Fathers. **Chapter 3** covers the period from 1923, when the Basilian Fathers handed St. Thomas back to the supervision of the third Bishop of Chatham, Patrice Chiasson, until 1945: although an unsettling period of economic depression and wartime stress, it was a relatively

good time for St. Thomas as a handful of dedicated clerical and a few lay shepherds nurtured its existence for English-speaking Roman Catholics on the Miramichi. **Chapter 4** deals with those shepherds' valiant (and poorly paid) attempts in the years 1945 to 1952 to provide a spiritually secure space within a rapidly secularizing post-war world. **Chapter 5** follows those clerics' struggles in the years 1952 to 1956 to acquire the financial wherewithal to meet the requirements of a modern education without sacrificing their personal commitment to the spiritual needs not only of their students but also of the wider community. **Chapter 6** explores the dilemma they faced during the years 1956-1960 as the requirements of educational modernization as well as pure regional politics forced them to contemplate wrenching themselves away from their pastoral Miramichi past. **Chapter 7** delves into the turmoil created for St. Thomas's supporters on the Miramichi in the years 1960-1962 by the plans of its new chancellor, the Bishop of Saint John, to remove the institution from its historical home in Chatham and transfer it physically to the provincial capital in Fredericton. **Chapters 8 and 9** focus on the intense and highly controversial political manoeuvres during 1962, 1963 and 1964 that St. Thomas's new president, Msgr. Donald Duffie, undertook in order to carry out the actual move to the campus of the University of New Brunswick. **Chapter 10** discusses the institution's first decade on its new campus in Fredericton where its physical as well as academic foundations as a modern university were laid. And **Chapter 11** examines St. Thomas's "Martin years" from 1975 to 1990 under its new president, Msgr. George Martin, when the university's existence as a modern, secular, liberal arts institution was finally assured.

At each stage of St. Thomas's evolution during these years, we have endeavored to show how the institution as a whole represented the collective behaviours, expectations, and morals of its constituent administrators, faculty and students.

A list of the sources used will be found at the end of each chapter in the web version as well as at the very end of the work as in the print version. A list of the members of the St. Thomas faculty in

the years 1964-1974 will be found in Appendix IV at the end of Chapter 10.

## CHAPTER 1

### ST. THOMAS AS ST. MICHAEL'S: 1860-1902

St. Thomas University began its institutional life in October of 1860 as St. Michael's Academy. St. Michael's was the creation of Bishop James Rogers, the first bishop of the newly created Diocese of Chatham. Rogers's ambition was to improve educational opportunities for the people of the Mirimichi region of the province, especially its anglophone Roman Catholics.

He established St. Michael's within two months of his installation. Although as an institution it had an uneven existence over the next half-century, it established a firm legacy on the Miramichi. Without Rogers's drive and determination and belief in the benefits of education, St. Thomas University as we know it would not exist.

Rogers was born in 1826 at Mount Charles, County Donegal, Ireland. He arrived in Halifax with his parents in 1831 at the age of five. The family was poor, his father in bad health. As a boy he had shown a keen interest in the priesthood as a future vocation. Because of his father's illness, however, in his teens James had to be the chief supporter of the family. When his father died in 1847, at the age of twenty-one he enrolled as a student at St. Mary's College, Halifax, where he became the protégé of his confessor and professor of theology, Fr. Thomas Louis Connolly. Connolly in 1852 became Bishop of Saint John and in 1859 Archbishop of Halifax. Until his death in 1876 Connolly remained Rogers's mentor.

Rogers received a classical education at St. Mary's and then attended the Grand Séminaire in Montreal. He was ordained in 1851 at the age of twenty-five. On his return to Nova Scotia he served in

a mission located at Church Point, Digby County, Nova Scotia, where he first experienced the ethnic duality of French and English. His experience in dealing with the consequent social tensions prepared him for some of the problems he would encounter in northern New Brunswick. His next posting was to the mission in Nova Scotia's Cumberland County and parts of Colchester County, where, in 1856, he recommended dividing the mission in order to recognize the duality of Francophones and Anglophones. He looked after the Anglophone area until 1857, at which time he was sent to Bermuda, which fell within the Halifax Diocese.

Postings to Bermuda at that time rarely lasted long since outbreaks of disease were common and death rates high. The two priests serving there before Rogers had died not long after they arrived. Rogers was more fortunate and escaped the fevers. He played a part in building the first Roman Catholic church on the island before being called back to Halifax in 1859. Connolly, now Archbishop of Halifax, having earlier recognized Rogers's abilities, appointed him as his secretary. The two worked closely together. Rogers taught some courses at St. Mary's College before he accepted other clerical duties.

### **Creation of the Diocese of Chatham**

In the first half of the 19th century only one Catholic diocese existed in the province of New Brunswick. It included the whole of the sparsely populated province as well as part of Maine. By 1860, the population of the province had increased dramatically with the arrival of large numbers of immigrants. The majority came from Ireland, and the majority of them were Catholics, with the result that Irish had supplanted French as the dominant element in the New Brunswick Catholic community—including in the church hierarchy. That community numbered about 85,000, which represented one-third of the population of the whole province. It was concentrated in two places: in the port city of Saint John, and in the lower Miramichi river valley and its port city of Chatham, where virtually all the Irish

immigrants were Catholic.

That demographic split explains why in 1860 the Church authorities decided to divide the southern two-thirds of New Brunswick into two dioceses, Saint John and Chatham. At Archbishop Connolly's suggestion, Fr. James Rogers, at 34 and Irish, was appointed the first Bishop of the Chatham Diocese. He remained bishop there until his retirement forty-two years later in 1902. His long and energetic career was marked by a passionate devotion to improving the educational opportunities especially for the young anglophone Catholics of his diocese. Although he was sympathetic to francophone interests, his primary concern was the Irish community. In any case, the primary issue for him was religious, not linguistic. In Chatham Rogers established a diocesan cathedral, St. Michael's, and a St. Michael's Academy, which aimed to prepare anglophone priests for the anglophone community.

The Chatham Diocese in 1860 was still a large one, encompassing the northern half of the province from Edmondston and even part of the state of Maine in the west to the Acadian settlements on the east coast. The region was considered by many, including Rogers, as “the most backward unsettled part of the Maritime Provinces.” The population of the diocese was only about 54,000. It was certainly isolated. The first railroad, the “Intercolonial,” would only be completed in 1876. As Rogers reminisced in one letter of his voluminous correspondence,

it was only in summer that by navigation it had communication with the outside world; in winter it was ice-bound and on account of the deep snow...few residents south of the cold region ever came to visit it at that season.

Rogers observed nevertheless that people in northern New Brunswick were proud and basically content with life. The climate was cold but dry and healthy. They enjoyed their own society. As he wrote, after the snow was beaten down and the tracks made hard and the swamps and streams frozen “neighbours could interchange visits by sleigh.”

Most of the men worked as fishermen, farmers and mill- and woods-workers. The main

settlements were in the area around the Port of Miramichi, which included Chatham, Newcastle, Nelson, and Douglstown. The labouring population of these communities and the smaller settlements in the area actually varied considerably according to the amount of work in the woods and lumber mills and in loading ships. A large proportion of the bishop's flock was termed "a floating population," working wherever they could, in the area or in other parts of the province or in the United States. Few were rich, most were poor, and most were poorly educated.

### **Installation of Bishop Rogers**

The creation of the Diocese of Chatham and the installation of its first bishop were significant events for the people of the region, not only for Catholics but for Protestants as well. The newly appointed bishop was consecrated in Charlottetown by Archbishop Connolly, on August 15, 1860, assisted by Bishop Sweeney of Saint John and the Bishop of Harbour Grace, Newfoundland. After a brief stay in Charlottetown, Rogers sailed for Chatham in the company of Connolly and Sweeney. According to Rogers, they had an enjoyable overnight voyage, "the wind being fair, but rather light" and with "the supply of good things on board." The archbishop had "burst out occasionally into immediate laughter in contemplating the group!" They had regained their composure by the time they arrived in Chatham on the morning of August 21 where they were given a royal welcome.

The town of Chatham had a festive appearance for their arrival, and both Catholics and Protestants turned out in large numbers to welcome the new bishop. Sweeney was already well known and well liked in the Chatham area, where he had ministered to the Catholics in the region before becoming Bishop of Saint John. The street leading up the hill from the town to St. Michael's Church, now designated St. Michael's Cathedral for the new diocese, was lined with evergreen boughs and here and there "triumphal arches." That evening the bishops paid a visit to Reverend Michael Eagan at Nelson, the venerable priest who had built the first Catholic church on the Miramichi in 1838-39. They

traveled in a coach drawn by four greys and were accompanied by eighty or more carriages. The installation of Bishop Rogers took place the next day, on August 22, 1860.

### **Problems in the Diocese**

Rogers confronted many difficulties in his new diocese. The first half of the nineteenth century had seen considerable hostility between Protestants and Catholics throughout New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. In New Brunswick in the 1840s riots and even deaths had occurred in Saint John, Fredericton and Woodstock. There had been less violence in the Miramichi region, but resentments lay beneath the surface since the area was controlled by a Protestant population that held both political and economic power.

Prejudice against Catholics was evident even in the provincial Legislature, which was dominated by Protestants. In 1862 Francis McPhelim, the first Catholic to become a member of the Executive Council of the province, said he remembered a time when “an Attorney General of this Province had said that if a Roman Catholic were called to the Executive Council, the River St. John would take fire.” He pointed out that he had become a member and “yet the river rolled on to the sea as peaceful as ever.” Prejudice against Catholics may have started to weaken, but it was still strong in the 1860s. Like his mentor Connolly, Rogers worked hard to improve relations between Catholics and Protestants in his diocese. In testimony of his strong character, over time he had considerable success and became friends with many prominent Protestants in the Chatham area, some of whom became strong supporters of his educational endeavours.

Rogers's chief concern as bishop of course was the spiritual health of his people. His diocese, which he described at the time of his appointment “as the poorest in all America,” had thirty churches, many of which were only half-built. He had to deal with a widely scattered Catholic population, a large proportion of whom were French-speaking. Many of his older Irish parishioners knew only their Gaelic

mother tongue and were unable to speak English or French. He had only seven priests to minister to the needs of his parishioners. Supervising and supporting their work kept him busy traveling to distant parts of the diocese.

The seasonal employment of most of his parishioners presented additional problems. From the middle of May until the middle of November most of the men, including boys as young as twelve, were employed in the lumber mills, but the mills closed down during the winters. Some went off into winter camps to cut wood. Others found occasional employment loading and unloading the vessels in port, although exposure to sailors from all over the world constituted another unsettling influence. Since many nominally Catholic youths had not made their first communion, the bishop urged his clergy to do everything possible to protect them from losing their religion.

Like most Catholic bishops at the time, Rogers subscribed to the notion of preserving the faith by educating Catholic and Protestant children separately in the province's schools and colleges. Yet that meant he must greatly improve Catholic educational opportunities. The entire educational system in the northern part of the province was in its infancy. There were no good Catholic schools or colleges. Rogers, convinced that education was the best way to overcome economic poverty, throughout his tenure never lost his enthusiasm for establishing Catholic schools and colleges.

### **Episcopal Enthusiasm**

He spent the first few months of his tenure examining first-hand the diocese and its many problems. He personally visited all diocesan churches and missions. No railways ran through the northern part of the province at the time, which meant long days and nights on the road in a carriage or sleigh, on horseback or even on foot. He never complained, and he was always impatient in his drive to improve conditions. Whether it was new churches, schools or hospitals, he was never short of new projects. For the rest of his life he was a tireless worker in his desire to improve the lot of the Catholic

people of his diocese.

Sadie Creamer of Chatham, at 100 years of age in 1979, remembered Rogers and described the bishop as follows:

He was a short man as broad as he was tall, was kind and nice to everyone, always a smile, always a laugh. He would travel on horseback along little 'toe paths' through the woods to visit scattered families. The first time the Bishop would come to visit, people would talk about it for months ahead of time. He was the loveliest man in the world.

### **Bishop Rogers and Financial Affairs**

Rogers's enthusiasm, however, often outran his resources. More than once it got him in trouble both locally and with the archbishop. As Connolly's biographer, Sister K. Fay Trombley, expressed it, Rogers "had the misfortune to be completely deprived of good money sense" and sometimes "did not make prudent decisions."

For example, in 1862 he decided he was too busy with diocesan affairs to go to Rome with other Canadian bishops, ostensibly to show their solidarity with Pope Pius IX over the "Roman Question." As a result, according to Connolly, he missed "one of the most important opportunities he would ever have to get financial aid" for his diocese. Indeed, his absence was interpreted by the Association of the Propagation of the Faith to mean "feeble concern on his part for the predicament of the Holy See," and because of it he did not do as well in getting funds for his diocese as did other bishops who had made the pilgrimage to Rome that year.

Rogers did not always welcome his archbishop's advice. He was told that a bishop's first duty was to "secure his own respectable maintenance." Then and only then should he look "to the cause of religion and education." But that was not Rogers's style. He was a man of the people and at heart an educator. His own comfort and prestige came after his parishioners' spiritual and educational needs.

The archbishop had advised Rogers to keep good accounts of revenues and expenditures "and never let expenditures exceed revenues." For Rogers that was constitutionally impossible. Connolly informed him he "should not want what he could not pay for," that money must be collected first and

spent afterwards. “Unbounded trust in Divine Providence could be a great virtue in a priest,” admonished the archbishop, “but for a Bishop, not paying his debts was an alarming feature.” Rogers, unabashed, wrote back: “Money is the very least of God’s gifts, and I shall go on as I always have done and trust in God, so don’t tell me what amount of money we have.” One of his assistants in Chatham, Fr. John Bannon, claimed: “It is no use talking principles regarding money matters to his Lordship, he’ll do what he wishes.” His insouciance frequently got Rogers into hot water, but neither near-bankruptcy nor threat of lawsuits changed his thinking. He willingly spent a great deal of time trying to find resources to keep the diocese going, and to his credit in the end he usually managed to pay the bills.

### **Education as Bishop Rogers's Priority**

Rogers's educational efforts ran up the highest bills. At the time of his arrival, Catholic priests were scarce in all of British North America. The Church made constant efforts to recruit boys who could be educated and sent on to seminaries. It is hardly surprising that Rogers, on his arrival in Chatham, set as his first priority establishing an academy for Catholic boys. This, he hoped, would not only protect Catholic boys from losing their faith but also provide some local candidates for the priesthood. He also wanted to see Catholics play a more important role in the economic and social life of the province, a world dominated by anglophone Protestants, but he knew that would only happen if better educational opportunities existed. He even hoped to create educational opportunities for girls, although that was not his first concern.

At the time, denominational schools existed throughout the province, but for most people education was not a priority. Few politicians were concerned with improving educational facilities. It was especially true for the northern region of the province where most saw little value in an education beyond learning to read and write. Teachers were scarce since they were so poorly paid and easily

induced to take other better paying jobs.

Catholic denominational schools had been established in Chatham and the vicinity at least as early as 1817, but qualified teachers were scarce as well as money to pay them. The few grants available depended on the licence the teacher held, whether it was a first, second or third class; the higher the class, the larger the grant. Most of those grants in practice went to Anglican institutions. When the government began officially supporting not only Anglican but also Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist and Catholic schools, opposition to government support for denominational schools grew. Outside funding for an institution like Rogers's proposed academy was therefore uncertain.

### **Catholic Colleges and Academies**

When Rogers arrived in Chatham in 1860, universities, colleges or academies in New Brunswick existed only in Fredericton and Sackville. Early attempts to establish Catholic colleges in Memramcook, Fredericton and Saint John had failed. In the northern part of the province most students attended local parish schools. Some of these went on to grammar schools located in the larger communities, such as Chatham, Newcastle and Bathurst, but they were restricted to those whose parents could afford to pay for room and board.

It did not take Rogers long to realize that in most communities in his diocese the people of power and influence were Protestant and that most Catholics were labourers. With Catholic priests scattered, his "ever increasing flock" of parishioners was exposed to neglect and in danger of abandoning the faith. Priests had to be found, especially priests who could speak both French and English, which he considered "indispensable" for the mixed population of his diocese. He needed to establish Catholic schools and acquire books in order to help his people better their position and educate their children. It demanded more manpower and money than he possessed. He was determined to find the help he needed.

In his correspondence with the archbishop he asked if the Christian Brothers might be a possible source of teachers and funding. The Brothers were a Catholic order founded in Ireland in 1802, by now with a directorship for Canada in Montreal. The archbishop responded that if Rogers wanted to bring religious orders into his diocese it would have to be at his own expense. Eventually the Brothers might pay their own way, but that, Connolly dryly advised him, would take about a century. Rogers in his enthusiasm did not believe him at first, although the difficulties he encountered in prying money loose from the Brothers over the next few years proved the accuracy of the archbishop's reservations. In Connolly's view, it was better and more economical to train candidates for the priesthood by sending them to seminary in Montreal than by trying to create a seminary in Chatham.

Connolly was speaking from experience. In 1853 as Bishop of Saint John, unsuccessful in his attempts to persuade religious orders to establish colleges in his diocese, he had gone ahead and established his own college in Saint John. The aim had been to educate seminarians as well as boys from wealthier families. It had failed and had had to close its doors in 1854. That year he tried again in Fredericton, opening a college in the city on the Hermitage property on the Saint John River, the estate of a former Surveyor General and Commissioner of Crown Lands, Thomas Baillie. Three clergymen were to preside over the college, "assisted by ecclesiastical students of the Diocese." The college does not appear to have won government support, however, and struggled to find teachers. By 1861 it too was closed down.

Saint John had briefly acquired a "seminary" in the diocese in 1854 when Fr. François-Xavier LaFrance opened the Collège St-Thomas in Memramcook, really a school for Acadian boys and girls. But in 1862 it too was closed because of financial and staffing difficulties. At the time, Fr. LaFrance informed Bishop Sweeney of Saint John that he was willing to give the buildings and land to a religious order. Sweeney, eager to have a religious educational institution established in his diocese, tried unsuccessfully to persuade the Christian Brothers to take it over. He was more successful in his negotiations with the Holy Cross Order, persuading them to come to Memramcook where, in 1864, they opened the Collège St-Joseph. Sweeney then had a bilingual college in his

diocese (and one which survived, for it became one of the four Catholic Acadian colleges that would amalgamate to become the Université de Moncton in 1964).

Rogers, as usual, had his own ideas. He wanted to set up an educational institution in Chatham where he and his staff could instruct a few vocational students who in turn could teach younger students. Later when appropriate the young instructors could be sent on to proper seminary studies in Montreal. He decided to call the institution St. Michael's Academy.

### **Establishment of St. Michael's Academy**

As St. Thomas had its antecedents in St. Michael's, so St. Michael's also had antecedents in Chatham. As mentioned above, Catholic schools had existed in Chatham from at least 1817. We know of one Patrick Flanagan who taught at a school there for some twenty-six years. In the 1850s we learn of a school's existence, either the same one or a different one, in a building owned by the Catholic Church known as "Temperance Hall," although in 1854 it was without a teacher. The local priest, Fr. Veriker, had advertised for a teacher with a first-class licence to run the school, but for two years none had been found so the school had remained closed. In 1856, one Thomas O'Kane, a teacher with a first-class licence, was hired, but he left shortly afterwards. In 1859 another teacher, Thomas Marshall, had taken over the school, but when Rogers arrived in Chatham in 1860, he decided Marshall was "unfit to teach the Catholic school of the Episcopal town," so he abruptly dismissed him, although he gave no reasons for the dismissal.

Rogers meanwhile had discovered some young men in the diocese who wished to train for the priesthood. Two of them had written him asking where they were to go to college. His first thought had been to send them to study at St. Dunstan's College in Charlottetown, PEI. After consulting with some of his priests, however, he changed his mind and decided instead to bring them to Chatham. Thus, Sam O'Sullivan and John O'Leary, both of whom had some teaching experience, were the first two members of the faculty of the new St. Michael's Academy, which was located in the Temperance Hall. At the same time they would study religious

subjects under the guidance of himself and his assistant, Fr. James Daly, whom Connolly had loaned to Rogers to help get the new diocese established. The idea was that eventually O'Sullivan and O'Leary would proceed to seminary in Montreal for their final course of study, where they could also learn French.

Thus, with Fr. Daly in charge as its first rector, St. Michael's Academy opened officially in the fall of 1860. It was similar to the Wesleyan Academy established in Sackville in 1842, which eventually became Mt. Allison University, and to various academies established in other parts of British North America in the nineteenth century.

In order to lighten the teaching load of his first two "seminarians" to give them more time for study, Rogers recruited two more teachers, John Upton and William Morrissey, neither of whom were headed for the priesthood. He later recruited Thomas Caulfield, an experienced teacher who had been educated at Trinity College, Dublin and for a number of years had been the master of the grammar school in the town of Newcastle.

The two seminarians studied under the tutelage of Rogers and Daly in the bishop's official residence, an old house dating from the 1840s built near the church for the first resident Catholic priest in Chatham, Fr. Sweeney. Rogers termed it "the cradle of the new seminary." Every day after morning lessons they all walked down to the school in Temperance Hall. The small gathering of students included some in their middle twenties who, according to Rogers, "being without work in the winter attended the school with delight." The curriculum included Latin and French in addition to the "usual branches of an English education." With meagre resources and great personal effort, Rogers had created his own seminary and academy. As he wrote to his friend the Bishop of Charlottetown, "a little Catholic academy has unpremeditatedly and by force of circumstances sprung up in our midst."

St. Michael's was an immediate success with Catholics in the area. As a financial venture, however, it was less successful. He had secured a government grant of £100 for both the school and the seminary, but operating costs far exceeded that amount. Every year he petitioned the government for additional funds, and they did increase the grant several times; by 1866 it amounted to £600, but that was still not be enough to pay

the bills. Indeed, financial problems haunted St. Michael's throughout its existence, in spite of its relative success in attracting students.

In its first year, enrolment at St. Michael's totalled eighty-seven "male scholars," excluding the seminarians. The following winter the numbers increased to one hundred twenty-two but declined the following summer to seventy-four since "many of the larger Scholars" had to work during that season. "Larger scholars" referred to those over the age of fourteen capable of working in the mills and shipyards or on farms. As for teaching staff, by the second year of its existence Rogers and Daly had increased the faculty to five persons of "respectable literary attainments." Caulfield, still the most experienced, was teaching Mathematics. Three of the teachers were the bishop's "seminarians."

### **Establishment of Female Academies**

Rogers did not ignore the educational needs of Catholic girls. Schools for Catholic girls had existed before his arrival, and Rogers wanted to encourage them. The year after St. Michael's opened, he hired a Miss Anne Quinlan, a native of Ireland who had trained as a teacher in the Saint John Normal School, to teach in what would be referred to as "St. Michael's Female Academy," also located in the Temperance Hall. It immediately attracted sixty students. Quinlan was assisted by a Miss McCarthy, but it was clear more teachers were needed for the girls. Rogers hit upon the idea of establishing convents in the diocese. Nuns not only could help with some parish duties, relieving the chronic shortage of priests, but they might also help with educating Catholic girls.

In January of 1863 he made a trip by coach to Halifax and brought back several Sisters of Charity. He was impressed by their willingness to come. In his correspondence he speaks of them "braving the hardships of a journey in midwinter of three hundred miles over ice and snow, a journey that none but true heroines of charity would undertake." The result was the establishment of two convents, one in Bathurst in the north and one in Newcastle on the Miramichi. By 1866 there were four more girls'

schools, all taught by the sisters from the convents. He paid regular visits to these convent schools where he was always warmly welcomed.

### **New Building for St. Michael's**

The Temperance Hall soon proved to be too small to handle the rapidly increasing number of pupils at St. Michael's. Early in 1862, Rogers announced to his parishioners that he intended to create a "new and spacious building" for the academy "on an elevated and healthy site" above the town, near the cathedral. The new building could also serve as the bishop's residence and seminary. The very next morning, as he reported to his enormous pleasure, people organized and sent parties several miles away "to a suitable place in the woods" to cut and prepare the wood for the frame of the building.

He also announced his intention in the not too distant future to replace the wooden cathedral on the hill, the old St. Michael's Church, with a proper stone cathedral. His plans required the purchase of additional land. Since the Church had little money, he turned to some prominent citizens and, with their financial support together with promissory notes from some of his parishioners, purchased three adjoining lots on the hill. The following year he purchased another large block of adjoining land for future expansion. The Church's property eventually expanded to some twenty acres. St. Michael's Academy and College, St. Michael's Female Academy, the Hôtel Dieu Convent and Hospital, the stone St. Michael's Cathedral (started in 1903 and finished in 1921), and St. Thomas College, would all take shape on that location on the hill overlooking the town.

After the initial purchase of the land, the work of constructing the new building for St. Michael's Academy proceeded rapidly. After Rogers himself staked out the location of the future cathedral, the digging for the nearby academy building began. The parishioners divided themselves into three groups: one group excavated the basement, another assembled the stones for the foundation, and the third prepared the timbers for the framing. The two-storey building went up quickly over the next few months, and in June 1862 Rogers

declared St. Michael's Academy open in its new premises. With the volunteer labour it had been built quickly and at very little cost to the diocese.

Besides accommodations for the teachers and about twenty student boarders, there were classrooms, a refectory, servants' apartments, a kitchen and a store room. The Inspector of Schools for the county reported that the new building "occupies a commanding site and has an imposing appearance ... a costly edifice two stories high with a stone basement." He added his opinion that "under the patronage of the Bishop of Chatham, this Academy is destined to occupy a respectable position among our educational institutions." Rogers himself wrote that it constituted "a most important addition to the educational institutions of this northern part of the Province." Now, with the new building, he was in a position, he hoped, to persuade a Catholic teaching order to take over running the school.

### **Annual Public Examinations**

In order to demonstrate the seriousness of his educational intentions, Rogers directed the annual examinations at St. Michael's be open to the public. The first examination took place in the Temperance Hall in July 1861 and lasted two days. The editor of the local newspaper, the *Chatham Gazette*, was particularly impressed by "an appropriate piece of music" sung by a large number of boys at the end of the examinations. He praised the academy for teaching music and expressed the wish that more schools would do so. Seventy students were present out of the one hundred twenty-two that had been enrolled during the winter. During the summer season, as we have seen, enrolment dropped substantially among those of working age. The second annual examination of students took place at the academy's new premises in July 1862, and the editor of the *Gazette* was again impressed. He particularly noted the discipline that was being maintained in the school, which he claimed was "a matter of vital importance," one "which we are sorry to say is too frequently neglected" in ordinary schools.

Students, according to the newspaper report, faced a series of oral examinations in "Spelling,

Writing, Arithmetic, Geography (with the use of Globes), Mensuration, Algebra, Geometry, History (Ancient and Modern), French, Latin and, we believe, Greek.” The number of students attending St. Michael's second annual public examinations again was seventy, although enrolment had increased to one hundred thirty-five during the winter months. The academy's second rector was Fr. Dougald MacDonald, replacing Fr. Daly who had returned to his duties in Halifax. As we shall see, MacDonald would unfortunately be found by the bishop to be derelict in his priestly comportment and would soon be dismissed. The other teachers or “professors” that year were Caulfield and four “seminarians”: O’Sullivan, who would also soon have to be dismissed for unseemly behaviour; William Morrissey and John Carter, who took turns teaching “the various English classes”; and John Upton, who taught French. A fifth teacher, Mr Patterson, taught Greek and Latin. (John O’Leary, one of the seminarians in the previous year, left after the first year.)

The annual public examinations must have been quite an ordeal. The following year, in July 1863, examining began at 10 AM and lasted until 6:30 PM with one hour off for dinner. It was followed in the evening by a student debate on “The Character of Julius Caesar,” which was presented by thirteen students and lasted from 8:30 to 11 PM. That year the bishop presented prizes of books, donated by himself and local residents, to the top students.

The editor of the Fredericton *Daily Gleaner* reported in August 1863 that it was “a pleasure to have something complimentary to say about the educational institutions in Chatham, the more gratifying because there was a period, not too remote, when our duty compelled us to speak in terms anything but laudatory of our Schools in Chatham.” It was “a credit to Chatham” to see the recent establishment of academies by both the Presbyterians and the Catholics, along with the Grammar School.

The opening of these academies resulted in the closing of several ordinary schools, and when Rogers opened his girls' academies more were closed. When Archbishop Connolly of Halifax and

Bishop Sweeney of Saint John paid a visit to Chatham in October 1863, they visited the academies and schools in the area and were impressed with what Rogers he had been able to accomplish. Rogers told them he hoped to do more.

St. Michael's public annual school examinations continued to draw interested members of the public and were regularly reported in the local newspapers. In 1865 those in attendance at the academy's examinations were reported to have included the four local members of the House of Assembly (including the Hon. Peter Mitchell and the Hon. John Mercer Johnson, two of New Brunswick's future "Fathers of Confederation": discussions of confederation among the Maritime and Upper and Lower Canadian colonies were taking place at precisely this time), as well as "several other Gentlemen interested in the advancement of education."

The Inspector of Schools in 1865 nevertheless expressed his disappointment at "irregular attendance" in some of the English classes, and the fact that only sixty students had attended the March examinations. In fact, winter-time enrolment that year had fallen to seventy-one, the lowest since the opening of the academy. Still, the inspector recognized the "general prosperity and usefulness" of the academy "under the fostering care of Bishop Rogers." The following year student enrolment did indeed increase. That year, the examiners found "particularly impressive" the progress made in vocal and instrumental music, although they did not name the music instructor.

### **Fund Raising for St. Michael's**

Rogers understood the importance of publicizing his educational aims. The public oral examinations were not his only publicity device. In October, 1860, shortly after St. Michael's had opened, a "Grand Soirée" at the Temperance Hall raised £60 for a chapel for the academy. The event was described as being "the largest gathering in town under one roof since Cunard's Moulding Loft Tea Party," held in 1847 for the relief of Irish famine sufferers.

In August, 1862, the Lieutenant-Governor of the province, Sir Arthur Hamilton Gordon, took a tour of the local schools, including especially the “Roman Catholic Academy.” A month later, a huge “Picnic and Soirée” was held to raise additional funds for St. Michael's. According to newspaper reports, about a thousand people attended the event, which included amusements for the youngsters, dancing to the fiddle, and a banquet “laid out on a table over 100 feet long.” Visitors were encouraged to wander through the new building. Tea and lunch was provided. An evening entertainment held in the new building entitled “The Grand Finale of the Day” was so well attended that not all guests could squeeze in. The Chatham Amateur Band played for the dance, which lasted until 4 AM. The event was obviously a great success, although we are not told how much money was raised.

Another fund-raising “Tea Soirée” was held in the fall of 1863 with an attendance of between five and six hundred. The money raised that year was to be used to hire new staff for the academy, as it was in the following year when another “tea soirée” was held. In spite of “rain descending in torrents at intervals and very muddy roads,” the building was “well filled.” The speeches were followed by dancing, singing and “promenading throughout the buildings.” The evening was reported to have been another success.

The guest of honour that year, 1864, was a well known Chatham native, Fr. D. Dunne, D.D., currently a priest in Chicago, who gave the academy “a handsome donation.” Rogers intended to use the monies raised that year to persuade the Christian Brothers to take over the running of St. Michael's.

### **Staffing Problems**

Rogers was always in need of more priests and more teachers. In 1862, when the priest at the mission in Bathurst became seriously ill, Rogers had not been able to find a replacement and was forced to take over the mission himself. In one of his letters he mentioned that it was on one of his many trips to Bathurst and back that he had the idea of establishing convents so as to engage the help of nuns in his educational efforts for

girls. The paucity of priests and seminarians often led him to an uncritical acceptance of candidates to teach in the boys' academy without checking into their backgrounds, for which some of his senior priests over the years would gently admonish him. His response, typically, for accepting those who had had problems elsewhere was that he felt they needed another chance. He did indeed end up with a few who caused trouble over the years.

The new rector of the academy was one such problem. When Fr. Daly left to return to Halifax in 1861, he was succeeded, as we saw, by Fr. Dougald MacDonald. MacDonald had studied at the College of Propaganda in Rome before arriving in New Brunswick, but it seems he was overly fond of alcohol and somewhat unrestrained in his social relationships. In February, 1863, we find the bishop informing him that “as this is the first day of Lent” it was an appropriate time to acquaint the errant priest with a detailed set of conditions that he must strictly observe. MacDonald was to “devote all the attention practicable” to his duties as rector of the academy. The bishop himself would look after missionary duties in the town and the country. Only when he, the bishop, was absent or “much occupied” would MacDonald be called upon to carry out any “parochial-missionary duty.” MacDonald was also to abstain “in toto from all inebriating drink” and to avoid all visits outside the academy or church grounds except on strict duty or absolute necessity without first obtaining the bishop's permission. In addition, “in order to remove the occasions when censorious criticisms of a clergyman's acts might be taken to be deserved,” he “must carefully avoid, as far as [his] other strict clerical duties permit, traveling in any private vehicle or promenading in the streets in company with females.”

MacDonald was not the bishop's only problem. At the same time he had to admonish another teacher at the academy, one of his former seminary students, Sam O'Sullivan, who was similarly having trouble dealing with his drinking and other social misbehaviour. The bishop the previous year had already reprimanded O'Sullivan when he had ordered him “to abstain from all social and more friendly visits” outside the academy and to confine all his visits to “those really necessary” for the

discharge of his clerical duties. O'Sullivan, it seems, had not complied with the bishop's admonishments. Now, having found that his "paternal admonition and friendly advice" had not been sufficient, the bishop was withdrawing from O'Sullivan "all jurisdiction and sacerdotal functions" for the time being. O'Sullivan was not to visit the town without the approval of the bishop or his vicar-general. He was to apply himself diligently to his theological and classical studies and to comply strictly with the regulations drawn up for students at the academy.

The bishop's admonishments to both men appear to have had little lasting effect. By 1865 MacDonald and O'Sullivan were gone from St. Michael's, and Rogers had found a new rector.

The affairs of the bishop's other seminarians at St. Michael's in those early years, however, seemed to be going well. William Morrissey, who had been a teacher before coming to Chatham and who had also studied medicine, was doing so well in his studies that the bishop decided to keep him in Chatham at the academy instead of sending him to seminary in Montreal. As a result, he was the first seminarian to complete his programme of study at St. Michael's, and he received his ordination from the bishop in 1864. Morrissey continued to teach at St. Michael's for several years.

Others of the bishop's seminarians had been sent to seminary in Montreal and were reported to be doing well there. One was William Varrily who hailed from Ireland where he had begun his education at St. Jareth's College in Tuam. He had come out to Halifax in 1863. Archbishop Connolly, anxious to help Rogers in his efforts, sent Varrily on to Chatham to study theology under the bishop and to teach at St. Michael's. He shortly was sent on to seminary in Montreal, and after ordination would return to Chatham to become one of Rogers's most reliable assistants. Another seminarian, Francis McManus, also proved to be a capable teacher at the academy; he, too, was sent on to seminary in Montreal.

### **A French Catholic Academy**

Rogers had recognized the bilingual nature of his diocese from the start, and with his experience among the Acadians in Nova Scotia early had intended to establish two academies or colleges in his diocese: one in Chatham where “English would be the language of the house,” and one in some central parish with a large French population “in which the French language would dominate.” His intent was also to have the two institutions “under the same general management so that they might mutually aid each other and so that a fraternal feeling, not antipathy, might be fostered in their fraternal rivalry.” The students in each institution could then advance in their studies so that “such of the boys of the French house as wished to perfect themselves in English could come to Chatham and, vice versa, those in Chatham [who] might wish to perfect themselves in French could be transferred to the French house.”

It was a noble and somewhat radical idea for the times. As we have seen, Rogers directed his initial efforts to establishing St. Michael's as the English Catholic school in Chatham, but he needed help to establish a second Catholic school in a French parish. When he had arrived in Chatham in 1860, of the seven priests in the diocese, six were fluent in both French and English. Rogers himself was also fluent in French. The seventh priest, Fr. Eagan, who been there since 1833, did not speak French but on the other hand was fluent in Irish Gaelic. Yet the priests were completely occupied by their parochial duties. Rogers began to search for a Catholic teaching Order that was willing to come to a French-speaking parish. The site he chose was the Madawaska area, which actually included part of the state of Maine. In 1869 he would suggest to the Holy Cross Fathers that they establish a college in St-Basile, but to no avail. Then, in the early 1870s, he would meet a Jesuit priest visiting Chatham and, after talking to him, would write to the Superior of the Society of Jesus in Montreal, offering the Order land for a college either in the town of St-Louis-de-Kent on the Kouchibouguac River, or at Petit Rocher in Gloucester County, or indeed at any mission in the Madawaska area of the diocese. But the Jesuits would also turn him down.

Rogers also tried to attract the attention of the Society of Mary, known as the Marist Order, which since the 1860s was establishing educational missions throughout the United States and Canada. A certain Fr. Touche from the Order was invited to visit Chatham and St-Louis-de-Kent, although the Bishop let it be known that in his opinion St-Louis-de-Kent was not ideal since it lay in a remote area and anyway was too near the “fine college of Memramcook.” In his mind, Petit Rocher, north along the coast from Bathurst, would be a better site for a college for boys learning French. Caraquet, he ventured, would be even better, since a branch line of the railway passed nearby. The latter was also “the most populous Catholic location” in his diocese. He offered to turn the mission at Caraquet over to the Marists if they would establish a college there. If they agreed, he would find them teaching accommodations in Chatham while they were constructing a suitable building. But the Marists too never responded to his offer. They would eventually establish a college in Van Buren, Maine, after the area had been detached from the Diocese of Chatham.

In the meantime, independent of the bishop's efforts, a “Collège de St-Louis” was taking shape in St-Louis-de-Kent, the work of an Acadian priest by the name of Fr. Marcellus Richard. Rogers was somewhat miffed. He let it be known that he would have been happier if St. Michael's at Chatham and Richard's new college at St-Louis-de-Kent, both in his diocese, could have been “conducted under the same general management.” This, he wrote, was because he wished “all our future Priests—like those of the past [and] our other educated men—to know both languages, as essential to their success, professionally, in the mixt population of our Diocese.” Fr. Richard appears to have ignored the bishop's suggestions and gone ahead with hiring teaching staff, opening the Collège de St-Louis officially in 1871. The bishop tried to be accommodating. In its early years he did send a few of his seminarians to teach there before they went on to Montreal, and in 1874 we find him praising Richard for “really doing wonders” in his educational work, but the two men never warmed to each other. At one point Richard accused Rogers of not supporting his work by not sending him teachers as requested. The

bishop commiserated with Richard, pointing out that he faced the same difficulties in finding staff for St. Michael's in Chatham as Richard was facing in St-Louis-de-Kent, so he was unable at the moment to offer him any assistance. As he expressed it, "if I [find] it prudent or necessary to suspend our college here, through want of resources of personnel, etc., to conduct it well, it is not surprising that your College feels the same difficulty." He upbraided Richard for having in the past "lent a deaf ear" to his plans to make both colleges flourish. He went so far as to offer Richard the presidency of an amalgamated College of St. Michael's and St-Louis, but the latter turned the offer down, a decision he perhaps came to regret since in 1882 the Collège de St-Louis closed its doors for lack of teaching staff.

### **Attempts to Attract the Christian Brothers to Chatham**

Finding teachers for the Catholic colleges was a perennial problem. In his early correspondence Rogers had mentioned the Christian Brothers as a possible source of teachers for St. Michael's. In an enthusiastic letter written in October of 1864 to Brother Liguori, Superior of the Order in Montreal, he indicated that he had been led to believe that the Brothers would actually be coming to take over the academy. He mentioned that he had already moved out of his residence, the old 1840s house that he had renovated. It had seven rooms, a kitchen, a store room and a cellar. He had been sharing it with his priests and seminarians since 1860. Now that they had all moved into the new St. Michael's building, the former bishop's residence would be at the Christian Brothers' disposal.

The Brothers, however, appear not to have shared the bishop's eagerness to come to Chatham. Whether he had been led to believe that by someone else or it was a result of his enthusiastic optimism is unclear. It seemed they were particularly concerned about New Brunswick's licensing regulations for school teachers, especially those requiring teacher examinations. In response, Rogers assured Brother Liguori that St. Michael's was a denominational school specially endowed by the government and that the government did not interfere with it other than to carry out periodic inspections. He pointed out that

Greek and Latin were taught at St. Michael's, even though they were not required by the government, and that the church alone managed the academy.

Rogers was even willing to guarantee salaries to the Brothers, despite his limited resources. He was so eager for them to come that he enclosed a draft from the Bank of Montreal for money to assist in outfitting them. He also asked the Brothers to inform him of the furniture needed for their residence, or whether they would prefer to furnish it themselves after their arrival. He waited for a response.

Brother Liguori's reply, on October 31, 1864, must have been a big disappointment. In a brief letter, Liguori informed the bishop that if and when they decided to come they would acquire their own furniture with money from their congregation and would bring their necessities with them, but it was now too late in the year for them to make the move. He suggested that they might be able to come the following year. In a second letter in November he informed the bishop that the Brothers had received permission from the Order to come to Chatham, but since they never took over a house until it was completely ready to move in they were not prepared to come right away.

The bishop managed to keep St. Michael's going in the meantime. A young seminarian, Stanislaus Doucet, was appointed to teach French. Other candidates for the priesthood were brought in to help the regular teachers. Joseph E. Théberge arrived from the seminary in Quebec to serve as Professor of Logic and Metaphysics while he completed his theological studies under the bishop. He got William Varrily's nephew, Patrick Dixon, who like Varrily had also been educated at St. Jareth's College in Ireland, to come to teach Latin and Greek while he studied for the priesthood at the bishop's growing seminary. But St. Michael's Academy was still short of teachers.

### **Demands of the Christian Brothers**

Rogers did not give up with the Christian Brothers, despite their prevarications. He received a letter in January, 1865, from Brother Liguori informing him that although they would not be able to

open a school this year, he hoped to provide “the promised Brothers....at a fit time.” He gave no indication of when that time might be. He also listed the brothers' requirements if they were to come. It was a long list, and some of the conditions undoubtedly surprised the bishop.

Among their demands for accommodations were: “an Oratory, a Common Room, a Walking Room, a Parlour, a Dormitory, a Refectory, a Kitchen, a Store Room, a Cellar, a Wood Room, a Private Room, a Servants' Room, a Well, and a Garden.” They also required a “School House, fully furnished, with a ready supply of wood and water.” The bishop would have to agree to pay for all necessary repairs. In addition, the Order would require a one-time grant of £50 for each brother to get established, and a yearly salary of £50 per brother. Furthermore, they were not to be expected to teach Greek or Latin, nor would the brothers agree to be examined for teaching diplomas. They would, however, “consent to be placed under the control of anyone appointed by His Lordship.” Liguori also informed the bishop that the brothers could not come before August, 1865. What must have made the bishop really catch his breath was the stipulation that their teaching would be at the primary level only.

The bishop's reply to Liguori, in February, 1865, reflected his understandable disappointment at some of the demands. He had been counting on the brothers receiving the government grant given to all teachers in the province, depending on the class of licence they possessed. The refusal of the brothers to be examined for licences would certainly be a problem. He put his best face on it. He informed Liguori that if the Brothers had come the previous fall, all their conditions might have been met, although he did not explain how the licencing problem might have been overcome. He also said he was willing to give them the residence which he and his priests had occupied for the past four years, since they had already moved into the new college building along with all his ecclesiastical students. He assured Liguori that the brothers would not have to teach Greek or Latin. His theological students would do that. He did, however, “presume” that students would have to receive a good English common school education, “fit to qualify them for any secular business, but not for the learned

professions.” That would require “a modification” of the requirement to teach only at the primary level.

Modification indeed. Rogers was well aware that about one third of the students at St. Michael's would require the equivalent of a grammar school or high school education. He hoped the Christian Brothers would change their minds, and he tried to assure Liguori that the brothers could conduct their school as they pleased with no interference, except for periodic visits of school inspectors as were required by law if they were to receive the government grant. As for teaching licences, he tried to skirt the issue, but of course he knew full well they would not receive a government grant if they refused to be examined for teaching licences. He mentioned in his letter that he had established two schools for girls, in Newcastle and Bathurst, that were being well run by the Sisters Of Charity. He concluded his letter by informing Liguori that if the brothers did come to take over St. Michael's he would be delighted, but if they “perceive too many difficulties” in coming he would wait until “God sends us teachers.”

The Christian Brothers presumably showed their unhappiness with the bishop's offer by silence, since there is no record of a reply. Indeed, nothing more would be heard from them for a good ten years. The bishop's old residence would remain empty until 1867, when Rogers offered it to the Hôtel Dieu nuns, who used it to open a hospital and a convent. But his disappointment with the Brothers' reluctance did nothing to quell Rogers's enthusiasm.

### **New Staff and a Musical Programme**

In 1865 St. Michael's Academy, reflecting its growing stature, became St. Michael's College. It had ninety-six students enrolled and several new teachers added to staff. Patrick Dixon, the seminarian who had taken over the teaching of Greek and Latin, was reported to be very serious and very demanding. Fr. B. J. Murdock, who taught at St. Thomas College in later years, recalled that Dixon

“was a short, somewhat slight man . . . , a great scholar—aware of the fact, and proud of it... He was kind, generous, punctilious and quick-tempered. He and I had a few little clashes. I liked him.” So did Max Aitken, the future Lord Beaverbrook, who as a precocious youth in Chatham in the 1890s met Fr. Dixon and in later years donated money for a hall to be named after him in the village of Beaverbrook, just outside Newcastle.

The bishop got another seminarian, Thomas J. Bannon, to help with teaching Mathematics, who taught until he became a parish priest. Later, as Chancellor of the Diocese, Bannon was a strong supporter of St. Michael's, visiting it as often as twice a week.

The bishop also appointed Israel DeLandry “Professor of Vocal and Instrumental Music.” DeLandry added a new touch to the college when he established a brass band. Popular in the town, it led the St. Patrick’s Day parade in Newcastle in March of 1866. Its fame spread and the members took part in parades and other civic functions throughout the area.

### **The Grand Concert**

In 1866 the bishop sponsored a “Grand Concert,” which was held, significantly, in the Masonic Hall. According to newspaper reports, it took place “before a highly fashionable audience comprising the ‘beauty’ and ‘elite’ of Chatham and the vicinity.” The hall was crowded, standing room only. DeLandry and his band provided the music. The band was described as quite a large one, with instruments which were “perfectly new” and cost between three and four hundred dollars. The vocals and instrumentals were said to be “deserving of all praise, more particularly when we consider the short time that the performers had been in training.” The concert also “included dramatic performances of *It Never Rains but it Pours* and *Aunt Peabody’s Visit*, which were rendered in an exceedingly creditable manner, and were by no means the least pleasant features of the evening’s Entertainment. The ‘moral’ of the ‘pieces’ were decidedly good, a feature overlooked in Dramatic representations.” Rogers

received high praise for being “indefatigable in his endeavours for the general good.” The concert was termed a great success, although no mention was made of the amount of money that was raised. In the same year a huge picnic was held on the grounds of the college, and over £100 was raised to help liquidate the debts resulting from the bishop's construction activity. Similar events were held annually over the next several years to raise funds to pay the staff.

### **Search for a Rector**

Although things seemed to be going well at St. Michael's, Rogers needed someone reliable to take charge. Daly had returned to Halifax. His successor, as we saw, had caused the bishop some embarrassment with his inappropriate behaviour and been dismissed. Most of the teaching staff were young. He needed someone with experience to supervise the college if his educational plans were to continue to bear fruit.

In January 1866 he paid a visit to St. Joseph's College in Memramcook and asked if one of the Holy Cross Fathers teaching there might be sent to Chatham to preside over St. Michael's as its third rector and to teach French, as well as to assist in the parish ministry. He was given Père Robert, who was described as “a venerable and learned gentleman of much experience in the higher departments of education.” With the arrival of Père Robert the staff now numbered eight, including three seminarians. Robert, however, was not as useful as Rogers had hoped. Although he was an experienced teacher, his English was poor, and he remained barely six months. With the arrival of the recently ordained Fr. Joseph Théberge in the summer of 1866 the bishop decided to send Robert to Petit Rocher as pastor in the hope that, later, other members of his community would join him to take over the direction of a French college that the bishop still hoped to establish there. As it turned out, Robert soon had a falling out with the Superior at St. Joseph's College, Fr. Lefebvre, and decided to leave the Holy Cross Order. Rogers, always in need of priests, accepted him into his diocese where he served as a parish priest in

Acadian communities for a number of years, but he never taught again at St. Michael's.

Rogers also had great expectations for one of his flock, Thomas Barry, presently studying for the priesthood in Montreal. In this case his expectations were fulfilled. Barry, born in Pokemouche, New Brunswick, in 1841, had begun his studies at the short-lived college that then-Bishop Connolly had established in Saint John in 1853. He completed his classical studies at the Catholic Collège de Montréal before entering the Grand Séminaire there in 1862 at the age of twenty-one.

By May of 1866, Rogers, who kept close track of potential priests for his diocese, was becoming concerned that he might lose the promising young novice. Barry was twenty-five years old, still not ordained, and the bishop was worried that he might lose him because he had expressed a desire to become a Jesuit. He wrote Barry to inform him that he would agree to any dispensation needed to speed up his ordination. When Barry requested the bishop's permission to join the Society of Jesus, Rogers weighed in with his episcopal authority. He had plans for young Barry at St. Michael's. He denied the request on account of his "great need for priests and the hope of future utility which you would be to promote God's glory in my diocese." He told Barry to trust in God to show him the right thing to do.

The bishop's prayers were answered. Barry decided not to join the Jesuits and was ordained later that year. He returned to Chatham towards the end of 1866 to accept his appointment as priest of St. Michael's Cathedral. He also agreed to take over as St. Michael's fourth rector. It was a significant moment in the pre-history of St. Thomas, and not only because he proved to be a diligent and highly competent administrator. It would be thanks to Barry's efforts during his tenure as Bishop of Chatham following Rogers' retirement in 1902 that St. Michael's College in 1910 was reincarnated as St. Thomas College.

Rogers shortly appointed the young Fr. Barry to be Chancellor of the diocese as well as his private secretary, a quick promotion for a newly ordained priest. Barry immediately showed his

initiative as well as his abiding interest in education. One of the first things he did after his arrival was to establish a “Theological Conference” at St. Michael's, a special course for the seminarians that he himself conducted. Barry's appointment as head of St. Michael's solved the bishop's quest for competent academic leadership at least for the next few years. His chancellorship also proved to be an astute appointment. Rogers and Barry together formed a dynamic and unusually effective partnership, and their actions defined the diocese over the course of several decades. .

### **More Construction**

The bishop had confronted another problem in 1866. The quarters in the college building that served as his rectory and the seminary were proving to be too crowded for the resident seminarians. As he had done a few years earlier in gathering public support for his new college building, he convened a meeting of parishioners to propose a new building to house the seminary and his residence. As usual his enthusiasm was infectious. According to his notes, people were so persuaded of his proposal that, as before, the very next morning several of them went “out in the woods and began cutting logs for the frame.”

The new rectory and seminary building went up quickly across from the college building beside the designated site of the new St. Michael's Cathedral, the stone cathedral of his dreams. Fund-raising functions were held to raise money to pay the construction costs. More properties on the hill were purchased to add to those acquired in 1862 and 1863. With his legendary lack of concern for mundane things, the debts mounted alarmingly. One of his biggest and most concerned creditors was Archbishop Connolly and the Archdiocese of Halifax. When Rogers at one point was threatened with a lawsuit by an outside business for non-payment of diocesan obligations, Connolly lowered the boom. An action against the Church in the courts, he wrote, could lead to Rogers's removal as bishop. He had to obtain the necessary funds somewhere. If not, Connolly told his impulsive subordinate, he would be forced to

take over from Rogers as temporary administrator of the Chatham Diocese.

Rogers, as always, had trusted in Providence to solve his problems. Connolly, frustrated by his subordinate's apparent lack of practical concern, informed him that "to talk of Providence in such cases is little short of irreverence to God." Spurred to action, Rogers with Barry's help arranged a mortgage on all church property in the Chatham Diocese. This drastic solution allowed Rogers to cover the debts and mollified the archbishop. It also helped to pay his expenses to Europe.

### **Bishop Rogers Goes to Rome**

In the fall of 1866 Rogers finally made plans for his "visit *ad limina*," a Catholic bishop's requisite pilgrimage to the Vatican. He would be away from the diocese for some time (it turned out to be a year and a half), during which time he planned to leave Chancellor Barry in charge of diocesan affairs.

Rogers, determined now not to leave the fate of his educational and spiritual handiwork in the hands of Providence, persevered in his attempts to find both money for the diocese and teachers for the college. On the continent he began immediately to search for funds from various Catholic organizations in Rome and elsewhere. In February, 1867, he traveled to Paris to petition the Catholic Bureau of the Propagation of the Faith, and as he reported to Connolly in March he met with some success. The latter, happily surprised for once, congratulated him. It was a tiresome business, though, as Rogers admitted. He was often frustrated by the delay in getting answers from various institutions. He sent the funds he did raise to Barry to pay off diocesan debts.

In June, 1867, he wrote Barry from Paris to say he wished he was home and could run up to Montreal "and enjoy the heavenly atmosphere of the Seminary" instead of the "tramp, tramp, tramp, the daily recurring duties required of a priest and bishop." The tramping in search of financial assistance was wearing him down. He confided that he was "anxious about the fate of our little

Seminary in Chatham.” The archbishop, it seems, had advised him “to break it up.” But he was determined not to have to act on that advice. His conscience would not allow him to do that, since it would leave “our Catholic youth” in Chatham without education. He wrote Barry that, if the Christian Brothers finally decided not to come to Chatham, he would at least find a competent priest to take over from Barry as rector of St. Michael's.

In July, before leaving Paris to go back to Rome, Rogers informed Barry that he had been promised a little more money for St. Michael's by the Propagation of the Faith Bureau. It seemed that the head of the bureau, Cardinal Barnabo, had encouraged him to spare no efforts in keeping his college going. In future, Rogers would refer to the good cardinal's advice regularly by way of justification for keeping St. Michael's open regardless of the problems of money and staff shortages, to which the archbishop must have shaken his head in despair.

Barnabo encouraged Rogers not to hurry back but to stay in Europe for a time to raise more money for his diocese. As a result, he remained throughout 1867 and most of the following year. His fund-raising tour took him to France, Belgium, Austria, and Germany, as well as Italy. It appears from his correspondence, however, that it was hard times. Other bishops were doing the same thing. Besides, it was discouraging that whatever funds he was able to raise immediately disappeared into a black hole whenever he sent them home only to have Barry put them toward paying off debts.

Always optimistic in spite of the financial obstacles, the incorrigible Rogers wrote Barry in January, 1868, that they should look into the possibility of acquiring even more land on the hill in Chatham. “I should like to have that land up the ridge,” he wrote “as that may be the spot on which a future college might be built.” He was nothing if not persistent. He would, eventually, acquire the property he had in mind, and it would be there, although he would never live to see it, that the new buildings for St. Thomas College would indeed be built.

In May, 1868, he wrote Barry from Rome that on the anniversary of the apostolic letters that

had created the Diocese of Chatham, he had celebrated mass on the altar of St. Cecilia in the Catacombs of St. Calixtus. He told Barry of his experience as follows:

I thought of the contrast between that Subterranean Chapel and its gorgeous successor, the Church of St. Peter! And, comparing small things with great, I thought that perhaps the present humble Diocese of Chatham, thus created under the patronage of St. Michael the Angel protector of Rome, by the great Pius IX, successor of Peter, might yet with God's blessing become important and flourishing! I saw however a great contrast between Peter and the B[ishop] of Chatham, and I feared that the shortcomings of the latter might impede the progress of God's work in Chatham. However – on reflection, I remember that Peter was a humble hard-working good-hearted fisherman, impulsive, illiterate, etc. – and that Our Lord by the choice of such rough & humble material for the foundation stone of His Church, more clearly manifested His Almighty power in fitting such means for the end desired. So I began to hope for the future of Chatham, that the more humble and unworthy according to human judgment the instrument employed by God for the foundation of the Church of Chatham, the more glorious and flourishing hereafter He by his Almighty power would render that Church. Fiat! Fiat!.

### **Fr. Barry and the Administration of the College**

The major difficulty Barry as rector faced in Rogers's absence was finding staff to keep the college open. Nothing more had been heard from the Christian Brothers, and money for staff was short.

At the beginning of term in 1867, Barry suggested the bishop bring William Varrily home from the seminary in Montreal to help run the college. Barry wrote to Varrily about the possibility. In a letter to Barry written in January, 1868, Varrily replied that although he took it as a great compliment to be asked to leave his "scholar's bench [for] a professor's chair," he felt he was not yet ready for the position. He pointed out that although it was true, "comparatively speaking," that he might have "a fair knowledge of the tracts," he still had a lot to learn. He felt it would be better for Barry to leave him in Montreal and keep the four seminarians presently studying and teaching at the college at least until the following year. He concluded by saying that "a vessel must first be filled before one can draw out of it" and that he would prefer to stay to finish his studies.

Barry was sympathetic. He let Varrily stay at seminary, along with the other seminarians from Chatham. It meant, however, that he himself had to take on some teaching responsibilities at the

college, in particular the course on Moral Theology. His decision to let the seminarians remain in Montreal pleased Rogers immensely. He wrote Barry that he too had had to take on such extra duties while Barry finished his studies at the seminary. He was now reaping the benefits of Barry's great service to the college and to the whole diocese. Rogers said he would try to find a priest in Rome who could assist Barry "despite our limited resources."

Paying off the most pressing diocesan debts so far in 1868 had left little money for hiring more faculty at St. Michael's. Nevertheless Rogers authorized Barry to reappoint Mr Caulfield to teach Mathematics for another year, if the latter had not found a better position. In the event, Caulfield accepted reappointment and Barry was able to keep the college operating, but the difficulties were mounting.

### **The College and its Music Program**

Rogers also urged Barry to continue the music programme, both at the college and at the church. Early in 1868 he authorized him "if means permit" to retain the services of Israel DeLandry, who for two years had been teaching vocal and instrumental music on a part-time basis. Rogers was hoping DeLandry would settle in Chatham and perhaps open a much needed stationary shop or bookstore, or become a music teacher for the town's residents. If so, and if he continued "always to lead an upright exemplary life and maintain an honorable character as hitherto," Rogers felt the "moderate salary" they could hope to pay him would serve to supplement his other income. The services he rendered the College, according to the bishop, "would not take up much of his time but would be for him an agreeable recreation."

DeLandry, unfortunately, had other plans. He had been offered a position in Saint John as organist at the cathedral there, so in the spring of 1868 he left Chatham, although he and Barry remained on friendly terms. He later wrote that the position was not ideal. He was unimpressed with

the cathedral choir, which he described as “most miserable – about 25 boys scream and holler to the best of their ability – that’s the Choir, and the organ itself is a miserable old rickety thing wholly unfit for this splendid Cathedral.” He intended to put up with it rather than return to Chatham, however, since he was getting a much better salary. As an aside, he cautioned Barry that the rector of St. Joseph’s College in Memramcook, Fr. LeFebvre, “has his eye upon your Brass Band instruments” for his college. DeLandry suspected LeFebvre had already written to the bishop requesting that the instruments be given to his college. De Landry told Barry they were “a splendid set” and that he “would be sorry to see the Chatham boys deprived of them for the pleasure of the Memramcookers.” He was “very much afraid they are doomed.” Such instruments, he claimed, could not be purchased for twice the price originally paid.

Barry took De Landry's advice and gave instructions to keep the instruments on the Miramichi, and to continue the music programme at the college. When classes began in the fall of 1868, Stanislaus Doucet, the French Professor, had taken on the course on Instrumental Music. And when he went on to seminary in Montreal at the end of term in 1869, he was replaced by William Murdock, “a senior student,” who taught both vocal and instrumental music. Doucet, in 1890, on Rogers's recommendation, would be appointed the first Acadian Vicar-General of the Diocese.

### **Bishop Rogers and the Josephites**

Besides asking for money in Europe, Rogers sought to recruit teachers for the college. Before returning home in 1868 he visited the ancient Catholic bishopric of Liège in Belgium to try to “negotiate” for a branch of the Religious Hospitaliers of St. Joseph to take charge of the education of boys in Bathurst and Chatham. Significantly and presciently, as we shall see, in a letter to Barry in May of that year he pointed out that the Josephites had members in their Order who “would suit us better than the Christian Brothers, who prefer to teach the poor and middle class a common school

education.” He spent several weeks trying to work out an agreement to get four members to come to the Chatham diocese. He wanted one priest who could take over the college in Chatham and three brothers to open a school for boys in Bathurst. He would prefer having all four in Chatham, but he recognized that the congregation did not have enough members who could teach in English. The Josephites indicated they might be able to help but needed more time to think about it. Always optimistic, Rogers wrote Barry:

What will be the ultimate result I know not yet, but humbly and firmly confide in that paternal Providence who has up to the present never abandoned us. In [my] imagination I see in the future a splendid College in Chatham directed by the Josephites, whose unique work is that of education.

He did, however, tell Barry not to tell anyone about it in case his hope was not realized.

In June, 1868, he had to inform Barry that the Josephites had decided they could not give him the teachers he needed, although they would keep the invitation under consideration. He was on his way to Ghent to apply to an order there known as the Brothers of Charity to come out to New Brunswick, at least to start a school for boys in Bathurst. And, indeed, eventually the Josephite Hospitaliers did come to Chatham, at first taking over the elementary grades of St. Michael's and then the secondary grades when St. Thomas College was taken over by the Basilians in 1910, keeping the name St. Michael's Academy.

### **Staffing Problems at St. Michael's**

Rogers tried to sort out with Barry who would be teaching at St. Michael's in September 1868 and who would still be studying at the seminary. If the Josephites did not come, he wrote, the status quo would have to be maintained. But he reiterated his advice that the seminarians in Montreal be allowed to finish their studies and become ordained before returning to Chatham, even though the college was to open in September. He was still eager to send the “young Theologians of Chatham” on to the

seminary in Montreal to complete their courses as soon as possible. but at the moment there was no one to take their place at St. Michael's. He simply did not know "how best to arrange matters." In numerous letters to Barry he went over and over the various possibilities, and what he would be able to do if he could get just one Josephite to come to Chatham. That seemed now to be a remote possibility, yet he did not give up hope that they might still find someone for him. He asked Barry for his opinion about what should be done, but the latter had no solution.

By early July, 1868, Rogers felt he had done all he could do abroad and was ready to return home. He had managed to get enough money to pay off the major debts, but he remained disappointed with the lack of success in acquiring teachers. Before returning to Chatham, he paid a visit to his family home in Ireland.

Before the bishop's return, Rector Barry, with the help of Thomas Caulfield, the Mathematics teacher, and the promising seminarians, did manage to open St. Michael's in the fall of 1868. One of the seminarian-teachers was Richard Quigley, formerly a student at Newcastle Grammar School, where Caulfield had been a master. Quigley would go on to study at Harvard University, Boston University, Laval, the Sorbonne, and the Catholic University of Paris, where he acquired a number of degrees including two PhDs. Eventually he became a well known judge in Quebec. The other seminarian was Thomas Dunne. William Murdock, as mentioned, took over Vocal and Instrumental Music. The college now, with Barry himself teaching a course, had just enough staff to continue for another year.

Things began to look up after William Varrily, who had been allowed to complete his course of study at the seminary in Montreal, was ordained late in 1868. He returned to Chatham and Barry appointed him Professor of Greek and Latin for the spring term. Then, for the following school year 1869-1870, in order to relieve the over-worked Barry, Rogers appointed Varrily the new rector of St. Michael's, the fifth in the first decade of its existence.

There were more encouraging staffing developments. While in Rome, Rogers had met an Irish

seminarian by the name of Finlan Dowling, whom he had persuaded to come to Chatham. Dowling had arrived in early 1869 in time to assist Rector Varrily and allow the seminarian Patrick Dixon, the demanding teacher of Latin and Greek, to go on to seminary in Montreal. (The following year, in 1870, Dowling too would be sent to the Montreal seminary to finish his studies.)

In 1869 the local newspaper reported that the classes at St. Michael's were well taught and the college was in a satisfactory state. Regular attendance was still sometimes a problem, as in most schools around the province, "because so many students are obliged to labour during a part of the year, and they go to school when they can."

Rogers meanwhile never abandoned his hope to persuade the Christian Brothers to come to Chatham, despite the unsatisfactory negotiations in 1865 that had led nowhere. By the time he arrived back in Chatham in 1868 after his Rome pilgrimage, the Christian Brothers were operating schools in Halifax and Saint John. He decided to try once more. In 1871, while in Montreal visiting his seminarians, he visited the Brothers' headquarters but again without success. The Christian Brothers simply were not interested in Chatham or Rogers's educational plans.

### **Discipline Problems and Threat of Closure**

St. Michael's in 1870 had a faculty of seven "professors": Varrily, Doucet, Murdock, Caulfield, William Creamer, and two senior students, Thomas Dunn and Edward Bannon. But an incident involving discipline at St. Michael's arose, the results of which threatened the institution's very existence.

In a Mathematics class, Thomas Caulfield's assistant, one of the young seminarians, attempted to reprimand a student for misbehaviour. The student objected, and in the confrontation the seminarian lost his temper and "gave him a couple of clouts" to his head. Another student told his friend he should not stand for it, whereupon the seminarian also gave him "a slap or two." The second student then

picked up a flute from a desk and hit the teacher over the head with it “which made the blood flow profusely.” When Rogers heard of “this fracas,” he sent the student who had struck the teacher home and summarily dismissed the teacher “because he violated (by striking the boy on the face with his hand) the strict regulations which in the beginning I had made on that subject and frequently published in the school since.” Rogers furthermore decided to dismiss Caulfield from St. Michael's “because he did not keep order in the school.” He was sorry for Caulfield, but claimed “this last fault of the poor man was only the straw that breaks the camel’s back. If these were only it, of course I would not have discharged him. He is now out of employment.” The result was a serious worsening of staffing problems.

Nevertheless the bishop, always optimistic, pushed ahead with construction of a new wing attached to the college building. It would be two stories high, with space for additional classrooms, administrative offices, and a new chapel. The top floor Rogers felt could be fitted up “if needed, into splendid rooms for the residence of the Christian Brothers.” Varrily informed him yet again that the Brothers were not interested in St. Michael's and suggested re-hiring Caulfield. Rogers told Barry, however, “to take Caulfield back again is a thing I cannot think of, so that I am again deliberating as to whether I shall try to keep the college going or suspend it” [emphasis in the original]. Several times he mentioned that he would go again to Montreal to try to persuade the Brothers to come, but he kept putting it off.

He was frustrated and confused. He had dismissed two faculty members and did not know how to replace them. Then came an even bigger loss. Barry left Chatham to undertake urgent work in the northern part of the Diocese. The bishop urged him to return, but Barry felt he was absolutely needed there and simply could not return, at least for the moment. The bishop reluctantly agreed. The needs of the Diocese were pressing, and superseded those of the college. His need for more priests for the parishes was desperate and required him to allow his seminarians studying in Montreal to remain there

to complete their studies. Nothing could be done about the staffing problems, so in September 1871 when St. Michael's should have opened, Rector Varrily had to inform the bishop that it "is suspended for a time." If it were to reopen, St. Michael's would have to have outside help.

### **Bishop Rogers Keeps the College Alive**

It was a desperate moment for Rogers and his cherished college. He was discouraged and unsure what to do, but he never gave up. On November 27, 1871, he confided to Barry that he was still thinking of leaving for Montreal "in search of Brothers for our little College which is still suspended." By December 19 he had still not gone. He wrote Barry explaining why:

I am now so much ashamed of all that has been said about my intentions of going, while like the auctioneers hammer, I am not yet gone – that, though my intention is unchanged, still I am unwilling to express it anymore. I confess that the fear – nay probability of not succeeding in my object – for Father Varrily says that it is useless to try – has some influence in keeping me back, also the prevalence of small pox at the Hôtel Dieu in Montreal.

Rogers finally visited Montreal in the spring of 1872, when he paid a visit to his seminarians. He tried again, without success, to get help from the Christian Brothers. One of his seminarians, James Townley, wrote to Barry in April to say that the seminarians from Chatham were all pleased to see the bishop. But he also said: "I am sorry to say I do not think he succeeded in getting the Christian Brothers. He appeared to be very much troubled about education in New Brunswick." Townley was right. Rogers wrote Barry shortly after his return saying that his application to the Christian Brothers was, "as I feared it would be, unsuccessful."

The trip was not entirely wasted, however. In Montreal he learned that one of his former seminarian-teachers, Francis McManus, presently director of "an establishment of 10 or 12 teachers," was "not at ease" and might consider coming back to Chatham. The bishop also reached an agreement with Richard Quigley, former seminarian-teacher at St. Michael's, who had been studying with a lawyer in Saint John. He would come to Chatham to teach for three months before going on to study at

Harvard University.

With the assistance of the seminarians, Quigley reopened St. Michael's in the spring of 1872. Rogers was encouraged: "So far all goes well and everybody is pleased," he informed Barry on April 14. The reopened St. Michael's had 70 students, and the bishop had high hopes that things would be even better in the fall term when and if McManus came. But Quigley left for further studies, and McManus never came. Worse, the provincial government was threateneng to cut funding.

### **The New Brunswick Common School Act**

In 1871 a controversy arose in New Brunswick over the proposed Common School Act. In providing for free, tax-supported, non-sectarian schools, the Act eliminated all grants to denominational schools. The grant St. Michael's had been receiving, which amounted to some £600, would end. It had been the main source of funds, so the college's very survival was now in jeopardy. With the expenses of the diocese's newly established convents in Bathurst and Newcastle and a hospital in Chatham, although all staffed by sisters, Rogers was hard pressed to keep everything going.

Worse, besides removing government grants from denominational schools, the Act also established teaching regulations for all schools. Teacher allowances henceforth would be based solely on a teacher's class of licence. Religious teachers such as the Christian Brothers would have to undergo examinations in order to teach in New Brunswick. Furthermore, religious garb would not be allowed in classrooms, nor would theology be a permissible subject of instruction.

The Act naturally engendered considerable opposition. Among the strongest opponents were those Catholics opposed to "Godless Schools." Bitter debates broke out in newspapers and at meetings. A riot in Caraquet resulted in two deaths. At the time of Confederation in 1867, sectarian schools in Ontario and Quebec had been allowed to continue in operation with government support. Catholics argued that denominational or sectarian schools had existed in New Brunswick at the time of

Confederation, just as in Quebec and Ontario, and therefore should not be deprived of support.

Unfortunately, it turned out, sectarian schools had existed before Confederation in New Brunswick only by custom, whereas in Quebec and Ontario they had existed by statute. They were not, therefore, protected by the British North America Act as they were in Quebec and Ontario. The circumstances were not propitious for attracting the Christian Brothers, or any other religious teaching order, to Chatham.

Appeals to the federal government to have the New Brunswick School Act repealed failed. In 1872 it went into effect in New Brunswick.

### **Catholic and Presbyterian Rivalry over a Grammar School**

The new education act cut the government's grant not only to St. Michael's but also to the Presbyterian Academy in Chatham. In a move to get around the law and continue to receive government grants, the trustees of the Presbyterian Academy arranged with the trustees of the Northumberland County Grammar School to merge the two, welcoming the Grammar School's teachers and students into the academy's substantial buildings. Although in practice it remained primarily a Protestant school, in name and in law it became the new Northumberland County Grammar School. In January 1873 Fr. Varrily, former rector of the college and now chair of the Catholic schools committee, objected. He pointed out that the Catholics too had an interest in running the affairs of the County Grammar School. If there was need for it to be transferred to a "superior building," it could best be transferred to the spacious building the Catholic Church owned on Wellington Street "known as St. Patrick's Hall" which had classrooms that had originally housed St. Michael's Academy. A week later they were informed that the trustees "decline to accept St. Patrick's Hall." The deal was done. The Presbyterian Academy became the new County Grammar School, eligible to receive government grants. St. Michael's was left out in the cold. The bishop had to turn to other sources for its salvation.

As a result of the protests, the New Brunswick government made some minor concessions. Catholic students might be grouped together in certain schools where qualified members of religious orders would be allowed to teach. In 1873, after more protests and appeals, the provincial government agreed to another concession: members of teaching orders could wear their “garb” in the classroom.

### **Christian Brothers Still Uninterested**

The concessions, however, were understandably not sufficient to persuade the Christian Brothers to take over St. Michael's. Although the Superior of the order in 1874 empowered the director of the Christian Brothers' school in Saint John to make a trip to Rogers's diocese, the aim was to recruit novices for the Order rather than to offer teaching brothers. Rogers was informed by one of the brothers in Saint John that he believed “that the establishment of the Brothers in your diocese depends much on the success of this enterprise.” It is unlikely the bishop welcomed the suggestion, since he himself was in need of priests and eager to recruit students for his seminary and the priesthood. Yet he was caught in a bind. He had been trying for so long to get a Catholic order to take over St. Michael's that he felt compelled to agree to the Christian Brothers' raiding party in hopes it might lead to something more substantial. In June, 1874, the Superior of the Christian Brothers informed Rogers that no brothers were available at present, although the bishop would “certainly be the first satisfied.” This in spite of the agreement to allow the brothers to recruit in his diocese.

Staffing problems at St. Michael's worsened. The bishop had no seminarians ready to be ordained. One had lost time because of illness, another because he was “undecided” about his vocation. Another had joined the Jesuits. Rogers was exasperated. As he complained to Barry, the Christian Brothers were scouring the coast as far as Bathurst “looking for material to manufacture into novices.” He was at a loss as to how to save his beloved college. In 1875 it was being run on a shoestring by the seminarian James Townley and “others” who were not licenced teachers, which meant no government

grant.

Further changes were made to the School Act. The government agreed to recognize the certificate of any Superior of any Roman Catholic teaching Order as a substitute for attendance at the Normal School, although an exam for a New Brunswick teaching licence was still required. Furthermore, the government agreed to allow school trustees to rent, for schooling purposes, buildings belonging to religious orders or the Church with no restrictions placed on their use after the close of the school day. The arrangement in effect allowed for religious instruction. Rogers hoped the changes answered most of the objections of the Christian Brothers. In February, 1876, he sent a telegram to Montreal asking them once more to consider taking over the college. A short telegram in response once again shot down his hopes. He was informed that it was “impossible for the present.” It is not hard to imagine the bishop's frustration. Fruitless attempts to get the Christian Brothers to come to Chatham had been going on now for over a dozen years.

### **Diocesan Debt and the Depression**

Rogers was understandably discouraged. By the mid-1870s the Diocese of Chatham had become severely burdened with debt. The bishop's concern for the welfare of his diocesan flock had led him to establish teaching convents in Newcastle, Bathurst and other parts of the diocese. He had brought in Hôtel Dieu nuns, who opened hospitals in Chatham and St. Basile as well as in Tracadie to serve the leper colony there, but these involved expenses. The diocese had also been hurt by the economic downturn. The merchant in Chatham who had supplied them with most of their needs on credit had gone bankrupt. The government was giving no more subsidies to denominational schools. To cover the debts, Rogers mortgaged the church properties in Chatham for five years. Even that did not provide enough to pay off the diocesan debt, which had grown to \$30,000, annual interest on which absorbed all their local revenues. Only funds from the Propagation of the Faith in Europe, which they

had been receiving since the diocese was established, kept them going.

### **The Christian Brothers Finally Arrive**

In the midst of the financial mayhem Brother Armin-Victor, Superior of the Christian Brothers' community in Saint John, wrote to Rogers saying he could give him brothers for Chatham, but that in teaching "they should be independent of all Government control." It is not clear why they had changed their minds, nor what "independent of all Government control" would mean in practice, but to Bishop Rogers it must have seemed a small miracle. His hopes for the continued existence of St. Michael's might finally be realized. He was pleased, but still worried. He replied immediately by telegram on April 8, 1876, suggesting that although it would be a challenge to maintain the school without a government grant, "we will try for one year. Therefore come with three Brothers immediately."

Shortly after that Brother Armin-Victor arrived. Rogers showed him around the buildings, explaining that his original plan had been to locate the brothers' residence rooms in the college building itself. He proposed that a day school of, say, two classes could be established in St. Patrick's Hall, although he could not guarantee it because of the "critical financial state" of diocesan affairs, as he expressed it in the written proposal. The college, if the brothers got it started again, would have to be "entirely at their own risk and responsibility." In light of the diocese's financial problems, the bishop would give the brothers the financial support they requested only for one year, after which time the conditions would be changed as necessary.

The Order apparently agreed to Rogers's conditions. In August of that year he received a letter of acceptance from Brother Joseph, Presidius of the Order of Mary in Montreal, informing him that their summer retreat had ended and "we are now thinking of going to our new home [in Chatham]." Brother Joseph himself, who was originally from New Brunswick, would become the new rector of St. Michael's. Although he had informed Rogers that six brothers would be coming to Chatham, when he

arrived he brought only three: Brother Symphonium, Brother Philip, and Brother Maximus Henry. They arrived from Montreal by train on August 15 and joined the boys “at a breakfast prepared for them in their refectory, while the girls had their feast in the large refectory of the Évêché.” Rogers was delighted finally to have them in Chatham.

His relationship with Brother Joseph at St. Michael's began on a friendly footing but soon became strained. The brothers changed the focus of the college to practical matters, as reflected in the new name they gave it: St. Michael's Commercial College. They began by recruiting boarding students from outside town, opening a school in St. Patrick's Hall for town students. Rogers soon came to regret having given them permission to set up what he would call a “pay school.”

Brother Joseph placed advertisements in newspapers for student boarders, accompanied by the following prospectus published in French and English:

*J.M.J. Institute of the Christian Brothers  
Prospectus of St. Michael's Commercial College  
Chatham, N.B.*

The College has for its object to impart to young men, together with the benefit of a Christian education, the necessary knowledge of commerce in all its branches and whatever else may fit them for industrial pursuits. The system of instruction is both theoretical and practical; it includes Religious Instruction, Reading, Penmanship, the English Language (Grammar, Analysis, Orthography, and Composition) and the French Language; Sacred History, England, Ireland and notions of General History.

Lessons are taught in English.

Geography keeps pace with lessons in History.

Book-keeping, according to systems used in the best business houses in the country.

Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry, Telegraphy, and Natural Philosophy, are taught to the pupils when qualified.

Linear and Ornamental Drawing, Surveying, Navigation and Vocal Music.

Pupils can be seen any day, but only during recreational hours.

A few days vacation are allowed at Christmas and Easter.

Summer holidays begin in the first week of July and close in the first week of September.

At the end of the months of November, February, and May, Reports are sent to the parents, informing them of the state of their children as to their health, conduct and application to study. Children are admitted from the age of seven years.

On the admission of a pupil, parents are requested to furnish: 1, a certificate from the principal of the last school he attended; 2, all the information calculated to enhance the good direction of the pupil.

It is of the utmost importance that the pupils be present on the very day of the opening. Delays

will be prejudicial, as the course of studies is organized on the next day.

#### *TERMS of BOARD*

Board for the scholastic year, payable in two terms: \$60 Sept. 1. \$35 March 1. A term already commenced is due in its entirety.

No deduction is made for absence, unless for expulsion or protracted sickness that is one month or more.

Boarding [fees] date from the 1st or 15th of each month, according as the student entered in the first or last half of the month.

Washing payable in advance, \$1 per month.

Physician fees, medicines, Instrumental Music, Navigation, Telegraphy, Drawing and Stationary are at extra charge:

Drawing	\$2 per annum
Navigation	\$5 per annum
Telegraphy	\$5 per annum
Bed and Bedding	\$8 per annum
Half Board	\$2 per month

Despite the bishop's misgivings, the opening of the new St. Michael's Commercial College in 1876 raised considerable interest in Chatham. The College's first year under the direction of the Christian Brothers was an apparent success. The first public examination of the students took place in April 1877, attracting approximately 500 people. Subjects included Mathematics, Geography, History, Elocution, Drawing and Book-keeping. Newspaper accounts gave the names of those students who had excelled. An end-of-year ceremony involved a programme of songs, recitations, performance by the school choir, the awarding of medals and prizes, a valedictory address and speeches by Bishop Rogers, Fr. Richard and L. J. Tweedie, the local MP and later Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick. Also attending was a Senator, the Hon. William Muirhead.

#### **A Day in the Bishop's Life**

Throughout these years, Rogers was constantly on the move to various parts of his diocese. Churches were always needing building or repairing. There were constant meetings with priests or groups of parishioners. He visited the schools, convents, and hospitals on a frequent basis. We learn of

some of his typically constant activity from a letter that he wrote to Barry following a brief overnight visit to the latter in Dalhousie in April, 1877:

When parting with you last Sunday night to retire to my room and sleep, I was fully of the mind which I had expressed to you, of not trying to get to the R.R. Station in time for the train on Monday morning on account of the fuss and inconvenience which my departure so early would necessarily cause to all concerned, myself included. But on awakening in the morning a little before 5 o'clock, feeling quite refreshed after the night's sleep, I thought it a pity to lose the fine chance, the weather that morning was so beautiful — So I hurried to dress and left with my little valise in hand and your fur coat on me to go to the stage office, which I found by inquiring. When I got there, I found the stage had left half an hour before. This was what I feared from the first moment that morning when I made up my mind to try, and therefore I made no delay to write or go to your room to inform you, for when I was leaving I was rather inclined to think I would be back again before you would go to celebrate your Mass. However, on asking the stable man if there was no one who would undertake to drive me to the station — the frost that night having made the roads hard & good as could be expected for days to come, he said that possibly the other driver who was sleeping might be induced to go — So he waked him up and got him to consent, although all feared we should have made our trip to River Charles in vain. A wood sled was taken at my suggestion, in preference to a pung. After starting he found the road too difficult to go fast enough, so he turned around and took the ice, below Dr. Hamilton's, and after turning the point at the light house, made straight across the bay for Eel River Church. The top ice was not strong enough to bear the horse so that it was hard on him. The Driver did his best. We got to the station barely in time to get on without permitting me to take off your fur coat or pay the man who brought me. We forgot also on his sleigh my grey shawl. At Jacquet River Station I gave your fur coat to Johnny Morrison to forward to you by first chance — also an envelope with thanks scribbled on a piece of paper inside and \$3 addressed to you for the Driver who drove me to the Station. Mr D. Curry, Sr., came on board, so that I had a chance to speak to him about the residence of the priest, the debt due the painter by the Belledune Church, and the non-payment of dues to you for the last year you served them. Etc. etc. Mr Curry got off at Bathurst. On arriving at Newcastle I perceived the ice partly open so that there was no crossing except by the R.R. Bridge. Hence I resolved to take breakfast in the Railway saloon (and a good repast they served up) rather than wait to celebrate my Mass at Chatham as I at one time thought might be possible. I kept on the cars to the Chatham branch and came down along with the Mail carried by Ullick — but with trouble on a/c of bad roads, arriving at 2 ½ o. c. p.m. I immediately came down to St. Patrick's Hall, where a number of hired men under Mr. Desmond were working, making certain changes & modifications to suit the Brothers. My timely arrival saved the porch from being spoiled in appearance by an ugly crown or roof which was condemned. Also my presence enabled me to prepare Varrily to move on Wednesday (yesterday) the day which the Sisters desired on account of its being the day of the week dedicated to St. Joseph. So that the Sisters with their sick patients & boarders slept last night in their new quarters and we all (Priests, Brothers, Servant girls, &c) slept soundly here in the little old house where we are at home again. Upwards of eleven years ago I vacated it for the Brothers, then expected. They did not come. But after it remained three years empty the Sisters came to occupy it. Now they leave it larger than it was then, with two other immense buildings erected on their account at either side (the new hospital and convent) and we reentered in company with the Brothers! [Emphasis is the original.]

### **Destruction of St. Michael's College**

On February 14, 1878, less than two years after the opening of the new college, a major fire consumed the buildings of St. Michael's Commercial College, the old church (designated St. Michael's Cathedral since 1860), and the bishop's and priests' residence.

It was Rogers himself who first noticed the fire. He detected smoke in his sleeping quarters on the second floor of one of the buildings surrounding the church. He looked over at the church and, not seeing the sanctuary lamp burning, assumed it had gone out and was smoking. But as the smoke increased he became alarmed. He went downstairs, opened the door of the private chapel, and was met by a wall of smoke. He returned to his bedroom and looked out the window. He saw an orange light in the second story windows of the tower of the church, obviously on fire.

Assisted by Thomas Fitzgerald, a student, Rogers gave the alarm. Thanks to the warning everyone was able to escape from the buildings. The fire soon aroused the town. People hurried to the scene. It became clear that none of the buildings could be saved. All the buildings in the church and academy compound were built of wood, two and a half storeys high, although on stone foundations. The old church, where it started, "seemed to go down before the fire like dried leaves." It spread quickly to the residence of the bishop and his priests, the college building, the brothers' living quarters, and the dormitories.

Students were able to remove some of their possessions before the fire spread through the dormitory. They rescued Fr. Bannon, who had collapsed in front of the altar in an unsuccessful attempt to save the sacred vessels. Attempts to save the brothers' newly acquired stock of school books and stationary, however, were unsuccessful. The block of buildings that included the Hôtel Dieu convent, hospital, schools and chapel was situated only twenty feet from the burning buildings, but the firefighters successfully saved them. The other college buildings and the church were beyond help.

Only one person was slightly injured, struck on the head and arm by bricks falling from a chimney.

The loss of the buildings was a major catastrophe for the financially strapped diocese. It soon became clear that the fire had destroyed most of the books in the library, the vestments, the sacred vessels, the furniture, and all the property of the Christian Brothers. Many suggested “that it was the work of an incendiary,” though the charge was never proven.

It is not difficult for us to imagine Rogers's reaction. All the time, energy and worry which he and others had put into trying to keep the college alive for so long must have seemed wasted. True to his nature, however, the bishop kept faith and did not give in to despair. What had been destroyed could, he believed, with God's help be rebuilt. On the Sunday following the fire, he conducted services in the crowded school room of St. Patrick's Hall in the town. After Mass, ever optimistic, he reminded his parishioners of the havoc that “is now being inflicted on thousands where war is raging! How many communities, like the Commercial Capital of our province, St. John, have suffered from the same dread scourge of fire! Therefore, let us not repine, but heroically bear our cross and confide in the goodness of Him who created all things out of nothing; that He may repair our loss by restoring to us again what He originally gave us.”

A few days later Rogers convened a meeting to determine what could be done. A decision was made to rebuild the College on the same foundation but taller where, according to the ever-optimistic Rogers, the brothers would be able to reopen St. Michael's with increased accommodations for their students. As for the cathedral, the diocese would provide “temporary church accommodations until the foundation for the new Cathedral is ready.”

Characteristically, the bishop proposed rebuilding both college building and cathedral in stone. St. Patrick's Hall would suffice for classes until the new college building was constructed, and the convent chapel and perhaps a newly constructed small wooden church in the lower end of town could serve parishioners until the new cathedral was constructed. In his view, it would take “a year or more”

to collect the necessary funds to build a proper college building. He and his priests personally would travel around the diocese raising funds, the result of which would be a much more satisfactory structure of brick or stone instead of a “hastily built wooden construction.”

The gathered Catholic community, however, preferred to rebuild the college building in wood, which would be faster and cost less, so Rogers reluctantly agreed. He would issue an appeal “in this hour of distress to the charitable sympathy of our kind neighbors” for funds for immediate construction. He did not give in, however, on using stone to construct the new St. Michael's Cathedral, even if it took longer.

Over the next few months Rogers widened his appeal for funds for the reconstruction of St. Michael's College. Besides traveling throughout the diocese, he appealed to various dioceses throughout Canada and Newfoundland. He authorized his secretary, Fr. Thomas Bannon, presently on a pilgrimage to Rome, to take his appeal to the Vatican's Committee for the Propagation of the Faith. He garnered the support of other bishops. Bishop McIntyre of Charlottetown wrote to the rector of the Irish College in Rome asking him also to take the appeal to the Vatican. His indefatigable efforts were rewarded and within a few months he had funds or promises sufficient to begin reconstruction.

### **Dissension Between the Bishop and the Christian Brothers**

As the rebuilding of the college got underway throughout the spring and summer of 1878, however, Rogers's relationship with Brother Joseph deteriorated. The first dispute came over where the brothers would reside during reconstruction. Rogers suggested they might remove themselves and “their college” to Bathurst for a time where they could live in a large house belonging to the diocese. Their presence in Bathurst, he later remarked, “would have fostered the taste and given an impetus amongst the boys and their parents to the holy work of Christian education.” It would have, he suggested, been especially productive among the Irish and the English-speaking Acadians in the

Bathurst region, who were actually more numerous than his Catholic flock in Chatham. It might even have led to enrolling more novices for the church. But Brother Joseph had different ideas. He did not want to move to Bathurst. He actually hailed from the town of Neguac, some twenty miles up the coast from Chatham. Indeed, his friends there had furnished the lumber for the frames for the original academy buildings, and they now offered to do the same for the new college buildings. Brother Joseph was in favour of accepting their offer. The bishop, in order to keep the peace, or as he termed it “unwilling to permit dissensions among our people,” yielded his ground and agreed to the immediate start of wood frame construction.

So the Brothers stayed in Chatham to supervise the reconstruction. As a result of the losses caused by the fire and a lack of operating funds, however, Rogers indicated he would have to change the conditions of his earlier contract. Brother Joseph was less than pleased and appealed to the Provincial Superior, Brother Armin-Victor. The latter came to Chatham to talk to Rogers personally. They agreed that the bishop would pay a reduced amount by employing two brothers instead of three to teach the younger students.

A few weeks later Rogers received some money from Ottawa, where former rector William Varrily had been soliciting funds for rebuilding the college. Assuming that the agreement with Brother Armin-Victor for reduced payments was still standing, Rogers forwarded a cheque for the next two quarters and followed it up with another cheque a few months later. He received no reply from Brother Armin-Victor and so assumed all was in order. In the meantime, Brother Joseph on his own had rented a house in Chatham for the brothers, expecting Rogers to pay the rent. The latter, however, refused. It was not, he claimed, because of the amount, which was not that great, but because he refused to recognize an obligation to pay debts contracted by others without his knowledge or consent.

Other disagreements with Brother Joseph arose over the construction of the new building. Since he would be paying the bills, Rogers felt he should be making the decisions. Brother Joseph had his

own views, and the two disagreed over details. In one case Rogers, on the advice of the builders, refused to put in certain windows that Brother Joseph wanted but which the builder felt would weaken the structure of the building. The brothers also wanted small sleeping quarters constructed where Rogers wanted a music room. Delays arose when Rogers was absent doing the rounds of his diocese and Brother Joseph wanted certain changes made in the construction. The builder said the changes needed the bishop's approval, so construction had been halted until his return. Worried that the building would not be finished in time for the start of term in September, Rogers lost his temper and ordered the work to proceed as planned, "forbidding all further changes or interference" by Brother Joseph.

These and other disputes led Brother Joseph, who was after all the college's rector, to criticize the bishop for interfering in what was to be the Christian Brothers' building. Rogers was furious. As he understood it, Brother Joseph had accused him "of personal vanity or pride to let nothing be done only through myself." He informed Brother Joseph that there was a proper jurisdictional relationship between the Christian Brothers and the Chatham Diocese, and it must be maintained. Was it, he asked, their failure to observe that relationship that had led to their leaving the dioceses of Halifax and Saint John? That would not happen in Chatham. "No one appreciates the merit and importance of the Brothers' work" more than he, but, he bristled, they must "keep within their legitimate sphere." They were doing things that were "expensive and unnecessary." They had decided, for example, on their own to put hot water heating into the new college building. A plumber and a steam fitter had been brought in from Montreal to install a heating system that included constructing a brick furnace measuring five by seventeen-and-a-half feet with approximately 8000 feet of piping. It was far too expensive.

Indeed, over time, the cost of running the unauthorized heating system was a one of the reasons for the huge debt that the brothers ran up over the next two years.

### **Opening of the New St. Michael's College**

In spite of the delays the new building was completed in October, 1878. An advertisement appeared in the newspapers outlining the courses and fees for the year. Everything seemed to be back on course at St. Michael's Commercial College. The biggest excitement of the year, however, was the laying of the corner stone for the new stone cathedral, the new St. Michael's Cathedral. A small wooden church that had been constructed on the foundation of the destroyed St. Michael's Pro-Cathedral was serving until the new cathedral could be constructed. The noted American church architect Patrick Keely (1816-1893) had been engaged to draw up the architectural plans. It promised to be the tallest church in Canada east of Quebec. The ceremony took place on June 9, 1879, and was attended, having been escorted from Rome by Fr. Bannon, by the Apostolic Delegate to Canada. He expressed himself much impressed by the progress the bishop had made in building hospitals, schools and especially St. Michael's College. Also attending the ceremony were the Bishops of Charlottetown, Saint John, and Arichat (the diocese originally serving the Acadian population of Isle Madame off Cape Breton Island, soon to be included in the Diocese of Antigonish), as well as "many prominent Protestants." All, announced Rogers, had contributed to the rebuilding fund for the construction of the new college. (As for the cathedral, however, for lack of funds its cornerstone would remain for two decades as only a pledge until 1903, when construction of Chatham's handsome sandstone landmark would actually begin. Even then, construction would only be completed in 1921.)

Everything started off fairly well at the college in September 1879. The teaching staff had been increased to six brothers. Rogers attempted to deal with the resentments of some of the parents "of the 20 or 30 boys belonging to Chatham" who were attending the school in St. Patrick's Hall rather than in the new college building. They were miffed because the brothers were charging them "boarding fees." Others resented having to pay extra for music, drawing and so forth, in order to help cover expenses of the school in St. Patrick's Hall. Rogers was sympathetic to their concerns. Previously he had expressed

his unease with the Brothers running “a pay school.” As he pointed out, the distinctions the Brothers had drawn between the boys at St. Michael's College and those at the school at St. Patrick's Hall “diminished the zeal and fervour of the parents of those attending St. Patrick's Hall,” who after all had helped to rebuild the College after the fire. The bishop understood why they “must feel a little sore at not seeing their own children, but rather strangers from outside the Diocese, enjoying it.” The bishop thus was not completely satisfied with the way things were going, yet serious problems did not arise until after the close of the 1879-1880 school year.

### **Denouement**

In 1880 the relationship between the Christian Brothers and the bishop fell apart altogether. The cause of the trouble was the agreement which the bishop thought he had made with Brother Armin-Victor when the latter visited Chatham after the fire in 1878. Armin-Victor had been replaced as the Order's Provincial Superior by a certain Brother Reticus, recently arrived from France. His was an unfortunate appointment. It transpired that he “caused great trouble within his community and outside it. He was unyielding with local employers and did not hesitate to close houses in places where the religious or school authorities did not give in to his demands.” On May 25, 1880, Brother Reticus informed the bishop that the latter's interpretation of the agreement with the Order, supposedly agreed to by Brother Armin-Victor after the fire about reducing the bishop's contribution, was wrong. Such a reduction was only to come into effect at some “future indefinite time,” one determined by the Provincial Superior, not by the bishop.

Unfortunately for Brother Reticus, as well as for St. Michael's College, Rogers was not one to give in to such demands. He wrote that he was “simply astonished” at his pronouncements. The altered agreement with the Order regarding the reduced liability of the diocese had been made two years earlier. There had been no dissent from the Order then, so he had not expected difficulties now. He

outlined for Reticus all that had happened since the fire.

The next letter from Reticus, which Rogers received in July, 1880, announced that the Christian Brothers would be leaving St. Michael's and Chatham at the end of the year. It was a major and unexpected setback for the bishop. Unfortunately there was nothing in writing attesting to the altered agreement with Armin-Victor, and Reticus was unwilling to accept Rogers's interpretation of what had happened.

The decision to remove the Christian Brothers from Chatham was approved by the Order's Superior in Montreal. Brother Reticus had reported that the House in Chatham was deeply in debt to the Mother House in Montreal for school supplies, books and stationery, materials that had been lost in the fire and had had to be replaced. Furthermore, the Brothers in Chatham were in debt to the Order for furnishing their residence as well as the dormitories, not to mention the exorbitant cost of the new hot water heating system and other things. Reticus had demanded improved terms from the bishop, namely a large contribution toward paying these debts. Otherwise the Order would leave Chatham permanently. The diocese, he claimed, still owed the Brothers \$1,661.42.

An angry Rogers refused to accede to the Order's demands. Over the past four years he had taken up yearly collections to support them, totalling \$1,353.51. The diocese had its own debts as a result of the fire. He wanted to pay less for the brothers' services, not more. The differences proved to be irreconcilable. The Christian Brothers packed up and left after "dismantling the house and taking the furniture, which was theirs, with them." Although the bishop was disheartened, with hindsight it was a positive development. The Christian Brothers' involvement with St. Michael's was ill-fated from the start.

### **Hard Times**

The whole of Canada, including New Brunswick, was still suffering from a prolonged

economic depression. The Chatham Diocese, what with its mortgages and other loans, was scraping by on its subsidies from the Propagation of the Faith. The bishop had only been able to pay the brothers over the previous two years with the proceeds of special annual collections. Times were hard. The outlook for St. Michael's was bleak. Rogers's hopes for the Christian Brothers had been misplaced. They had proven to be a weak reed: between 1860 and 1876 they had established six communities in the Maritime Provinces – two in Nova Scotia (Halifax and Arichat), one in P.E.I (Charlottetown), one in Saint John, and the most recent in Chatham. None lasted more than a few years.

Rogers was thoroughly discouraged. For the next five years he remained silent on the issue of St. Michael's. He returned to the subject in August, 1885, when he wrote Barry, since 1880 Vicar-General of the Diocese: "What would you think of taking charge of St. Michael's College to open it?" Barry wisely made no reply. The bishop wrote him again in October. This time Barry replied, but not positively. He had been reluctant to tell Rogers what he thought. While he wished to be helpful, "from your Lordship's remarks and my own personal knowledge of the many requests for a reopening, that proposition is now practically out of the question." The main reason, he thought, was lack of money for staff.

Despite his disagreements with Brother Reticus, Rogers maintained a relatively friendly correspondence with Brother Joseph, St. Michael's last rector. The latter wrote that he considered himself one of the bishop's spiritual children. He sympathized with his mentor's academic dreams. It had not been his decision to leave Chatham. He agreed to try to persuade the order to return to Chatham. In August, 1886, however, he finally informed Rogers that there was really no hope of getting any of the Christian Brothers from Montreal. They had no English-speaking brothers to spare, and they needed twice the number they had simply to run the houses they already were operating. He did offer to approach the Brother Superior in New York. He understood the Brothers from that district had recently opened a house in Halifax and might be interested in establishing other houses.

The bishop heard nothing from Brother Joseph until September 1887, when the latter wrote with some apparently heartening news. As a result of “how strong and numerous have been my appeals to him on behalf of the Diocese of Chatham,” a delegate from the New York district had agreed to visit Chatham to explore the possibility of the order's return. The delegate, “not finding it convenient to come to Chatham,” had commissioned one of the brothers from their house in Halifax to make the visit in his place.

On October 19, 1887, Rogers sent a written summary of their discussions to the Brother Superior in New York. He pointed out that since the brothers had left Chatham, “the college has remained, dismantled and desolate, such as they left it, intensified by the daily view of the empty apartments of the abandoned College.” The regret, Rogers wrote, “would be turned into joy by the resumption of the College by the Brothers.” Because of the financial losses the diocese had suffered in assisting the brothers previously, as well as the disappointment caused by their leaving, the bishop now proposed to sell the buildings and grounds of St. Michael's College outright to the Order, on condition that it be “held and always conducted as a Roman Catholic College.” They could have the college, which was valued at sixty thousand dollars, for “say Forty Thousand.” If they agreed to the purchase, he, Rogers, would use the money to finish the new cathedral. That would allow him to donate to the order the church building now being used as the Pro-Cathedral as well as his episcopal residence. As owners of the college, the order could run it as they pleased, free of all interference, “on their own account and for their own financial profit and loss.” If that was not satisfactory, then he would be willing to rent the buildings to them for a nominal rent, enough to cover the insurance. As enticement, Rogers would turn over to the order a thousand dollars that had been raised for the buildings' upkeep. There would be only one proviso. Remembering the dissatisfaction that had arisen earlier when the brothers had operated the college and school, Rogers stipulated that boarding pupils of the diocese should be granted a reduction in tuition and board over those from outside it. All these things, wrote

Rogers, could be the basis of a new agreement.

The New York Brother Superior did not respond. Three years later, visiting Chatham early in 1890 on his way to Europe, Brother Joseph wrote in a letter to another brother: “What a pity the Brothers ever left Chatham.... Something must be done in the near future or dismiss the thought altogether and thus give liberty to the Good Bishop to seek help elsewhere for teachers. I shall do my utmost to induce the Superior in Paris to accept the Bishop’s offer.” In March of the same year he wrote Rogers saying he had discussed the return of the Brothers to Chatham while in Paris, but to no avail. Their College of St. Louis had opened the previous year, in 1889, and that had become a huge drain on their resources. The Order now had over 130 Brothers in training, however, so there was some hope. He would “be so glad if some should in due time find their way to Chatham and repair the blunders which my want of experience made me commit as director in that place. My only hope and prayer is to see the Brothers once more in Chatham.”

Six years after that, in 1896, Brother Joseph wrote Rogers inquiring about reports that he was considering reopening St. Michael's College. Merely a rumour, responded the bishop. Two Eudist Fathers from Nova Scotia, he explained, had tentatively inquired about the possibility of some members of their community opening an establishment somewhere in the diocese. The Eudists represented the Society of Jesus and Mary, a Catholic organization (though not a formal Order) devoted to secondary education in colleges and seminaries. But, wrote Rogers, they were not interested in taking over St. Michael's. As for himself, he was approaching his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday and was contemplating retirement. Reopening the College, he wrote, would require more energy than he possessed. He would have to leave such an enterprise to his successor.

Rogers could not resist the opportunity to remind Brother Joseph that the closing of St. Michael’s had not been his, the bishop's, doing. He reviewed the decision taken by the Order in Montreal and remarked how it had insisted on “better terms” and a greater contribution to help pay

debts, something the diocese had not been able to afford. And he proceeded to list some of its well-known teachers and graduates: Frs. Morrissey, Carter and Doucet; lawyer and later Judge Richard Quigley; William Crimmins in Classics; Fr. Thomas Bannon; Dr. William P. Morrissey of New York; Dr. Israel Gallant of Rustico, P.E.I.; Charles Hachey of Bathurst and James Townley, both much esteemed for their high intellectual and scholastic capabilities; and Frs. William Varrily and Patrick Dixon, classical scholars and graduates of St. Jareth's College in Tuam, Ireland, who had taught Greek and Latin at St. Michael's. The bishop also pointed out to Brother Joseph that he had wanted to establish a French college in Caraquet or Petit Roché, where both English and French could be taught. In 1866 he had sent Père Robert there to get it started, hoping that other members of the Holy Cross Order might join him, but that effort had failed when Père Robert left the Order to become a parish priest.

Rogers had not found the funds to complete that project, and indeed would not find the funds to put St. Michael's back in the saddle. In an ironic twist, at the same time he was writing Brother Joseph about funding problems, a young, brash, penniless seventeen-year-old from Newcastle named Max Aitken was electioneering for one of the town's young lawyers named R. B. Bennett who was running for the position of alderman for newly-chartered Chatham. Fifty years later Aitken as Lord Beaverbrook would become a noted and generous benefactor of St. Michael College's successor St. Thomas College.

Brother Joseph wrote to Rogers the following year, 1897, that he was still trying to find ways to get the Christian Brothers back to Chatham. He promised the bishop "as one of your devoted children, I shall do all in my power to further your claim." The Christian Brothers, however, would never return to Chatham. The Eudist Fathers did open the Sacred Heart College at Caraquet in 1899 (or 1900), although it would later be destroyed by fire in 1914, after which it would be reopened in Bathurst. For the first decade of the twentieth century, therefore, the college in Caraquet would be the only college in the diocese.

In 1899 Rogers, who was not well, requested the appointment of Fr. Thomas Barry as Coadjutor Bishop with the right of succession. In his explanation to Barry he pointed out how fortunate he had been over the years. His confessor and spiritual director, Archbishop Connolly, in 1861 had sent him a first-class student, Fr. William Varrily, whom he had “ever regarded as a precious gift.” Then in a second stroke of good fortune, his good friend Bishop Sweeney of Saint John “had generously ceded his right” to keep one of his seminarians and instead had given him to the Chatham Diocese. That seminarian was Thomas Barry. Although he and Barry had disagreed about a number of things over the years, he felt he was the one most suitable to replace him. He made the recommendation to Rome, even though Barry expressed misgivings about taking Rogers's position. The recommendation was accepted, and Barry was appointed. Rogers stepped down as bishop in February 1902. Although Barry accepted the appointment reluctantly, he proved to be an excellent replacement for Rogers, who died a year later on March 22, 1903, at the age of seventy-seven.

Rogers died too soon to see his two life-long dreams realized. The beautiful sandstone, copper-roofed, neo-Gothic St. Michael's Cathedral had architectural blueprints drawn up and as we saw its corner stone laid in 1879, so that he knew what it would look like, high on its hill overlooking the town of Chatham, the tallest building in eastern Canada. Yet for lack of funds construction did not begin until the year of his death. (It would not be completed until 1921.) His second unrealized dream was to see his beloved St. Michael's College reopen. Yet seven years later in 1910 thanks to the efforts of his able successor, Bishop Thomas Barry, that dream, too, would be realized.

## Sources, Chapter 1

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